



REPORT

The joint urban design workshop - The edge of the old town – integration of the historic town into the inner city

Aleppo 21st Sep. – 2nd Oct. 2010

(Ed.) Heinz Nagler, Christoph Wessling



Joint Urban Design Workshop Aleppo

hosted by the University of Aleppo

REPORT

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(Ed.) Heinz Nagler, Christoph Wessling

Department for Urban Development and Design, BTU Cottbus

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Faculty of Architecture,

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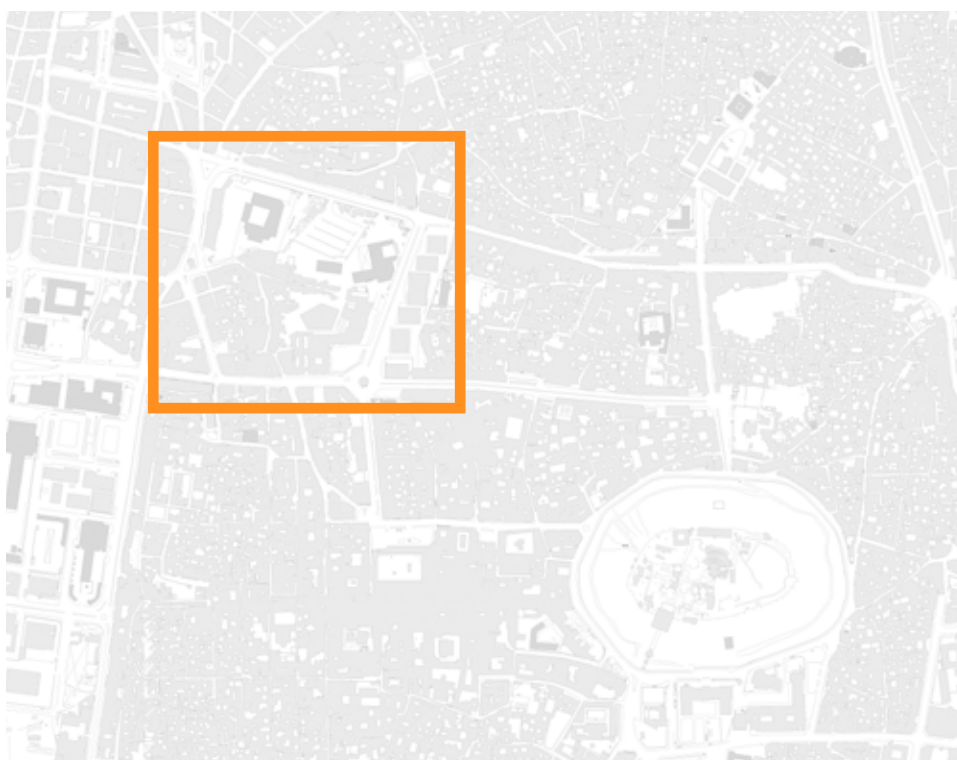
Cottbus, Germany, 12 / 2010

The joint urban design workshop Aleppo
The edge of the old town – integration of the
historic town into the inner city

case study area Bab Al Faraj



Aleppo north-western
inner city and the area
of Bab Al Faraj 1945



Aleppo north-western
inner city and the area
of Bab Al Faraj 2005

Foreword

In 2004 we organized the first urban design workshop with participants from Damascus and Cottbus. Since that time we extended and strengthened our academic cooperation with the Middle East step by step. The Joint Urban Design Workshop Aleppo in 2010 was the 5th workshop in our cooperation network with participants from the University of Aleppo, the University of Baghdad, the American University of Beirut, the University of Cairo, Giza and the University of Technology Cottbus.

The most important aspect of the workshop and our further activities for the academic exchange program is the multilateral dialogue concerning important urban design challenges in our cities. This dialogue was very intensive. Next to lectures and presentations followed by discussions,

the dialogue was mostly based on the practical work in working groups. The aim was it to elaborate a common development concept for the partly destroyed and mostly neglected area of Bab Al Faraj in the north-western edge of the medieval city of Aleppo. The experiences of the Aleppo workshop underlines our idea that the best intercultural dialogue is working together. Based on that we hope to continue with our cooperation activities and to strengthen the exchange of the participating universities. The goal of the group is to establish common master study courses entitled "Vitalization of inner city districts". With this we hope to establish a sustainable structures for a continuing exchange between our universities and countries.

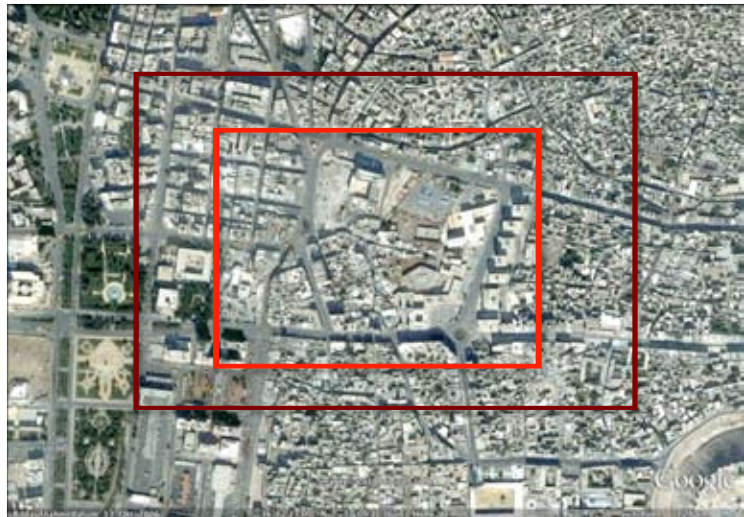
Heinz Nagler, Christoph Wessling

Introduction

The most important lessons of the workshop are to work cooperatively together and to elaborate urban design solutions for the challenges of the development of the Bab Al Faraj area at the edge of the historic city centre of Aleppo. This case study area for the workshop was chosen during a first meeting of the coordinators of the cooperation network together with the “Office for the Rehabilitation of the old Town of Aleppo” beginning of April 2010. Further analysis and researches concerning the rehabilitation of historic Islamic-Arabic towns and related to the topic of dealing with the edge of historic towns and the integration of historic town quarters into the whole inner city structure were discussed during the “Colloquium about the preparation for the Joint Urban Design Workshop” at the University of Technology Cottbus in July 2010. These basic information and further analysis about the situation of the study- and design area were presented and discussed at the beginning of the workshop.

Study Area and Design Area

Following the Danger-Plan 1932 – 1934, the Ecochard-Plan 1938 and the plans of Gutton from the 1950th for a modernization of the urban structure, the Bab Al Faraj area was one of the first areas of Aleppo, where a radical transformation of the urban structure started. This process was stopped 1978 and 1986 the historic town of Aleppo reached World Heritage Status. During the last twenty years the historic city of Aleppo was rehabilitated in an excellent way. Today the rehabilitation of the old town of Aleppo is well known as a best practice example for many historic cities. But the Bab Al Faraj area is still in a desolate situation and characterized by brown fields, not integrated modern buildings, historic buildings in bad conditions and wide main streets. For the next years the urban development of the Bab Al Faraj area is one of the most important challenges for the urban development of Aleppo.

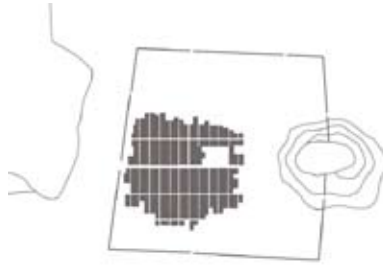


Case study area Bab Al Faraj, study area and design area

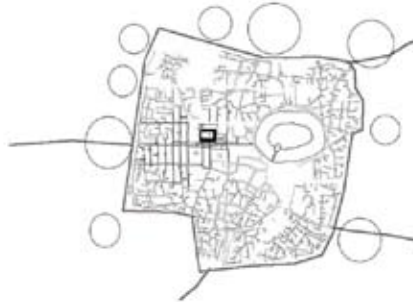
Aleppo Aerial picture by Google Earth 2010, date of the picture 13.10.2006



Aleppo urban structure 300 b.c.



Aleppo in Mamluc times, since 1260 a.C.



Aleppo in the ottoman period



Lectures

22.09.2010

Christoph Wessling

Introduction to the Joint Urban Design Workshop Aleppo 2010

In his introductory lecture Christoph Wessling explained the reasons for the workshop-topic - „The edge of the old town – integration of the historic town into the inner city“. In the last 20 years many historic/ historical cities in the Middle East gained experiences in rehabilitating historic city centers. Aleppo is one of these cities and it is an excellent example for this kind of planning experiences. Until today there is a visible edge between the historic city center and the surrounding quarters. The existing building structure varies between medieval, colonial and modern areas. Moreover the character of the city is affected by wide main streets, fallow lands and not integrated multi-story buildings. Exactly this situation affects the case study area Bab Al Faraj. This introduction was added by a brief overview of the historic urban development of Aleppo since Hellenistic time.

22.09.2010

Rima Osso, Rim Khanji, MA-Students University of Aleppo:

Ms. Rima Osso and Ms. Rim Khanji, Master students in the course „Preservation of historic Islamic - Arabic Towns“ at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Aleppo, which is a joint venture between Aleppo University and University of Technology Cottbus, prepared an urban analysis about the case study area Bab Al Faraj. The analysis and the presentation contained the milestones of the historic development of Aleppo, the analysis of the historic and current urban structure and architecture, different planning and development phases, analysis of the urban structure, the traffic situation, the social and economic structure, the status of regulation laws and current plans.

23.09.2010

Prof. Dr. Howayda Al-Harithy: “The contested heritage of living medieval cities”

The content of the lecture is about the transformation of medieval Islamic cities. On the example of Fes, Damascus, Beirut and other cities, the typical elements and their transformation are shown. Further new developments and actual problems are discussed on different examples in the Middle East. Western and modern influences are pointed out.

A basic question of the lecture is: „How do we define Heritage?“ Followed by the clearly pointed out answer from Dr. Howayda: „Heritage is how we mediate our relationship with the past“ with the basic elements - „Memory, Identity and Ownership“.



26.09.2010

Christoph Heinemann: “Adaptive reuse - appropriating and negotiating space”

The lecture will approach different possibilities of adaption and reuse by presenting a set of working theses developed parallel to the projects by ifau & Jesko Fezer.

Starting with a short historical collage showing the relation of open support structures and negotiable patterns of use and infill's, especially pointing out the ongoing fascination for such structures as one of the most evident influences of oriental architecture and urbanism on the development of modern architecture, several key-issues for the design of adaptable architecture will be explained.

The following presentation of the working theses along with projects all dealing with problems of flexibility, sustainability, change of use and adaption will raise more detailed questions on the matter.



Christoph Heinemann

23.09.2010

**Mahmoud Ramadan (GTZ / UDP):
„Aleppo city development strategy
2025“**

more balance



Mr. Mahmoud Ramadan referred to the running planning process to work out and to establish the “Aleppo city development strategy 2025”, which is an integrated framework plan for the development of the whole city. The basis of the planning process is a systematic inventory and analysis of the situation today.

Strengths of Aleppo are:

- UN Cultural Heritage Site: Old City with 238 classified monuments
- Cultural Diversity
- Active Business Community
- Cost of living is comparatively low
- Geographical location
- Urban Density
- Water resources are plentiful
- Active Mayor

Weaknesses of Aleppo are:

- Weak municipal structures
- Rigid planning laws and procedures
- Lack of affordable housing for low-income groups and rapid growth of informal settlements
- Urban Environment: Lack of Green Spaces, Pollution
- Local Economy not competitive
- Leisure resources are very limited
- Aleppo is not widely recognized
- Inadequate Access to the City (domestic and international)

The Aleppo city development strategy (CDS), also called Madinatuna, is an action plan for a more balanced growth of the city. It is developed and sustained through participation in order to improve the living qualities for all citizens. Madinatuna should be more than a physical master plan. It is a very complicated exercise to create synergy among the different interests of the stakeholders. The goal is to find a balance of power among all sectors, which should be warranted through long-term agreements.

The Agenda for the urban spatial development contains especially follow tasks:

- Develop major sub-centres
- Create micro-centres in informal settlements
- Phase and control urban extension
- Integrate road network into the urban structure of the city
- Diversify neighbourhoods
- Assign and develop Green Corridors
- Elaborate a Green Concept
- Develop a central green belt

26.09.2010

Caroline Pättsch – Presentation of the Diploma thesis “Bab Al Faraj quarter - urban development chances for the north-west edge of the old city of Aleppo”

Topic of the lecture is the diploma thesis of Caroline Pättsch and Andrea Nikisch, worked out 2005 / 2006 at the department of urban development and design, BTU Cottbus. The site of the thesis is Bab Al Faraj in Aleppo. Specific points of interests are the kinds of existing buildings, open spaces and residential building typologies. The urban framework is also shown like the measures in building stock and the final urban design. Further points of interest are strategic instruments to implement the proposed design.

Caroline Pättsch



Inventory of the urban structure, diploma 2006



Urban design concept, diploma 2006

27.09.2010

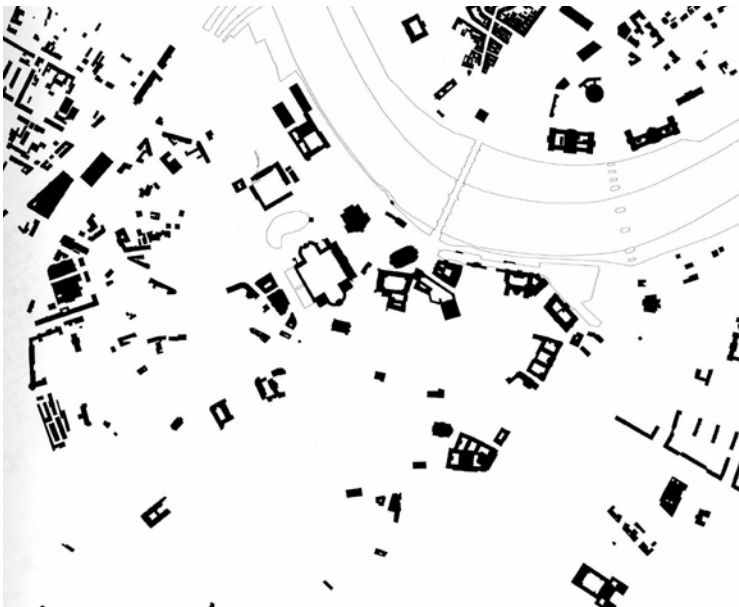
Dr. Assma Aty: The Al Azhar Park project and Urban Regeneration in the historic Darb Al Ahmar District

The main aim of the lecture is to introduce and present the Aga Khan green space project Al Azhar Park in Cairo. The situation before the project is also shown like the situation in between and after the project phases. Special interest is given on the effects and developments to the surrounding areas like the action areas or the social projects of the adjacent Darb Al Ahmar rehabilitation project.

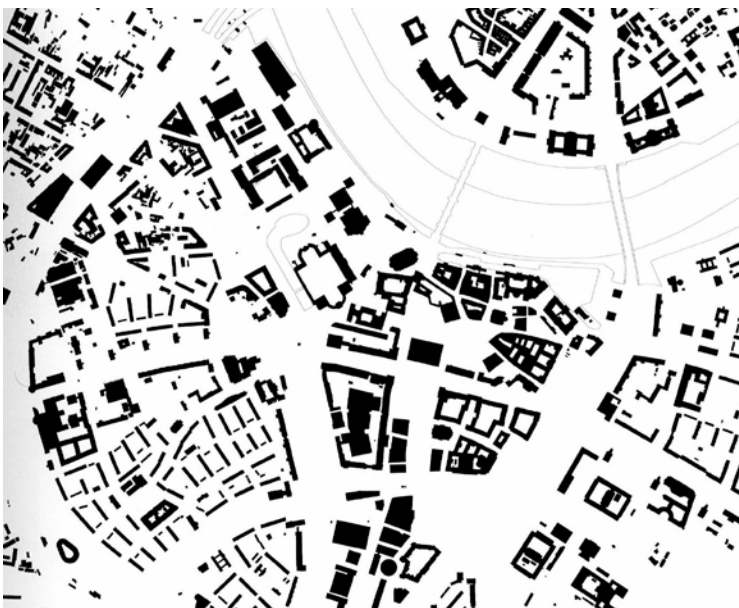




Stadtstruktur Dresden vor 1945 (Jessen, Reimann, Dresdner Morphologien, TU Dresden 2006)



Stadtstruktur Dresden vor 1953 (Jessen, Reimann)



10 Stadtstruktur Dresden vor 2006 (Jessen, Reimann)

27.09.2010

Prof. Inken Baller: "Architectural Design in urban historic context – case studies: Dresden, Kassel, Stralsund - Germany"

The exposure to the historic city centre is illustrated by the example of three different cities:

February 1945 the historic city centre of Dresden was almost totally destroyed by bombs. In comparison to other German or Polish cities, that suffered similar damages, only the outstanding monuments, such as the Zwinger, have been reconstructed after World War II. The consistent clear away of the building ruins led to the phrase of the „Second Demolition“ of Dresden.

Except of a small „island“ the historical city footprint was totally lost. Not until the German reunification in 1990 the discussion about the recovery of the historical urban space started. It did not stick by its recovery. Instead with the reconstruction of the Frauenkirche, the first step to the so called „business baroque“ was done. A surrounding facade architecture, simulating an orientation on traditional typologies but in reality showing nothing different than imaginary history selling well.

Kassel also has lost its old city centre during the Second World War. One of the former biggest German half-timbered centre. The reconstruction was not debated. Instead the historic city centre got disappropriated area-wide. A new „modern“ city was built up, after the criteria of a functional city with light, air, green and space for the anticipatory automobile traffic. The as well destroyed Unterneustadt on the other waterside of the Fulda became a big inner city parking area once in a while used for city festivals. In the beginning of the 1990s the recovery of the Unterneustadt was decided without advertising an urban competition. Instead the still existing city footprint below the parking area should be revitalized including the traces formed in the 1950s after the war. A parcel orientated city quarter with temporary architecture should be generated. Today the building development is almost finished. By now the Unterneustadt became an inner city quarter with a high acceptance.

Stralsund mostly escaped war damages, but the historic city centre got neglected to the point of demolishing some of the old building fabrics during the GDR. Long time ago the historic

city centre of Stralsund has lost its identity-founding meaning for its inhabitants. Most of them are living on the outskirts of the city. With the German reunification the few contenders for preserving the historic city center finally received support. The main goal is not only to create the city centre of Stralsund to a touristic magnet, moreover it should be an important centre for the inhabitants themselves. Both cannot succeed by only high quality reconstruction of old building fabrics. Trend-setting contemporary buildings also have to be generated. In 2006 the Ozeaneum by Behnisch and Partners on the peninsula opened up and gave a strong impulse for the touristic development. Also of particular importance is the development of school locations close to the historic city centre by modern high quality complements. Moreover the strengthening of the historic city centre as a point of purchase is accomplished by the planning and building of the Quarter 17. It will be an example for integrating a large-scale retail sale in the city centre without building a shopping mall. Only in this way the city can recoup inhabitants. So Stralsund is on a good way.

Result: Critical reconstruction means parcel orientated preservation of the historical city foot print with contemporary architecture. Only in this way the traditional city can be combined with the present and the future.

Inken Baller
Translation: Stefanie Wladika



Dresden, reconstruction of the „Frauenkirche“ and the urban fabric of the old town



Stralsund today



28.09.2010

Christoph Wessling: The Berlin Experience

The main topic of the lecture is the evolution of modern urbanism, the crisis of modern urbanism and the critical reconstruction of the traditional Inner City of Berlin since the 1980's finding the most dynamic development phase after the German Unification 1990. The beginning of the 1990's in Berlin a competition for the best development ideas and concepts started. Finally the development followed the guidelines of a critical reconstruction. Actual planning aims and planning processes of Berlin are pointed out at the end of the Lecture. As long as the administration budgets are nearly empty, today the most important actors for the urban development are the civil society. During the last years more than 100 hundreds cohousing projects were realised in the inner city of Berlin. These are housing projects, in which private families built their own inner city apartment building following their specific needs and reach in this way a much higher housing standard, than what is offered by normal investors.

Christoph Wessling

28.09.2010

Thierry Grandin (CCC - Planning Office Aleppo) – The perimeter of the Citadel of Aleppo, renewal of public spaces in the old town of Aleppo



The lecture shows the development of the citadel of Aleppo and the perimeter of the citadel. The challenges dealing with traffic organisation, finding and integrating new functions in historical buildings, defining and implementing guidelines for the design of public spaces and for the preservation of thousands years of heritage building structures of the citadel are the main topics.

29.09.2010

Joseph Rustom: Religious Denominations and Public Space in Aleppo and Beirut

This lecture aims to analyze the similarities in the social structures of Aleppo and Beirut based on the diversity of their religious denominations, their common political history under the Ottoman Empire and the French Mandate, and their common vocation for trade. It compares two historical periods where the two cities show striking similarities both in their population and their urban space, namely Aleppo in the 18th century and Beirut in the 19th century. In a first part, common preconceived ideas about the so-called Arabic-Islamic city are analyzed, especially those related to spatial segregations according to religion and function. In a second part, the social life of the two cities during the above-mentioned periods is confronted with Roland Barthes' notion of conviviality. The conclusions focus on the limits and dangers of seeing Arab societies through the filter of religion and the impossibility of mapping religious denominations in general in these societies. They also emphasize on the role of wealth, culture, and freedom of speech as catalysts in the daily exchange between the communities.

Joseph Rustom



30.09.2010

Prof. Dr. Saba al-Kafaji: Urban Strategies of old Rusafa - , Al Motanaby Street rehabilitation and Al Rasheed street development strategies

The lecture concerning the historical stages of the development of old Rusafa and showed the planning attitudes, which took place through time. It focus on two main streets which are Al- Motanaby, which was one of the historical alleyway of cultural function. It was completely destroyed in 2007 ... and was rebuilt and rehabilitated recently. The other was Al-Rasheed Street, which was the famous street in Baghdad, and having the great historical background, and special colonial architecture features. It acts as a sharp edge in dividing the old urban fabric (Mahals) of Baghdad. Many Architectural features from ottoman period are within its configuration. The lecture showed many illustrations of those examples, like Merjan Mosque, and Al-Assyfia Mosque, Al-Hyderyhana Mosque, Maryam Al Adra Church and Shorja Suq .

The Abbasien feature like Al-Mustansyria and Al-Abbasi Palace were in this zone. Many modern buildings that were erected during the twentieth century, like the central Iraqi Bank and many office buildings were also placed inside this traditional urban fabric. Its facades have certain colonnade rhythm in the street level with its two detaching aisles and many rich historical details of colonial period and other hybrid configuration in them. The lecture showed the proposal of one of the consulting bureau in developing Al-Rasheed Street. Also it focused on the students of 5th year at the development of architecture and their work in their graduation thesis in academic year 2009/2010, which concern the development of Al-Rasheed Street. Many illustrations of their proposals and models of different sectors of Al-Rasheed development strategies were shown and discussed in the lecture.

Prof. Dr. Saba Jabbar Al Khafaji



Al Rashied Street Area, situation today and development proposal

Al Rashied Street, situation today and development proposal

31.09.2010

Prof. Dr. Fatina Kourdi: „New urban development projects in Damascus and the development of informal settlements in Aleppo“

The Syrian Cities are growing quite strongly, especially Aleppo and Damascus. Both cities have a yearly population growth of about 4% as a result of a high fertile rate and immigration from rural areas. Since the independence of Syria in the 1950th in Aleppo and Damascus many informal settlements were erected. The lecture is about different upgrading strategies for the informal settlements and about new urban development concepts for the extension of these cities. For the development of the informal settlements two approaches were presented: on the one hand side there are case studies for a radical transformation of the urban structure of the settlements. Characteristic for these case studies is, that the existing buildings should be demolished and replaced by modern housing typologies. On the other hand side there are case studies for a bottom up based upgrading strategy, for which the preservation and modernisation of the existing private buildings and a qualification of public social and technical infrastructure step by step is characteristic.

Dr. Kourdi explained how these informal settlements were developed. The urban form of the informal settlements ensures, that it follows a clear system managed by a ‚land mafia‘. These ‚investors‘ bought the land and the farms and planed it in a highly economic structure as residential area for the new immigrants. Any social infrastructure and open public spaces were totally neglected in these plans. Many decades the official planning instruments ignored the informal settlements, but since a few years new planning processes were started to deal with the challenge to develop these areas.



informal settlements in Aleppo,
example for an upgrading proposal

Curriculum of the Joint Urban Design Workshop



The joint urban design workshop comprises four basic elements:

- Studio work in mixed working groups
- Lectures and presentations
- Excursions and field studies
- A dialogue forum to strengthen the cooperation between the participating Universities

Studio work in mixed working groups



The studio work of the workshop was organised in five working groups and each group started from a specific focal point for the urban development of the site. Each group had students from all participating faculties and were guided by two lecturers from the participating faculties. The groups started from different focal points, but all had the same goal: to elaborate a draft urban design concept for the area of Bab Al Faraj.

Through this a lively discussion was warranted because of the different point of views and the need to find compromises for common development suggestions and strategies. The goals of the lesson were, to convey the complexity of development planning for historic inner-city areas. By working collaboratively in practice and by discussing the different strategies for handling the challenges of the development of inner city districts, we reached new insights and enriched the experiences of all participants.

Focal Topics of the Working Groups

1. Development of public spaces and the integration of the different building structures
2. Design of new building typologies in the historic context, Architecture design regulations
3. Community based development strategies for the area and strategies for the renewal of the existing tradition buildings
4. Integration of the modern buildings; adaptive reuse and infill development
5. Urban design guidelines, the integration of traffic development and strategies for the implementation of a sustainable development



Ass. Prof. / Lectures guiding the working groups:

- (1) Joseph Rustom, BTU Cottbus;
Dhirgham M. Kareem Al-Obaydi, University of Baghdad
- (2) Sepideh Zarrin Ghalam, BTU Cottbus;
Dr. Sherin Ali Ahmed Gammaz, University of Cairo
- (3) Gabriele Moritz, BTU Cottbus; Dr. Asmaa Abdel Aty, University of Cairo
- (4) Christoph Heinemann, BTU Cottbus;
Sabina Alfa, University of Aleppo
- (5) Carolin Päscht, BTU Cottbus; Halima Knefati, University of Aleppo

Lectures and presentations

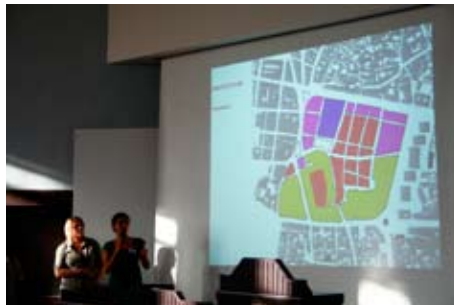
Next to the above mentioned ten lectures several presentations relevant to the topic, an interim and a final presentation of the five working groups were a part of the programme of the workshop. The projects of the five working groups were presented in a public exhibition at the end of the workshop in the lobby of the architecture faculty Aleppo to the representatives of the University and the municipality and to further colleagues.

Excursions and field studies

The visit of the old city of Aleppo, a guided tour through the Citadel of Aleppo including the visit of the concert and ballet „Indigo“ in the open sky theatre of the Citadel and several field studies in the study area and in the wider inner city of Aleppo were part of the workshop. Further the workshop programme comprised a two day (weekend) excursions to Hama – Crak de Chevalier – Tartus – Latakia and Ugarit and a half day excursion to the dead towns in the north west of Aleppo.

Dialogue Forum of the Cooperation Network

In the dialogue forum the responsible Professors decided about further steps of the cooperation. These will be an exchange of students and scientific staff members – starting spring term 2011, a joint urban design workshop in Germany in September 2011 and a conference in 2011 to clarify the road map for common master study programmes ‘vitalization of inner cities’.



Participants

University of Aleppo, Faculty of Architecture

Ms. Prof. Dr. Lamis Herbly,
Dean of the Faculty
Ms. Prof. Dr. Fatina Kourdi

Assistants (Master students):
Mr. Ahmad Rami Habbal
Ms. Riham Akili
Ms. Halima Knefati
Ms. Sabina Alfa

Students:
Ms. Nadine Dabaloni
Ms. Rama Darkazanli
Ms. NourTinawi
Ms. Carin Bedeian
Ms. Hinwa Almustafa
Mr. Tamer Samsatli
Mr. Mohammad Mourhaf Akhras

University of Baghdad, College of Engineering

Ms. Prof. Dr. SabaJabbar AL-Khafaji,
Head of the Department of Architecture

Lecturer:
Mr. Dhirgham M. Kareem Al-Obaydi

Students:
Mr. Haider Lutfi Muhsin
Mr. Usama Sabah Mohammed
Ms. AsmaaAdil Mahmood
Ms. Farah Faeq Hanna
Mr. Yasir Mohamed Ridha Shakir
Mr. Firas Ali Majid

American University of Beirut, Faculty of Engineering and Architecture, Department of Architecture and Design

Ms. Prof. Dr. Howayda Al-Harithy,
Chair of the Department of Architecture and Design
Mr. Prof. Dr. Robert Saliba

Students:
Ms. Liliane Al Haddad
Ms. Maya El Oraiby
Ms. Christina Baroud
Ms. Massa Ammoury
Ms. Carla Saad
Mr. Rony Hobeika,
Mr. Salah Koleilat

University of Cairo, Faculty of Engineering, Department of Architecture

Ms. Prof. Dr. Dalila Elkerdany
Ms. Dr. Asmaa Abdel Aty
Guest: Dr. Sherin Ali Ahmed Gammaz

Students:
Ms. Nahla Nabil Mahmoud Makhloof
Ms. Dalia Moati Rasmi Abdelhakeem
Mr. Tamer El Serafi
Mr. Ahmed Samir Mohamed Ghanem
Mr. Ahmed Aly Mohamed El Hussein
Mr. Mahmoud Abdelraouf Mohammed Abdelfattah

University of Cottbus, Faculty of Architecture, Urban Planning and Civil Engineering

Mr. Prof. Dipl.Ing. Heinz Nagler,
Dean of the faculty
Ms. Prof. Dipl.Ing. Inken Baller
Mr. Prof. Dr. Hans Harms (Guest)

Assistant Prof. / Lecturer:
Mr. Christoph Wessling
Ms. Sepideh Zarrin Ghalam
Mr. Christoph Heinemann
Ms. Gabriele Moritz
Ms. CarolinPätsch
Mr. Joseph Rustom

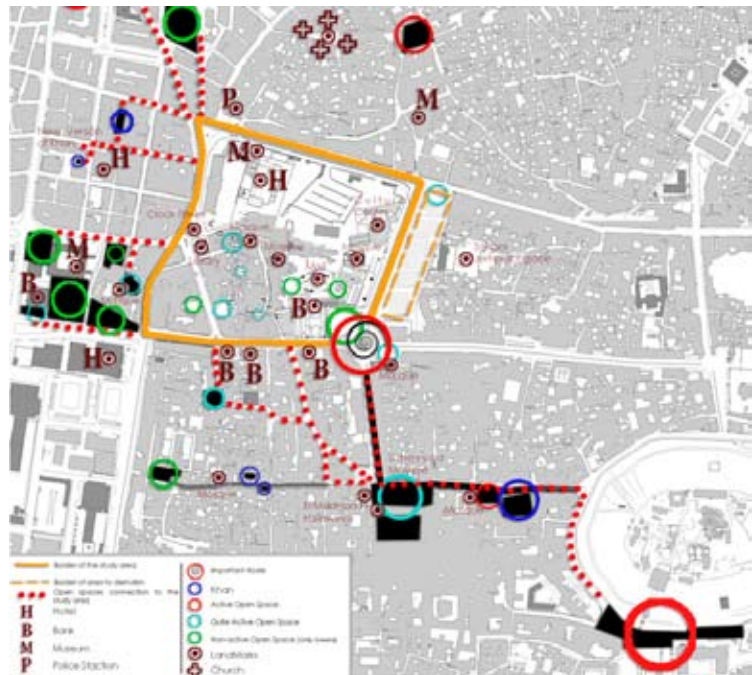
Students:
Mr. Daniel Wolff
Ms. Kollat Joanna
Ms. ZrobeckaEwelina
Ms. Natalia Kicinska
Mr. Saoud Al Jaraki
Mr. Marius Müller
Mr. Sebastian Strelow
Mr. Ronny Budach
Ms. Laura Niezjewski
Mr. Daniel Schoene
Ms. Antje Horn
Ms. Anne Storandt
Ms. Alicja Debska
Ms. Ewa Lorenc
Ms. Stefanie Wladika



Results of the Working Groups

Group 1 : Developement of public spaces and the integration of the different building structures by Joseph Rustom

Working group 1 approached the urban design of bāb al-faraj through public space. As a first step, various existing public spaces in Aleppo were analyzed according to the following criteria: location, configuration, accessibility, control, use (taking into consideration gender) and perception. Following this, a Nolli plan was drawn that allowed the students to seize the potentialities of the existing open spaces. In parallel, the evolution of the morphology of the quarter was drawn from historical maps. As a result of the analysis, the group decided that the public spaces developed in bāb al-faraj should mainly act as catalysts that bring together the different types of inhabitants living in the neighboring quarters of al-judaïda, al-farafrā, and kull 'āb. For this, the cultural and touristic functions were complemented by a residential quarter where most of the old urban fabric was preserved. The new public spaces were also developed in a scale adapted to the local climate.



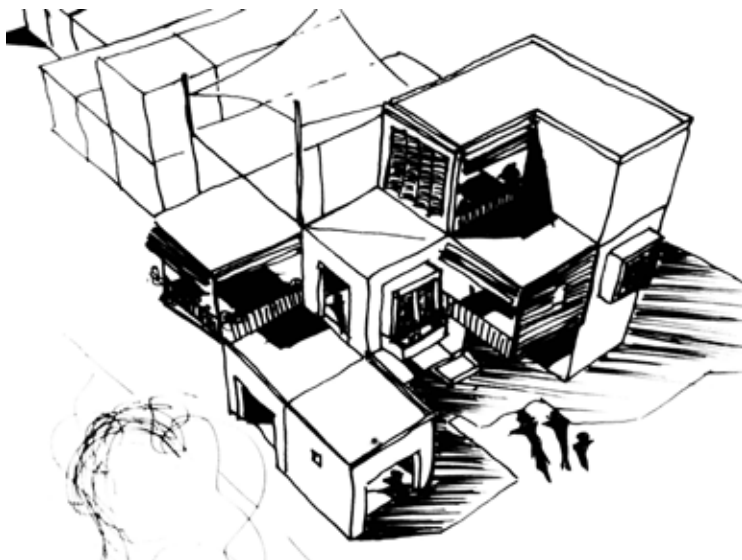
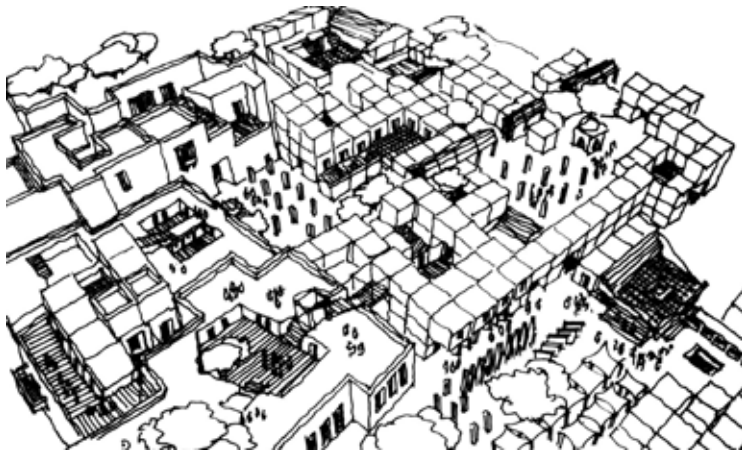
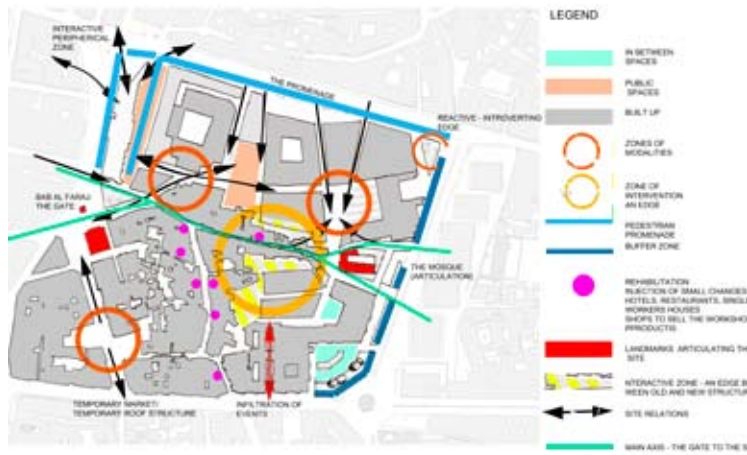
Urban ground figure
1930



Urban ground figure
2010



Urban ground figure
Masterplan working
group (1)



Group 2: Design of new building typologies in the historic context, Architecture design regulations by Sepideh Zarrin Ghalam

Within the frame work of the joint urban design workshop held in Aleppo between 21 Sep. - 2nd Oct. 2010, the objective of our group was to propose an appropriate design solution for the integration of the historic area of Bab Al-Faraj with the neighboring inner city through developing new building typologies, and architectural design regulations. The team carried out its design plan through a process with five main phases of problem definition, data gathering, analysis, concept and strategy depiction, and finally designs solutions.

First Phase, Problem Definition: In order to achieve a clear understanding of the problems of the area as well as illuminating our approach concept, the team started with brainstorming around the main idea of 'building typology' and its relation to our 'current context' to which resulted in concluding straightforward questions concerning the current building typologies and architectural design regulations in Aleppo, their efficiency or inefficiency in relation with current needs of the people as well as the physical integration or disintegration of these different typologies. At the same time some general questions were thought of such as:

- How can we integrate the new building typologies with the old ones in the way that it could revitalize this area and at the same time not negatively affect the strong identity of the old city?
- What is the reflection of the modern urban structure of the western edge on new typologies?
- How can we dissolve various types of typologies in a homogeneous way in one site?

Second Phase, Data Gathering: subsequent to the first stage and based on concluded questions the group conveyed documentation of the site itself and surrounding area in three main and parallel fields:

- Physical characteristics concerning the existing building typologies in terms of functions, heights, architectural styles, structure, and design criteria
- Socio-economic characteristics through applying a questionnaire

among users including the inhabitants and the workers aiming to determine their social and economic statuses.

- Recognition of the general social behavior in the public and private open spaces but specifically realizing how people adapt to the existing typologies based on their needs, as well as in buildings or even open spaces.

Third Phase, Data Analysis: Data analysis stage took some steps towards providing deep understanding of the potentials and the problems of the existing building typologies, besides identifying the constraints of Bab Al-Faraj Area and identifying the new functions that can be introduced in this area, while determining the different groups of users that will be targeted in this area.

Fourth Phase, Concept and Strategy Depiction: After the three initial phases were concluded, the team worked towards the depiction of group's design concept for the area based on three main ideas:

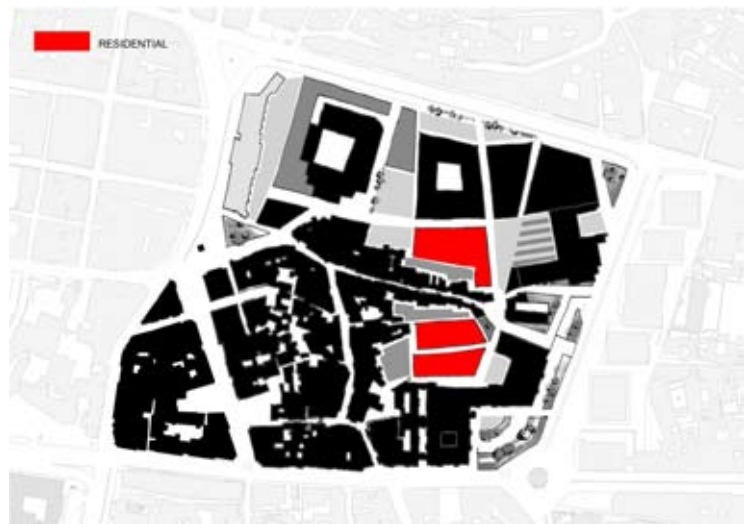
- Flexibility; through a new building typology to give the chance for the users to adapt their needs over time on one side and provide physical integrity between the old fabric and the new ones on the other
- Injection; regarding small interventions or change in function of old building typologies within the old fabric which were considered as of value for the site in order to provide social and physical integrity while enhancing continuity within the whole context
- Introversion; through introducing new attractions for the site aiming at directing the circulation of people towards attractive events within the site

At this phase different target groups of users and related functions had been determined in order to provide new spaces based on the hierarchy of public, semi public/private, and private spaces to fulfil their needs within new interventions or the existing fabric.

Fifth Phase, Design: ultimately the group commenced working on the final design strategies based on the above determining concepts of flexibility, injection and introversion, mainly by working on a physical model utilizing different modules and introducing possible alternatives of diverse combinations to further express the idea of flexibility or injection in the new building forms while providing

current functional needs of the users. Besides, through few sketches drawn of the new life expected of the new building typologies of the future had been illustrated.

At the same time and parallel to designing new injective elements and flexible building types in order to achieve the final masterplan for the site, placements of various kind of interventions such as rehabilitation, reuse, small injective interventions, and new buildings had been thought of and marked accordingly. The linkage between the existing elements and new interventions through introduced and yet simple design tools within the site itself and the site with its periphery had been further strengthened. Ideas of integration between new and new, old and old, new and old including small or big interventions, public, semi-public or private spaces had also been depicted through sketches and models.



Masterplan working group (2)





Group 3 : Community based development strategies for the area and strategies for the renewal of the existing tradition buildings by Gabriele Moritz

The project group composed of eight students from five different Universities and various backgrounds was guided by Dr. Asmaa Abdel Aty, University of Cairo and myself, Gabriele Moritz, University of Cottbus. Dr. Aty participated in several community based upgrading projects in historic Cairo. I worked on an upgrading project in Fortaleza, Brazil, which also focused on community participation.

Introductory I would like to point out that with all the different backgrounds and knowledges, the most rewarding aspects of the cooperation really were the discussions and comprehensions gained.

The project site Bab Al-Faraj is located at the edge of the old town of Aleppo and has an approximate size of 12 acres.

The students started implementing a community based, bottom-up strategy by interviewing the citizens of the Bab Al-Faraj area. The site contained several stakeholders. Part of the task was to denominate all of them and to characterize their thoughts and needs when planning developments for the area.

Further the students started to develop and design the area by focusing on the remaining traditional buildings, which were left over after demolition was stopped in 1986, and their citizens.

Another major planning approach was to emphasize the existing public and cultural buildings in the area and adjacent neighborhoods by addressing public spaces to them and thereby elaborating a cultural axis, which also would lead to an important linkage with the surroundings and their public and cultural institutions.

For our understanding as urban planners these are essential approaches in order to design neighborhoods sustainably.



Masterplan working group (3)



Group 4: Integration of the modern buildings; adaptive reuse an infill development

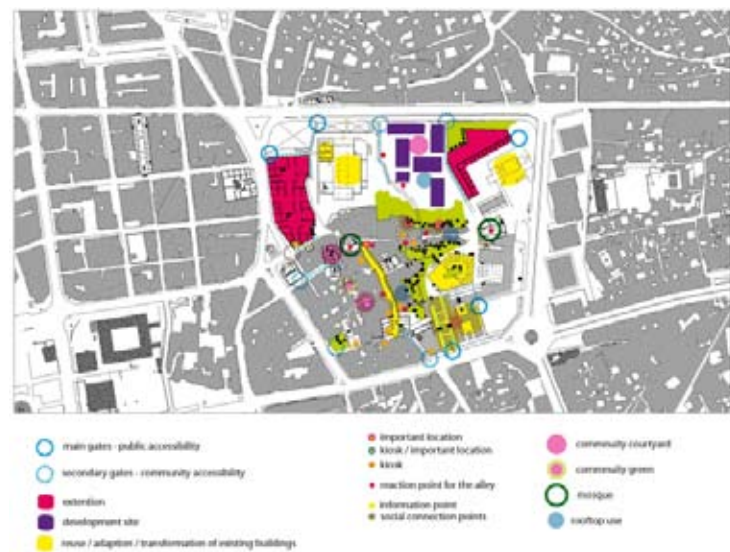
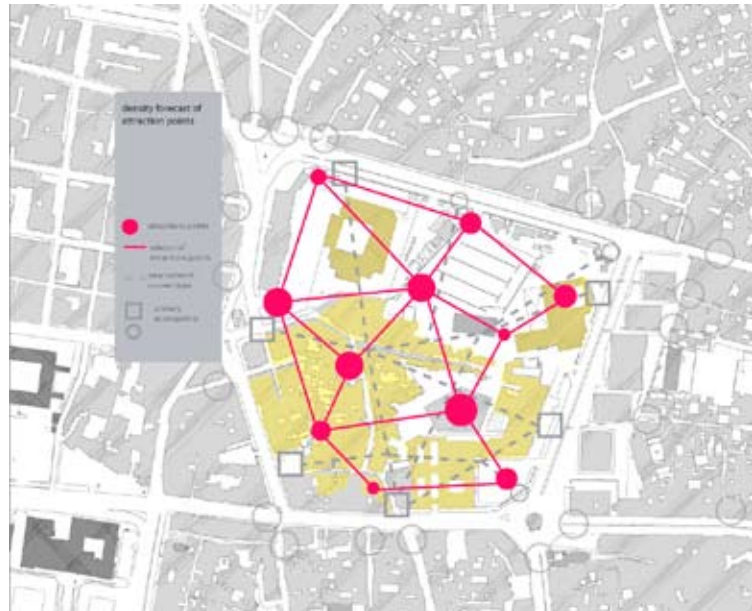
by Christoph Heinemann

The working group focussed on the possibilities of reuse and adaption of the existing buildings on site and deducing options from this approach designed a phased development process for Bab Al-Faraj, implementing top down planning tools as well as bottom up strategies.

After a first visit to the area and a brief swot-analysis of the several territories, neighbourhoods and building structures concerned, first space-use configurations were sketched to meet the existing and most obvious problem of accessibility and cohesion. Further visits and extended field studies, examining spatial capacities, inherent hierarchies combined with the questioning of users and stakeholders in the area, provided a deeper knowledge on possible complementary forms of use and on the socio-spatial character of the respective fabric or building investigated.

Based on this and related to the distribution and assignment of space in general and to possible forms of control by the authorities, private stakeholders or directly by the users, several spatial and structural interventions were designed to form a catalogue of informal and formal measures to strengthen the existing fabric as a base for a future infill of the remaining space by further investments.

By superimposing the historic street layout with the existing fragmented structure, a network of action points, having the capacity to reactivate and connect the different fabrics, typologies and forms of use, was installed. These action points locate different interventions - from simple care-taking, change of use and control to concrete newly build additions or adaptations of existing buildings - and thus combine spatial capacities with a number of well-orchestrated actions and activities.



Strategy plan working group (4)





Group 5 : Urban design guidelines, the integration of traffi develepmnt and strategies for the implementation of a sustainble development

by Carolin Pätsch

The approach to the Bab al Faraj area was led by the questions: What image must the area get in order to become a sustainable - in terms of social and economic aspects - part of Aleppo? What kind of functions and urban structures are needed to symbolize the new image of the area? Having these questions in mind the group analyzed the area itself and the surrounding in the field of function, open spaces, building structure and traffic. As a special focus they looked at functions and landmarks in the surrounding which have an impact on the area. Related to this issue the group focused on different connections of the Bab al Faraj area to the surrounding. In a second step the participants discussed whether the area should become a mixed quarter with a certain amount of housing or should become an island in terms of functions. There are some functions currently lacking in the medina: shopping mall, cinema, health center, kindergarten, which can be built up here. The discussion led the group to think of stakeholders who are currently acting in the area, target groups of the development and current housing needs. In the end they centered on the idea of a mixed residential quarter.

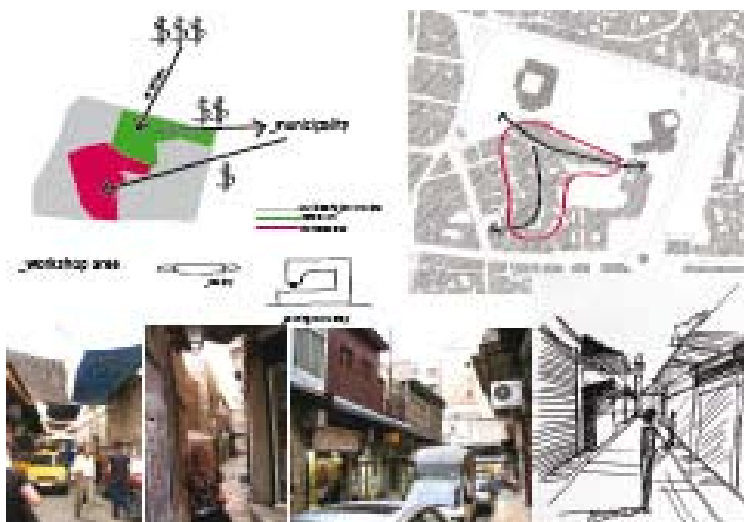
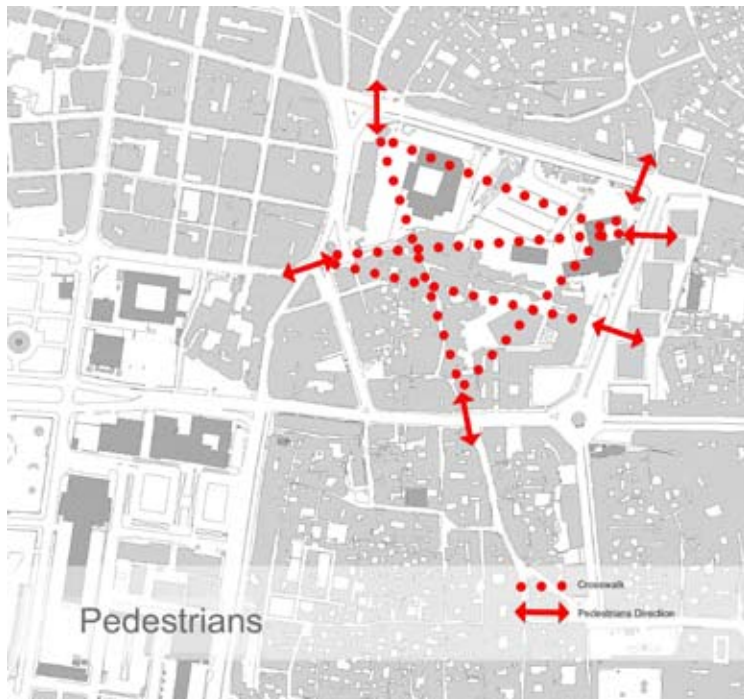
As a final result guidelines for the future development were set up.

One of the building guideline fixes an outline of the surrounding streets to get a clear defined urban structure and clear structured traffic development. To translate the guidelines into a design, the group discussed the question: Which conditions are needed to attract residents to the area?

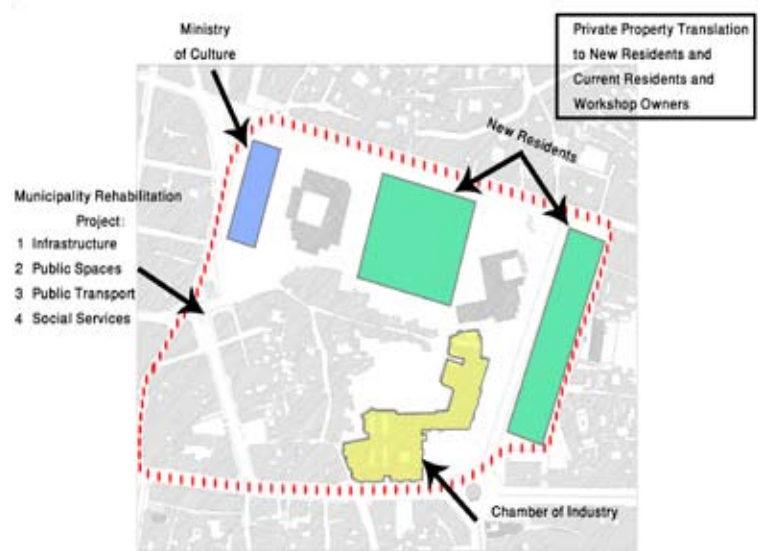
Apart from building guidelines for the reconstruction, the group defined initiators for the area. To start the development process some public investments i.e. culture, education, have to be taken. In the following several private investors are attracted to come in to build up the Bab al Faraj area.

The gallery should be transformed to an education center for crafts. Furthermore a new museum as a cultural landmark, next to the historic wall and the Sheraton, should attract people.

Apart from these new stakeholders it



is evident that the situation of residents currently living in the area has to be improved. In brief the process of development should direct private and public stakeholders by urban and functional guidelines in a multilayer development strategy.



Guidelines plan working group (5)



Appendix- Feedback of participants

Professors and Lecturer

Prof. Dr. Robert Saliba Follow-up on the Dialogue Forum, Aleppo, Oct. 1st. 2010

Associate Professor,
Coordinator
Graduate Programs
in Urban Planning
& Policy and Urban
Design

Faculty of Engineering
and Architecture

Department of Archi-
tecture and Design

American University of
Beirut

Dear Profs. Heinz Nagler, Inken Baller and Christoph Wessling,

Upon your request, and towards establishing an exchange program for master students around the theme of "Revitalization of Historic City Centers" involving the University of Cottbus, the University of Aleppo, the University of Baghdad, the University of Cairo and the American University of Beirut (AUB); and as the coordinator of the Graduate Programs in Urban Planning & Policy and Urban Design at the Department of Architecture and Design at AUB:

I am writing this letter to follow up on our Dialogue Forum that took place at the University of Aleppo, on October 1st, 2010. My letter will be structured under three main headings: 1) Assessment of the Joint Urban Design Workshop experience from the AUB's perspective; 2) a listing of courses that the Department of Architecture and Design at AUB can offer for the exchange students; and 3) some preliminary clarifications about registration requirements and tuition fees.

Assessment of the Joint Urban Design Workshop

Our department has participated for the last three years in the Joint Urban Design Workshop organized by the University of Cottbus successively in Cairo, Beirut and Aleppo. The three workshops provided a unique opportunity for our graduate and undergraduate students to 1) work in mixed groups with other students from different cultural and educational background; 2) to improve their design skills by working on strategic intervention areas in three different historic cities in the Middle East; 3) to be exposed within a short period of time to key presentations on each city by specialists in the field of architecture and urban history with guest speakers coming both from the public and private sectors; and 4) to be supervised by a variety of tutors active in research and practice on important themes ranging from community-related development to the integration of infrastructure in traditional fabrics, to the articulation of new building and open space typologies in and around historic districts. All our students expressed both their satisfaction and enthusiasm regarding the intensive learning experience they acquired every year through participating in the workshop. Concurrently, the summer workshop provided a source of inspiration and a starting point for carrying on the same thematic through our own urban design studios during the fall semester. For instance, we chose to elaborate on the workshop conducted in Beirut in 2009 and presented the final outcome on July 15th, 2010, at the University of Cottbus to compare and exchange views about our work and the work undertaken by the University of Cottbus students.

We therefore strongly encourage the continuation of the Joint Urban Design Workshop and we are looking forward to hosting the participating universities again in Lebanon in the near future.

Listing of relevant graduate courses offered by the Department of Architecture and Design at AUB

.....

Registration Requirements and tuition fees for exchange students

.....

I wish you the best in your efforts for carrying with this cooperation program towards a successful ending and would like to reiterate the fact that such a program will be of a great benefit for all participating universities.

My best regards,
Robert Saliba

Dear Mr Christoph,

Sending you best regards; we prepared an exhibition in the main lobby of the Department of Architecture that shows all the panels of our workshops in Cottbus in February and in Aleppo in September 2010 with all the necessary explanations, pictures of lectures, class works, excursions, and exhibitions. The students and the staff members are so attracted by these panels.

I also gave a report about it to be published on the website of the College of Engineering and in the college magazine.

I'll write a detailed report for all the activities in the program and our participation in all the workshops. I'll send it to the dean and the president of Baghdad University to inform them about the great benefit and high standard of the program, also the BTU's great effort in preparing and organizing these remarkable workshops.

Thank you and good luck.

Prof. Dr. Saba Jabbar Al Khafaji

Prof. Dr. Saba Jabbar
Al Khafaji

Head of the department
of architecture

College of
engineering

University of Baghdad

From Sherine Gammaz

We would like to show our appreciation for giving us the chance to participate in this fruitful workshop in Aleppo. It has been highly beneficial in the cultural exchange, academic enrichment and social interaction. The excellent organization of the University of Cottbus, Faculty of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Urban Planning was the main catalyst for the success of this workshop.

.....

Overall, we wish to continue this fruitful cooperation and are looking forward to the next workshop.

Dr. Sherin Gammaz

Dr. Sherine Gammaz

Architecture
Department

Faculty of
Engineering

Cairo University

Dr. Asmaa Abdel Aty

From Asmaa Aty

Cairo University

Faculty of
Engineering

Architecture
Department

As a part of the follow up for the Joint Urban Design Workshop Aleppo (Judw), September 21st – October 2nd, 2010 in Cairo University, the whole Egyptian group have arranged an open seminar on the procedures and the outcomes of the five working groups in the workshop.

1- Preparation for the Seminar:

In preparation for the seminar we designed a poster which was hung-up in every floor in our department and sent by e-mail to all the professors, lecturers and teaching assistants in our department. The lecture took place after the monthly department meeting, to gain the largest number of audience.

It is worth mentioning that all the A0 exhibition panels were reprinted and hung-up in the corridor of the main floor in our department next to the main hall. This allowed all professors, lecturers, teaching assistants, undergraduate and post graduate students to watch the outputs of the workshop.

2- Seminar Plan:

The lecture duration was one hour and a half and was attended by the Head of the Department.

Prof Dr. Dalila started the lecture by giving a general introduction on the preceding and the future prospects of the workshop, the universities in the co-operation network. The exchange program for the students and the joint degree that we are working on now. It is important to mention that there was interaction from the audience with Prof. Dr. Dalila for encouragement and questions.

Dr. Asmaa was the second speaker. In her part, the preparation for the workshop in Germany, the curriculum of the workshop in Aleppo, the regular day program, the topics of the lectures presented, the cultural excursions and the five themes of the working groups were explained.

In the end, Dr. Sherine Gammaz gave a brief introduction on Aleppo city and the development of the old city. During the lecture the audience started to interact and asked us a lot of questions on Aleppo.

After these speakers have finished, each of the six participants presented the data analysis and the concepts of the master plan of his group.

3- Conclusion:

Finally, the entire audience congratulated us for the successful workshop. They expressed their appreciation for the efforts and for having good results in such a short time. Everyone supported the continuity of the workshop.

4- Acknowledgement:

First, on behalf of all the group, I would like to express my gratitude for Prof. Dr. Dalila El Kerdany (Cairo University) for giving me the opportunity to participate in this workshop.

Second, we all deeply thank Prof. Dr. Heinz Nagler, and Christoph Wessling (BTU) for their good management and very well organized program through the whole workshop period scientifically and culturally in Aleppo, and for their hospitality in Germany.

Dr. Asmaa Abdel Aty

FOLLOW UP FOR THE JOINT URBAN DESIGN WORKSHOP ALEPPO (JUDW), 21ST SEPT. – 2ND OCT. 2010

THE EDGE OF THE OLD TOWN – THE INTEGRATION OF THE HISTORIC TOWN INTO THE INNER CITY CASE STUDY BAB AL-FARAG AREA ALEPPO

By:

Dr. Asmaa Abdel Aty
Cairo university
Faculty of Engineering
Architecture Department
November, 2010

Page 1

2- Seminar Plan:

The lecture duration was one hour and a half, and was attended by the Head of the Department.

Prof Dr. Dalila started the lecture by giving a general introduction on the preceding and the future prospects of the workshop, the universities in the co-operation network. The exchange program for the students and the joint degree that we are working on now.

It is worth mentioning that there was interaction from the audience with Prof. Dr. Dalila for encouragement and questions.

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Prof. Dr. Dalila explaining the preceding and the future for the joint workshop and the exchange programs



One of Cairo University Professors commenting on Dr. Dalila presentation



Dr. Asmaa presenting the curriculum of the workshop

Page 3



Nahla Nabil presenting the concepts of his group



Ahmed Samir presenting the concepts of his group



Tamer El Serafi and Dalia Moaty presenting the concepts of their group

3- Conclusion:

Finally, all the audience congratulated us for the successful workshop. They expressed their appreciation for the efforts exerted and the short time for having such satisfying results. Everyone supported the continuity of the workshop.

Page 5

1- Introduction:

As a part of the follow up For The Joint Urban Design Workshop Aleppo (JUDW), 21st Sept. – 2nd Oct. 2010 in Cairo University, the whole Egyptian group - supervised by Prof. Dr. Dalila El Kerdany, with Dr. Sherin Gammaz and Dr. Asmaa Abdel Aty as lecturers, and the participants Tamer El Serafi, Ahmed El Hussein, Ahmed Samir, Mahmoud abdel Raouf, Nahla Nabil, and Dalia Moaty- have arranged an open seminar on the procedures and the outcomes of the five working groups in the workshop.

3- Preparation for the Seminar:

To prepare for the seminar, Dr. Sherine Gammaz and Dr. Asmaa Abdel Aty have designed a poster for that event which was hung in every floor in our department and sent to the e-mails of all the professors, the lecturers, and teaching assistants in our department. Prof. Dr. Dalila proposed to make the lecture after the monthly department meeting to enable having the largest number of audience.



Design of the poster for the seminar

It is worth mentioning that all the A0 exhibition panels were reprinted and hanged in the corridor of the main floor in our department next to the main hall. This allowed all professors, lecturers, teaching assistants, undergraduate and post graduate students to watch the outputs of the workshop.



The Exhibition panels in the main corridor in the department

Page 2

the five themes of the working groups were all explained.

Dr. Sherine Gammaz has followed after that giving a brief introduction on Aleppo city and the development of the old city. Audience have interacted so much and asked us a lot of questions on Aleppo.



Dr. Sherine giving a brief introduction on Aleppo and the old city

After these speakers have finished, each of the six participants presented the data analysis and the concepts of the master plan for his group.



Mahmoud Abdel Raouf presenting the concepts of his group



Ahmed El Hussein presenting the concepts of his group

Page 4

4- Acknowledgement:

First, on behalf of all the group, we would like to express my gratitude for Prof. Dr. Dalila El Kerdany (Cairo University) for giving me the opportunity to participate in this workshop.

Second, we all deeply thank Prof. Dr. Heinz Nagler, and Christoph Wessling (BTU) for their good management and very well organized program through the whole workshop period scientifically and culturally in Aleppo, and for their hospitality in Germany.

Page 6

DHIRGHAM AL-
OBAYDI

Lecturer
Architectural Engineer-
ing Department

University of Baghdad

In context of the Middle East academic cooperation for rehabilitation and development strategies of inner historical cities, which is sponsored by DAAD, a workshop entitled „The joint urban design workshop, JUDW“ in cooperation with Brandenburg Technology University (BTU) and University of Aleppo was organized. The objective of the workshop was the development of the Bab Al Faraj area at the edge of the historic city centre of Aleppo.

Bab Al Faraj, which is one of the eldest and most important places in Aleppo, was selected as a case study due to its specific location in the urban tissue of old Aleppo. It contains remarkable buildings that belong to different periods of time like Bab Al Faraj watch tower, Sheraton Hotel and the cultural center of Aleppo. As a consequence, it represented a great challenge for the participating groups to find solutions in the development and renewal of the study area. So the selection for this area as a case study was a perfect choice.

Five universities from different countries participated in this workshop; University of Baghdad was one of them. During the workshop, the distribution of the working groups was carefully achieved by combining students from different countries in each group to the total of five groups. This distribution provides cultural interaction, thought and skill exchanges of students with different academic background and environments.

My position in this workshop was leading the first group beside Joseph Rostum from BTU Cottbus, Germany. The group dealt with the topic „Development of Public Spaces and The Integration of The Different Building Structures“. During my work with the group, there was a great cooperation between the members, which acted as a team, and here I especially mention Joseph Rostum who was very cooperative with me. We led the group together and followed the students in site visits as well as studios and encourage them to find the best solutions in developing the study area. The workshop was a great challenge for us creating a harmonic environment for the students who came from different countries and different backgrounds. All these differences were dissolved and the cooperation between them was reached to a level that made them think together, finding the optimum solution for the design problems.

The final conclusions which can be drawn from the workshop are summarized in the following points:

1. The workshop improved our capabilities in design and analysis procedures in the field of improving the ancient historical region. So we can adopt these ideas with some slight differences to improve some specific locations in the Alrusafa side of Baghdad (capital of Iraq) and other cities like Babylon in the middle of Iraq.
2. The workshop taught us how to cooperate with different groups of students as a team, that dealt with field study for a certain design problem.
3. All the gained information in the experiment of the workshop will be reflected for the students in our university (University of Baghdad - Architectural Engineering Department) when we are dealing with such a design problem.
4. During the lectures of the workshop, a detailed illustration of the theories in urban design was given to the participators which provide them with multiple mental solutions in the analysis and concept design for the improvement of an ancient historical region.

DHIRGHAM AL-OBAYDI

by Sepideh Zarrin

Hereby we would like to convey our gratitude to DAAD for the opportunity and support given for the participation within the successful as well as fruitful Joint Urban Design Workshop held between September 21st – October 2nd, 2010 in Aleppo, Syria.

The efforts and effective organization of Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus, Faculty of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Urban Planning, together with our host, the University of Aleppo, provided a sound environment for practical discussions and useful dialogues to be held between all parties which were highly beneficial in the cultural exchange, academic enrichment and social interaction amongst the various university partners and students whom participated.

[...] In addition we wish to continue and strengthen this rewarding cooperation and are looking forward to the next workshops.

Sepideh Zarrin Ghalam, M.Arch
BTU Cottbus

Sepideh Zarrin Ghalam, M.Arch

Phd-Student
Faculty of Architecture, Civil Engineering
and Urban Planning

Lecturer at the Workshop

BTU Cottbus

Appendix- Feedback of participants

Students

by Ewelina Zrobecka, Cottbus

We arrived in the city of Aleppo, already being on a long journey. I was tired. I expected work, lectures, people, but did not expect what was about to happen. The workshop started and with it, all the problems and fun.

First thing we had to deal with was multi cultural background. I knew we will differ from each other, it was just hard to guess in which layers we will overlap. We had few communication problems, maybe it is the language that is not our native one, maybe it is our education. I do not know. It was surprising however, how we could communicate finally – long nights of work seem to be normal to architecture students, regardless from the country of origin. Sometimes there were tensions, sometimes we disagreed but Shakira's 'Waka waka' played out loud in the courtyard had healing qualities. There were moments when I had enough, but when the workshop was over I felt I had to little.

The whole thing was crazy. We woke up in the morning, coffee, breakfast, taxi, lecture, taxi, food, taxi, university, taxi, hotel, courtyard ... and the next morning. A lot of taxis paid according to 'added' (or something like that – arabic name for taximeter in our version) were our means of transport back and forth from and to the plot. Amazing walks along the organic fabric, coffee with the inhabitants, conversation with them which were more gestured than verbal are just few ingredients of what we get to feel in Aleppo. Then long hours of discussing architecture as a whole, architecture in our countries, architecture in Middle East, in Aleppo. My points of view were totally shaken bottom up, and my understanding was improved, but honestly I still feel stupid and intimidated. I loved the moments when Baghadians started to talk, when Aleppians opened themselves to us and began to reveal the real life and customs of their culture. It is easy to say I can design on any given plot, it turned out to be so untrue in this case. If not for the cooperation with the students from other countries all I could have done would be just a design. We developed something much stronger in my opinion. We developed a shared vision, shared at least in 70%. This outcome, taking into account how different we all were was marvellous. My group had its ups and downs, but we tried really hard to create something together. We came up with the draft proposal of strategy, rather than a masterplan, but for me it was a huge success. To be honest I never made a design on the spot of this level of complexity. Not only was it complex, it was also really big and foreign to me. In my opinion it is a part of the city that everybody just walks around and does not really want to come closer. We had a chance to try to get deep and with such a good companion we had fun in doing so.

It is hard to say what I really learned, and it is hard to say what I gave to others. I just know the Aleppo experience is one of the most invaluable I have, though I can not really define what is that about,

just thank you all, it was a pleasure.

Ewelina Zrobecka
Master Student
BTU Cottbus

by Farah Faeq Hanna, Baghdad

It was very interesting to listen to some of the most important and diverse lectures of scientific content given to us by members of various universities in the world. The most interesting aspects of the presentations were the different ways of explaining traditional fabrics of old towns and the development of the old fabrics in comparison to the new ones, depending on the lecturer's origin.

There were many lectures and studies of Aleppo which were very useful for our work. For example we listened to a presentation about the Al Azhar Park project, the urban regeneration in the historic Darb Al Ahmar district and the old parts of Baghdad like urban strategies of old Rusafa, al Mutanaby street rehabilitation, al Rashed street development. Moreover there were lectures concerning the heritage of living medieval cities, the development of Berlin after the world war.

In the end we gained a lot of information and we examined different ways to deal with old towns in order to transform them into modern cities, keeping their heritage.

Farah Faeq Hanna
Master student
College of Engineering / University of Baghdad
Department of Architecture



by Usama Sabah Mohammed, Baghdad

During the workshop we had amazing excursions and spent very nice time with students from different countries and cultures. The sites were incredibly beautiful and we gained a lot of knowledge.

We visited many cities and locations that are full of historical icons which belong to different ages of Syrian history, like Tartus – Latakia – Ugarit – Hama. So we enjoyed and discovered many interesting places and historical architectural elements and learned so much about the Syrian history which helped us understanding the place's character, parameters and architectural criteria.

There are so many things you can see in Syria, but what I love the most are the narrow streets (zuqaq) in the old quarters. They are great to walk in day and night.

We also had so much fun during the excursion and watched unique places like the citadel of Aleppo and the knight castle.

It was a very nice experience for all the students to clear their minds and refresh their activity during the hard work.

Usama Sabah Mohammed
University of Baghdad
Master student

by Firas Ali Majid, Baghdad

It is a great experience for us (Iraqi team) and especially for me to participate in the Aleppo Urban Design Workshop under consulting of DAAD.

It is important for many aspects:

1- The most successful and best posts have been reinforced by this success through contact with staff architects from other countries to new ways to organize work and to deal with the problems of design

2- This work required constant interaction between students to come to a useful solution concerning the development of the region. This interaction has been successful at all levels, especially because of the continuous support of the teachers

3- Create a pleasant working atmosphere and show the individual capabilities of people

4- In addition, the workshop provided an opportunity to the students and professors from outside Syria to identify themselves with the civilization of Syria and the most important cities with their archaeological sites by carrying out a number of field trips

5- This workshop gave us the opportunity to work in a group with students of different countries and cultures. We learned to help each other in spite of our different languages and its difficulties.

Finally I want to express my great thanks and best wishes to all DAAD Professors and others participated in this workshop,

Best Regards
Mr. Firas Ali Majid
Master Student Department of Architecture
College of Engineering, University of Baghdad

by Yasir Al-Chalabi, Baghdad

It is a great experience for us (Iraqi team) and especially for me to participate in the Aleppo Urban Design Workshop under consulting of DAAD.

It is important for many aspects:

- 1- It gave us a chance to be aware of social, cultural and scientific capabilities of students from other Universities and to compare our abilities with them
- 2- The highly organized and managed schedule for all events, conferences and technical side of this workshop
- 3- The great selected place (Bab Al-Faraj area) for study and site work
- 4- The qualified professors and high coordination for supervising and helping the students in spite of all the different opinions between them
- 5- We got nice pictures of Syrian civilization and heritage when we visited many cities and doing our practical work

Finally I want to express my great thanks and best wishes to all DAAD Professors and others participated in this workshop.

It's my great honor to learn from Professors Christoph Wessling who played a significant part in this workshop.

Best Regards

Mr. Yasir Mohamed Ridha Al-Chalabi
University of Baghdad
College of Engineering
Department of Architecture



by Lilian AL Haddad, Beirut

The Aleppo workshop was part of a series of experiences dealing with historic cores that I have encountered in the past few years; I had worked on the Post War Reconstruction in the South project on the old city of Bint Jbeil, Lebanon, as well as the Nahr EL Bared Camp project in the municipality of Mhammara, north of Lebanon. However, the Aleppo workshop was unique as an experience of learning.

It was a workshop which I benefited from as an experience of exposure to different cultures and different schools of thought in Urban Design. I experienced hands on the clash between the western culture and the eastern culture, the approach to planning from European point of view verses a Middle Eastern point of view. Even the methodology and the process of design between the two cultures were different.

Concerning the program of the workshop itself, I felt the lectures should have been all at the beginning of the workshop rather than distributed along the 12 days. This could have given us more time to encounter the city freely. Moreover, the division of the different groups was based on space issues rather than a theoretical design framework; this forced us to start with site analysis and then go to theorizing which I think took more time process. I also would have liked to have people from the Far East and from America, this could have given the workshop an even richer mix and could have widened the scope of contributions.

However, the Aleppo workshop was my first experience of working on a non-local city and this feeling of being foreign made me triple aware of the constraints of the site. I learned that it is always helpful to be detached at first to see things from outside and then try to know the city more and understand its logic while keeping in mind the first impression of the space because then I will be more aware of its complexity.

People living in the city wanted to get out of its historic framework, they were eager to modernize their city and open it up in order to project it as a modern city. Because locals knew the area, they were fast to draw conclusions and were eager to start the design process without giving much thought to analysis. As an outsider, I was enchanted by the magic of the city, by this moment in time and history it is in. Aleppo captures and builds upon this history and this made me appreciate the qualities it holds today more.

This workshop made me advocate for a bottom up approach on things. It made me think of my role as an urban designer verses my role as an architect. An urban designer's vision of what an area should be influences hundreds and thousands of people for more than at least 50 years. It was very hard for me to make a decision in such a short time but I think it was a good exercise.

Lilian AL Haddad
American University of Beirut, Lebanon

by Rony Hobeika, Beirut

It was a fulfilling experience, the one I had in the Aleppo workshop in late September. I was given the chance to have hands on experience in researching and designing in an intricate Islamic structure of a city, responding to its complex social and economic demands, as well as proposing a Masterplan to re-stitch its once coherent structure. This event has drastically shaped the way I perceive urban fabric of cities and has broadened my knowledge and education in planning of critical network fabrics such as cases of medieval cities.

This event would not have been as successful if it weren't for the insightful lectures and presentations of the different professors and professionals from related fields which secured an inter-disciplinary approach to dealing with the problem imposed upon us, and the inter-cultural mix of groups, of students from a western perspective of planning as well as a Middle-Eastern one. I have found the debates and meetings amongst the groups to be interesting especially in how different backgrounds may be able to communicate and share visionary thoughts and approaches for an effort to be a solitary unit thus reaching common ground, which is a true spectacle that even though design is regionally rooted, it is versatile enough to reach an extent of a global language, understood by all.

Personally, my inherent design attitudes were heavily challenged by German orientation of problem solving, a confrontation that I found as incentive for me to widen my knowledge and understand other student's concerns and approaches. It was exciting for me to see my group's final documentation, a true collaborative effort and a distinctive production that earned the admiration of the judges.

I would like to thank the universities, especially the professors of BTU-Cottbus, for the successful effort of putting this event together. Hopefully it can serve as a model for future inter-university projects, serving both the educational interests of students as well as the civic society as a whole.

Rony Hobeika
Lebanese American University (LAU)



by Joanna Kollat

Aleppo was my first visit to this part of the world. It was my first experience with this Arabic country. Before my arrival, I felt excited, as I did not know how it is going to look like and what I should expect.

The trip was so organized that we had a chance to participate in the project but also to do sightseeing, explore interesting areas and get to know the new culture and other participants of the project.

Work on the project in the multi-national environment, has revealed many differences in approach to architecture, the perception of many issues and work organizing. The differences were much greater than I initially thought. They resulted in the extended time of our work as many of the issues had been discussed for a long time before final decisions were taken. As often happens, some of project participants showed more initiative than others and had a greater part in achieving ultimate objectives. However those long discussions about selection the one, best final concept resulted in high notes our project got in the end.

What I experienced in Aleppo is much more than just working on the project. For a quick moment I became one of the residents of Aleppo, a part of Aleppo's community. Everyday commuting to the university or the city center, walking down the street while looking for market or a place to eat gave me the opportunity to discover the unique customs of that community. Daily haggling with the taxi driver or a fabric seller in the market place, pleasant conversations with people encountered by a chance on the street, or a smell of cardamom and coffee these are things that will remain in my memory for a long time.

Visit to Syria was a lesson of culture and tradition of the Middle East. I understood that in many cases my thinking was full of stereotypes and I realized I had poor knowledge of the Arabic countries like Syria.

I am very pleased with my experience in Aleppo.

Joanna Kollat
Master Student
BTU Cottbus



