



# **BASIC CHOICES**

## CHAPTER III

### BASIC CHOICES

The ambitions and objectives that Lebanon has set in its Constitution and vocation put an outline for the country's prosperous and united future, where it would constitute an internationally recognized regional pole that would respect and expose its resources and heritage, and ensure that high quality collective services are provided to its citizens.

The challenges of the future show that these ambitions are not easily achieved, that there could even be risks of deterioration and that only adequate strategic choices would allow overcoming difficulties and reaching the ambitions.

What should these fundamental strategic basic choices be?

Expected responses to the various challenges converge towards three choices that are **unity, balance and rationalization**, as represented in the following table:

*Table 18: Challenges of the future and required responses*

Economic development	Reduce production costs Diversify activities Connect all the regions
Public Finance	Rationalize usage of public Finance Reduce costs of public services
Uncertainty of regional conflict	Improve competitiveness
Social cohesion	Promote national unity Promote solidarities Support local economy
Demographic growth, Urban sprawl, Environment, Needs	Rationalize the use of land Rationalize the use of resources Provide the infrastructure required nationwide

Effectively:

- Land use management must promote the unity of the country, economy, society, and territory. It is the major obligation required to confront economic and social challenges of Lebanon.
- Land use management must work to alleviate discrepancies of development between regions, but in the framework of a new, objective and modern conception of balanced development principle.
- Land use management must look for a rational use of the country's limited resources, particularly natural resources and public finance.

These fundamental choices overwhelm the entire orientations adopted by the National Physical Master Plan at the spatial level, be it in the determination of soil vocations, proposed urban structure, development projects for the various regions, orientations in the field of transport and public infrastructure, urban planning and management of urbanization development or natural resources and heritage management.

Thus, these choices constitute the basic parts of the adopted “management solution”.

### **III.1 A UNITARY AND INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL TERRITORY**

The fundamental choice of an integrated development of the nation is important in order to give more strength to the national economy and counter permanent risks of fragmentation of the national entity. However, this choice is not contradictory with an efficient decentralization at the municipality level.

The National Physical Master Plan promotes a unitary and integrated development which contradicts another vision that consists of concurrently implementing similar regional projects (at the Mohafaza or Caza level for example), thinking that this would be more beneficial and take into account local factors. Such a vision, besides that it would not secure a coherent plan, would contribute to anchoring development inequalities and emphasizing centrifugal tendencies (separation of regions, communities and local economies); its impact on the national economy would have been less advantageous and its impact on public finance much heavier.

The “unitary and integrated” choice could materialize through a series of arrangements:

- Priority to facilities and infrastructures of national importance: harbors, airports, road network, Lebanese University, but also conservation of agricultural, natural and tourism potential of the country, and global valorization of water resources, mountain and coastline.
- A unitary conception of economic development over the entire territory: the economy of cities and distant regions should not be conceived as a sum of similar local economies, but as components of a single national system, in which each region brings its specific contribution. This means that not only agricultural and tourism development will take place in distant regions, but also services and industrial sectors will develop.
- The development of each region of Lebanon (North, Center, East and South) must itself be further unified: large cities being the most prepared to play an economic leading role on behalf of their regions. The unity of development must be organized, in each region, around powerful urban centers. The more economically powerful Tripoli will be, the more the North region will benefit. Economic development will not occur by dissemination of small facilities, but from high investments in the industrial and services sectors.
- Road-links among large agglomerations of the country, among these agglomerations and secondary cities of their rural hinterland and among secondary cities and villages must be significantly improved in order to serve this unitary vision.
- The Lebanese university should no longer be scattered in various branches. Faculties must reunite. They also must be established in 4 campuses in the country, namely the North, Greater Beirut, the South and the Beqaa, each of them having all the faculties, in a way that encourages intermingling of youth.

Nevertheless, Land management should not be only unitary, but integral as well. Solutions for water services, solid wastes and wastewater treatment must be undertaken with close cooperation between municipalities and all stakeholders. Unions of Municipality will play a major role in the implementation of these solutions and conception of integral development projects over vast territories.

### **III.2 A POSITIVE DEFINITION OF THE BALANCED DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLE**

The principle of balanced development of regions has to be implemented with more strength, but in the framework of a modern conception of action that avoids anything that could contribute to the fragmentation of the country or to weakening solidarities and complementarities among the cities and regions.

When equality of treatment of regions implies fragmentation of education facilities or creation of power plants in each region to insure autonomy, or administrative divisions intended to reinforce communitarian homogeneity, these actions would work against national unity.

On the contrary, when equality of treatment consists of assuring the same level of basic public services (water, electricity, education, health care, etc.) all over the country, by accepting, and even favoring unity of national level facilities (universities, higher professional formation, energy production, etc.) and their establishment in regional poles, such policy strengthens the purpose of national unity.

Hence, the concept of balanced development of regions adopted by the National Physical Master Plan relates to the following orientations:

- Absolute evenness of treatment of all the regions as far as the quality of basic services is concerned (water, electricity and telephone);
- Development of the entire water resources in favor of towns, industries and agriculture over the national territory;
- Participation of all the regions in the development of the national economy by choosing a complementary development of major national activities over 4 major urban entities: Central Urban Area (Beirut + Mount-Lebanon), the capital of the North Tripoli, the large agglomerations of Beqaa (Zahle-Chtaura, Baalbeck) and the large agglomerations of the South (Saïda, Nabatiyeh, Tyre).
- Priority given to the Port of Tripoli for transit shipment towards Iraq;
- Priority given to the development of 3 major industrial zones: north of Tripoli, in the agglomerations of Zahle-Chtaura and between Ghazieh and Zahrani;
- Distribution of the Lebanese University faculties and main industrial zones over 4 areas: Greater Beirut, Tripoli, Zahle, and Nabatiyeh.

- Development of commercial functions of 2 secondary agglomerations, Saida and Jbayl, as the gates of the Central Urban Area towards the South and the North;
- Remarkable development of tourist functions of Baalbeck and Tyre;
- Strengthening of road links between each of the centers and the rest of the surrounding areas;
- Development of the most deprived regions, particularly with the reinforcement of the connection between Hermel and Tripoli through Akkar (highway project between Tripoli and Halba and improvement of the bypass between Qobaiyat and Hermel), between Baalbeck and Hermel (improvement of the existing itinerary), as well as reinforcement of the links from Hasbayya towards the North and South, and between Sir-Denniyeh and the 3 neighboring regions: Tripoli, Ehden and Akkar.

### III.3 RATIONAL USE OF RESOURCES

The Rational use of resources, be it: public Finance, agricultural soil, water, resources of tourist attractions (sea, landscapes, heritage, etc.), existing and future infrastructure and facilities and of course lands in urban as well as rural areas; answers at the same time to the vital need to limit public expenses wherever possible, to secure a better social benefice of resources and to increase competitiveness in various sectors of the economy.

A country's resources constitute an Asset. To benefit from its advantages, it is important to invest in this asset rather than consume it. This is the rule that should guide the use of resources in Lebanon, be that natural, human, physical or financial resources.

However, when there is no choice but to consume one part of the asset (to offer lands for construction, for example), rational approach consists in minimizing losses (to avoid offering the best agricultural lands or to degrade exceptional sites), or in transforming this part of the consumed asset to another type of asset (a well-fitted construction that would enrich the landscape).

#### To know how to use natural resources

The main natural resources of Lebanon are water, sites (mountains, valleys, coastline, etc.), agricultural lands and natural vegetation (forests, etc.). Being limited, their rational use is more than vital.

These resources play an important role in the quality of life, agricultural productivity and tourist attractions. It is necessary to avoid their dilapidation and, on the contrary, use each of them in the most profitable manner.

Water is a rare resource in the Middle East and Lebanon has the “gift” of being more endowed than its neighboring countries. Nevertheless, enormous efforts are needed in order to control its use and preserve its quality. Lebanon has to carry out this task in a productive approach, aiming at a better quality of life for citizens and a higher productivity of agricultural lands. There is a large consensus upon this national objective. It is therefore essential to find ways to realize it.

Remarkable sites (mountains, valleys, landscapes and coastline) and natural areas (especially forested zones) constitute in Lebanon a unique asset that must be used for improving the quality of life and the tourism economy. The use of sites, as resources, should avoid their degradation. Conflicts of uses (on the coastline, mountains, etc.) should be regulated in a way best suitable for the sustainable valorization of this asset. In particular, all forms of pollution are to be avoided, whether it is solid or liquid wastes, or “visual” pollution (obstruction of views, mediocre architecture, degraded or ruined construction, etc.).

Lebanon’s agricultural lands are among the most fertile lands in the Middle East. Moreover, they provide a large diversity of location and exposure (latitudes, elevations, coastal zones and interior plains, etc.), which allows cultivating a large variety of produce. The best lands constitute a national asset that should not be dilapidated.

What applies to water resources, sites and soils is generally applicable to the entire national territory. In fact, Lebanon is a small territory that is densely populated. The population density is even one of the highest in the world (11<sup>th</sup> rank). It is essential to ensure, in this small territory, the necessary functions required for the life and activities of the 4 million people of Lebanon (more than 5 million in 30 years from now).

But there are various constraints: only 39% of the territory is beneath 800 m of elevation and 35% is located above 1,200 m. The length of the coast is less than 250 km long. The scarcity of the “land” resource compels to organize its use in a reasonable manner and, before all, its economy. The objective must be not to waste areas that are most adequate for a given activity, by using it for another one.

#### To save public funds

For almost twenty years, Lebanon has been characterized by very costly multiplication of various forms of urban development, especially isolated construction, away from existing districts or villages.

Such forms of development induce growing expenditures for network extension (water, wastewater, electricity and telephone) and even major facilities displacement (reservoirs, pumping stations, transformers, etc.), road network maintenance and solid waste collection. Taking into consideration the limited public finance, Lebanon could no longer be a burden on the State and the Municipalities for such kind of avoidable expenses. Most countries in the world, including developed ones, have implemented policies aiming at

reducing forms of urbanization that could be costly for the Community, or make investors contractors bear induced direct or indirect expenses. Public welfare must meet this path.

In this framework, investment programs assume a major importance, where criteria for project selection must be refined: financial budgets allocated for different sectors must be better calibrated to satisfy the needs of sector by sector. The choices of projects within one sector must, without exceptions, promote the performance of existing installations in favor of new projects.

#### To know how to use other resources

The same approach is valid for all types of resources in the country, starting with the first primary resource, the human resource. Lebanon must encourage the use of its labor force in professions they have trained for, and try to resolve all the problems that lead the young generation to emigrate. An active person who lives and works in the country would contribute far more to the national economy than a one who has emigrated, even if the latter transfers money to his or her family in Lebanon.

As for physical resources, such as transport infrastructures and others, they must be used adequately: a highway must help reduce the distances and transport time between two cities. However, its use as a commerce boulevard might generate traffic obstructions, and increase transport time from one place to another that increase these distances. Profit of the commerce activity for a small number of people could not compensate for the economic loss induced by these obstructions.