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**Negotiations of space, perceptions and strategies in the urban projects of Beirut's Southern Suburbs reconstruction**

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The control and appropriation of space has been an important dimension of urban planning for the last 15 years in Beirut. It appeared particularly after the civil war during which space was at the heart of the conflict. Some large urban projects, the principal objective of which is per nature to transform space in given areas, became places of possible modification of the geography of territories. The stake was not only to control space. It also bore social, population and influence aspects. The context of reconstruction (sometimes of reconciliation) encouraged some political opponents, often former adversaries of the war, to negotiate space by negotiating urban projects (their existence, sometimes their content, and their control).

It was the case for the two projects of reconstruction studied here, Elyssar (after the civil war) and Waad (after the July 2006 war), both located in the southern suburbs of Beirut, inhabited by a population composed mostly of Shiite Muslims and dominated by Hezbollah, and both developed in a context of tension between the Lebanese government majority and the Party of God.

The multiplicity of the urban projects' stakes is not specific to reconstruction. Everywhere, town planning carries the idea that the transformation of space will have a social impact. The urban projects usually plan the transformation of society (to improve living conditions, encourage social diversity, protect identity, defend rights, encourage means of access to the city, modify the social composition...). The stakes are always strategic, social, political and space related.

As a consequence of the community distribution of space, and at the close of a civil war which reinforced the parcelling of space in denominational territories, the stake of the modification of the population is recurrent in the urban projects of reconstruction in Lebanon. It has been a central element in the criticisms towards the city centre's project which modified the demography of the heart of Beirut by emptying it of its inhabitants. It is nodal in the projects set up in the southern suburbs. Although the space is not homogeneous, the *dahiye* is a stronghold for the Shiite parties, Amal and Hezbollah (Harb 2005), and the population composes these parties' electorate. Consequently, in this space, any intervention of the government, for which those parties, former rivals in the war, have become the political opponents, assumes an important political and strategic dimension. Because they plan the construction of housing units (and not only their dismantling as in the infrastructure and

equipment projects), both the Elyssar and the Waad projects are essential when it comes to the issue of populating the southern suburbs.

Of course, the negotiations did not tackle exclusively this issue. In the southern suburbs, many projects, whether carried out or not, were the subject of explicit political negotiations concerning the definition of their content or the details of their execution: for example, at the time of the planning of large infrastructure installations projects (carried out motorways of the airport and of Jnah, non-carried out motorway of Ouzai...) or of equipment projects (carried out governmental hospital), particularly to settle on the issue of the dismantling of accommodations under their political influence and the compensations to be paid (Deboulet and Fawaz 2006). In Elyssar, the negotiations led to the laying-out of a joint project and to the setting up of an institutional framework in order to carry it out, the public agency, bringing the different parties of the negotiation together. For its main part, the project has not been carried out. In Haret Hreik, the negotiations did not lead to a project bringing together the opposed parties, but came to an agreement about continuing the reconstruction through parallel actions: compensations given by the government, the rebuilding of housing units by the owners, the creation of the Waad construction project by Hezbollah, the rehabilitation of the infrastructure installations by the government. The project is being carried out.

In the political negotiation of these two projects, the main stake, the crux of the negotiations, has been this populating issue. The Shiite parties' leitmotiv was to obtain that all the population would remain and be re-housed on the spot, thus guaranteeing the continued influence and control of these parties on this space. On the contrary, the other actors are in favour of a population modification, which would reduce, even disrupt, the predominance, which they consider to be excessive, of an organised social group considered to have unbalanced the social space of Beirut. Thus, they prefer the solution of indemnification, which let the population free to choose if they want to rebuild their house here or elsewhere,

In this paper, I thus address the issue of this specific form of space negotiation that is the negotiation of urban projects. The point of this paper is to show the permanency of the themes and stakes around which the negotiation of the projects in the southern suburbs takes place, and in particular the re-housing on site. Regarding Elyssar, it highlights the weakness of the compromise about re-housing, which is the main reason why the core of the project of Elyssar has never been implemented. It however shows why, thanks to this compromise, the main expectations of the parties have been fulfilled. Finally, despite different projects and political contexts, some intersections between the two projects shed light on the current period. In analysing Elyssar, this paper suggests hypothesis about Waad and the reconstruction of the southern suburbs after July 2006.



## I- Elyssar, a politically negotiated project

The project of Elyssar<sup>1</sup> comes politically within a logic of reconciliation between the Lebanese people and of reunification of a city fragmented in numerous community districts by the civil war (1975-1990).

### *A reconstruction project*

This ambitious project seeks to open up and to reinstate the 560 hectares of the South-Western suburbs into the city. The complete restructuring of the two thirds of the project's area has to provide an answer to the fact that there are irregular settlements in the area, which have been built on the estates of others, and which contain 80 000 inhabitants, in a city of one and a half million.

In Lebanon, this kind of squatting is localized mainly in these South western suburbs of Beirut (see map). Very localized irregular settlements have developed especially during the war, sometimes from former cores, owing to massive displacements of population coming particularly from South Lebanon and the Eastern suburbs. The setting up of the inhabitants was organized by Shiite militias, either enlarging the Palestinian camps or on parcels subjected to land conflicts. These districts were a stronghold of the Shiite parties Amal and

<sup>1</sup> The analysis of Elyssar was carried out as part of a PhD research on the principles of action of town planning in Beirut (Clerc-Huybrechts 2002). A survey was carried out between 1998 and 2001 among about a hundred observers and actors of the project, members of all negotiating parties, including Prime Minister Rafic Hariri.

Hezbollah, as are older quarters that are next to them to the East, Bourj el-Brajneh, Ghobeiry and Haret Hreik, where the main destructions occurred during the war of 2006. Therefore, in a Lebanese political context largely based on denominational cleavage, any intervention of this space assumed a strong political dimension.

Encouraged as soon as the conflict was over by the then prime minister Rafic Hariri, the project was developed through political negotiations between the government, who wanted to regain foothold in those spaces, and the Shiite parties, who play a structuring part on those territories which they control, which they help to equip, and in which the population, composed in a vast majority of Shiite Muslims, compose the electorate.

### ***The project's content***



*The map of Elyssar*

The negotiations led to the decision to carry out a project of restructuration of the area, planning on creating or improving the infrastructure installations, and on developing real estates and tourist resorts along the largest beach of the city, thus offering a new global potential of 6.7 million square meters in the area. They also enabled an agreement of the Shiite groups on the setting up of the project itself, in exchange of the insurance that the population would remain on site.

They established the principle and the modes of the dismantling of the existing irregular settlements, of compensation for the inhabitants and building owners, and of relocation of the Lebanese inhabitants who want to in new units built within the project's area. To implement the project, they settled a Public Agency, the only one in Lebanon for a project of planning and development.

In a displayed logic of public interest and of renewing the social links, this project sought a compromise between an access to the southern suburbs for all the inhabitants of the city – asked for by a government concerned to rebuild a unified and practical city – and the protection of the identity of those districts, related only to part of the population of Beirut, that is the one who live there – defended by their representatives who wish to maintain their mono-confessional territorial anchorage.

### ***Elyssar negotiation***

Before the negotiations, between 1990 and 1992, the project was developed by Rafic Hariri, before he was Prime minister. He consulted many people and worked with consultants who undertook studies on his behalf. The southern suburbs were divided into three different projects: suburbs upgrading in the South East, urban project in the South West and special action concerning the demarcation line.

In 1992, a decision process started before consulting the Shiite parties, with approbation by the Council of Ministers of the idea of a private real estate company for rebuilding the South-western suburbs.

Between 1992 and 1995, three years of political negotiations took place between Rafic Hariri's team and the Shiite parties Amal and Hezbollah. These three years were divided in two parts.

- From 1992 to July 1993, the Shiite parties rejected the project unless it would allow the inhabitants to stay in the area and unless the project would be led by a public development authority instead of a real estate company. These two conditions were very tightly linked, for the real estate company was mainly criticized because it required the inhabitants to leave their homes. They obtained this in July 1993 and in return voted the law on suburbs upgrading for the eastern part of Dahiye.
- In 1993, there was a pause due to national and international situational reasons.
- In 1994-1995, with the agreement on the two principles of the relocation of the inhabitants on the spot and the public agency, negotiations took place on the modalities of the process and the control of the project (composition of the board, unanimous decision, preparation of a decree including a master plan and a text confirming that new units would be built before evictions took place, signature of all the parties on the decree...).

Some points have to be raised about the way in which the project has been negotiated:

- There was a limited understanding of who could be an interlocutor for the negotiation in the beginning: during the time immediately following the civil war, during which militias progressively became political parties, it took around one year for the government's team to identify with whom to negotiate.
- Negotiations were not only between the actors. In the beginning, they were between whole projects, which the actors accepted or rejected. In the beginning, the government's project was rejected, not because of its content, part of which the Shiite parties agreed on, but for the only reason that it was to be implemented through a private real estate company.
- Negotiation was dissociated from the process of studies. Some of the ideas developed during the studies were not mentioned during the negotiation.
- Every actor said that all the negotiations occurred between the Prime Minister and the chiefs of the parties. This has to be nuanced. During the first six months, between March and October 1992, the first meetings brought together only engineers from both parties.

### *A compromise ?*

When stakeholders are asked about the project, they present some choices as the result of a consensus (renovation or destruction of existing buildings, for example) and some choices as the result of a balance of power (notably the two principal points of the compromise: the agreement on the re-housing in situ and on the public agency in July 1993). In fact, even this has to be nuanced.

- The public agency was envisaged in the reports since the beginning of 1993 and some of the engineers of the Hariri team said they had never believed in this solution for it seemed impossible to think of attracting investors in an illegally occupied area.
- For the relocation on site, presented by the Shiite parties as a requirement to be complied with by the government, it seems, to a certain extent, to have been an evidence for Rafic Hariri's team during the conception and the negotiation of the project. In March 1993 (after the beginning of the negotiation, but before the compromise), the three option plans for the area (that were not presented during the

negotiation) all integrated the idea of relocating the inhabitants in the area and the place to relocate was considered as an important choice. Furthermore, for some members of the Hariri team, including the Prime minister himself, the option of compensating the population would have been made impossible by the fact that South Lebanon was at that time occupied by Israel. In this part of the suburb, illegal settlements are considered as being linked to the issue of the displaced people. In the mind of Hariri and his team, compensation was not only money to compensate for a house, but also a means of enabling the displaced population to return to their villages. However, at the time of the negotiation of the project, South Lebanon was still occupied by Israel, so a symbolic part of Dahiye's population could not go back to their villages. The presence in the area of displaced people from the South became an argument to justify re-housing on site.

## **II The contradiction between the justifications of re-housing on site, a deep-rooted reason for the non-implementation of Elyssar**

The negotiations of a project are neither a linear nor a clear process based on mono intentional strategies. Strategies and negotiations lay widely on perceptions. The choices of the project depended on the actors' representations.

### **1 Negotiations and decisions lay on perceptions**

All the interviewed actors gave a personal explanation of the project, justifying and/or criticizing its choices. Numerous ways of building up the issue of the spatial and social reconstruction were present simultaneously, and confronted each other, throughout its development. The described strategies varied greatly and there were several notions of the city.

Each actor had a personal interpretation of the situation and of the project. Each one built his own way of constructing the problem, drew up personal hierarchies, according to the situation, and these conditions defined his position towards the project. Personal positions were composed of 3 different ways of reasoning.

- Everyone in Lebanon is reasoning about space in a *strategic* way, imagining what can be gained or lost, and how. Some think of preserving or modifying collective organisation, others see above all the intentions as a desire for territorial conquest or defence, others measure political or economic stakes.
- Actors are also always reasoning on what should *ideally* be done, according to them (to modernize, enhance the living conditions, upgrade, put in order, promote citizenship, social rise...)
- Finally, they pronounce a *judgement*, either criticism or justification, through different value systems, two of which were really omnipresent in the actors' discourses: the functionalist values (where what is most important is efficiency and progress) and the civic values (where the pillars are general interest, solidarity and respect of the law).

Analysis of the Elyssar project shows that many ways of combining these ways of thinking are present and that actors build their own position regarding the project independently from their profession or confession.

Even when they are widely shared, the representations do not shape the project directly. In spite of sometimes evident influences, it is impossible to give credit for the authorship of a choice to one or more people. The decisions are the result of the interactions, within a strategic interdependency background. Within the framework of this power struggle, each person aims at an agreement corresponding to his own interests and representations. Some proposals are the place of a crystallization. Some ideas suit everybody. Therefore the choices of the project carry the sense given to them by the actors, but this sense is different to each person.

It is the case for the choice of relocating the population in the area.

### ***The strategic and ideal dimensions of populating***

Population and populating of this area mobilize many representations.

All the actors of Elyssar think that acting on space is, and can only be, political, and that everyone but him has strategic intentions regarding the space (the actors almost always express the assumed strategies of others, very seldom their own). Thus, the southern suburbs are considered by all of them as a territory, a space inhabited by a group, controlled by an authority, a place of power, a space that has to be defended or conquered, a marked space, collectively thought of, used and lived as specific, prone to multiple political and symbolical representations, the strength of which depends greatly on the suffering and passion which took place there and made it an emblematic place. The term “southern suburbs” or *dahiye* is never neutral in the mind of those who use it.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the civil war was still very present in everyone’s mind. The Shiites are accused of wanting to keep a conquered territory, while the government is accused of trying to take it away from them or to parcel it out through the town planning projects. The Shiites accuse the government of wanting to recover the coast line in order to benefit from increased land- and economic value of the coast line, but also to recover an access, a way out of the city towards the South. On the government’s side, fears are expressed, such as the shutting in of the road to the airport by Shiite areas, this road being the umbilical cord linking the capital city to the outside. Strategies appear, such as the substitution of informal quarters, the number of which is uncontrollable, by localizable and quantifiable housing units. On the other hand, through wanting to build these housing areas, the government is accused of wanting to enclose the Shiites in a ghetto. As for the Shiites, they are accused of using the public agency to establish their power and collect the State’s funding for the population of this area...

These populating strategies are often mingled with reflections regarding a space and social ideal to be reached. When the actors talk about breaking the misery belt surrounding the capital –the term is recurrent since the 1970s (Bourgey and Pharès 1973)—, they wish to eradicate poverty from the suburbs, but they also wish to get rid of the threat of seeing Beirut surrounded by politicized populations living outside the law. In addition, for historical reasons, rural populations, poor people and Shiites are often assimilated. Thus the rural exodus is often considered as being the cause of a confessional unbalance in the city of Beirut. Thus, when some people criticize the rural ways of life of the inhabitants of some areas in the southern suburbs, it is often understood as a way of denying the Shiites access to the city and as an expression of considering them as second class citizens, encouraging them to move back to the countryside. On the contrary, it is said that there is a real political desire on behalf of the Shiite parties to secure the presence of their co-religionists in Beirut,



politically, economically and socially, and the southern suburbs are the space of this aimed at urban anchorage. Finally, if an agreement was reached concerning the idea of improving the living conditions of the inhabitants, by giving them modern accommodation, which are seen as going along with upward mobility, the fact of meeting the inhabitants' expectations is also considered as a political competition aimed at getting the adhesion and the gratitude of the inhabitants and of securing their votes.

### ***Justifications used concerning populating***

It appears that the same values system is used to justify both relocation and compensation, both the fact of letting the inhabitants remain on site and of displacing them away from the southern suburbs.

Squatters are criticized in every system of values (thieves, illegal, unfair...). But, in each case, one can find one or several reasons to judge them positively and to justify them. The most significant oppositions arise concerning civic values, which stigmatize these quarters most violently, and provide the strongest arguments for the justification of the inhabitants and for an intervention in their favour (for they are displaced from the war, have a right to settle somewhere, suffer from a lack of housing, and had no choice but to have recourse to these processes set up by the militias of the community which received them). These justifications of the inhabitants are all based on the State's failure, but they vary according to the social group towards which it failed (poor people, inhabitant of the southern suburbs, war-displaced people, landless people).

## **2 To stay on the spot, a conflict on the common interest scale**

Paradoxically, the justification used by the actors — to re-house people in the area or compensation to let them choose to go elsewhere if they want to — is a result of the same reasoning, belonging to the civic system of values. But all the actors of Elyssar do not consider social unity according to the same scale. They all agree on the importance of unity and on the rejection of social division. Based on these principles, two confronting civic attitudes, taking into account the social groups at different scales, are at the heart of the negotiations.

- The actors reasoning at the country's level refuse the territorial division between the communities. If they accept the compensation principle as well as the re-housing one, it should not be done on the spot, since it would in fact ratify a situation of partition of the society in denominational groups.
- The actors reasoning at the southern Shiite suburbs' level, are opposed to the thinning down of the community into a series of individuals who would want to free themselves from party guidelines and act in their own interests. This civic vision, internal to the community, encourages union, collective action, adherence to a cause, and the defence of the group's interests. In this regard, it seeks to maintain an existing social fabric and to gain rights and advantages for the inhabitants of the area. This civic logic drastically confronts the previous one since it advocates the preservation of a homogenous population on the spot.

By taking into consideration elements of these two contrary attitudes, the solution retained for Elyssar – the proposal of re-housing on site *and* the possibility of choosing compensation – is a compromise which meets both demands but does not justify itself properly in either of them.

The difficulty, probably met by the negotiators, to gather in a sole project representations that are basically opposed, is expressed through an almost absence of official texts that would enable to formulate a synthesis. The texts are unclear enough so that each party can interpret and justify them in its own terms (for example the article 8 of the Elyssar decree). The details of the implementation of the re-housing have therefore never been precisely defined. For example, in the interviews, actors never agree on how many new units should be built or whether the inhabitants should support part of the cost of these units, depending on the interpretations of what would occur for re-housing people. According to the director of the public agency, the present housing unit would be compensated for taking into account its former value of old unit, and the new unit would be sold according to its value of new unit. Housing loans, funded by the Public Agency of Housing, would have enabled the subsidization of the difference. But the very vast majority of the inhabitants would not have had the means of remaining on site. For the members of the opposition in the board of Elyssar, a new housing should be exchanged against an old one, of the same size, and everyone could remain. For others, the choice was not yet made between renting and selling...

The retained compromise solution did not fully please either of the two parties, because it was hard to justify for both of them. Thus, it would not have enough been in the interest of either the two parties to mobilize to carry out the re-housing.

### **3 A compromise which is enough in itself and allows other realisations**

However, the agreement concerning the choices of the project seems at least as important as its content. Through the only fact that it exists, the project constitutes a ground of understanding which enables the proceeding of the relations. So that the agreement holds, the contradictions should not be made visible until they are solved.

The agreement about the controversial part of the project enabled to ease certain tensions, carry on with the relations and to reach, through a partial realization and dispensatory regarding the appointed rules, the main social goals of each party.

- On the one hand, the governmental party gained the possibility of modernizing and opening up the southern suburbs to the whole of the population, it was able to implement the building of motorways going across the area, and it obtained the cessation of the expansion of irregular settlements.
- On the other hand, the Shiite parties obtained for the population that they issue an official acknowledgement of the rights of the irregular inhabitants, and the suppression of the threat of being expelled without compensation.

The negotiation of space in the Elyssar project raised the question of staying or not in the area. The core of the project, which is the relocation of the population on the spot and the possibility of those who want it to leave with compensation, was not carried out, probably mostly because the solution didn't satisfy, or at least would have needed further negotiations to satisfy both parties. But this compromise gave rights to the population and allowed other projects? in the area.

## II The reconstruction of Haret Hreik: an implemented negotiation of space

The forms and practices of spatial negotiation identified in Elyssar shed light on the recent project of reconstruction of Haret Hreik after the war of July 2006.

The reconstruction of Haret Hreik cannot be reduced to the Waad project of reconstruction. This project is the most visible part of a process of reconstruction that also includes interventions from the government, notably some financial compensations and some reconstruction of infrastructures. These interventions are presented as parallel actions, not as a compromise.

### *The process of reconstruction of Haret Hreik*

First, since the beginning, each party started acting on their own, as if there was a competition between them. Hezbollah made the promise (*waad*) to rebuild *dahiye* and make it more beautiful than it was. It gave compensations (10 000\$ to 12 000\$ per apartment), independently from the government. For its part, the government immediately announced its intention to take charge (Fawaz 2007).

In the days following the war, grounds for cooperation and negotiation were set up. A public commission was established, including representatives from government public planning agencies and from opposition parties, notably CDR, DGU, the Order of engineers and architects, the Caisse and the ministry of displaced people, the ministry of finance, the 4 municipalities of Chiah, Ghobeiry, Bourj el Brajneh and Haret Hreik and the local political parties Amal and Hezbollah. These representatives of the Shiites parties and of the government started discussions in order to see if they could develop a reconstruction plan for the area together.



*An image of Waad reconstruction*

In November 2006, just a few months after having been established, the commission decided that the government would give financial compensations to those who had lost their apartments, that it would reconstruct the infrastructures and that the homeowners would rebuild their apartments on their own. Two alternatives inspired respectively from Solidere

and Elyssar were rejected. Six months later, in May 2007, Hezbollah on its own officially launched the Waad project. It started to rebuild around 196 buildings out of about 265 destroyed by the Israeli strikes on Haret Hreik. Their owners decided to commit their financial compensations to the project, while Waad in return carried out the whole reconstruction. The owners of the almost 68 other buildings decided to rebuild their buildings with their own contractors.

### *From negotiation to parallel actions*

A lot can be said about this project, on the fact that it intends to rebuild the neighbourhood exactly as it was, including the departure from the law of construction, or on the little information people had about their rights and the different possibilities they had to reconstruct

their building. Some reflections can be pointed out about negotiation of space. In this process, having both said immediately after the war that they wanted to take charge, governmental and Hezbollah stakeholders held meetings to see if they could set up an urban project together. A place of negotiation was organised. These negotiations led to a decision stating that no common project would be set up and that stakeholders would act side by side, by taking complementary parallel actions, but not together. The Waad project was not set up as a compromise project, but as a part of a larger reconstruction process. The result of the negotiation let a space for Waad to be set up, but no compromise appears in its contents. Thus, negotiation of space in this reconstruction project is analysed here not in the Waad project, but more largely, in the parallel actions of the actors, including Waad.

Despite different projects and political contexts, some intersections between Elyssar and Haret Hreik reconstruction projects shed light on the negotiation of the southern suburbs space in the current period.

### ***Permanence of the themes of negotiation***

The different approaches of these projects, and the fact that the first one never implemented the housing units while the second one is rapidly coming to the end of the reconstruction of the destroyed buildings, could be interpreted as a difference in the balance of power or as a difference in the financial context. Hezbollah didn't need to ask for a governmental or public project, because no real estate company was envisaged and threatened the population as was the case with Elyssar. For the financial part, most of the actors said that Elyssar's core, the construction of the housing units, couldn't be implemented because the project lacked money. It needed an advance of 600 million dollars. To avoid this, two tenders were launched to build the units in BOT (build operate transfer). The first one was unsuccessful. No action was taken concerning the second. It was said that it was because an Iranian group gave the cheapest offer. In that case, it would have shown that Hezbollah and his supporters were ready to invest large amounts of money to allow the population to stay in the area, especially if everybody could get an apartment, regardless of their income. We can compare this with the compensation Hezbollah gave immediately after the war and with the Waad announcement that Hezbollah would pay the difference in case the State's financial compensations were not sufficient to cover the costs of reconstruction of the units. Again, there is money, probably more than before with international donors, but it seems that moreover, Hezbollah does all it can in this new project to incite the re-housing of the population in the area.

Again, it seems that the core of the reconstruction revolves around the issue of the populating of the area. It appeared as the crux of the negotiation, as Mona Fawaz (2007) pointed out, writing that: "the central government retracted developing reconstruction plan when it became clear that Hezbollah would stand in the way of any redevelopment plan that could displace dwellers"

### ***Justification and implementation***

To use the analysis developed for Elyssar, in the Haret Hreik reconstruction project, all the actions undertaken in the Haret Hreik reconstruction can be totally justified. Everything appears as if both the Shiites and the government stakeholders learned from Elyssar the fact that nobody benefits from implementing a choice they can hardly justify. In the reconstruction of Haret Hreik, there is no decision that nobody was able to justify totally, as it was the case for the "re-housing or compensating" solution of Elyssar. The actions can always be totally

justified by those who are responsible for it. Despite a common interest of rebuilding Haret Hreik, which is rebuilding Beirut, each part acts within its proper logic. And, as in Elyssar, the central logics of the government and of Hezbollah are, again, respectively, compensating or re-housing in the area. By giving compensation without being involved in the Waad project, the government actors are totally consistent with their willingness to allow people to leave the southern suburbs if they want to. By setting up the Waad project and offering to pay the difference if the reconstruction of the unit for which it is in charge appears to cost more than expected and than the government gives, Hezbollah is totally consistent with its strong willingness to re-house all the population in the area. The lack of information provided to the population seems to go in the same direction.

Hezbollah got what it wanted, that is to say set up a reconstruction project in which the owners of the future units will be the present inhabitants. The agreement that was reached in order to build the same number of square meters enables this. The government probably would have wanted to take advantage of the destructions in order to rebuild a less compact area with a modified population. But it at least obtained a status quo regarding population, considering that some people do not want to settle back in the area and that at least 20% of the population choose not to be dependent on Hezbollah for the rebuilding.

### **Conclusion : a competing implementation**

Both the reconstruction projects of Haret Hreik and Elyssar are extremely different. And yet, in both cases, re-housing on site and compensation were of issue. Re-housing in order to keep the population on site was demanded by Hezbollah to keep control and an appropriation of a space, even keep a place in Beirut for the Shiite community. The only attribution of compensation enabled those who wanted to, to leave, and was to encourage a modification of the southern suburbs' population. In Elyssar, by agreeing on a decision that enabled both choices, the actors, in reality, were not satisfied with a solution and they therefore did not promote it, since it might have induced effects contrary to the ones they stood up for. The project had other consequences, but it was not implemented. The compromise can here be considered as an impeding element, since it was more than anything an outward compromise and that the bottom line contradictions had not been solved. In Haret Hreik, all parties made decisions going in the direction they wanted and that they could justify. Nobody knows if the inhabitants who received compensations and for whom Hezbollah rebuilt an apartment will in the end inhabit this apartment. They can either rent it, or sell it. Nobody knows if all those who didn't give their money to Waad will finally build their new apartment. But the reconstruction in process is consistent with the strategies and the justifications of the stakeholders. The actors were thus able to act without contradicting themselves. The project was implemented very rapidly considering the scope of the task at hand. The fact that the buildings had already been destroyed explains part of it. But the competition between the logics at work probably is a more relevant key to understanding.

Negotiation of the appropriation and control of space also often exists elsewhere. The democratic countries in which the stakes concerning this issue are so tense are rare. But the stake of political control through populating is not specific to Lebanon. Two examples, in two radically different countries: in France, the policy of creation of social housing by left wing municipalities where many already exist is largely continued in order to strengthen a working-class electorate which is tending to diminish. On the contrary, some wealthy districts are ready to pay very vast amounts of money in order not to create social housing and therefore not disrupt the local sociological balance. In Cambodia, the establishment of new districts

resulting from programs of relocation of the inhabitants of informal areas evicted by city planning projects confronts the local elected representatives of the districts they are displaced to with a problem; they thus see their electorate deeply disrupted by the arrival of a new population sometimes as numerous as the population of origin. It is nevertheless a fact that it tends to seem particularly exacerbated in a country where the denominational distribution is so predominant.

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