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RETHINKING POST-CONFLICT CITIES:

THE RAMIFICATIONS OF WAR ON RECLAIMING THE
URBAN IDENTITY OF THE CITY OF BENGHAZI

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ABSTRACT

Throughout human history, there has been a nearly constant chain of varied armed conflicts - local, regional, national, and global - and these armed conflicts are threatening many parts of the world, and their number, magnitude, and severity are all increasing. In post conflict cities, significant attention is being devoted to the notion of "urban identity" following the loss of many cities' Character, essence, soul, originality, and distinction, particularly those of heritage, cultural, and historical value.

This thesis will attempt to shed light on the concept of the city identity and the loss of architectural and urban identity in post-conflict cities, specifically the city of Benghazi which is the second largest city in Libya. The study will provide detailed information about the unique qualities and characteristics of Benghazi and then define the start of the change in the physical and social combination of the city and its role in the loss of the identity. Moreover, how can the local architecture heritage and the urban-identity of the city be preserved throughout the reconstruction and renovation of a city exhibiting post-conflict destruction? What is this city identity? How it is related to the collective memory of the people? And what is the role of this identity in the rehabilitation and reconstruction process? Furthermore, it will attempt to shed light on the different tendencies in reconstruction policies proposed by different stakeholders and decision makers.

Beyond the physical rehabilitation of their built environment, post-conflict cities have substantial social difficulties. The traumatic recent past left traces of remembrance in both the city's landscape and its emotionally charged population. Historic urban centers, such as Benghazi's old city, contribute in boosting a place's identity, memory, and belonging. These historic sites shaped the identity of the larger cities and areas in the vicinity.

This research will discuss the identity conflict in post-conflict reconstruction process. This discussion of identity is currently being addressed by many architects, urban planners, stakeholders in the city, where the terms "local identity" and "urban identity" are always coming up as words which telling something, but nobody gives a clear answer as to what these terms really mean. Therefore, field research includes a historical analysis of the case of Benghazi and a number of interviews with architects and urban planners were conducted, and throughout these interviews and analysis this study will attempt to provide a better understanding of the concept of the city identity in a more inclusive manner.

Keywords: Post-Conflict Cities, Urban Identity, Architectural identity, Collective Memory, Collective Identity, post-conflict reconstruction