

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF SMALL SIZE



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ALEPPO / SYRIA

36°12'07"N 37°10'03"E

Following Syria's industrial development concentrated in large cities and a drought that affected the state between 2006 and 2010, the city of Aleppo expanded very quickly with massive movements from rural to peri-urban areas. The shape of the new settlements reflected the ethnic and religious divisions of the population, forming a decentralized model that opposed the centralizing will of the government. The 2010 report "Aleppo Diverse Open City" by the Berlin-based studio Uberbau, commissioned to draw up a development scenario for the year 2025, describes Aleppo from a social point of view as strikingly multifaceted, a result of its history.

The variety of civilizations of the oldest continuously inhabited city in the world led to a highly organized social, religious, and economic structure. The constant invasions and political instability forced inhabitants of the city to build cell-like quarters and districts that were socially and economically independent. Each quarter differed by the religious and ethnic characteristics of its inhabitants. This social plurality is evident in the

current city structure, as each city quarter has a distinct role and quality. During the Syrian civil war, it was precisely from these peri-urban and informal settlements, excluded from prosperity for much too long, that the rebels' military offensive against Aleppo, seen not only as a center of power but also as strongholds of wealth for the old (Sunnis) and new (Alaouites) rich, began.

Today, with the end of large-scale military operations, it is possible to imagine and plan the future reconstruction of the city, starting precisely from the rebuilding of the previous system of neighborhoods, pursuing an idea analyzed and devised by a vast number of twentieth-century planners: the cellular city. The cellular city is an alternative idea to the big city and represents a design where a large-scale "organic" vision absorbs the various small urban units, and where the reshaping of problems to minimum terms accomplishes large-scale control. The neighborhood offers better conditions for the inhabitants' lives because it deals inside its borders with urban, social, health, educational, ecological, political, administrative, and architectural issues, acquiring a certain degree of autonomy and autarchy.

New neighborhoods can also be physically separated by borders or strips of green to be easily identifiable in their acquired physical unity and to prevent the welding of their limits, searching for a balance between built and open space. Reconstructing a city through different neighborhoods helps to resolve ethnic, religious, and class divisions, provided that there are no significant differences in the distribution of resources, and allows the urban-rural division that characterized Aleppo before the war to be overcome. Reconstructing Aleppo according to neighborhoods can once again make Aleppo a city of civilization as it had been before the birth of Syria as a state, where a multicultural but aggregating power had ensured its development. Shaping a city made up of parts with their own urban, cultural, and administrative independence but connected to the historical core and each other by fast communication routes means shaping parts of a single unit. Aleppo can become an example of a new urban form born out of its past.







