



UNIVERSIDADE
LUSÓFONA
DO PORTO

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**The Identity Gap in a City:
The Cases of Latakia and Porto.**

Work carried out under the guidance of
Prof. Doctor Vítor Manuel Araújo de Oliveira

Mester Thesis in Architecture

July 2020



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Public defense at Lusófona University of Porto on
18. November. 2020 in front of the following jury:

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July 2020

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Acknowledgment

I still remember that moment earlier in March 2018, when I received the e-mail from Dra. Helena Barroco informed me of the final scholarship acceptance and to travel to Portugal. Frankly, it was a turning point in my life!

William Shakespeare wrote in his play Hamlet: “We know what we are, but know not what we may be.”, as a Syrian female student, being in Portugal becomes like an open window to the future to follow my ambition in architecture.

My deepest gratitude to the Global Platform for Syrian Students in Portugal, President Jorge Sampaio, and Dr. Helena Barroco for this precious chance.

Profoundly, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my supervisor, Professor Vítor Oliveira, for all his guidance, advice, and all information he provided. His work “House of Lindo Vale” helped me to shape the idea of this thesis.

Moreover, I would like to pay my special regards to the Rector of Universidade Lusófona do Porto Dr. Isabel Babo for her love and care.

I would like to gratefully acknowledge everyone who provided me with possible support and useful materials; Architects: Ranyah Jeblawi, Anthony Deep for providing me with useful materials, and The National Museum of Latakia for giving me access to its archive.

To my friends: Inês, Hadeel and Jasmine, thank you for your enthusiasm and encouragement.

Lastly, I wish to express my gratitude to my family, for their love and unconditional support. To my mother and my sister, who kept me going on in the hardest times, I am forever indebted. I dedicate this achievement.

Abstract

If cities are in constant change through time, the identity loss threatens the city's originality since it is considered a result of accumulating events through time. This is particularly evident in third world cities under urban pressure, where the mechanism of planning and design became random, a disruption in the chain of the city's cultural and civilizational gains. In addition to deformity and loss of aesthetic and historical values is noticed.

This thesis will discuss the identity that distinguishes cities through its architecture and urban form. Firstly, it highlights the concept of a city's character and the threat against it as the central leitmotif of the entire architectural scene. Secondly, it explores the polemical relation between Latakia's inherited built forms versus its new ones. Subsequently, it analyzes a modern built structure in Porto and how it tackles the surrounding old built forms.

The architectural heritage of Latakia, as a Syrian city, faces severe danger manifestations in front of the accelerating advance of modern buildings. Thereby, the study of an old building in Latakia (Mansion of Gabriel Saadé) and a modern building in Porto (House of Lindo Vale) aims to learn how modernity can reconcile with tradition and to invite the reader to understand how to maintain a collective behavior towards a city's character.

Keywords:

Architectural heritage, Character of cities, Identity, Identity loss, Latakia, Porto, Portugal, Syria Tradition, Urbicide.

Resumo

Se as cidades sofrem alterações constantes ao longo do tempo, o carácter singular de uma cidade é ameaçado pela perda de identidade uma vez que esta pode ser considerada o resultado dos eventos que ocorrem ao longo do tempo. Isto é particularmente evidente em cidades de países em desenvolvimento que se encontram sob pressão urbana, onde os mecanismos de planeamento e desenho urbano se tornaram aleatórios, verificando-se uma disrupção nas cadeias de ganhos culturais e civilizacionais da cidade, em adição a uma deformação e perda de estética e valores históricos.

Esta dissertação discutirá a identidade de cidades pela sua arquitetura e forma urbana. Em primeiro lugar, é destacado o conceito de carácter de uma cidade e a ameaça contra este como o leitmotiv central de todo o cenário arquitetónico. Em segundo lugar, pretende demonstrar a relação polémica entre as formas de construção herdadas em Latakia versus novas formas de construção. Subsequentemente, é analisada uma forma de construção moderna no Porto bem como o modo como dialoga com as construções antigas ao seu redor.

A herança arquitetónica de Latakia, é uma cidade Síria, enfrenta severas manifestações de perigo face ao avanço acelerado de edifícios modernos. Deste modo, o estudo de um edifício antigo em Latakia (Mansão de Gabriel Saadé) e de um edifício moderno no Porto (Casa Lindo Vale) pretende refletir sobre como a modernidade se pode reconciliar com a tradição, convidando o leitor a perceber como manter o comportamento coletivo em relação ao carácter de uma cidade.

Index:

INTRODUCTION	1
THE DEFINITION OF IDENTITY	3
1.1. TERMS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE FORMATION OF IDENTITY	4
1.2. DEALING WITH THE IDENTITY OF A CITY	6
1.3. TYPES OF IDENTITY	7
A BRIEF HISTORY OF SYRIA AND ITS URBAN DEVELOPMENT	11
2.1. THE STORY OF SYRIA OFFICIAL FLAG	12
2.2. SYRIA GEOGRAPHIC	12
2.3. SYRIA ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS	13
2.4. HISTORY OF SYRIA IN BRIEF	13
2.5. SYRIA FROM URBAN TO URBICIDE	14
FROM SYRIA TO LATAKIA	17
3.1. TRADITIONAL SYRIAN ARCHITECTURE	18
3.1.1. <i>Typologies of Traditional Buildings in Syria</i>	18
3.1.2. <i>Morphological classification</i>	19
A. The Tent:	19
B. The Basic House:	19
C. The House with a Riwaq	20
D. The House with a Liwan:	20
E. The Rural House with Courtyard:	20
F. The Urban House with Courtyard:	21
G. The Lebanese House:	22
3.1.3. <i>The Building Arts</i>	24
3.2. THE DILEMMA - SYRIA TO LATAKIA	27
3.3. LATAKIA – CITY OVERVIEW	30
3.3.1. <i>Urban territories of Latakia city</i>	30
3.3.2. <i>The character of Latakia city – urban and architectural aspect</i>	31
CASE STUDY: LATAKIA	38
4.1. GABRIEL SAADÉ MANSION	42
4.1.1. <i>Location</i>	42
4.1.2. <i>History</i>	42
4.1.3. <i>Architectural description</i>	42
4.1.4. <i>The Building Art</i>	43
4.2. THE CONSEQUENCES OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT	47
CASE STUDY: PORTO	54
5.1. CASA DO LINDO VALE	58

5.1.1.	<i>Location</i>	58
5.1.2.	<i>Architectural and Urban Integration</i>	58
5.1.3.	<i>Architectural Description and The Building Art</i>	59
CONCLUSION		65
BIBLIOGRAPHY		71

Introduction:

“The city is a cumulative reality in space and time. “(Mumford, 1937). What makes the person related to a time passed, feels a present time that he lives, or expecting a future that will come?. Cities are a time machine that transfers its inhabitants to their era. Each has a reflection that tells beauty and ugliness, history, and future, an identity of its own. Opinions diverged over who influenced the other, Does the city affect people or is it people who shape the city?. The first settlements took its place according to the founders’ needs, the accommodation principles, where the fertilized lands, so the communities raised, and civilizations flourished. Depending on the evolution of life, many purposes imposed itself, in a way, contributed to shaping these cities; metropolises, trade centers, touristic, religious, rural, depending on the type of activities within these cities. “By placing their activities in the environment, people not only shape the settlement, but the pre-existing geometry of the settlement also helps shape people’s decisions and behavior.” (Sevtsuk, 2012). Speculatively, change is affecting the cities through time since it is subjecting to humanitarian reactions. Likewise, the communities have a constant change through time “Change, as we’ve known, is the only constant force in cities...” (Sevtsuk, 2012). Inside the city itself -and each city is considered a unique case- the stages the city has passed through are translated into tangible reality concisely through urban forms; architecture and urban morphology. Together, they give the city its own identity “The design and architecture of their buildings reflect different social and cultural values.” (Bell and Shalit, 2011). Nevertheless, in the present time, many factors take place in shaping the contemporary city, especially the ongoing rapid transformation of the urban environment. New lifestyles are born related to the conditions the city is passing through, political, demographic, and all the modern attributes of its citizens and how they behave according to their “Morals”— as (Abdin, 2012) mentioned in his article “The concept of virtue in the term city”. And as (Cetin, Murat, 2010) argued, their Culture, “the city continues its existence carrying the traces of each period because of the changing social culture in time.” Thus, morals and culture, as essential characteristics, can be easily affected by the daily life challenges, and the city may face the risk of identity loss. With all the challenges as a middle eastern city in a war-torn country, Latakia has had a unique role despite all the rapid and urgent changes imposed by the stages of time. However, the distinguishing characteristics of this city became absent and mysterious with the attempts to physically save those old parts of the city without paying attention to the time track of its formation. And that led to falling into a circle of chaos into the urban and built environment under the urban pressures that are facing contemporary cities, especially in Syria “We find our identity by

understanding ourselves, and our environment” (Correa,1983). The city of Porto in Portugal has its distinctive architecture and urban character among the modern cities; we address it in this thesis to learn how to deal with new elements of a town. In a way it keeps an eye on the Identity that accompanied it through time and then became one of the best tourists’ destinations in Europe.

Chapter I:

The Definition of Identity

"Only once have I been made mute. It was when a man asked me, Who are you?"

*Gibran Khalil Gibran, a Lebanese writer,
Poet and philosopher.*

"The truth is that identity is not in itself a barrier to openness and connectedness; to the contrary, it is a prerequisite for them. The more we maintain identity, the larger the scope for openness and connectedness becomes, and the more consolidated diversity becomes. In the absence of that, openness becomes capitulation, the exchange becomes tutelage, and interaction becomes defeat."

*Adonis,
a Syrian poet and philosopher.*

The notion of identity has various species; factors led to its evolution; however, defining a city can be discussed in a social, anthropological, literal, or urban way. The interest in studying the city identity has taken a significant place among many architects and urban planners. Theoretically, many of them defined the identity from their point of view; “Our purpose is simply to consider the need for identity and structure in our perceptual world, and to illustrate the special relevance of this quality to the particular case of the complex, shifting urban environment.” (Lynch,1960).

1.1. Terms that Contribute to the Formation of Identity:

There are various points of view to define the concept of city identity, depending on different terms. Meanwhile, Fabian and Prohansky discussed the perspective of memories and emotions in a philosophic visionary. Part of researchers considered the social life and the people’s behavior in the city; “The Identity of the city bears on the identity of those living in it, and vice versa: the urban environment reflects human needs and values” (Haapala Arto, 2003). Many argued that identity is connected to environmental factors. “Environmental factors are one of the most important factors impacting the identity, and the people living in that environment add their lifestyles to that urban area in time” (Norberg-Schulz, 1979). It belongs to human nature to pursue agreement in things that matter and to reconcile our interests through a system of rights and duties. Hence, there is a need for a foundation and law through which people can appeal to their conflicts. Roger Scruton considers the moral sense to derive from our response to each other as social creatures, joined to an order higher than a person’s ego. The moral sense seems different from one place to another, culture to culture, in its reflection of what humans make. Everything humans do raises the question of its acceptability to others; Built forms of a city, monument, a building can connect with welcome vibes to a person while being repellent to another and that affects the behavior of them both likewise social life identity of the place. Besides, the built forms contributing to the identity of a place founded on climate characteristics. Beehive houses in Aleppo, Syria has been keeping desert dwellers fresh since 3,700 BC. The structures are not only eco-friendly, but eye-catching, and are still in use today and have been beating the heat without air conditioning for centuries. Made from mud, dirt, straw, and stones all affordable from the environment surrounding¹.

In the physical term of Identity, “The main characteristics which form spatial identity are the physical structure forming the space.” (Relph, 1976). And thus, The idea of identity in architecture, especially in urban design and urban scale. The city’s urban identity is made up of all the different buildings that are going into it. So, it is imperative to consider the character of a city while shaping

¹ inhabitat.com

its forms. A city's identity can be analogous to a brand of branding for a company and more personality. It is defined by the materials that contributed to the architecture, the structure, and the typologies. For example, in Charleston, South Carolina would be the use of pastel colors for a lot of buildings kind of light intensity or the typology of what is called a single-wide house, and it is kind of an extended skinny plan with a long balcony along one side. Hence, it allows for ventilation, and it is very sustainable and beautiful, which is very characteristic of Charleston South Carolina not seen in many other places.

Within these diverse concepts of identity, since a city being a space of multiple individuals with different politics, interests, religions, and ideas of their city and partly because a city changes over time. Bernard Khoury, a Lebanese architect who discussed his point of view when it comes to building in the city, temporality must be taken into consideration, we are no longer building pyramids or the Parthenon. Today the city evolves at a much higher speed. We still think of stone and steel and in conventional buildings. Usually, when designing a building and is completely disconnected from temporality when it is finished. So, there is an influential, active contributor; Time, collects all the elements together since the beginning, humanity has the change as a constant habit, through time, and the urban structure is strongly affected by that. Also, if we divide the timeline into three parts: past, present, and future- it becomes tangible due to architecture, social movements, and the structure in its physical metaphor. So, time is represented and translated into a continuous process connected to those three elements since the beginnings of a metropolis. "What is Identity? Firstly, it is a process and not a 'found' object. It may be likened to the trail left by civilization as it moves through history. The path is the culture, or identity, of that civilization. Secondly, being a process, the character cannot be fabricated. We develop our identity by tackling what we perceive to be our real problems. Thirdly, identity is not a self-conscious thing." (Correa, 1983).

Moreover, inevitably, the process is related to the time factor. So, due to the time factor, shall we defeat the old by the new? Or building on the past for the future?

1.2. Dealing with the identity of a city:

In the case of the Middle Eastern cities, so far, only two models have been proposed: to be a communication with the modern world; Le Corbusier's plan of Algeria which involves demolishing everything and trapping the traumatized populace in concrete blocks under motorways. The other is **Dubai**, designed on computers in London for the global rich. The beginning of the twenty-first century is marked by increasing globalization and the affirmation of a singular identity in constant tension with traditional local identities. This trend has followed the spread of the international style during the second half of the twentieth century. It has intensified as a result of the range of globalization. As a dominating world view from the end of that century. As a reaction to this sweeping trend, the phenomenon of expressing local cultural identities in architecture is observed in many parts of the world. As Castells put it: 'cultural identity is the process by which social actors build their meaning according to cultural attributes.' (Castells, 2004). The move towards "Dubaiification" or "Dubaiization" is becoming a trend, "An omnipresent tendency worldwide towards skyscrapers..., the Metropolis strives to reach a mythical point where the world is completely fabricated by a man so that it absolutely coincides with his desire. The Metropolis is an addictive machine, from which there is no escape, unless it offers that too,..., it needs its own specialized architecture, one that can vindicate the original promise of the metropolitan condition and develop the new traditions of the culture of congestion further " (Koolhaas, 1994), spreading widely in Arabic cities - like in Beirut, Lebanon - following the Dubai experience with a complete disdain of their characteristics and a complete denial of the heritage of each one creating a gap in the identity of these cities. As Ali A. Alraouf argued, as a model of urban development, it is based primarily on Images and icons rather than sustainable concepts and processes. The result is manifested in a severe struggle in most of today's Arab cities to imitate the Icons of Dubai. Major conflicts result from this process, including failing to adopt sustainability, limited interpretation of globalization, and degradation of the locality. Another different example is Favelas in Mexico. The Mexican artist Abraham Cruzvillegas describes the will of making a touristic attraction from misery and poverty, like branding Favelas but in total denial of the point of getting rid of the fact where most of its population lives in unplanned architecture or better to say slums. The scene reminds of the slums of Damascus on Mount Qasyoun "Mezza 86" As a result of the above ideas, the following question generated; how to tackle a city? And since architects and planners don't reflect the city itself or the reality of the people on the ground, is it possible to explore ways to revive cities? And since the city is always the people, can they be involved to decide the identity of their city?. Our architecture tells the story of who we are. Therefore, the people who construct and use the building are not the only contributors to it; those who may never enter it and those who simply pass it by

may equally contribute to its formation because they are part of the social reality that led to its creation. Also, the question about the notion of what is home? As a result of my country's war, people have lost both their homes and their cities, and gradually, our sense of identity changes not only by how we view ourselves but also by how others perceive us. As Marwa al-Sabouni discusses, "If a place offers architectural details that give pleasure to the eye, as well as moral values implicit in their creation, order, and configuration. Then the inhabitant will experience joy and consider that place to be their accomplishment; their identity and, as a result, their home."

1.3. Types of identity:

The concept of identity of a city can be misunderstood with many other related ideas that may be mistaken to define the same point. "Urban identity, architectural identity, and the urban Image about them are sometimes formed by very different components in a long period in urban space" (Yaldız, Aydın, and Sıramkaya, 2013). The first notion is Collective identity could be referred to as general characteristics of a specific society on a full scale. (ex. The language), which comprises other different small communities that differ in some other points that are less inclusive, and this is what is called the. The National identity makes an individual unique from others due to particular characteristics generating a feeling of belonging to a nation relying on five main elements according to (Al Ani, 2013) Cultural, psychological, territorial, historical, and political, and these gathered to compose the National Identity. In recent years, the issue of cultural identity in contemporary architecture has become essential to creating uniqueness and local individuality in a competitive environment on a global level. Industrialized and developing countries have started to re-examine their traditions in a search for their values and principles. (Delanty and Jones, 2002) observed that Europe's architecture had become an essential discourse for a new expression of post-national identity in general and, in particular, for the emergence of a "spatial" European identity. No longer tied to the state to the same degree as in the period of nation-building, architecture has become a significant cultural expression of post-national identities within and beyond the nation-state.' (Delanty and Jones, 2002.) This process has an impact on the production of contemporary architecture and eventually triggered an intense discussion about how local identity should be created other than by copying fragments from the past. Since identity is to mention what is the reality of a particular thing, and it cannot defer from one individual to another and not based on the impression of someone. (Lynch, 1981) discussed in his book (A Theory of Good City Form): "Urban identity is the whole qualifications, which allows urban areas to be read or to become meaningful for humans, becoming separated from the others." However, in his book (The image of the city, 1960), where he focused on studying the City Image and captured it as people's recognition

of the partials in the built environment. And how they behave within the city, creating and developing mental maps (images) regarding five factors; landmarks, nodes, districts, edges, and paths. That is to say, the image is not a physical or visual component, but mental reasoning of all the items of the city following our actions in using and accessing the cities. Another mistaken concept considers a single object or monument to identify the city depending on their symbols, "City Symbols." For instance, they identify Paris by Eiffel Tower, New York by its Statue of Liberty, Oporto by Luis I Bridge, and Aleppo by its citadel. Meanwhile, a city's identity is not only the visual image that can be represented in a visible form and a significant symbol. Identity is the city's spirit that owns a tangible side connected to intangible acts that appear through its sequence created with its connection with the time. Therefore, to understand the concept of identity, it needs to live the city and experience it through contacting with it inside its own defined area. Furthermore, identity experience cannot be felt without living in that city. So, the resident can explore the details of all its tangible and intangible elements and events. On a broader level, symbols, effect, and image of a city are the first items to having a primary comprehension about the urban identity as it is the overall production of them gathered. To concentrate more on the importance of the idea of identity, for instance, in Haussmannian Paris, individuals can feel a consistent type of street buildings' façades, the heights, materials, path. All gathered to generate a feeling of the French identity in its urban forms expressing its history in a way that respects its iconic milestones and distinctive appearance of the center of Paris we recognize today, mostly the result of Haussmann's renovation. The united colors, rhythmic openings, and the high respect of the heights can briefly identify Paris the center.

Once we understand this identity, it is crucial to incorporate it into the designs. For instance, we could recognize the character and try to pay respect to it, making sure knowing its kind preserved and maintained if the identity is not challenging at all. However, conversely, another way would be to go counter to that identity recognize and purposely try to be different. Like in an area where everything looks the same where it is terrible or run-down character that is very kind of mediocre or not too busy, it is possible to go opposite and try to challenge that identity. However, what is essential that it is not necessarily what to do and how to adjust the identity. What matters is making the adjustment, understanding it, realizing the implication, and what it means, making design better. The character of a town, as Karl Kropf describes, is something we perceive when we see and experience the city directly, in particular, the physical substance of the place. The arrangement of materials and details of construction is only one level of organization in the structure of a town other large-scale objects identified when describing cities; entire buildings, plots, blocks and streets, and the patterns of these objects.



Figure 1. Beehive houses in Syria, James Gordon



Figure 2. Charleston South Carolina, U.S.A.,
<http://ashtreecottage.blogspot.com/>

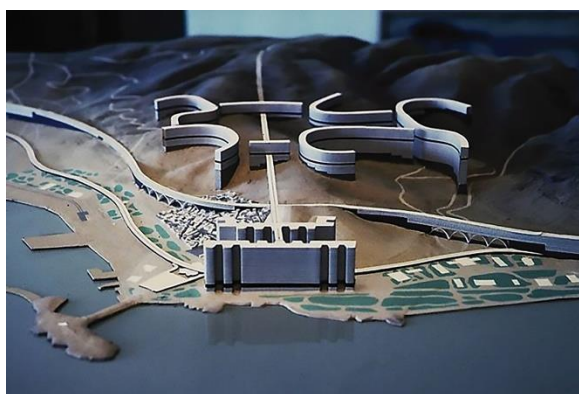


Figure 3. Le Corbusier's model of Algeria (1933),
www.cronologiadourbanismo.ufba.br



Figure 4. Le Corbusier's sketch plan of Algeria, moma.org



Figure 5. Dubai, U.A.E. (2020), Raihan Hamid



Figure 6. Beirut, Lebanon (2020), LiveLoveBeirut

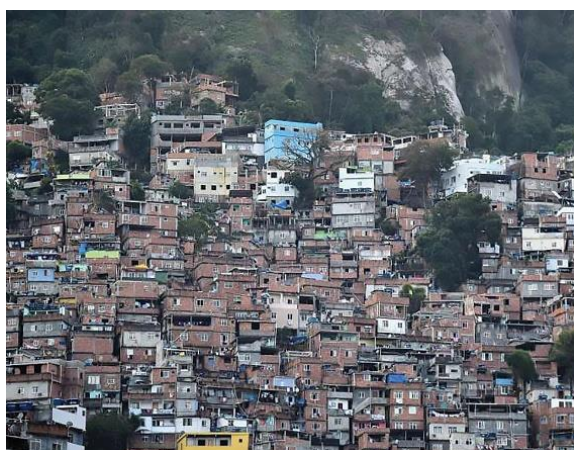


Figure 7. Favelas, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
<https://www.sciencespo.fr/osc/en/node/1056.html>



Figure 8. Mezza-86, Damascus, Syria, Rand Issa

Chapter II:

A Brief history of Syria and Its Urban Development

*"In Damascus:
the traveler sings to himself:
I return from Syria
neither alive
nor dead
but as clouds
that ease the butterfly's burden
from my fugitive soul."*

*Mahmoud Darwish,
a Palestinian poet.*

2.1. The story of Syria official flag



Figure 9. Syria official Flag, Wikipedia

In 1958 Syria joined Egypt in the United Arab Republic; its flag, based on the Arab Liberation Flag of the Egyptian 1952 revolution, had horizontal stripes of red-white-black with two green stars for the constituent states. In 1961 Syria broke from the union. In subsequent years it had two different flags expressing the political policies of the era. Finally, on March 29, 1980, Syria readopted the United Arab Republic flag as its national banner. The red, black, and white to make up the flag's horizontal triband background. The Red: the bloody struggle for freedom. The White: bright and peaceful future. The Black: oppression. Two five-pointed stars in color **Green** located in the central white: they represent Syria and Egypt in the time of unity.

2.2. Syria Geographic



Figure 10. Syria Geographic Location between Asia, Europe, and Africa. Wikipedia.



Figure 11. Syria and neighboring countries, Encyclopædia Britannica

Syria has an area of 185,180 km.sq. It is located in the west of Asia and considered one of Arab and Middle East country, at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea and north of the Arab Peninsula. Turkey borders it to the north (899km), Lebanon (403km) and Palestine/Israel (83 km) to the west and southwest, Iraq to the east (599 km), and Jordan to the south (379 km), Syria's coastline on the Mediterranean sea to the west measures (183 km). Its highest point is 2,814 m. above sea level, at Mount Hermon, while its lowest point is near Lake Tiberis -200 m. Its geographic zone due to its western shore on the Mediterranean Sea and the northern border with Turkey

besides its proximity to Europe has always been a hot spot for trading (The Silk Road) and world's political powers ambitions.

2.3. Syria administrative unites

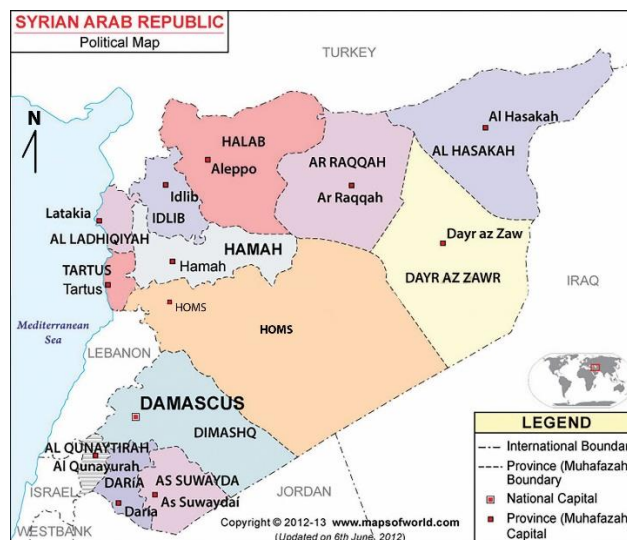


Figure 12. Syria political map showing the international border, the border provinces, [www. fr.mapsofworld.com](http://www.fr.mapsofworld.com)

Syria is a unitary state, but for administrative purposes, it is divided into fourteen governorates, each into sixty districts divided into sub-districts contain villages which are the smallest administrative units. The Governorates are Damascus (capital), Aleppo, Homs, Latakia, Hama, Daraa, Deir Ez-Zor, Al-Hasakah, Tartus, Idlib, Assuwayda, Raqqa, Al Hasakah, Al Quneitra.

2.4. History of Syria in brief

The area has been inhabited for thousands of years. From the third millennium BCE, the region was under the successive control of, among others, Phoenicians, Hittites, Assyrians, and Babylonians. In the 6th century BCE, it became part of the Persian Empire, which fell to Alexander the Great in 330 BCE. After Alexander's death, Seleucid rulers (301-164 BCE) governed the region. Later, the area became part of the Roman Empire (64 BCE), and afterward of the Byzantine Empire (ca. 300-634 CE). In the 7th century, Muslim Arab tribes from the Arabian Peninsula established control. From then on, the region was ruled by successive Arab dynasties, of which the Umayyad, Abbasid, and Fatimid are among the best known.

During the 12th and 13th centuries, Syria was the target of several Crusades. The Crusaders were driven out of most of the region by the Kurdish Syrian emir Saladin and finally defeated by the Mamluks from Egypt. In 1516, the region became part of the Ottoman Empire and remained so until World War I (1914-1918), when Arab and British troops eventually defeated the Turkish rulers in the region.

In 1920, Syria became a French mandate. At that time, it received its present name and borders; the collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War allowed European powers to expand into the Middle East. The Sykes-Picot Agreement, negotiated between Britain and France, led to the creation of modern-day Syria. It became fully independent in 1946.

Politically, the country has been marked by instability. In 1948, Israel's victory over the Arabs came as a great shock to Syria, especially as it considered Palestine to be part of historic Greater Syria (as it did Lebanon and Jordan). An influx of Palestinian refugees followed. In 1949, the military took power. The pan-Arabist and, later, the Arab Socialist Baath Party became the ruling party. In 1958, Syria was united with Egypt in the United Arab Republic. However, in 1961 another military coup ended this union. The Baath Party – dominated by officers belonging to the Alawite minority – remained in firm control. The military weakened the once-powerful and immensely wealthy landowners, who had ruled the country before. For this, they earned the support of the economically disadvantaged in Syrian society. In 1982, the army crushed the Muslim Brotherhood organization revolt in the town of Hama. In 1976, at the request of the then Lebanese President Elias Sarkis, Syria sent troops to Lebanon to intervene in the Civil War (1975-1990). The Syrian forces remained in Lebanon until 2005. In mid-March 2011, the Syrian authorities faced mass protests. The opposition took up arms to defend itself against the government forces, leading to severe destruction and many casualties. The conflict has increasingly attracted outside forces, leading to growing sectarian tensions in the region. As of October 2015, more than 4 million Syrians had fled the country, and the death toll since 2011 had passed 250,000.

2.5. Syria from Urban to Urbicide

Over time, many people lived on this land; Phoenicians, Sumerians, Egyptians, Hittites, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greek, Romans, Byzantine, Crusaders, Muslim Arabs, Ottomans, and French. Syria has always been considered a country with a diversity of beliefs, with many confessions living in balance without conflicts. Since 2011 and on, Syria becomes a war-torn country wounded by many barbarian conflicts mainly due to the foreign interventions and local degeneration of the Arab Spring. This war, as Italian architect, Jacopo Galli agrees in his essay 'Exercises in humanistic resistance' is the first cosmopolitan war: the first low-intensity, mobile, permanent, unconventional and timeless conflict. A war that is fought on a large scale and which sees national and transnational armies and coalitions, terrorist groups, armed groups, guerrilla formations and ethnic, religious, political, and ideological militias as contingent realities. Actors that associate and disassociate themselves depending on their immediate interests.²

² Stephen Graham in his book 'Cities under siege, the new military urbanism'

Before the war, Syrian communities were united by a shared approach to life, fairly tolerant. They were historically used to variety accommodating a wide range of beliefs, origins, customs, goods, climates, and food. Generally speaking, most women in Syria have not had to fight to get an education or to be represented in the fields of politics and culture. It was not due to any political decision or imposed plan. Still, as in architect Marwa Al Sabouni's view, it was a natural outcome of the sheer variety of life made available by free movement and trade. Now, surfing through media or googling about Syria is enough to emerge (and in a way that wrongly contradicts the previous peaceful portrait), a massive sectarian hatred. It seems strange how come this peaceful, diverse country to turn 180 degrees, in contrast, converting all the pride of Syria to ashes. How do modern and hitherto progressive societies collapse from a state of civilization to a nightmare? The built environment is a contributor to answering that question. "Architecture offers a mirror to a community,..., and in that mirror, we can see what is wrong and find hints as to how to put it right."³ The metropolis came into being in the Eastern Mediterranean and has been the ancient solution to human differences, how diverse communities settle side by side, and imprint their agreements on earth. In politics and history, when narratives are assembled, parties tell their sides of the story. It is only through architecture that we see the point of view that is no one is in particular, and everyone is in general. "Buildings do not lie to us; they tell the truth without taking sides.". In the built environment, we can find indicators of events that have already occurred and clues of what could or might still happen. Architecture in Syria has played a vital role in creating, directing, and heightening conflicts between warring factions by facilitating poor choices and narrowing viable alternatives. The shape of settlements and related economic systems, the moral code inspired by the architecture of a place, and how architectural choices can determine questions of identity and home. Even the countries that seem to be distanced from misfortune in Syria, especially the other countries touched by the so-called Arab Spring, the notion of identity and home are just as much in jeopardy. The Syrian architect Al-Sabouni suggested that the failure to create architecture that can constitute a home for its users stems from a loss of identity, which in turn has causes that go deep into the psychology of our people. When we look at what is being built in the Middle East today, and building methodology, loss of identity becomes glaringly apparent, as does the jarring disconnection between the rich heritage of the past and the empty modernism now being imported to form the present.

Furthermore, a question pops; How was it that we vandalized our cities in Syria before the war came to deliver the final blows? And how should we rebuild what has been destroyed so that it will not happen again? All that led to the notion of Urbicide; "violence against the city," a term coined

³ Al-Sabouni, Marwa

by science-fiction author Michael Moorcock to criticize the modernization process in the metropolitan area of New York in the 1960s. Philosopher Marshall Bermann defines it as; "the experience of seeing your city in ruins is one of the dreadful primal scenes: this is uricide." As architect Benno Albrecht says, "If someone destroys, others have to rebuild and put back in place." That can be a leading point towards the potential conflicts' areas in Syria. The deliberate destruction of cities that are relatively outside the Syrian conflict zones are the other victims of the Syrian war. Leads to generate another notion of damage, and a severe identity gap, where planning and construction mechanism has always been authoritarian and unjust, a mechanism produced civil and social cases; the identity of rapidly changing towns, in one hand; with refugees and newcomers and in the other side; building contractors. As safe zones, few of Syrian cities are facing another massive destruction against its architectural identity, severe damage of its built heritage "the destruction of collective memory made of stone" nevertheless an erosion of the centrality in an urban planning scale.

Chapter III:

From Syria to Latakia

"I come from a land where poetry is like a tree which watches over man and where a poet is a guard who understands the rhythm of this world."

*Adonis,
a Syrian poet and philosopher.*

3.1. Traditional Syrian architecture⁴:

Traditional architecture has its strong characteristics: it can be basic, domestic, or preindustrial in its concept, but it is almost conceived by men of the art rather than architects, implemented using local know-how, materials, and traditions, according to ancestral shapes and technologies.

The Syrian territory is divided into four geographical regions: coast, mountain, inside, and desert. Each has its climate and geography, shaping the character of its architecture.

3.1.1. Typologies of Traditional Buildings in Syria:

There is a rich diversity in building types in Syria; they can vary according to the region and people's lifestyles. However, two main lifestyles generate a significant difference in construction and dwelling: nomadic and sedentary. The first lifestyle depends on pastures as a daily economic activity; it requires constant migration from one place to another in search of pastures and water. These populations are called "Bedouins" and usually live under a tent. They can change geographic locations with their families and groups (often tribes) according to the available pastures or water necessary to work and live. The second lifestyle, the sedentary lifestyle is usually linked to cities and the countryside. The types of houses in a city or the countryside also differ according to the geographic location (seaside, mountain, valley). However, there are still some apparent differences between the traditional city house and the traditional country house. For example, the traditional city house is characterized by stone constructions with different types and colors and a great variety of building typologies. It mainly consists of a central inner courtyard surrounded by rooms for days or sometimes evening activities. The country house's courtyard tends to be used more like the garden of the house, surrounded on one side or more by rooms, while a wall borders the rest. The internal partition splits the house into two areas: one for the inhabitants and another for the animals. Countryside houses are generally small, ranging from a two-unit house with Mastaba in the front, commonly found in the coastal region of "Mashkita," near Lattakia, to the house with a courtyard where rooms border the courtyard, giving the house more space. In this case, more than one family can live in the house, such as it is in "Sfireh," a village located on the outskirts of Aleppo. Generally, the number of inner courtyards in the traditional Arabic house differs; the more luxurious the house, the higher the number of families living in it: some large houses have 2 or 3 courtyards. As for houses with a single courtyard, they differ according to their occupant's economic status; some houses have large courtyards with a fountain in the center, surrounded by trees, while others, smaller in size, have a plain simple courtyard.

⁴According to a study produced by CORPUS Levant and a collaboration between Syrian, French, and Spanish teams

3.1.2. Morphological classification

Seven main types have been distinguished; particular dwellings linked to the two main lifestyles mentioned above, in urban and rural areas⁵ (see Figure 13):

A. The Tent

Tents are nomad shelters used by Bedouins as a dwelling; they are easy to put up and take down for transfer. A nomad's life is linked to sheep farming, which means continuously moving from place to place, looking for pastures, and a suitable environment for the community and its livestock. They generally move in desert, in plains, in the eastern areas of Syria, near the Euphrates banks, and close to the Turkish-Iraqi border. Tents are used for multiple purposes; they can be of different sizes, according to assigned function or use: Firstly, there is the large tent made to suit the nomadic lifestyle, split into two parts: one for women and another for men. There is also a section for guests separated from the other sections with a felt or cloth curtain, sometimes with supply bags and beautiful reeds. Saddles are usually hung on the left side of the tent, and some belongings are also stored there. Secondly, there are small tents, usually used for household activities, including the kitchen and cooking area, or stock fodder and store equipment. The actual tent is rectangular or square and is made of woven wool, taut by ropes from the outside, and fixed into the ground with stakes. The woolen fabric used is characterized by its relative excellent insulation properties and its ability to protect from the summer heat and the winter cold. The families that live in these tents habitually consist of three generations. In some areas, we can find groups of tents where several families live together, sharing water and pasture. The tents are equipped with all the necessities for a nomad's life, which has almost remained unchanged: they still sit and eat on the ground, and their tents are furnished in the same traditional way, with mattresses, pillows and reed mats.

B. The Basic House

This type is composed of two aligned living units; they are open on the exterior, either in front of the house called "Mastaba," generally used as a leisure part of the house or on the back of the house, called "Zribeh," and used as a stable for animals. These two rooms communicate through a door; their use is mixed between day and night activities. The first is mainly used as a bedroom and the second as a kitchen and food storage area. This kind of spontaneous construction belongs to the rural world; it is mainly composed of one floor and is associated to a farm called "Bustan." It is found scattered in the mountains near the city of Latakia.

⁵ CORPUS Levant

C. The House with a Riwaq

This type of house is composed of several aligned rooms forming a residential unit; they are connected via a covered gallery called “Riwaq,” which makes up the whole front elevation. This type of house is common in the villages of the southern region of Syria, to the north of Damascus; it is used mainly as a residence.

D. The House with a Liwan

This type of house can be found in the region located north of Damascus. It is a tripartite structure composed of three aligned units: two are used for living, and the central unit, open on the exterior, is called liwan. The connection between the two living sections occurs through the liwan, which is used as distribution space. This house is a typical multipurpose rural house, used for living, as a “local workshop,” a warehouse, and finally as a shelter for domestic animals in the central space (Liwan).

E. The Rural House with Courtyard

The difference between city and country life has an impact on building the typologies and shapes of houses, building materials, also differ in the outskirts of Syrian cities. Life in the countryside depends on agriculture and livestock farming; this lifestyle calls for a courtyard attached to the house. It is used as a private space and is not necessarily surrounded by rooms. It can also have specific areas for animals, e.g., horses, poultry, and seasonal vegetables. Examples have been found in the surroundings of Aleppo, in the city of Sfireh, where mud structures and the use of mud cupolas in roofing are dominant. This typology is based on the use of one central unit, 4x4m, covered with a dome, and repeated around the inner courtyard. The larger the house, the richer the owner; the more units there are, the larger the courtyard. Although these houses never rise higher than the ground floor, it was found that they are generally divided into many sections: the day sections, with rooms for men and rooms for women, the kitchen and service rooms, including the “tanour” (traditional oven), the bedroom section and a particular area for animals, with a stable and animal stall. Mud cupolas are also used in Tiara, on the outskirts of Aleppo, but in this case, the whole building takes on the shape of a dome, not just the roof, as is the case in Sfireh. With time, buildings changed, and roofs became flat, covered with wood, plants, and earth. After the emergence of reinforced concrete, cement, and CMU (concrete masonry units). They became flat concrete roofs; walls were either kept as a traditional structure or made with stone or CMU, because of their durability and due to the fact they do not need any periodical repair. Another reason for the decrease in the use of mud is the lack of craftsmen capable of making and repairing mud structures. The new solution has not fulfilled the people’s needs on the level of thermal

insulation: traditional buildings surpass modern structures in this field; they provide better acoustic and thermal insulation and are more environmentally adapted. Traditional walls are thick and can reach 70cm wide; mud itself is an insulator that keeps the temperature in the house stable in hot and cold seasons. The most specific characteristic of this building typology is the limited number of openings, as observed in most cases, limited to the front door and small vertical long windows. It was noticed that locals make a hole in the storage room's dome to fill it with grain, then seal this hole. Earth rendering is used to cover the outer walls; the inner walls are usually covered with limewash. Mud has been used as the primary building material in many other rural areas and with different building typologies and shapes. Mud houses and rough stone houses can be found in the periphery of Damascus and Ghouta: buildings are made with wooden frameworks and are often two stories high. In other cases, city-building typologies are preferred, including the private courtyard that is most often surrounded by rooms. Sometimes city architectural elements are also applied to a rural housing, such as the Liwan (large alcove opening onto the courtyard) but in a much simpler version, using cheaper materials such as wooden roofs covered with plants or mud and brick walls.

F. The Urban House with Courtyard

One of the most common building types in Syria is the traditional courtyard house. It can be found in all Syrian cities, just as it can be found in all Mediterranean countries. This building type is characterized by a small number of relatively small openings in the external façade, and many openings open onto the inner courtyard. Traditional houses vary in size and luxury level, and inner spaces vary in number and size from house to house. However, they all have one common feature: the open courtyard gives the occupant a feeling of privacy and privileges the relations between the individuals of the family, who develop a secure attachment for the house. The inner courtyard is a garden and the center of household activities: all the rooms are set around it and open into this gathering place. In large and medium-sized houses, a fountain is placed in the center of the courtyard and freshens the air; trees are also grown in many traditional courtyards, adding shade and life to this exclusive area.

The height of the traditional house is limited, usually no more than 10m for two stories. Generally, the living rooms and service rooms are on the ground floor, while bedrooms are on the upper floor. In large houses with over one courtyard, spaces are separated into an area for the owners of the house, another one for guests, and a third for servants. Nevertheless, not all large houses are luxurious or rich in architectural features, though they can have more than one courtyard. In the traditional building, the courtyard is accessed by a corridor starting at the house's front door, a design that ensures privacy and security.

Moreover, most of the doors and windows open into the inner courtyard. The openings on the external façade are limited to a few long windows and high windows. Traditional Arabic houses are known to be welcoming environments and are friendly in both their design and structure. For example, courtyards are equipped with many elements that help to humidify the air (trees and fountains); they also use the Liwan as an open summer sitting room facing north. The thick walls and roofs are good insulators and help stabilize room temperature, while the variable roof heights and protruding elements in the facade provide shade. Some items appeared in the traditional urban house to increase the number of shaded areas, such as:

- i. The use of protrusions and cornices on the outer facades of the inner court, facades that look over the courtyard.
- ii. The use of the “Kishks” (protruding wooden kiosk) to cover the openings in the external wall, rarely used on inner facades.
- iii. Some traditional houses use the roof garden as a way to lessen the heat in the house.
- iv. Covered streets protect external walls from direct sunlight.

Traditional houses in urban areas also contain many architectural elements made to ensure a natural airflow through all the spaces; wind catchers, as well as openings opposite each other, are used. A great variety of ceiling heights are used, and the main areas of the house are conceived to be ventilated by soothing winds.

G. The Lebanese House

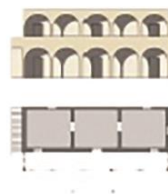
Throughout the eastern Mediterranean, a unique and common type that bears the country's name, where its presence is the strongest: Lebanon. The Lebanese house appeared in the second half of the 19th century and is linked to Ottoman modernity and the development of a middle-class in the area. This type represents a significant change in the organization of space in the traditional house: it is the result of the incorporation of new industrial materials and the new urban regulations and development programs in that period. The central hall is the main characteristic element of the Lebanese house. Around this hall or sizeable central room, we find several places for dwelling. The façade rooms open onto the outside through an ornate triple arch window. There is also often a balcony which prolongs the room towards the garden or the street. The Lebanese house generally found in Syria is very modest compared to the houses in Beirut, but it is the most modern middle-class traditional house in Syria. These houses are found throughout the Mediterranean area of Syria, especially Latakia.



A



B



C



D

E



G



F



Figure 13. Traditional Architecture in Syria: (A) The Tent, (B) The Basic House, (C) The House with Riwaq, (D) The House with Liwan, (E) The Rural House with Courtyard, (F) The Urban House with courtyard, (G) The Lebanese House. CORPUS Levant Team

3.1.3. The Building Arts⁶

Lifestyles change from one place to another, and the building materials that vary according to availability in the area produced different building typologies in different regions and cities. The building materials available in specific areas define building typology as well as the shape of the buildings and their overall appearance. That can be observed in rural architecture, as some villages use mud as the primary building material, while others use rough stone constructions or wooden frameworks filled with earth. Furthermore, the building techniques used in mud architecture also vary in roofing methods: in the north, mud cupolas are used while flat roofs are dominant in the south. In cities, the stone is the primary material used in building, though a few other rare typologies can be found.

Stone walls (Figure 14 - a) have been used in all types of buildings since the beginning of urban construction. They can still be found in the old cities of Syria (The Old City of Aleppo, The Old City of Damascus, The Old City of Homs). The stone used differed; according to the wall type and function in the building as an internal or external wall. It is built on a stone foundation (usually a trench in the ground around 1m deep). Then, the wall is constructed with two stone facings, rubble, and soil filling between them. One rare type of hewn or dressed stone wall presents an alternation of colors in the stone courses. These walls were used in Damascus' old houses because of their durability and beauty and were mainly used in the walls opening onto courtyards, giving these walls an aesthetic role. Today, they can still be observed in the main rooms and the inner courtyards of old prestigious Damascus houses. These walls use three types of stone: Black basalt, which is strong and durable; White, yellowish, or reddish limestone is less durable; Mazzi Stone (found in the area of Mezzeh), which is pinkish and quite hard. **Rough stone walls** (Figure 14 - b) are often used in village houses, for example, around Latakia, where the stone is used in building many different shapes and sizes of walls. It consists of two stone faces about 25 cm wide each. Rubble and earth usually fill the core, mixed with straw. The complete wall is about 60-70 cm thick and plays a vital insulation role. Mud mortar is used to join the stones together and to pointing the external walls to fill in the gaps. **Dry Stone walls** (Figure 14 - c) are found in the south of Syria, where volcanic basalt rock is widely available. **Mud Walls** (Figure 14 - d) were used in building in both the city and the country, and they can still be found in some buildings in Damascus old city and a few villages in the outskirts of Aleppo and Damascus. Mud is the primary building material in this type of construction: it is used in the body of the wall, in rendering Mud walls are built on the very ground if it is rock. If the soil is loose, the wall is built on a stone foundation of about 50-75 cm deep and which rises

⁶ CORPUS Levant

about 50 cm or more above ground level. **Rammed earth walls** These walls consist of courses of mud blocks: they are found in the Damascus region and are known for their low cost and fast construction.

Wood frame Walls (Figure 14 - e) were used in cities and are still found nowadays in some villages. Their base is a wooden frame that bears and transfers the loads. In general, these walls established on a continuous masonry base. In Syria, this technique is used for upper floors while the ground floor constructed with stone walls. **Openings, Arches, and Associated Elements'** shapes change according to style and age (Figure 14 - f). Many different civilizations flourished in Syria, leaving testimonies of their architecture on buildings and architectural elements, including the shape of openings and arches. In some exceptional circumstances, multiple architectural styles can be in the same single building. Arches are frequently used in urban architecture and widely in the architecture of essential buildings and religious structures. They were in entrances and passages of these buildings, and smaller-scale arches were in houses, mostly in the Liwan. The shape of the arch changed with the change of architectural style and age. Arches were used in rural stone architecture, especially in the southern area and the Damascus area, to shorten spans. These regions used rough stone to form the inner arches and ashlar for the arches on the external facades. Most of these arches were semicircle shapes transferring the loads to the base of the arch. The arches in Syrian architecture depend on the architectural style. For instance, the Umayyads used semicircle arches or transcending arches. Plant ornamentation and elements such as grapevines, palm branches, roses, and tulips on their edges filled those arches.



Damascus, Al-Azem palace, Public source



Damascus, Khan Asad Basha, Eva Shahoud

a



b Latakia, Village House, Public source



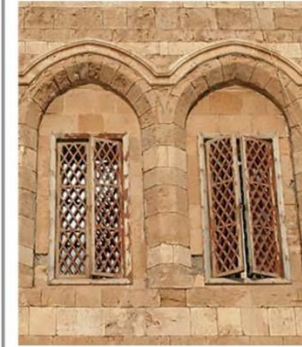
c Daraa-Izraa, House, CORPUS Levant



d Oronte Valley, CORPUS Levant



e Damascus, Bait Al-Wall, Publicsource



Tartus, Old Building, CORPUS Levant



Latakia, National Museum, Latakia National Museum archive



Damascus, Old House, Public source

f

Figure 14. The Building Art in Syria, sources mentioned underneath each photo. Public source: Google search(Al-Azem palace in Damascus- Damascene houses), Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/751719778293858/> /اللاذقية بين الماضي والحاضر)

3.2. The dilemma - Syria to Latakia:

In Syria; urbanism and architecture have all kinds of styles and schools, as many of Syrian architects name it “Mood-anism.”⁷ The forms of buildings are dictated by the mood of the mayor, armed with the privilege of secure connections with upper crust figures-through manipulating the building codes. For instance, the city of Homs has a vibrant heritage following the plan of Islamic city planning, had once a governor happened to admire towers and Dubai look-alikes, he pursued a new investment law allowing towers to built in the city with no consideration for the building heights around, even regarding the old city’s. Like what happened with Twin Towers(hotel (Gardenia towers), 32 stories, currently standing on the verge of green orchards and next to low rise housing. One of the main mistakes of strategic urban planning in this country was to deprive cities of civil and economic growth. This kind of mined urbanism, which is a central feature of most Syrian settlements, had no particular order. It exhibited neither aesthetic sense nor a predetermined design. Despite its spontaneity, urban growth did not make use of local organic materials or indigenous architectural techniques. However, built with monotonous concrete blocks, encasing whatever space was needed. A place, whatever is big scale as city or a small one as a survived house through generations, is an accomplishment by every inhabitant. A bond with ancestors and a validation of their present existence. The pride that accompanies these accomplishments creates an identity based on the sharing of a place to which they belong. If people were unable to find these traces, they would have no sense of belonging and would look for their identity elsewhere. After independence and the abandonment of the French lifestyle, many values were lost, and modern Syrian urbanization and architecture became a mixture of chaos and lost identity. In 1968 (after almost four years of independence) the Syrian government called the French military pilot, architect and urban planner Michel Ecochard. He was able then to be the first to see Damascus, the capital of Syria, from above and scan it using the technology of aero-photogrammetry during the French occupation period. 65% of the Ecochard-Benshoya plan of 1968 for the walled city of Damascus had been realized by 2009, resulting in infrastructure problems, urban slums, economic deficiency, and social ills, uncontrolled urban growth, leading at last to war!. Now Damascus is about to have a “rebuilding” project called “Project 66” or “Marota city” means sovereignty in Syriac ancient language, which is a pilot city where towers will be built in place of shabby housing and unnecessary greenery. Modern markets and shopping malls will replace craftsmen’s workshops and small businesses. The reconstruction on land where more than 50,000 people once lived, but where now new laws are being applied that favors profiteering. Skyscrapers for the phantom wealthy in place of houses, shops and workplaces for war-weary ordinary citizens

⁷ Described metaphor by architect Al-Sabouni-Marwa

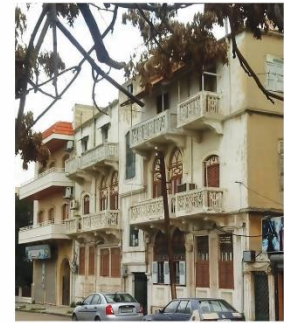
it began in 2012 as a new construction project of the government with a 215 Hectares (equals to 115 football fields). The city masterplan provides for many luxurious housing towers in addition to commercial and investment plots. Decree 66 identified two informal settlements zones in southern Damascus for reconstruction according to the master plan of Damascus. Marota city takes place in a zone called Al-Razi (55% informal housing,45% agrarian purposes); Plans to build luxury 'Dubai' style properties; 3 Landmark skyscrapers of between 50-70 floors and around 15 residential towers of luxuries flats and malls. The private sector engagement is characterized by luxury over need. It produced a hybrid set of inconsistent designs devoid of any added value that does not reflect either the identity of Damascus or its history since that city is for a small elite of wealthy people, not the evident focus for reconstruction. The fact that informal housing in Syria by the mid-1990s was becoming a norm, providing an estimated 50% of housing demands in Syria and 56% in Damascus. It does not respond to the desperate need for new housing, where an estimated 1.7 million damaged houses in Syria, and 150 thousand in Damascus and suburbs alone. Thus, it does not respond to the context of crisis and displacement plus middle-class wealth construction and massive unemployment. This city project promotes architectural firms to focus on the exterior without developing new housing typologies that fit the majority of the people's changing and urgent demands. As an example of what is being advanced as a post-conflict reconstruction plan, it clearly shows how this reconstruction needs to be rethought urgently. So that people are housed, the economy can rebuild, and communities can begin to develop again. It is essential to mention that the urban fabric composed by the stacked old damascene dwellings, which gave the city its identity, is ignored by high buildings to create the post-war futuristic Dubaified Syrian capital. A warning light about the direction of Syrian reconstruction is this the type of reconstruction that Syrians need?. Likewise, the crisis happening in **Latakia**, the fourth largest city in Syria but away from spotlights. Latakia architectural heritage and identity loss danger rises significantly nowadays in the shades of the war crisis privilege, a total denial of building rules, and flourished corruption.



Gardenia Twin Towers, Public source



Al Akshah Mansion, Public source - Demolished in 2014



Traditional buildings Public source



Homs Dream Project, Public source

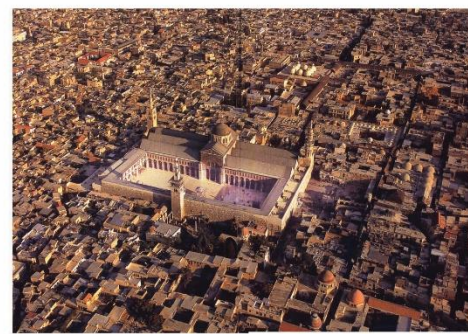


Naora souk, Public source - 1970s

HOMS DAMASCUS



Landscape of Modern Day Damascus 2009, Manfred Schweda/ thisfabtrek.com



The Old City of Damascus, Wordpress



Towers under construction (2020), Marotcity.sy

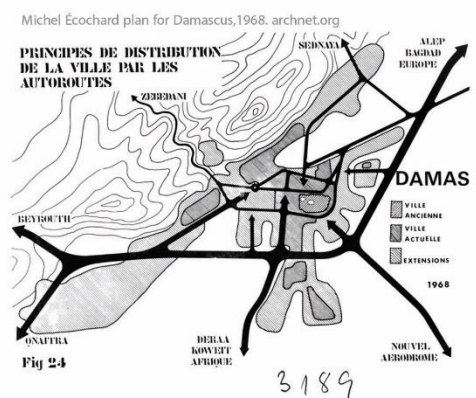


Figure 15. Old and New built forms in Syria (Damascus-Homs). The Public source is mainly from historians archive posts on Facebook Heritage pages: الأثرية حمص وأوابدها الأثرية منتدى دراسة تاريخ مدينة حمص و أوابدها الأثرية Forum studying the history of Homs

3.3. Latakia – city overview:

In the northern-west region of Syria (Figure 12), Latakia takes its place, surrounded by hills, orchards, and fertile agricultural land. It is Considered Syria's principal port on the Mediterranean Sea, so It has importance in the scope of maritime trade as well as its location on the borders with Turkey in its north. It is a tourist destination with its massive archeological tangible heritage like the site of Ugarit, Triumphal arch of Septimus Severus, and Citadel of Salah Ed-Din. Latakia is a resort city, so tourism is a significant source of revenue for the local economy. It was known to the Phoenicians as Ramitha and to the Greeks as Leuke Akte. Its present name is Laodicea's corrupted from the name of Seleucus II's mother (3rd century BC). It includes a campus zone "Tishreen University." The nowadays Latakia is a part of Syria that saw no real conflicts but many losses. It suffered from the war crisis and the massive loss of its sons as soldiers in the mandatory military service in the hot conflict zones. People from cities where fighting was fierce came and settled in the coastal cities Latakia and Tartus. Thus, significant problems came to the surface with an addition to the population like housing problems.

3.3.1. Urban territories of Latakia city:

The Governorate of Latakia is divided into four districts (Figure 16); Al Haffeh, Al Qardaha, Jableh, and Latakia district. Latakia city consists of 20 neighborhoods, which significantly vary in population, density, and area. (Figure 17) Latakia western zones, Area 1 (includes American street and Sleybeh neighborhoods) have the highest population density. They include mixed commercial and residential uses surrounding the port area of three main areas, represent the modern city, which replaced the old city during a significant urban transformation period in the 1980s and 1990s. This area is densely populated and includes most of the city's markets and logistical infrastructure. Since the crisis, this area has become very densely populated. Area 2 composed of 5 neighborhoods (includes Tishreen University and the Sports city); the fertile agricultural lands gradually become urbanized and resulted in low-density informal housing. Area 3 composed of 4 secondary settlements that expanded in Latakia periphery and became attractive for urban development. Areas 1 and 2 form the current urban part of Latakia this urban area is mainly dominated by residential uses but also includes sizeable logistical transportation services including the port, two duty-free zones, and modern rail and road networks. 86% of housing units in Latakia are modern multistory residential buildings⁸.

⁸ UN Habitat, 2014, City Profile of Latakia

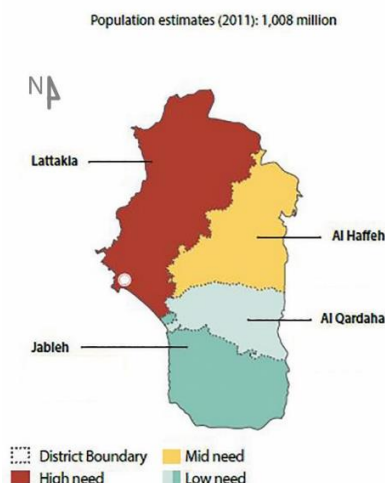


Figure 16. Latakia Districts. UN Habitat

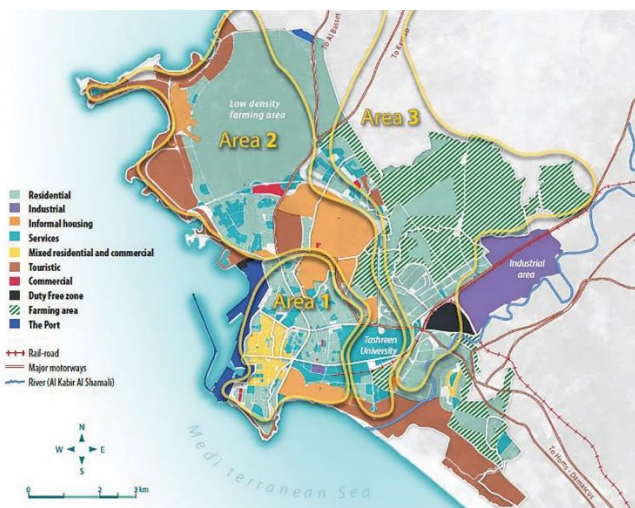


Figure 17. Latakia city Areas and Urban Composition. UN Habitat

3.3.2. The character of Latakia city – urban and architectural aspect:

The “Lebanese house” also known as “House with three arches” an approved model in the eastern Mediterranean cities’ coastal line (Latakia/Syria, Tripoli and Saida/Lebanon, Haifa/Palestine ...). This style of buildings was born in Beirut around the year 1860 and it remained alive in its Ottoman version until the year 1930⁹ (Figure 18). It had an internal courtyard (like the Damascene houses), The coastal mansion has a roofed corridor around the courtyard, repeatedly arches mounted on columns, its primary purpose as rain protection (the weather factor). It has a brick roofing truss composing a model that embodies the city in a harmonic unit of a full mesh representing the identity back then with maximum height of three floors. Its total area is between 100-250 sq.m. The absence of the tiny central pool of water is recognizable in the courtyards because the atmosphere of Latakia very humid as a coastal city. After the development of building materials and Concrete usage instead of stone, buildings structure became as if imported from abroad with high raised buildings too, without considering that these random volumes and those materials are massively ignoring the local identity of the city. Creating a new concept of dwellings as the building itself has, on average, five to eight floors, and each floor has a variety of apartments minimum two to four flats as maximum. The unity of the built forms broke in a very sudden moment started with using “Béton brut” imported by the French. Concrete was widely used as building material instead of limestone and brick sloping roofs. Buildings skyline turned to horizontal form. The other following gap was the massive wide movement that allowed **the demolition of old buildings** -those represented the tangible heritage of the region’s architectural style- and the construction of high buildings that make an abundant financial profit for its contractors. Each building has its height, design, and appearance, in brief, there becomes a blind action in the real

⁹ CORPUS, Maison aux trois arcs

estate sector on account of those historic buildings. The importation of buildings outside their environment creates a visual distortion that dissolves the city's visual identity, where there is no distinctive lattice. This change in the architectural style affects several areas, social and environmental. Perhaps the most obvious is the city center, which is in the old section, where the streets are relatively narrow and do not tolerate many vehicles, which led to an increase in the level of air and noise pollution. In the early French period, many residential houses and government buildings were built to reflect the city's architectural style. Latakia's municipality adopted an architectural style inspired by the old buildings of the city walls to reduce visual pollution as much as possible and make the city a unified character. "In a constantly changing world, more people are seeking modernization and shifting away from cultural heritage." (Biase, 2009). The action of demolition, mostly, is because considering the increasing demand for land the need for new building uses. That gave rise to many legal legislations and laws regarding demolishing in constantly growing cities. In the United States, for example, the adoption of "Demolition Review Laws." This law is not only placed to protect historically significant buildings, rather "it allows for review of applications for demolition permits to assess a building's historical significance. If the building is deemed significant, then issuance of the permit may be delayed for a specific period to pursue landmark designation, or to explore preservation solutions such as selling the property to a purchaser interested in rehabilitating the structure or finding alternative sites for the proposed post-demolition project." (Miller, 2006). From an economic aspect, building owners are often challenged with deciding between renovating an existing building or demolishing it and replacing it with 'new' construction. This choice between the two can affect the overall budget, schedule, and quality of the project. The decision must be based on individually assessing projects. In some cases, the assessment shows that renovation is less costly than demolishing, and effort to maintain the actual building is prosperous. While in other circumstances, demolishing seems to be the more economically suitable option and the final resort when all efforts to renovate fail. During the 20th century, for example, concrete deterioration and decay required a high cost of maintenance. Not only was it considered a costly process, but maintenance was also said to require a difficult procedure¹⁰. (Biase, 2009) Research has been conducted through the years to create a renovation versus new building support decision tool; this process includes an assessment of each category description, scoring and ranking as well as prioritizing each category, and finally decision making. (C. Pope, 2016). Mansions like Shidiaq and Isrep in Latakia are now just in the memory of people who knew them before demolishing but not for the new generation, and here, the memory loss of a city becomes disquisitional. It is not fair to defeat the old by new and cherish the legacy of the

¹⁰ E. Ibrahim, J. Yammine and N. Zreika

past by stimulating the vision in a Virtual Reality Technology. and a couple of old images. Modernity does not necessarily mean high towers and skyscrapers, the newest cities with a long heritage still maintain their tradition and distinctive architectural style even in residential neighborhoods. So, in a wide aspect, what is the point to imitate the shiny towers of Dubai and Manhattan? If one-third of Burj Khalifa tower is not used¹¹ instead of sheltering many of the displaced. Does the modernism and post-modernism architecture serve the cities and the needs of its inhabitants well? Does it give each city its own special identity of these cities that are going to be copied-pasted repeatedly?.

A 20th-century French orientalist and historian, professor Jean Sauvaget's seminal studies of the 1930- and 40s, assumed that the city plans of most cities of the Roman East were superimposed on a core comprising a Hellenistic-era grid. The classic example was Latakia on the Syrian coast, where the city's grid plan is still more strikingly evident in the modern street pattern than in any other living city of classical origins in the region (BURNS, ROSS). The urban transformation in Latakia was achieved during the French Mandate period. Firstly, major regional roads that connected Latakia with other centers like Beirut or Alexandretta were constructed. Secondly, they dried up the marshy area in the vicinity of the town and focused on the "modernization" of the layout of the whole city. During the French administration period, the city turned out to be one of the most modernized cities in the Eastern Mediterranean. The city was embellished with a major thoroughfare, a public garden, a tourist hotel, well-conceived houses, and streets with planted trees (Açıkgöz,2008). As it is agreed between Latakians, the square of Sheik-Daher is the city center, where no public spaces but two substantial artificial lakes surrounded by streets then multi-use buildings, it suffers from overcrowding, road congestion, and poor infrastructure.

The city still maintains the shape of orthogonal streets. Nowadays, the city has a recognizable extension and expansion movement, through the new organizational chart of the city of Latakia - released in 2008 as a plan to be done on 2025- recommends new projects in the orchard part of northern Latakia, eliminates the sources of income of many people working in agriculture. That new chart claims to fix the following issues; The inconvenience of the current city plan for the development, modernization, and reality requirements, the loss of identity and character of the city, the inferior position of service facilities, the multiplicity of building systems, the absence of special planning foundations and human development, the absence of a social survey of the population, the lack of implementation of organizational plans and their overruns, the absence of a detailed road traffic study, the lack of attention to comprehensive regional planning, the absence of the environmental policy necessary for coastal development Syrian and its touristic role, the problem of the port's location and expansion, and incorrect settlement of civil violations. However,

¹¹ The Guardian (2017)

in the shades of the Syrian war, Latakia received a vast number of displaced Syrians from the middle and eastern regions of Syria, and that generates many consequences, the consequences in the time of war. Chaos can have two contrasts, pros, and cons. This disorder is accompanied by a high population density, which can create a better social and urban interaction through a flexible growth of cities. It can motivate individuals to compete in the local market and more space for creativity, by establishing an unofficial market or a spontaneous urban and architectural expansion, or creating various spontaneous civic activities, such as street artists, political or environmental gatherings. Thus, a certain degree of chaos can create cities of economic, political, and social diversity.

On the other hand, chaos allows developing inappropriate random housing 'slums' and leads to an increase in the resources of cities and their infrastructure in an unplanned manner. It also leads to weakness or absence of control by authorities, which increases crime rates and low safety rates, and this constitutes a threat to urban life and the city in general with all its components. Significantly increasing chaos could cause the city to collapse and fail. On the other side, the 'organization' that is associated with low population densities allows improving the architectural and urban environment through clear legislation and laws with an increase in authority and oversight that provides residents with greater security and economic stability in the long run. We can better predict the city and thus of control On its resources. An increase in organization means stability and inflexibility, and this contrasts with the nature of the changing cities. The 'organization' also creates homogeneous societies that do not accept pluralism and have no room for political, social, or economic differences. It also strengthens supervision and authority. That allows it to curb freedoms further and control the population in addition to the possibility of commercial control of cities through capitalist companies that monopolize the market and prevent competition between individuals, which may increase the gap between the different classes and reduce social justice rates.

"In both chaos and order, we see a combination of negative and positive opposites. Therefore it is never possible to reach a perfect solution to an ideal city that is entirely problem-free, but it is always possible to seek a balance between them. Chaos alone means the inability to control the city and its resources, and the comprehensive system means totalitarian control and a lack of healthy urban life."¹²

¹² Qaoud, Eyad.

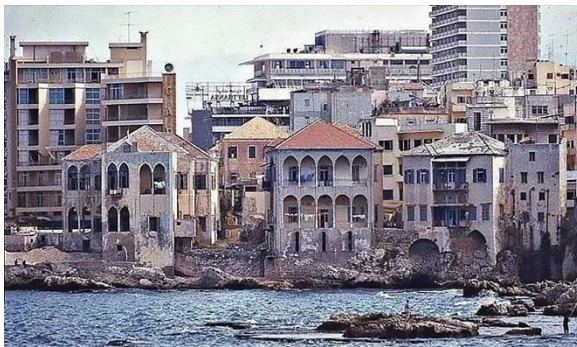


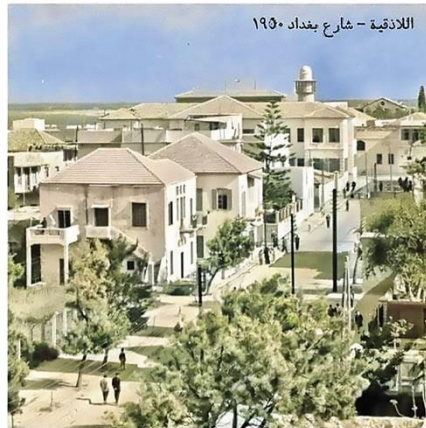
Figure 18. The Lebanese House as a traditional Architecture in Beirut, Lebanon (Left) source: and in Latakia, Syria (Right) source:; and challenges they face against new built forms in both cities besides the obvious apparent in their identity. Sources: <https://www.facebook.com/BeirutHeritage/> - www.facebook.com/groups/751719778293858/ - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/BeirutHeritage/> - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/383275602596550/> - [سوريون من أجل التراث العمراني](https://www.facebook.com/groups/383275602596550/) - [#Syrians For Built Heritage](https://www.facebook.com/groups/383275602596550/)



Latakia, Latin Church street (Bagdad street) 1953, Public source



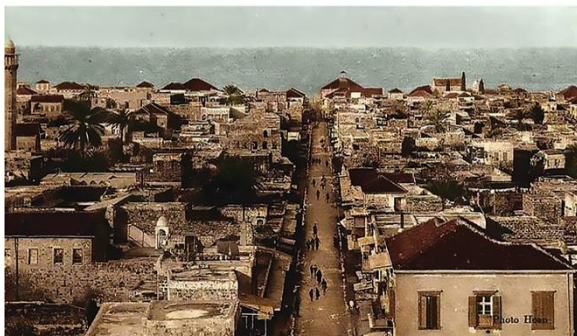
Latakia, Latin Church street (Bagdad street) 2017, Public source



Latakia, Bagdad street 1950, Public source



Latakia, Bagdad street 2009, Public source



Latakia, France street 1950s, Public source



Shekh Daher Square 1958, Public source



Latakia, France street, 1984, Public source



Shekh Daher Square 2010, Public source

Figure 19. The Old City of Latakia between Then (Left) and Now (Right) -the Alter in Urban texture and Identity. Public source: Facebook: www.facebook.com/groups/751719778293858/ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/383275602596550/> - Latakian Historians: Allam Rahmeh, Modar Kanaan



Figure 20. Timeline of Latakia Map Evolution.

Chapter IV:

Case Study: Latakia

“After he had set out from there (i.e. Emperor Augustus of Antiocheia), he came to Laodicea, a city in Syria. He built a very large theater in the city and had a marble statue erected there. “

(Lit .: M. Horster)

Laodicea: Laodicea ad Mare: Laodicea of the sea: Latakia old name

The study takes place on the west of what is considered the old city in Latakia. The avenue now is known as American avenue, a part of Al-Kamliah quarter, one of the oldest neighborhoods in Latakia. This avenue has many examples of the Lebanese house's style; many were victims of demolishing actions. One of the surviving buildings is Gabriel Saadé mansion.

The American street (defined in municipality documents as Al-Mutanabi street) the main street of American avenue extends from south to north in a length of about 900 meters and 9 meters in width. It has almost six orthogonal sub streets attaching two paralleled boulevards: '8th of March' street at east and the 'Western Cornish' street at west. One of these sub streets is Gabriel Saadé street passing by the south side façade of the mansion. All composes almost 19 segments vary between commercial and residential uses. This avenue is a vital place with many banks, luxurious shops, and entertainment establishments. The urban development of land use in this avenue through time is very recognizable; the built areas now in the American avenue are considered as closed areas with no vacant plots. American avenue, like in all of the old city of Latakia, has old built forms. In most cases, stakeholders chose to demolish these built forms. Stakeholders refer to investors and contractors. But also, they can be professionals or even laypersons who are authorized to give their opinions along the conservation process. By this, the decision making in conservation can be a collective process to act, allowing different opinions to be formed and ideas to be exchanged and allow the public to have a positive contribution in that procedure ¹³, and by this creating a chance that can save the identity can be real.

Few of demolished iconic buildings in Latakia (Figure 21): Shidiaq mansion and Emile Saadé mansion/American avenue, Shretah mansion/ Slaibah avenue, Isreb mansion/ Baghdad street. These mansions were in good condition, but the new owners decided the demolition and replaced by modern high structures.

¹³ Ibrahim E., Yamine J. and Zreika N.



Shidiaq mansion, was demolished in 2005, Public source



Emille Saadé mansion, was demolished in 1980s. Built style is similar to Alexandria's mansions in Egypt, Public source



Isrep mansion, was demolished in 2008. Public source



The Tower built on the site of the demolished Shidiaq mansion 2017, Rand Issa.



The Building on the site of the demolished Emille Saadé mansion 2017, Rand Issa.



The Building on the site of the demolished Isrep mansion 2017, Rand Issa.

Figure 21. Few of demolished iconic buildings in Latakia between Then and Now.

4.1. Gabriel Saadé mansion

4.1.1. Location

Gabriel Saadé Palace is now one of Latakia's hidden gems. It is on the west side of Latakia on American Avenue, at the heart of a principal commercial street, surrounded by residential towers and shops and close to many vital facilities like Al-Assad Hospital and Syria Commercial bank. When it was first built, its location was considered as on the periphery of the old town surrounded by orchards and had a full unobstructed view on the Mediterranean Sea other than what it is now. It is on the meeting point between two orthogonal streets: Gabriel Saadé street (heading east to west) and American street, also known as Al-Mutanabbi street (heading south to north). (Figure 22)

4.1.2. History

This mansion building process started in the late 19th century and was finished between 1902 and 1903, as mentioned in many documents. It was the first building to have an elevator in Latakia. The first owner of the palace was Michael Saadé, who belongs to the dominant feudal class in the city back then. He visited many western countries and was aware of European culture and architecture. The great care of the facades is a sign this building was his primary residence. The mansion is now the seat of a wine export company (Bargylus wine) owned by Saadé family.

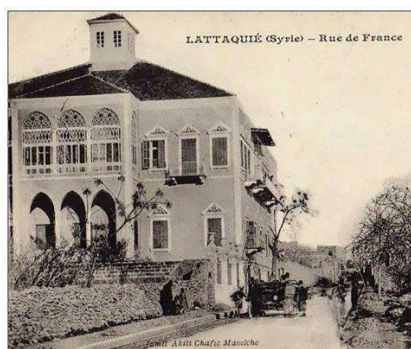


Figure 23. Gabriel Saadé Palace 1924.
Latakia National Museum archive



Figure 24. Gabriel Saadé Palace 2001.
Latakia National Museum archive



Figure 25. A high building is erected on the front yard of the Palace.
2019 Anthony Deep

4.1.3. Architectural description

This house is one of the most impressive homes remaining in Latakia. It is an example of building style in the city likely on the east Mediterranean coastline along from Syria down to Lebanon and Palestine, which has no more than two floors and a yard or a big front garden. The purpose of this building was to use it as a residence. However, the ground floor was used earlier for storage purposes and as a shelter for workers whose primary job was to take care of the orchards surrounding the mansion, later it was used as a wine cave.

The house has two main entrances, accessed by two stairs leading to a balcony with arches. The entrance is two adjacent and symmetrical doors. The first leads to a long gallery to the left of which leads directly to the office room. At the end of the corridor, a door leads to a rectangular hall. rooms and the services section are distributed around it. The second entrance leads directly through ascending stairs to the first floor. It leads to a narrow hall. Then a rectangular space, like on the first floor, surrounded by rooms and service section.

4.1.4. The Building Art¹⁴

The Mansion was built in two stages. The ground floor where the Ottoman build style is recognizable through the crisscrossed vaults and the sandstone walls while the other two levels have a brick roof and wooden support with the use of concrete and reinforced concrete. It is the only building in Latakia with ornaments in the shape of angles sculptures over its windows like in the European style, which is not used in the Islamic building art since human sculptures were prohibited in Islamic culture. "The Islamic Arabs were concerned with the decoration of their buildings from inside and outside. The Islamic decoration stems from the spirit of Islam and its rules, forbidding the sculpture of statues and the drawing of human figures, which led to a new artistic direction that differs from decorative arts in other civilizations." (Al Khadr, Abdulmoti). However, the house is also rich in architectural elements of Islamic and local style. The shape of the arches above some windows and doors, the first to use such brackets are Arab Muslims "The use of the arch has been widely used in Islamic buildings and Arab architects in the creation of three main models. The first is the pointed arch, which consists of two brackets drawn from two centers. The second is the four-pointed arches drawn from four centers, and the third is composed of two brackets from two main centers a straight arch meets the other line at the top of the Persian arch. Arab architects created this arch in the Umayyad, Abbasid and Fatimid periods"" The models of the pointed arches are Islamic architectural innovations, which were never used in previous times. The first model was used in the facade of the concourse overlooking the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, and it is also in the most Islamic buildings in Aleppo." (Al Khadr, Abdulmoti). Well-made iron-topped windows decorated the elegant facades of the house. There are also small terraces that almost come across the width of the door, resting on grooved and finely carved jambs and woven with wrought iron. This style of balconies spread widely in the city of Latakia in the early twentieth century. Still, it is unknown when this style of balconies began in use for the first time, it is more likely that it was in luxury homes, whose owners were open to European civilization, and then it limitedly spread in public houses. These European influences are not only in balconies, but also appear in the tiled roof, wrought iron, the height of the ground floor is higher than the height

¹⁴ According to Latakia National Museum's archive

of the first floor, the proportion of windows, the shape of the balconies, the use of wooden lampshades, and the decoration by statues.

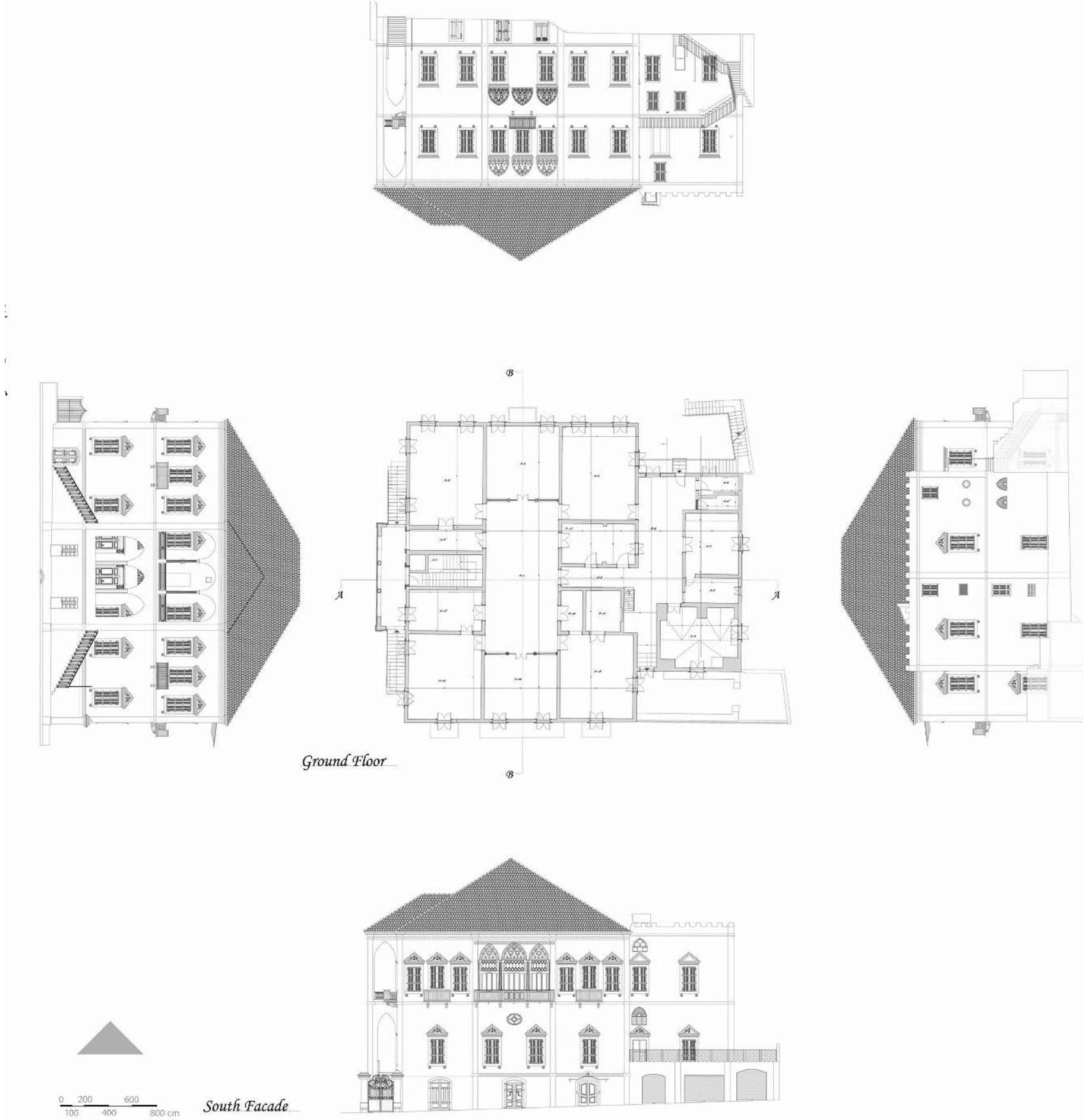


Figure 26. Ground Floor and Façades. National Museum of Latakia archive- updated edition review by Anthony Deep and Rand Issa 2020

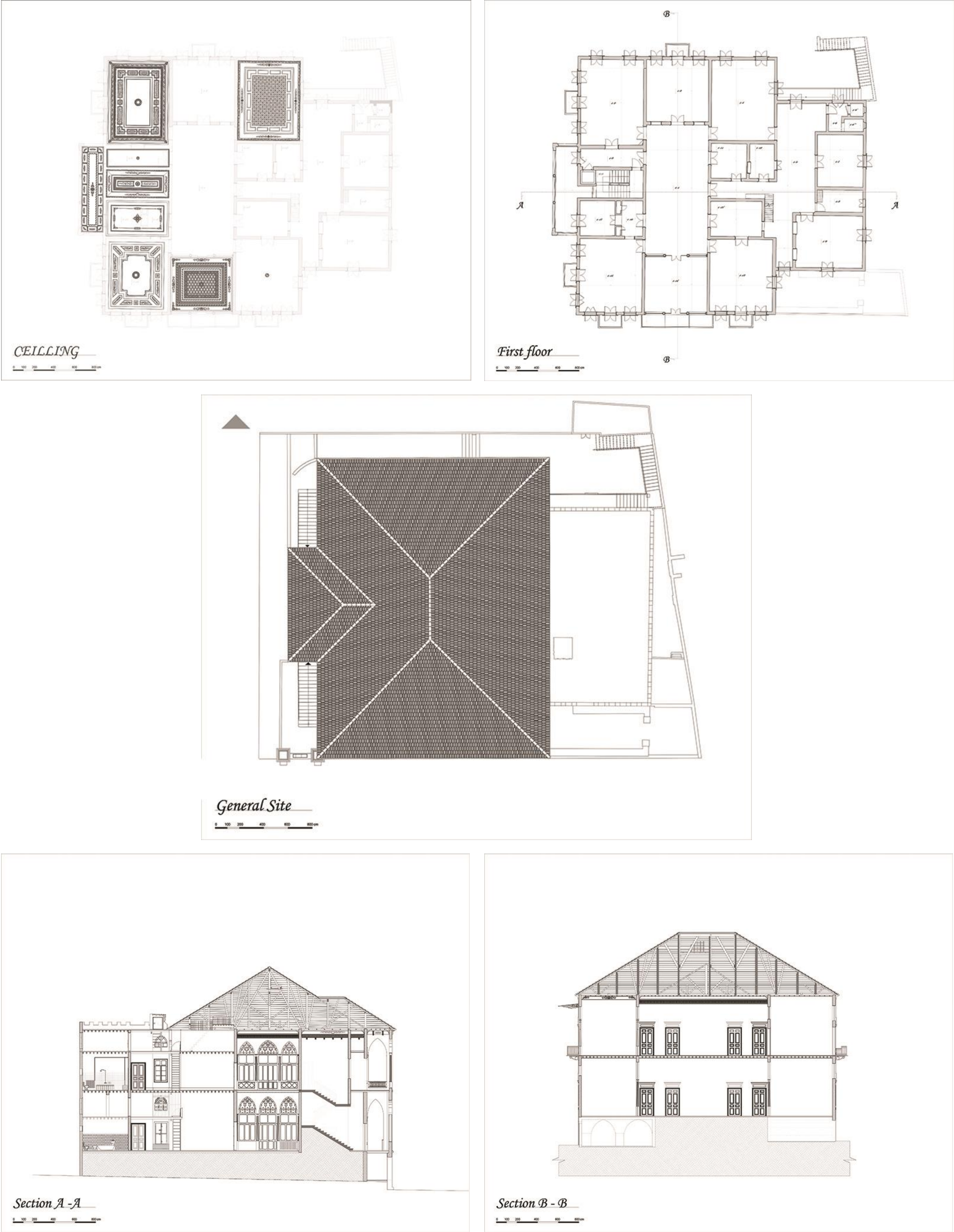


Figure 27. Plans of General Site, First Floor, Garnishing work of the Ceiling, and Sections A-A, B-B. National Museum of Latakia - Updated edition review by Anthony Deep and Rand Issa 2020

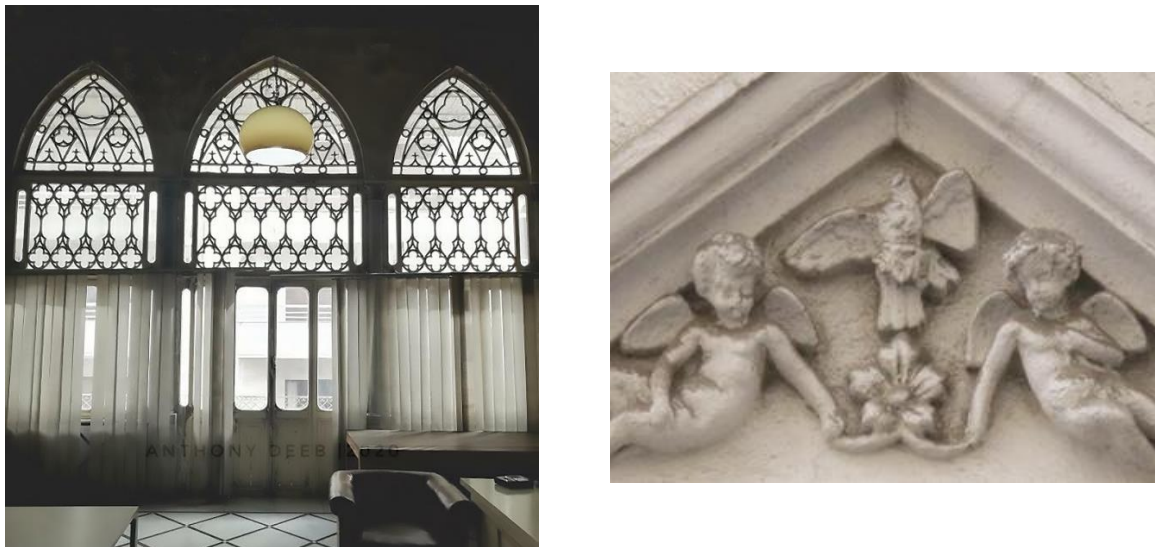


Figure 28. An interior image shows the three arches and the well-made iron-topped openings (Left)- Anthony Deep 2020, and ornaments in the shape of angles sculptures over windows(Right)- Rand Issa 2018.

4.2. The Consequences of Urban Development:

Saadé mansion is one of the remaining buildings in Latakia that expresses its identity. It is true that it is a survival from the demolishing process but had a cruel destiny. The undoing of the urban fabric has an advanced hand with the downfall of the moral fabric.

Luckily, it has never changed as a building but has had a significant change in its surrounding land plots. Today, new high raise-built spaces are around it. The most apparent difference is speculative, volumes, multi-stored buildings make it tricky to guess the palace location anymore. That turned it impossible to take a present photo for its Elevations (Figure 25).

The Saadé palace's elegance did not provoke the authorities of the Latakia municipality to consider the unified theme of built forms. Especially in the old city and its periphery due to many factors like the lack of areas to build on in the city center. That led to a massive breach against the green belt and open spaces left and -unfortunately- demolishing the architectural heritage in some instances like in the case of Shidiaq house just a few meters away from Saadé palace. This building has been affected not only the aesthetic aspects but the skyline of the slice itself. There is a big difference in the height of the surrounding buildings (Figure 29,30,31); they are very random physically and not elaborated. These buildings tend to be very fragmented and vary in their architectural style and height.

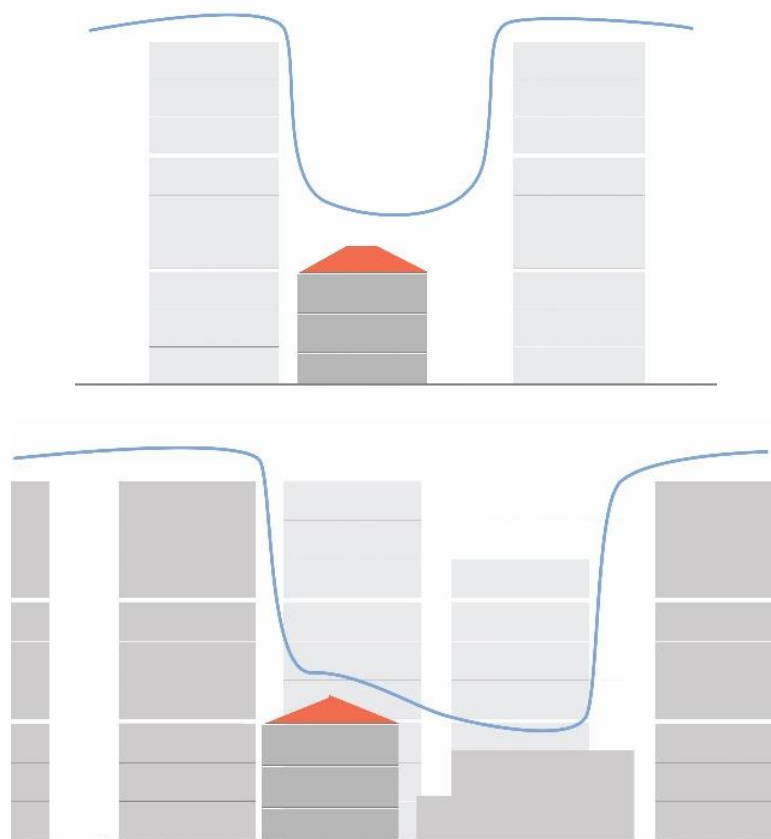


Figure 29. Skyline and massive difference in heights between Saadé Mansion and the buildings around it. Left: a section parallel to American street (south to north). Right: a section parallel to Gabriel Saadé street (east to west). Illustrated by Rand Issa.

Furthermore, those buildings have many different functions, and some buildings are mixed and used in a very arbitrary way. Also, no particular street views; the only attractive building is the palace, and a small ancient Angelical Church dates back to 1876 (Figure 22). Streets become not handy for pedestrians because of dense traffic from all sides, and they get narrower through time because of the new building process. The only real attempt was to simulate the openings with seven stories building in Gabriel Saadé street (Figure 30, Left) but with the use of different cladding materials and volume. There is no green belt or any public space. A few years ago, the front garden of the mansion sold to become a nine floors building standing as unfinished construction due to the unstable economic situation Syria passes through the war. The garden gave a recognizable space among the crowded built street.

These buildings can afford residential and commercial functions in a vital avenue; meanwhile, each has its style and height. The mansion now becomes a stranger among these buildings. It can barely be recognizable regarding the alter in their levels of heights and volumes with the detached disproportionate styles and design.



Figure 30. Buildings on the periphery of Gabriel Saadé Palace, Up 2020, Down 2011. Rand Issa

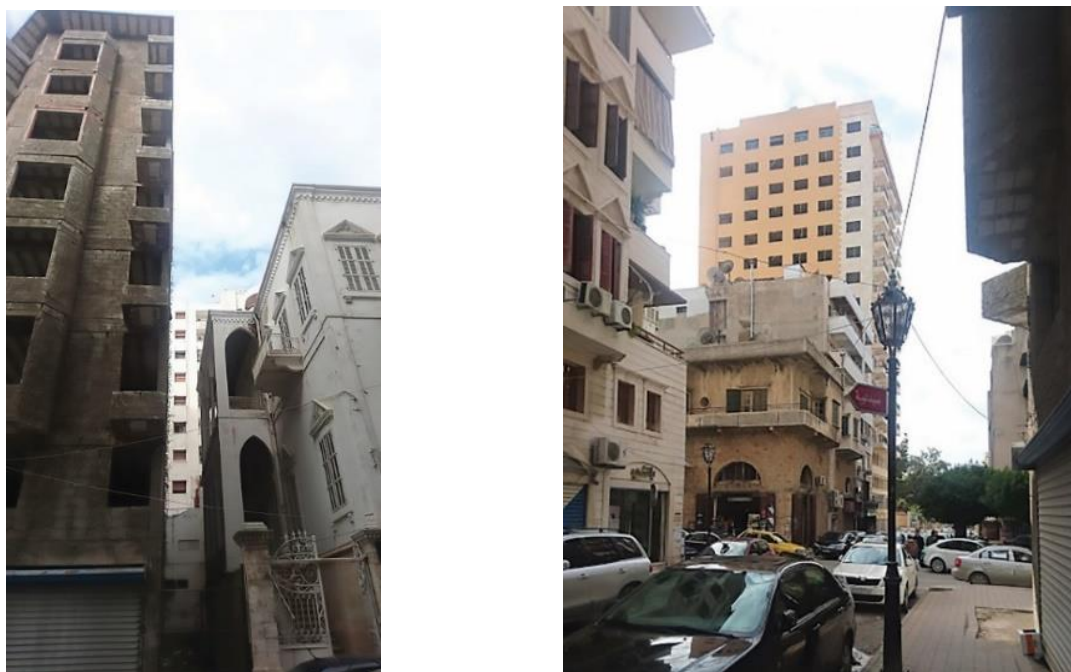


Figure 31. The buildings around Gabriel Saadé mansion in American avenue. Rand Issa 2020

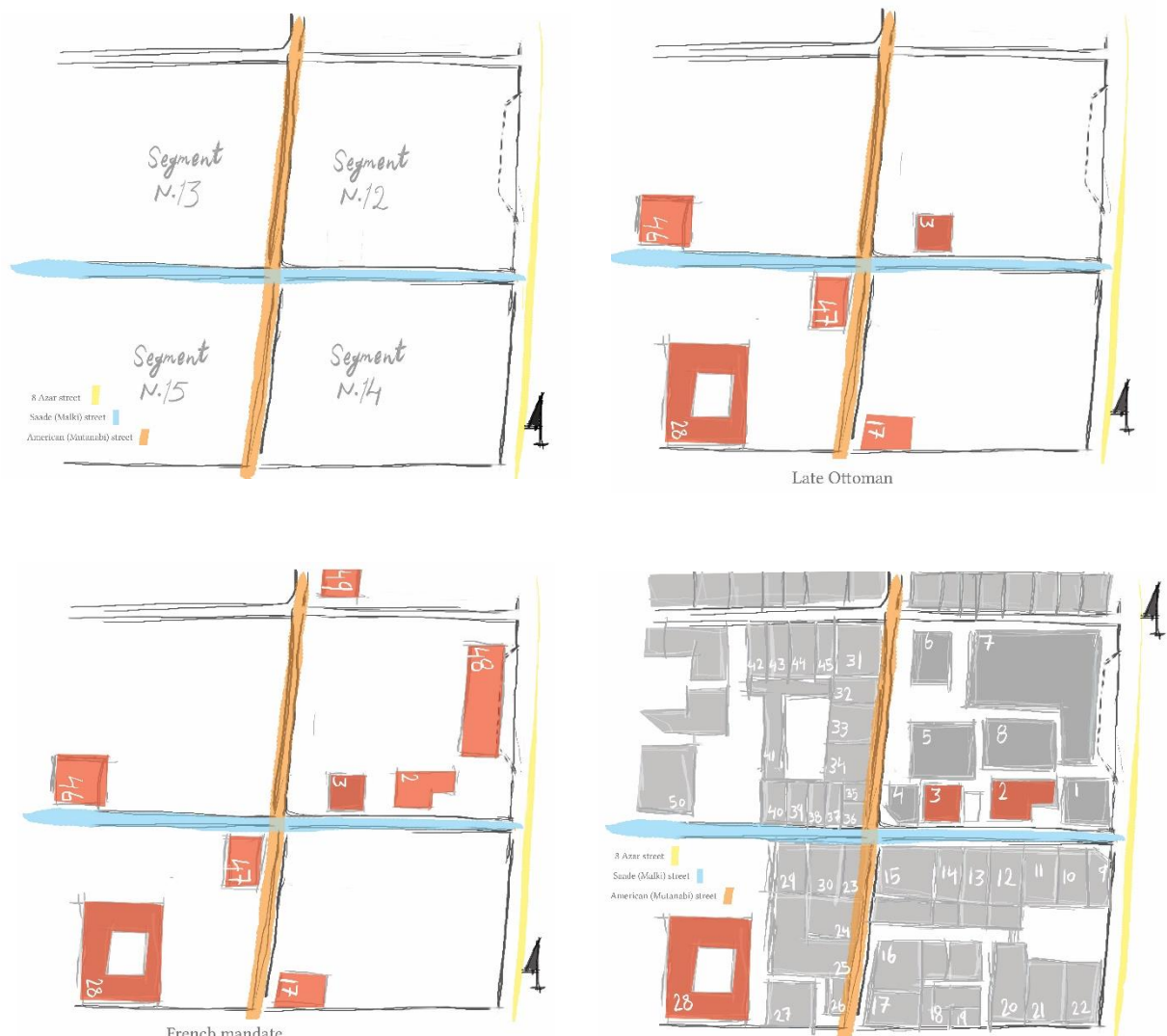


Figure 32. Sketches of the four segments generated by American and Gabriel Saadé street to show the evolution of Land use. Illustrations based on old images archive of the area (Ottoman and French periods sketches) and Google maps (the present statement sketch). Illustration by Rand Issa

The segments defined by these two streets (American street and Gabriel Saadé street) have grown since the Ottoman rule period, to the French mandate and then to the present with all the urban development, as showed in the maps and graphics. Saadé mansion allocates in segment n.12, mentioned by number 3 in the graphics, is standing still as a survivor since the late Ottoman to the French era but lost its front yard (Figure 32).

Real estates had been growing massively in such an active and vital street. Now, very few houses dating to the late French and early independence periods are still in this street, some in poor conditions (segments 12, 10, 6, 15) (Figure 34). The skyline of each street frontage can recognize them, the gap in heights between newly built forms and the few ancient ones. Supposedly, these houses standstill because either it has older people still occupying them or its owners are

immigrants abroad. Either way, it could be demolished like in the case of Shidiaq mansion, which was in segment 14. However, now a curtain wall tower stood over that piece of land, also, in segment 14.

American street has an overlooked fact that it is turning to a closed built area with an absence of rigorous monitoring on the implementation of the new buildings in that street and how they do behave with the identity of the city. Despite the risk of lacking green or public spaces, the Saadé mansion case is very provocative to Latakians due to the ignorance of this beautiful heritage.

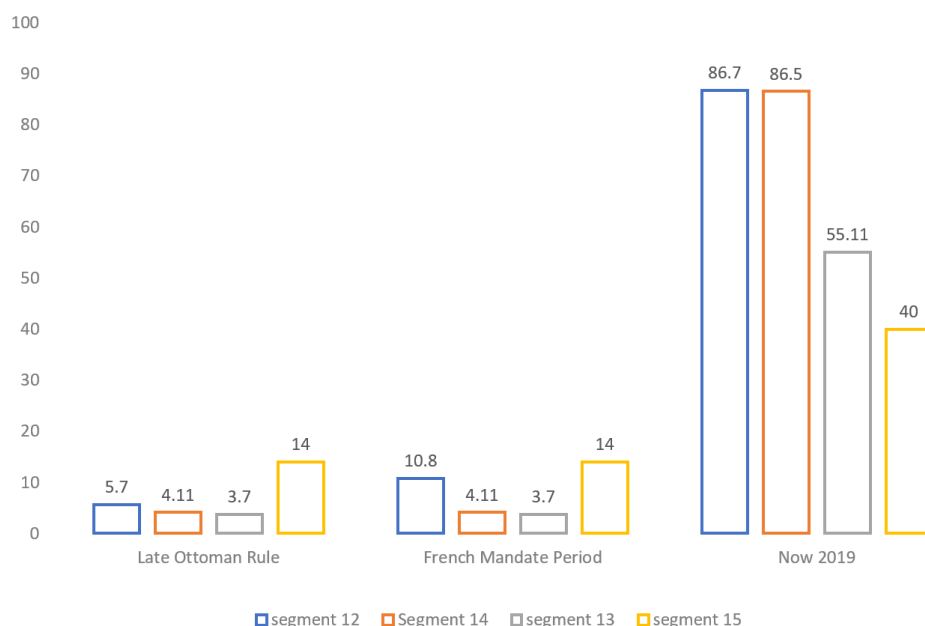


Figure 33. Built area growth in the four segments (percentage) through time,. Rand Issa

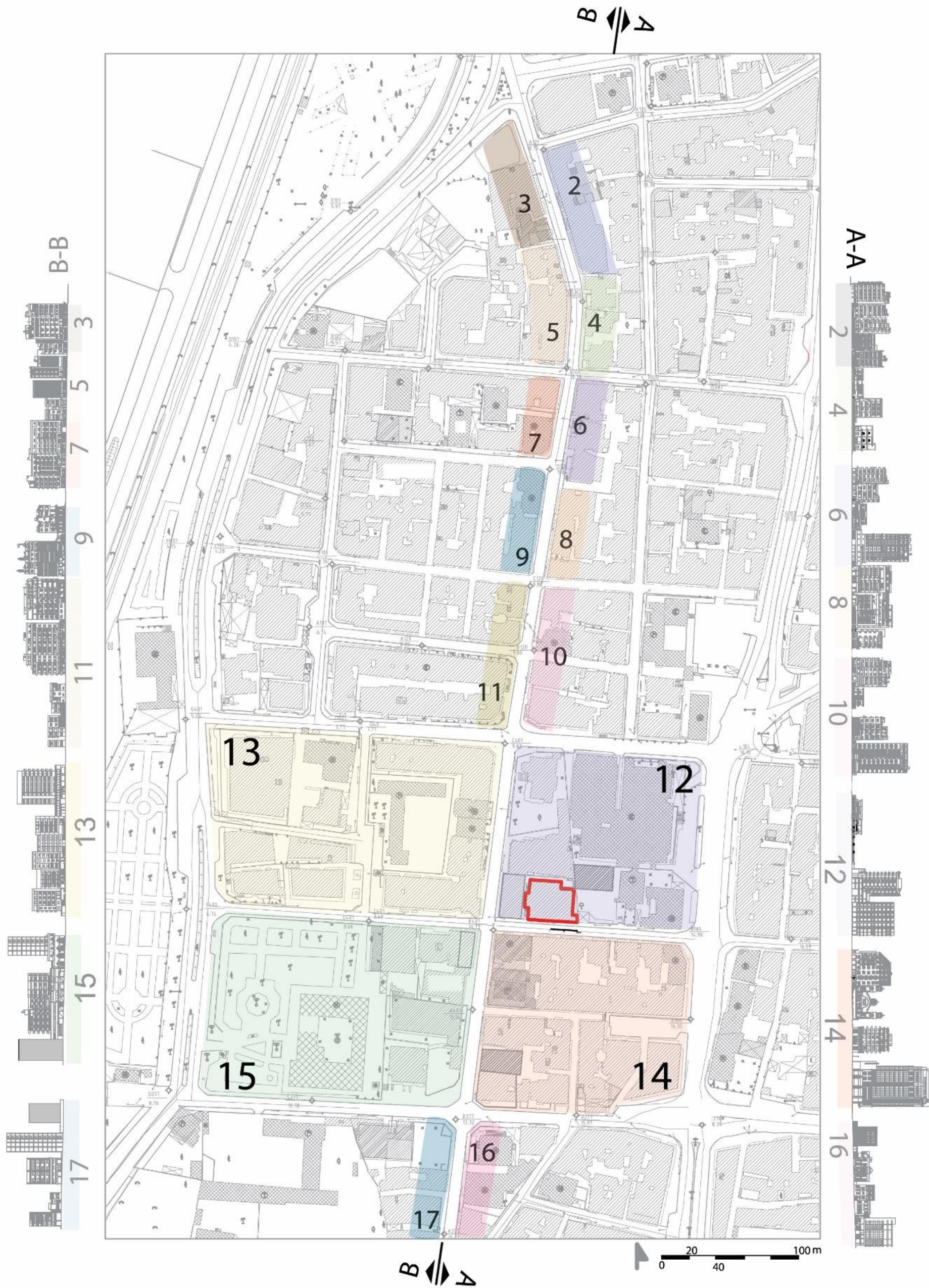


Figure 34. American street general plan shows the street frontages and buildings' heights and volumes. Gabriel Saadé mansion is marked by a red polyline. Latakia Municipality - Updated edition review and Illustration Rand Issa 2020

	Segment n.12	Segment n.14	Segment n.13	Segment n.15
Total segment Area (sq.m.)	17912	18326	29047	27432
Late Ottoman Rule				
Built Area (sq.m.) (%)	1017 (5.7 %)	754 (4.11 %)	726 (3.7 %)	4014 (14 %)
Buildings	3. Saadé mansion	17. Shidiaq mansion	46. mansion	28. Tobacco Khan (now National Museum of Latakia) / 47. Khan
Max. Floors number	3 floors	2 floors	2 floors	1 floor
Demolished buildings	—	—	—	—
French Mandate Period				
Built Area (sq.m.)	1937 (10.8 %) [1017 + n.48. American Girls school (Collège des Filles Américaines) no clues of its area before its demolishing approx. area 920 = 1320]	754 (4.11 %)	726 (3.7 %)	4014 (14 %)
Buildings	3. Saadé mansion / 48. American Girls school (Collège des Filles Américaines)	17. Shidiaq mansion	46. mansion	28. Tobacco Khan (now National Museum of Latakia) / 47. Khan
Max. Floors number	3 floors	2 floors	2 floors	2 floors (new floor at the National Museum of Latakia)
Demolished buildings	—	—	—	—
Now 2019				
Built Area (sq.m.) (%)	15532 (86.7 %)	15851 (86.5 %)	16009 (55.11 %)	10997 (40 %)
Buildings	1.Commercial Bank of Syria/ 2.Anglican church/ 3. Saadé mansion/ 4.5.8.residential building/ 6. mansion/ 7. Hospital	mixed use multi floors buildings	mixed use multi floors buildings / 41. School	mixed use buildings / 28. The National Museum of Latakia / 23. old Khan
Max. Floors number	11 floors	17 floors	12 floors	9 floors
Demolished buildings	Past: n.48. American Girls school (Collège des Filles Américaines) now n.7 the Hospital / the front yard of Saadé mansion now n.4 Residential building	Past: n.17. Shidiaq mansion now n.17 mixed use tower.	Past: n.46. two floors family mansion now n.50. mixed use multi floors building	—

Figure 35. Studying the Evolution of Land use areas and showing the demolition procedures in Segments 12,14,13,15 in American avenue (plots numbers regarding Figure 32). Rand Issa

It is clear from the above data that a very rapid growth in built areas happened with a total denial for the city's urban fabric towards new form of building ideology detached from the character of Latakia and its rich heritage. An irresponsible ideology of investors who prefer profit over anything else.

Chapter V:

Case Study: Porto

“Porto is a city that reinvents itself on its oldest streets and gives us the sensation that we are always being brought to life¹⁵.”

*Rosa Alice Branco,
a Portuguese poet.*

¹⁵ The City and the Writer: In Porto with Rosa Alice Branco, WWB Daily

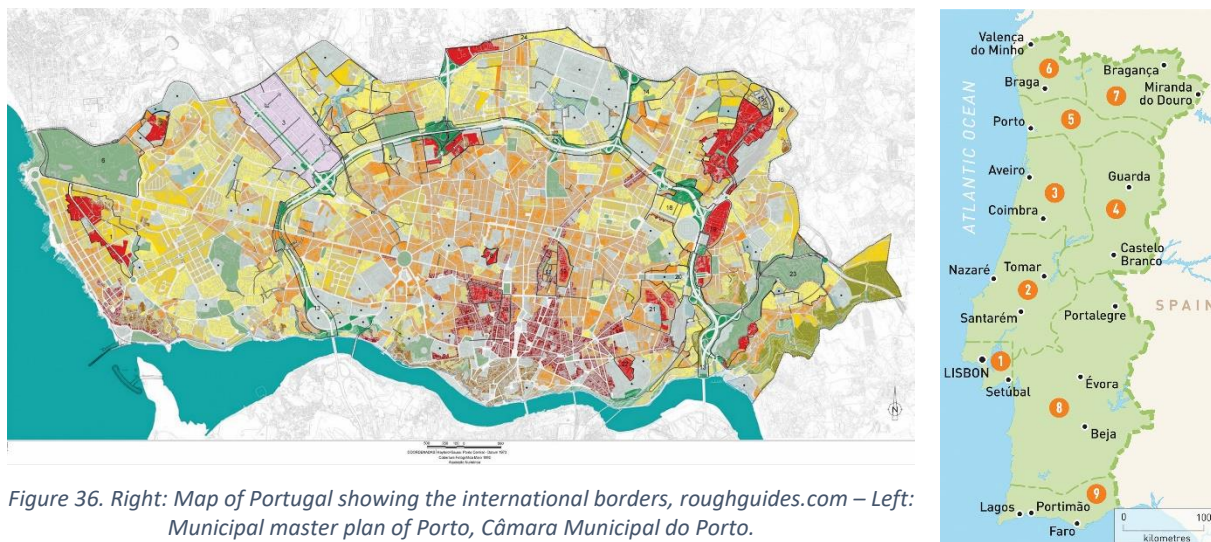


Figure 36. Right: Map of Portugal showing the international borders, roughguides.com – Left: Municipal master plan of Porto, Câmara Municipal do Porto.

Porto is the second-largest city of Portugal, the center of its metropolitan area and the main center of the northern region. It faces the sea and the Douro River. Part of the city was classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site 1996. In 2001 it was a European Capital of Culture. Despite its exciting features built upon nine centuries of history, there is a permanent challenge to preserve its built heritage and design new built forms that can enhance the city's character (Oliveira, 2014). The evolution of Quinta do Covelo in Porto began as a large property of fields and orchards in the 19th century to become an area with a great urban life in the city's central area, which was a significant leap in the urban development process in Porto. That included Lindo Vale street how its role turned from being part of one of the five connections with the north to an urban and residential street, in which many types of buildings were erected from traditional built styles to the seventies' apartment buildings. Then, several demolitions and the erection of many new buildings – usually multi-family buildings with inferior design in this street, then the rehabilitation of existing, or the construction of new, single-family buildings on the original plots. Rua Lindo Vale, includes 135 built plots (except two plots are empty), with a width between 4 and 21 meters, and their depth is between 7 and 56 meters. The height of buildings ranges between one and four stories, all buildings in the two different street façades follow the same alignment.

The object under analysis is located 2km from the old city center in Lindo Vale, once called the Estrada Velha, extending from south-west to north-east with a total length of 500 meters. It consists of two parts; first part south with 300 meters long and 6 to 10 meters width, between Praça do Marquês de Pombal and the Rua de Álvaro Castelões. The other northern part extends between Rua de Álvaro Castelões and Rua do Cunha with 200 meters long and 10 meters wide (Oliveira and Monteiro, 2016). After the construction of Rua Costa Cabral at the east, the street lost its role as the road to the north (specifically to Guimarães) and as a commercial street to adopt its residential

nature. In terms of land uses, several buildings with commerce, warehouse, and services (cinema), emerge against a background of residential use.



Figure 37. The Evolution of Lindo Vale area and the built area and urban development from 1892 to 2020, UP- A: Plan of Lindo Vale street by Telles Ferreira 1892. Down- B: Lindo Vale street 2020, Google Maps.



Figure 38. The location of Casa Lindo Vale, Google maps 2020, Illustration by Rand Issa

5.1. Casa do Lindo Vale

5.1.1. Location

The house appears in the middle of the northern west façade on the north part of Lindo Vale street - in the segment defined by Cunha street at the northeast and Álvaro de Castelões street at southwest.

5.1.2. Architectural and Urban Integration

House Lindo Vale is “designed for architects by architects” where the architect and client are one; furthermore, in this case, the ‘landowner’ and the ‘architect’ are the same, the design options are determined by the plan or decided by the landowner/architect. Architects Vítor Oliveira and Ana Cláudia Monteiro’s project was erected on a five by forty meters plot. It was previously occupied by remaining fragments of a preexisted building which had already been demolished when the plot was acquired.¹⁶ Only a part of the building’s main façade remained intact, and reconstruction was not a feasible option. This House is located in an urban tissue with an intermediate degree of design control, in the so-called ‘Areas of Continuous Building Frontages and Plots in the Process of Repletion’ (Figure 39) of the Plano Director Municipal (PDM) legally in force. This tissue includes buildings dating from the eighteenth century to the second half of the twentieth century.

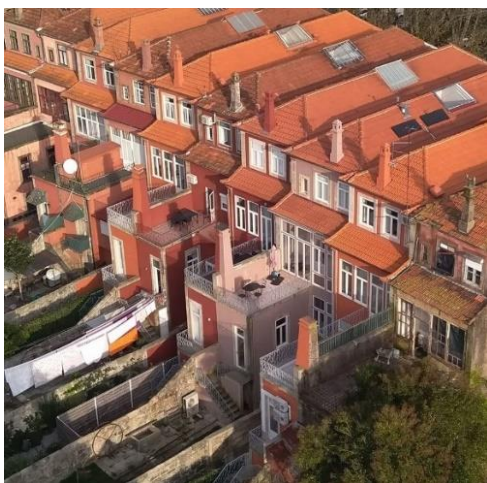


Figure 39. Continuous Building Frontages and Plots, Porto, Marquês. Vítor Oliveira 2019



Figure 40. Traditional Built Forms in Porto (Casa Portuense). Rand Issa 2019

¹⁶ as mentioned in the book “Casa Lindo Vale”

5.1.3. Architectural Description and The Building Art



Figure 41. Casa Lindo Vale, José Campos



Figure 42. Farnsworth house, Foresta Studio



Figure 43. House in Nipponbashi, Hiroyuki Hirai

According to the architects, in addition to the site and the specific urban tissue, Casa Lindo Vale (Figure 41) architecture was inspired by two styles; post-war American architecture and a line of contemporary Japanese architecture. Especially by two architectural works; Firstly, the house of Dr. Edith Farnsworth (1951) in Illinois, the U.S.A., designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, one of the pioneers of modernist architecture. Farnsworth's house (Figure 42) was a translation to his principle "Less is More" with its walls-free façades and the revolutionary use of steel columns as a reflection of the industrial revolution on modern architecture in the mid of the 20th century. The other was House in Nipponbashi by Japanese architect Warō Kishi (Figure 43); the house was built on a tiny plot of land in downtown Osaka (1992) with a 2.5 meters main façade wide and 13 m. deep. The abolishment of the roof was a glaring characteristic of modern architecture, and it is a distinct feature of the three buildings. The dominant and typified built style in this street (Lindo Vale) is called Casa Portuense (Figure 40) embodied as narrow, and long adjacent plots, and each has green back yards. As the architects describe, 19th-century architecture is not dominant in the street. However, it has a great variety of buildings, from the Estilo Português Suave to the architecture of the seventies, some cases of new architecture, and some non-interesting cases of rehabilitated buildings. Following the Plano Diretor Municipal guidance, the house does not exceed the street width with a total height of 8.8 meters (less than 1.2 of the street width). Both rear and front façades are similar. The main front transparent façade overlooks the street through a very symmetrical and classic design and equally divided by the three floors of the building, which can be recognized when walking by the house, giving a light spatial existence among the adjacent buildings. The three floors interior tend to be identical to the inner structure of typical Portuguese dwellings in Porto, which generally has in each floor two lit rooms by both façades and a non-lit room in between. The staircase is placed in the core of the house. The house's spaces are

continuous and flexible to adjust by inner sliding doors that can be fully collected by the interior walls, allowing creation for confined spaces or a united spatial floor. The spaces are lightened by the transparent façades and highlighted by a core patio adjacent to the staircase on the second floor (last floor). The only closed non-lit spaces are bathrooms; nevertheless, one of the bathrooms has a flat roof window over the shower. The two transparent façades windows are provided with very adjustable, flexible wooden white lacquered inner shutters. Each has two sections of shutters; a lower shutter extends between the floor to 90 cm height, and an upper one goes from 90 cm to 265 cm. They allow the establishment of different ambiances in each room. This minimalist mass follows the aphorism “Less is More” not only by following transparent façades and clean lines but also following in its interior. Starting with the ground floor, the white mesh fence of the gate to open on the garage space then to the inner part with a library and an office opened to the back yard. Also, this floor has a bathroom. Through a straight, riser-free, open tread staircase in the core of the house, the floors are connected. The first floor has a dining room, a living room, and a kitchen between them. While on the way to the second floor, as it is the last floor, the staircase is adjacent to a patio that separates two bedrooms, each is attached to a bathroom. There are no different heights of the façades, and the dwelling’s roof is flat, which reveals the ultimate impact of modernism; “If modern architecture can be called revolutionary, then it is partly because it abolished the roof.” (Kishi, Warō). According to Vítor Oliveira, Casa Lindo Vale has four fundamental characteristics: “the first is that the architects are also the clients, the sound sense of urbanity of this house, the house is very flexible and finally, the simplicity of design and materials. Concerning the last characteristic, the house has a neutral range of colors and materials. The integration of the house within the existing buildings is based, in a first moment, on a careful volumetric articulation and, second, on the simplicity of design of the front and rear façades – the steel structure, the wooden doors, and windows. The simplicity is also underlined by the use of a restricted range of materials in all rooms, including both the kitchen and the bathrooms: walls and ceilings are painted white, pavements are of the beige vinyl floor, and wooden interior sliding doors and shutters are painted, or lacquered, in white”. Casa Lindo Vale exemplifies how modernity can be a continuity, not to copy the past but to respect its urban forms, forming the built heritage of future generations. “I felt very good when I was at the house, with a feeling of well-being, of comfort and security, between the tranquility of the spaces of the sunset at west and the urban buzz at east. I felt terrific because that space, that transmitted balance and serenity, transported me to other dimensions, values and daydreams that are not reduced to earthly materiality. Architecture is needed for all this. The good architecture.” (Dias, Adalberto)¹⁷

¹⁷ as mentioned in the book “Casa Lindo Vale”



Figure 44. Casa Lindo Vale: Front Façade (A) and Rear Façade (B) and the Spatial flexibility carried in the glazed spans of the façades, (C): An interior image for the two sections of shutters- José Campos.

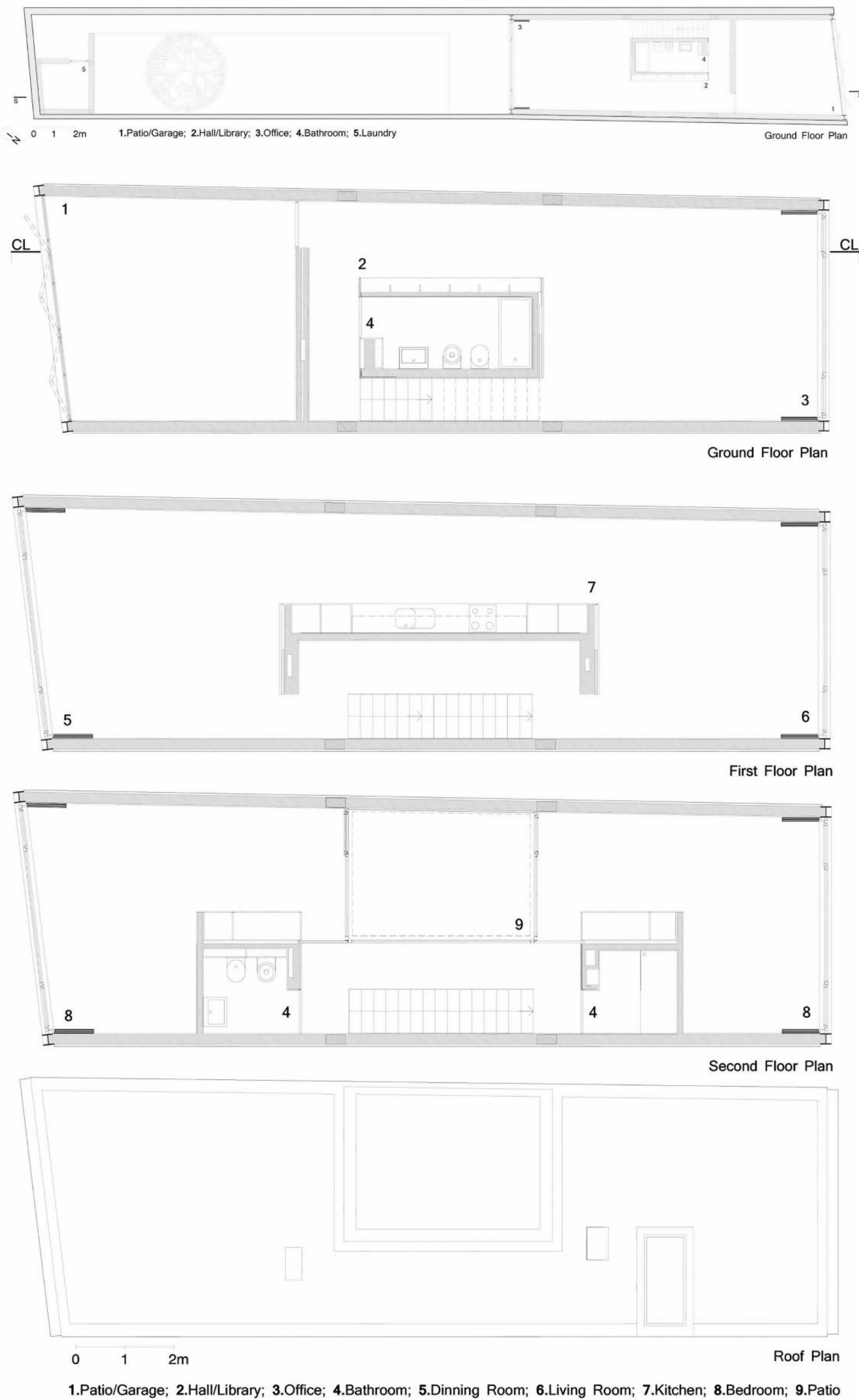


Figure 45. Casa Lindo Vale: General Site Plan, Floors' Plans, and Roof Plan—Oliveira and Monteiro 2014.

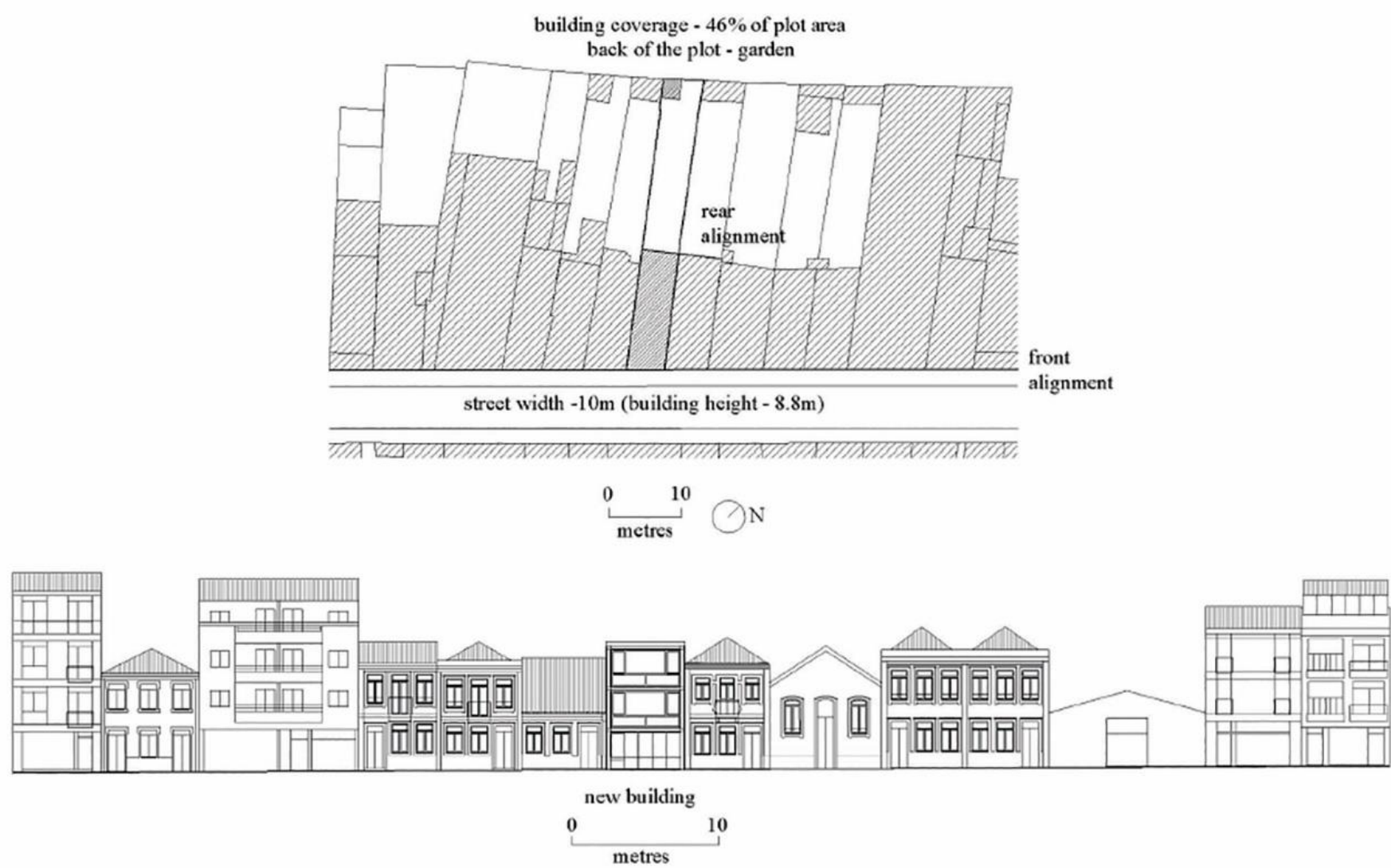


Figure 46. Site plan and Street Elevation

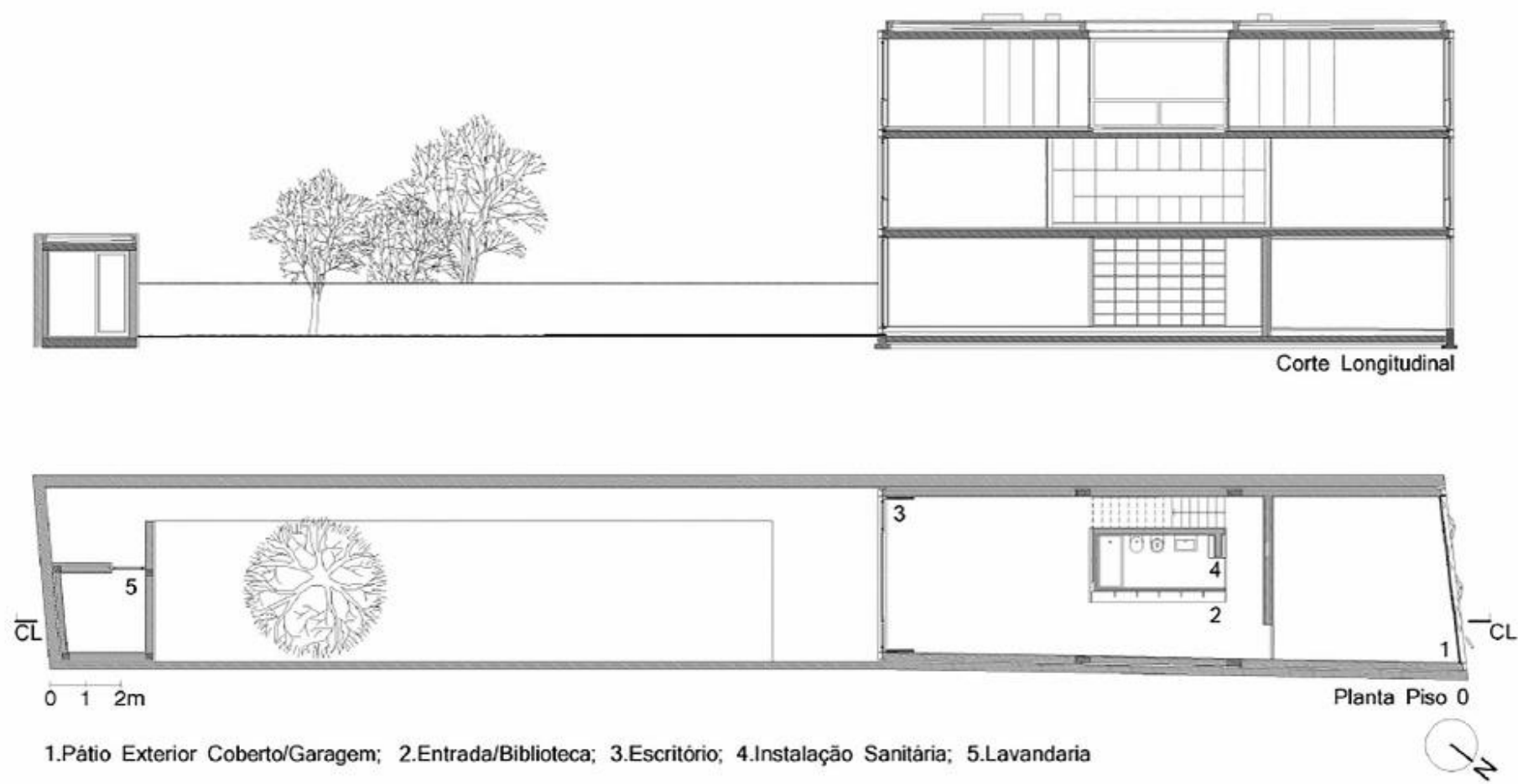


Figure 47.General Section CL and General Plan- Oliveira and Monteiro 2014

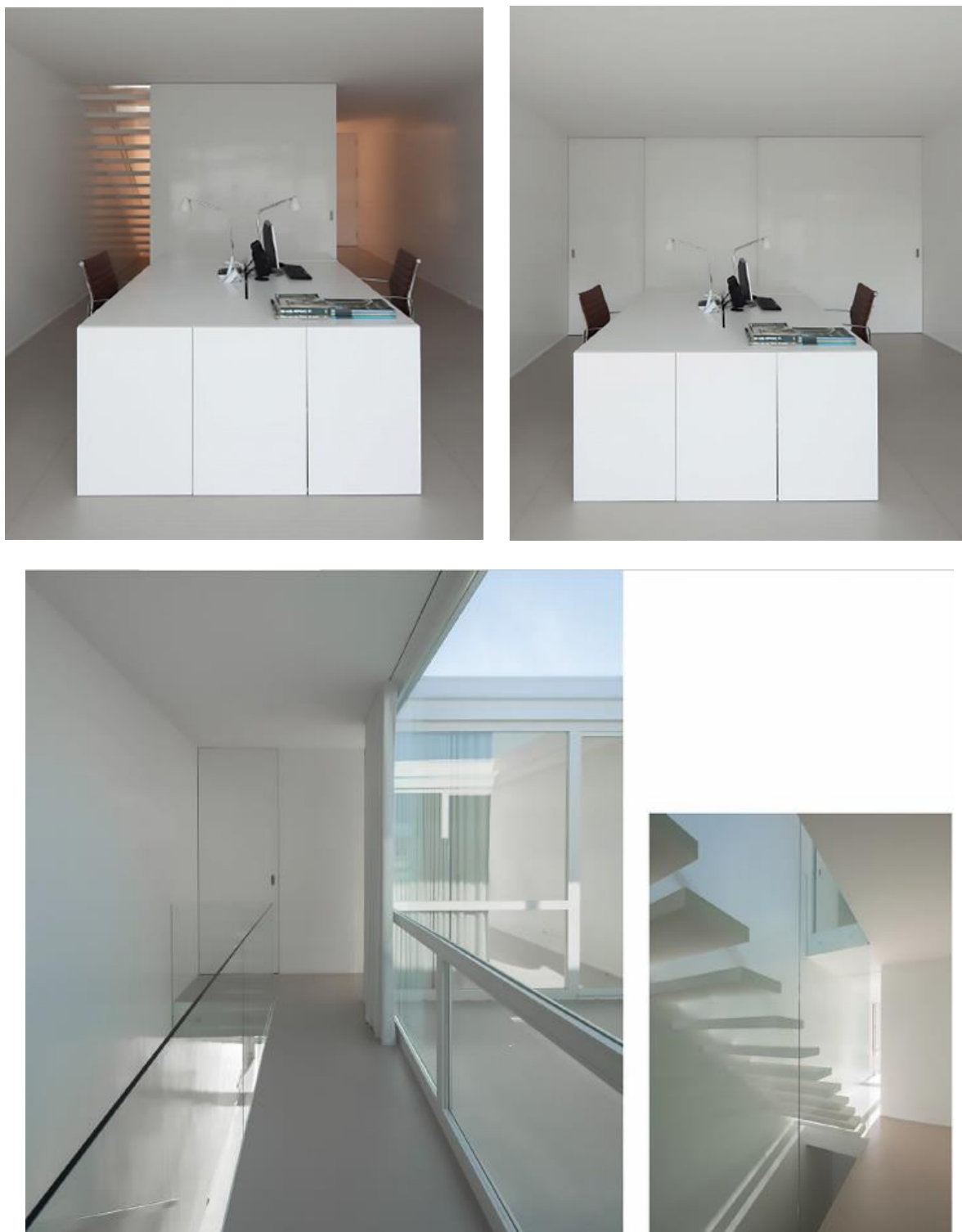


Figure 48. Casa Lindo Vale / Interior, Up: Spatial flexibility: sliding doors in the office. Down: Spatial continuity between the three floors: vertical circulation and it shows the Light source from the patio- José Campos.

Conclusion

"I say architecture and all art, for I believe architecture must be the beginning of arts, and that others must follow her in their time and order.."

John Ruskin, English thinker and philanthropist

"Identity of construction and form is the indispensable prerequisite of all architecture. At first sight, both appear to be opposites. But it is precisely in their close conjunction, in their unity, that architecture exists."

*Ludwig Hilberseimer,
German architect and urban planner*

Modernity does not mean an exclusion of tradition or habits. "Tradition is a challenge to innovation." (Siza Vieira). In many contemporary Portuguese architecture, architects combine modernity with tradition. The work of Siza Vieira is a notable example of this.. The importance of keeping tendency and the work combines modernity, and continuity is a must for how the identity of a city can be developed correctly without creating a gap in its urban forms. "Portuguese architects of younger generations keep this tendency, and their work combines modernity and continuity, with local traditions and history. These characteristics, influenced by their geographical and economic situation, are completely distinct from Japanese architecture tendencies and the rest of the world, confirming Portugal's unique condition. This attitude does not seek innovation as opposed to tradition" (Gonçalo Baptista + Yutaka Shiki).

Back in the fall of 2018, my first steps in Porto, I was -and still am- charmed of its urban morphological and identical continuity of the central Porto. Certainly, classifying its historical center as a UNESCO World Heritage Site took the leading role in saving part of Porto's character and tied up any attempt of arbitrary demolition of antique buildings. The PDM of Porto maintains the building process by defining the urban forms in each area, a set of rules, controlling ten types of urban tissues in Porto. "...The control on new and existing buildings decreases when we move from the 'Historical Areas' passing by 'Areas of Continuous Building Frontages and Largely Replete Plots' to the 'Special Urban Development Areas..." (Oliveira, 2016). It was apparent how modernity-maintained identity in Porto's central zone where the character of the historic region is preserved due to guidance monitoring the design of new buildings and defining usage. "The PDM for Oporto has a clear morphological dimension. It can be as an example of the increasing tendency for urban morphology to play a part, directly or indirectly, in urban planning. However, it also has features of its own. The fundamental task for its implementation in the next ten years is to reverse the tendency towards an increasing loss of historical and regional character that started in the 1970s." (Oliveira, 2006). In an interview with Siza Vieira (Dezeen) discussing his design of 611 West 56th Street residential tower in New York. Siza mentioned that the tower is not immense in comparison with N.Y. skyscrapers due to the narrow plot area. "for my country (Portugal), it is considered a big tower." Suppose this can lead to a trait of Portuguese architecture ideology, wherever in Portuguese cities, the unity among heights and proportion and the respect for the inherited architectural identity can be felt. Even so, every single Portuguese town has its character. By this, towers are not a bad thing, they just have to fit the place.

The case studied in Porto is a work of Portuguese architects from Porto. It is an architecture we can recognize and absorb while walking in the streets of Porto. Not that coping the traditional Portuguese architecture nor the fantasy of Deconstructivism, but a method in which modernity adheres to the urban periphery and the Portuguese identity where it is seen in the plan, a Portuguese influence on modernity and vice versa. "Tradition is important when it contains moments of change, when it is not just outward form and also implies an idea of what goes on inside a building, of conflicts and potential for innovation. Otherwise, Tradition means being stuck in a rut." (Siza Vieira).

The chosen case in Latakia, Saadé Mansion, one of the few inherited buildings, remained to express identity over time. However, a countable number of Latakians still know its location. Once a friend asked to take her there. She was shocked that she used to pass in the American avenue for shopping but never recognized there was a palace with all the large buildings surrounding its immediate periphery!. The two 'houses' are very different examples to compare in style or era. However, that was to highlight that it is possible to follow and to take a modern approach that conserves originality and both architectural and urban identity of the city. Like how Porto city adapted with the rapid building movement, whether establishing new expansion zones on its periphery like Matosinhos, Maia and Vila Nova de Gaia and how this helped to preserve the identity of the ancient Porto. Meanwhile, in Latakia, a portion of its most valuable heritage has vanished. A random demolition and public disregard for buildings of high value aesthetically and historically in the old city, replaced by heterogeneous structures almost devoid of any consistent proportion regarding the allocated area and urban-architectural surroundings, random buildings separated from identity creating the identity gap in Latakia's character.

A significant transformation is taking place in the architecture and urban fabric of the city without sustainable concepts and processes. These urban forms patterns accompanied the second period of twentieth-century architecture in Latakia, which was a result of the necessities of urban growth with heavy use of forms that found a gap with Latakia's old identity, which has been within an ace of becoming a reality. Therefore, the need to finding a way that sought to save the peculiarity of the city, which has taken many centuries of civilized interactions with various cultures besides its distinctive features influenced with the late Ottoman architecture and the impacts of the Mandate era phase on the local architecture and urban spaces. Moreover, the fact of being an Arabic city reflected in its urban tissues and represented in building materials and techniques that were matching environment, humanly, and climatically in its norms and social parts. Since the establishment of the Faculty of Architecture at Tishreen University (University of Latakia), there were many attempts to preserve the old city with coordination with the Latakia Council and

National Museum of Latakia. Despite the result of founding a housing construction regulation, unfortunately, real forbidden actions happened by real estate stakeholders with the absence of real control on buildings' implementation, which increased tremendously during the war after 2011. The act nowadays in the Arabic cities is to imitate the trending of high buildings with a serious willingness towards a literal "Dubaiification," Arab cities are competing today to have the largest, the tallest, and the more significant physical settlements and built environments. The risk we are facing now is not merely having a gap in identity in the built environment or urban forms. It is we are on a crossroads, either taking severe actions to force modernity respecting the tradition and the heritage learning from the Portuguese attempts, as previously noted, or succumbing towards a newly born form of identity focusing on odd architectural and urban styles.

Living in Porto and Latakia germinated the idea for this research; my thoughts were experiencing how Porto thrives without following the most impositive architectural trends, despite the economic factor, and how its architects generate a continuity of identity expressing their modernism. The aim was to consider the identity gap in the city of Latakia and take advantage of Porto's city to find a new architectural language we can translate in the newly built forms of Latakia. To not merely relying on the "Traditional Syrian" architecture and urban forms but to generate a continuity that could be called "Modern Syrian" architecture and urban forms. "We are now facing investment plans that see in our cities only opportunities for gains. We are now facing environmental and cultural deterioration, and we are solving it by importing strange and exotic frames. We are now facing a society of highly fragile, spatially and socially vulnerable" (Iyas Shahin 2020, Syrian architect).



Figure 49. Cityscape: Latakia Modern Urban Fabric. An over view on Latakia it shows Shekh Daher (left), 8th Azar street (down) and where part of the old city of Latakia supposed to be (right)- Rand Issa, 7 January 2018.



Figure 50. Cityscape: Latakia Waterfront on the Mediterranean sea, The Urbicide, The Chaos.- Sputnik . Mikhail Voskresenski 10. February 2019



Figure 51. Cityscape: The View from Torre dos Clérigos in southern direction over the historic centre of Porto (listed as UNESCO World Heritage since 1996) across the Rio Douro to Vila Nova de Gaia in the background- by Martin Mergili, 5 july 2017

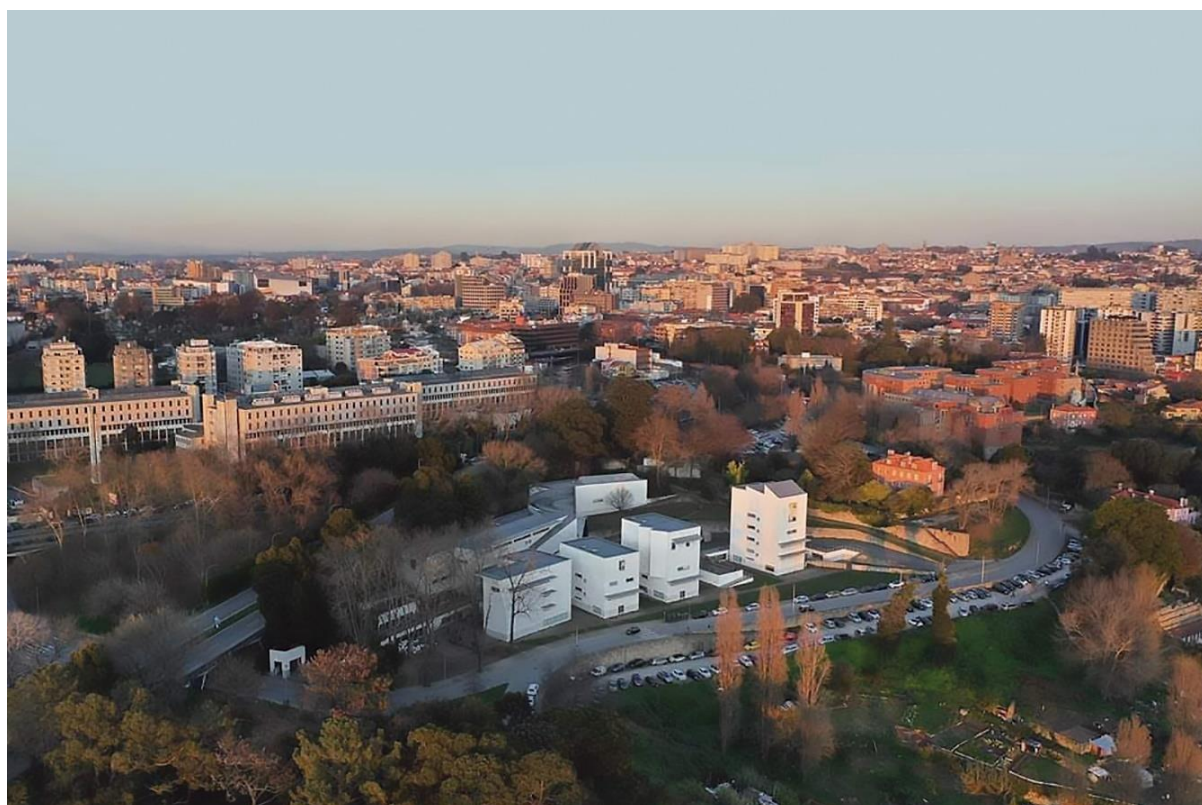


Figure 52. Cityscape: The View The View from Ponte da Arrábida in northern direction over the expansion of Porto beside the Rio Douro to Boavista (Facultu of Architecture in front, designed by Siza Vieira)- photo by ©PB, 7 December 2019

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