Exposed as they are to ever increasing pressures of modern urban development and to creeping globalised uniformity, the historic cities of the Islamic world represent a rich cultural legacy worth preserving as a reference and source of inspiration for future generations. Unlike most of their Western counterparts, many of them managed to survive as authentic living cities, in spite of physical decline and economic depression. Their skilfully adorned monuments, whether made of stone, brick or timber, carry the imprint of timeless spiritual messages which still speak to present users. The cohesive patterns of their historic urban fabric embody meaningful modes of social interaction and tangible environmental qualities, which transmit the experience of past generations and are still able to shape and support contemporary community life; for the values inherent to their spatial configurations transcend short-lived changes and fashions.

Such contextual values, sadly absent in most of our planned modern towns, constitute the cultural essence of historic cities. To use an analogy from literature, the qualitative rapport between single components has the power to transform a series of words into significant information or, even better, to make the difference between 'prose' and 'poetry'. This is why a city can become a collective work of art, or rather a living cultural experience, perpetuated by means of social rituals and local myths and tales. Cairo, in particular, is engraved in the cultural memory of Muslim visitors, readers, and listeners. Since medieval times, prominent travellers such as Nasir-i-Khosraw, Ibn Jubayr and Ibn Battuta have praised its splendours. The endless flow of stories contained in The Thousand and One Nights features Cairo, together with Baghdad, as the most recurrent backdrop for all sorts of experiences and adventures. More recently, Naguib Mahfouz, in his novels, has immortalised the popular life in old Cairo, as he witnessed it in the first half of the twentieth century.

The accumulated architectural legacy of historic Islamic cities, then, is not of merely material character, but encompasses much wider dimensions of human existence and aspirations. Physical restoration alone can therefore never come to grips with the essential task, which is to keep historic cities alive as a matrix of perpetuated cultural productivity and achievement. That is why more comprehensive approaches are needed which may best be summarised by the term 'rehabilitation'. The intended connotation is that urban rehabilitation aims not only at the restoration of the outer shell, but also at reviving the inner driving forces, which need to be revitalised in order to enable a
historic city to recover its inherent inner strength, to make the best use of its inbuilt resources and potentials, and eventually to progress in accordance with its own rhythms and constraints.

THE COMPLEXITY OF URBAN CONSERVATION

Conservation of historic cities is collateral to, and yet fundamentally different from, conservation of single monuments. While archaeological sites and unique monuments can occasionally be ‘frozen’ in a given or chosen state of evolution, historic cities as a whole cannot be kept in a museal state — with the rare exception of small urban ensembles conserved for tourist purposes. As a rule, however, historic cities are required to cope with the changing needs of their inhabitants in order to flourish and to be properly sustained. The real challenge is not how to preserve them, but how to establish a living, that is, an ongoing and evolving, cultural tradition which leads organically from the past into the future, while respecting most significant historic and environmental characteristics of a given urban fabric. This implies continuous maintenance, repair, and adaption (rather than demolition) of the traditional housing stock which provides the flesh, as it were, around the historic landmarks. Social facilities, public services, and public open spaces become other key components of such a contextual approach, since they are closely interlocked with housing, with commercial activities, and with major monuments still used by local communities.

The complexity of urban rehabilitation, understood as a multi-faceted cultural, social, technical, economic and institutional task, calls for equally wide-ranging measures which need to be applied
judiciously to the delicate grain of the physical and social fabric of historic cities. Coordinated investments by the government and by residents, landowners, and other stakeholders are required to ensure maintenance and, occasionally, careful substitution of obsolete single elements of the built environment. This presupposes the availability not only of a modicum of funding but also of the specific technical and social skills which used to be part of the traditional know-how.

Unfortunately, in most surviving historic cities in Islamic countries — and Cairo is no exception — funding sources and local expertise have become equally rare. Both the public and the private sector suffer from inherent weaknesses, are not used to cooperating efficiently, and tend to keep their limited investments for the further development of modern urban districts. Imported modern Western planning procedures tend to disaggregate previously integrated urban and social structures, thus dissolving the contextual values which constituted the strength of the historic urban fabric. While modern, Western-type city administrations exist (and often tend to block the traditional self-management of local communities which used to function in the old times), they rarely have the tools to deal with the intricate and complex problems in the old city. Here, focused grass-roots involvement, qualified plot-by-plot decisions and permanent feedback are required, rather than simplistic top-bottom implementation of abstract planning schemes which are too remote from the realities on the ground.

Yet the most important single factor responsible for the decline of historic cities in the Islamic world of today may well be of a psychological nature. It consists of prevailing negative prejudices and attitudes towards the depressed image of historic districts — some of them reflecting Western concepts of Modernism now outdated in their own countries of origin. With the progressive emigration of the former bourgeoisie from the old city into modern urban extensions (as has happened since the middle of the twentieth century), the social profile of historic cities has changed. A new population, often originating from the countryside, has been urbanised by adapting to the mould of the traditional urban fabric, which, in fact, is much closer to the structure of traditional villages than to that of modern urban developments. In doing so, the new residents have tended to consti-
tute new social networks and economic sub-systems, but can find little or no support as long as the historic city is wrongly considered as a sort of ‘slum’ awaiting demolition and modern wholesale redevelopment.

**THE NEED FOR AN INTEGRATED APPROACH**

Any intervention in historic cities, particularly in the developing world, must therefore aim at reversing this poor image by creatively uncovering new, previously unsuspected opportunities. Restoration and reuse of historic landmarks or public open spaces as focal points of civic pride and identity are one step towards achieving this, but they have to go hand-in-hand with the revitalisation of the resources and capacities of local communities from within. Broad-based and well-focused socio-economic development projects are needed in order to raise living standards, provide employment, support existing small enterprises and deal with health, education, and women’s affairs. Most importantly, the prevailing mood of general disinvestment and lack of trust — resulting from the threat of eventual demolition and displacement of residents — must be overcome by appropriate confidence-building initiatives. Only then will it be possible to tap and unlock the dormant assets of the old city — which reside in its convenient central location, in its potential environmental qualities, and, most of all, in the available social capital constituted by people’s sense of initiative and solidarity.

Taking into account the complexity of the subject, the art of urban rehabilitation (or ‘urban husbandry’ as it has once been defined⁴) is therefore predicated on the involvement of a wide range of professional disciplines and corresponding interventions. Their mutual interaction is essential for

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⁴ Urban husbandry: a term coined to describe the care of a city and its environment, similar to how a husband takes care of a wife. It emphasizes the active management and preservation of urban spaces.
achieving an integrated approach to the various layers of problems in historic cities. The following list is an attempt to sketch out the scope to be covered.

Documentation and Interpretation. The morphology of the historic urban form, in most cases ‘organically’ grown over many centuries, must be recorded, analysed, and creatively interpreted to provide a suitable framework not only for conservation, but also for careful repair and substitution of individual components, whenever needed. Detailed historic and structural analyses, sometimes including archaeological research, are also required to understand the structure and the historic layers of significant monuments. In parallel, the urban fabric has to be surveyed plot by plot with regard to land use, social stratification, physical condition, and so on.

Appropriate Planning Technologies. Sustainable ways of introducing modern infrastructure must be investigated, and existing tools and techniques must be adapted in order to provide an optimum level of viability without disrupting the essential features of the historic urban form. This often calls for trade-offs, particularly when it comes to vehicular traffic. For uncontrolled vehicular accessibility can annihilate the human scale and environmental qualities of centrally located historic nuclei and cause far-reaching damage in their physical and social fabric. Alternative options to be explored are peripheral car parking combined with limited service access and public transportation reaching the pedestrian city centre.

Improvement of Housing and Infrastructure Conditions. Introducing or improving water supply, sewerage, and electricity networks is essential, but requires the corresponding networks to be adjusted to the constraints of the given urban form and the particular housing typology. The crucial issue here is that urban conservation has to integrate many modern planning and engineering disciplines without allowing conventional practices and procedures (derived from a different context) to dictate the form of intervention in the historic fabric. Rehabilitation of the traditional housing stock must be pursued directly (through technical assistance, small grants, and special credit lines), as well as indirectly, that is, through improvement of infrastructure, social facilities, and environmental quality.

Public Open Space Enhancement. Often public open spaces — whether streets, squares, or barren land — are neglected because they are seen as residual spaces towards which no one feels responsible. Re-establishing a sense of ownership and care by involving the local community in corresponding upgrading projects is a tool to foster civic pride and solidarity. Moreover, improvements in public open spaces often provide an important leverage by motivating adjacent house owners or tenants to upgrade their own premises.
Fig. 43. In the northern areas of Pakistan, projects include the restoration of several forts (such as Baltit and Shigar) and other landmark buildings in conjunction with rehabilitation of traditional settlements.

Fig. 44. In Zanzibar, the HcSP has completed the restoration of the former 'Old Dispensary', one of many empty landmark buildings on the waterfront now being put to new uses.

Fig. 45. In Samarkand, Uzbekistan, the HcSP has assisted the Municipality in preparing a new master plan for the Timurid city. Several private houses and a Mahalla centre were restored with active cooperation by residents.

Fig. 46. In Mostar, Bosnia, projects concentrate on the rehabilitation of the historic neighbourhoods adjacent to the famous Old Bridge and on the restoration of a number of key monuments destroyed during the civil war.

Fig. 47. A detailed planning and urban design scheme is being developed around Aleppo Citadel, Syria.

Fig. 48. Rehabilitation and upgrading of the Timur Shah Mausoleum, an important landmark set in the midst of the old markets and adjacent to a former garden and the Kabul riverbanks, Afghanistan.
Conservation and Adaptive Reuse of Historic Buildings. When funding is short, it may not always be possible to conserve or restore the architectural heritage in full. Priority must be given to projects that can foster a sense of ownership and solidarity in the local community, and that can become catalysts for corollary urban conservation and renewal processes. The best way to achieve this is to combine the restoration with an appropriate type of adaptive reuse which is socially relevant to the community and generates an income basis capable of ensuring the long-term maintenance of the restored building.

Socio-Economic Development. Raising existing living standards is essential in order to back up parallel conservation and rehabilitation projects and to ensure that local communities stand behind the overall rehabilitation effort. The most urgent needs of the population living or working in the project area have to be surveyed and assessed. Projects in health, education, employment, and small enterprise development have to be set up in order to boost income, generate opportunities, and enable residents to actively participate in a continuous rehabilitation process. Incidentally, conservation projects offer many opportunities for training in specialised conservation skills and for the creation of new economic dynamics. Most importantly, the pride, solidarity, and sense of ownership of local communities can be boosted through their active involvement.

Institutional Support Systems. An appropriate local institutional system has to be built up (or strengthened) in order to coordinate, drive and sustain the rehabilitation efforts, drawing both on internal resources and external contributions and incentives. Local associations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and local government have to work closely together. Central government institutions need to encourage this effort, particularly with regard to overriding legal and planning frameworks, funding priorities, and financial mechanisms. However, no overriding planning policies will ever work if local communities are not backing such initiatives at their own level of action.

THE HISTORIC CITIES SUPPORT PROGRAMME AND ITS CAIRO ACTIVITIES

The approach sketched out above is a distillation of the field experience accumulated by the Historic Cities Support Programme (HCSP) — a division of the Geneva-based Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC), established in 1992 to implement the initiatives of His Highness the Aga Khan in the field of conservation and urban rehabilitation. Since its inception, HCSP has built up experience in a variety of geographical regions of the Islamic world, in both urban and rural settings.

Instances of interventions have included, so far: the restoration of historical forts and palaces in the valleys of Hunza and Baltistan (Northern Pakistan), in conjunction with the rehabilitation of traditional villages and environmental ensembles; the conservation plan for the Old Stone Town in Zanzibar combined with the improvement of its old housing stock, as well as the restoration of key
monuments and the upgrading of the waterfront; a plan for the revitalisation of the Timurid city of Samarkand; restoration and reconstruction projects in the war-struck historic nucleus of Mostar (Bosnia). In addition, major conservation and urban rehabilitation projects are now being implemented in Aleppo and Kabul. While many of these projects were initially tackled from the conservation and adaptive reuse end, further evolution led to the progressive integration of associated activities, such as housing improvement, urban planning, landscaping, social initiatives, small enterprise development and micro-credits, thus generating a new type of holistic area development project. The duration of projects and their expansion have largely depended on the response of local communities and support received from local authorities and other donors. The overriding principle has always been that technical and financial aid should stimulate revitalisation within local communities, rather than making them dependent on external support.5

Intervening in the historic city of Cairo was perhaps the biggest challenge of the Programme so far. Not only is the wealth of monuments in this Islamic metropolis overwhelming, it is also matched by towering problems linked to poor socio-economic conditions, deficient services and infrastructure, rising ground-water table, lack of public open spaces, and poor maintenance of the traditional housing stock often no longer inhabited by the owners. To make things worse, the pressures of a sixteen to eighteen million metropolis on the historic centre are enormous in terms of vehicular traffic impact, large-scale economic activities, tourism, and so on. Moreover, the intricacies of Egyptian bureaucracy, notorious since Pharaonic times, pose certain problems due to a highly centralised system with little decision-making power being delegated to local administrative units. The division of governmental authority into various sectorial domains (Traffic, Housing, Antiquities, Religious Domains, and so on) makes it difficult to overcome fragmentation of tasks and functions in the field. The role of NGOs, although agreed to in theory, has not been fully implemented. During the past decades, several well-intentioned planning projects for the historic city initiated by UNESCO, the UNDP, and the Egyptian Government have failed (or were only partially realised). This confirms the difficulty of implementing a project in conventional ways, that is, through mere top-bottom planning strategies, whereas conditions for the reverse approach are not yet in place.

The current HCSP activities in the Darb al-Ahmar district can be seen as an attempt to bridge this gap—by closely cooperating with the Cairo Governorate, the Supreme Council of Antiquities and the Awqaf Department (Religious Endowments), while at the same time mobilising a maximum of community participation and involvement. Without aiming at an over-ambitious ‘general’ solution for historic Cairo, it provides a pragmatic model for an action area intervention which is both holistic and focused on well-articulated spaces and corresponding social constituencies.

Reflecting the progressive evolution of the Programme, the objectives of the HCSP project in Cairo in the early years (1992–1995) were limited to a landscaping project on the Darassa Hills, thus
converting a vast derelict site at the heart of the historic metropolis into a thirty-hectare urban park. Alone, the Azhar Park project would already have had a major impact on the city of Cairo. But during its implementation the total scope of work took on much more complex dimensions, combining and integrating a number of additional activities. The conservation of the newly uncovered twelfth-century Ayyubid city wall (on the western slope of the park) became a natural follow-up to the general park intervention. The conservation of the wall was, however, not feasible without simultaneously tackling the abutting fabric of the Darb al-Ahmar district, which in turn led to extended programmes for the rehabilitation of historic housing clusters, the improvement of public open spaces, and a range of socio-economic development projects in the realm of health, education, community participation, small enterprise development, and so on. Built up step by step, this extended scope of work will continue for several years, beyond the completion of the initial park project, inaugurated in spring 2004. Its total impact will rely on the fact that the synergies between single project components make it become much more than the sum of its parts.

Accordingly, the benefits to be derived for the city of Cairo are manifold: Azhar Park itself provides a major public facility on a metropolitan scale and complements other grands projets undertaken by the Egyptian Government, such as:

- the recent construction of the Azhar Tunnel (which will eventually allow the re-connection of the two halves of the Fatimid city, hitherto divided by an elevated express road cutting through it);
- the forthcoming pedestrianisation and beautification of the large square between al-Azhar Mosque and al-Hussein Mosque, that is, the major place of assembly in the historic city;
- the ‘Massive Intervention’ aimed at restoring the series of major Islamic monuments along the old Fatimid spine of al-Muizz Street (see also the chapter by Nairy Hampikian).

Acting as a new pole of attraction for visitors, the park will pull important pedestrian streams from Azhar Square and al-Muizz Street into its boundaries, thereby galvanising the intermedi-
ate districts. Thus, it will be acting as a catalyst for the revitalisation of the whole adjacent Darb al-Ahmar district—a trend which is reinforced and extended by the historic wall restoration and by the array of physical and socio-economic rehabilitation projects across the wall. What is more, the new park will help change the perception and the ‘image’ of the complete old city, by literally allowing it to be seen from a new and extremely attractive perspective.

SCOPE OF WORK AND INTERACTION BETWEEN PROJECT COMPONENTS

The thirty-hectare Azhar Park project on the vacant dumping site of the Darassa Hills was first proposed by His Highness the Aga Khan to the City of Cairo in 1984. Implementation was delayed because the site had to be cleared from storage facilities and because USAID had to use the site for the construction of three large water tanks ensuring the drinking water supply to the city of Cairo. Indeed, the site offers a unique resource, miraculously preserved throughout centuries of urban development. It is surrounded by the most significant historic landmarks of Islamic Cairo, all of which are major destinations for visitors to the city. To the west are the Fatimid city and its extension, al-Darb al-Ahmar, with their wealth of mosques, madrasas (religious schools) and mausolea, signalled by a long series of minarets. To the south is the Sultan Hasan Mosque and its surroundings, as well as the Ayyubid Citadel. To the east is the Mamluk City of the Dead, with its many social welfare complexes sponsored by Mamluk sultans and dignitaries—a former necropolis which has developed into a dense urban entity of its own with an estimated two to three hundred thousand inhabitants. The hilly topography of the site, formed by debris accumulated since the fifteenth-century, provides elevated vantage points that dominate the city and offer a spectacular 360° panorama over the townscape of historic Cairo—a potential which has been fully exploited by the site plan.

The aim of the project was to provide an exceptional facility not only for the residents of the historic city but for all citizens of Cairo. The park therefore has both a popular dimension in terms of wide-spread leisure areas inviting people to meet, to rest and to picnic on the ground, and a more sophisticated dimension in terms of a prestigious hilltop restaurant and a lakeside café. The latter will set high-quality standards for the whole complex and add two prominent new landmarks to the Cairo townscape. The design of the park projects typical geometrical elements of traditional Islamic gardens onto the topography of the site without subjecting it to rigid transformations. Thus the formal ‘spine’ and the associated terraces and geometrical gardens are complemented by soft-shaped hills and a small lake. A network of informal pathways surrounds the more formal garden areas and leads through all levels and corners of the site. Together, the various components of the park design will provide the visitor with a unique and rich visual experience not available in any other area of Cairo (for more details, see the chapter by Cameron Rashti).
During the massive re-grading of the western park slope descending towards al-Darb al-Ahmar, the formerly buried Ayyubid city wall from the late twelfth-century AD, built under Sultan Salah al-Din along the western edge of the historic city, was re-discovered and, in part, excavated. One section had been covered by a road and temporary market structures and had to be excavated in toto. This wall, with its gates, towers, and interior chambers and galleries, is in itself one of the most important archaeological discoveries of the past decades relating to the Islamic period in Egypt. Over 1300 metres long, it will form a distinctive third element between the park and al-Darb al-Ahmar, providing an interesting enclosure and backdrop for the park, as well as a monument which can be visited from within, by acceding to the various gates, towers, and galleries. The historic wall physically separates the park from al-Darb al-Ahmar and the historic city, but also acts as an attractive visual and functional connection, offering opportunities to visitors to enter the city from the park, and vice versa.

While constituting an architectural feature in its own right, the city wall could not be dissociated from the adjacent Darb al-Ahmar district, neither conceptually nor physically. Over the centuries, the houses and monuments buttressing the wall on the city side became an integral part of Cairo's urban and social history. Selective removal of encroaching elements was undertaken by the project as part of the restoration process (see the chapter by Francesco Siravo and Frank Matero). Yet a wholesale demolition of the historic housing stock attached to the city wall — as foreshadowed in a twenty-year-old decree by the Supreme Council of Antiquities — was discarded, since it
would have contradicted today's prevailing international conservation philosophy and practice. Moreover, such radical clearance might have introduced undesirable and dangerous development pressures.

Currently, selective case-by-case approvals for restoration and rehabilitation of individual buildings along the wall are being obtained from the authorities, without lifting the current freeze on new construction which prevents speculative redevelopment in this sensitive area. The goal is to take advantage of the stimulus resulting from the upgrading of the park and at the same time impose clear building regulations and redevelopment models, in order to achieve a balanced rehabilitation process on this critical edge of the city facing the park. The most prominent ruined building restored under this 'gentlemen's agreement' with the authorities was the Shoughlan Street School, a hundred-year-old apartment building which later served as a school and is now being converted into a community centre. Its pivotal location makes it a symbol of the connection between the park, the wall, and al-Darb al-Ahmar.

Al-Darb al-Ahmar as a whole will indeed benefit from the dramatic reversal of environmental conditions brought about through the park construction. From a former backyard, used for centuries as a dumping ground, the site has now been turned into a highly attractive forecourt to the historic city of Cairo. Thus the community has overcome its former marginalisation, revived historic gates in the old city wall and new additional transition points (such as the Shoughlan Street School) will provide welcome connections between the park and al-Darb al-Ahmar – both for residents who want to use community sports facilities in the park and for visitors who want to cross over or to visit al-Darb al-Ahmar as part of their tour through Islamic Cairo. New itineraries for culturally interested visitors will connect the local Darb al-Ahmar economy to the tourist market – a privilege which has so far been monopolised by the Khan al-Khalilili markets in the northern district of historic Cairo.

However, considering the volatility and the potentially destructive impact of the tourist industry, the main efforts for the rehabilitation of al-Darb al-Ahmar are directed at a broad-based internal revitalisation of the local community and its built environment. To this end, a variety of sub-projects have been initiated which closely associate physical improvements in the domain of housing and public open spaces with a number of socio-economic development projects, such as training and skill enhancement programmes (some of them related to current physical restoration and rehabilitation activities), small enterprise promotion including micro-credit programmes, health clinics, women's and children's education, and so on. Most of these programmes are using or will eventually use spaces in restored historic buildings (for more details, see the chapter by Francesco Siravo). Public participation and NGO enhancement are essential aspects of this endeavour, and have already resulted in increased community pride and commitment.
Within this context, conservation projects on the Khayrbek complex and Umm al-Sultan Shaaban Mosque were initiated, including the restoration of partly collapsed minarets in order to complement the skyline of the historic city as seen from the park site. The ancient madrasas and sabil-kuttabs (fountains with children’s schools on top of them), as well as the remains of an ancient Mamluk palace, all attached to these buildings, offered a welcome potential for community-relevant reuse programmes.

All in all, and unlike the park, the Darb al-Ahmar rehabilitation programme is not geared towards a previously defined end-product, but represents a process which was launched three years ago and will continue for at least another four years, responding to the feedback received from the initial activities; it is expected that it will enable the local community to take a greater share of responsibility in the management of its built environment. The key-stone of the combined physical and social development strategies may well be a future Community Development Agency with strong local participation. To make it self-sustainable, such an institution must be enabled to raise income, drawing on the added value of restored and rehabilitated buildings entrusted to it.

While the AKTC is acting as the lead agency in this comprehensive rehabilitation process, it was fortunate to find other donors, such as the Egyptian Swiss Development Fund, the Ford Foundation, and the World Monuments Fund—all of whom have endorsed and supported this combined conservation and social development programme for years.

Capturing Fringe Benefits
Apart from the park project, the historic wall restoration and the Darb al-Ahmar rehabilitation programme, the AKTC decided to become involved, together with the Cairo Governorate, in two further projects which are being planned and implemented in order to consolidate the fringes of Azhar Park and al-Darb al-Ahmar.

The first project is the ‘Urban Plaza’ complex now being constructed on the north-eastern edge of the park, adjacent to the busy al-Azhar Street. This fringe area, close to the Khan al-Khalili markets and benefiting from excellent vehicular accessibility, has an obvious commercial potential, while it is too noisy and too detached from the upper plateau to be part of the park proper. A commercial building with shops, offices and an integrated multi-storey car park is being developed,
the plan of which was closely coordinated with the park design in terms of entrances, terraces and shared facilities.

All the net income from the future operation of this complex will be used to sustain the future operation, maintenance, and enhancement of the park and its neighbourhood. It thus provides a further source of income for the park and al-Darb al-Ahmar in addition to entry tickets. This method of ensuring self-sustainability is based on a traditional concept of Muslim societies, that is, the *waqf* model, whereby income-generating facilities are constituted as an endowment to support the maintenance of religious and public buildings. The same idea is behind the inclusion of commercial facilities within the park, such as the Hilltop Restaurant and the Lakeside Café.

The second fringe project concerns a strip of completely ruined houses on the west side of the newly excavated Ayyubid wall, along a former street leading into al-Darb al-Ahmar which has been lowered by four to five metres in order to expose the historic wall. A complete action area programme has been designed to provide an alternate service road into al-Darb al-Ahmar and to convert the former road along the wall into a pedestrian zone linked to Bab al-Barqiyya—a revived and restored old city gate now leading into the park. The ruined houses along this strip facing the wall and the park are irretrievable and represent prime redevelopment opportunities benefiting from the added value of the AKTC interventions on the park. A programme is currently being prepared for comprehensive and adapted redevelopment of the whole strip of houses with apartments in the upper floors and commercial facilities at street level.

The financial benefits obtained from this urban renewal operation will flow back into the Darb al-Ahmar programmes and the project can eventually constitute a model for similar operations in prime locations, which may later be handled by the future Darb al-Ahmar Development Agency. This venture may pave the way for new, much needed modes of public-private sector cooperation which will work in the interest of a well-balanced development of the historic city. Once repeated in other sectors of the historic city, this procedure could establish an internal cross-subsidising mechanism, whereby the economic potential of easily accessible, prime real estate on the fringe of
the historic city can be used to support improvement of more remote and less privileged areas. The model of the park intervention would thus have shown how the enhancement and revalorisation of a sensitive part of the urban system can act as a financial engine for a comprehensive, self-supported urban rehabilitation process by capitalising on previously dormant assets and making sure their added value is recycled internally, rather than being absorbed by external investors.

1 Ibn Battuta described Cairo as the "mother of cities, boundless in a multitude of buildings, peerless in beauty and splendour, the halting place of feeble and mighty, whose throngs surge as the waves of the sea and can scarce be contained in her for all her size and capacity". From Travels in Africa and Asia, published by H. A. R. Gibb, London 1929.
2 For the flavour of old Cairo around a hundred years ago, see also Albert Adès/Albert Josipovici, Le Livre de Goha le Simple, Calmann-Levy, first published in 1919.
3 For more details see Stefano Bianca, Urban Form in the Arab World - Past and Present, Thames and Hudson, London/New York 2000.
5 A comprehensive presentation of the first twelve years of HCSP activities will be found in the forthcoming book Towards the Rehabilitation of Historic Islamic Cities, edited by Stefano Bianca, Prestel, Munich/New York 2005.