RURAL HABITATION IN SYRIA: THE CULTURE OF TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE AND ITS ROLE IN THE RECONSTRUCTION PROCESS

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RECONSTRUCTION: THE TERM

Intro: Roots of the Term "Reconstruction" in Arabic Literature

In the last four years reconstruction has become a common term in the scientific literature and daily speech of Syria, its use implies hope and new responsibilities, especially when it is attached to the terms "post-war" and "post-crisis". This might be an indicator of the need to renew, or the desire to imagine something better than the destruction ruining the region. Yet, the enthusiasm for future prospects can lead to neglecting the need for a lot of research and calculation required to understand the term reconstruction and to develop answers to questions such as what is it, where will it lead us, and how can we continue it.

The linguistic equivalent of construction in Arabic culture is the term "*'imār*", which implies more than the simple act of building. The root of the word has two origins; the first signifies permanence and extension of time, while the second means loudness of voices (Ibnu Faris, 1979). Most Arabic dictionaries define construction as the opposite of destruction or ruining. Thus, constructing a house means making it inhabitable, and constructing a land means making it fruitful. Consequently, the meaning of the term "*'imār*" encompasses all aspects of life, including human beings, their environment and activities affecting that environment. This etymological analysis of the term has two symbolic implications: the first is that the word "*'imār*" describes the act of repairing the damages of wars or crisis as it is the opposite of destruction; and the second is that the culture of reconstruction of the built environment is inexorably intertwined with the general development of the human being.

There are almost no studies of reconstruction in the modern literature originating from the Arab world due to reconstruction projects being carried out primarily by foreign actors. However, we find that Ibn Khaldūn (1332 –1406), for example, offers an important analytical description of the

Figure 1. Reconstruction definition

urban history of the region. His theory articulates the link between political rule and cycles of construction and reconstruction in countries (Rabat, 2002, 112-110). Ibn Khaldūn provides a detailed analytical description of regions being constructed after their destruction or vice versa. While explaining the specific and general factors causing this change, one can notice several similarities between his explanation and the current mindset of reconstruction in modern literature.

This quotation from chapter 43 of "The Introduction" *(AlMuqadimah)* of Ibn Khaldūn describes post-war development in terms of actions of the King and provides a summary of his ideas on reconstruction.

" Those who had been weak gained in strength. The land was cultivated, and the country became prosperous. There was much money for the collectors of the land tax. The army was strengthened. The enemies' sources (of strength) were cut off. The frontier garrisons were manned. The ruler proceeded to take personal charge of his affairs. His days were prosperous, and his realm was well organized". (Ibn Khaldūn, 1909, 319).

In this context welfare is defined as the restoration of the administration of justice, agriculture, and safety, with the king himself supervising matters of the people. Although the nature of political authority has changed over time and is not centred around the king or the sultan anymore, stability and justice, as Ibn Khaldūn points out, are still crucial factors enhancing individuals' sense of belonging to the larger society.

Reconstruction: The definition

Based on the cultural understanding of the term 'imār". The process of reconstruction, which is the development of both the land and the human being, can be defined in the following manner: (**Figure 1**)

Reconstruction is the restoration of the developmental capacity of:
1- The human being, individually and socially.

2- The surrounding environment.

3- The interactions within and between them.

This definition encompasses economic, social, political, and urban elements; consequently this kind of development cannot succeed unless a harmonious and dialectical relationship among all of these elements is achieved. Reconstruction of an environment without establishing a conceptual framework for its use and without fostering the people who will use it would result in benefiting only certain social segments or it would yield no effective benefits at all.

FEATURES OF THE RURAL AREAS IN SYRIA – POTENTIALS AND CHALLENGES

Social and Economic Features of the Syrian Rural Areas

The population of the countryside comprises less than half of the total population of Syria and its share is constantly shrinking due to low rate of population growth in rural areas and migration to cities (Omran, 2002, 243). The rural areas of Syria have two features: their fragmentation they manifest around the country as they are mainly remote places, and their high urbanization ratios resulting from natural growth and internal migration. Even before the current crisis begun these areas needed developmental plans specifically devised to respond their problems.

Under the current situation in Syria, it is hard to identify stable social features to build a study on, due to rapid demographic changes, movement of the inhabitants, and their displacement while seeking safety. While it is important to document these changes and to analyse them independently, posing questions regarding the fundamental socio-economic characteristics of rural areas of Syria are essential to establish a basis that we can rely on when studying the plans of reconstruction in rural areas.,

Social Structure

Ghiath Al Jundi (1984) identifies two main characteristics of countryside society in his study L'Architecture Tradionnelle en Syrie (Traditional architecture in Syria). The first is the administrative role of the village principal "*al mokhtar*" and his relationship with government institutions. According to Al Jundi, this individual plays a significant role in organizing internal and external affairs of the village, the processes of census, keeping civil records, and solving personal problems. However, the importance of the role *al mokhtar* played in village life, especially his administrative position, has gradually declined after the expansion of mass communication media. The second characteristic of the countryside is the institution of family, which occupies an extremely important role in regulating the relationships among individuals within the village. In the family structure the father plays the leadership role, followed by his sons, and he represents the family in various occasions, and communicates with other families in the village. The hierarchal representation of the family among their members and the role of the father present a clear structure with which the social order can be understood easily and social actions can be prompted without communication problems.

Labour Structure and Natural Resources

The variation of geographic features in Syria results in different rural environments and forms of living. In general, Syria has agricultural lands

in the west and north, plain lands of grazing and agricultural activities in the central region, and deserts in the east and southern east of the country.

The population of the countryside mainly work in agriculture and relates fields, such as poultry farming and food industry. Although agriculture does not contribute to the national GDP as much as it did previously, it still accounts for 21% of it in 2006, a ratio higher than those in neighbouring countries. The workers in the agricultural sector comprise 20% of Syria's workforce, and they produced an agricultural output of 433 billion Syrian Pounds in 2006, 64% of which were botanical products, and the rest animal products. Two aspects of agricultural work in rural areas are particularly relevant to this research:

1. The unemployment rate in the agricultural sector does not exceed 5%, which means that most inhabitants of the countryside are employed and face no problem of permanent unemployment. Instead they go through periods of seasonal unemployment, which leaves them with investable free time.

2. Most of the workers in the countryside lack necessary experience for sustainable jobs, and the prospect to develop such experience. (Al Khalil, 2009, 15).

The diverse geological features of Syria result in a variety of available building materials. While basalt is common in the southern parts of the central region, calcareous stones and sandstones are abundant in the middle and eastern regions, and clay is prevalent in river basins. Therefore, building materials used in traditional architecture differ, which adds to the variety of architectural styles, and offer possibilities for the exchange of knowledge, expertise and materials within the country.

It can be argued that the local rural community in Syria can have a vital role in future post-war reconstruction process. The main advantages of such communities are seen in the availability of local materials and seasonal workforce, added to the clear social structure of rural community represented by the extended families.

The Urban Features of Syrian Rural Areas – The Village

The factors that affect the establishment of human settlements in Syria are the same factors agreed upon by the rural geography literature, and they fall into three major groups: Natural factors, human factors, and social factors. These factors affect the conditions of the formation of a village, thus we can find three main forms of villages -except for the villages planned in advance- as in **Figure 2**.

The Merging Form

This form is defined by the clustering of houses around a chosen spot within agricultural lands (**Table 1**). The settlement area is separate and different from the surrounding agricultural lands. This form can be identified on maps as villages being visible gatherings of structures in specific positions separated by agricultural lands and fields. Most villages in the southern region follow this pattern, making them look like congregations linked by a road network. This form can also be found next to other forms in the central region.
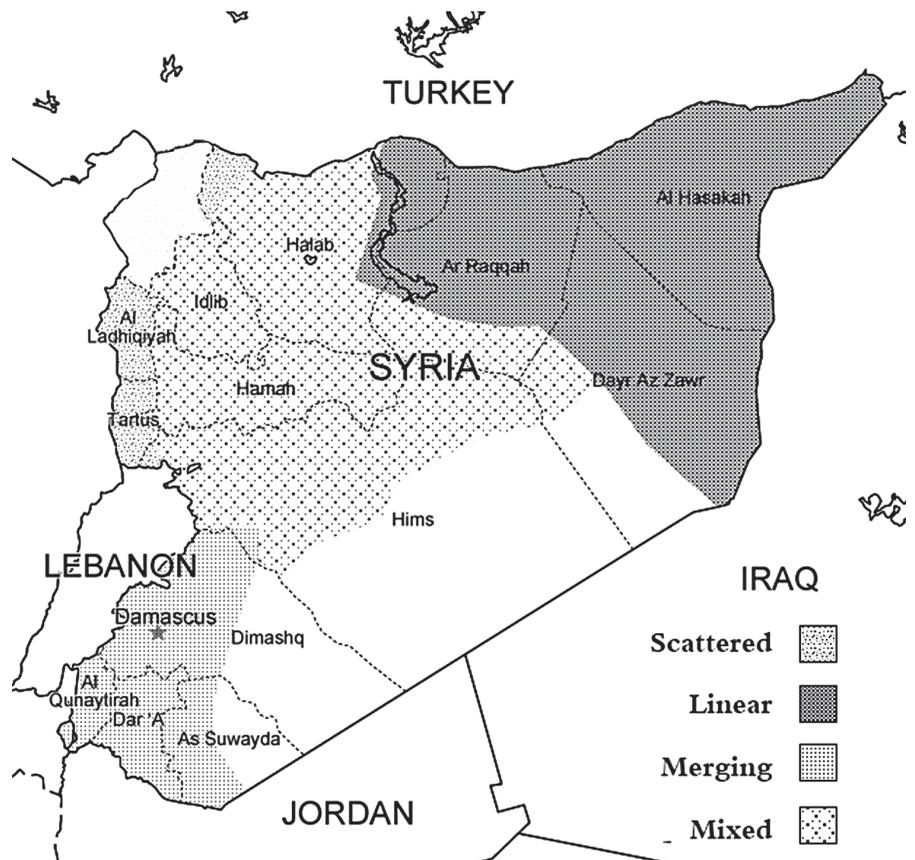
**Figure 2.** Forms of villages distribution in the Syria

The Scattered Form

In this form houses are scattered across the land with no regular pattern. Here, the village is separated into a number of fields each with one or two houses in them. The scattering form signifies either a strong relationship between the place of work and the place of living so every farmer lives in his farm, or it is a result of the physical features of the land. Scattered villages are common in mountainous and coastal regions; they can also be found on hills, where farms and the houses in them branch out from an ascending or descending road (**Table 1**).

The Linear Form

This form is a product of particular features of the site. Here buildings are constructed alongside a transportation line- such as a road or a river- that is an important factor of the creation and extension of the village in the first place. The houses of a linear village can be located alongside a road that crosses a main road with a modern service centre (Abu Ayaneh, 1993). This form is also encountered in river basins, especially in the eastern region; however, it is rare for a village to expand directly on the riverbed, as that space is usually reserved for the fields so they can be irrigated easily. Instead, the houses expand linearly on the roads nearby the river, or on a branch of the river that crosses the agricultural fields (**Table 1**).

The Architectural Features of the Syrian Countryside – The House

The countryside house, regardless of its form, has basic components that make it completely different from the city house. These components are related to the lifestyle of the countryside that revolves around agriculture,
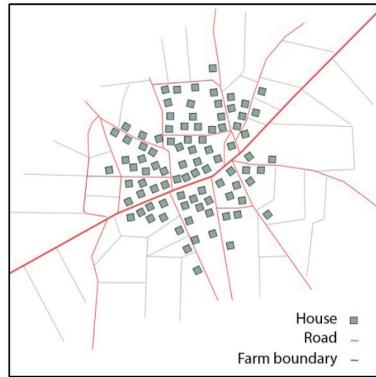
Expressive plan, a merging village


Merging Village | Orm Al Joz Idleb
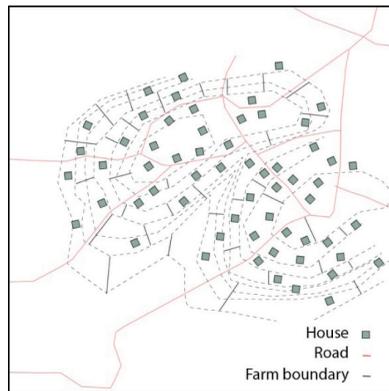
Expressive plan, scattered village

Scattered Village | Dower Babda Lattakia

Table 1. Samples of the forms of villages in the Syrian rural areas
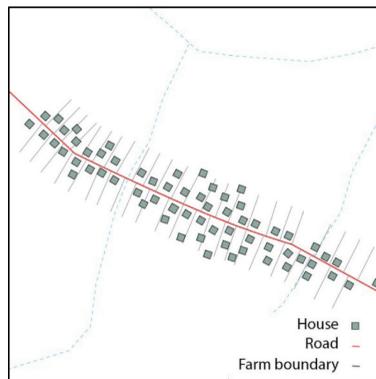
Expressive plan, linear village

Linear Village | Mohassan Der Ezzore

raising livestock, and related activities. Consequently, houses have three main spaces: the human space, the animal space, and the food storage space. These elements, and their different arrangements depending on the climate and seasons, constitute the essential features of the countryside house.

Between late 18th century and the beginning of 20th century, construction of rural houses in Syria had undergone changes. The alterations in the ways of separating or integrating the three aforementioned spaces affected the form and capacity of rural houses to provide better living conditions
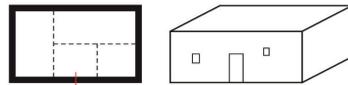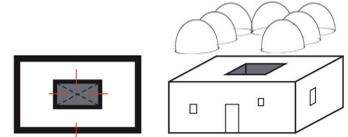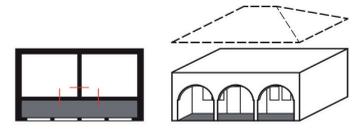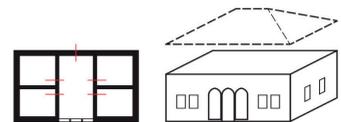
Rural Housing- Typologies

A- Simple House
B-Courtyard House
C-Iwan House
D- Arcade House
E- Central hall house

Table 2. Forms of the traditional rural houses

(Jäger, 2012, 14). This led to the development several major forms that rural houses can be categorized by: the simple house, the courtyard house, the *iwan* house, and the arcade house. (**Table 2**).

Furthermore, these forms went through other changes in their structures and functions. For example gabling roofs were added to the courtyard house, and arcades became more common and were added to simple houses as migrants from Crete and mainland Greece brought their construction methods with them**.**

The Simple House

The simplest and the most common form of house in the Syrian rural areas consist of a housing unit of a single family and their food stores,

along with a space where animals are kept. The house is fashioned of thick load-bearing walls, built from the materials available at the site. The walls usually have no exterior finishing if the building material is stone, while the insides would have a calcareous finishing.

The walls in the simplest form usually do not have large openings except for ventilation and exhaust for smoke. The internal design contains different levels outlining the functional features of the house; bedrooms, living rooms, and food storage spaces are elevated with several stairs that clearly define these areas. Several external activities such as cooking, baking, sleeping during summer, and processing the agricultural products are designated to an outside area with an outhouse often attached to it.

The Courtyard House

Common in the plains regions of Horan, Swieda, north and central Syria, courtyard houses are mostly found in complex form villages. While the courtyard shape is clearly defined, the outline of the house is not planned but rather takes shape as the family expands. The structure extends to the limits of the property with an internal courtyard that all windows open to. The walls are made of the materials available at the site, they could be stone or rammed soil as seen in the northeast of Syria.

The courtyard is the external space for most activities and sometimes a part of it is allocated for animals. The courtyard can have an external wall on one side, forming what is called a *hosh*. In this case, the *hosh*, with other houses belonging to relatives lining around the courtyard, forms an external space for all the activities and social bonding between families. (Corpus Levant, 2004, 15).

The Arcade House

This form is encountered in the central region of Syria, especially in the countryside around Homs and Kalamoon. It can also be found in scattered areas along the coast and in the southern regions. It features a long arcade covering the entire elevation of the house, either in the ground floor, or in the first floor with external stairs reaching it (**Table 2**). The arcade differs from the bench or the porch of a house, as it is a fundamental design element rather than a simple addition. In comparison to other rural houses the elevation of the arcade houses are considered among the most developed when in terms of the attention paid to their form and details. (Jäger,2012, 22). The animals are mostly kept in the ground floor, if the house is a two-story house, or in a separate structure built at the corner outside the house along with the outhouse.

The *İwan* House

This is one of the least common form of house found in the Syrian villages. The architectural definition of *iwan* is a space with a vaulted ceiling that is open to the courtyard on one side (Rabat,2002, 127). In many contemporary cases, the *iwan* does not exist as a clear structure anymore because it is either connected to the residence to form a closed space, or it is considered a part of the courtyard as in urban houses. The *iwan* is the essence of the domestic life, as attested by the attention paid to the details of the ceiling and the walls throughout the. It is the main reception space of the house, and the centre of social communication, similar in function to the arcades.

The *iwan* is always located in the centre of the house, surrounded by two rooms used for living and housework; it is sometimes used as a working

space, to store food, or to provide shelter to animals as well. The form and function of *iwans* vary between the city and the village; they face south in the countryside houses on higher altitudes, whereas in Damascus and Aleppo *iwan*s are oriented towards north to avoid direct sunlight.

The Central-hall House

This is a form that is developed lately with its particular features and characteristics, and is sometimes called the Lebanese house as it commonly encountered there. This form can be found in both urban and rural zones; it first appeared in coastal cities in Syria and Lebanon during the late Ottoman era and it became a status symbol in rural society. Affluent families in Syrian villages brought and imitated this style from the northern regions of the Ottoman empire, i.e turkey and southern Greece.

The most important feature of this house, hence its name, is the central hall that is formed by a group of elevated singular arcs that reach the entire depth of the house with rooms of living spaces opening to it. Formal symmetry of its elevations and the sloped gabled roof are significant features of this house. The food stores are kept in an outside space, or within the house if it is a two-story house, while the toilets and the kitchen are located inside. Moving the service facilities to the interior of the house signifies the aims to improve the quality of life of its residents to the socially accepted standard of development of the time.

RECONSTRUCTION REQUIREMENTS AND THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE

From Evaluation to Defining the Foundations

What are the criteria for success in a reconstruction experiment?

It is hard to determine the success or failure of a post-war reconstruction experiment, as the goals are always long-term oriented making it hard to evaluate the results tangibly. Thus, comprehensive evaluation mechanisms that can be applied to every effort are hard to be found (Cowen and Coyne, 2005,32). Instead, we find many evaluation reports that focus only on certain parts of the process, as every NGO, bank, donor country, and national institute participating in the process have their own tools for evaluation designed according to their own priorities.

The positive or negative results start to appear in the phases following the reconstruction, in the form of economic, social, and political changes. This is how we can estimate the success or failure of an experiment. The experiment may be a general failure like in Afghanistan, which still suffers from danger, lack of security, and subordinate economy, while some aspects of the effort being a success, including the international bank experiment that was described in the report as (highly successful), which included small scale loans for countryside residents to develop their lives (Rashid 2009, 184).

The positive or negative results appear in the period following the reconstruction, in the form of economic, social, and political changes. Reconstruction plans may result in general failure outlined by perpetual suffering from danger, lack of security, and subordinate economy as in the case of Afghanistan. However, even if the overall reconstruction project is regarded as a failure some of sub-procedures and local plans can have positive impact. In Afghanistan, the international bank experiment that

provided small-scale loans for countryside residents to develop their lives was described as highly successful. (Rashid 2009, 184).

Outlining detailed criteria in advance is out of the question due to the complete difference of the particular circumstances of each development case. In addition to many proposals that specialize in technical aspects (infrastructure, urban development, political institutions and so on) there are other proposals framing general values that are more like practical moral guidelines than technical strategies.

One of those proposals is presented by the researcher Sultan Barakat in the final chapter of the book he edited (Reconstruction and redevelopment in the aftermath of war – after the conflict), where he summarizes the experiences mentioned in the book and frames them as a general strategy for the process of developing countries and societies. The seven following points (vision, participation, security, reconciliation, equality, development, and capacity) are related to the role of human beings and their ability to produce, with the realization that external aid will not be permanent, but temporal. His framework also differentiates the outside observer from the witness and the survivor of the crisis, who could turn the vocabulary of his life into a positive push for himself and his surroundings.

In these seven points it seems that the key to future development is to focus on the post-war society and the role of local community in the reconstruction process. Thus, it can be argued that the architecture of the society, as a product of its experiences and as an application of construction as defined by its lifestyle, is the supplementary key to the development of the land and the people. The healthy vision for reconstruction plans should be based on the idea that the damaged post-war society is not a mere victim as it might appear to an external observer. Various groups and individuals carried out many activities to continue their lives during war. Many rebuild their houses, or rehabilitated what is left of it, while expatriates seized the opportunity to gain knowledge and educational opportunities for themselves and their children. All of this means the scientific, practical, cultural, and social reserves are not completely ruined, even if the scene of ruins dominates the war (Barakat, 2005, 251).

Table 3 illustrates the main characteristics of the seven pillars in Barakat's article. They will be used as a measuring tool to be juxtaposed with features of traditional architecture in the rural areas of Syria to see how they can present a solution.

The traditional architecture, specifically rural architecture, has several features that primarily go along the seven previously mentioned points. Many similarities exist between urban factors of the reconstruction process and features of the traditional architecture in the countryside, such as local building materials and the focus on the role of the family.

We can categorize the ways in which traditional architecture can contribute positively to the reconstruction process into three dimensions: Urban, social, and economic.

The architectural and urban role

Flexibility and responding to specific circumstances. (Overlaps with vision, development, and capacity):

One of the most important features of traditional rural architecture is that it responds to social and natural circumstances. It is sometimes described as spontaneous, local architecture or vernacular architecture (Corpus

PILLAR	GENERAL CONCEPT	URBAN PLANNING CONCEPT
Vision	Many social activities that were disrupted during the war present a vision of to overcome the crisis.	City planning starts with public participation and with no definitive time frame.
	The possibility of rising through individual and collective visions should be the main basis for a reconstruction plan.	The work on urbanism should reflect and be reflected in the social environment of the residents
Participation	External-based relief plans are only complementary, not the main instrument to end violence and initiate development.	It is important to emphasize the role of active participation in defining urban identity.
	Local participation in the reconstruction process is often less expensive and more reliable to rebuild self-esteem	Interactive spaces and allocation of buildings help socializing daily activities
Security	The role of family is both necessary and valuable.	Social security is based on a sense of belonging to place of residence and on family structure.
	The sense of future security is linked to ensuring economic and social stability.	Economic security is based on proprietorship and preventing the possibility of displacement due to economic factors.
Reconciliation	The reconstruction process should have a corrective dimension that deals with the roots of the problems and not their consequences.	The sharing and exchanging raw building materials and techniques can be a positive factor.
	Restoring the signs of life and the openness between different parties in society is the most powerful indicator for the restoration of trust among individuals.	Urban spaces also play a role in encouraging the expression of mutual hopes and benefits.
Equality	It is essential to meet the needs of different parties in society as some parties have suffered the biggest share of social damage during and after the war.	Urban plans should be self-cultivated and organic, which guarantees progress, and they should responds to basic needs.
	Cities and rural areas should be given equal attention for development.	Urban planning should take social justice into consideration when it comes to the use of public spaces and each family's right for a safe healthy house.
Development	Sustainable reconstruction cannot be achieved by relying on external sources alone.	The needs of post-war development can be met with sustainable natural materials.
	It is important to focus on the initiatives that took place during the war as a part of post-war planning.	Post-war plans should focus on developing the human being, means of work, and responding to their needs and requirements.
Capacity	The people provide social capital and they can be highly enthusiastic as they are emotionally attached to reconstruction, but lack the practical experience and proper guidance.	Urban plans should be flexible to increase capability and to avoid mistakes that might occur during the process.
	Capacity can be created through a flexible strategy, instead of it being an application of a project of features set in advance.	Developing working strategies, instead of applying pre-fabricated plans in defined templates, can create capacity.

Table 3. The seven pillars of post-war reconstruction from Barakat's point of view, developed by the authors.

Levant,2004). This response comes with previous experience and with expertise accumulated by responding to the circumstances of life for a long time. In some cases, the response may be affected by economically convenient practices and markets to result in the use of some untraditional

materials, as in replacing local building materials with cement and metal to build the roofs. Hence it is important to develop traditional architecture toward answering the new needs of housing.

Rather than imposing it on the reconstruction efforts, the study of traditional architecture and raising awareness about its importance can provide solutions derived from it. Thus this research doesn't introduce traditional architecture as a final solution that needs to be replicated, but it rather introduces the literacy of the traditional architecture with its buildings, the conscience, and the lifestyle attached to it, as a strategic introduction to reconstruction.

Organic Growth (Overlaps with vision, equality, and development)

We can describe traditional architecture generally as regions of self-cultivated organic growth instead of the application of previously planned urban grids (Badran, 2002, 105). The organic growth is a response to the socioeconomic factors forming villages and towns and resembles their architectural and urban culture. Many traditional villages still keep this feature and show respect for the scale and the human existence. Furthermore, traditional architecture exerts direct answers to climate conditions and thus the growth of its urban fabric is harmonious. This type of open growth offers a deeper understanding of development, and flexibility in urban articulation.

Communal Spaces (Overlaps with participations, reconciliation, and equality)

Social space for congregating in architectural forms of the rural houses is important to family members as well as to the rest of the society. **Figure 3** shows the location of this space in each of the five architectural forms. The naming of this space varies; called the yard, the approach, or the courtyard, and in some cases it can refer to the whole house. (Grehan, 2007, 274). This space is the family's front to the village, for its members, their products, and animals. It plays a main role in their occasions, and its form enhances the interaction between different residents.

Participatory Design (Overlaps with participations, reconciliation, and development)

Although the rural houses have common features, environmental and social properties, they do not follow the pattern of uniformly -designed buildings. It is more like, in Rudofsky's (1964) definition, an open field with general definers to interfere in the structure, thus the design is led by the input of the residents.

This work looks a lot like the social theory of the architectural design, which counts on the users themselves to lead the process (user led designs). This design, sought after by many researchers in urban sociology, interacts with the users at all stages making it a product of everybody's input. In contrast, when the design is based on the central vision of the designer, the communal area between the designers and the users, or the inhabitants as called in the research field, is reduced to a minimum. (Lee, 2006, 3).

This is why the participatory design in local architecture has such an effect on the residential projects, the sense of proprietorship, and the relationship between private and public within these buildings. Also, it enhances participation and the sense of belonging to the place and to the group, as it is a result of the experience of such a group building its own residences (Glassie, 1990, 18).
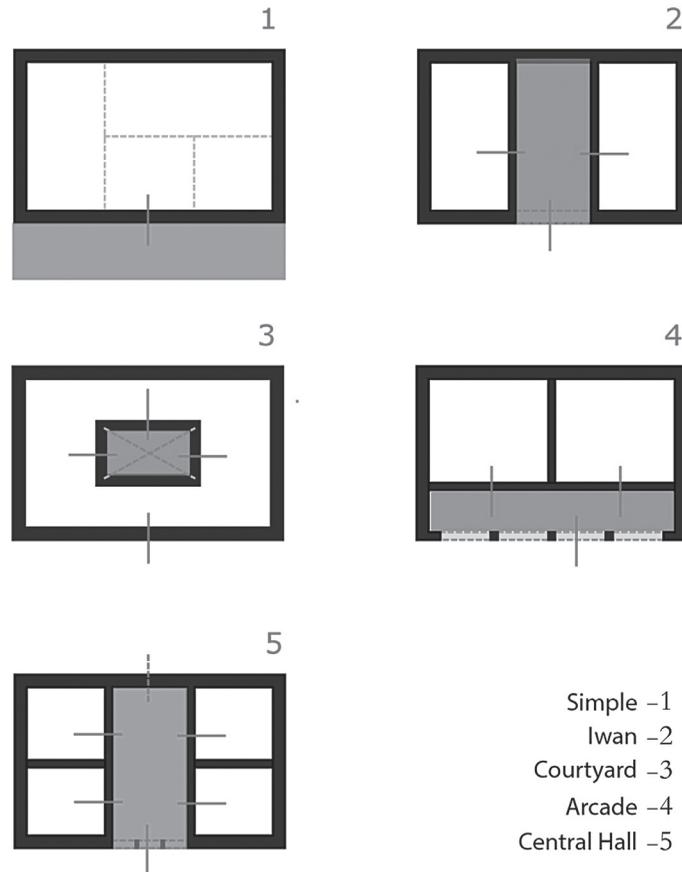
Figure 3. Interactive spaces within traditional house forms

Simple – 1
Iwan – 2
Courtyard – 3
Arcade – 4
Central Hall – 5

The Social Role

The Social Wisdom (Overlaps with vision and development):

Traditional architecture reflects the social character of the residents, thus it can inform us about their social life, habits, and lifestyles. This architecture presents an important element for future planning, as it contains the proper vision for reconstruction plans (De Filippi, 2005, 2). The most basic example of the social identity of architecture is presented in the analytical idea of the genre of living, suggested by Amos Rapoport (1969). Many social features manifest in local architecture in four points related to the identification of the life of a society and its relationship with the house. In the following table (**Table 4**), the four points were identified by what we have studied in Syrian rural areas. The table illustrates the basic social features of the countryside, and their reflection on the form and nature of the house.

Table 4. Rapoport's four keys and the Syrian village, the Authors

Agricultural Housing	Main needs
Many families of one core	Family
The entire house with men , except for some instances of receiving others.	Women's area of activity
Required, varies in accordance to the activity (internal/external). (singular/plural).	Privacy
Souq, Mosque, Yard, Hosh.	Social gathering areas

Memory and Identity (Overlaps with security and development):

Traditional architecture is shaped by the historical events communities experience therefore its loss also means the loss of social memory (RehabiMed, 2007, 35). The architecture is also linked to the personal memory of individuals and it is also the setting for the activities they try to maintain and hold on to. Traditional architecture provides the familiar atmosphere and the sense of place that contribute to the rehabilitation of the society that has undergone a crisis.

The Importance of Family (Overlaps with participation and security):

The traditional house attributes great significance to family, as family size is the major determinant of its development. We find some architectural forms that contain many families, like the courtyard house, derived from the practice of a main family sharing the same public space. Family relations play a big role in the establishing a sense of security, belonging, and trust, all of which are needed during reconstruction process.

Expertise and Building Materials Exchange (Overlaps with participations and reconciliation).

We have been over the fact that the variation in building methods and materials is an important aspect of construction in the past. Expertise that can be transferred from one location to another is essential for self-cultivated development, in order to provide the necessary mechanisms for creating employment and avoiding the need for external aid. This is why craftsmen who still have the traditional construction skills have great importance. They provide the base for stabilization, as major actors in the reconciliation processes based on understanding of mutual benefits, and their role in setting the future features of the society as a whole.

The Economic Role

Stabilization and Proprietorship (Overlaps with security and equality):

Local architecture is characterized by its inhabitants' sense of ownership, as they are the ones who decide to build the house and carry out or assisted with the construction according to their needs and their financial situation. This economic ability protects the residents from subordination to local debtors and investors, who impose their conditions on the damaged neighbourhood, which might not suit the developmental goals of the society.

Local Resources (Overlaps with vision, development, and capacity):

Traditional architecture relies on available materials that can be used. Syria's geography provides a fine variety of natural materials that can be relocated and utilized. It is important to mention that the domestic movement of expertise and materials is not a new phenomenon; for example many traditional houses in Damascus uses the basalt stones extracted from the southern and central regions (Corpus Levant, 2004).

Sustainability (Overlaps with vision and capacity):

Studies regarding the relationship between sustainability and traditional architecture point out the wisdom of the society in utilizing natural resources and energy during and after the construction processes.

Within the context of reconstruction plans sustainability can be defined by three points: Use of natural building materials, utilizing climate to

reduce energy waste, and ensuring sustainability through lifestyle of the traditional house.

Residents of traditional houses often adhere to general values of sustainability. Examples include storing excess crops for reusing or feeding animals, using the excess agricultural product to produce energy -such as using nutshells for heating-, environmental agriculture, and direct attachment to land. These cultural habits result from the social experience of living in an environment, dealing with the land and the house. (Gou at al, 2009).

Role of the Traditional Architecture in Reconstruction

The following table summarizes the role of traditional architecture in rebuilding the rural houses in Syria, where many of the roles overlap with the seven points previously mentioned. The urban factor (flexibility and response to circumstances) overlaps with three points (vision, development, and capacity) for example, and the social factor (expertise exchange) overlaps with reconciliation and participation, etc. as presented in **Table 5**.

It can be argued that the characteristics of traditional architecture forms a platform through which the reconstruction pillars presented by Barakat's study can be articulated. It is appropriate, however, to acknowledge that such a proposal does not tackle the complicated socio-political issues that we normally encounter, especially in big cities, under post-war conditions. Rather, it encompasses an abstract vision that could help as a set of general

Table 5. Urban, social, and economic factors of traditional architecture, and their role in reconstruction, developed by the authors.

vision	Participation	security	Reconciliation	Equality	Development	Capacity	The Seven Pillars	The factors
*						*	Urban Factors	Flexibility and response to circumstances
*				*	*			Organic growth
	*		*	*				Communal spaces
	*		*		*			Participatory design
*					*		Social Factors	Social wisdom
		*			*			Memory and the identity
	*	*						Importance of family
	*		*					Expertise and building materials exchange
		*		*			Economic Factors	Stabilization and proprietorship
*					*	*		Local resources
*						*		Sustainability

principles. The study targets small-scale initiatives in local communities of villages and rural zones where, as it was explained, the socio-economic structure is less complex.

RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The idea of reconstruction, encompassing the building of land and human beings, is rooted in the Arabic literature and culture as the opposite of destruction. Recent studies of post-war construction define the concept of reconstruction as process of developing the human being, the space, and the relationship between them. Thus, reconstruction as called for by both cultural references and recent studies prioritizes the development of human beings.

In Syrian countryside family is primary social institution that defines the roles of and the relationships between individuals within the larger community. The social elements constitute an important aspect of countryside urbanism along with the variation in building materials. These are reflected in the traditional building methods, and offer an alternative to imported building methods. Architectural forms of rural housing and villages' settlement patterns vary depending on geographical features, the changes in the concept of property, and on the relationship between place of work and place of residence.

In this particular context, traditional architecture, represented by the use of the local materials and know-how in space making, offers an opportunity for a self-developed reconstruction process. The study of traditional architecture illustrates that reconstruction plans should be based on human experience and living conditions by learning from cultural and social heritage, represented by architecture, and maintaining this identity as a part of development. Ensuring continuity of urban development is one of the most important aspects of development that can possibly be achieved by utilizing natural and local materials and focusing on the organic side of the urban growth. It is hard to develop comprehensive plans during periods of reconstruction, but it is also unacceptable to ignore particular regions or groups at the expense of others. In order to avoid preferential treatment urban plans should be self-cultivated and organic guaranteeing progress and responding to the major needs of the community.

When utilizing public spaces, long-term urban planning should take social justice and the right of each family to live in a safe and healthy house into consideration. Both the architectural and urban articulation of spaces in traditional housing shows a direct translation of the social structure. In the rural traditional housing typologies in Syria, a designated space is used for family daily activities and interaction with other families. This space is particularly important in post-war reconstruction and housing development and is an opportunity to be used as a device of interaction and reconciliation.

Using traditional architecture in reconstruction is not only a matter of architectural representation, it also offers us an opportunity to make the collective grassroots movement of material and knowledge exchange a part of the larger process. The diversity of both aspects in Syria provides a strong basis for such movement; the country has always been a place where eclectic methods of building were exchanged, and such technology transfers also encompass a cultural one that is much needed in a post-war context. A war torn society should not be treated merely as a victim,

since within it a lot of positive initiatives and important opportunities of self-improvement are present. Proceeding from that, reconstruction plans, especially urban ones, should not be pre-visualized, nor should they ignore the social dimension of the task ahead. Moreover, they should not rely entirely on temporary external aid. Instead, reconstruction plans should look at local experiences, especially those that took place during the crisis even if their scale was small, as they are the most important element of future work.

Ultimately, there is a lot to learn from what is outside of the circles, in which most research is conducted. It is far more important to study the experiences of the people, who have just been through war and who have ties to the history and the future of the region.

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RURAL HABITATION IN SYRIA: THE CULTURE OF TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE AND ITS ROLE IN THE RECONSTRUCTION PROCESS

This paper investigates the positive role traditional architecture can play during reconstruction, particularly in rural Syria, and highlights the effective impact cultural and social participation have on the process. In addition to exploring the possibilities offered by traditional architecture and its implementation within the strategic vision of reconstruction, this research also takes into account the authenticity of rural society and the diversity of urban identity in Syria.

This article consists of three major parts: the first section defines reconstruction as a general concept and as post-war practices with reference to its roots in the Syrian-Arab culture; the second section focuses on the urban and social characteristics of Syrian rural areas; the last section offers an attempt to contextualize these themes within post-war reconstruction guidelines offered by previous researches.

The research does not propose any practical strategy of post-war reconstruction; instead it articulates the importance of learning from traditional and local architecture in the process. This research suggests that the experiences of the war-torn Syrian society offer a vision for future reconstruction of the country, and expects to motivate other initiatives to seek and devise recovery strategies based on local experiences.

SURİYE'DE KIRSAL YERLEŞİM: GELENEKSEL MİMARİ KÜLTÜRÜ VE YENİDEN YAPILANDIRMADAKİ ROLÜ

Bu makale özellikle kırsal Suriye'de geleneksel mimarlığın yeniden yapılandırmada pozitif yönlerini araştırmaya ve bu süreçte kültürel ve sosyal katlılımcılıkta etkili yönlerini ortaya koymaya çalışmaktadır.

Geleneksel mimarinin olanaklarının gücünün keşfedilmesi ve bu olasılıkların yeniden inşa aşamasının stratejik vizyonunda uygulanmasına ek olarak, bu çalışma Suriye kırsal toplumunun otantikliğini ve kentsel kimliğinin çoğulluğunu da göz önünde bulundurmaktadır.

Araştırma üç bölümden oluşmaktadır; birincisi terimin (yeniden inşa/ yeniden yapılandırma) Suriye-Arap kültüründeki kavramlar, savaş sonrası pratikleri ve kökenleri içerisinde tanımlanmasıdır. İkincisi Suriye kırsal alanı için kentsel ve sosyal temalar iken, üçüncüsü bunların daha önceki araştırmalardan çıkarılan savaş-sonrasının ana hatları oluşturan temalar ile kesiştirme çabasıdır.

Bu araştırma savaş sonrası yeniden yapılandırmada herhangi bir pratik strateji önermemekle beraber, mevzu bahis aşamada geleneksel ve yerel mimariden öğrenebilecek ve aktarılabileceklere dikkat çekmektedir. Bu, diğer oluşumların yerel-bazlı iyileştirme stratejilerine doğru yönelmelerine bir motivasyon sağlayabilir. Son olarak; araştırma savaş yorgunu bir toplumsallığın kendisini geleceğin yeniden yapılandırma (inşa) vizyonu için kaynak olarak görür.

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