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University of Technology
Cottbus - Senftenberg



syrbanism



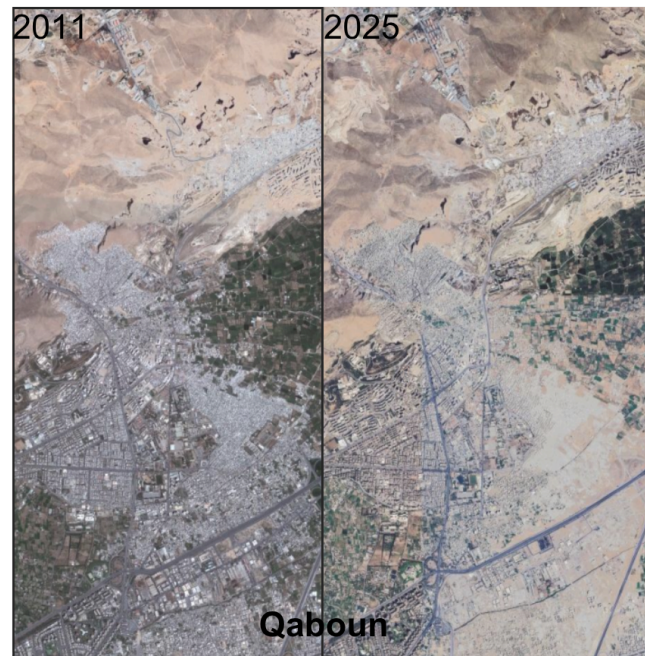
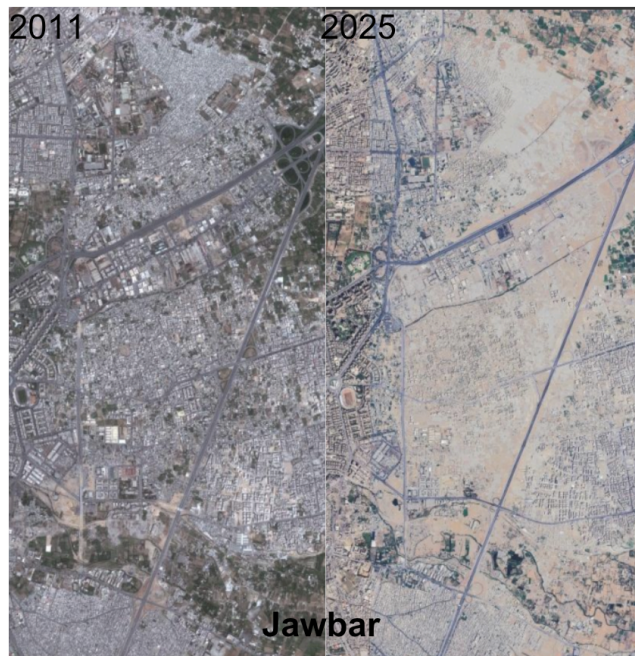
YOUNG SYRIAN
URBANISTS
شبكة الشباب
العمراني السوري

Co-Imagining Urban Futures and Recovery of War-Torn Neighbourhoods in Ghouta, Damascus

Case studies: Jobar and Qaboun in Ghouta, Damascus.

Collaborative project - BTU Cottbus–Senftenberg, Syrbanism gUG, Young Syrian Urbanists Network (YSU), American University of Beirut (AUB)

November – December 2025



2025 Google Earth images of Ghouta, Damascus. From left to right : Jobar 2011, Jobar 2025, Qaboun 2011, Qaboun 2025

Format:

Phase One – Online webinars

Phase Two – One-week workshop (Damascus)

Phase Three – Three-day workshop (BTU Cottbus–Senftenberg)

Locations: Online · Damascus (Syria) · Cottbus (Germany)

Partners: BTU Cottbus – Senftenberg, Syrbanism, Young Syrian Urbanists Network (YSU), American University of Beirut (AUB)

Case Areas: Qaboun and Jobar, Damascus, Syria

About the Programme

This two-month programme invites students of architecture, urban design, and planning to co-develop context-sensitive reconstruction strategies for war-torn neighbourhoods in Damascus. Built upon a network spanning two decades—linking BTU, AUB, Syrbanism and YSU—participants will engage with comparative experiences from Lebanon and Germany while collaborating closely with Syrian, Lebanese and international peers.

The initiative draws on earlier cooperation projects, including the DAAD-supported Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Historic Districts and Preservation of Architectural Heritage after Armed Conflicts (2021–2022), alongside ongoing collaborations in old-town revitalisation, heritage conservation, and post-conflict urban recovery.

Learning Outcomes

Participants will gain:

- Participatory and ethical research methods for post-conflict urban contexts
- Skills in documentation, mapping, and analysis of urban morphology and building typologies
- Approaches to safeguarding tangible and intangible heritage
- Integrated district planning: governance, urban management, and organisational models for reconstruction
- Practice in co-production with local stakeholders and community-sensitive design

Focus

Students will investigate two neighbourhoods in Qaboun and Jobar, each reflecting distinct patterns of destruction, displacement, transformation, and need. Through creative mapping, stakeholder interviews, site design exercises, and role-playing, teams will develop short-term, actionable projects alongside long-term strategies.

Programme Structure

Phase A: Online Preparatory Webinars (6th – 20th November, 16:00 Berlin time)

Led by BTU and AUB faculty with input from Syrbanism, the webinars will cover theory, methods, and comparative cases (Germany, Poland/Warsaw, Lebanon, Bosnia and Herzegovina/Mostar). Students will also begin desk research for Damascus case areas.

Webinar 1: 6th November, 16:00, moderated by BTU, Sepideh Zarrin Ghalam and Christoph Wessling, input and debate:

- experiences with the reconstruction of city centres in Germany after the Second World War
- Urban morphology as the basis for reconstruction planning; presentation of the ‘Old City Map of Aleppo’ project

Webinar 2: 13th November, 16:00, moderated by AUB, Howayda Al Harithy, input and debate:

- Experiences from Beirut ...

Webinar 3: 20th November, 16:00 (Syrbanism - YSU Network)

- Memory & Healing in Post-Conflict Reconstruction, experiences from Syrian academics and experts
- Spatial justice as a pillar of transitional justice in post conflict cities

Phase B: Field Workshop in Damascus (1st – 5th December)

Activities include site walks, interviews, mapping, and drafting of concepts and strategies for Qaboun and Jobar,

Participants: 24 students from Damascus, 8 from other Syrian cities, 8 from Lebanon. With organisers and lecturers, about 50 people will take part. The students will be divided into 5 working teams, each with minimum 1 supervisor. Each working team will work on a different topic.

Deliverables: Team concept briefs with creative maps, contextual analyses, aims, stakeholders perspectives, and proposals.

Phase C: Closing Workshop at BTU Cottbus–Senftenberg (18th – 20th December)

A core group of partners and selected students will synthesise Damascus outcomes, refine strategies, and prepare a publishable compendium for teaching and practice. Online links with Damascus teams will be maintained. The outcomes of the working groups conducted in Damascus will be presented, critically examined, and discussed within a comparative analytical framework.

Eligibility

Applicants: Syrian students and young professionals in Syria with a strong interest in urban reconstruction. Preferred backgrounds: architecture, urban design, planning, heritage conservation, or related fields. Senior bachelor's and master's students are encouraged to apply.

Selection criteria:

- Motivation and alignment with programme aims
- Relevant coursework or field experience
- Commitment to ethical, community-oriented practice
- Ability to collaborate in diverse international teams
- Good English skills are preferred, and Arabic support will be provided if needed.

Commitment: ~3 hours/week during webinars; full-time during workshops.

Support: Syrian students outside Damascus will receive travel and accommodation support.
Only students with Schengen visas/residency may also apply for Phase C.

Application Process

Submit a single PDF (max. 10 MB) named Lastname_Firstname_2025.pdf containing:

1. Answer this question: **In your opinion, what should be the main priorities for long-lasting reconstruction?**
2. CV (max. 2 pages)
3. Portfolio/work samples (max. 5 pages: studio work, mapping, writing, community projects)
4. Affiliation and location: current degree, university, country of residence
5. Availability: confirm participation in webinars and workshops
6. (General) If applicable: note existing Schengen visa/residency (essential for BTU workshop – visas cannot be provided)

Deadline: Sunday, 19th October 2025 (23:59 CET)

Notification: Sunday, 26th October 2025

Applications should be submitted by completing the [Google Form](#).

For any questions, please contact ysun.network@gmail.com.

Key Dates (2025)

Open call announcement: 13th October

Application deadline: 19th October

Notification of acceptance: 26th October

Webinar 1: 6th November

Webinar 2: 13th November

Webinar 3: 20th November

Damascus field workshop: 1st–5th December

BTU closing workshop: 18th–20th December

Logistics, Safety & Ethics

Participants must follow local laws, institutional policies, and research ethics (consent, data protection, cultural sensitivity). The workshop will take place in a room in the inner city of

Damascus . Accommodation for participants from outside Damascus will be provided. The field studies will be conducted in collaboration with local colleagues who are familiar with the study areas.

Cooperation Team

BTU Cottbus–Senftenberg: Prof. i.V. Christoph Wessling (Urban Design and Urban Studies), Dr. Sepideh Zarrin Ghalam (Middle East Cooperation Unit)

Syrbanism gUG Nour Harastani

Young Syrian Urbanists Network (YSU) Saeed Asaeed , Mudar Obaid Dabbous, Walaa Nezam

American University of Beirut (AUB): Prof. Dr. Howayda Al Harithy

General enquiries and application submission:

Applications should be submitted by completing the [Google Form](#).

For any questions, please contact

Saeed Asaeed (Coordinator, YSU Network) — ysun.network@gmail.com

This call reflects a joint effort to empower young scholars and practitioners to co-create equitable, culturally grounded pathways to urban recovery.

Funded by:



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