

THEMA 01: Living Heritage and Urban Resilience: Integrating Preservation and Development in Historic Cities, Towns, and Villages



SEPTEMBER 10-15, 2025

STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING HISTORIC CITIES' RESILIENCE TO DISASTERS

EARTHERN ARCHITECTURE QAA CASE

Siame - Hanna ISHAC

Vice President CIVVIH

REPRESENTATIVE ICOMOS HPF at UN-HABITAT

Architect Urban planner Director of Heritage

Collaborating partners:

Alia Fares - Archaeologist, QHRP Project director, Heritage Education Program NGO

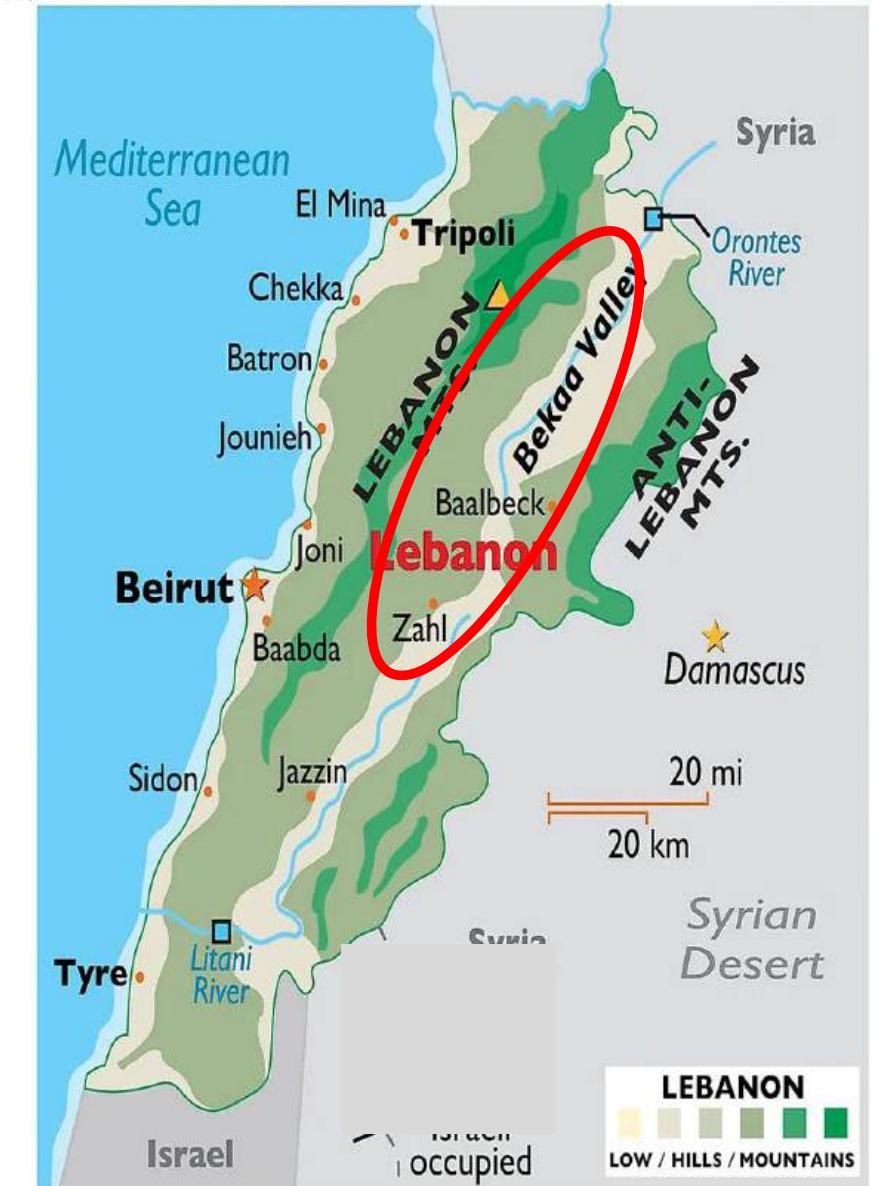
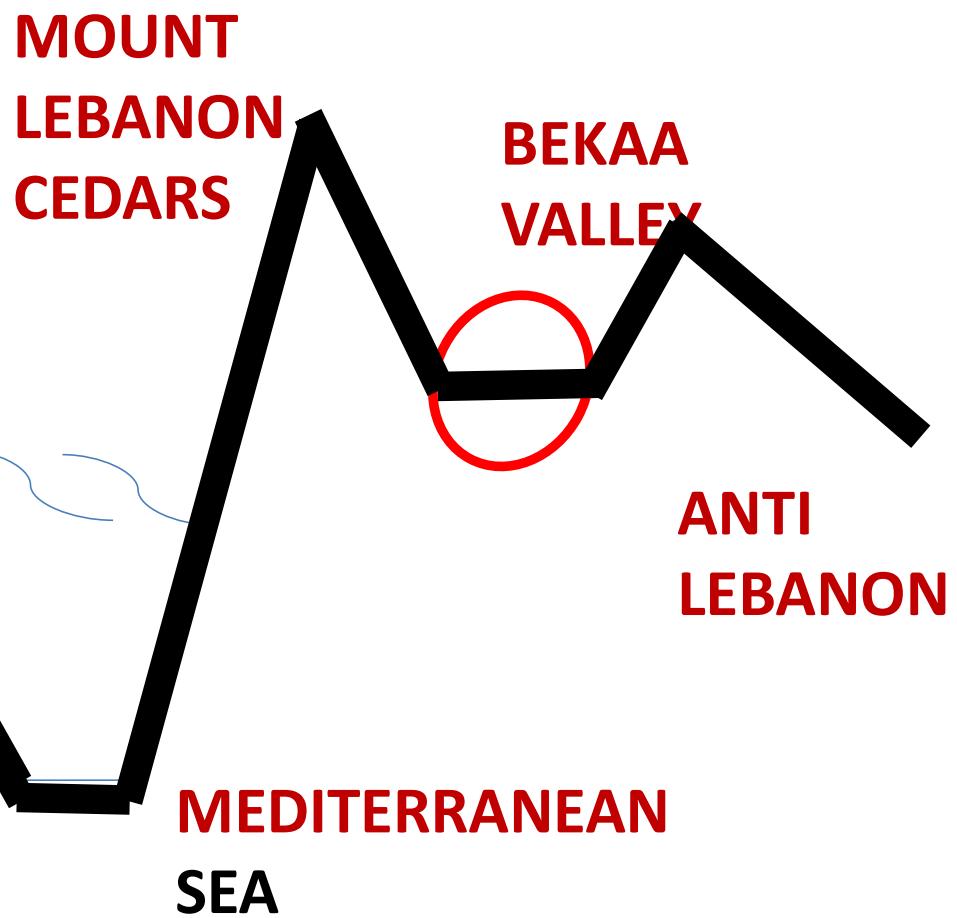
Salam Kallas - Local active citizen, HIMAM NGO

Nicolas Matar - HIMAM NGO and ex-el-Qaa mayor

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**STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING HISTORIC CITIES'
RESILIENCE TO DISASTERS**

CONTEXT



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TO DISASTERS

**Mudbrick earthen architecture has been used for millennia in Lebanon's Beqaa valley;
QAA , TAANAYEL**

We observe remains of earthen construction in BEKAA villages and some villages in the north of LEBANON
(mixed typologies)



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BEKAA LANDSCAPE



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This typical construction has been employed since 5000 years in the region,

Many cities, many imperial sites was built by Mudbrick and still preserved

Persépolis (Iran), Nile Valley (Egypt)

SYRIA(DEIR ATTIEH)

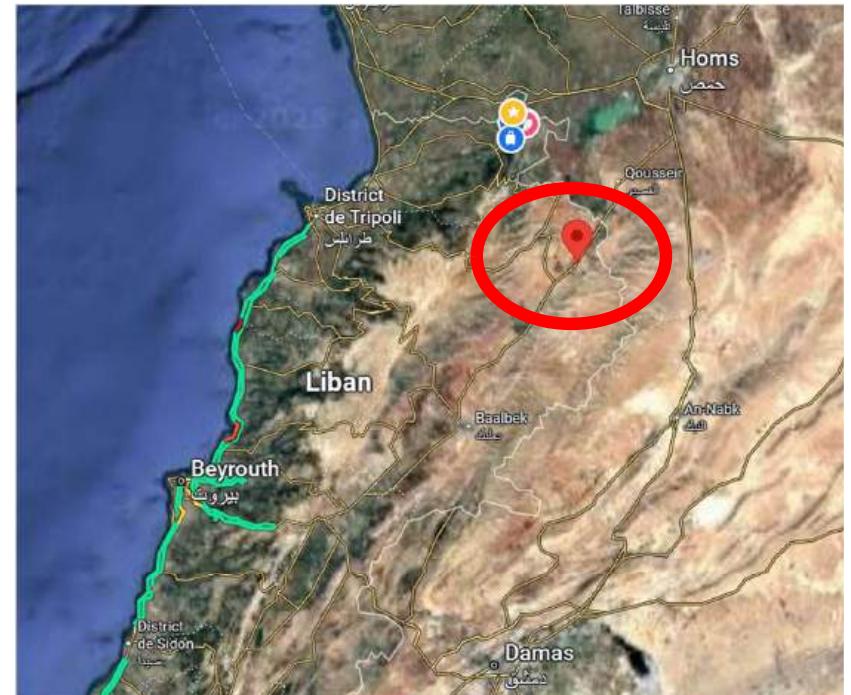


QAA CASE EARTHERN ARCHIRTECTURE

Constructive model that has been disappearing for decades

The village of QAA has witnessed many devastating calamities over recent decades

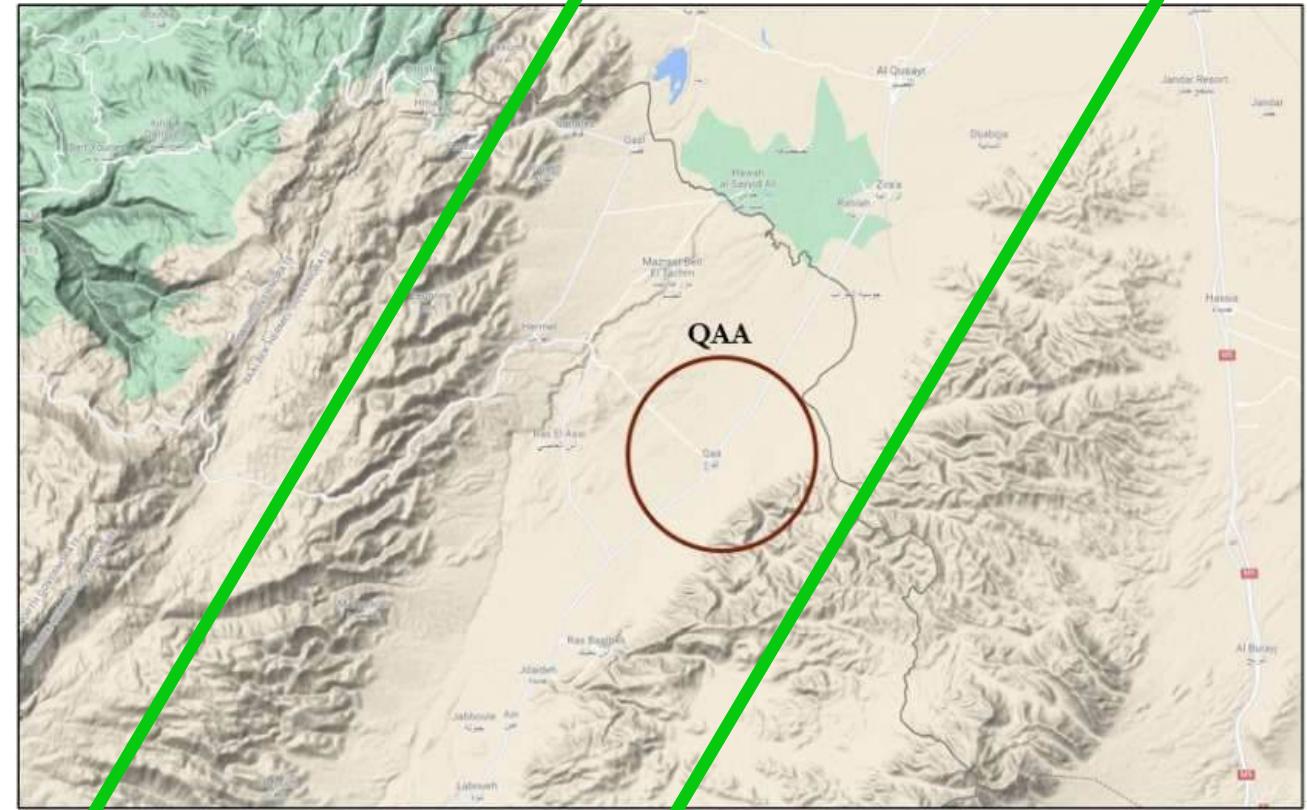
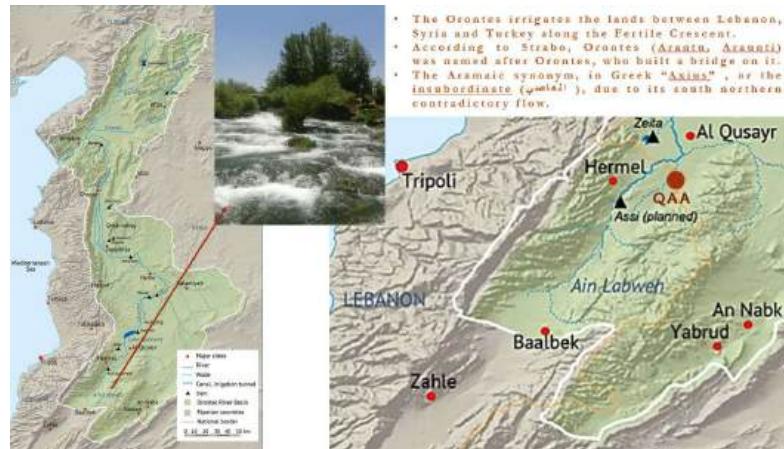
It is an example of many villages in Lebanon who switched to concrete construction



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QAA CASE EARTHERN ARCHIRTECTURE

**constructive model that has
been disappearing for decades**

Adding local Contexte :

- a civil war,
- military invasions,
- climate change with heavy weather fluctuations
- a depletion of natural resources,



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constructive model that has been disappearing for decades

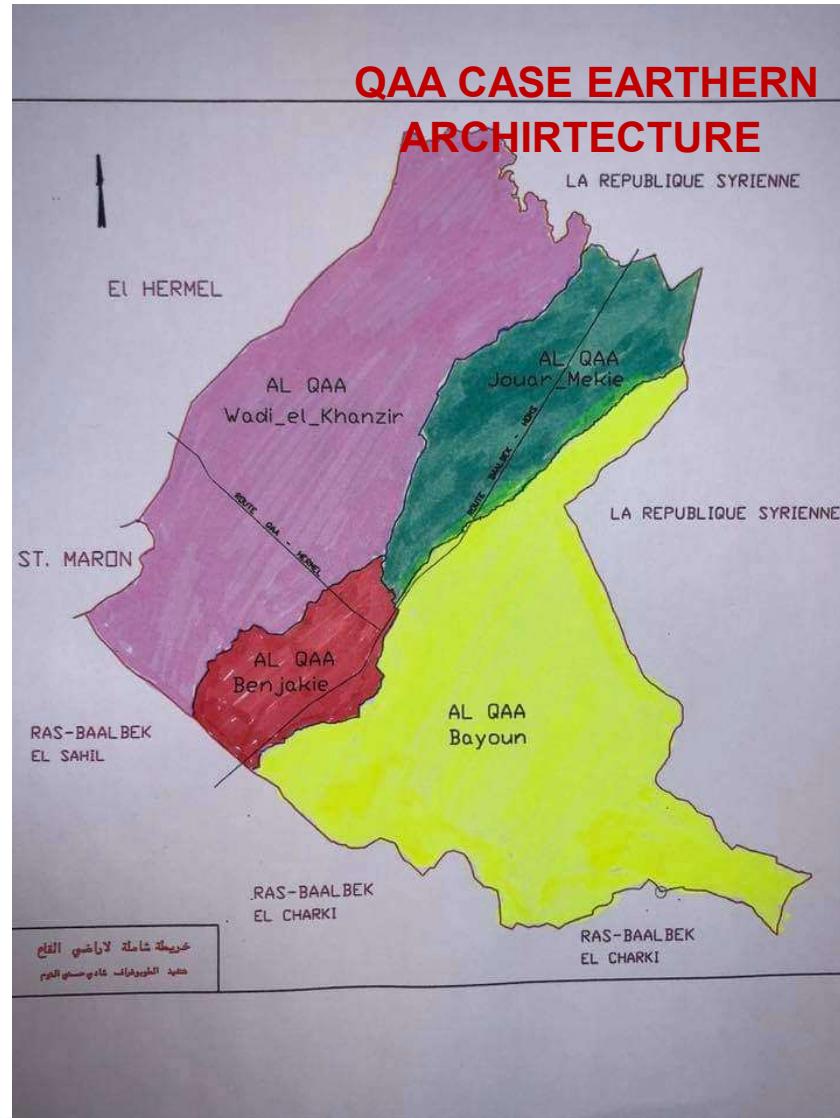
And

- rejection of models that require maintenance and that are considered indecent/uncomfortable



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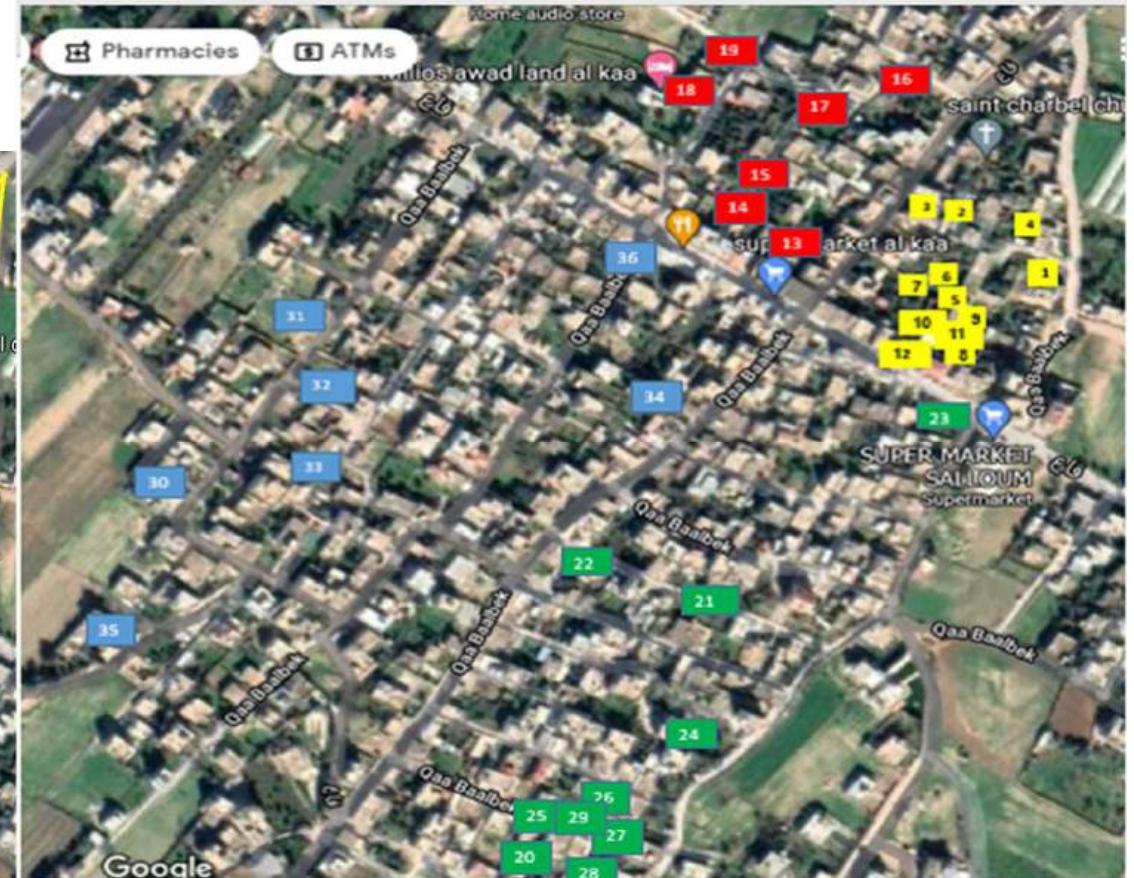
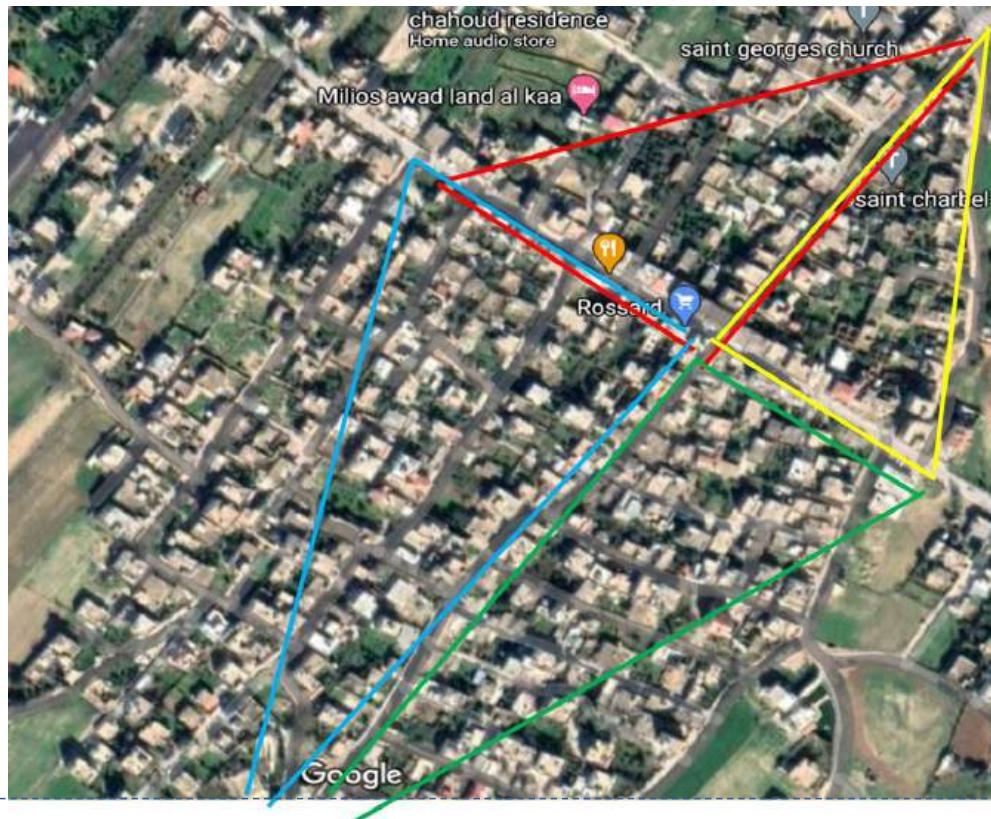
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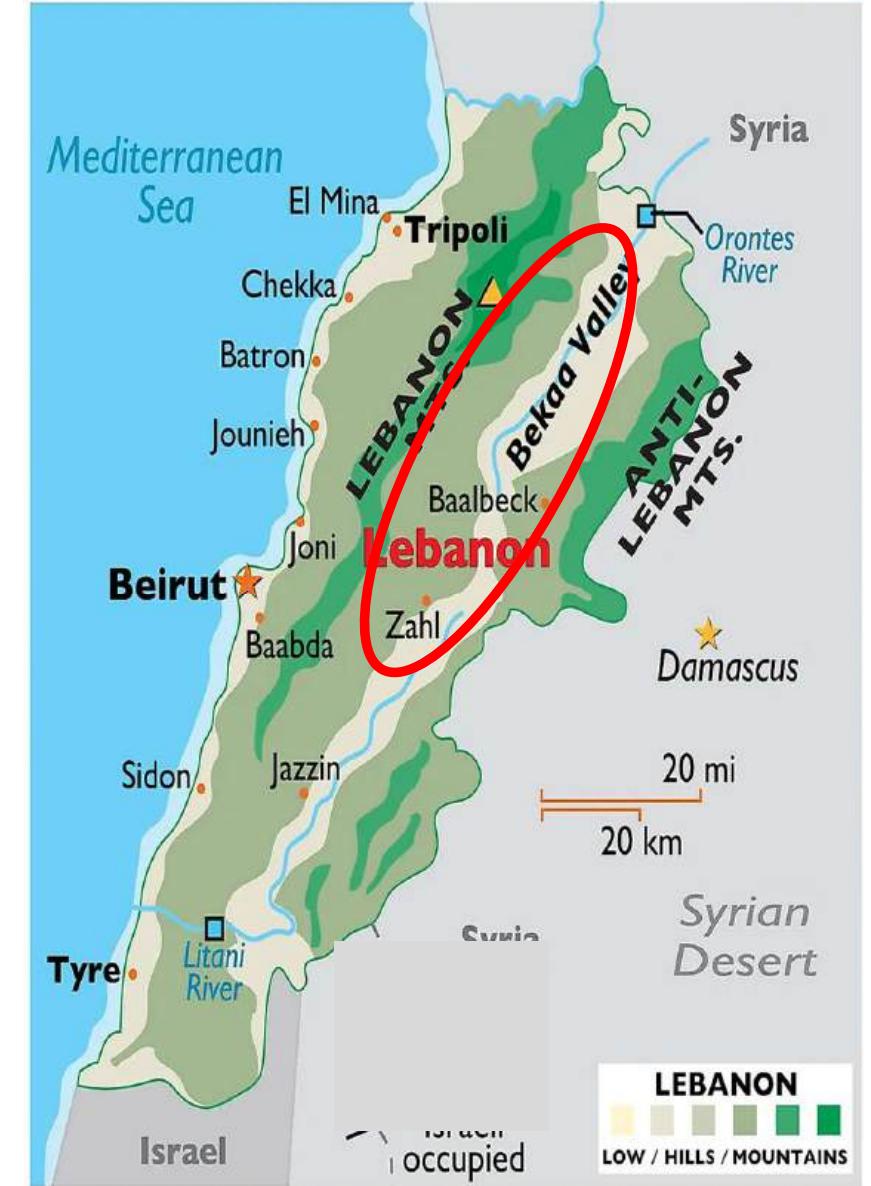
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QAA CASE EARTHERN ARCHIRTECTURE 34 sites



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THREATS AND AWARENESS



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Awareness

The village of el-Qaa has entire quarters of intact mudbrick dwellings resulting in the emigration of 80% of its inhabitants - leaving centuries-old mudbrick buildings to decay



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**QAA CASE EARTHERN
ARCHITECTURE**

Threats and Awareness

Raw earth construction using materials from the Bekaa, a local skill, is disappearing.

This construction style, similar to domed buildings, is a typical architectural style of northeastern Syria and the surrounding region.

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Threats and Awareness

These nostalgia-filled picturesque and historical houses build the urban fabric of this village.



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Threats and Awareness

It is therefore necessary to preserve a cultural heritage that is in danger.



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Threats and Awareness
it is
A climate-resilient architectural
Craft
model ,
culturally fragile
endangered.



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INITIATIVE



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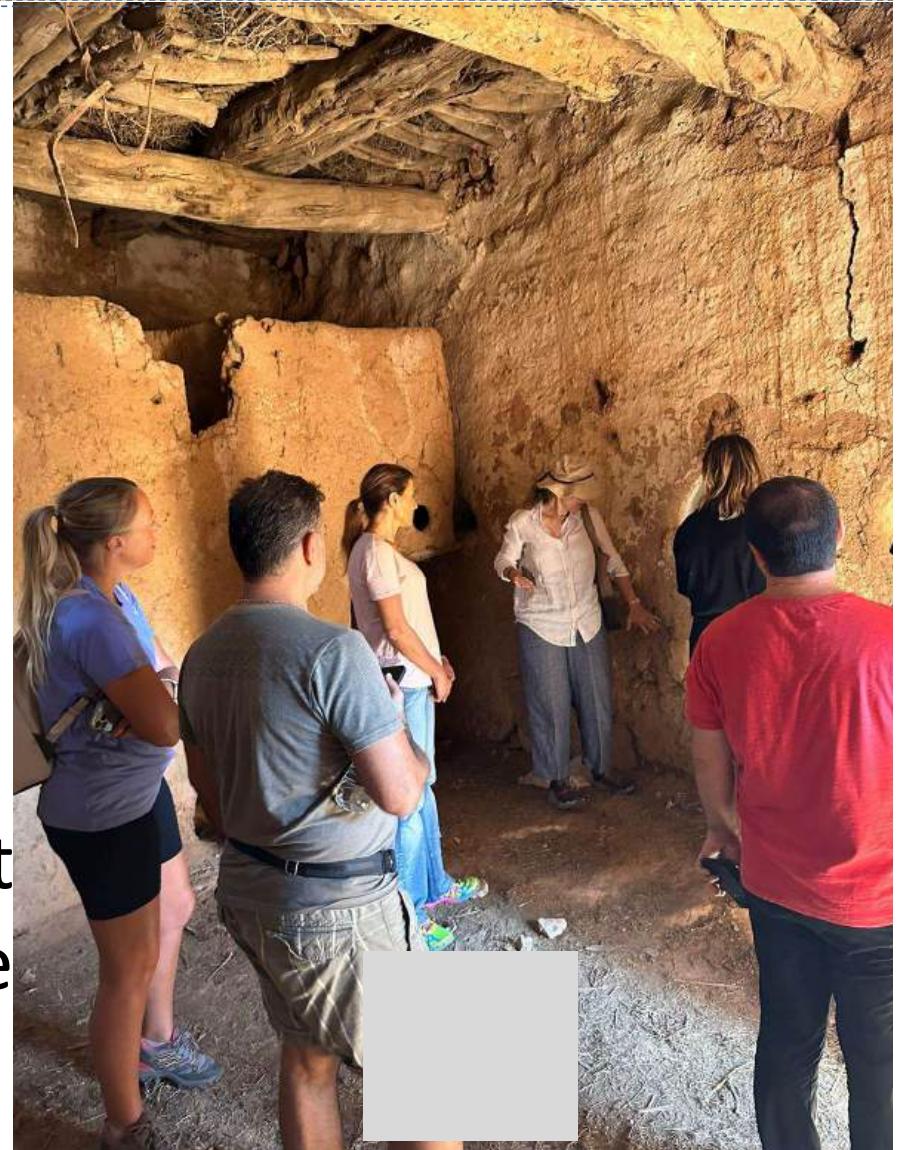
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INITIATIVE

Subject matter experts, archaeologists, and architect restorers

are involved

in empowering locals to document, protect and preserve their heritage



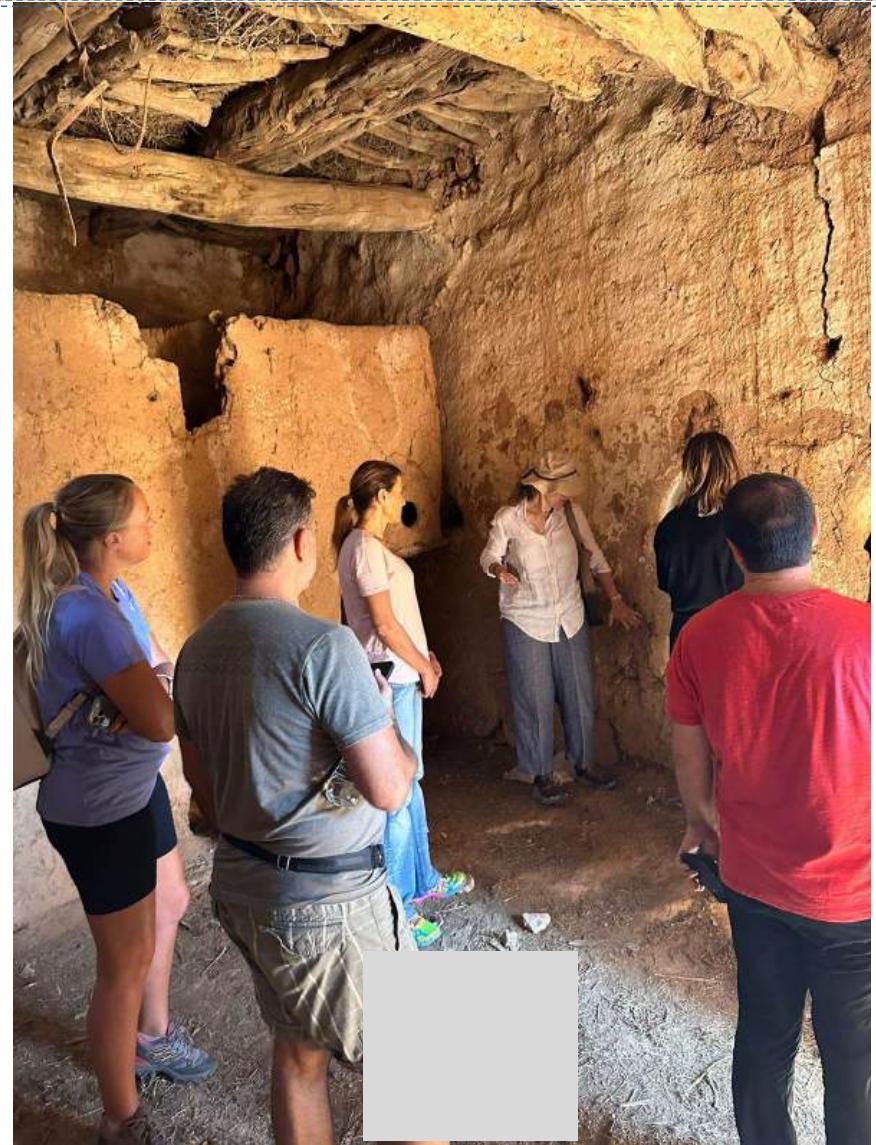
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VIDEO



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**QAA CASE EARTHERN
ARCHIRTECTURE
INITIATIVE**

RISE OF QHRP

QHRP aims to revive the rural identity of el-Qaa by preserving its traditional heritage of vernacular mudbrick architecture targeting eco-tourism based economic opportunities.



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هيئة المجتمع المحلي «همم»



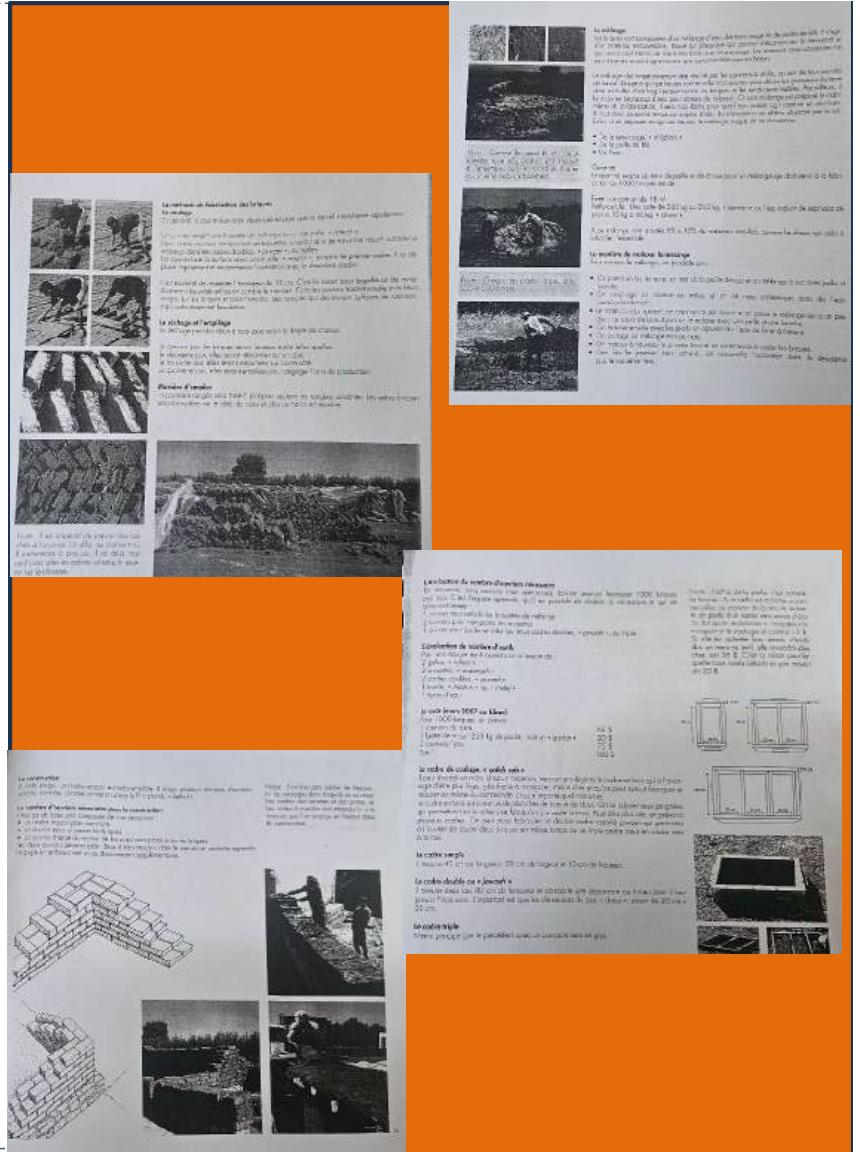
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CULTURAL AND DEVELOPMENT GOALS

A series of adobe craft training courses and workshops will be implemented , with the target to rehabilitate the urban fabrik and to introduce new durable, sustainable and climate change resilient methods of building techniques. *



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CULTURAL AND DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Additionally, the project aims on the long term is to reverse the depopulation process by restoring the dwellings and turning the region into a tourism destination, training locals in rebuilding using traditional construction techniques.



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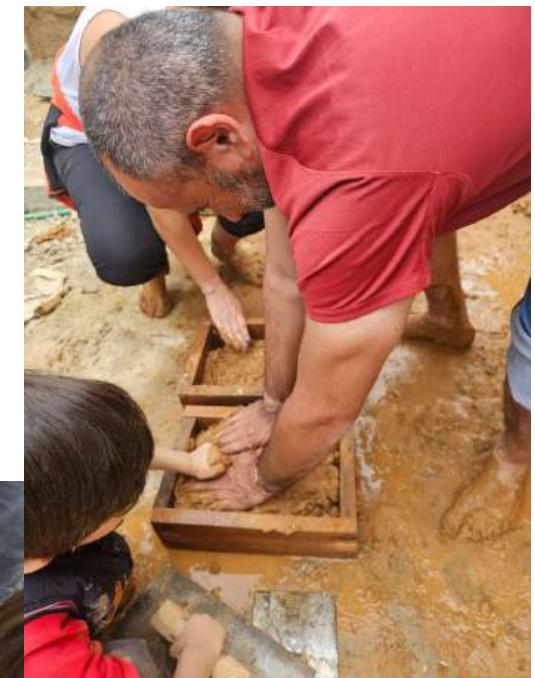
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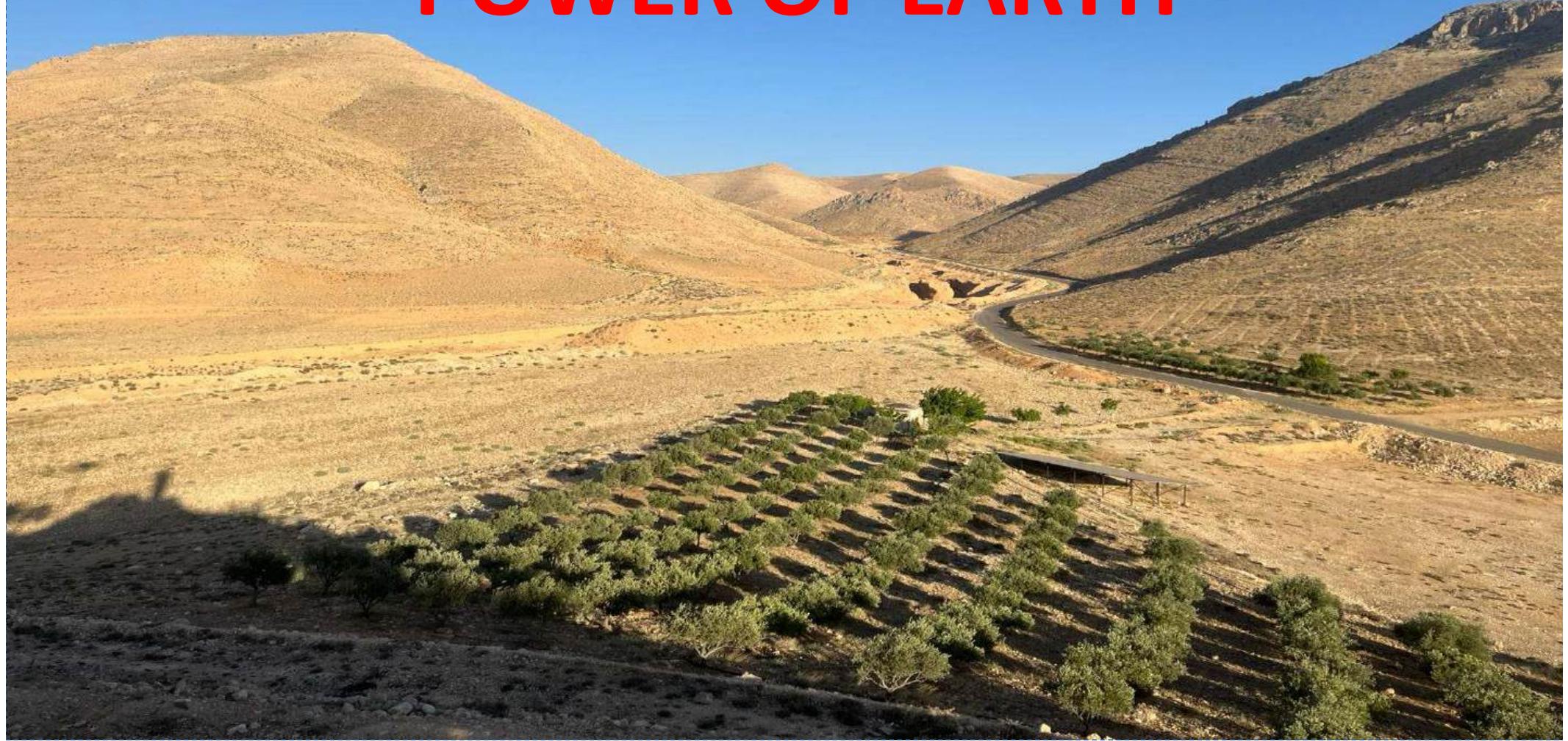
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TO GO FURTHER

The use of raw earth in construction is currently experiencing a revival, stimulated by current environmental awareness.

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POWER OF EARTH



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QAA CASE EARTHERN ARCHIRTECTURE

TO GO FURTHER

Indeed, it has real potential as a sustainable building material, provided that its application techniques are mastered and it is known how to judiciously combine it with other materials!
In Lebanon and around



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TO GO FURTHER

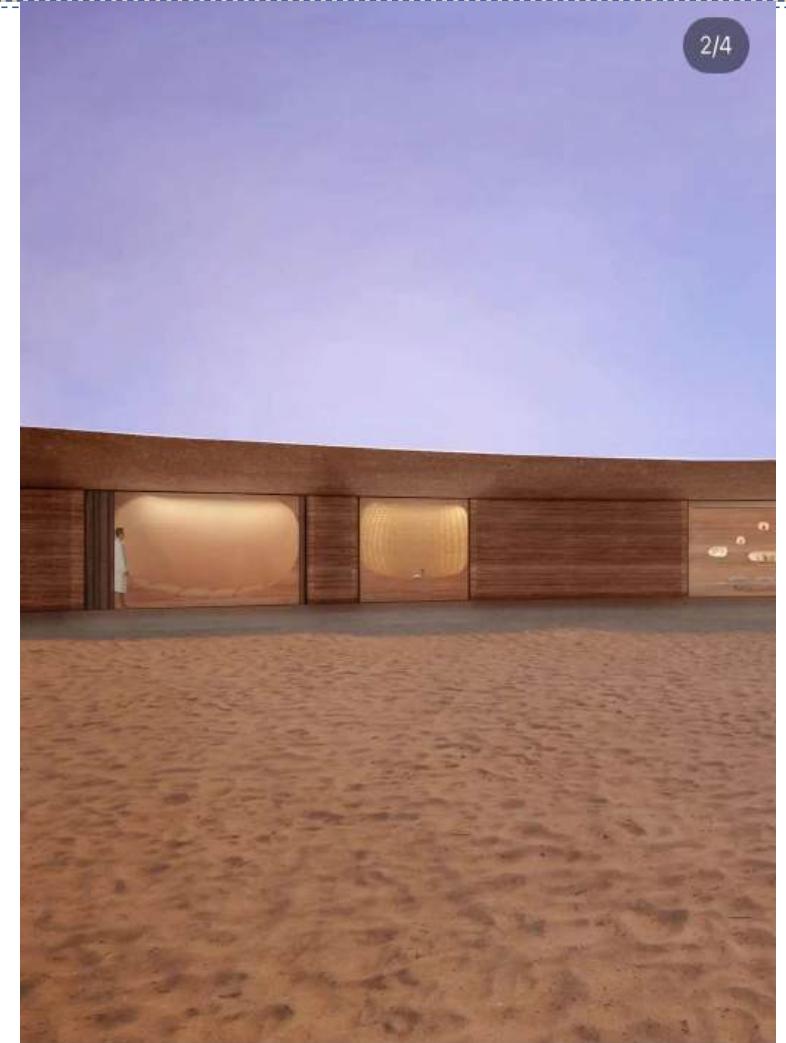
Indeed, it has real potential as a sustainable building material, provided that its application techniques are mastered and it is known how to judiciously combine it with other materials!



SDG GOALS

TO GO FURTHER

This ancestral method, adapted to modern requirements, demonstrates its effectiveness and its importance for the future of ecological construction.



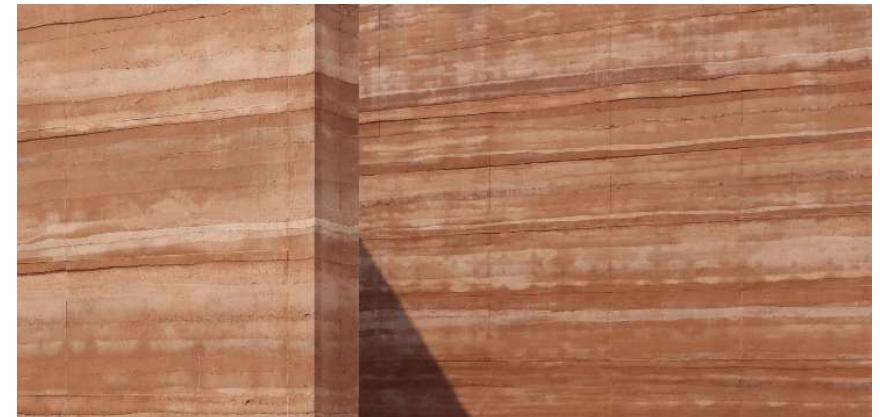
[LINA GOTMEH ARCHITECTE AL ULA](#)

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TO GO FURTHER

How to Build a Sustainable Project

The Potential of Raw Earth in the
lebanease and regional Revival/
reconstruction is georgeous



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This presentation is a starter to collect ideas about how to engage this construction in the current technological context.

Proposals to establish a pedagogy and strategies to overcome the difficulties of building with raw earth in the Lebanese context and same local features areas .

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Building from the materials, earth and water, that we find in our immediat environnement .

Today, the **great growth** of populations and the **climate change** forces population to create new constructions that pose serious problems for development and sustainable building.

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Lebanon and the region are not exempt from these parameters.

We concede that the industrialization of materials has changed the way of life towards more consumption of manufactured products, which is detrimental to sustainable development and for sur for visual pollution.

In Lebanon, earthen architecture is not ubiquitous in most cities, it has been forgotten for many decades even in regions with harsh climates and high risk of natural disasters

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TO GO FURTHER

Advantages

Raw earth

is a raw, ecological material that remains unchanged by the manufacturing process, emphasizing its natural and healthy character.

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TO GO FURTHER

Advantages

- sustainable architecture.
- The energy footprint of such buildings is minimized,
- fully recycled.
- creating a healthy habitat, offering excellent thermal inertia and natural humidity regulation.
- remarkable fire resistance,
- "It's like natural air conditioning":

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TO GO FURTHER

Disadvantages

A raw earth construction requires the addition of an insulating material to protect against frost and moisture. It is economical as a raw material; its specific application requires rare expertise and is more time-consuming than conventional construction methods. This can increase the final project budget.

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Solutions have been questionable in several regions of the world.

Working to find advanced and effective technical solutions.

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POWER OF CREATIVITY



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POWER OF RULES

TO GO FURTHER

RECOMMANDATIONS

Despite its environmental benefits, raw earth construction is not yet widely adopted in the construction sector, partly due to the lack of specific **regulations governing** its use.

the use of raw earth in construction imposes limits on architectural creativity due to its numerous technical constraints, which can turn into significant challenges.

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TO GO FURTHER
RECOMMANDATIONS

learning from the Egyptian architect Hassan Fathy, who understood and demonstrated that, on an architectural scale, one of the answers to these problems lies in leveraging local resources. He mobilized available cognitive and pragmatic resources: local knowledge and know-how.* village of New Gourna, on the west bank of the Nile, in Luxor.

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POWER OF TECHNOLOGIE

TO GO FURTHER

RECOMMANDATIONS

Regulated technical production sectors

and scientific analysis offices are to be developed on a human scale with the ambition of being a catalyst for environmental, energy, and societal transitions, as well as for changing behaviors in local construction.

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By reintroducing know-how and integrating reflections

**combining know-how and new technologies,
as well as training local people,**

**Basing on
new design regarding the material
EQUITY new concepts funds building capacity**

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we can equitably find solutions to maintain populations in their natural and social environment and support them by creating sectors that ensure sustainability, ecology, hygiene, and technical and technological performance.

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THANK YOU
MERCI POUR VOTRE ECOUTE .

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