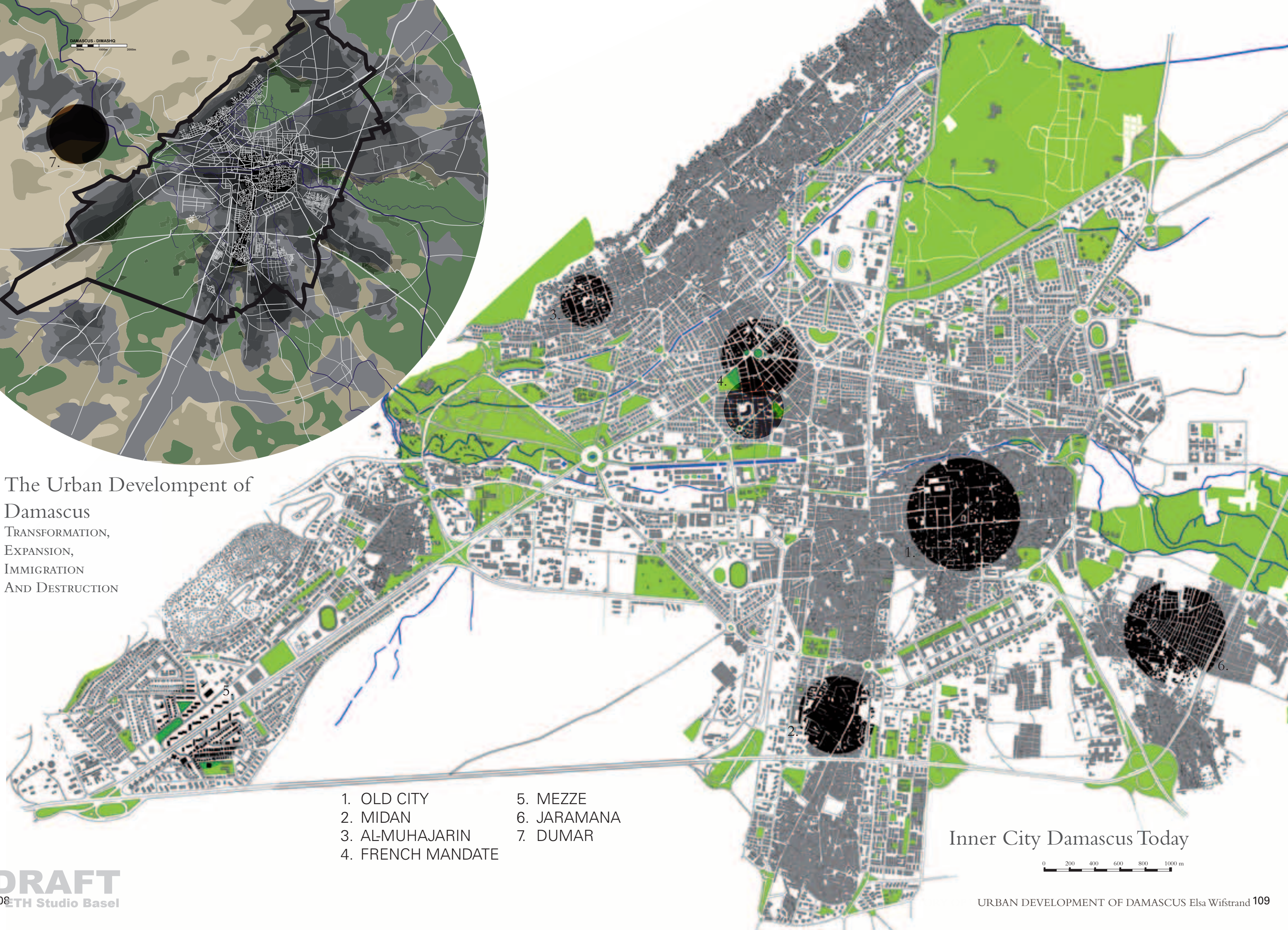


The Urban Developpment of Damascus

TRANSFORMATION,
EXPANSION,
IMMIGRATION
AND DESTRUCTION



- | | |
|-------------------|-------------|
| 1. OLD CITY | 5. MEZZE |
| 2. MIDAN | 6. JARAMANA |
| 3. AL-MUHAJARIN | 7. DUMAR |
| 4. FRENCH MANDATE | |

Inner City Damascus Today

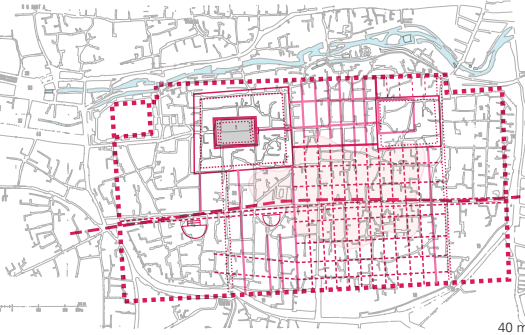
0 200 400 600 800 1000 m

Early, Ancient and Islamic City of Damascus

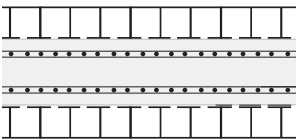
TRANSFORMATION INTO AN “ISLAMIC CITY”

The organic “Islamic” city began in the weak Byzantine empire

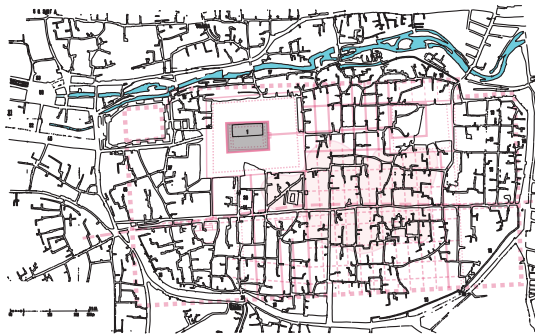
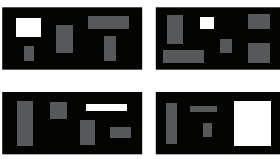
The Greek and Roman city followed strong geometric patterns and straight lines. During the Byzantine empire the rigid Roman grid of Damascus started to break up. The Byzantine empire, weaker administratively, gave house owners and the church the freedom to expand their properties. Due to the weakness of the Byzantines Damascus was taken easily by the Islamic armies. With the introduction of Islam, the unregulated expanding of houses and mosques continued, as long as one didn't offend one's neighbors. The strong ritualized living patterns of Islam made formal institutions unnecessary, and so open places like the forum disappeared over time. Pack animals were preferred before wheeled chariots, so wide streets were not needed anymore. This transformation from the straight roman street grid with large open spaces into “Islamic” narrow street-cities happened slowly taking many centuries to form.



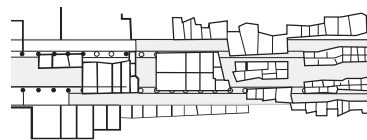
Roman city 64 BC



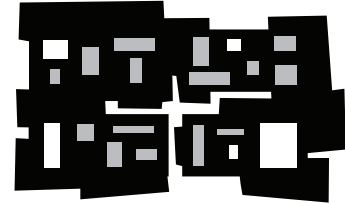
Roman Cardo



Old town 1919 AD



The Suq



Damascus under The Ottoman Empire

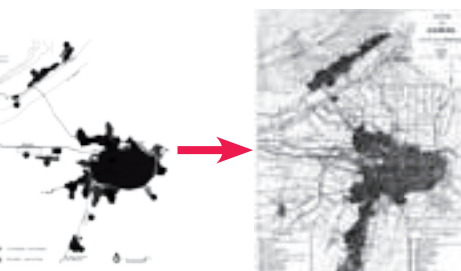
EXPANSION THROUGH RELIGION AND TRADE

Ottoman Damascus grew along the route to Mecca and developed straight street suburbs in late 20th century

Damascus became a major meeting-point for caravans and pilgrims on their holy Hajj to Mecca. As the Ottoman empire expanded so did the number of pilgrims, with between 25 000-60 000 people meeting in the Midan area twice a year. Also Damascus had become one of the big stops of caravan trade voyages, up to 2-3 caravans with 2000 camels from the far east stopped in Damascus every year before continuing west.

The Hajj-migration added over 30 % of the population and there was a fast expansion of suburbs. Damascus grew south along the route to Mecca and the old area of Maydan became fully incorporated into the city as a residential suburb. Settlements also arose following the road up to Saliheye.

The last sixty years of the Ottoman Empire were a time of administrated reform and modernisation, influenced by Europe. The new urbanism, and this was before any french mandate master plan, that developed was based on 3 principles.



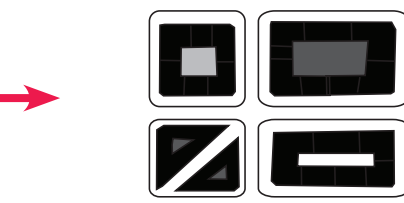
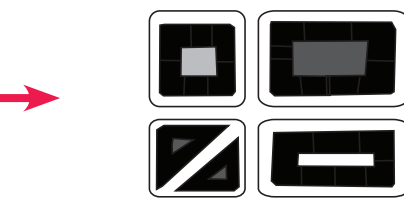
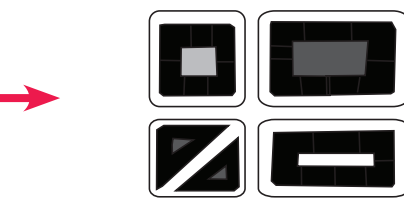
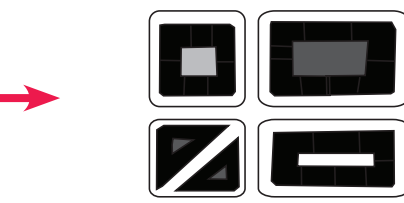
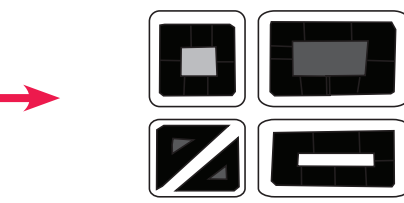
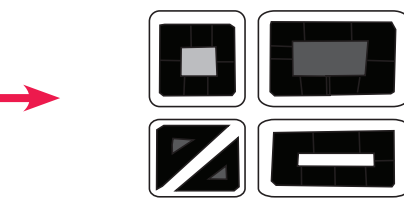
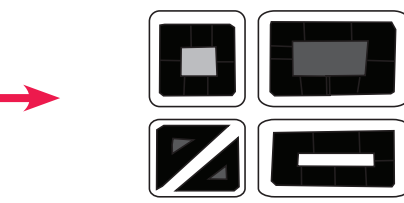
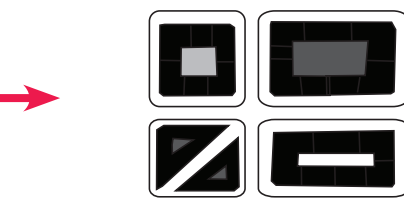
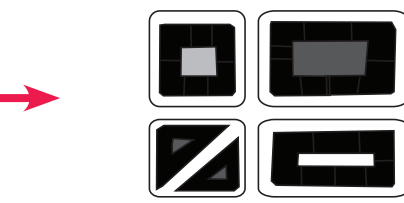
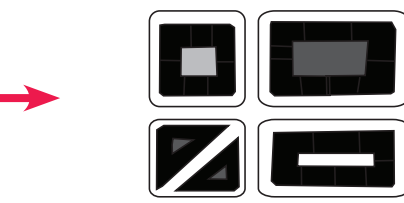
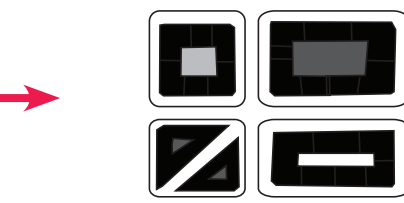
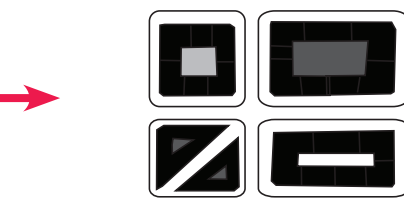
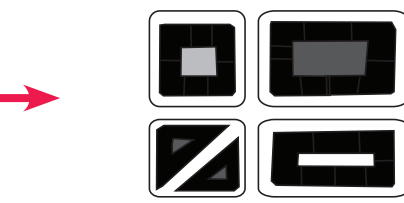
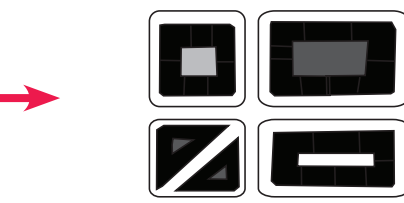
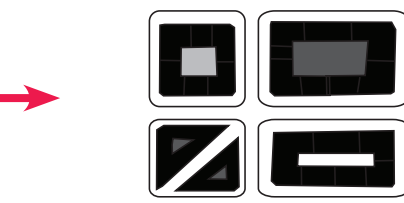
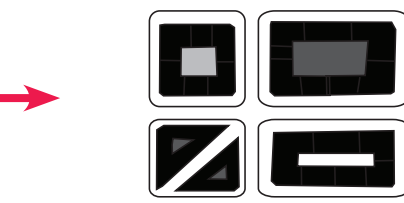
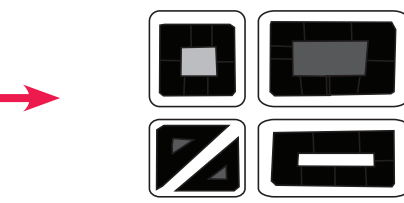
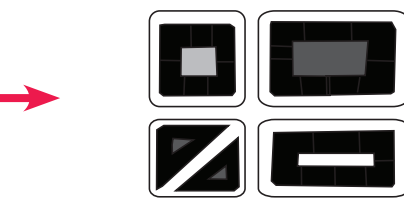
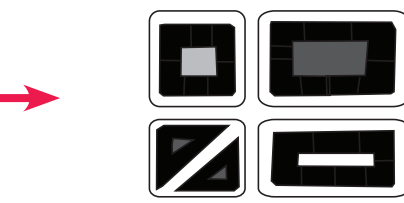
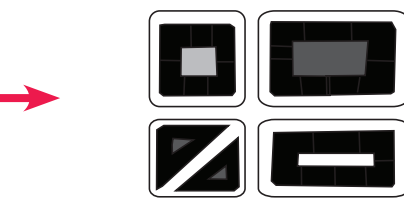
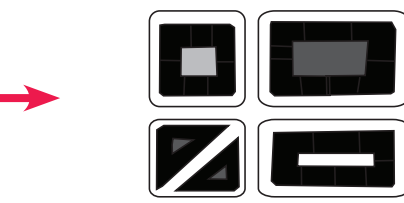
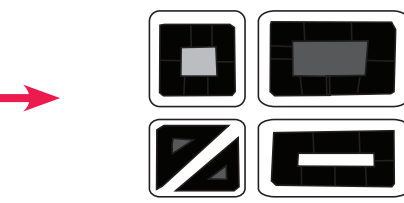
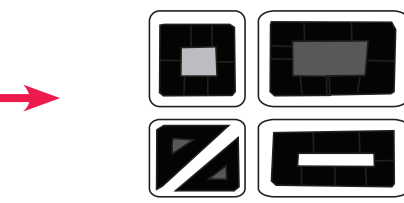
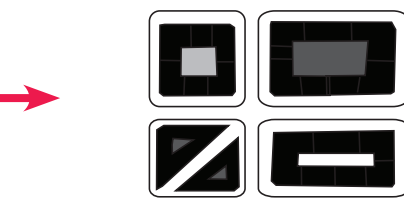
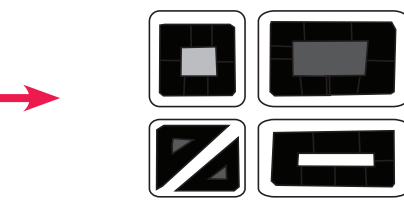
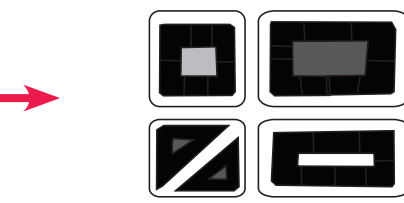
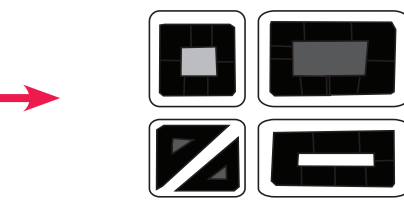
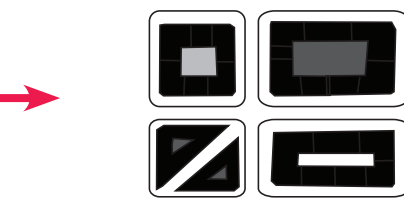
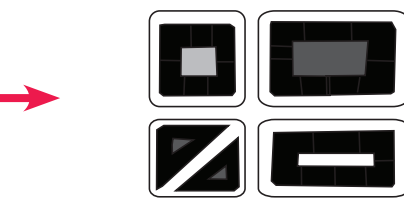
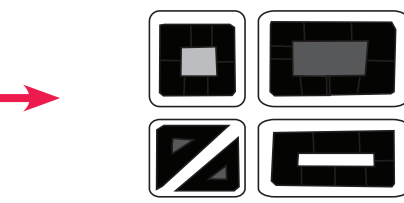
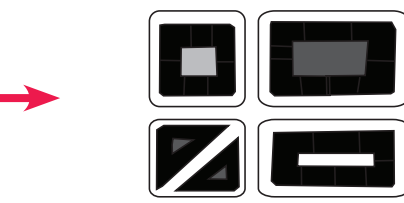
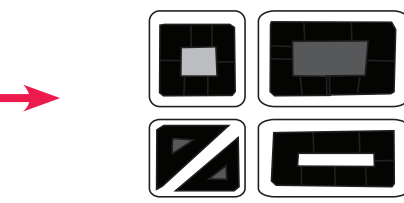
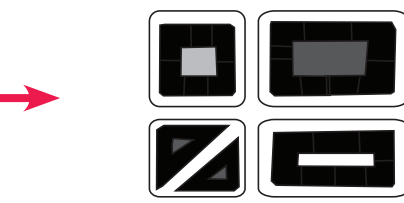
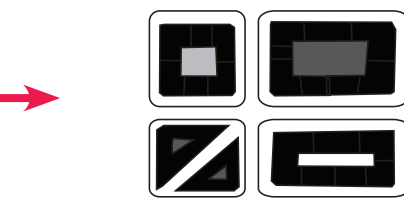
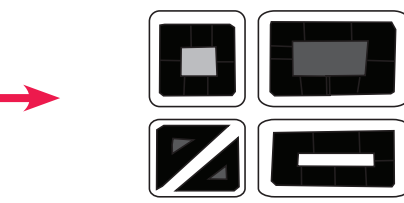
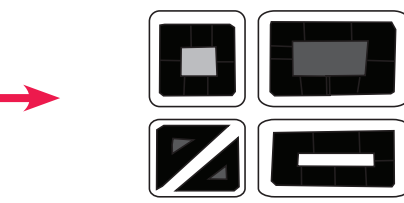
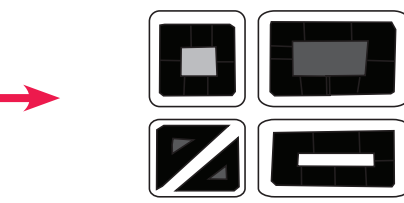
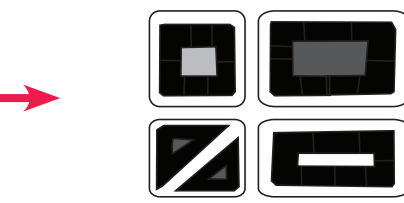
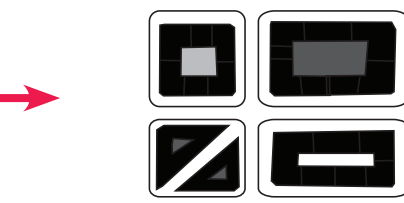
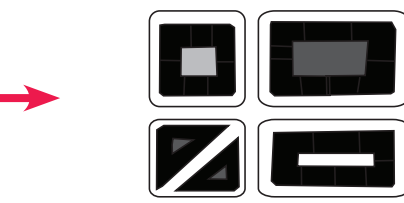
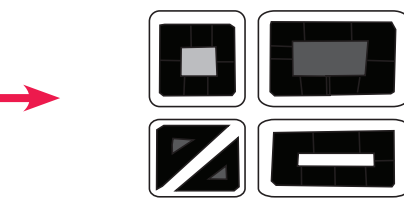
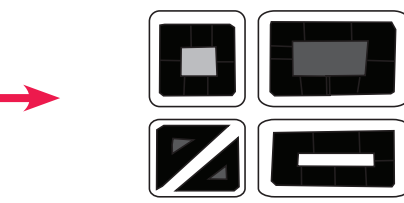
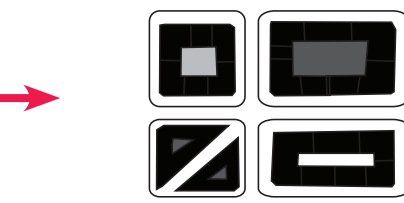
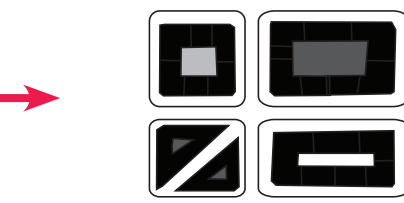
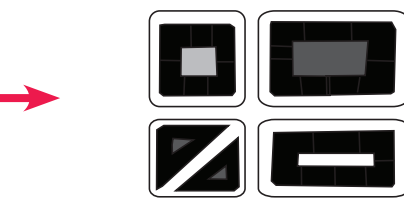
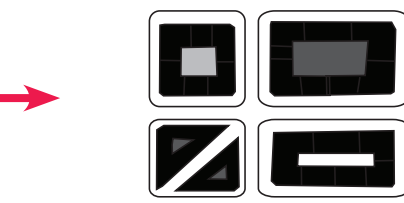
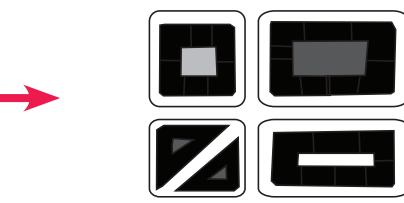
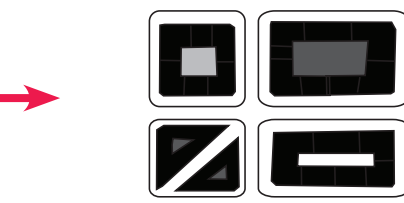
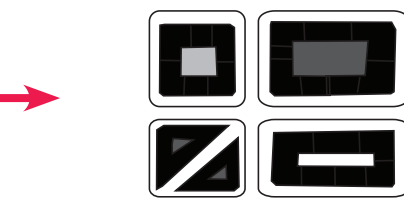
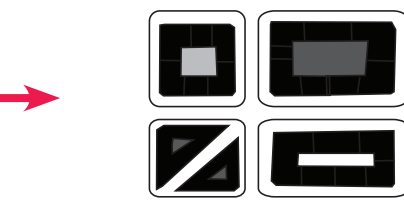
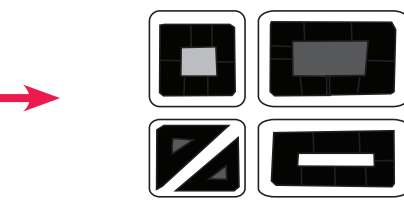
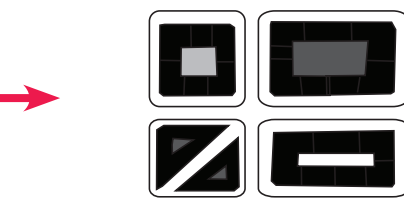
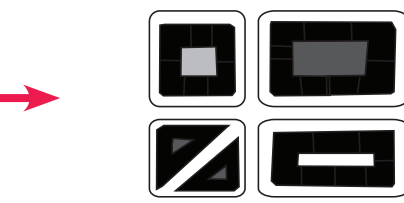
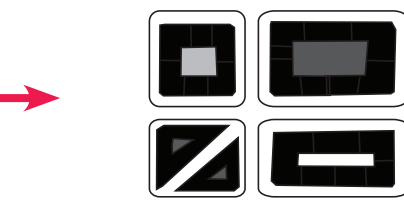
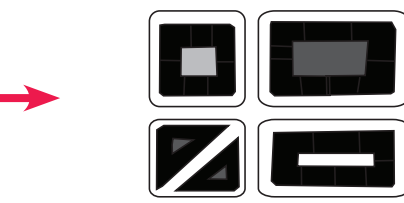
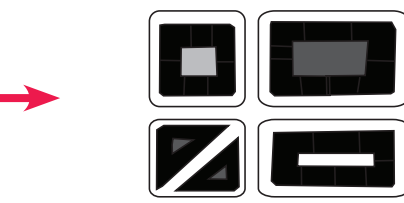
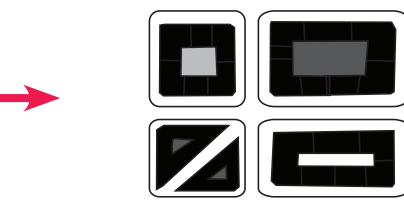
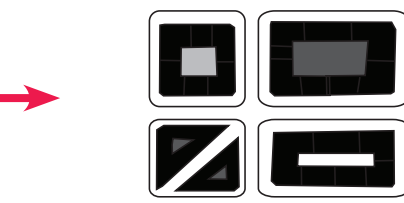
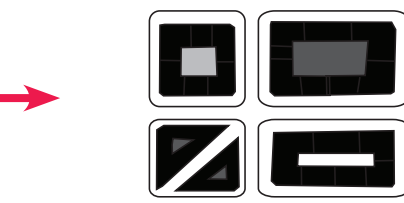
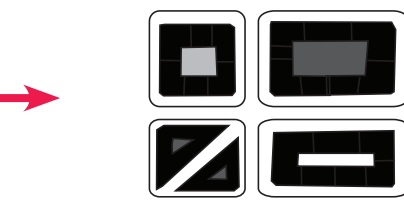
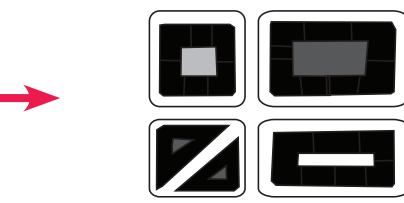
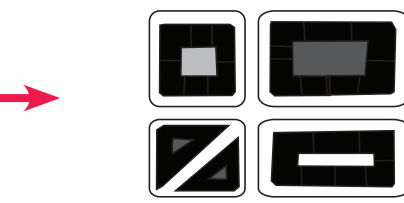
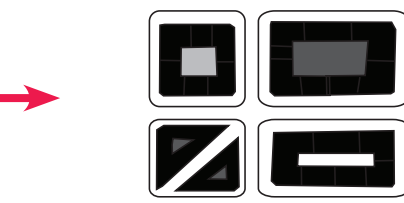
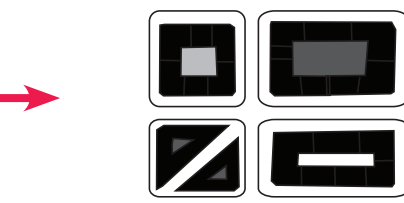
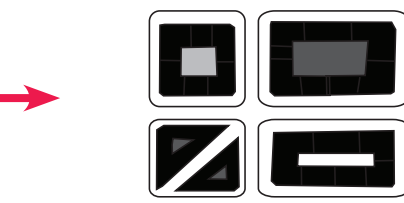
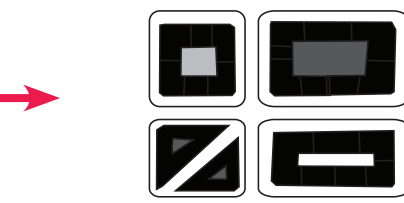
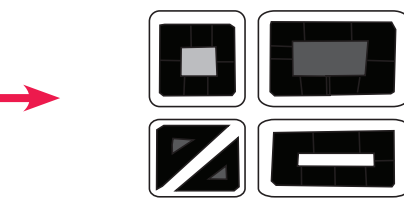
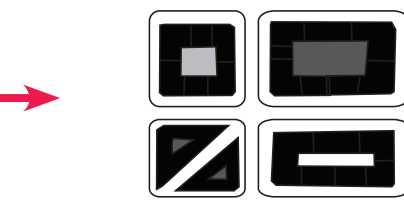
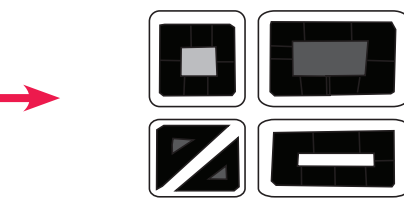
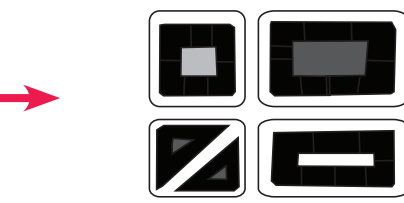
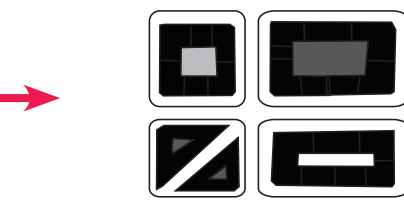
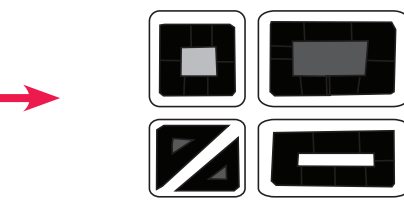
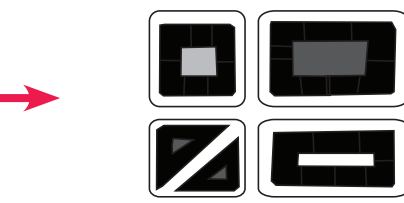
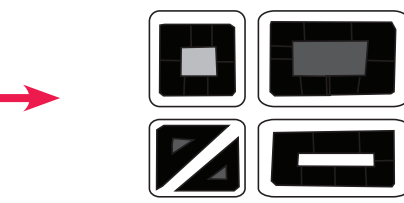
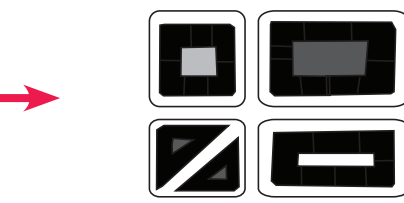
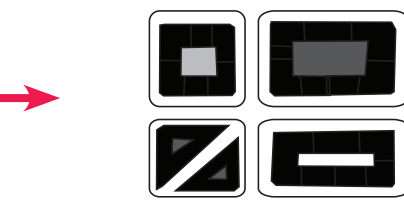
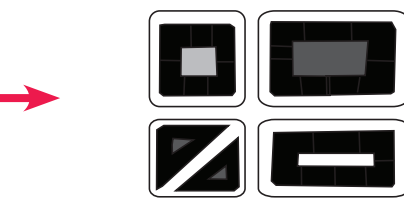
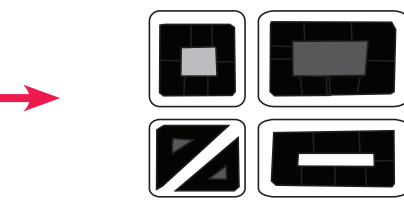
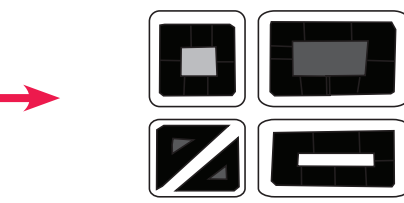
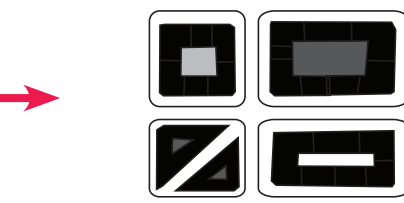
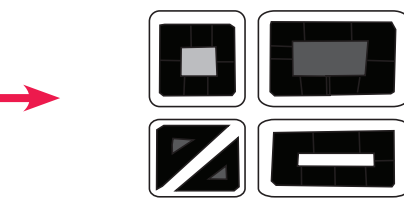
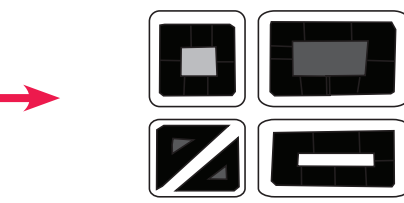
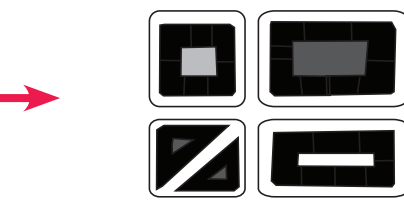
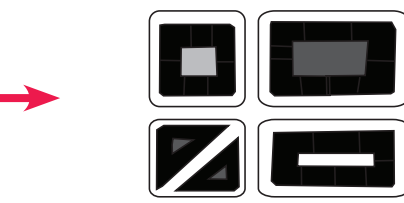
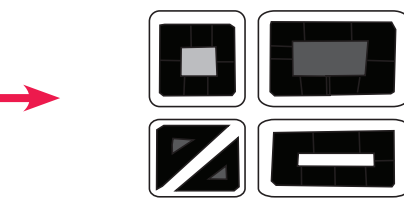
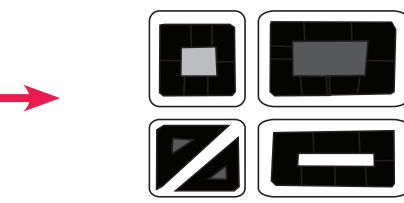
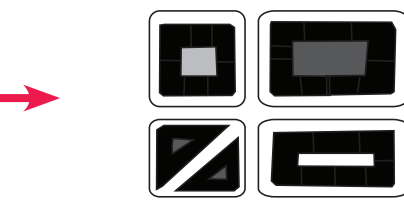
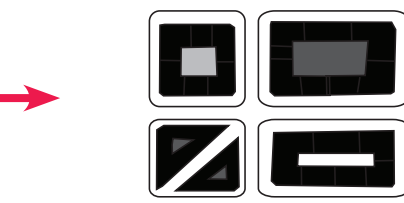
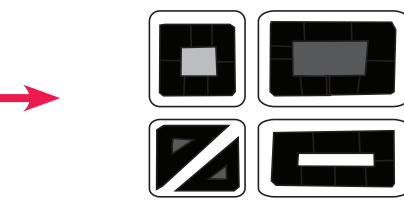
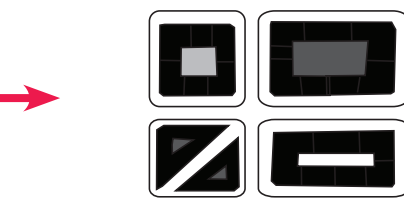
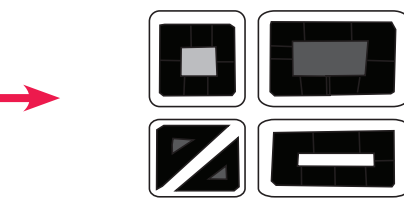
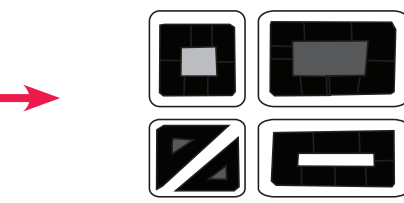
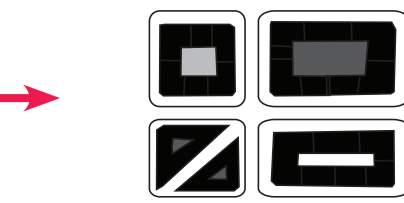
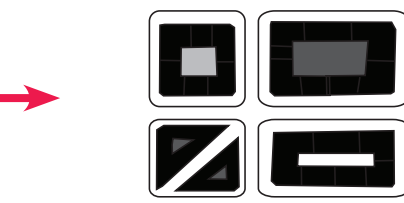
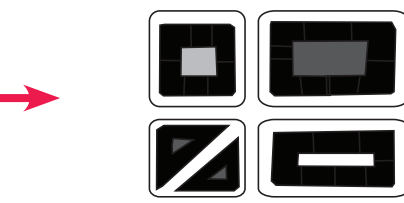
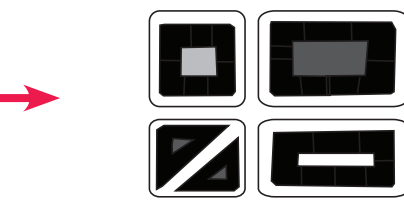
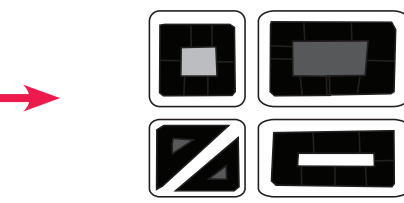
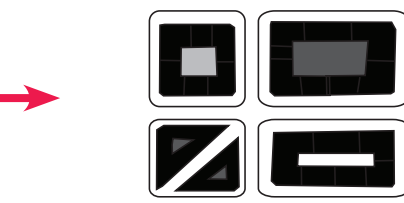
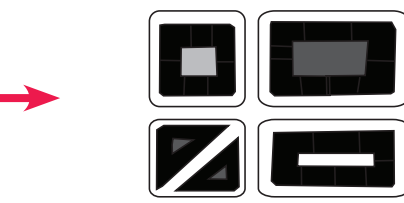
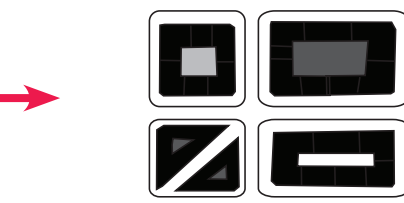
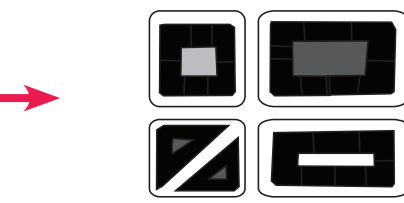
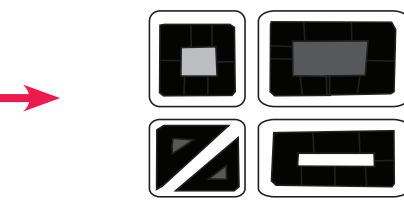
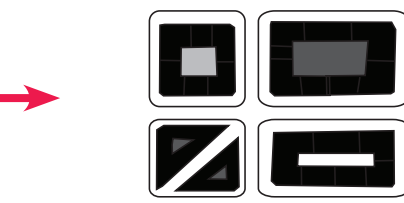
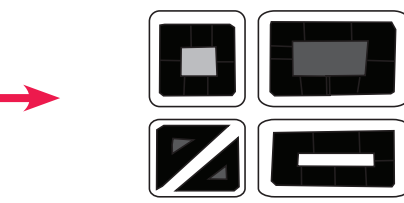
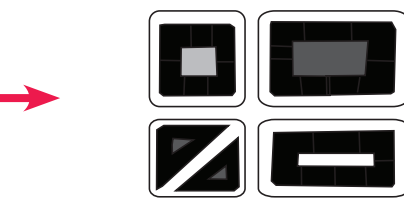
Damascus ca 1500



Damascus 1860



Damascus 1829

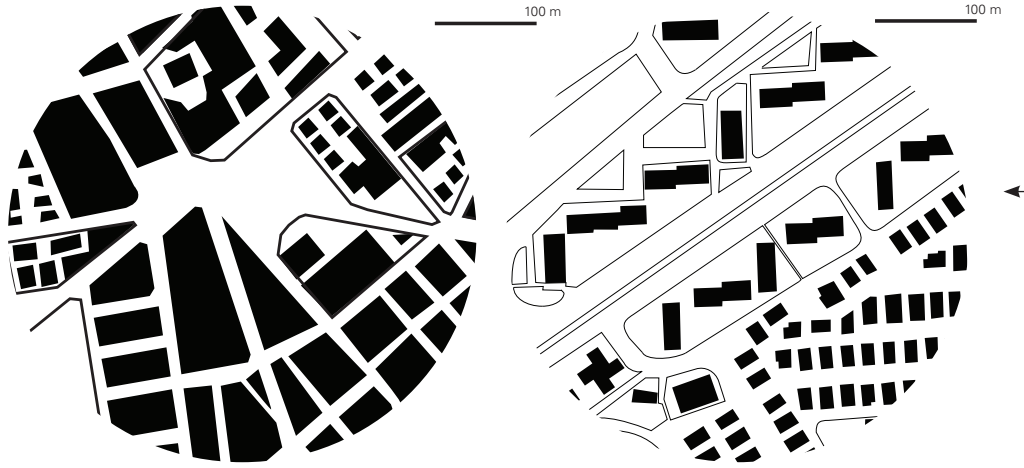
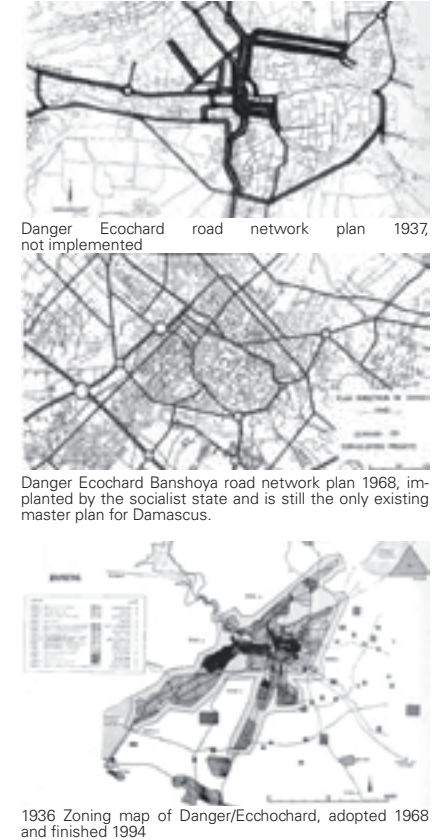


The French Mandate and Independence

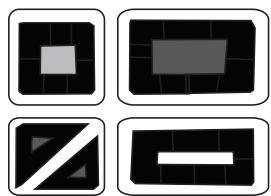
MASTER PLANS, SOCIALISM, IMMIGRATION AND THE NEGLECT OF OLD CITY

The French continued what the late Ottoman planners began with masterplanning the city and the post-independence socialist state of Syria implemented the planning.

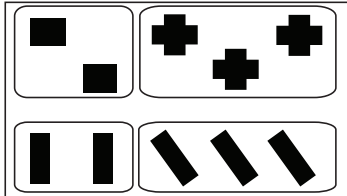
After the World War I the French Mandate continued the urban development which the Ottomans started in the 1900th century. The first master plan for Damascus, totally ignoring the local tradition and neglecting the old city, faced a lot of resistance from a city which had grown organically for a thousand years. Danger and Ecochard presented a new road system, creating a ring road around the old town, to ease congestion but also to “show off” the cultural heritage of the old city. They also proposed a new sewage system for the city including the old town, but French Mandate and Independence planning mainly focused on building new modern housing outside of the old city. They also proposed a functional zoning map. The plan was adopted in 1960 and completed in 1994.



Abu Rummaneh area, developed during the French Mandate period



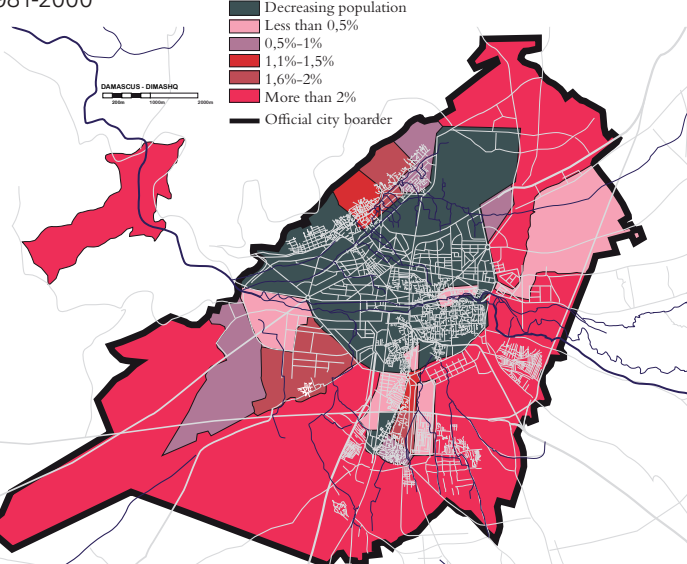
‘Soviet’ City with help from Japanese planner



The Baath Socialist Party took power over Syria in 1963. The suburb Mezze was influenced by contemporary Soviet planning and architecture. The government also implemented the Danger Ecochard master plans with the help of Japanese planner Banshoya.

Population growth per annum 1981-2000

Damascus population increased a lot from the 1950s and on. Much of the increase is explained by Iraqi and Palestinian refugees. The population today is officially 4,3 million, but that is in the whole region of Rif Dimashq. A large number of refugees are not counted in this number. The growth is mainly in the outer region of the Damascus and at least since 1980s the inner city has a decreasing population.



Damascus Today

REFUGEE SETTLEMENTS, SUBURBIA AND THE WORLD HERITAGE

30 % of Damascenes live in illegal settlement areas. Wealthier population leaves the old city for modern suburbs.

Today, illegal housing settlements (squatter) account for one in three residences in Damascus, and is also the main reason for the destruction of the Al-Ghouta. There are 13 illegal housing settlements. Jaramana, an area of Iraqi refugee area, being one of the largest. These areas provide services to the city as a whole, but is not shown in the formal economy. 30% of Damascus inhabitants live in these areas.

Dumar is an upper middle class suburb northwest of Damascus. Wealthier population leaves the old city for modern high standard housing outside the city, trend that started in the middle of the 19th century. Dumar is one of these suburbs. The old city has been left in municipal neglect for decades, but more and more restaurants and hotels are being built, and often the old Islamic and Ottoman houses are restored without proper restoration techniques.

A living old city and a site of World Heritage under threat

The World heritage site is situated within the old city walls, but the report from April 2008, written by the UNESCO and ICOMOS stresses the fact that the old city is only a part of a larger historic urban area, with the nearby suburbs Qanawat, Souk al Srijia, Midan, Sarouja and Al Uquiba. They want the area with the nearby suburbs and the old is to be considered as a whole. UNESCO together with a uproar of Damascene inhabitants successfully stopped the planned expansion to a highway on the King Faisal road, a project that would have separated the old city from the historic suburbs and done much damage to Barada river. They also stopped the ongoing rough and unsupervised “restoration” of Straight Street.

A lot of hotels and restaurants are being built in the old city. The positive outcome is the maintenance of livelihood in the old city so that it “stays alive”. The negative side is the gentrification process of rents going up, pushing out the poorer occupants.

The World Heritage List

890 properties forming part of the cultural and natural heritage which the World Heritage Committee considers as having outstanding universal value. These include 689 cultural, 176 natural and 25 mixed properties in 148 States Parties.

