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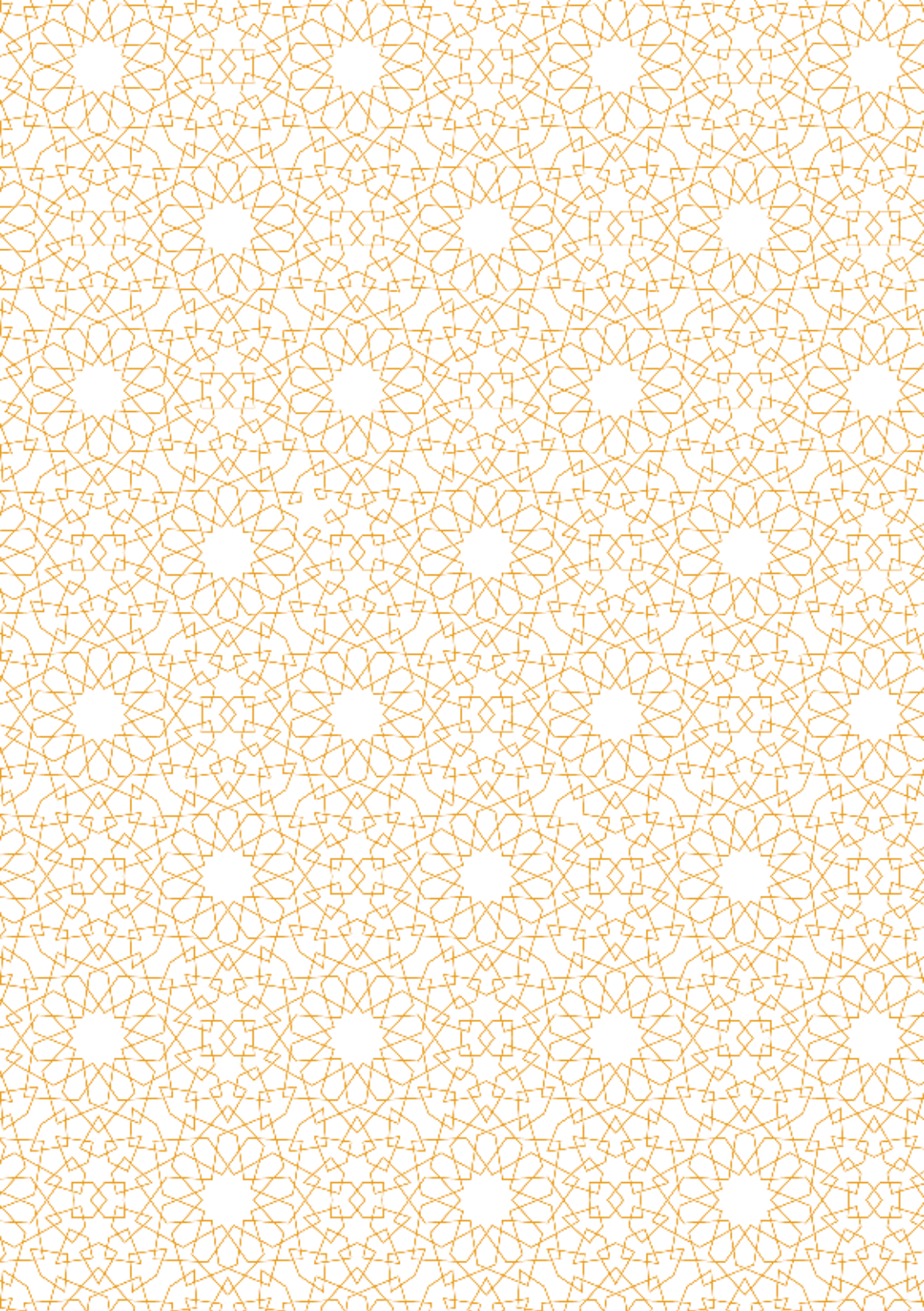


Benno Albrecht, Jacopo Galli

**RECONSTRUCT – SENSITIVE EMPLOYMENT CREATION
THROUGH BOTTOM-UP CELLULAR STRATEGY**

URBICIDE TASK FORCE

URBICIDE RURAL SYRIA RECONSTRUCTION OF VILLAGES



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**URBICIDE RURAL SYRIA
RECONSTRUCTION OF VILLAGES**

Urbicide Task Force, Università Iuav di Venezia

edited by

Benno Albrecht, Jacopo Galli

a project by Urbicide Task Force

Benno Albrecht, Emilio Antonioli, Andrea Fantin, Jacopo Galli, Marco Marino, Giulia Piacenti, Tania Sarria, Chiara Semenzin, Elisa Vendemini, Rossella Villani

architectural design by

Lorenzo Abate, Stefano Bortolato, Leonardo Brancaloni, Michele Brusutti, Stefano Busetto, Susanna De Vido, Pietropaolo Cristini, Martina Fadanelli, Martina Germanà, Maria Guerra, Irene Guizzo, Michele Maniero, Maddalena Meneghello, Silvia Pellizzon, Camilla Pettinelli, Mariagiulia Pistonese, Giacomo Raffaelli, Elena Salvador, Antonio Signori, Sonia Zucchelli

academic consultancy

Maria Antonia Barucco, Massimiliano Scarpa

technical consultancy

Enrico Guastaroba, Luca Panzeri

photos by

Umberto Ferro, Luca Pilot

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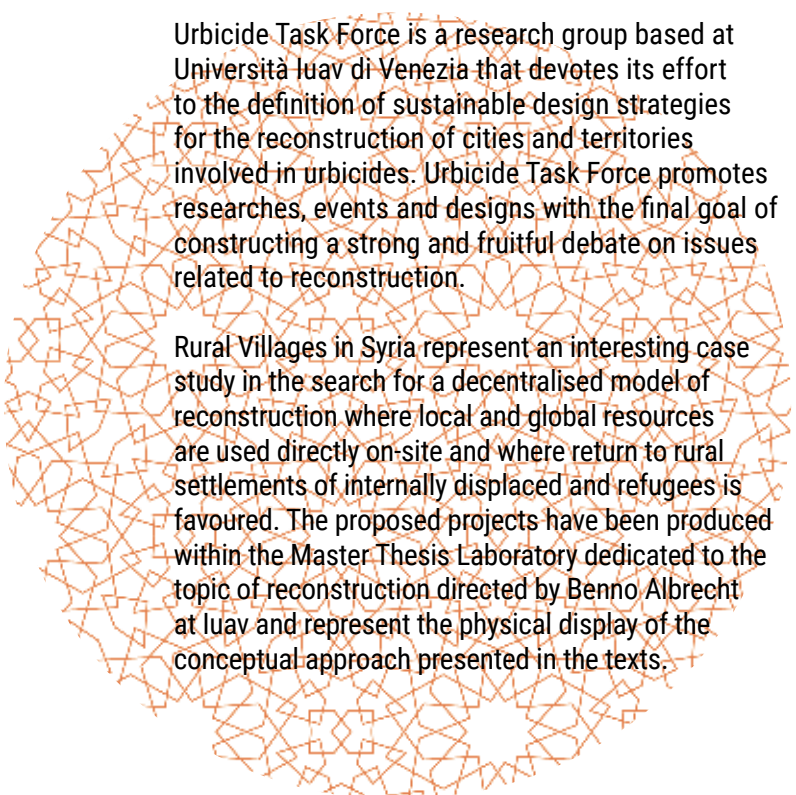
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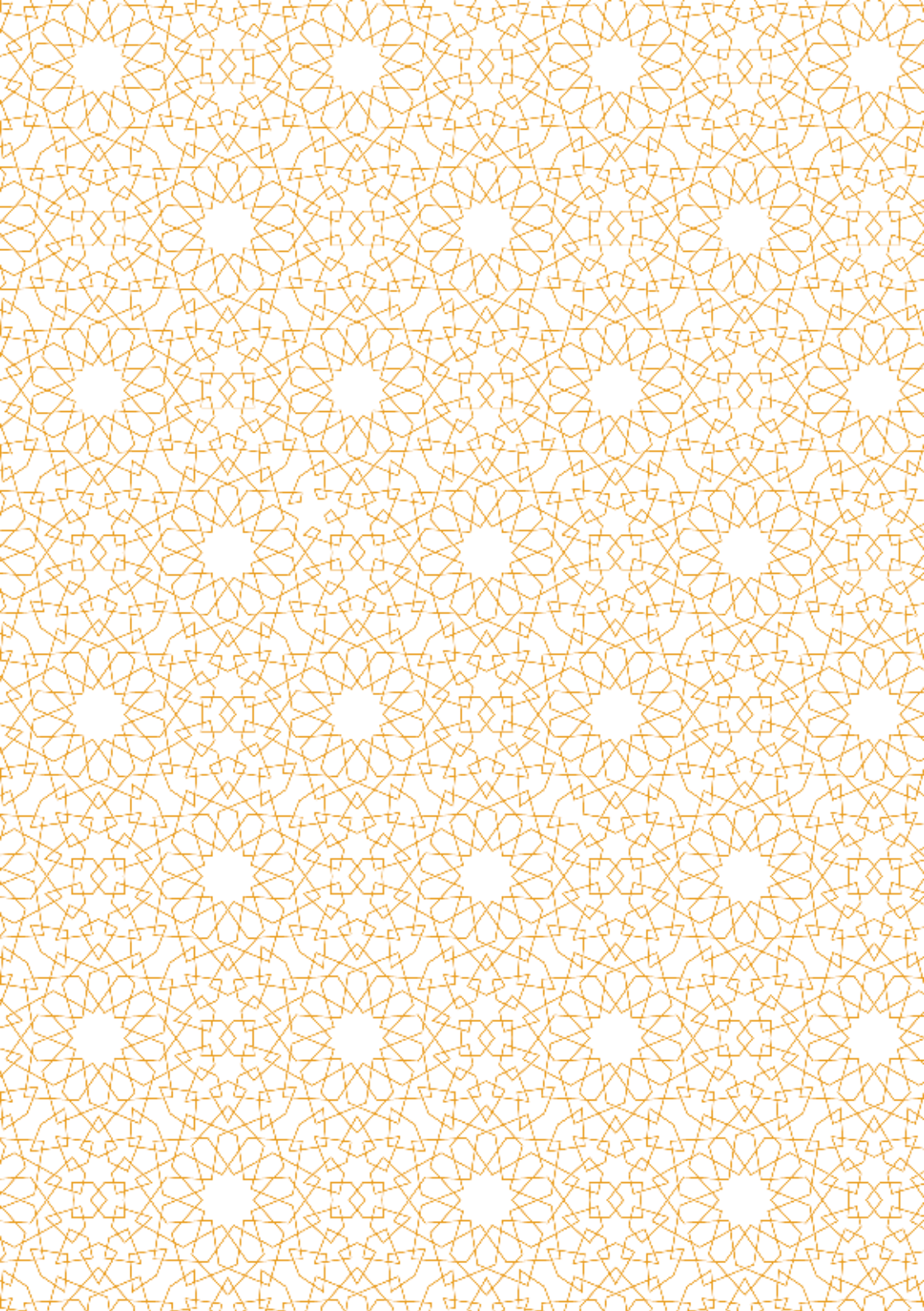


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Urbicide Task Force is a research group based at Università Iuav di Venezia that devotes its effort to the definition of sustainable design strategies for the reconstruction of cities and territories involved in urbicides. Urbicide Task Force promotes researches, events and designs with the final goal of constructing a strong and fruitful debate on issues related to reconstruction.

Rural Villages in Syria represent an interesting case study in the search for a decentralised model of reconstruction where local and global resources are used directly on-site and where return to rural settlements of internally displaced and refugees is favoured. The proposed projects have been produced within the Master Thesis Laboratory dedicated to the topic of reconstruction directed by Benno Albrecht at Iuav and represent the physical display of the conceptual approach presented in the texts.



CONTENTS

- 
- 9 The politics of the Little Homelands**
Benno Albrecht
- 29 Decentralisation**
Jacopo Galli
- 47 The reconstruction of the environment.
The Palermo Method**
Marco Marino
- 67 MODELS**
- 117 A circular reconstruction**
Emilio Antoniol
- 133 Other Modernities**
Elisa Vendemini
- 149 (R)urban Syria.
Rural-urban dichotomy as strategy**
Rossella Villani
- 159 SYRIA THEMATIC ATLAS**

Other Modernities

Elisa Vendemini

Latest in a long series of cities devastated by war events, Aleppo, Damascus, Homs and Mosul are at the same time tragic scenarios of a war that damages and is fought in urban areas: a new horizon towards which to strive, where experimenting new forms of local intervention based on global strategies.

Contemporary reflections must confront the military and political significance of the deliberate destruction of built memory and the conscious annihilation of all forms of urbanity.

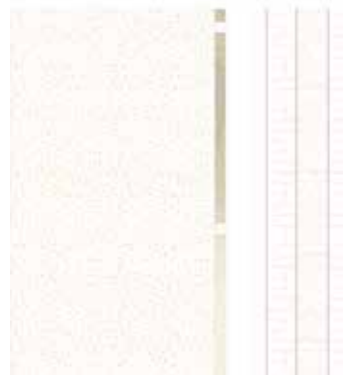
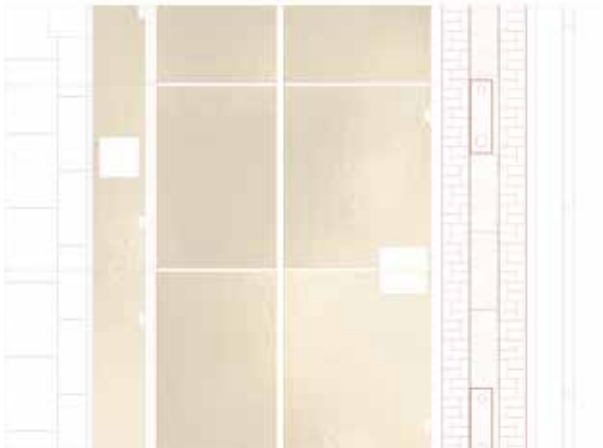
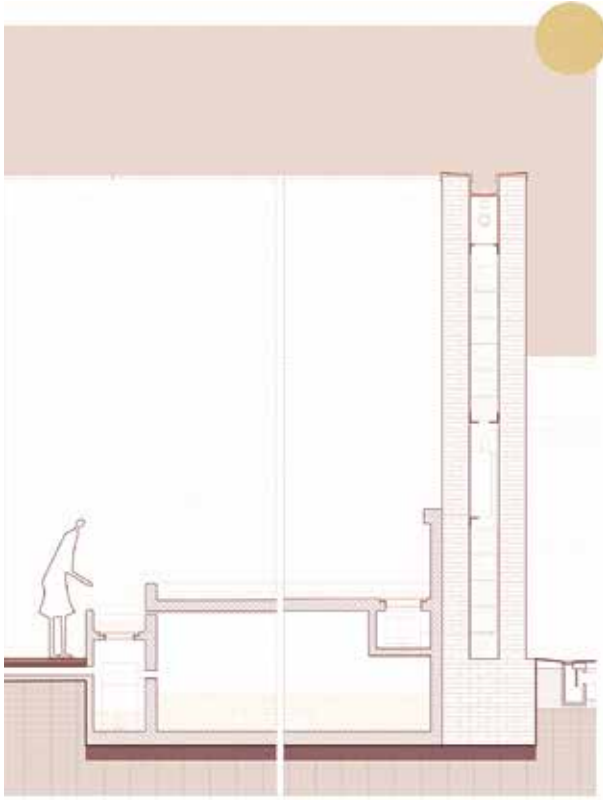
“War is the most terrible of destructive forces. It destroys the patient work of many generations, often in just a few minutes”¹.

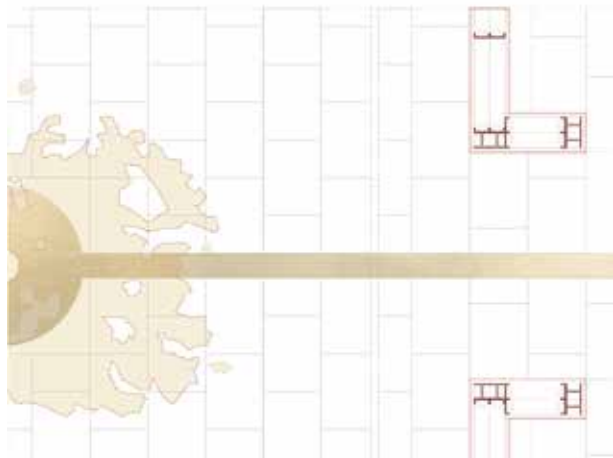
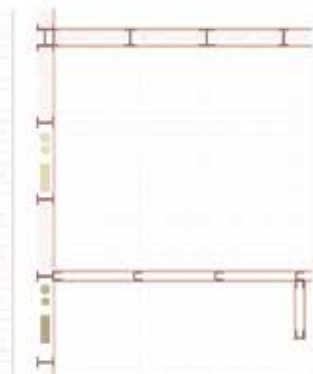
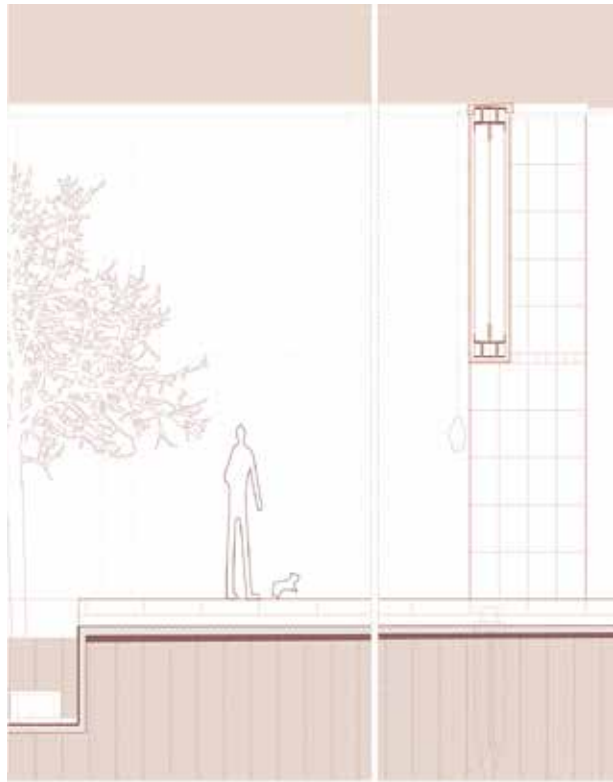
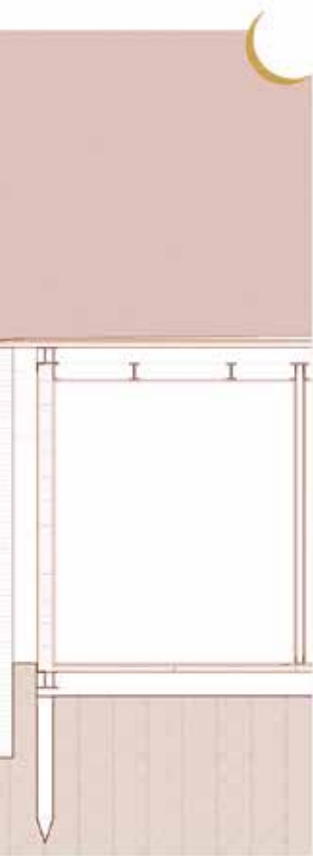
Since the Twentieth century the technological progress has allowed devastation and huge catastrophes that had mainly affected, until that moment, the historical core and the oldest consolidated parts of the cities. If, as Walter Benjamin wrote in the book *Das Passagenwerk*, “with the great cities have

1 – “La guerra è la più terribile delle forze distruttive. Essa distrugge, spesso in pochi minuti, il lavoro paziente di numerose generazioni” in Wiktor Ostrowsky, “La valorizzazione dei monumenti e dei centri storici urbani”, in *Urbanistica* n. 35, 1962, p. 58.

– On the previous page: Fahel, E. Salvador.

On the next pages: Adnaniyeh, M. Pistonese.





2 – “Die Phantasien vom Untergang von Paris sind ein Symptom davon, daß die Technik nicht rezipiert wurde. Aus ihnen spricht das dumpfe Bewußtsein, daß mit den großen Städten die Mittel heranwachsen, sie dem Erdboden gleichzumachen (C7a, 4)” Benjamin Walter, “Das Passagenwerk”, 1982, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, p. 152.

evolved the means to raze them to the ground”², from the Second World War onwards, strategies and methods for their reconstruction began to be developed on a world scale.

In reference to Italian and European cities, the destructions occurred during the Second World War were a rare opportunity to rethink and reconfigure the city, questioning the existing plant.

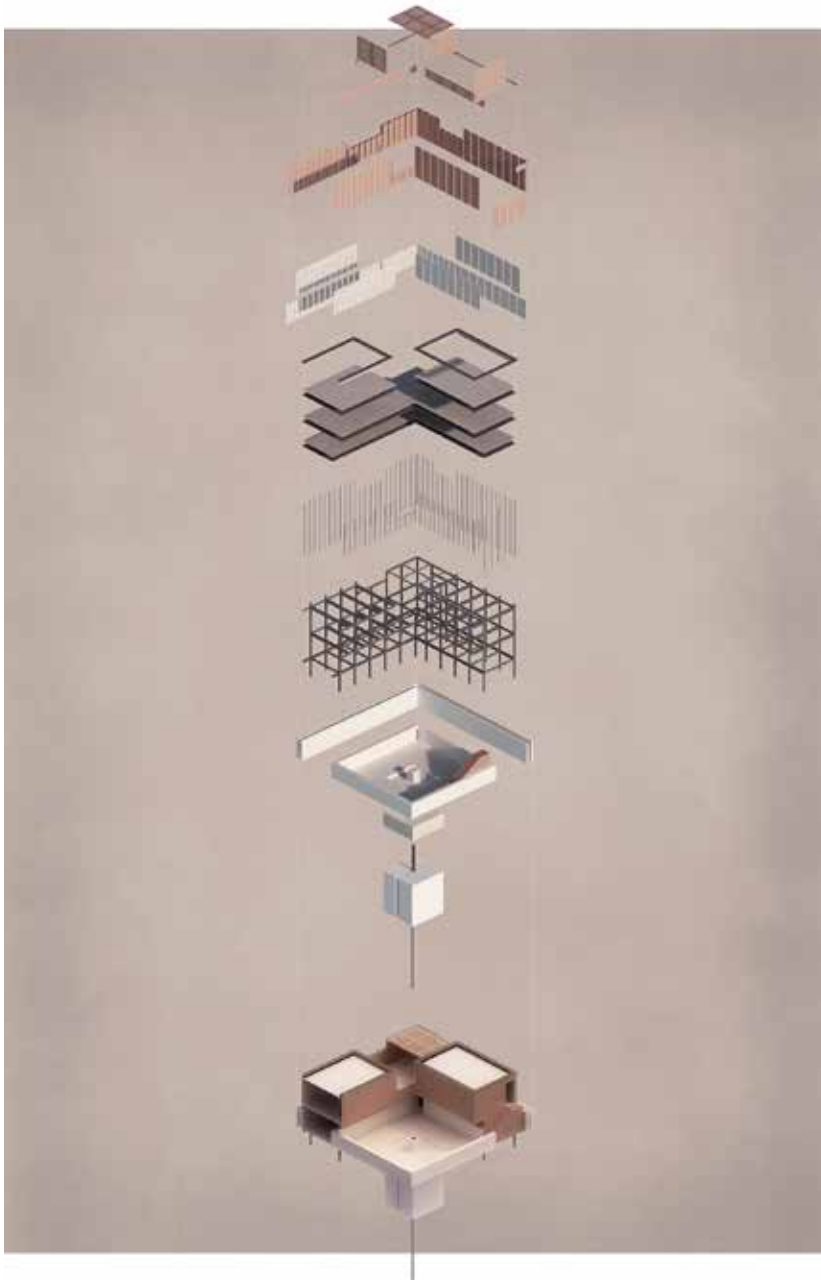
The debate on reconstruction strategies intercepts, between the beginning of the Sixties and the end of the Seventies, in the midst of the European economic boom and Italian speculative processes, the phenomenon of abandonment and physical degradation of many urban centres that had been pillars of pre-modern urbanization but by now these had lost their function, inhabitants and role.

In those years, Italy becomes the cultural and propulsive epicentre of a new way of thinking and intervening in urban centres: a story that marks a collective change of mentality towards the commons inherited from the past.

Conservation policy of ancient cities and historical cores, of the material and immaterial heritage of the inherited city, derives from a unitary and organic cultural attitude. Urban planners and architects as Giovanni Astengo and Saverio Muratori, lay the foundations for a new approach to the conservation of the historic city. Nevertheless, the most interesting contribution is expressed in the conservation projects developed under the guidance of Leonardo Benevolo as the plan for the historical centre of Bologna in 1969.

“Fundamental objective of the plan for the historic centre of Bologna is to respect the historical past as a universal heritage: respect that in the possibility of (rapid) cancellation assumes the meaning of a real

– On the next page: Al Mukharram Altehtaney, S. De Vido, M. Fadanelli.



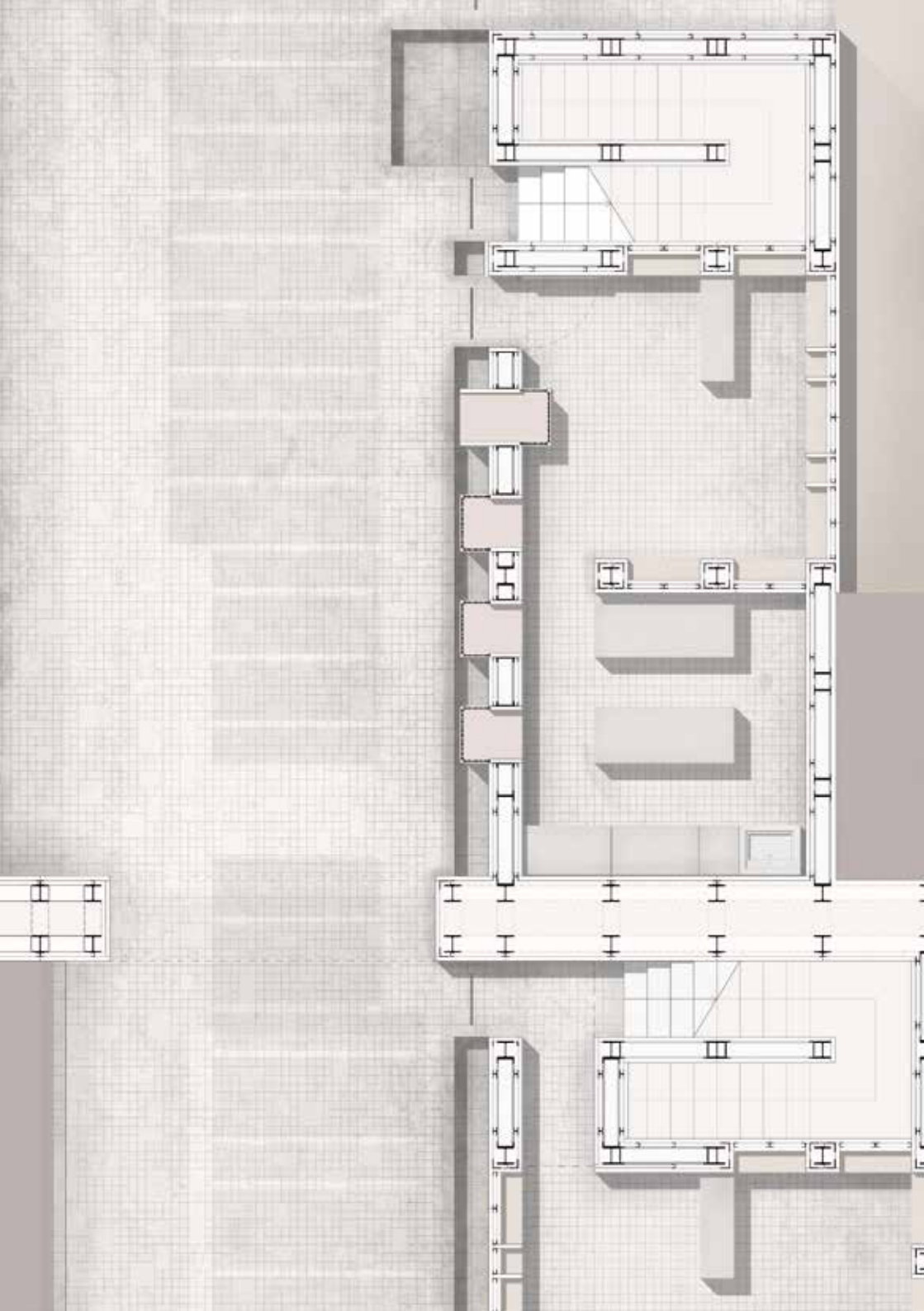
3 – “Obiettivo fondamentale del piano per il centro storico di Bologna è rispettare il passato storico come patrimonio universale: rispetto che nella possibilità di (rapida) cancellazione assume il significato di un vero salvataggio di questo. Il centro antico deve escludere tutto ciò che compromette la sua leggibilità morfologica e figurativa unificata e tutto ciò condiziona le sue funzioni primarie con funzioni incompatibili”. Comune di Bologna, Assessorato ai problemi urbanistici dell’assetto territoriale del comune del comprensorio, Variante al Piano Regolatore. Piano per il centro storico. Norme tecniche di attuazione adottate con deliberazione consiliare del 21 luglio 1969, n. 74 dell’O.d.G, 1969.

– On the next page:
Zardana, P. Cristini, G.
Raffaelli.

rescue of this. The ancient centre must exclude everything that compromises its unified morphological and figurative readability and all that conditions its primary functions with incompatible functions”³.

According to Benevolo, a monument cannot be isolated from the urban structure from which it was generated. The historical town has to be considered as a monument in its entirety: to be preserved in its complex set of public and private buildings, churches and palaces, houses and streets, canals and squares. Not only the single building damaged or destroyed must be restored, but it is the entire historical city as a whole that must be restored. Benevolo introduces the “restoration” of the urban structure destroyed by disembowelment and/or bombings and the Italian culture has played a leading role in the definition of the principles and practices of conservation of urban heritage during the last century.

The prosperity of the Italian contribution to urban conservation, the studies and tools produced in Italy as well as abroad, joined with the prestige that still surrounds this experience, are the indicators of the fertility of a season where the Italian culture was able to produce a theoretical and practical result, transmissible and exportable to institutional settings on a global scale: the urban restoration and the preservation of historic city facilities had soon spread throughout the world. The historical core and the value attributed to its heritage have given urbanized societies an inalienable right: in Tunis, Istanbul, Bursa, Jerusalem, Baghdad, Sana’a, Cartagena and Quito the community legacy is today transmitted by fragments of an ancient cities that architects as Ludovico Quaroni, Giancarlo De Carlo and Luigi Piccinato have contributed to remodel. Intervention strate-



4 – “Dovrà essere una nuova forma di ricostruzione che bisognerà collocare all’interno del dibattito più ampio e globale sulla sostenibilità e sulle possibilità di azione da lasciare alle generazioni future, sul valore del place attachment” Albrecht Benno, “Urbicidi e strategie di ricostruzione”, in Ferlenga Alberto et al (editeb by) “Ricostruzioni: architettura, città, paesaggio nell’epoca delle distruzioni”, Silvana Editoriale, 2018, pp. 206-207.

gies then adopted and implemented by international institutions such as the Council of Europe, UNESCO and the United Nations.

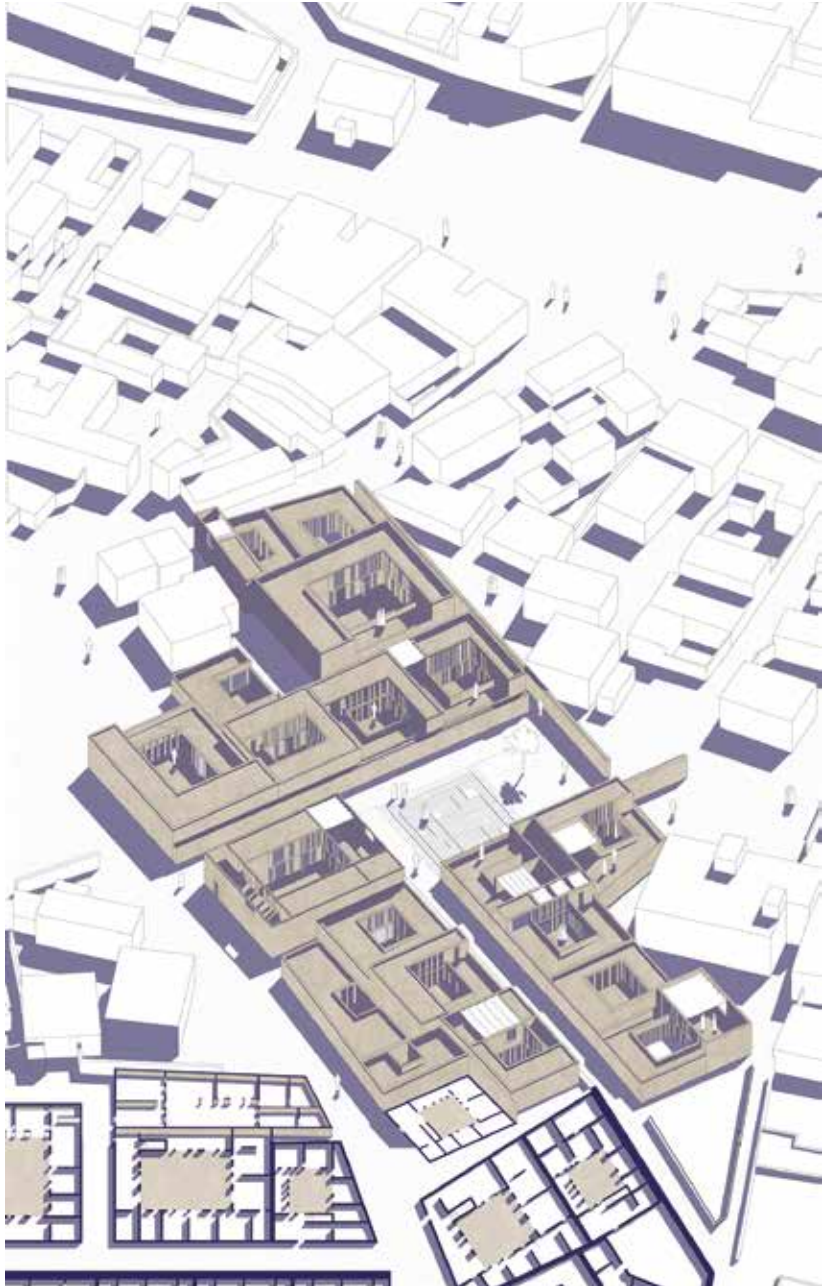
The ideas resulting from the urban restoration can be updated for the reconstruction of the historical areas of the cities destroyed nowadays in the entire MENA region. If the practice of reconstructing “As it was, where it was” is now universally recognized for the passages of historical cities, the reconstruction of vast areas of contemporary cities, without quality and very little documentary value, is much more complex and difficult to solve, as are the suburbs destroyed in Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Libya. For the first time in the history of mankind, there are major devastations of the huge parts of a post-industrial city.

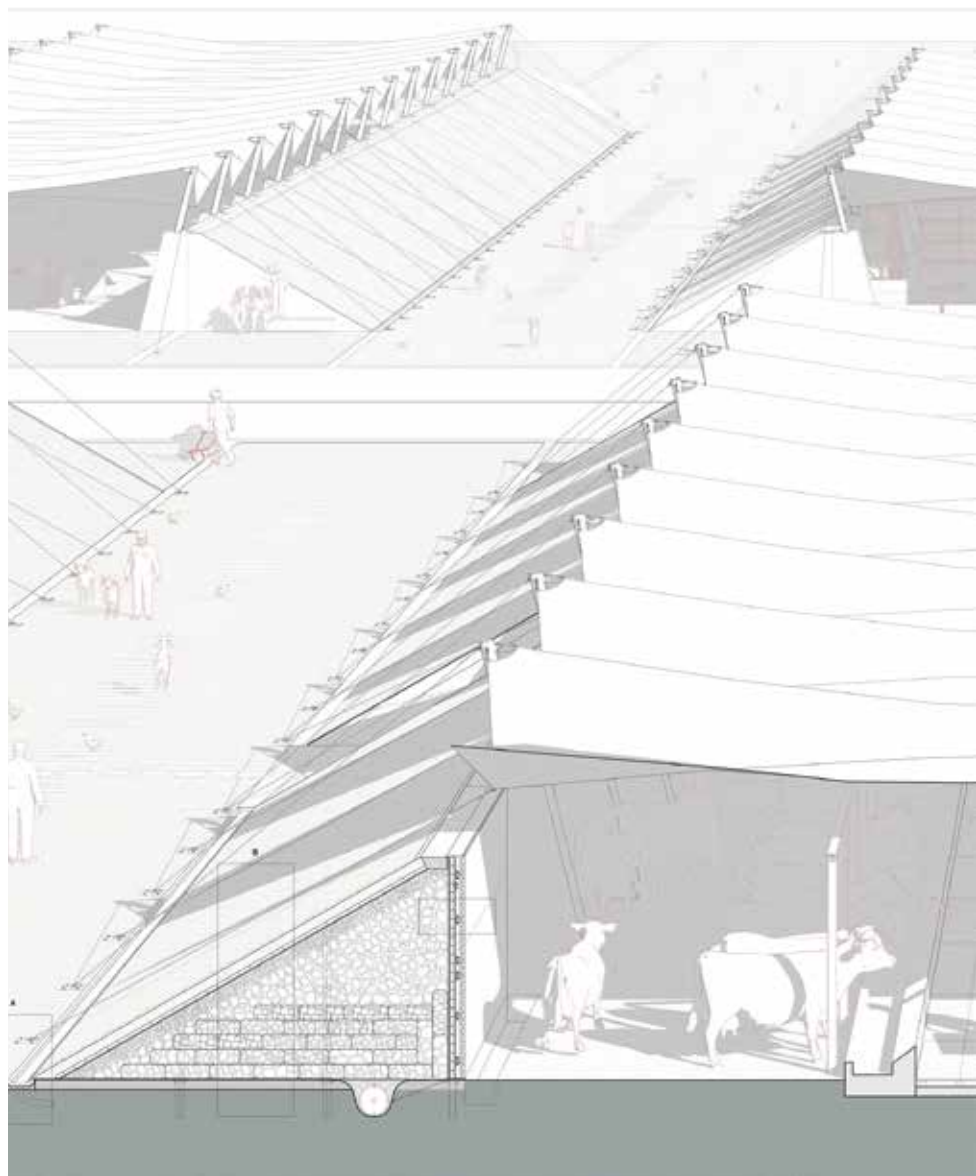
What to do in front of informal neighbourhoods, suburbs and industrial areas that have been destroyed? The challenge now is to identify innovative intervention strategies capable of responding to cultural, social, and urban differences in contexts resulting from millennial sedimentations and at the same time acting according to a clear image of the city of the future.

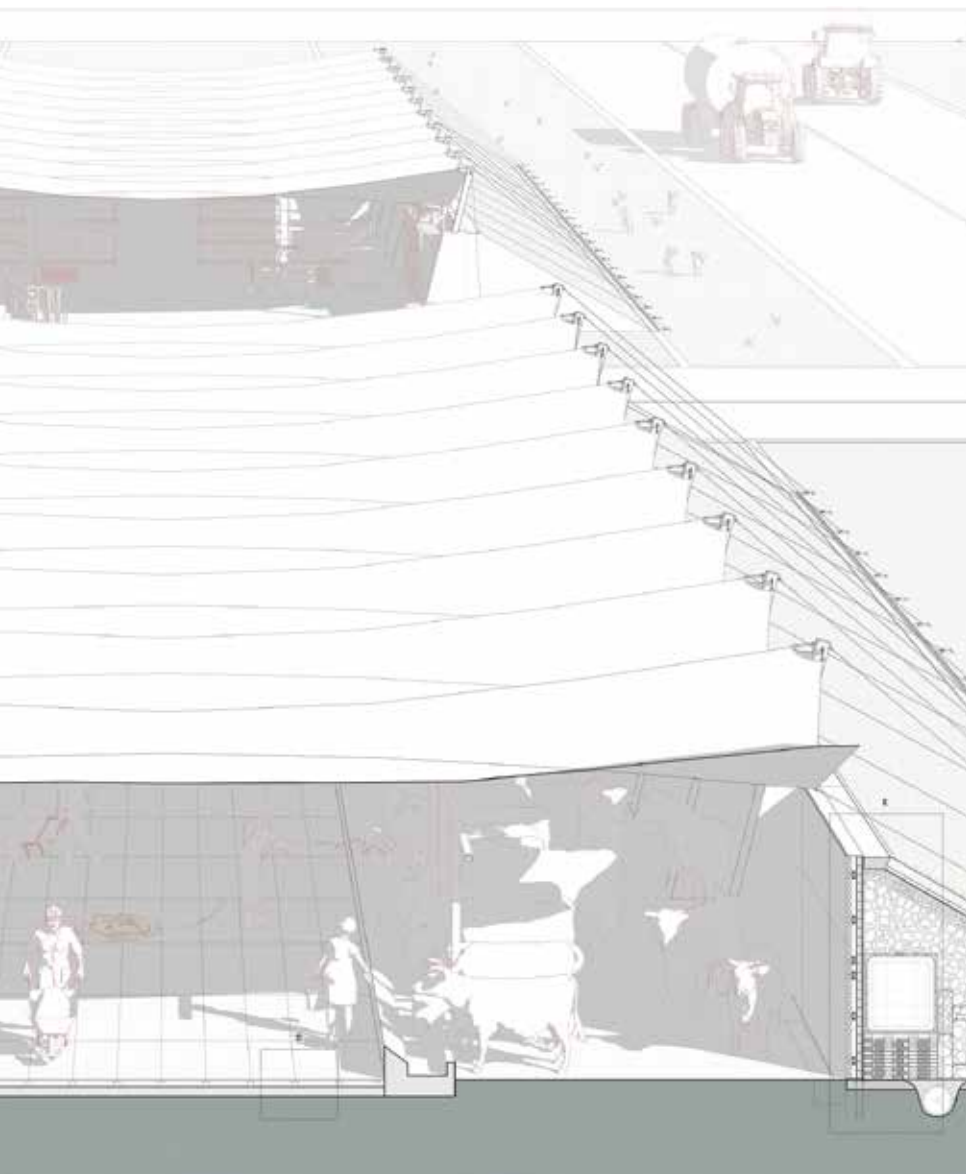
“It will have to be a new form of reconstruction that will need to be placed within the broader and more global debate on sustainability and the possibilities of action to be left to future generations, on the value of the place attachment”⁴.

The historical core, as a unified body composed of buildings, open spaces, and inhabitants, can be conceived as an operating and repeatable model for the reconstruction of the city of the future, as a maximum expression of sustainability: density, climatic system, use of local materials, percentage of land occupation and public space, circulation systems

– On next pages:
Jrajeer, M. Meneghello,
A. Signori, S. Zucchelli;
Al Jalaa, M. Brusutti, M.
Guerra.





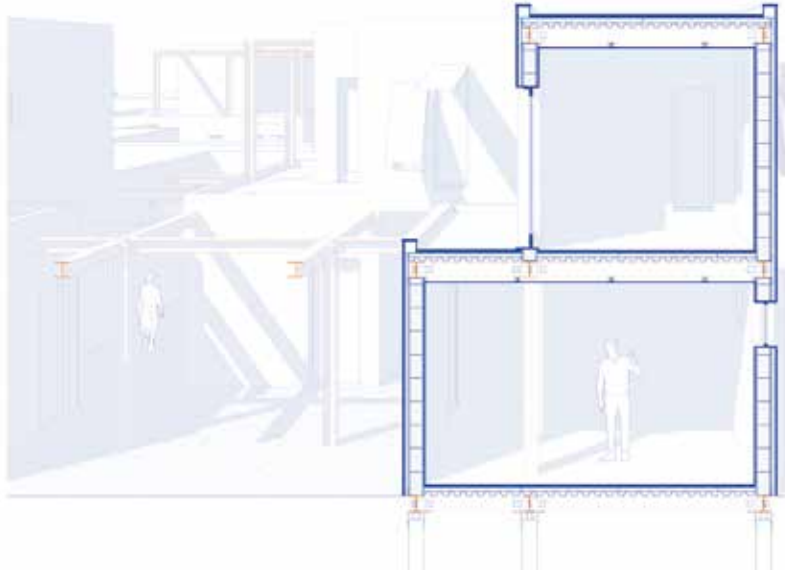


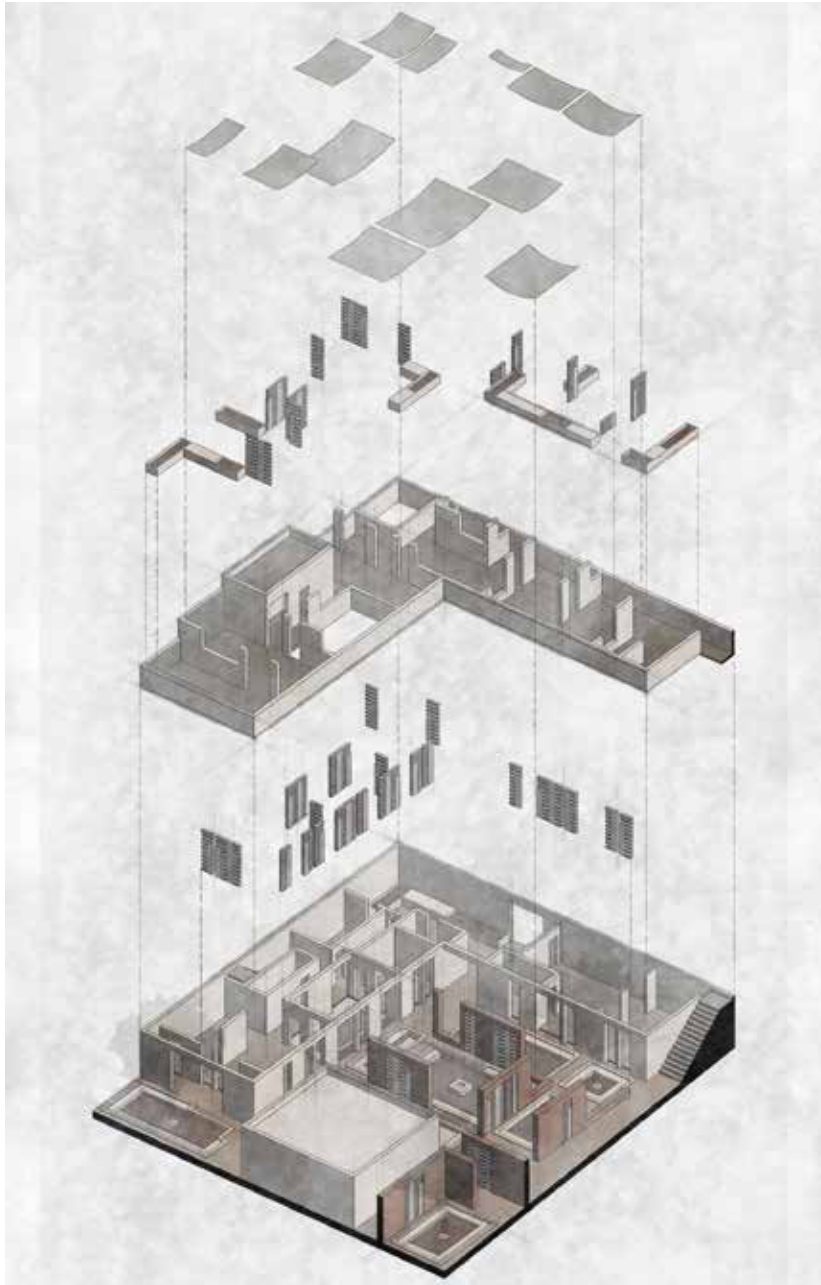
and other spatial features are a valuable starting point for reconstruction strategies. The reconstruction project will have to hybridize the historical spatial features with technological tools able to guarantee the performances in a simultaneously qualitative and quantitative effort; aesthetic and ethical.

The most difficult characteristic of historical city to reproduce for the city of the future is the right size. The global increase population and the exponential growth of inhabitants in urban areas to the detriment of rural areas leads to the irrepressible development of huge settlements: the megalopolises.

The cities before the advent of the mechanised era, though different from each other, had a common characteristic, that of being more or less static: “The great majority of the cities that were created during the first 5000 years of the history of the urban kind of settlement were on a small enough scale for pedestrians to be able to live and work in them conveniently [...] Capital cities were exceptional in being both relatively rare and relatively large, but this class, too, remained static, on its own peculiar scale [...] The rise of the mechanized cities has brought with it the greatest change [...] Mechanized cities are not stationary; they are dynamically on the move, and it is already evident that they are changing into a new type. They are coagulating into the megalopolises [...] The megalopolises on all the continents are merging to form Ecumenopolis, a new type of city that can be represented by only specimen, since Ecumenopolis is going, as its name proclaims, to encompass the land-surface of the globe with a single conurbation. The open question is not whether Ecumenopolis is going to come into existence; it is whether its maker, mankind, is going to be its master or to be its victim.

– On the next page:
Sheran, L. Brancaleni.





Are we going to succeed in making the inevitable Ecumenopolis a tolerable habitat for human being?"⁵.

5 – Toynebee Arnold Joseph, "Cities in the Move", Oxford University Press, 1970, pp. 195-196.

Is it now possible to imagine an alternative development that allows a renewed balance condition? We will have to contain, and as far as possible, to reduce, the quantum of area and urban population that presses on each centre; this will only be possible with the creation of new centres and as Constantine Doxiadis indicates, "the closed city has now to be replaced by one that is open-ended. Long before the pressure on a particular city-centre has increased to a degree at which it would be intolerable, the increase must be halted by diverting the further quanta of the mounting pressure to another centre-and then to another and another, in a continually lengthening echelon, as population and construction and production and traffic continue to increase"⁶.

6 – Ibidem, p. 244.

7 – Ibidem, p. 246.

It is described a development by decentralization of populations and functions in order to allow the experimentation of the reconstruction on site and from below, situating the communities at the centre of the processes of construction and reconstruction of the territory. The cells constituting the future "world-city" must be settlements on the scale of the traditional city, calibrated to the right dimension of sustenance for the community. "In the World-City there will be hundreds of thousands of these units, and they will be juxtaposed in a continuous mosaic, instead of being scattered thinly over a predominantly rural Oikoumenê"⁷.

Only a decentralized development for cellular units can allow a cosmopolitanism able to manage and enhance the local dimension and at the same time the global one.

– On the previous page:
Sahl, S. Bortolato, M.
Maniero.



(R)urban Syria. Rural-urban dichotomy as strategy

Rossella Villani

What happens when suddenly the urban perspective that characterizes our living is obscured or destroyed? The dualism and the dichotomy between the city and the country loses its simplistic meaning and it is obliged to reformulate all the spaces starting from the first crisis state. In a post-war scenario, that characterize the Syrian territory, it is possible to reconfigure the hybrid relations between city and countryside, combining natural elements and urban contexts.

The interruption, due to the war, of the period of rapid urbanization that characterized the growth of Aleppo and Damascus, is now an opportunity to analyze, re-design and reconsider the whole process of reconstruction and future development of the city, the villages and the countryside.

Before 2011 the expansion and acceleration of the sphere of influence of the cities was in fact following the worldwide trend of the demographic boom in the big centers.

– On the previous page:
Jrajeer, M. Meneghello,
A. Signori, S. Zucchelli.

1 – Mumford Lewis, "The urban prospect", *Il Saggiatore*, Milano, 1970.

2 – Carlow Vanessa Miriam, "ISU, Ruralism. The future of the villages and small towns in a urbanizing world", Jovis, 2016.

3 – Lynch Kevin, "The image of the city", The MIT Press, Massachusetts, 1960.

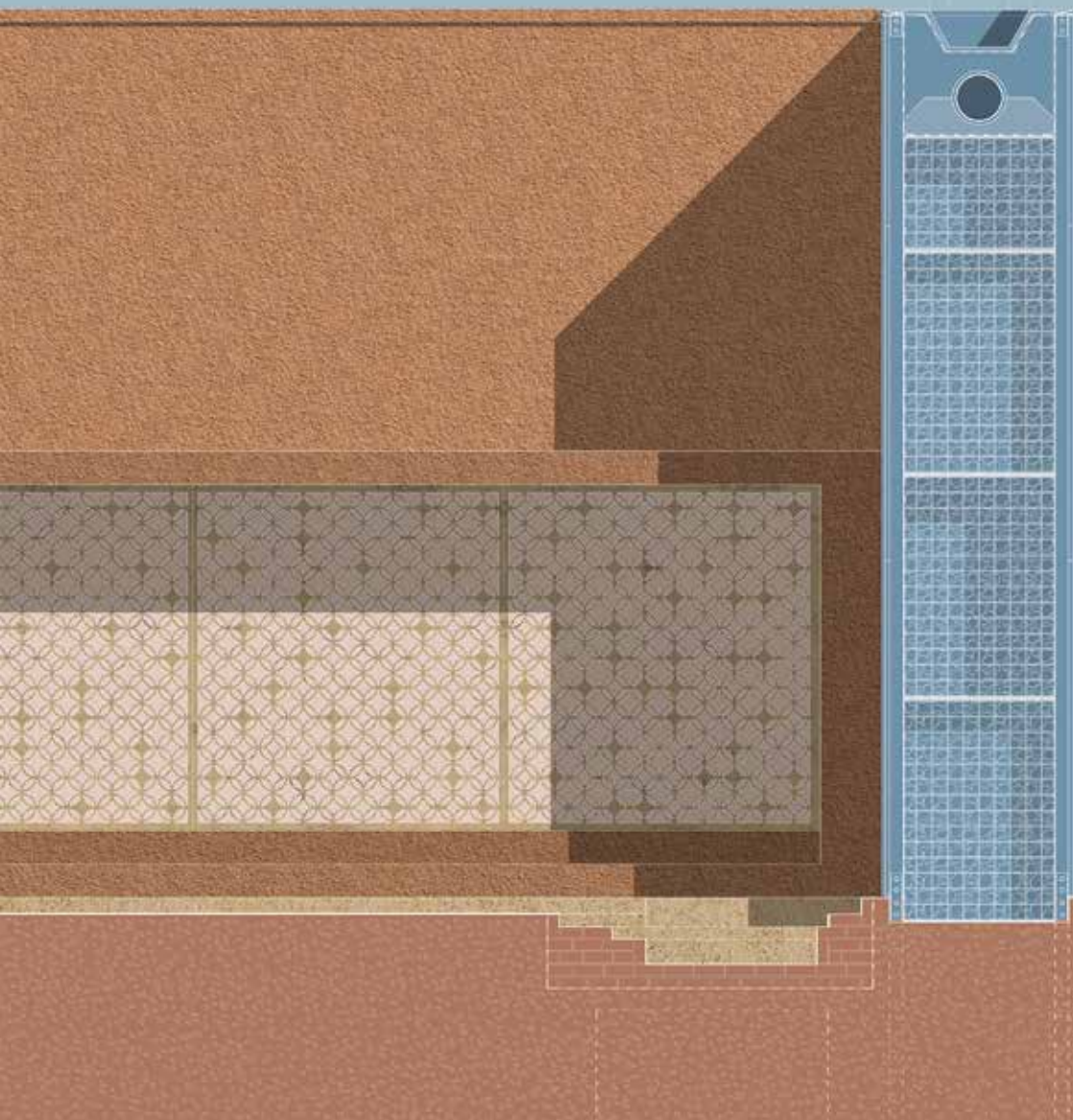
This concentration of population had assumed a dichotomous form of anti-city that oscillated between the rage on the center and urban dispersion. Precisely this strange reciprocity expresses the need to work in the reconstruction of cities by opening the gaze also to the landscape context. A serious awareness on a large scale, which is also clarified by Mumford's words "if architects or city planners will want to do better in the future, they will have to understand the historical forces originally produced the city's failure and contemporary pressures"¹. Rural reconstructions, following the example of the historical fabric of cities based on pre-colonial models, must implement transformations based on pre-oil and pre-urban agriculture models.

It is a form of construction that necessarily returns to the origins, to a foundational phase that is not limited to the urban space of the city but is also structured in the territory. A territory that according to recent mobilizations for sustainable development is no longer just an aestheticizing landscape that surrounds the peripheries of cities but that is increasingly understood as lands of production of renewable materials, energy, food products and social capital.

The water-agriculture-space paradigm² then appears in these territories where the break between the parts is clear. Geography makes cities, deserts, and river areas from which the fields radiate perfectly distinguishable. It is therefore not possible to think only on stone reconstruction, without first understanding and encouraging sustainable development. This paradigm implies that, under the rural precedent, a productive agricultural component could be extended to production in a more general sense under urban extension; to the production of renewable materials in conjunction with the development of space.

An imaginable vision³ must extend to the border, intercept the suburbs and tell the territories.

– On the next pages: Al Sahharah, S. Busetto; Adnaniyeh, M. Pistonese; Al Jalaa, M. Germanà, C. Pettinelli.







4 – Mumford Lewis, op. cit.

5 – Benevolo Leonardo, "La fine della città", Edizione Laterza, Bari, 2011, p. 6.

6 – World Bank, "Agriculture in Syria: towards the social market", Washington, 2018.

In this imagery it is also important to control the development of suburban areas by incorporating them in an intelligent system that limits damage to the natural landscape to a minimum and their incidence on the depopulation of historical centers. It must be a change that understands the social function of open spaces and prevents contact between one urban unit and another. A permanent green matrix⁴ must be able to manage a regional system in which cities can be redistributed in the territory in a more balanced way avoiding the congestion of the metropolis and the disintegration of the suburb.

In the Middle Eastern context the clear perception between the inside and the outside of the city resists. The fragmented system mainly characterized by resources must implement a large-scale strategy aware of its limitations, restrictions and interruptions. The resources and therefore the natural environment will dictate and limit the size and distribution of the city, the same that Leonardo Benevolo considers as a self-sufficient element perfectly capable of distinguishing itself from the surroundings "The city is instead a space in itself, which tends to be complete within the measurements it has given. It has all the characteristics that the territory does not have"⁵. This autonomy in Syria is dictated above all by an important resource, water. Despite the arid climate the economy is still dominated by the agricultural sector where it is important to consider the sustainability of groundwater resources in relation to the rapid expansion of the exploitation of groundwater and the expansion of irrigated areas. The World Bank report⁶ on the Syrian agricultural situation explains how before the conflict, agricultural policies have boosted farm incomes and helped improve food security, with subsidies on diesel and strategic cultures but posing great risks for well

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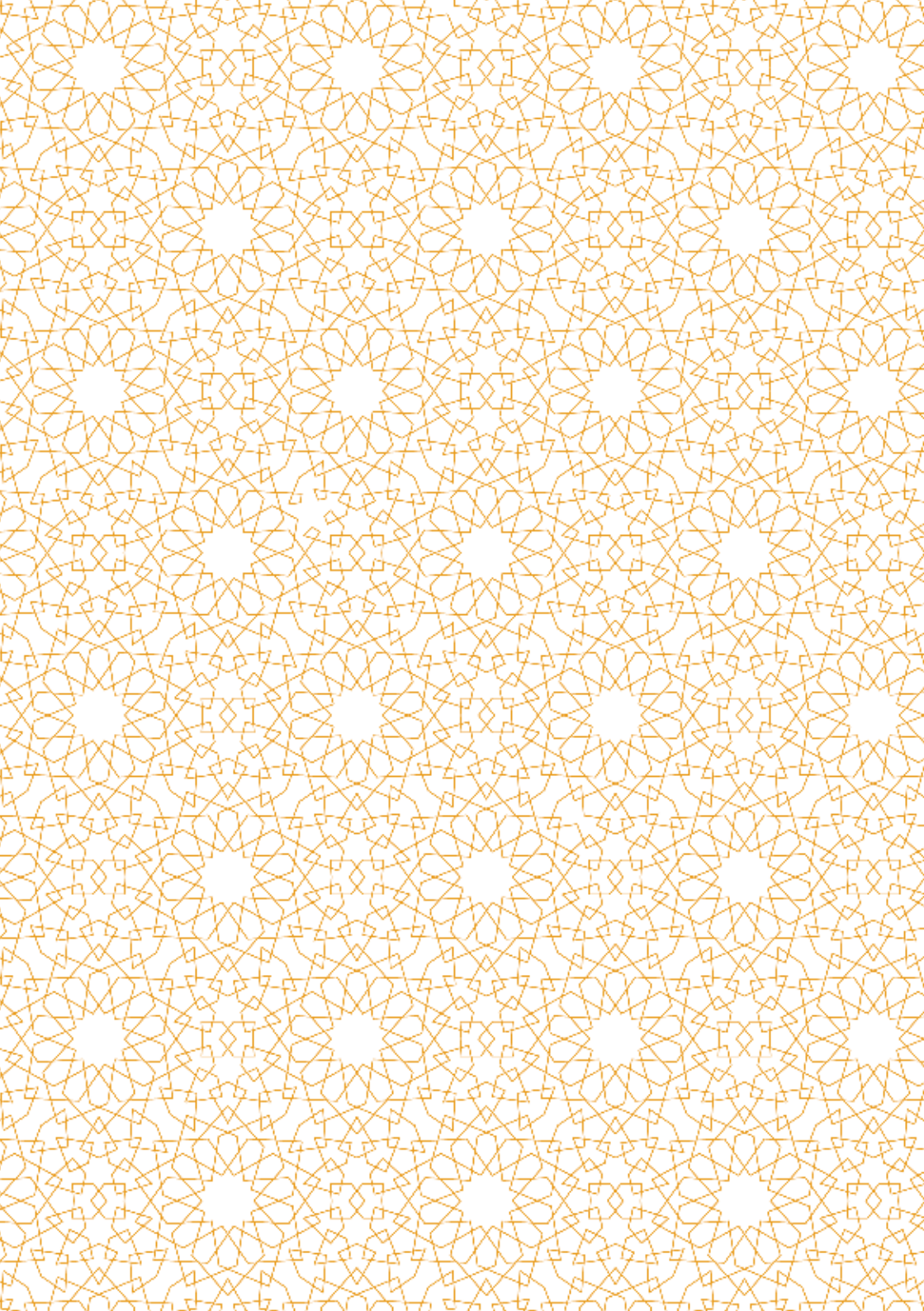


7 – Lefebvre Henri, "The Urban Revolution", University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

productivity and groundwater levels. It is essential that farmers act on their territories with long-term economic behavior. Irrigated crops produce almost 100% of summer agricultural production and about 40-70% of winter crops depending on the availability of rainfall, without considering agricultural clearances as a resource for the production of bio materials. Moreover, the agriculture is characterized by some crops considered strategic, such as cotton which occupies about 20% of the irrigated area, and wheat produced politically sensitive as the main source of food cultivated throughout the country. Cotton is the second largest supplier of foreign currency, after oil, needed to finance imports and improve the balance of payments position, and when coupled with sugar beet and wheat together they are the main suppliers of raw materials for a large part of the industrial sector population.

The countryside can also be a place of production. This reasoning illustrates the differential spaces⁷, which do not always depend on space as such but on the dominant activities that normally characterize rural space, industrial space and urban space. The city centralizes creation by combining the simultaneous interaction between nature and artificial technology, and their expansion of the ecological footprint forces the extraction of natural resources that often draws from around, to which we must necessarily work. Because even the rural environment requires people willing to create, innovate, connect. This is why the countryside can also be a place of production. Creative ruralism could lead to the creation of eco-techno-natural environments, which would provide some of the features of the country combined with specific services. The organic waste of the countryside will become a resource for the creation of materials and components for the reconstruction of de-

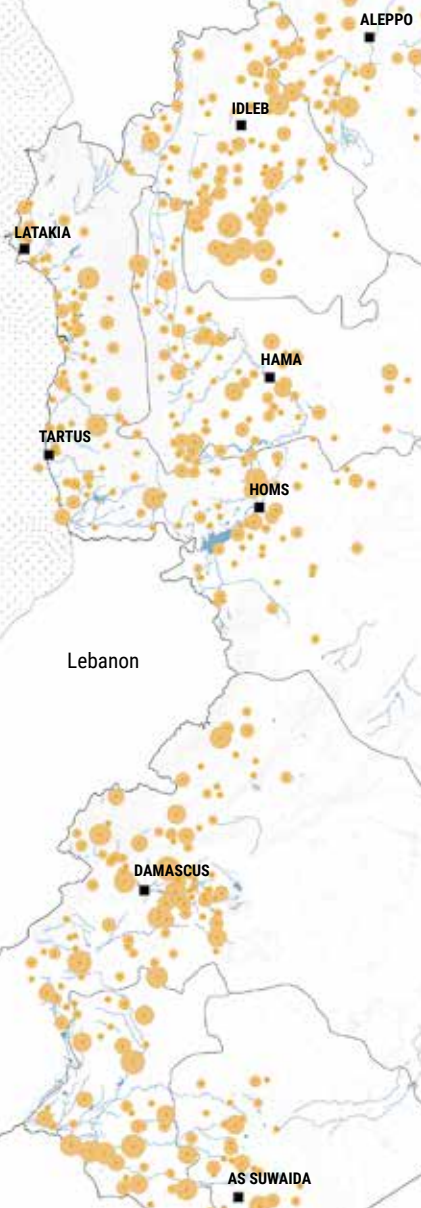
stroyed buildings, allowing urban districts to become self-sufficient in terms of natural raw materials. Then the rural world must be understood within the work of reconstruction as a lifestyle complementary to the city, to reconnect or re-locate. Within this scenario there is the need to explore and expand the possibilities of technology, pushing its actual limits and foreseeing potential new services that could improve rural life and making it more diversified in its natural simplicity.

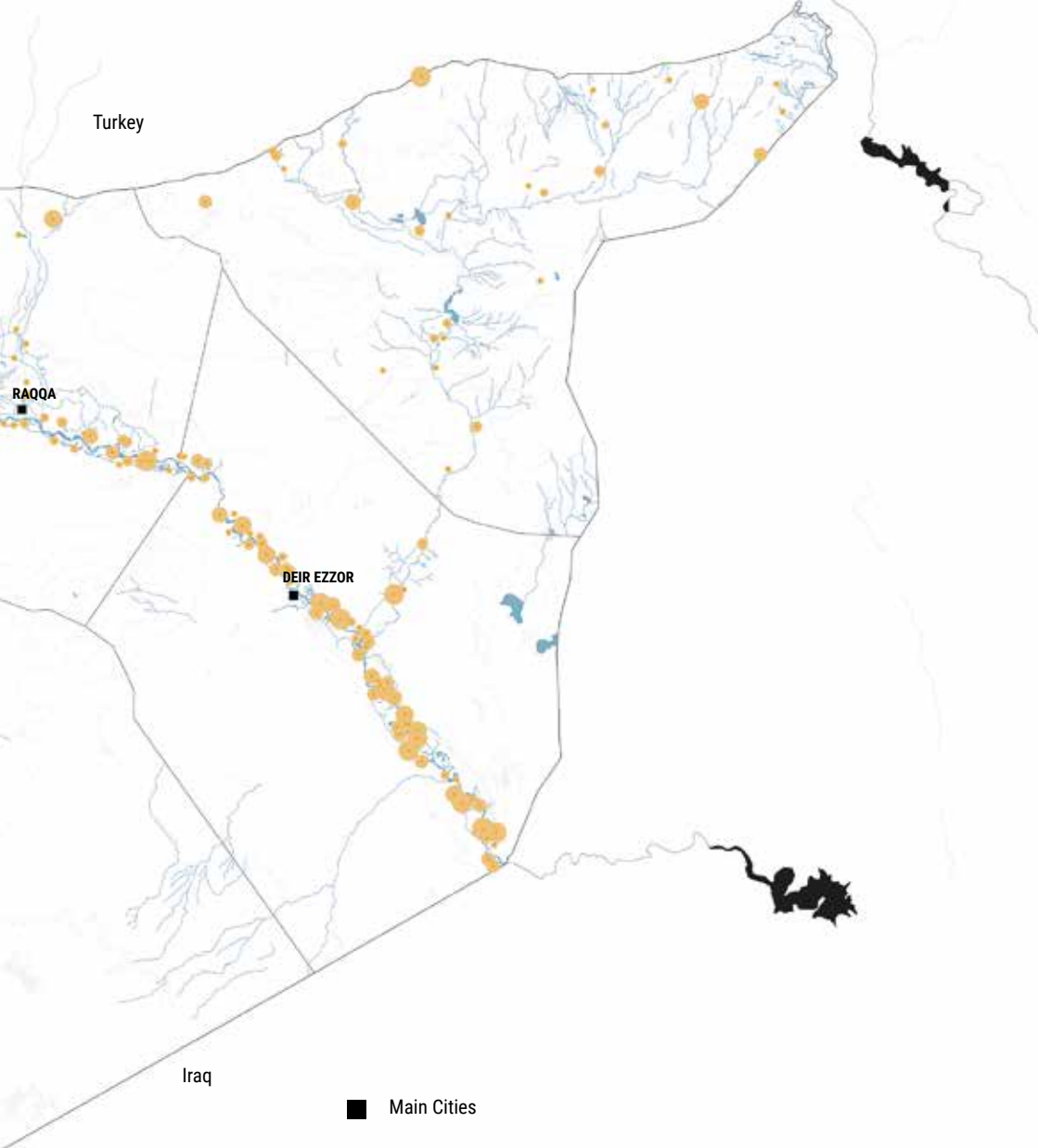




SYRIA THEMATIC ATLAS

HIDROGRAPHY SETTLEMENTS





Turkey

RAQQA

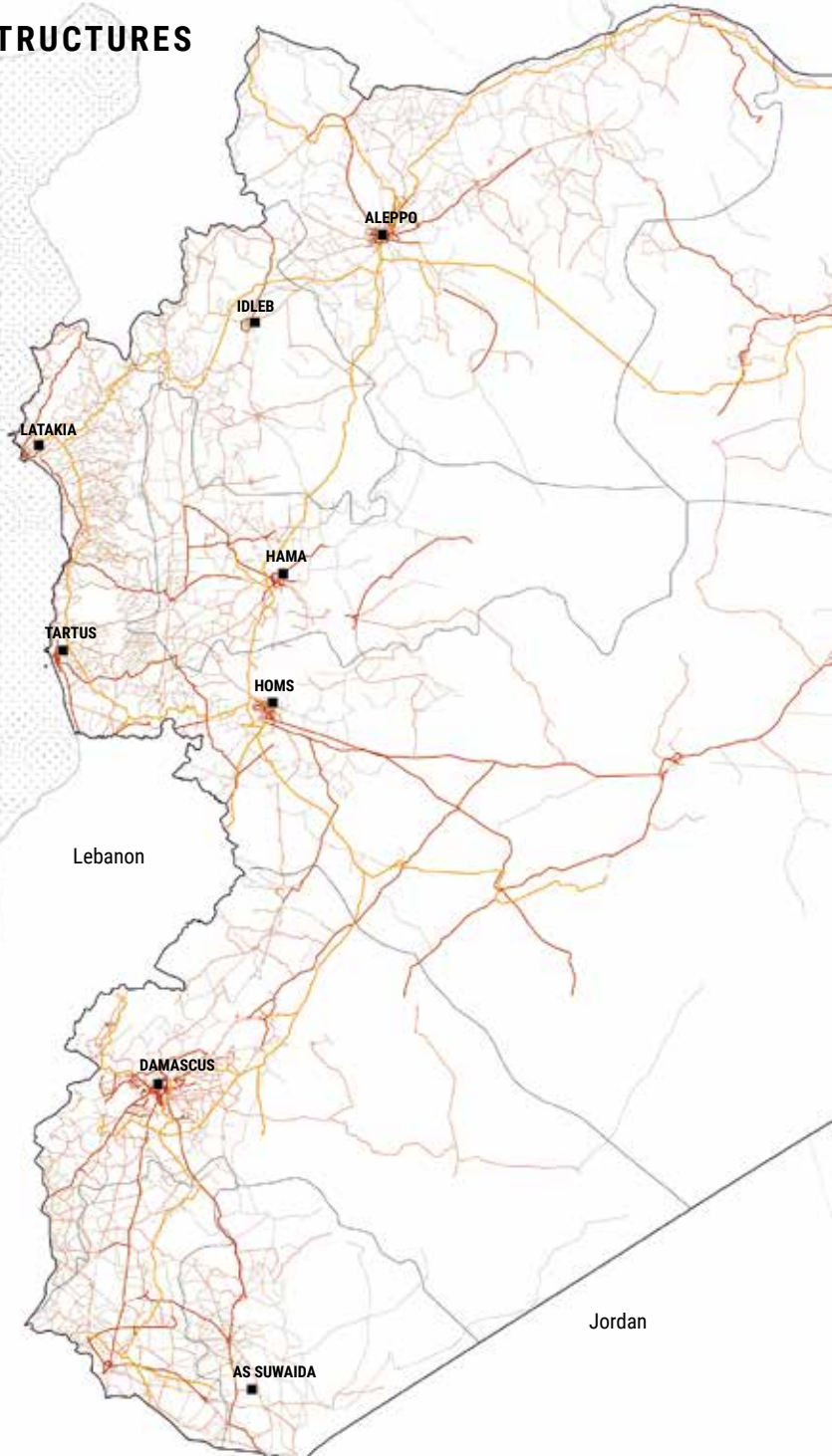
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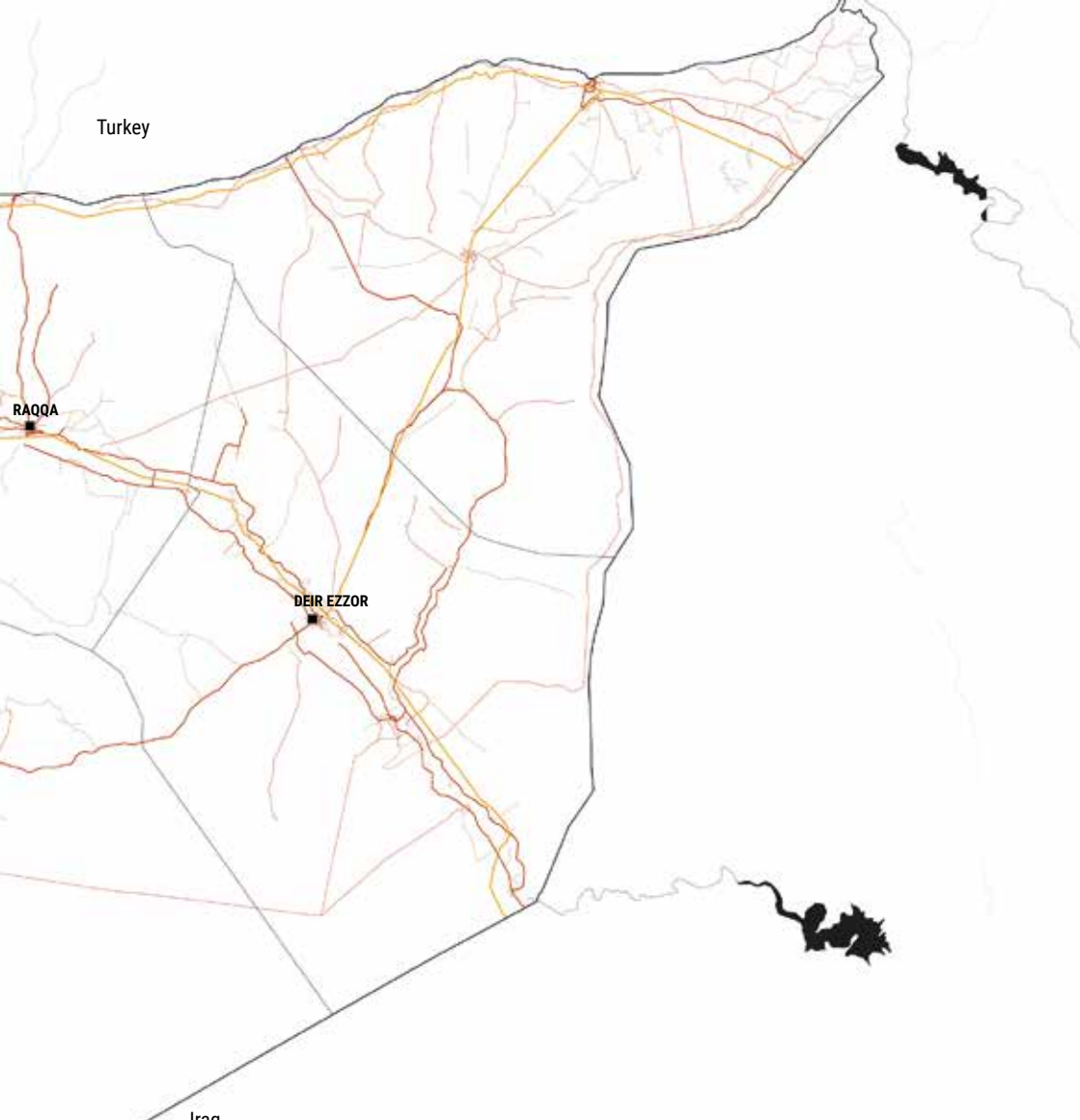
Iraq

- Main Cities
- Rivers
- Villages

Source: Syrian Geographic Information Atlas, 2011

INFRASTRUCTURES









Turkey

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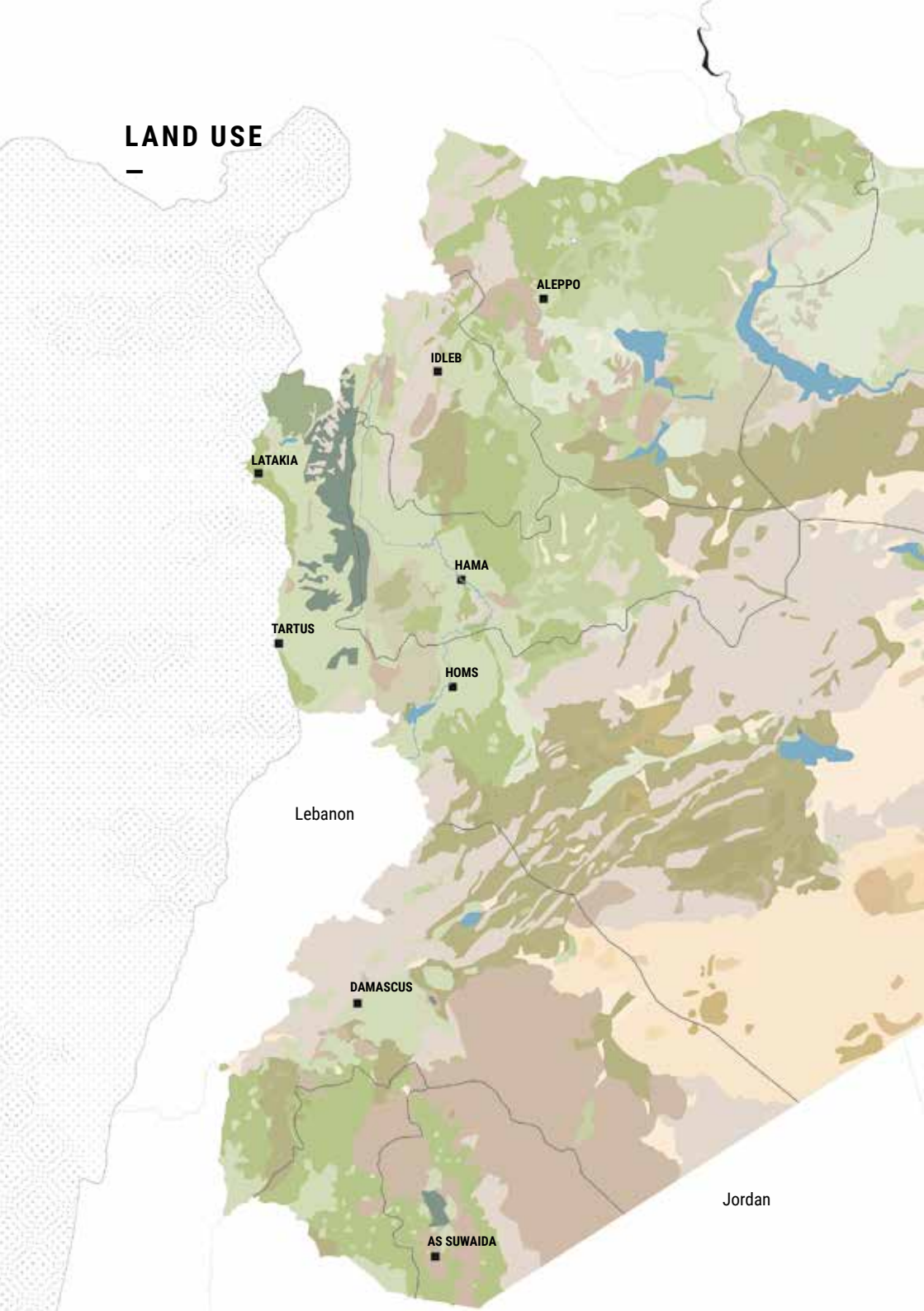
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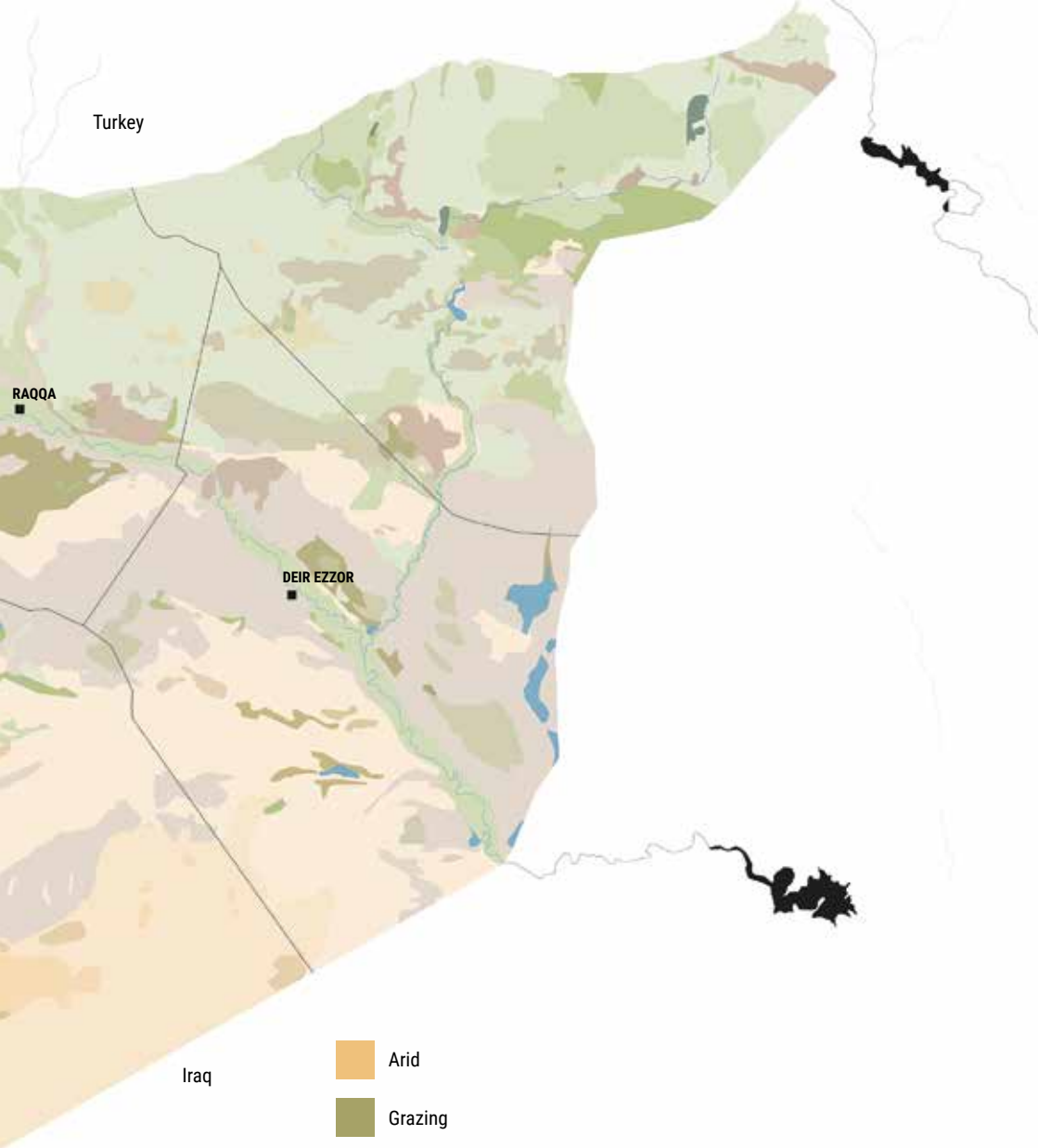
-  Highways
-  Roads
-  Secondary roads
-  Railroads

Source: Syrian Geographic Information Atlas, 2011

LAND USE

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Turkey

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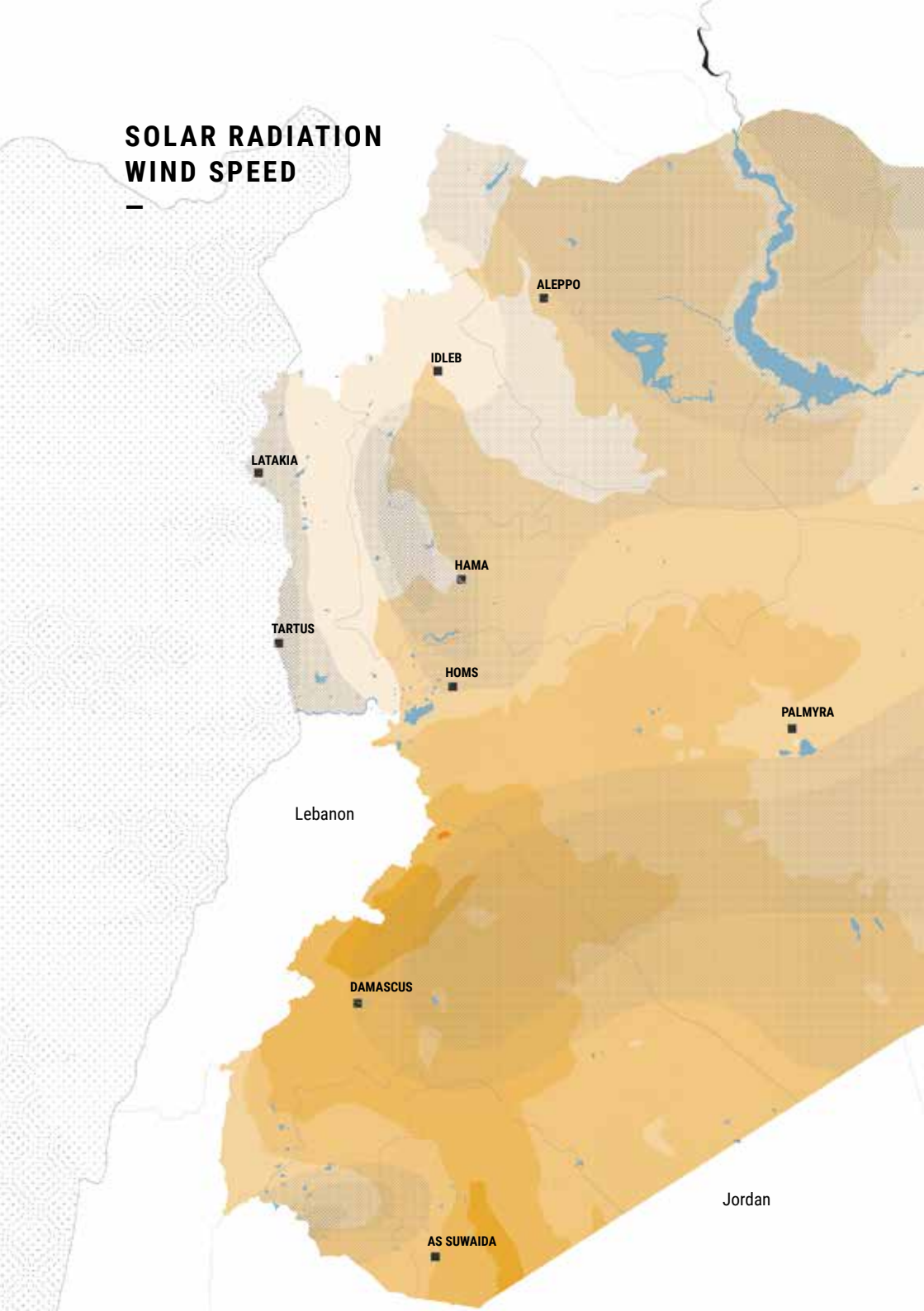
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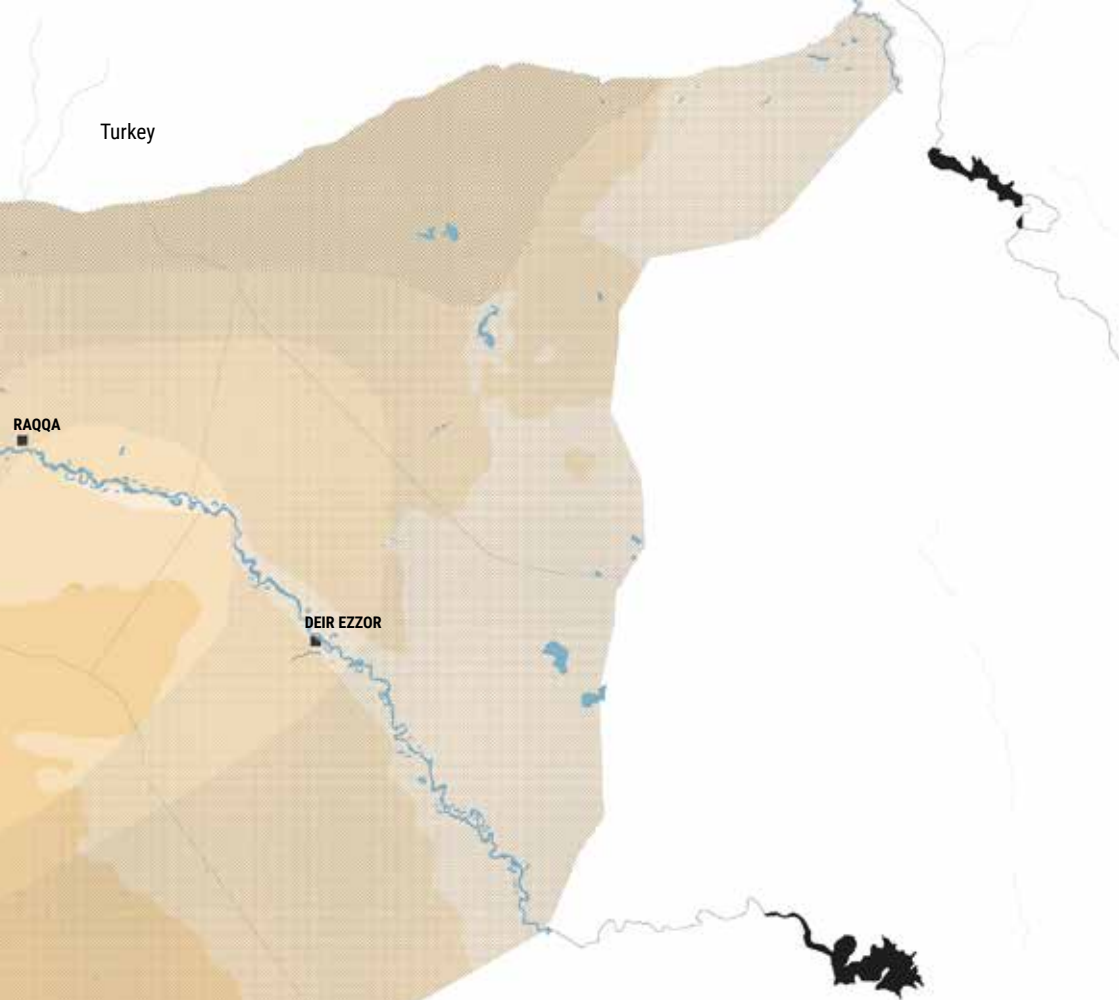
Iraq

- Arid
- Grazing
- Rocky
- Cropping
- Forest

Source: French mandate land use maps, AUB archive

SOLAR RADIATION WIND SPEED



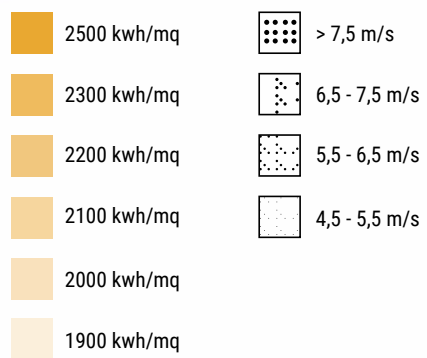


Turkey

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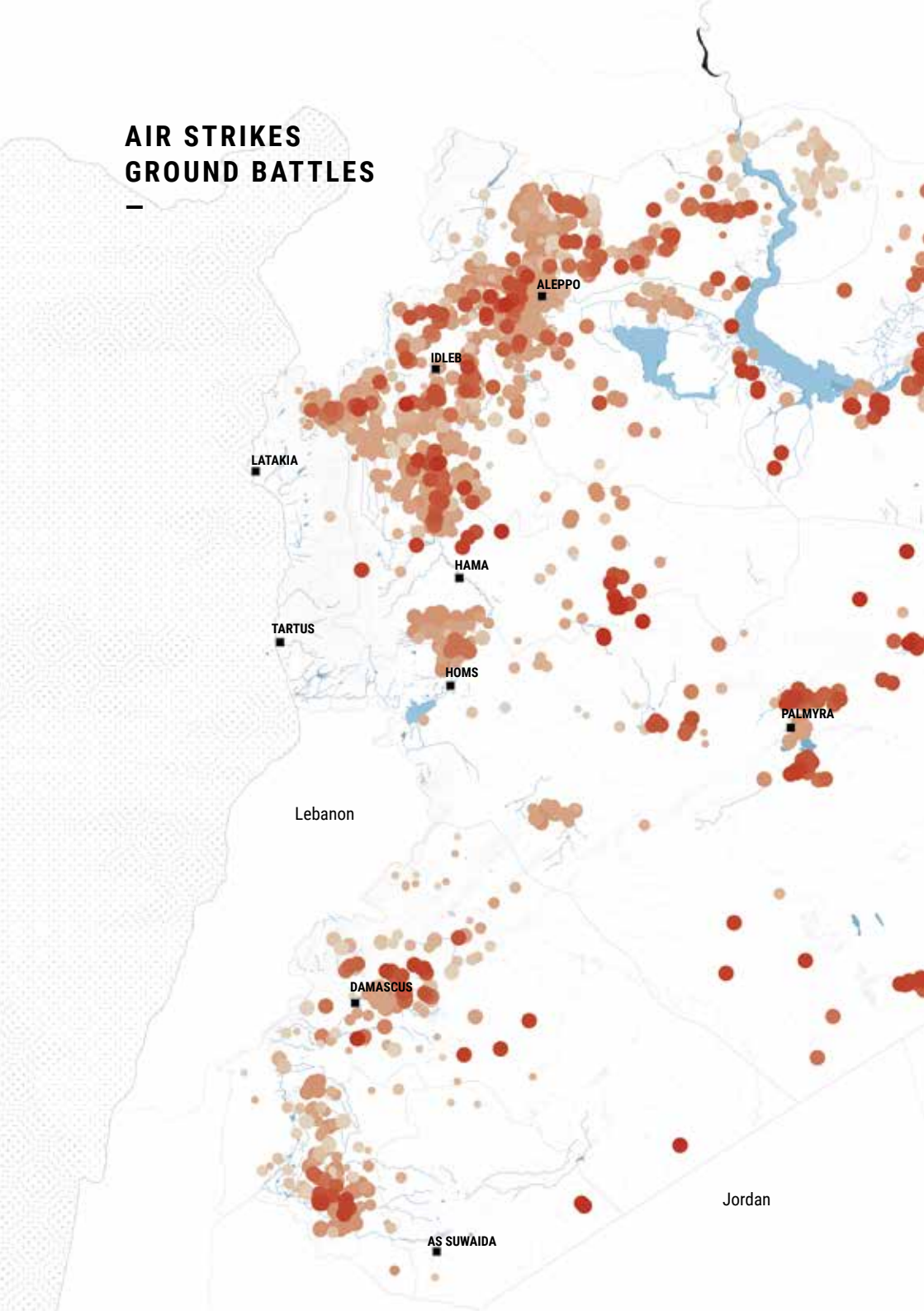
Iraq

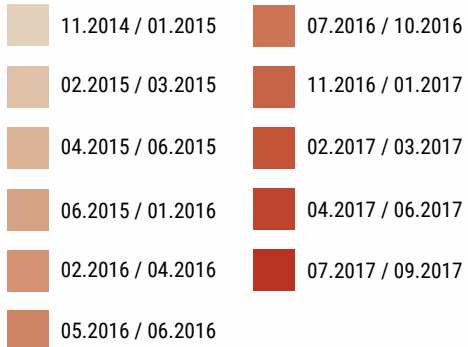
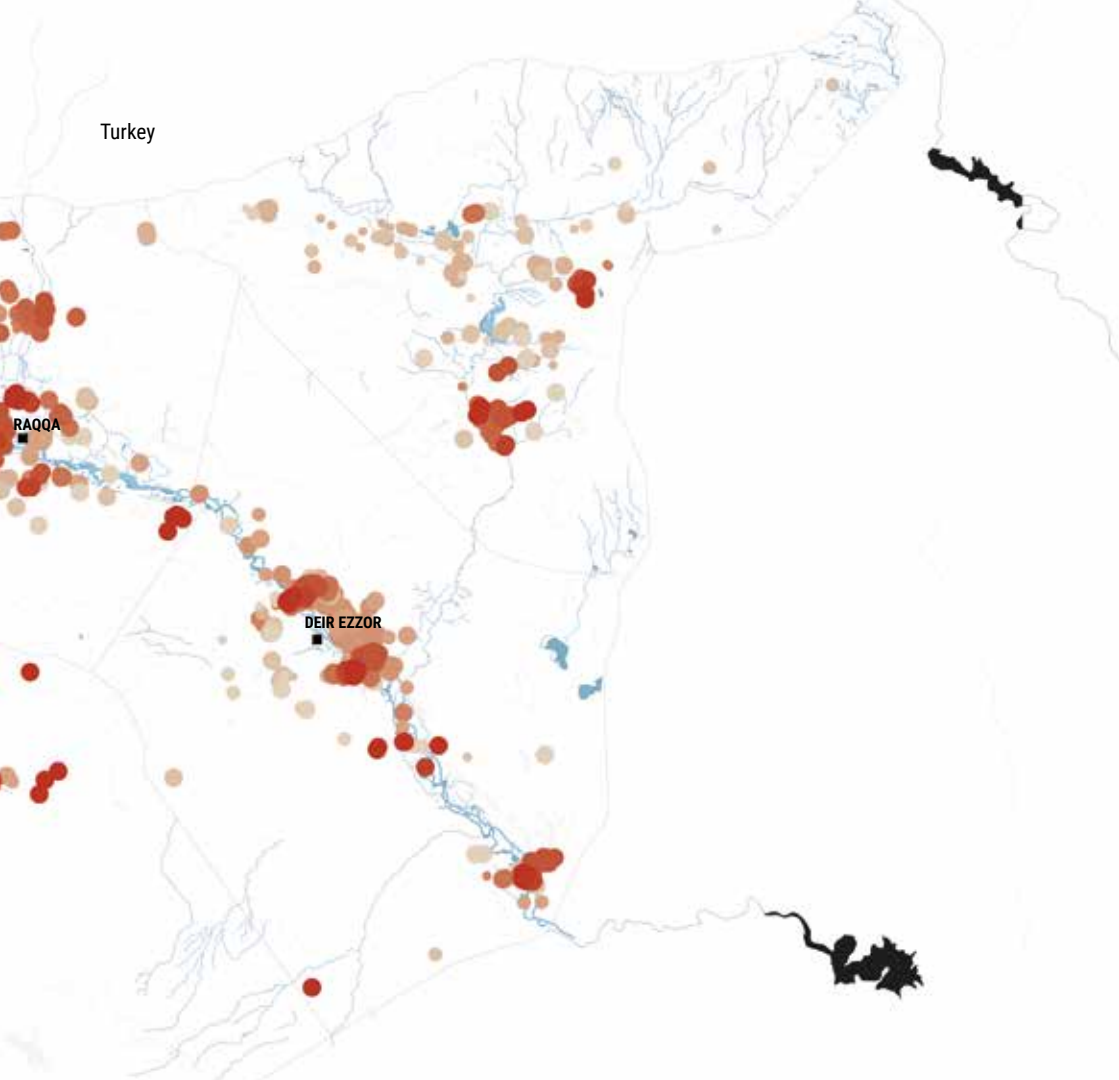


Source: Syrian Geographic Information Atlas, 2011

AIR STRIKES GROUND BATTLES

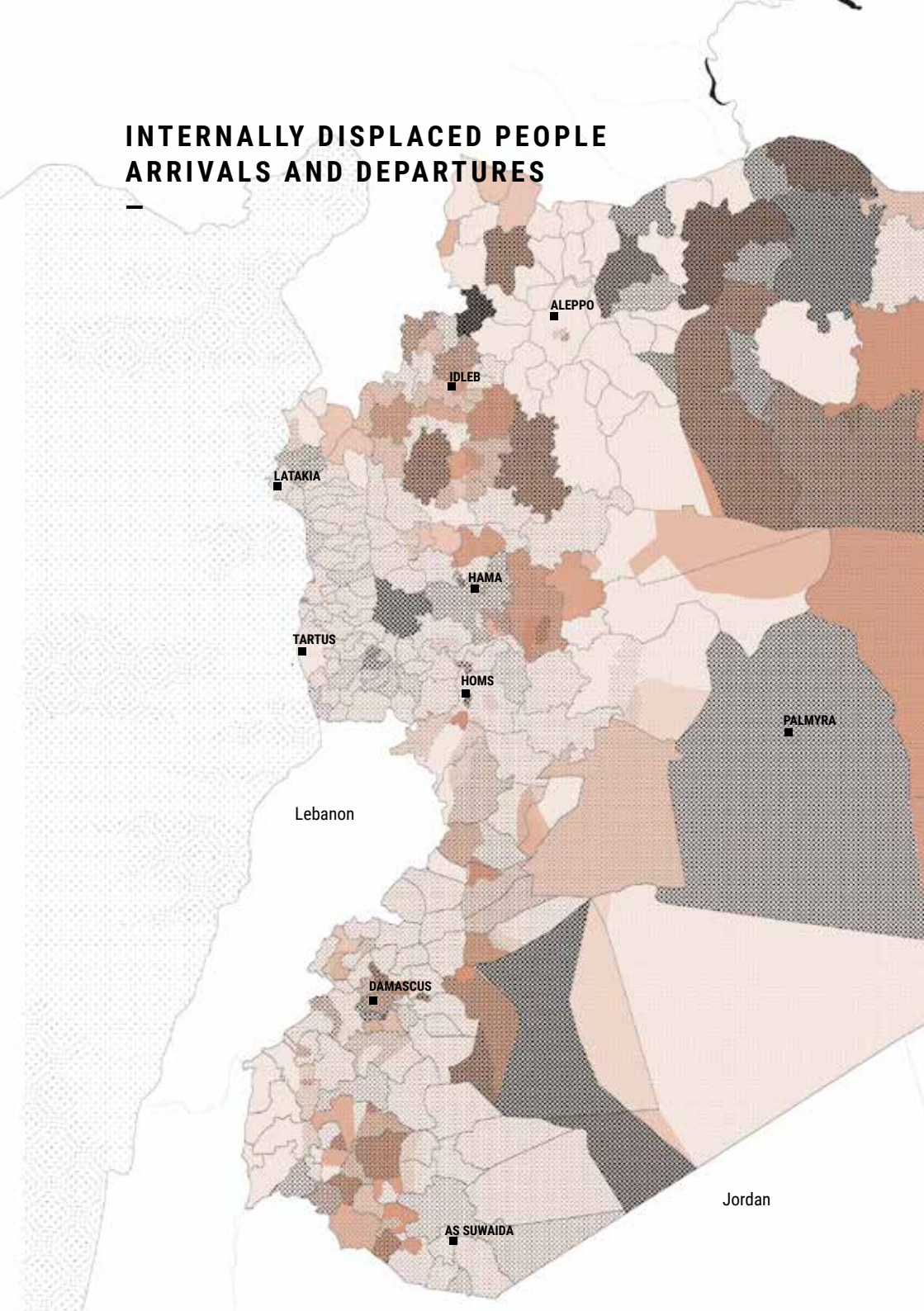
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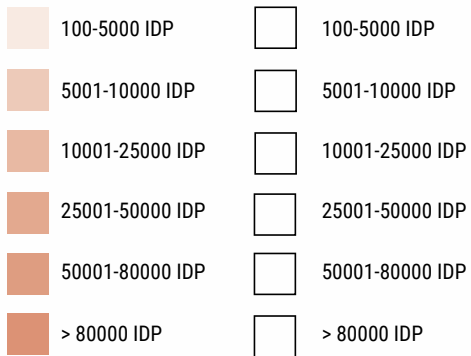
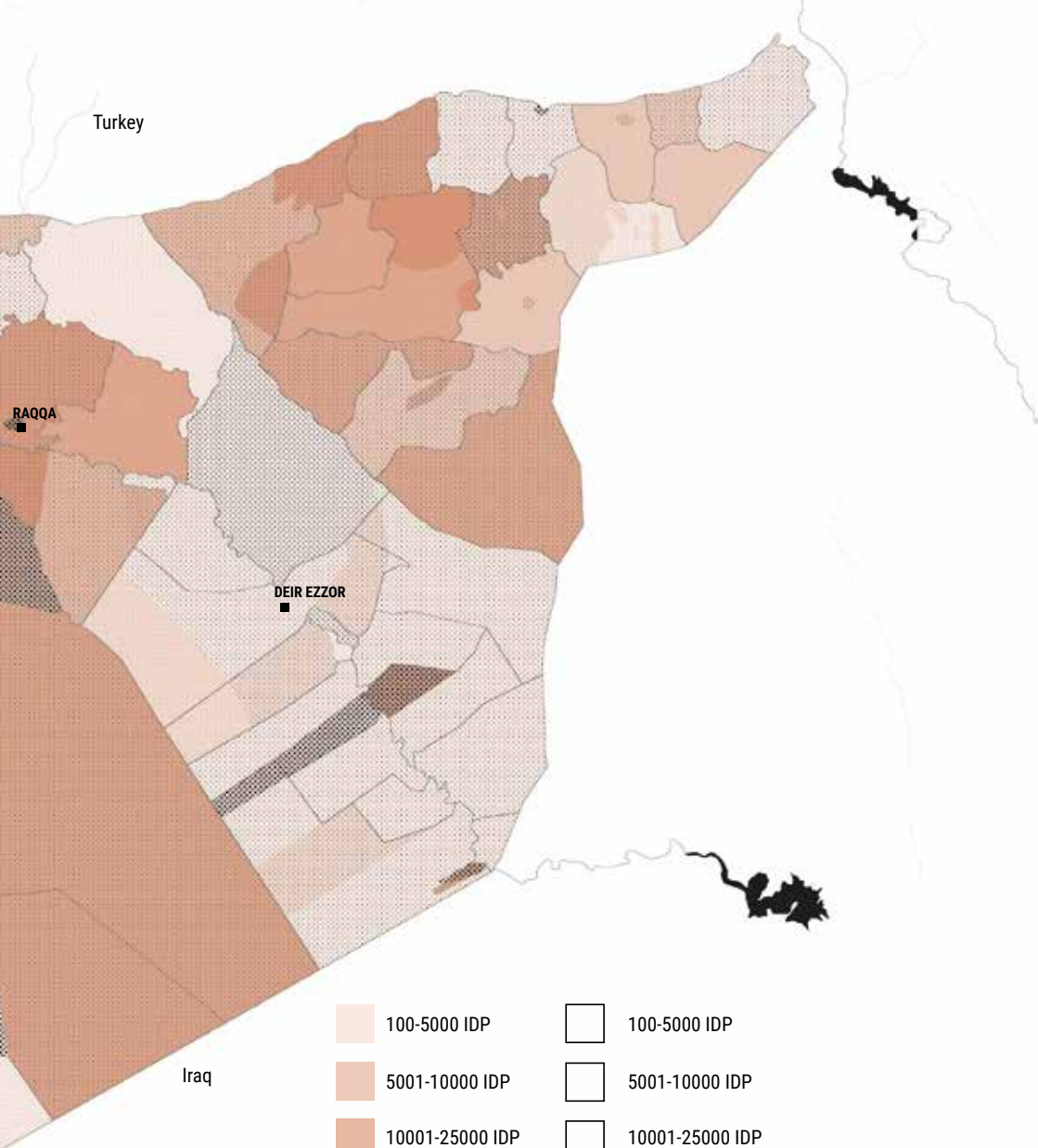




Source: Institute for the Study of War, 2018

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

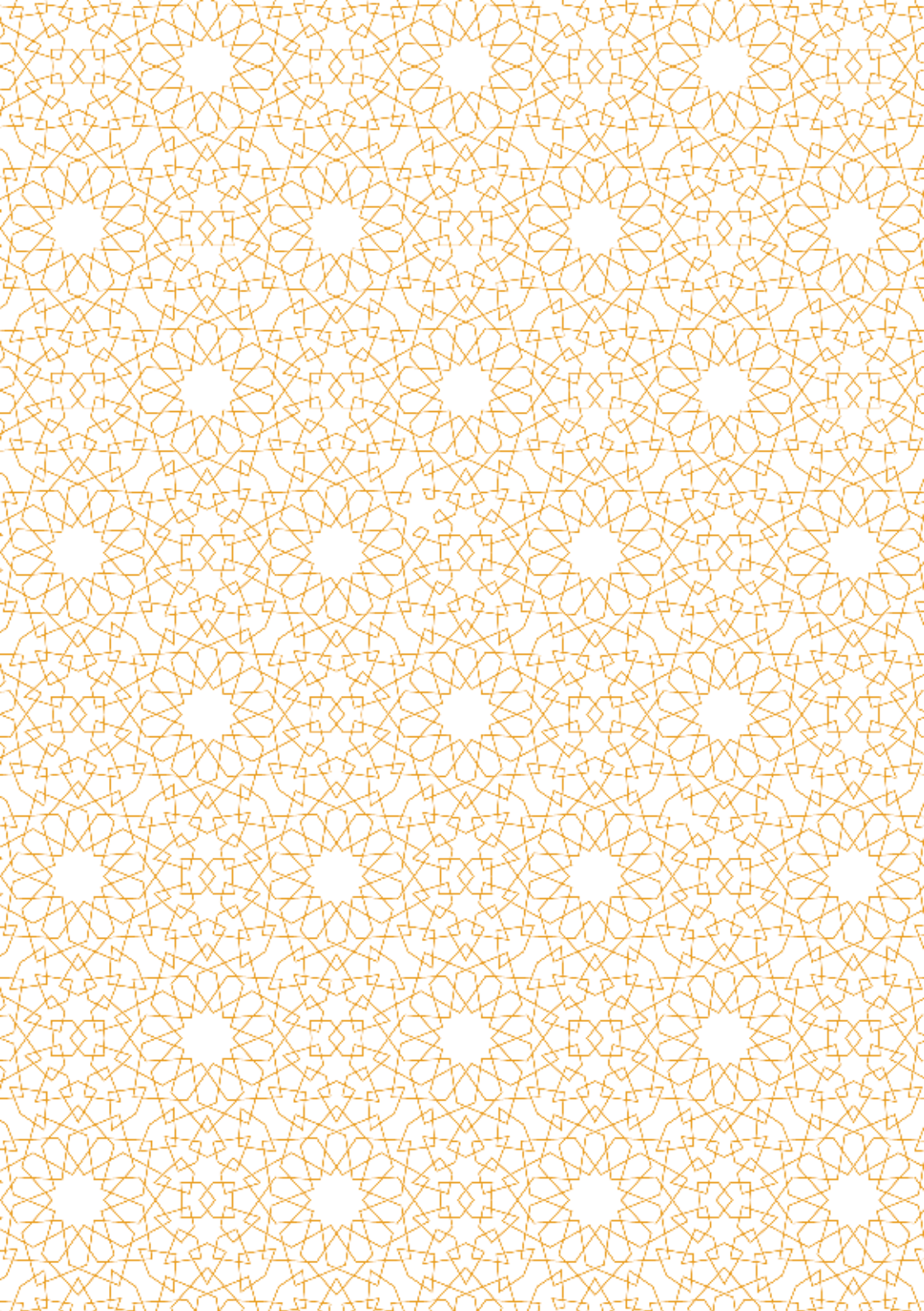




Source: Syrian center for policy research, 2016



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URBICIDE RURAL SYRIA

RECONSTRUCTION OF VILLAGES

Rural Villages in Syria represent an interesting case study in the search for a decentralised model of reconstruction where local and global resources are used directly on-site and where return to rural settlements of internally displaced and refugees is favoured. The proposed projects have been produced within the Master Thesis Laboratory dedicated to the topic of reconstruction directed by Benno Albrecht at luav and represent the physical display of the conceptual approach presented in the texts.

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