

SUMMARY

Is it possible, in the Palestinian territories, to implement urban projects in the normative sense of the term, by which we mean operations that are planned and whose execution is monitored and in which the city is perceived as a place for living and sociability?

This is the question we have attempted to answer, and the decision at the outset to consider the regeneration of the historical centres of Hebron and Bethlehem, has proved particularly fruitful. This is because the local contexts differ, although both cities are located in a Proto-State whose continued existence depends on international aid and which is subjected to colonial authority which it is unable to resist. The “strength” of the city of Hebron lies in its cohesion and relative closure on itself, while that of Bethlehem lies in its openness to the outside world.

The comparison allows us to go beyond the specific characteristics of each case and identify the factors that have led to the success of each project. Essentially there

are three of these. First, the creation of a single project manager, with legitimacy at both the local level and with regard to all the donors, namely the setting up, by the President of the Palestinian Authority, of the “Hebron Regeneration Committee” in Hebron, and the “Bethlehem 2000 Ministry” in Bethlehem. Second, as a result of external involvement an action plan was introduced which prevented the fragmentation of activities. Third, the existence of human resources, i.e. Palestinians with the expertise to negotiate with the donor organizations.

This analysis therefore allows us to perceive under what conditions it is possible to undertake urban projects of a similar size in the Palestinian Territories. On this basis, a sustainable development operation to safeguard Jericho and its oasis seems perfectly feasible. However, a coherent operation to regenerate the Arab sector of the old city of Jerusalem seems virtually impossible in the current context.