

THE FRENCH MANDATE CITY

A FOOTPRINT IN DAMASCUS



DANIEL STOCKHAMMER | NICOLA WILD

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and for all the patience of our girlfriends (Dec. 2009)
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THE FRENCH MANDATE CITY

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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Damascus, considered to be one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities of the world, has a long history of foreign occupation. In the early years of the twentieth century, after almost 400 years (1516–1918) under the Ottoman empire, an Arab nationalist formation in Damascus began to build an opposition to the “turkicisation” program by Istanbul. At the end of World War I, the Arab Revolt, under support of the British army, managed to take control over the city, coinciding with the fall of the Ottoman empire. In secret negotiations during World War I the French and British powers divided the Middle East into respective zones of influence, resulting in the “Sykes-Picot Agreement”. Syria was declared as a zone of “Direct French Control”. In 1920 the French made their way to Damascus after the Syrian government was forced to disarm the Arab army.

SYRIA UNDER FRENCH OCCUPATION

The French occupation was strongly rejected by the local people and the whole Arab world, leading to several rebellions during the Mandate time. The first visible impacts on the city were the bombings of parts of the old city to take back the control over the riots. The French themselves considered the old city as being backward and barbaric and they started to settle down on the slopes leading to Salahiye. In the 1930's, the French urban planner René Danger developed a master plan for Damascus. The urban planning approach contained both military and residential interests, implementing common tools of a Haussmannian city structure. It was planned to widen up the old city not only for the military but also for economic and traffic reasons. But the main areas of the French planning were north-west of the old city, where a development already had started in the late Ottoman period.

The new neighbourhoods were built using the imported “modern” city model principles, which stood in complete contrast to the existing urban fabric: broad straight streets with tree-lined avenues and residential blocks from four to five floors high with small balconies.

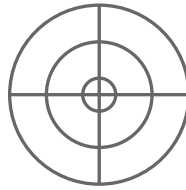
AFTER THE INDEPENDENCE

The French occupation lasted until the end of World War II, where Syria gained full independence in 1946. A huge growth of the Damascus population, which had started during the Mandate, brought the necessity for a new master plan in the 1960's. Michel Écochard, who used to work in the office of R. Danger, was invited a second time to plan further development of Damascus. Up to today, the city has been growing extensively, endangering its original layout.

INVESTIGATING SPECIFICITY

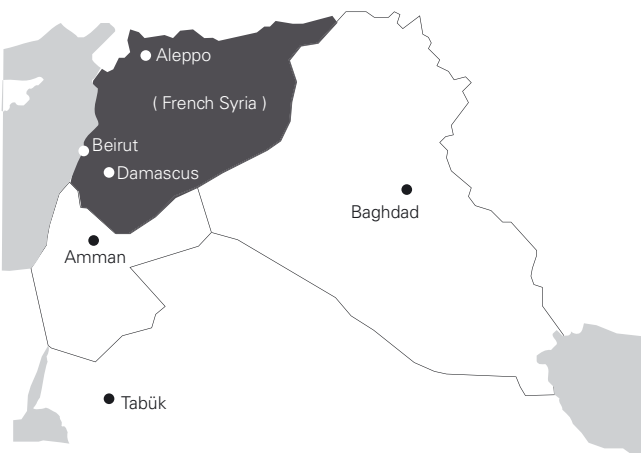
In our investigation, we trace the legacy of the French urban planning. How is the master plan implemented? What is the urban idea of the French planners? What is imported and what is adapted? What is the lasting impact of the Mandate era?

LOCATION





LOCATION IN HISTORY

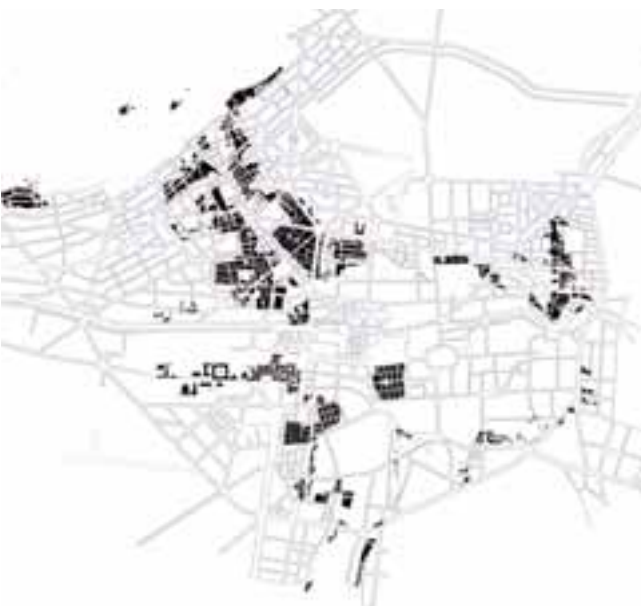


Mandate area of French Syria 1920 – 1946

INCIDENTS WORLDWIDE



END OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE



French mandate area in Damascus 1946

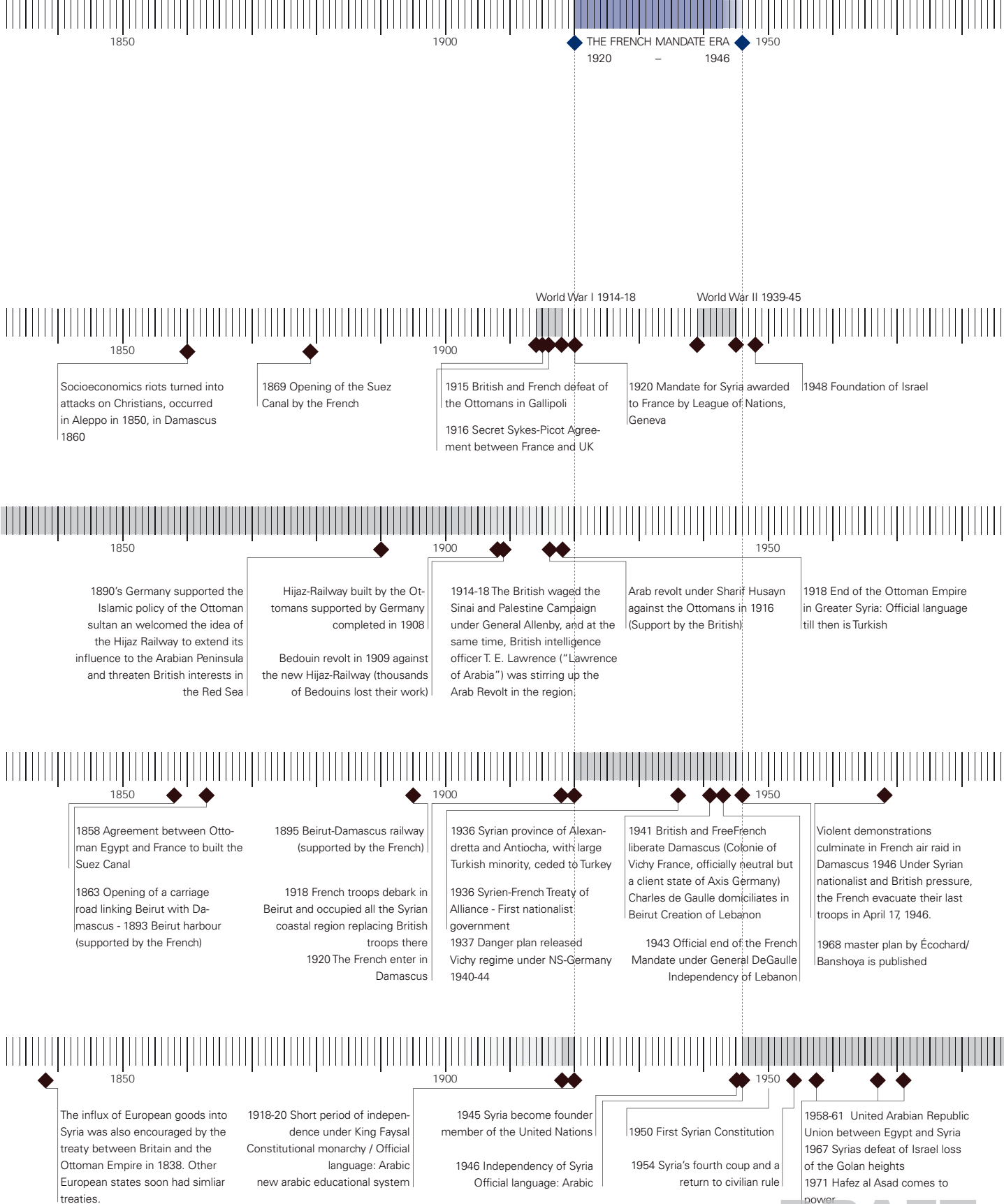
FRENCH COLONIAL ERA IN SYRIA

France's main economic interests were concentrated in a number of major public works projects before they came to Syria



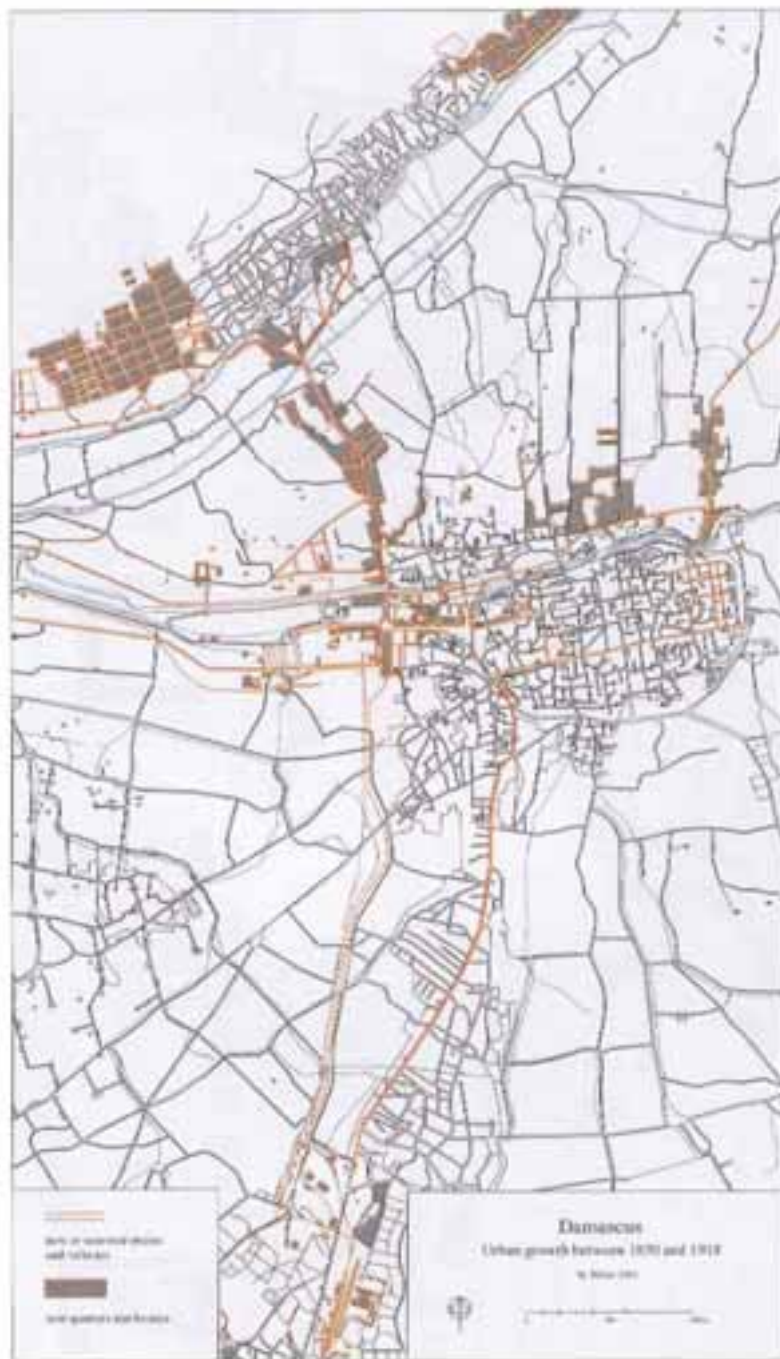
BEGINNING OF SYRIA







1850 – 1920 BEFORE THE MANDATE



Urban growth between 1850 and 1918 –
Late Ottoman Period

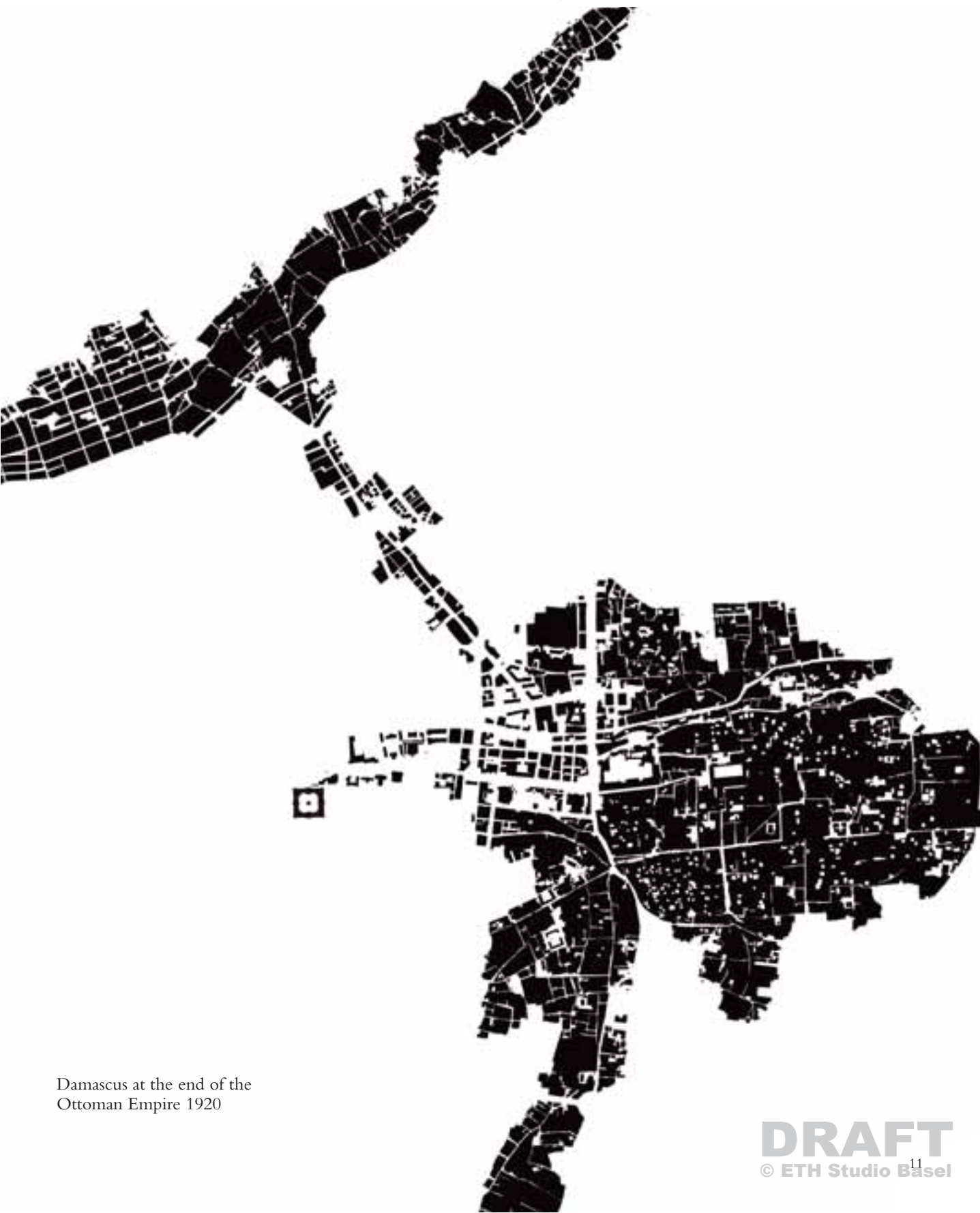
Weber, Stefan, (2004) The Reshaping of Damascus,
Architecture and Identity in an Arab-Ottoman City ,
Philipp, T/ Schumann, C, From the Syrian Land to the
States of Syria and Lebanon, BTS 96, pp. 41-58 Beirut

1850

1900

1920

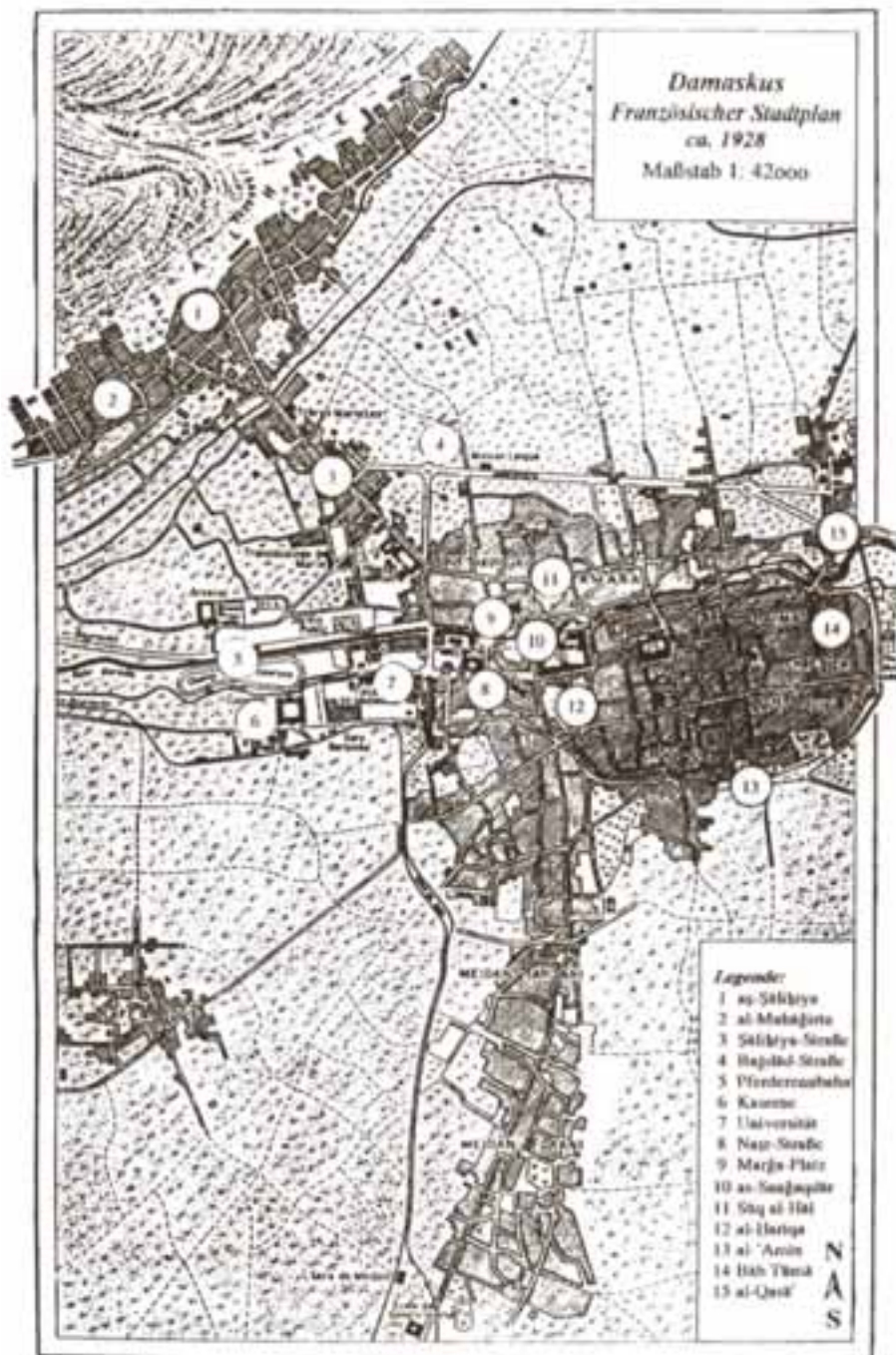
1950



Damascus at the end of the
Ottoman Empire 1920



1928 – 1937 BEGINNING OF THE MANDATE



French city map from 1928

Weber Stefan (1996) Von der osmanischen City bis zum Place de l'Etoile. Periplus, Jahrbuch für Außereuropäische Geschichte, vol. 6, pp. 49-60

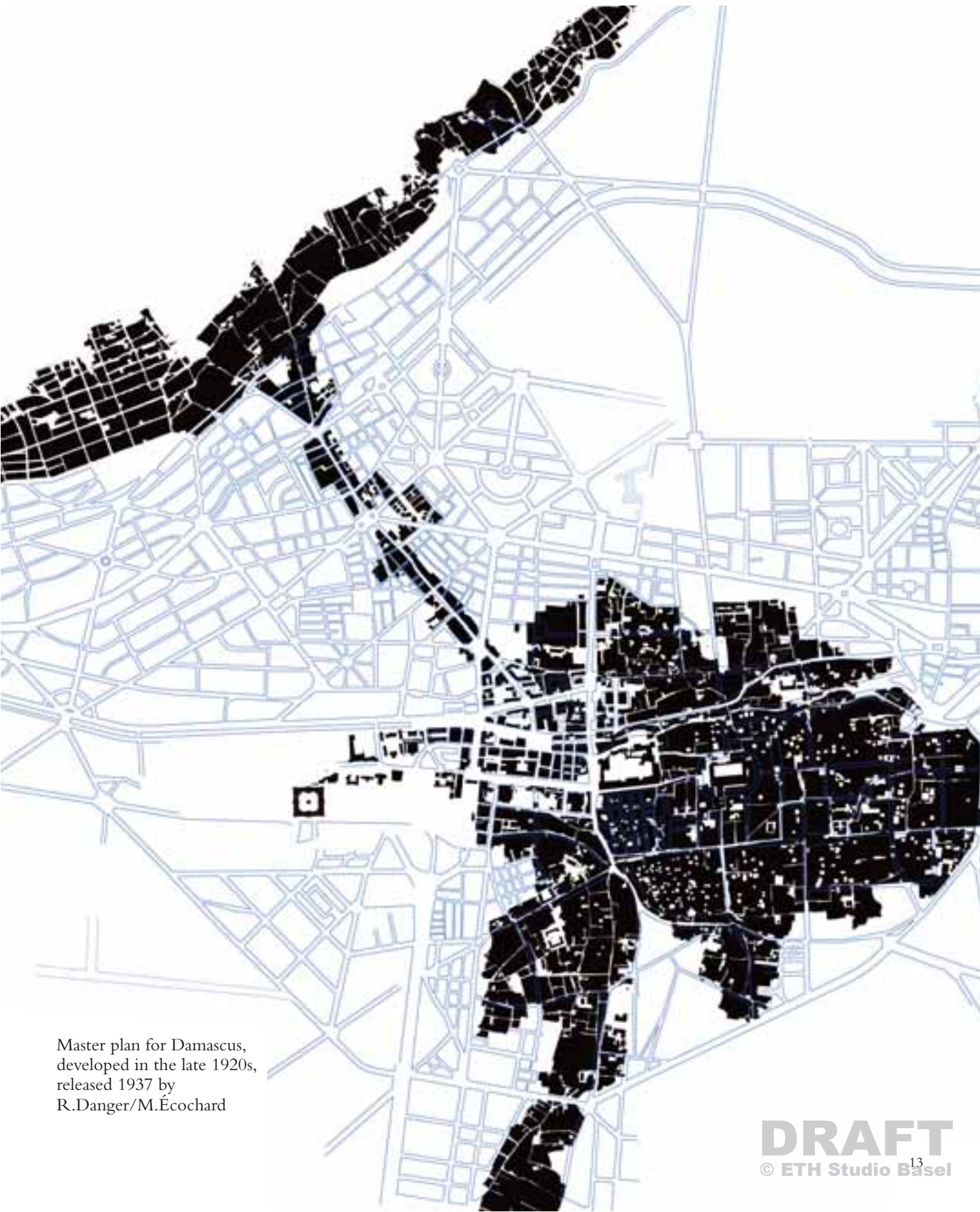
1850

1900

1928

1937

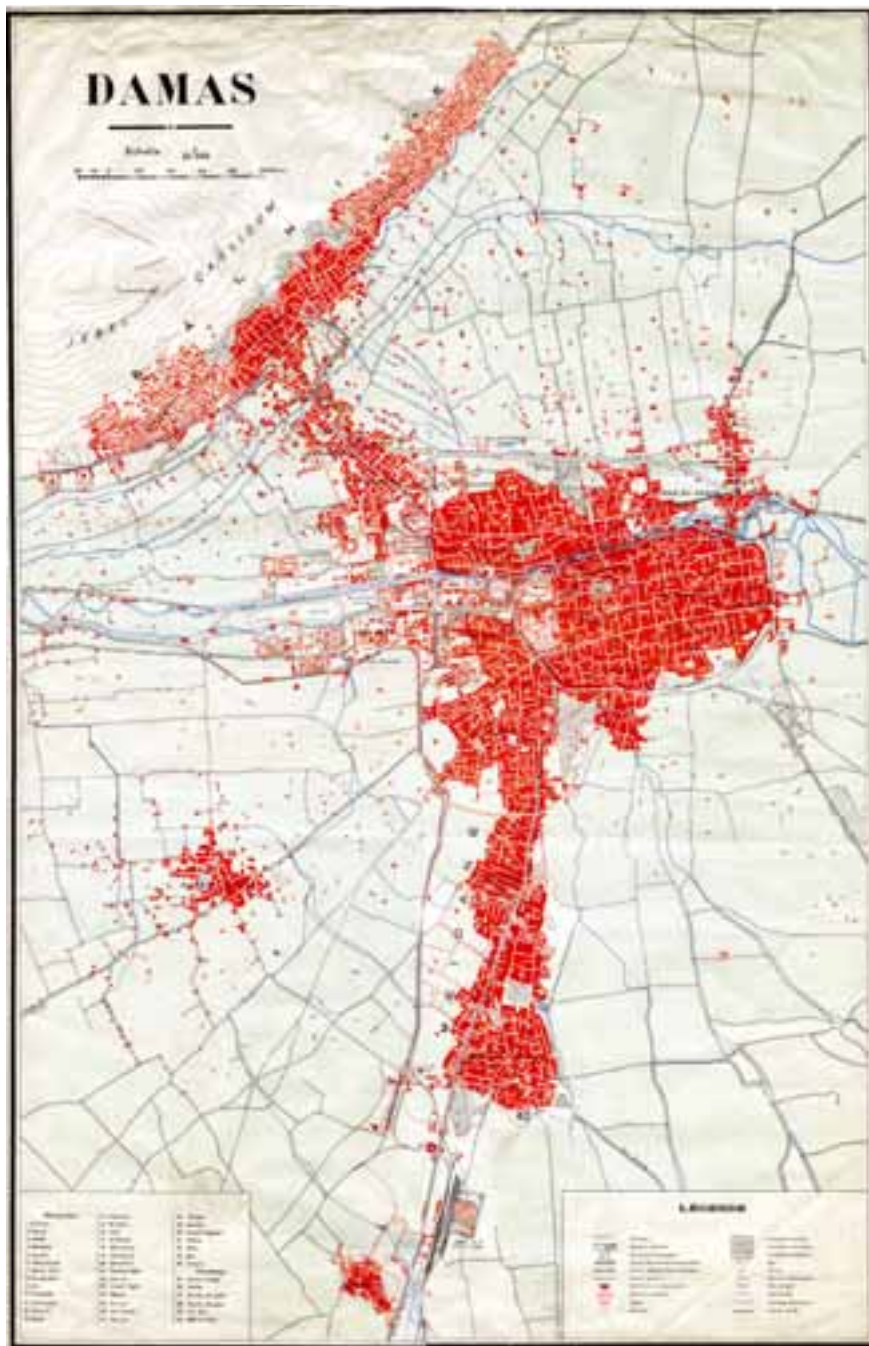
1950



Master plan for Damascus,
developed in the late 1920s,
released 1937 by
R.Danger/M.Écochard



1939 – 1946 END OF THE MANDATE



French city map from 1939
source: Institut français du Proche-Orient, Damascus, Abou Roumaneh

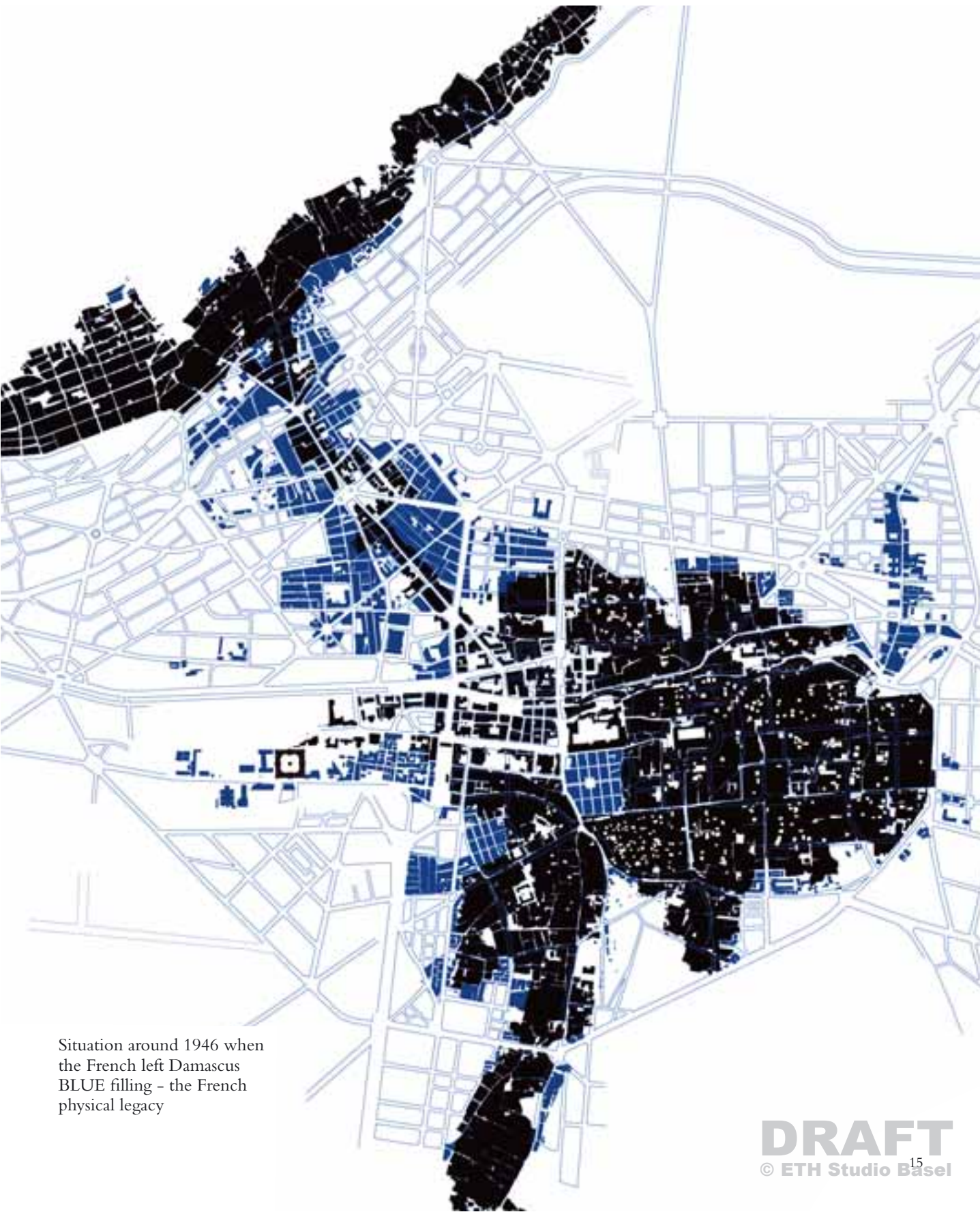
1850

1900

1939

1946

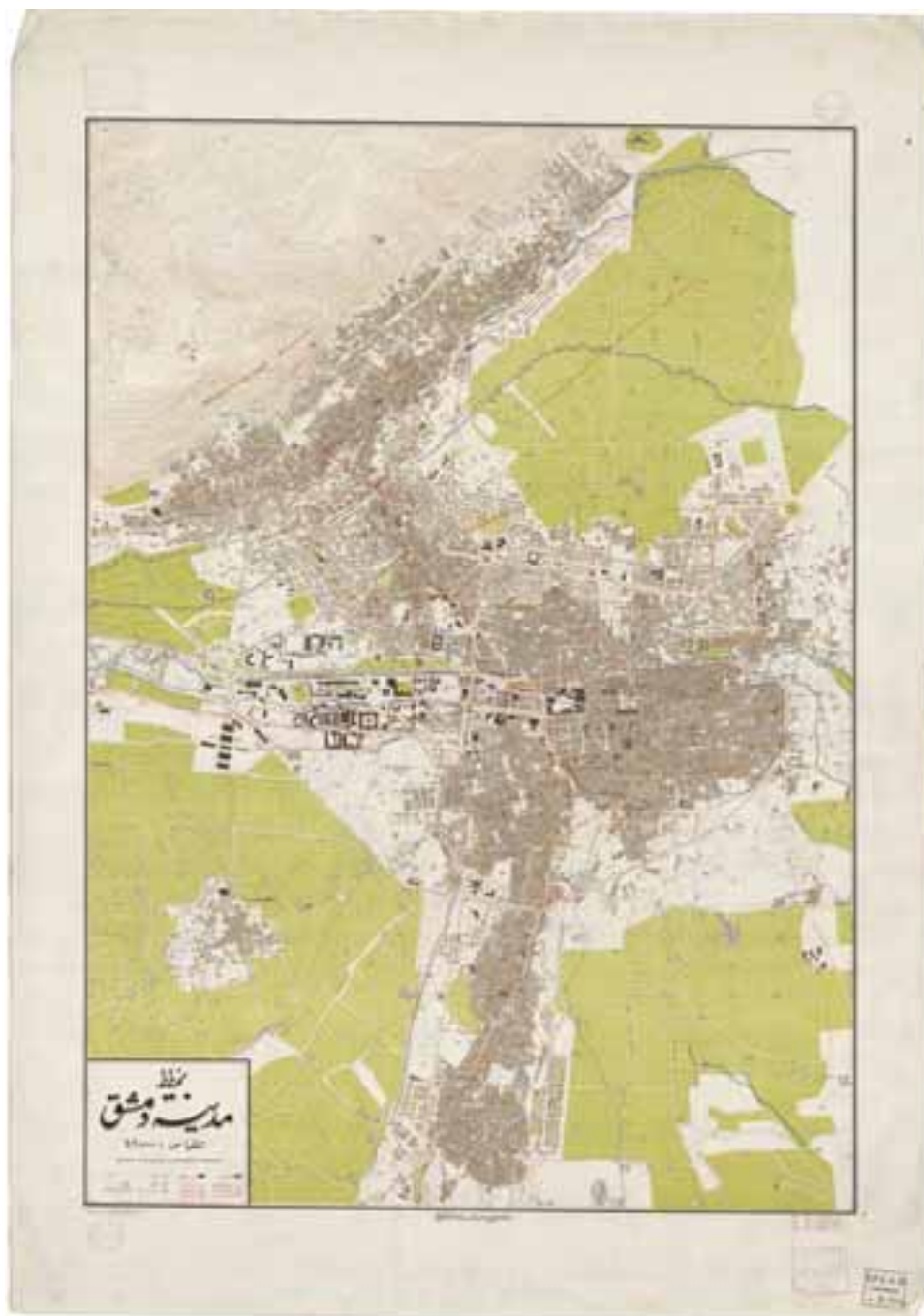
1950



Situation around 1946 when
the French left Damascus
BLUE filling – the French
physical legacy



1963 – 2009 AFTER THE MANDATE



City map from 1963
source: Valérie Clerc, Institut
français du Proche-Orient, Da-
mascus, Abou Roumaneh

1850

1900

1950

1963

today

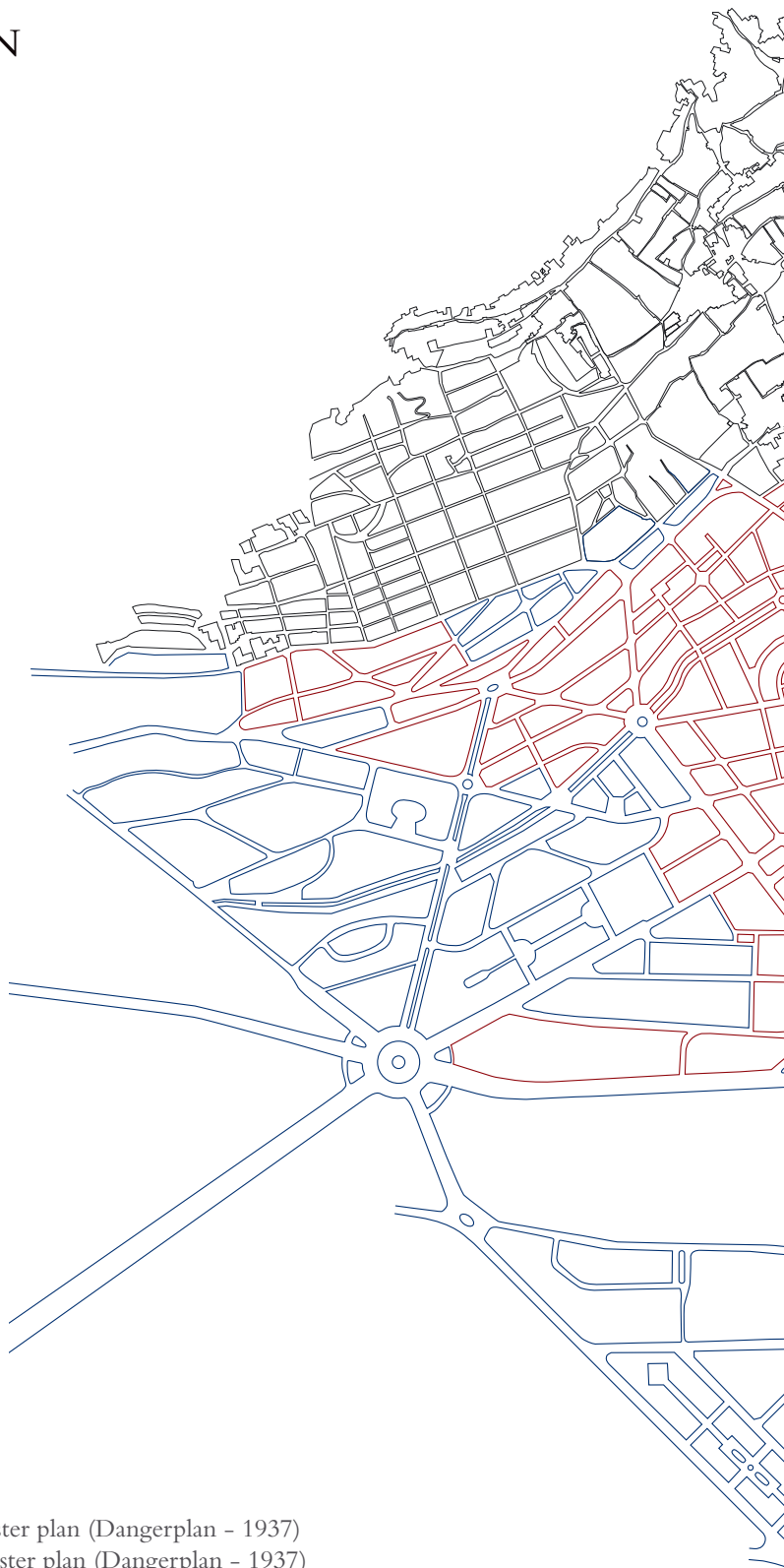
Current situation



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© ETH Studio Basel



CURRENT STREET PLAN



old city structure (before the French)

realized parts of the former french master plan (Dangerplan - 1937)

modifications of the former french master plan (Dangerplan - 1937)

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AREAS OF INVESTIGATION

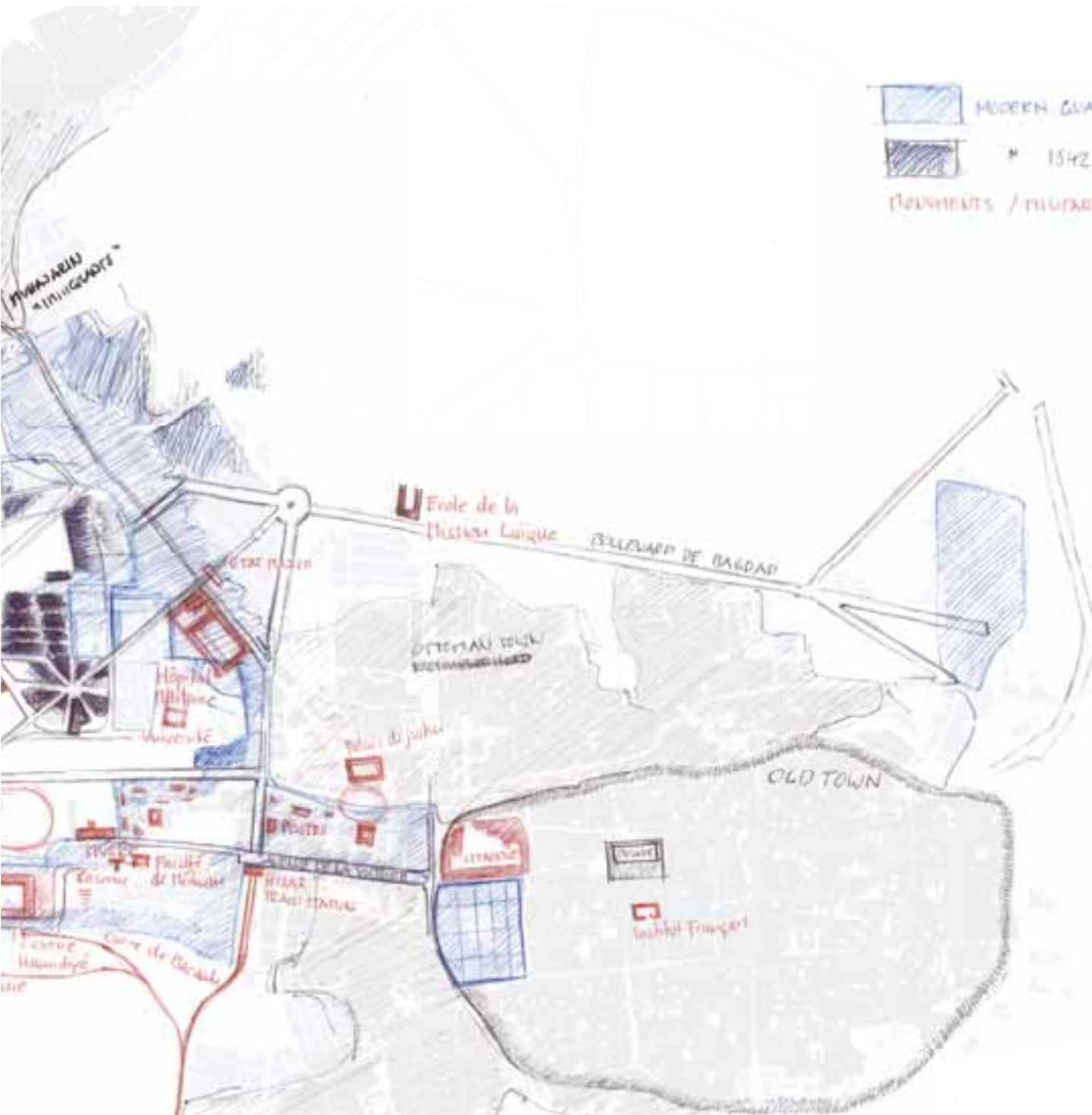
SKETCH PLAN FROM THE DAMASCUS FIELD TRIP



“modern” city fabric (late Ottoman – French Mandate) BLUE

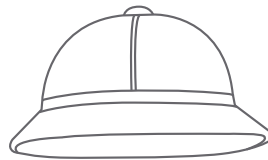
recognizable french architecture BLUE_BLACK

monuments and military facilities - RED



FRENCH COLONIAL URBANISM

AND ITS ELEMENTS





FRENCH COLONIAL EMPIRE

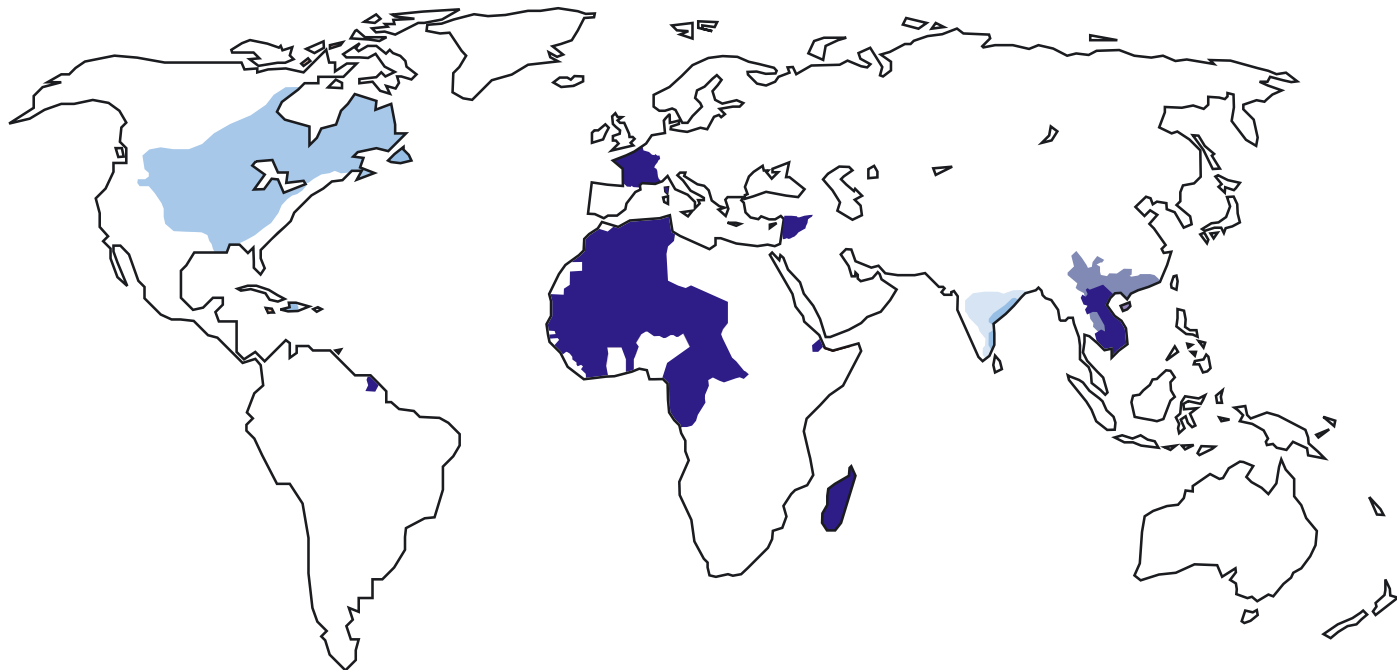
The first French colonial empire:

France began to establish colonies in North America, the Caribbean and India, following Spanish and Portuguese successes during the Age of Discovery, in rivalry with Britain for supremacy. A series of wars with Britain during the 1700s and early 1800s, which France lost, ended its colonial ambitions on these continents.

The second French colonial empire:

In the 19th century, France established a new empire in Africa and South East Asia. Some of these

colonies lasted beyond the invasion and occupation of France by Nazi Germany during World War II. Following the war, anti-colonial movements began to challenge French authority. France unsuccessfully fought bitter wars (1946 French retreat from Syria) in the 1950s and early 1960s in Vietnam and Algeria to keep its empire intact. By the end of the 1960s, most of France's colonies had gained independence, save for a series of islands and archipelagos which were integrated into France as overseas departments and territories.



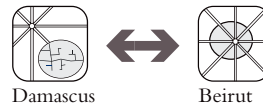
- 1st French Colonial Empire: acquisitions at the beginning of the 17th century (ends in 1763)
- 2nd French Colonial Empire: acquisitions until 1920 (ends in the 1960s)

FRENCH COLONIAL URBANISM

Urbanization during a french colonial period was marked by forms of racial and social segregation often expressed in terms of health and hygiene which continue to structure the city today.

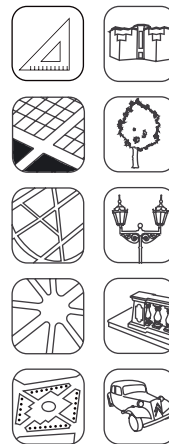
In Dakar for example, the authorities forced after an epidemic in 1914 most of the African population out of old neighborhoods, or “Plateau”, into a new quarter. This Plateau thereafter became an administrative, commercial, and residential district increasingly reserved for Europeans and served as model for similar exclusionary administrative enclaves in French colonial capitals like Antananarivo or Hanoi.

We detected two different French strategies to remodel a colonial city: 1) The “Haussmannian” model; a new grid on top of the existing fabric, demolition of medieval structures. (e.g. Beirut) 2) The “Versailles” model; an extension outside the medieval structures, “Cartesian” planning to develop the environs. (e.g. Damascus)



In all the colonial cities, we always find the same instruments for French urbanisation. No matter if we are in Vietnam or in the desert of Syria, the urban elements or tools like an Etoile, the Boulevard or even street furniture and trees look always the same. This was connected with the concept of “mission civilisatrice”, a moral duty France, to extend the benefits of its civilisation to a wider world.

In the following examples of former French colonial cities we will look for the most common urban instruments.





EXAMPLE 1: DAKAR, SENEGAL

RECOGNIZABLE FRENCH URBAN TOOLS AND IMPORTS



first master plan
for Dakar



recognizable grid
and axis



new planned
monument



arrangement
of zones



French master plan
Culot, Thiveaud/Mau-
rice, Jean-Marie, (1992):
Architectures Françaises.
OUTRE-MER. Mardaga.
p221

Gorée, including Dakar, was recognised as a French commune in 1872. The citizens of the city elected their own mayor and municipal council and send an elected representative to the National Assembly in Paris. A second major railroad, the Dakar–Niger built from 1906–1923, linked Dakar to Bamako and consolidated the city’s position at the head of France’s West African empire. In 1929, the commune of Gorée Island, now with only a few hundred inhabitants, was merged into Dakar.

In its colonial heyday Dakar was one of the major cities of the French Empire, comparable to Hanoi or Beirut. French trading firms established branch offices there and industrial investments (mills, breweries, refineries, canneries) were attracted by its port and rail facilities. It was also strategically important to France, which maintained an impor-

tant naval base and coaling station in its harbour and which integrated it into its earliest air force and airmail circuits, most notably with the legendary Mermoz airfield.

The number of French people in Dakar has actually increased since the country gained its independence from France in 1961. There are still kiosks on just about every other corner selling French bread, freshly baked several times a day. And it is not unusual to see a French woman feeding her poodle that sits under the table at a chic restaurant. However, the Dakarais have moulded the French influence to their own purpose. Famed for their beauty, Senegalese women parade the streets in high-fashion outfits whipped up out of African fabrics by personal tailors.



tree-lined street



big étoile
as a centre



Aerial view of “La Grande Etoile”
in Dakar.

Culot, Thiveaud/Maurice, Jean-Marie,
(1992): Architectures Françaises. OUTRE-
MER. Mardaga. p229



EXAMPLE 2: ANTANANARIVO, MAURITIUS

RECOGNIZABLE FRENCH URBAN TOOLS AND IMPORTS



big etoile in the middle of
the fabric



long straight streets and
recognizable grid



General plan. French
southern extension
(1961) Marie, (1992):
Architectures Françaises.
OUTRE-MER. Mardaga.

p61

Unlike most capital cities in southern Africa, Antananarivo was already a major city before the colonial era. Since the introduction of stone and brick, the entire city has been rebuilt and now contains numerous European-style structures, including the royal palaces, the houses formerly belonging to the prime minister and nobles, the French residency, the Anglican and Roman Catholic cathedrals, and several stone churches. Museum of Ethnology and Palaeontology is located in the city.

The city was captured by the French in 1895 and incorporated into their Madagascar protectorate.

After the French conquest of Madagascar when the city had a population of some 100,000, it was extensively remodelled as the population grew to 175,000 by 1950. Roads were constructed throughout the city, broad flights of steps connecting places too steep for the formation of carriage roads, and the central space, called Andohalo, was enhanced with walks, terraces, flower-beds and trees. Water, previously obtained from springs at the foot of the hill, was brought from the Ikopa River, which skirts the capital to the south and west.



French technology: Citroën always belongs to a French Mandate City



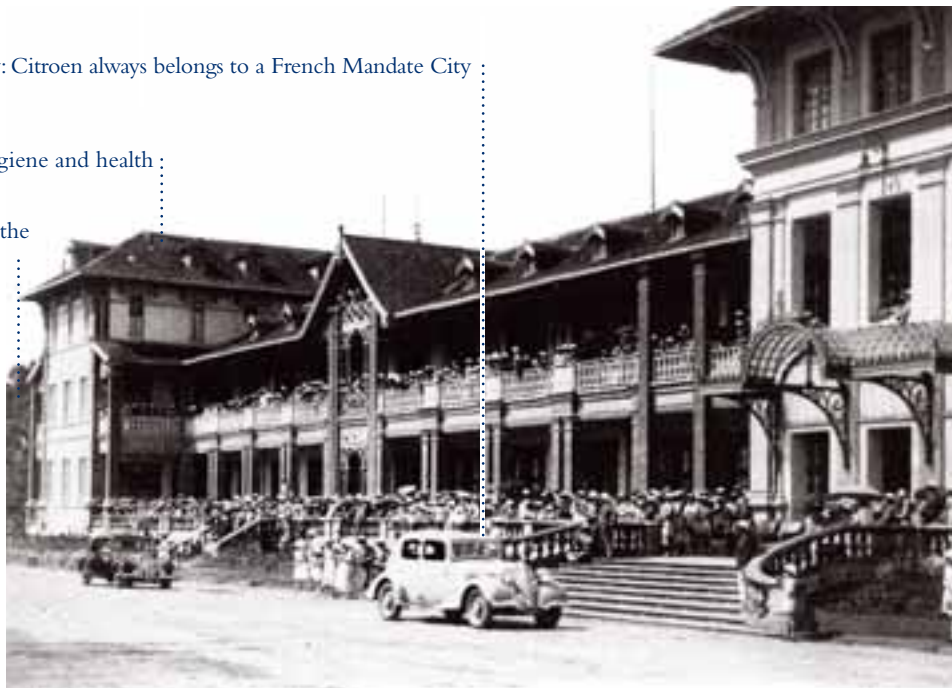
monument for hygiene and health



embellishment of the surroundings

Le Grand Hôtel
d'Antsirabé, monu-
ment thermal (a
french health resort)

Culot, Thiveaud/Mau-
rice, Jean-Marie, (1992):
Architectures Françaises.
OUTRE-MER. Mardaga.





EXAMPLE 3: ORLEANSVILLE, ALGERIA

RECOGNIZABLE FRENCH URBAN TOOLS AND IMPORTS



first detailed measurement
for Orleanville



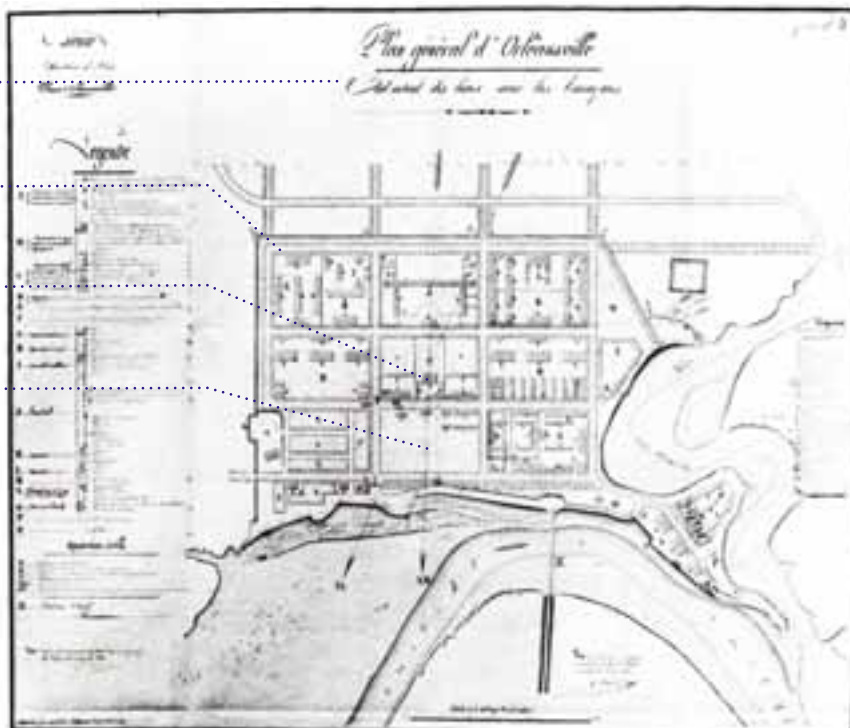
recognizable grid and axis



monuments



a big public square



First french master plan
for Orleanville in 1843
Grid and the five squares

source: <http://orleansville.free.fr/>

Download: 24.Nov. 2009,

Last update: 20.Oct. 2009

Orleansville is a colonial city in the desert of Algeria. “Le plan du camp”, released in 1843 is completely regular. Its form is a rectangle grid and planned for optimal defence.

The city structure consists of five squares: “la place d’Armes”, “la place du Marché” (public space for markets), “la place Royale” or also called “Place de

l’Église” and “la place de la mosquée”. For military reasons, Orleansville is completely ignoring the topography. Street facades are in the common French style. The new infrastructure, street furniture and even the trees are imported from France.



street furniture



sycamore tree
from France

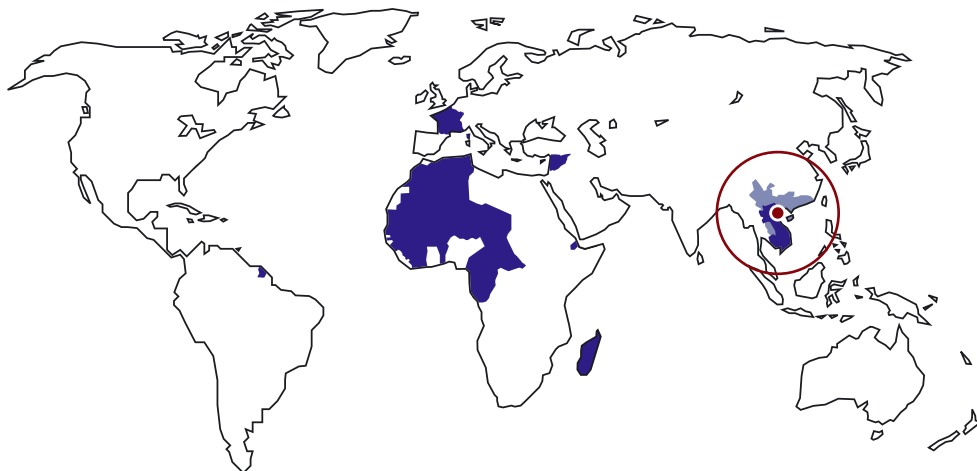


“La rue d’Orleansville”
in 1930



EXAMPLE 4: HANOI, VIETNAM

RECOGNIZABLE FRENCH URBAN TOOLS AND IMPORTS



parks and greenspace



mapping and the first aerial
view of Hanoi



axis and ring road



etoile and squares



Nouveau quartier du Gouvernement général de Hanoï, E.Hebrard architecte. Vue aérienne.

Culot, Thiveaud/Maurice, Jean-Marie, (1992): Architectures Françaises. OUTRE-MER. Mardaga. p301

Under French rule, as an administrative centre for the French colony of Indochina, the French colonial architecture style became dominant, many examples remain today: the tree-lined boulevards (e.g. Phan Dinh Phung street), The Grand Opera House, The State Bank of Vietnam (formerly The Bank of Indochina), The Presidential Palace (formerly Place of The Governor-General of French Indochina), the cathédrale St-Joseph, and historic hotel Sofitel Metropole.

The French took control in 1888 and modeled the city's architecture to their tastes, lending an impor-

tant aesthetic to the city's rich stylistic heritage, even expanding the city and adding rail connections over the Long Bien Bridge in 1902. In 1954, after the French departed, Hanoi was declared Vietnam's capital once again. The city boasts more than 1,000 years of history, and that of the past few hundred years is marvelously preserved.

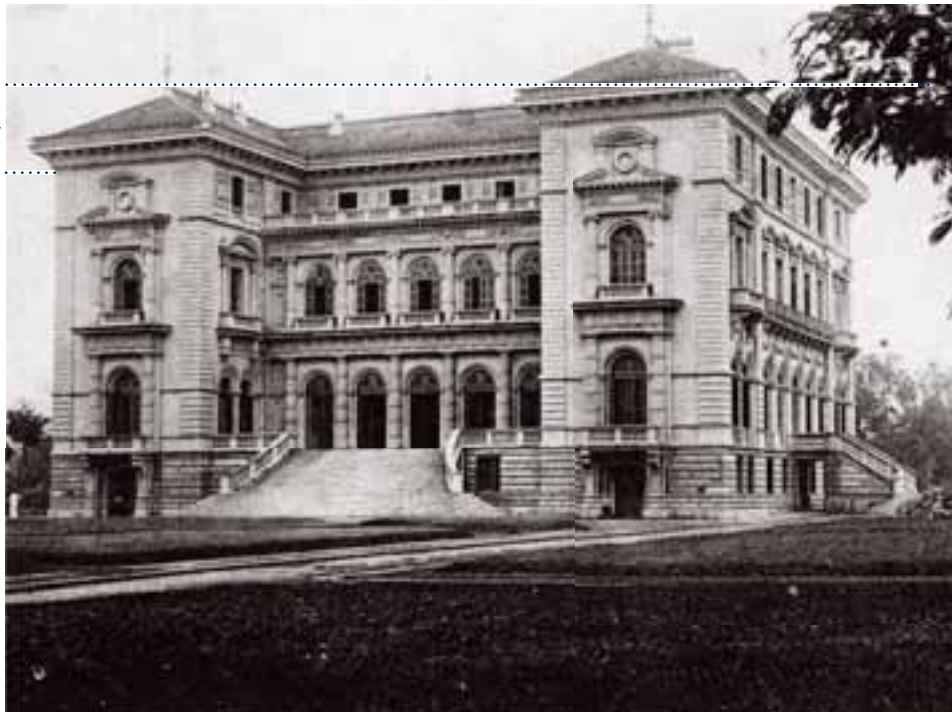
<http://travel.nytimes.com/frommers/travel/guides/asia/vietnam/hanoi/>. Download: 24.Nov. 2009, Last update: 24.Nov. 2009



French style
planting



the main monu-
ment: the Presi-
dential Palace



“Palais du gouverneur
général”, Hanoi, Vildieu
architect, 1901-1906

source: Culot, Thiveaud/Mau-
rice, Jean-Marie, (1992): Archi-
tectures Françaises. OUTRE-
MER. Mardaga. p297



ELEMENTS OF FRENCH COLONIAL URBANISM

A FRENCH URBAN RECIPE FOR COLONIES: “LES HUIT POINTS”

FRENCH URBAN TOOLS



ZONING PLANNING



AXIS AND RING ROAD



ETOILES AND SQUARES



PARKS AND GREENSPACE



MONUMENTS



STREET FURNITURE

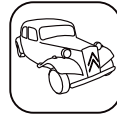


EMBELLISHMENT



TREES AND PLANTS

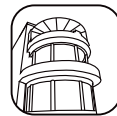
FRENCH IMPORTS



TECHNOLOGIES



SURVEYING

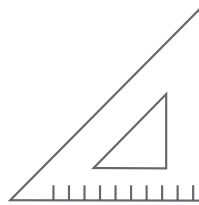


BUILDING TYPOLOGIES



Allegoric representation of deified geometry – the goddess of Cartesian planning

BEGINNING OF A MODERN CITY





LATE OTTOMAN MODERNITY AND ITS LEGACY

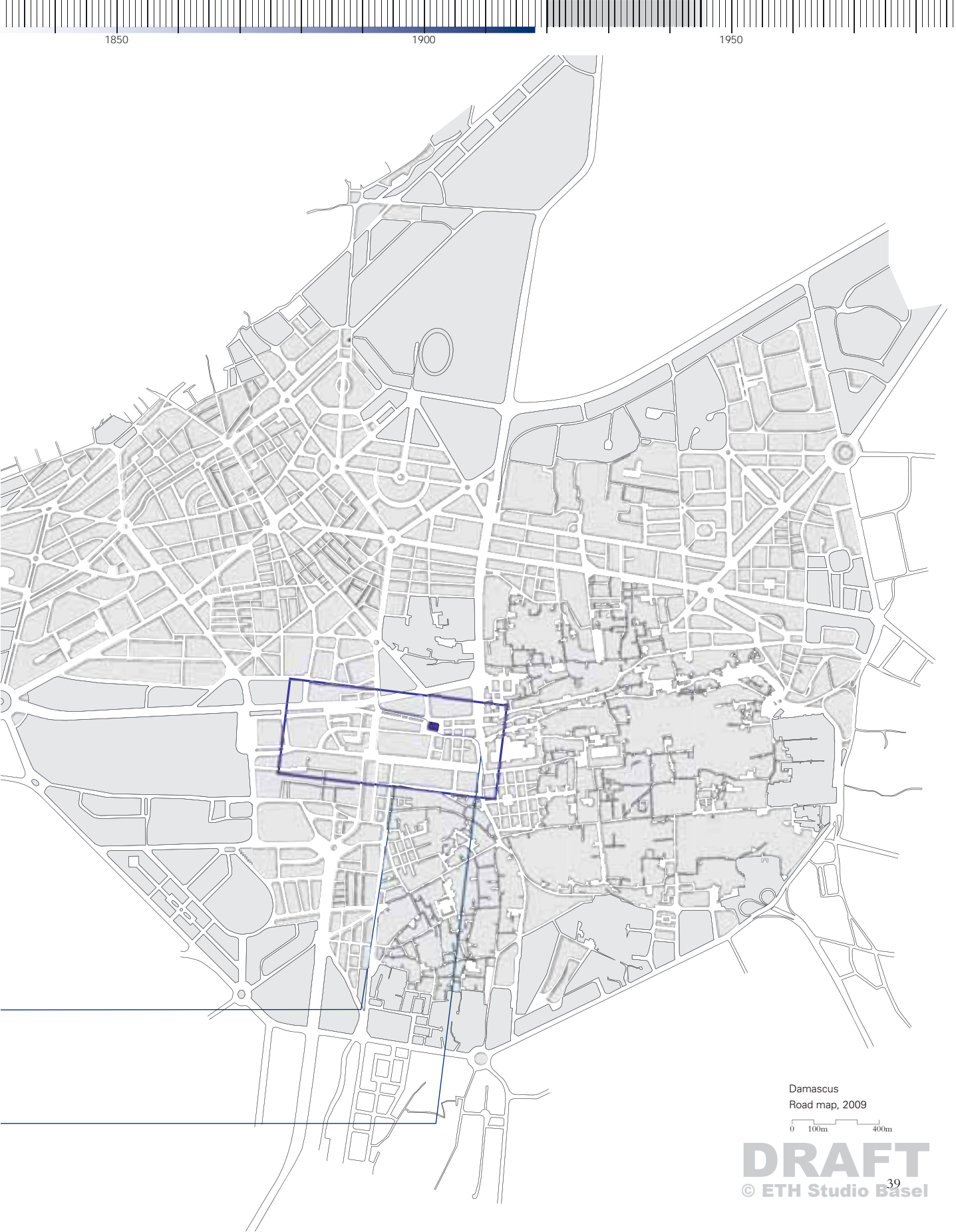
It could be said that the French took over a city from the Ottomans, which had already started the process of modernisation, and they continued many projects of the previous occupants.

The Ottoman Empire acted until its end as a filter and transmitter of Western influences which penetrated into Muslim countries via Istanbul.

Following the Ottoman efforts of centralization and modernization during the course of the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, the city of Damascus, like many other Ottoman cities, witnessed far-reaching changes in its urban texture. The return of Ottoman central power in the late 19th century through its enlarged facilities of administration, transportation (new streets, steam boats, and later railways), and communication (telegraph) connected the town to a new international network and had an overwhelming impact on Damascus. The urban texture of the city changed rapidly during the decades after the provincial reforms of 1864 right to the end of Ottoman rule in Damascus in 1918. The city itself became the object of extensive town planning carried out by a completely new administrative body. A new water system, electric streetlights and tramways were installed throughout the city between 1906 and 1907. Many streets in the old town, intra and extra muros, were enlarged and various new streets were built throughout the city.

The new city center:
Marjeh Square and surroundings - laying out by the Ottomans at the end of the 19th century

New infrastructure and public transportation: tramway



1850

1900

1950

Damascus
Road map, 2009

0 100m 400m

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A NEW CITY CENTER - MARJEH SQUARE

Due to an enormous demographic growth, new urban areas were settled and whole new quarters of the city founded (e.g. Muhajirin). With the laying out of Marja Square a new public center was founded. Numerous administrative buildings, (such as the municipality building, police headquarters, law court etc), hotels and modern transport facilities (railway stations and tramway headquarters) were built. Public places such as parks, coffee houses, and theaters were located there and provided a space for growing public life and discussion.

Cinemas and theaters around Marje square -1928



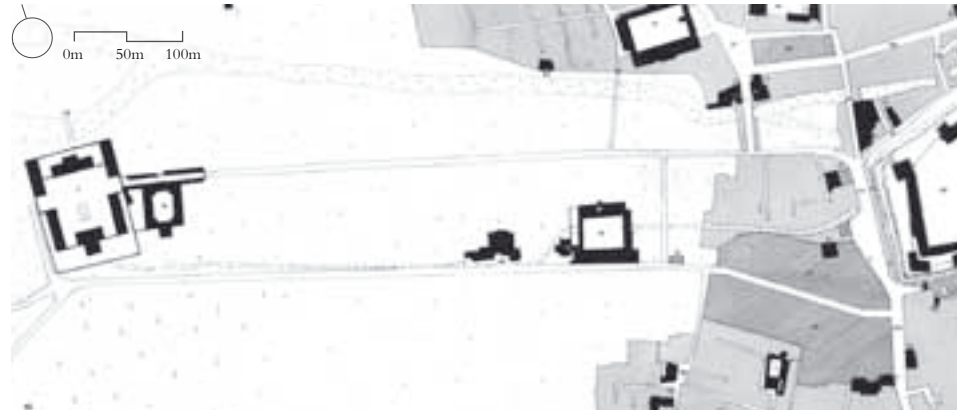
A new urban element in Damascus: the memorial - a former Ottoman memorial for telegraphy from 1907

former Ottoman and French municipality building

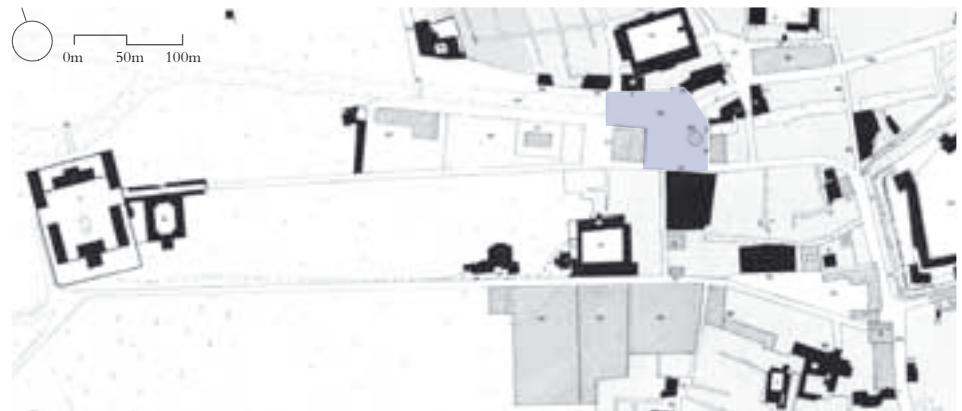


Marje Square 2009

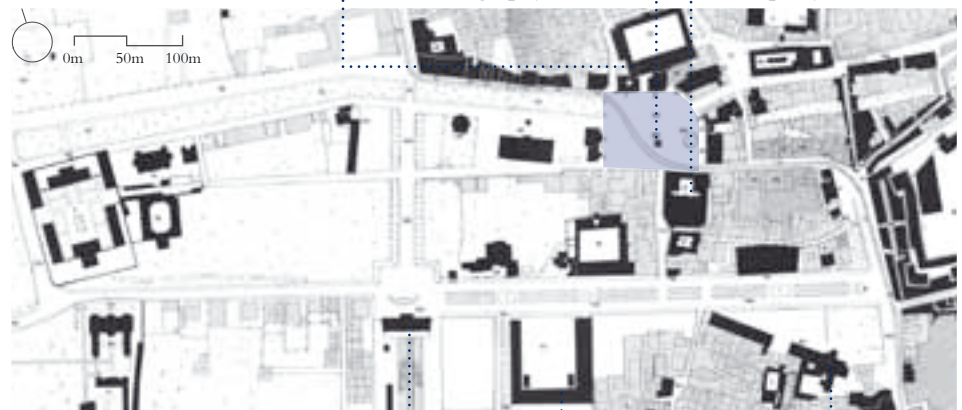
Marjeh Square, public buildings and infrastructure: around 1800



1880



tribunal telegraphy memorial : municipality 1918



Hijaz station military military saray

Weber, Stefan, (2009) Damascus, Ottoman Modernity and Urban Transformation (1808–1918). Proceedings of the Danish Institute Damascus, 2 vols. Aarhus.



CLASH BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNITY

The methods and standards of modern physical planning were established as a corrective to the shortcomings of the new development and are an outcome of the administrative and institutional framework produced by secular industrial civilizations. It is therefore not surprising that most of them should fail when transferred to the context of traditional societies which obey different prerogatives. While modern planning is often seen as the miraculous instant solution to arising development problems in the Third World, it appears to be even less visible there than in the Western context, unless its objectives, methods and procedures are

One does not have to share the Islamic belief in divine providence to realize that this illusion is the cause of the collapse of many planning schemes. The French Mandate in Syria was therefore too short and Damascus became an excellent example of how a city can react to different ideas in a short period.



rigorously controlled. For its implicit value system, consciously or unconsciously imposed on a different cultural context, can induce internal conflicts which end up paralyzing the internal control mechanisms of the community.

In philosophical terms, the most controversial aspect of modern planning is probably its claim to be able to predict and fix future conditions to an amazing degree of precision, leaving no room for unforeseen needs and developments. Indeed, the Cartesian approach of modern planning intimates that man is the full master of his future and that all influences unforeseen by his mind can be excluded.

Versailles vs French Damascus

Picture right: Danger Plan from 1937, Institut français du Proche-Orient, Damascus, Abou Roumaneh

Picture left: http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schloss_Versailles.

Last update: 16. 11.2009. Download: 10.12.2009.



Axis in Hariqah (French planning)
ends abrupt in front of medieval
structure – clashes like this have cre-
ated new forms of hybrid space



A NEW WAY OF PERCEPTION

AEROPHOTOGRAMMETRY - NEW WAY OF UNDERSTANDING CITIES

Photogrammetry is the first remote sensing technology ever developed in which geometric properties about objects are determined from photographic images. Photogrammetry is as old as modern photography and can be dated around 1850. Photogrammetry is used in different fields, such as topographic mapping, architecture, engineering, police investigation, and geology, as well as by archaeologists to quickly produce plans of large or complex sites.

It is therefore not surprising that the French should use the surveying as an efficient tool for investigation and urban planning all over their colonies. This is typically done using aeroplanes and in history with balloons. The Frenchman and military pilot M. Écochard was the first planner who saw the Damascus from above.



A French legacy: a complete surveying of the Roman grid in the Old Town of Damascus

source: Écochard, Michel / Banchoya (1968): Plan Directeur de Damas. Rapport Justificatif. by: La Commission Supérieure d'Urbanisme. Damascus.

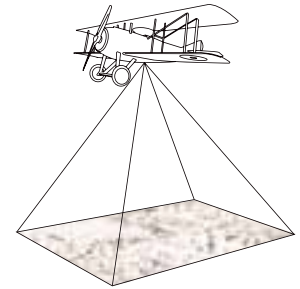
Michel Écochard came to Damascus in the 1920's as a young French officer and military pilot. He started his work as a planner in the Danger office around 1930. He was the first planner who saw the city from above.

Sourdel, Dominique (1985): REVUE DES ETUDES IS-LAMIQUES. GEUTHNER, Paris



Picture down: Airplane over Damascus: aerial view
1930's Damascus south elevation source: Valérie Clerc,
Institut français du Proche-Orient Damas, Abou Roumaneh

Capable for the French Mandate in Syria: The
FVII three-engined; world's first aircooled engine
and Fokker's best selling aircraft between the two
World Wars – probably flown by Écochard.



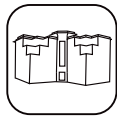
aerophotogrammetry – collecting information by
using aerial photography – the most efficient meth-
od for surveying in bigger scale



ANALYSIS IN DAMASCUS



1 – AL HARIQAH
The first French urban intervention



2 – MONUMENTS
5 french dealings with monuments



3 – AXIS AND BOULEVARDS
History and case studies about the french streets



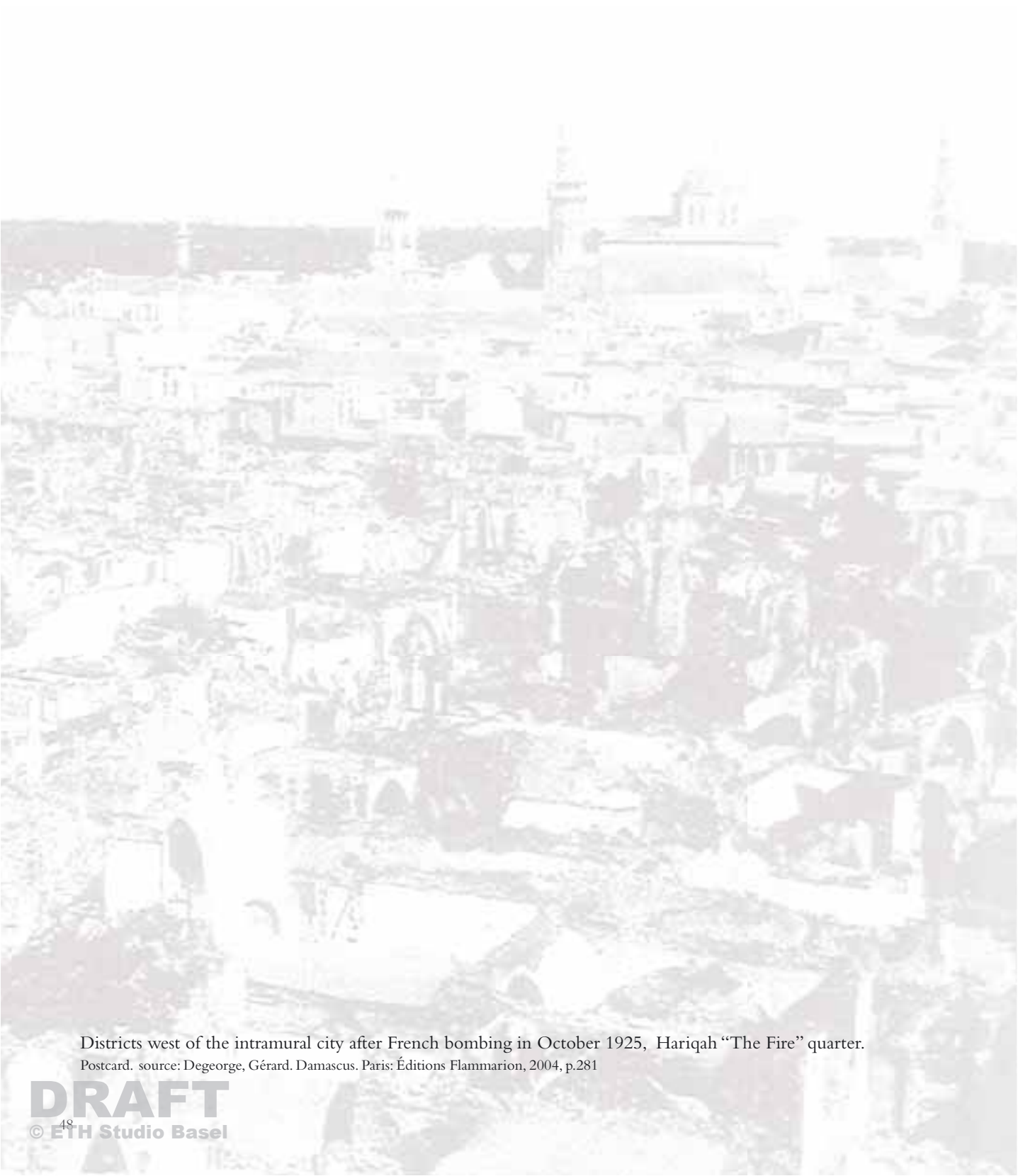
4 – ETOILES AND SQUARES
Development of new nodes



5 – PARKS AND GREENSPACE
Implementing public leisure areas



6 – BUILDING TYPOLOGIES
From a courtyard to the solitaire



Districts west of the intramural city after French bombing in October 1925, Hariqah “The Fire” quarter.
Postcard. source: Degeorge, Gérard. Damascus. Paris: Éditions Flammarion, 2004, p.281

AL HARIQAH

ANALYSIS 1





FIRST URBAN INTERVENTION BY THE FRENCH

VIOLENT BEGINNING OF THE FRENCH MANDATE IN DAMASCUS

In 1920, French forces entered Syria using military power, and made their way to Damascus. After the capture of Damascus, French forces set about “pacifying” the rest of the country. 1925 ferocious demonstrations broke out during a visit to Damascus by Lord Balfour. The Druze started a rebellion, which soon extended to all the Druze areas. “As barricades sprang up everywhere and Europeans hastened to take refuge in their consulates, the citadel’s guns, the air force and tanks rolled in action. The population of the lower city fled towards the districts of Muhajirin and Salihye, while a continuous line of cars wended its way to Beirut.”¹ After three days of fighting and bombing, Damascus looked like a war zone: “All along Straight Street up to Bab Sharqi, walls, doors and house fronts were pockmarked with tank shells.”² The Quwatli house, one of the most beautiful in Damascus had been bombed with shells and the houses around it were burning. After these incidents, the western districts within the wall earned the name Hariqa. The bombing of Damascus was welcomed, however, by partisans of ‘modern’ town-planning like Louis Jalabert, who defined it as the ‘development of civilized life’. “[...]The bombardment presented the advantage of allowing certain clearances to be effected.”³ But, after the riots, rebels could still enter and leave the city freely. “To ensure stability, the old town was ringed with barbed wire with a limited number of entry points.”⁴

It became crucial for the French authorities to cut the city off from the Ghuta (oasis) with which it had lived in close symbiosis since the dawn of time. Streets were built in a Haussmannian way as thoroughfares for the troops and armoured cars, allowing them to speed to any area in an old city seen as a place where fanatics could hide

– 10.12.1925, the governor presented to the mayor and councilmen a plan for “beautifying” the city

– 01.01.1926: the northern sector was completed, at the beginning of February, over 12km of Boulevard with barbed wire surrounded the city – politicians tried to justify these “improvements” with arguments of demands of vehicle traffic or a campaign against unsanitary conditions.

Despite of the “belts of iron and fire”, combat raised again in Midan, where the French forces did a second bombardement.

1,2,3,4 Degeorge, Gérard: „The end of the Ottoman empire and the pangs of Westernization“, in: Damascus; Flammrion, 2004, Paris. (p.280)

Implemented grid,
The Hariqah quarter

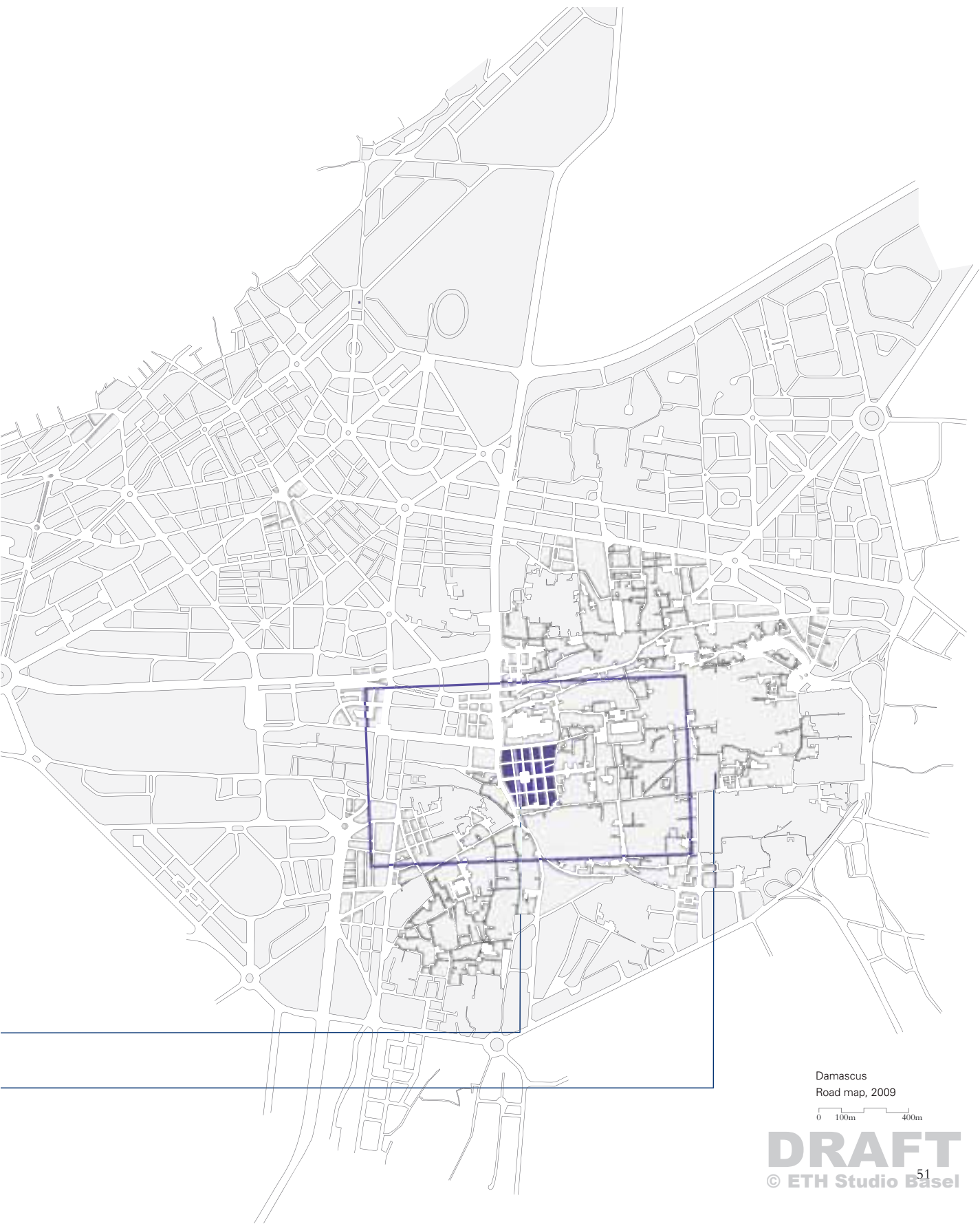
Old Town (intra muros)

1850

1900

1925

1950



Damascus
Road map, 2009

0 100m 400m

DRAFT
© ETH Studio Basel



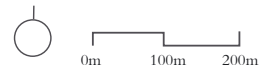
BEFORE THE FRENCH MANDATE

1860- SURVEY



(1) City map from 1860 by E.G.Rey: The former Qanaouate quarter: Medieval urban fabric with some of the most valuable courthouses in the Old Town

source: Institut français du Proche-Orient, Damascus, Abou Roumaneh

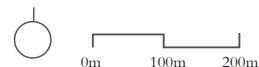


around 1920



(2) Aerial view of the former Qanaouate quarter; made by a french pilot, possibly M.Écochard, in the early 1920's.

source: Institut français du Proche-Orient, Damascus, Abou Roumaneh



French combat aircraft over Damascus at the beginning of the 1920's

Dr. Qutarba, Alschhabi (1990): Damascus. History and Photos. Anuri Verlag 2.Edition (in Arabic)





BEGINNING OF THE FRENCH MANDATE

THE DRUZE REVOLT



Druze rebellion in 1925, the French reacted with barricades. As barricades sprang up the citadel's guns, the air force and tanks rolled in action.

source: Alschhabi, Qutarba PhD (1990): Damascus. History and Photos. 2.edition Anuri Verlag 1990, Damascus (in Arabic)



The Quwatli house, one of the most beautiful in Damascus had been peppered with shells and the houses around it burned - Western districts within the wall earned the name Hariqa ("conflagration")

source: Alschhabi, Qutarba PhD (1990): Damascus. History and Photos. 2.edition Anuri Verlag 1990, Damascus

(3) First French master plan for Damascus and surroundings: The Danger Plan, developed between 1925 and 1937. A recognizable grid in the middle shows the first French urban intervention.

source: Institut français du Proche-Orient, Damascus, Abou Roumaneh

1930's - PROPOSAL



(4) New streets in the Hariqah quarter are already showing the new planned grid in the 1930's.

source: Institut français du Proche-Orient, Damascus, Abou Roumaneh

1930's





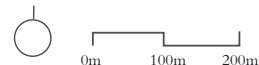
DURING THE FRENCH MANDATE

1937 - SURVEY

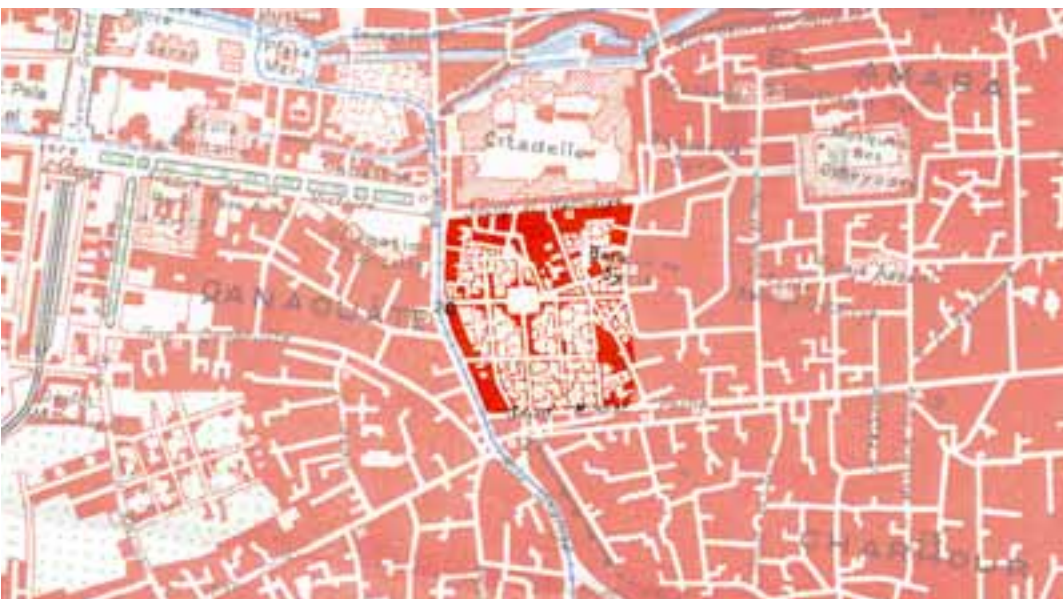


(5) Ruins and future grid in dashed lines – map from 1937

source: Institut français du Proche-Orient, Damascus, Abou Roumaneh

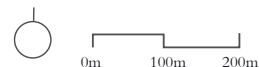


1939 - SURVEY



(6) The ruin field is more less cleared - Urban fabric starts to follow the grid – map from 1939

source: Institut français du Proche-Orient, Damascus, Abou Roumaneh



Aerial view 1930's: Har-
iqah quarter recogniza-
ble as a huge open space
source: Institut français du
Proche-Orient, Damascus,
Abou Roumaneh

1930's



(7) Urban growth is ac-
cepting the new grid –
map from 1941

source: Institut français du
Proche-Orient, Damascus,
Abou Roumaneh

1941 - SURVEY





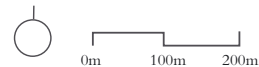
AFTER THE FRENCH MANDATE

1963 - SURVEY



(8) finished block structure in the 60's – map from 1963

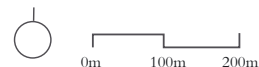
source: Institut français du Proche-Orient, Damascus, Abou Roumaneh



2009



(9) Current situation 2009 source: google earth. Date of picture : 12.06.2009. Download picture: 14.11.2009.



2009
blurry boundaries in terms
of functional using.



The French kept
ancient ruins in the
Hariqah quarter.



El Hariqah "The Fire" today

source: DeGeorge, Gérard (2004): Damascus. Éditions Flammarion, Paris p.80-81



DRAFT
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NEW GRID MEETS OLD TOWN

TRAFFIC AND PROGRAMM

position 01:

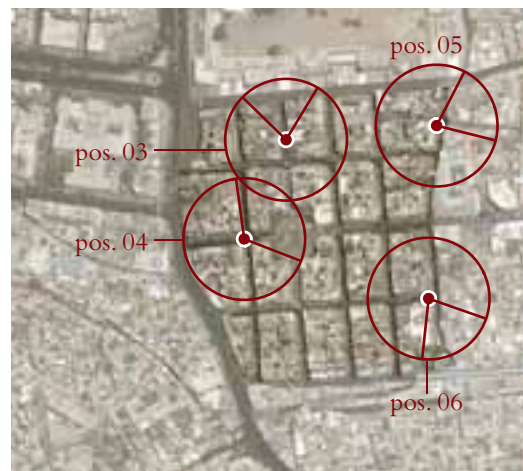
The old town is car-free in opposition to the Hariqah quarter with its modern street width. Cars in the southeast corner of Hariqah

position 02:

the enormous pressure by traffic (most of them are cabs) leads to one of the most polluted areas in town.

general ban on motorised traffic
for the old town





position plan



position 03:
Hariqah street – behind
the old citadel and souq;
where the old town is
recapturing the pedestrian zone



NEW GRID MEETS OLD TOWN



position 05:

Space in between medieval and new structure from the 1950's used as a clothes shop. Gaps like this have created new forms of hybrid space.





position 05:
Space in between medieval
an new structure from the
1950's used as a clothes shop.
Gaps like this have created
new forms of hybrid space.

position 06:
The Damascene people are re-
capturing the former French
street for using it as a Souk and
pedestrian zone.

position 04:
Panorama view of the Har-
iqah centre. One of two of-
ficial pedestrian zones. Well
used as a public area for rec-
reation.



MONUMENTS AND INSTITUTIONS

ANALYSIS 2





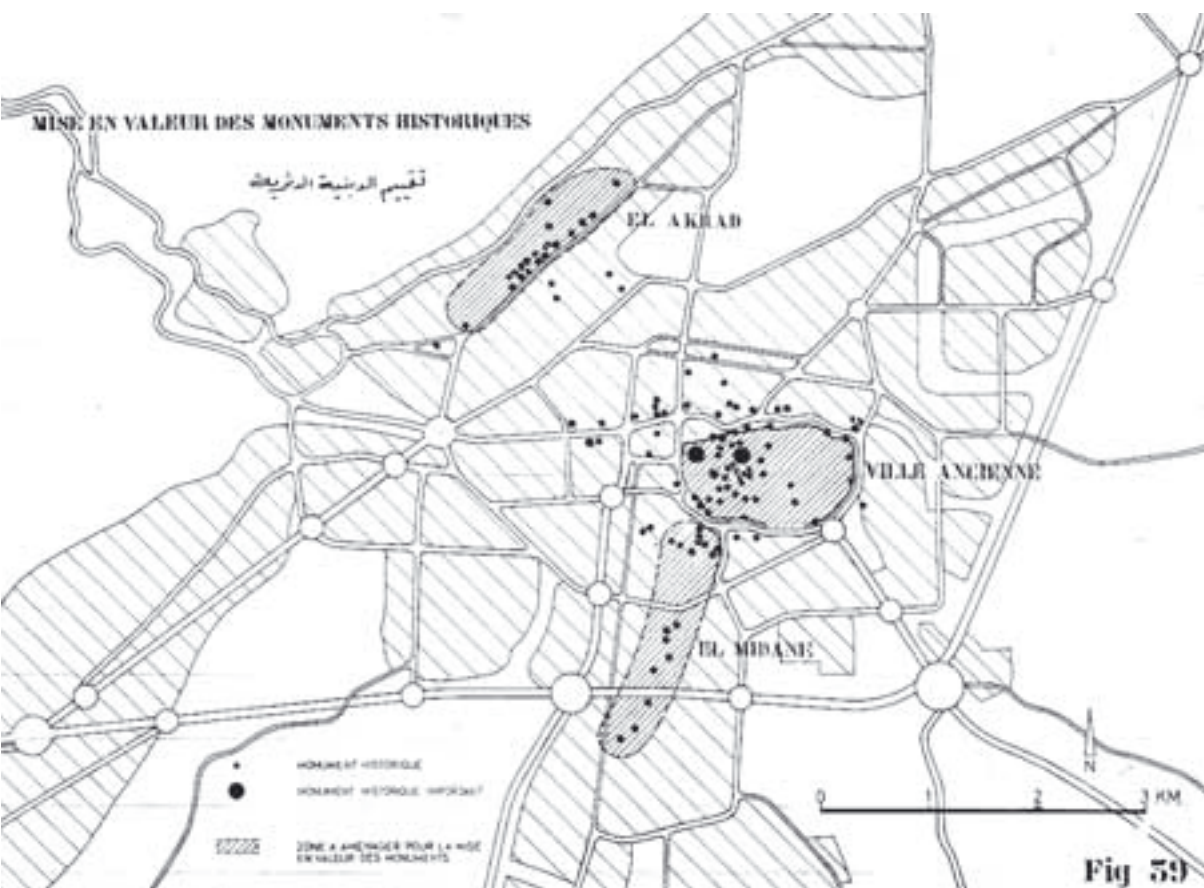
JUDGEMENT OF MONUMENTS

INVENTORY TAKING BY THE FRENCH

inventory of historical monuments in Damascus, published in 1968

source: Écochard, Michel / Banshoya (1968):

Plan Directeur de Damas. Rapport Justificatif. by: La Commission Supérieure d'Urbanisme, Damascus.



inventory of the historical monuments in the old town, published in 1968

source: Écochard, Michel / Bانشويا (1968):

Plan Directeur de Damas. Rapport Justificatif. by: La Commission Supérieure d'Urbanisme. Damascus.





CASE STUDY LOCATIONS

FIVE FRENCH WAYS OF DEALING WITH MONUMENTS



French embassy
(inclusive new extension)

Maisat Mosque

École de la Mission Laïque

Former University (built in 1929)

National Museum of Damascus
(built in 1933)

Former military casern

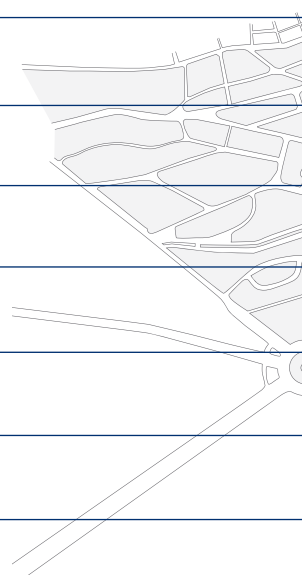
Hotel “l’orient palace” (built in1936)

Former main station
(Hedjaz Train Station built in 1908)

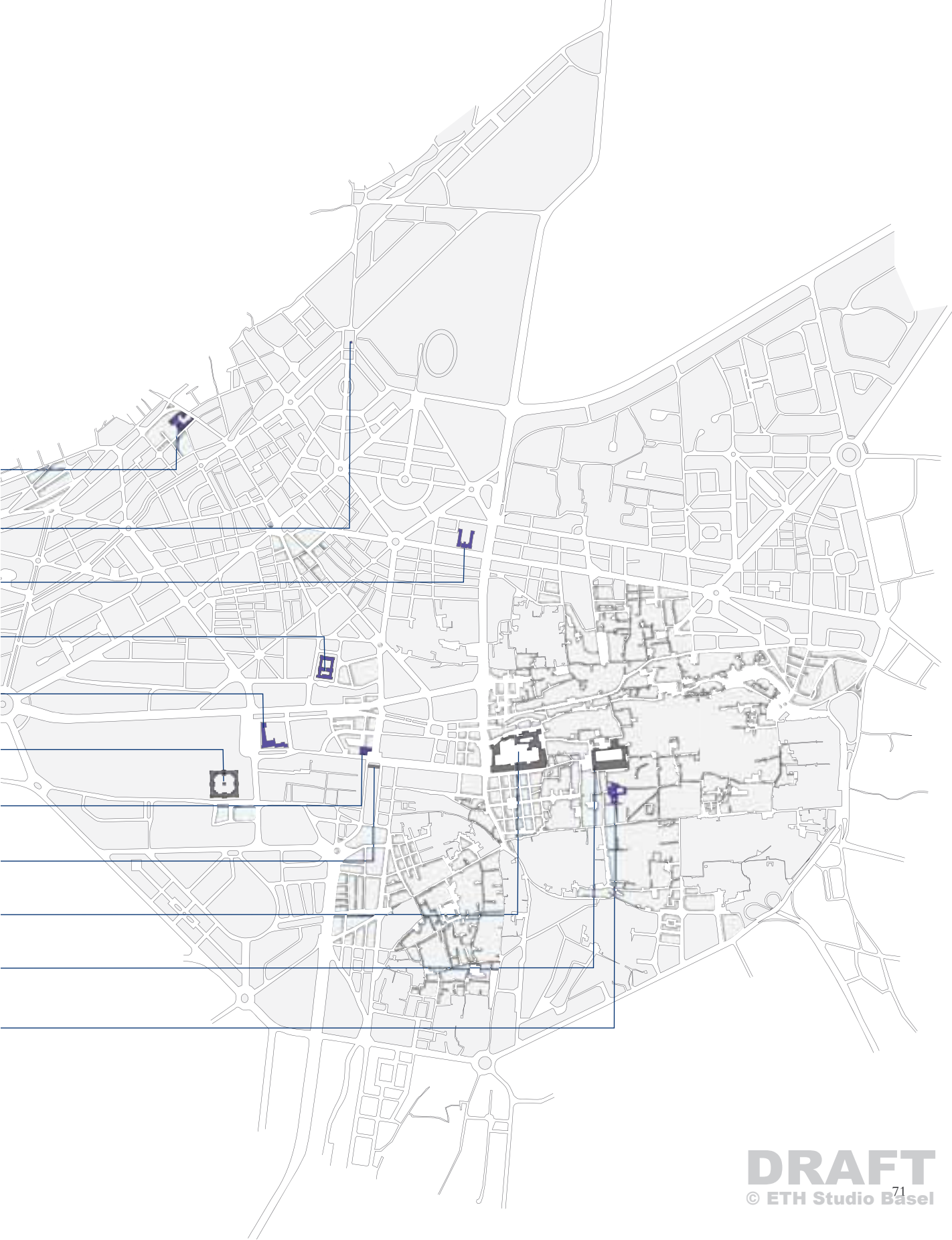
Old citadel

Omayad Mosque

French Institute (1930–46)



 before the French Mandate (significant for the French)
 French monuments





0) OTTOMAN CONSTRUCTED MONUMENTS AND CONSTRUCTION OF PERSPECTIVE

The return of Ottoman central power in the late 19th century through its enlarged facilities of administration, transportation and communication (telegraph) connected the town to a new international network and had an overwhelming impact on Damascus. The urban texture of the city changed rapidly during the decades after the provincial reforms of 1864 right to the end of Ottoman rule in Damascus in 1918. The city itself became the object of extensive town planning carried out by a completely new administrative body. New monuments (Marjeh Square pillar), Institutions, water system, electric streetlights and tramways were installed throughout the city.

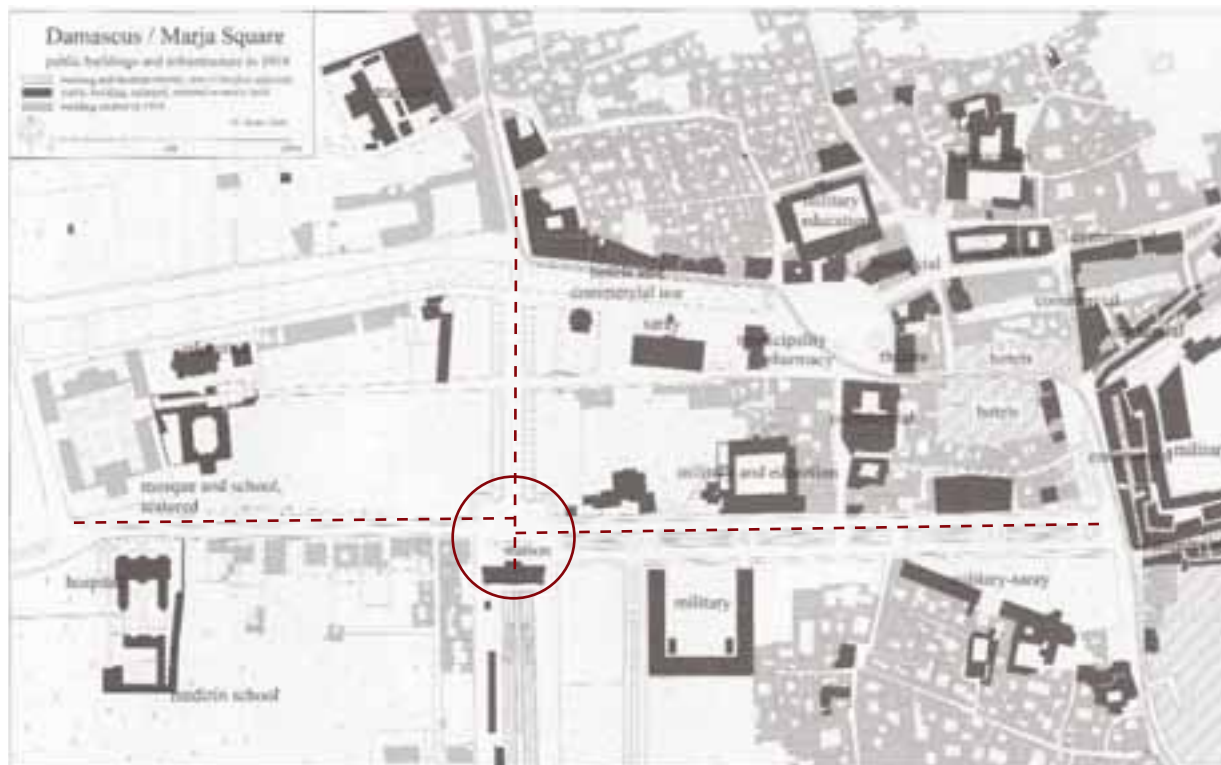
The most famous monument is the Hejaz Train Station. In 1913 it was opened as the starting point of the line Damascus to Medina.



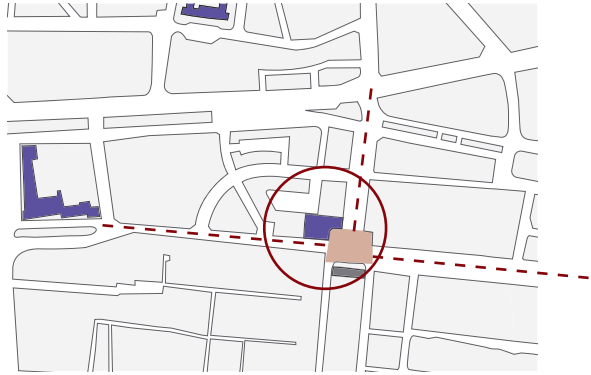


Ottoman legacy: public buildings and infrastructure at the Marja Square in 1918

Weber, Stefan, (2009) *Damascus, Ottoman Modernity and Urban Transformation (1808-1918)*. Proceedings of the Danish Institute Damascus, 2 vols. Aarhus.

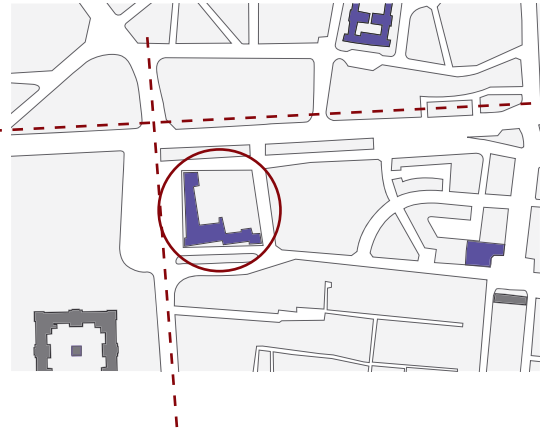


During the French Mandate, Marjeh Square kept its function as an infrastructural center. It was the place for a consecutive development of new Institutions and Monuments, such as the Police building (1922), the land registry office (1932), the place of business of the Bank Surya wa Lubnan al-Kabir (1932) and the big Orient-Palace Hotel (1936, opposite the Hedjaz-Station). With the construction of the main building of the university, a real educational center was built in 1929. The new construction of the National Museum (1933) and the racecourse already accounted for a French quality of life in the early years of the mandate.



National Museum of Damascus

The museum has one of the biggest collections of exhibits in Syria. The most popular part of the museum is the Dura-Europos synagogue which dates back to the 2nd century and was reconstructed there. Collection of exhibits began in 1919, and the current building (planned by Michel Écochard) was constructed in 1936 by, with wings being added in 1956 and 1975. The north façade incorporates the transplanted gateway of Qasr al-Heir al-Gharbi, a desert castle near Palmyra. The National Museum of Damascus lies in the West of the City, between the University of Damascus and the Tekkiye Mosque Complex.





2) FRENCH APPROPRIATION - MILITARY CASERNE AND DECORATION

“L'Orient Palace” Hijaz Station



Aerial view 1920's: military caserne (still in late Ottoman style) source: Institut français du Proche-Orient, Damascus, Abou Roumaneh

Little mosque in the centre

Entrance before French renewing



French embellishment:
same programm but a
new facade in French
style: pilaster, balustrades,
pillars and balkony over
the entrance.

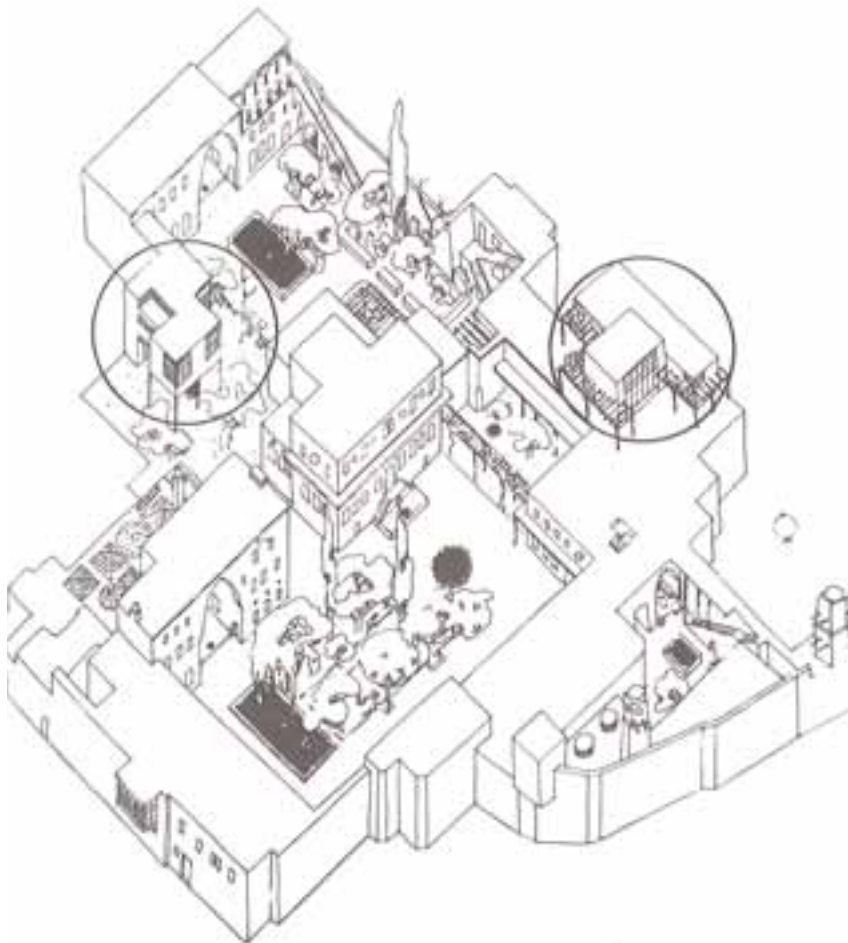
The Ottoman mosque
in the centre of the
court is still in its origi-
nal condition





3) RESTORATION - AZEM PALACE

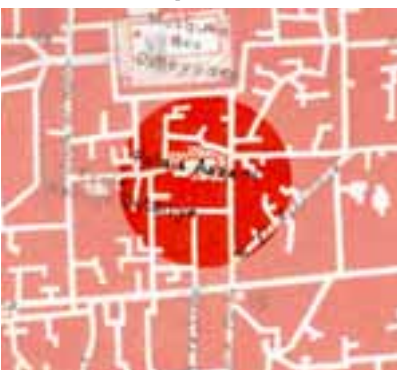
A RESTORATION BY M.ÉCOCHARD UNTIL 1946



1930's – still called “Palais Aazem” (ruin of the late Ottoman palace)

1942 – the new “Institut Français” (restored and expanded by Écochard)

1968 – national folk museum of Syria, Écochard provides in his masterplan of 1968 a huge public square as a parking lot in the south of the museum



1930's - SURVEY

1942 - SURVEY

1968 - PROPOSAL

The new "Institut Français" in 1941 – Restored and expanded by Michel Écochard; encircled the two modern additions.

The purpose in restoring the palace was twofold. 1) There was the need simply to preserve, restore, and reconstruct one of the masterpieces of Islamic architecture.

2) The French wanted the palace to use it as an Institute. (look at the isometric left)

In 1922 the French government bought the haremlik (the largest and central court of the former Ottoman palace) for 4000 gold liras.

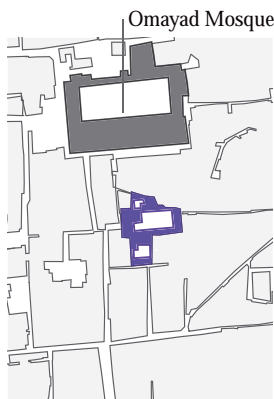
In 1925 the entire palace was extensively damaged when the French shelled the old quarter of Damascus to quell the Syrian uprising against their rule (look also at the Hariqa topic). The qa' a (main reception room) and the baths of the se-lamlik were set on fire, its roof burned and the upper parts of its walls destroyed.

When hostilities ceased, the French set about reconstructing the haremlik subject to certain limi-

tations, these were restored exactly as they had been. The limitations included a lack of evidence concerning the original form of the building and a scarcity of both the right materials and workmen with the relevant skills. It was therefore necessary to accept a modified and less ornate reconstruction.

In 1930 the French government gave its buildings in the palace to the newly set up French Institute. A new house for the institute's director was commissioned within the grounds and was built in a relatively empty area and set back in a position where it was hardly visible from the latter. The design by Michel Écochard, was uncompromisingly modern and the house was constructed of concrete. By utilizing the original materials and piasters for the infilling of the concrete work, however, the building blended into its eighteenth-century setting.

The institute was evacuated from the premises after Syrian independence.



2009 - SURVEY





4) ISOLATING MONUMENTS - OMayAD MOSQUE

FRENCH ATTITUDE TO THE CENTRE OF DAMASCUS



DeGeorge, Gérard (2004): „The end of the Ottoman empire and the pangs of Westernization“. Damascus; Flammrion, Paris

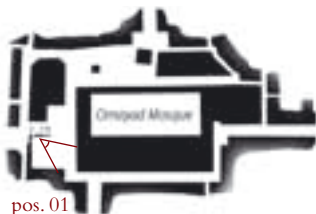




4) ISOLATING MONUMENTS - OMAYAD MOSQUE

FRENCH ATTITUDE TO THE CENTRE OF DAMASCUS

The idea of stepwise isolating the Omayyad Mosque is documented in Écochards work from 1968. Today the Mosque has two bigger squares in front of the north and west facade. Maybe the idea of an open space in the city as part of the Mosque lost a bit its stringency.



pos. 01



pos. 01

1930'S - PROPOSAL

First French master plan for Damascus and surroundings: The Danger Plan, developed between 1925 and 1937. A recognizable huge roundabout around the Omayyad Mosque.



1937 - SURVEY

Interesting detail if one looks closely to the plan from 1937: fine lines are connecting the end of the axis with the mosque. The Line of Sight seems to be important for the planner. (perhaps an other study on the survey plan)



1968 - PROPOSAL

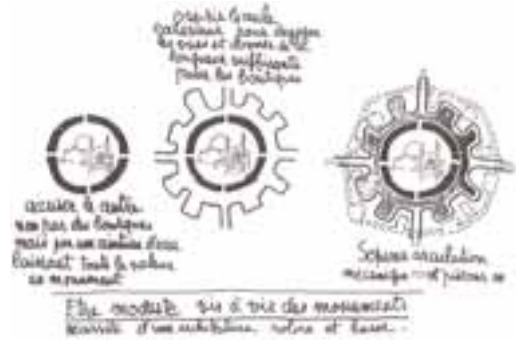
Écochard provided 1968 in his master plan a car-friendly Old Town. The roundabout by Danger is disappeared but parking lots allow car-friendly access to most of the monuments in the Old Town, specially to the Omayyad Mosque.





4.1) REALIZED ROUNDABOUT - IMAM REZA SHRINE

MASHHAD, IRAN - PLANNED BY ÉCOCHARD



First sketches by Michel Écochard: stepwise isolating of the Imam Reza Shrine. Around 1970

Sourdel, Dominique (1985): REVUE DES ETUDES ISLAMIQUES. GEUTHNER, Paris

First project overlayed on top of existing fabric. Dark circle shows the planned area of destruction.

Sourdel, Dominique (1985): REVUE DES ETUDES ISLAMIQUES. GEUTHNER, Paris



First realized step: the monument is isolated in a perfect circle, the area is clear for new construction

Sourdel, Dominique (1985): REVUE DES ETUDES ISLAMIQUES. GEUTHNER, Paris



Current satellite picture of Mashad shows an extended and covered roundabout.

Source: google earth. Date of picture : 12.06.2009. Download picture: 14.11.2009.



Aerial view (1970's -80's) The circle around the monument is filled with new block structure. The ring road became a treelined boulevard.

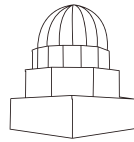
Sourdel, Dominique (1985): REVUE DES ETUDES ISLAMIQUES. GEUTHNER, Paris



5) DISLOCATION – MAISAT MOSQUE

A STORY BY HANI MUNIF, SYRIAN ARCHITECT, DAMASCUS

Moved Monuments – We have been told by a Syrian Architect (Hani Munif) that the small mosque with a red cupola had been moved from – we don't know what location – to the axial intersection of Hitten Square by the French. Because the French planned their broad new streets not in an existing structure but on the green field, they didn't have any existing monument as a landmark in the intersections. Many of these new centers remain empty until today, some have been upgraded through the dislocation of old monuments. The absence of centric Landmarks at the end of the alleys can be considered as one of the reasons why the monumental plan of R. Danger is more sensed on the plan than in its three-dimensionality.

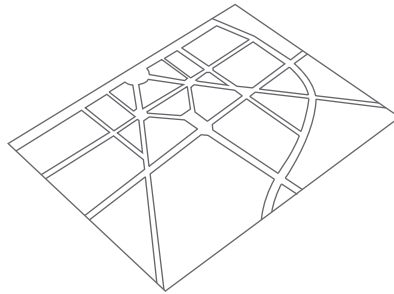


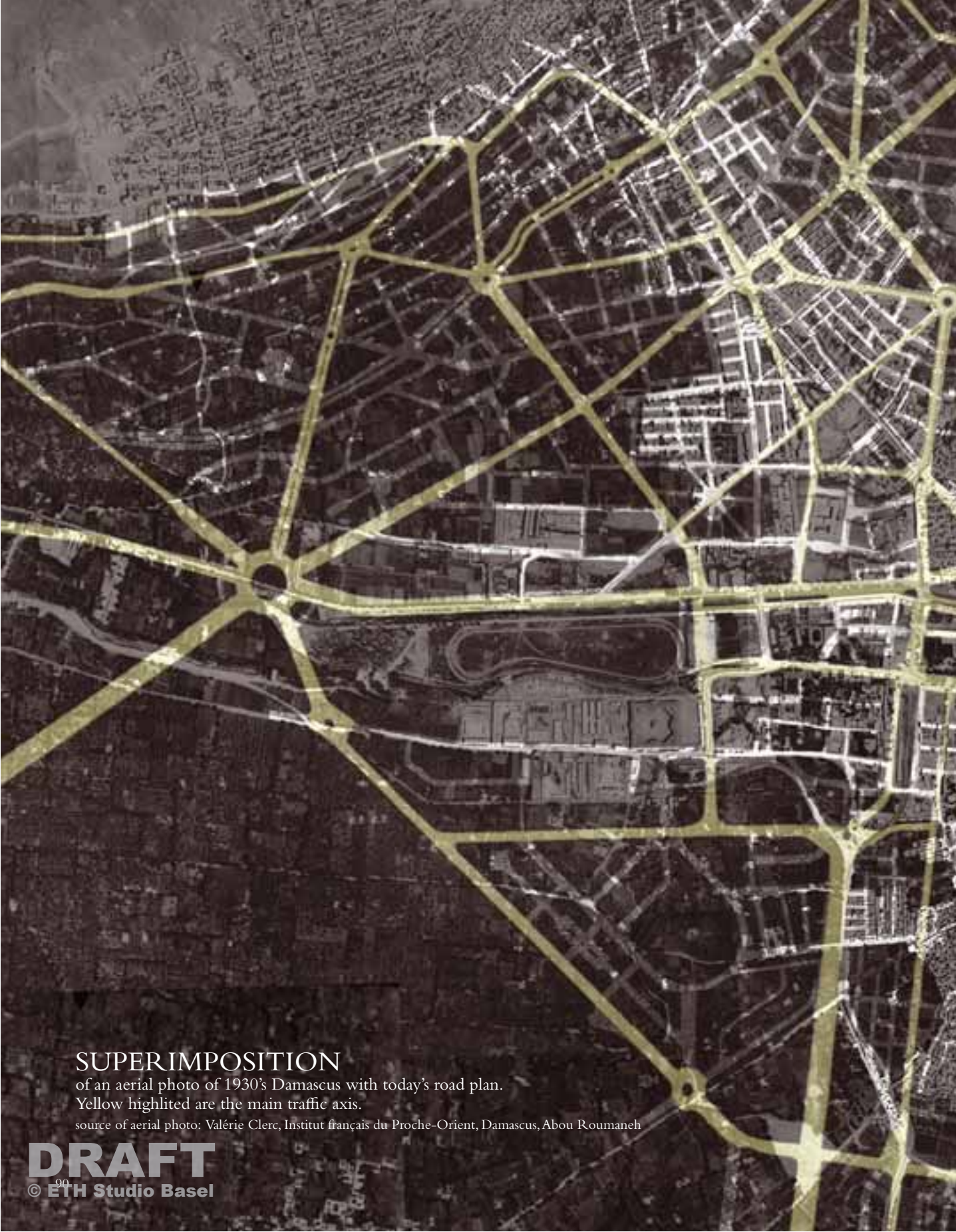




AXIS AND BOULEVARDS

CASE STUDY 3





SUPERIMPOSITION

of an aerial photo of 1930's Damascus with today's road plan.
Yellow highlighted are the main traffic axis.

source of aerial photo: Valérie Clerc, Institut français du Proche-Orient, Damascus, Abou Roumaneh

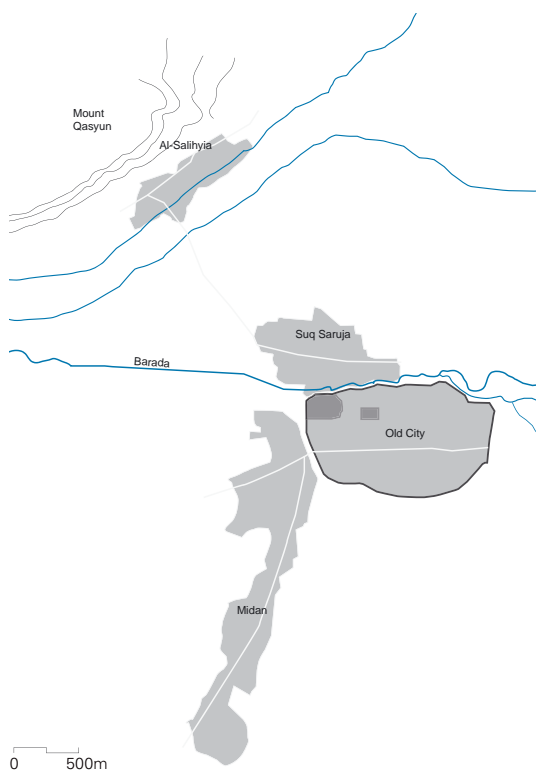
DRAFT
© ETH Studio Basel



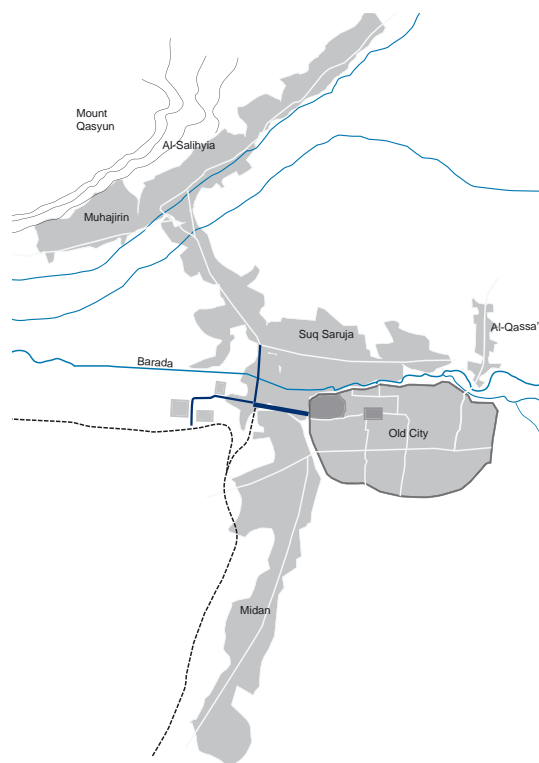


DEVELOPMENT OF URBAN AXIS

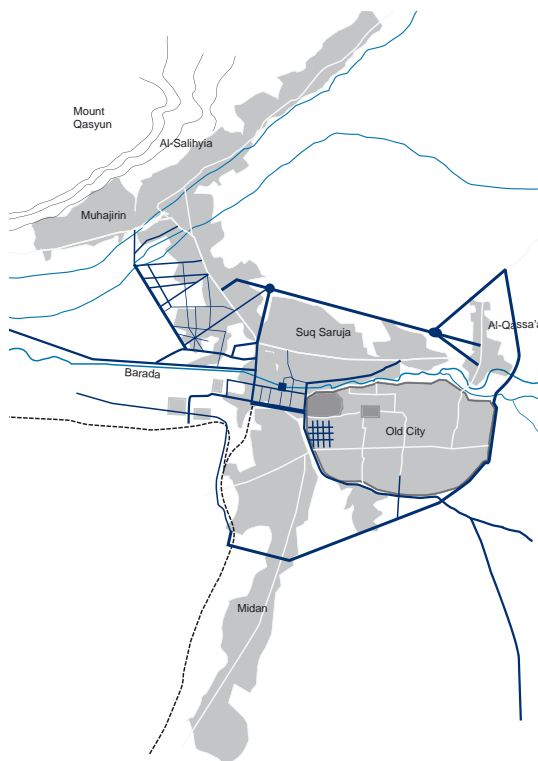
URBAN GROWTH AND NEW INFRASTRUCTURE



Damascus in the mid-19th century



Damascus at the end of the Ottoman occupation



Damascus at the end of the French occupation

The intramural city already started to grow out of its walls before the Ottoman time. During the Ottoman occupation the city faced a further extension to the northwest and the south. The former satellite Salihiye was connected to Suq Saruja and the Old City in the second half of 19th century. With upcoming new technologies and the arrival of the railway in the late Ottoman period the city extended to the west. The connecting street was built as a wide Boulevard, leading from the new Railway Station to the Citadel of the Old City.

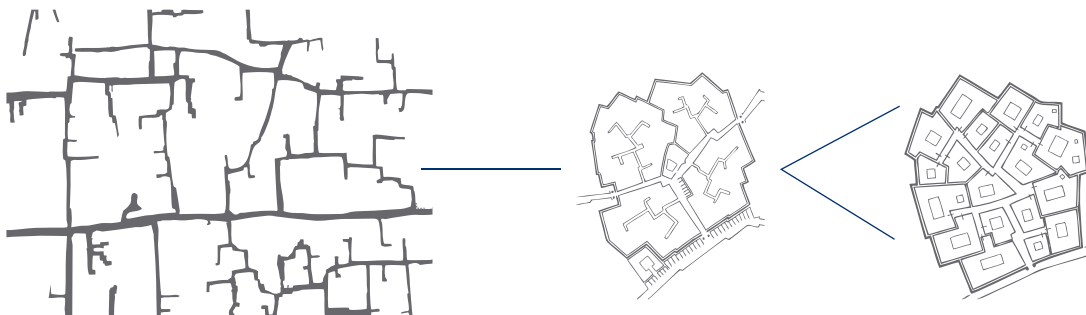
During the French Mandate, a whole new road system was built, mainly around the Old City and on the slopes to Salihiye. It was motivated both by military and residential interests. Streets were built in a Haussmannian way as thoroughfares for the troops and armored cars, allowing them to speed to any area in the Old City seen as a place where insurgents could hide. But at the same time mandatory authorities – anxious to loose control over urban growth and to save the “Ghuta” (the Damascus Oasis) – commissioned city planner R.Danger and architect M.Écochard to draw up a regulatory plan. The drawn masterplan uses the well-established system of a network structure. In contrary to the urban Grid, the Axis and Etoiles – system produces a hierarchy of places and has the aim to link every square with as many other squares as possible. But, in contrary to Haussmann’s intervention in Paris in the mid of 19th century, most of the French interventions in Damascus took place outside the existing structure.

With broad straight streets and tree-lined avenues, the French brought a piece of their own culture to Damascus, and the new districts attracted Europeans of all nations to the new areas. Also the Damascene Bourgeoisie started to abandon the Old City and moved to live near European neighbours and in buildings thought of as more comfortable, better equipped, and more “modern”. This catalysed a fast growth of the new areas and a slow deterioration of the Old City.



URBAN MORPHOLOGIES

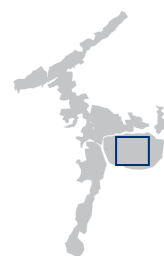
GENERIC STRUCTURE VERSUS NETWORK SYSTEM



Street structure in the Old City of Damascus

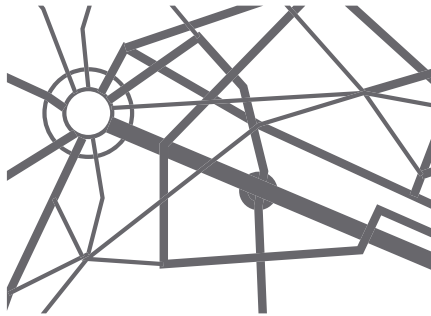
Typical structure of a residential district, composed of individually accessible cluster-units; and one cluster of courtyard houses around a dead end alleyway

source: Bianca, Stefano (2000): Urban form in the arab world – past and present. Zürich: vdf Hochschulverlag an der ETH.



Urban Morphology of the Old City of Damascus (2009)

0 200m



Structure of the transformation of Paris through Haussmann's "Grande Travaux"

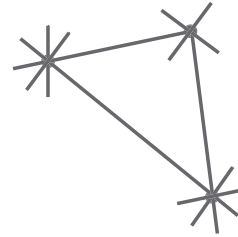


Diagram of the network system of Axis and Etoiles



Urban Morphology of the French planned area around Baghdad street (2009)

0 200m



THE DANGER-ÉCOCHARD MASTERPLAN

RESTRUCTURING THE OLD CITY AND THE LAYOUT OF THE NEW CITY



Masterplan by
R. Danger and
M. Écochard, 1936,
drawn on a city catastre,
1:5000. (junction of 4
parts)
source: Valérie Clerc, Institut
français du Proche-Orient,
Damascus, Abou Roumaneh



Danger-Écochard
Masterplan, redrawing
of the planned new
structure



INTRAMUROS CIRCULATION PLANNING

THE 1968 MASTERPLAN BY ÉCOCHARD AND BENSHOYA



Unrealised Master Plan for the walled city of Damascus by M. Écochard in 1968, proposing new roads, parking lots and demolition of a number of residential clusters for the creation of public gardens.

source: Écochard, Michel / Banshoya (1968):

Plan Directeur de Damas. Rapport Justificatif. by: La Commission Supérieure d'Urbanisme. Damascus.



Figure-ground Plan of today's Old City (2009)

Illustration of a typical Old City street

source: Arnaud, Jean-Luc (2006):
Damas: urbanisme et architecture. Arles :
Actes Sud. (p.243)



Typical Old City street
Damascus, 2009



EXTRAMUROS CIRCULATION

THE 1968 MASTERPLAN BY ÉCOCHARD AND BENSHOYA

In contrary to the intramural traffic planning, where Écochard in the 1968 masterplan proposed to widen up the Old City streets to make it accessible for cars, the districts outside the wall had to deal with an extending car usage.

His prospective survey on the traffic movement considered different scenarios of population growth until 1984.

Today's struggle with traffic issues mainly base on fast growth, missing regulations and the absence of a public transportation system. In the course of the

revolution of individual mobility in the 1950's the tramway had been removed, and up to today, only little buses and taxis are available for travelling the city without an individual vehicle.

Today, in the same manner as in Paris and many other cities, the open Boulevards are heavily used by the traffic, and the former green Extramural-districts are noisy and polluted. The Old City and especially the slopes of Salahiye seem to have less polluted air than the "modern" districts previously considered as more clean and hygienic.



Illustration of the general importance of traffic routes

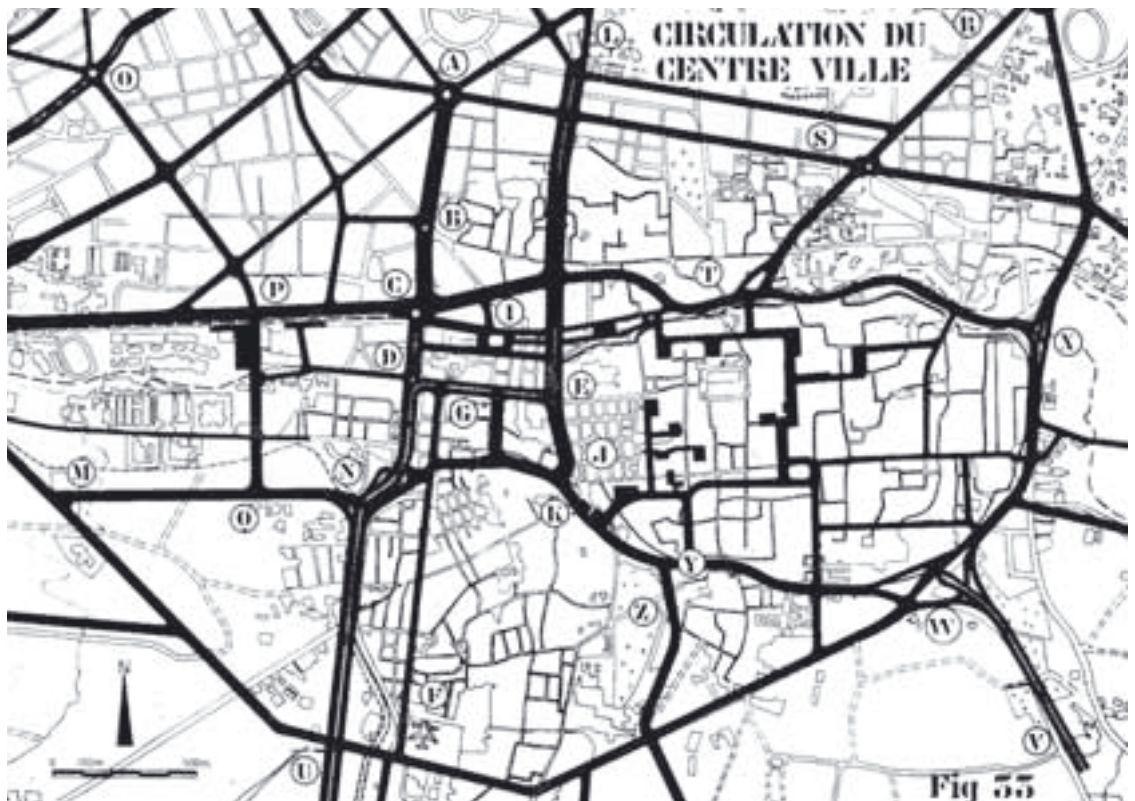
source: Écochard, Michel / Banshoya (1968):

Plan Directeur de Damas. Rapport Justificatif. by: La Commission Supérieure d'Urbanisme. Damascus.

Map of the circulation routes in the center of Damascus

source: Écochard, Michel / Banshoya (1968):

Plan Directeur de Damas. Rapport Justificatif. by: La Commission Supérieure d'Urbanisme. Damascus.





CASE STUDY LOCATIONS

Boulevard De Baghdad

Al Raees Lane

Zuheir Bin Abi Sulma Street

Ar Rawda Street

Avenue Abu Rummaneh





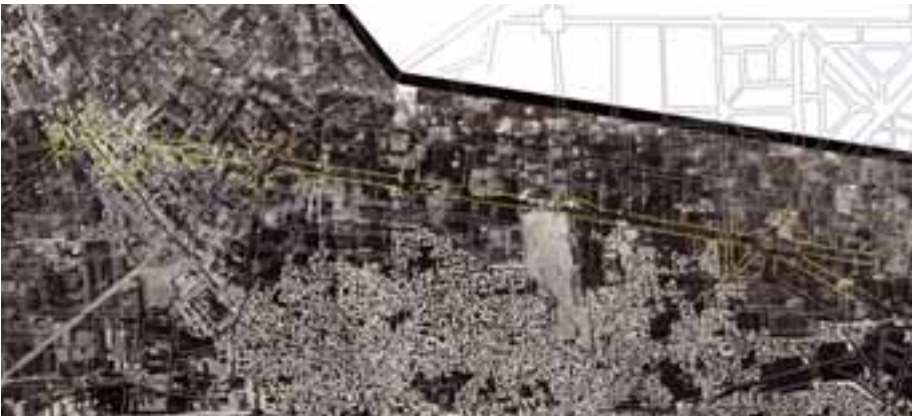
Damascus
Road map, 2009

0 100m 400m

DRAFT
© ETH Studio Basel



BOULEVARD DE BAGHDAD



Aerial photo of 1920's Damascus, with the planned Baghdad Boulevard highlighted.

source: Institut français du Proche-Orient, Damascus, Abou Roumaneh



Aerial photo of 1930's Damascus, with the tree-lined Baghdad Boulevard

source: Institut français du Proche-Orient, Damascus, Abou Roumaneh



Satellite picture, 2009

source: maps.google.com



As Sabe' Bahrat roundabout



long straight axis



Ecole de la Mission Laïque



Sycamore tree
imported from France



Historical photo of Baghdad street, view from As Sabe' Bahrat Sq. (around 1940's)
source: Dr. Qutarba, Alschhabi (1990): Damascus. History and Photos. Anuri Verlag 2.Edition (in Arabic)





BOULEVARD DE BAGHDAD



Sycamore tree



street furniture

left and bottom:
Baghdad Street, 2009



French looking building typology



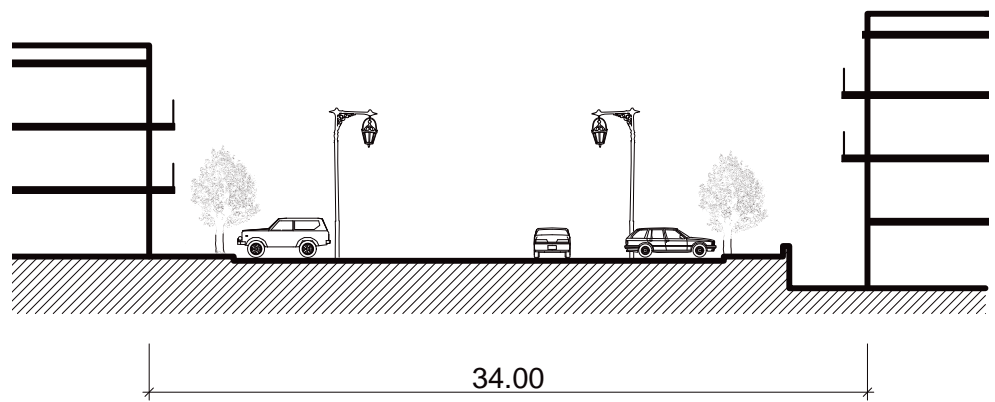
1850

1900

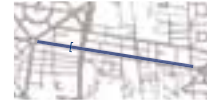
1926

1950

today



Section of Baghdad Street, 2009



small inserted greenspace

**DRAFT**
© ETH Studio Basel



AVENUE ABU RUMMANEH



Aerial photo of 1930's Damascus, with the planned Abu Rummaneh Avenue.

source: Institut français du Proche-Orient, Damascus, Abou Roumaneh



Map of Damascus in 1942, showing the newly built Abu Rummaneh Avenue.

source: Institut français du Proche-Orient, Damascus, Abou Roumaneh

1850

1900

1940

1950



Map of Damascus in 1963,
showing the settlement around Abu
Rummaneh Avenue.
source: Institut français du Proche-Orient,
Damascus, Abou Roumaneh



Satellite picture, 2009
source: maps.google.com



0 200m 400m



AVENUE ABU RUMMANEH



Historical photo of Abu Rummaneh, uphill view with Mount Qasyun in the background. (around 1940)

source: Dr. Qutarba, Alschhab (1990): Damascus. History and Photos. Anuri Verlag 2.Edition (in Arabic)

Sycamore tree



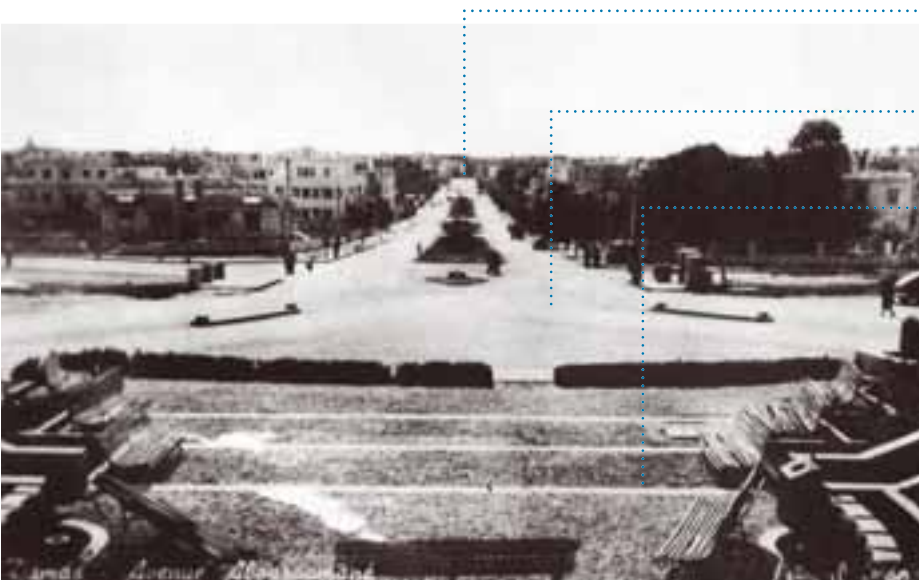
connecting axis



junction point

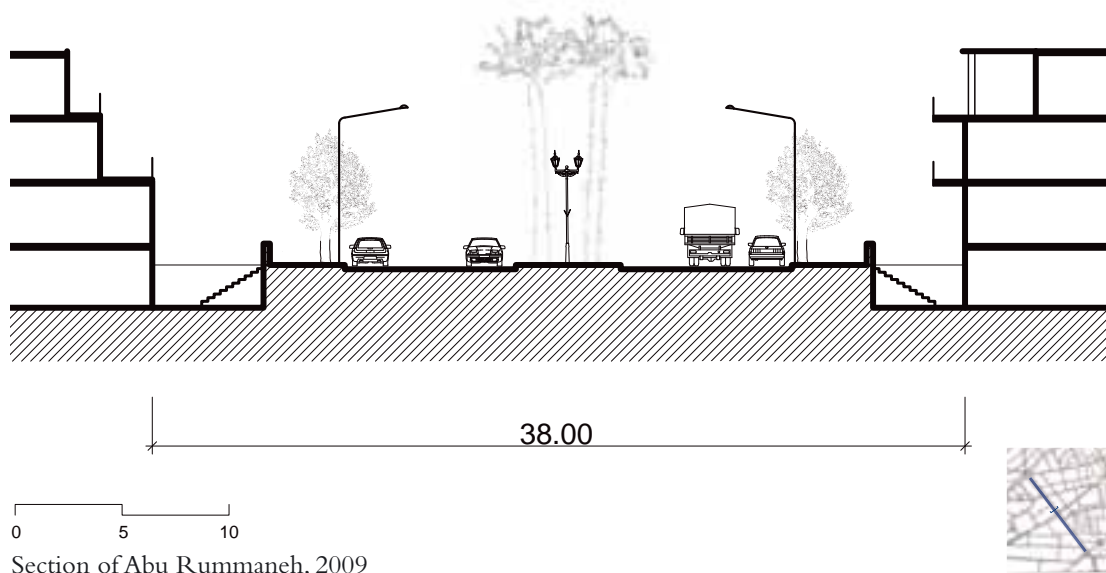


parks and
greenspaces



Historical photo of Abu Rummaneh, view from Abul 'Ala' Square. (around 1940)

source: Dr. Qutarba, Alschhab (1990): Damascus. History and Photos. Anuri Verlag 2.Edition (in Arabic)



“French”
building typology



Sycamore tree



connecting axis



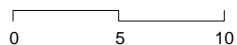
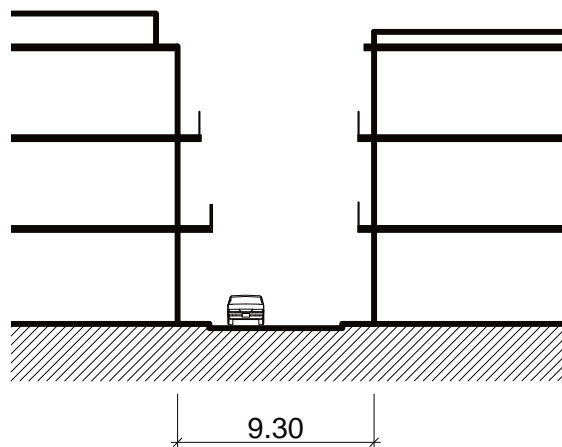
greenspace

Uphill view of Abu
Rummaneh with
Mount Qasyun in the
background. 2009

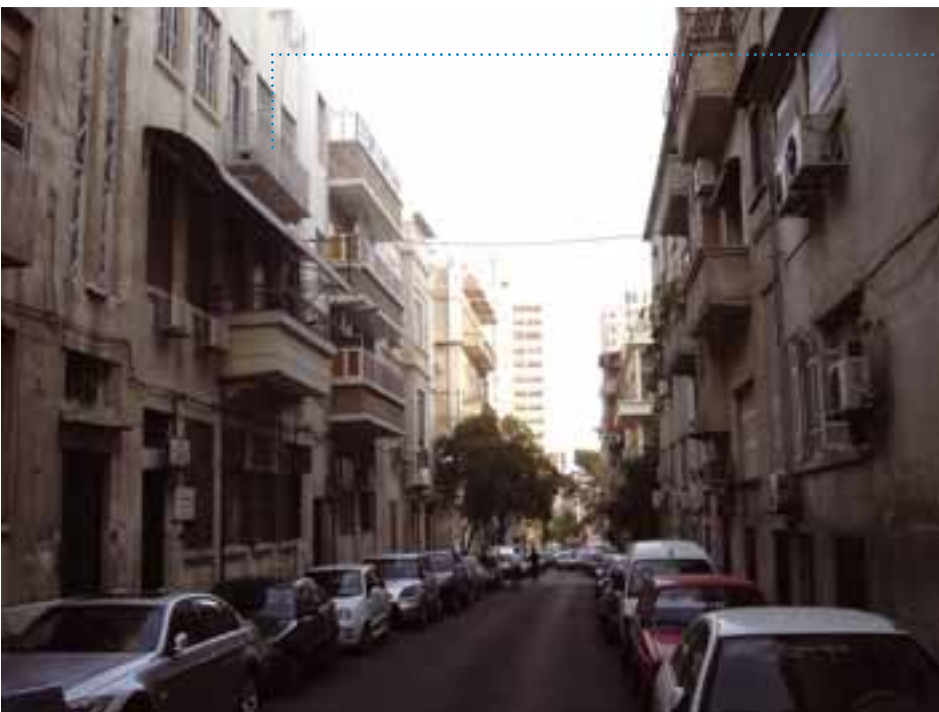
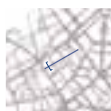




AL RAEES STREET



Section of Al Raees Street, 2009

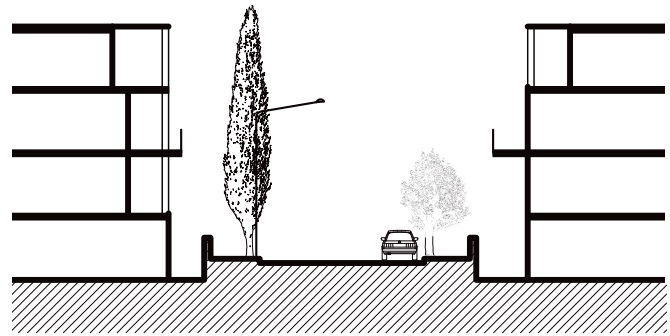


“French”
balconies



View of Al Raees
Street, 2009

AR RAWDA STREET



17.00

0 5 10

Section of Ar Rawda Street, 2009



"French"
colonial style



Sycamore tree



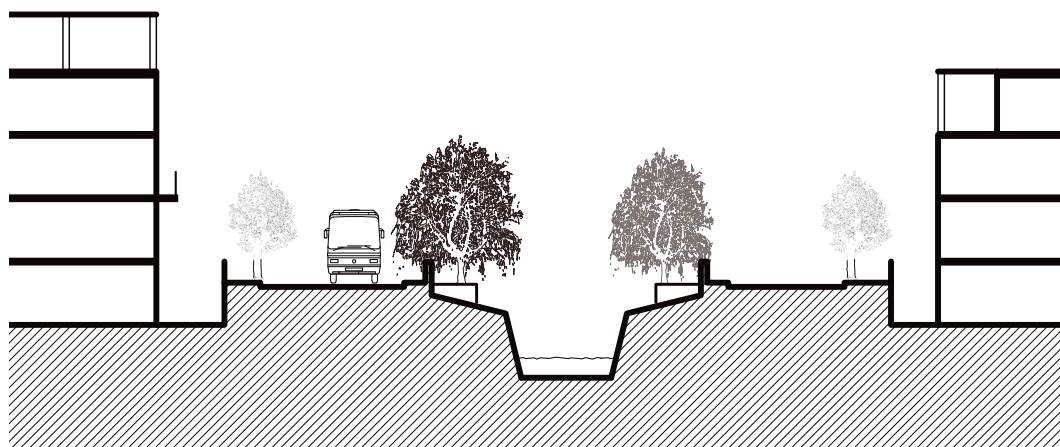
connecting
street

View of Ar Rawda
Street. 2009





ZUHEIR BIN ABI SULMA STREET



37.00

0 5 10

Section of Al Raees Street, 2009



DRAFT
© ETH Studio Basel



building typology



connecting axis



embellishment of the
surroundings



Barada
river bed



Weeping Wil-
low tree





EMBELLISHMENT:TREES



..... SYCAMORE TREE (NR. 21)

Acer monspessulanum (French Acer)

Baghdad Street, october 2009, Damascus

planted by the French between 1925 and 1946

max. dimensions: 10m high, diameter treetop: 6m



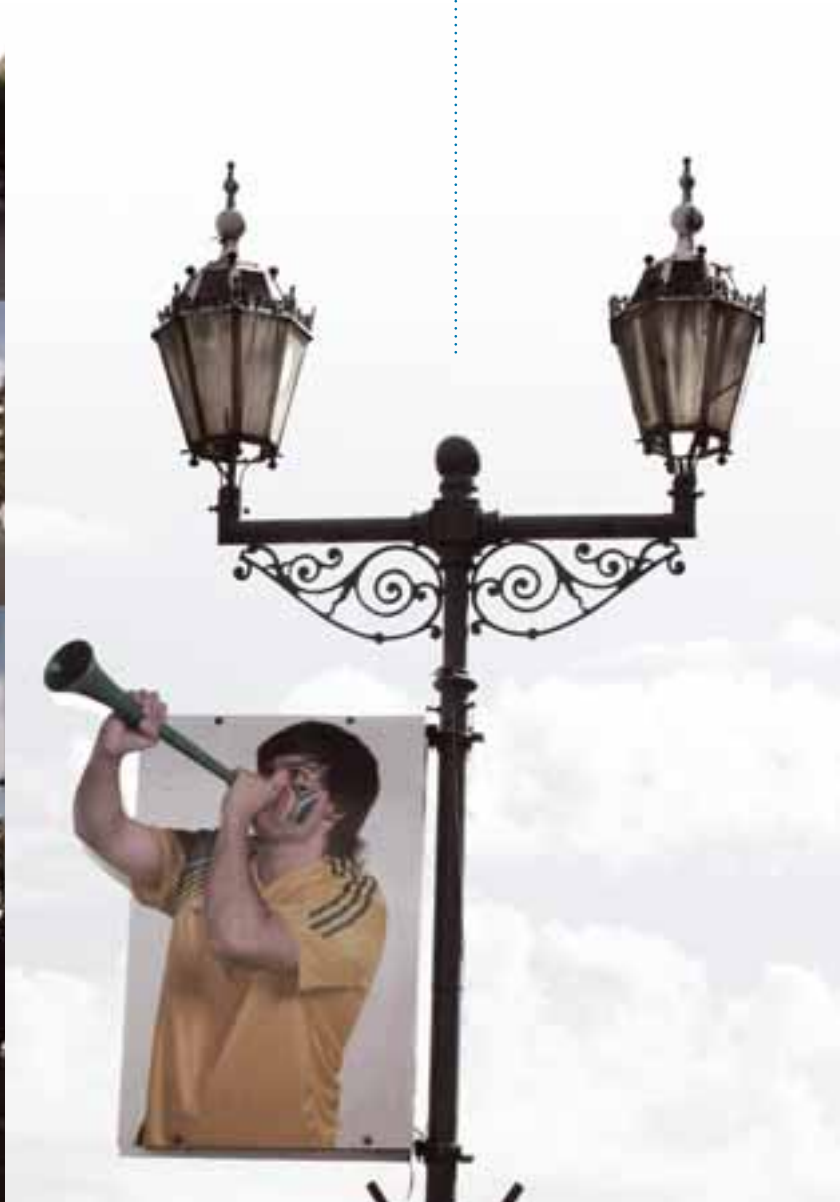


STREET FURNITURE: CANDELABRE



CANDELABRE

Characteristic street light with a French look
Abu Rummaneh (left), October 2009, Damascus
different street lights in Damascus (bottom)
probably installed after the French Mandate





THE VISUAL CONCEPT OF AXIS

AXIS LEADING TO A MONUMENT PRODUCE A VISTA AND HELP ORIENTATION IN THE CITY



minaret



fountain



greenspaces

Hariqah, Mo'aawiyah Street. Axial view from fountain (Monument of an Oasis City) to a mosques Minaret (Monument of Islam). Damascus, 2009.



Hijaz station



connecting axis



median strip

Buckled axial view from Yussuf Al' Azmeh Square to Hijaz railway station. Damascus, 2009.



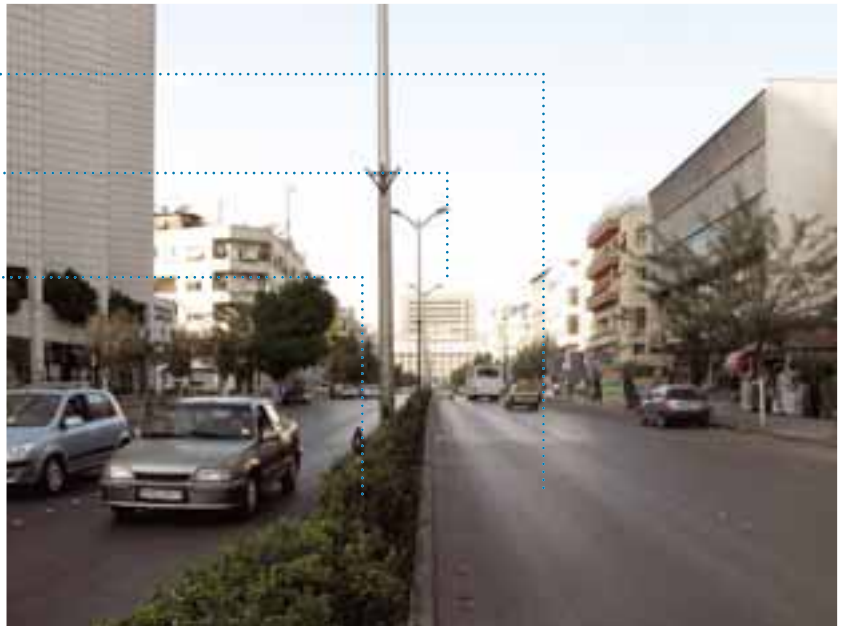
connecting axis



new monument



median strip



29 Ayyar Street, view
to a building of the
Central Bank of Syria.
Damascus, 2009.



monumental ruin



connecting axis

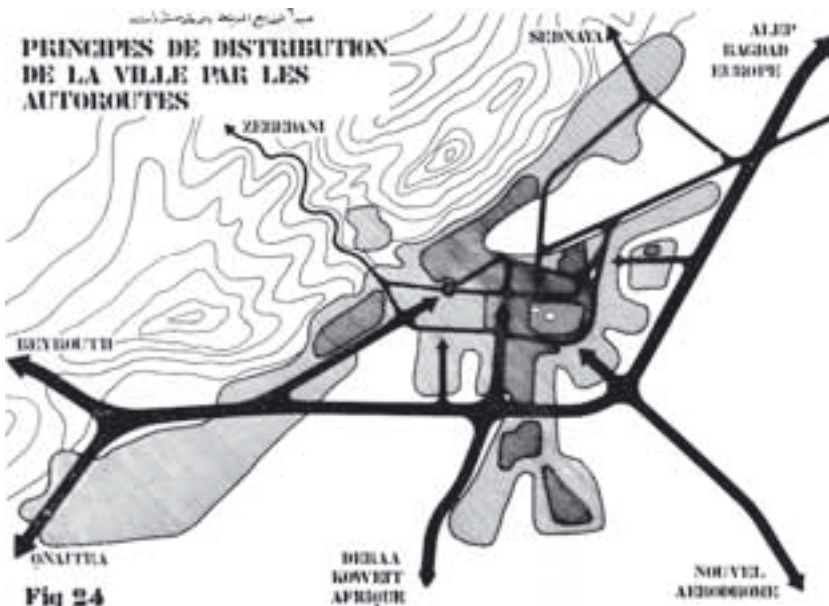
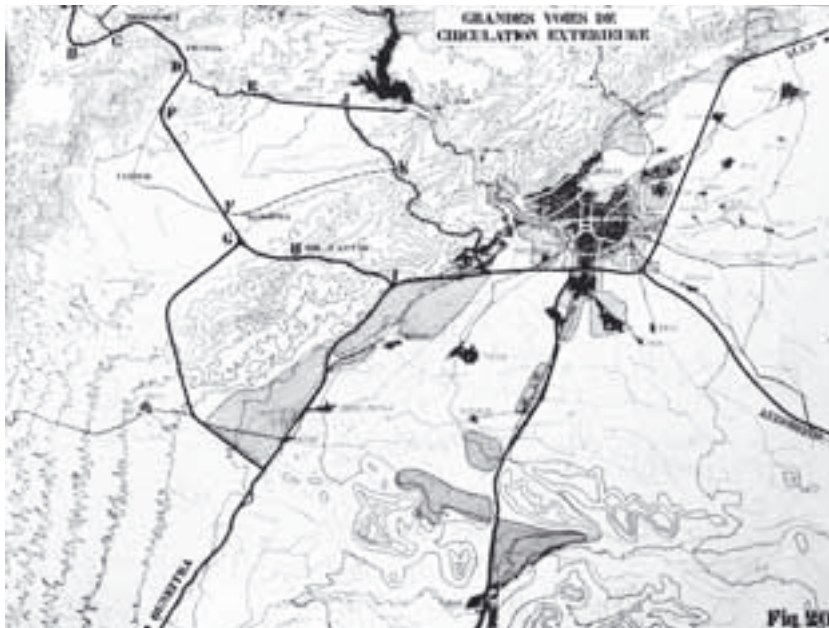


Al Azmeh Street, areal
view to an unfinished
monumental building
next to Marjeh square.
Damascus, 2009.



METROAREA CIRCULATION

THE 1968 MASTERPLAN BY ÉCOCHARD AND BENSHOYA

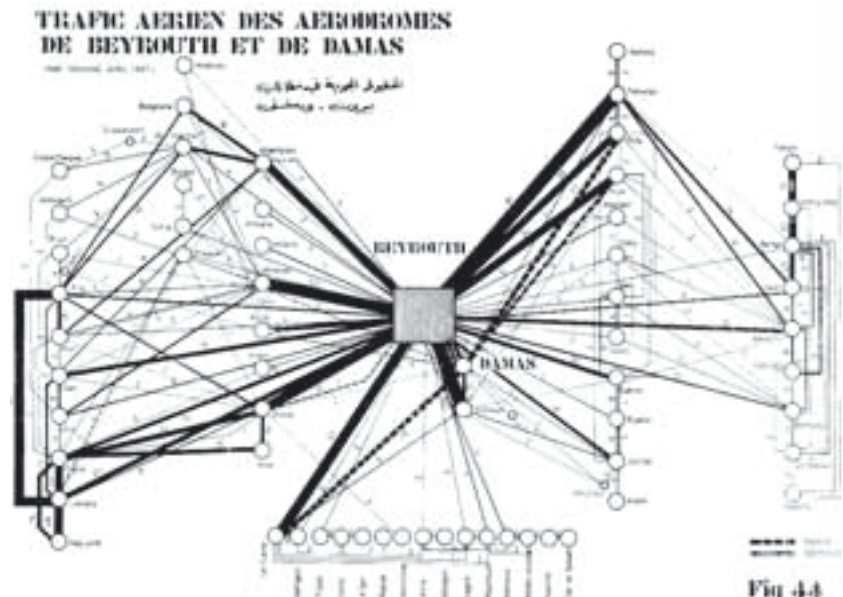


Traffic planning of Michel Écochard in 1968, analysing and forecasting traffic flows in the Metropolitan area. (top and bottom)

source: Écochard, Michel / Banshoya (1968):

Plan Directeur de Damas. Rapport Justificatif. by: La Commission Supérieure d'Urbanisme. Damascus.

CIRCULATION AT REGIONAL SCALE



(top) Traffic planning of Michel Écochard in 1968, showing the region of Damascus and the road to Beirut. (bottom) Analyze of the international aerial traffic in 1967, showing Damascus and Beirut airport connected to other cities.

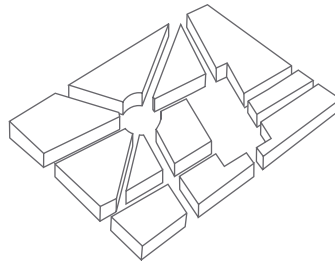
source: Écochard, Michel / Banshoya (1968):

Plan Directeur de Damas. Rapport Justificatif. by: La Commission Supérieure d'Urbanisme. Damascus.



ETOILES AND SQUARES

CASE STUDY 4





ETOILES AND SQUARES

WHAT IS INSIDE THE ROUNDABOUT?



Paris, aerial view of the "Place de l'Etoile" with the "Arc de triomphe". 1950's
source: <http://www.pcfubar.net/alconbury/recon.php>



Damascus, Marjeh Square around 1910.
source: <http://www.fustat.com/dimashq/pic3.shtml>



Damascus, As Sabe' Bahrat Square, in 2009.

In Haussmannian Paris, the network of axis mainly connected different Monuments, located in the center of big roundabouts.

The first bigger square in the developing New City of Damascus was Marjeh Square, built during the late Ottoman time, covering the Barada River. In the center of the square, a symbol of the arriving new technologies was placed, the Telegraph's column.

In 1936, the French planner R. Danger drew in his Masterplan a whole set of new squares around the Old City and in the new areas. But as they were built on the green field, they did not contain any monument. In today's Damascus, most of the bigger squares contain fountains and surrounding green spaces, in a sense also a monument, considering the city as an oasis in the desert.

A newer example of a large-scale roundabout planning is a cultural center in the center of Abbassid Square in the east of Damascus, planned by the local architect Sinan Hassan. It communicates its presence with a triangular-shaped roof, but mainly sits in the ground and therefore doesn't transport a monumental appearance.



Damascus, Abbassid Square roof structure, 2009.



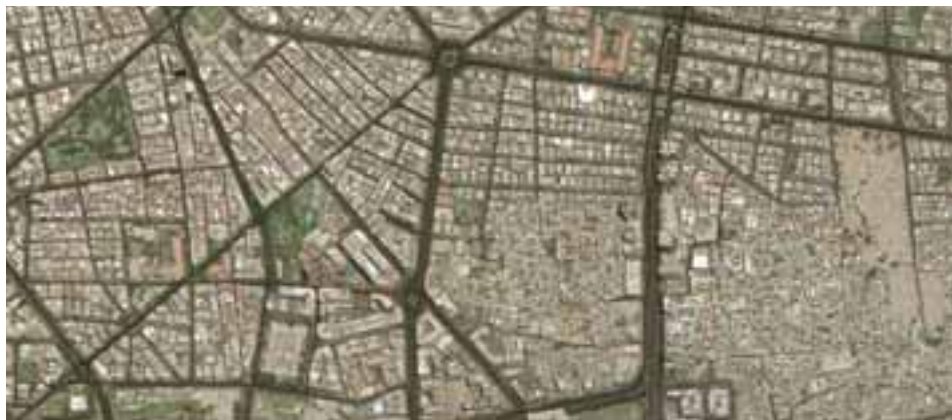
Aerial photo of 1920's Damascus,
before the big squares were built.
source: Institut français du Proche-Orient,
Damascus, Abou Roumaneh



Aerial photo of 1930's Damascus,
with As Sabe' Bahrat square and the
developing Sha'alan quarter. Super-
imposition with 1936 Danger Plan
source: Institut français du Proche-Orient,
Damascus, Abou Roumaneh



Satellite picture, 2009
source: maps.google.com



0m 200m 400m



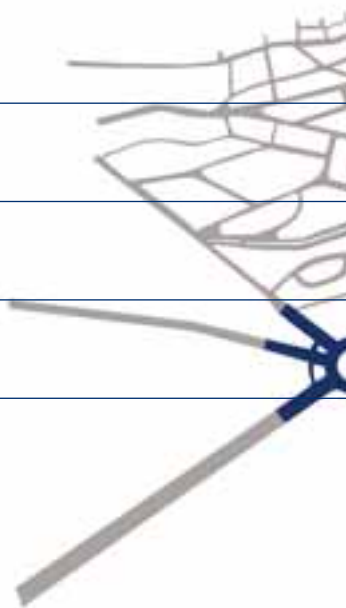
CASE STUDY LOCATIONS

Tishreen Square

At Tahrir Square

Sha'alan Etoile

Marjeh Square





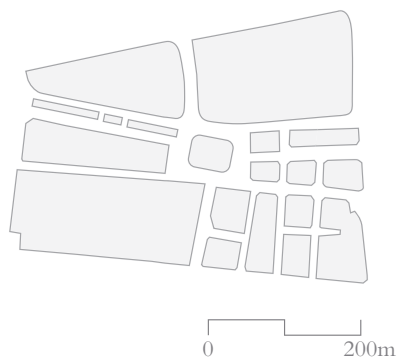
Damascus
Road map, 2009

0 100m 400m

DRAFT
© ETH Studio Basel 129



MARJEH SQUARE





Damascus, Marjeh Square in
1920's.

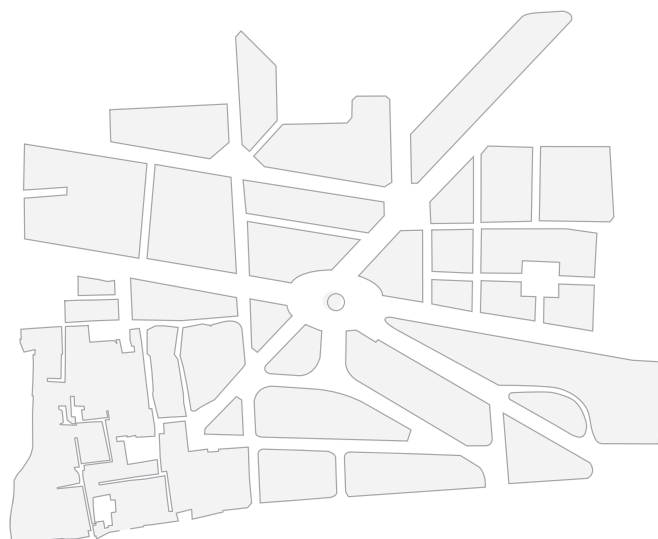
source: D. Manard,
[http://www.panoramio.com/
photo/258044](http://www.panoramio.com/photo/258044)





AT TAHRIR SQUARE

BOULEVARD DE BAGHDAD



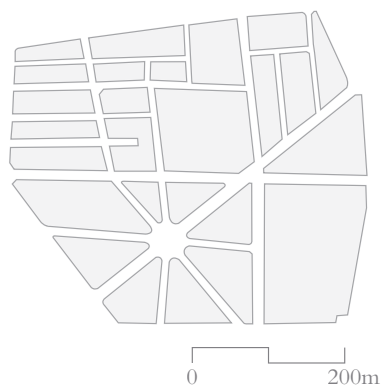
0 200m







SHA'ALAN ETOILE



Aerial view of western Damascus with the Sha'alan Etoile in the foreground.

source: Sarab Atassi, Institut
français du Proche-Orient,
Damascus,
Abou Roumaneh





TISHREEN SQUARE

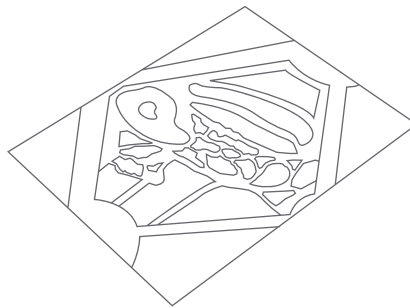






PARKS AND GREENSPACES

CASE STUDY 5





THE OASIS CITY

R. DANGER'S VISION TO PRESERVE THE OASIS CITY

The oasis city of Damascus, located at the border to the desert, has always been living from its "Ghuta", the green belt around the city, which is irrigated by the Barada River. As the city started to grow rapidly at the end of 19th century, more and more of this essential green space was sealed by new roads and buildings.

When the French started to settle down in Damascus during the Mandate, they already recognised the self-destructive potential of an uncontrolled city. From 1930, mandatory authorities – anxious to loose control over urban growth and to save the Ghuta – commissioned city planner R. Danger and architect M. Écochard to draw up a regulatory plan.

"With regard to the Ghuta – the very lungs of Damascus – its recommendations were very clear and unambiguous: to preserve and even to expand agriculture and the plantations, to limit the growth of the built-up zone and preferably to channel towards the foothills of Mount Qasiyun and away from farmland, and to put a halt to unauthorized settlement that endangered particularly the orchards to the north of the avenue of Baghdad: 'If one permits the clandestine mode of occupancy to continue', R. Danger warned, 'the gardens will disappear and with them the green belt surrounding the city, and, in relatively few years, one will be amazed to see, in their place a filthy and unsanitary shanty town forming a dangerous breeding-ground for epidemics'."¹

At the same time, the French imported a whole new setup of greenery interlacing the new districts. With their tree-lined alleys and many public city parks, they built up a nature inherent to the city, constructed for pleasure and recreation.

¹ Degeorge, Gérard: „The end of the Ottoman empire and the pangs of Westernization“, in: Damascus; Flammarion, 2004, Paris. (p.288)



Damascus, "Le Boulevard El-Nasor" 1921. The beginning of modernity in the late Ottoman time is represented through new public spaces inviting people to promenade.

source: <http://www.fustat.com/dimashq/pic3.shtml>



Damascus, Barada River, around 1920. Promenade at the river side.

source: <http://www.fustat.com/dimashq/pic3.shtml>

ENDANGERING THE OASIS

UNCONTROLLED GROWTH AND THE LIMITS OF WATER AVAILABILITY

In the second Master Plan of 1968 Michel Écochard again underlined the importance to keep the green Ghouta. Extensive growth in all directions and an overboarding usage of water resource endangers today the Ghouta as predicted by R. Danger in the 1930's.

source of basic map (b/w): Écochard, Michel / Banshoya (1968):

Plan Directeur de Damas. Rapport Justificatif. by: La Commission Supérieure d'Urbanisme. Damascus.



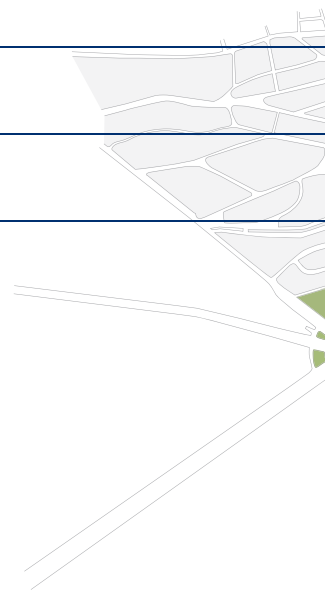


CASE STUDY LOCATIONS

Zaki Al Arsouzi Park

Zanoubia Park

Al Jahez Park





Damascus
figure-ground map, 2009
0 100m 400m

DRAFT
© ETH Studio Basel 143



MODERNITY AND RECREATION

KEY IDEAS OF GREENSPACES:

- MODERNITY
- LIVING IN THE PARK
- PUBLIC SPACE
- RECREATION, LEISURE
- REPRESENTATIVE UPPER CLASS
- CONSTRUCTED NATURE
- PROMENADES, THE FLANEUR
- EMBELLISHMENT
- ROMANTIC PLACES
- PLAYGROUND

Having public parks IN the city and not outside is relatively new for Damascus. With the French planning they brought the ideas of the Athens Charter (1933) to Damascus. The key underlying concept of the Charter was the creation of independent zones for the four 'functions': living, working, recreation, and circulation. Each of these zones are separated by a green belt and connected with axis.

In Damascus, parks (without speaking of the Ghouta) are little inserted green lungs in the new quarters. Every park which earns this name has a fence around it and has gates with guards, therefore somebody cares for it. The water consumption in this climate is questionable, every bigger park has a own water reservoir on a tower ("waterbomb").





Map of Damascus in 1942, the parks were not yet built
source: Institut français du Proche-Orient, Damascus, Abou Roumaneh



Map of Damascus in 1963, two parks are already built, a third one is shown in its outline.
source: Institut français du Proche-Orient, Damascus, Abou Roumaneh



0 200m 400m



ZAKI AL ARSOUZI PARK







ZANOUBIA PARK



0m 40m







AL JAHEZ PARK



0m 40m







RESIDENTIAL BUILDING TYPOLOGIES

CASE STUDY 6





TYPOLOGY AND MORPHOLOGY



Traditional courtyard-house



“Maison turque”



Morphology of the Old City



Morphology of Muhajirin





“Villa” – typology

source: Arnaud, Jean-Luc (2006): Damas: urbanisme et architecture. Actes Sud. Arles, France



Morphology of Abu Rummaneh



In the past 150 years, Damascus has lived through crucial changes in terms of the urban structure at a big scale and the residential unit at a family scale, touching the social structure and the way of living. The traditional typology of the Courtyard-house is well adapted to climatic, social and religious factors. In the hot and dry climate of the desert the Courtyard-house works as a natural cooling system. The introverted layout produces a protected open space, which regulates different layers of privacy.

In the late Ottoman time, the Turks imported a modification of the Courtyard-house with a different setup of room hierarchies. It was mostly used in the newly built district Muhajirin, located next to Salhiye.

With the proceeding import of modernity and the settlement of the French occupants, a new typology emerged, building an inversion of the Courtyard-house. The house was no longer arranged around a courtyard, the so called “Villas” were single-storey dwellings, entered through one stairways.

The necessity of the layout of different steps of privacy is still visible, and a central room called “The Sofa” transfers the original courtyard.

The solitaire houses were built of three to five storeys with balconies and a surrounding greenspace. Critical voices say, they are an imported model which is not adapted to the climate and the Islamic culture. Unable to keep the cool air of the night and having a lot of unprotected surfaces, those buildings easily overheat and need air-condition to stay comfortable. Furthermore, in terms of social factors, the modern typology doesn't provide the necessities of the Islam. The role of the Muslim woman has not changed as much as their residences. In 1984, only 13.9% of Muslim women were employed, and their traditional role is still mostly at home with the children.

Yet still habits of the Courtyard-house are transported to the symbols of modernity: the inside is what people care for the most, therefore the balconies remain as a hardly used adjacent room.

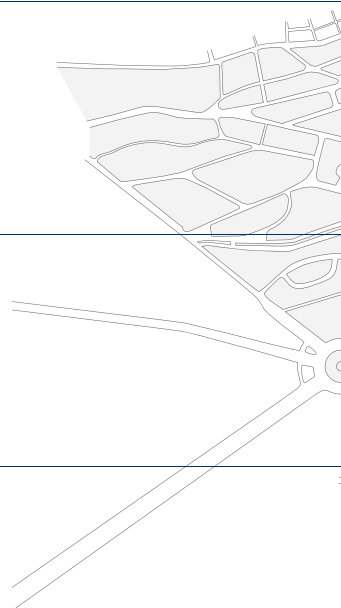


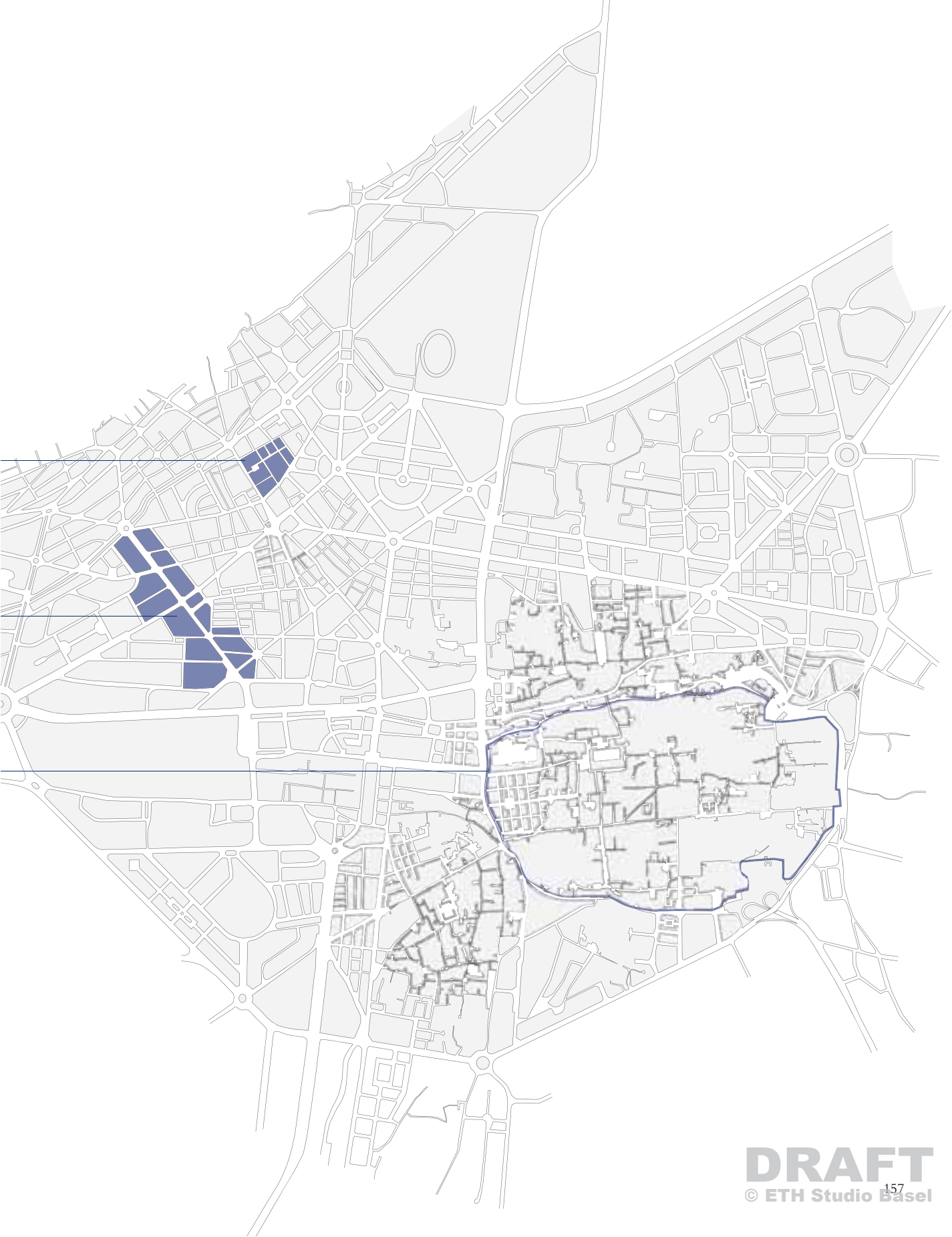
CASE STUDY LOCATIONS

Al Raees

Abu Rummaneh

Old City



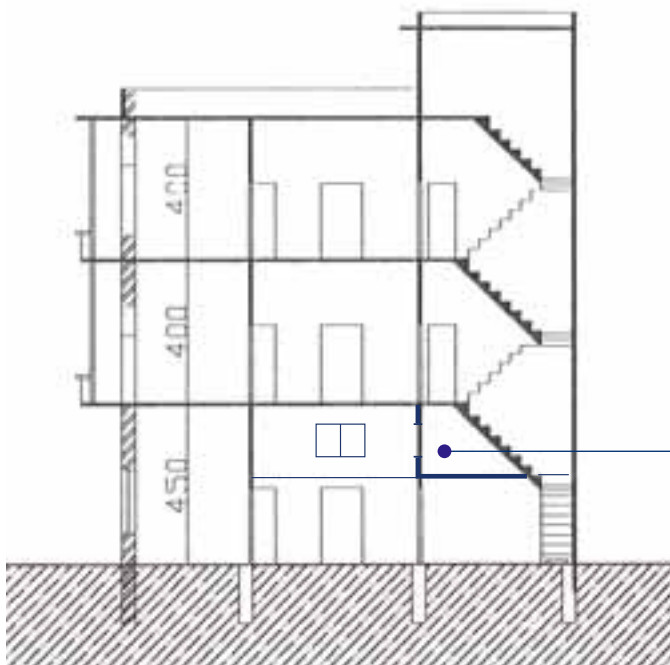




AL RAEES CASE STUDY: THE VILLA I

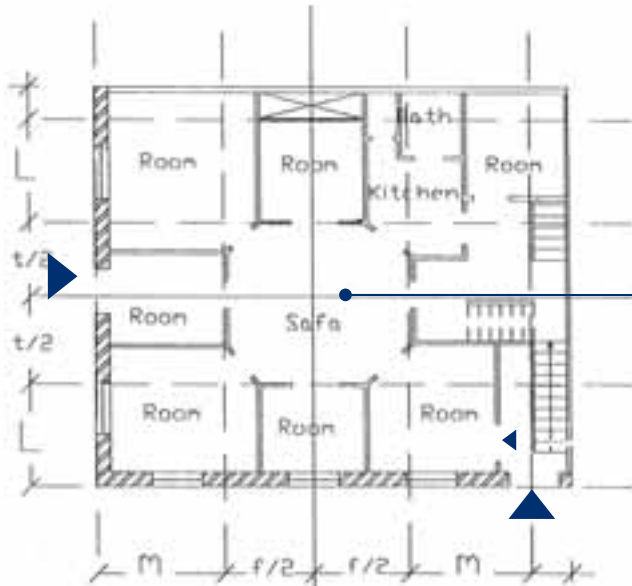


Al Raees area

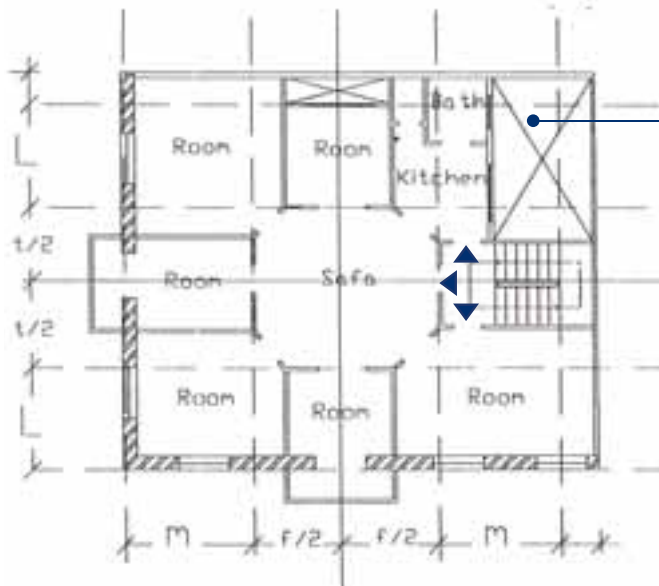


Section with mezzanine inserted





Ground Floor



Upper Floor

source of drawings: Kanawati, Sima (2000-01): Early modern architecture in the city of Damascus. Damascus University

“SOFA” TYPOLOGY

The Adaption of the traditional Courtyard-house into the neighbourhoods of the new town with their imported European housing typologies lead to the „Sofa“-House, where all the rooms are organised around a central room called Sofa, replacing the traditional courtyard.

In the shown apartment (ground floor), which has just been renovated, they inserted a mezzanine using the ceiling height of 4.5 meters in the main hall, producing low-ceilinged upper rooms.

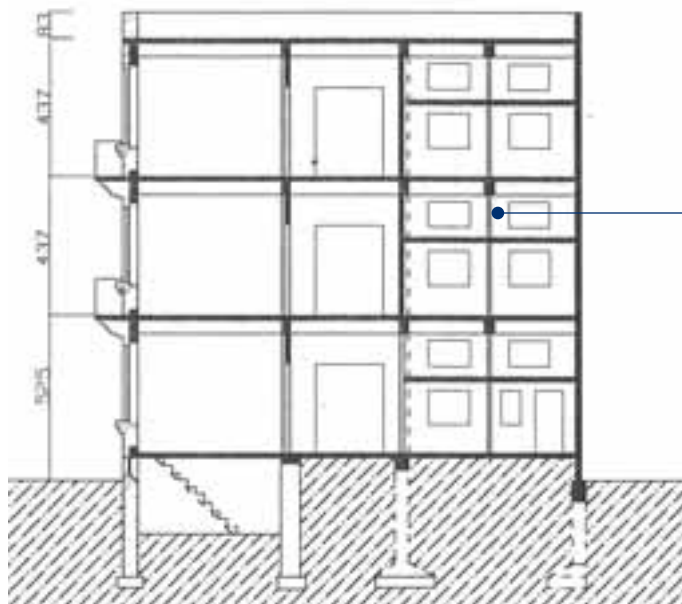
The configuration of the rooms allows to implement the traditional setting of different steps of privacy.



AL RAEES CASE STUDY: THE VILLA II



Al Raees area



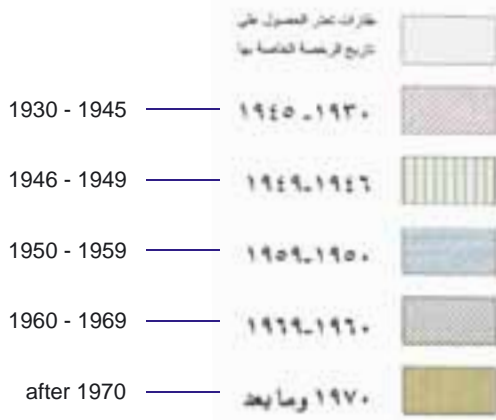
Section with mezzanine over kitchen



ABU RUMMANEH BUILDING TYPOLOGIES



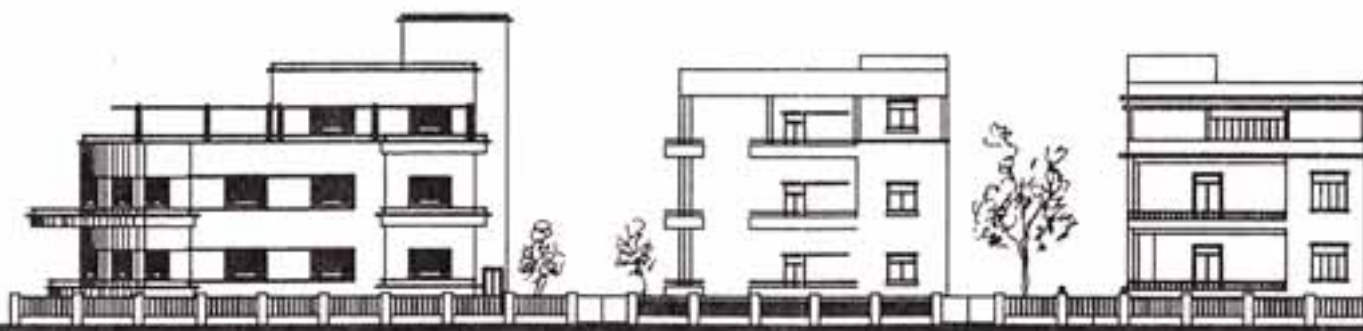
Abu Rummaneh, often considered as THE french street, was actually only built in its beginnings during the Mandate time. Most of the houses, which are designed by Syrian architects educated in Europe, have an appearance of a French colonial style, mixed with a little Bauhaus and a certain Syrian influence. Often they were built in different steps, floor by floor. Usually each floor represents an apartment house for one family – in a modern understanding of family – without grandparents and other relatives.



Ashi, Sham George (2001-02): The Architecture of Damascus in the beginning of second half of twentieth century (1945-1969) – Abu Rummaneh quarter as an example. Damascus University.



ABU RUMMANEH BUILDING TYPOLOGIES





Source of Drawings (including following double page): Ashi, Sham George (2001-02): The Architecture of Damascus in the beginning of second half of twentieth century (1945-1969) – Abu Rummaneh quarter as an example, Damascus



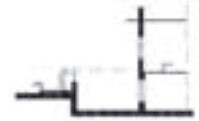
ABU RUMMANEH BUILDING TYPOLOGIES



1850

1900

1948





CONCLUSION

It could be said that the French took over a city from the Ottomans, which had already started the process of modernisation, and they continued many projects of the previous occupants.

At one point the French impact on the city development was completely different as that of Ottoman modernisation: in the approach to the Old City. Except that of the destroyed district Hariqah the intramural city of Damascus remained almost untouched during the French Mandate, although Danger's planning envisioned a major restructuring of the dense urban structure. Furthermore, even the second master plan in 1968 only happened partly in the Old City. There has always been great resistance against the western restructuring inside the city walls and the Écochard attempts even lead to a decree in 1972¹ forbidding intramural demolition or rebuilding. In contrast to the colonial city of Beirut and many others, the French interventions were deliberately adjacent to the existing city and not in the Haussmannian manner of cutting axis operating on the old structure.

Historically speaking, the French Occupation of Syria lasted a very short time, in which only little of today's "French Mandate City" was actually built. But the installation of new infrastructure in the former "Ghouta"² area and the master plan of R. Danger were a nucleus for a fast expanding city. The master plan has a lasting impact on the urban footprint and was formative for the city structure. A new city arose adjacent to the old, triggered by

a rupture with the past and eased the import of "modernity" into Damascus. The fast growth of the city, accelerated by an influx of rural populations into the city and large-scale refugee influxes, made it soon necessary to draw up a new master plan. The authorities called upon Michel Écochard, who had been involved in the Danger Plan, to further develop the vision of the French planners. The Écochard plan, which is based on the Danger Plan of 1936, is still deployed to today, and therefore leaves a French looking footprint, but most of the built structure has been built under ensuing socialist influence. Until today, about 65 percent of the Écochard Plan has been built, and it is expected that in the next 15 years the other 35 percent will be built as well. But his planning scenarios only lasted until 1984 with a maximum population of 1.5 million inhabitants, which has since a long time surpassed. Considering this growth with new arrivals of refugees, it is not surprising that the city infrastructure is overstrained and the ecological system of the Ghouta is still endangered.

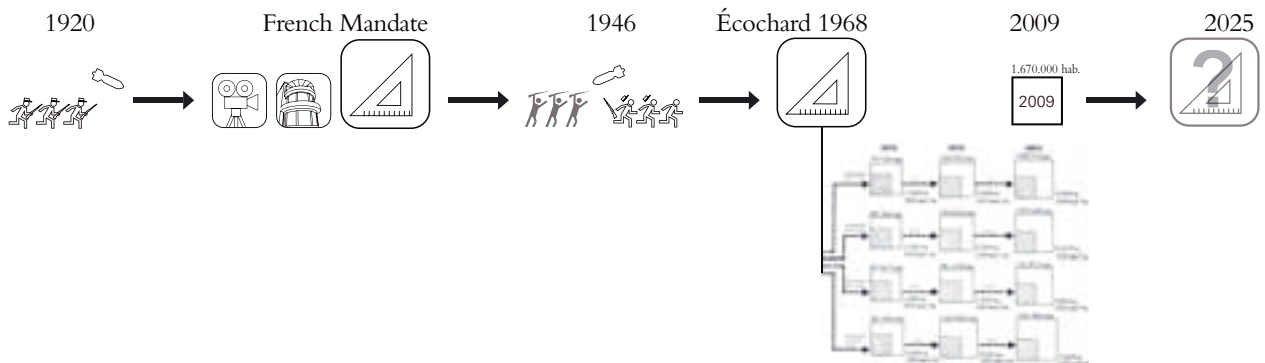
The Damascenes never really entirely accepted the French occupation and therefore in today's Damascus there are very little visible cultural influences in everyday life. But the physical footprint in the new areas outside the Old City has a lasting presence; the whole street layout with its proportions and the embellishing elements such as trees gives it a French appearance.

1 Degeorge, Gérard: „The end of the Ottoman empire and the pangs of Westernization“, in: Damascus; Flammrion, 2004, Paris. (p.292)

In 1975 the Old City was placed on the list of UNESCO world heritage sites

2 Ghouta: An expression for the Oasis. The Damascus Ghouta is a green agricultural belt surrounding the city of Damascus, separating the city from the Syrian Steppe.

WHERE DOES THE DAMASCENE URBAN PLANNING GO ?



1920 French invasion in Damascus

1925 destruction of "Hariqah"
– First urban intervention

1920–1946 The French Mandate beginning of urban planning for Damascus and surroundings

1937 Danger Plan released; creation of new institutions, new building typologies, beginning of a new lifestyle

1946 violent conflict and retreat of the French troops; independence of Syria – abolition of the French institutions and language

French lifestyle disappeared after the French left.

1960's the Syrian government called upon the French urban planner Michel Écochard to develop the old Danger Plan.
– The Écochard Plan was published in **1968** – 4 scenarios for at most 1,5Mio inhabitants in 1984.

2009 – 65 % of the French master plan is realized; 1,67Mio inhabitants and infrastructural problems.

2025 – The rest of the French master plan will be built without any solution for the water problem.

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An aerial photograph of Basel, Switzerland, showing the city's layout and the Rhine river. Two star-shaped markers are overlaid on the map: a larger one in the lower center and a smaller one in the upper right.

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Contemporary City Institute

THE MIDDLE EAST STUDIO
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DRAFT
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