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HERITAGE MANAGEMENT IN ARAB CITIES

THE INTERVIEW
His Excellency the Mayor of Madina, Fahad Al-Belaihshi, speaks about his city's experience on heritage management

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FOURTH ISSUE

HERITAGE MANAGEMENT IN ARAB CITIES

Front Cover

Old Town, Rabat, Morocco

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EDITORIAL

URBAN HERITAGE MANAGEMENT AS A DRIVER OF SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN ARAB CITIES

By Dr. Jihad Farah - Editor in Chief

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), more than 70% of sites inscribed on the World Heritage List are in cities, and 64% of the risks that threaten them are related to urbanization and urban development dynamics. To address this, significant efforts have been expended in the last two decades, focused on providing the necessary tools that address the tension that exists between the need for heritage preservation on the one hand, and that of urban development on the other.

Numerous international organizations and specialized institutions have launched programmes in this regard. Among the most prominent are those by UNESCO, in relation to "Urban Historical Landscape,"

which provides a new holistic approach to urban heritage management. Additionally, the Florence Declaration by ICOMOS calls for the development of effective mechanisms to link heritage preservation with sustainable local economic and social development. Thousands of experiments have been launched by municipalities, public agencies, and local associations across the world to address this tension and turn it into an opportunity for sustainability and urban resilience. These experiences have allowed for a broader understanding of urban heritage, which then includes intangible heritage, modern and contemporary heritage, and natural elements. The approaches and methodologies also no longer focus exclusively on architectural restoration interventions, rather they include urban planning, laws and regulations, and urban policies and strategies in various sectors.

Arab countries are not absent from these efforts. Dedicated administrations in each country have worked to classify thousands of buildings and landmarks. With the introduction of graduate level programs in built heritage conservation, a new generation of professionals have emerged across several Arab countries. Furthermore, many Arab municipalities have acknowledged the importance of urban heritage and consider it a driver for their development strategies and plans. In fact, the neglect of heritage buildings and neighborhoods constitutes a social and economic burden on the city, as dilapidated historic districts tend to become sites of concentrated poverty. Managing urban transformation while preserving heritage poses a set of complex technical, economic, and social challenges that hinder effective implementation.

The most prominent of these challenges is concerned with the reconciliation of architectural and urban form of heritage neighborhoods with the needs of contemporary lifestyles and demand for business and commerce activities. This requires the adaptation of buildings, roads, and public spaces to ensure that the required standards for efficient and safe infrastructure are being met, and to consolidate them in the face of earthquakes and floods risks without affecting the heritage character of neighborhoods.

Moreover, social challenges present as one of the most difficult and sensitive to deal with, most notably the concerns of residents and local businesses regarding regeneration projects in heritage neighborhoods. Improving the quality of heritage neighborhoods often leads to an increase in real estate values, following which several residents may choose to relocate, subsequently turning neighborhoods into 'tourist parks'.

In their recommendations, specialized organizations primarily focus on community engagement as a key element to raise awareness about the importance of heritage preservation. They further emphasize on the need for adopting planning, financial, and legal frameworks that allow for the transformation of neighborhoods in a way where economic development complements the preservation of social fabric. In addition to infrastructural and social challenges, funding also emerges as a significant concern. These are primarily regarding the procurement of funds for resource heavy projects, and the long-term management of urban heritage after their implementation.

Hence, in the face of all these technical, social and economic challenges, it is necessary to learn from and share successful experiences, their limitations and shortfalls. In this issue of MUDUNUNA, we shed light on some of these challenges and how they have been dealt with in a number of Arab countries and cities. In this issue's interview, we meet the Mayor of Medina Fahd Al-Balihshi, to talk about the city's experience in dealing with its urban heritage and the projects it has worked on in this regard. In the Urban Insights section, Dr. Jyoti Hosagrahar, Deputy Director for the World Heritage Centre at UNESCO, discusses UNESCO's 2011 Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape. Director of the Heritage and Historic Cities Organization, Sulaf Oueididi, presents the general trends and challenges of urban heritage management in Arab cities, while Badr Al-Hamdan from Saudi Arabia, Anas Soufan from Syria, and Karim Ibrahim from Egypt, focus on their respective country's experiences in this field. In the Cities in Action section, we go through a number of projects from around the Arab region that deal with the diverse challenges of urban heritage management. In AUDI News, we present our meetings, out newly formed partnerships with international organizations, and introduce our monthly webinar series titled 'Cities in Action'.

INTERVIEW

MAYOR OF MADINA MUNICIPALITY

ENG. FAHAD AL-BELAIHSHI

In dialogue about the city of Madina's experience in urban heritage conservation

His Excellency Eng. Fahd bin Muhammad Al-Belaihshi, Secretary of the Medina Region and CEO of the Region Development Authority.

Engineer Fahd has extensive experience in Strategic Planning, and Urban Development Management. His Excellency holds an Executive Master's from the London School of Economics and Political Science, and an Executive Master's in Business Administration from King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah, in addition to a fellowship from the Bloomberg Leadership Initiative at Harvard University in the United States of America. He also holds a degree in Civil Engineering from King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.



Photo: Mayor of Madina, Mr. Fahad Al-Belaihshi

The city of AlMadina AlMunawara holds a significant place in history, as home to the first Islamic civilization and as bearer to the first mosque and to the Prophet's shrine. This gives the city a global-scale religious and symbolic importance, attracting millions of visitors each year. However, AlMadina is also one of the largest Saudi cities experiencing remarkable demographic, urban, and economic growth. Hence, in this interview with His Excellency, MUDUNUNA seeks to shed the light on the experience of AlMadina in balancing between heritage conservation and management on one hand and urban development on the other.

> "This city holds a special place in the hearts of Muslims around the world"

To start off, what would you qualify as some of the main characteristics of urban heritage in the city of Madina?

The city of Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah is the first capital of Islam after the migration of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) to it. The Prophet (peace be upon him) established the pillars of the state, the Islamic society, and laid the foundations of his Mosque. Therefore, this city holds a special place in the hearts of Muslims around the world, and visitors look forward to visiting it and exploring the many historical sites and landmarks associated with the Prophet's biography and various Islamic eras.

Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah has a rich civilizational heritage, with its remarkable religious scholars and unique social history. In fact, throughout its history, it was a home to multiple religious scholars from all over the globe. The Islamic cultural system was first formed there, spreading its light to the world. This specific history of Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah [as a melting pot of Islamic traditions and practices] is reflected in its unique urban character, streets, public spaces, and



Photo: Masjid Al Nabawi, Madina
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extensive markets consisting of shops and traditional craft stores and service. All this has given the city a unique character that has contributed in turn to shaping its identity over the years.

With rapid urbanization taking place in the city, what kinds of challenges would you say this poses to the city's heritage and the capacity to ensure its conservation?

Historically, Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah has experienced numerous waves of urban transformations that have comprehensively changed its urban fabric, not least with the spread of modern construction, the effects of which are still evident today. After the incorporation of the city into the Saudi State, there has been significant urban development to respond to functional needs and provide housing, services, roads, and facilities for visitors and residents. This has significantly contributed to the prosperity of the city. However, it also necessitated attention to comprehensive planning in order to control this urban growth and expansion and ensure consistency throughout the city both in terms of service provision and in the quality of the built form ensuing from this rapid growth. It has also meant paying close attention to and preserving the city's historic character, and showcasing its unique features that distinguish Al-Madinah from other cities.

Hence, currently the main challenges lie in continuing and upscaling developmental efforts in a way that the city's future aligns with its specific urban identity. This requires a comprehensive development vision that integrates the old with the new and ensures access between the historical city center, government facilities and services, and the rest of the city through an effective transportation network. Additionally, it is essential that Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah's spatial form, including its main avenues, streets, and squares, denote a harmonious integration of the urban form with the city's natural and topographical features, as well as with the Prophet's Mosque and its courtyards - currently under expansion, drawing inspiration from the city's rich heritage. In fact, the latter is a testimony to the way the city has ensured this harmony through its history, and we believe this will allow us to preserve the identity of the city while keeping pace with contemporary demands and future requirements.

Can you tell us about these projects and any ongoing initiatives, including those led by the Municipality of Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah?

Indeed, in Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah, there are numerous programs and initiatives aimed at showcasing its heritage and developing and activating its historical sites.

In this context, one of the notable projects is the "Islamic Civilization Village" project by Rua Al Madinah Holding Company [an entity under the Saudi Public Investment Fund], which spans an area exceeding 257,000 square meters close to the Prophet's mosque. It aims to become an attractive and distinctive Islamic destination enriching the journey of pilgrims and visitors coming to Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah from all over the world. The project is divided into 8 zones representing different geographical areas, including the Arabian Peninsula, the Arab East, South Asia, the Maghreb, the East Asian countries, the Silk Road, Andalusia, and Africa. It also narrates the history of Saudi Arabia, the cradle of Islamic history and civilization. The project does not overlook the entertainment, commercial, and investment aspects. It seeks, through its unique design and its recourse to exceptional interactive techniques, to bring together a unique cultural character and experience. This project's main purpose however remains to bring to visitors diverse and rich Islamic cultural content, fitting to the site's and Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah's standing.

In addition to this, numerous projects, led by the Development Authority of Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah Region, the Municipality, and all governmental partners, aim at rehabilitating and activating Islamic historical sites in Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah. These projects contribute to enriching and deepening the cultural and religious experience of the pilgrims visiting the Prophet's Mosque. They also ensure the provision of exceptional services that would enhance the historical and cultural value of Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah and the city's quality of life in line with the highest standards and the aspirations of the [Saudi] Leadership in Vision 2030. Among these sites are the Prayer Area in the Ghumamah Square southwest of the Prophet's Mosque, the Prophetic Wells such as Bi'r Ghars and Bi'r Al-Faqeer, historical mosques, and urban museums that provide qualitative content to visitors. Additionally, initiatives and programs such as the Badr Route Journey, developed by and accessible through Visit Madinah platform, play a significant role in supporting visitors. I believe that this integrated cultural system that we seek to establish will greatly contribute to achieving our goals of consolidating and raising the status of the city as an enriching tourist destination attracting visitors.

How do you see the role of the public in the process of heritage conservation? And what kind of initiatives does the municipality take to ensure participation?

The role played by the community in preserving heritage is a crucial part of the activities of the Municipality and the Development Authority. This includes the City Humanization Program, which aims to improve various sites and neighborhoods in Al-Madinah Al-Munawarah, including historical



Photo: Sports track, Ramallah, Palestine
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neighborhoods, transforming them into places that contribute to enhancing the quality of life in the city. This is in addition to social and cultural programs and the creation of suitable spaces that serve as gathering outlets for residents and visitors. Recognizing the importance of community participation in achieving these goals, we continuously strive to involve residents of targeted areas in rehabilitation and development plans, fostering community partnership, especially in informal neighborhoods.

This initiative has seen significant engagement from residents, who have shown readiness to cooperate and enhance their participation through volunteer work. We have had remarkable experience with residents' involvement in efforts in the neighborhoods of Sayyid Al-Shuhada, Tal'at Al-Hubub, as well as in Quba Street and many other historical neighborhoods and natural sites such as Al-Aqiq Valleys and Qanat Valley. These development programs and the way they were implemented through participation have had successful impacts on these neighborhoods, including in terms of economic development, psychological well-being of their residents, provision of services and maintaining the natural environment of the site.

From your point of view, how important is institutional coordination when it comes to Urban Heritage Management, and how is Madinah Municipality working with other relevant institutions in this regard?

We operate within the Municipality and the Authority according to a comprehensive institutional framework, collaborating with all relevant entities involved in urban heritage affairs. We adhere to organizational mechanisms that ensure the successful implementation of programs, projects, and initiatives aimed at heritage preservation at the regional level. Our experience in Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah, focusing on the development and activation of Islamic historical sites, serves as a model of integration among various entities and reflects the harmony required to achieve the noble goal of preserving and showcasing this heritage in a manner befitting the status, history, and cultural depth of Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah.

The issue of long-term financial sustainability for urban heritage management remains a significant challenge for all cities and relevant administrations. What mechanisms does the Municipality of Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah adopt to address this issue?

Naturally, achieving financial sustainability for the management of urban heritage sites has been a major concern in the past. However, with the clarity of tasks and responsibilities outlined in the executive programs of Saudi Vision 2030, I believe that operational aspects and their sustainability have become clearer and easier to achieve. We also recognize the pivotal role of the private sector and investors in this regard. Therefore, we have worked on creating opportunities and a conducive environment to attract investments in the urban heritage sector.

Moreover, the active contributions of civil society associations and non-profit institutions play a significant role in this regard, prompting us to activate corporate social responsibility programs. All of these efforts contribute to securing financial sustainability for urban heritage management and furthering our contribution to the broader sustainable development system witnessed by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, firstly by the grace of Allah, and also with the support of the government led by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and His Royal Highness the Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman - may Allah protect them both.

"We continuously strive to involve residents of targeted areas in rehabilitation and development plans, fostering community partnership, especially in informal neighborhoods"



URBAN INSIGHTS

External Article

UNESCO 2011 RECOMMENDATION ON THE HISTORIC URBAN LANDSCAPE

Jyoti Hosagrahar

Mrs. Jyoti Hosagrahar is the Deputy Director of the World Heritage Centre at UNESCO. Among her responsibilities, she leads the implementation of various programs including the 2011 Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape, the World Heritage Cities Programme, World Heritage and Sustainable Development, the Modern Heritage Programme, management of sponsored projects related to World Heritage, and the International Assistance Programme of the World Heritage Fund. She is the Climate Change Focal Point for the Culture Sector and also leads the programme on the development and implementation of the UNESCO Culture|2030 Indicators, Thematic Indicators for Culture in the Sustainable Development Goals. From May 2016 to November 2018, she served as the Director of the Division for Creativity at UNESCO including the Intangible Heritage Convention, the Convention on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, and the Creative City Network. Prior to joining UNESCO, she was a professor and Director of the SUI Lab at GSAPP, Columbia University, New York; UNESCO Chair in Culture, Habitat, and Sustainable Development at Srishti Institute of Art, Design, and Technology in Bangalore, India where she was also Chair of the Ph.D. program; and Founder-Director of Sustainable Urbanism International (SUI), an NGO in Bangalore, India. She has a Ph. D in Architecture and Urbanism from the University of California, Berkeley.

"Urban heritage, including its tangible and intangible components, constitutes a key resource in enhancing the livability of urban areas and fosters economic development and social cohesion in a changing global environment. As the future of humanity hinges on the effective planning and management of resources, conservation has become a strategy to achieve a balance between urban growth and quality of life on a sustainable basis." - (2011 UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape)[1]

On 10 November 2011, UNESCO's General Conference adopted the Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape by acclamation, the first such instrument on the historic environment issued by UNESCO in 35 years. The 2011 Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape does not replace existing doctrines or conservation approaches; rather, it is an additional tool to integrate policies and practices of conservation of the built environment into the wider goals of urban development with respect to the inherited values and traditions of different cultural contexts.

The 2011 Recommendation is used by the World Heritage Committee to promote a holistic approach to managing historic urban areas. The 2011 Recommendation helps World Heritage properties in urban contexts find this balance by understanding

urban heritage as a system and a resource for sustainable urban development.[2]

Today, more than 70% of cultural World Heritage sites are located in urban areas, making them vulnerable to the pressure of urbanisation. To support State Parties in the conservation and management of their urban heritage, the UNESCO Member States have adopted the 2011 Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (2011 Recommendation), and the World Heritage Committee has established a thematic programme, the World Heritage Cities Programme.[3]

This innovative standard-setting instrument (2011 Recommendation) calls for the conservation of urban heritage to be embraced for its contribution to culturally vibrant, economically prosperous, socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable cities and settlements. The 2011 Recommendation advocates a landscape approach to historic urban areas that (i) integrates heritage conservation with urban development plans and processes; (ii) regards the built heritage, natural environment, local communities, and their practices to be integrally related; and (iii) views urban heritage as a resource and a vector for sustainable urban development. The 2011 Recommendation is an important tool for protecting the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of urban World Heritage properties and an instrument for managing urban heritage in all cities and settlements, prioritizing sustainable development, inclusion and resilience, including climate resilience. (45 COM 7.2)[4]

The 2011 Recommendation represents a way of understanding urban heritage as part of a landscape or system composed of different elements and layers. It is not a category of cultural landscape nor a type of site.[5]

UNESCO World Heritage Centre has created a range of tools to highlight the innovative methods for implementing the 2011 Recommendation, including the World Heritage Canopy platform and the UNESCO Urban Heritage Atlas.

The World Heritage Canopy is a living platform of innovative strategies and practices that integrate heritage conservation with sustainable development. Through case studies and practical examples, the platform aims to inspire and guide local actions that contribute to and align with major global commitments, including the 1972 World Heritage Convention, the Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.[6]

From the innovative practices on the World Heritage Canopy platform: Promoting traditional environmental knowledge in the M'Zab Valley (Algeria), and Cash for Work: promoting local employment through heritage conservation in historic cities (Yemen).

The UNESCO Urban Heritage Atlas is an atlas of the World's historic cities and settlements, and serves as a technical aid for implementing the 2011 HUL Recommendation. It is also a platform for cultural mapping and urban heritage and a resource for education, capacity building, and participation

The UNESCO Urban Heritage Atlas advances the participation and engagement of all stakeholders to enable informed decision-making about conservation and new interventions and projects that will improve urban heritage management. As historic cities and settlements worldwide seek to further sustainable urban development and climate resilience, the HUL Recommendation (approach helps by enhancing the understanding of urban heritage as a system and a resource for sustainable urban development and an active contributor to climate action.[7] To explore more on the Understanding of attributes of Stone Town of Zanzibar, please visit https://whc.unesco.org/en/urban-heritage-atlas/stone-town/

The Third Member States Consultation on implementing the 2011 Recommendation, demonstrated the relevance of the 2011 Recommendation as cities and urban heritage continue to face a number of complex global challenges and seek sustainability, inclusion, and climate resilience. The Recommendation was also clearly acknowledged as an instrumental tool for managing cultural heritage in urban areas and settlements while ensuring its integration with urban development plans and processes.

Concerning governance mechanisms; anchoring of heritage management plans in city development plans and processes, is critical to protecting urban heritage, and the harmonious integration of contemporary interventions into the historic urban fabric is a core principle of the 2011 Recommendation. While historic urban areas demand the coordination of multiple authorities at the local and regional levels

from heritage to tourism, urban development to infrastructure and transport authorities, the provision for steering committees or intersectoral coordination mechanisms at the national or local levels for urban heritage management is largely absent in many countries and cities.

Focusing on understanding and inventorying the multiple layers of urban heritage. The 2011 Recommendation advocates the inclusion of the built fabric, streets, and public spaces, natural features such as waterbodies and gardens, as well as the practices of the local communities underlining the relationships between the built heritage and natural environment including its wider setting. Thus, mapping and inventorying these multiple attributes of urban heritage are strategic tools for informed decision-making. National and local governments must adopt laws, policies, regulations programmes, and guidance across different scales of development from architectural features to the wider setting and its natural features.

The 2011 Recommendation promotes inclusive and participatory decision-making at all stages of planning and management. The use of civic engagement tools should involve a diverse cross-section of stakeholders, and empower them to identify key values, set goals, and agree on actions to safeguard their heritage and promote sustainable development.

The 2011 Recommendation approach advocates mainstreaming strategies and practices for sustainable urban development and climate resilience integrated with heritage conservation including implementing the United Nations 2030 Agenda and New Urban Agenda at the local level

Also developing diverse knowledge systems and promoting capacity-building are essential to the 2011 Recommendation approach and its implementation. Knowledge, skills and research about urban heritage should be actively developed and disseminated among target communities, decision-makers, academics and professionals.[8]

Note:

This text has been developed with excerpts from the;

Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape Text,

2011 Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape Webpage,

UNESCO Urban Heritage Atlas: Cultural mapping for historic cities and settlements,

Urban Heritage for Resilience,

World Heritage Canopy: Heritage Solutions for Sustainable Futures, UNESCO World Heritage Centre,

Promoting traditional environmental knowledge in the M'Zab Valley (Algeria),

Urban Heritage Atlas: Understanding attributes of historic cities and settlements| Stone Town of Zanzibar (United Republic of Tanzania),

Cash for work: promoting local employment through heritage conservation in historic cities (Yemen)

External Article

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AS A DRIVER FOR HERITAGE PROTECTION IN HISTORIC CITIES



Soulef Aouididi

Soulef Aouididi is an Architect and the Director of the Foundation for Arab Historic Cities and Heritage. She has also served as the General Director of the "Association de Sauvegarde de la Médina de Tunis" since 2023 and has been an professor Expert at ENAU " Ecole Nationale d'Architecture et d ' Urbanisme " since 2016. She was the General Secretary of ICOMOS TUNISIE between 2019 and 2022 and is a founding member of the Association 19-20 for Preservation of Recent Heritage in Tunisia.

Heritage plays a crucial role in shaping cultural identity. However, it is not static, and over time, cities contribute to the evolution and transformation of their heritage. Thus, the historic centers of Arab cities have come to their present form through a process spanning thousands of years, bearing witness to the rise of civilizations, oftentimes emerging as beacons of knowledge and creativity for the region and beyond. The characteristics of these historic centers are reflected in their very fabric, through their architecture, urban spaces, and social and cultural practices.

Most Arab cities today acknowledge the importance of preserving their historical assets, recognizing the role heritage plays in reinforcing their identity and supporting economic and social development. Cities have worked on the formulation of plans and strategies for the maintenance and revitalization of heritage, as

well as for the protection and integration of historical neighborhoods through comprehensive development efforts. This aligns with the recommendations of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, which emphasizes that heritage should not be seen as an obstacle to national growth but as an active component of it.

The strategies for preserving historic centers in our Arab cities vary from region to region. Some view historical heritage as an attraction for cultural tourism and aim to revitalize city centers and develop comprehensive tourism programs around them; this is the dominant practice in some Gulf cities today. Other cities, such as those in Tunisia and Egypt, prioritize intervening in the dense neighborhoods of historic cities, focusing on service provision and community participation to address the needs of the locals. In the context of natural disasters and war, the focus of intervention is on reconstruction. Today, we must ask ourselves how effective these strategies are amid the significant global transformations (climate changes, economic and security crises, rapid technological shifts, etc.) that impact Arab cities in various ways.

The challenges are numerous and complex, as highlighted in the following points:

At the level of urban planning

1. Conflicting Visions:

In the domain of urban heritage management, there exists a tension between the paradigm of modernization and that of historic conservation, particularly when the latter places particular stress on preserving authenticity.

2. Urban Sprawl:

With an increase in population density, the management of urban sprawl and informal construction activities in and around historic centers poses significant challenges. This is further exacerbated by the lack of proactive interventions and limited resources.

3. Hazards and conflicts:

Natural disasters and armed conflict have wreaked havoc on some historic cities and World Heritage sites, and the absence of risk management policies and their respective implementation has only worsened the situation.

At the social level

1. Flight of the Middle Class:

Driven by infrastructure degradation, and aspirations for a more modern lifestyle, residents of historic neighborhoods are moving to newer parts of the city.

2. Social Fragmentation:

The disintegration of shared customs and traditions, along with the gradual disappearance of the places where they were practiced, has affected social bonds and created a rift in the collective memory of historic neighborhoods.

Economic Challenges

1. Land use changes:

The influx of industrial activity in historic neighborhoods has led to several residential buildings being utilized as warehouses for industrial purposes, employing workers on low wages and in unhealthy working conditions, leading to an increase in the concentration of pollution in the area. This comes at the expense of high-quality traditional shops and crafts.

2. Tourism and Cultural Use:

There is a growing focus on repurposing historic landmarks into cultural and tourist spaces (museums, restaurants, hotels, etc.) without considering the needs of local communities, particularly those for services.

These factors have negatively impacted the urban heritage of old cities and contributed to its decline, even in the face of numerous international recommendations and agreements calling for the protection and development of these areas. The ICOMOS document from 1978 regarding the preservation of historic areas and urban spaces, outlines methods for integrating old and new elements. It sets standards for the rehabilitation of old buildings and the creation of new ones with contemporary architectural elements, ensuring harmony and respect for traditional urban environments, including building heights, passage

rights, street and alley widths, and the size of urban spaces to provide natural lighting and ventilation.

The 2015 Sustainable Development Strategy for heritage conservation, adopted by the World Heritage Committee, calls for incorporating sustainable development practices into heritage protection mechanisms. This strategy emphasizes the importance of urban heritage, both within historic city centers and outside them, especially in adjoining neighborhoods with a modern urban environment. Moreover, this strategy views urban heritage as a form of rich cultural legacy for the city. The deep history embedded within this heritage is conducive to the continuity of customs and traditions in communities. Hence, the preservation of heritage protects local culture, including its practices of art, crafts, and other forms of creative expression. Furthermore, historical neighborhoods exemplify cohesion in the urban fabric, and can serve as models for contemporary and future planning of cities.

From a social perspective, urban heritage contributes to defining identity and fostering strong ties within communities, enhancing their sense of belonging. This aspect of their relationship with the historic neighborhood is reflected through day-to-day activities, and various forms of cultural expression that used to take place in urban spaces; this is lacking in many contemporary neighborhoods today.

The economic value of urban heritage gains significance when its cultural value harbors investment and economic development. For this reason, restoring the architectural characteristics of old buildings, improving living conditions through the revitalization of urban infrastructure, and providing modern day amenities at these sites makes them attractive to residents, tourists, and investors; this is one way management of heritage sites can be integrated with the dynamic of economic development.

Thus, by adopting principles of sustainable urban development, we can save and revive our urban heritage. This revival can be manifested through encouraging restoration, improving housing, minimizing demolition, employing local building materials, promoting craftsmanship, building capacities, and repurposing historic landmarks with responsive solutions for local residents. Public participation and interaction are also essential for the success of preservation plans, along with raising awareness and ensuring compliance with laws and regulations, which sometimes need to be reviewed and developed to meet the needs of developing our historic cities.

External Article

URBAN HERITAGE MANAGEMENT IN SAUDI CITIES



Badr Al Hamdan

Director General of the Urban Heritage Sector at the Heritage Authority of the Ministry of Culture in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Badr Al Hamdan is an engineer with a Master's degree in Urban Design. He has previously held executive positions at the National Urban Heritage Center and the General Authority for Tourism and National Heritage in the Riyadh Region. He has over 20 years of experience in the field of municipal work, urban development and city management in the Riyadh Municipality and has also worked at the Municipality and Planning Department in the United Arab Emirates. He is a journalist in the Saudi Al Jazeera newspaper on urban planning and city management, as well as an ambassador for the King Salman Urban Charter.

Saudi cities are not novel urban agglomerations; their long historical journey of formation and growth reflect the Saudi people's development efforts and its subsequent impact on their urban environment. The way these cities have transformed sheds light on the people's ability to respond to their environment and its concerns, and build cities suitable for living, capable of accommodating day to day activities, and enabling survival and coexistence in the face of environmental crises and the limited natural resources. This is especially manifested in the urban heritage, both tangible and intangible.

The urban heritage we see in Saudi today is a reminiscence of the construction efforts of a bygone era, preserved through our unique cultural heritage which consists of "everything built by humans such as cities, villages, neighborhoods, buildings, along with the spaces, structures, and artefacts that have architectural, historical, scientific, cultural, or national value".

This includes ancient cities, heritage villages and towns, historical buildings and palaces, forts and citadels, and archaeological sites scattered throughout

the Kingdom. It is distinguished by a variegated architectural and urban vocabularies reflecting the differences in the natural, social, cultural, and economic characteristics that have contributed to shaping Saudi urbanism throughout history.

At the national level, there are seven registered UNESCO World Heritage sites in the Kingdom; namely the Archaeological Site of Al-Hijr - 2008, Al-Turaif District in Diriyah Historical Area - 2010, Historic Jeddah Gate to Makkah - 2014, Rock Art in Hail Region - 2015, Al-Ahsa Oasis evolving Cultural Landscape - 2018, Hima Cultural Area - 2021, Aroq Bin Ma'arid – 2023, Saudi Arabia has also ratified 5 conventions related to the protection of world heritage, in the years 1954, 1970, 1972, 2003, 2001.

At the local level, the Geographical Information Database serves as the main source for archiving, classifying, and managing the built cultural heritage. This involves protection, preservation, and conservation of sites, based on their architectural, urban, cultural, and historical significance. As of May 2024, there are 8,917 sites registered in the National Register of Antiquities, and 3747 sites registered in the National Urban Heritage Register. The focus is primarily on places with an existing community, where efforts are made to document them, and bring them back to life, by making them more attractive and suitable, and transforming them into economic, cultural, and social hubs, in alignment with the principles of urban economics. This is supported by more than 70 international missions working in the field of surveying and excavation in the Kingdom.

The management of urban heritage in the Kingdom is entrusted to the Heritage Authority of the Saudi Ministry of Culture, responsible for managing, preserving, and developing the national heritage sector, as well as enhancing protection methods across its key domains (urban heritage, antiquities, crafts and handicrafts, intangible heritage, world heritage), in coordination with stakeholders and partners such as regional institutions, trusts and municipalities, specialized entities, in collaboration with expertise from the private sector, universities, research centers, and international organizations.

Efforts include a number of projects, programs, and initiatives focusing on restoration, rehabilitation, operation, and maintenance works, developing systems and legislation, supporting efforts for national heritage development, raising awareness and interest in it and protecting it from disappearance. They also include encouraging financing and investment, building educational programs, and organizing conferences, exhibitions, events, and local and international competitions. All efforts aim at enhancing the urban heritage management system systematically and in alignment with the responsibilities and authorities of local, regional, and national management bodies.

The main challenge facing the task of managing the cultural urban heritage assets in the Kingdom lies in the fact that 85% of the ownership of cultural heritage assets is by private entities. This requires incentivizing owners and holders of heritage buildings to maintain, restore, and reuse their buildings according to conservation principles and protection plans based on regulatory and technical mechanisms under the Antiquities, Museums, and Urban Heritage Law and its executive regulations. These regulations include policies for dealing with private heritage properties, as well as local regulations established in the directives of urban planning schemes for Saudi cities at various levels.

The management of urban cultural heritage in the Kingdom represents the main source for feeding joint efforts in preserving the identity of Saudi cities and grounding their local character through strategic objectives that include culture as a way of life, in order to achieve economic growth and enhance the Kingdom's international standing.

External Article

MANAGEMENT OF URBAN HERITAGE IN SYRIA IN THE 21ST CENTURY



Anas Soufan

Dr. Anas Soufan is an artist, urbanist, architect, and heritage management specialist. Besides his own firm of Architecture and Heritage Conservation in Paris and Boston, Anas is a Research Associate to the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, CMES, Harvard; a lecturer in the Graduate School of Design, GSD, Harvard; a consultant for the Arab Regional Center for World Heritage, ARC-WH in Bahrain; a former expert-specialist for UNESCO; advisor for ICOMOS and other international organizations. Anas lectured and taught at several universities. His scholarly interests include post-war recovery, heritage management, urban regeneration and sustainability, memorialization and civic realm.

The notion of heritage in Syria first emerged in the late 19th century relating to sociopolitical narratives and ideologies, a fact that permitted its political instrumentalization since late Ottoman period. This should be kept in mind in understanding the present postwar situation of heritage management in this country; as it is highly affected by the on-going national crisis and its overlaying international complexities. In practice, this congestion is being manifested through several forms of dysfunction. The most laborious are the departure of the vast majority of heritage specialists abroad and the enormous difficulties in funding the rehabilitation, reconstruction, and even the consolidation of the historic assets following the war (2011-2017) and the earthquake of February 2023. Only a few initiatives related to non-governmental international organizations like the Aga Khan Trust for Culture and the ARCWH are taking place.

In fact, the management of historic assets in Syria has a multilayered structure involving national and international, governmental and non-governmental actors. The Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums, the Governorate, the Ministry of Waqf, the

Ministry of Tourism and their local sub-divisions are the main actors in charge. Other governmental divisions or agencies might be engaged when they own the historic assets. As for the world heritage sites, they are managed by the previously mentioned groups in addition to UNSECO and its advisory bodies for monitoring and consulting tasks. Undoubtedly, the local community is also a major player in the heritage management in Syria. The people either play a direct role through managing their own historic assets (residences, shops, etc.) or indirect through electing the decision-makers in the municipal and administrative councils. In the last decade, the roles of the civil society organizations and the private sector have grown significantly in funding the heritage management of the country. Clearly, the sensitivity and interests of the previously mentioned actors are different, even conflicting, a fact that generates divergence in their approaches about the role of historic assets in the sustainable development and urban social transformation.

During the last three decades, the general approach to heritage management in Syria witnessed several transformations. First, enlarging the definition of historic assets to comprise certain monuments and districts previously considered as suburbs of the historic cities or parts of their 'Modern' extensions dating back to the first half of the 20th century. The inclusion of an-Nasr Streets in Damascus and parts of al-Aziziyyeh district in Aleppo in the national register of the protected zones is a relevant example. In the same sense, several intangible cultural properties 2 were inscribed in the World Heritage List of UNESCO. Second, the rising popular awareness of the value of cultural heritage. Several aspects support this observation including the influential role of the local communities facing plans of urban 'upgrading' projects inside the historic fabrics. Ending the projects of al-Mutanabi Street in Aleppo and the King Faysal Street in Damascus are well-known examples. Third, supporting the adaptive reuse of the historic fabrics for commercial and touristic purposes, a fact that contributed to an increase in the involvement of private capital in the heritage management as well as the popular interest in heritage assets. Hence, utilizing the old cities in renowned cinematic productions had a hugely positive national and trans-national effect on the image of Syrian heritage. The final transformation is considering the destruction of historic assets and the mobilization of heritage as a political weapon during the conflict.

Hence, in the current post-war period, the main challenge facing heritage management in Syria is the multifaceted contradiction between the national / international standards of conservation and the eagerness to incorporate modern urban themes, such as sustainable development, equity, inclusion, vibrant city, kinetic city, etc. Focusing on the Ancient City of Aleppo as a case-study, we highlight that its post-war / post-disaster recovery represents an unprecedented opportunity to reconfigure it in a human, balanced and creative way that supports its sustainable development, considering three main strategies. First, reviving its rich urban heritage through a 'heritage management' approach rather than a strict conservationist one. In this sense, the UNESCO's recommendations about the historic urban landscape and the post-conflict reconstruction (Warsaw-2018) would be of huge significance. Second, reenergizing the economy of the city through adaptive and innovative neo-liberal models targeting an international position for the city and durable economic dynamics. Finally, empowering the linkage of the local community to its city through authentic visions of a prosperous future in the city.

External Article

A REFLECTION ON URBAN CONSERVATION: THE CASE OF EGYPT



Kareem Ibrahim

Kareem Ibrahim is an Egyptian architect and urban researcher who graduated from Cairo University in 1995. He worked on the UNDP's Historic Cairo Rehabilitation Project and for the Aga Khan Trust for Culture on the Darb al-Ahmar Project. From 2010 to 2017, he was a Senior Development Manager for Al-Futtaim Group Real Estate. He has collaborated with various international agencies on urban development projects. In 2009, he co-founded Takween Integrated Community Development. Currently, he is Chief of Party for a USAID-funded tourism project in Esna. Ibrahim has received several awards and served on the 2019 Aga Khan Award for Architecture Master Jury.

Egypt is home to numerous historic cities, with Historic Cairo being its most prominent urban center, recognized for its architectural and cultural heritage. Inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1979, Historic Cairo contains over 600 monuments, traditional housing, and vibrant public spaces, maintaining a unique socio-economic network despite facing urbanization and environmental challenges. The area is an economic hub with around 60,000 businesses, and most residents have deep local roots, expressing a desire to continue living there despite the deteriorating conditions and inadequate public investments.

Since the 19th century, there is a visible contract in urban development approaches adopted for Cairo; while one approach focuses on modernization of the existing city, the other advocates for its expansion into new neighborhoods. Modernization of the historic city raised questions regarding conservation, subsequently necessitating that close attention be paid to the protection of certain monuments. In the 1930s, Edmond Pauty introduced the "area conservation"

approach, an integrated conservation framework that went beyond individual monuments and considered the entirety of the historic urban fabric. Despite limited resources, various efforts by governmental and non-governmental organizations continued with this approach after Historic Cairo's 1979 World Heritage designation.

Urban conservation governance in Egypt involves multiple stakeholders, including the Supreme Council for Planning and Urban Development, Ministry of Housing, General Organization for Physical Planning, National Organization for Urban Harmony, Cairo Governorate, Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA), and the Egyptian Awqaf (Endowment) Authority. Recently, the Urban Development Fund (UDF) has played a significant role in Historic Cairo's urban upgrading. Historic Cairo's conservation has evolved through numerous initiatives. UNESCO's 1980 study shifted efforts from individual building conservation to cluster-based approaches. Projects like the Al-Darb Al-Asfar Alley Rehabilitation Project (1994-1999) emphasized community engagement and holistic rehabilitation of alleys. The UNDP's 1997 report outlined a comprehensive strategy focusing on the community, physical environment, and urban management.

The National Project for the Conservation of Historic Cairo, initiated in 1998, aimed to conserve and restore numerous historic monuments. Other projects, like the Housing Rehabilitation Initiative in Bab al-Wazir Area and the Old Cairo Development Project, targeted specific areas for revitalization. The Government of Egypt (GoE)-led Historic Cairo Project evolved into the General Administration of Historic Cairo under MoTA, focusing on infrastructure and heritage conservation, though it faced sustainability and coordination challenges. Additionally, the Al-Darb Al-Ahmar Revitalization Project, initiated by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) in 1997, aimed to revitalize one of Cairo's most underprivileged areas, focusing on physical and socioeconomic needs. The project integrated the restoration of historic monuments, housing upgrades, and community development programs. Local artisans were trained and employed for restoration work, and restored buildings were repurposed for community use, such as educational and healthcare facilities. The project improved living conditions and provided employment opportunities, although challenges related to sustainability and integration with government practices remained. Following the events in 2011, Egypt saw the rise of bottom-up heritage conservation efforts, with citizen-led initiatives working to protect cultural heritage assets. Examples in Cairo include the 'Ana min Al-Zaher' initiative and the Athar Lina in Al-Khalifa Area, promote citizen engagement in heritage conservation through workshops, building rehabilitation, and community development.

More recently, the GoE's urban redevelopment efforts in Historic Cairo have taken various forms, some controversial. Demolitions in Cairo's historic cemeteries and areas like Arab Al Yasar aimed to open new traffic corridors or replace historic fabric with new commercial facilities. Conversely, redevelopment in the southern parts of Historic Cairo, especially around Fustat, included new housing and quality public spaces. Following a visit by the Egyptian Prime Minister in March 2021, the GoE embarked on ambitious urban upgrading projects in Historic Cairo, focusing on restoring monuments, renovating building façades, upgrading public spaces, and introducing new tourist facilities. These efforts, spearheaded by the UDF, aim to consider Historic Cairo as a place for residence, work, and leisure.

Despite these efforts, urban conservation in Egypt faces governance challenges related to centralized and overlapping decision making, weak local administration, and insufficient transparency. This leads to the proliferation of building violations and inadequate public services. Outdated urban planning tools fail to preserve the historic urban fabric and accommodate effective urban conservation. The inability to shift from "project-based" to "process-based" interventions is a fundamental obstacle in Egypt's urban conservation. Additionally, economic opportunities are missed due to the absence of a heritage-based investment framework and effective economic development plans. Uneven population density distribution leads to urban decay and pressure on infrastructure; while environmental degradation and poor infrastructure exacerbate public health issues and hinder adaptation to climate change. In fact, there is a need to establish long-term policies, urban planning practices, and urban management frameworks that lead to sustainable and resilient historic areas rather than relying on ad-hoc projects.

Nonetheless, four notable areas of progress have emerged. First, projects such as the Al-Darb Al-Ahmar Revitalization Project have promoted an integrated urban conservation approach and introduced innovative tactics that, although not leading to sustainable policies, have influenced a shift towards area conservation. Second, capacity building and human resources development have improved due to efforts by MoTA, UDF, AKTC, local CSOs, and other organizations, leading to a growing acceptance of urban conservation concepts. Third, adaptive reuse of historic buildings has gained traction over the past decade, though revenue generation from these buildings still needs to be improved. Fourth, the GoE's recent efforts through the UDF and MoTA result in a needed learning curve in understanding the opportunities and challenges facing urban conservation and how to institutionalize this practice best.

Moving forward, urban conservation should consider broader issues such as political economy, land commodification, and urban governance. Increased integrated development approaches, community participation, and public investment are essential. Historic Cairo's compact fabric, walkability, and efficient residential-commercial land use integration offer valuable lessons for modern urban planning. Universities should integrate urban conservation into their curricula to improve local knowledge. Conservation is resource-efficient and vital for sustainable urbanization, but it must address climate change risks. Last, human capacity development is indispensable for making the shift to long-term, sustainable, and resilient urban conservation efforts that put people at their center.

TOOLKITS FOR URBAN HERITAGE MANAGEMENT AND CONSERVATION

Significant efforts have been made over the years to preserve sites of historical importance. The establishment of dedicated institutions, academic programs, and legal and financial mechanisms are all testimony to the fact that cities value their heritage. In order to ensure effective management and conservation of heritage sites, it is imperative that a comprehensive knowledge system be established, to provide all relevant stakeholders access to the latest tools and technologies.

In the following, Mudununa introduces a number of toolkits produced by international organizations that can help municipalities better understand the processes required for the successful management and conservation of their heritage sites. These toolkits cover a wide range of characteristics associated with urban heritage, including management of built heritage, documentation and protection of indigenous knowledge, and enhancement of the quality of life people associated with heritage sites.

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Toolkit 1:
Enhancing our heritage toolkit 2.0

2

Toolkit 2:
Documenting Traditional Knowledge –A Toolkit

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Toolkit 3:
Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage context

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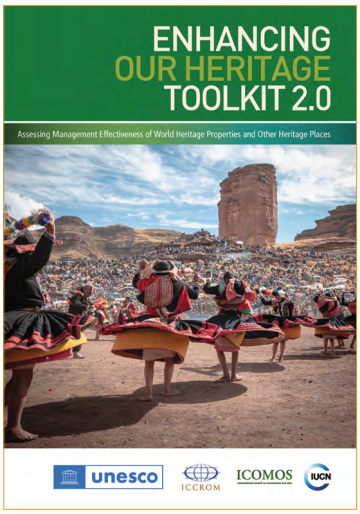
Toolkit 4:
New life for Historic Cities



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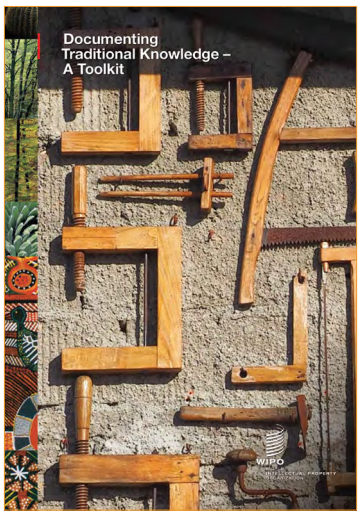
https://whc.unesco.org/en/eoh20/

Toolkit 1:
Enhancing our heritage toolkit 2.0

This document is part of the World Heritage Resource Manual series, aimed at providing guidance to state entities and other heritage protection authorities for better management of heritage sites. It does so by providing a self-assessment methodology for evaluating management effectiveness.

The document uses 12 tools to assess the management effectiveness of a heritage site. These consist of parameters such as the extent to which the values and attributes of the site are understood, knowledge of factors affecting the property, appropriateness of the sites' buffer zone, governance and regulatory arrangements, management processes, and delivery and monitoring of outputs.

In order to be applicable across a variety of situations, the toolkit provides recommendations on how to select between the aforementioned tools, emphasizing that heritage sites are distinctive and the ways in which the toolkit is used can vary from one region to another. However, it outlines a generic procedure by which the assessment can be conducted, starting from preparation, followed by the collection of information, to implementation, and finally, reporting and acting. The toolkit intends to improve the ways in which negative impacts on heritage sites are addressed, and in doing so, identify critical management weaknesses in order to rectify them.



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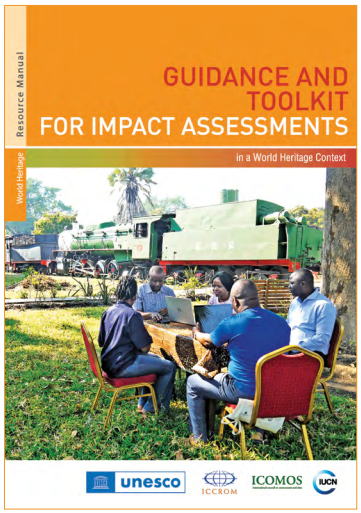
https://www.wipo.int/edocs/pubdocs/en/wipo_pub_1049.pdf

Toolkit 2:
Documenting Traditional Knowledge –A Toolkit

The "Documenting Traditional Knowledge – A Toolkit" is a comprehensive guide that aims to assist in the process of documenting traditional knowledge (TK) and addresses key issues related to intellectual property. The toolkit provides practical guidance and best practices for individuals and organizations involved in TK documentation projects.

The toolkit covers multiple aspects of documenting traditional knowledge, including understanding the interests and concerns of indigenous peoples and local communities, defining project objectives, conducting an intellectual property assessment, and applying existing documentation standards. It highlights the need for ongoing monitoring, verification, and periodic reviews to ensure compliance with requirements and safeguard the interests of indigenous peoples and local communities. The toolkit also outlines the process for ensuring effective representation and informed consent of indigenous peoples and local communities, as well as the ways of maintaining confidentiality when necessary.

Overall, the toolkit acts as a resource for individuals and organizations involved in documenting TK, with a focus on protecting the rights and interests of indigenous peoples and local communities, promoting collaboration, recognition, and ensuring the preservation and sustainable use of traditional knowledge for future generations.



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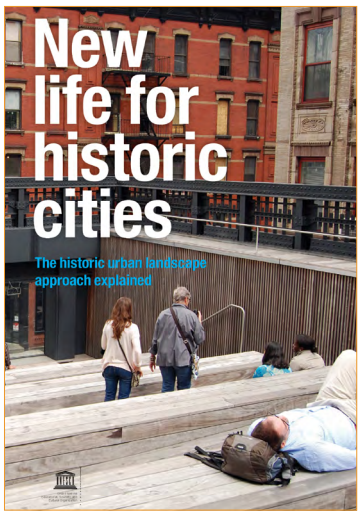
https://whc.unesco.org/en/guidance-toolkit-impact-assessments/

Toolkit 3:
Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage context

This toolkit provides a step-by-step approach to analyzing and understanding the values and attributes of a World Heritage property. It aims to guide users in using the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) as a basis for assessing the environmental and social impact of a proposed action on a World Heritage property. It aims to serve as the go-to reference in the process of sustainable heritage development, and provides practical tools for conducting impact assessments for cultural and natural heritage sites.

The toolkit is divided into several steps, including finding the Statement of OUV, analyzing the statement, extracting and organizing heritage values, identifying other heritage/conservation values, and creating values and attributes table. It also emphasizes the importance of understanding the OUV and attributes of the site, conducting impact assessments, considering alternatives, and engaging stakeholders throughout the process.

The toolkit also highlights the need for stakeholder participation, the integration of sustainable development perspectives, and the review and follow-up stages. Overall, the toolkit aims to provide a structured and systematic approach to understanding and documenting the values and attributes of a World Heritage site, conducting impact assessments, and promoting the protection and conservation of places of historical significance.



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Toolkit 4:
New life for Historic Cities

The New Life for Historic Cities document outlines the primary features of the historic urban landscape approach to managing and preserving historic cities. It emphasizes the importance of urban heritage in enhancing the livability of urban areas and fostering economic development and social cohesion.

The document advocates for a holistic approach that integrates the goals of urban heritage conservation with those of contemporary social and economic development. It highlights the need for active engagement from public, private, and civic sectors to better preserve and celebrate historic and contemporary cities.

In order to highlight the dynamic forces driving a city, the document deconstructs the city into its many layers including diversity and identity, infrastructure, social values, economic processes, cultural practices, as well as geomorphology and hydrology. It does this in alignment with the values of the historic urban landscape approach, that interprets the city as a 'continuum in time and space', and benefits it by enhancing property values, increasing revenue generation, and strengthening the communities' sense of place.

The document also provides examples of best practices and showcases various projects and initiatives that have successfully implemented the historic urban landscape approach. These include the High Line public park in Manhattan and Play the City initiative in Istanbul.

CITIES IN ACTION

Project 1



Photo: Al-Nouri Mosque, Mosul
©2024 UNESCO

Historical identity and culture

Recovering cities in the face of conflicts and hazards

When armed conflicts destroy a city's neighborhood, they not only scar its urban fabric but also its social fabric and identity. For recovery to take place, and go beyond reconstruction of buildings and streets, the city's numerous memories and social experiences need to be woven back in. Urban heritage plays a central role in this process. In the following article, we look into the steps taken by cities of Mosul and Beirut to revive themselves following the devastating effects of the 2014 conflict in Mosul and of the 2022 blast at Beirut Port.

Mosul

The city of Mosul in Iraq has historically acted as the hub for religious and cultural diversity, with its Old City serving as a testimony to Iraq's rich heritage. However, the conflict has turned many of its neighborhoods into rubble, destroying over 80% of its fabric.

Various efforts have been launched to restore the Old City, as this was seen as key to recover its broken urban and social fabric. The need to ensure a quick return to normalcy in the face of limited public resources meant that a large number of international and local actors were welcomed to engage in initiatives. While some of these actors led integrated holistic



Photo: A historic building, badly damaged following the August 2020 explosion in Beirut
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approaches others focused on particular areas or buildings within the Old City.

Of the integrated approaches, the most prominent has been UNESCO's 'Revive the Spirit of Mosul' initiative, that was launched in 2018 and seeks to rebuild the city's heritage and enhance social cohesion through citizen empowerment. Parallel to this, local authorities focus primarily in the domain of municipal services, or on intervening at the scale of public spaces such as in the case of an ambitious riverfront development project along the west bank of the Tigris River. At the grassroots level, albeit in an ad-hoc manner, local owners and philanthropists have spearheaded efforts to rebuild souqs and bazaars, showing sensitivity to heritage and culture; an effective example of this is the al-Jalili family's reconstruction of workshops and ancient khans. Significant work is also being carried out by the Bytna Institution for Culture, Heritage, and Arts, a local NGO, that is also housed in a 100-year old heritage building that they restored. In the case of specific buildings, such as for the famous Al-Nouri Mosque, the majority of the efforts have been led by international agencies. In its reconstruction efforts, UNESCO also fostered the inclusion of civil society movements, thereby integrating local resources in its larger rehabilitation program.

Both international agencies and local organizations have paid special attention to the role of culture in the revival of Mosul. These include the restoration of cinema, music, and other creative outlets. Efforts were also made to revive education through the training of academia stakeholders, as well as by reconstruction of schools and libraries. To ensure sustainability, international organizations invested in enhancing the employability of vulnerable youth. Local communities have welcomed grassroots movements, stating that locally led conservation has strengthened social cohesion and retained their sense of ownership towards Mosul's heritage.

Beirut

The Beirut Port blast is considered one of the strongest non-nuclear explosions in history. Its direct impact affected a radius of over 5 kilometers around the explosion site, however it particularly devastated the neighborhoods closest to the port. These are historical neighborhoods with a rich built heritage, that have known considerable urban transformation since the late 90s. Restaurants, cafés, and art galleries replaced traditional shops, while some upscale high-rise buildings came to replace derelict historical buildings.

The blast came in the context of deep economic and political crisis. Public institutions were paralyzed and incapable of responding to the challenge of reconstruction. It was civil society and international organizations that took the lead in the efforts of recovery. Multiple organizations addressed a wide diversity of issues, from the provision of basic humanitarian support to more elaborate rehabilitation interventions. This approach to reconstruction had its limitations, in terms of duplication of effort and the limited control on the quality of the implemented activities. Nevertheless, over three years, 70% of buildings were rehabilitated.

A major challenge in this reconstruction effort was related to the urban heritage aspect of these neighborhoods. In fact, many of the buildings and public spaces in these neighborhoods are part of the collective memory not only of their inhabitants but also of the city as a whole. Hence, several local professional organizations organized a rapid response to save heritage buildings from falling. This was followed by studies to assess the damage and identify restoration strategies. The support of international organizations, local foundations, and individual donors was essential in securing the funds for these. It was important to act fast to be able resettle the population, but also to ensure that this disaster would not be playing to the interests of real-estate developers who were eager to install high-rise luxury buildings at this prime location; a freeze on new construction permits and real-estate transactions in this area provided some security in this regard. In some cases, heritage organizations were able to secure enough support from owners of contiguous buildings to develop a cluster restoration strategy. However, having no official authority meant that this was occasional and most of the effort focused on individual buildings.

While there is a need for greater integration of efforts in both Mosul and Beirut, oftentimes local interventions see more impact due to the ease and speed at which they are implemented on the ground. However, in the absence of a larger strategy, there are long-term planning repercussions, including weak oversight, limited involvement of public authorities, and lack of coherence in the physical rehabilitation efforts. Nevertheless, the range of initiatives seen in Mosul and Beirut indicate the diversity of approaches present in the Arab urban development landscape to rehabilitate their heritage in the face of conflicts and hazards.



Photo: Buildings affected by the Beirut port explosion
©2024 Joseph M Khoury | @joekhourystudio | Project @bouyoutbeirut

Project 2



Photo: Al Balad Old Town
©2024 ME Construction News | Google

Reviving lost identities and fostering the tourism industry

Heritage development in Old Jeddah and Muharraq

The Old City of Jeddah has an expansive history, dating back to 250BC and evolving from a fishing settlement to the metropolis it is today. Its interaction with various historical eras has gifted the city with rich heritage, positioning it as one of UNESCO's World Heritage sites. The old city consists of over 600 heritage buildings, as well as ancient corridors, squares, and the old waterfront that had served as the primary route for Hajj pilgrims.

Unfortunately, historical events including rapid urbanization have inflicted significant damage upon the city's heritage sites. One of the earliest efforts to conserve the old city took place in the 1970s, in the form of a conservation master plan. Since then, several plans have been formulated to revitalize the historic town, including the Jeddah Municipality's comprehensive management plan for the old town.

Al Balad Old Town

However, the primary initiative at the forefront today is the 'Jeddah Historic District' or 'Al-Balad' project. It was launched in 2021 and managed by the Al Balad Development Company (BDC), that is owned by the Public Investment Fund (PIF) in Saudi Arabia. The project consists of two overarching goals, one to upgrade the urban environment, and the other to save buildings of architectural and heritage value. These include the development of infrastructure and services, enhancement of quality of life, and improvement of the general urban landscape. The project is also one of the largest in Jeddah and holds

high economic significance for the tourism industry.

The initiative is implemented through a series of sub-projects, ranging from the restoration of historic buildings, development of the waterfront, and revitalization of the town's historic markets. These include the restoration of 650 historical buildings, 5 markets, 36 mosques, as well as the development of public spaces and roads. The project also allocates over 650 square kilometers of space for offices and retail and expects to provide over 3,000 hotel rooms. This focus on the hospitality sector also provides the heritage site with a global platform, representing the country's history to an international audience.

What sets this project apart is the Saudi government's keen interest and direct involvement, as well as targeted investment towards ensuring its success. To date, over 50 heritage buildings have been restored, and three heritage hotels inaugurated. The government aims to achieve over 20 million annual visitors to Al-Balad by the year 2035. In doing so, the project is expected to provide over 25,000 jobs by the end of this year.

Pearling Path Muharraq

Another UNESCO World Heritage site, inscribed in 2012, that has successfully revived its rich history and bolstered tourism activity is the Pearling Path in Muharraq, Bahrain. The name is reminiscent of the historical practice of Pearl diving in Bahrain, dating back to 2000 BC. With the eventual decline of this industry, and in the face of urbanization in Muharraq, the historic buildings in the capital city faced dilapidation. Pearling Path has been declared by UNESCO as the last remaining insight into the tradition of pearling, and an outstanding example of the traditional use of the sea's resources, as well as of people's interaction with the natural environment.

Officially launched in 2015, the revitalization of Pearling Path is part of a larger program titled 'Muharraq Conservation Strategy'. Running along a 3-kilometer path, it narrates the stories of local craftspeople, traders, and communities involved in the historical practice, and celebrates Bahrain's heritage identity. The revitalization efforts involved the conservation of 17 historic properties, protection of 3 oyster beds, establishment of visitor centers and public squares, as well as the rehabilitation of more than 300 building facades. Visitors are guided along the path by lamp posts serving as trail markers, starting from the historic Bu Maher Fort of the 1840s, to the Siyadi House which serves as the main pearling museum.

To keep intact the spirit of the past, fragments of mother-of-pearl have been used to embellish public space fixtures and shops are enveloped in traditional coral stone and lime plaster. The Pearling Path's appeal lies not only in its ambition to preserve heritage but also the extensive efforts taken to revive the local economy and create a vibrant public space for people to experience; the path consists of 17 small public squares adorned by canopies.

While a major part of the work is led by public institutions, the success of the conservation initiative is evident in the way the project engaged diverse expertise, including heritage advisors, mobility consultants, and most importantly, homeowners with a stake in the conservation plan.

Both the initiatives at Jeddah and Muharraq are indicative of the rich history present in contemporary urban landscapes of Arab cities, and the willingness of both the state, as well as local communities to take concrete steps towards revitalizing their rich heritage, and subsequently, foster greater local economic development.



Photo: Bu Maher Fort, Pearling path, Muharraq
©2024 Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities



Photo: Bab El Bahr Medina of Tunis
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Heritage conservation in Tunis and Cairo

The importance of a participatory rehabilitation process

Oftentimes a significant risk posed by heritage conservation projects is the impact they may have on the lives and livelihoods of existing communities. In light of this, there are several conservation efforts that prioritize socioeconomic development when planning for the rehabilitation of historic districts. Two cases from the Arab world, one in the Oukalas of the Medina of Tunis, and the other in the Darb El Ahmar neighborhood of historic Cairo, narrate the process by which such projects can achieve success for both the restoration of heritage and the protection of the well-being of local communities.

Tunis

Since the 1950's the Medina of Tunis has experienced rapid in-migration of people from rural areas. This caused overcrowding in the already burdened housing stock of the old city, and led to the creation of what is commonly known as 'Oukalas', multi-family dwellings housing a disproportionately high number of people in generally unsanitary conditions. The growth of such Oukalas posed significant social, public health, and environmental challenges over the years.

Given the context, in 1991 the local government initiated the Oukala rehabilitation project with the

aim to rectify housing conditions that were affecting almost 3000 households across the 600 Oukalas in the historic center. It is this approach, that prioritized housing rehabilitation for the community rather than solely for architectural preservation, that made the Oukala project significant, and hence successful as a historic neighborhood revitalization effort.

While the proposed interventions did require some demolition and reconstruction, the majority of the buildings were rehabilitated, with due acknowledgement given to sites of historical significance. Thirteen buildings were identified as those with special historic or architectural value, following which subsequent plans were initiated to propose their adaptive re-use for public utilization.

In line with the project's focus on reviving people's quality of life, the adaptive re-use of historic sites was also determined in accordance with the needs of neighborhoods. The 15th century Medersa El Montaciriya, for example, was adapted to serve as a kindergarten, while the Fort El Bsili was utilized as a workshop. Other historical buildings were adapted to create a library, a day-care centre for the elderly, and offices for a cultural association. All interventions were supported by extensive surveys that sought to identify socio-economic profiles, incomes, and financial capabilities and commitments of households in the Oukalas.

As with any successful neighbourhood revitalization program, the Oukalas project also adopted legislative and financial mechanisms, including credit facilities for owners, to ensure sustained implementation of rehabilitation efforts. The project was completed in 2013, restoring over 400 buildings and benefiting over 3,500 households.

Cairo

Similarly, in the neighborhood of Darb al-Ahmar in historic Cairo, primary focus was given to the needs of local communities when designing conservation interventions. Housing approximately 100,000 inhabitants, the neighborhood is rich in Islamic heritage but struggles with poverty and inadequate municipal infrastructure and services.

Led by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture since the year 2000, in collaboration with the local government, the project is cited as housing rehabilitation beyond physical upgrading. It involved in-depth studies, spanning over a year and comprehensively



Photo: Before (above) and after (below) the Darb al-Ahmar Housing Rehabilitation Program
© 2024 Tadamun

documenting lifestyles and activity patterns in the neighborhood. When physical rehabilitation did begin, it started with a pilot involving 10 houses, and aimed to identify the procedural, financial, and other parameters that need to be taken into consideration before expanding the effort. As a result, the program successfully completed the rehabilitation of 85 buildings, and established several community services including a health and a business center. Public space rehabilitation was also carried out, in small neighborhood squares such as Aslam Square and in community markets such as the Tablita market. Extensive training workshops were conducted on traditional construction, following which several workers were engaged to work on the project itself.

Over its 6-year effort, the aspect of this program that had the most impact was the introduction of a micro-credit facility; it enabled locals, including women, to set up small businesses and invest in improvement of their houses. The effectiveness of this was also supported by the establishment of a community owned Darb al-Ahmar Business Association and a Family Health Development Centre. This indicates the importance of establishing grassroots level, self-governing institutional systems and accessible funding mechanisms for projects that are situated within complex social and economic contexts.

As we can see from the two cases of the Oukalas and Darb Al Ahmar, participation and attention to the social fabric could be crucial to the success of urban regeneration projects in historical districts. While often for the outsiders it is the rich history and architectural form of the neighborhood that is deemed valuable, for the people living in its midst the value may stem from an entrenched sense of belonging, transcending beyond the built form of the heritage they inhabit. Protecting this social fabric is as important as the conservation of monuments in preserving the spirit of the neighborhood.



Photo: Staircase with wooden balustrade leading to Zeinab Khatoun historic house, Darb Al-Ahmar
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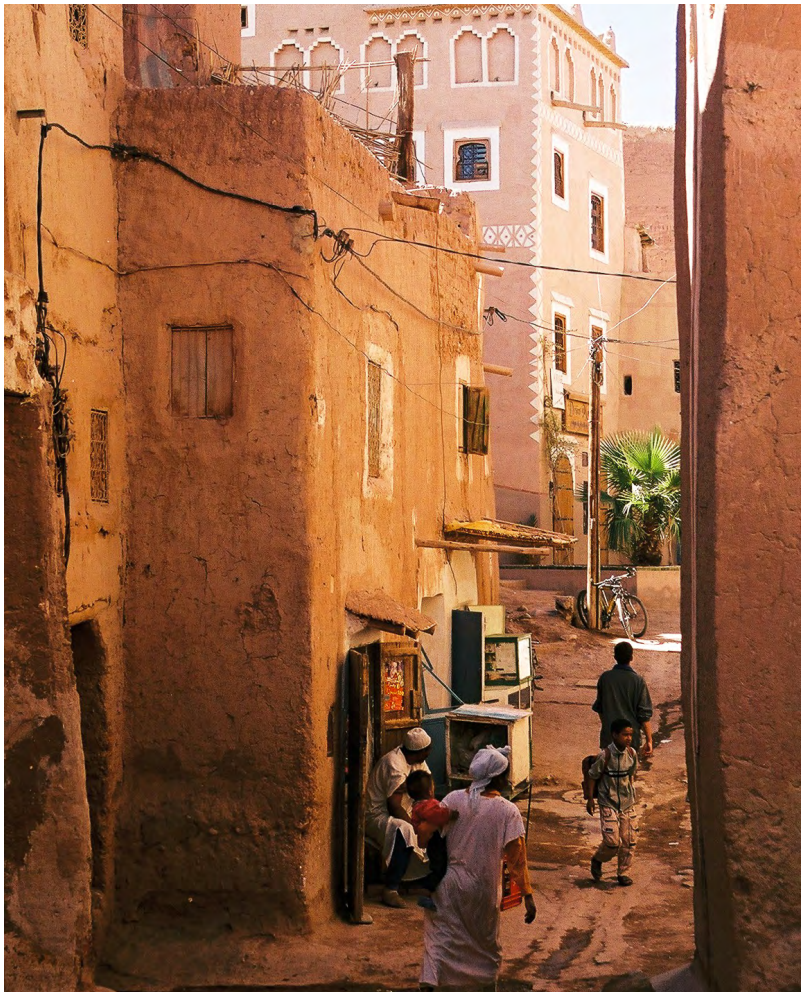

Photo: Kasbah of Taourirt, Ouarzazate
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Reviving abandoned historic sites

Cases from Ouarzazate

Any discourse on heritage would be incomplete without the mention of Morocco, a country with over 15,000 sites and historic monuments, and more UNESCO world heritage sites than in any other African country. The country's efforts towards conservation also serve as a model in the region, as it celebrates both tangible and intangible forms of heritage including music, crafts, dance, and language.

While there are numerous noteworthy examples of heritage rehabilitation and conservation efforts in Morocco, particularly in its larger historical cities (Marrakech, Fes, Rabat, etc.) some of the more intriguing initiatives are evident in sites that have been subject to comprehensive restoration following years of neglect. This article explores the case of two such sites located in Ouarzazate, a city that is stated to be a prime example of Moroccan earthen clay architecture. It is home to the Kasbah (fortification) of Taourirt, and the UNESCO world heritage site of the Ksar (village) of Ait Ben Haddou.

Although mostly built in the 19th century, the Kasbah of Taourirt houses some structures dating back to the 17th century. The historical kasbah

consisted of a conglomeration of buildings, including stables, workshops, a market, wells, baths, and residences. However, as the village became abandoned, it suffered gradual deterioration over the years. In the 1990's it came under the protection of an entity established the Ministry of Culture, which aimed to conserve, restore, and renovate architectural heritage in the Atlas and pre-Saharan valleys of Morocco.

The preservation process of the Kasbah of Taourirt began in 2011, the initial aim of which was to design a comprehensive methodology for preservation that could later be used for sites of similar character. Extensive documentation of the site was carried out, both in the form of digital modeling, as well as through archival and oral history sources. Following this, the physical conservation component was initiated, focusing on preserving the local building traditions and original structures on the site, as well as on promoting earthen architecture by training the local workforce. At this stage, the project team also worked extensively with the community to identify the best possible uses for the restored structures, as well as prioritize heritage elements that ought to be protected. Some of the proposed uses included a research center that focuses on earthen architecture and construction, an ethnographic museum, cultural exposition halls, tourist information office, guest house, restaurants, public spaces, and prayer hall. The project activities were completed over a period of 5 years, during which a policy document on conservation and rehabilitation was also developed.

Similar efforts were carried out at the Ksar of Ait Ben Haddou, that had historically served as a trading post on the commercial route linking Sudan to Marrakesh. It consists of a collective of dwellings estimated to have been built no earlier than the 17th century and was inscribed on the list of UNESCO world heritage sites in 1987. Similar to the Kasbah of Taourirt It also suffered from lack of maintenance and repair as its inhabitants abandoned the ksar.

Starting from the early 1990's a series of interventions have been carried out for the restoration of the site, aiming to revitalize and enhance its heritage value. However, it was only in 2006 that concrete efforts in partnership with multiple stakeholders were taken, and a plan was initiated for the protection and restoration of the ksar. Spanning a period of 6 years, the plan drove multiple activities to comprehensively preserve the site. On a macro level this included restoration of the ksar's urban form, focusing on public spaces, landmarks, and street patterns. For architectural elements, the restoration process kept intact the original structure, and maintained traditional construction materials and techniques, particularly in the case of old doors and windows that employed the use of wood. Some of the prominent spaces in the ksar that were restored in good condition include the public spaces, the three kasbahs, houses and markets, and places of worship including the mosque, synagogue, and marabout. Restoration efforts were repeated in 2016, following the destruction caused by the floods of 2014. Legal frameworks were also established, in the form of a development and safeguarding plan that regulates the interventions and developments permitted in the perimeter of the site.

In 2023, however, both the Kasbah of Taourirt and the Ksar of Ait Ben Haddou were among the 27 historic sites that suffered significant damage as a result of the devastating earthquake that hit the country. An investigation highlighted that a number of buildings at both the sites had been exposed to a number of cracks with partial collapses. Since then, studies are being conducted for their restoration, with local communities advocating for their restoration.

It is evident through these cases that even following years of neglect and abandonment, proactive interventions sensitive to the specificities of heritage sites could bring them back as lively destinations, contributing to the local economy and showcasing the history and identity of a whole region.



Photo: Aït Benhaddou, Morocco
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Project 5

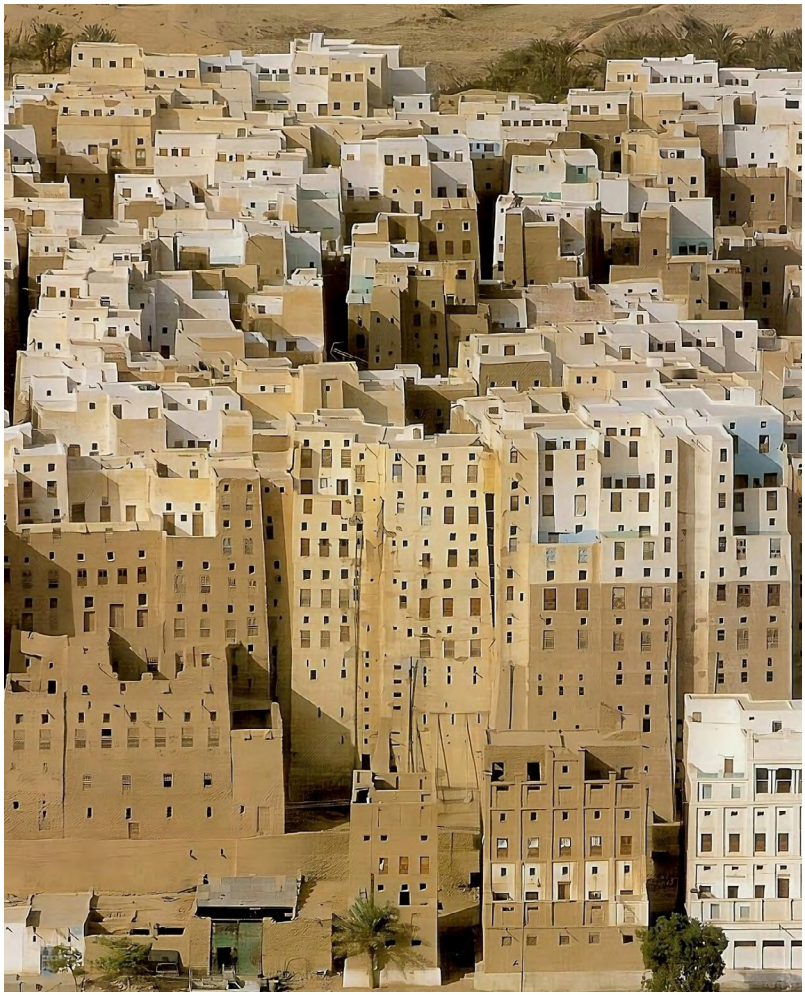

Photo: Shibam, Yemen
© 2024 Hidden Architecture

Supporting local economic development and communities' livelihoods through heritage conservation

The case of Yemen and Lebanon

For cities rich in heritage and cultural assets, their conservation and management play an integral role in local economic development. While such conservation efforts require significant investment, if planned effectively, they reap greater benefits for both the state and local communities. This article explores cases in multiple cities across Yemen and Lebanon, where heritage preservation has enabled local employment generation.

Yemen

Yemen is home to several World Heritage sites such as Old Walled City of Shibam, Old City of Sana'a, Historic Town of Zabid, and Socotra Achipelago. However, these sites suffer from dilapidation both due to the on-going conflict as well as because of lack of maintenance, funds, and limited technological tools to facilitate upgradation. The conflict has also affected the livelihood of the Yemeni people leading to displacement, food insecurity, high unemployment rates.

In 2018, an international initiative by the name of 'Cash for Work: Promoting Livelihood Opportunities for Urban Youth in Yemen' was launched. It aimed to restore livelihoods through development of cultural heritage in Yemen's historical cities of Sana'a, Shibam, Zabid, and Aden. It also focused on enhancing the capacities of local government and civil society organizations, focusing primarily on the urban youth. The project activities began with a comprehensive survey of the damage to heritage sites, with local communities actively participating in this survey. With the damages and priority sites identified, guidelines were established to ensure authentic preservation of the structures and their use, taking into account the local context of conflict and crises, the COVID-19 pandemic, economic concerns, and local governance capacities.

Local youth were engaged in repair and restoration works, including for roofs, facades, windows, and other building details. Through this, the formerly unemployed youth also gained valuable training in traditional construction and restoration techniques. By 2021, across the four cities, the project had surveyed 8,000 urban heritage elements, helped rehabilitate 151 historical buildings and provided employment opportunities to over 2,000 young people of which 10 percent were women. In doing so, the project fostered employment generation alongside enhancing the cultural and historical identity of the four cities.

Expanding its scope beyond heritage buildings, the project also intervened in the cultural and creative economy, aiming to increase the youth's access to employment opportunities. For this purpose, it established financial mechanisms such as a small grants program to initiate pilot projects across all four cities. These grants also covered training sessions to provide recipients with knowledge and skills related to sustainable heritage management, communication, and digital media tools. The programme employed extensive use of social media for outreach, and engaged with local influencers and media personnel, achieving a high rate of viewership. The grant programme directly benefited over 500 young Yemenis.

Lebanon

A project with a similar aim was implemented in Lebanon between 2003 and 2016, titled 'Lebanon Cultural Heritage and Urban Development Project'. The project intended to contribute to local economic development and the quality of life in the historic centers of 5 cities in Lebanon through the conservation and management of their respective cultural heritage sites. Intervening in Baalbek, Byblos, Saida, Tripoli, and



Photo: Byblos historic quarter
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Tyre, the plan proposed to restore monuments, rehabilitate infrastructure, and provide technical support to municipalities.

Projects in each city were designed to respond to their unique historical identity. In Tyre for example, the harbour and fishing activities hold a significant place in both its history, and in its local economy. Previously suffering from infrastructural degradation, the project upgraded facilities necessary for the economy of fishing, from small scale interventions such as providing storage boxes on the jetty and increasing the space allocated for boats and fishermen, to larger projects such as rebuilding the fruits and vegetable market, building a warehouse, upgrading municipal infrastructure, establishing a fishermen's club building, and restoring the facades of other buildings around the harbour. These efforts enhanced the fishermen's scope for establishing local businesses, in part also due to the increased number of customers attracted to the newly upgraded harbour. This same was seen in Byblos, where infrastructural renewal of the historical souk enhanced trade and transformed its streets into a vibrant public space.

In Baalbek, which is home to the World Heritage site of Temple of Bacchus, extensive preservation works were carried out. By intervening at the street level and providing greater pedestrian access to the monument, as well as allocating space for local businesses, the project encouraged increased tourism activity, subsequently benefitting the city's economic actors. The city of Tripoli benefitted from the rehabilitation of its souks, and restoration of the historic Khan-al-Askar. In the process, it also trained the local workforce which was then contracted as permanent staff at the Directorate General of Antiquities. Along the same lines, interventions in Saida included repair of infrastructure and restoration of building facades, leading to an increase in tourism activities and greater quality of life for the local communities.

The impact of the initiatives in Yemen and Lebanon underscores the effect of heritage conservation and management on the quality of life and livelihoods of local communities, and how the former can serve as an effective tool to simultaneously enhance local economic development and the country's tourism potential.



Photo: Souk Al-Harajb, Tripoli
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Photo: Traditional architecture, Djerba, Tunis
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Inscribing sites in Tunisia and Jordan on the World Heritage list

Sites inscribed on the World Heritage list are places that meet the threshold of UNESCO's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV); that is, they are places of such cultural or natural significance that they transcend country borders and hold importance across the globe for all generations and must be protected permanently. Each site has a specific characteristic, and sheds light on a particular aspect of human civilization. Hence, putting a site on the list is as much about building a narrative that unveils the characteristics of the site as showcasing outstanding monuments. This article explores the historical significance of two such sites, in Jordan and in Tunisia.

As-Salt

Known as the place of tolerance and urban hospitality, As-Salt in Jordan was inscribed as a World Heritage site in 2021. It is located in the hills of west-central Jordan and served as an important trading link between the east and the west. The majority of the development in the settlement took place between the 1860s and 1920s when skilled craftspeople from across the region participated in transforming it into a town. Its center consists of approximately 650 historic buildings, including large public buildings and private residences, constructed using yellow limestone. The settlement pattern is shaped by the region's

topography, and buildings are connected to one another through a network of stairways, alleys, and public squares.

There were two primary criteria based on which the site was inscribed as a World Heritage site. The first is its demonstration of intercultural exchanges, driven by the movement of people, skills, and wealth across the region. It offers significant contribution to discourse on the historical formation of regional networks within the Levant and presents as an excellent example of early-modern vernacular architecture.

The second criterion is its preservation of traditions and cultural history, through its architecture, as well as through intangible elements such as practices of urban hospitality, tolerance, and coexistence. These were evident through the importance they give to brotherhood and shared responsibilities; these traditions still manifest in their modern everyday lives. Furthermore, the lack of sectarian divisions in neighborhoods stood out as a unique form of coexistence, not common in many other cities of the region.

The level of commitment from the state and existence of relevant legal instruments are also taken into consideration in the decision-making process. In the case of As-Salt, the municipality has led multiple efforts, including the complete documentation of the site and its state of conservation. UNESCO provided further recommendations to the state entities regarding the implementation of the Conservation Management Plan, and establishment of a Heritage Impact Assessment process.

Djerba

In the case of Tunisia, the island of Djerba was inscribed as a world heritage site in 2023. It is the largest island in North Africa located off the southern coast of Tunisia. Djerba is often referred to by travelers as the 'Isle of Forgetfulness' owing to its bright blue skies and striking white buildings. It consists of two primary components, one is a large expanse of land dedicated to agricultural activities, and the other is its settlements and villages, consisting of mosques, churches, synagogues, and souqs.

The main criteria through which the site was inscribed deems it to be an important representation of a traditional human settlement, one that gives greater insight into forms of human interaction with the environment, particularly when the latter has become vulnerable. In the midst of a semi-dry and water-scarce environment, the island is divided into low-density neighborhoods (Houma), each consisting of multiple homesteads and spaces for cultivation, known as Menzels. While the Houma are connected to each other and to the primary religious and commercial spaces, they are an autonomous economic entity comprised of handicraft and agricultural activities; this was indicative of the larger economic system of the entire island. The architectural form of Menzel within these Houma is defensive in character, devoid of openings on the exterior, protected by towers, connected to other dwellings by narrow and maze-like roads; this is indicative of the people's need to protect themselves in the face of conflict with the mainland.

The inscription of Djerba made it the 9th UNESCO World Heritage site in Tunisia. Following its inscription, UNESO advised the state to place urgent conservation measures to preserve the heritage of Djerba along with ensuring a sustainable source of funding for said conservation. Keeping in mind the threat to Djerba by the growing tourism activity, it also recommended that an assessment of the site's carrying capacity be conducted. By December 2024, the state is required to submit a report on the implementation status of UNESCO's recommendations.

The cases of both sites, Djerba and As-Salt indicate the diversity and richness of heritage sites present in the Arab world. However, they also stress the importance of pro-active measures from the state to ensure that the sites achieve successful nomination, and in the aftermath of inscription, to ensure that the heritage status is upheld.



Photo: Hammam street, As-Salt, Jordan
© 2018 TURATH: Architecture and Urban Design Consultants | Rami Daher | UNESCO

OUR NEWS

CITIES IN ACTION: WEBINAR GREATER MUSCAT STRUCTURE PLAN

Cities in Action is a monthly webinar led by the Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI). It is held virtually and invites a representative of a project situated in the Arab region, to not only present the project but also discus the process by which it was materialized.

In April 2024, AUDI organized the first of this series, presenting the 'Greater Muscat Structure Plan' to over 70 participants from around the world including Jordan, Lebanon, France, Palestine, Australia, and the United Arab Emirates.

The webinar was moderated by Dr. Abdullah Dhifallah, who opened the session with an introductory overview of the "Cities in Action" webinar series, highlighting its significance in enriching discussions among experts in urban development across the Arab region. Dr. Dhifallah emphasized that the purpose of this webinar is to identify pioneering urban development projects and share ideas on approaches and best practices.

The session commenced with a presentation on the Structure Plan for Greater Muscat delivered by the project's technical director, Engineer Nasser Al-Sayegh. He emphasized the importance of integrating structure plans with other spatial strategies to achieve

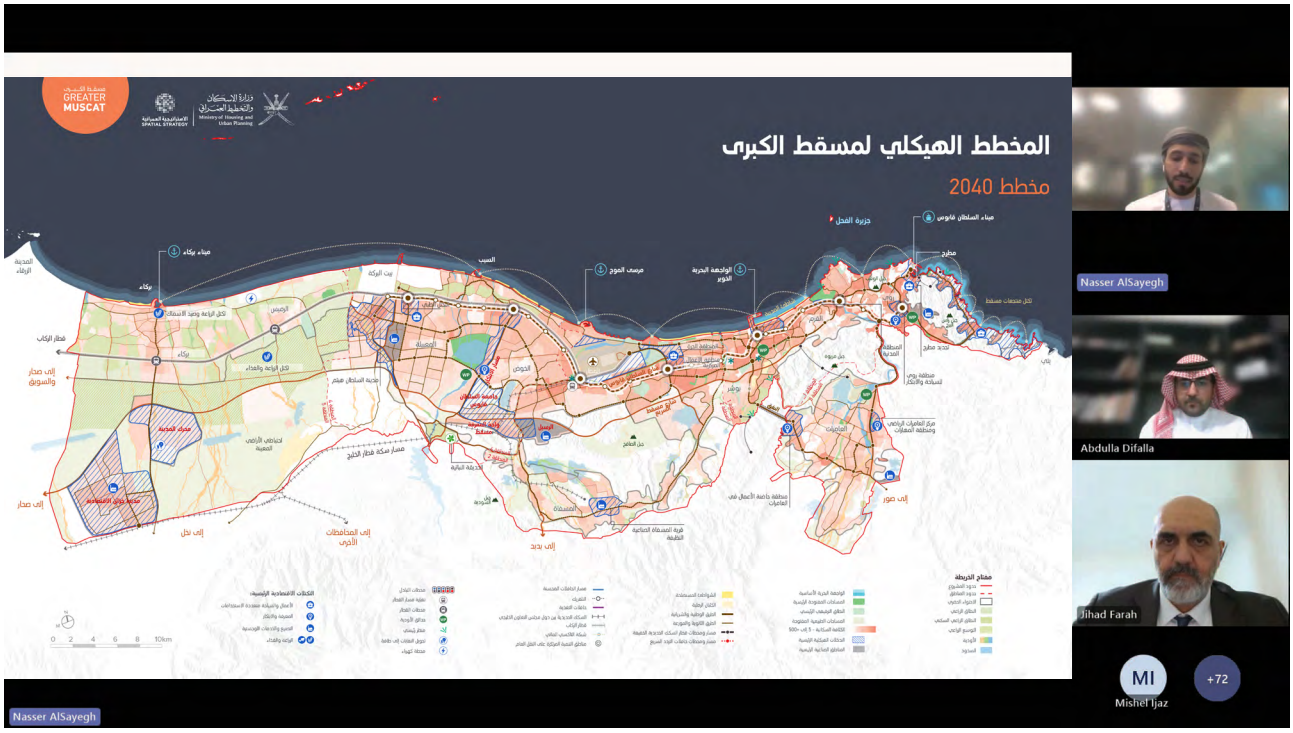

Photo: 'Cities in Action' Webinar session on Greater Muscat Structure Plan
© 2024 Arab Urban Development Institute



Photo: Poster for the 'Cities in Action' Webinar session on Greater Muscat Structure Plan
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sustainability in urban development initiatives and stressed on the crucial role of implementing agencies in the execution process.

In his presentation, Engineer Al-Sayegh outlined some of the key challenges facing Greater Muscat, including high population density, traffic congestion, linear economy that relies heavily on the exploitation of natural resources, inactive public spaces, and inadequate infrastructure in the face of natural hazards. Engineer Al-Sayegh elaborated on how the structure plan tackles these challenges, and in doing so, aims to enhance the quality of life of people in Greater Muscat. The plan's primary objectives are to position Muscat as a green capital of Oman, resilient in the face of challenges, developed as a livable city, and fostering integration within its communities.

NEW PARTNERSHIPS

Berkeley City & Regional Planning

The Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI) joins forces with the Department of City and Regional Planning (DCRP) at University of California, Berkeley, a global academic leader in urban management and quality of life studies. This collaboration marks a significant step toward launching the International Program in Innovation and Urban Management, which AUDI is implementing alongside global partners from United States and Europe to enhance the capabilities of Arab municipalities.

Internationally recognized for its first-rate education and cutting-edge, faculty-led research, DCRP spearheads solutions for sustainable cities that address pressing urban challenges such as widening socioeconomic inequalities, the impact of global climate change, and the growing demand for robust and sustainable public infrastructure. They leverage innovative planning techniques to develop tailored executive programs for Arab cities grounded in rigorous analysis and theory. Beyond academia, DCRP actively collaborates with communities, fostering inclusivity and participation in research, to ensure their solutions influence public policy and strengthen the communities they serve.

This strategic collaborative endeavor, solidified by a memorandum of agreement, is geared towards achieving the following:

- Developing advanced and effective training materials that illustrate the role of modern technology in urban development and improving quality of life.
- Organizing training sessions, workshops and visits to urban projects in the United States.
- Leveraging the expertise of faculty members and Alumni interested in urban development in Arab cities.

مبادرة الاراضي العربية

Arab Land Initiative

GLTN GLOBAL LAND TOOL NETWORK

UN-HABITAT

The Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI) partners with the Arab Land Initiative to empower "land governance champions" from the organizations working on promoting sustainable land management and securing land rights in Arab cities.

Launched in 2016 by a group of Global Land Tool Network partners, the Arab Land Initiative works towards achieving sustainable land management and securing land rights in Arab cities. Led by United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the World Bank, the initiative prioritized three key pillars;

- Good Land Governance by promoting fair and transparent land use policies;
- Functional land administration systems to manage land ownership for economic growth and stability;
- Protection of housing, land, and property rights particularly for vulnerable groups to achieve social justice and reduce poverty.

Driven by the shared dedication in securing a resilient and sustainable future for cities in the Arab region, AUDI and the Arab Land Initiative have forged a collaborative partnership to:

- Strengthen the studies and research on land management in Arab cities
- Develop Practical Toolkits and Training programs
- Facilitate engagement with international working groups

AUDI'S MEETINGS

The Arab Institute for Urban Development held a number of meetings with development partners from international organizations and Arab cities. During these meetings, areas of cooperation were discussed and a mechanism was agreed upon to activate the partnership through technical committees aimed at making proposals for specific projects and initiatives.

These include the a visit of the institute by a delegation from the World Bank, a meeting with the Arab Gulf Programme for Development (AGFUND). The institute also conducted a meeting with the municipality of Tripoli, Libya, as well as with representatives of the Quality of Life program, and Al-Faisal University.



Photo: Meeting of the Arab Urban Development Institute with the Arab Gulf Programme for Development (AGFUND)
© 2024 Arab Urban Development Institute



Photo: Meeting of the Arab Urban Development Institute with the Municipality of Tripoli, Libya
© 2024 Arab Urban Development Institute



Photo: Meeting of the Arab Urban Development Institute with representatives of the Quality of Life Program
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Photo: Meeting of the Arab Urban Development Institute with Al-Faisal University
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Photo: Meeting of the Arab Urban Development Institute with the World Bank
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