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# *Reconstruction Through Memory Building and Re-functioning Buildings with Public Access*

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## ABSTRACT

Historic buildings are an essential part of collective memory. Collective memory plays a major role in the recovery of the community in a post-conflict city. It is also a part of preserving the identity of the city, therefore it should be sustained. Nowadays, with the increasing number of wars/conflicts, historic buildings are exposed to damage. Occasionally, the approach to the reconstruction process can result in harm to the collective memory due to a deficiency of knowledge and experience. The study inquired about the appropriate approach to address the collective memories of historic post-war/conflict structures. It is discussed whether the reconstruction of these buildings can be used as a tool for community recovery. One of the approaches to achieving this is public participation. It could be a useful reference for similar cases in future reconstruction applications to have the experience of selecting the best solutions in dealing with post-war or conflict historic buildings. by considering memory parameters and public access, thus having the potential to contribute to community recovery. The reconstruction of Dar al-fatwa building in the historic city center of Aleppo was examined within this context. Suggestions were made depending on the prior analysis. Eventually, more effective scenarios for refurbishing Dar Al-fatwa building by considering memory parameters and public access were created.

## KEYWORDS

Reconstruction, re-function, collective memory, public access, community recovery.

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### INTRODUCTION

First, it is worthwhile to clarify some concepts related to the topic of the paper, reconstruction can be defined as the reconstruction of ahistorical building. However, refunctioning, or adaptive reuse can be defined as giving a new function to a historic building that has lost its function. Currently, with the increasing number of wars and conflicts, while cities are being destroyed, historic buildings are also being damaged along with them. Sometimes reconstruction is wrongly handled with the aim of erasure of collective memory, the aim of changing history, or limited knowledge and experience of post-war or conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation of historical buildings Thus, society faces the danger of losing the most important instrument for preserving heritage, history, and collective memory that gives them national and symbolic dimensions.

In this paper, awareness will be raised about the importance of knowledge about how to deal correctly and successfully with post-war/conflict historical buildings and prevent using them for political purposes. Thus, prevent tampering with collective memory or causing partial or complete loss of it. In addition to focusing on the importance of investing in them in a way that they are available for public use, they also contribute positively to community recovery. This study could be a useful reference for similar cases in future reconstruction applications. It is important to keep collective memory alive. Conflicts are a part of nations' collective memory too; they should be kept in memory for learning lessons and avoided for political purposes. Therefore, the damages of conflict should be remembered too.

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS TOPIC

- Historical Continuity, maintaining tangible ties to the past so that present and future generations can comprehend the historical context and lessons from the struggle.
- Healing and Reconciliation, participate in helping war/conflict affected

communities recover. By encouraging conversation and reconciliation.

- Collective Memory, repurposing structures with historical significance aids in preserving a location's cultural memory. These buildings act as observable relics of the past.
- Cultural Identity by reiterating a community's ties to its history and traditions despite hardship, the restoration of historical buildings strengthens cultural identity.
- Public Engagement, historical structures that have been renovated frequently become public areas that encourage participation, education, and knowledge of the causes and effects of war and conflict.

### EXAMPLES OF RECENT STUDIES:

- Mostar Old Bridge, Bosnia, and Herzegovina, A notable example is the restoration of the Mostar Old Bridge following its devastation during the Bosnian War. Studies have investigated how its reconstruction has affected society and the human psyche, as well as how it has aided in promoting tourism and peace. (Thomson, 2008).
- Post-Conflict Rebuilding in Aleppo, Syria, studies have looked at the difficulties and approaches for restoring and reusing old structures in Aleppo, considering the city's rich history and the devastation caused by the Syrian conflict. (UNESCO, n.d.).
- Museum and Memorial Spaces, Studies have investigated converting war-damaged structures into museums, memorials, and cultural hubs. These locations are intended to honor the past, inform tourists, and encourage dialogue on the effects of violence. (UNESCO, n.d.).
- Public Perception and Engagement, some studies examine the extent to which these places are constructed as well as how the public views historically accurate reconstructions of buildings. aid in healing the community. (UNESCO, n.d.).

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- Tourism and Economic Impact, researchers look at how revitalizing historic structures might boost local economies by fostering employment growth, tourism, and cultural development. (UNESCO, n.d.).

To understand the social effect of post-war/conflict reconstruction applications, various cases of conflict-affected historic buildings will be studied. It will be focused on how it affected positively or negatively collective memory to have the experience of selecting the best solutions in dealing with post-war or conflict historic buildings. The study will be followed by an examination of the reconstruction of Dar al-fatwa (Fatwa House) in the historic city centre of Aleppo. Suggestions will be made depending on the prior analysis. By analysing heritage buildings in the area around Dar al-fatwa building, focusing on the Dar al-fatwa building situation before and after the conflict and its restoration advantages and disadvantages, eventually it will be created more effective scenarios for investing in Dar al-fatwa building by considering memory parameters and public access, thus having the potential to contribute to Old Aleppo City community recovery.

## MATERIAL AND METHOD

A comparative examination method is applied; the current situation will be determined by data collection. Comparisons with various reconstruction processes of post-war or conflict buildings were made. The pros and cons of the reconstruction intervention were analysed to get insight into how to deal with post-war/conflict historic buildings. Any item in the city may contribute to the collective memory of a community. When we look at the building process of these memories, it will start with the physical construction of these items and continue with their function of **engaging** with their community. This phase is considered a baseline, so it is labelled "Phase 0". Phase 0 will continue unless this item faces damage or destruction. So, "Phase 1", can be considered the destruction phase during times of

war/conflict. When the war/conflict comes to an end and damaged items need to be preserved, "Phase 2" will start, which is the new memory building or reconstruction of the memory. In this phase, the decision about which memory to hold is made. Depending on various reasons, such as politics or social anxiety, some of the memories that the item represents can be eliminated. In "Phase 3," on the other hand, regardless of its social and political effects, all memories are preserved and transferred to the next generation Approaches were defined according to the phases that were described in (The diagram of building memory classification is expressed in (Fig. 1), classification is expressed in (Fig. 2), which explaining these by combining various phases. In "Approach 0 (A0), the damaged building is reconstructed regardless of any collective memory. "Approach 1 (A1)," on the other hand, ignores the collective memory of conflict; only the memory
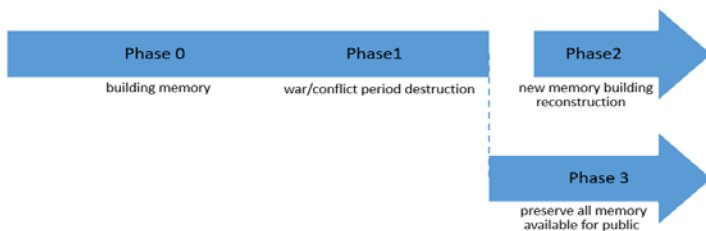


**Figure 2.** *Building memory classification prepared by the authors.*
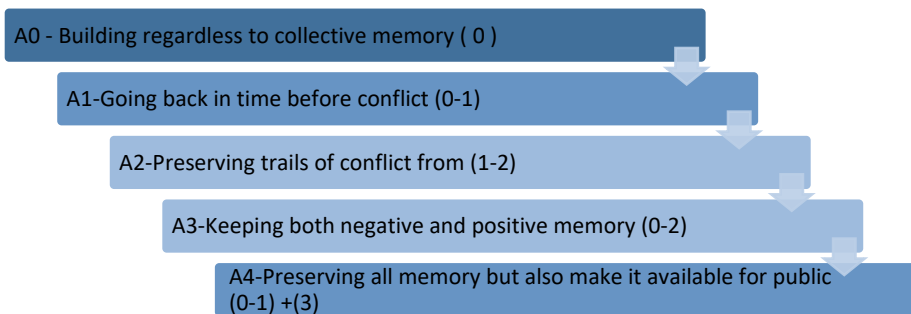


**Figure 1.** *Post-war/conflict hitorical building memory classification prepared by the authors.*

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of the former glory is preserved. While "Approach 2 (A2)" includes trails of the conflict period, "Approach 3 (A3)" preserves everything, whether negative or positive. The last one, "Approach 4 (A4)," is not only preserving every memory but also engaging the public in its functions. Afterward, related case studies were selected to define these approaches and analysed depending on these categorizations.

## CASE STUDIES RELATED TO APPROACHES

### Aphamia Al-Sham Hotel/Hamah- Syria

Example of (A0), Kilania was an archaeological neighbourhood; it was destroyed and demolished in 1982 AD after the Hama massacres. The Aphamia Al Sham Hotel was built in its place by the government, (Fig. 3), (Arwani, 2019) Indicates the old Kilania neighbourhood. (Fig. 4), (Arwani, 2019) the disappearance of Kilania neighbourhood. Hama city before(above) and after (down) 40 years is expressed in (Fig. 5) (Arwani, 2019).



**Figure 4.** *Kilania neighborhood.*



**Figure 3.** *Aphamia Al sham Hotel.*

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**Figure 5.** *Hama city before and after 40-year.*

Advantages
- A new five-star hotel has been built that covers the city's needs.
- The place has been re-planned in a modern way.
- Facilitate controlling the city from a government perspective.

Disadvantages
- The government used it to support and establish its rule.
- Remove the traces of the massacre by removing the neighbourhood completely.
- Intimidating people to not revolt again.
- Erasing all collective memory by building the Aphamia Al-Sham Hotel in place of the neighbourhood.
- Create a new memory.
- Ignore people's opinions.

### *New Old Town/ Warsaw*

Example of (A1), during World War II, German forces razed over 80% of Warsaw. After Soviet troops took over the city, the old city was restored (Fig. 6), (Murawski, 2013) from left: John's House on Castle Square in the 1920s; John's House, as depicted by Bellotto, c. 1768; John's House after the 1948 reconstruction.

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**Figure 6.** *John's House on Castle, 99% Invisible.*

Advantages
- Reconfiguration to make Warsaw better than it was before the war.
- The past could cease to be just destruction.
- A drastic overhaul of the country.
- Pushing for authenticity.

Disadvantages
- The rebuilding of the city was done in the 18th century.
- Warsaw's historic Old Town is not a replica of the original.
- It's a reimagining of a historic city that never really was.
- They didn't want Poles to long for this lost part of the city.
- The buildings are beautiful, but they are not original.
- Erasing collective memory (1-2).

### *Genbaku Dome / Japan*

Example of (A2), Genbaku Dome was the Chamber of Commerce. It was the only building that survived the atomic bombing in 1945. Later, it was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1996. It became a part of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima, Japan (Morezzi, April-May 2019). The ruin of the hall serves as a memorial to more than 140,000 people who were killed in the atomic bombing of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, (Fig. 7), (Charles, 2010).

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**Figure 7.** *Hiroshima's Genbaku Dome.*

Advantages

- We can instantly see the destruction.
- They left the building as it was after the war.
- Japanese and visitors will have a true experience with the building and have an idea of what happened.
- It has not been rebuilt, but they plan a park to be visited.
- The memory lives in the heart of the city (1–2).

Disadvantages

- It showed us just demolished buildings.
- There is no experience of the past before the destruction (0–1).
- It was not invested in a useful way.
- It is better to see the destruction to keep memory, but it should be refunctioned and invested.

## *The House of Broglia/Turin- Italy*

Example of (A03), The House of Broglia is a historic building in Casa Broglia, it was among the badly damaged buildings during the bombing of Turin in World War II.

The walls did not fall and are still standing, (Fig. 8), (Quarlzo, 2014).

Advantages

- Merging identity and heritage with the imprint of modernity.
- Do not affect the place's identity or collective memory.
- Building with new materials and simple geometry

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**Figure 8.** *The House of Broglia.*

- Keep the memory as it is (02).
- The building is living and is refunctioned.
- We have an idea about past events from the outside.
- It was converted, but the memory was kept.

Disadvantages

- We could not have interior experience with it.

### *Rahmi M. Koç Museum/ Turkey-Ankara*

Example of (A04), Ankara's first industrial museum was opened in 2005. Located just opposite the main entrance gate of Ankara Castle, formerly known as the horse market, the museum comprises two main buildings: Çengelhan and Safranhan. In 2003, it was rented to industrialists to be used as a museum. After a restoration period, (Fig. 9), (URL-1).



**Figure 9.** *Rahmi M.Koç Müzeleri.*

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Advantages

- The museum building is history by itself.
- The memory was kept by the building itself.
- Inside is a very nice mixer between past and present, with a variety of modern artifacts displayed in unique presentations.
- A good investment for such a historical building.
- It is a family place. There are exhibits for all ages, making it a great family outing.
- Preserving industrial memory.
- It has changed the fate of the region.
- Public access.

Disadvantages

- The function of the building was changed so the inside memory disappeared.
- Erasing part of the memory.
- There is no available parking.

## OUR ARGUMENT AND PROPOSITION

Both memories are important before the conflict (0–1), and the damages of the conflict (1-2) are worth keeping and passing onto future generations. On the other hand, how to do it is the most important question. Rebuilding and keeping trails of damages from the conflict period on the building, like the Gombak Dome in Japan, leaving it only for display and not including the surrounding society to interact with it, will display limited usability to the public. The less the building is used, the less it is sustained. The solution in our argument is public participation in the decision-making period; the re-functioning process should be consulted with public (community) governmental bodies and financial bodies. That means saving memory (0–1), conflict memory (1-2), and re-functioning (investment for community recovery) (3). So, we must deal with conflict-affected historic buildings by

using memory rebuilding to help the community recover. This means reconstructing and re-functioning historical buildings while considering a memory parameter.

## PROPOSITION AND CREATING SCENARIOS

Reconstruction through memory building and re-functioning the building with public access:

Scenario 1 (S1): Keep the function as it is and reconstruct it as it is.

Scenario 2 (S2): Do the reconstruction as it is and re-function.

Scenario 3 (S3): Have a reconstruction method and be invested.

- passive experience
- active experience

Scenarios will be applied to the case study (Dar al-fatwa in Aleppo Old City).

## CASE STUDY DAR AL FATWA BUILDING /SYRIA- ALEPPO

### *Aleppo Old City*

The 5000-year-old Aleppo City deserves its title as one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. UNESCO included Aleppo Old City on the World Heritage List in 1986 and considered it an important historical city because it contains a large area of cultural heritage that must be protected. The old city has been placed on the World Heritage List in danger since 2013 because of the conflict that has continued in Syria for nine years, which caused a lot of damage to the city (Qudsi, 2017). Aleppo Old City is divided into 12 sections. It consisted mainly of residential, commercial, administrative, public, and historical areas, Aleppo Citadel, and its perimeter; it is indicated on the figure by the number (1), (Fig. 10), (Osman, 2009). It has 16 archaeological buildings; Dar Al Fatwa building is the 7th one.

**Figure 10.** *Castle circumference axis.*

### Dar al-fatwa Building

It was established in 1886 by Sheikh Muhammad Abu Al-Huda Al-Sayyadi, head of the Supervision Syndicate in Aleppo at the time. Later, the Waqif Directorate bought it and designated it as Dar Al-fatwa. It is composed of three sections that combine the European architectural system with the Islamic architectural style (al Jasser, 2008).

It had been Al-fatwa house for a long time includes a mosque and a mausoleum. It is the first building built within the walls of Aleppo Old City (1295 AH 1876 AD, (Fig. 11), (URL-2), (Fig. 12), Its historical and archaeological site overlooks the Citadel of Aleppo from the eastern side.



**Figure 11.** *Dar Al-fatwa building.*

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**Figure 12.** *The site plan of Dar Al-fatwa building prepared by the author.*

During the Syrian War, opposition forces were in Aleppo Old City, so the army bombed the city. (Fig 13), (Razzouk, 2022). Dar Al- during the war in Syria was badly damaged and partially destroyed. Later in AD 2019, a major role was for the residents of Aleppo in making donations to support the restoration work.



**Figure 13.** *Dar Al-fatwa before & after destruction.*

Advantages
- The building was rebuilt as it was.
- Reviving what was destroyed by the war, as it was in the past.
- Revival of ruined historical architecture.
- Save the identity of the place.

- It is now a monument reminding people of its history.
- Memory was kept (0-2).

Disadvantages

- We cannot instantly see the destruction.
- The restoration was aimed mainly at meeting logistical needs.
- The restoration aimed mainly to say that the government succeeded terminating the conflict.
- So, it did not re-function.
- It was not invested in a useful way with public access because they do not want to remember the conflict.

## RESULTS OR FINDINGS

- Dar Al-fatwa building is located within a historical center that must be preserved.
- It was the first of the restored as heritage buildings surrounding the Citadel of Aleppo.
- The main goal of its restoration was to show that the government had succeeded in controlling the city and returning it to normal life.
- The restoration did not aim to contribute to the city's economic, social, or even educational recovery from the conflict.
- It has not been re-functioned in a way that preserves the conflict memory. (1-2) or even invested in a useful way that contributes to society's recovery.
- Dar Al-fatwa continues with its administrative function. Limited public use is offered, and as with other administrative buildings that were surrounding the castle, numerous cars caused air pollution and damage to the buildings. (Vibrating and threatening the structural integrity of the historical buildings)

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- The mixing of tourist and administrative movements (the governmental work is interrupted by the flow of the tourist circulations) in addition to the limited number of parking spaces.
- There are no signs of the conflict's effects on the building. Everything is erased.
- It could be invested in the social or educational recovery of the community.
- Decisions were made by the government for political purposes, the public should have been involved in the decision-making.
- Multiple scenarios had to be worked out and a vote had to be taken to make the decision.
- historic heritage buildings can be invested, whether damaged by the disaster or not, in a way that reflects positively on society and contributes to its recovery.
- One of the heritage management strategies is the reminding approach so it could be invested with public access that contributes to keeping memory alive.
- It is better to change its function into Interactive cultural function by considering a memory parameter, serves tourism and helps in economic growth.
- Using environmental vehicles protects the city from smoke and vibrations that may affect the archeological buildings.
- Enabling public participation
    - Open a discussion (creating a platform for a debate) to what this building could be used as:
        - Educational (children, youth, elderly, all?),
        - Governmental (social services, judicial, religious),
        - Office space and could rented and the income could be used.
        - Tourist place,
        - Or a hybrid function?

- Or reconstructing the community by reconstructing the building
- Open to an architectural competition
- The jury will select 5 projects.
- Enabling community election for the winning project
- Funding regional/national/international?
  - Funding must get both governmental and public approval (to make it a transparent process)
- Reconstruction process
- Sustain these approaches:
  - The building starts to operate.
    - Assigning a commission to administrate the building: to live that space up to its potential.
  - Policy making: to increase the public participation in public historical buildings.

## PROPOSING A SCENARIO FOR RE-FUNCTIONING

A hybrid function proposition: educational, a social and tourist place
Dar Al Fatwa can be divided into four separate sections, (Fig. 14), (Fig. 15).



GROUN FLOOR PLAN

**Figure 14.** *Proposal for re-functioning Dar Al- fatwa, ground floor plan prepared by authors.* P a g e 17 | 22

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**Figure 15**. *Proposal for re-functioning Dar Al-fatwa, first floor plan prepared by authors.*

The first part is zone 1: The east part of the plan, because it has a private entrance, and an internal courtyard can serve for public use in addition to numerous rooms on two floors (G+1) Which helps with its multifunctionality and flexibility. It is suggested to be used as a Cultural Heritage Center .It offers multiple and varied interactive activities that serve to preserve the collective memory, in addition to being an investment that serves the recovery of society at multiple levels.

- It has the potential to present the heritage in Aleppo through workshops with the participation of the public in making miniature models of cultural heritage products.
- Educational and training courses for traditional handicrafts that contribute to the rehabilitation of society and provide job opportunities.
- Participation in heritage events and festivals through its flexible and multi-purpose function.

The second part is zone 2: The west part of the plan is on the first floor, due to its beautiful view of the Aleppo Citadel in addition to its private entrance, which is through a special staircase. It is suggested to be a traditional restaurant and coffee shop with traditional chants and traditional food.

The third part is zone 3:  The west part of the plan of the ground floor, according to its form as shops open to an outside courtyard and overlooking the castle are suggested as shops for selling heritage, traditional products, antiques, and souvenirs.

The fourth part is zone 4: The middle part of the plan of the ground floor, due to the building being functioned as Dar Al Fatwa for a long time, an office has been designated that aims to:

- Handle urgent matters for the people.
- Preserving the previous memory of the building's function as Dar Al fatwa.

## CONCLUSIONS

Even though reconstruction seems to rebuild a damaged building, it has numerous parameters that are affecting the physical and the social world of a citizen. The decision to use reconstruction as a tool to reconstruct its community plays an important role in development of the post-disaster urban layouts.

Collective memory plays a major role in the recovery of the community in a post-conflict city. It is also a part of preserving the identity of the city and therefore it should be sustained.

Each building has variable phases for its memory which can be classified into (Phase 0) Building regardless to collective memory, (Phase 1) the destruction phase during the times of war/conflict, (Phase 2) the new memory building or reconstruction of the memory, (Phase 3) all memories are preserved and transferred to the next generation. Both memories are important before the conflict (0-1) and the damages of the conflict (1-2) are worth keeping and passing onto future generations. In addition to public participation in the decision-making period, so re-functioning process should be consulted with

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public (community) governmental bodies and financial bodies. That means saving {past memory (0-1) + conflict memory (1-2) + re-functioning (investment for community recovery) (3). Reconstruction will be achieved through memory building and re-functioning the building with public access, and this requires Creating scenarios: Scenario 1 (S1)-keep the function as it is and reconstruct it as it is, Scenario 2 (S2)-do the reconstruction as it is and re-function, Scenario 3 (S3)-Have a reconstruction method and be invested by passive experience/active experience.

These scenarios were applied on the case study (Dar Al-fatwa in Aleppo Old City), which was reconstructed as it was and continued with its original function, which isn't suitable to the development project of old Aleppo city. Aleppo is an old city that possesses an urban cultural heritage, and this qualifies it to be a world-class tourist center, Dar Al-fatwa building was not invested neither to be a part of the development project of old Aleppo city or to contribute to the recovery of the community or even to save collective memory.

Re-functioning the Dar Al-fatwa building was suggested, to be invested in a way that attract tourist and use heritage as a tool to contribute to the recovery of the community after the conflict either social, economic, educational or tourist side on the other hand using heritage in saving collective memory and identity.

## EDITORS' NOTE

The editorial board cannot be held responsible for the contents of this article, and the opinions in the article do not necessarily reflect the editorial board's opinions.

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