

Conservation-Based Cultural, Environmental, and Economic Development: The Case of the Walled City of Fez

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Introduction

When dealing with 'conservation' one has to realize that heritage, which has endured over centuries, can be neither grasped nor discerned all at once, within the limits of time and place. Furthermore, the legacy of centuries of innovation, development, human experience, mutation, and change requires an holistic vision to unveil its true dimensions. This holistic vision cannot be achieved easily, and unfortunately it is often subsumed by assumptions and attempts toward preordained conclusions and syntheses through self-projection and foreknowledge.

Indeed, this vision is the key to the puzzle that permits us to understand the essence of the past and shape sound strategies for the future. Conservation is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it reveals the 'positivity' of the past and its value that is worthy of consideration and cultivation and on the other hand, it restrains and imprisons the future in its own realm. Thus, the present can oscillate between the readiness of the past, which tends to preserve itself as it was and the projected future, which drives it forward.

The historic site is now identifiable and has its own undeniable integrity and it is due to its very 'energy' that many cities have been improved. On the contrary, regarding the site as an open-air museum piece has been a cause of its neglect and abandonment. The position regarding the historic site as a determined and invariable entity is derived from lack of dialogue and understanding. It renders it merely a sacrosanct object. The extreme respect for this sacrosanct object leads to its abandonment not as a negative reaction but for fear of dealing with it, or for the anguish of monotonous submission.

This is not, by any means, a generalizing conclusion. Rather, it is drawing lessons and assessing the conservation policy-making of one of the greatest world heritage sites, Fez. Since Fez was declared a world heritage site in 1981, it has become a hub for national and international researchers and experts for the study of the conservation of a city which is still living beneath the shade of the past even while in the twentieth century. It is home to approximately 160,000 people, covers an area of 375 hectares and encompasses 13,385 buildings.¹ This immense historic urban site still preserves all the features of a medieval city ranging from its water system, urban facilities, dwelt houses, markets (*souks*), to working neighbourhoods. Together with its blank and austere facades, its network of winding pedestrian streets has never been altered. In addition to its intact physical environment, the walled city remains the hub of the local economy and the core of Morocco's spiritual and cultural legacy.

Setting up a conservation policy for Fez has required more than three decades of sound research, experimentation, and implementation of pilot projects in order to crystallize a practical strategy for approaching this complex and intricate urban site. The local expertise that each historic site needs to develop was considered necessary to maintain the course of action, the harmony of the whole, ensure a grass roots approach, and avoid applying imported 'ready-magic' strategies. Those 'magic' strategies, often immature, which have been duplicated and which do not stem from the site itself, were behind the failure of many previous conservation efforts. Whereas the effectiveness of a specific type of imported expertise can be better obtained through interaction with the locally developed one. In order to further clarify this idea, it is of the utmost importance to examine how the concept of 'conservation' evolved in the case of Fez.

Evolution and Mutation of the Concept of 'Conservation'

It is noteworthy to mention that this paper represents a brief overview of conservation through a broad historical study. The space here does not permit us to explore all its ramifications.

Pre-colonial Period (before 1912)

Why and how has Fez been preserved over the centuries since its founding by Idriss II in 808 A.D.?

Since the days of the *Idrissid* dynasty which ruled Morocco in the ninth century, successive rulers in different dynasties have respected the tradition of 'sultan-builders'. Without destroying their predecessors' achievements, each dynasty had to compete with them and erect new works. Be it a mosque, *madrassa*, *founduk*, hospital, palace or gateway, Fez is a

'portfolio' filled with traces of each historic period.² In addition to these landmarks, the sustainability of the city is deeply related to the societal development and the community institutions that have played an important role in keeping its heart beating without stopping.

The balance between the institution of the sultan and that of the community was a major factor in the development of urban life. The former was concerned with the strategic features of the city such as guaranteeing its defence by building walls and fortifications, providing the city with water via aqueducts, supervising and preserving the main urban patterns, i.e. main thoroughfares, gateways, etc. This sultan institution was composed of the sultan, the chief judge, the guild trustees, the Muslim scholars (*ulama'e*), and neighbourhood representatives. The latter supervised the daily life of the different self-organized neighbourhoods. Each neighbourhood had a centre that catered to daily needs such as a small mosque (*Masjid*), bakery (*Ferran*), Turkish bath (*hammam*), public fountain (*sequaya*), and grocery stores (*dakkakin*). Those public services were joined through a node upon which all dead-end alleys belonging to that neighbourhood converged. This spatial unity could not be achieved without the neighbourhood institution which was composed of local judges, scholars (*ulama'e*), *Muhtassib*, trustees of local guilds (*Umanae*), and local saints' brotherhoods (*Zawayya*). Furthermore, these neighbourhood institutions had moulded the most complex organic urban body through embodying the spirit of the community as a honeycomb.

These two institutions developed the city, preserving its unity. This unity is demonstrated by the harmony of the whole structure that appears as one single neighbourhood. It is worth mentioning that the change over time and space was based on adaptation and innovation rather than on destruction. From the ninth to the nineteenth century, the city evolved and grew without any major or sudden change that might have altered its integrity. Therefore, conservation was not displayed as a separate concern since the language, the tools, and the values of change had been respected. The example here is of the different interventions upon the medina over centuries in order to restore a monument, improve the sewage network, or expand the wall for protection purposes as a result of the growth of the city, etc. The medina has kept its strength as a sustainable city through the strong relationship created between the manmade environment and the spirit of man himself. Conservation was not seen as a precise technical action but rather as an imbued state of mind embodied in a style of living.

Colonial Period (1912-1956)

When one compares Morocco where the cultural heritage is still physically well-preserved with other countries colonized by France, one might ask the question, why and how did the French avoid erasing historic sites? Why did

the French use conservation as an alibi?

Once Lyautey was assigned to fill the position of General Resident of Morocco, he kept in mind the mistakes and destructive policies of French colonial policy in previously occupied countries such as Algeria³ and Madagascar. Having accumulated experience in colonization tactics, Lyautey came to Morocco with a new policy for enhancing France's presence in this land. As Lyautey himself stated: 'They [the Moroccans] still do not know us well. We frighten them. They still remain rather withdrawn, but they are easy to win over when one shows them intelligent sympathy, especially when they feel that they are appreciated. For the secret is a welcoming hand, and not a condescending one, a loyal man-to-man handshake, made in order to understand one another...' (Scham, 1970, p. 89). His policy consisted of first understanding the cultural context and then shaping the cultural tools for French intervention in Morocco.

To reach this end, he called upon pioneers of different disciplines, most particularly planners, to explore the country.⁴ Among those planners, Prost appears to be the man who made Lyautey's dreams come true.⁵ Both Lyautey and Prost claimed a 'culturalist' approach toward dealing with colonization issues. Prost, as a leader among his peers in his time, had drawn up the most significant urban colonial policies and territorial management strategies in Morocco. Those policies took into consideration two positions. The first was to show to the 'indigenous' people that the French were aware of the importance of their cultural heritage sites. Therefore they would distinguish them from the French colonial centres and would conserve them in order to avoid their opposition.

Lyautey himself was responsible for the practice whereby the French in Morocco (unlike those in Algeria) built their own cities outside Arab cities; he wished to preserve the character and the charm of the Arab cities. But this separation also accentuated the French tendency to look upon the Moroccans as the 'natives', holding lower position in the social and class structure. (Scham, 1970, p. 192).

The second position was that, instead of relying only on military power and destructive means, as applied elsewhere, Lyautey tried to gain the core of the country by understanding its spheres of influence, i.e. its ruling institutions and the main sources of leadership in its local communities. Thus, he was able to shift the lever of power from powerfully historic large urban sites such as Fez, Marrakech, Mekness, and southern *Kasabas* to newly designed colonial urban settlements that were erected in their precinct not far away from the French military camps. This shift was achieved through four main actions:

- land acquisition for expanding the colonial urban centres;
- substituting local institutions through the creation of new modern ones;
- military presence for eventual intervention and control;
- evolving economic strategies based on taxation and the decentralization of local wealth to new geographically designed rich and powerful centres.

This centre consisted in the newly created capital of Rabat instead of Fez,⁶ the port of Casablanca from which wealth was exported to France, and Kenitra, a newly created colonial city which was primarily a military one. With the implementation of this type of policy, the historic urban settlements remained physically intact but were deprived of their economic, institutional, spiritual, intellectual, and social strengths. They were transformed into poor, overpopulated ‘dormitories’ for the large number of immigrants from the countryside who were brought in to provide labour for the colonial industrial units. These historic urban settlements were not considered real cities, to be developed, but rather were treated as ‘exotic indigenous’ hubs to be sought out by tourists. That was the role of the Beaux-Arts, which consisted in restoring single monuments and displaying them as museum artefacts.

Post-Colonial Period

The tradition of building historic cities contrasts with the rise of new colonial cities, which was followed – after independence – by new policies dealing with this urban duality. As a result, Moroccan cities are complex urban entities, consisting in the historic *medina*,⁷ a colonial *ville nouvelle*, contemporary urban extensions, and shantytowns (*bidonvilles*). The shift from the tradition of developing the *medinas* to the expansion of the colonial precinct, together with the housing crisis, transformed the historic *medinas* into areas of many kinds of disorder and irregularity.

Since the Protectorate period, the term ‘conservation’ has been used in what might be called an ironic way. For the sake of mere preservation, the historic urban settlements were dealt with as if they were dead artefacts rather than living entities that require development and adaptation to contemporary needs without the loss of their authentic integrity and their historic memory. Government agencies have reached a chaotic stage in dealing with the intricate issues of both historic and modern urban forms. Therefore, the gap between policy-making and the actual manner in which cities are growing is continuously widening.

Since the 1970s, all urban documents and master plans designated the medinas as ‘preservation zones’, but without providing any defined guidelines or norms. The most striking case is that of Fez. Indiscriminate preservation of such a large and complex unit has condemned it to decay.

Experts have hesitated to tackle its challenges since it has been regarded as an untouchable site under the label of an undefined 'preservation'. Thus it has suffered for decades from neglect and intense decay, and the sustainability of its socio-economic and cultural networks, which are in fact its *raison-d'être*, has been disregarded.

Launching the National and International Fez Conservation Program in 1981

By the end of the nineteenth century, the population of the historic city of Fez was about 90,000 and due to the above-mentioned neglect, together with the many years of drought in Morocco, the population of Fez had reached 180,000 inhabitants in the 1980s. This increased population density, the result of continuous rural immigration, had accelerated the city's physical decay and weakened its socio-economic conditions. These accumulated issues and the lack of responsible actions by the government for solving the growing problems at the right time in an efficient manner had rendered Fez little more than a 'ghetto'. Until that point in time, it is sad to note, policies were of two kinds: catastrophe and prevention. It seems that the policies of catastrophe were more applied in this case since problems were not faced at the right time or could have been avoided if their causes had been eradicated with minimum cost and effort by following a preventive approach.

Based on the GIS of ADER-Fès (*l'Agence pour la Dedensification et le Rehabilitation de la médina de Fès*), which provides us with detailed data about the Fez medina there are 13,385 buildings, of which 11,601 are historic ones. Their physical condition can be proportioned as follows: 49 per cent of these buildings are in a medium physical state (neither excessive decay, nor excessive preservation); 41 per cent are decayed ones; 8 per cent are in danger of collapse; and 1.5 per cent are actual ruins. The population density is around 800 to 1,200 people per hectare. In addition to these significant numbers, the medina was a favourable place to locate semi-industrial or industrial activities, which took the place of palaces and magnificent historic buildings. Those industrial activities had a negative impact on both the buildings' structures and the city's infrastructure, which was not designed to accommodate industrial waste, either chemical or physical. Thus, pollution had become a major issue. The medina's critical state had led concerned international institutions to take urgent measures in order to save this historic city from disappearance. UNESCO launched an international protection campaign for Fez and listed it as a world heritage city in 1981. As the former Director General of UNESCO, Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, stated:

The changes had become so important during the last decades that Fez risks, under demographic, social, and economic pressures without equivalent in its history, losing its profound originality of being one of the purest jewels of Islamic culture... Nevertheless, it is by its very nature a campaign without precedent in the activities of UNESCO. It is the first campaign to be undertaken on behalf of an Islamic city. The operation to be carried out exemplifies, by virtue of its scope, one of the major challenges to which humanity must rise if it is to preserve and enrich its cultural heritage in the face of the constraints imposed on us by the process of accelerated modernization and industrialization. This challenge is of a nature to tax man's capacities and imagination to the full'.⁸

Among the incentives for launching the national and international campaign to safeguard Fez was the expression of the will of the late king Hassan II through his letter addressed to the Moroccan government on 21 July 1980. He asked the government to place the project of safeguarding Fez among its most urgent priorities and give it particular attention.

Setting up the Institutional, Financial, and Legal Framework

In 1982, the government created a commission for the safeguarding of Fez. Its mission was to implement the protection program. Since its creation, this delegation had undertaken such actions as:

- establishing the necessary studies covering all areas of expertise in order to set up a sound data base;
- coordinating the implementation of experimental pilot projects related to the above program;
- offering technical assistance to concerned public services and private sectors interested in restoration and rehabilitation;
- sensitizing the population of Fez as to the importance of cultural heritage and enhancing public participation;
- promoting the safeguarding of Fez at national and international levels.

As a delegation, the group had neither clear legal guidelines nor the financial resources to cover the immense task that it was assigned yet a larger amount of field studies and pilot projects were undertaken via donations. This caused the government to create a new efficient and operational structure. Moving away from the public administrative style of agency, which relied only on public financial resources, which are often insufficient for undertaking large actions, a new semi-private institution was created in 1989, ADER-Fès. The main role assigned to this institution was to implement conservation programs in the historic city, which gained

funding from the government-supported private projects implemented outside the medina (cash flow operations). This agency has an administrative council with representatives from all ministries – since all of them are involved and conservation is no longer limited to artists and poets and it is seen as a national duty – NGO's, and local municipalities. This institutional, legal, and financial structure has enabled the Fez project to move forward and launch its major implementations.

In addition to the operational agency, ADER-Fes, the medina of Fez has had its own Municipality and authority headquarters (*Prefecture*) since 1985. This has transformed it into a real city requiring care and administration and not just an isolated district belonging to the *ville nouvelle*. The Municipality and the *Prefecture* have had a great impact on the development of the medina through the introduction of needed urban facilities and services, and its adaptation to contemporary requirements. Together with ADER-Fes, introduction and adaptation are made following the norms of an historic site.

Meanings and Dimensions of Conservation in Fez

As stated in the introduction, Fez has been a locus of national and international expertise. This has enabled its project, which has lasted more than three decades, to reach a high degree of maturity compared to other similar cases where complexity can be perplexing. Starting from the first seeds of trying to gain understanding, conservation could not be viewed without bearing in mind the ingenuity of those who had built the city with craftsmanship and dexterity. Layers of experience and dynamic historic evolution that never ceased to add new layers of innovation have sustained the whole city as a human body that requires all its organs and inner energy to remain alive. To import conservation techniques or borrow sophisticated chemicals and high tech will not be the right way to rescue Fez from death, since the people who built it are still there. If you were to talk with *maalem* Abdellah or *maalem* Larbi about restoration techniques they would wonder whether you are from Fez or if you are a foreigner tourist! Simply and politely, they are proving to you that they are doing their duty of building, restoring, teaching others, etc., as their fathers and grandfathers did before them. A trained professional might be shocked but will gradually learn to adapt to those who were able to shape a whole city with modest tools and centuries of practice. Conservation has a whole new meaning in Fez.

The example of the craftsmen is just one among many others in the city and thus the way conservation is perceived should develop with the spirit of the site itself (Figure 23.1). This spirit resides in understanding the different hidden energies and synergies that need to be explored so they can flourish anew. New ideas are not precluded, rather, they are needed and they should

act as catalysts to enliven an existing energy or as tools to innovate a new effective process of intervention. This was proved in many restoration projects in Fez, which were learning processes. Therefore, restoration is a way of integrating and not a way of dismantling. By acting in this way, one is preserving *the whole in the part* and *vice-versa*.

The same criteria for the conservation of a building can be applied to the whole city by trying to understand its main organs and their different dynamic inter-relations. To reach this understanding all concerned disciplines are asked to interact, in order to reach a comprehensive strategy that can be translated into practical tactics to deal with the related issues of the historic site. I cannot apply the concept of ‘multidisciplinarity’ that seems to be often used. The only reason why is that multidisciplinarity could not reconstitute the whole past since this past is ‘encyclopaedic’ and was not generated or built-up by a limited number of specialized disciplines whose methods and, even *raison-d’être*, differ from one another.



Figure 23.1 Example of the craftsmen

In order to crystallize these ideas, we should recall the initial period of the Fez conservation program when specialists hesitated to venture into

exploring the medina and few of them showed interest and willingness to learn from the site and acquire appropriate skills in complementing their knowledge. Among those specialists were planners, engineers, architects, economists, sociologists, historians, chemists, archaeologists, etc. It might be noteworthy here to state that the *terrain suggests the goal and the method*.

To overcome the lack of appropriate expertise, to rebuild the community's trust in its heritage, to bring the master-builders back to their original work, to involve more public and private sectors in investing in the historic city, and so on, a common ground has been established and a training environment has been set up for the simple citizen as well as the craftsman, technician, politician, stakeholder, businessman, intellectual, etc. By doing so, Fez has succeeded in making conservation a common concern and all parties are required to act and participate. It has taken a long time to reach this stage of consciousness regarding conservation issues in the city, which are not, by any means, limited to one institution.

The Fez conservation program, in developing such dimensions, is internationally considered a model in undertaking the challenge of not only restoring its monuments but also of crafting its future. Development, culture, and environment are the framework upon which these conservation efforts are based. Moreover, one of major factors of sustainability in Fez is that of its dynamic community. If Fez is still intact, it is not because of its monuments but rather it is because of its people. Over its history, the population of Fez was self-organized. The inherent qualities of this city need several abilities so as to be grasped properly.

Conservation Planning and Management

Since the launching of the Fez conservation program, documentation and data building related to the site of the medina is seen as being of the utmost importance. No action or project can be built without know-how and expertise. Therefore, efforts have been made to set up a core of national experts who would develop the first conservation team. Most Moroccan professionals have been trained in France without knowledge of their own country; to work on heritage for them seemed just an escapade. It was the growing national interest and the importance of these issues that led them to take on the responsibility of such a huge task.

The integrity of the project and the soundness of its objectives was the main concern of this conservation team that started up under the auspices of the Ministry of Housing (*l'Habitat*) in 1978 and moved to that of the Ministry of the Interior in 1981. Thus, the tools to conserve such a city cannot be found anywhere but within the city itself. Acting in this way is to guarantee a sustainable line of action while trying to build a general sense

of liability among the ones to whom this heritage belongs in the first place. The challenge to know what to do and how to do it was among our top priorities. The meagre financial resources allocated to the project prevented the team from tackling the city's 'macro-urgencies'. However, efforts were made to push and implement the population density decreasing programs, infrastructure rehabilitation, transfer of polluting activities, the establishing up of emergency street networks, etc. These macro-urgencies were the key actions for slowing down the rapid decay process and for upgrading the quality of life within the medina.

The First Fez Master Plan

The local conservation team started in 1976-1978 by establishing the first comprehensive master plan (*Schema directeur*)⁹ for Fez. This master plan was unprecedented in terms of its scope and ambitions. Instead of dealing with the issues of the medina as an isolated entity, it focused on the global development of the whole city of Fez. This was aimed at bringing the historic hub to the forefront first by centralizing it in the city's urban fabric and second by revitalizing its key social, economic, cultural, and environmental functions. This attempt to integrate the medina with the rest of the city failed. As a consequence of this failure, the eastbound expansion of the city was partially replaced by westbound expansion because of the continuous pressure of the Colonial centre (*Dar Dbibagh*), *Ville Nouvelle*.

Furthermore, because of the housing crisis, since 1970 this zone has been a main hub for immigrants and the needy. Massive efforts have been made, over the last five or six years, to improve it and bring it up to the average urban norms. Besides, the walled city was at the centre of this *extra-muros* critical situation since the problems of the eastern zone were the result of its explosion. In the 1980s, 40 per cent of medina inhabitants were immigrants from rural areas. This shift in the social structure enhanced the disparity between the *ville nouvelle* and the medina. The former encompassed more than 70 per cent of urban facilities and infrastructure and so municipal investment was notably slanted to one side. This clearly demonstrates the social and spatial segregation that started gaining ground.

In spite of its consistency and its sound findings, this master plan was not respected. The pressure of other parameters prevented the adoption of its guidelines in the whole urban agglomeration of Fez. Nevertheless, those guidelines regarding the medina were taken into consideration and provided insightful orientations for the successful operations undertaken in the walled city.

The Rehabilitation Plan

It is important to ask the question: how can an historic city be managed through a plan? It is true that no plan can embody the complexities and intricacies that characterize an historic city. At the same time, it is regrettable to halt the urban development of an historic site with potentials for adaptation and upgrading because of the lack of a definition of what exactly is 'historic'. Moreover, it is inappropriate to carry on random interventions without guidelines or regulations. A rehabilitation plan is a necessity and its main purpose is the establishment of technical guidelines based on legal considerations. Due to the lack of urban documents and technical guidelines, many historic sites in Morocco have been mistreated. This absence has led to a lack of control and therefore, these sites have been turned into places where illegal and random interventions were commonplace.

The rehabilitation plan of the Fez medina was launched in 1995 by the ADER-Fez team. It was the first national urban plan for an historic city. It was followed by many other cities in view of its positive impact on the preservation and development of Fez. The rehabilitation plan was not by any means limited to the design process and pencil sketches, but was developed by a team of professionals from different disciplines. The emphasis was on understanding the dynamics of the past and on how to find the synergies provided by the city itself. Fez by its nature is a complete and coherent historic city where neighbourhoods are still intact with their functional centres. Its linear markets (*souks*) are the busiest in the whole city. Thus, the main goal achieved by the team was to define the city as a dynamic entity. The inhabitants contributed to the evolution of the city and have been the driving force behind its extension and continuity. The question of evolution is a central one, since the attachment of people to their heritage is not stagnant but evolving. It is by understanding this fact that we can evaluate the limits and capacity for change to be integrated within a historic area. But if these changes, are not measured properly the existing harmony will be disrupted and the city will cease to function normally.

The first step was to find the limits of all neighbourhoods – residential, commercial, scientific, or productive. We focused on the real limits and not on the administrative ones, which did not reflect the true spatial urban organization. The second step was to delimit all key historic areas following a hierarchy of historical and archaeological values. The third step was to identify all the buildings and monuments of great architectural value. The fourth step was to define the environmental features of the entire city, starting from its internal green areas and moving on to the green belt surrounding its exterior walls. The fifth step was to locate all linear or nodal commercial and production activities. The sixth step was to locate

infrastructure, and so forth. This set of dynamic layers permitted the building of a plan or plans with a certain depth. This depth was translated through district plans at the scale of 1:500 and in some cases 1:200 since the rehabilitation plan cannot go beyond the spatial limits of 1:2000. In this district plan, a detailed urban orientation was provided by giving the nature of precise interventions in every building in the district and potential development that may result. However, this is a short description that may not reveal the intricacy of the process that took years of reflection and research.

In addition to spatial analysis, the legal guidelines were developed in parallel considering that regulations should facilitate the initiatives of the inhabitants and not hinder their innovation or their intervention. This rehabilitation plan was presented to the community and feedback was recorded and taken into consideration. This process culminated in the establishment of coherent urban documents that are now one of the main tools for managing the medina space. This plan is now supervised by the *Agence Urbaine de Fès*, a local agency whose main role is the implementation and the follow-up of urban documents in the city in coordination with all concerned institutions. It is essential to note that the plan is not an end in itself and there are possibilities of large numbers of cases that may occur in the site due to its very complex nature. Therefore, an interdisciplinary and inter-institutional committee is reviewing and scrutinizing any innovative effort that may not be covered by documents in a proposed private or public initiative.

The Geographical Information System (GIS)

The GIS of Fez is a planning and management tool. It is an active database covering, in an exhaustive manner, all its 13,385 buildings with a minimum of 30 items of information for each one and all its infrastructure, sewage, springs, rivers, and electricity networks. The idea of developing a GIS for the Fez medina stemmed from the growing concern for managing the subtleties of such a complex site. The medina's tiny interlaced alleys and its dense overlapped urban fabric cannot be dismantled without the computer capacity for recording small details.

The digital map of the medina in Microstation™ and its database in Oracle™ provides a grounding for the planning processes in different scales with an unlimited number of layers. This flexibility of moving up and down avoids the errors that can occur due to the manual manipulation of information and cartographic documents. The GIS provides the cartographic support for the rehabilitation plan, as mentioned above, and is used to manage projects within the medina. In addition, it is the tool used for designing and managing all future urban and architectural projects

(Figure 23.2). The information provided by the GIS on the whole medina ranges from the nature of the buildings (traditional, neo-traditional, transformed, or modern), ownership status, occupation status by levels, infrastructure (sewage, water, and electricity), cultural value (architectural, archaeological, social, urban, and artistic value) to the action to be undertaken in the building (restoration, rehabilitation, renewal, or emergency intervention through consolidation or demolition).

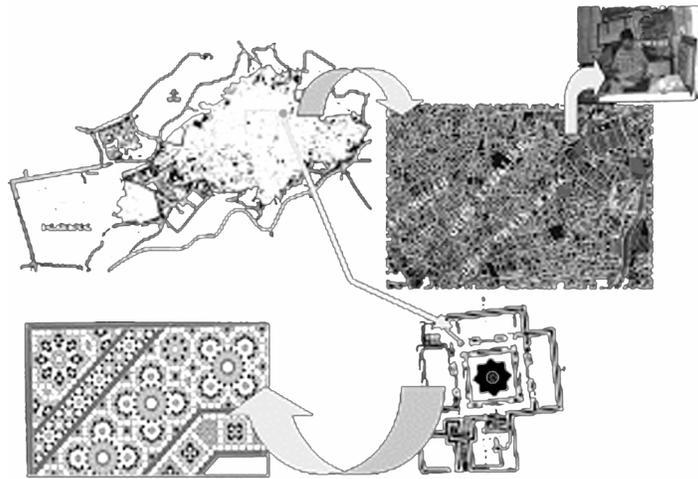


Figure 23.2 The GIS of Fez

Examples of Conservation Implementations in Fez

The experimental operations undertaken in Fez between 1985 and 1989 proved that the conservation of the medina is possible. In spite of the limited financial resources available, these operations have covered many areas such as monument restoration, residential rehabilitation, emergency interventions in unsound buildings in danger of collapse, rehabilitation of the sewage and river networks, restructuring of artisan activities, and insertion of urban facilities within the medina (schools, administrative services, institutes, etc.). All these operations were funded by private donors and ADER-Fes.

The restoration of the *fonduk* Nejjarine (caravanserai) dating back to the seventeenth century was a true training ground for artisans and technicians. The restoration was not limited to one building but covered the whole

Nejjarine complex, composed of the carpenters' market (*souk Nejjarine*), four houses above the market, a mosque, a public square, and a fountain. This example of restoration showed that restoration in Fez cannot be achieved without the rejuvenation of the built environment surrounding a monument. This project was funded by the Foundation Karim Lamrani (Figure 23.3).

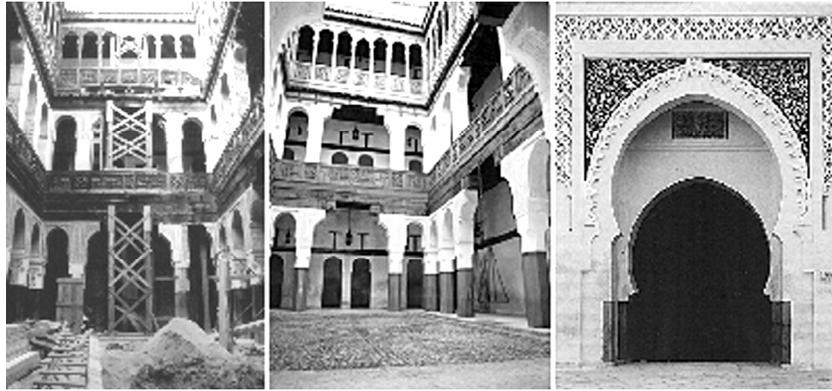


Figure 23.3 Examples of restoration

The ongoing rehabilitation of houses started as an experimental operation and is now a successful action, undertaken by the inhabitants and supported by ADER-Fes and the Municipality. This rehabilitation consists mainly in assisting owners in refurbishing their houses by introducing sanitary services and maintenance works. It is not a restoration per se but respects the traditional residential typology.

The Emergency Interventions program has been developed by ADER-Fes in coordination with the Municipality of Fes-medina in order to protect human lives from the threat of collapsing unsound buildings and structures. More than 200 houses were included in that program.

The restoration of historic walls consists in consolidating and reconstructing the missing parts. Most of the walls were built with the ancestral method of rammed earth or *pise*. *The Banque Populaire* funded the first restoration project of the Bab Mahrouk gateway (Figure 23.4).

Among the priorities of the conservation program was the rehabilitation of the river and sewage networks. ADER-Fes has intervened in 7 km of canals below the medina. It is important to mention that the medina's decrepit water system was the main cause of building collapse (Figure 23.5).



Figure 23.4 Restoration of historic walls



Figure 23.5 An effect of the medina's decrepit water system

The World Bank Loan to Fez – An Unprecedented Step

Since its participation in the Second International Colloquium of World Heritage Cities held in Fez in 1993, the World Bank has shown interest in beginning the adventure of rehabilitating historic cities. Though it was a new trend for the Bank to face cultural heritage issues, the colloquium had great impact on international financial institutions. The main purpose of this successful colloquium was to bring these financial institutions together so that they could become concerned and persuaded about the importance of cultural heritage in the economy. In addition, another goal was to overcome the usual image that heritage is the domain only of artists, archaeologists and architects and hence the scarcity of financial resources

which heritage conservation has suffered for years due to the narrow perception and ignorance of its potential in local sustainable developments.

The first thing that comes to mind when dealing with the financial component of heritage is tourism. Unfortunately, this remains the only criterion to prove the economic benefit of heritage on the national level and, thus, it is the only investment that can be made. Consequently, many places with great archaeological and historical value are now nothing more than a zoo for tourists to visit, yet one should not ignore the success of a very few cases for which this phenomenon was under control. Consequently the original inhabitants have been replaced by bazaars and *Ali Baba's* adventures to build up a new façade based on 'extraordinary' or exotic scenes.¹⁰ This has resulted in the reduction of the value of the living heritage as a sustainable economic potential for the local population. Undoubtedly, this potential, if promoted properly, will maintain the intrinsic values of a historic site and protect them from the loss since they are reflecting its originality and *raison d'être*.

Again to talk about economics in heritage is a dilemma in itself. Our economists are not trained to think beyond the equation of cost-benefit analysis. Many elements, such as the socio-cultural values as perceived by local communities, cannot be equated or assigned an economic value *per se*. The assessment of heritage assets from the point of view of this equation raised another complicated issue: 'poverty'. When thinking about intervening in multifaceted cases where the site reflects certain complexity regarding its social mosaic vis-à-vis the urban fabric in particular for the case of developing countries, poverty is one of the labels easily applied to the problem at hand.

It would, however, seem more logical to perform a comprehensive inquiry into the 'micro-mechanisms' that could generate sustainability of the proposed action. Hence, when 'poverty' label is solely magnified, historic areas are subject to 'charity'. No one can deny the importance of donations for the needy everywhere but how can we find out catalysts for a continuous process of self reliance and set up a local sustainable development?

Tackling the social, cultural, physical, economic, and environmental issues with the 'yardstick' of poverty alone will not solve the problem of poverty itself, which is seen to be treatable in its own realm. By treating only the consequences and symptoms of poverty rather than its causes, the problem is left intact, since its roots are not investigated.

The first missions of World Bank experts to Fez were of the utmost importance, but at the same time subtle, since their visions were different from those of the local team. It took more than three years to reach the conclusion that cultural heritage issues are different from the case studies and projects undertaken by the Bank elsewhere. This project developed between the Bank, ADER-Fez, the Municipality of Fes-medina, and the

Moroccan government was an unprecedented one. Firstly, because of its ingenious institutional and legal set-ups and secondly due to its well-woven components that were made to complement the local line of action and sustain local energy. The project was not tailored as a package but aimed to generate and stimulate the local culture and economy through its future impact. The rate of returns for public investment is in the order of 10-20 per cent and will remain consistently at ten per cent after ten years.

The components of the World Bank loan for the Fez conservation project are the following:

- community development which consists of rehabilitating the unsound buildings and following the ADER-Fez emergency actions which showed a great impact on the population by protecting their lives from the danger of the crumbling and dilapidated structures. This component also includes the removal from ruins of polluting wrecks and rubble, the rehabilitation of public services, and improvement of domestic urban environments through neighbourhoods;
- improvement of accessibility by setting up an emergency street network to facilitate access to the inaccessible parts of the medina for medical and fire emergencies. It is to be noted that this is not aimed at destroying the existing fabric but at improving large existing pedestrian accesses;
- improvement of the urban environment by clustering and organizing non-polluting activities inside the medina. In addition, this component is encompassing the improvement and management of solid waste collection and treatment of public spaces;
- rehabilitation of the physical heritage, including monuments and improving existing tourist circuits with different themes (walls and fortifications, Andalusian gardens and palaces, craftsmanship, monuments and *souks*, and the Andalous historic district);
- institutional development improves the managerial capacities of the institutions involved with the conservation projects such as the Municipality of Fes-medina, ADER-Fes, and so on. Its main objective is to reduce the gap between those institutions and to set up a coordination ground that will, without doubt, affect the efficiency of the project.

This project is a model for other historic cities to follow and learn how to 'avoid mistakes' to save time and as it was assessed by the World Bank in its *Quality at Entry Assessment*:

After a careful assessment of project components, including review of project documents and meetings with key members of the project appraisal team, peer reviewers, Bank managers, as well as with Mr. Mohamed Kabbaj, former

Minister of Finance and Foreign Investments of Morocco, and Professor François Vigier of Harvard University, the panel finds the project *fully satisfactory*, and wishes to congratulate the task team on the novel and replicable approach adopted for the rehabilitation of Fez. This is an important ‘first’ project in a possible series of similar projects in other Medinas of Morocco, and it may serve as a reference as a learning ground for planning rehabilitation projects of other historic cities in the region and elsewhere in the world ... The Fez Medina Rehabilitation Project has been also successful in raising consciousness concerning cultural heritage issues both in the [World] Bank and in Morocco due to the attention it has received from the highest authorities of Morocco, as well as from Executive Management of UNESCO and the senior management of the Bank...¹¹

Finally, it is important to mention that the World Bank loan for Fez does not cover all the needs of the conservation program, which is supported by other financial resources from other national and international institutions. National and international donors have played a prominent role in raising interest regarding heritage conservation at national and international level. The FADES (the Arab Fund for Social and Economic Development) contributed with its funding to the restoration of more than seven km of water networks and public fountains. And last but not least, UNESCO has been of great support for Fez in informing the world community about the importance of this mankind’s shared legacy.

Notes

- 1 Based on ADER-Fès GIS. The population of the whole city of Fez is one million.
- 2 Ibn Khaldûn (1332-1406) stated in his *Muqaddimah* that very large monuments are not built by one dynasty alone: ‘The reason for this is the aforementioned need for cooperation and multiplication of human strength in any building activity. Sometimes buildings are so large that they are too much for (human) strength, whether it is on its own or multiplied by machines ... Therefore, the repeated application of similar strength is required over successive periods, until (the building) materializes. One (ruler) starts the construction. He is followed by another (the second by) a third. Each of them does all he can to bring workers together in a common effort. Finally, (the building) materializes, as it was planned, and then stands before our eyes ... we find that (later) dynasties are unable to tear down and destroy many great architectural monuments, even though destruction is much easier than construction, because destruction is return to the origin, which is non-existence, while construction is the opposite of that’ (Ibn Khaldûn, 1958, vol. 2, pp. 241-242).
- 3 ‘La conquête de l’Algérie a été faite par le soldat de France; soldat de métier, il est vrai, vigoureux et ardent, fils du soldat de l’époque napoléonienne, mais non adapté à la vie coloniale, ignorant tout du pays où il allait lutter, de l’adversaire qu’il allait rencontrer, de sa langue, de sa manière de combattre, de ses mœurs et des mobiles divers qui animaient son âme de guerrier. La pacification du Maroc, au contraire, est exclusivement conduite avec des troupes indigènes, musulmanes, puisées dans l’Afrique

- du Nord...’ (Dugard, 1918, p. 235).
- 4 ‘De fait, Lyautey eut la chance d’être porté par son époque, de disposer d’une pléiade de jeunes et remarquables architectes-urbanistes et d’être averti par la déplorable expérience algérienne’. (Rivet, 1999, p. 228).
 - 5 ‘Les principes suivis par l’architecte, par l’urbaniste, par l’artiste plutôt qu’est M. Prost, restaurateur de Sainte-Sophie et auteur déjà du plan d’agrandissement d’Anvers, sont les suivants: séparation totale des anciennes villes indigènes et des villes européennes nouvelles...’ (Dugard, 1918, p. 123).
 - 6 ‘Fès était véritablement et est restée la métropole indigène du nord; tandis que Marrakech était semblablement et est demeure le centre indigène du sud. Pourquoi choisir Rabat, et non l’une des trois villes [la troisième c’est Casablanca]. M.Mareschal, dans son article de France-Maroc du 15 septembre 1917 sur Rabat-Résidence, nous dit quelle fut la raison qui inspira le choix du Général Lyautey à ce moment: La situation militaire exigeait que notre grand chef fût à même d’agir à la fois sur Marrakech et sur Fès, sur le sud et sur le nord du Maroc. Pour être le maître des deux capitales indigènes, il ne fallait s’établir dans aucune, mais accourir dans chacune d’elles toute les fois que les événements l’exigeraient. Il suffit de regarder une carte du Maroc pour voir que c’est sur la côte de l’Atlantique, vers Rabat et Casablanca, que se trouve le point de départ, le lieu géométrique des grands axes, des voies de pénétration économiques et militaires de notre Maroc...’ (Dugard, 1918, p. 132).
 - 7 The term *medina* means the historic walled city and is used nowadays to distinguish this entity from the *Ville nouvelle*, or new town. First used by French while they were in Morocco.
 - 8 Amadou-Mahtar M’Bow, ex-Director General of UNESCO, appeal for the Safeguard of Fez on the 9 April 1980 at Fez.
 - 9 This master plan was funded by UNDP with a global sum of US\$ 672,000.
 - 10 I was amazed going through an article written by Mona Serageldin in which she states the following: ‘...This is a challenge, because Fez is not particularly tourist-friendly environment. The population is very conservative, and their absorptive capacity for foreign visitors is quite limited. Moreover, tourists find the physical environment intimidating, with its dark shadows and tiny alleyways, which architects and designers find breathtaking. Tourists tend to go to Marrakech, completely bypassing Fez’. (Serageldin, 2001, pp 238-239)
It is indeed striking to have such a view in the twenty-first century that sounds as an Orientalist writing or drawing in a canvas this dark shadows and tiny alleys of the Arab city in eighteenth century. It may be deduced that this medina is totally unsecure and still is a place of Moor pirates. Moreover, it is the visitors themselves who find this physical environment breathtaking which has lead to approximately more than 15 European and American families to purchase houses in the midst of this medina who they enjoy the warmth of its community, and not architects who fled for ages to design their nice glass and aluminium facades. So then please what do you propose to make it more welcoming? Is it to bring more serpent charmers and make people dance for tourists and rely on their coins so as to have nice economic indicators or maybe take away and demolish all these shadowed alleys? This is not by any means an emotional reaction nor a refutation of tourists that are welcome to discover their own world heritage but it is only a way of conveying that a tourist education should be initiated to know how to deal with different peculiarities of different cultural sites they visit and not ask too much from people who they live as they live. It is to be believed that each historic site attracts its own visitors such as Fez.
 - 11 The World Bank: Quality at Entry Assessment, Morocco-Fez Rehabilitation Project.

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