



**MEZZEH**  
modern Damascus



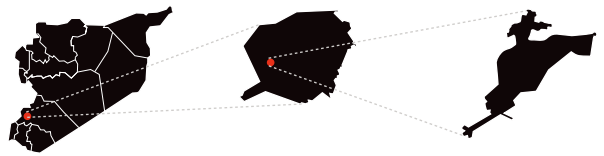
# MEZZEH

ETH Studio Basel Contemporary City Institute  
Elsa Wifstrand, Rujun Jia

Prof. Jacques Herzog  
Prof. Pierre de Meuron  
Manuel Herz  
Shadi Rahbaran  
Ying Zhou

THE MIDDLE EAST STUDIO  
Wintersemester 2009





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WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Khaled Malas, architect, Istanbul  
Hosam Jirody, architect, Damascus  
Hani Munif, architect, Damascus  
Tamara Al Olabi, student, Damascus University  
Alaa Khayat, student, Damascus University  
Tamara Saleh, student, Damascus University

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## INTRODUCTION

Although the old city of Mezzeh dates back to 6th century and some modern structures was planned and built during the French mandate, as the military airport and now closed Mezzeh prison, the real development of the now modernist suburb of Mezzeh started after Syria became independent and mainly under the socialist regime from 1958.

During the presidency of Gamal Abdul Nasser (1958-1961) in the United Arab Republic, a residential area was planned, called the "Nasser project" along Airport Road, which passes by the old Mezzeh and was one of the main roads leading to Beirut. Introducing a modernist plan from Soviet the purpose was to make social housing, to inhabit low-income young people. This project is executed in the early 1960's.

The road now officially called Hafez Mansour road, the Mezzeh highway, was planned to be used as an emergency runway during the 67' war. In the early 1970's, it is transformed to a wide automobile road. The socialist Baath government of Assad developed military housing in Mezzeh. Government facilities are gradually located. Lands are distributed and sold to encourage cooperative housings.

In the late 1970's, the expansion of university and the frequent communication between Lebanon and Syria made Mezzeh a popular area.

Today, Mezzeh is a city with mixed character. On one hand there is a planned area inhabited by high-income and middle-income groups, and on the other hand, the rural immigration and refugees keep on constructing illegal housing around the planned area.

## ABSTRACT

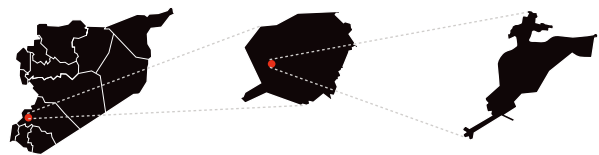
In the first step, we will briefly retrospect the urban modernization history of Damascus

In the second part, we make a detailed research on Mezzeh, showing how the Damascus modernization process has influence its urban structure, its design of architecture. We also paid special attention to how the local inhabits react to this planned environment and change the existing urban structure.

Im comparison, we would like to discuss the different modern city models in Damascus, Mezzeh, Dumar, and Berzeh.

In the end, we go back in view from Damascus. We try to elucidate the function and meaning of Mezzeh, in the modernization history of Damascus.





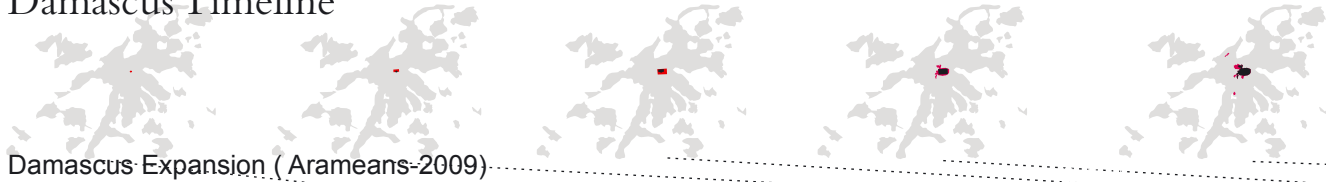


# DAMASCUS PLAN

DAMASCUS AND SYRIA TIMELINE  
ECCOCHARD AND EXECUTION

# DAMASCUS PLAN

## Damascus Timeline

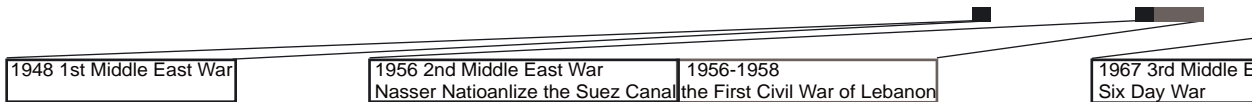


### Rise of Asad



### Damascus expansion ( after independence - today)

### Timeline of Wars



### 1516-1916 OTTOMANS

1858 Ottoman Land Code. a requirement introduced as permitment for buiding houses.

1916- 1946 Frecnh Mandate  
 in 1925, After a large nationalist insurrection, the issue of urbanism became a central question The souk in Sa-rouja, which was perceived as the headquarters of the resistance movement, was razed in order to destroy the social militant tissue.

New boulevards were implanted in its place to transform the area into what was known an 'economic-administration centre', thus the new 'cité-jardin' close to the mandate administration was controllable.

1935-36 The first Damascus master plan: Danger-Ecochard Plan.



1935-36 Danger-Ecochard Plan

The unauthorisedsd development coincided with growing Arab nationalism, and revolts against what was perceived as an illegitimate rule. It was during this era, that the first unauthorised developments began. In

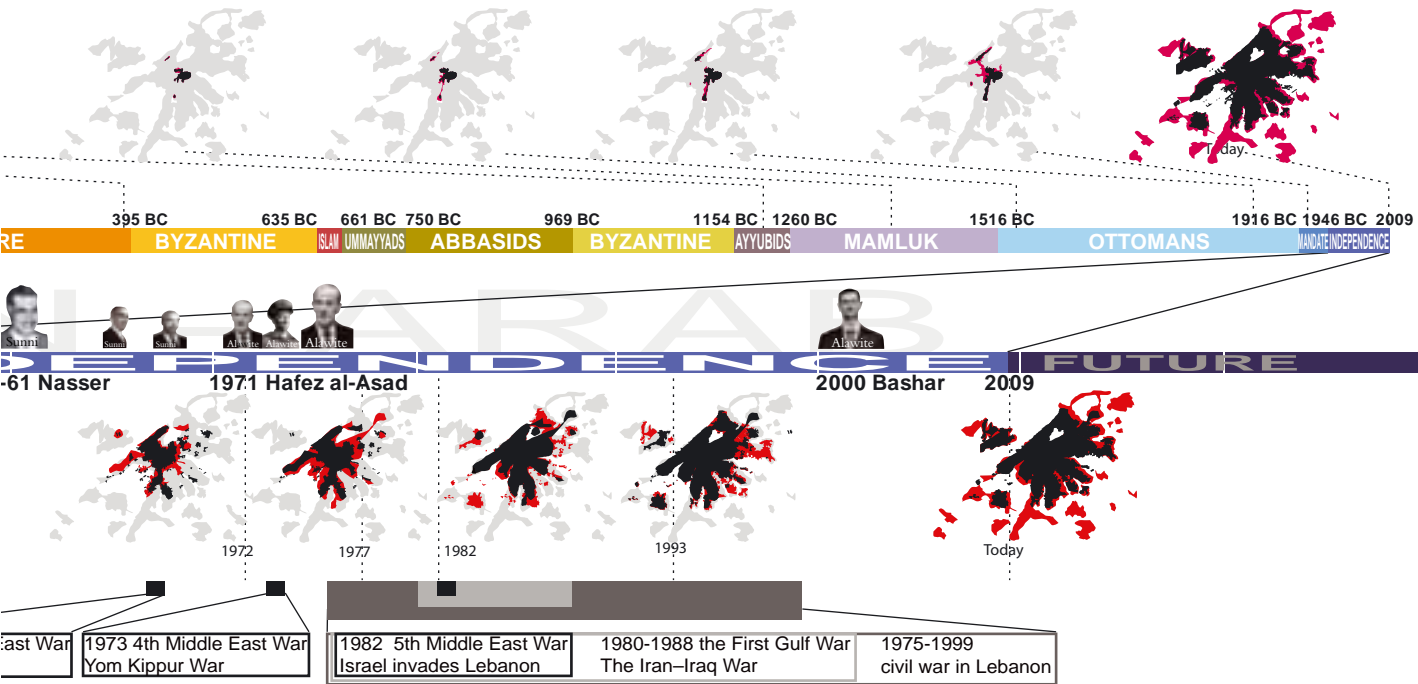
1919, 36% of houses in Damascus were built without a permit. Between 1920-1930, the city grew almost 25% – as much as it had done over 50 years previously (Fries, 2000).

With regards to land tenure, the mandate's policies further aggravated the maldistribution of land in Syria by encouraging the growth of private latifundia and facilitating the private appropriation of land to those who collaborated with the mandate. Large areas of land, previously belonging to the Sultan were "sold, leased, or given in the mid-1920s to big landlords and influential persons at low prices"

1952 almost 50% of private land was in holdings of over 100hectares, with only 13% of land held in small holdings of 10 hectares or less. Approximately 82% of the rural population was either landless or owned small land plots less than 10 hectares (IBRD, 1955).

### 1958-1961Nasser Period

Under the banner of 'Socialism',the Agrarian Reform Law No. 161 , no one person was allowed to own more than 80 hectares of irrigated land or 300 hectares of rain-fed land. Approximately 1.37 million hectares of land was to be expropriated and redistributed to landless peasants. A system of full compensation was planned, using bonds to be paid annually by the recipients over



forty years .Cooperative membership was compulsory to all those receiving land, and for small land-hold owners, contrasting against the traditionally “highly individualist spirit of the peasants in Syria” Nationalization of major enterprises, including banks and insurance companies, prohibitive taxes (up to 90% of income for high earners), and strict foreign exchange controls

These rigorous measures “were detrimental to the Syrian economy, which had a deep-rooted, free-enterprise tradition.... There followed a flight of capital out of Syria”

Between 1963 and 1970

The Ba’ath party members in control swung from left, to far-left to finally ‘liberal’ left in 1970 when Alawite Hafez Al-Assad became President  
1968 Ecochard Plan



1960’s Plot division



1968 Ecochard Plan

1971– 2000 Hafez al- Asad Period

Land reform was instated more extensively, reducing the sizes of landholdings and lengthening the time of compensation.

While the Ba’ath Party ran a predominately statist economy, not all sectors fell under state ownership, and entrepreneurs were encouraged to invest in agricultural and retail sales sectors. Furthermore, the building and construction industry was to be left in the hands of the private sector.

Given that private property was encouraged after independence, and has been the long-standing measure of wealth in Syria, the Ba’ath government did not establish a system of social housing.

As the result of the Pan-Arab ideology of Baath Party, the refugees from surrounding countries, and the rural immigrants are allowed to flux into Damascus, and create their own homes informally.

1971– 2000 Hafez al- Asad Period

In 2000, Hafez al-Asad’s son, Bashar al-Asad became new president of Syria. He tried to open up the market. Private loan for car is allowed, which result in a huge increase of the private car ownership.



**1972** July – **Strategic Arms Limitation Talks Agreement** SALT I signed

**1973** January – **Cease fire in Vietnam** – United States helps overthrow Chile government

1974 August – **President Nixon resigns**

1978 **Camp David Accords** – through negotiations led by President Carter, **Sinai returned to Egypt** in exchange for **recognition of Israel**

**Arab League expels Egypt** The Arab countries divided into a "refusal front" headed by Syria and a more moderate Arab League

**Israel invades Lebanon** Israeli forces in southern border

**Islamic Revolution in Iran** which is led by Ayatollah Khomeini, overthrow the Shah of Iran. Khomeini belief in Muslim unity and the export of Islamic revolution throughout the world. He is considered "the Islamic revival" by both Shia and Sunni scholars.

September 1980 to August 1988: **the Iran-Iraq War**

**1982** **5th Middle East War** Israel invades Lebanon a second time and lays siege to Beirut.

**PLO moves its headquarters from Beirut to Tun**

December of 1982: **The Arab summit** tried to satisfy the goal of reuniting the Arabs along with **placing the Americans** and providing support for the Palestinians. It was not particularly satisfactory to anyone.

**1985** – Mikhail Gorbachev ascends to power in Soviet Union

**1986** – Gorbachev **ends economic aid to Soviet satellites**

**1986** November – **Iran-Contra Affair revealed to public**

1987 October – Reagan and Gorbachev agree to remove all medium and short-range nuclear missiles

1989 January – **Soviet troops withdraw** from Afghanistan

1989 November – **Berlin Wall falls**

1991 Aug – **End of Soviet Union ; Cold War Ends**

**1992** **Oslo Peace Process**, **Yasser Arafat signs a peace deal with Israel** at the **White House**

**First Hamas suicide attack**

1996 **Palestinians elect Yasser Arafat as President**

1999 **Sharm el-Sheikh memorandum signed between Israel and PLO, final status of Peace talks begin**

2000 **Camp David II** – Clinton-led negotiations between Barak and Arafat breakdown, largely over the issue of **Jerusalem**

Israeli Likud leader Ariel Sharon makes **provocative visit to Temple Mount**, **Protesting Israelis**, **Arabs shot by Israeli police**

**2001** **Second Intifada**, a violent and sustained uprising, begins

2003 Saudi Crown Prince peace plan endorsed by **Arab League**, promises **recognition of Israel for ending**

2004 **US initiated war in Iraq** Occupation of Iraq begins, 2004 Sharon announces unilateral Gaza withdrawal plan and gains U.S. support. **Palestinian Authority**

**President Yasser Arafat dies**.

2005 Mahmoud Abbas elected President of the Palestinian Authority

**Second Intifada ends**

**Hamas**, an organization, **wins majority in the Palestinian Legislative Council elections**. Escalation of Israeli-Palestinian violence in Gaza and abduction of Israeli Corporal Gilad Shalit.

2007 **Meca Agreement between Hamas and Fatah**, leads to formation of Palestinian unity government in March.

**Arab League re-launches its Peace Proposal**.

2008 **May**, **President Assad announces a 25% pay rise for public sector workers to offset effects of rising food and heating oil prices**.

2009 March – Trading launches on Syria's stock exchange in sign of **gradual liberalisation of state-controlled economy**.

16 Mar 2009 – **First Lebanese Embassy Opens In Syria**

2009 June: The UN-led watchdog, the IAEA, said traces of undeclared uranium were found at a second site in Syria – a reactor in Damascus.

**1970** **Fateh al-Moudares** is a **contemporary art founder in Syria**, whose works were **created and exhibited by the Arab-Israeli War**

**1971** **1971 Nizar Qabbani (1923-1988)**, the **greatest Syrian poet of the 20th century**, whose work was transformed after the Arab-Israeli War **from romantic into political poetry**

**1970** **Faramuz**, the **leader of Faramuz's family in Lebanon, a friend of Assad** in Damascus. **Karamuz is elected as president of Lebanon**

**1970** **November 16, 1970** **Hafez al-Asad seizes power in Syria**, launching a "correction movement". He organizes the **Revolution of 1970**, a civilian, as president, and makes himself Syria's leader

**1972** **March 13, 1971** **Asad releases a new constitution for Syria** which makes the **Baath Party the ruling party** of the state and society.

**1972** **"National Progressive Front"** established, making all the other parties under the lead of **Baath Party**

**1973** **October 6, 1973** **Hafez al-Asad and Anwar al-Sadat launch the "the October War"**. Syria retieves one principal town in the Golan Heights

In 1973, Syria completed construction of the **Tabcaah Dam** on the **Euphrates River**, forming **Lake Assad**, to protect Syria against the remote possibility that it might choke off Syria's water supply in an **internal political crisis**. Thousands of people were displaced, and archeologically important villages were **destroyed**

**1973** **political play "Day at Ashraf" (The October Village)**, performed in 1974 to glorify **the Arab-Israeli War of 1973**. The play was considered a **masterpiece and a classic in modern Arabic theatre**

**1976** **May 31, 1976** The Syrian Army **enters Lebanon to end the Civil War under pleas of Lebanese Christians**, engages in war with **PLO of Yassir Arafat**

**1977** **September 1978**: **Egypt signs the Camp David Peace Agreement with Israel**, which is accepted in treason by Assad and Syria **severs diplomatic relations with Egypt**

**1980s**: As moving back shows people together in a communal experience, the Baathist regime begin to reduce the number of cinemas in Damascus from 120 to 6 in 1996

**1980** After the Islamic Revolution in Iran, **Muslim groups instigate uprisings and riots in Aleppo, Homs and Hama**. Assad begins to stress Syria's adherence to Islam.

**1980** **September - Iran-Iraq war**: Syria backs Iran, keeping territorial rivalry between Baathist leaderships in Iraq and Syria.

**1982** **February - The Sunni Arab Muslim Brotherhood took control of the city of Hama** and murdered its **Nawite** and **land officials**. Assad reacted by sending **12,000 Alawite soldiers into Hama**. **Massacred** as many as **30,000** **Sunni Arab civilians and leveled much of the town**.

**June 6, 1982 - 1st Middle East War**: Israel invades Lebanon and goes to war **against both the PLO and the Syrian Army**

**1982** **September 17, 1982** **Lebanese General Gemayel signs a peace treaty with Israel**, infuriating Hafez al-Asad, who joins ranks with rivaling Lebanese militias to bring it down. He succeeds in **forcing the May 17 Agreement**.

**1982** **December 7, 1987**: **The first intifada breaks out**. **The stone-throwers become a symbol of rebellion and Arab pride**, and are eulogized in Syria by government and public alike.

**1988**: film "Stars in Broad Daylight" by Osama Mohammed, **merciless indictments of the baathist dictatorship** it has won many international reputations, but could not be seen in Syria

**National Film Organization** manages the production of all Syrian film, only 12 movies a year.

**October 1988**: **Taiif Agreement - Establishment of special relations between Lebanon and Syria**, with a framework for the **beginning of Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon**. **Brings an end to the Lebanese Civil War**.

**October 1990**: General Aoun is defeated in Beirut by the Syrian Army, enabling the civilian leader, **Elias Hrawi (backed by Assad)** to assume his responsibilities **as President of Lebanon**

**January 1991**: the **Second Gulf War**, **Syria joins the USA** in Operation **Desert Storm**, with an international coalition created to **liberate Kuwait**

**October 1991**: **Madrid Peace Conference**, **first under auspices of the USA**, where **Syria agrees, for the first time since 1949, to have round table talks with Israel**.

**December 25, 1991**: **The USSR, Syria's strategic ally since 1966, collapses, prompting Assad to open channels with the USA**

**1996** **Asad accuses Arafat of having misled the Arab World by conducting a separate peace with Israel**.

**1996** **Summer Olympic Games**: **Asad wins first and only Olympic gold medal**.

**March 2000**: **Asad holds a meeting with US President in Geneva**, aimed at solving the **Syrian-Israeli gridlock**.

**Geneva Conference fails**, and **Asad refuses to normalize relations with Israel**. **The Golan Heights are returned to Syria**, according to the **pre-June 4, 1967** boundaries.

**May 24, 2000**: **Israel withdraws from occupied South Lebanon**. The resistance of **Hizbullah**, supported by Syria, declares victory over Israel, and this is largely attributed to **Asad's unwavering support for the Lebanese resistance since 1978**

**2000** Mar. The new government **cut taxes on new joint stock companies from 20% to 25%**.

**June 10, 2000**: **President Hafez al-Asad dies**. Assad had given **lifetime passes to his children**, the army and born **while the Sunnis were given a free rein in trade**.

**June 12-20**: **Bashar Assad, son of Hafez Assad** began a **seven-year term as Syria's 16th head of state**.

**200** **Sep 27**: **89 intellectuals published a demand for more democracy and freedom of expression**. The regime responded by **releasing 600 political prisoners**.

**2001** September: **Disruption of MPs and attempt to reform parliament**, **crushing hopes of a break with the authoritarian** past of Hafez al-Asad.

**2001** Jan 21, Syria **approved private banking and ended artificial exchange rates**.

**2001** May 6, the **1st time a pontiff prayed in a Muslim house of worship**.

**2001** November - **British PM and President Assad fail to agree on a definition of terrorism**.

**2002** April: **The UN condemns Syria, says Damascus is acquiring weapons of mass destruction**.

**2003** Oct 3: **Israeli warplanes bombed the Ein Sahab base northwest of Damascus, Hezbollah military called it an Islamic Jihad training base**.

**2004** January - **end of Assad's frosty relation between Syria and Egypt**.

**2004** **Saudi Arabia** **administration ordered economic sanctions against Syria**, **supervening terrorism**.

**2005** **Mar**: **UN Security Council** **urged Syria to withdraw its forces from Lebanon**.

**2005** **Mar**: **Saudi Arabia** **told Syria to withdraw its troops**.

**2005** **Apr 26**, **Syria ended its 28-year military domination of Lebanon**. Since 1976 15,000 Syrian troops were killed in the Lebanese civil war.

**2006** **Mar**: **Syria's parliament** **elects Bashar Assad** **as president**.

**2007** **May**: **Leading dissident Kamal Labwani and prominent political writer Michel Kilo are sentenced to a long jail terms**, after human rights lawyer Anwar al-Bunni is jailed.

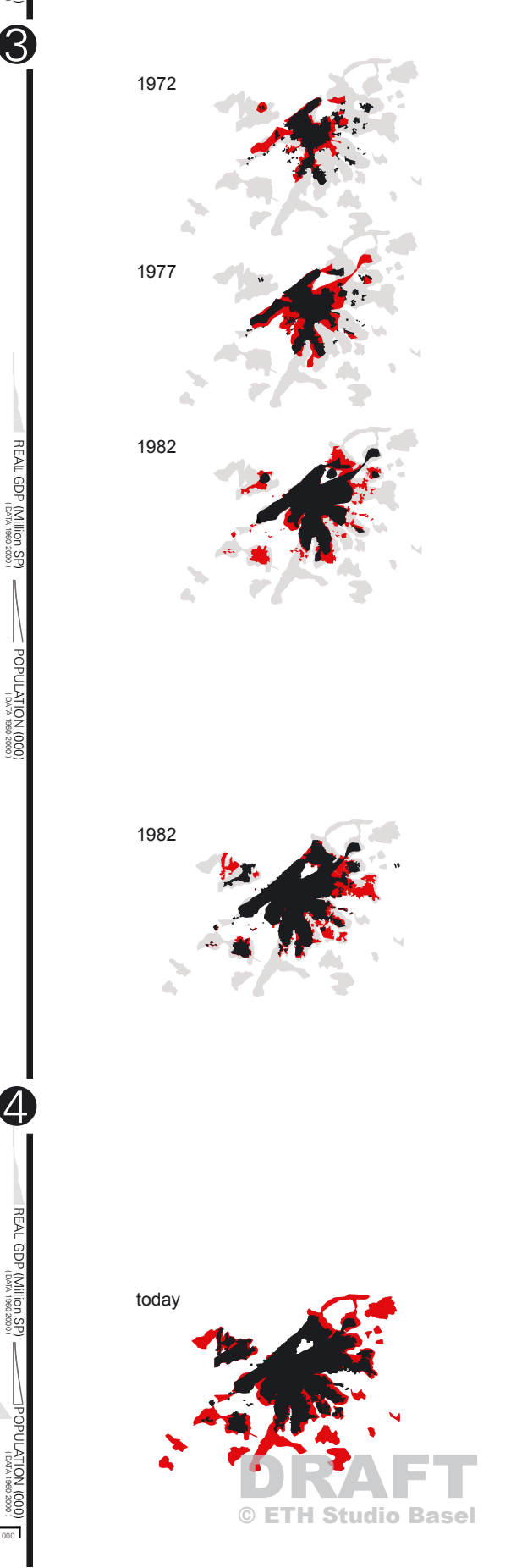
**2007** **September**: **Israel made an aerial strike against a military site in northern Syria**.

**2008** **May**: **President Assad announces a 25% pay rise for public sector workers to offset effects of rising food and heating oil prices**.

**2009** March – Trading launches on Syria's stock exchange in sign of **gradual liberalisation of state-controlled economy**.

**16 Mar 2009** – **First Lebanese Embassy Opens In Syria**

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# DAMASCUS PLAN

## Ecochard plan

### Introduction

The architect and planner Michel Ecochard (1905-1985) graduated in architecture from the Beaux Arts. He represented the modernist and functionalist approach to planning in a time of modernization.

### 1964–68 Ecochard Plan

In 1963, the Baath party took the reins and it claimed the modernization of Syria according to socialist and collectivist options.

The elaboration of the master plan of Damascus lasted 4 years (1964-1968) instead of 18 months as initially intended, mainly because the process of discussion and of approval requested long administrative stages.

In his Ecochard plan, Mezzeh is part of the central area of Damascus., extending along the mountain to southwest towards the new residential area.

### Key Point 1:

#### Demography

One of the major concerns of the master plan was the huge increase of population in the following years and the physical growth of the city.

### Key Point 2:

#### Preservation Of Oasis

The site of Damascus is an oasis at the mouth of the Barada river coming from the mountain of Qassium. The oasis was an important agricultural land adjacent to the city, and a precious landscape. Its preservation from urbanization was a major goal.

Mezzeh's boundary now is partly determined by this „green line“ (the red line in the map on the right)

### Key Point 3:

#### Direction Of Growth

The master plan recommended to extend the city along the mountain east- and westwards in order to keep the oasis untouched, and studied carefully the new neighbourhoods.

Mezzeh is designed as part of the central city, leading to the southwest new town. Although now Mezzeh is still not the central city, and the military airport locates at the position where the new town should be, it kept the tendency of the expansion along the mountain to southwest.

### Key Point 4:

#### Transport

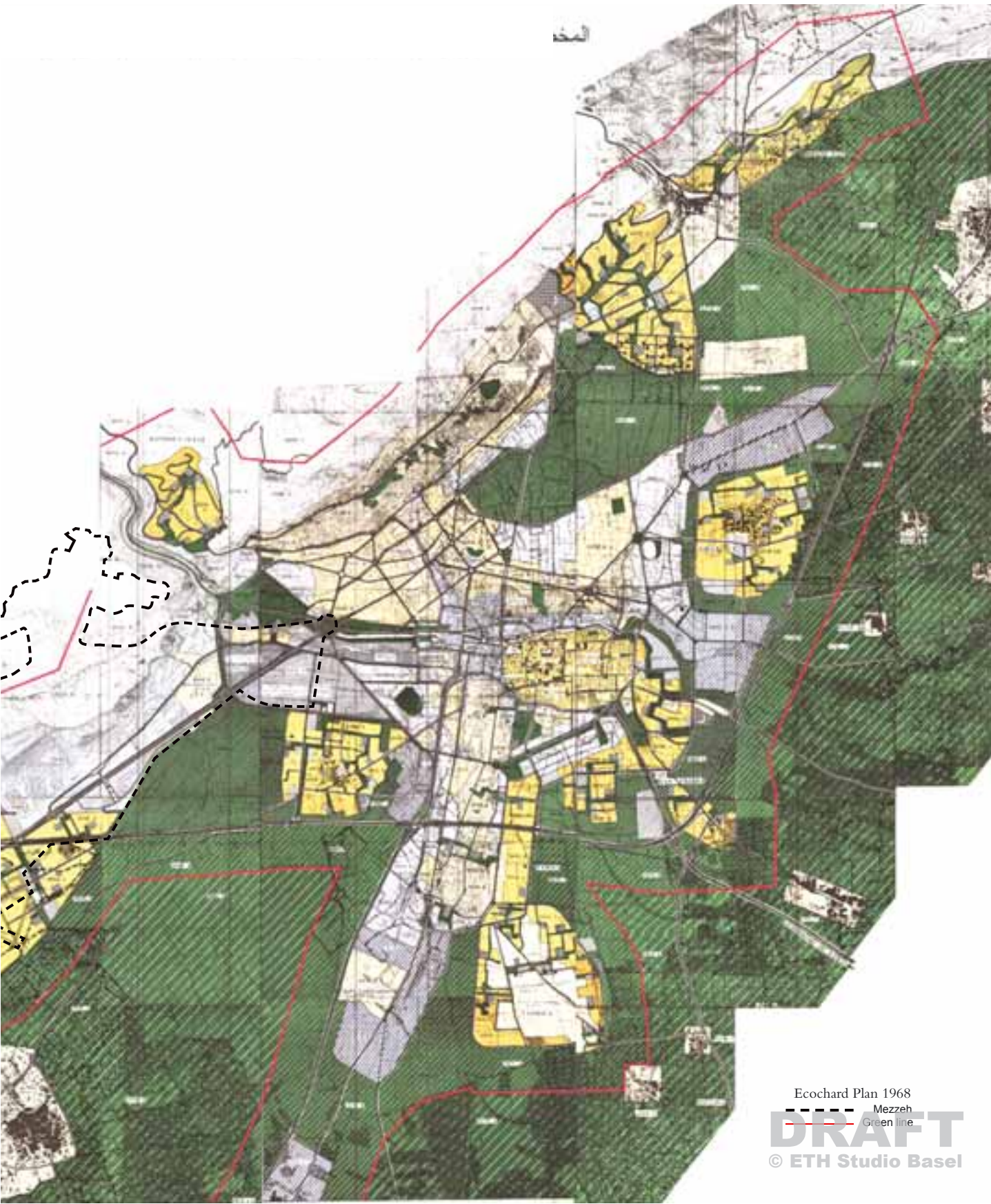
Another important goal of the master plan was the modernization of the major arteries network, with new highways toward Jordan, Lebanon and the North (Aleppo – Baghdad).

The planned road system inside the city creates a ring road around the old city and the new city. It aims to relieve pressure on the existing central axis by developing main roads throughout the city, making more areas accessible.

Mezzeh now is locating on the way towards Lebanon, and connected to the central city by the ring road, which is planned in Ecochard Plan. This convenient location made it a popular area for middle class residence.







المنزه

Ecochard Plan 1968

Mezzeh

Green line

**DRAFT**  
© ETH Studio Basel

# DAMASCUS PLAN

## Ecochard plan – Execution

After the master plan was finished, in 1967 before being officially approved in 1968, Syria experienced a new political change.

In the aftermath of the 6 days war, a triumvirat led by the baathist Salah ed Din Bitar took the power, and in 1970, he was replaced by Hafez al-Assad.

The later would impulse a major change in Syria (still lasting until now that his son has taken on) and implement a more pragmatic policy.

The new regime implemented selected parts of Ecochard's master plan that reinforced the role and the image of the capital of Syria. But they also introduced to ideas to serve new needs and new social categories in new places, thus changing the conception of the Damascus agglomeration far from what Ecochard foresaw.

### KEY POINT 1 DEMOGRAPHY

- out of control

After independence in 1946, Damascus rapidly developed as the state capital, with its population remarkably increasing from 423,000 in 1955 to 3million in 1980.

#### Reason For Change 1: Rural Urban Migration

According to World Bank Statistics, Syria has one of the highest population growth rates in the world, at 3% per annum due to increased mechanization of agriculture, and growing rural unemployment (El- Laithy & Abu-Is-mail, 2005).

#### Reason For Change 2: Concentration Effect Of Damascus As The Capital

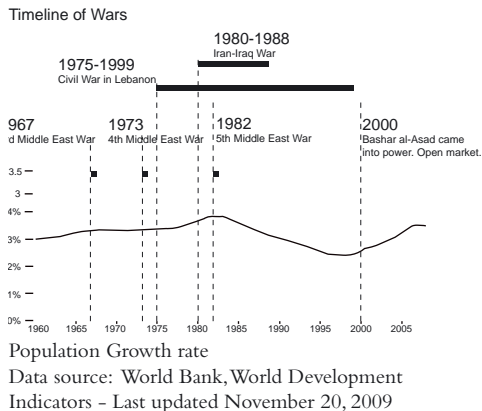
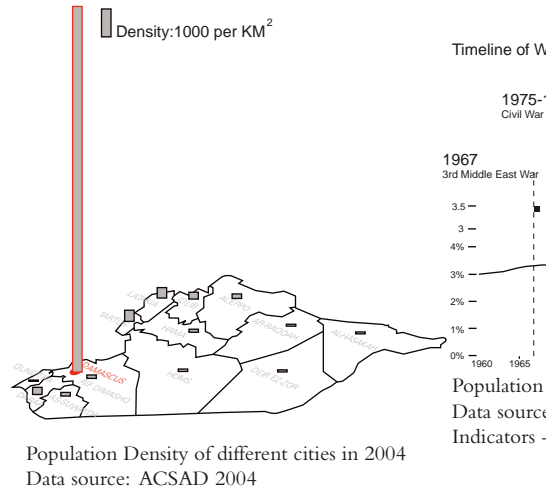
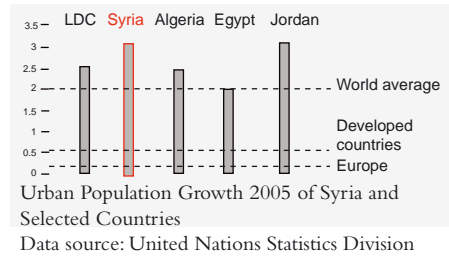
The high tariffs, high costs of internal trade, and low levels of international trade increase the degree of urban concentration and that political instability and dictatorship determine urban primacy – all factors applied strongly in Syria, which make Damascus extremely attractive for rural-urban immigration.

Another reason to make Damascus popular is its vicinity to rural areas.

But the immigration of Alawite ( the same race with the President Asad) is special, they come from the remote northern mountain, and are encouraged to immigrate in Damascus.

#### Reason For Change 1:Refugees

The war had created a large amount of unexpected flow of Syrian and Palestinian refugees from the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights settled in camps and in informal settlements in various parts of the city.



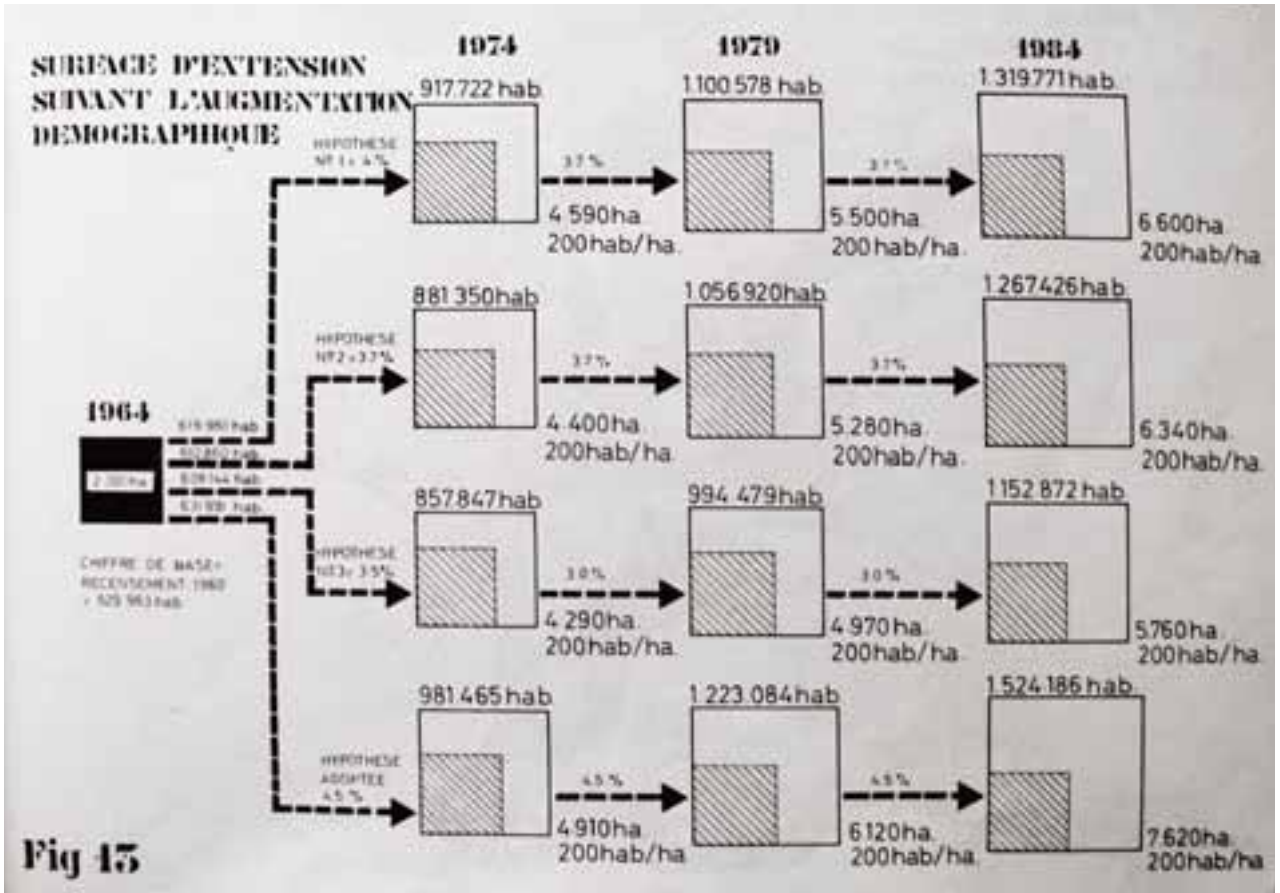
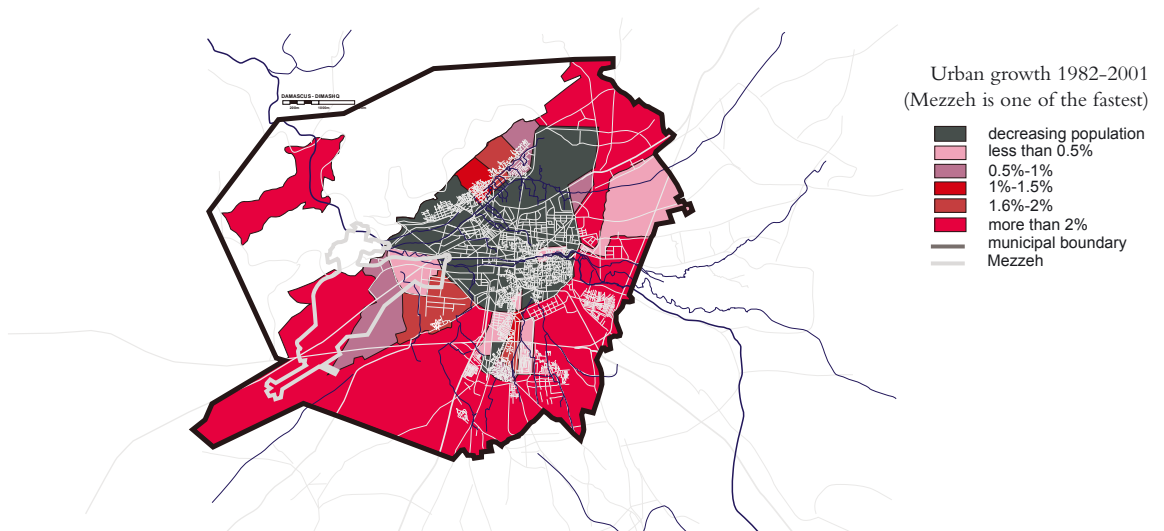


Fig 15

Ecochard's demography research when making 1968 plan



# DAMASCUS PLAN

## Ecochard plan - Execution

### KEY POINT 2 PRESERVATION OF OASIS

-out of control

### KEY POINT 3 DIRECTION OF GROWTH

-out of control

#### Reason For Change 1:

The Influx Immigrants. (see key point 1)

#### Reason For Change 2:

##### Lack Of Social Housing

Given that private property was encouraged after independence, and has been the long-standing measure of wealth in Syria (Barakat, 1993), the Ba'ath government did not establish a system of social housing. As a result, poor immigrants to Damascus have had to create their own homes informally. Today, illegal housing settlements (or squatter settlements) account for one in three residences in Damascus, and are the main reason for the destruction of Al- Ghouta (Al-Mhanna, S. 2008).

#### Reason For Change 3:

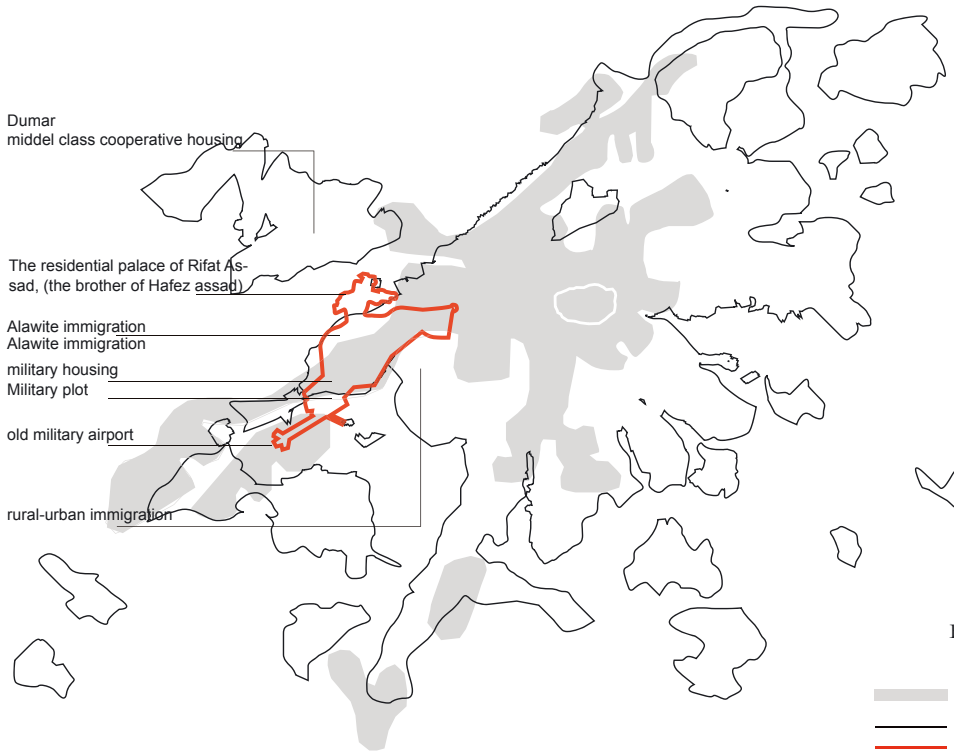
##### Cooperative Housing For Supporters

In the same time, Hafez el-Assad intended to strengthen his grip on the society and therefore sought to give satisfaction to the social categories that were supporting the regime, at the first rank armed forces and civil servant. Some areas initially planned to remain gardens and agricultural areas, like Kafar Soussa, were progressively built. From 1972-73, Hafez al-Assad called for the implementation of huge housing programs. In the following years, several new towns developments were studied and planned in three locations that Ecochard had not considered for urbanization, in Dummar on the old Beirut road (Chaline 1989; Labeyrie 1982), behind the Jibal Qasium, and in Dimas, on the new way to Beirut.



Ecohard plan: the city expands along the mountain, preserving the oasis.

Mezzeh



Boundary situation now

- Ecohard boundary
- major residence boundary 2009
- Mezzeh
- old city

# DAMASCUS PLAN

## Ecochard plan – Execution

### KEY POINT 3 TRANSPORT

- carried out

Another important goal of the master plan was the modernization of the major arteries network, with new highways toward Jordan, Lebanon and the north (Aleppo – Baghdad).

But the administration also requested to modernize the inner city and new streets were drawn. It was particularly the case of the new Ommeyad entrance along the Barada toward Marjeh square and the Thawra (Revolution) street from Hamidiyeh Gate, in front of Salah ed Din Citadel, both of them cut through the ancient urban fabric of the neighbourhoods outside the walled city.

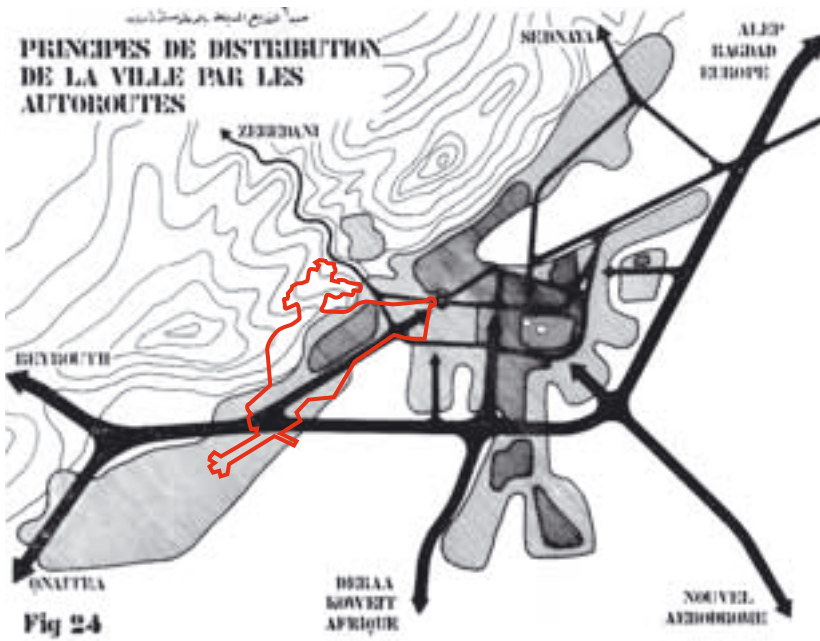
This major modernization project was a high priority for the administration and the government launched it as soon as 1966, before the approval of the whole master plan. The project had a symbolic meaning, since it linked the Ommeyad Square with Hamidiyeh and Hamidiyeh with the modern city of the 1930-1950's where most State administrations were established (David 1986). It also fitted the modern need for opening wide streets for an increasingly car-equipped middle and upper class, at a time when the traffic was congested in the narrow street network.

In 1979, at last, UNESCO labelled the walled city of Damascus World Heritage and this finally stopped the road constructions in the old town. This led to the abandon of the few Ecochard's ideas that the government was still considering like the widening of some small streets to the traffic, even though some works were carried out until 1983 (Degeorge 1994). The demolition had aroused a new concern for the historic heritage. It led to sharp criticism of Ecochard's view

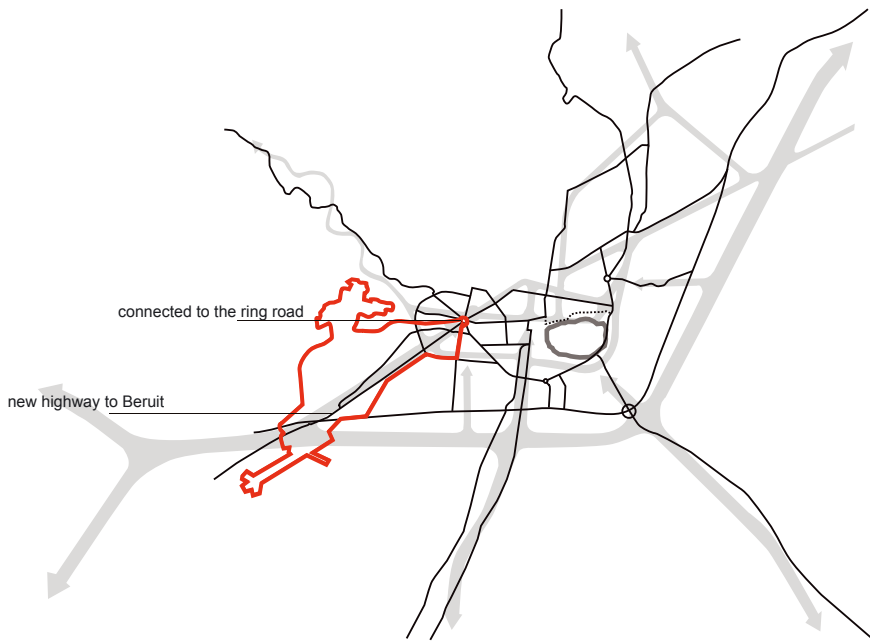
But the big network masterplans of highways was carried out, though it took time. Still today new highways are being constructed that was part of the Ecochard masterplan; as the 2nd ring road south-north connection was made in 2004.

Source: Michel Ecochard in Lebanon and Syria (1956-1968). The spread of Modernism, the Building of the Independent States and the Rise of Local professionals of planning  
Eric Verdeil, University of Lyon-CNRS-UMR Environnement Ville Société. 18, rue Chevreul 69007 Lyon

The Urban Development of Damascus: A study of its past, present and future, By Zara Lababedi, BA(Hons), UCL MSc European Property Development and Planning Dissertation, Bartlett School of Planning, Faculty of The Built Environment, University College London



Ecochard traffic study



- Traffic now
- Ecochard planned road direction
- main traffic connection
- Mezzeh
- old city
- ..... unrealized road

# DAMASCUS PLAN

## Public Transport – Lack Of Plan

In 1907, a public tram system was built in Damascus.  
But in 1967 this service was abandoned.

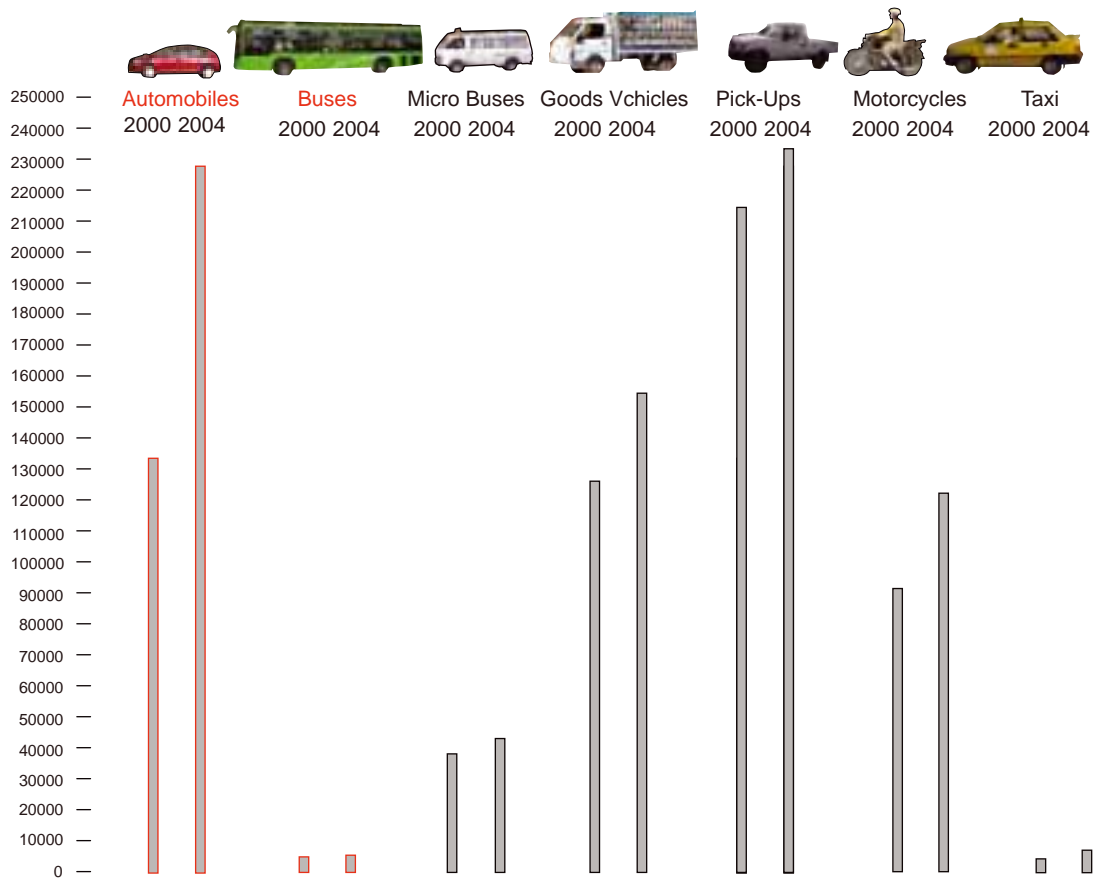
The number of buses is quite limited. As we see in Damascus, the major public transport way is the micro buses.

After 2000, president Bashar gradually opened up the market. Private banks are introduced and many of them are situated in Mezzeh, and people are allowed to get a loan from these private banks to buy their own car, which greatly stimulated the increase of private cars in Syria.

Today, there is a heavy traffic between Mezzeh and the central city.









# MEZZEH HISTORY

# MEZZEH HISTORY

## 1940'S Peripheral Area

### Basic Facts:

Old Mezzeh is mentioned already in the 6th century, as it is said that some of prophet Mohammad's companions moved there. Mezzeh has at least, if not earlier, since then been a suburb to Damascus, located closely to the river Barada. It is also said that there are old stone quarries in the area, from where you could get the famous Mezzawi stone (from Mezzeh) which you can see in many old houses in the old town, and in the courtyard of the Ummayyad Mosque.

The French, during their mandate in Syria, constructed an airport in the area and also a prison close to the old city of Mezzeh.

In 1946 Syria got its own independence.

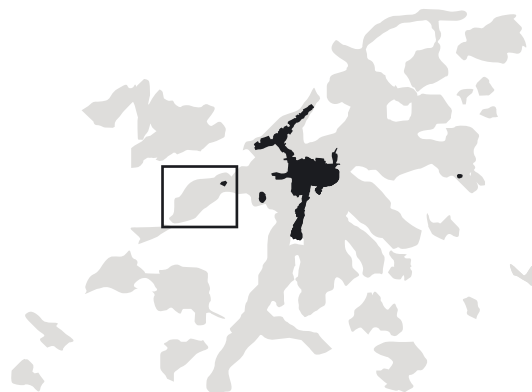
Source: [www.mideastimage.com](http://www.mideastimage.com)



1916-1946 French Mandate



1946. Syria independence





# MEZZEH HISTORY

## 1960'S Social Housing

### Basic Facts:

In 1958 Syria joined Egypt in the United Arab Republic, and so became socialist. In the name of the president Gamal Abdul Nasser, a social housing project was planned nearby the old city of Mezzeh, with the Airport Road as it's main nerve.

With a new ideology in the regime a land distribution plan was made.

The airport expanded and during the 6 day war in 1967 an emergency runway was constructed, parallel to Airport Road. This was for back up if the airport it self would be bombed. The runway was never used during the war for airplanes, and was later transformed in to a highway as one of the intended traffic solutions given in the Ecochard traffic solution proposal.



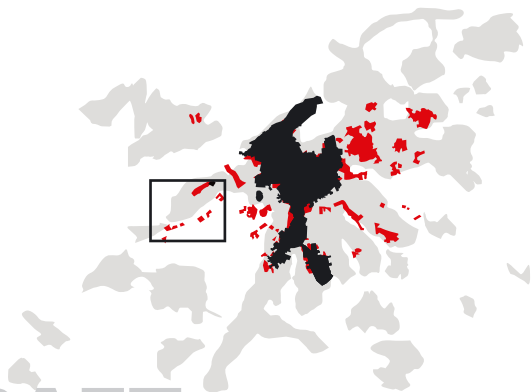
1958-1961 Nasser:UAR

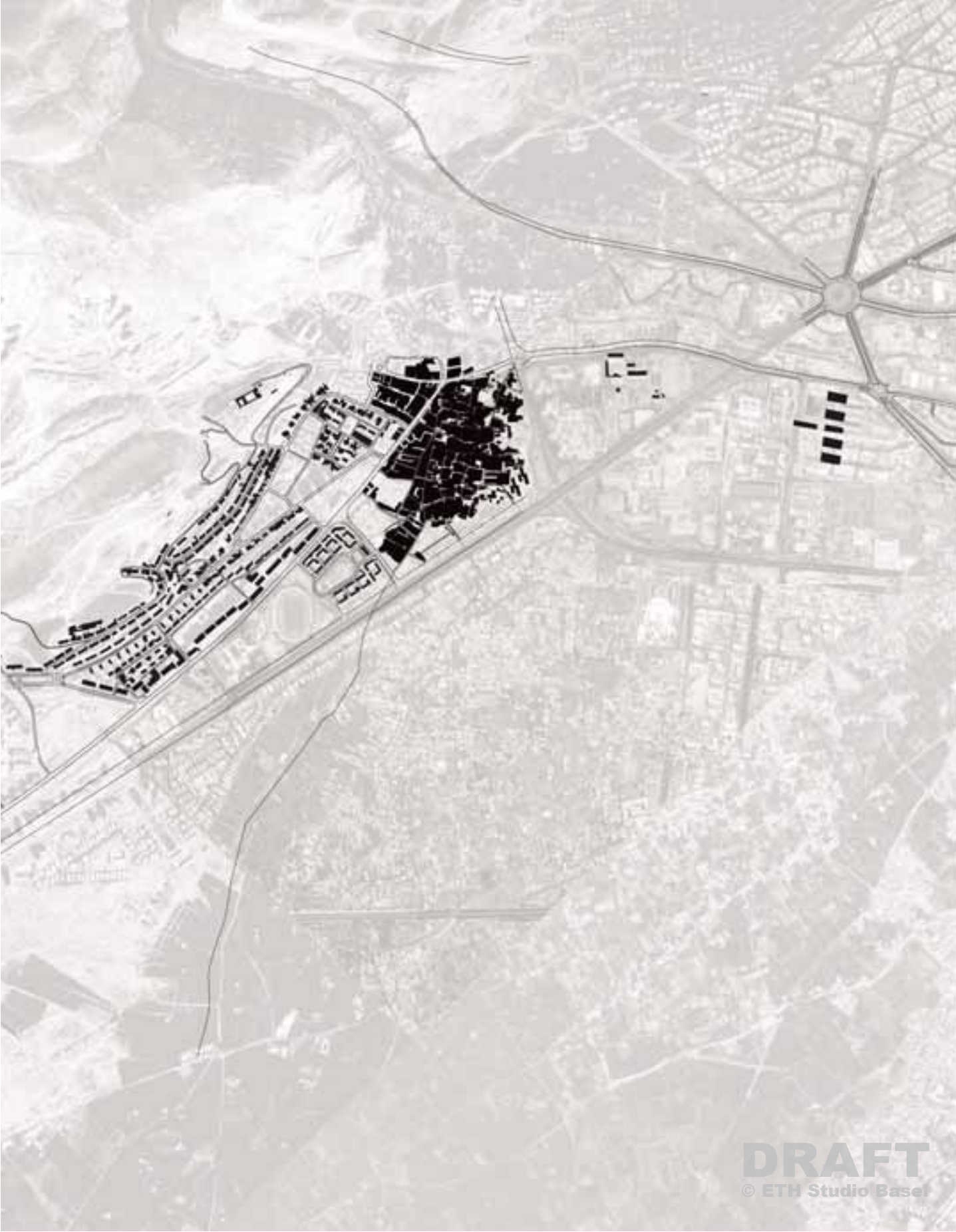


1968 Ecochard Plan



1967 Syrian families evacuating the Golan Heights after the Israeli occupation during the 3rd Arab-Israeli War



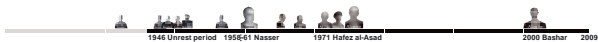


# MEZZEH HISTORY

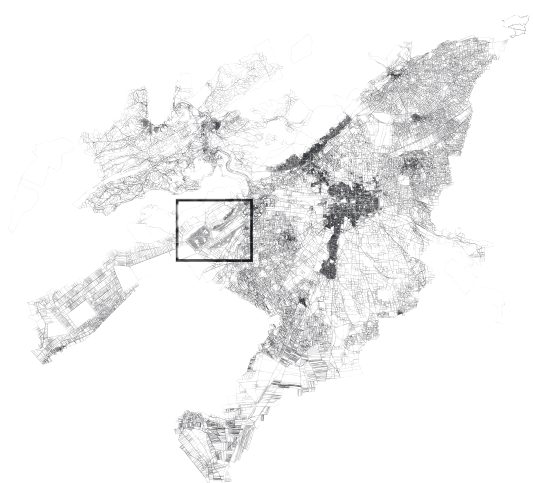
## 1960's - Land reform

### Basic facts:

In 1958 the president Gamal Abdul Nasser made a land reform in both Egypt and Syria. No person was allowed to own more than 80 hectares of irrigated land and 300 hectares of non-irrigated land. The city of Damascus was divided in small plots and the plot division of Mezzezh was set up in the 1960's. The socialist regime of the UAR also introduced the cooperative system not allowing anyone without membership in a syndicate to get land or housing.



1958-1961 Nasser:UAR





3386



# MEZZEH HISTORY

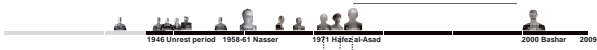
## Early 1970's - Expansion

### Basic Facts:

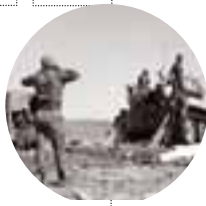
Hafez Assad gradually came to power in 1970-71, and allowed partial private property, and the real estate business was one of the most profitable markets as it was not government controlled.

Cooperative housing was still used as the major way to get housing.

High-rises are being built with the influence from east-block architects and planners. The main road network is made for Mezzeh and plot by plot Mezzeh grows with private and cooperative housing.



1970 General Hafez al-Assad launched a correction movement that brought him to power.

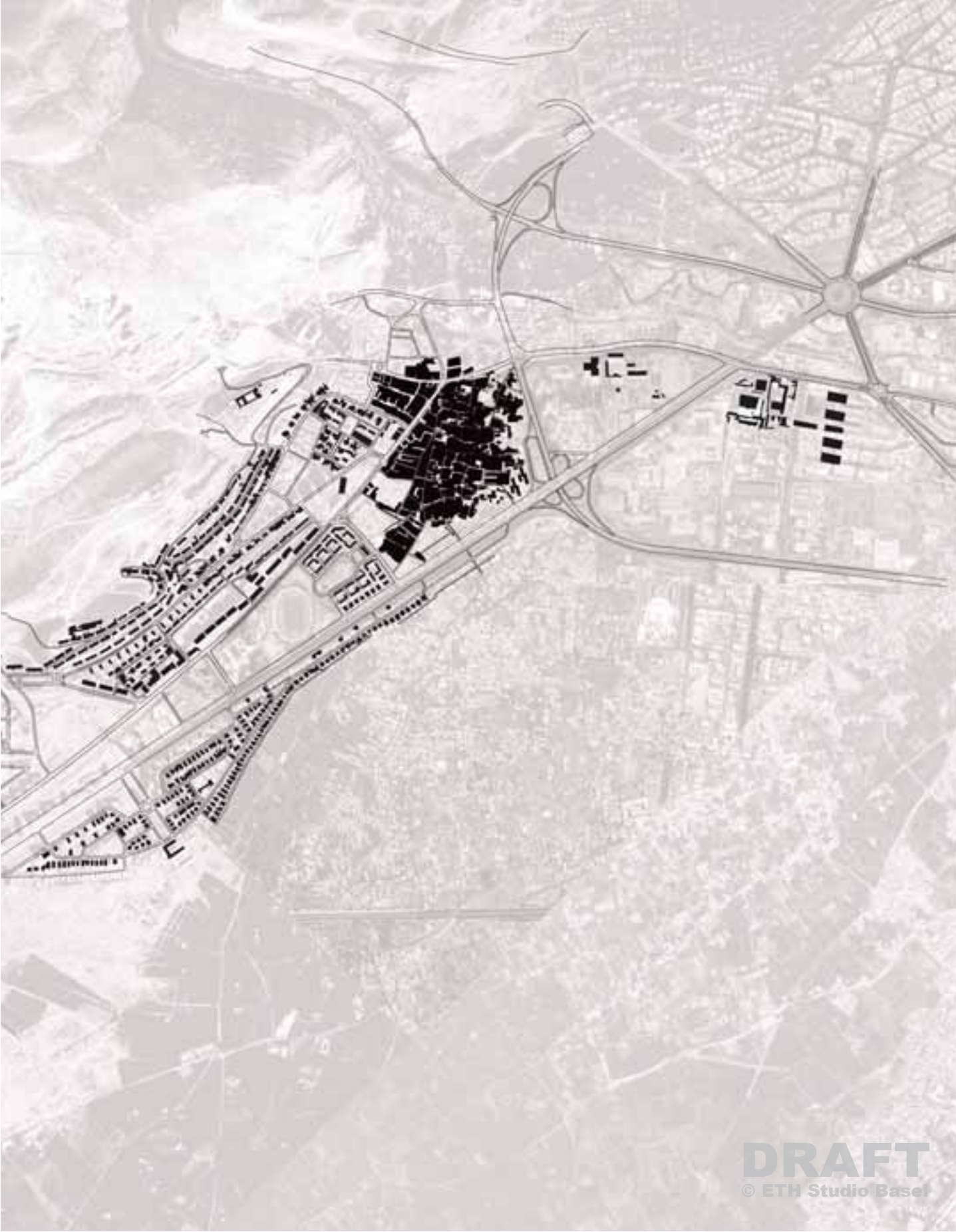


1973 4th Arab-Israeli War Arab Oil Embargo begins



1975-1999 Lebanon Civil War





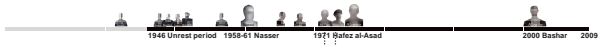
# MEZZEH HISTORY

## Late 1970's Rapid Growth

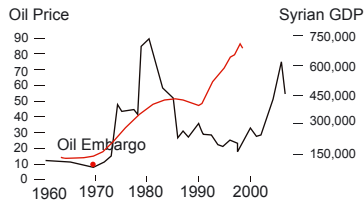
### Basic Facts:

The economical situation in Syria is good in the 1977 and Mezzeh becomes a very popular place to reside in both for it's location on the route to Beiruth but also because of the expansion of the Damascus university. Student housing is built near the highway, and a lot of professors move to Mezzeh.

The residential palace of Rifat Assad, the brother of Hafez assad is built overlooking Mezzeh and a lot of military housing is constructed near the airport and along Mezzeh highway.



1970-2000 Hafez al-Assad



Oil Price in Today's dollar ( Barrel)  
 GDP(Million SP of 1995) ,Data  
 source: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/  
 Category:Petroleum





# MEZZEH HISTORY

## 1980s - A maturing city

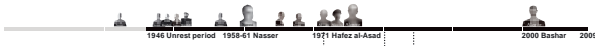
### Basic Facts:

The plot division of Mezzeh is filling up and more and more high-rises are being built along the highway.

The ring-road suggested in the 1968 Ecochard plan is begins to be constructed, going from the junction of Beirut road and Mezzeh high-way.

More military housing is built near the airport.

During the 1982 boycott many people residing in Mezzeh leave the country to work else where as the country goes through recession. A coupon system is introduced and small government shops are built at various locations in Mezzeh.



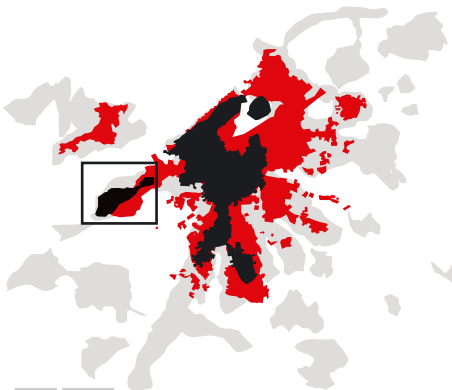
1970-2000 Hafez al-Asad

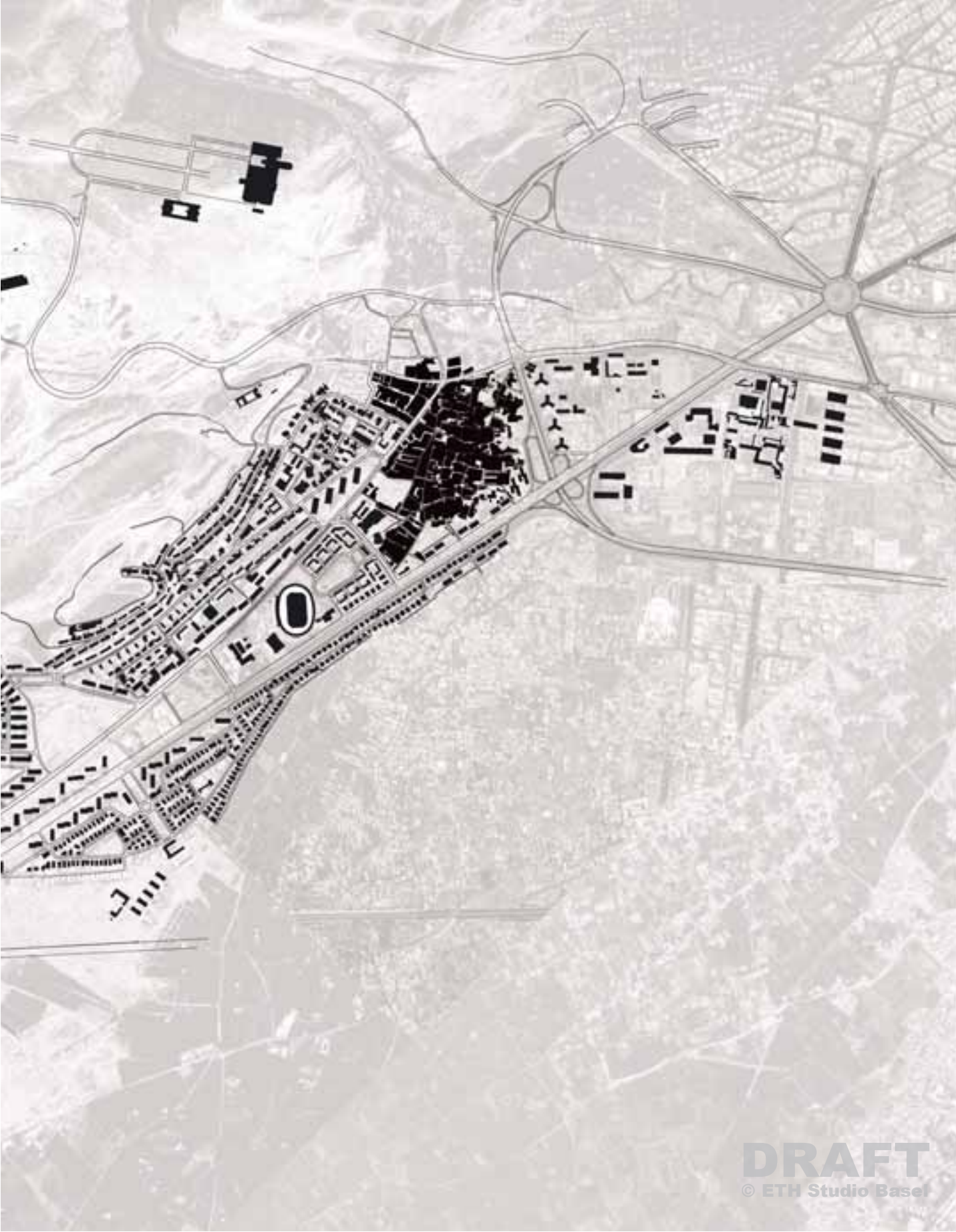


1975-1999 Lebanon Civil War



1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War





# MEZZEH HISTORY

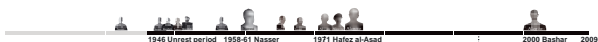
## 1990s - Liberalisation

### Basic Facts:

The Mezzeh plot division is full

New part of Mezzeh built in the south close to the new ring road mostly high-rises 10-12 floors. All private investors.

Some of the private small residential houses, the Villats, are sold and still in reconstruction by private investors.



1970-2000 Hafez al-Asad



1975-1999 Lebanon Civil War







# MEZZEH HISTORY Today

## Basic Facts:

Mezzeh is now a popular high income residential area  
Mezzeh is still in transformation. Especially the villat plots- some are sold and reconstructed. governmental institutions as the new court house is built.

privatisation and personalisation of houses and public spaces keep going on. After paying the illegal construction fine, some of the illegal constructions are in fact “legalized,,.

After Bashar became new president, more private banks are opened. commercial spaces is allowed in the bottom floor of mezzeh highway, a lot of offices. Mezzeh mall is opened.

With the loan from private banks, more private cars are owned by people.



2000-today Bashar al-Asad







# MEZZEH PLAN

MODERNISM IN CONSTRUCTION

ZONES AND SOVIET INFLUENCE

ROAD NETWORK

GREENERY

PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

RESIDENTIAL TYPOLOGIES

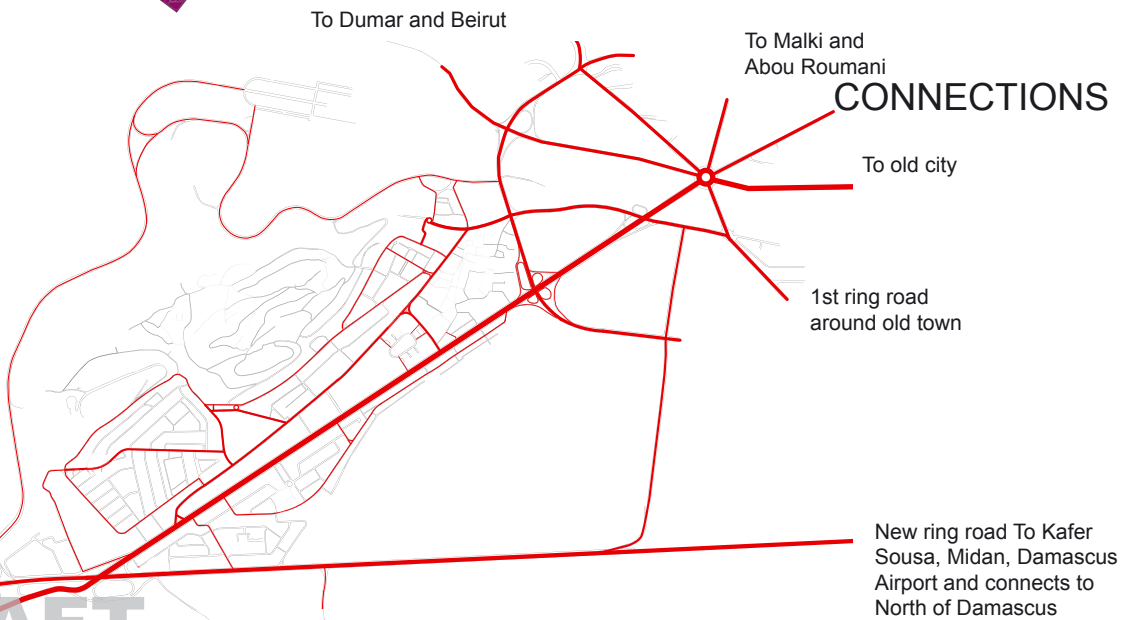
# MEZZEH PLAN “Modernist city” in construction



PLOT DIVISION



FUNCTION ZONES



CONNECTIONS

To Dumar and Beirut

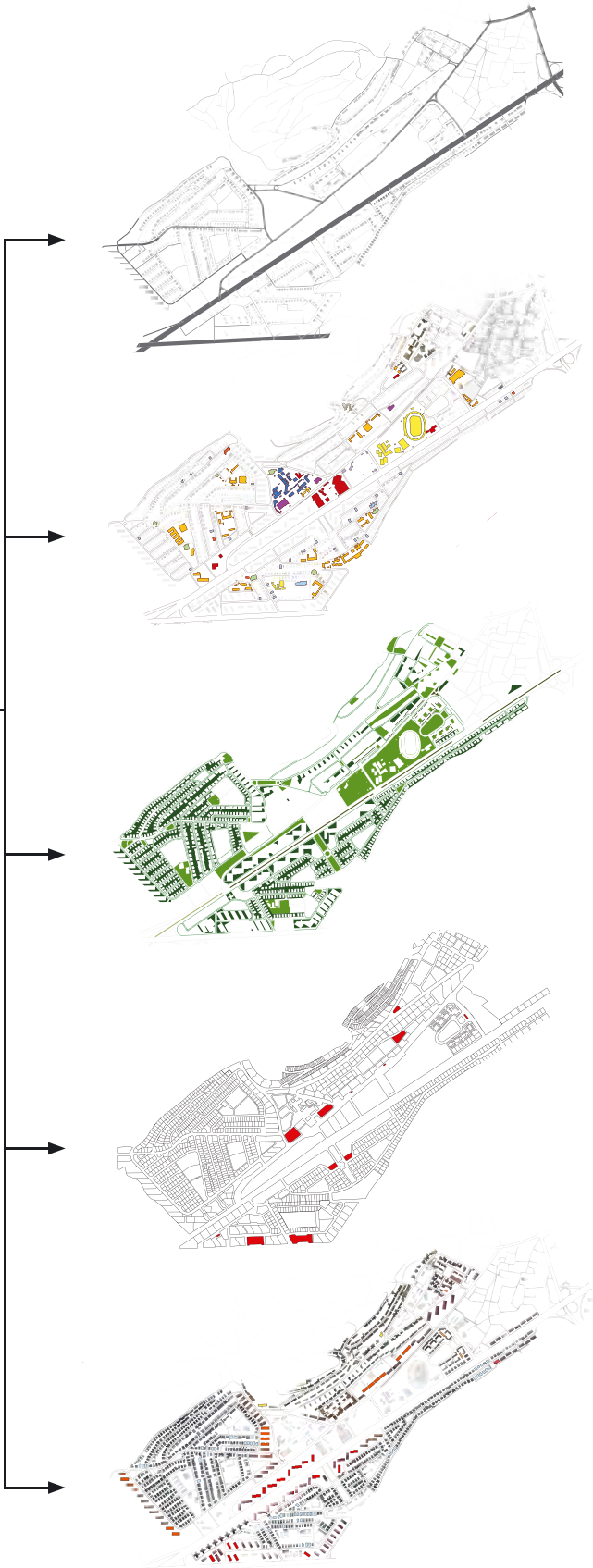
To Malki and  
Abou Roumani

To old city

1st ring road  
around old town

New ring road To Kafer  
Sousa, Midan, Damascus  
Airport and connects to  
North of Damascus

To Beirut



TRANSPORT

PUBLIC FACILITIES

GREENERY  
(PLANNED)

COMMERCIAL  
( PLANNED)

BUILDING TYPOLOGIES

# MEZZEH PLAN

## Zones - Surroundings

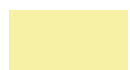



### Basic facts

Damascus was divided in plots in the land reform, according to different zones. The first land reform by Nasser said that no one should be able to own more than 80 hectares of irrigated land, and 300 hectares of non-irrigated. Also, you had to be part of a cooperative to buy land. When Hafez Assad came to power, and ownership of land was even more regulated, reducing the size of landholding.

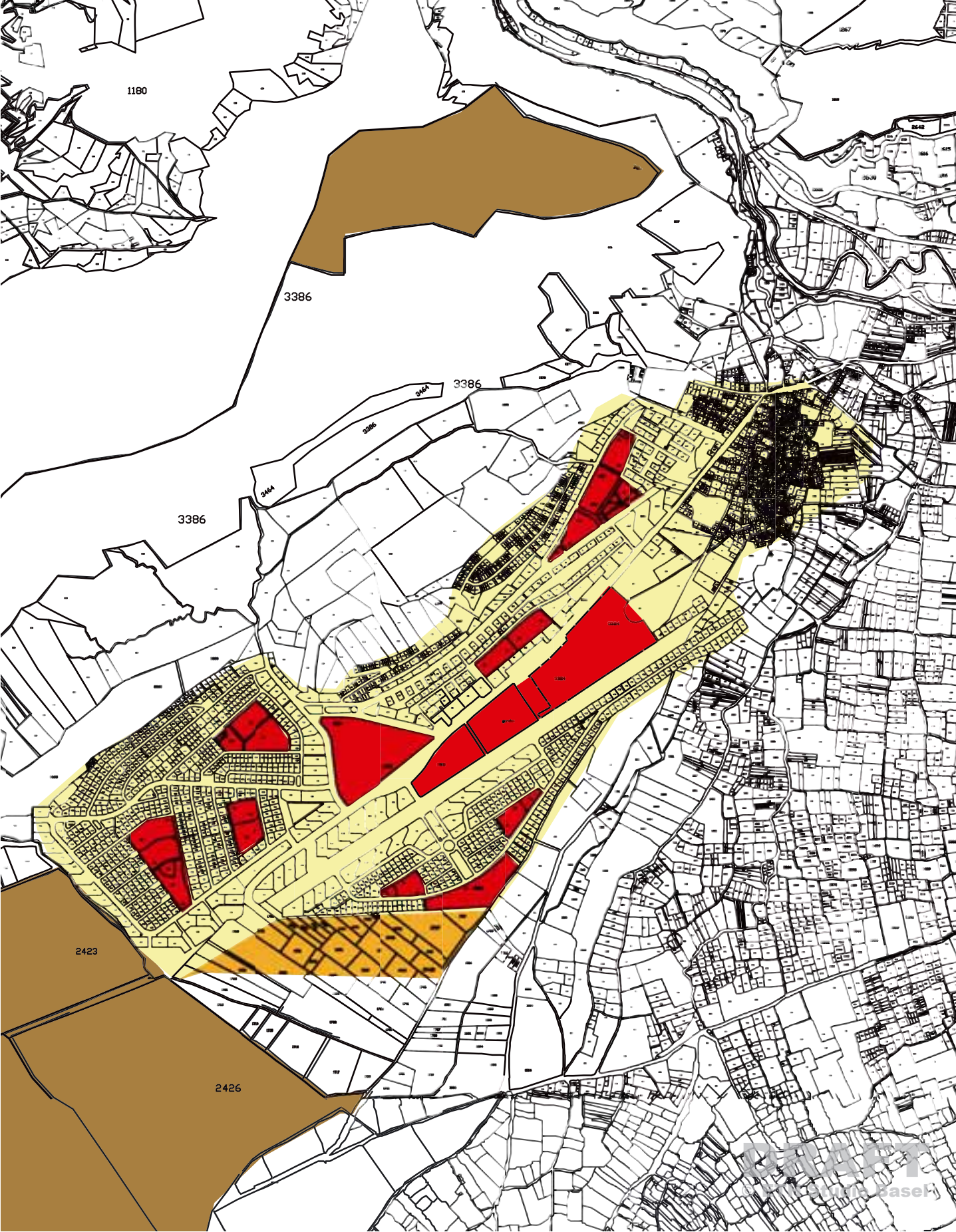
Only the military could own big plots, and two of these military zones are neighbours to Mezzeh; the military airport zone, and the area around the residential palace.

The closeness to the military zones and the residential palace has made the Mezzeh a popular place to live for many officers, and some of the high-rises on Mezzeh highway are built as military housing.



-  Residential Zone
-  Public
-  Mezzeh expansion area 1990's
-  Military zone





1180

3386

3386

3386

2423

2426

Real Estate  
Casey

# MEZZEH PLAN

## Soviet influence – Mass-production

### “COMRADES!”

“It is a long time since we last had a National Conference of Builders and there is a great need for such a conference. It is my opinion that the present meeting will be to the great good not just in construction, but of all our work both in industry and in other sectors of our national economy.”

“What are the consequences of using monolithic concrete in construction? Increased dirt on building sites. The use of moulds of all kinds and shapes. Unnecessary expenditure of iron. Wastage of cement. Losses of inert materials and concrete.

And what are the effects of using prefabricated parts? Use of prefabricated reinforced concrete will allow us to manufacture parts as is done in the plant industry – it will make it possible to switch to factory construction methods. (Applause)”...

...“Our country is engaged in building industrial enterprises, residential buildings, schools, hospitals, and other structures on a large scale. The construction programs is of vital importance. We have an obligation to sign significantly speed up, improve quality of, and reduce cost of, construction. In order to do so, there is only one path – and that path is of the most extensive industrialization of construction.”...

...“The interests of industrialization of construction dictate the necessity of reorganization how our design organisations work, of making production of standard design and use of already existing standard designs the main element of their work.”...

...“They (architects) are all agreed that use of standard designs will significantly simplify and improve the quality of construction, but in practice many architects, engineers, and - industrial construction - technologists too aspire to create only their one-off designs.

Why does this happen? One of the reasons evidently is that there are flaws in the way we train architects. Led on by the examples of great masters, many young architects hardly wait to cross the threshold of their architecture institutes or find their feet properly

before wanting to design nothing but unique buildings and hurrying to erect a monument themselves. If Pushkin created himself a monument ‘not made by human hand’, many architects feel they simply must create a ‘handmade’ monument to themselves in the form of a building constructed in accordance with a unique design. (Laughter, applause)”...

...“We must select a small number of standard designs for residential buildings, schools, hospitals, kindergartens, children’s nurseries, shops and other buildings and structures and conduct our mass building programs using only these designs over the course of say, 5 years. After the end of which period we shall hold a discussion and, if no better design turn up, continue in the same fashion for the next five years. What’s wrong in this approach, comrades?”...

...“Comrades, I shall bring my speech to a close by expressing my confidence that builders, architects, engineers, workers in the construction-materials industry and in manufacture of machinery for construction and roads, and employees of design and research organizations will carry out with honour the tasks laid upon them by the Party and the Government: will improve still further the level, pace and quality of construction in our country; will accelerate the bringing in of factories, mines, power stations, and manufactories; and will build residences, schools, and hospitals better and more beautifully. Goodbye until we meet again at the next conference of builders. I wish you success, comrades! (Wild, continuous applause. Everyone stands)”

Nikita Krushchev

Excerpts from Volume magazine nr 21 “The Block”, Archis 2009 #3, “On the extensive introduction of industrial methods, improving the quality and reducing the costs of construction”

Excerpts from a speech by Nikita Krushchev at the National Conference of Builders, Architects, Workers in the Construction Materials and Manufacture of Construction and Road Machinery Industries, and Employees of Design and Research and Development Organizations on December 7, 1954.

# MEZZEH PLAN

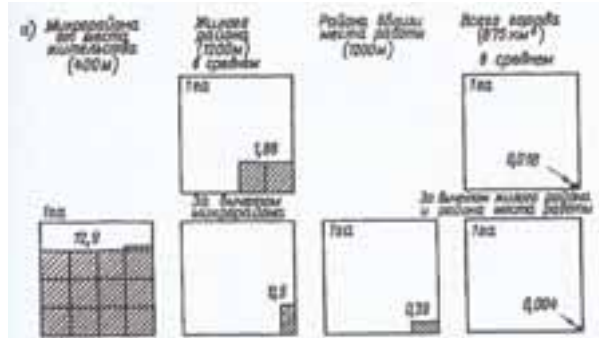
## Soviet influence - Microrayon

"In 1971 the Central Scientific Research and Design Institute on Urban Development published District and Micro district: Manual for Design and Building (Moscow: Publisher of Literature for the Building industry). It contains the scientific principles for designing a microrayon."

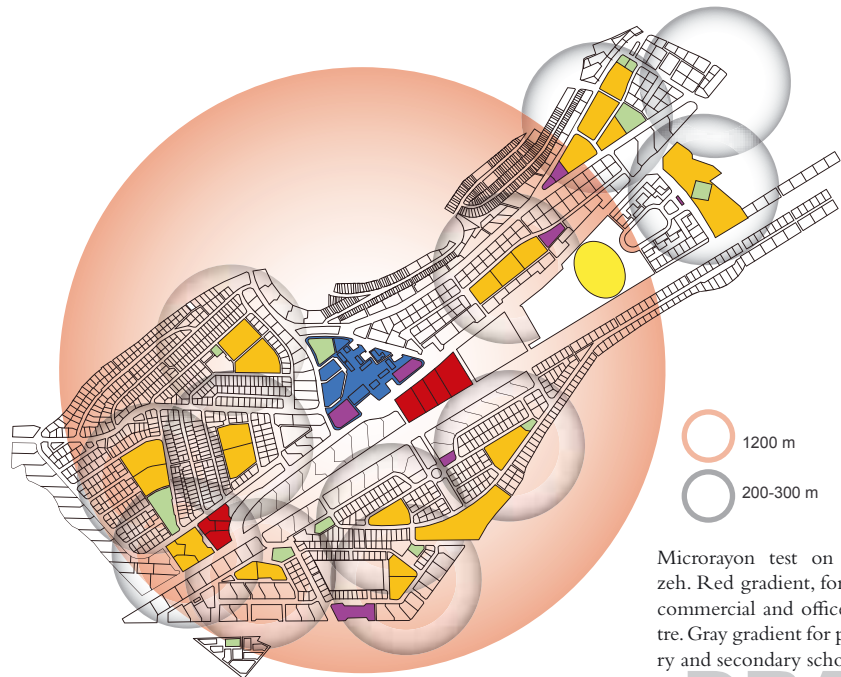
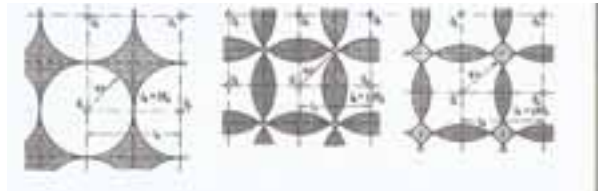
"The core principle of Soviet urban theory is Sistema Stupenchatago Obaluzhivaniya which translates literally as "System of Stepped Services". In this system the city is divided into several scales. Each one of which is responsible for certain amenities. The system sets up a hierarchy of public buildings dependent upon use frequency. The smallest scale of microrayon consists of facilities for daily use: schools, kinder gardens, grocery stores and communal services. Residential district scale buildings are used periodically and include cinemas, restaurants, polyclinics and shops selling manufactured goods. The largest scale is urban and consists of facilities used only sporadically or incidentally: theatres, zoos and exhibition halls, for example."

"The theory is that the more intensively a function is used the closer it should be located to residential districts."

Excerpts from Volume magazine nr 21 "The Block", Archis 2009 #3, "Microaroyon Handbook" by Dimitri Zadorin



Schools, grocery stores and kindergartens should be reached within a radius of 2-400 meters, and workplaces should be reached within 1200 meters. But function radiuses should not be too far away from each other, it will produce areas with poor access, neither should they be too close which will result in an inefficient overlapping. 1.8 times the radius if the microrayon is the optimal solution, then only 5-10 % will have poor access or overlapping.



Microrayon test on Mezzeh. Red gradient, for main commercial and office centre. Gray gradient for primary and secondary schools.

# MEZZEH PLAN

## Road System

### Basic facts

The road system in Mezzeh is built according to the plot division, and plots are sold one after one. The road was completely laid out before selling of the plots.

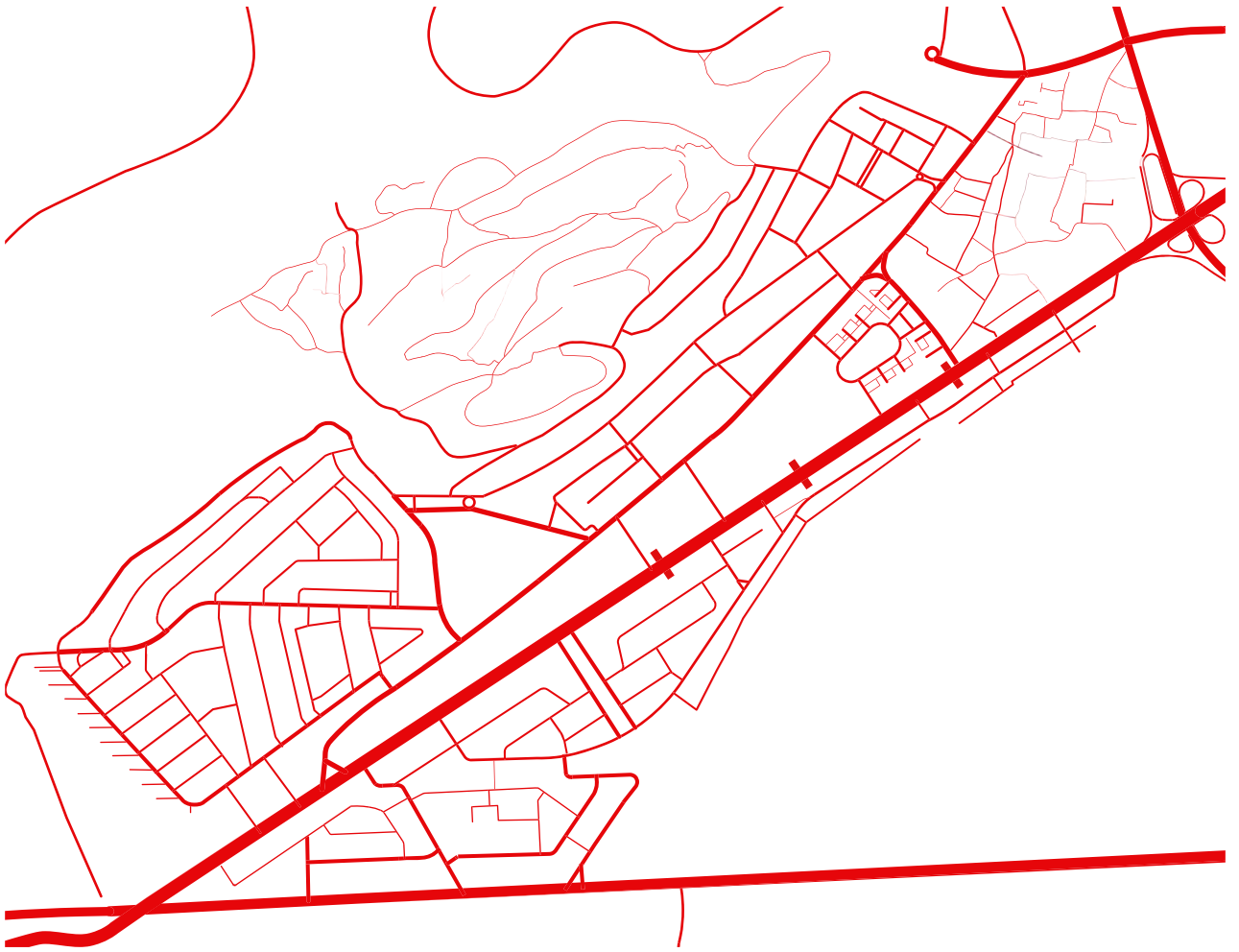
The size of the road, have been changed and widened as development progressed.



1972 map: showing roads constructed before buildings

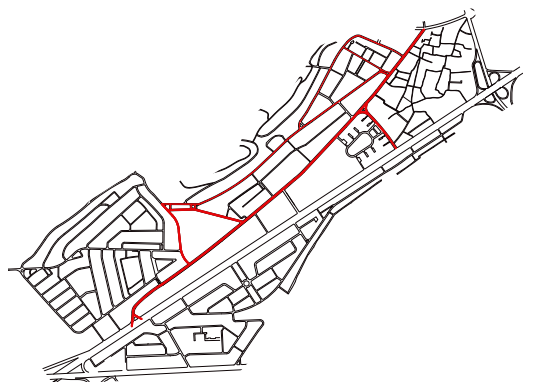


Mezzeh highway in 2009

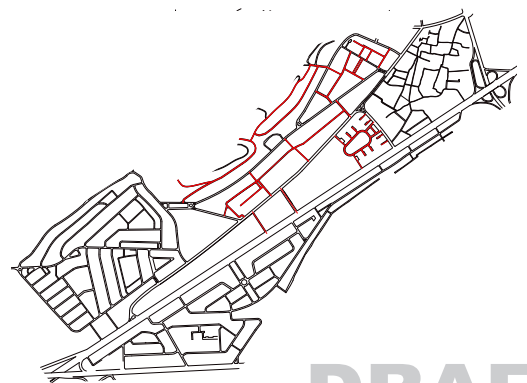


# MEZZEH PLAN

Road System\_Main road ( 60's )

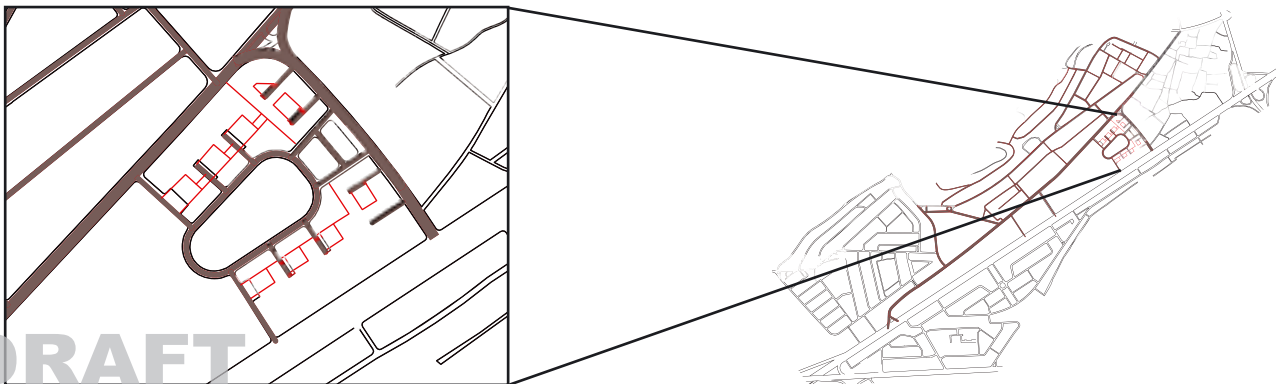


Road System\_ Block Road ( 60's )



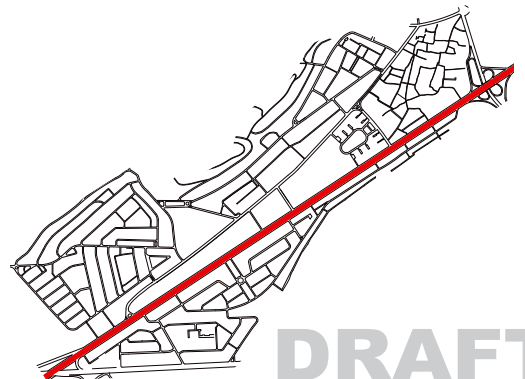
# MEZZEH PLAN

Road System\_ Footpath between blocks ( 60's)



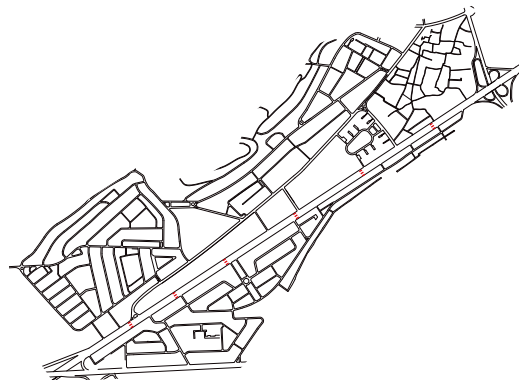


Road System\_ Highway ( 70's )

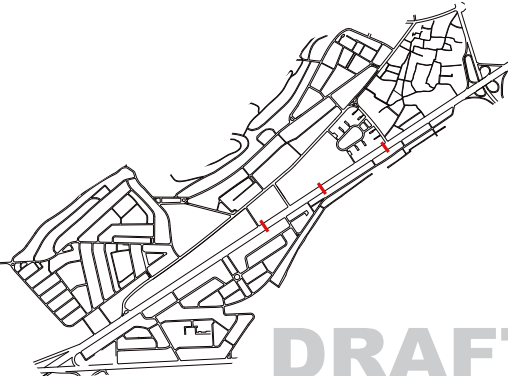


# MEZZEH PLAN

Road System\_ Highway\_Crossing the street( 70's )



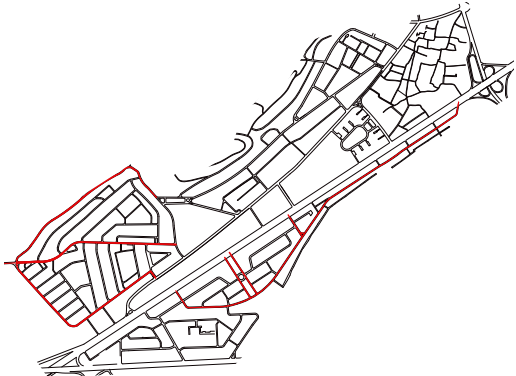
Road System\_ Highway\_Tunnels( 70's )



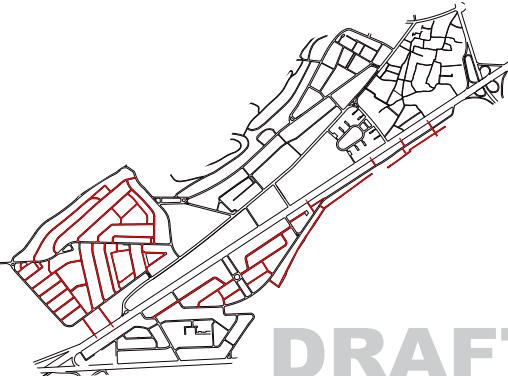
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© ETH Studio Basel

# MEZZEH PLAN

Road System\_ Main Road ( 70's )

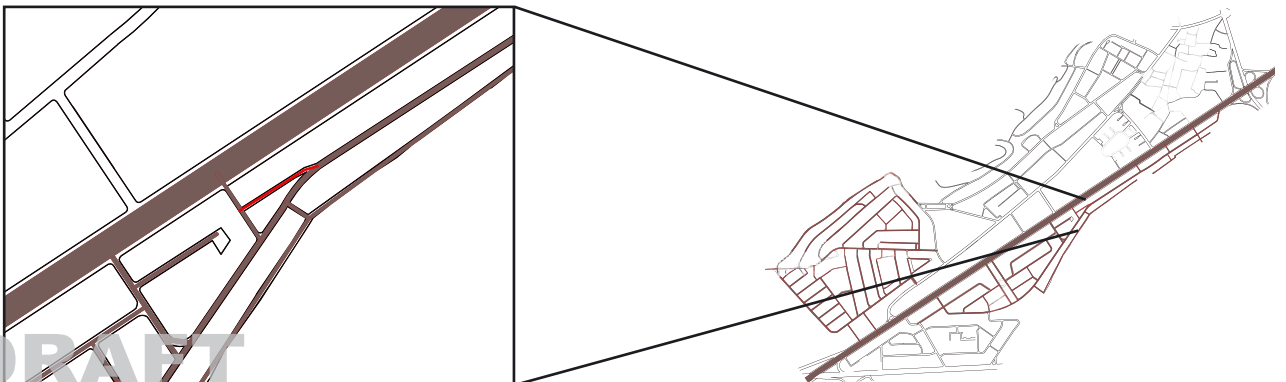


Road System\_Block road ( 70's )

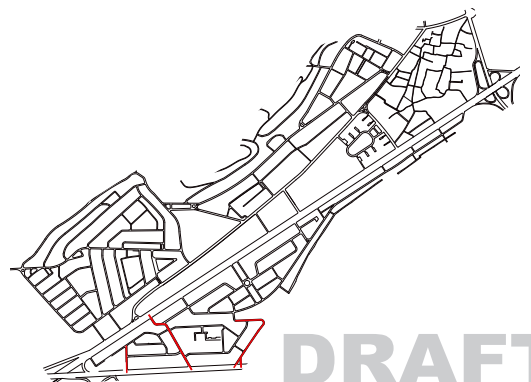


# MEZZEH PLAN

Road System\_ Footpath ( 70's )

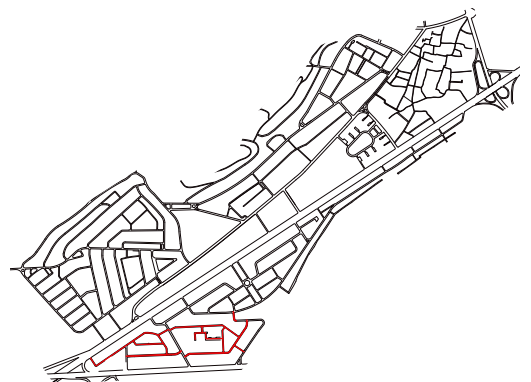


Road System\_ Main road ( 80-90's )



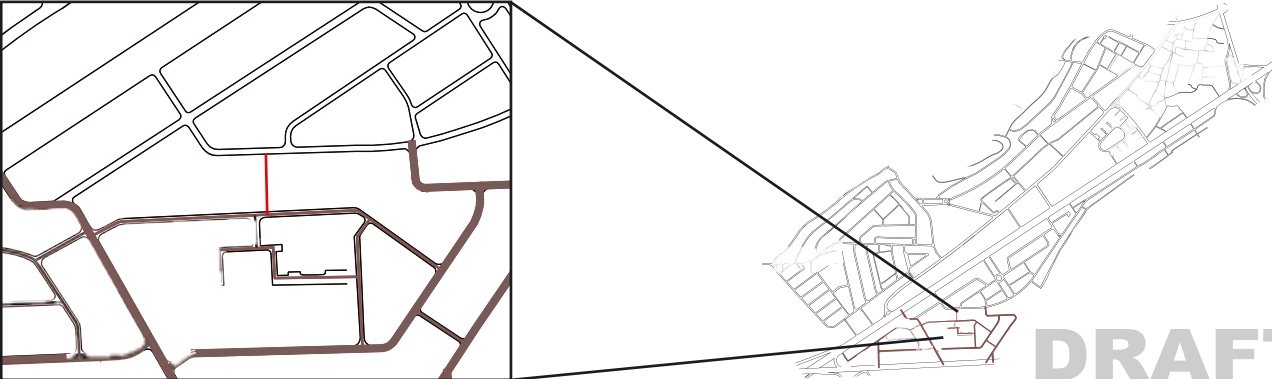
# MEZZEH PLAN

Road System\_ Block Road ( 80-90's )





Road System\_ Footpath in Block ( 80-90's )



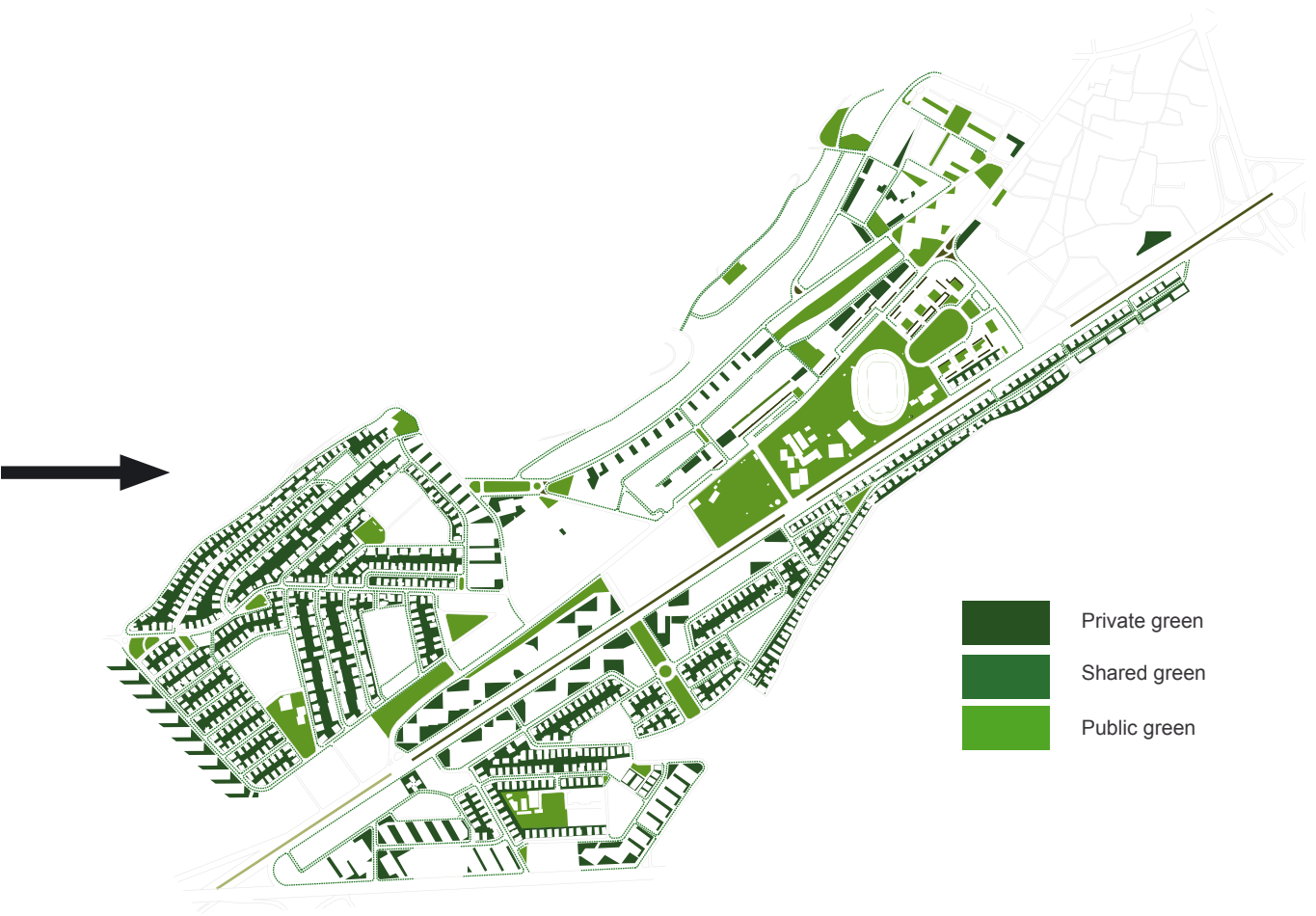
# MEZZEH PLAN

## Greenery system

### Basic facts

Mezzeh is planned as green suburb. Almost all plots have assigned gardens, whether they are private or shared. Small public gardens are distributed in the entire area inside blocks or between blocks. Two big recreation parks with sports facilities are planned.





- Private green
- Shared green
- Public green

# MEZZEH PLAN

Greenery system\_Recreation park



Greenery system\_Recreation park



# MEZZEH PLAN

Greenery system\_Central Park inside blocks

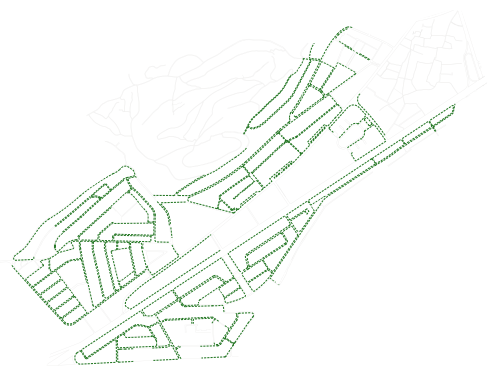


Greenery system\_Central Park between blocks



# MEZZEH PLAN

Greenery system\_Greenery along the streets





Greenery system\_Greenery in the middle of streets



# MEZZEH PLAN

Greenery system\_Planned private gardens



Greenery system\_Planned cooperative gardens



# MEZZEH PLAN

## Public facilities

### Basic facts

Functions assigned through the plot division plan.

Schools in the centre of neighbourhood. All public schools in Damascus are designed by the same architect, Chaldoun Soufi, who also was a member of the Bath Party.

Centralized commercial and office zone. Mixed governmental and private offices.

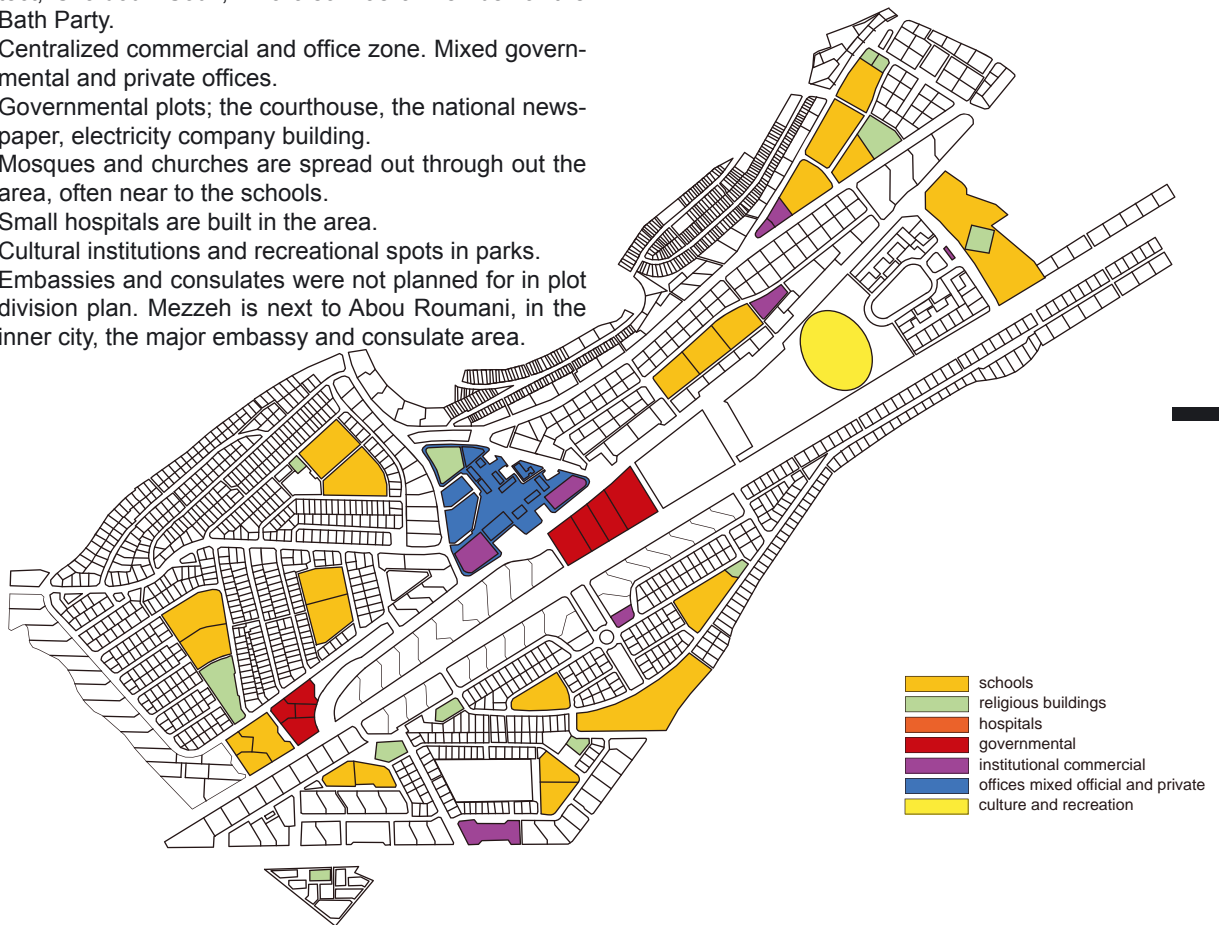
Governmental plots; the courthouse, the national newspaper, electricity company building.

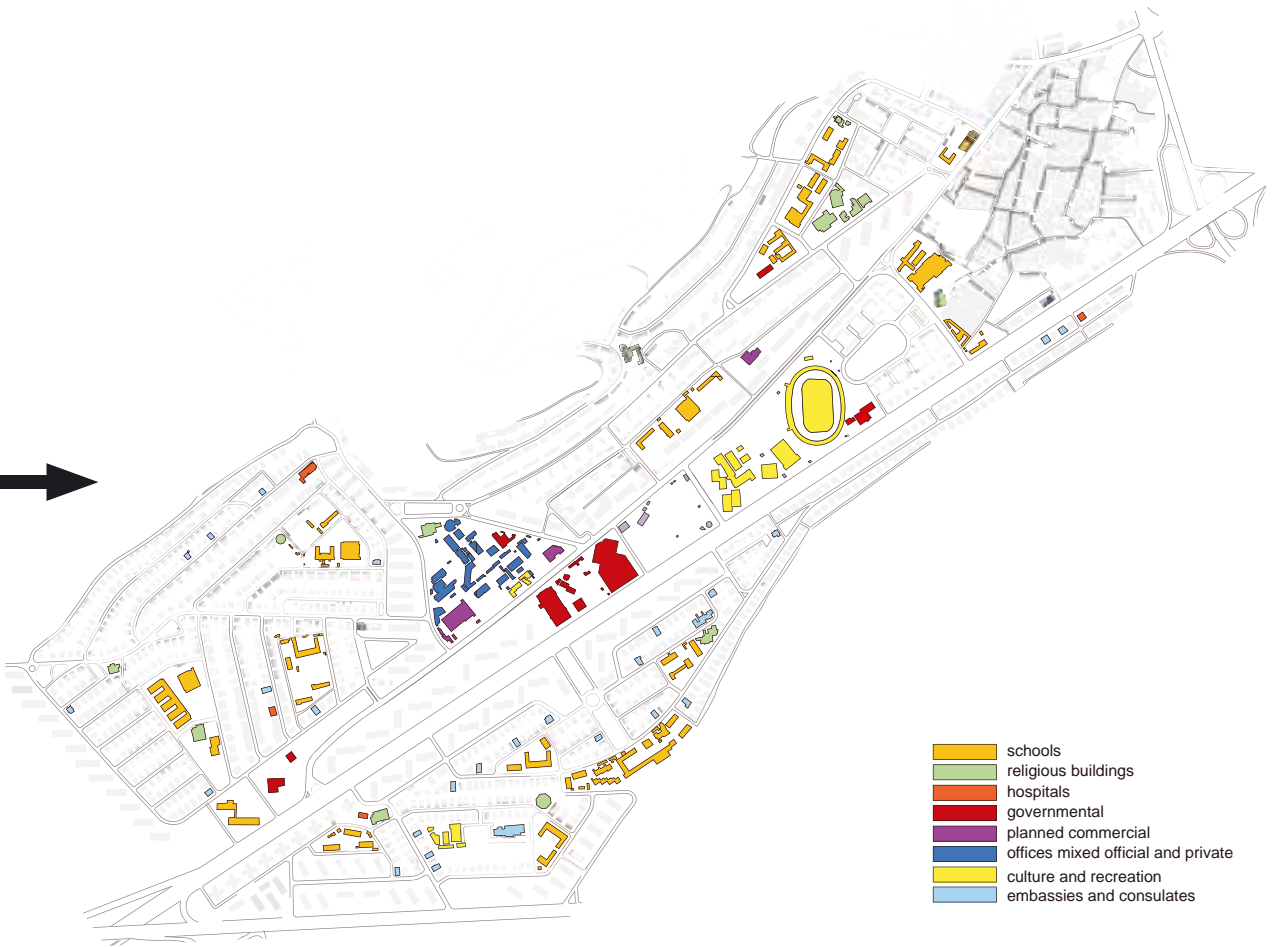
Mosques and churches are spread out through out the area, often near to the schools.

Small hospitals are built in the area.

Cultural institutions and recreational spots in parks.

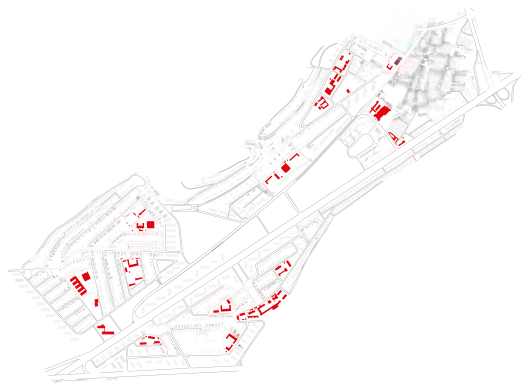
Embassies and consulates were not planned for in plot division plan. Mezzeh is next to Abou Roumani, in the inner city, the major embassy and consulate area.



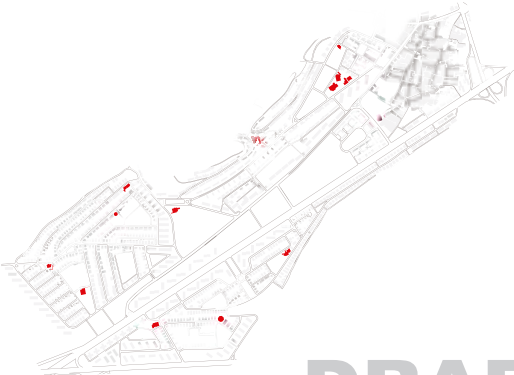


# MEZZEH PLAN

Public Facilities\_Schools



Public Facilities\_Religious buildings



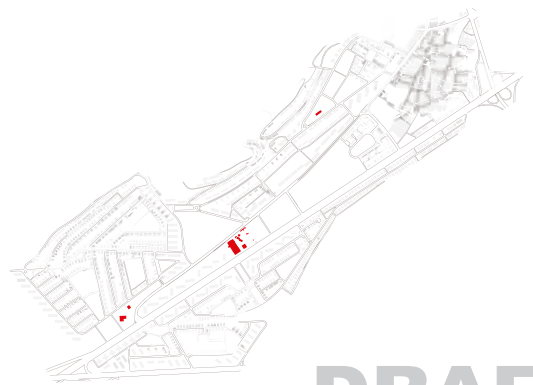
# MEZZEH PLAN

Public Facilities\_Hospitals





Public Facilities\_Governmental buildings



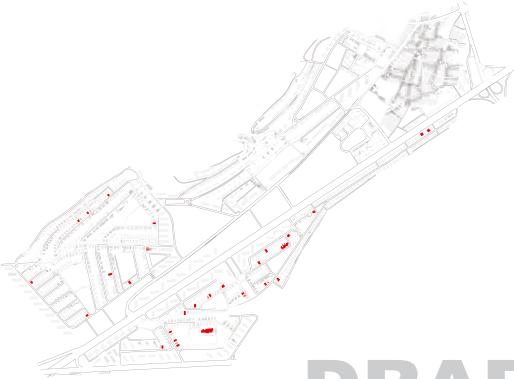
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# MEZZEH PLAN

Public Facilities\_Governmental and private offices, commercial zone and cultural institutions



Public Facilities\_Embassies and consulates

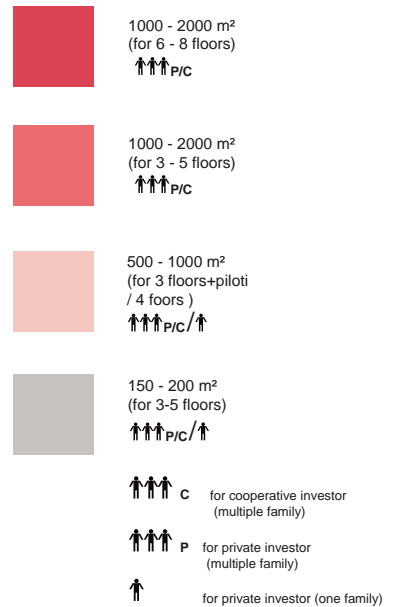
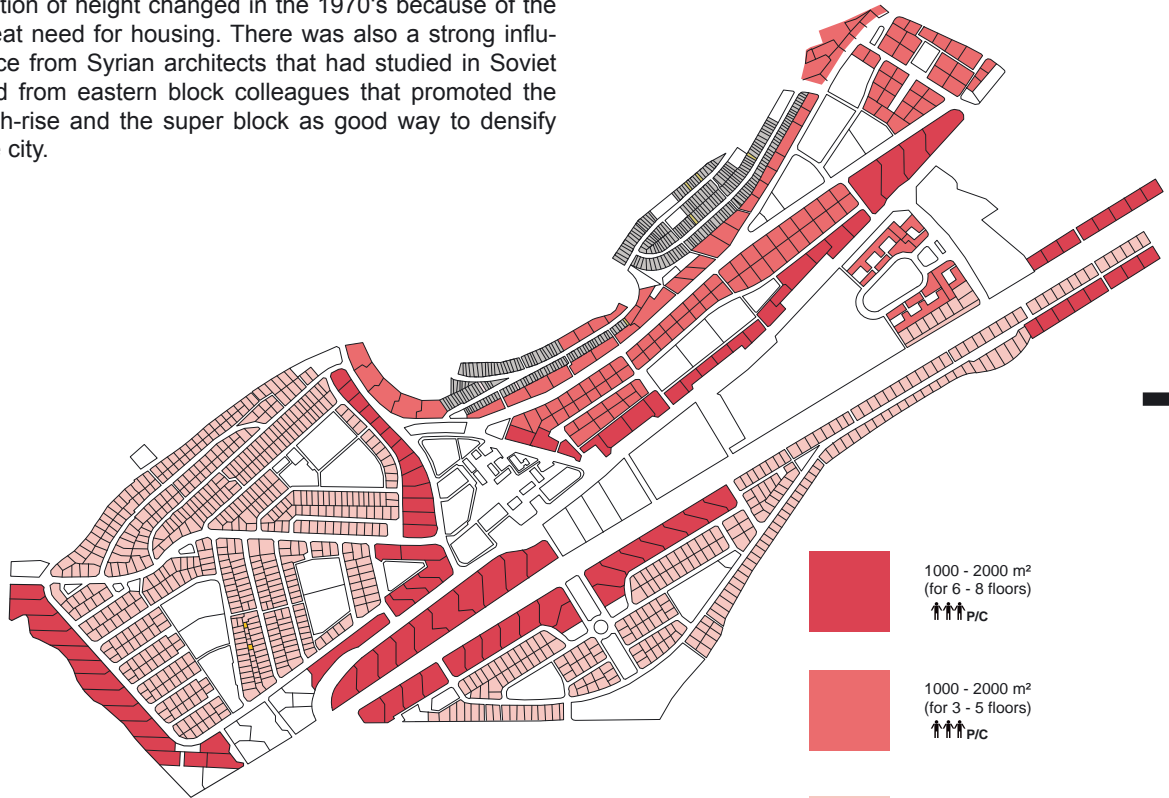


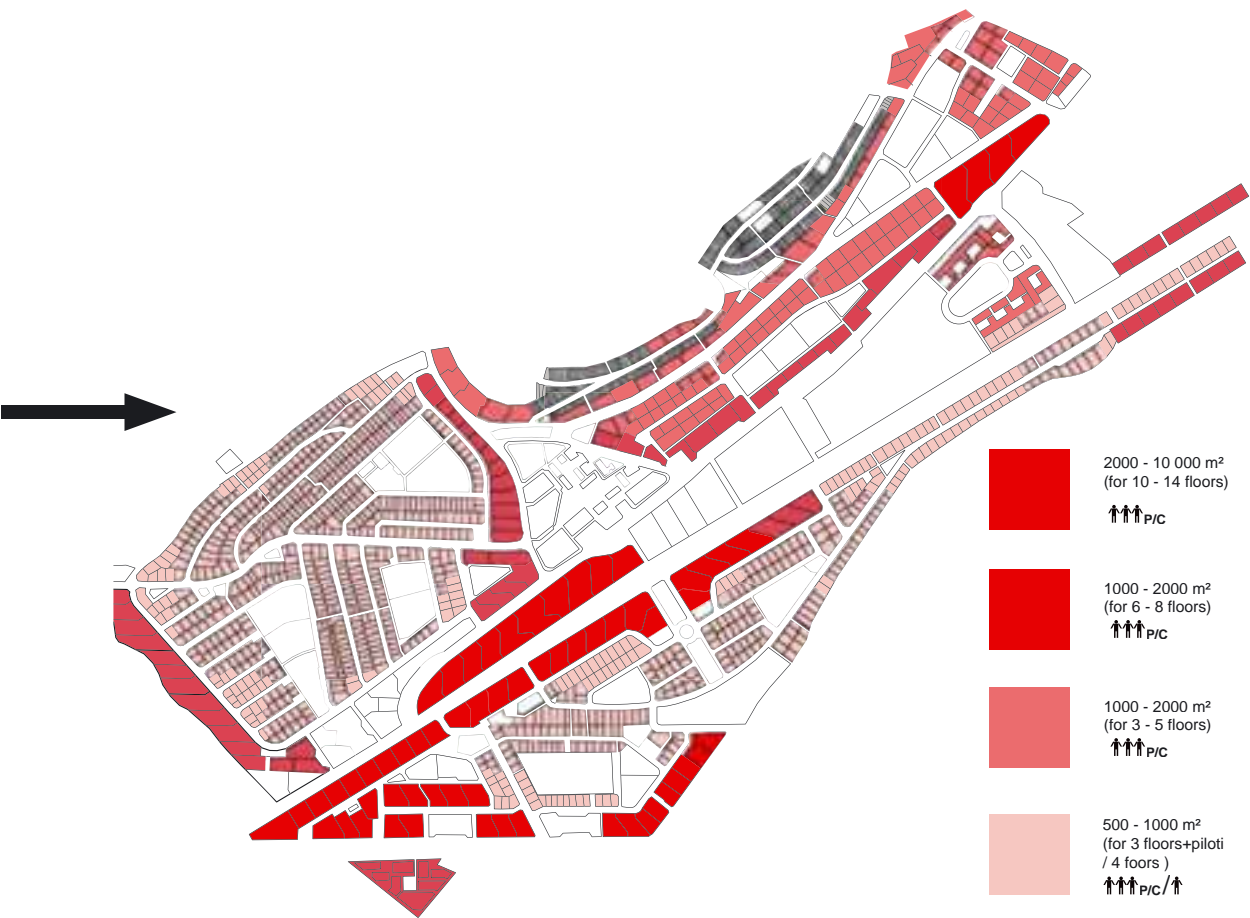
# MEZZEH PLAN








## Residential Typologies

### Basic facts

The typology of the plot is chosen by its size, and in the early plans for Mezzeh the highest building was only supposed to be 6-8 floors. This is much higher than the city average at that time, which was 3-4 floors. The regulation of height changed in the 1970's because of the great need for housing. There was also a strong influence from Syrian architects that had studied in Soviet and from eastern block colleagues that promoted the high-rise and the super block as good way to densify the city.





- 
 2000 - 10 000 m<sup>2</sup>  
 (for 10 - 14 floors)  
 ↑↑↑P/C
  - 
 1000 - 2000 m<sup>2</sup>  
 (for 6 - 8 floors)  
 ↑↑↑P/C
  - 
 1000 - 2000 m<sup>2</sup>  
 (for 3 - 5 floors)  
 ↑↑↑P/C
  - 
 500 - 1000 m<sup>2</sup>  
 (for 3 floors+piloti / 4 floors )  
 ↑↑↑P/C/↑
  - 
 150 - 200 m<sup>2</sup>  
 (for 3-5 floors)  
 ↑↑↑P/C/↑
-  C for cooperative investor (multiple family)  
 P for private investor (multiple family)  
 for private investor (one family)



# MEZZEH PLAN

## Residential Typologies – Housing System

### Housing As A Good Way For Investment

While the Ba'ath Party ran a predominately statist economy, not all sectors fell under state ownership, and entrepreneurs were encouraged to invest in agricultural and retail sales sectors.

Furthermore, the building and construction industry was to be left in the hands of the private sector (Quarterly Economic Review, 1968). Given the “rampant corruption and severity of government controls on imports and exports,...[and] the complete nationalisation of banks and insurance companies, private investors focused mostly on the service sector and real estate as they felt more free [from government control] and therefore [it was felt that these sectors] carried less risk” (Kamha, 2008).

Given the perceived ‘low-risk’ of real estate, land speculation has dominated the economic scene from the 1960s until today. “Traffic in urban land and building for quick speculative profit has become a major economic activity” (Shiloh, 1969, p. 209).

This high rate of real estate and construction developments are associated with the rapid urbanization of the major cities in Syria since the 60s.

### How This System Works

Step 1 The government nationalized the land and redistributed it by a land reform, which started in the Nasser period.

In Assad period, the land reform was instated more extensively, reducing the sizes of landholdings and lengthening the time of compensation. However, while land reform was “supposed to create a more equal society, the Ba'ath Party favoured members of their sect; large amounts of Alawites from the North came Damascus and land was distributed amongst friends and families of the government” (Ayoub Agha, 2008). The military is the only large undivided plot owner.

2 Investors should apply for land ownership. Both private investors and cooperative members could apply and own the land. But as a cooperative the government gave subsidized prices for the land (the government showed in this way to help the “poor” people to have their own housing, but in fact the intelligence class, like professors, engineers, who support Ba'ath party, benefited the most by this system. )

3 The investors hire their own architects and urban planners.

4 But the plan should follow the criterion published by the government, and should send the plans to the government to get the certification for building. For the typologies of the buildings that could be used, there are also books of criterion published by the government, so that the city could look “unified”, although developed by different investors.

### Influence From The Eastern Block:

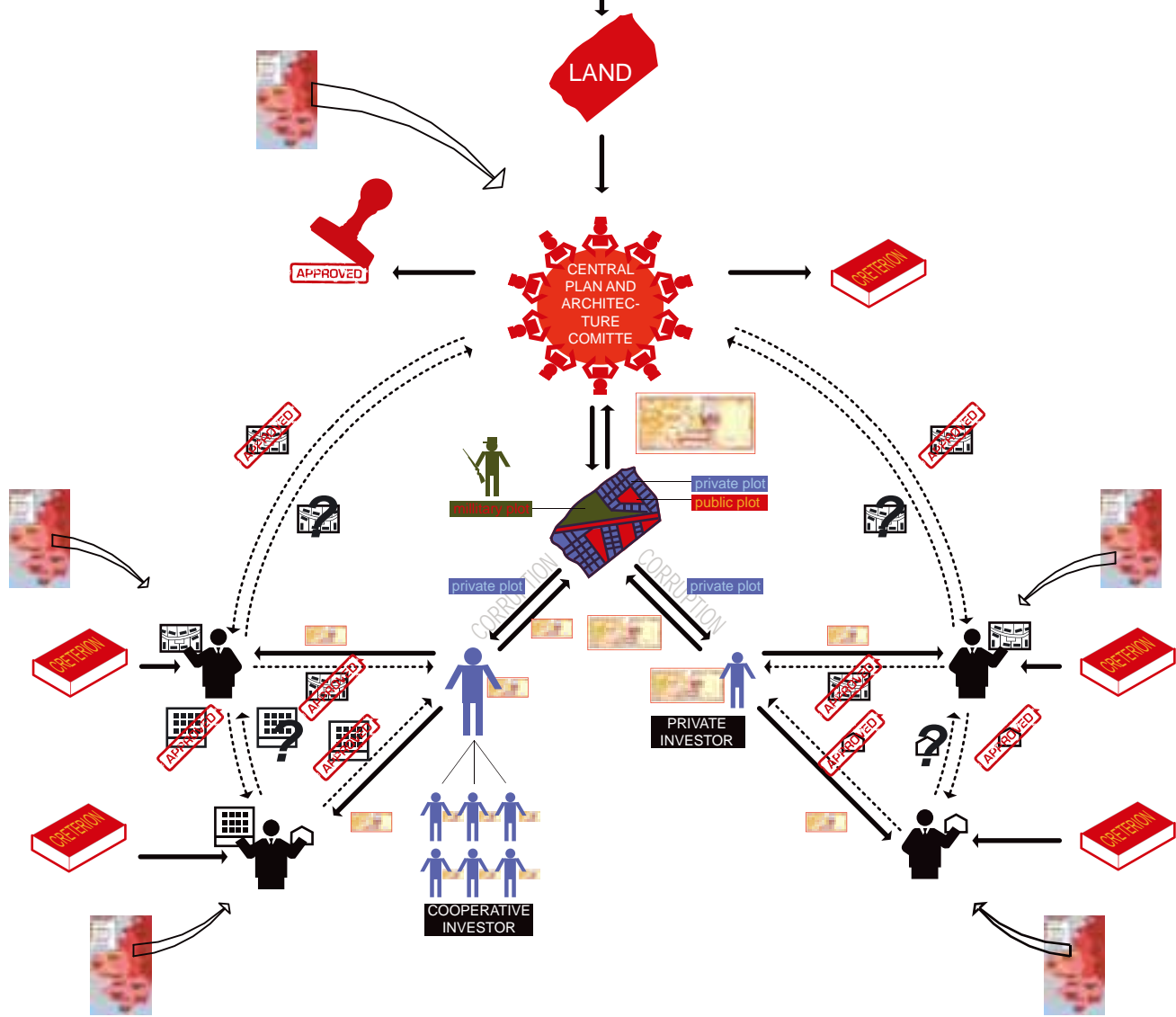
Under the socialist ideology, with cold war as the background, the Syrian regime developed links with the socialist countries and Bulgarian and Polish experts were appointed in various administrations, including the planning one.

Also many students got the scholarship from the government to study in eastern block countries. It is compulsory for them to serve the government the same year as they stayed in abroad. Lots of them became the high rank officers or leaders of government, who would use the knowledge to construct their homeland.

The prevalent style at that time in eastern block countries is modernist, as an effective, time-money saving way to serve the need of large scale construction.




  
 Gamal Abdul-Nasser (1958-1961)    Hafez al-Asad (1970-2000)

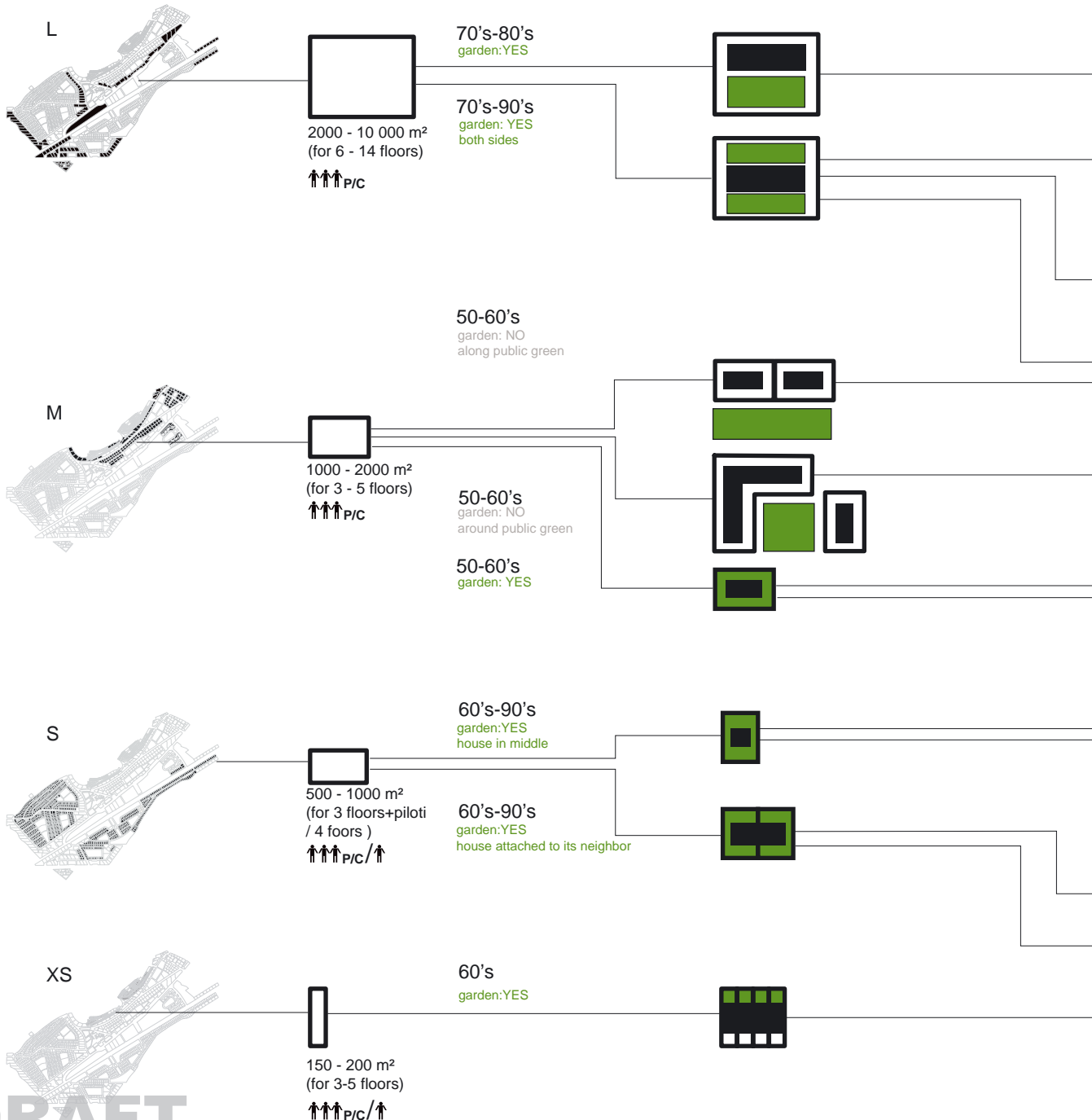


# MEZZEH PLAN

## Residential Typologies - Determined by plot

### Plot Size

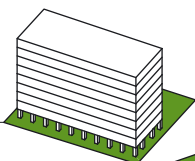
### Plot division typology



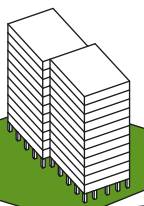


# Building typology

**HIGH RISE 1 (70-80's)**  
6-8 floors  
piloti: YES ↑↑↑ P/C



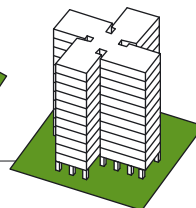
**HIGH RISE 2 (70-80's)**  
10-12 floors  
piloti: YES ↑↑↑ P/C



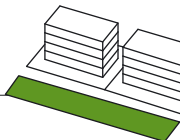
**HIGH RISE 3\_"MATCH BOX" (70's)**  
14 floors  
piloti: NO ↑↑↑ C



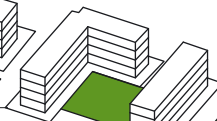
**HIGH RISE 3\_"FANS"(90'S)**  
14 floors  
piloti: YES ↑↑↑ P



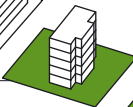
**MID RISE 1 (60's)**  
3-4 floors  
piloti: NO ↑↑↑ C



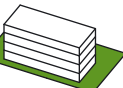
**MID RISE 2 (60's)**  
3-4 floors  
piloti: NO ↑↑↑ C



**MID RISE 3 (60's)**  
5 floors  
piloti: NO ↑↑↑ C



**MID RISE 4 (60's)**  
3-4 floors  
piloti: NO ↑↑↑ C



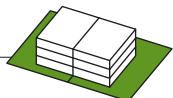
**VILLAT 1 (60's-2000's)**  
3 floors  
piloti: NO ↑↑↑ P/C / ↑



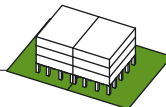
**VILLAT 2 (60's-2000's)**  
4 floors  
piloti: YES ↑↑↑ P/C / ↑



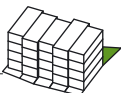
**VILLAT 3 (60's-2000's)**  
3 floors  
piloti: NO ↑↑↑ P/C / ↑



**VILLAT 4 (60's-2000's)**  
4 floors  
piloti: YES ↑↑↑ P/C / ↑



**ROW HOUSE (60's-70's)**  
3-4 floors  
piloti: NO ↑↑↑ P/C / ↑



C for cooperative investor (multiple family)



P for private investor (multiple family)



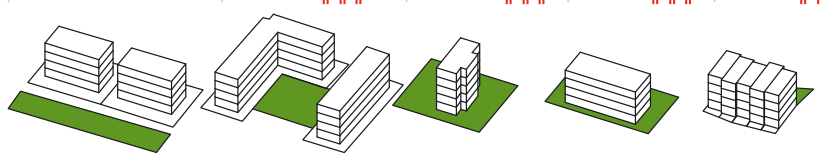
↑ for private investor (one family)

# MEZZEH PLAN

## Residential Typologies – Chronological evolution

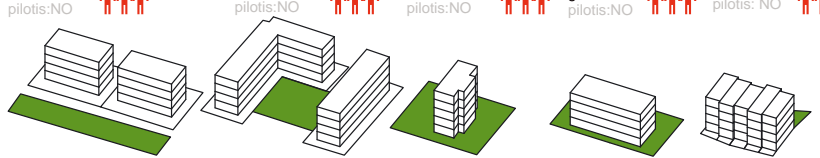
**50's**

<b>MID RISE 1</b> 5 floors garden: NO pilotis: NO	<b>MID RISE 2</b> 3-4 floors garden: NO pilotis: NO	<b>MID RISE 3</b> 3-4 floors garden: YES pilotis: NO	<b>MID RISE 4</b> 3-4 floors garden: YES pilotis: NO	<b>ROWHOUSE</b> 3-4 floors garden: YES pilotis: NO

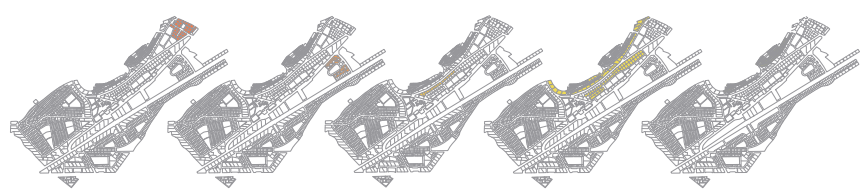


**60's**

<b>MID RISE 1</b> 5 floors garden: NO pilotis: NO	<b>MID RISE 2</b> 3-4 floors garden: NO pilotis: NO	<b>MID RISE 3</b> 3-4 floors garden: YES pilotis: NO	<b>MID RISE 4</b> 3-4 floors garden: YES pilotis: NO	<b>ROWHOUSE</b> 3-4 floors garden: YES pilotis: NO

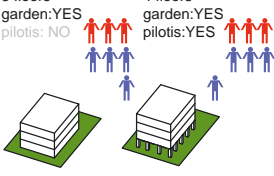


**70's**



**VILLAT 1**  
3 floors  
garden: YES  
pilotis: NO

**VILLAT 2**  
4 floors  
garden: YES  
pilotis: YES



**80's**

**VILLAT 1**  
3 floors  
garden: YES  
pilotis: NO

**VILLAT 2**  
4 floors  
garden: YES  
pilotis: YES



**90-2000's**

**VILLAT 1**  
3 floors  
garden: YES  
pilotis: NO

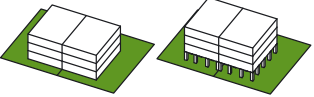
**VILLAT 2**  
4 floors  
garden: YES  
pilotis: YES



- by cooperative investors for multiple families
- by private investor for multiple families
- by private investor for one family

**VILLAT 3**  
3 floors  
garden: YES  
pilotis: NO

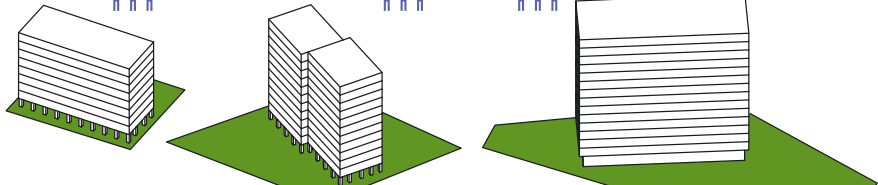
**VILLAT 4**  
4 floors  
garden: YES  
pilotis: YES



**HIGH RISE 1**  
6-8 floors  
garden: YES  
pilotis: YES

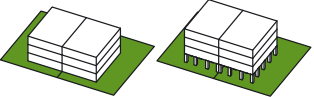
**HIGH RISE 2**  
10-12 floors  
garden: YES  
pilotis: YES

**HIGH RISE 3\_ "MATCH BOX"**  
14 floors  
garden: YES, both sides  
pilotis: NO



**VILLAT 3**  
3 floors  
garden: YES  
pilotis: NO

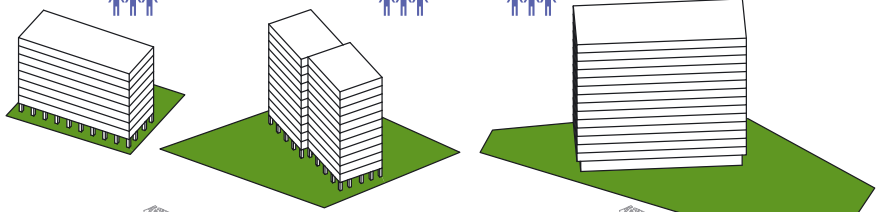
**VILLAT 4**  
4 floors  
garden: YES  
pilotis: YES



**HIGH RISE 1(70-80's)**  
6-8 floors  
garden: YES  
pilotis: YES

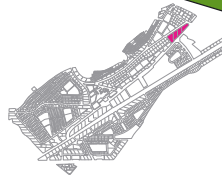
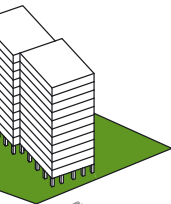
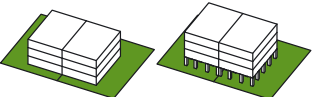
**HIGH RISE 2**  
10-12 floors  
garden: YES  
pilotis: YES

**HIGH RISE 3\_ "MATCH BOX"**  
14 floors  
garden: YES, both sides  
pilotis: NO

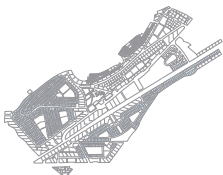
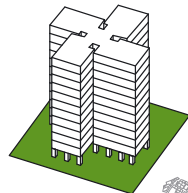


**VILLAT 3**  
3 floors  
garden: YES  
pilotis: NO

**VILLAT 4**  
4 floors  
garden: YES  
pilotis: YES



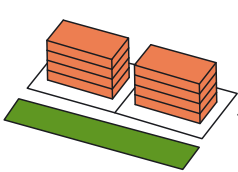
**HIGH RISE 3\_ "FANS"**  
14 floors  
garden: YES  
pilotis: YES



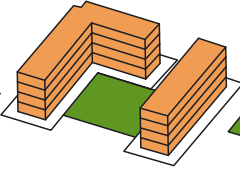
# MEZZEH PLAN

## Residential Typologies

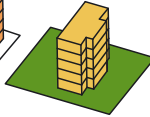
**MID-RISE 1 (50-60's)**  
 5 floors  
 garden: NO  
 pilotis: NO



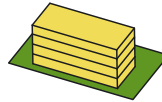
**MID-RISE 2 (50-60's)**  
 3-4 floors  
 garden: NO  
 pilotis: NO



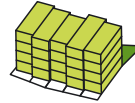
**MID-RISE 3 (50-60's)**  
 3-4 floors  
 garden: YES  
 pilotis: NO



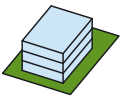
**MID-RISE 4 (50-60's)**  
 3-4 floors  
 garden: YES  
 pilotis: NO



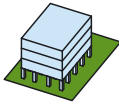
**ROWHOUSE (50-60's)**  
 3-4 floors  
 garden: YES  
 pilotis: NO



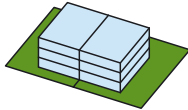
**VILLAT 1(60-2000's)**  
 3 floors  
 garden: YES  
 pilotis: NO



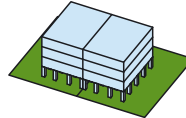
**VILLAT (60-2000's)**  
 4 floors  
 garden: YES  
 pilotis: YES



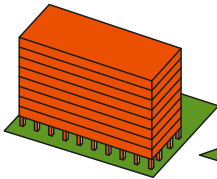
**VILLAT 3(60-2000's)**  
 3 floors  
 garden: YES  
 pilotis: NO



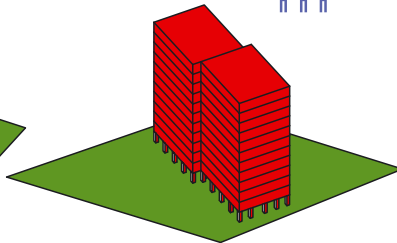
**VILLAT 4(60-2000's)**  
 4 floors  
 garden: YES  
 pilotis: YES



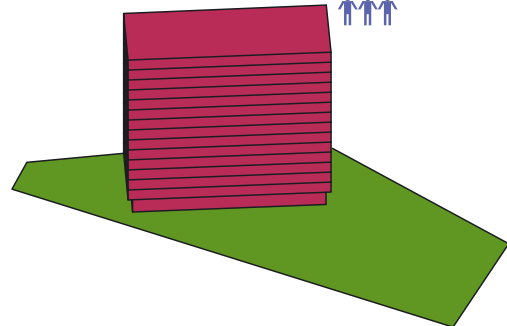
**HIGH RISE 1(70's-80's)**  
 6-8 floors  
 garden: YES  
 piloti: YES



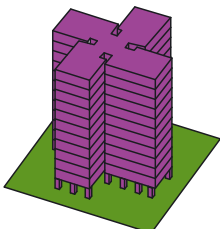
**HIGH RISE 2 (70's-80's)**  
 10-12 floors  
 garden: YES  
 piloti: YES



**HIGH RISE 3\_ "MATCH BOX" (70's-80's)**  
 14 floors  
 garden: YES, both sides  
 piloti: NO



**HIGH RISE 3\_ "FANS" (90's-2000's)**  
 14 floors  
 garden: YES  
 piloti: YES



by cooperative investors  
 for multiple families



by private investor  
 for multiple families

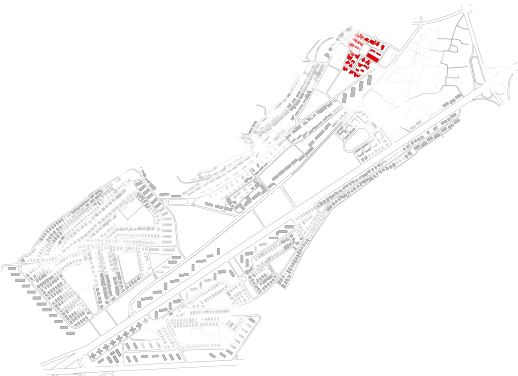


by private investor for one family

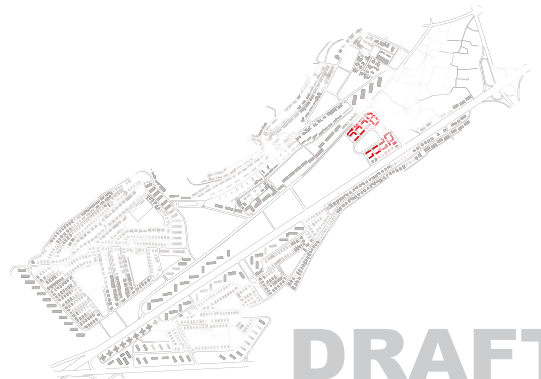
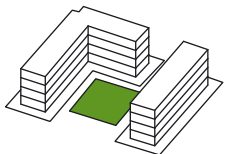


# MEZZEH PLAN

Residential Typologies\_Mid-rise 1, 3-4 floors without garden, 1960's



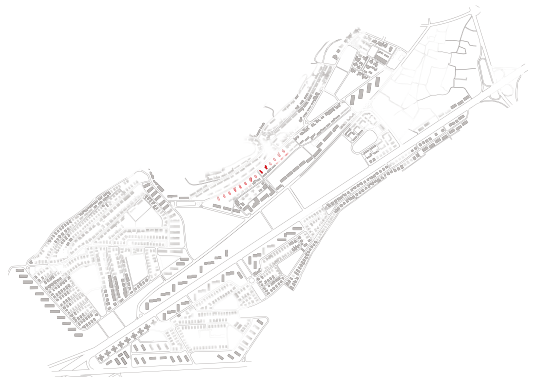
Residential Typologies\_Mid-rise 2, 4-5 floors, without garden, 1960's



**DRAFT**  
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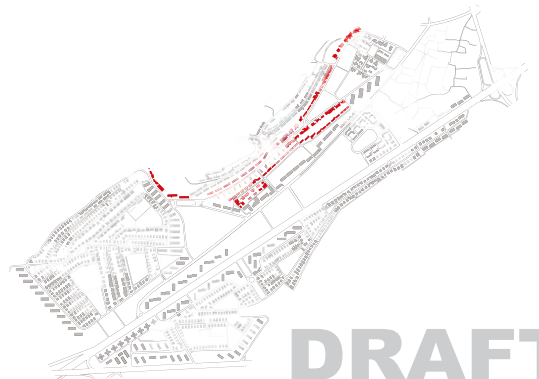
# MEZZEH PLAN

Residential Typologies\_Mid-rise 3, 5 floors with garden, 1960's





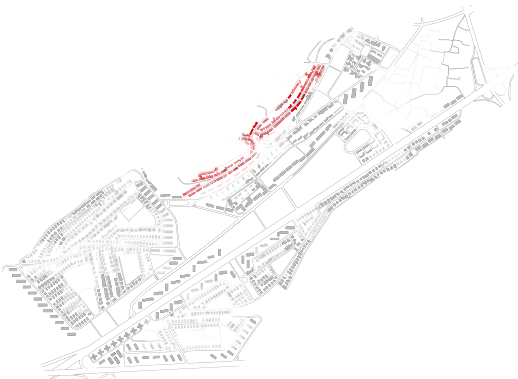
Residential Typologies\_Mid-rise 4, 3-4 floors, 1960's



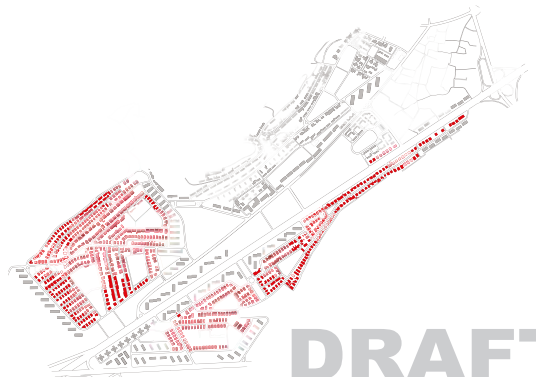
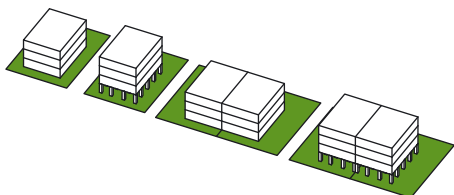
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# MEZZEH PLAN

Residential Typologies\_Rowhouse 3-4 floors, 1960's



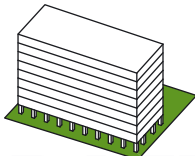
Residential Typologies\_Villat 3-4 floors, with/without piloti, with garden, 1960-2000's



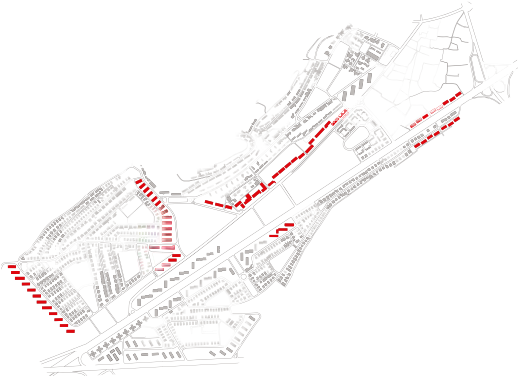
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# MEZZEH PLAN

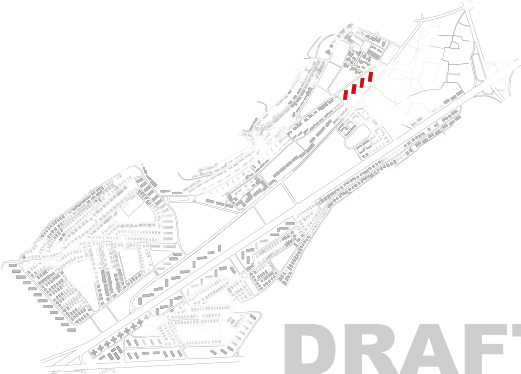
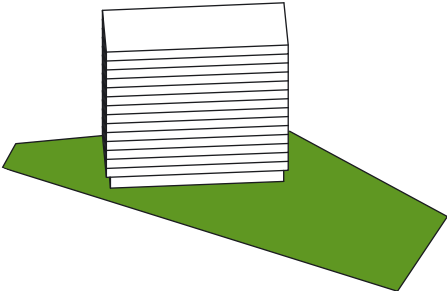
Residential Typologies\_High-rise 6-8 floors, 1970's



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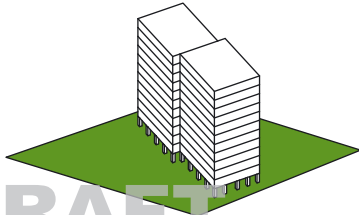
Residential Typologies\_High-rise 14 floors, the Matchboxes, 1970's



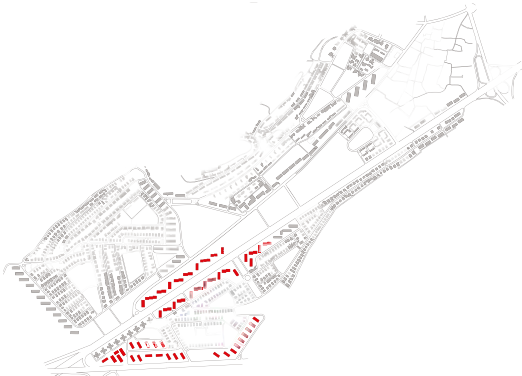
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# MEZZEH PLAN

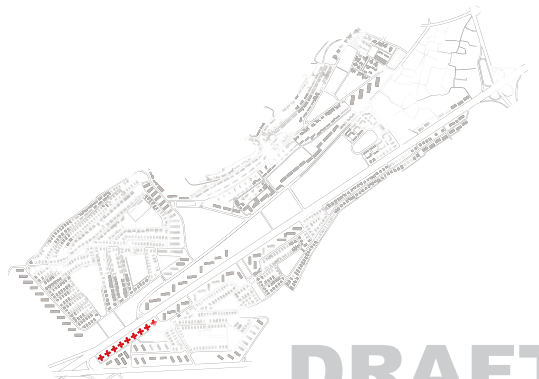
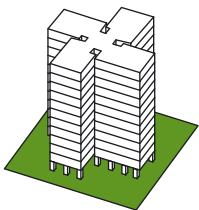
Residential Typologies\_High-rise 10-12 floors, 1970-90's



**DRAFT**  
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Residential Typologies\_High-rise 10-12 floors, the The Fans 1990's



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# EVOLUTION

GREENERY

BUILDING TYPOLOGIES

COMMERCIAL SPACES

# EVOLUTION Greenery

## Basic facts

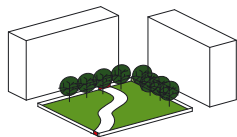
Many public gardens are kept green, but are mostly gated and closed during night, and some are so gated without entry, the greenery is only for the eyes. Many gardens have fallen in neglect, and in a city with a shortening of water supply, many gardens are dead. Most of the dead gardens are in the older parts of Mezzeh, and they are kept greener in the wealthier areas than in the lower income areas.

Parks become minimized due to a higher parking demand and

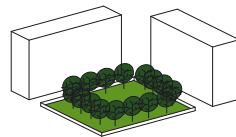
one planned green area is now overtaken fully by a market. But, the green space is not only diminishing, many people add illegally to their houses with private gardens, decreasing oversized and often unused sidewalks.



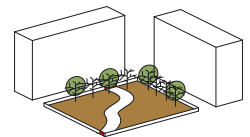
Transformation examples of greenery.



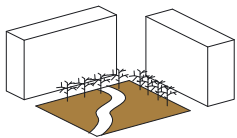
Gated park  
Kept green  
Entry during daytime



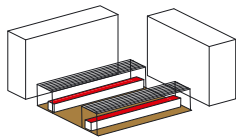
Completely gated park  
Kept green  
No entry



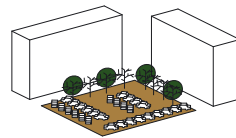
Dead gated park



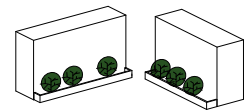
Dead greens public or shared



Green area transformed to market



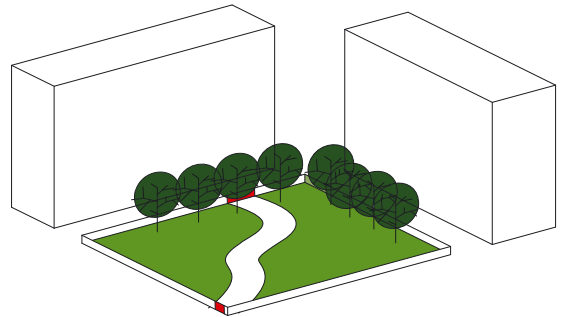
Green area diminished by parking lot



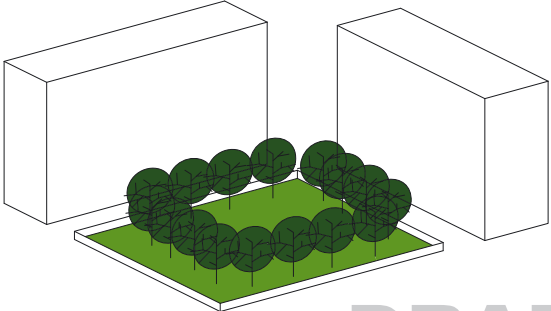
Appropriation of public or cooperative space for private greens

# EVOLUTION

Greenery\_Gated garden with entry during daytime

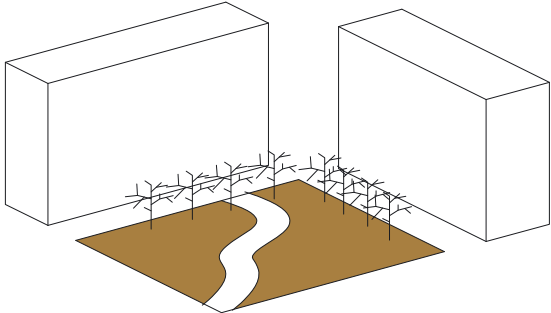


Greenery\_Gated garden with no entry

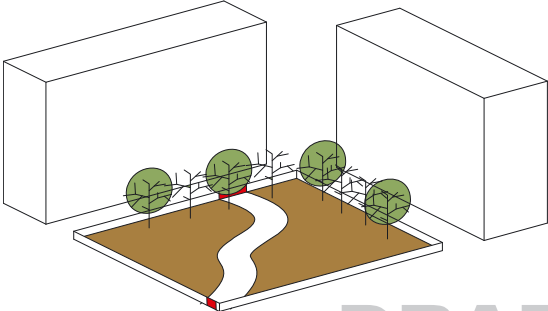


# EVOLUTION

Greenery\_Neglected cooperative gardens

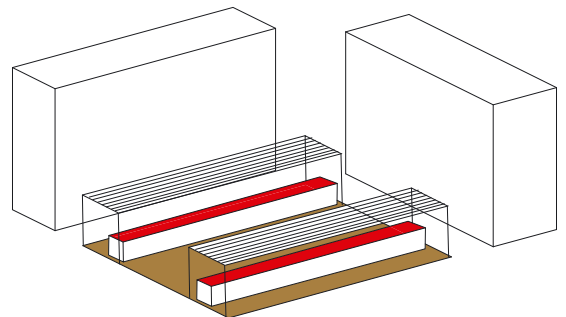


Greenery\_Neglected gated garden, always locked



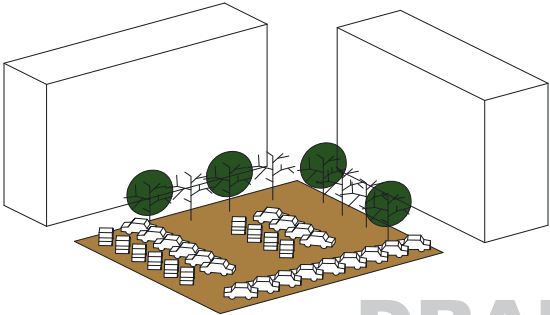
# EVOLUTION

Greenery\_Public garden transformed to vegetable market



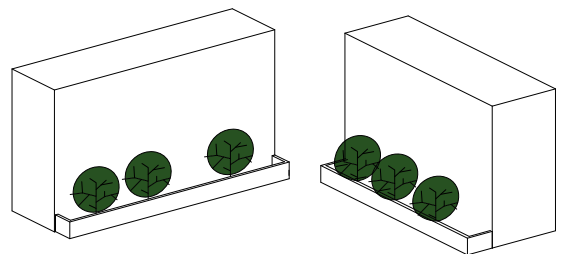


Greenery\_Public garden diminished by parking

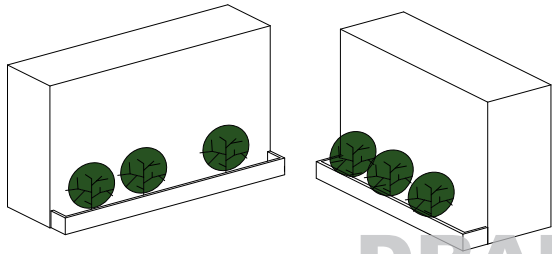


# EVOLUTION

Greenery\_Shared space in bottom floor appropriated by ground floor residents



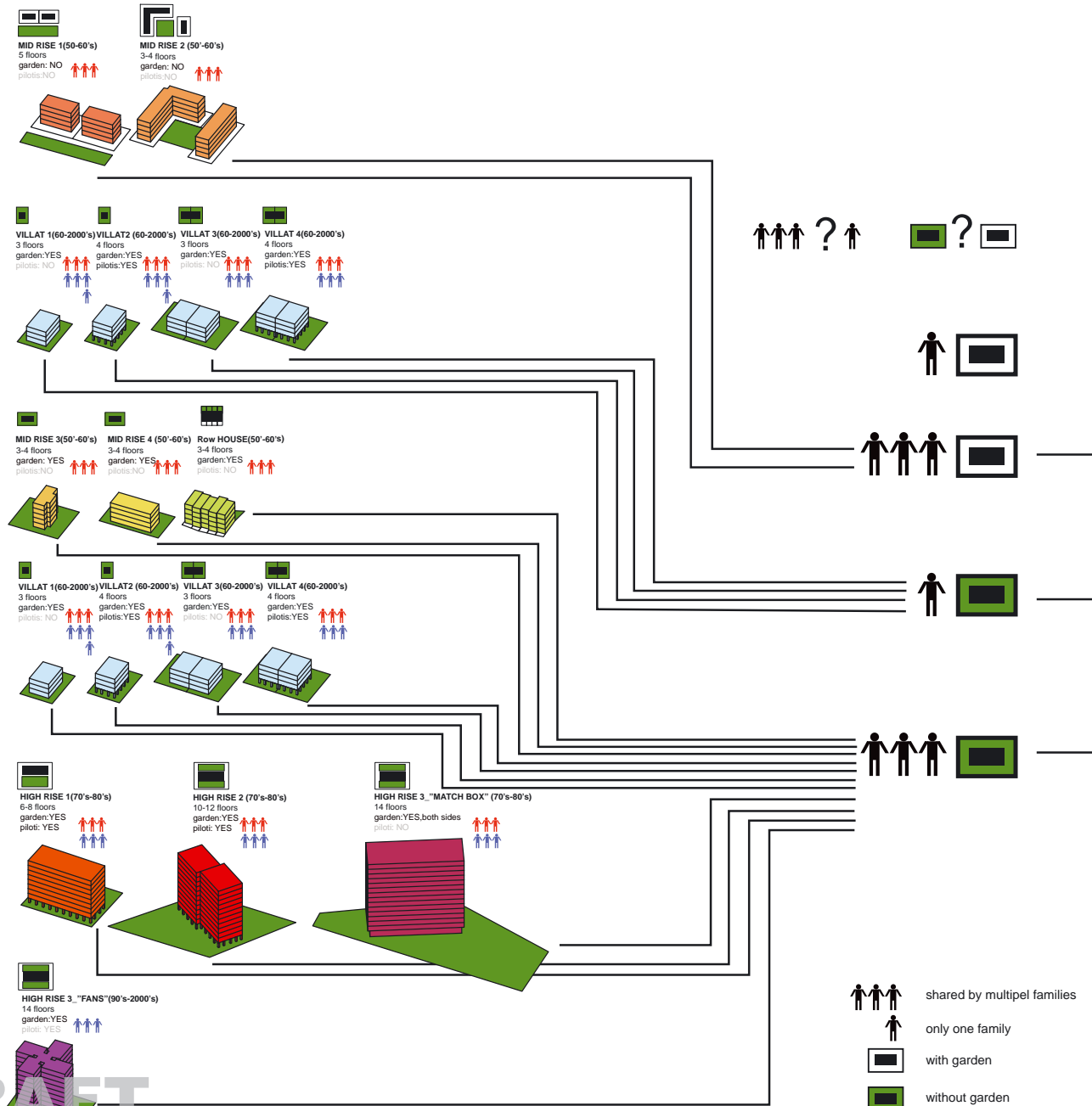
Greenery\_Appropriated and privatized sidewalk by ground floor residents



# EVOLUTION Residential Typologies

From these different typologies we've found in the area of Mezzeh we have chosen three to look at more closely how they have been changed and altered by their residents and how the public spaces around these houses have transformed and have become appropriated. The examples vary in size and date and their relation

to ground. The 3-4 floor mid-rise without garden is built in the earliest development of Mezzeh as part of a social housing project. The Villat is a very small apartment house with a private garden, for a wealthier class built from the late 1960's up until today. The high-rise is mainly built from the 1970's when the economy was expand-

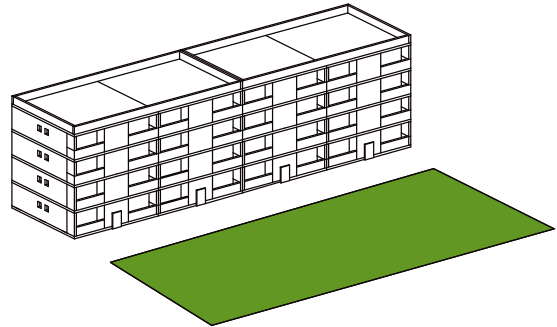


ing and the population was increasing rapidly and there was a big demand for flats and efficient housing. But also, the east-block architects and planners working in Damascus preferred the high-rise.

The transformation, alteration and appropriations of these houses take many forms and here we present what we have seen in Mezzeh.

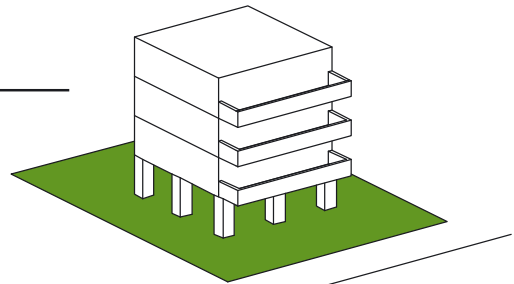
**MID RISE 1 (50-60's)**

4 floors  
garden: NO  
pilotis: NO



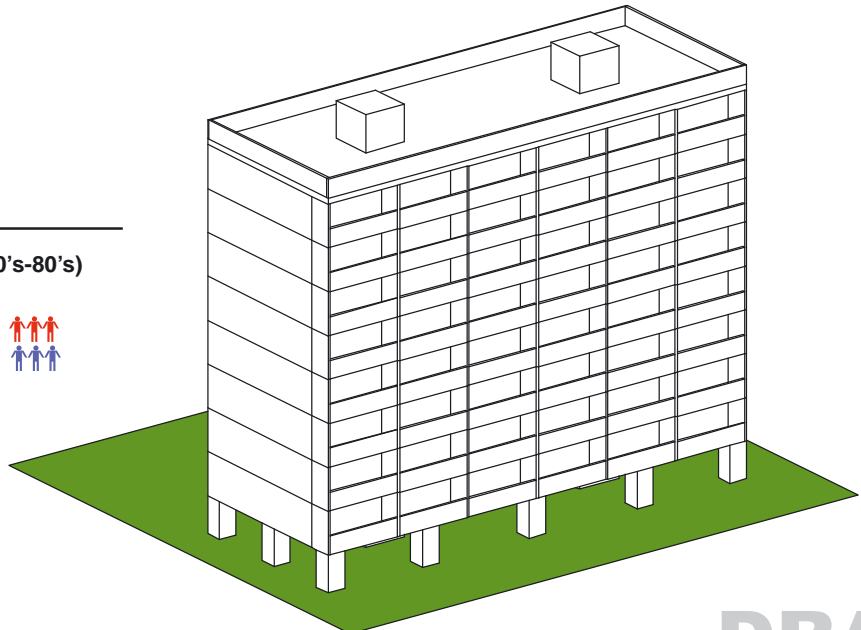
**VILLAT 2 (60-2000's)**

4 floors  
garden: YES  
pilotis: YES



**HIGH RISE 2 (70's-80's)**

10-12 floors  
garden: YES  
piloti: YES



# EVOLUTION Residential Typologies – Mid-rise

The 3-4 floor mid-rise apartment building without garden was only used in the early development of Mezzeh.

## Ownership

Many of them was part of the Nasser project, a social housing for the young poor made in the name of the president of the UAR. Apartments were sold to cooperative members.

## Alterations

These houses doesn't not have their own garden attached to the house, but a public green space near by. Many times these green spaces were never executed. They are now occupied by parking.

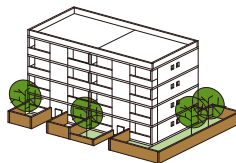
The pavement surrounding the house, is often occupied by private gardens, the residents in the ground floor take this place as part of their own property, and often build extensions of their indoor space. Many times these additions are used as small shops facing the street.

The apartments are 2 bedroom apartment, very efficiently planned, with a very small kitchen and bathroom, as it was built for the young. The small kitchens are often rebuilt.

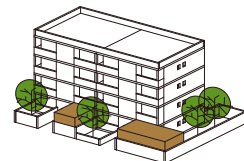
The additions also happen on the roof. In the case of the Villat these new floor additions are often made with great care to fit the rest of the house and are often undetectable for someone new to the area.

The additions on the roof for these houses are constructed during night so they won't be detected by the government. As soon as the new construction has a concrete roof it cannot be torn down according to Syrian law.

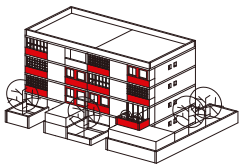
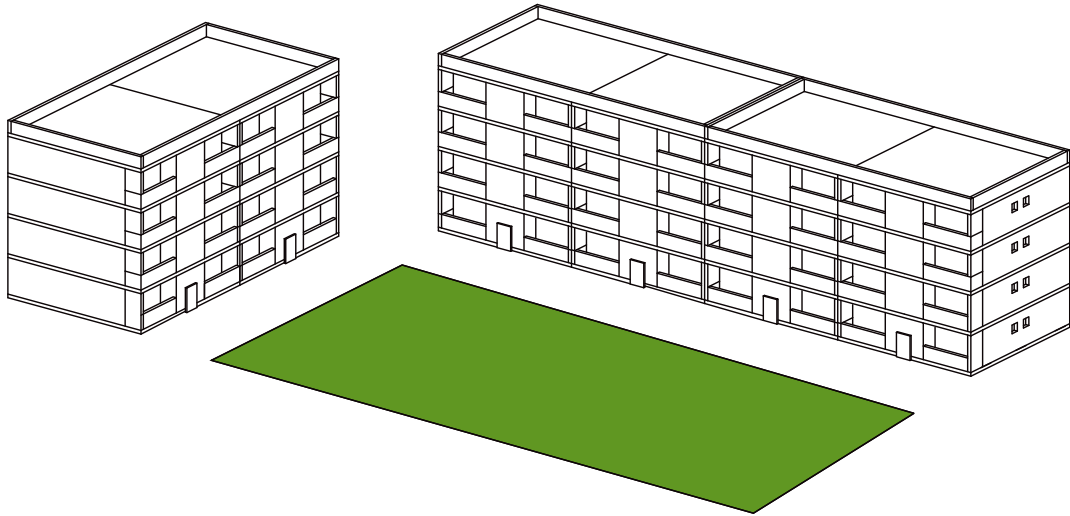
Transformation examples of Mid-rise without garden.



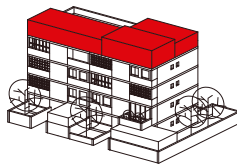
Private garden appropriation of wide sidewalks and space around house.



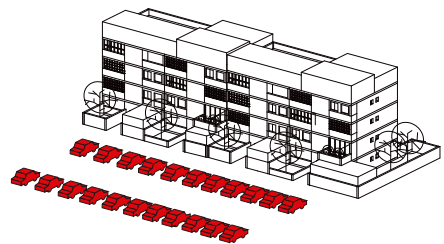
Structures are built in the "private gardens", additions of the interior space.



Additions and alterations on the exterior and interior.



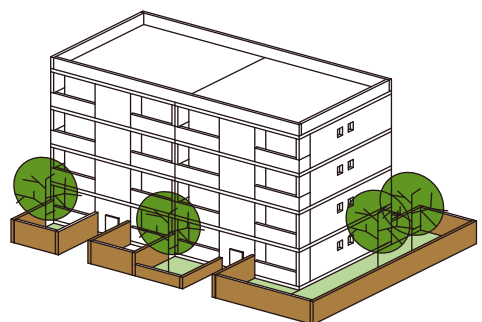
New floors are built on top floor.



Shared space or garden space between blocks becomes occupied by parking.

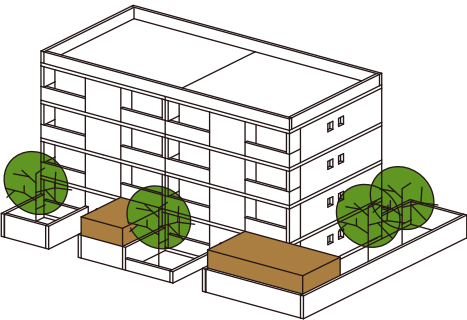
# EVOLUTION

Residential Typologies\_Mid-rise\_Shared or public space appropriated by private gardens



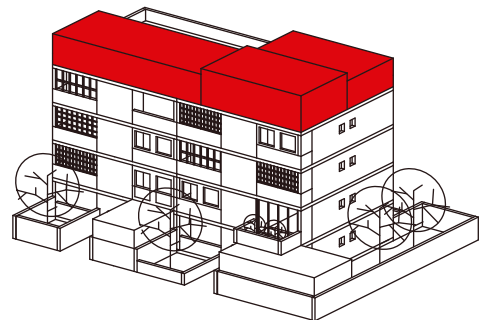


Residential Typologies\_Mid-rise\_Shared or public space appropriated by residential additions

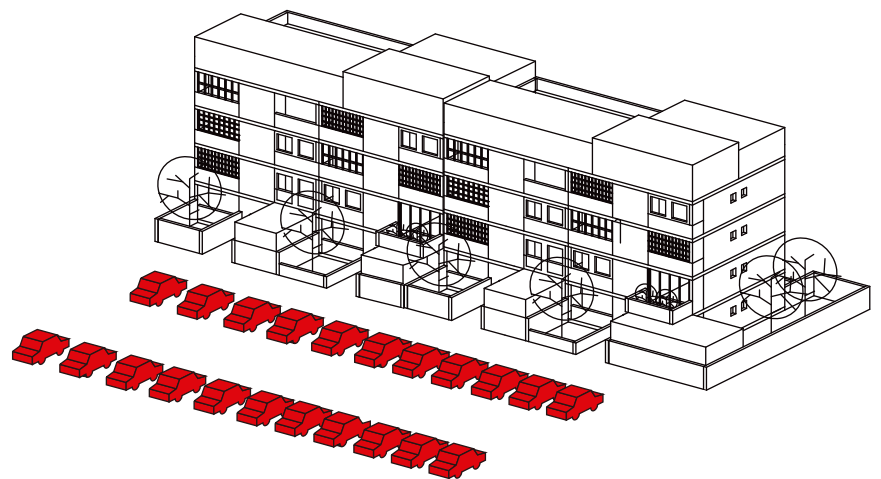


# EVOLUTION

Residential Typologies\_Mid-rise\_Roof additions and alterations to windows and balconies



Residential Typologies\_Mid-rise\_Open space inside block appropriated by cars



# EVOLUTION

## Residential Typologies – The Villat

The Villat is a three floor apartment building with one apartment per floor.

### Ownership

Villat could be built as a cooperative or a private investor. The price for the plot was cheaper for an cooperative applicant, but any one could apply for the governmental housing loan.

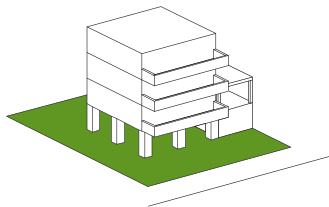
### Alterations

The residents were allowed to build a garage next to house, but these garages were rarely used for keeping cars. Often they were used as extra residential space, sold to another person, or transformed in to a commercial space. Gradually the garage became illegally extended to the street, which was not the original plan for plot. On top of these garage the inhabitants on the higher floors built new illegal constructions, sometimes as an extension of the interior living space, sometimes as an extra terrace for the apartment.

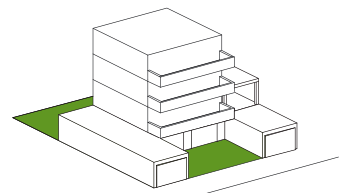
As almost no one uses the garages for parking there are cars everywhere along the streets, parked in more or less informal ways.

It's almost impossible to find an unchanged Villat today, which makes it very difficult to determine which villa has piloti-space or not, as all Villat now have a covered ground floor.

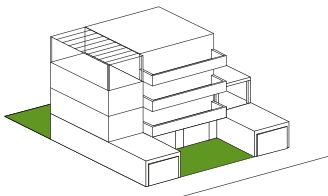
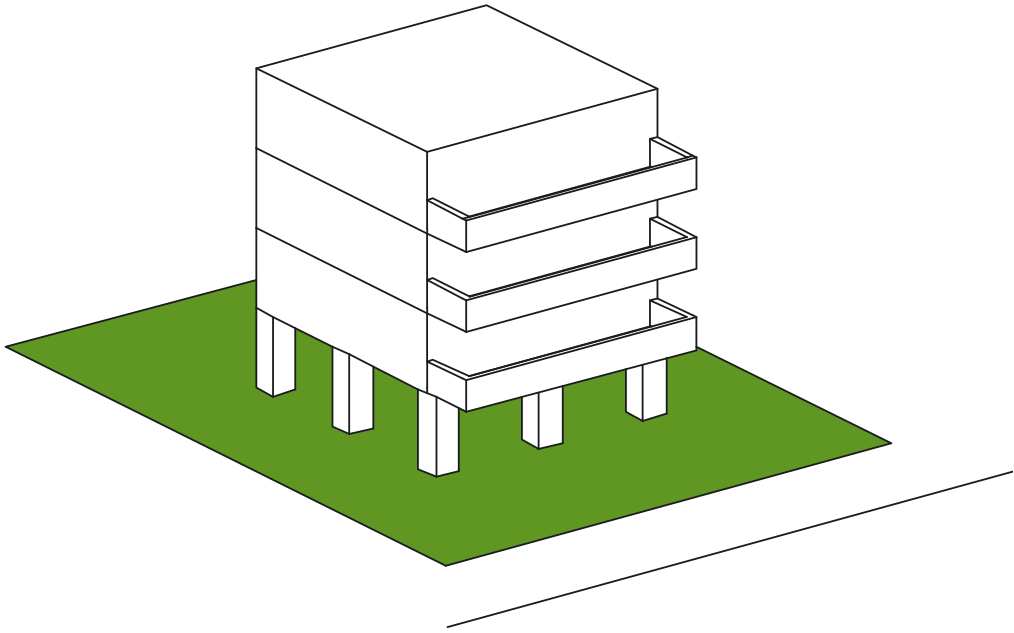
Transformation examples of Villat with piloti.



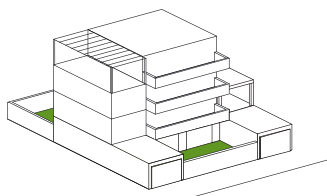
Residents are allowed to build private garage. Garages are often transformed to other functions; residential or commercial. On top of garage illegal terraces are constructed.



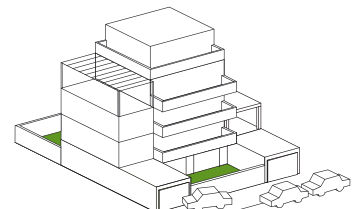
Garages become illegally extended to the street. Piloti-space becomes appropriated by residences or commercial.



Illegal additions on top of illegal additions, each floor extends the interior space.



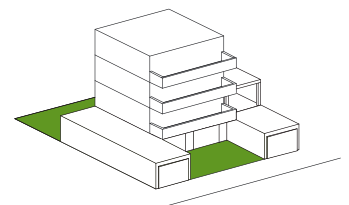
Gardens become gated.



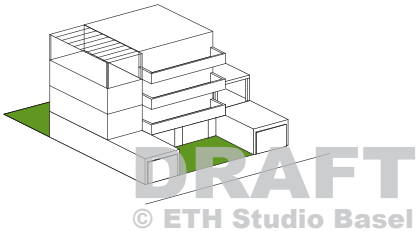
Since few actually use garages for parking, the cars are everywhere on streets.

# EVOLUTION

Residential Typologies\_Villat\_Commercial garage, illegal terrace, gated garden

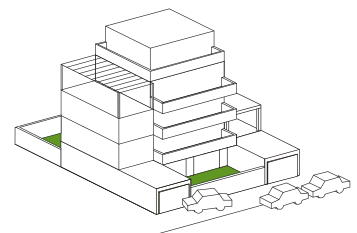


Residential Typologies\_Villat\_Three illegal additional construction on top of each other



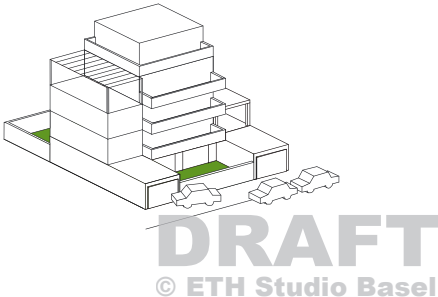
# EVOLUTION

Residential Typologies\_Villat\_Additional floor





Residential Typologies\_Villat\_Parking on sidewalk



# EVOLUTION

## Residential Typologies – High-rise

The big plots were dedicated for high-rises, and high-rises weren't built until the 1970s. In the early plans for Mezzeh the highest building was supposed to be only 6 floors.

### Ownership

The big plots could be sold both to private investors and cooperatives, but the government subsidized the price for the land for the cooperatives.

The cooperative were organized by profession and the houses sometime have variations to fit the specific group of residents needs. But in general all the high-rises are very similar to each other, following a standard model typology.

### Alterations

Even though you would think that a house built by a cooperative would have a more wishes to organize them selves more around the collectively owned spaces, this was not the case. Apartments were often sold very quickly after being built, and many bought in illegally in these cooperative projects to get an apartment. It was relatively cheap to join a cooperative, and the profit of selling it when the house was finished was high.

So the idea of unified residents almost never existed. This resulted in a lot of neglect of the collectively owned spaces. People paid a lot of attention to altering and decorating inside their apartments and even the door to their apartments. Elevators, back set gardens, lighting in staircases and central heating was neglected. People didn't want to part of a system that would maybe benefit

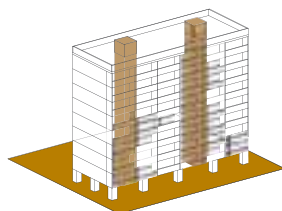
their neighbour more than them selves. But also many times water and heating was not sufficient, as people in the nearby informal housing areas illegally connected them selves to the infrastructure. So the residents of the high-rises put in their own heating, cooling out side of balconies and water tanks on the roof.

Most of the apartments were 2-3 bedrooms, which didn't fit the regular Damascene family which consists of 5.2 persons. Balconies were rebuilt to expand the indoor space and give extra bedrooms and larger living space.

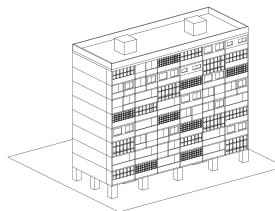
The green space planned around these houses that belong to these houses also transformed over time. As the residents in the houses rarely can decide what to do with the back set gardens they are left in neglect, and many green spaces are dead and unused. Many times illegal commercial activity has taken over the gardens and the unused piloti space in the bottom floor. Now a days these supermarkets, shops and offices are being legalized, and are very much appreciated by the residents and the neighbourhood. The greens spaces that are kept green, are gated and privatized by the people living in the ground floors.

Many times the gardens are minimized for having more parking.

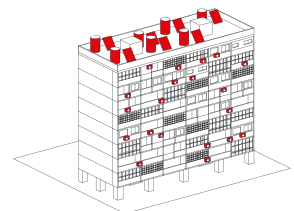
Transformation examples of High-rise



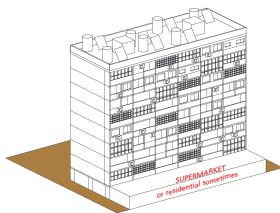
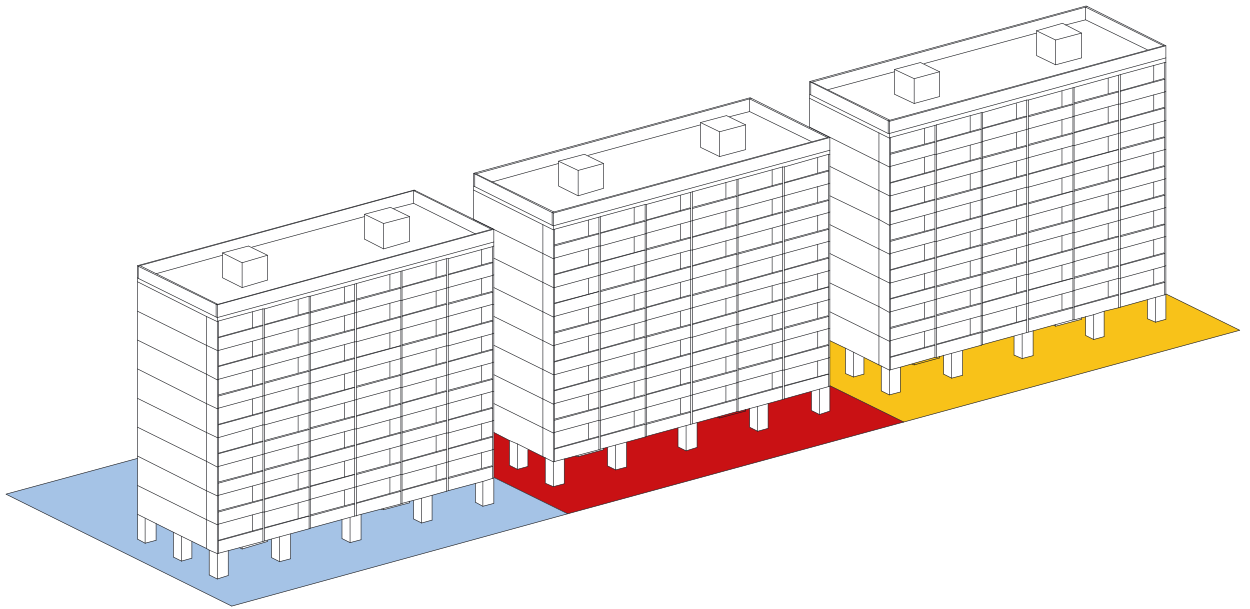
Shared spaces are left in neglect. Dead back set gardens.



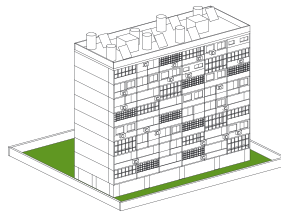
Residents change the interiors and exteriors. Balconies rebuilt to indoor space. People pay lot of attention to their door to apartment.



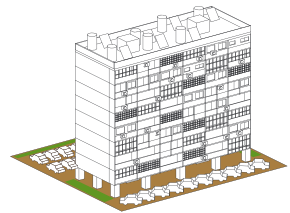
Heating, cooling and water tanks occupy roof and exterior.



Piloti space is rebuilt to residences or commercial space.



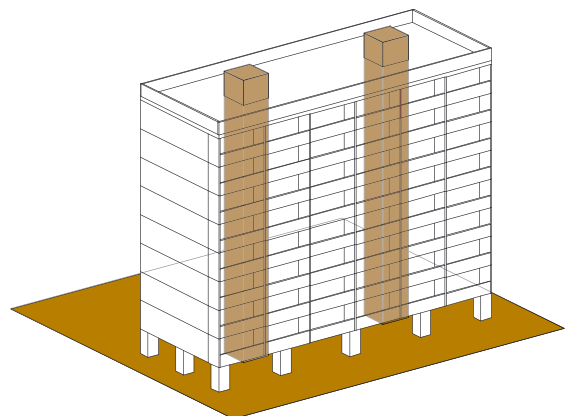
Green ground floor become gated.



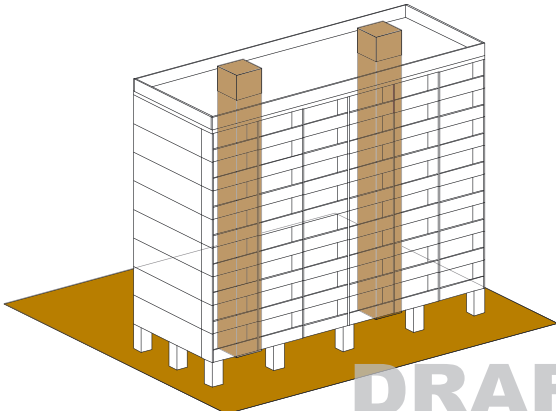
Greenery is minimized to fit parking need.

# EVOLUTION

Residential Typologies\_High-rise\_Neglect of shared spaces

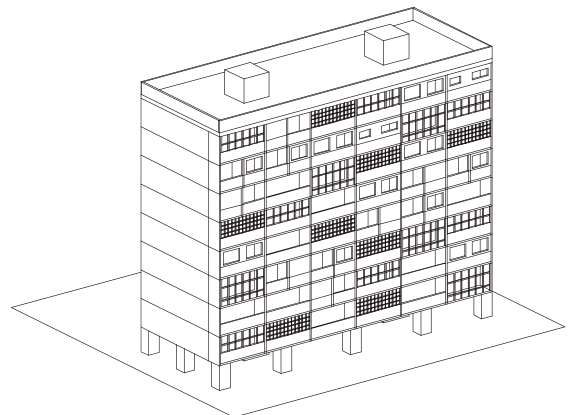


Residential Typologies\_High-rise\_Neglect of shared back set garden

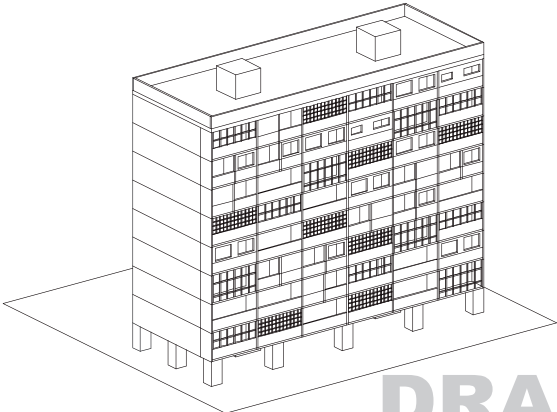


# EVOLUTION

Residential Typologies\_High-rise\_Alterations of private entrances

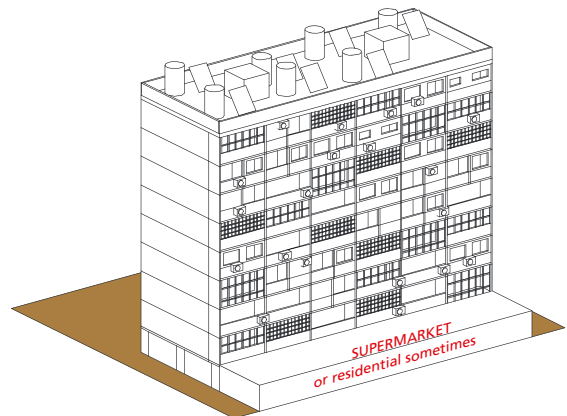


Residential Typologies\_High-rise\_Alterations and additions of interior and exterior



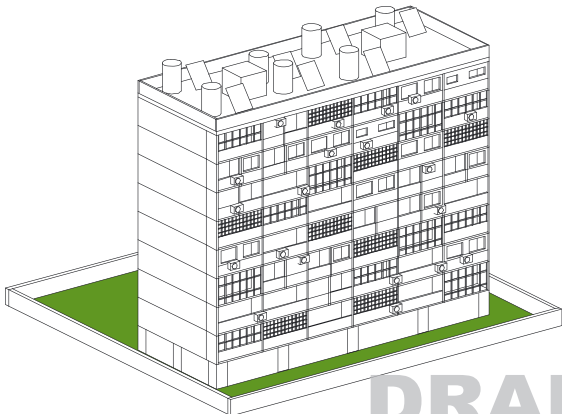
# EVOLUTION

Residential Typologies\_High-rise\_Piloti space is appropriated.



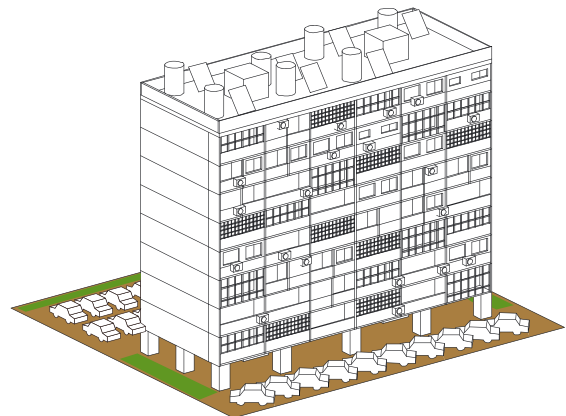


Residential Typologies\_High-rise\_Gardens become gated.

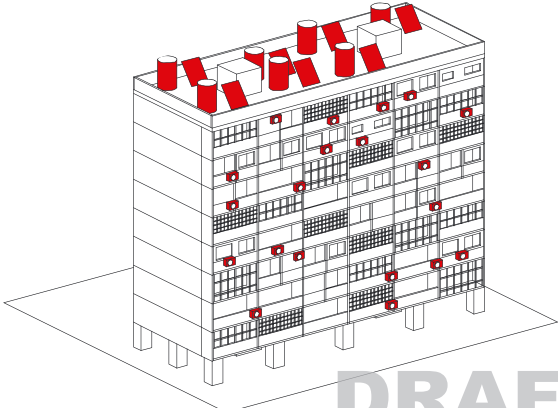


# EVOLUTION

Residential Typologies\_High-rise\_Greenery is minimized for need of parking.



Residential Typologies\_High-rise\_Watertanks-, heating- and cooling additions.



# EVOLUTION

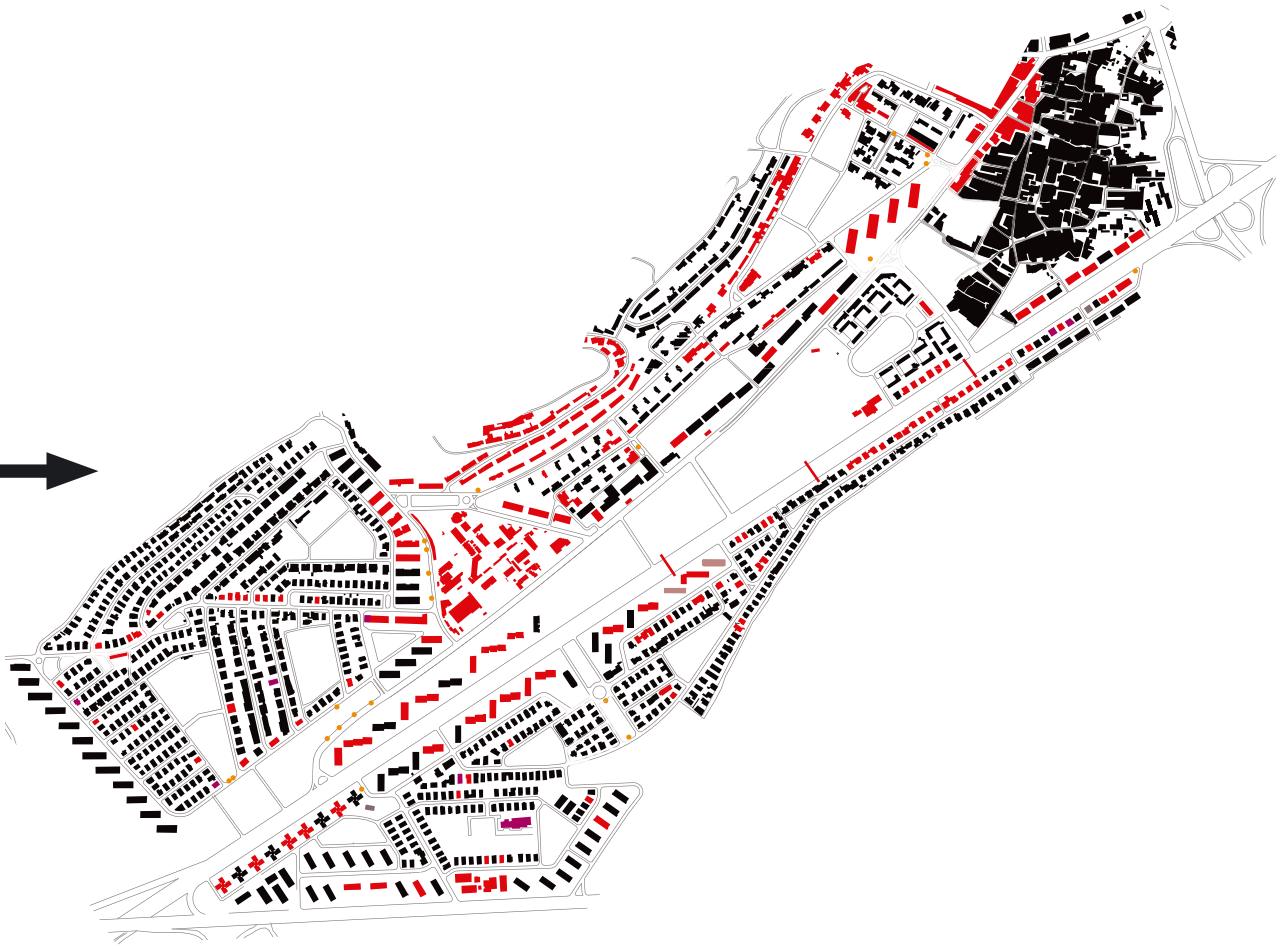
## Commercial additions

### Basic facts

Many of the additions and appropriations to the residential houses and also to some extent public greenery has been transformed into commercial spaces. Up until 2000 all of these shops, offices or restaurants was illegal to make, but now it is allowed along Mezzeh high-way, which has resulted in a big increase of commercialisation.

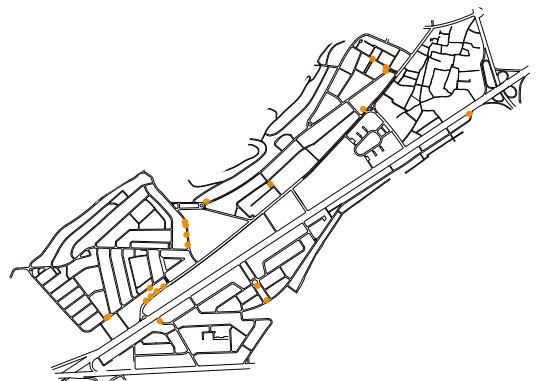
There are many apartments that has been rebuilt into offices.



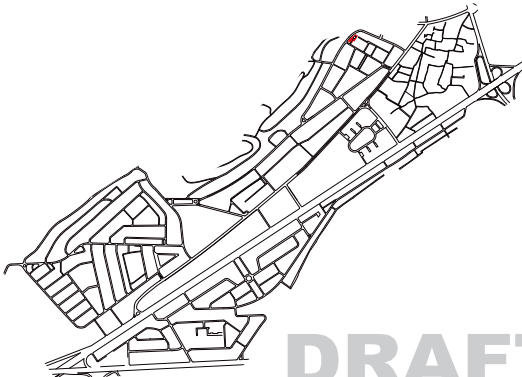


# EVOLUTION

Commercial additions\_Small tabacs

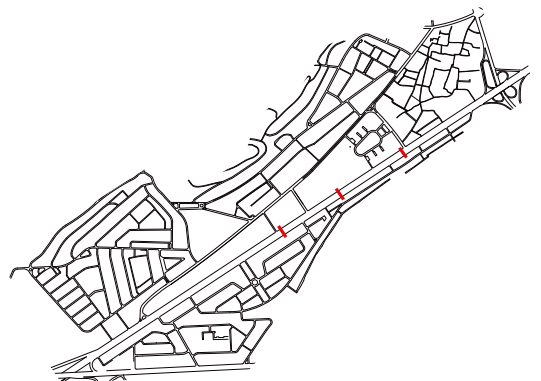


Commercial additions\_Garden transformed into market



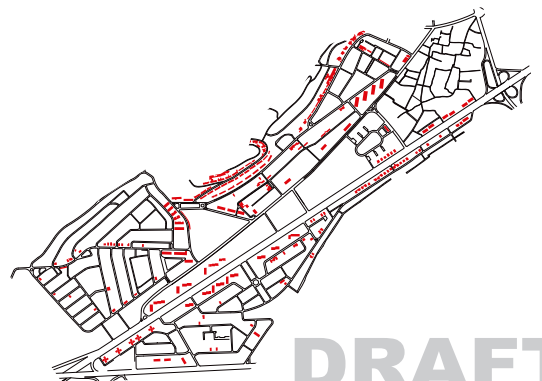
# EVOLUTION

Commercial additions\_Tunnels under Mezzeh highway



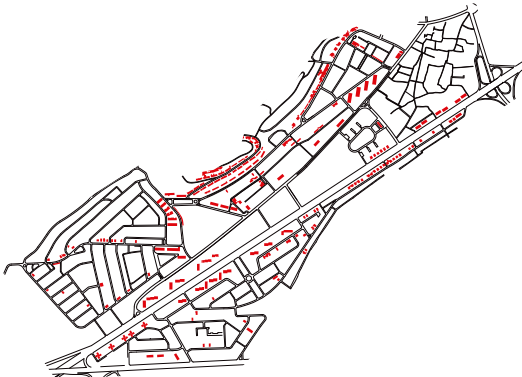


Commercial additions\_Rebuilt ground floor

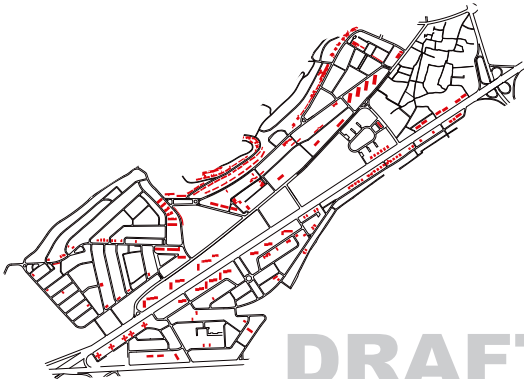


# EVOLUTION

Commercial additions\_Rebuilt ground floor



Commercial additions\_Rebuilt ground floor



**DRAFT**  
© ETH Studio Basel



# CASE STUDIES

MID-RISE WITHOUT GARDEN

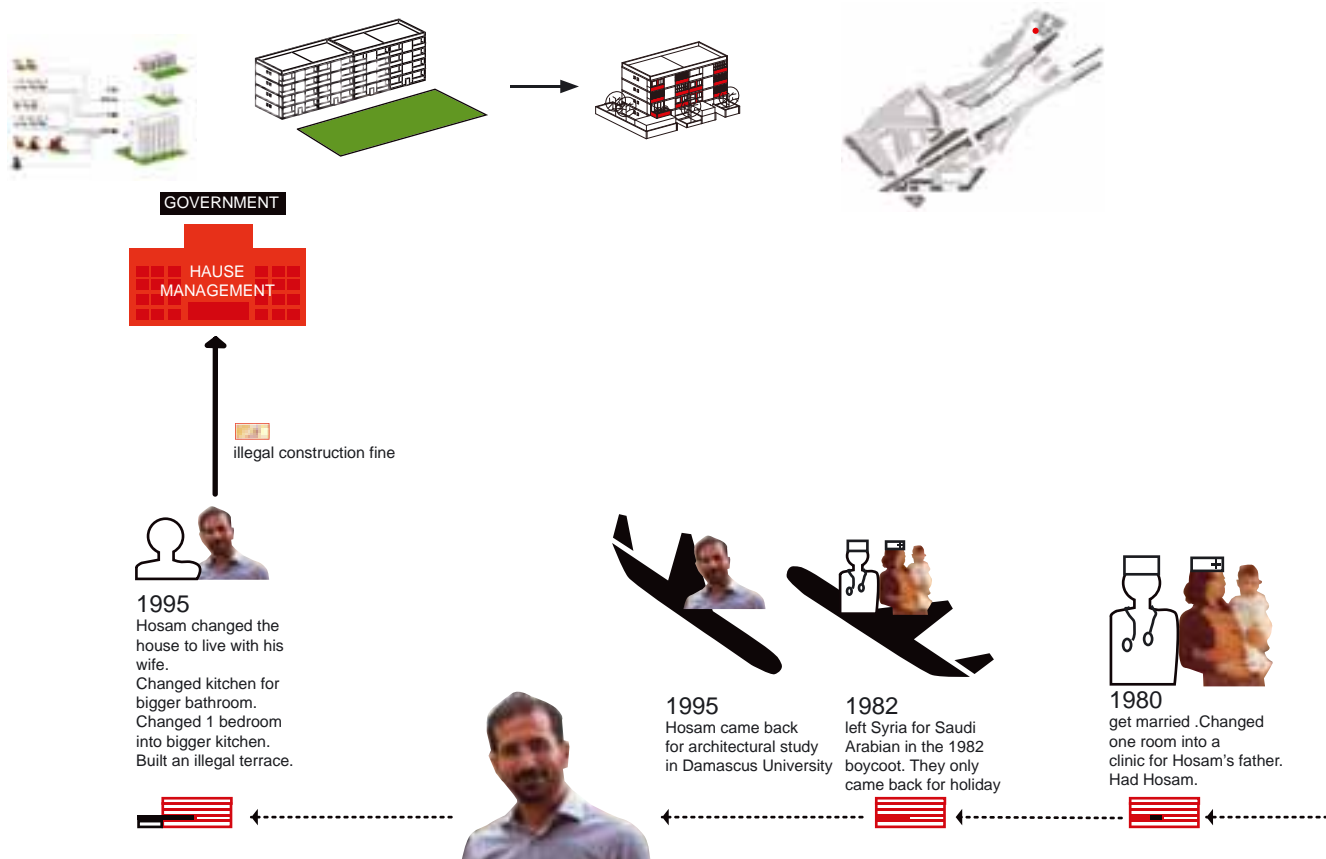
VILLAT

HIGH-RISE

# EVOLUTION

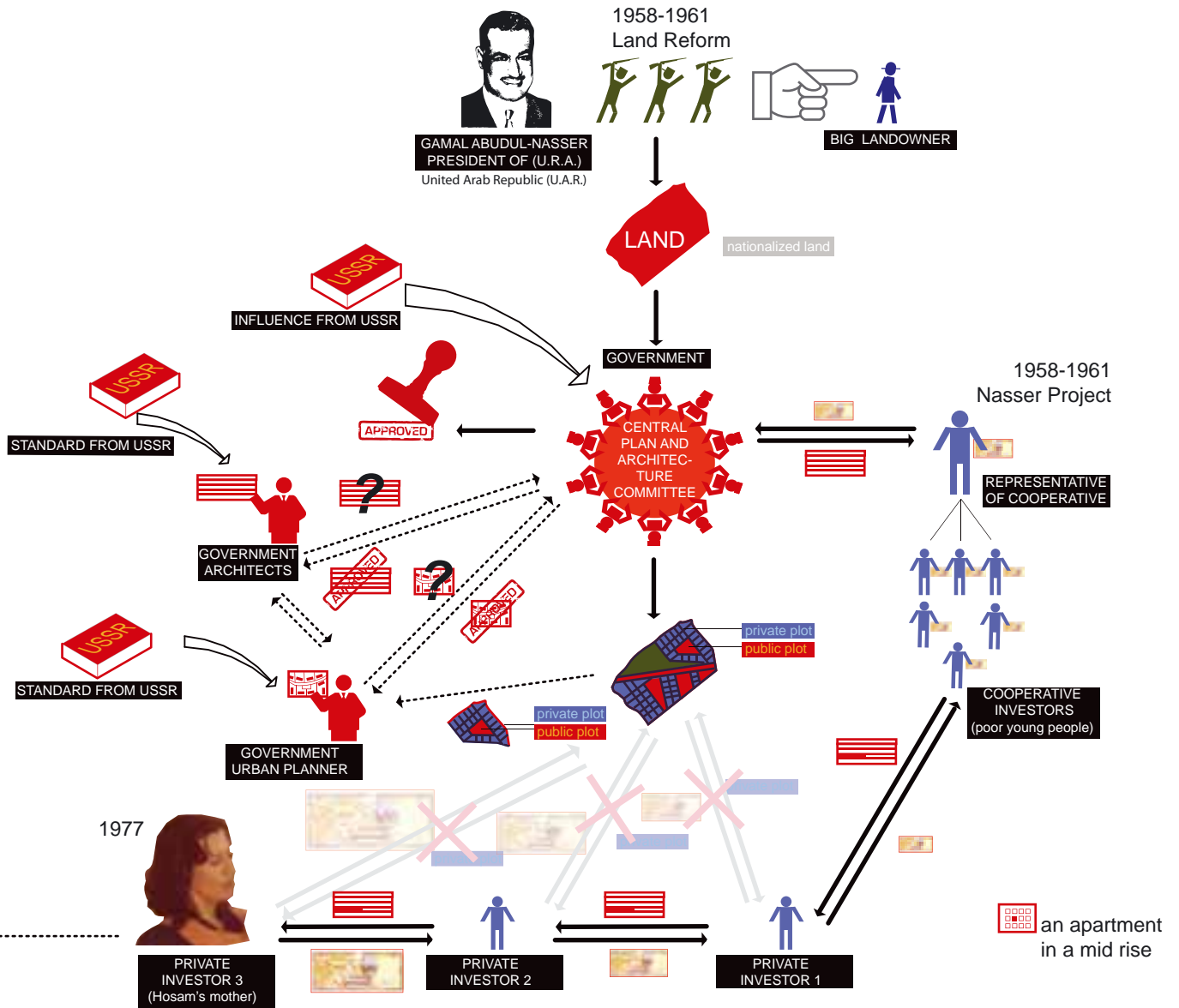
## Mid-rise without Garden - Hosam's house

Hosam, the owner, is a Syrian architect.  
 This house was built in the 1960's, as part of the Nasser project housing for the poor youth.



The original inhabitant sold the apartment quickly after being built, and Hosam's mother bought it in 1977 from it's second owner. Hosam's mother met Hosam's father at the hospital they both worked at, she as a midwife and he as a surgeon. They both lived in the apartment for 2 years and had Hosam there. They rebuilt one the bedrooms to a small private clinic where Hosam's father worked in the afternoon. In the early 80's Syria was in a great recession and was put under boycott from the rest of the world for invading Lebanon. They decided to leave Syria for Saudi Arabia. The house was left empty, but was visited during the summers for holidays. In 1995 Hosam started in architecture school at University of Damascus and moved back to Syria and lived in the apartment. His then wife moved in there too and they together renovated the apartment. The small kitchen and bathroom became a big bathroom, the bedroom - clinic became the new kitchen. They also expanded their living-room, and built a new balcony, illegally, on the already existing illegal structure on the ground floor. Hosam paid his compensation fine to the government and the new balcony was legalized.





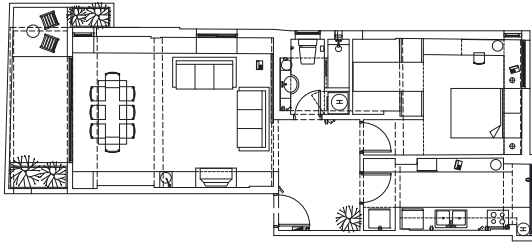
Model made by Hosam for renovation.



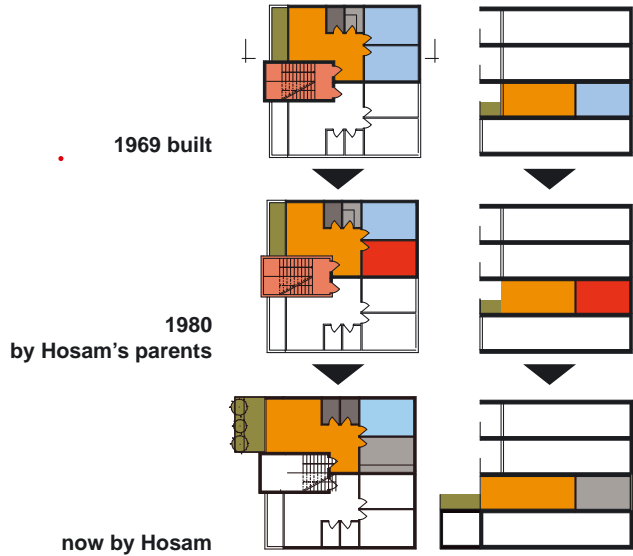
Renovated terrace from the outside.

# EVOLUTION

Mid-rise without Garden - Hosam's house



Renovation plan by Hosam



- bedroom
- clinic
- guest room
- terrace
- traffic
- bathroom
- kitchen



Looking from the guest room to the renovated kitchen.



Renovated Kitchen.

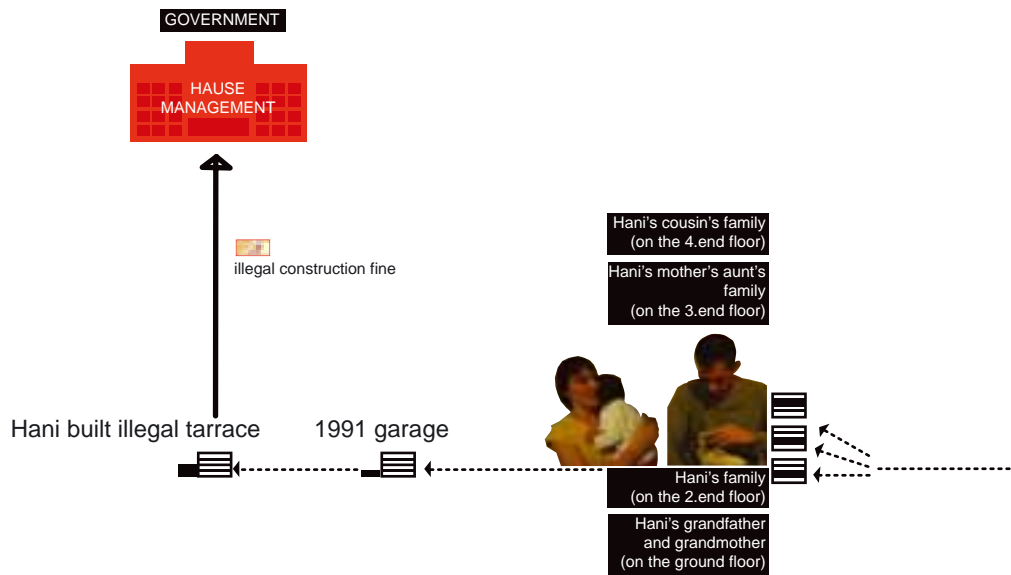
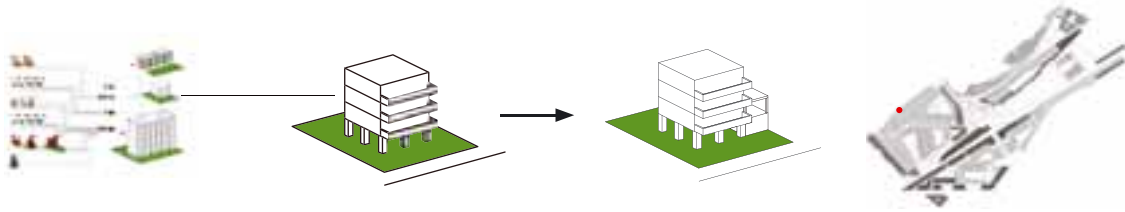




**DRAFT**  
Hosam on his renovated terrace  
© EKH Studio Basel

# EVOLUTION Villat - Hani's house

Hani, the owner, is a Syrian architect.  
Hani's grandfather bought this plot and built this house in 1969.



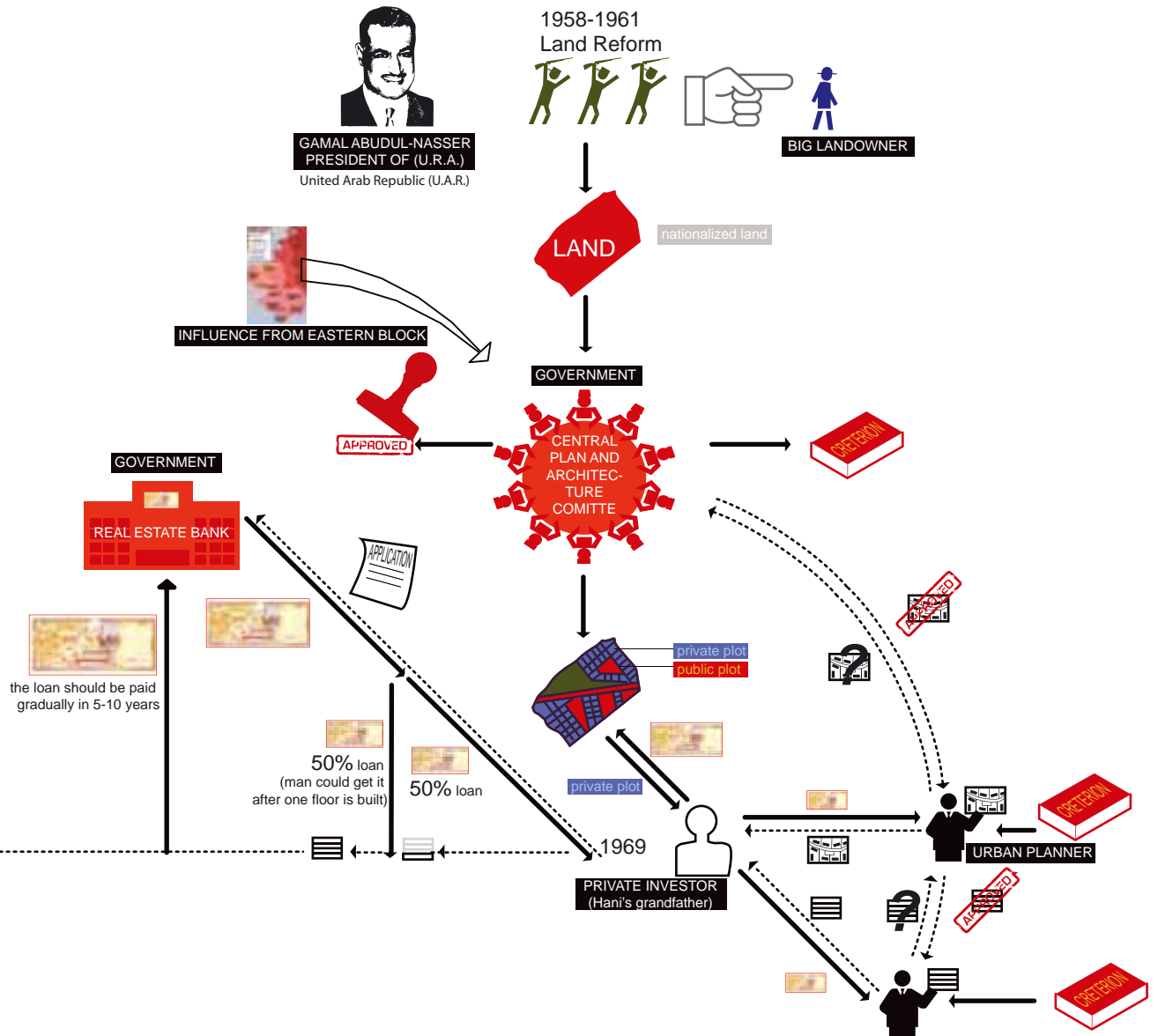
Exterior corridor. We could not take a photo of the facade, because a Hamas leader residence is close by.

Hani's grandfather (mother's father) was a small contractor, and applied for governmental funds to build a house for his family, giving the families of his daughters one apartment each. For this type of plot in the west villat area you could build a 3-4 floor high apartment building with one apartment/floor.

He got the first part of his funds and started to build. Only after the first floor was constructed he got the rest of the funds to finish the house.

In 1991 they built an extra garage, which is not used as a garage to day. On top of the garage, Hani's family has their terrace, constructed illegally, but after having paid illegal construction fines it is now legal.

Today still it's his extended family living in the house. His grandfather and grandmother still lives there. The aunt of his mother lives in one apartment. His cousin with his family lives in the top apartment.



Door from the guest room towards the terrace.



Illegally constructed terrace.

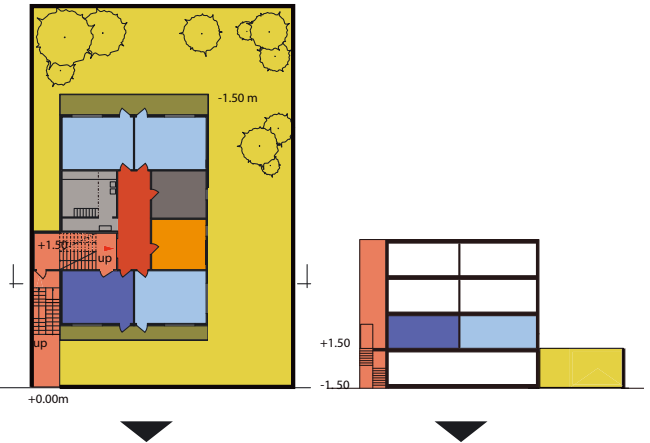
# EVOLUTION

## Villat - Hani's house

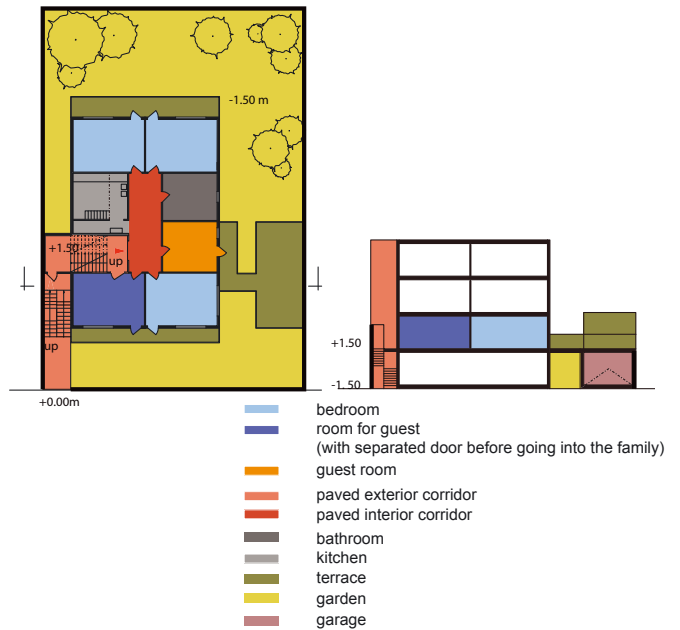


Ground plan of a two-courtyard house (Bait Siba'i)

1969 built



now



Hani's apartment, which was his grandfather's residence in the house, is designed to imitate the traditional courtyard typology. There are two entrances to the apartment, one that leads in to the main corridor which all the rooms have doors to: the courtyard, and one entrance is for the guest room, which in a traditional courtyard house would be the small courtyard before the big courtyard. In the hallway is also a wash basin, which according to Hani's grandfather could be translated into the fountain that you would find in many traditional damascene houses.



Exterior corridor with 2 entrances for one apartment: one for family, one for guests.



All the rooms are organized around a paved corridor.

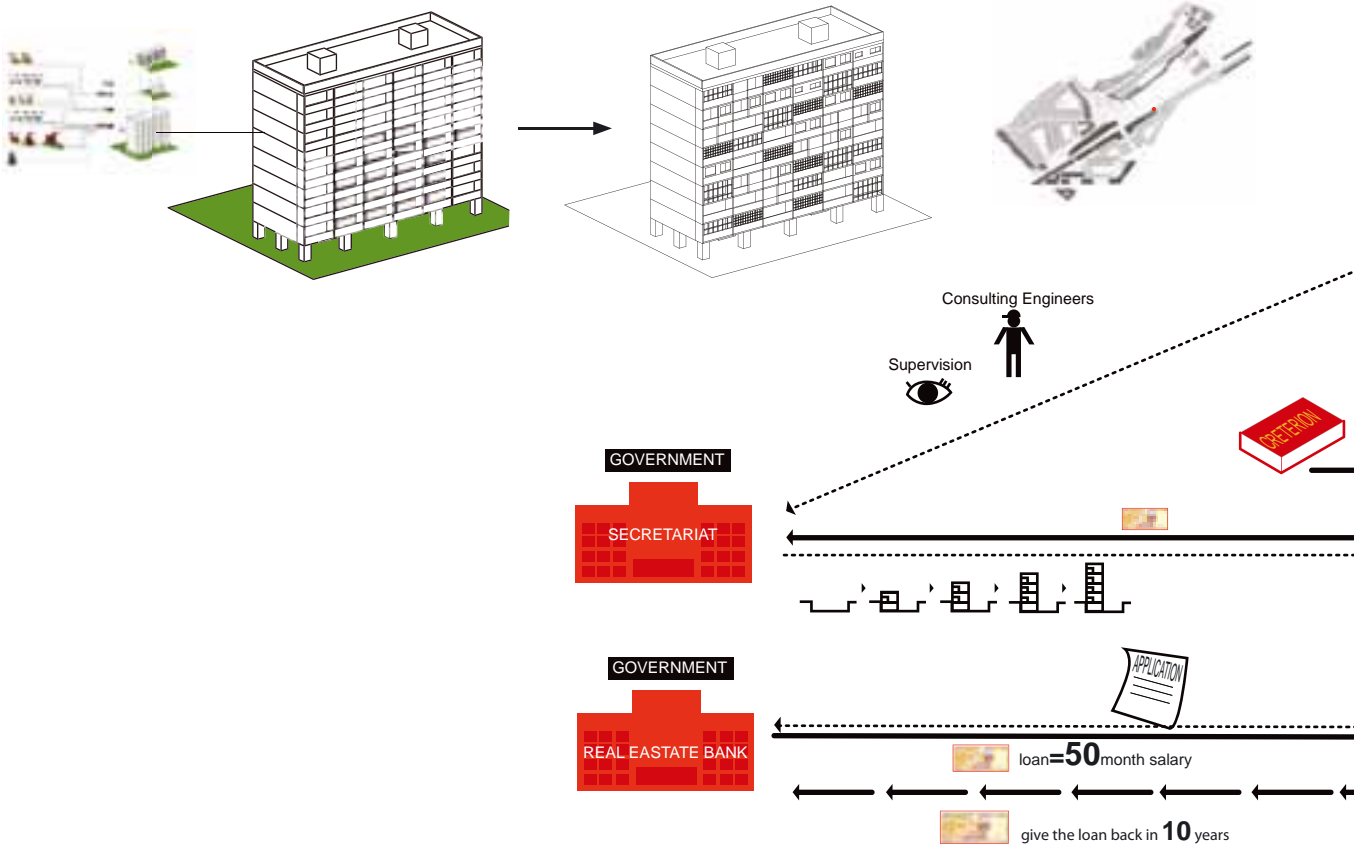


# EVOLUTION

## High-rise - Sadaki family house

Khairy Sadaky, the owner, is a legal adviser, working in the culture ministry in the fine arts section. He lives in an apartment with his family.

This building has finished in 1973 by the Cooperative housing association (Fine Arts Society), as one of the first high rises in Mezzeh. It is 8 floor high based on the Corbusier Unité house plan.



The cooperative of artists and employees in the cultural ministry, and some of their friends a total of 100 persons built this cooperative house. It was designed by the architect Nofel Krawy and his friend, Nofel left for America soon later. But the construction of the building was by execution of the secretariat. The cooperative association provides all the plans and delivers it to special workshops to construct, under the supervision of the central committee of architecture and planning who also had their own engineers. In this way it is constructed cheaper than giving the building to a contractor.

Khairy does not got enough saving for construction, so he applied for a loan from the national Real Estate Bank, equal to his 50 month salary and paid it back for ten years. The total price was equal to 100 month salary for Khairu. But now the value of an apartment in this building is equal to 1000 month salary.

Now half of the apartments are sold to others outside of the cooperative.



GAMAL ABUDUL-NASSER  
PRESIDENT OF U.R.A.  
(1958-1961)



HAFEZ AL-ASAD  
PRESIDENT OF SYRIA  
(1970-2000)

1958-1961 Land Reform  
1970's Land Reform



BIG LANDOWNER



LAND

INFLUENCE FROM EASTERN BLOCK



CENTRAL PLAN AND ARCHITECTURE COMMITTEE

APPROVED



URBAN PLANNER

ARCHITECT  
Nofel Krawy

private plot

private plot  
public plot

PRIVATE INVESTOR 1

REPRESENTATIVE OF COOPERATIVE

1973  
Cooperative housing for the Fine Arts Society

1973-2009  
50% is sold gradually to private investors

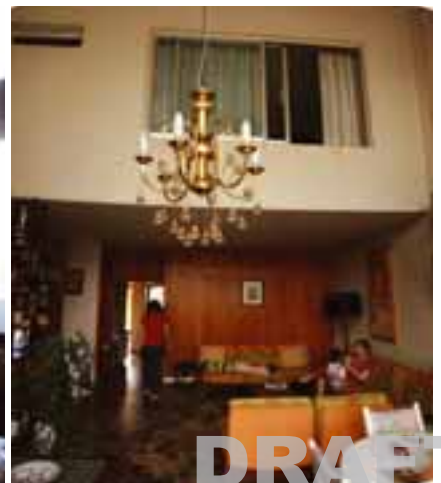
COOPERATIVE INVESTOR  
Nofel Krawy

total price/apartment = 100 month salary

1975  
live with his wife. 2 daughters were born. Changed the working room and southern terrace into 2 bedrooms.  
price/apartment now = 1000 month salary



Southern facade



2 floor guest room + original working room

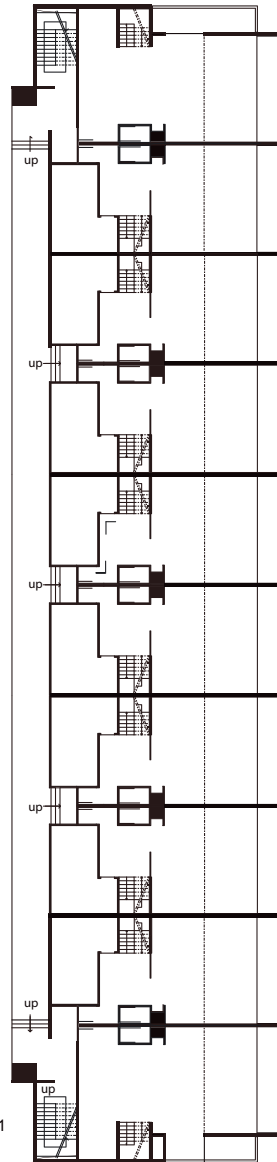
DRAFT  
ETH Studio Basel

# EVOLUTION

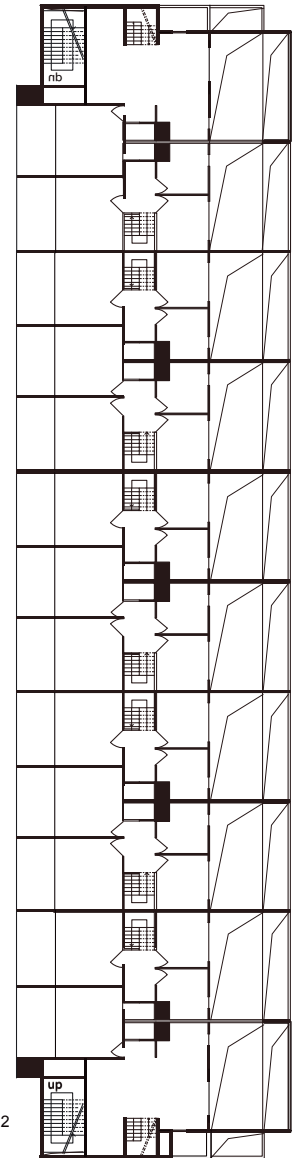
High-rise - Sadaki family house



The design process lasted for 2 years, and was made to fit the new owners, the artists. The ground floor is kept as a big open space. Apartments were only planned to be residential, but craft shops were planned inside the house. But the apartments were quickly sold to families when the house was finished.



typical plan\_floor 1



typical plan\_floor 2

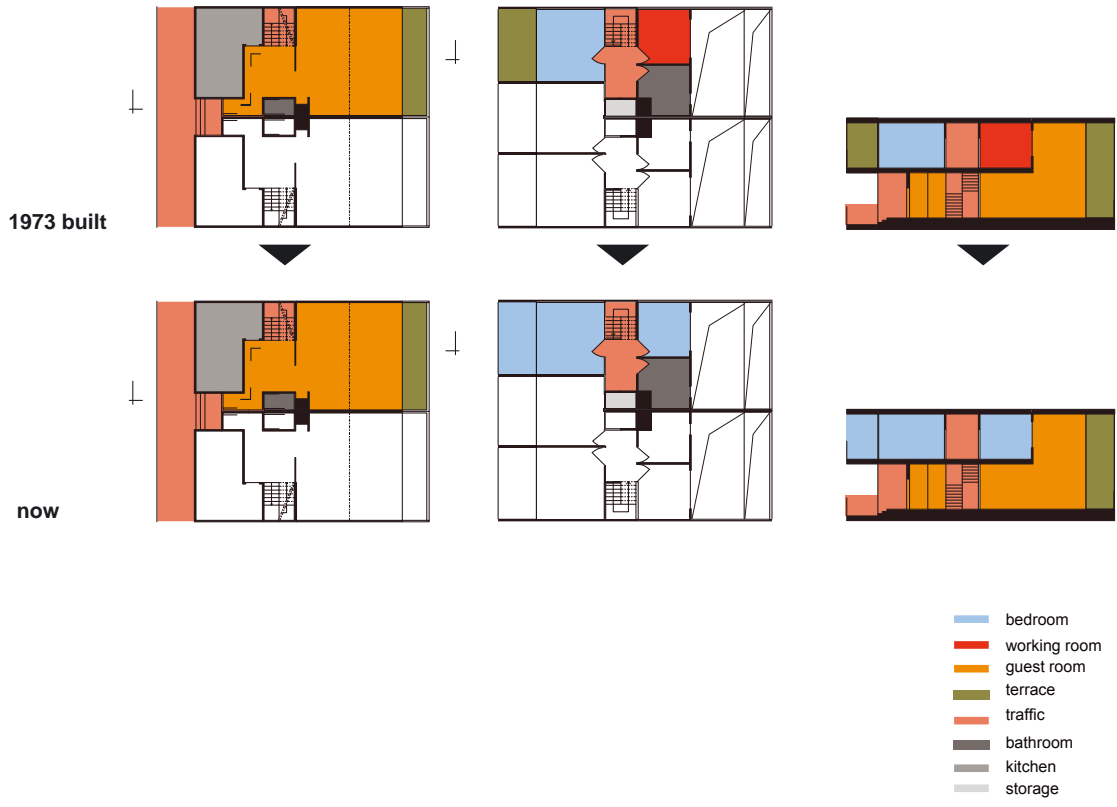






# EVOLUTION

## High-rise - Sadaki family house



In the need of more space for family members,( especially new children), Khairy changed both the original working room and the southern terrace into bedrooms.







# COMPARISON

SITUATION

INTRODUCTION OF DUMAR AND BERZEH

HOUSING SYSTEM

URBAN STRUCTURE

TYPES



DUMAR

MEZZEH



BERZEH

Dumar and Berzer are also built in Hafez al-Asad's period, located in the suburb of Damascus. Compared with Mezzeh, they are developed later, and are regarded as more successful model for socialist housing in Damascus.

Berzeh is a part of the Ecochard extension plan, Dumar is built outside of the „Green boundary“, the preservation boundary of oasis, made by Ecochard.

**DRAFT**  
© ECH Studio Basel

# COMPARISON Situation – Mezzeh

## Mezzeh

3312400 squaremeters  
developed from early 1960s-1990's  
ownership: social housing & coop-  
erative housing & private investors

Now: middle class+ upper class







# COMPARISON Situation - Dumar

Dumar  
1785000 squaremeters  
built in late 1970's  
ownership: cooperative housing for  
the assembly of professional syndi-  
cates

now: middle class





**DRAFT**  
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# COMPARISON Situation - Berzeh

## Berzeh

343200 squaremeters

Built in 1988

ownership: cooperative housing for  
working class syndicates

now: working class





**DRAFT**  
© EY Studio Base

# COMPARISON

## Introduction - Dumar

Dumar situated north east of the city in the mountains is a development of the city not planned in the Eccochoard master plan for the future expansion of Damascus. In the mid 1970' real estate investor Sadala Jaber had an idea of making a new suburb of cooperative housing.

“Why do you unions work alone, why don't you join together? he said and invited different unions. Together as the assembly of professional syndicates, professors, lawyers, architects and doctors planned an built Dumar.

As Sadala Jaber wanted as little as possible to do with the government, knowing that government employes tried to make personal profits on new housing projects. He hired his own architects and engineers, both from Syria and other countries, mainly from the eastern block. The planner who won the competition for the master plan was a syrian architect and planner, Jihad Issa, and the chief architect also syrian, Mamoun Fahan. To avoid as much outside interference as possible, Sadala even planned and built the factories that would produce the element to construct the houses. Many government officials was very mad about this project, keeping them out of the loop. Both Mamoun Faham and Jihad Issa was adviced by colleagues not to join the project

“It is a project against corruption”.

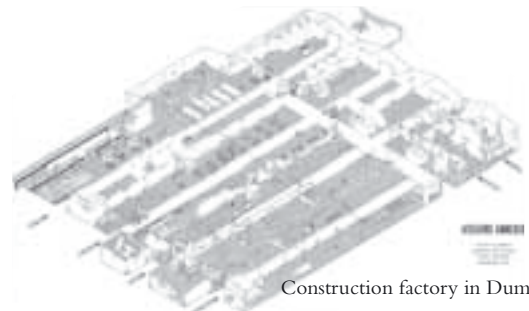
Dumar was planned according to the typical modernist plan, every residential plot has big green spaces, public gardens at various points and commercial center was planned in the middle of the area. Schools, hospitals, smaller commercial spaces and other public facilities was part of the master plan. A set of residential typologies was chosen, mostly 3-4 floors and some high rises, one for each block. Although the low-rise was the main

typology for the area, the Polish and Bulgarian architects convinced Sadala to have more high rises, as they are more effective.

Dumar was supposed to be the new Sham, the new Damascus, and should be modern in all ways and urban central heating system was constructed for the entire Dumar. The thought was to use common services to save costs But inhabitants didn't want this, they either thought that the heating was not sufficient or they didn't want to part of this collective system, almost all the houses have their own heater and water tank on the roof now, as we also can see in the rest of the city.



Project Team Meeting, Sadala Haberi in middle in white



Construction factory in Dumar.



Dumar Plan



Dumar: almost all the houses are designed at the same time

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# COMPARISON

## Introduction - Berzeh

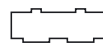
Berzeh is built in 1988 and is on the northern part of the planned Eccochard expansion. It has a modernist urban design with detached houses which are set back from the street with a collective green space. Public facilities and commercial zone is planned, like public parks and mosques. It is mainly a residential area. It was planned for low income housing cooperatives and new comers to the city.

The introduction of prefabricated elements in Berzeh is a new phenomenon in Damascus. All houses have used the same type of element, with little variation. The main typology has three variations to it and all houses have the same exterior materials and colors. The variation of the 5 story slab house is a shorter version with only one entrance and a link with one entrance that connects to another house when the street turns.

The concrete in these prefabricated elements are much harder than in the previous modernist houses. The elements are physically more difficult to change even though, people have tried to alter the things they could, windows are changed.

Also income level in Berzeh is much lower than in Mezzeh, what might the reason for less informal commercial activity as the demand is not so high.

For Dumar, 15 typologies were chosen, and designed carefully by the project team. In Mezzeh the modernist houses has transformed and have become privatized and personalized. Here in Berzeh, the original appearance is left.



Typology 1  
2 entrances



Typology 2  
1 entrance



Typology 3  
1 entrance

the link to connect other houses when the street turns







# COMPARISON Housing system

Different from Mezzeh, mixed with different models of housing system, both Dumar and Berza are planned at one time, and executed quickly. But their organization systems are different.

## Mezzeh

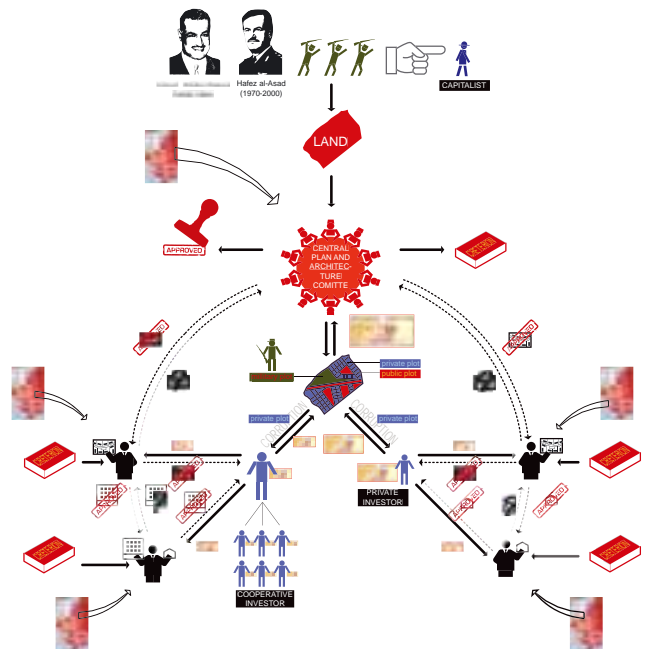
a mixture of different housing systems: after assignment of the the biggest plot to military, all the parts of plots are developed gradually by both private and cooperative investor.

## Dumar

Dumar is a „Super Cooperative“, In Syria, lands are divided into small plots to make the society equal and avoid big land ownership. The only undivided big plots are all military. But in the way of a „ Super Cooperative“, scattered plots are in fact gathered to be a big plots, so that a masterplan for the whole area possible. In order to avoid the corruption of government, they tried to design and construct Dumar totally by themselves, even a prefab factory was established to produce the material needed for construction.

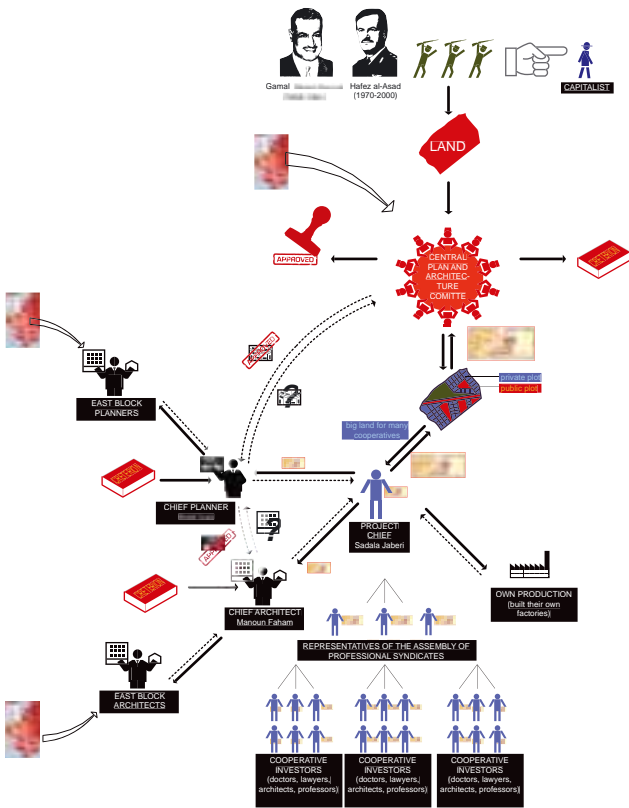
## Berzeh

majorly a social housing managed and developed by the government.



## Mezzeh(1960's-today)

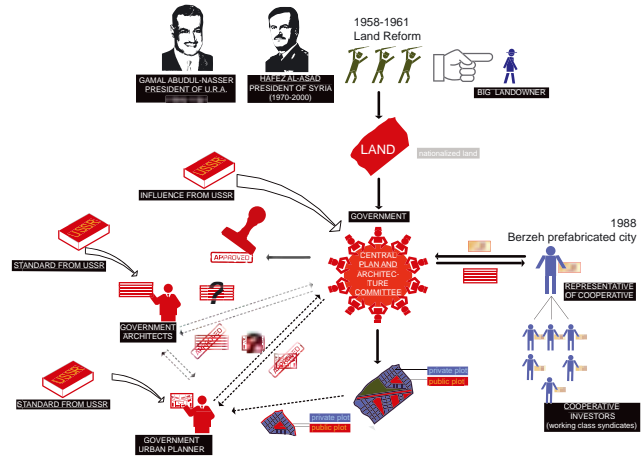
Mixture of cooperative and private investors  
Gradually developed by small plots  
Designed and executed in different ways



### Dumar (1970's)

“ Super Cooperative” by many syndicates.  
Get a super big plot.

Designed and executed by cooperative investors themselves



### Berzeh (1988)

Social housing by government  
Get a big plot

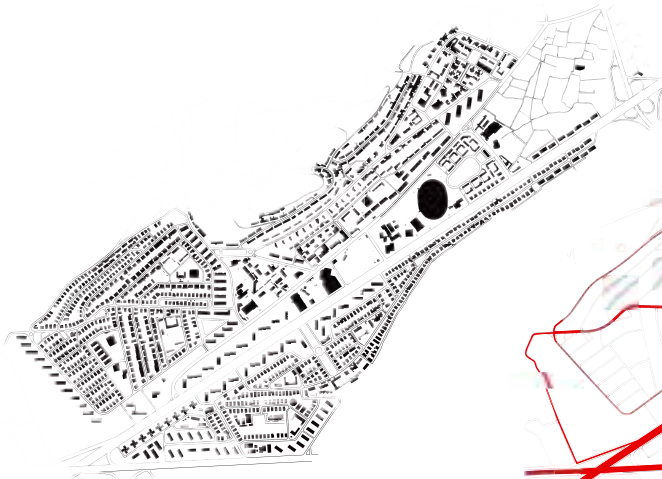
Designed and executed by the government

# COMPARISON Urban Structure

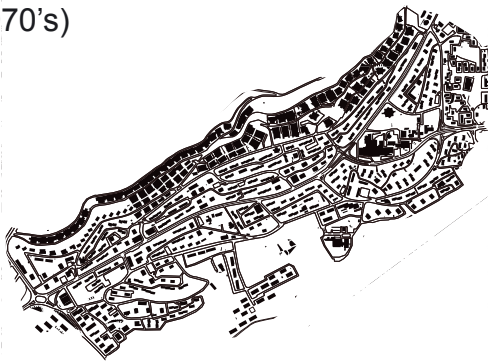
Grain Map

Major streets network

Mezzeh (1960's-today)



Dumar (1970's)



Berzeh (1988)



reener stem

- Public greens
- Shared greens
- Private greens

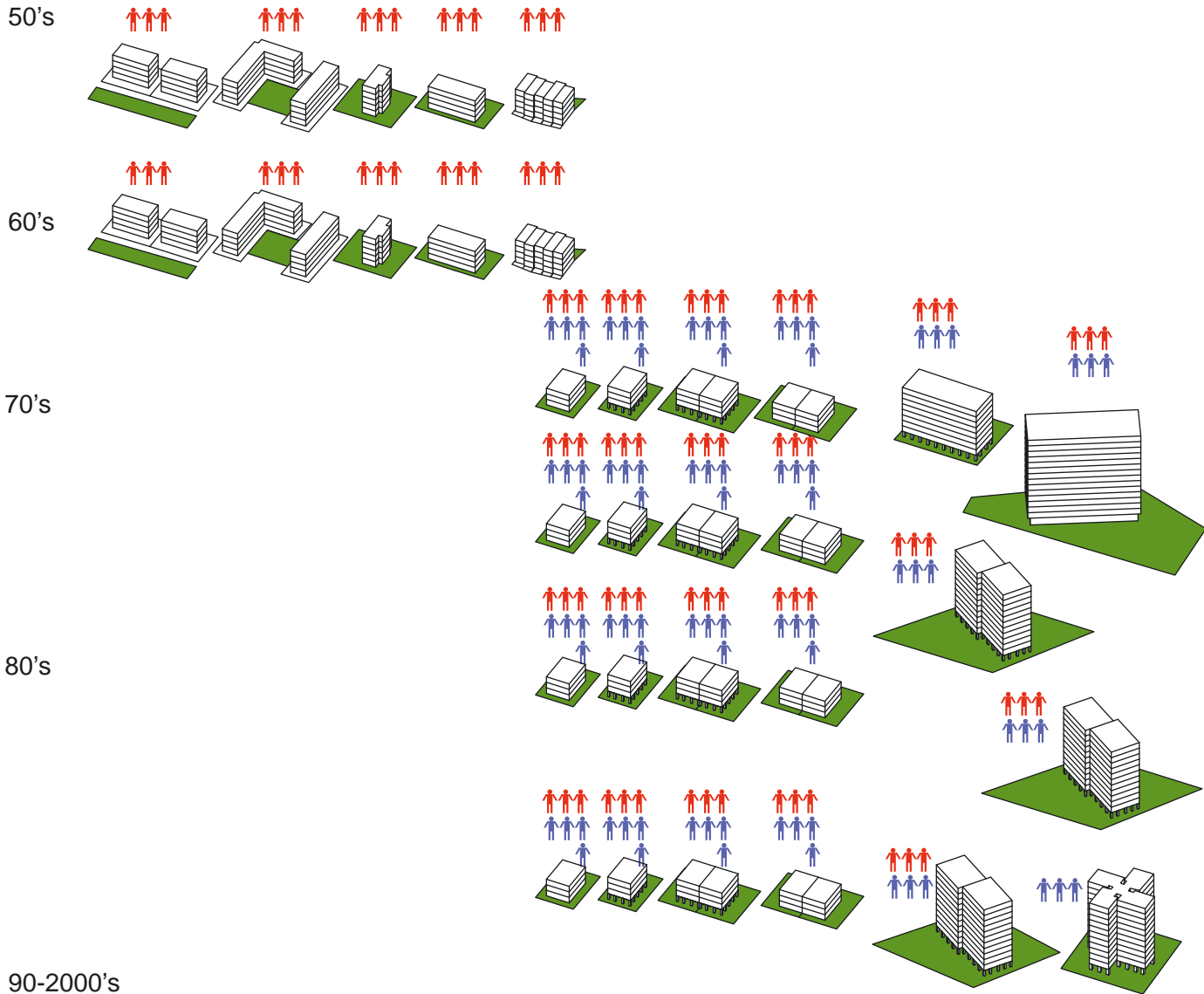
Public facilities

- schools
- mosques
- hospitals
- government
- planned commercial
- offices mixed private and governmental
- embassies
- culture and recreation



# COMPARISON

## Typologies - Chronological evolution



CHRONOLOGICALLY AND TYPOLOGICALLY DIVERSE

MEZZEH  
1960's-today



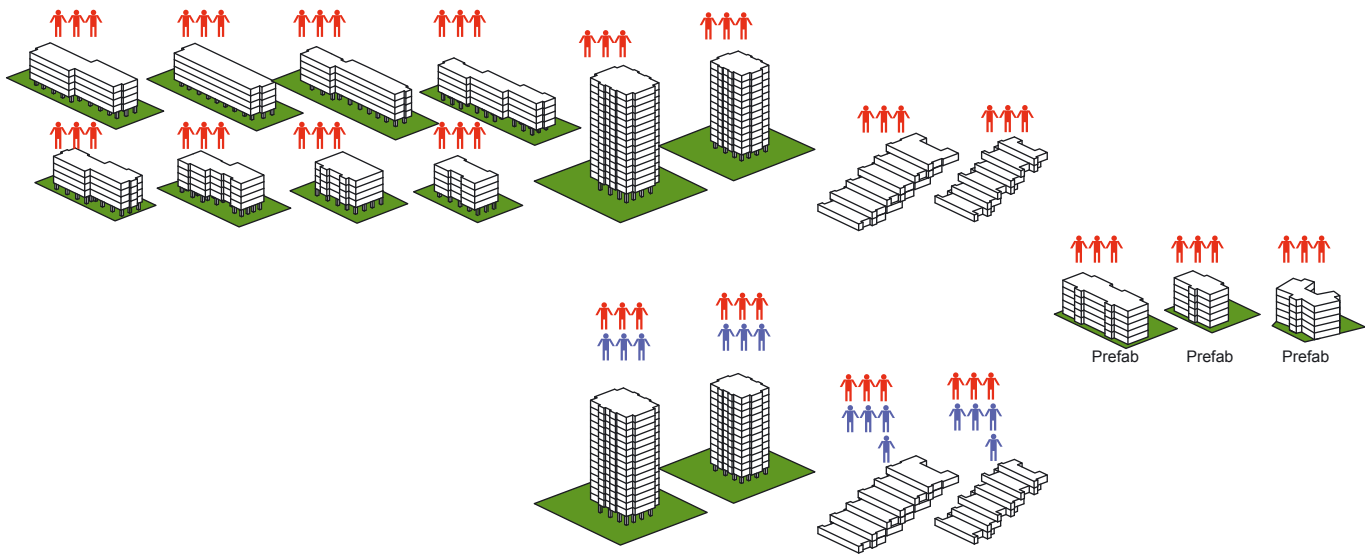
by cooperative investors  
for multiple families



by private investor  
for multiple families



by private investor  
for one family



CHRONOLOGICALLY SINGULAR, TYPOLOGICALLY DIVERSE

CHRONOLOGICALLY AND TYPOLOGICALLY SINGULAR

DUMAR  
1970's

BERZEH  
1988

# COMPARISON

MEZZEH 1960'S-TODAY

Chronologically and typologically diverse



DUMAR 1970'S

Chronologically singular, typologically diverse



BERZEH 1988

Chronologically and typologically singular



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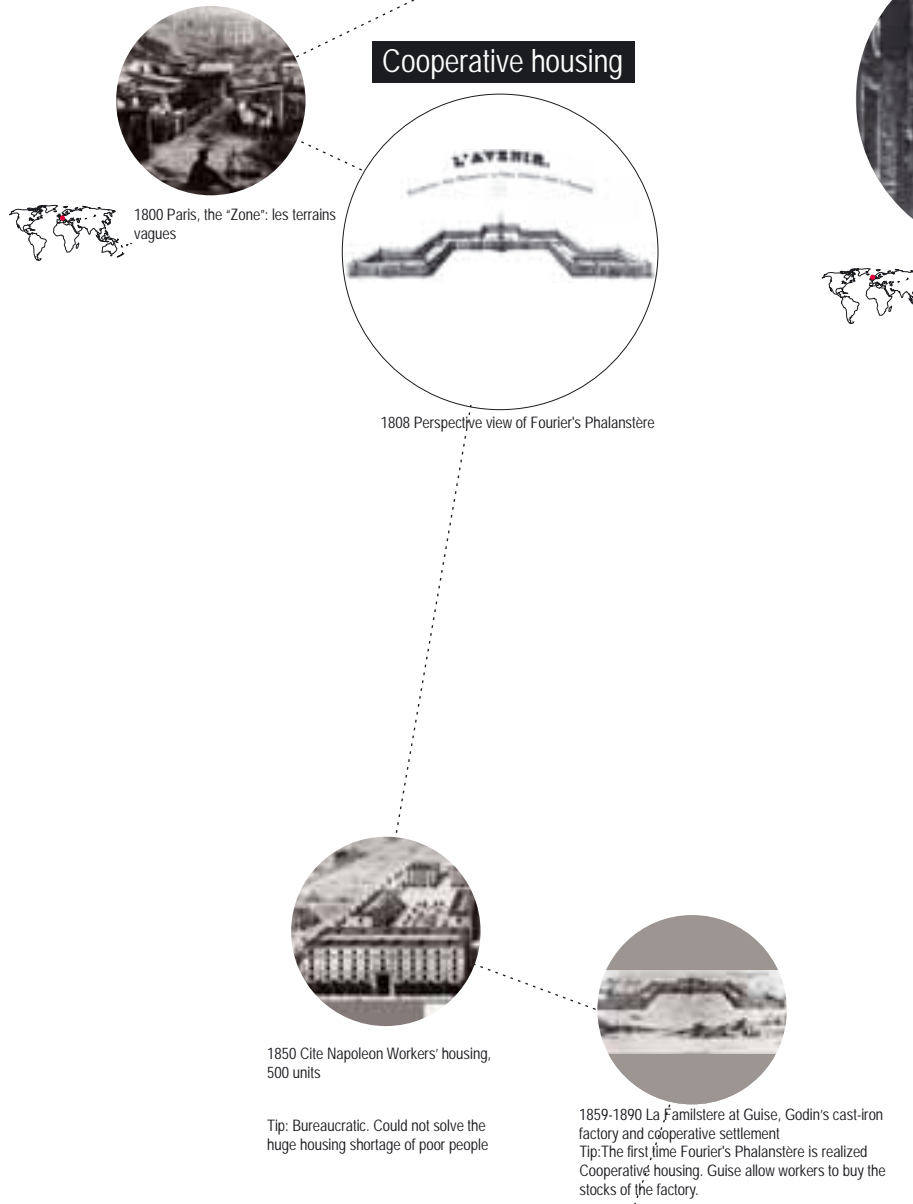
# CONCLUSION

# CONCLUSION

## Mordernization Genealogy

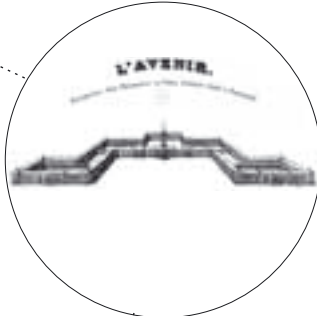
The history of the modern City started from the Industrial Revolution. It is a history of struggling to find a better city for people, and a better way for people to live.

Syria, as a developing country, is repeating this modernization process, in a extremely quick way. Mezzeh, as a new part of city, developed from 1960's, became mature in 1982's, is its living documentation.



1800 Paris, the "Zone": les terrains vagues

Cooperative housing



1808 Perspective view of Fourier's Phalanstère



1850 Cite Napoleon Workers' housing, 500 units



Tip: Bureaucratic. Could not solve the huge housing shortage of poor people

1859-1890 La Famillistere at Guise, Godin's cast-iron factory and cooperative settlement  
Tip: The first time Fourier's Phalanstère is realized Cooperative housing. Guise allow workers to buy the stocks of the factory.



12 th centry. before Industry Revolution,most urban Fabric has always been made of houses



1800 Manchester Overcrowded tenements

### More green space



1823, London, Park Village, John Nash



1800 Preston( Near Manchester ) Row house for workers

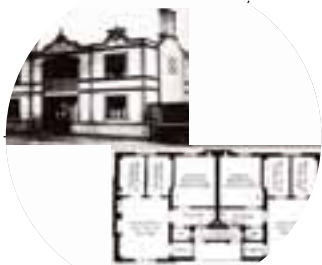


1830s Manchester, Victoria Park, Joseph Paxton

### Housing Units



1850's, James Silk Buckingham Victoria, model industrial town



1852 Londen, Prince Albert,Workers Units.World Exposition1985

Tip:the architect could solve the social problem: A decent house for working class.

1750

1760's Industry Revolution begins in England

manufacturing began to rely on steam power, fueled primarily by coal, rather than on animal labor, or on water or wind power; and by a shift from artisans who made complete products to factories in which each worker completed a single stage in the manufacturing process. Improvements in transportation encouraged the rapid pace of change.

1770

1780

1800

1808 Charles Fourier , Theory of the Four Movements

Fourier declared that concern and cooperation were the secrets of social success. Fourier saw such cooperation occurring in communities he called "phalanxes," based around structures called Phalansteres or "grand hotels"

1810

1820

1830

1840

1851 First law on housing "labouring classes Lodging Huse Act

1850

1859-1910 Arts and Crafts Movement

1860

as a reaction to the eclectic revival of historic styles of the Victorian era and to "soulless" machine-made production aided by the Industrial Revolution



1879 Model Tenement, James Ware, the "dumbbell" plan



1870 Riverside suburb of Chicago  
Friedrick Law Olmsted

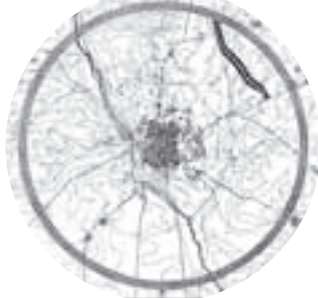
Tip: For middle class



1880 Pullman company town south of Chicago

Tip: Pullman seemed a dream, winning awards as "the world's most perfect town."  
Very decent housing for workers: Arcade, boarding house and row houses. Workers live in Villas. Public space, hotel, shopping mall in the centre  
Suburb, but stay linked to Chicago

### Linear city based on traffic



1894 Spain, Arturo Soria y Mata, Ciudad Lineal, "Rurban"

Tip: House built according to traditional profit-motivated process

### Town for the motor age



1929 Radburn as "a town for the motor age".



1929 New York Regional Plan, ideal neighborhood, Clarence Stein.

### Boradacre "city"



1935 Frank Floyd Wright, Broadacre City

1943 Richard Neutra, Axion Texas

With new techniques- mass production, automobiles, modern facilities, we are living in a new way: we could have bigger green spaces, instead of crowded slum; We have bigger and cleaner houses instead of shabby huts, where we maybe would have been attacked by cold and sickness easily; in the skyscrapers, the view towards sky and birds show us the beauty of nature, there we would never be disturbed by any noise. We move faster and go further than ever before. But have we ended up with a better city? This question maybe even more crucial for Damascus to answer, as a city with such a long history and such a deep-rooted tradition.

### Super Block: Seperation of car and pedestrain



1904-1917 Lyon, Cite Industrielle, Garnier, The majority of housing is the small villa type set in publicly owned land



1904 Letchworth  
The first garden city,  
Raymond Unwin



1931-34, Villeurbaine, Quartier Les Gatteciels



1925 "Plan Voisin  
demolish the Ma

## Garden Suburb for workers

1953 Saltaire, 800 units of housing separated by allies  
Tip: With alterheim for old people.

## Garden City



1887 Port Sunlight  
Lever soap company, William Owen

## Garden "city" as sleeping suburb



1907 Hampstead Garden Suburb  
R. Unwin, Hampstead Institute, E. Lutyens

Tip: for middle class



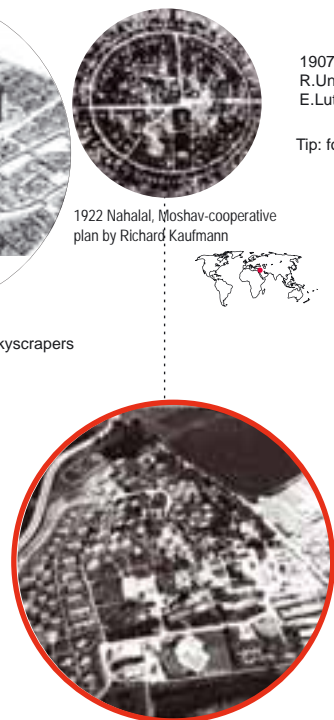
1900 Berlin  
Kreuzberg Mietskasernen



1924 Berlin, Horseshoe Project for Gehag cooperative  
Bruno Taut & M. Wagner



1929 W. Gropius, Project for high-rise prefab city



1945-1970s Kibbutz Merhaviva



1971 Soviet, the Central Scientific Research and Design Institute on Urban Development, District and Micro District: Manual for Design and Building

1870

1880

1887 Port Sunlight:  
The first garden suburb

1890

1889 The first car manufacturers: Panhard & Levasor, French

1900

1887 Howard Garden City  
Development is strictly controlled for equilibrium between urban and rural. Independence from metropolis. The land belongs to a municipal cooperative, rented to inhabitants

1910

1904 The birth of super block

1908 General Motors forms.  
It becomes the largest corporation in the world.

1920

1917 Russian Revolution  
1914-1918 WWI  
1919 Constructivism  
1919 Bauhaus establishes

1921 the first highway:  
1921 Towards a new architecture

1930

New mode of living derived from a new spirit defining the industrial age, demanding a rebirth of architecture based on function and a new aesthetic based on pure form.

1921 the first shopping mall  
1933 Bauhaus ends

1940

1939-1945 WWII

1950

1945 the Cold War begins

1960

1961 Jane Jacob: The Death and Life of Great American Cities  
1966 Aldo Rossi: The Architecture of the City

1970

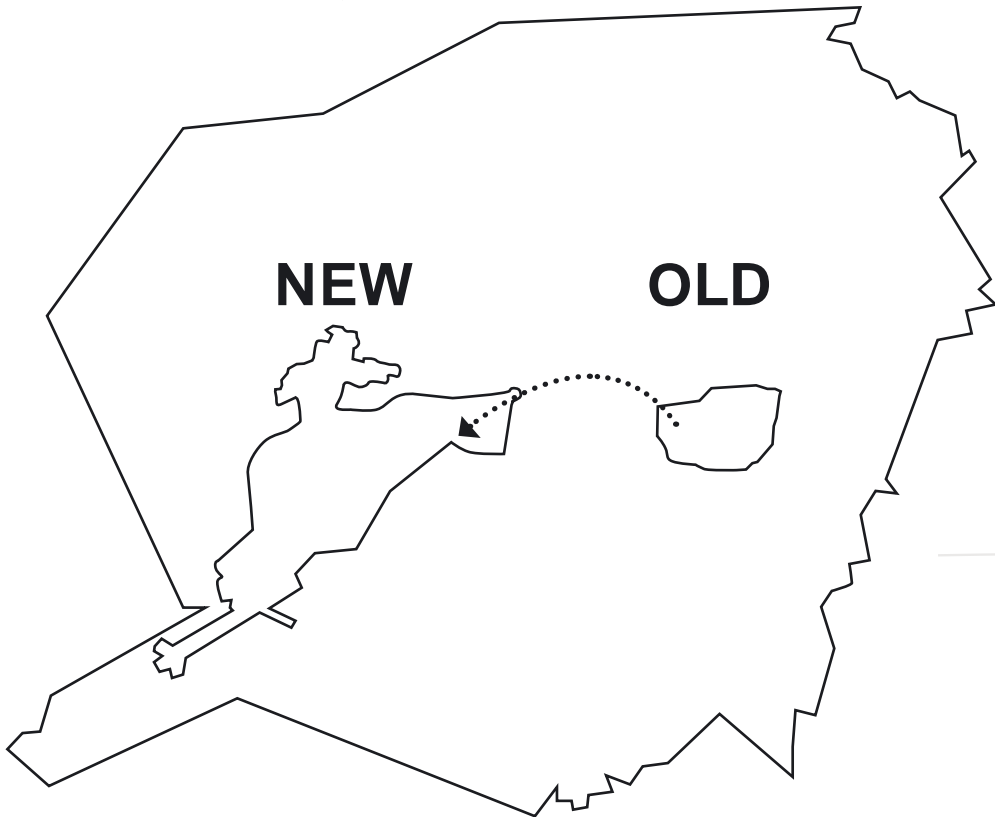
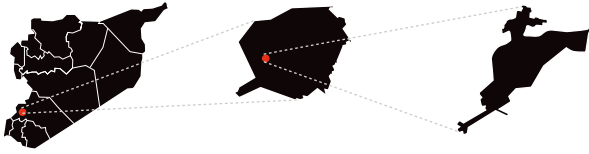
1966 Robert Venturi: Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture

1980

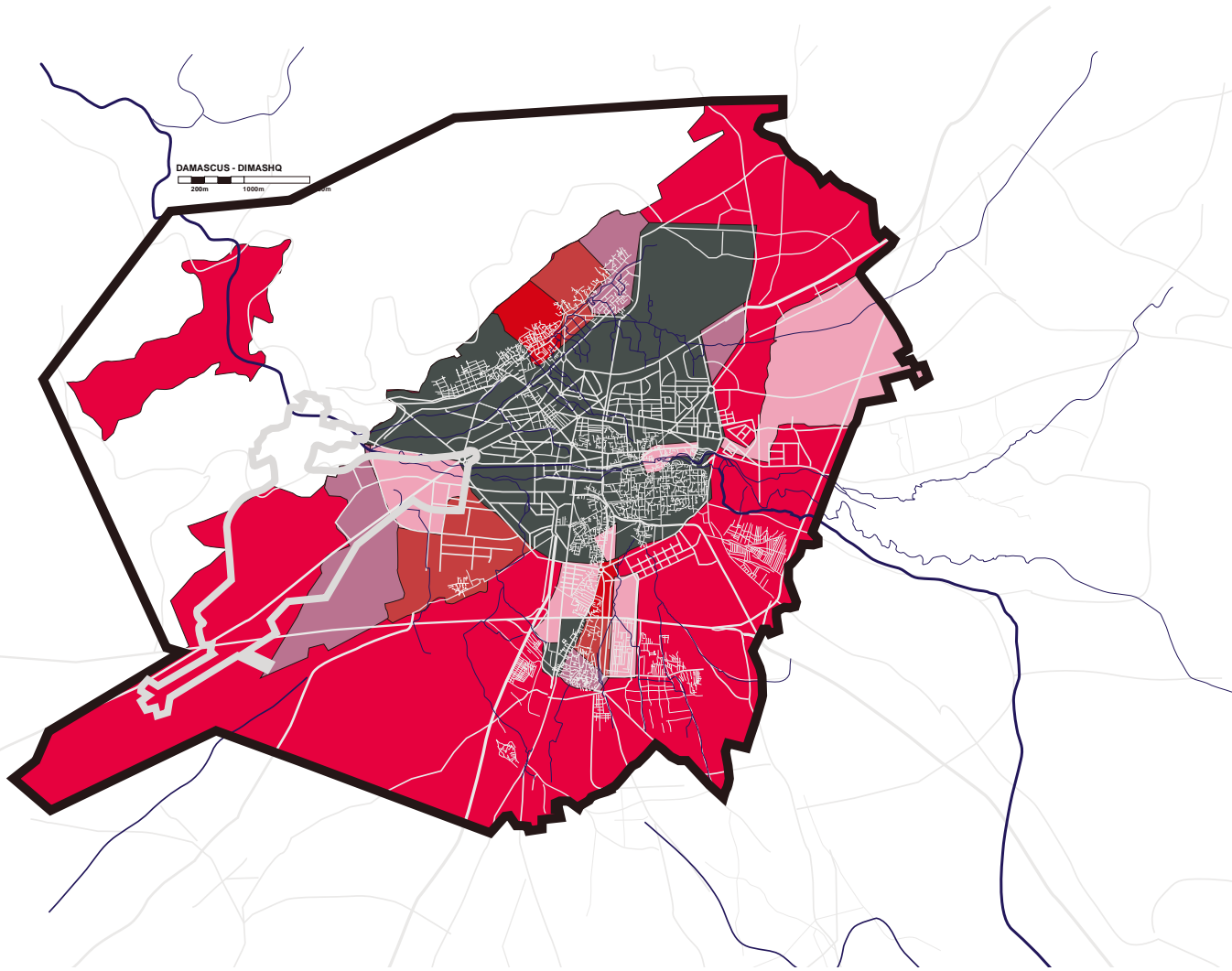
## CONCLUSION

### Mezzeh In Damascus: old-new

As a new residence area, Mezzeh is in fact competing with the old city. The new life style is challenging the old life style. The population growths in Damascus shows, at least now, Mezzeh is the winner.







Urban growth 1982-2001  
(Mezzeh is one of the fastest)

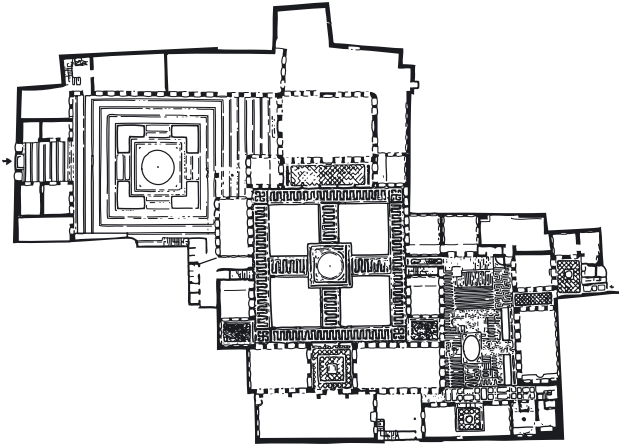
- decreasing population
- less than 0.5%
- 0.5%-1%
- 1%-1.5%
- 1.6%-2%
- more than 2%
- administrative boundary
- Mezzeh

# CONCLUSION

## Old-New: Densifying The City?

In the new city, there are big green spaces, mass produced houses, high rise or skyscrapers, as advanced effective ways to organize people. But in this way, are we densifying or diluting our city? Is it the only and the best way to organize the city, to organize the life of people, even when we have not carefully what is the life of people?

### Old Damascus



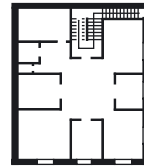
Traditional courtyard house in old town.

Rooms are connected to courtyards, sometimes many courtyards connected to each other. House for the extended family. Dense low rise urban structure, 1-4 floors. Narrow streets, developed through appropriation of old Hellenic/roman grid street network.



Old town

### French Damascus



French Mandate apartment building, the Sofa house.

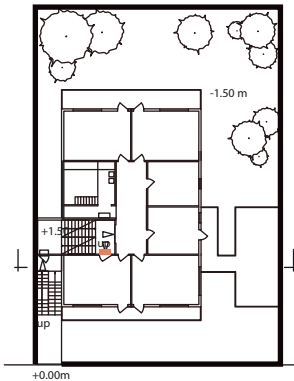
The French introduced the apartment and also the ability to rent. Rooms are connected to the sofa room, in the center of the apartment. One apartment/floor. Apartment for one family. Structured and dense low-rise urban structure, 3-4 floors. Streets could fit cars in two directions sometimes parking along the street.



Abou Romani

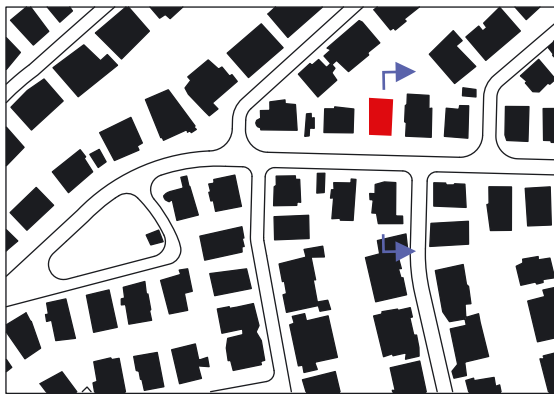


## Modernist Damascus



Villat house

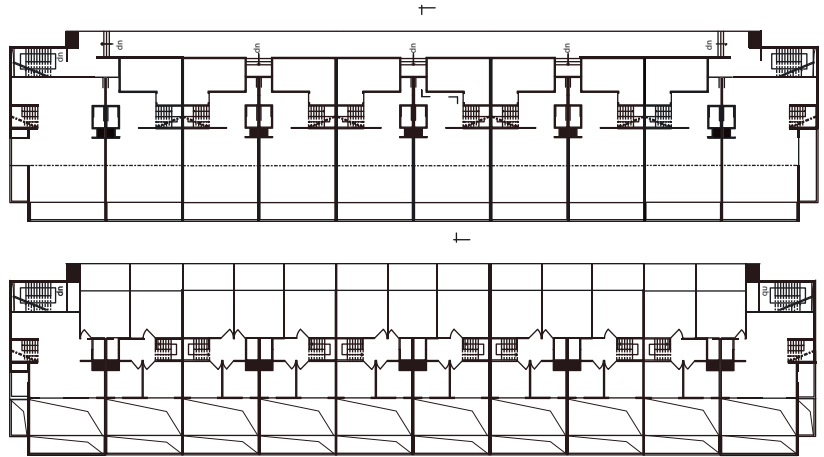
Small apartment building with back set garden. 3-4 floors usually on piloti. Interior layout vary but many resemble the sofa house, rooms are connected to central hall. One apartment/floor, sold to cooperatives and private investors. Distributed urban structure, garden city. Streets fit 2 cars in each direction and parking on both sides.



West Villat area

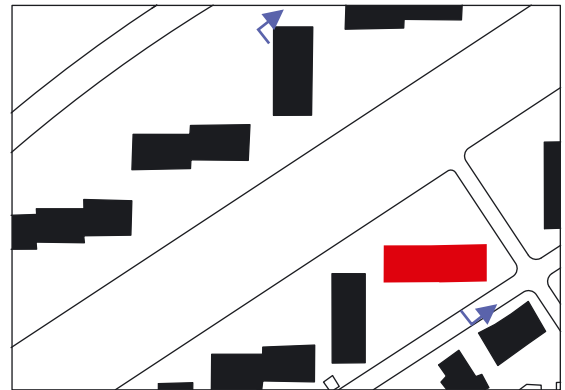


## Modernist Damascus



High-rise

Large apartment building on a large plots, with greens and parking. This house has a unité plan with piloti in ground floor. 10 apartment/floor x 4 corridors x average damascene family of 5.2 = 100 persons. But some buildings can contain up to almost a thousand people (12 apartments x 14 floors x 5.2 people = 873 persons). Highway is introduced. Distributed urban structure with high density residential building. Mezzeh highway fit 5 cars in each direction and parking on both sides.



Mezzeh autostrad



# CONCLUSION

## Efficiency = A Better City?

Is the new modernist city better or worse, in the terminology of a "CITY" - a place where we should come together, defend each other, express, share, communicate, generate new ideas and accessible maybe fall in love with each other?



old Damascus residence,diversity!



Damascus residence in French Mandate,diversity...

old Damascus street, for people!



a Damascus street during French Mandate, for people...



Modern monotone prefab city in Berze, no diversity.



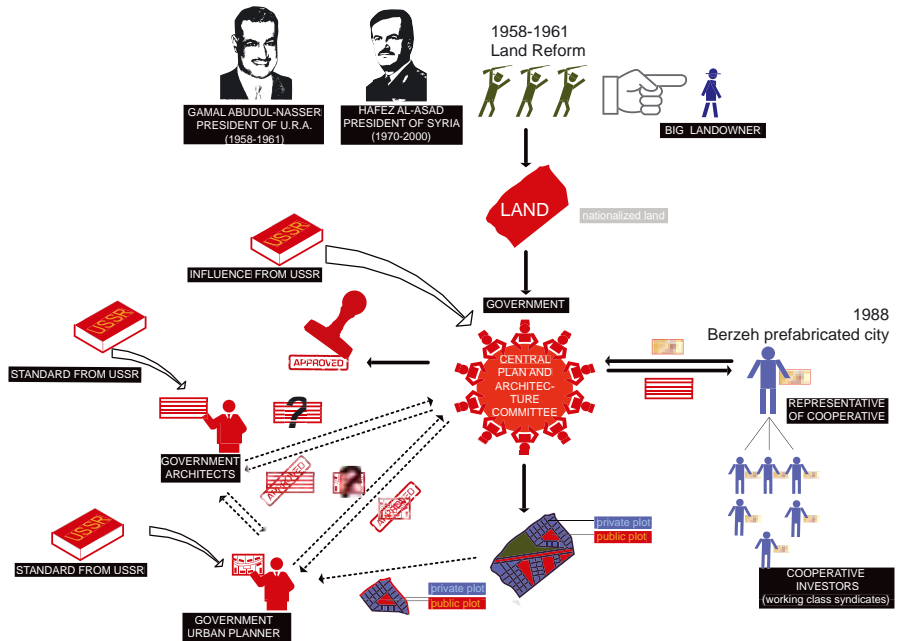
Mezzeh highway, not for people,

# CONCLUSION

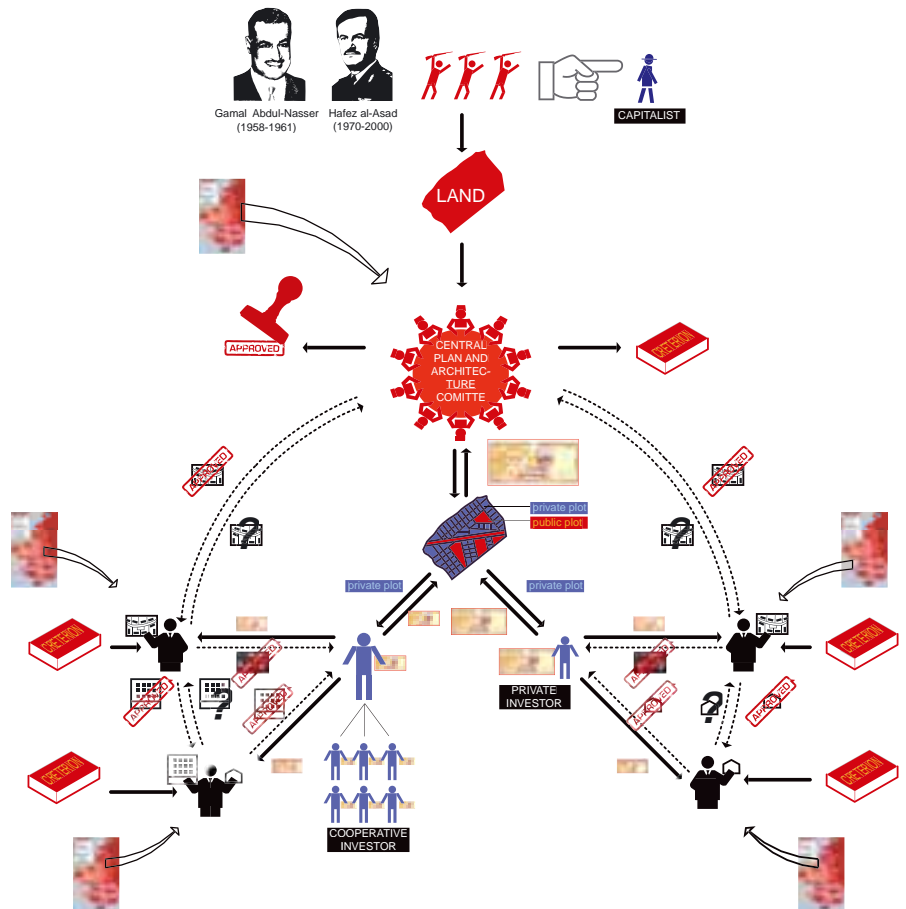
## Push forward Modernism by strong-headed government

The efficient construction way of modernism is pushed by the socialist government, as a tool to construct cheap and effectively, to serve the expanding population caused by the uncontrolled immigration, also to satisfy their supporters. The broadcast of urban designs and buildings in Modernist style are in fact, at least part of the achievements of the strong-headed Syrian government. By the compulsory use of housing typologies, the people must use the modernist style, regardless of his background or personal taste. So in the end, every investor ( cooperative and private) who build his own building should have in fact devoted to the fast modernization process in Syria.





Intended housing organization model 1: government build social housing

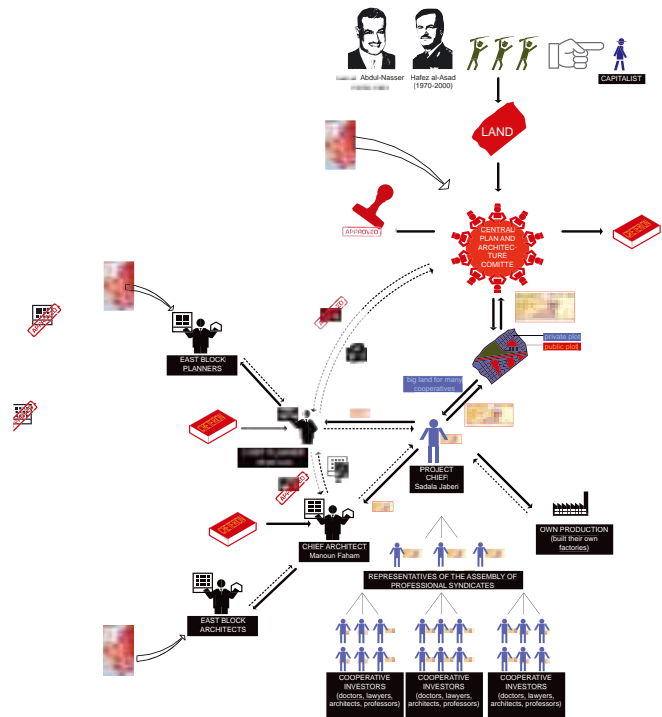


Intended housing organization model 2: investors are strongly controlled by the government

# CONCLUSION

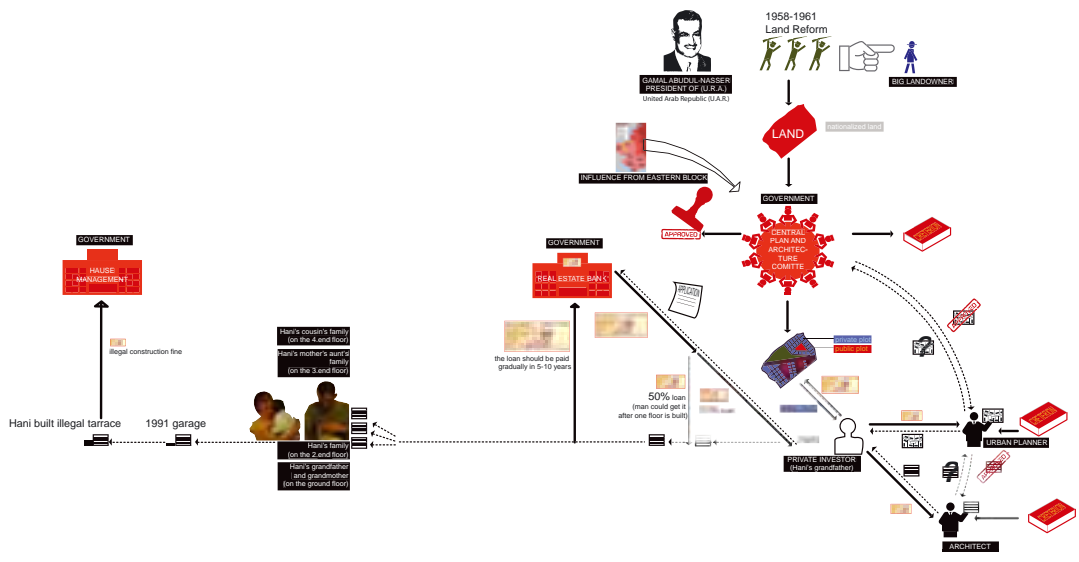
## Space for freedom

But under this rigid compulsory organization system, people always find space for freedom. The cooperation between government and investors to promote modernism model, also give space for the change and adaptation of the modernist model. Inhabitants build their house with the typology, but still try to express their personal taste.( Hani's house), or they change the monotone apartments legally or illegally, under the acquiescence of the government, to fit their personal interest. ( Hosam's house). Or they try to organize by themselves in the strict socialist system, (opposite to government's will to constrain the land holder), they gather as super cooperative group to get a bigger land, and plan their own city.( Duma) Under the highly unified socialist appearance of the city, there is in fact a highly liberal construction wave and expression of personal interest busily swarming.The modernist typology building became the playground for transformation and adaptation.

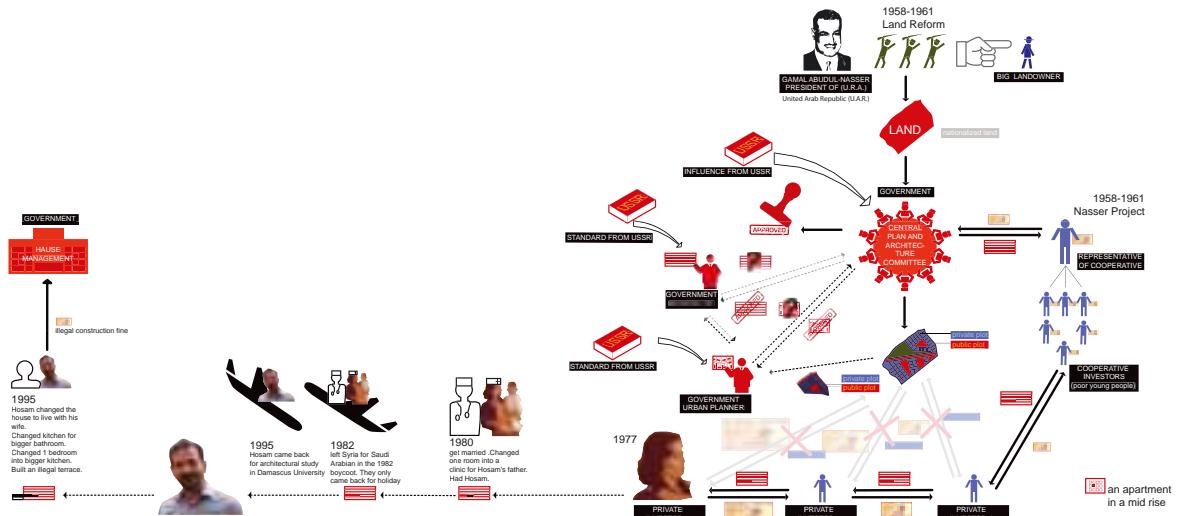


Free space example 1: Super Cooperative + masterplan by their own (Dumar)

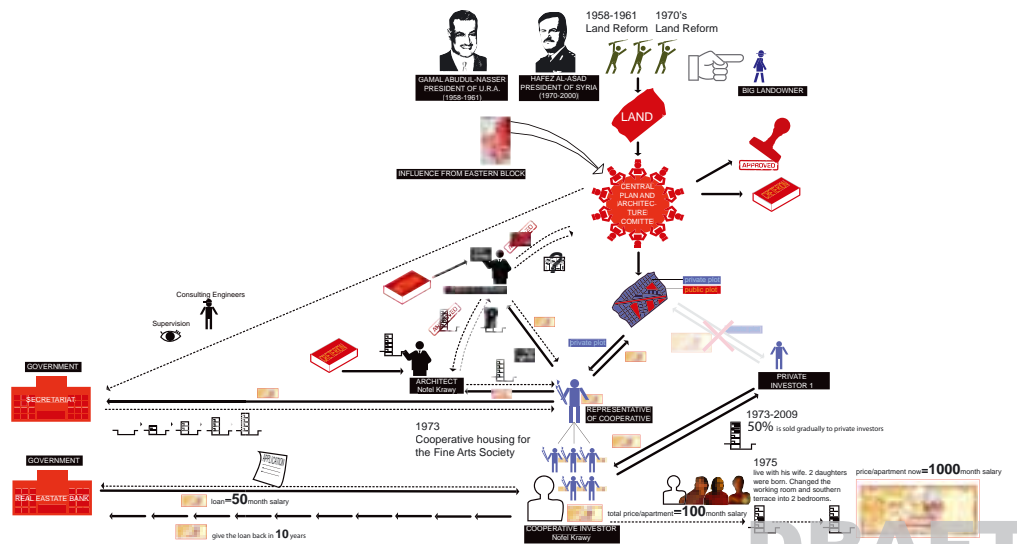




Free space example 2: Expression of personal taste+ illegal construction (Hani's house 1960's)



Free space example 3: adaptation of functions + illegal construction+real state investment (Hani's house 1960's)

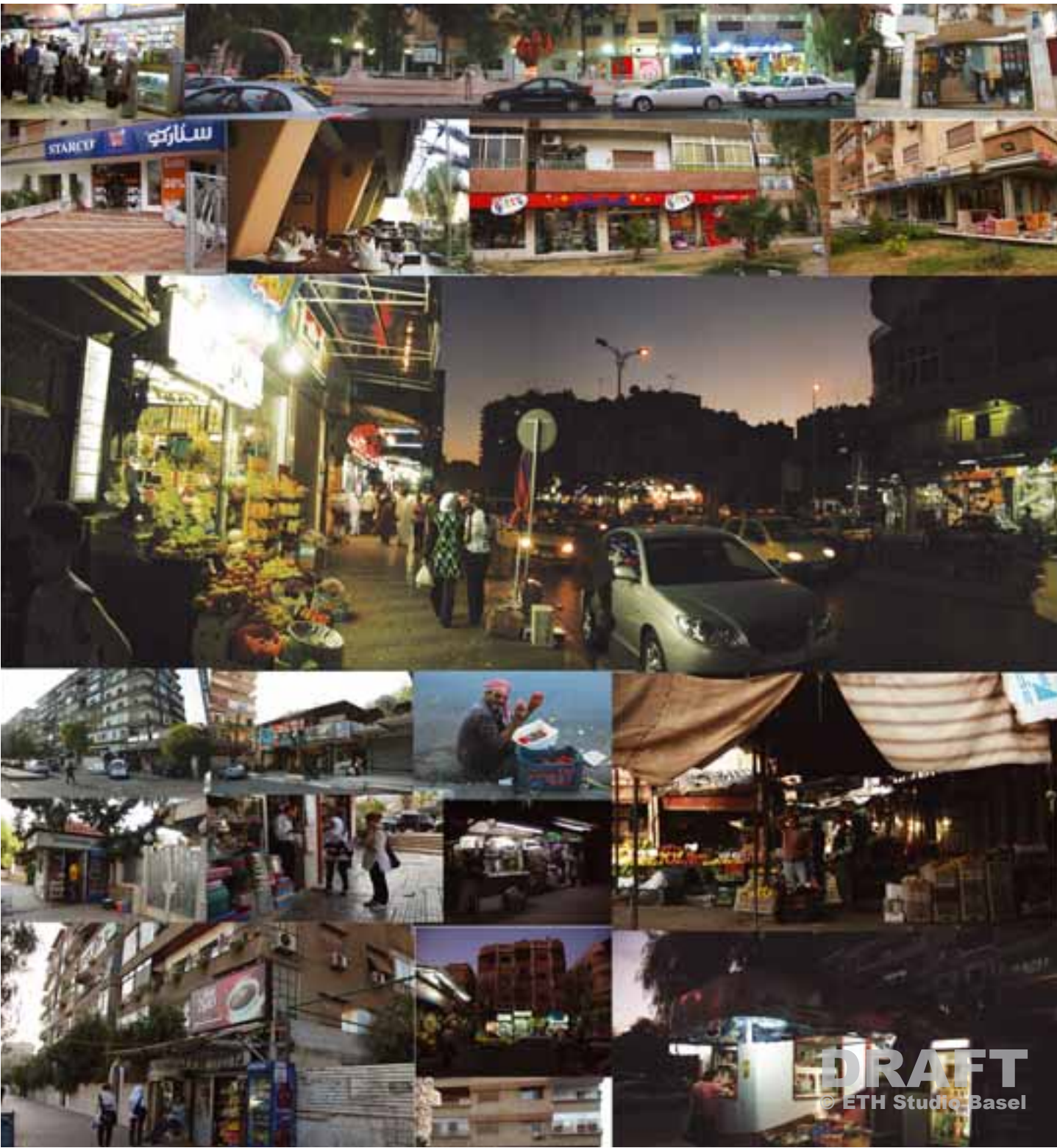


Free space example 4: adaptation of functions +real state investment (Hani's house 1960's)



Modernist plan always want to organize the city in an effective and hygien way, which result in the wide greenspace and streets, build centralized shopping and entertainment centre. They have killed the city life on the street in fact.

But now the inhabitants in Mezzeh has changed this existing rigid modernist model, in different ways, changing it gradually into spaces they prefer. Unused wide sidewalks are appropriated, commercial spaces and private courtyard pop up everywhere. Is the street coming back to life in the modernist urban plan of Mezzeh?





Mezzeh: busy in construction

## MEZZEH IN CONSTRUCTION`

Mezzeh being one of the first new residential areas built in Damascus during the socialist regime, is interesting in that way, that we could see how its development is directly linked to almost all the political events of the last decades, and how Mezzeh is transformed by its inhabitants.

The Ecochard master plan of 1968, although it was only partially executed, has determined the current road system, Mezzeh's current popular location on the way to Beirut, it has also determined the official boundary of Mezzeh.

In Syria, a country with so many different races and religions, socialism was used to create a unified and controlled country, and an attempt to erase social classes. Land reforms and cooperative housing strategies are used as an effective way to reorganize the society.

The plot division made in 1960's has greatly influenced the urban structure in Mezzeh now, showing a modernist urban plan of its public-private plots, overlapped with a socialist desire in a dictatorship country - except for the military who could own the undivided big plots, all other lands are cut into small fragments, in order to create an "equal" society.

From 1958 Nasser period, the cooperative system helped to generate a fast modernization process of Syria, which is also reflected in Mezzeh's development, with a booming time in 1970's, when Hafez al-Asad newly came into power and constructed housing rapidly for his supporters.

Although the mass production and the compulsory use of limited building typologies in building construction generates a "equalized unified" modern appearance of the city, the people who lived there, were never unified. They tried to find space in this rigid but highly corruptive system, hiring their own architects to make special design inside the standardized facade; changing their standardized apartments to adapt to their personal interest; or illegally expand their private space, and in the end trying to create a better living environment for themselves.

This liberal informal form of construction, expression of real and personal desire of inhabitants, which in the end has changed the existing modernist urban structure on all levels, but which also happened under a highly rigid formal socialist system, which aims at unifying and equalizing population, is the most interesting phenomenon in Mezzeh.

In comparison with Dumar and Berzeh, we could read another layer of diversity in Mezzeh: after a relative long term development, its architectural diversity is also created by the accumulation of limited typology in different years

Mezzeh is still in construction, or reconstruction.

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(C) ETH Studio Basel  
Spitalstrasse 8  
4056 Basel Switzerland  
+41 61 2731685  
studio-basel@nsl.ethz.ch  
<http://www.nsl.ethz.ch/basel/>

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ELSA WIFSTRAND, RUJUN JIA  
ETH Studio Basel Contemporary City Institute  
The Middle East Studio  
Wintersemester 2009

Prof. Jacques Herzog  
Prof. Pierre de Meuron  
Manuel Herz  
Shadi Rahbaran

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