Building urban livelihoods: two generations in an unauthorized settlement in Damascus
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8. Conclusion: Summary and Reflections

In this study of Duelha, I have attempted to show how people build capitals in order to improve their livelihood and wellbeing. Drawing on the fieldwork I conducted in Syria, I have used the livelihood strategies approach to explain how people use a variety of strategies and resources around them in order to improve their living situations. In addition, I have dealt with the way in which attitudes and livelihood strategies change over time between two generations. In conclusion, I present a model which links the results of the study to the wider livelihoods discussion and how national policies and local context affect household strategies.

This study was done in a context in which it is rare to carry out social research based on primary fieldwork, and in a context in which it was not possible to affiliate openly as such.

The main research questions are:

1. How do migrants use their capitals to develop a livelihood strategy and how do the sets of capitals change during this process?
2. How does the context of an unauthorized settlement affect the way residents there build up their livelihood strategies?
3. How have livelihood strategies changed over time between the first and the second generations in Duelha?

In the next sections, I sum up the main findings and answer the research questions and analyze the outcomes of local community livelihood strategies according to the approach I have used.

8.1. Building capitals

The field study, of which the results are presented in chapters 4–6, show that households in Duelha use many different strategies to build their capitals in order to increase their wellbeing. They have built up assets which are both tangible and intangible, in which the intangible social networks play an important part in integrating the various capitals to form a whole. The several dimensions of livelihoods built up by households in the local community portray a picture of positive trends within the local Christian community, whose members utilize their internal social bonding and external social relations, cultural values, economic opportunities and exploit opportunities in both the public and private sectors and acquire human capital using instruments such as education, health and employment. Both the state and the church play an important role in the dynamics of this process.
8.1.1. Building human capital

Building human capital involves the specific elements of education, health and employment. The inhabitants of Duelha made extensive use of the state facilities provided in these areas, as they increased their access in comparison to their previous locations in the rural areas, where these facilities are much less available. As a result, almost all of the second generation attended basic and secondary education. In addition, almost a third of the second generation had access to tertiary levels of education. There is a clear difference in the extent to which young men and women choose their subject areas, with young women preferring arts and humanities to other subject areas.

In accessing education, the residents of Duelha are able to make use of the extensive provision of public sector schooling which the Syrian state developed in the last thirty years. Such schooling was free of costs, although personal costs for uniforms and basic writing materials remained a household cost. This system was supported by the additional capacity provided for remedial education by the church and local tutors in the Duelha neighbourhood, which allowed those who would otherwise have dropped out of the school system at an earlier stage to complete slightly higher levels of education. In migrant families the first generation attached importance to obtaining a higher level of education for their children.

The public health care system has expanded significantly in the last thirty years in Syria, with a larger concentration of facilities in Damascus as compared to other cities. Nevertheless, many people prefer to utilize the private health care system where possible because of the efficiency of the service provided. In Duelha, both public and private clinics are readily available and are also accessible to low-income households. For the poorest groups, the church provides basic curative health care facilities, donated free of charge by local doctors and dentists.

The migrant households in Duelha reflect the general trend of changing employment patterns in the last thirty years, where the predominance of employment has shifted from the agricultural sector to the service sector, with a lesser role for the industrial sector. In Duelha, the rate of employment among men and women of the first generation of migrants was high among men and low among women. Most people worked in the public sector because the bureaucratic state had to recruit a large number of people. In contrast, the rate of employment among women of the second generation is much higher than was the case for their mothers, whereas men’s employment rate remained at similar levels. More men were now employed in the private sector in a variety of services. This corresponds to the preferences expressed by many second-generation men for work in the private sector because you can earn well without having a high level of education.
8.1.2. Building social and cultural capitals

This study has depicted how people migrated to Duelha based on their religious background. This particular area was settled by Christians from different parts of the country. This common cultural background has helped households in the neighbourhood build up bonding cultural capital and has reduced their vulnerability as migrants.

Bonding cultural capital has also been increased and supported through the traditional structure of the courtyards (Dakhles). The courtyard structure encourages people to get to know each other by name and become familiar with people's family histories. The notion goes beyond the neighbourhood. Instead it is a community (Putnam, 1994: 308) which has reduced the level of violence and crimes in those Dakhles where interaction is strong.

Although there are many benefits to such a community, one of the negative results is that the notion of privacy becomes very restricted. Many of the families that reside in these areas live in extended family situations where the notion of privacy is limited and where there is therefore greater social control. In these households, the structure of the families has changed to include the male children of the second generation, their wives and children. This leads to a higher population density in the locality.

Culturally the first generation has remained more attached to their rural lifestyle by living in the urban area according to the simplicity of village life by, for example, using strategies to minimize their expenditures on clothes, food and personal expenses. People from the second generation are, however, urbanised and care more about autonomy and privacy as a way of life. This creates a certain amount of tension between generations, which is may be resolved by separate housing whenever possible. They have more opportunities for educational achievement. At the same time, with the help of the community and their families, Duelhas residents were able to manage their livelihoods in a successful manner. By building strong social networks these people were able to build their social capital.

The Church has also played a significant role in bonding the community together. By organizing community activities such as study sessions, financial donations to poor households and medical and remedial education support, the Church has provided the most vulnerable households in the local community with important supportive services. Therefore, the Church has become an important factor in supporting low-income households in the community with regard to reducing their vulnerability and building different capitals.

Communities that are restricted to certain boundaries such as religion or ethnicity create strong bonding capital among the members of their own group. However, as the study has shown, one of the consequences is that interaction with people of other communities remains exclusionary. In Duelha, people will interact in public spaces and carry out economic activities without any problems. These interactions have limits and strict boundaries apply to intimate cultural interactions such as friendships, inter-marriage and inter-household relations. Private domestic space was found to be off limits to members of other religious and social backgrounds.

The number of NGOs in Syria and in Damascus is still very limited and their role is marginal. However, one NGO was found to be currently active in Duelha, limiting its activities to providing families in need with basic food on a monthly basis.
8.1.3. Bridging and linking social capital

In terms of bridging and linking social capital, three main areas of discussion were found to be relevant for migrants in Duelha. The first concerns general ethnic/religious relations within Syria as a whole, the second concerns the role of the state and the third the role of the church.

Syria is a country with a variety of religious groups, with a primary division between Christians, Muslims and Kurds. The government has promoted secularity for a long time and tensions flare up only occasionally. Although Syrians are influenced by the current conflicts in the Middle East between the Christian (West) and the Muslims (East), this has not led to the collapse of national cohesion within the Syrian population. Although Syrians are aware of the global current events news through the media, satellite, internet and other mass media, there is active contact among people of these diverse backgrounds. There is little prejudice at the level of economic and public sphere interaction. People buy from and sell to each other, children are sent to the same schools and are taught by both Christian and Muslim teachers without any sort of explicit discrimination. Appointments are made with doctors according to their reputation rather than their ethnic background.

However, in the private family sphere, few mixed marriages between Christians and Muslims were found. In Duelha, no cases of intermarriage were found among the respondents in the survey of households. At national level, no sources can be found with statistics indicating intermarriages between people from different religious backgrounds. These results suggest that despite the historical conflicts between so many different ethnic groups in Syria as well as the region, the fact that ordinary people live and grow up together largely takes place without any extreme frictions.

The neighbourhood of Duelha is a mainly Christian one. The background to this situation lies in the situation in rural areas, where the later migrants lived in endogamous villages based on religious beliefs. Consequently, the old and classic neighbourhoods in many Syrian cities have followed a similar pattern. Christians live in clusters near their churches and they construct their own Christian areas. At the same time, there is also a clear blurring of such religious distinctions in Syrian cities, where many middle-class Christian households live in Muslim areas in Damascus and other cities.

The state has been a major institution providing linking capital to the Duelha community, as a result of which people were able to access strategic resources. The government did this in several different ways. The first was based on its tolerance of the illegality of the community established on land designated for farming after which it was turned into a residential area. Rather than increasing its insecurity by threats of removal (as happens regularly elsewhere (van Lindert, 1997), it supported the build-up of the community by providing basic needs such as water, electricity, paved roads and public transportation. This occurred despite the fact that the residents were illegal settlers. Secondly, the Syrian government was a major provider of employment throughout the public sector, to which the Christian community had easy access. Thirdly, the state synergized its other activities by facilitating the building of human capital through the construction of schools, health centres and its leniency towards petty

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47 Syrian identity cards/passports doesn’t discriminate between religious, they don’t mention the citizen religion as the case in many other Arab’s states.
48 As Kaasm illustrated, social norms and values within homogenous village change more slowly than the heterogeneous villages which consists of different religious and ethnic groups (Kaasam 1999: 146).
traders and informal sector economic activities. Finally, the government reduced the vulnerability of low-income households by basic food items and controlling prices.

The role of the local Roman Catholic Church was found to be very important in providing organisational support for the process of bonding the community together. It complemented the state’s role through several support activities and the provision of vital services particularly to the poorest households that were most vulnerable. This was done in the areas of health, education and social services which ensured a basic quality of life for the poorest households.

The church is present in many areas of local life. Although its primary role is cultural in terms of collective spiritual activities, it also has a social role in providing the community with a health care centre and educational and training programs, while being the only physical location suitable for large gatherings for marriage/death rituals. The church provides services to many of the local residents which support their health and education and therefore contribute to their well-being.

8.1.4. Building physical and financial capitals

The strong growth of the Syrian population and rural-urban migration led to a shortage of affordable housing in the 1970s and 1980s. During the period of 1981-1994, more than 65% of the residents in Damascus made use of illegal housing units. The area of Duelha is one of many illegal areas forming a ring around Damascus. Settlement started in Duelha in the early 1970s, when people built houses on existing farmland. Such land was inexpensive and was bought in units of Kassabehs at unit prices of between 105 to 200 SP (3 to 4 USD). Plots were divided up to form Dakhles. The average size of the courtyards on either side of the small side street was found to be four Kassabehs (96 square metres). Dakhlehs were both open leading to other Dakhles or forming cul-de-sacs.

People’s houses were built in the courtyard style with the rooms surrounding an open courtyard. The houses were gradually built and extended. Initially, one family would begin residing in the courtyard. Over the years, nesting strategies caused their male offspring to come and live with their wives and children in the same location, thereby forming an extended family. These types of larger families caused the settlers to extend their homes by building second floors. Because of the constantly changing living situations, many families rent out part of their courtyard. Usually the first floor is rented out while they themselves occupy the second floor.

Population density is very high in such illegal areas. The houses have few decorations and lack ventilation systems. Therefore, during the summer, the living conditions in some houses deteriorate and there is lack of privacy for the inhabitants. Over time, the residents have been able to convince the government to provide them with legalized infrastructural facilities, such as electricity, potable water, a sewerage system, paved roads, street lights, phone lines and garbage collection. This is in stark contrast to the situation in many other developing countries, where local governments have added to the existing insecurity among rural-urban migrants by suddenly evicting citizens or razing unauthorized settlements. The government also provided direct services such as roads and transportation linking Duelha to the rest of the city and the region.
Another physical feature of Duelha which has drawn people to live there is its location, which is favourable for the development of commercial activities. Good road transportation has made Duelha very accessible to many outsiders. This has led to the expansion of the local market area, which has drawn investment into the neighbourhood from elsewhere in the city. This has allowed residents from the local community to use their houses as shops and to obtain their livelihoods from the market for better way of life.

8.2. Interaction between capitals

The capitals that households build up are not independent of each other but can overlap and influence each other in positive or negative spirals. The following figure indicates the potential ways in which capitals can interact.

Figure 8-1: Interaction between capitals

![Diagram showing interaction between human, social, physical, cultural, and financial capitals]

Source: author
Reciprocal relations between capitals which ensure more secure livelihoods can be the result of different strategies and institutional support. For example, building human capital was mainly ensured by the state, which provided local schools, complemented by the local church which mobilized bonding capital to ensure that the most vulnerable group of poor schoolchildren received substantive and material support to remain in school long enough to obtain their diplomas. Thus, the reciprocal relations in building human capital are ensured at the national/city scale by the state, and at the neighbourhood level by the church, which targets poor and educationally vulnerable groups of children.

Such reciprocal relations exist in several areas and is discussed systematically below (Woolcock et al, 2000:11). The section will also show that there is an overlap between the various actors involved. The main actors in households, church and state play a major role in several areas in which households have built up their assets. The section starts by looking at the relationships and overlapping of human capital with the other capitals in the pentagon diagram of the livelihood approach. Later I also discuss the interaction between the other capitals.

**Human / Physical capitals:**

Education, health and employment are the major areas of human capital. The Syrian government is the main provider of education at all levels. In the rural areas, the number of schools was very limited in the 1970s with there only being schools in large villages. The distances discouraged villagers from sending their young children far away. Migrating to the outskirts of Damascus and settling there in Duelha provided a geographical advantage to the residents there, allowing low-income households with a rural background to access higher levels of education easily. This included both the physical and financial access to subsidized higher education such as college and universities.

Living in Duelha also meant improved access to health provisions compared to the rural areas. Damascus has the highest number of hospitals and clinics, including both public and private ones. In addition, within Duelha, low-cost health facilities are available from young aspiring professionals and through the church.

The build-up of human capital was also supported by the physical capital in the form of housing and cheap transportation. The second generation have successfully exploited the available housing to ensure their access to higher levels of education in Damascus as a whole. The infrastructure facilitating transportation is advantageous for the pursuit of studies at several educational levels, starting from community-based schools. The housing system initially provided adequate quality and space for the first generation, but should now be upgraded. The second generation is stimulating this as a result of their higher levels of education and employment which has led them to desire a better physical living environment. Legalisation of the area would enhance this process of improvement, ensuring greater well-being. Later in this chapter this phenomenon will be addressed as one of the most important steps the government has to take.
Human / Financial capitals:

Financial capital is also vital in building up human capital. The money invested in low-income communities is not a trivial sum, but represents a conscious effort on the part of the local community to invest in enhancing their human capital. The effort is made by sacrificing time, funds and energy. People need to invest relatively little to obtain an education as it is, in principle, free although costs for school uniforms, transportation to university and college and stationery remain the responsibility of the families themselves. Local households do show a high rate of expenditure on health, using both public and private health services. Notably, they go to private doctors for minor maladies while being obliged to use the public hospital for operations.

The level of education had a positive impact on the type of employment available to the first generation of residents in Duelha, and less so on the employment preferences of the second generation. The employment rate is high in Duelha both in the public and private sectors, with income generating activities obtained in a variety of ways and strategies. The next section discusses the human capital dependence on the social capital.

Human / Social capitals:

Social capital plays an essential role in obtaining employment in the public, private and informal sectors. Therefore, the increase in human capital depends on the available linking social capital providing access to employment opportunities. For the first generation, the public sector access the Christian community had made the transition from rural to urban areas smoother than would otherwise have been the case.

The ability to tap into other people’s resources through the social network is a very powerful instrument that can be used to find and provide job opportunities. To be educated, to acquire good health and to gain skills and knowledge allows these people to compete for good jobs.

The level of bonding capital was built by the local church so that it had a positive impact on human capital, where the quality of education was supported by remedial educational courses. Additional support was also provided by personal social networks (relatives, neighbours and the nuns), who used their resources by helping needy students to complete their homework where their parents were unable or and incapable of helping, either because of their low level of education or limited time and space.

Human / Cultural capitals:

The values and norms within the local community allocate a very high value to education. Therefore, the value of education as part of human capital was encouraged by existing local cultural capital.
Cultural / Physical capitals:

In Duelha, the phenomenon of living in a local community bound by one religion is not new, especially for inhabitants from rural areas. Many Syrian villages are still organized according to religious denomination. Therefore, religion is a major factor in building the community of Duelha, although the residents are from different regions and villages. The Christian culture in the area has attracted other Christians to come and live there. It has encouraged people to build their houses and shape their Dakhles to facilitate patterns of cohesiveness, by which community members support each other as they did when they first migrated in the 1970s.

As far as cultural norms are concerned, the relation between first and second generations has thrown up many cultural obligations regarding the housing (nesting) and sharing of local habitat.

Cultural / Financial capitals:

The first generation was able to maintain strong ties with the rural way of life as one of their positive strategies, to control expenditures and consumption. On the other hand, the second generation has become vulnerable to an urban culture of consumption that leads them to use many strategies in order to keep themselves “up to date as regards lifestyle” and to feel that they are modern urbanites.

Cultural / Social capitals:

Religion (Christianity) is a major factor in the lives of the local inhabitants of Duelha, and influences the construction of social capital in many areas. They include the role of the local church in bonding social capital, with social activities such as group prayers, catechism meeting and other social activities initiated by the church order and based on religion.

Karaza, a cultural ritual, enhances the status of women in their community and rural-urban networks and consists of visiting married and unmarried sisters back in the villages. This cultural ritual maintains or initiates new social interaction and keeps the women influential within the community.

Generational differences lead to many unique characteristics for each generation in the area of social behaviour and diversifies social interaction between the parent as the first generation and that of their offspring. The worldview of the first generation can be regarded as classical and conservative, that of the second generation as contemporary and modern.
Social / Physical capitals:

Since the 70s, social networking has played a major role in supporting physical capital by building relationships between the local community and local authorities. In doing so, the local community has accelerated the installation of many infrastructural services such as electricity, water and other services. Through the trusted social network with the government the building of houses has been condoned without interference. In addition, through these social connections the local authority has made the road into Duelha safe. Although the area is illegal for residential purposes, the local authorities made no attempt to evict residents. People are able to live in their homes without any danger, even without any documents proclaiming a right to construction on farming land.

Social / Financial capitals:

Obtaining access to credit and income-generating activities also depends greatly on social capital, since many of the local inhabitants lack sufficient cash either because they earn low salaries (public sector) or work in the private or informal sectors as casual workers. Therefore, they used their social networks as a means of generating credit by using rotating savings and credit schemes (Jamieahs). The social networks of family members, neighbours and friends also play an important part in lending cash to each other, as the banks offer very limited possibilities.

8.3. Changes in livelihood and capitals between generations over time

How have livelihood strategies changed over time in Duelha between the first and the second generations?

This study has analysed the livelihood strategies that two different generations within households have built up; namely, the first generation who migrated from various rural areas and their offspring – the second generation – who grew up in a primarily urban environment. Major changes in livelihood strategies occurred between these two generations, and many different strategies were used in order to build their social, cultural, human, physical and financial capitals. The first generation that had migrated from the rural areas during the 1970s reacted differently to their new situation and used different strategies to build up their livelihoods. The following figure summarizes the differences and changes over time between the generations.
8.3.1. First generation’s livelihood strategies

The first generation has dealt with two main issues, namely accessing better education facilities and ensuring better employment by obtaining affordable housing in an unauthorized settlement. They have tended to remain loyal to the rural way of life.

In the area of housing, they accepted provisional facilities while building and extending their houses in stages. Their lifestyle remained rural as regards choices of food, clothing and socializing. In employment they preferred the security of government jobs, although the wages obtained were not very high. Their expenditure patterns show low-level consumption patterns.

The first generation did not have access to very much education in the rural areas and this means that the first generation has much lower education levels than their children, although they do attach a great deal of importance to education. The notion of a large family (and the extended families still exists in the first generation).

The housing patterns were very dense and designed to promote social interaction around the courtyard and side street. The notion of privacy was not important to the first generation since they were used to the rural way of life. The nesting pattern with their own married children is part of the idea of promoting inter-generational responsibility.

Their social interaction and network remain limited to their own extended families and neighbours within the community area. There were no collective social activities in the areas, their contact with the church was very limited apart from participating in social obligations such as weddings and funerals.
8.3.2. Second generation's livelihood strategies

A first difference between the generations is that the second generation has a much higher level of education than their parents and this gives them a higher initial level of human capital with which to pursue their livelihood strategies.

This is further enhanced by their perspective on employment opportunities, in which they show a preference for the private sector rather than the security of the public sector as their parents did. They look for private sector opportunities. These offer higher wages but also higher risks because employment is not guaranteed in the long term. They have made extensive use of their urban social networks with regard to accessing employment opportunities. This fits in with what Rogers and Vertovec say about employment relations in migrant networks; “modern society frequently harnesses and depends upon existing patterns of social relations, or social networks, in their recruitment dynamic, whilst social networks frequently come to own sets of clusters of employment vacancies, i.e. occupational property where kinship, friendships or neighbourhood status are important in obtaining access to employment. Employment relations may serve to reinforce and strengthen social boundaries rather weaken them.” (cited in Grico, 1995:203).

Social networks among the second generation have become a vital asset in Duelha not only as regards helping people to find work, but also to train them in the necessary skills needed for that work. The concept of skilled and unskilled work in the urban informal setting has changed, from an informal family training system to training through the social-network of kin and friends. For example, if the head of the family is a carpenter, his male children may also became carpenters. In the case of Duelha, many friends spread the news of potential work opportunities. In much the same way, many young people are trained informally by helping fathers, uncles, neighbours and friends with house painting, installing electricity and/or construction work.

Members of the second generation have different notions of space and freedom and want more social freedom and spatial privacy in their everyday lives. Large numbers of young people would love to move out of the Duelha area. Some of them feel ashamed to be “living in Duelha”, but the financial burden forces them to expand their access to housing by building more rooms on the second floor and upgrading the courtyards in which their parents live. Young women do not want to live in the same house as their mothers-in-law.

Consumption patterns among the second generation are much higher than those of their parents. They spend money on an urban lifestyle which includes food from shops, clothes and personal expenses such as hair dressing and make up. They follow fashions, but share their assets to keep it all affordable. The culture of the younger generation also differs from that of their parents. Many of the young generation have fallen into the trap of what one could call the “consumer culture”. An interest in consumption is historically and cross-socially universal. However, in a consumer culture the items consumed take on new symbolic value and not merely a material value. It arises most in societies where powerful groups, usually those seeking to accumulate capital, encourage consumers to want more than they need. In a consumer culture, consumption becomes the main form of self-expression. In Duelha, the younger generation is tempted to behave like their European counterparts. However, the notion of globalization in consumer culture goes well beyond the limits the second generation in Duelha sets itself in its liking for material things.
Their culture has also changed in terms of ideas about ideal family size and gender relations. The younger generation wants a smaller family, and has more social interaction between the sexes. Nevertheless, they maintain a strong sense of responsibility towards their parents and their siblings. This notion of social relations as assets produces greater economic security, is a strategic way of adapting to new circumstances which, over time, helps to create assets and reduce the level of vulnerability inside a community.

8.3.3. Migration networks as elements of livelihood strategies

The settlers of Duelha collectively share a common religious background. Their Christian identity is the major cultural capital shaping their social networks within Duelha. For the first generation, the networks are built on a combination of collective Christian heritage (although it is diversified across Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches), and social networks crossing the rural-urban divide. Their links with their villages of origin are far stronger than those of the next generation; illustrated by the yearly holidays they spend in their villages more than the second generation. The second generation has built up more urban-based social networks, linked to their schools, places of work, and within the neighbourhood of Duelha itself. Their links with the natal village of their parents is limited to more important ‘rites de passage’, such as marriages, funerals, and yearly religious holidays.

The type of consciousness and identity migrants in Duelha have built up tend to be linked to ethnic affiliation and territory (their natal place of birth) among the first generation, with several parents going back to their villages after retirement of the husband. The first generation generally has a strong history and awareness of their villages and their imaginations of going back and living there in a greater place is alive among them. The second generation experiences more than their parents the concept of creolization or bricolage. The first generation has kept a more rural attitude reflected in their simpler consumption patterns in everyday life. The second generation has gone far and fast to modern and culturally accepted practices in an urban setting; with their high education, the way they dress, their modern music and different urban culture making the gap with the first generation quite wide. This suggests that there is clash of generations between first/second generation.

Throughout the dissertation, we mentioned the way in which restrictions in the national economy have diminished the role of the big Players, such as transnational corporations. McDonalds, the fast food American chain is not allowed in Syria. Remittances by migrants are important, and are given in both cash and in kind. Many wage employees contribute consumption items to their families in rural areas, both in cash and in kind. As a reward, food products based on agricultural seasons are expected to be received from the villages (such as olive, wheat, and fruits).

Political exchange between rural/urban areas are very limited, as political participation for long period has been dominated by the Ba’ath party, which plays the major role in everyday political life, at the same level in rural and urban areas. Civic society is growing in importance now. As the one party model is still in a very preliminary transition period in terms of letting other parties participate and be active, this was less relevant in this study.

The idea of a Syrian village has to some extent been recreated in the shape of the Dakhles in Duelha. They provide the physical and social space to maintain a rural way of living. Examples of this include the ‘Mastabe’, which functions as a meeting point, where
information will be exchanged, people informally visit, and others are observed and gossip takes place as well. The Mastaba is used more by the first generation, as the second generation uses other localities (bakeries, coffee shops) within the city to encounter other youth.

8.4. Dealing with vulnerabilities

8.4.1. Reducing vulnerabilities

In this study, the strategies members of households have used to build up their livelihoods have been discussed. Throughout the build-up of their capitals in Damascus, households have not only successfully built up their capitals, but also have developed strategies to cope with negative circumstances such as shocks and stresses. In this section, an overview is provided of the most important strategies the local community has developed for reducing their vulnerability.

The first strategy concerns changes in expenditures patterns. These include both reducing expenditures (such as also mentioned by Moser (1998)), as well as systems of sharing consumption goods. Examples of such strategies are using school uniforms and for several years among siblings, and sometimes among friends and neighbors. The same applies to leisure time or festive clothing, especially among members of the young second generation. They have developed sharing strategies among siblings, relatives and friends. Such sharing among friends are found more among women than men.

A second area concerns expenditure and types of food consumed. In lean times, more use is made of traditional homemade food among the first generation. Among the second generation there is more conformation to modern diets and the need for more expensive items.

A second main strategy concerns the way housing and income are pooled and shared. In housing, there are two elements to sharing. Household members (or whole nuclear families) adopt a nesting strategy, and/or the house is rented out to generate additional income, or used as a working place. When family members have money problems or social crises, nesting becomes a vital strategy, including more family members living in one courtyard. This occurs mainly among men and occasionally among women (as the example of the divorced woman returning to her nuclear parent family).

Other households generate income in difficult times by renting out part of their courtyards, as rooms for students and solders and workers, and newcomers’ families, with whom they share facilities, or move to the second floor and renting out the first floor. The alternative of opening a business in the courtyards is very challenging inside the dakhles, although some professionals use their home as productive space for dental care or small grocery stores.

The third strategy concerns the way credit is obtained in times of cash crises and lack of access to formal credit institutions. This is done primarily by making use of rotating saving and credit groups, accessing credit through social ties, and by selling jewelry to a pawnbroker. The rotating savings and credit schemes provide a monthly large amount to one member, and can be accessed twice to the same member, in case of ill health, death, or marriage. Social ties also provide access to credit, as public sector employees have access to formal credit from their union. He or she can ask for a loan and give it to siblings, friends or even neighbors who
need it. On some occasions, women sold their jewelry (mostly collected during the Henna party at marriage, and to lesser degree on other occasions, such graduation, and baptism).

The fourth strategy concerns changes in employment patterns. Women in the 2nd generation took up more employment, and men went for employment through regional migration (to Jordan or Lebanon), taking up more than one job and diversifying in the types of jobs they took up. The number of women working in the private sector rose from 4 % in the first generation to 26 % in the second generation. Many others in the second generation also had more than one job to increase income with the high levels of inflation.

8.4.2. Remaining vulnerabilities

Several areas of vulnerability remain. The first of these concerns the increase in domestic conflicts and the second increased conflicts in congested public spaces. The study found conflicts among family members, and with tenants within courtyards and neighbors several occasion. These social conflicts resulted from the overcrowded conditions in one courtyard, where one household comprising five persons live in one room, and several households share facilities in a courtyard.

In public spaces, drivers, vendors, and pedestrians are in continuous conflict. It is hard to drive and to walk safely, and congested places force pedestrians to walk mainly in the middle of the main road where they run the risk of being felled by cars, vans, and vendors on carts and they even put their products on the sidewalk for selling. Especially children walking to and from schools seem as a river of children in the streets, in danger from the congestion of public space.

A third type of conflict is the clash of generations. The gap between generations has widened so fast, that the existing strict gender relations and the worldviews of parents have become quite different among the second generation of the same household. The concept of respect and other rural values is questioned and another set of definitions has replaced it. This has made father/son relations tense. Mothers are confused on how to adopt a new way of cooking, dressing and maintaining social relations within the household.

A final type of vulnerability is the degree of closure from other communities. The negative impact of the strong bonding social capital found in the local community raised the question of social exclusion as areas of vulnerability, when many individuals still refuse to integrate with others than their community members in social networks. The current transitional period in Syria may also lead to a certain degree of uncertainty and vulnerability, although this remains to be seen.

The strategies local community developed for reducing their vulnerability and the remaining vulnerabilities patterns are summarized in the following table...
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reducing vulnerability</th>
<th>How is it addressed?</th>
<th>Who is involved in the process?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Changes in expenditures patterns;</td>
<td>Individuals (1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Housing nesting / expanding house;</td>
<td>Households (2, 4, 7, 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Using housing as a source of income through rent (also used as pension⁴⁹)</td>
<td>Neighborhood network (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Rotating saving (jamieah);</td>
<td>Private sector (5, 6, 9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. 2nd generation women are employed in private sector</td>
<td>Government (2, 8, 9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Cumul of job (more than one) / ability to diversify</td>
<td>Church (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Jewelry selling as a way of increasing income one time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Rely on social aid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Regional migration for employment as a way of increasing income regularly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Remaining vulnerability</th>
<th>What are they?</th>
<th>Who is involved in the process?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Congested public space increase conflicts on public places</td>
<td>Individuals (1, 2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Increase in domestics conflicts</td>
<td>Households (2, 3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Generations clashes</td>
<td>Neighborhood network (4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Lack of disclosure to other communities</td>
<td>Private sector (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Political economical transitional period let to unknown</td>
<td>Government (1, 5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Church (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: author

### 8.5. Accessing institutions

Institutions are vital instruments in shaping livelihoods. In Syria, important institutions at the national level are found in the public sector, where they play a major role in channelling civic society/state interactions, through their bureaucracy and unions. These national institutional organisations have substituted but also limited the importance of private institutions, local NGOs and other civil society organizations. The Baa'th party is present in most national political, social, economic institutions and unions; therefore, most employees in the public sector are expected to be part of this political body. For example, schoolteachers will

⁴⁹ When first-generation settlers retire in their village of origin, they don't sell/transfer the land/house but keep it as a capital and rent it.
participate in meetings according to their occupational group. An individual who is politically active will have easier access to public employment and more chance for promotion. However, membership in Ba'ath party and its institutions is only recommended for gaining access to public employment and is not compulsory. Presently, many non-Ba'athists may have access to high political and government positions.  

8.6. Building a new model of livelihood strategies

The diagram below symbolizes a new model of livelihood strategies, built up on the experience of the local community of Duelha, incorporating elements which have emerged from the study findings using previous models elaborated on by Rakodi and Lloyd-Jones (2002), and international development agencies which already use their own diagrams according to their preferences and field of interest. The main new elements incorporated in this model are: the importance given to institutions in providing support (or possibly undermining) local livelihood strategies at household level and the changes over time which occur between subsequent generations.

The model includes elements that represent a general situation of the two generations of local community connected directly and indirectly with the national context.

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50 For example the minister of environment was from the commonest party.
Main capitals utilized were cultural capital based on religion, and linking capital through access to educational system and public sector employment. Church provided both social control in neighbourhood as well as social support system for all residents in unauthorized area.

Second generation model

Reducing urban vulnerability through private sector employment. Higher educational capital
Urban lifestyle as cultural capital

L.S = livelihood strategy
H.H = households.
H = human, S = Social, C = Cultural, HP = physical, F = Financial

Source: author
These both diagrams show the different of the input/output and conclusions. The context of the first generation is different in quality and historical realities from the second generation. Therefore, the construction of their livelihood and worldview and strategies for reducing vulnerabilities is not the same.

In addition, the model indicates the major actors that stimulate the process of building capitals. It shows how these strategies have changed over time and by generation and who has reacted to changes in the institutional context at macro level. These changing strategies suggest that managing and improving people’s well-being and reducing vulnerability is not a static project. The model contextualizes and visualizes how actors mobilize assets and enable households in local communities to structure and re-arrange their livelihood strategies.

The structured organization of livelihood outcomes are strongly related to the dynamics of their context. In other words, the strategies of local actors have responded to structural changes at macro level, including national and global realities. In the case of Duelha, these changes have occurred primarily in the domains of political organisation and economics. Social capital played a major part in this process, both bonding capital which provided a basic cohesion among the migrants that became local residents in Duelha and the bridging and linking capital embedded in the supportive relations between the government and the Christian community. These were based on the state ideology of a secular government, and the inclusion of all minority groups. This complemented the notion of trust that has had a considerable impact not only on families and local communities, but also on their wider networks in making many tangible and intangible resources more accessible, in line with the assumptions of Fukuyama (Fukuyama, 1995). The community reacted to the historical changes and maintained a strong affiliation with the state, acquiring privileged access to jobs, facilitating a greater degree of social power, protecting their housing rights and being encouraged to develop their livelihood to higher standards. This notion of trust helped the first generation to form a stable and strong self-Syrian identity, become socially included and have a political voice at the national level. The model suggests that the notions of bridging/linking social capital and governance are essential elements of a new model in order to understand the choices people make and the constraints they experience (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000).

The model allows changes in the political economy context to be made explicit, and for them to be analysed in relation to the strategies of a new generation. Such changes include new types of public management, privatization and state withdrawal from many large-scale industries and services which used to recruit large numbers of people. It also includes regional conditions, the relative rates of employment in public versus private sector and the consumption and lifestyles of the groups involved. The extent to which local communities respond to these regional political and economic contexts can then be matched, and the question addressed of how to achieve sustainable livelihoods and well-being (de Haan, 2000). Is the struggle for everyday living (needs, wants) secured at the community level? Is long-term development guaranteed and can people aspire to their dreams?

Finally, the model suggests that ideas about inclusion and exclusion may be too simple. Social cohesion in the case of Duelha includes both horizontal and vertical networks, which bring their own benefits and limitations which in turn may also be contradictory. This element has been emphasized in the work of Granovetter (Granovetter, 1995), who insisted on the importance not only of horizontal networks (social network based on trust and at community level and of families, kinship, neighbours, local church) but also on the importance of vertical
networks (such as relations with the elite, government organisations and powerful economic interests.

In short, the forms livelihood strategies take cannot be extrapolated over generations, as the standards which each generation develops, change, as well as their political, economic, and social contexts.