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ROLE OF PUBLIC SPACES IN RE-ACTIVATING THE CULTURAL IDENTITY

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Abstract
Culture plays an important role in defining a society's values and identity. Craftsmanship has remained an important aspect of Lebanese cultural identity and history, contributing to the shaping of many public and private spaces as well as supporting families and people's livelihoods. Unfortunately, considering the significance of craftsmen cultural production in the country's social and economic development, it is still a lost field nowadays. Therefore, as result, this tradition is diminishing, threatening Lebanon's intangible cultural heritage. Therefore, this paper aims to develop convenient solutions to regenerate and to preserve the city's social, historical, and cultural image and identity through creating public spaces and places that will improve the cultural resilience, production, and liveability of a neighbourhood. To achieve the main aim, the research study will begin with a literature review based on previous readings, book analysis and desk research, about the relation of the cultural identity with architecture. Through the analysis, the research will highlight through a case study the role architectural public spaces in recovering the cultural image and activities in Beirut city.

Keywords
Public Space, Culture, Cultural Identity, Cultural Production, Craftsmanship

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1. INTRODUCTION:

From the viewpoint of communities and architectural theories, the identity term of a city involves a huge definition that incorporates physical, geographical, and cultural product and services, as well as people's social values. Over time in urban fabric, quite disparate elements can combine to generate cultural area, architectural identity, and city images about them. Culture has a significant impact on a society's values and identity. (Yaldiz, 2013)

In recent years, people have frequently encountered the challenge of communities entering a new architectural and urban generation process in which the unique identities are being lost. Cities that are continually changing and growing lose their readabilities, and its residents suffer from vision and memory issues. Thoughts of not belonging to or owning that city grow in certain communities. Therefore, preserving the historical and cultural identity, regional originalities, and urban cultures and image in that city gets increasingly challenging.

The transmitted cultural heritage that represents the cultural identity of a city includes social practices, knowledge, and skills to produce specific traditional crafts. The value of cultural heritage is not in the cultural representation itself, but in the presence of knowledge and skills transmitted down through generations. Conversing the cultural heritage is a major element in preserving cultural diversity in the face of globalization. As shown in fig.1.

Unfortunately, considering the significance of craftsmen cultural production in the country's social and economic development, it is still a lost field nowadays. Therefore, as result, this tradition is diminishing, threatening Lebanon's intangible cultural heritage.

Craftsmanship has remained a significant part of Lebanese cultural identity and history, helping to shape numerous public and private settings while also caring for people's livelihoods. The Ministry of Culture does not have recent database and any statistics concerning the practice of craftsmanship in Lebanon. In 2014, the UNIDO Creative Cultural Industries Cluster Project, conducted a survey to evaluate different levels of handicraft production systems across Lebanese's regions. (Makki, 2019) as shown in fig.2.
This research aims to investigate effective approaches to regenerate and to re-activate the cultural identity of a neighbourhood by creating public spaces and places that will improve the cultural resilience, production, and livability of the neighborhood.

To reach this aim, the research seeks to accomplish the following objectives: To understand how cultural identity is influenced by architecture. To study the relation between cultural identity, craftsmen, cultural production and architecture. To highlight on the Importance of public spaces in the regeneration of cultural activities. To investigate different solutions related to cultural activities and cultural production to restore the cultural lost image and to improve the economic and social growth of the neighbourhood through these cultural activities.

The main hypothesis of this research is the existence of cultural public spaces will improve the social, cultural, and economic growth and the livability of the city.

To achieve this aim, the paper will rely on the qualitative analysis, based on literature reviews about the cultural identity, highlighting on the relation of the cultural identity of cities and architectural public spaces. Through these studies, the paper will conclude with some recommendations and suggestions to regenerate some brownfields and its impact on the economy.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Based on a reviewing the literature, a theoretical base was detected to relate cultural identity and architecture, specifically public spaces as collaborative research. It covers cultural activities and architecture among each other. In order to comprehend this relation, the research begins with highlighting specific definitions, types, and similar examples of cultural public spaces, and at the end a set of parameters are conducted in a form of table.

2.1 Definition Cultural Identity:

The term culture comes from the latin word "colere," which means "to dwell, cultivate, or respect." It describes the human activities as well as the metaphorical frameworks that provide the work value. The architecture of cultural conversation is considered social, and cultural space refers to where a group of people that belongs into that pattern. The expression "cultural space" refers to both individuals and their surroundings as they relate to a variety of
environmental and cultural identity. The term "cultural space" refers mostly to a unique type of place in which cultural activities are carried out, as well as to the design of space, cultural variables, and, most importantly, the people who live in it. (Ferdus, Nilouhar, 2018)

Culture refers to people lifestyle and the identity of city or a population, while cultural space refers to the physical framework of urban environments. Public cultural spaces doesn’t represent only the belonging to our physical environment and culture, they occupy a unique place in our built environment and they also have the power to transform our perspectives of history, culture, and societies. (Ferdus, Nilouhar, 2018)

Public cultural spaces have long been a combination of art forms, even though they are currently focal points for the cities’ cultural and historic heritage. Public spaces have evolved in shape and function in adapting with the changes in public and social needs of the city, resulting in the metamorphosis of park area characteristics. Public spaces have evolved into social and cultural remembrance spaces. They represent important historical fragments that reflect the metaphorical language of prior encounters. Public spaces and parks, whose form blended in with the environment to identify cultural activities in space, became special operations and architectural dominants of urban compositions. (Dimković, D, 2016)

2.2 Historical Background

"Cultural identity is the process by which social actors build their own meaning according to cultural attributes." (Castells, 2004.)

Buildings and architectural clusters that have experienced the city's history are positioned in a special position as part of city life. As a result, buildings and architecture complexes that contribute to the city's unique identity and preserve architectural features from its built time play a vital role in maintaining the city's cultural connectivity, defining its identity, and passing it down to future generations.

The start of the 21st century is characterised by growing globalization and the declaration of a distinctive identity which is in constant conflict with traditional local identities. This issue started with the expansion of the international style in the second half of the last century and has already accelerated since its end, when globalization became the dominant viewpoint. (Yaldiz, 2013)

Cultural buildings symbolize the channels and communication systems, as well as the transmitters of shared activities. The public space is progressively encountering and trusting in the capacity of designers and art directors to create a meaningful illustration of the culture, driven by architecture and design facilities that would reveal and provide knowledge about the frightening part of the history, as well as assume for a knowledgeable and more careful humanity in the long term. (Yaldiz, 2013)

2.3 Public Cultural Spaces:

There are types of public spaces in architecture and to understand and offer a basic overview of the phenomena of cultural identity, as well as to suggest different way of reflecting cultures in a built environment. The concept of reflecting regional identity and culture in design has emerged in various regions of the world as a response to this spreading approach.

2.3.1 Public spaces as cultural expression:

Culture imposes a royalty on those who take root to build an identity, and architectural design is a process that is expressed by culture putting a royalty on those of the magnificent civilizations. At the beginning of any conceptual design, culture plays an important part. Every monument's very character is imagined and taken from the individual's cultural identity and heritage. It shapes and frames the design concept and supports in the remembering of past memories and cultural values of the city. Culture and civilization, in relation to a location's social, ethical, and economic conditions, facilitate the transfer of that place's advancement. The acquisition of knowledge and art is at the core of a country's culture. (IA Team, 2020)
People built different cognitive processes based on respective lifestyles. Architecture never deviates significantly from culture; instead, it adjusts to it and integrates with the various layers of ideology and conceptualization. Cities and countries all over the world have already been shaped by a variety of cultural aspects. (IA Team, 2020)

Although cultural public spaces and parks are a result of cultural traditions, their forms are often interchangeable. Sensation, which is based on innate knowledge or understanding, is timeless, as proven by shapes that are still filled with associations when put out of context in simple, modern design parts. (Kempt, O. 2016)

2.3.2 Urban spaces as cultural spaces:

Cultural space can be formed of the interactions between people and cultural activities in specific areas, which might occasionally operate as an expansion of public facilities, though in the street. As a result, social activities are dependent on the existence of culture in public spaces.

a. Social space: Both social and cultural dimensions in physical environment are included in the idea of social space. Social clusters use social space to represent their habits and behaviours and perceptions. Cultural space, like social space, combines the perceptual and interactional dimensions between people and cultural activities in public spaces. (Nilufar, F. 2008)

b. Neighbourhood space: A neighbourhood is a gathering of individuals who live in communities’ quarters. Neighbourhood is largely a social concept that arises from physical living. As a result, neighbourhood space is both an expansion of social space and a repository of culturally significant elements. Because cultural space is much more than a social phenomenon like neighbourhood space, it is influenced by both social and cultural variables. (Nilufar, F. 2008)

c. Human space: The term 'human space' refers to a specific physical environment inside the huge areal expanse of a neighbourhood that is delimited by a perception limit but has little social connections. It has been discovered that several 'neighbourhoods' in cities are mentally fragmented into smaller groups by their people based on either central position or visible differences. Cultural space similarly includes an inhabitant's perceptive border, and it interacts with a great social dimension with the major amount of social contact. (Nilufar, F. 2008)

d. Community space: In neighbourhood level, community space is much concerned with a specific class of people, though in cultural space, based on common interests, cultures, and nationalities interact in urban fabric. Throughout this approach, community space on a higher level would be far more strongly linked to the essential role of cultural space. (Nilufar, F. 2008)

2.4 Reflection Of Cultural Identity In Architecture:

There might be an issue with ineffective proper regulation of public space preservation in urban, leaving them vulnerable. The preservation of traditional urban culture while still creating a "quality" urban environment is a pressing challenge for modern architecture, city design, and construction and interpretation and concept.

The city is now seen as a life form with a reasoning of creation, well-established patterns of spaces, the importance of its components, the overlaying of cultures, and countless institutional and policy recommendations in the field of urban planning practice. As a unique type of urban public space, cultural spaces are an important aspect of the city's architecture and cultural history and identity. (Karnabed.M. 2014)

Public cultural spaces and parks plays an important role in creating the city's image and identity, and sustaining its character. Designers investigate a complex of open and closed places as humans move through the city, combining with a series of different works that match
the citywide system of perspectives. There's always the natural environment, which needs to be protected, within the space harmony with the cultural context. (Karnabed A. 1995)

The term "cultural space" defined as a human sense of space instead of a physical location. Though this properties among all communities, such as buildings, streets, public gatherings, religious buildings, gardens, are the same, it has already been stated that social cultural differentiates from area to another. In addition, the internal value of environments, specifically urban areas, differs from culture and also from city to another. (Ferdus, Nilouhar, 2018)

2.5 Analysing Similar Examples

For the literature review, the study first focuses on chosen references that use a qualitative approach and are related to cultural public spaces with an emphasis on the recommendations for improving cultural identity in architectural built environment.

2.5.1 The green wings cultural hub, Turkey:

The cultural hub, designed by Turkish architecture firm ONZ Architects, converted the 1950s Antakya Atatürk Stadium into a new public cultural park. By presenting an unending green area above the rooftop, three huge green wings welcome guests inside immediately to allow people experience a unique public park and cultural hub in Hatay, Turkey.

"In line with the development of the city over the years, it is aimed to transform the old stadium as a city park due to the intense construction around it." (ONZ architects, 2019)

For such special and unique area, which has historical and cultural significance for the city, the design aspires to maintain cultural history and reveal the city's cultural identity. The design aims to improve the city's cultural identity through revitalizing its cultural activities while also strengthening the city's relationship with its citizens. This building serves as more than simply a stadium for local citizens; it also serves as a repository for the remnants of historical cultural activities that are important for cultures' collective memories and identities.

![Fig.3: Perspective shows the green wings cultural hub](Source: (worldarchitecture.org))

To satisfy the city's needs, the architects designed a fluid and dynamic cultural centre to reflect the increasing desire for an iconic public cultural space that will improve the cultural resilience and existence of cultural activities in this multicultural neighbourhood. The new cultural hub, named Green Wings, would have a cultural centre, gallery & art centre, bookstore, cafés, cafeterias, an outdoor plaza for outdoor recreation spaces, and an underground parking. As shown in the figure 3, sub urban spaces are developed at the project's three corners, that are placed at the meeting of the city's circulatory axes and are linked with pedestrians and cycling pathways. (WA, 2019)
2.5.2 Gallery of Adisaptagram Workshop, India:
In 2020, Abin design studio construct its adisaptagram workshop in West Bengal, India. The project serves as a workspace, and its implementation gives opportunities for residents and financial security.

The designed workplace expansion is developed to give craftsmen and consumers to experience and cooperate on prefabrication relevant to woodwork, metallurgy, construction details, and materials in a single space, as well as exhibition spaces and workspaces.

Using architecture to generates a significant tectonic connection with the environment, the project defies the typology of a factory facility and creates a provision that allows the participation of all stakeholders into the craftsmen's workspace.

The project intends to establish a workshop and a materiality research unit that might act as a framework for exploratory and production activities. It's a mutually beneficial structure to provide both support and innovation for the craft practice, as well as stable work for craftsmen to improve and to innovate their skills and work experiences.

As shown is the fig.9, the building's entrance is on the southeast side, leading to an open floor plan with double-height workshop areas created to enable for flexibility and connectivity throughout the area of the building. The first floor, serves as a visual spine, directing people to the primary exhibition halls and gathering spaces on the southwest side of the block. It also has a introverted green court.

2.6 Parameters of Analysis
Revitalizing cultural practices in the community has the potential to bring pleasure and opportunity to integrate the local inhabitants with the neglected cultural skills. Through a variety of functions as a workspace and social interventions, providing opportunities for locals, financial stability in the area, raising livability, and innovation of these practices.

The public cultural spaces become a new living room for the city recommended by residents, leading to the innovation and modernization of the cultural identity of the city from its very formation, with its attractive icon, accessible and welcoming outlook, entrepreneurial approach, and environmentally principle.

Cultural spaces enhance the interaction between people and cultural activities in the specific area. The integration of public spaces for cultural purposes that highlight on the importance of cultural practices through architecture. The improvement of cultural skills through educational facilities that improve the cultural experiences. In addition to the reflection of cultural experience in neighborhoods in street designs on the ground level where people are in visual contact with the cultural production process, and the location of the public cultural park that is related to a cultural context within the city.
The preceding research, the study deduces a group of parameters to be in the analysis of similar examples, which are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural identity</th>
<th>architecture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of cultural practices</td>
<td>Public cultural spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional crafts</td>
<td>Education facilities and workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural experience</td>
<td>Street as space of cultural production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural context</td>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These parameters must be referred to when investigating memorial architecture and especially memorial parks in post-traumatic cities. The following case study justifies them.

3. METHODOLOGY:

The paper investigated a case study to derive principles for enhancing the regeneration and re-activation of the cultural identity of Bourj Hammoud neighborhood in Lebanon. The research is following one methodology it is inductive method, which gathers information regarding a particular location, and it is based on the fieldwork survey and interviews with inhabitants to find about their opinions on the present problems. In order to receive measurable results, the author prepared a questionnaire form and distributed it over to a random group of people. Lastly, as a last phase of the process, the research comes to the conclusion a set of criteria to serve as a guide for enhancing the activation of cultural activities through public spaces using the deductive technique.

3.1 Introducing The Case Study Of Bourj Hammoud Cultural Identity:

Craftsmanship is an important element of Lebanese traditions and culture, having shaped distinct private and public settings and supported the lives of people and families throughout time. Although its essential role inside this country’s economic growth and development, it represents a field lost in the process, caught between both the indifference of public entities and the lack of a regulatory regime to encourage its growth.

With forced migration and rapid urbanisation density, city characteristics modified. The number of hidden workshops in neighbourhoods grew, providing an environment appropriate to creative labour in response to increased demand from European and Arabic markets. As shown in fig.5, craftsmen worked away from public scrutiny, creating their own distinctive brand, developing essential business connections on both a regional and international level, and facilitating collaboration between Armenians and their peoples from France to Los Angeles.
The lack of awareness and public knowledge, while advocating for major involvement in local political culture, improving Bourj Hammoud’s value as a multicultural Lebanese context deserving maintenance, and therefore conservation. As a result, this activity is decreasing, putting Lebanon's priceless intangible cultural legacy in threat.

3.2 Historical background of Bourj Hammoud:

Bourj Hammoud was mainly an agricultural area with a huge green terrain as well as a few isolated small buildings when the first group of Armenian immigrants settled in Beirut in the 1920s. As shown in fig.6, since leaving the Turkish murder, Armenians in Lebanon are therefore given the chance to establish a new habitat in a quickly changing environment. The agricultural field and Hammoud Arslan's independent two-story building began to change into a residential neighbourhood developed according to French urban development in the 1930s. The urbanised design expressed new Armenia's vision. To resemble Adana, Marash, Gulabachène, Sandjak, or Sis, areas were developed and titled just after homeland.

Buildings integrated the residence and the workplace, and streets were filled with design ornamentation remembering a departed homeland. Despite the grave threat, schools and churches collaborated to protect their native language. While domestic workshops continued to manufacture and tanning leather items, gold smithing, and sewing. People supported themselves by working as tinsmiths, crafters, cooks, or metal craftsmen. Children who received information and resources through intergenerational transfer or institutional education.

Therefore, the "culture of origin" in Armenian urban and rural areas was retained, growing connected with handicraft over time and assisting refugees in forming a new identity inside the foreign company. Even during the most difficult phase of the Civil War, Lebanese Armenians earned a reputation as dependable artisans.

![Fig.6: Maps showing the urban development of Bourj Hammoud](Source: Craftsmanship in Bourj Hammoud- Nahnoo. Org)

3.3 Urban Analysis of Bourj Hammoud:

The Bourj-Hammoud district is Beirut City's geographical expansion along the Mediterranean coastline of Beirut. It encompasses the capital's direct eastern suburbs, which are separated by the Beirut River, as well as the northern extend of the popular urbanized zone that surrounds the capital. It is a compact neighbourhood, spreading almost an area of 2.4 km\(^2\), within the Greater Beirut sprawling city, with specific attributes related both to its placement and socio-economic qualities, from which derives the development challenge.

Bourj Hammoud’s communities developed due to the artisanship of its residents. Apart from the street decorations and architectural ornamentation designed to revive and remember a lost homeland, schools and churches focused on teaching Armenian, while factories sprang up within houses to create things that preserved Armenian cultural heritage.

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3.3.1 Population of Bourj Hammoud:
Bourj Hammoud is a mixed-use urban area that includes residential, industrial, and commercial region. It is one of the densest populated areas in the Middle East. It is known as "Little Armenia" because it became a safe place for Armenians after the horrific murders of Armenians that began in 1915 under Ottoman authority. Today, it is one of Lebanon's most diversified neighbourhoods between Lebanese, Syrians, and Others.

3.3.2 Bourj Hammoud land uses:
From the 1930s through the 1970s, almost all of Bourj Hammoud’s residential properties and buildings were constructed. Buildings are mainly two to four floors up, with wooden terraces overhanging above the mostly narrow roads of the neighbourhood. Because of its location on the borders of Beirut, the neighbourhood is vibrant and productive, however it does confront certain environmental challenges. Bourj Hammoud is intersected by highways and overlooks the water, where it has recovered a few acres of land as shown in fig.7.

3.3.3 Local economy of Bourj Hammoud:
On the street level, there are a variety of stores and small businesses distributed throughout the neighbourhood, as shown in fig.8. All this serve multiple local residents, but they also meet the needs to a diverse variety of city-wide customers looking for low-cost items & services. All of the stores and workshops in the area are small, with fewer than ten people employed.
3.3.4 Social services of Bourj Hammoud:

Throughout years, changing demographics have increased Bourj Hammoud’s population variety by bringing in inhabitants of various nationalities and races, leading to the variety of social and cultural traditions, languages, educational levels, and political connections.

![Map showing services provided in Bourj Hammoud](https://digitalcommons.bau.edu.lb/apj/vol28/iss1/5)

**Source:** UN Habitat, (2017)

**a**- **Healthcare:** The rising population densities of Bourj Hammoud has put a strain on local medical institutions and facilities, including Al Hayek Hospital and Saint Joseph Hospital. The Armenian Red Cross, the Greek Orthodox Dispensary, the Nuns Dispensary, and the Al Sader Dispensary all fulfil the Health Ministry's requirements for Essential Healthcare Institutions. The UNHCR formed a cooperation with Karakozian Dispensary, a social development centre, which provide primary healthcare services to enrolled Syrian refugees.

**b**- **Education:** The educational sector in Bourj Hammoud is seeing a rise in school dropouts because of several of causes, including a lack of a suitable school atmosphere, a poor financial management, and a growth in student numbers.

3.4 Identifying The Problem Of The Cultural Identity Related To Craftsmanship Of Bourj Hammoud:

The Armenians of Bourj Hammoud employed crafts to merge into the Lebanese economy and society. Through the time, people established their spot in Lebanon's traditional production industry, and their activity had become a major element of the region's intangible cultural heritage, demonstrating the strong way wherein handicraft skills and experience create and form societies.

Unfortunately, the highly growing industry started to drop in scale and output through time, mainly the changes in the international financial patterns and regulatory flaws at the regional level. Understanding of the reasons and consequences of this decrease necessitates knowledge of the Lebanese government's objectives in terms of craftsmanship.

The variety of practices, technological evolution as well as the generational transformation of crafts chains threat the perspective of value chain actors, who are still engaged in historically rooted crafts production. As a result, produced handicrafts lost its quality and importance, and even the interest for the craft passed down through generations,
as artisans were forced to conform to the marketplace by lowering expenses in a desperate bid to fight with Chinese imports.

Jewellery, leather work, tailoring, textile, brass/copper, metal work, and other key institutional value chains in Bourj Hammoud have all contributed to the neighbourhood’s fame. The jewellery industry is lacking of young performers, with leather work serving as the only cross-generational interesting performer between the ages of 30 and 70. The artists in their 30s and 40s gained their businesses mostly through family transfers. There is no institutional presence in the craft education process.

3.5 Selection Of A Specific Area Of Bourj Hammoud:

In order to concentrate the research, a specific area is chosen in Bourj Hammoud. The chosen area is the main street of Bourj Hammoud the Armenia Street where it is the main commercial spine of the neighbourhood. It is a mix used area where from the Armenia Street, the “Nor Maraash” neighbourhood contains the main craft workshops of Bourj Hammoud, connected to the “Mar Youssef” commercial street.

3.5.1 Dimensions of the chosen site

The site is located in the zone D which is a commercial and residential zone. Its area is 3000 m2, according to the regulations the allowable built-up area is 7,200 m2 with 1,500 m2 as a foot print in the chosen site.

The chosen site could be a landmark for Bourj Hammoud as a cultural space reflecting the cultural identity of the neighbourhood since it is on the edge of the Armenia Street facing Beirut River. It is visually connected to mar Mikhail Street from the west side of the site.

Fig.10: Graphs showing craftsmen’s ages, status, and economic sufficiency by sector in Lebanon
Source: Makki, F. (2019)

Fig.11: Figure showing the chosen site
Source: author
3.5.2 Land use in the chosen site

The Armenia street is an important touristic and commercial street in Bourj Hammoud. As shown in fig.18, the mix use buildings in the Armenia street, the ground floor level is the known Jewellery souk of Bourj Hamoud. The ground level of the mix use buildings of Nor Marash consist different types of crafts workshops.

Fig.12: Figure showing the land use map of Armenia street
Source: author

3.5.3 Cultural practices in the chosen site:

The neighbourhood of the chosen site “Nor marash” is known with its cultural richness since it contains different types of workshops and craft practices, as shown in fig19-20.

Fig.13: map showing souk locations in Bourj Hammoud
Source: Haddad, L. (2017), Productive cities- the reconfiguration of the urban

Fig.14: Map showing some craftsmanships workshops in Bourj Hammoud
Source: Authors

3.6 Different perspectives of public on “Bourj Hammoud”:

Contact with the residents of Bourj Hammoud was attempted in order to gain credibility, this communication is performed during a site survey to the selected region, which gave a clear perspective and understanding of the residents’ points of view on the existing issue regarding the preservation and regeneration of the cultural identity challenges of the neighbourhood.

3.6.1 Holding Interviews:

In Bourj Hammoud, face-to-face interviews with residents in the area were performed across the neighbourhood. These interviews were conducted with locals between the ages of 25 and 45. Four questions were asked during the interview, including the following:

1. Jewelry
2. Textile-fashion
3. Spices
4. Craft
5. Vehicle services
6. Furniture
a) Do you think that neglect of craft production is threatening the Lebanese cultural heritage?

b) Do you think that the quality of handicraft products manufactured in Lebanon is less than the quality of imported products?

c) Are you interested in learning handicrafts?

d) Do you consider that handicrafts are a main part of the cultural identity of the neighbourhood?

e) Do you think that reviving the craft production would improve the cultural resilience?

Here are some examples of responses:

Garau, (65 years old)

“Yes of course, the Lebanese intangible cultural heritage concerning the skills to produce crafts is under threat, the handicraft industries are diminishing, their products are replaced with imported items, these skills are not transmitted anymore to the next generation which threat these practices.

Salah, (38 years old)

“Of course, the Lebanese industrial sector is known for the low quality of its products compared to the imported ones. We face a lack of advanced industrial equipment and technologies, and even if it’s available, it would be in lower quality.”

Maya, (25 years old)

“Yes, I would like to learn handicrafts, but only as a hobby not a profession. The crafts sector is limited to a certain group in our region. In addition, we also have a lack in educational facilities and public workshops in this field; young people only learn this interest from their families.”

Pierre, (45 years old)

“Yes, Bourj Hammoud has been known for its handicrafts practices from our ancestors and even before; even in our days, people still come to it from all around Lebanon in order to buy leather products, gold, etc... despite its obscurity and the neglect of its practices in recent years.”

Aram, (32 years old)

“Yes, craft production been has decreased with the time. In our days the gold handmade production in the only prevailing craft between elder craftsmen in our neighborhood and not like before. Youth must be aware of the importance of these crafts and educating them handicraft production skills to revive these crafts which would make it resilient.”

3.6.2 Questionnaire:

A closed questionnaire was applied at random to a group of inhabitants in Bourj Hammoud ages ranging from 20 to 50 years old. The following questions were included in this questionnaire:

a) Do you think that there is a major problem regarding the cultural identity of the neighbourhood?

b) What is the type of facility that you prefer to implement in the region to improve the handicraft practices?

c) Do you prefer to buy handmade Lebanese products or imported products?
d) Do you think that the decrease in the handcraft sector have an impact on the economic and social status of the neighbourhood?

The paper evaluates the findings and conclusions of the responses after the field method is completed.

4. FINDINGS:

The result of questions would be expressed in the form of sketches or graphs employing a methodological approach.

4.1 Analysis of Interviews Result:

Answers of the listed interviews were given to turn into a list of required spaces needed in the neighbourhood for improving the cultural identity of the area. The table 2 is a representation of this list.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social spaces</th>
<th>Educational spaces</th>
<th>Production spaces</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>exhibitions</td>
<td>handcraft studios and classes</td>
<td>workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>retail shops</td>
<td>vocational training</td>
<td>labs (integrating new techniques)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2 Analysis Of Questionnaire Results:

Statistical charts resulting in different cultural, social, and economic backgrounds are used to produce the results. The outcomes are represented in the pie charts in Figures 20, 21, 22, and 23.

Fig.15: Pie Chart answering Q (a) about the loss of the cultural identity of BH
Source: Authors

Fig.16: Pie Chart answering Q (b) about the proposed facilities to improve handcraft practices
Source: Authors
Based on the questionnaire, in the first question, as shown in fig. 2.1, the answers are as follow, where 80% strongly agree that there is a major problem concerning the loss of the cultural identity of Bourj Hammoud and 15% agree. In the second question the percentage of the answers are variable between proposed facilities, as shown in the fig. 2.2, where 35% propose vocational training centre, 40% public workshops, 15% handcraft retail shops, and 10% exhibition spaces for craft products. In the third question, as shown in the fig. 2.3, 75% of people prefer handmade products, where 25% prefer imported products. In the fourth question, as shown in the fig. 2.4, the highest result is 45% of the neighbours thinks that the main impact of the decrease of handcraft practices in Bourj Hammoud is the increase of imported products instead of handcraft products, 30% think that it this decrease caused economic crises for neighbours, and 25% think that the impact is in the loss of the cultural identity of the neighbourhood.

5. DISCUSSIONS:

The previous findings recognized the necessity of developing cultural activities in the Bourj Hammoud neighborhood in order to revitalize and reactivate the neighborhood's cultural identity. The regeneration the cultural activities of Bourj Hammoud would be improved through creating public spaces and cultural facilities in the neighborhood that would increase the economic and social status of the neighborhood, and would enhance the cultural practices between neighbors.

In the main commercial and tourist street in Bourj Hammoud, a cultural public park would connect the edge of Bourj Hammoud from Beirut River with the Armenia Street, through developing and upgrading the existing public spaces in front of the existing commercial spaces in this street, and implementing cultural educational facilities in the empty lots of the area to enhance youth to learn about these crafts and to regenerate these cultural handcraft practices, in addition to proving public workshops for craftsmen for improving the cultural production and to encourage people to learn handcraft practices and to show the process to the public (citizens, neighbors, tourists...)
6. CONCLUSION:
Based on the perceiving research, the study gives points.

The points are:
- Providing public spaces that creates a community space for public and neighbours in order to enhance the sociocultural interaction.
- Providing educational spaces that improves of cultural skills through educational facilities, exhibitions, souk, and outdoor public spaces reflecting craft products that improve the cultural experiences.
- Integrating modern technologies to keep Bourj Hammoud's cultural practices (handcrafts activities) up to date with technological advancements and connected to the surroundings and to innovate these crafts.
- Reducing the disconnection with the context by creating such a social and cultural activities to recall the culture of Bourj Hammoud.
- The revival of handicraft activities would have a significant effect on the neighbourhood’s economic level. These practices would create job opportunities for young people and small businesses, as well as increase neighbours’ income and boost economic activity productivity.
- The image and identity of a city are strongly influenced by public cultural spaces. These places would attract tourists interested in learning about the culture of the Arminian city and handmade production practices and skills inside Bourj Hammoud.
- Implementing landmark cultural facilities in a main mix use street of the neighbourhood, in addition to introducing outdoor spaces for sociocultural purposes, would improve the regeneration and revitalization of the cultural image of Bourj Hammoud.
- Reviving cultural programs in the area has the capability of providing opportunities for local residents to get access to previously underutilized cultural skills.
- With its appealing icon, approachable and welcoming approach, public cultural places offer contributed to the innovation and development of the city's cultural image.
- This research focuses on maintaining a sustainable strategy associated with social engagement, financial viability, and architectural improvements in order to reanimate cultural practices and revive the city's cultural image.
- According to the questionnaire and interviews, the city has a great of potential to reanimate cultural activities, especially since Bourj Hammoud's economy is based on the jewellery, commercial, and tourism sectors.
- This paper refocuses the light on the neglected craftsmen practices, which should make a huge push to the municipality of Bourj Hammoud to make investments in the cultural sector with the support of the ministry of culture and the ministry of economy.
- Architecture was focusing only on the building functions with neglecting the importance of integrating cultural activities within the public spaces that would reflect the cultural identity and image of a neighbourhood.
- Architects should focus on providing a social space that improves the cultural skills of space users through integrating different type of activities that enhance the cultural practices.
- NGO and UN Habitat would play an important role in improving the needs of craftsmen and youth that would practice crafts through their financial and cultural support.

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