Post War Recovery of Cultural Heritage Sites

Aleppo

تحت القلعة

An Urban and Landscape Design Studio

Howayda Al-Harithy
Jala Makhzoumi
About the Studio

Multi-layered Narrative Analysis

Historical Socio-Economic Spatial Environmental Political

Proposed Visions

Selected Community Shared Vision

Proposed Individual Concepts

Group Design Proposals

Howayda Al-Harithy

is a Landscape Architect. She received her Bachelor in Architecture in Baghdad, Iraq in 1971, her Masters in Environmental Design from Yale University in 1975 and her PhD in Landscape Architecture from Sheffield University in 1996. She pioneers ecological landscape design and planning, which she applies in practice, research and teaching to bridge disciplinary boundaries towards place and culture responsiveness, local community empowerment and environmental and ecosystem health. Jala's professional practice in the Middle East spans 35 years with a focus on sustainable urban greening, post war recovery and rural and natural heritage conservation.

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Jala is co-founder and partner at UNIT44, a Lebanon based practice offering consultancies in architecture, landscape architecture, ecological planning and urban design. She is also a founder and member of the Lebanese Landscape Association, the national chapter of the International Federation of Landscape Architects.

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The social, economic and physical disruptions caused by war are an urgent issue that requires immediate attention. With this in mind, the

Forward program at the University of Beirut (UoB) in Spring 2017-18 aimed to explore new approaches to sustainable development in post-conflict situations. The program was centered, heritage-led and people-focused. It was built around a study tour of Aleppo, Syria, as a site of inquiry for the studio, URDS 602, offered by the Department of Urban and Regional Design Studies.

As a heritage city par excellence, Aleppo was selected for its rich history, diverse culture, and ongoing conflict. The program sought to understand the impact of war on the city and its people, and to generate innovative solutions for its post-war future.

The studio explored the potential of heritage as a catalyst for post-war reconstruction, focusing on the old city and currently active in post-war reconciliation and reconstruction efforts. Of equal value was the input of architect and urbanist Omar Abdulaziz Hallaj, who contributed to the program at AUB.

Field work was not possible due to the unsafe conditions on the ground, but the students were invited to key studio reviews to share their post-war aspirations of the local community and guide the visions for the city and its people. They relied on archival data, maps and other documentation of ongoing wars. The students had remote access to Aleppo residents living in the war-ravaged city. Another key challenge was to initiate a conversation about alternative approaches to post-war recovery that are place-centered, heritage-led and people-focused.

The designs prioritized ownership and the phasing of implementation, proposing guidelines to engage the community, facilitate participatory design and development. Design conceptualization and development. The designs were informed by the input of architect and urbanist Omar Abdulaziz Hallaj, who contributed to the program at AUB.

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About the Studio
While disasters produce death, injury, heartbreaking economic loss, and widespread disruption, recovery from disaster should not be seen as a set of issues, decisions and events occurring in isolation from long-term trends in the community. The drama of the emergency and restoration periods fades, and the ongoing forces that produced the characteristics of the pre-disaster city re-emerge as the primary determinants of the city of the future.

Reconstruction Following Disaster. The MIT Press, 1977

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

The urban design studio tackles sites of post-war recovery upon the disruption of daily life and the unavailability of space, and the return of society to the areas, and particularly, to the studio’s role as a generator of innovative spatial design ideas. In particular, the studio investigates the role of urban design practice in the process of recovery. In short, the studio takes a clear position in the discussion and the approach to post-war reconstruction. In particular, the studio argues that the “reconstruction” of a place to which it is inherently linked, should not eliminate the studio’s role in the development of innovative spatial design ideas.
The conflict emerged in March of 2011 on account of an armed conflict that spread throughout Syria and continued until today. The Syrian conflict caused severe damage and demolition in urban centers, particularly in the urban core of the nation and its capital cities. Before the war, Aleppo was the economic capital of Syria and second largest city in the nation. Today, it has become one of the most war-torn cities, with most families, particularly in the urban core, currently in need of emergency shelter. Problems such as water, electricity, and food are now major concerns.

Public spaces have witnessed transformations during the last decades. The old city was celebrated as one of the oldest continually inhabited cities in the world that approximately 60 percent of the old city has been severely damaged, by the conflict and the bombardments. A UNESCO-led mission reported that “90 percent of the surface area of the old city is estimated to have been destroyed.” The old city had a total area of 930 hectares and contains over 10,000 heritage sites. UNESCO’s associate program coordinator in Aleppo, stated: “local and international actors called for urgent interventions to address the massive scale of damage.”

The old city was divided between a western part under government control and an eastern militarized zone as the armed conflict divided Aleppo. Its citadel that rises approximately 45 meters above ground level was key in the power game and became a symbol of resilience along the frontline during the civil war. The citadel of Aleppo, dating to the 12th century, was an icon of resilience along the frontline during the civil war. Activists, mostly architects and conservationists, moved to turn things around and to protect Old Aleppo’s heritage sites. They succeeded in raising awareness and opposing the municipal plans threatening the destruction of a neighborhood near Bab al-Harir.

As early as 2013, plans were revealed to restore 250 buildings in the old city. Mazen Samman, UNESCO’s associate program coordinator in Aleppo, stated: “The danger is that top-down, externally motivated projects will focus on the commercially attractive rather than the historically informed. The same stones where we can.” Tim Williams of UCL raised concerns about the decision to restore 250 buildings in the old city. He added: “Aleppo is an example of the need for engaging with the local communities and not just the authorities affiliation. The right projects and priorities will focus on the commercially attractive rather than the historically informed.”

ABOUT THE OLD CITY OF ALEPPO

The old city was an enclosed urban area of approximately 360 hectares and occupies 4 percent of the total area of Aleppo. It housed, prior to the war, an estimated population of 120,000 inhabitants; primarily Sunni Muslims and Orthodox Christians. It consisted of the ancient walled city, which was built on a natural hill and was surrounded by a moat now filled with water. The city fell under the full control of the government in December 2016.

Given the uncertainty of the situation in Aleppo, the aim of the studio is to pursue them through tools, methods and strategies of intervention within the public realm. As the studio takes readings. The design explorations and developments are followed up through a critical discussion of design ideas and processes in the studio through both group presentations and individual written work. The studio proposes a strategic and surgical intervention that starts at the core of the built heritage and within the public realm. As the studio takes

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Multi-layered Narrative
Multi-layered Narrative: Aleppo

Ayyubid Dynasty 1183–1260

- Sultan Ghazi refortified Aleppo against the crusaders
  - The moat was deepened

Mamluk Dynasty 1261–1515

- Construction of Mosque al-Otroush
- Moralism emerges

A Place of Exchange, A Market Place

Governors focused on building grander scale sites in the central monumental area located south of the entrance gate to the citadel

Construction of Hammam Yalbougha al Nasri

Agriculture

- Governors focused on building grander scale sites in the central monumental area located south of the entrance gate to the citadel

Construction of Hammam Yalbougha al Nasri

The attack of Tamerlane had devastating effects on the city

Construction of Hammam Yalbougha al Nasri

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Construction of Hammam Yalbougha al Nasri
Aleppo
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Multi-layered Narrative

Early Ottoman
1517-1585

A Market Place
1517

The political context of the Ottoman conquest of Aleppo

Ottomanization of the cityscape
1546
1585

Consecutive earthquakes cause heavy damage to the site

Late Ottoman
1800-1918

A Weekly Market Place
1812
1822
**Aleppo**

**Multi-layered Narrative**

### French Mandate (1918–1943)
- **1918**: Nation-state of Syria formed with new boundaries drawn by the French authorities.
- **1920**: France colonized Aleppo, Syria.
- **1920–1943**: The plaza at the foot of the citadel became a military space.

### Post-Independence (1950–1990)
- **1930**: The French began archaeological excavation and restoration works.
- **1943**: Syria gained its independence.
- **1960**: Water from Quieq River was used in massive irrigation projects.
- **1974–1980**: Banshoya proposed new roads for the old city of Aleppo that were implemented later on.
- **1980s**: New administrative buildings have shifted the urban center outside of the old city towards the west.

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**Future Expansion towards the North**

- **1950**: The citadel was overthrown.
- **1952**: The citadel was abandoned.
- **1955**: The French closed the citadel.
- **1957**: The French began the construction of a new military space.
- **1960**: The citadel was opened again.

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**Shift of the Urban Centre & Military Barracks**

- **1950–1990**: The transportation hub.
- **1950–1990**: New administrative buildings have shifted the urban center outside of the old city towards the west.
Pre-War 2003-2010

A Cultural Hub and Promenade

The Aga Khan Trust for Culture started a rehabilitation project in the perimeter of the citadel.

There was a sudden decline in average rainfall and a rise in average temperature.

2009

Inauguration of the Aleppo Citadel Perimeter Project

2010

Yarn trading developed to become a focal point for trade among buyers and sellers in the souqs.

Aleppo

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Multi-layered Narrative 02

Yarn trading developed to become a focal point for trade among buyers and sellers in the souqs.
**Multi-layered Narrative: Aleppo**

**Current (2017-2018): A Rubble Yard**
The Assad regime is leading the rebuilding of the city of Aleppo. A development plan that aims to rebuild the historic old city was led by the Syrian Ministry of Culture in close collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

**Civil War (2011-2016): A Frontline**
- Civil uprising in Aleppo
- Aleppo divided with the old city on the frontline
- Main drinking water pipes destroyed
- Battle of two axes and rise of ISIS
- Frontline demarcated and perforated with passages
- Geneva II Conference on Syria
- Battle of Khanasser (November 2012 - May 2013)

**2012 - 2013**
- Battle of Al-Mashaya
- Battle of Khanasser (November 2012 - May 2013)
- Syria support regime against ISIS
- battle of Khanasser

**2014**
- Syrian pound replaced with Turkish Lira in Aleppo
- Russia and Turkey step in
- Kurdish support regime against ISIS
- Russia and Turkey step in
- Syrian pound replaced with Turkish Lira in Aleppo for a short period of time

**2015**
- Kurds support regime against ISIS
- Syrian army encircles the opposition and starts taking control of the city
- In December, Aleppo fell completely under the control of the Assad regime

**2016**
- Battle of tunnels versus barrel bombs
- ISIS declares its state
- Russia and Turkey step in

**2011-2016**
- Civil War
- Battle of Khanasser (November 2012 - May 2013)
- Battle of two axes and rise of ISIS
- Battle of tunnels versus barrel bombs
- ISIS declares its state
- Russia and Turkey step in
Historical
Cycles of War, Destruction and Reconstruction
Damage Assessment Map

Citadel Timeline
Site Character Throughout History

1910 - Jayshiyah school of the students
1928 - Citadel foundation
1935 - Spring line to Aleppo
2000 - Main mosque

1930 - Damaged mosque, survivor of the early Islamic period
2000 - View to the north towards the citadel

2012 - Damaged citadel

Urban Evolution

1. Initial period
2. Development phase
3. End of the 19th century
4. First years of the 20th century
5. Beginning of the 19th century
6. 19th century (British Period)
Socio-economic

The Souqs:
A Monumental Commercial Corridor

Ottoman Rule and Aleppo’s Socio-Economic Profile

Shift of Urban Axis from Mamluk to Ottoman

Cotton and Fabric Industry

Analysis of the Souqs:
A Monumental Commercial Corridor

Cotton and Fabric Industry

The Monumental Commercial Corridor

Analysis

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Ottoman Rule and Aleppo’s Socio-Economic Profile

Shift of Urban Axis from Mamluk to Ottoman

Cotton and Fabric Industry
Social Hierarchy, Self-Surveillance and Strong Communal Ties

Urban-Rural Migrations

Quarters

Role of Site in the City Model

City Center Components & Uses

Site's Historical Activities 

Site's Historical Broad Activities

Site's Historical Activities: Mosque, ... 

Tourism and Travelers

Aleppo: An Exotic City for Travelers

Tourism and Travelers: Exotic City  for Travellers...
A Socio-Economic Profile: Modern to Post War Aleppo - 20th and 21st Centuries

Population density pre-crisis
Population density in crisis 2014
Population density post-crisis 2016

Migration networks in Aleppo during crisis
Major import & export destinations in 2015

Trade balance in Syria pre-crisis
Imported & exported goods in Syria in 2015
A Socio-Economic Profile: Modern to Post War Aleppo - 20th and 21st Centuries

Analysis

Aleppo

Site in 2000

Site in 2009

Site during rebel war

"The new Aleppo is a 9,000 year old city. Cleared to the ground by countless times, it was rebuilt with simple pleasures, blended with a small town feel in the restoration of the ancient walls, the parks ofFesaker, the fountains of the Fesaker, and the social elements of daily life." - Michael Jensen - Oct. 25, 2017

Sustainable tourism development plan

Site & scales changing identities over time

Access routes in 2015

Boundaries & importance of site area

Agricultural exports in Syria in 2010 (USD)
Spatial

Urban Transformation and Reconfiguration over Time
Environmental
Urban-Rural Agriculture and Migration: Interdependencies

Climate and Rainfall

About 85% of Syria's total land area is classified as a dry or semi-arid climate. This is the hottest region in summer and is filled with very low rainfall and frequent dust storms. To the north and west, the desert region is characterized by vast plains where snow is occasionally Laffa. Temperatures throughout the year are very harsh in the Syrian Desert (SRC, 2010).

Analysis

See the context of how this has been a clear driver of the average rainfall and the overall average temperature. For more in-depth analysis, refer to the detailed graphs and data from the previous page.
Water Networks and Agricultural Resources

Major Agricultural Crops

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crop</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
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<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guayule</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Green Spaces and Typology

City scale: May 1: Site Area in 1955, Post/unrealization

The destruction of green areas and the reduction in the number of green spaces due to urbanization has led to increased pressure on the water resources of the city and the significant presence of public parks.

City scale: May 1: Site Area in 2019, Post war

The green areas have decreased, some might have been completely destroyed due to the bombings of the war.

Site scale: May 1: Site Area in 2020, Unrealization

City scale: May 2: Site Area in 2017, Post war

The green areas have decreased, some might have been completely destroyed due to the bombings of the war.

The analysis of green areas has been superimposed on the map of the city.
**The Moat**

**Pre-Ayyubid Period**
An underground passage under the moat (ditch) in red on the plan was excavated as a secret escape to the city.

**Ayyubid Period (1180–1260)**
Escalent Ghabib refortified Aleppo into a strategic stronghold against the crusaders. As such, the moat was deepened to integrate grapevines and battlements, and a drawbridge was added that forms the current entrance to the citadel.

A sewage drain was installed to prevent the pollution of the water in the moat.

Prison cells were built above the moat.

**Mamluk Period (1260–1516)**
A water supply plan leading to the pnrants, was built. The moat was recycled after the battles by Sultan Qansuh al-Ghuri.

**Today**
The moat is covered with drains.

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**Analysis**

*Aleppo*


**Aerial view of the citadel. Source: Aga Khan Trust for Culture, 2006.**


**Cross section of the citadel. Source: Aga Khan Trust for Culture, “The Citadel of Aleppo,” 2008.**

**View of Bernard Gagnon, 2010.**


**Plan of Bernard Gagnon, 2003.**

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**Analysis**

*Aleppo*


**Aerial view of the citadel. Source: Aga Khan Trust for Culture, 2006.**


**Cross section of the citadel. Source: Aga Khan Trust for Culture, “The Citadel of Aleppo,” 2008.**

**View of Bernard Gagnon, 2010.**


**Plan of Bernard Gagnon, 2003.**
Political
Social and Economic Dynamics
Leading to the War
The choice of the site for the strategic intervention is a critical start. Public spaces provide an entry point where collective memory and communal practices from the past can work as seeds for imagining a future for the city. Besides their infrastructural values, public spaces are threads in the narrative of the city. They encapsulate past cultural and social celebrations, reference trauma and destruction and facilitate the imagining of the landscapes.
Proposed Visions

The Green Lungs of Aleppo

A Cultural-led approach through Crafts and Food
A Digital Platform for 2030
Shantal Ayoub

I envision Aleppo 2030 as a cultural smart city that integrates technology into a strategic approach to sustainability, while preserving its cultural and historic fabrics. The aim is to attract a new generation of Aleppines to live and work in Aleppo and contribute to its restoration. This participatory and innovative approach will bring the city’s society together by creating smart public spaces that are digital and data-driven.

The social dimension of the Aleppo smart city is to promote equity and sustainability. Everyone becomes part of a well-functioning technologically advanced system. The system extends from the area under the citadel to other open spaces and creates smart, connected, inclusive and automated public nodes around the city.

Proposed Visions
Digital technology connects people. Focusing on IT infrastructure and Smart Cities becomes a path to recovery in the 21st century.
An inclusive Aleppo city capable of fighting marginalization, social and economic exclusion, and urban decay through an inclusive constitutional process in which majority and minority rights are respected. The site of intervention for the design studio will serve as a political statement that will venture this inclusively through boldly highlighting the unity of Aleppo and its freedom.
Countryside Migration

Informal Settlements

The Aleppo-Regime Bargain

Post War Aleppo

Vision

Assad continues
Gentrification
Repopulation
Political Control
Warlords

Political Resolution

Addressing forced displacement
Balanced development between East and West
Division of Power
Demilitarization
Inclusive Constitutional Process

Democratic City of Aleppo

Brownfield, prosperous, competitive growth
Against social and economic exclusion and urban decay
Site as a political Statement to reunite Aleppo
(Promoting democracy through open public spaces)

Countryside Migration

Informal Settlements

The Aleppo-Regime Bargain

Post War Aleppo

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Assad continues
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Democratic City of Aleppo

Brownfield, prosperous, competitive growth
Against social and economic exclusion and urban decay
Site as a political Statement to reunite Aleppo
(Promoting democracy through open public spaces)
A Productive Post War Healing Landscape
Mariam Bazzi

Based on the notion that landscape heals the urban and social fabric, this vision for Aleppo’s post war recovery builds on the assets of the city—its cultural core including the citadel and old souq, the Queiq River, the public open spaces and cemeteries—to propose Integrated Landscape Systems that will act as drivers for the post war city formation. This vision is also based on the concept of urban-rural fusion where these systems interact between the dense urban fabric and the rural areas. This is characterized by building an ecological network and integrating rural agriculture into the urban center, thus arresting the city’s suburbanization. The vision will be targeting different people across social backgrounds by creating a network that will become a common ground and ensure social interaction after the period of violence ends. As such, the vision will aim to create a healthy, equitable and resilient urban environment.

Being at the core of the old city and having a rich cultural layer, as well as its proximity to the old souq and the river, Sahat el Qalaa has the potential to be the center of the landscape systems. It will become a multifunctional open space that acts as a hub for cultural and civic engagement in the city. This vision can be implemented by the municipality through a participatory approach.

Women played an important role throughout the civil war by ensuring the safety of their children, generating income and supporting their families during the fighting. Given the opportunity to participate, women in Aleppo can contribute to the process of recovery, reconstruction and healing.
A Creative Network of Knowledge

Mariam Dandachi

For many centuries, Aleppo has been famous for its economic role on both the national and international levels. Although the education and employment rates are lower in Aleppo than in other Syrian cities, Aleppo’s citizens biggest asset is their will to work, achieve and do more. It is from this situation emerges the vision of Aleppo 2030: a creative network of knowledge. A creative network is an effective way of combining individuals’ knowledge and skills in the pursuit of personal and organizational objectives. It is a rich and dynamic phenomenon in which knowledge is based on three pillars: connectivity, development and evolution. Additionally, it serves to promote models of inclusive urban development, which offers access to space and amenities that encourage urban mixing and generate opportunities. Hence, a creative network of knowledge and labor will allow an exchange between the Aleppines. Each individual shares their knowledge with the community. Implementing such a network improves connectivity between the neighborhoods, supports innovation and provides solutions for housing and accessible transportation. Additionally, a creative network of knowledge works on providing quality education for all. It strengthens the bonds between the community and the city, which is crucial for the city’s future and becomes the backbone for the city’s development. Connectivity is the first level of this network, as it is the local and the neighborhood level of the network. It is the level where the network begins, and it is where the network ends. Placemaking contributes to recovery by reviving social practices and daily rituals and re-anchoring them in the spaces around the Aleppo citadel. Placemaking integrates economic, ecological and spatial components, conceptualizing them as drivers for recovery.
Aleppo witnessed many cycles of destruction and reconstruction throughout its history. It is a city renowned for its rich heritage and its commercial and industrial activities. Before the civil war, the city controlled the bulk of agriculture and two-thirds of the industries in Syria.

I envision Aleppo as a resilient city that celebrates its rich past and aims for a better future for its people through three recovery strategies.

REGENERATING THE HISTORIC CORE OF THE CITY

The historic core of the city includes the citadel, the souqs, the mosques, the madrasas and the remaining courtyard houses. The reconstruction should respect and integrate the historic fabric with the new one. The architectural heritage should be adapted to the modern needs of the citizens of Aleppo.

REVITALIZING THE ECONOMY

This will encourage the emigrants to return and invest in the city's commerce and agriculture to support livelihoods and create new employment opportunities.

MAKING ALEPPO A GREEN CITY

In order to respond to climatic challenges such as drought, food shortage and pollution caused by the war, the city should incorporate more public and semi-public green spaces that are sensitive to the lifestyle of the citizens of Aleppo.

A resilient city that celebrates its rich past and aims for a better future for its people through three recovery strategies.
Aleppo is Syria’s largest and its manufacturing center. Its location between the Euphrates River and the Mediterranean Sea positioned the city as a commercial hub since the early ages. The practice of setting up a market and industries dates back to before the Ayyubid occupation of the area. However, it was under the Ottoman empire that commerce became a priority in steering urban development—facilities were almost doubled during this period.

As such, trade and commerce were to head the identity of Aleppo throughout the different periods of occupation. The city collapsed and rose again, while trade and industry remained a crucial feature in its modular evolution.

Aleppo 2030 envisions a city of trade and commerce with both a “business heart” and an “emotional heart.” The business heart of the city of Aleppo will revolve around an urban and commercial hub in light of such industries as textiles, garments, agro-food, gold, pharmaceuticals and carpets.

Therefore, the vision is to revive and enhance what was left of these industries and gradually re-establish the major industrial zones such as providing infrastructure, sewage treatment, raw materials and rails and highways to be connected to the airport and the port in Latakia. The exchanges will occur around the city of Aleppo between Aleppo and other cities in the region as well as other countries.

As for the “emotional heart” of Aleppo, the old city and the site around the castle will serve as a memorable focal point for reconnecting the exceptional intangible heritage of Aleppo. Reconnecting youth with the food and music heritage of the city is a key to long-term recovery, with schools as recovery nodes that re-introduce the youth to their rich culture.

The disruption caused by the fighting deprived a generation of children and youth from the rich intangible heritage of Aleppo. Reconnecting youth with the exceptional food and music heritage of the city is a key to long-term recovery, with schools as recovery nodes that re-introduce the youth to the rich culture of their city.
Based on our analysis of the city of Aleppo over time, we note the important role that the souqs played as a social and economic destination to the citizens of the country, the region and beyond.

In parallel, if we map the effects of the war, we notice that all historic buildings at the foot of the citadel were destroyed, leaving a vacuumed space that stretches from the entrance of the souqs to the Palace of Justice that remains standing.

These conditions inspired my vision to bring back the city to life through commerce and transportation. The strategy is summarized in three steps:

1. Restore the old souqs as a living market.
2. Expand the commercial activities into the vacuumed space at the foot of the citadel, which now has the entrance tower as a central corridor that animates the public space. The tower has animated the public space at the foot of the citadel since the Ayyubid period.
3. Create an infrastructural knot or a “point d’eclatement”. A point of out-break or a transportation hub that connects the heart of Aleppo to the rest of the city, its hinterland and to the country at large. Using the Palace of Justice as a transportation knot (terminal) will benefit the restored souqs and the new commercial space with the flow of commuters who will benefit from the souq.

Thus the objective is to utilize commerce and the infrastructural knot as a social and economic revitalizer of Aleppo.

The implementation of the vision adopts a process that is both top-down and bottom-up.

The top-down approach involves empowering the Municipality of Aleppo to manage and implement the infrastructural knot and to renovate the surrounding buildings and public spaces. The bottom-up approach involves empowering the community in the renovation process and its relationship to the knot.

As a conclusion, the market and the transportation knot are mutually beneficial in revitalizing the city at the socio-economic level.

“Based on the historical role of Aleppo as the center for commerce, manufacturing and agriculture for Syria and the Middle East, recovery should reconnect Aleppo with its historic role in order to reclaim Aleppo’s role as a regional hub.”

Proposed Visions

An Urban and Infrastructure Knot

Basma Ibrahim
While transitioning from one era to another and at the end of each cycle, the heart of the city evolved (from a maydan, to a civic space, to a market place) while the identity and the essence of the city has remained the same. “In this perspective, resilience is not conceived of as a return to normality, but rather as the ability of complex socio-ecological systems to change, adapt and crucially transform in response to stresses and strains.” (Davoudi 2012)

In 2012, Aleppo faced yet another conquest. Confrontations between the Syrian government and the opposition engulfed the city for four years. The ancient city, renowned for its heritage, became a warzone. The old city of Aleppo has been damaged; however, the city has been remarkably resilient, as a new chapter in the history of the ancient urban fabric. What would be the title of this chapter? What is the evolved state that Aleppo will acquire in this new era? And how will it reach such a state?

The war left a deep scar on the city’s history, as a separation line passed around the citadel. This separation line did not, however, eliminate the sense of the Aleppine community and cooperation, with both sides coordinating efforts to get water and different merchandise in order to sustain themselves.

Building upon these cultural practices, and focusing on the historical nucleus of the old city, a new narrative for Aleppo can be written. Aleppo in 2030 would be a cultural hub in Syria and the Middle East and a destination for festivities and cultural gatherings where most of the events can be hosted, mainly in “Sahat al Qalaa” and the citadel.

To reach the proposed vision, many steps have to be accomplished. While focusing on the historical nucleus of Aleppo as a reconciliation center, the resolution has to begin at the demarcation line. My aim is to use the scars of the war, the destroyed spaces and the demarcation line as assets to reinforce the city’s heritage. Given that the tangible heritage of Aleppo has been destroyed several times, it seems logical to focus on a notion of intangible heritage that was preserved as a mean of reconciliation and reconstruction.

Thus, the primary targets in my vision are the artisans, the people holding an endangered know-how (intangible heritage) and the artists, the people possessing a certain knowledge (ideas to be expressed).

The participatory approach visualized divided into pre-reconstruction, reconstruction and post-reconstruction stages, and the community should be involved in the three steps under the umbrella of a democratic governance. The vision proposes a path not only to recover the built heritage, but also to write the tangible heritage as a catalyst for the transmission of an endangered know-how. Cultural heritage will be used as a spark that allows the Aleppines to utilize public space as a platform to express their thoughts and hold different political and cultural events, while celebrating unity and diversity.

This proposed vision can lead the path to recovery through knowledge and ideas. The focus is equally on animating urban spaces and creating processes that engage the people of Aleppo and reaffirm community-inclusive recovery.
Aleppo's identity was forged by the overlapping layers of different cultures. The cultural landscape, the nature of the terrain, the natural resources and the climate are influenced by the diversity of the cultures that occupied the city. The Ayyubids and the Mamluks, followed by the Ottomans to the French mandate, each one of these cultures left its own imprint on the city visible in many landmarks and architectural buildings.

The site, although damaged, still holds huge potential to recover as it is a former seat as an evident cultural center on a regional level. Defying the physical boundaries, Aleppo can serve as an international template to showcase its heritage to a global audience.

More heritage sites around the world have been transformed to reveal new life in common. Many cultures revive and maintain their historic urban fabrics. They restore these spaces through cultural practices such as the markets, academies, fairs, festivals, values of hand and crafts. A cultural hub has transformed the once-sacred site of Hotan, China, into a modern cultural and tourist center. In Cairo, the Al-Muizz street is another example of the same process. The street is now a market where each shop sells various obvious urban items.

Many heritage cities around the world have one thing in common: their citizens restore and continue to inhabit their historic urban fabrics. They revive these spaces through cultural practices such as the markets, academies, fairs, festivals, values of hand and crafts. A cultural hub has transformed the once-sacred site of Hotan, China, into a modern cultural and tourist center. In Cairo, the Al-Muizz street is another example of the same process. The street is now a market where each shop sells various obvious urban items.

The site in Aleppo holds rich diversified spaces that can be revitalized through a cultural approach. They present many similarities with the spatial qualities of the case studies stated above. The arena of the citadel can host shows, theaters and cultural festivals. Sahet el Qalaa, or plaza would be the node of large scale social gatherings in front of the citadel, constantly animated by arts and crafts markets, local and regional art exhibitions, libraries and local food markets. Khan el Shouna and the old souqs can promote the rebirth of typical cultural practices by hosting the activities of crafts workshops.

The restored monuments will host cultural events for locals and tourists to experience the rebirth of Aleppo's city center as a global heritage site. This revitalization can be led and financed by cultural organizations such as the UNESCO. Moreover, many corporate bodies and foundations would be interested in funding this project.

However, a bottom-up approach is necessary to give the chance to the locals to raise their voices and share their hopes for the city of tomorrow.

Proposed Visions

**A Vision for Aleppo 2030**

"Aleppo as a palimpsest of identities, each leaving its imprint. Overlapping the social fabric with the spatial and historic can restore Aleppo's collective identity."
A Network for Urban Agriculture
Maysaa Sarieddine

My vision for urban agriculture is based on an analysis of Syria’s agro-environment. With a national population of sixty million people, Syria’s urban and rural areas present a significant opportunity for agriculture. In 2019, the government approved the first agricultural zone. Unfortunately, after the crisis, assessments show that agriculture has been severely affected.

Factors such as reduced planting area and low yields, sickness, and diseases have resulted in reduced harvest for all crops since the crisis began.

Therefore, I envision a solution to revitalize agricultural production through new methods such as introducing agricultural areas into urban spaces. Some examples of urban agricultural acupuntures include:

- Dwellings farming and urban agriculture
- Rooftop farming
- Edible sidewalks
- Fruit picking events
- Reclaiming old buildings and using their roofs
- Hosting events
- Incorporating urban agriculture
- Controlling the urban heat island effect
- Renting empty lots
- Propagating the home

- Connecting outdoor farmers to indoor farmers
- Implementing a plot sharing system
- Receiving resources such as seeds, tools, input and technical advice
- Reclaiming old buildings and using their roofs
- Hosting events
- Incorporating urban agriculture
- Controlling the urban heat island effect
- Renting empty lots
- Propagating the home

Proposed Visions

Rooftop farming and locally produced food
Fruit production
Edible sidewalk gardens
Gardening for strangers
Participation in small-scale cultivation and cultural citizenship
Controlling the urban heat island effect
Renting empty lots
Propagating the home

Revitalize agricultural production through new methods of urban acupunctures.
A Vision for Aleppo 2030

City map: Early 2000s

- Markets and public squares: These areas are crucial for the town's identity and social cohesion.
- Agricultural areas: Essential for food security and economic stability.
- No public parks

City map: Post-2005

- Damage to infrastructure and public spaces.
- Increase in the use of private cars and motorcycles.
- Decrease in the use of public transport.

City map: 2017

- Overcrowding in the city center.
- Decrease in the use of public parks and green spaces.
- Increase in the use of private vehicles.

Legend:
- Parks
- Public roads
- Agricultural areas
- Residential green
I built my vision on urban connectivity, primarily envisioning the city as a ‘shared’ one, connected to the city through the citadel. Instead of connecting the city to the citadel, I connected the city through the citadel. My vision aims to turn the citadel from a monument into an active element in the urban, social and economic realm of the city. The area facing the back of the citadel is relatively marginalized. Urban development in the citadel is concentrated in front of the citadel’s gate. Therefore, a new pedestrianized urban corridor opens the main axis of development and development in front of the citadel. It will enact a continuous flow of social and economic activities andocally and attractively reurbanize the main axis. The axis, as an urban corridor, connects the urban areas through the citadel. The corridor opens the back of the citadel, generating social activities and activating the citadel’s back area. The axis will generate and connect multiple urban and social activities, functioning as an initiative, generating revitalization and repair. Without destroying or erasing the old footprint of the street network, the urban corridor will function as a generator of urban, social and economic revitalization and repair.

To turn the citadel from a monument into an active element in the urban, social and economic layers of the city.
Selected Community Shared Vision
Aleppo, a city of trade and commerce
Place-centered, Heritage-led, People-focused

The history of Aleppo is marked by “evolutionary resilience” (Davoudi 2012). It witnessed many cycles of destruction and reconstruction over time. The plaza at the foot of the citadel evolved from a maydan, to a civic space, to a market space, while the identity and the essence of the city remained the same. Therefore, our vision for Aleppo would be a vision of a resilient city that celebrates its rich past and aims for a future that is inclusive of all the people of Aleppo.

RECOVERY PLAN
In order for it to become a resilient city, the recovery plan should focus on three main axes:

URBAN CONSERVATION OF THE HISTORICAL CORE OF THE CITY
The historic core includes the citadel, the souqs, the mosques, madrasas and the remaining courtyard houses. The reconstruction should respect and integrate the historic fabric with the new one.

Revitalizing the Economy
The revitalization will occur through the celebration of the living and intangible heritage of the city, including food and crafts. These will provide cultural, touristic and commercial value, while supporting the livelihood of the inhabitants and creating new opportunities for employment.

Making Aleppo a Green City
In order to deal with, and attempt to solve, the environmental issues, the vision aims for more public and semi-public green spaces that respond to the lifestyle of the citizens of Aleppo.

VISION FOR THE OLD CITY AND SAHIT EL QALAA
The city will have a series of interconnected open spaces that create a cultural network, with the site at the foot of the citadel as the main focus. These open spaces will be public and shared, enlivening the culture of creation and exchange. The network will consist of open spaces that respond to the needs of the city and its inhabitants. These spaces can gather, connect and expand upon an act of containing the city, its inhabitants and their history, self and community, culture and place together. Furthermore, it will enforce a people-led approach, encouraging participation, understanding, and engagement of the community.

STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Activation
These public spaces will allow people to gather and interact with each other. They will become a hub of activity, meeting spaces and community action, moving from an act of unity to a celebration that has increased the resilience of the community.

Urban Conservation
The citizens will gather in the established nodes to exchange ideas on the restoration of the old fabric. They will start a process and lead their own restoration project endorsed by various NGOs.

Interpretation
The public spaces will serve as open spaces of interpretation, allowing ideas and experiences to be shared through interaction and interpretation.

Celebration through Festivities, Markets and Exhibitions
The open spaces will host a diversity of events throughout the week. The cultural exchange, festivities and markets will animate the spaces that lead to the focal point of the cultural network.

POLICIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION
In order for the vision to be implemented, the municipality of Aleppo should be involved in the decision-making process. The municipality should: 1) guarantee the right to the city for each citizen; 2) implement a decentralized governance system; 3) take charge and initiate an incremental plan to prioritize public spaces; and 4) manage the process of restoration.

This partnership can be extended to the national and international level, as well as to the micro-level. The implementation of the vision will follow a people-led approach with high respect and sensitivity to the living and historical heritage of the city. The management approach of Aleppo should be participatory, focused on the community, and responsive to the needs of the community. It will allow for the community to make decisions and take action, ultimately leading to a sense of belonging to the city and its public spaces.
To the people of Aleppo, the citadel embodies the heritage and identity of Aleppo.

Yaman Hilany

نحافظ على هوية البلد و نعيد الخانات و الحمامات مع التجديد كمثال.

Smart City

Rasha Kayyali

تشيدها تقل للدّق، متوقد ساعات مفتوحة إتاحة.

Walid Shayeb

الحفاظ على البلد القديم مع تصليح و تحسين البنى التحتية.

Noura Wali

الحرية مع التجديد كمثال.

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Wall

الحفاظ على البلد القديم مع تحسين البنى التحتية.

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Serve Wall
Proposed Individual Concepts
The project aims to transform the site under the citadel into a green memorial space that honors people who passed away during the violent episodes of Aleppo’s recent history. The project is culture- and place-led—it will bring the community together to the site to plant and commemorate the individual and transform the space into a living memorial. It focuses on human-environment interactions and ways those interactions can foster the healing of communities and individuals.

The community-based planting practices in public space are meaningful. They will serve as a mechanism to promote healing and recovery, not just as the restoration of social-ecological systems.

The project uses urban design tools to facilitate a participatory process and allow people to take part in creating a memorial space for the individuals who passed away. It is inspired by two main ideas:

1. The floral symbolism that plays a role in keeping memories alive through the use of plants that traditionally honor the dead and local symbols in the site.
2. The therapeutic power of planting and caring for flora at memorials—an activity that is expected to provide an outlet to process trauma and grief, a powerful setting of social support, and a place to engage with the rhythms and spiritual power of nature.

Proposed Individual Concepts

Urban Greening
Shantal Ayoub

Green Memorial Space as a Post War Recovery Strategy: Culture- and Place-led
The Process

Phase 1: Most Intervention

Phase 2: Memorial space under the citadel

Phase 3: Partially destroyed buildings

Phase 4: Rooftops

Phase 5: Open spaces + fully destroyed buildings

Phase 6: Citadel interventions

The End Product

Condition of the Urban Fabric and the Patrimony of Aleppo
Gradually demilitarize the saha into a civic space through a systematic process of relief, reconstruction and recovery that can serve as a catalyst for change.

PHASE 1: RELIEF

This phase prioritizes the basic needs of the citizens through simple interventions that aim to revitalize the local economy, provide food and water for the residents and link the city to its suburbs. The approach will be achieved through:

1. Establishing a temporary market to serve the basic needs of the residents and kickstart the local economy.
2. Supplying water to both parts of the city by gradually using the moat as a reservoir through rainwater harvesting.
3. Linking the city to its rural peripheries through water channels and supply routes.

Phase 1 will transform the saha into a hub that can attract farmers from rural areas, merchants, business men, laborers, peddlers, judges, doctors and residents from the eastern and southern sides of the city in an attempt to diversify the user group of the space. It will also attempt to reverse the people’s perception of the space from private, gated and militarized to public, accessible and civic.

PHASE 2: RECONSTRUCTION

Phase 2 will aim to demilitarize the space by decentralizing public facilities and empowering the local authorities and civil society. This will be achieved through:

1. Gradually removing the temporary market.
2. Designing a new building to serve as a civic center that includes the municipality, an indoor market and offices for NGOs and Unions.
3. Relocating the courthouse to the east for use as a cultural center.
4. Rehabilitating the madrassa and hammam to serve as touristic attractions.
5. Gradually reviving the saha into an active public space.

PHASE 3: RECOVERY

Phase 3 will aim to recover the city through revitalizing its cultural infrastructure. Mosques, churches and unions will serve as focal points for public participation in the reconstruction and recovery. The main stakeholders, such as the Dar al-Eftaa’ and the waqf as landowners, will be directly engaged in the process under the supervision and authority of the municipality.

Proposed Individual Concepts
User Empowerment
Mariam Bazzi

The vision of the project for Aleppo defines three axes of intervention: the conservation of the urban and social fabric, the environmental and ecological sustainability and the economic revitalization of the city to achieve resilience. This vision actively supports a more sustainable regional, multi-layered, ecological, economic and social network. It draws from the essential elements of Aleppo’s culture and preserves the region’s role and local identity. It proposes three phases of intervention. The first phase will promote the participation of women in the economic revitalization of urban and rural areas in Aleppo. The second phase involves linking people in the rural areas surrounding Aleppo to the city center. This connection is both physical and socio-economic. The physical connection will connect the main roads to the center in order to facilitate the flow of people. This takes the shape of a green network that connects open spaces to the main roads. The other socio-economic connection will link people in the different economic sectors (rural agriculture, domestic food production and sewing and stitching) through participation in a weekly market around the citadel. The last phase establishes Taht el Qalaa as a cultural hub—a vibrant mixed-use environment that reinforces the community’s sense of place and celebrates the cultural and social heritage of Aleppo through an equitable and more inclusive city center. The hub will become a public destination that extends beyond its local role to put Aleppo back on the regional map. This will empower a wide range of stakeholders; it will challenge the masculinity of the space and the centrality of power, while strengthening a more peaceful and socially cohesive society. As a result, all Aleppines, and women in particular, will participate in peacebuilding efforts in the city.
Networks of Empowerment

Aleppo

تحت القلعة

Networks of Empowerment
Placemaking
Mariam Dandachi

Throughout the war in Syria, millions of people have been displaced. Hundreds of thousands of homes have been damaged and hundreds of thousands more have been destroyed. The destruction and loss of cultural heritage have been immense. As the war is coming to an end, there is a glimmer of hope that the city of Aleppo will return to its former state as a vibrant city rich with heritage and tradition. The people of Aleppo need incentives to return to the city and invest in the rebuilding process and recover their livelihoods.

Therefore, the project proposes a placemaking urban strategy that can help the people of Aleppo to reclaim their city. The project starts from the plaza at the foot of the citadel, the heart of the city of Aleppo. Placemaking is used to encourage the people to reclaim the open space, enforce the community, build a sense of place and regenerate the dynamic of the city. Hence, the plaza at the foot of the citadel will become a point of reflection where the everyday practices of the people shape their spatial experiences.

Traditional activities, such as arts and crafts exhibitions, food markets, and musical festivals, will energize the place and allow people to alter the ways they perceive and use the plaza and the citadel.

Proposed Individual Concepts

Placemaking: A People-centered Urban Strategy

What is PLACEMAKING about?

Benefits of PLACEMAKING:

Qualities of Successful Places:

Aleppo

Proposed Individual Concepts

Placemaking: A People-centered Urban Strategy
Placemaking: A People-centered Urban Strategy
The vision of this project celebrates the rich past and culture of Aleppo and aims for a better future for the city. The younger generations are the most active agents in the recovery process and will ensure the continuity of tradition.

To do so, the project proposes a network of schools in the old city of Aleppo. The connected series of courtyards and open spaces in the schools can create interactive outdoor learning areas that are programmed with a variety of activities.

There are around 230 schools that are concentrated around the citadel in the old city of Aleppo. The schools are an opportunity for the youth to learn about culture and history. Other cultural assets in the old city include religious structures (mosques and churches), amphitheaters, cafes and musical institutions. Music is important to heritage and tradition. Examples of tangible heritage include instruments, events, organizations and traditions.

Through the various activities, the youth will be exposed to experiential learning by practicing and listening to music. The citadel and the open spaces will be activated as public spaces for performance and education. The users of the site can act as performers or the audience. As a result, the resiliency of the citadel and its heritage will be ensured.

Proposed Individual Concepts
Cultural Regeneration

Youth Empowerment and Traditional Continuity
Youth Empowerment and Traditional Continuity

Cultural Heritage and Resources: The intangible and tangible
The project is inspired by Kevin Lynch’s Image of the city. 
In order to locate critical energy nodes on the sidewalks surrounding the citadel, I mapped the existing character areas connected via pedestrian ways through walking paths, the landmark buildings which drive energy areas and the pathways that connect them. Quantifying the presence of landmarks and pathways creates a potential layer of urban magnets and points of interest. These nodes are characterized by their landmarks while others by the pathways on which they stand. Our site, Taht el Qalaa is the largest of the nodes in question.

In order to allow the nodes to merge in our space, the project utilizes strong edges of the landmarks to define the space and create the subspaces around the school. One of the spaces is linear, following the continuity of the pathways which go to the center of Taht el Qalaa, while the others act as extensions to the souqs, adding a commercial layer to the cultural and historical ones of the citadel.

Proposed Individual Concepts
Urban Redefinition
Maysaa Saireddine

Analysis and Strategy
This project addresses the massive physical destruction along with the socio-economic damage that has occurred in old Aleppo and the lack of urban public spaces in the area that serve the neighborhood’s residents. It aims to reclaim Taht el Qalaa space for the locals of the old City of Aleppo—a space that would respond to their needs after the hostilities end with social and economic activities. It will use “the make-shift spaces” approach through the temporary, purposeful replacement of something that is absent. The space will be divided between three interlinked programs: (1) the community center; (2) the creative space as an extension to the present souqs where independent local businesses will be located; and (3) the common space that will host social and cultural events that are determined on the basis of participatory approach by the locals.

This intervention will act as a social and business hub for the locals who lost their livelihood during the war and are in need for a new source of income.

Proposed Individual Concepts

Make Shift Spaces

Aleppo

Proposed Individual Concepts

Make Shift Spaces: stands for a temporary, purposeful replacement for something that is absent.

Temporary Structure
Economic Revitalization
Priscilla Fahd
George Nader

Our role as urban designers is to represent the Aleppo community as opposed to dictate top-down interventions on space. Accordingly, the project is inspired by the existing networks of resilience that were established during the war and operates along three main axes:

- Revitalizing the economy through the creation of markets and spaces for communication and exchange of basic needs
- Urban conservation of the historic core of the city and the preservation of the cultural and know-how of Aleppo
- Turning Aleppo into a green city

This dynamic approach can be incrementally applied and adapted to each stage of implementation.

Given that the souqs of Aleppo and Taht el Qalaa were heavily damaged during the war and covered with rubble, the project encourages people to benefit from the remaining assets of the city by turning the moat into a public space.

As a first step, the moat will be temporarily activated by revitalizing the commercial activities that were previously in the souqs and are currently awaiting reconstruction. The moat will house kiosks for food and crafts as well as art installations. Craftsmen will help in cleaning the rubble and restoring the built heritage.

As a second step, the rubble will be recycled and reused. The activity that was previously in the moat will be relocated to the main public space. Negotiations will begin in order to use the public realm. Youth communities will replant the moat.

Craftsmen and artists will collaborate to design interactive art installations in the small networks that are connected to the central hub. A proposed food market will invite local women to be more engaged in the social dynamics of Aleppo. The market will initiate an exchange between the parties engaged in the conflict and will establish a base for communication.

Finally, the public realm will become more spatially defined within the restored built fabric. The activities in the buildings of Taht el Qalaa will activate this public space.

This approach operates on two scales: the micro-scale which involves a surgical intervention in Taht el Qalaa and the macro-scale which connects the main core of the city through healing spaces placed at zones of high tension. The existing functions around Taht el Qalaa will activate the proposed small networks, while the central hub will ensure the green lung that pumps life into the city of Aleppo.

Proposed Individual Concepts

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Concept Phase I - The Moat as an Activator of the Public Space
Concept Phase II - Emerging Activities from the Moat

Concept Phase III - Urban Fabric as an Activator of Public Space
Networks of Resilience

Negotiations with Stakeholders
Urban Regeneration

Basma Ibrahim
Nadine Salhab

The site is conceptualized as a hinge between various urban networks. Its historic value is highlighted by directing the community to the site through Infrastructural, economic, social, cultural and environmental networks. The focus is on linking public spaces to a network of pedestrian and vehicular green corridors that can act as catalysts for urban recovery. This intervention works on three different scales: the city, the old city, and the site at the foot of the citadel.

To compensate for the lack of open spaces within the old city and enhance the quality of public life, the intervention creates the demand for creating open spaces. Pedestrian pathways and plazas are created at the foot of the old city. The green corridors of the old city are converted into pedestrian paths where the destroyed areas are connected through pedestrian pathways.

The site at the foot of the citadel is treated as the main point d’eclatement (point of outbreak). Essentially, it proposes creating a network of open flexible spaces revolving around Taht el Qalaa. Taht el Qalaa is the first surgical intervention that will spread out to the network of open spaces in a celebration of recovery. It will be the main prototype which will act as a model to be replicated throughout the network of open space. The pedestrian corridors increase accessibility to the foot of the citadel as an urban node.

Taht el Qalaa and the network of open spaces will host a multitude of scenarios that will change at different seasons. Those scenarios are a fusion of social, economic, cultural and environmental practices.

In order to activate the site at the foot of the citadel, the intervention proposes to create a series of open spaces for art and performance. The following activities will be injected into the buildings at the ground level and will spill over to the in-between open spaces.

CARLTON
To be restored as a hotel with a Khan typology
Crafts shops on the ground floor as a continuity to the souq; they empower craftsmen and attract both locals and tourists

KHAN EL SHOUNEH
To be restored into a culinary school with a restaurant that serves local Aleppo food
Involves all user groups interested in celebrating food heritage

AL KHOSROWIYYAH MOSQUE
Restore the mosque due to its historic and religious importance

AL SULTANYA MOSQUE
Restore the mosque due to its historic and religious importance

SERAIL
Allow the government to rebuild the Serail that is located within the horizontal axis that defines Taht el Qalaa according to the following guidelines:
The ground floor is designed as a porous space that directs people into the plaza
The ground floor holds art and performance workshops during the day; the activities extend to the plaza in the afternoon for open-air exhibitions
These guidelines help counter the stigma over government buildings, attract local men, women, children and tourists and build trust within the community.

PALACE OF JUSTICE
Restore the palace to its original form, with deep novel uses opening as a community center in the afternoon; the space can also be rented for commercial and family occasions, memorials and conferences.

Proposed Individual Concepts

Aleppo

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<th>Proposed Individual Concepts</th>
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<td>Palace of Justice</td>
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Catalyst for Urban Recovery
URBAN REGENERATION

STEP 2   CITY SCALE | The MACRO LEVEL

Targeted Users

A catalyst for urban recovery

- A catalyst for community gathering in Syrian cities, along with the restoration of war-ravaged landmarks.

- The urban regeneration through the city towards destruction sites of commercial and social activities through timely reintegration around the core of the city.

- Inherent with the community, emphasize recovery through participation and start creating a post-war spatial social narrative.

- Commencing with strategically significant patches and pathways will be highlighted, forming the essence of a global proposition that needs to be considered.

- Reactivate and represent two.

Urban regeneration

- The narrative for urban regeneration pathways will become the green urban fabric within the city.

- Linking parts of life building, a number of urban pathways, the movement of and new recovery discussion and exchange of ideas, hopes and visions.

Spatial scenarios
Politics is integral to the discourse on urban heritage. Funding comes with strings attached and agencies as key decision-makers.
Historically, Taht el Qalaa has been a highly militarized site long before the civil uprising in 2012. This was evident during the civil war period when the site became the main frontline that divides the city into two parts, east and west. With the Serial and the palace of justice heavily present in the site, the space was divided into gated inaccessible spaces. The Aga Khan project in 2003 rearranged the site according to a formal street grid that altered the human-scale of the city.

Based on the above analysis, the design intervention aims to demilitarize Taht el Qalaa, revive the local economy and increase accessibility and permeability to the site.

An in-depth analysis of the old city shows that open spaces where defined by three main factors: continuous daily practices, shared religious values and social rituals. These factors connected the socio-economic activities with the religious and educational functions. They ensured a smooth transition from public to semi-public-private open spaces rather than a rational grid of streets and squares.

Accordingly, the proposed intervention aims to extend the typology of the old city through a network of spines and open spaces that will connect the sites' various polarities. This will be achieved through an infill strategy that will gradually lead to a local commerce-led economic recovery. Taking into consideration that we are working in a post war situation and dealing with multiple actors and stakeholders within the site, the project will be gradually implemented in three phases:

**PHASE 1: MICRO-REZONING**

Applying law number 10 issued in 2018 that reunites ownership in a designated zone. This will locate the main actors, define site boundaries and redistribute ownership within the site.

**PHASE 2: RELIEF AND RECONSTRUCTION**

Securing people’s basic needs by establishing a temporary market in the destroyed areas. This step will be followed by decentralizing public facilities, empowering local authorities and civil society and diversifying spaces users.

**PHASE 3: RECOVERY**

Revitalizing the city’s networks and using the mosques, shrines and squares as focal points for participatory approaches. The municipality, the waqf and Dar al-Eftaa’ are the main actors in the site and will have the highest number of shares. Multiple phases will be needed to prepare the site and ensure local autonomy on the site. Libraries, Maws and the offices of the war, and museums of modern art will be removed, supporting the main buildings.

The proposed intervention will be split into three phases: the first phase will mainly focus on creating the infrastructure and the second phase will mainly focus on capital and the third phase will mainly focus on finalizing the project and ensuring the site’s sustainability.

The proposed intervention will focus on transforming the site into a network of open spaces rather than a rational grid of streets and squares.

The proposed intervention will aim to transform the site into a network of open spaces rather than a rational grid of streets and squares.

**Design Objectives:**

1. Demilitarizing Taht el Qalaa
2. Revising the Local Economy
3. Increasing access and permeability to the site

**Concept:** Extending the old city’s urban typology through a network of spines and open spaces that will connect the site’s polarities.

**Infill: A Local Commerce-Led Economic Recovery**

**Aleppo**
Spines: Definition and Experiences

Main Spine: Includes the commercial activities.

Mobility Spine: Allows vertical access to the site.

Choral Spine: Hosts the future activities and events.

Infill: Towards Local Commerce-Led Economic Recovery
Aleppo

Infill: Towards Local Commerce-Led Economic Recovery

Top View

View 1

View 2
Infill: Towards Local Commerce-Led Economic Recovery

Phase I: Zoning
1. Defining Diversity and Locating Main Axes
2. Defining Mix Function
3. Non-Density Wall Rules

Phase II: Relief and Reconstruction
1. Redevelopment
2. Reconstruction
3. Redevelopment

Phase III: Recovery
- Redeveloping the site through adaptive reuse
- Advocating for the promotion of diversity and local commerce
- Enhancing public spaces and increasing pedestrian access
- Re-establishing the site as a hub for local commerce and culture

Stakeholder Analysis

Avoid GENTRIFICATION

Program

Municipality

Arts Council

Community Center

Volunteer Groups

Government

Local Business

Residents

Program

Municipality

Arts Council

Community Center

Volunteer Groups

Government

Local Business

Residents

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Municipality

Arts Council

Community Center

Volunteer Groups

Government

Local Business

Residents

Program
Looking at the history of Aleppo, one finds that the space at the foot of the citadel has not completely been a space of activities free from political tension. During the French mandate, it hosted military events and during the Ottoman period, it was a hub for economic activities. Therefore, our aim is to allow the people of Aleppo to re-claim their heritage and culture, by creating a new identity for the space: the civic identity. Through the complete removal of the Serail, the re-programming of the palace of justice and the implementation of the place-making theory, the space at the foot of the citadel becomes a place for the memorialization of the victims of the war and operates as a place for everyday rituals and activities. This place-making theory is strengthened by the use of existing urban elements, such as nodes, edges and pathways, which plays a crucial role in shaping a coherent and connected space organized around the central funnel space approached through three main axes with multiple sub-spaces. These spaces are activated through a multi-functional program, where modular structures are installed to carry out economical, artistic, educational and entertainment activities. Similarly, the edge of the moat works on animating the space, as it is treated as an outdoor exhibition space, where the citizens exhibit their artwork and produced goods. Furthermore, the space at the foot of the citadel is linked to a larger network of urban pockets. These pockets are character spaces that are scattered throughout the city, forming a green network of open/public spaces.
Place-Re-Making, a Culture-led Regeneration
Place-Re-Making, a Culture-led Regeneration

Vegetation layer

Aleppo

تحت القلعة

Place-Re-Making, a Culture-led Regeneration
Place-Re-Making, a Culture-led Regeneration

Ministry of Culture
Ministry of Labor
Ministry of Tourism
Unemployment

Design Development

Implementation Plan

Management + Maintenance

Phase #1: Re-ranking
- Developing the city
- Enhancing the city
- Planning the city

Phase #2: Relocation
- Re-location plans
- Re-location of the city
- Re-location of the area

Implementation of the project stage

Contextual Space

Ministry of Culture
Ministry of Labor
Ministry of Tourism
Unemployment
Place-Re-Making, a Culture-led Regeneration
Place- Re-Making, a Culture-led Regeneration

Off-Memory
Visual
Tactile
Auditory
Text

Arabia
Sultan’aymemah
Pavilions
Re-Enactment programs
House-memorial wall
Second memorial wall
Saving of the market
Saving of the market
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Place-Re-Making, a Culture-led Regeneration
The phases can be numerous since our proposal is an open ended elaborating an incremental project.

In phase I, the restoration of the main cultural heritage buildings on the citadel itself, the restoration of the scaffolding around the hammam, and the opening of the policies is done. The kiosks that used to inhabit the scaffolding will begin to be demolished.

In phase II, the scaffolding around the Hammam Yalbougha and the seating and extensions spaces, as well as a system of ramps and stairs to allow the construction sites to function adequately. In phase III, the restoration of the main cultural heritage buildings on the citadel is done. The scaffolding around the domes of the existing buildings will be modified in order to fit the needs of the visitors. The functions of the existing buildings will be redefined in order to fit the needs of the people and also affinity of the economic exchange. In phase IV, infills around the edges of the site are constructed, allowing a better definition of the space and enforcing the peripheral edges, while the scaffolding is used as a space for exhibition, and creates buffer zones around buildings. The bigger the scale, the more detailed the grid and the definition of the space and enforcing its peripheral edges, while the scaffolding is used as a space for exhibition, and creates buffer zones around buildings.

The phases can be numerous since our proposal is an open ended elaborating an incremental project.

In the first phase, the aim is to establish the cultural heritage buildings on the citadel itself, the restoration of the scaffolding around the hammam, and the opening of the policies is done. The kiosks that used to inhabit the scaffolding will begin to be demolished. In phase II, the scaffolding around the Hammam Yalbougha and the seating and extensions spaces, as well as a system of ramps and stairs to allow the construction sites to function adequately. In phase III, the restoration of the main cultural heritage buildings on the citadel is done. The scaffolding around the domes of the existing buildings will be modified in order to fit the needs of the visitors. The functions of the existing buildings will be redefined in order to fit the needs of the people and also affinity of the economic exchange. In phase IV, infills around the edges of the site are constructed, allowing a better definition of the space and enforcing the peripheral edges, while the scaffolding is used as a space for exhibition, and creates buffer zones around buildings. The bigger the scale, the more detailed the grid and the definition of the space and enforcing its peripheral edges, while the scaffolding is used as a space for exhibition, and creates buffer zones around buildings.

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In the first phase, the aim is to establish the cultural heritage buildings on the citadel itself, the restoration of the scaffolding around the hammam, and the opening of the policies is done. The kiosks that used to inhabit the scaffolding will begin to be demolished. In phase II, the scaffolding around the Hammam Yalbougha and the seating and extensions spaces, as well as a system of ramps and stairs to allow the construction sites to function adequately. In phase III, the restoration of the main cultural heritage buildings on the citadel is done. The scaffolding around the domes of the existing buildings will be modified in order to fit the needs of the visitors. The functions of the existing buildings will be redefined in order to fit the needs of the people and also affinity of the economic exchange. In phase IV, infills around the edges of the site are constructed, allowing a better definition of the space and enforcing the peripheral edges, while the scaffolding is used as a space for exhibition, and creates buffer zones around buildings. The bigger the scale, the more detailed the grid and the definition of the space and enforcing its peripheral edges, while the scaffolding is used as a space for exhibition, and creates buffer zones around buildings.

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Urban Design Proposal | Concept Diagrams and Policies

Legal Framework and Negotiations:

- Landmark protection laws, and policies
- Public Private Partnerships, as set in the proposals
- Law No. 170/1996, Parameter and Designation Law
- Law No. 140/2000, Law of Permanent Protection
- Law No. 143/2002, Law of Permanent Protection

Theavelnahm and the activation of the edges:

- Increase the density of the urban fabric
- Enhance the connectivity
- Improve the accessibility
- Promote the mix-use
- Increase the pedestrian safety
- Provide public spaces
- Enhance the visual appeal

Network Planning

Urban Design Proposal | Activation of the Edges

The urban development which can be affected by the building regulations of the urban fabric with edges developments:

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Urban Design Proposal | Phase I

Given that the Souq is covered in rubble and there is a lack of walls destroyed, our intention is to provide a temporary place for the souk around the boat.

The scaffolding around the restoration of the Souq will extend to the boat on a series to provide ramps and take up the commercial activity into the boat.

Urgently needed, this edge of the boat will be rehabilitated in order to accommodate navigation above, temporarily and above the full water level, with an efficient system of ramps and stairs to access the boat.

Urban Design Proposal | Phase II

In Phase I the scaffolding around the high walls is used to make the boat visible and for the edge of the boat to have a clear path. The scaffolding is used as ramps for exchange, and for the Souq to be visible. The scaffolding around the boat edge is taken over by steps while this uses it in the restoration.
Urban Design Proposal | Phase III

The vision for Aleppo is that of a resilient city—to celebrate its rich past and culture, as well as aim for a better and more inclusive future for the people. Through a recovery plan, three main axes are emphasized: conservation of the historical core, economic revitalization and urban greening.

In order to guarantee urban revitalization and recovery, a culture-led regeneration strategy will ensure the continuity of tradition, specifically the intangible heritage of food and music that are essential to the culture of Aleppo and incorporate traces from many civilizations. This will be done through the involvement of two user groups: youth and women who will act as powerful agents to safeguard Aleppo’s heritage.

The focus will be on the network of public spaces and courtyards of mosques and other cultural assets that can act as models for education, interaction and exchange.

The proposal will also focus on the local culture of food in rural and urban areas and creates a network between the two. Women will actively participate in the economic revitalization of Aleppo city. They will target the different economic sectors to create new opportunities for the youth and generate income. The focus will be on the network of public spaces and courtyards of mosques and other cultural assets that can act as models for education, interaction and exchange.

The citadel, Taht el Qalaa and the courtyards will be revived as vibrant and inclusive public, cultural hub that is intensified and enriched with different instances of food and music. The simplicity of the strategy relies on an implementable and practical design with minimal changes. Since the space is already under reconstruction, the design will not require the transfer of property ownership.

This cultural hub will be a combination of an open market for agriculture food products, crafts, musical instruments and textiles, as well as a learning center and performance spaces of art expression. The open spaces will reflect the cultural assets present in the citadel and its neighborhoods. It can be reclaimed and reshaped by the visitors themselves. The intervention will be extensive and will reinforce the importance of the citadel. The main gateway will be strongly accentuated as the main axis with frequent activities. The citadel will be anchored and branched out into two main cultural corridors, the food and the music corridors, that will intersect at the foot of the citadel emphasizing the main entryway. The courtyards of the mosques will be used as learning facilities and for taking part in the Dzikr Al-Qadiriyya, an important Sufi tradition that occurs in the ‘zawiyas’ of mosques, as well as other instances of religious ceremonies and chants tightly related to the heritage of Aleppo. The courtyard of Khan el Shouneh will be used for musical concerts and education to further reinforce the established music corridor. A performance space will be shaped with the backdrop of the Sultaniyah Mosque to create a public space for expression. The food spine will be managed by the women. The open market spaces will be connected and shared spaces will be constructed by gardens, trees and pavements.

In order for this proposal to be implemented, the community of women and youth from different age groups should be strongly involved in the process. The municipality should enforce the rights of these user groups. A partnership will be created between the involved institutions and actors, such as the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Culture, the waqf, UN-HABITAT, the schools and the sheikhs, as well as representatives from the community.
Design Strategy and Development

Aleppo تحت القلعة
the rest of the city to a porous membrane that invites the community. The ring road will be changed from an edge between the citadel and outdoor space as part of their daily activities.

Micro-scale Strategy

1. Buildings as Space Activators

Taking into consideration that all the buildings surrounding Taht el Qalaa and the ring road around the citadel. The framework and the methodology used at the micro scale can be repeated incrementally and programmatically and spatially. Thus, programmatic and spatial design

2. ACTIVATION OF OUTDOOR AREAS

OWNERSHIP – SCENARIOS FOR RENTING SPACE AND THE

This will result in the macro-level strategy. Activating the site seeks to used in significant sites of communal importance at the level of the city. The surgical intervention at the macro-level targets the site of Taht el Qalaa and the ring road around the citadel. The framework and the methodology used at the micro scale can be repeated incrementally and programmatically and spatially. Thus, programmatic and spatial design

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3. The Strategy

Basma Ibrahim

Space as Catalyst

Urban Regeneration: Public Space as Catalyst

Group Design Proposals

The Strategy

Basma Ibrahim

The Strategy

Basma Ibrahim

The Strategy

The Strategy
Spatial Strategy and Ownership/Renting Scenarios

Concept Diagram - Program - The Belt Road
View Towards the Citadel

Partial Plans

Educational Complex at North & Balcony Over Meisat

Planned Bridges
Cultures & Neighborhoods
Parking for Vehicles
Outdoor Walking Balconies & Parking Plans
Pedestrian Pathways & Connections
Open Spaces
Planning Zones for Parks
High-Rise Buildings in the Area
Outdoor Activities Spaces
Campus for Today People & Students
Parking

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View Towards the Citadel

Partial Plans
The designs prioritized ownership and phasing of implementation, proposing guidelines to engage displaced communities and returning residents. Economic drivers that would ensure that the proposed narratives were self-financed were also considered a priority, not only because of the shortage of funding available for development but also to avoid top-heavy, state intervention.
One of the most important outcomes of the studio was to generate a conversation about alternative approaches to post war recovery that are place-centered, heritage-led and people-focused.