



by Aysil Tükel Yavuz

Conservation of Hebron Old Town

Hebron, Palestine



Architect
HRC Engineering Office

Client
Hebron Rehabilitation Committee (HRC)

Design
1990 and ongoing

Completed
1995 and ongoing

I. Introduction

Hebron is one of the oldest, highest, and most sacred towns in Palestine. Its past is full of events related to the Haram of Abraham, around which the town developed. Its urban texture, mostly dating from the 18th century is a remarkable stone architecture of tightly knit clusters of irregularly arranged cubic volumes. Today it has retained most of this texture, albeit in a dilapidated condition. In the last thirty years the old town became a target of Jewish settlement. The inhabitants were harassed and forced to abandon the town. The urgent rehabilitation of the town became necessary in order to stop the tearing down of the old town to make way for new Jewish settlements. The project was organised under the management of the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee and it is being implemented over three years, with very positive results.

II. Contextual Information

a. *Historical background*

Hebron (Al Khalil) is one of Palestine's major towns. It lies 32 km to the south of Jerusalem. Founded in the first half of the second millennium, it is assumed to be one of the oldest settlements in Palestine. It is a very important religious centre for Islam, Judaism, and Christianity and is the fourth sacred city for Muslims because of the Haram built over the Machpelah Cave which holds the grave of the prophet Abraham. The Haram also contains the graves of Sarah, Isaac, Rebecca, Jacob, and Leah.

Once a Canaanite city, Hebron was destroyed by the Romans and taken over by the Ummayyads, followed by the Abbasids. The Crusaders occupied the city until 1099, at which point the Ayyubids replaced them. Consequent Mamluk rule was followed by the Ottomans from 1517–1917 and then by the British Mandate in 1922. In 1948, Hebron came under the Jordanian rule and in 1967 was occupied by Israel.

The first building over the Machpelah Cave was constructed by Herod in the first century B.C. It was followed by a Byzantine church, a Moslem mosque, and a Crusader church which was converted into the mosque of Salahaddin Ayyoubi in 1187. The Haram was extensively restored by the Mamluk Sultan Baybars, and Kalavun the First built a mosque beside it.

The town lies on trade and pilgrimage routes to Mecca and connects Damascus to Cairo. It is the highest city in Palestine, at an altitude between 925 m in the old city and 1'000 m in the newer areas. Fruits such as grapes and apples have been the town's major agricultural products, besides the manufacturing of leather goods, glass, cotton and wool yarn, and soap.

Hebron suffered from intense Jewish pressure during the occupation. Agricultural land owned by the Arabs was expropriated to construct quarters for Jewish settlers coming from other countries. In 1981, 3000 *donums* of land were expropriated. The Jewish quarter, which had been torn down in 1929, was rebuilt. The Abraham Mosque was divided into two parts, and a Jewish school was opened in the historical building known as *Hadasah*. The administration of the Haram was turned over to the settlement of Kiryat Arba. A person from this settlement attacked those praying in the Abraham Mosque in 1994, killing 67 people and wounding 300. With the 1993 and 1995 international treaties, 15'000 soldiers who were in Hebron to protect the Jewish settlements built in 1979 had to withdraw on 15th May 1996. They actually withdrew on 17th January 1997 and turned over 80% of the administration to the Palestinian Authority. At present, there are two checkpoints for motorised traffic on the main street in the old town, Shaara Shaheda, and one must cross through the east side of the new town to reach the other side of the same street. The vegetable market is closed for "safety" reasons.

b. *Local architectural character*

Hebron is a stone town; that is, stone is used structurally in the old town and over reinforced concrete skeletons as cladding in the new parts. The old town is very compact and has developed organically. The large extended-family houses, or *hosh*, have access from the street, usually by means of an underpass which may lead to more than one entrance. The houses usually have two or three storeys. Spaces are asymmetrically clustered around a courtyard. Rooms for married sons might be horizontal extensions around another courtyard or may be extended vertically. These vertical extensions are recessed back from the courtyard, so the open and semi-open areas increase as the buildings get higher. Services usually open onto these spaces. The rooms are mostly square or cruciform in plan. Some of the square rooms are extended into rectangles, in which case the addition is marked at the superstructure. In some of these rooms the floor level is raised with a platform, or *mastaba*, under which storage is located.

Not all spaces have exterior windows and many rooms have windows opening on to the courtyard and its semi-open vertical extensions. The exterior windows are usually coupled and inscribed into a single relieving arch. The windows originally did not have frames or glass panes, only timber shutters, which opened towards the inside. The water from the roofs is collected in cisterns in the courtyard, many of which are still functioning.

Several of the houses have one fireplace which was probably used for cooking, as several of them are not in rooms but in the semi-open spaces. The fact that there is not a fireplace in every house curiously overlaps with the accounts of the 17th century Ottoman traveller Evliya Celebi. He relates that 7'000 dishes of food were distributed from the kitchen of the Abraham Mosque, that everyone in the town was fed by this kitchen, and that there was therefore no need to light fires for cooking in the houses of the rich or the poor. The rooms, at present, do not have any means of heating such as a *tandur*, or pot oven, inserted into the pavement.

The open area on top of most of the houses is closed in by a parapet wall which is 70 cm high and has a band of inset equilateral triangles of similar height. The triangles are composed of terra-cotta tubes, or *kizan* and embedded in lime mortar. These were filled with water to cool the air passing through them on hot summer days, when this area is used as a terrace. In several buildings, walls were built on top of this parapet, an indication of the vertical growth in various periods.

The buildings are of stone masonry with thick walls and a vaulted superstructure. Underpasses and small spaces are barrel-vaulted, lesser rooms are cross-vaulted, and the majority of living spaces are covered with star vaults, the centre of which is elaborated into a small cupola. There is engraved decoration on the cupola and on the facets of the star's arms. Some of the living spaces are domed over simple pendentives.

Although the *hosh* form large clusters, the space provided for the family of each son is not large. Usually, there are two rooms in addition to service spaces. The rooms are small and are not high, and the vaults usually spring from the floor level.

All the buildings have undergone more than one period of construction, but in general it is accepted that most date back to the 18th century.

c. *Climatic conditions*

The highest town in Palestine, Hebron receives a fair amount of rainfall, an average of 700–850 mm a year. Still, there has been a shortage of water throughout its history. The average winter temperature is 10°C and the summer temperature is 28°C. There may be snowfall once or twice a year but it melts quickly.

d. *Site context*

The ancient town of Hebron was built to the west of Wadi al-Khalil (the Valley of Hebron) which runs along the modern town to the Northeast. The Arab town developed around the Haram of Abraham on the eastern side of the valley. Development shifted to the North and spread in all directions during the Mamluk Period, particularly to the South and Southeast. Until the beginning of the 19th century the town consisted of three sections. The first of these was on the eastern spur of Djabal al-Djabira; the second, smaller section was near the Mosque of Ali al Bakka to the northwest of the first section, on the Djabal Baylun spur. The third, larger section was located at the south of the valley. The town did not have a wall surrounding these three sections, but each was partially protected by the continuous wall of closely-knit houses at the periphery. The few main entrances had gates which were highly controlled. The underpasses led to the entrances of the houses which did not open directly to the outside. The closely-knit town had integral ties with the agricultural land surrounding it.

At present, the old centre of Hebron is southeast of the modern city formed by the expansion that started at the end of the 19th century. The inhabitants of the old city either abandoned their houses, rented them, or let poorer relatives to live in them once they had constructed new houses on the slopes of the four mountains surrounding the old town at the base of the valley.

The part of the town to the south and southeast of the Abraham Mosque was torn down during the Jordanian rule, creating a large gap in the urban fabric. At present there is a newly constructed Israeli administration building on this site; the rest in an open area.

e. *Site topography*

Hebron is situated in the southern Judean hills, in the northern reaches of Wadi al Khalil which is a tributary of the Wadi Beershiba. It is at the base and lower slopes of the four mountains that surround it.

III. Programme

a. *Conditions of programme formulation*

In order to respond to the jury's questions A and B: the programme must be discussed within the light of the political situation in the last thirty years.

According to the 1997 census Hebron has a total population of 126'000, 1'500 of whom live in the old town. There is only a small population of Jews in the old town: 400 according to Israel, 200 according to the Palestinians. The population of the old town was 10'000 in 1967, before the military occupation. The drastic reduction in the population and the evacuation of 85% of the houses is the result of the Israeli policy that discourages people from living there. Amidst fighting and harassment, the entrances to the old town were all walled except one. There were extended curfews lasting ten to twenty days. Arab families of obscure backgrounds were encouraged to come and live. The empty houses were torn down. These events forced the owners and tenants away from the old town, which still retains 99% of its old buildings.

Political pressure, the fact that the city cannot expand much more, and the dilapidated condition of the old town prompted the initiation of the project.

The old town consists of four parts, three of which surround the Haram of Abraham. The

revitalisation was mainly done in two sections and consolidation work was done in the other two.

Work started in 1988 with the initiation of the Hebron University Graduates Union (UGU). A special committee was formed and an office was established. Many of the people working on the project were part of this office. Between 1988 and 1991 a comprehensive survey was done to document the urban texture and the dwellings therein. In a second stage, which was partially completed in 1992, selected pilot projects were prepared with more detailed surveys and projects. This work was financed by the UGU with additional assistance from AMIDEAST, but no project was implemented.

The Hebron Rehabilitation Committee (HRC) was organised as a result of a decision by Mr. Yasser Arafat. The HRC has 13 members headed by the Minister of Transportation, who is from Hebron, officials from the Ministry of Sports, Ministry of Waqf, and representatives from NGO's, including the UGU. These members chair lower committees which handle housing, tender, public relations, purchasing, legal issues, information, and social issues. The most important is the Engineering Office which is the executive arm of the HRC.

The Engineering Office, which performs the function of the town planning office, is headed by a resident engineer and has two main divisions: administration and a larger division, the Technical Office, which staffs the projects and controls their implementation.

b. Objectives

The project has many objectives. The major one is to counteract the political pressure to evacuate the old town and to avoid its becoming a target for Israeli settlements. It is intended that this be done by making the old town liveable again with an intensive programme of rehabilitation which would bring the dwellings up to contemporary standards of habitation. This is meant to encourage the return of the former population and other people who are homeless at the moment. This is to be done without overlooking the quality of the old town and its value as cultural property. The effort naturally overlaps with the sensitive position of the Palestinian Authority, which is at the threshold of becoming a state. Land, property, identity, and cultural consciousness are sensitive and important issues. Thus the conservation of the old town as cultural property is a major objective, though not the only one.

The project started on the two above-mentioned sectors of the town. It covers the rehabilitation and restoration of the existing dwellings and divides larger houses into smaller apartments which can be used by different families while providing the maximum possible privacy. The programme of each intervention is determined according to the strategic location of the building and its condition of deterioration.

c. Functional requirements

Though in a dilapidated condition, most of the clusters do not suffer from major structural problems. A set of principles, decided before any restoration was begun, is used to for all buildings. There is no extensive reconstruction to complete their missing parts. Only the minimum amount of work is done to make them structurally sound and functional. The main interventions include the provision of extra stairs when the present ones do not suit the desired circulation pattern, the addition of running water services (WC, shower, and kitchen), completely new pipes for fresh water, sewage, and drainage, the installation of a water tank (because there are long water shortages), and new electric wiring.

Several buildings underwent intervention before the project started; for example, spaces were repaired or altered in order to accommodate new plumbing. In the majority of these cases the interventions were evaluated and were not removed. Concrete block walls were faced with cut stone which harmonised with the rest of the building.

IV. Description

a. *Project data*

A General Policy for Restoration, applicable to all cases, was formulated by the Engineering Office. This document addresses the current living conditions of the 20th and those anticipated next century. Changes that would jeopardise the architectural and historical value of the buildings are prohibited and the following measures are listed to ensure the desired results:

- A comprehensive architectural and structural documentation must be done.
- Everything in the building must be documented by drawings, reports, and photographs. The date of each renovation and the person responsible for it must be noted.
- No radical changes should be made to the exterior.
- Alterations should be minimised.
- Any changes must be in harmony with the architectural quality of the building.
- The courtyards should be kept as they are so as to not affect the natural climate of the building.
- Alterations should be done to the interior rather than the exterior. Relationships between the spaces should not be changed.
- Alterations and changes should not hinder the natural ventilation of the spaces.
- The relationship of the wet spaces with the general sewage system should be carefully studied.
- The additions should serve the purpose they are made for.
- Niches in the walls should not be closed.
- No *mastabas* should be removed.
- The height of low doors can be raised.
- Alterations should not hinder the visual appearance of the vaults.

Although not written in the regulations, all buildings being restored have a metal panel indicating the donor, agency responsible, contractor, and the starting date. When the restoration work is finished it is replaced with a stone inscription panel with completion dates in both calendars.

b. *Evolution of design concepts*

The number of apartment units that will be produced when the project is finished is not yet known, but judging from the area covered by those completed, 1'000 appears to be a good estimate. The two- or three-storey buildings, which do not conform to any planned volumetry, but show an organic growth vertically, are sub-divided in each case as the specific building permits. The small courtyards usually have two or more spaces opening on to them; various stairs climb from the courtyards to the levels above, providing access to small groups of rooms. This is relevant to the extended family, since cooking spaces and services are not available in each unit. The rooms are not very large; a star vaulted living space is about 24–30 m². This can mean that the married son of one family occupies a space of 70–90 m², including the semi-open circulation area and an occasional smaller storage space. This is a typical description of an apartment in the new arrangement. In several cases these spaces are on two levels, making stairs the most common feature among the buildings.

Running water utilities are built in the semi-open spaces if they are big enough; if not, a smaller room is divided between the WC, shower, and the kitchen. In cases where there were already such alterations, they were kept if they were not distasteful.

The varying floor levels within the rooms are kept, including the higher platforms of the *mastabas*.

The rubble stone walls and the vaults are plastered whereas the walls with rough or regularly coursed stones are pointed, although photographs and evidence on door jambs indicates that the roughly

coursed walls were originally plastered.

The original pavement is kept if it is still intact. In other cases, a choice between cut stone, terrazzo tile, and plain cement pavement is made. The latter is limited to spaces where the ceiling is very low.

The window and door openings, which had wood frames and wings, are all refitted with metal frames, metal grills, and metal shutters on the outside. This is done in buildings all over the country. It is claimed that this is done for safety as well as being due to a lack of wood.

The vertical piping for water and sewage is hidden inside the walls if the spaces with running water can be placed on top of each other. In most cases this is not possible, so most of the piping runs down the surface of the exterior walls and connects to the sewage system on the ground floor. One large-capacity water tank per family is installed on top of the roof. The custom of drying laundry on the roof is still common. The roof is reached either by built-in stairs or by a portable wood ladder.

Furnishings vary from house to house, depending on size. The bigger houses have more furniture and it is of better quality. However, in all cases, one big room is filled with a bedroom set consisting of a large bed, a large wardrobe, and a toilet table. In the smaller apartments the living rooms are sparsely furnished. In most of these apartments the electrical appliances are limited to a television, refrigerator, and an electric water heater. There is a large population of very young children, most of whom share the same bedroom with their parents. There is no central heating. Instead, portable electric heaters are used when needed, because electricity is free.

Growing trees or bushes is not possible in the small courtyards, but each apartment has a large number of flowerpots on different levels.

c. *Structure, Materials, Technology*

The buildings do not have drastic structural problems. Small cracks in the wall or vault surfaces are filled with cement mortar. When a large structural crack is found in a wall, the wall is taken down and rebuilt again (*scucio-cucio* method). When there is a serious opening in the floor and walls, metal ties are inserted into the horizontal elements. This results in visible pyramidal caps on the two end walls. The technology of building a cross or star vault is complex and therefore avoided. Instead of being repaired or rebuilt, deformed vaults are supported from underneath with reinforced concrete arches. The original lime mortar on the *extrados* of the domes is replaced with a layer of concrete on which a sheet of insulation is applied. It is either light beige or dark grey in colour.

Stone is used for surfaces, but concrete is the major material for interventions. More cement is used in the interiors and less for the plasters. White cement is used with lime for pointing. Stone and terrazzo tiles are used as pavements in rooms and circulation areas, and ceramic tiles are used on the walls of the WC and shower. White wash is used on the surfaces of the walls and the superstructure. Electric wires are mostly embedded into the stucco; there is one outlet for each space.

d. *Origin of technology, materials, labour force, professionals*

The various technologies used in the restoration of buildings are common ones widely used in new constructions. The same is true for the materials. The stone used is local, as is the lime. The cement is readily available. The labour source is local. The team of professionals in the Engineering Office is mostly trained as civil engineers; there are few architects among them. This may be the reason for the overuse of cement and concrete. The consultants who are part of the HRC do not seem to be actively involved; they appear to be nothing but impressive names on paper. The only consultant who actively cooperates is the architect Ghassan Dwaik. Most of the contractors are regular construction workers who learn the job by doing it.

V. Construction Schedule and Costs

a. History of project

What has been done so far is mainly the restoration of the dwellings. The documentation and building projects started in 1988 and were implemented in 1995. The work on the building clusters is scheduled for completion in 2002 if necessary funds are provided.

The infrastructure project was prepared and opened to tender on 21st April 1998. It is a very detailed project for Sharaa Jamal El Deen El Afagane, the main street crossing the old town. This project provides for the upgrading of water-supply, drainage, sewage, the removal of electric and telephone wires underground, and the improvement of the stone pavements of the streets. The contract will have a duration of three months and a cost of USD 145'000. The implementation of the infrastructure improvements was intentionally postponed in order to collect more information on the existing situation. The present sewage system is about 150–160 years old. The large stone channels do not function properly and there is frequent leakage to the foundations of the buildings. Every rehabilitated building was fitted with a new sewage system carried down to the ground level and is temporarily connected to the existing sewage system.

Hebron also has a master plan for these sectors; however they have little hope for its implementation. It has to be approved by the Palestinian Authority as well as the Israeli government which makes it impossible. The project plans for traffic, accommodates several small parking lots as well as a multi-storey parking garage at the northern boundary of the site. Pedestrian streets have been designed. There are provisions for parks in the few open areas within the clusters, and a hotel is planned on an open area near the site of old Hebron. The cemetery will no longer be used; it will be turned into a park and left as it is.

There are similar projects for the restoration of monuments in Hebron. The so-called "Turkish Bath" has been restored for use as a museum. In the Abraham Mosque the paintings of the vaults and the stone panels are being restored. Substantial support will come for the mosque from the Islamic Development Bank, as confirmed by one of their officials on 21st April 1998.

b. Total costs and main sources of financing

The revitalisation of Hebron old town is financed solely through public and international funds, without any contribution from the owners. The amount spent before January was USD 24 million. At the beginning of March 1998, 127 apartments and 25 shops were finished; in 95 buildings restoration work is ongoing and about 200 are either in the design or bidding stages. The speed of the work makes it impossible to make accurate estimates.

The main contributors to the project are the Saudi Islamic Development Bank and the Kuwaiti government through the Social and Economic Development Fund. The Spanish Government promised USD 1 million but has not yet finalised the offer. The Saudi Islamic Development Bank has agreed to extend further funds. The diplomatic corps of many countries are very interested in the project and pay visits to Hebron to oversee what has been done.

c. Comparative costs

Various questions asked about the cost per m² of the restoration showed that they are fairly arbitrary. The cost of restoration is USD 150 per m² in the architect's brief. When I inquired, I found out that the cost is about USD 200. The average is about the same as the cost per m² of new construction,

which is said to be USD 170–180 per m². Hebron claims to have low prices because the funds are managed without intermediaries. The rehabilitation going on in Bethlehem is given as an example: the cost of 1 m² of plaster is USD 14 in Hebron and USD 32 in Bethlehem; the cost of pointing is USD 8 per m² in Hebron and USD 32 in Bethlehem. The remarkable difference between these prices is said to be the result of the presence of UNDP, which gets 11% of the total sum and is therefore not interested in lowering the prices proposed by the contractors. The UNDP actually encourages more spending.

d. Maintenance costs

The contractors are responsible for any repairs and maintenance for two years after the job is completed. Since the restoration work started in 1996, the contractors are still responsible. The Engineering Office plans to have a team of three or four workers for continuous maintenance.

VI. Technical Assessment

a. Functional assessment

The dwellings are simple and efficient; they fulfil the basic needs of the dwellers.

b. Climatic performance

The clusters retain the natural ventilation of the original design. The yards and the semi-open spaces provide ventilation and shade. The introduction of the metal doors and shutters is detrimental to heat insulation. The open spaces within do carry sound but the users are not noisy. The orientation of spaces has not changed. They are more related to the intricate layout of the clusters than to the sun, wind, or view.

c. Choice of materials, level of technology

The materials used and the level of technology are enough to ensure the survival of the buildings, but the extensive use of concrete will create problems when it comes into contact with water.

d. Ageing and maintenance

The various types of stone used for basic building materials do not seem to have deterioration problems. There may be problems in the future where there is exposed cement mortar on stone, as is the case on the parapets of the roofs. The exposed insulation of the roof needs to be covered by a thin layer of lime mortar for protection.

e. Design features

There are minimum additions to the exteriors. The overall harmony of the volumes is not disturbed. The only negative factor is the water tanks on the rooftops.

VII. Users

a. Beneficiaries of the programme

The entire town of Hebron benefits from this project because the revitalisation of the old centre guarantees the Palestinian existence and counteracts the attempts by the Jews.

Because the project is ongoing, only the use of the dwellings can be evaluated. Their users are the owners and the tenants. "Owners" may mean more than fifty people for each building, a single room owned by several members of a larger family.

The use and division of the clusters directly relates to how this multiple ownership pattern operates. The diversity in the number of spaces and the floor area of the dwelling units also relates to this pattern. If a cluster or building is completely abandoned by its owners the building is divided into smaller units, usually two-room apartments.

When there are too many members of the extended family still living there or who are willing to return, the buildings are divided into smaller rental units. There are several cases where the partial owners living in the houses will pay some rent to other partial owners at the end of five years. In cases where there is one major owner living in the house and there is no problem within the family, his extended family uses the whole building the way it was traditionally used. The Sharabati house is an example of this; it accommodates an extended family with four married sons.

If the houses are not very large, the owners are allowed to use them as single private houses. It is reasonable to assume that this also depends on the ownership pattern at the time of decision. Houses that have too many owners usually end up being used by tenants if the members of the family clan cannot agree to allow one or two nuclear families to live there. The assent of 51% of the owners is enough to rent a property.

Owners of the houses are given priority in the decision to divide a building. The ratio of owners to tenants is 2:1; this means that the historic quarter of Hebron is still inhabited by 67% of those who own property there. The tenants are chosen from among the applicants with the help of a questionnaire. Applicants are usually low-salaried government employees, soldiers, or workers. Young couples with small children are preferred. The tenants do not pay any rent for the first five years, after which point, rent at market prices is to be paid if they want to remain in their houses. To guarantee this, a contract is signed with the tenant assuming that a rent of USD 3500 per year is to be paid if the conditions of the contract are not fulfilled. Every unit is allotted 100 kw of electricity and 8 m³ of water for each month at no cost. Technically, the occupants must pay for additional water and electricity, but this has not yet been enforced.

Response to project

I had the opportunity to talk with many of the tenants and owners and to ask them many questions. None of the tenants had major complaints, although a few expressed a desire for more rooms. Almost all of the owners were content because their houses were restored, they have basic amenities, and they live comfortably. These are major factors in convincing the other owners to return to the old town. A few women said that they would prefer terrazzo tiles to the existing flagstones in the pavement because they are easier to wash. In some houses, where there are *mastabas*, the owners would prefer to remove them. One interesting complaint from a young owner, Adnan Zeytun, was that the stairs are dangerous for the children. On the suggestion that a playground in the area would make the children happy, he claimed that he would not let his children play there because of the snakes and that he would not allow his wife to accompany the children to the playground. Although surprising, this may mean that people are not disturbed by the lack of common open spaces and that they are happy within the safety of their homes behind metal doors, perhaps as a result of their experiences over the last few decades.

There were some serious problems during the restoration. To work on those clusters to which entry was prohibited by the Israelis, the workers moved into the buildings to be restored with their families and did the work from within. Between 1996 and 1997, 416 workers were arrested and work was

stopped 108 times. An elderly woman related her encounters with Israeli soldiers with apparent pride and a sense of belonging. In several instances the Israelis gave up harassing the workers and left them in peace, but still there are bans on groups of buildings and on parts of certain buildings. In the Sharabati building, which is adjacent to the Israeli settlers' apartments, two rooms facing these apartments cannot be used or restored.

Abandoned houses were restored and turned over to the owners and tenants. In cases where there were already people living in the buildings, the restoration process went on while tenants continued to live there. Some owners reported that this was difficult. However, the duration of the intervention was only between two and four months, a short enough period to endure coexistence with the workers.

The HRC is keen on learning more about the opinions and reactions of the people using the restored buildings. They have prepared several sets of questionnaires on social life, general and psychological conditions, and the relationships between the tenants. The information is to be used in short and long term policy-making. Interestingly, several of the questions also aim to create a certain sympathy with and respect for the cultural property that the residents are living in. A full-time social worker at the Engineering Office makes regular rounds to the houses to follow up and provide assistance.

All of the people I had the chance to talk with seemed to be very positive about the revitalisation. Some owners seemed to want to wait a little longer before deciding to return.

VIII. Persons involved

Project personnel

The Engineering Office of the HRC is responsible for every aspect of the design and administration of the project. Dr. Khalid al-Quwasme is the resident engineer and the head of the office. There are four engineers: Hilmi Maraqa, Tahseen Al Natsha, Abdeh Qader Al-Sharabati, Hisham Zaloom, and Samar Bader, a technical craftsman. The ongoing restorations are controlled by 10 supervisors: Hamid Al-Karaki, Ismael Abdel Rahman, Fakhri Abu Zana, Riad Al-Qazaqi, Waleed Al-Homoz, Mohammad Abu Zunade, Fayez Abu Mukadam, Mohlis Al-Hamoui, Bassam Hassanah, Ya'roub Al-Natsheh, and Ebrahim Mohamed.

The administration under the management of Imad Hamdan has two executive managers: Mohammad Al-Sharif and Mohammad Al-Jaabari. They employ a lawyer, Jahsen Tawfeeq, a social worker, Nuha Abu Sara, two accountants, three secretaries, and eight other employees working as messengers, guards, and drivers.

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