

**Developing Heritage: Activist Decision-Makers and Reproduced Narratives  
in the Old City of Aleppo, Syria**

By

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B.A. Political Science and Education  
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Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

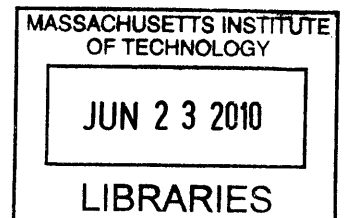
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**ABSTRACT**

Aleppo's rehabilitation project has received plaudits for its comprehensive pro-resident approach and an active stance to limit gentrification and touristification. As this objective goes against many of the structural and economic interests in the city, the 'illogical' aspects of plans and regulations would be expected to be immediately transgressed. Surprisingly, however, municipal regulation of investments for significant new uses of property is strong, as is the provision of services to neighborhoods with little to no expected returns. Interviews and analysis of project documents demonstrated that these actions are not a passive enforcement of the plan and regulations. Instead, local decision-makers are active, collaborative agents who dynamically re-shape and reinvent the guidelines for implementation.

All decisions regarding the regulation of new uses, and especially those not directly traceable to immediate economic interests, were strongly paired in the discourse of the actors with a discussion of a normative vision of the city and specific re-constructions of an ideal past. Aleppo, like other historic cities, arguably represents some of the most powerful *lieux de memoire* of twenty-first century urbanity. But, while memory and culture have been well-researched as instrumental facades for profit-driven urban projects (as well as in the marketing of spaces for consumption) the methods through which constructed narratives impact decision-making processes is less well-known. This thesis argues that normative narratives of the city are reproduced, amalgamated, and re-imagined by decision-makers and that these narratives play a central role in the decision-making processes to control new investment in the historic center.

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To my colleagues and friends in Aleppo

To my aunt Bern, who encouraged travel and demanded sharp thinking

To my colleagues and friends in Aleppo

To all those who have enabled, exijado, and shaja'u my studies

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### *List of Abbreviations and Terms*

AA	Action Area, demarcated zone for pilot projects
AKTC	Aga Khan Trust for Culture - Aga Khan Cultural Services-Syria after 2007
D – Plan	Development Plan for the Old City of Aleppo
DOC	Directorate of the Old City – Sub-section of the Municipality
EU	European Union
GIS	Geographic Information System
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation - Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GmbH)
HC	High Committee (Committee for the Protection of the Old City)
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
<i>the project</i>	Project for the Rehabilitation of the Old City of Aleppo
souk / aswaq	Traditional market / markets
TC	Technical Committee
waqf / Awqaf	Religious endowment of property, now controlled by state ministry / endowments

## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, memory and culture have been well-established in scholarly literature as increasingly prominent elements of the public discourse on urban projects. In the ‘modern’ and ‘global’ city, produced narratives of genealogy and legitimacy have become standard components to explain public production of urban space as well as marketing certain spaces for consumption. In both of these processes, however, the memories which are brought to the forefront are most often understood as an instrumental façade to produce legitimacy for processes that are fundamentally driven by ‘real’ drivers of decision-making in urban development, such as tangible structural interests or economic gain. Similar arguments can be made for the instrumental nature of how the perceived authenticity and ‘story’ of a place grants an economic edge in producing spaces of consumption for the global and local shoppers of experience. However, this thesis explores the influence of memory and culture in the process of decision-making for implementing the rehabilitation plans.

Given that both the structural and economic frameworks locate the trajectory of the production of urban space and trace it to material interests, two assumptions underpin understandings of the nature of specific interventions to modify the city. First, any changes are assumed to be fundamentally serving the entrenched political and economic interests dominating decision-making. As such, any outlier attempts at limiting the natural trend of this economic market will be either subdued or co-opted.

Second, plans that are made for specific interventions to modify the city deviate in actual implementation. Political and economic interests are often among the first reasons cited to explain this deviation. Among projects with some component of ‘benevolent development’ – as

in the case of the rehabilitation of historic Aleppo – the differences in the plans and implementation are also often attributed to poor administration, corruption, or the lack of the ability to internalize the ‘true vision’ of the city among the ‘lower-level’ decision-makers.

However, in the case of Aleppo, neither one of these frameworks fit with the outcomes observed. Limits on investment do take place, but in ways that are not ‘logical’ from a structural-economic understanding of the interests of their decision-makers. And while the decisions taken often transgress the regulations and ‘produced visions’ transferred from upper levels of the project, these transgressions are not random. Nor can they be categorized as an expression of the classically-depicted anticipated economic and political gain on the behalf of the actors.

Culture and memory, thus, are essential to the process not only as a veneer, but as active mediators in the process of limiting and guiding investment. This thesis argues that the decision-makers who interpret the project of rehabilitation – with both ‘benevolent’ and ‘economic’ – components are actually active agents of interpretation. These agents *do* draw significantly on produced narratives from the upper-levels of the project as well as the sociopolitical interests which surround them. But, this thesis argues, they also actively engage in a process of re-production, agglomeration and re-composition of these visions to create their own specific project-based constructed narratives of values and memory. These project-specific narratives contain a specific memory of the city, normative vision for its future, and a value-driven ideology of the role of their own actions.

With these puzzles in mind, and aided by a host of interviews and project documents, this thesis unpacks the ‘black box’ of implementation through narrative description of the ongoing process of local decision-making in negotiating the regulation of investment in the old city of

Aleppo. With the suspicion that alternative explanations exist to describe the process of implementation beyond the structural and economic frameworks, this thesis investigates how culture and memory produced new visions of the city through local, cognitive processes, and impacted the material outcomes. As a space flush with memory and large-scale planning initiatives, the rehabilitation project of the historic center of Aleppo, Syria presents a unique urban setting in which to examine these dilemmas. It is both one of the world's largest and oldest historic cities, and likewise maintains a political and economic system highly dissimilar from that of other nation-states with less-regulated markets and public spheres.

Most importantly, critical acclaim has lauded Aleppo's revitalization initiatives to be at the forefront of progressive urban strategy (Busquets, 2005; GtZ 2009). In particular, the project is held up as a model of pro-resident development in an urban heritage setting. A quantitative mapping of prices and variance permits suggests a relatively more dispersed geography of investment and increasing socioeconomic diversity than would be predicted in rehabilitations of historic urban environments (See Appendix I: 'A Geography of Investment').

Aleppo's 'success' is especially intriguing given its unusual overlaps between plans for projects and their implementation realities on the ground. In the rare instances when plans do go according to design, or at least enjoy good outcomes which are claimed by the planners, analyses typically attribute the outcome to a successful control of decision-makers over public officials, lower-level bureaucrats, and committee members.<sup>1</sup> The role of culture and memory in project implementation remains under-explored.

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis, project 'strategists', 'planners' and 'designers' are terms used to designate individuals whose primary involvement in the old city is on the level of creating a framework, not implementing or regulating.

These views assume almost no possible positive agency on the part of the actors themselves. In the case of the rehabilitation efforts, the lower-level individuals and groups are often those who exercise the most power over how a plan is implemented. But this power is not merely a negative factor; on the contrary, transgressions of laws or plans may often make them better. In contrast to how they are often perceived, these ‘cogs’ of the ‘implementation phase’ are capable of much more than stopping or slowing plans.

Local decision-makers as analyzed in this study inevitably also engage in a reevaluation of their meaning, and then often modify or adapt the mandate which they are given to better fit with their vision of what the city needs or what the city should be. The process of adaptation and modification is the primary goal explained by this thesis. In addition, however, several mechanisms are identified as foundational elements upon which further initiatives could be constructed.

Strand of analysis: outside investment and the narratives of socioeconomic diversity.

The unit of analysis in this study is how new land uses have been officially encouraged or discouraged to locate across the historic center of Aleppo. In the old city, two primary sets of mechanisms are available to the public realm for managing changes of use of property. The first of these is legal regulation. The old city has had a new place-centered set of guidelines with enforcement power and local decision-making for just over a decade. Service provision, the second mechanism, has been a key component of the rehabilitation project for almost fifteen years, and hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent on capital investments and ongoing public services have flowed into the old city over the past fifteen years in a series of phased projects.

Stepping back, this particular thread of investigation sprang out of my interest in the geographies of resources and inequities. Historic cities are some of the few areas of the world that are becoming more socioeconomically diverse in terms of property ownership. The typical trajectory for this change entails the establishment of arts and cultural uses, followed by higher-end commercial establishments, expensive residences, the reuse of public spaces, and a gradual increase in the price of property in certain areas which far exceeds that of others (Smith 1996, 180; ).

The process for decision-making for both regulation and service provision follows the predictions of urban literature in many areas. Others present puzzles not easily explained by traditional understandings of structural or economic interests, whether when local mayors – *mukhtars* - decide to not report an illegal renovation, committees opt to go beyond the land use laws and prevent a restaurant from locating in a neighborhood to prevent the ‘traditional’ way of life, or elites involved in project strategy decide to advocate a provision of services to the poorest neighborhood in the city.

Much of the process of decision-making regarding public investment, or the giving of permits for private investment, is permeated by its institutional and economic context. However, specific visions – produced narratives of what the old city should be, and the role of the decision-maker and their institution to influence this change – permeated all discussions about decisions to be made. This thesis describes the prominent role of memory and culture in the process of local action and argues that narratives –in parallel with action- are not fixed nor merely consumed down the hierarchy of decision-making, but actively re-interpreted, subverted, and re-invented as guidelines for the ongoing re-shaping of the historic city.

### Limitations and possibilities of broader relevance

Due to the topic and the geography of the area of study, many of the intriguing larger questions raised in this thesis cannot be answered, and only a few are discussed. In many ways, this thesis provides a framework upon which to base further explorations. The relative weight of these produced narratives in the process of decision-making, for example, is outside the scope of the current analysis, but would be a fruitful topic for further study.

The narrative of the attempt at ‘re-gentrification’ of old Aleppo is a complex story of urban development in a city with many significant differences in political, economic, and cultural functioning than those most frequently examined by western academic literatures of urban life and society. More times than I can count, by academics and family members alike, I have been challenged to counter that Aleppo’s exceptionality – as one of the largest historic cities in the world, in the middle of an authoritarian state, to name a few- renders any stories generated from its experiences necessarily exclusive to its context. This is true to a large extent; what has happened in Aleppo is unlikely to happen in the same way in another city. And, overall, this thesis accepts this argument, and humbly attempts to just ‘tell the story’ of a city rich with differences. In this understanding, the academic contribution is the addition of variation and nuance to existing narratives of redevelopment. So overall, there are no pretensions at model-making – in any case, that an outdated concept for urban development.

That said, two opportunities exist for this thesis to move beyond a case study of a complete ‘outlier’ or ‘odddity’. The first level of response is the existence of cities sharing important characteristics with Aleppo – they are middle-income, have a semi-authoritarian government structure with substantial streams of revenue from the central government, a

prominent elite, and the existence or possibility of international development investment in urban development or cultural resources. I believe that this analysis of change in Aleppo can contribute to understandings of how the different factors converge upon historic redevelopment in some of the ‘non-global’ and peripheral cities of today.

Secondly, I believe that many of the struggles that have defined the policies toward reinvestment and land use in the old city of Aleppo are unusual in their implementation (ie in ‘shutting off’ a large section of the city to investment or changes of use), counter to the predicted market logic of urban decision-making. By looking at how this decision came to be, as well as how it has actually been implemented (both bureaucratically and on the ground in the city), I hope to begin to open new questions regarding urban change – via a study of property changes and municipal politics– that will expand the analysis of the ‘conditions for’ as well as the ‘results of’ ambitious land-use and redevelopment policies for large, low-income areas with ‘heritage’ value. Lastly, while investment is by no means the only factor worth analyzing in processes of redevelopment, this thesis provides an example at how it can be used as a useful measurement of city change.

This thesis traces the role of memory and culture in the decision-making process of regulating land use and investment in the old city through a deliberate progression. An overview of the sociopolitical and institutional context for land-use decision-making in the old city is reviewed in Chapter II, as well as Chapter II the specific meta-narratives of memory and a rough sketch of their original construction and *raison d’être* in rehabilitation project. Chapter III delves into the role of memory in urban projects. The same chapter will lay out the narratives expressed by decision-makers which correspond with specific project components, such as the idea of



‘resuscitating’ the city back to life, and a ‘civic duty’ of elites to their heritage. Chapter III also details some of the project-specific processes for the intentional reproduction of these narratives, and, lastly, the ways in which individuals and groups appropriate these memories into their own cognitive framework, producing new, amalgamated and project-specific normative visions for the city. But how are these memories used in the framework of a highly centralized and developing-country context for real implementation? Chapter IV sets the discussions of memory in an analysis of the urban politics of Aleppo, and the political space open for the narrative-based ‘activism’ of the local decision-makers, and begins an analysis of the cognitive process involved.

#### Researching in Aleppo and methodological approach

With the support of a grant from the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture, I was spent two months in the summer of 2009 conducting interviews and collecting data. I was greatly assisted by my former colleagues (see Appendix I), but at the same time tried to maintain a distance from questions that I had been personally involved with, or debates to which I already knew the answers. Almost all of what I wrote in this thesis was completely new knowledge to me, and on a topic that I had not engaged with previously. In addition to the formal methods of ‘acquiring’ data, I also tried to be an observer, as much as time would allow, imposing on the hospitality of the extraordinarily hospitable Aleppians who welcomed me into their offices, homes, and worksites.

Field research over the summer had three main components. First interviews and data-gathering from local real estate agents to gain a picture of changes in housing price over the last ten years. Second, interviews with local residents, shopkeepers, and any other property owners

were key to gain a qualitative narrative explaining neighborhood change, as well as current perceptions of the city and the actions to change it. Last, sustained interaction and observation in neighborhoods and offices inside the old city that have frequent interaction with ongoing investment or regulation, was helpful in grounding the words of interviewees in their professional context.

I speak the local dialect of Arabic with professional fluency, and throughout my work sustained trusting relationships with many households in the old city and beyond. More importantly for Syria, perhaps, I worked alongside the local government and NGOs on several projects as a 'local' actor, and feel that I was able to gain access and build upon previous trust to the benefit of my research priorities. While in no way can I capture all of them, I attempt to make explicit any working or personal relationship or potential personal biases that might affect my point of view in this thesis.

I relied on a combination of quantitative and qualitative data, to best approximate in my analysis the multifaceted nuance of the processes and effects of urban development. Interviews with key actors in the rehabilitation process will help me understand the political, economic, and cultural contexts behind the zoning and planning decisions taken, as well as strengthen my knowledge of the regulatory framework and its areas of flexibility. The methodology for quantitative data is described in more detail in Appendix I. Interview data is more frequently used in Chapters III and IV, and its more detailed methodology and sampling strategies (mainly snowball, but some targeted) are described in Appendix III.

## CHAPTER II. PRODUCING CHANGE: THE HISTORIC CITY OF ALEPPO AND ITS MANY (RE)DEVELOPERS

The social and spatial fabric of Aleppo, like that of many cities in the Islamic world, is often portrayed as social an ‘organic’ result of centuries of weak municipal administration, or more charitably, an expression of a laissez-faire approach to the common good. While these views are reductive and incorrect as generalizations, a case-by-case approach to the regulation of urban space in Aleppo does have slightly more documented historic precedent than blanket legal frameworks (Lapidus 1967; Watenpaugh 2005; David and Degorge 2002; Marcus 1979). In terms of social space, neighborhood stratification by income appears also to have to become increasingly marked in the last two centuries.

This thesis focuses on the period 1989-2009, and in particular on land use decisions and investment between 2004 and 2009. A brief overview of the broader historic patterns of land regulation and redevelopment visions for the old city, however, is essential to understand the particularities of the context from which these decisions emerged. The second half of this chapter will provide an overview of the legal and institutional institutions which have formally structured the rehabilitation efforts of the past decade.

After the gradual withdrawal of Roman-Byzantine imperial power over the cities of northern Syria, regulations governing the use and structure of urban land shifted away from orthogonal prescriptions over the organization of space and activities. The more localized decisions about the usage of space which gradually followed in ‘Islamic’ Aleppo appear to have



ethnicity, employment, and –only becoming prominent by the 17<sup>th</sup> century - confessional identities. And while social association typically stretched over neighborhoods to form what Marcus calls “highly differentiated communities” of specific social and economic status, neighbor to neighbor contact was inevitable (Marcus 1986, 175; Lapidus 1970, 197). Some of the better-off members of the minority confessional communities began to coalesce near the end of the Mamluk period and early years of Ottoman rule, building many opulent homes outside of the city walls to the north, but, two centuries later, many Christian and Jewish residents were still documented as being relatively scattered across other neighborhoods. Sale prices were similarly distributed across residential areas; in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the average high-priced home sold for more than 10 times the average lower-priced home, and this variation did not vary significantly by area of the city (Marcus 1986, 171).<sup>4</sup>

The last century of Ottoman rule in Aleppo brought increasing codification to state methods for defining and regulating lands (Sait and Lim, 2006). Land ownership was registered under one of five categories, and lists of owners were sent to Istanbul.<sup>5</sup> *Muhtasib*, or local ‘moral’ authorities now drew Ottoman salaries and cooperated with neighborhood sheikhs to enforce against infringements on the public right of way (Abu Lughod 1987; Marcus 1986, 176; D-Plan, 2002). These moral regulations were reportedly delegated to de-facto enforcement through neighborhood self-policing, in which the neighborhoods were responsible, and risked hefty fines from the Ottoman authorities if they were slack in their duties. Neighborhoods were

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<sup>4</sup> Marcus does not discuss in detail any possible differences in variation between neighborhoods.

<sup>5</sup> The five categories established by the Ottoman Land Law of 1858 were: *miri*, or imperial/state land, *mulk*, close to the western understanding of private free-hold, *waqf*, and *mawat*, or ‘dead’ lands undeveloped or unusable. The last two categories eventually reverted to state control. See Sait and Lim 2007 for a more in-depth discussion of the evolution of Islamic land holding types.

responsible for the enforcement of moral standards of their inhabitants and the expulsion of undesirable uses, such as for the sale and consumption of alcohol (Marcus 1986, 177).

Municipal works in the Old City during the twenty-year French Mandate period, 1923-1943, emphasized the old city simultaneously as an *archeological site* subject of an Orientalist gaze towards a picturesque firmly fixed in the past, as well as a simply ‘backwards quarter’ to be separated from the modern city.<sup>6</sup> The new residential and commercial areas developed under the French were, surprisingly, not as geographically separate from the historic core, unlike the more heavily-colonized cities under the French elsewhere in the Arab world (Abu Lughod 1980; Brown 1976; Chalin 1990). Most pertinent for the old city, however, was the massive documentation and classification of monuments, as well as the first cadastral map of the old city, completed in 1931 (D-Plan 1998 2; David and Degorge 2002)<sup>7</sup>. Apart from the surveys, almost no public funds went into the old city at this time (Qudsi 2005, Hallaj, 2007).<sup>8</sup> At the same time, during the decades following the end of the French mandate, the old city lost over half of its population, especially upper and upper-middle income households, to the ‘modern’ neighborhoods built to the north and west (D-Plan 1998, 4; Sergie 7/2009; Vincent and Sergie b, 2005).

By the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the historic core was viewed as anachronistic, and two major plans slated it for ‘modernization’, embodied by the establishment of multi-lane traffic roads through the historic fabric (Gutton 1954 and Benshoya 1975). Until the 1990s, however, minimal overall regulation of either land use or modifications to individual structures took place.

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<sup>6</sup> Similar to Tamari’s recent discussion of the British Mandate views towards Jerusalem (ed. Davis, 2010)

<sup>7</sup> The cadastral map continues to serve as the basis of the current maps today, and many of the plots on current maps don’t reflect subdivisions made in the past 70 years (GIS work in the Old City 2009).

<sup>8</sup> Apart from the everyday maintenance of mosques and homes.

Infusions of funds, although paltry, into the old city during this time either went towards monuments, often through the waqf structure, or towards traffic infrastructure serving the old city. Homes and neighborhoods were not documented as being held tightly to any dictates of land uses.

These plans were partially implemented by bulldozing large avenues through sections of the historic fabric, and the destruction of parts of the old city is usually cited as a significant impetus behind the coalescence of the coalition to 'save' the historic core (DOC Presentation, 2006; Qudsi 2005). In particular, after the destruction of most of the Bab al-Faraj area in 1976, according to Benshoya's renewed version of Gutton's master plan, a group of local architects and preservationists convinced the Ministry of Culture to declare the intermural area a National Historic Monument, effectively blocking any future demolition. A permanent multisectoral committee – the Committee for the Protection of the Old City - discussed in much detail below, was established in 1978. After much advocacy and strategic lobbying, a more regulatory committee with more on-the-ground purview was established in 1985, and the city became, along with Damascus, recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1986.

Major public investment began, slowly, in the mid-1990s, co-sponsored by the German Technical Collaboration (GTZ) and the Syrian Government, along with other smaller investors. Most of the initial funds went to studies and mappings, and later into a whole-scale replacement of the road network, water systems, and drainage. As of 2008, over 80% of the street fabric had been renovated, and, by the summer of 2009, only a few areas were still being worked on. The scope of this project covered the entire area included in the UNESCO classification. After operating out of temporary authority and temporary offices, a new administrative unit, the

Directorate of the Old City (DOC) was established in 1996 to coordinate and supervise all municipal services, land use plans, property permitting, and to coordinate and supervise all international initiatives. At this time, a few ‘pilot projects’ were established in selected ‘action areas’ with the goal of demonstrating the feasibility of compliance with regulations, and providing a perceptible “yardstick” of “acceptable solutions” (Hallaj, 4/2010) The details of the beginning of the rehabilitation effort have been relatively well-researched to date, albeit mostly for unpublished theses or non-academic articles (such as Khechen 2004; or Williams 2010).

From the outset, the rehabilitation project was conceived of as a financial collaboration between the GTZ, the Arab fund, and the municipality of Aleppo. From a total cost of 4.1 million dollars over a time span of 3-5 years, the German component was proposed to be 1.5 million marks, the Arab fund’s US \$850,000 and \$722,000 from the City Council. In the next stage, of ‘executive implementation’, the City Council’s contribution was substantial, at 2.125 million dollars, and later grew to be over 60% of all project funds (GTZ presentation, workshop 2/2008). The GTZ was to contribute primarily through the provision of occasional foreign experts as well as salaries for a few local experts. The total German contribution was projected to be 1.5 million marks (City of Aleppo, Plan of Operation for the Studies, 1992).

After several years of operating out of an ad-hoc project office, the Old City Administration became formalized into a permanent line on the City’s budget as the Directorate of the Old City of Aleppo (DOC) Officially, the more powerful district does not directly supervise any projects, except through funding exceptional initiatives. In reality, the governor often became involved in decision-making on at least a bi-weekly basis, occasionally over-riding



decisions or delays of the DOC.<sup>9</sup> Currently, the Directorate is comprised of three working departments: planning, permitting, and maintenance/public works. Administrative and design staff support the general mission in all three areas.

The third comprehensive land use plan, as understood in the context of western planning, was developed as part of the project in the mid-1990s. Following the first few years of funding of the Project for the Rehabilitation of the Old City, consultants and staff drafted a series of guidelines for future development and conservation, or the “Development Plan”, or “D-Plan” in 1998. Positioning itself as a strategic and non-binding planning vision for the development and conservation of the old city, the D-Plan attempted to establish a framework for future, more detailed binding plans, only a few of which have emerged (see section II).

While aiming to be a representative planning ‘vision’, the process was explicitly acknowledged to have been constrained to limited ‘consultative’ sessions among public and private stakeholders, and minimal ‘informative’ participation among lower-level officials and the

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<sup>9</sup> The current director of the Directorate of the Old City expressed his wish that the DOC at some point become an autonomous unit, like ‘any other municipality’ and receive funds directly from the national government. Although he has expressed this desire to higher levels, nothing has come of it so far.

general public (D-Plan 1998, 15; Arnstein 1969, 217)<sup>10</sup>.



*The Old City in the context of modern Aleppo, early 1990s. Source: DOC 1998.*

Although the 1998 Development Plan only received its official seal of approval from Damascus in 2007, it has been effectively in place as a regulatory instrument since 2000 (DOC 2006a; Masri, 7/2009). The plan, and especially its land-use map, is one of the most-referenced strategy documents among Old City planning staff today.

#### Land use regulation: exclusionary zones on a fine-grained scale

A significant section of Aleppo's Development Plan discusses the management of land use. This land use plan is exceptional on several levels. Very conservative 'protection' of residential areas discourages new uses that would be profitable to private investment. This

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<sup>10</sup> Both informative and consultative processes fit within the 'degrees of tokenism' in Sherry Arnstein's classic 'ladder of participation'. A more recent theorization for 'developing countries' would fit this type of engagement into a category called 'manipulation' (Guaraldo Choguill, 1999)

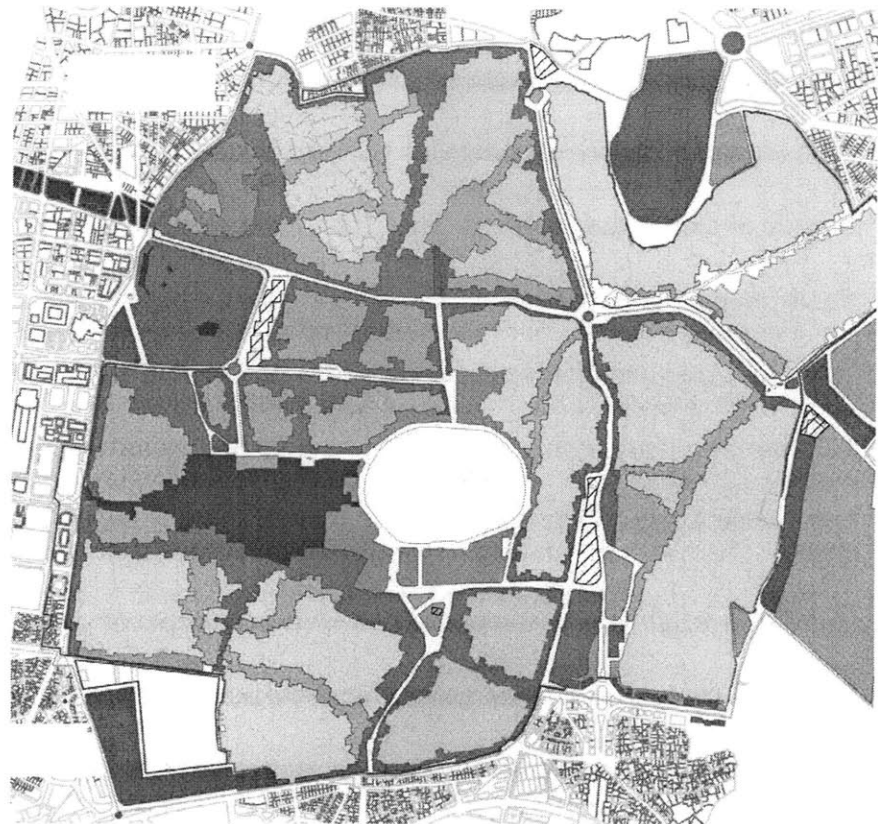
restriction on non-residential investment is especially continuous on the eastern side of the city. Secondly, specific zones were set aside to ‘contain’ tourist-oriented investment, and corridors, following existing commercial streets, were created to maintain a spatial hierarchy of businesses outside of the residential areas. These restrictions on use were paired with the quantitative descriptions of the permissible ratio of area to height (Floor Area Ratio, or FAR). Both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the land use plan effectively limited many of the possible values for property, going ‘against the market’ and would seem to especially limit the options of large-scale external investors.

These principles were based on several precepts of value. The first strategic step discussed for spatial development is the “safeguarding of housing” (D-Plan, 81-83.) Land use is divided into somewhat more nuanced categories than the ‘standard’ masterplans of the era. Residential areas are described as having a predominant “special Arabic-Islamic” character formed in part from its current residential use. By placing a historical significance on ‘use’, writers of the plan then limit permitted activities to residences, “non-disruptive” and “traditional” business and services that primarily cater to the immediate area.









Commercial areas, orange and red in the map below, are allowed to have activities which are “not seriously disruptive” in character, and in which all types of commercial operations, warehouses and storage are permitted (D-Plan, 20). However, in the main traditional *souk* area, activities are limited to ‘non-disruptive’ businesses (D-Plan, 21). Administrative areas and open space are self-explanatory.

The zoning for tourist areas, in purple, has surprisingly exclusive wording. The only permitted developments are either tourist-oriented businesses and institutions, complementary

functions (not explained), and residential buildings. The definition of ‘complementary functions’, in particular, is intriguing, as many of the existing structures in these areas are used for very quotidian commerce and light industry with no strong link – to tourism.<sup>11</sup>



**Master Plan for Old City of Aleppo, 1998; ratified 2007**

	Border areas		Tourist services
	Undefined		Mixed commerce
	Residential		Open space
	Mixed residential		Souk

The final two zoning categories included in the land use plan are ‘mixed residential’ and ‘mixed commercial’, in light and dark orange respectively. Mixed residential areas have many of the same uses and restrictions as pure residential, but without the prefix of ‘traditional’. Mixed commercial areas are identical in regulation to commercial areas, but with the additional permitted use of housing (Development Plan 1998, 20).

The section of the development plan describing future land uses only rarely explicitly expresses a ‘position’ above the neighborhood level. A few goals appear in multiple sections,

<sup>11</sup> Questions that remain to be resolved include the ‘complementariness’ of these uses, and their plan for the future.

however, such as the adjustment of population density to an ‘ideal mix’. This is stressed at the beginning as an essential component of the city’s future sustainability. In some neighborhoods the recommendations are to decrease or increase residential density prescriptions down to the individual number of desired households to add or subtract in each area (Development Plan 1998, 22). Likewise, building heights are frequently mentioned, and required to remain under the neighborhood limit, and, if a building is given an exception, it must be in harmony with the surrounding buildings (Law number 39, section 6.3.3; Development Plan 1998, 21). Crucially, the land use categories are not described as fixed, but very directly stated as a starting point, inherently flexible and intended to be modified. But while they are explained clearly as “a concept for further political and public comments”[sic] (1998, 99),as will be examined in Chapter IV, the plan has been officially formalized into regulation with few expectations of modification.

#### Other legal frameworks regulating property and specific to the redevelopment of the historic city

The second major guiding legal/policy document mentioned in decisions regarding the old city is the building code, as ratified in the Aleppo City Council Decision #39.<sup>12</sup> The ‘decision’ or *qarar*, perhaps similar to a city ‘ordinance’ in the American context, is a minimally-revised republishing of a 1971 version (City Council Decision #39, 1990), except for a section where it gives power to a committee to adjudicate a new regulation applying to all plots

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<sup>12</sup> Minor changes in revised version passed in 1998 (Albean, 7/2009).

and neighborhoods *inside and outside the walls* that were registered by the Ministry of Culture (Decision #39, section 2).<sup>13</sup>

Ordinance #39 also provides examples of regulations not followed: some aspects of the oft-cited 1990 regulations from the Aleppo Council include strong prescriptions towards the built environment which have been essentially disregarded. The multi-story buildings lining the major roads bulldozed by the master plans of the 1950s and 70s were slated for demolition or not to be replaced once they became in poor condition.<sup>14</sup>

Uses for structures in the old city as described in Ordinance #39 appear to present a hodgepodge of permissible activities for the old city, and only emphasize the lack of appropriateness of facilities for storage for external uses, or enterprises which engage with hazardous materials. Specific uses are repeatedly mentioned to be acceptable – cultural learning centers, specific touristic attractions, performance venues – if “in the spirit of local heritage” (5.1, 2-أ).<sup>15</sup>

Likewise, in an example which will be pursued later at length, the law permits for restaurants which “are traditional and historic” but those two terms are left up for local interpretation (Decision 39, 5.1, ٥). No mention is made of what uses might be appropriate for the neighborhood context (Decision 39, 5.1).

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<sup>13</sup> Some of my interviews indicated that the *Nizam al-Dabta* was not finished until 1998. Other sources in public media contradict this - a state-run newspaper reports that the idea of the *Nizam al-Dabta* formulated in a workshop in 2005 (al-Wahdeh, 12/15/2005) – but from what I was told, they do not seem correct.

<sup>14</sup> In detail: “The multi-story buildings currently present, which were constructed under a previous regime, will be conserved in their present state until their demolition. Reconstruction on the site will be supervised by a new permitting process that will adhere to the new building code, and will prescribe that they do not exceed two floors.” Translation of City Council Decision 39, Section #2.5.

<sup>15</sup> Literally: "ذات الطابع التراثي المحلي"

As a result of the multiple layers of regulation that permeate, investments in the Old City are perceived by some to be tied down by more legal frameworks than anywhere else in the country (Ghazal 7/2009)<sup>16</sup>. In addition to the *nizam al-dabta* and the land use regulations and guidelines, buildings in the old city are subject to Syrian Law regulating antiquities (most prominently law #222 from 1963), which includes the power of the government to appropriate any ‘heritage sites’, hypothetically includes materials older than 200 years (Rehabimed 2009; DGAM law #222). This is used infrequently, due to the DGAM’s chronic under-funding and other issues, but nevertheless is viewed as a disincentive to most private landowners to disclose any findings of historic significance on their property.<sup>17</sup>

In the larger context, the national government gives a broad set of regulations and guidelines from the 1970s for urban development (Law #5, 1983). In this, there is a loose reference to guidelines developed by the Ministry of Housing in the 1970s, but the suggestions regarding the documentation of existing building types or setting aside historic areas for preservation were not carried through (Rehabimed 2009, 2).

Finally, as the old city is registered as a World Heritage Site, it is also subject to international preservation criteria and guidelines. The regulating power of the international conventions, such as the ICOMOS charters, etc., is almost wholly symbolic. However, it is occasionally invoked as a tie-breaker, as in the case of some details of development of a pedestrian plaza circling the Citadel in 2008. Apart from the logo gracing the signs on the

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<sup>16</sup> The current director of the Directorate of the Old City.

<sup>17</sup> I personally know of several families and developers who kept significant archeological finds under cover to avoid a costly process and potential expropriation. In the eyes of many, the DGAM is seen as incapable to provide sufficient protection to built heritage, and an oft-repeated sentiment is that ‘it’s safer kept underground’, and ‘its better off protected from the government who would wreck it anyways’ (developer interview from another city in Syria, 7/2009).

entrance to the Old City, the World Heritage status is only occasionally invoked in my experience.<sup>18</sup> Much more common is a reference to undefined ‘international norms of conservation’, which, when given in detail, refer back to an amalgam of charters and conventions, typically based around European cities and formulated by international organizations.<sup>19</sup>

#### The process for investment within the formal framework

In the 1998 plan, any physical modification or change of use on a plot within the Old City boundaries must receive official approval. The types of permissions are divided into three administrative categories, according to the degree of change proposed. The first, the eponymous ‘simple works’, encompasses minor repairs and changes including tiling, plastering, and electrical improvements. Owners or certified residents<sup>20</sup> submit a simple application to the Permitting Office of the Old City Administration. These applications usually request proof of ownership or residence, on occasion are visited by staff, and most are adjudicated in a few weeks (Majid Albean, 7/2009; Rasha Masri, 7/2009, permissions records 2008-2009).

The second type of modifications, or ‘restoration’, covers removal of a wall, replacing a ceiling with concrete. In this case, the owners must submit technical drawings, and sites are always visited by a member of the Technical Committee. This committee has 10 appointed members from the associations represented in the High Committee (Rasha Masri, 7/2009). The

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<sup>18</sup> A masters thesis from 2004 makes a loose connection between the World Heritage Site status and ‘professionalism’ in planning (Vincent).

<sup>19</sup> GIVE DETAILS HERE. Venice charter, Washington charter.. ICOMOS guidelines.

<sup>20</sup>See section on ownership and land rights.



Syndicate of Engineers is required to make a secondary study and give their stamp of approval. This process typically lasts between one to three months (Albean, 7/2009).

Finally, major investments and/or changes of use go to the High Committee<sup>21</sup> which typically meets every few months. Its primary members are the heads of all agencies considered to be primary stakeholders in the old city: the powerful Aleppo Governorate, the Aleppo City Council, the Directorate of Tourism in Aleppo, the Syndicate of Engineers in Aleppo, the Directorate of Religious Endowments (Awqaf), and the Directorate of Antiquities in Aleppo, in addition to the president of the local engineers' syndicate and deans from the Institute of Archeology/Heritage and the College of Architecture at the public Aleppo University. The High Committee only considers cases of major change of use, major restoration, demolition and reconstruction. The high committee was often discussed as a relatively independent, as "so much honest" and "efficient and active" (Sergie a, 7/2009; Rasha Masri 7/2009). One observing member said that their work is made more difficult as they must take a decision which "pleases all parties" (Masri, 7/2009).<sup>22</sup> While often discussed in a favorable light, the current chair dismissed all decisions as 'purely political' with a frequent disregard for the scientific analysis of planning (Olabi interview, 7/2009).

In cases of major change of use, three entities must give their approval: the Department of Antiquities, the Old City Administration. For major tourist developments, such as a new hotel, the committee typically requested comments and approval from the Directorate of Tourism in

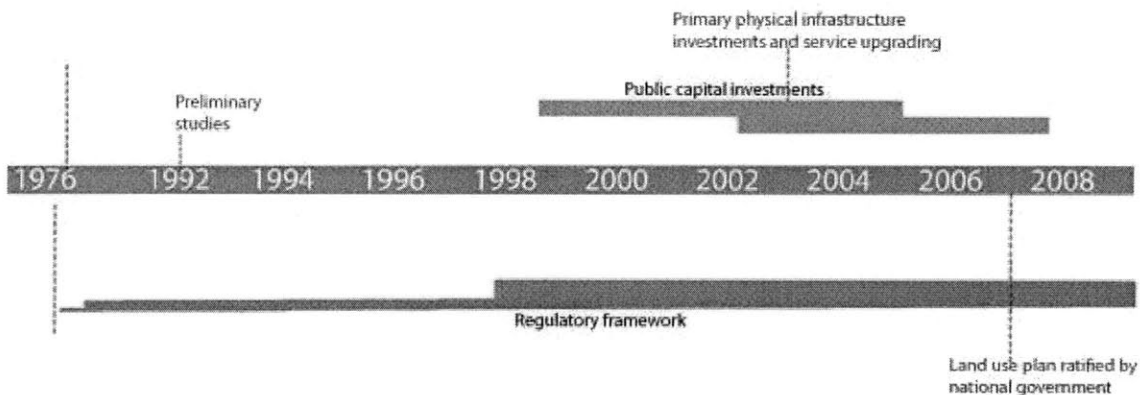
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<sup>21</sup> The literal translation of the Arabic name, لجنة حماية المدينة القديمة, is 'the Committee for the Protection of the Old City,' the official translation given in English publications is that of the 'High Committee'. While the former definition is more precise, the latter will be used in this thesis to facilitate cross-referencing with other English-language writings.

<sup>22</sup> "يرضى الكل"

Aleppo (HC minutes, 4/2006; City Council Decision 39)<sup>23</sup> Likewise, any cases which involve potential excavation must do so under the supervision of the Directorate of Antiquities and Museums (City Council Decision #39 1990, 6.6). Cases are typically adjudicated in between one to two meetings.

The Syrian state actively engages in the effective enforcement of select civil regulations.<sup>24</sup> The City Council regulations include stipulations for punitive action. If an owner or developer begins actions without the appropriate permits, the City reserves the right to seal the house with “red wax”, declare the construction illegal, and require that the lawbreaker return the property to its original condition on his account. FIGURE 2.1: Chronological development of



<sup>23</sup> In a typical case, a petition to develop an abandoned property into a hotel was referred to tourism directorate to see if its “proposed location and services were appropriate and deserving” (High Committee minutes, 4/2006).

<sup>24</sup> By select I mean that certain regulations are apt to be highlighted for a certain period of time and in certain spaces more than others. Shops on certain streets were strictly held to a new evening closing time for a few months, and transgressions are more liberally enforced inside neighborhoods or in low-income or low-profile neighborhoods. A seatbelt law enacted in late 2007 or early 2008 resulted in immediate changes of behavior – with fines exceeding \$100 – but not equally across urban space. Privately-initiated violent crime is rare, and security forces have the reputation of well-developed networks that facilitate quick apprehension of any resident whenever so desired.

the regulatory framework and major public investment in the old city

Structural constraints unique to the old city: ownership and property

Early on, the issues of ownership and inheritance were identified by redevelopment professionals as a ‘blockage to investment by owners’ (Rabenau 1992 pp 16-17). Complex inheritance patterns complicate the clarification of titles in many historic centers, and Aleppo is no different.<sup>25</sup> For properties receiving major investment between 1989 and 2003, 40% were recorded to have a ‘problem in the ownership’ (Albean, 2004). In the northern intermurus neighborhood of al-Bayyada, Gangler and Gaube traced the ownership of several houses to increasingly complex levels, with parts as small as 0.9/2400 being sold and divided between 12 persons in 1973 (5, 1991). The possibility of hundreds, if not thousands of heirs has current-day repercussions for the ease of turnover, particularly among expansive homes housing large extended families. One such ‘mini-palace’ in the southeastern intermurus neighborhood of Jalloum ,with remarkable stone carving, inlay, and other decorative elements was slated to be sold for SYP 60 million – US 1.2 million – last year, but the deal fell through due to the inability to gather signatures of approval of all heirs. In the meantime, the home continues to be occupied by several distantly-related households who migrated to the old city in the last twenty years (Haddad, 6/2009; Jazzar 6/2009). This type of situation is far from unusual.

As part of its role to encourage re-investments among all residents of the old city, the old city directorate has developed several formalized procedures to accommodate the nuance in the

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<sup>25</sup> Yehya provides an interesting case study over the Anti-Lebanon range in Beirut, where the dissolution of property boundaries has created a fundamentally different dynamic in the relationship between the past and redevelopment (2007, 248).

understandings of title prevalent in the old city. For a permit for the most basic level of repairs, petitioners are only required to prove one-quarter ownership, and renters are permitted to take charge of the changes as long as they have a signature showing approval from the landlord (Tarakji, 7/2009). This also applies to *waqf*—religious endowment- properties, in which case approval from municipal representatives of the Ministry of the Awqaf is required. This flexibility gradually decreases with increasing project size, and for more serious proposals such as change of use or demolishing and rebuilding, full ownership is required (Tarakji, 7/2009).<sup>26</sup>

As part of the agreement signed by a petitioner for ‘simple’ restoration and repairs to their homes, a petitioner must sign that he or she

“pledges to the City Council of Aleppo to take responsibility for all of the consequences and results related to taking on the mentioned restoration, and regarding the other owners - if they requested their rights now or in the future, and I am disposed to bear the full payments of returning their...” (DOC, ‘Permit for Simple Restoration Projects’, copied 2009).

A second significant factor complicating land use decisions and developing ownership is that of the *waqf*. The Directorate of the Awqaf of Aleppo controls a significant percentage of property in the old city, and is by far and away the old city’s largest land owner. *Waqf* lands or properties are typically established when an individual donates the use of his or her property for a specific charitable use or purpose. For more everyday properties, such as houses or stores, the income generated is dedicated to a certain purpose. Of the Awqaf properties, around 40% host long-term tenants who pay minimal rent (Masri, 7/2009). In these types of situations, no party

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<sup>26</sup> The act of sale in and of itself entails an interesting re-tracing of societal relationship. While most of the *ayan* of *ahl haleb* define themselves as relatively segregated from the rest – genealogically so, they often share last names and ownership (Field notes, 6/2009). The return in importance of a historic claim to ownership provides an unusual stage for a negotiation between ‘equals’, at least in shares of homes. In the case of one large house in Jalloum, one of the owners is one of the most prominent US-trained science professionals, while the current residents are a recently-urbanized extended family previously herding sheep (See Image I, Appendix C).

has an incentive to reinvest in the property; the resident, because they don't hold the title to the house, and see it as belonging to the Awqaf. From the standpoint of the Awqaf Directorate, reinvestment would unlikely be paid off by minimal rents, and it would be politically/morally difficult to displace the long-term tenants.

The Ministry of the Awqaf's first stipulation is that the waqf property cannot be sold or replaced, through lease or sale under any circumstances (Ministry of Awqaf, 2010), but some, as a result of being developed "hastily" on the advent of the World Heritage designation are still not included in the cadastre (Hallaj 2007). Waqf properties continue to be especially present in the built landscape of the old city. Almost all of the monuments currently associated with a religious function are under the administration of the waqf, and 36% of all commercial stores in the main market area are leased out by the Directorate (Aleppo Directorate of Awqaf, 2010). In primarily residential neighborhoods, the percent of homes owned and leased as waqf ranges around 10%.<sup>27</sup> Most of these homes are not being maintained by the Directorate or the current residents.

The leases for commercial and residential properties have long since ceased to be generators of real revenue. Owners buy and sell the leases with relative ease, any modifications or restorations proposed by the leasee must also be approved by the waqf ministry. The commercial stores in the *souk* and larger khans of Aleppo are also mainly waqf property.<sup>28</sup> While the sale of the leases are more symbolic than anything, with a marginal amount of monthly rent paid, if at all, and the properties receive negligible maintenance. Some sources claim that the

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<sup>27</sup> The most recent reliable survey of all property and subdivisions in Aleppo took place in a predominantly residential and low-income intermurus neighborhood; there, exactly 10% of homes were leased by families from the Awqaf Directorate (AKCS-S, 2009).

<sup>28</sup> The commercial properties that were measured in the quantitative study (Appendix I) were all outside the main *souk*, and, to my knowledge, were all in freehold. Anecdotally, the rights to a waqf lease in the main *souk* remain desirable real estate, and the rights to a lease for a miniscule shop can easily command over six figures (USD).

waqf is strategically attempting to offload its residential property in the old city (Rehabimed, “The Legislative Framework”). No mention of this was made by any actors or residents interviewed during this study, however. Between 1989 and 2003, almost one-fifth of all major investments occurred on Christian and Muslim waqf land (Albean, 2004). Inheritance complications and Awqaf property aside, ownership rates are extraordinarily high in Aleppo, at 95%, at least compared to old cities elsewhere in the Arabic-speaking world (Colin 1996; 107).

#### Technical aspects of the project development:

The project’s highest-profile investment in the old city is arguably the renewal of public physical infrastructure. Street repaving, and the refurbishment of water and sewer networks rose to the top of the agenda list for two main reasons. First, the lack of services was frequently cited as one of the primary drivers behind the diminishing middle-class residential population. Second, the structural integrity of homes and monuments was perceived to be at risk because of settling and water leakages from the hundred-year old water and drainage system. These infrastructure improvements took place over the entire old city, phased over the last decade. By summer of 2009, only a few areas of the northeast and eastern sections of the old city remained unpaved (Mukhtar interviews, 6-7/2009).

In the action areas, funds flowed to for minor improvements for public spaces as well as a rehabilitation of old properties for a health point (one total), a kindergarten (one total), and a performance venue/non-profit office center (one total). All of these had a significant GTZ component to their financing. Apart from two brief children’s painting exhibitions in 2003 and 2006, only recently has more serious investment in social programs for Old City residents begun, coordinated primarily through the Aga Khan Cultural Services-Syria, and in a limited area . The

intervention is expected to be limited, and primarily catalyze increased attention and improved coordination among government social service providers (Esmail, 7/2009).

### CHAPTER III: CONSTRUCTED PASTS AND THE PRODUCTION OF REHABILITATION

If any city can claim to be the poster-child of multiple stories and narratives, Aleppo would be high on the list, boasting over five thousand documented years of continuous inhabitation.<sup>29</sup> Even as far back as the eleventh century, the chronicler Ibn al-Adim had no illusions of all-inclusiveness, titling his masterpiece “Cream off the top of the history of Aleppo”.<sup>30</sup> In this context, any pretensions at a ‘complete’ or ‘representative history, are by definition implausible.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, to sum up contemporary experiences of residents and visitors of the city, and how they form part of a historical narrative, has more recently been re-established in theoretical literature as a futile exercise (Çinar and Bender 2007, xii). Narratives of the past and present, as in any city, anywhere, are selective and constructed in Aleppo. The previous section shows how these narratives formed a central part in the decision-making processes of actors in the old city.

This chapter will explore the content of these ‘produced episodes’, their manufacture, and the ways in which they have been intentionally reproduced.<sup>3233</sup> I will argue that although multiple narratives of the old city permeate the decision-making processes, they do not all align neatly with easily-separable political agendas. While different groups of actors interviewed did vary in narratives through which they frame the city and redevelopment, the rehabilitation

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<sup>29</sup> The 2003 uncovering of a Hittite temple in the Citadel crown area dates the mound as a prominent place of worship to the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium BC. See Gonella, 2006, Kohlmeyer 2009.

<sup>30</sup> A pun in Arabic, as the name for Aleppo has the same root as that of ‘milk’ – halab.

<sup>31</sup> Benjamin and other urban explorers present a partial picture and describe this in *simultaneities*.

<sup>32</sup> Tilly describes episodes as “continuous streams of social life” that are inevitably filtered and bounded for a social purpose (2006, 15). ‘Produced episodes’, although somewhat redundant, clarifies the critical inclusion of the process of selection and modification.

<sup>33</sup> Stille quotes Faulkner as saying “The past isn’t dead. It isn’t even past.” (Stille 2002, 312).



project has amalgamated components of many of these into a loosely-woven fabric of values guiding project design and implementation. And individual actors, as described in chapter four, engage in an ongoing process of interpretation of the different episodes produced to explain and guide their decision-making. Their amalgamations often fall into patterns and groups that transcend a specific era or thematic episode.

### 3.1 Framing urban memories: what is the language to use?

The usage of memory and culture in urban projects has grown exponentially in popularity in urban literatures since the late 1970s (Lefebve 1991; Schultze 1992; Pine and Gilmore 1999). In the context of the US and western countries, it has primarily been analyzed as an economic driver and a public good veneer over a regular ‘industry’ (Zukin 1995, 133; Florida 2005; Judd and Feinstein 1999; Hussayn 2003, 15). Heritage and artifacts themselves have been increasingly defined as entirely produced commodities, the “transvaluation of the obsolete” (Stille 2002, xix; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett). This consumption of experiences, whether through produced spaces or spectacles is especially characteristic of cities in the postmodern era (Featherstone, 99). The demand is augmented by any communication of authenticity, as in recent descriptions marketing Aleppo for the western tourist (NYT, 1/24/2010).

Driven by consumption, economies can only move forward by delivering services through an ‘event’ that is ‘memorable’ (Pine and Gilmore 1999). But the actions pursued for growth in turn have been recently observed by European scholars to impact the political agenda for urban change (Lorentzen 2009) as well as styles of urban governance themselves (Therkildsen et al. 2009). One specific result of this demand is that arts and ‘culture’ have gained traction over the past two decades as the new way to attract capital back to

‘underinvested’ physical environments.<sup>34</sup> Many cities invent ‘places’; cities with a surfeit of built heritage often end up selecting specific zones to market for outside consumption (Judd 1995; Cilek 2005).

In the global South, however, memory and culture have been argued to have uniquely high levels of influence on politics in and of itself. Hussayn argues that in the Middle East culture and memory remain “key politically” in the Middle East (2003, 15). While the role of culture and history in political discourse has been relatively well-explored in the region (see Salamandra 2004, Abu Lughod L, 2005), cultural narratives and historical memories as participants in the specific urban dynamics of heritage conservation<sup>35</sup> projects, broadly defined, has been less thoroughly explored.

In the immediate region, the relationship between the symbolism of heritage places and urban politics has been the subject of several recent rigorous studies. Cinar, studying Istanbul, tracks how the gradual ‘replacement’ of Islamic monuments corresponded with the ascendancy of the more overtly religious AK party (2005, 102). By modifying squares, statues, and symbols of the city celebrating the Ottoman heritage, the regime strengthened their claim of a ‘legitimate’ genealogy of rule and an alternate narrative of nationhood celebrating conquest (2005,158).<sup>36</sup> Also in Istanbul, Zeynep Celik argues compellingly that the rehabilitation of Soğukçeşme street

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<sup>34</sup> Recent events (Spring 2010) seem to be signaling the formalization – and possible proximate decline – of this trend: the Ford Foundation announced a series of grants to go to revitalizing areas around arts and culture, and the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at MIT convened a lecture series around the same theme.

<sup>35</sup> Including, for the moment the various branches implied by the other ‘five rs’: restoration, revitalization, regeneration, rehabilitation and renewal. See Rodwell (2007) or Tiesdell, Oc and Heath (1996) for a more general discussion of these terms and their application in historic cities.

<sup>36</sup> Although Aleppo and Istanbul shared imperial governance for just over 400 years, the national politics and structure of governance is radically different in contemporary Istanbul. Regardless, Cinar’s book provides a series of fascinating case studies, primarily around the modification of built space, that are particularly illuminating regarding the highly political (she argues) ascription of an religious and ‘Islamic’ identity.

was strongly shaped by an ‘inherited’ European conception of what a city of the ‘Orient’ should resemble (1994, 92). However, like most of the writers, she focuses on the actions and outcomes themselves of urban projects, and not how the projections of history fit into the processes of implementation *per se*.

To the south, Sekdy (2005) notes how, in the construction of the al-Azhar tunnel in Cairo, a rhetoric of ‘progress’ trumped conservation measures considered non-threatening to the streams of tourist revenue (120-121). For disputes around the old city of Cairo, international cultural arbiters, with the conventions of ICOMOS and UNESCO as their guiding ‘values’ infrequently took a political stance, and were ineffective (2005, 119).<sup>37</sup> In their place, historic and nationalist narratives have been employed to implement global trends of exclusion and privatization (ElSheshtawy in Singerman and Amar 2006, 297).

Literature on Israeli cities is an exception to the region, with rich analysis and discussion of urban politics and conservation. The power of created narratives in sparking conservation efforts is especially sharply illustrated by Amit-Cohen, who notices that “heritage values can be formulated and even artificially produced to promote urban development,” and that conservation efforts are the most dominant for some of the youngest built fabric, in Tel Aviv, a place that, in the words of a fellow scholar, people come for the “not for the past, but the present” (Amit-Cohen 2004, 292-294; Gyorgy Konrad quoted in Schlor 1999. 212). The control of selective

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<sup>37</sup> It goes without saying that usage of selectively-constructed historical narratives to bolster a political claim to rule is not a new trend. See Grabar, 1987 for one good example discussing art.

identities, class segregation, and urban planning are all linked strongly by Yiftachel in analyses of sites, cities, and spaces of conflict in Israel/Palestine (1995; 2001, 2006).<sup>38</sup>

Literature based on cities in the US and UK, remains uniquely well-developed regarding investigations of how redevelopment is understood and promulgated through constructed historical discourses. In his in-depth study of the redevelopment of Times Square, Reichl notes how a new framing of a narrative of decline was the key element in catalyzing a coalition of elites to back reinvestment (1999, 3). When Times Square was framed as the “worst block in town”, and the symbolic center, catalyzing the elite coalition to revive it became much easier, if nothing else because it was logical to support an ‘example’ for the continued legitimacy of the city as a worthy of postindustrial transformation (Reichl 1999, 56-58).<sup>39</sup> Given these factors, Reichl argues that “public discourse must be recognized as an instrument of politics” (1999, 169).

Legitimacy of rule through historization is also well-theorized for urban projects in the western context. Hobsbawm shows how many of the characteristics which are now understood as unquestionably ‘old’ are actually quite new, and are narratives created, constructed or which emerged on their own for a purpose, to “inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by

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<sup>38</sup> While the Israeli literature is very rich, I will not explore it in depth in this chapter, as, despite geographic and historic proximity, many of the central issues of class relations, politics, conflict, and the overall level of development are radically different from those in Aleppo.

<sup>39</sup> In a succinct statement of the processes at work in Times Square, Reichl observes that “...historic preservation allows pro-growth forces to depict development as a means to restore romanticized images of the good ol’ days...By evoking historic imagery, pro-growth interests can frame the debate over development in terms of a social agenda of reclaiming an idealized past, thereby deflecting attention away from such issues as the biological or physical environment. (167-168).

repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past” (1983, 1).<sup>40</sup> Neotraditionalism has been cast as a method of resistance to colonialism in other parts of the developing world (Ranger 1983 in Hobsbawm 1984, 261). Along similar lines, preservation can be seen as a valuable act of defiance against any dominant economic or political system, especially for conserving subaltern narratives or specific cultural heritage(s) (Fitch, 403; ICOMOS 2010; UNESCO 2010; Sarageldin I, 2008). Cultural identity can be especially powerfully produced and consumed in the urban context, as spaces where ethereal area of movement in which “personal memories are inscribed” which provide “comfort” and a sense of belonging and place (Healy 2002, 1781)

In Syria, the dynamics behind the conservation of Damascus and its interaction with public memory have been relatively well-studied (Rabbat 2005; Salamandra 2004). In Aleppo, this is less so. While Watenpaugh’s main focus is the Ottoman era, in his conclusion he theorizes a few statements on contemporary Aleppo, based on his time in fieldwork there. More broadly, he proposes that the middle class retains a fascination with history, and work to construct genealogies for not only themselves, but the nation (2005, 302). The middle class emerged, in the Eastern Mediterranean, for Watenpaugh when they began ‘to speak’, ‘to remember’ and ‘to produce culture’.

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<sup>40</sup> In a nuance to the argument of ‘political’ motivation, Hobsbawm also notes that many of the ‘invented traditions’ of the past century were intended to “foster the corporate sense of superiority of elites (10), and others are distinctly inclusive.

3.2 Traditional ‘episodes’ that are temporally or thematically defined: visions of the old city, based on its role as a *lieu de memoire* for multiple narratives.

Table 3.2: ‘Episodes’ and their interpreters, using the classic temporal-thematic framework

NARRATIVES	‘SILK ROAD’	‘ISLAMIC’	‘ARCHEOLOGICAL BUILT HERITAGE’	‘SOCIAL, CULTURAL GLORY’	‘MORAL EDDY/BASTION’	‘MODERN, UNEXCEPTIONAL’	‘JUST A PRETTY PLACE’
Rough corresponding chronological period	Byzantine - cosmopolitan, multi-religious	Umayyad-Ayyubid	Ayyubid-Mamluk	Mamluk-early Ottoman	Late Ottoman, Mandate, pre 1970s	Present	present
Residents	Low/weak	Present				Relatively strong	<b>Strong</b>
<i>Mukhtars</i>	Weak	<b>Strong</b>	Present		<b>Strong</b>		<b>Strong</b>
Merchants	Present	Present			Present (local merchants)	Present	Weak
Local elites	Present	Present	Present	<b>Strong</b>			
National patriotic discourse	Only as an illustration of a secular	Weaker, only in a generic sense		<b>Strong - Glory as Arab and tied to place</b>		As capital of the north (Chakar, 2007)	

	heritage			(Qalaji 1989)			
Domestic popular culture		Relatively high		Somewhat in a few 'period' dramas	<b>Strong, anti-Ottoman resistance, morals</b>		
International Media	<b>Strong - exotic and definitively 'other'</b>		<b>Strong, but only as a space permanently in the past or in decline</b>				

The most general level of memories which are utilized in recreating specific narratives to motivate or justify projects represents the idealization of a specific historic era. These are not used in isolation, and it would be reductive to assign them to specific parties or individuals as sole justifications for their projects. Nevertheless, these clusters of memory remain powerful groupings to understand the bases upon which other narratives are constructed.

Taking the above studies into consideration, the first step is to identify narratives and to match them to specific veins of politics and society. These categories are not exclusionary nor are they reducible to independent packets of rhetoric dictating or justifying actions limiting development and growth. The table below demonstrates a preliminary, and incomplete, list that hypothesizes a few of the main streams of 'history' that are drawn upon and used in contemporary rhetoric.

One of these streams is the 'archeological' view of the city, which identifies value in the city primarily in buildings or remains, which are as suppliers of evidence or visual consumption of past eras. This view continues to be predominant among archeologists and historians from

abroad and the Institute for Archeology/Heritage at the University of Aleppo, the *Maahad at-Turath*. One example of this framing is the enthusiastic perception expressed in article about the Storm God Temple discovered in the citadel, as “one of the great archeological sensations of the last decade” (Hawkins, 2009).

The city’s Islamic identity has been touted among traders, tourism advertisements aimed at the Gulf and alternative television channels. In addition to the physical installations following the designation of Aleppo as “Capital of Islamic Culture 2006”, as described in section 3.3, many local books and ‘popular’ promotional literature stresses the ideal that once was – ‘mosques on every corner’, ‘services for the poor’ (Capital of Islamic Culture 2006; Hadjar 2000; Fansa 2008).

As a national site, there is minimal difference between the official ‘appreciation’ of Aleppo – on state television, in speeches, etc., than of any other ‘heritage’ site in Syria, the opposite of what Salamandra finds in Damascus (2007). But there is careful work made so that all sites are inevitably wrapped up in the Syrian national narrative, and become ‘Syrian’, or at least Arab.<sup>41</sup> Although analyzing the national scale, Lisa Wedeen meticulously documents the process by which discourses and images become used as methods of control and mechanisms of compliance (1999, 145).

### 3.3. Project-level meta-narratives.

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<sup>41</sup> Some academics seem to prefer the term ‘Arab’ instead of ‘Islamic’ when referring to the changes which occurred in Aleppo upon the conquest of the Muslims from the Arabian peninsula. For example, Nezar al Sayyad argues that Aleppo presented an “organic development” similar to other cities before becoming “Arabized” (1996, 36).



The broad-brushed groups of memories detailed above are rarely invoked in isolation. Rather, even among the more theoretical ‘visions’ gleaned from project documents and interviews, chronologically-bounded memories were often mixed and matched with a set of normative ideals and a specific project to be implemented. While this process is similar down the hierarchy of decision-making, some narratives appear to have remained remarkably resilient on the project-level over the past decade. These ideas are then cited and reinterpreted throughout the process.

3.3.1 Selected narratives of the city. One group of narratives reproduced by the project focused on a normative ideal of the city not necessarily connected to a chronological episode of the past.

#### 3.3.1.1 The Old City as a place of value

Almost all of the actors discuss the old city’s history as long, glorious, and with a great deal of cultural value. The value for old buildings as they form an example of a ‘traditional’ and ‘authentic’ urban fabric, some would argue, is not innate, but a taught process (Hallaj, 2007). Almost all time periods can be fit into this form of presentation. But in almost all versions, the past is celebrated as ‘glorious’ and a “cultural heritage”. Segments of ‘less-glorious’ heritage are typically those that have not been propagated by any specific group. Savvy members of the technical and high committees speculated this shift in perceptions would lead to a change in mindset and “renewed interest”, which would then form the basis of the recent increases in property values (Masri, 7/2009).<sup>42</sup>

Pride in the city, and the recognition of quality likewise permeated many of the interviews. One respected architect, a French transplant of 30 years, theorized that Aleppians

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<sup>42</sup> Ahya’ al ihtimam

have a special appreciation for quality, attention to detail, and honesty. It is this understanding of the ‘full value’ of investment that sets them apart from Damascenes, for example, where homes of plaster are “smoke and mirrors” (Grandin, 7/2009). From afar, Hashim Sarkis also notes this preponderance of ‘civic’ pride in his essay in Busquets’ short edited volume (2005).

### 3.3.1.2. Decline – moral, material, and pervasive – and stemming the damage

Another theme that persistently recurred in interviews and project documents is that of the Old City is that the urban and social fabrics have suffered a gradual decline since some point in the pre-Mandate history. Actions taken are justified in formal rhetoric as ‘stopping the trend’. This narrative has also been a favorite of scholars and external media for some time.<sup>43</sup>

At first glance, the mukhtars and residents subscribed strongly to the idea of *kharaab* or ‘ruin’ that the social morals in their neighborhood had come to. One said of the social structure: it is “like a house that needs serious repair, and then goes to beyond repair: the only solution is to tear it down and build it again anew”(Haddad 6/2009).

But, in almost every interview with mukhtars, the powerful narrative of decline would be counterpositited by one of continuity. Mukhtars would also first define their neighborhood as a place of ‘good morals’, tight communities where “nobody has come or left, and nobody will” or “traditional in all the meanings of the word”, where extreme solidarity entails protection and self-help among people from the *hara* – neighborhood (Naasan 7/2009; Haddad 7/2009; Sawwas 6/2009). What is interesting here is not so much whether they ascribe positive or negative trends

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<sup>43</sup> For a recent representative sampling see Williams 4/17/2010 on Bloomberg.com, reproduced in the New York Times which, amid many other cringe-inducing statements and poor reporting, calls Aleppo a “ravaged” city.

to the past, but what factors they choose to describe them with. In the case of almost all mukhtars and residents, the social fabric was the prominent mode of analysis.

In official rhetoric, the social fabric is present along with the physical in a narrative of decline and neglect, and both of them are presented as en route to a process of resuscitation. But when it came to actions, almost all of the interventions discussed by officials and committee members were on the built environment.

### 3.3.1.3 Permanence and stable past

Somehow, the old city is imagined to have been a stable community. Sennett warns against this in his critique of Jacobs, and I would imagine Herber Gans, in that their depiction of urban ethnic neighborhoods as somehow “traditionally stable” is false, as they are actually places of great population mobility. And, he argues, like anywhere else in a city, the poor “survival community” needs diversity and instability (154-153). In the region, this is similar to how medieval Cairo is projected as “intact, a historic area...in a basically unaltered state” (Sanders 2008, 120).<sup>44</sup>

In a sense, then, the rehabilitation project rhetoric of Aleppo is not a shutting-off of the city as an unwanted appendage, but an effort to re-encompass and ‘bring back’ an excluded area into the fold. Alternatively, this could be framed as an invasion, a swallowing and flattening, through gentrification, of a solidly lower-class, or *shaabi*, area.

3.2.2 Produced narratives discussing the role of the project. Official reports and presentations of the project positioned themselves in relatively consistent narratives of significance. Some of

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<sup>44</sup> This discussion is in the context of Sanders’ critique of the conservation projects implemented by the Bahra community in Islamic Cairo, used also to leverage a critiques how the history of the city is narrated separately from the history of preservation (120)

these were explicitly intentional and strategically re-produced, such as that of ‘stewardship’, while others are less direct statements as they are accompaniments to discussions, such as that of ‘reurbanizing’.

### 3.3.2.1 Stewardship and responsibility

This projected narrative constructs a past where the old city was permeated by elite ‘stewardship’ and responsibility for a neighborhood or charitable institution. This discourse primarily draws upon memories from the late Ottoman period, but typically references structures and institutions founded under the Ayyubids or Mamluks. This narrative is frequently referenced in formal and informal rhetoric about the project (Graves 2007; Qujjeh 7/2009).

Some of these memories are not completely false; before the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the higher socioeconomic classes were documented over time to be well-distributed throughout the old city, and provided many of the social and physical public services for their neighborhoods (Marcus 1979, 205-220). This contributed to their individual and religious morality and family standing in Aleppo( Doumani 1998, 15) and more broadly (Yahya 2008, 428). More importantly, perhaps, major charitable or civic investments are documented to have produced gains in social prestige and access to the elite circle of decision-making (Marcus 1979, 162; DeGuilhem 1995, 937, 942).<sup>45</sup>

### 3.3.2.2 Re-civilizing as re-urbanizing

Many neighborhood-level officials and a few professionals went beyond connecting the idea of re-civilizing the city to behaviors and deteriorated norms (littering) to the types of users

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<sup>45</sup> Returning to Peterson, this could be considered a correlary to what he calls ‘reputational’ power (Peterson 1981, 143).

themselves. But while tourist uses were occasionally mentioned – and only in neighborhoods of high investment – the presence of *ashaair*, or ‘tribal’ ‘newcomers’ to the old city were cited across position and geography. In truth, many of the ‘newer’ residents whose families moved into the old city only a few generations back, often reported hailing from a village or smaller city near to Aleppo, and were not pastoralists as is sometimes implied. Still, the perception that uncivilized is equivalent to un-urban, and that the rural/pastoral newcomers were wrecking the city with their lack of urban ‘manners’, prevails among residents, *mukhtars*, and several elite-professionals interviewed.<sup>46</sup> In interviews with the *mukhtars*, 15 out of 17 correlated the high quality of their area with the lack of any *ashaair* (Interviews, 7/2009). On the other side, one mukhtar attributed the “societal lack of morals” that he saw pervading his neighborhood had a high influx of *ashaair* from the south of Aleppo (Qahle, 6/2009).<sup>4748</sup>

### 3.3.2.3 Correcting the ‘mistake’ of modernization: claiming a local legitimacy

This ‘flight from the old’ is often framed as part of a larger Arab misguided pursuit of deification of European norms and planning ideals. The narrative often voiced by professionals involved with the project, if not in direct terms. In the words of the head of the Planning Division for the Old City, for example, the Municipality stopped giving services so they could invest in the “prettier part of town” where the new houses had green spaces outside, not inside” (Zammar, 6/2009). The timing of the decades of massive emigration becomes especially pertinent when overlaid with the ages of the protagonists in the campaign to protect the old city. A

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<sup>46</sup> Yet more proof for the power of long-lasting narratives. The trope of the ‘desert-dweller’ and the ‘cultured urbane’ continues to run long after Ibn Khaldoun.

<sup>47</sup> ‘Sou’ al-mujtama khalqiyyan.

<sup>48</sup> Sedky also discusses interpretations of the Arabic root word *Hadr* in the conservation politics of Cairo.

Almost all of the first generation of project strategists and initiators grew up in the old city, and continually cite their childhood memories of their neighborhood when discussing the reasons for a 'return'. In their eyes, leaving was a logical reaction of families fleeing disintegrating services. But the decline is also framed as a 'mistake', facilitated by a structure oriented towards 'western' values which ignored the Aleppian identity (Olabi 7/2009; Qudsi, 6/2009).

Another way of telling the story is that of a re-emergent 'underdog' city with history on its side. In a nation-state where allocations are not always based on population, the rehabilitation project is one way of re-establishing the symbolic competitiveness with better-funded localities. One popular narrative in Aleppo tells how, after the French Mandate, the founders of the new Syrian state intended the city to be the capital of the new nation, but, wary of being too close to the Ottoman empire, decided on second-best, Damascus.<sup>49</sup>

Abandonment had a happy ending, for some. Then, as now, most public finance is channeled through the central government, and Aleppo became accustomed to receive increasingly small allocations per capita. In the view of one prominent well-educated woman long involved with the project, this circumstance forced a "longer period of thinking" which led to better results, and engendered "inventiveness and local agency" faced with the scarcity of funds (Sergie, 6/2009a). This trend was finally reversed under the administration of a well-connected and 'learned' province governor Tamer alHajjeh (late 1990s –find date-to 2008), funds from Damascus increased (Sergie, 6/2009a)<sup>50</sup>.

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<sup>49</sup> The punch line of this story always includes the fact that Israel was founded a year later with the border less than an hour's drive south of Damascus.

<sup>50</sup> Al Hajjeh is conveniently now the Minister of Local Affairs, in charge of allocations to provinces

### 3.4 AMALGAMATED MEMORIES AS GUIDES OF PRACTICE

In practice, local actors interviewed take in the narratives which are presented to them, and, in combination with their ‘own’ cognitive understanding of the city and its institutions, create amalgamated micro-narratives that are tightly associated with the types of decisions they take in their limited space for regulatory flexibility. Some of these narratives came up multiple times across sectors, and a few are presented below.

#### 3.4.1. Produced Visions of the city on the lower level.

##### 3.4.1.1 ‘Representative centrality’: the city as a quintessential *lieu de memoire* <sup>51</sup>

The idea that Aleppo represents the epitome is a long-established genre, and one into which this thesis falls as well. In Aleppo, this discourse of centrality can revolve around any one of the historic narratives described above. Even the notion of the nation-state is especially ‘invented’ in the Middle East (Hobsbawm, 14). Nations like to claim to be the opposite of ‘novel’ (Hobsbawm, 14). Certainly, Aleppo in the eyes of outsiders, and to other Aleppians and Syrians, is being heavily marketed and reproduced as ‘authentic’.

As a part of the rehabilitation process, then, the historic city has become a place for the repository of memory, or the “ultimate embodiments of a historical consciousness” of the *lieux de memoire* elucidated by Pierre Nora (1989, 11). For Lefebvre, cities only exist with centers, and the historic center, with its “spaces appropriated during the course of a previous history” is a natural location for the establishment of this centrality. Following the “double character” of the

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capitalist city, the areas for the consumption of space are naturally linked to places of consumption (Lefebvre 1967; 1996, 170-1).

Few homeowners or neighborhood-level actors in a restoration process discussed the connection so explicitly between their actions and a city-wide benefit for the OC. This is in contrast to one recent quasi-anthropological examination of property in China by Abrahamson, who recorded how a returnee to a Chinese city restored an old family house to “help preserve the Old City’s character” (2010, MS).<sup>52</sup>

To what extent has an internalization of values by residents has occurred? On one hand, some actors argue that yes (Albean, 7/2009), and that they are sitting tight on their property. In my own experience, residents who had previously expressed interest in selling this ‘qadiim, kharbaan’ old, deteriorating’ house, now often framed it as “turaath’ or heritage (Arnab 6/2009). Many other officials and committee members argued that more consciousness is needed, however, to clean the streets, to ‘respect’ the old buildings in the way they deserve. But many of these same actors followed these statements with an acknowledgement of the economic difficulties facing many of the residents today. The residents or lower-income individuals who did return to the city (Appendix VII) frequently expressed extreme pride in their dwelling and lifestyle. One mukhtar opined that if any of the families of the neighborhood left, they would be “like a fish out of water... and I hope to live here for another hundred years” (Ghazi Masri, 7/2009).

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<sup>52</sup> Similar to Zanchet and Jokilehto’s (1997) discussion the values of *states*, or the types of the different artifacts, versus the *values* of processes, or the more intangible heritage of knowledge and practices (1997).



### 3.4.1.2 Social integration – a need to actively return.

Many of the memories of the city cited by current actors in the rehabilitation process focused on social structures and the feelings of responsibility of the elites. Although far from the city described by Sennett, memories of Aleppo often seem to harken back to the time when a certain interdependence and physical proximity intertwined different social classes. That isn't to say that people were "the families cannot ignore each other" as in Sennett's 'anarchic' city (1970, 190); quite the opposite – Watenpaugh, Lapidus, Marcus, Abu Lughod all describe how spheres of difference were well established in some of the many 'pasts' of Aleppo. Nonetheless, in most contemporary (and past) studies of residential areas with more heterogeneous residents indicate benefits for the less-privileged, and increased understanding/compassion on the part of the privileged. This is also hypothesized by Sennett, but not proven, in his 1970 book (194).

This 'imagining the city' has been a relatively unified process on the most basic level.<sup>53</sup> The old city is once again a core part of Aleppo's identity(es). But when taken down to the detailed level of decisions, it appears that a semi-consensual process of negotiating the different 'imaginings' of how the city was and should be.

Officials, professionals, and committee members all recognized that 'nobody is coming back'.

But at the same time, Josef Ashqar is the one puzzling case that was often elevated to heroic status- a doctor who had convinced his wife and children to a traditional house in a neighborhood just to the east of the citadel, and who still lives there. Almost everybody who brought up his

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<sup>53</sup> Taken from Benedict Anderson's famous postulate that "imagining the nation" as the key difference behind some types of development, comparing Cambodia to Vietnam and China. He also calls this "planning revolution". (1983; 2006, 158-59).

case did so admirably, and often expressed a mixture of longing and the insinuation that he was able to become even more of a ‘true Aleppian’ (Albean 7/2009; Qasmo 7/2009; Fansa 7/2009).<sup>54</sup>

Like the idea of return, certain key words invoke expressions of nostalgia blended with a hope (for some) that a ‘return’ is inevitable. As one member of Aleppo’s upper merchant class and a participant in the *Aadiyat* local ‘archeological’ organization stated: “these are our roots. I would like to fix up a house and spend my last days there..these are our memories, tied up with the old city as we remember it” (Hilal 7/2009). Specific elements of the courtyard home are referred to more than others, such as jasmine, and the fountain, *berket al-ma*.<sup>55</sup>]

### 3.4.2 Understandings of their role in the project

#### 3.4.2.1 Decision-makers as protectors of the city

As guardians of a social fabric, members of the committee and officials described an almost moral obligation to serve as the buffer between investors and residents, and to mediate, or humanize, economic power through their interpretations of the land use regulations. As one former member of the technical committee put it, “the big target of the development plan was to protect people from higher prices and development” (Albean, 7/2009). A frequently-expressed sentiment was how the *jau al-ijtimaai*, or ‘social ambiance’ of a place is the single most important determinant of which uses should be permitted to be placed there (Qujjeh, 7/2010). Others mentioned the need to control the seemingly unstoppable elements of “tourism and restoration” (Qasmo, 7/2009).

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<sup>54</sup> Like all the terms here, social ‘revival’ is non-neutral, and often carries with it the threat of displacement, as it necessitates actions to calm the ‘fear of reducing the distance between them and us’ (Zukin 142)

<sup>55</sup> Describe in more detail here also connect to Rabbat’s excellent analysis of ash-Sham.(Similar to how discussed by Rabbat as an ascribed characteristic of old Damascus (2002, 299)

One specific aspect of this was the regulation of restaurant enterprises (Table 4.3; Masri, 7/2009). Restaurants were mentioned frequently as a use which would ‘disrupt’ and be ‘intrusive’ to the ‘traditional ways of life’ (Qujeh, 7/2009). One member of the high committee mentioned that, in his opinion, old city residents “want neighbors “ and not even *pensions*, or bed and breakfasts (Olabi, 7/2009). Similarly, there is a feeling of a need to protect the old city’s neighborhoods from any other uses that would be undesirable to their traditional ways. In February of 2006, the High Committee ruled to deny the petition of an office for the “shipping of bulk goods” from creating its office in the Old City. However, the company was given “assurances that approval would be given and a site would be found outside of the walls of the old city” (HC minutes, 2/2006).

#### 3.4.2.2 As technocrats: conservation as ‘scientific’ planning and the right thing to do

On the ground, the value and practice of urban conservation is perceived very clearly as ‘imported’ and retains an aura of international superiority. The current director of planning in the Old City said very clearly identified it as a concept “from the Germans”, and the coalition has ‘scientific’ ideas (Zammar, 6/2009). That this is the ‘right idea’ and also something essential with which to protect the old city.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> A 1908 poem by the historian Ibn ‘Ali, as translated in ‘People of Sale’ (p. 191-2) describes a very different place and time, but in my mind, still speaks to the complicated manner in which many Aleppians view themselves and their society in comparison to the general ‘west’*الغرب* and everything western. “...The nations of the west..have perfected their knowledge of things.. and undeniably taken the lead...and invented the most astonishing things possible...if the East had gone the way of the West/it would have attained success in every domain/but it neglected the knowledge/with which it had been endowed..” Aleppo’s urban services, for example, are often cited to be in a state of ‘failure’, an observation which is often followed by ‘look at German cities – they are so clean’ and then by a statement to the effect that ‘the east was once a center of learning and ahead in everything’.

but the ‘other’ of the European and western city is omnipresent (Qujeh 7/2009).<sup>57</sup> The idea that the project is at the ‘top’ of the profession, and undertakes actions as they ‘should be done’, and of ‘international quality’ is frequently mentioned among project actors.<sup>58</sup>

### 3.4.2.3 As agents of ‘ordering’ a disordered city

Expanding on the idea of ‘protection’ and ‘guardianship’, many of the project strategists discussed the old city as a place to be ordered. The present perceptions of a ‘disorder’ are similar to how described by Sampson in that physical signals are often referenced as symbols of a larger societal malaise.

Cleanliness, for example, predominates in many of the contemporary visions of the old city. The use of persuasion and ‘consciousness campaigns’ applies to the physical habits of residents and users. In discussing the solid waste programs of the old city, the head of one of the three main branches of the old city administration discussed how it was an essential aspect of his job to ensure that “everything is clean and that people don’t throw things away, or *do everything everywhere*”[italics added]. A civil society organization, “Aleppo Citadel Friends”, saw discarded food waste – in particular the husks of seeds – one of the primary challenges to a ‘legitimate’ precedent in the west. This comparison can be positive or negative, or simply proper use of the new plaza around the Citadel, and organized a cleanliness campaign with posited as a difference, as in ‘the return of the elite will not take place’ “as it happened in Paris”,

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<sup>57</sup> Almost never do any project actors mention any rehabilitation project in the arab or developing worlds as a comparison. Damascus is a notable exception, but it is only referred to as a (useful) case of exactly the opposite outcomes desired in Aleppo. But this, with typical Aleppian pride, is often written off to the Damascenes’ lack of appreciation for the ‘right’ way, the ‘raqa’, their immersion in national politics, and their weaker ‘local’ elites with pride.

<sup>58</sup> While Vincent (2004) mentions what she identifies as an ‘impact’ on the professional standards of planning as a result of the world heritage designation, I think the level of self-awareness and comparison is the more interesting variable.

young volunteers, posters, and slogans.<sup>59</sup> For the organization, this is part of a larger objective to “cultivate the notion of the importance of heritage sites” (“Activities of the Society”, ACF, 2007)

On a larger scale, segregation of land use could easily be framed as an attempt to problematically “order” the city, and away from the liveliness and empowerment of conflict and disorder as discussed by Sennett (198). More apropos of the current initiatives would be an investigation of how the new discourses of ‘urban management’ be viewed as ‘solving’ a ‘disorder’. Another potentially rich field of investigation would involve tracing the evolution of the way in which ‘disorder’ is constructed for cities in the Middle East. Based on casual hypothesis, the current portrayals and discussions of Aleppo’s ‘lack of order’ are inextricably linked with comparisons to the levels of physical and social control perceived in cities of Western Europe.

#### 3.4.2.4 As champions of religion: preserving ‘tradition’ but sweeping out ‘*takhalluf*’ or ‘backwardness’

Often, the cosmopolitan past of Aleppo is posited as being in conflict with the ‘backward’ Islamic elements. One member of the high committee recognized there had been ‘surgical’ action upon the city, but posited that it needed much more: so far it has just been “skin grafts, when we need a heart replacement” (Qujjeh and Hillal, 7/2009). As in “The Future of the Past,” Alexander Stille quotes the director of the Greater Cairo Library on the two different “cultural winds” of Egypt: “one is from the Mediterranean and the other is from the desert. From the sea, it’s nice. From the desert, it’s hot” (249).<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> The author was asked to assist in drafting the proposal for this activity. Further documented in an article by a local newspaper: خيري لجمعية اصدقاء "افتتاح معرض عن المشاريع التي تنفذ في القلعة ومحيطها وحفل القلعة" [http://jamahir.alwehda.gov.sy/\\_\\_archives.asp?FileName=10058721172008041221](http://jamahir.alwehda.gov.sy/__archives.asp?FileName=10058721172008041221)

<sup>60</sup> Stille goes on in subsequent pages to fit himself cleanly into the ‘cosmopolitan’ discourse, celebrating both the classical heterogeneity of Alexandria as well as its cultural openness of the 1960s.

the east', however. One, as described previously, is merely of the 'rural' and 'uncivilized' household lacking the 'consciousness and behaviors' to adhere to urban norms of cleanliness and close residence. The other, although more frequently implied than voiced, is that the more recent residents of the old city practice a different form of conservative Islam. This is alternately celebrated, as 'the old way of life' as it is derided for being antiquated and 'uncivilized'. To be fair, most of my interviewees expressed both of these views, often in the same breath, when justifying their decision-making processes. For example, one neighborhood mayor described at length the 'backward' views of residents as connected with their 'uneducated' conservative understanding of Islam, but also stated that there could be some uses that would be 'clash' with his neighborhood, and also discussed how some new property owners did not respect the 'customs' of the area (Mukhtar #7, 6/2009). Nobody that I interviewed directly equated religion with 'tradition', but previous research drew parallels between the discourses of 'preserving' a 'traditional' social fabric with a 'traditional Islamic social fabric'.<sup>61</sup>

### 3.5 Reproducing and Reselling the Narrative: Methods of Transmission

While most methods of reproduction of narrative are often implicit, the rehabilitation project also has contained some explicit initiatives that deliberately attempt to further a specific understanding and 'vision' of the city. Strategically, changing the perceptions toward the old

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<sup>61</sup>In theory, strict land use regulations, go against traditional views of Islamic property law as applied in the city, which is often framed as exclusively reactive, rather than pro-active. Although land is traditionally conceptualized to belong to God, and only secondarily to lack of pro-active regulations that advocate for the common good. In Abu-Lughod's classic 1987 work, she observes that, in an urban area: "Of primary importance were the pre-existing rights of individual or collective users of land and immoveable property. Of secondary importance were the rights and responsibilities of proximate neighbors, followed by those of more distant ones. Then, finally, as a residual, there was the right of the collectivity or larger administrative unit."

city, especially of Aleppians, has been a well-established goal of the project (Von Rabenau, 2002). “Most Aleppians don’t view the old city as a feasible address” to call home and remain socially accepted (ibid). The land use law, in particular, was part of a larger strategy to demonstrate ‘feasibility’ and raise trust among investors (Hallaj 2007, Von Rabenau 2002).

Individuals and groups reproduce memories to themselves or to others through a rich variety of mechanisms: formal institutions, study, family stories, media, and so forth. I will mainly focus on the episodes of intentional transmission through the rehabilitation project, and specifically with the members of the high committee and the technical committee in mind.

For the most part, the phenomena observed in Aleppo straddle the debates about institutions and individuals.<sup>62</sup> Similar to the mechanisms identified in the previous chapter of how ideas are formed into action, the way by which individuals interpret narratives into guiding principles can be understood as a dialectic of interaction with their institutions. Kim’s ‘new social cognition’ description as a useful perspective to analyze dynamics of change between individual actors and structural elements of society.<sup>63</sup> One recent analysis of institutional economics, using game theory models of medieval merchants around the Mediterranean, posits a grander claim, that historic patterns of individual negotiation with institutions are significant to the point that they become the “default in providing the micro-foundations of behavior in new situations” (Grief, 188).<sup>64</sup> Under this theory, rules correspond to behavior only if people are motivated to follow them. Beliefs and norms motivate individuals to follow institutionalized

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<sup>62</sup> As well framed by Rodrik, Dani

<sup>63</sup> Kim focuses on the role of cognition in economic transitions - with Vietnam as the specific case- but

<sup>64</sup> While Grief’s arguments are not airtight – he reverts back to problematic generalizations about the role of culture, for example, in chapter 9, his work provides a meticulous illustration of how behaviors respond and change to their structural surroundings over time.

rules” (36). The more ‘behavioral’ disciplines of social science often section the beliefs into the expectations of the behavior of others (Bicchieri, and Xiao, 2008), and the reactions of the environment, or ‘laws of nature’ (Grief, 42).

Internalization, as discussed by Parsons (1951) is one well-known example of a problematic framing of the place of cognition in society. However, his ideas of “internalization” of values, I would argue, deserve a second glance and re-interpretation. While obviously not at the root of any societal inequities, I find that they do somehow influence the decision-making patterns of the local officials regulating zoning.<sup>65</sup>

The land use laws in and of themselves were discussed as containing the elements for easy reproduction. They were considered to be structured to have immediate effect because they will give a framework for the municipality to “encourage and drive” investment (Hallaj 2007). Some elements of the land use plan and policies are estimated to have greater impact because of their built-in structure for dissemination and reproduction. For example, maps were some of the most-frequently cited documents for the land use laws among my interviews and observations. Interestingly, graphic representations and maps are theorized to have a ‘placing’ power that ascribes a rigidity to a place, similar to the how museums lend themselves to museumification of their contents (Anderson 2006, 174).

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<sup>65</sup> For example, Parsons postulates that “it is only by virtue of internalization or institutionalized values that a genuine motivational integration of behavior in the social structure takes place, [and] that the “deeper” layers of motivation become harnessed to the fulfillment of role-expectations”(1991 (1951), 26). Parsons continued to interpret these in a highly ecological way, but in and of themselves, the observation that it is not only an individuals *place* in a system, but their *understanding* of meaning and their role, is quite powerful, and – I argue – holds potential for further evaluation in the urban context.



The mechanisms for the reproduction and transfer of ideas inside of municipal projects are relatively well established, but how they have changed would likely be fruitful area for future study. For example, in addition to what Stille identifies as the ‘disintermediation’ of sources of knowledge (Stille 2002, 332), the role of consumption-only media, such as television, radio, and the internet opens new fields of scale, transnationality and challenge to authority inside of the discipline of reproduced social narratives.

Most of the narratives produced appeared to be reproduced informally and without a strategic intention. An explicitly acknowledgement of the power of the ‘vision’ as useful for the implementation of the plans and regulations was rare. A few interviewees made the explicit connection between the importance of this ‘public discourse’ of history directly to the production of compelling visions for the future. “Comprehensive understanding of the project” was provided by a few key actors provided the “orientation, expectations” for the city that were integrated into the presentation of an “improved vision”, *tasawwir afdal* (Esmail, 7/2009).

Finally, the act itself of engaging with memory may unwittingly be following a model different from that of the locality. In discussing the changing relationship of Algerian peasants to time, Bourdieu postulates that *memory in and of itself* requires the subjugation of other rhythms of remembering (1979, 29).<sup>66</sup> By first creating lieux de memoire for the old city, and then

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<sup>66</sup> I just read Bourdieu’s ‘Algeria 1960’ for the first time – and have no background in anthropology - but it seems that it challenges the idea of not only what we remember, but the ways in which remembering occurs, or is imposed, setting the stage for his call for epistemological reflexivity. In this case, specifically, he argues that “Traditionalism seeks to abolish chronological succession in the sense of continuous discontinuity, by reducing the chronological order (in the cycle and life as in the cycle of farming) to the (mytho)logical order”(1979, 29). While the broad mechanism may permit a comparative dalliance, when he some of the more detailed observations differ significantly from the argument of this thesis, for example while describing how peasants moving to the city create a shantytown simply ‘recreate’ their previous dwelling conditions, unencumbered by any imposition of identity (1979, 87).

weaving these memories as core components, into a cognitive framework for action, the project is firmly problematized as 'modern'.

In examining the theories of values and interpretation of history in justifying redevelopment, this chapter explored two themes in depth. First, the perceptions of the city cited, and how they blend and draw upon certain conceptions of history is correlated to projects and interests. But they are also radically re-processed by decision makers. Secondly, how specific memories been called upon to justify ideas of the city appears to have fallen into several general categories. While the relative influence of these narratives over decisions taken to shape the old city is not in the scope of this thesis, the next chapter sets a foundation to understand the other political and social forces at play in the city's decision-making processes.

## CHAPTER IV. ACTIVATING THE VISION: MEMORY AND CULTURE AS AGENTS OF IMPLEMENTATION IN AN AUTHORITARIAN POLITICAL CONTEXT

This chapter will start from the premise that the actions of the public and non-profit sectors have influenced investment and property change in the old city. This package of interventions in Aleppo has been identified as ambitious and has been touted as a model for historic city regeneration in the developing world (Steinberg 1996; ICOMOS 2010; Busquets 2005).<sup>67</sup> The overall project and its initiatives have been studied extensively in their preliminary phases, and their program design deserves further research in and of itself. But the outcomes, like those of every plan and every city, vary distinctly from how they are envisaged in the plan.<sup>68</sup>

The previous chapter discusses how constructed narratives of the city feature prominently in every level of decisions to encourage or discourage new uses and investment in specific areas of the old city. Clearly, these decisions do not occur in a vacuum, guided only by the values and memories of the actors at the table, but are part of a much larger political context.

This chapter will first examine the political space for the modification and reinterpretation of plans and regulations in the rehabilitation of the old city, from the point of view of the larger arena of municipal politics in Syria. The actors involved in the project as analyzed in the previous chapter – local mayors, committee members, ground-level bureaucrats,

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<sup>67</sup> Bousquets (2005) is a volume commissioned by the Graduate School of Design at Harvard upon the awarding of the Veronica Green Prize in Urban Design to the Old City Rehabilitation Project in spring of the same year.

<sup>68</sup> Appendix I outlines the nature and location of change in the old city as measured by a limited framework of price, turnover, and use of residential properties. Findings showed that on the largest geographic scale, prices in the old city have been becoming more diverse than those measured in the new city. The differences between neighborhoods have grown, however, with some having appreciated at a rate 10 times that of others. Inside neighborhoods, the range of variance of housing prices increased exponentially.

and project 'strategists'- pro-actively appropriate these spaces and, using the narratives, modify the regulations and plans which they are given.

This chapter will explore how the process and motivations behind three actions of the public sector to limit and encourage re-investment are part of the political framework of Aleppo. These 'redistributive' actions, which simultaneously limit and encourage investment, are interpreted and put in place will be analyzed in three subsets of the redevelopment process: a)encouraging investment across the old city b)designing land use laws which set a large section of the city off-limits, and c)enforcement of these laws by the two regulatory committees and officials. While focusing on the current practices of municipal-level officials and neighborhood leaders as they implement and interpret these regulations, this chapter will also include the convergence of a coalition behind the land use laws in the mid-1990s. These mechanisms were selected for their variation in method and geographic scope, but also because they have been perceived, at any given point in time, as efforts to increase the socioeconomic diversity of the old city, and as being counter to market logic.

#### 4.1 Politics of public reinvestment in the old city as a whole

Since 1992, over 70 million dollars has been invested in projects in the old city by public actors and development agencies (GTZ 2005; Von Rabenau 2002), a large percent of which was in physical infrastructure. This investment and valuation of the old city marked a radical shift from the previous policies in that streets were upgraded not only in the areas slated for development, but across the entire old city. Like most large-scale urban redevelopment initiatives, the story behind the implementation of this range of programs is a complex blend of individual agency, group mobilization, and structural change.

Public reinvestment in the old city is frequently cited by project documents and actors as at the core of an overall strategy to ‘resuscitate’ the old city’s socioeconomic and physical fabrics.<sup>69</sup> These projects are assigned an identity of a ‘progressive’ action that successfully navigates to both the apparent paradox between benefiting the current residents through improved access, and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the historic built environment through enabling increased investment (Graves, 1999; Freunde der Altstadt von Aleppo, 2010; GTZ 2005).

At the same time, theories of urban projects suggest that motivations behind the majority of redevelopment initiatives are can be traced to direct material interests on behalf of their supporting coalition (Logan and Molotch 2007 (1987) 62). This section explores the way in which the overall momentum for public investment in the old city took hold. Findings show that that perceptions of the city, produced and ‘internal’, played a key role in shaping the coalition of support for reinvestment.

The public investments entailed by the rehabilitation project, as detailed in chapter II, encompass a gamut of activities in the old city. This section will consider just two: the phased replacement of the majority of street infrastructure (what I will call ‘tier I’), and site-specific improvements, such as the physical beautification of a square, or the establishment of a health clinic (‘tier 2’).

Official project strategy considers street infrastructure and the upgrading of public space as contributing to the broader project aim to conserve and develop its built and social fabric. The

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<sup>69</sup> ‘Public’ referring to any funds transferred through and administered by, however marginally, the Old City Administration (OCA), as well as investments made by international development organizations or domestic NGOs in the Old City that work closely with the OCA.

first section of the “General Objectives” section in the Development Plan argues, as a means to this end, for an intentional effort to attract more diverse residents ‘back’ to the old city, and reversing the migration patterns out which resulted in the “lack of variety in the social structure of the Old City” (D-Plan, 16). Yet, at the same time, the specific land use laws which were developed restricted the change of use – and thus the more profitable investments – to limited areas.<sup>70</sup>

#### 4.1.1 Reinvestment as redevelopment: possible motivations

Viewed as massive push to reinvest public funds in a declining area of the city, the rehabilitation of the old city of Aleppo resembles urban ‘upgradings’ of large central-city environments in other locations. Academic study of structural urban politics and sociology of contemporary Middle Eastern cities has been noted to be extraordinarily limited (Stewart 2002, 392; Deneoux 1993, Chapt. 3).<sup>71</sup> English-language academics who do study and theorize on contemporary urban politics and sociology in the Middle East are disproportionately based in Israel, Morocco, Cairo, and a few in Amman, marking only a slight increase since Abu Lughod’s classic 1987 critique of ‘urbanist’ narratives towards the region (Abu Lughod 1987; Roy, 2009).<sup>72</sup> I would argue that this problem is especially acute regarding the more ‘closed’

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<sup>70</sup> The possibilities for variances was incorporated in the land use plan, but not discussed in detail. How variances are negotiated is expored in more depth in section II of this chapter.

<sup>71</sup> See Denoeux 1993 in particular for a further discussion of the gap in the literature regarding urban dynamics in the contemporary Middle East.

<sup>72</sup> It goes without saying that the Middle East is difficult and problematic as a natural ‘region’ (AlSayyad and Roy, 2003). Although Aleppo has historically – and continues – to have strong influences on its urban life and organization from the north, for the purposes of this thesis I will use three regional categories for organizing scholarship: ‘Bilad ash-Sham’, or a historical understanding of the ‘lands of Syria’, roughly equivalent to the ‘Levant’ or ‘Near East’; the former Ottoman Empire, as roughly equivalent to the ‘central’ Middle East with the addition of Turkey and the Balkans, and, in deference to the organization of contemporary literature, the “Middle East” and the Arabic-speaking world’ as roughly interchangeable descriptors of a range of frequent cultural interchange relatively unobstructed by language. In reality, however, I think of the true ‘region of interchange’ for

countries, such as Syria, which have more linguistic, logistical, and political challenges to western researchers investigating topics explicitly related to contemporary politics and yet contain enormous potential to expand professional and scholarly paradigms such as those based on the better-studied developed ‘west’, the undeveloped ‘south’, or the rapidly developing ‘tigers’.

This lack of previous study in the regional context is problematic, as it fundamentally offers one of two choices: to either piece together the bits and pieces of contemporary study (and the rich historical analysis) or to draw on western-based observations and set an inevitable stage for the drawing of superficial comparisons of the politics of redevelopment between highly unequal urban contexts such as Aleppo versus Atlanta. Acknowledging that these classic western lenses already entrenched in my mode of analysis, I would argue that it is ‘cleaner’ to address them directly and critically rather than pretend to leave their questions on the sidelines. Nonetheless, in this regard, this chapter will likely be most useful through contributing questions for further research more than ‘answers’ or strong arguments about where Aleppo’s urban redevelopment fits into theoretical paradigms.

#### 4.1.1 Decentralized authoritarianism and discourses: a context for municipal decision-making in Aleppo

Decision-making on the urban scale in Aleppo is dictated in great part by the national political environment of Syria. This means that conflicts and negotiations typically take place out of the view of the public, the ability to enforce is high, and accountability exists primarily

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the rehabilitation project in the old city as a somewhat accidental network of expertise, similarity, and interest encompassing Germany, southern Turkey, Lebanon, Iran, Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, and, to a lesser extent, Italy and England.

through social and personal networks, similar, but in a more exaggerated form, to the network mechanisms described by Beyat in Cairo and Tehran (1997; 2002), and Diane Singerman's well-respected ethnographical exploration of the political networks and connections used by residents in a low-income neighborhood of Cairo to gain services and assistance (1996, 172, 245).<sup>73</sup>

In Aleppo, those who are not in the higher echelons of the economic elite or lack political connections do not concern themselves to a great deal in municipal politics. Most Aleppians – apart from the small circle of the well-connected and the economic elites – can fluently debate the day-to-day occurrences of politics in Palestine and the US but draw a blank when asked to discuss the processes behind recent municipal decisions.<sup>74</sup> 'Paid compliance' could be one factor, as in the trade-off of upper-middle class Aleppians observed by Watenpaugh where "in exchange for political quietism...the middle class is guaranteed many of the *material* elements of middle-class modernity" (2006, 300).

In most ways, the national political environment of Syria is enforced through the province governor, or *muhafiz*.<sup>75</sup> The *muhafiz* is appointed by the national coalition, and holds a high degree of authority over and use and zoning projects. Decision-makers are political

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<sup>73</sup> These networks can be primarily inter-neighborhood, and used for employment (149) or education ( ) etc. More pertinent to this investigation, they can also revolve around the personal connections with politicians or those connected in the government (170-171). While formal, bolder challenges are limited in the Egyptian context she describes, the informal networks actively engage the state and the formal sector. While the relationships that she documents are often patron-client systems (134-136; 256-257)

<sup>74</sup> Many small exceptions exist to this generality, however, and it could be argued that, as in any urban setting, Aleppian households are fully conscious of the decisions which affect them directly, and knowledgeable about the method by which they could enact change, if they had the capacity to do so. At the same time, when asked 'how do you complain', most respondents reported that they first attempted informal networks. While this method of organization would typically be viewed as producing 'substandard' and less legitimate outcomes than a western-style democracy, it could be argued that, at the end of the day, it is fundamentally just another choice of governance. Many of the choices are severely constrained, it goes without saying, by force or the threat thereof – but, to play devil's advocate, this could also be a 'choice' of the 'governed' so to speak for a 'stronger hand at the wheel'.

<sup>75</sup> In my two years of working on planning issues in Aleppo, I observed that the overwhelming majority of debates and decision-making around urban projects go back to the province governor, *al muhafiz*, for final resolution.



appointees, typically members of well-connected families and/or long-time members of the ruling Ba'ath party. Nonetheless, 'Damascus' is still perceived as having the ultimate authority, sometimes in a way that transgresses hierarchies of the local politics, a wild card, sometimes mentioned almost as a completely external 'Al Jazeera.'<sup>76</sup> When the street upgrading in Jalloum "was seen from Damascus" the area *mukhtar* noted that the quality quickly improved from sub-standard to more-than-acceptable (Haddad, 6/2009).

In most cases, accountability for extreme wrongdoing is the only form of possible involvement of lower-level functionaries or the public at large in contemporary Aleppo.<sup>77</sup> The typical method of recourse is to call on family or friends with more powerful connections to advocate for one's position. Absent this, the sole option is to make an in-person appeal to a higher authority, typically the governor or the ministry headquarters in Damascus. Residents and lower-level officials express remarkable faith in this last mechanism to issue impartial decisions, especially in cases of wrongdoing visible to, and recognized by, a large population.<sup>78</sup>

Although civil society organizations became legalized in 2007, they remain under extraordinarily tight control and have little influence. Moderate religious leaders from all sects,

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<sup>76</sup> Upon occasion of discussing regulations which seem to be particularly harsh or absurd, a few interviewees said "I would call al-Jazeera", meaning that external attention, not mediated by local politics or networks, could be brought in to 'see the truth'.

<sup>77</sup> While this would fit with Ohlander's hypothesis of a tradition of *zulm vs adl*, or injustice vs. justice instead of injustice vs. freedom dominating historic discourse the Arab-Islamic region, I would dispute his casual inferences of an 'inherited' rhetoric or mindset in this case. The phenomenon in contemporary Syria where the lack of severe injustice as the only aspect of rule which can be challenged by citizens is much more closely related to the experiences of the past three generations in their interactions with the ruling regime than any inherent 'Islamic' cognition.

<sup>78</sup> Examples given of this 'last resort' correction by higher levels of government of 'recognized' wrongdoing included the indictment of a hospital director who was well-known to have exceeded the 'accepted' limit of petty corruption, reversing a mayor's actions to slow the investment of an international NGO based on a personal dislike of its leader, or the staying of a popular developer's prison sentence for violating zoning which had been reinstated on a whim by a new minister a month after its cancellation.

and especially Christians and Shi'ias are given an 'in' to decision-makers, and occasionally will speak on behalf of their constituencies. The judiciary does little besides rubber-stamp land and development disputes, and has never been known to advocate for the less-advantaged. In sum, decisions are closed to those outside what could be seen as an interlocking system of a national-level 'old style' ethnic group machine, and the 'reformed' machine of local economic and political elites.<sup>79</sup>

'Participation' of the general public or residents of the old city as understood in the western context, is virtually non-existent in Aleppo, and the current sphere of decision-making gives no space even for the most tame of 'minipublics' (Fung 2003, 341). Recent studies of Syria argue that this status quo is maintained through force (Watenpaugh 2006; 305) or more symbolic forms of domination (Wedeen 1999, 131). While the rehabilitation funds from the GTZ contained stipulations for a process, the two investment project had a very limited group of stakeholders and agenda (DOC 2005; Bitar and Rifaii, 2008).<sup>80</sup> And, although the rehabilitated infrastructure and improved physical environment obviously was within the immediate interest of current residents, property owners, and merchants, they are almost entirely absent from reality – as well as rhetoric- about the beginning of the project and its ongoing development.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Categories made famous by Banfield and Wilson's analysis of change in US city governance and ethnic groups (1963,46).

<sup>80</sup> This is acknowledged directly in several project reports. Focus groups were occasionally convened but necessarily were of limited scope. One, described in a project summary compiled by an employee of GTZ and the head of the planning division at the OCA for Rehabimed, says that the "participatory meetings for the residents before implementation" were to "verify their will for the physical improvements of their surrounding"[sic]. Bitar and Rifai,2008, 2.

<sup>81</sup> Logistical and legal barriers also likely played a role – it is often an involved process to get the go-ahead to host even an informal gathering of local residents.

As a result, or parallel to these circumstances of governance, essential urban services in the Municipality of Aleppo as a whole are, for the most part, highly biased towards the segment of population with connections to the political and economic elite. With the exception of a few large projects from the more-socialist era and the maintenance of major thoroughways, the city's resources and energy have gone exclusively to providing services to upper-income commercial and residential districts, resulting in a city with stark geographic stratification of physical and civic infrastructure, effectively participating in a system of self-perpetuating "place inequality" (Logan and Molotch 2007 (1987), 48).<sup>82</sup>

#### 4.1.2 .International development, intentionality, and influence.

While walking around the old city, one of the friendlier identities I was presented as by my colleagues was "almaniyya", or German.<sup>83</sup> The amount of exposure the GTZ has gained through their work in the Old City is high and positive. Almost everybody knows about the German involvement in the process, and officials, especially those lower down in on the ladder, such as the mukhtars, attribute much of the impetus behind the changes to the German involvement.

International development institutions, especially those based in Europe, have rapidly expanded their operations in Syria over the past two decades. How they navigate and influence local development decisions, however, has not been recently studied in Syria, to my knowledge. In my perception, most of the major European institutions prioritize working closely with the local and national administrations – out of choice, and necessity, most likely – and, in the past

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<sup>82</sup> The levels of public service inequality are not comparable by any means to cities in Latin America, but are noticeably higher than Damascus and cities directly across the border in Turkey. And especially considering the relatively equal income distribution of Syria, the gap in municipal service provision is marked.

<sup>83</sup> Among many others – 'syrian raised abroad', 'a person from the coast', or 'from Damascus'.

decade, have stressed their role as ‘enabling’ and ‘modernizing’ local capacity (GTZ 2005; UDP 2010; EU 2010; AKTC 2005).<sup>84</sup>

Local actors generally agree with this positioning. While the GTZ provided over half of the funding for the rehabilitation project, they are alternatively cited as the key strategists behind the project or, more frequently by local professionals, merely helpful suppliers of material support and dispatchers of occasional dispassionate technical expert (Zammar, 6/2009; Sergie, 6/2009a; Fansa, 7/2009).

After the round of German experts came to Aleppo in 1991, a delegation of Syrians travelled to Germany, on the invitation of the government, to visit cities and planning. This group marked, in some ways, the ‘first generation’ of professionals involved in the first phases of the project, and who had hopefully ‘internalized’ some of the progressive urban rhetoric and optimism of the GTZ. On the last day of the visit, after a presentation, they received a commitment for German support for the implementation of projects in several action areas (Fansa 7/2009). The local team came up with a short list of 11 areas, and from those Bayyada and Jalloum emerged as the two finalist neighborhoods, based on their amount of monuments, their proximity to the Citadel, and other factors, to receive the first round of pilot investments in social and physical infrastructure upgrading (Corsten 1994; Fansa, 7/2009).

For some, the GtZ’s intervention was ‘flexible’ and ‘request-based’ and “is the motor, not the driver, of development – or should be” (Sergie, 6/2009a). Another local long involved in the project noted that well he was “impressed by their way of working,” the interventions in the old city came from “local energy” (Fansa, 7/2009). A local expert noted that, in contrast to the other

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<sup>84</sup> The Delegation of the EU to Syria emphasized institutional modernization of the public sector; the GTZ takes a mixed approach with a heavy focus on municipal management, and the The Aga Khan Trust for Culture stresses how its projects are examples of multi-agency cooperation – the agency also emphasizes – and also emphasize in every event that it began projects in Syria at the formal request of the national and local governments.

international organizations she had consulted for, the “Germans really listen” to her opinion and findings (Abdulwahab, 6/2009). If true, this would seem to be an intentional contradiction from the pattern of neo-clientalism of ‘professional’ NGOs operating in the Middle East as observed by Bayat in Egypt and Palestine (2002, 19).<sup>8586</sup>

In many ways, the experience of Aleppo suggests that, similar to Mollenkopf's 'political entrepreneurs, politicians and actors constructed coalitions around “disparate elements” but a single agenda (1983, 4,6). Based on a study of the postindustrial transformations of central cities in the US during the New Deal, and arguing against the ‘Growth Coalition’ of Logan and Molotch, Mollenkopf argues that “political entrepreneurs arduously built progrowth coalitions out of conflicting interests, mass as well as elite, and that each element had its own reasons for joining forces (1983, 19). Mollenkopf notes that political entrepreneurs may place costs upon many to strengthen powerful friendships or vice-versa if in need of votes (5).

#### 4.1.3 Project ‘champions’: the power of exceptional individuals

The extraordinary efforts of single actors frequently forms part of narratives in explaining how the ‘counter-intuitive’ public investment became leveraged to the old city. As the establishment of project frameworks for public investment and regulation built up over several decades, many argued for a more gradualized understanding of agency where “not everything happens at once – since the beginning, progress happens step by step”, and that is set in motion by individuals (Fansa, 7/ 2009). Most frequently mentioned is the persistence and abilities of the

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<sup>85</sup> Bayat cites similar comments by Mahmoud Mamdani in Lindberg's *Globalization and Democratization*.

<sup>86</sup> Although the main source of extra-municipal funds for the street and site upgrading in the Old City is an international organization, and not a national government, Mollenkopf's observations about how the New Deal-funded programs served a purpose replacing the traditional urban ‘machines’ with more updated versions, characterized by “a new kind characterized by bureaucratic certainty and funded by the US Treasury” (1987, 44)

Aleppian architect Adli Qudsi, who won a Rolex Award for his leadership role in the rehabilitation process (Bianca 2000, Graves 1999; Williams, 3/15/2009; Fansa, 7/2009; Dickie 2008).<sup>87</sup> Other Aleppian actors, outside of the public administration, frequently mentioned for their active role include Abdelaziz Hallaj, Khaldoun Fansa, and Mahmoud Ramadan and Faisal Rifaai.<sup>88</sup>

Key international actors who became involved at this stage include the German planning professor, Anette Gangler, who remains involved to this day. Heinz Gaube and Jean-Claude David, German and French academics, respectively, who were long-time students of Aleppo joined to support the project as well. A society in Germany, “Friends of Aleppo” was founded in 1990, rallying Syrian expatriates and Germans to support the rehabilitation project (Freunde der Altstadt von Aleppo, 2010).<sup>89</sup>

#### 4.1.4 Framing the ‘illogical’: fitting Aleppo in with previous explanations for urban reinvestment and land use changes

As mentioned above, in the classic US-based writings on urban politics, significant development projects are always rooted in expectations of economic growth (Logan and Molotch 1989; Peterson 1981; Altshuler 2003). Increased property values, in particular, are anticipated results of infrastructure improvements (Logan and Molotch 2007 (1987), 115). And,

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<sup>87</sup> Bianca calls Qudsi’s actions “courageous” and “instrumental”. For full disclosure, I was a trainee at the AKTC when Mr. Qudsi was the country representative; there are a myriad of additional positive things I could say, as well as adding in the narratives of other actors, but I decided to limit myself to the discussions of other literature to avoid perceptions of bias. I do think that Mr. Qudsi is exceptional among other actors for his level of sustained activity, focus, and dedication to the old city. The initial era of the project is not my time of focus, and has been much more thoroughly studied by other researchers. As has been noted in previous studies, many of these individuals were architects by training, and several with professional degrees from the US, UK, and Germany.

<sup>88</sup> Among many other exceptional individuals.

<sup>89</sup> Most of the funds raised by the organization go to support the ‘Emergency Fund’ project in the Old City, which provided low-interest loans to low-income families living in homes with structural danger (Freunde, 2010).

economically, property regeneration has long been recognized as a tool to leverage a greater municipal and regional prosperity (Lloyd and Black 1993, 145).

This nexus between real estate interests and political elites is particularly powerful creator of significant programs for “so-called city improvement” in places where the market is controlled by local firms and power is primarily streamed through local governments (Healy 2002, 1791). Aleppo’s firms are primarily based in the city, but most important decision-making remains centralized in the capital (Oxford Business Group, 2009).

Property ownership also drives elite interest in reinvestment in theories of redevelopment. In Logan and Molotch’s framework, “structural speculators” are identified among the developmental elites as the dominant urban decision-makers. At their essence, private individuals who seek to manipulate the differential rents of one place in respect to another, but who often form powerful coalitions of varying degrees of organization and permanence (Logan and (1987), 30-31, 65.

This framework is less compelling in Aleppo, where, as discussed in Chapter II, freehold ownership of property is often complicated by inheritance, waqf holdings, and disputed claims. Also complicating the picture is the fact that many of the investors did not begin to purchase property in the old city until after the redevelopment project showed on-the-ground ‘results’ of its actions, especially in the pilot Action Areas (Hallaj, 2007; Albean 6/2009).

Under a more conservative strand of US-based theory, ‘ambitious’ projects only arise as urban decision-makers rationally pursue developmental policies that represent their own interests as well as the interest of the city as a whole (Peterson 1981, 20, 29). This ‘consensual’ model,

however, is said to occur only in pro-growth initiatives, and, as argued in this thesis, the rehabilitation project cannot be exclusively classified as a developmental undertaking.

For Aleppo, the first phase of the project, it could be argued that the local officials took the path of least resistance to the possibility of external funds to be used in the old city. I would argue that this decision cannot be classified as ‘allocational’ under Paul Peterson’s classic urban politics framework (1981, 41, 132), as the decisions made by local politicians were constrained by the desires of the donors. Any potential conflicts and bargaining regarding the location of the pilot areas for intervention in Aleppo would be just another lively contest within a “relatively narrow band of the range of controversies...” (Peterson 1981, 165-166). In further contrast to Peterson, it was not “respected community leaders, who are often businessmen” who were developing the “beneficial policies” for the city (Peterson 1981, 148).

And while the primary physical investment – the upgrading of basic physical infrastructure – is arguably redistributive on the scale of the entire old city, in the minds of several *mukhtars*, the execution followed more traditional patterns of ‘allocational’ growth-machine oriented policies, assigning higher quality contractors to the “certain neighborhoods that have always been able to pay” (Sawwas 6/2009, Mukhtar 7; 6/2009).<sup>90</sup>

The municipality’s subsequent commitment of resources to the old city however, appears to represent a combination of developmental and redistributive actions.<sup>91</sup> At the same time, the

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<sup>90</sup> For some comments the interviewees requested that their names and identifying neighborhood be withheld. The researcher has a private chart which links the numbers of the Mukhtars to their names, however, this information is not to be released to the public.

<sup>91</sup> Investment in the areas of the historic center with little to no foreseeable returns, will be considered ‘redistributive’ for the purposes of this thesis. For Peterson, such actions only occur in the urban environment (again, in the US context) under pressure from specific groups defending the poor or a misguided sense of obligation



long-term potential for Aleppo to attract tourist investment for specific pilot neighborhoods (the Action Areas, and the zone around the citadel) in the short term -and the entire historic city on a more extended time horizon - fits with Peterson's definition of a developmental policy, expected to "yield economic benefits that will protect the community's fiscal resources...and even lead to growth and expansion" (Peterson 1981, 132-33). How far into the future the interests and 'anticipated payoffs' of local elites may be extended, however, under this framework, remains to be clarified.

Place-based coalitions are one way in to stretch the growth coalition theories to include policies that benefit a broader good, and can help understand some of the dynamics of the support for reinvestment in Aleppo. Under this framework, large-scale, long-term, or vaguely 'redistributive' projects can occur when a single coalition, or union of coalitions, can convince its members to support long-term investments in ways which potentially transcend the individual and short-term interests of their members. In the case of Atlanta studied by Stone, moving beyond a mere 'caretaker regime' to actively pursue projects around a 'civic agenda' required a slowly accumulating coalition of economic elites with a complex internal system based around 'selective incentives' to its members (1989, 5, 7, 232). Municipal politicians depend on the support of the coalition to accomplish any project, and have no choice but to support the coalition's areas of consensus. In Aleppo, many of supporters of the reinvestment project were not previously involved in municipal politics, and have not collaborated on issues outside of the old city hence. However, many of them do circulate in similar social networks with arguably similarly strong norms of reciprocity and expectations of continued co-existence as the political

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among civic leaders, and under all cases would imply negative economic consequences for the city as a whole (Peterson 1981, 169).

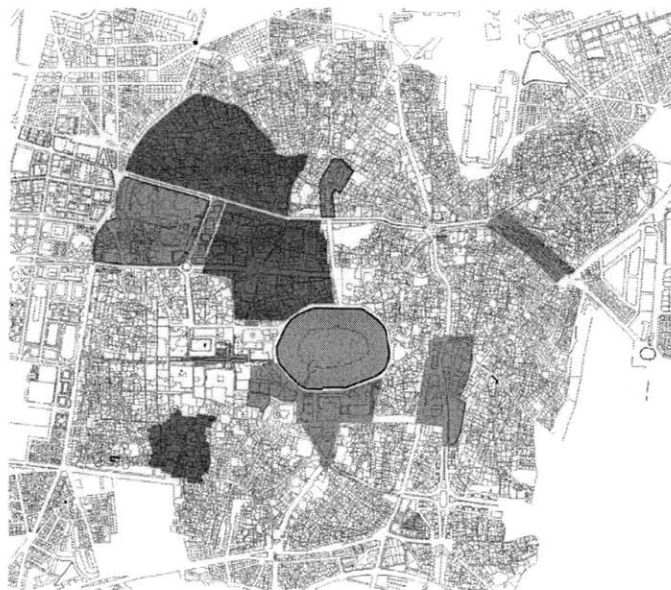
deal-makers in Atlanta. Conditions and context aside, this idea would only have descriptive power if it included not only areas of political collaboration, but also expectations of repeat social interactions.

The process was not without conflict, however, and the reinvestment did not emerge in a void of plans for the old city, but involved a direct about-face in the plans of the elite. This might suggest a situation more similar to the 'sectarchy' model as proposed by Jones and Bachelor, which allows for slightly more conflict than the 'collaborative coalition'. In a sectarchy, bargaining occurs among different groups who wield power in the city on select issues that are of interest to them, but in which the elites are the most powerful (Jones and Bachelor 1992, 51-53). Debates occur, but participation is limited to a small circle of elites active in the day-to-day politics. In Aleppo, a loose growth coalition had supported a growth-oriented masterplan including a network of thoroughfares cutting through and 'modernizing' the old city. After the conservation coalition defeated this proposal, however, most elites saw no direct interest in a run-down area mainly housing low-income residents and commerce. As such, apart from the diversion of revenue from other projects, the revitalization project violated no direct interests of decision-makers.

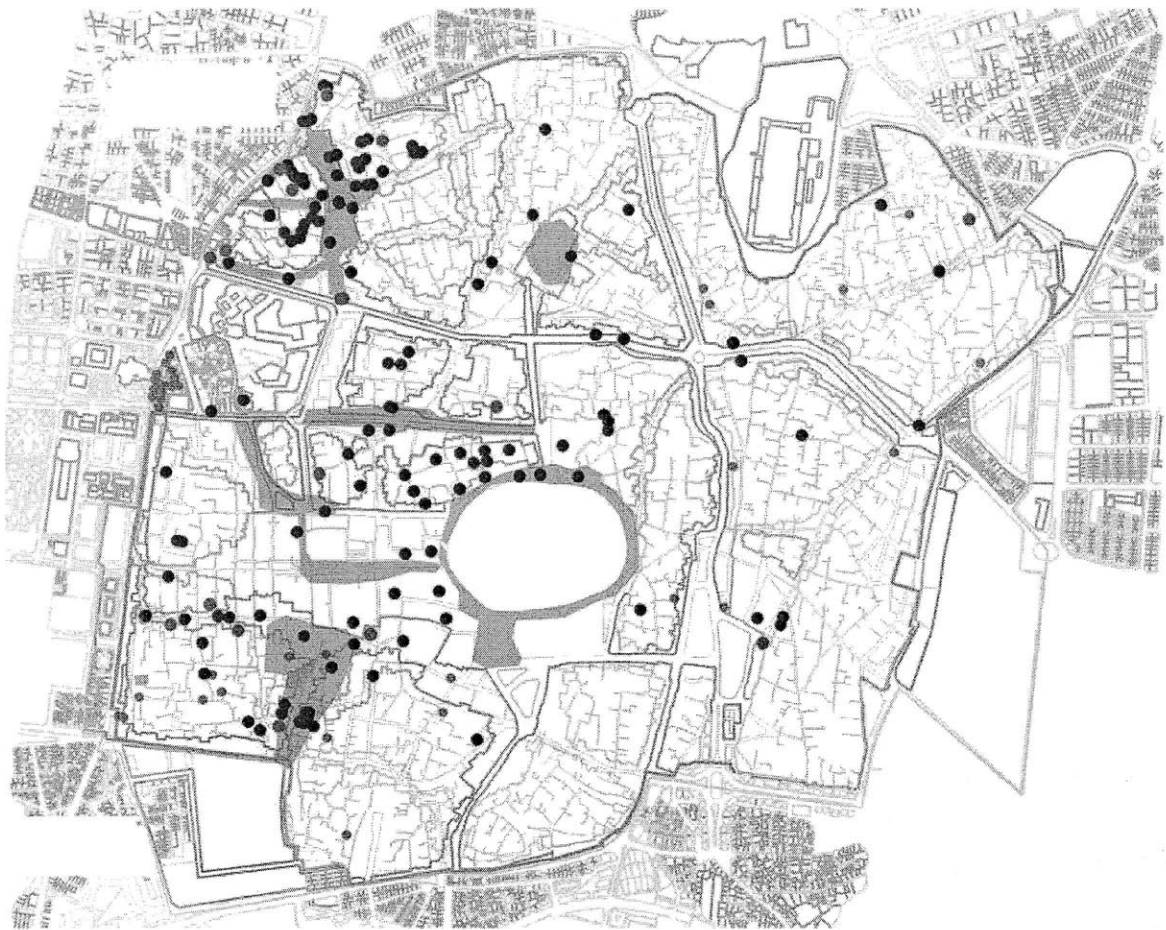
Two notable similarities emerge between the elite theories and Aleppo's rehabilitation politics. First, businesses and private elites in Aleppo are extremely place-based and stable (Watenpaugh 2006, Robinson 1998). This combination of social networks and economic isolation strengthens the expectations of repeat interactions and permanent location. Second, all of the local champions of the revitalization project, although themselves primarily architects,

planners, and local historians, were deeply embedded directly or by family connection to the developmental elite.

Still, none of the regional or ‘western’ based theories for the motivating mechanisms behind urban governance seem to be able to be applied convincingly to Aleppo. Redevelopment in areas of the city imbued with historic and narrative significance. The next section will explore how the narratives of ‘exceptionality’ of the historic core, as described in Chapter III, could have had a practical role in shaping the mechanisms behind a public reinvestment.



*Fig. 4.1.1 Map of Action Areas and large development projects as envisioned in the D-Plan of 1998.*



**Action areas and public space upgrading**



**Permissions for 'simple works' investments, granted 1/2008-5/2009**

- Minor investments approved

**Requests for major investment in property and outcomes, 1989-2009**

- Petition approved
- Review, referral, more information requested, modifications, denial

Fig. 4.1.2 *Author's mapping of the primary areas of public investment and properties which have applied for major restoration works or changes of use, as of 2009.*

#### 4.1.5 Specificities of a growth machine in the historic city

While relatively little critical literature exists examining contemporary processes of redevelopment in the Arab world, most identifies projects driven by property values and heritage

‘consumption’ (Salamandra 2004, 3).<sup>92</sup> In the mid-nineties, restoration and conservation is argued to be a selective process, emphasizing monuments in a museumification-oriented process (Colin 1996 (1989), 123). Describing similarly broad trends in the 1980s, Janet Abu-Lughod observes that while the patina of heritage and memory covers almost all of the discussions about the revitalization of historic cities in the Arab world (1990, 2-4).

In his cross-cutting review of contemporary ‘Arab’ cities, Colin identifies an overall trend towards a “reconquest of old cities by the middle class” (Colin, 1989; 1996, 124). Likewise Islamic Cairo has become overtaken by the ‘development industry’ in the past few decades (Williams in Singerman and Amar 2006, 270). Janet Abu-Lughod, also primarily analyzing Cairo but also examining Tunis, argued that, in the Middle Eastern context, while they included a narrative of economic development, rehabilitated historic cities in the 1980s of North Africa were not yet gentrified, nor were truly rehabilitated for their existing residents (1992, 4).

Place itself has relatively recently been ‘discovered’ as a source of profit. Freiden and Sagalyn, in their classic study of central city redevelopment in the US during the 1970s-1980s, mention “using downtown itself as a theme [for development]” (1989, 75).<sup>93</sup> In the pursuit of tourist spending, historic cities often convert sections of their fabric into retail zones specifically catering to the outsider in search of an ‘experience’ (Fainstein and Judd 1999, 9).

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<sup>92</sup> Aleppians do employ the phrases identified by Salamandra such as *‘awda lil-qadim*, or ‘return the old [way/life implied], and the growing values placed on an incorporation of ‘authentic’ *adat wa taqalid*, customs and traditions (3). However, I would argue that the level of commodification that she describes in Damascus is less pronounced in Aleppo.

<sup>93</sup> And while the downtown regeneration literature presents many similarities, overall the experience of Aleppo diverges significantly, as it can in no way be conceived of as ‘microsurgery’ of a specific site- if anything, would be closer to a full-scale transplant of all central arteries, nerves, and veins.

Given the above arguments, it is tempting to identify the rhetoric of nostalgia in Aleppo as grounded in the “unbridled capitalistic interests - placemaking to suit the needs of the urban place economy” described by Soja (1989, 173). These narratives of ‘heritage’ are typically framed by urban theorists as the prelude to the construction of environments of consumption and experience (Zukin 1995), or the ‘staged authenticity’ and ‘back entry’ of the Copenhagen kitchen with the window open to the street as famously observed by McCannell (1973, 10-11; referencing Sjoby 1971). The precise types of expectations, experience, and projections will be explored more in depth in Chapter 5; for the purposes of this chapter we will assume that there are economic benefit to a marketed form of heritage and history in attracting outside ‘consumers.’

Tourists are often anticipated as the primary new ‘export good’, their generated supply is often difficult to measure, due to the overlap in consumption and frequentation by the general population (Judd and Feinstein, 3). Despite the Syrian national government’s sustained focus since the 1990s promote international tourism to Syria (Grey 1997), and exuberant estimates of “over 500 million dollars” projected investment in two years (Syrian Enterprise and Business Centre, 2005), the rate of actual tourist entries remained remarkably flat. Between 2003 and 2007, non-Arab visitors increased by about 10%, while residents of Arabic-speaking countries, who make up two-thirds of all visitors only increased by just over 1% (Syrian Statistical Annex, 2004).<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Non-Arab visitors increased from 989,141 in 2003 to 1,272,150 in 2007; visitors from Arabic-speaking countries, increased only marginally, from 3,398,978 in 2004 to 3,454,663 in 2007. This estimate excluded the exponential increase of entries by Iraqis – the six-fold rise in entrants since 2004 is generally understood to be by refugees, not voluntary tourists. Entries of non-Syrians decreased into the country is closely monitored, and is more likely to be relatively accurate than statistics from other departments.

But so far, actions taken by the elite have gone against worldwide trends to 'Mannhattanize' downtown into a "bourgeois playground" and a mere commodity such as the result the gentrification processes described by Smith (1986, 354). Instead, both versions of the past highlight the local ownership of heritage, which appears to be slowly shifting the dialogue to one of 'resource management' (Dunlap 1979, 263). In the case of Aleppo, however, no single-owner commercial mega-projects were advanced which could have had an advocating interest in a repackaged old city to the extent described in the urban politics of the US. In the one neighborhood, *Jdeideh*, where several commercial projects were advanced over the past ten years and real estate values have risen sharply, almost all the restaurant developments which followed had Christian and Armenian investors at their head with (arguably) lower levels of political leverage in the municipal arena.<sup>95</sup> If the primary investors and beneficiaries are not at the core of a 'growth machine', the project could only be framed as a mechanism of co-optation, or anticipated long-term benefits, or could be explained by other factors not traditionally included in the framework of structural analysis.

#### 4.1.3 – On the ground – understandings of public investment

Given the limits of this study, the relationship of public investment and zoning to home appreciation can only be conjectural. In the minds of residents, though, both tiers of physical upgrading were strongly linked with property appreciation. "All the increases came after the

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<sup>95</sup> The status of Christians in Aleppo is complex, and many of the property owners of the upscale shops and restaurants are a recognized part of the city's economic high elite, and enjoy a reputation as the highest-quality purveyors of certain cultural goods (fashion, food, music, theatre), especially those that have associations with the west or are somehow would be too 'unIslamic' (as in the consumption of alcohol) for a wealthy Sunni to distribute without impinging upon their societal reputation. Still, for the purposes of this argument, the Christian community remains on the fringe of the larger community of landlords and factory owners that make up the powerful 'developmental elites'. On a related note, Watenpaugh observes at the end of his study of Aleppo in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, "in Aleppo, religious difference continued to interfere with attempts to create intraclass solidarity (2006, 305).

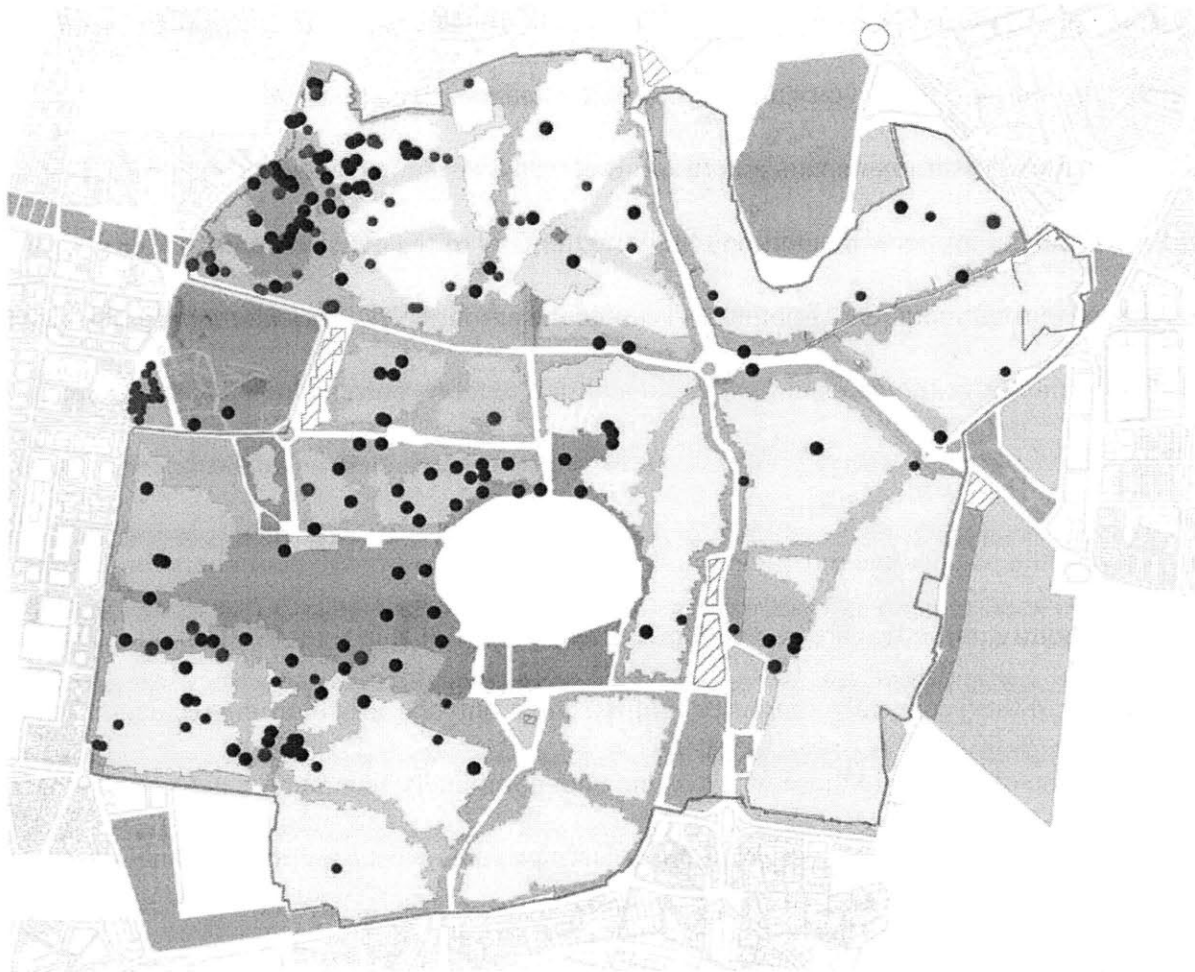
improvements,” as one mukhtar noted, referring to the repaving of the streets (Idlibi, 7/2009). In the east, however, prices were observed to have increased upon rehabilitation, but “not by much” (Masri MG, 6/2009). Second-tier ‘spot’ upgrading were more strongly associated with appreciation; in one neighborhood, store owners concurred that there was a “completely different market” for homes on the main square and commercial streets than that of properties located in peripheral alleyways (Abu Abdu 6/2009). Likewise, second-tier public investment were likewise perceived as highly influential on *anticipated* prices; the *mukhtar* of one neighborhood in the south-west cited plans for a large new park as the primary reason property owners to hold off on selling their property (Haddad, 7/2009).

#### 4.2 Regulating land use: the high committee, the technical committee, and how much of the old city became ‘out-of-bounds’ for large investment and change of use.

Chapter II describes in detail the process through which the new land use plan old city was developed. This section will attempt to analyze the forces behind it as a document in and of itself, as well as the processes by which it developed and how it is understood. The land use plan grew out of at-times conflicting intents to encourage investment back to the old city, but to also concentrate it and ‘protect’ the residential neighborhoods (D-Plan, 1998; Hallaj 2007; Gangler 3/2010). At the same time, the land use plan was developed among a group of professionals to be a relatively open and flexible document on one hand, but also an easily interpretable group of rules on the other (Hallaj 2007).



**Zoning and Investment petitions, 1989-2009**



**Zoning from Master Plan  
drafted 1998; ratified 2007**

- |                     |                |
|---------------------|----------------|
| ■ Tourist services  | ■ Residential  |
| ■ Souk              | ■ Open space   |
| ■ Mixed commerce    | ▨ Undefined    |
| ■ Mixed residential | ■ Border areas |

**Requests for major investment  
in property and outcomes, 1989-2009**

- Petition approved
- Review, referral, more information requested, modifications, denial

**Permissions for 'simple works' investments,  
granted 1/2008-5/2009**

- Minor investments approved

Data Source: Records of permissions and High Committee meeting notes, Directorate of the Old City of Aleppo

Regulations on activities, usage, and buildings are one of the most common elements in upgrading programs in historic cities (Sarageldin I, 2000). In Aleppo, any physical or usage change to property in the old city must be reviewed and approved by the Old City Directorate. Everything but very simple repairs and restorations must be studied and approved by one of two multi-sectorial committees. In addition to talking to many of the officials in the old city, I interviewed current members of both the ‘Technical Committee’, *al lejneh al fanniyya*, as well as the “High Committee, *al lejneh al himaya*, in addition to a few present and past consultants to their actions.

From the perspective of officials and professionals, most of the petitioners for permits to change or modify properties are commercial establishments of some sort. Still, of all investors, one member of the Technical Committee estimated that only 2% are returning residents. Very few resettle the old city, and those who do, one –not completely accurate - view is that “most of them are foreigners.”<sup>96</sup> <sup>97</sup> There are only a few large private investors, around 20 investors of more modest ambitions (Grandin, 6/2009; Masri, 7/2009).

Another group reinvesting in the old city are a handful of charitable donors who fund the rehabilitation of a mosque or specific monument.<sup>98</sup> The Awqaf properties were not mentioned as having any significant re-investment by any interviewee, apart from regular works on religious structures and projects funded by an outside donation. “up to residents whether to obey or not” after a primarily infrastructure-oriented upgrading in Sanaa (Colin 1996, 126).

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<sup>96</sup> This is not completely true; many who have bought houses or invested in the Old City are Syrians returning from abroad.

<sup>97</sup> Abu Lughod notes that “it is ironic” that “attempts...to restore old medinas in the Middle East, the houses appeal primarily to foreigners” (1990, 5).

<sup>98</sup> “for “prestige” as well as genuine charitable desire – not unlike the founders of the waqfs described by Marcus (1983).

Views on the land use law from the perspective of the developers, as could be predicted, frame the restrictions with a mix of caution and disregard. One property in Jdeideh is in a ‘dotted-yellow’ zone, and thus requires “special permission,” understood to mean more time to be approved (Grandin, 7/2009). One well-known businessman has purchased a series of service and commercial buildings in one neighborhood to the south-west. One investor was reported to have bought “a large percentage of a centrally-located neighborhood” 16 years prior, and was “still waiting” to be permitted to develop what was speculated to be “tourist projects” (Abu Ahmed, 7/2009).

#### 4.2.1 Neighborhood perspectives: a desire for moderation.

Resident views on the infrastructure upgrading and zoning restrictions varied significantly by their place in the city. In general, neighborhoods that have more upper-level investment and new uses stated that they would like less, and those who have little stated they want more. Likewise, the role of land use regulations as protecting neighborhoods from undesirable uses was indirectly supported in areas which had received more external investment.

In one north-eastern neighborhood, the neighborhood representative observed that “people [of the neighborhood] saw [improved] services in areas around them”, and that residents made and continued to make the connection between touristic activities and a government commitment to maintain streets and water mains [Mukhtar QA 6/2009].<sup>99</sup> On the other end of the spectrum, neighborhoods which received the infrastructure first –mainly action areas #1 and #3, had no significant complaints about the maintenance of the infrastructure and public services.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> When asked about this particular neighborhood, the Director of Public Works recognized the delay and noted that they are working on it and that it “needs to happen” soon.

<sup>100</sup> Apart from the common observation in the action areas regarding the re-paving of the streets, as the first areas to receive the traditional basalt stones were done by less-experienced craftsmen, and that they were used as an area “for teaching” that “had to be redone (Haddad; Abu Abdu 6/2009; in Jdeideh, Hazzazeh, Jalloum).

In two neighborhoods that had received higher levels of tourist investment, residents and leaders had more mixed feelings about the combination of newcomers and improved services. The basic infrastructure upgrading was appreciated as a necessary improvement. However, the ‘second tier’ public investments were viewed as primarily to serve outsiders; “people from the area don’t use the new square at all”. While an overstatement, it was echoed by several of the traders next to him, and by a gathering of neighborhood women (Sahet al Hatab traders 6/2009, Umm Abdu gathering, 6/2009).<sup>101</sup>

In the area with more tourist investment, new users were viewed with some ambivalence by shopkeepers. But this understanding is complicated and nuanced, and depended greatly on the interlocutor and their position in the city. On one hand, new users to the area are perceived as “coming to the restaurants but not buying anything from the stores of the *hara*” and as “foreigners” (Abu Abdu, 6/2009).<sup>102</sup> This statement was modified by the fact that the restaurants themselves were recognized as significant buyers from many of the small food stores for last-minute supplies and fresh vegetables and meats (Abu Abdu et al, 6/2009). Most other retail stores are segregated in their clientele, but a few exceptions do exist. A small stall famous for its bean soup is packed daily with a mix of men in laborers’ garb, a few suits and ties of returning migrants or businessmen hungry for beans, and a steady stream of youth waiting to bring a plastic bag of take out back for lunch in their workshops<sup>103</sup> At the end of the day, most residents

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<sup>101</sup> While not a subject of this study, the square in question was observed by the researcher to be a frequent site of play for local children, and occasionally used by the elderly to sit and chat.

<sup>102</sup> Foreigners was understood to imply both actual non-Syrians, as well as Syrians from ‘outside’ the old city. While this was not a topic of my study, a solid mix of upper-class Aleppians and visitors can be observed in the restaurants- most times of year, they are dominated by Aleppians.

<sup>103</sup> A name used in Arabic – *warsheh* ورشة - to designate a small room or sets of rooms used for light industrial production, such as garment manufacture, the punching of soles for sandals, as well as more ‘traditional’ crafts such as carpentry or stonecutting. Currently distributed across the old city, although clustered in some areas, most workshop uses are in illegally-converted homes or basements. The phenomenon was said to have begun in force in

and mukhtars had no real opinion about the land use regulations *per se*, but would often mention that they wished their neighborhood had a more ‘moderate’ level of external investment.

#### 4.3 How these perceptions translate into action Land use laws as perceived by planning professionals: a moral duty to enforce

In Aleppo, the members of the technical and high committees, over the past few years, have become the gatekeepers to new development in the old city. Hotels are often allowed, but restaurants are discouraged from locating in more residential areas. A shipping center was told to move out of the old city. A new hotel was allowed to locate in a building that was slated for eventual demolition. This section will analyze how local officials cite the most important factors in their decision-making rationale for bending or aligning themselves with the regulations.

From the perspective of the neighborhoods and developers, the combination of land use laws and the project created “leverage” to control uses. As one head of a non-profit noted, “if left to the free market it [the project’s investments] would have just encouraged gentrification” (Esmail, 7/2009). For a previous member of the technical committee, also involved in the design of several action area plans, the land use plan itself was styled to “limit the investment” and “not make it easy” (Albean, 7/2009).

Professionals engage in the active reproduction of the narrative of ‘protection’ that certain uses are undesirable for some neighborhoods. The perception that residents are ambivalent to external users of their spaces is understood by some professionals engaging in the specific design of

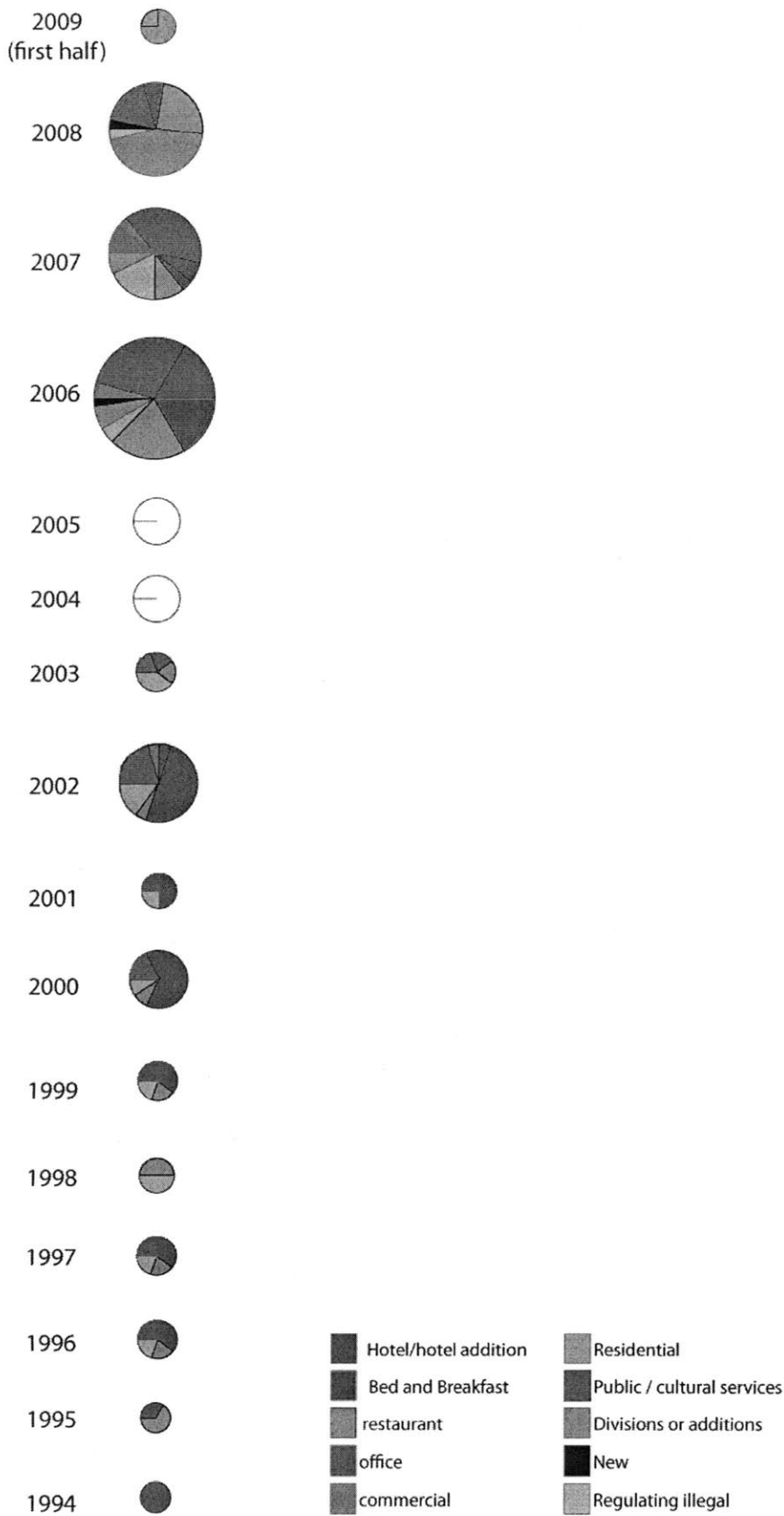
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the 1970s, and is now perceived by some to be declining as a result of increased competition from the recent relaxation of import barriers on goods from East Asia (Haddad 6/2009; Merchant in Bahsita, 7/2009). The workshops, on the whole, are typically viewed in a negative light by neighborhood leaders and city officials. At the same time, they provide employment for some old city residents – and with unemployment documented to be over 25% in some neighborhoods, they may be seen differently by residents searching for work (Haddad 6/2009; Zammar 6/2009; Abdulwahab, 6/2009; AKTC, 2005).

interventions; one architect involved in designing a new square for a predominantly residential and low-income neighborhood in the old city discussed how residents advocated for no benches out of fear of ‘outsider’ usage, and how the donor organization wanted to respect this ‘semi-private’ understandings of the square (Grandin, 7/2009).

#### 4.3.1 Strategies of reproduction of *implementation*: officials to property owners and discourses of paternalism, pedagogy and enforcement

One of the first ways in which local officials began to describe their commitment or disillusionment with the local land use regulations was how they communicated them to others. For example, persuasion as a method of implementing conservation values was often seen as relatively ineffective. Multiple opinions exist as to what makes a shop or home more beautiful. In particular, the difference between the aesthetic choices of residents and current officials. Rasha Masri, a representative for the department of antiquities, noted that many of the petitions for formal improvements to a specific plot come from the central *souk* area. In her words, the broader committee takes it upon themselves to try to spread appreciation of a more ‘authentic’ restoration style, and they try to “educate them [the businessmen] that the old style is better, but most of them desire something modern” (Masri, 7/2009).



*Figure 4.2. Petitions reviewed by the high committee, by desired use, 1994-2009. To be used for a general idea only, as the comprehensive cataloguing of all petitions to the high committee from 2006-2009 includes a few more fine-grained variables that were likely excluded from the Albean analysis (2004), such as 'divisions and additions'. Similar petitions within a 6-month period for the same plot were consolidated.*

*For a geographic distribution of the investments, see the series of maps at the end of Appendix I.*

*Data Source: Minutes of the High committee, 2005-2009; data from 1994-2002 from Albean, 2004. No data for 2004 and 2005.*

<u>Major permits refused or delayed 2005-2009</u>	<u>Examples of Justification for refusals (if given)</u>
<b>Denial of application for restaurant or café permitted (5 properties)</b>	No restaurant allowed – because of position on roof, placement in residential area, historic character of hammam, etc
<b>No extra building or room (4 properties)</b>	Against FAR percentages permitted, for whole old city, based on a ‘scientific’ interpretation of the building code.
<b>Not suitable use for area (apart from applications for restaurants)(3 properties )</b>	<p>“on a side street” , <i>zuqaq</i> not suitable for commerce</p> <p>“not appropriate for the area”</p> <p>“a decision about the whole area is needed before this can be granted”</p> <p>“not in accordance with detailed plan for area X”</p>
<b>Building character (8 properties)</b>  <i>Primarily delays or requests for modifications</i>	Detailing notes, façade  Roof work  Placing tarp over courtyard (in most cases for hotel



	or restaurant” – not discurb the character
Committee/Procedure (2)	Committee divided on matter, need more time  Behind on dues

#### 4.3.1.1 Incentives

Coaxing participation through the exchange of needed services is another tactic described by the old city officials. In one commercial area, commerciants were reluctant to make the switch to wooden doors, as desired by OC officials in beautifying the area. When their investment was framed as a trade, however, for improved water and sanitation services, however, the change was much easier to make (Ghazal, 7/2009).

#### 4.3.1.2 Incorporation and decentralization of enforcement as a mechanism of reproduction.

Ideally, the engendered feelings of conservation and change are taken up and reproduced by residents and commerciants to be “self-enforcing and regulating” (Ghazal, 7/2009). In one example frequently cited by project organizers, traders vehemently opposed the proposal of the old city to shut one central market corridor, as-Sweiqa, well-known for its bustling business in light household goods and plastic toys, to traffic during the day. After business did not decline, the key business owners now take it own themselves to convince others who aren’t in agreement (Ghazal, 7/2009). Similarly, the *mukhtars* and neighborhood committees are formally framed as increasing in responsibility and authority, as part of the overall development strategy (Rahmoun, 7/2009; Ghazal, 7/2009).

Micro-decentralization to the *mukhtars* was not framed as having theoretical benefits, but as a good way to reduce the paperwork burden on the central DOC authorities of ‘minor business’. The *mukhtars* are interviewed by an employee of the DOC about their primary concerns twice a month, and then gather every two months for a general meeting. These were viewed by central DOC officials as beneficial for their own work “to know what and where the problems are” (Rahmoun, 7/2009), as well as a way to bring local leaders on board by listening to their complaints (Ghazal 7/2009). These ‘complaints’, in the view of the current Director of the Old City, are becoming more grounded in reality as *mukhtars* feel increasingly part of the process (Ghazal, 7/2009)<sup>104</sup>.

#### 4.3.1.3 Understanding regulation as a pedagogical tool.

Officials and project actors often see the law and regulation as a pedagogical instrument, an ‘agent’ for change. The land use laws are there to ‘teach’ investors of the societal value of traditional neighborhoods. Smaller-scale regulation of business activity, such as the restriction of small traders to take up part of the street with displays of their wares, are enforced with punishments, such as shutting the store (Rahmoun, 6/2009). But while this was the consequence described by one of the directors of implementation, its actual implementation is likely more frequently negotiated than implemented in full.<sup>105</sup>

If drawn out to a broader critique of theory, this view of regulation goes counter to Durkheim’s observation that “normally, customs are not opposed to law; on the contrary, they

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<sup>105</sup> Personal observation.

form the basis for it” (1893; in Lukes and Skull 1983, 35).<sup>106</sup> This raises the question, however, whether the dichotomy of ‘law’ and ‘customs’ is even applicable as a construct in Near Eastern countries such as Syria. I would argue that, given how this thesis understands ‘law’ and the way in which regulations can successfully speak to understandings of culture, memory and experience is fundamental to understanding how they are implemented.

Despite these various methods described above, a sense of skepticism was frequent in discussions of decision-makers in the potential for their hopes to be implemented on the street. This connected to a larger finding that actors on all levels had very few illusions about the impact of their work. One prominent Aleppian and participating strategist in the earlier phases of the rehabilitation project noted that “sustainability cannot be done in a single click” (Sergie – a, 6/2009). It should be noted, that while this sentiment was echoed by others currently involved in the project, the skepticism is not so strong as to dissuade initiatives or action.

#### 4.4. Fitting memory into action: how the narratives are placed in the political framework

Among the interviewed actors who engage with guiding investment in the Old City on an ongoing basis, all catalyze their comprehension of the regulations into a selective process of enforcement and interpretation of policy. These ‘translations’ are intriguing in several ways. First, many of the ‘original’ components of the land use plan remain used frequently as guides and points of reference, and are frequently ‘reproduced’ as value statements. Second, and much

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<sup>106</sup> The post-mandate experience of Aleppo with inherited colonial laws seems to be a direct counter example of Durkheim’s earlier assumption that societal organization is essentially stable, and law is “nothing more than the most stable and precise element in this very organization” (in Lukes and Skull, 34). I’m sure that studies of post-colonial experience through the Durkheimian framework have taken place; it might be intriguing to attempt to extrapolate a comparable theory of change/staticity around the newer ‘hybrid’ regulations of the Middle East.

more importantly, there appears to be an active reinterpretation of the regulations that follows specific patterns.<sup>107</sup> This sub-section will examine a sampling of a few of the ways in which policies were modified based on the on-the-ground interpretation.

In all cases, aesthetic regulations were selected as the primary examples given to discuss the key dilemmas faced by the public official-stewards.<sup>108</sup>

#### 4.4.1 The ‘cog’ as ‘activist’

Many officials discussed how they can make the old city better. Prominent among these discussions were changing future uses – by design or as ‘evolving’ at present, but these were often described with more uncertainty and questioning. One example of a powerful currents of such advocacy is the facilitation and encouragement of residential relocation.

While a few interviewees remained optimistic that the younger generation would someday return, most did not foresee any drastic shift in patterns of settlement. Another member of the high committee reflected that any return was in the hands of the next generation, in effect an attitude that ‘we have done what we can’ and that it is up to them’ (Qasmo, 7/2009).

One of the most intriguing ideas discussed was the connection between a ‘political infrastructure’ and sustained public investment. In this view, distributing elites (or those with connections) throughout the neighborhoods, is the only ‘natural’ way to ensure continued

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<sup>107</sup> Somewhat similar to Lefebvre’s argument, but for decision-makers, not just ordinary citizens, and often in group consultations. *“Political power dominates or attempts to dominate space, hence the importance of monuments and squares, but if palaces and churches have a political meaning and goal, the townsmen citizens divert them and appropriate this space in a non-political way. The citizen resists the state by a particular use of time. (Lefebvre 2003; 236-237)*

<sup>108</sup> This should be qualified by the possibility that, in discussing their work with a relative ‘outsider’, officials chose to stress stories which they perceived to be of more interest. It also should be taken as a reflection, for some, of their disciplinary trainings, and in the Syrian context where more symbolic regulations are more easily enforced.

patronage of public funds in a clientalistic/authoritarian system.<sup>109</sup> The only way to keep the old city alive is

“if every neighborhood had one public official living there, they would all be amazing” [in terms of physical infrastructure]. If Ammar Ghazzal [ the current director of the DOC], for example, lived in Jalloum [a neighborhood in the south], the neighborhood would be incredible..good services, everything. (Aadiyat discussion, 7/2009).

Some, however, saw the conflict between the mix required for a ‘sustainable’ old city and the reality as fundamentally intractable, and limited primarily by the nature of the physical fabric. Particularly stressed was the different future possibilities for large houses versus small homes, and their perceived lack of adaptability; “there are no suitable homes for modern families” (Qujjeh, 7/2009; Fansa 7/2009). Another commonly-expressed view discussed the limited group of those who had resettled the old city to live.

..only three kinds of people have come back so far: those interested in the arts, those who are crazy about old buildings, and non-Syrian tourists. Some of them truly are interested in tradition – like Julian Jalal ad-Din, a Swiss musician who has become a well-known *qanun* player. But, the rest have fled from the old city. This hurts the old city (Qujjeh 7/2009).

A certain skepticism also pervaded about the old city’s future as remaining residential – “we’d like it to remain residential, but, in reality, at least we can stop it from being demolished” (Masri, 7/2009).

Most actors acknowledged that increased usage of the old city by the upper class Aleppians (in addition to tourists) had increased significantly, and there ‘was demand’ for more usage (Qudsi, 6/2009; Albean 7/2009). This brings up a theoretical discussion of the broader notions of property ‘rights’ and ‘responsibilities’ hold over a space deemed to be of ‘exceptional

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<sup>109</sup> Clearly this could be also argued for a ‘democratic’ society as well – see Verba, Massey etc for a US-based discussion of the geographic stratification of ‘political voice’.

heritage'. Do previous residents of the old city – from several generations – have the obligation to care for it, to retain their commitments to their traditional neighborhood? Could this be framed as elites creating an ‘intellectual bond’ over the old city, as in Durkheim’s discussion of the possibilities of an individual to ‘will’ something to be his?<sup>110</sup> How does the “power of use and enjoyment” hold forth in a space of heritage? How much is a heritage space inherently a ‘right’ of all citizens of the city – and where does the city end? More tangibly, how are the restrictions put on the private property of others legitimated for a ‘common’ good, or ‘long-term’ payoff?<sup>111</sup>

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#### 4.5 Hitting the ground with the land use plan: enforcement and interpretation

In this section, I will advance a theory of influence of rhetoric on the actions of the local actors in implementing the project. Ideals and norms about the meaning and future of the old city are primarily transmitted through the coalition of actors involved to employees of institutions. It is then re-interpreted by the coalition, and ‘taught’ to the employees of the implementing institutions – in this case, the Technical Committee, the High Committee, and officials in the DOC, and, to a lesser extent their ‘cooperators’ in the neighborhood. At the end of the day, these ‘lessons of norms’ interact with people’s ideas and understandings of who they are and their role in society to influence their opinion and actions of implementation.

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<sup>110</sup> Professional Ethics and Civic Morals, (127-128). Durkheim invokes Kant for a theoretical discussion of these issues.

<sup>111</sup> In his ‘Prohibiting Attacks against Property, Durkheim notes that there are some aspects to property not linked to labor, but public opinion (a legal loophole for ‘zoners’) saying that “my property, or what I own, might double its market value without my lifting a finger.....however economic life be organized, the value of things will depend always on public opinion.” (Durkheim, Professional Ethics and Civic Morals, 126, section ‘Elements in property that do not derive from labor.’)

<sup>112</sup> Durkheim’s discussion -**Need to discuss in more detail** - “Thus, the power of use and enjoyment is also found in cases where there is no right of ownership.” For Durkheim, enjoyment is not the key aspect of property ownership, exclusion. (141-) common property is different. (149) property is contagious.

The second major surprise in findings was how local officials understood investment, and restricted or encouraged it in unusual ways. I will argue that the ways in which they interpreted or modified their mandate (and regulations) is closely associated with their own cognitive framework of history and social justice.

Tangibly, these interpretations, or ‘translations’ as I will call them, of the ‘dirty work’ of implementation have resulted in a series of different outcomes on the city’s investment fabric. In general, they seem to have followed the map and specific ‘static’ rules for the usage and zoning of areas -- as opposed to the more flexible guidelines for the ‘preservation of hierarchies’ as proscribed in the Development Plan. Likewise, the spectrum of categories is often collapsed in practice into ‘areas which can accept disturbance’ and ‘areas which we need to keep ‘pure’.

#### 4.6 Cognition and examples of the modification of action

4.6.1 Societal responsibility / righting a wrong. A sense of charitable mission pervaded many of the officials’ descriptions of their involvement in the old city project. In describing the provision of the ‘second tier’ of public services, such as public spaces, health centers, and kindergartens, the director of public works in the DOC said that “before, it [an old city neighborhood] was like an informal settlement, but now there is no difference between them and rich areas” (Rahmoun 7/2009). “Or at least they’ve stopped leaving”

Implied in these types of statements is a *deserved right to services* of residents, which is then supplied, beneficently, through the righteous actions of officials and their leaders. While these types of explanations are often given in formal descriptions of all types of public sector ‘development’ projects around Syria, it is more unusual to have them described in an informal

setting one-on-one. In many ways, the officials were not describing the project itself, but their agency and involvement.<sup>113</sup>

#### 4.6.2 Softening regulation as ‘enactors of justice’

Empathy for socioeconomic difficulties to abide by rehabilitation standards was frequently expressed as a rationale for why the ‘laws shouldn’t be applied equally’ (Masri 7/2009). On a larger scale, the same particularistic sentiment applied – the old city needs its own laws, and especially those relating to the preservation of buildings (*qanoun al-athar*) (Qujjeh 7/2009; Ghazzal, 6/2009; Olabi, 7/2009; Masri, 7/2009).

The *nizam al-dabta*, ratified in 1998, is seen as a first step at creating a framework more particular to Aleppo, but is perceived as a derivative of regulations developed in Damascus (Rehabimed, 2009). The law is seen by many as a valuable tool, a first step, and a needed legal base for the Technical and High Committees (Masri 7/2009, City Council Decision #39). At the same time, it is only the base upon which to extrapolate more localized decisions (Qujjeh, 7/2009; Rehabimed 2009). Because the laws aren’t very specific, but are binding and apply to the whole old city without distinction, they are often seen as unnecessarily binding, to be implemented reluctantly, and transgressed where safely possible (Masri, 7/2009; Albean, 7/2009; Qujjeh and Qasmo, 7/2009). “We put it in practice, we have to rely on it at the end.. only in special cases can we consider the [broader] conservation concerns (Qujjeh, 7/2009).

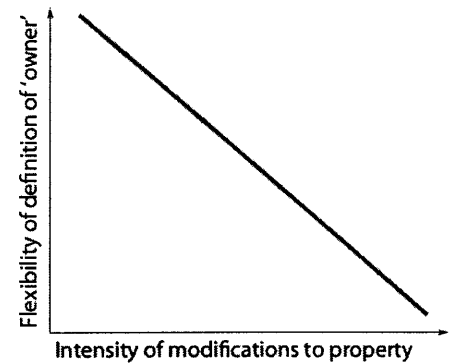
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<sup>113</sup> It is difficult for me to describe the nuance of difference in how officials describe their work, and all of my observations, in general, must be understood as a version that was explained to me – a somewhat outsider, who made myself explicitly independent from, but supported by, the municipal administration. While multiple ‘versions’ of specific events or actions are common in many aspects of public explanations, based on trust, position, and proximity among other factors, I believe that many of my interviewees were remarkably frank with me – perhaps as a result of the ‘non-contentious’ topic, or the fact that I am a woman researcher. That said, there was a large degree of variation in responsiveness among interviewees, based again, in my view, on a combination of factors involving their position, their trust of me and knowledge/trust in my perceived social contacts.



Ownership requirements are one way in which this is negotiated. Officially, DOC policies and some legal regulations dictate the degree of ownership or permanent residence required to change a property (see Chapter II for details). But, according to the head of section in the Permitting Department of the DOC, there can be flexibility, for “exceptional circumstances”, such as a long-term absence, an infinitesimal part, or a family dedicated to a house in need- all of which is helped by the good word of the neighborhood (Tarakji, 7/2009). This suggests the possibility that local officials are negotiating outcomes of more nuance and responsiveness to household needs, while also placing a value on the ‘local knowledge’.

*Fig. 4.1 Lower-intensity investors are held to less-stringent standards*



#### 4.6.3 Redefining scope of regulations.

Several members of the high committee thought that the building code made no sense when applied to homes in poor repair (Masri 7/2009). Expanding upon the theme of over-extension, the current chair of the high committee argued that the area for conservation as “defined by UNESCO” is “too big” for the limited resources of the Directorate to care for (Olabi, 7/2009). This was confirmed by a member of the technical committee “we don’t have enough capacity” (Masri, 7/2009).

How this feeling was put into practice likely occurred through *de facto* understandings of a differential enforcement for low-income neighborhoods. Households in the poorer areas of the old city understand that they could likely undertake low-profile modifications of their home for their own purposes without fear of enforcement. This corresponds with observations from many

of the neighborhoods in the east, where unpermitted modifications of property were commonplace, at least among residential homes, as well with the official record from the permissions department. A review of the last five years of the permits for major and minor changes yielded no examples of exceptions based on socio-economic status (High Committee Minutes, 2004-2009).

#### 4.6.4 Doubting the emphasis on the physical

Some of the interviewees recognized that the core of the rehabilitation process was the preservation of the physical fabric (Qujjeh, 7/2009). For example, the current head of the High Committee, the head of the Planning Division in the School of Architecture in Aleppo University expressed his frustration with what he saw as a lack of attention to the question the core of the Old City, and in particular an over-emphasis on the built environment, saying that “the physical aspects are not the most important part of the Old City” yet, in his view, the project is almost entirely focused on preserving the built heritage (Olabi, 7/2009).

Likewise, the under-development of the eastern areas was recognized by almost all officials and past participants in the process. For some, they are merely the next areas ‘waiting to happen’, and as part of a logical progression of development through which ‘progress will spread out from the improved areas to the rest of the city’ (Rahmoun, 7/2009).

Not to be omitted is the possibility that many of the officials and members of the committee simply follow orders, or act strategically to acquire funding. While decision-making is deeply entrenched in these ‘realist’ constraints, as in any other place, my interviews and data yielded stories that were illogical and unexplainable by these methodologies.

## 4.7 A cognitive argument

The committee members and local officials are active interpreters of the regulation and permissions process. While no doubt influenced by standard economic and political pressures, they also expressed their rationale for making decisions along quasi-paternalistic lines. This type of authoritarian paternalism is not as very well theorized, apart from Kim (2006) and, in an economic context, the medieval institutions of trading networks in the Maghreb as studied by Grief (2005).<sup>114</sup>

### 4.7.1 Filtering, translating, and with the patina of history that is both intentionally given as well as absorbed.

In the end, these are agents interpreting, in discussions with regulations. As Patsy Healy notes, “images of the city are filtered and used, to present the city to outsiders and to citizens (2002, 1782). The “‘calling up’ into consciousness” as vital to all major projects of planning—power of imagined city. Another way to describe this consciousness could be “institutionalized rules, beliefs and norms” (Grief 2005 )

The land use plan was put forward by a coalition that was more ‘pro-poor’ than most other projects in Aleppo. The strategic team included GTZ members, but was not exclusively so. The plan was implemented in parts, mainly separating the city into geographic zones of different requirements, and was based on an understanding of history and how they perceive the old city, what they want it to be, and the frames by which they frame its problems – ie paternalistic, protective, ‘other’, grounded, special.

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<sup>114</sup>For Grief, an institution is a “system of social factors,” which are “man-made and exogenous to each individual whose behavior they influence” that conjointly generate a regularity of behavior” (2006, 382-383).

Decisions which shape where, how, and when new investment enters the old city is a product of the understanding of individuals (taught and ‘intrinsic’) negotiated with, and in response to the structures which encompass them. The most immediate structures, in their case, are the land and building laws, and the city-wide social and economic patterns and expectations of social structures. The methods by which individuals negotiate the law on the high committees, then is similar to the “endogenous institutions” as recently theorized by the ‘new institutionalist’, Avner Grief.<sup>115</sup>

The national sphere projects a certain message, with corresponding guidelines. Domestic projects must align with a national agenda, at least in rhetoric and symbolism. Every event, speech, and sign states that the project is ‘under the auspices of the Syrian Arab Republic’. While in no way unique to Syria, the combination of disciplinary and symbolic mechanisms to ensure compliance and allegiance are well-documented (Wedeen 1999, 144-146).

Whether these are the “everyday acts of resistance” in the way theorized by scholars of institutions (Lipsky 1980, 68) anthropologists in the strategic usage of narrative (Silbey and Ewick 2003, 2), conscious or otherwise (Abu Lughod L, 1990) or by households reframing their modernity (Ghannam, 2002) is unclear, and deserves exploration in further analyses.

#### 4.7. 2 Example of a cognitive ‘outcome’ - mixed-income, for different purposes: establishing a political infrastructure through physical improvements

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<sup>115</sup> Endogenous institutions “self-enforcing and reproducing in the sense that each individual, using his private knowledge and information, follows the behavior expected of him, while the implied behavior does not refute the validity of the beliefs motivating behavior or erode its motivating norms...Institutions reflect the actions the interacting agents but constitute the structure influencing each agent’s behavior.” (2006, 384). Needless to say, Grief’s study, comparing the collaborative structures of Genoese and Maghribi traders, was of a very different place and time.

One famous long-term urban coalition, in Atlanta, was noted to be much more successful at catalyzing physical changes than addressing social problems (Stone 1989, 166). The rehabilitation effort of Aleppo has had a similar experience. This could simply be a matter of funding, and all of the socioeconomic development initiatives, envisioned to parallel the physical rehabilitation, had significant organizational and fiscal difficulties or were not implemented at all.



**Intended use of plots in applications for change or restoration of use, 1989-2009**  
(no data for 2004)

- |               |                 |                            |                        |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| ● Commercial  | ● Multiple uses | ● Hotel with food services | ● Restaurant           |
| ● Residential | ● Offices       | ● Guest house              | ● Restaurant expansion |
| ● Civic       | ● Not given/NA  | ● Guest house - expansion  |                        |

Source: High Committee Minutes 2005-2009 and Albean, 2003

But physical investments disproportionately dominated the implemented aspects of the planned rehabilitation project. I hypothesize that the outcomes, as negotiated from the laws tended to have a physical bias. An emphasis on the physical is nothing new in the politics of

service provision, as “there are no greater opportunities for monuments and plaques and ribbon cutting ceremonies than investments in physical urban infrastructure” (Harsman and Quigly, 9). But physical interventions were also seen as one way to secure a public investment of ‘societal value’ into the symbolic and tangible future; “if it is finished, it will stay there” (Masri, 7/2009)

#### 4.7.3 Coordination between laws and implementation

Actors inside and outside the process attributed what they saw as a remarkable correspondence of laws to implementation with the quality of the project design. The idea of a well-designed project translating into consistent implementation was frequently mentioned by mid-level officials (Ghazal , 7/2009; Zammar, 6/2009; Rifaai, 6/2009). But a “certain degree of control” was also cited as key in keeping the initiatives on their ‘right track’– al khatta al mazbouta - and with the right people (Fansa, 7/2009). What this control was, however, is open to question.

Events also played a critical role in catalyzing public opinion. An example from an earlier stage of the rehabilitation project given were the ripples from the first international conference organized in 1983. Interestingly, the most important effect cited was not the engagement of international experts and the mobilization of support for future studies, but how it catalyzed ‘fame’ of the old city in the rest of Syria (Fansa, 7/2009).

The ‘workshop’, has become renowned as the GTZ’s primary method of socialization – as well as planning organization, and especially in Aleppo (Peterek 1995, 94). The first workshop that was organized remains in people’s memory, hosted in part by two consultants,

Nina Corsten and Frank Sammol, as presenting the methodology of a ‘tree of problems’ and its counterpart, the ‘tree of solutions’(Fansa, 7/2009).

Concluding thoughts: political space exists, and actions depend on ideas and cognition.

In many ways, the coalition that backed the reinvestment effort aligns with expected norms about urban reinvestment; real estate ‘growth machine’ politics dominated. But even Logan and Molotch also argue that these narratives also help the process. To some extent, the histories do serve to foment the "place patriotism of the masses" to connect civic pride to development projects (Logan and Molotch 2002, 299). Even Aristotle argued that any good rhetorician must “refresh their memories” (of the public) before attempting to convince them of anything (as quoted in Tilly 2004, 132).

Aleppo, then, is doubly unique. In the processes analyzed in this chapter, memory and culture, as expressed as components of ‘produced narratives’ are not only descriptors or facades of projects, but real mechanisms for influencing decision-making. Secondly, the ways in which decision-makers transgressed their mandates and regulations were found to be not merely acts of bureaucratic or system ‘failure’, but an active dynamic of ongoing interpretation.

## CONCLUSIONS

Through an exploration of the implementer's day-to-day transgressions of the rehabilitation projects' plans and regulations, this thesis set out to investigate the role of memory and culture in municipal decision-making processes in regulating land use and property usage in the historic center of Aleppo. Aleppo's rehabilitation project has been recognized as a gold standard of heritage regeneration for its foresight against many of the social ills of redevelopment: gentrification, displacement, homogeneity/ stratification, and commodification, and museumification (Bousquets 2005; UNESCO World Heritage Sites 2009; ICOMOS 2010; Organization of World Heritage Cities (OVPM) 2010). roject plans contained strongly-worded ideology of the need to 'seed' investment in the old city to protect its physical fabric and ensure its future provision of services, but also to limit, however naively, 'gentrification' to action areas (D-Plan 1998; Hallaj 4/2010). Taking the regulations of new investment as a sub-case, I investigated how were actually translated to ground-level interventions.

As such, the findings of this thesis suggest that, in most ways, Aleppo is a classic case of urban 'renewal', where public funds are channeled for the physical upgrading of a low-income area with older physical stock with expectations of economic gain as well as a stated mission to of improving the city. At the same time, it is a counter-case in its lack of displacement and pro-resident plans and regulations that posit a seeming contradiction to the logic of the economic and structural interests of Aleppo in the last two decades.

This also contrasts with the dominant view of the results of upgrading historic environments, and especially as preliminary findings show that these decisions have material outcomes. An analysis of major changes in property which occurred in the old city between 2004



and 2009, using the two main indicators of price-per-meter shifts, and permits for formal investments. A geographic and temporal mapping of these phenomena suggest that reactions to the 'globalizing' forces as embodied by cultural-historic reinvestment, are much more complex than simple increases in class stratification. These patterns do not fit with other experiences of 'gentrifying' areas as theorized and in 'similar' contexts. Public and non-profit investment into historic cities in the developing world, the Middle East being no exception, is typically followed by increases in land value and a displacement of residents (Salamandra 2004, Yacobi and Schechter 2005, 508) where the local populations are typically ignored in favor of projects aimed at outsiders (Sutton and Fahmi 2002; Bromley and Jones 1996; Smith 1996; Orbasli 2000, 131; Rodwell 2007, 165).

Even more surprisingly, this thesis found that, over the past five years, there has been sustained implementation of actions -and enforcement of regulations- with no easy explanation in the established interests, such as the denial of petitions for hotels to locate on certain back streets, or the investment in services in areas unlikely to appreciate in land value. Some of these actions and enforcement do align with how the plans and regulations were structured. But other decisions deviated from the project mandate, and yet were not immediately related to a traceable benefit of any given interest or political gain.

As unique arenas for the investigation of the interface between rhetoric, memory and implementation, historic centers are sites of recognized 'value', and so also often come under higher levels of regulatory and developmental scrutiny from politicians, the international community, and the greater public. At the same time, these ascriptions of value to the old city are not uniform in content. Nor is their process of production and reproduction monopolized by a

limited group. This thesis analyzed the spaces of convergence between regulation and memory. Findings indicate that implementation of these plans and regulations is dynamically negotiated and re-imagined by decision-makers on the ground. Produced narratives of memory and values enter these decision-making processes not only as explanations, but as core motives for action.

This thesis finds that the way in which imaginations of Aleppo's heritage were reproduced to give meaning to the new set of actions influencing private-sector investment (regulation and targeted public investment) was the key to structuring a process of change. 'versions' of the old city interact with the existing value frameworks and narratives of the enforcers of laws and incentives. Their influence is essential, directing them to decide which laws and incentives to enforce, and to what degree. These different outcomes in process suggest a potential need for new lenses to examine outcomes, process, and the rhetoric used of upgrading process in historic cores. The two main findings of this thesis suggest that a combination of discourses of memory with understandings of local decision-making in the city can yield dynamic cognitive models for how the construction of narratives and action co-evolve in historic centers.

In Aleppo, understandings of the city stem from the rhetoric, values, and productions of 'episodes' of memory that exist and are constantly being produced. These are then interpreted by decision-makers. Unusual decisions were justified by explanations of history which were most often combinations of the various narratives being 'spun' about town. These mini-productions then grew and took a life of their own, as in the narrative of elite 'responsibility' for old city as a re-vitalization of a historic and Islamic tradition of social justice. This narrative first emerged in the beginnings of the rehabilitation project in the late 1970s, but now reappears in modified

versions as a validation of a particular normative vision of the city, like a mayor who critiques the new inhabitants of the large house in the neighborhood as lacking social feeling, or a member of a variance committee – with the telling name ‘committee for the protection of..’ - who discusses their own actions as a moral and civic duty.

The second major finding of this thesis is the existence of decision-making space for low-level officials and citizens charged with the everyday implementation of the project plans and regulations. In contrast with the view that suggests that almost all urban decision-making is driven by the interests of growth elites, coalitions or, in a neoliberal understanding, the maximization of economic potential, the ground-level actors and groups charged with implementing plans and regulations enjoyed a small, but significant amount of space to decide outcomes.

This is especially surprising given that the state, and a strong centralized one at that, has been the primary actor in the development process, stewarding the processes of reinvestment as well as those of protection and legislation. Through interviews with key actors, past and present, this thesis finds that factors influencing their decision-making and forming of coalitions go beyond the traditional explanations of growth coalitions, and that memory and culture form ‘interests’ in and of themselves. In Aleppo, a series of coalitions emerged to further the process, motivated by multiple narratives, understandings of the city, as well as strategically-imbued values. How actors interpreted these values with their own cognitive framework is key to how they supported, but also modified, regulation and development.

The transgressions of regulation and political-economic interests by local-level decision-makers took place in Aleppo, in part to further ‘cultural’ goals based in a specific vision of the

old city. As such, they are active participants in negotiating the purported dilemma of the management of cultural heritage as an economic asset, and how markets can be ‘balanced’ to maximize both the ‘cultural’ good of a site while capitalizing on its potential to catalyze economic development. Historic cities such as Aleppo offer an especially unique illustration of discussions at the intersection of the specificity of cultural heritage, economic development for residents, and the regulation of public resources.

For example, interviews with local officials emphasized their role as ‘stewards’ of the old city, both in its built environment as well as its social fabric. They often explained their role as self-styled guardians and developers as a moral one, requiring decisions and values about the future of the old city. At the end of the day, they combine their perceptions of themselves, the history of the old city, and its ideal state, into multiple and fungible *modus operandi* for governing use and usage in the city. In this way, they work within the system, but modify it incrementally.

One explanation given for the serendipitous overlaps in the anti-growth narratives of plans, laws and actual implementation is the high quality and foresight of the plans and regulations themselves (Ghazal, 7/2009). However, many places have good plans, while only few have plans that are followed. Based on evidence that suggested a relatively tight regulatory framework had taken root in the Old City over the past ten years, and that implementation followed the development plan in many cases, but also modified, transgressed, and selectively ignored other major sections. This thesis argues that the changes have occurred in most ways not because of the plan itself, but how the plan has been understood and implemented. Many actors in the old city are already very aware of this discrepancy in planning implementation (physical framework

vs. development). A leader of a prominent NGO working in the old city framed the past emphasis on physical improvement as a situation to remedy; in his mind, given the circumstances, the logical action is to “take the shell and fill it with substance,” as the role of any “active social development” (Esmail, 7/2009).<sup>116</sup>

Looking towards the future, some of the regulation and incentives are beginning to be challenged by the local actors – based, primarily, on their understandings of social justice and the importance of heritage. While some of these actions are being implemented informally now, the degree of flexibility in the formal planning framework will determine the degree to which future investment and appreciation concentrates, or disseminates throughout the neighborhoods of the old city.

In this way, the process of land use regulation in Aleppo gives substance and nuance in describing a cognitive process of decision-making. Even in the ‘best’ of designs, laws will be implemented as they are understood, and the creation of frameworks and regulations is only as good as how well it synchronizes and finds a place within the existing framework in the minds of the actors. In Aleppo, actors directly involved in the implementation of plans receive narratives but also actively construct narratives of the old city’s past and ideal state. Memories of specific episodes of history are amplified for certain purposes, but then experience a ‘second life’ as some of their components are selected and repurposed in the ‘agglomerated narratives’ that implementers produce around specific projects. In the cognitive process, memories often appear paired with normative values of social justice in creating a set of guidelines for action. These

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<sup>116</sup> At-tanmiya al-fa’aleh”

guidelines, formed of a combination of ‘external’ and ‘internal’ produced narratives, then directly engage with the structural institutions of society – laws, a mandate of a job, resources, obligations to neighbors. This interaction produces a further evolution of the guidelines, and actions and decisions emerge from this negotiated evolution.

Much research is needed to better ground investigations such as this thesis in understudied municipal contexts. For example, chapter IV exposed a need for the development of theories of urban politics in non-western and non-democratic settings. The other elements of urban politics would, once identified, form the base of any research to investigate the relative role of memory and culture in decision-making for heritage centers. I strongly suspect that, similar to the findings of this thesis, land use decisions in heritage cities are exceptionally permeated with values of the past as well as normative values.

Many of the findings drawn from the research of this thesis find resonance in common sense. Individuals and groups, after all, form independent thoughts, and make their decisions accordingly. That said, almost everything about how individuals and groups think is learned and socially constructed. In Aleppo, intentional and informal reproductions of specifically constructed narratives of history actively contribute, whether intentionally or ‘spontaneously’ to decision-making rationales. These rationales, then, are influenced in part by a combination of reproduced ‘narratives’ as well as personal memories of the city. This combination results in a material outcome in which developments are more scattered than would be predicted, but also regulated out of what are considered to be more ‘traditional’ residential areas, detailed in Appendix A.

INTERVIEWS REFERENCED<sup>117</sup>

Mukhtars interviewed (neighborhood representatives of the municipality). 30 minutes – 1.5 hours.

An-Naib, Mohamad. Mukhtar, 7/2009. Al Mawardi Almaji, Kallaseh as-Sughra.

Abu Radan, Salah. Mukhtar of Bayyada and Jbeileh

Fellahah, Mohamad Wahid. Mukhtar, Mashfa al Askari, Maysaloun, Aqoul, Arqoub, Sheikh Abu Bakr. 7/2009

Haddad, Mustafa. Mukhtar of Jalloum. Interview; also notes by two craftsmen from the neighborhood sitting in.

Homsi, Jamal. Mukhtar of Bab al Maqam.

Idlibi, Mohammad Nur ad-Din, Esq. Mukhtar of Bab al-Ahmar.

Masri, Mohamad Ghazi. Mukhtar, Bandara al Islam

Naasan, Ahmad. Mukhtar, Farabin Foqani wa Tahtani, Taratellar.

No name, Mukhtar Bab Qinnisreen and Qalaat Sharif.

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<sup>117</sup> Preliminary list – still missing a few names

No name. Mukhtar Blat al Foqani wa Tahtani.

No name, Mukhtar al-Jdeideh.

No name. Mukhtar al Bahsita and Foq Bab ajJnein

No name. Mukhtar, Sahhet Bizzeh, Tahht al Qalaa, and Jamia

Qahleh, Abu Deebu. Mukhtar Bab An-Neirab.

Sawwas, Mohammad Ghatfan. (two interviews). Mukhtar, Ibn Yacoub wa tuabiha, Mandaly and Mashatiyya

Real Estate Agents. (30 minutes – 45 minutes)

AsSayyid Yehya, Abu Ahmad. Real Estate Agent in Kallaseh

Did not want to give name (1), Real estate agent, Masakin as-Sabil

Nasser, Abu Salim. Real estate agent, Kallaseh

Satout, Ammar. Real estate agent, Hilluk

No name, (3), Real estate agent in Shahba' al Jadida



Real estate agent, Bustan al Qasr

Owner, Radwan Real Estate, Adzhamiyya

Real estate agent, Bandara al Islam.

Others interviewed between 5/25/2009 and 7/24/2009 (45 minutes – 2 hours)

Abu Abdu, merchant in Jdeideh, with comments from two adjacent store-owners.

Al-Atrash, Dania. Current section head in the Planning Department, DOC.

Al-Olabi, Sakhar. Head of 'High Committee' overseeing body for all physical changes and planning in the old city. Professor and Head of Planning Division in the College of Architecture, Aleppo University

Abdelwahhab, Razan. Previous long-term consultant on citizen participation and socioeconomic studies for the DOC and GTZ. Current head of informal settlements project with the GTZ and the greater Municipality. Involved in project for many years.

Albean, Majed. Former member of the technical committee, private architect, previous consultant to the GTZ on real estate prices.

Bormann, Ulrich. Expert Advisor to the department for geoinformation systems of the municipality of Aleppo. GtZ/DED/Municipality of Aleppo. 6/2009.

Esmaeil, Ali. CEO of Aga Khan Cultural Services- Syria.

Gangler, Gangler (correspondence, spring 2010). Professor of Planning at the Cities Institute at the University of Stuttgart. Highly involved in project for decades. Expert consultant on urban development and design in Middle East and Central Asia.

Fansa, Khaldoun. (two interviews). Consultant on the rehabilitation process. Current partner at Construction and Conception Consultants, a private restoration and conservation firm. Author of children's book "Come to the Old City" (2008), nominated for the Arab Book Award. Secretary of the Aleppo Citadel Friends. Highly involved since beginning of rehabilitation process.

Grandin, Theiry. Urban designer and conservation architect at Conception and Construction Consultants, Aleppo. Directed many of the most prominent designs for public spaces and private home restorations in the Old City. Involved in project for last 20 years.

Hallaj, Omar Abdulaziz (correspondence spring 2010). Director of the Syrian Trust for Development. Previously involved in multiple aspects of rehabilitation project, GTZ coordinator of rehabilitation of Sanaa, Yemen.

Hilal, Me. Fouad. Member of Aadiyat Society and president of Syrian Maritime and Transport Agencies. 7/2009.

Ikhlassi, Hanadi. Artist and director of film on the old city.

Kassabjian, Janik. Permitting department, DOC. 7/2009. Kujjah, Mohammad. Member of the High Committee, Head of the Aadiyat Society, and Secretary General for Aleppo, Capital of Islamic Culture 2006. 7/2009.

Masri, Rasha. Director of the Ministry of Antiquities for the Old City, member of High Committee and Technical Committee.

Qasmo, Tamim. Architect, member of the Technical Committee. Involved in rehabilitation project actions.

Qudsi, Adli. Director, Conception and Construction Consultants. Former representative of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture in Syria. Key leader behind many of the large-scale public investments in the old city and the rehabilitation process more generally.

Rahmoun, Nadeem. Director of Implementation and Maintenance, DOC. 6/2009.

Rifaa'i, Ghada. Former section head in the Planning Department, DOC. Involved with many projects in the DOC. Currently head of the new Urban Observatory at the Municipality of Aleppo. Active in several educational non-profits.

Tarakji, Adnan. Head of Division of Permitting, DOC. 7/2009.

Toushan, Chourouk. Junior planner in the planning department, DOC.

Umm Abdu gathering, 6/2009. Off-the-street invitee to a *subhiyyat* gathering of approximately seven married women in Jdeideh; attendees had come from homes in all of the far corners of the old city, with three from the same neighborhood. In closed, shared entryway between several homes, one of which belonged to Abu Abdu, merchant (noted above).

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## APPENDIX I: THE GEOGRAPHY OF INVESTMENT AND PROPERTY

### APPRECIATION: A DIFFERENT SHAPE OF 'GENTRIFICATION'

Introduction and exploring socioeconomic difference as a practice in reflection: my own work in

Aleppo and position as a researcher

Patterns of socioeconomic segregation, and the possibilities, benefits, and disadvantages of integration have long formed a core part of my academic, personal, and professional curiosities. Growing up in coal-town West Virginia and later south Texas, I became interested by how and why people separated their spheres of dwelling and social life, and, in particular, why some neighborhoods and regions were so split along the tracks, and others remained more mixed. More importantly, it struck me that the geographic divisions of people were paralleled by lines of goods and services, making life only more difficult for people from the Appalachians to inner-city Texan neighborhoods. On top of this, the trend seemed to be that of increasing separation; nobody stays in a coal town or an underserved neighborhood who can afford to move.

My interest focused on historic cities in the developing world when I observed similar patterns of growing stratification abroad when I lived in Mexico, and more recently, Syria. I first went to Syria as an exchange student in college to Damascus, and was struck both by what I perceived as relative socioeconomic equality and the strong feelings of residents as they described a sharp increase in stratification. Like historic areas around the world, the old city<sup>118</sup> seemed miniscule in comparison to the rest of the city, and, like the Cartagenas, Venices, and Oaxacas of the world, was rapidly becoming full of restaurants and souvenir shops. Two years later, chance led me to relocate to Aleppo on my Fulbright scholarship, with the Historic Cities Support Program of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture as my institutional sponsor. The city's sprawling informal neighborhoods, and more recently-built areas with ornate mansions valued over a million dollars were distinctly geographically separate along bipolar coordinates that

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<sup>118</sup> For the remainder of this thesis I will use the term 'old city' to designate the historic core under UNESCO World Heritage Site designation. While to my ears, 'historic City' and 'historic core' sound sweeter, and are equally apt descriptors, 'old city' is what has become the standard in local documents in Aleppo; a very literal translation of *al madina al qadima*, into English.

reminded me of the class geography of one of my hometowns, Austin, Texas, where, to generalize, low-income people live to the south and east, and the better-off and wealthy to the north and west. In Aleppo, the old city sits near to the geographic center of the city, marking east from west. By the time I arrived, it was perceived to be inhabited almost exclusively by lower-income households.

However, in recent decades, Aleppo experienced high levels of fiscal and human investment in the revitalization of its extraordinary old city. Similar to the many historic cities undergoing rehabilitation in the past decades, the movement in Aleppo, and Syria in general, has primarily centered on physical interventions and indicators, such as restoration of building stock, public spaces and infrastructure. As a result of upgrading, many historic cities in other countries have become ‘museumified’ spaces of predominantly high-end districts, commodities of ‘experience’ and history for the wealthy, such as in Venice, Cartagena, and, to some extent Damascus and Aleppo. Alternative narratives produced of the historic neighborhoods rarely include the present low-income residents, nor actively promote strategies for their inclusion in the redefined space.

At the same time, actors from all across a powerful rehabilitation project saw (re)ascribing value and re-integrating the areas as key to their mission. This brought up an intriguing possibility of Aleppo being a counter-trend to the dominant urban movement towards residential stratification, and, more specifically, to the narratives of gentrification and displacement plaguing areas of heritage value with large rehabilitation projects. However, it is far too early to pass even preliminary judgment on any ‘success’ of sorts, as it could be that Aleppo’s turnover has merely been slowed by external factors. A preliminary effort at



quantifying property turnover and appreciation, over geography and time, does suggest that the patterns of investment and displacement may vary from the traditional predictions in several ways (See Appendix I).

Nonetheless, the very language to describe the social impacts of the process of upgrading historic cities has been constrained for the most part to analyzing the displacement of lower-status households for ‘gentrification,’ there seemed to be the possibilities for more nuanced ways of explaining the changes in Aleppo. Guided by that curiosity, I began this project with three broad guiding questions: how, or if, has the old city become more or less socioeconomically diverse over the past ten years, and how concentrated or dispersed have the changes been? How do the ‘pro-integration’ goals of the project actually translate to actions on the ground? And how do actions connect to imaginations and remembrances of the city? Through these three questions, I was curious to learn the opinions of the project strategists, but also of implementing officials, professionals and bureaucrats involved with the day-to-day decision-making in the city.

While working in the Historic Cities Programme at the Aga Khan Trust for Culture in Aleppo, researching historic background for urban design proposals and starting the first series of socio-economic initiatives in the old city, I noticed three pervasive, but unproven, assumptions used by policy makers, academics, and activists in the city. The first is the old city used to be a highly integrated, socioeconomically, ethnically, and religiously. If true, the length of Aleppo’s sustained urban settlement would provide a substantial counterweight to the argument that segregation is a natural and irreversible process of the ‘modern’ era. Upon first glance, it appears that Aleppo was indeed quite diverse until the second half of the twentieth century (see chapter II). Also, in the popular discourse of the rehabilitation project, the specter of increased home

prices and gentrification is always raised. To my knowledge, however, no formal study has documented the changes in home values, land markets, or property sales in the past twenty years. And at the same time, the rehabilitation of the old city of Aleppo has been internationally touted as preserving much of the traditional social fabric and retained existing residents, and for having ‘implemented’ its goals. As in the other two claims, no investigation has taken place of neighborhood newcomers, or emigrants, or what integration looks like and its driving motivators.

These debates coalesced to support an argument for a highly regulated process to control the placement, type, and intensity of new investment and usages in the old city. In additions to the reasons listed above, new usages – but limited- seemed to be the only way to maintain the historic fabric. A 2002 survey supported this, declaring unequivocally that very few options for financing were available to households in the old city, and even if they were, “their incomes are not sufficient to even cover basic restoration of their property” (Von Rabenau 2002). I still believe Aleppo might prove to be a model, but that its proponents are touting mistaken mechanisms as instruments of success.

Finally, although it is outside the scope of this thesis, I became increasingly intrigued by the idea put forth by ‘ground-level’ and ‘upper-level’ actors alike, of (re)creating a political infrastructure / social sustainability through the intentional dispersion and encouragement, but also limitation, of upper-scale investment. As one member of the regulatory committee put it, “The attention that the old city is good, but not sufficient. The president comes and eats in the old city – but even if he comes every year, it is not enough...although it does make people happy and proud that he eats in al-Jdeideh (Qujje and Hilal, 7/2009).” The process by which social and political structures be encouraged – and not just in rhetoric – to ensure the ongoing stewardship

of a built environment for mixed-incomes remains elusively nebulous in literature. To me, Aleppo seemed to provide a good environment for a targeted partial analysis, driven by these greater curiosities.

### GEOGRAPHY OF INVESTMENT AND APPRECIATION in the OLD CITY

*“the essential movement [of a city] is after all the purchase of property”– Henri Lefebvre (1991;1996, 210)*

Real estate investment unavoidably arises in all discussions of the potential impacts of urban renewal. In Aleppo, reinvestment has taken the form of both a positive discourse, that of the elites bringing ‘life back into the old city’ as well as that of a negative specter of museumification, displacement and inauthenticity. This chapter represents a beginning at a process of measuring and quantifying the actual change in the property market, across old city neighborhoods and over time, between 2004 and 2008-9, and stems the argument that numerous intentional efforts to control gentrification and change of use to specific areas in the city.<sup>119</sup> These investigations yielded geographical and temporal patterns that alternately contradict and conform to standard expectations of how neighborhoods with older built environments and relatively low-income populations react to intentional projects of revitalization.

Building off of residential sales data provided from interviews with neighborhood municipal representatives, or ‘mukhtars’, this chapter explores why the housing markets in the old city varied by neighborhood, and from those in the rest of the city. Three groups of

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<sup>119</sup> By intentional I mean to specify processes of change which have included at some point a plan, and corresponding action, to change a geographic area of the city according to certain value-filled notion of how it can be improved.

unexpected phenomena emerged from the data which differ from expected outcomes of an urban redevelopment project.

First, prices across the old city have risen less than would be predicted by a simple market analysis. Given the high demand and low supply of property, especially housing, in metropolitan Aleppo, prices (per square meter) in the old city would be expected to rise at par with the rest of the city, if not more, given the new valuation and public investment projects leading up to 2004. Expert consultants affirm the tight interrelationship between the housing market of old Aleppo with the housing shortage in the rest of the city (Von Rabenau 2002, 47; Hallaj 2007). Results from this study, however, indicate that the change in prices in the old city was consistently lower than the change measured in the control neighborhoods outside of the old city.

Secondly, there is significant variation in price per square meter among neighborhoods. This variation became more accentuated between 2004 and 2008-9, but has also become spatially more distinct. The western areas of the city have increased in price much more rapidly than the eastern areas, indicating a bifurcated trend of investment.

Lastly, and most interestingly, the range of sale prices inside neighborhoods in the Old City widened considerably between 2004 and 2009. While the price per square meter of the least-expensive property has not increased drastically, many more homes have been sold for significantly higher prices than in 2004. Hypothetically, a widening of the investment spectrum would indicate an increase in socioeconomic diversity as the middle class or wealthy purchase homes in low-income areas. This may well be a correct assessment. When analyzed

geographically, however, the widening range of sales prices is strictly concentrated in certain neighborhoods.

This chapter will be organized to investigate the three questions as posed above. To set the stage, a brief analysis of the general factors driving the property market in Aleppo will help place the municipality as a whole, and the old city specifically, in their market context. The conundrum of the ‘slow growth’ in the old city is then investigated more carefully by examining the layers of the built and social environment specific to the historic core, as well as through a neighborhood-by-neighborhood analysis of market change. Finally, an overview of *who* and *for what* new property is being purchased will begin to shed light on the simultaneous spatial trends of macro-diversification and micro-stratification in the property markets of the Old City.

Finally, this chapter focuses on the frames engaging the economic arguments around the ‘classic’ effects of redevelopment and historic revitalization. While crucial to understanding the market, the corresponding examination of how Aleppo fits with more nuanced understandings of forces driving this redevelopment --such as a coalition of political elites, ‘invisible’ market forces, or the desires of a strong-willed state, and the impact of memory upon these--will be discussed in sections (ii) and (iii) respectively. Preliminary findings suggest alternative sub-narratives to the global discourses of inevitable increasing stratification and heritage ‘gentrification’.

#### Methods:

For this component of the study, seventeen local mayors, or *mukhtars*, and neighborhood real estate dealers were interviewed and asked about all the properties in their neighborhood which

had sold over the past ten years. These were typically all recorded, along with the remembered price at which it sold. If the number of houses which sold during that period was either too great to record (over 25) or non-existent, the local brokers/mayors were asked to give price information for what the ‘typical’ house in their area might have sold for 10 years before, 5 years before, and this year. Prices were reported in the currency value of that time, and were later adjusted for inflation. As the data points were fewer – perhaps in actuality, or perhaps as remembered – for the ‘ten-year’ before mark, they were not included in the quantitative calculations of change.

The core set of variables analyzed were courtyard homes in the old city which had been reported as sold in 2004 or between June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008 and June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009. Limiting the data gathered to this certain set of ‘comparable’ properties is a convenient generalization, as the courtyard homes observed vary greatly in structural, decorative, aesthetic and historic qualities. However, it is a useful generalization to create a starting point from which to analyze market trends within a sub-set of Aleppo’s property market.

#### **Appendix I-1 The old city: Normality or Exceptionality?**

*“...the old city is a completely separate market and cannot even be compared to the rest of Aleppo...”* – Adli Qudsi, prominent architect behind rehabilitation projects and occasional developer.

Data gathered and analyzed for this project indicate that the median price-per-meter for residential real estate in the historic center of Aleppo increased by 77% between 2004 and 2008-

9 (Table 1.1.1).<sup>120</sup> This growth is dramatic when compared to the change in purchasing power; real income per capita in Syria increased by only 19% in the same time period (Al-Laithy, 2004; UNDP 2009). But outside the old city, prices almost trebled over the same five years as measured in a sampling of control neighborhoods (see Table 1.1.1 or Appendix 1.1.2). In theory, the old city wouldn't be exempt from the city-wide pressures on the markets for property and space. If understood as 'just another neighborhood', prices would be logically expected to escalate sharply. Even after controlling for price, size of home, and other characteristics, the difference in change remained significant.

<b>Table 1.1.1</b>				
<b>Price per Square Meter</b> of reported price points for courtyard homes in the Old City, field data and 2004 averages <sup>121</sup>				
	2004	2008-9	Change 2004-2009	
			Old City	'New' City
Average	SYP 11,413 / m <sup>2</sup>	SYP 33,008 / m <sup>2</sup>	+ 189%	+ 344%
Median	SYP 9,233 / m <sup>2</sup>	SYP 16,364 / m <sup>2</sup>	+ 77%	+ 188%
Minimum	SYP 299 / m <sup>2</sup>	SYP 4,615 / m <sup>2</sup>		
Maximum	SYP 70,000 / m <sup>2</sup>	SYP 266,667 / m <sup>2</sup>		
Standard deviation	SYP 12,669 / m <sup>2</sup>	SYP 52,700 / m <sup>2</sup>	+ 316%	

The section begins with a brief examination of this difference in the four classic frames of analysis of housing markets. The old city does not seem to vary significantly from modern

<sup>120</sup> As the main field research for this thesis was conducted between May and July of 2009, data points on sales and example prices were gathered for the time period between 6/1/2008 and 6/1/2009.

<sup>121</sup> The averages gathered by the GTZ in 2004 for some neighborhoods, interviewing similar local brokers, possibly more closely represent the actual sales prices of the time. If so, this would indicate that the *mukhtars* and brokers tended to underestimate the past sale value of a property. As this seems likely, and that the sale prices gathered in 2004 are likely better reflections of reality, the 77% increase in median sale price will be the primary number referred to throughout as the five-year increase in property values in the old city.

neighborhoods of similar socioeconomic status in the ‘modern city’, at least not by any of the classic factors (access to finance, demand, construction sector, etc).

Compounding the surprise of the slow growth in the property market, the old city received a significant amount of reinvestment in its physical infrastructure in the late 1990s and early 2000s. An analysis of similar cases shows that property values in historic cities upon public reinvestment sharply increase.

### 3.1.1 The old city of Aleppo as a property market: how does it differ from the modern city and what frames of analysis can be used?

The markets for urban property, land, and specifically housing, operate radically differently than markets for other goods. The past two decades have heralded a critical accumulation of literature that assesses and theorizes these differences. Housing is inextricably positioned in space and connected to its surroundings, is extremely durable, requires an initial investment exceeding that of other goods, is often considered an essential requirement of life (Harsman and Quigly, 3).

As only a fraction of homes in the old city are short-term rentals, this study will focus on the housing market for sales only. The change in sale price is the most commonly-used variable to begin a description of housing markets. Under the most commonly used conceptual model of housing markets currently referenced, four key markets interact to determine the price for housing at any given moment and place (DiPasquale and Wheaton, 1992). First, prices (‘rent’) are considered to be a function of demand and supply. Demand for housing, in addition to household characteristics such as income and preferences, is mediated by the availability and



cost of financing – the premium charged on expending future resources in a present investment. The intersection of demand with the cost of financing correspondingly feeds into the incentives for the construction industry to produce more units. These units take time to build, but they eventually increase the market in actual space supplied, which then intersects with the demand curve to determine the certain price of the moment.

### Appendix I-1.2 Factors of Demand and Supply in the Property Market in Aleppo

Like many middle-income countries with high population growth and a relatively stable macro-economic environment, the unmet demand for housing is extraordinarily high in Aleppo. While the rates of urbanization in Syria have slowed in the last two decades, they remain among the highest of all mid-income countries (Mahayni, 1990). Fertility rates have declined rapidly, from the average of more than seven children per female in 1970 to just over three in recent years, but the overall population growth rate has remained persistently among the highest in its income groups, and is now estimated at a staggering Appendix I-26 for 2005-2010 (UN –ESA, 2008).<sup>122123</sup> More recent studies in the Old City, however, indicate that family size and expected fertility rates are higher than those in other areas (AKTC, 2006; AKCS-S, 2009). Many households live with their extended families, and, unlike the rest of Aleppo, it is still socially acceptable in many households for the new bride to move into her in-laws' house, often in a large room 'ghurfeh' opening onto the courtyard. This is considered more private than a room in

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<sup>123</sup> The most specific estimate for current fertility rates in urban Aleppo is 3.1, as estimated by the Syrian Statistical Abstract in 2004 (SSA, 2005)

a modern apartment, yet, similar to many urbanizing and developing countries, preferences have been turning towards increasingly small household size, thus increasing the demand for housing.

#### Preferences and alternatives: Where the old city fits in a city-wide demand for residences

Syria has a large lower-middle class population, and a relatively low, but growing level of income inequality.<sup>124</sup> In a representative low-income<sup>125</sup> neighborhood in Aleppo, the average household consists of seven to eight family members who live in a historic or informally constructed space with two to three private bedrooms, a basic kitchen and one bathroom.<sup>126</sup> Better-off households, with formal private or public sector salaried jobs, more typically have five to six members with two to three bedrooms in a walk-up building constructed by an individual contractor or a government program, on lands with a ‘more legal’ title. The fewer more economically privileged families typically have five to six members in a spacious two to three bedroom apartment, in formally constructed elevator buildings in well-kept and mapped neighborhoods.

#### Physical stock and preferences

There are two main types of homes in Aleppo: the courtyard house, often of stone and centered around a courtyard or open space of some sort, and apartment blocks, frequently referred to by old city dwellers as *qalbet qibrit* or ‘matchbox homes’. For the properties measured, apartments in the old city appreciated more quickly than courtyard homes (see housing markets and statistics appendix for an exact estimate). The old city is primarily

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<sup>124</sup> UNDP Development Report, 2005.

<sup>125</sup> In this thesis, I will classify households as ‘low income’ that have a combined gross income less than 400 USD/month, “middle income” between 400-800 USD/month (acknowledging that the majority lie closer to the 400 mark), and “upper income” for those making above 800 USD/month.

<sup>126</sup> Compiled from studies of formal and informally neighborhoods in the historic center, on the periphery of the historic center, and newer areas in the outskirts. Gtz, 2005, Gtz 2008, Aga Khan Trust for Culture, 2004 and 2007.

composed of courtyard homes, most of them dating at least a century, the majority to the later years of the Ottoman Empire, and a still-significant minority with components surviving from the Mamluk or earlier eras.

The types, layouts, and other perceived spatial amenities differentiating one residence from another are frequently associated with significant expressions of preference, through price. However, a strong real estate analysis of the valuation placed on traditional ‘courtyard’ style homes versus similarly-sized residences without an internal courtyard would be a productive area for further research.

Interviewees frequently brought up the benefits and challenges to using a traditional courtyard home. On the one hand, many ‘project strategists’ said that they were ‘no longer suitable’ for the majority of Aleppian’s housing tastes (Qujjeh 2009; Fansa 2009). At the same time, interviews of residents in neighborhoods indicated a strong sense of possession and identity with life in a courtyard home (Sawwas, 6/2009; Umm Abdu et al., 6/2009).

Across the city, courtyard homes were priced significantly less than non-courtyard homes per square meter (Appendix 1e). However, in the old city, the median and average values of courtyard homes increased more than non-courtyard homes between 2004 and 2008/9.

<b>Sale prices of courtyard homes vs. apartments in the old city, 2004-2008-9, field data and 2004 estimates<sup>127</sup></b>		<b>2004</b>	<b>2008-9</b>	<b>Change</b>
<b>Average</b>	Courtyard	SYP 11,632	SYP 37,140	219%
	Apartment	SYP 10,156	SYP 23,532	132%

<sup>127</sup> There was no significant difference if 2004 estimate was excluded.

Media n	Courtyard	SYP 8,688	SYP 20,625	137%
	Apartment	SYP 10,000	SYP 19,119	91%

There was no significant variance in the average or median square meterage among the data points reported for apartment-block style homes between 2004 and 2009; likely due to the relatively static nature of any formal development of apartment in the old city as a result of building regulations.

Appendix I-1.3 Limitations on housing finance: exacerbating the mismatch between demand and supply in the old city

Limited access to formal sources of financing constrains purchase or investment in private property in the Old City to a limited number of Syrians. Rising prices, themselves in part a symptom of restricted financing possibilities on a municipal and national scale, exacerbate the inaccessibility of the housing market to newly-formed households. The under-investment in the housing sector in greater Aleppo also can be traced, at least in part, to an overall shortage of financing and mortgage instruments. The relationship between the availability of financing and demand is strongly proven in classical studies of real estate markets (DiPasquale and Wheaton 266). Similar to Renaund's findings from the more centralized housing markets in Korea, financial repression and a scarcity of low-cost options to take on housing debt likely lessen the ability of Aleppian households to translate their demand for future assets into present flow which could stimulate a responsive construction market (1989, 3-4). Importantly for Aleppo, where over one-third of the population is under 15, the lack of finance has been shown to

disproportionately limit the ability of young people to enter the market as buyers (Renaund 1989, 18).

Despite the often-touted ‘liberalizing’ of Syria--that, since 2000, it is transitioning into a more liberal market-oriented economy--the state continues to dominate the markets for labor, capital, and industry. While benefitting from a relatively stable macroeconomic environment, with average growth rates of 3-4% and inflation below 15%, methods and sources of capital have not changed significantly in Syria since 2001. International direct investment, previously nonexistent, is now at around 2%.<sup>128</sup> Syria has no secondary mortgage market, minimal movement of international finance, and only recently opened a stock exchange.

<b>Table 2. Macroeconomic indicators, 2000-2008</b>		
	2000	2008
GDP growth estimate	2% (1998) <sup>129</sup>	5.8 (2007)
Inflation	4.8 (2000-2005) <sup>130</sup>	15-16.5% <sup>131132</sup> (2008)
Bank branches/person	n/a	1/300,000
FDI (% of GDP)	0.7	n/a, but likely around 2%
GDP/Capita (PPP-USD)	2500	4300

Demand-side housing finance in Aleppo remains a curious and limited blend of public, private and social alternatives. In particular, the traditions of *rehniyya* and *jamiyyat*, or down

<sup>128</sup> IMF, Public Information Notice (PIN) No. 09/07. January 26, 2009. Executive Board, 2008 Article IV Consultation with the Syrian Arab Republic. Accessed at <http://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/pn/2009/pn0907.htm> March 2009.

<sup>129</sup> CIA World Factbook, accessed online.

<sup>130</sup> UN Human Development Report, 2008

<sup>131</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit, accessed online at <http://eiu.ecnext.com>, March 3, 2008

<sup>132</sup> IMF, Public Information Notice (PIN) No. 09/07. January 26, 2009. Executive Board, 2008 Article IV Consultation with the Syrian Arab Republic. Accessed at <http://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/pn/2009/pn0907.htm> March 2009.

payments savings groups are commonly used by lower-income groups to finance housing, deserve more study in the Middle Eastern context.

Sources of credit: formal options few and far between, gougers, or collaborative rotating funds

The Syrian government views housing as a right; as such, public policies since the 1950s have favored direct construction as well as indirect subsidies to the supply market. Government workers were given priority to access subsidized housing, although in practice many of them re-sold the units. Currently, the state offers subsidized loans to qualifying individuals to participate in a housing development group. Loans are for up to 20,000 USD, and typically last 10-20 years at low (>5%) interest rates.

As of 2003, private banks have opened in Syria. They currently cater primarily to business and well-off individuals, and by 2007 supplied 16% of all private sector loans.<sup>133</sup> Housing loans have only been advertised in the last six months by three banks, one of which offers home financing in accordance with Islamic law.<sup>134</sup> Loans are available to households with a regular monthly income of over 650 USD - upper “middle income”, for a maximum of five years, at 6% interest.

Housing *jama'iyat* are officially-recognized temporary associations of individuals who wish to own a home, often from the same occupational status (government accountants, teachers, etc.) Once their pool is recognized, the state will assist them with land acquisition, and initial

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<sup>133</sup> “Syria, Banked by Lebanon”. *Executive*. 4/18/2008. Accessed online through Zawya.com, a Middle Eastern real estate news portal. <http://zawya.com/printstory.cfm?storyid=ZAWYA20080410125746&l=052549080418>. March 8, 2009.

<sup>134</sup> Syria, one of the more secular states in the Middle East, has relatively little oversight into the *sharia* standards in finance. US banks are just beginning to tap into this growing demand – see the “A hometown bank heeds a call to serve its clients”, *New York Times* 3/07/2009.

financing and materials. They then pay an up-front installment to the contractor directly – now about 4-6,000 USD, and then smaller –around 1-2,000 USD- monthly or tri-yearly payments to finance the ongoing construction. After the basic cement floors, walls, pillars, and exterior finishing are completed, individuals typically finish the apartments on their own.

Informal Jamaiyyat are rotating group loans, most often among individuals with some social ties, who all contribute a certain amount – among low-income families around 100 USD for a ‘home’ group – on a monthly basis. The couple who initiated the group receives the collective pot on the first month. Friends and associates effectively subsidize inflation and opportunity cost, but there are high social expectations of repetition.<sup>135</sup> While jamaiyyat rarely raise enough funds to cover an entire house purchase or building, they are frequently used to supplement savings, especially among the lower income groups. Jamaiyyat are often organized by women.<sup>136</sup>

Rehniyyeh In this arrangement, families or groups of students give a large sum of cash to the owner of an apartment. After a designated period, often two years, during which the family lives in the apartment, the owner returns the amount in full to the family. 4,000 USD was cited as a typical amount for a two bedroom apartment in an upper-middle class area, which would normally rent for about 200 USD /month. To me, this would indicate an extreme difficulty in acquiring capital by any other means, as the owner effectively must anticipate returns on his investment which exceed the expected rent (in this case around 4,800 USD) minus inflation, or a more than 100% gain for the renter. These arrangements are registered formally with the finance

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<sup>135</sup> A classic “repeat game” within a certain group which reaches a more ‘optimal’ equilibrium.

<sup>136</sup> There may also be different systems of ‘informal’ financing used exclusively by men that I am not aware of.

ministry's local office, and are considered enforceable.<sup>137</sup> A similar system, *chonsei*, has been noted in Korea by Renaund as a financially inefficient alternative only taken up in the lack of liberalized institutions (1989, 14). It is difficult to discern if *rehniyya* have increased or decreased in the past years, but they are certainly still present, fulfilling a need not met elsewhere, or as a product of a preference for a product of that structure.

Savings, incremental building, and parental obligations. A high societal value is placed on saving to buy homes or plots outright. For more than two decades, however, this strategy has been financially all but impossible for the bottom three-quarters of Syrian earners. Loans from relatives or close acquaintances were also a popular strategy to supplement construction payments, and there is an established tradition of familial interest-charging.<sup>138</sup> Now, a middle or lower-income young man, regardless of education or work status, can only afford his own home in his lifetime if his family home has a room which he can claim for his new family, his parents had purchased a home or partially-built flat, or he emigrates to work abroad, typically to the construction industry in Arabian gulf countries for 5-10 years.<sup>139</sup>

#### Appendix I-1.4 The construction market: languid except for the informal market

Over the past two decades, a combination of limited financing, land restrictions, state-dominated permitting has created a formal housing supply increasingly unable to keep up with the needs and demands of the many new households. Despite the intensification of demand, the construction sector has astonishingly declined as a percent of the GDP since the mid-1990s (Al-

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<sup>137</sup> In addition to the enforcement power and psychological effect of the pervasive secret police force, Syria as a country enjoys high levels of social trust and 'bonding' capital which facilitate potentially risky transactions.

<sup>138</sup> Anecdotal from recent phone interviews with Aleppians.

<sup>139</sup> Observation of families and their strategies, Aleppo 2006-9.



Laithy and Abu Ismail 2005).<sup>140</sup> Between 40-60% of Aleppo's residents, most of them more recent migrants from the surrounding province, live in informal neighborhoods surrounding the city (Shibli, Head of City Council; Hammal et al. 2005; Wakely and Abdulwahab, 2007; ibid 2009). The structure of the supply sector has been seemingly little-affected by the gradual economic liberalization beginning in 2000. While state intervention in price fluctuations of building materials has decreased, contractors have retained similar strategies of scale, structure, and financing arrangements as before 2000. State banks continue to offer more favorable terms of loans (Table 1).

	Scale	Coverage	Source of financing	Housing type	Permitting and regulation	
					Overall	Old City of Aleppo (more detail in chapter 2)
Pre-1998	Family businesses of 1-5 permanent employees and 10-20 laborers dominate, a few large firms for multi-story structures and government contracts	Sub-urban. In large cities contractors will work in one or two areas; in the country 1-3 small towns.	Client pre-pays for expected material costs, contractor fee ~3%.	2-3 floor walk-ups most common, one-story courtyard homes in informal areas	Formal structures inspected by architect and engineer, complex multi-agency permitting process, corruption. True value underreported	Many structures subject to Syrian Antiquities Law; symbolic regulations of World Heritage Site status.

<sup>140</sup> From 3.4% in 1996 to 3.0% in 2000.

<sup>141</sup> Interviews with small-scale contractor with over 40 years of building experience. Wished to remain unnamed. May 2009.

1998-2009	Unchanged, with the addition of Arab gulf companies such as Emaar entering megaprojects.	Unchanged	More frequent contractor-client conflicts due to shifting prices of materials	Unchanged	Unchanged, although a 2007 law requires re-reporting of all structures for taxes.	1998 new building code – <i>Nizam al Dabta</i> implemented Afterwards, relatively unchanged; land use plan becomes officially ratified by Damascus in 2007.
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Despite previous stated aims of pairing the economic liberalization policies with restructuring of social programs, the state-owned Syrian Public Construction Company, under the charge of the Ministry of Housing and Construction, continues to control over one-third of all formal construction.<sup>142</sup>

Appendix I-2 ‘External shock’ and a market under ‘urban renewal’: models and their applicability to the rehabilitation project in Aleppo

Public investment usually flows into cities with the expectation that private capital will follow, generating tax revenues, attracting businesses and producing more easily consumable image of the center. This chapter focuses on the real estate, and specifically housing, markets in the old city; the more detailed exploration of the nature of these (re) investments, the conditions required for their supporting coalitions, and the associated socioeconomic, political, and symbolic ramifications, are discussed in Chapter II.

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<sup>142</sup> This figure is likely significantly less for the housing market as the one-third probably includes infrastructure and public buildings. “Emerging Syria 2008”. *Oxford Business Group*. Accessed online through <http://www.oxfordbusinessgroup.com>. March 8, 2009.

The outcomes in the property markets for areas which have experienced significant levels of public investment through projects of renewal, rehabilitation, revitalization, etc., are mixed, but, if the investment can be tangibly associated with the property, public reinvestment generally brings about increases in property values (Smith 1996; Judd and Fainstein 1999).

In the years leading up to 2004, the City of Aleppo, the GtZ and the Arab Fund invested a total of, at the very least, five million dollars in upgrading the old city's infrastructure (City of Aleppo, Plan of Operation for the Studies, 1992). Street repaving and the replacement of water and sewer lines were phased first through the action areas, as noted in the introduction, but eventually have covered almost all of the old city's fabric.

Whether stated up-front or considered to be behind the scenes, the primary goal of redevelopment is to increase property values. Investment is 'turning the tide' of the very trends of disinvestment which attracted 'renewal' in the first place. Rising prices are cited as a 'success', along with, in the western case, the rates of new mortgages withdrawn, or loan applications (Zeilenbach, 2000, 169).

Classically speaking, redevelopment in an previously-built area only occurs when the potential redeveloped land residual visibly exceeds the gross present value of land and capital in addition to any costs of demolishing (DiPasquale and Wheaton 1996, 85). In most cases, this differential arises when the optimal FAR exceeds the current FAR, or when the current housing capital is substantially deteriorated (ibid, 86).

The particularities of the property markets in areas of 'heritage'

In historic cities, the supplementary attractiveness of form and perceived authenticity to ‘outsiders’ and consumption-oriented retail and services further augment the ‘natural’ demand pressures on existing building stock (Smith 1996, 114-115; Zukin 1995, 132). The more broadly discussed phenomenon of ‘gentrification’ is observed to be a “resolutely economic creation” (Smith 1996, 51). Seemingly small and symbolic actions communicate a changing culture oriented toward a specific clientele. Culture is thus definitively established as a “mechanism of stratification” (Zukin 1995, 139).

On the other hand, the costs of restoration of property for historic buildings, while cost-beneficial from a societal viewpoint, often outweigh a single owner’s demand. This ‘market failure’ analysis is used as a common justification for historic preservation policies (Coulson & Leichenko, 2001; Rypkema, 1994).

Existing studies of the economic impact of changes in law and development to a historic area are most well-established in the US context of the designation of historic districts. In theory, most forms of historic recognition, through a preservation district or a world heritage site, often bring with them legal restrictions to any substantial capitalization of the possible land or property value by restricting physical expansions or modification. These restrictions, in the classic economic view, limit the profitability of any possible investment (DiPasquale and Wheaton 1996, 86-88).

However, the most widely-cited findings indicate the possibility of positive externalities of historic designation on surrounding properties (Coulson and Leichenko, 2001; Noonan 2007). But, when regulatory limitations outweigh incentives given, property values were also found to fall, as in Asabere and Huffman’s study of Philadelphia (1994).

Property markets in historic cities have long been observed by scholars to increase in dynamism and value after investments, symbolic or physical, by the state (Rodwell 2007). However, these analyses are almost all descriptive in nature, with little quantitative field checking. Migrants, and the recipients of their remittances, are also a source of funds and desire to restore ‘traditional’ architecture in historic cities (Abrahamson 2010, 45-46).

A premium on size? Among the courtyard homes which actually changed hands in 2004 or 2008-9, there was no significant change in the physical characteristics of the properties themselves. Square meterage remained comparable, although the median rose slightly.

<b>Table 4. Average Courtyard Home Size Sold, m<sup>2</sup></b>	2004	2008/9	Change
<b>Average</b>	144m <sup>2</sup>	145 m <sup>2</sup>	<b>+1%</b>
<b>Median</b>	120 m <sup>2</sup>	100 m <sup>2</sup>	<b>- 17%</b>
<b>Minimum</b>	55 m <sup>2</sup>	55 m <sup>2</sup>	<b>0.00</b>
<b>Maximum</b>	500 m <sup>2</sup>	1000 m <sup>2</sup>	<b>+ 100%</b>
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	100 m <sup>2</sup>	185 m <sup>2</sup>	<b>+ 85%</b>

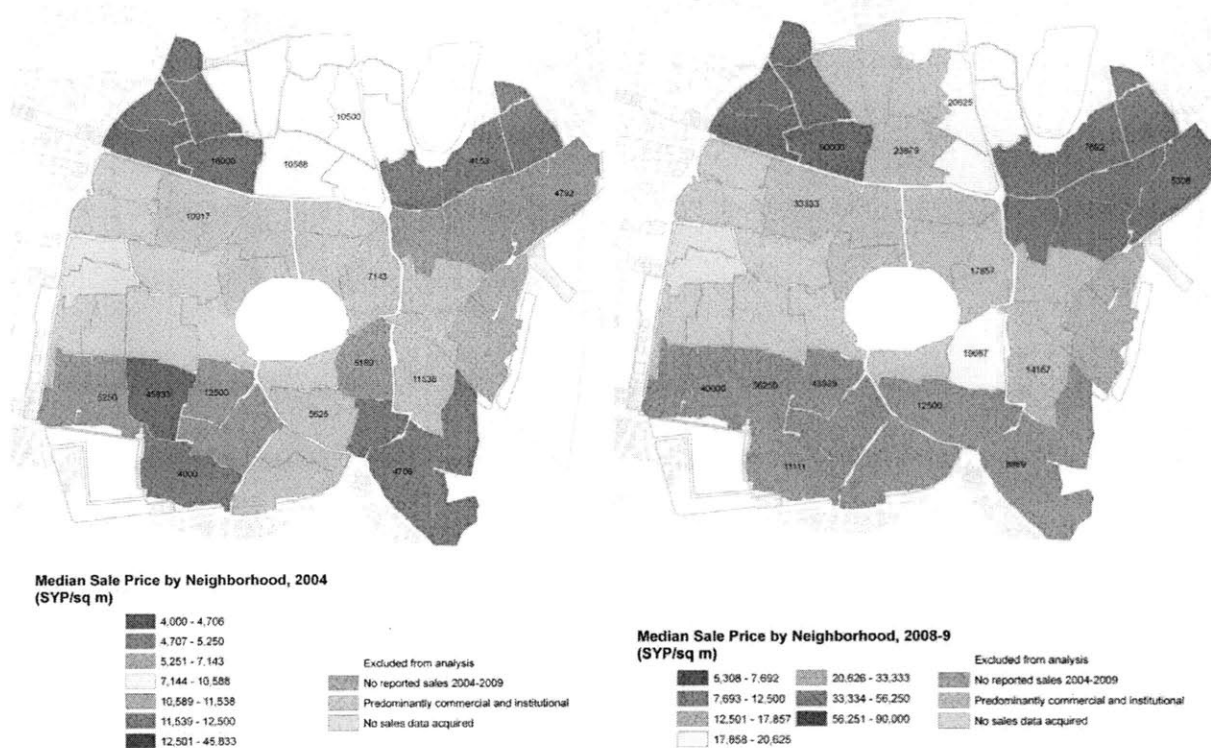
When aggregated with the estimates of average property sale prices gathered in 2004 by the GTZ, overall measurements of change remained similar.

Appendix I-3 Variation in price among neighborhoods: dramatic differences, and increasing consolidation/stratification

A comparison of the changes in median sales price by neighborhood between 2004 and 2008/09 suggests an increasing geographic stratification of investment. While prices rose in all neighborhoods, both maps were given the same color scheme to best analyze the geographic distribution of change. In 2004, higher median values (light red) were present in the Action

Areas (see figure 4.2 in Chapter IV), but were also represented in three neighborhoods in the eastern areas of the city which are poorer and receive less investment. Likewise, some of the lowest median sales were in the southwest corner, where public investment was concentrated. By 2009, the distribution became much more strictly divided, and all the neighborhoods in the three highest septiles of price ranges were in the west, and the three lowest (blue) were exclusively in the south and east.

Variance inside the degrees of speculation varied significantly. While the two neighborhoods with the most significant increase were not surprising – Action Areas 3 and 1 (the northwest and southwest corners), other neighborhoods were surprising for their lack of significant appreciation, such as the Farafra-Bandara al Islam (Action Area 2) area, which only rose three-fold over five years.



In many ways, this increasing geographic stratification comes as no surprise, to the literature or to the city. Gentrification often occurs in ‘bubbles’, and high-rent areas naturally consolidate – or spread, depending – to their neighbors (Judd and Feinstien, 1999).

The neighborhoods which have the highest median sales price also present no counterintuition: they represent the closest areas to the wealthier areas of the city overall, are close to major visitor routes. Most, but not all, have agglomerations of monuments, and one of the highest-priced areas is one of the few areas in the old city zoned for tourist use. In addition, the two neighborhoods with the highest price per meter have received some of the most investment from the rehabilitation project (See map of interventions in Chapter II).

Appendix I-3.2 Change in median sale price: growth in unexpected areas.

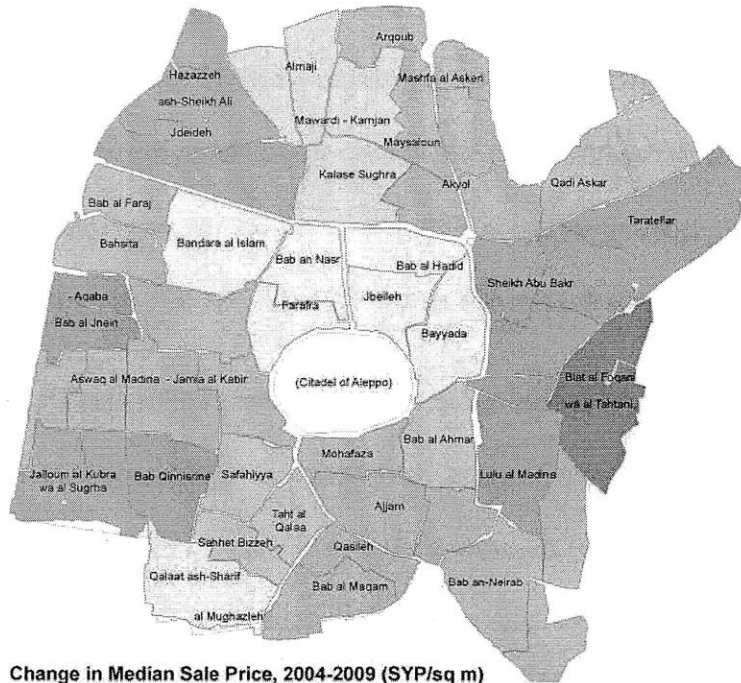
<b>Neighborhood Name</b>	Average Price per square meter, 2004 (2004 SYP)	<b>Median Price per square meter, 2004 (2004 SYP)</b>	Average Price per square meter, 2008-9 (2004 SYP)	<b>Median Price per square meter, 2008-9 (2004 SYP)</b>	<b>Change in median price / sq m</b>
Lulu - Sheikh Abu Bakr	11,538	<b>11,538</b>	14,167	<b>14,167</b>	+ 23%
Bab al-Ahmar	13,333	<b>5,189</b>	42,667	<b>19,667</b>	+ 279%
Tatarellar	4,792		5,308		+ 11%
Bayyad Jbeleh – 2004	21,587	<b>7,142</b>	23,326	<b>17,857</b>	+ 150%
Akyol - Maysaloun - Al Arqoub - Al sheikh abu Bakr - Mashfa al Askeri	10,500		20,625		+ 96%
al-Almaji	14,564	<b>10,588</b>	23,689	<b>23,879</b>	+ 126%
Qadi Askar	4,153		7,692		+ 85%



Jdeideh Sayyid Ali al Hazzazeh	24,800	<b>16,000</b>	121,889	<b>90,000</b>	+ 463%
Bab al-Maqam	6,319	<b>5,625</b>	12,500		+ 98%
Safahiyye 2004	11,500	<b>12,500</b>	43,939		+ 252%
Qalaat ash-Sharif	3,481	<b>4,000</b>	11,111		+ 178%
Bab an-Neirab	5,076	<b>4,705</b>	10,515	<b>8,889</b>	+ 89%
Bab Qinnisreen	45,833		56,250		+ 23%
Jalloum	5,250		60,741	<b>40,000</b>	+ 662%
Bandara al Islam	12,333	<b>10,916</b>	33,333		+ 170%

While sale price appears to be becoming increasingly geographic, as high-priced neighborhoods are more likely to be adjacent than previously, the amount of change is more distributed across the city than would be expected, and a few of the highest-growth areas are in the eastern neighborhoods adjoining, or close to, the Citadel.

Still, appreciation is highly unequally spread across the city; a typical house in the southwest corner of the city that sold for around US \$40,000 in 2004 now could command up to \$300,000.



Change in Median Sale Price, 2004-2009 (SYP/sq m)



Data in quintiles; for courtyard and apartment data points, 2004 - 2009

Many stories of property

value appreciation are even more dramatic. However, as several mayors and a project engineer noted, the very existence of the outlier story, and its frequent reproduction and telling in the neighborhood has recently, in their view, decreased the volume of sales, as ‘every owner wants the rich buyer to come to his house.. but maybe there is only one rich buyer’ (Haddad, 7/2009).

#### 1.4 A widening range of sale prices: More ‘diversity’? why? And for who and what?

Strictly speaking, a broad range of home per-meter prices in a single neighborhood is often a good indicator of the socioeconomic diversity of owners –as well as, or perhaps alternatively, a building stock differentiated by size quality or age. As Jane Jacobs noted for New

York, "...time makes the high building costs of one generation the bargains of the next" (1967, 247). In Aleppo, the range of prices in the old city has significantly widened between 2004 and 2008/9 by almost three-fold (See Statistical Appendix 1a). As the bottom values of prices have remained relatively the same, it appears that the majority of this growth has been in the upper end of the market. In particular, several 'outlier' purchases have taken place. Many of these are likely homes which were purchased for renovation or change of use into a commercial or service areas.

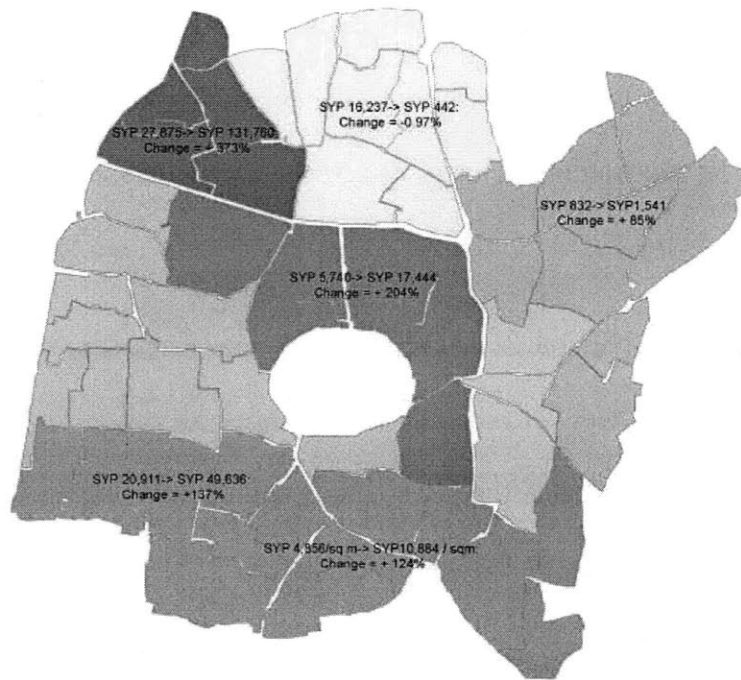
Indeed, the area with the most growth in tourist or visitor-oriented businesses, al-Jdeideh, has the most marked growth in the range of sales between 2004 and 2008-9. As will be discussed in the next chapter, Jdeideh is one of the few neighborhoods zoned for tourist services; it was also were some of the first physical infrastructure interventions took place.

Surprisingly, however, the neighborhoods of the south and southeast also experienced significant growth in the range of median sale prices, and the areas of the northeast, often dismissed as overwhelmingly poor, increased the range of sales by no less than 85%.

Another unusual finding is that of the shrinking range of the central-north neighborhoods – some of the areas with the highest appreciation and perceived by the local *mukhtar* as a highly desirable area for Syrian expatriates and wealthy Christians to purchase a 'summer home' (An-Naib, 7/2009).

An analysis of the change in standard deviations shows that overall, the old city is gaining a much wider range of sales. Questions remain, however, such as further identification of

the buyers of these properties, their purpose, and their interactions with the plans, regulations and decision-makers.



**Changes in Standard Deviation,  
Median sale prices of courtyard homes  
2004-2008/9  
(SYP/sq m)**



### Return of users, not residents

In the context of industrial cities, revitalization and renewal efforts are often perceived to be an ‘urban renaissance’ whose success in part rests on the touted return of upper-middle class residents from peripheral and more modern residential areas (Smith 1996, 55). In the beginnings of the gentrification literature, no observed large ‘return to the city’ occurred; instead, most of the ‘gentrifiers’ observed by Smith in Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington were simply

upper-middle class white city dwellers consolidating their place of residence (Smith 1996, 54-55).

In Aleppo, the initially hoped-for return of elites (see introduction, p 2). By most accounts, it has not occurred, and most professionals involved in the old city do not expect the situation to change anytime soon (Qujje, 7/2009; Fansa, 7/2009). However, in more than a few cases in my fieldwork, I came across individuals and households of somewhat more modest means who moved to the old city, and had finished, or were in the process, of improving their homes (for examples and images, see Appendix 4). Like the other intriguing findings in this chapter, these phenomena cannot be explained with simple answers, and will be so will be more appropriately explored in detail in the following two chapters.

### Commercial properties

Residential properties are the focus of this thesis. As such, a significant part of the story of real estate change is admittedly omitted. A few data points were mentioned by *mukhatir* and brokers during interviews however. This data indicates that the inflation for purely commercial small stores, with no conversion of use involved, has been less than half of that observed for residential properties.<sup>143</sup>

### 5.5 Conclusion

The future can only augment the current housing shortage in Aleppo and Syria. This will likely increase pressures on the old city. The relationship between the conventional property market

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<sup>143</sup>A 37% percent increase in the average price per meter was documented for the shops measured, from US \$607/m<sup>2</sup> in 2004 to US \$833/m<sup>2</sup> in 2009. The size of the range variation in price did not change significantly, and for properties measured, the median was very close to the average.

and the market for residential properties in the historic city requires more exploration. Much of the development and re-development in the coming years, in other areas at least, will hinge upon the municipality's enforcement standards of land use, especially in the city perimeter areas, where new and low-rent development is most likely to occur. As a scarce commodity in the Middle East, the availability of arable and irrigated land will likely dictate much of urban growth, and incentivize limiting the outward growth of informal settlements. The effect of physical limitations on contractors, such as the requirement to use domestic cement, will only increase in the coming years, unless alternative building technologies are promoted. Likewise, the still-limited availability of financial capital will likely continue the state's pre-eminence in shaping development, except in the ever-burgeoning informal sector.

The old city is not exempt from increases in demand. If anything, rates of natural growth outpace those in other areas of the city, and while refugee settlement, and continued rural-urban migration place less population pressure on the historic core than in other areas of the urban housing markets, they are nonetheless present. While the incomes and employment status of old city residents continues to lag behind the rest of the city – at least observationally- the growing economy of Aleppo and rising purchasing power for non-durable goods over the last decade has further increased potential demand on building stock across the city. As in the rest of the city, social norms place a premium on individual homeownership, so much that it is a virtual prerequisite for beginning a family. Also, while families in the old city are often viewed as remaining more 'traditional' than the those outside, homes nonetheless have gradually opened to outside contact, media and cultural influences, which in turn are shifting preferences towards individual units for smaller families, away from courtyard or larger homes with extended families. Housing mobility is traditionally very low in the old city; however this is true of most

of Syria, as families traditionally remain in the same house that they purchase while forming a household. Mobility may be changing, however, as housing stock is seen as less permanent and less tied to a specific lot or neighborhood.

In conclusion, taking the old city as a whole, prices did increase. However, given that the entire area enjoyed significant infrastructure improvements, it is surprising why the increase in prices was not greater. Overall, property in the old city increased in price less than properties in the city as a whole. Inside the city, differences appear to be growing, and high-rent areas consolidating rather than spreading. One hopeful sign for proponents of mixed-income, however, is the increase in range across all neighborhoods but one of the old city.

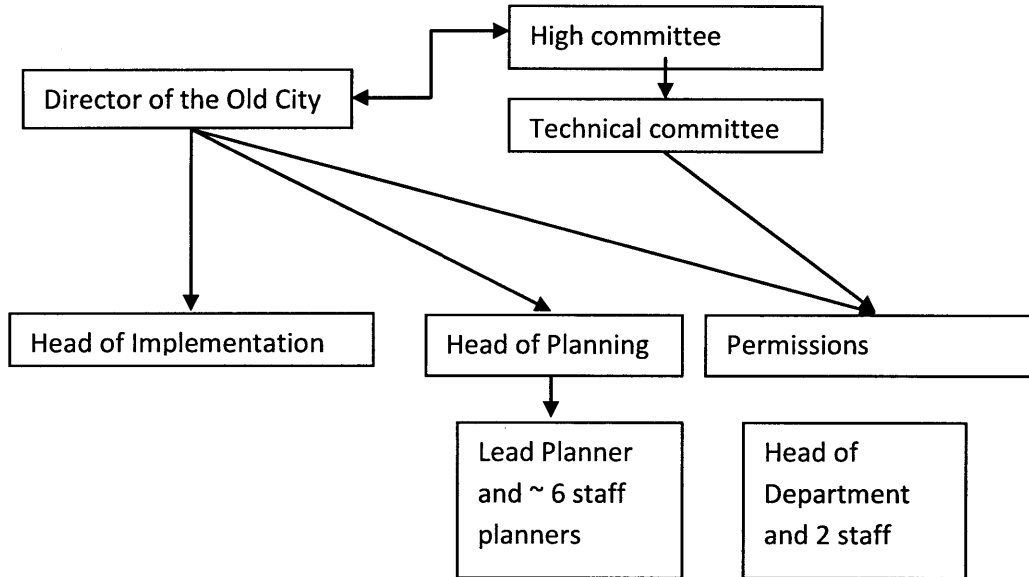
Finally, further questions abound, as this inquiry has investigated a mere slice of time, and, as of now, the futures of property, integration, and affordability remain open for the old city. While gentrification processes are often said to ‘tip’ and slide quickly into better-off homogeneity<sup>144</sup> (Schiller 1971; Card et al 2008), Aleppo’s large stock and relatively slow turnover to date invites speculation of the possibility of a more gradual change. There are hints that investment is slowing over the past years (see Appendix 1.5.1) but at what point will it reach an ‘equilibrium’ of sorts, or will it? The patterns of how new investors in homes and businesses spread or concentrate themselves across the old city will crucially shape changes in the political, physical, and social infrastructures of neighborhoods. And, perhaps most interestingly, how can these types of questions be bundled and cross-referenced with other indicators of urban change to create strategies for encouraging healthy neighborhoods. More than anything, this small beginning at a gathering of quantitative data opens a broader field for further questioning, both in the case of Aleppo, as well as disciplinarily for studies of property change in historic centers.

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<sup>144</sup> This is most fully explored in the US context of race, as in the seminal 1971 study by Schilling, and more recently reviewed by Card et al in 2008. While geographic proximity of different social classes undoubtedly differs greatly, especially in the context of Syria, in my mind the framework holds to generally describe patterns of residential segregation.

## APPENDIX II

### 1. Placing the sources and interviews in an organizational context: organizational hierarchies and structures:



- Director of the Old City (mayor), Ammar Ghazal
  - Director of Planning, Majid Zammar
    - Head planner, Dania al-Atrash
    - Previous head planner, Ghada Rifaii.
      - Planner/architect, Chourouk Toushan
  - Director of Implementation and Maintenance, Nadeem Rahmoun
  - Head of Division of Permitting, Adnan Tarakji
    - Permission staff,
- Head of 'High Committee' overseeing body for all physical changes and planning in the old city, Dr. Olabi
- Director of the Ministry of Antiquities for the Old City, Rasha Masri (and member of high committee)
- Members of the 'Technical committee'
  - Rasha Masri
  - Majid Albean (previous cycle)
  - Tamim Qasmo
- Previous consultants, project instigators
  - Adli Qudsi, architect, former director of Aga Khan Trust for Culture in Syria, main organizer of rehabilitation project at outset



- Khaldoun Fansa
- Members of the ‘high committee’
- NGO developers
- Neighborhood ‘mayors’
  - i. Extended: Bab al Ahmar, Jdeideh, Jalloum, Bandara al-Islam,
  - ii. Short: Bab Qinnisreen, Qalaat ash-Sharif
- Private real estate agents/developers
- Previously-involved consultants
  - Citizen participation and socioeconomic studies local lead, Razan Abdulwahab
- Residents
- Filmmaker, Hanadi Ikhlassi
- Shopkeepers and business owners
- Academics
- Local NGO
  - ‘Aadiyyaat. Local historical society with elite membership.
    - Director
    - Two members – one an architect involved in the process in the beginning.
  - Social welfare NGO – kids and job training (Ghada Rifaai)
- Foreign
  - Aga Khan Cultural Services Syria – Director and head of socioeconomic projects
  - GtZ local economic development head – tbc
  - GtZ project manager on information
  - GtZ project manager, documentation
- German project strategists
  - Annette Gangler, key planner involved since beginning of project. Interview lost because of her meeting with mayor. Phone interview scheduled
  - Heinz Gauber
  - Jean-Claude David, author of most of the historical studies of Aleppo
  - Abdulaziz Hallaj, previously involved in project, then went to Yemen, now based out of Damascus.
  - Previous GtZ representative –, at university.

## **DOCUMENTS/RECORDS**

Land use decisions by current administration:

- All minutes of the High Committee since 1/2006 until the present, including approved and denied permissions for large-scale modifications, changes of use, or demolition. These don't include much discussion or defense of the decision, and are more records of the decisions taken.
- Records of the technical committee for the past three years, including all applications for upgrading and their progress, with recorded dates.

Current Policy:

- Development plan (detailed Master Plan with explanations, vision)
- Locally-developed guidance procedures and policies for permissions department in the Old City
- Policy for revolving fund
- Need: Nizaam al-Dabita

Previous plans:

- Old master plans from the 1950s and 1970s.
- Previous schemes for two of the major development projects.

Documentation of socioeconomic levels

- Socio-economic surveys of three neighborhoods from 2008, and studies of the same neighborhoods from 1993, using many of the same categories.
- Whole-neighborhood study from early 2009, with geocoded plot information on tenure type, structural quality, and number of household members.

**Real Estate price information:**

- Reported sales for the last 5 (and in some cases 10) years for
  - Including: price and price the structure would have gotten 3,5, and 10 years prior.
  - Physical characteristics of the structure (condition, number of rooms/size)
  - Uses past and present
  - Origin of the buyer and sellers.
- This data was gathered from 10 neighborhoods in the Old City, two adjacent neighborhoods which did not receive improvements, but do have a significant portion of older fabric.
- Data from five control neighborhoods outside of the old city, representing a rough cross-section of all socioeconomic possibilities were also taken.

**-Report from GtZ, about development project retrospective 2008.**

APPENDIX II : Sample of COUHES consent form / Arabic and English

**الموافقة الشخصية لمشاركة في مقابلة**

لقد طُلبَ مشاركتك في بحث دراسي من قبل الأنسة برناديت بايرد-زرر من كلية الهندسة المعمارية والتخطيط "Massachusetts Institute of Technology" (M.I.T.) وغاية تلك الدراسة هي تعميق الفهم عن الآراء حول الدمج الاجتماعي وعن في جامعة التغييرات في السوق العقاري وفي الحارات السكنية، بعد مشروع الإحياء للمدينة القديمة في حلب – سورية. سيتم وضع نتائج هذه الدراسة في الرسالة النهائية للماجستير لبرناديت بايرد-زرر. تم اختيارك للمشاركة الممكنة في البحث بسبب معرفتك وأخبرتكم العميقة عن الموضوع. يرجى قراءة المعلومات التالية وتقديم أي سؤال عن أية عناصر غير مفهومة قبل أن تقرر أن تشارك في هذه المقابلة.

- هذه المقابلة اختيارية وتستطيع أن ترفض الجواب عن أي سؤال أو توقف المقابلة في أي وقت لأي سبب كان. زمن المقابلة يتوقع أن يستمر حوالي 30 دقيقة.

- هذه المقابلة غير مأجورة.

لن ننشر اسمك أو لقبك العملي أو أقوالك المباشرة، وكل المعلومات التي تقولها إلا بعد موافقتك لاستخدامها.

- سينتهي المشروع في حزيران 2010 وستحفظ كل الملاحظات من المقابلة في مكان آمن ما قبل ذلك التاريخ.

أفهم الإجراءات الموصوفة سابقاً وقد جُوبت أسئلتني بشكل مُرضي وأوافق أن أشارك في هذه الدراسة وقد قُدم لي نسخة من هذا الاستمارة.

إختر ما هو مناسب لحالك:

( ) أوافق على أن يتم تضمين البيانات التالية في منشورات هذه الدراسة:

( ) اسمي ( ) اللقب ( ) الأقوال المباشرة من هذه المقابلة

اسم المقابل: التاريخ:

اسم الباحث: التاريخ:

إذا كانت تشعر بالمعاملة غير العادلة، أو إذا كان عندك أسئلة حول حقوقك كمقابل في البحث العلمي، تستطيع أن تتصل برئيس لجنة استخدام الإنسان في البحوث العلمية:

M.I.T., Room E25-143b, 77 Massachusetts Ave, Cambridge, MA 02139 USA  
هاتف -617-253-001  
6787.

You have been asked to participate in a research study conducted by Bernadette Baird-Zars from the School of Architecture and Planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T). The purpose of the study is to deepen the understanding of opinions on the social integration in the old city, and how the real estate market and neighborhoods have changed in the years following the rehabilitation project. The results of this study will be included in the Masters thesis of Bernadette Baird-Zars. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of your extensive knowledge and/or experience in the subject. You should read the information below, and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

- This interview is voluntary. You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop the interview at any time or for any reason. We expect that the interview will take about half an hour.
- You will not be compensated for this interview.
- Unless you give us permission to use your name, title, and / or quote you in any publications that may result from this research, the information you tell us will be confidential.

This project will be completed by June 2009. All interview data will be stored in a secure work space until one year after that date.

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

*(Please check all that apply)*

I give permission for the following information to be included in publications resulting from this study:

my name    my title    direct quotes from this interview

Name of Subject \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Subject \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Investigator \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please contact Bernadette Baird-Zars with any questions or concerns.

If you feel you have been treated unfairly, or you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Chairman of the Committee on the Use of Humans as Experimental Subjects, M.I.T., Room E25-143b, 77 Massachusetts Ave, Cambridge, MA 02139, phone 1-617-253-6787.

APPENDIX III: Estimating size and housing type: *ghuruf*, *hosh*, and other particular attributes of the Aleppine courtyard home.

Local interviewees were encouraged to give the size of the property sold in the format which they could be most precise. Exact square footage was given for 33.3% of property data points gathered. For the rest, the number and characteristics of rooms was given. *Ghuruf* or non-service rooms, is the standard way that real estate agents, as well as the general population, describes the attributes of a residential home. For larger homes *ghuruf* is sometimes differentiated from a designated ‘living’ space, or *salon*, interviewees were asked to specify the total number of rooms. For the data points without recorded numeric areas, an estimated area was assigned using an average of the square meterages in the survey data given for homes with the same number of rooms and extra spaces in a neighborhood with similar general building stock.

For apartments, the square footage was estimated using a chart of averages from the sample data as well as online listings (Table 2).

<b>Table 2. Size estimator for apartments in multi-story buildings, ‘middle-class’ neighborhoods in Aleppo</b>			
Average total square meterage of homes from listings on <i>al-waseeleh</i> , and other houses surveyed in the extra-murus modern city in neighborhoods classified as ‘lower-middle’ or ‘upper-middle’ in 2009 map (Appendix C). An extra ten square meters were added to the estimates for homes in the ‘high’ areas, and an extra 20 square meters per room in the ‘elite’ area.			
	<i>No additional rooms mentioned</i>	<i>Intermediary spaces- Muwwazzia / Munafia</i>	<i>Living room - ‘Salon’</i>
One room	40m <sup>2</sup>	45m <sup>2</sup>	55m <sup>2</sup>
Two rooms	55m <sup>2</sup>	60m <sup>2</sup>	75m <sup>2</sup>
Three rooms	<i>Insufficient data points</i>	85m <sup>2</sup>	100m <sup>2</sup>
Four rooms	140m <sup>2</sup>	160m <sup>2</sup>	190m <sup>2</sup>
Five rooms	185m <sup>2</sup>	<i>insufficient data points</i>	<i>insufficient data points</i>

Appendix 1.1.2: Prices per square meter, using different permutations of the sampled data

<b>Price per Square Meter of all types of residential property</b> (courtyard and apartment) in the Old City (original field data only)	<b>2004</b> (n=25)	<b>2008/9</b> (n=28)	<b>Change</b>
<b>Average</b>	SYP 9,136 / m <sup>2</sup>	SYP 29,413 / m <sup>2</sup>	+ 222%
<b>Median</b>	SYP 6,696 / m <sup>2</sup>	SYP 15,000 / m <sup>2</sup>	+ 124%
<b>Minimum</b>	SYP 2000 / m <sup>2</sup>	SYP 140 / m <sup>2</sup>	
<b>Maximum</b>	SYP 45,833 / m <sup>2</sup>	SYP 266,667 / m <sup>2</sup>	
<b>Standard Deviation (range encompassing two-thirds of sample)</b>	SYP 8,795 / m <sup>2</sup>	SYP 51,706 / m <sup>2</sup>	+488%

<b>Price per Square Meter of courtyard homes</b> in the Old City (original field data only)	<b>2004</b> (n=19)	<b>6/1/2008-6/1/2009</b> (n=18)	<b>Change</b>
<b>Average</b>	SYP 10,626	SYP 29,413	+ 260%
<b>Median</b>	SYP 8,117	SYP 15,000	+ 102%
<b>Minimum</b>	SYP 299	SYP 140	
<b>Maximum</b>	SYP 50,000	SYP 266,667	
<b>Standard Deviation</b>	SYP 11,454	SYP 51,706	+ 498%

<b>Outside the old city: Change in residential sale prices (SYP/m<sup>2</sup>) in control neighborhoods.</b>			
	<b>2004</b>	<b>2008-9</b>	<b>Change</b>
AVERAGE	SYP 47,636 / m <sup>2</sup>	SYP 10,720 / m <sup>2</sup>	+ 344%
MEDIAN	SYP 25,000 / m <sup>2</sup>	SYP 8,667 / m <sup>2</sup>	+ 188%
MINIMUM	SYP 6,364 / m <sup>2</sup>	SYP 6,667 / m <sup>2</sup>	
MAXIMUM	SYP 20,833 / m <sup>2</sup>	SYP 333,333 / m <sup>2</sup>	
STANDARD DEV	SYP 4,722 / m <sup>2</sup>	SYP 64,530 / m <sup>2</sup>	

<b>Two 'comparable' neighborhoods outside of the old city</b>		<b>2004</b>	<b>2008-9</b>	<b>CHANGE</b>
KALLASEH	Median	7,846	14,000	+78%
	Standard Deviation	2,932	17,125	+484%

HILLUK	Median	6,735	20,446	+204%
	Standard Deviation	9,412	23,333	+148%

Grouped neighborhoods	SD 2004	SD 2008-9	Change in Standard Deviation
Northeast	\$ 832	\$ 1,541	+ 85%
North	\$ 5,740	\$ 17,444	+ 204%
North extramurus	\$ 16,237	\$ 442	-97%
Northwest	\$ 27,875	\$ 131,760	+373%
Southeast	\$ 4,856	\$ 10,884	+124%
Southwest	\$ 20,911	\$ 49,636	+137%

APPENDIX I: PRELIMINARY STATISTICAL CALCULATIONS (Made with Stata Student v.13)

Note #1: Looking back, I realized these would have been more meaningful if done analyzing the change in price by property (for those for which I have reported prices for both 2009 and 2004).

Anyways, this is a first attempt!

**a. Increased range**

The range of sales prices (95% confidence interval) in 2009 is treble that of 2004, suggesting that increased variation has come into the market.

*Note: I think I interpreted this correctly, but please let me know if I didn't!*





Controlling for size, properties sold in the Old City are still significantly negatively related to the sales price, and sell, in this estimate for an average of SYP 15,161 per meter less than the sales reported for homes in the new city during the same time periods.

```
. regress pricepm2_2 sq_meters oldcity_1 courtyard_2
```

Source	SS	df	MS			
Model	1.7093e+10	3	5.6978e+09	Number of obs =	114	
Residual	1.0064e+11	110	914945203	F( 3, 110) =	6.23	
Total	1.1774e+11	113	1.0419e+09	Prob > F =	0.0006	
				R-squared =	0.1452	
				Adj R-squared =	0.1219	
				Root MSE =	30248	

pricepm2_2	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
sq_meters	107.1006	29.30635	3.65	0.000	49.02234	165.1789
oldcity_1	-15161.02	7699.239	-1.97	0.051	-30419.1	97.06341
courtyard_2	171.2158	7609.721	0.02	0.982	-14909.47	15251.9
_cons	16289.19	6033.674	2.70	0.008	4331.868	28246.52

**1c. Variation inside the Old City** Linear regression test on the variation in price/sqm in relation with the property size (sq\_meters), the type of residence (courtyard home, apartment-style home, or basement), and the neighborhoods in the old city. In this particular combination, only the northwestern neighborhood grouping – Jdeideh, Hazzaze, Saliba and Sheikh Ali – are statistically significant, with a strong positive relation of 47,000 SYP/m<sup>2</sup> addition associated with the area. The two north eastern neighborhoods have a high negative coefficient, but it is not significant.

```
. regress pricepm2_2 sq_meters courtyard_2 Qalaat_ashSharif_Bab_aMaqam Bandara
> ikhAbuBakr Taratellar Bayyada_Jbeileh_BabalAhmar Akyol_Almaji_Maysaloun QadiAs
> Safahiyya_Bizzeh_Qasileh-TahtaIQ BabanNeirab Jalloum_BabQinnisrine
note: Lulu_SheikhAbuBakr omitted because of collinearity
```

Source	SS	df	MS			
Model	1.8144e+10	12	1.5120e+09	Number of obs =	73	
Residual	6.3122e+10	60	1.0520e+09	F( 12, 60) =	1.44	
Total	8.1266e+10	72	1.1287e+09	Prob > F =	0.1747	
				R-squared =	0.2233	
				Adj R-squared =	0.0679	
				Root MSE =	32435	

pricepm2_2	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
sq_meters	.8868498	40.70463	0.02	0.983	-80.53453	82.30823
courtyard_2	-375.9128	10465.29	-0.04	0.971	-21309.61	20557.78
Qalaat_ash~m	-7540.681	23962.08	-0.31	0.754	-55471.99	40390.63
Bandara_Fa~r	2296.48	24462.51	0.09	0.926	-46635.82	51228.78
Lulu_Sheik~r	(omitted)					
Taratellar	-9033.657	25863.86	-0.35	0.728	-60769.09	42701.77
Bayyada_Jb~r	3139.213	24577.76	0.13	0.899	-46023.62	52302.04
Akyol_Alma~n	-54.95733	21352.49	-0.00	0.998	-42766.3	42656.38
QadiAskar	-9830.368	39077.46	-0.25	0.802	-87996.92	68336.19
Jdeideh_sa~h	47001.87	23917.85	1.97	0.054	-840.9618	94844.69
Safahiyya_~Q	4263.596	23654.83	0.18	0.858	-43053.11	51580.3
BabanNeirab	-6354.109	22383.95	-0.28	0.777	-51128.68	38420.46
Jalloum_Ba~e	64.99334	26730.95	0.00	0.998	-53404.86	53534.85
_cons	14302.64	19270.19	0.74	0.461	-24243.48	52848.75

#### 1d. Impact of Neighborhood Variation

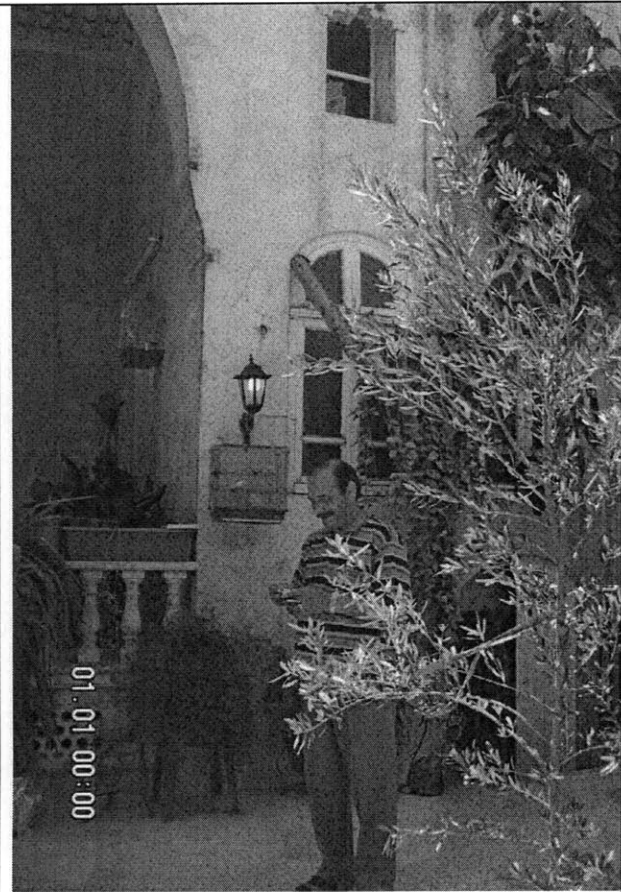
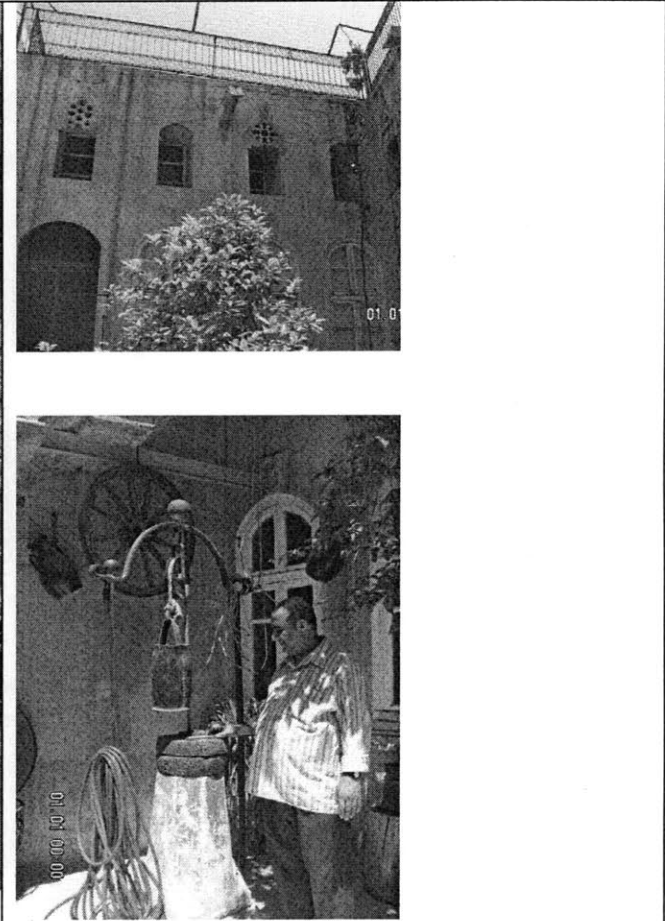
When taken in sum across the new and old cities, neighborhood variation is estimated to be less than 30% of the impact on prices. (question for Annette: should I be paying attention to the adjusted R-Squared here, or the normal one? Or are neither really relevant?)

Source	SS	df	MS	Number of obs = 124		
Model	28572.378	26	1098.93761	F( 26, 97) =	1.61	
Residual	66400.4204	97	684.540417	Prob > F =	0.0511	
Total	94972.7984	123	772.136572	R-squared =	0.3008	
				Adj R-squared =	0.1134	
				Root MSE =	26.164	

price	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
n3	5.635866	6.439586	0.88	0.384	-7.14493	18.41666
n4	3.097263	9.032637	0.34	0.732	-14.83002	21.02455
tabiq	.4773253	7.489028	0.06	0.949	-14.38632	15.34097
sqmeters	.1000242	.0208932	4.79	0.000	.0585569	.1414915
old_city	-1.541915	33.2888	-0.05	0.963	-67.61097	64.52714
store	6.66835	9.504259	0.70	0.485	-12.19497	25.53167
adamiyya	(omitted)					
bustan	.264631	22.16386	0.01	0.990	-43.7245	44.25376
kallaseh	1.786154	20.77332	0.09	0.932	-39.44314	43.01545
bandara	-1.977805	28.97657	-0.07	0.946	-59.48828	55.53267
lulu	2.525815	29.56733	0.09	0.932	-56.15715	61.20878
bab_alahma	-.6829148	32.19913	-0.02	0.983	-64.58928	63.22345
taratellar	-4.386638	29.32545	-0.15	0.881	-62.58953	53.81626
bayyada	1.822677	29.01678	0.06	0.950	-55.7676	59.41296
shahba	4.637797	21.5713	0.21	0.830	-38.17526	47.45085
hilluk	-5.768608	20.93837	-0.28	0.784	-47.32548	35.78827
akyol	1.365899	28.95464	0.05	0.962	-56.10105	58.83285
almaji	1.210327	27.99299	0.04	0.966	-54.348	56.76866
qadiaskar	(omitted)					
jdeideh	3.575541	28.55611	0.13	0.901	-53.10043	60.25151
adamiya	-9.687738	23.98019	-0.40	0.687	-57.28178	37.90631
ajjam	1.544481	30.2857	0.05	0.959	-58.56426	61.65322
safahiyya	-.8605159	28.66071	-0.03	0.976	-57.74409	56.02306
qalaat_ash	.3783394	30.285	0.01	0.990	-59.729	60.48568
bab_anneir	1.553935	28.77236	0.05	0.957	-55.55124	58.65911
jalloum	-8.834482	29.37523	-0.30	0.764	-67.13619	49.46722
babqinnis	32.96621	28.32255	1.16	0.247	-23.2462	89.17863
sabil	-2.829425	22.66463	-0.12	0.901	-47.81243	42.15359
_cons	-13.09637	20.93811	-0.63	0.533	-54.65272	28.45997

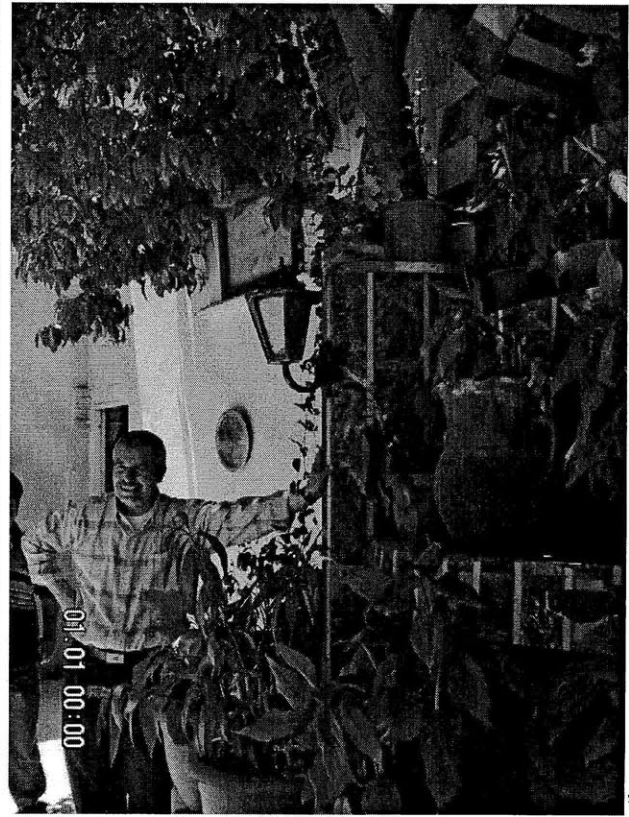
APPENDIX VI: NON-TRADITIONAL RETURNEES (lower-middle income households who have bought or are restoring courtyard homes. Photos and quotes from interviews, 6-7/2009)

	
<p>In a poor neighborhood. Moved to the old city because he has a <i>hiwaya</i> – whimsical love- for old homes. Used to live in a courtyard house with his grandparents outside of the old city, then moved to an apartment. He conducted all the restoration himself over</p>	<p>“this is us – this is how our grandparents lived...just like <i>bab al hara</i> – they even wanted to film something here once, but I didn’t let them – it wouldn’t be easy for my women, and upset the calm of the house..”</p>

several years.



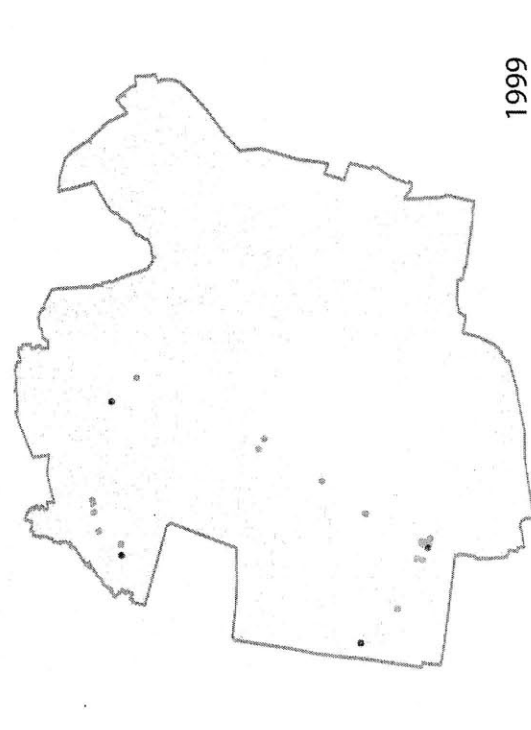
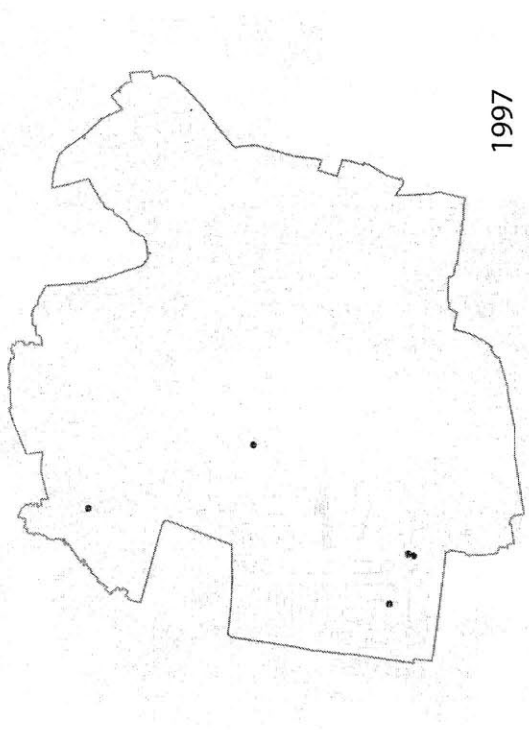
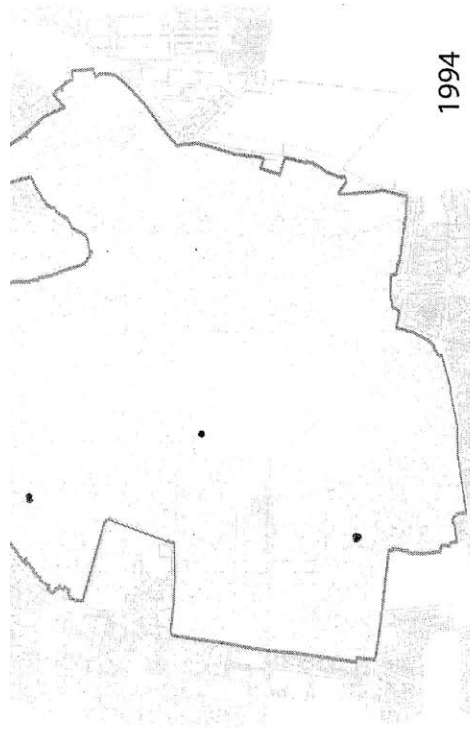
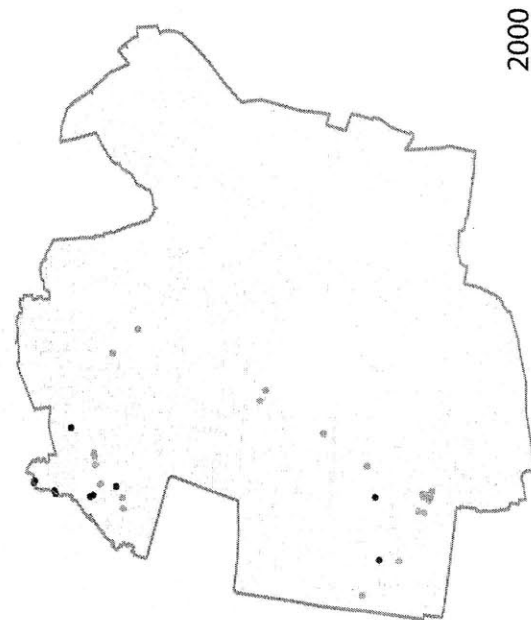
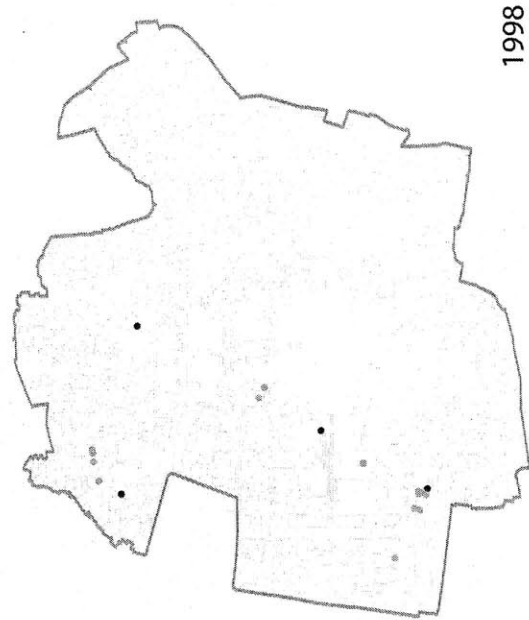
New bathroom tile going into an ottoman-era courtyard home, also in a poorer area.



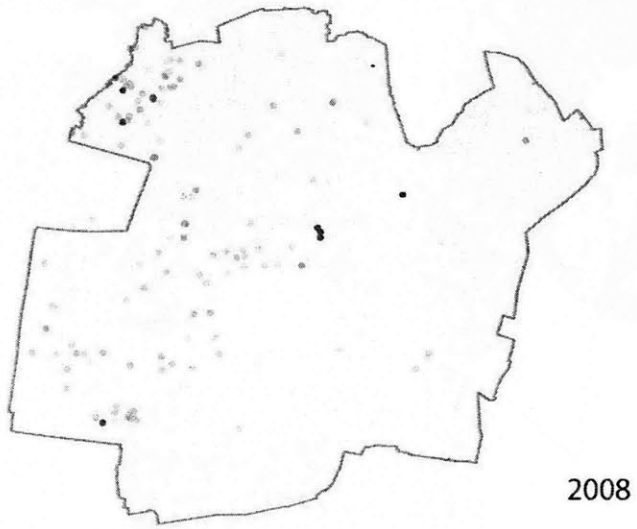
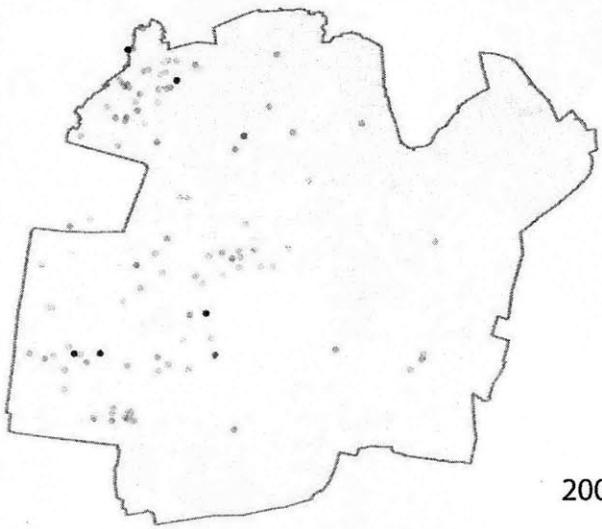
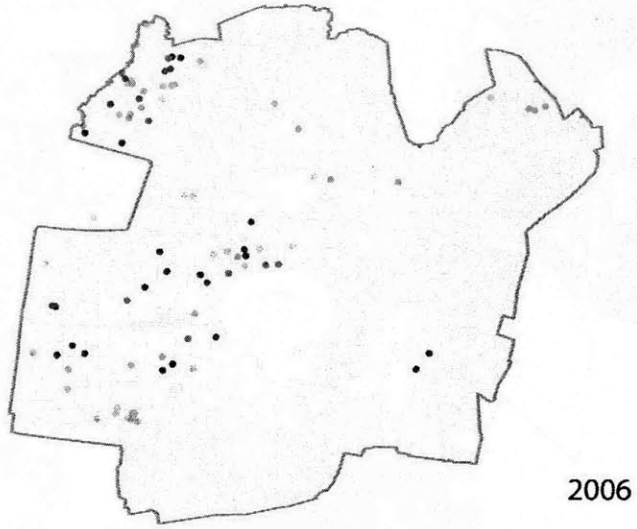
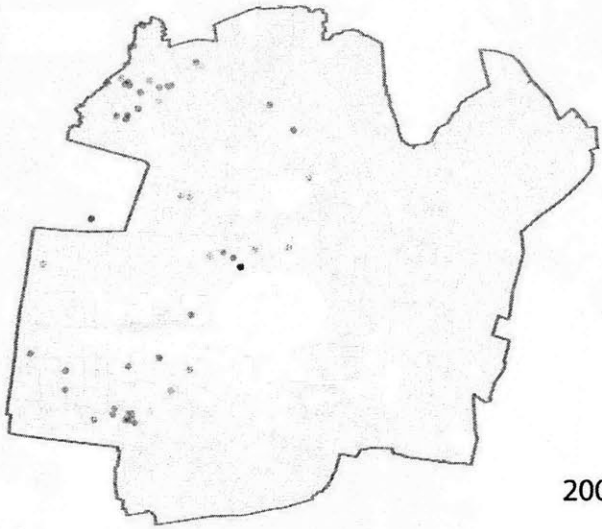
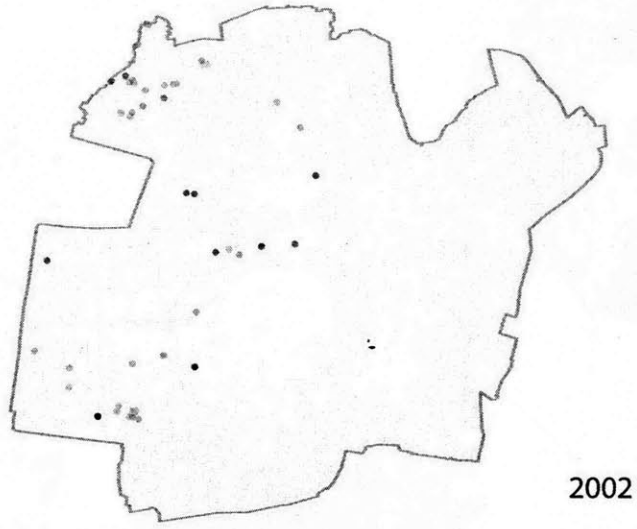
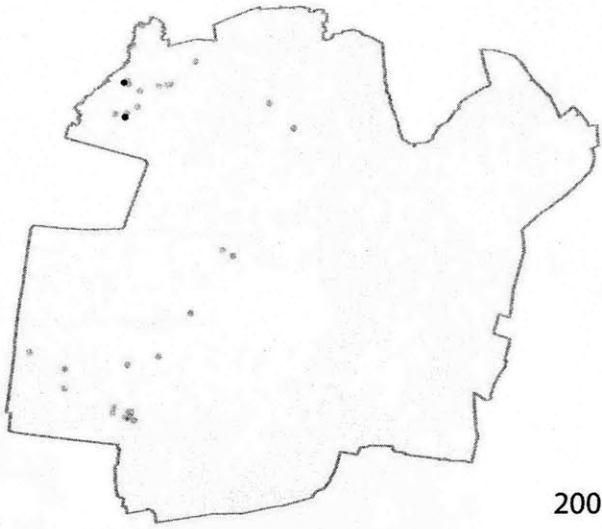
Water and plants are essential to life...this house lets you breathe'.

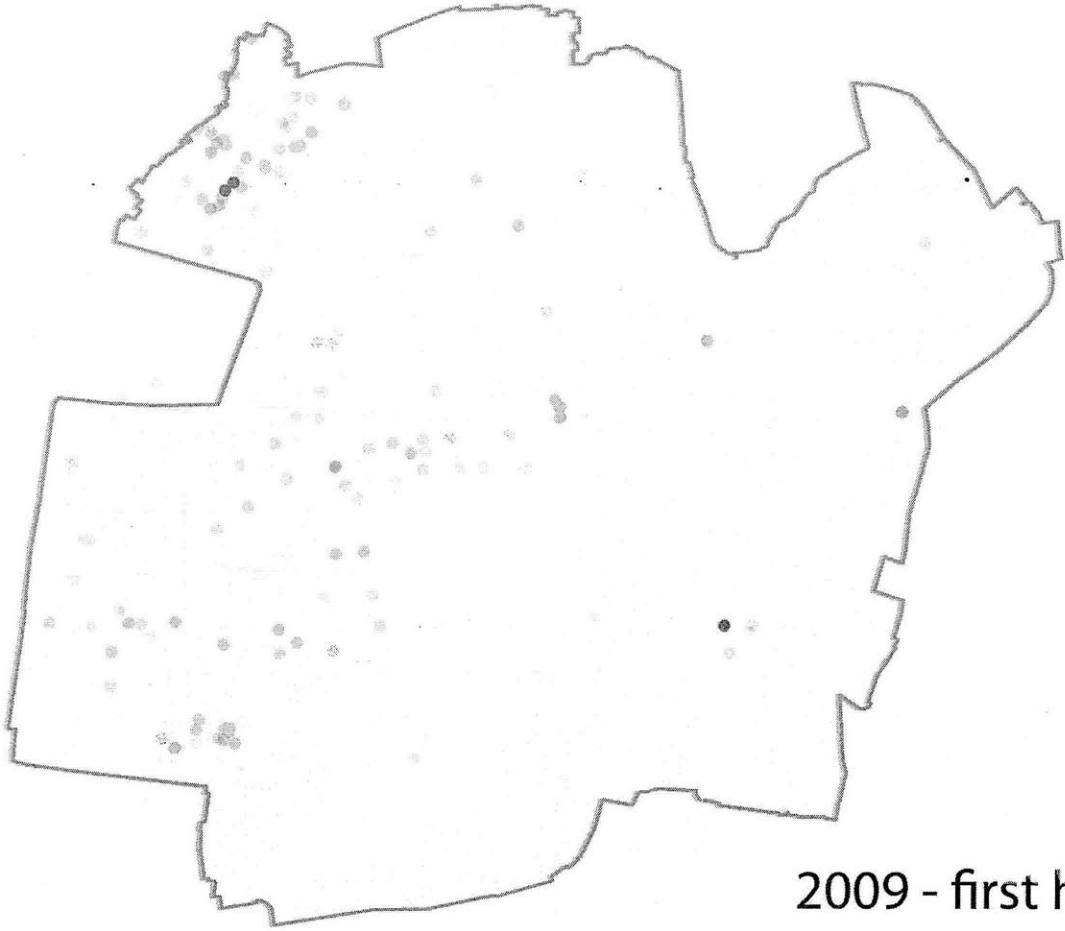


Informal (non-permitted) restoration of a small courtyard home. “I moved here because it was a house that I could afford, and it has space for children.” (Young medium-low income trader, recently married).









2009 - first half