

## MOSTAR VERSUS BEIRUT POST CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION: ARGUMENTATIVE REVIEW

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### ABSTRACT

The difference in the political leanings, ethnic diversity or religious beliefs between the nations leads to armed conflicts. Cities become subject to total or partial destruction, physically, socially and economically. The number of displaced people witnessed a significant increase in the last few years, with several ongoing conflicts across the world, especially in the Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA) region. This research aims to find a way to develop the livability. This paper reviews the different methodologies applied in international case studies of the post-conflict reconstruction processes conducted by post-conflict cities from Europe and the MENA region to overcome and pass these conflicts. The research focuses on two case studies from Beirut, Lebanon; and Mostar, Bosnia, Herzegovina tackling their reconstruction experiences following the battles from 1975 till 1990 and 1992 till 1995, respectively. The findings highlight the main aspects of the reconstruction projects that can be used for post-conflict reconstruction in similar cases. The conclusions highlight that post-conflict cities would attempt to rebuild themselves to recover war-torn communities and help the return of the displaced citizens.

KEYWORDS: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Lebanon, Armed conflict, Urban Planning

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Over the years, most countries were exposed to armed conflicts that led to their partial or total destruction. By June 2019, over 70 million people worldwide were displaced as a result of conflicts, about 41 million internally displaced and almost 26 million were refugees [1]. The second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed long-term armed conflicts caused by religious or ethnic differences. Many of these conflicts were in the form of civil wars more than conventional wars between different nation-states. Conflicts number and magnitude worldwide have risen in the last three decades and continue to grow rapidly and impact the human wellbeing and economies [2]. War,

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violent conflict, ethnic violence, armed conflicts or civilian strife items, all have the same meaning where they all cause the collapse of the civil society at all levels; including social, economic, environmental, technological, and physical aspects [3]. Conflicts are contests between different people with different ideas, needs, goals, beliefs, and values [4]. Various research addressed several aspects related to the conflict types, causes, challenges, and the process of reconstruction [3, 5-8].

Armed conflict is a social phenomenon that had several causes and sources, accordingly there are no two conflicts alike. Conflicts could happen for a few reasons or for only one such as the poor economic conditions, ethnic diversity, human rights abuse, and political instability [9]. Each conflict differs in intensity and duration, which leads to destruction in terms of human, social, and economic aspects [10]. After any conflict, the institutions' collapse, human lives are lost and massive refugees are displaced, and internally displaced population are caused [3]. The destruction of the built environment and the city's cultural heritage, which are sometimes the targets of the enemy's attacks, would cause the greatest despair [11].

Reconstruction must be the initial phase in the recovery process after any disaster. The reconstruction process is the physical rebuilding of the destroyed settlements, which is an aspect of a broader process in dealing with war and its aftermath. This process is a full range of integrated activities, which includes the social, economic and psychological readjustments [12]. Furthermore, it aims for the consolidation of security and peace and the achievement of sustainable socioeconomic development in war-torn countries [8]. Reconciliation is necessary when any conflicts occur and the parties' relationship had been damaged, as it refers to the restoration of the relationships till trust and cooperation become possible again between parties [13].

## **2. POST CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION**

Post-conflict reconstruction of cities is defined as a generic term referring to the rebuilding of the community in the aftermath of conflict where physical infrastructure is rebuilt or repaired, the economy is restarted, governmental institutions are to be reformed, refugees should be repatriated, psychic traumas of the civilians and the

combatants have to be treated, reconciliation between the conflict parties has to be initiated, and justice has to be delivered [14]. This process has to support the affected communities, help them to regain control of their lives by improving the services and restore the necessities of life. It should guarantee the existence of a shared vision among the technical and administrative process as a response to the basic needs of the people and it must be shared among all the stakeholders. There should be a politicized dialogue to find sustainable post-war political systems for the development and finally, it should address the needs of the communities and the need to reinforce peace and the need to induce growth [15].

There are many actors involved in the reconstruction process either in developing the vision, goals and plan for the reconstruction or the funding assistance. The ability to reconcile the roles and objectives of the reconstruction participants with each other is considered to be the main factor for the success of the reconstruction plans, where conflicts of interests between these parties are on society. All groups in one hand and the difficulty of reconciling their differing goals is on the other hand. The main parties involved in reconstruction can be identified and summarized as follows [16-19]:

- **Local Community:** must have the essential responsibility and it should include all the groups in the society. All groups in the community must participate in decision making and in the reconstruction process implementation to strengthen the sense of the ownership.
- **The Government and Local Authorities:** the government responsibility is to develop policies and strategies for a long-term reconstruction plan, and to coordinate between all parties involved in the reconstruction process. The local authorities represent the districts governments and municipalities, which provide any data regarding the social housing, utilities, land ownership, population and any documents needed for the reconstruction process.
- **The Private Sector:** plays a very important role, especially in post-conflict reconstruction programs, this sector possesses the skills, abilities, labor and

resources, in addition to being flexible and adaptive with any circumstances. Its participation encourages the creation of a new market for the local economy.

- The International Community: can provide technical and/or financial assistance. It can also aid in peacebuilding, help in returning the refugees and displaced people, and provide healthcare programs in addition to other services.
- Local non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's): are one of the main pillars for achieving the reconstruction goals as they are aware of people's problems and society's needs as their response to these needs are faster than the government.

No common strategy exists that can help re-build post-conflict cities [20]. Scanning the cases in each city in the present study confirms this significant experience. Kassouha mentioned three strategies for the recovery of cities: 1) maintaining the same image of the city by re-building the city as it was before the war (Replication), 2) renovating the existing buildings of the city depending on what remained after the war, and 3) reconstructing new buildings to create a new image of the city [21]. The first strategy requires massive funding for post-war countries as the state faced an economic crisis due to the conflict. Therefore, the international community could help in funding the reconstruction projects. While the second strategy might be possible for the state by the help of the local community, finally for the last strategy, the city could be considered as an investment zone attracting the private sector [22]. The criteria to choose any of these strategies depend on the social and economic relations, financial abilities, the historical importance and the level of damages [21].

Generally speaking, various literature prove that most of the war-affected cities faced Urbicide. In 2017, Serag defined Urbicide as "the deliberated destruction of the main symbols and the important built environment of the warring cities which is another form of damaging and destroying of the city image" [22]. The image of the city is soaked in each citizen's meanings and memories in the warring cities as this integrated and vivid physical setting is important and affects the social life besides preserving the built environment of the pre-conflict society is a means of restoring the sense of identity and healing the injured population. The city image is a visual aspect

that includes all the features that represent the surroundings; buildings, local roads, open spaces, and urban spaces, therefore any severe changes in these features lead to changing the city image [23]. In post-conflict reconstruction of cities, there is always a dilemma whether to take the chance to clear the territory for development or to restore the pre-war built environment [24].

### 3. SELECTED INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

This paper focuses on non-international armed conflicts that are defined as an armed confrontation between the forces of one/more armed groups (civil/internal war) [7]. By using the theoretical approach, the present paper studies the strategies and methodologies that had been applied practically in the post-conflict reconstruction projects of cities. Beirut's and Mostar's reconstruction experiences were selected as the two cities were engaged in armed ethnic conflict between different religious sects. Moreover, each one followed a different strategy in the reconstruction process. Figures 1 and 2 show the two cities after reconstruction.



Fig. 1. Beirut city center after reconstruction [25].



Fig. 2. Mostar's old bridge after reconstruction [26].

#### 3.1 The Case of Mostar

Mostar is the capital of Herzegovina. It is located in a mountainous region along the Neretva River in the South of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Herzegovina-Neretva Canton [27] as shown in Fig. 3. Figure 4 shows old city of Mostar.



Fig. 3. Mostar location in Bosnia and Herzegovina [28].

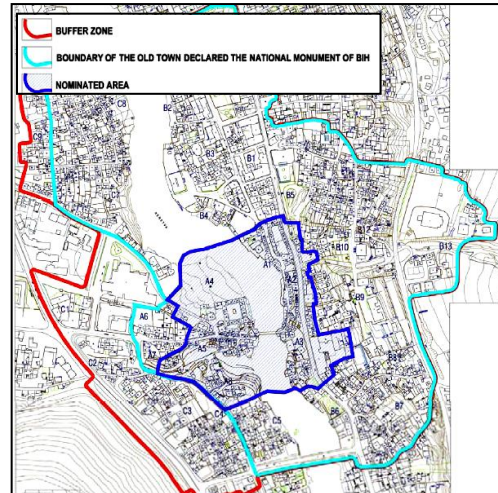


Fig. 4. The old city of Mostar [29].

The Ottoman period gave Mostar a special urban form and its most significant structure had always been the old bridge, which was built in 1566 by the Turks [27]. During World War II, Bosnia and Herzegovina came under the State of Croatia, which was then became the Federative Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia [30].

### 3.1.1 Mostar's conflict

In 1991, countries started to declare their independence gradually from the Republic of Yugoslavia. Serbia and Croatia wanted to divide Bosnia and Herzegovina [31].

For Mostar, it was ravaged by two wars, one from April until July 1992, when the Bosniaks and Croats fought together against the Serbs to defend Mostar. The other war was from May 1993 until February 1994 between the Bosniaks and the Croats [32]. Therefore, Mostar was the most destroyed city with 3,000 deaths, loss of 75% of the housing stock, 40 thousand refugees, and the economic activities were cut in half [20, 33]. Fig. 5 shows the destruction in the city. The borderline that was established by the Croatian forces divided the Bosnian-Croat and the Bosniak communities and the city was divided physically and functionally since 1993. As a result, the city remains were somewhat segregated along this line to date [34]. Figure 6 shows the borderline between the communities.



Fig. 5. Pictures of the destruction in Mostar after the conflict [32].

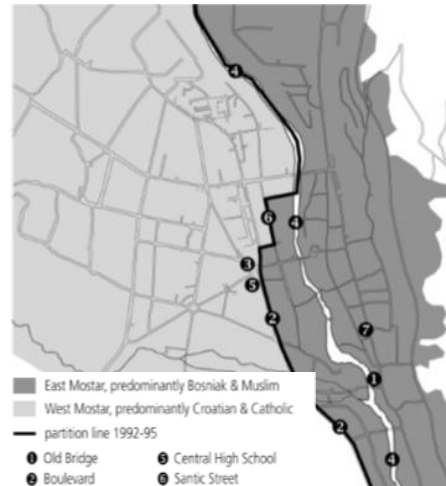


Fig. 6. Map of Mostar division after the conflict [34].

In 1995, Dayton Peace Accords was signed between the Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs, resulting in the division of the state into the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska [35, 36]. Reconciliation in Mostar was very important because Mostar did not become ethnically nationally homogenous after the conflict and the city was torn apart [37].

### 3.1.2 Mostar's reconstruction

Most of the heritage areas and buildings were affected especially Mostar old bridge which was a valuable icon for all Yugoslavs. The city government decided to use the reconstruction of the old city of Mostar as a symbol of the restoration of the different ethnic societies of Bosnia and Herzegovina and to heal the war-torn communities hoping that this would help in the reconciliation of the Bosniaks and Bosnian Croats [38]. The reconstruction process goals were [39]:

- Reconstruction and rehabilitation of the central core.
- Revitalization of the empty, underused, or ruined historic buildings.
- Revitalization and rehabilitation of the neighborhoods and improvement of the community identity.
- Improvement of the circulation in the historic core by establishing a pedestrian network and traffic roads.



The reconstruction project in Mostar started by gathering and managing some data such as what was damaged, population characteristics, displaced people and infrastructure systems, that were needed to know how and where to direct the investments [32]. The reconstruction process was divided into two main projects the rehabilitation of the old city and the rebuilding of the Old Bridge complex as these two projects started in parallel in 1998. The rubble of the destructed buildings was collected to be used in the reconstruction [31]. The new master plan was based on the complementary between the historic neighborhood and the Old Bridge to be a single system, which respected and preserved the city's natural landscape and protect the identity and the image of the city [39]. The reconstruction project was managed and funded by different international organizations such as UNESCO, The European Union, the Agha Khan Trust and the World Bank [40]. Figure 7 shows Mostar before and after the reconstruction.

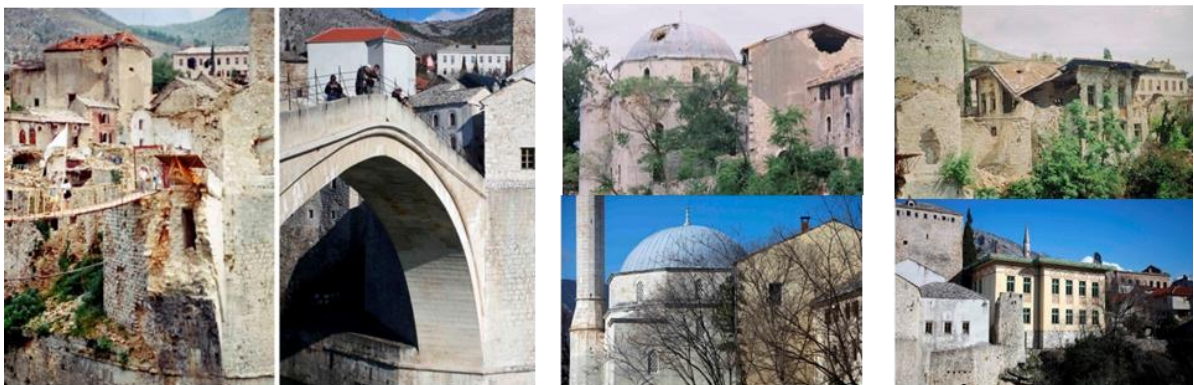


Fig. 7. Pictures showing the Old Bridge and the historic buildings in the Old City of Mostar after the destruction in 1993 and after the reconstruction projects [41].

Mostar reconstruction process succeeded to reconstruct the city's Old Bridge. Through the reconstruction project, the strategy was chosen to replicate the old bridge and maintain the image of the city and to reconnect the West Mostar (Croats) and East Mostar (Muslims). However, it did not bring back Mostar as it was. The old city of Mostar was included in the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2005 after the reconstruction. Although Mostar historical core was a magnet and attraction for tourists, part of the city looks like a ghost town; derelict buildings, garbage



everywhere, potholes in the roads [42] and few parks in Mostar became cemeteries after the war [43].

Although the conflict ended, the politics are still as divisive as ever, Mostar was the only municipality that did not participate in the local elections for more than a decade. Citizens had been virtually ignored by the government for the past years, there is no city council, and as a result there is no investment or public reconstruction works [42]. The reconciliation of the divided city was fragile as the difference between the Muslims and Croats is very clear in the education systems. Most of the young Croat had never been to the Eastern Muslim part of Mostar and the majority of the young Muslims do not know the Croatian part of the city [41, 43].

### 3.2 The Case of Beirut

Beirut is the capital city of Lebanon with the largest population in the country, which is located on the Eastern coast of the Mediterranean. Figures 8 and 9 show that Beirut city centre enjoys a special location at the heart of the capital and at the waterfront [45]. Although there were 18 different religions within the area including 12 Christian sects, 4 Muslim sects, and Jewish, the city was well blended until the civil war. The city was then segregated as the majority of the Western side of the city is Sunni Muslims while the Eastern side is mainly Christians [46].



Fig. 8. Beirut location in Lebanon [47].

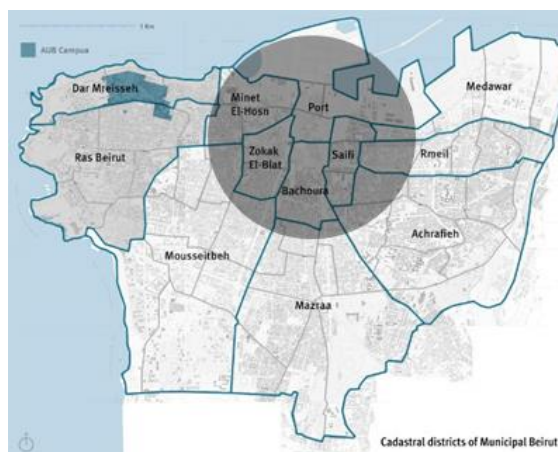


Fig. 9. The highlight spot is Beirut city center [48].

Until the mid of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Beirut was a small village under the Ottoman Rule, which was the major port and a hub for commercial activity. Beirut became the destination for tourists and financial activities as its harbor was the main one along the Mediterranean coast until the Lebanese civil war in the 1970s [46, 49].

### 3.2.1 Beirut's conflict

The civil war in Beirut started in 1975 between the Muslim-Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) alliance and the Christians [50]. It lasted for 15 years, and resulted in 17 thousand disappearances, 184 thousand wounded, and 144 thousand emigrated; as well as the destruction in the built-up environment, infrastructure [51,52], and weakness of the state in all levels [49] as shown in Fig. 10. During the war, an imaginary line known as the “Greenline” divided the city and passed through the heart of Beirut to separate Muslim West Beirut from Christian East Beirut and cut the historic city center [53, 54] as shown in Fig. 11. In 1989, there was an agreement known as the “Taif Agreement” which focused on ending the Lebanese crisis in the political, religious and social levels through changing the political system [49].



Fig. 10. Beirut destruction [55]



Fig. 11. Beirut imaginary Greenline [56].

### 3.2.2 Beirut's reconstruction

Solidere, a private company, was created to be responsible for the reconstruction of Beirut [21]. Solidere decided to reconstruct the city giving it a new image to compete with the Gulf cities and to be a financial and tourist hub [51]. The main goal was to repair the built environment, which included residential and

commercial buildings then to provide the different services and create religious harmony [52]. Solidere reconstruction project objectives [57] were:

- Install a complete infrastructure.
- Restore historical buildings.
- Reconstitute the public domain and create new public spaces
- Establish the urban fabric and accommodate mixed uses.
- Create points of attraction for the City Centre and make it active.

The reconstruction project started with damage surveys to classify the buildings depending on their historical and cultural importance to determine the ones that can be preserved [51]. Solidere dumped rubble from the demolished war damaged buildings and placed them at the edge of the sea and greened them [16]. Almost 300 buildings were selected to be kept as a part of the conservation area [56]. The private sector financed most of the reconstruction projects and then it succeeded to attract funding from the international community [52]. Solidere destroyed more buildings than what was destroyed during the civil war [58] as shown in Fig. 12.



Fig. 12. (Left) satellite image shows the destruction in 1986, (Right) satellite image shows the destruction in 1995 by Solidere [56].

The master plan depended on the block-wide buildings that do not articulate with the function or the identity of the place that changed the urban fabric of the city center. It enriched some squares with mixed uses from concert halls, museums, and public libraries to shopping areas [59] as shown in Fig. 13.



Fig. 13. (Left) the destruction after the conflict, (Right) the city center reconstruction [60].

The reconstruction of Beirut's city center, succeeded to achieve all the reconstruction objectives, but unfortunately the social and economic aspects of the city community were neglected. Most of the indigenous population could not return back to their homes because of the new rules and conditions for the reconstruction of their homes that might cost them much more money. Also, the new residential properties were very expensive, there were no suitable jobs to afford the high cost of living in the new City Centre that was isolated from the other districts, and there was no transportation.

The development plans changed the urban fabric of the City Centre and changed the image of the city due to the demolishing of the traditional City Centre. Readjusting the urban fabric should be a response to social changes and needs, which is difficult unless there is participation from the local community to point these needs and changes [61]. Solidere renewed the entire infrastructure in the city center and expanded the street network grid to accommodate and facilitate the land parceling for real estate development. The water supply networks, public lighting, TV, telephones, telecommunication networks, sidewalks, and green public spaces were installed [57]. The planner succeeded to make Beirut's city center a good touristic and commercial

place but only for rich people from Lebanon or from other countries and not a place for the city's community as it does not provide any job opportunities [62].

#### 4. DISCUSSION

From the review above, key findings emerge in studying the two case studies for the civil conflicts in Lebanon and Bosnia and Herzegovina. These two experiences may seem to be alike but each one had a different reason for starting the conflict. For Lebanon the conflict issue was for political reform in the country where the main demand was abolishing the political sectaries and equally distributing the parliament's seats between the community sects. Conversely, for Bosnia and Herzegovina, the conflict was an ethnic cleansing war of Bosnian Muslims. Beirut city center and Mostar's old city were both the war confrontation line.

Beirut's strategy was to build new buildings to create a new image of the city and attract new investment. This was achieved by developing a new master plan with wider blocks that changed the urban spaces of the city center and demolished more buildings. The private sector was responsible for reconstruction projects as it was the stakeholder that could enrich the reconstruction and is capable of achieving the reconstruction objectives. Ignoring the local community participation led to a loss of ownership and belonging. The disassembled local government could not participate. Contrary to what happened in Mostar, Mostar's strategy was to maintain the image of the city and build the historical core as it was (replication). Consequently, the international community was responsible for managing and funding reconstruction projects with the participation of the local community. For the local authorities, they were still divisive as ever, which prevented their participation in the reconstruction. Table 1 summarizes the different participants in the reconstruction process.

Table 1. Stakeholder participation in the two case studies.

Stakeholders	Mostar	Beirut
Local Community	√	-
Government and local authorities	-	-
Private sector	-	√
International community	√	√
NGO's	-	-



For the physical reconstruction, in Beirut, some buildings were restored and some new ones were built for mixed-use buildings, but to achieving Solidere's vision, a lot of buildings were destroyed, hence, changing the city center's urban fabric and the city image. For Mostar, the old city area was restored as it was preserving the city image. Therefore, the city was listed in the UNESCO heritage list. Consequently, the two case studies succeeded to fulfill all the physical reconstruction process goals and to recover from the war damages.

As for the social reconciliation, although Mostar rebuilt the old bridge and reconnected the two banks of the old city, it failed to heal the war-torn communities and citizens' divisions are still there. The separation of the two banks of the city is clear in the separation between the Muslims and Croats. While in Beirut, there is no obvious separation between the citizens and the reconciliation succeeded when the government made changes in the political system. However, this argument is disputed as some argue that although there is no physical separation, there are still some hidden psychological barriers between the different groups.

For the internally displaced people (IDPs), in Mostar, they returned back to the city to their homes or bought new ones in the sector they belong to but they had been virtually ignored by the government for years. The citizens were responsible to restore their own properties. However, in Beirut, not all the citizens could return back to their homes in the city centre as they could not afford the living expense and Beirut's city centre became deserted.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

This paper highlights the main aspects of the reconstruction projects of two case studies. Understanding the causes of any conflict can help in the consolidation of security and peace.

The importance of the physical damage surveying to record the level of damage in the city, which is key for choosing the suitable strategy to be applied in the reconstruction project and to determine the reconstruction goals. The urban planner and designer can take part as the new master plan for post-conflict cities should



preserve the traditional image of the city not to change it as preserving the built environment restores the sense of identity and belonging and heals the war-torn communities.

This paper also highlighted the role of the different stakeholder in the reconstruction projects. The local community participation in any decision taken in the reconstruction process is essential to determine the needs, problems, alternatives and solutions, and strengthen the sense of the ownership. Coordination and multi-layered approach as the government institutions should participate in this process and at the same time, the private sector and the non-profit organizations should be an essential factor in funding the post-conflict reconstruction process.

The importance of present work is in figuring out the social movement and reconciliation after civil wars. The added value is in the reconstruction process that should be a comprehensive process to guarantee the return of the displaced people and help them to overcome the pre-conflict trauma.

By scanning the reconstruction process in the two case studies, this study shows the procedure that each experience followed to achieve the reconstruction objectives. As such, this procedure is intended to go through a few steps that could be implemented in several consecutive stages or parallel stages. The physical damage assessment to decide on the level of intervention and how and where to direct the investment. The selection of a suitable strategy to be applied in the reconstruction project is essential.

The recommendation provides lines to determine the project objectives and establish the new master plan and on the other hand, plan a deal to clear or reuse the rubble. The main challenge in the reconstruction projects is to set a financing and funding plan and how to get the funding. In conclusion, this paper showed the essential need for drawing a comprehensive plan for social reconciliation.

## **DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTERESTS**

The authors have declared no conflict of interests.

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### مراجعة جدلية لإعادة الإعمار فيما بعد النزاعات لمدينة بيروت مقابل مدينة موستار

يؤدي الاختلاف في الميول السياسية أو الاختلاف العرقي أو المعتقدات الدينية إلى نزاعات مسلحة. ونتيجة تلك النزاعات، تصبح المدن عرضة للتدمير الكلي أو الجزئي سواء عمرانياً أو اجتماعياً أو اقتصادياً. تستعرض هذه الورقة البحثية المنهجيات المختلفة المطبقة في عمليات إعادة الإعمار فيما بعد النزاعات التي أجرتها بعض المدن في أوروبا والشرق الأوسط للتغلب على تلك النزاعات وإعادة الإعمار. ويركز البحث على دراسة حالتين لإعادة الإعمار فيما بعد النزاعات، بيروت - لبنان (١٩٧٥-١٩٩٠) وموستار - البوسنة والهرسك (١٩٩٢-١٩٩٥). وتسلط النتائج الضوء على الجوانب الرئيسية لمشاريع إعادة الإعمار التي يمكن استخدامها لإعادة الإعمار فيما بعد النزاعات في حالات مماثلة. وخلصت النتائج الي ضرورة محاولة مدن ما بعد النزاع أن تعيد بناء نفسها واستعادة المجتمعات المتضررة ومساعدة المواطنين النازحين للرجوع مرة أخرى.