Urban Cultural Heritage in the Middle East

Old City of Aleppo

Five Thousand Years of Urban Structures

The Plan of the Old City of Aleppo shows the pre-conflict urban structure of the historic core of Aleppo and documents different layers of the unique morphological characteristics and exceptional spatial qualities of its Old City as it has developed over thousands of years. The distinctive structure of an ancient city complex and its later transformation into an old Arabic city with significant monuments and their squares, bazaars, main streets and various quarters with individual neighbourhoods along dead ends represents the unique characteristic, even if many buildings and streets are currently severely damaged.

Aleppo, as Syria's second largest city and one of the oldest continuously inhabited settlements in the world, was dominated by armed conflict since the beginning of 2011 to the end of 2016. The extent of humanitarian loss and devastation of the cultural heritage soon reached the level that in 2013 the Old City of Aleppo was placed on the UNESCO list of the World Heritage in Danger.

Taking into account the richness of the Old City of Aleppo as a cultural palimpsest of various historic layers the project of Aleppo Archive in Exile- Plan of the Old City of Aleppo was outlined. The project aimed at filling the gap in the existing documentations and analysis on the Old City of Aleppo through generating a comprehensive inventory of its pre-conflict urban structure in its totality and complexity enhancing the urban values and integrity of the Old City.

The project integrated relevant existing urban investigations on the spatial structure of the Old City into a unified picture. For this purpose, Durrafour's documentation efforts of the land register plans (cadastre) from 1928 to 1931 which had introduced a modern way of understanding the city through an accurate representation of the property structure, became highly instrumental. These plans, which were digitized in the late 90s by the 'German Society for Technical Cooperation' (GTZ, now GIZ) together with the Directorate of the Old City of Aleppo (DOC) and recently revised by the Berlin Museum of Islamic Art, were employed as the main base for the Plan of the Old City of Aleppo. The digital cadastral plan was overlaid with an inner courtyard plan of the Old City, making the built-up area more visible while further emphasizing on the morphological relationship between the masses and voids.

In order to enhance the overall picture of the urban structure, ground floor plans of numerous individual buildings with high cultural significances were included in the Old City plan. These buildings represent the Old Aleppo's most valuable architectural and urban elements such as traditional houses, mosques, *madrasas*, *hammams*, *khans*, *suqs*, the citadel and even newly designed public spaces. Moreover, the plan illustrates the destruction and transformation of some of the parcels during the modernization period and at the same time reveals structures that are currently hidden by building rubbles. Where today only rubble is visible, the plan shows the foundation walls, paths, alleys and parcel structures underneath. The 1984 inventories of the Old City prepared by Heinz Gaube and Eugen Wirth served as other important reference documents to show morphological characteristics including the historic periods and the functions of the significant individual buildings within a more comprehensive image. Finally, the collected documents of the highly praised Rehabilitation project of the Old City of Aleppo (1990s to 2011) including the surveys, analysis and design proposals, were located on the Plan.

Each of these documents have recorded one or more aspects of Old Aleppo's urban form pertinent to its morphology, pattern of the spatial components and its development processes which epitomize the social, cultural, economic, political and environmental forces of the city in the course of history. As a result, these valuable documents not only portray the physical characteristics of Aleppo's architectural or urban elements but also narrate living patterns, structures, traditions and memories of the previous generations when put together in a detailed and comprehensive manner.

The scope and performance of the current project was drawn mainly based on the capacities provided through the long-term cooperation of the architects and urban planners of the BTU with the University of Aleppo regarding the development and revitalization of the World Heritage Site. After the outbreak of the armed conflict, BTU academics together with colleagues from other institutions took on the task of securing existing documents on the Old City of Alepp. The Plan of the Old City of Aleppo at hand with 16,000 parcels and around 400 ground floor plans, was the result of a close cooperation between BTU, Association of Friends of the Old City of Aleppo and University of Bari based on extensive and long standing academic and practical experience of each institute on the Old City of Aleppo. Finally, the project was carried out within the Archaeological Heritage Network for the preservation of cultural heritage and through a cooperative partnership with the Syrian Heritage Archive Project at the Museum of Islamic Arts in Berlin.

Aleppo Archive in Exile - Plan of the Old City of Aleppo

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Franziska Laue, Friends of the Old City of Aleppo e.V.; University of Stuttgart; Urban Historical Archive and Documentation Centre for Aleppo (2008 – 2011)

Cooperation Partner:
Museum of Islamic Art, Berlin, Syrian Heritage Archive Project

Project of:
Archaeological Heritage Network (ArcHerNet)
within the frame of "Stunde Null" Project
German Archaeological Institute (DAI)

Financed by:
German Ministry of Foreign Affairs

BTU Cottbus - Senftenberg 2020

Plan of the Old City of Aleppo



Aleppo Archive in Exile - Plan of the Old City of Aleppo

Figure Ground Plan with Available Ground Floor Plans of Buildings 1:1000

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Financed by:
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Conception and Construction Consultants, Thierry Grandin and Adli Qudsi
Directorate of the Old City of Aleppo
Giulia Annalinda Neglia
Jean-Claude David
Mahmoud Sakit
Miral Bakhach
Nasser Rabbat
Thierry Grandin
University of Aleppo

Legend:

- World Heritage Core Zone
- World Heritage Buffer Zone
- Path of the Ayyubid Wall

Sources of the Used Documents:
Heinz Gaube & Eugen Wirth (1984)
Anette Gangler (1993)
Jean-Claude David (1998 & 2019)
Jean Sauvaget (1941)
Lamia al-Jaseer (end of 1990s to 2015)
Mansur Mahmud Abdurraziq (2014)
Stefano Bianca (1991)
Berlin Museum of Islamic Art, Syrian Heritage Archive Project
Urban Historical Archive and Documentation Centre for Aleppo (UHADCA)

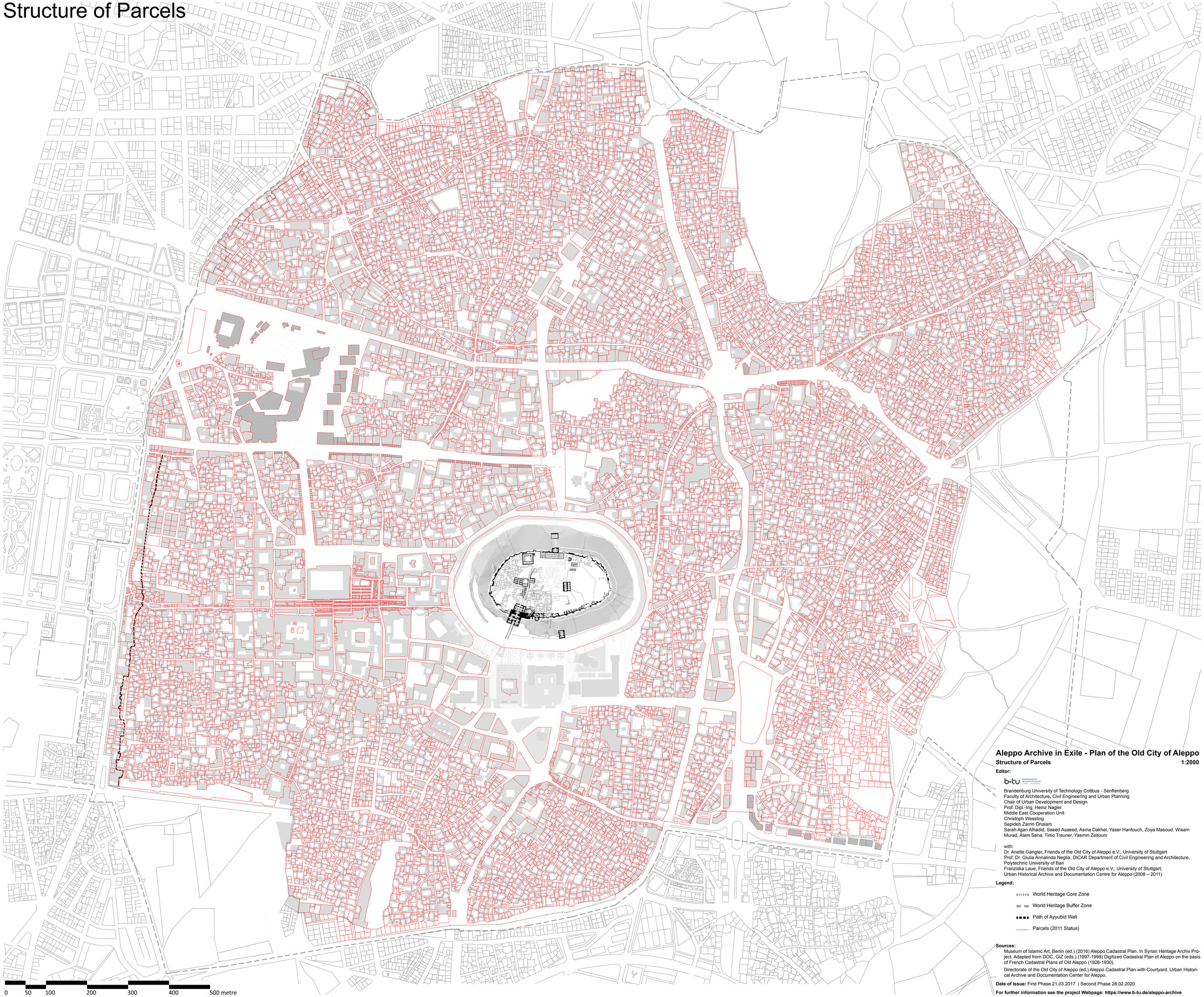
Sources of the Base Plan:
Berlin Museum of Islamic Art (ed.) (2016) Aleppo Cadastral Plan. In Syrian Heritage Archiv Project. Adapted from DOC, GIZ (eds.) (1997-1998) Digitized Cadastral Plan of Aleppo on the basis of French Cadastral Plans of Old Aleppo (1926-1930).

Directorate of the Old City of Aleppo (ed.) Aleppo Cadastral Plan with Courtyard. Urban Historical Archive and Documentation Center for Aleppo.

Date of Issue: First Phase 21.03.2017 | Second Phase 28.02.2020

For further information see the project Webpage: https://www.b-tu.de/aleppo-archive

Structure of Parcels



Aleppo Archive in Exile - Plan of the Old City of Aleppo

Structure of Parcels **1:2000**

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Franziska Laue, Friends of the Old City of Aleppo e.V.; University of Stuttgart;
Urban Historical Archive and Documentation Centre for Aleppo (2008 – 2011)

Legend:

- World Heritage Core Zone
- World Heritage Buffer Zone
- Path of Ayyubid Wall
- Parcels (2011 Status)

Sources:

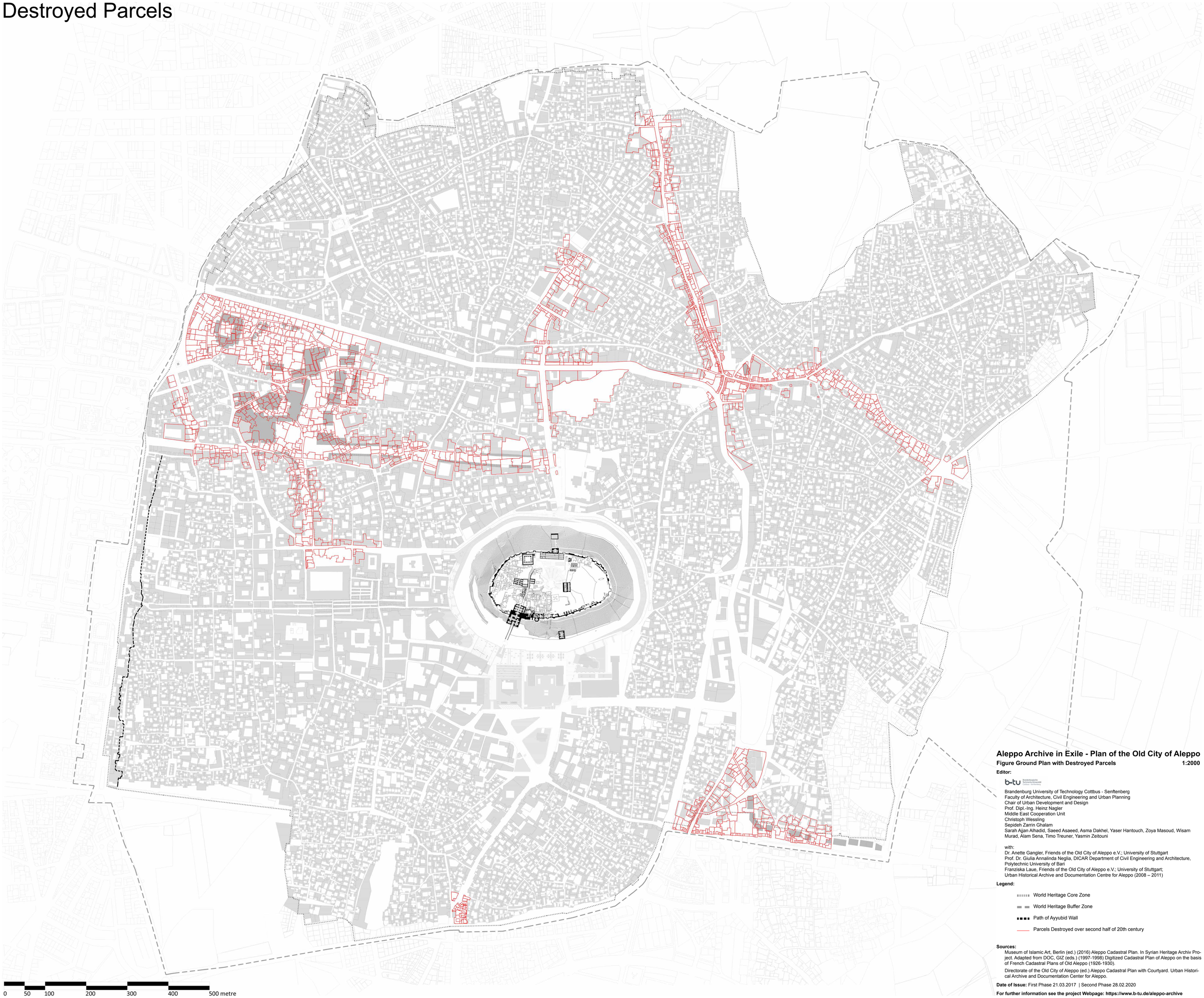
Museum of Islamic Art, Berlin (ed.) (2016) Aleppo Cadastral Plan. In Syrian Heritage Archiv Project. Adapted from DOC, GIZ (eds.) (1997-1998) Digitized Cadastral Plan of Aleppo on the basis of French Cadastral Plans of Old Aleppo (1926-1930).

Directorate of the Old City of Aleppo (ed.) Aleppo Cadastral Plan with Courtyard. Urban Historical Archive and Documentation Center for Aleppo.

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Destroyed Parcels



Aleppo Archive in Exile - Plan of the Old City of Aleppo

Figure Ground Plan with Destroyed Parcels **1:2000**

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Urban Historical Archive and Documentation Centre for Aleppo (2008 – 2011)

Legend:

- World Heritage Core Zone
- World Heritage Buffer Zone
- Path of Ayyubid Wall
- Parcels Destroyed over second half of 20th century

Sources:

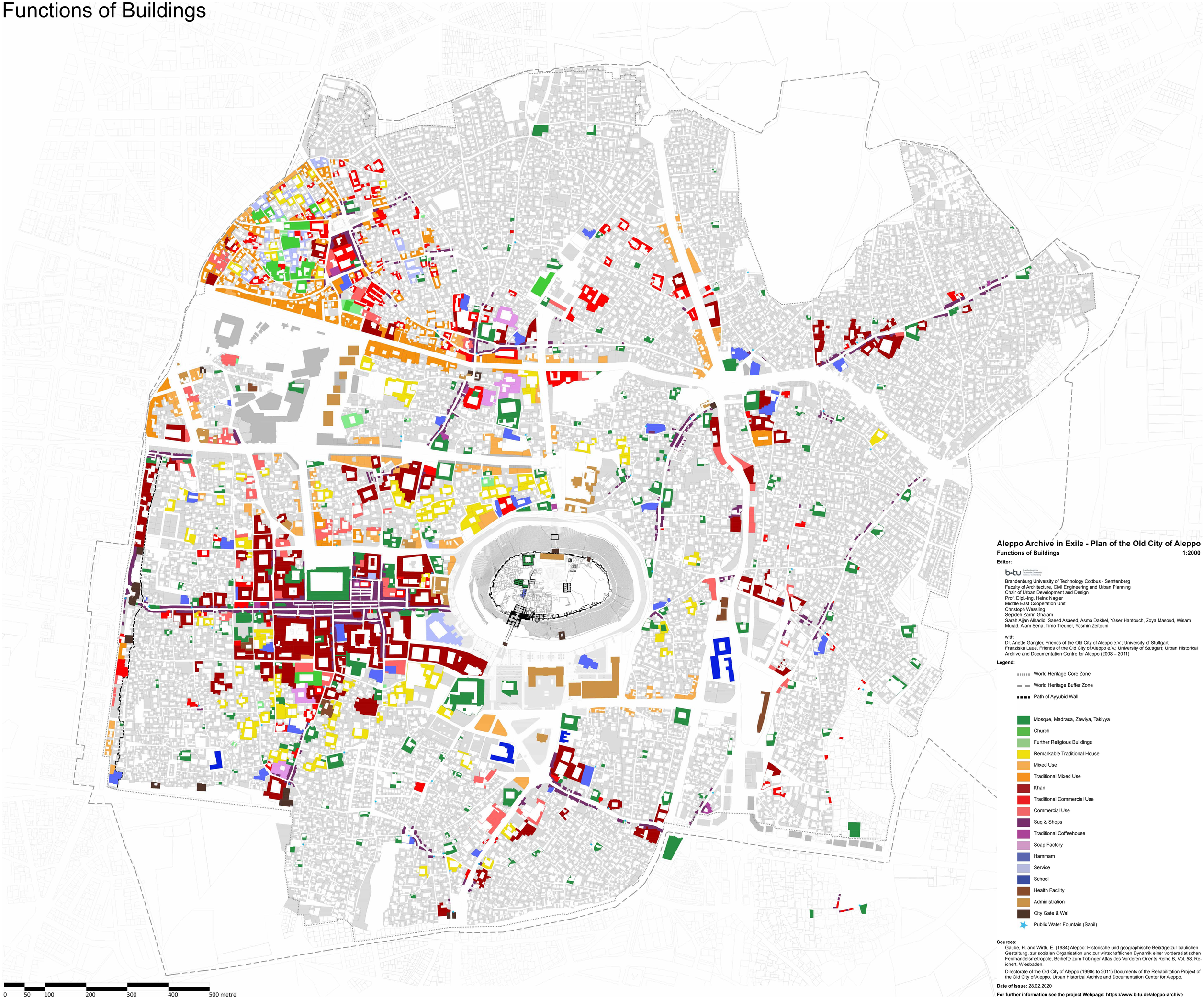
Museum of Islamic Art, Berlin (ed.) (2016) Aleppo Cadastral Plan. In Syrian Heritage Archiv Project. Adapted from DOC, GIZ (eds.) (1997-1998) Digitized Cadastral Plan of Aleppo on the basis of French Cadastral Plans of Old Aleppo (1926-1930).

Directorate of the Old City of Aleppo (ed.) Aleppo Cadastral Plan with Courtyard. Urban Historical Archive and Documentation Center for Aleppo.

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Functions of Buildings



Aleppo Archive in Exile - Plan of the Old City of Aleppo

Functions of Buildings **1:2000**

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Franziska Laue, Friends of the Old City of Aleppo e.V.; University of Stuttgart; Urban Historical Archive and Documentation Centre for Aleppo (2008 – 2011)

Legend:

- World Heritage Core Zone
- World Heritage Buffer Zone
- Path of Ayyubid Wall
- Mosque, Madrasa, Zawiya, Takiyya
- Church
- Further Religious Buildings
- Remarkable Traditional House
- Mixed Use
- Traditional Mixed Use
- Khan
- Traditional Commercial Use
- Commercial Use
- Suq & Shops
- Traditional Coffeehouse
- Soap Factory
- Hammam
- Service
- School
- Health Facility
- Administration
- City Gate & Wall
- Public Water Fountain (Sabil)

Sources:

Gaube, H. and Wirth, E. (1984) Aleppo: Historische und geographische Beiträge zur baulichen Gestaltung, zur sozialen Organisation und zur wirtschaftlichen Dynamik einer vorderasiatischen Fernhandelsmetropole, Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients Reihe B, Vol. 58. Reichert, Wiesbaden.

Directorate of the Old City of Aleppo (1990s to 2011) Documents of the Rehabilitation Project of the Old City of Aleppo. Urban Historical Archive and Documentation Center for Aleppo.

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Urban Centres and Neighbourhood Structures

The novelty of the World Heritage City of Aleppo is in its complex and organic urban structure. The important structural features of this unique structure are the various quarters and neighbourhoods with their respective centres. The hierarchy between public and private areas, which is typical for historic cities in the Middle East, also characterizes the old city of Aleppo. While the area around the Citadel, as well as the Great Umayyad Mosque and the Great Suq of Aleppo, are public spaces with high cultural significance for the entire city, the centres of the individual quarters also hold local importance for their neighbourhoods and are a source of social cohesion and order for their inhabitants. This hierarchical gradation continues into each of the individual neighbourhoods. While the main streets in the quarters are continuous streets, i.e. streets that are also used by people who do not necessarily live or work in these neighbourhoods, the inner streets are designed as dead-end pathways that are only used by the residents and their guests and therefore have a high level of privacy and social control. This hierarchical division between public, community (neighbourhood) and private (buildings) is also found in a similar way within the typology of its traditional courtyard houses. The entrance to the traditional courtyard houses is never straight, but accessed from the corner, so that the interior of buildings, especially the courtyards, cannot be seen from the street, even when the front door is open. From the entrance area one enters the courtyard, which is the place where the families and their guests meet. From the courtyard, other individual rooms and spaces are accessible to the various members of the household.

The map «Buildings with Significance for the Formation of Urban Centres» shows the buildings that are of particular importance for the formation of such urban centres. The distribution and concentration of these buildings and facilities show the polycentric structure of the old city, with the area of the Suq and the Umayyad Mosque, together with the connection of the west gate with the Citadel, standing out as the main historic urban centres. The centres of the individual quarters are formed at crossroads and central points of the connecting streets between the city gates and the areas around the Citadel that are central to the city as a whole.
The map «Quarter Jibb Qaraman - Entrances and Neighbourhood Alleys» shows the entrances of the individual buildings as well as the dead-end pathways of the individual neighbourhoods and how they branch out to form different clusters of larger neighbourhoods.

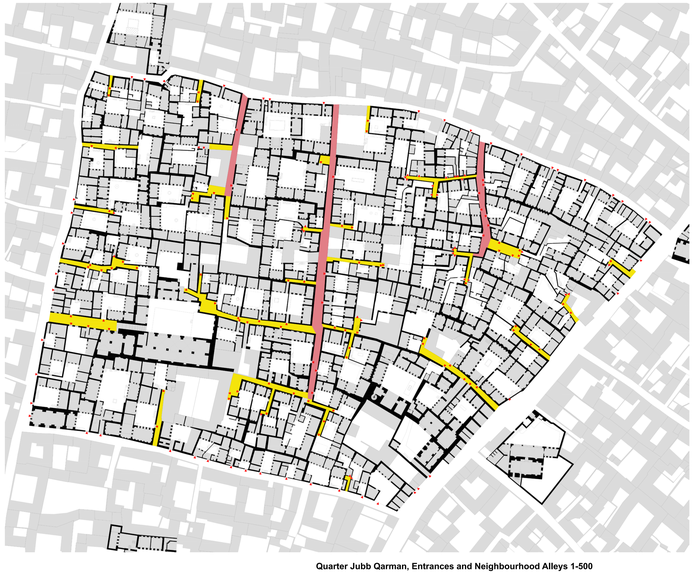
For the World Heritage City of Aleppo, these organic urban structures with polycentric arrangements, developed over generations and centuries, with city gates and main connecting routes, subordinate quarter streets and neighbourhoods formed by a system of dead-end pathways and the individual buildings as courtyard houses are extremely characteristic. Such an evolved and additive urban structure also reflects the traditional social, cultural and economic structure of Aleppine society.







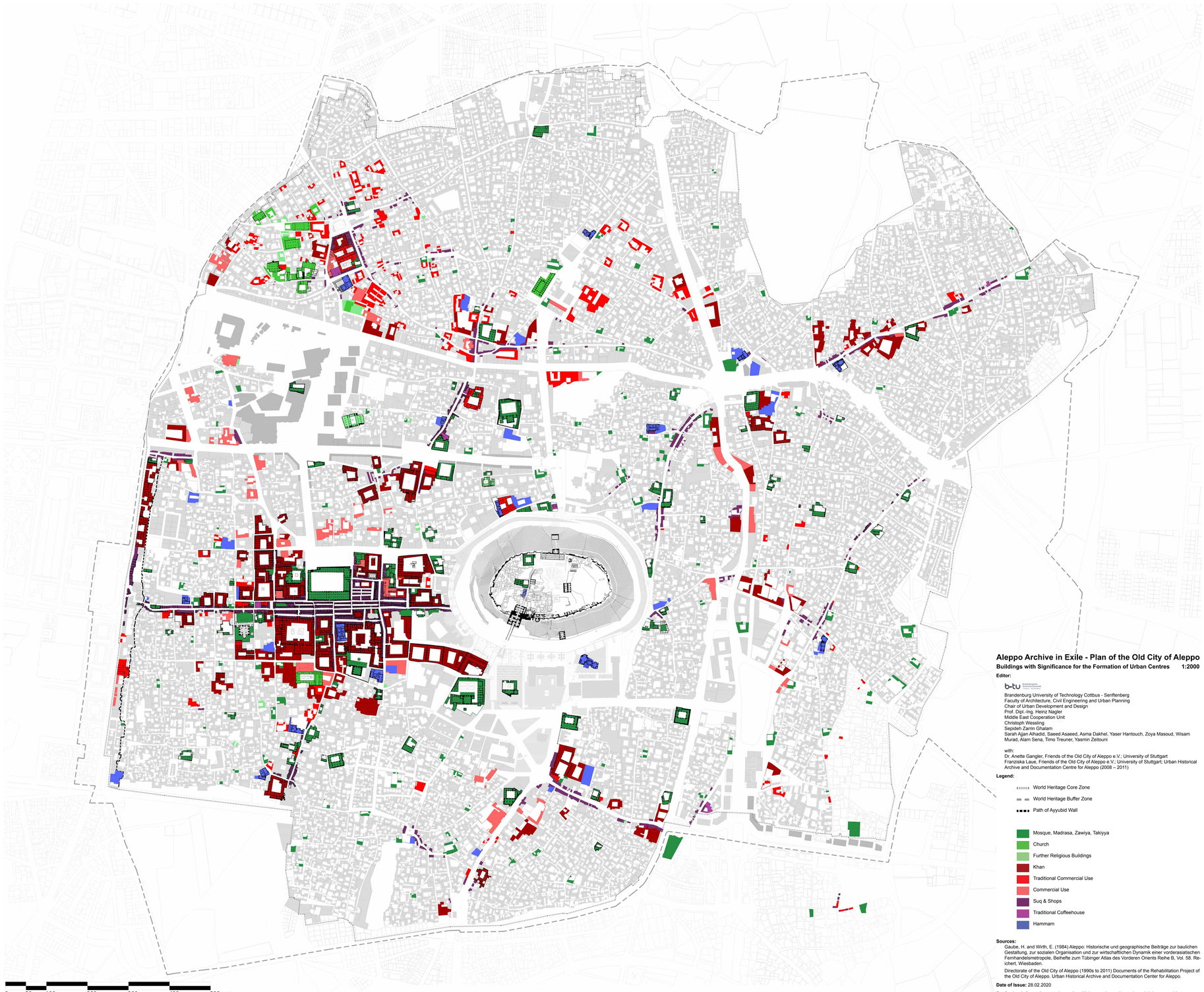
Quarter Jubb Qarman: Centre with the Banqousa Mosque and Neighbourhood Alleys, Photographs: Gangler, A. (1988)



0 10 20 50 100 metre

Quarter Jubb Qarman, Entrances and Neighbourhood Alleys 1-500

Source:
Gangler, A. et al. (1993) Plan 13 „QUARTIER ĞUBB QARMĀN- ZEITSTUFEN, in Ein traditionelles Wohnviertel im Nordosten der Altstadt von Aleppo in Nordsyrien. Wasmuth.Tübingen, Berlin.



0 50 100 200 300 400 500 metre

Aleppo Archive in Exile - Plan of the Old City of Aleppo

Buildings with Significance for the Formation of Urban Centres **1:2000**

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Legend:

- World Heritage Core Zone
- World Heritage Buffer Zone
- Path of Ayyubid Wall
- Mosque, Madrasa, Zawiya, Takiyya
- Church
- Further Religious Buildings
- Khan
- Traditional Commercial Use
- Commercial Use
- Suq & Shops
- Traditional Coffeehouse
- Hammam

Sources:

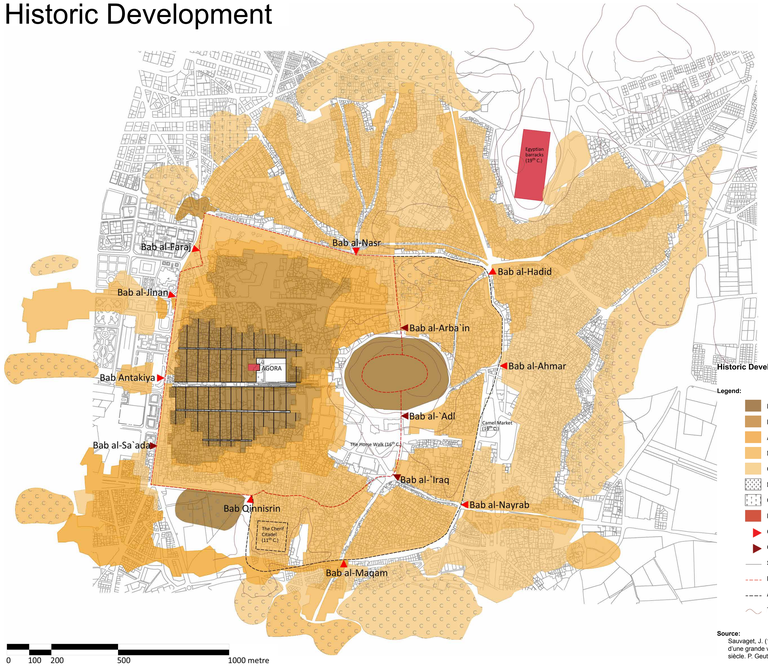
Gaube, H. and Wirth, E. (1984) Aleppo: Historische und geographische Beiträge zur baulichen Gestaltung, zur sozialen Organisation und zur wirtschaftlichen Dynamik einer vorderasiatischen Fernhandelsmetropole, Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients Reihe B, Vol. 58. Reichert, Wiesbaden.

Directorate of the Old City of Aleppo (1990s to 2011) Documents of the Rehabilitation Project of the Old City of Aleppo. Urban Historical Archive and Documentation Center for Aleppo.

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For further information see the project Webpage: https://www.b-tu.de/aleppo-archive

Historic Development



Historic Development of the Old City of Aleppo
1:5000

Legend:

- Hellenistic & Earlier Periods
- Byzantine Period (11th C.)
- Ayyubid Period (13th C.)
- Mamluk Period (16th C.)
- Ottomon Period (19th C.)
- Muslim Cemetery
- Christian Cemetery
- Remarkable Building
- Gates
- Old Gates
- Street Network (B. C.)
- Pre-Ayyubid Fortification
- Ayyubid Fortification
- Topography Line

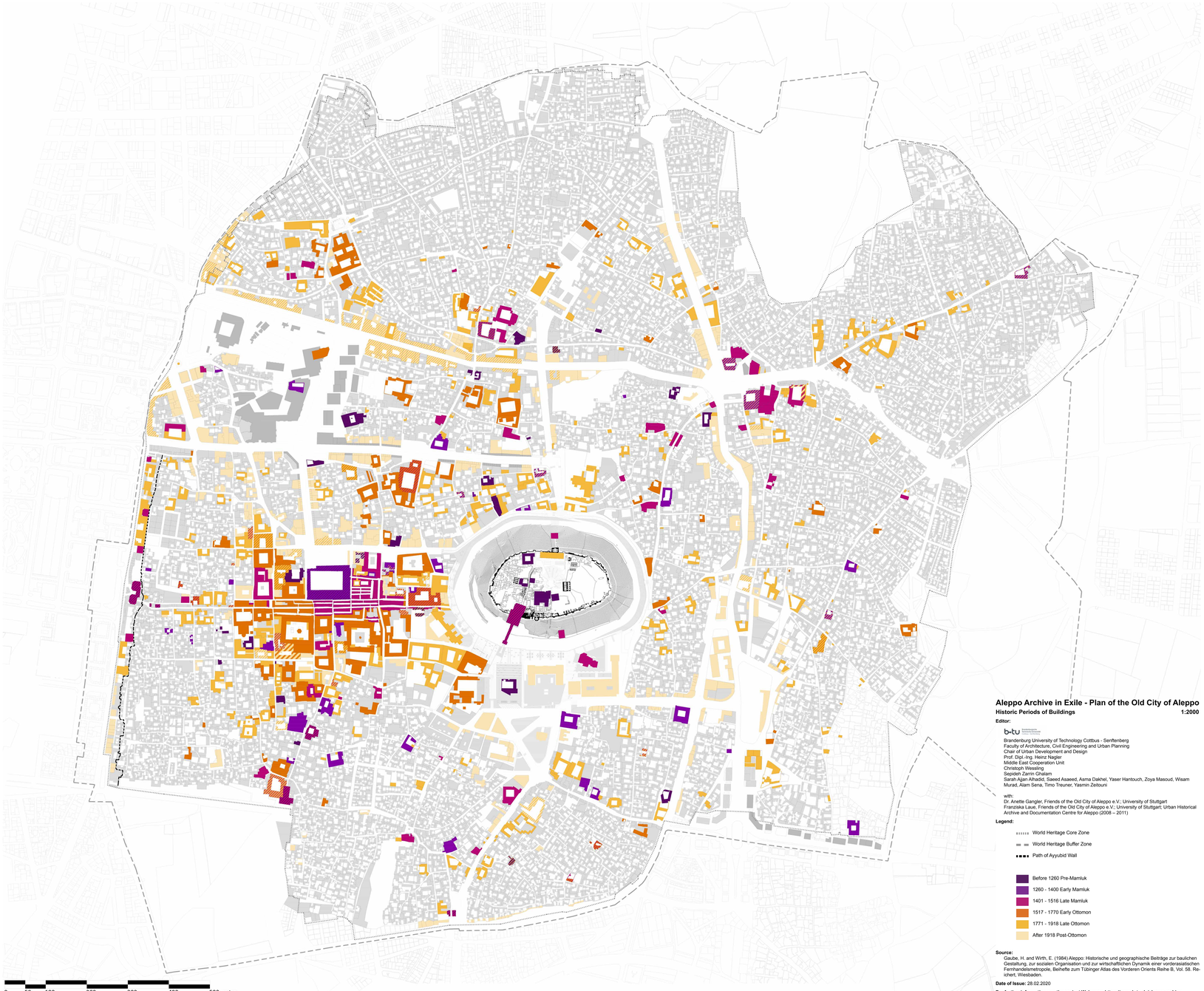
Source:
Sauvaget, J. (1941) Alep, essai sur le développement d'une grande ville syrienne, des origines au milieu du XIXe siècle. P. Geuthne, Paris.

0 100 200 500 1000 metre



Section of Suq Area of Aleppo, Historic Periods of Buildings **1:500**

0 10 20 50 100 metre



0 50 100 200 300 400 500 metre

Aleppo Archive in Exile - Plan of the Old City of Aleppo
Historic Periods of Buildings **1:2000**

Editor:

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Franziska Laue, Friends of the Old City of Aleppo e.V.; University of Stuttgart; Urban Historical Archive and Documentation Centre for Aleppo (2008 – 2011)

Legend:

- World Heritage Core Zone
- World Heritage Buffer Zone
- Path of Ayyubid Wall

- Before 1260 Pre-Mamluk
- 1260 - 1400 Early Mamluk
- 1401 - 1516 Late Mamluk
- 1517 - 1770 Early Ottomon
- 1771 - 1918 Late Ottomon
- After 1918 Post-Ottomon

Source:
Gaube, H. and Wirth, E. (1984) Aleppo: Historische und geographische Beiträge zur baulichen Gestaltung, zur sozialen Organisation und zur wirtschaftlichen Dynamik einer vorderasiatischen Fernhandelsmetropole, Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients Reihe B, Vol. 58. Reichert, Wiesbaden.

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Urban Rehabilitation

Old City of Aleppo

Project 1994 to 2011

Before the wake of the crisis in Syria, the Old City of Aleppo was the subject of one of the most successful cases of urban rehabilitation in the region. Rehabilitation of the Old City of Aleppo was carried out through a collaboration among the Municipality of Aleppo and the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ or former GTZ) and with efforts of Aleppine citizens. The project was also supported by other international, regional and local agencies, associations and Funds such as the Aga Khan Development Network(AKDN), Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) and Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD).

In consideration of the cultural significance of the Old City of Aleppo with its physical and socio-economic dilapidation, the main challenge of the Rehabilitation Project was to improve the living conditions in its historic neighbourhoods and simultaneously preserve the integrity of its most valuable urban heritage which finally resulted in the development of an integrative approach to conservation and development at an urban scale. Accordingly, series of measures and tools were utilized at different urban and architectural levels in order to perform a comprehensive rehabilitation process.

The Old City Development Plan, issued in 1998, was developed as a key guiding instrument based on a flexible planning system and with an emphasis on defining objective and strategies rather than rules and regulations. At the same time, the historic preservation plan was linked to various issues of urban management including land-use regulations, housing, technical infrastructure, traffic, social services as well as public participation efforts.

At an urban level, thematic issues like traffic, infrastructure, environment and urban economy were detailed in Subject Plans and at district level several strategic zones were recognized according to their land-use patterns and rate of change. These zones were further surveyed according to their urban values, physical conditions and socio-economic situations. As a result, strategic goals were defined for each zone that had to be realized through a set of pro-active and / or restrictive instruments including the regulatory, technical, economic, capacity building and additional participatory tools. At a more local level, clearly defined Action Areas with manageable sizes were identified where key local issues had to be solved in a problem oriented and swift manner. Nine Action Areas have been distinguished and planned accordingly.

Finally, specific projects were planned, with some being realized, such as designing a representative public space in front of Citadel which was a recreational area of a high cultural value where people from different generations and communities as well as tourists and visitors could meet. This project became of high importance due to the role of such a public space in reinforcing cultural identity, encouraging economic activities and public political participation as well as providing urban facilities.

One of the main financials tools for improving the living conditions on one hand and moving beyond solely monument restorations toward preserving the historic urban fabric on the other, was the Housing Fund including the Emergency Fund and the Rehabilitation Fund. Emergency Fund was established in 1993 to financially and technically support the local population in repairing their houses particularly for consolidation of structural elements such as collapsing roofs, sagging foundations and cracking walls. Emergency Fund, was dedicated mostly to lower-income families and played an integral role toward social justice and minimizing social segregation. Rehabilitation Fund was additionally utilized for solving larger problems which couldn't be covered by the Emergency Fund. A large number of houses were benefited from the Housing Fund during the Rehabilitation process.

Implementation of the Rehabilitation Project of the Old City of Aleppo for almost two decades had left us a considerable number of documents including many surveys, analyses, planning, as well as the knowledge and expertise that should be further utilized for the future conservation and development of the Old City Aleppo.

Cases of Restored Houses with Housing Fund

Bayt 'Akura

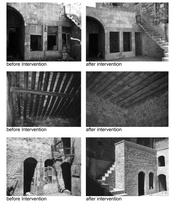




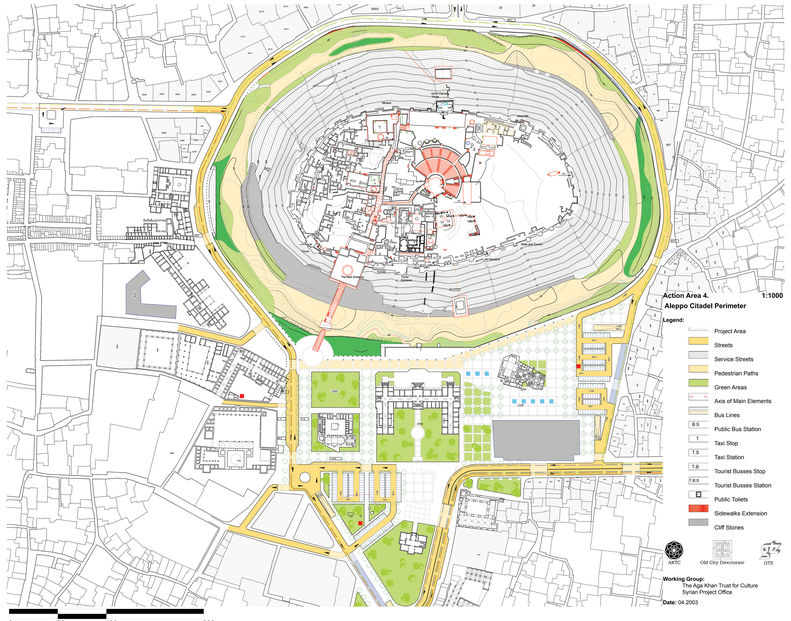
Building Type: courtyard house
Building Size: 232 m²
Rehabilitation Date: 2005
Rehabilitation Cost: 4,000 Euros
Major interventions:
reconstruction of demolished parts
repair of dilapidated ceilings and hazardous walls
restoration of significant architectural elements

Bayt Mawaldi





Building Type: courtyard house
Building Size: 124m²
Rehabilitation Date: 2003
Rehabilitation Cost: 5,560 Euros
Major interventions:
consolidation and reconstruction of dilapidated parts
restoration of the staircases and the wooden ceilings



Action Area 4. 1:1000
Aleppo Citadel Perimeter

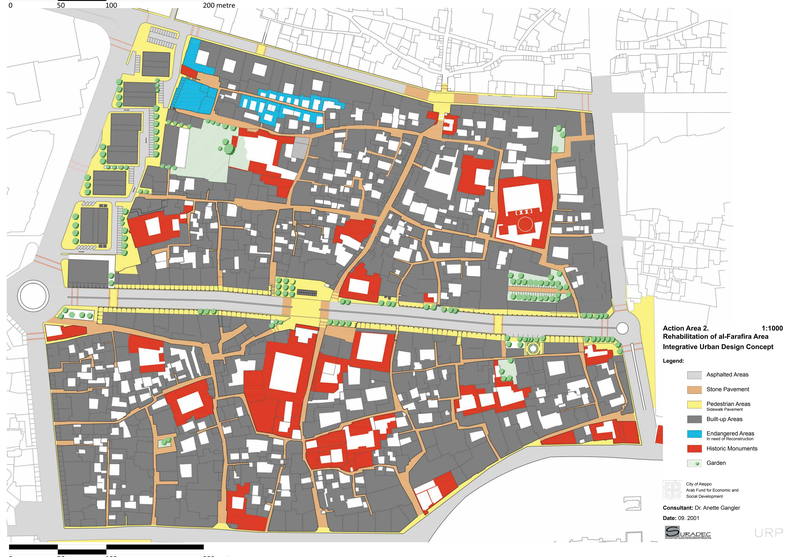
Legend:

- Project Area
- Streets
- Service Streets
- Pedestrian Paths
- Green Areas
- Axis of Main Elements
- Bus Lines
- B.S Public Bus Station
- T Taxi Stop
- T.S Taxi Station
- T.B Tourist Busses Stop
- T.B.S Tourist Busses Station
- Public Toilets
- Sidewalks Extension
- Cliff Stones

AKTC Old City Directorate GTZ

Working Group:
The Aga Khan Trust for Culture
Syrian Project Office

Date: 04 2003



Action Area 2. 1:1000
Rehabilitation of al-Farafira Area
Integrative Urban Design Concept

Legend:

- Asphalted Areas
- Stone Pavement
- Pedestrian Areas
  Sidewalk Pavement
- Built-up Areas
- Endangered Areas
  in need of Reconstruction
- Historic Monuments
- Garden

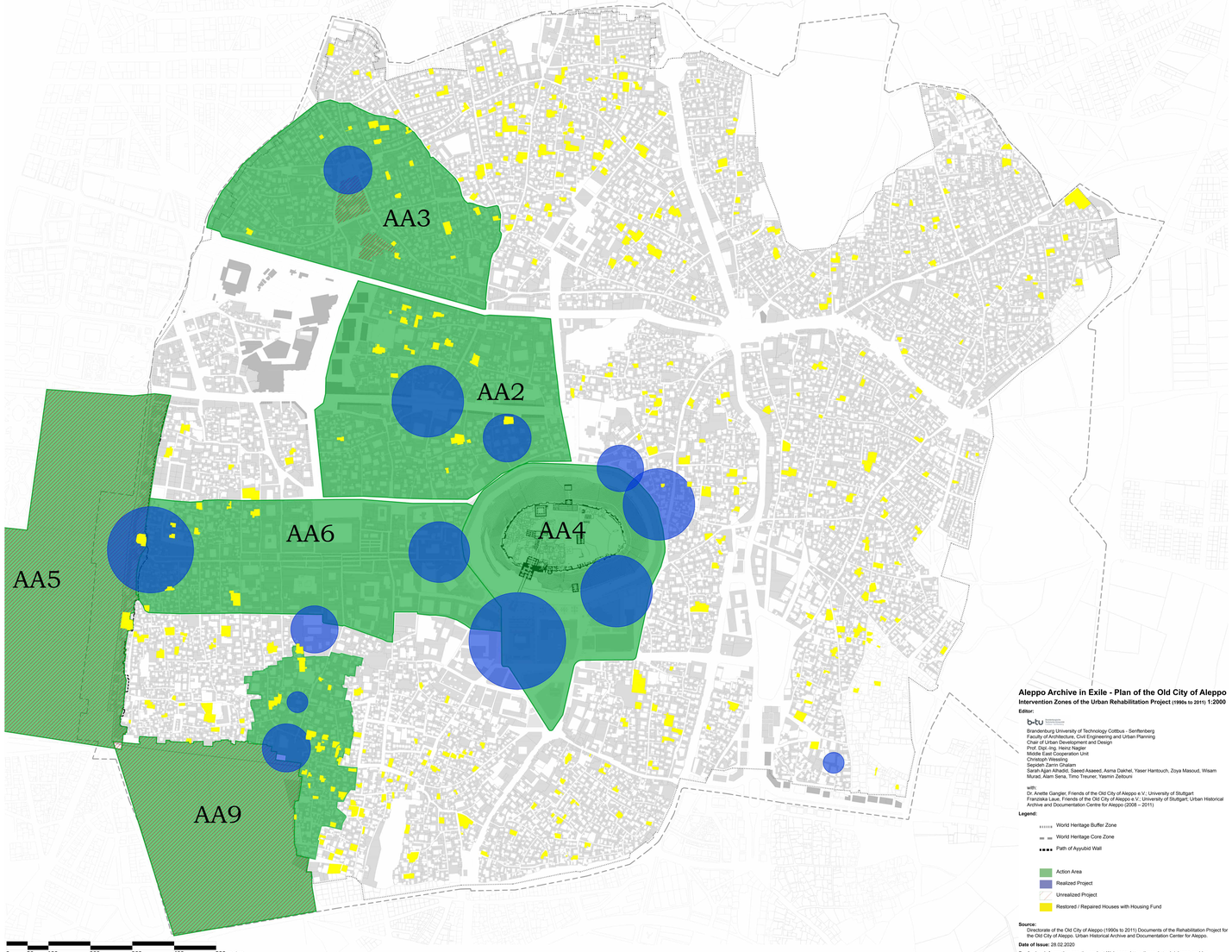
City of Aleppo
Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development

Consultant: Dr. Anette Gangler

Date: 09. 2001

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Aleppo Archive in Exile - Plan of the Old City of Aleppo
Intervention Zones of the Urban Rehabilitation Project (1990s to 2011) 1:2000

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Legend:

- World Heritage Buffer Zone
- World Heritage Core Zone
- Path of Ayyubid Wall
- Action Area
- Realized Project
- Unrealized Project
- Restored / Repaired Houses with Housing Fund

Source:
Directorate of the Old City of Aleppo (1990s to 2011) Documents of the Rehabilitation Project for the Old City of Aleppo. Urban Historical Archive and Documentation Center for Aleppo.

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For further information see the project Webpage: https://www.b-tu.de/aleppo-archive