

Urban heritage in action in the historic city of Fez: guest houses rehabilitation models

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ABSTRACT:

In the urban agglomerate of Fez, the old medina is distinguished by its extended and vital historical space. Despite a long process of deterioration, the urban heritage of the old medina has conserved its authenticity especially in the historical part that hosts an array of touristic projects. Funded by the World Bank, an integrated project has been set off in order to end the isolation of this part of the city. The present article is an attempt to contribute to the goal of characterizing the problem related to urban heritage rehabilitation in the historical part of the city of Fez. We discuss and diagnose the process of activating the rehabilitation of urban heritage by studying the initiatives related to the construction of guest houses, which are traditional hotels that vary in terms of luxury. In this work, we consider that urban projects constitute an interactive and multidimensional result of the rehabilitation process and the built urban heritage practices within a supposed relationship with the neighboring environment i.e. what is locally referred to as the alley or “derb”. In this context, we try to detect the different compatibilities between private investors’ initiatives and general public orientations. We expect that a deep analysis will either confirm or refute our main hypothesis in which we assume that there is a possibility of restructuring the internal fabric of “urbanization” in the historic medina. At the level of methodology, we adopt a qualitative approach based on extensive fieldwork in order to respond to the elements of the problematic, taking into account the complex and multidimensional character of the subject and its scientific projection. At the level of the general results of the study, the analysis of the representation and practices of urban heritage projects stresses the valorization of the process of significant positive practices.

CONFERENCE THEME: “On Measurement; Social environment”.

KEYWORDS: Rehabilitation Plan of the built heritage; historic Fez; development of local tourism; the process of guest house creation; profile type models.

INTRODUCTION

The old medina of Fez, the spiritual, scientific and cultural capital of Morocco, has been listed by UNESCO as a world heritage site since 1980. It is considered as one of the largest historical cities in the Arab and Islamic world: it is distinguished by its extended and vital historical space (El Bouaachi 2009), especially at the level of the economic dynamics and the high urban value (Fejjal 1993). Despite the degradation process, the urban heritage of the old medina still conserve its originality and authenticity, especially in the historic part (PNUD 1991) where many touristic projects are concentrated and where our fieldwork is carried out.¹

As a major result to participative planning and a series of public consultations, the major local stakeholders (institutional agents) agreed on an integrated project, for the historic city of fez. The study /project, “The Safeguard and Rehabilitation Plan” is funded by the World Bank, the purpose of which is to overcome the problem of isolation from which the historic city suffers by improving the traffic and access by means of designing special touristic routes to diversify the supply and extend the average stay of a visitor. (UNESCO 2004).

The institutional approach to public intervention in the urban heritage has been based on several studies financed by international organizations, especially the UNESCO and the WORLD BANK. The preliminary official conception adheres to a gradation logic, as it ranges from a regular, comprehensive and systemic approach to consensus building, leading to an integrated program. This includes multiple interrelated sub-projects according to the United Nations Program for Development

(PNUD, Ministère de l'Intérieur, 1991). This approach also required an appropriate legal framework including defining the role of "The Agency for the Reduction of Density and the Safeguard of the Old Medina of Fez" (ADER)² in taking charge of coordination, technical supervision and institutional control of the project (UNESCO 1991). The official studies have witnessed a significant progress in conception, through the social evaluation of the requalification process ((Royaume du Maroc, B.M. 1995). The study is based on a basic challenge represented in inverting the prospects of analysis and approaches used in former projects, with an emphasis on the transition from negative idealism to a positive one. Considering this fact makes it possible to emphasize the proposal raised in the project, a one that advocates the idea of supporting the rehabilitation of traditional houses (Royaume du Maroc, B.M. 1995).

This research aims at discussing the problems related to urban private rehabilitation of this historic core of Fez. Specifically, we attempt to identify and diagnose the process of activating the projects in relation to urban rehabilitation and renewal. The logic behind two pivotal operations, namely conception and execution shall be identified by studying the dynamics of the creation of guest houses. Those are traditional hotels that vary in terms of luxury. This research also aspires to discuss and diagnose the impact of these projects on the community and the space around them. Our fieldwork, questions the actual patterns of renewal, examining the material and social aspects of the process of construction and the practice of urban rehabilitation, that is based on the representative model of guest houses. Indeed, we consider that these urban projects adopt an interactive and multidimensional process of conception and practice, through a supposed relationship with the immediate environment of these projects, namely the local concept of the alley or "Derb". Our hypothesis consists of considering the increasing presence of a noticeable number of diversified groups that create guest houses within a framework of projects that aim at rehabilitating urban heritage according to different investment patterns, intervention time and size, and the logic that underlies it. The process of guest house creation, on another level, is supposed to lead to changes and transformations in the nature of linkage with the immediate environment of the surrounding neighbourhood.³

The first part of this work diagnoses the genesis and the process of extensive practices developed by private investors in the domain of guest houses' creation. The rationale behind this classification is to identify the elements that grant the heritage component an added value; this is accomplished by preliminary field observations that necessitate a consideration of the process of implementation of the projects in selected sites of the medina. The second part discusses the patterns of the rehabilitation practices via models reflecting guest houses projects' diversity, and considers the isolation of projects' from their local environment. (El Bouaaiichi 2008).

A preliminary analysis of the subject may not suggest the existence of a convergence or a divergence of the two processes of urban heritage practice neither the top-down approach, that is associated with private investors from outside the alley, nor the down-top one that comes from inside the local environment and which is practiced by the local population. It is expected that a deep analysis shall confirm the pivotal premise around which the present work revolves, namely that of the interaction processes of urban heritage and reuse that carries an economic and touristic value and that of the process of reuse of ordinary urban heritage that carries a dwelling value and which positively responds to the concept of "shared urban heritage", which has been recently advertized internationally within the general framework of sustained development (UNESCO 2004).

In this context, we adopt the new approach, one that is innovative and constructive as it seeks to depict urban heritage as a distinguished "identity" in the international market (El Bouaaiichi 2008). In this approach, it is expected that the local population will be involved in forming this entity and identity, in addition to private and public agents in a way that guarantees the projects' success and integration within their local environment (Navez-Bouchanine 2000). On this basis, the methodological procedure of this work adopts qualitative approaches, within the field of applied, urban and innovative geography that integrates territory science (Lévy & Lussault 2003), which are susceptible to effective geographical application⁴ (El Bouaaiichi 2004, Bailly 1995, Lévy 1994). Basically, this methodological procedure relies on diverse, extensive, complementary, and thorough fieldwork, which was carried out since 2001⁵ to assess the process of rehabilitation in action. The

data collection is based on semi-directed interviews. It should be noted that the interview by itself does not lead to a reproduction of stereotyped interview situations; in fact, this is an in-depth technique that reproduces real situations with all their complexities and multi-facets, a fact that makes it compatible with the subject under investigation. Two different groups have been targeted in this fieldwork, a thing that compelled us to devise two interview guidelines: an interview guide directed towards investors in guest house projects⁶, and another interview guide directed towards the local population.⁷ This population lives in the same semi-closed space i.e. the alley where projects are localized. In order to restrict the representative samples of the target population in both segments, all cases have been covered by means of filling a quantitative questionnaire that includes preliminary information that guarantees the identification of all relevant cases. In terms of content, the investors' interview guide contains four main axes,⁸ whereas the local population's one contains five axes.⁹

All in all, the objective of this fieldwork is to come out with exact, detailed, and qualitative conclusions that may either confirm or deny the considerable presence of positive mechanisms. These are expected to lead to a reduction of negative impacts. This may make it possible for guest houses and urban heritage in general, to reach social integration and an eventual real involvement in the dynamics of the process of sustainable development in a globalized world (Osmont 1997).

I. THE GENESIS AND THE PROCESS OF PRIVATE INITIATIVES

ADER has designed an integrated plan, with consensus of the local and institutional agents concerned. Both the state and the urban community of Fez will contribute to this plan, but the bulk of the funding depends on a loan from the World Bank under the auspices of UNESCO. This is a complex development project, including the activation of the component of "rehabilitation support" that aims to involve the low-income population in the effort of conserving traditional buildings (UNESCO 2004).¹⁰ The scheme also aims to develop the cultural and touristic potential of the historic city. Within the process of organizing and framing private investors' initiatives that accompany the public project of rehabilitation, the competent government authorities have issued a *dhahir* "decree" of the following: "the guest house, a touristic institution that accommodates tourists and provide services, should minimally consist of five rooms in order to be classified at least in the second category". The law defines two types of guest houses: first class and second class. Each type has a special criteria and characteristics that match the rank assigned to each guest house. Thus, it is clear that the classification criteria for the first category are based on geographical and security parameters as these houses are mainly located in periphery sites¹¹.

These house types known as *riads* are considered together with traditional houses, as the most prevalent types in the old *medina*. The *riad* refers to a house that has a garden inside. Now, the growing number of guest houses in the *medina* since 1997 constitutes a promising and unprecedented phenomenon as they were not to exceed in their early period before 2000 four guest houses, scattered along the western part of the historic city from north to south. The number increased from the beginning of this process and has reached sixty authorized and classified guest houses. This number is confirmed by the regional office of tourism. The actual number of this product may be a hundred, most of which are not authorized, and are used for purely touristic purposes whereas others are still under construction.

I.1. THE EMERGENCE OF THE FIRST GUEST HOUSES: A REFERENCE IN VALUING THE QUALITY OF AUTHENTIC URBAN HERITAGE

The initial dynamics of guest house creation were initiated in the historic city between 1997 and 1999 by investors in touristic development, who focused on providing commercial activities related to tourism, like handicraft and touristic animation. This being said, the associated dynamics are activated thanks to the first agent on the list, who is one of the most experienced professionals in the field of tourism. He relies on his prior experience as a former official in Marrakech, a city which was the first to transform traditional *riads* into guest houses in old cities. In this context, the *Fassi* model of guest house creation is characterized by local *Fassi* investments compared with Marrakech, a city characterized by foreign influence. (Wilbaux, Q. 2001).

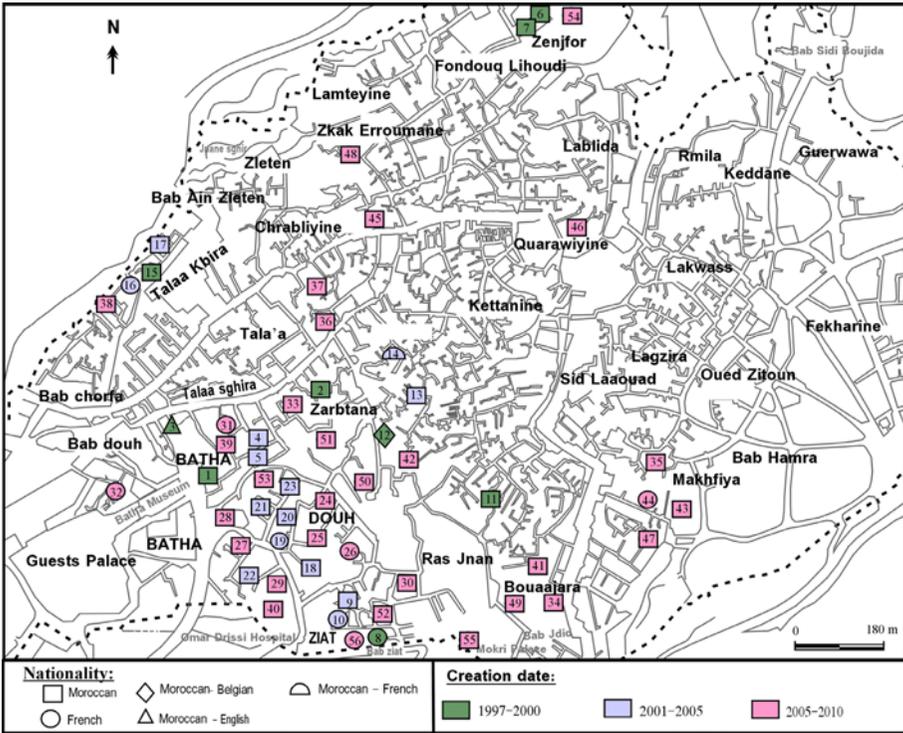


Figure 1: The distribution of guest houses according to the nationality of investors and the creation date of the project

The category of early investors also includes a minority of people with mixed marriages –Moroccan-French or Moroccan- Belgian- and who are strongly attached to owning houses in the historic city. The Fassi husband, who after a long period of immigration, returns back with his foreign wife to his city. He invests and lives in the historic medina. This first category invests in medium size projects that respond to the logic of their marriages and by translating this strong link with the historic city into an acquisition and rehabilitation of medium-sized traditional houses. This group of investors select relatively internal and less accessible sites (relatively far from parking places) for social reasons, like their attachment to some familiar alleys or where there is a concentration of their family members and acquaintances’ network. Whatever the size of the investment and its geographical location, it has become an engineering and urban reference for subsequent investments, at later stages. This reference is at the level of field testing of the rehabilitation techniques on the ground, on the one hand, and at the level of the evaluation of artisans’ skills in traditional construction and restoration on the other hand.

1.2. STAGE OF CREATIVITY: THE EMERGENCE OF LUXURIOUS “GUEST PALACES”

Since 2000, a new professional group entered the scene to contribute effectively to this experience; this group is dominated by architects who manage this creative an phase in the process of implementing projects on the ground. The huge investment allocated aims at activating these costly projects where “Dar Shahrzad” tops the list¹². This distinguished professional category employs all its creative skills to produce very large and luxurious guest houses, similar to ancient Andalusian palaces with easy access. In addition to the technical’ reproduction of the architectural’ fine details, the architects/ investors make these palaces more luxurious by the special beauty added to some of their parts like royal suites with highly decorated domes and handmade embroidered furniture, and ornaments

like antiquities and chandeliers. The creativity of architects reaches its climax when reconciling architectural authenticity and modern functionalism. At the level of other services and activities, these also reflect a kind of high creativity such as developing Moroccan cuisine by introducing new ways of presentation and innovative recipes that impress participants in cultural events and organized festivals .

1.3. THE DIVERSITY OF THE RANGE OF GUEST HOUSES IN THE TRANSITIONAL PHASE: INFLATION OF THE SOUTH WEST MARGIN

Since 2005, the market has witnessed an unprecedented excess in opening small to medium-sized guest houses, orbiting around the first guest house “*Riad La Maison Bleue*”¹³. It was inaugurated within the first process and initial phase in which “*Dar Shabrazad*” constitutes the top of the list, in terms of creativity and luxury. The rationale behind the proliferation of these guest houses around the two poles is manifested in the localizing of the two poles in the *medina* and which is clearly visible in all aspects of the rehabilitation of the alley, including the amelioration of the environmental, physical and security framework. These positive standards have guaranteed to the newly created houses the status of a second class category, if not a first class one, within the first leading houses in the domain. These houses try to distinguish themselves from the other poles through the provision of a variety of supplies in terms of prices and in terms of the recreational and cultural suggested activities. The basis of which is the attempt to create a bond between the tourist and the local environment.

1.4. QUALITATIVE DEVELOPMENT: VALUATION OF THE SOUTHERN MARGIN PRIOR TO THE FORMATION OF TOURISTIC COMPLEXES

Aspects of a qualitative evolution in the process of guest house creation started to appear in the observed changes in the logic of management and in the geographical settlements that head toward the south more than towards the west. This has to do with a qualitative change toward new future horizons that are bi-dimensional: the first dimension is represented by the new model that is based on the logic of innovative investment which is expected to lead to specialization in the future by changing the function of the institution from a guest house to a huge restaurant. The second is represented by an upcoming model, still underway, which is similar, as suggested by the initial signs observed in the field, to huge touristic complexes. As originally conceived, the project is based on the idea of constructing and linking five guest houses together to accomplish the largest traditional touristic structure that has the form of touristic complexes, but in an original way. Located at the top of the highest strategic site in the south of the historic city, these structures lead to an appraisal of the upper part of the *medina* by building luxurious cafés and restaurant from which you can see all the *medina*.

2. PATTERNS OF THE ACTIVATION OF REHABILITATION PRACTICES VIA MODELS REFLECTING GUEST HOUSES PROJECTS' DIVERSITY

A number of distinct and diverse profile types or representative models of rehabilitation have been collected and set with patterns of openness to/and interaction with the neighboring physical and social space. The aim is to measure and evaluate the act in its relation to the locus of intervention, namely the alley. In this context, we note that the qualitative data related to the particular elite of early investors was collected from the field according to the alley and/or the neighborhood. This allowed to feed to a large extent the process of building and of installing these profile types. Thanks to these early investors, the foundations and the logic of these initiatives within the framework of the revival of the old city was established. . The data investigated takes into account, and in a complex way, the perception, attitudes and the elements of satisfaction and dissatisfaction of the agents and the interviewed population that live in the alleys subjected to these dynamics. The intersection of these two types of qualitative data allows to draw six “profile types” in the qualification of these projects, on the basis of the presence of some of the variables within the same “profile type” and which is related, in a way or in another, to the type, form and nature of the relationship with the neighboring space as we have relied on these variables to collect representative cases in each profile type.

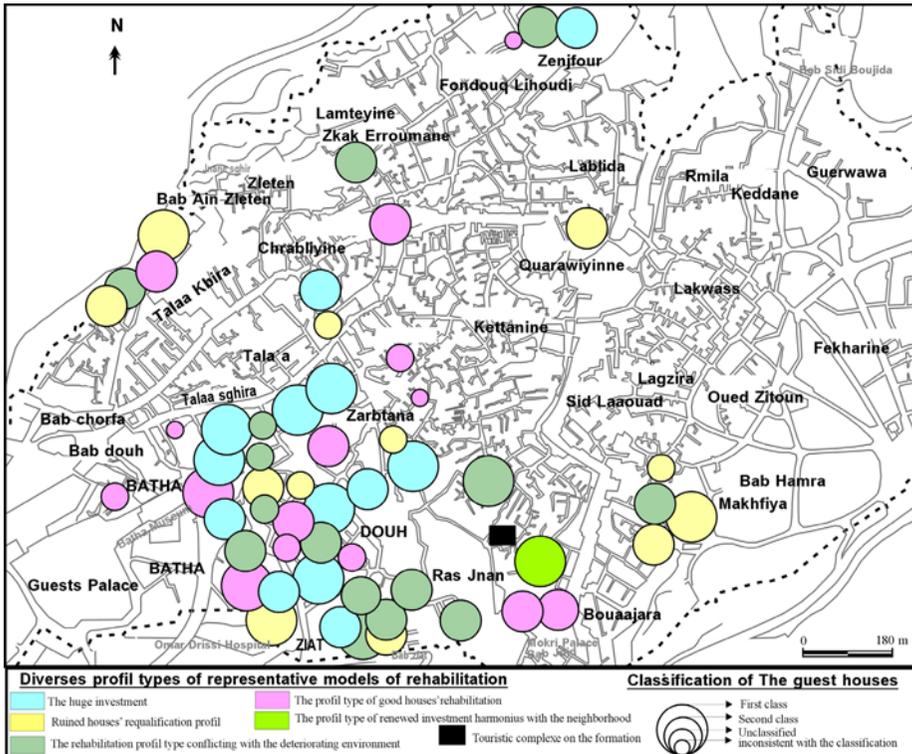


Figure 2: Localization of guest houses according to the type profile of the rehabilitation and the official classification

2.1.THE HUGE INVESTMENT PROFILE TYPE CONCURRENT WITH THE PRESSURE OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD

A huge amount of money has been allocated to give priority to the rehabilitation of the sewerage network, which drains a lot of money from this investment. This profile type is also characterized by a strong mobilization in favor of the creativity and knowledge in the field of urbanism. In this profile, the issue has to do with a number of architects who have opted for the acquisition of a type of *riad* called “Big *riad*”, which has a unique access quality and which constitutes of a group of relatively deteriorated houses that require expensive rehabilitation, especially the one concerning infrastructure. In this context, the analysis confirms the link between this profile type and the tension at the level of the neighboring environment because of the effects of the heavy and bi-dimensional intervention such as the extended time of work, accompanied with environmental and auditory pollution in the alley, during the activation of rehabilitation work. In this regard, we can distinguish between two cases that are expressive and relatively different in so far as the relationship with the adjacent area is concerned and thus in terms of the pattern of negotiation or consensus adopted in the “alley” subject to this profile in its rehabilitation.

2.1.1.A willingness to be open to the adjacent space

This case is represented by a distinguished investor “the architect”, who owns the project which tries to recreate the traditional architectural model, open to the neighborhood unit in the historic city. The diagnosis and monitoring of this distinguished model is done through the specificity of the discourse and practices translated by architects/investors’ strong awareness and sensitivity towards the immediate environment of their projects, namely the alley. This is reflected, on the one hand, in the mobilization of engineering skills in the context of the special projects’ category of agents. On the

other hand, this is represented in the provision of technical expertise and supervision required for all the projects of the rehabilitation of traditional houses in the same “alley”.

In addition, the maintenance and management of the alley are considered as top priorities for this category of investors. In this context, the local population maintains two patterns in this act that have a strong social impact: the maintenance of the exterior facade of the alley, and the elimination of sources of pollution in places called locally “black spots” of the alley and which are deserted houses. At the level of communication patterns adopted, this expressive case is characterized by the ability to act, to react and to find points of agreement and consensus. It needs to be emphasized that the presence of NGOs in some neighborhoods facilitates negotiation processes.

2.1.2.A restricted relationship with the adjacent area

The limited character of the relationship finds its roots in the negative perception of the social neighborhood, and the absence of one negotiator, further deepens this negative perception. The “architect” sees that the adjacent territory as a source of blackmailing for traditional house owners who live next to guest houses. The discourse is bounded by a variety of requests for assistance by the neighbors and by demands to take charge of all forms of degradation caused to the houses near the projects concerned. The rejection of these demands is based on the investor conviction: that there is no “technical legitimacy”, the deterioration precedes the project and bears no relation with the latter.

2.2. RUINED HOUSES’ AND REHABILITATION PROFILE WITH A POSITIVE IMPACT

This type is based on the confluence of two positive factors: the importance of both material investment and social impact due to the broad and unconditional engagement of the local population in these projects. This rehabilitation profile adopts the strategy of restoring the original referential model through recreating the *riad* with all its details. The agent here falls within the category of the professional investor who has a significant number of guest house projects, ranging from two to three guest houses of the first category and a fourth in the process of achievement. This profile inaugurates a new process engendered in the activation of the heirs of collapse- threatened houses of the dynamics of taking in charge and restoring these houses. A distinction is made in this profile between two revealing and relatively different cases, at the level of the development of the relationship with the local social environment.

2.2.1.A positive development in the relationship with the adjacent area

The strategic location of guest houses at the entrance of the alley is the factor behind the positive evolution of the relationship with the nearby territory, by taking into account its double status as a “semi-private” space. This strategic localization makes it possible for the traditional houses in the alley to benefit from rehabilitation programs implemented by investors for the project concerning *riads’* restoration as guest houses. Guest houses substitute the deserted houses and rehabilitation operations spread over the entire alley. This is a simple operation with a visible and positive impact on the daily living patterns, thanks to its contribution in improving the living standards.

2.2.2. Relatively negative development in the relationship with the adjacent space

The location of deserted houses near guest houses is sometimes a source of social tension in the alley, where the desire to rehabilitate them by investors contradicts with the special value of these ruined houses which have a special place in the hearts of the local population, as they used to constitute religious places (known as a *zawiyas*) where Koran used to be read, mysticism used to be celebrated, and alms used to be given to the needy. In this way, the intervention becomes bounded by this religious symbolism which reduces the margin of freedom and restricts the operation and the maintenance of the houses.

2.3. THE REHABILITATION PROFILE TYPE CONFLICTING WITH THE DETERIORATING ENVIRONMENT

In this profile, the issue concerns the agent/investor who prefers to seize the opportunity to purchase cheap real estate at the expense of the inappropriate environment by focusing on the quality/price equation. These medium-sized and relatively maintained houses are located in relatively easy accessed but deteriorated alleys. Within this profile type, two revealing cases are distinguished according to the degree of social pressure against the nature of the investment, incompatible with the degraded place.

2.3.1. A social tension underway in the nearby area

In principle setting a guest house in one of the long and degraded alleys of the historic city like “Derb Elmiter” does not constitute any social problem. Despite its existence on the way that leads to the guest house, a formerly abandoned house would not create any environmental problem; however, the addition of a high roof to the guest house has worsened the whole situation in the entire alley as the local population sees that the subsequent building of an open roof at the top of the guest house, which stands over neighboring traditional houses, is the reason behind the worsening of this social crisis. From their viewpoint this intervention is an attack on the sanctity of the community (tourists’ taking panoramic photographs). This attitude has negated all forms of negotiations, a thing that led the population to adopt an offensive reaction, manifested in re-employing the ruined house as a locus of household garbage.

2.3.2. A relative mitigation of social tension

The issue we are concerned with is where the alley could reveal a strong social tension caused by an advanced physical deterioration of this space, which usually is simultaneous with the presence of polluting activities and open channels of liquid cleansing. In such cases, the social demands are quickly satisfied, for instance the investors’ accept to move the guest house air conditioners from the facade across the alley to the roof. Generally, the investor becomes reserved against the population, which is an attitude called in morocco “*tiqar*”.

2.4. THE PROFILETYPE OF SELECTING GOOD CONDITIONS OF HOUSES’ FOR REUSE

The strategy adopted by investors in this model is based on the principle of reducing investment costs, while ensuring the extension of the profits. This is about merging a new set of varied opportunities together, to acquire the best assortment, such as the acquisition of non-deteriorated houses that are located in previously rehabilitated areas by virtue of their hosting of the first wave of the equipped and well managed guest houses. Generally, this ideal assortment is directly associated with sites that are characterized by coexistence and where social tension has melted away. In this context, two revealing cases were detected in this profile, according to the quality and nature of the opportunities exploited.

2.4.1. Seizing the family opportunity

This is about re-owning the traditional “family house” which is in a good state and which is valorized by doing light, but aesthetic requalification operations. To grant the project an added value, the guest house relies on the advantages and the constituents of its strategic location such as its nearness to the administrative compound of the historic city, and its openness on one of the main squares that are highly dynamic at the level of connectivity to transportation means and at the level of the vitality of economic and touristic activities, located in the square (the *Batha* square). The quality of the neighborhood increases the advantages as it is the case with this revealing case where the neighborhood acquires the characteristic of warmth and mutual respect. In addition to this, this sample constitutes a strong impetus to similar new dynamics in the same alley that may eventually lead to the creation of other guest houses.

2.4.2. Seizing the chance of juxtaposition with similar projects

In this revealing case, we are concerned with the benefits drawn from a number of rehabilitation operations of the neighboring space. Therefore the valuation of the positive image is spread by the first guest house project in the alley on the basis that this positive image will be extended to the entire neighborhood, in the framework of what we call in the field of rehabilitation “the oil spot extension”. In this sample, these guest houses are distinguished as they supply various touristic formulas, varied in terms of quality and products and adapted to the urban particularities of the ancient fabric. We can cite the distinguished guest houses of the south-west of the historic city as a representative case that reflect the aforementioned dynamics.

2.5. THE PROFILE TYPE OF RENEWED INVESTMENT, HARMONIOUS WITH THE NEIGHBORHOOD

This profile type is considered as a new and outstanding orientation at many levels. It is driven by a new and a different logic where the “agent/investor” is an experienced professional, who owns a travel agency and uses his experience and his professional network to seize real estate opportunities, at the right time and in the right place amid the great number of projects. Despite the temporary acquisition of a real estate, the final decision of choosing the new place, south of the historic city took a year of consultation and evaluation as a whole. This evaluation is based on the logic of the outstanding investor who programs his pension at a later period, a thing that pushes him to split the huge investment into regular payments according to this medium term. This logic allowed him to have a margin of freedom that made it possible for him to:

- Expand the size of the project and be flexible in the diversification of its functions: on the one hand through the acquisition of the first small house and the valuation of the guest house project by acquiring the medium-size space house next to it after years of waiting and in search for opportunities; and on the other hand, through the activation and expanding to a specialized and professional Moroccan restaurant by utilizing and building two floors in the garden of the second house to host this new function. Behind this orientation lies the will of the investor, after retirement, to readapt the guest house to occupy its future new function, namely a huge restaurant compound that may accommodate from 200 to 300 people as the investor is convinced that the demand for this sort of services is increasing by virtue of the number of different and varied festivals that take place in the historic city throughout the whole year.

- Extend the time and improve the quality of “restoration” work by mobilizing three architects for three full years. The project investor considers this as an open laboratory to implement a successful “restoration” operation, from his own perspective. The private investor finalizes his conception of successful restoration by bringing craftsmen who are specialized in building traditional houses (*maalmiin*), mobilizing his relations’ network in the heart of the historic city.

In this way, this renewed investment and flexible practices have become distinct and positively integrated with its local environment. This is also reflected through the activation and coordination of the investor’s initiatives to ensure the maintenance, cleanliness and restoration of the exterior facades of the alley, along the lines of the traditional model used in the guest house Night guarding for the entire alley has been also ensured. As a result of this good alley management, and in a short time that did not exceed a year after the official inauguration of the guest house, the latter has become a positive element that helps in promoting the dynamics of medium and small guest house creation in the same alley, where others have become active and more are still under construction.

CONCLUSION

The outcome and the results of field work, at the level of the “qualitative models” of rehabilitation in parallel to the degree of the projects’ integration into their local environment, stress the valuation of the process of positive practices present. It allows to reduce and even overcome the impact of negative projects, which are fewer and less representative.

The growing number of guest house projects in the historic city of Fez is a relatively recent phenomenon. It includes positive mechanisms. The intersection of these private initiatives with the general public orientation for the safeguard is reflected at the level of three major components:

- First, at the level of the contribution of these projects to the rehabilitation of historical houses that has a distinguished urban value. It allows on the one hand, the attraction of tourist investments that range from medium to very large ones and the diversification of the cultural tourist product, in addition to the quality valuation and extended stay in Fez in general, on the other hand.
- Second, at the level of guest houses' contribution in improving traffic mobility and access to the "alley". This may be seen as an actual outcome of private management that takes charge of local issues of certain spatial units of the public domain i.e. the alley, where projects take place.
- Third, at the level of private investors' taking charge of the about-to-collapse traditional houses' rehabilitation: This concerns places that pose a significant threat as they cause an increasing territorial deterioration of the entire alley. This intervention by the owners of "guest houses ensure a kind of social legitimacy, in relation to the act and local affairs of the alley.

Geographically, the results of the work confirm that the largest concentration of projects of guest houses responds to the forces of polarization exerted by the south-western outskirts of the historic city, thanks to their privileged location. Those parts of the historic city are open margins on the outside of the urban system, by means of transportation compared with the central original nucleus which is denser and "besieged". The urban specifications adopted in the selection of first class guest houses contribute to the valuation of these classy margins of the historic city.

At the level of "building" and installing "qualitative models" of rehabilitated guest houses, the results of the analysis show a positive outcome of three major orientation in the context of consensual management:

- A real willingness to take charge of private functions and management of the semi-public domains; the desire driven by the dominating urban "Fassi" origin of investors explains the re-acquisition of houses and the strong attachment to those "alleys", where projects of guest houses were adopted.
- The presence and relative awareness of the public interest; this remains linked to a stronger representation of civil societies, which still lack organization, support and adequate funding.
- A relative presence of openness and communication against a rise in social demands, especially at the level of activating the capacity to negotiate and search for points of consensus among investors and the local population members, whose homes or local environment could be damaged by these projects, especially major ones, in the initial stages of construction. The results of the analysis in terms of rebuilding the system of urbanization in the historic city confirms a need for the integration of territorial and social formula of the projects, in the context of sustainable development. The strong link to the alley, in particular and to the historic city, provides a distinct system of urban heritage in general, which is more than ever, highly desirable in this era of globalization.

Concerning the limits of involving tourist industry and the building of guest houses, new research in the field is being carried and it is mainly focused on the impacts of these projects. The first obtained results have indicated a trend towards rising property prices in the medina, parallel to a relative increase in living standards. In the absence of adequate accompanying measures, this trend could evict from the medina local people with limited income.

This leads us to ask new questions about implementing consensual strategies whose purpose is to oversee the ongoing processes; otherwise we would find ourselves with a "folklorisation" scenario of the built heritage. This would create a sort of obvious risk of massive consumption of heritage, which is in complete contradiction with the interests of sustainable development. This scenario, which implies negative development dynamics, would obviously act at the opposite of a development that respects the fragility of the cultural and architectural heritage of the medina.

In this sense, and while awaiting a thorough exploitation of new field research in progress, we can already confirm that the sustainability of successful guest houses experiments requires the adoption of greater professionalism. Maintaining the “sustainability” of the heritage offer, while responding to the rise of the “demand”, requires more consideration of two essential criteria: “quality” and “diversity” of this offer in the different tourism practices at the level of use and consumption.

In this context, the research findings lead to the formulation of a set of recommendations that we summarize as follows:

- Publication of the outcome of the social and territorial evaluation in restoring, and sensitizing to the importance of qualitative approaches in reaching quality at the level of the diagnosis of the process of the intervention in urban heritage, impact monitoring, and the construction of intervention models in relation to the local environment to the direction that leads to the valuation of this profile type and new trend in expertise in urban heritage in action. The institutions conviction of the viability of practical employment of this qualitative pattern in the evaluation, as a plan of action that allows the assimilation of the complex reality and therefore the direction or correction of the intervention, is in itself an essential and positive step that highlights an active engagement in the process of consensual planning and effective partnership between the institutional and technical domain and university scientific research centers.

-Thinking of the creation of the “Charter of the historic city of Fez,” a charter that may be directed to private investors who will be involved in the rehabilitation of urban heritage that is agreed upon by the institutions concerned with the management and planning of the preservation of urban heritage in action on the basis that the Charter relies on the following basic goals:

- * to approach the rehabilitation of guest houses within a set of specific and global features of the environmental scene and within the socio-cultural and environmental reality of the historic city where there is an overlap of the various components in a transversal way,

- * to override the single approach which is limited to the engineering and technical vision of heritage by adopting a more holistic approach that integrates the values of authenticity and respect of local customs and traditions. In this context, we can consider the drafting of a guide that organizes the relationship of co-existence between visitors and the local populace,

- * to evaluate the positive experiences of pioneering professional investors in the rehabilitation of guest houses by working on the dissemination, transfer and exchange of technical skills; and the capacity to communicate with the local community so that these experiences become a reference, at the level of the countries, precisely the ones comprising *Medina*. This *challenge* informs about “best practices”, and thus can be subject to employment by new investors. Here, we can seek the help of promotional supports like websites allocation.

- * to control the real estate market in the historic city by using urban documents with a legal background, and by including the necessary adjustments in terms of zoning, knowing that these amendments are imposed by the specificities of the historical urban fabric and the need to protect it from risks of the escalation of real estate speculation. These modifications may fall within the context of an outdated master plan of urbanism and planning, which is being updated at present. Taking this recommendation into account when updating the zoning process may have a double effect:

- +The protection of the densest and most vulnerable original zones part of the “historic nucleus” (9-12 century), where the equipment and facilities like commercial and religious shrines and sites of high heritage value are located,

- + The protection of the southwestern part of the historic city (century 17-19) from the intensification of the pressure faced by the high concentration of guest houses.

-Supporting and revitalizing the population’s representative mechanisms by activating the organizational structures of NGOs and their integration due to their strong representative implications and their vital strategic role as a legitimate mediator in negotiation, dialogue or consensus between the local populace, the public authorities and other agents in urban heritage under requalification. This generally requires a certain conviction that the participation of people

through organizational structures is a positive resource in the process of sustainable development rather than an obstacle to restoring and restructuring. The translation of this conviction on the ground necessarily leads to the involvement of the local populace in alleys in the projects of the establishment of guest houses, and the maintenance of this involvement and its valuation throughout the process of rehabilitation.

-Creating partnerships among Arabic countries concerned with the problematic of historic cities that constitute a “living entity”, especially with regard to the financial support for the rehabilitation projects of traditional houses with a “normal heritage” such as thinking about the mechanisms of activating the contribution of banks to accord micro-credits to medium and low-income groups (Royaume du Maroc, BM, 1996).

-Creating a network of multidisciplinary experts working in the domain of the urban heritage rehabilitation, both at the technical and the social environment level in Arabic countries, and providing tools and means of support necessary to make this network function in a scientific and practical way.

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ENDNOTES

1. The historical city of Fez extends around the old nucleus (a nearly twelve centuries old one) known as "Fez El Bali" as opposed to relatively recent extensions (dating back to the 17th 18th and 19th century), called "the New Fez". The old city with its two nuclei (the historical and the modern) covers an area of 210 hectares.
2. The creation of a specialized agency ADER-FES in 1989 was for the sake of applying programs "to safeguard the ancient city of Fez."
3. These new projects are localized in distinguished areas that originally reflect the traditional nature of the urban and social organization of neighborhoods in the historic city: These are units that are referred to locally as alleys: the alley is a semi-closed area that consists of internal paths, for the most part without access, and which is characterized by a purely residential function and by a density of social relations and a type of "privacy" that does not exist in housing units open to traffic, and where the residential function mixes with the economic functions. It is supposed that the traditional residential units attract newcomers "tourists" due to new investment projects and be open to unusual movements and activities in the alley, in addition to the expected positive and/or negative economic and social effects.
4. We mean by that in particular the humanistic approach in its geographical and axiological dimension: on the one hand, the axiological approach focuses on the Investigation of the different agents, the values that they hold and their different practices that produce urban space; this approach deals with the pattern and the process of human action. On the other hand, it concerns the typological approach with a renewal of its mechanisms in research provided that there should be an integration of both approaches.
5. This field work has started since 2001 and from that time the establishment of guest house projects has been tracked and accompanied in parallel with the monitoring of the impacts on the surrounding environment from the perspective of the local populace.
6. The interview guide was directed towards the original category "or nucleus" of investors that have created the basic structure of this project and also towards that category that came later and became a head or "pole" for each profile type: the first initiative is established in each of the distinct locations, and the ground is prepared to a group of houses built around these poles. The interview guide has been also directed towards a representative sample of the latter category in every profile type. These nuclei or poles have become at later stages a kind of technical and artistic reference for investors at the level of re-engineering successful models and at the level of the valuation of investment in new locations. The total number of respondents who represent the interviewed investors approximates 50 of the total number of houses under rehabilitation in the field, and which amounts to approximately 60 guest house classified and legally recognized.
7. 180 household owners were interviewed; they are distributed in all the alleys concerned with projects and represent a quarter of the total number of families inhabiting it. This sample covers diverse housing, social, and economic positions that reflect a complex variety of representative cases.
8. The personal profile of the investor, his qualifications and motives, a diagnosis of the specificities of the *riad* and the procedural execution of the project, management style, the nature and logic of the adopted rehabilitation, and forms of openness to the area and the neighbouring community of the project.
9. Identification of the interviewed characteristics of the family; logic of stability in the historic city, its relationship to the project in the alley and finally an evaluation of projects by the population including their reactions and forms of openness and communication.
10. The implementation comes in two forms: a donation to the population and the artisans who wish to rehabilitate their homes or workshops, a conditional donation in the range of 30% of the total amount invested by the beneficiaries. Despite the modest results at the level of achievement, this component remains an important experimental workshop.
11. First class guest houses are required to be located in a carefully selected site, with good public lighting, and should have a banner bearing their name and their rank. The regulating law also requires that first class guest houses have a parking lot guarded day and night.
12. This guest house has been established in 2001 and it is a *riad* that dates back to the eighteenth century and is located in the alley of "Arsat Bennis" in the neighborhood of "Douh" (south west of the city), in an area of 1700 square meters, and which has been rehabilitated by the architect/owner of the project along the lines of Arab-Andalusian style; it comprises 11 suites and luxury rooms.
13. The guest house "Riad La Maison Bleue" has been established in 1997 by the rehabilitation of a family house obtained by inheritance, and it is located in the Independence Square in the Batha district (south west of the city). The *riad* covers an area of 250 square meters; it has been originally in a relatively good form, and is one of the Andalusian architectural types that have been rehabilitated by the owner who works in the tourism sector. This house consists of 14 rooms.