

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

PRIVATE SMALL SCALE REHABILITATION PROJECTS: A
CATALYST TO RECOVERY, THE CASE STUDY OF BAB
AL-NASR, ALEPPO

by
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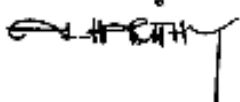
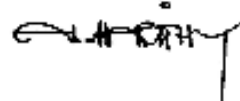
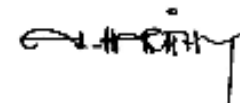
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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Haya M.Ghassan Tabbakh for Master of Urban Planning and Policy
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Title: Small scale rehabilitation projects: a catalyst to recovery, the case of Bab Al-Nasr, Aleppo.

The neighborhood of Bab Al-Nasr is located in the heart of Aleppo's 5000 years old historical core (Gaube & Wirth, 1984; Qudsi, 2016). The neighborhood that was once known for its vibrant commercial activity has witnessed massive destruction and has become a war-damaged landscape where many of its heritage buildings and cultural practices were threatened (Doucet, 2018; Xinhua, 2018). According to the United Nations damage assessment map almost 43% of Bab Al-Nasr is heavily damaged (see Qudsi, 2016).

Despite the political instability and the western sanctions imposed on the country, rehabilitation projects are slowly occurring. On one hand, international agencies, and local authorities, involved in the neighborhood's rehabilitation activity, seemed to adapt a top-heavy physical approach to reconstruction with little to no attention to the recovery of the war-torn social fabric and its cultural heritage. On the other hand, inhabitants, business owners and other community-based groups have mobilized to restore their homes, re-establish their businesses and save the remnants of the neighborhood's cultural heritage. Nevertheless, by thoroughly observing the dynamic of these projects, it was noted that they are rather fragmented, independent, and uncoordinated as efforts in the absence of a common framework at the level of the neighborhood and do not add up to a collective initiative.

The main hypothesis of this thesis is that these projects are a positive contribution to the reconstruction efforts of both the neighborhood, and the city as they serve an entry point to a more comprehensive heritage-led and people-centered recovery of Bab Al-Nasr. Yet, through adapting a City Development Strategy, a strategic framework would be formulated to lead a sustainable recovery process in the neighborhood that could revitalize its socio-economic network as much as its cultural heritage and urban scene.

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CHAPTER I

THE THESIS CHALLENGE

A. Introduction

The city of Aleppo, Syria, is among the world's oldest continuously inhabited cities given its 5,000-year-old historical core (Gaube & Wirth, 1984; Qudsi, 2016). The almost decade-long conflict in Syria, however, has caused severe damage to Aleppo's Old City, a UNESCO World Heritage site. The four-year-long battle for Aleppo, fought between Syrian government forces and opposing factors, met at the heart of the Old City, severely damaging an estimated sixty percent of it (UNESCO, 2017)

The neighborhood of Bab Al-Nasr, which will be the focus of this thesis, is one of Old Aleppo's subdivisions, earning its name from one of the once-walled city's nine historic gates (UNESCO & UNITAR, 2018). Before the conflict, the historic Bab Al-Nasr served primarily as a residential neighborhood with mixed-use and commercial zones and hosted light industrial activity (in the form of small factories) and small business (Gaube & Wirth, 1984; GTZ, 2001)

After the battle for Aleppo ended in 2016, the newly accessible neighborhood slowly regained its residential and commercial activity (Westcott, 2019; Xinhua, 2018). Interviews conducted in the neighborhood for this thesis's purposes made evident the effort by local individuals to save the remnants of neighborhood's heritage and re-establish their businesses and homes. This effort, however, remained uncoordinated and fragmented. The destruction suffered by the neighborhood in the four-year battle for Aleppo however continued to threaten many of Bab Al-Nasr's historic buildings in the years following 2016 (Doucet, 2018; Xinhua, 2018). This thesis' research finds that

individual/private rehabilitation initiatives are rather fragmented, independent and uncoordinated as efforts in the absence of a common framework at the level of the neighborhood and do not add up to a collective initiative.

The question of Bab Al-Nasr's recovery is the key topic of this thesis. In the years following the end of the battle for Aleppo, a handful of small-scale private rehabilitation and community-based projects took place despite western sanctions on Syria and continued political instability. More comprehensive recovery, encompassing social and cultural dynamics, remained a challenge (Doucet, 2018; Westcott, 2019).

Literary debate on the topic of urban reconstruction in the aftermath of a disaster questions whether mere physical reconstruction alone counts as "recovery" (Campanella, 2006). Campanella supports this by explaining that cities are not just clusters of buildings and layouts of infrastructure; they are also composed of multiple dense interrelated social and cultural entities. Recovery is about recovering the myriad social and cultural relations ingrained in the spaces (Lawrence J Vale & Thomas J Campanella, 2005).

As the post-war recovery of the millennia-old Bab Al-Nasr unfolds, the opportunity to frame it within the global discussion on sustainability presents itself. The 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, defined in 2012 and targeting implementation by 2030, include a goal entirely dedicated to "Sustainable Cities and Communities." (United Nations, n.d). Over the years, international development organizations such as The World Bank, UNHABITAT, GiZ, and other global actors united under the Cities Alliance's consortium have adopted the concept of a City Development Strategy (henceforth abbreviated as CDS) (Cities Alliance, 2001).

As defined by its championing institution, Cities Alliance, a CDS enables the city to “link their economic growth and poverty reduction objectives(CitiesAlliance, n.d). The CDS especially highlights the importance of inclusivity in the process of identifying how this linkage is to be made. Incorporating local participation in the CDS process ensures the voices of those most socio-economically vulnerable are heard (CitiesAlliance, n.d). The concept of the CDS will be further explored in the Literary Review Chapter.

In the case of the post-war recovery of Bab Al-Nasr, the participatory development of a CDS is supplemented by the strong consideration for the neighborhood’s tangible and intangible heritage.

This thesis explores post-war private initiatives to restore Bab Al-Nasr. It addresses how a Neighborhood Recovery Strategy can incorporate them within a more comprehensive socio-economic, heritage-led, and participatory recovery. The goal of this research is to suggest a more strategic framework for sustainable post-war recovery.

B. Problematic

Bab Al-Nasr sustained damage on social, economic, and physical levels: historical buildings and heritage sites were left in ruins or damaged. Families, craftsmen, and businesses owners who resided and conducted businesses in Bab Al-Nasr for years were displaced from the area and sought refuge elsewhere.

Like the rest of the city, the neighborhood proved to be resilient, with considerable ongoing activities led by residents, business owners, UN agencies, and the public sector to rehabilitate their dwellings and cultural monuments and sites of

historical and symbolic significance¹. Active individuals keen on rehabilitating the neighborhood formed groups to coordinate their work; others functioned independently and privately. Private funds channeled by the formed groups were dedicated to small-scale rehabilitation projects of historical monuments in the Old City, while funds by the independent individuals were dedicated to the restoration of private dwellings and commercial properties.

Although these small-scale initiatives were implemented in line with government regulations, they did not reach full implementation. Some were halted due to multiple reasons, such as lack of funding and government permissions.

Nevertheless, these initiatives prove vital to envisioning a more comprehensive recovery of Bab Al-Nasr in this thesis when viewed collectively.

What this thesis argues is that these efforts are fragmented, independent and uncoordinated and do not add up to a strategic framework for sustainable development and post-war recovery. They only tackle the neighborhood's physical rehabilitation when the recovery process of Bab Al-Nasr should have a more comprehensive approach that factors in its social, cultural, and economic aspect for it being a heritage site.

C. Research Question and Hypothesis

These competing factors conjure the following question: “How can small independent private rehabilitation interventions form a base for a more comprehensive/community-based framework for the recovery of the historic neighborhood of Bab Al-Nasr?”

¹ Based on constant field observations and informal conversation done by the researcher throughout the study

To further frame the thesis, the following secondary questions served as guiding axes for field research and surveys:

- What is the adequate urban planning model that can facilitate for the articulation of a collective vision and sustainable post-war recovery for the neighborhood scale of the site in question: the historic neighborhood of Bab Al-Nasr?
- How can the model be adapted to the socio-economic and cultural sensitivities of the site and be a catalyst for heritage-led recovery of the neighborhood?

The following hypothesis will guide this thesis:

- That the CDS model, if adapted to the neighborhood's scale and condition, can help elaborate a shared community vision which translates into a heritage-led strategic framework for sustainable post-war urban recovery of the historic neighborhood of Bab Al-Nasr.
- That the model can provide a participatory bottom-up alternative which can be followed in other neighborhoods and begin to impact a cultural heritage led recovery at the Old City scale.
- That these small scaled independent private projects are a positive contribution to the reconstruction efforts of both the neighborhood and the city, as they serve an entry point to a cultural heritage-led recovery. However, they could benefit from guidance and an overall strategic framework that would increase the interests of all stakeholders.

D. Thesis Objectives

The objectives of this thesis are three-fold:

- Level of the discourse on post-war recovery: it aims to advance a people-centered and heritage-led recovery, in addition to negotiating a collective vision of the neighborhood's recovery.

- Level of the planning, it aims to test the validity of the CDS model at the scale of a neighborhood and in a post-war environment.

- Level of the case study: It aims to develop a sustainable recovery strategic framework which can be advocated for in the neighborhood as an alternative to the top-heavy physical reconstruction. Thus, to demonstrate that the recovery effort of Bab Al-Nasr in Old Aleppo could be bottom-up, strategic, comprehensive, and inclusive.

Additionally, the motivations for adapting a CDS model are the following:

- Due to its participatory nature and is a community-based project;
- It is tailored specifically to the diagnosis of the case study;
- It offers a shared community vision and proposes guidelines and clear action plans;
- It advocates for sustainable development;
- Organizes the relationship of the different stakeholders;

As mentioned earlier the model will generate a framework which among its outputs are the following:

- Proposing guidelines that help organize and revitalize the local small businesses of the area.
- Advocating adequate form of governance between the public sector, private sector, and community-based groups that are involved in the recovery in Bab Al-Nasr.

- Proposing an adequate participatory model and discourse for locals to express their desires for the area and contribute to the vision of recovery of their neighborhood.
- Sharing lessons learned among private stakeholders in rebuilding their dwellings in order to potentially create partnerships, avoid duplication of effort, avoid conflicts related to property lines or other issues, etc.
- Encourage future civic engagement in surrounding areas, thus contributing to the common good of the greater city/scale.
- Reconnecting the neighborhood to its surrounding reasons

E. Methodology

1. Methodological Adaptation of the CDS model

In order to propose an adequate strategic framework which fits the context and the scale of Bab Al-Nasr, the CDS model will be critically adapted into a Neighborhood Recovery Strategy by taking into consideration the several issues:

a. Issue of scale:

Although the study site is clearly defined as a neighborhood; it will not analytically be treated independently from the city context; it will also observe its relation to the city-wide.

b. Issue of condition:

Given the unstable political climate and landscape of the city, it is also crucial to accommodate for the consequences of the battle for Aleppo and plan for sustainable development. These include the heavy damage caused to physical structures, the mass

displacement of the neighborhood residents, and the economic losses to the neighborhood caused by closure and destruction of businesses and a lack of financial availability to regenerate them.

Additionally, in an ideal scenario, the last component generated at the end of a CDS model is an Indicator System. According to MedCities (2014), the indicator system was set as a tool to examine if “the urban variables constituting the city were being affected positively by the Action Plans” proposed for the development of the city (MedCities, 2014, p. 24). Yet, in the proposed Neighborhood Recovery Strategy, the indicator system's formulation was suspended due to the country’s volatile political context, whereby it is best designed once the country is stable.

c. The challenge of participation:

Knowing that community engagement is one of the CDS pillars, the methodology will shift and adjust where a shared vision and objectives will be identified. To define the vision for this Neighborhood Recovery Strategy, this research capitalized on informal participatory practices in the neighborhood. These included undertaking key and open-ended extended conversations with business owners and inhabitants, gathering key observations and indicators on the ground, extracting and articulating a vision from the private small-scale interventions and conducting repeated site visits to clarify the developed vision and framework with the locals. However, this thesis concedes that the participating public's nature is not as diverse as desired mainly because a high number of Bab Al-Nasr’s dwellers are absent and are unable to return due to the unsolved political condition. Therefore, the formulated vision and strategic framework will acknowledge the absent population and account for the facilitation of

their return, and protect their property rights and their place in the neighborhood's social fabric.

2. Objectives of the Data Collection

This thesis assesses the governmental regulatory framework within which these projects function and recommends regulatory changes that would add up and propose a recovery framework of Bab Al-Nasr, which tackles three main aspects of the neighborhood: the physical, cultural, and socio-economic realms.

For this thesis, the rehabilitation efforts of Bab Al-Nasr were fully documented and understood, with particular attention given to their often ad-hoc nature and function outside of official institutions. This allowed the creation of a strategic framework for the neighborhood's sustainable post-war recovery following the methodology CDS model.

The specific methodology consisted of:

- Documenting and profiling post-war rehabilitation efforts in Bab Al-Nasr.
- Analyzing these projects' structure and understanding the development of their implementation in terms of governmental approvals etc.
- Understanding the motivation of these initiatives.
- Understanding the funding mechanism of these projects.

The data collection process covered the period from 2017 to December 2021; therefore, any occurrence outside of these dates related to the area of study's rehabilitation activity was not considered in this research. At the time of writing, the research acknowledges that the rehabilitation activity is ongoing and progressing.

The data collection process met considerable challenges for three reasons:

- The continuing unstable political climate in the country.

- The absence of data on the changes from the period of 2012 till 2016 when the area was under siege and inaccessible.

- The lack of detailed published information on the rehabilitation activity of the area of study.

The main target source of information was first the area's dwellers, both residents and business owners, focusing on those who were undertaking private rehabilitation projects. Interviews were also undertaken with officials from the public sector and from other international organizations involved in the rehabilitation activities of Bab Al-Nasr.

a. Entry Source to the Neighborhood and Trust Building

One of the most important factors that facilitated the fieldwork and data collection was an already established trust base with the dwellers, which has long existed before the beginning of this research. This trust exists because of the author's family origins in Bab Al-Nasr. Growing up, I frequented its streets and understood much about its history and dynamics. This resulted in many acquaintances and relationships with the different stakeholders of the area. Moreover, at the time of writing, the author's family was taking part in the recovery of the neighborhood by attempting to re-launch their 40-year-old business.

Building on the definition of "trust" by Zaltman and Moorman (1988), "trust is an interpersonal or inter-organizational state that reflects the extent to which the involved actors 'have faith that the other will continue to act responsively despite an uncertain future'"(1988; p. 17); they further explain that this definition of trust is built on the notion of embeddedness. Shapiro (1987) ties the idea of trust to the concept of embeddedness by stating the following "trust is established by the gradual increase of properly conceived and timed acts on the part of each person in a relationship (as

mentioned in Zaltman & Moorman, 1988, p. 17). My embeddedness as a researcher and as a dweller in the context of Bab Al-Nasr has established a network with the different stakeholders involved in the rehabilitation activity of Bab Al-Nasr.

b. Network Building

As mentioned above, the process of Aleppo's post-war reconstruction was still primitive at the time of writing, and published information about the issue were scarce. Therefore, it was vital to establish a network with dwellers and the multiple stakeholders involved in the reconstruction of Bab Al-Nasr to be able to access valuable unpublished information and understand the structure of the different projects and initiatives. In other words, it was necessary to construct and empower this network through "social capital" to facilitate field research and data collection. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) define social capital as the "sum of the resources, (...) to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of (...) mutual acquaintance and recognition." (p.19). Lyda J. Hanifan (1917) identified social capital as "the good will, the community spirit, the compassion and the social exchange from which a social unit is made up" (as cited in Yiu & Saner, 2012).

The establishment of the research network started when approaching the organizer of the first community-based initiative for rehabilitating a landmark in Bab Al-Nasr; the details of the project will be further elaborated in the upcoming chapters. The connection with this individual was made possible by his acquaintance with the author's family. He provided information on the early reconstruction projects and was the bridge of introduction and communication with the organizations and the public sector involved. Additionally, I was already familiar with two business owners who provided

connections to other owners and residents rehabilitating their dwellings: hence the network expansion.

Building a network was crucial to staying up to date with changes in the reconstruction activity and understanding opportunities and challenges, especially from the dwellers' perspective.

Strengthening the relationship with the dwellers was also important. Going back to the notion of trust-building, strengthening this network and the relationship with the dwellers was important to exercising a form of unofficial participation and communicating the strategies with locals while drafting the framework.

3. Type of Data

As this thesis attempts to propose a strategic framework for sustainable post-war recovery using the CDS model, it will be tackling three main aspects of the neighborhood: the physical, cultural, and socio-economic. The thesis uses both quantitative and qualitative data gathered through observations and interviews, in addition to mapping. Secondary data found on websites, in previous studies of the area, and technical and theoretical reports done on the Old City of Aleppo were also used.

4. Data Collection

The first phase comprised of gathering secondary data found in archival documents (historical maps and books by Aleppian and Western Historians), data from technical reports, web pages, and field observations. The purpose was to understand the spatial, socio-economic, and historical evolution of Bab Al-Nasr and comparative analysis before and after the 2011 war. Field visits were also done and had started in

January 2017 when the eastern neighborhoods of Aleppo became accessible to have an idea of the physical and socio-economic condition of the neighborhood following the end of the battle for Aleppo in December 2016.

The second phase consisted of updating the data retrieved from the first phase and understanding the site's spatial and socio-economic transformations and analyzing them. Through mapping tools, the setting was thoroughly documented and updated. Informal conversations were conducted with business owners and inhabitants to understand the nature and the challenges of post-war life. Lastly, the rehabilitation activity was mapped and documented, specifically the small-scale rehabilitation projects. Additionally, the stakeholders involved in the rehabilitation of the neighborhood were identified.

The third phase was dedicated to conducting interviews and conversations; thus, field visits were iterative and inductive. Throughout the research I constantly engaged with the neighborhood's dwellers in casual conversation and surveys, specifically the ones involved in rehabilitation projects. A total of 35 households and 20 business owners were surveyed, using the snowball sampling method. These queries allowed the understanding of the dwellers' motives and challenges while rehabilitating their dwellings and shops and understanding their vision regarding the neighborhood's recovery. These surveys helped explain the residents' socio-economic conditions in the aftermath of the conflict as no published and official data was found. The content of the surveys will be discussed in the different upcoming sections of the thesis.

The second group of interviewees was with individuals from organizations, community-based groups, and the public sector involved in Bab Al-Nasr's rehabilitation projects. The interviews were semi-structured and open-ended; a total of 11 individuals

were interrogated. The purpose of the queries was to learn about these projects' functioning structure and their implications on the neighborhood's recovery.

All the interviews were conducted in Arabic and then translated into English. The majority of the interviewees' names were anonymized. The content of the interviews is further elaborated in the upcoming chapters.

The fourth phase consisted of building on the data analysis and drafting the expected components a CDS while methodologically adapting it to the scale and context of Bab Al-Nasr.

F. Thesis Outline

The outline of this thesis is atypical. The chapters follow a CDS structure, and each chapter represents a different component expected of a CDS.

The first chapter provides a literary review of the CDS, explaining this model's choice and highlighting the assumptions and considerations relating to applying it to Bab Al-Nasr.

The second chapter presents the theoretical framework, which supports the research with theories on how using a City Development Strategy model can propose a strategic framework for sustainable recovery and can launch a heritage-led recovery process.

The third chapter represents the first component of Bab Al-Nasr's Neighborhood Recovery Strategy: The Descriptive Memory. It analyzes the urban setting of the neighborhood, its demography and economic activity, and its cultural heritage. It also highlights the trends and transversal issues found across the mentioned above component.

The fourth chapter represents the second component of the site's Neighborhood Recovery Strategy: The Strategic Diagnosis. It analyses the transversal issues and trends, states the vision generated through the conversations, and concludes with strategic objectives for the neighborhood.

The fifth chapter represents the core of the thesis, the Strategic Framework. Strategies are proposed based on the strategic objectives and the vision elaborated for the neighborhood while considering the identified critical transversal issues in the neighborhood. It also presents two action plans generated from the strategic framework. It also summarizes the research and reflects and on the methodologically adapted Neighborhood Development Strategy.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This thesis explores a war-torn historic neighborhood's case study and seeks to propose a framework for its recovery. It aims to do so through a strategic urban planning model and using cultural heritage as a catalyst to recovery. Therefore, this chapter will explore the evolution of strategic urban planning and, more specifically the model of City Development Strategy (CDS). It also observes the application of the model in Saida, Lebanon, a city which too, endured war and is rich with cultural heritage. Moreover, the chapter will also explore the literature on the importance of recovering heritage in a post-war context.

A. Strategic Urban Planning

Modern-day urban planning approaches originated as consequences to urban changes and rapid urbanization, which began in the wake of the nineteenth-century industrial revolution. Urban planning approaches were transmitted across the world through colonialism, educational and scientific institutions, and various international agencies such as the World Bank and United Nations agencies (Rasoolimanesh, Badarulzaman, & Jaafar, 2016; UNHabitat, 2009

; Watson, 2009). These approaches were centered around the professional and bureaucratic applications of planning to generate master plans and blueprints (Beatley, 2012; Friedmann, 1993), and although they have been recently reprimanded for their inadequacies in integrating the social and economic aspects of a city, globally they remain the eminent planning methods. Therefore, many scholars in planning literature

promote alternative modern planning approaches that concede a participative and strategic nature of planning (Abbott, 2013; Friedmann, 1993; Healey, 2003; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2016; Watson, 2009). In contrast to master planning - which can be described as a technical and expert oriented practice in which decisions are made by local authorities and stakeholders in collaboration of technical assistance provided by professionals - participatory planning approaches utilize the collective efforts of all decision-makers, including the civil community (Healey, 2003; Innes & Booher, 2000).

Strategic urban planning (or strategic spatial planning) is a participatory and cooperative procedure that emerged from the private sector in response to comprehensive planning approaches (Healey, 1996; Innes, 1996). According to Poister and Streib (2005), strategic urban planning (SUP) is a methodological process to collect information about a city to articulate a long-term vision and translate it into goals, objectives, and action plans. Kunzmann (2000) defines strategic urban planning as a “public-sector-led” (as mentioned in Albrechts, 2004), socio-spatial process (Healey 1997a), through which “vision, actions and means of implementation” are developed that create and build what “a place is and may become” (Albrechts, 2004, p.747). Albrechts (2004) defines strategic spatial planning as a set of “concepts, procedures, and tools” that must be adapted according to the context at hand to achieve the wanted results (p.48). Strategic urban planning relies upon substantive theories that take into consideration the socio-economic, cultural, and environmental characteristics and objectives of a space to achieve “sustainable development” (Albrechts, 2004, p. 748). It also determines key stakeholders from both the private and public sectors (Bryson & Roering, 1988; Granados-Cabezas, 1995), promotes multi-level governance and diverse engagement from the public, economic and community-based groups (Albrechts, 2004).

In other words, in ideal cases, it facilitates a process in which the involved stakeholders come to a consensus through rational deliberations (Healey, 1997; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2016) and define the long term socio-economic and environmental visions for their city (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2016).

For the past 3 decades, strategic urban planning has been adapted in multiple developing cities in response “to rapid and extensive changes, such as globalization, decentralization, enhanced civil society, and rising concerns about sustainable development” (de Graaf & Dewulf, 2010 as mentioned in ; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2016, p. 288). In comparison to master planning, strategic urban planning is “decentralized in nature, action-oriented and flexible”, it also assimilates budgeting and implementation (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2016, p. 288). The participative aspect of strategic urban planning allows for multiple stakeholders to share their perceptions, which in consensus, define the long-term spatial, socio-economic, and environmental visions which address the urban challenges of their city (Bryson, 1995).

B. City Development Strategies (CDSs)

City Development Strategies (CDS) is a strategic urban planning tool that functions on a city scale and relies on participative and communicative planning theories. It allows for specific goals and guidelines tailored to respond to contemporary urban challenges faced by a city and its dwellers and develops specific themes for cities such as “poverty reduction, sustainable urban development, and economic growth” (CitiesAlliance, 2017; Rasoolimanesh, Badarulzaman, & Jaafar, 2013; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2016, p. 288; UN-Habitat, 2009).

The process of the formation of the CDS model was dynamic and evolved and adapted to the changing urban realities. According to Parnell and Robinson (2006), the practice of CDS originated from neoliberal ideology. Since the 1990s, the world has been the propagation of neoliberal ideologies which center around competitive and free markets. As urban planning approaches spread through colonialism in the 19th century, new neoliberal ideologies were transmitted to developing countries by international agencies such as the World Bank and their structural reforms and programs (Parnell & Robinson, 2013). As a result the planning policies in developing countries adapted doctrines of liberalizing the economy and decentralizing the government (Parnell & Robinson, 2006).

The CDS model's earliest applications dates to the 1990s in East Asia, including Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, and China. The listed countries were not only funded by the World Bank but also followed its proposed urban strategies, which focused on four key themes: “livability, competitiveness, bankability and good governance and management” (ECON & Centre for Local Government, 2005; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2013; 2016, p. 289). Therefore, in the 1990s, many CDS models were tailored to neoliberal ideologies that stressed economic development and growth (Parnell & Robinson, 2006; Parnell & Robinson, 2013). Nevertheless, with time, these neoliberal ideologies proved a failure as they assumed “that a competitive and self-regulated market results in the optimal allocation of resources” (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2016, p. 289). However, these doctrines resulted in market failures, social segregation, and failed urban developments (Brenner & Theodore, 2002 as cited in ; as cited in, Rasoolimanesh et al., 2016).

In response to the adverse implications of the neoliberal ideologies of globalization and decentralization; Cities Alliance was established in 1999 and developed the CDS model to focus on enhancing and attaining positive socio-economic conditions of all populations (ECON & Centre for Local Government, 2005; Parnell & Robinson, 2006; Rasoolimanesh, Badarulzaman, & Jaafar, 2012; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2016)

In the aftermath of the establishment of Cities Alliance, the CDS model evolved. It focused on poverty reduction and socio-economic development and focusing on local governance and sustainable development (ECON & Centre for Local Government, 2005; Parnell & Robinson, 2006). In the early 2000s, the CDS model further evolved to adopt a new trend that promotes city competitiveness and sets a vision to achieve sustainable economic growth. To achieve this sustainable growth, the newly adapted model sought to comprehensively understand the conditions of local economies and identify the city's competitive advantages (Rasoolimanesh, Jaafar, Badarulzaman, & Ramayah, 2015).

In sum, CDS is a participatory process that identifies and capitalizes on urban opportunities while developing strategies that consider the economic realities. It also aims to strengthen the role of the identified stakeholders and help them set a vision for their city's future while attracting investment from across national and global markets (Parnell & Robinson, 2006). It is a flexible and dynamic planning approach that fosters and nurtures a city's values, hence "CDSs, have many forms, with differing formats, priorities, and scale." In other words, the themes of a CDS vary from a city to another. (ECON & Centre for Local Government, 2005, p. 1). According to Rasoolimanesh et al. (2016), the themes of a model can differ significantly between developing and

developed cities based on “their situational and contextual differences” (p.290). He further explains that the themes chosen in a CDS model are based on “the needs, culture position and planning background of the city” (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2016, p. 290). Furthermore, different themes are advocated by various international organizations; the CDS model promoted by the World Bank focuses on economic development and growth while the themes supported by Cities Alliance and UN-Habitat aim for social development and environmental protection. Hence CDS themes and content highly differ from one city to another, which is why rigid and strict CDS themes cannot be enforced on cities (Rasoolimanesh, Badarulzaman, & Jaafar, 2011; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2016).

1. CDSs’ Buildings Blocks

A CDS methodology, also referred to as its “building blocks” differs from a city to another. Despite the variety of each city’s building blocks, the World Bank stresses three main phases of a CDS implementation:

1. The “scoping session” is dedicated to identifying the city’s challenges.
2. The “comprehensive analysis” phase explores the city's socio-economic, financial, and environmental issues.’
3. The “external assistance” phase is concerned with obtaining the needed funds to launch the project.

According to a report issued by Cities Alliance in 2017, the implementation of a CDS is a four-phase process which consists of the following:

1. Situation Analysis phase which carefully defines the stakeholders in the process and the structure of the model. It also collects as much information and data as possible on the city's existing situation.
2. Visioning and strategic analysis phases build upon the data collected in phase one and consolidate it in a SWOT analysis situation. It starts with elaborating a vision and then moved to develop the strategic objectives wanted for the city.
3. The strategy formulation phase focuses on translating the strategic objectives into concrete programs and projects with projects.
4. The strategy implementation and Monitoring and Evaluation phase ensure that the implemented strategies are operational and the projects are maintained (CitiesAlliance, 2017).



Figure 1- The CDS cycle according to Cities Alliance (Cities Alliance, 2017; p.11)

Researchers concur that CDS implementation's success relies primarily on the design of its building blocks or methodologies (Rasoolimanesh, Jaafar, &

Badarulzaman, 2014). Despite the minor differences in the building blocks of the multiple models of CDSs, several similarities and uniformities can be observed (Parnell & Robinson, 2006).

2. The MedCities City Development Strategy Approach

This thesis will adapt the CDS model developed by MedCities as it has been implemented in cities in the region. It will look more closely into the case study of Saida as it is one of the most successful models developed by MedCities and of similarities in the context of Bab Al-Nasr.

MedCities is a network of Mediterranean cities created in Barcelona in 1991. Under the umbrella of the METAP (Mediterranean Environmental Technical Assistance Program), the network was established by the World Bank with the aim of environmental amelioration in the Mediterranean region. The program is funded by the World Bank, European Investment Bank, the European Commission, and United Nations Development Program (UNPD). The network is comprised of one city in each country with a general preference of cities other than the capital.

The objective of MedCities is to strengthen decentralized actions with technical assistance to promote awareness of urban environmental problems and empower municipalities in developing countries related to specific urban environmental issues. The main aims and purposes of the network are sustainable urban developments to improve living conditions in the Mediterranean region, they are as listed:

- “To develop the awareness of interdependence and common responsibilities as regard policies of sustainable development, environmental conservation and social cohesion of the Mediterranean basin”(MedCities, 2014, p. 14);

- “To reinforce the role, competence, and resources (institutional, financial, and technical) of local administration in the adoption and implementation of sustainable local development policies (MedCities, 2014, p. 14);

- To raise citizens’ awareness and participation in the development of their cities.

- To create a framework for corporations and partnerships between the different stakeholders of the city.

MedCities developed the Urban Sustainable Development Strategies (USUDS) project “to promote sustainable development and social cohesion in Mediterranean cities through the application of urban sustainable development strategies model (UDS)(also known as CDS) and networking” (MedCities, 2014, p. 1). It also reinforces “decentralization processes and contributes to the consolidation of good practice in the government (MedCities, 2014, p. 20). By promoting citizens' participation and strengthening local authorities' role, the model balances territorial development and empowers citizens.

The model prepares long and medium-term strategic plans to address the implications of the 21st century fast urban growth on the Mediterranean city network's socio-economic and spatial aspects. MedCities perceives strategic urban planning as a “continuous management method rather than a one of planning method for the city” (MedCities, 2014, p. 27). MedCities has a mission to become an active player in transforming the city. Its role is not consultative but instead of the decision-making process directly responsible for executing projects of strategic importance to the city.

3. The CDS model of Saida, Lebanon as a Case Study

Saida, Lebanon is among the cities in the Mediterranean that have applied the CDS model of MedCities. It was chosen as the comparative study with Bab Al-Nasr for three reasons: (1) firstly, Saida suffered from the social and economic impact of the war (2) secondly, Saida is a Middle Eastern city with a similar culture, and (3) It is one of the few cases of CDS in the region, and finally (4) Saida is a small-scale city with an important historical core, like Aleppo, which contributes to its urban economy.

Saida is located in the south of Lebanon and is considered the third-largest city in the country with a population of approximately 110 000 residents. Saida's is located on a narrow coastal strip separating the mountain region from the sea. Saida's old city is a "living urban heritage site" (MedCities, 2014, p. 46) which boasts religious and cultural diversity.

Before the city's CDS model proposal, Saida experienced "multidimensional urban problems" mainly because of its poor resource management (MedCities, 2014, p. 46). However, its rich civil community had a will to strengthen the governance of its municipality to improve its role in the development process.

The USUDS project in Saida was launched in 2014. The model of Saida's CDS was structured to have a holistic development approach to shift the role of Saida's Municipality "to that of a local authority playing a major role in the development process of the city" (MedCities, 2014, p. 47). The goal was to put Saida on the path of modern urbanization while considering and valorizing its historical identity. The model also set goals of transparency and accountability through a participatory approach.

After positioning its mission and vision Saida's model was structured as the following: "6 strategic lines developed in 22 objectives deriving in 63 strategies to be

materialized through an action plan containing 27 plans, programs and actions” (MedCities, 2014, p. 28). Conversely to other models in other cities, Saida’s urban sustainable development strategies developed 27 projects while encompassing 50 other projects that were undergoing before the strategic plan. These 50 projects were analyzed and considered to adapt to the strategic objectives set by the model to gain quick public support.

The implementation of Saida’s CDS was challenging on many levels. Some administrative and financial issues hampered the start of the implementation of the model. Additionally, the generally unstable political climate and security situation of Lebanon and in Saida specifically affected the process. During the strategic Framework phase, armed conflicts that have erupted in the city of Saida halted all future projects planned for the city, and any discussions surrounding the future of the USUDS framework. Nevertheless, Saida’s Municipality and the Hariri Foundation for Sustainable Human Development were persistent to surpass the mentioned above challenges and continue in the implementation of the USUDS project as a “reconciliation tool among citizens”(MedCities, 2014, p. 47) and to encourage the use of strategic planning through reflecting on the vision and mission proposed for the city.

c. Saida’s CDS methodology

The building blocks or component that were generated in Saida’s CDS were the following:

1. **Descriptive Memory:** The descriptive memory, also known as the “pre-diagnosis”, was the first component of Saida’s CDS. The Descriptive Memory was based on accumulated existing data gathered to produce the

Descriptive Memory report. The Descriptive Memory presented a descriptive analysis of the city's urban setting, which led to identifying critical transversal issues for development. It also showcased the ongoing major projects happening in the city.

2. **Strategic Diagnosis:** The second component of the CDS was dedicated to the strategic diagnosis of the transversal issues identified in the previous phase to understand the correlations of the different urban variables. It also included an analysis of the trends and ongoing projects in the city. It finally concluded by drafting a vision for the city through the consultation of different community members and by setting strategic objectives.
3. **Strategic Framework:** In sequence with the analysis done in the Strategic Diagnosis of the transversal issues, general guiding objectives for the city were drafted to guide the formulation of the strategic axes for development.
4. **Action Plan:** The application of the strategies drafted for the city was done by creating projects and action items. Action items were designed to function upon a timeline by the supervision of the needed stakeholders. When designed, these projects were considered drivers for the city to achieve the results aspired for during the Strategic Framework formulation.
5. **Indicator System:** The indicator system was set as a tool to examine if the urban variables constituting the city were being affected positively by the Action Plan.

The case study of Saida's CDS is of significance to this thesis. It can be observed thoroughly to guide Bab Al-Nasr's strategic framework's formulation due to the similarities in them. First, Saida, too endured a fifteen-year-old civil war, and thus its model was developed within a post-war context. Second, the model sought to valorize and use the rich cultural heritage as a driver to sustainable urban development by utilizing its historical core and sustaining its tangible and intangible heritage. It aimed to revitalize the local economy and preserve the cultural practices and highly encourage the participation of the local population.

C. Cultural Heritage as a Catalyst to Recovery

According to Harrison (2010), the fluidity and flexibility of heritage definitions make it challenging to build on a "working definition" of heritage that can be applied in the discourses concerning conflict and heritage (As mentioned in Bishop, 2014, p. 43). However, this thesis will tackle the relationship of heritage and identity in order to understand the importance of heritage in rebuilding conflict-torn social fabrics.

Smith (2008) perceives heritage as a multi-faceted dynamic concept that interrelates with different facets from politics, sociology, and psychology and could be perceived as tangible structures and intangible practices (. Other scholars describe heritage as an expression of a collective or personal identity that has been established as a representation of their historical identity in the present (Bishop, 2014; Harvey, 2001; Howard & Graham, 2008). Bishop (2014) defines it as "a process that negotiates the connections between people, places and their past" (p.13). Smith (2008) argues that cultural heritage is not a product but rather a social process, in which memories and historic social events are chosen to be commemorated in historic sites.

Whether tangible or intangible, heritage acts as “an anchor to which memories can be attached, giving both collective and individual memories legitimacy and a sense of place both geographically and historically through imagined traditions of remembrance (Misztal, 2003 as mentioned in Bishop, 2014; p. 50). Building on the above notion of the interdependence of heritage and identity, Bishop (2014) concurs that when identities are endangered, so is their existing definition of heritage (p. 49)

In war, civil or inter-communal clashes, rivals destroy their adversary's identity by targeting the latter's symbolic monuments, cultural heritage and purposely displacing communities from their environments (Barakat, 2007; Kaldor, 2013). These attacks have deeper consequences than just on the built environment; they challenge the affected community's social and psychological recovery (Barakat, 2007). They result in extensive damage of cultural identity and an irreversible change of intangible connections between the place and its affected community (O'Keefe, 2006; Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1996 as mentioned in Bishop, 2014). Grenville (2007) further explains that in the wake of conflicts, the legitimacy of pre-war identities become endangered due to multiple factors such as “changing history, involvement in the conflict, changing social power dynamics, loss of the familiar past and ontological security” (As mentioned in Bishop, 2014, p. 49).

However, the recovery of cultural heritage in post-conflict contexts has been disregarded by mainstream post-war reconstruction practices and policies and is often perceived as a luxury that cannot be managed by societies emerging from such calamities (Barakat, 2007). Stanley-Price (2007) seconds the precedent and explains the difficulty of broaching the topic of cultural heritage in a post-war context, and more specifically in the aftermath of a violent conflict when “the human needs of shelter,

food and health have priority” and are more visible, the attention to heritage could appear insensitive to this latter precedence (p.1). However, he stresses the importance of including cultural heritage in post-war reconstruction agendas, whereby people’s ability to recover from war trauma depends heavily on their cultural resilience and could have a constructive effect on restoring the torn social fabric (Stanley-Price, 2007). Harvey (2001), discerns that heritage can support and create identities; therefore, heritage is a vital issue to tackle in post-conflict agendas to reconstruct the damaged and fragmented identities (as mentioned in Bishop, 2014).

Heritage is perceived as an important “aspect of both conflict and recovery from the conflict” (Bishop, 2014). Legnér (2018) also explains that historical sites' destruction is often the most discernible and grave effects of a conflict. Built environments of historical and cultural importance have a substantial role in strengthening or reviving communities’ identities and cultures (Grodach, 2002), since heritage is perceived as a “tool for democracy” where different communities and social groups can manifest their identity and their understanding of history and their collective memory (Misztal, 2003; Samuel, 2012). Accordingly, stakeholders, such as international organizations, local governments, and sub-national groups, often broached heritage, engaged in the reconstruction process as part of the reconstruction/ healing process (Giblin, 2014). As a result, the rehabilitation of heritage sites becomes part of political processes constructing post-conflict communities, contributing to reinforcing or establishing new identities (Legnér, 2018)

Case studies of historical sites that have witnessed destruction could be observed to understand the process and the importance of the rehabilitation of such sites. Grodach (2002) talks about the positive impact the reconstruction of heritage sites

could have in war-torn cities. He specifically gives the example of the rehabilitation of the 16th-century historic city of Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the aftermath of the Bosnian Wars of 1992-1995. The author illuminates how rebuilding the post-war reconstruction of historic landmarks in the city played a crucial role in reconstructing the city's social fabric and did not only "articulate a new definition of local identity and ethnic relations" (p.61), but also turned Mostar's reconstructed space into a tourist attraction that accelerated the city's economy (Grodach, 2002).

The city of Warsaw, Poland, also endured massive destruction during World War II; however, within 11 years, the city recovered its pre-conflict populace and regained its activity as what could be perceived as "a fully functional capital" (Goldman, 2005, p. 136). Goldman (2005) owes the re-emergence of Warsaw to the reconstruction of its historic core that represented seven centuries of the capital's history and explains that its completion in 1961 demonstrated the revival of the nation's "cultural and historical identity" (p.136).

D. Conclusion

The City Development Strategy model created a paradigm shift in the practice and theory of urban planning. It pushed the notion of integrating and addressing "the social" in city planning. It offered a more participatory and community-oriented approach to planning, challenging the perhaps outdated and top-heavy master planning approach. Most importantly, it capitalizes on human resources and urban assets for achieving sustainable development.

In Bab al-Nasr, the destroyed urban landscape gains more importance and attention from the reconstruction efforts than the torn and displaced social fabric. Thus,

adapting the CDS model in Bab Al-Nasr could be beneficial on multiple levels, particularly in prioritizing the social challenges and assets in the recovery process. The case study of Saida showed how the model allowed the city to be thought of strategically and holistically. It tapped into the city's valuable variables and explored its strengths and weaknesses, and utilized its cultural assets as a catalyst to development. Saida's model aimed to achieve sustainability by setting short- and long-term goals and implementing tangible and intangible outcomes.

The literature on "cultural heritage as a catalyst to recovery" highlighted the interdependence of heritage and identity and their importance in mending war-torn social fabrics. It explained how heritage should not be perceived as a "luxury" in post-war agendas but rather should be approached as an opportunity to mend individual and collective identities and create a post-war healed collective memory.

CHAPTER III

DESCRIPTIVE MEMORY

The Descriptive Memory (pre-diagnosis) is the first phase of Bab Al-Nasr Neighborhood Recovery Strategy. The Descriptive Memory presents an objective description of the different variables that constitute the “urban reality” (MedCities, 2014, p. 29). The upcoming sections will aim to:

- To present a descriptive and general profile of the neighborhood through four tracks, which are:

- Urban Planning
- Socio-economic
- Business Activity
- Cultural Heritage

- To assess the state of the tracks mentioned above before and in the aftermath of the end of the battle for Aleppo by drawing critical issues regarding each of the sectors

- To identify the transversal issues to be further explored in the "Strategic Diagnosis" section

- To identify driving forces and trends related to the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the neighborhood.

The data collected on the neighborhood in the pre-war period were retrieved from previous technical studies, mainly from comprehensive research done by the German Association for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) in 2001. The material on the post-war condition of the neighborhood was collected through fieldwork and inquiries

addressed to the dwellers of Bab Al-Nasr and the active groups involved in its rehabilitation.

A. Urban Planning Profile

This section begins by introducing the location of the neighborhood in the Old City of Aleppo. It then proceeds to describe the neighborhood's urban morphology in relation to its topography, street hierarchy, building heights, and land-use. It then elaborates on the patterns of ownership in Bab Al-Nasr, presenting a damage assessment, and ends with listing the critical issues related to the planning of the neighborhood.

1. Urban Setting

The Old City of Aleppo is constituted of its ancient walls dating back to the Hellenistic Era (64 BC-395 AD) and of districts that have emerged outside of this enclosure starting from the 6th century onwards (Miroğlu, 2005; Qudsi, 2016) (**Figure 2**). The walls are constituted of 9 gates that surround the historical Greco-Roman style streets, composed of hammams, mosques, churches, khans, souqs, and traditional courtyard houses (Qudsi, 2016, p. 10). Dating back to the 10th century BC, the Citadel of Aleppo sits in the heart of the city. The 12th to the 14th century served as a fortress for the Zengid and Ayyubid Dynasties (Neglia, 2010; Qudsi 2016). The city was at the center of important trade routes since the 2nd century BC and has witnessed the rise and fall of many dynasties and empires. It was ruled consecutively by Hittites, Assyrians, Akkadians, Greeks, Romans, Umayyads, Ayyubids, Mamluks, and the Ottomans, leaving behind traces of their material culture (Campanella and vale, 2005, p vi; Qudsi,

2016, p. 10). The Old City was classified as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1986 and was inscribed on World Heritage in Danger in 2013. Up until 2016, the Old City of Aleppo served as a battlefield for the government troops and their opposing forces, leaving some of its historical monuments and heritage assets with extensive damage (Qudsi, 2016).

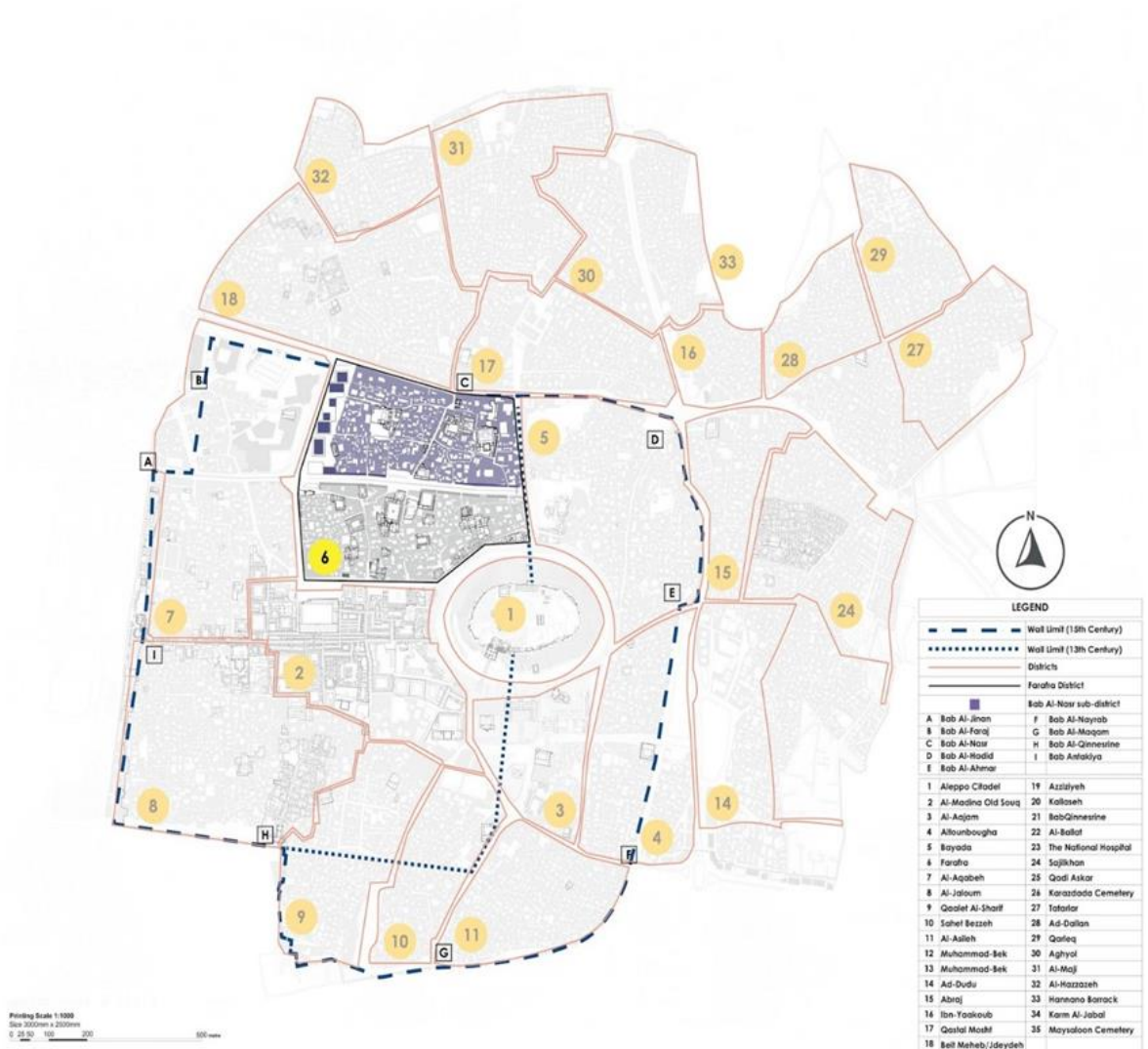


Figure 2- Map of the Old City of Aleppo highlighting the ancient city walls, the gates, and the districts (author, 2019)

Bab Al-Nasr, from which the neighborhood's name is drawn, is among the five remaining gates today (UNESCO & UNITAR, 2018). It is located on the northeastern medieval city walls (Miroğlu, 2005; Tabbaa, 2010). Formerly, it served as an entry point to the Old City, but according to Mansel (2016), the gates gave their names to the districts surrounding them with time. The neighborhood is located between Zone 7-3-2 and Zone 7-1-1 (**Figure 3**) in Aleppo's Master plan and is situated in the Al-Farafra district. Bab Al-Nasr occupies 10.5 hectares of the Old City (GTZ, 2001; Google Earth, 2019).

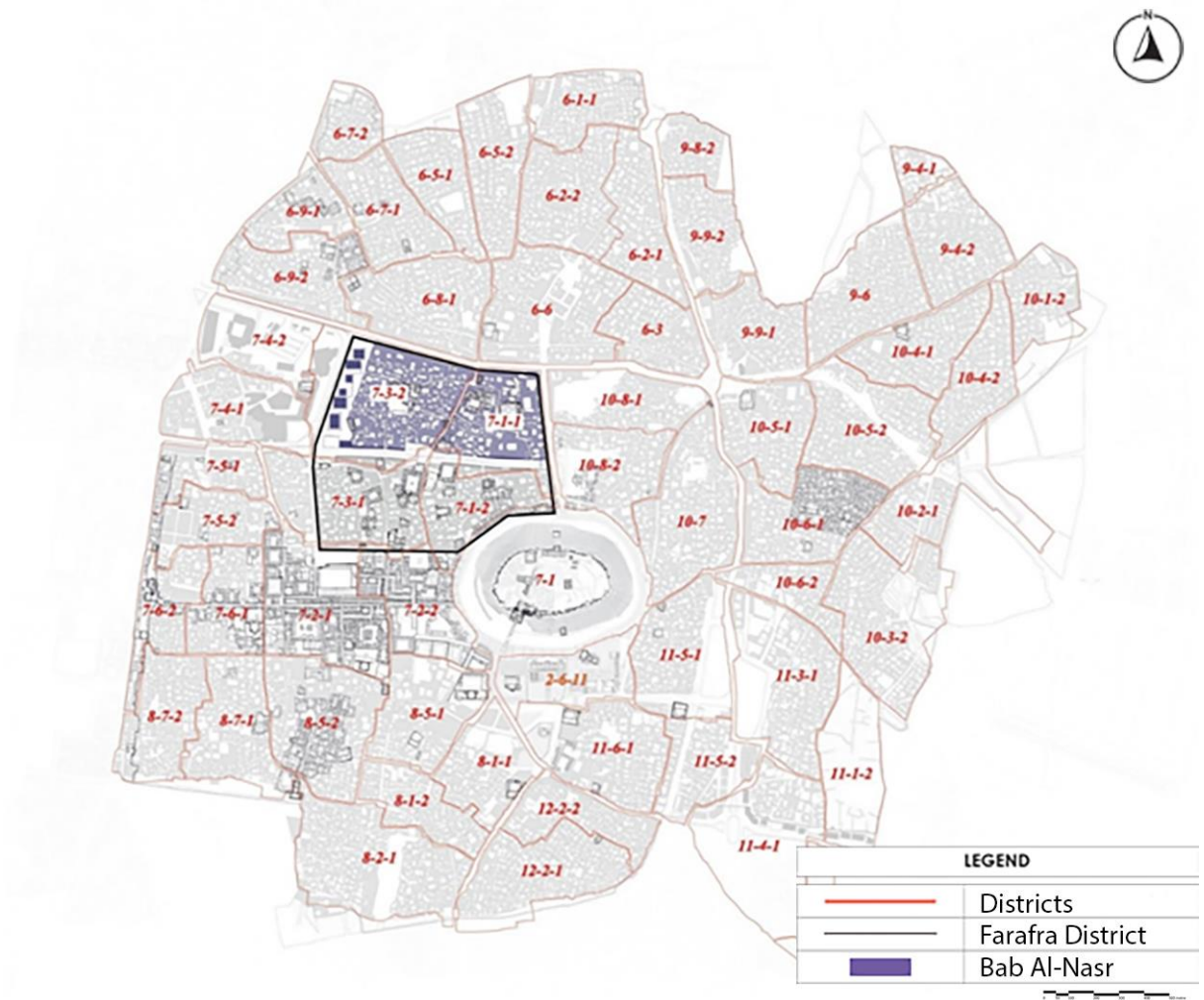


Figure 3- Map of the Old City highlighting the Farafra District and the neighborhood Bab Al-Nasr (author, 2019)

d. Topography

Bab Al-Nasr is characterized by a gently sloping topography starting from the citadel's hill to the southeast, down to the western edge of the neighborhood. These topography variations can be noticed in the neighborhood's structure, where significant changes in the sloping grade are detected over relatively small distances and appear as "low hills" (**Figure 4**). However, it is also suspected that the previously

mentioned slopes could be artificial and have resulted from the accumulation of debris of time (Gangler, 2001).



Figure 4- Photo of the slopes noticed in the neighborhood (author 2020)

e. Typo-Morphology:

The neighborhood's traditional medieval fabric is tightly knit and cellular in its structure (**Figure 5**). Traditional courtyard houses and historical monuments are compactly clustered around alleyways that form the organic street network and are accessed through cul-de-sacs. Most of the neighborhood's open spaces are occupied by

the residential stock's courtyards, whereas the traditional right of way constitutes 10% of the surface area. Similarly, the avenues and the open spaces implemented by modern-day planning constitute 10% of the surface area (Gangler, 2001).



Figure 5- Nollie Map of the neighborhood showing its dense urban fabric (author, 2020)



Figure 6- Picture of Bab Al-Nasr's alleyways (author, 2020)

f. Street Hierarchy and Accessibility

Four major and primary vehicular roads surround the neighborhood (**Figure 7**). The master plan scheme proposed by Andre Gutton in 1952 dissected the larger Farafra District in two districts and implemented Al-Khandak Street to modernize and improve connectivity and accessibility allowing automobile traffic in the Old City. It destroyed 10% of Al-Farafra monuments to create two ring traffic axes (Alsalloum, 2019; GTZ, 2001; Lafi, 2017; Soufan, 2015)(**Figure 8**). Nevertheless, these modern planning interventions created a rather sharp juxtaposition with the traditional urban fabric; the multistory buildings that were built along the edges of the modern major roads distorted the urban morphology of the area and created a physical threshold to the old city fabric (**Figure 10**).

The traditional medieval typo-morphology is evident through the neighborhood's inner secondary vehicular narrow residential streets and tertiary pedestrian cul-de-sacs (Miroğlu, 2005). These are made up of cobblestone roads that make vehicular circulation almost difficult but have been used likewise, as modern accessibility usage demands such adaptation (Qudsi, 2017).

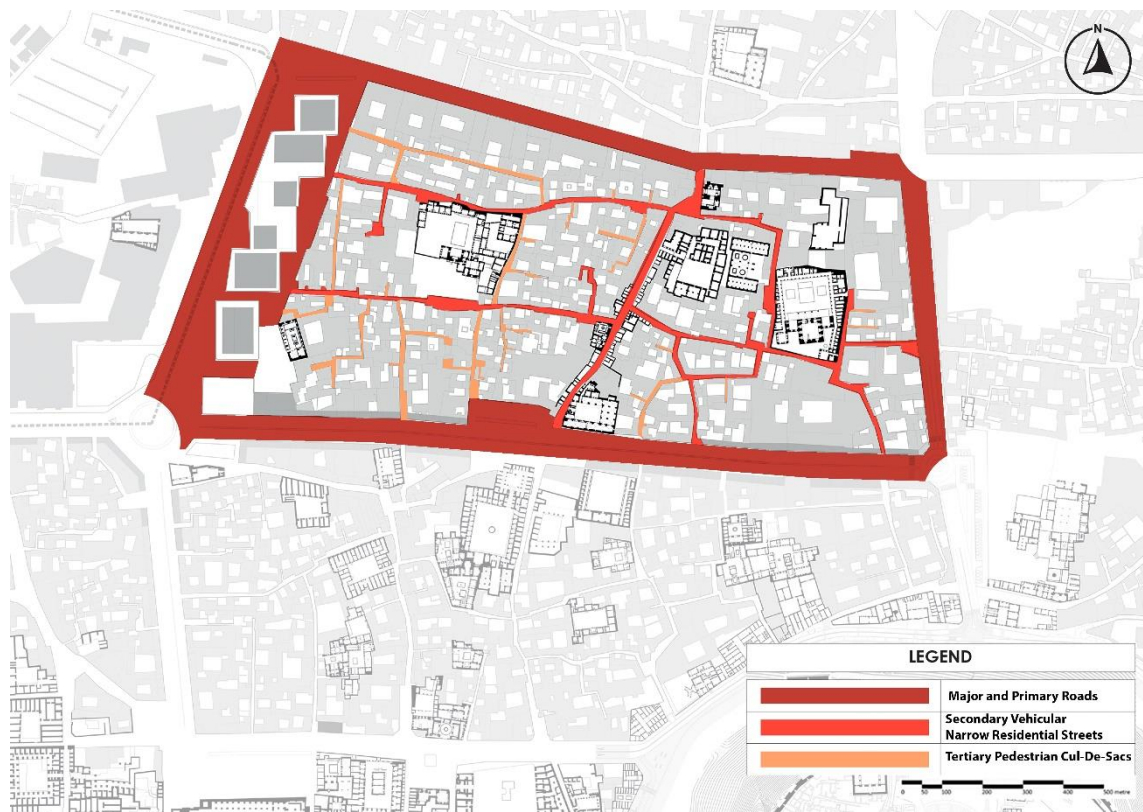


Figure 7- Map showing the street hierarchy of the neighborhood based on GTZ (2001) (author, 2019)

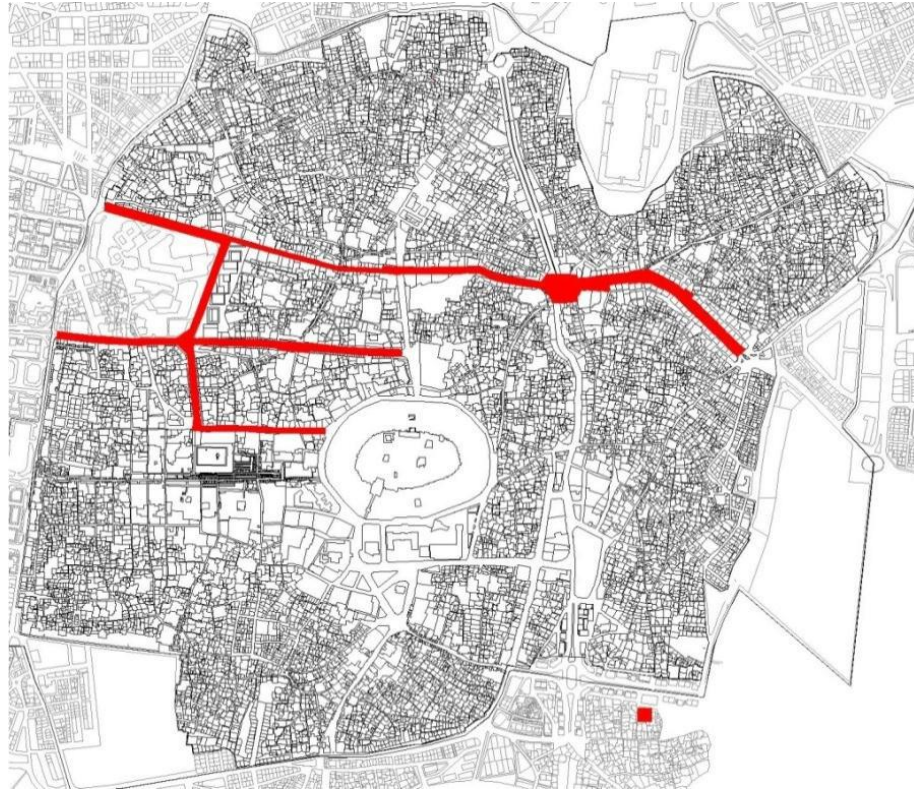


Figure 8- Map showing the implemented roads as per the proposed Master Plan of Gutton (Zaloum, 2014)

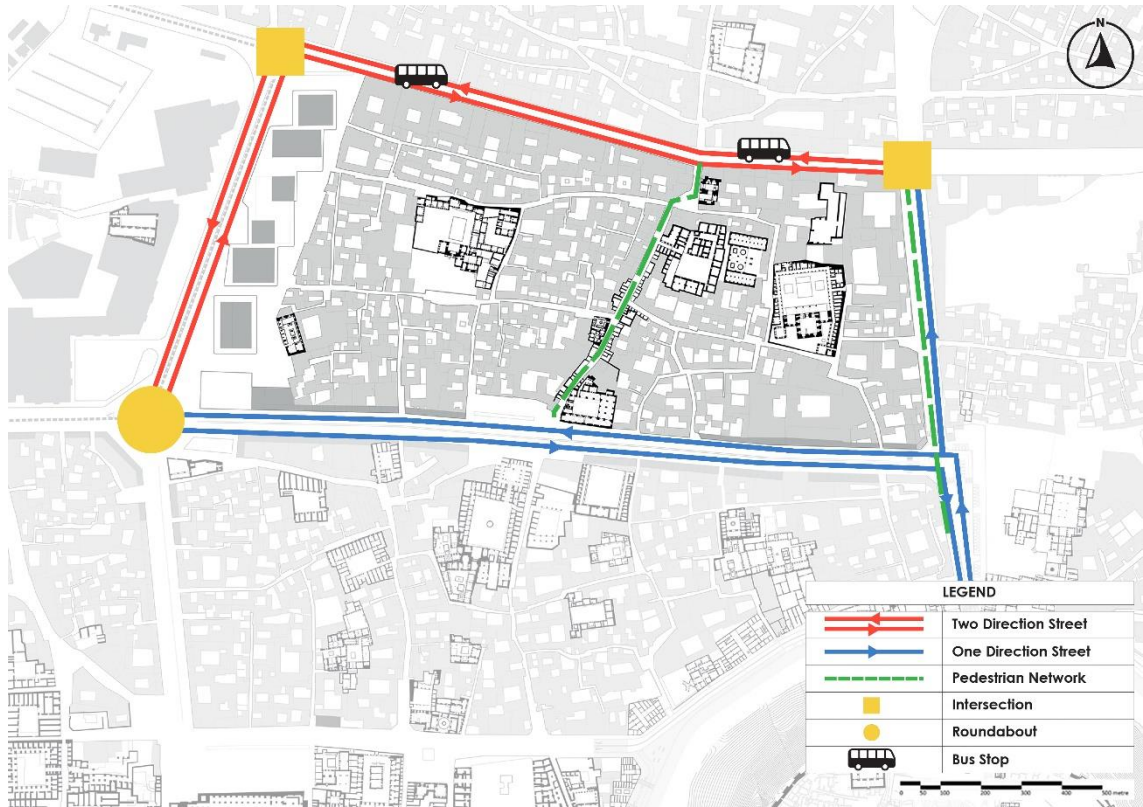


Figure 9- Accessibility Map of Bab Al-Nasr based on GTZ (2001), (author, 2019)



Figure 10- Photo of the modern buildings on Al-Sijen Street (author, 2020)

Due to the extensive damage caused by the conflict, accessibility has become restricted in the neighborhood. Some buildings are still not safe for public access, and alleyways are still inaccessible due to the debris from the fallen destroyed buildings (**Figure 11**). It is also important to mention that the ring roads surrounding Bab Al-Nasr, serving as the link between the city and the neighborhood, were also heavily damaged and deserted to varying degrees. Al-Sijen Street buildings are still unused and extensively damaged, whereas most of the buildings on Al-Khandak Street are comparatively more inhabited and rehabilitated (**Figure 10**). This discrepancy in the state of the two streets of Al-Sijen and Al-Khandak is due to the cease-fire line drawn between the two streets during the battle, and its scars are very much represented physically. Moreover, public transportation activity has significantly decreased in comparison to its pre-war state, as fewer buses service the area.

Additionally, the neighborhood and its bordering areas become less safe to access during nighttime for two main reasons. The first reason is the day-time population coming into the neighborhood and the Old City and commuting elsewhere at the end of its working hours, which renders the neighborhood silent during the nighttime. Secondly, the streets are also unlit during the night due to the damaged electrical infrastructure, making it unsafe for any nighttime movement.



Figure 11- Rubbles of destroyed buildings blocking rights of way in Bab Al-Nasr (author, 2020)



Figure 12- Photo of Al-Khandak Street (left) more populated than Al-Sijen (right) (author, 2020)

g. Land Use

The effect of the implemented modern buildings was far more extensive than just the contrast with the traditional inner neighborhoods. It had further implications on the land use of the area. Initially, these buildings were to have mixed-use structures; the ground floors were intended for commercial use and the upper floors for residential use. However, two subsidiary developments followed and changed the land use application, which increased commercial use and allowed for auxiliary facilities: office spaces and warehouses (Gangler, 2001).

Consequently, massive changes to the land-use of the area took place during the 1980s; the upper floors of buildings initially zoned as residential slowly replaced commercial offices. Additionally, the taller buildings' traditional houses began to lose their residential privacy and transformed into warehouses to serve as extensions to the commercial zones on the major primary roads (Al Sijen and Al-Khandak Street) (Gangler, 2001). This pressure on the residential stock resulted in an alarming trend in the late 1990s, with households migrating outside of the Old City and a resulting 50% increase in vacant plots (ibid).

Before the Syrian conflict, Bab Al-Nasr was made up primarily of residential, commercial, and historic monuments buildings with various uses, in addition to facilities that hosted light industrial activities (Gangler, 2001). Similarly to the rest of the Old City's residential parcels, Bab Al-Nasr residential buildings consisted of traditional courtyard houses. These are typically composed of a courtyard surrounded by one or two stories of rooms with inward-facing windows, with no opening onto the outside streets to preserve privacy (Qudsi, 2016, p. 9).

The battle for Aleppo had severe impacts on the Old City; for years, it served as the meeting point of the warring factions and bore the brunt of shelling and airstrikes. Like much of the rest of the city, Old Aleppo was under siege from 2012 until 2016. In consequence, Bab Al-Nasr, along with other neighborhoods in eastern Aleppo, was virtually emptied of people. Many residents and business owners abandoned their dwellings and shops seeking refuge elsewhere (Lund, 2017).

Based on numerous field visits, it is evident that despite the end of the battle for Aleppo, Bab Al-Nasr still witnesses a decrease in commercial activity and in active households. Similarly, services, health, and educational facilities have ceased their operations in the area during the conflict. They have yet to return to pre-war conditions since the area became semi-accessible.

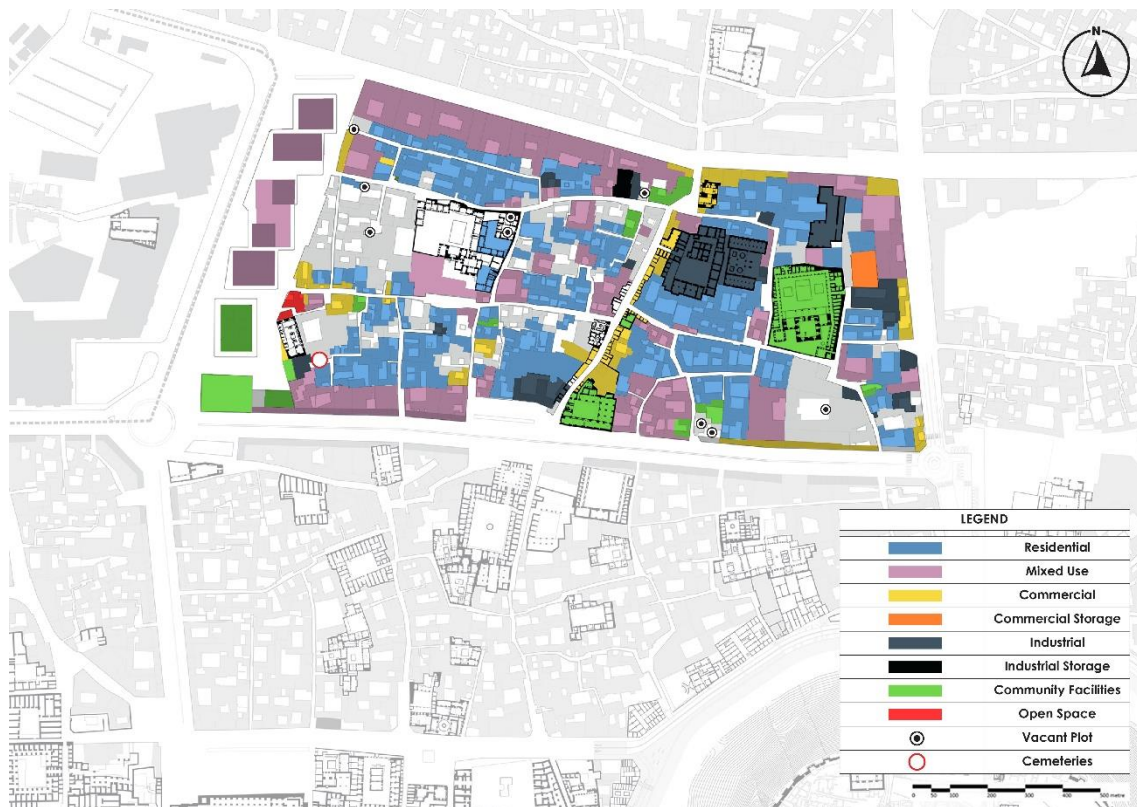


Figure 13- Land use map of Bab Al- Nasr based on GTZ, (2001) (author, 2019)

The map below by BTU (2020) shows the detailed building functions of Bab Al-Nasr's built fabric.

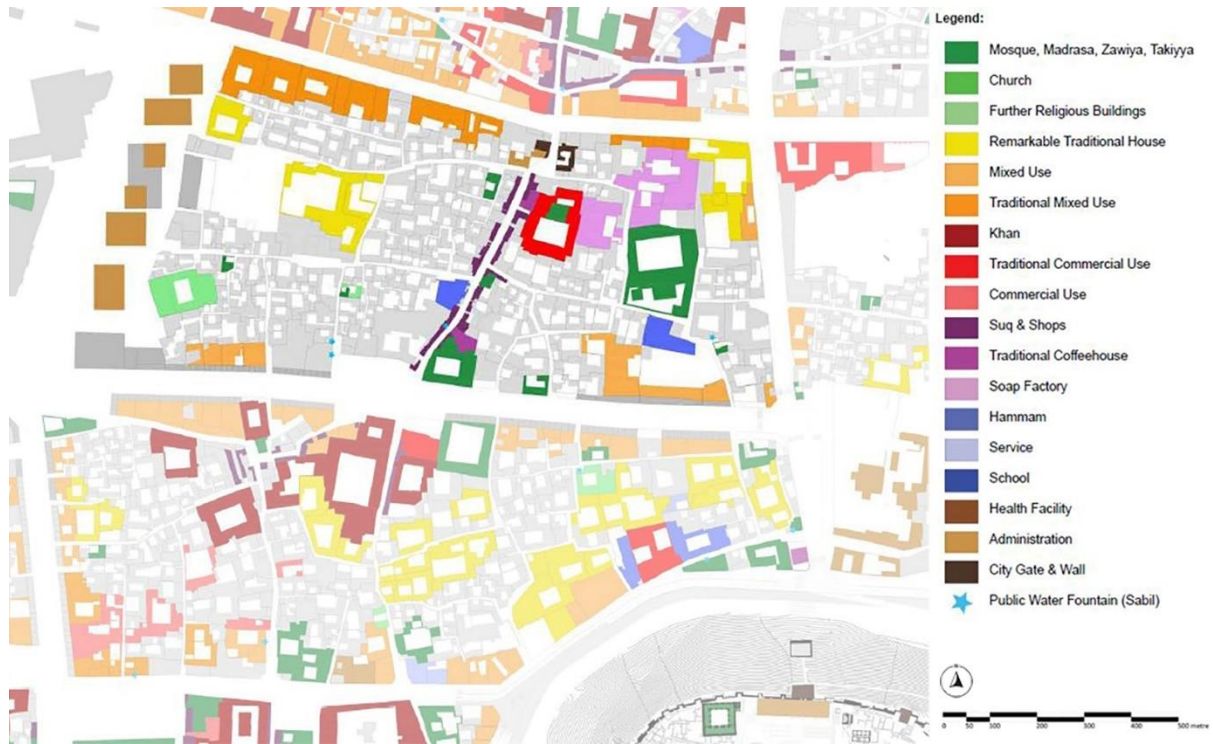


Figure 14-Detailed buildings functions in Bab Al-Nasr (BTU, 2020)

i. Building Heights

Most of the historic housing stock located in the neighborhood's inner streets comprises one to two-story buildings. However, the modern high-taller buildings constituting five to six stories were built along the primary roads; and infiltrated the neighborhood's inner residential stock (**Figure 15**). These buildings disrupted the density and typo-morphology of the original low-rise urban fabric. This is especially significant when combined with buildings' destruction to create streets, leaving vacant and ruined plots randomly spread across the area (Gangler, 2001).



Figure 15- Photo in Bab Al-Nasr showing the infiltration of modern buildings (left) in the historical urban fabric of the neighborhood and its juxtaposition with historical buildings (right) (author, 2020)

h. Housing

Almost 24% of the neighborhood's land-use maintained a residential function after the battle for Aleppo ended. However, the physical state of the neighborhood's residential stock was already deteriorating before the conflict. Surveys conducted in 2001 show that the housing stock's dilapidated infrastructure was the main cause of its infrastructural deficiency. The most recent rehabilitation work done on the residential stock was in the early eighties as a massive wave of incoming migration took over the area after the demolition of neighboring areas in the Old City. The second wave of rehabilitation took place in the early 2000s and included a complete overhaul of the electric and water grids of the Old City, a project funded by the GTZ.

The residential stock is made up of historical houses and units established in the newly implemented buildings on Al-Khandak Street and Al-Sijen Street. Although the area housed 750 households from the late nineties to the early 2000s, these figures

dropped at a rate of 10 households per year as families migrated out of the area. By contrast, and as mentioned earlier in the ownership section, the remaining households were becoming denser as multiple families would share the same home (Gangler, 2001).

2. Damage Assessment

The Old City location in the heart of Aleppo and its urban structure composed of labyrinthine markets and adjacent buildings has made it a frontline and a battlefield for opposing forces (Qudsi, 2016; Westcott, 2019). As a result, the UNESCO heritage site has sustained massive damage (UNESCO & UNITAR, 2018). Francesco Bandarin, the former UNESCO assistant director-general and a member of AKTC's (Agha Khan Trust for Culture) steering committee, describes the war-torn ancient city as "reminiscent of destroyed German cities after the Second World War" (Mcgovern, 2018). Based on a damage assessment report done by UNOSAT, UNITAR (United Nations Institute for Training and Research, 2018), the Intramuros area of the walled city is moderately damaged. According to the Qudsi (2016) damage assessment done on the Old City, 79% of Farafra's district built-up area is damaged (**Figure 16**). According to the damage assessment map done by REACH, UNITAR, and UNOSAT (2019), Al-Farafra district 6.1 to 9.0 buildings are destroyed per hectare (p.8) (**Figure 17**)

Row Labels	Destroyed % of Nbrhd	Highly Affected % of Nbrhd	Mildly Affected % of Nbrhd	Neighborhood Area	Affected Area	Affected Area as % of Total Area
AL Ajam	34%	59%	6%	10.39	10.33	99%
Al Aqaba	7%	48%	44%	8.47	8.40	99%
Al Bayyadah	2%	26%	70%	36.88	36.22	98%
Al Jalloum	12%	37%	48%	17.14	16.61	97%
Al Jdaydeh (North)	6%	42%	48%	19.90	19.23	97%
Al Jdaydeh (South)	4%	46%	43%	18.54	17.30	93%
Al Qasila	2%	54%	34%	9.84	8.85	90%
Bandara and Farafra	0%	8%	71%	13.58	10.77	79%
Banqusa, al Dudu, and Bab al Nayrab	1%	12%	69%	83.22	68.25	82%
Citadel and its Perimeter	0%	12%	73%	14.69	12.56	86%
Medinah	1%	30%	52%	20.76	17.32	83%
Qastal Mesht and Qastal Harami	1%	26%	49%	19.59	14.91	76%
Grand Total	4%	27%	58%	273.01	240.74	88%

Figure 16- Damage of the Old City of Aleppo by neighborhood, Bab AL-Nasr is highlighted in yellow, (Qudsi, 2016, p. 14).

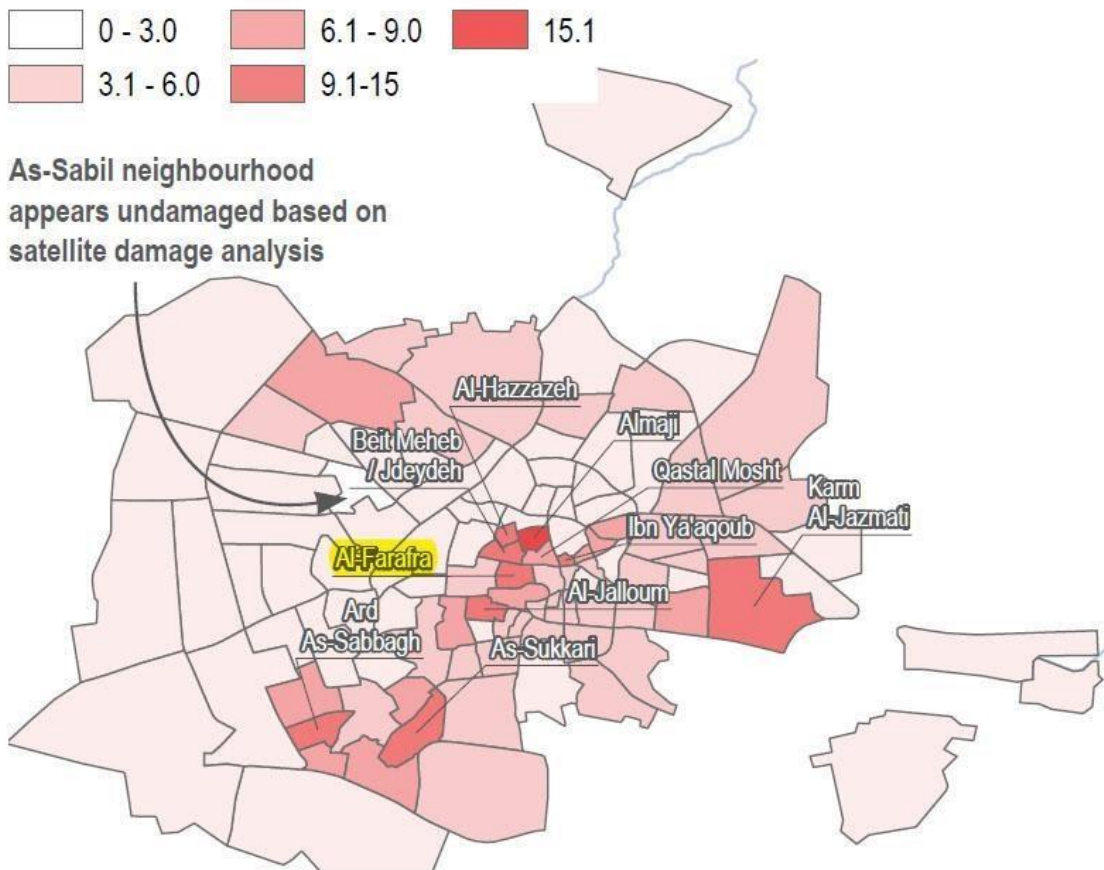


Figure 17- Map of Aleppo shows the number of destroyed or damaged buildings per hectares per district. (REACH et al., 2019, p. 7)

Figure 18 was produced as part of this thesis to show and measure the destruction of the neighborhood's built-up area. This was based on a damage assessment map created by the UN Cartography Section for the Office of the Special Envoy to Syria published in "Rebuilding Old Aleppo" by Qudsi (2016).

To measure the destroyed areas in the neighborhood, the first step was to geo-reference the UN map to a satellite map and trace over the affected zones with polygons to calculate the categorized damaged areas. The results were the following:

- 4.2 hectares were highly affected.
- 4.6 hectares were moderately affected.
- 0.44 hectares were destroyed.

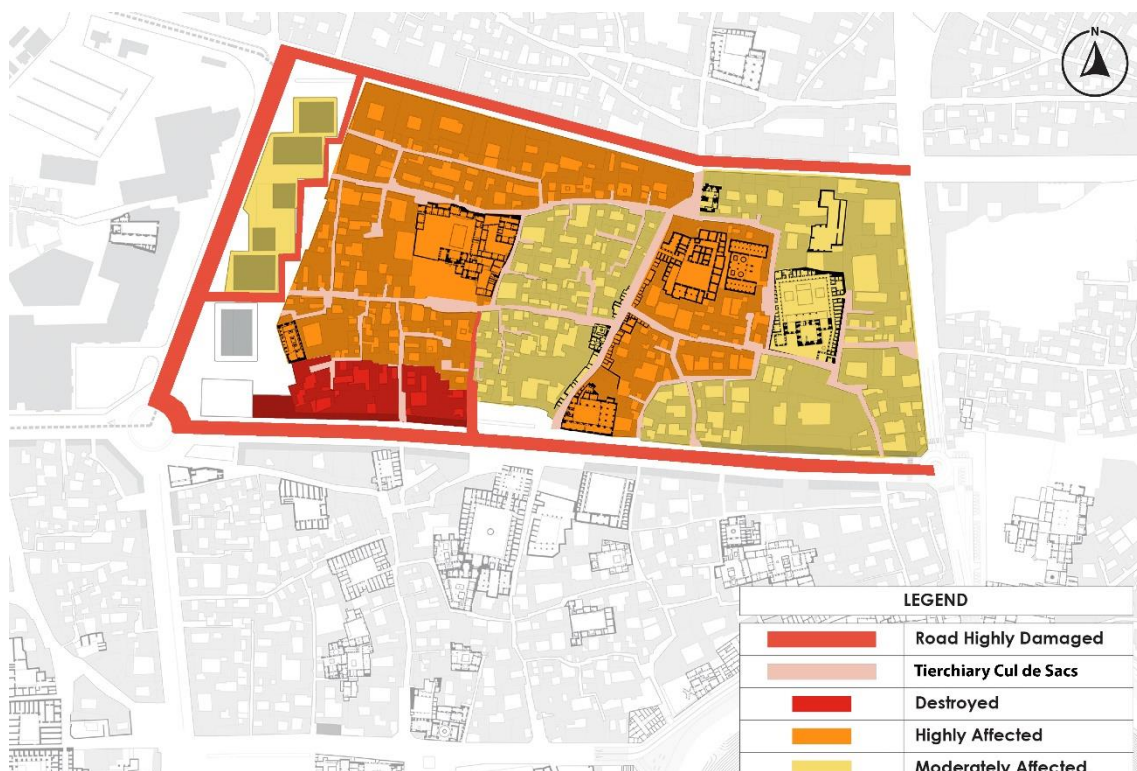


Figure 18- Damage assessment map of Bab Al Nasr based on the UN cartography Section for Special Envoy Office, see Qudsi, (2016) (Author, 2019)

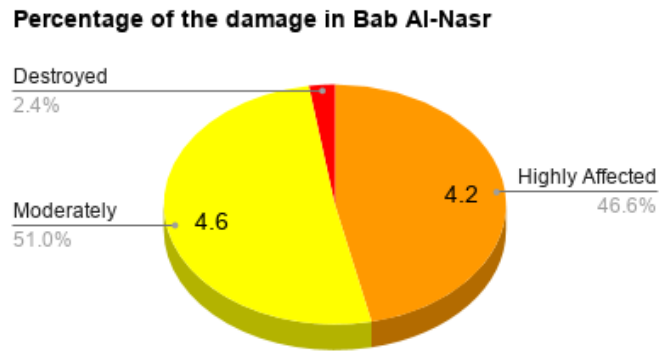


Figure 19- Graph showing the Damage assessment of the built-up area in Bab Al Nasr in hectare per different level of damage (author, 2019)

The map below by REACH et al. (2019) shows more explicitly the number of damaged buildings in Bab Al-Nasr.

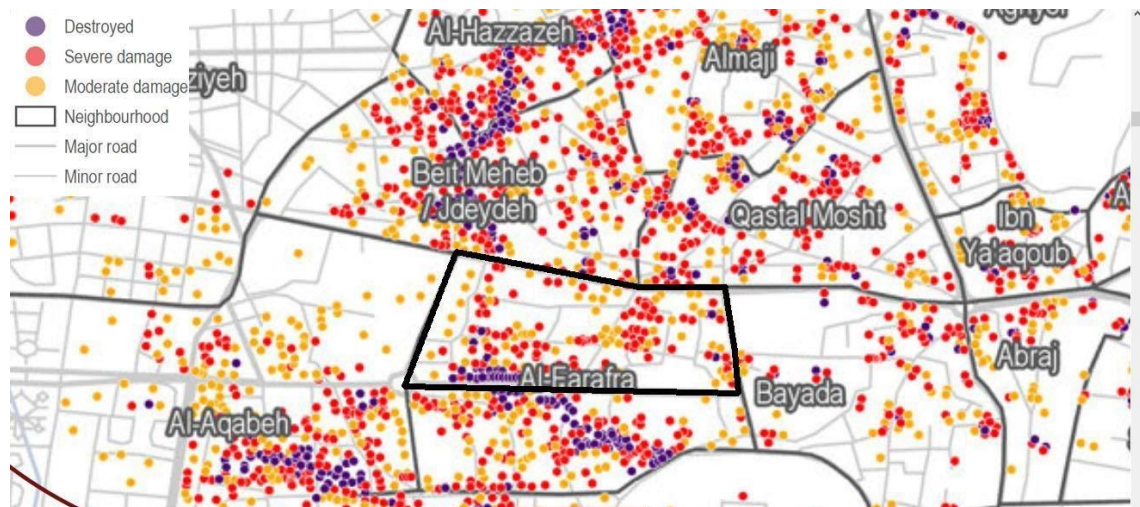


Figure 20- Damage assessment map by REACH, Bab Al-Nasr is highlighted in black (REACH, 2019, p.8)



Figure 21- photos of destruction in Bab Al-Nasr (ArabianPost, 2016; Author, 2020)

Based on field visits conducted in January 2017, as the neighborhood became accessible, it is documented that the water and electrical infrastructure of Bab Al-Nasr was heavily damaged. The electrical grid network was damaged entirely and did not reach the neighborhood. It is also noted that the water and sanitation systems were partially damaged. Moreover, according to the residents, the water supply and quality were scarce and poor.

3. Ownership

According to Gangler (2001), the ownership to tenancy ratio in the residential stock of Bab Al-Nasr was relatively high, with 72 percent of the residential stock privately owned and 28 percent rented. However, GTZ (2001) mapping shows that the northern part of Bab Al-Nasr is composed of a high proportion of subdivided buildings. In contrast, in the southern part of the neighborhood, a medium proportion of

subdivided buildings exist (Gangler, 2001). According to Gangler (2001), 51 percent of the residential stock comprises divided houses, whereas 49 percent are not. These properties are usually traditional houses subdivided between the family members, sometimes up to 7 different housing units to accommodate more than one family (Gangler, 2001).

On March 2nd, 2019, I conducted a brief interview with Mrs. Souraya Zureick², architect and consultant of rehabilitation of historic cities, who has previously worked on the Old City and patterns of ownership in the area. She explained that it is rather challenging to have an adequate mapping of ownership in the Old City, mainly because properties are highly subdivided in terms of ownerships. Due to the inheritance law in Syria a property can be entitled to multiple heirs. She further explains that she observes these subdivisions happening privately between the families and without governmental officialization based on her previous fieldwork. Whereby families subdivide the property and occupy the parts, they think they are entitled to.

On the other hand, the ownership-to-tenancy ratio in the commercial properties is a lower figure. Only 27 percent of the commercially available plots are privately owned, and 73 percent are rented (Gangler, 2001; GTZ, 2001) (**Figure 22**). It is also important to mention that the Directorate of Islamic Endowments (Awqaf) is a major owner in the area (Gangler, 2001).

Furthermore, in the aftermath of the battle for Aleppo and as the rehabilitation activity started in 2017, the Syrian civil law of article 537 section 1, enacted in 1949,

² Mrs Souraya Zureick is an Architect and Planner who will be referenced earlier in the thesis. She is an expert in the rehabilitation of Old Cities and a member of The ICOMOS organization for the conservation and protection of cultural heritage places around the world. Prior to war, she conducted many studies on the Old City and on Bab Al-Nasr. In the post-conflict period, she had been conducting studies on the Old City and of Bab Al-Nasr. She had shared significant professional and technical remarks concerning the neighborhood which were of value to the study.

became active. The law strips tenants of demolished commercial property to become applicable due to the consequence of destruction. Even though they occupied the property under the old rent law, this new law transfers ownership rights to the landlord, nullifying any previous lease effective immediately.

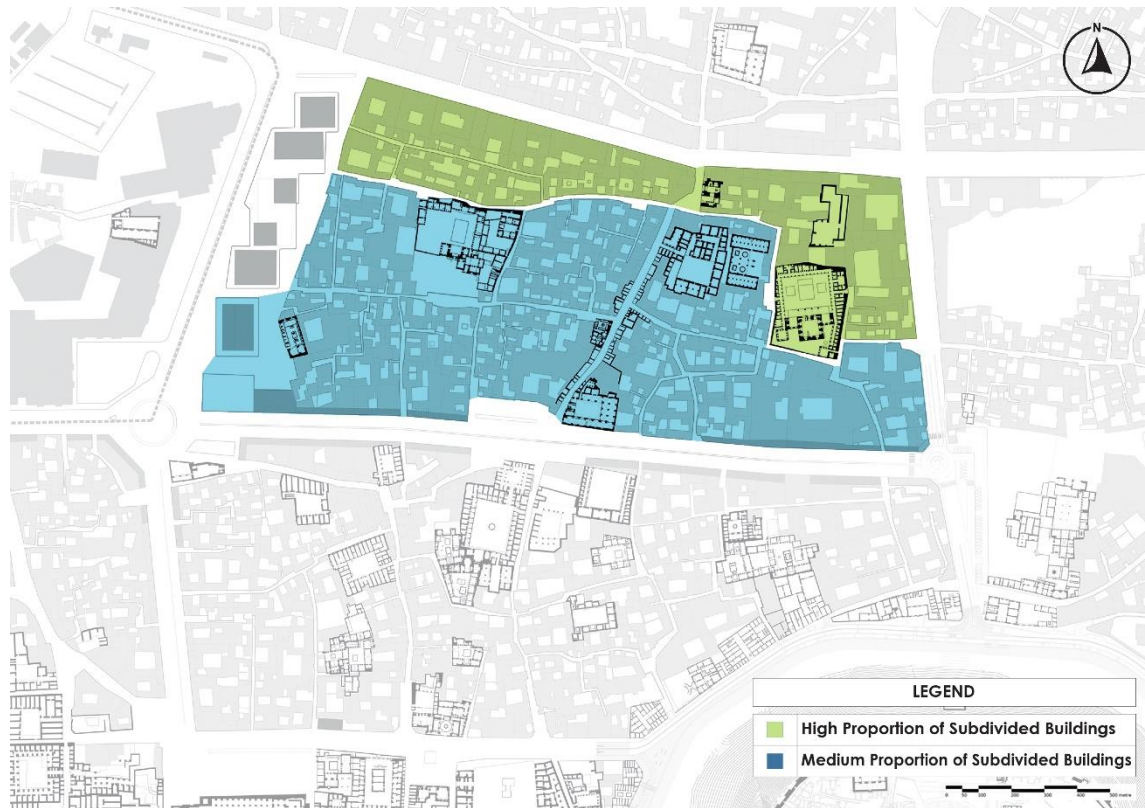


Figure 22- Ownership Status of Bab Al-Nasr based on GTZ (2001), (author, 2019)

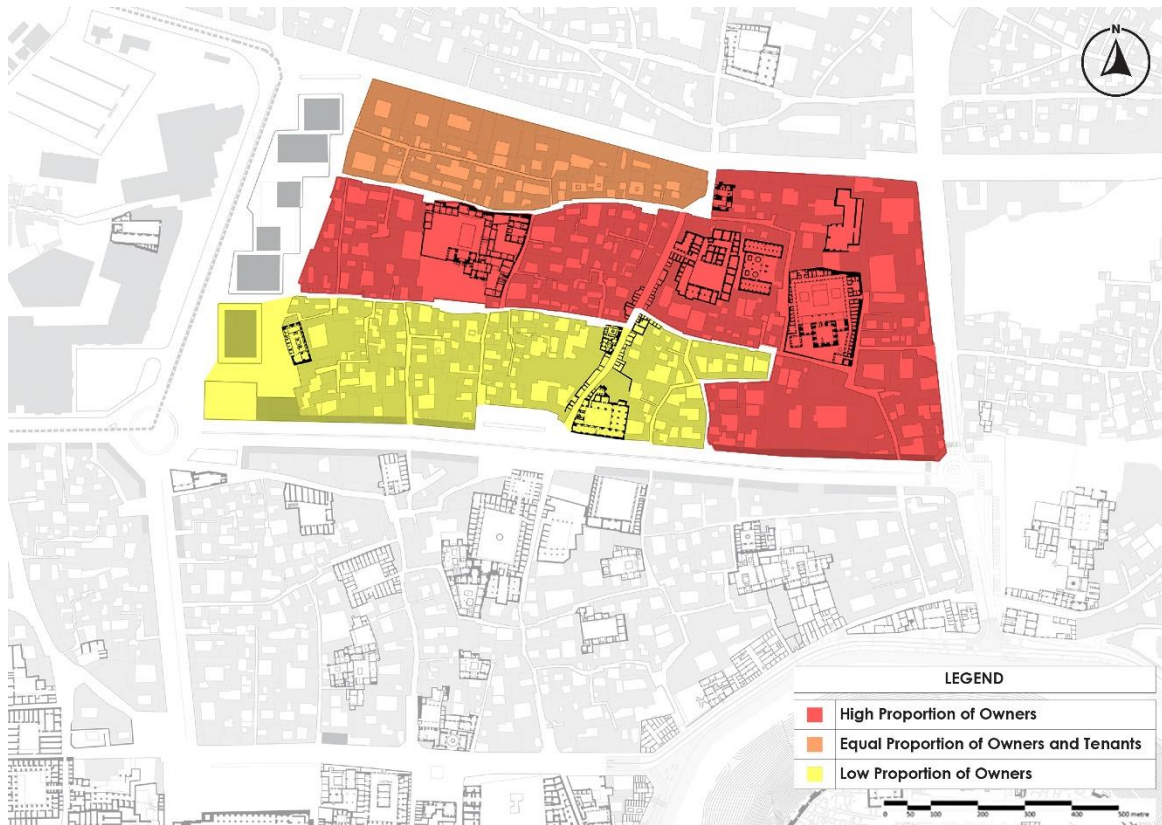


Figure 23- Map showing the subdivided lots in Bab Al-Nasr based on GTZ (2001), (author, 2019)

4. Trends

This section identifies the trends impacting the built environment of Bab Al-Nasr during the post-war period. These include emerging trends in rehabilitation projects in relation to service provision, infrastructure, and road networks.

a. Rubble and Debris Removal

In 2017, the UNDP, in partnership with the Directorate of the Old City of Aleppo (DoA) launched a rubble and debris removal initiative to help clean out the streets and revitalize urban activity. However, the initiative did not extend to the inner roads and residents' dwellings or damaged shops. Consequently, residents and business owners in the inner areas had to take it upon themselves to remove the debris from their

premises back into the main roads that the initiative had previously cleared up. This prompted a second clearing of UNDP's main roads before a later rehabilitation project of Souq el Khabieh in 2019³.

Based on field research, the Municipality of Aleppo has also carried out its rubble removal initiative following the end of the battle for the city. However, this activity remained exclusive to the Old City's main roads and did not extend to the Bab Al-Nasr neighborhood. In the aftermath of urban warfare and destruction, rubble removal is crucial in revitalizing the urban fabric. This undoubtedly helps to facilitate ease of circulation and if well planned, sorting the debris helps create a list of reusable reconstruction material. Planning rubble removal and sorting material on site makes a sustainable effort to ensure a conclusive understanding of the damage sustained in the area and a better understanding of the materials needed in future rebuilding efforts.

b. Restoration of The Electrical Infrastructure

Contrary to the water infrastructure⁴ whose damage was minimal, Bab Al-Nasr's electrical infrastructure was heavily damaged. The municipality's primary infrastructural reconstruction project after the conflict was the restoration of the electrical grid network. Despite this effort, the municipality's restoration approach was not inclusive of the whole neighborhood: only electrical infrastructure serving the major roads surrounding the neighborhood was restored. The housing stock and the inner streets of the neighborhood were excluded from the electrical restoration plan. On the other hand, a collective of fifteen neighbors organized themselves and rehabilitated their

³ Based on an interview with Mr. Alaa Al-Sayed in early 2019.

⁴ Although the water infrastructure is not heavily damaged, the water provision did not reach twenty-four hours.

dwellings' power grid from their expenses, but through the approval of the Electrical General Company (الشركة العامة لكهرباء محافظة حلب). Although it is the municipality's duty to provide electricity to the housing stock, they did not provide them with any financial support or materials.

5. Key Issues

The main identified key issues related to the neighborhood's urban setting are related to infrastructure and service provision based on the urban planning profile.

These include:

- Absence of a comprehensive municipal plan for the restoration of the infrastructural networks in the neighborhood: roads, electricity, water and sewage. Although the neighborhood after the conflict was slowly reoccupied by both business owners and residents, the electrical infrastructure was not fully rehabilitated. The Municipal restoration efforts were only directed towards the restoration of the electricity network on the area's primary streets.
- Scarce water provision: unlike electricity, the water infrastructure is less damaged. Nevertheless, water provision is not regular and does not reach residents 24 hours per day. Restoration of the water network was limited to the Souq main street in the neighborhood and was executed by the UNDP.
- Restricted accessibility due to safety and war damage: The debris of destroyed buildings was not completely removed from the neighborhood in the years following the conflict, as some areas in the neighborhood remain inaccessible.

- Absence and/or weak services: When the battle broke out in the Old City, all services and facilities, including health care and schooling, moved to the city's western districts or stopped operating entirely.

- Disrupted connectivity with adjacent areas and beyond - a city-scale issue: Many neighborhoods in the Old City and Aleppo were still not inhabited nor re-occupied by the business owners following the conflict, which disrupted the connectivity of the economic activity of the neighborhood with the rest of the city.

B. Socio-Economic Profile of the Neighborhood

This section is dedicated to describing the social composition and networks of Bab Al-Nasr. Each sub-section will start by describing the pre-war conditions and then proceed to compare them to post-war conditions. Before the conflict, the size and structure of households are first described and the latter level of education and nature of profession. Finally, it compares all the above-mentioned components to their current post-war state. It then proceeds to talk about the neighborhood's economic activity and its role within the Old City's Souq's and presents the recent changes and challenges.

1. Residents of Bab Al-Nasr

During the pre-crisis period, most of Bab Al Nasr residents were Muslim Sunni middle-to-low-income families (Al-Ghazi, 1998; CAERUS, 2016; GTZ, 2001). The estimated population density in Farafra during the pre-war period was 341 households (GTZ, 2001); however, no specific date was found on Bab Al Nasr's population count before the conflict. According to the Mokhtar of Bab Al-Nasr, whom I interviewed on December 15th, 2018, 200 families resided in Bab Al-Nasr in 2010. When the battle

broke out in the city, the eastern part of Aleppo, where the area of study is located, was captured by the rebels in July 2012 (Lund, 2017), an intangible demarcation line was created separating the eastern rebel enclave along with the rural western Aleppo from the western part of the city. In September 2016, the United Nations classified east Aleppo as “besieged”(REACH et al., 2019, p. 7). The western part of the city was under the control of Syrian Government Forces (Lund, 2017; Nallu, 2017). In the aftermath of the events of December 2012, the neighborhoods of eastern Aleppo were “virtually empty of people” (Lund, 2017), as its population sought refuge in the western part of the city or fled the country completely (Lund, 2017; OCHA, 2016). In December 2016, government troops regained control over the eastern parts of Aleppo, the neighborhoods of the Old City became once again accessible, and displaced families originally from the Old City started settling back into their pre-war area of residence (Holder, Levett, Scruton, & Torpey, 2016; Shaheen & Wintour, 2016; Westcott, 2019)

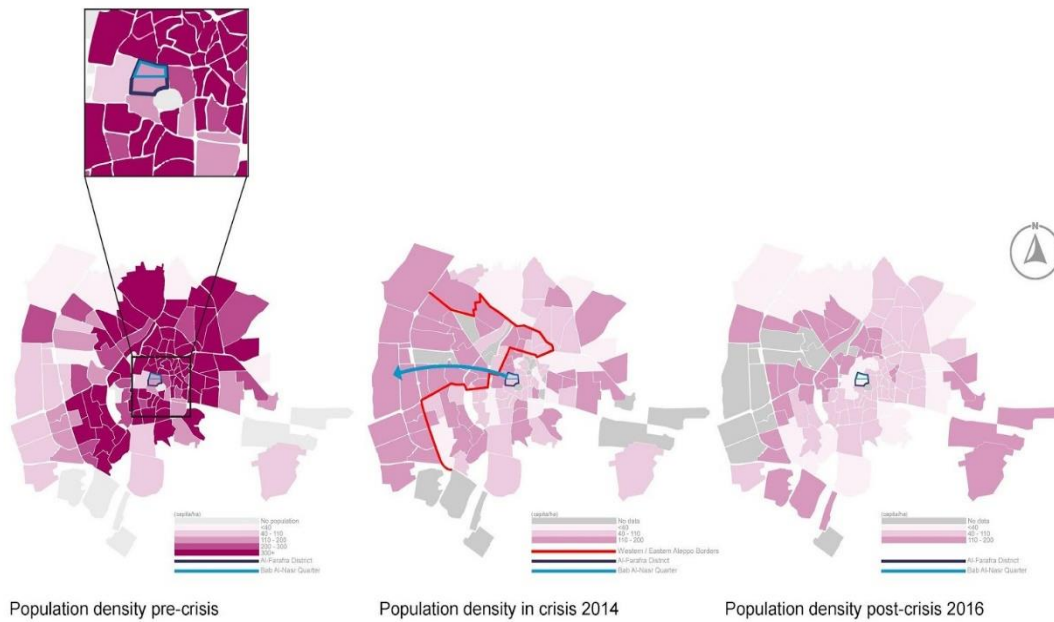


Figure 25- Population Density Pre, During and Post the end of Battle of Aleppo. (AUB, 2018)

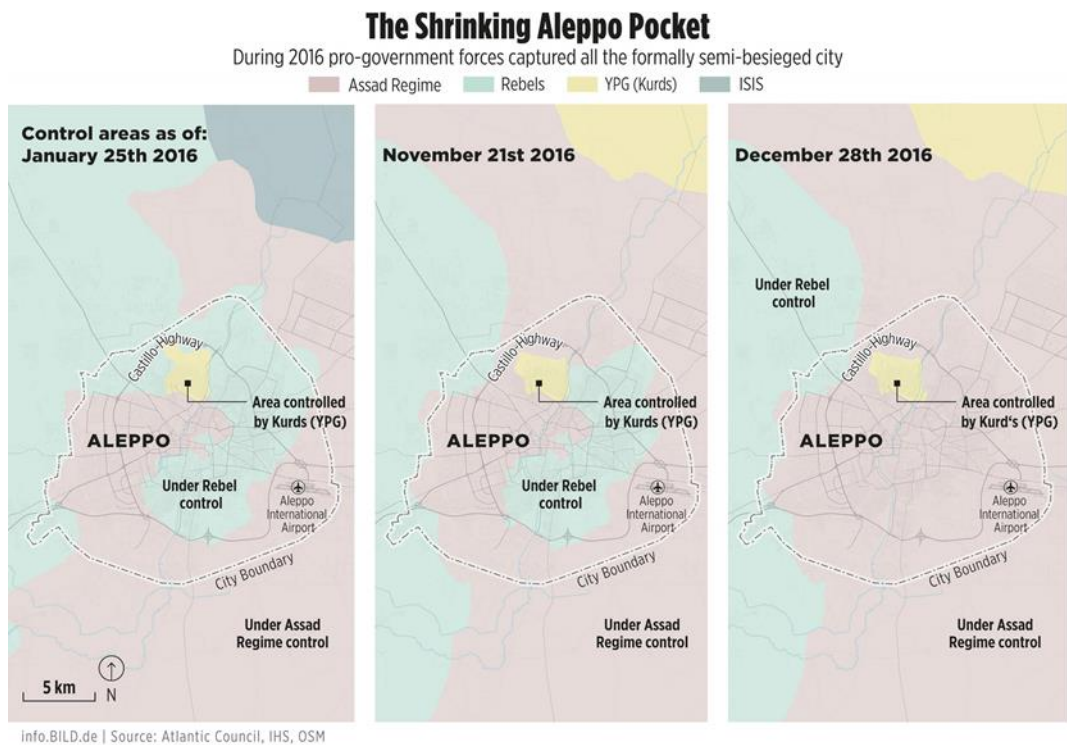


Figure 24- The evolution of the city's division during Aleppo' conflict, (AtlanticCouncil, n.d)

No published data was found concerning the number of returnees or the families who stayed in Bab Al-Nasr. Approximate numbers were estimated from two primary different unpublished sources regarding the households currently living in the neighborhood. The first source was Mr. Aws Al-Hayeb from the SARC (Syrian Arab Red Crescent), Mr. Al-Hayeb is the Shelter Team leader in SARC. An informal interview was conducted with him in June 2017. In early 2017, the SARC monitored the number of returnees and the families who did not leave during the conflict in neighborhoods of the previously enclosed eastern Aleppo. The table below (**Figure 26**) shows that in 2017, 24 families resided Bab Al-Nasr and, more specifically, 92 individuals.

الإجمالي		المنطقة		الإجمالي		المنطقة		الإجمالي		المنطقة	
عدد أفراد	عدد عائلات	عدد أفراد	عدد عائلات	عدد أفراد	عدد عائلات	عدد أفراد	عدد عائلات	عدد أفراد	عدد عائلات	عدد أفراد	عدد عائلات
16	3	41	6	103	22	242	50	242	50	الإحصائي	
48	10	783	170	196	37	127	29	127	29	الإقامة	
23	6	36	8	13	1	86	14	86	14	الإدارات	
4	1	224	48	138	26	397	70	397	70	الأرض الحمراء	
29	7	117	23	53	11	1132	229	1132	229	الأنرفية	
5	1	12	3	178	35	71	13	71	13	المعصية	
14	3	43	8	51	11	33	6	33	6	التفوق الهوائي	
19903	4070	5804	1195	297	63	10	2	10	2	الحدائق	
		88	16	0	0	45	13	45	13	الجوام	
		7	1	262	51	15	3	15	3	الحدائق	
		29	5	6	1	1185	236	1185	236	الحدائق	
		8	1	356	71	55	14	55	14	الحدائق	
		11	2	245	55	908	167	908	167	الحدائق	
		17	3	180	32	140	32	140	32	الحدائق	
		97	23	92	24	189	42	189	42	الحدائق	
		32	6	29	5	45	10	45	10	الحدائق	
		72	13	1209	260	349	84	349	84	الحدائق	
		42	13	12	3	29	7	29	7	الحدائق	
		8	1	378	74	100	25	100	25	الحدائق	
		94	20	62	11	378	78	378	78	الحدائق	
		54	14	163	27	62	12	62	12	الحدائق	
		11	1	9	2	48	8	48	8	الحدائق	
		42	5	23	4	211	38	211	38	الحدائق	
		4	1	3	1	36	9	36	9	الحدائق	
		6	1	25	6	356	66	356	66	الحدائق	
		16	3	0	0	233	47	233	47	الحدائق	
		1	1	18	5	32	5	32	5	الحدائق	
		5	1	5	1	981	186	981	186	الحدائق	
		49	12	275	61	75	15	75	15	الحدائق	
		17	1	40	8	8	3	8	3	الحدائق	
		54	10	340	78	184	36	184	36	الحدائق	
		36	8	195	47	9	1	9	1	الحدائق	
		107	29	14	4	5	1	5	1	الحدائق	

Figure 26- Estimation of number of returning families in 2016 to Eastern Aleppo by SARC.

The second source is Mr. Alaa Al-Sayed, a historian researcher and co-founder/member of “Friends of Bab Al Nasr”, a community-based organization working heavily on the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Bab Al-Nasr historical monuments (Doucet, 2018). Their projects and initiatives will be further discussed in the upcoming sections of the thesis. He was also acting on behalf of the neighborhood residents as a mediator for voicing the dwellers' concerns to the governmental bodies and/or international communities who were involved in the rehabilitation of the neighborhood. Based on an interview conducted with Mr. Al-Sayed on the 10th of February 2019, it was then estimated that 50 families resided in Bab Al Nasr, which amounted to roughly 185 individuals.⁵ Mr. Al-Sayed also explained that a high proportion of the displaced

⁵ The numbers slightly increased in later stages of the research.

families fled the country and could not return for political reasons, resulting in other internally displaced families settling in the neighborhood.

2. Size and Structure of Households

As mentioned in the ownership section, before the conflict, some of the residences in Bab Al-Nasr housed multiple families, some who were related and others who were not. A survey was done by Gangler (2001) on the households classified the types of the households and identified the following types:

- Nuclear family: where only one family resided in the dwelling
- Extended Family: at least one person living in the household was not part of the nuclear family
- Multiple families: multiple unrelated families resided in the household.

The survey showed that 62 percent of Bab Al-Nasr households were of extended families, 19 percent were nuclear families, and another 19 percent were of multiple families. The household's average size was 5.54 people per household and sometimes ranged from one to 24 persons. The graph below shows the percentage of the different sizes of the households of the neighborhood.

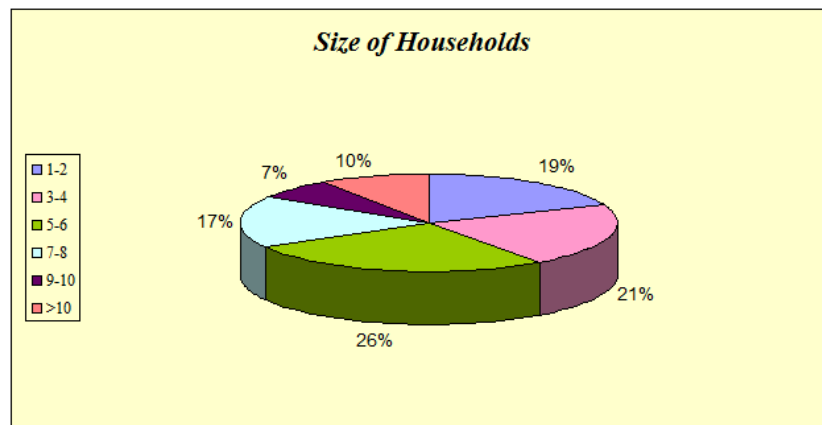


Figure 27- Family structure of Bab Al-Nasr before the conflict, (Gangler, 2001; p. 23)

Surveys were conducted to understand if the same household structures persisted or new ones had evolved. Initially, no targeted number of interviewees was set, since the housing stock is not densely inhabited. The sampling was a probabilistic quota sampling method. The questions were semi-structured and open-ended, conducted and transcribed into Arabic. The final number of interviewees was 20.

The questions were the following:

1. Were you a resident of Bab Al-Nasr before the conflict? If not, are you related to the original owner of the property?

2. Do you share the residence with your nuclear family, or do you have any extended family members residing with you?

The results showed that five out of the twenty families interviewed were internally displaced families that fled their destroyed neighborhoods. All five of them have declared that the residences were owned by their relatives outside the country at the time of the interview. Ten out of the remaining fifteen families shared their dwelling with at least one person outside their nuclear family. It was also noted that six out of the remaining fifteen households interviewed were female-headed families.

This brief inquiry confirms the continuity of the families' multiplicity within one dwelling. It also shows the intensity of the original residents' massive displacement and their replacement with an internally displaced population. Finally, it sheds light on a post-war phenomenon affecting households: the gender imbalance and the growth in the number of females headed that have lost their husbands or male members to the conflict.

3. Education and Occupation

The study by Gangler in 2001 shows that the level of education of the neighborhood's residents was low, with higher education averages for men than for women (Gangler, 2001). The surveys showed that almost one half of the male population and two-thirds of the female population were either illiterate or had minimal elementary education (Gangler, 2001, p. 26). The survey also indicated that most

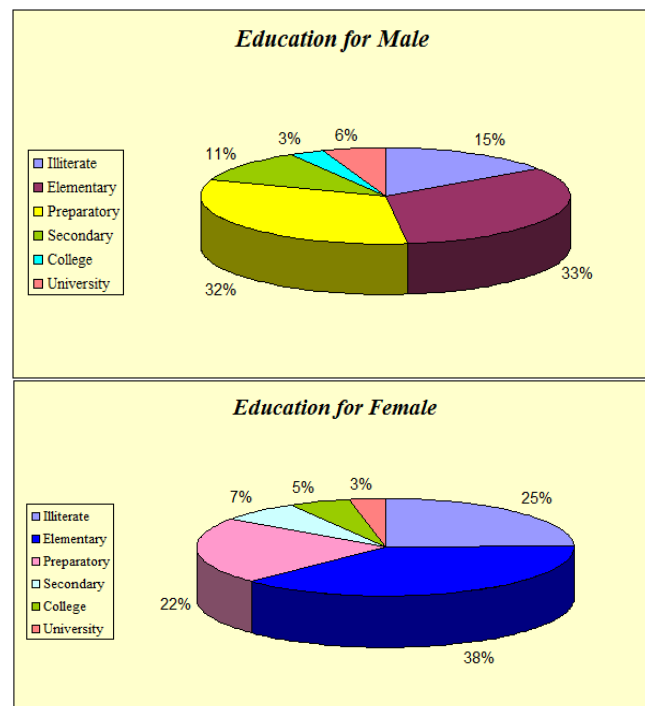


Figure 28- Percentage of educational levels for the female and male prior to war (Gangler, 2001; p. 26, 27)

children would at least reach the end of elementary school before dropping out. The numbers disclosed that only 5 percent of the boys at the elementary school age were not enrolled, and 16 percent of girls were reported to be not registered (ibid). University degree attainment was also low for both genders, as shown in **Figure 28**.

The conflict took a heavy toll on the educational sector in Aleppo, with many schools serving as military bases during the conflict. In the wake of the cessation of

fighting in Aleppo in 2016, many educational facilities were listed as non-functional and had sustained substantial damage.

Aleppo suffered from the highest number of damaged educational facilities amongst the Syrian cities, with 73% of its schools damaged and approximately 49% demolished (*Education Under Attack 2018 - Syria*, 2018). Consequently, school enrollment rates dropped to 6 percent (AIR, CFBT, & SavetheChildren, 2015). No accurate data was found on the residents' post-war enrolment and educational levels. However, based on conversations with the inhabitants, many children in the neighborhood had to suspend their education due to displacement or shelling in the neighborhood. At the time of the research, one school within the neighborhood's proximity was functional and prepared to receive the area's children.

The levels of unemployment were high in Bab Al-Nasr before the conflict. Gangler (2001) estimated that 14% of the male population was unemployed, while 54% of the female population were either unemployed or housewives. However, the percentage of working women was found to be higher in Bab Al-Nasr than in other parts of the city. Most of the working male population was either employed in the private or public sectors, while three-quarters of the working female population were public employees (Gangler, 2001) (**Figure 29**).

Additionally, it was noted that nearly all the households had two wage earners, each providing for two or three other family members. However, two-thirds of the entire Bab Al-Nasr labor force generated low income, reflecting the households' financial hardship (Gangler, 2001).

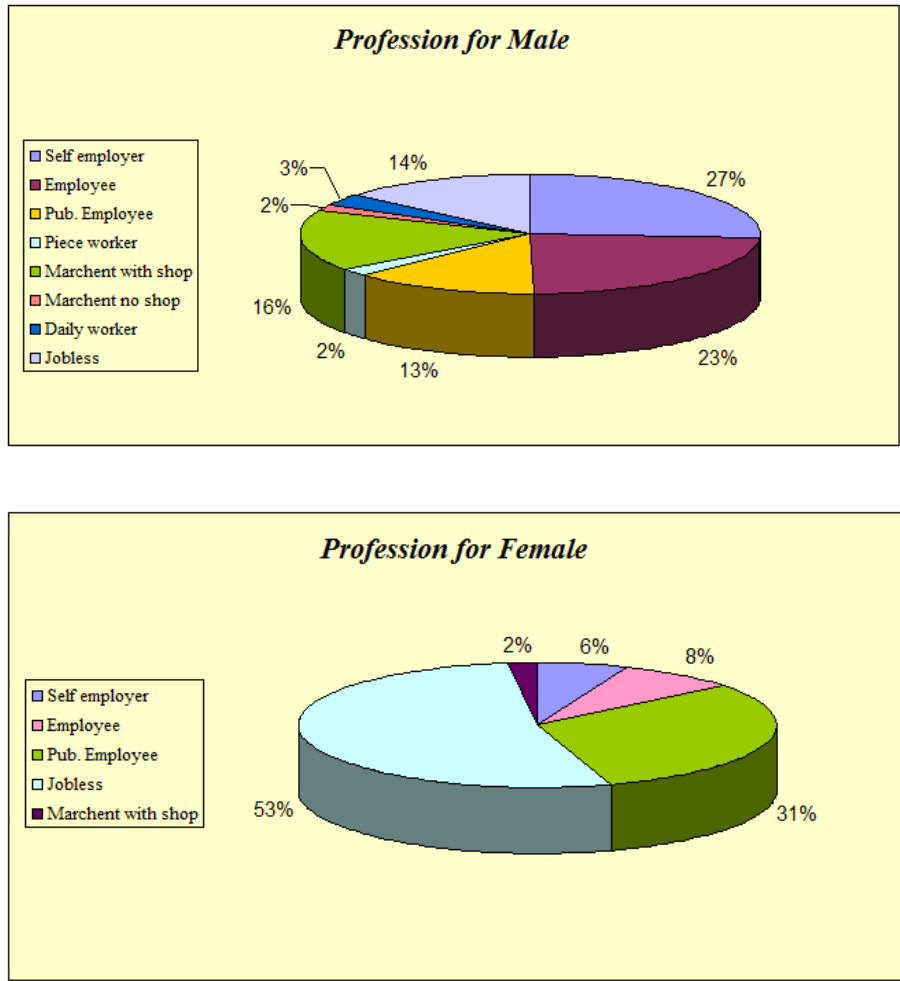


Figure 29- Profession percentages for the male and female population of Bab Al-Nasr before the war (Gangler, 2001, p.28)

Surveys done with the residents showed that unemployment continued following the end of the conflict, with at least 50% unemployment across both genders. However, the surveys did not specify whether those who were employed worked in the Old City or were business owners in Bab Al-Nasr. Unemployed residents were also questioned about their income source; results show that some of the households depended on financial assistance from humanitarian organizations or received financial aid from their extended families living abroad. Additionally, surveys also showed that five out of fifteen households had an underage income provider.

4. Trends

This section seeks to present trends related to the socio-economic fabric of the neighborhood.

a. Private Small-Scale Rehabilitation Residential Projects

Field visits have also shown that some residents have rehabilitated their dwellings. According to surveys conducted with them, they have not received grants or any financial aid compared to the Souq area's business owners.

Due to the lengthy process of acquiring rehabilitation permits, fieldwork showed that some residents resorted to rehabilitating their dwellings informally without following any guidelines that imposed some threats on the neighborhood's historical fabric. These restoration projects would be carried out with minimal regard to the continuity of material used in the neighborhood and the quality of the build.

5. Key Issues

According to field research, the social issues of Bab Al-Nasr are the following:

- Displacement of the original residents: the siege of Bab Al-Nasr and other neighborhoods in Aleppo's eastern districts caused an involuntary mass dispersion of its residents. Despite the end of the battle, the hard-living conditions in the neighborhood discouraged their return.
- Settlement of IDPs (Internally Displaced Populations): following the conflict, Bab Al-Nasr hosted an internally displaced population, replacing the original people of Bab Al-Nasr.
- Gender Imbalance: The deployment of men in the Syrian Army created high death rates in the Syrian male population and a significant gender imbalance. This

became apparent from research as many of the post-war households became female-headed.

- **Female Unemployment:** before the battle for Aleppo, female employment rates were low due to low levels of education or social constraints. The post-war numbers showed that the war made it even more challenging for women to find jobs and limited their access to the job market.

- **Financially challenged households:** As mentioned above, Bab Al-Nasr's social class was financially challenged prior to the war. The 10-year-long conflict created an economic crisis that further worsened the living conditions of its inhabitants.

- **Limited access to child education:** The shelling during the conflict destroyed a lot of schools in Bab Al-Nasr and in adjacent neighborhoods, which restricted children access to an adequate education.

C. Bab Al-Nasr's Business Activity and Social Facilities

This section seeks to talk about the neighborhood's business activity and elaborates on the social facilities that are in the neighborhood. It then proceeds to present the post-conflict changes and challenges that have occurred.

1. Type of Businesses in Bab Al-Nasr

Prior to the war, the business activity of Bab Al-Nasr belonged to the secondary and tertiary sectors; many of the businesses were of the SME (Small and Medium Enterprises) category. Most of the economic activity was oriented towards serving the Old Souq in the Old City and addressing the residents of the Old City and Aleppo's rural areas. The area's business activity put pressure on many urban functions

of the neighborhood, mainly noticed in the proliferation of the warehouses and the workshops into the residential stock (Gangler, 2001).

Most businesses in the neighborhood consisted of retail and craft shops. Bab Al-Nasr was known for its stationery light industry, which was the main manufacturing and distribution point to the city. It also hosted a light manufacturing activity famously known for its Laurel soap production known as the “Aleppo Soap.” The neighborhood also contained many shoemaking, furniture, and mechanical workshops. (Gangler, 2001)

The shops were repartitioned in the neighborhood as follows: Abdel Mounim Ryad Street's western part delimited primarily sold household equipment and industrial tools. Al-Sijen Street encompassed a total of 180 wholesale shops for dry goods. Al-Khandak and Nouredin El-Zinki Street, the northern and southern perimeters of the neighborhood, contained workshops, libraries, stationery shops, and wholesale shops for industrial equipment. Finally, Souq Al-Khabia, the main axis cutting through the neighborhood's heart, hosted about 119 shops that serve the neighborhood and its neighboring areas (Gangler, 2001). The soap factories were interwoven with the residential stock of the neighborhood. **Figure 30** visualizes the commercial functions of the neighborhood before the war.

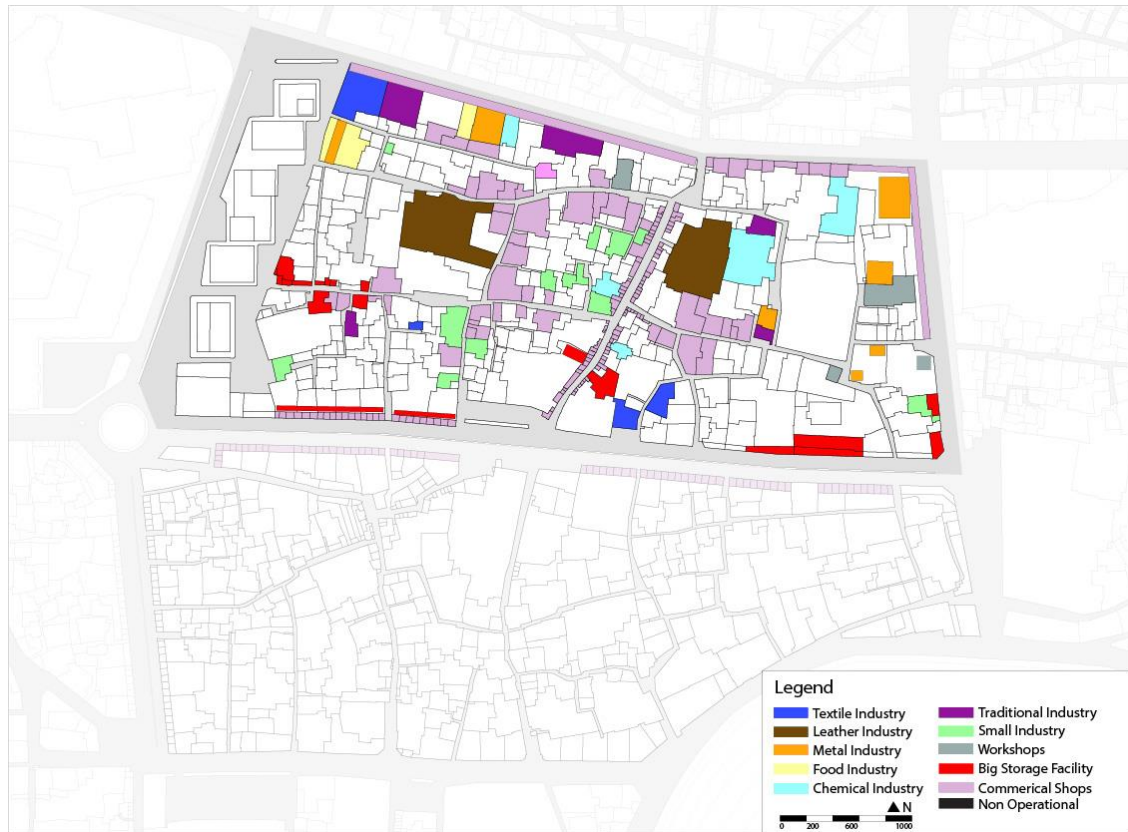


Figure 30- Type of businesses in Bab Al-Nasr prior to war based on GTZ (2001) and on author's mapping (author, 2020)

Based on field visits, it was apparent that the number of shops significantly diminished following the conflict. In Souq Al-Khabia only 20 shops had been rehabilitated and reopened at the beginning of the research. Al-Sijen Street was almost completely inactive with a maximum of 7 operational shops. Al Khandak Street and Nouredin El-Zinki Street were relatively more operational (Error! Reference source not found.). Few of the Souq's traditional businesses were operational since many workshops, small and medium-scale industries, that have long been part of the neighborhood's intangible heritage, were shut down (**Figure 31**). Conversations were conducted with the business owners to understand the conflict's impact on the neighborhood's business activity. They explained that the conflict has caused a decrease

in the qualified labor force, which challenges traditional crafts production. Furthermore, there was a significant lack of demand for these goods as the economic market was still recovering from years of war and that consumer demand for products would take time to recover.



Figure 31- Photo of shops that are out of business in the after math of the conflict (author, 2020)

2. Social Facilities

This section seeks to describe the social facilities that serviced Bab Al-Nasr. However, it does not only investigate the facilities that are located within the limits of the neighborhood, but rather the ones that were also in its vicinity that might have

accommodated the residents of Bab Al-Nasr. The upcoming sections seek to elaborate on the prior to conflict and post-conflict state of the facilities per sector.

Prior to the war, the neighborhood was surrounded by many facilities directed to the city's general service rather than directly benefiting the residents. The majority of the facilities that existed in the neighborhood and its surroundings were for the city's administrative service. The neighborhood and its surroundings lacked recreational facilities and social activities organized for the youth, women, and the elderly, especially during the nighttime where few facilities operated (Gangler, 2001). Based on field visits, many of these facilities were either destroyed or stopped operating in the aftermath of the conflict.

a. Educational Services

Generally, there were enough educational facilities in the neighborhood and its surroundings; five elementary and two preparatory areas existed in the area. The area also hosted two religious schools but lacked kindergartens. Most schools were either located in newly constructed buildings or in historical buildings (Gangler, 2001). In the aftermath of the conflict, only one primary, one religious and one kindergarten remained operational. It was later discovered that the kindergarten was a private institution and thus did not accommodate the lower-income residents.

b. Religious Services

Before the war, the neighborhood contained many religious facilities amassed throughout history (Gangler, 2001). They are composed of large mosques such as the Al-Osmaniyyeh Mosque and many other smaller ones (masjids). As previously mentioned, there were also two Islamic madrasahs (Religious Schools). On the north of

the neighborhood's limits, where the physical gate is located, a Muslim saint's shrine exists. A synagogue is located in the western parts of the neighborhood and a shrine dedicated to a Jewish saint (Gangler, 2001). Although the conflict damaged many of these religious facilities, they were among the first rehabilitated buildings.

c. Health Services

Before the war, there was a lack of health services. Two small health facilities existed on the opposite edge of the neighborhood, a night clinic on the eastern boundary, and a small health center on the western limits. Yet, they were not enough to service the neighborhood and its surroundings. The majority of the Old City's residents had to commute to the city's western districts for proper health facilities (Gangler, 2001). These two health facilities were shut down due to the conflict and did not reopen despite the area's repopulation.

d. Tourist and Recreational Services

The area was very poorly serviced in terms of facilities that would serve the tourism sector prior to the war. One hotel existed in the western boundaries of the neighborhood. The main recreational services that could have served the tourism sector were cafes and restaurants that mainly served the male population and the daytime working population. Furthermore, according to (Gangler, 2001) the other entertainment facilities which existed were two celebration halls for social events and weddings. However, there were no recreational facilities provided for the area's residents, mainly due to the lack of open spaces in the area's dense traditional urban fabric. The neighborhood also contained two bathhouses (Public Hammams). Only one was functional before the war, while the other one was converted into a makeshift workshop.

After the conflict, the five-star hotel is still operational, yet based on multiple field visits, the cafes, restaurants, and bathhouses have yet to reopen.

e. Administrative Services

The majority of the city's administrative facilities were located in the Old City. On the western edge of the neighborhood, the newly implanted buildings hosted some administrative buildings. There was also a police station in the north of the

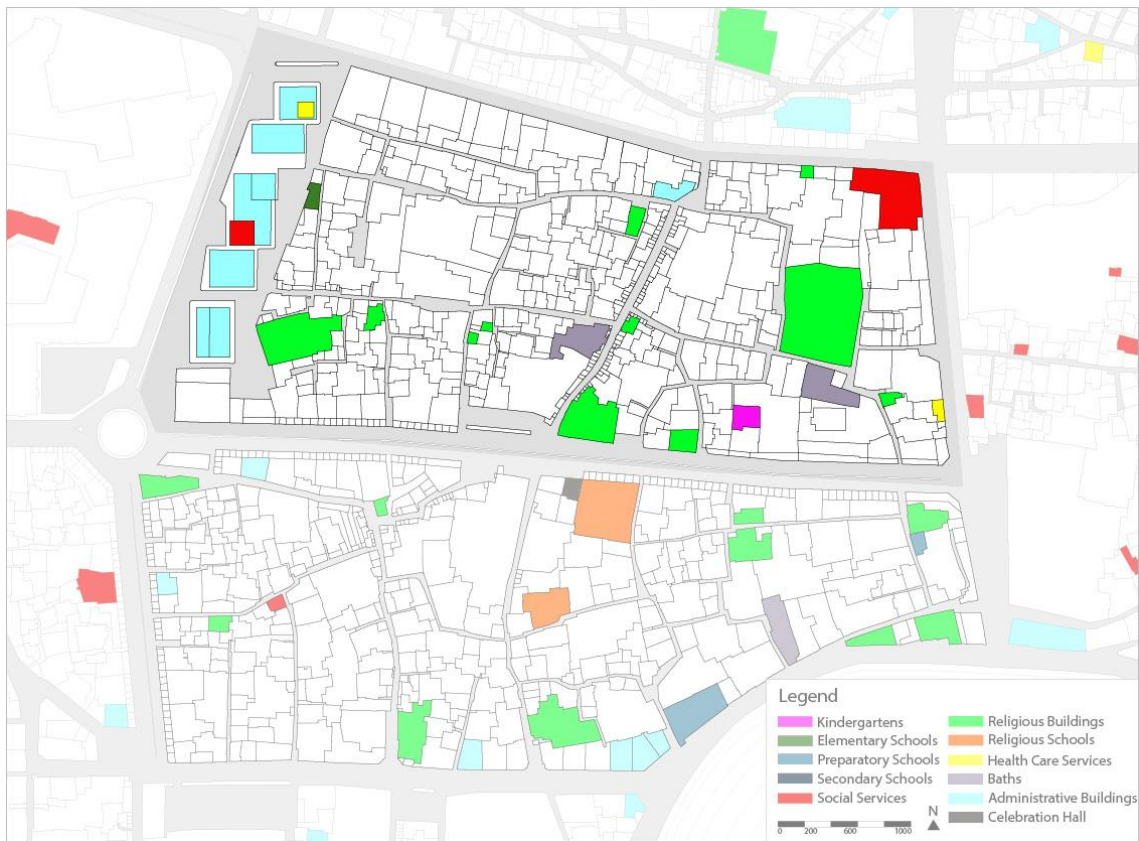


Figure 32- Social Facilities in Bab Al-Nasr and areas in proximity prior to war based on GTZ (2001), (author, 2020)

neighborhood in the vicinity of the physical gate of Bab Al-Nasr. The war has caused the relocation of these services to other safer city districts (Gangler, 2001).

3. Trends

This section identifies the trends impacting the rehabilitation of the commercial activities and the social facilities of Bab Al-Nasr during the post-war period.

a. The Rehabilitation of Souq Al-Khabieh by the UNDP in partnership with the Municipality of Aleppo

The UNDP in partnership with the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, Roman Catholic Archbishopric, and the Syrian Orthodox Archdiocese and through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the Government of Japan launched the rehabilitation of Al-Khabiyeh Souq located at the heart of Bab Al-Nasr. It started with rehabilitating the Souq's water infrastructure but did not extend to rehabilitating the shops. It also assisted the first returning business owners in recovering their businesses by allocating them grants to replenish their merchandise. The project then proceeded to rehabilitate the facades of the shops. (UNDP, 2019).



Figure 33- Photos of the Rehabilitation of Souq Al-Khabiyyeh Before and during the UNDP’s project (Top: the souq before the launch of the project, bottom right: the rehabilitation of the Souq’s infrastructure, bottom left: the rehabilitation of the shops’ facades). (Group of Students from the Faculty of Architecture in Aleppo (photographer), 2018; Souraya Zureick, 2019)

b. Private Small-Scale Commercial Rehabilitation Projects

When Bab Al-Nasr once again became accessible following the end of the battle in December 2016, business owners and residents returned and executed small-scale rehabilitation and reconstruction projects in their shops. This mainly happened in response to two laws passed in Syria. The first declaring if a commercial property is

destroyed, its once-protected lease would be voided. The second law was Syria's Law no.10 in November of 2018, which required all owners to declare their properties in person (often requiring payment of back-taxes) within one year or risk losing the property (Abu Ahmad, 2018). Those who fail to do so will lose ownership of the property and not be compensated for the loss. The property's title deed would be regained by the city, town, or province in which the property is located (Abu Ahmad, 2018, para. 3). This has prompted a frenzy in some private owners or leaseholders who have lost official title deeds, hastily conduct refurbishment on their dwellings and businesses to de-facto create a proof of their ownership. These business owners cannot proceed with any rehabilitation activity without acquiring municipal approval, validation from the Directorate of Antiquities and Museums ⁶and from the Directorate of the Old City of Aleppo ⁷, to assure the historical buildings' rehabilitation process is conform to heritage preservation guidelines.

4. Key Issues

According to field research, the issues facing Bab Al-Nasr's business activity and social facilities are the following:

- Limited work opportunities and low demand
- Shops relocated outside the neighborhood into safer areas: The displacement of businesses highly affected the neighborhood's commercial activity. Despite the cessation of the battle for Aleppo and the rehabilitation of parts of the Souq, some businesses still did not return to Bab Al-Nasr.

⁶ The Directorate of the Antiquities and Museums of Aleppo is responsible for the execution of the laws of heritage preservation and protection in the Old City.

⁷ The Directorate of the Old City is a subdivision of Aleppo's Municipality established in 1999 to guide rehabilitation projects in the Old City (UNESCO, n.d-a).

- Shift in the nature of the economic activity of the Souq: Most of the shops that re-opened in Bab Al-Nasr have changed the nature of their business, with fewer of them selling tourist-oriented local artifacts and more focus on local needs.

- Lack of a qualified labor force
- Financially challenged businesses
- Lack of recreational and social facilities for the residents
- Lack of services for the accommodation of the tourists

D. Cultural Heritage Profile

This section introduces a holistic understanding of Bab Al-Nasr's heritage, where both its tangible and intangible heritage are defined. Its built heritage is visible in the architectural artifacts and its urban layout. Its intangible heritage is marked by its local trade and local crafts production that has been part of the neighborhood's economic activity since its early establishment.

This section will first start by elaborating on the pre-war condition of the cultural heritage and then will compare it to the implications of the war. It will then discuss the trends impacting the rehabilitation of the neighborhood's cultural heritage and end with listing the identified key issues.

1. The Built Heritage

The built heritage in the case of Bab Al-Nasr can be subdivided into two categories: architectural and urban. In addition to Bab Al-Nasr's monuments and landmarks, some of which date back 5000 years, its cobblestone roads, street layout, and morphology can also be considered part of the neighborhood's-built heritage in

addition to edifices. This is important to define and include both building and street rehabilitation under the umbrella of heritage rehabilitation.

a. The Urban Morphology of the Neighborhood

Bab Al-Nasr dates back to the earliest establishments of the Old City of Aleppo during the Roman Hellenistic period (**Figure 34**). It was among the seven gates which served as an entry point to the walled Roman-Hellenistic city (Miroğlu, 2005; Tabbaa, 2010). The city was then consecutively ruled by the Umayyads, Ayyubids, Mamelukes, and Ottomans, leaving behind their architecture traces (Qudsi, 2016, p. 10; Lawrence J. Vale & Thomas J. Campanella, 2005).

Bab Al-Nasr's urban fabric represents amassed heritage layers evident in many significant historical components that have evolved over centuries. The establishment of the Souq area is based on a Greco-Roman grid that is sustained to the present day (Burns, 2017) and its medieval spatial character and morphological structure is apparent in its inner narrow streets, cul-de-sacs, and its low rise dense residential buildings (Massoud, 2019; Miroğlu, 2005). Furthermore, the neighborhood's housing stock is a valuable aspect of the neighborhood's urban morphology. The area surrounding the Bab Al-Nasr gate earliest inhabitation was during the Byzantine Period due to an influx of Jews to the city that settled in the northern-eastern quadrant of the walled city (Gaube & Wirth, 1984; Miroğlu, 2005; Neglia, 2010). Therefore, Bab Al-Nasr was now called Bab Al-Yahud (Gate of the Jews) because of its closeness to the Jewish neighborhoods (Burns, 2017; Gaube & Wirth, 1984; Mansel, 2016; Tabbaa, 2010). It was not until the seventh century when Arabs and Muslim conquered the city,

that families started settling in the area (Gaube & Wirth, 1984; Miroğlu, 2005; Neglia, 2010; Tabbaa, 2010).

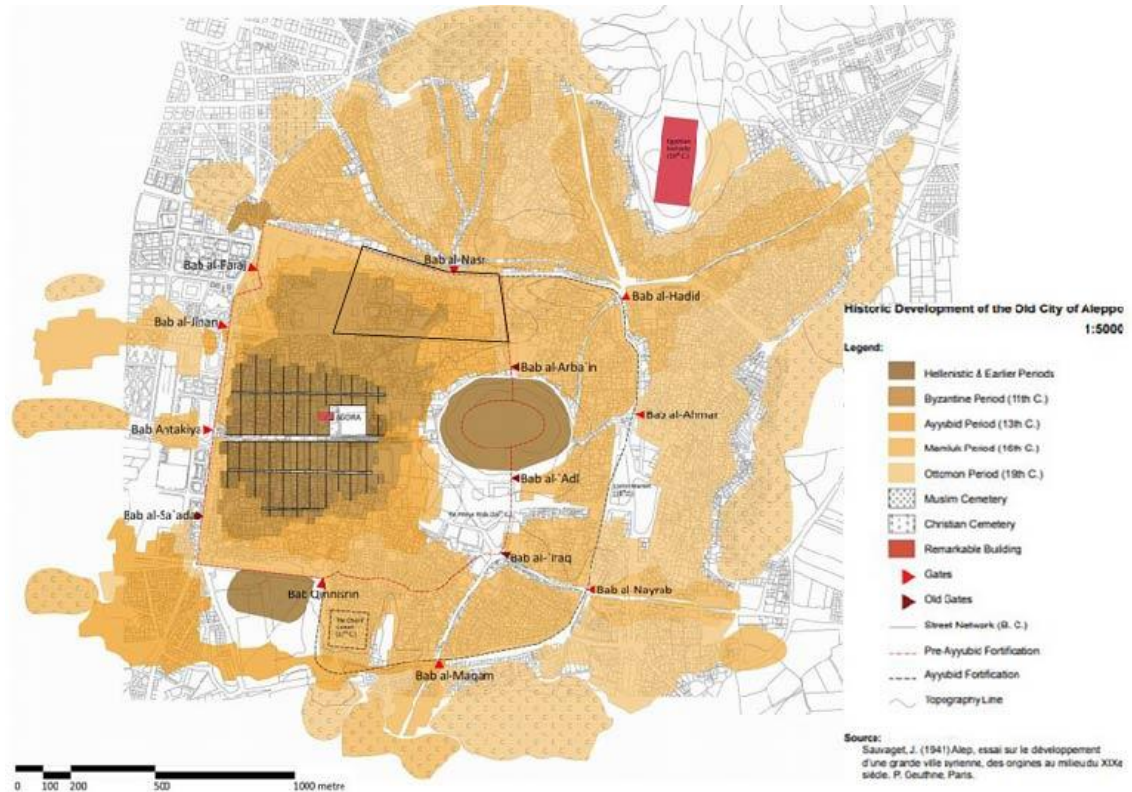


Figure 34- Map of Old Aleppo's and Bab Al-Nasr's (encircled in black) historic development (BTU, 2020).

Like the rest of the old city's residential parcels, Bab Al-Nasr residential buildings consist of traditional courtyard houses. These are typically “composed of courtyards and one to two-story rooms around the courtyard facing inwards, and there is little to no opening onto the outside streets to preserve privacy” (Qudsi, 2016, p. 9). This typology of architecture has existed in the neighborhoods of Aleppo since medieval times and has persisted in the historic neighborhoods of Aleppo to this date (Miroğlu, 2005). However, in 1947, riots broke out in Aleppo following the United Nations vote to partition Palestine, and mobs targeted the Jewish community. As a result, the Arab Jews gradually started fleeing Aleppo (Zenner, 2000).

According to Gangler's study in 2001, the neighborhood was facing deterioration due to high congestion, aging housing stock, and outdated infrastructure coupled with the financial inability of its residents to conduct maintenance (Gangler, 2001).

As mentioned earlier the war heavily damaged and endangered the historic urban fabric of the neighborhood. Despite the rehabilitation efforts, none approached the neighborhood as a historical entity; the housing stock received no attention and was not targeted within any of the neighborhood's rehabilitation plans.



Figure 35- Photo of a damaged and un-rehabilitated historical house in Bab Al-Nasr (author, 2020)

Bab Al-Nasr was a vital tourist site for its history and location in the Old City of Aleppo. Prior to the war, Aleppo was one of Syria's main tourist attractions, mainly for its rich history and heritage (Antipolis, 2002). According to Rabenau (2010), 6.0 million international tourists visited the city, representing 8.1 percent of its annual growth with 4.4 million visitors in 2003 (p. 38). Unfortunately, due to the war, the

tourism sector diminished significantly. The Minister of Tourism stated that Aleppo's tourism had suffered the most among all Syria's cities (Al-Arabiya, 2013). The destruction and weak security due to instability poses major limitations on the city's tourism sector (Rao, 2018)

b. The Monuments

Historians concur that Bab Al-Nasr contains approximately 68 historical monuments composed of single monuments and constellations of buildings of historical architectural characteristics dating back to different eras (Gangler, 2001) (**Figure 36** and **Figure 37**).



Figure 36- Map representing Bab Al-Nasr's different monuments (author, 2020)



Figure 37- Map of Bab Al-Nasr's historical monuments categorized based on the date of their establishment (BTU, 2020)

However, only 56 monuments are classified and preserved by the Ministry of Culture. Since the area was subject to modern-day planning, 16 were demolished and replaced by high-rise buildings or were left vacant. Before war, these monuments were historically important and served commercial and social functions in the neighborhood (Gangler, 2001). Many of the monuments are privately owned or are historical mosques owned by the Directorate of Islamic Endowments (Al-Awqaf) (**Figure 39**)

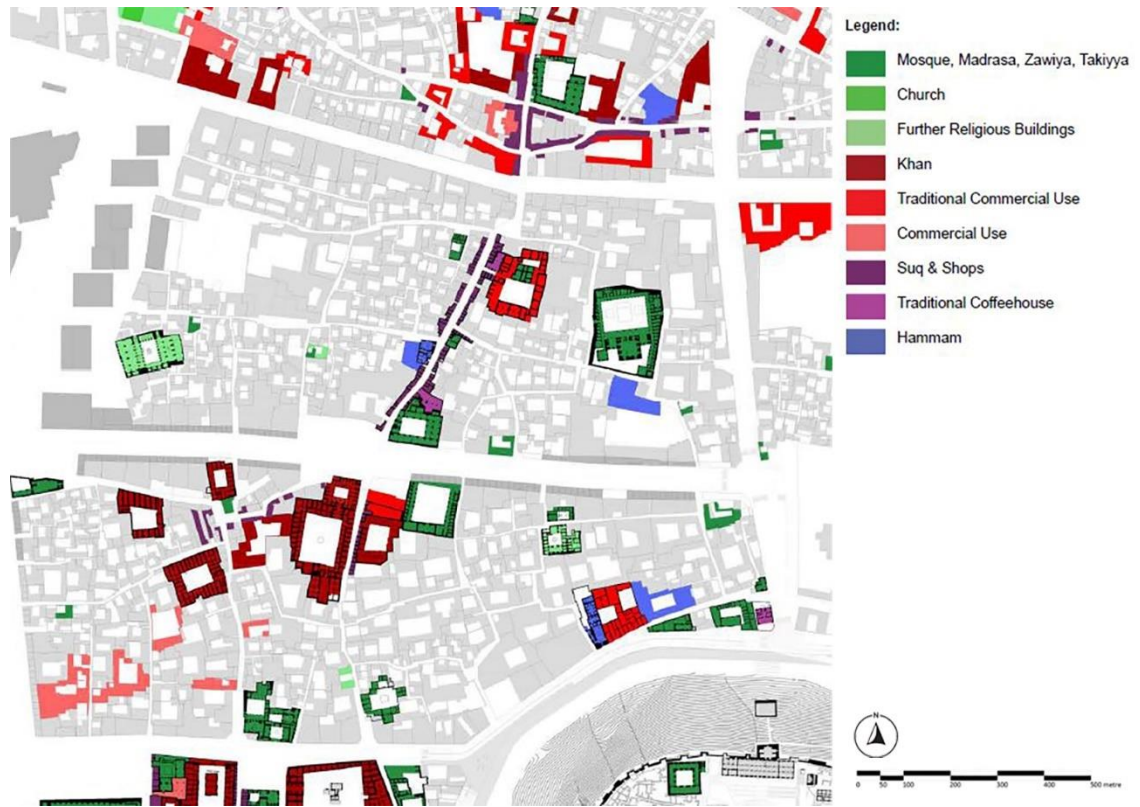


Figure 38- Functions of the neighborhood's historical monuments (BTU, 2020)

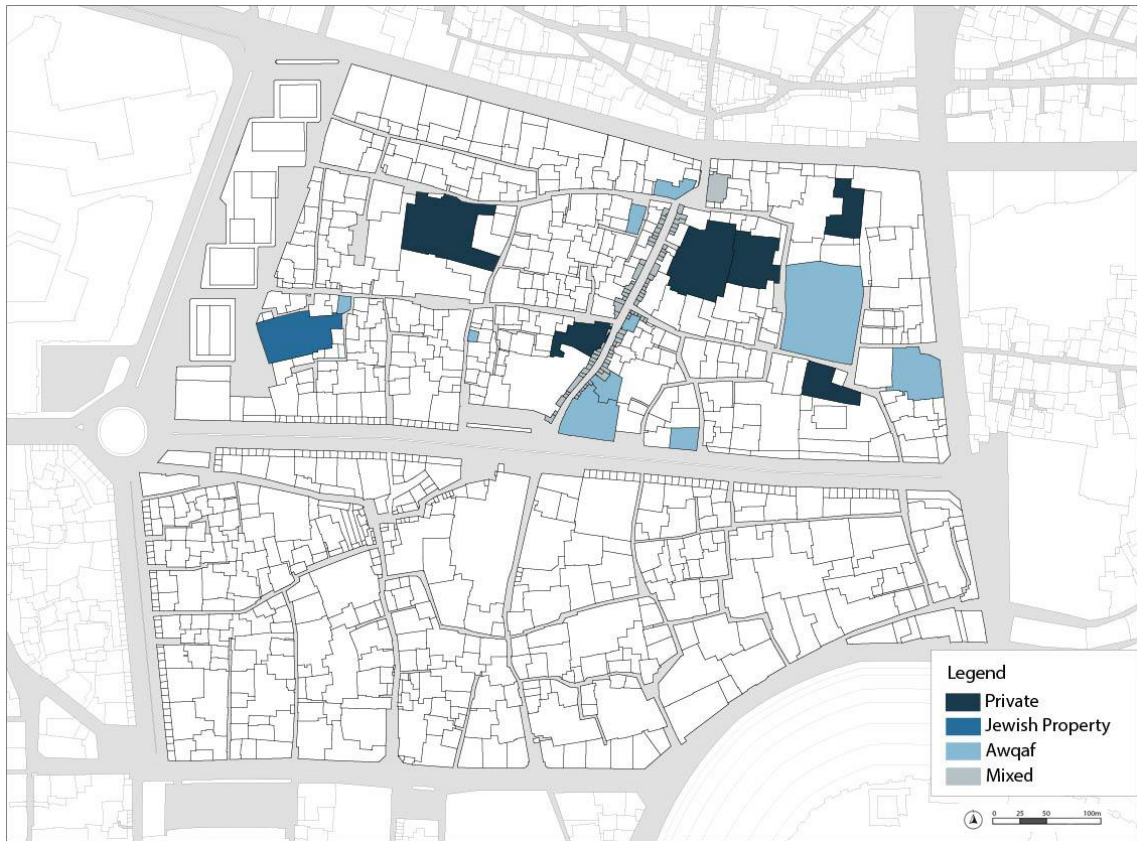


Figure 39- Ownership map of Bab Al-Nasr's Historical Monuments based on Gangler (2001), (author, 2020)

Similarly to the neighborhood's housing stock, the monuments were rapidly decaying and burdening the neighborhood's stability in 2001. According to Gangler (2001), 50 percent of the monuments were described as well maintained, 25 percent were poorly maintained, and the remaining 25 percent were in average preserving conditions. It was noted that the privately-owned monuments were among the poorly preserved structures while the buildings owned by the Awqaf were in better condition (ibid)

The main reason these monuments were neglected was the high cost of their maintenance. In the year 2000, the estimated running cost for priority restoration works was 12 million Syrian Pounds, which was in the 2000s equivalent to 240,000 dollars. Although a law mandated the Directorate of Antiquities and Museums to participate in

50 percent of the monuments' rehabilitation cost, regardless of its ownership status, the high price of restoration made it almost impossible to apply. The Directorate was only able to provide a feeble budget (Gangler, 2001).

The war worsened the state of Bab Al-Nasr's built heritage. Many historical monuments became damaged, abandoned, and inaccessible in the neighborhood, such as Al-Kadi Hamam (parcel 5 in **Figure 36**)(see **Figure 40**).



Figure 40- Photo of Hamam Al-Kadi showing its deteriorated state after the conflict (number 5 in figure 27) (author, 2020)

The local authorities that oversee the monuments and mosques, such as the Directorate of the Old City, the Directorate of Antiquities and Museums, and the Awqaf did not have any ongoing plan or project to rehabilitate the historical monuments in Bab Al-Nasr. They also no longer provided subsidies for the rehabilitation of the historical monuments. There was also no conform damage assessment that assesses their post-war physical state. Nevertheless, some community-based groups-initiated rehabilitation

projects, which will be further discussed in the upcoming sections. However, fieldwork shows that the mosques in the area are amongst the most rehabilitated monuments.

2. The Intangible Heritage

The main Souq of Bab Al-Nasr, Souq Al-Khabia is of historical importance; historians perceived it to have hosted the caravan trail between northern Aleppo and the Anatolian region (Al-Sayed, 2020). Sauvaget (1945) sees the architectural layout as a Hellenistic Style dating back to Seleucus I's reign. The Souq's commercial activity served the caravans since the Silk Road establishment and was sustained and expanded until our modern days (Al-Sayed, 2020).

Before the war, the economic activities in Bab Al-Nasr did not only generate vitality and give life to the area but were identified as the neighborhood's intangible heritage. The neighborhood hosted many traditional small industries and workshops and was famous for producing laurel oil soap by the Sabouni, Fansa, and Jbaily soap factories (**Figure 14**). The neighborhood was also known for its stationery and printing shops that densely populated the area and were main selling points to the rest of the city. The neighborhood also hosted many leather-making and shoe-making workshops (Gangler, 2001; Gaube & Wirth, 1984).

The social practices and religious festivities are also integral to the neighborhood's identity. Religious festivities such as animal sacrifices during Eid al Adha and gatherings, hanging of decorations, and distributing sweets for Eid Mawlid, were common occurrences in the neighborhood before the conflict. These practices continued after the conflict despite the destruction (**Figure 41**) and indicated a continuity of festivities that should be accounted for in the area's spatial rehabilitation.



Figure 41 Decorated alleys in Bab Al-Nasr in celebration of the birth of the Prophet (author, 2020)

3. Trends

After the end of the battle for Aleppo in 2016 and the cessation of fighting in eastern Aleppo, Bab Al-Nasr witnessed an increased interest in recovering its heritage. Community-based groups initiated rehabilitation projects to help save the neighborhood's heritage. These efforts mainly focused on the neighborhood's historical monuments.

a. The “Friends of Bab Al-Nasr” initiative

This community-based group was founded in the aftermath of the battle for Aleppo in Bab Al-Nasr in 2017 to initiate rehabilitation projects in the area. It was founded by Mr. Alaa Al-Sayed, an engineer who requested to remain anonymous in partnership with his colleague. Based on an interview with Mr. Al-Sayed, the motive to start this initiative was their *“love for the Old City of Aleppo and Bab Al-Nasr”* and because of the *“urgency to rebuild, protect and sustain the heritage and culture of the Aleppians (...) and to maintain the historical and cultural importance of the city within the world”*.

The physical gate of Bab Al-Nasr constitutes the main gate and two towers on its edges, which date back to the Ayyubid Dynasty. One of the towers houses the Al-Khidr shrine (Tabbaa, 2010). The organization aimed to rehabilitate the tower, which housed the shrine. The organization was not officially registered nor formalized by the government. At the beginning of the rehabilitation work, Mr. Alaa and his partner did not apply for a permit and worked informally. Yet, in later stages, due to security reasons, they applied for a temporary rehabilitation permit.

The project was funded by private donors such as wealthy families and businessmen. When asked about reasons that encouraged these donors, Mr. Al-Sayed’s answer was the following:

“This project received a good amount of funding because of the willingness of the civil community to rebuild the city and to rebuild their community, some people did it for their love of history, others because of the shrine’s religious importance to them

*(...) this proves that Aleppo is resilient and there is always hope for the city (...)
Aleppians love their city and love their history”.*

The project did not undergo any supervision from the local authorities. The co-founders of the initiative were responsible for hiring the labor force and executing and monitoring the work. The rehabilitation of the shrine was the only project by Friends of Bab Al-Nasr. Subsequently, to the completion of the shrine rehabilitation, the United Nations Development Program took over the rehabilitation of the remainder of the Bab Al-Nasr’s physical gate.



Figure 42- Photos of the shrine rehabilitation (alamy.com)

b. The Yagan Family Initiative

The Yagan Family is originally from Bab Al-Nasr, the neighborhood was their place of residence since the Ottoman Empire until they migrated outside of it. The patriarch of the family, Othman Pasha Al-Yagan was the Wali (an equivalent of a governor) of Aleppo during the Ottoman Empire. He ordered the construction of the Osmaniyyeh Mosque and dedicated it as a religious endowment. The mosque is also composed of a religious school and cemetery for the Yagan Family. During the conflict, the mosque sustained a lot of damage, which endangered its architectural and historical

character. As a result, current member of the Yagan Family decided to rebuild the mosque privately.

The Yagan family is a Sunni conservative family with middle-to-high-income; some of its members remained in the city while others fled the country during the war. The information regarding the rehabilitation project was acquired through an interview with Mrs. Samar Yagan, an electrical engineer and appointed supervisor of the project by the rest of the family. A total of 17 Yagan family members participated in the funding of the project. They included an array of engineers, architects, doctors, and businessmen, of which half lived abroad. The collective sum was approximately fifteen thousand Dollars.

I asked Mrs. Samar about the family's motives to rehabilitate the mosque, she made clear that the family had participated in funding for the rehabilitation of five other mosques. Still, the Osmaniye Mosque was their priority because it represented the *"family's history and legacy in the Old City of Aleppo."* She also explained that their motive was religious and described as a *"good deed- عمل خير"* and rehabilitating a mosque is a charitable cause as per the Islamic commandment. She also highlighted the Yagan family's allocation of a sum from their private donations to help five financially challenged families in Bab Al-Nasr rebuild their damaged homes. I also interviewed another funder, Mrs. Riad Yagan, a senior member of the Yagan family who resided in Aleppo at the time of writing. I asked about her motives for funding this project. Her answer was the following:

"This is our legacy, our history and the place of birth and inhabitation many of our ancestors (...), we might no longer reside in the area, but we will always belong to Bab Al-Nasr (...), we owe it to our history, to Aleppo, to the community who still lives here.

Some Families who currently live in the area are incapable of rebuilding their homes and are struggling for help (...), I hope what we are doing can help the people and help restore hope and faith in them”.

According to Mrs. Samar, the rehabilitation procedure started with acquiring the Directorate of Endowments' approval, the Directorate of Antiquities (DoA), and the Old City Directorate (DOC). All the Directorates did not participate in the funding nor provided any design guidelines. However, during the project's implementation, supervisors from the DoA were sent to monitor the work.

The family appointed Mrs. Samar and another Engineer from the family⁸ to oversee the rehabilitation process, who then appointed the labor force and set the design guidelines. A major section of the mosque was rehabilitated. However, the project was stopped by an order from the Islamic Awqaf Authorities, claiming that the reconstruction process was not conforming to antiquities' laws and regulations. According to a member of the funding family, the project was stopped for political reasons. The Yagans remained persistent in finishing the mosque's reconstruction and continued to collect funds as they awaited the approval of the Islamic Awqaf.

⁸ The engineer requested his identity to stay anonymous.



Figure 43- Photos of the rehabilitation of the Osmaniye Mosque (author, 2019)

c. The Emergency Rehabilitation of Janpolad Palace

Janpolad Palace was built during the second half of the 16th century by a Kurdish, Janpolad Ibn Qassim. In the first half of the 19th century, the palace became a family waqf of the Ibrahim-Pasha Family. It is estimated that approximately 500 to 600 heir of the Ibrahim-Pasha Family is entitled to this property (Youssef, 2010). The Ibrahim-Pasha is a very big Aleppian family; some of its members belong to middle to higher-income social class, whereas others are from a middle to lower one. Before the war, the property was voluntarily managed by a senior family member, Dr. Nazem Ibrahim Pasha, who overlooked its legal issues and financed its maintenance when needed. In the aftermath of the war, the property was severely damaged; however, Dr. Nazem Ibrahim-Pasha and another family member, Mr. Fakher Ibrahim-Pasha, took over its emergency rehabilitation. An interview was conducted with Mr. Fakher in October 2020 to understand the rehabilitation project's mechanisms mechanism. He was first asked about his motives to protect and preserve this historical monument; he explained that this property “*is a historical treasure, inherited to us by our ancestors (...) it is a representation of our family’s history and of Aleppo’s cultural heritage (...)*”. He also explained that this monument is of sentimental value to him as it gives “*a sense of belonging to the history of Bab Al-Nasr and the Old City (...) and a sense of nostalgia*”. The interlocutor was also asked about the process he had to undergo to get the reconstruction permits from the local authorities and the extent of work he could achieve on the property. He explained that in 2018 he was able to get a temporary rehabilitation permit approved by the Directorate of the Old City (DOC), the Directorate of Antiquities and Museums (DoAM), and from the Directorate of Endowments (Al-Awqaf). The permit allowed him to undertake minor work on the property due to the

strict laws imposed by the DoAM despite the extensive damage caused to the property. Additionally, although the property is designated as a historical monument, the DoAM did not provide any financial assistance as mandated by law⁹. Due to these obstacles imposed by the local authorities, Mr. Fakhir had to unofficially continue the rehabilitation work to protect and save the palace.

⁹ As mentioned earlier in the Built heritage Section, According to Gangler (2001), a law mandates the Directorate of Antiquities and Museums to participate in 50 percent of the rehabilitation cost of the monuments, regardless of its ownership status.



Figure 44- Photos from inside the Janpolad Palace Showing some of the War's Damage (author, 2020)

4. Key Issues

This section highlights the key issues identified throughout profiling the neighborhood's heritage and impacting the neighborhood's rehabilitation.

a. Lack of legislative framework

- No existing mechanism or design guidelines for the rehabilitation of historical monuments, regardless of their ownership status

- No existing mechanism for periodic monitoring and supervision of the rehabilitation of historical and cultural monuments heritage works, particularly during the designing and implementation stages.

- No unification of private rehabilitation initiatives, with no single agency ownership

- No organization or coordination of private funds oriented towards the rehabilitation of the public historic monuments.

- Strict measures by the Directorate of the Antiquities and Museums and for restoration work and permits.

b. Limited funding and resources

- The local government currently lacks technical resources to monitor and facilitate the rehabilitation works.

- Both the central and local government lack funding for heritage rehabilitation

c. Issues of Neglect and Deterioration

- The historical urban fabric of Bab Al-Nasr historically suffered from deterioration; this was worsened by the conflict.

- There are many abandoned and vacant monuments of historical importance.

- The rehabilitation costs of monuments were very high before the conflict and increased following it.

- Neglected and damaged historic housing stock, although it represents a significant proportion of the neighborhood's historical urban fabric.

d. Issues of Accessibility, Promotion, and Awareness

- No official and standardized inventory of damage assessments conducted by the local government to guide the rehabilitation works
- Access to some of the historical monuments is limited due to war damage
- Declining tourist activity, which used to be a significant component of the city's and the neighborhood business activity

E. Identified Transversal Issues

This section highlights those issues that are transversal across urban planning, socio-economic elements, and cultural heritage.

a. Threatened Cultural Heritage

Sectors: Urban Planning/Tourism/Heritage

Bab Al-Nasr's cultural heritage represents its social and historical identity and is an essential economic asset. Some of the neighborhood's historical urban morphology and historic housing stock is threatened and inaccessible due to the war damage. The intangible heritage is threatened and lacks protective measures due to the neighborhood's declining business activity's historical Souq and the displacement of the residents. However, some community-based groups mobilized to rehabilitate some historical monuments but were impeded by the local authority's strict heritage preservation rules. Furthermore, the decline of tourist activity in the aftermath of war-affected Bab Al-Nasr and the Old City's economic vitality. Therefore, there is a crucial need for a comprehensive plan to organize these efforts and establish a people-centered heritage-led framework for the rehabilitation and preservation of cultural heritage.

b. Declining Business Activity

Sectors: Economic/ Urban Planning/ Traditional Industries

The traditional business activity of Bab Al-Nasr has significantly declined in comparison to its pre-conflict state. Many businesses have migrated outside the neighborhood due to its unaccommodating damaged physical condition. The displacement of its residents and a lack of a qualified labor force have also affected it negatively. Furthermore, the business activity faces a disruption in its connectivity with the rest of the Old City as most of its surrounding edges remain physically damaged and unoccupied. Therefore, there should be a development plan to revitalize, protect and support these traditional businesses.

c. Poor Urban Environment

Sectors: Urban Planning/ Governance/ Finance

The conflict has caused extensive damage to the urban fabric of Bab Al-Nasr and the Old City of Aleppo. It resulted in a poor urban environment and challenging living conditions for its residents and businesses. The neighborhood is poorly serviced in terms of social facilities, in addition to water and electricity provision. Some parts of the neighborhood are still inaccessible due to the war damage.

The neighborhood and its surroundings lack an integrative and comprehensive approach to rehabilitating its electrical infrastructure, mainly because of funding issues. Moreover, the urban environment suffers from disrupted spatial connectivity as the surrounding areas are physically damaged and uninhabited.

d. War-Torn Social fabric

Sectors: Security/Planning/ Socio-economic

The social fabric of Bab Al-Nasr has been heavily ruptured during the ten-year conflict. Many of its residents have been internally displaced or have fled the country. Those who have returned to their dwellings suffer from living in an unaccommodating, poorly serviced, and damaged urban environment. The neighborhood's housing stock remains damaged and un-rehabilitated. Most households are female-headed and suffer from unemployment, and endure challenging socio-economic living conditions. There is also a concerning security issue as the area is relatively still inactive and less populated at night. Measures should be set in place to encourage the return of the displaced and improve the residents' living conditions, and support and organize the residents in the decision-making of the neighborhood's rehabilitation.

CHAPTER IV

STRATEGIC DIAGNOSIS

A. Introduction

The Strategic Diagnosis is the second phase of Bab Al-Nasr's Neighborhood Recovery Strategy. The Strategic Diagnosis aims to diagnose further the transversal issues drawn at the end of the Descriptive Memory; these are:

- Threatened cultural heritage.
- Declining business activity
- Poor urban environment
- A war-torn social fabric

The Strategic Diagnosis allows for each issue to be further analyzed by adapting a transversal approach to “understand the interrelations of the different urban variables” (MedCities, 2011, p. 4). The Diagnosis also offers a SWOT analysis of the trends regarding the key issues (MedCities, 2014, p. 29).

The diagnosis depended heavily on the data collected during the drafting of the Descriptive Memory and continued within a cyclical process of accumulating data and reformulating findings and positions as new material is collected or found. Therefore, the strategic diagnosis required extensive data collection, interviewing stakeholders, endorsing positions, and aims at formulating a vision towards a strategic framework.

As mentioned previously, critical data are absent, such as record keeping of the ongoing rehabilitation projects, surveys, or estimations of the current population residing the neighborhood or the housing stock condition. Thus, the diagnosis process

required constant fieldwork bouncing back and forth to the site and conducting surveys and open-ended conversations.

A strategic framework will follow the diagnosis developed in this chapter. A key link between them is the formulation of the vision. The vision was articulated to help guide the diagnosis while considering the transversal issues generated at the end of the Descriptive memory.

B. Analytic reading of the Transversal Issues

This section seeks to further analyze the transversal issues by collecting further data and analyzing them.

1. Threatened Cultural Heritage

The Descriptive Memory has highlighted that Bab Al-Nasr is rich with cultural heritage amassed throughout the years. Its tangible heritage is represented in its urban morphology and monuments of high architectural value. Its intangible heritage is characterized by its traditional business activity and by its community's traditional festivities. The previous chapter has finally concluded that the neighborhood's cultural heritage was damaged and endangered in the conflict's aftermath. This section seeks to analyze the causes threatening the neighborhood's cultural heritage.

a. Threatened Tangible Heritage

This section departed with trying to understand the level of damage caused to the built heritage of Bab Al-Nasr and mapping the rehabilitation work related to it. Although the implementation of a rapid damage assessment systems is crucial in the

aftermath of conflicts, it prioritizes efforts and resources. It indicates the need level of intervention and methods of treatments (Vafadari, Philip, & Jennings, 2017). Yet, after conducting several interviews with officials from the local authorities, it showed that no damage assessment nor any record was tracking the rehabilitation work. Thus, by referring to the map by the UN cartography Section for Special Envoy Office (see Qudsi, 2016), the map below was produced to represent the damage of the neighborhood's historical monuments.

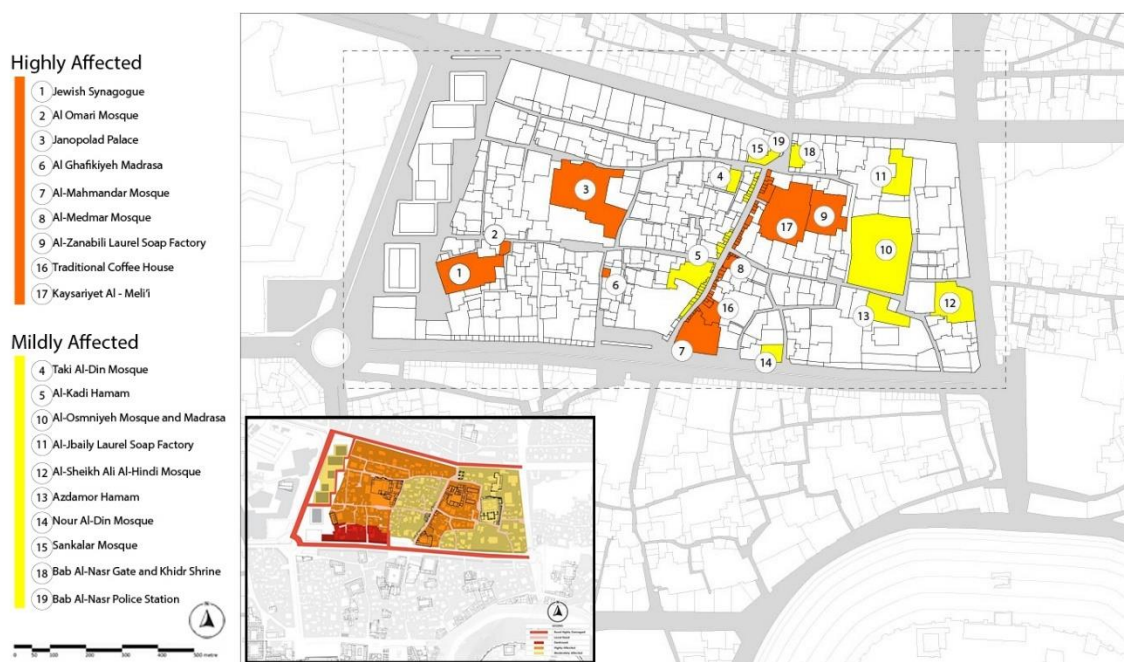


Figure 45- Bab Al-Nasr's historical monuments damage assessment (author, 2020)

Since no record keeping was found of the neighborhood's rehabilitation activity, the rehabilitation activity of these historical monuments was mapped (see **Figure 45**). The mapping showed that the Awqaf monuments, the mosques specifically, are amongst the ones that are the most rehabilitated, generally through donations from the civil society. However, some of the privately-owned remained unrehabilitated and in a decaying state.

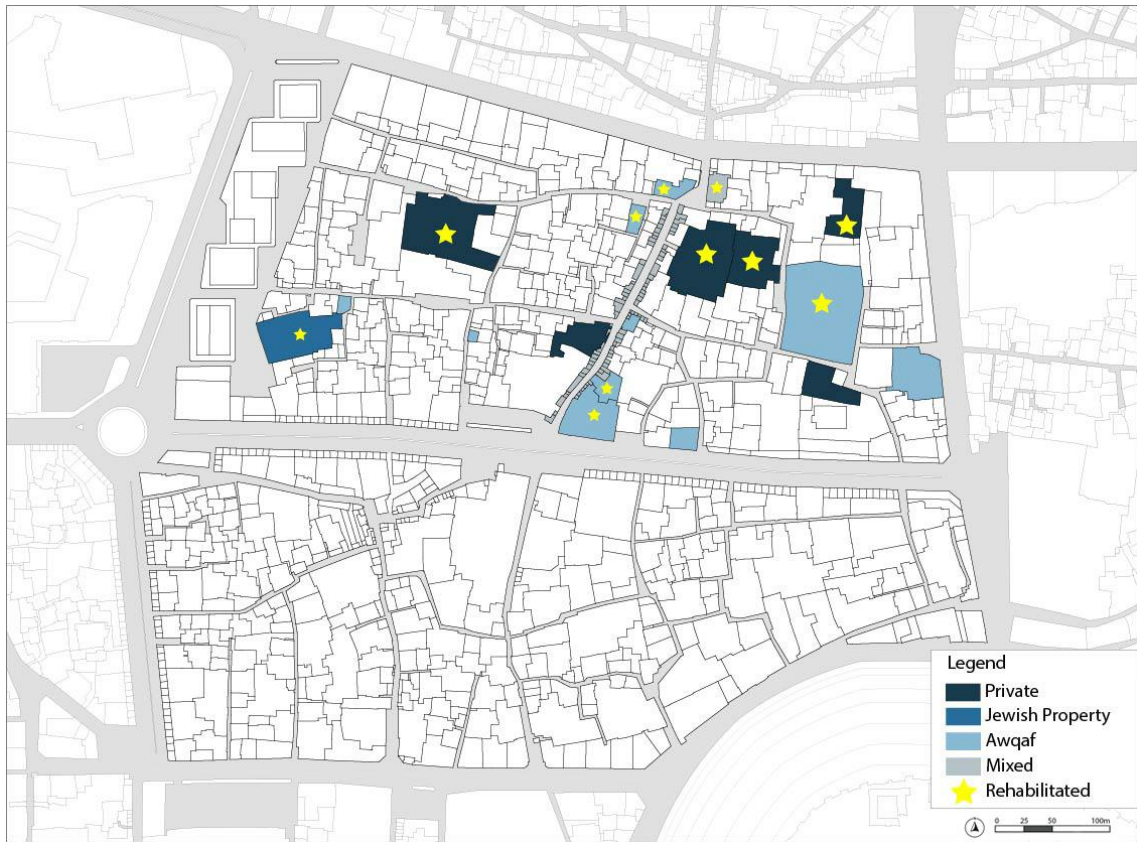


Figure 46- Map of the rehabilitation of Bab Al-Nasr's historical monuments (author, 2020)

Two interviews were conducted with owners of historical monuments to understand the issues and challenges related to the rehabilitation of privately-owned historical monuments. The first interview was conducted with Mr. Jbaily, owner of the Jbaily soap factory (parcel no.9 in **Figure 46**), who had undertaken and completed rehabilitation work in his factory. Mr. Jbaily pointed out that his factory's rehabilitation was challenging due to the high running cost of rehabilitation and the lack of skilled labor. Additionally, he further explained the challenges he had faced due to the Directorate of Antiquities and Museums' strict regulations, which delayed the completion of the rehabilitation work. Such bureaucratic complications in the process in

which one applies for rehabilitation permits result in the informal practices of rehabilitation work, as seen in the Janpolad Palace's case.

The second interview was conducted with the owner of Hamam Azdamor, who preferred to stay anonymous (Parcel no.13 in **Figure 45**) was also interviewed his property yet is still damaged and unrehabilitated. He explained that he lacked incentives and motives to rehabilitate the Hammam, mainly due to the rehabilitation work's financial burdens. He also explained that the city's declining economic activity, instability, and the lack of visitors' footprint and residents in the area was another reason not to rehabilitate and re-activate the Hammam. These interviews have shown that the neighborhood's historical monuments are threatened due to the lack of protective measures and an adequate regulatory framework for their rehabilitation.

The Descriptive Memory has also highlighted the decaying state of the neighborhood's historical residential stock and the lack of attention from the local authorities and international agencies to rehabilitate it. Therefore, a sample size survey was conducted with the 15 households that successfully rehabilitated their dwellings' electrical grid to understand the damage caused to the neighborhood residential stock and the challenges related to its rehabilitation. The households were first asked to rate the damage caused to their homes. They were also surveyed about whether they had conducted any rehabilitation work in their dwellings and explained whether they applied for a rehabilitation permit. Finally, they were asked if they had received any form of technical and financial assistance. Nine out of fifteen interviewees assessed their residences as mildly damaged, while two interviewees considered them severely damaged. The remaining assessed the damage as minor.

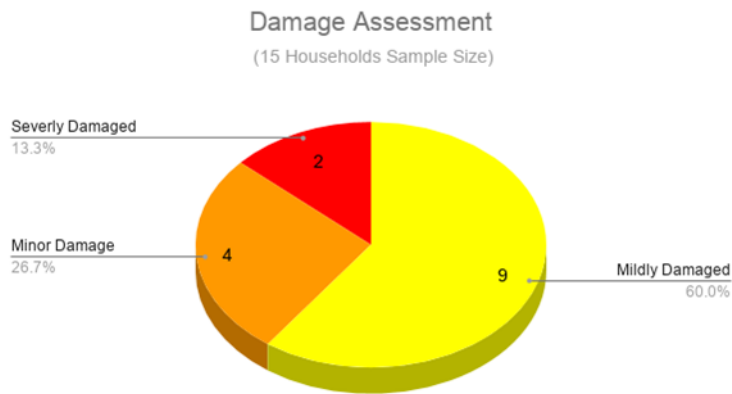


Figure 47- Damage assessment of the interviewed households (author, 2020)

All the households explained that they had to rehabilitate their dwellings, yet only two of the fifteen households issued rehabilitation permits from the Old City Directorate. Furthermore, all the households explained that they did not receive any financial nor technical assistance or guidance from the local authorities or any other party. In fact, out of the 15-household sample size, two households have obtained permits and thus had to assign architects to draft architectural rehabilitation plans for their dwellings.

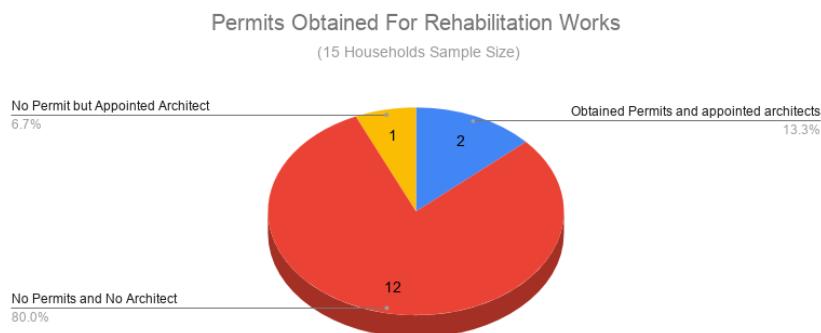


Figure 48- Percentage of households who applied for permits for the rehabilitation of their residences (author, 2020)

Of the remaining 12 households, one household assigned an architect to draw up architectural plans without obtaining a legal permit, while the rest got no legal permits and no architects.

The analysis shows that although some rehabilitation work targets some aspects of the neighborhood's tangible heritage, these efforts are not organized nor well-structured and lack guidance to ensure their completion and efficiency while considering the site's historical importance. The surveys show that the neighborhood's historic residential stock is endangered and damaged, which affects the return and the recovery of the neighborhood's social fabric. It also shows the residents' incapability to afford the financial burdens of rehabilitation work. Furthermore, the local authorities' weak role in supervising and aiding in the rehabilitation activity is further threatening the historic residential stock. Attention should be directed to the rehabilitation of Bab Al-Nasr's historical residential stock. A framework should be proposed to guide the residents and aid them in rehabilitating their dwellings technically and financially.

b. Threatened Intangible Heritage

The Descriptive Memory concluded that the neighborhood's intangible heritage is embodied in its traditional commercial activity and its residents' religious festivities. However, in the aftermath of the conflict, business activities declined, endangering traditional crafts production. The social celebrations were also limited due to the heavily damaged social fabric and the lack of locations to organize these events. Despite the different projects targeting the rehabilitation of the neighborhood's cultural heritage, none tapped into the intangible heritage. Moreover, according to Mariam

Douba, an architect employed at the Directorate of Antiquities and Museums, the Directorate does acknowledge the customs and festivities of the communities as intangible heritage, therefore it does offer any framework for the protection and rehabilitation of the intangible heritage in the aftermath of the war.

However, as elaborated in the Literature Review Chapter, in a post-war context where identities are threatened, and social fabrics are torn, incorporating cultural heritage in postwar agendas could be a catalyst to recovery because of its sentimental value to communities. According to (UNESCO, n.d-b), cultural heritage is not limited to historical monuments and material objects. It also includes “traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge, and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts”(UNESCO, n.d-b, para. 1). Furthermore, Lenzerini (2011), explains that intangible cultural heritage as a representation of cultures, embodied by the diversity of “living heritage of humanity” and a tool for cultural diversity. Additionally, intangible heritage does not only characterize inherited traditions from the past but also stands for contemporary practices crucial to the identity and continuity of social groups (UNESCO, n.d-b).

Conversations were conducted with four senior residents to learn about their pre-war festivities to investigate the limitations in the aftermath of the conflict that impeded the practice of their customs. The interviewees explained that the displacement of most of the neighborhood’s residents decreased the celebrations and the neighborhood social practices. Preparation for religious festivities such as Eid's where neighbors would gather and celebrate together, decorating the streets with ornaments. One of the

residents also highlighted the tradition of going to public hammams as a tradition that many families undertake as preparations for many celebrations, such as weddings. The residents were also asked to explain where they held their celebrations in the aftermath of the conflict; they explained that some families volunteered to hold social events in their residences due to the damage that occurred to the celebration halls, while other families would be forced to hold them in celebration halls in other parts of the city.

These conversations supply an underlying base that intangible heritage is endangered and neglected. Thus, attention should be directed to its protection and support of the neighborhood's intangible heritage to ensure the sustainability of the neighborhood's historical and social identity. Measures should be set in place to provide the right environment for the residents to practice their customs and traditions.

2. Declining Business Activity

The business activity of Bab Al-Nasr plays a significant role in the neighborhood's historical identity and economic vitality. The previous chapter has highlighted that the number of shops and SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) has significantly dwindled in the aftermath of the conflict despite the return of some business owners and the Souq's physical rehabilitation UNDP. The map below shows the number of businesses that have returned and re-opened in the conflict's aftermath. In comparison to its pre-conflict, eighty percent of the businesses have shut down in the area.

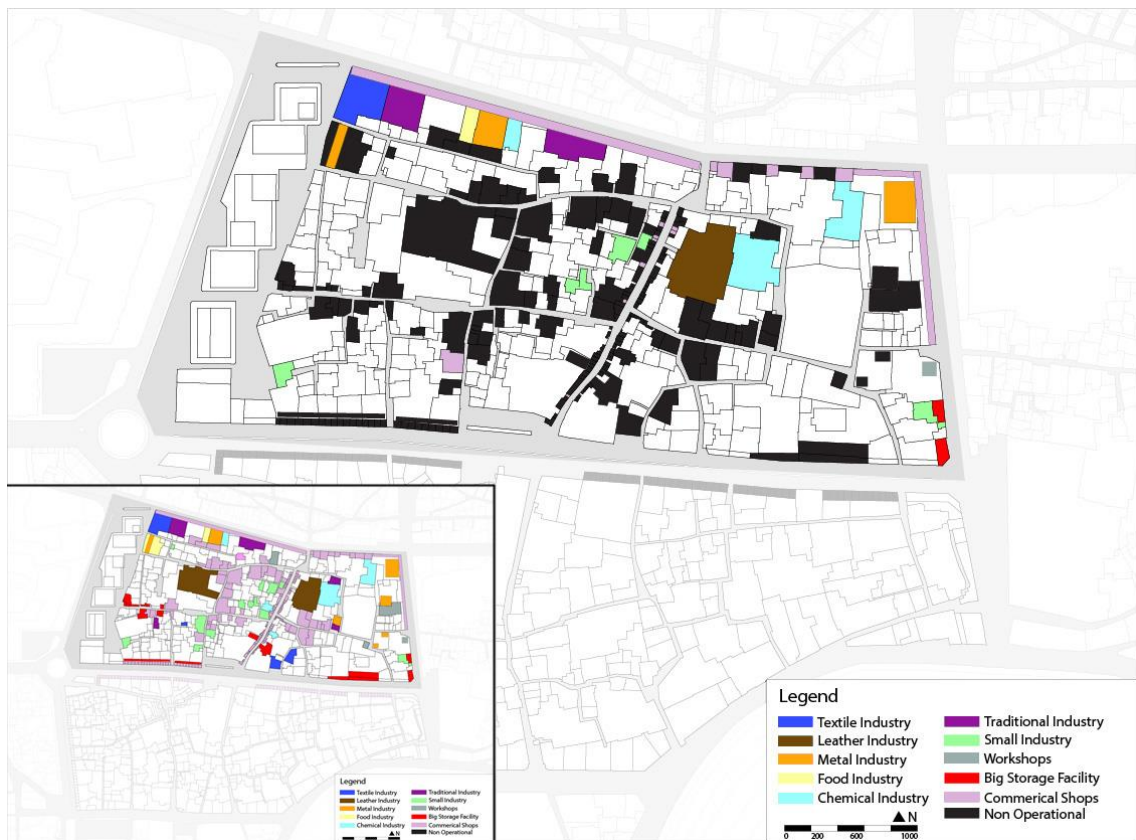


Figure 49- Bab Al-Nasr's business and industrial activity post-conflict based on GTZ (2001) and on author's mapping, (author 2020).

This section seeks to analyze the reasons causing the shops' depopulation and the decline of the neighborhood's business activity. It also seeks to elaborate and analyze the UNDP's project's structure and observe its impact on the neighborhood's business activity.

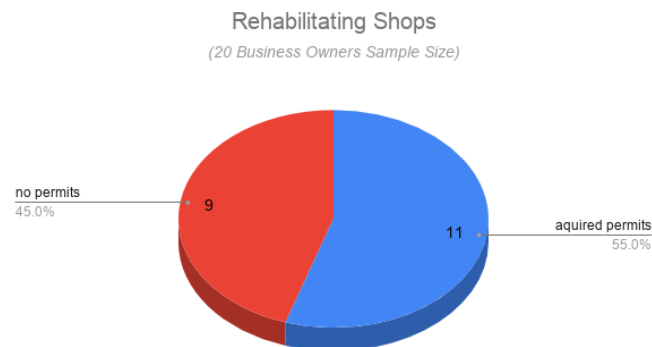


Figure 50- Number of business owners who applied for rehabilitation permits vs. the number of business owners who did not (author, 2020)

A survey was conducted with twenty business owners to understand the challenges imposed on them upon their return to the neighborhood in the aftermath of the conflict. The shop owners were first asked to elaborate on the challenges they faced while trying to re-open their businesses. They were also asked to assess how their businesses were doing. Almost all the business owners explained that they had to settle some financial disclosures such as taxes in Aleppo's Financial Administration (مديرية مالية حلب) which was a big financial burden for them as some had been out of business for almost ten years. Moreover, eleven out of the twenty surveyed business owners said they had to go through the long process of acquiring rehabilitation permits to refurbish the inside of their shops. The remaining nine did not have to conduct significant

rehabilitation work but just removed rubble and cleaned the inside of their shops. When asked how their businesses were doing, only seven out of the twenty surveyed stated that their businesses are doing relatively well. Those who claimed that their businesses were not doing well were asked to correlate it to a cause. Some business owners connected it to the city's poor economic conditions and its disrupted regional and international economic exchange network. The majority associated it to the lack of demand for consumer goods, which is heavily impacted by the decrease of the customers' footprint and lack of residents in Bab Al-Nasr and adjacent residential areas. These were the souq's main customers

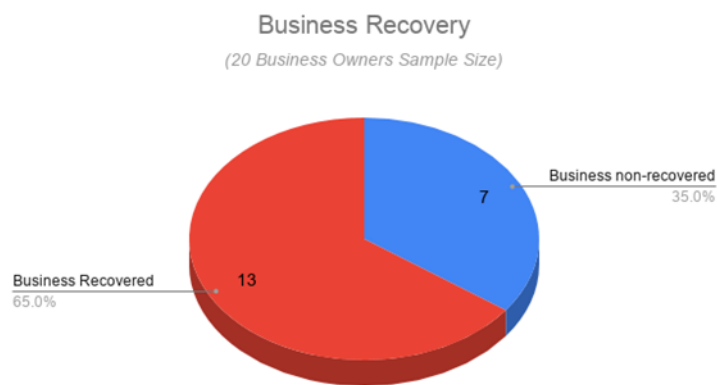


Figure 51- Number of businesses doing well in the aftermath of the conflict vs. businesses that are not doing well.

On the other hand, business owners were inquired if they knew the reason their neighbors in the Souq did not reopen their shops; they informed that some owners had fled the county as the conflict began while others relocated their businesses to western districts of the city. They also explained that the internally displaced businesses that have established a market and are doing well in the city's western neighborhoods have found it more profitable to rent there than to return to the static market of Bab Al-Nasr.

The business owners were also asked if they had a committee to represent them or have worked collectively to address matters concerning the rehabilitation of their business activity. Their answers showed that they did not have a committee or worked collectively on issues concerning the collective.

Furthermore, before the war the Old City's business activity was interlinked and connected (Gaube & Wirth, 1984); yet these were heavily damaged in the war's aftermath. Therefore, I mapped the Souqs and Khans that are in the neighborhood's proximity that have re-opened. The mapping showed that the decline of the business activity has been limited to Bab Al-Nasr's but rather to the Old City's scale, which created a disruption in the Old City's commercial activity and connectivity.

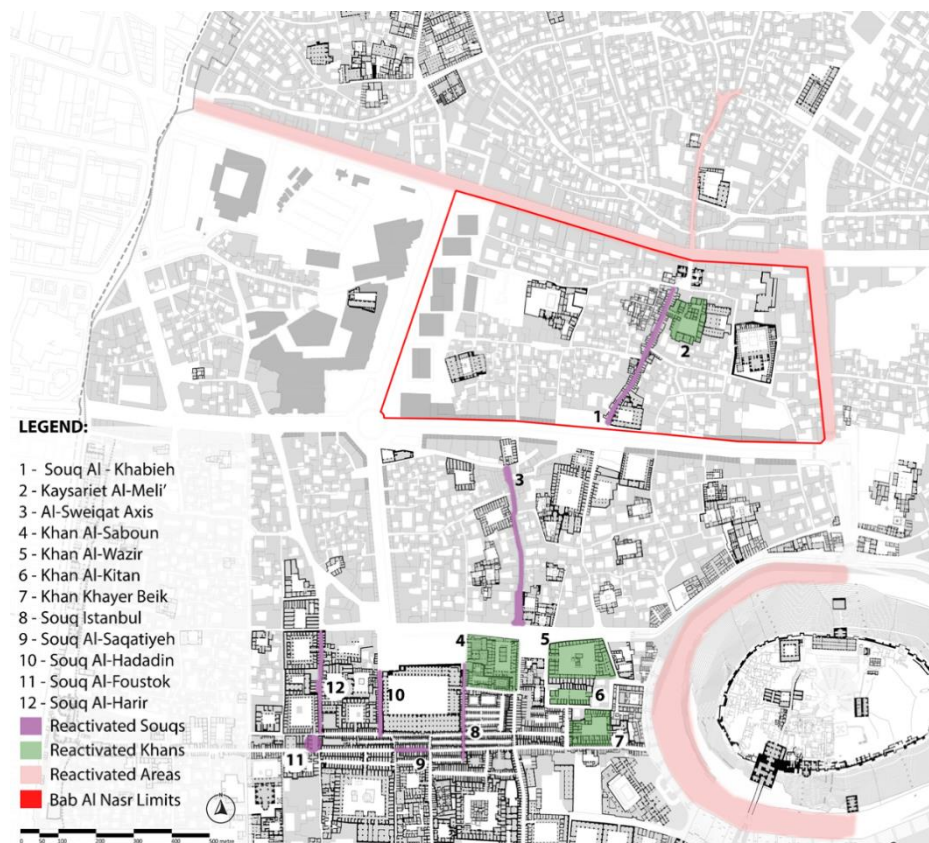


Figure 52- Active Souqs and Khans in Bab Al-Nasr's neighboring areas (author, 2021)

a. The Rehabilitation of Souq Al-Khabyeh by the UNDP

The Descriptive Memory briefly elaborated on the rehabilitation work done by the UNDP in Bab Al-Nasr. Yet, based on many field visits to the site and conversations with the business owners, the Souq was still depopulated with business owners and was barely operational. This section seeks to analyze the project's structure and mechanism and observe its impact on the neighborhood's recovery and, more specifically, on its business activity.

As already mentioned in the previous chapter, The UNDP's work started with rubble removal. It then helped the Souq's business owners financially and rehabilitated the Souq's water infrastructure. Although the project did not encompass the Souq's electrical infrastructure's rehabilitation, solar panels were installed for electrical provision to illuminate the Souq during nighttime. Fieldwork also showed that the project had extended to rehabilitate the façades of the shops. The project was undertaken by a contractor who was chosen through bids announced by the UNDP. The same contractor conducted multiple rehabilitation projects in the Old City. An interview was conducted with the architect supervising the project, Ms. Rama Omar. It was conducted and transcribed into English. The architect was first inquired about the UNDP's motives to rehabilitate the Souq of Bab Al-Nasr. She explained that the UNDP cares to invest in human resources and to rehabilitate prominent historical landmarks. She further explained that as the area became re-accessible, some business owners returned to open their shops. The UNDP sought to rehabilitate the right environment for them and preserve a significant landmark at the same time. She was also asked if the project's planning was participatory during any of its numerous stages with the business owners. Ms. Omar explained that it did not; the decision making concerning the project

occurred between the UNDP, the contractor, and the public sector (i.e., The Directorate of the Old City and the Directorate of Antiquities and Museums). I also asked Ms. Omar if the project was to extend and rehabilitate the housing stock. She explained that the project would not include the housing stock; however, it will expand to restore the façade of the physical gate of Bab Al-Nasr. The interlocutor was also asked if the UNDP would cooperate with Friends of Bab Al-Nasr since the latter already conducted rehabilitation work on the gate. She explained that it would not, as both projects function independently.

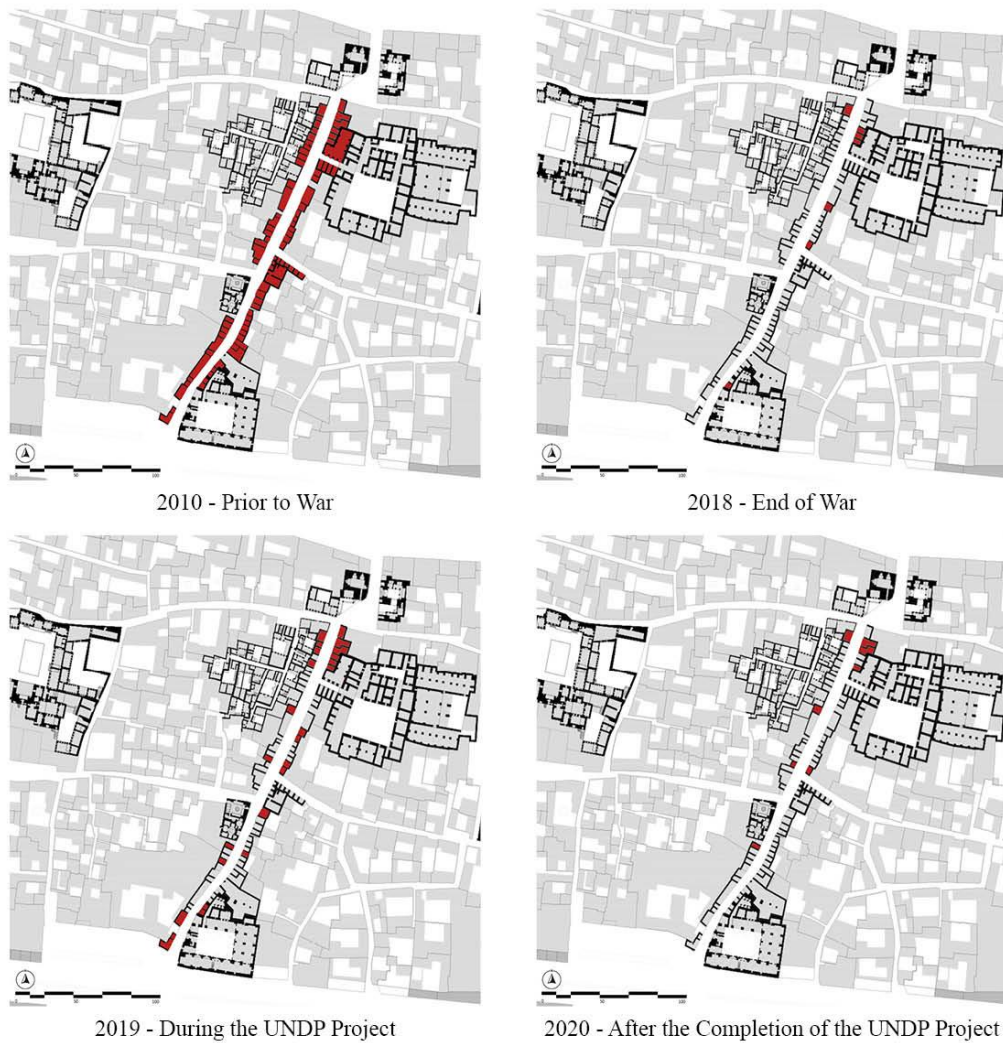


Figure 53- State of Business during the Rehabilitation of the neighborhood (author, 2020)

After conducting multiple field visits during and after the completion of the UNDP's project, it was noticed that the Souq hardly returned to being fully operational (Figure 54).



Figure 54- Picture of Souq Al-Khabyeh's deserted state in the aftermath of the rehabilitation project by the UNDP (author, 2021)

Thus, while conducting the surveys with the business owners, they were asked to assess their satisfaction with the project and see the implications of the Souq's reconstruction on their businesses and understand the reasons for the Souq's depopulation. When asked about their opinion concerning the Souq's rehabilitation, eleven out of twenty business owners were relieved the UNDP took over its physical reconstruction. On the other hand, some business owners were not entirely pleased with

the work and objected to their lack of participation in the project. Many business owners criticized the poor quality of work and how the grants were provided for the first comers only. Furthermore, almost all the business owners complained about the lack of electricity in the Souq and their shops due to the damaged electrical infrastructure. Business owners were also asked if the project had a positive impact on their businesses and had allowed them to pick up. Seventeen business owners said that the project was not beneficial for their businesses as it mainly focused on the Souq's physical rehabilitation while disregarding the needs of the business owners.

Based on the interviews and field visits, it is undeniable that the UNDP's project has massively assisted the business owners by rehabilitating and preparing the right post-conflict environment for them. The project has addressed the costliest aspect of the Souq's rehabilitation in terms of its infrastructure and took over the hurdle of historic preservation. However, the UNDP's planning approach is top-down and purely physical. Moreover, this incremental physical intervention did not perceive the Souq as part of a more significant entity; it does not factor its relation vis-a-vis the rest of the neighborhood nor consider its connectivity to its adjacent areas. As seen in the previous map, the neighborhood business activity is not limited to its spinal Souq but instead infiltrates the cul-de-sacs and residential fabric.

The WorldBank (2017) discusses the importance of investing in the private sector in post-conflict agendas as governments emerging from war do not have adequate financial and human resources to rebuild the economy. Rebuilding and investing in the private sector in post-conflict agendas can establish a people-led reconstruction plan and facilitate the displaced businesses' return. Therefore, the local authorities must develop an "adequate business environment and institutional reforms based on consensus

emerging from an inclusive dialogue on reconstruction” to revitalize the private sector (WorldBank, 2017, p. 44). Therefore, measures should be set in place to assist the business owners in the physical rehabilitation of their shops and the reactivation of their businesses to adapt to the post-conflict realities. The business owners’ efforts must also be combined and maximized to help them reach a consensus that would collectively benefit them. Incentives must also be set in place to encourage the displaced businesses’ return to repopulate the neighborhood and reactivate its business activity.

3. Poor Urban Environment

Despite the rehabilitation activity in Bab Al-Nasr, its urban environment remains damaged. It is mainly because each of the rehabilitation projects targets different neighborhood buildings while disregarding the remaining of the urban fabric and what constitutes it. This clastic approach to rehabilitation impeded a more comprehensive approach to recovery. Vale and Campanella (2005) argue that “urban recovery occurs network by network, district by district, not just building by building” it is about reconstructing the “myriad social relations” rooted in the urban fabric (Vale & Campanella, 2005, p. 347). Contrary to Vale and Campanella's statement, none of Bab Al-Nasr's projects address the neighborhood as part of a larger urban landscape or a bigger social network. For instance, although the built heritage was receiving much attention, neither the historical residential stock nor the shops were accounted for any of the initiatives’ agendas.

The Descriptive Memory has highlighted many issues that render the neighborhood as an unlivable urban environment. Bab Al-Nasr lacks adequate water and electricity provision due to the damaged infrastructure and lack of social facilities to

service the residents. Furthermore, it was highlighted that the city's transportation does not properly service in the area. Finally, it was highlighted that the neighborhood's activity decreases during nighttime as it is unlit and unsafe to access due to the remaining war damage. During the surveys conducted with the twenty households, they were asked about the challenges they faced living in this post-conflict environment to analyze further how they functioned within it.

a. Poor Service of Water and Electricity Provision

In the surveys conducted with the residents, they were asked to explain the alternatives they resorted to for the lack of electricity and water provision. Two out of twenty households explained that their temporary alternative for electricity provision to inner streets was a privately-owned generator installed in the neighborhood that would provide electricity. This, however, was a costly substitute, which many of the dwellers could not afford. Thus the remaining eighteen households had to borrow electricity from the rehabilitated electrical posts on the main streets illegally. The residents were asked about the electricity provision during the nighttime. All residents have explained how difficult it was to attain a full day of electricity, making their daily lives difficult, let alone in the winter cycle, when the entire neighborhood goes dark early. One neighbor described this trauma as an impromptu curfew. With little to no streetlights to help guide anyone back home, the scenery at night of the war's aftermath is still engraved in their daily lives.

As for the water, the residents explained that the water provision does not reach 24 hours; six out of twenty households would seek alternative water provisions through wells built initially since the early establishment of the residential housing stock. The

remaining fourteen households explained that they do not have alternatives, either because they do not have wells or their wells have been damaged due to war.

b. Lack of Social Facilities

The Descriptive Memory showed that the area already suffered from a lack of social facilities and services before the war. Mapping was conducted in this phase to see the impact of the conflict on them. As noticed on the map, many of the facilities have shut down and are un-operational. Residents explained that they commute to the western parts of the city for services. Residents were also asked about the educational facilities available. They explained that the conflict had damaged many schools in the area that remain un-operational in the conflict's aftermath. It was also noted that the neighborhood, before the war, was not equipped to service the tourism industry. Although the Old City boasts a plethora of historical monuments, the foundational support for the tourism industry was weak even before the war and has only worsened in the war's aftermath.

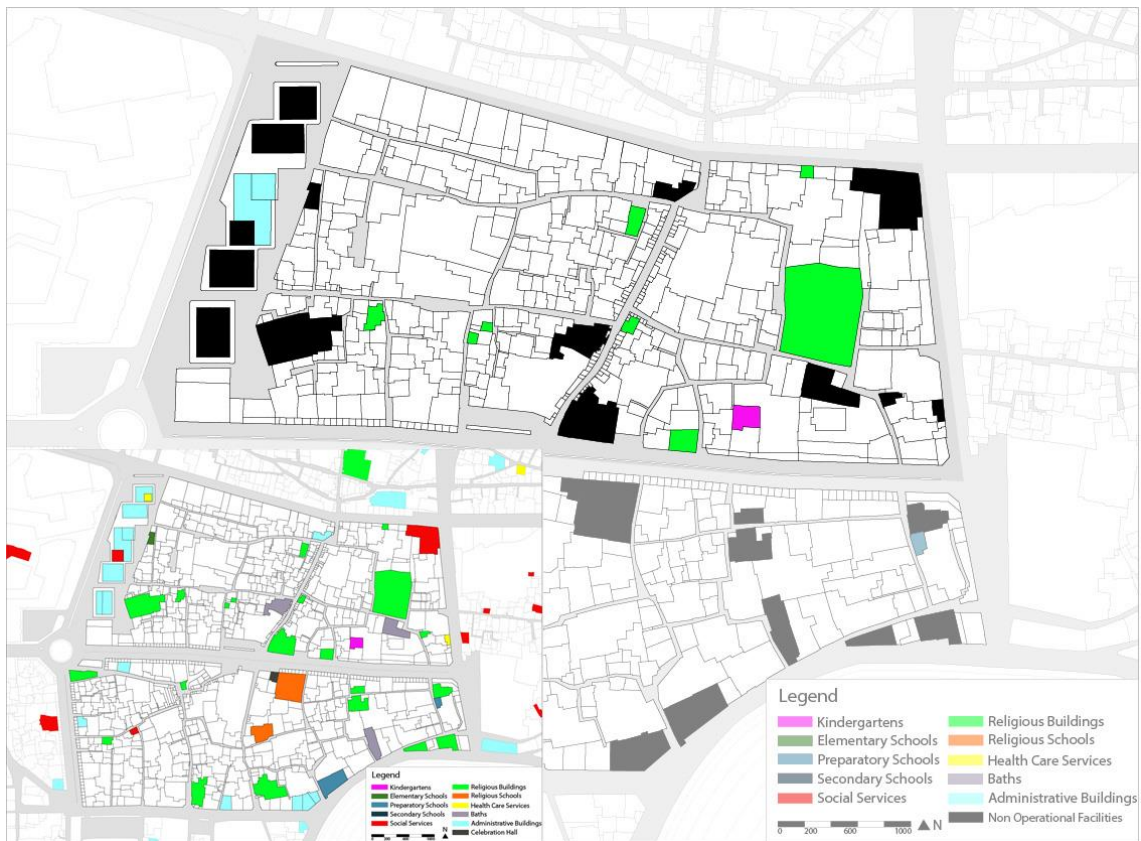


Figure 55- Existing facilities in the aftermath of the conflict (author, 2020)

In conclusion, a framework should be set in place to target the entirety of the neighborhood’s urban environment. Furthermore, the local authority’s poor governance hinders the recovery of the neighborhood’s urban environment. It fails to deliver a comprehensive plan for the rehabilitation of the electrical infrastructure in Bab Al-Nasr and neighboring areas, mainly due to funding issues. Gilbert (1996) perceives a local authority as “good governance” through the ways it acts and what it delivers to its broader community (p.24). He further explains that the practice of good governance is to achieve sustainable development for its communities by delivering certain responsibilities such as “the provision of adequate infrastructure (p.17).

4. War-Torn Social Fabric

According to Bojicic´-Dzelilovic´ (2002), in the aftermath of the conflict, the reconstruction process starts by determining the physical and material damage imposed on the country's infrastructure, housing stock, and economic assets, and thus are given priority attention and funds (Bojicic´-Dzelilovic´, 2002). However, while physical destruction remains one of the most challenging reconstruction tasks in a contemporary context, the more challenging agenda involves the rehabilitation of the institutional infrastructure of the communities recovering from war (Bojicic´-Dzelilovic´, 2002). The previously stated is very similar to Bab Al-Nasr's case; despite the numerous rehabilitation projects undergoing in Bab Al-Nasr, it remained relatively unpopulated by both business owners and residents due to the massive wave of displacement which persisted after the end of the conflict. It is mainly because none of the projects or initiatives addressed or encompassed the war-affected social fabric circumstances and their poor living conditions in their agendas.

The Descriptive Memory has also highlighted the challenging living conditions which burden the everyday life of the households currently residing in the area. The previous field visits and surveys are done with the area residents showed that they mainly suffered from living in a poor urban environment that lacks adequate service provision. Moreover, the surveys also showed the challenging financial circumstances most families were suffering from due to the lack of job opportunities in the city. Based on Gangler's (2001) study, the main financial provider in many of the families in Bab Al-Nasr were male members. However, based on surveys, six out of the twenty

households surveyed were female-headed due to the high rates of deaths in the male population during the war.

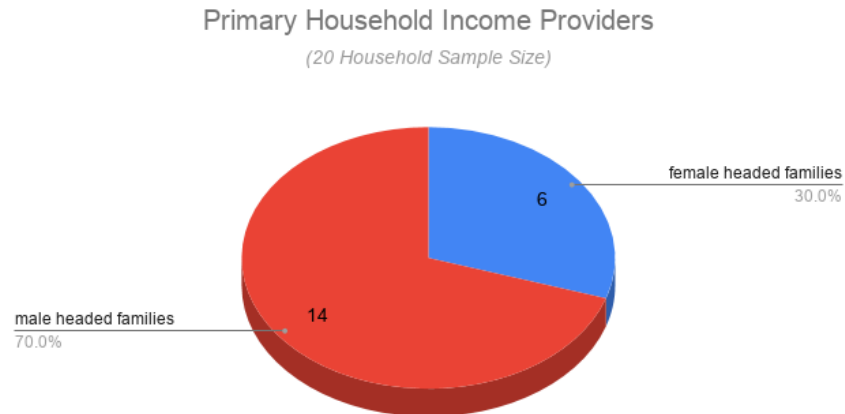


Figure 56- Primary Household Income Providers (author, 2020)

Surveys showed that these female-headed families' financial status has deteriorated since they no longer have a fixed income that used to be provided by the male members. Four out of the six female-headed families explained that they either relied on aid from humanitarian organizations or extended family members. In contrast, two family members had an underage financial provider.

Source of Income for Female Headed Families

(6 Female headed Family Sample Size)

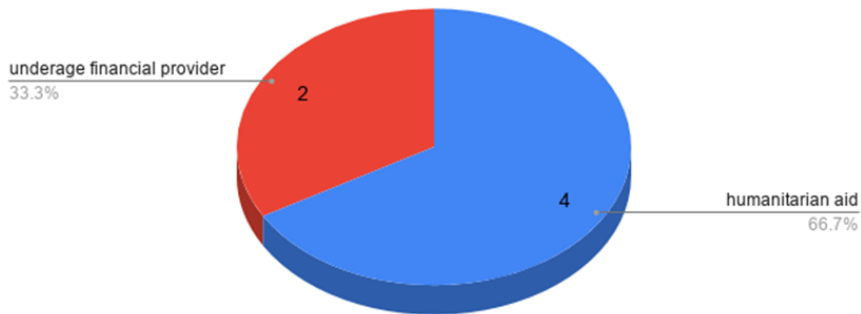


Figure 57- Source of income for female-headed families (author, 2020)

Finally, the previous sections elaborated on the deteriorating state of the neighborhood's housing stock. Before the war, the condition of the infrastructure was already deteriorating and has worsened during the war. Throughout the research, continuous field visits were undertaken, which note that the housing stock remained scarcely populated. Thus, the residents who were surveyed were first asked about their displaced neighbors and knew why they had not come back to resettle in Bab Al-Nasr. Their answers highlighted two main reasons, the first and main being because they fled the country and were incapable of returning due to the issue of politics, security, and/or safety. Therefore, the homes were either deserted, rented, or occupied by relatives of the original families. The second reason was due to the simple fact that the residence upon which they hoped to return to was destroyed beyond their capabilities of restoring. The interviewees explained that some residents who were internally displaced rented in modern style homes in the western districts of Aleppo. The main benefit of why they moved to the city's western districts is that they felt better connected to the larger city, which is more accommodating to everyday needs. Answers also showed that some of

the internally displaced did not pay rent in the western neighborhoods as they moved into their relatives' residences who fled the country.

Literature shows that urban spaces have embedded and interlinked social identities that cannot be perceived and targeted separately. Campanella (2006) pushes the notion of the built environment beyond its physical aspect and identifies it as “thick concatenations of social and cultural matter” which grants the built environment its “essence and identity (p.142). Moreover, Tierney and Oliver-Smith (2012) discern post-disaster recovery as a “socially-configured process” (p.1). Building on these notions, it is inevitable to say that the reconstruction efforts cannot be solely physical and should invest in the torn social fabric. It is part-and-parcel of the neighborhood's urban fabric. Surveys showed that the neighborhood's social fabric had been subjected to changes and damage in the conflict's aftermath. They also showed that the displacement of the social fabric and its return and recovery is heavily interlinked with the neighborhood's recovery and adjacent areas' urban environment. Measures should be set in place to tackle the social fabric issues and create a better environment for them and incentivize the return of the displaced.

C. Vision

The CDS model of Bab Al-Nasr was absent from a full participatory framework for two main reasons. The first reason was the lack of full accessibility and inhabitation in the neighborhood. The second reason was the political instability that prevailed in the city and could have affected the safety and security of the author. Therefore, the methodology of the formulation of the vision was shifted to adapt to the context at hand; however, it was still formulated through an informal participatory way.

The social network and the trust established in the neighborhood facilitated dialogues with the interviewees to draft the vision.

The extraction of the vision happened in two different ways. First through open-ended conversations, people volunteered their vision for the neighborhood, and second through a targeted survey querying about their vision. The conversations occurred during multiple field visits during February 2020. It is important to mention that in numerous occasions, I was engaged in informal group discussions with multiple interlocutors at once, where each of the latter would express his/her vision.

The conversations were conducted and transcribed in Arabic and translated into English. However, it should be mentioned that some of the connotations behind key terminologies used by the interlocutors may have been slightly changed in translation to adjust to the standard English academic writing.

Using a simple random sampling quota, a total of 23 business owners and residents were interrogated. The interlocutors' name will be kept anonymous as it will not be of importance to the content of the conversation; however, the gender, age, and profession will be mentioned.

To ease the way into the conversation, the interlocutors were communicated a very brief hypothesis first to facilitate the way into posing the question about the vision. The question asked was the following:

“Assuming in the long run, let say in forty-fifty years, the war has ended, and all the political tensions have eased, which allowed the reconstruction of Aleppo to occur. More specifically, let us assume that Bab Al-Nasr has, of course, recovered from the war damage; how would you envision Bab Al-Nasr in forty-fifty years after its reconstruction?”

Below are the most useful and guide-full quotes that guided the drafting of the vision; some quotes in Arabic were added to make it clearer what the interlocutors were trying to say. However, very minor terms in the Aleppian dialect were replaced with formal literary Arabic to make it more understandable to the reader. Their answers were the following:

"بشوف بيوتها معمرة وانا وعائلي عايشين فيها مثل ما عاش وكبر فيها والدي

"I see its houses rebuilt and me and my family living in it, just like my father and his father did" - Resident, 20, Resident of Bab Al-Nasr.

"بالنسبة الي باب النصر بشوفها عامرة بعد أربعين سنة بناسها وعالمها يلي قدروا

"For me, I see Bab Al-Nasr's recovery in forty years linked to the recovery of its people who were able to rise from the war and go on with their lives - Female, 35, resident of Bab Al-Nasr.

"باب النصر بترجع باب النصر لما عالمها بترجع تعيش مرتاحة وتعيش مع بعضها

"Bab Al-Nasr" - "وبتمنى بعد خمسين سنة نقدر نعيش أحسن من الظروف يلي عايشينا وعشناها" will re-emerge when it's people return and live peacefully with each other, and I hope in fifty years will live in better circumstances that we are living and have endured" - Female, 22, resident of Bab Al-Nasr.

"بتمنى بعد خمسين سنة سكان باب النصر يقدروا يرجعوا يعيشوا فيها رغم سنين التشرد

"I hope in fifty years the residents of Bab Al-Nasr will be able to - والحرب والمعاناة"

return and live in the neighborhood despite the many years of displacement and war and suffering” - Male, 28, Business owner in Bab Al-Nasr.

"بشوف الحي معمر وكل الأسواق بمحيطه معمرة وشغالة (...) لخالو ما بقدر يعيش"

“I see the neighborhood reconstructed and all its surrounding souqs reconstructed and functional (...) alone, it cannot survive” - Male, 44, Business owner in Bab Al-Nasr.

" (...) باب النصر جزء من سلسلة بتربط كل أسواق حلب القديمة مع بعضا (...) وإذا

" Bab Al-Nasr is part of a chain which connects all of Old Aleppo’s souqs (...) and if the neighborhood’s surroundings are not recovered neither will it” - Male, 60, Business owner in Bab Al-Nasr.

"I see Bab Al-Nasr in fifty years gaining back its importance in the city” - Male, 27, resident of Bab Al-Nasr.

"انشاءالله يرجع سوقها يرجع يشتغل مثل أيام قبل و اقدر افتح محلي الخاص"

“InshAllah, the Souq returns to its pre-war state and I will be able to open my own business” - Employee in a business in Bab Al-Nasr, 19.

–"بكرًا بس ترجع المكتبات والمحلات والدكاكين كلها بترجع باب النصر مثل قبل وأحلى"

"Tomorrow, when all of the stationary shops and commercial shops "return" -become functional- Bab Al-Nasr will be better than it ever was" - Male, 47, business owner in Bab Al-Nasr.

" انشاء لله يكون تم إعادة أعمار الجوامع والمباني التاريخية (...) ولازم نضل نتذكر

" *InshAllah the historical buildings and mosques will be rebuilt (...) and we must keep on remembering the history of our ancestors and of our neighborhood"* – Male, 59, resident of Bab Al-Nasr.

" (...) باب النصر الها تاريخها وأهم الشي ولو بعد أربعين سنة نضل متذكرين تاريخها

" (...) Bab Al-Nasr has its own history and the most important thing is to keep on remembering its history even if forty years pass (...)” - Male, 63, resident of Bab Al-Nasr.

"إذا عمرت المباني التاريخية رح نضل عم نتوارث تاريخ الحي والمدينة وحضارتا لولاد

" *If the historical buildings are rebuilt, we will be able to inherit the history of the neighborhood, the city and its civilization to our ancestors for hundreds of years"* - Mrs. Samar Yagan, member of a community-based initiative.

"باب النصر كلها كنوز وبعد فترة لما رح تعمر كل هذه الكنوز باب النصر رح تصير

"جنة" *Bab Al-Nasr is full of treasures, and when these are rebuilt, Bab Al-Nasr will turn into heaven*" – Mr. Fakher Ibrahim-Pasha, member of a community-based initiative.

"بعد خمسين سنة باب النصر رح ترجع مثل ما كانت لان ما ادمرت كليا (...) محالاتها

"*In fifty years, Bab Al-Nasr will return to what it used to be because it was not completely destroyed (...) its businesses will also return to what they used to be because they were amongst the first ones to return*" – Business owner in Bab Al-Nasr, Male 62.

Based on the myriad of responses it is evident to say that the vision of the neighborhood is seen by the community of Bab Al-Nasr in two main perspectives. On one hand, the neighborhood's recovery was perceived "as a product" of social, economic, and physical recovery. For instance, people saw it as a product of social recovery: "*I see Bab Al-Nasr's recovery in forty years linked to the recovery of its people*". Or as a neighborhood that experienced economic recovery: "*(...) and all its surrounding Souqs reconstructed and functional*".

On the other hand, the neighborhood's recovery was viewed as a "process" that entails conditions to attain the recovery: "*(...) its people don not return, even after fifty years neither will Bab Al-Nasr*", "*(...) the most important thing is to keep on remembering its history even if forty years passes (...)*".

Therefore, the drafting of the vision had to encompass both perspectives and consolidate all the communicated visions together, which lead to the following:

“Bab Al-Nasr is a socially and economically recovered neighborhood empowered by its sustained living heritage. It is spatially reconnected to its surrounding, physically rehabilitated, socially restored as a network and economically revitalized to play a vital role in the City of Aleppo”. This drafted vision will guide the analysis and the tracks of investigation in the upcoming section.

D. Trends Analysis

The Descriptive Memory has shown that most rehabilitation work either targets the open/ public spaces or the historical monuments. It has also highlighted four types of trends that unfolded after the end of the Aleppo battle in 2016: the small-scale rehabilitation work by the private sector, the rehabilitation projects by the public sector, the project by the UNDP, and the community-based initiatives. This section seeks to analyze these rehabilitation projects undertaken by the different stakeholders in Bab Al-Nasr.

1. The Process of Acquiring Reconstruction Permits

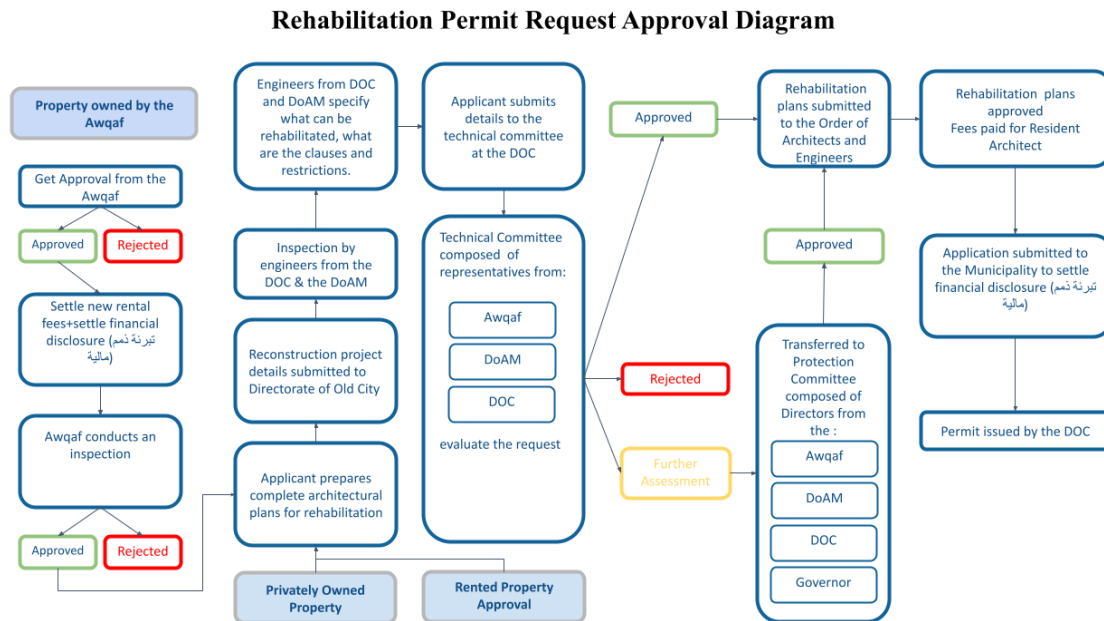


Figure 58- Rehabilitation Permit Request Approval by the Directorate of the Old City of Aleppo

Many of the individuals interviewed conducting rehabilitation work expressed the long and incapacitating process of obtaining rehabilitation permits. Thus, the process of acquiring the permits was documented to understand and analyze the lengthy process. The process differs based on the ownership status of the property. In case a tenant decides to conduct the rehabilitation work, he/she must acquire the owner's approval. On the other hand, if the Awqaf own the property, the tenant must settle all financial disclosures and newly implemented rental fees. The Awqaf must then conduct an inspection and then issue the approval.

The issuing of reconstruction permits is done through the Directorate of the Old City (DOC); the applicant must first submit a request to the DOC. Then, appointed architects from the DOC and the Directorate of Antiquities and Museums (DoAM) undertake an inspection of the site to issue a report on the property's physical state. They also provide the applicant with the permit clauses and restrictions. The permit

request is then submitted to a technical committee, including representatives from the DOC, the DoMA, and the Directorate of Endowments (Al-Awqaf), to thoroughly review the plans and either approve or reject. However, if the property was severely damaged or major structural changes were to occur to the property, the request would be transferred to the Old City Protection Committee, consisting of the DOC, DoMA Directors Al-Awqaf. Once approved by the committee, the plans must be transferred to the Order of Architects and Engineers to be approved, and fees must be paid for a resident architect appointed by the OEA to supervise the rehabilitation work. The applicant must then settle all tax disclosures related to the property in the Municipality and finally proceed to the DOC to receive the reconstruction permit.

The mapping of the process shows that the applicants must go through many financial and bureaucratic burdens, yet as observed by the applicants interviewed, the project is eventually poorly monitored. Thus, rendering the lengthy application process time consuming and ineffective. Furthermore, as previously mentioned before, this resulted in informal rehabilitation work in the neighborhood and the Old City's remaining to avoid this process.

2. Private Small-Scale Independent Rehabilitation Projects

Researchers affirm that societies affected by violence are the first responders during the aftermath of a disaster or a conflict (Van Krieken, Kulatunga, & Pathirage, 2017). Therefore, empowering them to be key players in postwar reconstruction, through participatory processes, is critical to the success of the reconstruction projects and a core value in CDSs (CitiesAlliance, 2017; Davidson, Johnson, Lizarralde, Dikmen, & Sliwinski, 2007). According to Alam (2010), the affected population's

involvement can positively influence the reconstruction projects. Bojicic´-Dzelilovic´ (2002) argues for the need to engage local actors in designing and/or implementing postwar reconstruction projects into

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the business owners and the residents were among the first initiators of the rehabilitation projects after Aleppo's battle. Thus, residents and business owners were asked to elaborate on their experiences during the rehabilitation process and identify the challenges and opportunities these projects offer to the recovery of the neighborhood.

First, the dwellers were inquired about acquiring the reconstruction process; most of the answers described it as lengthy and incapacitating as they had to deal with the many directorates responsible for the planning of the Old City. The dwellers were also asked if they had received any financial assistance or facilitation. Answers showed that they did not, instead, they had to pay back-taxes and take care of all reconstruction expenses. The dwellers were also questioned about the technical aspect of the rehabilitation, in case they received any supervision, technical assistance, or guidance, and in which stages. Answers showed that it was mainly during the first step of applying that the Directorates were strict with the submitted plans and permits; however, during the execution process, random and occasional supervision visits would be done by the technical committee to monitor the work. These strict processes and measures and the lack of supervision and monitoring by the local authorities had encouraged unofficial rehabilitation work by both the residents and business owners without regard to the neighborhood's historical fabric. Furthermore, Architect Souraya Zureick, architect and planner leading studies in the neighborhood concerning its damage assessment and rehabilitation, has informed me that the absence of an official

damage assessment of the Old City challenges the local authorities to keep track and monitor the quality of the rehabilitation activity. Thus, it is resulting in the poor-quality rehabilitation work threatening the historical fabric and disregarding unsound buildings dangerous to the safety of the neighborhood's dwellers.

a. The Rehabilitation of the Electrical Posts Initiated by Residents

As elaborated in the Descriptive Memory, some households organized themselves to rehabilitate the dwelling's electrical provision and fix their landlines. To understand this initiative by the residents, an interview was undertaken with one of the residents in it, Mr. Kinan Kharboutli, a resident in Bab Al-Nasr for the past 30 years. Mr. Kharboutli was asked about the number of households that participated in this initiative and why it did not target all the neighborhood's households. According to him, only 15 households participated in the initiative, whereas the remaining households in the neighborhood could not afford to participate.

Mr. Kharboutli was also asked if a neighborhood committee or cooperation existed to represent the residents and business owners, especially when trying to acquire permits related to the neighborhood's rehabilitation. He explained that although the committee did exist, it was not effective in these matters. The initiative he undertook with his neighbors was independent of the neighborhood's committee. However, he explained that he and his neighbors requested approval from the General Company for Electricity (شركة العامة لكهرباء حلب) to rehabilitate their electrical posts in the form of a community-based initiative (عمل شعبي). They then had to pay-off back bills and then were approved to go on with the work.

These rehabilitation initiatives value the neighborhood as they represent its social fabric's post-war continuity, vitality, and resilience. They are smaller in scale, faster, and operate independently without the hurdle of a larger, complicated set-up. Although some of these projects are fragmented, they represent the neighborhood's private sector. If organized and combined collectively, as shown in some cases, it could contribute to a more comprehensive plan that maximizes all participants' benefits. Many scholars argue the positive impact of collaborative planning. According to Healey (1996), collective planning theories perceive planning as a decision process where the different stakeholders can agree on an action plan which serves their mutual interest. Innes and Booher (2000) explain that participants within a participatory process debate, develop, and resort to network power to achieve their interests. Groups and individuals engage in collective planning because they believe and have assimilated that their interests are linked to others' actions and would like to be acknowledged as stakeholders within the process of decision-making (Innes & Booher, 2000). However, they lack financial support and funding, given they come from a financially challenging environment. They could also benefit from technical guidance and facilitation to operate formally with attention to the historical urban fabric.

b. The Rehabilitation of Historic Monuments by Community-Based groups

The Descriptive Memory indicated a significant rehabilitation activity by different community-based groups. They were specifically interested in the neighborhood's historic landmarks that were of sentimental value to them. Across all the projects, these community-based groups collected a good amount of funding and achieved significant work in the landmarks. However, some of these projects never

reached completion or attained their desired impact due to the local authorities' strict heritage preservation regulation. These stringent measures, especially during the issuing of the rehabilitation permits, discouraged many of the initiatives, which resulted in them continuing the rehabilitation work informally or stopping the work.

These efforts should be recognized and supported by the local authority as they could be of value to the neighborhood's recovery and could encourage further funding and initiatives interested in the rehabilitation of the historic fabric of the neighborhood. Nevertheless, they should operate within a more organized and technically guided framework for them to reach completion.

c. The Rehabilitation of Religious Monuments

Mosque Rehabilitation Permit Request Approval Diagram

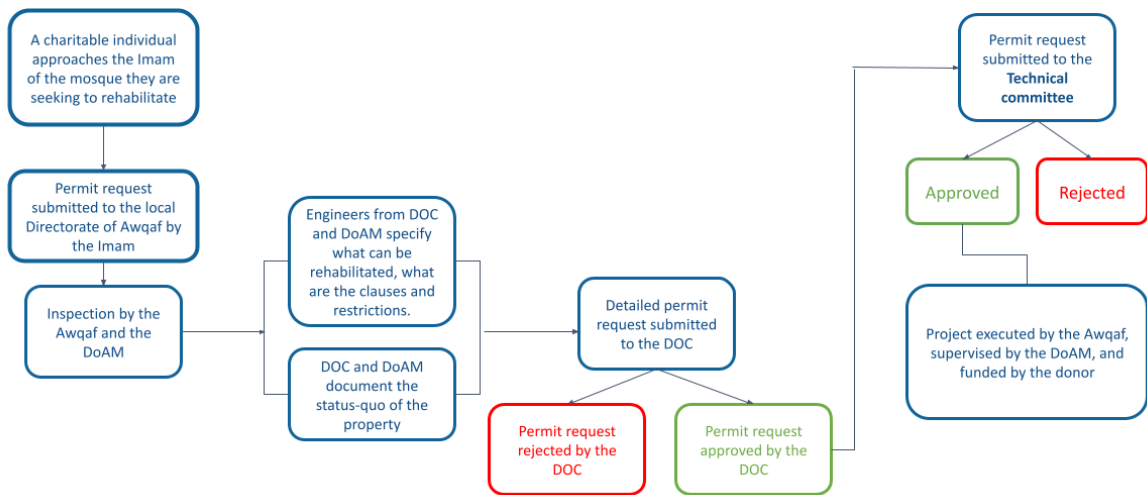


Figure 59- Mosque Rehabilitation Permit Request Approval Diagram from the Awqaf

The Descriptive Memory indicated Bab Al-Nasr being densely populated with religious facilities. It further showed that they were amongst the first monuments to be rehabilitated in the neighborhood. The previous chapter highlighted an example of a

mosque rehabilitation through a civil society initiative by the Yagan Family. The motives of the family were for religious and philanthropic purposes. Field visits showed that these types of ventures were repeated in almost all the neighborhood's mosques. To understand how these ventures operated, their rehabilitation process was documented.

Since the mosques are Awqaf properties, an interview was conducted with Ms. Daa Yagan an official working with the Directorate, to understand the process of applying for mosque rehabilitation permits. Mrs. Daa explained that the Awqaf does not fund the rehabilitation of its monuments. Funds are provided by Muslim philanthropists (فاعلين خير) seeking the rehabilitation of the mosques for religious and charitable reasons. However, she explained that the funder could not apply directly for the permit; it needs to be done through the mosque's Imam. The funder must first submit an application containing a detailed rehabilitation study by an architect and listing the rehabilitation work sought to be conducted. The Imam then proceeds to submit these documents to the Awqaf. If approved by the Awqaf, the application is transferred to the DoMA and to the DOC to consent.

These religious facilities occupy big plots in the neighborhood; thus, their rehabilitation could be a catalyst for the urban fabric's recovery. These rehabilitation initiatives also benefit the community residing in predominantly Muslim families, as the mosques are an essential social facility for it. However, similarly to other community-based initiatives, the technical quality of these projects is extremely poor. It is often contested and stopped by the local authorities, as seen in the Osmaniye Mosque case.

These ventures show civil society's willingness to invest and donate to preserve and rehabilitate their shared cultural heritage. These ventures must be

encouraged and built on to attract funding further and channel it towards a more comprehensive urban rehabilitation.

	Private Small-Scale Independent Rehabilitation Projects	The Rehabilitation of the Electrical Posts Initiated by Residents	The Rehabilitation of Historic Monuments by Community-Based groups	Rehabilitation of Religious Monuments by community-based groups
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smaller in scale and faster in implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active & resilient social fabric Faster in implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smaller in scale and faster in implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smaller in scale and faster in implementation
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor quality rehabilitation work No financial & technical assistance = informal rehabilitation projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not comprehensive of all residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor quality rehabilitation work No financial & technical assistance = informal rehabilitation projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor quality rehabilitation work
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Return of residents & owners Rehabilitation of the commercial activity Recovery of social fabric 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Producing a livable urban environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attracts funding Protected historical urban fabric as the monuments occupy large plots in the neighborhood Raise awareness & attracts further projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attracts funding Rehabilitated facilities for residents
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenged by the local authorities' long process of acquiring permits Financial burdens 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenged by the local authorities' long process of acquiring permits Financial burdens Don't reach completion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Endangerment of Original Architecture

Figure 60- Table summarizing the SWOT analysis of all the small private scale rehabilitation projects in Bab Al-Nasr (author, 2021)

E. Key Partners

Public Sector

- Municipality
- Directorate of the Old City
- Directorate of Antiquities and Museums
- Directorate of the Islamic Religious Endowments (Awqaf)

- Ministry of Tourism
- Chamber of Commerce
- Syrian Federation of Exporters

International Community

- UNDP
- UNESCO
- Aga Khan

Civil Society/Non-Governmental Organizations

- Friends of Bab Al-Nasr
- Neighborhood committee
- Syria Trust for Development
- Al Adeyat Archeological Society
- Private initiatives / Community- based groups

Donors

- Japanese Government
- Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

F. General Objectives and Strategic Objectives

A. Improving the socio-economic conditions of the residents and the business owners

- 1) To create job and employment opportunities for the residents of Bab Al-Nasr

- 2) To incentivize the return of the displaced residents of Bab Al-Nasr
- 3) To empower women and the youth
- 4) To support ailing businesses and encourage their return of the displaced ones
- 5) To re-establish the businesses' local, regional, and international value of its commercial products
- 6) To ensure a secure and safe environment

B. Developing a coordinated and comprehensive urban rehabilitation scheme

- 1) To learn from and build on the existing small rehabilitation practices and consolidate their efforts
- 2) To reform the local authorities' regulatory framework and engage local expertise in the rehabilitation of historic properties
- 3) To involve all the stakeholders and coordinate their efforts
- 4) To rehabilitate and protect the built heritage and the history of Bab Al-Nasr
- 5) To restore the historical housing stock by engaging the residents through subsidies and training according to consistent and affordable restoration guidelines and techniques

C. Protecting and Sustaining the Production of cultural heritage, both the tangible and intangible

- 1) To support and protect traditional crafts and industries
- 2) To sustain the social practices related to the intangible heritage
- 3) To develop the neighborhood into a tourist attraction

D. Building Civic Engagement

- 1) To strengthen the culture of participation within Bab Al-Nasr's social fabric

E. Securing a livable Urban Environment

- 1) To restore social services

- 2) To reach 24 hours of water and electricity provision
- 3) To ensure a secure and safe environment
- 4) To provide accessibility to the neighborhood and link it to its surroundings

CHAPTER V

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The Strategic Framework represents the third and core stage of Bab Al-Nasr's Neighborhood Recovery. It is based on the Strategic Diagnosis of the four transversal issues generated at the end of the Descriptive Memory. The diagnosis of each transversal issue generated strategic objectives that were then consolidated into overarching general objectives. The general objectives are the following:

A. Improving the socio-economic conditions of the residents and the business owners.

B. Developing a coordinated and comprehensive urban rehabilitation scheme.

C. Protecting and Sustaining the Production of cultural heritage, both the tangible, and intangible.

D. Building Civic Engagement.

E. Securing a livable Urban Environment.

The results of the diagnosis were translated into a set of strategies. In the following chapter, the strategies will guide the elaboration of the Action Plans. According to the USUDS report generated for the City of Saida in 2013, "The cross-cutting approach of the diagnosis allows for considering each strategy within one comprehensive framework and pursuing value-adding complementarities and synergies among different objectives related to different sectors" (Al-Harithy et al., 2013 p. 3). It also facilitates cooperation and coordination between the different stakeholders while offering for each of them guidelines explicitly tailored to their priorities (Al-Harithy et al., 2013)

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the city development strategy proposed for Bab Al-Nasr was methodologically adapted to the scale and the context of the neighborhood.

However, it is imperative to mention that the neighborhood cannot function nor recover independently and outside of the city's context. Therefore, the proposed strategies are of multiple scales; in other words, some of the proposed strategies are particular to the development of the neighborhood and function according to its scale, while others tackle issues in the neighborhood's immediate surroundings. Lastly, some tap into the city's large mechanisms and be implemented by local authorities. It is also important to mention that the stakeholders involved in the strategic framework are not limited to the neighborhood's dwellers but rather are in partnership with other stakeholders from the public and private sector, local authorities, and international agencies.






A. Vision for Bab Al-Nasr

The vision articulated for the neighborhood is the following:

“Bab Al-Nasr is a socially and economically recovered neighborhood empowered by its sustained living heritage. It is spatially reconnected to its surrounding, physically rehabilitated, socially restored as a network and economically revitalized to play a vital role in the City of Aleppo.”

The vision encompasses five critical assets that accumulate to the neighborhood's sustainable development and consequently comprise the core structuring links connecting the framework below's strategies. The strategies need to be understood as intended to enable the neighborhoods to valorize and tap into these assets towards achieving sustainable development and post-war recovery of Bab Al-Nasr. The main

drivers for sustainable recovery are represented in color-coded double arrows next to each strategy in the annexed table summarizing the strategic framework. They are the following:

- Spatially Reconnected 
- Physically Rehabilitated 
- Socially Restored Network 
- Economically Revitalized 
- Sustained Living Heritage 

B. Bab Al-Nasr's Strategic Framework

This section will elaborate on all the general objectives, strategic objectives, and strategies elaborated for the neighborhood.

A. Improving the socio-economic living conditions of the residents and business owners.

The Descriptive Memory highlighted the aggravating consequences of the war on both the residents and business owners' socio-economic conditions. The diagnosis has also highlighted that the declining business activity and the residents' poor socio-economic conditions intertwine and impede the recovery of the neighborhood. Measures need to be set in place to recover the neighborhood's residential fabric while stimulating the neighborhood's business activity in a way that both try to adapt and emerge to the post-conflict realities. The depopulation of the neighborhood must be targeted and proposing incentivizes to solve the issue of displacement in the neighborhood to ensure the recovery of its social fabric. Therefore, a myriad of strategies must be proposed to

target the physical rehabilitation of shops and residences and secure a safe environment for returnees. The poor socio-economic conditions of both the residents and business owners must also be tackled, such as high unemployment, massive displacement, gender imbalance, and inequality.

A1. To create job and employment opportunities for the residents of Bab Al-Nasr

The socio-economic recovery of conflict-affected groups is strongly associated with local economies' capacity to create job opportunities. However, after years of conflict, the local economy is unable to do so mainly due to “reduced purchasing capacity, the disruption in commercial activity, loss of productive assets, inadequacy of infrastructure, poor and inadequate skills and labor force and risks and instability inhibiting investments.” (CRSIS, 2010, p. 1)

Based on the Diagnosis, it was evident that both residents and owners suffer from the consequences of the war on the city's economic state. Many residents were unemployed and dependent on humanitarian aid, while business owners struggled to reactivate their businesses.

Scholars discuss the importance of job creation in reconstructing the economy as an initiative of peace and livelihood stability. Stewart (2015) explains that the economy's restoration is one of the pillars of post-conflict policies. A report published by the International Labor Organization in 1999 also supports this claim and states “that employment creation was critical for building sustainable peace (Cited in Date-Bah, 2003, p. 3; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2011). Beasley (2006) seconds the following by stating in a United States Agency for International Development (USAID) report that “Job creation projects are among the most effective means of stabilizing communities

and keeping the peace, immediately after conflict” (p.1). Therefore, strategies should be put in place to create job opportunities for the residents in addition to enhancing the working environment of the business owners as it is vital to the recovery of Bab Al-Nasr’s social fabric.

A1.1 Provide vocational training and reconstruction workshops by contractors that have established reconstruction projects in the neighborhood for the residents to be able to undertake minor rehabilitation work coherent to the law of heritage preservation.

Seeing that employment should have a fundamental role in post-conflict rehabilitation programs should stimulate this demand for labor (CRSIS, 2010). Beasley (2006) sees that these efforts should begin with “emergency job projects” (p.16), such as employment in infrastructural reconstruction. These job opportunities provide long-term work and result in lasting benefits to the community, such as skills acquiring (Beasley, 2006).

Aleppo has witnessed the largest percentage share of total damages among Syrian cities, representing 58% of Syria’s damage (WorldBank, 2017, p. 28). The city has almost 36 000 buildings destroyed; debris removal would take six years of continuous work and “26 million truck-kilometers” (Overton & Dathan, 2019, para. 4). These figures demonstrate the need for a massive labor force to be recruited. In response to the high unemployment rate in the city and the neighborhood, efforts should be directed towards training the labor force in reconstruction to ensure job opportunities. This will be done by relying on the expertise and the know-how of established contractors that have previously conducted work in the neighborhood to

initiate training programs for non-skilled community members to undertake DIY (do-it-yourself) projects in rehabilitating their properties.

A1.2- C1.2 Provide capacity building workshops for residents to create employment opportunities in the tourism sector while supporting the development of tourism and preserving the tangible and intangible heritage of Bab Al-Nasr and the Old City

Fieldwork and conversations with some residents showed that they had valuable information on the neighborhood's history and families and its monuments. In partnership with Al-Adeyat Organization ¹⁰and the Directorate of Tourism, residents (focusing on the youth and women) and business owners should be first trained to become tourist guides and offer their services for visitors seeking to visit the neighborhood Old City.

A1.3- A4.5 - C1.3 Provide vocational training in traditional crafts and industries and enhance entrepreneurial skills

Most war-torn countries experience a substantial decline in qualified and skilled human capital due to migration or high death rates, resulting in a loss in entrepreneurial knowledge and technical skills (CRSIS, 2010). Therefore, vocational training, capacity building programs, and skills workshops should be offered to the residents, especially the youth and the business owners that have endured the consequences of war. Their agendas should be need-tailored and address the skills

¹⁰ Al-Adiyat Archeological Society is a local qualitative scientific organization established in Aleppo in 1924. It is specialized in the city's cultural heritage both tangible and intangible. It also holds many activities to increase communication on the city's cultural heritage ((UNESCO, n.d-b)

required in the local labor market. According to (CRSIS, 2010), these programs assist in enhancing labor supply and access.

A1.4/A2.3 Provide access to labor market information and employment services encouraging returnees to consult them.

A particular program needs to be designated for the integration of the returnees to guarantee their inclusiveness. It should focus on equal access to opportunities and recovery benefits similar to the rest of the population to avoid marginalization. The program will need to investigate mechanisms to ensure their integration into the local labor market by valorizing their skills. The program should aim to create a more comprehensive market that will deliver the returnees and the hosting community's needs while encouraging collaboration and business associations. Special projects should be set in the program for women, and their needs must be prioritized to access the job market and information.

A2. To incentivize the return of the displaced residents of Bab Al-Nasr

Based on the diagnosis, the area is relatively still depopulated, and grave consequences have been imposed on the neighborhood's social fabric. Most of the inhabitants were internally displaced, finding refuge in the city's western neighborhoods or have fled the country entirely. The issue of displacement calls for measures incentivizing and facilitating the return of the displaced, which will ensure the restoration of the social fabric.

A2.1 Develop a legal framework for the compensation of lost property in response to Law No.10

As mentioned in the Descriptive Memory, the displaced population who had fled the country faced losing their property to Law no.10. Measures should be applied to provide shelter and housing and tackle issues of property titles of the displaced and re-settlers, which according to CRSIS (2010), is a crucial incentive for their return. Compensation could happen in financial assistance, which allows the affected population to find alternatives to the lost properties. Another form of compensation could occur in the form of legal aid that enables the affected population to rebuke the decision concerning lost property confiscation.

A2.2 Issue legal acquittals (اعفاءات) for the displaced populations

As previously mentioned, the strategic framework drafted for Bab Al-Nasr will consider the absentee population as they are an undeniable part of the neighborhood's social fabric. Thus, measures need to be set in place to facilitate their safe return. As elaborated previously, the main reasons that Syrians cannot return to Syria are due to security reasons (e.g., political positions, unfinished military services, and illegally exiting the Syrian territory through illegal border crossing).

A1.4-A2.3 Provide access to labor market information and employment services encouraging returnees to consult them.

This strategy is transversal across different strategic objectives and has been elaborated on in A1.4

A2.4-B5.1- A4.2 Develop incentive packages to facilitate the physical rehabilitation of residential/ commercial properties

The population returning to the neighborhood cannot rehabilitate their properties due to financial obstacles and the local authorities' strict measures. A program needs to be set to facilitate the physical rehabilitation of the residential and commercial properties by providing financial and technical assistance. This program will be lead by the neighborhood committee in partnerships with the needed expertise to develop comprehensive incentive packages to facilitate the rehabilitation projects.

A3. To empower women and the youth

The Diagnosis elaborated on the challenging living conditions the inhabitants were living in. It was also noted the significant gender imbalance where the majority of households are female-headed families. The disruption of the educational system has had a negative impact on the youth and has forced the youth into child labor to be able to provide for their families. Measures need to be put in place to aid in developing the capacity and skills building of the women and youth of the neighborhood. Initiatives should be taken to help human capital formation in the neighborhood by supporting and empowering the youth and the neighborhood's women. Human capital is a form of territorial capital, which “represents capacities, productive assets, and resources” that must be appropriately reconstructed to induce economic revival (CRSIS, 2010, p. 21). In post-conflict recovery programs, donors and stakeholders introduce “technical expertise, financial resources, and institutional frameworks” to stimulate the recovery of territorial capital (CRSIS, 2010, p. 21). Therefore, these programs and measures need to be implemented to:

- Strengthen their role in the community and be able to voice their concern on issues related to the recovery of the neighborhood
- Improve their living conditions while helping them integrate with the local job market and encourage them to attain higher education levels.

A3.1 Implement strict measures against child labor and encourage child education

In order to stop the exploitation of underage employment, strict actions must be taken against businesses and enterprises that continue to do so illegally. Initiatives by non-governmental organizations must help set up a system that tracks underaged employment and penalizes business that continues to do so. NGOs can also aid the reinstatement of children back into the education system.

A3.2 Provide Support for female-headed families by linking them to work and study opportunities (especially ones of young children, members with disabilities, or the elderly)

The neighborhood's socio-economic profile demonstrated that before the war, the majority of women's educational attainment had only reached middle school and faced high rates of unemployment. Nevertheless, the war has worsened the educational attainment across different age groups and exceeded the unemployment rates. Additionally, it was noted that the majority of the families in the neighborhood were female-headed who have no means of income and receive financial support from humanitarian organizations. There is a dire need to provide different support forms for these women, such as capacity-building workshops, financial and moral support, and link them to social and income-generating activities. They should also be encouraged to organize "women-only" neighborhood meetings to discuss neighborhood issues and

their communities' challenges. Female-headed families should also be encouraged to work from home (e.g. women with sewing skills can be linked and sell their products to sewing workshops or work for them from home; women with good culinary skills can cook from home and provide for restaurants). Workshops will be offered for capacity and skills building and assisting women in becoming exposed to the labor market and encouraging them to apply for higher education.

A3.3 Promote existing youth community centers to encourage skill development and networking

The neighborhood's social fabric has been severely affected by the conflict. In order to recover it, the neighborhood's post-war recovery plan needs to focus on building capacity for the younger population. Local NGOs should take the lead in raising awareness and promoting existing youth centers and skills development programs to encourage the younger population to consult them. The local NGO's should also implement programs to encourage networking and establish youth networks of cultural and educational exchange.

A3.4-E1.3 Establish recreational services for the youth and female population

Before war, no recreational services existed for the women and Bab Al-Nasr's youth and its surrounding. Facilities should be designated for the organization of social events for the female and younger population to network. On the other hand, social events could be organized in abandoned historical monuments or through a partnership with the Awqaf by utilizing the mosques for social gatherings. The social events and gathering will encourage dialogues and forums within the neighborhood's committee

A4. To support ailing businesses and bring back the displaced ones

As elaborated in the Diagnosis, the souq located at the heart of the neighborhood was physically reconstructed by the UNDP. However, the neighborhood's business activity was merely back to being operational. This issue is highly associated with Bab Al-Nasr's being part of an inactive economic network in the Old City, whereby the neighboring areas are depopulated and destroyed. Moreover, the business owners' return seems to be impeded and challenged by the local authorities' strict regulations in tax collections and financial disclosures. Therefore, it is vital to develop incentives to facilitate their return in terms of physical reconstruction, taxation, and registration procedures to recover the neighborhood's historical economic activity and sustain it.

A4.1 Reform the regulatory frameworks that govern registration procedures and taxation

Based on the interviews done in the diagnosis phase, the internally displaced businesses find it more affordable to rent in the western parts of the city than to relocate into the Old City and deal with the rehabilitation work and the re-opening procedures. Adjustments must be made in the regulatory framework that governs registration procedures and taxation, such as differing tax collections and issuing acquittals of financial disclosures for the retuning businesses. These facilitations can be implemented to facilitate and incentivize the return of the business owners of Bab Al-Nasr and other businesses in the Old City

A4.2- A2.4-B5.1 Develop incentive packages to facilitate the physical rehabilitation of residential/commercial properties

This strategy is transversal across different strategic objectives A2 and B5 and has been elaborated on in A2.4

A4.3- C1.6 Establish a micro-loan program for the ailing businesses

As mentioned in the Diagnosis, the UNDP rehabilitation project included distributing grants for some returning business owners. The distribution was based on a *first-come, first-serve* basis and therefore created controversy as it was unevenly distributed. The business owners need to be introduced to other funding alternatives such as reaching out to micro-loans companies or applying to micro-loans through banks to get financial relief to physically and economically revitalize their businesses.

A4.4-C1.7- E4.2 Organize commercial fairs to attract customers and increase the demand for the neighborhood's businesses

The diagnosis has stressed the lack of economic recovery due to the lowered demand for goods and customers not being attracted to access to the neighborhood. Additionally, it was also highlighted that the neighborhood suffered from a lack of connectivity with other parts of the city. This was due to the destroyed aftermath of the built infrastructure of the roads. The neighborhoods that once were deemed as the hotspot for diversified goods are today desolated. Therefore, the need to organize local commercial fairs to attract new commercial footprint into the neighborhood can be seen as vital to the social and economic recovery of the neighborhood. This will allow the neighborhood to redeem its daily commercial footprint and instill a sense of stability in the neighborhood marketplace. These commercial fairs will bring out the social aspect of the community back to life.

A4.5 - A1.3- C1.3 Provide vocational training in traditional crafts and industries and enhance entrepreneurial skills

The conflict has resulted in a lack of qualified labor force, especially in traditional crafts and industries. It impeded the recovery of the neighborhood's business activity and threatened the neighborhood's commercial heritage. Qualified individuals must conduct vocational training in traditional crafts and industries to train and reproduce a new class of qualified, skilled laborers. Entrepreneurial skills workshops must also be provided especially for the youth, to be able to adapt to the new economic landscape of the city's economic activity.

A5. To re-establish the businesses' local, regional, and international value of its commercial products

As highlighted in the Descriptive Memory, Bab Al-Nasr was mainly known for its stationery, leather shoemaking, and laurel soap light industries. These light industrial facilities solidified the neighborhood's commercial value, not only locally but regionally. In the aftermath of the war, these light industries that once shaped the neighborhood's character have ceased their operations due to numerous reasons affected by the war. Therefore, it is critical to re-establish the businesses and their commercial value as it revitalizes the neighborhood's commercial activity and its character.

A5.1 Market and Brand Bab Al-Nasr's SMEs

Before the war, Bab Al-Nasr's business activity was part of a larger trade and commerce network. Although Bab Al-Nasr is among the first souqs that have been rehabilitated it is located within a damaged urban environment that lacks commercial connectivity. Thus, measures need to be implemented to reestablish the value of Bab

Al-Nasr's market and brand. Business owners should be trained to brand and market their merchandise through the use of social media. Collectively, the business owners could also organize local fairs to attract customers.

A5.2/ B1.1 Establish a cooperative for business owners to consolidate their decision making concerning the commercial and physical rehabilitation of their shops

As elaborated in the Descriptive Memory, the neighborhood's business owners do not have formal cooperation to represent them. Therefore, it is proposed to establish a partnership that would unify all Bab Al-Nasr's business owners and help them deliberate and reach a consensus that would benefit all the business owners. The cooperation will assist them in collectively addressing issues concerning the commercial and physical rehabilitation of their shops. Lessons could be shared among them concerning their businesses' rehabilitation to avoid duplication of effort and avoid conflict. It will encourage partnerships with business owners with stakeholders from other sectors. Furthermore, this collective power will facilitate partnerships with other stakeholders involved in the neighborhood's rehabilitation.

A5.3 Establish a program by the Syrian Exporter Federation (SEF) to consult and train Bab Al-Nasr's cooperative of business owners in the business of exportation and trading

The Syrian Exporter Federation is a national organization of businesses and companies aiming to develop and further the interest of local businesses in Syria, specifically in the exportation sector. The federation goals are to establish trade between Arab countries while facilitating and promoting the flow of goods of Arab origin. It also provides marketing and economic data on the Arab markets while holding seminars and

trade fairs to develop the inter-Arab foreign exchange. Most importantly, participation through the federation creates an extensive database network of Arab importers and exporters while encouraging joint Arab projects for international marketing. It is proposed to establish a partnership between Bab Al-Nasr's business owners and the SEF to help develop and further expand the national trade network. For example, Bab al Nasr's cooperative representatives will participate in the seminars and business training programs. This will create new opportunities in the marketing of local products, thus expanding the horizons of Bab Al-Nasr's products' market value.

A6. To ensure a secure and safe environment

Providing a safe and secure environment is a crucial factor in rehabilitating the war-damaged social fabric; it incentivizes the displaced's return and allows affected communities to get over the trauma and consequently stimulate recovery. It was noted in the Descriptive Memory that the area was unattractive for visitors for safety reasons, mainly due to the lack of electricity and damage. Therefore, the introduction of community-based activities during night time and providing adequate lighting will render the neighborhood a safer environment for both residents and the broader community.

A6.1-E3.1 Introduce community-based activities during nighttime

It has been elaborated in the Descriptive Memory that the neighborhood and its surroundings are usually less active and populated during nighttime as the daytime commuters (e.g., business owners and customers) leave the area by the end of business hours. Introducing community-based activities by providing social and recreational

services for the neighborhood's residents will enhance the safety issue and the neighborhood's accessibility during nighttime. Public Spaces should be designated to accommodate the gatherings of the community.

A6.2-E3.2 Establish a community-based security system during nighttime (community watch groups)

As elaborated in the Descriptive Memory, a police station was in the neighborhood for security and protection measures. In the aftermath of the conflict, the police station was abandoned. It is proposed to implement community-based watch groups that will occasionally guard the neighborhood to ensure the neighborhood's security and safety.

A6.3-E3.3-E2.3 Develop a comprehensive energy-efficient rehabilitation scheme for the electrical infrastructure allowing surplus energy storage for nighttime

The damaged electrical infrastructure causes power outages during the nighttime. Therefore it is proposed that a new study is to be done on the neighborhood's energy usage and develop a comprehensive energy-efficient scheme that allows the installation of solar panels with battery storages. This will help create a surplus of energy to store during the daytime and will enable the neighborhood to consume power during the nighttime.

B. Developing a coordinated and comprehensive urban rehabilitation scheme

The ongoing rehabilitation activity in the neighborhood is purely physical and does not encompass the neighborhoods' social, economic, and cultural aspects. It is also no inclusive of the neighborhood's urban fabric, but instead, the rehabilitation is done

on a building to building basis. Moreover, the local authorities and international agencies' projects are not participative of the neighborhood community. On the other hand, although many community-based groups and private rehabilitation projects are undergoing, none seem to be coordinated. A coordinated and comprehensive urban scheme will be proposed to negotiate an adequate form of governance between the public, private sector, experts, and international agencies involved in Bab Al-Nasr's reconstruction. It also aims to target the neighborhood's rehabilitation in a more urban-based approach to ensure and tap into the neighborhood's remaining neglect urban components

B1.To learn from and build on the existing small rehabilitation practices and consolidate their efforts

The private small-scale rehabilitation projects and community-based rehabilitation initiatives were the initiators of the neighborhood's rehabilitation activity; they showed resiliency in mobilizing to recover their livelihoods and sustain their history. However, these ad-hoc initiatives functioned on separate agendas and, in the absence of a framework, which, if existed, could maximize their efforts and serve as an entry point to a more comprehensive cultural heritage led recovery. These efforts must be understood and analyzed to build on them and maximize them. They also need to be organized to consolidate their actions and ensure the participation of all stakeholders. These organizations will allow stakeholders to communicate their success stories, challenges and be able to translate them into collective visions

B1.1-A5.2 Establish a cooperative for business owners to consolidate their decision making concerning the commercial and physical rehabilitation of their shops

This strategy is transversal across different strategic objectives and has been elaborated on in A5.2

B1.2 Reorganize the neighborhood committee to ensure broader and more efficient communication across all the residents of the neighborhood

The Diagnosis elaborated on a group of 15 households that were able to achieve successful electrical rehabilitation work in the neighborhood. This committee seemed to be well organized and established coherent rehabilitation work in cooperation with the local authorities. Thus it is proposed to build on the committee's efforts and expand the program to include more neighborhood residents. This will allow a broader and more effective communication system across the neighborhood households by creating multiple committees representing the community regarding the neighborhood. Representatives should be elected, and women's participation must be encouraged. This is also linked to the Strategic Objective "D1. Create a culture of Participation."

B1.3-B4.4 Create a fund to amalgamate the private external funding donated and distribute it more comprehensively towards the rehabilitation of the neighborhood's urban environment

As elaborated in the Descriptive Memory, many external community-based groups funded historical monuments' rehabilitation in the neighborhood. It is proposed to establish a fund to attract investments and funding further and distribute it more comprehensively across the rehabilitation of the neighborhood's urban environment. Campaigns could be launched to raise awareness and draw attention to the historical

importance of the neighborhood and the extensive damage caused to it to draw funding. This could be an opportunity to fund the rehabilitation of the neglected housing stock.

B2.To reform the local authorities’ regulatory framework, and engage local expertise in the rehabilitation of historic properties

The previous chapters have identified some gaps in the local authorities' regulatory framework in issuing rehabilitation permits. It also stressed the lack of technical supervision and guidance during the implementation of the rehabilitation projects. This is resulting in informal rehabilitation projects in the neighborhood, which is endangering the neighborhood’s urban historical fabric. Therefore, reforms need to be done to the local authorities ongoing regulatory framework for the issuing of rehabilitation permit and apply better technical monitoring systems

B2.1 Reinforce supervision mechanisms to monitor and guide the private small-scale rehabilitation projects by the Directorate of the Old City, the Directorate of Antiquities and Museums

Based on field visits and interviews with different stakeholders, the local authorities rarely conducted field visits to supervise the projects and ensure that the latter conform to their permit clauses. Therefore, supervision mechanisms should be reinforced where officials should continuously work field visits to monitor small-scale rehabilitation projects.

B2.2-B4.3 Engage Professors and local expertise to co-design alongside the dwellers a comprehensive urban rehabilitation scheme for the neighborhood

The Descriptive Memory has elaborated on Bab Al-Nasr’s rehabilitation activity being top-down and done on a building-to-building basis. It also showed that

some residents and shop owners were rehabilitating their dwellings informally, negating the neighborhood's historic urban fabric. Thus, it is proposed to encourage the residents and business owners to create partnerships with local expertise and professors to co-design an urban rehabilitation scheme for the neighborhood. This participatory approach to planning will ensure the inclusivity of the residents and business owners' concerns and conduct rehabilitation work within technical guidance conforming to the laws of heritage preservation.

B2.3 Ease the process of acquiring reconstruction permits

The Diagnosis has described the long and incapacitating process of acquiring permits. As seen in strategy B2.1, it is proposed to reverse the local authorities' regulatory framework, thereby easing the process of obtaining the rehabilitation permits and increasing supervision and monitoring mechanisms.

B2.4 Establish a damage assessment inventory by the Order of Architects and Engineers

The local authority has not yet conducted a comprehensive damage assessment on Bab-Al Nasr's neighborhood and the rest of the Old City of Aleppo due to the lack of human resources at their disposal. However, some local experts (i.e., professors, architects, engineers) are conducting damage assessment surveys independently. It is proposed to establish a unified code by the Order of Architects and Engineers to distribute the relevant experts conducting damage assessment surveys to accumulate them and create an inventory.

B3. To involve all the stakeholders and coordinate their efforts

The previous chapter has outlined the different rehabilitation projects undergoing in the neighborhood. Through the analysis of these efforts, gaps have been identified in the overall rehabilitation activity. The UNDP's project lacked a participative planning approach that was inclusive of the business owners. The private small independent rehabilitation projects were unorganized and fragmented. Furthermore, in some cases, the community-based groups rehabilitating historical monuments lacked technical guidance. Therefore, measures should be applied to organize, assess and coordinate these efforts under one overarching umbrella to maximize these efforts' efficiency in the recovery of the neighborhood.

B3.1 Create a consortium of representatives of stakeholders across the different sectors involved in the rehabilitation of the neighborhood (public sector, private sector, community-based groups, the international community, local experts)

This consortium should serve as an intermediary between the public and private sector, the international agencies, community-based groups, and experts. It aims to organize the different stakeholders in various committees to mediate their decisions and visions and reach consensus. The neighborhood's committee and the business owners' cooperation should elect representatives to represent them and address their concerns when establishing partnerships with other stakeholders. This consortium will allow all stakeholders to deliberate and communicate their visions and challenges. It will also facilitate the co-designing of a comprehensive rehabilitation scheme and the implementation of incremental projects beneficial to the majority of stakeholders.

B4. To rehabilitate and protect the built heritage and the history of Bab Al-Nasr

The rehabilitation activity conducted in Bab Al-Nasr's neighborhood has not taken into account the sensitive nature of the built heritage. This neighborhood, along with its adjacent communities, has played a crucial role in the history of the Old City as a whole. Therefore the protection of such history should be a priority in the rehabilitation programs.

B4.1 Amend and reform the regulatory framework for the preservation and rehabilitation of historical monuments

As elaborated in the Descriptive Memory, the neighborhood's historical monuments decayed prior to the conflict and have massively worsened in its aftermath. The current regulatory framework is outdated and does not conform to the realities of the aftermath of war. Therefore, the preservation and rehabilitation of the historical monuments must be amended and updated to support the preservation of these historical monuments adequately. It is proposed to primarily update the historical monuments' inventory, then categorize them into different priority levels of historical and architectural value. Furthermore, strict technical guidelines in the rehabilitation process should be enforced to ensure the built fabric's continuity.

B4.2-B2.4 Establish a damage assessment inventory by the Order of Architects and Engineers

This strategy has already been elaborated on in B2.4. However, the establishment of a damage assessment inventory by the Order of Architect and Engineers is crucial to help identify the state of the built heritage. This will allow for the tracking and monitoring the rehabilitation projects in the neighborhood and other parts of the city to ensure their conformation to heritage laws.

B4.3-B2.2 Engage Professors and local expertise to co-design with the dwellers a comprehensive urban rehabilitation scheme for the neighborhood

This strategy is transversal across different strategic objectives and has been elaborated in B2.2. Enlisting the relevant expertise and the help of the community members will help guide a comprehensive urban rehabilitation scheme best suited for the needs of the neighborhood's community. This will also protect the built heritage as the relevant expertise will ensure the conformation of preservation laws.

B4.4-B1.4 Create a fund to amalgamate the private external funding donated and distribute it more comprehensively towards the rehabilitation of the neighborhood's urban environment

This strategy is transversal across different strategic objectives and has been elaborated on in B1.4

B5. To restore the historical housing stock by engaging the residents through subsidies and training according to consistent and affordable restoration guidelines and techniques

Although the neighborhood's medieval housing stock represents a significant substantial proportion of the neighborhood's historical built heritage, it is being disregarded by the rehabilitation efforts. However, its rehabilitation is an opportunity to both save the neighborhood's urban environment and recover its social fabric. Therefore, a participative rehabilitation scheme must be implemented to engage the residents through subsidies and technical training to replenish their dwellings.

B5.1- A2.4-A4.2 Develop incentive packages to facilitate the physical rehabilitation of residential/ commercial properties

This strategy is transversal across the strategic objectives A2 and A4 and has been elaborated in A2.4

B5.2- A1.1- A2.5 Provide expertise and the know-how of established contractors that have previously conducted work in the neighborhood to initiate training programs for non-skilled community members to undertake DIY (do-it-yourself) projects in rehabilitating their properties coherent to the law of heritage preservation.

This strategy is transversal across the strategic objectives A1 and A2 and has been elaborated on in A1.1

C. Protecting and sustaining the production of cultural heritage, both the tangible and intangible

As shown in the Descriptive Memory, the conflict has caused extensive damage to Bab Al-Nasr's tangible and intangible heritage. It represents its layers of history, social identity, and historical business activity. Therefore, adopting a participative heritage-led recovery for Bab Al-Nasr will ensure the revitalization of its business activity and the preservation of its community's cultural identity. Jigyasu (2019) affirms that post-disaster contexts' participative heritage rehabilitation programs can ensure collective action among the affected communities for post-disaster recovery. He further explains, "the rich expression of heritage" is a potent way to help disaster-affected communities to recover from the psychological effect of the disaster (Jigyasu, 2019, para. 14). Therefore, measures need to be applied within the neighborhood's recovery

scheme to ensure the protection and sustainment of the neighborhood's cultural heritage production.

C1. To support and protect traditional crafts and industries

As previously discussed in the Descriptive Memory, the neighborhood's business activity represents an integral part of Aleppo's Old City's history and economic vitality. Therefore, supporting and protecting the business activity is a two-fold benefit. First, it improves the socio-economic conditions of the business owners and revitalizes their business. Secondly, it sustains the continuity of the neighborhood's history and heritage.

C1.1- A1.2-C3.3 Provide capacity building workshops in tourism for residents to create employment opportunities in the tourism sector while supporting the development of tourism and preserving the tangible and intangible heritage of Bab Al-Nasr and the Old City

This strategy is transversal across the strategic objective A1 and C3 and has been elaborated on in A1.2

C1.2- A4.3 Establish a micro-loan program for the ailing businesses

This strategy is transversal across different strategic objectives and has been elaborated on in A4.3

C1.3 -A4.5 - A1.3 Provide vocational training in traditional crafts and industries and enhance entrepreneurial skills

This strategy is transversal across the strategic objectives A4 and A1 and has been elaborated on in A1.3

C1.4-C3.2-A4.4 Organize commercial fairs to attract customers and increase the demand in the neighborhood's businesses

This strategic objective is transversal across the strategic objectives C3 and A4 and has been elaborated on in A4.4

C2. To sustain the social practices related to the intangible heritage

Intangible heritage develops from the relationship of communities with objects, practices, and places and thus represents a bottom-up approach to heritage creation. It also represents a collective's identity and helps it produce collective social memories (Harrison, 2010). Hence, the sustainability of the neighborhood's intangible heritage is highly associated with its social fabric recovery. As described in the Diagnosis, the intangible heritage is not tapped into in rehabilitation projects. Measures need to be set in place to restore and facilitate the social practices that have long been part of the neighborhood's social fabric. This can be done by creating a safe environment to facilitate the ease of practicing social activities.

C2.1 Organize celebrations for religious events

The Descriptive Memory showed that religious festivities are integral to the neighborhood's social fabric. It is thus proposed to encourage the organization of public celebrations of religious events. This allows the community to gather around social events and restrengthen community ties.

C2.3 - E1.4 Restore existing celebration halls to provide spaces for cultural and social events

The Descriptive Memory highlighted the destruction of the celebration halls used to serve the community's social events. Restoring these would allow the social fabric of Bab Al-Nasr to recover as it will encourage social events to be organized and celebrated.

C2.4 - E1.5 Rehabilitate the neighborhood's public baths (Hammams)

Before the conflict, the neighborhood's two public baths were severely damaged and un-operational in the aftermath of the war. These public baths played a vital role in the neighborhood's community's social practices and served as touristic attractions. It is proposed to give the local authorities incentives to the owners of the Hamams to be able to rehabilitate them and restore them to their functionality. This could benefit the recovery of the social fabric as it provides a recreational output for the community. Additionally, this strategy supports the rehabilitation of Bab Al-Nasr's built heritage.

C3 To develop the neighborhood into a tourist attraction

In the aftermath of the conflict, the touristic activity has significantly diminished in Bab Al-Nasr and the Old City. However, the touristic activity decreased considerably during the war.

Jacinto and Preez (2018) affirm that tourism has been recognized as an essential vehicle for developing a country after a period of war. It is often their vector for their reassimilation into the global economy (Novelli, Morgan, & Nibigira, 2012). In partnership with the neighborhood's committee, the Directorate of tourism, and the Directorate of the Old City, it is proposed to develop Bab Al-Nasr into becoming a touristic attraction. Visitors could be offered guided tours to learn about the neighborhood's history. It is also proposed to make some of the neighborhood's

historical monuments accessible to the public to visit. As proposed in strategy A, this could be an opportunity to organize commercial activities and on-site leisure activity to attract tourists. This would be an opportunity to introduce income-generating activities to the residents and stimulating their business activity, in addition to sustaining the neighborhood's cultural heritage

C3.1-A1.1 Provide capacity building workshops for residents to create and develop employment opportunities in the tourism sector while preserving the tangible and intangible heritage of Bab Al-Nasr and the Old City

This Strategy is transversal with the Strategic Objective A1 and has been elaborated on in A1

C3.2 Design and provide adequate communication tools in the neighborhood

The neighborhood must be provided with adequate communication tools such as providing signage, maps, and small informative text on the neighborhood's history to navigate the tourist through the neighborhood

C3.3 Establish a public digital inventory exhibiting the neighborhood's cultural heritage

To raise awareness on the importance of the neighborhood's cultural heritage, a digital inventory or interactive platform must be created through public and private partnerships. It will encourage to:

- Raise awareness on the value and importance of the heritage and the history of the neighborhood
- Document all the heritage assets and making the material available to the public

- Showcase the neighborhood’s damage assessment
- Draw attention to the dire need to rehabilitate the rehabilitate and attract funds
- Increase the neighborhood’s accessibility

D. Building Civic Engagement

Aldrich (2012) elaborates on the importance of investing in social capital in post-war agendas as social relations help post-conflict communities rebuild themselves. He further explains that communities “emerging from a war that manifests higher levels of solidarity and civic-mindedness are inclined to have stronger recoveries than more isolated individuals” (p.166). Therefore, it is essential to build on the ties that exist in the neighborhood and inducing participation and civic engagement to promote reconciliation, social inclusion, and acknowledge the diversities within the community.

D1. To create a culture of participation

Although acknowledged, participation and community-based action are challenged concepts to be introduced within the city’s political instability; it is still proposed to advocate for it and introduce participatory decision-making concepts.

Participation is praised in the literature of planning as it is recognized to create consensus building across different stakeholders. According to Healey (1996), collective planning theories perceive planning as a decision process where the various stakeholders can agree on an action plan which serves their mutual interest. Innes and Booher (2000) explain that participants within a participatory process debate, develop,

and resort to network power to achieve their benefits. Groups and individuals engage in collaborative planning because they believe and have assimilated that their interests are linked to others' actions and would like to be acknowledged as stakeholders within the process of decision-making (Innes & Booher, 2000).

Participation can be induced by strengthening the neighborhood's committee's role and encouraging debates and discussions to be done within it. This will help to recover the social fabric and enhance it

D1.1- B1.2 Expand the 15-households committee that rehabilitated their dwellings electrical posts to create a broader and more inclusive neighborhood committee

This strategy is transversal with the Strategic Objective B1 and has been elaborated on in B1.2

D1.2 Establish a residents-based fund to assist the financially challenged families

To induce participation and create a sense of solidarity, support and cooperation should exist among the residents. It is proposed to develop a resident-based fund where residents will contribute a sum of money and distribute it to a different household in need every month. This fund could assist in improving the financial conditions of some families, in addition to empowering and recovering the neighborhood's social fabric

E. Securing a livable Urban Environment

The lack of services and facilities in the neighborhood makes it a challenging urban environment for the residents. Measures need to be implemented to enhance the betterment of the social fabric's services and ensure equal service provision across all ages and genders. It could also be an opportunity to induce sustainable measures for the

well-being of the social fabric and the introduction of environmental-friendly measures into the lives of the neighborhood's community.

E1. To restore social services

The Diagnosis has elaborated on the decline of social services and facilities in the neighborhood. There is a dire need to restore them since an urban environment, and a social fabric cannot function without them

E1.1 Rehabilitate and provide more health services

Before the war, the neighborhood was very poorly serviced in health facilities, and residents had to commute to the city's western districts to seek medical assistance. In the aftermath of the conflict, all of the previously available medical facilities have shut down. Two options can be proposed in case the public sector is incapable of restoring these facilities. First, incentives (e.g., low rent for clinics) should be granted to medical workers to establish their practices in the neighborhood and the adjacent areas. Second, these medical facilities could be rented out for INGOs (e.g., Red Cross, Doctors without Borders) to set up make-shift facilities in these abandoned properties.

E1.2 Rehabilitate and provide educational services across all levels

Before the war, Bab Al-Nasr and its adjacent areas hosted adequate educational services across all levels. Due to the consequence of war, these establishments have been destroyed. Therefore, it is proposed to mobilize the residents of Bab Al-Nasr to approach the Directorate of Education to suggest and manifest the need for further educational facilities

E1.3- A3.4 Establish recreational services for the youth and female population

Bab Al-Nasr and the neighboring areas rarely hosted any recreational services for the community's youth. The recovery should allow for the opportunity of establishing recreational services for them. Through the partnership with the Awqaf, recreational community centers could be established in the properties owned by the awqaf for the development and empowerment of the youth and female population

E1.4-C2.3 Restore existing celebration halls to provide spaces for cultural and social events

This strategy is transversal with the Strategic Objective C2 and has been elaborated on in C2.3

E1.5-C2.4 Rehabilitate the neighborhood's public baths (Hammams)

This strategy is transversal with the Strategic Objective C2 and has been elaborated on in C2.3

E2. To reach 24 hours of water and electricity provision

As elaborated in the Descriptive memory, the water and electricity provision in the neighborhood is poorly serviced and managed. The goal is to provide sustainable alternatives for providing clean water and stable electricity to ensure 24/7 water and electricity provision.

E2.1 Rehabilitate the water wells of the neighborhood

The majority of the historic housing stock in Bab Al-Nasr contains water wells in their courtyards, which have existed since their medieval establishment. Some households heavily depended on them for water provision during the siege on the eastern part of Aleppo. It is proposed to rehabilitate their internal and structure and

restore their functionality for the service of households and other buildings in the neighborhood to ensure the constant provision of clean water

E2.2 Recycle rainwater

To ensure sustainable water provision and to mitigate further water crisis, sustainable and environmentally friendly alternatives should be introduced to the residents. Workshops should be offered to raise awareness and introduce the concept of rainwater retention and share its benefits. Rainwater retention units could be placed on rooftops or in the courtyards to serve households

E2.3-A6.3-E3.1 Develop a comprehensive energy-efficient rehabilitation scheme for the electrical infrastructure allowing surplus energy storage for nighttime

The damaged electrical infrastructure causes power outages during the nighttime. Therefore it is proposed that a new study is to be done on the neighborhood's energy usage and develop a comprehensive energy-efficient scheme that allows the installation of solar panels with battery storages. This will help create a surplus of energy to store during the daytime and allow the neighborhood to consume power during the nighttime.

E3. To ensure a secure and safe environment

This Strategic Objective is already mentioned under the General Objective “Improving the socio-economic conditions of the residents and business owners.” Thus, the strategies apply to both strategic objectives.

E4. To provide accessibility to the neighborhood and link it to its surroundings

As shown in the Descriptive Memory, accessibility has been limited due to the war damage in the neighborhood and its surroundings. This has affected the commercial activity of the neighborhood as it is less frequented for daily needs. Furthermore, accessibility has been limited due to the disrupted transportation system. Accessibility is a vital factor for linking the neighborhood to its surroundings to ensure its connectivity. Hence, measures need to be implemented to reconnect it spatially.

E4.1 Connect the neighborhood to a more developed inner-city affordable transportation system.

The transportation system needs to be rehabilitated to become more developed and affordable. This transportation system should connect the inner-city to its broader extents. This will aid in reconnecting the city and ensure accessibility to Bab Al-Nasr and other surrounding neighborhoods.

E4.2-C1.4- A4.4- Organize commercial fairs to attract customers and increase the neighborhood's businesses' demand.

This Strategy is transversal with the Strategic Objectives C1 And A4 and has been elaborated on in A4.4

C. Action Plans

This section seeks to propose action items to showcase how this framework could be incrementally implemented in Bab Al-Nasr.

Project Title: Design and implement a comprehensive program for revitalizing the traditional businesses of Bab Al-Nasr

General Objective(s)

- A. Improving the socio-economic conditions of the residents and business owners
- C. Protecting and Sustaining the production of cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible

Type of Project

- Execution Project Strategic vision
- Detailed Project Lobbying - Advocacy
- Institutional Set-up Capacity Building
- Valorization- promotion

Strategic Objective(s)

A4: To support ailing businesses and incentivize the return of the displaced ones.

A5: To re-establish the businesses' local, regional, and international network of economic exchange.

C1: To support and protect the traditional arts and crafts.

C3: To strengthen accessibility to the neighborhood and link it to its surroundings.

Project Objective(s)

Contributes to strategies: A4.1- A4.2- A4.3- A4.4- A4.5- A5.1- C1.4- C1.3- C3.2

Reactivate the business activity of Bab Al-Nasr

Assist the business owners in physically rehabilitating their shops

Improve the quality of the traditional crafts and the products of Bab Al-Nasr's industries

Brand Bab Al-Nasr's traditional goods and services

Project Description (concept notes)

In order to rehabilitate and sustain the historical traditional business activity of Bab Al-Nasr, a program needs designed and implemented to ensure the economic and physical rehabilitation of the businesses. The program will be composed of the following:

- Providing micro-loans for the physical rehabilitation of their shops and the replenishing of their merchandise stock
- Providing workshops to assist the business owners in rebuilding effective businesses/workshops/production lines using innovative design and technology to render their products more attractive to the customers.
- Provide branding workshops to train business owners to digitally brand their products.
- Organize local fairs where the business owners will be offering on site leisure and cultural activities (e.g., crafts making shows, tourist storytelling).
- Taxation incentives which include delay the financial and tax collection, for the business owners aiming to reactivate their businesses, for a period of five years.

The program will be led by Bab Al-Nar's Business Owners Cooperation through creating partnerships with the local authorities, funding organizations and expertise that will help the design and execution of the program.

Participating Players on the Design and Execution Levels

Local/National: Municipality of Aleppo – local NGOs – Aleppo Chamber of Commerce – University of Aleppo- Aleppo Chamber of Industry- Syria Trust for Development- Aleppo Directorate of Tourism- Aleppo Financial Administration (مديرية مالية حلب)- Bab Al-Nasr's Business Owners Cooperation

International: UNDP

Proposed Sources of Financial Resources

Local: Local foundations – local NGOs

National: Private Banks- Al-Wataniya Microfinance- Syria Trust for Development- Aleppo Directorate of Tourism

Period and Timing Needed for Execution

Short term Long term

Phased

Expected Results

More businesses are incentivized to return to Bab Al-Nasr

Bab Al-Nasr's historical business and intangible heritage are rehabilitated and sustained

The socio-economic conditions of the business owners is improved

Project Title: Rehabilitation program of Bab Al-Nasr's historical housing stock

General Objective(s)

Improving the socio-economic conditions of the residents and business owners

Develop a coordinated and comprehensive urban rehabilitation scheme

Protecting and Sustaining the Production of cultural heritage, both the tangible and intangible

Type of Project

Execution Project Strategic vision



Detailed Project Lobbying - Advocacy



Institutional Set-up Capacity Building



Valorization- promotion

Strategic Objective(s)

A1. To create job and employment opportunities for the residents of Bab Al-Nasr

A3. To incentivize the return of the displaced residents of Bab Al-Nasr

B4. To rehabilitate and protect the built heritage and the history of Bab Al-Nasr

B5. To restore the historical housing stock by engaging the residents through subsidies and training according to consistent and affordable restoration guidelines and techniques

Project Objective(s)

Contributes to Strategies: A1.1- A3.3- B4.3- B5.2- B2.2

- Rehabilitation of the deteriorated and damaged housing stock

- Developing construction-related skills that generate income for business owners and residents.
- Improving the living conditions of the residents through the architectural and infrastructural rehabilitation of their households and incentivizing the return of the displaced

Project Description (concept notes)

A rehabilitation program will be established to lead rehabilitation work in the neglected damaged housing stock of Bab Al-Nasr. Owners and residents will be the leading stakeholders in the program. Through the establishment of multiple partnerships an institutional, financial, and technical frameworks will be established to guide the program.

The program will be composed of:

- Providing skills building workshops to train the residents and owners to restore the historical housing according to consistent and affordable restoration guidelines and techniques conform to heritage laws.
- Establishing a community-led fund
- Launching campaigns to raise awareness on the history of the historical housing fabric and to advertise for the dire need to rehabilitate it to preserve the neighborhood's historical urban fabric. The campaigns will also aim to attract investments and funding for the rehabilitation of the housing stock and channel them into the fund for skills training workshops and subsidies for the residents. The residents will also be introduced to micro-loan programs in local organizations and local banks as another mean to fund their dwellings.

A technical support team will conduct the damage assessment surveys and mapping, in addition to proposing rehabilitation guidelines.

The implementation of the program will be monitored and supervised by the Directorate of the Old City, the Directorate of Antiquities and Museums and the Awqaf

Participating Players on the Design and Execution Levels

Local/ National: Municipality of Aleppo, The Directorate of the Old City, the Awqaf, Order of Architect and Engineers, Directorate of Antiquities and Museums, The neighborhood committee

- International: UNESCO, ICCROM, UNESCO

Proposed Sources of Financial Resources

- Local: Private Sector, Private Foundations, Donations, Al Wataniya Micro finance, local Banks, Syria Trust for Development
- International: UNDP, Agha Khan Historic Cities

Period and Timing Needed for Execution

Short term Long term

Phased

Expected Results

- The residential historic is rehabilitated and preserved.

- Construction skills are acquired, and capacity building is provided for owners and residents.
- Job opportunities in construction are generated.
- Repopulated residential stock

D. Conclusion

Bab Al-Nasr's location in the Old City has caused extensive damage as it served as a battlefield for the ten-year conflict. After almost three years of the end of the battle, despite the challenges of living in a damaged urban environment and the unclear government plan for recovery, dwellers, business owners, and other community-based groups return to the neighborhood to restore their dwellings and save the remnants of the neighborhood's cultural heritage. On the other hand, international agencies, and local authorities, involved in the neighborhood's rehabilitation activity seemed to adopt a top-heavy physical approach to reconstruction with little to no attention to the recovery of the war-torn social fabric its cultural heritage. The thesis has notably highlighted the tension between community-based and small-scale practices to rehabilitate versus the local authorities' top-down bureaucratic regulatory framework. At times, these small-scale rehabilitation practices have functioned informally, escaping the strict regulations and the long process of the local authorities' formalization, yet they managed to reach completion. The initiatives and the involvement of this post-war community manifest their resilience and provide an idea of what Parver and Wolf (2008) call their "cultural context and attributes" (p.54). In other words, they represent the necessary actions for peacebuilding and recovery (Parver & Wolf, 2008, p. 71). On the other hand, the local authorities' excessiveness in regulating the rehabilitation activity limits and impedes the small-scale initiatives that have emerged despite a comprehensive recovery plan for the neighborhood and the city. This top-down heavy regulatory framework, if persisted, can eliminate these small-scale initiatives or encourage their implementation informally without the needed technical supervision, which could disrupt the historic urban fabric of the Old City.

As elaborated in the literature review, CDSs are usually adapted by cities to plan for sustainable development. Yet, in Bab Al-Nasr's case, the model was methodologically adapted to produce a strategic framework for sustainable post-war recovery. The following section will reflect on the adaptation of the CDS model in a post-war environment.

Cities alliance describe CDSs as “a well-positioned, well-timed public, private and civil society strategic interventions (CitiesAlliance, 2017, p. 7). Fengler, Ihsan, and Kaiser (2018) explain that “in post-conflict countries, the reconstruction challenge is often compounded by the need to rebuild a functioning public administration.” In Bab Al-Nasr and Aleppo's case, Therefore, the application of a CDS in a post-war environment is impeded by the weakened delivery systems of governments, the unresolved political issues, and the risk of returning hostilities (Fengler et al., 2018).

Furthermore, another issue to consider in the implementation of Neighborhood Recovery or any other CDS model in the post-war Syrian context is the hurdle of implementing it. At the same time, there is a high proportion of the absent population unable to return. In other words, there should be a central legal framework that needs to be challenged or reformed (i.e., canceling or reforming Law 10) to avoid the long-term displacement and be able to account for the absented population in the recovery phase.

The second challenged imposed on the model due to the unstable political environment is the lack of participation. Thus, instead of a fully participatory process, I relied on the community members' maximum possible engagement through multiple channels. Although at first, many community members were hesitant to communicate their thoughts and vision directly and openly regarding the neighborhood's recovery. It was essential to build trust among them by stimulating and engaging in post-war

recovery conversations with them. These conversations also revealed the community's readiness, awareness, and resilience to emerge from the conflict's calamities and start discourses concerning post-war recovery. Another challenge faced was the lack of information, data, and records on the neighborhood's post-conflict situation. Thus, the thesis relied massively on sample surveys and conversations with the neighborhood's rehabilitation stakeholders. The model also tried to make up for the lack of participation by stressing a people-centered strategic framework for recovery.

The model's application to the neighborhood scale focused on the small-scale private efforts and the remaining neglected social fabric as main focal points despite their weak role in the neighborhood's rehabilitation decision-making. This was done by proposing strategies that focus on the neighborhood that are multi-scalers; in other words, it took into consideration its relation to the city-wide by understanding its spatial and social connectivity to the rest of the city. The model was also expected to be an inclusive process that recognizes all key actors' roles, including the public sector, the private sector, and the international agencies involved in the neighborhood's rehabilitation.

If applied, or if it were able to achieve any form of incremental change, this model could be a pilot project for other communities and neighborhoods to be encouraged to take the lead and form a base for their recovery. The model could propose an adequate form of partnerships between the different stakeholders (i.e., public sector, private sector, civil society, and the international community)

Finally, this thesis does acknowledge the challenge of implementing such a model in a setting where top-heavy planning dominates. Therefore, I propose to leave this model in the custody of a to be established steering committee composed of

representatives from the neighborhood committee and the business owner's cooperation to implement in the next ten to fifteen years. They will also be joined by representatives from the DOC and a representative from the Awqaf to be a significant neighborhood owner. A technical committee should also be established to guide the projects; on board should be a representative from the DoA. As mentioned in the strategic framework, local experts and professors from the University of Aleppo should be on the committee since Aleppo has conducted many valuable studies on the Old City. Furthermore, I also propose to have the GTZ on the committee, as it had an important role in the rehabilitation of the Old City before the war and to have representatives from the Order of Architects and Engineers.

The formulation of the indicator system was suspended and designed by the technical committee when the city's political climate becomes more stable. This model could be a tool for the steering committee to apply for funds from international agencies, organizations, and local NGOs. The steering committee will create a fund to amalgamate all the funds, whether applied for through grants or from the community-based groups that were donating to rehabilitate the neighborhood's heritage. The technical committee will continue to package the action plans and match them with funding. Finally, as already been happening in the neighborhood, the projects will be implemented through contractors.

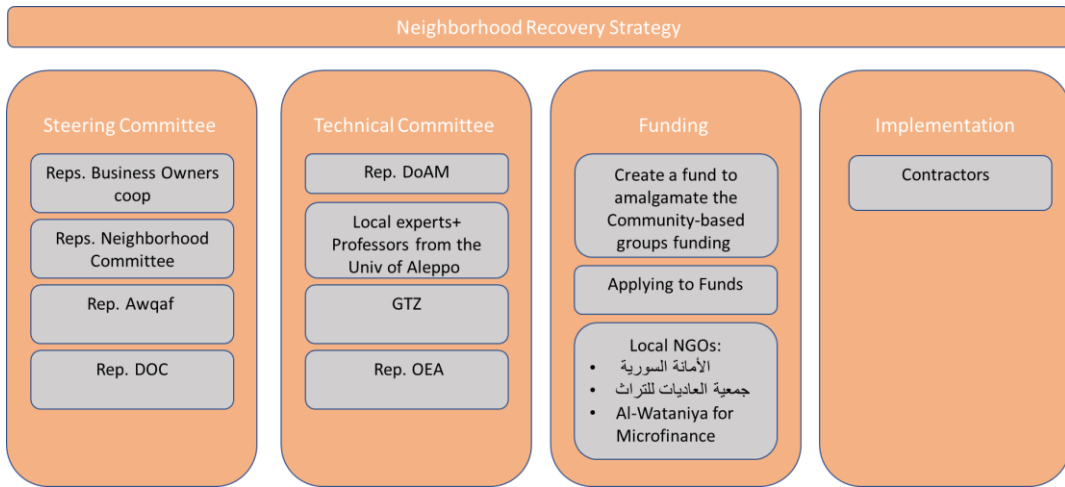


Figure 61- Proposed implementation scheme of the Neighborhood Recovery Strategy (author, 2021)



APPENDIX





Legend:




- Spatially Reconnected 
- Physically Rehabilitated 
- Socially Restored Network 
- Economically Revitalized 
- Sustained Living Heritage 





Transversal strategy across different Strategic Objectives 




GENERAL OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES
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<p>A. Improving the socio-economic conditions of the residents and business owners</p>	<p>A1 To create job and employment opportunities for the residents of Bab Al-Nasr</p>  	<p><i>A1.1- B5.2-A2.5 Provide expertise and the know-how of established contractors that have previously conducted work in the neighborhood to initiate training programs for non-skilled community members to undertake DIY (do-it-yourself) projects in rehabilitating their properties coherent to the law of heritage preservation</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>A1.2- C1.1 Provide capacity building workshops for residents to create and develop employment opportunities in the tourism sector while preserving the tangible and intangible heritage of Bab Al-Nasr and the Old city</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>A1.3- A4.5 - C1.3 Provide vocational training in traditional crafts and industries and enhance entrepreneurial skills</i></p>
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		<i>A1.4-A2.3 Provide access to labor market information and employment services encouraging returnees to consult them</i>
	A2 To incentivize the return of the displaced residents of Bab Al-Nasr 	<i>A2.1 Develop a legal framework for the compensation of lost property in response to Law No.10</i>
		<i>A2.2 Issue legal acquittals (اعفاءات) for the displaced populations</i>
		<i>A2.3/ A1.4 Provide access to labor market information and employment services encouraging returnees</i>
		<i>A2.4- B5.1 Develop incentive packages to facilitate the physical rehabilitation of residential/commercial properties</i>
		<i>A2.5- B5.2- A1.1 Provide vocational training and reconstruction workshops by contractors that have established reconstruction projects in the neighborhood for the residents to be able to undertake minor rehabilitation work coherent to the law of heritage preservation</i>
	A3 To empower women and the youth 	<i>A3.1 Adapt strict measures against child labor and encourage child education</i>
		<i>A3.2 Provide Support for female-headed families by linking them to work and study opportunities (especially ones of young children, members with disabilities, or elderlies)</i>
		<i>A3.3 Promote existing youth community centers to encourage skill development and networking</i>
		<i>A3.4-E1.3 Establish recreational services for the youth and female population</i>
	A4 To support ailing businesses and encourage their growth  	<i>A4.1 Reform the regulatory framework that govern taxation procedures</i>
		<i>A4.2- A2.4-B5.1 Develop incentive packages to facilitate the physical rehabilitation of residential/commercial properties</i>
		<i>A4.3- C1.6 Establish a micro-loan program for the ailing businesses</i>
		<i>A4.4-C1.4-E4.2 Organize commercial fairs to attract customers and increase the demand on the neighborhood's businesses</i>

		<i>A4.5 - A1.3- C1.3 Provide vocational training in traditional crafts and industries and enhance entrepreneurial skills</i>
	A5 To re-establish the businesses' local, regional, and international value of its commercial products 	<i>A5.1 Market and Brand Bab Al-Nasr's SMEs</i> <i>A5.2-B1.1 Establish a cooperative for business owners to consolidate their decision making concerning the commercial and physical rehabilitation of their shops</i> <i>A5.3 Establish a program by the Syrian Exporter Federation (SEF) to consult and train Bab Al-Nasr's cooperative of business owners in the business of exportation and trading</i>
	A6 To ensure a secure and safe environment 	<i>A6.1-E3.1 Introduce community-based activities during nighttime</i> <i>A6.2-E3.2 Establish a community-based security system during nighttime (community watch groups)</i> <i>A6.3-E3.3-E2.3 Develop a comprehensive energy-efficient rehabilitation scheme for the electrical infrastructure allowing surplus energy storage for nighttime</i>
B. Developing a coordinated and comprehensive urban rehabilitation scheme	B1 To learn from and build on the existing small rehabilitation practices and consolidate their efforts 	<i>B1.1/ A5.2 Establish a cooperative for business owners to consolidate their decision making concerning the commercial and physical rehabilitation of their shops</i> <i>B1.2-D1.1 Expand the 15-household committee that rehabilitated their dwellings electrical posts to create a broader and more inclusive neighborhood committee</i> <i>B1.3-B4.4 Create a fund to amalgamate the private external funding donated and distribute it more comprehensively towards the rehabilitation of the neighborhood's urban environment</i>
	B2 To reform the local authorities' regulatory framework and engage local	B2.1 Reinforce supervision mechanisms to monitor and guide the private small-scale rehabilitation projects by the Directorate of the Old City, the Directorate of Antiquities and Museums, and the Awqaf

	<p>expertise in the rehabilitation of historic properties </p>	<p><i>B2.2-B4.3 Engage Professors and local expertise to co-design alongside the dwellers a comprehensive urban rehabilitation scheme for the neighborhood</i></p> <p>B2.3 <i>Ease the process of acquiring reconstruction permits</i></p> <p>B2.4 <i>Establish a damage assessment inventory by the Order of Architects and Engineers</i></p>
	<p>B3 To involve all the stakeholders and coordinate their efforts </p>	<p>B3.1 <i>Create a consortium of representatives of stakeholders across the different sectors involved in the rehabilitation of the neighborhood (public sector, private sector, community-based groups, international community, local experts)</i></p>
	<p>B4 To rehabilitate and protect the built heritage and the history of Bab Al-Nasr </p>	<p>B4.1 <i>Amend and reform the regulatory framework for the preservation and rehabilitation of historical monuments</i></p> <p>B4.2-B2.4 <i>Establish a damage assessment inventory by the Order of Architects and Engineers</i></p> <p>B4.3-B2.2 <i>Engage professors and local expertise to co-design with the dwellers a comprehensive urban rehabilitation scheme for the neighborhood</i></p> <p>B4.4-B1.4 <i>Create a fund to amalgamate the private external funding donated and distribute it more comprehensively towards the rehabilitation of the neighborhood's urban environment</i></p>
	<p>B5 To restore the historical housing stock by engaging the residents through subsidies and training according to consistent and affordable restoration guidelines and techniques </p>	<p>B5.2-A1.1- A2.5 <i>Provide expertise and the know-how of established contractors that have previously conducted work in the neighborhood to initiate training programs for non-skilled community members to undertake DIY (do-it-yourself) projects in rehabilitating their properties coherent to the law of heritage preservation.</i></p>

C. Protecting and Sustaining the Production of cultural heritage, both the tangible and intangible	C1 To support and protect traditional crafts and industries 	C1.1- A1.2- Provide capacity building workshops for residents to create and develop employment opportunities in the tourism sector while preserving the tangible and intangible heritage of Bab Al-Nasr and the Old city
		C1.2- A4.3 Establish a micro-loan program for the ailing businesses
		C1.3 -A4.5 - A1.3 Provide vocational training in traditional crafts and industries and enhance entrepreneurial skills
		C1.4-A4.4 -E4.2 Organize commercial fairs to attract customers and increase the demand in the neighborhood's businesses
	C2 To sustain the social practices related to the intangible heritage 	C2.1 Organize celebrations for religious events
		C2.2 - E1.4 Restore existing celebration halls to provide spaces for cultural and social events
	C3 To develop the neighborhood into a tourist attraction	C2.3 - E1.5 Rehabilitate the neighborhood's public baths (Hammams)
		C3.1-A1.1 Provide capacity building workshops for residents to create and develop employment opportunities in the tourism sector while preserving the tangible and intangible heritage of Bab Al-Nasr and the Old City
		C3.2 Design and provide adequate communication tools in the neighborhood
	C3.3 Establish a public digital inventory exhibiting the neighborhood's cultural heritage	
D. Building Civic Engagement	D1 To strengthen the culture of participation within Bab Al-Nasr's 	D1.1- B1.2 Expand the 15-households committee that rehabilitated their dwellings electrical posts to create a broader and more inclusive neighborhood committee
		D1.2 Establish a residents-based fund to assist the financially challenged families
	E1	E1.1 Rehabilitate and provide more health services

E. Securing a Livable Urban Environment	To restore social services 	E1.2 <i>Rehabilitate and provide educational services across all levels</i>
		E1.3- A3.4 <i>Establish recreational services for the youth and female population</i>
		E1.4-C2.3 <i>Restore existing celebration halls to provide spaces for cultural and social events</i>
		E1.5-C2.4 <i>Rehabilitate the neighborhood's public bath (Hammams)</i>
	E2 To reach 24 hours of water and electricity provision 	E2.1 <i>Rehabilitate the water wells of the neighborhood</i>
	E2.2 <i>Recycle rainwater</i>	
	E2.3-A6.3-E3.1 <i>Develop a comprehensive energy-efficient rehabilitation scheme for the electrical infrastructure allowing surplus energy storage for nighttime</i>	
E3 To ensure a secure and safe environment 	<i>This Strategic Objective is already mentioned under the General Objective "Improving the socio-economic conditions of the residents and business owners". Thus, the strategies apply for both strategic objectives.</i>	
E4 To provide accessibility to the neighborhood and its surroundings 	E4.1 <i>Connect the neighborhood to a more developed and well serviced inner-city affordable transportation system</i>	
	E4.2-C1.4- A4.4- <i>Organize commercial fairs to attract customers and increase the demand in the neighborhood's businesses</i>	

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