PRERICO
ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Places of Religion and Ritual

Emergency response for living heritage in conflict and disaster contexts in places of religion and rituals IDMS 2026

RESTORATION AND REHABILITATION OF LIVING HERITAGE: REVIVING THE SPIRIT OF THE PLACE

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25 April 2026



Omayyad Mosque of Damascus

Old City of Damascus



Earth From Above — Syria April 2009. ©Yann Arthus Bertrand

Old City of Aleppo



Earth From Above – Syria April 2009. ©Yann Arthus Bertrand

Old City of Jableh



Earth From Above – Syria April 2009. ©Yann Arthus Bertrand

The Domed villages in the countryside of Aleppo and Hama



Earth From Above – Syria April 2009. ©Yann Arthus Bertrand

The historical village of Maloula



Earth From Above – Syria April 2009. ©Yann Arthus Bertrand

MORE THAN JUST STONES

Good morning/afternoon, everyone.

When we walk through an ancient city or enter a historic building, we aren't just stepping into a physical space; we are stepping into a narrative. However, too often, our approach to history is to "freeze" it—to turn buildings into silent monuments or dusty museums.

Today, we are discussing **Restoration and Rehabilitation of Living Heritage**, a philosophy that moves beyond mere maintenance. We are here to talk about **Reviving the Spirit of the Place**.

1. UNDERSTANDING LIVING HERITAGE

What makes heritage living? It isn't just the age of the masonry; it's the continuity of use.

A building is a shell; the people, the traditions, and the daily rituals are the pulse.

When we modernize without thought, or restore without soul, we risk creating hollow spaces that look right but feel wrong.

Recognizing that for heritage to survive, it must remain relevant to the community that inhabits it today.

The urban fabric and the historical buildings surrounding the citadel of Aleppo; a complete destruction and demolition

Palmyra, the historical Archaeological Hippodrome, Vandalism, and Illegal Excavations and illicit trafficking





Deir Ezzor historical Souks, destruction and intentional demolition during the war

Additional destruction due to the Israeli Violations and attacks on the historical citadel of Damascus



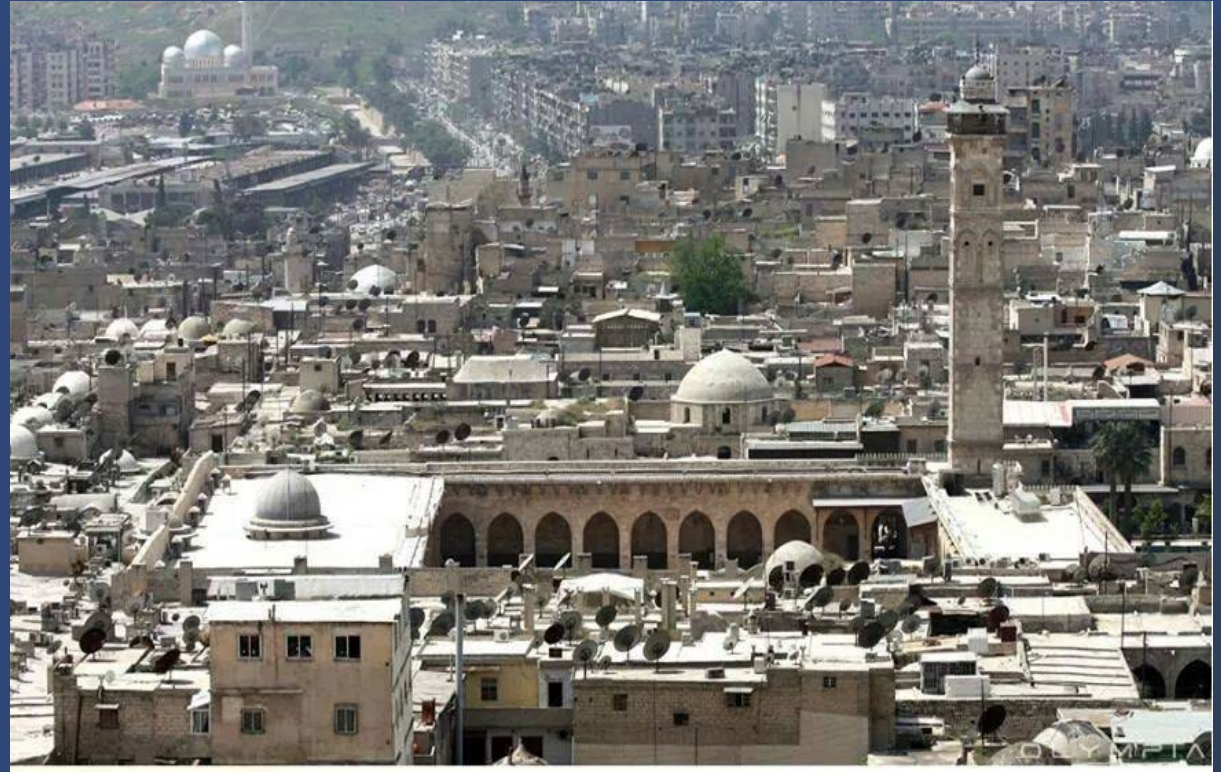
2. RESTORATION VS. REHABILITATION

To revive the spirit, we must balance two distinct but complementary paths:

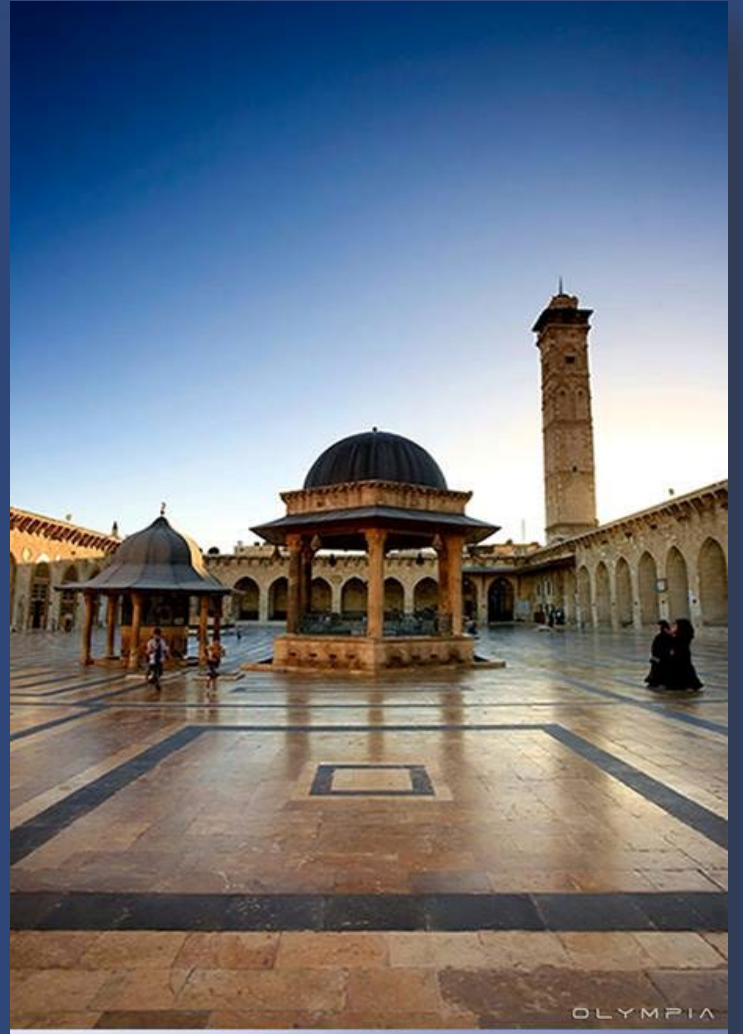
Restoration is the scientific repair. It involves:

- Using traditional materials (lime mortar, authentic stone, original pigments).
- Correcting structural decay while respecting the original architect's intent.
- The Goal: To ensure the physical integrity of the site for another century.

The Omayyad Mosque of Aleppo, Before and after the destruction









The historic churches and the urban fabric and historical monuments of Aleppo, Before and after the destruction

2. RESTORATION VS. REHABILITATION

Rehabilitation is the creative re-use.

It involves:

- Adapting old structures for contemporary needs
- Integrating modern technology (HVAC, accessibility, lighting) without scarring the heritage fabric.

The Goal: To ensure the building remains a working, breathing part of the city.







Living Heritage: Places of worship and prayers







Living Heritage: Old Souks at the centers of the old cities

3. DEFINING THE SPIRIT OF THE PLACE

- The "Spirit of the Place" is that intangible quality that makes a location unique. You can’t see it on a blueprint, but you feel it the moment you enter. Reviving this spirit requires:
- **Sensory Preservation:** How does the light hit the courtyard? How does the sound echo?
- **Social Memory:** Honoring the stories and events that happened within these walls.
- **Authenticity over Imitation:** Preserving the "old-timey" look and keep genuine character.

4. THE IMPACT OF A REVIVED SPACE

When we successfully rehabilitate living heritage, the benefits ripple outward:

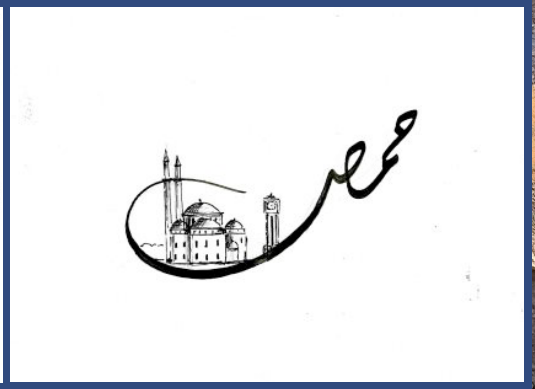
1. **Economic Resilience:** Heritage districts become hubs for tourism, local crafts, and sustainable commerce.
2. **Environmental Sustainability:** The greenest building is the one that is already built. Rehabilitation reduces the carbon footprint of new construction.
3. **Social Identity:** It provides a sense of belonging. In an increasingly homogenized world, heritage is the anchor of local identity.













Aleppo Historical Souks, September 2021. ©Luna Rajab

A Legacy for the Future

Restoring a building is an act of engineering; reviving its spirit is an act of love. Our goal is not to live in the past, but to ensure the past lives with us. By rehabilitating our heritage, we aren't just saving old stones,we are ensuring that the soul of our cities continues to speak to future generations.

Let’s not just build for the future; let’s make sure the future has a soul.

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING