

Hebron SWOT Seminar Report

7th Sep 2014



Project funded by the
EUROPEAN UNION



Contents

Overview	2
Concept	3
Agenda	5
Reports of Panels	6
- First session	6
- Second session	9
- Third session	10
Results of the workshops	11

Overview

On Sep 7th 2014, the 5th SWOT seminar in Hebron city was organized by Birzeit University under the patronage of his Excellency the Governor of Hebron Mr. Kamel Hmeid.

This seminar was held as part of the activities of the MEDNETA project "The Mediterranean cultural network to promote creativity in the arts, crafts and design for the communities' regeneration in historic cities". It is an interactive event to allow for ACDs, stakeholders, civil society institutions and governmental representatives to work together and discuss the state of the ACDs sector in Hebron city and to explore the possible ways to promote them as part of the city regeneration.

The seminar mainly focused on two objectives; Firstly, the presentation of the results of the field survey conducted by the project team in Hebron, and discussion of these results with the audience, and Secondly, the organizers aimed through the seminar to define the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and challenges to urban regeneration and as well the priorities and needed policies for the development of traditional crafts in Hebron city.

The seminar was attended by 70 persons from the arts, crafts and design (ACDs) covered by the field research, stakeholders and different institutions.

Through the seminar, there were many discussions about the problems facing the crafts sector in Palestine, and the creative solutions for exploiting the available opportunities to improve the craftsmen situations and to develop their design and marketing skills.

Finally, the team talked about the upcoming activities, and the registration was opened for the Training and the Open day.

Concept

Old city in Hebron was the place where most of handcrafts started its business. However, nowadays, due to the Geopolitical circumstances in the city, the majority of these craftsmen moved away from the center of the old city to its surroundings and to the new districts of Hebron as a new place to run their craft. Hebron city has special geopolitical conditions, the city is divided into two areas, H1 which is under the Palestinian Authority Administration, and H2 which is under the Israeli control. Moreover, the old city is classified as H2 area and considered as closed military zone, contains Israeli checkpoints especially near the Ibrahimi mosque area, which was supposed to be the most commercial active zone in the city.

The ACDs in Hebron are located as follows:

- **The old city:** where few of ACDs are still working in the old Souq and near the Ibrahimi Mosque.
- **The Surrounding area around the old city,** which is also considered as part of the historic district but classified as H1 area. It's worth mentioning that this area started its urban development at the eve of the twentieth century.
- **Modern Hebron city:** this includes all the districts outside the old city and its surroundings. Most of the craftsmen moved to this area but still have their original places and shops closed in the old city.

During the last period, Medneta team in Birzeit University, conducted a field survey of Hebron's ACDs that covered the above mentioned three areas within the city. This research included meetings and interviews with all ACDs in the city in order to study and assess the crafts workshops' conditions regarding the production, marketing and the surrounding built environment.

The study also included identifying the crafts sectors' playing actors and stakeholders in Hebron city, including the governmental bodies, civil society institutions, unions, schools and training centers, etc. in order to find ways of collaboration with them within the MEDNETA project.

The field work shows that the number of ACDs workshops is 36 and include these specializations; Glass, Ceramics, Pottery, Wood, Mosaic, Embroidery, Antiques, Brassware, Accessories and Sand drawing.

Based on the results of this field work, the SWOT seminar has been organized to find the priorities of the crafts sector which will form the guidelines for the project's upcoming activities.

Agenda

Sessions	Duration	Presenter
First session	9:00-10:45	
Registration	9:00-9:30	Attendance
Welcoming speech / Dr. Mohammed Abdulhadi - Chairman of the Department of Architectural Engineering	9:30-9:35	Birzeit University
Speech of the Governor of Hebron / Mr. Kamel Hmeid	9:35-9:45	Hebron Governorate
Presentation of MEDNETA project in English, presenting the experience of SOWT seminars in MEDNETA projects.	9:45-9:55	National Technical University of Athens
Presentation of MEDNETA project in Arabic / Dr. Shadi Ghadban - project director	9:55- 10:10	Birzeit university
A documentary film about traditional crafts in Hebron.	10:10-10:15	Birzeit University
Presentation of results from the field survey of arts, handicrafts and design in Hebron	10:15-10:35	Birzeit University
Open discussion	10:35-10:50	
Coffee break	10:40-11:00	
Second session	11:05-12:10	
Presentation and discussion on the topic of "Creativity and Innovation in Traditional Industries" / Eng. Baher Dkedik.	11:05-12:10	Birzeit University - Center for Continuing Education (CCE)
Lunch break	12:10-13:30	
Third session	13:30-15:30	
The reality of traditional handicrafts in Hebron, available strengths, weaknesses and opportunities.	13:30-13:50	Birzeit University
Work in groups to identify challenges and priorities that the project seeks to achieve	13:50-14:20	Attendance
Summary of the results from the work by groups.	14:20-14:40	Attendance
Work in groups to identify the most important policies and procedures to achieve defined priorities.	14:40-15:10	Attendance
Summary of the results from the work by groups.	15:10-15:30	Attendance
Coffee break	15:45-15:30	
Fourth session	15:45-16:30	
Presentation of the results from the workshop	15:45-16:20	Birzeit university
Closing of the workshop	16:20-16:30	

Reports of Panels

A SWOT workshop was organized by the Department of Architectural Engineering in Birzeit University, focusing on the field of arts, handicrafts and creative design (ACDs) which targets the handicrafts sector in Hebron city area. This seminar falls within MEDNETA project (Mediterranean cultural network to promote creativity in the arts, crafts and design for communities' regeneration in historical cities). The workshop took place on Sunday the 7th of September 2014, in Hebron governorate building, under the patronage of the Governor of Hebron Mr.Kamel Hmeid and attended by workshops and handicraft workshops owners, a number of Hebron local bodies representatives in addition to the project's organizing team from Birzeit University, with a total number of 70 attendees.

First Session:

The workshop was opened by the Chairman of Architectural Engineering Department and the project communication officer Dr. Mohamed Abdel-Hadi. He welcomed the Governor of Hebron, representatives of municipalities, local bodies and the audience. Dr. Abdul-hadi talked about the craft sector and its role in the development of the local economy, providing employment opportunities, in addition to its contribution in moving the wheel of tourism, culture, economy, imports and export operations activities.

Dr. Abdul-Hadi added that "The craft sector is an important factor in raising the level of production, and development of the local tourism sector, attracting tourists to visit the region and investing in it, which contributes to create new job opportunities, and reaching a balanced development that provide an economical and cultural diversity that affects the social life".

After that, Mr. Hmeid, mentioned the role of Hebron governorate in hosting such workshops in its premises allowing to develop the city. Also, he thanked the project team, local and international partners pointing the role of such a workshop in the development process of culture, heritage and preserving the identity and the land, and developing relations with the entire world.

Mr. Hmeid called to stop the marginalization of traditional crafts sector, and he asked the project team to distribute the results of the workshop, the field survey and all studies conducted by local institutions, in order to use these documents to develop the traditional craft industry in the city and the governorate.

After that, the project leader Prof. Sofia Kolonia from the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA), in a recorded speech, talked about the cultural and historical ties which can form a propitious framework for rapprochement and cooperation between we both, in order to face the problems of interstate relations devised for former generations, encouraging the taking of problems having risen in the Mediterranean especially in Palestine through target developmental initiatives contributing essentially to the development of local economies. Prof. Kolonia added, that through a more enforced cooperation in the fields of culture and education we will bring the people of the Mediterranean closer.

Also, she added that the Mediterranean civilizations have highlighted and maintained the stability of the values for the respect of human values and rights for the cultural heritage of humanity and the natural environment. We therefore believe that they can continue to loyally serve these values and to create a common future of peace, democracy, prosperity, social and cultural understanding.

Then, the project director Dr. Shadi Ghadban, presented a summary of the project, where he confirmed that the project is based on the framework of rapprochement and cooperation, friendship and scientific cooperation, within the spirit of harmony of the Euro-Mediterranean collaboration. He mentioned that the general objective of the project is increasing the competitiveness of contemporary creative ACDs, improve cross-border cultural dialogue among multiple stakeholders, revitalize local communities, web of economic activities, and exploit partners' comprehensive experience to spread knowledge and know-how. He presented a summary of SWOT workshops in a number of Mediterranean cities participating in the project, such as Tunisia, Beirut, Athens and Valencia and pointed out that the expected results of the project centered on the development of sustainable urban strategies, stimulation of the development of social and economic environment in the historic cities, including programs for the regeneration of the Arts , Crafts and Creative designs (ACDs), and drafting of a permanent new forms of cultural and economic cooperation across the border.

The presentation of a documentary film followed, showing the different crafts and traditional industries in Hebron city area such as ceramics, glazing, pottery, clay, olive wood carving, copper formation and embroidery. This film was taken during the field journalistic tour, by the projects' media coordinator and photojournalist Mr. Iyad Jadallah. On the sidelines of the workshop, a photography exhibition took place documenting traditional crafts in Hebron city, representing the work of three photojournalists: Iyad Jadallah, Nour Alshamali and Mohammad Farraj.

Afterwards, Mrs. Andaleeb Alatawneh, the project coordinator, shared the field surveys' results conducted by the project team. One of the main issues the results raised was the severe damage that occupation causes to the crafts sector in the old city of Hebron, where intensive checking procedures limits and sometimes prevents the entry of raw materials and product exchange mainly within the borders of the old city. The field survey went through different points, including but not limited to the following:

- The inadequacy of spaces used to house some of the crafts' workshops, in terms of location, size and the possibility of sufficient waste disposal
- The deficiency of using contemporary technology to enhance product quality and increase productivity (only 37% of the pottery workshops owners use contemporary technology parallel to traditional means for example).
- Market problems facing the crafts sector due to lack of knowledge in marketing, in addition to the complications made by the Israeli occupation procedures concerning hindrance in passing raw materials through to the Palestinian market, and creating physical and legal obstacles causing late delivery of the products.

Questions and further interventions were allowed next as clarified below:

- The correctness of some results is questioned.
- Products imported from china are one of the major problems facing the local crafts products, being the main competitor due to the open market policies in the Palestinian territories and the absence of minimum standards regulations. This raises the importance of branding and stamping the country of origin of each imported product, to avoid selling it as a local one.

- The marketing process is facing the difficulty of withstanding unaffordable expenses, and this could be encountered by establishing an official marketing body for all crafts or even for each one aside.
- The urge of making a strategic plan for development concerning crafts and the traditional industry sector in Hebron Governorate.
- The complications of the exporting procedures implemented by the Palestinian ministries are a main reason behind lack of exporting Palestinian crafts, where each exporter needs to be officially registered in the municipality and ministry of health and should own a building permit for his/her workshop, while the only requirement for import is an age above 16.

Dr. Shadi Ghadban commented on some of these interventions explaining that all presented information and results were merely the discharge of data obtained from the questionnaires without any interference. Regarding import problems, it's time to enforce additional terms on import/export regulations to support the local product and its capacity to face the market. Dr. Ghadban further emphasized the importance of having a branding name or a trade mark for each product produced by the local workshops to be protected by the Palestinian commercial and trademark laws.

Second Session:

The second session handled the topic of creativity and innovation in traditional industries, presented by Mr. Baher Idkedek, an engineer in the Center of Continuing Education in Birzeit University. After defining the term "industry" Mr. Idkedek focused in his presentation on several major topics, clarifying the main factors which industry relies on, explaining that Palestine already owns the resources and raw material, but to add value to these materials industry is needed in addition to a deep understanding of the market needs, adding that crafts in Palestine are considered to be low-tech industries where a sufficient use of technology can improve the product value dramatically.

In his presentation Mr. Idkedek clarified what a product life cycle is, showing the difference between the terms creativity and innovation, and stressing the significance of innovation to further extend a product's life time in the market by understanding and implementing product

management tools and approaches, closing the presentation by suggesting a general road map to improve any product through three steps:

1. Elevate industry level by adding new techniques and skills. This can be relevant to raw materials and their characteristics, or by enhancing implementation strategies and technologies.
2. Thinking out of the box for a while
3. Professional implementation of product management tools.

Third Session:

After the lunch, 50 persons participated in session 3, the attendance included representatives from the craftsmen, stakeholders, tourism and antiquities, education ministry, center for cultural heritage preservation in addition to MEDNETA team from Birzeit University.

At first, the results of the sectorial workshops "strengths and weaknesses" were circulated and discussed between the participants and the project coordinator Andaleb Atawneh and the rest of BZU team.

After that, the craftsmen were divided into working groups to discuss the challenges and priorities to find the main threats that facing the crafts sector in Hebron, and to suggest policies and procedures for developing the conditions of traditional crafts.

At the end of this session, the results of the working groups were presented and discussed by all participants, and the results were as shown in the following table:

Results of the workshop:	
Internal environment	
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1- Chances of succession in the traditional crafts are good. 2- The raw materials for some crafts are inexpensive and available locally. 3- Many workshops are owned by the craftsmen. 4- The craftsmen are skilful and have the potential for innovation and creativity. 5- The craftsmen are capable to produce good quality items. 6- The number of workshops and manufactures is sufficient. 7- The use the crafts products, specially the ceramics and pottery has good healthy impacts. 8- A skilful manpower for some crafts is available. 9- The competitiveness between craftsmen in the same sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1- The products are promoted only through the owner himself. 2- The raw materials are expensive specially those used in ceramic manufacturing because of the high cost of the import. 3- Inappropriateness of the working environment for some crafts, like pottery because it needs vast areas rather than the resulted, harmful waste and smoke. 4- The low number of craftsmen (36) in general, and in the glass sector in particular. 5- Disability of some craftsmen to incorporate new technologies that increase the quality and quantity of production. 6- The running cost are high specially in the crafts that depend on using electricity and fuel; like ceramics. 7- Most of the craftsmen aren't aware of the importance of getting training which help them in developing their professional skills. 8- The participation in local and international exhibitions is weak. 9- Most of craftsmen don't care about property rights. 10- In some sectors, the craftsmen's focus on creativity and innovation doesn't meet the needs of the local and international market.

External Environment	
Opportunities	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1- The presence of institutions that sponsor the crafts sector are available. 2- The presence of good local market which could be used to promote craft products. 3- The society positive perception towards the traditional crafts products. 4- The high property rights is given high consideration by local and international institutions. 5- The presence of various projects for developing tourism in Palestine including the handicrafts sector. 6- The presence of several vocational educational institutions, which could be used for crafts training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1- The present legal status of the crafts workshops. 2- The raw materials and fuel and the possibility to provide them locally. 3- The Israeli crossings and check points' policies and practices. 4- The future sustainability of skilled manpower, locally. 5- The interaction of the local market with crafts products. 6- Absence of quality assurance lab-tests. 7- The present quality and objectives of the programs available in the crafts education institutions. 8- The possible future regeneration of the crafts industry in the old city. 9- The creation of policies and procedures to support the crafts sector including taxes and fees. 10- The development of cooperation and integration between craftsmen, artists and designers. 11- The role of the supporting institutions in developing marketing and management skills of the craftsmen.
Priorities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1- To increase the interaction of ACDs with the local market. 2- Developing of the craftsmen's marketing skills. 3- To activate and develop the role of the vocational educational institutions in terms of programs offered to promote ACDs. 4- Developing procedures to settle the legal problems of the crafts workshops. 5- Developing programs to encourage the craftsmen to work inside the old city. 6- To develop the cooperation between artists and craftsmen. 	

- 7- Increasing the awareness of the craftsmen towards the importance of property rights.
- 8- Improving the policies and procedures to protect the local products and control the imported ones.

At the end of the seminar, Dr. Shadi Gadhban reviewed the main outputs of the SWOT seminar workshop, and made a discussion about the Open Day and the Training Workshop which are parts of the project upcoming activities. Then the registration was opened for these two events, where 21 persons registered for the Open Day and 25 persons for the Training Workshop.