Arab historic cities: Challenges of conservation, management and development - some case studies.

Rachid BOUZIDI, Morocco

Key words: Historical areas, environmental context, spatial planning, risk management, urban changes.

SUMMARY

This is a summary on the paper on “Arab historic cities: Challenges of conservation, management and development - some case studies -. Arab cities are in changes on different levels according to globalization, demographic explosion, expansion and pressure associated with society’s evolution. The challenges of continuity of the past for the future, arises many questions in Arab World. Historical and traditional areas in urban contexts are mainly concerned in order to be survived with conservation of these buildings and their soul, management of urban field, development of society, shelter conditions, slums, public policies…This paper is focusing on concepts of conservation, safeguarding and restoration, risk problems and urban management, integration and development necessities; the focus concerns therefore practiced issues for some cases.

RESUME

Ce résumé porte sur : “Les villes historiques Arabes: Défis de la conservation, de la gestion et du développement, - quelques études de cas - ». Les villes de la région Arabe ont subi des changements à différents niveaux à cause de la mondialisation, de l’explosion démographique, de l’expansion et de la pression associées à l’évolution de la société. Les défis de la continuité du passé pour l’avenir posent beaucoup de questions dans le monde Arabe. Des secteurs historiques et traditionnels sont ainsi concernés pour sauvegarder ces édifices physiques et leurs âmes, la gestion de l’espace urbain, le développement de la société, les conditions de logement, les bidonvilles, les politiques publiques…Ce papier se concentre sur les concepts de la conservation, de la sauvegarde et de la restauration, les problèmes des risques ainsi que la gestion urbaine, les nécessités d’intégration et de développement et les solutions pratiques en ce qui concerne certains cas.
INTRODUCTION

From ancient times to our days, the Arab World has greatly contributed to history and evolution of urbanization. It is one of the most important regions in the World where urban culture was generated while developing many beautiful cities. The process of urbanization and generating architecture richness has evolved through the Past within the interaction of civilizations, emergence of defined forms and patterns shaped from military, economic, spiritual and religious considerations. From 1970 to present, the urban population in the Arab region has quadrupled and it starts to grow to be more than double again over the next 40 years. Current urbanization is driven by economic development, migration from countryside to the city and from small cities to the biggest ones, migration to oil-rich countries. Therefore, cities and especially those including historic centers and areas, need to be protected, reinforced and upgraded towards this growth. Cultural heritage becomes so a real stake at the middle of urban issues.

Although, the Arab historic cities which preserve an important architectural heritage, are so confronting not only social, economic and political challenges, but also daunting risks of conservations and restoration, spatial planning, urban management and changes. But, the overarching challenge of many cases is how to integrate them with their specific souls and dynamic identities within contemporary environment and urban transitions.

1-BRIEF AVERVIEW ON CITY’S CONCEPT

1-1: Urban planning approaches

The urban planning is an act for the future; this means that it concerns the present and what is existed, and to project a new or an adaptive design. There are several theories and visions which give approaches for improving urban planning process:

- Geographical approach related to characteristics of cities, the ways of using the lands and the human interaction with the site and the land;
- Economical approach interested to utilitarian aspects of the city as specialized unit as for example trading cities, financial cities, industrial towns, military cities, university towns…;
- Social approach considering the city as landscape of non homogenous communities, groups and individuals, traditions and customs, and as various levels of urban areas;
- Demographical approach concerning especially the required balance between demographical evolution, needs, areas and equipments in one hand, and the human interaction with the land in the other hand.
- Cultural approach putting city in its cultural framework process and creation, both related to archaeological and historical buildings, traditional architecture, aesthetic area, human relationships, safeguarding of shared memory, cultural property…;
- Ecological approach considering city as an opened eco-system to evolution only on
preservation level of its natural environment as for example concepts of green city, city park and sustainable development…

The human actor is therefore the center of urban creation and evolution as well as he is also the principal actor of culture and traditions. Many centuries ago, the historian Ibn Khaldoun has considered the equation between mans and city’s creations and process².

1-2: For harmonious city

City is created whether after political or voluntarily decision or after spontaneous process as for example historical settlements formed from succession of quarters and areas. City is not only theoretical and practical planning and designing, but also cultural sharing field which preserves and generates memory, history, traditions and customs, reminiscence and nostalgia, collective imaginary and property, and all what is related to humans.

City is also cultural and symbolic human creation giving to its environment and the country their own identity and character. This idea appears not only in narrow concept of culture, but also in the followed urbanization models, engineering of habitations, constructions and streets, urban design, field management ways, social and areas partition, and what influence on lifestyle in urban context.

Whatever the category of cities as universally considered (green city, inclusive city, productive city, resilient city, safe and healthy city, planned city), historical centers should be protected and improved. According to the above approaches, it is so important to respect the principle of sustainable city within evolving harmonization of these approaches based on preservation, management and integration of cultural landscape, and improving an integrated urban planning according to a long-term vision related in one hand to field organizing vision, and to its developing system in the other hand. Cultural landscape and its soul take in this integrated strategy an appropriate place in urban dynamic, permit to preserve, to conserve and to promote architectural heritage, give issues to overcome many challenges caused by contemporary environment and demographic evolution.

When we study or describe structure evolution and relations in Arab historic cities as well as classical cities, we remark that in the past, materials nature and methods used in constructions, aspects of urban developments, configuration of juxtaposing and superposing historical buildings indicate overall coherent process of urban planning, transition and evolution that it is difficult unfortunately to see in current urban planning in different Arab historic centers.

So, it is important to develop criteria that lead to sustainability of urbanization and to extend the life of historical buildings by making interaction between sustainability of them and their managements models, creating internal environment of the building that achieves thermal comfort for its environmental sustainability, physical environmental and characteristics (buildings, design, masonry, structures…) without forgetting to use new technologies that keep the environment and historical architecture, taking into account architectural features of buildings, sustainability of built heritage by investment of economic opportunities provided by cultural heritage. However, concepts of heritage identity must be re-formulated and redefined in a manner consistent with the current times and technological developments. Maintenance of pillars of heritage in general and elements of intangible heritage relating to some traditional buildings in particular reflects also their identities and contributes to their continuity. Therefore, Arab historic centers are vulnerable to many effects...
relating to their specific physical state, geological environment, climate changes, threats of urbanization and demographic pressure.

2. IDENTITY AND SOUL OF THE ARAB HISTORIC CITY

2-1: Arab urban identity

Arab historical towns reflect influences coming from many civilizations and cultures (ancient Sumerian, Akkadian, Hellenistic, Roman, Parthian, Sassanian, Christian, Ottoman, Arab-Islamic civilizations, modern and Western cultures), traces and clues of architectural and urban development coming from classical heritage to colonial and modern architecture occurred during and after French and English colonialisms.

At the beginning of Renascence until the end of the last century, Arab societies were exposure to cultural currents which imposed different realities and contributed to emergence of new concepts of culture and architectural identity formed through the time.

Arab historical cities reflect therefore diversified architecture and the content of aesthetic values of inherited rich popular handicrafts and traditional industries. Being so characterized due to climate and environment differences, they led to various styles of architecture in terms of form, design, function and construction tools. The architectural style in each urban context depends on importance and identity of each historic town.

The concept of identity is usually used as an ideological concept rather than scientific or cultural one. The American heritage dictionary defines identity as many characteristics determining something and distinguishes it from others. Identity in architecture and urban planning is so two points: visual identity and identity based on activities and events related to the buildings. Identity is not static but is a process with many dimensions; it isn’t formed at once, but it evolves and accumulates its components. As identities facets are depending on local, regional and national levels, they are also relating to evolution and historic process. But we have to separate between an authentic identity in which evolution improves harmonious systems and developments, and a broken identity with big contrasts and dissimilarities in its systems and evolution which is usually developed to shattered identity. In this second case for example, we have usually duality conflict between tradition and modernity in culture or in lifestyle for example.

The same vision should be applied for architecture and urban planning. Shattered urban identity reflects therefore dissymmetry between historic centers and modern ones in the same city. Studies on urban identities in Worldwide including the Arab region are not developed and outlined in a serious way. The history of urban identities formation is still unwritten as well as successive states of the cities remain to be clearly established.

One of the striking examples of shattered urban design is the historical center of Cairo showing at the same time identity of architectural character and urban heritage, and modernity in Azbakiya and the city center.

Authentic identity has significant impact on continuity of urbanism and sustainability of the city’s soul, and improves reciprocal relationships between community and urbanism. Each city has its own soul which permits it to grow according to its specific rhythm and environment.

2-2: The soul of Arab city

One of characteristics that we find in all Arab cities is the hierarchical plan of social and spatial order followed by urban traditional planning. Minarets are for example the sole purely
vertical structure in historic centers while urban layout gives horizontal views and is structured around the Great Mosque, “suqs” markets, and “quisariya” covered markets. Overall the city is surrounded by immense wall defining limits of the city and its soul. Arteries are interconnected together leading obviously to the Great Mosque and “suqs” from urban gates opened at the day and closed at night. If the city is extended, the new sector or quarter is also delimited by a new wall to be linked to the previous one. This design dates back to the classical times and particularly to Hellenistic and Roman times.

The soul of Arab city is its urban design on different topographic lands, its components (great mosque and quarters mosques, palaces, central place and covered markets, hospitals -maristans-, hospices, religious schools -medersas-, caravanserai -fondouks-, houses “Riads”, public fountains – sabils -, public baths – hammams -, urban wall and gates...), its buildings materials, its traditional urban fabric which is often modeled on circular city pattern concentrated on Great Mosque as city core, management of its land properties by endowment system -Waqf-, supervision of its markets and commercial activities by financial control – Hisba - system, customs and traditions of its inhabitants, rich flavors of its architectural decoration and decorative arts, manual handicrafts and traditional industries of its community (fig. 1). The urban soul is consecrated by interconnection between Great Mosque, - suq - and palace, spatial layout, urban and buildings design (fig. 2). Its image was for a long time surrounded by a sense of imagination, artistic richness, power of the country and self-glorification of princes – Sultans - and legendary creators.

Built heritage is normally an important part of the urban morphogenesis which is applied to enhance authenticity of the urban interface dynamic. It is formed originally within adjustment of art work, site selection, building techniques, ethnic, religious, social, political and strategic considerations, distinctive style, design and aesthetics. All these components give it richness and diversity by creating its authenticity and significance (fig. 3).

Nevertheless, there are many examples of Arab historic cities where public makers have developed several projects inside these centers or around them. The situation is therefore strikingly because they contribute to produce in this case big urban contrasts between urban centers for particular town and acculturatation of memory. If any urban planning in historic city is not framed within the city’s soul and its identity process, urban projects couldn’t ensure sustainable urbanization and cultural heritage preservation.

3. ARAB HISTORIC CITIES: ASSESSMENT OF MAJOR CHALLENGES

3-1: From decay to dichotomy and multiplicity

The beginnings of threats experienced by Arab cities date back to the 18th and the 19th centuries when they live a long period of stagnation in their activities and decay in their urban development. Architectural patterns, dwellings, public buildings and streets were remained in their previous state and use without upgrading issues. This urban situation is related to the late Ottoman period and the Napoleon Egyptian’s Campaign (1798-1801).

The important transition started during the colonial period especially in the 20th century when European urban managers built new quarters which lead to creating dichotomy between old city and modern one; therefore, the second area was constructed adjacent to or attached to or widely and completely separated to the first one. For example, the Fatimid center in Cairo, the Ottoman center in Baghdad, the Imaamian medina in Meknez, the Idrisside medina in Fez, the andaluzian medina in Tetwan, the ochre-red city of Marrakech remained dynamic areas. Even if this colonial policy leads to conserve historic areas as separate unit, it created a
process for destruction of symbolic and traditional buildings, disruption between private and public spaces, inconvenience between communities and public / official buildings, acculturation of urban memory. Nevertheless, this policy has permitted to constitute new urban and planning design and architecture with European currents in arts and architecture which are considered now a day as an important part of Arab cities heritage.

During the last decades of the 20th and 21st centuries and due to demographic urban expansion, extension and development of new technologies and socioeconomics levels and needs observed in the Arab region, urban environment was affected by a variety of transformations and considerable dynamic. Arab cities are changing therefore and they are tending to compact cities for some cases and to segmented or divided cities for others. For the two cases, this urban environment is currently being constituted by multiplicity of urban centers. However, in front of unlimited urbanization and growing of urban multiplicity’s centers, the city becomes enhancing mobility and dynamic in territory, and losing its historic center or at least its soul or some of its components.

3-2: Demographic pressure

The Arab World home to 357 million inhabitants in 2010 with 56% of its residents is living in cities. The countries of the Mashreq region are so urbanized with urban population varying from 43% in Egypt, to 87% in Lebanon. The Maghreb countries are also highly urbanized with urban inhabitants adjoining in total 50.6% and varying from 43% in Mauretania to 78.99 in Libya. In Morocco, urban population is at present around 61%, it will grow to 69, 18 in 2030.

Urban population is so growing rapidly in the Arab region due to many phenomenons as evolution in birthrate both in Mashreq and in Maghreb, migration to Arab Golf States and currently to Maghreb, migration from countryside “rural exodus” and small cities to the biggest towns. As demographic pressure increases challenges of urban transitions (unemployment, particularly among the young peoples, limited economic life of cities, urban development and housing problems, insecurity, unbalance between city centers…), it causes critical situations for historic urban areas which become one of the most vulnerable and compact demographic spaces among these centers (fig. 4). Social cohesion and cultural heritage with both its two forms, tangible and intangible, are affected and suffered; the permanent links inside nuclear families and between families and their inherited homes and historic urban environment are broken as well as the common urban memory. Vulnerability of historic buildings is increased: for example, houses are sold or rented, many of them are transformed and narrowed to small spaces for housing their new inhabitants who have no symbolic interconnection with said buildings, some of them are physically affected, deteriorated or probably destroyed along the time especially if there is no promotion policy. Historic centers receive so other traditions which could be strange while the collective identity is changing.

3-3: Climate changes and capillary rising

Arab countries are situated in a region characterized by moisture and capillary rising. The impacts of these phenomenons are observed in many historic cities. The situation gets worse further more climate change effects and material reactions. Historic buildings are made from several materials and facing many serious challenges related to climate change which is considered as one of the overarching challenges in different cases. Although, there is a variety
of effects resulting from reaction of materials within climate change while the appropriate issues aren’t in sometimes used or developed to overcome deterioration process and its dynamic action. According to different climatic, natural and geographical environments and historic backgrounds, different materials and techniques are used in this region, practical issues and analytical approaches are tried to be used for enhancing risk management and conservation process.

3-4: Legislation, governance and conservation concepts
Legislation, governance and official conservation concepts represent regulation with three-dimensional framework of the urban planning questions which arise various degrees of interventions on built heritage. In some countries, there is a lack of legislation related to heritage preservation. In almost all Arabic countries, this legislation suffer from insufficiency and shortcomings issues or even controversies in the same text of law or between deferent laws implemented in the same country. For historic centers, several policies with a variety of backgrounds could be applied (urban planning and architecture policy depending on the Ministry of Urbanism, urban and architecture policy depending on local communities and authorities, urban planning policy, cultural heritage policy, environment policy, - waqf- and Islamic Affairs policy…). According to these aspects, urban governance system, as emerging issue, presents for a long time a perennial problem of misunderstanding of legislation applications and communication between different actors and public makers.

Terminology is suffering too from inappropriate definitions of many concepts related to build heritage conservation. In Morocco for example, conservation means for Moroccan specialists of heritage, maintenance and management for preservation; for other actors, it means maintenance of historic building as it is. Concept of restoration means for those specialists, maintenance of physical historic building by appropriate materials by conserving the original resistant parts and using some approaches that must be considered; but for other actors, it means rebuilding with traditional materials, used completely or partly with modern materials (for example local communities, Ministry of – Waqf - and Islamic Affairs…).

3-5: Tourism impacts
Although, tourism has economic impact on the country according to development plans of public makers, it becomes in many levels as a threat for historic areas. Some of them have changed their destinations and were transformed into commercial, industrial and touristic spaces. The increase of these economic activities leads to restore or to rebuild historic buildings with incompatible ways while they are reused also in different unsuitable forms. The increasing of tourism industry without compatible tourism planning with historic areas framework and sustainable identity, accelerates changes and destruction process in the ancient cityscapes and breaks their common identity, values and significances. Just to give a simple example of this situation, in several Moroccan historic cities, as Marrakech, Fez, Essouira…, many traditional and prestigious houses - Riad - were changed to touristic restaurants, guest-houses…. with incompatible materials and elements; it is possible therefore to find swimming
pools on - Riad - terraces or streets reserved entirely by their foreigner owners to tourism activities and international estate agencies.

Nevertheless, Morocco is still operating on cultural heritage including historic buildings, firstly for culture issues and then for tourism, that helps to control potential threats of tourism impacts. In difference of this policy, Egypt and Jordan for example operate with the inverse vision, tourism firstly and then culture, so that touristic and investigated threats are moreover increased.

3-6: Insensitive modern urban sprawl

Currently, cities are growing and changing when historic landscapes are attacked or at least affected by many threats related to urban development as isolating original inhabitants from their houses, losing of authentic identity, historic buildings and arts, expropriation and transformation of remaining buildings, destruction or encroachment upon them, unhealthy lifestyle, semi-industrial activities using toxic materials, high pollution air, problems of waste management, lack or limited upgrade programs, construction of modern buildings inside historic areas…All these threats among others make them more vulnerable and deeply affected to collapse as it is observed in different Arab historic cities with mutation process as Tunis, Meknez (fig. 5), Fez, Al Kasbah of Algiers, Cairo…

In other cases and particularly in Arabic Golf States, the high rising buildings are erected beside historic areas as they show their self-glorification on substrates of cityscapes heritage, especially since they are seen from different perspectives within ultra-dynamic urban mobility environment, in front of the sea and the Sahara horizons, and under the sky connections. As these huge buildings introduce a new lifestyle in Arab societies, they transform so the cores of cities to attractive new places and environments making for that shatter with the old cores. They raise vertical movement of urban planning, coming from Western countries, to be applied in an environment of horizontal urban reality in which the minaret of the mosque or the church was the only vertical construction (fig. 6). By their volumes and scales, the high rising buildings edified around the historic centers, shatter there visual perspectives increasing therefore threats against these areas, their souls and sustainability (fig. 7 and 8).

The most challenge of urban planning in Arab World is how to preserve sustainability of historic centers and to enhance modern urban development at the same time?

3-7: Process of incompatible maintenance

Many cities have been suffering not only from aging, destruction, lack of maintenance and legislation..., but also from inappropriate practiced maintenance. If the curatives interventions are made on historic buildings without beforehand diagnosis “on the monument and the specific threats to which it is faced” and with lack of scientific techniques and compatible materials, these actions could be turned against the state of their conservation and multiply degrees of threats.

Broadly followed before many years until today, curative actions are conducted off any preventives actions or any prior treatment of threats or risks. The repair reinforcement of structures and surfaces isn’t challenging therefore to shape physical and visual construction which continues to suffer from occurred high risks not resolved, and in this case the damages are moreover increased.

In this regard also and without getting to make scientific and integrated project which appears expensive, some public makers use for repairs structures incompatible materials like...
for example stones and baked bricks attached directly on the original structure made from clay or adobe before plastering all the surface of the structure with the authentic local color of plaster as it happens in Meknez. For many urban wall sections in this city, original parts were disappeared but current materials of the existing structures are moderns and covered by the authentic color plaster. In this regard, the public makers conserve and preserve just the line of the wall and its soul (fig. 9). The same point of view was behind building recently a new section wall with cement and stones on the ruins of some wall original sections of the historic center of Azemmour which were destroyed voluntarily just before that. In Meknez again, recent restoration made in Moulay Ismaïl stables, used baked brick structures applied on the original structures from clay; unfortunately, the restoration structure presents in this case major threat and occurred structural, physical and visual risks (fig. 10).

By the intention to present an homogeneous traditional color of buildings for improving tourism and urban identity, it happens to make the same plaster color as well as on historic walls and buildings, and on neighborhood modern constructions such as it is followed in the core historic public place in Meknez between urban historic wall and modern shops intended for artisan activities but not occupied until today (fig. 11). It is here an example of disfiguration of the historic cityscape which looks like the visual contrasting caused by modern construction through its color or design.

However, public policies in Arab countries are therefore diversified and incoherent in several cases. When it is necessary to consider for any conservation and rehabilitation project, monument as part of a whole unit or environment, it is often considered unfortunately as isolated unit from its environment; this vision affects so all the following planning process (fig. 12).

4. FOR SUSTAINABLE CONSERVATION AND URBAN PLANNING

4-1: Knowledge, diagnosis and monitoring process

In Arab countries, potentiality of heritage is not yet fully exploited as part of the people life and historic areas as a whole are badly presented today by several issues that have emerged since the advent of new technologies and rapid urban sprawl. Public makers, who become aware of tremendous opportunities available by cultural heritage, are driving many efforts toward conservation and rehabilitation of historical urban centers within modern evolution.

Knowledge, diagnosis and monitoring of built heritage are three valuable tools for any territories cultural development or any heritage promotion and conservation. They permit to have basic documentation on the historic building, its physical state and different levels of its environment. Unfortunately, this value is often underestimated or misunderstood by urban planning projects. Therefore, in any case we have preexistent building or historic cityscape and before any intervention inside or surrounding, we need to collect and to analyze information, to produce documentation and to exploit it for the historic city or building, and to transmit knowledge to all stakeholders. Inventory process evolved by GIS database enhances selected documentation and thereby our vision to define exactly potential threats in shorts, medium and long terms. A beforehand diagnosis is unavoidable for any preventive or curative measures with the whole process; it must concerns either the state of the monument, threats and challenges. However, collecting information, investigating on field surveys and establishing diagnosis could not achieve their aims if they aren’t carried by monitoring system, remedial measures and controls on concerned center or built heritage so that to follow
up evolution and degrees of materials characteristics and reactions, structural scheme, damage and decay processes.

4-2: Local governance

Without governance mechanism and participatory process, it is so difficult to ensure sustainability for historic centers in modern urban environment. Dialogue with all stakeholders, civic involvement on questions related to the shared identity, and dealing with the public living in this environment or concerned by conservation of historic towns, are special forms for involving all concerned stakeholders who should be invited to give their opinion on conservation and urban planning projects so that public makers define required tempting targets of each operation (fig. 13). Built heritage projects are usually subjected to opposing and various views to the crisis of who is doing what, and who has the right to do what in complex political and administrative frameworks with various aspirations and backgrounds. The case study of Fez provides good practice in the way conflicts and differences were arranged to make a successful conservation program. The new concepts of cultural heritage and its issues require implementation of urban framework governance oriented by planning team and stimulating synergy between all stakeholders related to historic cities question including also local population which must take ownership of this cultural landscape.

4-3: Urban morphology between preserving cultural assets and upgrading urban spaces

Looking briefly to all Arab historic cities, it appears evident that urban morphology is usually linked to heritage approach and extended from the historic core.

Planning process needs to respect values-based approach, taking stock of urban evolution in the past, and assessing significance of each building or group of buildings (historical values, artistic and aesthetic values, symbolic values, urban and architectural values, research values, natural values, social or civic values, spiritual or religious values, symbolic or identity values, economic values). Identification of values and those who hold them is not restricted to a given period or community, but is an ongoing process in a framework of urban mobility and intricacy, and also historical path but by connecting to the concerned urban soul and identity. The holistic approach that forecast what a city should look like all kind of built heritage within synergy with normal social and urban development process, needs to establish first off all various assessments as for example condition, environmental, surveys and documentation assessments so that it could be possible to specify appropriate conservation and urban integrity program with programmatic focus.

Problems of rehabilitation of historic monuments and centers are usually connected to balancing ways between development and conservation according to planning laws, urban geography, touristic planning and economic mechanisms acts in genesis of urban development. Conservation program should be based on institutional, financial and technical frameworks as it was applied for Fez for Example by creating a local agency to improve the urban development and conservation in historic center – medina -. The role of ADER-Fez agency is to implement strategic policy. The success of this project is related to large network of professionals connected to this structure. (- medina - of Fez comprises: about 13,385 of historic buildings; about 3,000 of historic monuments; about 20 kilometers of historic wall;
from 800 to 1,200 person/hectares; 100,000 inhabitants). The strategic policy of Fez as well as any other historic city is therefore to see how to implement comprehensive urban plan, conservation plan, rehabilitation with appropriate use and protection through strengthening and repairing process for historic centers and buildings within economic development and environmental improvement.

However, one of the best ways to improve conservation and development is if the maintenance is made by the owners and inhabitants of historic buildings as it happens in many Arab countries. In Yemen for example, buildings are made from sun-dried mud whose survival has only been assured the continuous maintenance of the structure by its inhabitants, today this practice is unfortunately declining while several additional risk threats are so developed in these buildings.

The survival of historic centers doesn’t require only conservation plan but also improvement of infrastructures and facilities (traffic organization, accesses and parking, water and sewage system, emergency and circulation networks, electricity and telephone networks, urban facilities, transporting goods, emergency and safety, renewal of drainage channels, household waste collection, managing tourist flows…(fig. 14 and 15).

Simultaneously of this improving policy, desired survival needs meshing chain heritage by protecting and improving manual possession handicrafts and traditional industries, because one of the extensions of historic cities is also their human heritage and its product. Historic cities depend on their economy by relying on the heritage of existing labor force of handicrafts and traditional in their industry also (fig. 16).

For the same order of idea, local materials and stones are officially required to be used in many traditional as what was restricted by royal decree in Jordan or national law in Yemen that has permitted to preserve visual integrity in the whole concerned cities.

Urban development which is accompanied with demographic pressure and architectural innovations requires establishing and applauding city policy focusing on each Arab city and basing on urban integration and social cohesion within respecting civic engagement process. For a few years ago, Moroccan government has created new department in charge of city policy within the Ministry of Urbanism. Although, this initiative is a step forward in evolution of leaders’ considerations on urban environment, it hasn’t unfortunately committed all values-based approach namely cultural approach, historic urban evolution, tangible and intangible heritage and its sustainability, regional urban identities, civic engagement…The current and advanced Moroccan Constitution adopted in 2011 and the ongoing project on advanced regionalization relate these values.

Urban morphology in Arab World requires more efforts in order to plan for harmonious cities and sustainable development regarding social harmony, spatial harmony, environmental harmony, protected areas and heritage harmony to be involved within inclusive urban planning framework.

**4-4: Heritage landscape and visibility concept**

There is no sustainable conservation of historic centers if there is no protected area harmony or no respect of visibility concept. The concept of vicinity and surroundings of historic buildings and centers is the result of protection of cultural and natural landscapes policies according to concepts of sustainability (fig. 17 and 18).

The idea of protecting and preserving surroundings of historic areas was initiated in France by the Laws of 1906 and 1930. In France, in 1943, it was decided to control all...
buildings projects situated around historical monuments and to stop them if they affect their preservation and conservation state. The aim of this law was to promote and to conserve moreover historical centers and monuments in their environments. Cultural landscape is based in this law on visibility areas between historical buildings and other constructions, bared or built, located on 500m perimeter around them.

According to article L 631-31 of the Heritage Code in France, no project of new buildings, demolition, alteration, deforestation or modification couldn’t be made by private owners or local authorities or public makers around protected buildings on 500 m perimeter without prior permission of the Architect of the Buildings of France. All applications for urban planning permissions are transmitted to all concerned heritage services for examination and decision related to impact of submitted project not only about the considered historical building, but also about its surrounding areas and the reciprocal visual connections in this area. This regulation is included also in the Urban Planning Code. The concept of visibility’s field is not normally implemented inside protected areas or between historical buildings but also between them and modern buildings in order to overcome any kind of co-visibility’s alteration. Likewise, the Environment Code of France talks about protected areas and their surroundings, especially in article L. 581-8 which prohibits advertising in natural and cultural landscapes.

One of the first decrees in Arab World regarding protection of historic or archaeological area surroundings was published in Morocco in 1921 and concerned preservation of protected area around the archaeological site of Volubilis. This royal decree published many decades before that UNESCO established convention on protected surroundings and visibility concept, has greatly contributed to protect one of the famous natural, cultural and ecological landscape in the World in which land using is evidenced from Prehistory to today, to ensure co-visibility between the site and its environment, and to reduce correctly modern buildings threats. Protected area in urban or countryside zone according to its natural or cultural interest presents many opportunities to develop and to institute issues for improving local dynamic economy and stimulating collective and shared memory.

Concepts of heritage landscape and co-visibility reflect the need to rationalize instrument systems of protection relating to natural or built heritage of a given territory and the shortcomings of protection of historical buildings surroundings.

**CONCLUSION**

Many projects made on Arab historic towns reflect the need to balance development and heritage conservation and to search the best ways for equilibrating between the whole centers of a given city including historic center which becomes actually new backbone of urban and economic dynamics if Arab actors change their visions on urban built heritage and try to understand the compatible process of development that it requires. Contrary to what believe some peoples, heritage doesn’t slow down development and urban planning if urban policies create normal framework to cities to be developed and to build heritage to be conserved and relived. Arab historic cities embody rich heritage but require compatible and unified law, policies, interests and concepts.
Fig. 1: The soul of Arab historic city, restitution through its basic components

Fig. 2: Damascus, Omayyad Mosque reflecting a main part of the city soul

Fig. 3: Rabat, Oudayas historic center reflecting much significances
Fig. 4: Fez, historic area as compact area

Fig. 5: Meknez, modern buildings extending to the city wall

Fig. 6: Fez, mosque minarets as the major vertical buildings

Fig. 7 and 8: Sharjah, the high rising buildings edified around historic center
Fig. 9: Meknez, preservation of soul of the city wall original made with clay, and repaired with bricks and stones, and hided with traditional plaster.

Fig. 10: Meknez, Moulay Ismail stables, recent restoration and additional with threats.

Fig. 11: Meknez, modern buildings attached to historical wall, hided with the same plaster coloration.

Fig. 12: Safi, road sings disfiguring visual aspect of walls.

Fig. 13: Fez, The Nejjarine Caravanserai, as succeeded operation of cooperation restoration and rehabilitation.

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Fig. 14: Rabat, opened urban access on the historic wall to facilitate urban connections

Fig. 15: Meknez, historic city core requiring specific transportation vehicles

Fig. 16: Fez, tanneries as special handcrafts and part of the city soul

Fig. 17: Rabat, compatible visual landscape between historic and modern buildings

Fig. 18: Essaouira, opened visual landscape between city and sea

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

1 Two historic centers from the Arab region were among the first in the World to be registered on the World Heritage List: The Cairo historic city (Egypt) and the archaeological site of Carthage (Tunisia) both registered in 1979.
3 Historic city means here all urban layers.
4 Classical cities were also organized around the temple, the agora or the forum and basilica, defined by urban wall flanked by gates which were linked to avenues (decumani and cardins).
5 Without bigotry either for cultural heritage or for aggressed modern innovation.
6 This site registered on the World Heritage List, dates back to ancient periods and was occupied in ante-roman, and roman times followed by another occupation in the earlier centuries of Islam.
7 Under instructions of UNESCO and the Moroccan Ministry of Culture, we have prepared technical detailed project when we worked in this site which permits to register this protected area in 2008 during the meeting of World Heritage Centre held in Quebec.

CONTACTS

Rachid BOUZIDI,
Profile : Specialist of cultural heritage
Institution: General Secretariat of Ministry of Culture, Morocco
Address: Ministry of Culture, General Secretariat, n°1, Ghandi Street,
City: Rabat
Country : MOROCCO
Tel. +212-537209484/29, +212-666295152
Email: bouzidir3@gmail.com
Web site: www.minculture.gov.ma