

# WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THE RECONSTRUCTION OF ALEPPO?

ESRA CAN AKBIL

In conflict, the major destruction of cities aims at and causes primarily the destruction of commons of the city. To start planning the reconstruction now, instead of post-conflict, would open up architecture and urbanism into becoming agents to transform conflict from an ethnic or religious one to the one where urban actors shall react to controversial matters related to the city, turning the conflicting narratives into processes of building the commons.

In order to act as a transforming tool, reconstruction processes in conflicted spaces should put forward strategies of emergencies and participatory planning. Hands-on design tools shall be employed as support structures for grassroot civil initiatives and citizens for being part of decision-making processes towards a unified development of the cities. Such advocacy of citizens and city commons would bring legitimacy to the actions.

Keywords: advocacy, participatory design, building commons

MARIE-THERES ALBERT

The heritage of humankind is unique and irreplaceable. Therefore, the responsibility of sustainable preservation actively shifts from the former to the current and finally to the future generations. The heritage of humankind does not only belong to an individual culture, but instead, to the shared cultures of the people as a whole. This was the message delivered by UNESCO in 1948 when they adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and again in 1954 with the adoption of the Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict.

Cultures and their heritages are created by man and they are destroyed by man. This concerns not only material and immaterial culture, but also cultural expressions, the arts and cultural institutions. The background of experiences to which societies refer when constructing their past, present and future is formed by looking at the cultures of different people. By looking at the collective culture of societies as well as the culture of the nations of the world, it is evident that both material and immaterial heritage shape an individual's identity. The destruction of culture and cultural heritage has therefore been part of the historical processes of the world. This strategy is aimed directly at destroying cultural identity, because experience has shown that when a culture is stripped of its identity and no longer feels unified, it is easier for new powers to establish control.

In recent years, the Buddhas of Bamiyan, the mausoleums of Timbuktu, the sites of Aleppo or Crac des Chevaliers, the temples of Palmyra and many other sites have been attacked by terrorists. As a result of these attacks, it is crucial that the international community reflects upon the strategies of terrorists and defines ways to rebuild this heritage and furthermore, that it develops long-term strategies to avoid destruction in the first place.

## KAMAL BITAR

**International doctrines** regarding the reconstruction of heritage buildings are evolving since the formulation of the Venice Charter. An assortment of recent charters and declarations on this subject tackled the issue of **reconstruction** of heritage properties damaged by armed conflict, allowing it in exceptional circumstances. Nevertheless, their broad and – sometimes – contradicting concepts, as well as the strong association of reconstruction with the varying social, cultural, urban, artistic and symbolic significance of heritage properties contribute greatly to the **blurriness** of their interpretation.

Furthermore, the adoption of a **participatory approach** including a wide variety of stakeholders, as proven by the Rehabilitation Project of the Old City of Aleppo, is required for better planning and implementing planned activities.

## FRIEDRICH SCHIPPER

Considering the reconstruction of Syria and the rebuilding of Aleppo in particular it is, of course, important to plan ahead. At the same time this is very difficult as the war is still going on, and today nobody can say when it will end and what political and humanitarian situation we will face then. Past wars and civil wars may serve as an example of what to do in the short, mid and long terms to foster reconciliation – and what is better not to do. The stakeholder question is crucial. Who will be the stakeholders? Who will make claims? Who will decide on which claims? And what constructive role may and can external actors play?

# HOW SHOULD WE START TO RECONSTRUCT / REBUILD / REDEVELOP ALEPPO?

ANETTE GANGLER

The urban structure of the traditional quarters and the typology of housing is important to safeguarding the historic city as a World Heritage. During rapid post-war reconstruction the flexibility of this housing typology helps to repair the damaged houses in a kind of self-organization process by the inhabitants and to keep them in the Old City. It needs clear guidelines, technical and financial support as was successfully carried out with the “Housing Fund” in the frame of the Syrian-German Rehabilitation project since 2010. The association “Friends of the Old City of Aleppo” wants to achieve possible re-housing for the inhabitants and returnees as soon as possible through such financial support.

ADLI QUDSI

Credit is given to Germany, Kuwait and the Aga Khan for supporting the project for the rehabilitation of Old Aleppo. Everyone involved is saddened by the destruction and is most likely looking for an end of the hostilities to begin their support for the reconstruction. The principles for the future reconstruction are already laid out in the rules of the concluded project whose main theme was: to preserve the Old City within its historic architectural context for its own residents, and as a cultural heritage that belongs to the whole world.

# ALEPPO ARCHIVE IN EXILE

BACKGROUND, MILESTONES,  
MODES OF COOPERATION  
AND OUTLOOK



## 1. Introduction

This paper describes the establishment and consolidation of the Urban Historical Archive and Documentation Center for Aleppo (UHADCA), a newly established DOC sub-section that was in charge of safeguarding and documenting historic and valuable documents since 2008.

This paper, based on the presentation within the frame of the fundraising event ALEPPO\* – STRATEGIES TO REBUILD ALEPPO in DAZ Berlin, 22 April 2016, describes the process of setting up the archive and documentation center inside Aleppo until 2011. Due to the ongoing conflict inside Syria, the project has been put on hold with data having continuously sighted in exile. In the second part of the paper, current challenges and needed interventions are discussed.

## 2. Aleppo – 5000 Years of Urban History

Historic Aleppo, a World Heritage Site sized about 360ha, looks back to more than a 5000 year-old continuous urban history, dating back to the third millennium BC. Outsiders and visitors have admired the city's urban heritage ever since. Throughout the centuries, the Old City's inhabitants pragmatically considered the ancient urban fabric and its architecture as home and as an economic platform.



Fig 01: Location of Urban Historical Documentation Center and Archive of Aleppo. Source: UHADCA, Aleppo, 2010

## 2.1. Becoming a World Heritage Site

Thanks to the commitment of a number of local architects and other citizens, a process of safeguarding and rehabilitation started, ensuing in private initiatives, followed by academic research and involvement, eventually resulting in national and international rehabilitation projects to conserve this invaluable heritage. A legacy long threatened by the harsh transformations of the 20th century. Starting with a group of architects who were alarmed by the harsh interventions in the historic fabric, Aleppo's society managed to successfully oppose the municipal planning that peaked in the alarming destruction of a neighborhood near Bab Al-Faraj. In 1978, when the 1974 master-plan turned into its implementation phase, resistance was formed by local architects and 'conservationists' (Qudsi, 1984: 22), initiated by the architect Adli Qudsi. Consequently, an "Old City Committee" was formed, consisting of members from the private sector and other public institutions to negotiate the future development of the Bab Al-Faraj site (Bianca 1984), and the Old City as a whole.

## 2.2 Preceding Local and International Efforts for Safeguarding Aleppo's Urban Heritage

The increased consciousness toward preserving the Old City's invaluable built heritage encouraged local and international initiatives (both private and public) to prevent any further demolition or deterioration. As a consequence of extensive analysis (1993–1997), a comprehensive engagement in the rehabilitation process started in 1994, providing support to the people as well as to municipal authorities and public service providers. One of Aleppo's first overall administrative steps was the setup of a "Directorate of the Old City" (DOC) in 1996, located in the Farafra neighborhood.

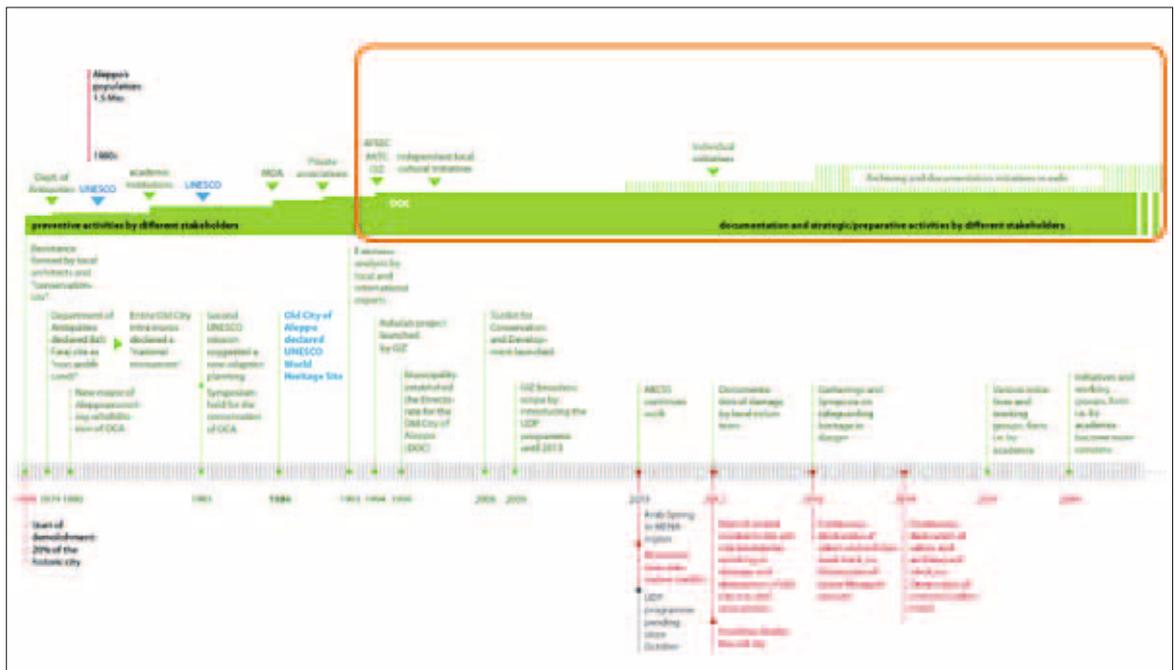


Fig. 02: Timeline of stakeholder involvement. Graph: Franziska Laue, 2016