Urban Rehabilitation and Community
Development in al-Darb al-Ahmar

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The work on the park and the historic wall along the critical western edge of the Darassa site raised the issue of how best to harness the dynamics unleashed by the park project onto the adjacent urban area of al-Darb al-Ahmar, a densely built-up district of historic Cairo. The area lies south of the prestigious al-Azhar Mosque and the popular Khan al-Khalili, historic Cairo’s principal tourist bazaar, and is bound by al-Azhar Street, the Darassa Hills and al-Darb al-Ahmar Street. Today, the area is the focus of much public interest, and is on the verge of major changes induced by a number of large-scale projects, including the recent completion of the Azhar Street tunnel, the planned pedestrian square between al-Azhar and al-Hussein, the development of new parking and commercial facilities on the ‘Urban Plaza’ site, and, lastly, the creation of the new Azhar Park on top of the Darassa Hills, a strategic location between the Fatimid city, the Mamluk cemeteries and the Citadel. These developments will dramatically improve the image and importance of al-Darb al-Ahmar over the next several years and call for a carefully studied urban plan of action to guide future interventions in the district.

RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

A vital residential district with many artisans, small enterprises and a strong social cohesion, al-Darb al-Ahmar suffers today from poverty, inadequate infrastructure and a lack of community services. Although endowed with sixty-five registered monuments and several hundred historic buildings, its residential building stock is in very poor condition due to the area’s low family incomes and an economic base that often lags behind other parts of Cairo. The deterioration of the buildings is exacerbated by the imposition of unrealistic rent controls, counter-productive planning constraints and limited access to credit. The common perception of al-Darb al-Ahmar as a haven of crime and drug-related activity generates easy support for plans calling for radical clearance and ‘sanitising’ of the district, thus posing yet another threat to the survival of the historic urban fabric.

Contrary to common perceptions, the Aga Khan Trust for Culture’s survey shows that most adults are gainfully employed and that crime in the district is negligible. Furthermore, over sixty percent of the people have lived in the area for thirty years or more, and almost twenty percent have been there for more than fifty years. Length of residence was found to be the result not of necessity, but
of choice. Most inhabitants feel comfortable and safe in their neighbourhoods. They cite the proximity of family and mosques, as well as the support of their neighbours, as reasons to stay in the area, thus highlighting the very traditional values and sense of community that are said to be lacking. Most importantly, residents view al-Darb al-Ahmar as their permanent home and are ready to invest their own resources to improve their living conditions. The survey thus demonstrates that the essential pre-conditions needed to implement a housing rehabilitation and economic revitalisation programme exist, and that such a programme can be firmly based on the district’s social setting and local resources.

With its pedestrian scale, distinctive monuments, historic buildings and active community al-Darb al-Ahmar has the potential of becoming a vibrant residential and commercial area, as it was in the past, as well as an alternative destination for visitors to Islamic Cairo. The Azhar Park initiative further enhances the district’s prospects and provides a strong impetus for parallel rehabilitation efforts in the area.

But these new opportunities cannot be separated from a number of inherent risks. On the one hand, the new Azhar Park, which is to become metropolitan Cairo’s major green space, will no doubt represent a powerful attraction and a catalyst for change in the old city. It will transform the character of the area as a whole, and it is likely to spur increased public and private investment in the area. On the other hand, speculative pressures could soon determine a pattern of uncontrolled development in the area, leading to the expulsion of both current residents and their enterprises and activities, and so paving the way for a total substitution of the traditional urban fabric. These opportunities and risks must be anticipated, carefully managed and properly channelled through a conscious planning effort.
A PLANNING STRATEGY FOR THE DISTRICT

To this effect, beginning in 1996, the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) and its local subsidiary, the Aga Khan Cultural Services-Egypt (AKCS-E), expanded the scope of its activities in the area and embarked on a comprehensive urban rehabilitation programme for al-Darb al-Ahmar. The AKTC’s long-term strategy focuses on the physical upgrading of the building stock and the socio-economic development of the community, two complementary objectives aimed at the general revitalisation of the entire district. This strategy is consistent with the AKTC’s belief that synergy between physical improvement schemes and community development is essential for launching a genuine process of urban rehabilitation, capable of producing results that can become sustainable and eventually independent of external inputs. This important synergy is recognised by the AKTC’s funding partners, the Egyptian Swiss Fund for Development, the Ford Foundation and the World Monuments Fund, who have generously participated in the combined socio-economic and physical rehabilitation of al-Darb al-Ahmar.

The AKTC’s long-term strategy focuses on an integrated programme of physical and economic revitalisation in an effort to reverse the pattern of decay and improve living, leisure and working conditions. This strategy sees preservation as part of a comprehensive rehabilitation process; it envisions a future for the district in which a stable residential core is enlivened and sustained by a capillary system of small workshops and retail activities, supported by essential infrastructure and community facilities, and made more attractive by well-maintained open spaces and monuments. To realise this vision, conditions must be established to sustain and encourage a stable and self-sufficient population. In turn, this requires improving the economic climate, addressing community development issues and physically upgrading the area. More specifically, actions must be aimed at creating and facilitating access to sustainable employment opportunities for unemployed young
people, providing health and educational facilities, particularly for women and children, and, above all, strengthening civic groups and local institutions that will steer and sustain future actions in the district. Such socially relevant activities can and must go hand in hand with physical rehabilitation projects, such as restoring and reusing key historic structures and providing for their maintenance, upgrading open spaces and the urban environment and ensuring their upkeep, and rehabilitating and improving the existing housing stock. Both the social and the physical aspects are indeed interdependent and can foster significant synergies.

Implementation of such interrelated activities is being sought through a series of pilot projects in specific locations within al-Darb al-Ahmar, strategically located along the historic wall bordering the new park, the corridor that is at relatively higher risk of uncontrolled transformation. The pilot projects take advantage of special opportunities identified during the course of the survey, focusing on individual monuments and historic buildings, on significant public open spaces, and on residential clusters, as described below. These projects offer an opportunity to investigate key conservation and development issues and help identify policies and solutions for physical improvements that can then be applied throughout the district. Whether individual monuments, public spaces or residential areas, these should be viewed not only as rehabilitation projects but also as catalysts towards future social and economic revitalisation.

ENCOURAGING SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

As is the case with any depressed historic area, the priorities in al-Darb al-Ahmar are first and foremost social and economic. The widely held view that only substantial government intervention and public capital can produce results in these spheres overlooks the fact that relatively simple initiatives can have a significant impact. Such a ‘minimalist’ approach is being followed by the AKTC/AKCS-E’s management and staff in al-Darb al-Ahmar with encouraging results. Their experience has been that in order to generate employment it is not necessary to create new jobs. A more efficient strategy is to connect people with existing employment opportunities. With this in mind, a job placement and counselling service was established in the Project’s office in the neighbourhood, leading to the placement of dozens of people. Acquiring on-the-job experience has also proven the best and most direct way for the unemployed young to prepare for and eventually find a job. Project staff formed agreements with a number of existing workshops in the area to train young people. Quite often these have led to longer-term employment opportunities.
Training is in fact crucial in introducing appropriate know-how, developing independent capabilities and re-establishing vanishing crafts and skills, especially those related to traditional construction so highly relevant to the future maintenance of Cairo's historic areas, al-Darb al-Ahmar in particular. All of the AKTC restoration projects in the district include a training component and employ as much as possible local craftsmen and labour, complemented when necessary by external trainers. Also in this case, direct apprenticeships on AKTC restoration sites have led to the development of skills and employment prospects for residents of the district.

Finally, the availability of micro-credit for al-Darb al-Ahmar residents has had a very promising impact on the area, enabling people to engage in what they do best. With limited loans, and through the establishment of a lending and credit-recovery programme, the Project has been able to help businesses and individuals, especially women, to start income-generating activities and improve their trades. Approximately 270 loans, averaging LE2,500, have been disbursed to date, and an expansion of the micro-credit programme is envisaged for the next four-year cycle of project activities.

INVESTING IN COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

The Project also recognises the key importance of promoting community awareness and self-governance as a means of making people more aware of their cultural traditions and restoring civic pride. Self-governance in residential areas was a distinctive feature of traditional Muslim cities and can be at least partly restored by enabling people to share their problems and identify solutions, and by creating the confidence needed to act on their own behalf rather than passively wait for outside intervention. To this effect, the project has promoted the creation of the Darb al-Ahmar Business Association and the Family Health Development Centre, two locally based organisations charged with the delivery of services to the community in the all-important sectors of health and business development. In addition, it has provided support for a number of existing non-governmental organisations (NGO's) in the area who are seen as key partners in raising community awareness and channelling local resources towards the future revitalization of the district.

In the longer term, the AKTC and its partners envision the establishment of a Community Development Agency based in the area. This body will operate as a self-sustaining community-managed private-sector initiative working to mobilise community resources within the framework of locally identified problems, needs and priorities. It will combine the mobilisation of resources, technical coordination, community affairs and institution-building with physical upgrading and environmental improvement activities. It will do so while building up the community and encouraging the development of new entities capable of providing leadership, technical support and assistance in mobilising and managing resources. A case in point is the successful pilot activities promoted by the ‘Women Working Together’ group, established within the framework of the Project.
to encourage and support educational and income-generating activities among women residents of the area. Building upon these promising initiatives, the new Darb al-Ahmar agency, once fully operational, will offer the critical support needed to help residents become more self-reliant and the community to take greater responsibility for maintaining and developing the district’s social and physical environment.

GEARING PHYSICAL PLANNING TO THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE DISTRICT

At the institutional level, the AKTC Project provides support in reorganising the planning and building process within the district in order to include a conservation agenda as well as those issues that residents perceive as a priority, including long-standing stumbling blocks. More particularly, the AKTC has been working with national and local institutions to ensure that the district and its historic fabric are treated differently than contemporary city fabric, with finer-grain surveying and planning, special attention to the context and closer monitoring of building activities. Gearing the planning process to the requirements of a historic area must be effected from the outset, starting with plot-by-plot physical surveys and in-depth socio-economic investigations. Only detailed preparatory work can provide the basis for comprehensive physical planning that responds to the particular conditions of an historic area.

While working with local institutions is essential, an equally important level of action is to facilitate a greater involvement of local community interests in planning decisions and in addressing the complex, long-standing issues that have created a climate of uncertainty over tenure, thus discouraging residents from investing in the area. The paramount concern in this respect is the revision of building codes and building regulations for the district, the lifting of obsolete planning constraints, and the resolution of the tenure issue for properties along the Ayyubid wall under restoration. To this effect, the AKTC has obtained from the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) a partial waiver of the demolition order condemning the traditional houses in proximity of the historic wall. Alternatives to demolition are now being put into effect to allow the residents to continue to live in the area and the monument to be preserved together with its living urban context.

Eventually, a revision of the current planning and institutional framework will be necessary to preserve the physical fabric, maintain the present inhabitants, and achieve balanced development
throughout the area. Declaring al-Darb al-Ahmar a conservation area subject to special planning provisions and establishing a dedicated task force charged with its continued planning and management are seen as essential steps in demonstrating public commitment to the revitalisation of the district and creating the confidence needed to mobilise resources within the area.

REHABILITATING HOUSING

Detailed surveys carried out in 1999 along the eastern boundary of al-Darb al-Ahmar show the worsening conditions of the residential fabric due to limited access to housing finance and insecure tenure. Tenure is a particularly serious issue in al-Darb al-Ahmar, where over thirty percent of the historic fabric is subject to demolition orders. Those forced to abandon their houses or shops cannot find affordable alternatives in the same area, and are forced to seek alternatives in the peripheral areas of Cairo, where public services and infrastructure are limited or non-existent, and social and community ties difficult to re-establish. If the present pattern of abandonment and disinvestment persists, it can only pave the way for further deterioration and the eventual demise of irreplaceable social, economic, and cultural assets. It will also deprive the district of the critical mass of inhabitants needed to sustain the area’s social and economic life.

Housing rehabilitation can play a crucial role in the future improvement of al-Darb al-Ahmar and should be seen as the best long-term antidote to the district’s decline. In the long-term, the realisation of better living conditions for individuals and families is the driving force needed to establish cleaner and more stable neighbourhoods, and a primer that can set in motion a positive chain reaction to preserve and revitalise al-Darb al-Ahmar.

For these reasons, the AKTC, as part of its larger revitalisation effort, is giving priority to the identification of policies and programmes that will ameliorate housing in the area. A dual strategy is being pursued, to facilitate the gradual rehabilitation of existing residential units on one hand, and to promote the redevelopment of ruined buildings, vacant plots and blighted areas into new housing on the other.

In 1998, the AKTC initiated a pilot study of 125 plots and buildings in al-Darb al-Ahmar’s Aslam neighbourhood to find out what kinds of housing improvements are needed and how best to intervene. At the same time, the study was used to ascertain residents’ interest in remaining in the dis-
strict and their willingness to contribute to the rehabilitation of their homes. The results of the study showed not only that the overwhelming majority of residents wishes to remain in the area, but also that a substantial portion of the rehabilitation costs could be met by the residents themselves, without having to depend on very limited public resources. In this respect, creating the conditions to upgrade occupied buildings and helping people to afford to continue living in their homes not only reduces the threat of abandonment, but also saves the government the considerable social and economic expense associated with relocating entire households to other parts of the city. In addition, the study developed a series of models for both rehabilitated and newly constructed housing that take into account residents’ lifestyles, income levels and tenure status. The study also included technical solutions and innovative institutional and financing schemes to facilitate implementation.

Based on the results of the initial study, the AKTC launched, in 2002, a pilot rehabilitation housing credit scheme near the historic wall, comprising approximately fifty residential buildings. Project staff discusses priorities with the residents, identifies a building programme, carries out rehabilitation work, or, alternatively, makes funds available directly to approved contractors, and ensures repayment of loans to replenish the revolving fund. The scheme is now being implemented and is receiving considerable local interest, following the completion of rehabilitation works for the first group of houses and the return of the residents to their renovated apartments.

The rehabilitation of existing houses is the AKTC’s primary focus, but rehabilitation must be complemented and reinforced by new developments in order to meet the need for more housing, which
is in short supply throughout al-Darb al-Ahmar. The many plots of vacant land in the area offer ample opportunity: in 1997, a physical survey identified close to 320 vacant ruins and unimproved plots out of a total of two thousand—sixteen percent of area properties. At least part of this available land can be returned to full residential use by encouraging private development, particularly where clusters of ruins and vacant land offer the possibility of building multiple housing units and realising operational economies. In these cases, incentives could be provided with low-interest loans administered through special arrangements with lending institutions and owners (or tenants). Project staff can act as facilitators between the two, providing technical assistance programmes for low- and moderate-income households. Such schemes already exist for new development, but have never been applied in historic areas. Their adaptation would present special challenges, but also open up new opportunities for high-profile exemplary initiatives.

The AKTC is currently exploring one such opportunity in the area immediately north of al-Mahruq Tower, in conjunction with the recent lowering of the road built over the historic wall. Here, the high percentage of ruins combined with easy pedestrian access present excellent prospects for a comprehensive housing redevelopment scheme. In shaping the proposal, special attention will be devoted to creating a promising mix of commercial activities and housing, and to identifying design solutions that are compatible with the surrounding historic context.

**IMPROVING PUBLIC OPEN SPACES**

Public open spaces are poorly maintained and deteriorating throughout al-Darb al-Ahmar due to a lack of planning and investment in public infrastructure. Their deterioration may also be attributed to the fact that it is unclear what purpose they are to serve and who is to be responsible for their maintenance. In future, a clear understanding of how these spaces are to be utilised within the community, and how they can be brought back to full use, will be essential if they are to serve civic purposes effectively and be maintained over time.

Towards this end, the AKTC has carried out detailed surveys in al-Darb al-Ahmar’s neighbourhoods and discussed with residents ways in which the current uses can be discontinued, when harmful, or maintained and improved, when desirable. The AKTC’s plans target not only major and highly visible spaces, but also commercial streets and

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Fig. 83. Discussing an open space clean-up project in the intervention area.
Fig. 84. Bab al-Wazir Street elevation from the edge of Aqsunqur Mosque to the tomb of Khayrbek.

Fig. 85. Graphics illustrating the reconstruction of the Khayrbek minaret.
small neighbourhood squares that play an important role in the quality and appearance of public spaces in the district. Proposed interventions, to be carried out with the involvement of the district authorities and the development of self-help initiatives, focus on a variety of these spaces.

**Commercial streetscapes.** Possible improvements range from basic space planning to accommodate conflicting activities, to upgrading street paving, public lighting and signage, as well as façades and storefronts. While these improvements by themselves do not generate economic activity, they can do much to attract and enhance commerce.

**Important public squares and public concourse areas.** These often require comprehensive re-organisation and space planning. Improvements in these highly visible spaces can do much to enhance the image of the area and attract visitors.
Small neighbourhood squares. These are found throughout the inner blocks of al-Darb al-Ahmar, often associated with tombs of saints and community mosques. These spaces can be targeted for simple low-cost improvements that are designed to encourage informal contact and community life.

Aslam Square is an example of a small neighbourhood square selected for improvement by the AKTC team. Interest in this area stems from its proximity to Bab al-Mahruq, one of the historic principal gates along the eastern side of the Ayyubid city wall, later blocked. In the past, the gate was connected to Aslam Square and, from here, to the important thoroughfare leading to the Fatimid gate, Bab Zuwayla. With the creation of the new Azhar Park, this old connection will be re-established and Aslam Square gradually equipped to serve both as a pedestrian link and as a forum for commercial activity and social interaction in the closely-knit Aslam neighbourhood.

Archaeological excavations have started near the al-Mahruq Gate as a first step to re-opening the old connection with Aslam Square. Future actions foresee the involvement of local residents in an improvement scheme for the square that includes elimination of informal vehicular parking and the upgrading of public utilities, paving and lighting. The scheme will be complemented by a façade improvement programme for the residential and commercial buildings facing the square, as well as selective restoration of Aslam Mosque.

Another open space improvement project actively pursued within the framework of the Project is the rehabilitation of Tablita Market, located on the main pedestrian road linking the heart of the Fatimid city with Azhar Park. Here, the proliferation of street vendors, poor management and severely deteriorated environmental conditions are threatening the very existence of the market, with dire consequences for the local economy. In an attempt to resolve
the deadlock and provide a suitable architectural solution for this sensitive vacant space, the AKTC’s team prepared plans that call for an enclosed new market hall to contain and reorganise the vendors. The design was developed in close cooperation with representatives of the market vendors and in consultation with the Cairo Governorate.

REUSING MONUMENTS AND HISTORIC BUILDINGS

The restoration and adaptive reuse of monuments and historic buildings complete the pilot programmes initiated by the AKTC. Monuments are in fact plentiful in the district, which contains some of medieval Cairo’s finest and most admired historic structures. There are sixty-five monuments registered by the SCA in the area, as well as several hundred unregistered but architecturally significant buildings that determine the quality of al-Darb al-Ahmar’s urban context. Their long-term preservation is crucial to maintaining the architectural character and quality of the area. Future development strategies should therefore promote the stabilisation and long-term maintenance of these structures, and their integration in the district’s social, recreational and educational life.

The AKTC has targeted three representative projects to fulfil these strategic objectives through practical, direct actions: restoration of the Khayrbek complex (composed of several associated buildings), restoration of Umm al-Sultan Shaaban Mosque, and the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of the former Shoughlan Street School.

The Khayrbek complex is named after Khayrbek, Egypt’s first governor after the Ottoman conquest, and was built in stages during the Mamluk and early Ottoman periods. The stabilisation and partial restoration of the complex includes the thirteenth-century palace of Alin Aq, Khayrbek Mosque and the sabil-kuttab, two partially ruined Ottoman houses and the surrounding open space. The AKTC plans to re-establish the extraordinary urban value of this ensemble, which lies at the south-
ern end of the new Azhar Park, in close proximity to Aqsunqur, or the Blue, Mosque. The combined programme includes restoration works (Ayyubid city wall, Khayrbek Mosque and the sabil-kuttab), stabilisation of ruins (Alin Aq Palace), adaptive reuse (the Ottoman houses) and environmental and landscape improvements. The complex will eventually offer a setting for recreational and cultural events and provide a focal point for the community as well as visitors to the district.

The mosque and madrasa of Umm al-Sultan Shaaban, built in 1369, is one of the principal monuments along Bab al-Wazir Street, the processional route that crosses al-Darb al-Ahmar and connects the Citadel to the historic city. The complex, built by Sultan Shaaban for his mother Khawand Baraka, is one of the finest examples of Mamluk architecture in Cairo. It comprises a mosque, a two-storey madrasa and two domed tomb chambers located on either side of the qibla iwan. The minaret, the focal point of the structure, is highly visible from both sides of the street, even though its uppermost portion is missing as a result of an earthquake in 1884. The work currently under way includes reconstruction of the missing section of the minaret and restoration of the southern and western façades, interior of the mosque, ablution area, the roof and domes, as well as rehabilitation of the madrasa. The latter will house the community activities initiated by the AKCS-E, in particular the literacy, employment, social and economic development programmes. The interior will be equipped to serve as meeting rooms, offices and classrooms. In addition, the rear courtyard will be used as an outdoor open area for occasional community events.

The former Shoughlan Street School, an early twentieth-century residential building located along the historic wall, later converted into a school, represents the first major historic building project completed by the AKTC in the area. The project makes use of the former school’s close proximity to the historic wall and the future park, as well as its potential, given its location and size, to serve the community. This led to the idea of reusing this large structure as a combined community facility, visitor centre and AKCS-E office space. An orientation and exhibition space and a rooftop area with views of the park and the Citadel will accommodate visitors, while recreational as well as family, educational and community services are to be housed in other parts of the building. This programme will introduce much needed services in a context that sorely lacks public facilities. The conversion of the structure also includes provisions for the future reuse of the building as a guesthouse to generate revenue for the operation of the planned Community Development Agency.
The Khayrbek and Umm al-Sultan Shaaban projects are being undertaken through special agreements between the AKTC and the SCA. These agreements have provided occasions to work with the various offices of the national authority concerned to develop and implement innovative and realistic solutions towards preserving Cairo's monuments. The solutions planned range from identifying appropriate restoration techniques to finding compatible new uses. In particular, for the first time in Cairo, the AKTC has been given permission to partially adapt historic monuments to serve social and community uses, a step that will facilitate their maintenance and their integration in the life of the district. The AKTC’s efforts have thus established an important and innovative precedent that can go beyond al-Darb al-Ahmar and be applied to the preservation and reuse of historic structures elsewhere in Cairo.

Being able to rehabilitate the many underused, often decaying historic structures, particularly those in public ownership, should also be seen as an opportunity to revive dormant assets, introduce much needed facilities and services in the area, and promote the preservation and adaptive reuse of old buildings. In this respect, the reuse of the former Shoughlan Street School as a community and visitor centre will show that old buildings need not necessarily be associated with poverty and neglect, and that they can still play a useful role in contemporary life.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

The action plans and pilot interventions in al-Darb al-Ahmar seek practical and sustainable alternatives to the current dilemma confronting officials and planners in historic Cairo — alternatives that can provide valuable examples for other historic districts and cities. Often, the only perceived options are either to accept the current decay as inevitable, or to embark upon a costly and socially disruptive policy of radical transformation. Continuation of the present inertia and disinvestment would no doubt condemn the area to ever
lower standards of living and the continued deterioration of public services and infrastructure. On the other hand, radical redevelopment fuelled by the urban projects already under way in and around al-Darb al-Ahmar could arouse strong speculative pressures and start a reaction of uncontrolled change.

Contrary to these two scenarios, the alternative being pursued in al-Darb al-Ahmar by the AKTC builds on the direct involvement of residents, community groups, and local institutions towards a gradual rehabilitation of the existing residential and commercial property and a phased improvement of the urban environment. With strong institutional support and active management of the residents' capacity for direct intervention, the social fabric can become the engine driving the rehabilitation efforts. Paramount is the conviction that, in the long run, community involvement is the best means of achieving lasting results. This alternative is both achievable and wise: it is far less costly over time than either abandonment or radical intervention; it actively engages the existing so-
cial setting and it does not disrupt or alienate the people concerned; furthermore, it keeps the historic fabric of the district alive, thus preserving a significant portion of historic Cairo for future generations.

Ultimately, institutional coordination and community involvement within a gradual process of economic improvement and physical rehabilitation must be viewed as the necessary ingredients for taking on the manifold conservation and revitalisation needs of historic Cairo. Too often, this task has remained an abstract notion predicated on grand and difficult-to-implement schemes, rather than being pursued through practical rehabilitation efforts based on actual needs and realistic programmes for action.

The results of the AKTC’s ongoing activities will be important beyond the Darb al-Ahmar setting, since they offer a living model of old city rehabilitation that may be applied in identifying both general policies and practical solutions throughout historic Cairo, and indeed many other historic cities in the Islamic world.