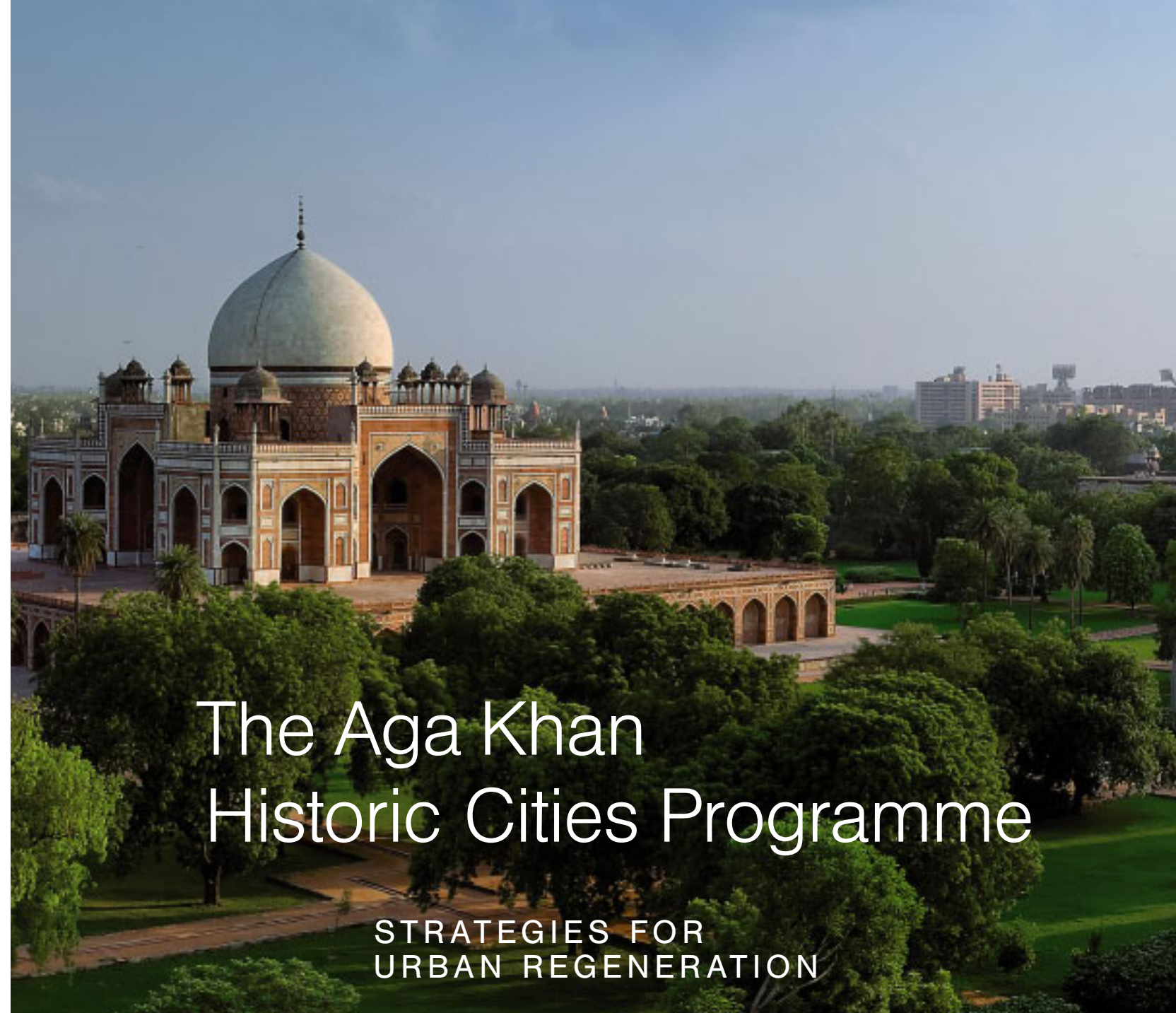
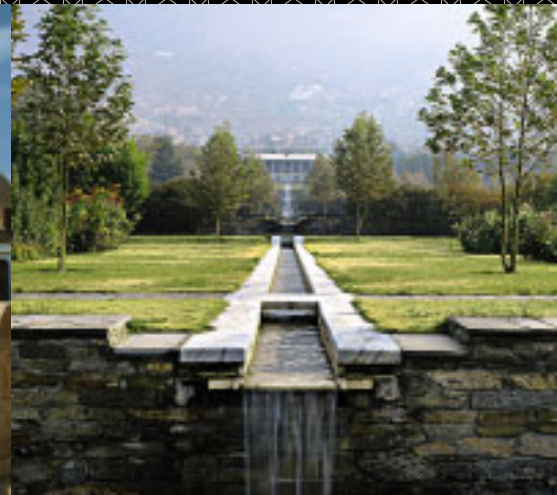
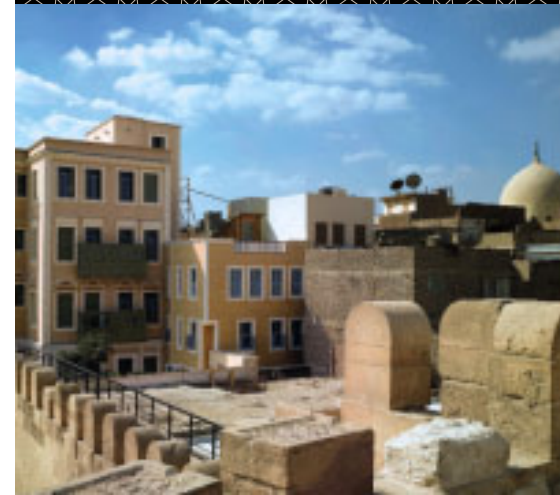
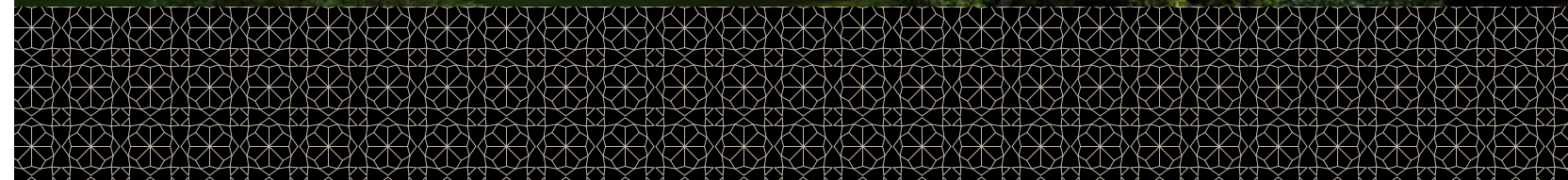




The Aga Khan Historic Cities Programme

STRATEGIES FOR
URBAN REGENERATION



DAMASCUS
SYRIA



Damascus Houses

DAMASCUS, SYRIA

Considered one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities, Damascus displays in its urban fabric the remains of the successive civilizations inhabiting its site, the latter being, before contemporary times, the Ottomans, who have profoundly marked the city during their four hundred years of presence. Among the most significant palaces constructed during the classical Ottoman period in Damascus are Bait Sibai and Bait Nizam. They are typical Syrian courtyard residences, the result of intensive reconstruction works after the earthquake of 1759 and refurbished several times according to the fashion of the time. Instead, Bait Quwatli, built in 1868, contemporary to the arrival of telegraph communication and rail transport, shows Western influence adapted to the local taste and construction methods.

The involvement of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) in Damascus commenced in the last quarter of 2008 following the signature of project framework agreements in August 2008. AKTC and the Tourism Promotion Services of the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development (AKFED) embarked on the development of two hotels of distinct nature: one converting the Aleppo municipal Serai dating from the early twentieth century; the other in the Old City of Damascus reusing three historical palaces – Bait Sibai, Nizam and Quwatli – that were carefully restored prior to conversion into a boutique hotel.

The properties, owned in the past by prominent Damascene families, had become government owned in 1974 and since then, in spite of temporary use as film sets or for receptions and high-profile events, had deteriorated to the point of collapse. Although major restoration was carried out by the authorities on Bait Sibai and Bait Nizam in the 1980s and on Bait Quwatli in the early 2000s, lack of use and maintenance led to rapid damage. When AKTC initiated architectural surveys and condition assessments, the analysis revealed that much of the damage was related to lack of use and maintenance. The buildings had also been subject to a large number of recent alterations.

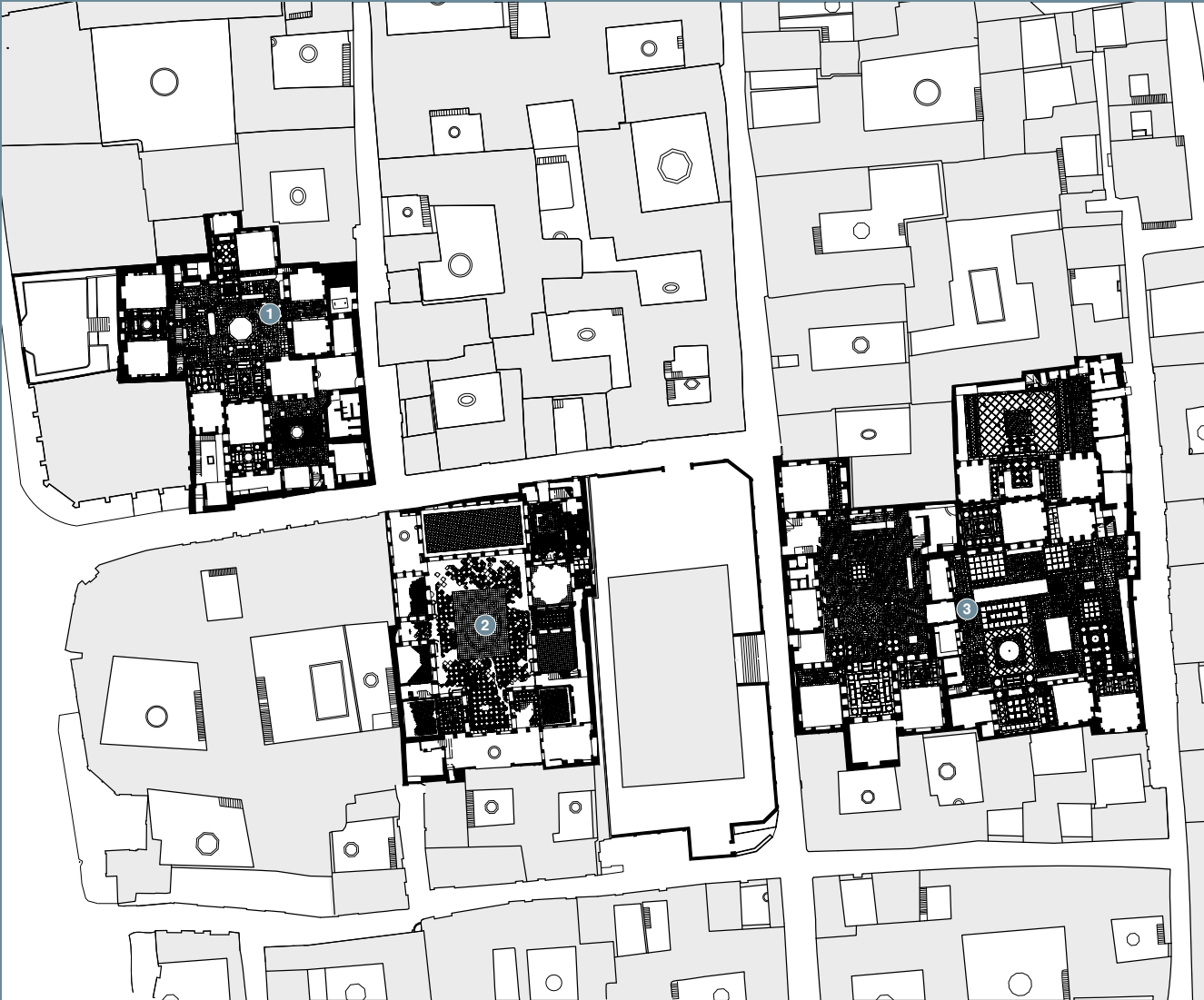
The conceptual approach to the conservation of the palaces and adaptive reuse as a boutique hotel associated a cultural dimension of heritage conservation aimed at conserving the authenticity of the fabric and at ensuring long-term conservation and a for-profit activity of hospitality, providing economic opportunities



A bird's-eye view of the interior courtyard of Bait Sibai.

Opposite page:
A detail of the wall decoration in the *qa'a* off the second courtyard of Bait Nizam, sometimes known as the "Grapes Room".

Preceding pages:
The main *qa'a* of Bait Quwatli, one of three historical palaces the Trust is converting in Damascus.

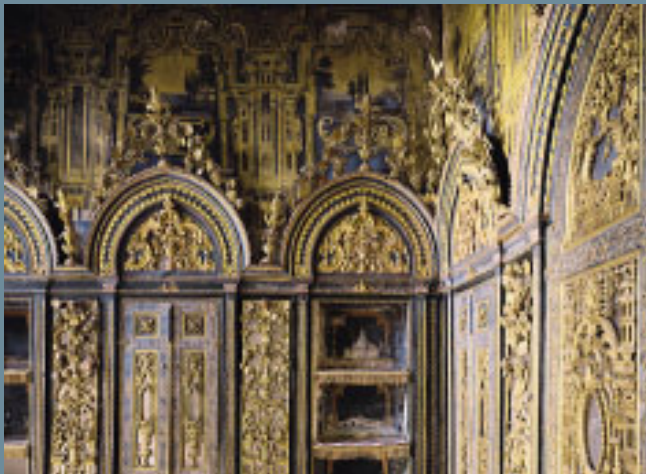


1 Bait Sibai 2 Bait Quwatli 3 Bait Nizam

N
20 m

Programme Scope/Objectives

AKTC's role is to survey and document three Ottoman houses in Damascus's Old City, and then preserve, restore and rehabilitate them for reuse as a boutique hotel. The project aims to illustrate the potential for beneficial change and to create architectural prototypes that strengthen typical Damascene structures against seismic activity. Overall, this is an attempt to create an asset for sustainable tourism in Damascus that can inspire urban regeneration in neighbouring areas.





Top left, a view of the main *qa'a* of Bait Nizam.

Bottom left, the *qa'a* off the second courtyard.

Right, the courtyard and water fountain.

Opposite page:
A view from above of the interior
of Bait Quwatli.

and social development in the area: employment, training, open-space upgrading and tourism. Conversion into a hotel facility, therefore, not only continues the previous use of the palaces as private residences but also guarantees to the authorities that the asset will be managed and maintained.

In functional terms, the large culturally-sensitive halls, located mainly on the ground floor around vast courtyards, are used for public functions, while the first-floor spaces were converted into high-standard guest rooms. To minimize the impact of modern hotel services in the existing buildings, a large portion of back-of-house, technical services and guest rooms were accommodated in two new buildings designed on adjacent plots in substitution of two obsolete concrete buildings: an elementary school and a fire brigade.

The Syrian authorities view this project as an opportunity to set high standards in the country for adaptive reuse initiatives in sensitive buildings, a booming trend in Syria that poses quality challenges. Thus, emphasis is given to project methodology and process, calling for a large variety of specialists, both Syrian and international, and an important component of training and capacity building of local professionals and craftsmen.

Background

BRIEF HISTORY OF PROJECT SITE

Damascus, with six million inhabitants, is considered one of the world's oldest continuously inhabited cities. This site is profoundly marked by 400 years of Ottoman presence. Bait Sibai and Bait Nizam are typical Middle-Eastern courtyard residences, the result of intensive reconstruction works after the earthquake of 1759. Bait Quwatli, contemporary to the 19th-century arrival of telegraph communication and rail transport, shows Western influence adapted to local taste and construction methods.

Challenges

PROJECT RISKS

New uses for historic buildings might result in rising prices in the neighbourhood, and consequently induce gentrification. Socio-economic programmes are intended to balance such reactions. Heavy vehicular access, intensive commerce and a recent increase in international tourism can undermine the historical value and monumental qualities of the site.

SITE CONDITIONS

The Old City of Damascus remains an important centre of urban activity.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Parts of the site's infrastructure date to the Roman era, but most of its electricity, water and sewage networks were built during the French Mandate period and require upgrades for future needs. Sewage and water leakage is seeping into and damaging the historic built fabric.

BUILDING CONDITIONS

Bait Sibai and Bait Nizam have undergone previous conservation works, using methods such as cement repair and synthetic varnish that damaged the historic fabric. Bait Quwatli was used as a school and a Palestinian refugee camp before being abandoned, and is today in very poor condition.

Significant Issues and Impact

DATA COLLECTION/SURVEYS

A comprehensive architectural survey of the three houses was conducted by a local team of young professionals, trained in total station and rectified photography.

HISTORIC BUILDINGS/MONUMENTS CONSERVED

In addition to Bait Sibai, Bait Quwatli and Bait Nizam, neighbouring remnants of an Ayyubid wall and a *sabil* (public fountain) were included in the conservation project.

NEW BUILDING FACILITIES

Two modern, but obsolete structures were replaced by new buildings to accommodate the site's infrastructure while displaying a form and scale more appropriate in design for the Old City.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING/CAPACITY BUILDING

The architectural survey and restoration project (including conservation works in stone, wood, plaster and paint) provided several recently graduated architects and other building professionals with an opportunity



to acquire skills required for monument preservation, a field with potential in a city that includes a World Heritage Site.

CONTRACTING METHODS

Conservation work on areas with significant decoration or morphological value was carried out by labour directly recruited by AKTC. Reconstruction works were left to contractors under AKTC supervision.

Partners

PUBLIC PARTNERS

Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Culture, Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums, Governorate of Damascus, Directorate of Old City of Damascus.

Donors

Tourism Promotion Services.

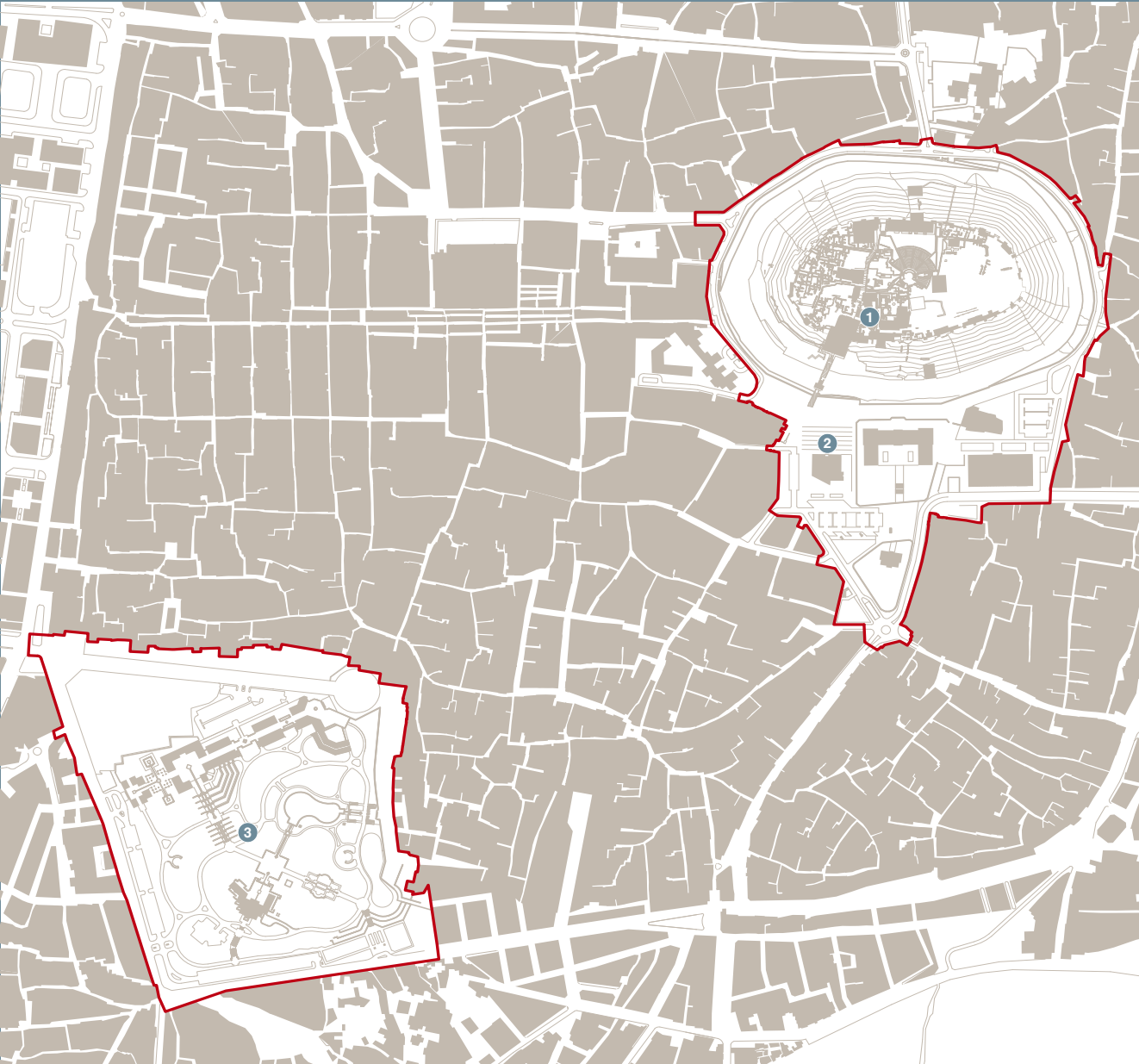
Authoritative Framework

'Tourism Investment Contract' between the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development and the Government of Syria for the sites of the Damascus Hotel and Yalbougha Hammam and Serai Hotel in Aleppo, signed in August 2009.

ALEPPO

SYRIA



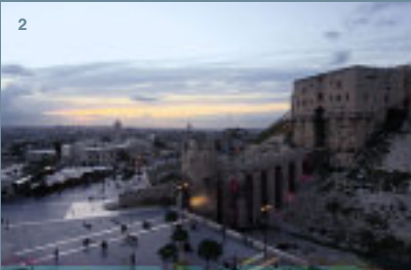


1 Citadel of Aleppo 2 Citadel Perimeter 3 Bab Qinessrine Intervention areas N 200m

FEATURED CASE STUDIES



CITADEL OF ALEPPO



CITADEL PERIMETER



BAB QINESSRINE

Programme Scope / Objectives

In Aleppo, AKTC aims to revitalize the Old City and to bring social and economic benefit to its residents by restoring the Citadel and adding a visitor centre. The conservation and adaptive reuse of a historic *hammam* and government building into a hotel are also involved, as are the upgrading and landscaping of public space around the Citadel perimeter. The creation of a sustainable public park with development initiatives taking place in adjacent neighbourhoods is also part of the programme. This initiative relies on a 'Public-Private Partnership Framework', which is new to Syria.

Preceding pages:

As part of the Aleppo Area Programme, the Perimeter of the Citadel of Aleppo has been upgraded.

Aleppo Area Programme

The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) has made a long-term commitment to working with the people and Government of Syria to support and contribute to the improvement of prospects for economic, social and cultural development. These efforts are undertaken within a 'Framework for Development Cooperation Agreement' between AKDN and the Government of Syria, which was ratified by the Syrian Parliament in 2002.

AKDN programmes in Syria span six provinces (Aleppo, Damascus, Hama, Lattakia, Sweida and Tartous), and serve both rural and urban populations. Priority areas include rural economic development, employment and enterprise development, enhancing the quality of services, strengthening civil society organizations, protecting cultural heritage and developing sustainable tourism.

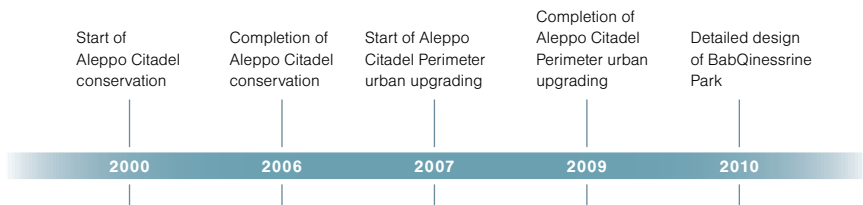
The Aga Khan expressed the interest for AKDN in Syria: "My interest in working in Syria is to take the various lead countries of the *umma* and say, let's start, let's move together, let's revive our cultures so that modernity is not only seen in the terminology of the West, but in the intelligent use of our past."

The Historic Cities Programme (HCP) has been active in Syria since 1999, when the Government of the Republic of Syria approached the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) for assistance in the restoration of the three citadels of Aleppo, Masyaf and Salah al-Din. A partnership agreement was signed with the Syrian General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums in 1999. Consistent with the Area Development approach developed by AKTC in Egypt, Pakistan and elsewhere, under the agreement AKTC would also work to improve the area around the Citadels. During the early stage of the Citadel restoration projects, HCP expanded the initial scope of pure conservation work to include the contextual dimensions of the three sites. Building on its work on the Citadel of Aleppo, HCP expanded its mandate to include the planning and landscaping of the Citadel Perimeter, the creation of a new Park, and social development projects in the Old City.

One of the oldest cities in the Middle East, Aleppo developed as a cross-roads between East and West, straddling important trade routes linking the desert to the sea. Until 1930 the city remained more or less confined within its medieval boundaries, limited by its walls and early suburbs, which were surrounded by pistachio, fig and olive groves.

Today, approximately 100,000 people, or five per cent of the population of the city as a whole, live in the historic Old City. A great many monuments are

Phasing 2000 → 2010



Opposite page:
The work done at the Citadel (here, the entrance to the bridge tower) is a key component in the expansion of tourism in Syria.



Above, a mason carries out arch consolidation work on an Ayyubid room at the Citadel.

Below, protective work on wood at Tower 42 is being carried out.

found amidst the historic fabric of the city and it was recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site in 1986.

Within this World Heritage Site lies the Citadel of Aleppo, located at the heart of the Old City. The area around the Citadel used to act as an oversized roundabout, with a constant stream of vehicles cutting off access from and into the historic town and creating a rupture in the urban fabric. In 2006, HCP initiated a planning project on the Perimeter of the Citadel, working in close collaboration with the Old City Directorate and the German Technical Cooperation Agency (GTZ). The scope of the planning project includes major infrastructure improvements, traffic management plans, landscape design and proposals for the reuse of key historic structures.

In 2007, a 'Memorandum of Understanding' was signed between the Governorate of Aleppo and AKTC to create a Park located at the edge of the Old City and to formulate a socio-economic project in the surrounding neighbourhoods. Bab Qinessrine Park will be an important gateway to the Old City. Capitalizing on the efforts already undertaken on and around the Citadel, the Park will attract locals and tourists, thereby providing opportunities for employment and services.

Although Aleppo is the second largest city in Syria and receives over four million tourists every year, proceeds from tourism have not led to a status of relative well-being for the population living around the Citadel. Aleppo's population to the east and south of the Citadel is considered amongst Syria's most marginalized, with income levels per capita that are often below the level of US \$1 per day. The reasons for this are numerous, but foremost amongst them are a general lack of employment opportunities, low education levels due to high drop-out rates and inadequate upkeep of residences.

Three key areas of socio-economic intervention have been established in the two neighbourhoods immediately adjacent to the future Bab Qinnesine Park, with local needs researched through a baseline survey. These initiatives include increasing literacy levels amongst those above fifteen years of age; ensuring education for potential school drop-outs; increasing access to health and promotion, as well as revival of cultural heritage; raising family incomes through vocational training and employment; providing linkages with micro-credit; the improvement of access to and upgrading of open spaces; and the physical improvement of dwellings.

The thrust of these efforts in Aleppo is to enhance the historic urban fabric and stitch together two attractive poles on the northern and southern ends, realizing the potential for these projects to become significant contributors to the economic development of the Old City.



Citadel of Aleppo

ALEPPO, SYRIA

The Citadel of Aleppo is one of the remarkable examples of military architecture in the Middle East. The recently discovered Temple of the Storm God dates human use of the hill from the beginning of the third millennium BC. The Citadel of Aleppo, which has been built on a natural limestone hill, is the result of numerous constructive phases, large changes and destruction. The record of these changes is still recognizable in a few structures. Most of what remains today is from the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods. The monument represents a unique cultural heritage for the quality of the architecture, the variety and quality of the materials, and for the complexity of the historical stratifications.

The Citadel rises above the Old City of Aleppo, which since 1986 has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In the same time, the Citadel is the landmark for the new Aleppo, a city with almost two million inhabitants that attributes a strong symbolic value to the Citadel. Indeed, the site is one of the most famous monuments of Islamic architecture and one of the most visited sites in Syria.

The Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) signed a 'Memorandum of Understanding' with the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums in Syria (DGAM) on 1 December 1999 to propose support in the restoration of three citadels in Syria (Aleppo, Masyaf and Salah al-Din).

The Citadel of Aleppo is a very large complex containing a series of buildings and monuments with different historical features, which call for a diversified approach and different forms of conservation and maintenance targeted to the specific requirements of each structure or category of structures. These can be listed as the bridge and the main gateway; the ring walls and the towers; the mosques; the cisterns; the palace complex; the arsenal; the *hammam*; the barracks; the tunnels; and the new theatre.

Three major axes of implementation were developed by AKTC from 2000 to 2008, after the finalization of the Master Plan in 2000.

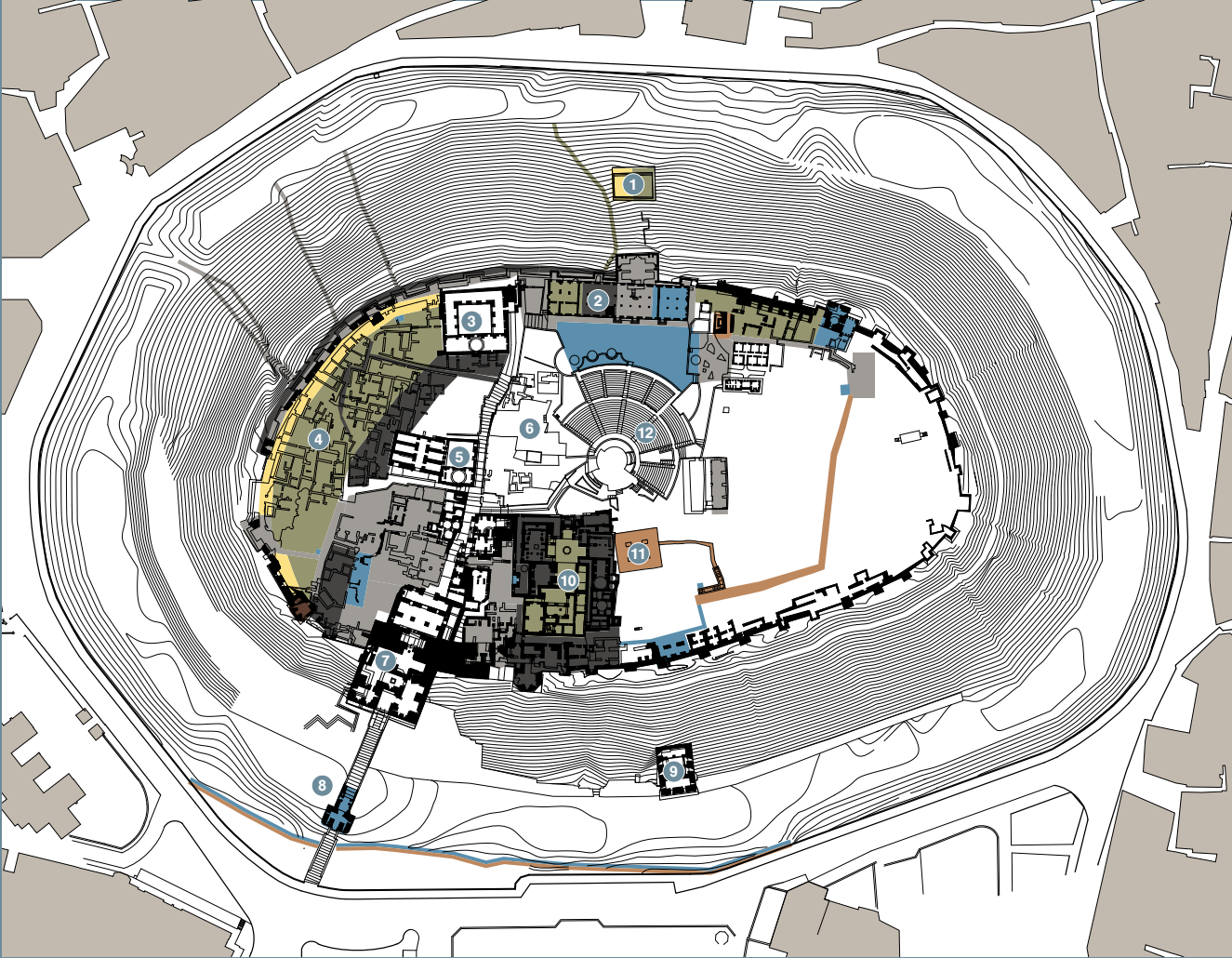
The main goal of the Trust was to develop several levels of intervention: upgrade the local staff in the preservation of the masonry; the development of a real tourist infrastructure; and intervention in place of the local Directorate of Antiquities when foreign expertise was needed.



The bridge leads to the entrance complex.

Opposite page:
Above, the plan highlights the phases of work accomplished on the restoration of the Citadel.

Below, an aerial view of the Citadel that illustrates its position on top of a natural outcrop.



- | | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 North Advance Tower | 5 Mosque of Abraham | 9 South Advance Tower |
| 2 Barracks of Ibrahim Pasha | 6 Excavations of the Ancient Temple | 10 Ayyubid Palace |
| 3 Big Mosque | 7 Entrance Complex | 11 Ayyubid Cistern |
| 4 Ottoman Dwellings | 8 Bridge Tower | 12 Modern Theatre |

2000	2004
2001	2005
2002	2006
2003	

Project Scope/ Objectives

The goals of this restoration project are to train local Antiquities staff, engineers, contractors and craftsmen in up-to-date conservation techniques. The programme provides guidance on proper environmental protection and management of complete sites, the creation of visitor routes of tourist interest in neglected areas, and the creation of a visitor centre, equipped with documentation and guidebooks for visitors.





Top left and right, comparative views of the Ottoman room and Arsenal entrance, before and after restoration, exemplify visitor path reclamation.

Bottom left and right, comparative views of the main *qa'a* of the courtyard of the Ayyubid palace, with a wall fountain in the niche inside the northern *iwan*.

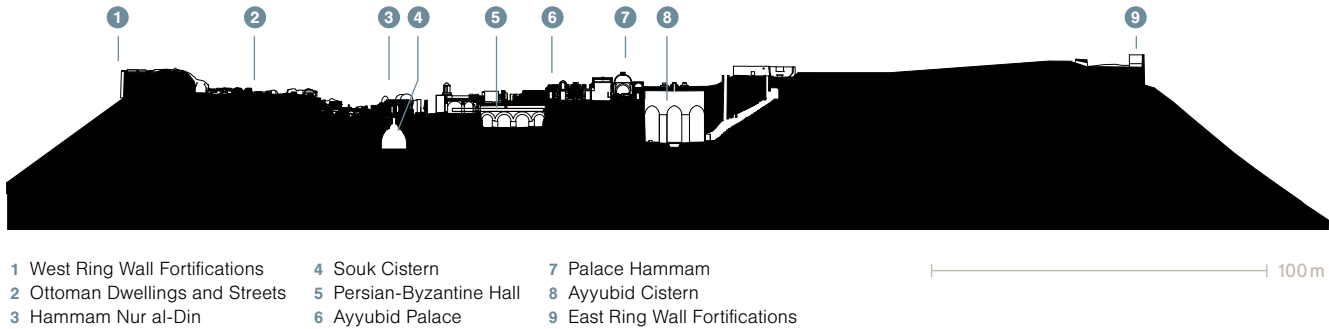
The Trust initiated a restoration project that included the preservation of remaining elements. This task concerns essentially the preservation of the medieval ruins, and consisted in a traditional but necessary exercise of masonry conservation. These interventions were completed over the years, through the training of the Antiquities staff, local engineers, contractors and craftsmen in up-to-date conservation techniques.

The Trust developed the visitor infrastructure, including the creation or upgrading of a ticket office, a visitor centre, paths, rest points and view points, signage, sanitation services, brochures and a guidebook. Through this initiative, the Citadel, along with those of Masyaf and Salah al-Din, was the first monument in Syria, to provide visitors with a comprehensive visit.

The Trust invested its expertise in the preservation of some highly sensitive buildings, such as the Ayyubid cistern and well. Plural-disciplinary teams were involved in the conservation of these two subterranean structures. High-technology techniques such as geo-radar analysis were used. The results of these analyses permitted the Trust to choose suitable techniques of conservation.

Since that time, in the Citadel of Aleppo, a considerable amount of work has been completed through cooperation with the Antiquities authorities. Only a number of historically or spatially coherent areas within the site were selected to become the focus of conservation efforts, with the intention that the DGAM would continue work elsewhere using methodologies and skills acquired during the implementation of the joint project.

The work has developed along the lines of international standards and methodology of restoration and rehabilitation. The choices made were the result of a careful analysis of the monument's history, of its present physical and figurative state, and of its conservation



status. During these years in fact detailed surveys were carried out with the analysis of materials and systems of decay. The reconstruction or restoration of structures has sought to avoid the creation of facsimiles of how they might once have appeared as much as possible. The limited reconstruction of specific elements has been carried out only where it was absolutely necessary.

AKTC's work started in 2000 on one of the towers of the ring walls. From 2000 to 2008 the Trust initiated a large mission of surveys, to obtain documentation on the complete site. From 2001 to 2004 the Trust carried out sizeable works on large sections of the walls, including underpinning and important structural stabilization, as well as the consolidation of the northern advanced tower. During the years 2001 and 2002 the western area was the subject of a mission of archaeological excavation and conservation of the Ottoman remains discovered. In 2002 and 2003 pilot projects were developed on some major gullies located on the glacis. From 2002 to 2004 an important effort was made on the preservation of the Ayyubid Palace, a large complex including residential and reception functions. During these works the pavement of the central part of the main reception hall was restored. From 2002 to 2006 efforts were also concentrated on the development of the visitor infrastructure. In 2005 a reinforcement of the cladding stone of the glacis was implemented. From 2005 to 2007 the Trust worked on the conservation of the Ayyubid cistern and well, tasks that included structural reinforcement as well as architectural interventions. In 2007 the portal of the throne hall was completely cleaned. During 2008 a large mission of upgrading and cleaning the site was undertaken. The World Monuments Fund provided support for the work on the Ayyubid complex, some intervention on the ring walls, and participated in the archaeological excavations in the area of the temple, the Ayyubid cistern and the portal of the throne hall.

The Trust finalized its intervention by the definition of a cultural site management plan for the DGAM: a maintenance programme includes the routine upkeep of the structures and periodic checks to ensure that all mechanical systems are in working order, as well as repairs to materials and components that are subject to predictable wear and tear. But it was also important to include unplanned maintenance in this programme, in case

A cross-section of the Citadel hill shows surface landmarks and underground spaces.

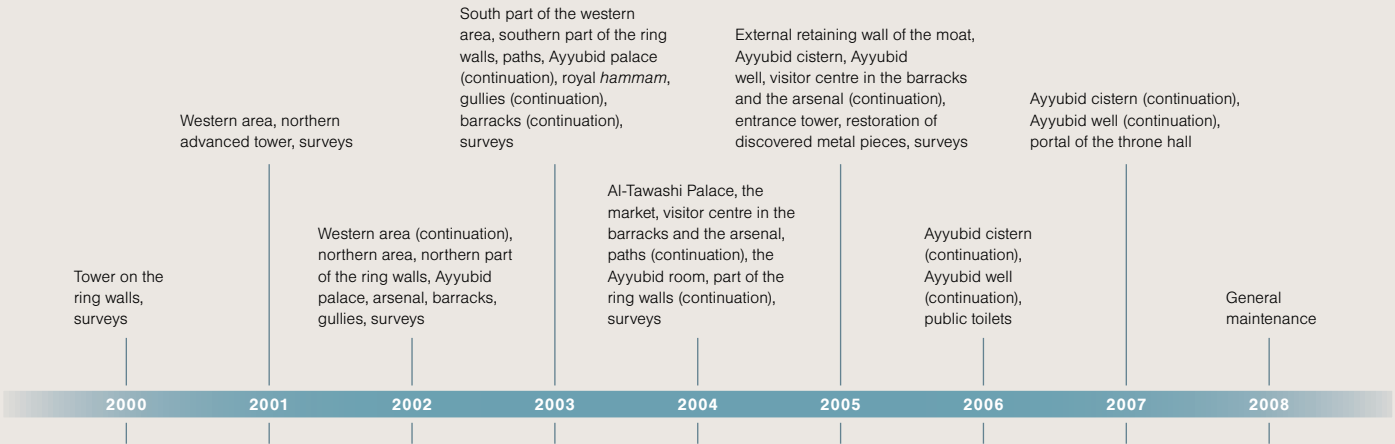


Recent excavations and subsequent conservation work have preserved a substantial Ottoman residential network in the western half of the site. This settlement featured a well-developed street and drainage network, and substantial improvements have been made to visitor pathways to enable access.

structural or mechanical components of a building are seriously impaired without prior warning. In these exceptional cases, prompt and effective interventions using appropriate equipment and personnel are crucial. The main maintenance-related problems in the Citadel could be subdivided into two major categories: management and technical.

Within the site, several archaeological excavations are still ongoing; the Citadel will be the subject of historical and archaeological research for several years. A first example is the Storm God Temple. Here the excavations are now almost concluded with the last two years’ works funded by AKTC and the World Monuments Fund. The future use of the site once the work is completed should be considered beginning with the preliminary management phase. The most likely solution foresees the creation of an archaeological museum presenting the results of the excavations and the many important elements found during the excavations in the temple area, which will receive a ‘roof’ whose characteristics are still to be defined. Another example is the eastern part of the citadel: the reopening of this large archaeological area could eventually be undertaken by the DGAM at a later stage.

Phasing 2000 → Ongoing



Background

BRIEF HISTORY OF PROJECT SITE
The Citadel of Aleppo stands at the centre of the Old City of Aleppo, which was recognized as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1986. Situated on top of a natural limestone hill, the Citadel rises some 40 metres above its surroundings. Its high walls, imposing entry-bridge and great gateway remain largely intact, and continue to dominate the Aleppo skyline, a powerful symbol of the city's heroic past. The earliest archaeological evidence of occupation found in the Citadel date to the third millennium BC, although it is likely that the site was occupied even earlier. Most of what remains today are the ruins of military, ceremonial and residential structures built by the city's Ayyubid (12th to 13th centuries) and Mamluk (13th to 16th centuries) rulers.

Challenges

PROJECT RISKS
In addition to its status as a cultural and tourist attraction, the Citadel of Aleppo, was, is and will continue to be an archaeological site of great importance. These require different but compatible strategies concerning architectural preservation, structural safety, archaeological excavations, tourism, cultural events and maintenance.

SITE CONDITIONS
The ring wall foundations of the Citadel were in poor condition. Most of the area within the walls, including remnants of old buildings, was covered with earth, debris and overgrown vegetation.

INFRASTRUCTURE
The medieval drainage was full of debris and the long-neglected landscape prevented surface rainwater drainage, resulting in major leakage at the foot of the ring walls. Although several high-power electrical lines cross the site, no suitable electricity network existed within the Citadel.

BUILDING CONDITIONS
A succession of invasions, bombardments and earthquakes have taken their toll on the area within the ring

walls, but amongst the ruins stand two fine mosques, a hammam and the remains of a palace and houses, dating to the Zengid, Ayyubid, Mamluk and Ottoman periods.

Significant Issues and Impact

DATA COLLECTION/SURVEYS
AKTC carried out architectural, structural and topographical surveys of the majority of the Citadel structures, moat and slopes. Areas of intervention were documented detailing conditions before, during and after restoration, conservation and rehabilitation works. Separate project documents were prepared in advance to any works.

MASTER PLANNING PROCESS
Prior to the work, a Master Plan was defined for future interventions. This plan was based on strategies related to emergency measures, drainage problems, archaeological areas, visitor infrastructure and the logical phasing of interventions.

PLANNING ISSUES
One of the project's aims was interpretation, to develop tourists' understanding of the site. Particular attention was paid to developing a tourist route (with signage) linking the major historical monuments in the Citadel. The trail is interspersed with shaded rest points and viewpoints with panoramas of the Citadel and city. A new visitor centre was equipped with information panels, brochures and guidebooks detailing the Citadel's historical evolution. Rubbish bins were installed and efforts made with the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM) of Syria to achieve better on-site waste collection but follow-up work is still required.

HISTORIC BUILDINGS/MONUMENTS CONSERVED
A large sector of the Citadel has now been preserved. The main structures are the Ayyubid complex, the western area, sections of the ring walls, the Ottoman barracks, the Ayyubid cistern, the well and the medieval paths. The monument's preservation entailed the revival of traditional building methods (such as lime-based mortar injection) that had disappeared during the last decades.

NEW BUILDING FACILITIES
Prior to AKTC interventions, there were no suitable structures for tourists. In cooperation with the DGAM of Syria, AKTC equipped the Citadel with a visitor centre and upgraded sanitation facilities in addition to rehabilitating the cafeteria located within the Citadel walls.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT/PROGRAMME
At the project's outset, meetings were held with the DGAM of Syria to define and agree on interventions for the Citadel's major historical sites.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING/CAPACITY BUILDING
AKTC initiated training sessions and programmes to provide the DGAM of Syria, contractors and craftsmen with instruction in methodologies for documentation and conservation. Specialized and accredited international and local experts conducted the training.

CONTRACTING METHODS
The choice of contractors was based on tender procedures after selected invitations.

RELEVANT CODES/STANDARDS ADOPTED
Local codes and international standards.

Partners

PUBLIC PARTNERS
Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums, Governorate of Aleppo, Municipality of Aleppo, Directorate of Old City of Aleppo.

Donors

World Monuments Fund.

Authoritative Framework

On 1 December 1999, AKTC signed a 'Memorandum of Understanding' with the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums of Syria for providing support and expertise to the 'Restoration of Three Citadels in Syria'. One of these sites was the Citadel of Aleppo.

Citadel Perimeter

ALEPPO, SYRIA

The Citadel of Aleppo is the centre of a historic city, which is registered as a World Cultural Heritage Site. The conservation project undertaken by the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM) and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) within the Citadel of Aleppo underlined the need for an intervention at its perimeter. Within the scope of the 'Project for the Rehabilitation of the Old City of Aleppo', an urban design study was implemented for the Perimeter of the Citadel of Aleppo, in cooperation with the Old City Directorate and GTZ (German Technical Cooperation Agency). The City of Aleppo and AKTC signed a protocol in 2003 detailing the objectives and conditions of this study.

One of the main objectives of the Citadel Perimeter project involved the planning and control of the spread of commercial functions in ways that might jeopardize the comfort, economy and environment of the adjacent residential areas. It was also important to open new cultural development opportunities through the reuse of existing historic buildings and to steer tourist and commercial functions into a direction that is beneficial to the particular areas involved and the Old City in general.

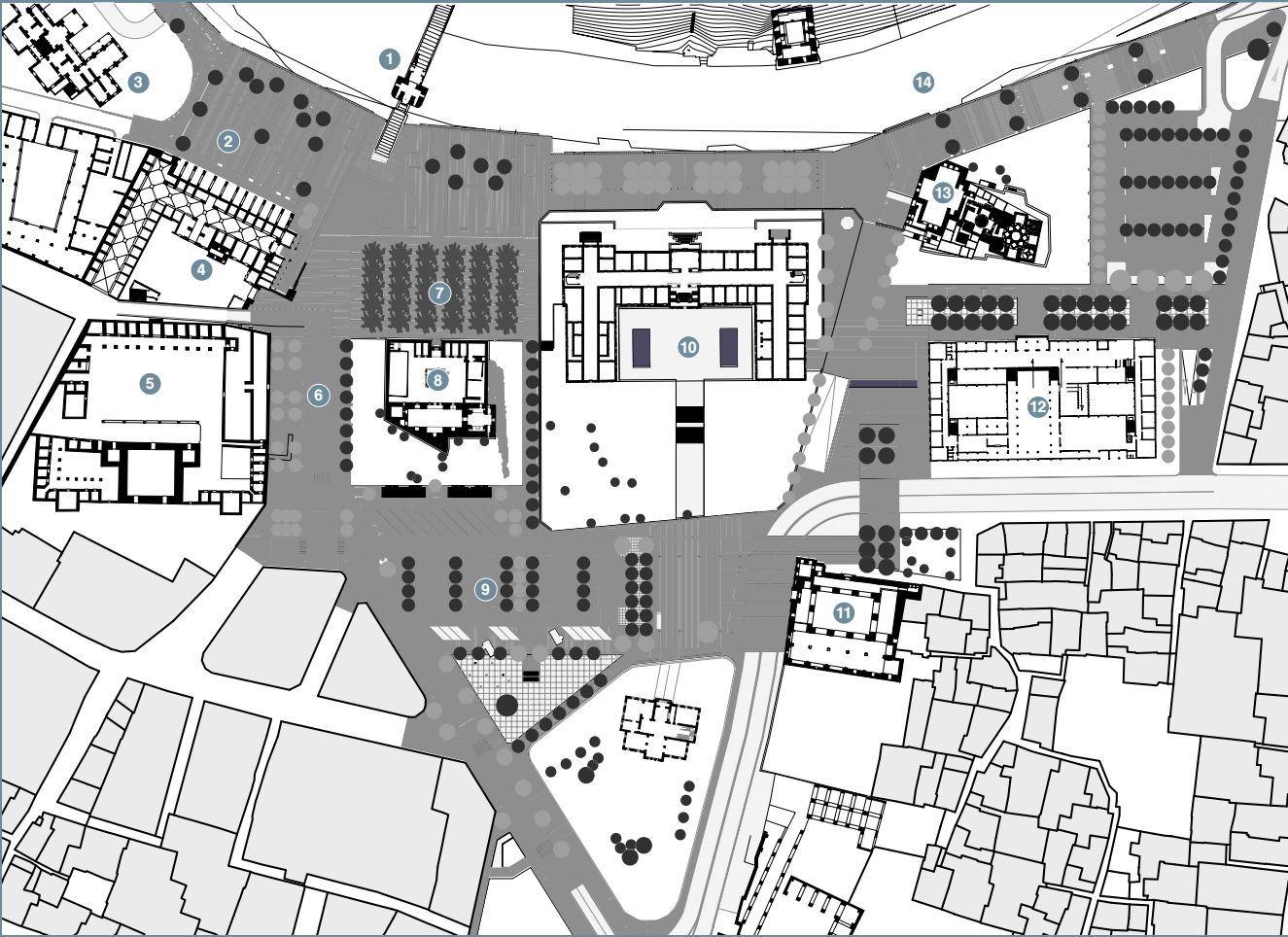
Condition of the Perimeter of the Citadel of Aleppo

The traffic situation of the Aleppo Citadel Perimeter was no longer suitable for the quality of such an exceptional site. An appropriate traffic management system supported the function of the central commercial zone created by the souks of the Old City. The optimization of traffic permitted the creation of the main public spaces as a representative cultural zone for the whole city.

The main objectives for the Old City comprise reorientation of the traffic in and around the Citadel area, including pedestrian issues, public transport networks and parking areas; the control of future planning and the protection of the physical and historical environment of the Citadel Perimeter; the control of the spread of commercial functions in ways that might jeopardize the comfort, economy and environment of residential areas; steering the commercial development in a direction that is most beneficial to the particular areas involved and the Old City in general as tourism activity; protecting the surrounding residential areas, especially from the pressure of commercial functions; adoption of a land-use



The area outside the Citadel has become a popular spot for people to gather and relax. The site was planted with palm trees and seating was added (opposite).



- 1 Bridge and Tower (entrance to Citadel)
- 2 Esplanade with outside cafés
- 3 Old National Hospital converted into a hotel
- 4 Khan ash-Shoune (handicraft market)
- 5 Mosque al-Khosrowiya (religious school)
- 6 Esplanade (parking and access to the Old City quarters)
- 7 Esplanade (pedestrian area planted with palm trees)
- 8 Madrasa al-Sultaniya (mosque)
- 9 Future underground parking and above ground bus station
- 10 New Serai (former governorate offices soon to be a hotel)
- 11 Djami' al-Otrush (mosque)
- 12 Justice Palace
- 13 Hammam Yalbougha al-Nasri
- 14 Moat

Project Scope/Objectives

The scope of work included topographical, traffic, architectural, land-use and economical surveys as well as historical research of each component of the Citadel of Aleppo site. Project development included the creation of a vast pedestrian area at the foot of the entrance to the Citadel, and an appropriately scaled landscape suitable for the urban spaces located on its perimeter.





Before its development, the Perimeter was clogged with traffic, as pictured above, while now (opposite) it has become a people-friendly area and the New Serai, seen in the background, is currently being transformed into a hotel.

plan that enhances the tourist and cultural functions and complements rehabilitation efforts; proposition for future use of each of the major public or vacant buildings; and the improvement of public spaces, infrastructure elements, landscaping, pavements, lighting, details and so on.

Potentials of the Perimeter of the Citadel

The Citadel and its surroundings are one of the most famous cultural heritage sites in the Near East. They are at the heart of a lively historic town and the traditional administrative centre of the city. The Citadel is the landmark of a city of two million inhabitants and of high value for the image of the city. Together with its surroundings, the Citadel is a recreational area for residents and visitors, a cultural attraction of international and national standing, and an archaeological site of great importance for scientific research.

An Urban Study

The Citadel Perimeter envelope is a conglomeration of attractive historic buildings and plain new structures, creating a facade unified only through the use of limestone as its main building material. Its open spaces were poorly defined and badly employed. A privileged zone of the Aleppo Citadel Perimeter was the southern area of the project and in particular the area between the souk entrance and Yalbougha Hammam. This newly created pedestrian plaza now serves as a recreational and pleasure outlet for area residents, and for those of the city as a whole. It also acts as an attractive tourist activity zone. The proper conception of the overall design, details of the surface treatment, urban furniture and other essential elements in a pedestrian public space for creating an amiable urban area were essential to the success of the project. Reference to the traditional urban landscape was a priority, but as a voluntary spirit of continuity and not as an effort to create facsimiles or copies. The project completes the signature of each historical building from the different eras in a real sense of local modernity. Preferences were always given to local techniques and materials with durable qualities implemented by local labour.

Implementation

The implementation of the traffic concept under existing conditions proved to be a complex exercise in its own right. Accordingly the execution of the whole project was divided into five phases. Zone 3, the plaza across from the Citadel entrance, was funded by AKTC and is now completed. Zones 1 and 2 were funded by the Directorate of the Old City and completed in 2010. Zones 4 and 5, the car parks and the completion of the pedestrian zones, will be the subject of a tender procedure after final approval of the local authorities.



Background

BRIEF HISTORY OF PROJECT SITE

The Citadel of Aleppo is one of the most remarkable examples of Islamic military architecture in the Middle East and one of the foremost visited sites in Syria. It is also a landmark of strong symbolic value for Aleppo's two million inhabitants. Its periphery features buildings from a range of periods (13th to 20th centuries).

Challenges

PROJECT RISKS

The spread of commercial activities in the Citadel Perimeter may jeopardize the comfort, economy and environment of the adjacent residential areas, and therefore requires planning and controls.

SITE CONDITIONS

The area defined by Aleppo Citadel and its periphery was a large open space subject to heavy vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Many of the buildings on the Citadel Perimeter were used for administrative functions unrelated to the Old City and with no positive impact on the area.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Drainage, water supply, electricity and telephone systems were inadequate in varying degrees and in need of upgrades. The quality of the water network was very poor, often interrupted, and leakage had damaged buildings, especially at basement levels. Replacing the visually disruptive power cables crossing the site with an underground network presented a major challenge.

Significant Issues and Impact

DATA COLLECTION/SURVEYS

In addition to a detailed topographical survey, basic field data was collected for the demography and environment; existing traffic conditions; existing and future

land use; definition of interesting buildings and houses; future functions of specific buildings and legal status of the lots.

MASTER PLANNING PROCESS

A study for a new concept of traffic in the Old City and in particular for the Citadel Perimeter was performed in cooperation with GTZ (German Technical Cooperation Agency) and the Directorate of the Old City. Based on the analysis of these data, the Master Plan was developed. The principal objective was to divert through traffic away from the Old City by proposing an efficient public transport system, providing appropriate parking facilities, offering an environmentally attractive design for the newly gained pedestrian areas between the Citadel and the New Serai, and beneficially redirecting the spread of commercial activities around the Citadel Perimeter. The esplanade in front of the entrance to the Citadel would provide the only public open space in the Old City. The integrative urban concept was prepared, with special attention paid to landscaping quality, and presented to the local authorities.

PLANNING ISSUES

Convincing the local authorities to suppress a major traffic axis and replace it with a mainly pedestrian area was difficult, but successful. Cultural development opportunities were generated by reusing existing historic buildings on the perimeter and steering tourist and commercial functions in a direction beneficial to the Old City. The project has resulted in an increased value of the lots within the Citadel Perimeter and revived commercial investment in the area.

HISTORIC BUILDINGS/MONUMENTS CONSERVED

The historical, architectural and cultural value of each building on the Citadel Perimeter was evaluated. Public administrative functions were relocated to the modern city centre and the buildings rehabilitated to serve tourist or cultural functions. The quality of both the stone available in the area and the stonework produced by local masons was outstanding and lent coherency to the project.

NEW BUILDING FACILITIES

A tourist centre, exchange points and public toilets were integrated in the project as were electricity substations to solve the lack of electricity supply in the area.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT/PROGRAMME

Decisions regarding the reorientation of traffic in and around the Citadel area, developing pedestrian areas and creating controlled service roads were the result of meetings with the inhabitants, businesses and local authorities. Workshops with inhabitants and local authorities were organized throughout the development of the final design and during execution.

CONTRACTING METHODS

The choice of contractors was based on tender procedures after selected invitations. The sense of architectural micro-detail was a constant issue of discussion with the contractors and their teams, in the expectation that this approach might impact future projects developed by the city.

RELEVANT CODES/STANDARDS ADOPTED

Local codes upgraded by international standards.

Partners

PUBLIC PARTNERS

Directorate of Old City of Aleppo, Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums, Ministry of Tourism, Directorate of Electricity, Directorate of Water.

Donors

GTZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit).

Authoritative Framework

Protocol signed between AKTC and the City Council in 2003.

Bab Qinessrine Park

ALEPPO, SYRIA

The Bab Qinessrine Park project is the result of a previous engagement by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) in the conservation of three historic citadels in Syria over 1999–2005, including the Citadel of Aleppo and the planning and redesign of the latter’s urban Perimeter space. This first phase of engagement by the Trust in Syria was marked by the inauguration of the Citadel of Aleppo by His Highness the Aga Khan in 2008. The seventeen-hectare site of the future Park lies in a strategic location, just outside the city’s historic walls, and takes its name from the south-western gate itself. The site is just a hundred metres from the Grand Mosque and traditional souk and only another forty metres from the Citadel of Aleppo.

The proposal for the redevelopment of the mostly barren site into a municipal Park was one advanced by the Government of Syria following a visit of high-level officials to Azhar Park in Cairo (see p. 310). Similarities between the former condition of the site in Cairo and that of Bab Qinessrine are striking: in their pre-existing states, these two sites represented mostly marginalized inner urban land, just outside the historic city walls, adjacent to economically challenged but vibrant communities, with considerable topography and poor soils. The Syrian authorities were keen to apply similar methods used in Cairo to this disadvantaged but central site.

Beyond the above-mentioned physical constraints, impediments to the project existed in the site’s western edge where mid-rise multi-family housing blocks had experienced differential settlement, a large percentage of which had already been condemned, residents relocated and the buildings demolished. A remaining series of buildings await similar evacuation. Park design proposals also need to take into account the mosque and small cemetery located on the site’s north-western corner and two known caves which run roughly north-south in the chalk strata below the site.

As is often the case, certain site constraints can be advantages, such as the high elevation of the central part of the site which affords views northwards towards the city gate and the Citadel. With careful master grading, the site will allow for a three-dimensional landscape with terracing of planted and walking areas and facilities that will provide interesting views over the city and city walls.



A bird’s-eye view from the main retail spine shows the upper plateau, the lake and Bab Qinessrine Gate in the distance.

Opposite page:
The area where the Park will be developed is currently in a state of neglect.



- | | | | |
|-------------------|--------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 Parking | 4 Cafeteria | 7 Children’s Play Area | 10 Ayyubid Wall |
| 2 Main Entrance | 5 Restaurant | 8 Amphitheatre | 11 Existing Cemetery |
| 3 Shopping Bazaar | 6 Cave Area | 9 Bab Qinessrine | |

N
150 m

Project Scope/Objectives

Bab Qinessrine is an area of waste ground outside the Old City walls where AKTC is developing a Park to provide green space and to form a visitor circuit through the Old City. The Park is the core component of what is expected to become an urban regeneration project in the immediate area through a package of initiatives, including environmental rehabilitation and economic and social improvements, with additional benefits from private inward investment as a complement to the Park investment, and with public-sector investments on the periphery for roadways and other similar public infrastructure.





The Park is planned to feature a palm-lined walkway with water channels and fountains.

The Park's Master Plan design has been entrusted to the Cairo-based practice, Sites International, landscape architects for Azhar Park.

The Park design consists of two major zones with distinct design themes. The first zone occupies the northern area of the site alongside Bab Qinessrine Gate's approach road, consisting of a series of courtyard and low-scale retail modules arranged on both sides of a wide promenade punctuated with pools and fountains and lined with trees. Designed to accommodate large numbers of strollers and to provide diverse retail and food and beverage outlets, this zone will allow the Park to generate funds for its ongoing operations while screening the northern parking zone from the main park area.

The second and far larger Park zone consists of the sloping areas of the site, designed to provide areas for leisure along curvilinear paths and terraces. At the northern end an amphitheatre has been set into the slope at the eastern end of the main promenade, facing the historic city gate itself. The higher areas of the Park to the south will contain a small lake, a playground for children, a café and, at the highest point, a restaurant with indoor and outdoor seating for residents and tourists.

The Park design process has been accompanied by careful deliberation and planning with the Governorate of Aleppo regarding an appropriate future management system for the Park that will safeguard the quality and finish of the completed project. The Trust has entered into a 'Memorandum of Understanding' whereby the Park will be designed, built and then managed by the Trust for a period of time, allowing the management system to be put in place and operated in the best interest of park users, the city of Aleppo and neighbouring communities.

As the Park planning and design proceed, AKTC is in close coordination with the Aleppan authorities in the development of a series of proposals that aim at enhancing the quality of life in the adjacent communities. A socio-economic baseline survey has been undertaken to assess the present quality of life indicators and to identify the highest priority needs, and a community-based office has been set up. Consistent with other AKTC projects in inner city areas, the Park and socio-economic projects will be coordinated to provide a multiplicity of linkages and benefits across the project areas.



Above, a fountain in the midst of a square can be seen in the foreground of a view along the retail spine towards the Citadel of Aleppo and Bab Qinessrine Gate.



Left, a view of the vacant land where the Park will be developed. The Citadel rises in the background.

CITADEL RESTORATION PROGRAMME

SYRIA



Citadel of Masyaf

MASYAF, SYRIA

Located in central western Syria, the town of Masyaf nestles on the eastern slope of the coastal mountains. The Citadel of Masyaf, which is built on a rocky promontory, is the result of several phases and is marked by considerable changes and destruction. The record of these changes is still recognizable in a few structures. The monument represents a unique cultural heritage for the quality of the architecture, the variety and quality of the materials and for the complexity of the historical stratifications. The Citadel rises at the eastern side of the Old City and is a landmark for the whole city. The site is one of the most famous monuments of the Islamic architecture of the coastal region. Furthermore, the Citadel can be the object of important archaeological investigations in the future.

The Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) signed a ‘Memorandum of Understanding’ with the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums in Syria (DGAM) on 1 December 1999 to present support in the restoration of three citadels in Syria (Aleppo, Masyaf and Salah al-Din). Since that time a considerable amount of work has been completed in the Citadel of Masyaf through cooperation with the Antiquities department.

Most of the areas within the site were selected to become the focus of conservation efforts, with the intention that the DGAM would continue work elsewhere using methodologies and skills acquired during the joint project implementation. The work has been developed following international standards and methodology of conservation, restoration and rehabilitation. The choices made were the result of in-depth analyses of the monument’s history, of its present physical and figurative state, and of its conservation status. Surveys were carried out with the analysis of materials and systems of decay.

The Citadel of Masyaf is a very dense complex containing a series of buildings and monuments with different historic elements and features, which called for a diversified approach and different forms of conservation and maintenance targeted to the specific requirements of each structure or category of structures.

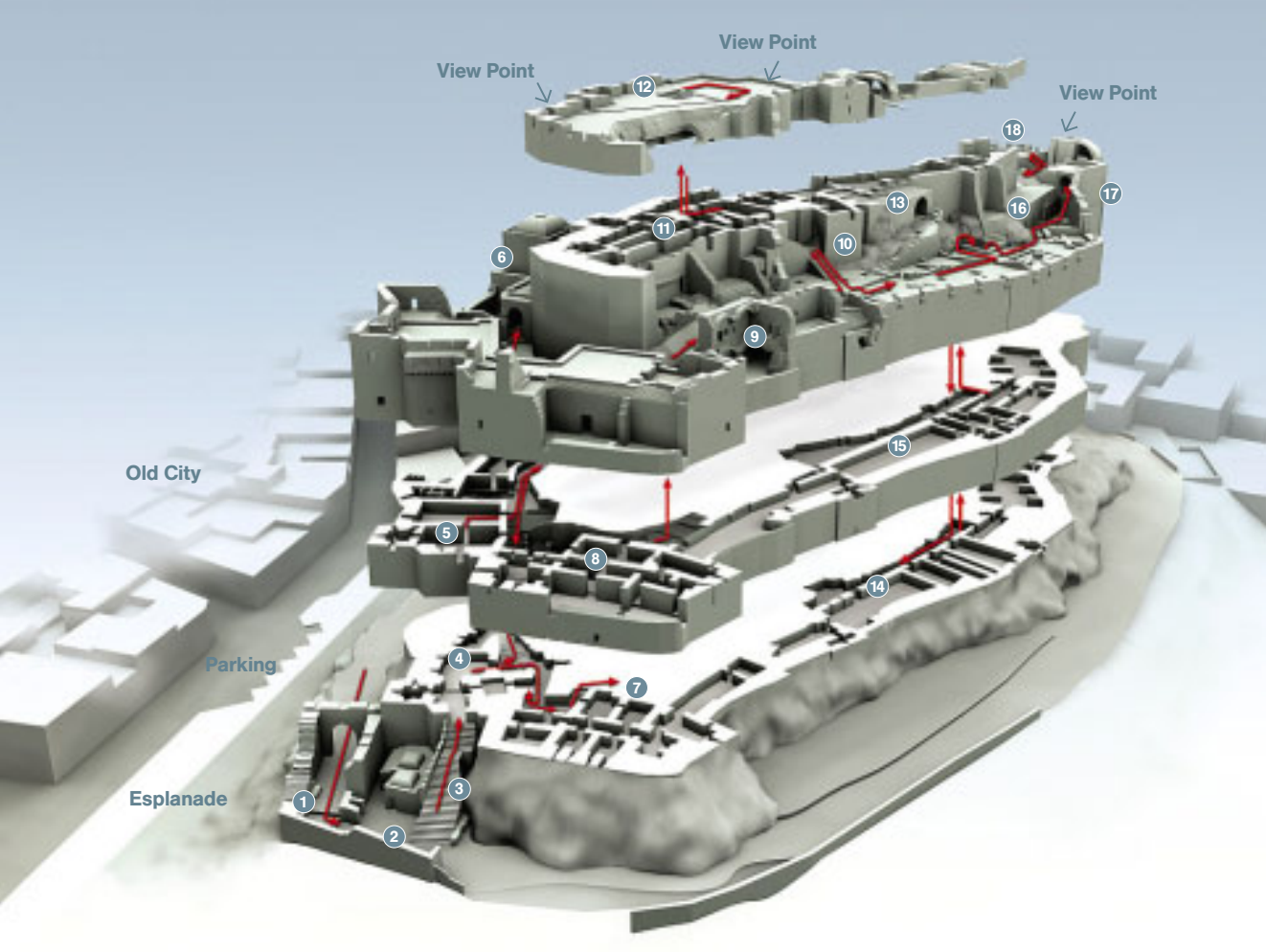
The main structures are the barbican, the *hammam*, the stair and the main gateway; the ring wall and the towers; the south-western compound of the outer citadel; the tunnel, the cisterns and the store rooms; the eastern and western terraces; the donjon or inner castle; and the palace complex containing the Byzantine castle.



The facade of the Citadel of Masyaf, seen from the south, after several modern houses that had encroached on it have been removed.

Opposite page:
Above, an exploded axonometric plan showing the various levels and structures contained within the Citadel.
Below, masons are pictured working on the West Terrace.

Preceding pages:
The Castle of Salah al-Din is located on the western slope of the Syrian coastal mountains at an altitude of 400 to 460 metres. The lower town is on the right, the upper plateau on the left, and the remains of the Byzantine citadel can be seen above.



- | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| 1 Barbican | 6 Western Ottoman House – visitor centre | 11 Inner Castle-Palace, lower level – northern and southern sections | 15 Eastern Front, upper level |
| 2 Hammam | 7 Southern Defensive Complex, lower level – tickets, information and bookshop | 12 Inner Castle-Palace, upper level | 16 Tombs – hypogea from the Byzantine period |
| 3 Stairway | 8 Southern Defensive Complex, upper level | 13 Quarter attributed to Sinan Rashid ad-Din | 17 Room with distinctive plaster |
| 4 Entrance Complex, lower level | 9 Eastern Ottoman House | 14 Eastern Front, lower level | 18 Defensive Tower Terrace |
| 5 Entrance Complex, upper level, visitor centre | 10 Stairway to Inner Castle-Palace | | |

Project Scope/Objectives

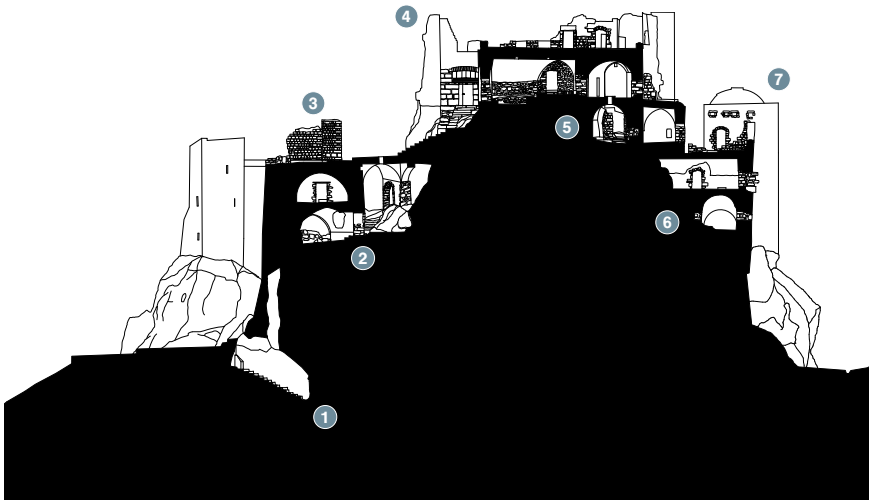
The scope of tasks included documentation, historic research and the definition of principles for the conservation of masonry. The project included the development of techniques for stabilization and structural reinforcement, and masonry conservation and major repairs. HCP was involved in the creation of tourism infrastructure and the access esplanade. Brochures and guidebooks for tourists were also created.



Right, east-west section of the Citadel, showing the outer and inner castle erected on the excavated promontory.

Opposite page:

The Citadel seen from the south-west with the town of Masyaf in the foreground.



- | | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|------|
| 1 Cistern | 5 Inner Castle | 20 m |
| 2 Outer Castle Eastern Front | 6 Outer Castle Western Front | |
| 3 Eastern Ottoman House | 7 Western Ottoman House | |
| 4 Entrance to the Palace | | |



An access corridor in the Citadel is a 60-metre-long tunnel divided into sections separated by raised arches.

The project began in 2000 with the documentation work and the definition of the concept and principles of the preservation process. During the whole mission, detailed documentation was created, including topographical and architectural surveys of the six main levels of the Citadel. Plans of these levels and precise sections were drawn.

In 2001 the consolidation of the eastern wall was executed. As the structural base of the historic Citadel, the rocky promontory was also the object of periodic controls.

From 2001 to 2003 efforts concentrated on the core of the Citadel, and in particular on the western and eastern areas, which presented major structural issues. During this period, archaeological excavations were carried out.

From 2002 to 2004 the Trust completed the work on the upper levels. In the whole Citadel, drainage problems have been resolved by channelling water away from the walls' foundations towards the interior areas of the complex. Rain falls have been redefined to avoid concentration of groundwater near the walls to avoid aggravating the existing problems of erosion and the future occurrence of landslides: although both the ring walls and the walls existing within the Citadel have been repaired and often rebuilt with protective caps. The realization of the screeds on the terraces was executed according to traditional local techniques.

The preservation of the entrance complex, in and out of the portal, was undertaken during 2004 and 2005. Tasks were consolidation of the *hammam*, preservation of the barbican and the removal of the former modern stair access to the Citadel in favour of the rediscovered medieval access.

In 2006 and the beginning of 2007 the Trust concentrated its efforts on the development of visitor infrastructure: access, visitor centre, paths, signage and sanitation facilities. The Historic Cities Programme (HCP) has undertaken a review of the present Master Plan of the city of Masyaf. The project envisaged the improvement of the Citadel's urban context. In this framework, the immediate proximity of the Citadel was considered as an indivisible part of the historic site. The esplanade and the western terraces as well as the eastern terraces were created. Subsequently, brochures and a guidebook were published.



Background

BRIEF HISTORY OF PROJECT SITE

The town of Masyaf is located in the centre of the Syrian coastal mountains. Masyaf Citadel is one of the most intact medieval strongholds of the Syrian littoral. Built on a rocky promontory, most of the Citadel's extant structures date to the Ismaili occupation (12th and 13th centuries) when Masyaf was their state capital. A Byzantine structure that pre-dates the Citadel was included in the medieval fortress. In the Ottoman period some constructions were added. During the 20th century the Citadel was the subject of several consolidation campaigns, performed without any historical or architectural basis. Prior to HCP intervention the site was completely abandoned.

Challenges

PROJECT RISKS

The site analysis and definition of new structures and historical ruins represented a challenge, as did the effort of de-restoration (removing former substandard conservation and reinforcement works).

SITE CONDITIONS

Bombardments, erosion, human impact and long-term abandonment caused deterioration to the site. The western approach to the Citadel was blocked by a series of shabby informal apartment buildings.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The site lacked all electricity, water, rainwater and waste drainage infrastructure.

BUILDING CONDITIONS

The Citadel was in an advanced state of decay. Parts of the ring walls had collapsed.

Significant Issues and Impact

DATA COLLECTION/SURVEYS

AKTC carried out architectural, structural and topographical surveys of most of the site, documenting areas of intervention and detailing conditions before conservation or rehabilitation works.

MASTER PLANNING PROCESS

A general plan was defined for strategies related to emergency measures, drainage problems, visitor infrastructure and the phasing of interventions. The objective was to restore the Citadel and make it a catalyst for socio-economic development in the city, particularly through tourism. After its preservation, the Citadel was included within the 'National Plan' defined by the Ministry of Tourism. The number of visitors increased from less than 500 per year to more than 6000 in 2009.

PLANNING ISSUES

To develop visitor facilities, minimal but efficient infrastructure networks were planned and installed in co-operation with the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM). One of the major interventions was the development of tourist interpretation at the site. In addition to the tourist trail and signage, brochures and guidebooks were planned for availability in a new visitor centre. To enhance the appearance of the esplanade, and reproduce a view of the Citadel as it was in medieval times, the natural rock of the site was exposed and cleaned, and electrical networks were installed underground.

HISTORIC BUILDINGS/MONUMENTS CONSERVED

The Citadel and its immediate surroundings were the main conservation project.

NEW BUILDING FACILITIES

The Trust purchased 12 blocks of buildings blocking the western approach to the Citadel in 2003 and

replaced them with an esplanade. Parking for tourist buses and cars was provided. A visitor centre and sanitation facilities were created, and a tourist route was defined and equipped with signage.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING/CAPACITY BUILDING

Accredited international and local experts conducted training sessions and programmes in up-to-date methodologies of documentation and conservation for the benefit of DGAM staff, contractors and craftsmen.

CONTRACTING METHODS

AKTC carried out most of the works with a team directly employed by the Trust in order to upgrade local restoration skills. Contractors were chosen for structural reinforcements of the ring walls, based on tender procedures after selected invitations.

NEW TECHNOLOGIES INTRODUCED

The monument's preservation entailed the revival of traditional building methods (such as lime-based mortar injection) that had disappeared during the last decades.

Partners

PUBLIC PARTNERS

Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums, Governorate of Hama, City Council of Masyaf Town.

Authoritative Framework

On 1 December 1999 AKTC signed a 'Memorandum of Understanding' with the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums of Syria for providing support to the 'Restoration of Three Citadels in Syria'. One of these three sites was the Citadel of Masyaf. In 2001 the Trust signed a protocol with the Governorate of Hama and the City of Masyaf.

Castle of Salah al-Din

HAFFAH, SYRIA

The Castle rises amidst spectacular landscape and, together with the Crac des Chevaliers, was included in UNESCO's World Heritage List in 2006. Indeed, the site is one of the most famous monuments of Islamic architecture and one of the most visited places in Syria (around 100,000 visitors in 2008).

Its successive occupants were the Byzantines, the Franks, the Ayyubids and the Mamluks. The site is the result of numerous construction phases and the record of changes is still recognizable in most of the structures. The monument represents a unique cultural heritage for the quality of its military architecture, the variety and quality of the materials, and for the complexity of the historical stratifications, as well as for its environmental surroundings.

The Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) signed a 'Memorandum of Understanding' with the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums in Syria (DGAM) on 1 December 1999 to provide support in the restoration of three citadels in Syria (Aleppo, Masyaf and Salah al-Din). Since that time a considerable amount of work has been completed with the cooperation of the Antiquities authorities.

The Castle of Salah al-Din is perched at an altitude of approximately 450 metres on a long rocky spur stretching from east to west and divided into two plateaux separated by a steep ridge. Only a number of historically or spatially coherent areas within the site were selected to become the focus of conservation efforts, with the intention that the DGAM would continue work elsewhere using methodologies and skills acquired during the joint project implementation. The work has been developed according to international standards and methodology of restoration and rehabilitation. The choices made were the result of in-depth analyses of the monument's history, of its present physical and figurative state, and of its conservation or rehabilitation status.

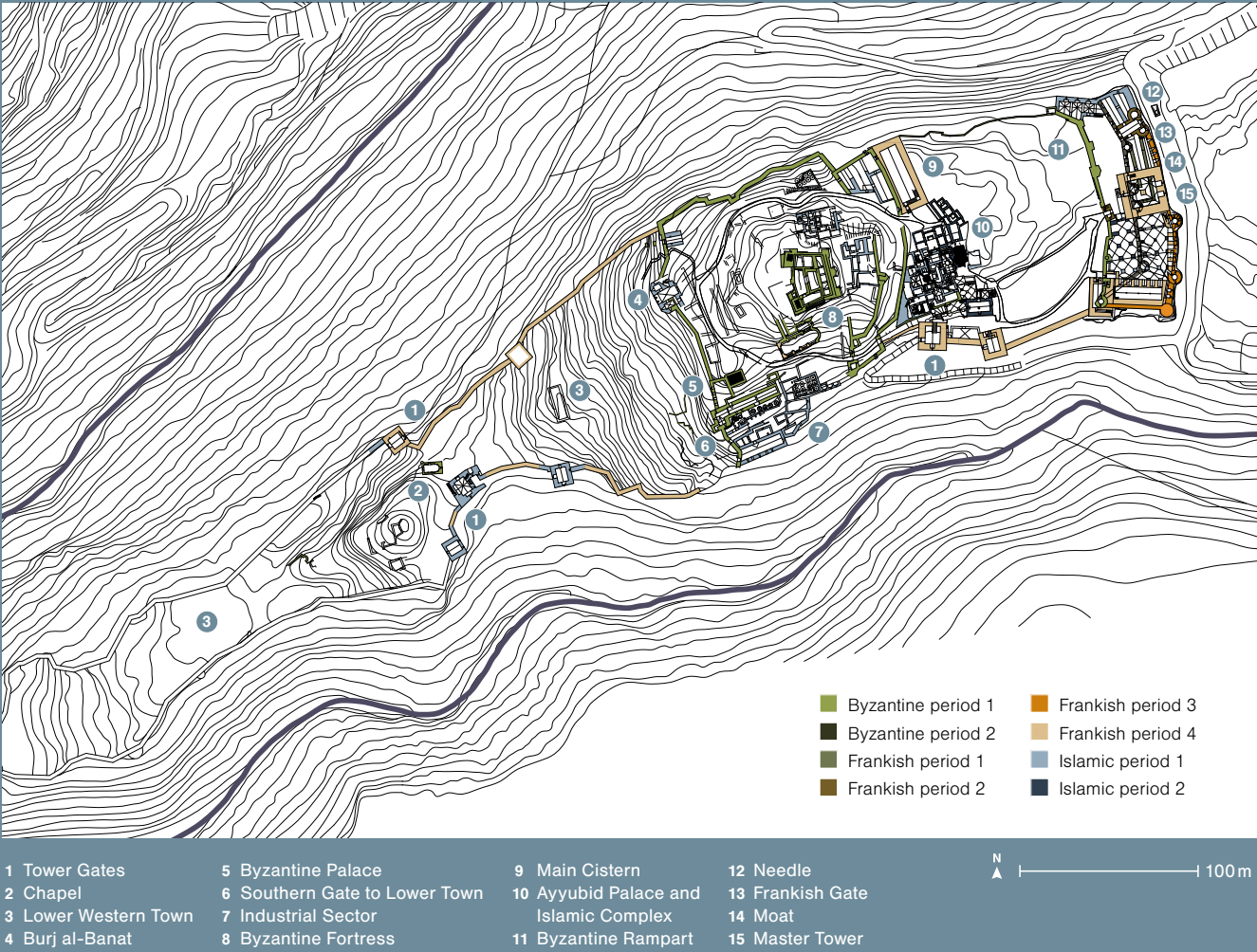
The Castle of Salah al-Din is a very large complex containing a series of buildings and monuments of different historical periods, which call for a diversified approach and different forms of conservation and maintenance targeted to the specific requirements of each structure or category of structures.

The main structures are the moat and the needle; the main gateway; the ring walls; the towers and the master tower; the Byzantine fortress and ramparts; the



This view of the Castle reveals its Frankish fortifications resting on top of cut bedrock, with the rectangular tower and the moat in the foreground.

Opposite page:
A guide shows visitors around the pillared hall constructed in the Islamic period.



Project Scope/ Objectives

The scope of work included architectural, archaeological and historical research, documentation and actual conservation of the Salah al-Din Palace. The implementation on site mainly concerned the conservation of the Islamic complex: the mosque, palace and *hammam*. Tourist infrastructure was also created.





This plan illustrates the historical chronology of the Ayyubid palace area on the upper plateau to the east of the Byzantine fortress.

Islamic complex (including the mosque, the palace and the public *hammam*); and the Lower Town, walls and towers and the two tower-gates.

During the years of the mission of the Historic Cities Programme (HCP), detailed surveys were carried out with the analysis of materials and systems of decay. An extensive programme of documentation, archaeological excavation, and historical and architectural analysis for the conservation and restoration work was carried out on the Islamic-era remains of the Castle, as well as the completion of tourism facilities.

The conservation work concentrated on the Islamic complex, and particularly on the mosque, the public *hammam* and the residential palace. The archaeological excavations, done in the palace to gain a better understanding of the complex, were led by a multidisciplinary team of Syrian and international specialists. The mosque and the adjacent building were rehabilitated as the visitor centre. Tourist paths and signage were executed in complete respect of the environmental topography of the site. The entrance tower was upgraded to offer visitors a suitable ticket and information space; the cafeteria was also upgraded; sanitation facilities were installed outside the limit of the fortifications; and brochures and a guidebook were published.



A bird's-eye view of the Castle showing its position on a long narrow ridge encompassed by a gorge on either side.

In terms of cultural site management, a maintenance programme includes the routine upkeep of the structures and periodic checks to ensure that all mechanical systems are in working order, as well as repairs to materials and components that are subject to predictable wear and tear.

Furthermore, the Castle is still the subject of archaeological investigations and historic research. The main areas of potential research concern firstly, an area east of the Islamic complex, the Byzantine rampart, which is partially under excavation. Some Ayyubid structures appear, and some excavations in this area could be of interest. Secondly, the DGAM has partially cleaned the lower part of the Castle. The need and effect of these excavations is evident for understanding the whole of the Lower Town. And thirdly the industrial sector and the area north of the Byzantine fortress where some excavations are needed for a better comprehension of the economic activities in the Castle.

The conservation work has been performed by local craftsmen. This choice seems successful, since, from the time of the HCP interventions, the DGAM in Syria, through its Department in Lattakia, is continuing this project with the restoration of certain Byzantine, Frankish and Islamic structures.



Left, the monolithic pillar, or ‘needle’, left by the Franks during the excavation of the moat as a drawbridge support.

Opposite page:
The Ayyubid palace with the mosque minaret in the background.

Background

BRIEF HISTORY OF PROJECT SITE

Standing against the striking backdrop of the Syrian coastal mountains, the Castle of Salah al-Din bears witness to more than 1000 years of history. The remains date to the Byzantine, Frankish, Ayyubid and Mamluk periods. These successive occupants did not destroy their predecessors' work, but instead strengthened existing structures and expanded the site to create the largest enclosed fortification in the Middle East. The only restoration of the site was performed by French architects in 1937 and 1940. A rare melange of architectural styles, the Castle, along with Crac des Chevaliers, was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2006.

Challenges

PROJECT RISKS

Interventions needed to preserve the topography and vegetation that contribute to the site's evocative atmosphere.

SITE CONDITIONS

Prior to HCP interventions, the site had been long abandoned. Located in an area of heavy rainfall, the site was severely eroded and overgrown.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Electric cables and telephone lines were installed at the Castle entrance and remedial lighting was provided in some areas by the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM). Aside from these interventions, there was no infrastructure on site.

BUILDING CONDITIONS

Except for the main tower and parts of the fortifications, the structure had suffered from more than 60 years of abandonment. The first floor of the Ayyubid palace was no longer visible and the *hammam* was in ruins. Most roofs were not intact and water leakage affected most of the covered spaces.

Significant Issues and Impact

DATA COLLECTION/SURVEYS

Prior to the intervention of the Trust, site documentation consisted of several imprecise drawings. AKTC carried out architectural, structural and topographical surveys of the Islamic complex.

MASTER PLANNING PROCESS

A general plan for future interventions was based on strategies related to emergency measures, drainage problems, visitor infrastructure and phasing of the work.

PLANNING ISSUES

Improving tourist interpretation was a major concern. In addition to the design and execution of tourist trails and signage, a visitor centre was planned, including historical information panels, newly published brochures and guidebooks.

HISTORIC BUILDINGS/MONUMENTS CONSERVED

The conserved Islamic-era structures include the Castle mosque, its minaret and the adjacent room; two levels of the Ayyubid palace, with its private *hammam*; the public bath; the Burg al-Banat, rehabilitated into a cafeteria; and the entrance tower rehabilitated to serve as a ticket and information space.

NEW BUILDING FACILITIES

Sanitation facilities were built outside the fortification.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING/CAPACITY BUILDING

Accredited international and local experts employed by the AKTC conducted training sessions and programmes in up-to-date methodologies of documentation and conservation for the benefit of the DGAM and other local staff, contractors and craftsmen.

CONTRACTING METHODS

The bulk of the work was contracted. The choice of contractors was based on tender procedures after selected invitations. Miscellaneous maintenance works were executed by a team employed directly by the Trust.

Partners

PUBLIC PARTNERS

Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums, Governorate of Lattakia, Municipality of Haffeh.

Authoritative Framework

On 1 December 1999 the Aga Khan Trust for Culture signed a 'Memorandum of Understanding' with the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums of Syria for providing support to the 'Restoration of Three Citadels in Syria'. One of these three sites was the Castle of Salah al-Din.