

From Documentation to Policy-Making: Management of Built Heritage in Old Aleppo and Old Acre

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This article investigates links between the documentation of historic cities and the development of heritage-management plans and policies. It asks: How can the documentation of heritage value help produce policies and plans that sustain the historic fabric as a living place? It compares projects that have adopted different approaches to urban preservation in two World Heritage cities, Aleppo in Syria and Acre in Israel. By investigating the documentation methods used in these projects and their impact on later management plans, the article reveals how effective policies, plans, and intervention strategies emerge from approaches that balance concern for the physical, spatial and social components of historic cities.

This article discusses the processes that influence the documentation of urban built heritage — and the planning and intervention processes that are, in turn, influenced by this documentation. It specifically addresses World Heritage cities where, in order to comply with UNESCO's Convention, management plans must address the entire historic urban fabric.¹ This includes the ensemble of built heritage, associated physical elements, and contents.²

By comparing two World Heritage cities, Aleppo in Syria and Acre in Israel, the article thus investigates two interrelated issues: the documentation of heritage value and the localization of international heritage-management standards. In particular, it explores documentation methods that led to the inscription of these two cities on the World Heritage List and the links between these methods and the development and implementation of management plans and intervention strategies — especially as these relate to the physical, spatial and social components of the cities' historic areas.

The article argues that several factors influence the choice of documentation methods. However, the chosen methods can then not only affect the formation of policies and plans, but they can also, if not carefully designed, lead to outcomes counter to initial planning goals.

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The article therefore begs several questions: What factors influence the documentation of urban built heritage, especially in the case of cities inscribed on the World Heritage List? How does documentation influence the formation of local policies, plans, and intervention strategies? And how can the identification of these links inform planning and help sustain the historic built environment as a living place?

DEFINING HERITAGE

World Heritage status has a profound effect on historic cities, bringing to bear a number of international standards and conventions for intervention that significantly affect them in physical, morphological and social terms.

As AlSayyad has observed, the term heritage “derives from the Old French *eritage*, meaning property which devolves by right of inheritance in a process involving a series of linked hereditary successions.”³ UNESCO has translated this notion of inherited property in its general definition of “cultural heritage.”⁴ It has further argued that this refers “to monuments, groups of buildings and sites with historical, aesthetic, archaeological, scientific, ethnological or anthropological value.”⁵ This definition has been contested, however — particularly its reference to “monuments, groups of buildings and sites” as the constituents of cultural heritage and the definition of heritage “value.”

To understand what constitutes recognized cultural heritage one must examine the development of the various international charters that are interdependent with the UNESCO World Heritage Convention.⁶ Tracing this succession, it is possible to see how notions of heritage (especially international heritage, later codified as “World Heritage”) have changed. Specifically, the definition of heritage has evolved from an emphasis on monuments to encompass more of their surroundings, until entire urban areas are now included.

The first international charter, known as the Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments, was adopted after the First International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments in 1931. This charter, which emphasized the architectural significance of monuments, was drafted anonymously by the architect Le Corbusier in 1933, and published in 1941.⁷

The Venice Charter of 1964, also known as the Restoration Charter, came next. In addition to individual monuments, it emphasized their surroundings.⁸ This charter coincided with the establishment of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), a scholarly organization that collaborates with the International Center for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM). Both ICOMOS and ICCROM are today affiliated with UNESCO.

As ICOMOS drafted subsequent charters, views within the organization came to reflect criticism of an exclusive

focus on monuments. For example, the Townscape movement in England highlighted the visual experience of entire urban landscapes, and introduced the concept of “serial vision.”⁹ New charters hence began to address the preservation of urban landscapes. Among these was the 1987 ICOMOS Charter on the Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas.¹⁰ Another influential document was the Burra Charter: The 1999 Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance.¹¹

As a broader view of cultural heritage has prevailed, more recent arguments have gone even further, advocating that efforts to preserve historic urban areas transcend concern for physical elements. Instead, authors have advocated that equal concern be given to the spatial and social components of urban space.¹² According to one: “Physically, [urban preservation] is linked to building preservation. . . . Spatially, it is viewing the townscape as a holistic entity, with its relationships between spaces and their use, as well as circulation and traffic. . . . [Socially, it] concerns the users, local community, and the urban population.”¹³

INTERVENTION DISCOURSES

The Physical Component. Parallel to the broadening of the definition of cultural heritage, physical intervention procedures have become more refined over time. Specifically, they have grown from an exclusive concern for aesthetic enhancement, restoration and conservation in the Athens Charter to embody a gradient of five procedures, described in the 1999 ICOMOS Burra Charter. The first procedure is “maintenance,” considered the least invasive approach, based only on continuing care. The second is “preservation,” intended to impede future deterioration of historic fabric by actively maintaining it in its existing state. The next two procedures, “reconstruction” and “restoration,” seek to return existing built fabric to a known earlier condition. But while reconstruction may introduce new material, restoration only removes accretions or reassembles existing components. Finally, “adaptation” is defined as modifying historic fabric to suit contemporary uses, and may incorporate any or all of the previous procedures.¹⁴

Beyond the need to care for individual historic structures, the Burra Charter acknowledges that the challenge of urban preservation is to protect the entire urban fabric, with “all the physical material of the place including components, fixtures, contents, and objects.”¹⁵ Preservation at the urban scale must also take into account the addition of new structures, whose design should not compromise the visual and spatial experiences of the existing fabric. Consequently, several approaches have been developed that combine the preservation of historic structures with the contextual design of new ones.¹⁶ Such efforts seek to produce “contemporary architecture that is sensitive to and compatible with the context surrounding it,” either through matching or compatible designs.¹⁷ “Matching”

entails new design styles that imitate historic ones by using the same materials, details and massing.¹⁸ New Urbanist designs thus frequently seek to identify archetypes and typologies that shaped a historic fabric, and transform these into building codes that are regulated by preservation and construction manuals.¹⁹ Some criticize this strategy as historicist, however, because it is divorced from the distinctive artistic values that distinguished each past era and culture.²⁰ And, because it emphasizes the visual aspect, matching frequently overlooks morphological or spatial characteristics of place. By contrast, “compatible” designs may include contemporary elements that are sensitive to a historic composition in terms of size, scale, massing, materials, color, and even spatial arrangements.²¹ Thus, the British Townscape movement advocated designs that supported the picturesque quality of the historic fabric (i.e., its visual experience) — maintaining its composition without attempting to imitate all its details.²²

Notions of authenticity have also become central to the debate over appropriate intervention and the incorporation of new structures in the historic fabric. And, aside from the consensus view that any intervention must be reversible, a flexible approach to authenticity has now emerged, one that considers whether preservation is intended to deceive or not.²³ Some argue that historic preservation must also make a clear statement of its aims — whether it is intended as authentic physical preservation or heritage development for commercial gain.²⁴

The Morphological/Spatial Component. Since the middle of the twentieth century, geographers have drawn attention to the spatial arrangements, or morphology, of historic towns. Conzen developed such an analysis in his work on medieval Alnwick, and coined it “town plan analysis.” Morphological analysis is concerned with three interrelated aspects: street systems, patterns of blocks and parcels, and building footprints.²⁵ Using this approach, morphologists have argued that the experience of historic areas is not purely architectural or physical, but influenced by underlying spatial organization. They have also argued that the “spatial spirit” of a historic town stems from relationships between its morphology, visual character, social structure, and links to land use. They have therefore advocated the incorporation of a morphological component in urban preservation initiatives.²⁶

Contemporary research strives to incorporate these three spatial aspects in the preservation of urban heritage.²⁷ At the methodological level, innovative technologies, such as space syntax are being used in studies of the spatial development of historic cores. These reveal how massive spatial transformations negatively affect the urban structure and pose significant challenges to preservation. By contrast, moderate transformations are more sympathetic to historic spatial organization, allow historic cores to survive, and facilitate urban preservation. Such views bolster Conzen’s argument that the essence of historic cities, their “spatial spirit,” transcends the physical preservation of individual buildings or spaces.²⁸

Similar to debates on architectural preservation and the contextualization of new structures, calls for morphological contextualism have also emerged. These include innovative spatial interventions that take into account historic arrangements.²⁹ Others, however, have specifically highlighted plot patterns as the most significant element of urban morphology, and have advocated their preservation.³⁰

The Social Component. Many authors have shown how the preservation of urban morphology — especially plot and land use patterns — may link social processes to physical and spatial qualities.³¹ But there are many other challenges involved in addressing preservation at the urban scale. Thus, other authors have described how urban preservation needs to consider multiple stakeholders, balance development and preservation, and extend beyond the physical into the character, or sense, of place.³² Moreover, even when urban preservation is able to sustain the physical and spatial attributes of place, it may not be able to create environments that meet the contemporary needs of residents. It may thus transform a historic fabric into a liability rather than an asset.³³

Accordingly, some theoretical and empirical research has highlighted how historic preservation must go beyond physical issues to address socio-cultural well-being. Such research has focused on the needs of local communities and local perceptions of cultural significance.³⁴ In such projects, attempts have been made to engage local communities in the production of place, empower them to define and represent their history, and allow urban traditions to evolve continuously.³⁵ For example, the significance of the historic fabric as a living space guided Lord Esher’s plan for York during the 1960s.³⁶

URBAN HERITAGE: SIGNIFICANCE, VALUE AND DOCUMENTATION

As is evident through the discussion above, the concept of the value or significance of heritage is frequently contentious. Since this article focuses on World Heritage, however, the primary qualities of value considered here are spelled out by the UNESCO World Heritage Convention. This presently identifies six criteria for the inscription of what it loosely coins “cultural heritage” (as opposed to natural heritage). To be nominated for the World Heritage List, a site must fulfill at least one of these criteria: it must represent a masterpiece of human creative genius; exhibit an important interchange of human values; bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization; be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape; be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land use, or sea use; or be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, ideas, beliefs, or artistic or literary works of outstanding universal significance.³⁷

The notion of “universal value” clearly prevails in these criteria, with little or no attention to local perceptions. While

succeeding international charters have forced policy-makers to address local concerns, the focus of heritage criteria continues to be based on determinations of universality. This process is balanced, however, as the following discussion reveals, by the most recent definition of cultural significance in the 1999 Burra Charter.³⁸

When the current universalist definition of heritage first prevailed in the nineteenth century, historic preservation claimed to be concerned with past built forms because of their “intrinsic value.”³⁹ With time, however, new arguments emerged that contested the intrinsic significance of built heritage, arguing instead that heritage is inherently “value-laden.”⁴⁰ This has led to an insider-outsider view of heritage, which stresses its varied meaning to different people.⁴¹ With regard to World Heritage, these notions have challenged not only the Convention’s definition of value or significance, but its criteria and the choice of standpoint from which to determine them. Appeals are now made to incorporate the views of stakeholders when identifying heritage and defining its significance. The ordinary and the mundane in the urban fabric may thus acquire significance.⁴² Sometimes this may even be based on the relationship between urban fabric and social memory.⁴³ For example, Lord Esher’s plan for York bestowed significance on ordinary and mundane elements of the historic fabric as well as monuments.⁴⁴

There are currently many measures of heritage significance. These typically distinguish between cultural and architectural significance⁴⁵; memorial (e.g., age, history, and place memory) and present-day value (e.g., use, aesthetics, newness, and relative art values)⁴⁶; and contemporary (e.g., economic, functional, educational, social and political⁴⁷) and cultural values (e.g., identity, relative artistic or technical worth, and rarity⁴⁸). The ICOMOS Burra Charter attempted to encompass all these notions in its definition of cultural significance as the “aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations.”⁴⁹ By including the notion of multiple generations, the definition places the emphasis on stakeholders — past, present, and future. The question remains, however: How can significance or value be determined with reference to such a plurality of stakeholders? The answer lies in documentation. This process identifies and establishes the value or cultural significance that justifies intervention.⁵⁰ And since contemporary definitions of heritage significance extend beyond the physical, documentation must now encompass historical associations with individuals, events or periods, along with such physical characteristics as age, architectural style, and the altered or authentic state of the objects themselves.⁵¹

Today the statement of significance that ensues from the documentation phase is a “prerequisite to making decisions about the future of a place.”⁵² It is thus critical to the later development of policies and plans.⁵³ The value or significance that emerges from the documentation phase is usually recognized through some form of designation.⁵⁴ And in the case of

World Heritage, the nomination package for any site submitted to UNESCO must include a statement of significance that identifies which of the six UNESCO criteria of universal value justifies its inscription on the World Heritage List.⁵⁵

Eligibility for World Heritage status also entails that member states prepare a comprehensive plan to address the preservation of the site.⁵⁶ Appropriate documentation is thus central to the effective curatorial management of cultural heritage, since it guides the selection of appropriate intervention methods.⁵⁷ Documentation is further important because it provides information about heritage at the outset of, during, and after any intervention.⁵⁸ To facilitate monitoring and preservation of the built heritage, documentation must therefore be “accessible, effective, efficient, replicable, and accurate.”⁵⁹

Documentation methods have evolved according to theoretical trends similar to those affecting ideas about preservation and significance. As a result, some methods have been developed to address the architectural and physical components of heritage, while others have been developed to address its spatial and social ones. Literature, historic archives, and in-situ measured drawings are now among the most common methods used to document the architectural and physical components of heritage.⁶⁰ But highly technical photographic methods have also emerged in response to increased concern for the physical authenticity of historic buildings and the need to document architectural features and facade elements in detail. For example, rectified photography now uses grids to define scales and provide reference points, and photogrammetry pairs photos in a stereoscopic viewer to create a more precise record.⁶¹

Beyond these methods for documenting individual buildings, the shift toward urban preservation and a concern for historical morphology has introduced new spatial recording techniques, especially geographic information systems (GIS).⁶² GIS facilitates analysis of the three principal morphological elements — street networks, blocks and parcels, and building footprints.⁶³ GIS may thus be used to describe associations among factors that influence the historic fabric.⁶⁴ And together with other spatial techniques such as space syntax, it can help document morphological changes over time by digitizing historic maps and comparing them to contemporary conditions.⁶⁵ Proponents of GIS also claim that it promotes broader participation in urban preservation through such applications as Internet mapping, which allow dissemination of information to a larger audience.⁶⁶ GIS has been criticized, however, for being too broad and for not recording details at the building level.⁶⁷ In order to overcome this weakness, it is usually now used in conjunction with other methods. This allows its spatial-recording abilities to be augmented by such traditional methods as field drawings — and by computer-aided design (CAD) applications that can provide descriptive data, and hence facilitate a deeper understanding of the historic fabric.⁶⁸

Finally, oral traditions are usually overlooked as a source of information about built heritage, even when they offer a

wealth of information.⁶⁹ In particular, they may offer insights on the use, meaning, and local significance of heritage. Hayden investigated the role of story-telling as a source of information for determining the value of built heritage.⁷⁰ Others have gone further to argue that local communities and their oral traditions can be useful when considering the practical significance of built heritage, such as its economic value.⁷¹ Determining present value frequently presents both an opportunity for economic development and a challenge in terms of preserving sense of place in historic cities.⁷²

PLACE-AS-PRODUCT: THE COMMODIFICATION OF HERITAGE

In most cases today heritage preservation cannot be separated from tourism development. Thus, valuations of heritage typically prioritize either the anticipated or existing economic benefits of tourism. Planning that emphasizes this value seeks to maximize economic development by increasing the number of tourists, their length of stay, and their spending. Such an economically driven perception transforms built heritage into a commodity, and typically leads to efforts to improve its place in the global tourism market.⁷³ This commodification process frequently relies on marketing to communicate a particular image of a historic city.⁷⁴ This normally highlights a myth of the historic area as unchanged, and frequently emphasizes its visual attributes as static in a past time.⁷⁵ Hence, the historic aura of the place becomes its distinctive quality, or unique selling point.⁷⁶ Development of a historic city as a tourism product typically also integrates a mix of primary (e.g., monuments and museums) and secondary (e.g., historic districts and local crafts) attractions.⁷⁷

Since it tends to prioritize such a static sense of an area's visual attributes, such commodification clearly emphasizes the expectations of tourists over the needs of local residents.⁷⁸ Moreover, commodification considers local communities to be "an important part of the product."⁷⁹ As such, these communities are evaluated as either assets or liabilities in terms of their contribution to the historic city's value as a tourism product. Such an outside-in perception, if not handled carefully, may result in the exclusion of local communities from planning processes.⁸⁰ Such cases of exclusion usually result in irreversible socio-cultural changes in the historic city, as local communities are displaced through processes of gentrification.⁸¹ Such outcomes jeopardize an important component of a historic city's identity — the quality that attracts tourists in the first place.⁸²

CASE-STUDY METHODOLOGY

In attempting to address the impact of documentation methods on the issues outlined above, this research

employed a cross-national comparison of planning and policy-making for urban rehabilitation. By comparing a preservation project in Aleppo and a place-as-product project in Acre, it sought to explain how documentation methods may affect later policy-making and planning.⁸³ Since both cities are World Heritage Sites, the comparison also sought to investigate how globally accepted guidelines, such as the ICOMOS preservation charters and the UNESCO Convention, are adapted differently to local conditions.

In general, the analysis aimed to investigate elements of success and failure in each project, and the reasons behind them.⁸⁴ The choice of two Middle Eastern sites further emphasized South-to-South learning, particularly given the similar general contexts of the two cities.⁸⁵ In addition to World Heritage status, one might include among these similarities their inhabited historic fabrics, their low-income populations, the challenges of global tourism, and the presence of management plans and urban rehabilitation projects in each city.

For the purposes of the study, analysis was limited to the historic parts of each city where the preservation projects were ongoing. As such, the study included the entire area of Old Acre within its historic walls, while in Aleppo the study focused on three action areas (AA), which corresponded to three quarters or neighborhoods: Bab Qinnasreen (AA-1), Al-Farafra (AA-2), and al Jdeideh (AA-3).

Among other concerns, the research design had to consider the political situation in the Middle East. In particular, fieldwork in Aleppo had to be completed before fieldwork in Acre, because it would have been impossible to enter Syria after Israel. Due to limitations imposed on the author's length of stay, especially in Israel, data collection was also preceded by extensive preparation to optimize fieldwork time. Research in Aleppo was carried out between May 26 and June 18, 2005; fieldwork in Acre took place between December 13, 2005, and January 11, 2006.

The research depended on a variety of primary data sources, including in-depth interviews with planners and other policy-makers, structured interviews with local residents, public meetings and events, and observations and visual analyses of the built environment. Secondary sources included project documents and archives, journal publications, newspaper articles, and Web resources. The interviews with planning officials attempted to incorporate the perspectives of government employees, private-sector developers, and the staff of various NGOs. Nine interviews took place in Aleppo, and eleven in Acre. Each was transcribed, and the answers to each question were compared for similarities and differences and then grouped in tables accordingly. The questions posed concerned three main topics: current management plans, each city's distinctive characteristics, and sustainability measures.

Structured interviews were also used to elicit at least 35 responses from local residents in each city. Local residents were defined as anyone working and/or living within the his-

toric areas where the projects were being implemented. Accurate sampling was made difficult because of the cities' organic urban forms and a lack of telephone directories and house numbering (as a result of multiple subdivisions of houses). Accordingly, a quasi-random method was developed, which took into consideration the division of the historic fabric into residential quarters. The number of interviews sought in each quarter depended on its size: the number in Aleppo ranged between eight and ten interviews; in Acre between five to seven interviews were conducted in each quarter. Using a map of the historic city, the author selected each tenth unit (residential or commercial) for study, and available and willing adults were interviewed until 36 responses were achieved in Aleppo and 38 in Acre. Finally, data from open-ended questions with local residents and their comments on closed-ended questions were arranged in tables that grouped similar answers and comments.

Since ethics review stipulated that anonymity be guaranteed to all respondents (planners and local residents), once data collection commenced, every respondent was given a corresponding number. Access to the actual identity behind each number was restricted to the primary investigator.

THE TWO CITIES

Old Aleppo and Old Acre have both been inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List based on the third of its six inscription criteria — that they are unique testimonies to cultural traditions or civilizations.⁸⁶ Both cities boast nearly intact historic fabrics that contain inhabited residential and commercial quarters and major religious and secular monuments. They also share characteristics typical of Middle Eastern cities built in the Islamic tradition: they are organic in terms of form; they exhibit a minimum of public open space; they were once divided into segregated residential quarters to distinguish different tribes, clans, and religious groups; and they feature circulation hierarchies comprised of a maze of narrow streets and cul-de-sacs. Each residential quarter in Aleppo and Acre typically contains a main street, off which smaller streets branch and lead to the quieter and more private residential cul-de-sacs. All economic activities once took place in the central marketplace (the bazaar, also known as the *souq*), where shops were concentrated according to crafts or goods.⁸⁷

The French Mandate over Syria (1920–1946) and the British Mandate over Palestine (1918–1946) ended without significant changes to the urban form of either city. While the colonizers focused on developing their newer districts, the historic fabric remained nearly intact. Significant demographic change, however, occurred during this period. In Aleppo, affluent residents moved to the New City, to be replaced in the old districts by poorer, less educated rural migrants. Gradually, the residential quarters of the Old City

also became overcrowded, and houses were subdivided into smaller units to accommodate extended families. More recently, sweatshops and commercial storage facilities have begun to occupy many of the historic houses.⁸⁸

Similarly, but for political reasons, the population of Old Acre changed significantly with the end of the British Mandate in Palestine and the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. As a result of the political events of 1948, most of Old Acre's Arab residents fled to neighboring countries or to the countryside, becoming "absentees from their property."⁸⁹ Simultaneously, many Arab Palestinian families from Haifa and its environs fled to Acre by sea, where they were confined within its walls for security reasons by the newly established Israeli government.⁹⁰ Thinking that their displacement was temporary, the new arrivals crowded into the houses of Old Acre, sometimes dividing them into multiple units.⁹¹ Nearly all interviews with local residents referred to their current living conditions, and many insisted on showing intimate details of their daily hardships, such as crowded sleeping quarters and a lack of personal space. Several planners in Old Acre also highlighted the poor living conditions there. According to one: "some of the houses in Akko are inhumane. Some underground houses in Akko do not get sunshine and are not suitable for human habitation." According to another: "A lot of the buildings, structures are not fitting appropriate for dwelling. It is not healthy to live there. They all suffer from high humidity. . . . Without the circulation of the air, there is thick air within the structures."

Corresponding to demographic changes in both cities, ownership complications have surfaced that pose significant planning challenges. Most of the property in Aleppo is subdivided among several owners as a result of the inheritance provisions of Shari'a law.⁹² Multiple ownership of properties has exacerbated the difficulty of maintaining them. According to one planner:

The houses in the Old City have many heirs . . . and you will see one property owned by twenty or more individuals, among them that who is deceased, who is living, who has his own heirs. . . . This issue deters any operation from a legal aspect. For example, if he wants to apply for a loan to enhance his living standards, or if he wants to apply for a grant, then he, as an individual, is not the owner of the property consequently. . . . This is one of the problems that residents face.

Ownership problems of a different kind exist in Acre as a result of the creation of the state of Israel. In the wake of the 1948 war, the Israeli government created the position of Custodian of Absentee Property to manage the businesses, land and property of Arab Palestinians who fled. The Custodian then leased the property of all who were considered absentees to new Jewish immigrants — or, in certain situations, to other displaced Arabs within Israel (as was the

case in Old Acre). Then, in 1953, the Custodian appointed the Israel National Housing Company for Immigrants, locally known as 'Amidar, to be its agent and administer its residential and commercial property on behalf of the Israel Land Administration.⁹³ To this day, 'Amidar leases absentee property, which amounts to 85 percent of all property in Old Acre, to Arab Israeli residents who have been displaced there since 1948.⁹⁴ The remaining property in Old Acre either belongs to Muslim and Christian religious institutions (10 percent) or other private owners (5 percent).⁹⁵

Because of their limited economic means, the new residents of Aleppo and Acre have often been unable to maintain their houses in their original condition. Observations of the built fabric also reveal that, as they have subdivided and added to historic structures, they have used contemporary materials such as reinforced concrete that interact negatively with traditional stone construction.

Neglect by the local authorities in both cities has also contributed to the spatial and the social decline of the historic districts. Spatially, the two municipalities have not upgraded or maintained the urban infrastructure in the historic quarters, and have instead channeled most municipal spending toward newer parts of each city. Most of the damage to the organization of the Old City of Aleppo actually resulted from planning initiatives between the 1950s and the 1970s that imposed automobile roads over the traditional street network.⁹⁶ In particular, the 1954 master plan, known as the Gutton Proposal, imposed two main roads, running west-east, and two ring roads, one around the old quarter and the other around the main *souq*. Although only partially implemented, this proposal destroyed one-tenth of the intramural historic fabric and numerous extramural parts of the Old City.⁹⁷ Likewise, the attitude of the municipality and 'Amidar toward Old Acre has been marked by neglect, and has resulted in ongoing problems. For example, until the early 1990s, one planner reported, Old Acre lacked basic physical infrastructure, such as sewers.

Finally, residents in both cities complained during interviews of the lack of social infrastructure. They repeatedly referred to the lack of clinics, vocational schools, public libraries, playgrounds, and kindergartens. So far, one planner reported, the preservation project in Aleppo has provided only one public clinic and one kindergarten for the entire area of the Old City. Similarly, Old Acre's social infrastructure, especially public schools and clinics, continue to be inadequate. According to another planner: "The [two] open clinics now are private clinics for private doctors . . . and they don't even work every day, only certain days in the week." Moreover, Old Acre suffers from congested and deteriorating residences that frequently collapse (FIG. 1).⁹⁸



FIGURE 1. A corner in a house, Old Acre.

INITIAL DOCUMENTATION, ESTABLISHING SIGNIFICANCE, AND INSCRIPTION

A new plan, the Banchoya-David Plan, was proposed for Aleppo in 1974. Although it initially sought to counter the effect of the Gutton Proposal, it also proposed a new north-south automobile road, which would have cut through the historic fabric, demolished more monuments, and further segregated the historic quarters from each other. Many public and private parties in Aleppo joined forces to oppose the Banchoya-David Plan, and by 1979 they had convinced the Syrian General Directorate of Antiquities to halt its implementation and seek to have the entire Old City registered as a historic area. After that, the Syrian government requested UNESCO's help putting forward appropriate plans for the Old City, and Dr. Stefano Bianca, a UNESCO expert, conducted lengthy research, including detailed documentation of the historic city, which led to a report in 1983. The combined efforts of local activists and international experts culminated with Aleppo's inscription on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1986.⁹⁹ In the words of one planner who played a prominent role in halting development plans and involving UNESCO:

What exacerbated matters more was that [planners] opened some streets. . . . There was a group of three to four individuals who tried their best to stop the organizational plan, and they succeeded in stopping it. There were interferences on behalf of UNESCO and others. We included UNESCO and the central government, and there were fights because the municipality did not want to change its policies. But then later the municipality switched positions and adopted preservation.

Shortly after the World Heritage inscription, the Syrian government requested support from the German government in preserving the Old City. Consequently, the Project for the Rehabilitation of the Old City of Aleppo materialized in 1994, and is still ongoing. The German government delegated the German Technical Cooperation Agency, known as GTZ, to represent it in the project.¹⁰⁰

The situation in Acre was similar in some respects. Contrary to 'Amidar's and the municipality's policies of neglect, several informants reported that the Israeli Antiquities Authority (known as 'Atiqot) and the central Israeli government realized the tourism significance of Old Acre, particularly its Crusader remains. British archaeologists had carried out extensive surveys of the area and documented these in an unpublished report known as the Winter Report.¹⁰¹ 'Atiqot eventually followed these recommendations. As a result, tourists now enjoy the results of extensive documentation, excavation and preservation work in the Citadel and around the Old City.¹⁰²

However, in Acre, the goal was always to develop the city as a tourist destination. By 1962, the central Israeli government had already proposed a comprehensive plan for Old Acre known as the Kesten Plan, and in 1967 it established the Old Acre Development Company (OADC). The latter was entrusted with three tasks: to implement the Kesten Plan, manage Old Acre as a tourism resource, and convert Old Acre into a "museum city."¹⁰³ To achieve these objectives, OADC sought to vacate the Old City by transferring its entire population to al-Makr, a nearby contemporary Arab village. It justified this action in two ways. First, it referred to the precedent of Old Jaffa, in which the Old Jaffa Development Corporation (established by the central Israeli government to implement tasks similar to those of the OADC) had transferred the entire Arab population of the old quarters and transformed them into a museum and tourist city.¹⁰⁴ Second, the OADC rationalized the removal of the local population on the basis that Old Acre's Arab residents were a liability to tourism development. At the time the city's reputation derived largely from its concentration of Arab residents, who were reputed to present a multitude of socioeconomic problems, including unemployment, substance abuse, and violence.¹⁰⁵ According to one source:

For many years the Israeli government didn't know how to handle the situation. As you know, the population is 5,000 to 7,000 inhabitants, and practically all of them are Arabs. Now, for many years, the Israeli government thought that the condition for developing Acre was to relocate the population, and in fact they built a village — al-Makr. The purpose of the construction of the village was to relocate the residents of Acre to it. [But] the moment you tell somebody that we want to relocate you, they will not agree. In fact, I think it is offensive, and I don't think it is good.

Once Old Acre's Arab residents realized the parallel between their situation and the transfer of the residents of Old Jaffa, they immediately returned to Old Acre.¹⁰⁶ According to another planner:

I don't know if anyone informed you about the experiment — that the government constructed a whole neighborhood in a nearby village, al-Makr, so as to transfer Old Acre's residents to it. And even with that, the houses [in Old Acre] were not vacated, the majority stayed. . . . And a lot of the residents [who left] came back. More came back than those who left. If a residence had a few families leaving it, they all came back to live in the same houses because it was not easy. Well, there were around 1,400 to 1,500 residents who left to al-Makr, but once they left, much more than that number came back to Old Acre.

One event during the mid-1990s, however, brought Old Acre into the international spotlight. Based on 'Atiqot's recommendation, UNESCO selected Old Acre from among one hundred sites worldwide that best represented medieval heritage — in this case, Crusader heritage.¹⁰⁷ Immediately thereafter, OADC and the Israeli Land Administration together hired a team under the leadership of two renowned urban planners, Arie Rahamimoff and Saadi Mendel, to propose a \$100 million five-year development plan for Old Acre.¹⁰⁸ The documentation that preceded the five-year plan, and the plan itself, became the core of a nomination package submitted to UNESCO to inscribe Old Acre on the World Heritage List. The nomination was successful, and in 2001 Old Acre, along with Masada National Park, became the first sites in Israel to be inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List.¹⁰⁹ Given its tangible positive outcomes, the plan has since been renewed for two additional five-year terms.

Both Aleppo and Acre are thus currently subject to planning initiatives that commenced in the mid-1990s. The two plans, however, vary significantly in their approaches. The Project for the Rehabilitation of the Old City of Aleppo (PROCA) considers rehabilitation its ultimate objective — which it aims to achieve through the preservation of the residential function of the historic fabric.¹¹⁰ The project stresses the need "to understand the needs of the target groups using the site, primarily the residents."¹¹¹ During a meeting in the

Old City on June 6, 2005, attended by a select group of stakeholders — particularly local merchants and tourism entrepreneurs — the mayor of Aleppo announced that, using his control over licensing, he would continue to curb tourism development in the residential quarters of the Old City: “What we [the municipality] decide will be implemented, and if we decide no tourism, then no tourism.” At the same meeting, the Director of the Old City Directorate added, “tourism is a tool not a goal for developing the Old City and improving the quality of life within it.” These views were echoed during interviews with planners:

The project in its very early inception somehow regarded tourism in a rather nonchalant way, for lack of a better word, in that the main attention of the project was still — and to a certain extent is still — the preservation of the residential function of the city. In that sense, working too much in the favor of tourism was seen as somehow endangering the probability of a continuous residential function in the city. So it was mostly an idea of mitigating tourists' presence rather than opening up the city for tourism.

Conversely, the Old Acre Development Company clearly stipulates that its primary goal is “to develop the Old City as an international tourism city with large and small hotels, attractions, historical and archeological sites, sailing, sports, recreation and tourism.”¹¹² And a planning team was hired specifically to produce a comprehensive plan to convert Old Acre into a “City of Tourism.”¹¹³ According to one planner:

OADC, the Municipality of Acre, the Ministry of Interior, and the Land Development Authority, together with the National Company for Tourism, approached Arie Rahamimoff and asked him to submit a proposal for the plan for the Old City of Acre. They worked together, and they wanted to prepare a plan for Old Acre basically from the point of view of tourism. [Their] point of view was mainly developing tourism . . . [and] basically, the way they viewed tourism in 1993 was to improve the waterfront and the marina.

Notwithstanding these different objectives, both projects similarly began with an intensive phase of data collection and documentation. This lasted for two years in Aleppo.¹¹⁴ In Acre, it lasted one year.¹¹⁵ The two projects, however, approached documentation differently. The following section investigates how these approaches influenced the collection methods, the types of data collected, and eventually, the management plans and intervention strategies that were used in the two cities.

WHAT TO DOCUMENT? AND HOW?

Divergent approaches were used in the documentation phase that preceded the proposal of management plans in Aleppo and Acre. In Aleppo, German support led to the extensive use of geographic information systems (GIS) to document and analyze existing conditions. GTZ provided the necessary software and trained local Syrian staff in its use. But, as data accumulated, a local private planning firm was subcontracted to manage the process.

Once data collection commenced, the effort was dominated by technical surveys of infrastructure and land use.¹¹⁶ According to one planner: “GTZ money is not financial assistance, it is technical assistance. And whatever implementation on the ground takes place is technical assistance and is geared more towards training people and building institutional capacity than actually doing things. . . . So there was a whole set of options, and unfortunately the project never followed up on these.” To assume that GIS and its associated technical data were imposed on the Syrian authorities tells only one aspect of the story. The focus on spatial data and GIS techniques actually resulted from a combination of factors. Among these was the strong temptation to use GIS for the first time in the region. In addition, cross-national transfer of technical knowledge in the planning field is always easier than cross-national interpretation.¹¹⁷ To an extent, the case of the Old City of Aleppo also resembles the typical one where a donor agency guides support process within the receiving country — even if this was not explicitly clear from the interviews.¹¹⁸ What is clear was that documentation became limited to technical surveys and failed to extend beyond the spatial component.

By contrast, documentation in Old Acre was mostly triggered by the need to understand local residents in order to facilitate the development of the Old City for tourism. As one planner put it: “So today, the authorities and the government finally got into their head and comprehended that Acre’s residents will not leave. They tried very much — for over twenty years. and its residents will not leave it.” Therefore, according to one source, Mendel and Rahamimoff, the lead planners hired by a coalition of public agencies,

. . . proposed a one-year plan during which they wanted to study as many aspects as possible of Old Acre. . . . It was very clear that if you don't deal with all aspects of life of the city, it will be impossible to develop sustainable tourism. . . . Rahamimoff and Mendel established an interdisciplinary team that included a consultant on social issues, an economist, preservation expert, traffic engineer, infrastructure engineer. . . all of them listed in the planning document. The first thing we [the planning team] realized . . . is that it is impossible to prepare a plan for tourism without dealing with the whole city.

Consequently, and instead of focusing on one method or one component of Old Acre, documentation incorporated detailed architectural surveys, documentation of tourism activities at the spatial scale, and surveys of the socioeconomic conditions of local residents.¹¹⁹

FROM DOCUMENTATION TO INTERVENTION

In each city the documentation phase yielded management plans and proposed strategies to achieve the objectives of each project. The Development Plan for the Old City of Aleppo identified nine topic areas as the ostensible basis for a holistic approach to rehabilitating its physical fabric and sustaining its residential function: land use, housing, economics, environment, traffic and transportation, infrastructure, and historic preservation.¹²⁰ Similarly, the five-year Comprehensive Plan (1994–1999) to convert Old Acre into a tourism city was comprised of eight subplans. These addressed infrastructure, population and housing, economic development, archaeology, tourism services, garbage collection, marketing and promotion, and finally, the planning, management, control and maintenance of Old Acre.¹²¹

Both plans similarly emphasized infrastructure, housing, and economic development; but they perceived the role of tourism differently. Where the development plan in Aleppo prioritized the preservation of residential functions and mentioned tourism only in passing (confining it to the area around the Citadel), four of Acre's subplans directly related to tourism.

The other major difference between the two plans lay in their implementation strategies. Aleppo's plan adopted a normative approach that focused on what ought to be done, rather than how specific desired ends would be achieved.¹²² Acre's subplans proposed management tools, rather than means of control.¹²³ This difference, as the following analysis reveals, can be attributed to the form of documentation used. The next sections compare examples of physical, spatial, and social preservation in each city. They highlight the processes of change in each project's objectives at the actual intervention phase. They also indicate how policy-making and planning in each city localized international standards — especially the historic preservation procedures of the 1999 Burra Charter.

PHYSICAL PRESERVATION

Historic preservation in Aleppo suffered from a delivery gap between documentation, planning and implementation.¹²⁴ It was incorrectly assumed that GIS was a “do-all” tool.¹²⁵ As a result, the project in Aleppo depended only on the spatial component of GIS and overlooked the crucial need to link spatial and descriptive information.¹²⁶

Although detailed architectural surveys were carried out in the Old City at various stages (including the Bianca report of 1983), one planner pointed out that there seems to have been no mechanism to link those to the GIS database. This meant the spatial survey of Old Aleppo was not directly linked to supporting information about individual buildings, including their facade details, whether they had been altered or were in authentic condition, and whether they warranted preservation intervention. The lack of such descriptive data eventually precluded the derivation of effective policies and strategies.¹²⁷ And the ensuing preservation policies were limited to the addition of one page to an existing three-page historic preservation law, known as Decision 39, from 1990. The final iteration of Decision 39 simply advocated a “policy of control and regulation” to preserve the historic fabric through deterring deterioration, preserving the status quo, and controlling future development.¹²⁸

The main problem with this approach was that while it prevented owners and tenants from improperly changing or modifying historic properties, it failed to provide guidelines for historic preservation. To regulate new construction inside the Old City, the legislation merely offered a brief set of codes. These vaguely limited heights to two stories, specified that only traditional building materials could be employed, and prohibited uses other than residential, cultural, educational, health, tourist, traditional crafts, and light industry. Decision 39 also stipulated that any unapproved additions to historic structures would be demolished.¹²⁹ As one resident complained:

*There is stringency in the laws — we cannot restore; wood is not allowed; . . . we are not allowed to remove it [the existing wood]; and we do not have the ability to maintain it. That's why we sold it [our house]. . . . We could not take it anymore: the dilapidation, the walls, the humidity in winter is very difficult . . . , and [the house] needs maintenance. . . . We are sad to leave the area, but there is nothing we can do.*¹³⁰

By emphasizing the preservation of the physical fabric in its authentic state, Decision 39 shifted the project's focus from rehabilitation, which might have allowed the fabric to be adapted to contemporary needs, to preservation, which prevents change.¹³¹ The project thus inverted the traditional relationship between Aleppo's residents and their built environment: they now have to adapt their living conditions to suit the built environment, which they formerly adapted continuously to fit their needs through expansion, addition and subdivision.¹³² One planner in Aleppo emphasized this point, arguing that the traditional relationship of the local residents to their built environment was a process of “continuous negotiation” that incorporated adaptation. By freezing this negotiation, a process of displacement ensued, and local residents began to leave Old Aleppo for places where they could



FIGURE 2. A sign advertising an Arab house for sale.

find cheaper and easier solutions to their housing needs. Such an option becomes increasingly tempting when tourism entrepreneurs will pay high prices for properties. And today the three Action Areas in the Old City are dotted with houses that have been converted into hotels, restaurants and cafés. Many residents surveyed either confirmed selling their houses or expressed interest in selling. And it was common to find signs in the Action Areas advertising traditional courtyard houses for sale (FIG. 2).

One planner admitted the presence of a displacement process and the penetration of tourism services into the historic residential quarters:

They don't have the means to maintain their own houses, so how can this built-up structure be maintained if we [Old City Directorate] don't? . . . So we would have to bring in richer people who have the money to maintain. . . . The more people come in and invest, the more people come back — and this is presently happening, that people come back from outside Aleppo, even from foreign countries, investing into the Old City, into these courtyard houses, renewing them . . . to modern living standards. Once you have grown over a certain critical mass — and I think that we are arriving at this critical mass now — we are also somehow worried about this. It is not yet dangerous, but it may become dangerous. We see this in other areas, some historic areas, which we don't want here. . . . I am not sure if we can stop this, if we can prevent this, but first of all we need to know how much it is . . . [a] priority . . . for the locals. . . . I don't know where the limit is, can't tell you . . . but we hear from the mukhtars, for example, that, in particular, in the Bab Qinnasrin area and in the Jdeideh area, houses are bought.

In Old Acre historic preservation policies were similarly influenced by documentation methods — but in different ways. The OADC subcontracted with 'Atiqot to document the historic fabric and propose appropriate intervention strategies. Accordingly, 'Atiqot documented all physical elements including structures and architectural features, and identified four levels of significance. 'Atiqot then designed policies and preservation guidelines that corresponded with each level. Level A represented the most significant structures — monuments and sacred buildings that should be preserved in their authentic state. Level B included all archaeological buildings and ruins whose preservation was regulated by the antiquities law and administered by 'Atiqot. Level C referred to structures of medium significance — included mostly residential and commercial buildings whose facades had features that warranted preservation. All remaining residential and commercial buildings belonged to level D, where more flexibility was allowed in modifying properties as long as tenants adhered to certain design guidelines for materials, building height, massing, and colors.¹³³ These guidelines were intended to contextualize contemporary additions within the existing fabric and so maintain Old Acre's visual composition.¹³⁴

'Atiqot also used this architectural data to prepare detailed typologies of urban and architectural features — such as doors, windows, ceilings and walls. It then documented these in manuals that described their construction and suitable preservation techniques.¹³⁵ These manuals built on the notion of place as product in offering detailed typologies of all design elements.¹³⁶ They were made accessible to the public, and were housed in the main office of the Old Acre Development Company in the Old City.

MORPHOLOGICAL/SPATIAL PRESERVATION

The management plans of Aleppo and Acre both prioritized the rehabilitation of physical infrastructure to extend the life of the historic fabric and deter further deterioration. However, in Aleppo, infrastructure rehabilitation seems to have been the only one of the nine development areas actually implemented. Conversely, in Old Acre all other subplans also seemed to be ongoing at the time of the fieldwork associated with this article.

According to two planners in the Old City of Aleppo, the focus on infrastructure rehabilitation was a direct result of focusing only on technical data collection. Another planner had the following to say about local factors, including government policies:

Public infrastructure is the easiest way of spending the money in what the state considers a transparent way. And to a certain extent this was the dominant thinking, . . . that the state is a catalyst for change. By investing its share it encourages others to invest their shares. And by

providing also the framework for space investment — that is, land use regulations, clear building codes, clear definition of what is permissible and not permissible in the Old City — then people would feel secure . . . and move ahead in their investments.

The same planner later commented on how the backgrounds of the local Syrian staff influenced the technical orientation of the project: “It also is expected in the fact that the majority of the [local] people who worked on the project were architects and engineers. This is a project that was technical by its very interests.”

According to Conzen, land use policies link spatial and social components in the historic city.¹³⁷ The emphasis on spatial data without descriptive information on social components therefore poses challenges to processes of policy formation and intervention that attempt to address a range of issues.

In Aleppo, GIS analysis of land use revealed that the Old City traditionally lacked any clear separation of uses. However, the new policies proposed separate land uses, whose visual appearance would convey a more organized spatial order (FIGS. 3, 4). The policies did not elaborate on the reasons for this, the means of achieving it, or the possible consequences on local social structure, except to say that confining tourism to the Citadel area would preserve the residential function of the old quarters. But the new policies also sought to remove all activities deemed unwelcome from the Old City, including small workshops, industrial and commercial warehouses, and certain commercial and community facilities.¹³⁸ While some of these facilities had only been

recently added to the Old City, others, such as goldsmiths and soap-makers, had existed for centuries.¹³⁹ The repercussions of moving these traditional commercial and industrial activities out of the Old City are dangerous, especially given the trend to replace them with tourist services. Such displacement will eventually disrupt the centuries-old socio-economic structure of the Old City.¹⁴⁰

As in Aleppo, land use policies in Old Acre limit tourism activities to certain areas. But the rationale behind these policies and their actual implementation have differed. When OADC documented tourism activity, it identified existing patterns of movement within the historic city. Ensuing policies then sought to limit the circulation of tourists to two sets of trails that run north-south and east-west (FIG. 5). Together, the trails highlight the major attractions of Old Acre and bring tourists to areas that increase their potential contribution to local economic development. Among these are the shops in the Ottoman *souq*, the harbor (where fishermen sell their catch), and the city walls (which house a few local restaurants). Moreover, some of the trails offer a glimpse of the lives of local residents by bringing them along the main streets of residential quarters, without imposing them on more private alleys. The resulting experience suits the needs of tourists while being sensitive to the needs of local residents. Nevertheless, preserving the residential quarters of Palestinian Arabs while commodifying them for tourism consumption might be seen as part of a larger process taking place within Israel during the 1990s. By fixing Arabs spatially, they are presented as being part of one of several Israeli “interiors.”¹⁴¹

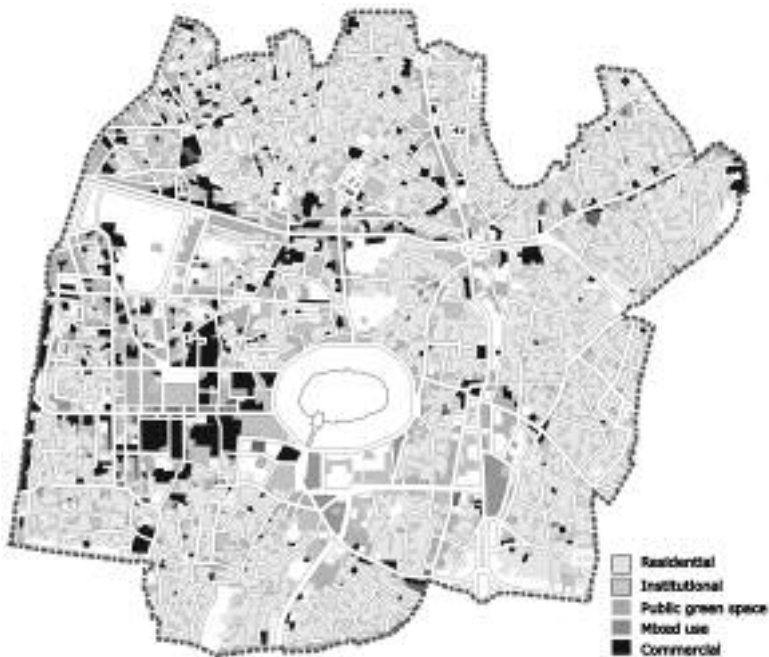


FIGURE 3. Land use Aleppo, existing.

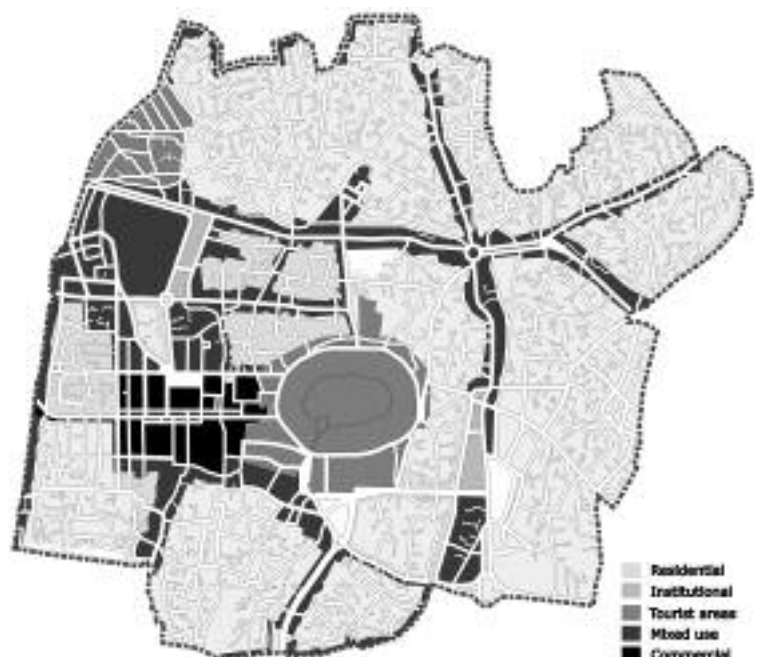


FIGURE 4. Land use Aleppo, proposed.

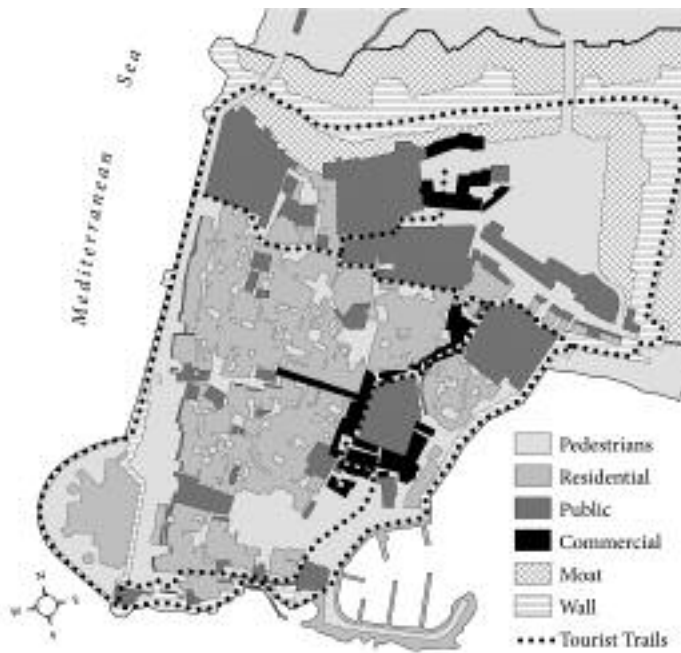


FIGURE 5. Old Acre Development Plan.

SOCIAL PRESERVATION

The project in the Old City of Aleppo apparently attracted German funding because it aspired to be a participatory planning process. According to one planner, “The project, the first plan, is very ambitious, particularly in its aims, and the reason it was included under German funding was primarily . . . because of this participatory component in urban development.” This same informant explained how public engagement gradually faded into the background because of a combination of local Syrian politics and the project’s technical emphasis:

Unfortunately, the Syrian side was not quite willing to develop this particular component [public engagement] any further. [There was] the overwhelming need for technical intervention at first: providing the necessary infrastructure . . . [and the] political guarantees that have to come with [such] investment. . . . In a sense it was, and it still is, a highly supply-side development. [This] caused many of the technicians of the project to see participation only in the most rudimentary role. If you think of it as participatory on a scale of one to ten — whereby the first level is information sharing and dissemination, . . . [arriving at] joint or actual needs assessments and analyses of people’s demands, then . . . [moving on to] joint participation and decision-making, until you come to empowerment — the process is, I think, . . . level one. To that extent, one has to say that the . . . first two years basically saw the importance of communicating with people, but not [moving] to the point where you give people decision-making power.

Thus, the documentation process in Old Aleppo did incorporate local communities to the extent that it collected demographic and socioeconomic information.¹⁴³ But this data was primarily statistical, and embedded within the GIS spatial data. One planner, who was probed for further information after repeatedly mentioning surveys with local residents, finally explained that by “survey” they meant a technical survey, and by “participation” they meant using local residents as a source of information on technical issues:

The surveys were built on meetings, but, of course, they were not detailed questionnaires. . . . We had a printed survey that we, the project’s team, filled out. . . . [This] gave a general idea about the . . . nature of the area — that is, the most prominent problems . . . , the most important keys, but in very general terms. So we . . . started to build data . . . specific to the Old City on the basis of local residents’ perceptions . . . say 60 percent [theirs] and 40 percent technical analyses — [such as] the stone how it is, and the structure here how it is, and the infrastructure here how it is. Even . . . when we built the infrastructure-specific map, . . . it was . . . related to the residents themselves and to the information they provid[ed], because they are the ones living in the Old City and know where . . . issues are. So it was from there that the feeling of the strong relation between the residents started. . . . If you don’t take this information from them, this thing will cost you much more time. Additionally, when we started, the first step to execute the project . . . in the Old City was changing the infrastructure.

In addition to limiting intervention to infrastructure rehabilitation, the nature of the technical data collected in Aleppo precluded development of tools to deal with complex issues of private ownership, which one planner pointed out now hinder preservation efforts. An analysis of the section dedicated to housing in the development plan reveals its overly normative nature. It documents and identifies ownership patterns, links them to population densities, and compares existing situations with a desired ideal, while failing to provide any means for achieving this ideal.¹⁴³

Conversely, the social component played a significant role in the documentation of Old Acre’s existing condition. Indeed, a sociologist, who was part of the planning team, documented the social situation there.¹⁴⁴ Sources stressed the importance of her background as an Arab and a previous resident of the Old City, which facilitated access to the real opinions of residents. Her presence also triggered a positive participatory process between residents and the OADC. “We had a social consultant, a sociologist, and she is Khawla Abu Baker. She was born in Acre, and I . . . don’t know if she is still living there today, but she was living in New Acre when we worked with her, . . . and she knew everyone.” Several planners indicated that she provided in-depth information

about residents' strong place attachment, their dire housing needs, and their desire to be involved with tourism development. According to one informant,

In the master plan there was a multidisciplinary team, and one of the team was Dr. Khawla Abu Baker. She is a social worker, and she was the link between the team and the inhabitants of the Old City. She also carried out a survey of the . . . inhabitants' wishes, . . . [which] gave them some sort of a confidence that they were part of the plan. And even after the plan was ready, it was shown to the public, and there is a subcommittee that consists of some of the inhabitants . . . [who] still work together with us, and we have a social worker with us here also.

One of the primary findings of the social survey was that solving the complicated property-ownership situation would be crucial to the successful implementation of historic preservation policies. Accordingly, 'Amidar and OADC collaborated to devise new ownership policies. According to one senior planner, these will provide residents with long-term loans to help pay for the rehabilitation of property they are currently leasing from 'Amidar, conditional that they abide by

the design guidelines and building manuals (FIGS.6,7). Once residents repay these loans, 'Amidar will transfer the property to them. As this senior planner explained:

Because Acre was abandoned by its original dwellers, all the houses, all the properties went to the government. Now the government has leased the houses to dwellers. It is not ownership, it is a lease. It is a lease that they pay only 60 percent, and 40 percent is [paid by] the government. Now, we are in the midst of a process to sell the houses to the dwellers. From the 40 percent they have to pay only 50 percent to be owners of the houses. And that will generate two things. One, once you are an owner of the house, you have an interest in developing and keeping it in order, because it is not a lease, it is yours: now you take care of your own property, and you will invest in it. And because, of course, it is not a lease anymore, it is an ownership, it will make other people want to buy in the Old City. . . . If he [a resident] has to pay now, between 15 to 20 thousand American dollars for a house, then he can sell in the free market for 70 to 80 thousand . . . because we take into account the years he lived there. . . . He also can leave it to his children; it's his property.



FIGURE 6. *Illegal additions, Acre.*



FIGURE 7. *Legal additions, Acre.*

Residents whose houses were subject to rehabilitation or had already been rehabilitated under these policies confirmed they can now own their residences provided that they make the payments — although one commented that “it will take me two lifetimes to pay my loan.” These same residents also said they were provided with alternative housing arrangements for the duration of the rehabilitation process.

Notwithstanding these reassurances and the existing cases, other less senior planners were skeptical about the legal aspects. One, who requested that the recording device be turned off, but allowed note-taking, justified such skepticism:

‘Amidar is in a difficult position because it’s managing the property of those who are absent, . . . who left in 1948. So in reality it is not the owner of the property, but a manager of it. So now it is in a dilemma that it has no authority to resell those houses, but in reality should give them back to the refugees, who are in the West Bank and all over the Arab world, particularly in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. So it has no authority to really sell those houses or allow the current residents, who are leasing them, to pay for them and buy them. So it is beyond a national dilemma, but an international dilemma that ‘Amidar is stuck with.

Another planner who did not mind being recorded was more critical of the preservation process itself, and of the amounts demanded from local residents:

When [the authorities] became certain that Acre’s residents won’t get out of Acre, and that they won’t be able to make it into a ghost city, they said “OK, let us repair the houses, let us allow people to add, and let us supervise the additions and limit it to the same existing style,” . . . but without giving it at this stage any possibility of funding. And they see how much it would all cost, and they tell the owner come and participate with half of it, with 50 percent. Owners had to participate with their share, and had no control how much this share will amount to. . . . Owners are [also] not the ones who prepare the plans, . . . who do the actual repairs, . . . who employ the workers and pay them. The law of elimination of danger requires that the resident pays half the costs, that is the law. . . . The [Old Acre Development] Company makes the calculations and makes the “contract.” . . . The Arabs whose houses are being repaired, they thought that their houses will be repaired, but they don’t have any money to pay for it. They have been paying for fifty years now, so why doesn’t [OADC] take that into account? Or allocate long-term loans for them with very simple conditions and help them economically? [Why not] consider those fifty years of paying by converting their houses to humane places for living? Seriously, people do not have the money to pay, not that they have the money and don’t want to.

If successfully implemented, this new ownership policy will further convey to Old Acre’s Arab residents that ‘Amidar and OADC are no longer interested in removing them, but instead in improving the quality of life for those who choose to remain in Old Acre. And a pilot project in an administrative unit in Old Acre known as Block 10 (at the northeastern corner of Old Acre along HaHagana Street — known locally as al-Fakhoura Street) has begun to slowly implement these policies on a case-by-case basis. It thus represents a first step toward urban rehabilitation, which meets housing needs and solves ownership complications.

The above analysis reveals how the outcome of the preservation process in both Aleppo and Acre has differed from its original vision. By focusing only on spatial data, documentation in Old Aleppo discounted the local perspective and led to planning policies counter to the original objective of preserving its residential function. The project instead triggered a process of private-sector-led tourism gentrification, in which most of the historic fabric is gradually losing its residential function to tourism services.¹⁴⁵

The project in Old Acre also faced unanticipated shifts; but contrary to Aleppo, these were positively influenced by documentation that considered the local perspective. Instead of transforming Old Acre into a tourism city by removing all its residents, the new policies have actually preserved residential functions and balanced local needs with tourism development.

CONSEQUENCES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Urban preservation is a challenging task that incorporates architectural and physical, spatial and morphological, and social concerns.¹⁴⁶ The true challenge, however, stems from the need to integrate these components and relate them to each other.

The transformation of Old Acre was driven by a diversity of information accumulated during the documentation phase, which incorporated all three of these components and linked them to local needs. While one might assume that subsequent policy-making, planning, and implementation would not deviate from the project’s original tourism development goals, this research offers different insights. The combination of different policies has actually facilitated the preservation of ordinary buildings by ordinary residents, responded to housing needs, and balanced tourism development with residents’ activities. Consequently, the project has transcended its initial emphasis on tourism to establish a deeper perception of the historic city as a living place. It thus balances the preservation of its significant architectural elements, its unique spatial organization, and its socio-cultural and economic characteristics.¹⁴⁷ The ensuing intervention leans toward a curatorial management of the built heritage that “accommodates both the past and the future.”¹⁴⁸ In

doing so, it experiments successfully with translating international requirements and charters into operational management tools at the local scale.

Conversely, while the project in Aleppo emphasized the architectural significance of the historic fabric, it adopted a spatial documentation method that was not compatible with the formation of appropriate preservation policies. Notwithstanding the commendable efforts to use GIS technology, the project's overambitious scheme to preserve the authenticity of every element within the historic city was not only unrealistic, but it has also frozen the interactions between the city and its inhabitants. It has failed to fully incorporate local residents in the urban rehabilitation processes.¹⁴⁹ And by triggering tourism gentrification, it has failed to preserve the historic city as a living place.¹⁵⁰

In investigating the case in Aleppo, this research did not set out to critique GIS and its use in urban rehabilitation.

On the contrary, this article argues that the project in Aleppo fails to capitalize on the full potential of GIS to guide future urban preservation. If used appropriately, especially if augmented with data about the physical and social components of the project area, GIS holds great potential to assist in the curatorial management of the historic cities. For example, it can facilitate the identification of various levels of significance at the urban scale, monitor change over time, and help communicate with local communities through the dissemination of visual information.¹⁵¹

The two case studies confirm the risks of designing documentation methods separately from planning and intervention processes. Such separation is bound to result in a delivery gap between the design and implementation of management plans. Hence, there is a need to implement a documentation strategy from the outset that is compatible with planning goals.¹⁵²

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6. This article adopts North American terminology, in which "preservation" refers to historic buildings and sites, while "conservation" refers to nature conservation. The international charters adopted by all member states of UNESCO and ICOMOS use "conservation" to refer to "all the processes of looking after a place so as to retain its cultural significance," only one of which is preservation." For more details, see ICOMOS, "International Council on Monuments and Sites," <http://www.international.icomos.org>.
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130. Several other residents during interviews complained about the lack of guidance available to them if they wanted to proceed with historic preservation as an option. Decision 39/1990 and its modification does not provide sufficient information, and their only option is to hire a professional historic preservation firm — something that is beyond their capabilities, given the fees charged by such firms and the very modest amount of the "preservation fund" that is offered to residents. The Old City Directorate offers support for supervision of construction only — not for the design of rehabilitation and/or preservation — something that several planners confirmed during interviews.
131. Tiesdell, Oc, and Heath, *Revitalizing Historic Urban Quarters*, p.166.
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144. When contacted for the purposes of this research project, this sociologist

adamantly refused to be interviewed and insisted that all information she could share about her work exists in publicly available documents on the project, and that she had nothing to add. She was the only planner in Old Acre and Old Aleppo who refused to be interviewed.

145. Lees, Slater, and Wyly, *Gentrification*, pp.3–10.

146. Nasser, “Planning for Urban Heritage Places,” p.469.

147. This aligns with what Nasser calls for in “Planning for Urban Heritage Places,” pp.474,476.

148. Tyler, *Historic Preservation*, p.145.

149. Khechen emphasizes this particular point and stresses the need to incorporate all stakeholders in a truly inclusive planning process that steers away from strict preservation, whose goal is to freeze the historic

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152. MacLean, “Capturing the Past: Documentation & Conservation,” p.13.

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