

Looking Beyond 'Celebrating' Heritage: Baalbeck and Luang Prabang: A Story of Two World Heritage Sites

Hiba Bou Akar

MCP Program
Department of Planning and Urban Studies
MIT



States and governments strive to include their cultural and natural heritage in the World Heritage Sites List. The reasons behind this aim are either to protect them from danger like (war or man), or to attract tourists, who are magnetized by World Heritage sites' charm and propaganda. However, after the site is listed, other issues and factors start to surface; these issues come within the larger debate of conservation, heritage, tourism, authenticity, image making, and their impact on the local communities, where people live their everyday lives.

In this paper, I compare two World Heritage sites that I have encountered: Baalbeck in Lebanon, and Luang Prabang in Laos. I have worked for almost 1 year on Baalbeck as part of CHUD¹ (Cultural Heritage and Urban Development) project. While I was visiting Luang Prabang this January 'as a tourist', I found myself, comparing the two cities, attempting to analyze the current urban conditions of both cities being both listed as prestigious World Heritage sites. In this brief survey, I will first review the rules that govern Cultural World Heritage listings. Second, I will explore similar and different changes and complexities that both urban contexts are undergoing. Finally, I will conclude with a few suggestions that might improve the local residents' experience under such 'listing' conditions.

BACKGROUND

Luang Prabang was the capital of Laos before Vientiane. According to the World Heritage sites' committee Luang Prabang represents, to an exceptional extent, the successful fusion of the traditional architectural and urban structures and those of the European colonial rulers of the 19th and 20th centuries. Its unique townscape is remarkably well preserved, illustrating a key stage in the blending of two distinct cultural traditions. The protected site includes, beside the old town, the mountainous forest across the river. To further protect the city, the banks of the Mekong and its tributary, the Kahn, have also been designated as development-free zones². Luang Prabang was listed as a World Heritage site in 1995.

On the other hand, Baalbeck lies in the Bekaa' Valley, in the inland of Lebanon. The golden age of Baalbeck began in year 15 BC when Julius Caesar made it a Roman colony³. Baalbeck, with its colossal structures, is one of the finest examples of Imperial Roman architecture at its apogee⁴. During the fifth century, Baalbeck was named as one of the wonders of the World. When inscribing this property, World Heritage sites' committee expressed the wish that the protected area include the entire town within the Arab walls as well as the south-western quarter extra- muros between Bastan-al-Khan, the Roman works and the Mamluk mosque of Ras-al-Ain⁵. Baalbeck was listed as a World Heritage site in 1984.



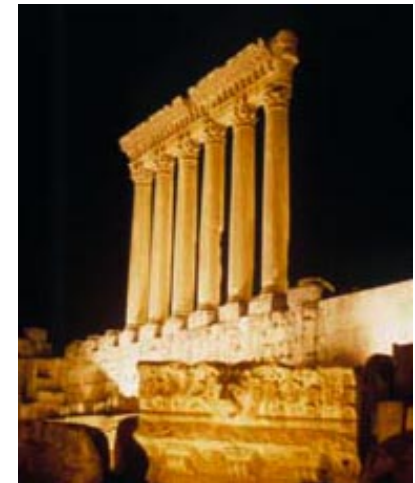
Map of Laos: Luang Prabang is in the northern part of the country



Wat Ho Prabang Temple



Map of Lebanon: Baalbeck lies in the northeastern part of the country



Baalbeck: The famous 6 columns

Rules: World Heritage Site Listing

In order to understand the effects of listing a city on the World Heritage list, I will examine the criteria for the inclusion of such cultural properties in the List. Besides having an outstanding value from the point of view of history, art or science, the property should be very well preserved and governed by the state that nominated it. Since I am interested in the impact of the listing of the property/city on the urban development of the city in question, I will be looking here at the urban laws that the respective government should impose on the city to establish and maintain its eligibility.

According to Article 24-b-ii from the Criteria for the Inclusion of Cultural Properties in the World Heritage stated by UNESCO, “each property should have adequate legal and/or traditional protection and management mechanisms to ensure the conservation of the nominated cultural properties or cultural landscapes”. Moreover, “... assurances of the effective implementation of these laws and/or contractual and/or traditional protection as well as of these management mechanisms are also expected”⁶.

The Directorate of Archeology in Lebanon has placed, even before 1984, strict preservation rules on the Baalback's site as well as the residential and commercial strip around it. Baalback's temples and citadel stands intact surrounded mostly by greenery. The Site is protected from any violation or construction. However, during the civil war (1975-1990), many objects were robbed and exported from the Baalback's Site. The neighborhoods around the temples are under strict preservation rules as well –such as ‘Hayy el-Kalaa’ (the citadel neighborhood). In these neighborhoods, nobody can alter or add any structures on the existing houses and stores. Since early 1950's, Hayy el-Kalaa' was denied any modifications; it was frozen in time. The laws were enforced by the police against people who try to break the rules. Nevertheless, during the civil war, many of the rules were not enforced, and people did alter their houses, add rooms and floors, but this was not widespread. More violations took place within neighborhoods, which fall within the Arabic Wall, but are not adjacent to the citadel.

Many traditional houses still exist in Baalback, and many are still preserved. In the early 1990's, by the end of the civil war, rules were again enforced. Nowadays, the Directorate General of Antiquities, in collaboration with the Baalback municipality, makes sure that the rules are met. The newly established CHUD⁷ project is a national in scope project that works on five Lebanese World Heritage Sites, one of which is

Baalback. Through the project, the government is trying to develop planning schemes that enhance the socio-economic conditions of the population living in these cities.

As for Luang Prabang, the site is governed by an inter-institutional committee in charge of the protection and rehabilitation of the patrimonial site. The Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Communication-Transport-Post-Construction (MCTPC), the Provincial Government and the Maison du Patrimoine of UNESCO are members of that committee. A local on-site UNESCO office that houses international architects in collaboration with local Lao architects develops architectural and urban preservation drawings for the district. The office is located in one of the traditional French style houses. Moreover, the Urban Development Administration Authority (UDAA) of Luang Prabang is in charge of the urban development and planning in all the Luang Prabang territory, including the patrimonial area.

Both Baalback and Luang Prabang are inhabited sites. There are other urban preservation rules that should apply in the case of inhabited towns. Article 29 states that “In the case of inhabited historic towns the difficulties are numerous, largely owing to the fragility of their urban fabric...To be eligible for inclusion in the List, the spatial organization, structure, materials, forms and, where possible, functions of a group of buildings should essentially reflect the civilization or succession of civilizations which have prompted the nomination of the property”. In this article four categories of towns were distinguished. Luang Prabang falls under the first category:

“Towns which are typical of a specific period or culture, which have been almost wholly preserved and which have remained largely unaffected by subsequent developments. Here the property to be listed is the entire town together with its surroundings, which must also be protected”,⁸

While Baalback falls under the third category:

*“Historic centers” that cover exactly the same area as ancient towns and are now enclosed within modern cities. Here it is necessary to determine the precise limits of the property in its widest historical dimensions and to make appropriate provision for its immediate surroundings.*⁹

The Criteria mentions that listing inhabited towns on the World Heritage List should be done only in exceptional conditions and should involve the communities' participation. Article 34 states that:

"In view of the effects which the entry of a town in the World Heritage List could have on its future, such entries should be exceptional. Inclusion in the List implies that legislative and administrative measures have already been taken to ensure the protection of the group of buildings and its environment. Informed awareness on the part of the population concerned, without whose active participation any conservation scheme would be impractical, is also essential."¹⁰

However, I argue that the presence of a World monument such as the one in Baalback has an extreme impact on the whole city, even if the city was not entirely listed as a World Heritage Site. It is only through the current CHUD project that actual preservation and socio-economic development plans attempts to tackle the larger area that falls within the Arabic Wall. The monument's presence has always had a major impact on the city.

The preservation rules that were discussed above show that the respective World Heritage related cities undergo a strict urban development and monitoring rules that impact the life of the citizens.

Regional Geography

Both Baalback and Luang Prabang are part of a wider network of regional tourism. Both countries are considered "lower" income countries, and most of the touristic tours that take place in their respective geographical regions attempt to include them as part of the larger pictures, in the essence that they are clean extracts of their contexts and nation, protecting tourists from experiencing the poverty of their respective nations. Luang Prabang is part of the Indochina region, while Baalbeck is part of the Middle East region. Their special monuments are mostly treated as part of a regional tourism network. However, there is a major difference between the network

that links to Luang Prabang and that that encompasses Baalback.

Luang Prabang lies on either the 'Indo China Tour' or 'Mekong World Heritage Tour'. However, due to the distance between the different destinations, whether those in Thailand or Vietnam, the tourist has to stay in Luang Prabang for at least 2 or 3 days. Therefore, the tourists actually spend money in the city itself. Here is one of the ads for a tour that includes Luang Prabang:

8 DAYS MEKONG WORLD HERITAGE TOUR

Bangkok - Sukhothai - Luang Prabang - Pak Ou - Luang Prabang - Danang - Hoi An Hue - Danang - Siem Reap - Bangkok.

Join us on an innovative heritage tour of 5 historic kingdoms. From the City of Angels, Bangkok, fly to the first capital of Thailand, Sukhothai. Then explore Luang Prabang, the ancient capital of the Lan Xang Kingdom, the 'Land of a Million Elephants' in Laos. New stop Hue, the former capital of Vietnam, and from there on to Siem Reap in Cambodia, home of the legendary Angkor Wat, before returning to Bangkok. Five great experiences in the great tour of the Mekong region.¹¹

On the other hand, Baalback lies on the Jordan-Syria-Baalback route. Even after the end of the Lebanese war as a result of the continuous political instability in Palestine and southern Lebanon, most of the Middle East region tours take place within Syria and Jordan, with an approximately 2-hour visit to Baalback. This is very convenient to the regional tourism agencies. By adding Baalback to their tour packages, they add an important element for the price and the attraction of their tours. At the same time, it is easy to travel to Baalback from Syria and Jordan. Baalback is only 1 and half hour in bus from Damascus. Below is how an 11-day tour to the region was advertised:

Program Syria / Jordan / Baalbeck 11 Days

Day 01 DAM-Damascus/ Assist at airport. Transfer to Hotel

Day 02 DAM-Damascus old city tour+ Museum/Damascus Hotel

Day 03 DAM-Damascus/Palmyra-City Tour/Homs Hotel

Day 04 HOMS-Homs/Hama/Apamea/Ebla/ Aleppo Hotel

Day 05 ALP-Aleppo/Full day tour/St. Simeon/Aleppo Hotel

Day 06 ALP-Aleppo/Krack/ Maalula/Sydnaya/Damascus Hotel

Day 07 DAM-Damascus/ Baalbek/Anjar-Visits/Damasacus Hotel

Day 08 DAM-Damascus/Bosra/Jerash/Amman Hotel

Day 09 AMM-Amman/Madaba/Mt.Nebo/Karak/Petra Hotel

Day 10 PET-Petra city tour full day/Amman Hotel

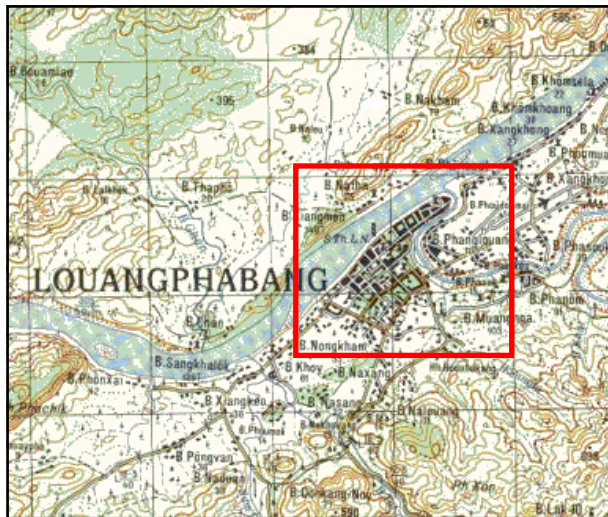
Day 11 AMM-Amman Hotel Transfer to Amman Airport ¹²

Such popular packaged tours have a major negative effect on the city of Baalback, where the tourists just visit the citadel and leave. The economic positive externality of such an important feature of the city goes uncaptured. Actually, a negative externality of the presence of such monument better describes Baalback's situation. The people live under strict rules of development and preservation, which hinders them from benefiting from their house assets, while at the same the source of their 'unhappiness' does not provide them with alternative means of income.

Both cities are included in the tourist to increase the benefits of these regional touristic companies. In both cases, it is evident to an observer that the countries of origin whether Lebanon or Laos are not the intended experience behind tourism. I have explained this aspect in the case of Baalback. As for Luang Prabang, the life on the streets, the style of the restaurants the tourist find there, and the type of food served shows that exposure to the Lao culture is not the intention behind the visit. This notion will be further explained in later sections.

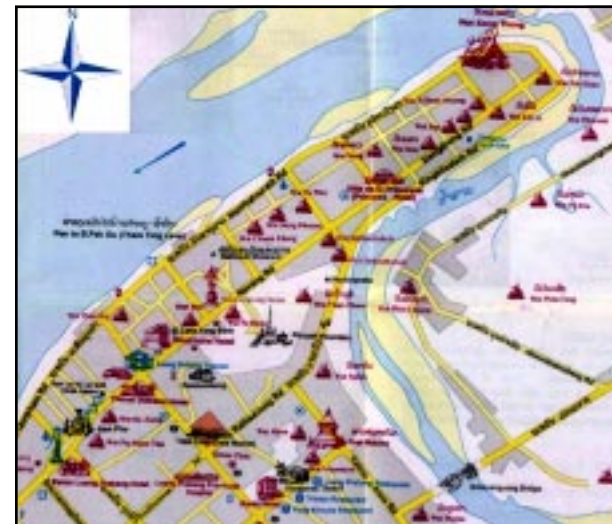
Local Geography - Luang Prabang

The preserved town of Luang Prabang is a narrow strip squeezed in between the main road artery called 'Navang Road' and the 'Manthafourath Road' bounding the Mekong River. The tip of the town is a peninsula surrounded by the Mekong River on one side, and its tributary, the Kahn on the other sides. On the tip of this historic strip - overlooking the river- lies the office of the UNESCO. The two roads are connected by secondary perpendicular roads, where most of the guesthouses, and the (very few) residents houses are. The connecting road between the villages (the smaller units of a Lao city) and the preserved strip is not developed. There is a definite break between the touristic Luang Prabang, and Luang Prabang the home. The two 'Worlds' are spatially disconnected.



Source: [p://www.mekongexpress.com/laos/general/maps/map_luangprabang.htm](http://www.mekongexpress.com/laos/general/maps/map_luangprabang.htm)

On the preserved strip, the UNESCO report identified 33 temples and 111 historic Lao-French buildings to be preserved, citing Luang Prabang as the best-preserved traditional town in Southeast Asia. During the old times, the old part of the city was inhabited by the noble and rich people of Luang Prabang. This might suggest that the strip was a gated area where local people were not welcomed. Even today, very few "locals" live in this strip. The strip is gated for the tourists, the current "royalty" in Luang Prabang. According to World Heritage Sites' rules, No additions or developments are allowed for the existing. Any changes or upgrading should be approved, and should use local materials and styles, which is very expensive¹³. These rules make it costly to maintain a house and living in this preserved strip. To cope with the costs of maintaining their houses, most people have turned their houses into guesthouses, where budget tourists can stay for \$4-\$8/night. Only in this case, the family will stay in the quarter, while securing income. Most of these guesthouses are family businesses.



Source: Frank Pollick's website. <http://www.psy.gla.ac.uk/~frank/laos>

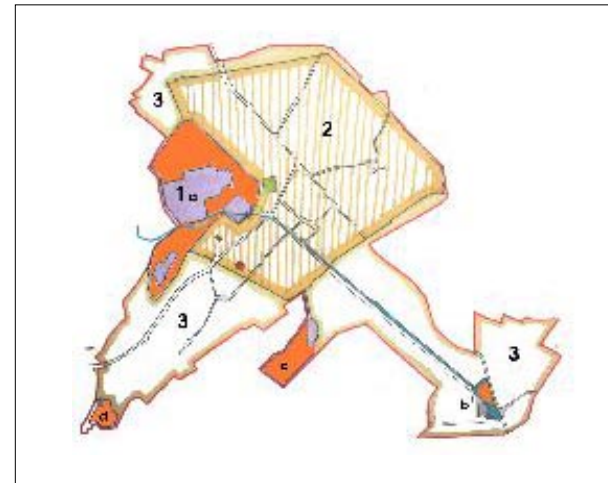
Baalback

On the other hand, the city of Baalback grew concentrically around the Temples. The city originally grew within the Arabic wall, within which one finds the traditional houses. However, very minimal traces remain of the Arabic wall, and the city has grown beyond that. Although the World Heritage committee - in the session during which Baalback was listed as a World Heritage Site - suggested that the preserved area should be extended to the Arabic wall, I believe that the war, and the absent of



municipal power, prevented this extent of preservation efforts. Nevertheless, the citadel and the adjacent neighborhoods were relatively monitored. Strict preservation rules apply for the houses. Unless the roof falls on the head of the houses' residents, they cannot change it from wood and mud to concrete. Such rules resulted in an incentive for people to let their houses deteriorate. For example most people will leave their roofs and walls unattended in winter, which will result in their collapse, thus giving them the reason to replace them by a concrete shelter. (Note: we started working in Baalbeck on February 2002, by July 2002, 20% of the houses that we identified as crucial to the history of the city and witnesses on the traditional local architecture fell apart!)

As mentioned earlier, Baalback is only a 1 day visit (sometimes 2-hours) from Damascus. Most tourists stay overnight in the hotels in Syria. As a result, there are very few hotels and inns in Baalback. The inns are relatively cheap - around \$10/night. However, these are only suitable for back-packers and budget young travelers. There is only one expensive high-end regional renowned old hotel in Baalback, the 'Palmyra Hotel'. This hotel is open mainly during Baalback International Festival, which is a very prestigious festival that takes place each summer in the temple. High-income people who can afford to attend the festival might spend the night in Palmyra Hotel.



Components:

- 1 Archaeological area
- 2 City fabric within the ancient Arab walls
- 3 Urban corridors and buffer areas

Source: ARS Progetti-CHUD Project

Who are the Tourists?

Both Luang Prabang and Baalback have similar types of tourists. The high income and/or retired people mostly come via buses or planes directly to the Luang Prabang touristic strip. They are also brought there through the larger regional touristic network we discussed above. These people lodge in the nice hotels that are located in old French villas. However, this type of tourists constitutes only a small portion¹⁴ of



Villa Santi: a high-end hotel



The stage for traditional shows

tourism in Luang Prabang. The mayor of Luang Prabang wants to attract more of these higher income tourists. Unfortunately, Laos is not on the higher income tourists' maps like Thailand. As a matter of fact, and as a result of the World Heritage committee efforts, Luang Prabang is the only city in Laos that has the potential infrastructure to accommodate such a high-income tourism. Nevertheless, it still lacks much of the amenities as compared to its neighbor Thailand. On the other hand, the main type of tourists in Laos generally, including Luang Prabang, are backpackers, budget, and young middle-income tourists that lodge in the local guesthouses, which are within their budget. As for what is there to experience, during the day the tourists visit the Wats and the Palace, and climb the Phousi hill. The entire city is within a walking distance. After that, tourists have dinner in one of the restaurants that are spread on the entire strip. Locally manufactured cloths, artifacts, and food markets occupy the roads at night providing the 'entertainment'. There are also special 'traditional' shows that are played every Sunday in the garden of the Royal Palace.

In Baalback a similar scenario exists. High Income tourists do actually visit

Lebanon, but do not spend time and money in Baalback, but in Beirut. There is no 'entertainment' infrastructure in Baalback. The only time the city will welcome this type of tourist is during the Baalback International festival. These tourists (as well as high income Lebanese) usually stay at the one and only up-to-standards Palmyra Hotel. The tourists who spend time in Baalback and lodge in its inns are the budget tourist and the back-packers. These tourists are usually interested in spending more time in the city itself interacting with the local communities, rather than just looking at the Roman stones. The Ras El-Ain strip provides cafés and restaurants where local people meet at night and play cards and chess. Tourists join them there also.

What is interesting to note is that both cities are dead at early hour at night. Luang Prabang sleeps at 11:30, while as Baalback sleeps around 10. Both cities used to provide cheap 'light type' of drugs (hash in Baalback and opium in Laos) for the adventurous backpackers. However, strict anti-drug law enforcement in Baalback diminished the supply tremendously. I am not quite sure about Luang Prabang in that aspect.

Where Are the People?

As a tourist in both cities, you would wonder: Where are the local people? Where do they live? What are they doing? While meandering in the roads of Luang Prabang,



A woman seller and her two daughters in the morning market



Monks are the apparent residents of the strip.

you rarely encounter 'residents' of the city. The local people that you see are the people working in the restaurants, selling fruits on the river, or serving in the guesthouses. In



Weaving in Luang Prabang's Ban Phanom village.



Xiengthon Road

addition to the women and children who are selling in the market. The most apparent residents are the monks living in the 33 Wats in the old city. The people of Luang Prabang live somewhere else.

The strict rules of building in the old center prohibit people from adding to accommodate family extensions. As I mentioned earlier, any upgrading of the existing structure should be in local material and executed in high quality. This material is mainly wood which is now very expensive for the residents to obtain in Laos¹⁵. As a result of these rules to preserve the strip's image, most of the houses within the strip are turned into guesthouses that are preserved while generating money for their residents. As the family grows, family members leave their current houses in the strip and go to live in the villages that lie on the outskirts. What remains there are the part of the family who runs the business. Therefore, the people who are encountered in the strip are those who are in the 'tourist' service business.

During the tourists' stay, most of these people become recurrent faces; they are the sellers in the morning market, and the sellers in the night market. At 11pm, when the market closes, Tuk-tuks¹⁶ pick up the family and their merchandise to take them home. These people don't live within the preserved strip. Each day, they bring their objects to sell to the tourists, and then take them back home at the end of the day. It seems like the old times, when local people come to the strip to serve the royalty and leave at night to their villages. Other people, who do not earn their income from selling

touristic merchandise, work in agriculture and fishing or paper making, or weaving. When in Luang Prabang, one would wonder where the local people are. In Vientiane, the markets cater for the locals. The tourists are their secondary clients. During work days, most employees buy snacks from women who cook and sell food on the roads. Tourists share local residents their market.

In Luang Prabang, the markets are not local markets. There are no women selling food on the road. Everything is clean waiting for the "royal" visitors. This feeling is accentuated by the fact that most restaurants are 'French style': French breakfast; French dinner with wine. Lao traditional dishes are available too, but tend to be included within the International or the French menu. Organic bread and fruits have their share in Luang Prabang, especially in cafés and bakeries which are mostly operated by foreign investors¹⁷.

In Baalback, people live around the citadel. However, the city plays a very small role in their daily life. As I noted earlier, due to the regional power and political structure, Baalback's economic share of the regional tourists is small. There are few shops facing



A bakery on the street facing the Temples

the entrance to the citadel that sell antiques. In most cases, these stores are not the main source of income for the family. They are operated by the women, while men work in carpentry, local market, blacksmithing, agriculture, or serving in the army. In

Baalback, women play an important share in the household income. Most women work in weaving traditional dresses. Most of these products are sent to Beirut's market. Some are exported. These products are sold for very high prices in Beirut's stores or when exported abroad. However, these women get a very small share of that money. Still it constitutes a decent source of income. Other women work in manufacturing home-made 'mouni'¹⁵. The 'mouni' too is sent to Beirut's markets. Few quantities are exported as well. (As a side note, for the past decade or more, Baalback's main income was from the drug traffic. However, after the recent anti-drug law enforcement, Baalback sunk into poverty. Most people had to pick another job than working in the drug fields.)

The other touristic area in Baalback is Ras El-Ain. It is the area where all restaurants, café's, and open spaces are located. In case tourists plan to have lunch in Baalback, the tourists visit the citadel and then they are transported by bus to Ras El-Ain, resulting in minimum interaction possible with the city and its people. Ras Al-Ein coffee houses and restaurants do not serve the Baalbacki traditional food since Baalback has its own traditional food that is different than Lebanon, due to geographic location, inland. Rather, these restaurants serve the Lebanese generic traditional food. The Lebanese 'traditional' food –such as taboule', hommos, barbeque- is served for the tourists wherever they are on through out the country. This food is very celebrational, and up to the tourists' standards. On the other hand, Lao food is less celebrational than the Lebanese, so people treat themselves in foreign owned 'cheap' Luang Prabang restaurants.

These facts indicate that the presence of the Temples in Baalback is actually not benefiting the local community. On the contrary, the preservation rules imposed on the residents as a result of the Temples' presence prohibit them from neither extending nor modifying their houses. The traditional building system in which the houses were built with needs tremendous human effort to keep it in shape. Each week, men must clean the wood-and-mud roofs from snow, and then press the mud by large heavy stones - 'al-mahdala' - to prevent the water from leaking inside. When left without these weekly preservation activities, the roofs will eventually fall down. In spring, the walls must be coated by local extracted materials. The coating is done communally by women. It takes around 10 days to coat one house. Moreover, the traditional houses do not have toilets inside the house. Older people do not mind that, that is how they were brought

up. However, the new generation is used to bathtubs and toilet seats. During the war, most people converted their roofs into concrete; others converted their entire house to a concrete one, depending on the financial ability of the family. Air-conditioners and heaters were added to replace the insulation that was provided by the traditional built thick stone walls.

However, in neighborhoods, such as Hayy el-Kalaa', where strict preservation rules are imposed, the people are still suffering. These neighborhoods are part of the "buffer zone" that World Heritage Committee¹⁹ requires the cities to create around their World Heritage monuments to protect them. Structures lying within these buffer zones undergo the same strict rules as the adjacent monument. Therefore, the residents of these neighborhoods are starting to leave their houses. Many people have already built new 'concrete' houses in the agriculture fields, in the outskirts of Baalback. The people that are still residing in the neighborhood are either waiting for their new houses to be completed, or they are only part of the family who take care of their house during the day, and who go back to the fields at night.

Baalback, in the vicinity of the Temples, is turning into Luang Prabang's old strip, where the people who remain there are only the people who serve the tourists. Others are just indifferent, or they even dislike the Temples' presence, because it is disturbing their daily live. Besides, the people used to be able to play on the premises within the vicinity of the citadel, where there are ample green open spaces that are not used. However, lately, the municipality is putting fences that will even prohibit the local people from using the area as an open "breathing space" for the congested old city.

In Luang Prabang, local people transport their merchandise to the town for the consumption of the tourists. This phenomenon takes place every single night during the touristic dry season. In Baalback, similar activities are now taking place seasonally, mainly during the Baalback International festival - the only active season on the larger scale of the city. People, with the help of the municipality, build temporary display stores where they sell their hand made food 'mouni', clothes, artifacts, as well as antiques. In both cases, the people live "outside" the preserved area - either spatially like in Luang Prabang or economically and politically like in Baalback, and ship their 'heritage' to the tourists' 'preserved' areas.

A Monument in a city or the city as a Monument

Baalback is a case of a “monument within a city”, while as Luang Prabang is a case where “the city is a monument”, an open air museum. Although, at a first thought, the idea of a city as a museum is very disturbing, and the monument within the city is a less frightening one. However, studying both cases, I would argue that in the former case of Baalback, people are suffering more than the Lunag Prabang's case. I cannot deny the fact that Baalback's Temples is an important large-scale historical site, whose scale dominates any other attraction in the city. However, the citadel dominates the fate of the city, but the city is not benefiting. People surround-



2004 Baalback International Festival website
<http://www.baalbeck.org.lb/english/main.htm>

ing the city are suffering from its presence. If we look at Byblos or Tyre or even Sidon, the location and scale of the celebrated monument is not as central to the respective cities as much as Baalback's monument. These other cities function as normal cities, separately from the monuments.

Baalback is frozen in time; maybe 'terrified' is a better word. There is a lot of interesting traditional construction houses within the old city that are forgotten. Their scale is negligible in relation to the huge celebrated 6 columns. They are falling apart, because they are not within the network of tourists. The idea of what the tourist should and should not see dominates the whole economic and social structure of the city. When spending their day in Baalbeck, the tourists are led on a road that links all what they 'need' to see. It links the Hibla stone site, the Temples, the Mamluk

mosque, and Ras El-Ain recreational area. All actors participate in that 'strategy'. The municipality frequently paves this road: 5 years ago, the municipality made the road wider (but less attractive) by removing the ancient trees that existed on the both sides of the road, and which are part of the city's and the residents' memory, image, wedding videos. This took place in order to accommodate the big touristic buses going to Ras El-Ain. The tourism companies have contracts with selected restaurants owners that receive their tours. Only these three restaurants benefit from this tourism industry. Tourists do not eat in local small scale stores. There is rare input into the local-small scale economy. This industry benefits only key actors that operate on the regional level. It is a cartel between the travel agencies, bus companies and the restaurants' owners.



The 6 columns of Baalback

In Luang Prabang, only the people that select the 'service' industry benefit from the presence of the tourists. The 'preserved' zone does not interfere in the lives of those who choose to lead a life away from the tourists. They are spatially detached from the city-monument. The space of the monument and the space of the people do not overlap, in contrary to Baalback, where these two spaces coexist. Therefore, as I argued before, in this particular case, Baalback is suffering much more than Luang Prabang from being listed as a World Heritage Site.

Money into city

In Luang Prabang, the higher-income tourists who afford to stay in the 5-stars hotels spends money that goes to few foreign investors and rich local Lao people. Nevertheless, the money of the budget tourists is channeled directly to local economic power through the guesthouses and the markets. Certainly, a tourism 'cartel' similar to that of Baalback's does exist between the key actors: the travel agencies, bus companies, and the hotels. Still, the large numbers of tourists come alone and lodge in the locally owned guesthouses, and buy from the local market. With regards to the entrance fees collected in the different monuments, this money is collected to be used to preserve and upgrade the local monuments. It is not distributed throughout the country. It remains within the 'walls' of the strip.

As discussed earlier, in Baalback, tourists' money is not channeled to the local community. Moreover, the Temples' entrance fee does not go to the local municipality. In Lebanon, the law indicates that the entrance fee of all the nation's monuments go to the central government. Then the government allocates through the yearly budget money to each municipality to upgrade their respective monument and city. The amount allocated doesn't depend on the percentage of income generated from their respective monuments. This law of money collection does not give incentive to the local municipality to try to create strategies to attract more tourists. Publicity for Baalback remains a national duty.

The current CHUD project aims to develop projects that aim to channel money to a larger area of Baalback. A detailed urban plan for the old city within the Arabic Walls was prepared. The plan aimed at pinpointing all traditional houses that are still viable, and which could be upgraded, and used by their owners as a source to generate income. By turning them into bed and breakfast houses, local food outlets that serve traditional food, or even as local exhibitions that exhibit local handmade, the claimed economic benefits of tourism will then target a wider group of residents. However, this project is very hard to realize and to initialize economically. It is tough to secure capital for the people to start upgrading their houses. First the World Bank loan cannot be used for individual purposes; it should be used for the 'public good'. Hence, this money

Community Organization

Community solidarity and organization play an important role in 'selling' the city to the tourists. A major difference between Luang Prabang and Baalback is the time of their listing. Luang Prabang was listed in 1995, and tourists did not start going there frequently until much later. Therefore, Luang Prabang people are still very enthusiastic about their city being a World Heritage monument, dreaming of the coming prosperity. They participate in tiling the streets. The families of the guesthouses take turns in completing the portion in front of their houses. On the other hand, Baalback was a touristic destination since long time ago. Although it was listed in 1984, but it has been preserved even before the French mandate. Since this monument has been celebrated for such a long time, people lost hope of getting anything out of it. They went back to their agricultural fields.



Women tiling one of the roads that leads to Xienthong road, with guesthouse on both sides.

Conclusion

In this paper I discussed the rules of the World Heritage Site listing that govern sites in inhabited towns. These rules have huge impact on how the life of the city is shaped. Moreover, the regional networks that govern the Site plays a major role in impacting the life of the city. In both cities, Luang Prabang and Baalback, the tourists are mostly backpackers that lodge in guesthouses, or high income tourists that come through the regional networks. It seems that whether tourists spend days in the Site – like in Luang Prabang-or only few hours - like in Baalback - makes a big difference in the enhancing the economy of the city from tourism. Luang Prabang is a city as a monument, where people choose both to live within the city and play a role in the tourism industry, or they choose to live in the villages in the outskirts of the city, earning their living in working in the fields or other jobs. However, Baalback Temples are a monument within the city. The lives of the people who live in the vicinity of the Temples are shaped by the rules governing the monument, as well as the regional political dominance. In both cities discussed above, the local people were alienated in different ways.

These are just few issues that come with stamping these places with the 'World Heritage List' stamp, especially in lower income countries. It seems that when these monuments are internationally celebrated, they leave a lot to be desired from the perspective of the local residents. I would like to note that the issues that are discussed above cannot be generalized for all World Heritage Sites. Many of the World Heritage Sites are economically viable, and improving the life of the residents around them. Even in the case of Luang Prabang, most of the people are proud of their World Heritage city. However, the problem starts to become apparent in cases like Baalback, where the country is poor, and the regional politics dominates the fate of the locals. I will discuss below few issues that concerns me and which I think should be taken into consideration when listing a monument as a World Heritage Site.

The paper does not aim to send the message that World Heritage sites are causing more damage than benefits to the local communities, and that the only solution to this problem is to stop tourists from coming to these cities, or remove the monuments from the World Heritage Site list. I think that getting tourists to Baalback, a city which is far from Beirut in a centralized economy is a great opportunity to instigate development

and economic independence. However, as the situation holds now, this is not what is happening. The problem is that the tourists are not staying in Baalback. The level of control that the regional networks have on tourism in Baalback is impeding this development. Moreover, the taxation centralized system is not giving incentive for the local people to work harder to get tourists to stay. I think if tourists are attracted to stay more than 2 hours, they will eventually see the city and interact with its people, which will result in increasing tourists' interests in the city and their participation in its economic development. Therefore, listing a site on World Heritage Site is not a drawback. However, before doing that the government strive to list its monument on the World Heritage List, it should ensure an atmosphere where there is this direct link-whether social, economical or political-between the tourists visiting World Heritage Site and the local residents.

Moreover, local residents should be able to see the economical potential of the monument. Without people's satisfaction in the whole process, listing monuments as World Heritage Sites will only result in clashes and lost heritage- such as the traditional houses in Baalback. Not only money should be channeled to all those people that feel that their lives is being shaped by the monument, but also money should be invested in the entire city to benefit all the residents even those who are not working in the tourism industry, and doing other jobs. In the case of Baalback, money should be channeled to people who still preserving their traditional houses in the city. At the same time, money should be spent in the city as a whole by improving streets, increasing open spaces, designing tourists paths, funding inns for budget tourists, improve night life. These activities will make local people feel included.

This problem should be addressed on the level of the World Heritage Sites' Committee.

If the World Heritage Sites listing put rules that houses or buffer zones around the monument should be preserved too, without any modification or alteration, then at least there should be an UNESCO program that works in conjunction with the World Heritage Sites program, making sure that the residents of these quarters are not being gentrified or getting poorer. I think such a program is crucial to the World Heritage Sites program. As it is now, it is taken for granted that by just listing the monument on the World Heritage Site list, the city will flourish. The city will undergo prosperity, and the people will earn money from tourists.

These are only few ideas that have been thinking about will discussing Luang Prabang and Baalbeck. However, I am interested to extend this research to other World Heritage Sites, located in lower income countries, which will give a better idea of what policies should be placed in order to ensure that people's lives and cities' economies are being improved by the presence of World Heritage Sites.

Endnotes

- ¹ CHUD: Cultural Heritage and Urban development project. It is a project initiated by a loan from the World Bank to preserve the five World Heritage Sites in Lebanon. Pls. refer to footnote page 2.
- ² World Heritage Committee, Nineteenth Session, Berlin, Germany, 4-9
- ³ Baalbeck (World Heritage Review): <http://whc.unesco.org/whreview/article8.html>
- ⁴ http://whc.unesco.org/pg.cfm?cid=31&id_site=294
- ⁵ Report of the World Heritage Committee, Eighth Ordinary Session, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 29 Oct-2 Nov 1984
- ⁶ 'Criteria for the inclusion of cultural properties in the World Heritage', Establishment of the World Heritage List, UNESCO website on World Heritage: <http://whc.unesco.org/nwhc/pages/doc/main.htm>
- ⁷ The main objective of the project is to finance conservation and associated urban infrastructure improvements in the selected sites of Baalbeck, Byblos, Saida, Tripoli and Tyre. It also will provide technical assistance services to strengthen the capacity of the Directorate General of Antiquities (DGA), the Directorate General of Urban Planning (DGU), and target municipalities in cultural heritage preservation and tourism development.
- ⁸ Criteria for the Inclusion of Cultural Properties in the World Heritage: Article 29-i
- ⁹ Ibid: Article 29-iii
- ¹⁰ Ibid: Article 34
- ¹¹ <http://www.indochinatour.com/vietnam/tour.html>
- ¹² <http://www.atlas-tours.com/pack2.htm>
- ¹³ "A case Study on Luang Prabang, Lao PDR", Culture Heritage Management and Tourism, Models for Cooperation among stakeholders, submitted to UNESCO: office of the Regional Advisor for Culture in Asia and the Pacific, by the Local Team Study; <http://www.unescobkk.org/culture/archives/luangprabang-2.pdf>, pp. 26. The report states that the people have problems upgrading their houses in wood because it is very expensive now in Laos.
- ¹⁴ Ibid. p 13; There is no definite percentage, however in a report from the local team working in Luan Prabang to the regional office of UNESCO, the authors mention that the want ti increase the number of high income tourists, since they constitute a small portion of all tourists. They are also thinking of strategies that will attract this type of tourists.
- ¹⁵ Ibid p. 21 & 26.
- ¹⁶ Tuk-tuks are the local motorized transportation system.
- ¹⁷ "A case Study on Luang Prabang, Lao PDR", p. 19.
- ¹⁸ Mouni: Traditional home-made food that is prepared in the summer and used in the winter.
- ¹⁹ Criteria for the Inclusion of Cultural Properties in the World Heritage: Article 17.