

**Conflicts on development
of an urban centre in extra-mural quarter in Damascus**

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TITLE: Conflicts on development of an urban center in extra-mural quarter in Damascus, conciliation or negotiation.

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Key words: historical neighbourhoods, stakeholders analysis, sustainable regeneration, guideline, integrated development plan

Abstract:

The Old City of Damascus has been recognized by the UNESCO as a World Cultural Heritage in 1979. Many efforts have been since undertaken to ensure the protection of its urban and architectural heritage. But the historical patrimony of Damascus is not restricted to its Old City. The extramural historical neighbourhoods constitute a continuous development of intra mural Damascus. They have developed since the Zangid and *Ayyubid* period at 12th century. In total eight neighbourhoods surrounding the Old City with the same urban structure and plenty of historical monuments and vast traditional houses inserted in their organic urban structure, embrace the core of Damascus to protect it, meanwhile they are in danger of being transformed by the pressure of huge investments, and face the risk of being partly or completely demolished which might put an end to the relations between the extra mural neighbourhoods and the Old City.

Since the 12th Century the first urban quarter to develop on the North bank of the river *Barada*, in the adjacent surroundings of the Old City, is *al-Uqayba* (or the small slope). And just close to the city wall on the north, *Amara barranieh* is a quarter where vegetable market exists since the *Mamluk* period, and metal workshop still provide farmers with their metallic tools.

In recent years, the adjacency of the historical suburbs next to the modern city centre has resulted in their coming under development pressures, as exemplified by the recent controversy over the King Faisal Street corridor redevelopment proposal. Traffic engineers talk about road "improvements" when they mean widening. This enhancement hides often social and economic problems on the long term that will result from demolishing of houses and shops and the relocation of people in far areas. About 5,000 families affected by the road development plan have received

expropriation notices in November 2006. The widening of the road to about 40m, will causes the destruction of traditional houses, the metal workshops and others kind of local small and medium commerce. This project will also interrupt the link and the viable connection with the old city through the northern gates.

In this paper we will present the historical development and the actual situation of these two northern extra mural quarters, referring to their urban problems and risks. And while focusing on the controversy on the recent road project in this area, and which is still in discussion in many official and public meetings, we will present the different positions of actors and stakeholders at all levels, from local dwellers to national and international institutions.

The paper will attempt to provide a guideline for an overall vision for this area while being conscious that the preservation and sustainable regeneration of historical localities pass certainly through achieving three essential goals:

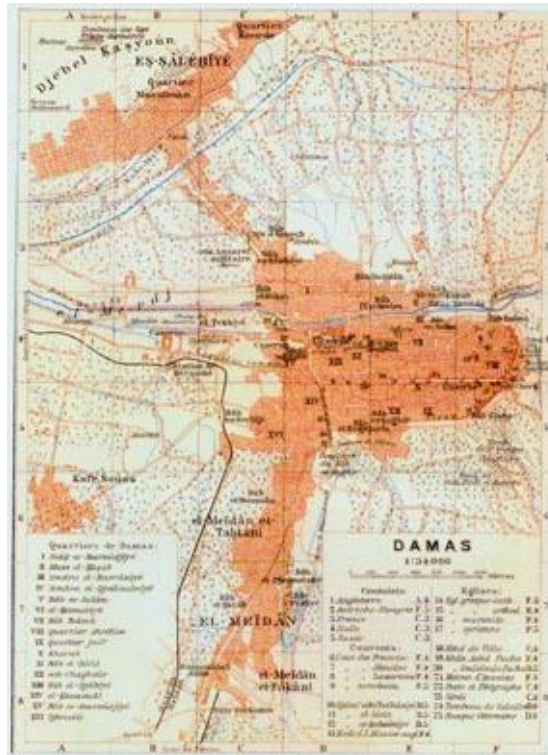
- the historical urban structure and monuments of these localities is preserved from demolition,
- original people are still living in their traditional houses,
- economic development, social cohesion and community participation are assured on long term basis.

This vision will include consideration of:

- o urban structural issues,
- o heritage protection,
- o traffic management,
- o the environment,
- o economic and social development, and
- o urban design.

Introduction:

The Old City of Damascus has been recognized by the UNESCO as a World Cultural Heritage in 1979. Many efforts have been since undertaken to ensure the protection of its urban and architectural heritage. But the historical patrimony of Damascus is not restricted to its Old City. The extramural historical neighborhoods constitute a continuous development of intra mural Damascus. They have developed since the *Zangid* and *Ayyubid* period. In total eight neighbourhoods surrounding the Old City with the same urban structure and plenty of historical monuments and vast traditional houses inserted in their organic urban structure, embrace the core of Damascus to protect it. Their location close to the City Centre doubles the risk of demolition under the presser of huge international and national investments in this part because of the ignorance of the importance of the historical value of these neighbourhoods by the local authorities and the lack of interest in developing an integrated development plan for these quarters.



Map 1 - Neighborhoods and the Old City Map, Damascus, 1920, French Plan from the Mandate period

These traditional neighborhoods are located in a close distance to the Old City; they constitute a buffer zone that links the Old City with the modern part. The situation of being threatened by potential future projects that don't take in consideration the respect of this historical heritage causes many problems and make living conditions in these neighborhoods very difficult, such as deterioration of infrastructures, lack of public facilities, collapse of traditional buildings. In these neighborhoods large projects of traffic planning are being carried out on old roads. They face the risk of being partly or completely demolished which might put an end to the relations between the extra and intra mural.

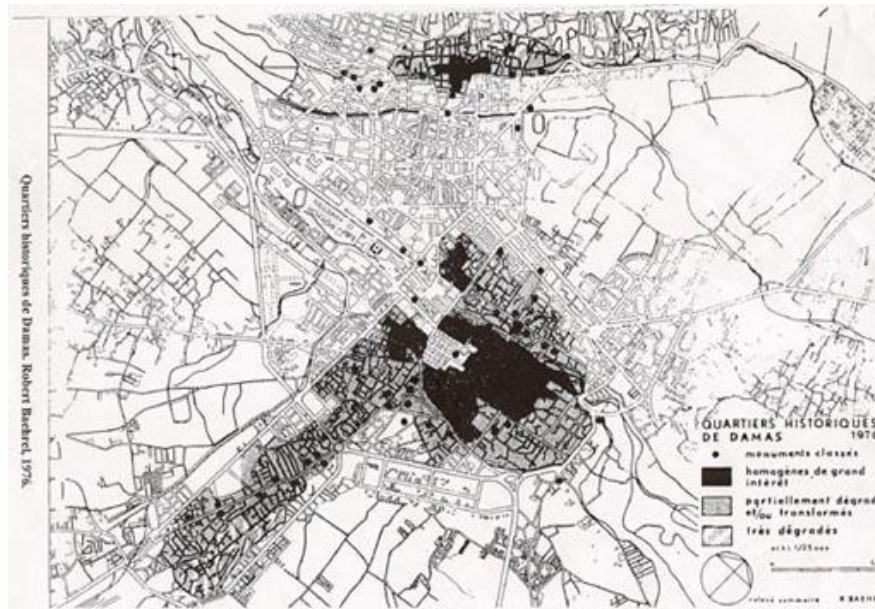
The protection of the old city with its monuments, have always been and still remain today, a main focus of the monument conservation efforts by the state authorities. In fact, since the old city is inhabited, constant maintenance has been carried out. On the contrary, the situation of the closed historical zone is more serious.

1- Heritage preservation - Laws and procedures:

The Syrian Law of Antiquities (1963) allows, for the protection by the General Directorate of Antiquities, of individual buildings as well as of ancient quarters. A protection area may be defined around a building or a district. If the protection area is not defined at the moment of listing, this could be done later by ministerial decree (article 13). The easements around the site may concern non-aedificandi areas as well as heights, construction materials, techniques and colours and even windows and terraces of buildings (article 14). The Antiquities authorities approval is anyway

necessary for any building license in a location adjacent to a historical building or site (article 10)

The National authorities listed the old walled city early in 1972. 110 individual monuments were already listed in Damascus when the city was listed by the UNICCO in 1979. 300 monuments now are listed in the whole Damascus.



Map 2 - Historical Districts of Damascus. UNESCO Report by Robert Behrel, 1976

The conventions concerning the preservation of urban heritage are now internationally recognized after many efforts and through long process. This concept includes the preservation of the whole parts of the city and not only the monuments.

Considerable effort has also clearly been expended by the Damascus Governorate through the Old City Master Plan to bring forward ways in which the area within the walled city might be protected and enhanced. The Old City Master Plan, however, has excluded all the parts of the Old City outside the wall.

Thus, the preservation of historical neighborhoods located in the extramural Damascus, is a question that has been debated since the late 70s. Some extramural areas have recently been timidly designated and were progressively listed after 1972, like *Qanawat* (1988 and 2004), *Al Hajaj Palace*, *Bab al Srijja* and *al Tirouzi* (2006), *Souq al Sroujia* (2004), *Midan* (2005) and *Suq Saruja* (2003). Al Uqaiba district to the north of the walled city has also been "designated" a future listed area. Individual listing should be juridically useless when it overlaps with a district listing, but still practically provides more care and attention.

2- The northern historical extra-muros quarters

Since the 12th Century the first urban quarter to develop in the adjacent surroundings of the Old City is *al-Uqayba* (or the small slope), on the North bank of the river *Barada*. The foundation of the Great mosque *al-Tawba* on the remains of an old

caravanserai / *khan* gave the quarter an important impulse. Just close to the city wall on the north, **Amara barranieh** is a quarter where vegetable market exists since the *Mamluk* period, and metal workshop still provide farmers with their metallic tools. In the Northwest, overhanging the square/esplanade that spreads under the citadel, in the North of the great mosque of *Yalbuga*, a small market, *suwayqa*, was established at the year 1343 bearing the name of **Suq Saruga**.

On the main road in the south of the neighborhood, the *King Faycal* road, there are three northern gates of the Old City Wall, *bab al-faradis*, *bab al Faraj* and *bab al salam*, their names are linked to the ancient gardens on the north part of the city wall which were almost a paradise (*al-faradis* or *al-janna*), the second is titled the gate of relief, and the third one is titled the gate of peace.

2-1 Physical and socio-economic changes

Urban development

The unsustainable growth of economic activities in all sectors is causing the deterioration of most of historical localities and sites of national value in addition to the loss of intangible heritage that was embedded in the patrimony. This means consequently the loss of an important source of national income. This is also due to the lack of development of tools to promote integrated development plan that contribute in development of the society while protecting and preserving heritage for future generations. Tourists are an economically important factor, but tools and policy of sustainable cultural tourism with respect to heritage and social life in these neighbourhoods are not well developed.

In the plan of Damascus of 1942, the district has kept the same structure and the same fabric of the urban tissue, and a new modest development is started to the northern part, but during this development, the north part has been kept a green part to supply food to the city, it was the last part to be developed. Changes weren't dramatically till the second master plan of 1968 designed by Ecochard and Banshoiya. The main concept was to introduce the car everywhere; it proposed a road to connect west to east passing near the northern wall of the old city, and another road that goes to the north near the Citadel, al-Thawra Street which has been executed in about 1977.

During 30 years (from about 1940 to 1970) there was a slow development to the north. By comparison the city has developed rapidly during the second half of the 20th century. And now after the expansion of construction, there is still a small green part of the eastern green fields (al-Ghuta al Sharqiyya - Basatine Abou Jarash) where will be a zoo and a botanic garden. - The increase of built area in the city of Damascus:

In 1940 - 670 H

In 1965 - 2000 H

In 1994 - 5800 H

The last 20 years is characterized by these principal points:

- Development of the central districts nearby the northern historical districts, and the result was a kind of Hypercenter (old+new), where modern buildings juxtapose traditional houses.
- Central expansion of the city on the periphery areas
- Decrease of the green field (al-Ghuta) around the city
- Continuity of built areas from inside the city to the nearby villages
- Increase of informal settlements

Social changes

During the last thirty years, original Damascene families, from those who used to live in al-Uqaiba, left their houses with a courtyard to live in modern districts. In the 70's, New comers from nearby villages (especially from villages in al-Qalamoun, about 40Km far), or small cities moved in (ref. Deliverable project Hammam).

Nevertheless, the prices of property sale remain relatively moderate in this district. It is the same for rentals, which urge people to stay in a pleasant sector located in the heart of Damascus, a few minutes' walk away from the Omayyad Mosque, and in the center of the modern city. Our urban survey shows that about 70% are owners, and that there is still a high percentage of houses in good condition.

The statistic below shows the decline of population between 1981-1994 due to the departure of inhabitants and the growth of commerce in the two northern districts (Sarouja and Okeibeh).

District	Area Hectare (1997)	Population (1981)	Population (1994)	Density	Resident. area Hectare 1997	Lands used for administrative and social function 1997 Hectare	Growth Rate 1981-1994
Sarouja	53.8	12 090	11 293	246	41.3	12.5	-1.331
Uqaiba	30.2	10 169	8 876	339	26.2	4	-1.852

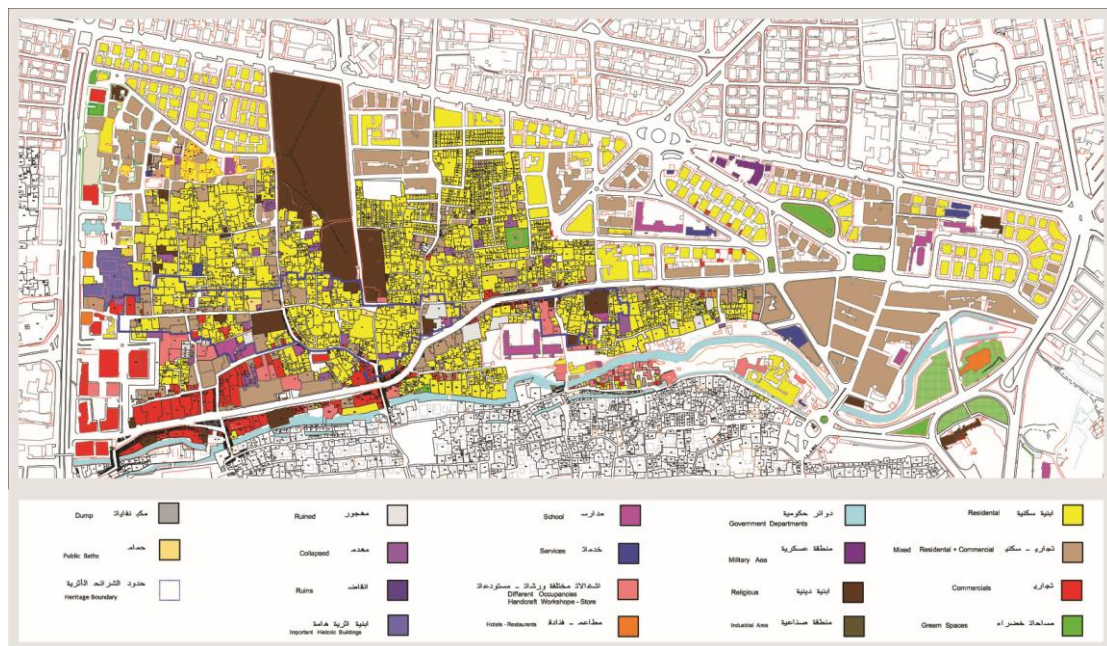
The Statistical data of 2004, published in 2006, shows the main points below in the three administrative quarters (Sarouja, Uqaiba, Amara Barranieh) on which extends the study area (ref. Deliverable Project Hammam) :

- Majority of population are from the age group 10–14 year, and then 15-19 and 20–24, and 35–39, that means young population.
- About 70 – 90 % of population (age more than 15 year) are female out of work force.
- There is very small percentage of female (5%) who works in trade (shop keeper).

- There is a majority of female who works in education sector.
- There are more literate female than male. High percentage of females study in intermediate institutions (two years), where as high percentage of males study in the university. Percentage of population between 5-24 years old those hasn't been ever in schools is very low in these areas.

Economic development

The assessment of the economic activities in the neighborhood shows that musallabat al-Amara (the crossroad of the neighborhood from the old city) is a small node of commerce where products for local daily supply are provided. The main commercial node of the neighborhood with services and alimentary food is located near al-Tawba mosque. Two main sectors for the city level are located on the edges of the neighborhood; one is more specialized of painting materials, electrical devices, kitchen's utensils, etc...on King Faycal Street near al-Joseh Mosque, the second one is the metal workshops and shops on the western side of the neighborhood. In addition we have to take in consideration the vegetable market. This market has been located there a long time ago. During the French Mandate there was a whole sale vegetable market which was called "les Halles", as the one in Paris. And even after the relocation of the market to other part in the city, we still find vegetable street vendors. (ref. Deliverables Project Hammam)



Map3 - Function map – Source MAM, 2009

The unsustainable growth of economic activities in all sectors is causing the deterioration of most of historical localities and sites of national value in addition to the lost of intangible heritage that was embedded in the patrimony. This means consequently the loss of an important source of national income. This is also due to the lack of development of tools to promote integrated development plan that contribute in development of the society while protecting and preserving heritage for

future generations. Tourists are an economically important factor, but tools and policy of sustainable cultural tourism with respect to heritage and social life in these neighbourhoods are not well developed. (ref. Deliverables Project Hammam)

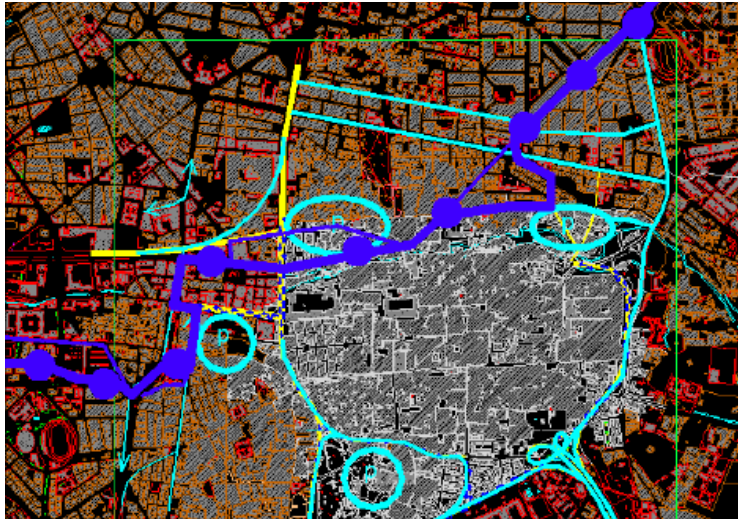
3- Urban Risks

The study of the Master plan of Damascus has passed by different stages and it hasn't been approved yet but during this passed time great environmental, physical and social damage has affected Damascus trinity: Qassiyoun Mountain, the Green fields (Al-ghuta), and Barada River. These are the major stages:

- Start of the study on 1992 - scale 1/10.000
- First public consultation 2001 (for the city of Damascus). In this master plan limits of historical areas were identified to be protected.
- Second public consultation on 2002 (for the rural areas of great Damascus) – Working on 1/5000 for the city and its development areas.
- New Contract for the Master plan 2009-2010
- Integrated and development conservation plan for the old city Damascus 2007-20010 MAM

The northern historic districts are near older transportation corridors, they still have fragments of neighborhoods that work fairly well. But they are also threatened by surrounding conventional development, as they are near the old historical center and the modern one. Most problems in the physical environment are solved by people, whose job is to look at only one piece, moving cars faster, building high buildings,...

The adjacent area on the north of al-Uqaiba neighborhood (*Al-Samaneh*) is not listed yet as historical area, it has very large houses in good condition but unfortunately it is not even assigned to be protected. People there can obtain permission to construct new buildings. Now we can see modern buildings beside old traditional houses without any cohabitation between them which cause a loss of the traditional urban fabric in this area.



Map 5- Metro Map source MAM

The most hindering to the northern neighborhoods is the widening of King Faycal Street, which will interrupt the link and the viable connection with the old city through the northern gates such as Bab al-Amara or al-Faradis. This gate is a main access to the old city and to important religious monuments (Umayyad mosque, Sitt-Ruqyya mausoleum). The widening of the road to about 30m, will causes the destruction of the metal workshops and others kind of commerce, which till now there was a wide diversity of small and medium commerce and a lot of jobs. This market serves the whole city and it is well-known for special kinds of products.

Another project is the Metro which will pass in the neighborhood but it hasn't been yet approved and many international companies have proposed their offers. And there is no decision for the kind of metro to use if it will be underground or aerial.

3-1 Disadvantages of being close to the Old City/ Traffic:

- Religious pilgrimage mostly come from Iran to visit Sitti Ruqyya Mausoleum causes many shops to change the type of products, and many Street Sellers come from outside Damascus that cause congestion problems and crowded streets full of pedestrian near the mausoleum. In the nearby districts such as al-Uqaiba, some houses have been changed to be small cheap hotels. In addition to this traffic problems is resulted in order to serve tourists by big buses, taxis, microbus.. (ref. Deliverables Project Hammam)

- Through traffic in narrow streets: the minibuses take a shortcut way in the neighborhood to arrive rapidly to the bus stop, and taxis also take the north – south narrow road near hammam Ammouna to arrive to the main road, King Faycal street, and near the gate that lead to the old city. (ref. Deliverables Project Hammam)

- The structure of the urban fabric is characterized by dense built areas with open courtyards, no open spaces in the neighborhood. And the few open places which are resulted of demolishing some houses or parts of houses, are used as parking lots,

and especially for intra-muros activities, no green areas, no place for children to play with safety, and lots of garbage and deteriorated electrical wiring in the street.

4- The Project King Faisal Street

Traffic engineers talk about road "improvements" when they mean widening. This enhancement hides often social and economic problems on the long term that will result from demolishing of houses and shops and the relocation of people in far areas.

The huge development of the King Street corridor redevelopment proposal is located in the northern historical quarters on the north side of the Old City. This new transportation project was the object of national competition but the main objective was to provide easy (east-west) access to cars. Two projects were retained the first with 8 lane road with bridges and tunnels close to the city wall and low and medium rise buildings, the second propose another traffic solution that are less destructive of the tissue but with high rise buildings and extensive replacement of historic urban tissue. The municipality worked on the first one asking more detailed executive plans. It plans to build a four-lane highway along the Old City walls in Damascus. a road 30 to 40 meters wide along a stretch of just 1.5 kilometers. But actually it will do nothing to resolve a citywide congestion problem and will damage the city's unique heritage.



Map 6- First schema, project King Faisal Street



Map 7- Second scheme, project King Faisal Street



Perspectives: Scheme 2 King Faisal Street

The King Faisal area proposals are controversial and subject to much technical disagreement on a number of points including urban structural issues, heritage protection, traffic management, the environment, economic development, great social impact and urban design

About 5,000 families affected by the road development plan have received expropriation notices in November 2006. The widening of the road to about 30 to 40m, will cause the destruction of traditional houses, the metal workshops and others kind of local small and medium commerce. This project will also interrupt the link and the viable connection with the old city through the northern gates.

5- Stakeholders analysis:

The Municipality

Municipal officials contending that the road will ease traffic congestion. The planned highway is intended to facilitate access to the Old City. Building the new road will help to resolve many of the Old City's problems. It will increase the city's tourism potential and provide new opportunities for the inhabitants of the Old City.

A study was commissioned by the Damascus City Council concluded that few of the buildings in the area have historical value. Supporters of the project argue that only the part inside the city walls should be considered World Heritage, and that building a road beside the site will improve accessibility.

Damascus officials maintain that the project will improve life in the city. They assume that they will continue our conversation with UNICCO to achieve the best solution

Ministry of Culture and Directorate of Antiquities

The Ministry of Culture's High Council of Antiquities is responsible for the protection of Syria's cultural heritage. The ministry's Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM) is the operational body responsible for the designation of listed buildings and protected areas and for approving specific projects in protected sites, including restoration standards. There is good cooperation between UNESCO and

DGAM and according to the last report of the Buffer zone comity (Municipality, DGAM, MAM) there is now an official Map to the protection area "Buffer zone".

Associations & NGOs,

In preparing the King Faisal Street proposals it appears that the impact of the scheme in terms of broader policy issues involved in urban structural decisions has not been considered adequately.

Local Dwellers and Al-Manakh Association

Expropriation procedure has started for the parts concerning the road, but the decision to expose the city wall and to demolish the parts next to it still in going as it needs another procedure. This part is occupied mainly by shops and traditional crafts, many owners and renters have opposed this decision through different kind of actions as establishing an association of those working at Suq al-manakhliyya. Many of those running small businesses and shops in the area will receive no compensation because their premises were built without a license. They will be able to buy new premises in one of Damascus's western suburbs.

Families who owns a 400-year-old house just outside one of the city gates, and have lived in their house for over 50 years, have received a document to be signed, and in which they agree to leave their houses within the coming year and move to new houses 25 kilometers from here.

There has been a weakness in terms of transparency and consistency in presenting information to the local residents.

British Syrian Association

The association has held many meetings and workshops on heritage conservation issues and the case of the King Faical project. some of the results and recommendation are:

- Full opportunity should be taken of all the available relevant expertise both local and international
- the implementation of a preliminary impact assessment study is a crucial requirement for any proposed project.
- There should be an immediate pause in the implementation of the current proposals in the King Faisal Street area, including expropriation processes.
- The development of a Vision for the King Faisal Street area to take account of the city needs and the World Heritage status constraints in a balanced way and in accord with realistic assumptions concerning the overall future direction for the city.

National and International Experts

National experts in the domain of urban regeneration and heritage conservation criticize the project as follow:

- the construction of a road 30 to 40 meters wide, along a stretch of just 1.5 kilometers, will do nothing to resolve a citywide congestion problem and will damage the city's unique heritage.
- the project argue that a new road will only attract more traffic to the Old City.
- It will increase pollution,
- an important economic, social and cultural value, will all be affected.
- the district contains centuries-old mosques, bathhouses, and houses dating back to medieval and Ottoman times but in a historic city like Damascus the value of individual buildings and monuments is less important than the urban tissue of the neighborhood as a whole
- The project will inevitably entail the destruction of many houses.

Faculty of Architecture – Damascus University

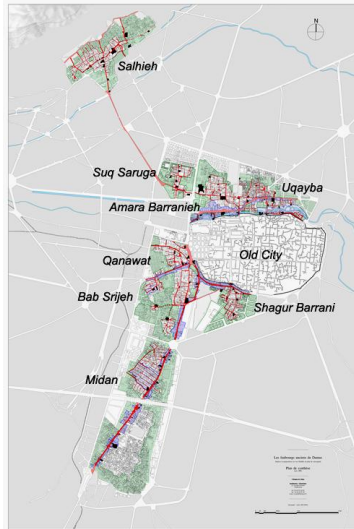
A study by Damascus University on King Faisal Street and the adjacent Barada river is of particular value because it shows that the present proposals are based on an out-of-date road scheme that requires complete reevaluation.

Students and professors have presented many recommendations for an integrated development

- The study should link the conservation of the built environmental enhancement of the barada river and the provision of recreational facilities for the public
- The study should take in consideration an integrated assessment of the world heritage conservation needs of the area in relation to public transport, traffic, public use and the safeguarding of heritage.
- Small projects should be based on enhancing existing buildings as the restoration shop-fronts which will enable decision-makers and the general public to appreciate their architectural value.

Institut Français du Proche-Orient (IFPO)

the survey undertaken by a French school of architecture (Paris-Belleville) on Damascus old suburbs during 17 years with the support of the Institut Français du Proche-Orient could be an excellent basis of work. The results are presented on a set of very detailed maps that are to be published soon in Damascus. These maps drawn at a scale of 1:5,000 cover an area of 3 by 6 km, include 4 categories of situations according to the importance of built and natural heritage and their proposed degree of protection.



Small projects with local dwellers during HAMMAM project financed by the European Union, such as competition of the most beautiful Alley, revitalization of hammam ammuna of the 12th century and cultural events in open public places at al-Uqayba neighbourhood, all these action have the role of empowering local dwellers and draw attention to theses

Map 8- Suburbs of old Damascus, IFPO, in print

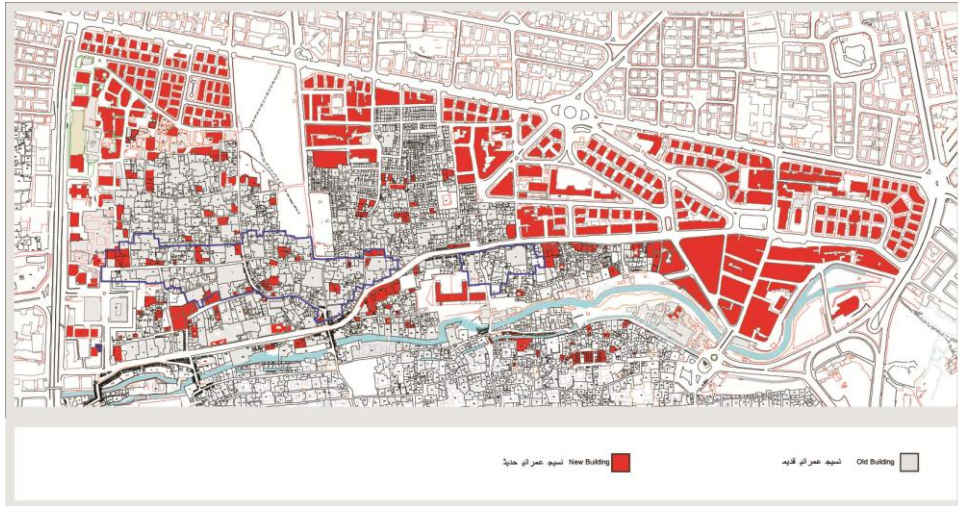
Municipal Administration Management (MAM) and Directorate of the Old City:

The delineation of the Old City buffer zone requested by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre to simultaneously protect Old Damascus intra muros and safeguard its historic suburbs is deemed a priority issue in the preparation of the Integrated Development and Conservation Plan for the Old City of Damascus as part of the European Union funded Municipal Administration Modernization project. The boundaries of the site were never clearly defined, a factor contributing to the controversy. The zones around the site should also be preserved because they form an integral part of the city's historic development.

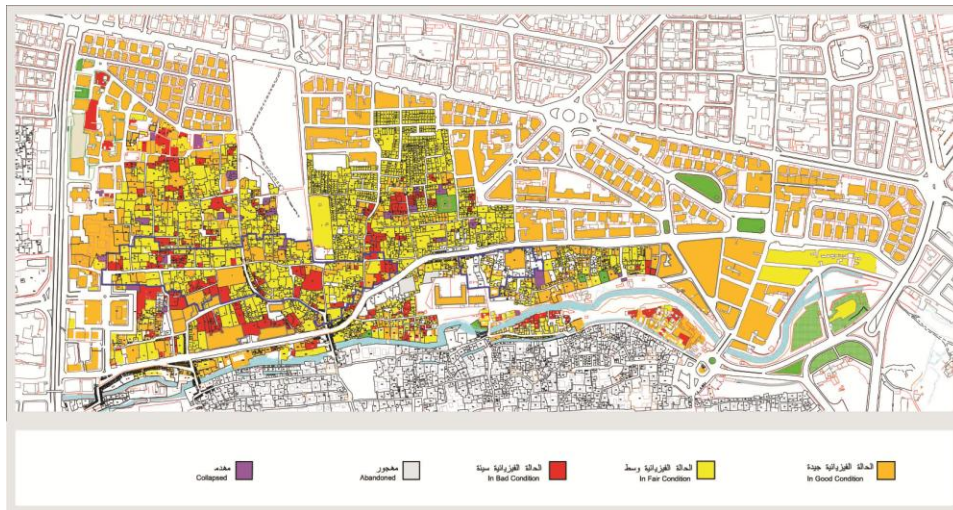
A detailed review in late August 2007 of the steps required to prepare an Integrated Development and Conservation Plan for the Old City of Damascus led to an intensive documentation effort of existing conditions in the historical quarters that is essentially complete.

- Land uses and building conditions of the King Faisal Street corridor have been documented and mapped.¹
- Demographic information is being tabulated and analysed.
- The assessment of the infrastructure,
- The recently completed Draft Damascus Old City Traffic and Transport Improvement Plan provides valuable information on circulation
- An assessment of environmental conditions with an emphasis on the pollution of the Barada River, air quality, and the possible presence of polluting economic activities.

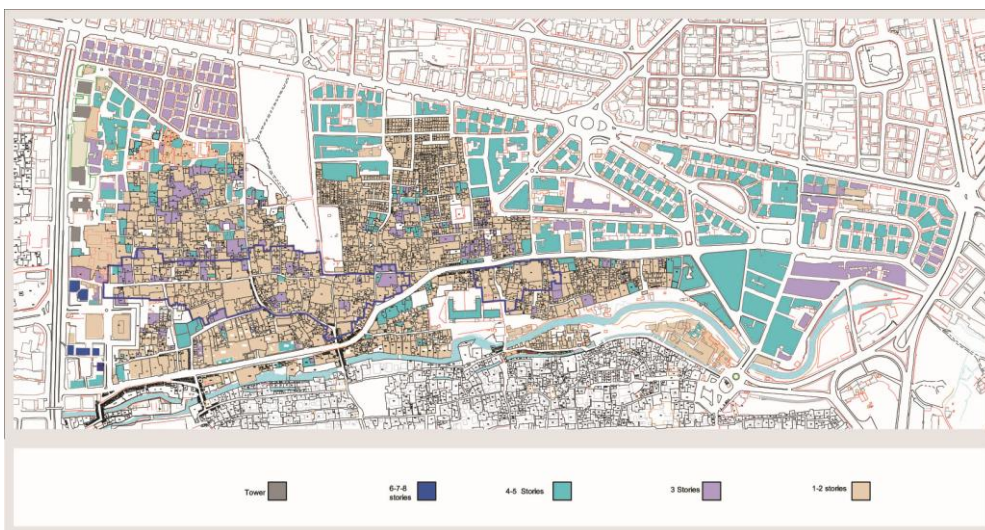
¹ In addition, The French Institute for Arabic Studies' documentation of the historic suburbs provides valuable supplementary information on historical buildings.



Map 9- Old and new structure map, MAM2009



Map10- Physical condition map, MAM 2009



Map 11- High building map, MAM2009

UNESCO

The February 2008 UNESCO Mission Report by Daniele Pini and Franca Miglioli add that "specific and diversified regulation should be established for the "buffer zone" which would include namely the following:

- Preserve, with different degrees of protection, all the remaining historic fabric. These should be established on the basis of detailed plot-by-plot field surveys;
- Control the land use, building height and typology of new urbanisation and renewal/redevelopment interventions;
- Prevent the opening of new thoroughfares that would bring through traffic and increase the traffic congestion near the Ancient City Walls;
- Implement road cuts and widening only when needed for public transportation and to improve local accessibility, without damaging or destroying heritage features, and according to the established degrees of protection;
- Determine standards of environmental compatibility for new developments or redevelopment and infrastructural interventions".

Objectives should anyway be adopted and detailed by the Committee for the study of the Buffer zone that was nominated by the Ministry of Culture in the summer 2008.

It appears that the requirements of the World Heritage Convention have not been taken into account and namely the fact that the King Faisal area is within a buffer zone that is meant to protect the city *intra muros* inscribed on the World Heritage List. Parts of the proposed extension of the King Faisal Street, which foresees demolitions, are within the registered National Heritage areas and should therefore not be demolished. UNESCO World Heritage Centre reported that they do not consider that they have adequate details of the proposals. The UNESCO World Heritage Centre will report about the state of conservation in Damascus regarding the development of the King Faisal project during the annual meeting of the World Heritage Committee next June. Should the proposed project be implemented, the World Heritage Committee could consider listing the Ancient City of Damascus on the World Heritage List in Danger.

- Other arguments that are considered by those in favor of the project:
 - Economic, land value in the center of Damascus, hotels, offices,....
 - An argument in favor of the project is that the road would facilitate access to the Saida Ruqqiyeh mosque, which attracts hundreds of thousands of Shiite pilgrims from Iran every year. Traffic in Al Malik Faisal Street is regularly backed up as dozens of buses double-park near the Old City gates to unload pilgrims heading for the mosque.

Interlinked institutional aspects

the proposals for King Faisal Street are motivated by the need for urban development in a general sense and that the proposals have been the subject of considerable work by the Governorate and others. the available opportunities and requirements for integrated cooperation between governmental agencies and other relevant bodies have not been respected to an adequate degree

there are a number of competing visions for the future of Damascus within the different agencies.

The Ministry of Culture should present a document of analysis and intent to the World Heritage Centre no later than January 31st 2009. To be implemented, above mentioned proposals need however an endorsement from concerned authorities: essentially the Ministry of Culture and the Governorate. The Ministry of Culture, that is entitled to present the "Buffer zone" to UNESCO, would rely on the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums.

The management of the Buffer will of course imply the Damascus Directorate of Antiquities which action is not restricted to listed districts. The Directorate for the Old City of Damascus (Maktab Anbar) has already two different territorial departments: one in charge with the walled city and the other with external historical suburbs. Only in the walled city however does it also coordinate all the city services. An evolution of their missions is however still possible.

The walled city is entirely included in Bab Touma Municipality. A single management policy is easier to achieve. Damascus outer historical districts belong to half a dozen of other municipalities.

6- SWOT Analysis:

This section provides an analytical overview of conditions in the north area of the old city and identifies the nature of the major interventions required to preserve its site.

It should be noted that there is a strong interplay among the various factors pertinent to this analysis:

Opportunities	Threats	Weaknesses	Strengths
Contextual Assessment			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of religious tourism - Development of culture tourism especially handicraft - Restore historical building - To develop building system regulations to the different sectors according to the historical values - Integrated conservation - development plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No good studies for tourism activities especially religious tourism - No architectural studies - The need to a disaster management plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The urgent need to Infrastructure -Traffic problems - Large number of buildings in bad condition - Different building system (bad elevation) - No restoration regulations - Expropriation problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Historical value : layering of urban morphologies dating back to 7 centuries ago (The ancient extramural suburbs share the same architectural quality as the intramural) - Cultural value of historical suburbs - Social &economic values: dual role residential and commercial role - Historical and important buildings
Recent trends			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Plans between buffer zone and listed areas - Redevelopment to the area surrounding the King Faisal street 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trying to isolated the old city from the surrounding areas with new constructions of roads - the project of King Faisal street - Roof studies are absent (bad situation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Miss order by different building material - Very bad condition for large number of buildings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The important of urban and architectural structure protection -The involvement of Ministry of culture - the associations and stockholders are more active
Management and protection of the site			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Studying the building system (with taking care of the modern activity) - Suitable prices for the restorations of traditional building - Available traditional material, well developed studies on restoration methods, - Available good restoration experts - Improve the modern areas and define the location and nature of new development that is complementary to the conservation strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not enough progress in restoration studies - High number of bad physical condition buildings - No development studies in traffic system (allies, parking, etc...) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Different authorities responsible in the area - The Cooperation between different authorities need to be more stronger 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assigned historic suburbs under the protection of General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums DGAM (2 areas) - Integrated conservation development plan for old city of Damascus includes this areas (historical suburbs)
Administrative structure.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adopt the buffer zone and adopt administrative solution to complete the protection of areas between the old city and the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The unwell studied projects on the buffer zone threat the continuities between the old city and the buffer zone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bad controlling& Monitoring - Redefine the planning and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Stopping the project of king Faisal street was supported by the ministry of culture, general directorate of

suburb - Complete the process of the license of building system and guaranty the controlling	(King Faisal street project)	regulatory mechanisms in the surroundings of the old City (Different regulations) - Different municipalities (division of responsibilities)	antiquity and local experts - stopping expropriations (ministry of local affairs)
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7- Up to date situation

Advantages:

- The Municipality sent a message to the UNESCO that the project was stopped.
- The Ministry of local affairs stopped all the process of expropriations.
- An Invitation was send to the UNESCO experts from the municipality to see the result of the committee report of 18 national experts, formulated by the ministry of culture, which emphasizes on the important values of the area and against king Faisal project. The UNESCO experts visited Damascus in January 2007, and another UNESCO mission was done in 2008 concerning the same subject.
- On the Last meeting in Kopeck 2-10 July 2008 (world Heritage committee) It was informed that the Syrian Arab Republic stopped king Faisal project and they are working on the Buffer zone.
- Ministry of culture formulated a committee that consists of the municipality, ministry of culture and MAM, concerning the Buffer zone of old city of Damascus, which king Faisal street located among that area, decision (582) 24 /12/2008.
- Completing all planning studies: according to the integrated conservation plan of the old city of Damascus MAM 2007-2009.
- the Buffer zone committee finished its work of the buffer zone and the map was approved by the ministry of culture and sent officially to the UNESCO.

Disadvantages:

- Traffic regulation and recommendation were not applied, which allowed to the traffic problem to become bigger and bigger
- All services are in a very bad condition
- Completing the decision of the comittee, which was to complete studying all the regulations concerning the surrounding area of the listed and assigned suburbs
- Institutional advice to add the buffer zone area to one Municipality because of the difficulty of being this area related to many Municipalities.

7- Vision of Integrated development and future pilot projects

The ancient suburbs that developed outside the walls have made Damascus urban layout unique and have become part of the Old City. In order to protect the remains

of the historical identity of Damascus, it is necessary to approach it entirely and through all parts, from al-Salihyya in the north to the limits of al-Midan in the south.

The preservation and sustainable regeneration of historical localities pass certainly through achieving three essential goals:

- the historical urban structure and monuments of these localities is preserved from demolition,
- original people are still living in their traditional houses,
- economic development, social cohesion and community participation are assured on long term basis.

• **For Housing:**

- Housing rehabilitation programs should be organised with the participation of inhabitants. A juridical solution should be found for too many unnecessarily expropriated properties, from individual houses to whole districts.
- A fund providing loans to inhabitants should be set up, like in Aleppo a few years ago. It may receive its capital from the Municipality, foreign donors or lenders (World Bank, Arab Funds, Foreign countries, etc.). Contributions from ticketing to museums, monuments and some other traditional premises may also be considered.

• **For Shops – Suqs**

- There is a strong need to valorize the architectural character of historic shops. At present, their architectural qualities are only visible to specialists
- By demolishing the King Faisal street souqs would compromise the authenticity of their setting. Instead, there should be a “linear park” along the city walls and a cleaned Barada river

• **For traditional handicrafts and building crafts:**

- To provide tax incentives and sometimes necessary materials, to organise training and revitalising centres for traditional crafts in the Old Town. These centres may become an additional focus for tourism.
- The handicrafts souk in the Madrassa al Suleymaniyeh should be architecturally restored and recover its original purpose, which is to be a demonstration area for traditional handicrafts, not a shopping mall for oriental goods.

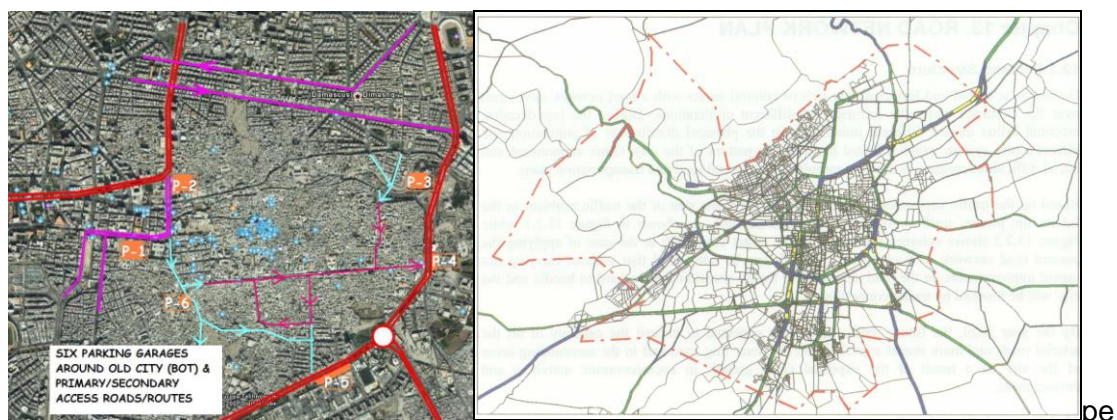
• **For tourist management and marketing purposes:**

- To set up and support an Old Damascus Tourism Agency with staff training.
- To develop a strategic business plan and a planned marketing strategy.
- Information and public relation events should be developed abroad.

- Up-to-date information technology should be used to set up a seductive and most practical website as well as a web-enabled mobile phones system, etc².
- The landscaping of built and natural areas beside Barada river along the old city walls

- **For traffic**

In the view of the traffic experts of the MAM project, a new road next to the old city wall is unjustified on either traffic or planning grounds, so Bagdad street, just to the north, should remain traffic artery. Any traffic scheme should be integrated with other proposals, such as the metro, new parking.



Map 12, Traffic Map, MAM

- **For Preservation and restoration**

There is a need to review current building regulations with a view to assess the desirability of a spatial modulation of applicable standards to reflect the degree of protection required (and therefore the renovation and construction standards to be applied) according to the characteristics of the distinct sub-areas that make up the World Heritage site, the architectural quality of individual buildings, the proximity of listed monuments and historically significant buildings, and the urbanistic quality of the streets.

A philosophy for the restoration of the City walls and of traditional houses located atop of it should also be developed as they should enhance adjacent built and natural areas and should follow the international rules of architectural conservation. Even a landscaping project for the improvement of Barada natural areas should be designed quite differently from an ordinary city garden.

² See Maria Luiga CALIA "Tourism Action Plan" Report, June 2007.

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