OBSOLETE ROMANTICISM AND THE POSTMODERN TRANSFORMATION OF URBAN CULTURES AND TRADITIONS IN MEDITERRANEAN MEDINAS

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Cities are subject to constant transformation, because every society forms its own urbanity according to its value system, approach to life and principles of social organisation. Based on the conviction that the spatial identity of a community is manifested in its urban cultures and traditions, several normative guidelines and preservation principles have evolved to conserve the urban heritage and character of historic towns. Nevertheless, more recent urban transformations in North African and Middle Eastern old cities (medinas) often clash with romanticised preservation ideals and follow a strong desire for consumption, hedonistic pleasure, and an orientalised atmosphere. Since attempts to protect the urban fabric, restore buildings true to their original form and preserve former functions tend to neglect contemporary societal needs and contradict a future-oriented development of cities, they have to be reconsidered with respect to ecological, economic and social sustainability. The chapter argues that historic urban quarters should be reinvented by using advanced materials and by managing processes of gentrification, festivalisation, commodification, Disneyfication and digitalisation as new dimensions of participatory and integrated urban planning.

1. The history of urbanisation in the Mediterranean – every society, every epoch forms its own urbanity

Continuous waves of urbanisation, integration and economic prosperity – interrupted by abandonment, regional disintegration, economic decline and social instability – have characterised the development of the Mediterranean region and its large city networks. The conquests of Alexander the Great in the 4th century BC were driven by the ideal of establishing a "vast, expanding, pluralistic political and cultural system, bound together and lubricated by the active exchanges and linkages of a network of large trading cities" (Gottmann, 1986: 7). Overall, we can distinguish between two types of evolving urban nodes in relation to their major function: market-cities (e.g. Athens) and sanctuary cities (e.g. Rome) (Myres, 1943: 15–17).

Since the mid-1970s, North African and Middle Eastern medinas have been designed, modified and fundamentally transformed under neoliberal conditions to serve societies' increasing demand for leisure and hedonistic lifestyles, which demonstrates that cities are subject to constant change.

Cities are subject to constant transformation, because "every society, every epoch forms its own urbanity" (translated from Siebel, 1994: 15). Civilisations have shaped the materiality and composition of cities according to their value systems, approach to life and ways to manage society. Hence, urban sociology considers urbanity and its materiality as an expression of urban lifestyles (Simmel, 1903). Prominent examples are Greek and Roman cities where the exercise of power was under constitutional law, with public functions and buildings surrounding the *agora* and *forum* in the city centre. In contrast, the dominance of seclusion and privacy reflects the principles of social organisation within Arab-Islamic medinas. The layout of old towns focuses inwards, characterised by dead-ends and houses with inner courtyards and no windows onto the street (Wirth, 2000/2001). To this day, we find spatially concentrated ethnic groups in many Arab-Islamic cities living side by side in urban quarters. The bazaar (souk) with its covered alleys was located in the centre. Its complex operating principles, with an ordered variety of different branches related to certain handicraft, services, retail and wholesale (Wirth, 1974: 237–250), constitute a unique achievement of Islamic medieval times and best reflect the cultural independence of Arab-Islamic cities (Wirth, 1975: 39). With the Islamic conquests that began in the mid-6th century, Islamic culture took root in the cities of the central and southern Iberian Peninsula and southern Italy (Lombard, 1992: 129–153).

From one era to another, organisational structures, materiality and street patterns were only preserved if they were suitable for repurposing. The constitutional organisation of the *polis*, for example, shaped western urban development and its city rights significantly. It influenced the provincial centralisation of the Roman Empire (Kolb, 1997: 170) and its military and juridical structure with standardised institutions. The expanding urban network and superimposed organisational structure allowed Christianity to spread throughout the Empire (Gottmann, 1986: 8). Likewise, the right-angled grid plan introduced by the architect Hippodamus (after 479 BC) was applied in Roman as well as Renaissance cities, in line with the principle of openness (Wagner, 2011: 31). In contrast, the irregular street patterns of dense historic centres go back to radical urbanisation during the Middle Ages. In the case of Arab-Islamic old cities, these were caused not only by population growth, but also by the less restrictive control of building activities (Escher and Wirth, 1992: 30).

In the past century, historic urban quarters have been transformed to serve societies' increasing demand for places that counter the functionalist spaces that dominate our living environments. Historic urban quarters represent the other, archaic, natural and slow life of previous epochs: "The progress of modernity ("modernization") depends on its very sense of instability and inauthenticity. For moderns, reality and authenticity are thought to be elsewhere: in other historical periods and other cultures, in purer, simpler lifestyles" (MacCannell, 1976: 3). Moreover, tourists and residents want to have a choice between traditional and modern, active and passive, high culture and popular culture and Western and exotic cultural experiences (Krösbacher, 2006: 102), which leads to the often-encountered potpourri of cultural elements.

In view of the history of urbanisation, the preservation of urban cultures and traditions is the subject of heated debates. To challenge contemporary approaches, the chapter recapitulates why preservation guidelines emerged, in what ways they have evolved and how they are justified today. Based on empirical studies of both authors, the last section elaborates on recent urban transformations in North African and Middle Eastern medinas. These examples show that romanticised ideas of preservation constitute obsolete attempts at safeguarding historic quarters.

2. The preservation of urban heritage over time – from material protection to functional restructuring

According to the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), the conservation of the built vernacular heritage is important, as "it is the fundamental expression of the culture of a community, of its relationship with its territory and, at the same time, the expression of the world's cultural diversity" (ICOMOS 1999: 1). Since the early 20th century, several normative guidelines and preservation principles have evolved. The assessment of what constitutes heritage is constantly changing and represents every generation's view of what is worthy of preservation. These changes are reflected in many international documents and declarations and constitute the backbone of different approaches to heritage conservation. The approaches presented below are all employed to date, often intertwine and depend on the responsible authorities, conditions and demands of heritage places.

The "material-based" or conventional approach focuses on the protection of the urban fabric and its monuments and individual buildings (Poulios, 2014: 17, 30). The main tool to promote urban preservation has been the World Heritage List, the most significant feature of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) World Heritage Convention of 1972 (UNESCO, 1972). A common strategy for the transformation of inner-city areas consisted of "museumisation". Urban objects were disconnected from current dynamics and took on the character of museum-like objects, leading to a disconnect between urban structures and spaces and the ways in which they were used and understood.

A significant shift in heritage preservation started in the mid-1970s. It was argued that the built environment is a living record of a society's progress. The broader term "conservation" became popular, because it allowed for adaptive reuse to revitalise urban quarters. Based on the understanding that "conservation is the control of the rate of change" (Ward, 1968: 15), buildings, structures and spaces should be carefully adapted to present lifestyles: "New functions and activities should be compatible with the character of the historic town or urban area" to secure its authenticity (ICOMOS, 1987).[1] As a result, preservation principles and objectives were largely focused on the material and spiritual elements that account for the historic character of a town or urban area (e.g. urban patterns, appearance of buildings, functions of the town, traffic flows). In addition, the "Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage" (ICOMOS, 1999) underlines the need to ensure the endurance of traditional building

In contrast, material protection, the restauration of buildings true to the original building style and the preservation of former functions are cost-intensive, romanticised and obsolete attempts at preservation that contradict a future-oriented development of cities.

[1]. It was only in 1994 that ICOMOS recognised, for the first time, that the determination of authenticity cannot be based on fixed criteria but has to be considered within the cultural context to which it belongs, since it is a socially constructed category (ICOMOS, 1994: 47).

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systems through the inter-generational transmission of knowledge. Its practical guidelines encompass the need to conduct a complete analysis of the vernacular architecture prior to physical work and to respect the integrity[2] of the siting and landscape. The charter also appreciates changes over time to avoid conformity of the various parts of a building, but a consistency when replacing material, and safeguarding integrity in case of adaption and reuse, should be ensured (ICOMOS 1999: 1–3).

In contrast to these romanticising approaches, the "living heritage approach" concentrates on maintaining the community's original connection with its heritage in order to achieve continuity. The aim is to safeguard heritage within this connection, even if on certain occasions the fabric might be harmed. Heritage protection should be based on the empowerment of core communities, with conservation professionals in guiding instead of leading roles (Poulios, 2014: 17–28): "[A] living heritage approach marks the shift in heritage conservation from monuments to people, from the tangible fabric to intangible connections with heritage, and from discontinuity to continuity" (Poulios, 2014: 28).[3] This is also recommended by UNESCO (2011) through the "Historic Urban Landscape" approach, a holistic, integrative and inter-disciplinary "soft law". Participatory and integrated planning based on the inclusion of multi-faceted values (cultural, natural, intangible, social, physical and economic), local communities and stakeholders, as well as a balance between development and conservation through mixed uses, ensure urban resilience (Turner, 2013: 85; van Oers and Pereira Roders, 2014: 127). The six-point action plan also recommends the mapping of resources, assessments, the development of an integrated urban development and conservation strategy, and action plans, as well as the establishment of appropriate partnerships and local management frameworks (UNESCO, 2011).

Within this new heritage paradigm, heritage values have expanded from the urban fabric towards intangible assets that are constantly changing according to the needs of society over time: "[A]n important cultural value of the historic city rests precisely upon its ability to be in a constant evolution, where forms, space and uses are always adapting to replace obsolescence with functionality" (Araoz, 2011: 58).

The success of urban revitalisation depends on determining the most appropriate strategic approach. "Functional regeneration" includes changes in occupation, with the retention of existing uses that operate more efficiently. "Functional diversification" brings in new uses but keeps the existing ones, whereas "functional restructuring" involves new uses or activities replacing the former ones (Tiesdell et al., 1996: 41–42). At the analytical stage, this requires a correct diagnosis of the level and type of obsolescence (physical, functional and locational) as well as of development dynamics (high, static and declining). Measures to promote economic recovery in serious cases include conversion, adaptive reuse, image reconstruction, public subsidies and the occupation of buildings by public agencies. Although displacement and gentrification is likely to occur simultaneously, that might be an unavoidable side effect of reversing the deterioration process (Doratli, 2005: 753–771).

2. In the operational guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, integrity is defined as "a measure of the wholeness and intactness of the natural and/or cultural heritage and its attributes" (UNESCO, 2008: 23).

3. "The "intangible cultural heritage" means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage" (UNESCO, 2003).

3. A glance at postmodern transformations of North African and Middle Eastern medinas

In the middle of the 20th century, Arab-Islamic medinas experienced an economic and social decline in the course of decolonisation (Escher, 2001: 23). Since the 1950s, modernisation and westernisation have led to destruction and fundamental structural changes in the souks, and to the realignment of their goods (Wirth, 1974: 208, 225). Furthermore, modern new cities *(villes nouvelles)* that were constructed during the French colonial era based on European models triggered the devaluation of the traditional business life in the souk. The souk experienced a decline in building structure and offered affordable housing for socioeconomically disadvantaged groups (Escher, 2001: 23).

The rehabilitation of historic cities in North Africa and the Middle East began towards the end of the 1960s (Balbo, 2012: 3). Since the presentation of goods in the souk is diametrically opposed to Western standards, heritage values were ascribed especially to that area, in order to attract international tourists. Western visitors, for example, perceive an atmosphere of "existential tension, which increases because they cannot relate to the many signs and sensory stimuli that they register (…), but classify them speculatively or imaginatively" (translated from Escher, 2008: 172). However, it must be noted that every individual perceives the atmosphere of historic quarters differently (Escher, 2008: 167–173).

In the following section, we will introduce current transformations of medinas based on empirical studies conducted by the authors. Four examples illustrate how historic centres and the area of the souk have been designed, modified and fundamentally transformed under neoliberal conditions. Due to space restrictions, we will highlight the most dominant processes for each example, although they take place in almost every historic quarter to different extents. As common denominator, all case studies follow the trend of touristification. As a result of this process, the medinas are only partially inhabited by their original residents and increasingly frequented by visitors and temporary new residents. This trend has intensified due to digitisation and online marketing (e.g. Airbnb, Instagram).

In the 1990s, the government of Tunisia passed laws and founded institutions to protect and conserve the country's cultural heritage. These initiatives were driven by three objectives. They tried not only to counter the threat of cultural globalisation and international gentrification, but focused on national identity formation and myth-making. Third, the projects aimed at generating higher revenues from tourism (Hazbun, 2007/2008: 26–27). One example is the revitalisation of the medina of Tunis, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1979, as a symbol of national identity. The medina should not become a dead museum or an exaggerated tourist attraction, but represent an ideal place for Tunisians. To preserve the urban fabric and social life, the state initiated and supported several revitalisation projects. The material revitalisation concentrated on certain areas like the government district and the former Jewish quarter. Numerous representative buildings have been placed or newly built in and near the former *kasbah* to emphasise the pre-colonial traditions of a longtime ruling class (Escher and Schepers, 2008).

Urban resilience can be achieved by placing individual and collective human preferences at the centre of participatory and integrated urban planning, by taking ecological, economic and social aspects into consideration and by managing processes of gentrification, festivalisation, commodification, Disneyfication and digitalisation.

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The souk retained its importance in spite of many structural and functional changes. Some traditional crafts (e.g. the weaving of fabrics) have resisted the rising competition, while others have adapted to Western trends. The products of shoemakers, for example, reflect the latest fashion trends (Wagner, 1996). In contrast, many owners in the non-refurbished side of the medina neglected their houses and never rehabilitated them. Many became boarding houses, inhabited by low-income Tunisians who lack resources to renovate them. In the post-revolution era, the preservation of the medina of Tunis is not a priority for the Ministry of Culture (Ltifi, 2013).
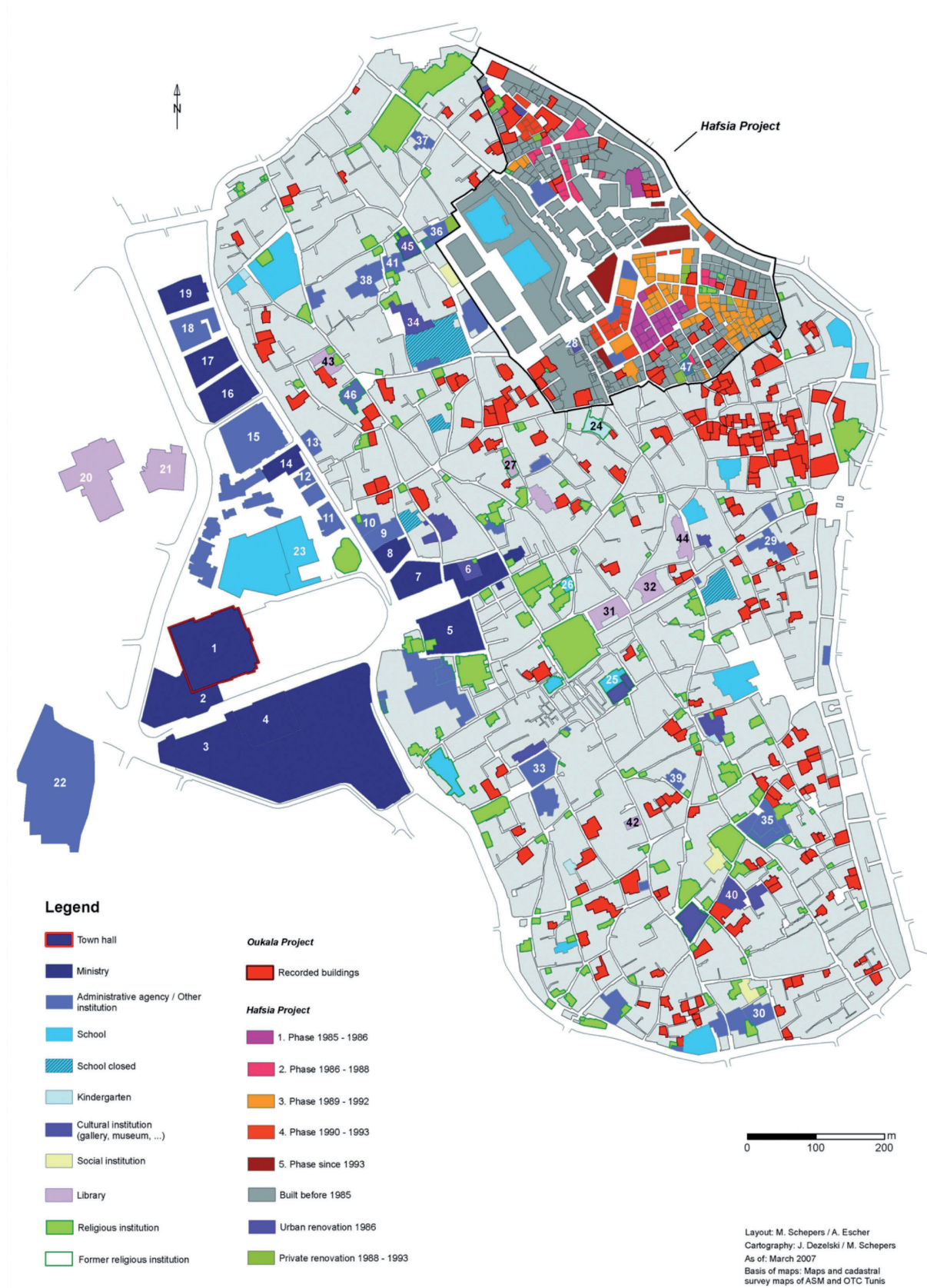
The historic centre of Fez, the spiritual, cultural and scientific capital of Morocco, has a highly differentiated economy and combines several functions. Marginalised groups have refused Western culture and tried to uphold traditional institutions and crafts, for fear of losing their cultural identity and due to their lack of resources (Escher and Wirth, 1992: 272). Despite the degradation process, UNESCO's decision committee stated in 1981 that "Fez is at once an astonishing city-museum and one of the largest Islamic Metropoli" (Organization of World Heritage Sites, 2018).

In 1989, a new institutional framework was set up to oversee the extensive restoration of Fez's 8th century medina. The government's "Agency for the Reduction of Density and the Safeguard of the Old Medina of Fez" (ADER-Fès) promoted the redesign and reconstruction of historic sites, artisan production and cultural events. To guide and inform foreign visitors about its heritage, extensive signage has been installed in the medina. The current director of ADER-Fès highlights the need for change as follows: "Our mission is to create new opportunities for the medina. We don't want it to be a relic of the past; we want it to be a living city of the future" (cited in Gilbert, 2017).

The "Fez Medina Rehabilitation Project", which ran from the 1990s up to 2005, was funded by the World Bank and supported by international donors and national foundations. Initiatives, which were based on comprehensive strategic studies, focused on the conservation of key historic buildings, on improving vehicular circulation around the medina and on the rehabilitation of public squares. Furthermore, pedestrian streets, residential buildings and workshops were rehabilitated. Within the framework of participatory planning, local stakeholders and community organisations that engaged residents were involved (Bigio and Licciardi, 2010: 6–28).

More recent projects in Fez encompass the restoration of the Seffarine Hammam (Istasse, 2013: 39) and the project "Artisan and Fez Medina", funded by the American "Millennium Challenge Corporation". The project includes an international design competition for the reconstruction of Place Lalla Ydouna, the design and rehabilitation of three 14th and 15th-century *fondouks* (former inns with trading and storage functions) and the development of a production zone at Ain Nokbi to resettle those copperware workers affected by the rehabilitation (Millennium Challenge Corporation, 2016). The Chouara Tanneries are one of three tanneries reconstructed in 2015 and 2016, and Fez's biggest tourist attraction. Despite all the measures to renew the workspaces of tanners, their low socioeconomic status remains unchanged today.

Hafsia Project

Legend

Town hall

Ministry

Administrative agency / Other institution

School

School closed

Kindergarten

Cultural institution (gallery, museum, ...)

Social institution

Library

Religious institution

Former religious institution

Oukala Project

Recorded buildings

Hafsia Project

1. Phase 1985 - 1986

2. Phase 1986 - 1988

3. Phase 1989 - 1992

4. Phase 1990 - 1993

5. Phase since 1993

Built before 1985

Urban renovation 1986

Private renovation 1988 - 1993

Layout: M. Schepers / A. Escher
Cartography: J. Dezelski / M. Schepers
As of: March 2007
Basis of maps: Maps and cadastral survey maps of ASM and OTC Tunis

Source: Escher and Schepers (2008: 142).

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A — Craftsmen's district in the area of the northern gate (oil mills, wood & wool processing)

B — Craftsmen's district at the river (tanneries, metal processing)

C — Central retail district

D — Wholesale district (textiles and cloth)

E — Palace converted into a hotel

Mosque, "madrasse", graves

Primary and secondary school, youth center

Public and administrative offices, military

Bank branch, credit institution

Hospital, health service

"Hammam" (public bath)

★ "Msid"-Preschool   ● Fountain   ▲ Toilette   ▫◻ Bakery

"Dräz", commercial building (traditional architecture)

"Fondouk" (former inn with trading and storage functions)

"Kisariya" (specialized retail building)

Oil mill

Commercial construction built after 1950 (modern architecture)

Courtyard used for retail and trades

0   20   40   60   80   100 m

Remarkable residential building

Residential building with trades

Building complex of the city's fortification

Cemetery with memorial slabs

Garden, park, green area

Rubble-, demolition-, rehabilitation-area

Mapping and conception: E. Wirth 1980

Source: translated from Escher and Wirth (1992: 9).

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Figure 3. Property ownership by foreigners in Marrakesh in 2012

N

m
0 100 200 300 400 500

Foreign ownership
Buildings
City wall
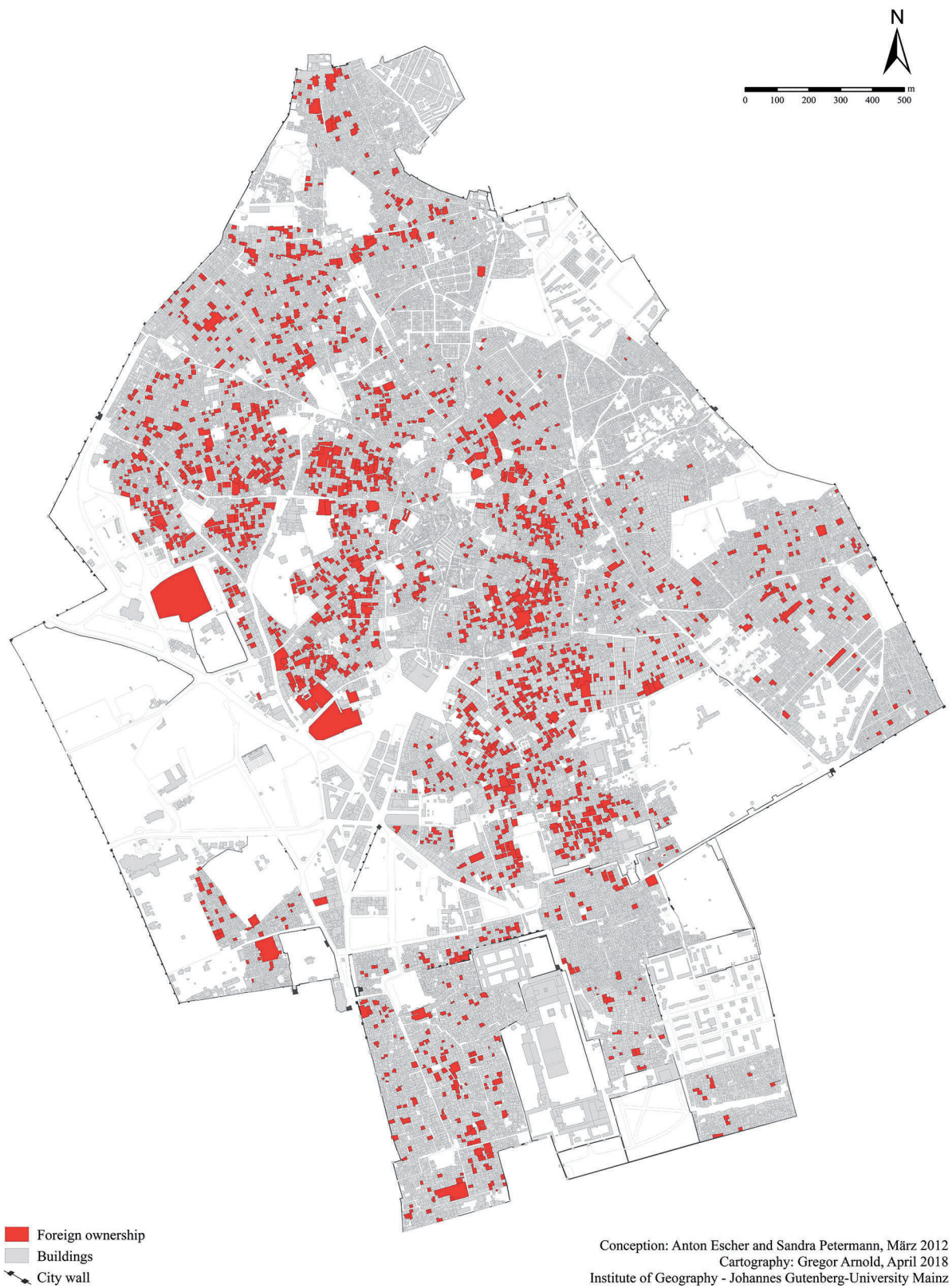
Source: Escher and Petermann (unpublished).

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The Moroccan old town of Marrakesh is a place of religious tradition for the local population. Historic buildings such as the Koutoubia Mosque, the Islamic urban planning by the Almoravids, and the old centre's role as a model "oriental city" contributed to the designation of the medina and its Menara Gardens as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1985 (UNESCO, 2009).

Simultaneously, Marrakesh became the destination for lifestyle migration par excellence. Since the beginning of digital globalisation in the 1990s, the city has become a global marketplace and hotspot for national and global investors. As a precondition, official entries in the land registry guaranteed their legal security. These investors renovated and transformed abandoned courtyard houses (*dars* and *riads*) and converted them into guesthouses, backpacker hotels, restaurants, art galleries, wellness centres and bathing complexes (*hammams*) with orientalising designs, as well as into drugstores to sell traditional medicine to tourists (Escher and Petermann, 2009). Europeans constitute by far the largest group among the foreign investors. They have bought more than 2,500 properties and contributed greatly to the gentrification of the medina. Migrants use the old city as a stage for personally satisfying their needs, and perceive the "better life" in four spheres: the "colonial sphere", the "Arabian nights sphere", the "comfortable sphere of life" and the "local social sphere" (Escher and Petermann, 2014: 29, 35).

Since 1922, the Jemaa el-Fna in Marrakesh has been protected as part of Morocco's artistic heritage (UNESCO, 2013). Descriptions from that period indicate the scope of its physical deterioration: "To tell the truth, the relevance of this place is rather constituted by the enormous crowd which meets there on a daily basis than by its surrounding composed almost exclusively of buildings in ruins without any architectural quality" (translated from Prost, 1932: 76 cited in Escher and Petermann, 2009: 230). Due to global influences and social changes in Morocco, the use and appearance of this cultural space was subject to constant change. The square can thus be interpreted as "an inauthentic tourist spectacle, as a Disneyfication[4] of itself, as a representation of the Orient that is no longer authentic and no longer in keeping with the times" (Schmitt, 2005: 187). However, the Jemaa el-Fna was described as a "Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity" by UNESCO in 2008 (UNESCO, 2013).

The Lebanese old town of Byblos is often referred to as the oldest continuously inhabited city in the world, populated since Neolithic times (5,000 BC). These days its souk transforms into an open-air club during the summer months. Numerous restaurants and bars with outdoor seating areas and open-air events like the Byblos International Festival attract a diverse audience. Among them are locals, guests from Lebanon and the diaspora as well as international Western and Gulf tourists who refer to the city as the "Lebanese Saint-Tropez" (Karner, 2016: 109).

4. The term "appears to be a globally understood metaphor for an *inauthentic,* commodified, and banalized modernization or reproduction of cultural forms that are removed from their original context and meanings" (Schmitt, 2005: 188).

The first heritage protection interventions date back to the middle of the 19th century, when French excavators exposed pre-Ottoman structures and created a large archaeological site in Byblos (Dunand, 1972). In the 1970s and 1980s, the Lebanese state expropriated homeowners and refurbished the appearance of the souk to create a museum city in Byblos (Council for Development and Reconstruction, 2001: 192). The

Figure 4. Nightscape of Byblos with pubs (blue) and restaurants (yellow) in 2012
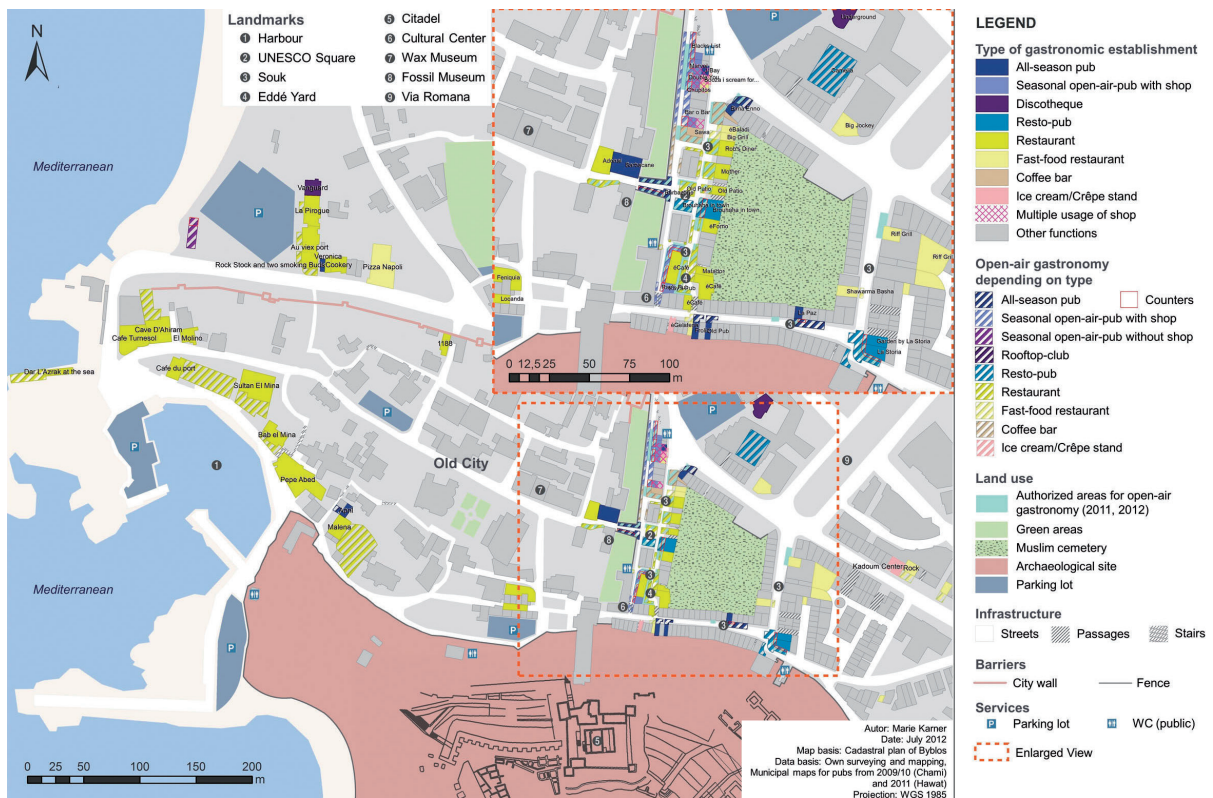
Source: translated from Karner (2016: 321).

old town was added to the UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1984 to protect it against rapid urbanisation and to revive cultural tourism after the end of the civil war (UNESCO, 2010). From 2003 until 2016, the "Cultural Heritage and Urban Development Project" (CHUD) focused on stimulating local economic development and enhancing the quality of life in Byblos (World Bank, 2016).

The recent transformation began in 2004, thanks to high vacancy rates in the souk despite the sound building structure (Weinitschke, 2002: 41). A local businessperson opened "Eddé Yard", which consists of a conglomerate of gastronomic establishments and boutiques spread over more than 20 former stores and workshops. Since 2008, the local government has permitted the operation of open-air bars during the summer months in the public area of the souk and promotes events like "Dance in the old city" (Karner, 2016: 177–213).

Byblos represents a postmodern hedonistic "urban nightscape" (Chatterton and Hollands, 2003) where one can socialise, stroll, proudly flaunt, dance, flirt, observe others and simultaneously consume food and (alcoholic) drinks in a privatised public historic setting. The atmosphere is perceived as a journey back in time, where existing norms and values can be bypassed. Passing time in the old town of Byblos has calming effects on visitors: "I come here to have fun, to refresh, to feel hope, to meet people and to communicate: I love people. (…) The whole night I am jumping from one bar to another" (cited in Karner, 2016: 173).

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International newspapers such as the *New York Times* reported on the "rebirth" of Byblos and the return of tourists (Beehner, 2009), because the old town has a history as a tourist attraction. Apart from being an early cultural tourism destination, the fishing harbour used to be a destination for the international jet set during the 1960s, with its famous Byblos Fishing Club. The recent emergence of Byblos' nightscape is also linked to the long history of nightlife in Lebanon and to Beirut's leading position as party capital of the Middle East (Karner, 2016: 153–160).

To sum up, cities are a reflection of societal norms, cultural peculiarities, religious beliefs and economic activities influenced by geopolitical and neoliberal policies. Postmodern transformations of North African and Middle Eastern medinas follow the strong demand for leisure and hedonistic lifestyles. The aestheticisations and transformations and their side effects often contradict the outlined preservation guidelines. However, they do justice to the feelings and needs of contemporary society. Visitors are in search of authentic hedonistic places and do not question the scientific or historic originality. Historic towns function as "escape spaces" to cope with the exigencies of modern life and everyday problems of today's society. Thus, the outlined transformations support the introduced theoretical understanding of urbanity as a mirror for urban lifestyles.

4. Stop preservation and be WISE: Reinvent historic urban quarters!

For many centuries, urbanisation was characterised by new construction, and only those elements and structures that had proven to be beneficial endured. In contrast, holding on to traditional structures is a phenomenon of the past century, which is widely criticised: "[It] represents nothing other than the universalization of the recasting of tumultuous historical reorderings into the ossified ruins of theatrically staged places: time frozen as place, a mere moment of space" (Swyngedouw, 2005: 132). Moreover, the preservation of buildings, structures and spaces is only possible through definition, formalisation and institutionalisation. This contradicts the specific and complex dynamics of places throughout history. It is not only questionable whether squares like the Jemaa el-Fna can be preserved (Schepers, 2008: 115), but we should also wonder why preservation strategies are applied if the issuing of decrees might lead to their destruction: "But Jamaa 'el-Fna, one can destroy him by decree, but one cannot create him by decree" (translated from Goytisolo, 1995 cited in Schepers, 2008: 115).

Furthermore, conservation measures are linked to the paradox that there is no material preservation that does not cause economic change. This relationship counteracts traditional uses and activities, whose revival is often a simultaneous goal to promote tourism. Moreover, the vast majority of residents and tourists lack the expertise to distinguish original historical elements from replicas. In addition, they do not attribute the same values to expensively preserved urban heritage as conservation experts. On the contrary, today's visitors identify with urban landscapes that exhibit a mixture of both built heritage and innovative design of space (Gospodini, 2006), and ask for authentic experiences.

With that in mind, the efforts towards conducting scientific-based impact assessments should be redirected. Instead of measuring the degree of damage to material structures that traditional and new uses cause, historical remains' suitability for contemporary uses has to be assessed. If buildings do not suit the current standards of living, they need to be modernised using new technologies and local materials alongside advanced ones like glass, concrete and eco-friendly resources. Taking ecological, economic and social aspects into consideration, the demolition and rebuilding of structures should be encouraged if it is the most sustainable solution. Architects can create an atmosphere reminiscent of history, with newly constructed but ancient-looking structures that satisfy visitors' longing for the past. To ensure identification of the local population with the structures, valuable elements should be preserved during processes of deconstruction. They can either be integrated into the urban fabric (e.g. facades) or digitally documented and (virtually) displayed in subsidised museums. In addition, new usages should be promoted. In doing so, today's generations will create resilient urban quarters with innovative materials and functions, as we know from previous epochs.

Overall, material protection and cosmetic restoration works true to the original building style are cost-intensive, romanticised and obsolete attempts at preservation that neglect the diverse needs of our societies and contradict advanced urban developments. "[B]uilt heritage represents formal fragments of the city's history that are rich in meaning, and that allow themselves to be interpreted again and again in different contexts" (Gospodini, 2006: 326). For that reason, it is necessary to place individual and collective human preferences at the centre of participatory and integrated urban planning. By considering everyday and touristic practices, the economic, social, cultural and religious needs of society can be addressed.

Instead of counteracting inevitable processes of gentrification, festivalisation, commodification, Disneyfication and digitalisation, authorities should acknowledge and control them as new dimensions of future-oriented planning. These processes have to be recognised and managed in order to create competitive urban quarters. Modern-day tools and proven concepts can provide guidelines for strategic urban planning, but should be questioned and further developed to tackle current problems. Needless to say, the overall spatial planning regulations have to secure good physical-atmospheric conditions like fresh air, clean water, daylight and green areas. As a result, this reinvention of historic urban quarters will provide us with sustainable integrated spaces that people can identify with for living, recreation, leisure and the satisfaction of other needs in the 21st century.

This reinvention of historic urban quarters will provide us with sustainable integrated spaces that people can identify with for living, recreation, leisure and the satisfaction of other needs in the 21st century.

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