

ANKARA YILDIRIM BEYAZIT UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF NATURAL AND APPLIED SCIENCES



PEACE & WAR THROUGH URBAN PUBLIC SPACES
"THE CASE OF ALEPPO CITY"

M.Sc. Thesis by

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Rehabilitation**

September, 2023

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PEACE & WAR THROUGH URBAN PUBLIC SPACES
"THE CASE OF ALEPPO CITY"

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by

Ghada Rifai

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M.Sc. THESIS EXAMINATION RESULT FORM

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PEACE & WAR THROUGH URBAN PUBLIC SPACES

“THE CASE OF ALEPPO CITY”

ABSTRACT

Urban public spaces shape societies' dynamics and can significantly affect conflict and peacebuilding initiatives. This thesis explores the intricate relationship between urban spaces and their influence on war or fostering sustainable peacebuilding. By comprehending the social dynamics, conflict history, and the mental spatial map of cities, it can help to gain valuable insights into how these spaces can be harnessed for promoting lasting peace.

This thesis aims to analyze the role of urban spaces in both peace and war contexts and their contribution to sustainable peacebuilding, focusing on the influence of architects and urban planners. The existing literature acknowledges the importance of urban spaces in post-conflict contexts; however, there is a significant gap in understanding the specific requirements for urban public spaces to actively facilitate peacebuilding and the corresponding expectations from architects and urban planners. To address this, a comparative study of Belfast and Barcelona, two cities with different post-war experiences, will be conducted to identify effective strategies for designing urban spaces that support peacebuilding initiatives.

Drawing insights from these case studies, the study will be applied to the context of Aleppo, a city that has endured prolonged conflict and demands innovative urban solutions. The study will utilize a mixed-methods approach, encompassing a case study review of Aleppo City from an urban perspective and fieldwork involving focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews. The expected outcomes include exploring public spaces' role in peace and war, providing recommendations for architects and urban planners, drawing lessons learned, and proposing practical guidelines for post-war public space reconstruction projects in Aleppo and similar contexts. The study findings aim to inform policymakers and stakeholders about the significance of investing in well-designed urban public spaces to foster sustainable peace and reconciliation. Ultimately, this study endeavors to contribute to the field of

post-war reconstruction by highlighting the critical role of urban spaces and professionals in shaping cities for sustainable peace and development.

Keywords: Public Spaces, Peacebuilding, War, Urban Planning, Post-War Reconstruction



KENTSEL KAMU ALANLARI ÜZERİNDEN BARIŞ VE SAVAŞ “HALEP ŞEHİRİ ÖRNEĞİ”

ÖZ

Kentsel kamu alanları toplumların dinamiklerini şekillendirerek çatışma ve barış inşası girişimlerini önemli ölçüde etkileyebilmektedir. Bu tez çalışması, kentsel alanlar arasındaki karmaşık ilişkiyi ve savaş üzerindeki etkilerini araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu bağlamda kentsel kamu alanlarının sürdürülebilir barış inşasına teşvikini incelemektedir.

Şehirlerin sosyal dinamiklerinin, çatışma geçmişinin ve zihinsel mekan haritasının kavranmasının, bu mekanların kalıcı barışı teşvik etmek için nasıl kullanılabileceğine dair bir öngörü sunmaya yardımcı olabileceği düşünülmektedir. Bu kapsamda tez, mimarların ve şehir planlamacılarının etkisine odaklanarak kentsel mekanların hem barış hem de savaş bağlamındaki rolünü ve sürdürülebilir barış inşasına katkılarını analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Mevcut literatür incelendiğinde çatışma sonrası bağlamda kentsel mekanların öneminin kabul edildiği görülmektedir; ancak, kentsel kamu alanlarını barış inşasını aktif bir şekilde kolaylaştırmaya yönelik özel gerekliliklerini ve mimarlar ile şehir planlamacılarından buna karşılık gelen beklentileri anlamada önemli bir boşluk olduğu gözlemlenmektedir. Söz konusu sorunu incelemek için, barış inşası girişimlerini destekleyen kentsel alanların tasarlanması için etkili stratejiler belirlemek üzere, savaş sonrası farklı deneyimlere sahip iki şehir olan Belfast ve Barselona'nın karşılaştırmalı bir çalışması gerçekleştirilmiştir. Vaka çalışması şeklinde tasarlanan bu çalışma, uzun süreli çatışmalara göğüs geren ve yenilikçi kentsel çözümler talep eden bir şehir olan Halep şehri kapsamında uygulanmıştır. Çalışmada, örnek olay incelemesi gerçekleştirilmiş ve odak grup tartışmaları ile yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeleri içeren saha çalışmasını kapsayan karma yöntem yaklaşımı kullanılmıştır. Çalışmanın sonucunda kamusal alanların barış ve savaştaki rolünün araştırılması, mimarlar ve şehir planlamacıları için öneriler sağlanması, öğrenilen derslerin çıkarılması ve Halep ve benzeri şehirlerde savaş sonrası kamusal alan yeniden inşa projeleri için pratik kılavuzların önerilmesi yer almaktadır.

Çalışma bulgularının, sürdürülebilir barış ve uzlaşmayı teşvik etmek için iyi tasarlanmış kentsel kamusal alanlara yatırım yapmanın önemi konusunda politika yapıcıları ve paydaşları bilgilendirme için faydalı olabileceği düşünülmektedir. Sonuç olarak bu tez çalışmasında, sürdürülebilir barış ve kalkınma için şehirlerin şekillendirilmesinde kentsel mekanların ve profesyonellerin kritik rolünü vurgulanmış ve savaş sonrası yeniden yapılanma alanına katkı sunmaya çalışılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kamusal Alanlar, Barışın İnşası, Savaş, Kentsel Planlama, Savaş Sonrası Yeniden Yapılanma



NOMENCLATURE**Acronyms**

FGD	Focus Group Discussion.
SSI	Semi-Structured Interview



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CHAPTER 1

INTRO & AIM OF STUDY

Chapter 1 lays the groundwork for the thesis, encapsulating the essential elements that underpin the study journey. With a well-crafted introduction, the chapter presents a concise overview of the study's subject, providing readers with a glimpse into the study's focal point. Moreover, it clarifies the specific aim of the study, outlining the objectives and study questions that guide the investigation. The chapter then delves into the study's methodology, elucidating the approach and techniques employed to collect and analyze data. Lastly, it offers a disposition that outlines the subsequent chapters, providing readers with a structured path to explore the study's themes and insights.

1.1. Introduction

Public spaces are a living culture that shows the various identities in the city, for it should belong to the people, not to the state, where the people all people can raise their voices on the issues of their concerns through public spaces and streets [1] For this reason, it has a significant role in grounding the citizenship implication as part of promoting democratic practices through emphasizing the rights and responsibilities of the citizens on a practical and small-scale level, ultimately shaping the city's political frame [2] The dynamics in the public spaces could facilitate the grounding of the construction of citizenship at the community level. Ultimately, it constructs citizenship, belonging, recognition, rights, and ownership, where citizenship is experienced, performed, challenged, and demanded daily[2].

The urban spaces reflect the macro-political structure of the city, where each of the urban spaces has the ability, among others, to influence the city's order and political dynamic. Ultimately, the social and cultural life of the urban spaces is part of the broader state attitude, political structure and economic systems. And vice versa, they constitute a place's defining elements as a social context for political and other social behaviour [3]. Based on the viewpoint of considering the public spaces as a conflictive space where the ongoing conflict is reflected on them, as well, it's a place where the

various groups meet and are introduced to each other. They manage their differences to create a unique identity that belongs to the space and all of them simultaneously. The public spaces also played a significant role in connecting the segregated areas and building bridges between the different cultural groups through cultural activities. [4] & [5]. Owning the public spaces and ensuring the inclusivity of all citizens and participating in the daily democratic life of the city, considering the public spaces as a place for citizenship in social-psychological and political terms [2]. It is also regarded as a must right at the neighbourhood level, regulated by the guidelines and policies of the neighbourhood [6]. People in public spaces at the neighbourhood and city level need to feel absorbed by what's happening around them—taking them to a unique dynamic where they gradually become part of it and have a memorable experience just by crossing through it. It creates opportunities for all social groups to exchange and express themselves and protect people's rights to participate appropriately in urban spaces. For this reason, as urban planners and designers, the need to understand that public spaces evolve through the processes and practices of the time. The need to focus on the functions and procedures that enhance public spaces' roles [7].

In addition, public spaces have a two-way effect; the value and the process of their development influence the community and the city act, and vice versa; the community's behaviour and willingness for changes will impact the role of the public spaces. The public spaces also present new values in the community, which educates the people about democratic and collective action in the city's daily life [4]. For that, urban design is considered an opportunity for joint Planning across different ethnicities, bringing them together and ensuring equal participation. The public spaces are considered connecting areas between those groups from different ethnic backgrounds [4].

The power of Planning comes from its ability to translate democratic and civic objectives into concrete actions that ensure sustainable peacebuilding. Urban design and tools educate the people on what democratic terms mean in practice and how they can be applied daily and manage the relationship between the people and the city daily. Urban Planning ensures a breath moment for the city to deal openly with challenges and problems of the city. It paves the way for a shared future of the people in the city by connecting the spatial design with the social and civic objectives of the city [4].

In conclusion, public spaces are the symbolic presentation of diverse groups, preserving the memory and identity and defining the political order of the city. In addition to the economic system, where those spaces can play an essential role in the sustainable peace of the city and the need to pay attention to what extent and how might spaces' functions limit democratic action and pave for an upcoming foreseen conflict. Through understating the reciprocal role of the influence of physical on its social, cultural, and political structures [3].

Dewey (1916: 73) stated long ago, "a democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living"

1.2. Aim of Study

Most post-war reconstruction interventions consider revitalizing public spaces an appealing starting point; much effort is focused on guaranteeing a new phase and transitioning from conflict to peace, which has a different influence on maintaining peace. To ensure the peacebuilding role of public spaces, the need to understand how they contribute to the conflict and their role in sustainable peacebuilding. In most scenarios, the peacebuilding process influences and guides the post-conflict urban planning intervention. It plays a critical role in paving the way for sustainable peace or upcoming conflicts by using the urban design of public spaces and urban tools. These practices show that the use of urban design and urban tools is not innocent and not impartial. And that shows the vital role of urban planners and architects in the peacebuilding process to lead the process and play a positive role in the city's reality and future.

The thesis aim of the study is to Understand urban public space's role in conflict and peace. through analyzing the urban spaces' role in dealing with the city based on its social dynamic concerning the conflict history and developed mental spatial maps as part of post-war reconstruction and development projects by analyzing the case of two cities and understanding the role of the different actors, especially the architects and urban planners. The first one is Belfast, which went through a civil war that ended with a peace agreement where most of its articles were implemented. Besides, reconstruction and rehabilitation work focused on revitalizing the public space. However, an underlying conflict still threatens the sustainability of peace and can turn

the city into a violent conflict mode at any moment. The second one is (Barcelona), where the urban planner and architects played an essential role in sustaining the peace agreement. They have managed to reflect it at the urban structure level by working on connecting the urban spaces across the city at the local neighbourhoods' level and exploring the two cases through their timeline, and understanding the role of urban planners and architects in designing the urban spaces as part of the peacebuilding process, applying the lessons learned to (the Aleppo city) case study. Then raise the red lights and recommendations on how to deal with the urban spaces as part of post-war reconstruction and development projects, discussing the requirements to redesign the urban spaces as part of post-war recovery and development projects for sustainable peacebuilding.

The peace agreement might sometimes maintain segregation and balance power between conflicted groups and communities. It cannot transfer the city to act and progress as one body for a shared future. That shows urban intervention's role in developing spaces and policies that support democratic practices and ensure daily diverse group interaction. Ultimately, the city can deal with the conflict that could lead to creative development [4]. And in others, working on public spaces as part of the regeneration projects participates to the effectiveness of those projects, where the public spaces play a critical role in developing the low-income groups' situations which open space for their participation and defining their priorities. Otherwise, it is just a "renewal program" that works on the physical level [8].

The thesis will explore how public spaces can play an essential role in recovering the cities experiencing conflict. And what are the requirements and conditions needed to ensure the effectiveness of the public space's recovery role? By answering the following questions:

- Are urban public spaces essential in creating sustainable peace or for upcoming conflict?
- How do we deal with the divided communities and hidden barriers in urban public spaces to foster and sustain peace?
- Are architects and urban planners playing an active role in peacebuilding?

The thesis questions and methodology are designed around the following hypothesis:

- When Urban public spaces thoughtfully designed and managed could play a destructive or sustaining role in the peace depending on whom, when and how it's designed and developed.
- Urban public spaces is able to deal with physical and hidden barriers by understanding the divided communities' mental spatial maps and the conflict's history.
- Urban planners and architects could pave the way for sustainable peace or upcoming foreseen conflict through their role in designing urban spaces.

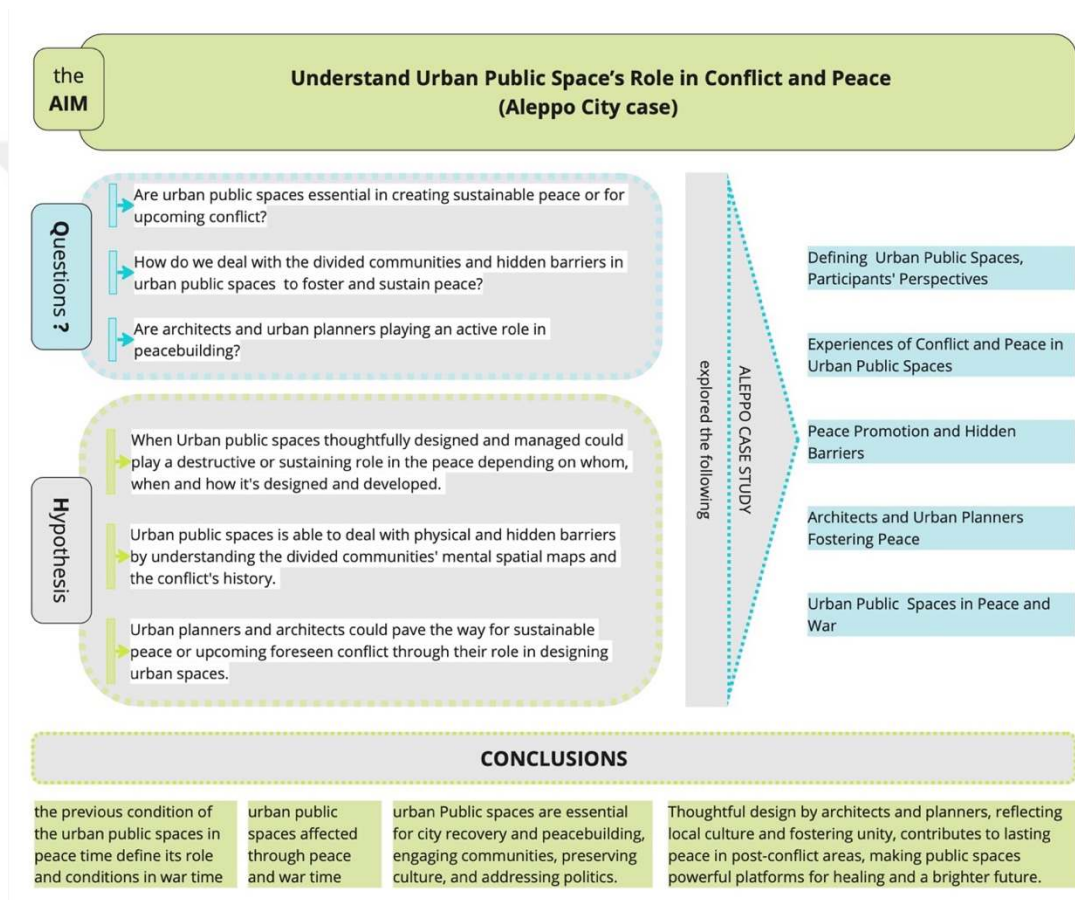


Figure 1.1 Research diagram

1.3. Methodology

The thesis will follow the deductive approach. Starting with the literature review of the role of urban spaces' design in relation to the peace process. by going through different case studies from other parts of the world, especially in the cities that went through a conflict, such as (Belfast and Johannesburg), that leads to coming up with a list of lessons learnt and recommendations for the urban spaces' development and

design as part of the development and post-war reconstruction projects, to fulfil the envisioned role at urban spaces in sustainable peacebuilding.

Applying the theoretical background on the case study of (Aleppo City) and evaluating the pre-war urban spaces and their impact on fueling the war. Then analyzing the current urban practices and their relation to the peace process helps raise the redlight and design recommendations to ensure the role of urban spaces in paving the way for sustainable peacebuilding.

The methodology of this thesis is based on implementing different types of primary and secondary sources that permit one to go deeper. The various consulted sources:

1. Cross city examination, the journey of two cities that went through conflict and peacebuilding, and the public spaces were one of the main urban tools used for post-war recovery. The review is based on the documents published by the Cities, the previous studies and study and the evaluation reports.
2. Background about the case study (Aleppo city) based on the city's reports, previous studies, papers, and geographic maps. In addition to, reports that describe the current peacebuilding process' activities.
3. information collected by using FGDs & SSIs tools with Aleppians, who are a resident of the city now, and how lived in the city before the war.
4. Annalyse the Views and opinions collected by using FGDs and SSIs tools with previous and current residents of the city.

The following figure shows the interrelation between the different tools used for this thesis and the areas that will be explored by using these tools.

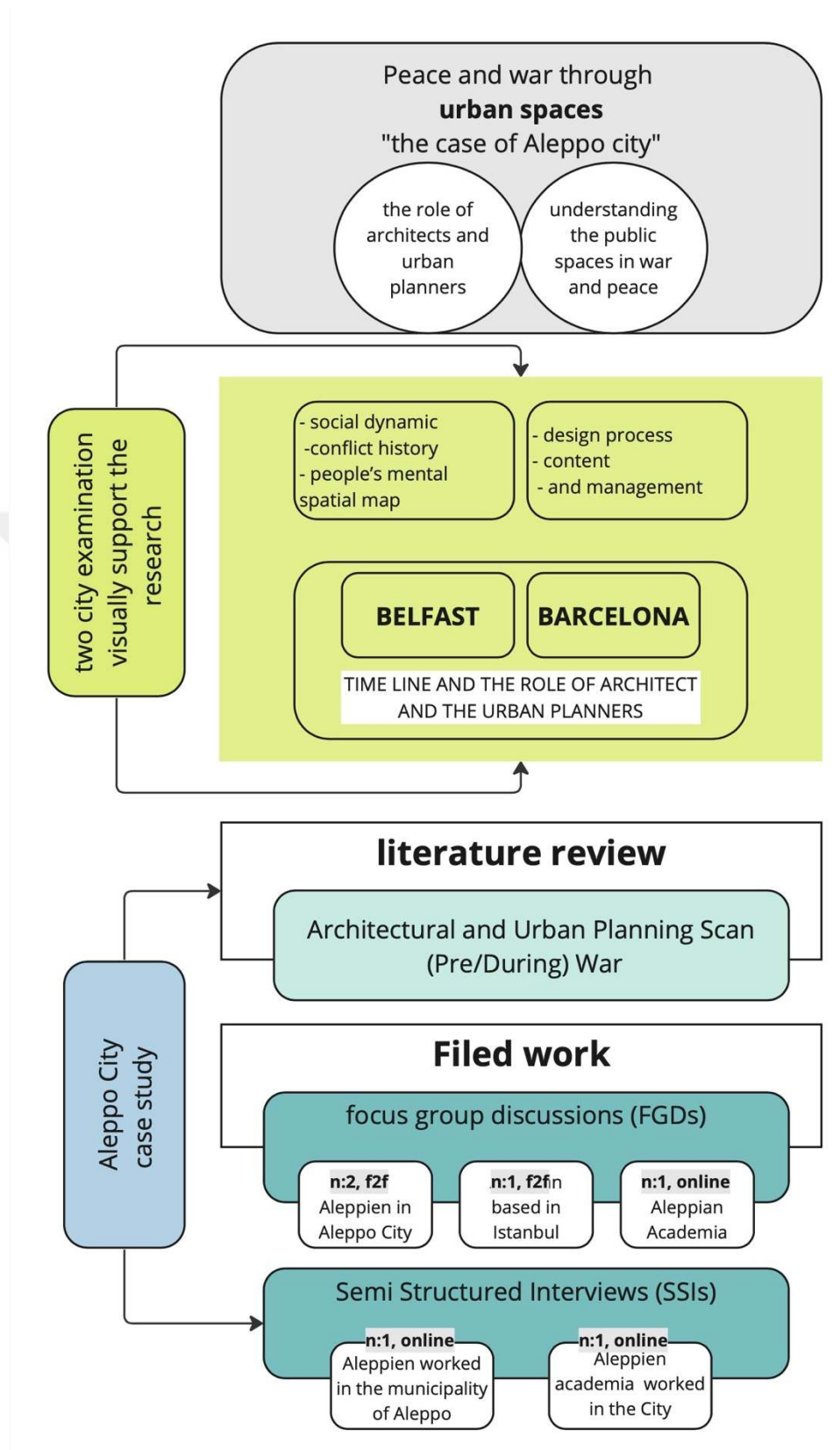


Figure 1.2 Thesis flow chart

1.4. Disposition

This study encompasses five distinct chapters, each contributing essential insights to the study. Chapter 1 serves as the introduction and outlines the aim of the study. It begins with an introduction to the study, providing a context for the subsequent chapters. The chapter then elaborates on the study's specific objectives, followed by a comprehensive explanation of the chosen methodology. Lastly, Chapter 1 provides a disposition, offering a roadmap of the subsequent chapters' content.

Chapter 2 delves into a cross-city examination of two significant urban centers, Barcelona and Belfast. The chapter explores the importance of public urban spaces in these cities and highlights the reasons behind selecting Belfast and Barcelona for the study. Subsequently, it presents an in-depth analysis of the urban dynamics in Belfast and Barcelona, shedding light on the distinctive characteristics of their development. The chapter culminates in summarizing the literature review categorized by thematic, encompassing strategies, tactics, ownership, participation, vision, policies, and the critical role of architects and urban planners in peacebuilding efforts.

Chapter 3, titled "Material and Methods," elucidates the study's methodology, providing a comprehensive understanding of the methods employed in the study. Additionally, it details the specific material relevant to the study of Aleppo City, an essential case for this research.

Chapter 4 unfolds the "Case Study Aleppo," commencing with an exploration of the city's background, contextualizing its significance in the broader study context. The chapter then scrutinizes the architectural and urban planning endeavors during both pre and wartime periods. Subsequently, it examines the public urban spaces within Aleppo City, offering valuable insights into their transformations during times of conflict and peace. The chapter further presents a detailed analysis of the case study's findings, including participants' perspectives on defining public urban spaces, experiences of conflict and peace in these areas, barriers to peace promotion, and the pivotal role of architects and urban planners in fostering peace within these spaces.

Lastly, Chapter 5, "Conclusion," summarises the study's key findings and insights from the cross-city examination and case study. It provides a comprehensive interpretation of the results, addressing critical issues identified in the literature. The chapter

concludes with a discussion of future research directions and their potential impact on urban spaces' role in peace and war contexts.



CHAPTER 2

CROSS-CITY EXAMINATION, (BARCELONA & BELFAST)

Chapter 2 embarks on a cross-city examination, focusing on the urban dynamics of two distinctive cities, Barcelona and Belfast. This chapter begins with exploring the significance of public urban spaces, emphasizing their pivotal role in shaping the urban fabric and fostering community interactions. Furthermore, the chapter delves into the rationale behind choosing Belfast and Barcelona for this comparative study, shedding light on the unique post-war experiences that shaped these cities' development.

Subsequently, the chapter unveils the intricate dynamics of Belfast, providing an in-depth analysis of its urban landscape and how it has evolved over time. The exploration of Belfast's urban dynamics sets the stage for a similar scrutiny of Barcelona, unraveling the city's architectural and urban planning endeavors that have contributed to its current state.

To provide a comprehensive understanding, the chapter synthesizes the existing literature thematically, focusing on key aspects such as strategies and tactics, ownership and participation, vision and policies, and the critical role of architects and urban planners in peacebuilding efforts.

2.1 Urban Public Spaces

urban Public spaces are important arenas for social interaction and engagement and can be crucial in shaping social relations and identities [9]. However, these spaces are also often contested and can become sites of conflict and violence, particularly in war and political unrest [10]. This chapter examines how urban public spaces can be affected by and affect peace and war, drawing on the perspectives of academic researchers in urban planning.

Research has shown that urban public spaces can promote peace and resolve conflict. For instance, public spaces can facilitate intergroup contact and communication, leading to greater understanding and empathy between different groups. Additionally, public spaces can serve as venues for cultural events, festivals, and celebrations that highlight the diversity of a community and promote positive intergroup relations [11].

Public spaces can also provide opportunities for collective action and political engagement, allowing citizens to voice their opinions and influence decision-making processes [12], [13]. And can also play an important role in peacebuilding efforts. In post-conflict situations, the reconstruction and revitalization of public spaces can serve as a symbolic gesture of rebuilding and healing. The public spaces can be designed in post-conflict situations to facilitate peacebuilding efforts. The authors propose a framework considering the social, spatial, and temporal dimensions of post-conflict public space design. They argue that public space design can be essential in fostering social interaction and reconciliation among divided communities [13]. These spaces can also provide opportunities for dialogue and reconciliation among conflicting groups, particularly if they are designed and managed to promote inclusivity and accessibility.

On the other hand, urban public spaces can also become sites of conflict and violence. Research has shown that urban spaces can serve as venues for various forms of violence, including gang activity, drug trafficking, and terrorism. Public spaces can also become sites of contention and struggle over resources, power, and identity. For instance, using public spaces for political demonstrations, rallies, and protests can lead to confrontations and clashes between groups with opposing views. In addition, one of the key themes that emerge from the literature is that urban public spaces can serve as a site of resistance against oppressive regimes during war and conflict. For example, in the case of the Arab Spring protests in Egypt and Tunisia, urban public spaces such as Tahrir Square and Bourguiba Avenue were used as a site for mass mobilization against the government. These spaces served as a symbol of resistance against the regime and a platform for citizens to voice their demands for change [14]. However, it is also important to note that urban public spaces can be sites of violence and conflict during war and political unrest. For example, during the Syrian Civil War, urban public spaces such as public squares and parks were targeted by both the government and opposition forces, resulting in their destruction and displacement of residents [15].

In addition to the role of urban public spaces in times of war and conflict, academic researchers have also explored the role of urban planning in promoting peace and reconciliation in post-conflict settings. In particular, the literature emphasizes the need for urban planners to involve communities in the process of rebuilding and

redevelopment, as well as the importance of creating public spaces that are inclusive and accessible to all [15].

Furthermore, academic researchers have also highlighted the role of public art in promoting peace and reconciliation in post-conflict settings. For example, the Belfast murals in Northern Ireland depict scenes of the conflict and its aftermath and have been used to promote dialogue and understanding between different communities.

Despite the potential for conflict in urban public spaces, research has highlighted the importance of understanding the factors contributing to peace and conflict. For instance, research has shown that the design and management of public spaces can significantly impact the extent to which these spaces promote peace and facilitate conflict resolution [16]. Furthermore, research has shown that social and economic factors, such as poverty, unemployment, and social exclusion, can also contribute to tensions and conflicts in urban public spaces [17].

In conclusion, urban public spaces have the potential to both promote peace and contribute to conflict and violence. However, academic research has highlighted the importance of understanding the various factors contributing to peace and conflict in these spaces. By understanding these factors, policymakers and urban planners can develop strategies and interventions to maximize the potential of urban public spaces to promote peace and facilitate conflict resolution. Furthermore, urban planning has a vital role to play in promoting peace and reconciliation in post-conflict settings, including the creation of inclusive and accessible public spaces and the promotion of public art that promotes dialogue and understanding.

2.2 Why Belfast and Barcelona Cities

The thesis analyses the urban spaces' role in dealing with the city peacebuilding process based on its social dynamic concerning the conflict history and developed mental spatial maps as part of post-war reconstruction and development projects, in addition to the role of urban planners and architect in this transformation to peace.

Through exploring several cities globally that have grappled with divisions and have implemented diverse approaches to address them. These cities include Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, which faced 'urbicide' and the Dayton Agreement; Johannesburg, South Africa, navigating post-apartheid urban challenges; Nicosia,

Cyprus, surmounting physical walls, though not political ones; Basque Country, Spain, transitioning from 'Etxea' to 'Euskal Hiria'; Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina, where the city itself became a war spoil; and Beirut, Lebanon, which serves as a compelling case study in an indeterminate state, with its urban spaces playing a complex role in peacebuilding.

These cities and many others worldwide have navigated the intricate relationship between urban spaces and peacebuilding. They offer diverse case studies that further enrich our understanding of the dynamic interplay between conflict, urban planning, and the role of architects and urban planners in shaping the post-conflict urban environment. However, Belfast and Barcelona were selected as primary case studies in this thesis due to their unique trajectories and pronounced impact on the peacebuilding process, making them particularly instructive for the research's objectives.

Amidst this array of cases, the thesis centers its attention on Belfast, Northern Ireland, and Barcelona, Spain. These cities were chosen for their unique narratives and substantial influence on peacebuilding. The first one is Belfast, which went through a civil war that ended with a peace agreement where most of its articles were implemented. Besides, reconstruction and rehabilitation work focused on revitalizing the public space. However, an underlying conflict still threatens the sustainability of peace and can turn the city into a violent conflict mode at any moment. It was chosen because of its ability to tell us about the un-impartial role of public spaces and its role in maintaining the root causes of the conflict. And how the urban tools and spaces have been politicized where the peace process needs to be applied consciously at the metropolitan city and local levels simultaneously, considering the daily interaction of the people and mental maps of their movement at the city-local level. As well as the long-time span of this city experiencing war and peace could help us extract trends and lessons learnt from the relationship between the political peace process and urban interventions.

The second one is (Barcelona), where the urban planner and architects played an essential role in sustaining the peace agreement and managed to reflect it at the urban structure level by working on connecting the urban spaces across the city at the local neighbourhood's level. Urban planning and public spaces design, revitalization and

interconnection played a vital role in achieving the city's transition that was affected by the conflict and the political transition from Franco dictatorship to democratic Spain. In the mid-1980s, the recovery of public spaces, the recreation of new parks, and the revitalization of the city centre were critical in translating a new culture and value into the city system. The literature review of Barcelona, scanning the public space design process using the timeline, followed by an assessment of the function of public spaces in post-conflict rebuilding to determine the success and failure of the public space design process. And the long period of the city by using the development of public spaces strategy to disseminate the values of democracy helps us to extract the valuable role of the architects and urban planners, in addition to the principles of public spaces designed for peace.

Going through their timeline and understanding the role of urban planners and architects in designing urban spaces as part of the peacebuilding process, as well as the role of the public spaces in peace and war and the principles of creating public spaces for peace.

2.3 Belfast City

2.3.1 Introduction

Northern Ireland experienced decades of conflict from the 1960s to the late 1990s, where more than 3500 people were killed. This period is known as the “Troubles”, the historical conflict between Protestants against the Catholic minority. The conflict ended with a peace agreement signed in April 1998; the “Good Friday Agreement” was based on a power-sharing government that included political forces and armed groups. After twenty years, most of the Agreement has been implemented, where the armed group still exists, but with different shapes and roles, and violence has noticeably decreased. Whereas sectarian tensions still exist, and the conflict has taken on another form, recently, as part of Brexit, the situation has become complicated, and there are threats of the rise of conflict again. In this paper, the study examine the timeline of Belfast City, a symbol of religious (Catholic/Protestant) and nationalist (Irish/British) conflict that has experienced violent sectarian conflict since 1969. This sectarian segregation was applied at the urban level, where inner community violence resulted in creating 15 peace lines made of various materials, ranging from metal to

light fabrics. Most of them still exist [18]. Understanding Belfast's journey and what has happened internally and externally that resulted in the current segregated reality is essential. By highlighting the sustainable recovery factors for any future recovery plan, the paper describes those factors within the context of Belfast. Emphasizing that there is no recovery blueprint and understanding the internal and external context is essential for developing a recovery plan.

2.3.2 Background of the Belfast Civil War

Belfast is the capital of Northern Ireland, a relatively new city. From a population and economic perspective, it is considered the most important city in the region [19], [20]. To better understand the root causes of the conflict in Northern Ireland, the paper performed a history scan of the main events, ending with the Good Friday agreement, where the Agreement is reviewed as is its implication in the following years until 2021. The history scan considered the following main categories Figure 2, according to three perspectives: changing of control, a significant development in the city and the main agreements.

Early inhabitation and the city's modern history: This phase paved the way for the "civilization and ethnic division" and is considered the start of city division. The newcomers (Protestants) settled within their walls and away from the residents' Catholic people; Catholics perceived them as a "pocket of civilization" [21].

Belfast industrial development and recent position: In this phase, considered as a cornerstone for "state division", there was a high need for workers; where Catholics moved inside the walls of Protestants, and the interaction in the community gave rise to class divisions because the Catholic community gathered in clusters [21].

Ireland partition: As part of this phase, the "nationalist division" became the main shape of the state and religious division. Catholics claimed Irish independence, and Protestants called for unification with Great Britain [21].

The city's decline: The conflict surfaced and became violent with clear and defined conflict parties. The segregation of the communities became much more evident and increased during the troubles in Northern Ireland in 1969 [21].

Pre-peace Agreement: To attempt to settle the conflict, several action projects in 1977–1985 reflected all shapes of the conflict in the spatial design of the city [21].

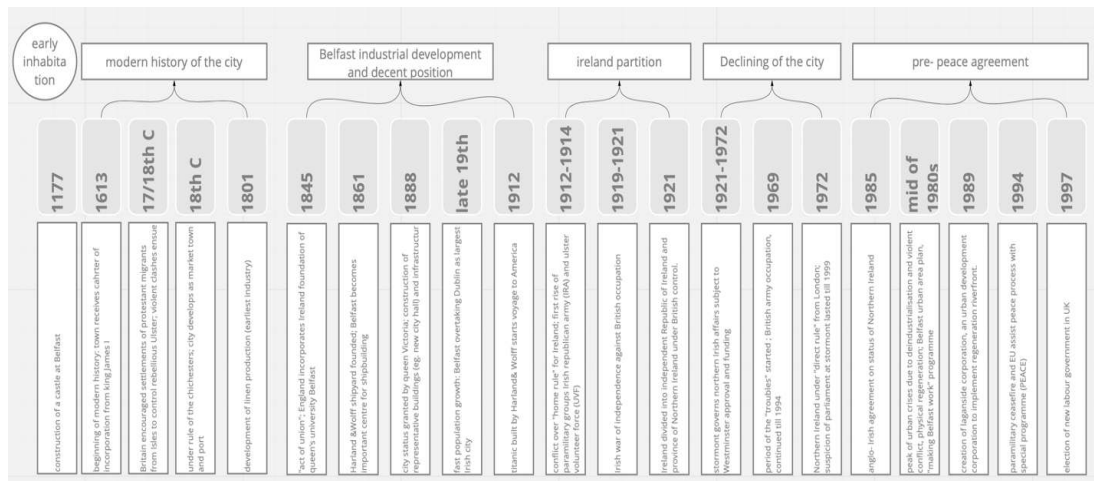


Figure 2.1 Background of the Belfast walls: main events- developed by the author.

2.3.3 Peace Design Process

Several agreements were established until the peace process started without violence in Northern Ireland. The Good Friday Agreement was a starting point for peace implementation, even though the contents of the Good Friday Agreement were not put in place directly. There was a need for several complementary agreements and negotiations to shift the conflict between the conflicting parties to the political level and establish several entities that could put the Agreement into practice as part of a political architecture design.

Good Friday Agreement (1999): The Agreement ensured power-sharing between political parties. It promised the city a better future, attracting investment development projects from the E.U. and the U.K. Despite this progress, peace lines still exist between sectarians, dividing communities and waiting for the conflict to lie under the ashes [20]. The British and Irish governments and the major political parties in Northern Ireland signed it. One significant point in the Agreement was that Northern Ireland is part of the U.K. Reuniting with the rest of Ireland was possible through a majority vote in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The Agreement contributed to the transference of authority from the U.K. to a Belfast parliament, which helped abolish weapons of fighting groups and join the political process, which resulted in a noticeable reduction in violence [20].

Complementary agreements: There was a need for several complementary agreements and negotiations to shift the conflict from the conflicting parties to the political level:

(1) The St. Andrews Agreement (2006) and (2) The Hillsborough Agreement (2010).

Political Architecture: As part of the peace agreement (Good Friday), different entities and structures were developed to ensure the implementation of the peace agreement.

The power-sharing between the conflicting parties was the guiding principle for this architecture, as well as activating the role of different sectors in peace agreement implementation and ensuring their involvement in the process [22] [23]. Three bodies that were created include (1) The Northern Ireland Assembly, (2) North–South and East–West, and (3) the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

2.3.4 Current Status Quo of the Peace Agreement

Complementary (Initiative/Agreement): Several events led to ensuring the peace agreement's survival and the continuation of the peace process, such as the 2013 Haass Initiative, the 2014 Stormont House Agreement and the 2015 Fresh Start Agreement [24]. Those complementarity initiatives and agreements supported the peace process procedures. Still, they did not deal with the root causes of the conflict [24], [25], such as the division in the city at the community and political levels and the lack of trust among them.

Crises in the Peace Process: The political instability led to reviving the unrest and violence in the city; this event started in 2017 and was followed by a series of events, ending with the return of the violence in 2021. The followings are the events and their sequences [24] [25], [24], [26] (1) March 2017 early (unexpected) Assembly Elections, (2) the re-establishing of the government in 2019, (3) leadership crisis in April 2021, and (4) the return of violence in March–April 2021.

Ongoing Challenges: More than 20 years after the signing of the peace agreement, there are various levels of achievement, such as establishing the democratic power-sharing Institution, decommissioning paramilitary weapons, policing and security normalization and human rights and equality [24]. However, the peace process faces several ongoing challenges, such as sectarian divisions, dealing with the past, the paramilitary at the local level, and economic development and equal opportunities. In addition to Brexit influencing the power-sharing dynamics between the conflicted communities and related parties, the USA has an ongoing concern by supporting the

Northern Ireland peace process. It has noticeable mutual economic benefits through the city's main events. Considering the external and internal contexts, from the Good Friday Agreement to Brexit to the present day. To understand the trends and causes of those events and discuss the possible way to deal with them, this analysis emphasizes the importance of focusing on peace as a long-term goal that needs effort and continuity to highlight that peace is a journey, not an objective that can be easily reached. It needs to be part of all city dynamics aspects; more specifically, the paper focuses on urban Planning and architecture's role in sustaining peace.

2.3.5 Belfast Status Quo When the Peace Agreement was Signed.

Peace Lines or Peace Walls: From 1969 to this day, even though the peace agreement took place in 1998, some peace walls still exist [27]. The purpose of the peace line is to separate the two opposing parties and related communities in religious, nationalist and ethnic conflict [28]. The size of the walls varies; the largest is 12 m in height with a 1.6 km width, and the smallest is 3 m in height with a 30 m width. The walls are not fully closed and do not surround the areas; some have a gate controlled by the police or residents [18]. Recently, artists painted the walls with graffiti representing belonging and the identities of the conflict parties, with defined colours and flags for each. This graffiti is a sign of the ongoing conflict that has now taken cultural shape and is now a tourist attraction [28]. The plan to remove all peace walls by 2023 seems unlikely to be achieved.

Regeneration Projects: There was a considerable lack of trust in public authorities, but still, in the mid of what was called “the Troubles time”, several regeneration projects started in 1977, which paved the way for the city's development. At the same time, urban development participated in more division at the urban and social fabric levels [12]. Despite the excellent quality of those projects, they are widening the mistrust gap with the authorities because the projects structured new social classes and served the wealthiest people in the city. The redevelopment project started in 1977 aimed to solve and deal with housing problems. In 1996, another project started on “visioning the city” for the upcoming 25 years (for details, see City Vision Section) [27]. The focus of those projects was to work on neutral areas and the economic development of the city [29], [30], envisioning a detailed master plan in 2004 that aimed to achieve this vision by transferring the city “from decline to revival” [30].

In 2020, the process was followed by the launch of the local development plan (2020–2035), which focuses on the development of the centres in the city at different levels, and it will ultimately create more opportunities for the city to play an active role in its economic growth. Additionally, it focuses on the following areas: city centres, district centres, local centres and neighbourhood centres [31] [32]

Hidden Barriers: The results of the regeneration projects led by the government ensured the restricted movement of vehicles and pedestrians to provide a more secure, enclosed and defensive environment for the residential areas. Political and military authorities influenced the designs of social renewal projects because those projects implemented in the pre-peace Agreement were part of a trust-building exercise to solve the housing problem and improve the living conditions of the houses categorized as unfit. Still, security and defensive mechanisms influenced all programs and projects. A means to ensure security among the conflicted communities was developed, where a confidential committee was working in a hidden way parallel to all development and housing programs. Regeneration and urban development interventions legitimized and even ensured community divisions. The mental maps of where one can move in the city still limit and guide people's movements and decisions of going to certain places and using services in specific areas. These mental maps came from the violent accidents during the conflict, which most people still hold in their memory, and thus do not feel comfortable crossing those lines.

“It’s not a wall, it’s a silent wall...What would you call a wall that’s there, but not there?... It used to be that you couldn’t walk down to the turn [beyond the traffic island.] It was just a no-no. You can do it now. I’m going to the wee butchers at the turn of the road. I’m up here 30 years, and I only started going there just before Christmas. That’s something I wouldn’t have done before.” [31]

Physical Barriers: Within the community, barriers were developed by using architectural and urban designs Figure 2.2 & Figure 2.3 , whereas as part of the housing program that took place from 1977 to 1985, open-ended streets were replaced with new close-ended roads Figure 2.4, which severed the connection of neighbourhoods in within the same community as well. This practice was part of an architectural and urban trend emphasizing privacy and local ownership of public spaces. Still, designers have added to it to fit within the security concerns in Belfast, as can be seen from the

testimonies of the architects and urban designers who participated in the design of these neighbourhoods.



Figure 2.2 separates Catholic housing from Protestant housing [31].



Figure 2.3 Industrial estates were established to separate Catholic from Protestant housing [31].

“We tried to make a clear divide between pedestrians and cars, trying to make areas much more secure and controlled for the residents, to try and give people privacy and security.” [29], [31]

Figure 2.5
“We tried to break the areas down and make them much more private for those that lived there. We built quite crude ways, building walls here and here to stop traffic and through-movement and give the folks that lived here more ownership. That certainly was the theme. The design thinking around these redevelopment areas was how do you move back to something that gives local people control and keeps those that aren’t from the area out.” [31]



Figure 2.4 The House in the centre of the picture was built in the middle of a former street [31].



Figure 2.5 Cars cannot cross neighbourhoods for security reasons [31].

Urban spatial arrangements at the neighbourhood level prevented any chance of daily natural meetings among residents. The same is true for the residential passages, disassembled into fragmented, unconnected paths just opened to the quarters' residents.

2.3.6 Belfast Vision

As part of the agreement preparation, work on envisioning Belfast started in 1994. A committee from all sectors was established to perform a broad consultation work to envision the city within 25 years. The development steps toward peacebuilding released the energy towards working on the city development at the economic level. The vision aimed to cover different sectors under a widened umbrella vision of a connected and mutual city. The vision's concept focuses on economic development that encourages the connection of mutual profit for all actors and builds on common areas among them [29].

For this reason, they developed a set of criteria needed to be in place to achieve the vision and deal with the current conflict context and dynamics, to ensure the competencies that support economic development, and to deal with the community's division. Developing the vision is centred on encouraging creativity, which will help to boost the city and be a considerable step forward in its development process. The initial idea to ensure originality within the highly conflicted and polarized community was to work on the neutral (in-between) areas, which raises the question of how neutral spaces will manage division problems and support the development of the city centre. In addition, the other question raised as part of the vision-related to leadership is who will lead the process and the importance of the leadership role to ensure the long-term implementation of this vision. Additionally, what circumstances need to be in place to safeguard the influential role of the renewal leadership? Building a broader partnership and participatory approach with the community and activists is also acknowledged, where the urban problem cannot be solved without a more comprehensive partnership network.

In conclusion, the vision focuses on developing and preserving the existing local business and internal investment while opening up to the broader market and supporting community-based enterprises and the social economy [29]. It aims to ensure the city centre's diverse role and full awareness that democracy is essential to urban development [29].

2.3.7 Belfast Urban Recovery Policies

As defined by the Good Friday Agreement, urban policies must be impartial, not reflect or be biased toward any conflicting parties, and protect people's land and property, predominantly those of the Catholic minority [18]. The policies developed to achieve specific aims are aligned with the peace agreement. In contrast, the executive plans and projects diverted the original policies' aims from their direction, as shown in below [33].

Table 2.1 Designed policies vs implemented projects.

Policies	Plans and Projects
Encouraging the increase in residential population in Belfast city centre	Planning provided about three times more hectares for business use in the city centre compared to residential use
The growth of housing has been set as an indicator of the city centre	Few projects have been implemented in the city centre with mixed-use to encourage housing
Develop public transportation to enhance the connection between the different areas and for all people	No new routes were designed and implemented to connect the west to the north of Belfast
Develop a comprehensive regional transportation network for vehicles and cyclists	Only adding to what already exists without reinforcing the missed connection
Ensuring balanced opportunities for economic development	The high rent values for offices in the centre do not encourage newly created creative businesses to move to the city centre
New urban areas should respect the surrounding context	Bedford Street is located in a historical area and does not respect its surrounding
Improve living conditions of the already existing housing	No funds were allocated for this purpose

2.3.8 Belfast City Centre as an Impartial Area for Development

The aims were to focus on the impartial areas for development and recovery to create a shared space for people to meet and interact, shift the focus from the comprehensive approach and the deepened divided community, and just design areas for them to meet by keeping the divisions and dealing with it. This helped to reduce conflict for over two decades but could not unite the city and the community [18]; [19]. At the exact time, the current policies focus on connecting people to the city centre and public services, which is essential. However, economic development needs to be aligned with healthier social relationships that lead to thinking more about the connection between communities. Visible and invisible barriers must be tackled compressively at all levels, city centres and among communities.

2.3.9 Connecting the Dots between the Peace Process and Urban Interventions

This section provides a multidimensional presentation of the Northern Ireland peace process and Belfast City. In conclusion, with the need to zoom out and rethink the connection between all working areas of the peace process, Figure 2.6 shows the areas that have been covered in this section: (1) the political process (in green), (2) external influence (in purple), (3) urban intervention (in red) and the monitoring process that reflects community participation (in yellow). The lack of interaction between those areas created the current status quo, consisting of sectarian division, the paramilitary at the local level, and a lack of economic development and equal opportunities.

The figure shows that peace is achieved at the political level without ensuring its application across all stages at the urban/local level. The peace keeps the community on standby, ready to revive the conflict. Even when the peace agreement was signed and implemented, the community was unprepared and did not go through the process at the urban/ local level to move toward peace. They have been waiting for the worst to come, where divisions between the conflicting communities stayed in place and were reinforced by urban policies and interventions [34]. In addition to the transfer of the sectarian tension from violence to the political forum was essential but not enough for sustainable peace.

In contrast, the divisions at the urban level increased, interaction areas decreased, and the number of peace walls increased. The process did not achieve an integrated and built-in change at the community level. Urban demographic changes, the existence of the peace wall, as well as the empty centres and hidden barriers, emphasize the idea that peace is a more complex issue and beyond the process defined by the international community.

Peace agreement partners and the external connection of these parties helped to root the conflict and transfer it to other levels, with a high risk of return to violence. They empowered the conflicting parties with financial tools and legitimized their position to lead the recovery process when the process could not support the rise of other small political parties.

How could the peace process include urban interventions? Can peace-oriented urban interventions play a role in changing the power dynamics to extend beyond the conflict actors and open the floor for peace actors from the community level supported by

urban policies and interventions? What needs to be conducted differently as part of the peace process journey in the emphasis on the critical role of urban intervention?

From the review, it was clear that urban interventions played, at least, a negative role, if not harmful, and could not participate in managing the sectarian division; urban interventions are never impartial.

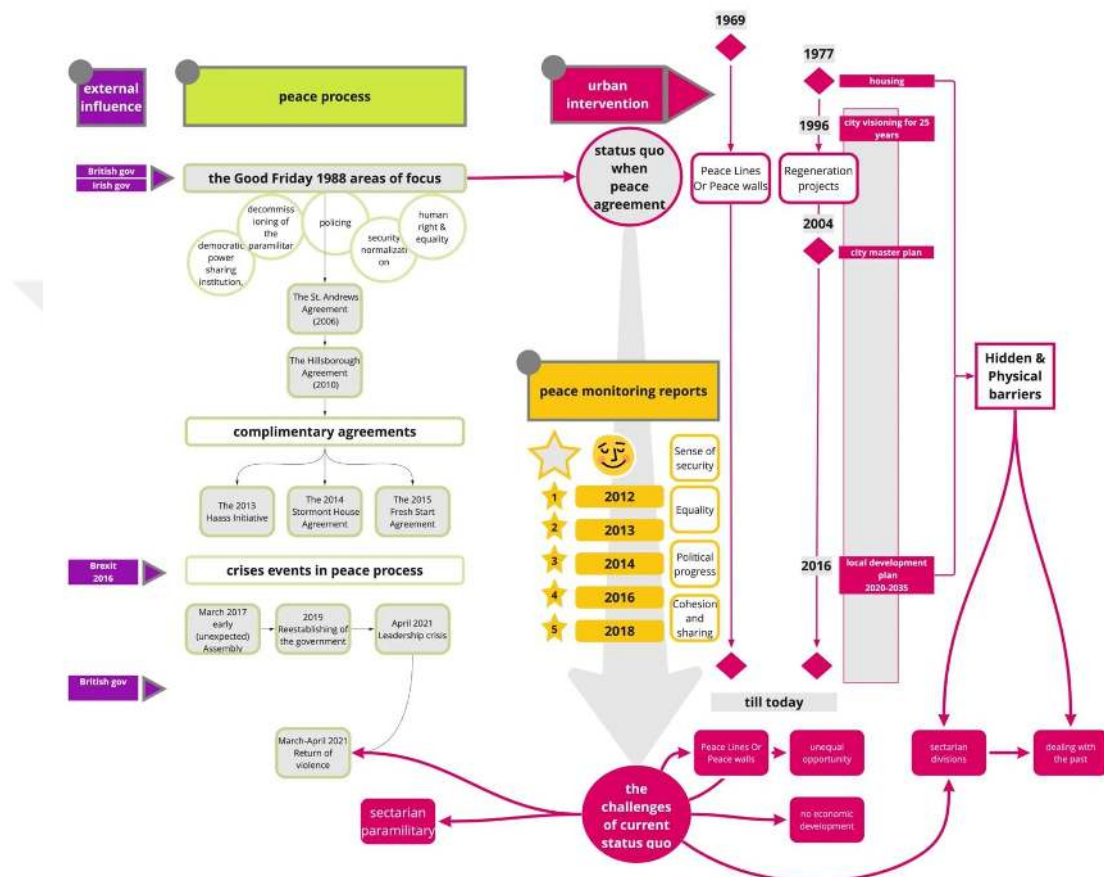


Figure 2.6 Connecting the dots of the Belfast recovery journey. (Developed by the author.)

2.4 Barcelona City

2.4.1 Background of Barcelona Public Spaces Design

Barcelona's city story with public spaces started as part of urban regeneration local policy and making public spaces in the 1980s. Their policy had international recognition for its way of improving the city, where more than three hundred qualified inter-connected public spaces and facilities were created. It aims to respond to people's claims to develop their neighbourhoods and fulfil their need to play an active role in the civic and political realm [5]. This policy was implementable because it resulted

from the 1970s grassroots movements' proposals on urban rehabilitation, where the political parties found it acceptable within the political environment after a long-contested dictatorship that lasted for forty years. The reconstruction of Barcelona focused on the local urban interventions, including the public spaces, that connected the diverse areas to establish a network of democratic gathering spaces [2]. the concept is that by creating connected public spaces that will participate in dealing with the segregation city faced during the dictatorship era, recovering the urban fabric, and developing the quality of life at the local level.[35] where the connected public spaces in Barcelona still play an active role in the present.

“And thanks to this procedure, Barcelona gained a network of small-scale public spaces that still play an important role in our present day.”[35]p.3

2.4.2 Small Scale Connected Public Spaces Strategy.

Developing a series of small projects across the different neighbourhoods and connecting those projects with their public spaces was a strategy to ensure the balance of equal recovery for all neighbourhoods in a way that responds to association claims and simultaneously limits the displacement from one area to another. [35] the design focused on developing the periphery at the same level as the centre to provide them with good urban design. The strategy was to alternate ween overall to the area- area-specific work on the fastest and the cheapest to ensure the achievement and progress in responding to the neighbourhood association claims and residents' needs. [35]

As a result of this strategy, several events also played an essential role in sustaining and challenging this strategy. The Olympiad in 1992 significantly influenced the Barcelona public spaces journey; it is considered an important milestone where the city went through structural crises to fulfil the needs of hosting the Olympiad. For this purpose, a new public-private partnership was established and guided the spatial dynamic and priorities of the design of the public spaces. This negatively affected the role of the public spaces as a place of citizenship because the global dimension dominated the preparation needed for the Olympiad and became a tourist-centred design process. This phase resulted in a higher level of exclusion and developed policies against migrants and minorities, in addition to the oppression and low freedom of expression [35], [36]



Figure 2.7 Developing the Olympic rings as well as the new centre [35]

Despite implementing the new central area as a preparation for the Olympiad, the work in developing the small public spaces continued as a strategy to balance between the big centre and the city soul, mainly since they facilitate the areas with parking lots, hotels and infrastructure. To ensure that all city is benefitting for this big event. In addition, as part of the Olympiad preparation, they worked on art integration into the public spaces as an attractive element for visitors and tourists and as an indicator of the excellent quality of the administrative services.



Figure 2.8 Art designs in the public squares as part of the Olympiad took place in Barcelona [35]

in addition to another international event in 2004, the universal culture forum shifted the focus to the global and went beyond the local political conflict. [1]. Such events put the urbanist in the dilemma of market-driven design versus citizenship and local

community needs-driven design. They manage those global events to reinforce the relationship between national, regional, and local policies [1], ensuring the city's global sustainability.

One of the events mentioned could explain the conflictive relationship over the public spaces, in one of Barcelona's neighborhood, in late of 2000 there were a vacant placed as a result of demolition work planned to be a public space as part of the 1985 urban development plan for the people in one of the marginalized neighbourhoods in the city, the people decided to take the action and shows their unacceptance for the long time passed and not designing the public space as well there were a plan for gentrifying the neighbourhood by the council and the private sector, as a result of this circumstances, the people decided to reoccupy their public space and make as it was planned (garden) for the neighborhood, they plant a tree in the middle of the empty space which faced with a refusal from the municipality and several back and forth action took place ended with the municipality took over the planet trees and sieged the area, but the activist and the citizens took over the area and planted trees and flower as well established a playground and opened theater, the conflict lasted till 2007, and became a symbol of a public demands for a public spaces that's fulfil local communities needs and priorities, where the municipality designed the public spaces according the measures and responds to the public claim. [37]



Figure 2.9 shows the planted trees and the self-managed park by its residents [37]

This event shows a un ended story where the conflict over spaces will never end, but at least having the community's culture and structure could ensure community-based urban interventions. The public spaces could be considered an indicator of the proper implication of urban interventions; if the public spaces reflect people's lives, diversity, cultures and needs, we are on the right track.

“These small-scale operations, close to the citizens, contribute to improving urban living conditions and quality and increase the citizens' pride with respect to their neighbourhood and city.”[35] p.439

2.4.3 Role of Architects and Urbanists

Another fact in Barcelona's case is the role of the architects and urbanists; they were in the street with the people and engaged in the political discussion because they believed that the city's role was to ensure the rights of the people to their streets and public spaces. The city's function and design reflect the more extended political situation, and that's what the urbanist of Barcelona focus on as part of criticizing the franco city and applying the urban justifications as an indirect way to come for a democratic city [1], [35].

As well as part of the designing and implementation of the connected public spaces, at that time was an apparent confrontation between the architects and engineers, where engineers were more progressive while architects were more involved in politics [35]. In addition to the long history of the architects' role during the conflict, when a group of architects created a platform for new-generation architects, connecting them to the latest studies in the architect and urban planning field. They actively found a solution for the current urban problems and visioned the city's plans [35].

Understanding the historical and cultural relationship between the people and their city's public spaces was essential in the development role of the architects and urban planners in transferring the city and standing against the policies developed during the Franco years, as shown in Table 2, which affected the heritage and the authenticity of the city [1]. As well it's important to mention the dependency between urban peacebuilding and the political peace process. The death of Franco opened the space for the administrative entities to apply the changes of urban peacebuilding in public areas. But still, the urban approach is essential for sustainable peacebuilding at the national and local levels [4].

Table 2.2 Comparison between Franco's Planning and what the urbanist worked on

Barcelona City during Franco's years (Wynn, 1979)	What the urbanist worked on
- It was an overbuilt landscape shaped by private power - City of limited public spaces - Working-class neighbourhoods were under-serviced	- They have helped neighbourhood-based-movement associations to analyze their local problems and define possible solutions. - They provided a political-civic education about the need for local democracy.

Urban Planning translated the economic and social program into action through 1) the process of developing and designing the urban spaces and 2) what the urban design focused on and had a priority based on the result of the participatory process. For this reason, this authority from urban design needs to be used in a way that supports the democratic transfer of the city and ensures equal opportunity and access for all groups [4].

2.4.4 Neighbourhoods Based-Movement Association

Establishing the neighbourhoods based-movement association was essential in requesting the design of more than 200 parks, where the demands at the urban level connected to the neighborhood movement for democracy. The public space at the neighbourhood level developed as part of the extensive work with the people; they defined their problems and solutions and were educated on what democracy means [1]. The use of urban tools put together all opposition parties around one shared project despite their political agenda. In addition to the essential role of the neighbourhood associations in developing the city's vision, they played a crucial role in building trust. They had a direct result in community participation reflected in the provision of their urgent needs, implementing public spaces and parks in their neighbourhoods. This process was an educational approach for the community and played a transformational role in democracy.

The neighbourhood associations are the real champions of protecting the historical quarters and claiming a better quality of life locally. They stand against the previous plan threatening their neighbourhood's historical values. Their activism was evidence

of the transition toward a democratic period. [35] their movement resulted in a democratic municipal election four years after Franco's death, followed by more decentralization at the economic level for the municipalities that played an essential role in the reviving and recovery of the city. Urban has another position in educating the people on what democratic terms mean in practice and how they can be applied daily and manage the relationship between the people and their city daily. Urban Planning ensures a breath moment for the city to deal openly with challenges and problems of the city. It paves the way for a shared future of the people in the city by connecting the spatial design with the social and civic objectives of the city [4].

2.4.5 The Role of Public Spaces as Part of Democracy and Peacebuilding

The public spaces' role in grounding the citizenship implication as part of promoting democratic practices through emphasizing the rights and responsibilities of the citizens on a practical and small-scale level, ultimately shaping the city's political frame [2]. how the dynamics taking place in the public spaces could participate in grounding the construction of citizenship at the community level. What are the criteria of those public spaces that can construct the sense of citizenship, such as belonging, recognition, rights, and ownership, and where citizenship is experienced, performed, challenged, and demanded daily? That's called locational citizenship, which the study explores in-depth as part of the Barcelona and Belfast case study [2]. public streets and spaces are a living culture that shows the various identity in the city, for it should belong to the people, not to the state, where the people all people can raise their voices on the issues of their concerns through public spaces and streets .

The urban spaces reflect the macro-political structure of the city, where each of the urban spaces has the ability, among others, to influence the city's order and political dynamic. Ultimately, the social and cultural life of the urban spaces is part of the broader state attitude, political structure and economic systems. And vice versa, they constitute a place's defining elements as a social context for political and other forms of social behaviour

Based on the viewpoint of considering the public spaces as a conflictive space where the ongoing conflict is reflected on them, as well, it's a place where the various groups meet and are introduced to each other. They manage their differences to create a unique identity that belongs to the space and all of them simultaneously. Owning the public

spaces and ensuring the inclusivity of all citizens and participating in the daily democratic life of the city, considering the public spaces as a place for citizenship in social-psychological and political terms [2]. It is also regarded as a must right at the neighbourhood level, regulated by the guidelines and policies of the neighbourhood [6].

Public spaces have a two-way effect; the value and the process of their development influence the community and the city act, and vice versa; the community's behaviour and willingness for changes will impact the role of the public spaces.

Based on this two-way role, the public spaces present new values in the community, which educates the people about democratic and collective action in the city's daily life, a critical factor in democratic practice [4]. the urban design was an opportunity for joint Planning across different ethnicities, which brought them together and ensured equal participation. The public spaces were considered connecting areas between those groups from different ethnic backgrounds [4], where post-war reconstruction aims to deal with the war causes and the issues raised during the war.

In other cases, the peace agreement might maintain segregation and balance power between the conflicted groups and communities. It cannot transfer the city to act and progress as one body for a shared future. The urban intervention needs to develop spaces and policies that support democratic practices and ensure daily diverse group interaction. Ultimately, the city can deal with the conflict that could lead to creative development [4].

The power of Planning comes from its ability to translate democratic and civic objectives into concrete actions.

Working on public spaces as part of the regeneration projects participates to the effectiveness of those projects, where the public spaces play a critical role in developing the low-income groups' situations which open space for their participation and defining their priorities. Otherwise, it is just a "renewal program" that works on the physical level [8].

Based on the above, we can conclude the success factors of public spaces' role in democracy and sustainable peace as following

1. Community participation and political education
2. Role of architects as activists and working with people

3. Implementing local thinking global
4. Planning's justification for claiming political issues.
5. Ongoing process

People in public spaces feel absorbed by what's happening around them. Those spaces take them to a unique dynamic where they gradually become part of it and have a memorable experience just by crossing through it. Public spaces create opportunities for all social groups to exchange and express themselves and protect people's rights to participate appropriately in urban spaces. As urban planners and designers, they must understand that democratic public spaces evolve through the processes and practices of the time. they must focus on the functions and procedures that enhance democratic public spaces' roles [7].

In conclusion, public spaces are the symbolic presentation of the diverse group, preserving the memory and identity and defining the political order of the city and the economic system; those spaces can play an essential role in the democracy of the city. the need to consider to what extent and how public spaces' functions might limit democratic action by understating the reciprocal role of the influence of physical on its social, cultural, and political structures [3].

Dewey (1916: 73) stated long ago, "a democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living."

2.5 Literature Review by Thematic

This section extracts the main thematic areas of design and implementation of public spaces to foster peace or conflict from the two case studies and the literature review that help to understand the Aleppo case study from this perspective. The four thematic areas could be considered the main four factors for peacebuilding-based public spaces implementation.

Why public spaces:

The two cases showed the different use of public spaces for sustaining peace and democracy or for deepening the division between conflicted communities. In the case of Belfast, urban tools have been used to maintain the divisions and the urban spaces have been designed to draw hard, physical borders between the communities, the case

of peace lines, main roads, and parking lots. At the same time, the rehabilitation of the city centre as impartial areas in-between the divided communities ended up being empty and unused. In some areas, despite the vision developed and the peace agreement articles that emphasize building trust and bridges between conflicted communities, they couldn't manage to deal with the hidden barriers between them. The implemented policies and the urban tools, and the use of public spaces deepen the division between them and not completing the peace agreement implementation. The process and the intervention couldn't transfer the city to act and progress as one body. While in the case of Barcelona city, the strategy of developing small scall-connected public spaces and the active role of the neighbourhood association in line with the architects' active role in peace and politic proposed a different scenario and scene. As Bollens described, the Guiding values for public spaces are summarized in the following [1]:

- Public access is reflected in stakeholders who participated in the design that influenced the urban design and access.
- Equality: is reflected in working with most marginalized groups and improving across all neighbourhoods.
- And democracy is reflected in the process design, ensuring participation and the interventions' priorities.

Those values helped establish and reinforce urban-based identity, which included all ethnicities and is present in the case of Barcelona city. the examination of the two cities and what other authors wrote about is clearly shown why its important to explore the role of the urban public spaces in the Aleppo city case study. As well the two cities examination concluded the main factors that foster peace and democracy or conflict listed under the following main areas that interfere or at least an attention needed to be paid to those four areas that could influence the envisioned role of the public spaces. Considering the two-way role of public spaces where it can present new values in the community, which educates the people about democratic and collective action in the city's daily life, a critical factor in democratic practice [4]. following are the main thematic areas:

- Strategic and tactics
- Vision and Policies

- Ownership and participation
- Actors for peace

The following sections present the significance of each of these factors by drawing insights from the examination of the two cities, highlighting their pivotal roles in the cities' transformation during times of both peace and conflict.

2.5.1 Strategies and Tactics

This paragraph mainly summarises how the public spaces have been used, for what purpose, and what strategies and technics put in place. Dealing with the social dynamic, history of the conflict, and hidden barriers is essential for peacebuilding-based public spaces. It can't be achieved without the liaison between urban intervention and the political peace process. The most significant positive impact that could be gained was inspired by the Venice Charter, “launched to present a proposed guideline for post-war reconstruction based on the Syrian conflict. It aims to be applicable in any other similar context as well”. [4], [34]. Emphasizing the early connection between the political process and the urban/ local interventions will pave the way for a gradual transition from war to peace at a community level. Changes need time but will not happen without a plan to deal with people’s mentality, foster new actors, and create a quick-win reality. That supports people to have a different experience because those living in diverse neighbourhoods show more openness and less racial attitudes toward others from different backgrounds [4], [28]. While working on peacebuilding, the need to spotlight such practices, plan for the gradual transition to diverse neighbourhoods and keep in mind the flexibility and porosity of urban interventions. For this reason, the strategies and the tactics of using public spaces played an essential role in both cases (Belfast and Barcelona), as explored in the previous chapter.

The Planning process ensures equity and deals with the conflict's root causes. Where all groups have equal access, opportunity, and spaces to be presented, and all are empowered to play an active role in the city's development. The sensitivity of urban land usage ensures respect for different ethnic groups, religions, and histories. As well as create spaces for interaction between all those groups. This raises the need for an urban-sensitive approach to conflict and ethnic differences.

Starting small at the neighbourhood level (Barcelona case) is essential to practice the process with the community and showcase the benefit they got from their participation;

urban equity intervention is a critical criterion for public spaces at the neighbourhood level approach. It also helps to deal with the unique needs of each neighbourhood concerning what they went through during the conflict and the mentality developed from their experience of this conflict. Because even if the whole country went through a conflict, there is still a specification related to each area. At the same time, the connection between public spaces to form a network as a step toward a general plan for the whole city is considered essential for success. In addition, it ensured the connection between the various communities.

The challenge that hinders the peace role of public spaces, explained in the case of Belfast city, is the mentality seen in the existence of physical and hidden barriers between the conflicted communities. The strategies are to maintain this separation by using urban tools such as parking lots, establishing unnecessary autoroutes between conflicted residential areas, and the close-ended roads between the residential areas. The city's division needs to be dealt with to help the community deal with their memory and, at the same time, find the way forward, where working on urban regeneration without considering the root causes of the divisions makes it directed by conflict management and used as a tool for war. Thus, it will change the development opportunities of the city later [24] and waste resources because the divisions will still be there and take a different shape and will be much more rooted and harder to deal with [28]. Maintaining the hidden barriers is considered a primary challenge for peacebuilding and other related recovery projects and programs; these barriers influence the policies and the built environment, raising the need to understand how this built environment affects peace and conflict. However, unfortunately, those hidden barriers are not considered a priority when the decision-makers and urban planners set policies and develop plans and programs for the city's development. These hidden barriers are the main obstacle to their projects and aim for developing the city. There is a need to pay attention to these barriers, which could appear as an honest urban component, such as a street, green areas or even a market centre.

Working on developing impartial spaces that might be helpful for a short time but will not provide sustainable peacebuilding and will not participate in dealing with the root causes of the conflict. The impartiality of post-conflict urban development and

recovery and the unequal distribution of resources might lead to other unforeseen conflicts. Sometimes, the need is to focus on the most affected community.

2.5.2 Ownership and Participation

This paragraph mainly summarises how the public spaces owned where using the participation tools is insufficient without understanding the context and the purpose of the participation tools usage. The cases explored in the previous section shows that fragility resulted from urban intervention despite the use of participatory tools. This resulted in so-called divided cities, such as Belfast. Divided cities are fragile because they cannot provide adequate security, public services, infrastructure, and governance to a growing number of inhabitants. They become exposed to violence, instability, poverty, health risks, and natural and human-made disasters.

Implementing participatory urban Planning approaches faces different and specific challenges. One of the main challenges lies within the governance framework (Said 2020). This is characterized by the lack of political willingness, transparency, a corrupted system, and the distorted application of decentralization, which is limited regarding the transfer of responsibilities due to the centrality of the decision-making processes. Specifically, in this context, using a post-conflict participatory approach represents a critical process. It entails a change of mentality eventually reflected in public life. Also, the application of these democratic practices can help in shaping a governance framework that takes care of guaranteeing transparency and accountability. Setting the pre-conditions for supporting the participatory approach will pave the way for good governance and guarantee political support for participation. The second challenge can be found at the scale of the local administration, where they face miscoordination mechanisms between the different actors. In addition to a substantial lack of expertise in strategic urban development [4], [38], there is a lack of awareness of participatory tools, implying a limited openness toward them [4], [38]. The third level of challenge is a matter of language regarding the term “the local”. It seems as if “the local” has become a buzzword without a clear meaning. How to define them? Are to engage with the “local” communities? Those questions are even more necessary amid a misleading of unsatisfactory results in implementing “local participation” approaches. Authors like Ljungkvist & Jarstad (2021) argue that participatory processes failed to assist capacity building and the

communities' sense of ownership toward the urban participatory approach since their needs and culture are neglected. In the same breath, Carmon (2013) raises the question of how to ensure that, by reaching specific social groups, the process does not marginalize the needs of the individuals. Finally, another identified challenge comes from the role of media in continuing the dialogue in post-conflict contexts. Media can open and provide a space for people to participate at different levels, no matter where they are. Building trust during the process and with decision-makers is essential. It relies upon building and supporting a trusted local media that can be a space of dialogue and information sharing. Building trust within the process and with decision-makers is essential throughout a conflict context. A trusted local media can ensure transparency and continuation of the dialogue, for it opens spaces for people's participation at different levels and wherever they are. The role of media is critical, for it is the channel through which information related to post-conflict rebuilding can be shared. If failing to create trusted media, other platforms can appear as an open space for marginalized groups to participate and engage. Social media platforms have been considered the source of information and the coordination platform in most recent conflicts [38].

The participatory urban tools open spaces for discussion and sharing, away from the political actors, where urban planning tools can play an essential role. Discussing a master plan or a regeneration project with the community will provide a significant opportunity for interaction and meeting. It is a technical tool that can be used for peacebuilding and needs to be considered. The planning process is as critical as the final results of the urban interventions, and urban planners can thus connect urban/local interventions with national politics [39], [34].

the centre of any transformation process should stand the communities which are explicitly in a context of conflict and, therefore, much more affected by any kind of resistance and violence. Considering the complexity of social dynamics, highlighting their vulnerable position is even more urgent. Understanding that the future urban form and the complex social mechanisms need to be tackled, the Venice Charter on Reconstruction created 21 articles under six areas. One of them is "Participation" from an angle which focuses on development and peacebuilding, enabling it to deal with the

specificity of the post-conflict context. Following are developed the four articles compounding the participatory approach for post-conflict rebuilding:

Local first: communities are the centre and the objective of any intervention. They need to be engaged at the early stage of the decision-making - their participation is a right, not a privilege [34]. It must not be forgotten that local people and actors have already started their urban interventions, even during the conflict, to respond to their current situation. For this reason, supporting their empowerment and engagement from these early stages is vital. In this way, it is possible to ensure that these urban interventions and changes are designed through a participatory approach, considering the interests and the concerns of the local groups, no matter “wherever they are.” Especially in post-conflict contexts, there is a dramatic geographical change with many displaced people and refugees. Therefore, when discussing including communities, it should be considered that they could be spread across different geographies. The whole local participation process must be inclusive, not only spatially but also institutionally, meaning that the coordination mechanisms should guarantee the engagement of the local communities - wherever they are - in the decision-making process. For this purpose, maintaining the connection between local communities and establishing platforms for dialogue and visioning of their country is essential at this stage.

The global: the post-conflict reconstruction, by its nature, involves a variety of international actors, such as academia, civil society (local, national, regional, and international), public and private sectors, as well political parties. That raises the need for high-level coordination between all the influential parties shaping the country's future [34]. Within the coordination process, the culture and the process of community engagement in decision-making will be defined as part of the design and the policies required for this phase. In addition, the formula of this coordination will determine the ability of the country for future self-development, where capacity building, the empowerment of the local organizations and structure, and the coordination with higher education institutions are essential to ensure the knowledge transfer and investing with the local assets for sustainable rebuilding.

A sum of micro-interventions: post-conflict rebuilding should be a community-oriented process. The architects need to be involved as community members and as facilitators. It is important to avoid imposing any modernization plan or agenda that

could result in dramatic changes in the culture and identity of the place [34]. At the same time, understand that post-conflict rebuilding means not waiting until the end of the conflict; instead, paying attention to the small prior interventions that are taking place and will affect the nature and identity of the city. Due to the complexity of this context, it is vital to acknowledge that the participatory approach could lead to fragmented cities. People might hide behind the wall and avoid contacting and communicating with others. For this reason, the participation process must be designed based on a comprehensive vision that ensures the city's transfer from fragility to stability [40].

Collective mapping: the international and multi-intervention nature of post-conflict rebuilding raises the need for a hub of public shared data where all the updated data regarding the affected territories, interventions and projects can be easily accessed. By counting on this tool, the effective and complementary participation of all actors at all levels can be ensured [34].

In conclusion, post-conflict rebuilding is a lifetime opportunity for the city to set the base for a sustainable transfer from conflict to peace. The result of post-conflict rebuilding needs to go beyond physical rebuilding. The participatory approach is a cornerstone in developing policies, mechanisms and procedures to deal with local issues and disputes, ensuring equal rights and opportunities for all people. With participation, everyone feels respected and engaged, and their needs and concerns are fulfilled. Cities need active citizens that participate effectively in development [41]. In addition, participation is critical in bridging the gaps between the communities and building trust between the state and the people. Based on a broad range of participation, community-oriented solutions, and a transparent process, it is possible to define the priority areas of work in post-conflict rebuilding [21]. Also, it paves the way for democracy implication, where participatory rebuilding connects the dots between community life and political expression. All this must be led to understanding the current context, where small-scale projects are essential for such implications. Overall, participatory tools help rebuild post-conflict urban settings and are crucial in laying the stones for gradually consolidating a democratic culture where people enjoy the benefits of the results. At the same time, they can have a voice to express their interests and concerns [4].

2.5.3 Vision and Policies

This paragraph mainly summarises how setting the master plan of the city that include the creation or/ and rehabilitation of the public spaces and, ultimately, its role in shaping the future of the city, where the process of visioning the city and the related policy is crucial in defining peace and conflict scenarios of the city. The cases explored in the previous sections show the fragility resulting from urban intervention in the case of Belfast city, which resulted in so-called divided cities. One of the challenges that hinder the peace role of public spaces, as explained in the case of Belfast City, is the urban visions and interventions that do not deal with the root causes of the conflict. This is reflected in the generation projects and the city's vision, and it can't deal with physical and hidden barriers between the conflicted communities.

The most significant positive impact that could be gained was inspired by the Venice Charter, “launched to present a proposed guideline for post-war reconstruction based on the Syrian conflict. It aims to be applicable in any other similar context as well”. The charter covers seven focus areas for post-conflict reconstruction: one is “urban planning and architecture”, which consists of three articles. One of them is (3) a master plan [34]. It believes in the possibility of dealing with the conflict's effects through designing a comprehensive framework that can connect small with the bigger scale of planning to deal with the root causes of the conflict. Consequently, avoid creating new public spaces that will end up being empty places. In the city centre of Belfast, where the visioning exercise of the city hoped to achieve economic development by revitalizing the city centre; on the contrary, the enacted policies were circumvented by the actors in a way that maintained the divisions and the conflict.

Fulfilling the different needs of each ethnic and cultural group is essential in designing urban policies and interventions. The requirements could be moral (psychological) or physical, which will help to define the criteria for the peaceful coexistence of the different groups and develop a common identity that includes and respects all smaller identities. All these aspects need to be discussed as part of urban policy and recovery interventions [18]; [42].

Post-conflict urban recovery is sensitive because it might establish or emphasize a particular power structure. One of the political actors could use it to ensure their control over the city's development and widen its legitimacy. Understanding the power

structure as part of the urban intervention and dealing with it as part of the recovery projects is essential to ensure sustainable peacebuilding and comprehensive development. Urban policies are a tool for peacebuilding and conflict at the same time. Additionally, the need to be careful of not paving the way for the upcoming conflict by unequal application of the urban policy that provides more benefits to one group than another [18].

Overall, no preset policies and procedures for urban development could help the local decision-makers make the most effective decisions, even more in a post-conflict rebuilding context characterized by a limitation of resources [43]. For this reason, the city visions need to address the challenges related to its context, where the public spaces' design and creation play an essential role in defining the city's characters. However, further challenges exist in recognizing the need for improvements and imagining how to address them. In the public domain, the other side of culture is politics, which necessitates different strategies. In addition, working with administrations whose mandates are limited to four years is sometimes inefficient. It has proven difficult to follow up on getting projects designed and built, reinforcing the need for enduring vision shared by the local people and depending on the scale of regional or national level. For example, the Climate Corridors requires not only technical and scientific expertise but an alignment on an emotional level to believe in a common goal and the possibility of reaching it. The same goes for envisioning public spaces, which can bring people together around a shared identity and experiences, which is the case in Barcelona city.

In the case of Belfast City, the vision of centralizing the development on the impartial areas and the city centre, in addition to a considerable lack of trust in public authorities, within what was called “the Troubles time”. Several regeneration projects started in 1977, which paved the way for the city's development, but at the same time, they participated in more division at the urban and social fabric levels [31]. Despite the excellent quality of those projects, they are widening the mistrust gap with the authorities because the projects structured new social classes and served the wealthiest people in the city. In 1996, another project started on “visioning the city” for the upcoming 25 years [27]. The focus of those projects was to work on neutral areas and the economic development of the city [29], envisioning a detailed master plan in 2004

that aimed to achieve this vision by transferring the city “from decline to revival” [30]. A committee from all sectors was established to broadly collaborate to envision the city within 25 years [29].

It is evident in this case how the public spaces failed to pave the way for a peace transition when it is not connected to a wider vision, whereas on the contrary, in Barcelona's case, they developed a set of criteria needed to be in place to achieve the vision and deal with the current conflict context and dynamics, to ensure the competencies that support economic development, and, at the same time, to deal with the community's division. Developing the vision is centred on encouraging creativity, which will help to boost the city and be a considerable step forward in its development process. The initial idea to ensure originality within the highly conflicted and polarized community was to work on the neutral (in-between) areas, which raises the question of how neutral spaces will manage division problems and support the development of the city centre. In addition, the other question raised as part of the vision related to leadership is who will lead the process and the importance of the leadership role to ensure the long-term implementation of this vision. Additionally, what circumstances need to be in place to safeguard the influential role of the renewal leadership? Building a broader partnership and participatory approach with the community and activists is also acknowledged, where the urban problem cannot be solved without a more comprehensive partnership network.

In conclusion, the vision aims to ensure the city centre's diverse role and be fully aware that democracy is essential to urban development [29]. The urban policies must also be impartial, not reflect or be biased toward conflicting parties, and protect people's land and property [18]. The policies developed to achieve specific aims are aligned with the peace agreement. In some cases, the focus on the impartial areas for development and recovery to create a shared space for people to meet and interact, shift the focus from the comprehensive approach and the deepened divided community, and just design areas for them to meet by keeping the divisions and dealing with it. This could not unite the city and the community [18]. At the exact time, the current policies focus on connecting people to the city centre and public services, which is essential. However, economic development needs to be aligned with healthier social relationships that lead to thinking more about the connection between

communities. Visible and invisible barriers must be tackled compressively at all levels, city centres and among communities.

2.5.4 Actors for Peace “The Role of Architects and Urban Planners.”

This paragraph mainly summarises the role of architects and urban planners in peacebuilding, what happens when their role is missed, and the different results could be achieved when they are active and working for peacebuilding. The case of Barcelona city shows the essential role of the architects and urban planners, where the leadership at the urban and architectural levels played a significant role in the political and urban future of the city [1]. Sometimes, the political leader is considered the one who does the democratic change, but in reality, the leaders could be found within urbanist professions. In addition, the planning tools were guided by the community (neighbourhood associations), ensuring the focus of the urban interventions at the neighbourhood level. Played a crucial role in building trust and directly resulted in community participation reflected in the provision of their urgent needs and the public spaces. In addition, implementing public spaces and parks in neighbourhoods was an educational approach for the community. This resulted from the active role of urban planners at a local level. Using urban tools at the planning level can also put together all opposition parties around one shared project when each party has their political agenda and vision of developing the community and transferring to democracy.

A general theory is that the relationship between the political process and the urban/local practices must be coordinated and linked. This relationship is the only way to transfer decisions to local people's daily lives [39]. The challenges that hindered sustainable peace in Belfast by changing people's mentality, dealing with the root causes of the conflict and including peace actors were due to the absence of urban planners and architects in the peacebuilding process.

In the case of Belfast City, the conflict actors are the same as those who control people's daily life and urban policy, which is seen in the governance structure and the misuse of the urban policy. Urban is always in a dynamic position that raises the need not to wait for a peace agreement or settlement. Because it might be too late and used to ensure the policies of dictatorship if urban planners and architects didn't actively involve others will use the urban intervention to maintain the division and sustain the conflict; urban intervention is not waiting.

The most significant positive impact that could be gained was inspired by the Venice Charter, which was launched to present a proposed guideline for post-war reconstruction based on the Syrian conflict. It aims to be applicable in any other similar context as well. The charter covers seven focus areas for post-conflict reconstruction “Urban planning and architecture” is one of them, which consists of three articles; the two articles that directly relate to this paragraph are the role of the architect and the grassroots facilitators.

Indicators that could be drawn out from the article on the “role of architects” are the followings: 1) architects and urban planners are in the decision-making circles, 2) architects and urban planners are active in problems and challenges management, 3) architects and urban planners have an equal role with the politicians and economist. This emphasizes the importance of ensuring the involvement of architecture and urban planners in different platforms from the beginning, which will pave the way for continued participation in the other decision-making circles. The peacebuilding process is not happening linearly, intervention at the urban level is taking place even during the conflict, and there might not be a starting point for the recovery process.

Indicators drawn out from the article on the “grassroots facilitators” are the followings: 1) The bottom-up approach in grassroots Planning and local initiatives, 2) the community articulating their needs into an actual design program, 3) the decision-making entities influenced through the critical mass from the community, 4) socially conscious solutions provided through the mediation role. This emphasizes the importance of the capacity-building initiatives conducted with the engineers and architects, such as advocacy and facilitation skills, and provides them with tools that help them facilitate the participatory work with the local communities as part of the urban interventions.

In conclusion, It is essential to include urban planners and architects in the early stage of the peacebuilding process because politics is the opposite of building bridges. The daily issues of people’s lives are politicized and discussed based on differences and fears, not on commonality and shared hopes and concerns. Urban intervention tools provide a space for including marginalized communities and dealing with the underlying root causes of the conflict [34]. [44]. the Venice Charter on Reconstruction emphasizes the role of architects and urban planners in areas of the postwar condition.

They are identified as possessing the skills and capacity to reshape the physical reality, considering the needs of the communities while taking care of adequately managing the resources.

For this reason, they should also be part of the global decision-making tables, along with politicians and economists. Architects and urban planners should be the implementers of post-conflict rebuilding interventions. In the Venice Charter on Reconstruction, they are additionally urged to join forces acting together as a “transnational pressure group” [34].



CHAPTER 3

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Chapter 3 stands as a vital cornerstone of this thesis, presenting the systematic approach employed to gather essential data and address the study's questions. In this chapter, the study offer a comprehensive introduction to the materials and methods utilized in the study, with a specific focus on public spaces within Aleppo City.

The study adopted a case study approach to shed light on the urban dynamics and peacebuilding potential of Aleppo City. Furthermore, a focus group discussion tool was thoughtfully implemented, enabling the collection of valuable data and insights from various participants.

The chapter commences with a detailed exploration of the chosen study methods, offering readers an understanding of the meticulous procedures used to gather and analyze data effectively. Subsequently, the focus shifts to the unique materials relevant to this study, specifically focusing on Aleppo City as the primary case study, which provides a robust foundation for the subsequent in-depth investigation.

3.1 Methods

The method used in the study consist of a case study and filed work that reached 33 participants by using focus group discussion and semi-structured interview tools. The study methods aimed to provide an understanding of the role of public spaces in peace and war. The case study and focus group discussion tool allowed us to obtain detailed and nuanced data that was analysed thoroughly to generate insights. By combining these methods, the study ensured the reliability and validity of the findings presented in the following sections of this paper.

Case study: the study selected Aleppo City as a compelling case study to achieve its objectives. By applying the case study method, and comprehensively understanding the city's development and history, allowing us to understand its historical evolution and current state, as well as the urban public spaces' significance in both times of peace and conflict. Moreover, the study delved into the city's historical documents and reviewed previous findings by other researchers on the role of public spaces in Aleppo City.

urban public spaces as part of the wider urban interventions, the study illuminates the intricate interplay between urban interventions, the timeline of conflict, and the peace process. The findings from the study provide a deeper understanding of the dynamic role of urban public spaces in adapting, transforming, and influencing the city's narrative during challenging and transformative times.

Focus group discussions (FGDs): Besides the case study, a focus group discussion tool is used to gather data and insights. The participants were selected based on their experience and expertise as part of the focus group, ensuring diverse perspectives. a semi-structured questionnaire developed to guide the discussion, asking open-ended questions to allow participants to share their opinions and experiences.

the study implemented four insightful focus group discussions (FGDs) and two enlightening semi-structured interviews, providing a comprehensive understanding of public spaces in Aleppo City. A total of 31 participants took part in the FGDs, with 14 women and 17 men contributing diverse perspectives.

The study implemented three four group discussions to gather insights into the design and planning of public spaces in Aleppo city and its role in peace and war, and the challenges and opportunities for improving these spaces in the context of post-war reconstruction. The first and second focus group discussion was conducted face to face with current residents of Aleppo city, the third with former residents who now live outside Syria, and the fourth with technical engineers and architects who are pursuing their masters in post-war reconstruction and now live in a different part of the world inside and outside Syria.

The first and second focus group discussions were with 17 Aleppo residents who still living in the city. The focus group discussion was conducted face to face to cover residents from different parts of the city, especially from the eastern and western parts. The participants were carefully selected based on specific criteria, such as their experience living in the city, their age, and their occupation, as well as; the study ensured the gender balance of the participants. The participants shared their experiences and perspectives on the challenges and opportunities for their experience with the public spaces in Aleppo City, and its role in peace and war.

The third focus group discussion conducted was with 8 former residents of Aleppo who had lived in the city for at least 10 years but are currently living outside the city

due to the ongoing conflict. the participants recruited for this focus group through various means, such as social media, online forums, and personal contacts. We screened potential participants based on specific criteria, such as their length of residency in the city, their current location, their age, and their occupation, as well as; we ensured the gender balance of the participants. The focus group discussion with former residents of Aleppo provided valuable insights into the city's previous state of public spaces and the impact of the ongoing conflict on the usage and condition of these spaces. The participants shared their experiences and perspectives on the challenges and opportunities for improving public spaces in Aleppo City, drawing on their lived experiences in the city.

The fourth and final focus group discussion was with 6 technical engineers and architects from Aleppo City who were pursuing their master's on post-war reconstruction. the participants for this focus group were recruited through personal contacts and colleagues doing the master. the study screened potential participants based on their area of study and their urban planning and design expertise.

Moreover, the study included two in-depth semi-structured interviews. The first interviewee was a male academic from Aleppo who had actively participated in various research and projects related to the city. His knowledge and expertise enriched the study with his experience of the city's public spaces and their role in shaping urban development.

The second interviewee was a female professional who worked in the Aleppo City Council and actively participated in significant urban planning projects. Her experiences and contributions, such as designing squares in the old city and participating in the Aleppo master plan and rehabilitation of informal settlements, provided valuable insights into the practical aspects of public space development in Aleppo City.

the study used a real-time video conferencing tool to interact with the participants to conduct the online focus group discussion and semi-structured interviews. invitations to potential participants were sent with clear instructions on how to access the online platform. Also, the participants were informed about the purpose and objectives of the study and obtained their concerns. The focus group discussion with technical engineers and architects provided valuable insights into the design and planning of public spaces

in Aleppo city and city challenges and opportunities for improving these spaces in the context of post-war reconstruction. The participants shared their experiences and perspectives on the role of public spaces in promoting social cohesion and community resilience and the need to integrate these spaces with other urban infrastructure and services.

During the focus group discussion, open-ended questions about public spaces in Aleppo City were asked, such as their current state, usage, and challenges. Also, the participants were asked about their experiences of using public spaces in the city, their opinions on how they can be improved, and the role of public spaces in peace and war. The discussion was moderated by a trained facilitator who ensured that all participants had equal opportunities to share their thoughts and experiences.

Overall, the four focus group discussions and the two semi-structured interviews provided rich and diverse data that helped us comprehensively understand the issues related to public spaces in Aleppo City and their role in peace and war. The insights generated from these discussions can inform policymakers, planners, and designers in their efforts to revitalize and improve public spaces in the city and contribute to post-war reconstruction and sustainable urban development in Aleppo City.

3.2 Material (Aleppo City)

Aleppo City was selected as the material for this study as it represents a unique case study of post-war reconstruction and the revitalization of public spaces in a city that has experienced long-lasting conflicts and destruction. The city has a rich cultural heritage and history, and its public spaces have played a significant role in shaping the social and cultural fabric of the city and ultimately played a role in peace and war. Therefore, understanding the role of urban public spaces in Aleppo City is essential for post-war reconstruction and revitalization, promoting peace and social cohesion.

As the material for this study, Aleppo City was selected as a case study to explore the role of urban public spaces in promoting peace and healing in a post-war context. The study employed focus group discussions to gather insights from participants, including current and former residents, technical engineers and architects, and the semi structured interviews that targeted technical from Aleppo city in order to reflect on the role of urban planners and architect as part of urban public spaces design.

The decision to utilize a the combination of focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews stemmed from the aim of fostering a holistic understanding of the research context. This ensured that the data collection process was both comprehensive and enriched with contextual insights. By employing these methods, we could discern how perspectives varied based on geographic areas and contexts. Moreover, this approach facilitated the validation of information by probing similar questions from diverse angles, thereby revealing disparities and diverse experiences. This comprehensive approach extended to engaging participants from both within and outside Aleppo, representing various backgrounds and age groups. Ultimately, this multifaceted data collection strategy bolstered the authenticity and depth of the case study's findings, providing a nuanced portrayal of the role of public spaces in the peacebuilding process.

two focus group discussions were conducted face to face with current residents of Aleppo City, one of them were with residents from west of the city and the second one were with residents from east of the city, who provided first-hand experiences and perspectives on public spaces in the city. The third focus group discussion was conducted with former residents who now live outside the city, providing a different perspective on the design and planning of public spaces in Aleppo City. The fourth focus group discussion was conducted with technical engineers and architects from Aleppo City who are currently pursuing their masters, providing valuable insights into the design and planning of public spaces in Aleppo City. in addition to the focus group discussion, two semi structured interview conducted with technical who played a role in the city management as part of their previous role in the city council or their participation of several projects at city level.

the previous mentioned tools showed the crucial role of urban public spaces in the case of Aleppo city in promoting peace and healing in a post-war context and its role in peace and war. Using those tools enabled us to understand the issues related to the design and planning of public spaces in Aleppo City, providing valuable insights and recommendations for policymakers, planners, and designers. By prioritizing the revitalization of public spaces in post-war reconstruction efforts, and promoting social cohesion and contributing to sustainable urban development.

CHAPTER 4

CASE STUDY ALEPPO

In this chapter, the study explore Aleppo City comprehensively, delving into its general background, historical context, and urban public spaces before and during the conflict. a quick scan of the architectural and urban planning dynamics pre and during the war were conducted, examining their relation to the root causes of the conflict. Subsequently, the study's focus will shift towards an in-depth analysis of the city's public spaces.

The chapter begin by providing a brief overview of the urban public spaces in Aleppo City, outlining their historical significance and cultural relevance. Building upon this foundation, then delve into the results of our fieldwork, which shed light on the role of public spaces in peace and war and the involvement of architects and urban planners. examine the impact of the conflict on these public spaces, exploring how they have been affected and their potential for post-war reconstruction and revitalization.

Throughout the chapter, the study also considers the broader implications of public spaces in promoting peace and social cohesion in a post-conflict context. Drawing upon the valuable insights gathered from the focus group discussions, aiming to uncover the transformative potential of public spaces and highlight the vital role that architects and urban planners can play in shaping sustainable and peaceful urban environments.

By weaving together, the multifaceted aspects of Aleppo's history, urban development, public spaces, and their connection to the conflict, this chapter aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the city's past, present, and future, with a specific focus on the role of public spaces in peace and war.

4.1 Aleppo City Background

Located in northern Syria, Aleppo is a historic city with significant urban development throughout its long history [45], [46]. Its strategic location along trade routes has played a crucial role in shaping its urban growth and prosperity [46]. Over the centuries, Aleppo's urban fabric has evolved as a result of diverse influences, reflecting the contributions of various civilizations and architectural styles, Aleppo city before the war is the largest city in Syria, with a population of around three millions with 125 neighbourhoods 22 of them are informal settlement all of them allocated in the east of the city where 40% of the Aleppo city population are living in the informal settlement. [47] [48]. The social dynamics in the city has fluctuated over time due to migration, urbanization, and the current ongoing conflict [45], [46]. The city has historically been home to a diverse mix of ethnic and religious communities, including Arabs, Kurds, Armenians, Christians, and Muslims, contributing to its cultural richness and social fabric [46].

Aleppo city history/ how the city developed: Aleppo's history is a captivating narrative of civilization's ebb and flow through the ages. This ancient city, situated atop a steep hill or "tell," has been inhabited since the third or fourth millennium BC. Its name was first etched into tablets in 2250 BC, and it served as the capital of the Kingdom of Yamhad during the first half of the second millennium BC. Aleppo's commercial significance traces back to early trade routes, aided by the Kuweyk River. Over time, it witnessed the rule of diverse civilizations, including the Hittites from 1600 to 1200 BC and later governance by the Arameans, Assyrians, Persians, Seleucids, and Romans. Byzantium and Persia tussled over Aleppo, resulting in Persian occupation in 440. In 636, Islamic conquest dawned on the city, marking a turning point. The Zengid and Ayyubid dynasties fortified Aleppo, constructing the iconic Citadel as a military stronghold. However, the Mongols' 1260 attack, followed by Tamerlane's in 1400, devastated the city. The Mamluks assumed control but were later supplanted by the Ottomans in 1516. Under Ottoman rule, Aleppo flourished as a trade hub, ranking third in importance after Cairo and Istanbul. Despite political changes and challenges, including the earthquake of 1822 and Egyptian governance from 1831 to 1840, Aleppo retained its regional and production prominence within the empire. The 19th century brought economic and political transformations, with the 1850 events underscoring

tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims due to newfound privileges. Ottoman rule persisted until the collapse of the empire in 1918, followed by French occupation in 1920. Aleppo served as a capital province under French Mandate until regaining independence in 1946. [49]. Aleppo's historic core, the Old City, showcases a blend of architectural styles, as a reflection of the long history of the city including Roman, Byzantine, Islamic, and Ottoman [46]. The city's urban layout is characterized by narrow, winding streets that create a labyrinthine network, leading to bustling squares and hidden courtyards [45]). Aleppo's traditional houses, with their distinct architectural features and intricate decorations, have contributed to the unique charm of the city [46].

Aleppo's historical urban development could presnet by tracing its growth through six key periods: Roman, Byzantine, and the 11th, 13th, 16th, and 19th centuries. The Roman-Hellenistic era, spanning 64 BC to 395 AD, played a pivotal role in shaping the city. Initially named Beroea by the Seleucids, it featured a structured layout characterized by a straight main avenue connecting the Western Gate (Bab Antakia) to the base of the Citadel. Notable landmarks during this period included the hill in the Aqaba quarter (A), the Citadel (B) as the highest point, and the Principal Temple (C). The city's gridiron-style plan expanded around Aqaba and al-Jallum, nestled between the Citadel and Bab Antakia within protective walls. The Via Recta stretched from the Citadel to Bab Antakia Gate, with the city wall commencing from the Citadel's midsection and encircling the western side. The presence of the Kuweyk River likely influenced the city's location and it was characterized as a "rectangular grid city," as a roman city (Mmroğlu, 2005).

In the Byzantine Period (395-636 AD), Aleppo underwent significant changes with the rise of Christianity. The Principal Temple was repurposed into the Cathedral, while two additional churches were constructed within the city walls. Two churches were also built within the Citadel for religious activities. Residential expansion occurred around the Via Recta and within the city walls during both the Roman and Byzantine periods, while burial grounds remained outside the city walls. The residential area expanded organically beyond the Via Recta, giving rise to new quarters. On the north side of the Via Recta, two synagogues were erected in the Jewish quarters. Notably,

the settlement pattern evolved from a regular layout in the Roman period to a more organic arrangement during the Byzantine era[49]

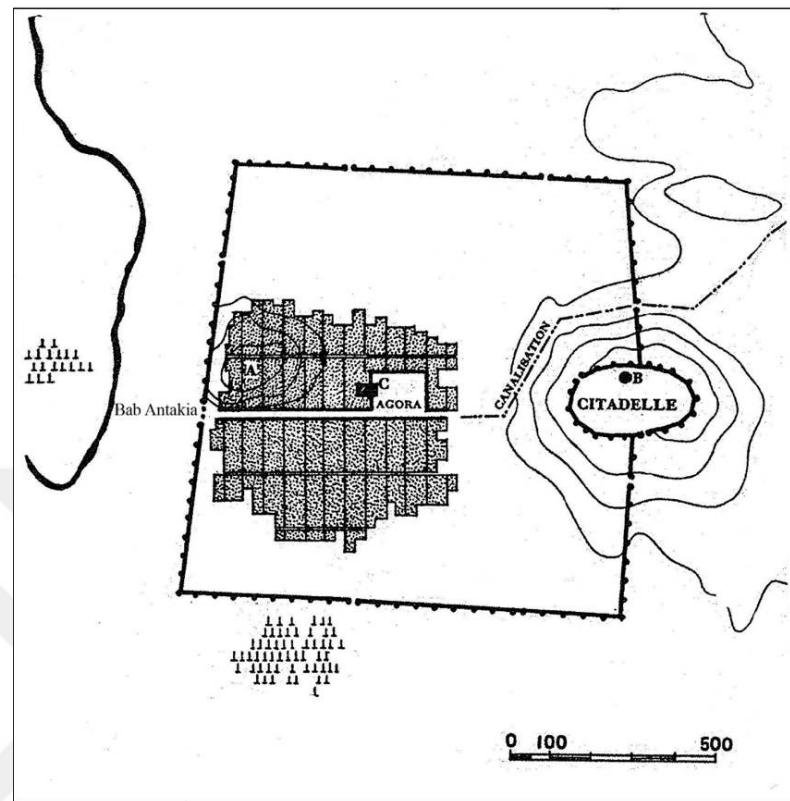


Figure 4.1 the roman Hellenistic city of Aleppo (sauvget 1941)[49]

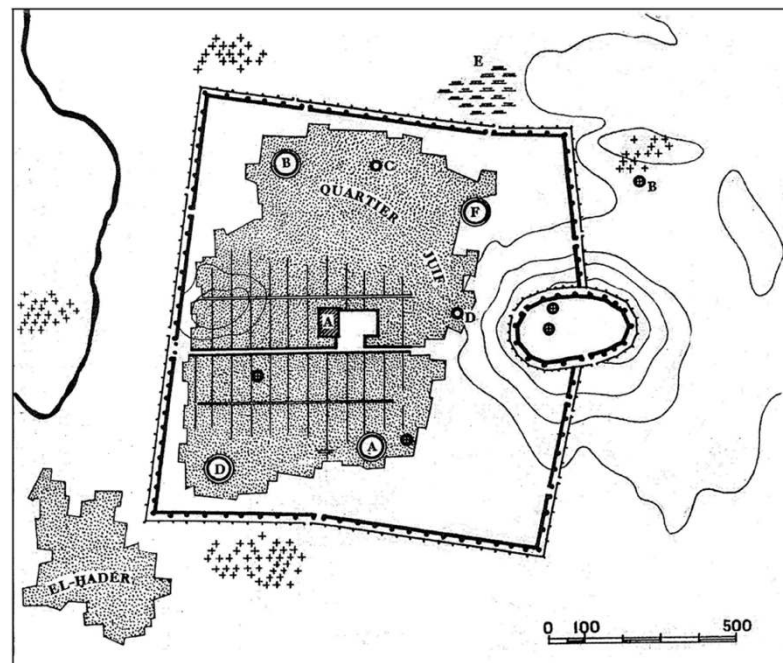


Figure 4.2 the Byzantine city of Aleppo (sauvget 1941)[49]

Towards the end of the 11th century, during the Umayyad, Abbasid, and Hamdanid dynasties, Aleppo experienced a transformative period. With the advent of Muslim rule, significant changes occurred not only in the city's social structure but also in its urban layout. the gradual shift from a gridded Roman colony to an Islamic city, marked by the preservation of the "super-grid" structure and the addition of a secondary street network. Unlike Roman cities, Islamic cities featured neighbourhoods formed around shared social interests, with districts separated by through-streets shaping the urban blocks.

In the 11th-century map of Aleppo, a notable transformation is observed in the city's street pattern, shifting from a gridiron layout to a more organic one. The city walls underwent reconstruction and fortification. Urban expansion was witnessed outside the walls, particularly in the southwestern corner.

Inside the city walls, the Muslim army entered through the Bab Antakia Gate. The agora was transformed into the Great Mosque, surrounded by a commercial area. Settlement within the city walls expanded to the western city walls, while churches within the Citadel were converted into mosques. The Citadel served as a centre for governance, housing the Royal Palace [49]

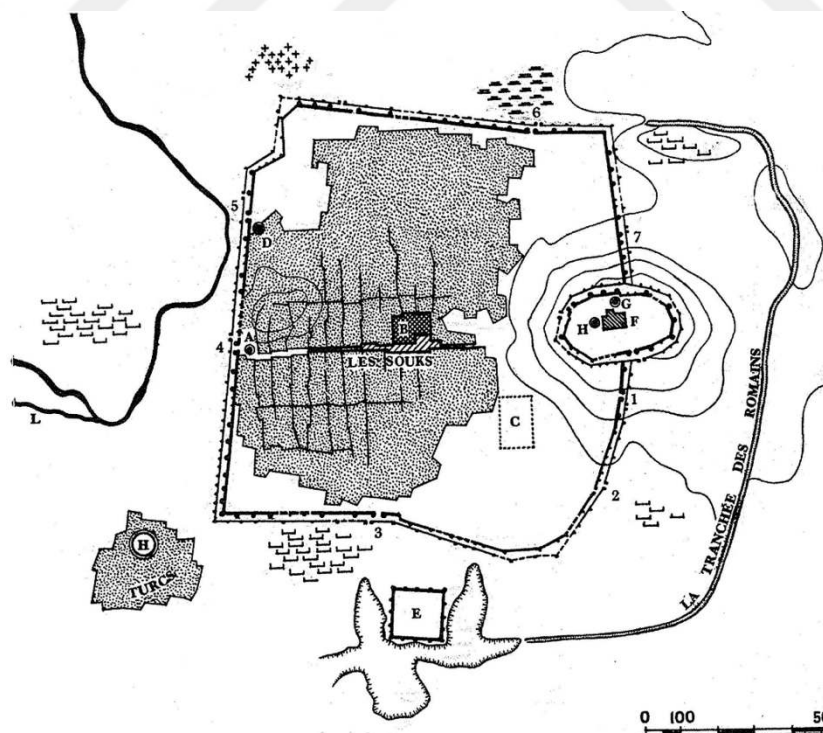


Figure 4.3 Aleppo at the end of the 11th century (sauvget 1941)[49]

Extra-mural, the eastern and northern areas experienced notable growth, with industrial quarters and schools being built. The western suburbs also expanded, and new districts following Western planning principles emerged.[49]



Figure 4.5 Aleppo in the middle of the 19th century (sauvaget 1941)[49]

Transitioning from a Roman gridiron plan to an Islamic city, represents what so-called "inward city," characterized by enclosed spaces and gated areas. However, the fusion of different street systems creates a diverse and heterogeneous urban model, challenging a simplistic classification solely as an "inward city. Aleppo, a historically rich city with a mix of civilizations, became a significant Islamic centre during the Ottoman period due to its strategic trade location. Economic and political changes in the 19th century, including reforms, played a key role in its growth. The city's transformation is linked to broader shifts in the region. With the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1918, Aleppo faced a period of French occupation until 1946. This historical context forms the backdrop for Aleppo's administrative system, socioeconomic dynamics, and political processes throughout historical periods that influenced the city's current status and the resulting segregation between East and west.[49]

Throughout its history, Aleppo has been known for its vibrant markets and commercial districts. The Souq al-Madina, one of the most renowned markets in the city, has been a hub of economic activity and social interaction [46]. This bustling market, with its diverse array of goods and vibrant atmosphere, has played a central role in shaping Aleppo's urban character [45]

The conflict in Syria started in 2011 has inflicted severe damage on Aleppo, causing significant destruction and loss throughout the city. Aleppo has witnessed extensive damage to its infrastructure, including residential areas, public spaces, and historical sites [50]. The destruction is particularly visible in the Old City, a UNESCO World Heritage site, where many historical buildings and cultural treasures have been damaged or destroyed [47], [51]. Iconic landmarks such as the Great Mosque and the Citadel have also suffered significant harm. In addition to the western part of the city where the informal settlement is east [47].

The devastating impact of the war extends beyond physical damages. Aleppo has experienced significant demographic changes as a result of the conflict. The population of the city has undergone fluctuations due to displacement and migration. Many residents have been forced to flee their homes, seeking refuge in safer areas within Syria or becoming refugees in neighbouring countries [45], [52]. The displacement of people and the disruption of communities have had profound social and economic implications for the city.

The conflict has also led to a transformation of Aleppo's social fabric. The war has affected the city's diverse communities, with different religious and ethnic groups experiencing displacement, loss, and changes in their social and cultural dynamics [45], [52]. The displacement of communities and the fragmentation of neighbourhoods have disrupted social cohesion and the sense of community that once characterized Aleppo (Munawar, 2018). The war has brought about significant challenges in terms of rebuilding social networks, and restoring trust between the divided communities, where the city witnessed several years of separation between its east and west.

Between 2012 and 2016, Aleppo's political division reflected pre-existing socio-economic divides. The wealthy settled in the west, while the poor and low-income classes lived in the east and south informal areas. City master plans favored the west, neglecting the eastern and southern districts. The population in these neglected areas

consisted of migrants from diverse backgrounds, including those from rural regions. Economic policies and drought led to population growth. The lack of assimilation under economic liberalization policies made these areas fertile grounds for opposition movements. Additionally, strong ties between rural migrants and their original areas fueled support for the opposition in these neighborhoods. These historical disparities and marginalization contributed to the alignment of eastern and southern neighborhoods with the opposition during this period. [53]

Efforts are needed to deal with root causes and the effects of the conflict. Furthermore, initiatives focused on social healing, community engagement, and reconciliation are essential for rebuilding the social fabric of Aleppo and promoting a sense of unity and resilience among its inhabitants.

In conclusion, the war in Aleppo has caused extensive damage to its infrastructure, including historic buildings and cultural heritage sites. The conflict has also resulted in significant demographic changes, with population displacement and disruptions to the city's social fabric. The process of post-war recovery and reconstruction must address the physical, social, and economic aspects, with a focus on the affected communities and dealing with the root causes and effects of the war through developing and maintaining the city fabric and connection. Through these efforts, Aleppo can begin to heal and rebuild, fostering a sense of hope and resilience for the future.

4.2 Architectural and Urban Planning Scan (Pre/During) War

The review is conducted from an architecture and urban planning perspective and related factors for sustainable peace.

Pre-war urban planning and architecture: Visiting the context before the war to measure differences is essential. The Aleppo city council played a pioneering role, especially in the last ten years before the war. In 2003, it had its first four-year plan aligned with the country's fifth plan, which became a guiding document for the work of all administrative units. It is worth mentioning that it ensured the role of public and private organizations and NGOs in the city's development. In addition, the city council's role has been redefined from a service provider to a development agency [54].

Notably, the city council emphasized the involvement of public and private organizations, as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), in the city's development [54]. This approach aimed to harness the collective efforts and resources of various stakeholders to foster sustainable growth. By engaging these entities, the council fostered collaboration and ensured a more inclusive approach to urban planning and development.

Moreover, the role of the city council underwent a transformation during this period. It shifted from being primarily a service provider to assuming the role of a development agency [54]. This redefinition allowed the council to take a proactive approach in driving positive change and implementing projects that aimed to enhance the city's infrastructure, public spaces, and overall livability. [38], [55]

From 2004–2010, the Aleppo city council developed a master plan for the city in close coordination with the Aleppo University of Architecture. [55] The master plan did not deal with class segregation between the east and the west part of the city; it dealt with them as two individual areas. In addition, the master plan did not deal with the unequal distribution of the services and did not build a connection when the two-part of the city. Instead, the main character of the east part of the city is the location of the industrial area and cemeteries and vineyards spaces. The following Figure 4.6 are the listed objectives of Aleppo's master plan [54], [56]

- Green atmosphere, sustainable clean air preserved by a conscious society
- Reaching a sustainable economically developed society
- Preserving the heritage and revive it to consolidate the individuals' belonging to the environmental and cultural surrounding
- Organizing illegal settlement to be well-serviced residential areas
- Preventing the emergence of new illegal settlements
- Ideal social and economical status for better life with identity

Figure 4.6 Master plan's objectives (source: Aleppo diverse open city) [54]

In addition, the informal settlement's objective, mainly located in the east part of the city **Figure 4.6**, focused on ensuring excellent and balanced services without dealing with class segregation and different opportunities related to this segregation. In keeping the division without providing interaction between the various communities [57], a rapid profile developed for those settlements for their better understanding settlements at the historical, social, economic, infrastructural, services and

environmental levels, which is a good start. Still, it dealt with those areas away from the rest of the city, with no plans or vision put in place to ensure the interaction at all levels between the various groups in the city. During the development of Aleppo's master plan, a new law 15 was released in 2008, targeting the informal settlement to be developed by the real-estate developers. Still, there was a discussion on the importance of developing informal settlements without demolishing the social fabric of those areas.



Figure 4.7 Aleppo informal settlement map [57].

Even as part of the city development strategy, to last for 15 years until 2025, the vision developed for the city is very ambitious and long, consisting of about 500 words, where just two lines of 27 words mention the connection between the East and west of the city.

“.....Connecting East and West and linking the city with its surrounding historical landscape, it is the social interface for all of Aleppo’s citizens and contributes to their collective identity.” [56]

This work in the Aleppo city development strategy raises the need for an integrated spatial plan to ensure the city's quality and a participatory approach as a tool to ensure quality by reflecting people's needs, hopes and concerns. It is designed to provide participation and involvement to a wide range of people in Aleppo City and the different partners from different sectors [57]. Most of the city's local issues were raised and dealt with at the local municipality level. In conclusion, the city's development strategy is considered a good start for the city's development and raised critical issues

that could be considered as root causes of the current conflict in the city. Unfortunately, there was no political will to take the theoretical work to action. The work stopped at the end of 2010, and many in the team were arrested and under investigation.

During the war, urban planning and architecture: Aleppo city council returned to the service's role with minimal resources and no partnerships. The sanction and start of the war pushed out international partners, such as the German Agency of Development and the European Union. Additionally, partners at the local level are not coordinated with the local administration because of the sanction as well, since the received funds must benefit the community directly. At the planning level, the central government, in coordination with the Aleppo city council and the governor, worked on releasing the developed master plan in 2012. At that time, the city was divided into the eastern part under the control of the opposition and the free army, and the western part was under a control regime. This division reflects the previous urban interventions' behaviours, which reinforced the segregation between the east and west of the city and resulted from the unequal service provisions to the eastern part of the city [53]. The city's division came as a result of disparities in development and resource allocation. As previously highlighted, the less-developed neighborhoods and informal settlements were situated in the eastern part of the city. This emphasize the significant role of urban intervention in exacerbating the conflict dynamics. The division between the eastern and western parts of the city is visually depicted in the following figure illustrates the division.

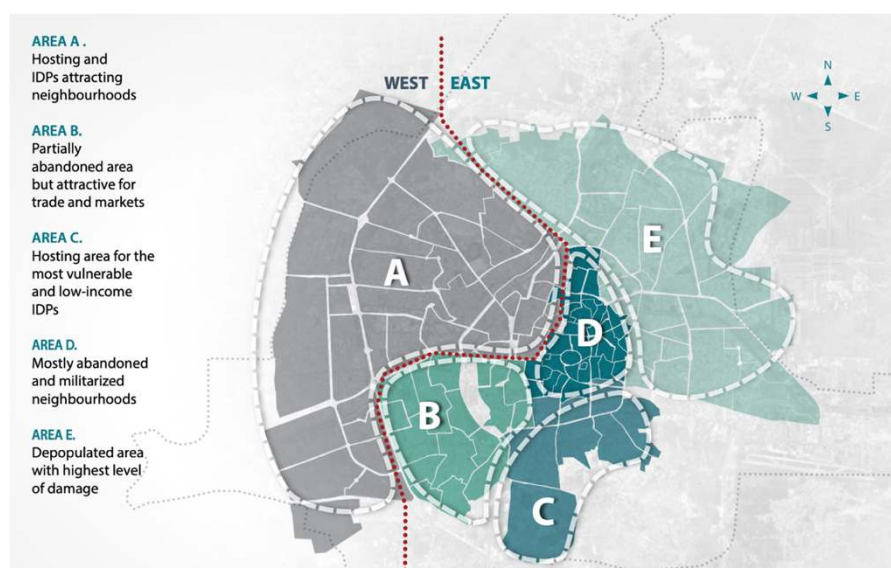


Figure 4.8 neighbourhood analysis for Aleppo- 2014 shows the east and west divisions [47]

The division facilitated transition points between the city's eastern and western sectors, famously referred to as the 'Pass of Death.' Initially, this was a bus station employed during the height of direct hostilities to act as the principal crossing point for civilians moving between areas under regime and opposition control within the city. The following map provide a visual comparison of the 'Pass of Death' crossing in 2014 (left) and 2012 (right), along with the identification of roadblock locations in the surrounding area as of May 2013 [58]



Figure 4.9 the main crossing point for civilians [58]

The crossings were under sniper control and often the target of sniper fire. Various efforts were made to mitigate this threat and provide a safer passage for civilians. Despite these measures, thousands of lives were tragically lost during these perilous crossings. One poignant account of this period is documented in the book 'Yallah Habibi,' which offers a visual narrative of life between 2013 and 2015. It vividly portrays the challenges faced during this era when the city was deeply divided, with one part under siege and the other grappling with severe service deficiencies and direct violence.



Figure 4.10 protect the crossing from the snipers (yallah habibi book)

In late 2015, the regime regained control of the eastern part, and several laws and plans were developed and released as preparation for the reconstruction of the city, where almost a third of the city's population was displaced or were refugees in other countries. In addition, a number of real-estate developers aligned with the regime registered. This shows that the focus of the developed master plan in 2018 and the related laws 10/2018 and 23/2015 was to deal with and run the reconstruction work by closing the door of the city to just those who stayed and redistributing the resources and rights among the actors that are aligned with the regime.

Some efforts for Aleppo's recovery were conducted by the international organization and the Syrian diaspora, where they documented the damages and designed scenarios for recovery, keeping in mind that the city went through a year of physical division between the East and West. At present, there are no plans, visions or even

documentation for the impact of this division at a social level. In addition, a few initiatives across Syria are run by international organizations working on designing the post-recovery process for Syria by working with Syrian experts from all sectors and other capacity buildings to create a network of Syrian engineers and architects. All these efforts are disconnected from what is happening on the ground at the city level and do not influence the daily reality of people's lives.

In 2012, a political process started in Geneva. It included several meetings, either run by countries supporting the political parties or created to organize and unify the opposition, whilst other meetings were primarily for armed groups. In addition, several meetings for Syria did not include Syrians; in conclusion, these meetings did not lead to any political solutions.

In 2016, there was an explicit declaration from the European Union and countries called "friends of Syria" that they would not support funding reconstruction work without a political agreement as a tool to weaken the regime and support the just revolution of the Syrian people against the dictatorship. [59] However, the political process worked hard to include Syrian people through civil society organizations in peace process platforms. Still, none of these efforts participated or affected people's daily life because the topics raised were generic and not applicable, and reconstruction is considered a forbidden topic. In addition, it is considered in those platforms that it is too early to discuss reconstruction, so there is no need to explore this topic in depth. However, in parallel, a good number of recovery projects are being conducted at the local level through local NGOs, with no experience and no coordination with local authorities. Additionally, there is no overall vision for the city's recovery. [60]

Reconstruction became a sensitive and contentious topic in the peace process platforms, often considered premature for in-depth exploration. Consequently, discussions on reconstruction were limited, and there was no overall vision or comprehensive plan for the city's recovery. Meanwhile, numerous grassroots recovery projects were being implemented by local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) without sufficient experience or coordination with local authorities [60]

Estimates of damaged buildings in Aleppo were reported by international organizations, with approximately 33,521 buildings damaged in September 2016. The World Bank's assessment in 2018 found that 23% of housing units (154,465 units)

suffered partial damage, and 7.5% (49,830 units) were destroyed. The Syrian authorities claimed 209,432 buildings were damaged, with 16,283 fully destroyed, 15,499 severely damaged, and 65,460 with medium or light damage. They control the damage assessment, which may lead to potential abuse and discrimination during reconstruction. [53]

The lack of a coordinated approach to reconstruction and the absence of a political agreement hindered effective recovery efforts and impeded progress toward rebuilding and restoring normalcy to people's lives in war-affected areas (Asseburg, 2020) It is essential to address these challenges and foster a comprehensive and inclusive reconstruction process that integrates the needs and aspirations of the Syrian people [60]

Figure 4.11 shows that urban interventions are used as a political tool. The political process is disconnected from the actual development and changes happening at the urban/local level. It emphasizes the idea that the urban cannot be separated from the political process.

Aleppo's reconstruction planning is highly centralized, with limited involvement of local authorities. Decision-making is confined to a small circle of selected partners, including entities linked to the Ministry of Defense and influential real-estate development companies. The focus is on prioritizing investors in tourism, industry, and urban development sectors, neglecting the housing needs of the displaced and poorer population. Proper mechanisms for housing and property rights identification are lacking, hindering the return of displaced individuals. Informal settlements like al-Haidariyya demonstrate a preference for real-estate development companies' interests over residents. However, these companies have yet to respond to government investment requests, advocating for more deregulation in the real-estate sector. [1], [53]

The reality now is: (1) a blocked and isolated political process, (2) the city is controlled by the central administration (regime) and works for the benefit of the regime-aligned investors and (3) the city is facing division challenges as it is designed as a city for foreigners where its people's right is not upheld.

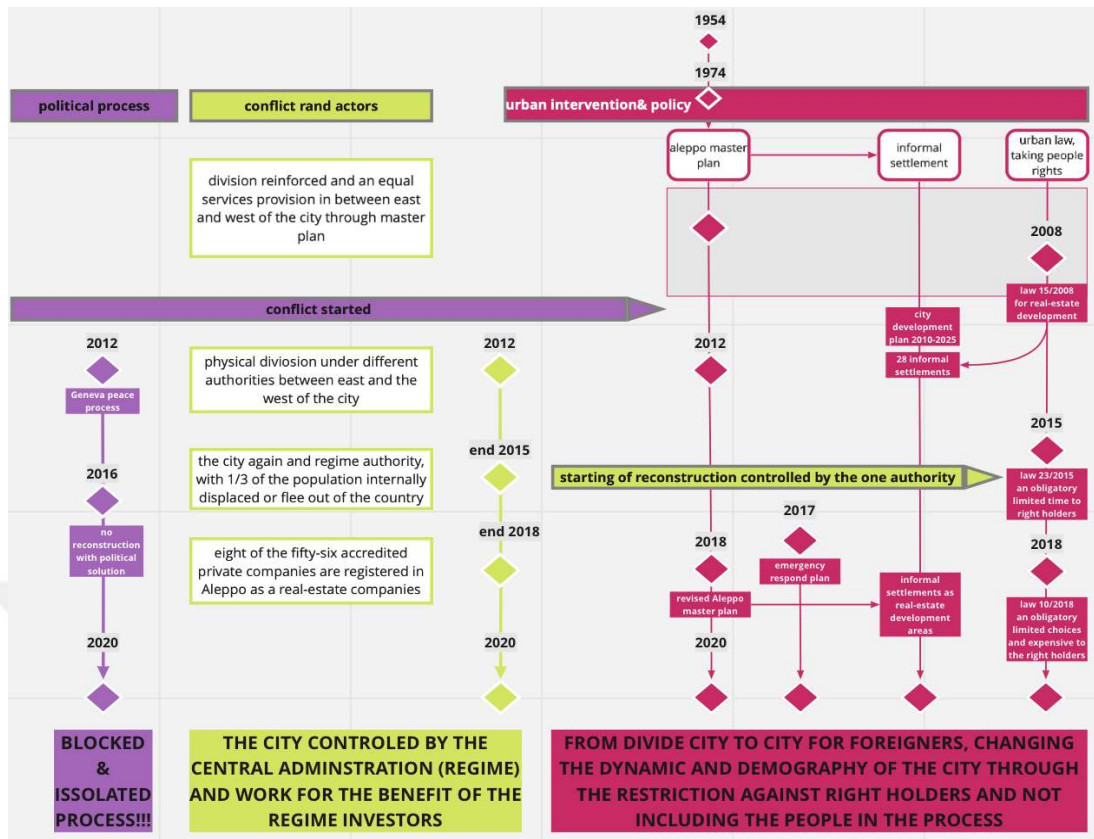


Figure 4.11 Urban Intervention, the Conflict, and the political process. (Developed by the author)

Bollens, Scott A. in his review of “urban planning and peacebuilding” discusses the role of cities and urban interventions in contributing to peace-building processes. It highlights that cities are not just passive entities shaped by larger societal dynamics; they can actively influence societal progress from conflict to stability. Urban planning and policies can play crucial roles during political and societal transitions by articulating alternative urban futures and complementing larger political accords. The author emphasizes that cities can establish key parameters and logic that shape more equitable relationships among different societal sectors. Urban interventions are most significant during uncertain and unstable stages of societal transition, as they can establish new development parameters and processes that contribute to peace. Urbanism's influence lies in its ability to effect direct and visible changes in people's lives, making it a leading-edge force in creating new peace-building development pathways. Overall, the value of urban interventions as contributors to broader societal progress, especially during times of transition when relationships between societal and urban interest sectors are still being formed. Urbanists can connect grassroots peace-

building principles with larger political debates, introducing innovative ways of advancing societal peace. [1]

The author discusses urbanist and planning interventions for peacebuilding in inter-group conflicts. Key principles include:

- Flexible urban form for future options.
- Equity planning to empower marginalized groups.
- Sensitivity to cultural homelands and frontiers.
- Protecting and promoting inclusive public spaces.
- Diffusion of grassroots peace-building knowledge.

"Protection and Promotion of the Collective Public Sphere" emphasizes revitalizing public spaces as neutral, inclusive areas fostering cross-ethnic interactions, democratic deliberation, and societal peace. [4] Where this research sheds light on several important questions that aim to explore as part of the fieldwork on the role of public spaces in peace and war. These questions are as follows:

- How can establish an early connection between the political process and local urban interventions? It is important to foster a symbiotic relationship between these two realms to facilitate more effective and coordinated efforts.
- What measures can be taken to involve urban planners and architects in the early stages of peacebuilding and the political process? Their expertise and insights can contribute to informed decision-making and help shape sustainable urban development strategies.
- Can urban topics serve as dialogue spaces that transcend political actors and pave the way for sustainable peace in Syria? Exploring the potential of urban planning tools to foster dialogue and engagement may provide a promising avenue for creating spaces that go beyond traditional political arenas.

By addressing these questions, the study aims to deepen the understanding of the intricate relationship between urban interventions, (public spaces in our case) the political process, and the prospects for achieving sustainable peace in conflict-affected contexts such as Syria.

4.3 Urban Public Spaces in Aleppo City

The study deliberately refrained from providing a pre-defined, rigid definition of urban public spaces in Aleppo. Instead, it allowed the participants in the study to interpret and define these spaces according to their own understanding, terms, and needs. This approach was inclusive and open-ended, acknowledging that the concept of urban public spaces can be dynamic and multifaceted, varying depending on individual perspectives and experiences. Moreover, the study took into account the period before and during the war in Aleppo, recognizing the significant impact that conflict and displacement might have had on the perception and usage of public spaces during that time. By adopting such a flexible and participant-driven methodology, the study aimed to capture a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the role and significance of urban public spaces in Aleppo amidst the complexities of urban life and the challenges posed by conflict.

Before presenting the study findings and analysis, the study scanned what other researchers covered under the topic on urban public spaces in Aleppo city, which encompasses insights from various researchers who have explored different aspects of public spaces in the city. Some of them have focused on assessments of public green spaces, evaluating their distribution, accessibility, and impact on urban well-being. Others have delved into the historical significance of public spaces in fostering social cohesion, particularly by facilitating interactions and relationships between diverse ethnic groups and religious communities throughout Aleppo's history.

The literature review also emphasizes the importance of considering the historical context, highlighting how public spaces have long played a crucial role in promoting social cohesion, cultural exchange, and intergroup relationships among the city's diverse communities. Additionally, it sheds light on the significance of democratic practices and the empowerment of people in shaping and utilizing public spaces, which can ultimately contribute to sustainable peace-building efforts.

public spaces in Aleppo, such as markets, squares, and neighborhoods, have historically served as meeting points where different religious groups interacted, exchanged ideas, and engaged in commercial activities [52]. Where the design of the city concept is based on conviviality, which refers to the peaceful coexistence and cooperation between various religious communities within shared public spaces. It

examines instances of conviviality, where people from different religious backgrounds have successfully navigated their differences and established harmonious relationships. This conviviality is often facilitated by the cultural practices, traditions, and shared values that have developed over time in Aleppo [52]. public spaces in the context of urban cultural heritage, play a role as sources of social cohesion and factors of diversity. Additionally, public spaces are at risk due to rapid urbanization, conflicts, and climate change, necessitating preservation efforts to maintain the city's identity and protect its historic components.

other papers focused on urban green spaces, emphasising the need for a comprehensive strategy on urban green spaces, and pointing out inequities in public parks before the war. The study promotes the use of GIS-based network analyses in urban planning decision-making to optimize the distribution of green spaces and improve city environments. An equitable distribution of parks among different income groups is a measure of spatial equity and can enhance the quality of life for citizens. [52]

However, the presence of conflicts and tensions within these public spaces. It sheds light on instances where religious differences have led to clashes, competition for resources, or struggles for influence and control over certain areas, where various factors contribute to these conflicts, including historical grievances, socio-political dynamics, and the impact of external forces. still, a nuanced understanding of the complexities surrounding public spaces in Aleppo is needed how the interactions and relationships within these spaces are shaped by religious, social, and political factors and the influence of historical contexts and contemporary challenges. [52]

despite that the public spaces were greatly altered during the conflict, in several paper the public spaces in Aleppo city in the context of its regeneration after the war can play a vital role aims to create accessible spaces for all, regardless of age or gender, while reevaluating the boundaries between public and private areas. The author in his article “The Reconstruction of Post-War Cities—Proposing Integrated Conservation Plans for Aleppo’s Reconstruction” advocates for community engagement, emphasizing citizens' physical participation in the regeneration process. it suggests reusing materials from damaged buildings to preserve cultural identity and minimize reconstruction costs. It also addresses the challenge of harmonizing tourism and locals in the historic center, aiming to retain tourism while respecting residents' privacy. The

need to balance tradition with contemporary city planning, adapting to changing societal values. It views the city's recovery as an opportunity for redevelopment and proposes policies considering inhabitants, stakeholders, UNESCO's regulations, and the cultural value of the built environment [50].

In addition, public spaces play a pivotal role in urban reconstruction. They serve as gathering places, promoting social cohesion and community interactions. For Aleppo, integrating public spaces with its heritage can help reconnect residents with their city's history and foster a sense of belonging and identity [50].

Protecting and promoting the collective public sphere in both physical and institutional forms is essential to promote urban stability and coexistence. In the physical realm, planners should focus on revitalizing and redeveloping public spaces and historic areas as neutral places that encourage healthy interactions between different identity groups. Instead of pushing for residential integration, the emphasis should be on creating mixed public spaces that enable cross-ethnic mingling without the polarizing effects of mixed neighborhoods [1].

Public spaces play a crucial role in fostering cohesion, social equality, and collective expression among diverse communities. In post-Franco Barcelona, small-scale improvements in public spaces were used to demonstrate the benefits of democracy. Care should be taken in redeveloping public spaces to ensure that measures for crime protection do not overly restrict public interactions [1].

4.4 Analysis and Findings of the Case Study

As mentioned earlier, the fieldwork involved reaching out to 33 participants from various backgrounds and geographic areas 19 out of them (57.6%) are from Aleppo city and 45.5% are female. All participants had been residents of Aleppo city for at least 10 years. The following figures (4.12,4.13) shows the participants' backgrounds.

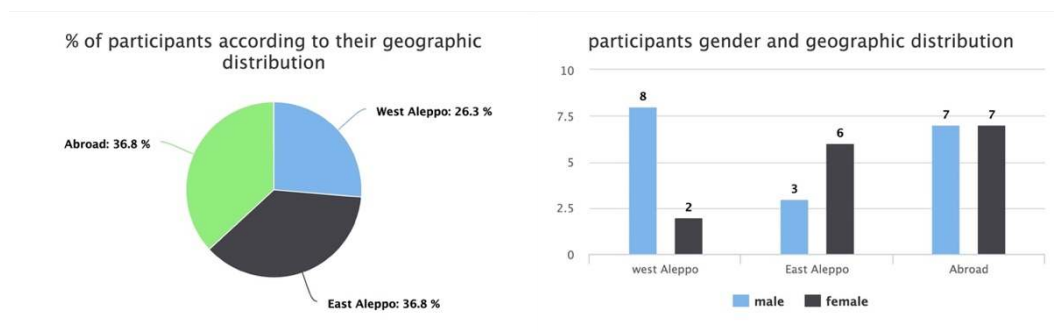


Figure 4.12 Participants' geographic distribution and number.

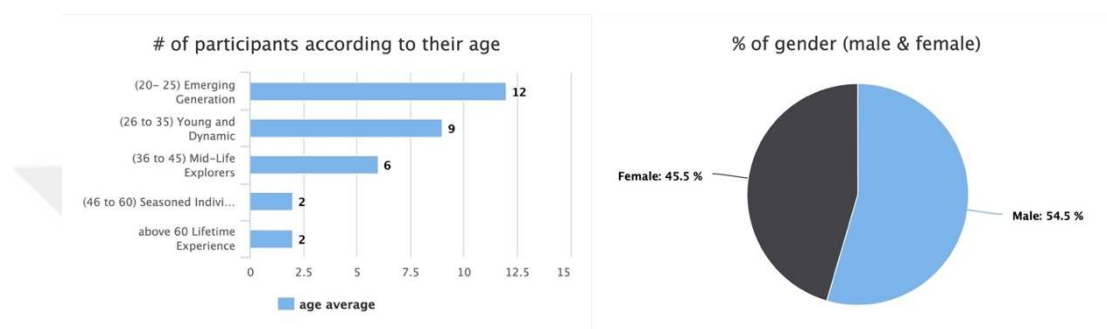


Figure 4.13 participants' age groups and gender

Table 4.1 participants of the focus group discussions

ID	Age	Gender	Occupation	Years of Residence in Aleppo	Current Residence	Additional Information
P01-FG1	20	Male	Student	20- till now	Aleppo - Sakhour	
P02-FG1	21	Male	Student	21- till now	Aleppo - Shaar	
P03-FG1	21	Male	Student	21- till now	Aleppo - Mashhad	
P04-FG1	22	Male	Tailor	17- till now	Aleppo - Hanano	
P05-FG1	23	Male	Student	17- till now	Aleppo - Hanano	
P06-FG1	18	Female	Student	18- till now	Aleppo - Mashhad	
P07-FG1	20	Female	Student	16- till now	Aleppo - Shaar	

P08-FG1	23	Male	3D Printing	23- till now	Aleppo - Midan	
P09-FG1	21	Male	Community Center	21- till now	Aleppo - Shaar	
P01-FG2	34	Female	engineer	till now	Syrian	
P02-FG2	30	Male	volunteer	till now	Martinian	
P03-FG2	22	Female	teacher	till now	Farqan	
P04-FG2	38	Male	Humanitarian work	till now	New Aleppo	
P05-FG2	25	Male	volunteer	till now	Suleimaniya	
P06-FG2	24	Female	eacher	till now	Ashrafieh	
P07-FG2	25	Female	engineer	till now	New Syrian Quarter	
P08-FG2	33	Female	volunteer	till now	Nile Street	
P01-FG3	26	M	Tailor	Until 2015	Istanbul	Al-Hamadaniyah - District 1
P02-FG3	31	M	Programmer	Until 2014	Istanbul	Al-Mashhad
P03-FG3	22	F	Student/ Medical Labs	Until 2014	Istanbul	Bab Al-Hadid
P04-FG3	59	F	Homemaker/ Civil Engineer	Until 2012	Istanbul	Near Rahman Mosque
P05-FG3	60	F	Former English Teacher/ Current Homemaker	Until 2017	Istanbul	Al-Idha'a
P06-FG3	72	F	Retired Agricultural Engineering Professor -	Until 2012	Istanbul	Al-Jameeliyah

			University of Aleppo/ Retired			
P07-FG3	61	M	Civil Society Activist/ Agricultural Engineer	Until 2013	Istanbul	Al-Jameeliyah
P08-FG3	44	M	Current Clothing Industry / Formerly in Accounting and Political Media	Until 2014	Istanbul	Tariq bin Ziyad
P01-FG4	31	M	Post-Doctoral Studies in Architecture Theories and History	Until 2014	Europe	Al-Zahour Street - Sheikh Taha
P02-FG4	35	F	Research Fellow in Urban Planning and Architecture	Until 2011	United Arab Emirates	Al-Muqambu
P03-FG4	27	F	Master's Student - Post-War Reconstruction	Until 2019	United Arab Emirates	Salah al-Din
P04-FG4	37	M	Master's Student - Post-War Reconstruction and Humanitarian Work in North-West Syria	Until 2014	Idlib	Salah al-Din - Bilal Street

P05-FG4	44	M	University in Ireland	Until 2017	Ireland	Al-Azha'a
P06-FG4	38	F	University of Aleppo - Doctorate Studies	Until 2012	Aleppo	Al-Furqan

The city is divided into two distinct sections: East and West, each with unequal distribution in terms of infrastructure and services, in addition to the urban and demographic dynamics. To comprehensively understand the contrasting aspects of these regions, it was crucial to gather perspectives from participants residing in both areas. As delving into the upcoming analysis, the diverse viewpoints of East and West Aleppo residents will enrich the understanding of urban planning's role as a root for conflict and peace. Figure 4.14 visually represents the distribution of participants across the city, highlighting the representation of East and West Aleppo residents.

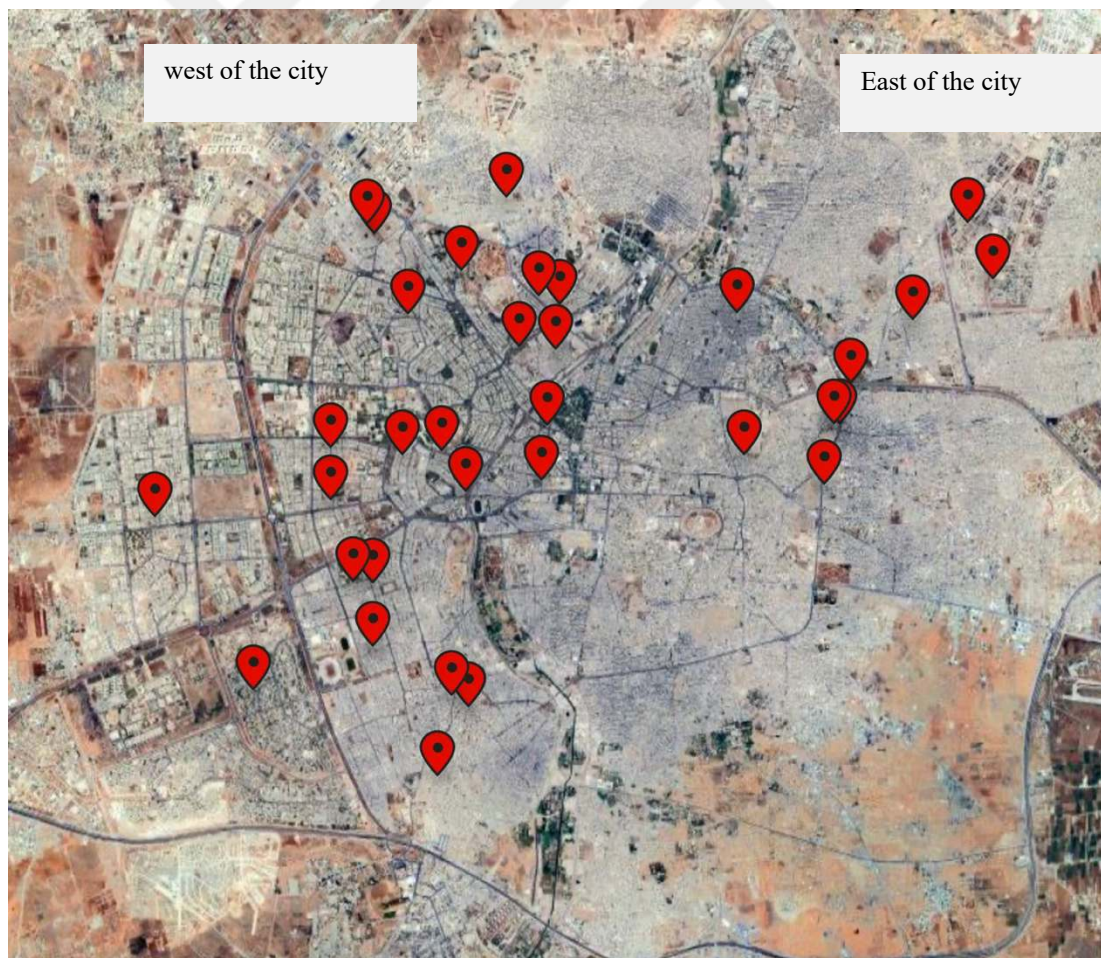


Figure 4.14 participants distribution on the map (developed by the author)

Participants criteria:

The primary selection criterion for participants in this study was their status as Aleppian residents with a minimum of 15 years of experience living in the city. Additionally, participants were intentionally chosen to represent diverse backgrounds and age groups. This diversity in participant demographics aimed to capture a comprehensive range of perspectives. Furthermore, participants were carefully selected to ensure representation from various geographic areas within Aleppo, encompassing both the eastern and western parts of the city. This geographical diversity was a deliberate choice to incorporate insights from individuals residing in different regions of Aleppo, each of which may have unique experiences and viewpoints shaped by their specific local contexts.

Moreover, the participant criteria included individuals who are currently living in the city as well as those who were displaced during the war. This dual perspective aimed to provide insights from residents who experienced the conflict's immediate impact and those who have returned or remained, offering a multifaceted understanding of public spaces in post-conflict Aleppo.

Lastly, one of the focus groups specifically targeted academics to ensure the inclusion of an academic perspective on the role of public spaces, complementing their personal experiences. This academic perspective contributes an additional layer of expertise to the study, enhancing the depth and richness of the data collected.

The analysis of the fieldwork's findings regarding the role of public spaces in "Aleppo City" during times of peace and war is structured as follows:

1. Participants' perspectives on the definition of urban public spaces and their perception of the distribution and types of these spaces.
2. Understanding the diverse experiences of participants before and during the war and exploring how these experiences relate to the role of public spaces in times of peace and war.
3. Examining how public spaces in the case study either promoted peace or unintentionally created hidden barriers. This analysis is based on the participants' expressed views.
4. The analysis of two questions: a) How can public spaces in Aleppo play a more significant role in promoting peace? b) What steps can Architects and Urban

Planners take to contribute to peacebuilding? These responses will be structured based on four main factors identified in the literature review that contribute to either peace and democracy or conflict. These factors are as follows:

- Strategic and tactical approaches
- Vision and Policies
- Ownership and participation
- Actors for peace

5. Finally, answer the question: Did urban public spaces play a significant role in peace and war, based on the gathered insights and analysis from the participants.

4.4.1 Defining Urban Public Spaces: Participants' Perspectives

The study delves into the participants' perspectives on Urban Public Spaces, exploring how they defined these spaces through the fieldwork. The study analyzes the number and distribution of public spaces before and during the war, presenting the findings in textual form and visual maps. Additionally, closely examine the types of public spaces mentioned by the participants, seeking to identify any variations based on their locations and backgrounds. Through illustration, the different categories of public spaces and the corresponding number of each were presented, as reported by the participants. This comprehensive analysis allows us to gain a deeper understanding of how public spaces were perceived and experienced by individuals from various parts of Aleppo City, shedding light on the role of these spaces in shaping urban life during both times of peace and conflict.

4.4.1.1 Before the War:

The analysis of the participants' perspectives reveals a noticeable trend regarding the distribution of public spaces in Aleppo before the war. Regardless of the participants' locations, the majority of mentioned public spaces were concentrated in the west part of the city, suggesting potential disparities in access to such amenities across different neighborhoods. Approximately 90 public spaces were identified and can be grouped into six main categories.

Firstly, public parks emerged as prominent spaces offering green areas for relaxation and recreation, fostering community well-being. Secondly, the inclusion of private sector establishments like malls, entertainment venues, and private clubs as public spaces highlights their role in shaping public life and facilitating social interactions. Thirdly, public squares held significant importance as central gathering points for social, cultural, and civic activities, reflecting Aleppo's heritage. Fourthly, occasional gathering places like exhibitions, festivals, and museums contributed to the city's cultural fabric, promoting artistic expression and educational experiences. Fifthly, street markets and bazaars played a vital role as bustling commercial areas and vibrant social hubs, bringing together people from diverse backgrounds. Lastly, mosque squares held cultural and religious significance, serving as places for communal prayers, social gatherings, and community events.

The diversity of public spaces identified by the participants underscores the multifaceted nature of urban life in Aleppo. These spaces were integral in fostering community cohesion, promoting cultural exchange, and enriching residents' overall quality of life. Figure 4.15 shows the distribution of the type of public spaces defined by the fieldwork participants before the war.

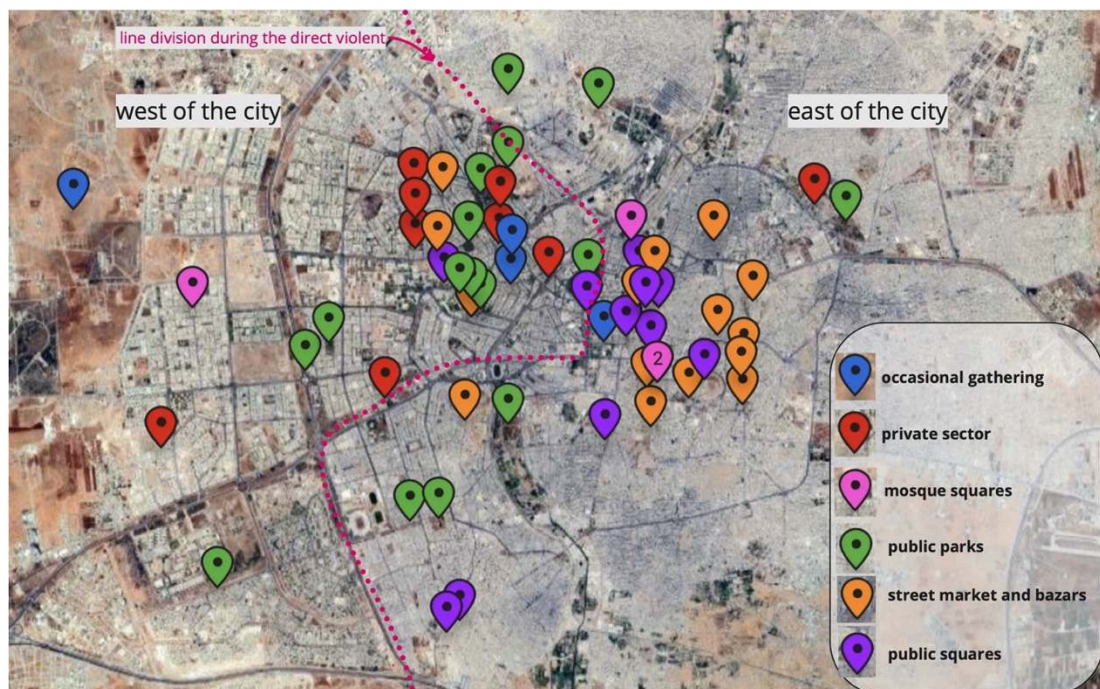


Figure 4.15 type and distribution of the public spaces before the war as defined by the participants of the field work (developed by the author)

As well from the above map figure 4.15 shows that the green parks exist in the west expansion of the city where the public spaces in the east part of the old city is mainly streets, and as shown on the map the public squares is the centre on the western centre of the city.

The participants defined public spaces as areas where they could spend time with family or friends, enjoy nature, and engage in leisure and entertainment activities. These spaces were seen as places to participate in various activities and socialize with others.

It is worth mentioning that, at the beginning of the discussion, women and girls were hesitant to refer to certain places as public spaces, indicating that these spaces were not perceived as integral to their daily lives. In the following section further explores the experiences of women and girls in these public spaces. One participant expressed, *"Public spaces in the city were not considered an integral part of daily life at all."*

P02/ SSI/ women 44 years old

This quote highlights the limited role public spaces play in the lives of some individuals, especially women and girls, and underlines the potential gendered aspects of access and usage.

In conclusion, public spaces in Aleppo, their distribution, and other identified points can serve as indicators or signs of the root causes of the war, especially considering the city's division into East and west during the conflict:

Unequal Distribution of Public Spaces: The concentration of public spaces in the western part of the city and the limited presence in the east indicate unequal urban development and resource allocation. Such disparities could have contributed to feelings of marginalization and exclusion among residents in the eastern areas, potentially fueling tensions and discontent.

Social and Economic Divides: The uneven distribution of public spaces can reflect wider social and economic divides within the city. Residents in the west may have had better access to recreational and leisure amenities, while those in the east faced limited opportunities for social interactions and cultural enrichment. These disparities could have heightened social inequalities and contributed to underlying grievances.

Cultural and Identity Factors: The distribution of public spaces, such as the concentration of public squares in the western centre, might reflect historical and

cultural dynamics. These spaces hold symbolic and communal significance, potentially reinforcing identity differences between various neighborhoods or communities. Disputes over control and access to such spaces could have escalated tensions.

Overall, the distribution of public spaces in Aleppo and other identified indicators provide valuable insights into the underlying social, economic, and political dynamics that contributed to the city's division and the eruption of the war. Understanding these root causes is crucial for addressing the legacy of conflict and fostering reconciliation and sustainable development in the post-war era.

4.4.1.2 During the War:

The war in Aleppo significantly altered the nature and function of public spaces. Public spaces lost their role in providing safety, and the home became the only relatively safe place for many residents. Due to the ongoing conflict, public spaces receded from their traditional roles and became confined within the neighbourhood. The use of building basements during shell attacks and seeking safety in lands in the countryside and mountains underscored the shift in how public spaces were utilized.

In West Aleppo, public streets and circles and the emergence of gardens related to some residential areas served as the remaining accessible public spaces.

The experiences of Aleppian residents in Istanbul further highlighted the contraction and disappearance of public spaces during the war. Security authorities taking control over these spaces resulted in fear and hindered mentioning public squares and places. Some squares were remembered in the context of negative experiences, indicating the impact of the war on the perception and usage of public spaces.

From an academic point of view, the academic groups from Aleppo provided valuable insights into the effects of the war on public spaces, highlighting their shrinking and disappearance, as well as the control exerted by security authorities. The limited mention of specific main public spaces underscores the severe impact of the conflict on the city's urban fabric and the communal spaces that once played an essential role in the daily lives of its residents. Where the expert revealed a transformation of public spaces at the beginning of the uprising, with protests and marches taking place in these areas. However, over time, public spaces turned into security checkpoints and

inspection points, reflecting the shift in how these spaces were controlled and utilized during the war.

Overall, the war in Aleppo profoundly impacted public spaces, with many losing their traditional functions and becoming restricted due to security concerns. The disappearance and shrinking of public spaces, along with the control of security authorities, reflected the challenging circumstances faced by the city's residents during the conflict. These changes in the definition and usage of public spaces illustrate the war's devastating impact on the urban landscape and people's daily lives.

The figure 4.16 below illustrates the stark reduction in the number of public spaces during the war, predominantly mentioned by those who remained in the city. For them, access to public spaces represented an opportunity to restore a semblance of normalcy amid the ravages of war. However, it is evident that public squares were conspicuously absent from the discussion, while street markets emerged as new public spaces, particularly on the city's western side.

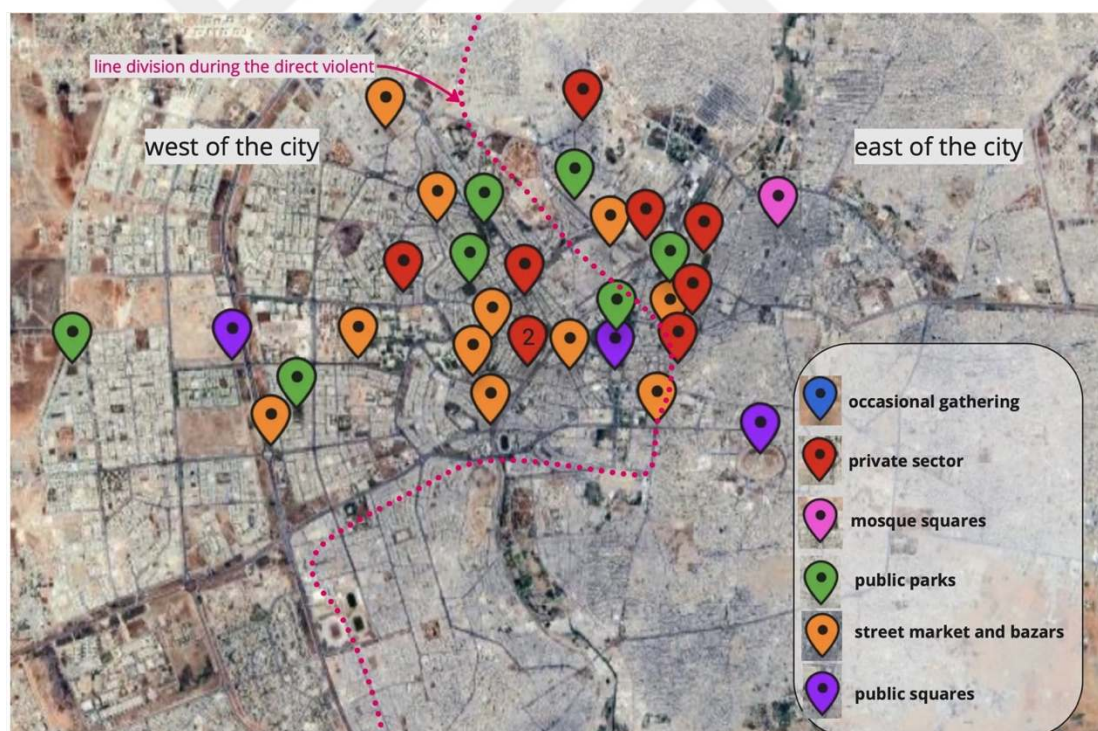


Figure 4.16 type and distribution of the public spaces during the war as defined by the participants of the field work (developed by the author)

The emergence of street markets highlights the adaptability of residents to challenging circumstances, as these markets served as alternative spaces for social interactions and economic activities. Despite the cessation of direct violence, the unequal provision of

services between the eastern and western parts of the city persisted, as reflected in the disparity in available public spaces.

However, most participants who had left the city could not mention any public spaces, which opened the door to trauma-related discussions. Sensitively, the discussion facilitators actively avoided delving into traumatic memories to prevent any unexpected emotional consequences for the participants.

In essence, the limited number of public spaces during the war and the shifting landscape of their usage underline the profound impact of the conflict on the urban fabric and the people's daily lives. The absence of traditional public squares and the rise of street markets reflect the community's resilience and the ongoing challenges in restoring equitable services and a sense of normalcy in the aftermath of the war. The need for supportive and trauma-sensitive approaches in such discussions becomes apparent, acknowledging the war's emotional toll on those who experienced it directly. The conclusion about public spaces during the war in Aleppo reveals a direct connection to the aspects of Unequal Distribution of Public Spaces, Social and Economic Divides, and Cultural and Identity Factors. The development and absence of public spaces during the war were significantly influenced by these aspects, exacerbating the impact of the conflict on the urban landscape and people's lives.

Unequal Distribution of Public Spaces: Before the war, there was already an unequal distribution of public spaces in Aleppo, with a notable concentration of amenities in the western part of the city. This disparity in access to public spaces became even more pronounced during the war. As the conflict intensified, many public spaces in the eastern areas either faced destruction or became inaccessible due to security concerns. Meanwhile, some public spaces in the west continued to exist and even saw the emergence of new ones, such as street markets. This unequal distribution further widened the gap between different neighborhoods, exacerbating social divisions and resentment.

Social and Economic Divides: The unequal access to public spaces during the war reflected wider social and economic divides in Aleppo. The limited availability of public spaces in the eastern areas, where the conflict was often more intense, contributed to a sense of marginalization and exclusion among residents in these regions. In contrast, the continued presence and development of public spaces in the

western areas could have reinforced existing social privileges and disparities in access to resources and amenities.

Cultural and Identity Factors: Cultural and identity factors influenced the distribution and usage of public spaces in Aleppo. Public squares and areas of cultural significance were particularly impacted during the war. Some public squares became sites of negative experiences, reflecting the loss of communal identity and shared cultural spaces. Additionally, the emergence of street markets as new public spaces may have been influenced by cultural adaptation and the need for economic activities during challenging times.

The absence of public spaces in certain areas during the war can be attributed to the severity of violence and insecurity, which rendered many spaces unsafe or inaccessible. Security authorities' control over public spaces further restricted their usage. This absence exacerbated feelings of fear and isolation among residents. Conversely, the development and survival of some public spaces, especially on the western side, highlight the adaptability and resilience of the community in the face of the war's challenges. The emergence of street markets as alternative public spaces showcased the community's ability to sustain economic activities and social interactions despite the conflict.

In conclusion, the unequal distribution of public spaces, social and economic divides, and cultural and identity factors significantly influenced the development and absence of public spaces during the war in Aleppo. The war's impact further exacerbated existing disparities, leading to the shrinking or disappearance of public spaces in some areas while fostering the development of new ones in others. Addressing these issues is essential for post-war recovery efforts to promote inclusivity, rebuild social cohesion, and foster a sense of shared public life in the city.

4.4.2 Experiences of Conflict and Peace in Public Spaces

During the focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews, the participants to were inquired about the public places they were familiar with before the war. Building upon this foundation, then delved further into their personal experiences within these public spaces. their responses categorized into positive and negative experiences, and the factors that contributed to such perceptions explored. Through this analysis, the study aimed to gain deeper insights into the elements that shaped individuals'

encounters in public spaces. This exploration encompassed both the pre-war and during-war phases, allowing us to comprehend how the context of conflict influenced these experiences. By delving into these narratives, the study hoped to unravel the key determinants that underlie people's positive or negative sentiments towards Aleppo's public spaces.

4.4.2.1 Before the War:

experiences in public spaces in Aleppo exhibited a diverse range of emotions and reflections. Positive encounters were characterized by themes of "Family and Community Bonding," where gatherings and neighborhood interactions fostered strong familial connections. "Social Connection, Diversity, and Inclusivity" emerged as participants described public spaces as meeting points for people from various backgrounds, promoting diversity and inclusiveness. "Recreation and Leisure" played a significant role, with modern facilities and parks providing leisure activities and relaxation spaces. Heritage sites also influenced positive encounters, instilling pride in the city's history. However, negative experiences highlighted challenges such as safety concerns, lack of amenities, and feelings of detachment. These experiences are grouped into themes of "Safety and Security Concerns," "Social and Cultural Barriers," and "Limited Inclusivity and Amenities." Understanding these aspects is crucial in comprehending the complexities of Aleppo's public spaces before the war and their potential role in contributing to the conflict. the following figure 4.17 summarize the experiences.

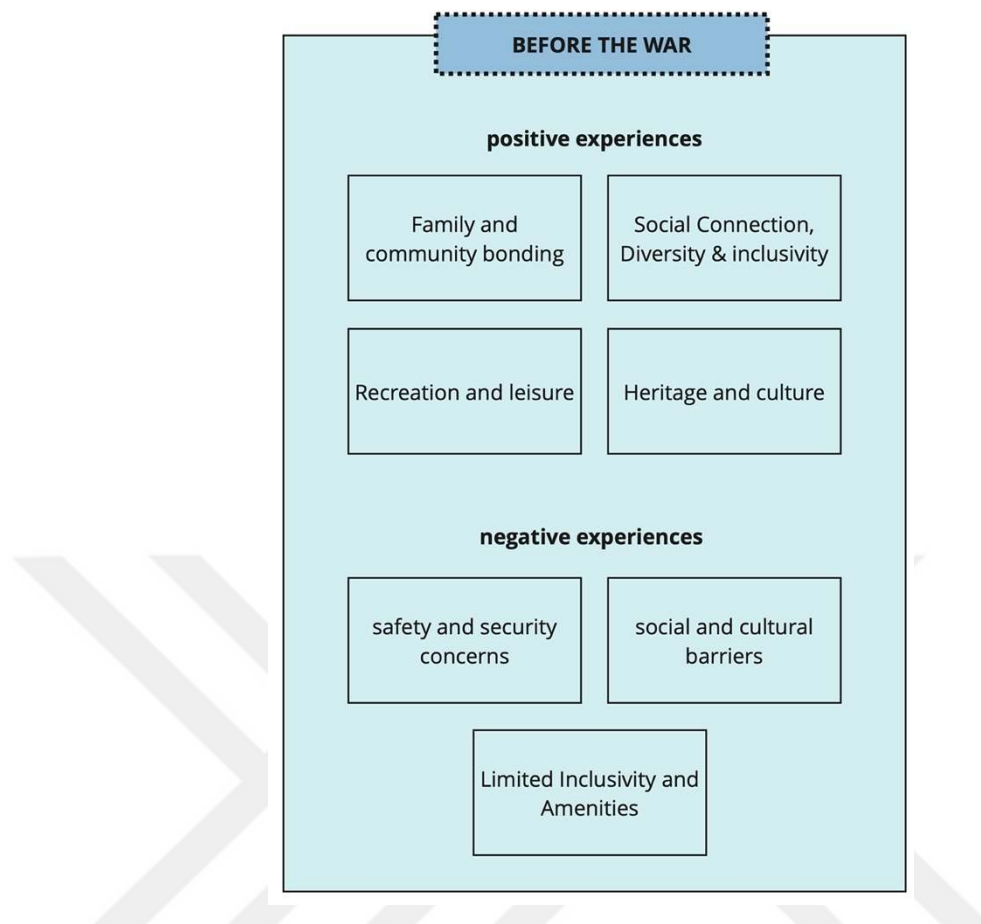


Figure 4.17 Experience before the war (positive and negative) The main categories (developed by the author)

Positive Experiences Before the War: The positive experiences documented in this study fall into distinct thematic categories, such as "Family and Community Bonding," where participants expressed fond memories of gatherings with loved ones during holidays and the significance of neighborhood gatherings in fostering familial connections. Additionally, the themes of "Social Connection, Diversity, and Inclusivity" emerged as participants described public spaces as meeting points for people from various social strata, promoting diversity, and encouraging inclusiveness. "Recreation and Leisure" proved to be another essential aspect of positive experiences, where modern facilities and public parks provided spaces for leisure activities, sports, and relaxation. Lastly, participants revealed how "Heritage and Culture" significantly shaped their positive encounters, as historical sites in Istanbul reflected the local culture and heritage, fostering a sense of pride and appreciation for their city's history.

Family and community bonding holds a special place in the hearts of participants from different parts of Aleppo. The sentiment of togetherness and community integration was evident when they reminisced about their experiences in public spaces. One participant from the western part of Aleppo City expressed,

"For me, visiting public spaces was like going to a public place with relatives and mingling with the community."

As another participant shared, these spaces became essential for families seeking release from the crowded confines of home,

"We couldn't play at home, especially when there were many people in the house, so public spaces were places for release."

Another participant highlighted the significance of public spaces as gathering spots during holidays:

"During holidays, we used to gather with family in public spaces."

The importance of family and community connections extended beyond specific locations, as the interviewees of semi-structured interviews shared their experiences with neighborhood gatherings. One participant mentioned,

"The neighborhood gatherings in Aleppo were a family experience and a recreational outlet for us when we were children, where we spent some time as a family."

These gatherings served as a comforting and familiar environment, fostering a sense of belonging for families. It is evident that public spaces in Aleppo were not just physical locations but rather cultural touchstones, fostering family ties and communal unity when possible.

As for Social Connection, Diversity and inclusivity, The shared experiences shed light on the role of public spaces in fostering social connection, diversity, and inclusivity within their communities. For Aleppian based in Istanbul, private clubs like the Lawyers' Syndicate canteen and Engineers' Syndicate were recognized as

"Pleasant places with greenery and being close to residential areas considered respectable places" (Participants based in Istanbul)

exemplifying how these spaces can serve as hubs for specific professions and contribute to social bonding within those groups, which enhances the sense of inclusivity among members. In the western part of Aleppo city, certain public spaces

were dedicated to specific genders ex: just boys or men, and others who linked to school and family trips, emphasizing the significance of these areas in shaping social interactions and cultural experiences, fostering a sense of belonging for different groups. Participants from the eastern part of the city also highlighted those public spaces were:

"Easily accessible to various social strata, and it was a meeting point for the rich and the poor, not exclusive to a particular group" (Participants from the eastern part of Aleppo city).

This inclusivity showcased the positive experiences of the public spaces related to bridge socio-economic divides and create an environment where people from all backgrounds can interact and connect, promoting diversity and social cohesion.

Moreover, the Aleppian who based in Istanbul shared various classes came together in places like the university canteen, fostering dialogues and reflecting the city's diversity, creating an atmosphere of inclusivity and understanding among different cultural and social groups. The positive experiences of the public parks in Aleppo city were highlighted as

"Open and beautiful spaces connecting different parts of the city and attracting diverse groups" (Participants based in Istanbul)

further emphasizing their role in fostering social connections and providing a common ground for people from various neighborhoods, promoting a sense of community and interconnectedness. Meanwhile, the surroundings of the Citadel in Aleppo served as a crowded and safe space where participants always felt a sense of belonging (Participants who are academia from Aleppo), creating a positive social connection between the residents. Additionally, unclassified places like ordinary sidewalks in Aleppo transformed into public spaces during holidays, offering children's games and recreational activities, showcasing the adaptability of these spaces to meet the community's needs and promote inclusivity (Participants who are academia from Aleppo). Understanding and nurturing the positive aspects of these spaces can play a crucial role in building cohesive and harmonious communities within urban settings.

Recreation and leisure play a significant role in shaping positive experiences in public spaces, as shared by participants. According to participants from the eastern part of Aleppo city,

"The new mall (Carrefour) was safe at night and included events suitable for all segments of society."

Other participants highlighted the significance of the Muhallak (hanging road around the city), describing it as

"Providing a refreshing and open space." (Participants based in Istanbul)

Additionally, they appreciated residential squares like Al-Mashhad Square, considering it a: *"respite for residents with nearby services."* The festive atmosphere in major squares, exemplified by the Cotton Festival in "Saadallah Al-Jabri Square", was mentioned as *"showcasing pride in local products."* The Olympic swimming pool and football fields were regarded as *"beautiful spaces for youth and sports practice."* Moreover, facilities like "Bassel Al-Assad" Sports City, "Al-Zahra" Cinema were viewed as *"promoting technology, development, and recreational places."*

Participants who are academia from Aleppo highlighted the attention given to the "Hamdaniyah playground" and its surrounding spaces, stating that it fosters activities like walking and offers the presence of *"kiosks and services."* These positive experiences, as expressed through participants' quotes, underscore the importance of public spaces in providing opportunities for recreation, leisure, and community engagement.

Heritage and culture breathe life into public spaces, as participants revealed through their positive experiences. Aleppian who based in Istanbul, mentioned historical sites like the Citadel, Farhat Square, and the Grand Mosque reflect the city's rich civilization, serving as gathering points for the community.

"Historical sites like the Citadel, Farhat Square, and the Grand Mosque hold great significance as they reflect our city's rich culture and civilization."

In Aleppo, fountains and a musical fountain signify the city's development, while Saif Al-Dawla Street and Al-Hatab Square become spaces for communal celebrations.

"The fountains in the public park, as well as the musical fountain, indicated the beginning of development, and they are an integral part of our cultural heritage."

Saadallah Al-Jabri Square comes alive with activities during holidays, and the areas around Aleppo Citadel and the public garden hold special significance. These instances showcase how heritage and culture infuse public spaces with history, identity, and a sense of togetherness.

"Al-Hatab Square is a place for friends to gather, especially when eating Foull." Furthermore, participants reminisced about the beauty and significance of certain areas, with one individual stating,

"Old Aleppo and the surroundings of Aleppo Citadel, including the spaces between them, up to the public garden and Saadallah Square, were the most beautiful areas in the country for me."

heritage and culture play a pivotal role in shaping the essence of public spaces, evoking a sense of identity, pride, and belonging among individuals and communities. The positive experiences associated with historical sites, cultural elements, and traditional celebrations illustrate how these factors enrich public spaces and foster a deeper connection to the collective heritage of the cities.

Negative Experiences Before the War: On the other hand, the negative experiences shared by participants shed light on the challenges and obstacles that some public spaces presented. These experiences ranged from safety concerns, and the absence of facilities and services, to feelings of detachment and lack of belonging. These valuable insights have been categorized into three main themes: Safety and Security Concerns, Social and Cultural Barriers, and Limited Inclusivity and Amenities. By carefully examining and analyzing these negative encounters, the study aim to shed light on the factors that contributed to the less-than-ideal conditions of public spaces in Aleppo during that time. Moreover, this exploration allows us to gain a deeper understanding of how these negative experiences may have played a significant role as root causes of the conflict. following explore each of these themes in detail to better grasp the challenges Aleppo's public spaces faced before the war.

safety and security concerns surrounding public spaces in Aleppo before the war, participants shared their harrowing experiences, highlighting the prevalent anxieties that plagued these areas. One participant revealed, "*Fear of using public facilities like bathrooms.*" was a significant issue, reflecting the unease and vulnerability felt within these spaces. Another lamented others shared that its dangerous to sit in public spaces such as public gardens because that will put you in dangerous especially for women

"Hesitant to sit in restaurants or cafes due to fear of harassment and stalking (public garden). ((Participants from the western part of Aleppo city).

underscoring the pervasive sense of insecurity that hindered their enjoyment of public spaces. The perception of public gardens as unsafe for families was also prevalent, with one individual expressing, *"Public gardens were perceived as unsafe for families,"* shedding light on the barriers that deterred families from leisurely activities. The lack of inclusivity and accessibility was evident, as evidenced by the statement, *"Malls were intimidating for people with disabilities,"* indicating the need for more accommodating environments. Disturbingly, participants disclosed incidents of harassment, with one sharing exemplifying the challenges women faced while trying to enjoy public spaces.

"Harassment in public parks and dark places, like the "Albara" area, was prohibited due to the presence of harassers,"

Moreover, inadequate amenities were a recurrent issue, with participants citing the *"Absence of services and even sanitary facilities in public places, like the 'Sanaam' area."* Neglected areas in the city's eastern part were perceived as hazardous, with one participant stating, *"Neglected places in the city's eastern part, like the Bab al-Hadid roundabout, are considered unsafe and emit bad odours."* The absence of proper lighting and facilities rendered parks scary and unwelcoming at night, leading individuals to avoid them altogether, as one participant shared, *"Scary at night after sunset, we avoid going to parks."* Additionally, the lack of essential amenities like lighting and facilities posed problems, as another participant mentioned, *"Some problems are associated with parks due to the lack of lighting and facilities."* Furthermore, the lack of basic facilities such as bathrooms and water faucets in public spaces proved inconvenient and detrimental to the overall experience, as participants noted, these experiences paint a vivid picture of the safety and security challenges that plagued public spaces in Aleppo before the war, and where most of the experiences shared were in the eastern part of the city.

the social and cultural barriers examination of public spaces in Aleppo, participants shed light on the divisive and exclusionary aspects that hindered communal cohesion. One distressing observation was the use of some squares for compulsory marches, such as the University Square and Saadallah Al-Jabri Square, which restricted public spaces from serving as places of leisure and gathering. Participants pointed out that certain statues in squares were perceived as symbols of embezzlement of the country's wealth

and people's money, as exemplified by the Saadallah Al-Jabri Square statue. These symbolic representations contributed to a sense of mistrust and resentment among the population. This utilization of public squares for political or ideological demonstrations curtailed their potential as inclusive areas for community interaction.

"The squares were often used for compulsory marches, and it limited our ability to freely enjoy these spaces." (Academician from Aleppo)

Additionally, certain squares acted as barriers between wealthy and poor neighbourhoods, reinforcing feelings of oppression and discrimination. One participant expressed their concern:

"Certain squares act as barriers between wealthy neighbourhoods and very poor ones." (Aleppian based in Istanbul)

Such urban planning decisions perpetuated social stratification and hindered community integration. The issue of privatization of public squares by specific sectors and private investment further exacerbated the exclusionary nature of these spaces. One participant shared,

"Some public squares are monopolized by specific sectors and private investment" (Aleppian based in Istanbul)

highlighting how these monopolies limited the wider community's access to and enjoyment of public spaces. These experiences emphasize the significance of addressing social and cultural barriers in public spaces to foster inclusivity, cultural understanding, and community bonding, ultimately leading to more harmonious urban environments.

Limited Inclusivity and Amenities in public spaces were prominent issues that affected the experiences of the participants. As one participant from the eastern part of Aleppo city stated, *"There is a lack of breathing spaces in the city, and we have to go outside to find clean public places."* Additionally, a participant from the academia in Aleppo expressed concerns about parks, saying, *"A large percentage of parks were left uncultivated and became unsafe gathering spots for young people, hindering the movement and passage of women in the area."*

The atmosphere in public spaces was also a significant concern, with participants expressing feelings of fear and discomfort. A participant from the eastern part of Aleppo City noted,

"Unencouraging atmosphere, presence of harassment, lack of lighting, and security guards make parks a scary place."

Another participant from the same area mentioned, *"As soon as the sun sets, we have to go back home,"* highlighting the safety concerns that limited their use of public spaces during certain hours. Moreover, the lack of amenities and organized activities in public spaces was another issue raised by the participants. A participant from the academia in Aleppo expressed their disappointment, stating, *"No activities are organized in public spaces."* This lack of organized activities contributed to a sense of detachment and disconnection from these spaces, as another participant from the western part of Aleppo city remarked,

"We did not feel attached to them, which led to neglect by people."

These quotes exemplify the sentiments of the participants and provide valuable insights into the limited inclusivity and amenities offered in public spaces in Aleppo before the war. The issues raised shed light on potential root causes of conflict within the community.

4.4.2.2 during the war:

During the war in Aleppo, participants from different parts of the city shared their experiences, shedding light on both the negative and positive aspects of public spaces during this tumultuous period. For those still inhabited the city, their experiences were further divided into two phases: during and after the direct violence stopped. Within these phases, the participants' perceptions varied significantly, reflecting the profound impact of the conflict on public spaces. While some noted positive changes after the direct violence subsided, others experienced ongoing challenges and safety concerns. However, for those who had left the city, the recollection of positive experiences became elusive, as the discussion of this phase opened the door for sharing their personal trauma and the threatening experiences that led to their displacement. The narratives from both groups underscore the transformative power of war on public spaces and the enduring effects it leaves on individuals and communities. the following illustration summarizes the main categories of the experiences during wartime.

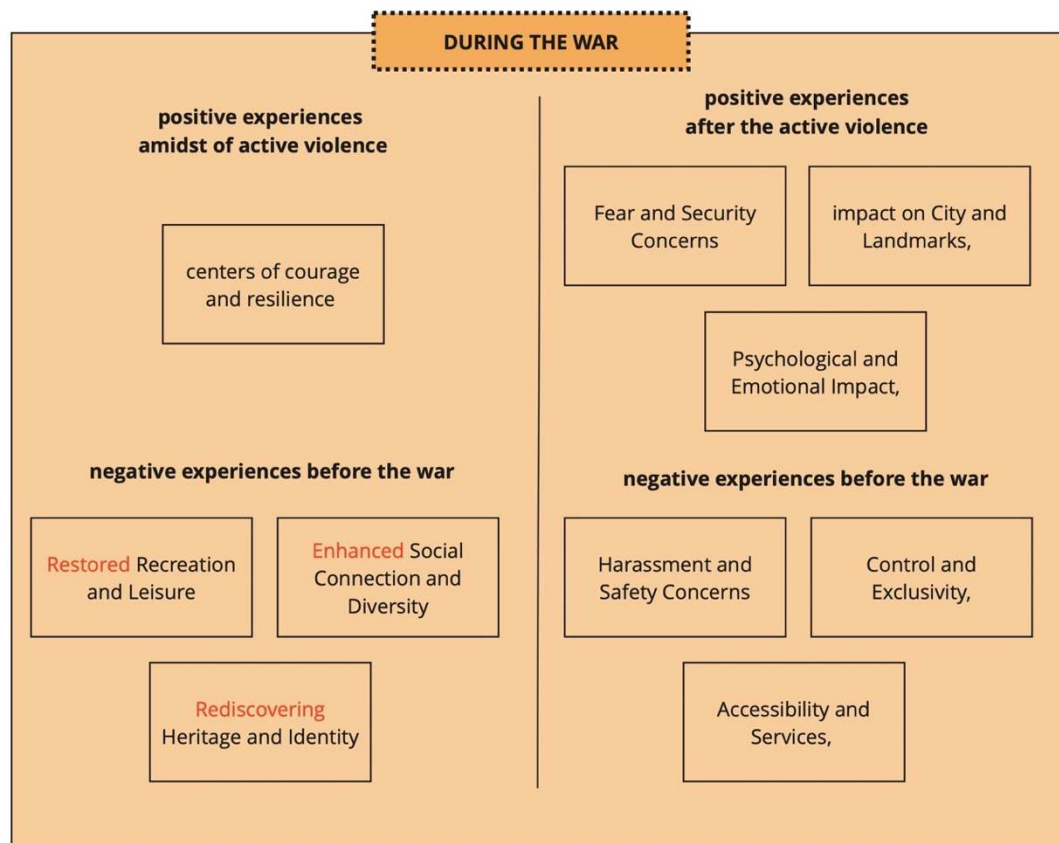


Figure 4.18 experience during the war (positive and negative) The main categories (developed by the author)

positive experiences during the war: Amidst the active violence in Aleppo, the participants faced the challenging task of sharing positive experiences from the city's public spaces. Despite the difficult circumstances, they bravely demonstrated how these spaces transformed into centers of courage and resilience during the conflict.

“I used to participate in first aid and support affected cases when shells fell in public places.” (Participant from the western part of Aleppo city)

Each shared experience shed light on how public spaces in Aleppo transcended their physicality, becoming havens of refuge and support. In the face of war, these places played a vital role, enabling acts of compassion, providing aid and medical assistance, offering solace and escape, and serving as platforms for alternative spaces for freely expressing opinions even under the watchful eyes of security observation.

“Some specific areas, like “Mukambo,” served as an escape from the ongoing war.” (Participant from the eastern part of Aleppo city)

“People who needed to express their opinions resorted to open places far from security observation.” (Participant who is academia from Aleppo)

These stories underscore the profound significance of public spaces in fostering community bonds and showcasing the indomitable human spirit amidst the turmoil of war.

After the end of the direct violence, as previously mentioned, mainly those who remained in the city were able to share positive experiences during the war and in the aftermath of the conflict. These experiences can be categorized as acts of resilience and community building, showcasing the indomitable human spirit amidst the turmoil of war. Despite the hardships faced, the participants demonstrated how public spaces in Aleppo became beacons of hope, fostering a sense of unity and solidarity among the people. Through their stories, individuals show remarkable strength and determination to rebuild their lives and create a sense of normalcy even in the face of adversity. These positive experiences stand as a testament to the enduring power of human connection and the ability to find rays of light in the darkest of times, the following shows the priorities areas people tried to restore despite the war and after the end of the direct violence:

Restored Recreation and Leisure in Aleppo after the direct violence subsided has brought a sense of respite and joy to public spaces. Participants from the city's eastern part mentioned that public areas have become enjoyable again, although they still require better maintenance. Additionally, vibrant malls with a youthful atmosphere have emerged as community hubs, fostering social connections and a sense of normalcy amidst the rebuilding efforts. This restoration showcases the city's resilience and determination to create a brighter future for its residents.

“After the direct violence, public spaces have become enjoyable again, but they still need better maintenance,” shared a participant from the eastern part of Aleppo city.

Another participant from the same area added, *“Some malls had a youthful atmosphere, providing a sense of leisure and fun for people in the city.”*

These quotes illustrate how the restoration of recreation and leisure activities in Aleppo has had a positive impact on the public spaces. Despite the challenges, the city's

residents have found solace in these spaces, experiencing moments of joy and connection as they rebuild their lives and communities.

Enhanced Social Connection and Diversity mark a significant shift in Aleppo's public spaces following the tumultuous conflict. Participants from the eastern part of the city shared their experiences, illustrating how these spaces have evolved into more open and accessible realms, promoting social integration during the war and displacement. As one participant noted,

"They have become more open and accessible to all people due to social integration during the war and displacement."

This transformation reflects the city's resilience and the community's determination to foster inclusivity and unity. and emphasis on inclusivity encourages individuals from diverse backgrounds to coexist and interact freely, cultivating a stronger sense of understanding and empathy among Aleppo's residents.

Rediscovering Heritage and Identity has emerged as a powerful theme in the post-conflict period for participants from Aleppo. As mentioned by one of the participants who left the city and came for a short visit for few times mentioned In 2017, the citadel area became accessible, and one participant fondly shared,

"The experience was special as people from all walks of life shared the same place in the same way to visit the citadel, expressing their longing for it despite its lack of readiness and rehabilitation."

This profound connection to heritage sites demonstrates their significance in preserving cherished memories and serving as a unifying force that transcends cultural differences, bringing people together in their shared history.

Furthermore, another participant expressed a sentiment of hope and longing, stating,

"A positive experience full of longing and a desire to rediscover the old city to find out what has happened to it."

This collective longing to reclaim their city's identity and understand its transformation highlights the resilience of Aleppo's inhabitants in preserving their heritage amidst the ravages of war.

Through these experiences, Aleppo's public spaces have evolved into powerful repositories of memory and identity, symbolizing the city's enduring spirit. As

residents have the need to rediscover their heritage, they reaffirm their shared sense of belonging and pride, which fosters the need for a collective narrative that binds them together in their journey of healing and rebuilding.

negative experiences during the war: negative experiences mirrored the divided nature of the positive ones for those who remained in the city. Their encounters were shaped by two distinct phases: during the direct violence and after it ceased. Within these phases, participants' perceptions varied significantly, as they endured ongoing challenges and safety concerns amid the turmoil of conflict. On the other hand, for those who had left the city, their experiences were confined to the period when the direct violence still prevailed, as they were unable to witness the changes and developments that occurred in Aleppo after the violence ceased.

During the direct violence participants from various backgrounds experienced a wide range of emotions and challenges related to public spaces. The conflict led to fear and security concerns, with some areas becoming inaccessible or controlled, and violent incidents in public squares. Landmarks suffered damage and deterioration, impacting the city's overall landscape. Moreover, public spaces became associated with painful memories and triggered anxiety, leading to avoidance those experiences categorized under the following:

Fear and Security Concerns, the participants from different backgrounds shared their experiences of fear and security concerns during the conflict. In the eastern part of Aleppo City, there was a fear of leaving the house due to the presence of gangs or groups.

“Fear of leaving the house and fear of gangs or groups.” (Participant from the eastern part of Aleppo city)

In Istanbul, participants also reported feeling anxious and attempting to avoid areas with security barriers and controls. Moreover, they witnessed the suppression of individuals and the use of violence in public squares during protests, adding to their sense of insecurity.

“Suppression of individuals and the use of violence in public squares due to the repression of protests.” (Participant based in Istanbul)

impact on City and Landmarks, the war profoundly impacted public spaces and landmarks in Aleppo. Participants who were academia from the city noted the shrinking of public spaces, limiting access to once-vibrant areas. The inability to access the old city and the shocking state of Saadallah Al-Jabri Square was particularly significant and indicative of the war's toll on the city's landmarks and historical sites.

“Inability to access the old city. Saadallah Al-Jabri Square was a big shock.

“(Participant who is academia from Aleppo)

Psychological and Emotional Impact, the war's psychological and emotional impact on the participants was evident in their experiences. Places associated with painful memories triggered negative emotions, making some public spaces emotionally challenging to visit.

“Public spaces have become a source of worry and fear.” (Participant who is academia from Aleppo)

Public spaces became a source of worry and fear, leading to the avoidance of such areas at the beginning of the conflict. The presence of demonstrations and the need to express opinions in open places away from security observation also contributed to the participants' psychological stress during the turbulent period.

After the direct violence participants shared negative experiences in public spaces, including harassment and safety concerns, issues of control and exclusivity, and challenges with accessibility and services. These themes highlight the difficulties faced in utilizing public spaces after the direct violence and as part of resilience during war as follows:

Harassment and Safety Concerns, Participants from both the eastern and western parts of Aleppo City shared their experiences during and after the conflict, expressing significant concerns regarding harassment and safety in public spaces. One participant from the eastern part of the city remarked, *"Public places are filled with harassment,"* highlighting the challenging and uncomfortable environment. Another participant from the same area mentioned, *"Significant annoyance from beggars,"* shedding light on the presence of beggars in public areas. Moreover, some participants noted that the fear of frequenting certain public spaces had diminished, suggesting a shift in the perception of safety. Conversely, a participant from the western part of Aleppo city shared,

"Now, going to public spaces is annoying due to the presence of a large number of beggars in public areas,"

indicating the negative impact of this issue on their experiences in public spaces. These accounts underline the distressing circumstances and safety concerns faced by individuals while navigating public spaces amidst and after the conflict in Aleppo.

Control and Exclusivity. The experiences shared by participants from the eastern part of Aleppo city shed light on the challenges of control and exclusivity in public spaces during and after the conflict. One participant noted,

"Some public parks are monopolized by specific groups,"

indicating limited access to these spaces for certain individuals or communities. Additionally, another participant mentioned,

"Some spaces are controlled by certain individuals exploiting their influence,"

highlighting the issue of authority and power dynamics impacting public spaces. Moreover, the participant mentioned that.

"Activities in public squares are limited to those with security approvals,"

suggesting restricted access to certain events or gatherings. Furthermore, the privatization of public spaces was a concern, with one participant stating,

"Public spaces have been privatized and turned into exclusive places,"

reflecting the transformation of once accessible areas into restricted and exclusive domains. These accounts underscore the challenges of control and exclusivity, which have influenced the dynamics and accessibility of public spaces in Aleppo.

Accessibility and Services. Participants from the eastern part of Aleppo City highlighted various concerns regarding accessibility and services in public spaces during and after the conflict. One participant pointed out that public spaces were *"Difficult to access with high costs,"* indicating financial barriers that limited people's ability to utilize these areas. Additionally, another participant mentioned,

"No nighttime lighting, a lack of proper services, and no surveillance, resulting in a lack of security,"

underlining the safety challenges in these spaces. The earthquake's impact was also evident, with a participant indicating inadequate infrastructure to handle emergencies.

"During the earthquake, I couldn't seek refuge in public places because they were not adequately equipped,"

Moreover, the lack of proper health facilities and cleanliness in free public places like public gardens and the citadel was a concern for participants, reflecting the deterioration of services during the conflict. The observations on Saadallah Al-Jabri Square revealed that it was primarily used for crossing and unsuitable for leisure due to its carnival design, limiting its functionality as a public space. These experiences shed light on the issues surrounding accessibility and services, emphasizing the need for improved infrastructure and amenities to enhance public spaces' functionality and usability.

The following figure 4.19 illustrate the main factors that influence the perception of experiences in public spaces, both positively and negatively, before the war and during the conflict. These factors are closely tied to the pre-war characteristics and conditions of public spaces, which, in turn, play a crucial role in shaping their transformative trajectory during wartime. The experiences shared by participants demonstrate how the history and nature of public spaces lay the groundwork for their adaptation and resilience amidst the challenges posed by war. The impact of the conflict on these spaces is intertwined with their pre-war significance, reflecting the indomitable human spirit that persists even in the face of adversity. These insights shed light on the dynamic relationship between past and present experiences, underscoring how the qualities of public spaces before the war continue to shape and influence their evolution throughout the conflict.

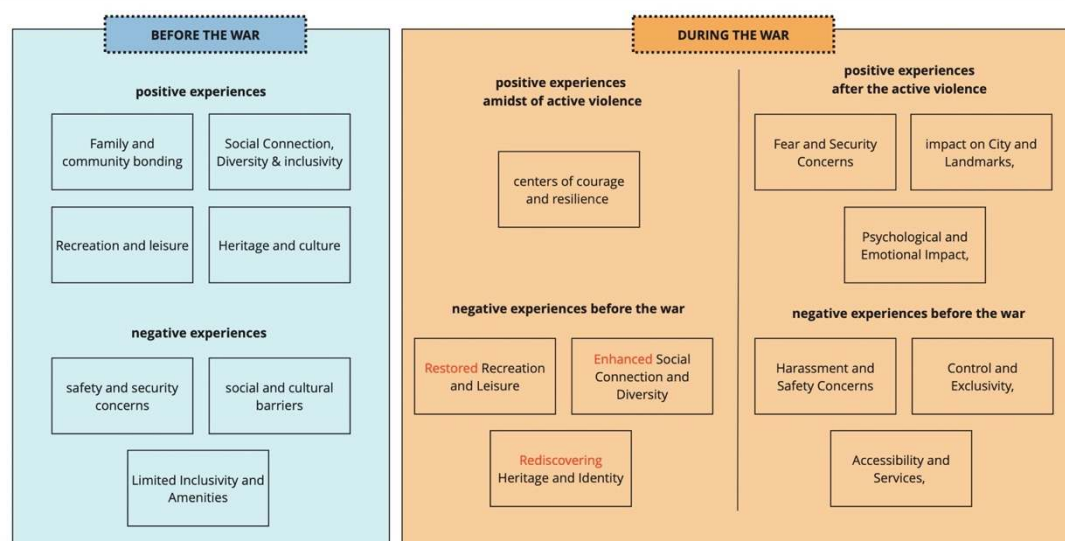


Figure 4.19 factors summarize the experiences of the participants in the public spaces in Aleppo before and during wartime. (Developed by the author)

4.4.3 Peace Promotion and Hidden Barriers

The study delves into the participants' responses and categorizes them into four main factors crucial for enhancing the role of public spaces in fostering peace and democracy. To achieve this, the participants were questioned on various aspects, such as the role of public spaces in promoting peace and social cohesion both before and during the war and the potential creation of hidden barriers between communities by these spaces. Additionally, the study sought insights into how public spaces in Aleppo could play a greater role in promoting peace.

To draw meaningful conclusions, the analysis of how public spaces can either promote peace or contribute to conflict will be compared with the four primary factors identified from the literature review as key influencers in peace and democracy, namely strategic and tactics, vision and policies, ownership and participation, and actors for peace. This comparison will unveil the specific aspects that may be associated with hidden barriers and highlight the factors that received particular focus from the participants.

4.4.3.1 *Scan the role of public spaces in Aleppo city Before the war:*

Before the war, urban public spaces In specific cases played a significant role in promoting peace and social cohesion, acting as gathering points for people from diverse cultural backgrounds. These spaces provided a sense of inner peace and served as outlets for releasing energy and relieving stress, contributing to psychological comfort and overall peace. One of the essential factors that enhanced social cohesion was the absence of significant social class differences in society, which allowed various groups to get to know each other, removing barriers and fostering a sense of unity. In other cases, public spaces before the war facilitated coexistence among different people or cultures, indirectly enhancing social cohesion. Events held in some of the named public spaces played a crucial role in integrating diverse communities compared to more segregated spaces closer to residential areas. Although public spaces didn't actively promote peace, they also did not negate their potential, offering opportunities for interaction and understanding among individuals.

Despite their positive impact, public spaces before the war faced certain challenges that potentially created hidden barriers between communities. In some instances, these

spaces lacked comfort and freedom for open conversations, leading to conflicts and violence due to differences between individuals. Furthermore, certain public spaces were exclusive to specific groups or were used as tools of conflict, like mandatory marches, which could reinforce divisions among the community. There was also a disparity in the distribution of services between the east and west sides of the city, which led to feelings of neglect and contributed to social segregation. Neglected local neighborhood spaces created barriers within the same neighborhood, hindering community connections.

Public spaces before the war had the potential to play a more active role in promoting peace and social cohesion, but they were influenced by the overall social and urban planning in the city. The uneven development and planning between the east and west sides of Aleppo resulted in divisions and inequalities among residents. The neglect of certain areas led to heightened violence later on, fueled by feelings of resentment and injustice.

Highlighted points from a technical perspective & Aleppian academia recognized the positive role of some squares before the war, such as the Citadel Square and Al-Hatab Square, in bringing together individuals from diverse backgrounds, organizing community activities, and providing suitable services for all groups. However, the discrimination in the distribution of services before the war between the east and west sides of the city, poor infrastructure implementation, and neglect of local neighborhood spaces created barriers within the same neighborhood and hindered community connections.

Where the technical participants from Aleppo highlighted the city's uneven planning, particularly regarding public spaces, which led to divisions and inequalities among residents, reinforcing social segregation. The focus on developing certain areas while neglecting others and the neglect of old city markets also created barriers between communities.

Overall, challenges such as unequal development, neglect of certain areas, and specific spaces being associated with certain social groups contributed to the creation of hidden barriers among individuals and communities. To harness the full potential of public spaces as agents of unity and peace.

4.4.3.2 Scan the role of public spaces in Aleppo City during the war:

urban Public spaces emerged as a pressing need amidst direct violence during the war in Aleppo. The disappearance of traditional public spaces during this period forced people to discover alternative sanctuaries that would foster unity and support among neighbors and family members, providing a sense of security and positivity. One such refuge was makeshift public spaces, like the "express" kiosks, where individuals sought solace and shared their worries and concerns, finding guidance and support from one another. These spaces served as a means of escaping the harsh realities of war, offering moments of peace and tranquility when surrounded by loved ones.

However, the challenges faced by public spaces during the war also contributed to the creation of hidden barriers between communities. The danger posed by military activities in the city made open spaces unsafe, while incidents of theft and kidnapping reinforced divisions, leading to mutual accusations among residents. The absence of public services and protection in these spaces further exacerbated the situation, resulting in uncivilized behaviors that tarnished the image of public spaces among families. Additionally, armed individuals misusing public spaces deepened the issues and intensified the challenges faced by these areas.

After the end of the direct violence, public spaces encountered obstacles in fully realizing their potential for peacebuilding. While they continued to serve as meeting points for people from different backgrounds, their role in actively promoting peace was not yet fully realized. Nevertheless, these spaces played a significant role in sustaining the livelihoods of communities, especially through unauthorized trade projects like kiosks. Moreover, public spaces remained vital spaces for interaction, contributing to individual stability.

Despite these challenges, the experiences of participants from different parts of Aleppo illuminated the positive aspects of public spaces during the war. In Western Aleppo, the interactions in public spaces fostered positive energy and promoted understanding between diverse individuals, transforming stereotypical perceptions and breaking down barriers. Additionally, certain places that were once restricted became open to all, promoting greater interaction and coexistence.

However, it is essential to acknowledge that there were instances where public spaces contributed to the creation of hidden barriers between communities. Some activities

within these spaces showed disregard for the experiences of certain communities, leading to self-isolation and a lack of trust in others. The accessibility of public spaces also posed challenges, with limited income affecting the full participation of some individuals. Moreover, the impact of a high cost of living reduced the potential positive role of public spaces in building peace.

In conclusion, urban public spaces in Aleppo played a dual role during the war – serving as vital sanctuaries and meeting points for communities yet facing challenges that hindered the promotion of peace and social cohesion.

4.4.3.3 *How to preserve the role of public spaces in promoting peace and social cohesion in Aleppo City:*

In the quest to preserve and enhance the role of public spaces in promoting peace and social cohesion, diverse perspectives and insights emerge from participants in Aleppo, each offering valuable contributions to this crucial endeavor. From technical experts to Aleppian academia and residents, their collective wisdom is categorized under the four factors that play a vital role in preserving the significance of urban public spaces: strategic and tactics, vision and policies, ownership and participation, and actors for peace. This synthesis delves into the thoughts shared by these stakeholders, offering valuable guidance on safeguarding and activating the role of public spaces and building bridges of unity in a city that has faced the challenges of war and division.

Under strategic and tactics, a multifaceted approach is advocated to preserve the significance of public spaces in fostering peace and cohesion. Key measures include properly managing and rehabilitating these spaces to optimize their impact. Additionally, introducing new and diverse activities and entertaining content aims to attract a wide range of individuals, promoting inclusivity. Embracing innovation, the implementation of smart features and facilities within public spaces enhances usability and fosters social interactions among visitors. To ensure the safety and well-being of these spaces, the establishment of local protection groups is suggested. Moreover, forgotten public spaces are to be rekindled and promoted, re-engaging the community with their inherent value. Lastly, empowering youth-led organizations is seen as instrumental in increasing engagement and involvement in these vital communal areas.

As for vision and policies, a comprehensive approach is recommended to fortify the role of public spaces in promoting peace and social cohesion. To achieve this, a focus on providing basic services and incorporating attractive elements is crucial to enhance the overall appeal of these spaces. Activation of public spaces through community-driven initiatives and clubs fosters a sense of ownership and inclusivity within the local population. Preserving public ownership and nurturing green spaces ensures a sustainable and eco-friendly environment for communal gathering. A robust framework of accountability and complaint mechanisms is to be established to ensure the maintenance and upkeep of these spaces. Implementation of regulations and laws becomes imperative to safeguard security, ensure safety, and maintain fair pricing, fostering a sense of trust among visitors. In addition, considering the current priorities and distributing services equitably becomes instrumental in bridging existing divisions and creating a more cohesive and harmonious urban landscape.

Ownership and participation are critical factors in preserving the significance of public spaces as agents of peace and community cohesion. To achieve this, a key action is to include a wide array of activities that are accessible to people of all age groups and diverse communities. Fair distribution of services is imperative to bridge the gap between different areas of the city, fostering a sense of equity and inclusivity. Involving municipalities in the management of neighborhoods and public spaces ensures a collaborative and community-driven approach to their upkeep. Furthermore, the design of public spaces should consider the needs of various age groups, especially children, and cater to the unique requirements of the residents. Prioritizing residents' privacy and social needs when designing and utilizing squares creates an environment that fosters a sense of ownership and belonging, further strengthening the role of public spaces in promoting peace and social integration.

Actors for peace, including local communities and youth activists, play a central role in shaping the role of public spaces as catalysts for peace and unity. Their active participation in designing and managing these spaces is essential to ensure they effectively address hidden barriers and promote a culture of peace. By actively involving these stakeholders, public spaces become more than just physical locations; they become vibrant hubs of community engagement and cohesion. Local communities and youth activists bring a unique perspective to the table, representing

the voices and aspirations of the people directly affected by these spaces. Their insights and ideas contribute to creating inclusive and accessible environments that foster a sense of belonging among all residents. Moreover, the involvement of municipalities in the local level and ensuring the decentralization and private sectors is crucial in preserving and nurturing the role of public spaces in promoting peace. Municipalities, as custodians of urban development, have a responsibility to create an enabling environment that encourages community engagement and social cohesion. They can establish policies and regulations that prioritize peacebuilding and inclusivity in public space design and management. Additionally, the private sector can contribute by investing in revitalizing and maintaining public spaces, providing attractive elements and amenities that enhance their appeal to residents.

4.4.4 Architects and Urban Planners Fostering Peace

The study extensively examines the perspectives of Aleppo residents, academics, and technical experts who participated in focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews. It investigates these individuals' technical aspects and personal insights to uncover the potential role of architects and urban planners in peacebuilding. Through these engagements, participants reflected on the significance of public spaces in fostering peace and recognized the existence of hidden barriers. Together, they collaboratively generated a list of critical factors essential to ensuring the positive impact of public spaces. Ultimately, in this section, the study analysed the participants' valuable input on the anticipated role of urban planners and architects in promoting peace and facilitating post-war reconstruction in Aleppo, shedding light on the broader context of conflict transformation within the city.

The current residents of Aleppo and the Aleppians based in Istanbul share valuable perspectives on the vital role of architects and urban planners in post-war reconstruction. Their focus is on enhancing public spaces, promoting peace, and fostering a stronger sense of community within Aleppo. The key areas of concentration are Inclusivity and Safety, Community Engagement, Preserving Identity and Heritage, Sustainability and Innovation, Promoting Social Cohesion, Activation and Revitalization, Financial Viability, and Eliminating Barriers as show in the figure 4.20.

Through dedicated efforts in these areas, architects and urban planners can significantly contribute to the city's revitalization and unity after the conflict.



Figure 4.20 The key areas of concentration/resident's perspective

The key area of concertation requested from architects and urban planners' role in post-war reconstruction, focusing on enhancing public spaces in Aleppo, can be explained as follows:

- **Inclusivity and Safety:** This category emphasizes the need to create public spaces that are inclusive and safe for all segments of society. It involves providing spaces that accommodate the diverse needs of children, women, and people with disabilities. Safety measures within public spaces are crucial to ensure a sense of security for visitors.
- **Community Engagement:** Engaging the community throughout the planning, design, and implementation of public spaces is essential. By involving people of different age groups and fostering high community participation, architects and urban planners can create spaces that truly reflect the desires and aspirations of the local community.
- **Preserving Identity and Heritage:** This category highlights the significance of preserving the city's cultural heritage and identity in public space design. Incorporating educational landmarks and symbols that motivate people to make a difference plays a crucial role in preserving the city's history and fostering a sense of pride and belonging among residents.
- **Sustainability and Innovation:** Sustainable and innovative designs are essential for post-war reconstruction. Architects and urban planners can incorporate solutions for generating sustainable energy, smart and eco-friendly designs, and facilities to deal with environmental factors within public spaces.

- **Promoting Social Cohesion:** Public spaces can act as bridges that connect diverse segments of society. By designing spaces that cater to all segments of society and promoting interaction between diverse groups through arts and cultural activities, architects and urban planners contribute to social cohesion and unity.
- **Activation and Revitalization:** Revitalizing forgotten and small spaces as public areas is crucial to breathe new life into the city. By planning designated areas for investment within public spaces, architects and urban planners can activate these spaces and promote community engagement.
- **Financial Viability:** Ensuring financial viability is vital for sustaining public spaces in the long run. By planning public spaces to be income-generating, where their development expenses can be covered from their revenues, architects and urban planners can ensure these spaces' continuous maintenance and improvement.
- **Eliminating Barriers:** Removing physical barriers and creating open and welcoming public spaces is essential for fostering a sense of belonging and accessibility for all residents.

Upon analyzing the responses from academia and technical participants in focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews, several valuable points were added to the list. These include the challenges in funding public spaces due to the absence of effective economic systems impact the development of parks in Aleppo. However, it is crucial to recognize the role of public spaces and services in contributing to the mental health and overall well-being of residents. Strategic neighborhood planning is essential to achieve social justice and peacebuilding, emphasizing inclusivity and social cohesion in urban planning. The post-war significance of public spaces as symbols of remembrance, reconciliation, and healing should be acknowledged. The process of self-reconciliation involves acknowledging the past while moving forward towards a better future. It is essential to understand that public spaces are dynamic and shaped by surrounding events, playing a significant role in influencing economic and social dynamics within the city.

These additional insights highlight various aspects of urban planning and architectural considerations that can contribute to post-war reconstruction and the revitalization of public spaces in Aleppo.

As part of the discussion they highlighted on where to start and what to avoid in ensuring the consideration of urban public spaces in post-war reconstruction projects in Aleppo as urban planners and architects.

they stressed the importance of linking social, cultural, and technical elements to find comprehensive solutions. Understanding the evolving demographic changes, priorities, and needs of the community emerged as a crucial step in this process. Moreover, the participants emphasized the significance of developing a community-driven vision for public spaces, which should not solely rely on international and local trends in city planning. Instead, it should reflect the unique aspirations and cultural identity of the communities residing in Aleppo.

The experts also highlighted the need to initiate the rehabilitation of selected public spaces that had played positive roles during the conflict. By showcasing their potential contribution to peacebuilding, these rehabilitated spaces could serve as pioneering projects for further development. Innovative technology should be utilized in the design process to enhance these spaces' effectiveness in fostering unity and interaction among people.

On the other hand, the participants outlined certain aspects that should be avoided during the reconstruction process. It was essential to refrain from restoring squares without acknowledging the historical events that took place during the war. Ignoring the city's history and context in the restoration was also deemed unacceptable. The experts cautioned against presenting squares and public spaces as design competitions, as this might neglect social and economic considerations vital for the city's healing and reconciliation.

In summary, the experts emphasized the importance of a thoughtful, community-driven approach in reconstructing public spaces. By understanding the local needs, culture, and history, and avoiding superficial restoration efforts, the reconstruction process can contribute significantly to peacebuilding and the revitalization of Aleppo's sense of community and identity after the conflict as illustrated in the following table

Table 4.2 where to start and what to avoid in public spaces post war reconstruction.

Where to start	What to avoid
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☐ Link social, cultural, and technical aspects to find comprehensive solutions. ☐ Understand demographic changes, priorities, and needs of the community. ☐ Build a community-driven vision for public spaces, avoiding reliance solely on international and local trends. ☐ Develop planning based on the visions and cultures of the communities. ☐ Initiate rehabilitation of selected public spaces with positive roles, starting with pilot	☐ Avoid restoring squares without acknowledging historical events during the war. ☐ Do not restore stones without considering the city's history and context. ☐ Avoid presenting squares and public spaces as design competitions without prioritizing social and economic considerations relevant to peacebuilding.
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4.4.5 Role of Urban Spaces in Peace and War

As a crucial aspect of the fieldwork, the participants requested to articulate their perception of public spaces before and during the war in Aleppo City, encapsulated in one sentence or word. Additionally, the facilitators asked them to express their aspirations for these spaces. This exercise proved invaluable in comprehending the role of public spaces from the participants' unique perspectives across the three distinct stages - before, during, and after the war.

4.4.5.1 Before the war:

The findings from this exercise reveal a diverse array of perspectives regarding the role of urban public spaces in Aleppo City before the war. Participants from the western part of the city highlighted the significance of these spaces as vital elements of daily life, providing free time, breathing space, cultural experiences, and a sense of community gathering. These spaces were perceived as adding charm and positive energy to the lives of the city's residents, creating excitement and enthusiasm.

In contrast, participants from the eastern part of Aleppo emphasized the importance of public spaces as safe havens, providing a sense of security amidst the challenging circumstances.

The perspective of participants based in Istanbul offered a different lens, pointing out that although urban public spaces were abundant in resources, they often remained unused and lacked organization. These spaces were seen as deprived and needing more attention to foster a sense of community connection and social safety. Despite this,

city viewed these spaces as essential needs that provided a change of atmosphere and served as alternative solutions amidst the conflict. However, they were scarce, abandoned, and often hidden, raising concerns about safety and fear. For them, these spaces symbolized hopelessness and adaptation to the challenging circumstances.

Participants from the eastern part of Aleppo emphasized the danger associated with public spaces during the war, as they became areas of insecurity and fear.

Meanwhile, the perspective of participants based in Istanbul shed light on how the relocation of markets to residential areas in the western part of the city created a semblance of safety and normalcy amidst the conflict. However, overall, public spaces were perceived as unsafe, terrifying, and turned into sites of conflict and security barriers.

For the academic participants from Aleppo, public spaces during the war were deemed places to be avoided, as the negative aspects prevalent before the war intensified. However, they acknowledged some positive effects resulting from demographic changes on the streets during the conflict.

The insights from the semi-structured interviews highlighted the sense of adventure intertwined with fear and suffering in crossing urban public spaces during the war.

It is worth mentioning that those who left the city before the end of the direct violence carried with them painful memories, and they were unable to recall any specific public spaces they experienced during the height of the conflict. On the other hand, the participants who chose to remain and continue inhabiting the city distinguished between two distinct phases during the war.

The first phase, marked by intense bombing, direct conflicts, and the physical separation of the city into east and west, left a profound impact on their experiences of public spaces. During this time, public spaces were often associated with fear, danger, and insecurity, and their utilization for leisure or community gatherings significantly diminished. In contrast, the second phase, which occurred after the end of the direct violence, ushered in a different perspective on public spaces. As the conflict subsided, participants began to witness the gradual resurgence of public spaces as places for rebuilding and regaining a sense of normalcy. Although challenges remained, there was a renewed appreciation for these spaces as symbols of hope and resilience, slowly

backgrounds. Participants from the western part expressed hope and emphasized the importance of protection and development for these spaces, signifying a desire for rejuvenation and renewal.

On the other hand, participants from the eastern part saw potential in transforming public spaces into tourist attractions, envisioning a future where these spaces would draw visitors and contribute to the city's revival.

Those based in Istanbul shared a collective vision for urban public spaces that catered to the youth, prioritized safety, embraced diversity, and reflected the unique identities of various communities. They dreamed of inclusive squares that brought people together in a spirit of love, peace, and artistic expression while preserving the distinct customs of each region.

The academic participants from Aleppo also emphasized respecting diversity and creating safe and enjoyable spaces that provided respite and activities for all age groups. Their vision included public spaces that promoted dialogue, respected the city's identity, and became attractive points of interest for everyone.

The insights from the semi-structured interviews underscored the need to balance privacy between communities while fostering connections and overcoming mutual fear and animosity.

In conclusion, the aspirations for urban public spaces post-war in Aleppo City centered around revitalization, inclusivity, safety, and preserving the city's unique identity. While there were variations in perspectives, the shared vision among participants highlighted the critical role of public spaces in promoting community engagement, healing, and unity. The collective hope for these spaces to become genuine havens visited by all reflects the aspiration to rebuild a city that thrives on diversity, creativity, and harmonious coexistence. These aspirations serve as guiding principles for urban planners and policymakers in their efforts to create vibrant, welcoming, and resilient public spaces that contribute to the city's post-war transformation and well-being.

becoming tourist attractions highlights the potential for these spaces to promote the city's revival and showcase its cultural heritage to visitors.

the study on public spaces in Aleppo City exemplifies the transformative nature of these spaces throughout different stages of peace and conflict. Public spaces have the power to shape urban experiences, serve as symbols of hope and resilience, and contribute to community well-being. By recognizing their significance in peace and war, urban planners and policymakers can work towards designing inclusive and vibrant public spaces that not only withstand conflict challenges but also become beacons of peace, healing, and unity in the aftermath of war. By nurturing these spaces, Aleppo City can move towards a future that cherishes its past, embraces its diverse communities, and envisions a harmonious and thriving urban landscape for all its inhabitants.

CHAPTER 5

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRESERVING URBAN PUBLIC SPACES AND FOSTERING SOCIAL COHESION IN ALEPPO CITY

This chapter presents a series of thoughtful and actionable recommendations that highlight the significance of public spaces in nurturing social interactions, community bonds, and healing in conflict-affected regions. Recognizing the intrinsic value of preserving and restoring public spaces, the recommendations emphasize the need to protect areas of historical and cultural importance. By safeguarding these spaces, Aleppo can honor its rich heritage and provide opportunities for communities to gather, heal, and envision a brighter future together. Another key theme in the chapter is community involvement, stressing the importance of engaging residents, local leaders, and stakeholders in the reconstruction efforts. Through collaborative approaches, the recommendations aim to empower those who have directly experienced the impact of the conflict, allowing them to shape the future of their city and become active agents in the rebuilding process.

The chapter explores theoretical concepts and provides concrete recommendations to transform these aspirations into reality. It calls for collective efforts from city officials, urban planners, architects, and, most importantly, the citizens who have endured past hardships.

Based on extensive fieldwork, thorough analysis, and attentive listening to the perspectives of city residents, both current and displaced, as well as academicians and technical personnel who have studied and managed the city, the following recommendations have emerged:

1. **Foster Inclusive and Participatory Urban Planning:** Involve residents, community leaders, and stakeholders in the planning and design of public spaces. Engage them in decision-making processes to ensure that the spaces reflect the needs and aspirations of the diverse communities, promoting a sense of ownership and inclusion.
2. **Preserve Cultural Heritage:** Embrace and preserve Aleppo's cultural heritage by integrating historical elements into the design and restoration of public spaces. By celebrating the city's identity, public spaces can become symbols of unity and pride, fostering a shared sense of belonging among the residents.
3. **Promote Intercommunity Interaction:** Design public spaces to facilitate interactions between different communities. Create inclusive gathering points and events that encourage dialogue and social exchange, promoting understanding and cooperation among diverse groups.
4. **Intercommunity Dialogue and Reconciliation:** Facilitate platforms for intercommunity dialogue and reconciliation within public spaces. Organize events that encourage people from different backgrounds to come together, promoting understanding and harmony.
5. **Privacy and Integration:** Balance the need for privacy among communities with initiatives that foster integration and interaction. Encourage activities that encourage people to connect while respecting the diverse cultural norms and customs of the city's neighborhoods.
6. **Enhance Safety and Security:** Implement measures to enhance safety and security in public spaces. Adequate lighting, surveillance systems, and active community engagement can help residents feel safer, fostering a sense of trust and stability within the community.
7. **Provide Recreational and Cultural Activities:** Organize recreational and cultural programs in public spaces to promote community engagement and

social cohesion. Events such as art exhibitions, music performances, and sports activities can bring people together, fostering a sense of togetherness and shared experiences.

8. **Ensure Accessibility for All:** Design public spaces to be accessible to people of all ages and abilities. Consider the needs of children, the elderly, and people with disabilities to create welcoming environments that promote inclusivity and equal participation.
9. **Emphasize Sustainability and Green Spaces:** Integrate sustainable design principles and green spaces into public spaces. Urban gardens, parks, and green areas contribute to residents' physical and mental well-being while fostering a connection with nature and promoting environmental awareness.
10. **Establish Community Centers:** Establish community centers within public spaces, providing residents with spaces for social gatherings, workshops, and educational activities. These centres can serve as hubs for community-building initiatives and peace-building programs.
11. **Youth-Centric Spaces:** Design public spaces with the specific needs and interests of the youth in mind. Create engaging and safe environments that offer recreational activities, fostering a sense of ownership and community among young residents.
12. **Artistic Expression and Cultural Preservation:** Integrate artistic elements and cultural symbols into public spaces to celebrate the city's heritage and foster pride among its inhabitants. Art installations, murals, and cultural events can enhance the spaces' aesthetic appeal and storytelling.
13. **Collaborate with NGOs and Civil Society:** Partner with non-governmental organizations and civil society groups that specialize in peacebuilding and community development. Their expertise and resources can enhance the impact of initiatives focused on public spaces and social cohesion.
14. **Community-Led Initiatives:** Support and encourage community-led initiatives in the management and programming of public spaces. Empower local communities to take an active role in shaping and caring for their shared spaces.
15. **Monitor and Evaluate Impact:** Regularly monitor and evaluate the impact of peacebuilding initiatives within public spaces. Collect feedback from residents

and stakeholders to assess the effectiveness of implemented strategies and make necessary adjustments for continuous improvement.

By implementing these recommendations, Aleppo City can harness the power of public spaces to promote peacebuilding and foster social cohesion. Through inclusive planning, preservation of cultural heritage, and the provision of safe, accessible, and vibrant spaces, public areas can become transformative tools for healing and reconciliation, fostering a harmonious and resilient city for its residents.

As for the role of the architects and urban planners following are the recommendation directed to them:

1. Addressing Economic Systems: Develop effective economic systems to fund public spaces in Aleppo. Explore innovative financing models that generate revenue from public spaces, ensuring their sustainable maintenance and improvement.
2. Promoting Mental Health and Well-being: Recognize the role of public spaces and services in contributing to residents' mental health and overall well-being. Design public spaces with features that promote relaxation, tranquility, and a sense of refuge for individuals dealing with post-war trauma.
3. Strategic Neighborhood Planning: Implement strategic neighborhood planning to achieve social justice and peace-building objectives. Prioritize inclusivity and social cohesion in urban planning to foster a sense of community and unity among residents.
4. Public Spaces as Symbols of Remembrance and Healing: Acknowledge the post-war significance of public spaces as symbols of remembrance, reconciliation, and healing. Design public spaces with commemorative elements that honor the past while paving the way for a better future.
5. Understanding Demographic Changes and Community Priorities: Continuously monitor and understand the evolving demographic changes, priorities, and needs of the community. This information will inform adaptive urban planning and design, ensuring that public spaces remain relevant and responsive to the community's aspirations.
6. Community-Driven Vision: Develop a community-driven vision for public spaces that reflects Aleppo's communities' unique aspirations and cultural

identity. Engage residents in the design process to foster a sense of ownership and pride in these spaces.

7. **Rehabilitation of Positive Spaces:** Prioritize the rehabilitation of public spaces that played positive roles during the conflict. Showcase their potential contributions to peacebuilding and use them as pioneering projects for further development.
8. **Innovative Technology in Design:** Utilize innovative technology in the design process to enhance public spaces' effectiveness in fostering unity and interaction among people. Consider incorporating interactive elements and smart features to create dynamic and engaging spaces.

Furthermore, the study listed a recommendation of things that urban planners and architects should avoid:

- **Ignoring Historical Events:** Avoid restoring squares and public spaces without acknowledging the historical events that took place during the war. Recognize the significance of these spaces in the city's collective memory and design with sensitivity to their historical context.
- **Superficial Restoration Efforts:** Refrain from superficial restoration efforts that neglect social and economic considerations essential for the city's healing and reconciliation. Prioritize comprehensive solutions that address the needs and aspirations of the community.
- **Design Competitions without Social and Economic Considerations:** Avoid presenting squares and public spaces as design competitions that focus solely on aesthetics. Instead, prioritize designs that consider the social, cultural, and economic factors crucial for the city's post-war recovery.

By integrating these additional recommendations, architects and urban planners can contribute to the successful post-war reconstruction of public spaces in Aleppo. The insights gained from the academia and technical participants underscore the importance of a community-driven and culturally sensitive approach that fosters unity, peace, and a renewed sense of identity for the city and its inhabitants.

The literature review played an essential role in guiding the shaping of the fieldwork. It also provided us with general recommendations that need to be in place when dealing with post-conflict reconstruction and work for peacebuilding. Where the analysis

shows that the connection between national and urban/ local politics is essential for sustainable peace. In the Belfast case study, it was clear that urban interventions deepened the segregation between the conflicting communities; despite its good development in the political peace process, Belfast is still at risk of reverting to violence. In the Aleppo case study, it was clear that there is no progress at the political level, which is now blocked. The international community and civil society hold the conflict and people's life (except for the relief work) until the international community pushes the regime to play an active role in developing a political solution. Still, at the same time, the regime is active at the local/urban level, where urban tools have been used to ensure the regime's power, remove people's rights, and change power dynamics and the city's character. The three factors of sustainable peace include:

- The early connection between the political process and the urban/local interventions.
- Include urban planners and architects in the early peacebuilding/political process stage.
- Opening spaces for discussion and sharing, away from political actors by using urban planning tools.

The unresolved conflict in Syria, which has been taking place for more than 11 years, is hiding more complicated upcoming conflicts, since the current approach focuses on the conflicting parties at the international and national levels and ignores the realities and changes happening at the local/urban level [20].

Furthermore, it is essential to delve into the significance of squares to the people, understanding whether they hold personal memories and cultural value. Comprehending these sentiments could make an informed decision about prioritizing restoration efforts. For instance, Saad Allah al Jabri Square represents authority and control in the city.

In conclusion, this chapter's recommendations offer a roadmap for transforming Aleppo's public spaces into vibrant social cohesion, healing, and community-building hubs. By recognizing the profound impact of these spaces on the city's identity and well-being, take small but meaningful steps towards their restoration and revitalization.

Pilot squares can serve as valuable testing grounds for these recommendations, allowing us to fine-tune approaches before implementing them on a larger scale. These experimental projects can demonstrate the positive changes that can be achieved through collaborative efforts and community involvement.

Crucially, the involvement of the Aleppian diaspora in this process can be a powerful force for peacebuilding. Their unique perspectives, cultural insights, and passion for their hometown can enrich the current dynamics and infuse a sense of shared responsibility. Embracing the diaspora as part of the reconstruction efforts adds value and fosters a strong connection between the city and its global community.

By nurturing these collaborative partnerships and taking gradual yet purposeful steps, the city's resilience and move towards a future where public spaces stand as symbols of unity and reconciliation could be made. Emphasizing inclusivity, safety, and sustainability, create spaces that accommodate Aleppo's inhabitants' diverse needs and aspirations.

embarking on this transformative journey, it is essential to acknowledge the significance of public spaces as platforms for collective healing and envisioning a brighter future together. By preserving the city's rich heritage and embracing innovative solutions, and design public spaces that facilitate dialogue, cultural exchange, and mutual understanding among diverse communities.

The commitment to these recommendations, beginning with small steps, will set the stage for a new era of collaboration and collective progress. As part of celebrate Aleppo's past while shaping its future, public spaces can serve as powerful instruments for lasting peace-building efforts.

In the face of challenges, let us be guided by the collective hope, resilience, and determination of Aleppo's residents and the diaspora. Together, they can create a city where public spaces serve as beacons of harmony and inspiration, standing as a testament to the indomitable spirit of its people.

Starting from now, let's unite the efforts and forge a path towards a brighter, more inclusive, and cohesive future for Aleppo City. By embracing the diaspora's contributions, tap into an invaluable source of strength and enrichment that will propel Aleppo forward with confidence and optimism.

With each step, the need to remember that the transformation of public spaces is not just about physical structures but about weaving the threads of a united community.



CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED

As the study draws to a close, it becomes evident that the exploration of Aleppo's post-war reconstruction, preservation of public spaces, and fostering of social cohesion has uncovered invaluable lessons. Through a meticulous examination of the city's journey, the study gained a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between war, peace, and urban spaces, witnessing the immense resilience of Aleppo's inhabitants in the face of adversity.

the conclusion chapter does not merely serve as a destination but also marks the beginning of further intellectual exploration. It raises pertinent questions that beckon future research endeavors, guiding scholars towards untapped areas of inquiry. These questions span a wide array of domains, including the socio-cultural impact of reconstructed public spaces, the long-term effects on community well-being, and the intersection between urban planning and conflict resolution.

By recognizing these gaps in knowledge, the chapter challenges academics and practitioners to continue the work initiated here, delving deeper into the intricacies of post-war reconstruction and urban development. These unanswered questions serve as a call to action, urging scholars to build upon the existing foundation and contribute to this field's growing body of knowledge.

"Conclusions and Questions to Be Addressed" chapter stands as the culmination of a journey that unravels the multifaceted dynamics between war, peace, and urban spaces in Aleppo. Through insightful conclusions drawn from the study's core concepts and the anticipation of future research questions, this chapter enriches the comprehension of the subject and invites further exploration and endeavors to create a brighter, more resilient future for conflict-affected communities worldwide.

This study has addressed the research question of how public spaces can play a pivotal role in the recovery of cities experiencing conflict, and what specific requirements and conditions are necessary to ensure the effectiveness of these spaces in the process. By investigating and answering critical questions related to the design of urban spaces, dealing with divided communities, and the role of architects and urban planners in peacebuilding, a valuable insight into the transformative potential of public spaces in conflict-affected cities were gained.

Through a comprehensive analysis of theoretical concepts, empirical data gathered from fieldwork, and guidance from existing literature, the multifaceted significance of public spaces in fostering sustainable peace or contributing to future conflicts were explored. The design of these spaces emerges as a crucial determinant in shaping the trajectory of post-conflict cities, offering opportunities for social integration, dialogue, and collective healing.

The study highlighted the importance of inclusivity, community engagement, and fostering an environment of trust and understanding by exploring strategies to address divided communities and hidden barriers within urban spaces. Public spaces can act as bridges that connect diverse segments of society, promoting social cohesion and unity while dismantling divisive forces that may linger after conflicts.

By actively participating the architects and urban planners in the design and development of public spaces, these professionals can contribute to the reconstruction of cities in ways that nurture peace, harmony, and resilience. Their vision and expertise can create environments that facilitate inter-community interactions, preserve cultural heritage, and cater to residents' diverse needs and aspirations.

moving forward, it is essential to recognize the dynamic and transformative nature of public spaces in the context of post-conflict recovery. These spaces must not merely be physical entities but platforms for empowerment, reconciliation, and envisioning a shared future. A thoughtful, community-driven approach that considers local values, traditions, and historical context will be critical in ensuring the effectiveness of public spaces as catalysts for positive change.

Furthermore, The fieldwork conducted for the case study of Aleppo City has been instrumental in unveiling the profound impact of public spaces on the city's dynamics during both times of peace and conflict. Through meticulous observation and analysis,

the study has elucidated how public spaces can either foster peace or unwittingly contribute to hidden barriers that hinder reconciliation and social cohesion.

Even amidst direct violence and devastation, the study highlighted the undeniable need for public spaces, as people instinctively sought out and developed alternatives to restore some semblance of normalcy to their lives. This resilient human instinct demonstrates the critical role public spaces play in providing communities with a sense of belonging, social interaction, and collective healing during times of upheaval.

The knowledge gained from this study unequivocally underscores the essential nature of understanding the role of public spaces in peacebuilding strategies. The insights obtained have illuminated how intentional design, community engagement, and inclusivity within public spaces can pave the way for sustainable peace in conflict-affected regions.

By acknowledging the complex interplay between public spaces, peace, and hidden barriers, urban planners, architects, and policymakers can make informed decisions that enhance the positive impact of these spaces on post-conflict cities. Emphasizing inclusive design, open dialogue, and trust-building initiatives can empower public spaces to transcend their physical boundaries, becoming catalysts for reconciliation and social integration.

The study's findings demonstrate that public spaces hold transformative potential, even amidst the most challenging circumstances. They serve as vital spaces for human interaction, creative expression, and resilience-building. Therefore, understanding the nuances of public spaces and their role in fostering peace is not only essential but imperative for building a more harmonious, interconnected world.

the fieldwork conducted on Aleppo City's case study has highlighted how public spaces are crucial for communities in times of both peace and conflict. By consciously integrating this knowledge into peacebuilding strategies, the power of public spaces to break down barriers, foster unity, and empower communities towards a brighter, more peaceful future could be reinforced. It is evident that public spaces are not just physical entities but catalysts for transformation and healing, and recognizing their role as such is a vital step in creating inclusive, resilient societies.

The literature review of Barcelona and Belfast cities illuminates the critical success factors contributing to public spaces' role in fostering democracy and sustainable peace. From the analysis, following are the conclusive points:

- **Community Participation and Political Education:** Active community involvement and political education within public spaces play a pivotal role in nurturing democracy and sustainable peace. When citizens engage in decision-making processes and understand the importance of their voices, public spaces become arenas for inclusive dialogue and democratic expression.
- **Architects as Activists and Collaborators:** Architects assuming the role of activists and working closely with communities become catalysts for positive change in public spaces. By incorporating the needs and aspirations of people, architects can create spaces that are reflective of their desires and contribute to social cohesion.
- **Implementing Local Thinking Globally:** A successful approach to public spaces involves embracing local culture, history, and values while recognizing their relevance in a global context. This fusion allows for spaces that celebrate diversity while fostering a sense of interconnectedness and shared humanity.
- **Planning for Political Issues:** Public space planning can be used as a tool to address and advocate for political issues. By justifying the incorporation of political elements within public spaces, architects and planners can create spaces that encourage dialogue and awareness of social and political challenges.
- **Ongoing Process:** The success of public spaces in promoting democracy and sustainable peace is an ongoing journey. Continuous engagement, adaptation, and responsiveness to the community's evolving needs ensure that public spaces remain vibrant, inclusive, and meaningful over time.

the literature review on Barcelona and Belfast underscores the transformative potential of public spaces in fostering democratic engagement and sustainable peace. By embracing community participation, collaborative architecture, local-global integration, political awareness, and a commitment to ongoing development, public spaces can serve as dynamic platforms for unity, understanding, and progress in

diverse urban contexts. Understanding these success factors provides valuable insights for planners, architects, and policymakers to create public spaces that embody the values of democracy and contribute to a harmonious and peaceful society.

As well as, the framework presented by [13] sheds light on the critical role of urban public spaces in post-conflict contexts, emphasizing the need to move beyond mere functional considerations and embrace the socio-cultural context of the site. By recognizing the significance of history, culture, and the local community's aspirations, the design of public spaces can become a powerful tool for peacebuilding.

The authors' argument highlights that the design of post-conflict public spaces can serve as more than just physical structures; they can be transformative platforms for community interaction, fostering a sense of belonging and ownership among residents. These spaces become integral in facilitating the reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons, providing them with essential opportunities for healing and rebuilding their lives.

Stakeholder engagement and community involvement emerge as pivotal factors in ensuring the success of these design endeavors. By actively including local communities in the planning process, public spaces become inclusive, sustainable, and reflective of the values and aspirations of those who inhabit them. This approach fosters a sense of ownership and reinforces a sense of pride and connection with these spaces.

Importantly, the design of urban public spaces can play a significant role in building social capital and promoting social cohesion. As communities come together within these spaces, bridges are built, and relationships are forged, fostering an environment conducive to sustainable peacebuilding in post-conflict contexts.

In conclusion, this study has shed light on the immense potential of public spaces to play an integral role in the recovery of cities experiencing conflict. By addressing critical questions related to design, community cohesion, and the engagement of architects and urban planners, charted a course towards creating public spaces that serve as symbols of hope, resilience, and peace. As the study endeavor to make meaningful and sustainable transformations, remaining committed to the well-being and aspirations of the communities ensures that public spaces become beacons of unity and healing, paving the way for a brighter, harmonious, and peaceful future.

Furthermore, highlights the profound impact that thoughtful and context-sensitive design of public spaces can have in promoting peace and healing in post-conflict environments. By prioritizing socio-cultural aspects, community engagement, and inclusivity, public spaces become catalysts for positive change, fostering unity and understanding among diverse communities. As cities seek to recover and rebuild after conflict, embracing this framework can lead to creating public spaces that meet functional needs and serve as symbols of hope, resilience, and transformation for all who call these spaces their own.

Here are some potential research questions that could be addressed in future studies:

- How can ensure the inclusion of urban intervention as part of the political/peace process in the early stage since it is already used as a political tool (in the case of Aleppo) or influences the implementation of a political agreement (in the case of Belfast)?
- How does the international community (in the case of Aleppo) narrow and limit the urban intervention concept to the funding aspect? This limited or delayed the role of urban planners and architects until the achievement of a political agreement.
- Which spaces for discussion, away from political actors, can be established at the city level?
- How can the design of post-conflict urban public spaces be further optimized to enhance their role in facilitating reconciliation and social cohesion among diverse communities?
- What are the long-term impacts of inclusive and community-engaged public space design on sustainable peacebuilding and conflict resolution in post-conflict contexts?
- Considering their unique socio-cultural contexts, how can the experiences and lessons learned from public space design in one post-conflict city be applied and adapted to other conflict-affected regions?

- What are the specific challenges and opportunities faced by architects, urban planners, and policymakers in implementing community-driven public space design in post-conflict environments, and how can these challenges be overcome?
- How do different design elements and features of public spaces influence their effectiveness in promoting a sense of belonging, ownership, and empowerment among refugees and internally displaced persons?
- What are the best practices and approaches for measuring public space design initiatives' social impact and long-term sustainability in post-conflict contexts?
- How do public spaces contribute to communities' mental health and well-being in post-conflict settings, and what strategies can be implemented to enhance their therapeutic role?
- How can digital technologies and innovative approaches be integrated into public space design to promote connectivity, civic engagement, and cross-cultural understanding in post-conflict cities?
- What are the most effective methods for fostering collaboration and cooperation between various stakeholders, including governments, NGOs, local communities, and international organizations, in the planning and implementation of public space projects in post-conflict areas?
- How can the concept of "restorative justice" be integrated into public space design to promote healing and reconciliation among communities with a history of conflict?

These research questions can serve as a starting point for future studies that aim to further explore and enhance the role of public spaces in peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery. Addressing these questions can contribute to a deeper understanding of the transformative potential of public spaces and inform evidence-based strategies for creating inclusive, sustainable, and healing environments in conflict-affected regions.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Eastern Aleppo Focus Group Discussion

Appendix 2: Western Aleppo Focus Group Discussion

Appendix 3: Aleppian based in Istanbul Focus Group Discussion

Appendix 4: Aleppian Academia Focus Group Discussion

Appendix 5: Aleppian Technical 01/ Semi-Structured Interview

Appendix 6: Aleppian Technical 02/ Semi-Structured Interview



Appendix 01- Eastern Aleppo Focus Group Discussion

Documentation Template for Dialogue Results in the Public Spaces in Aleppo City

Date: 20.07.2023 Duration: 3 hours Location: Aleppo City – al- mohafaza, Facilitators: RM, M H H
Group Description:

Participant Information: Total Number of Participants: 9 (7 males, 2 females) Age Range: Between 18 and 22 years old, they are all residents of the eastern part of Aleppo city.

Participant ID	Age	Gender	Occupation	Years of Residence in Aleppo	Current Residence	Additional Information
P01	20	Male	Student	20	Aleppo - Sakhour	
P02	21	Male	Student	21	Aleppo - Shaar	
P03	21	Male	Student	21	Aleppo - Mashhad	
P04	22	Male	Tailor	17	Aleppo - Hanano	
P05	23	Male	Student	17	Aleppo - Hanano	
P06	18	Female	Student	18	Aleppo - Mashhad	
P07	20	Female	Student	16	Aleppo - Shaar	
P08	23	Male	3D Printing	23	Aleppo - Midan	
P09	21	Male	Community Center	21	Aleppo - Shaar	

Discussion points

The dialogue will revolve around a focused discussion group on the role of urban public spaces in promoting sustainable peace or fueling conflict, with a specific focus on pre-war and during-war experiences in Aleppo city. The goal is to understand their aspirations for the desired role of these spaces in the post-war period. Participants will be asked to reflect on their personal experiences and observations regarding urban spaces concerning the following research questions:

Role of Urban Public Spaces	Before the War	During the War until Now
Known Public Places	The public space existed- it creates a sense of place in human gatherings - entertainment - strengthens social relationships - play and amusement - exposure to other cultures - advertising promotion - engagement in activities and hobbies - community initiatives - observing people's conditions - enhancing children's psychological well-being - a source of income and job opportunities.	The public spaces lost their role in providing safety, and the home became the only relatively safe place Within the neighborhood, due to the electricity outage during the war, the public space receded to be within the neighborhood. The building's basement was used when shells were falling or for carrying out specific activities, or in Lands in the countryside (Southern Aleppo countryside) - Mountains in the area of Al-Bab
Experience Descriptions	☐ When visiting public spaces, for me, it was like going to a public place with relatives and mingling with the community. ☐ We couldn't play at home, especially when there were many people in the house, so public spaces were places for release. ☐ During holidays, we used to gather with family in public spaces. ☐ The only place where I felt happy was going to the pool with my brother; water was the space that made me feel positive emotions.	☐ I used to participate in first aid and support affected cases when shells fell in public places. ☐ We used to go to the mountain within the city of Al-Bab just to be able to make phone calls because there was no coverage in other places except the mountain. ☐ Now, going to public spaces is annoying due to the presence of a large number of beggars in public areas.

Role of Urban Public Spaces in peace and war	Before the War	During the War and Until Now (During Direct Violence and After Ceasefire)
Public spaces were successful in promoting peace and social cohesion	☐ Bringing people from diverse cultural backgrounds together. ☐ Creating a state of inner peace among individuals. ☐ Providing safety for women. ☐ Spaces for releasing energy and relieving stress. ☐ Psychological comfort in these spaces contributes to peace. ☐ Absence of social class differences in society allows various groups to get to know each other and remove barriers. ☐ Engaging in recreational activities as desired by each individual's needs (play for children, communal dining activities for youth, etc.). ☐ A source of livelihood, contributing to individual stability and thereby promoting peace.	☐ During the direct violence ☐ Unity and support among neighbors and family members, contributing to a sense of security and positivity. ☐ Sharing and expressing worries and concerns with someone (like the owner of the "express" kiosk), and receiving support and guidance within that space. ☐ Escaping the circle of war. ☐ Having loved ones around creates a sense of peace. After the direct violence ☐ Public spaces have not yet played their role in peacebuilding. ☐ Meeting and getting to know other people. ☐ A source of livelihood, especially for unauthorized trade projects (kiosks). They are well-known places that facilitate the exchange of goods and money in simple trade operations. ☐ Supported diversity in all aspects during open meetings. ☐ Helps in family reunions. ☐ Places that help individuals overcome their isolation, especially the elderly who can return to their routine life in public spaces. ☐ A space to meet people who contribute to internal peace by feeling the satisfaction of giving while interacting and giving advice to others. ☐ A gathering place to work on resolving disputes between individuals.
Did urban public spaces contribute to creating hidden barriers between communities?	☐ There was no comfort and freedom to speak openly within public spaces. ☐ Meetings in these places could sometimes lead to conflicts and violence due to differences between individuals. ☐ There was violence in sports fields, especially when the home team lost.	During the direct violence ☐ Open spaces were dangerous places due to military activities in the city. ☐ Theft from public spaces contributed to reinforcing divisions due to mutual accusations. ☐ Kidnapping cases increased due to the lack of security in public spaces. ☐ Public services and protection ceased in these spaces, leading to uncivilized behaviors (lack of order, accumulation of debris, unethical manifestations, etc.).

		☐ A gathering place for armed individuals, tarnishing the image of public spaces among families. After the end of direct violence ☐ The presence of troublemakers in public spaces is currently widespread. ☐ The phenomenon of theft is widespread in public spaces.
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"How do we preserve the role of urban public spaces (public places) in peace?"

"How do we preserve the role of public spaces?"	☐ For parks, these places should be properly managed by the relevant authorities. ☐ Allocate space for families within each public area. ☐ Restore, organize, and clean up public spaces. ☐ Rehabilitate beautiful public spaces. ☐ Prohibit beggars from entering public areas. ☐ Increase the involvement of youth-led organizations in public spaces. ☐ Introduce new activities within public spaces. ☐ Revamp the entertainment content within public spaces (zoos, facilities, etc.). ☐ Form local volunteer teams to care for public spaces (cleaning, amenities, etc.). ☐ Establish a system of penalties for violations that harm public spaces. ☐ Implement smart features within public spaces. ☐ Install facilities that encourage social interactions (e.g., facing benches). ☐ Provide continuous security and surveillance within public spaces. ☐ Establish local protection groups for public spaces. ☐ Combat the spread of stray animals (in Hanano, for example). ☐ Address the issue of lack of lighting in public spaces, which hinders people from visiting them. ☐ Develop smart services within public spaces (e.g., synchronized music fountains). ☐ Prohibit weapons from entering public areas. ☐ Promote forgotten public spaces that people may have neglected during the war.
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How can it have a greater role in promoting peace?

What steps should be taken to ensure the consideration of urban public spaces (public places) in post-war reconstruction projects in the city of Aleppo?	☐ Taken into consideration during the preparation of the plans for the associations.
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Summarize in a sentence the public spaces and their roles	Before the War	During and After Direct Violence Stops	Post-War
	Safe places	dangerous areas	Tourist attractions

Steps for Architects and Urban Planners to Contribute to Peacebuilding

1. Develop plans to modify roads to encourage higher utilization of public spaces.
2. Innovate solutions for generating sustainable energy in public spaces.
3. Form groups of engineers with different specializations to enhance various aspects of public space development.
4. Generalize protection mechanisms to safeguard public spaces from theft.
5. Consider creating plans to invest in public spaces to make them comfortable and foster internal peace for visitors.
6. Carefully consider and involve people of different age groups during the planning phase of public spaces.
7. Provide spaces for children that accommodate their differences and diversities.
8. Ensure safety measures within public spaces.
9. Offer areas for sports activities and youth-specific locations (performance areas, open theaters, etc.).
10. Design public spaces to cater to all segments of society.
11. Address the needs of women when designing public spaces.
12. Pay attention to aesthetic views to provide psychological comfort for residents.
13. Incorporate educational landmarks and symbols that motivate people to make a difference.
14. Include facilities and amenities in public spaces that promote awareness and education within the community.
15. Consider the needs of people with disabilities during the design of public facilities (e.g., ensuring that playgrounds are inclusive) to make them feel included and integrated.
16. Provide designated areas for bicycle parking and charging stations to support the presence of individuals within public spaces.
17. Plan public spaces to be income-generating, where their development expenses can be covered from their revenues.
18. Allocate specific areas within public spaces for students to enhance the educational and cultural role of public spaces.
19. Provide facilities to deal with environmental and weather factors (shades, more trees, etc.) within public spaces.

Documenting the participants' additions and comments at the end of the session- **during the session**

- I got lost in the park and started crying and screaming. Someone saw me and stayed with me until I found my family, which reflected the sense of safety directly linked to peace.
 - Around 90% of the playgrounds were closed during the war.
 - For instance, during water shortages, people gathered in public spaces, and this allowed organizations to provide support to those in need.
 - I needed a change of atmosphere to get out of the mental state I was drowning in during the war.
 - Bread ovens caused conflicts among people as everyone sought their turn to get bread.
 - There was a neighbor I knew who became associated with a group of young people involved in corruption and turned into a prohibited substance dealer. I got to know them within the public space we used to frequent.
 - I had a session at As-Sabil Park, but I couldn't relax at all due to the presence of beggars.
 - After the war, we visited the castle to see what happened to it.
 - The good spirit that existed before the war when visiting public places has vanished.
 - Most of the gardens in Hanano had their trees cut, and immoral behaviors spread within them.
 - We formed a protection group during the war to keep danger away from our neighborhood.
 - The head of a certain area paid money to close down a problematic public space that became associated with ethical issues.
 - The community needs rehabilitation to positively interact with public spaces.
- Closing Remarks by the Facilitation Team:
- The participants' age group was relatively young, and the information focused on public spaces during and after the war.

Appendix 02- Western Aleppo Focus Group Discussion

Documentation Template for Dialogue Results in the Public Spaces in Aleppo Cit

Date: 23.05.2023 Duration: 3 hours Location: Aleppo City - Assas Office - Near the Public Park,

Facilitators: M D, MHH

Group Description:

Participant Information: Total Number of Participants: 8 (3 males, 5 females) Age Range: Between 22 and 34 years old Professions: Various, including teaching, volunteering in humanitarian work, and engineering

Participant ID	Age	Gender	Profession	Years of Residence in Aleppo	Current Residence	Additional Information
P01		Syrian				
P02		Martinian				
P03		Farqan				
P04		New Aleppo				
P05		Suleimaniya				
P06		Ashrafieh				
P07		New Syrian Quarter				
P08		Nile Street				

Discussion points

The dialogue will revolve around the role of urban public spaces in promoting sustainable peace or fueling conflicts, with a focus on pre-war and during-war experiences in Aleppo city. The goal is to understand their aspirations for the desired role of these spaces in the post-war period. Participants will be asked to reflect on their personal experiences and observations regarding urban spaces concerning the following research questions:

Following presents information about the role of urban public spaces in Aleppo city before, during, and after the war. It highlights the known public places, experiences and perceptions of those spaces, and their impact on peace and social cohesion during different periods

Role of Urban Public Spaces	Before the War	During the War until Now
Known Public Places	Public gardens, restaurants, parks with admission fees, spaces associated with specific residential areas, public squares, markets, clubs for specific groups, art galleries, university campus, and university housing	Public streets, circles, emergence of gardens related to some residential areas not mentioned before, sports facility in addition to university campus, and university housing

Experience Descriptions	☐ Some were dedicated to specific genders or linked to school and family trips ☐ Easily accessible to various social strata, and it was a meeting point for the rich and the poor, not exclusive to a particular group ☐ Beautiful places associated with beautiful memories ☐ Fear of using public facilities like bathrooms ☐ Some were hesitant to sit in restaurants or cafes due to fear of harassment and stalking (public garden) ☐ There was ease in investing in public spaces ☐ The new mall (Carrefour) was safe at night and included events suitable for all segments of society ☐ Public gardens were perceived as unsafe for families ☐ Malls were intimidating for people with disabilities	☐ Diverse places accessible to most social groups, especially amusement areas ☐ Free public places like public gardens and the castle were not adequately serviced compared to paid public spaces ☐ Lack of health facilities and cleanliness ☐ Some considered public gardens and waterfalls unsafe ☐ Privately managed places were considered safer (e.g., Shihab Seminar, where measures prevented harassment) ☐ Cleaner environment due to less smoke, pollution, and noise ☐ Some malls had a youthful atmosphere (New Mall) ☐ - Paid public spaces were considered safer ☐ Some specific areas, like "Mukambo," served as an escape from the ongoing war ☐ We spend a short time in public places, feeling anxious. ☐ Some parts of the public parks are monopolized by certain groups. ☐ The stigma attached to people who frequent public parks has increased. ☐ There has been a deterioration in the services aspect (sanitary facilities). ☐ Fear of leaving the house. ☐ Fear of gangs or groups. After the direct violence stopped: ☐ Public places are filled with harassment. ☐ Enjoyable but in need of better maintenance. ☐ Significant annoyance from beggars. ☐ Some public parks are monopolized by specific groups. ☐ Some spaces are controlled by certain individuals exploiting their influence. ☐ Activities in public squares are limited to those with security approvals.
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		☐ Some public places have been described in a manner that makes them less appealing, becoming trivial tourist attractions (e.g., Khan Al-Wazir). ☐ They have become more open and accessible to all people due to social integration during the war and displacement. ☐ Public spaces have been privatized and turned into exclusive places. ☐ Difficult to access with high costs. ☐ No nighttime lighting, lack of proper services, and no surveillance, resulting in a lack of security. ☐ During the earthquake, I couldn't seek refuge in public places because they were not adequately equipped. ☐ Not suitable for everyone and lack inclusivity. ☐ The fear of frequenting some public spaces has diminished.
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Role of Urban Public Spaces in peace and war	Before the War	During the War and Until Now (During Direct Violence and After Ceasefire)
Public spaces were successful in promoting peace and social cohesion	☐ Did not promote peace but rather facilitated coexistence, where different people or cultures were avoided. ☐ Indirectly contributed to enhancing social cohesion by bringing together individuals from diverse groups and social classes. ☐ Events held in public spaces played a significant role in integrating diverse communities compared to spaces closer to residential areas, which were more segregated. ☐ Did not actively promote peace, but also did not negate its potential. ☐ Differentiation between groups was not based on religion but rather on individual evaluations of whether someone was considered "good" or not (based on values).	☐ Yes, there was positive energy in getting to know and interact with diverse individuals. ☐ Indeed, there was a change in stereotypical perceptions of others through interactions within these public spaces. ☐ Yes, these spaces reinforced greater interaction and coexistence with others, leading to the breaking down of barriers. ☐ In certain situations, these spaces fostered increased solidarity among people. ☐ Some activities within these spaces facilitated integration between different social groups. ☐ Certain places that were previously restricted to specific categories became open to all members of society during the period of conflict, such as the Holy Land Monastery and

		church squares during the earthquake. ☐ As a result of our exposure to hardships, our capacity for acceptance of others became more flexible. ☐ These public spaces associated with the identity and culture of the city were utilized to promote peace through organized activities and regulations. ☐ Neighborhood-specific spaces played a larger role in promoting peace compared to larger public spaces.
Did urban public spaces contribute to creating hidden barriers between communities?	☐ There was a stigma associated with individuals, especially women (sporadically), who frequented public spaces. ☐ People avoided public parks due to the presence of troublemakers (harassers). ☐ Public spaces were frequented by individuals with limited or low income. ☐ These spaces did not create barriers. ☐ There were specific times designated for visiting public spaces.	☐ It led to self-isolation and a lack of trust in others. ☐ It was associated only with people who were similar to oneself. ☐ Some activities had negative effects on community feelings, such as showing disregard for their experiences. For example, when the "Return to Aleppo Castle" event was held, many residents of the area (around the castle) expressed their dissatisfaction, feeling that the event brought joy to their sorrows. ☐ Public spaces were not suitable for individuals with limited income, leading to increased social stratification. ☐ The high cost of living reduced the possibility of visiting public spaces, consequently impacting their positive role in building peace.

"How do we preserve the role of urban public spaces (public places) in peace?"	
"How do we preserve the role of public spaces?"	☐ Providing basic services. ☐ Activating them through activities or clubs. ☐ Rehabilitating them through community initiatives. ☐ Offering attractive elements. ☐ Maintaining public ownership. ☐ Preserving and caring for green spaces. ☐ Opening new public squares. ☐ Providing enjoyable activities in these spaces. ☐ Breaking down barriers and stereotypes associated with parks. ☐ Enhancing effectiveness of accountability and complaint mechanisms. ☐ Providing nighttime illumination. ☐ Implementing regulations and laws. ☐ Ensuring security and safety.

	☐ Exercising control over investors to regulate prices.
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How can it have a greater role in promoting peace?

What steps should be taken to ensure the consideration of urban public spaces (public places) in post-war reconstruction projects in the city of Aleppo?	☐ Studying mechanisms to enhance integration and ease of access for all segments of society to these public spaces. ☐ Including awareness-raising activities and events. ☐ Empowering the community's ownership of public spaces (reducing centralized authority over them, so the community feels a sense of ownership). ☐ Utilizing public spaces within neighborhoods and activating their role to contribute to peace-building. ☐ Directing thinking and planning towards public spaces and their organization. ☐ Redefining public spaces to meet contemporary needs. ☐ Respecting the culture and identities of the local community. ☐ Facilitating global networking activities. ☐ Implementing legal and ethical regulations (values) to govern public spaces. ☐ Avoiding activities that perpetuate hidden identity conflicts. ☐ Ensuring the inclusion of all groups, cultures, and diversities within public spaces to reflect different identities.
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Summarize in a sentence the public spaces and their roles	Before the War	During and After Direct Violence Stops	Post-War
	Free time Breathing space Life is more enjoyable Accessible and easy to reach Adds charm to the city's residents Cultural experience Positive energy Gathering Excitement and enthusiasm Routine (part of daily life)	Better than nothing Change of atmosphere Beneficial Essential need Abandoned Alternative solution Hidden Disabled Few Rarely found Won't work out for you Unsafe Fear Adaptation Hopeless	Hope Deserves protection and development

Steps for Architects and Urban Planners to Contribute to Peacebuilding

20. Learn from the experiences of other countries 21. Remove barriers and walls from public spaces 22. Respect the culture and diverse identities of the community 23. Engage in high community participation throughout the design, planning, and implementation of public spaces 24. Create accessible, inclusive, and convenient places for all segments and groups 25. Focus on functionality rather than extravagance in design 26. Work on revitalizing forgotten and small spaces as public areas 27. Implement smart and sustainable designs (e.g., smart concrete absorbing sunlight and generating energy at night) 28. Plan designated areas for investment within public spaces to activate them 29. Develop architectural urban solutions that mitigate stigmas and stereotypes

Documenting the participants' additions and comments at the end of the session

- During the discussions among the participants, there was a recurring observation about the distortion of the concept of public spaces. They called for a redefinition of the concept of public spaces and emphasized the importance of fostering a sense of ownership and belonging among community members to these spaces.
- The varying ages of the participants played a significant role in shaping their perceptions of public spaces, especially considering that many of them experienced these spaces during the conflict in Aleppo. Consequently, their understanding of public spaces became closely linked to the experiences they witnessed during the conflict period.
- The section on the role of public spaces in promoting peacebuilding sparked significant debate among the participants. There was a considerable divergence of opinions regarding the effectiveness of these spaces in enhancing peacebuilding. This discrepancy was evident in the expressions used by the participants, such as merely coexistence, having no role, or fostering cohesion among community members.



Appendix 03- Aleppian based in Istanbul Focus Group Discussion

Documentation Template for Dialogue Results in the Public Spaces in Aleppo City

Date: 27.05.2023 Duration: 3 hours Location: Istanbul/ al fatih, Facilitators: Ghada Rifai

Group Description:

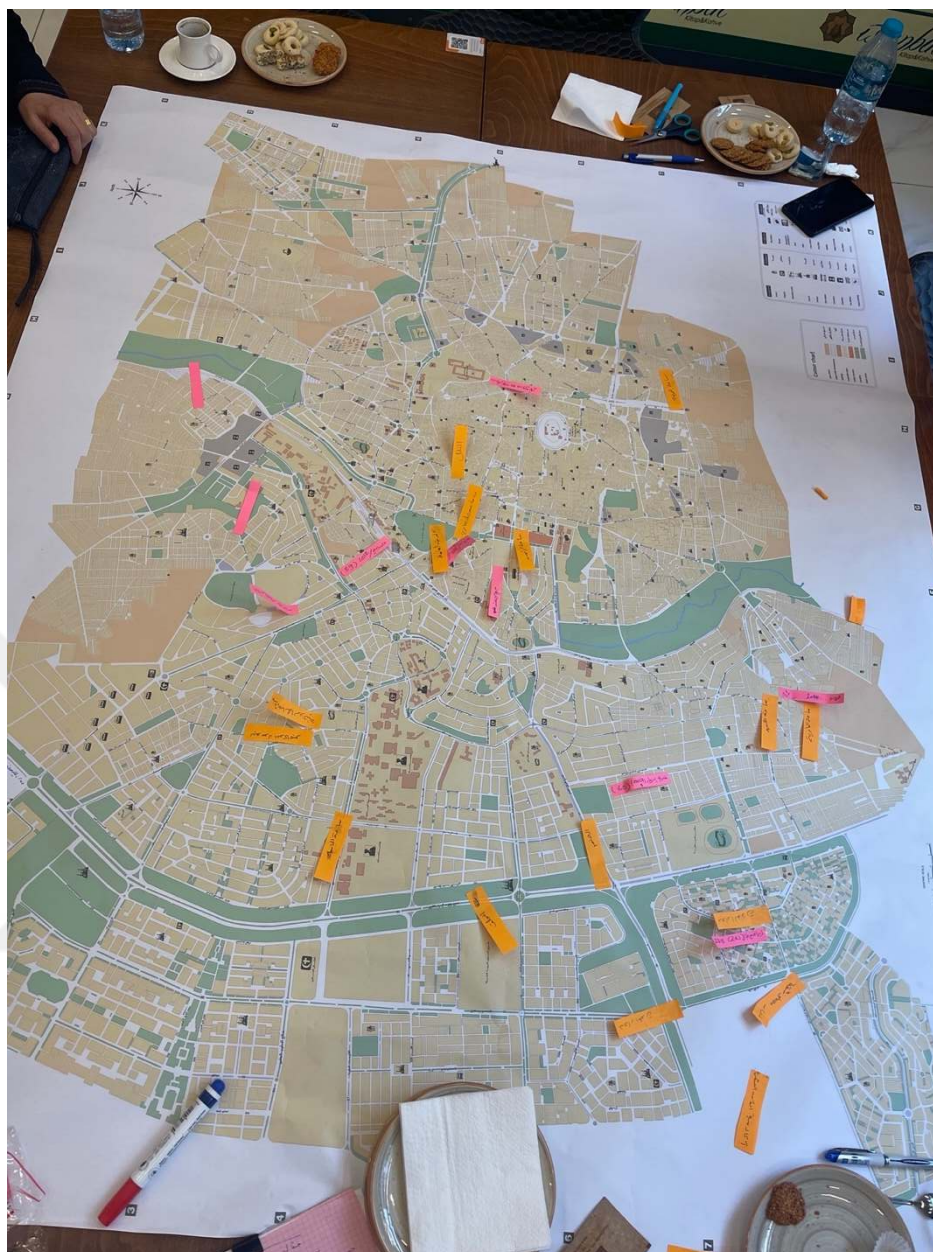
Participant Information: The total number of participants was 8 (4 males, 4 females), ranging in age from 22 to 72 years. The session was distinguished by the presence of two generations that experienced the city during different periods, which stimulated discussions and dialogues about public spaces within various time frames and historical epochs.

Participant ID	Age	Gender	Occupation	Years of Residence in Aleppo	Current Residence	Previous Residence in Aleppo
P01	26	M	Tailor	Until 2015	Istanbul	Al-Hamadaniyah - District 1
P02	31	M	Programmer	Until 2014	Istanbul	Al-Mashhad
P03	22	F	Student/Medical Labs	Until 2014	Istanbul	Bab Al-Hadid
P04	59	F	Homemaker/Civil Engineer	Until 2012	Istanbul	Near Rahman Mosque
P05	60	F	Former English Teacher/ Current Homemaker	Until 2017	Istanbul	Al-Idha'a
P06	72	F	Retired Agricultural Engineering Professor - University of Aleppo/ Retired	Until 2012	Istanbul	Al-Jameeliyah
P07	61	M	Civil Society Activist/Agricultural Engineer	Until 2013	Istanbul	Al-Jameeliyah
P08	44	M	Current Clothing Industry / Formerly in Accounting and Political Media	Until 2014	Istanbul	Tariq bin Ziyad

Discussion points

The dialogue will revolve around the role of urban public spaces in promoting sustainable peace or fueling conflicts, with a focus on pre-war and during-war experiences in Aleppo city. The goal is to understand their aspirations for the desired role of these spaces in the post-war period. Participants will be asked to reflect on their personal experiences and observations regarding urban spaces concerning the following research questions:

Following presents information about the role of urban public spaces in Aleppo city before, during, and after the war. It highlights the known public places, experiences and perceptions of those spaces, and their impact on peace and social cohesion during different periods



Role of Urban Public Spaces	Before the War	During the War until Now
Known Public Places	According to the group's understanding of public spaces, approximately 30 public places and areas were mentioned within the following categories: main public parks, spaces associated with specific residential areas, several squares linked to central markets in the city or known for selling specific products, markets and caravanserais in the old city, squares and public areas associated with the presence of cafes and restaurants, the university square, and rented entertainment activities.	There was a noticeable contraction and disappearance of public spaces, with security authorities taking control over them. The group was unable to mention public squares and places during the war due to fear of leaving their homes. Some squares were mentioned in the context of negative experiences within them.

Experience Descriptions	Negative experiences: ☐ Public squares being used for compulsory marches, such as the University Square and Saadallah Al-Jabri Square. ☐ Some statues in squares being seen as symbols of embezzlement of the country's wealth and people's money (e.g., Saadallah Al-Jabri Square statue). ☐ Certain squares acting as barriers between wealthy neighborhoods and very poor ones, reinforcing feelings of oppression and discrimination. ☐ The Umayyad Mosque Square being a dirty and neglected place during Turkish occupation. ☐ Some public squares being monopolized by specific sectors and private investment. ☐ Lack of breathing spaces in the city, necessitating going outside to find clean public places. ☐ Harassment in public parks and dark places, like the 'Albara' area, which was prohibited due to the presence of harassers. ☐ Absence of services and even sanitary facilities in public places, like the 'Sanaam' area. ☐ Neglected places in the eastern part of the city, like the Bab al-Hadid roundabout, considered unsafe and emitting bad odors. Positive experiences: ☐ Various classes coming together in places like the university canteen, reflecting diversity and fostering dialogues. ☐ Modern public places like Shabba Mall and New Mall, offering diverse activities and new restaurants. ☐ Positive experiences at facilities like Bassel Al-Assad Sports City, Al-Zahra Cinema, and 5D Cinema, promoting technology, development, and recreational places. ☐ Public parks serving as open and beautiful spaces connecting different parts of the city and attracting diverse groups. ☐ Historical sites reflecting local culture and civilization, such as the	☐ The presence of security barriers and security controls, causing fear and attempting to avoid them. ☐ Suppression of individuals and the use of violence in public squares due to the repression of protests.
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	Citadel, Farhat Square, and the Grand Mosque. ☐ The Muhallak (hanging gardens) providing a refreshing and open space. ☐ Private clubs for certain professions (e.g., the officers' canteen, Engineers' Syndicate), offering pleasant places with greenery and being close to residential areas, considered respectable places. ☐ Residential squares like Al-Mashhad Square, housing a market that serves as a respite for residents with nearby services. ☐ Festivals held in major squares, like the Cotton Festival in Saadallah Al-Jabri Square, showcasing pride in local products. ☐ Empty lands in residential areas serving as play areas for children near their homes. ☐ The Olympic swimming pool and football fields acting as beautiful spaces for youth and sports practice. ☐ The presence of some services like As-Sabil Square.	
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Role of Urban Public Spaces in peace and war	Before the War	During the War and Until Now (During Direct Violence and After Ceasefire)
Public spaces were successful in promoting peace and social cohesion	☐ Central public squares like Saadallah Al-Jabri Square are symbols of change due to their location at the heart of the city, capable of bringing together diverse groups. ☐ Similarly, University Square and Saif Al-Dawla Square serve as meeting points for individuals from various backgrounds, contributing to the creation of a shared space among them. ☐ Some squares have played a role in showcasing the city's cultural diversity, such as Al-Azeziah Square, where people can learn about different communities and participate in their activities and celebrations.	☐ New spaces were discovered, and people found themselves in new social interactions with each other. ☐ Due to the shrinkage of the city, all places became close to each other.
Did urban public spaces contribute to	☐ Some spaces were exclusive to specific groups, for example, Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafieh.	☐ Small affiliations emerged, and extremism

creating hidden barriers between communities?	☐ Public spaces were used as tools of conflict, such as mandatory marches. ☐ The squares are centers for the presence of security forces and intelligence. ☐ There is an unbalanced distribution of squares in the city, with most of them located in the western part.	began to manifest in these public spaces. ☐ Public spaces were unable to build a common mentality and shared identity. ☐ There is a disparity between societal groups, evident in the ability to access paid public spaces (where most of society can no longer afford the entry fees to public places). ☐ Most squares were controlled by security forces. ☐ Different functions were mixed, and markets appeared within residential areas.
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"How do we preserve the role of urban public spaces (public places) in peace?"		
"How do we preserve the role of public spaces?"	☐ If the activities contribute to bringing communities out of their isolation due to the current situation. ☐ Including activities that are accessible to everyone. ☐ Currently, the main priorities are basic needs. ☐ Working on distributing services fairly to overcome the division between the east and west of the city. ☐ Using arts as a part of street culture. ☐ Planting some plants and flowers. ☐ Activating the role of municipalities in managing neighborhoods and the city, especially in the affected areas. ☐ Distributing services in squares and public places.	

How can it have a greater role in promoting peace?		
What steps should be taken to ensure the consideration of urban public spaces (public places) in post-war reconstruction projects in the city of Aleppo?	☐ Allowing public activities and removing authority control over them. ☐ Making public spaces hosts for arts, thus promoting interaction and attraction between diverse groups. ☐ Using public spaces for peaceful expression of ideas, thereby contributing to creating greater peace among society's segments. ☐ Ensuring that public spaces are accepting of differences and diversity. ☐ Public spaces should reflect the nature, environment, and culture of the people in the area. ☐ The design of public spaces should represent and embody the local population and community. ☐ Having specific squares for communities and neighborhoods that differ from general public spaces. ☐ Establishing public places such as libraries capable of gathering students and youth. ☐ Municipalities should secure public spaces and provide services that cater to people's needs. ☐ Understanding the community and its desires to design public spaces accordingly.	

☐ Preserving the identity of the place.			
Summarize in a sentence the public spaces and their roles	Before the War	During and After Direct Violence Stops	Post-War
	☐ Deprived ☐ Lacks organization ☐ Abundant resources but unused ☐ As a park, it used to be a respectable resort with all kinds of entertainment (games and cafes). ☐ These spaces lack the element of community connection, despite their importance and value as public areas. ☐ They need more attention. ☐ The squares couldn't create a pluralistic community space and lacked a sense of social safety. ☐ The squares were secure and served as an outlet for us during holidays. ☐ Each place has its own uniqueness that suits a specific social environment. ☐ Sweet memories.	☐ The presence and relocation of markets to residential areas (western part of the city) made them safe and provided a sense of normalcy away from the war. ☐ The squares were unsafe during the war. ☐ Unsafe. ☐ Terrifying. ☐ Public squares and spaces turned into frightening security points. ☐ Lack of safety and the proliferation of security barriers. ☐ The relocation of public markets to small alleys and the abundance of barriers trapped us in our neighborhoods. ☐ They turned into spaces of conflict for control over public spaces.	☐ Places that cater to the youth and prioritize activities with ease and safety. ☐ Squares that carry the identity of communities and reflect them. ☐ Open squares that are easily accessible, offering various services and opportunities to showcase different forms of art. ☐ Embracing all segments of society. ☐ Resembling us. ☐ Squares that attract all people and treat them equally without discrimination. ☐ A suitable place to escape the pressures of the day and engage in diverse activities. ☐ I dream of bringing us together with a spirit of love and peace and spreading art, just like in Paris Square. ☐ Preserving the customs of each region while remaining open to other areas,

			ensuring we do not erase the identity of any region.
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Steps for Architects and Urban Planners to Contribute to Peacebuilding

1. Fair distribution of public services.
2. Not marginalizing any social groups.
3. Creating an interconnected state between squares (connecting the city through its squares).
4. The need to build a community that works on managing public places and squares, in addition to the role of schools that bring together people from diverse backgrounds.
5. Improving the quality of services and education consistently across all areas, without variation based on location.

Documenting the participants' additions and comments at the end of the session

- I wish we could have rehabilitated our squares before the war.
- The city no longer resembles us.
- There is now a gap between the urban and social life, and family members, between the inside and outside.
- It is necessary that we (the people of Aleppo abroad) be included in any study, planning, and development process for the city, as we are not only a resource for the city but also an integral part of it.
- Urban development requires long-term collaboration with the community to reflect its culture on the city.
- The younger age groups (the youth) find better connections, without a gap in their relationships with other youth who are still in Aleppo. This stems from the youth's desire to preserve their identity by maintaining these relationships.
- It is essential to address the psychological aspect while working on any urban development.
- Involving everyone, especially the current residents, is necessary.

Appendix 04- Aleppian academia Focus Group Discussion

Documentation Template for Dialogue Results in the Public Spaces in Aleppo City

Date: 06.06.2023 Duration: 2 hours 20mins, Location: teams platform/ online, Facilitators: Ghada Rifai
Group Description:

The total number of participants is 6 (3 males, 3 females) within the age group of 20 to 45 years. All of them hold or are currently pursuing higher education degrees, and they are all from Aleppo city.

Participant ID	Age	Gender	Profession	Years of Residence in Aleppo	Current Residence	Additional Information – Previous Residence in Aleppo
P01	31	M	Post-Doctoral Studies in Architecture Theories and History	Until 2014	Europe	Al-Zahour Street – Sheikh Taha
P02	35	F	Research Fellow in Urban Planning and Architecture	Until 2011	United Arab Emirates	Al-Muqambu
P03	27	F	Master's Student – Post-War Reconstruction	Until 2019	United Arab Emirates	Salah al-Din
P04	37	M	Master's Student – Post-War Reconstruction and Humanitarian Work in North-West Syria	Until 2014	Idlib	Salah al-Din – Bilal Street
P05	44	M	University in Ireland	Until 2017	Ireland	Al-Azha'a
P06	38	F	University of Aleppo – Doctorate Studies	Until 2012	Aleppo	Al-Furqan

Discussion points

The dialogue will revolve around the role of urban public spaces in promoting sustainable peace or fueling conflicts, with a focus on pre-war and during-war experiences in Aleppo city. The goal is to understand their aspirations for the desired role of these spaces in the post-war period. Participants will be asked to reflect on their personal experiences and observations regarding urban spaces concerning the following research questions:

Following presents information about the role of urban public spaces in Aleppo city before, during, and after the war. It highlights the known public places, experiences and perceptions of those spaces, and their impact on peace and social cohesion during different periods

Role of Urban Public Spaces	Before the War	During the War until Now
Known Public Places	According to the group's understanding of public spaces, approximately 22 places and public areas were mentioned within the following categories: ☐ Main public gardens. ☐ Spaces related to specific residential areas. ☐ Several squares related to central markets in the city or known for selling specific products.	A noticeable shrinking and disappearance of public spaces and the control of security authorities over them, as only the main public spaces in the city were mentioned, such as Saadallah Al-Jabiri Square, Al-Sabeel Garden, and the university campus.

	☐ Markets and caravanserais in the old city. ☐ Squares and public places associated with the presence of cafes and restaurants. ☐ The university square.	
Experience Descriptions	Negative experiences: ☐ A large percentage of parks were left uncultivated and became gathering spots for young people, hindering the movement and passage of women in the area. ☐ Unencouraging atmosphere, presence of harassment, lack of lighting and security guards make parks a scary place. ☐ Playground equipment was unsafe and not suitable for use, lacked safety measures, and was overcrowded. ☐ Not suitable for the age group of young people. ☐ Scary at night after sunset, we avoid going to parks. ☐ In general, we do not feel a sense of belonging to public spaces; there is a sense of detachment. ☐ We did not feel attached to them, which led to neglect by people. ☐ Lack of concern for the cleanliness of public spaces due to not feeling a sense of belonging. ☐ No activities are organized in public spaces. ☐ Presence of some ill-behaved youth in public areas resulted in negative experiences for women. ☐ Some problems are associated with parks due to the lack of lighting and facilities. ☐ As soon as the sun sets, we have to go back home. ☐ The overall proportion of public spaces is not proportional to the population; most residents do not have easy access to public places. ☐ Parks and squares are not equipped with bathrooms or water faucets Positive experiences:	☐ Shrinking of public spaces. ☐ Places with painful memories. ☐ Inability to access the old city. ☐ Saadallah Al-Jabri Square was a big shock. ☐ Al-Sabil used to shelter many families, but now families are in the parks. ☐ Humanitarian work now targets people in parks. ☐ Public spaces have become a source of worry and fear. ☐ Avoiding public spaces at the beginning of the events. ☐ Avoiding gatherings. ☐ The presence of demonstrations. ☐ People who needed to express their opinions resorted to open places far from security observation.

	☐ The Citadel surroundings are considered a positive psychological factor that enhances spatial connection. ☐ A place to relax with friends and family. ☐ Beautiful memories as it is associated with family. ☐ A place to relax with the family in nearby parks. ☐ The fountains in the public park, as well as the musical fountain, indicated the beginning of development. ☐ The attention given to the Hamdaniyah playground and the surrounding spaces (streets) for activities like walking and the presence of kiosks and services. ☐ Saif Al-Dawla Street becomes a gathering place for the whole area during holidays and events, turning it into a public square. ☐ The Union and Grand House areas used to be a large gathering place for people of all ages and transformed the streets into a public space. ☐ A place to go for sports. ☐ The only park considered as a refuge for the family. ☐ The animals in Al-Sabil Park were a source of joy for children. ☐ Al-Hatab Square is a place for friends to gather, especially when eating fava beans. ☐ Saadallah Al-Jabri Square, especially during holidays, and especially when there are activities in the squares. ☐ When there are activities, I feel welcomed to the place. ☐ The nearby spaces to residential areas and the surroundings of the Citadel were crowded, and we always felt safe due to the sense of belonging. ☐ Some unclassified places (ordinary sidewalks) turned into public spaces during holidays, where children's games are placed or during the	
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	summer when everyone is outside and needs fresh air. ☐ Old Aleppo and the surroundings of Aleppo Citadel, including the spaces between them, up to the public garden and Saadallah Square, were the most beautiful areas in the country for me.	
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Role of Urban Public Spaces in peace and war	Before the War	During the War and Until Now (During Direct Violence and After Ceasefire)
Public spaces were successful in promoting peace and social cohesion	☐ Some squares have a fundamental and positive role, such as the Citadel Square and Al-Hatab Square, where people from diverse backgrounds used to gather. ☐ Organizing community activities in public squares during holidays and public celebrations. ☐ Suitable services are available for all groups to enjoy. ☐ Public places with distinctive urban character (Old Aleppo and the Citadel surroundings) can create a stronger sense of belonging and identity. ☐ The presence of various functions surrounding the square.	☐ Aid was directed to public gathering places, showing the goodness in the country. ☐ Some individuals played the role of helping others. ☐ Public residential spaces became a relief for the residents. ☐ People were forced to get to know each other better. ☐ Interacting with people from different areas and creating a space for diversity. ☐ The situation varies depending on the controlling authority. ☐ The integration of commercial and residential functions provided a sense of security and tranquility.
Did urban public spaces contribute to creating hidden barriers between communities?	☐ Discrimination in the distribution of services between the east and west sides of the city. ☐ Poor implementation of infrastructure and corruption contributed to creating barriers. ☐ Public spaces near the river attracted people from various social backgrounds, causing dissatisfaction among local residents. ☐ Local neighborhood spaces are neglected compared to central spaces, creating barriers within the same neighborhood. ☐ There was surveillance and security measures in public spaces. ☐ The presence of security controls in certain areas.	☐

	☐ Local squares and spaces are neglected compared to central squares, hindering local community connections. ☐ When public spaces are not female-friendly and feel unsafe for women, it can lead to increased gender inequality. ☐ It is challenging to establish public spaces in areas known for their existing problems, and people might resort to violence to solve their issues. ☐ Main streets are usually safer. ☐ The nature of the community determines the existence of public spaces.	
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“How do we preserve the role of urban public spaces (public places) in peace?”		
“How do we preserve the role of public spaces?”	☐ Parks should include activities ☐ Catering to all age groups ☐ They should consider the diverse categories of children.	

How can it have a greater role in promoting peace?		
What steps should be taken to ensure the consideration of urban public spaces (public places) in post-war reconstruction projects in the city of Aleppo?	☐ Allocating spaces that range from semi-private to public ☐ Utilizing positive experiences from European models ☐ Lack of funding for parks due to the absence of effective economic systems ☐ Conducting advanced landscape studies that suit the reality and needs ☐ Incorporating an urban vision and planning that ensures public spaces conform to international norms and human rights ☐ Including agreed-upon symbols in public spaces ☐ The presence and distribution of public spaces contribute to justice ☐ Involving the community in all its categories to identify their needs and priorities in designing public spaces ☐ Enhancing a sense of belonging through community involvement in designing and caring for public places ☐ Urban furniture should facilitate communication between people ☐ Ensuring safety, then comfort, and then attractiveness in public spaces ☐ Activating and rehabilitating parks and public squares to ensure activities and provide protection ☐ Strengthening the role of the community in managing public spaces and organizing activities that reflect different affiliations and cultures ☐ Residential clusters should consider fairness in allocating private gardens and squares ☐ Planning residential neighborhoods should support designing semi-private public spaces ☐ Urban planning starts with city planning and allocating appropriate spaces to achieve social justice ☐ Safety and comfort in public places contribute to peacebuilding ☐ The society’s understanding of public spaces should be mixed ☐ Ensuring high-quality execution	

	☐ The presence of services contributes to mental health and balance, including the presence of public spaces ☐ Social justice in planning across different layers of society enhances safety ☐ Planning residential neighborhoods and their distribution contribute to peacebuilding ☐ Initiating planning from residential neighborhoods enhances peacebuilding ☐ Our role as architects is to be the link ☐ Supporting the presence of women and children in public spaces in a comfortable manner
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Summarize in a sentence the public spaces and their roles	Before the War	During and After Direct Violence Stops	Post-War
	☐ They were not very encouraging places to visit or fully utilized to their potential. ☐ A place for spending family time. ☐ A communal and personal need. ☐ An entertainment outlet, but their experiences were often unsafe. ☐ A gathering place if available.	☐ Places that are better to avoid: ☐ All the negatives mentioned before the war have multiplied after the war. ☐ A place frequented only by those in dire need. ☐ Creating new urban spaces to meet needs and transforming squares into sites of fear and anxiety. ☐ There was some demographic change on the streets during the war that had its positives.	☐ Respecting diversity: ☐ I hope it becomes a destination, not just a transit place, encouraging walking and dialogue, and truly becoming enjoyable and comfortable. ☐ A place of respite and leisure that provides safety and activities for all age groups. ☐ Creating public spaces that allow people to have barbecues with staff present to ensure safety and security. ☐ Respecting the city's identity and promoting dialogue so that it becomes an attractive point of interest. ☐ A genuine and safe haven that is visited by everyone.

Steps for Architects and Urban Planners to Contribute to Peacebuilding	
1.	Raising awareness among university students about the importance of respecting cultural differences, whether architectural or not.
2.	Linking urban projects with social psychology.
3.	Starting with small initiatives.
4.	Initiating small steps.

5. Bridging the gap between architecture and society and working on meeting the community's needs through designs.
6. Making the design process an opportunity to create spaces for dialogue among people, which will be reflected in the designs.
7. Searching for points of compatibility and positivity related to conflicts.
8. Engineers should be aware of societal issues.
9. Respecting the identity and culture of the community and influencing them positively.
10. Including displaced communities in project designs and interventions.
11. Equipping a generation of academics and raising their awareness to respect and appreciate their communities and work to meet their needs.
12. Linking academia with practical application.
13. Rehabilitating public spaces (obtaining licenses from municipalities to rehabilitate vacant lands) and involving local residents in the rehabilitation process.

Documenting the participants' additions and comments at the end of the session

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Appendix 05- Aleppian technical 01/ semi-structured interview

Documentation Template for Dialogue Results in the Public Spaces in Aleppo City

Date: 13.06.2023 Duration: 1 hours 15 mins, Location: teams platform/ online, Facilitators: Ghada Rifai

Description:

An academic from Aleppo city who played an active role in several projects within Aleppo city as part of his work at Aleppo University before the war. He resides in Turkey and works in the academic field as a doctor at the university.

Participant ID	Age	Gender	Occupation	Years of Residence in Aleppo	Current Residence	Additional Information - Previous Residence in Aleppo
P01		Male		Until 2014	Turkey	Airport Road - Eastern part of Aleppo city

Discussion points

The dialogue in the semi-structured interview will revolve around the role of public urban spaces in promoting sustainable peace or fueling conflict, with a focus on pre-war and wartime experiences in Aleppo city. Participants will be asked to reflect on their personal experiences and observations regarding urban spaces in relation to the following research questions:

Role of Urban Public Spaces	Before the War	During the War until Now
Known Public Places	In general, specific spaces within neighborhoods were mentioned where people used to spend time, especially because these spaces had good services. Additionally, there were public spaces that people used to visit either as a passage or for specific purposes within the city.	At the beginning of the uprising and before the division between East and West Aleppo, there were protests and marches in public spaces. However, with time, these public spaces turned into security checkpoints and inspection points.
Experience Descriptions	☐ The neighborhood park (Al-Sakhour) is new, well-maintained, and equipped. ☐ The city square is primarily used for traffic and crossing. ☐ Also, Saadallah Al-Jabri Square is associated with protests and demonstrations. ☐ Al-Hatab Square used to be linked to the fish market before its renovation. ☐ After the renovation, we go to Al-Hatab Square for studying, drawing, learning, and work-related purposes. ☐ Some experiences have been enjoyable. ☐ Other experiences are related to work, like going to the city market for shopping.	☐ Security and inspection checkpoints. ☐ A place for protests and demonstrations. ☐ Moving to the western part of the city due to the eastern part being under attack. ☐ The presence of a dividing crossing point within the city.

Role of Urban Public Spaces in peace and war	Before the War	During the War and Until Now (During Direct Violence and After Ceasefire)
Public spaces were successful in promoting peace and social cohesion	☐ Al-Muhallak in Aleppo was a recreational space before the war. ☐ This recreational area was capable of bringing together people from different areas and social backgrounds.	☐ Al-Muhallak continued to serve as a recreational area after the war, and people tried to preserve these spaces. For example, they prevented cutting down trees in Al-Muhallak, while trees were cut in other areas. ☐ The city's markets, which moved to residential areas, helped meet the needs of both the residents and the displaced, thus alleviating some of the problems resulting from the war. ☐ The overall damage that affected everyone reduced the sense of injustice and inequality among the residents.
Did urban public spaces contribute to creating hidden barriers between communities?	☐ There was a clear distinction in the city's planning, especially regarding public spaces, as the city was clearly divided between the west and east sides of the railway in terms of planning quality and services. ☐ In the west side of the city, there was better maintenance and development of public spaces, as it was considered the urban residential area, with more emphasis on green spaces and wider streets. ☐ The east side of the city, on the other hand, was considered the less developed area, and there was a perception that dealing with these areas required removal and reconstruction. ☐ Additionally, the east side was seen as an industrial zone attracting labor from rural areas. ☐ The lack of homogeneity in planning between the east and west sides of the city contributed to divisions and	☐ The control of public spaces has become a goal for all groups. ☐ The military forces (snipers and shelling) were concentrated with the aim of gaining control over public places, considering them as indicators of control over the city and victory. ☐ Public spaces have turned into permanently inhabited areas. ☐ Subsequently, these points and public spaces turned into boundaries and inspection points (such as the Citadel, the river, and the square), serving as demarcation lines between the east and west sides of the city. ☐ The concept of public space has completely transformed into a different reality.

	inequalities among the residents. ☐ The city's planning reinforced social segregation and subsequently escalated violence between the eastern and western parts of the city. ☐ The stigma associated with people coming from the east as being affiliated with "Daesh" (ISIS) and people coming from the west as being affiliated with the "regime" (government forces) resulted from this uneven planning. ☐ The focus on developing certain areas while neglecting others led to heightened violence later on due to the sense of resentment and injustice. ☐ The neglect in developing the old city markets also created barriers between communities.	
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"How do we preserve the role of urban public spaces (public places) in peace?"

"How do we preserve the role of public spaces?" What are the factors that should be taken into consideration when redesigning public spaces?	☐ Define the main purpose of public spaces (the primary objective) - cultural, recreational, or for peace-promoting events. ☐ Ensure accessibility to public spaces, providing access to a wide range of residents regardless of cultural and social backgrounds, aiming to bring people together. ☐ Make the public spaces usable by people with disabilities and special needs, ensuring comfort for all users. ☐ Study urban furniture design to ensure comfortable and efficient utilization of public spaces. ☐ Utilize symbols and signs that promote peace and contribute to social cohesion, serving as unifying elements for the community. ☐ Ensure smooth movement within public spaces, guaranteeing the required space ratio for each individual. ☐ Design public spaces and their functions based on the city's history and uniqueness, considering the city's culture and community needs
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How can it have a greater role in promoting peace?

What steps should be taken to ensure the consideration of urban public spaces (public places) in post-war reconstruction projects in the city of Aleppo?	☐ These public spaces have acquired new significance and a new history that must be showcased in public areas to achieve reconciliation (e.g., the River Massacre and the recovered bodies). ☐ These squares should become symbols of remembrance and reconciliation, contributing to healing. ☐ Achieving self-reconciliation (where we should not forget but also move forward).
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	☐ These squares, whether positively or negatively associated with the war, can be utilized to promote community reconciliation and thus establish lasting peace. It is crucial to involve all factions so that these public spaces represent and assist them in moving forward. ☐ These spaces help the new generation remember what happened and prevent its recurrence.
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Summarize in a sentence the public spaces and their roles	Before the War	During and After Direct Violence Stops	Post-War
	☐ Functional ☐ For the purpose of enjoyment	☐ Sense of adventure running in the crossing ☐ The suffering	☐

Steps for Architects and Urban Planners to Contribute to Peacebuilding
1. Linking the social and cultural aspects with the technical side and finding comprehensive solutions. 2. Conducting a survey of the new community in the city, re-identifying them, determining their needs, specifications, and current underlying problems before starting the planning process. 3. Understanding the demographic changes in the city, as well as the priorities and needs of the new age groups. 4. Building a vision for the public spaces based on the community's needs and social composition, and avoiding past experiences of city planning based solely on international and local trends. 5. Developing the planning based on the visions of the communities and their cultures. 6. Initiating the rehabilitation of selected public spaces that have had positive roles and showcasing their potential contribution to peace-building, for example, the square in front of the museum could be utilized to foster integration and interaction among people, possibly using technology in the design of these spaces. 7. Starting with these squares as pioneering projects. Things to avoid at this stage: ☐ Current restoration of the squares without acknowledging the historical events that took place during the war and working directly on their restoration. ☐ Restoring the stones without considering the city's history and context. ☐ Note: Some parts of the original text were unclear, and thus, the translation may not be perfect. Please provide further context or clarification if needed.

Documenting the participants' additions and comments at the end of the session
- In 2011, the Mayor of Aleppo gathered to contemplate the sustainability of the city's gardens. It was suggested to grant the local residents the authority to plant certain sections of the gardens, and the management of this process would be under the supervision of the local administration. However, academics rejected this idea, considering it might lead to chaos. - There is a possibility of working on urban gardens between houses in neglected areas, where their management would be carried out by the residents themselves, defining their functions. - It is crucial to determine the future of public spaces and their functions by involving the current residents in deciding how they want their city to be portrayed. - A network should be established between all public spaces to allow easy movement and accessibility. - There is a necessity to develop public transportation in conjunction with enhancing public spaces (such as the Aleppo Metro project).

Appendix 06- Aleppian technical 02/ semi-structured interview

Documentation Template for Dialogue Results in the Public Spaces in Aleppo City

Date: 22.07.2023 Duration: 1 hour 15 mins, Location: teams platform/ online, Facilitators: Ghada Rifai interviewee Description:

Urban Planner worked at Aleppo City Council until 2011 and contributed to numerous urban projects within its scope at the council. It played a role in planning and rehabilitating several squares in the Old City of Aleppo. Additionally, it was involved in the development strategy project for Aleppo city, and specifically took part in preparing a study for the rehabilitation of non-compliant areas in Aleppo city.

Participant ID	Age	Gender	Occupation	Years of Residence in Aleppo	Current Residence	Additional Information - Previous Residence in Aleppo
P02		Female		Until 2011	USA	Alneel street

Discussion points

The dialogue in the semi-structured interview will revolve around the role of public urban spaces in promoting sustainable peace or fueling conflict, with a focus on pre-war and wartime experiences in Aleppo city. Participants will be asked to reflect on their personal experiences and observations regarding urban spaces in relation to the following research questions:

Role of Urban Public Spaces	Before the War	During the War until Now
Known Public Places	Visiting public spaces was very limited and generally associated with crossing through the city center or engaging in seasonal family activities such as picnics, production markets, or cultural events like the 'Hatab' and 'Shebani' squares. Public spaces in the city were not considered an integral part of daily life at all. Definition of public space: It is a place where we meet others to engage in activities, participate, or attend specific events.	It was a series of visits focused on exploring the old city to retrieve memories about the area (in 2017 and 2019).
Experience Descriptions	Negative experiences: ☐ Public spaces are associated with fear. ☐ Gatherings held in these spaces are linked to protests and marches. ☐ Trying to avoid these public spaces because of feeling like I don't belong to that cultural group, and my cultural group doesn't find being in these public spaces comfortable. ☐ My experience as a woman from a different cultural background creates a sense of fear towards these spaces and a desire to avoid them.	Negative experiences: ☐ The city square (Saadallah Al-Jabri Square) was only for crossing and especially in the summer, it was not suitable for sitting as it was designed only for carnivals, making it difficult to sit and spend time in the public square. Positive experiences: ☐ A positive experience full of longing and a desire to rediscover the old city to find out what has happened to it. ☐ In 2017, the area around the citadel was accessible, but the cafes were not yet open. The experience was

	☐ Public spaces were associated with a social group I didn't belong to. ☐ The surrounding environment of the public square imposed a specific character on the square, for example, Al-Qotel Street leading to the main square of the city. ☐ Due to the nature of the environment we grew up in, where others were classified, we were not supposed to mix with them. Positive experience: ☐ The neighborhood gatherings (Al-Mahalih) in Aleppo were a family experience and a recreational outlet for us when we were children, where we spent some time as a family. ☐ The neighborhood gathering was a comfortable place for us as a family.	special at that time, as people from all walks of life shared the same place in the same way to visit the citadel, expressing their longing for it despite its lack of readiness and rehabilitation. This shows the role of heritage sites in expressing people's memories of their city, bringing people together despite cultural differences that may have been a barrier in other squares.
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Role of Urban Public Spaces in peace and war	Before the War	During the War and Until Now (During Direct Violence and After Ceasefire)
Public spaces were successful in promoting peace and social cohesion	☐ Heritage sites such as "Sahet Al-Hatab" and "Sahet Al-Sheebani" reflect a sense of collective belonging or common interests among individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. ☐ Some places, like "Al-Aziziyah," represent a specific state or condition associated with modernity and civilization, and are linked to a specific social group. People from various cultural backgrounds gather in such places, and these locations do not impose a specific social hierarchy, fostering a wider margin of freedom and respect, with no harassment. ☐ "Sahet Al-Jame'a" (University Square) attracts people from diverse backgrounds and spectrums, serving as a gathering place for the youth and also functioning as a crossing point.	☐ The surroundings of the citadel, as a person coming to the city for a visit. ☐ The continuation of "Al-Mokambo" as a place with restaurants and bustling traffic creates a universal space for people from diverse backgrounds.

	☐ "Al-Mokambo," with its restaurants and bustling traffic, creates a universal space that welcomes individuals from diverse backgrounds.	
Did urban public spaces contribute to creating hidden barriers between communities?	☐ Saadallah Al-Jabri Square, representing carnivals, marches, and national events organized by the authorities, created a sense of detachment and lack of ownership towards this square for groups with opposing political orientations. ☐ Al-Azeeziyah Square, representing a specific social and cultural group, may have contributed to reinforcing societal divisions between diverse groups in the community and creating hidden barriers among individuals.	☐ The intense security officer presence in the central square created a sense of danger towards these squares.

"How do we preserve the role of urban public spaces (public places) in peace?"

"How do we preserve the role of public spaces?" What are the factors that should be taken into consideration when redesigning public spaces?	☐ Ensuring the privacy of each square, where functions or activities cannot be replicated from one square to another. ☐ Considering the surrounding neighborhood when designing squares, as the functions and activities surrounding public spaces impact the nature of events in those spaces. ☐ Prioritizing the residents and the privacy of the area to determine the nature of activities in the region. ☐ Designing squares to serve the social needs of the residential area where they are located, to ensure their effectiveness and prevent abandonment or misuse by residents. ☐ Urban furniture fulfilling the daily and seasonal functions in public spaces to create meeting and gathering areas. ☐ Classifying squares based on their functions and roles (public squares, semi-public squares, residential squares, etc.). ☐ Each city has its uniqueness, and in the context of Aleppo, it is crucial to reevaluate the city's current social structure and its inhabitants' characteristics (extent of openness or closure), considering factors like fear of strangers that intensified during the war. ☐ Understanding the current social divisions and how to address them during square design, starting from the residents and addressing the memories and hidden barriers that emerged during the war. ☐ Preparing and equipping individuals for dialogue by creating representatives from the community and working with them to understand how to build real bridges between them at the city level
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How can it have a greater role in promoting peace?

What steps should be taken to ensure the consideration of urban public spaces (public places) in post-war reconstruction	☐ Active and genuine community participation, which is continuous and not merely symbolic or one-time, contributes to building trust with the community. ☐ Creating clear communication bridges between the community and the entities responsible for city management. ☐ Involving individuals in decision-making regarding the design and definition of activities in public spaces through the establishment of reliable structures representing the community.
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projects in the city of Aleppo?	
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Summarize in a sentence the public spaces and their roles	Before the War	During and After Direct Violence Stops	Post-War
	☐ It serves specific functions but does not achieve the desired objective.	☐	Preserving privacy between communities while simultaneously connecting various public spaces in a way that goes beyond mutual fear and animosity between the different communities in Aleppo.

Steps for Architects and Urban Planners to Contribute to Peacebuilding
☐ Understanding the social composition by identifying mechanisms and tools to engage with and access communities. ☐ Involving the community in the process of rehabilitating public spaces and activating their role in peace-building. ☐ Prioritizing the focus on not just obtaining new designs. ☐ Recognizing that our work is social and economic, requiring efforts from engineers and planners to understand the social and economic realities. ☐ The nature of these public spaces is shaped by the events and activities surrounding them, contributing to economic and social dynamics. ☐ Understanding the legal situation and preserving property rights helps enhance the role of engineers in peace-building efforts, especially with the presence of a significant number of Aleppians living outside the city. ☐ Changes in property status and the subsequent alteration of existing functions in public spaces. We should avoid: ☐ Presenting squares and public spaces as design competitions without giving priority to social and economic considerations that can impact dynamics for peace-building. ☐ Avoiding decision centralization and focusing solely on localities and local groups.

Documenting the participants' additions and comments at the end of the session
- There is awareness within communities, and they are capable of contributing to decision-making.