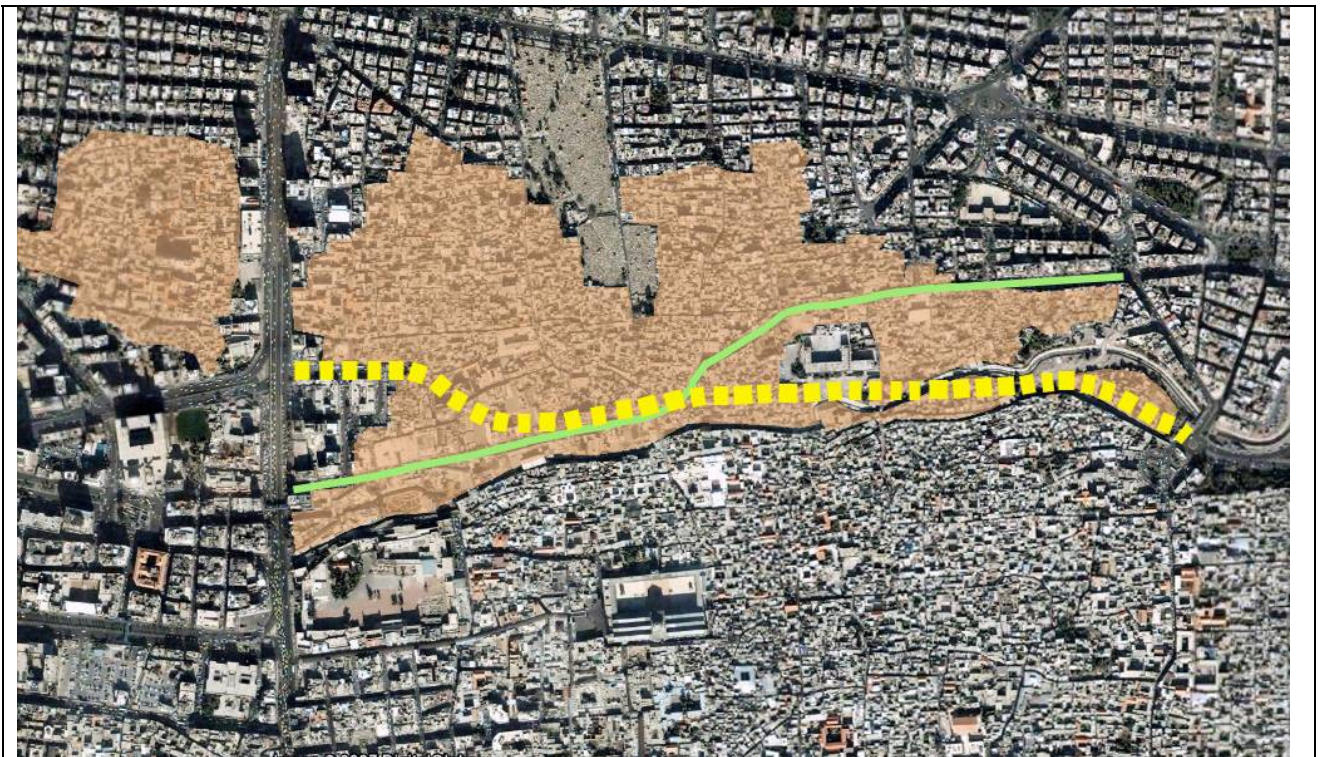


MISSION REPORT

Participants:	Daniele Pini, consultant Franca Miglioli, UNESCO - WHC
Dates of mission:	09 – 15 December 2007
Type of travel:	Technical assistance for WH site
WH Site:	Ancient City of Damascus - King Faisal Street Project
Budget code n°:	534GLO4000.11 and 198CSV4433.3



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Terms of Reference

The mission was carried out by Mr. Daniele Pini with Franca Miglioli from UNESCO – WHC, upon request of the Syrian authorities, notably the Ministry of Culture, with the following Terms of Reference (Fee Contract No. 5400043054):

1. *Evaluate the results of the studies carried out by the local Committee on the King Malik Faisal Street Urban project in Damascus; specifically give technical advice and guidance concerning this project to the local authorities and assess how different alternatives could affect the World Heritage site;*
2. *Submit to the World Heritage Centre for approval a detailed report on the evaluation on the urban development project including recommendations for future actions.*

1.2 Background

During a mission to Syria in January 2007, the Governor of Damascus informed the World Heritage Centre of a large scale project that involves the Malik Faisal Street area, tangent to the northern perimeter of the city walls. At that moment, the project foresaw the redevelopment of a large area, demolishing all the existing historical urban fabric in order to build a new 32 meter wide road parallel to the city walls, partly covering the Barada river. Furthermore, the project included the restoration of the city walls with the clearing of all the addition and constructions next them, so to create a green open space.

The World Heritage Centre informed the State Party of the negative impact that this project would have on the World Heritage property, and on the necessity to inform the World Heritage Committee, as required by the *Operational Guidelines*, before any major projects being implemented within the protected area (core and buffer zones) of a World Heritage site.

The State Party reacted by inviting the World Heritage Centre, in March 2007, to advise on the King Faisal Street Project, and to take part as well in a national meeting on it, co-organised by the British Syrian Society and the EU funded MAM (Municipal Administration Modernisation) Programme. The observations and recommendations of this seminar, which involved all the stakeholders, clearly underlined the controversies on the subject and the lack of a preliminary impact assessment study, requiring for the development of a *Vision* for the area and suggesting the possible implementation of pilot projects (see Annex 3a).

Afterwards, the Ministry of Culture set up a Local Committee composed by 18 national experts to study this subject. In July, during the World Heritage Committee session (see Annex 3b), the Syrian Deputy Minister of Culture, Dr. Ali Al-Kayem, handed the results of this study (see Annex 3c) to Ms Véronique Dauge, Chief of the Arab States Unit at the World Heritage Centre, while an official letter had been sent by the Ministry of Culture, inviting a mission of experts appointed by the World Heritage Centre to discuss these results.

1.3 Summary of the mission

The mission met the different stakeholders involved in the King Faisal Street Urban Project:

- the Directorates of the Governorate promoting the urban redevelopment initiative;
- the staff of the General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM) in charge of the safeguarding of the cultural heritage of Damascus (while the Ministry of Culture and his Deputy were on mission abroad);
- several experts working with different roles on the conservation issues of the Old City.

On the basis of the presentations offered by the different administrations and counterparts, the visits to the sites officially and informally carried out, and the documents collected before and during the mission, the experts confirm without any doubt that the King Faisal Street Project (hereinafter the KFS Project) affects an area that belongs to the historic fabric of Old Damascus, though it is not included in the perimeter of the World Heritage site delimited by the walls thread (hereinafter the Ancient City or WH site).

The results of the studies carried out by the Local Committee of experts have been totally agreed by the mission, which had the opportunity to receive an English version of the *Recommendation and Results* and of the most significant maps resulting from the survey of the area.

On the other hand, during the meetings with the promoter of the urban redevelopment project, the mission was informed that the original project, which was the result of a competition, has been abandoned and that a new proposal is under preparation.

1.4 Acknowledgements

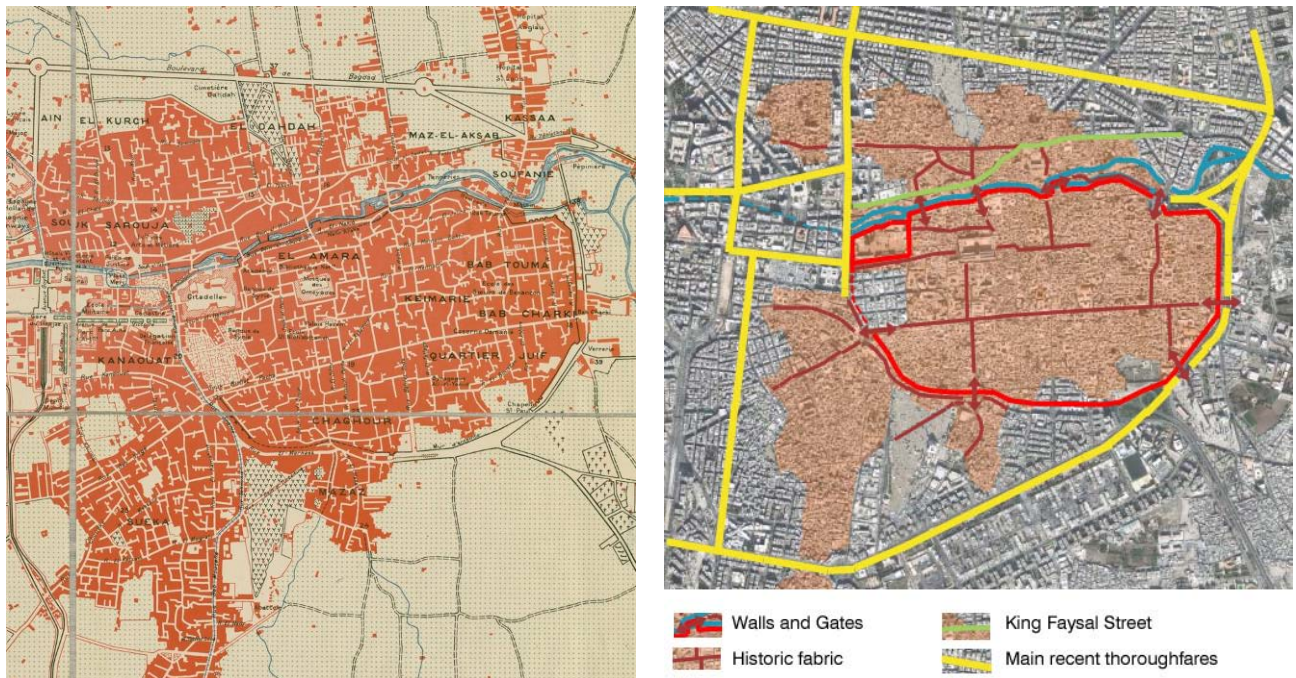
The World Heritage Centre wishes to express its gratitude to:

- the Governorate of Damascus for its great hospitality;
- the Ministry of Culture;
- H.E. Dr Ghassan Nseir, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of the Syrian Arab Republic to UNESCO, for kindly assisting in the organization of the mission;
- Dr Bassam Jamous, Director-General of Antiquities and Museums and the staff of the Directorate;
- Eng. Bassam Jairoudieh - Executive Bureau Member, Arch. Abdul Fattah Ayaso - Director of Urban Planning, and Eng. Amjad Alres - Manager of Old Damascus, from the Governorate of Damascus, for their time, organization and pleasant company;
- the team of the MAM Programme for their precious co-operation.

2. FINDINGS OF THE MISSION

On the basis of the presentation offered by the different administrations and counterparts, the visits to the sites officially and informally carried out (see Annex 2), and the documents collected before and during the mission, the experts confirm without any doubt that the King Faisal Street Project (hereinafter the KFS Project) affects an area that belongs to the historic fabric of Old Damascus, though it is not included in the perimeter of the World Heritage site delimited by the walls thread (hereinafter the Ancient City or WH site).

From the start, it has to be stressed indeed that the Damascus historic fabric is not limited to the inscribed WH site, which definitely represents the cultural and functional core and holds the highest concentration of monuments, but it clearly includes many neighbourhoods outside the city walls, which are unprotected and seriously threatened by recent and undergoing urban renewal projects aiming at extending the modern City Centre. Yet a very strong continuity may be observed between the parts of the historic fabric laying inside and outside the ancient walls from the points of view of the heritage values, the spatial organisation, the economic activities and the social dynamics.



Left: Damascus map of 1929. Right: the remaining historic fabric in 2005. The walls thread (in red) encompasses the World Heritage site.

The existing cultural, spatial and functional linkages led the experts to consider Old Damascus as a whole from which the Ancient City cannot be separated. In particular they assume that the continuity between the WH site delimited by the walls and the neighbourhoods outside the ancient walls has to be considered as a heritage value in itself, to be preserved and enhanced. Therefore all evaluation of the possible impact of the KFS Project should be referred not only to the specific conservation and planning issues of the area concerned by the proposed new road, but should be also seen in the larger context of the historic fabric, particularly the WH site and its historical northern suburbs.

An overview of the most relevant conservation and functional issues is necessary in order to evaluate the possible impact of the KFS Project and the different alternative approaches, which

were presented to the experts during the mission, and to put forward the required recommendations for future actions.

2.1. Relevant issues concerning the historic fabric of Old Damascus

The Old City of Damascus is the subject of several important studies being carried out by the concerned administrations and cultural institutions, which provide a detailed and comprehensive picture of the different conservation issues. It was not in the aim of the mission to develop a further analysis or interpretation of these issues, nor to assess the state of conservation of the WH site. However, in order to evaluate the results of the studies carried out by the local Committee appointed by the Minister of Culture, and give technical advice and guidance concerning this project, the following aspects deserve to be pointed out:

- the persistence of an evident economic and functional vitality in all the different parts of the historic fabric, which occasionally implies however some clear environmental diseases;
- the spread of restoration and rehabilitation activities, particularly within the WH site, related to the diffusion of new activities related to tourism and leisure;
- the physical decay of large parts of the historic urban fabric, within and outside the city walls, due to the undergoing changes in the resident population, the presence of incompatible activities, the lack of maintenance, the uncontrolled vehicular circulation.

To this regard it is worth to underline some specific aspects concerning the functional and socio-economic dynamics observed in the Ancient City and the related conservation issues that may be relevant with reference to the Project.

2.1.1 Relevant functional and socio-economic dynamics in Old Damascus

The persistence of the historic and traditional handicraft and commercial activities still make the whole Old Damascus a vital component of the City Centre. This vitality, in many cases, adds to the heritage values in making the historic fabric attractive for tourists and visitors, but also and most of all, makes it still capable to offer fundamental expenditure and income opportunities, as well as services of any kind to the resident population of the larger metropolitan area.

The historic functional structure, which consolidated in the last century, remains basically unchanged, with a clear spatial distribution of the different types of activities, reflecting the strong functional and economical linkages between commerce and handicraft, and the different levels of attraction – i.e. the urban and local clientele, and the tourists. The main commercial spines attracting the urban clientele and the tourist are still those of the traditional suq within the walls, particularly in the western side next to the modern City Centre; whilst the retail and the handicraft activities catering the neighbouring local population are scattered in the fabric and tend to concentrate near the historic gates, inside and outside the city walls. Here the presence of larger food markets and specific craft and industrial activities (metal, timber, fabric, leather, and so on) is favoured by the possibility of vehicular access.

It has to be noted that these commercial and handicraft areas mainly cater a popular clientele of lower and middle income population, which is rapidly increasing due to the growth of the city and has reached many times the size of the resident population of the Ancient City. The traditional “suq economy” and all its related activities (manufacturing, stocking) has developed correspondingly to

cope with a growing demand and nowadays it occupies large sectors of the walled City and its suburbs spreading into the residential area. Since many of the industrial and wholesale commercial activities depend on vehicular access, they tend to concentrate near the city walls gates, next to the intersections of the historic street pattern with the new heavy traffic thoroughfares, with a heavy impact on the environmental conditions and the integrity of the fabric of Old Damascus.



Traffic congestion, commercial activities and historic fabric on the borders of the Old City

Not only the pollution and traffic congestion have become unacceptable, but also the deterioration and the misuse of the historic residential stock are rapidly increasing and represent now the most important issue to be addressed for the conservation of the heritage values of the historic fabric, within and outside the WH site. Still, in spite of these inconveniences, the spatial pattern of the economic activities in the Ancient City reflects its vitality and the close functional linkages existing in Old Damascus between the WH site and the extra-muros suburbs.

However, in this framework, recent trends have brought to the creation of new activities in the residential neighbourhoods within the WH site, related to tourism and leisure - such as restaurants¹, high standard “hotels de charme” and tourist shops -, as a result of a widespread reuse and rehabilitation of ancient large houses or the conversion of the traditional shops. This phenomenon is fostering a considerable increase of the real estate values and rents in the residential areas, with heavy consequences on the housing market.

¹ According to anecdotic information and direct observation on the ground, about 90 restaurants and several “hotels de charme” have been created in the last five years.



Two heritage palaces converted into hotels in the Ancient city

These new activities, which require a higher environmental quality, will create an increasing demand to reduce congestion and vehicular traffic in the Ancient City but also, at the same time, an improved accessibility and parking facilities that can only be provided near the gates. It is possible that in the near future a conflict would arise between the existing land use in these areas and the functional needs deriving from an expansion of the tourism and leisure activities.

2.1.2 Relevant conservation issues in Old Damascus

With reference to the issues addressed by the KFS Project, there is no doubt that the most critical situations for the conservation of the historic fabric and heritage values of Old Damascus can be observed along the thread and around the gates of the city walls. In these areas the pressure of the industrial and commercial activities, together with urban renewal and infrastructural interventions expanding the modern City Centre, have already affected large parts of the fabric, progressively changing their functions and relationships with the modern commercial and business centre. In particular, after the cuts of Thawra street and Al Ittihad Al'Arabi street, the western part of Suq Sarouja has been almost completely deleted and redeveloped with high rise buildings. The new North-South corridor of Thawra Street not only definitely isolates the Citadel and other heritage complexes, such as the Khaled Al-Azem palace housing the Damascus Historical Museum, from their historic context, but also brings heavy traffic all along the western side of the intra-muros city: Al Darwishiyeh street is now a congested artery, whose rich heritage is deteriorated and almost hidden by the heavy traffic.



The Citadel on Att Thawra Street and the Al Darwishiyeh mosque on Al Darwishiyeh street

A vicious circle seems to have been established, since the vehicular access to the Ancient City attracts commercial and industrial activities that the historic fabric can not support; this leads to a further deterioration favouring new redevelopment and street widening interventions, or even the cut of new roads that would attract further traffic... In the meantime, the pedestrian network connecting Old Damascus core within the walls to the outer suburbs is losing its consistency in many points. This has occurred particularly by the gates, where it is severely crossed by the vehicular system, and the recent urban renewal areas: here the shapeless spaces resulting from demolitions and insensitive reconstructions are occupied by informal commercial activities and chaotic parking.



Traffic congestion, informal activities and heritage obliteration in the intersection area between the historic network heading to Bal Al Faraj and the King Faisal Street, near the Thawra Street thoroughfare

Besides the risk of further “amputations”, it has to be stressed the physical decay of the historic urban fabric due to the functional congestion and/or the increased presence of incompatible activities and, correspondingly, to the loss of residential functions, all along the perimeter of the city walls.

In this context, the advanced state of disrepair of the city wall has to be addressed as a priority action. The integrity and authenticity of this major heritage component is seriously at risk due to the very bad state of conservation of the stone masonry, the many inconsistent recent additions built with concrete blocks and other inappropriate materials, and the overall total lack of maintenance. Moreover, as pointed out in the following sections of this report, the structural state of conservation and the same heritage values of this major heritage component have been seriously worsened by the recent implementation of the new sewage system along the Barada river banks.



A City Wall section off Al Badawi Street on the southern border of the Ancient City

Moreover, with no direct reference to the Project, many factors and aspects of physical decay in the historic urban fabric may be observed that call for an urgent and detailed assessment, i.e. the widespread deterioration of the “vernacular” housing stock, the abandon of several large historic houses and palaces of high architectural value, the insufficient maintenance and the poor environmental quality of the public spaces, the very bad state of conservation and presentation of several archaeological remains of the highest interest, and so on. As for the WH site, these issues are nowadays addressed by several projects and studies carried out by different administrations and institutions². Nevertheless some recent and ongoing interventions demonstrate that still a more sensitive planning approach needs to be adopted, which would consider the whole historic urban fabric, and not only the individual registered monuments, as an heritage to be preserved.



Recent and undergoing transformations in the Ancient City: the new mosque near Bab Faradis, and a building site on Medhat Pasha Street (Via Recta)

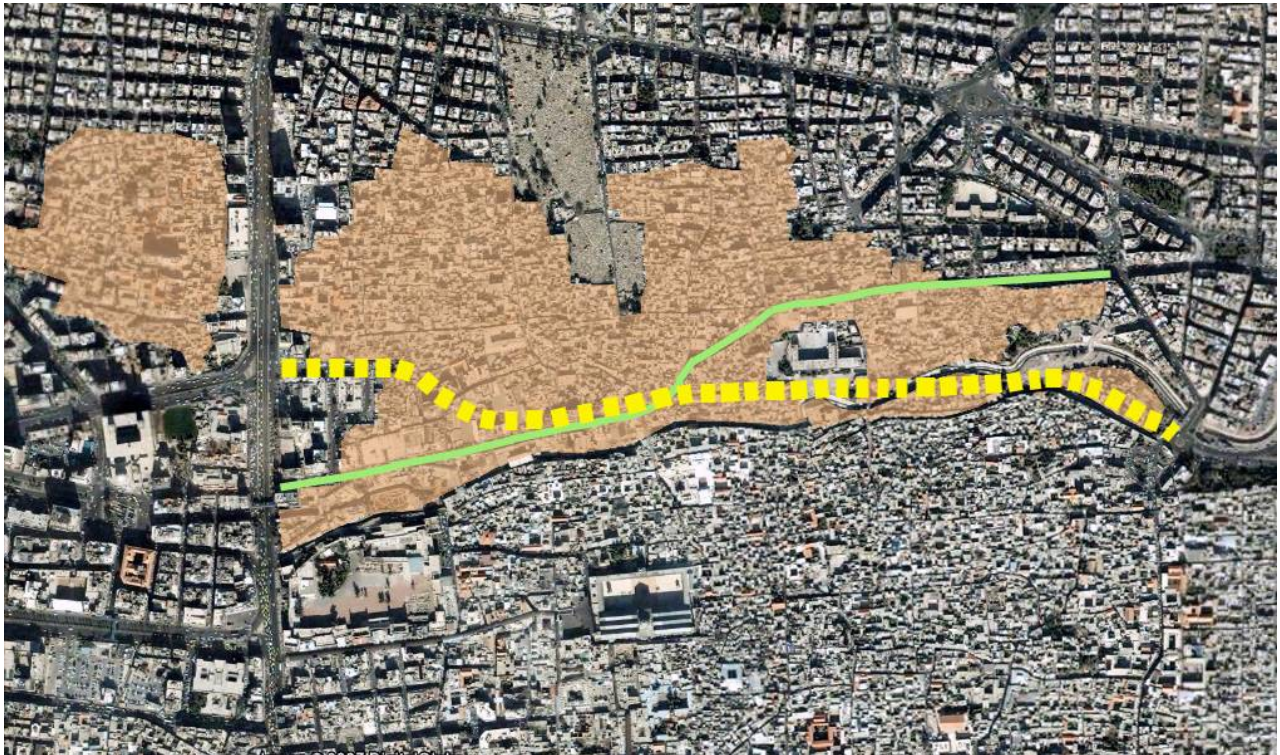
² It is worth to mention at least:

- the Directorate of Old City of the Governorate of Damascus, which has engaged with several interventions of upgrading of the urban infrastructure and public spaces, and is launching a project on housing rehabilitation funding in collaboration with the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ);
- the Municipal Administration Modernisation (MAM) Programme funded by the E.U. and carried out under the responsibility of the Ministry for Local Administration and Environment, which includes an Action Plan for the Old City to be carried out in collaboration with the mentioned Directorate;
- the Office for the preservation of the Old City of Damascus of the Ministry of Culture;
- the Faculty of Architecture, University of Damascus, and other universities from abroad.

2.2. The King Faisal Street Project area

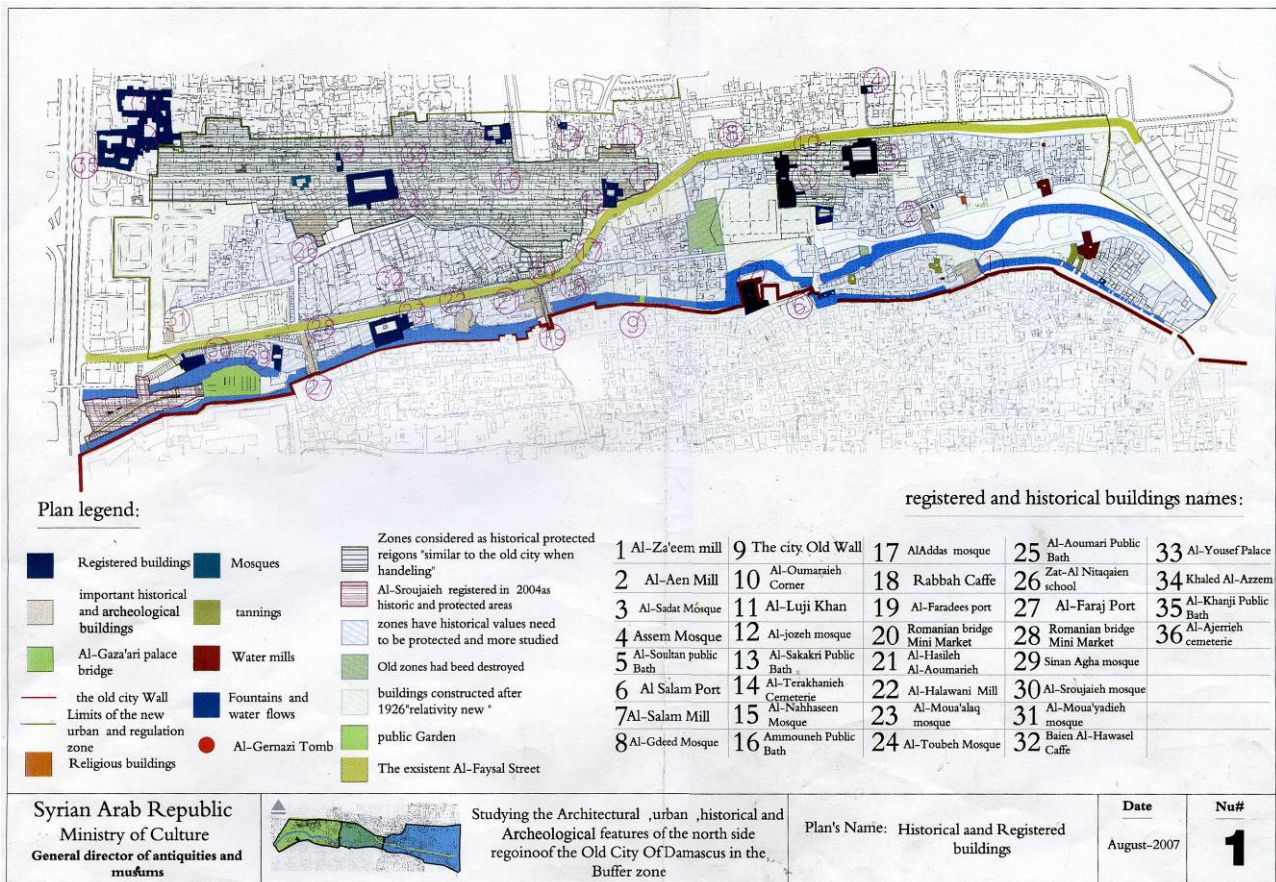
For the sake of the required evaluation and recommendations, the experts assume the "King Faisal Street Project area" as it should be considered by an overall urban conservation and regeneration program covering the parts of the historic fabric and landscape north of the city walls. This area does not strictly correspond to the one, which would be directly affected by the new road proposals, so far not yet clearly defined, but it encompasses the larger historic northern urban sector, as defined by the river Barada and the existing King Faisal Street, including the suburbs structured by the historic streets heading to the city gates, and presenting heritage values and functional features similar and complementary to the WH site.

Based on the information received, the route of the new road would continue Al Ittihad Al'Arabi street to follow the course of the River Barada and the thread of the Northern city wall, in order to reach the roundabout of Bab Touma square and hence complete the West – East "corridor" proposed by the Ecohard Plan in 1968. This would affect the functional and morphological relationship between the northern suburbs and the Ancient City protected as W.H. site.



The historic northern suburbs, with the existing King Faisal street (green) and the approximate road of the proposed new road (yellow dots) continuing the Al Ittihad Al'Arabi street until the Bab Touma roundabout to complete the so-called East – West corridor.

To this regard, the experts consider that the area taken in consideration by the Committee appointed by the Ministry of Culture (see the map below) can represent an useful and valuable field of investigation, since it includes the major and most relevant components of the urban structure, even if it does not cover the whole historic urban fabric of the northern suburbs, as it appears from the satellite photos of 2005.



Map of historical and registered buildings in the KFS area produced by the Committee of the Ministry of Culture (the unofficial translation of the legend from the Arabic was graciously offered by the General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums).

2.2.1 Heritage components and values

The suburbs and the landscape in the area hold heritage values of the highest interest, that have to be considered complementary and, to a certain extent, similar to the ones of the WH site. To this regard, the following components deserve to be noted:

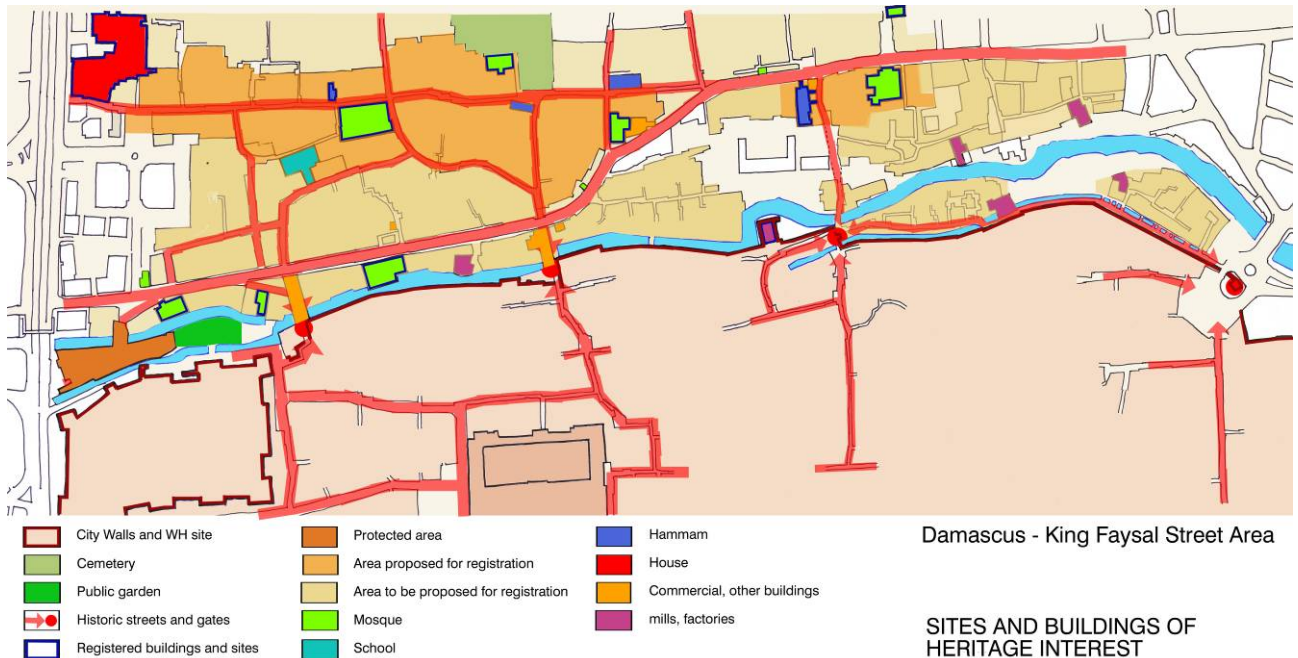
- The City Wall,
- The Gates,
- The River Barada,
- The ancient “extra-muros” suburbs,
- Many buildings of high architectural and cultural interest.

These components are fundamental features of the morphological and functional structure of the historic fabric of the Ancient City and can not be considered as “isolated” spots, whose protection can be seen separately from their context.

Only few elements of this large heritage are registered, and include some buildings of different type scattered in the area, and a small section of the historic fabric along the Barada River, just off

Thawra street and besides the Citadel. It is clear that this is not enough to preserve the historic consistency and the cultural values of this part of the Ancient City.

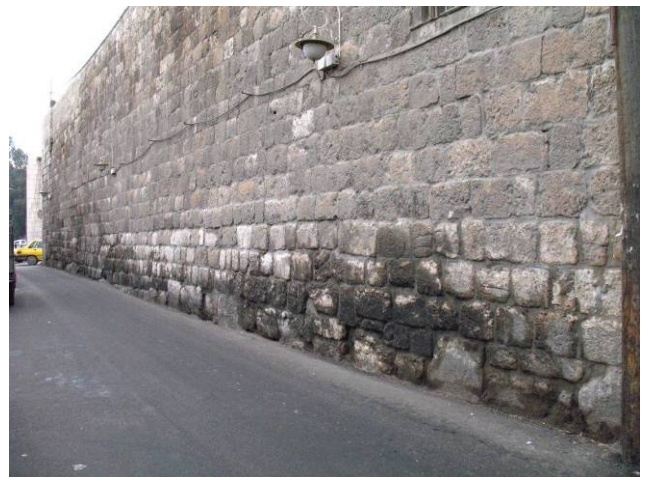
The map below, based on the surveys carried out by the Committee summarise the main heritage components in the area, and it clearly shows their very close relationship with the main spines of the historic street, which still connects the northern suburbs to the gates of the Ancient City.



The City Wall

It represents one of most distinguished heritage component of the historic urban fabric and its northern section extends for about 1,8 km. Here 4 gates are opened linking the WH site to the River Barada and the outer suburbs.

The city wall is not a one-period and free-standing monument. It incorporates Roman materials, and it was extensively rebuilt or repaired in the medieval and subsequent periods over the same foundations. For most of its length domestic structures have been built against or on it, particularly in the Ottoman period. Moreover, because the city extended beyond the walls from the 12th century, it remains almost hidden at certain points, since the new suburbs developed outside the gates, continuing the intra-muros fabric. Thus the present shape and setting of the northern section of the City Wall clearly reflects the same overlapping and interaction of different historical and cultural layers that make the



heritage value of the Ancient City.

However some recent transformations have affected its integrity and authenticity, in particular the demolitions on both sides of Bab Touma to allow the traffic to enter the Ancient City, and the widespread additions, built with poor and inappropriate materials. These latter have seriously disfigured its multilayered image at several points.

Moreover, the lack of maintenance and the diffused uncontrolled intervention on the houses built on it have definitely affected its state of conservation.



The gates

Four gates are in the northern section of the City Wall, connecting the “intra-muros” fabric to the outer suburbs and the river Barada, from East to West: Bab Touma, Bab Al-Salam, Bab Al-Faradis and Bab Al-Faraj.

Bab Touma is the only one free-standing, due to the demolition of the walls on both sides, and lays almost invisible and inaccessible in the midst of a square entirely taken over by the vehicular circulation. If the historical contact with the northern suburb of Soufanie and the river is completely lost, nevertheless it still gives access to the northern bank of the Barada branch and to the neighbourhoods, which developed along the river.



Bab Al Salam, restored in the 12th and 13th centuries, is set at the point where the southern Barada river branch is covered and enters the City Wall, and is linked to a bridge over the main stream of the river itself. It gathers the main spines of the craft and residential set with continuity on both sides of the walls. Due to its position and architectural quality, it represents a remarkable landmark in the area, in spite of the poor management of the surrounding public space.



Bab Al-Faradis (or Amara), restored in the Ayyubid era, is completely incorporated in the urban fabric of the commercial neighbourhoods extending on both sides of the City Wall. It

commands the bridge on the Barada river connecting the Amara quarter around the Umayyad Mosque to the King Faisal Street quarter and the Sarouja Neighbourhood. The density of commercial and handicraft activities, sometimes incompatible with the urban environment, and the many uncontrolled building additions have disfigured the bridge and the walls; nevertheless these prove the intensity of the economic and spatial linkages between the historic neighbourhoods inside and outside the wall: these require to be regulated, but can not be denied.



Bab Al-Faraj, renewed by Saladin in the 13th century is double sided and commands on the northern side the “Roman” bridge over the main stream of the Sarouja River. Similarly to Bab Al-Faradis, it is completely incorporated in the fabric of the suq spine, which connects the market area at the western end of King Faisal Street and the commercial core of the Ancient City between the Citadel and the Umayyad mosque. The same threats to heritage values and urban environment can be observed too.



The Barada River

The river Barada is an essential heritage element of Old Damascus and more specifically of the KFS Project area. During the centuries it has been the main water resource for the city, providing power to mills and workshops; whilst its banks were an important recreational area with gardens, cafés and promenades. Its stream is now divided in two branches:

- a main one to the north, running uncovered all along the area, with a rather meandering course and a larger riverbed;
- a secondary one, indeed a narrow channel running covered inside the walls from Bab Al-Faraj to Bab Al-Salam, and then uncovered at the foot of the wall.



In recent times, the river has lost its historic functions and meanings; it has served as a main sewage collector and its landscape has radically changed due to renewal interventions and the urbanisation on the northern terrace. Most of the gardens and green areas along the riverbanks have been deleted, and the river is now nothing but a “rear”, a forgotten space, whose environmental situation has dramatically deteriorated.



The main stream has been recently completely channelled with a concrete riverbed and stone banks, whilst a new sewage collector has been accommodated along the bank at the foot of the Wall. These interventions have been implemented with inappropriate and visually intrusive solutions, which affect at many points the City Wall and seriously hamper the cultural landscape and the heritage values of the whole area.



The ancient extra-mural suburbs

The urban fabric has expanded beyond the City Wall and the Barada river branches since the Ayyubid era (12th – 13th centuries) continuing the streets intra-muros, particularly next to the Al-Faraj and Faradis gates.



Along the wall, the neighbourhoods spatial pattern and the typologies owe to a great extent to the presence of the river. Between Bab Touma and Bab Al-Salam, two distinct and well defined neighbourhoods stretch in between the two branches and used to house activities requiring the power of the water stream (mills, leather factories). The fabric is structured by a main spine along or parallel to the secondary branch of the river and city wall, and by a comb-like pattern of perpendicular alleys heading to the northern main branch of the river and opening into courtyards. The space organisation and several architectural typologies are very peculiar and testify of the past craft activities, even if these are nowadays deserted



or replaced by other poor or inconsistent uses. The historic fabric still show a relatively high degree of integrity and authenticity, and the street fronts along the main spines in front of or parallel to the wall represent an interesting example of “vernacular” urban architecture. However several inconsistent buildings and additions have densified and partially disfigured the spaces along the main Barada branch, and an overall poor or bad state of conservation of the buildings can be observed.



The most relevant historic suburban expansions can be noted in the region beyond the northern main stream of the river, in connection with Bab Al Salama, Bab Al-Faradis and Bab al-Faraj. These have been affected by the opening of the existing King Faisal Street in the early decades of the 20th century, and the more recent urban renewal operations and new constructions, which have deleted most of the garden and green areas along the river bank.



In spite of the recent and ongoing transformation, the historic characteristics and the heritage values of the urban fabric are still visible in many neighbourhoods and reflect their different relationships to the river and to the gates.



Next to the river, the spatial pattern and building typologies are similar to the neighbourhood mentioned above, but the fabric tends to be continue and denser along the banks near the gates and in particular it incorporates the “Roman” bridges heading to Bab Al-Faradis and Bab Al-Faraj. Here the suq spines of the Ancient City within the walls merge with those of the outer suburbs, making evident the functional and economic complementarity between the fabrics on the two sides.



The street commanded by the gate runs perpendicular to reach the Suq Sarouja, parallel to the City Wall. This represents the main spine of the larger suburb in the area, and, before the opening of Ath Thawra Street, used to reach the actual Youssuf Al Azmeh Square, in the very centre of the modern city.

Even if the heavy and totally insensitive urban

renewal and the “barrier” of the North-South thoroughfare have definitely amputated and devitalised its western end, the remaining section still shows an high degree of integrity and keeps almost unspoiled the traditional characters of the urban fabric, definitely similar to the most celebrated WH site.



The overall state of conservation of the historic fabric is however very poor in this suburb, as in the rest of Old Damascus. Moreover, the widespread deterioration of the building stock adds to the very bad environmental conditions of the public space, sometimes congested by the informal street commerce and parking, the presence of vacant lands serving as waste disposals, and so on. If this does not affect the consistency of the historic fabric, it certainly makes the heritage values less and less visible and understandable, and calls for an urgent action of rehabilitation.



Only a small portion of the Sarouja district, adjacent to the Citadel in between the two Barada canals, has been registered in 2004. The undergoing works of rehabilitation prove to be successful, thus demonstrating the possibility of recovering what seems to be a lost heritage.



As for the rest, the largest part of this fabric is totally unprotected by planning regulations. According to the study of the Committee, the Sarouja district is to be considered as “historical protected region similar to the Ancient City”, whilst the other neighbourhood next to the River and the Wall “need to be protected and more studied” (see the map above).

In this context, the existing King Faisal Street represents to a certain extent a “cut” in the spatial and morphological continuity of the historic fabric, even if it results from the widening of pre-existing street threads. However its width and the types of commercial activities on the continuous street fronts do not hamper the functional and pedestrian continuity, which still exists along the south-north connections with the gates.



On the contrary, the intersections have become points of very intense urban life, and, in spite of

several exceedingly high buildings, large sections of this street could be rehabilitated to become part of the damascene heritage.



Architectural heritage

The historic fabric of the northern suburbs is enriched by buildings of the highest architectural and cultural interest. Most of them are set along the main branch of the river Barada and in the northern Sarouja suburb.

Along the river several dismissed mills in disrepair can be found, particularly in the eastern section. Near the gates of Al-Faradis and Al-Faraj and along the western section of King Faisal Street, the architectural heritage is more diversified and includes the “Roman” bridges, some mosques and buildings of different types.



In the northern suburb of Sarouja, the most distinguished architectural heritage consists of buildings, which represent the focal points for the local community, such as mosques, hammams, schools, khans and cafès; on the western end of the suq, but now facing the thoroughfare, stands the complex of the Khaled Al-Azem Palace and the Al Khanji hammam.



On the basis of the studies and the field surveys, the Committee has drafted a list of 36 buildings of major heritage interest, whose 14 are already registered.

Their state of conservation is rather diversified, and should be carefully assessed. It is worth however to consider urgently for a restoration action the worst condition of the bridges, which support the suq connecting the WH site to the northern suburbs of Sarouja. The historic structures are almost completely hidden by recent uncontrolled additions, often built with poor and inconsistent materials, which make



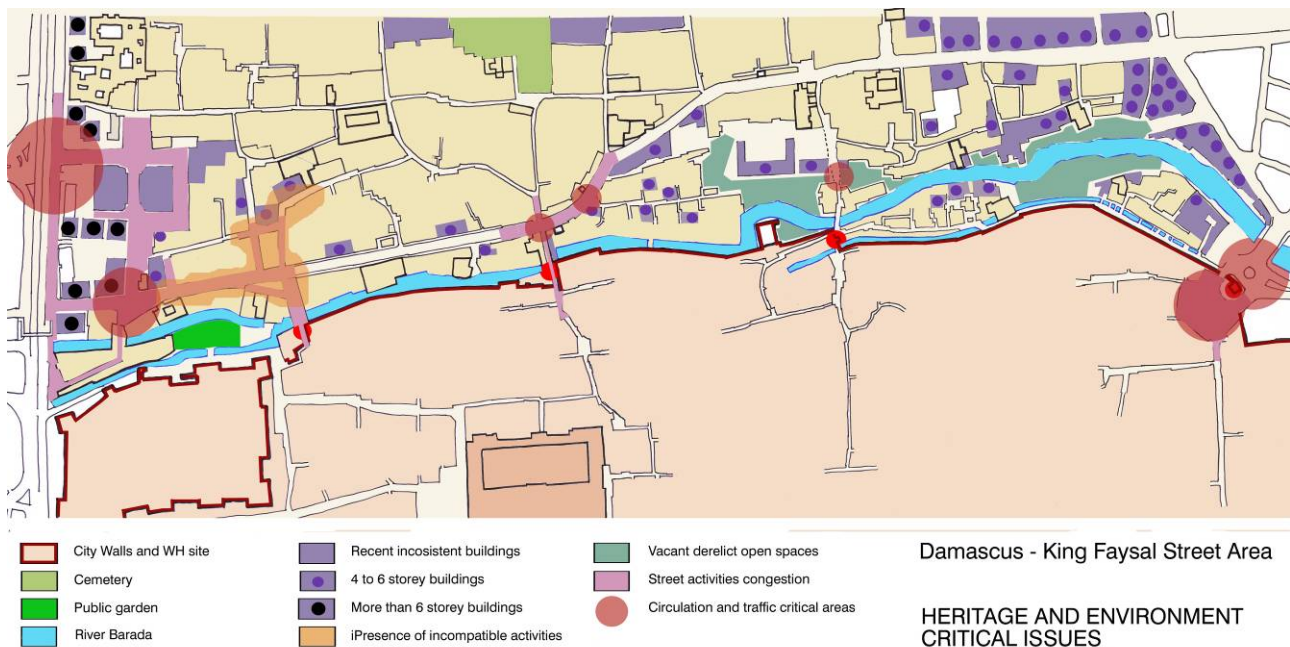
them unrecognisable and seriously affect their stability.

It must be stressed that many other buildings should be added to the list if vernacular housing architecture is taken in consideration, as it would be necessary for the implementation of an overall conservation and rehabilitation action.



2.2.2 Critical issues

Recent and undergoing transformations in the urban fabric of the Old City and its surroundings are seriously threatening the heritage values in the suburbs.



The consistency of the historic fabric has been affected since the second half of the 20th century, first, by new urbanisation along King Faisal street, later on by several redevelopment interventions scattered along this artery and in the fabric of the different neighbourhoods, and more recently, by the urban renewal operations being implemented along Thawra Street in the western side of the area.

In the meanwhile, the growth of the informal sectors of “suq economy”, together with the development of traditional retail and handcraft into wholesale commercial and semi-industrial activities, enhanced by the increased vehicular accessibility, have produced at some points difficult environmental situations. In particular, the areas near the gates, within and outside the walls, are now characterised by the presence of both productive and commercial activities (metal, timber and stone work, hardware, etc.) and larger food market, particularly on the western side, where larger scale interventions of urban renewal and road opening or widening have occurred as an expansion of the modern City Centre, bringing traffic congestion near to the perimeter of the City Wall and

even within it.

If the negative impact on the heritage values conservation and the environmental conditions can not be neglected, the contribution of these activities to the economic and functional vitality of the whole Old Damascus, and the WH site in particular, still seems to be fundamental and can not be denied.

These factors, on the other hand, have probably accelerated and aggravated the process of deterioration and decay of the historic residential fabric in the larger part of the historic suburbs. Not only these are more and more affected by the diffusion of commercial and productive activities but apparently are mostly inhabited by a lower income population and suffer from abandon and poor maintenance, or inconsistent and intrusive interventions of adaptation, additions, and so on.

Nowadays the integrity of the remaining historic fabric is threatened by several diffused phenomena. In particular, it is worth to consider the following:

- The scattered presence of several recent buildings, which are inconsistent with the historic fabric because of their size and heights, materials and architectural typology, and often replace old buildings been demolished;
- The presence of several illegal buildings along the river banks, mostly built with poor and inconsistent materials;
- The widespread deterioration of the residential stock, due to abandon and underutilisation but, most of all, to intrusive interventions of adaptation and additions (vertical and horizontal).



Besides these issues, which directly affect heritage conservation and are similar, to a certain extent, to the rest of Old Damascus, intra and extra-muros, some specific aspects are particularly harmful

for the urban environment and the livelihood of the suburbs, and may result in an eventual decay of the urban fabric, i.e.:

- The presence of activities, which are not only incompatible with the spatial and typological characteristics of the historic fabric but, sometimes, also dangerous and environmentally harmful. For the reasons explained in section 2.1.1 and 2.1.2, these are mainly (but not only) located in the area of the intersections of King Faisal Street with Bab Al Faraj and Att Thawra street, and consist of:
 - wholesale and retail commerce of hardware, timber and fabric wares;
 - semi-industrial metal and timber carpentry, stone workshops;
 - a large food market and street vending;
 - an important concentration of other informal handicraft and commercial activities in the street.
- The presence of traffic congestion, not depending on the intensity of the circulation but mainly due to the widespread presence of informal commercial activities on the street, unrestricted circulation of heavy vehicles (pick-ups, trucks), and uncontrolled parking of all kind of vehicles without any limitation.



Both these aspects explain the very poor environmental quality of the public open spaces, that suffer from lack of maintenance and the presence of informal waste disposal. Moreover, particularly on the riverside, the vacant land that used to be green areas is now mostly deserted and derelict, as a consequence of the recent works on the riverbed and the banks.

2.3. The Project proposals

2.3.1 The project process

The large scale project that involves the Malik Faisal area, tangent to the northern perimeter of the city walls was launched with an international competition in 2006, with two stated main goals:

- Complete the E-W corridor, extending the Al Ittihad Al 'Arabi Street, according to the Ecochard Plan of 1968, in order to improve the accessibility to the moderns commercial and business centre and to ease the circulation at the local level;
- Valorise the city wall, increasing their visibility and creating a park along the river, trough the clearing of the fabric in between the new thoroughfare and the Ancient City (i.e. the W.H. site).

Two different proposals had been selected, on the basis of which the Governorate intended to develop the final project to regenerate the area. On these basis, a route for the new road has been chosen and the international consulting firm Halcrow was committed to develop the technical studies of the Project.

During the mission it was not possible to collect detailed information and official documents on the selected competition entries, and the technical studies carried out since then. Also, no clear and official information has been found concerning the funding and phases of the intervention, and apparently neither Feasibility nor Impact Assessment Studies have been developed. However, according to national and international press releases and verbal information received from officials and representatives of residents associations, expropriations have started in order to allow the implementation of the Project along the chosen route.

During the mission, the experts were informed that, after the strong reactions on the project at local and international level, a new proposal was being drawn up, but its preparation was in a very preliminary phase (Halcrow). The valorisation of the heritage was presented as the primary concern of the Governor and its collaborator in the general meeting held with the experts and the responsible of the different offices, even if in the separate meetings had with the technical offices of the Governorate the traffic problem was always considered as one major reason for the intervention in the KFS area.

Nevertheless, the mission received the copy of a map (see below par. 3.2) showing the area interested by the expropriations foreseen to implement a still technically undefined project. It is on this single document and on the information verbally given by the representatives of the different services of the Governorate that the experts evaluation of the possible impacts is based.

2.3.2 The route of the new road

According to the document offered to the experts, the new road would clearly continue the present Al Ittihad Al'Arabi street from its intersection with Att Thawra street, in order to complete the West-East corridor connecting the modern commercial and business Centre to the roundabout of Bab Touma square, and hence to the eastern ring road.



Map showing the areas affected by expropriations in order to implement the possible route of the new road and the park along the City Walls (source: Governorate of

The only available information on the project concerns the route of the road, about 40 meters wide according to the map: soon after the needed (but not indicated) intersection with the North-South corridor, it turns southward to reach the present King Faisal Street, and continues straight eastward, more or less parallel to the City Wall thread, to plug into the existing Bab Touma roundabout.

If the technical characteristics are not specified, the geometric configuration of the route as it appears from the available plan -typically that of a thoroughfare- makes evident the intention to deal with the heavy flows of through-traffic, from- and to the modern City Centre, with no intrusion of local traffic. The proposed route is indeed overlapped to the urban fabric and no intersections are shown with the existing King Faisal Street and the historic street network heading to the gates of the Ancient City.

In the same map is clearly visible the foreseen park along the city wall, stretching from the western end of King Faisal Street to Bab Touma. This seems to be the complement of the new road, and it covers a continuous strip of land along its southern edge, clearing the whole historic fabric, with the only exception of few registered buildings, in order to “isolate” and put in visual evidence the City Walls - a monument to be eventually restored and “cleaned” from all the supposed “additions” and “transformations”.

Even if the issues related to the implementation of the linear park along the City Walls have not been discussed during the mission, it is worth to underline that this proposal is somewhat consistent with the vision intrinsic in the road proposal: to isolate as a “monument” not only the City Wall from the suburbs, but eventually the Ancient City itself from the rest of the city. It must be noted that the same principles seem to be applied to the other few registered along the route, which in the map look surrounded by the “green area” of the park.

It is clear that here heritage protection and conservation is deliberately considered only to foster a visual and “aesthetic” valorisation of few “monumental” or “archaeological” heritage features, without any concern for their historic and cultural layers, and most of all, regardless of their urban context. This would allow to complete the “valorisation” with large scale urban renewal interventions, which could eventually delete the non protected historic fabric.

It has to be underlined that these conservation and planning concepts are nowadays totally unacceptable, and contradict all the internationally established criteria in the field, particularly the UNESCO “Operational guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention” stating that “relationships and dynamic functions present in cultural landscapes, historic towns or other living properties essential to their distinctive character should also be maintained” (par. 89)”.

2.3.3 An evaluation of the possible impact of the Project

The lack of detailed technical studies makes difficult and uncertain any evaluation of the Project's possible impact. When confronted with objections concerning the crucial problems induced by the new road within the existing urban situation, the officials met in the technical offices have informally put forward different hypothetical solutions: i.e. a tunnel under Suq Sarouja and the riverbed, or a restricted and more winding route, and so on.

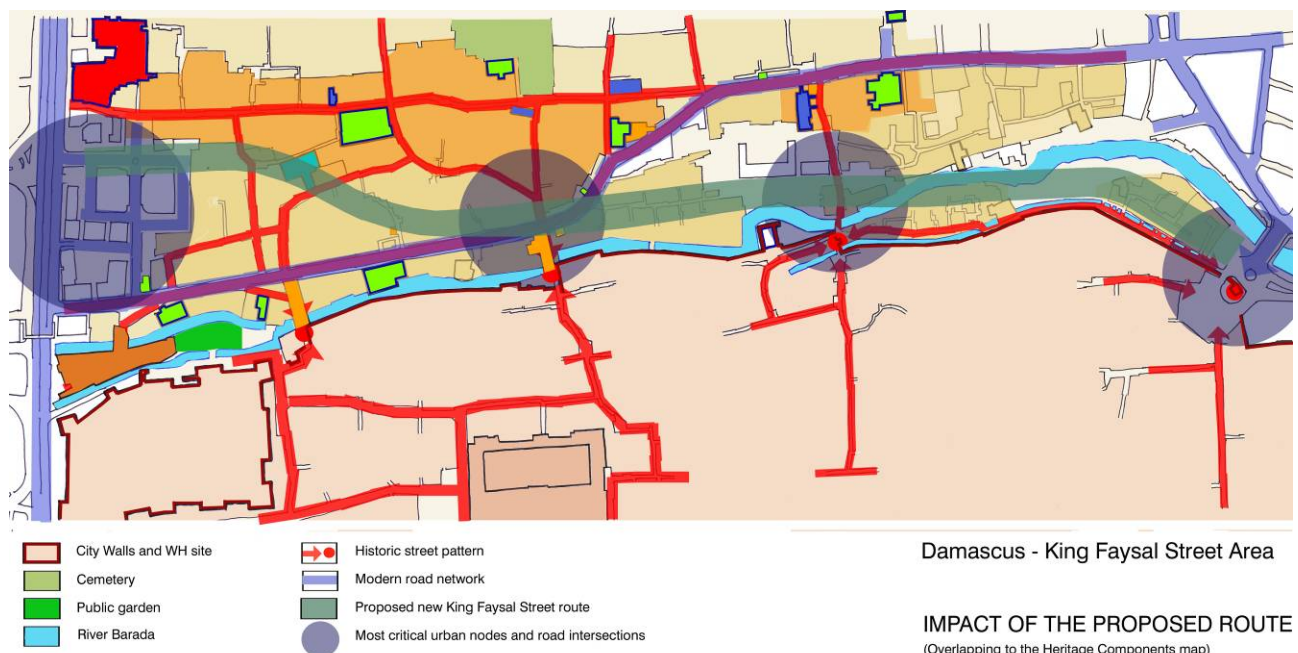
Nevertheless, on the basis of the information and documents collected during the mission, particularly the expropriation map, the possible impact of the proposed route can be evaluated from the following points of view (see the map below):

- Impact on heritage values;
- Impact on local mobility and accessibility to the Ancient City;
- Impact on the socio-economic environment.

Impact on Heritage Values

The following direct impact can be ascertained from the simple overlapping of the proposed route on the map showing the buildings and sites of heritage interest (see the map below):

- The southern part of the Suq Sarouja suburb would be seriously affected, particularly the areas that, according to the study of the Committee, should be proposed for registration;
- The suburbs along the Barada River would be almost completely cleared to eventually create a park;
- Some buildings of architectural interest identified by the Committee would be destroyed, including the Zat-Al Nitaqaien school and some mills, whilst others would be at risk and in any case separated from their urban context, particularly the buildings next to the roman bridge of Bab Faradis;
- The river Barada would be partially covered and a main potential green area along the bank would be occupied by the road.



It may be argued that these destructions could become the premise for a future extensive urban renewal operation, which would continue the high rise redevelopment of the western part of Sarouja along the Al Ittihad Al ‘Arabi Street. This would imply the definite destruction of this suburb.

Impact on local mobility and accessibility to the Ancient City

If the technical characteristics of the road are not yet defined, is worth to stress the following critical points:

- On the western end, the connection with Ath Thawra street seems very difficult to be implemented, since the new West-East corridor would have about the same importance of the existing North – South corridor. The crossing of these two major axes would require an adequate, probably space-consuming solution in a very critical point, also due to the presence of the flyover. Also the connection with the roundabout of Bab Touma square would present difficulties due to the restricted space and the heavy flows of traffic;
- No possible intersection is envisaged with the existing King Faisal Street, and with the historic streets heading to the gates, particularly Bab Al Faradis and Al Salam. The former is simply deleted in the section corresponding to Bab Al Faradis, whilst the proximity of the new thoroughfare to the historic gates would make any possible exit towards the Ancient City extremely harmful for the preservation of the City Walls and the WH site. As a matter of fact, the intersection with the existing street pattern is technically impossible and in any case not desirable. The implementation of the proposed new route would definitely imply the rupture of the historic street network, including the existing King Faisal Street that would be cut in two distinct parts, and therefore the interruption of all the possible vehicular links between the suburbs and the intra-muros city.

It has to be noted that the pedestrian connections between the larger part of the northern suburbs and the intra-muros city would become extremely difficult if not impossible. The width of the proposed thoroughfare, and the presumed speed of the traffic would prevent indeed any pedestrian “permeability”.

Impact on the socio-economic environment

The impact on local mobility, particularly the rupture of the existing King Faisal street, and on the accessibility to the Ancient City will definitely affect its relationships with the northern neighbourhoods of Old Damascus, hence the socio-economic vitality of the WH site.

The following effects of the new road can be easily foreseen:

- The partial deletion of the food market, catering the local population and low-income groups from the larger urban area, which will imply its decay, and probably an informal and uncontrolled relocation;
- The rupture of the economic and functional relationship between the manufacturing and whole sale commercial activities along the existing KFS area and the retail within the walled city;
- The devitalisation of the suqs heading to the gates, particularly Bab Al Faraj and Bab al Faradis;
- The loss of income opportunities for several hundred, if not thousands families, probably with no job alternatives in the area, that will imply the total disruption of the local community and consequently a further decay of the residential urban fabric.

If many of the activities that would be deleted by the implementation of the KFS Project are incompatible with the historic fabric, it has to be stressed that they are anyway essential to maintain the vitality of Old Damascus. An appropriate conservation planning policy would require land-use control measures and a careful plan of relocation and replacement with compatible activities, instead of a mere brutal deletion.

2.3.4 The debate on the KFS Project

The KFS project has raised an intense debate and strong oppositions in the civic society, diffused by the national and international press, blogs on internet and local groups initiatives. These reactions mainly focused on issues concerning, on the one hand, on the preservation of the local community social consistency and economic resources and, on the other hand, on the conservation of the overall heritage values of Old Damascus, not only of the WH site. In particular, the following aspects were given evidence:

- The Malik Faisal Street road scheme is derived from an old-fashioned, 1960s, transport master plan for Damascus and it does not take account of changes that have taken place since that date;
- It does not take in consideration the proposals to develop mass transit - especially the metro, and to pedestrianise parts of the Ancient City;
- It is underlined that the implementation of such a Project would almost certainly result in the WH Committee consider inscribing Damascus onto the *List of World Heritage in Danger*.

In this framework, the KFS Project has been discussed as a case-study in a seminar organised on 31 March 2007 by the Syrian British Society and the M.A.M. with the participation of government members, officials from the Governorate and the other concerned administrations, professionals and experts from different institutions.

The conclusions and the recommendations of the seminar (see Annex 3.a) largely recall the concerns of the public opinion and make proposals for several “action points” stressing the need to develop a Vision for the King Faisal Street area. This should “take account of the city needs and the World Heritage status constraints in a balanced way and in accord with realistic assumptions, in so far as they can be ascertained, concerning the overall future direction for the city”. Furthermore, some “pilot projects” are also envisaged aiming at:

- increasing the efficiency of local traffic management,
- improving the street layouts of the existing street,
- implementation of specific restoration projects according to internationally acknowledged standards.

2.3.5 The work of the Committee

The Committee nominated by the Minister of Culture, with decision n. 776 dated 7/5/2007, in order to evaluate the King Faisal Street project, produced a report in Arabic that was provided to the UNESCO – WHC in October 2007. An unofficial translation of the Conclusions and Recommendations was offered to the experts by the General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums (see Annex 3.b), together with some maps illustrating the study carried out. The results of the work of the Committee can be summarised as follows:

- The KFS area must be considered as the buffer zone of the Ancient City, with which it has undeniable architectural and urban continuity and historical social, cultural and financial links. Their protection is necessary for the very safeguarding of the WH site.
- The residential tissue and the green areas located on the river side have an exceptional value for the site of Old Damascus and need to be conserved, restored and rehabilitated.
- The socio-economic fabric is a major important factor in the conservation and a participatory process should be envisaged in the rehabilitation plans.
- The proposed projects for traffic solution would destroy the historical relation between Old Damascus inside and outside the wall and produce very negative environmental, architectural and social effects.

The Committee's urgent suggestions are:

- Preparing a comprehensive sustainable conservation plan for the area, including the socio-economic aspects and the participation of the local community, and carrying out a complete feasibility study for any project in the area, taking into account all the already available studies;
- Stopping the expropriations.

In this framework, the following immediate actions should be taken:

- Cleaning and rehabilitation of Barada River;
- Planting the neglected open spaces;
- Studying alternative solution for the present dangerous and polluting industrial activities in the area;
- Rehabilitation of the public spaces (road furniture, lightening, parking, traffic);
- Restoration of the historical buildings, wall and gates;
- Studying the removal of the Suq Al-Hall and the rehabilitation of the area;
- Rehabilitation and development of the traditional markets with the participation of the local community.

2.3.6 Other proposals for the area

To this purpose it is worth to mention the project “Valorising the City Walls”, being developed by the MAM in the framework of its study for an “Integrated Conservation and Development Plan for the Ancient City of Damascus”. It is intended to develop a programme to valorise the historic shops on Malik Faisal street, and rehabilitate the Barada river to form a kind of linear park between the back of the shops facing the suq and the city walls. The park will include public space and services such as cafes and will restore the historic recreational function of the river. Accessibility would be provided by light timber walkways and bridges where necessary to connect different parts of the park with King Faisal Street. A “City Walls Walk” is proposed with bridges across the Barada outside each of the gates. The demolition of squatter buildings and illegal extensions on the northern side of the river will make possible the recreation of such open spaces for relaxation and the formation of the “linear park” along the river.

This project, which needs to be linked with “effective strategies to address the severe pollution of the river”, shows the possibility of recovering and valorising the different and often neglected historic heritage values that exists in the area, providing new spaces and opportunities for the local community as well as for the larger public.

3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 General remarks

From many points of view, the KFS Project is not only the late result of an out-to date plan (the so-called Ecochard Plan dating 1968), but it is also reminiscent of an old-fashioned approach to urban planning, based on the simplistic assumption that urban development should only depend on the extension and strengthening of the road network, which considers the historic city as constraint to a modern and efficient urban development, and heritage protection only a matter of preserving few isolated “objects”.

The experience of other large cities in the Mediterranean Arab world, like Tunis or Cairo, which have addressed problems similar to those of Damascus, beyond all the differences, clearly show that:

- Traffic problems inherent to a rapid urban growth can not be managed only through new road provision, but require a more comprehensive planning approach considering the fundamental role of public transportation, particularly the implementation of rapid mass transit systems;
- Monuments and other relevant heritage features can be only protected and valorised within a well preserved context, and most of all, the whole historic city fabric is an heritage component in itself that could become a resource for a more sustainable urban development.

The principle should be adopted to adapt the traffic and transportation solutions to the physical characteristics of the historic fabric to be preserved, taking into consideration at the same time the heritage conservation requirements and the social and cultural implication of any planning choice. The old “infrastructural” vision brought in by a limited interpretation of the “Ecochard Plan” should be therefore got over by the undergoing revision of the Master Plan being carried out by the Governorate, and by the “Integrated Conservation and Development Plan for the Ancient City of Damascus” studied by the MAM, taking benefit from the international “best practices” and responding to the requirements of the WH “Operational guidelines”.

Considering the need of establishing a comprehensive strategy for the Ancient City – i.e. the WH site and the suburbs - the experts reiterate same fundamental considerations of previous UNESCO reports³ and stress the following:

- The two studies should be strongly coordinated, since “to be successful conservation must be considered as an integral part of the comprehensive town-planning process. Interdependencies and repercussions can be adequately mastered only if there is a close co-ordination between both activities”. A comprehensive strategy of conservation for the whole Old Damascus should be established with the involvement of all the concerned administrations and institutions, namely the Ministry of Culture and the Governorate, which

³ See: Giorgio Piccinato and Nada Al Hassan, *Mission Report – Damascus, Evaluation of the Malik Faisal Urban Project*, April 2007, and the old, but still relevant: Stefano Bianca, *Conservation of the Old City Damascus*, 1987.

primarily addresses the housing issues and considers “transportation and commercial activities together with the physical historic structures”;

- It is crucial to develop and implement the above planning and conservation studies in connection with the planned housing loans programme, carried out up by the GTZ at the Directorate of Old Damascus;
- A new approach should be established for the mobility in the whole City Centre and the Ancient City, giving priority to public transportation and particularly to rapid mass transit systems (i.e. the metro or the tramways) for the metropolitan connections. It has to be avoided to increase and enhance the vehicular through-traffic within the modern commercial and business centre and at the edges of the walled city adopting appropriate traffic and parking regulations, and deterrents of different type benefiting from the international best practices;
- The specific critical issues of the historic suburbs should be addressed in a new conservation and planning perspective, so that the different neighbourhoods could remain in close functional relation with the central core of Old Damascus, although with a different character. In particular, their land-use could complement the one of the walled city featuring the presence of controlled semi-industrial and commercial activities of appropriate scale and environmental impact.

As for the specific case of the northern suburbs and the issues raised by the KFS Project, the experts share most of the conclusions and recommendations of the Seminar organised by the Syrian – British Society and the MAM (see Annex 3.a) and of the Committee appointed by the Minister of Culture with decision n. 776 dated 7/5/2007, and in particular wish to underline the following:

- The plan to complete the North-South and the West-East “corridors”, according to the nowadays outdated “Ecochard Plan”, is not only harmful for the preservation of the Ancient City, but must also be reconsidered with regard to the present pattern of the mobility in the whole central area of Damascus and its future possible development. It seems necessary to give priority to the implementation of a consistent and appropriate policy of public transportation, based on rapid mass transit systems for the whole metropolitan area;
- The existing King Faisal Street should be rehabilitated as an artery for local traffic, and a public space belonging to the Ancient City. On the one hand, the priority should be given to the establishment of appropriate measures for the regulation of the circulation and the parking, and the provision of local transportations improving accessibility to both the northern suburbs and the Ancient City “intra-muros”; on the other hand, the urban streetscape needs to be improved and the pedestrian connections made easier and safer;
- The need to undertake a policy for the urban rehabilitation of the whole Old Damascus, taking into particular consideration the different specific situations and characteristics of the suburbs, and using a set of different but integrated tools of regulation and interventions on the basis of detailed surveys and analyses: i.e. land use control measures, housing loans, conservation and adaptive reuse, localised redevelopment and renewal. The historic fabric has to be maintained and respected all in all as a document of an outstanding stratification of cultural layers and heritage values, but also as a living component of the larger city.

3.2. Recommendations

Based on the above general principles and on the information collected during the mission, the experts recommend the following:

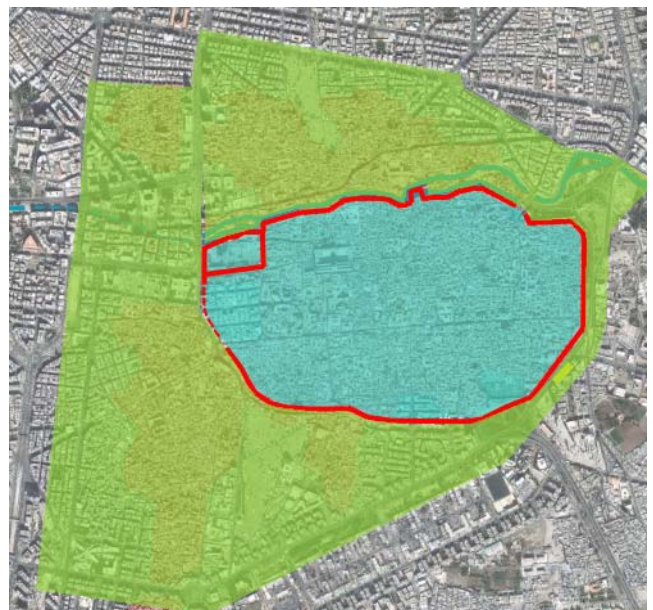
- To establish the “buffer zone” for the WH site of the Ancient City;
- To develop and implement an “Action Plan” for the KFS Project area, as part of a comprehensive conservation and rehabilitation strategy for Old Damascus;
- To take urgent land-use and protection measures for some critical and sensitive sites in the KFS Project area.

3.2.1 The “Buffer zone”

The establishment of “buffer zones” is requested by the national legislation, in accordance with the requirements of the Operational Guidelines for the implementation of the WH Convention. It has to be considered as a priority action in the framework of the studies for the new Master Plan and the “Integrated Conservation and Development Plan for the Ancient City of Damascus”. According to internationally accepted criteria, the “buffer zone” of the intra-muros city, i.e. the WH site, should include:

- The whole remaining fabric of Old Damascus outside the City Walls, to be identified on the basis of cartographic documents reflecting the state of the urbanisation before the development of the modern urban structure. In the case of Damascus, the cadastral maps of the '20 would provide an excellent reference and lead to consider the inclusion of all the areas developed until the Late Ottoman period, including the 19th and early 20th “Turkish city”;
- The outer areas of recent urbanisation, where renewal and redevelopment interventions have to be controlled, in order to prevent further traffic pressures and uncontrolled land use transformations on the historic fabric

Based on these criteria, in the sketch below an indicative perimeter of the possible “buffer zone” of the WH site is suggested.



The WH site of the Ancient City (in blue) and the possible “buffer zones” (in green)”

A specific and diversified regulation should be established for the “buffer zone” which would include namely the following:

- Preserve, with different degrees of protection, all the remaining historic fabric. These should be established on the basis of detailed plot-by-plot field surveys;
- Control the land use, building height and typology of new urbanisation and renewal/redevelopment interventions;
- Prevent the opening of new thoroughfares that would bring through traffic and increase the traffic congestion near the Ancient City Walls;
- Implement road cuts and widening only when needed for public transportation and to improve local accessibility, without damaging or destroying heritage features, and according to the established degrees of protection;
- Determine standards of environmental compatibility for new developments or redevelopment and infrastructural interventions.

3.2.2 The Action Plan

In the framework of the undergoing studies for the new Master Plan and the “Integrated Conservation and Development Plan for the Ancient City of Damascus”, an Action Plan for the northern suburbs should be developed, as for the implementation of a comprehensive conservation and rehabilitation strategy for the whole Old Damascus.

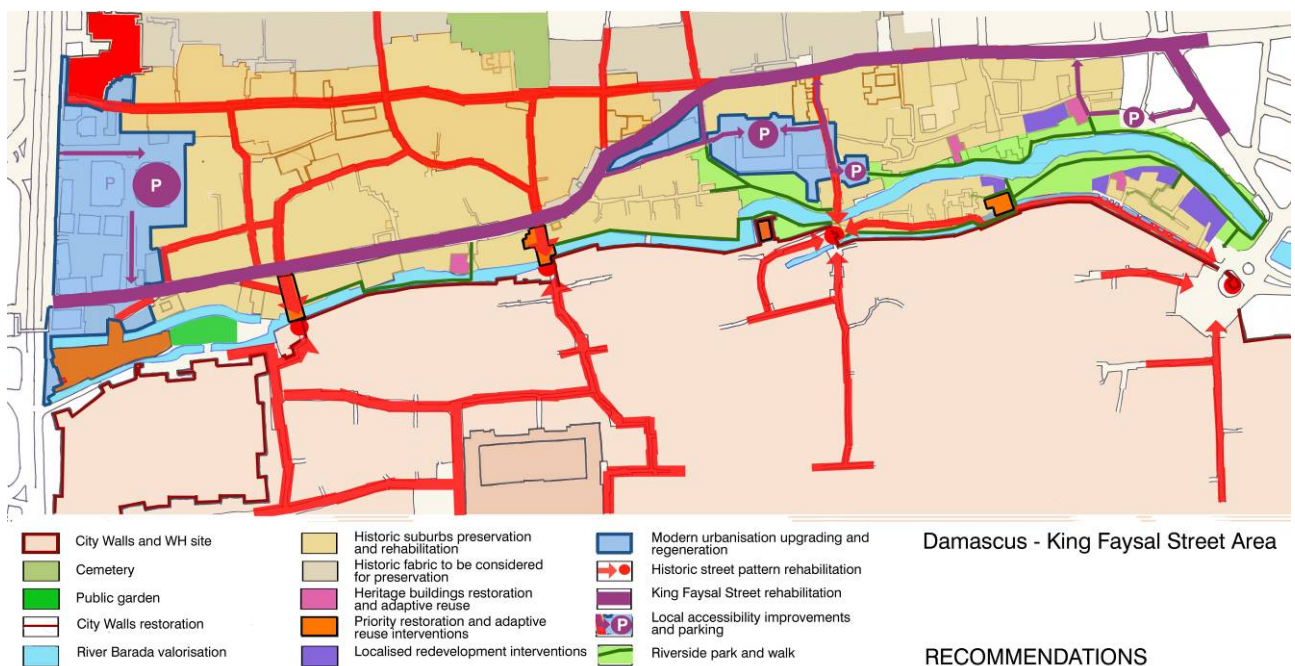
The Action Plan should aim at the identification and definition of conservation, urban regeneration and landscape rehabilitation not only of the area concerned by the KFS project but of the whole remaining historic fabric and isolated heritage elements in the northern suburbs. To this regard, the perimeter of the study area considered by the Ministry of Culture's Committee should be probably extended to include the northern side of the Suq Sarouja and the cemetery itself.

The Action Plan should be based on the existing documentation, to be completed with further detailed surveys plot-by-plot, in order to define the different degrees of protection of the fabric, identify the different types of interventions to be applied to each building, establish criteria for priority interventions of restoration and adaptive reuse. Moreover, the necessary information should be collected and analysed in order to develop proposals on landscape improvements and traffic management in the area.

The Action Plan should be developed through different but integrated projects, consistent with a general vision for the protection and valorisation of Old Damascus as a necessary complement of the WH site of the Ancient City. To this purpose, on the basis of the available information, particularly the work carried out by the Ministry's of Culture's Committee and the MAM, the experts suggest addressing the following conservation and planning issues:

- The restoration of the city walls, respecting the stratification of the different historic layers, and avoiding any indiscriminate clearing of the constructions added on the top;
- The rehabilitation of the River Barada in an integrated project, which should deal with the following aspects:
 - Measures to address the severe pollution of the river;
 - The re-landscaping of the banks of both branches;

- The creation of a “river park”, including open areas along the two banks (to be extended with the demolition of illegal buildings and inconsistent additions) and pathways to be created along the river banks;
- The conservation and rehabilitation of the historic residential urban fabric, including land-use measures, and adopting different degrees of protection on the basis of a plot-by-plot survey;
- The restoration and adaptive reuse of some selected and architecturally distinguished heritage buildings (i.e. the mills; the bridges and their markets);
- The rehabilitation of the existing KFS area and the historic street pattern, including provisions for localised street widening and new parking, in order to regulate and improve the local accessibility;
- The urban upgrading and redevelopment of recent inconsistent urbanisation, taking into consideration:
 - the possible introduction of metropolitan mass-transit systems and local public transportations;
 - the relocation of incompatible activities and their replacement with less intrusive ones;
 - the creation of new parking facilities (including multi storied or underground garages).



These objectives are shown in the map above, that has to be considered as a merely indicative contribution to the establishment of an integrated conservation planning strategy.

The experts wish also to stress that the implementation of such an Action Plan could create the conditions to allow for the eventual extension of the WH site perimeter to the Barada river and its historic heritage, according to the decision 31COM 7B.58 of the WH Committee at its last session (2007). This extension should include parts of the historic fabric north of the city wall, which presents the same heritage values of the Old City and that would be affected by the King Faisal Street Project.

3.2.3 Urgent measures

In the framework outlined above, the experts wish to put the emphasis on the need to undertake immediately some priority actions to stop the deterioration of the physical environment of the suburb and to address the most critical conservation issues. To this regard, the following urgent measures are proposed:

- Undertake the restoration of the City Walls, particularly along the secondary branch of the Barada River;
- Address the progressive deterioration of the historic fabric through the implementation of financial, fiscal and regulatory measures aiming at:
 - undertaking a widespread process of housing rehabilitation, including the cleaning of inconsistent and precarious additions;
 - removing and relocating inconsistent and incompatible semi-industrial and wholesale activities, to be replaced by less intrusive retail and handicraft;
 - preventing new constructions and the densification of the existing fabric along the river banks and the existing King Faisal Street;
 - demolishing illegal buildings and constructions.
- Undertake the conservation and adaptive reuse of unused registered and high value buildings, particularly the mills and the “roman bridges” on the Barada river;
- The landscaping of the river banks including the upgrading of the recent sewage system to satisfy the environmental requirements and make it compatible with the heritage values of the historic area.

ANNEX 1 - LIST OF PEOPLE MET

Governorate of Damascus

- Mr Bishr Al Sabban, Governor of Damascus
- Eng. Bassam Jairoudieh, Executive Bureau Member
- Arch. Abdul Fattah Ayaso, Director of Urban Planning
- Eng. Amjad Alrez, Manager of Old Damascus
- Eng. Tarek Ibrahim Alasmi, Manager of Traffic and Transport Engineering Directorate

General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM)

- Dr Bassam Jamous, Director-General,
- Dr. Ghazwan Yaghi, manager of Monuments and Documentation Department
- Mr.Nazeer Awad, Director, Office for the preservation of the Old City of Damascus
- Arch. Maram Diab, architect

Municipal Administration Modernisation (MAM)

- Eng. Erfan Ali, Director MAM
- Dr. Abir Arkawi, Historic City Development expert
- Dr. Samir Abdulac, consultant
- Prof. François Vigier, consultant
- Dr. David Michelmore, consultant

Local Committee of Experts

- Prof. Radwan Tehlaoui, Faculty of Architecture, Damascus University
- Eng. Mouaffak Doughman, Prof. Faculty of Architecture, Damascus Office for Architecture &Heritage

German Technical Cooperation (GTZ)

- Eng. Regina Kallmayer, Project manager, Rehabilitation of the Old City of Damascus

Halcrow

- Mr. Yacoub Naber, Chief Engineer, Halcrow
- Mr. Haysam Jazairi, General Manager, Halcrow Damascus Branch
- Eng. Abdul Matin Khan, Market sector Director - Highways, Halcrow

Civil society representatives

- Ms. Luna Rajab, member of the Association for the safeguard of the old city of Damascus
- Eng. Mhd Arfan Tabbaa, King Faisal Street local community
- Houssam Alhaj Issa, King Faisal Street local community
- Representatives of the Association Heart of Damascus

ANNEX 2 SCHEDULE OF THE MISSION

Sunday 09 December 2007

Afternoon Arrival at Damascus, received by representatives of the Governorate and the DGAM. During the mission, the experts were accompanied by Mr. Mohamed Ali Imam, translator, from the Governorate of Damascus.

Monday 10 December 2007

Morning and afternoon: Meeting at Old Damascus Directorate, Damascus Governorate:

General Overview of Old Damascus conservation issues, the plans and the interventions planned or carried out by the Municipality

Visit to Old Damascus with the representatives of the Governorate and the DGAM: main monuments, restored buildings, ongoing infrastructural works

Late Afternoon: Visit continues informally: northern neighbourhoods and King Faisal street project area

Evening: Dinner with Eng. Bassam Jerudieh, Eng. Amjad El Riz, Arch. Abdul Fattah Ayaso

Tuesday 11 December 2007

Morning and afternoon: Visit to the area concerned by the King Faisal street Project with the representatives of the Governorate, the DGAM and NGOs: Barada river banks, northern neighbourhoods, City walls

Meeting at the National Museum, with Dr. Bassam Jamous and collaborators from the DGAM: presentation of the study carried out by the Committee set up by the Ministry of Culture on the King Faisal area, by Dr. Mouaffaq Doughman, Prof. Radwan Tehlaoui and collaborators

Afternoon Work on the documents

Evening: Dinner with Eng. Bassam Jerudieh, Eng. Amjad El Riz, Arch. Abdul Fattah Ayaso

Wednesday 12 December 2007

morning and afternoon: Short visit to the National Museum

Meeting at the Urban Planning Department, Damascus Governorate, with Arch. Abdul Fattah Ayaso and Eng. Hiyam Ali: presentation of the ongoing studies for the Master Plan of Damascus

Meeting at the Traffic and Transport Engineering Directorate, Damascus Governorate: illustration of the traffic issues in Damascus Central area

Informal visit to the King Faisal Street Project area

afternoon Meeting at the M.A.M. with Dr. Eng. Erfan Ali and collaborators: discussion on the issues related to the Old City conservation and the King Faisal Street Project implementation

Thursday 13 December 2007

Morning and afternoon Informal visit to Sarouja neighbourhood and the Citadel

Meeting at the Damascus Governorate with the Governor of Damascus, Mr. Bishr Al Sabban, the General Director of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM) Dr Bassam Jamous, the representatives of the concerned administrations, and the responsible of Halcrow company committed with the technical studies of the King Faisal Street Project

Afternoon Meeting at Old Damascus Directorate and visits to sensitive areas in the Old City, with Eng. Amjad Alres and the representative of GTZ, Eng. Regina Kallmayer

Friday 14 December 2007

Morning and afternoon work on the report and informal visits to the Old City sensitive areas

Afternoon Work on the report

Saturday 15 December 2007

morning Informal visit to King Faisal street area and to the western neighbourhoods

afternoon Departure to Bologna and Paris

ANNEX 3 DOCUMENTS

3.a Observations and recommendations by the organisers on the proceedings of the British Syrian Society/MAM seminar: "Damascus 2020: The Vision for Urban Development and Transportation". Case Study: King Faisal Street

(March 2007)

- A. The Seminar shed light on the great deal of work that has been done separately by various agencies to arrive at overall structural understandings of Damascus in urban planning terms. In particular, the work presented by the General Company for Researches and Technical Studies on the Damascus Master Plan is clearly valuable. Nevertheless, the accomplished work seems to have been done by the various agencies on individual level with little overall coordination.
- B. Considerable effort has also clearly been expended by the Damascus Governorate through the Old City Master Plan to bring forward ways in which the area within the walled city might be protected and enhanced. The Old City Master Plan, however, has excluded all the parts of the Old City outside the wall.
- C. It is also clear that the proposals for King Faisal Street are motivated by the need for urban development in a general sense and that the proposals have been the subject of considerable work by the Governorate and others.
- D. It became clear during the seminar both in general terms and in the specific context of the King Faisal Street case study that the available opportunities and requirements for integrated cooperation between governmental agencies and other relevant bodies have not been respected to an adequate degree. For example in the case of the King Faisal St. area proposals the role of the Ministry of culture and the Directorate of Antiquities in particular has surprisingly appeared to be minimal. If better advantage had been taken of the opportunities legally available for involvement many, of the difficulties identified below could perhaps have been avoided.
- E. There was an apparent lack of a unified vision for the future of Damascus between the various governmental agencies. Indeed it would appear that there are a number of competing visions for the future of Damascus within the different agencies. In future full benefit should be taken from the existing processes to ensure a sustainable unified approach to planning for the future of the capital city and to realise full benefit from the serious work that has been done.
- F. Speaking specifically of the King Faisal Street area, it appears that the requirements of the World Heritage Convention have not been taken into account and namely the fact that the King Faisal area is within a buffer zone that is meant to protect the city *intra muros* inscribed on the World Heritage List. Parts of the proposed extension of the King Faisal Street, which foresees demolitions, are within the registered National Heritage areas and should therefore not be demolished. UNESCO World Heritage Centre reported that they had only learnt of the King Faisal St. area proposals late in the process and by accident when discussing another matter with Syrian authorities; they report that they do not consider that they have adequate details of the proposals. The UNESCO World Heritage Centre will report about the state of conservation in Damascus regarding the development of the King Faisal project during the annual meeting of the World Heritage Committee next June. Should the proposed project be implemented, the World Heritage Committee could consider listing the Ancient City of Damascus on the World Heritage List in Danger.
- G. It would also appear in the case of King Faisal Street proposals that there has been a weakness in terms of transparency and consistency in presenting information to stakeholders in particular the local residents. Some distress, confusion and antagonism could be avoided with future similar proposals if there was greater effective involvement from the start. It would also seem that the views of academic institutions and NGOs have not been adequately sought or responded to.
- H. In preparing the King Faisal Street proposals it would appear that the impact of the scheme in terms of broader policy issues involved in urban structural decisions has not been considered adequately.
- I. It is clear that the King Faisal area proposals are controversial and subject to much technical disagreement on a number of points including urban structural issues, heritage protection, traffic management, the environment, economic development, great social impact and urban design. Full opportunity should be taken of all the available relevant expertise both local and international and the implementation of a preliminary impact assessment study is a crucial requirement for any proposed project.

From the above observations arise a number of proposed action points:

1. An independent review mechanism should be established to consider the various visions on urban development in Syria and a clear statement of direction together with implementation guidelines should be identified so that they can be followed by all Governmental agencies whilst planning for urban development and transportation in Syrian cities and villages.
2. Better mechanisms should be established for the coordination of international support bodies concerned with urban development working with the various government agencies.
3. There should be an immediate pause in the implementation of the current proposals in the King Faisal Street area, including expropriation processes.

4. Any project for the King Faisal Street Area should not put at risk the historical urban fabric in the northern outskirts of the city intra muros or isolate the old city from what was its natural expansion scheme throughout history.
5. The establishment of a King Faisal Street Area Task Force fully representative of all relevant government agencies, taking advantage of the available international assistance, to formulate a broad strategy for resolving current difficulties and establishing future directions.
6. The UNESCO World Heritage Centre should be consulted throughout the process of revising the project of King Faisal Street area and any other similar project.
7. Legal consultations of how the issues arising from existing expropriations in the King Faisal St. area might be dealt with in case the properties prove to be not after all necessary.
8. Clarification of the status and accuracy of the available information for the area.
9. The holding of a series of events both formal and informal to fully explore the detailed views of involved stakeholders in the area.
10. The development of a Vision for the King Faisal Street area to take account of the city needs and the World Heritage status constraints in a balanced way and in accord with realistic assumptions, in so far as they can be ascertained, concerning the overall future direction for the city. This Vision to include consideration of:
 - urban structural issues,
 - heritage protection,
 - traffic management,
 - the environment,
 - economic and social development, and
 - urban design.
11. The development of a number of pilot projects in the King Faisal St. area to include:
 - Increasing the efficiency of local traffic management
 - Improving the street layouts of the existing street
 - Implementation of specific restoration projects according to internationally acknowledged standards

These pilot projects would serve to demonstrate alternative solutions but should be timed to ensure that some work on the ground is taking place in time for the Year of Damascus as Arabic Cultural Capital, and should be undertaken with full consultation from the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and other stakeholders.

3.b Document and Decision 31COM 7B.58 of the World Heritage Committee at its last session (July 2007)

58. Ancient City of Damascus (Syria) (C 20)

Year of inscription on the World Heritage List

1979

Criteria

(i) (ii) (iii) (iv) (vi)

Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger

N/A

Previous Committee Decisions

17 COM VIII.3; 21 COM IV.57.a

International Assistance

Total amount allocated to the property: USD 149,690 for Technical Cooperation.

UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds

Total amount allocated to the property: USD 3,900 for an expert technical mission in March 2007.

Previous monitoring missions

World Heritage Centre missions in December 1993 and March 2007.

Main threats identified in previous reports

- a) Poor state of conservation;
- b) Inappropriate restoration techniques;
- c) Lack of a buffer zone;
- d) Lack of a management plan.

Current conservation problems

Since its inscription on the World Heritage List, the conservation of the Ancient City of Damascus has not been addressed in a comprehensive study and no global conservation actions have been taken. It is urgent to point out that the state of conservation of the property is very poor. Although the main monuments and buildings are more or less well conserved, the urban fabric has considerably degraded since the inscription of the Ancient City of Damascus on the World Heritage List.

Several single monuments were and are being restored, however inappropriate restoration techniques are often used within the property: for example, in the Ayyubid building al-Madrassa al-Adliyah (7th century AD), Ayyubid ashlar stones have been partially cut and covered with mechanically cut stones cladding in large portions of the monument; this technique had been previously used also in the Roman perimeter of the Great Omeyyade Mosque of Damascus and was stopped following UNESCO recommendations in 1997. In private dwellings and in all historical buildings in general, reconstructions in cement are allowed provided that the original forms are reproduced; the use of the traditional construction techniques in timber structure and mud bricks is not compulsory.

In addition, two alarming recent developments within the inscribed property have occurred without the World Heritage Centre being informed: several housing units have been destroyed in two locations to allow for new constructions, one adjacent to the Sitt Ruqiyah Mosque and the other situated along the Medhat Pasha Street (the former Roman *cardo*).

Moreover, and despite a World Heritage Centre mission in 2001 in which a definition of a buffer zone was agreed upon in principle with the General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums, the State Party did not yet officially submit a plan showing the buffer zone to the World Heritage Secretariat.

Nevertheless, in 2006, the State Party undertook a major positive step: the Ministry of Local Administration and Environment produced a "Conservation Action Plan" for the World Heritage property and transmitted it, in Arabic, to the World Heritage Centre. This Plan - that is still to be endorsed by several governmental agencies before its implementation is allowed - provides a comprehensive analysis of the conservation problems of the property and lists a series of remedial actions on the urban level. Although the Action Plan needs to be modified in some areas, mainly by cancelling the idea of a ring road around the city walls, and by updating the urban regulations and technical requirements of restoration works, its implementation can contribute to considerably improving the property's physical conditions.

Within the framework of the implementation of the proposed "Action Plan", all infrastructure services within the property will be buried. Therefore, any underground excavations that are planned should be supervised by competent and vigilant archaeologists, since these excavations will concern valuable and highly informative archaeological evidence that constitutes an intrinsic part of the property's value.

In a recent World Heritage Centre mission to Syria (January 2007), the Governor of Damascus informed the Centre of a large scale project that involves the Malik Faisal area, tangent to the northern perimeter of the city walls. The project foresees to demolish the whole area, including large portions of the historical urban fabric inscribed on the National Register - that form part of the agreed upon buffer zone -, "clear" the constructions that hide the city walls, replace them with gardens, and, build a new 32 meter wide road parallel to the city walls, partly covering the Barada river that runs in this area.

The World Heritage Centre informed the State Party during the January 2007 mission and by letter immediately upon return, of the negative impact that this project would have on the World Heritage property, and on the necessity to inform the World Heritage Committee, as per the *Operational Guidelines*, before such a project is implemented. The State Party reacted by inviting the World Heritage Centre, in March 2007, to advise on the modifications that need to be done, and to take part as well in a national meeting on the Malik Faisal project, involving all the stakeholders. To answer this request, the World Heritage Centre dispatched a senior urban planner and a member of the Secretariat to Damascus from 28 March to 2 April. The members of the mission concluded that the planned project on the World Heritage property would have tangible and immediate negative effects on the property's historical and heritage values, and harmful impact on the human, social, and economic levels. Moreover, the members of the mission highlighted the fact that the historical suburbs concerned by the Governorate's project undeniably constitute a natural buffer zone to the property.

Finally, the mission underlined that, as mentioned in the *Operational Guidelines* (paragraphs 178 and 179), a World Heritage property - as defined in Articles 1 and 2 of the *Convention* - can be inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger by the Committee in the cases of ascertained danger due to "serious deterioration of materials" and/or "serious deterioration of structure and/or ornamental features", or potential danger because of "lack of conservation policy" and/or "threatening effects of regional planning projects". Concern is indeed raised by the project foreseen in the northern outskirts of the property because of its negative and significant impact.

The World Heritage Centre communicated these conclusions by letter to the State Party on 23 April 2007, and proposed to support the Syrian Directorate of Antiquities and Museums in planning an implementing an alternative pilot project for the urban rehabilitation of the Malik Faisal area, before the end of the year 2008 in which Damascus has been designated as the Capital of Culture for the Arab World.

At the time of drafting this document, no answer was officially received by the World Heritage Centre regarding the possible decision of cancelling the project foreseen in the Malik Faisal area. Such a decision would be indispensable for the protection of the World Heritage Property's integrity and open the way to reinforced cooperation with the Directorate of Antiquities and Museums in the field of urban rehabilitation.

58. Ancient City of Damascus (Syrian Arab Republic) (C 20)

Decision: 31 COM 7B.58

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC-07/31.COM/7B.Add,
2. Notes with satisfaction that the State Party has prepared an Action Plan for the conservation of the property;
3. Encourages the State Party to implement the Action Plan provided that:
 - a) Any ring road around the property must respect the integrity of the property;
 - b) Infrastructure works are planned and implemented under high quality archaeological supervision;
 - c) The legal framework for the protection of the property is improved and detailed;
 - d) The use of traditional restoration techniques within the property becomes compulsory to guarantee the preservation of the property's integrity;
4. Urges the State Party to refrain from undertaking any demolition work within the property and its buffer zone, in case such work impacts on the integrity of the property;
5. Invites the State Party to consider extending the boundaries of the property in order to include its valuable historical neighbourhoods and requests the State Party to define the boundaries of the proposed buffer zone and to officially provide a map of this zone to the World Heritage Centre for approval by the Committee;
6. Requests the State Party, in accordance with Paragraph 172 of the *Operational Guidelines*, to inform the World Heritage Centre in advance of any planned changes and any foreseen project within and around the property;
7. Further requests the State Party to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS mission in order to assess the situation and to submit to the World Heritage Centre, by **1 February 2008**, a progress report on the above recommendations and on the state of conservation of the property for examination by the Committee at its 32nd session in 2008.

3.c Results and recommendations of the Committee appointed by the Minister of Culture with decision n. 776 dated 7/5/2007

The results and the Recommendations of the committee:

According to 1)- The Syrian law of antiquities in the articles (10, 11, 13, 14, 17, 18, 24, 25, 26), and 2)- The recommendations committed by the general convention of the Unesco in his nineteenth session held in Nairobi, 26 November 1976 concerning “protection and conservation of the historic regions and its role in the modern life” 3)-and from what had been documented by the committee nominated by the decision number 776 dated on 7/5/2007 by the ministry of culture:

This region “King Al-Faysal Street” in totality is considered as a historic region because it contains several building, urban tissues and open spaces in addition to the historic monuments and sites which form a solid urban tissue, and it also has very important values: historical, architectural, social, cultural, archeological and esthetical as well.

This region is related and connected “from the north” with a very important environment, and it has a historic evaluation “The Old City of Damascus” which affect the realization and the comprehension of this site, and they are both connected with social, cultural and financial links in addition to the architectural and urban tissue.

Therefore the committee specifies:

- ١- In the conservation plan of Damascus, This area was specified as a historic region and its limits were adjusted according to the Cadastral plan of 1926.
- ٢- It was considered as a buffer zone of the Old City of Damascus in the recommendation of the Unesco and the DGAM which should specify certain zones as historical regions.
- ٣- It contains many public and private buildings which are so rich in details and architectural and historical elements, and also coherent urban tissue.

- ξ- The quarters in the region such as “Oukaibeh, Saroujah, Amarah Barranieh...” outside the wall grew and developed, and had been connected to the old city since the first Islamic Decades.
- ο- There are many financial activities in this site “Particular markets, mills, Khans and many others...” in addition to the traditional hand craft which is so important to the city. That what should be considered as a major factor, and to be carefully studied when dealing with this site.
- Ϛ- Also there are distinct social activities in the site such as “restaurant, public baths, religious buildings, cemeteries and schools...” which have special historic importance.
- Υ- The historic and archeological zones had been located on the attached plan, and it has an important and considerable historical and cultural fund, and we have to conserve, do the restorations needed, put special and specific aspects when dealing with it, and also keep the continuity and the connections between the surrounded areas. The registered and some important and historic buildings were also defined in the plans with a table of its names, and also the public building which should be conserved. Although that the region should be studied more carefully and in details which may raise another areas and more buildings as well.
- Λ- We should study the traffic solutions in the area in a way which respect the important and distinct urban tissue, and not to separate the region from its connection with the old city and the buffer zone as well.

7-1: The recommendations and the results:

- ١- The area at the north of the old city which spread between “old Souk Al-Hall and Souk Saroujah from the west, Al-Aqsab mousque and Bab Toumah from the east, Al-Ouqaibah and Amarah Baranieh and Saroujah from the north side and the wall of the old city from the south” is considered as a part of the buffer zone of the “old city of Damascus” which had been registered in the world heritage list in 1979, and the local and international principals of rehabilitation and conservation must be adapted when dealing with it.
- ٢- The residential tissues, especially which is located on the river side, is to be considered as a unique tissue in the area and in the Arab region, and it contains architectural and urban components, and by losing it Damascus will lose an important, essential and unreplaceable mark of the city, therefore, we can't allow destroyed, and should have sufficient and detailed studies before doing and restoration or rehabilitation.
- ٣- Barada River, and the other streams and its important features “such as bridges and mills.....” is to be considered as natural elements which affected the development safeguard the historical city, and we should respect, conserve, do the restoration and the rehabilitation and also we must segregate it from the “drainage” of the city, and destroy and treat all the deformation, and we should not “in any case” cover it partly or totality.
- ٤- The registered building and the assigned building “which is considered to be registered in the DGAM” and the historic tissues which was registered in corporation with the governorate, are permanent need restoration and rehabilitation.
- ٥- The green areas which go back at least to the cadastre of 1926, have to be conserved and protected because it represents part of

the general view of the river and the north wall of the old city, and we should take legal procedures to enlarge it and reinforce it in the area.

- ٦- The traditional markets “souks”, the small market “Souwaikat” on the bridges which connect the old city with the north tissue and the traditional hand craft in the area are essential part of the process when doing the rehabilitation and renovations plans.
- ٧- The social tissue which is in the region is a major and important factor in the conservation plans, and we must let it participate in any local project in the area.
- ٨- The modern buildings and the bad, disastrous and dangerous activities “containers, heavy industrial and polluted activities...” which had been raised according to certain reasons, are to be considered regions we may develop them in a way respect and be in harmony with the old historical tissue of the area and to pay attention to the legal rights of the owners and the workers there, as it is already a big burden on both social committees and the governorate, therefore, we have to find alternative regions and places to transport these activities.
- ٩- The road and traffic solution, according to the official plans and the suggested expropriation projects, threaten the site because of some consideration:
 - Destroying the relations between the old city of Damascus within the wall and the old city outside the wall.
 - Threatening the environment of the old city and the historical and archeological tissue surrounding it.
 - Destroying some of the historical, cultural, financial and social elements.

7-2 The committee suggests urgently because it is so important to rehabilitate the site:

- ١- The work of the committee with all the documents done, is a scientific materials helps in case there is any project to be done in the area.
- ٢- We must take benefits and take advantages of all the academics studies of the universities and specialized institutions “urban studies- social- financial- historical- environmental...”
- ٣- When putting the conservation plan and the general plan of the area, the social and financial specializes, and local committees must be included, and expertise with certain related organizations should be part in making future studies.
- ٤- We have to do urgent financial study of the benefits of the rehabilitation project of the site and development plan through the concept of the sustainability, and compare it with the other choices either in the expropriation or the regulation and organization plans, and this study will present to the minister commission presidency to discuss and put its principles in any future studies.
- ٥- The committee suggests stopping the second and third phases of expropriation.
- ٦- Any further delay in adopting the suggested procedures may complicate the right solutions and destroying the historical aspects of the site.

7-3: The urgent executive procedures in the site:

- ١- Cleaning and rehabilitating of Barada River.
- ٢- Plating the neglected open spaces which reflect the historic values of the site.
- ٣- Starting giving notices to the proprietors of the dangerous and heavy polluted industrial activities, and studying the alternative places.
- ٤- Studying the road furniture, roads lightening, parking and traffic regulation.
- ٥- Studying the possibility of rearrange Souk Al-Hall and consider it as a part of open green spaces in the site and include it in the general study of the site.
- ٦- Restore, refecton and rehabilitee the historical and archeological buildings and sites.
- ٧- Develop and rehabilitee the traditional markets "Souks".

Working period: from 7-5-2007 till 14-8-2007