

House of Reconciliation

By
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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

ABSTRACT

The Ta'if Agreement signed on October 22, 1989 marked the beginning of the end of the divisive and destructive Lebanese Civil War that had raged since 1975. The civil war was finally ended in March 1991, when the new Lebanese Parliament enacted the General Amnesty Law that stated there were to be no victors and no victims in the war (*la ghalib le maghlub*). Unfortunately, this law allowed the Lebanese people to turn a blind eye to the ugly truths of the war, and it ushered in an era of uneasy silence in Lebanon. Today, as Lebanon's political battle for independence and a unified national identity continues, there is still no government-supported attempt to break this public silence. I believe that this legislated lack of collective/public self-expression has rendered both the local—and the Diaspora populations incapable of reconciliation with their traumatic past, and unable to forge a brighter future. This thesis investigates the unrelenting silence permeating every layer of Lebanese society today and proposes architectural solutions that may help to break the silence and thus reconcile Lebanese to their past.

The core of this study consists of three architectural interventions aimed at breaching this silence. These are put into context through historical analysis, family interviews, photographs, maps, illustrations, and other documents drawn from first person experience, as well as personal narratives of field research to Beirut conducted by the author in the fall of 2005. As such, this thesis probes not just the public—but also a personal struggle to overcome Lebanon's silence. There can be no reconciliation based on silence.

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I am very grateful to my parents, for their incredible help and support, without which I could not have done this. My brother, my cheering section, for his patience, and Mona, I will be forever indebted to her for the opportunities she has provided for me.

DEDICATION

To Mona

A satellite-style map of the Middle East region. The landmasses are shown in shades of brown and tan, with green areas representing vegetation. The Mediterranean Sea is visible on the left, and the Red Sea is on the right. The country of Lebanon is outlined in white, showing its location on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean. The text is overlaid on the left side of the map.

“There’s more to this place than ancient ruins and really good almond pastries.”

Lebanon packs a lot into its modest borders: ancient cities, ski resorts, impressive architecture and striking landscapes are just the start. Then there’s great food (reputedly the best in the region), and great nightlife (Beirut claims to be the party capital of the Middle East).

Dangerous situation:

The security situation in Lebanon remains very uncertain. Violent clashes have taken place on the streets of Beirut and further unrest is predicted. Travellers should exercise extreme caution, avoid any demonstrations and monitor the news for any developments. Beirut airport has reopened but damage from the conflict remains significant throughout the city. The presence of unexploded ordnance is a real threat, particularly in the south.

Lonely Planet Travel Guide

www.lonelyplanet.com

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Fig.0.0 (Opposite) Aerial of the Middle East identifying the Country of Lebanon. Aerial courtesy of Google World 2007.



TOTAL AREA: 10,452 km²

ESTIMATED POPULATION: 3,925,502

ESTIMATED DISPLACED BY CIVIL WAR: 750,000

ESTIMATED TOTAL DIASPORA: 15,000,000



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الحقيقة

TRUTH

CHAPTER 1: ON SILENCE

There is no such thing as an empty space or an empty time. There is always something to see, something to hear. In fact, try as we may to make a silence, we cannot.¹

Lebanon is a country still held hostage by civil war that ended 16 years ago. Recovery and restoration of political life is prevented by the Lebanese' adoption of a tacit code of silence. They prefer to remember the long-past glories of pre-civil war Lebanon, when Beirut was a kind of Paris on the Mediterranean; when it comes to the war that left the country and its capital in ruins, the overwhelming attitude is that "the silence will save us."

The attitude of the Lebanese toward the civil war is not unlike that of the Germans after the end of the Second World War when their country lay in ruins. Hannah Arendt, the German-Jewish political philosopher who left Germany as a refugee in 1933, was stunned when, during a visit four years after the end of the war, she observed the way the Germans dealt (or rather didn't deal) with their past. The evidence of catastrophe was all around them in flattened cities and destroyed families, and yet, as she put it, "nowhere is this nightmare of destruction and horror less felt and less talked about than in Germany itself." She elaborates:

A lack of response is evident everywhere, and it is difficult to say whether this signifies a half-conscious refusal to yield to grief or a genuine inability to feel.

1. John Milton Cage Jr. (September 5, 1912 to August 12, 1992) Was an American composer who pioneered what he termed "chance music" (the non-standard use of musical instruments, and electronic music). He is best known for his 1952 composition 4'33": three movements performed without a single note being played. The sheet music simply reads, "tecet, tecet, tecet," which means silent break. During the presumed silence, the audience becomes aware of their own ambient noise; they become aware of the impossibility of silence.

**After an argument, silence
may mean acceptance—or the
continuation of resistance by
other means.**

Mason Cooley, U.S. aphorist.
City Aphorisms, Twelfth Selection, New York (1993)

Fig. 1.0. (Opposite) Photograph taken during the Independence 2005 protest in Place des Martyrs by An Nahar.



Fig. 1.1. A photograph depicting a common yet surreal scene that was circulated on the internet in the summer of 2005. The image is of Lebanese tourists sunning themselves by the pool within view the ruins of the St.. George, covered in tattered political banners.



Fig. 1.2. Winner of the World Press Photo 2007. By Spencer Platt (Getty Images)

Amid the ruins, Germans mail each other picture postcards still showing the cathedrals and market places, the public buildings and bridges that no longer exist. And the indifference with which they walk through the rubble has its exact counterpart in the absence of mourning for the dead, or the apathy with which they react, or rather, fail to react, to the fate of the refugees in their midst. This general lack of emotion, at any rate this apparent heartlessness, sometimes covered over with cheap sentimentality, is only the most conspicuous outward symptom of a deep-rooted, stubborn, and at times vicious refusal to face and come to terms with what really happened.²

The puzzle of German behavior in the post-war years continued to fascinate Arendt throughout her life. In a 1959 talk in Hamburg, she noted that, faced with a disaster such as the Nazi tyranny and the Second World War, “the temptation was particularly strong, in the face of a seemingly unendurable reality, to shift from the world and its public space to an interior life, or else simply to ignore that world in favour of an imaginary world ‘as it ought to be’ or as it once upon a time had been.” But what was perhaps a totally understandable coping mechanism during wartime had not ceased after 1945. People continued to act as though the years from 1933 to 1945 had never been, “as though everything depended on forgetting the ‘negative’ aspect of the past and reducing horror to sentimentality.”³

In regards to its own post-war coping, Lebanon in the 1990s was not much different from Germany in the late 1940s and 1950s. The signing of the Ta’if Agreement⁴ on October 22, 1989 marked

2. Hannah Arendt, “The Aftermath of Nazi Rule: Report from Germany,” in Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954*, Jerome Kohn ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1994), 249.

3. Hannah Arendt, “On Humanity in Dark Times,” in Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), 19.

4. Ta’if Agreement: Negotiated in Ta’if Saudi Arabia by the surviving members of the 1972 Lebanese parliament, the Ta’if Agreement covered political reform, the ending of the Lebanese Civil War, the establishment of special relations

the beginning of the end of the Lebanese Civil War and the passing of the General Amnesty Law in March 1991 effectively ended it. This Amnesty law ushered in an era of silence for the Lebanese people. The terms of the General Amnesty Law, which had as its basic tenet a “no victor and no victim” (*la ghalib le maghlub*) mentality, suggested that widespread silence and forgetting was a viable foundation for a new civil society. This legislated amnesia, which totally ignored the reality of crimes committed and atrocities suffered, allowed Lebanese to close their eyes to the ugly truths of the civil war, an opportunity most were more than happy to seize. After 1991, if Lebanese talked at all about the civil war, they referred to it as *le waratoona* (“that which we forcibly inherited”) or *beghenah a’nnah* (“that which was thrust upon us”). Such phrases were part of a widely-adopted rhetoric that stressed that the political conflicts of other nations—Syria, Israel, and Palestine—had been played out on Lebanese soil, and that consequently the Lebanese people bore no responsibility for what had happened.⁵

The postcards on sale in Beirut since the end of the civil war are as telling as the postcards for sale in Germany after 1945; in the cafés, cigar shops, bookshops, libraries, hotels, etc., they don’t just sell postcards of idealized pre-war images but of idealized images of sites that no longer even exist, and haven’t for thirty years. Examples include: the *Corniche*, the cliffs that fall from the western side of the city into the Mediterranean; *Les Plages*, the sandy beaches that once dotted the old waterfront; and of course, *Place des Martyrs*, the old hub of Beirut with its palm-lined plaza and manicured gardens. Walking around Beirut today belies the images on these “once upon a better time” postcards. The *Corniche* was built up illegally during the civil war, and is now covered with a string of charmless hotels and storefronts. *Les Plages* suffered a similar fate, having been paved over during the same period, losing even the shoreline promenade which used to be the city’s pedestrian lovers’ lane. *Place des Martyrs* has been

between Lebanon and Syria, and a framework for the beginning of complete Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon. It was signed on October 22, 1989.

5. A belief by the citizens that Lebanon was and is nothing more than a stage on which the regional and global powers battle each other.



Fig. 1.3. Postcard: Beyrouth - Les Plages.



Fig. 1.4. Postcard: Beirut Lebanon - Place des Martyrs.

transformed from a bucolic respite in the centre of the downtown to a rubble-strewn wasteland. To be sure, postcards that depict this new Beirut are available, but they are hard to find and vastly outnumbered by their nostalgic counterparts.

Contemporary developments elsewhere around the world suggest that a different and more constructive approach to the problem of reconciliation could have been possible. As the Lebanese were attempting to stitch their society back together by means of silence and convenient fictions, South Africans of all races tried to come to terms with the poisonous legacy of Apartheid. At first, it appeared that South Africa was going to follow the path Lebanon had chosen: “Let’s forget the past! What’s done is done!” Nelson Mandela and F. W. de Klerk exclaimed in the initial enthusiasm of the moment when they first joined hands, not as opponents, but as partners.⁶ But fortunately, things were to continue differently from there. The former prisoner, the former jailer, and their countrymen quickly realized that while this rhetoric of forgiving and forgetting might send a useful message that a new beginning was being made, it was not very helpful in healing the deep wounds created by the profound suffering both Apartheid and the struggle against Apartheid had generated. Therefore the South African government decided that before the past would be forgotten, it ought to be accurately remembered, and recorded. There would be no reconciliation based on silence. In one of his first acts as President, Mandela set up the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (TRC) to help deal with what had happened under Apartheid. The TRC recognize that conflicts during this period had resulted in violence and human rights abuses from all sides. No section of society escaped these abuses and therefore all were asked to come forward with their stories and their confessions. In their analysis of the Final Report of the TRC, the American legal scholars Eric Yamamoto and Susan Serrano describe how storytelling made a political difference in South Africa:

6. Eric K. Yamamoto and Susan K. Serrano, “Healing Racial Wounds: The Final Report of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission,” in Roy L. Brooks, *When Sorry is not Enough: The Controversy over Apologies and Reparations for Human Injustice* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1999), 493.

Lucas Baba Sikwepere described the last time he saw the world. At a regional hearing of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, he told of his escape in 1985 from a political conflict near Cape Town. After police fired shots into a group of South African blacks, Sikwepere attempted to flee. "[W]hen I arrived at the place when I thought now I am safe, I felt something hitting my cheek... I felt my eyes itching... I was scratching my eyes, I wasn't quite sure what happened to my eyes." Sikwepere also told the Commission of later beatings by the police with electric ropes, of suffocation, and of being forced into an empty grave. And he expressed relief in finally recounting those traumatic events: "I feel that what has been making me sick all the time is the fact that I couldn't tell my story. But now—it feels like I got my sight back by coming here and telling you the story."

"Telling the story" is an important step in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's ongoing effort at racial reconciliation. Storytelling by victims and perpetrators, the Commission hopes, will be therapeutic. It will build a new "truth" upon which relationships central to the nation's health can be reforged. At the same time, the Commission acknowledges that storytelling is only the beginning of a long and difficult healing process. To move the country towards reconciliation, white and black South Africans need to acknowledge appropriate responsibility for past wrongs, both as individuals and as group agents.⁷

Hannah Arendt's work provides the foundations would have approved of the aims and methods of the TRC, for she too had talked about the need to fully disclose the past in the present as the only way to "master the past":

7. *Ibid.*, 492.

We can no more master the past than we can undo it. But we can reconcile ourselves to it. The form of this is the lament, which arises out of all recollection. It is, as Goethe has said (in the Dedication to *Faust*), “Pain arises anew, lament repeats / Life’s labyrinthine, erring course.” The tragic impact of this repetition in lamentation affects one of the key elements of all action; it establishes its meaning and that permanent significance which then enters into history. In contradistinction to other elements peculiar to action—above all to the preconceived goals, the impelling motives, and the guiding principles, all of which become visible in the course of action—the meaning of a committed act is revealed only when the action itself has come to an end and become a story susceptible to narration. Insofar as any “mastering” of the past is possible, it consists in relating what has happened.⁸

In the case of the genocidal crimes perpetrated by the Nazi regime, reparations and amnesty seemed futile, and so Arendt did not consider these viable. Hence to her, “telling the story” was the best one could hope for. However, in the case of Apartheid, all interested parties agreed that reparations *were* possible. Therefore the mandate of the TRC reached beyond allowing people to bear witness. On the basis of a full confession of the truth, the TRC could grant amnesty to the perpetrators of crimes relating to human rights violations, and it could also oversee matters of reparation and rehabilitation.

Sadly, Lebanon never established anything like a TRC, and for almost a decade after the end of the civil war the painful past remained buried. Then, on October 10, 2000, the Beirut daily newspaper *An-Nahar* broke with the tradition of silence and convenient fiction when it published a public letter of apology by former Lebanese Forces official Assa’ad Shaftari⁹. In his letter Shaftari apologized to all his “living or dead” victims for “the

8. Arendt, “On Humanity in Dark Times,” in Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, 21.

9. Lebanese Forces: A Lebanese political party and a former militia, which fought on the Christian side during the civil war that ravaged Lebanon between 1975 and 1990.

ugliness of war and for what I did during the civil war in the name of Lebanon” or the “cause” or “Christians”. Shaftari’s, and *An-Nahar*’s, actions were rightly seen as a breach of the self-imposed silence by the Christian militia leaders, as well as all former high-ranking militiamen of other sects.

Shaftari was the first official to publicly challenge the “no victor and no victim” fiction that shaped public discourse in post-civil war Lebanon. Shaftari pronounced that it was time to reconsider the blanket amnesty that had been given without a proper accounting of the crimes that were the subject of that amnesty. Shaftari expressed the hope that his public apology would encourage others to come clean about their involvement in the civil war, as well as the belief that this was “the only way out of the Lebanese distress and that it will clean souls of hatred and ill will and the pain of the past.”¹⁰

Unfortunately, Shaftari’s piece did not cause the hoped-for wave of public confessions and reconciliation with others. The letter, sadly, went largely unnoticed, except by a handful of other politicians who remarked that his apologies were not genuine and were merely cynical ploys to garner him attention. In response to them, Shaftari planned to publish more elaborate accounts of his experiences and thoughts, but due to the January 2002 murder of his former Lebanese Forces militia commander, Elie Hobeika, the letters were held back a year. Finally, another daily newspaper, *Al-Hayat*, published them on February 14, 15, and 16, 2003.

Shaftari’s published letters present an interesting and unique example of public remembrance. Three themes dominate the letters: the difficulties of remembering the war, memories from Shaftari’s youth and upbringing, and memories from the war.¹¹ For example, Shaftari talked about his childhood and then attempted to trace the cause of the hatred towards his Muslim compatriots. He described the neighbourhoods he grew up in and acknowledged that his community played a large role in shaping his bias towards “them (the Muslims)”, and added that, “at the time I did not know where

10. Sune Haugbølle, “Looking the Beast in the eye: Collective Memory of the Civil War in Lebanon” (Ph.D. diss., University of Oxford, 2005), 38-41.

11. *Ibid.*, 43.

these feelings of tension and factionalism came from.” Aware of the potentially upsetting nature of his letters, Shaftari emphasized that the point of them was “to relate this trial to those who did not live it without embellishing... and [that] the truth needs to be said in order for us to deserve the forgiveness of our children.... The war was both ugly and complicated and the difficulties surrounding it many.”¹²

A beginning must be made somewhere, and Shaftari’s account of the war can be seen as an attempt to begin a dialogue through the sharing of memories and confessions of involvement in the civil war in the hopes that his action would start the country on a path towards reconciliation. His intention was to be the first voice in a nation-wide collection of “confessions” or perspectives that would begin a much-needed dialogue with the “other”, ultimately leading to reconciliation through understanding and tolerance of difference. Shaftari’s story is only one of hundreds of thousands of personal stories that constitute the war. These individual personal memories make up a collective, but still dispersed, national memory of the war. Reconciliation cannot therefore be achieved by mediating the sectarian and political groupings; reconciliation is only possible through a certain consciousness of the role of the individual. The editor of *An-Nahar* later commented that by publishing Shaftari’s letters of apology, he was seeking to encourage others to display the same courage that Shaftari had mustered in revealing what he called “[his] truth of the war”, and that in time, he hoped it would be possible to publish other “truths” as well.¹³

Yet a newspaper like *An-Nahar* can only go so far in becoming a forum of truth and reconciliation. Its business is varied: to make money for shareholders, to report on breaking stories, to entertain the public, and so on. If Shaftari’s example is to be followed, Lebanon needs its own version of the TRC. If and how such an institution might arise amidst the fractured politics of today’s Lebanon is difficult to say. The prospects are not good. Yet, as an aspiring architect who belongs to the Lebanese Diaspora, I can at least try to make my own contribution. By considering the issue of

12. Ibid., 43-44.

13. Ibid., 49.

truth and reconciliation from an architectural and urban point of view, I might, perhaps trigger Lebanon's imagination of what could be, of a society that does not hide from the truth about itself, but which places that truth, un-mastered and un-masterable as it may be, firmly at its center—not as a static monument for politicians to visit once a year and a “must” for foreign tourists, but as a dynamic institution that is fully embedded in the fabric of ordinary life.

I began my investigation into how this might be achieved by considering what others have already done to provide such a means of catharsis. I was inspired by Samir Khalaf, a well-known Lebanese public intellectual who teaches at the American university of Beirut (AUB) and believes that artists and others can help the Lebanese find a voice:

People in pain are often bereft of the resources of speech. It is not surprising that the language for pain should in such instances often be evoked by those who are not themselves in pain but by those who speak on behalf of those who are (...) By mobilizing aesthetic sensibilities and other artistic energies and popular cultural expressions in everyday life, they (urban planners, architects, intellectuals and humanists) can do much more to arouse the public to redeem its maligned heritage. More important, they can prod the Lebanese to turn outward and transcend their parochial identities to connect with each other.¹⁴

Indeed, artists are far ahead of politicians in addressing Lebanon's need for reconciliation. Individual experiences of the civil war, which both address and transcend sectarian boundaries are evident in the written biographies, films, and art that have been produced in the years since the cease-fire. The memories and narratives expressed in such works have begun to breach the subject of the civil war and the ghosts that continue to surround it.

¹⁴ Samir Khalaf, *Beirut Reclaimed: Reflections on Urban Design and the Restoration of Civility* (Beirut: Dar an-Nahar, 1993), 126.



Fig. 1.5. Nada Sehnaoui's installation "Fractions of Memory" was installed at Place des Martyrs in the summer of 2003.



Fig. 1.6. Nada Sehnaoui's "Fractions of Memory."

For example, in the summer of 2003, Nada Sehnaoui, an artist who is well known in Lebanon for her paintings and art installations about the civil war, encouraged members of the public to bring her their memories of pre-war Beirut. Her resulting exhibit, titled "Fractions of Memory" (Fig.1.5.), was installed outdoors at *Place des Martyrs*, the old city centre and the symbolic place of fracture between the different parties during the civil war. The exhibit featured a wide range of individual personal recollections of the beginnings of the civil war, typed and pasted onto stacks of newspapers (Figs.1.6.). Sehnaoui's exhibit attempted to collect and publicly present many individual memories of the war all together in order to begin a dialogue that would encourage visitors to reflect on—and perhaps even share experiences of the civil war as an event that has touched every Lebanese man, woman, and child, but that people are so reluctant to discuss.¹⁵

Similarly, in 2001, the artist couple Joana Hadjithomas & Khalil Joreige explored the ideas of fragmenting memory, fabricated myths and personal recollection in an exhibition called "Circle of Confusion" (Fig.1.7.). They took a vast aerial photograph of the city of Beirut, cut it into thousands of fragments, and then laid the fragmented photograph out on a mirror that measured 3 x 4 meters. Each visitor to the exhibition was encouraged to remove the fragment of the image with which he or she strongly connected. As the image eroded, slowly revealing more and more of the mirror underneath it, visitors could see themselves reflected back into the remaining image of the city. Slowly, it became clear that no single fragment could possibly represent the city in its entirety or complexity, and that Beirut is in fact a sum of individual and fragmented memories. The overall image exists as an abstraction, a grain, a rough photographic matter, and a discrete object that over time becomes imbued by the visitors with their collective memories. As such, Beirut ceases to exist as a single reality but rather as an aggregate of pasts and presents, utopias and dystopias.¹⁶

15. Nada Sehnaoui, "Installations - Fractions of Memory," a description of the installation, by Nada Sehnaoui. January 22, 2007. http://www.nadasehnaoui.com/PRIMARY_MAIN_PAGES/INSTALLATIONS_MAIN_PAGES/FRACTIONS_OF_MEMORY.htm (accessed July 10, 2007).

16. Joana Hadjithomas & Khalil Joreige, Larys Frogier, *Vital Space*, catalogue

Another one of their works, titled “Wonder Beirut: the story of a pyromaniac photographer” (Fig.1.8.-Fig.1.9.), addresses the artists’ misgivings about the “truth” of published information and how it contributes to collective memory. Hadjithomas & Joreige began with a series of postcards depicting images of Beirut’s sites before the civil war. Naturally, these postcards—still on sale in Beirut today—no longer represent the reality of the places depicted on them, but a pre-war memory. Then the artists invented the character of Abdallah Farah, a postcard photographer whom the artists supposedly met in the 1990s. Farah was said to have published a series of photographs of Beirut’s tourist attractions in the late 1960s, but after the civil war broke out, Farah started burning and damaging the negatives that had produced his postcards, first mirroring and eventually outdoing the destruction he saw around him. Hadjithomas & Joreige have “re-issued” these burnt images as a new set of postcards, full of tears, bubbles, scorch marks, and lacunae. As with “Circle of Confusion”, the visitor is encouraged to take these postcards away, for they might function as a reminder of what lies behind recent architectural reconstructions, or perhaps even constitute a perverse act of triumph over adversity.¹⁷

Other Lebanese artists and filmmakers such as Akram Zaatari¹⁸ and Walid Raad¹⁹ have transformed their personal childhood experiences of the civil war in Beirut into critical and moving works that represent traumatic events of collective historical significance. One of Zaatari’s most notable works is a documentary film titled “This Day” (2004). It presents a brilliantly composed montage of

exposure, Rennes: Shouted the center of contemporary art, 2001.

17. Joana Hadjithomas & Khalil Joreige, “Story of the Pyromaniac Photographer”, in *Cabinet Magazine: The Sea* issue 16, (Winter 2005), 37.

18. Akram Zaatari is a film-maker, artist and curator living in Beirut. He is the author of over 30 videos and video-installations. He is a founding member of the Arab Image Foundation (Beirut), which is relevant in the development of his current, research-based work surrounding the photographic, image-based history of the Middle East while serving as a platform for a series of exhibitions and publications.. His work captures his fascination with Beirut and the history of the civil war with obsessions with the city, a reworking of the war experience, a subtle play with reality and fiction.

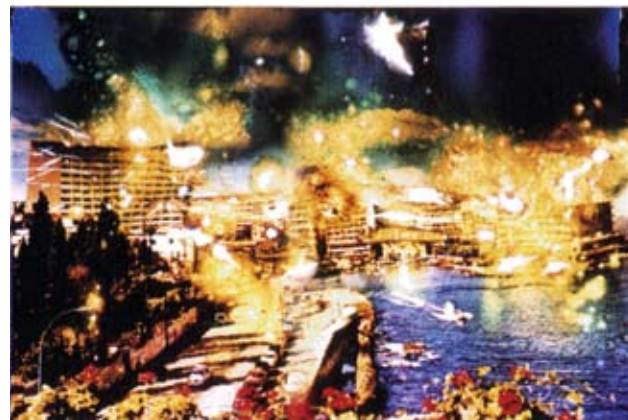
19. Walid Raad is a media artist as well as a Professor of photography and art at Cooper Union. His works to date include video, photography and literary essays.



Fig. 1.7. The 2001 “Circle of Confusion” installation by Joana Hadjithomas & Khalil Joreige.



Fig. 1.8. The destruction of Place des Martyrs depicted in a burned postcard negative. From the exhibition titled “Wonder Beirut: the story of a pyromaniac photographer” by Joana Hadjithomas & Khalil Joreige.





old photographs, personal diaries written during the civil war, and images of daily life from Beirut, Amman, Damascus, and the Syrian desert that capture the stereotypes of city and desert life. In another work, titled “Saida: June 6, 1982” (2004), Zaatari revisits the day in his youth when the Israeli army invaded Lebanon, by re-working six photographs that he had taken on that day documenting the air strikes just over the hill from his house (Fig.1.10.). In this way, Zaatari is able to convey and preserve history and memory based on incommunicable, personal experiences from daily life.²⁰ Raad, an accomplished videographer, writer, and photographer has a similar

20. David Cranswick, “Digital Experimentation: Cultural Reciprocity”, in *RealTime Magazine* issue 72, (April-May 2006), 28.

Fig. 1.9. (Opposite) From the exhibition titled “Wonder Beirut: the story of a pyromaniac photographer” by Joana Hadjithomas & Khalil Joreige. The image depicts a progression of images documenting through the burning of postcards the destruction of the resort hotels in Downtown Beirut.

Fig. 1.10. (Above) Akram Zaatari’s 2004 work titled, “Saida: June 6, 1982” compiled from a series of images that were taken by the artist as a teenager.



Fig. 1.11. Walid Raad. *Untitled and/or artillery I*. 2005. Chromogenic print. Courtesy of the artist and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.

approach to documenting memory and selective recollection. In his work, “We Decided To Let Them Say ‘We Are Convinced’ Twice.” In “It Was More Convincing This Way”, Raad revisits a series of 15 photographs he took of military activity in West Beirut from his home in the eastern district (Fig.1.11.). Re-issued as large-scale prints, these specifically recall the Israeli Army’s invasion and siege of Beirut in the summer of 1982. These photographs, recently reprinted off now degraded negatives, reveal unusual discoloration, creases, and holes offering a disturbing but realistic representation of a broken world rendered flat by the series of catastrophes that has befallen it.²¹ Both Zaatari’s and Raad’s works address the concerns of the collective and selective histories of Lebanon with a particular emphasis on the civil war, the representation of traumatic events of collective historical dimensions, and the ways film, video, and photography function as documents of physical and psychological violence.

Writers have also greatly contributed to the cause of truth for reconciliation. A handful of authors have integrated the war in their novels and have addressed the traumas, absurdities, and destruction of the built environment in a personal, fair, and poignant way. Writers such as Jean Said Makdisi²², Ghada Samman²³, Hoda

21. Walid Raad, “Paula Cooper Gallery,” <http://www.paulacoopergallery.com/artists/wr/wr.html> (accessed June 18, 2005).

22. Jean Said Makdisi’s civil-war memoirs titled *Beirut Fragments* is an intensely personal yet timelessly crafted portrait of life in a worn-torn city of Beirut which spans the years of the civil war in Lebanon between 1975-1990. When thousands fled, Jean Said Makdisi chose to stay. She raised three sons, taught English and Humanities at Beirut University College. She records the breakdown of society and the physical destruction of Beirut, the massacres of Sabra and Shatila, the Israeli Invasion, everyday acts of terrorism, the struggle to maintain ordinary routines amid chaos, and the incredible spirit of a people. A Palestinian, a Christian, a woman who has lived in Jerusalem, Cairo, the United States, and Beirut, Jean Said Makdisi uses the migrations of her own life as a paradigm which helps elucidate many of the conflicts in the region. The new afterward covers the postwar years, from the last ceasefire to the present day.

23. Ghada Samman is regarded by many Arabic literature critics as one of the most prominent Syrian women writers of fiction. She began to write in the early 1960s and was a journalist and columnist in Beirut during the civil war. She has written over thirty volumes of short stories, novels, poetry and non-fiction. In her 1976 novel titled, *Beirut Nightmares*, Samman The pet shop, which the writer-narrator-protagonist repeatedly visits in both her dreams and when awake, comes to function as an extended political allegory, recreating in microcosm the socio-

Barakat²⁴, and Elias Khoury²⁵ have crafted novels depicting the experience of the quotidian during the civil war through fiction and non-fiction storytelling. Hashim Sarkis explains that they are “able to capture the unusual historic and spatial attributes of a city at war with itself.”²⁶

These novelists manage to successfully narrate the war by framing it not only within Beirut’s myth of cyclical destruction, but by telling stories of the war from the intimate point-of-view of individual characters. In so doing, these works can be universally appreciated by all people from all sides in the conflict.

Though the voices of writers, artists, and filmmakers are valuable and significant, and have already started to do the important work of sensitively and intelligently beginning a dialogue about the civil war, few architects have responded accordingly. To my mind, many architects see the civil war as either something to be completely erased, ignored in restorations, or fetishized at a superficial graphic level, that is, in choosing to “remember” the war by recreating the architecture which resulted from it (i.e. deliberately composed ruins and architecture with a war theme). A prime example of this is a bar in Beirut’s Gemayzeh district, called “1975” (Fig.1.12.). The bar’s owner and designer is rumoured to be Ziad Al Rahbani, a famous Lebanese playwright who openly opposes the corrupt government. The bar is

economic and class conditions in Lebanon at the beginning of the war, exposing the superficial, hypocritical, and exploitative aspects of pre-war Lebanon.

24. Hoda Barakat is one of the most original voices in modern Arabic literature. Born in 1952, she graduated from Beirut University in 1975 with a degree in French literature. All her novels (so far) have been set during the Lebanese civil war and constructed around a male figure living on the margins of society. *The Stone of Laughter*, which won the Al-Naqid prize, was the first Arabic novel to have a gay man as its central character. Another of her novels, *The Tiller of Waters*, won the Naguib Mahouz Medal for Literature.

25. Elias Khoury is a renowned journalist, literary critic, and novelist. He is considered one of the leading contemporary Arabic intellectuals and writers. His literary work include, eleven novels, dealing with subject matters pertaining to the Lebanese Civil War and the Palestinian plight. *The Kingdom of Strangers*, published in 1996, shows the Lebanese capital, the scene of warring historical and political powers, break apart at the seams of its various ethnic groups, languages, and religions sects during the civil war.

26. Hashim Sarkis, “Beirut, the novel,” in *Parachute: Contemporary Art Magazine*, issue 108, (October 1, 2002). 132-143.



Fig. 1.12. 1975 bar in Beirut's Gemayzeh District just south-east of Beirut Central District.

designed as a caricature of a bomb shelter with bullet holes, Lebanese propaganda graffiti, floor seating, and foam-stuffed “sand bags”—all the trappings one needs to relive the civil war from an ironic distance while having a cocktail with friends.

Unfortunately, such projects do nothing to reconcile the Lebanese people to the war that happened in their streets. Kitsch is not enough. Shaftari’s public confessions and the works of many of the Lebanese artists and writers have begun “mastering” the Lebanese Civil War through narration, but the Lebanese government does not support their actions institutionally. Furthermore, most of the Lebanese artists whom I have discussed are living in the Diaspora, and many people who live in Lebanon see them as outsiders, supported by the foreign countries in which they permanently reside. Their narratives are often criticized as primarily reflecting the interest of the Diaspora and therefore not particularly relevant to the public and the daily life of the country itself. Furthermore, most books are read in private and most exhibitions and films are quite ephemeral; they are not nearly as public or “in your face” as is a building is. This is why I believe architects have a responsibility as shapers of the built environment to deal with the true subject matter of the civil war and the scarred psychological

landscape lurking just below the surface of the Lebanese people.

Beirut does not need more architectural fakery or civil war memorials. Post-civil war architecture must go beyond the memorial, which is eternally in danger of externalizing and localizing the traumas of war in a piece of stone. It must go beyond its current trend of absolving people of the burden of remembrance through restoration efforts such as the recent large-scale restoration of Beirut's downtown. Such restorations merely "rewind" architecture to the easier times prior to the civil war or even to a period that may not have ever existed. Architecture must take on a new leadership role of not only gathering and presenting a range of individual narratives, but also of catalyzing public recollection and discussion in the service of a unified national identity. A physical repository or vessel is required to collect, encourage, and, as Samir Khalaf has suggested, to "prod" people into sharing their memories and experiences in a space for the voice.

Thinking about such a centre of speech on the ruins of silence, one might ask about the possible role of architecture and urban design in the whole discourse of uncovering the truth, of storytelling. In her classic study, *The Human Condition* (1958), Hannah Arendt suggests that politics, as it is embodied in speech and action, can only exist when a community creates what she defines as a "space of appearance."²⁷ In his *Architectural Principles in the Age of Historicism* (1991) Robert Jan van Pelt further analyzes the architectural and urban articulation of Arendt's "space of appearance" in ancient Athens, the place where a politics based on the clash of competing discourses developed. He suggests that the cemetery, the Acropolis, and the Agora provided a triad of a) a past accurately remembered (Stela or cemetery), b) a future envisioned in common (Acropolis), and c) a present fairly contested by all (Agora) that framed and energized Athenian political life. According to van Pelt, the actual location, mutual relationship, and architectural articulation of these three sites mattered greatly in providing a possibility for politics to take place.²⁸

27. Hannah Arendt, "Power and the Space of Appearance," in Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 199.

28. Robert Jan van Pelt, "Athenian Assurance," in Robert Jan van Pelt and Carrol William Westfall, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Historicism* (New Haven and

Can we really imagine a situation in Lebanon in which architecture and urbanism would matter politically as a true “space of appearance” in Arendt’s sense? Can we imagine an architecture and urbanism that would offer space to those who would want to follow Shaftari’s example? Can we imagine a possibility to create a space of the voice, in the middle of a landscape of silence? And if all of this were possible, where would one begin?

At the 1993 “Recovering Beirut” conference held at MIT, Lebanese Architect and MIT Professor Hashim Sarkis²⁹ presented a paper on the opportunities and obstacles that faced Lebanese urban planners who aimed to reshape a built environment that had been destroyed by war. In the first part of his paper, Sarkis studies a short-lived proposal made by the newly re-instated Lebanese Parliament immediately following the end of the civil war to rebuild the government complex to house the president, cabinet, and parliament on “neutral” ground determined by precedents set both prior to—and during the civil war. A neutral site would guarantee that whatever was built on it would play a large role in orchestrating and transforming the social life of Lebanese society, thus ensuring the prevention of another civil war. Sarkis links the rise of the local politically confessional factions in downtown Beirut and the rest of the country with the migration of the Presidential palace—the symbol of political power—between 1958 to 1967. With the absence of a unified government presence these factions began to define the new boundaries and occupied territories of Beirut. The *Kataeb* (The Lebanese Phalangists) drew the demarcation line in 1975 immediately west of the headquarters just east of *Place des Martyrs*. The line identified the territory between the *Kataeb* and their Muslim opponents.³⁰ Soon, this line would stretch out spreading the violent rupture of the city along the road to Damascus splitting Beirut into East and West Beirut. Sarkis states that the government’s obsession at the end of the war with identifying neutral space, for fear of creating a symbolic imbalance,

London: Yale University Press, 1991), 183-210.

29. Hashim Sarkis, “Territorial Claims: Architecture and Post War Attitudes Toward the Built Environment,” in Samir Khalaf and Philip S. Khoury, *Recovering Beirut* (Leiden, 1993), 104.

30. Kamal S. Salibi, *Modern History of Lebanon*, (New York: Caravan Books, 1977). 44..

only served to assert the division imposed throughout the civil war. He goes on to postulate that had the government chosen to inhabit or negotiate a position within “the territories of labeled or tainted regions, resurrecting and reinhabiting such spaces could be easily infused, with a reawakened sense of collective memory.”³¹ The government could apply this approach across the entire country to diffuse territorial claims by establishing its presence, not in the gaps between territories but in each one of the militia influenced territories, and in each one of them differently. Architecture can begin to redefine the relationship between the state and the differently groups across the country not so much by representing a confirmed image of the state, but by reinterpreting the presence or need for the state in each area; a simultaneous coexistence of local and national identities can “coexist in the same building, in the same room.”³²

In the published proceedings following the conference, Sarkis added an additional statement to his paper titled “Epilogue: On the ‘Space Of The Voice.’” In this document Sarkis addressed Richard Sennett’s observation made during the conference that providing a “neutral space” did not guarantee reconciliation. The renowned urban sociologist claimed that one did not just need a “neutral” space, but “to the understanding of the potential of the resolution of difference in conflict”³³ as well: a space of dialogue, a “Space of the Voice.” Sarkis admitted that his failure to address the potential of dialogue stemmed from the deep-rooted reluctance of Lebanese to speak about the civil war.

The discovery of Sarkis’ epilogue and particularly Sennett’s observation of there always being a voice in response of the times intrigued me. It dictates that one should not begin with selecting an appropriate site and formulating of a center of truth. I had to do the kind of homework Sarkis had failed to do—preliminary investigations that would make it possible to understand what a “Space of the Voice” might be. First I had to learn to listen. I had to begin at home.

31. Hashim Sarkis, “Territorial Claims: Architecture and Post War Attitudes Toward the Built Environment,” in Samir Khalaf and Philip S. Khoury, *Recovering Beirut* (Leiden, 1993) 109.

32. *Ibid.*, 123-124.

33. *Ibid.*, 125.



CHAPTER 2: ON SPEECH AND EVASION

When it comes to addressing the Lebanese Civil War and its effects on the country's citizens, silence reigns within every community and every family: between brothers, father and son, mother and daughter. I am a twenty-seven year old Lebanese-Canadian and my life has been, both directly and indirectly, shaped by the civil war and the silence surrounding it. My siblings and I were brought up on the myths of Lebanon's enchanting splendour before the civil war. More recently discussions of the country's reconstruction troubles have supplemented the myths. But never—not once—did our parents speak of the civil war itself. By reading between the lines my brother and I had been able to figure out that our parents had expedited their marriage in order to save them from further involvement in the civil war, but we never enquired into their specific involvements. We didn't realize it at the time, but the shadow of the civil war and its subsequent silence underlay every conversation and every decision of our family, at least until very recently. When we lived in Africa in the 1980s—during the fiercest fighting in Lebanon—we never asked. When we were told of our move back to Lebanon in 1992—a year after the official end of the civil war—we never asked. Even when we returned back to Canada in late 1994—during Lebanon's worst period of recession—we never asked. Finally, two years ago, during the live broadcast of the independence rally on Monday, February 28, 2005, things began to change, at least in my family. The veil of silence surrounding the civil war began to slip.

That Monday, in our living room in Hamilton, Ontario, my family and I watched our country in the throes of revolution. Only five days earlier we had seen 25,000 people demonstrating outside the Lebanese parliament building in Beirut, demanding the government's resignation. Thirty years of civil strife and another Syrian Occupation, which had driven us into exile, unraveled in front of us. We were transfixed. It didn't matter that each of

I think we need everybody's narrative. We all together at the end of the day destroyed the country and we killed 150,000 and wounded 300,000.... Who started it, why, when—it all becomes secondary.

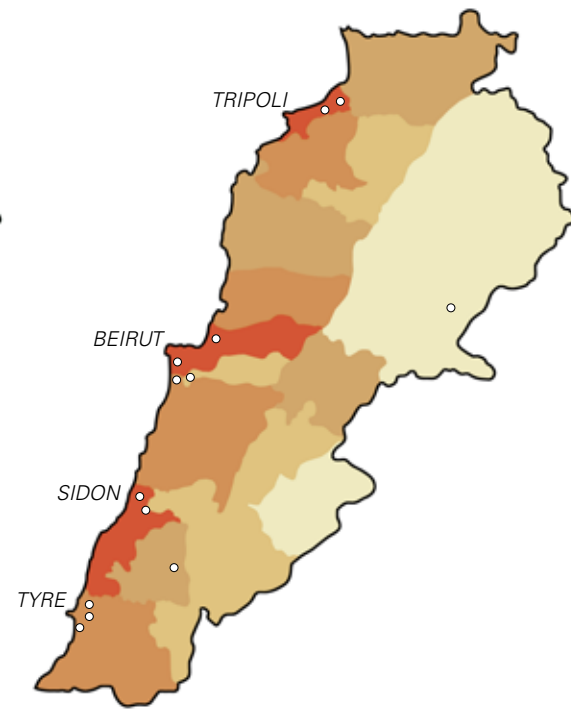
Roseanne Saad Khalaf
Literature professor
American University of Beirut

Fig.2.0. Independence 2005. Place des Martyr, Beirut Lebanon March 14, 2005. Photograph courtesy of newspaper An-Nahar.



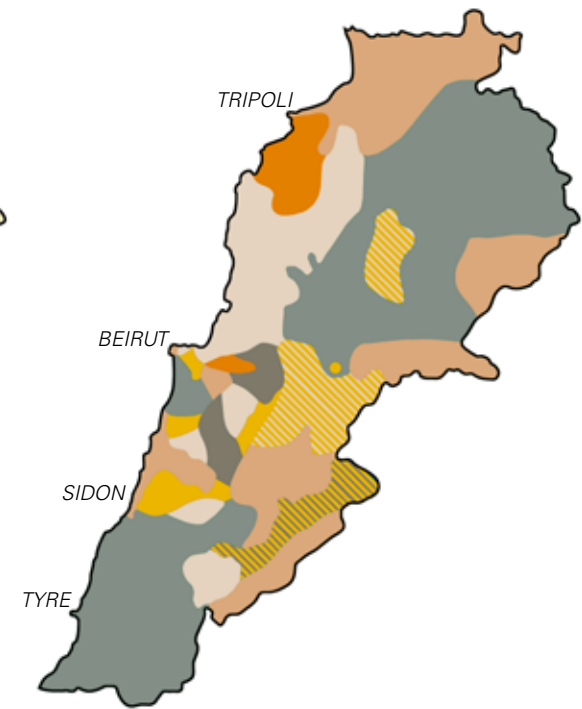
ADMINISTRATION DIVISIONS

- Administrative Divisions
- United Nations Governed Zone



DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION

- 0 < 50 Per square Kilometer
- 50 < 100 Per square Kilometer
- 100 < 150 Per square Kilometer
- 150 < 250 Per square Kilometer
- 250 < Per square Kilometer
- Palestinian refugee camp
-



DISTRIBUTION OF RELIGIOUS GROUPS

- Maronite
- Greek Orthodox
- Greek Catholic
- Shia Muslim
- Sunni Muslim
- Druze
-

us had to work the next day, or that we had not moved from the television since that morning, or that we would be up the entire night. We watched with a sense of elation, and with a twinge of disbelief, as Muslims, Maronites, and Lebanese of other religions put aside their long-standing differences as they marched to the Place des Martyrs¹ adjacent to the parliament building, carrying not their own sectarian or militia flags, but the one flag with the cedar tree, the flag of Lebanon, shouting “truth and freedom”. It happened to be my father’s birthday. I looked over at him. His face was that of a man reborn. He was witnessing something that he could only have hoped might happen in his children’s lifetime, but had never dreamed would happen in his own. There, on the Place des Martyrs, he saw his people take the first steps towards independence and peace.

How did this event affect me as an expatriate? My parents were born and raised in Lebanon, a small country perched on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean, where you can take a dip in its blue waters and an hour later be skiing on its snow-covered mountains. Ever since I was little I had heard stories of how its capital, Beirut, was once “the Paris of the Middle East,” a summer playground for European travelers and wealthy Arabs. The city wore this enviable crown until 1975, when civil war broke out and militias loyal to different religious sects quickly reduced chunks of the downtown into war zones. This tumultuous period in the country’s history ended in 1991, but not before urban guerillas, hijackers, kidnappers, and suicide bombers had left their marks on the city.

I had been to Lebanon since then, but had spent little time in Beirut. Lebanon, as my brother and I knew it, was a distant utopia pieced together from our own innocent childhood memories and the magnificent stories that our parents had told: stories of the myth of Beirut and Lebanon prior to the war and stories of the conditions following, but nothing about the war itself. Amidst the tumult and infectious emotion broadcast into my family’s living room on that

1. Place des Martyrs (French), Martyrs’ Square (English) or el Bourj (Arabic) is the square at the heart of the downtown district of Beirut, Lebanon. Its central statue commemorates six Lebanese nationalists hung there by the Ottomans during World War One.

Fig. 2.1 - 2.3 (Opposite) Administration District, Population Distribution, and Religious Distribution maps of Lebanon. There has not been an official census taken since 1932. The reason is based out of a fear that a new general census could trigger a new round of sectarian conflict. Therefore this information is cobbled out of CIA and UN estimated numbers.

February day, for the first time I began to really question the silence that had shaped so much of my own life. And perhaps, just perhaps, I sensed, my parents did too.

I began to interview my parents on a regular basis. We were all cautious and unsure to begin with—how does one approach thirty years of silence? At first my parents would only speak about the period before the war. Any attempt to speak about the war was met with resistance and even hostility—particularly from my mother. But I continued to record interviews every weekend, and transcribed the tapes the following week. Then, on Saturday, May 7, 2005, my father did something he had never done before: he began to speak about his involvement with the Christian militias. It began innocently enough, with memories of his youth:

JOSEPH: Well before the war, as you probably have read, Lebanon was an incredible and beautiful place. It was different from the other Arab countries because it was... still is today, though I don't know how long it is going to stay that way.... It was the only Arab country with a Christian president and they had a kind of true democracy, where the president was elected every six years.

When I grew up... unfortunately... it was until maybe... I was thirteen, fourteen when things started to change... for the worse.

FARID: What year was that?

JOSEPH: I was born in 1960 so I will say seventy-... Three, seventy-four was, you could say, when it started. The war started with the Palestinians protesting in the Place des Martyrs and trying many ways to rally people for their cause... military demonstrations and so on. But before that a typical day for me I was a student and I was going to a private school.

They used to call it the Chan Ville.... I used to wake up in the morning, six-thirty seven o'clock, to be at school for eight, eight-thirty, we were done around three o'clock.

We used to have maybe half an hour break and then we'd go and do our homework. We used to do our homework at school...and after an hour and a half or an hour, another break...and we were done around six o'clock... and we had to hand in most of our homework during what we call étude period, which is doing our homework at school. Your aunts and I would arrive at home and have supper and we'd start studying for oral exams, readings and things like that.... I can't remember exactly... but I know we never got home before seven thirty. We used to do two hours of study after class and that was mandatory for everybody.

FARID: What did you do during the weekends?

JOSEPH: During the weekends... I used to... I used to go watch movies in Beirut and things like that. I used to have a friend of mine almost my age... and my advantage was they were foreigners. He lived with his mother... he rented one of the apartments in our home... downstairs, and his mother used to have good connections with the university, the American University of Beirut and we used to go to the university and watch kids playing baseball or American football and things like that... watch some plays at the university, watch some music, you know, pieces played by the orchestra, the university orchestra, like I mean, the student university. We used to go... we used to go do our... our tours after that in Beirut, mostly walking along the streets of Beirut, sometimes with his mother.... Most of the time we used to go... autostop... how do you say it in English... it's like...

FARID: Hitchhike?

JOSEPH: Hitchhike. Yeah, we used to hitchhike as couple of kids or we used to pay very minimum... like maybe a quarter of a pound to go to Beirut from our area... we lived 14 km... no, we lived 12 km from downtown

Beirut and we used to go... in the bus to Antilies from there for twenty five piasters, which is a quarter of a Lebanese pound... actually one dollar used to equal 2.25 Lebanese pounds... so we... we used to hitchhike to downtown Beirut to Place des Martyrs or... and we used to sometimes take another cab to al Hamra... most of the cinemas used to be on al Hamra Street.

FARID: Where is al Hamra Street?

JOSEPH: Al Hamra Street is in Beirut... it is in the west side of Beirut. And we used to go to those movies and we used to sneak in with the crowds... sometimes we used to arrive and the movie is started and there is no more seats... sold-out... and we used to talk to the guys at the door and tell them that we are coming from a far place and... and we would sit on the floor to watch the movies and they used to let us in.... Sometimes we used to pay for the tickets too.... After that we used to go to some restaurants to spend as little money as we can... and back again on the same route.

I remember we used to be so young and sweet-talking the cab driver and telling him how much money we have and what we want to do and they used to take us for rides for free as well.

FARID: So, when did you first start noticing things changing?

JOSEPH: As a teenager. It was then I woke up and started to notice the situation around me. I was fourteen, fifteen... the war was already started and everything shifted... we limited our movies, the minimum we could have gone to the movies was in our area.... My friends and I became involved in the political party.... When I was seventeen, believe it or not, I was the Secretary of the party in Mtayleb... we used to have like fifty, fifty-four or fifty-seven members... and some of them were married

and some were kids like myself.

We got involved very young... we didn't have much choice because...

FARID: Because the war was going on?

JOSEPH: Yeah.... You didn't have a choice. The war is going on... the Syrians were everywhere. There were political parties everywhere.... Unfortunately, at one point in Lebanon every embassy had a political party on its grounds and every embassy used to get involved in our politics... it was the war of the other countries on Lebanon.

We were very young and we ended up going to training camp and it was a little bit scary because it was the first time when we get involved in arms and things like that.... We used to be trained with the live ammunition being fired beside us, you know, next to our feet. And we were on the floor trying to move and we used to hear the bullets above our heads. It was a little bit heavy and... [there were] different [levels of] training. Some of us got involved more and more and some of us barely got involved... really only level-one training while others went beyond that.

FARID: Was it mandatory?

JOSEPH: It's not mandatory but you have to do it because you belong there... you were brainwashed like this is it, this is the war for your survival, because we heard what happened to other towns when the other army or militia got in, whether they destroyed the churches or they... they did bad things to the populations.... Some of them fled, some they burned, some of them had their houses burned and all this... Syria was heavily involved and they were on the mountains overlooking our area, so it was difficult for us to live without thinking too much what was going on.... You can't be a neutral person living in the middle of

all these stories so we had to go to training camps.

My teens were very disturbing in a way that I lost a lot of my close friends... during the war on the front or even a bomb drop on the city. I was sad too... and we didn't, we didn't have... like here you go through a crisis and the school or community helps you out and sends you to a specialist and you talk about it. It was difficult, like, I mean... I had lost... I lost a few of my close friends, matter of fact one of my closest friends just the last year in high school got shot. He died. It was... it was touching to go to a funeral and worse to miss a funeral because you are involved in your military things. You come back after a week on the front lines and the first questions you hear are: "Who died? Who survived? Who was wounded?" Those were always the questions asked... eventually they were the only questions asked.

FARID: Did everyone have guns?

JOSEPH: I remember... I remember we had a few teachers who wanted to maintain a regular life. They refused to carry guns, but at the same time it was difficult because the bombs, the bombs, especially the Syrian canons, were shooting over our heads so all the bombs were dropping in our area, and we wanted to maintain a normal life, we wanted to maintain the school, so the school was open and the teachers used to come and teach us and I remember vividly lots of times we had teachers coming to give us a class and usually they are coming back straight from the front, or from a training camp, or wherever, mostly coming back from the front and they are very tired and exhausted and they come in and they remove their guns and put them on the desk and everybody sits in the class to carry on a lesson and when it's done the teacher picks up his arms and goes.

I remember each one of us at one point or another we had our own guns. I had my own gun. Every car used to have military equipment like that whether in the trunk

or on the dashboard and you used to have a member card for the political party and lots of checkpoints in the area. It was a messy situation and it struck me very hard a few years later....

When I grew up... after university... I... this image struck me very... I don't know... I tried to... what happened is I didn't realize that when we were living in Lebanon in the middle of all these things, we thought this was normal life. I mean you hear, like, a twelve-year-old went in the middle of the darkness of the night to implement a bomb under a bridge, because the Syrians were planning to attack... you know... And that kid blew up the bridge and blew himself up with it... to save the town or something... and this was daily stories that you hear.

It was after that my parents decided that they wanted me to leave Lebanon because I was too much involved and they said, "OK, you have to get out of Lebanon," because I was the only son in the family.

FARID: How old were you?

JOSEPH: Nineteen... I had my two, two-and-a-half years of university and... actually, three years by that time.

Once I went to Africa, we opened a jewelry store in 1980, pardon me... '80 or '81 because I remember it was before the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. So in 1980 or '81 I was in Europe, like, I came to Africa and we opened a business and then I opened a jewelry store, so I used to go and buy gold, sometimes to Lebanon, sometimes to Italy, but my trip used to go from Lome to Paris. From Paris to Geneva to do some business and exchange some money because we used to export gold to Geneva.

I used to... I went to Geneva on one of my business trips and I... I cried walking on the riverside because it was the first time in my life that I see young people laying down on the grass as couples and kids playing, it wasn't roller blade at the time... it was roller-skate or something.... So, it was the first time I saw an old guy, he

was seventy seven because he was speaking French and those guys were doing some exercises and he kept telling them that: “Remember I’m seventy-seven, I can’t do the same things.” And with him he had teenagers and he had a couple of ten year old, eleven or twelve and most, of them were teenagers playing with him. And you see a couple laying down on the grass and a couple there kissing each other and suddenly I had like a lightning in my brain and I start thinking the difference between the two worlds and the Lebanese situation and what is going on... and I was at the hotel hearing that the Palestinians did this and that and the Syrians were attacking our area trying to come down to the Christian, the last piece of the Christian area, between Matin and K’srwan, which are two big places where a big percentage of Christians lives in those areas.

It was... I don’t know... I started crying... I was walking and looking at those guys... I don’t know if I felt jealous... I felt jealous... I don’t know... and it was that day when I heard that another kid, twelve years old blew himself up trying to stop a Syrian tank... you know... that was painful... Really over all, going back to the original question... it was a short period between the time you can go on your own to Beirut and enjoy Beirut and all this and then suddenly we are adults and we are responsible, we are carrying guns and we are checking cars and trucks and doing checkpoints, and preparing a mission and preparing ourselves to go to take to the front and preparing food to the front... I can’t say that I had a normal teenager life.²

That Saturday in May, it seemed the wall of silence had finally been breached. Yet was it really so? I realized while transcribing the interview the following day that I had, in part, been told another myth: an adventure story of sorts, a story of sacrifice, pain, and suffering—but not one that addressed what I increasingly sensed to be present but not articulated: a story of some hidden

² Joseph R. Noufaily, interview, 7 May 2005, Hamilton, ON.

Fig. 2.4. (Opposite) 1992 Official Ontario Notarized Moving documents for the Noufailyys. Highlighted is the list of the items to be packed into the 40’ shipping container.

MOVING LIST

	<u>EST.</u>
	<u># BOXES</u>
<u>WATER BEDROOM</u>	
King-size mattress & box spring	
Headboard & footboard	
Triple dresser with triple mirror	
Two night tables	
Mirrored armoire	
Sears 21" colour TV	
Fisher VHS VCR	
Sears Beta VCR	
Sanyo double tape deck, CD player, radio ghetto blaster	
Canon video recorder/camera	
Canon SLR camera & accessories (tripod, screen, etc.)	
Clothing (including 4 furs)	5 wardrobes
Footwear, handbags, lingerie, other clothing, etc.	14 boxes
Jewellery	1 box
<u>MONA'S ROOM</u>	
Queen-size mattress & box spring	
Brass bedstand & headboard	
Highboy dresser	
Triple dresser with triple mirror	
Two wheelchairs & two wheelchair inserts	
Crawler bench & walker	
Toilet seat insert & shower chair & commode chair	
Standing brace & leg braces	
Mobilift (portable lifter)	
Bionaire humidifier	
Diapers	20 boxes
Clothing, footwear, etc	3 boxes
Computer (Mitac desk-top CPU)	
Darius Monitor & keyboard	
<u>BOY'S ROOM</u>	
Double bed & box spring	
Brass bedstand & headboard	
Two desks	
Clothing, footwear, etc.	6 boxes
Yamaha piano keyboard	
Two lamps	
Computer (IBM clone, 286 type with desk-top CPU)	
Packard Bell Monitor	
101 enhanced keyboard	
Epson dot matrix printer	
Accessories (mouse, joystick)	
Computer desk	
Software, disks, manuals, other accessories	3 boxes
<u>BATHROOM</u>	
Medicines	5 boxes
Towels, shower & bath accessories	2 boxes
Go Curling iron & Son of a Gun hair dryer	
Interplak toothbrush	
Medixact scales	
Rendez-vous hair dryer	
Shower massage head	
Personal care toiletries, cosmetics, perfumes, etc.	2 boxes

e & chairs	
Dishes, pots & pans, cutlery, cooking utensils, etc.	6 boxes
One pair curtains	
Linens	1 box
Kenmore microwave & stand	
Moulinex juice extractor	
Black & Decker coffee maker	
Sunbeam popcorn maker	
Creative kettle	
Iona Mixer	
Cuisinart food processor DLC 7/10 Plus	
Moulinex Turbo hand blender	
American Harvest jet-stream Oven	
Osterizer blender	
Sunbeam can opener	
Toaster	
Toaster/oven	
Cake decorator	
Moulinex deep fryer	
<u>FAMILY ROOM</u>	
Four tables (2 of which are marble)	
Sony Trinitron 29" TV	
Sony component stereo (speakers, tape decks, CD, etc.)	
Satellite dish & Accessories	
Two lamps	
Wooden clock	
<u>LIVING ROOM</u>	
Sofa, loveseat, & chair	
Three marble tables	
Two chandelier-type lamps	
One pair curtains	
Four oil paintings	
<u>HOME OFFICE</u>	
Computer (386 DX Computer IBM clone & tower CPU case)	
Amazing SVGA monitor	
Bilingual 101 enhanced keyboard	
Okidata OL 400 laser printer	
Computer desk	
Power surge conditioner	
Logitech mouse and Logitech scanner	
Accessories/supplies (cartridges, etc.)	2 boxes
Software & manuals	8 boxes
K-E Autolock drafting table & accessories	
General Electric answering machine	
Bell telephone	
Single line Panasonic fax PD 2400	
Canon Photocopier PC 65	
Two file cabinets (filled with personal papers)	
Office safe	
Other personal papers & office supplies	6 boxes

shame. As I transcribed the tapes, I could sense that there was some evasion going on.

Shame brought me back to an unexplained sequence of events that shaped my own youth in the years following the end of the civil war. In 1992, when I was thirteen, an age when boys take their first steps towards adulthood, my father—having spent four years establishing himself in Canada—suddenly sold the house, packed all our worldly possessions into a container and shipped us all off to Lebanon. I was too young to remember our flight from Lebanon, but this attempt to return and the ultimate failure of that return happened at the moment that I became fully aware of the world around me. This was the time when my own questions of identity were strong, and the dramatic story of two moves, one from Canada back to Lebanon in 1992, and one from Lebanon back to Canada two years later, remains a pivotal point in my own identity.

Though my family and I have been back and forth to Lebanon since, this double journey remains fixed in my memory as a symbol of my family's displacement, even, dare I say it, of our failure. My siblings and I always felt out of place. In Canada my brother and I always looked different from the other children in our school. But after our return to Lebanon the situation was not much better. We looked no different from anyone else, but we felt different. We spoke Arabic with a foreign accent. We dressed differently than everyone else, and we certainly thought differently. It was then that I realized I would never be at home.

After my father broke the silence in May 2005, it triggered my own obsession with the moment of our attempted return to Lebanon in 1992. I recalled that our parents had made a list of all our worldly possessions, along with what we each felt would be necessary to survive back “home” in Lebanon. I became fixated on that list. As my parents still would not talk about the double journey, I had to find another way of beginning to document and understand the process of moving. So, I decided to interrogate the objects on the container list, to perhaps make them speak instead. I began to draw...

GENEROUS	
Brac (including statues, etc.)	6 boxes
Satellite dish	1 box
Christmas decorations	2 boxes
Toys (boys & girls), dolls, stuffed animals, games, etc.	13 boxes
Sports equipment	3 boxes
Hockey gear, tennis gear incl. one Head racquet, skateboards, roller blades, etc.	
Several pieces of luggage & briefcases	
Two fire extinguishers	
One regular picnic cooler	
One electronic Koolatron picnic cooler	
Sheets, comfortors, blankets, pillows, etc.	7 boxes
Books & encyclopedias	28 boxes
Clothing	1 wardrobe
Records & audio tapes	1 box
Compact discs & videotapes	5 boxes
DINING ROOM	
Dining table & eight chairs	
Buffet & china cabinet	
Bar Trolley	
Bar supplies (alcohol, wine, etc.)	1 box
China, brassware, crystal glasses, decanters, etc.	13 boxes
Serving trays, ashtrays, serving dishes, vase	2 boxes
One pair curtains	
BASEMENT	
Sears Best washer	
Sears Best dryer	
Kenmore sewing machine	
Kenmore carpet cleaner	
Moulinex Iron & ironing board	
Electrohome HiFi/radio combination, speakers & stand	
Coat tree	
2 pair curtains	
Two carpets	
GARAGE	
General freezer	
Tools, garden equipment, etc.	8 boxes
Man's Venture 18 speed mountain bike	
Four boy's bikes (one 12-speed and one 18-speed)	
Bicycle rack	
Patio table & umbrella with lazy susan & stand	
Eight patio chairs & eight pads	
Six small patio tables	
Ladder	
Kenmore bar-b-que & accessories	
VEHICLE	
1988 Dodge Mini Ram Van (Serial #1B7GK1334JX241119)	
Ricon built-in electronic wheelchair van lift	
Extra set of four tires	
DDOVL15.JFH (May 11, 1992)	
3	

Fig. 2.5. (Opposite) 1992 Shipping container moving list

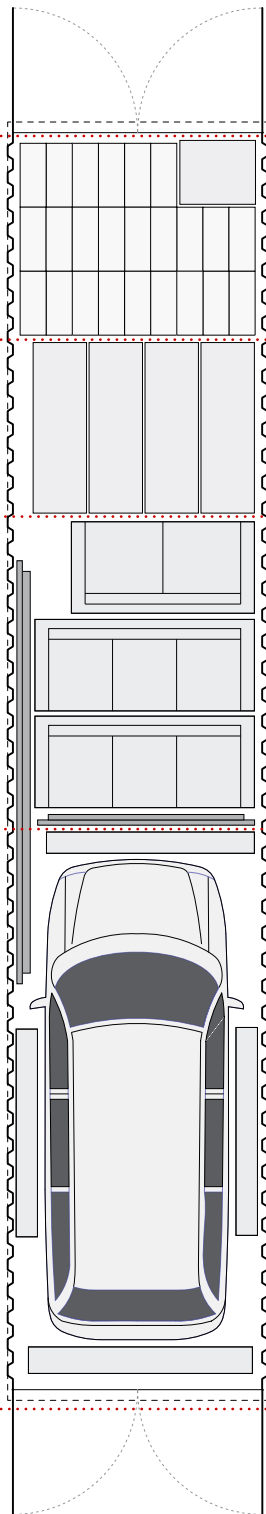
Fig. 2.6. (Opposite) 1992 Shipping container moving list

Fig.2.7. 1992 Shipping container Moving List

NOUFAILY CONTAINER CONTENT



Fig.2.8. Layout of items packed by the Noufailys into the container.



Zone 1

- Boxes containing small items and appliances
- Valuable items hidden in freezer

Zone 2

- Medium size furniture containing more small items along with clothes packed into the drawers of the arm

Zone 3

- Large furniture and antiques.
- Items are stacked and wrapped with bedding.

Zone 4

- 1989 Dodge Minivan equipped with wheelchair lift.
- As the car is “waterproof” and lockable, electronics and valuable items are packed into it.



Fig. 2.10. Shipping container for the Diaspora returning to Lebanon.

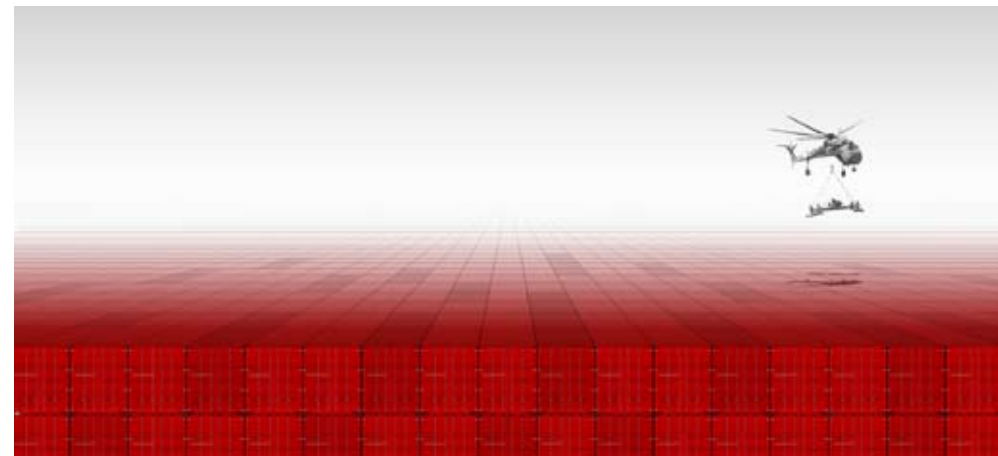


Fig. 2.11. An imagined “city of containers” for the Lebanese Diaspora.

Fig. 2.9. (Left) Plan layout of the 40’ container packed by the Noufailys for their move back to Lebanon in 1992.

I showed the drawings to my mother. Until now, she had refused to talk about our lives or our failed return to Lebanon. The drawings turned out to be the necessary catalyst, as I discovered one evening when I checked the inbox of my email: it was a letter from my mother that began to breach another frozen sea of silence.



Fig.2.12. Joseph and Dalal Noufaily's Wedding circa 1979.

In 1979, after four years of a bitter Lebanese civil war, my husband, Joseph, and I got married and looked to start a family outside of Lebanon. We moved to Lome, Togo—in Africa—and found work in our family's import/export business. After two years of working with my brothers, my husband and I started a jewelry store. We specialized in Italian and Lebanese jewelry design and after initial difficulties, started to do very well. The store's success was very important to us, because not only were we trying to support our parents still stuck in a worsening Lebanese civil war, but also we now had three wonderful children.

In 1983, our youngest, Mona was born. Immediately it was apparent that something was wrong with her. However, the doctors were not able to accurately diagnose her and as a result, couldn't treat her condition. The one obvious trait was her skin, which was very sensitive to the weather. It was consistently dry and brittle and required constant moisture and treatment. So, in 1984, seeking better medical care, a cooler climate, and a better place for our two boys, Farid and Bachir, to grow up in, we immigrated to Canada. Coming from a tight-knit, old-fashioned family this decision was not received well by family in Lebanon or Togo.

After arriving to Canada, Mona was quickly diagnosed with Sjögren-Larssen syndrome—a derivative of the Cerebral Palsy family. As any parent of a disabled child will tell you, accepting this was very hard. As parents of barely 27 years of age, with no other family in a foreign country halfway around the world,

we had very little support and struggled to make best of a difficult situation. At the time, I vowed to make Mona as independent as possible—a vow I have tried to keep to this day.

Mona inspired Farid and Bachir. They were very successful in elementary school, and supportive of their sister. My husband worked three jobs: as a cash register salesman, steel salesman at Stelco, and on weekends as a French Teacher. Like any proud immigrant father, he was fueled by a desire to provide the best life he could for his family. In 1988, we bought our first house in Canada—settling in a five-bedroom home with an Olympic-sized swimming pool in a wonderful suburban neighbourhood. We were the embodiment of the immigrant’s dream and were enjoying our time together.

In 1989, my husband’s father, Farid Sr., came to visit for 7 months. He was proud of how well we were handling ourselves in Canada. Specifically, he was proud of how we were the model of the ideal Lebanese family—full of love and harmony and planning for a wonderful future. His time in Canada was among the happiest of his life. With his son working so hard, he took it upon himself to send my daughter and me to Africa during the summer and stayed behind to take care of Farid and Bachir during the hot summer days of Canada. While I was away, my father-in-law would spend his days poolside, watching the kids, and nights with his son and grandchildren. During his visit, we were sworn in as Canadian citizens.

We now eagerly waited my mother-in-law and sister-in-law, Raghida—the youngest in the family—to join us at Christmas. That winter was exceptionally cold and long, so, within two months they returned. Having developed the strongest bond and best memories of Canada, my father-in-law was the most affected. He had just turned 60, and as the head of the family, saw Canada as the brightest future.

Leaving Canada, my father and mother-in-law went to Africa to visit their other two daughters. The Lebanese civil war was in its worst stages and the family couldn't return home. Canada seemed more and more like the best option—until tragedy struck.

My husband received a call from his mom and sister late one night. His dad had died from a heart attack. Joseph rushed to Africa to be by his mom and sisters' side. He quickly made arrangements for the body and funeral back in Lebanon. However, it took over a week to find an opportunity to get the body back to Lebanon. Even worse was the 48-hour adventure of traveling from Togo back into a country whose civil war was getting worse and worse. With the country in such an unstable state, proper arrangements and respect could not be made for my father-in-law. He was buried hastily the day his corpse arrived in Lebanon. Sadly, there was no formal ceremony. Most people hid in bomb shelters—afraid to take the risk of gathering in a large group in the open.

My father-in-law's death was a big loss to the whole family—especially the small part of it in Canada. Within the year my mother-in-law—under tremendous stress—was in and out of hospital. My husband made two emergency trips to Lebanon to be by her side and lift her spirit.

Overcome by guilt and dissenting voices in the family, my husband struggled when he returned to Canada. Although he was recently promoted, he quit his job, sold the house and shipped all our belongings to Lebanon—including a fully loaded accessible van that was custom made for Mona's needs. While packing the 40-foot container with all our belongings, we lived in a townhouse for six months to finish the school year and then moved the entire family to Lebanon.

After a thirteen-year war, the war had tentatively been settled with a cease-fire—the Ta'if Agreement. Despite the peace that arose from the agreement, the resulting recession after the war was exceptionally hard. Worse

still, the shipping company that was handling shipping our possessions went bankrupt. Our container was stuck in New York Harbor. We now had to arrange alternative shipping arrangements with another company that charged twice as much. I always saw this as our first sign to return back to Canada.

That year [1992], approximately 300,000 Lebanese expatriates returned to Lebanon to start new lives. The promise of returning and the family support quickly disappeared as we encountered one disappointment after another. Initially arriving with financial security, my husband struggled to start one business after another.

Luckily, Farid and Bachir were accepted to a prestigious English boarding school. The school's curriculum was in English, but also incorporated introductory Arabic classes. The kids struggled to learn the new language but this was nothing compared to the cultural differences. Comparing it to the Canadian education system, it was a tremendous challenge for my kids to deal with the disciplined, conservative Lebanese system. Persevering, they worked hard and achieved excellent academic success.

Similarly, Mona wasn't free of the difficulties of the move. Although she was accepted to a special school catering to kids with special needs, it was still very difficult. Unlike the Canadian government, the Lebanese government offered no support or care and the under-funded medical system made it expensive and difficult to get good care—especially for a special case like Mona.

Overwhelmed by obstacles, and frustrated with the lack of progress in two years, the family moved back to Canada in October 1994. My husband returned initially and established the family in an apartment complex next to the kids' school. Farid returned to start high school, Bachir to Grade 7, and Mona to Grade 6. Fortunately, they were not affected academically by the transitions and were very happy to return.

My husband returned to Lebanon to close a gift shop we had set up in our previous two years. However, he was quickly seduced by the opportunity of another job in Lebanon and decided to stay behind. He established a business as an exporter in the Ukraine for a couple years but through political instability had to abandon the business. Retreating and under new hope, he returned to Lebanon and decided to help establish and invest a construction company with an old school friend.

During the next couple years, the business was doing very well. They quickly developed 65 apartment buildings under a variety of conditions. However, the recession still loomed, their credit was stretched and the struggling government did not help matters. The company faced a big financial crisis. With customers unable to pay, and the government and legal system in shambles, the company's resources were stretched. My husband tried every financing option available to keep the company afloat. However, things went from bad to worse over the next three years.

Meanwhile, I struggled to raise three teenagers myself both financially and emotionally. As financial support from my husband dried up, I sought any opportunity I could to help my family. I started volunteering, and paid whatever bills I could to stay afloat. Having never completed post-secondary education due to the war, I enrolled in Mohawk College to update my education. My volunteering and new education eventually led to me being hired into the Hamilton Catholic School Board as an Educational Assistant. Overall, the family was moving forward through the bad days. These times made us stronger, bonding our love and galvanizing our spirits. Although a very difficult time, I look back fondly on these times.

On December 20, 2000, my husband returned to his small Canadian family to start again with nothing. He returned defeated, humbled, and broke, to a very different Canada and family he had left 8 years before.

However, after 6 years apart, it was a dream to finally reunite the family.

Nineteen months passed and my husband struggled to find work. This would be difficult for any man—but I believe it was worse for Joseph, a motivated, Type A personality that had been working since he left high school. He felt useless and fell into a deep depression.

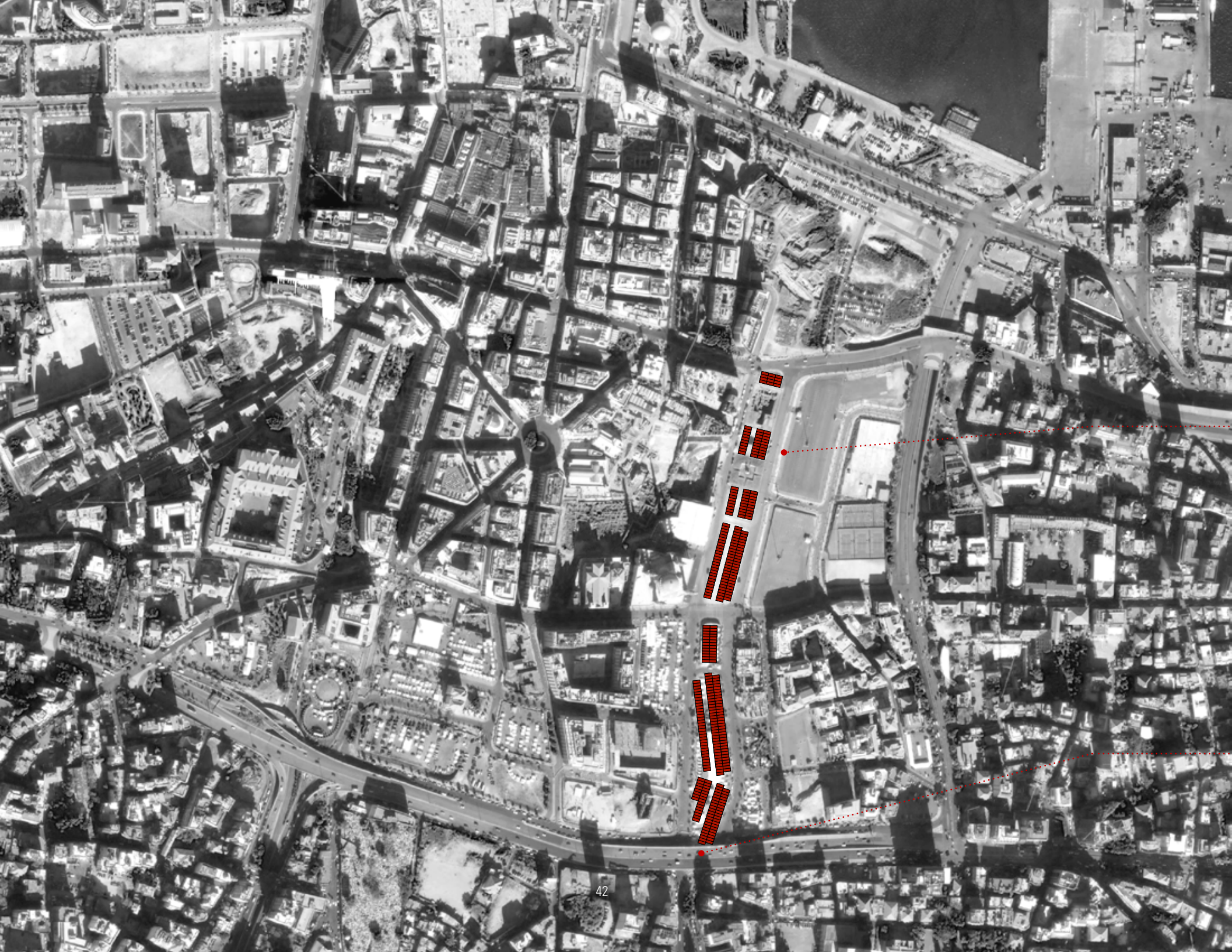
After countless rejections and struggles, he was finally able to employ himself as a pre-boarding screener at the Hamilton airport. Earning slightly over minimum wage, it was a difficult start. However, his spirit quickly rose. With the same resolve and dedication he showed years before, he worked hard and eventually his potential and talent couldn't be ignored. He was promoted six months later as a regional manager. He was now not only managing the airport he worked at as a pre-board screener but four other locations throughout southern Ontario.

Farid and Bachir continued to show the same academic focus and potential. As multiple-scholarship winners, Farid has flourished at the University of Waterloo majoring in the prestigious Masters of Architecture program and Bachir has graduated from the premier business school in Canada, the Richard Ivey School of Business at the University of Western Ontario. Mona has also carved her own accomplishments. Receiving the same support from the government and community groups that attracted us to Canada in the first place, she has developed her communication, social, and life-skills that are needed to be as independent as possible.

Throughout all our adventures, highs and lows, the only constant has been family—and all the ideals it represents. It is this spirit that guides us in the future—together.

Dalal Noufaily³

3. Letter from Dalal Noufaily to Farid Noufaily, 5 July 2007.



Now my mother had also broken her silence. Her story acknowledged the difficulties and even the defeats we had suffered. Significantly, she had written this to me while my father was away.

Having given voice to the broken past, my mother allowed me to look at the story of our container again, this time with a little more “fun.” I conceived my own memorial, a cemetery of empty containers recalling the Lebanese Diaspora. I began to look for a place where all the thousands of containers of the beaten up and beaten down families like ours could be assembled. I decided that only one place would do, *Place des Martyrs*. After all, we were ourselves martyrs, martyrs of a certain kind. The empty containers could be filled, I believe, with the accumulated papers of all the Lebanese Diaspora that had allowed me to reconnect the contents of my family’s container in 1992. And so I made a drawing exorcising the defeat and shame of our shattered return in the aftermath of the war.



Fig. 2.14. Containers surrounding the Place des Martyrs monument. In the background towers the Muhammad al-Amin Mosque.



Fig. 2.15. View north towards the Mediterranean Sea. The ruins of Beirut City Centre building if immediately to the left

Fig. 2.13. Quick plan outlining of the container installation / intervention into Place des Martyrs , designed by the author.



CHAPTER 3: INTERVIEWING THE SITE

Once upon a time, the entire world was a garden—a garden before the fall. *Place des Martyrs* was also a garden once...

We went to see the palace of this Prince, which stands on the North East part of the City. At the entrance of it is a marble Fountain, of greater beauty then [*sic*] is usually seen in Turkey. The Palace within consists of several Courts, all now run much to ruin; or rather perhaps never finished. The Stables, Yards for Horses, Dens for Lyons, and other Salvage Creatures, Gardens, &c. are such as would be not unworthy of the Quality of a Prince in Christendom were they wrought up to that perfection of which they are capable, and to which they seem to have been design'd by their first contriver. But the best sight that this palace affords, and the worthiest to be remember'd, is the Orange Garden. It contains a larger Quadrangular plot of ground, divided into sixteen lesser squares, four in a row, with walks between them. The walks are shaded with Orange trees, of a large spreading size, and all of so fine a growth both for their item and head, that one cannot imagine any thing more perfect in this kind. They were, at the time when we were there, as it were, gilded with fruit, hanging thicker upon them then [*sic*] ever I saw Apples in England. Every one of these lesser squares in the garden was border'd with stone, and in the stone work were troughs very artificially contriv'd, for conveying the water all over the garden. There being little outlets, cut at every Tree, for the stream as it passed by, to flow out and water it. Were this place under the Cultivation of an English gardener, it is impossible any thing could be made more delightful.... On the east side of

Everything began and ended in the city centre. That was why it was the civil war's primordial theatre.

Antoine Boulad,
"Place des Martyrs" in *Transit Beirut*

Fig.3.0 (Opposite) Paving the way for the reconstruction of downtown Beirut. Photograph taken by Nabil Ismail in 1990.

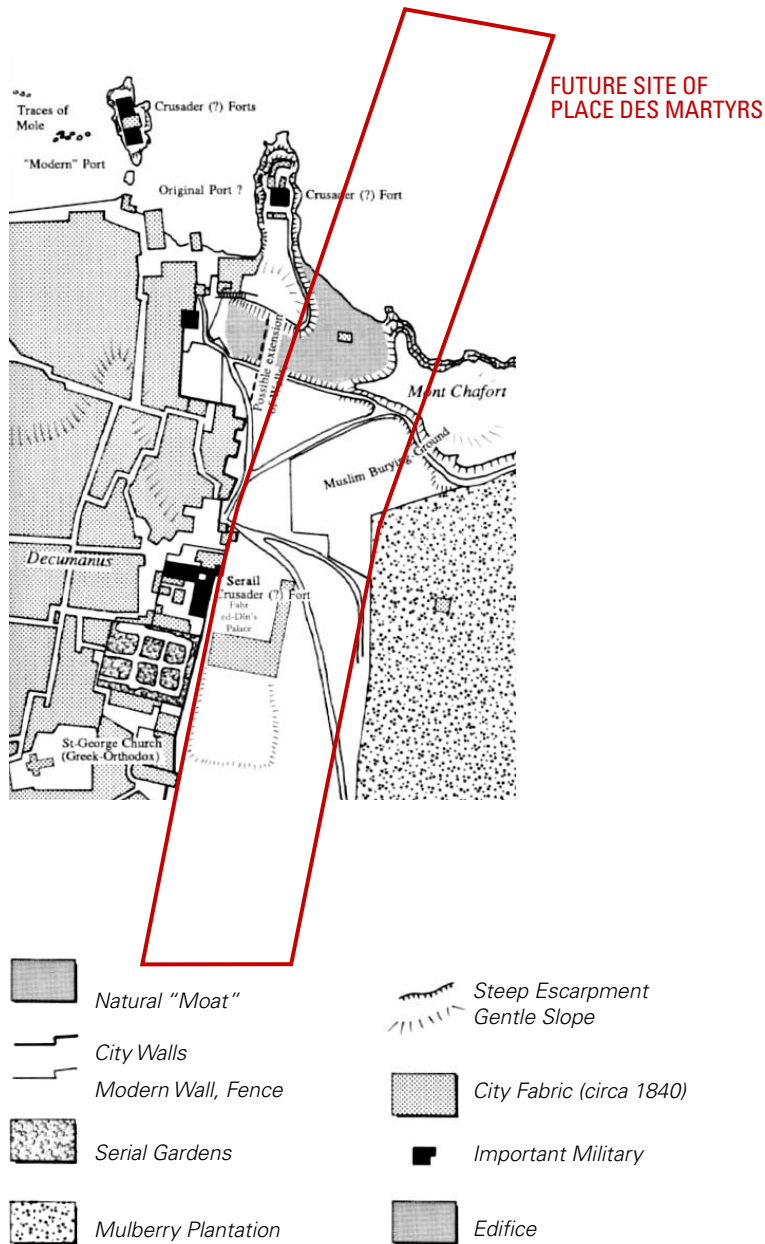


Fig.3.1. 1697: The Square is part of Fakhr al-Din's palace garden compound.

this Garden were two terraced walks rising one above the other, each of them having an ascent to it of twelve steps. They had both several fine spreading orange trees upon them to make shade in proper places. And at the North end they led into booths, and summer-houses, and other apartments, very delightful: this place being design'd by Faccardine for the chief seat of his pleasure.... In another garden we saw several Pedestals for Statues, from whence it may be inferre'd that this emir was no very zealous Mahometan. At one corner of the same Garden stood a Tower of about sixty foot high; design'd to have been carried to a much greater elevation for a watch Tower, and for the end built with an extraordinary strength, its walls being twelve foot thick. From this Tower we had a view of the whole City.¹

On the twenty-first day of their pilgrimage from Aleppo to Jerusalem, the Reverend Henry Maundrell and his fourteen companions from the English Levant Company's Syria office rode into Beirut. The year was 1697. There, they were received by Emir Fakhr al-Din I, Lebanon's Ottoman-appointed governor, who generously offered the company accommodation at his vast palace and gardens in the centre of the city. Maundrell kept a diary during his trip, in which he extensively recorded his observations, noting among other things that the Emir had built the tower so that he could sit in it to admire and reflect upon the city of Beirut.

We also know from his diary that Maundrell and his companions encountered many of the religious sects, which had taken refuge from religious persecution in the geographically isolated Lebanese mountain ranges. Each sect has its own distinctive customs and ways of interacting with foreign travelers. In the North, they encountered Maronite Christians, which Maundrell describes as "a pack of Rogues more exacting and insolent in their office, than the very Turks

1. Henry Maundrell, *A journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem at Easter A.D. 1697*. (Oxford, 1703), 39-43. Based on information from English Short Title Catalogue. Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Gale Group. <http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO.html>.

themselves.”² To the South, they encountered Arab tribes, but soon learned to keep their distance from these volatile peoples. Maundrell writes about “the embroilments and factions that were then amongst the Arabs: which made us desirous to keep as far as possible out of their way.” He then goes on to say that, “Tis the policy of the Turks always to sow divisions amongst these wild people, by setting up several heads over their tribes, often deposing the old, and placing new ones in their stead. By which Art they create contrary Interests, and Parties among them, preventing them from ever uniting under any one Prince, which if they should... might shake off the Turkish Yoak, and make themselves supreme Lords of the Country.”³

Fakhr al-Din I’s palace and garden occupied the area in Beirut that at the time was named after its most prominent landmark—the *Burj*—that is, the Emir’s tower that Maundrell describes in his diary. Three hundred years later, long after Fakhr al-Din I and his tower were gone, the Ottomans claimed and renamed the area *Place des Canons*. After the Treaty of Versailles, it was renamed yet again as *Place des Martyrs* or “Martyrs’ Square”, in honour of a group of Lebanese intellectuals who had been executed there for demanding independence from the Ottoman Empire. It is unlikely that Fakhr al-Din I ever dreamed that his serene place of private reflection, the geographical centre of the city, would one day become a battleground for the various religious communities surrounding the city, the stage on which the country would play out its struggles, its dreams, and its tragedies.

To understand *Place des Martyrs* one needs to know an outline of the history of Lebanon. The first people to settle in the area now known as Lebanon were the Phoenicians⁴, who came from the Arabian Peninsula around 3500 BC. They established settlements that would eventually become the coastal cities of Beirut, Byblos, Tyre, and Sidon. By 64 BC, when the Roman general Pompey the

2. *Ibid.*, 44.

3. *Ibid.*, 55.

4. Phoenicians were the earliest settlers along the Lebanese coast. Their origins remain a mystery, though they called themselves Canaanites, the Greeks dubbed them Phoenicians after the purple dye they sold from the port of Tyre.

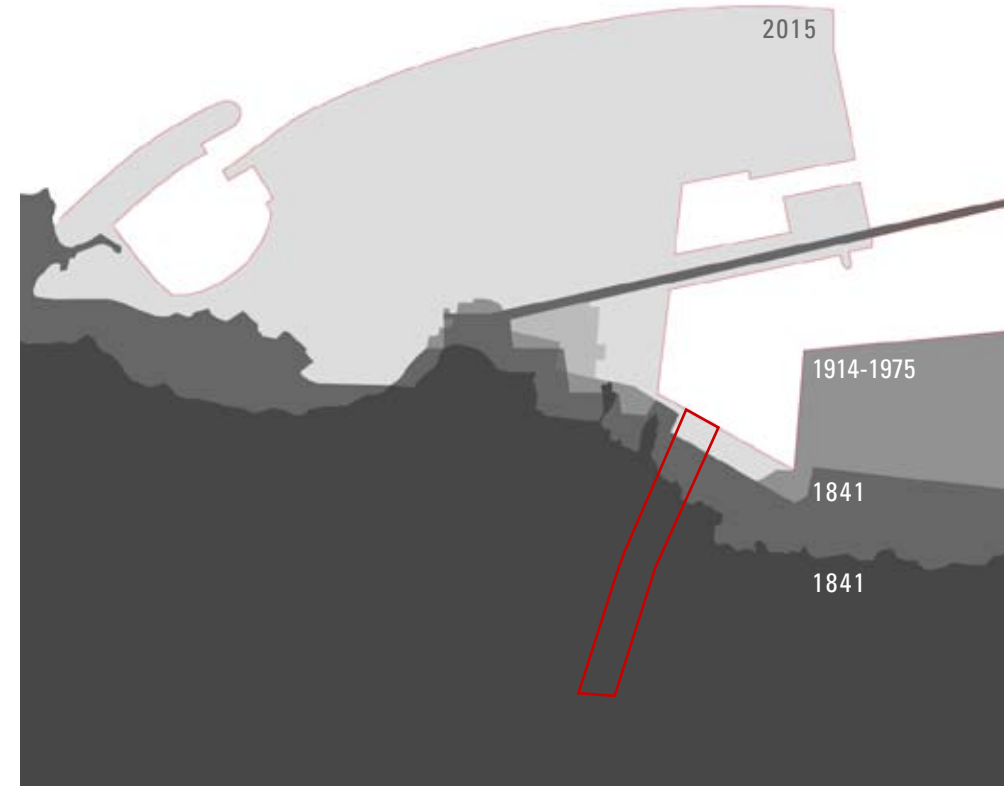


Fig.3.2. Evolution of the shoreline north of Place des Martyrs from 1841 to 2007.

Great conquered the territory that comprises modern Lebanon and governed it as part of the province of Syria, it was already a wealthy region thanks to a flourishing spice and silk trade.⁵

For the purpose of simplicity, I will refer to the territory within the borders of modern Lebanon as “Lebanon” from this point forward. In the early Christian era, Lebanon became a refuge for religious minorities fleeing persecution in neighbouring regions, where theological differences bred numerous breakaway Christian and, later Muslim sects.⁶ In the seventh century, fleeing forced conversion to Islam, the Christian sect that would later become the Maronite church settled in the northern Lebanese Mountains, where Maronites remain to this day. The geographical inaccessibility that made Lebanon attractive as a religious refuge to Christians also appealed to Muslim sects; the Shiites found a haven there during the ninth century and the Druze in the 11th century. The resulting mosaic of different religions in Lebanon bred a climate of limited tolerance, with each religious group enjoying a certain amount of autonomy in specific geographical areas. However, it simultaneously presented an obstacle to unity for the region as a whole, a problem that would continue to bedevil Lebanon to the present day.⁷

In 1516 the Ottoman Empire incorporated Lebanon, with its many and disparate peoples, into the province of Damascus. The Turks granted local leadership of the mountainous hinterland to the Maronites, while along the coastal regions the Druze were given autonomy to govern their lands and collect tribute.⁸ However, the local *Pashas*⁹ and *Emirs* had never precisely defined the boundaries of their territories, and so religious communities that had remained isolated from each other were now being exposed to each other through the new roads and pathways that were being carved through

5. Sandra Mackey, *Lebanon: A House Divided* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), 19-21.

6. *Ibid.*, 33.

7. *Ibid.*, 55.

8. William Harris, *Faces of Lebanon: Sects, Wars, and Global Extensions* (Princeton: Markus Weiner Publishers, 1996), 27.

9. Pasha: (Turkish: *pasa*) was a high rank in the Ottoman Empire political system, typically granted to governors and generals. As an honorary title, ‘Pasha’ in one of its various ranks is equivalent to the British title of ‘Lord’.

the mountainsides. Skirmishes and clashes that developed into long-standing feuds became increasingly commonplace, something the Ottoman Turks were only too happy to encourage and exacerbate as it fitted their general policy of “Divide and Rule.”¹⁰ In an effort to quickly establish their authority within their areas of government, the *Emirs* began to assimilate, renovate, and inhabit ancient structures built by the Romans and European Crusaders. These elaborate castles and gardens served both as a refuge and as symbols of the Emirs’ authority. By the time the Reverend Maundrell would visit Emir Fakhr al-Din I’s resplendent Beirut palace and gardens, peace had been established between Emir Fakhr al-Din II, the surrounding region’s *Emirs*, and the local Turkish governors.¹¹

During the time of Ottoman rule, the political fortunes of Lebanon depended on the strength of the alliances that were formed among the various Lebanese feudal families, and the power of the pashas who had jurisdiction over Lebanon, such as the Pashas of Damascus and Tripoli, and later of Saida. In the latter part of the 16th century the *Ma’an*, a Druze family in the southeastern Lebanese mountain ranges, increased its power base among the Emirs in Lebanon.¹² The apex of its power was reached during the reign of Fakhr ed-Din I. Having been inspired by his visits to Italy, Fakhr al-Din I aspired to bring Lebanon towards complete independence from Ottoman rule through military and economic development. Noted for his religious tolerance and suspected by some of being a closet Christian. Fakhr al-Din I attempted to merge the country’s different religious groups into one Lebanese community based on the principles of security, prosperity and religious equality.¹³ This

10. Kais M. Firro, *Inventing Lebanon* (New York: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1988), 17.

11. Kamal Salibi, *A House of many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 153-154.

12. William Harris, *Faces of Lebanon: Sects, Wars, and Global Extensions* (Princeton: Markus Weiner Publishers, 1996), 94-95.

13. In 1631, Fakhr al-Din I granted to the Franciscans (who had been displaced from Nazareth by the Druze Emir of that region) Mount Tabor in Galilee. This act turned the pashas of Damascus, Tripoli and Gaza, along with other emirs against him. They accused Fakhr al-Din to the Sultan for favoring the Christians to the detriment of the Muslims. This accusation, along with the fact that Fakhr al-Din I had opened the port of Sidon to European ships and had tried to unite all his subjects into one country to defend it against the Turks, drove the Ottomans to intervene.



Fig.3.3. 1841: The Square is nothing more than an open plateau outside the walls of the city.



Fig.3.4. 1876: The Square demarcated by the road to Damascus with the trace of the wall and the new neighbourhoods east of Beirut.



Fig.3.5. Evolution of Place des Martyrs through historical photographs between 1891-1994.

did not sit well with the Ottoman Rulers and eventually Fakhr al-Din I fell out of favour and was sentenced to death in 1635. Fakhr al-Din II established much better relationships with the Ottomans, but after his death, his tranquil garden would not remain a place of quiet contemplation for long. Its geographic, political, and strategic centrality would inevitably lead to its metamorphosis from a private garden into a public square.

As Lebanon prospered under Ottoman rule, it developed greater economic and religious ties with Europe. Its strategic position drew the attention of the great European powers of the day, and it became the focus of political and military strife between France, Russia, and Britain. These rivals offered their protection and support to specific ethno-religious groups. France supported the Maronites, Russia supported the Druze, and Britain the Ottoman rulers.

In 1772, during the reign of the Druze Emir Youssef Chehab, the Russian fleet laid siege to Beirut in support of a civilian revolt against the Ottoman occupation. On June 18, the Russians bombed Beirut and, five days later, took control of the city.¹⁴ They deployed their canons and regiments in the gardens of the Emir's palace. Almost overnight, the garden had been erased and turned into a military precinct at the edge of the city. When the Ottomans retook Beirut a few months later they recognized the tactical potential of the square for defending the city from another sea attack. The canons remained and the square was fortified. It henceforth became known as *Place des Canons*. For the next century the area would be continually occupied by canons and artillery.¹⁵

During the nineteenth century, Beirut became the most important port in the region, largely due to the Maronites living in Mount Lebanon who transformed it into a centre of silk production. This industry made the region wealthy, but also dependent on links to Europe. Because of the increasing economic isolation of the Druze and the increasing economic wealth of the Maronites, discontent turned into open rebellion—fueled by money and support

14. Kamal Salibi, *A House of many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 158-159.

15. Harris, *Faces of Lebanon*, 100.

that came from the Ottomans and the British, who both wanted to break the bond between the Lebanese and the French. Bitter animosities that had long simmered between the Christians and the Druze under the long reign of Ibrahim *Pasha* flared up upon his death and the appointment of the new Emir, Bashir III.¹⁶ The Ottoman sultan then attempted to re-establish control by deposing the Bashir III, who's incompetence as a ruler threatened to give rise to an uprising, and appointing Umar Pasha in his stead. But this only fueled sectarian conflicts, forcing the sultan—acting on a proposal from European representatives—to partition Lebanon into two districts: a northern district under a Maronite deputy governor and a southern district under a Druze deputy governor. Both of the officials were responsible to the governor of Sidon, who at the time resided in the former palace of the Emir in the heart of Beirut. The Beirut-Damascus highway, which originated at *Place des Canon*, became the official dividing line between the two districts.¹⁷

The period between 1841 and 1860 saw a more laissez-faire approach by the Ottoman rules over Lebanon and a blind eye was turned conflicts between the Maronites and the Druze continued during this period.¹⁸ When civil war boiled over and threatened to tear the region apart, the French—seeing this as an opportunity—intervened and quashed it. Place des Canons remained such a strategic location that in 1861, Napoleon III dispatched French artillery to occupy the square in a failed attempt to aid the Turks in the suppression of the beginnings of a by now unavoidable, though short-lived, civil war between the Maronites and the Druze that lasted through 1861.¹⁹ The instability of the region, coupled with Europe's dependence on Lebanese exports, then triggered another intervention, this time by the French and the British, who forced the Turks into establishing an autonomous, Maronite dominated administration later in 1861. This new administration lasted until the end of the First World War. During this period there would be several attempts to refurbish the *Place des Canons*, including one in 1881, in which,

16. Ibid, 103-104.

17. Ibid., 106.

18. Salibi, *A House of many Mansions*, 158-159.

19. Ibid., 161-162.



Fig.3.6. 1881 - 1914: The Square with the new Ottoman municipal building, new tram lines and public garden.



Fig.3.7 1958: The Square showing the removal of the Petit Serail.



in order to garner more local support, Ottoman officials built a public garden and administrative building to house the local Turkish governor in the centre of the square. The governor's pavilion became known as *Le Petit Serail*, or “the little seraglio”.²⁰

With the outbreak of the First World War, Ottoman forces in Syria occupied Lebanon in August 1914 and ended the Maronite autonomy. The Turks commandeered Lebanon's food supplies causing famine and plagues. A third of Lebanon's population perished. In 1916, public unrest provided an opportunity for Syrian and Lebanese Nationalists to free themselves from the clutches of the Ottomans and form an independent Lebanon. However, their attempt was quickly thwarted, and Turkish officials simultaneously hanged the leaders of the Syrian and Lebanese patriots in Beirut and Damascus on May 6, 1916.²¹ Still, the tide was turning and Turkish rule in Lebanon would soon come to a close.²²

By the end of the First World War, The Ottoman Empire was in ruins, soon to be carved up by the victorious Allies in the Treaty of Versailles. The region's boundaries were completely redrawn, which included creating the independent nation of Lebanon on territory that had previously belonged to Syria. The new nation of Lebanon fell under French mandate, which promptly renamed *Place des Canons* as *Place des Martyrs* (“Martyrs' Square”), in memory of the Lebanese and Syrian patriots whom the Ottomans had executed in 1916 for demanding an independent state.²³ The French also proceeded to tear down the medieval fabric of Beirut's core and replaced it, following Hausmann's design for Paris, with a grid of streets emanating like the spokes of a wheel from the new *Place de l'Etoile*, centered in front of the new parliament building designed and built by architect Youssef Aftimos in 1919, and located just west of *Place des Martyrs*,

20. Hashim Sarkis, “A Vital Void: Reconstructions of Downtown Beirut,” in Hashim Sarkis and Mark Dwyer, eds., *Two Squares: Martyrs Square, Beirut and Sirkeci Square, Istanbul* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006), 18-19.

21. Among those that were hung were Lebanese citizens: Philip and Farid el-Khazen, Sheikh Ahmad Tabbara, Father Joseph Hayek, Omar Hamad, Abd el-Wahab al-Ingilzi and the Mahmassani brothers.

22. Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions*, 167-168.

23. Mackey, *Lebanon: A House Divided*, 106-107.

separated by the ruins of the ancient Roman forum.²⁴

From the 1920s to the 1970s *Place des Martyrs* was at the heart of Lebanese life once again. It was the place where inhabitants of Beirut lived out their day-to-day activities, the centre of the city's entertainment district, and a busy public transportation hub, not just for Beirut, but for the whole of Lebanon. One could catch a bus or taxi traveling to every corner of the region, even as far as Jerusalem or Damascus.²⁵

But all was not well. In an attempt to keep sectarian conflict at bay, the French mandate effectively made the Maronites the dominant political power in Lebanon and reserved other high-ranking offices in the government for members of designated religious groups. In this unspoken pact, the President would be Maronite, the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim, the Deputy Prime Minister an Orthodox Christian and the Speaker of the Parliament a Shi'a Muslim. This custom continued even after Lebanon became a fully independent and sovereign country in 1943.²⁶ Although this arrangement would ensure that the needs of all of Lebanon's many religious groups would be met, it did nothing to solve the long-standing tensions between them.

In 1975, when Lebanon's fragile secular social fabric tore apart as the result of a disagreement over the presence of Palestinian militias in Lebanon, it was no coincidence that it tore right down the middle of *Place des Martyrs*. The Square that, in the minds of many Lebanese, had been the centre of the country—the one place that all Lebanese identified with and that most represented Lebanon's sovereignty—could no longer hold the country together.²⁷ This tear would continue from the square, splitting the city into East and West Beirut, and then beyond the city, literally dividing the country in two along the ancient road that tied Beirut to Damascus, from North to South, from the mountains to the sea.

24. Samir Khalaf, "Reclaiming the Bourj," in Sarkis and Dwyer, eds., *Two Squares: Martyrs Square, Beirut and Sirkeci Square, Istanbul* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006), 26.

25. Jean Said Makdisi, *Beirut Fragments* (New York: Persea Press, 1990), 70-71.

26. Mackey, *Lebanon: A House Divided*, 116.

27. Hashim Sarkis, "Territorial Claims: Architecture and Post-War Attitudes Toward The Built Environment," edited by Samir Khalaf and Philip S. Khoury, *Recovering Beirut: Urban Design in Post-War Reconstruction* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993).

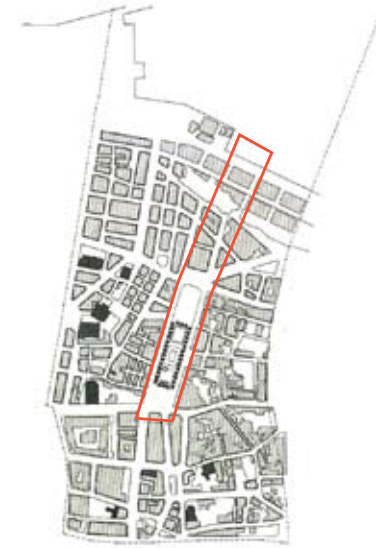


Fig.3.8. 1975: The Square as it existed before the beginning of the Lebanese Civil War.



Fig.3.9. Image of Ottoman soldiers next to hanging cadavers of the Lebanese martyrs hung from the gallows erected in the very square that now commemorates their death.

Fig.3.7. (Opposite) Aerial identifying the division between east and west Beirut along the "Green line" during the civil war between 1975-1990.



- | | |
|--|--|
|  BCD Boundary |  Public or Religious building |
|  Prewar shoreline |  Open space |
|  New Development (low density) |  Pedestrian street / link |
|  New Development (low density) |  Archeological sites |
|  New Development (High density) |  Utilities |
|  Restored Building | |

Fig.3.10. Solidère's Master Plan of Beirut Central District.
Issued September 2005

This tear became known as “The Green Line.” Writer Antoine Boulad summarized the situation as follows:

Everything began and ended in the city centre. That was why it was the civil war's primordial theatre. A country shatters when its capital is wounded, like a point and a circumference; a capital disintegrates when its city centre is destroyed, and the two concentric circles make a nation. Or unmake it. And the men of tomorrow will be able to do no more than dance in the ruins.²⁸

Though the civil war would stop briefly in 1977 with intervention by the Arabs, led by Syria, it resumed again in 1979, when the Syrians came down on the side of the Palestinians and Muslims. Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon in support of the Maronites and against the Palestinian militias garnered the war international attention that in turn brought about failed military operations by England, France, and the United States. The years 1983 to 1990 witnessed a series of wars throughout the country between and among Christian and Muslim militias. Throughout this period of internal and international conflict *Place des Martyrs* and the blocks surrounding Beirut Central District suffered the most devastating destruction. As the wars raged on, the square that had once symbolized the country's unity became a terrifying desolate wasteland, presided over by snipers perched atop the ruins. Even after the war ended in 1991, *Place des Martyrs* sat forlorn and empty.

In 1995, almost four years after the end of the civil war, an organization known as Solidère²⁹, which had been assigned the

28. Antoin Boulad, “Place des Martyrs” in Malu Halas and Roseanne Saad Khalaf, eds., *Transit Beirut: New Writing and Images* (London, SAQI, 2004).

29. Solidère stands for *Société libanaise pour le développement et la reconstruction de Beyrouth*, French for “The Lebanese Company for the Development and Reconstruction of Beirut.” The company was founded by then-Prime Minister Rafik Hariri on May 5, 1994 who made a priority of promoting the Lebanese reconstruction of the Downtown. Solidère was assigned with the task of planning and redeveloping Beirut's Centre Ville (Beirut Central District). By agreement with the government, Solidère enjoys special powers of eminent domain as well as a limited regulatory authority codified in law, making the

task of planning and redeveloping Beirut Central District began to demolish what was left of the old downtown. They gave their essentially tabula rasa plan the more benign name of “archaeological reconstruction,” but it was nevertheless quickly recognized for what it was—a wholesale destruction of what was left of the pre-civil war city centre. Prominent architects, historians, and concerned public figures spoke out against Solidère’s plan on the grounds that leveling eighty-five percent of the buildings in the old city centre was unnecessary, since many of the condemned buildings were still inhabited. Furthermore, this heavy-handed approach to rebuilding the city was criticized as being completely unrealistic in a city and country that had not yet recovered from the exhaustion of armed conflict and the burden of crushing economic debt. After Solidère had succeeded in demolishing most of the downtown, public outcry finally forced the company to present a revised plan that would maintain buildings of historical significance. Though this appeared to address public concern, the fate of *Place des Martyrs* remained uncertain. In actual fact, Solidère left the square as a shapeless void, which has become associated with the silence and amnesia that have characterized the entire post-civil war period in Lebanon.

By erasing the physical evidence of the civil war, the planners and architects at Solidère largely ignored the vital tasks of remembrance and reconciliation. Although a group of concerned expatriates tried to correct this architecturally enforced act of forgetting by approaching Solidère directly and proposing a place of reconciliation, all they got for their efforts was a small park, known as the Garden of Forgiveness, designated in an area just east of *Place des Martyrs*. This intervention, though well intentioned, has proved too small to combat the prevailing amnesia that afflicts Lebanese society today. Many Lebanese hoped, and continue to hope, that not talking about the war, that hiding the evidence, that forgetting and moving on would eventually reconcile their differences. Instead, it simply allows the warring factions and religious sects to shift their tactics from violent conflicts to transparently conspicuous political confrontations.

company a unique form of public-private partnership.



Fig.3.11. 2015: The current Solidère Masterplan projection for Beirut Central District. Estimated time of completion 2015.



Fig.3.12. Plan of the Garden of Forgiveness was designed following an international design competition won by American landscape architect Kathryn Gustafson.

Initially, Solidère did not touch *Place des Martyrs*. It was too charged a site. The battlefield zone had divided the city in half during the war. As a result it has been left as a gaping void, an immense absence at the heart of Beirut. For a whole generation of Lebanese youth, a generation that has known the life of the city only in multiple “centres” that proliferated at its periphery during the war, the historical heart of Beirut is no more than a blank slate onto which their parents’ memories are projected, assuming their parents are even willing to share their memories with their children. And though nothing remains of the site but an empty concrete void and a bullet-riddled monument at its centre, somewhere in the Lebanese collective consciousness or unconsciousness the idea and cultural memory of *Place des Martyrs* was waiting to be resurrected.

The assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and 21 others on February 14, 2005 changed everything. No one knows who had started the rumours that circulated for days prior to the demonstration, who had chosen February 28 as the date, or who had chosen *Place des Martyrs* as the site. It seemed natural that it would take place there. Not since before the civil war had the square been so active, as Lebanese arrived from all over the country, united in a vigil for the latest martyrs of independence and in defiance of the official silence about the long string of atrocities that had been perpetrated against the people and the nation since 1975. They stood together, a mix of classes, incomes, ages, religions, and allegiances. Their significant and obvious distinctiveness from one other was the very opposite of the uniform appearance that characterizes the organized demonstrations and pre-planned marches we are used to seeing in the media. The crowd that descended that day had a palpable aura of urgency. People felt it as they greeted each other. This was a spontaneous yet unified coming together, as citizens walked side-by-side in an orderly and purposeful manner, despite the grief and anger that hung over them all. *Place des Martyrs* had reclaimed its forgotten role: it had become again a place of meeting, continuity, and community. The hated Green Line had dissolved, and past and present, East and West Beirut, appeared bound together again. Once again, the site of so much of Lebanon’s cultural and political history became a place of collective unity, able at last to usher in the 21st century.

Two weeks later, on March 14, 2005, the tombs of Rafik Hariri and his companions—directly adjacent to the western edge of *Place des Martyrs*—became a new place of pilgrimage for all Lebanese, and this pilgrimage in turn further legitimized the square as the united heart of Lebanon. These murdered men and women were new martyrs to a new independence. *Place des Martyrs* resonated with emotion as the crowds united again under one voice—singing the national anthem, flying the Lebanese flag, lighting candles, placing flowers, and writing on the construction hoarding walls. This day, this vigil, revealed the most important historical function of the square yet: to bind the people and the country together. Ever since, the square variously named *the Burj*, *Place des Canons*, *Place des Martyrs*, and the Green Line, was also known by an additional name: *Freedom Square*.

Remarkably, even as regular Lebanese citizens changed the nature of the square, architects were drawing up their visions of the future in an international urban design competition organized by Solidère. The winner of this competition, to which many Lebanese expatriate architects and designers contributed, was a Greek team of Vassiliki Agorastidou, Bouki Babalou-Noukaki, Lito Ioannidou and Antonis Noukakis. On May 6, 2005 they had been awarded the formidable task of giving form to *Place des Martyrs*. At the largest scale, their winning scheme connects the square to the Mediterranean Sea by drawing the sea up into the city and by creating a series of stepped plateaus that descend towards the archeological level to the north of *Place des Martyrs*. There, the plan calls for the sea—currently a quarter of a mile away beyond a landfill—to be brought, via tunnels and bridges, right up to the archaeological remains at the north edge of the Square. In this way, the shore of the Mediterranean would be returned to where it had originally lapped at the shores of the Roman city of *Berytus*. In the Square, the interventions to the excavated ruins and the Martyrs Memorial are kept to a minimum. The foundations of the Ottoman *Petit Serail* serve as a threshold that allows visitors to descend into the archeological levels of the site where a new museum and information centre will be located. A modest civil war monument is planned to be etched into the space between the existing (1918)



PLACE DES
MARTYRS

Fig.3.13. The mental image of Beirut Centre as remembered by Lebanese over the age of 45. (Reprinted from Saliba, R., *Morphological Investigations of Downtown Beirut*. American University of Beirut 1991.)



PLACE DES
MARTYRS

Fig.3.14. The mental image of Beirut Centre as remembered by Lebanese between the ages of 25 and 45. (Reprinted from Saliba, R., *Morphological Investigations of Downtown Beirut*. American University of Beirut 1991.)



PLACE DES
MARTYRS

Fig.3.15. The mental image of Beirut Centre as remembered by Lebanese below the age of 25. (Reprinted from Saliba, R., *Morphological Investigations of Downtown Beirut*. American University of Beirut 1991.)

Martyrs Memorial and the *Petit Serail*. At the centre of the scheme is “the void,” and at its centre the Martyrs Square Monument. This void, which is really an empty space, is surrounded by groves of trees along its perimeter to shade visitors. A series of tree-shaded pedestrian promenades that flow from North to South tie these elements together along the length of the square.

Although it appears that the Greek team has provided all the appropriate planning ingredients to address and inhabit the many situations in and around *Place des Martyrs* and to tie it into its surrounding fabric, and though there is to be a new monument for the civil war, something vital is still missing. The plan lacks a clearly articulated place of dialogue. There is no place where people can speak their memories. The Greek program has not accommodated anything like a TRC. And without one, nothing will really change permanently in Lebanon. But to discover what that place to house a Lebanese version of the TRC needs to be like, I need to be on the ground.



Fig.3.16. North entrance view of *Place des Martyrs* looking south. Image courtesy of *Solidère*.

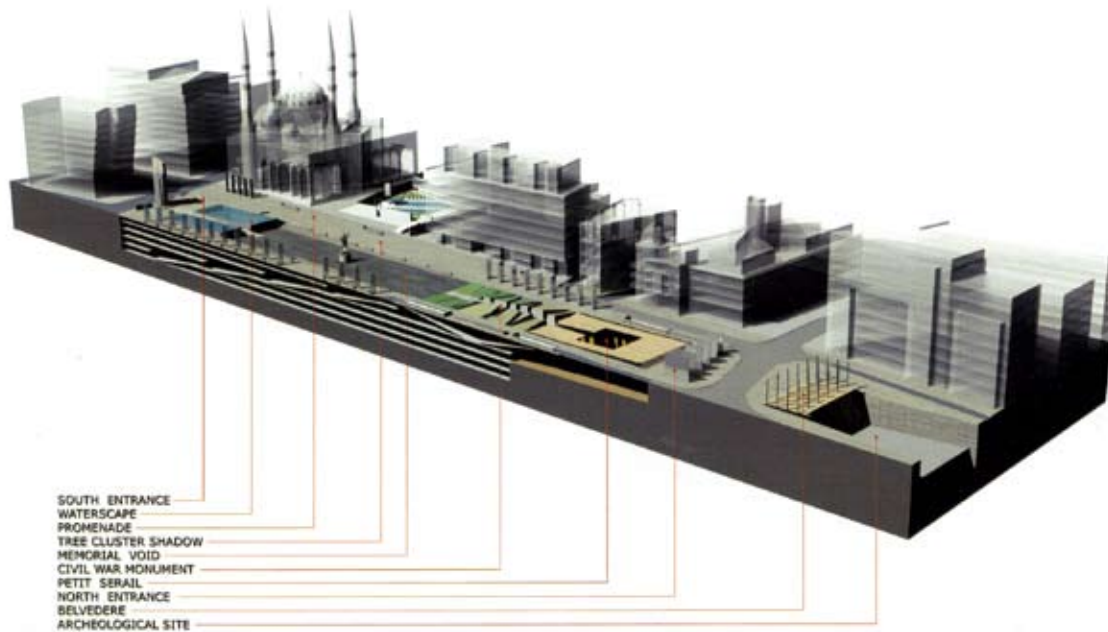


Fig.3.17. (Opposite) Sectional axonometric of the winning scheme. The memorial void surrounding the Martyrs' Monument is highlighted with a dark paved surface. Image courtesy of *Solidère*.



CHAPTER 4: INTERVIEWING THE HOUSE

I returned to Beirut in September 2005, seven months after the “Cedar Revolution” rally I had witnessed on television. As I entered *Place des Martyrs*, I expected some evidence of the events of the past months, some sign of the new dispensation, a trace of “freedom.” Instead, I found desolation. A small exhibit of the winning designs of the competition on display in a strikingly modern building¹ seemed so disconnected from *Place des Martyrs*. I could not tie the site and the visions together. They existed in parallel, disconnected universes. Had the winning Greek architects ever even visited *Place des Martyrs*?

Disheartened, I left the square, wondering if I would ever find a way to root myself at the site—if I would be able to find a way not to fall into the traps of global architecture where designs are relegated to computer screens and drawings are more concerned about their presentation than their contents. I decided I had to start in the only place in Lebanon where I was free to do what I wanted, to ask the questions and demand the answers that I needed to understand. I decided to interview my family house.

Our house is in an area known as *Mtayleb*—once a small village; it has now been incorporated into a larger area called *Rabyeh*. The city of *Jounieh* spreads out to the north, Beirut is to the south, and the Mediterranean majestically unfurls to the western horizon. After the Lebanese Civil War, *Rabyeh* became known as the Beverly Hills of Lebanon, inhabited by celebrities and the most notorious and corrupt Lebanese politicians. For me, it is still the beautiful sun-washed hillside of my youth where my grandfather and I used to take long walks, and where I would

1. The building was a ruin, charred from fires, stripped down to the concrete with what appeared to be an “egg-shaped” theater on the second floor. This building, and the way it had been retrofitted to display the potential ideas of *Place des Martyrs* interested me greatly. Its image would later haunt me.

The Lebanese house occupies its place naturally and without pretension, it is embedded in a landscape humanized by countless terraces, and built of the materials furnished by its environment. Probably its finest manifestation is the detached, isolated residence, rising high above the surrounding land, the expression of a degree of independence and security not known in adjoining lands.

Friedrich Ragette,
Architecture in Lebanon.

Fig.4.0. (Opposite) Aerial photograph of Mtayleb and Rabyeh with Beit Noufaily identified. Aerial courtesy of Google Earth. 2007.

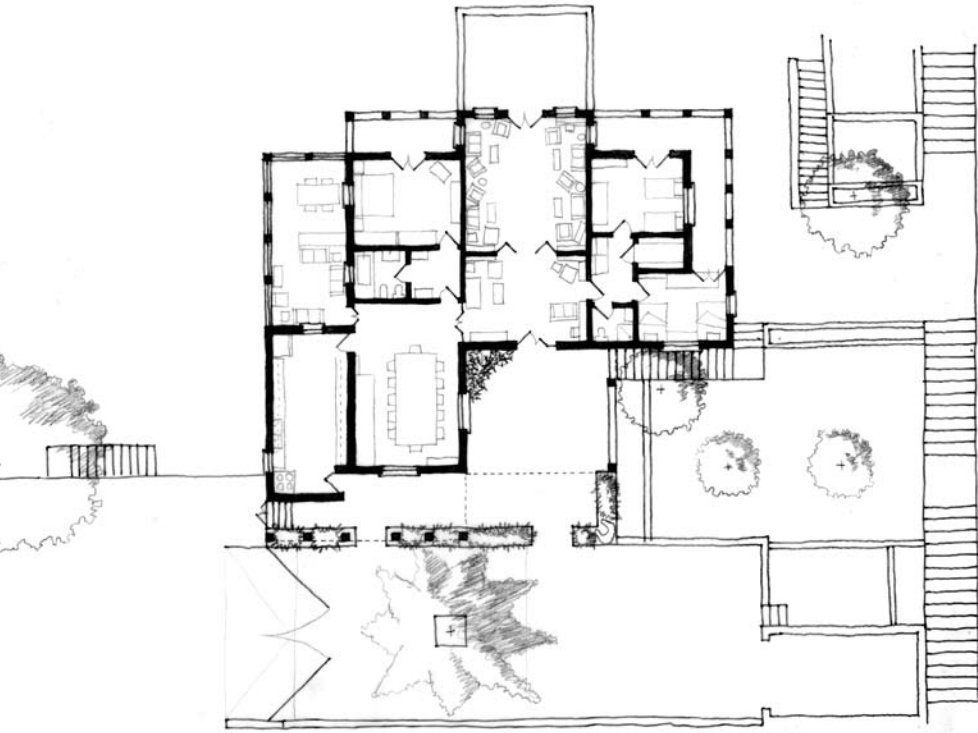


Fig.4.1. Initial sketch of Beit Noufaily from memory done by author on September 10, 2005. The sketch was done as an exercise in recalling the family home prior to traveling to Lebanon after a nine year absence.

get into mischief. To the north of our house are other houses constructed of the same local white calcium stone quarried just over the hill. To the south and west sides of the house is the orchard where my grandfather cultivated peaches, apples, and oranges, and, in one corner of the far garden, a patch of artichoke bushes. In the front of the house a magnificent Lebanese cedar tree stands in the centre of the driveway. My grandfather brought it from one of the last remaining Lebanese cedar groves in the northern mountains and planted it on the day of his youngest daughter's birth. The cedar stands on axis to the large main doors that were the main entrance to the house. These doors open to a small living room that connects directly to another larger central living room that was packed each Sunday and holiday with relatives and well-wishers (Fig.4.2.). Beyond the living room, which was usually off limits to children, is the large balcony that faces west towards the cities below and the horizon of the Mediterranean Sea beyond. We were also not permitted on the balcony without adults, though sometimes my grandfather would let me sit there and watch him work in the garden where I wasn't allowed for fear of snakes. Behind the house the mountain rises, scattered with red terra-cotta roofed houses huddled around tall marble and calcium stone clad churches.

Before my trip I had attempted to sit down and draw the family home of my youth. My recollections were limited to the confines of our house and the garden terraces directly adjacent. As I tour the house and compare it to my (pre-trip) sketch, I realize that my memory has exaggerated the proportions of the communal and public spaces, rendering them larger than they really are (Fig.4.1.). In contrast, my renderings of the few private spaces, such as the bathrooms, family room, and my childhood bedroom, which have been modified throughout the building's life, are fairly accurate. I know the history behind many of the anomalies: the tiles in the dining room changed after a water pipe burst, the second bathroom converted from the nanny's room after our return in 1992. In every niche of this house I find memories of my youth. In the family room, I rediscover the "secret" window between my grandparents' bedroom and the family room. When my grandfather built this section of the house in 1939, what is now the family room had been a



Fig.4.2. Central living room directly off the main entrance of the house. Photograph taken by author.

secondary morning balcony that faced south, receiving the morning light. Soon after marrying my grandmother, my grandfather had converted the balcony into a day room so that the family could enjoy the morning light and the view of Beirut all year round. This renovation meant that the windows of the master bedroom—at the time my grandparents’ room—now opened into the new family room. As a child of about five I would sleep with my grandparents in their master bedroom directly adjacent to the family room. I enjoyed sleeping there, not because I was afraid of sleeping alone, but because of the “secret” window in the south-facing wall. I loved watching American TV shows such as *The A-Team* and *The Dukes of Hazzard* with my nanny. At night, at my grandmother’s request, my nanny would “put me to bed”, and though I was supposed to be asleep I would wait until she had gone into the family room to watch the shows. Then I would quietly creep out of bed and up to the window, where I would peek through the slats in the shutters and continue to watch television over my nanny’s shoulder. I don’t think anyone ever discovered our secret.



Memories like these slowly help me reconnect with my family home. But I must begin to interview the house in a much more critical way. How is the house unique? Where does it stand in the Lebanese vernacular? What can its different stages of construction tell us about the family, the community, and the country in which it was built? The house not only carries with it the story of the family, but through the study of its typology and evolution, it can begin to speak about the family which inhabits it, the community it contributes to, and the country in which it resides.

The Noufaily and Kassis families, who had migrated from the northern mountain town of *Ajaltoun*, founded the town of *Mtayleb* in the middle of the 18th century. The name of *Mtayleb*, as the myth goes, is derived from an Assyrian landmark in the town's cemetery, which marked the centre of the sloping mountain ridge.² The two families developed the area agriculturally and cultivated black cherry trees, olive trees, and silk worms. One of the patriarchs of

the founding families was so fond of the canopy pines that grew in *Ajaltoun* that he had taken it upon himself to transplant these trees to *Mtayleb*. The canopy pine has since become a distinguishing feature of the town.

During the 19th century, under the Ottoman Empire, the town of *Mtayleb* prospered as families from surrounding northern towns of *Beit Cha'ar*, *Al-Rihany*, *Di'k Al-Mehdeh*, and *Cornet Chehwa'n* moved in. The town's prosperity and growth was due largely to the residents' initiative to connect the town to the new highway that ran east-west between *Antalias* and *Bikfaya*, and would ultimately connect the highest mountain ridge to the coastline and finally to Beirut.²

During the First World War, many *Mtayleb* families emigrated to the Ivory Coast in West Africa to establish to set up trading enterprises. As is common in emigration patterns, as one

2. *Daya'at Mtayleb* (The Town of Mtayleb in Arabic) Mtayleb, 1993.



Fig.4.3. View from the back balcony facing west with Jounieh to the North (right) and Beirut to the South (left).

single member of a community prospered abroad, more family and extended family followed to assist in the prospering business. Still others then followed to enjoy the benefit of a ready-made community that would help them to get settled quickly. Members of my own family—the Noufailys—engaged in the import/export market along the Ivory Coast, particularly between Ghana and Togo. After the war ended, many newly successful young men returned home to establish families, and *Mtayleb* enjoyed another period of prosperity as they began building homes for their families. My grandfather was one of these young men who had done well in Africa and returned to *Mtayleb*. Upon his return in 1919, and prior to marrying my grandmother, he added a second storey to the original late 18th century house. This was the first of several additions to what became known as Beit Noufaily or “the Noufaily House”. As Friedrich Ragette, the architectural historian who studies Lebanese Domestic architecture, “the construction of a house was the crowning

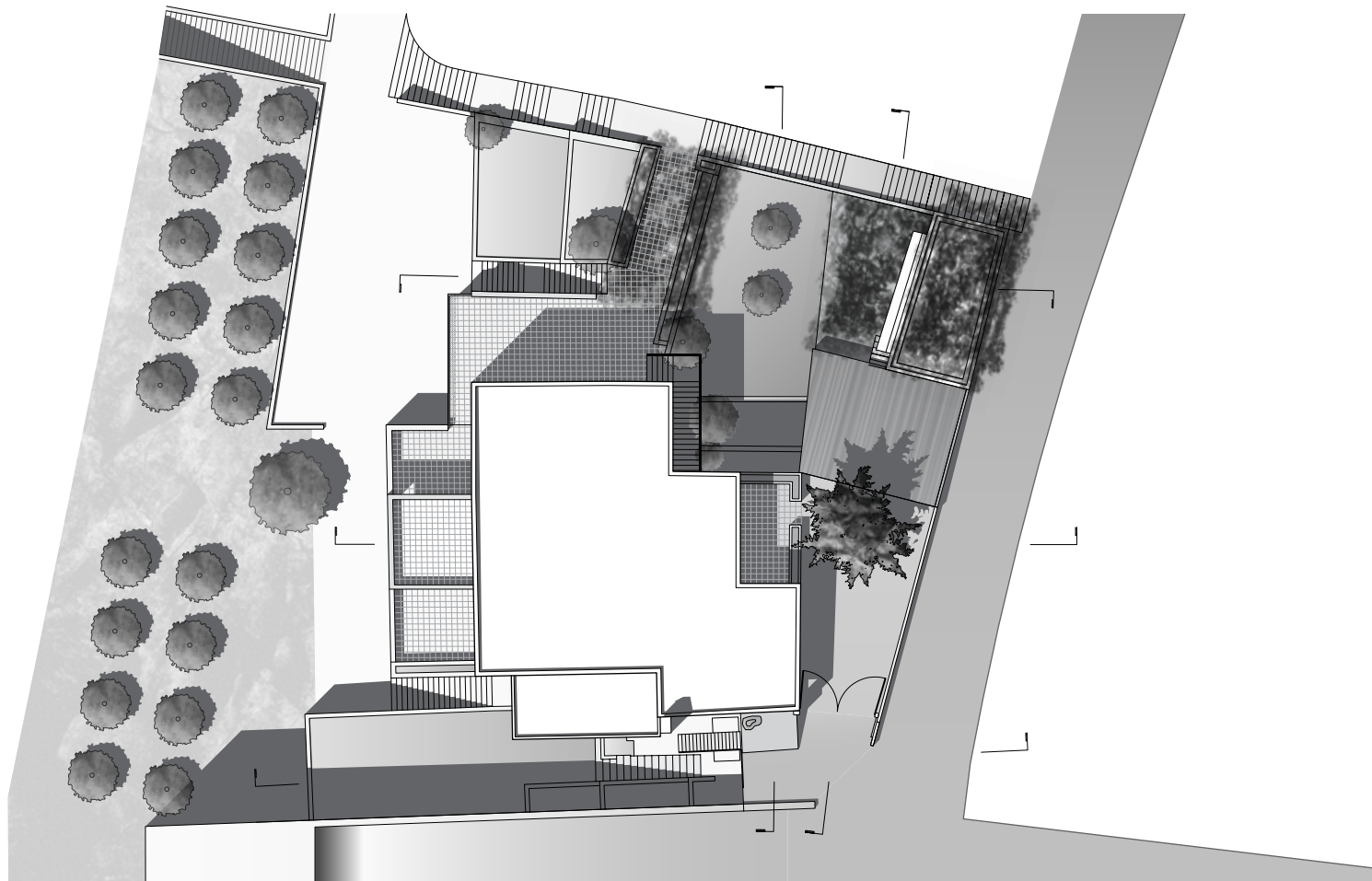
Fig.4.4. (Next page: Left) Aerial photograph identifying the town of Mtayleb. Also identified is Beit Noufaily at its centre.

Fig.4.5. (Next page: Centre) Partial site plan of Mtayleb along Rue St. Joseph. Beit Noufaily is identified in red as well as images outlining the surrounding condition.

Fig.4.6. (Next page: Right) Photographs corresponding to site Mtayleb site plan. Photographs by Danny Noufaily.







BEIT NOUFAILY . SITE PLAN
1:400

Fig.4.7. Survey drawing of Beit Noufaily by author.



BEIT NOUFAILY . 3RD FLOOR PLAN
 1:400

Fig.4.8. Survey drawing of Beit Noufaily by author.

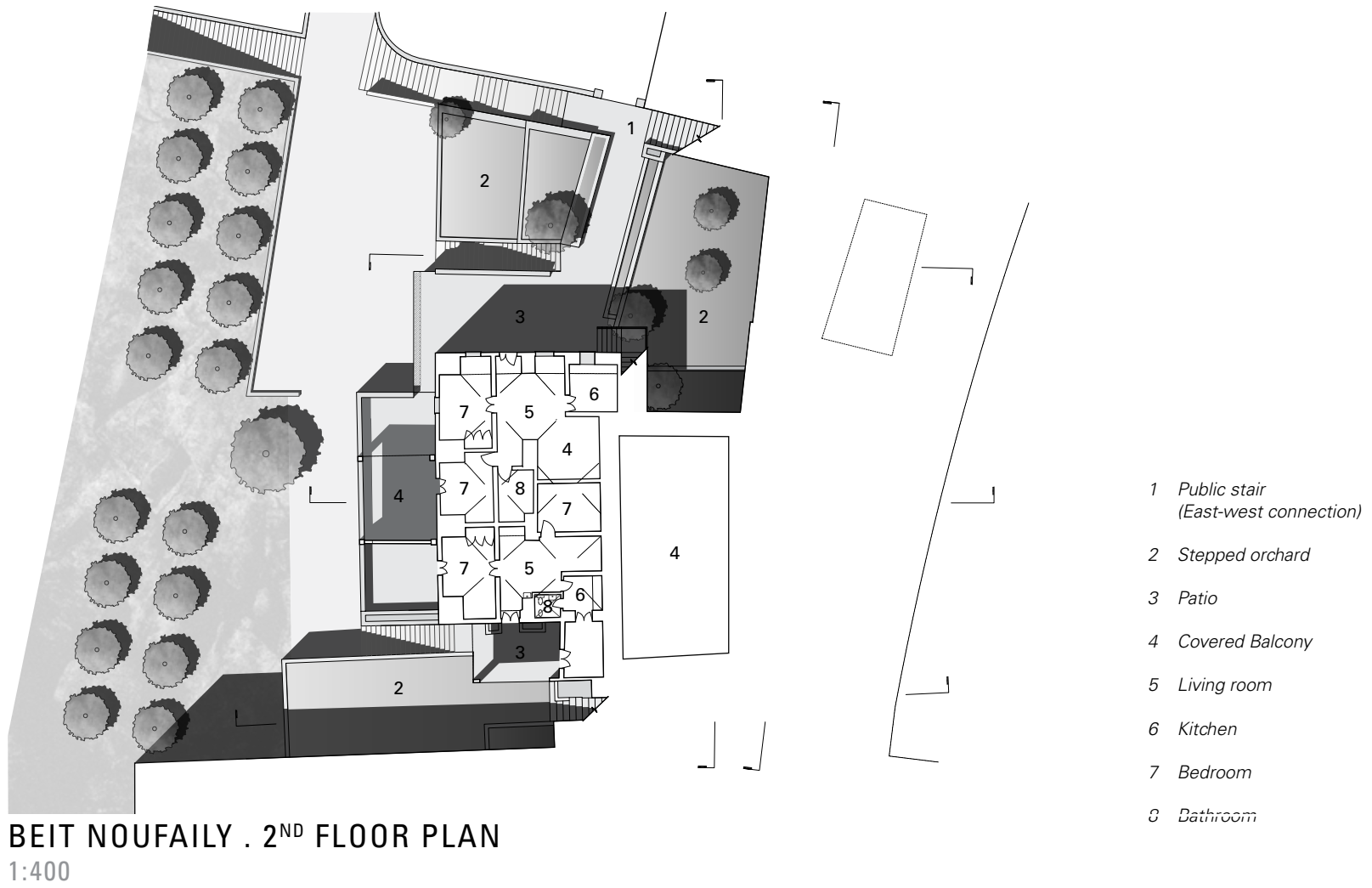
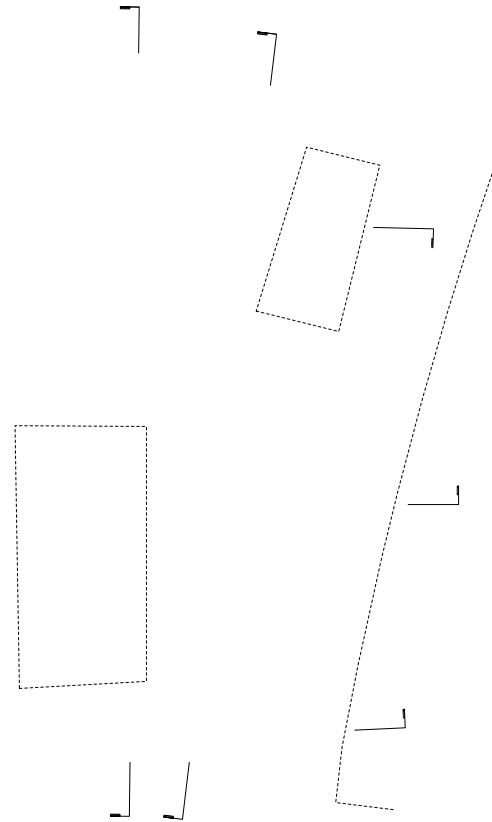
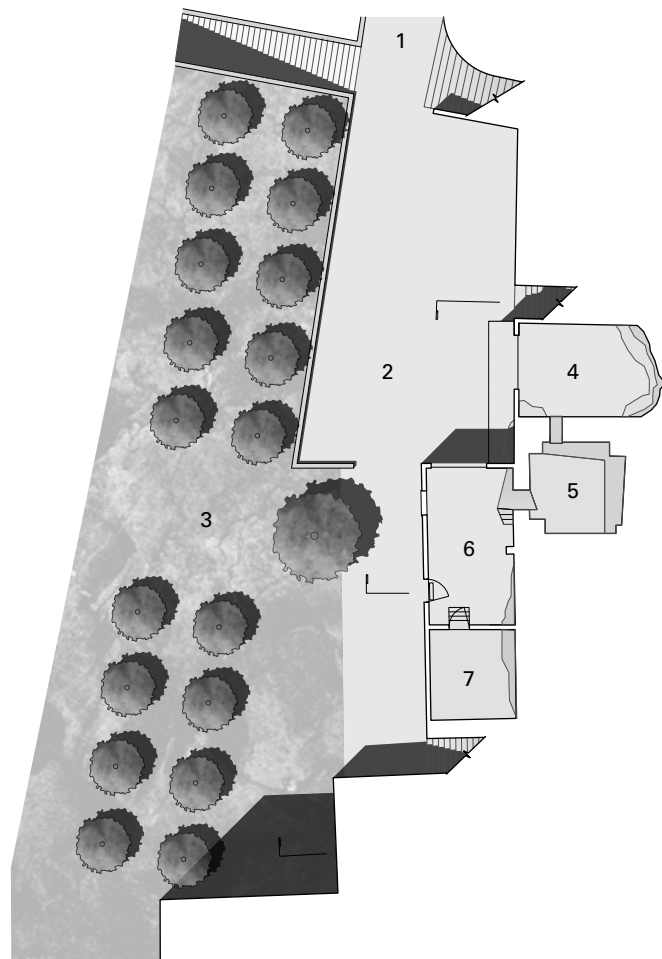


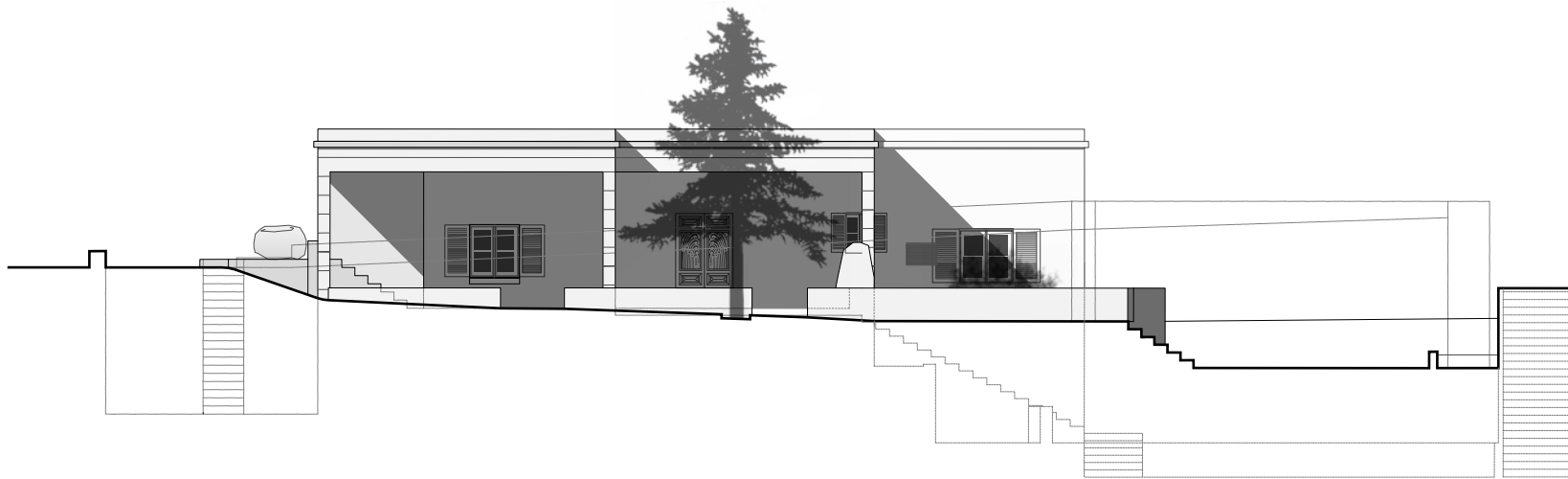
Fig.4.9. Survey drawing of Beit Noufaily by author.



- 1 Access north to Highway (Antilyas- Bikfaya)
- 2 Driveway
- 3 Orchard
- 4 Garage
- 5 Bomb Shelter
- 6 Garage / storage
- 7 Makeshift kitchen and bathroom

BEIT NOUFAILY . 1ST FLOOR PLAN
1:400

Fig.4.10. Survey drawing of Beit Noufaily by author.



BEIT NOUFAILY . EAST ELEVATION
1:200

Fig.4.11. Survey drawing of Beit Noufaily by author.



BEIT NOUFAILY . WEST ELEVATION
1:200

Fig.4.12. Survey drawing of Beit Noufaily by author.



BEIT NOUFAILY . NORTH ELEVATION
1:200

Fig.4.13. Survey drawing of Beit Noufaily by author.



BEIT NOUFAILY . SOUTH ELEVATION
1:200

Fig.4.14. Survey drawing of Beit Noufaily by author.

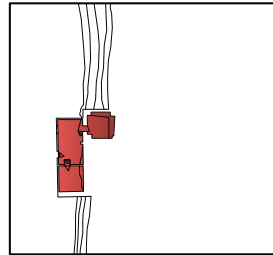
Fig.4.15. (Next Spread: Left) Plan Evolution diagrams of Beit Noufaily of both the interior and surrounding built environment.

Fig.4.16. (Next Spread: Right) Elevation Evolution diagrams of Beit Noufaily.

BEIT NOUFAILY EVOLUTION

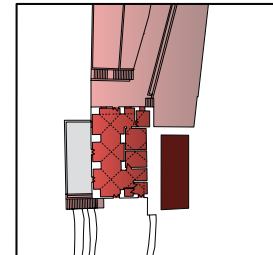
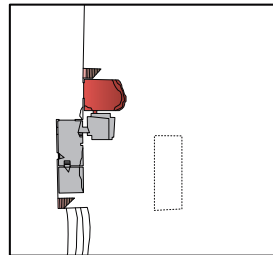
Late 18th Century

- Construction of standard Rectangular House built out of local calcium stone.
- Home built atop calcium stone outcropping.
- Development of blackberry trees, olive trees and silk worms.
- Access path from the North-Western base of slope.



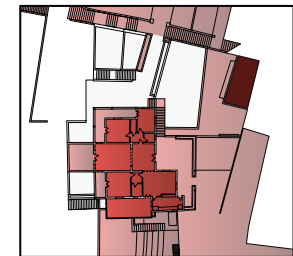
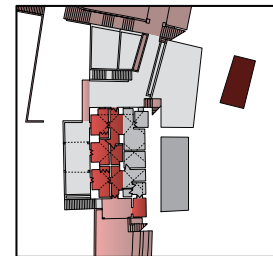
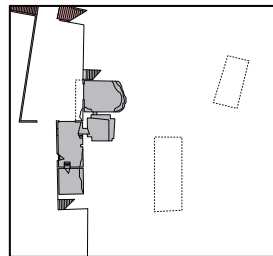
1919

- Addition of outdoor storage space (eventual conversion to vehicle garage)
- Addition of second level Gallery Variant type (Vaulted interior parallel to mountain contour)
- Introduction of water cistern braced by addition
- Beginnings of tiered orchard to the north (part of beginning of cluster of housing)
- Access from North-Western slope.



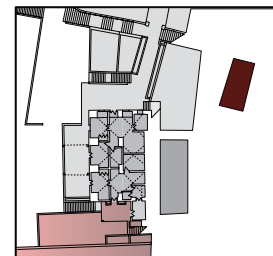
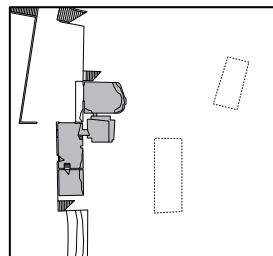
1939

- Dissection of second level into two apartments
- Construction of stair from lower level to new upper level street (on access with town church)
- Introduction of second cistern on North-Eastern edge of property
- Addition of third level Central Hall type
- Landscaping of upper area around house to include gardens and stairs
- Access to House from upper South-Eastern edge



1992

- Expansion of Upper driveway
- Instillation of fencing and electric gate
- Instillation of security lighting and surveillance cameras
- Access to House from upper South-Eastern edge



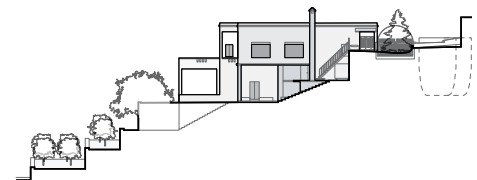
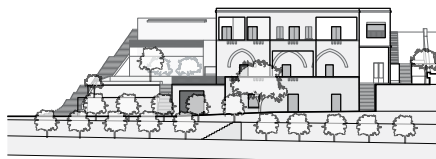
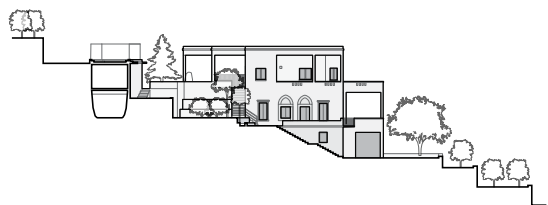
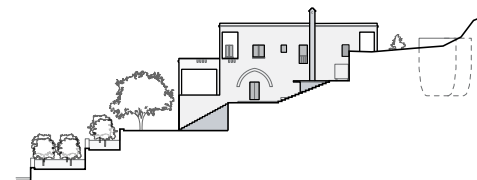
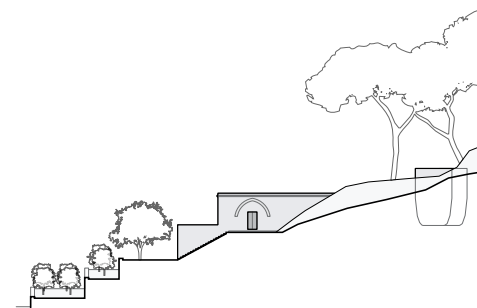
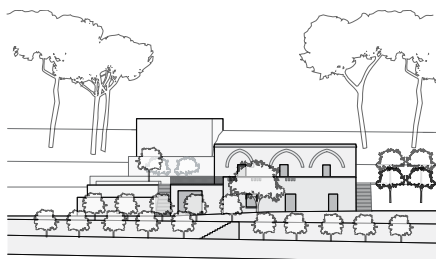
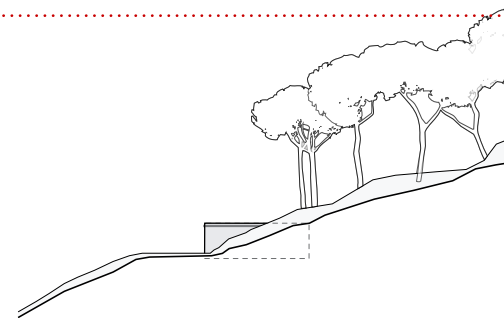
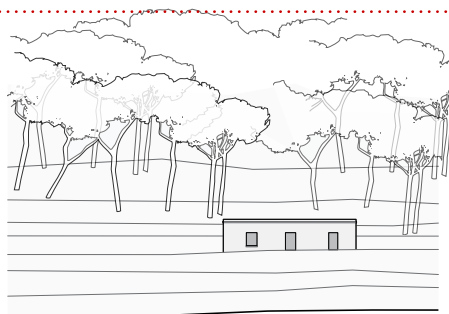
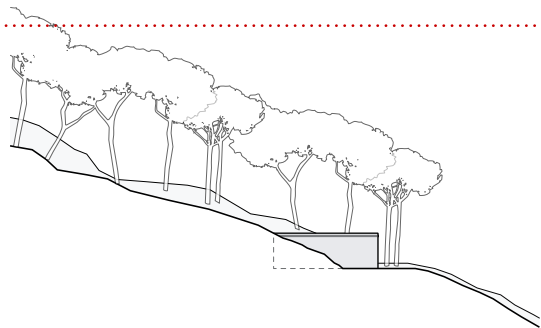




Fig.4.17. Image of a typical Lebanese mountain village. Some easily identifiable house types are highlighted.

achievement of one's life, being brought about with the concurrence and cooperation of the whole community."³

Although the tradition of migration from the mountains to the coast and ultimately to overseas was derived from a need to seek one's fortune in the world, Lebanese emigrants have typically remained attached to their homeland. This connection is maintained by visits, by sending money to support relatives in Lebanon, and often by returning to retire in Lebanon. Friedrich Ragette comments on the connection between emigration and the evolution of the family home in Lebanon:

Before the 20th century, a prosperous young man would return after having found his fortune abroad, and commission a house from the village's master mason (*mu'allim*). Consulting with the client, the *mu'allim* would choose one of the common plan types and proceeded without drawing plans or formal documents. The house was built following tradition, with participation from the owner's whole family. Therefore, the construction of the Lebanese home is linked to the relationship between the understanding of functional requirements and the potential of available materials.⁴

Ragette observed that the archaic Lebanese house derives from the shepherd's shelter. From this form evolved more sophisticated peasants' homes, village houses, isolated residences, and luxurious dwellings for the upper class. Ragette further identifies four basic types of pre 20th century houses that exist in the Lebanese landscape.⁵ These types are:

- ① The Closed Rectangular House
- ② The Gallery House
- ③ The Liwan House (and related Courtyard Houses)
- ④ The Central House

3. Friedrich Ragette, *Architecture in Lebanon* (New York: Caravan Books 1970), 184.

4. *Ibid.*, 122.

5. *Ibid.*, 5-12.

These types are not necessarily independent of each other. Many houses in Lebanon today consist of several house types built one on top of each other. Ragette identifies such houses as Combination types. My own family home, *Beit Noufaily*, with its evolving history and evident multiple strata, is an example of the Combination type house. Using the criteria developed by Ragette and subsequently adopted by many contemporary researchers, I will now outline the evolution of Lebanese house types and the evolution of our own home.

1. The Closed Rectangular House: Practical Agrarian

The Closed Rectangular House is the simplest house type found in Lebanon. It consists of a single square or rectangular space, with below roof ventilation and one or two small windows. The main door into the house is low to prevent cattle from wandering in and out. The largest unobstructed space that can be achieved without additional internal supports is a square room of roughly 20m². This is predicated on the average common local timber length of 5m. Though vaulted stone constructions of this house type have been found in the Middle East where timber is lacking, this is not the case in Lebanon.⁶ Here, the house is made up of a combination of load bearing walls (consisting of stone bearing walls sometimes up to 1m thick) and a timber skeleton roof construction. At grade to the outside, the entrance onto the lowest level of the house (*bertash*) is used as a soiled service space (*madura*) where shoes and tools can be left. This level, usually consisting of just under half of the area of the entire house, also serves as a stable (*'istabl*) with a raised level (*matban*) for animal feed storage. The remaining half of the house is raised 20-75cm, and offers a clean platform (*mastabeh*) for living and sleeping. This remaining half of the area serves as a family room (*maskan*) and storage (*hasel*). This grouping of all living and working space under one roof both satisfies the need for security and harnesses animal warmth during the winter. The *maskan* is usually only

⁶ Yasmine Makaroun, *Réhabilitation: manuel pour l'entretien et la réhabilitation de l'architecture traditionnelle libanaise*, (2004), 12.

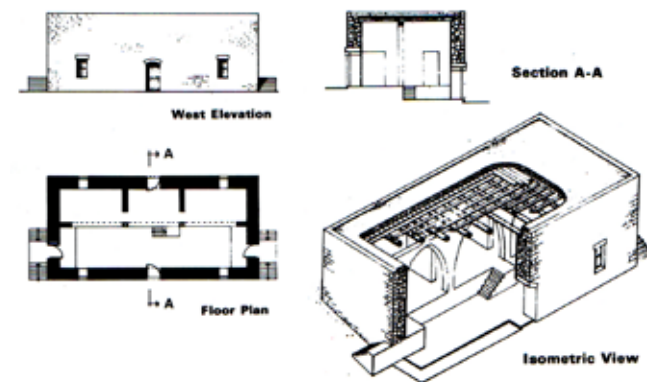


Fig.4.18. Typical Closed Rectangular House Type with raised interior arcade.



Fig.4.19. Typical Closed Rectangular House Type. Photograph taken by author.

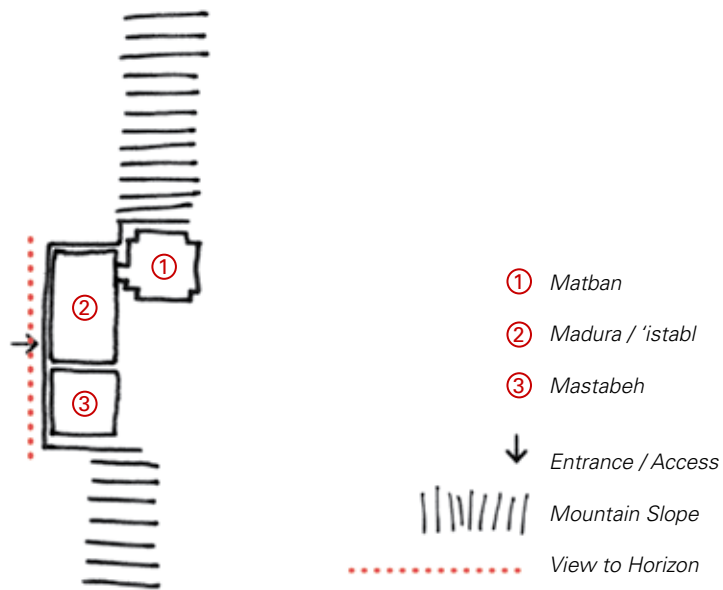


Fig.4.20. Sketch of the lowest lever of Beit Noufaily illustrating the Closed Rectangular House Type.

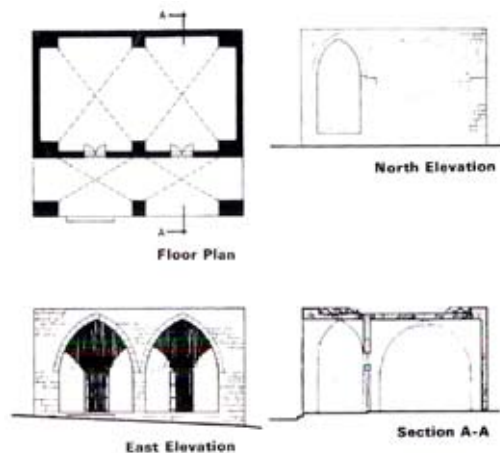


Fig.4.21. Typical small Gallery House Type. The sleeping area is closed off from the open living shaded area.

used at night or in the winter. During the day the actual working and living space is outside, with a small independent structure that serves as a kitchen (*daykuneh*), usually on the shady north side of the house. The water reservoir (*bir*), a well (*nab'*) or at least a basin that receives fresh water brought in from the village fountain would be located nearby.⁷

Construction on *Beit Noufaily* began in the late 18th century after the Noufaily family first arrived in the village of *Mtayleb*. This is when the oldest—and lowest—level of the house was built. Although it is a typical Closed Rectangular House type, no evidence of the original wooden structure remains today. Steel and concrete reinforcements have replaced the original wooden structure to brace the subsequently installed upper levels. During the civil war, this first level, securely nestled in the mass of the mountain, became an ideal bomb shelter for not only the family but also the surrounding village community.

2. The Gallery House: The Symbolically Feudal

With the development of stone vaulted construction techniques in the 18th century, cross-vaulted ceilings began to appear in Lebanese building practices.⁸ This important development enabled greater spans for larger unobstructed rooms, which were capable of accommodating growing and extended families under one roof. This gave the home a chance to rise above the site, giving it a commanding view of the surrounding property. It also meant that a second floor could be built on top of the vaulted arches of the ground floor. Besides effectively doubling the living space, in the dry summer season the roof would serve as a working surface where fruits, cereals, raisins, and pinecones are dried.

Renovations to Lebanese homes traditionally come in entire floor additions to the existing structure, and since these additions are intended to be used by extended families, internal vertical accessibility between floors is not desired.⁹ As a result, external

7. Ragette, *Architecture in Lebanon*, 17-20.

8. *Ibid.*, 176-178.

9. *Ibid.*, 188-189.

stairs (*daraj*), which climb the natural slope of the terrain, were designed to provide access to upper levels. For security from animals and passers-by the roof does not have direct access. Instead, the external stone stair—built into the external wall—is terminated above arms reach. The remaining gap is bridged by a wooden ladder (*sellom*). In the summer, the family would sleep on the roof where it is cooler and the ladder would be retracted for security. For additional security and privacy, Gallery Homes are often found clustered together around a common flat or terraced courtyard.¹⁰

In 1919 my great grandfather—Youssef Abraham Noufaily—built the second storey Gallery House directly above the original Closed Rectangular House of *Beit Noufaily*. A water cistern was built directly adjacent to the first level on the north side to accommodate the growing family’s water supply. The family was beginning to cultivate the surrounding landscape with tiered orchards containing olive trees and also cultivating silk worms. Further evidence of the family’s expanding agrarian activities is evident in the construction of a storm-water retention cistern dug into the mountain that is braced by the new Gallery House. With the addition of the third—Central Hall House—level in 1939 the Gallery House level was subdivided to create two apartments.

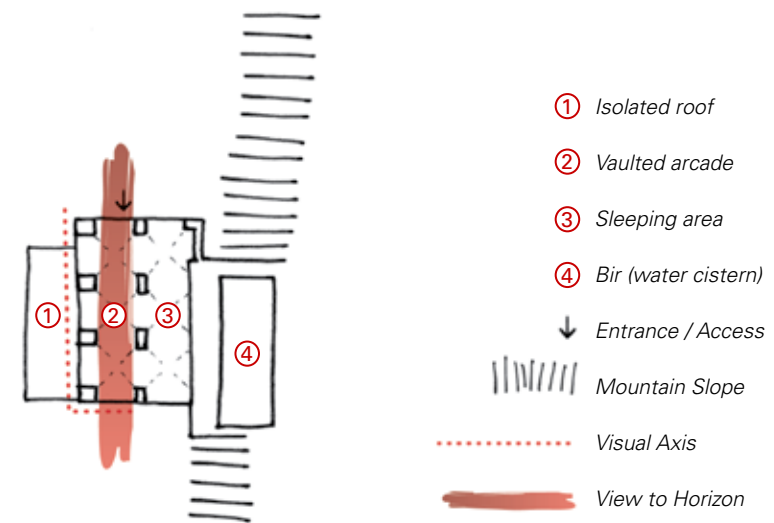


Fig.4.22. Sketch of second level of Beit Noufaily illustrating the Gallery House Type.

3. The Liwan House: Courtyard House

Of the four Lebanese house types identified by Ragette, the Liwan House is the least frequently found.¹¹ This is because it requires a large walled courtyard space at the front that is at grade with its sheltered space, and is therefore extremely difficult to build on the often dramatically sloped sites found throughout most of Lebanon. Ragette postulates that the design of the Liwan House is derived from the Arab Bedouin tent, which has three sides closed against the wind while the fourth side is opened, effectively extending the covered living space out in front of the tent in a kind of implied courtyard.¹² In Lebanon, the simplest form of the Liwan House is



Fig.4.23. Example of the standard Liwan House type: A 3m x 5m Liwan flanked by 5m x 5m rooms.

10. Makaroun, *Réhabilitation*, 13.

11. Ragette, *Architecture in Lebanon*, 68.

12. *Ibid.*, 88.

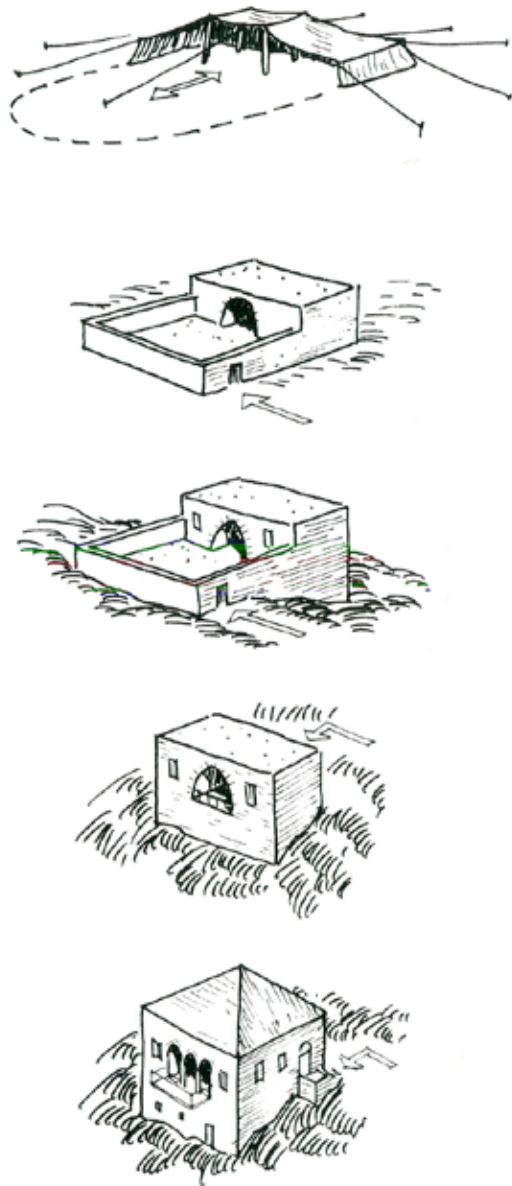


Fig.4.24. Diagram illustrating Friedrich Ragette's evolution theory of the Bedouin tent into the Liwan House and ultimately into the Central Hall House.

a freestanding unit built along the coastline or on one of the larger flat terraces in the mountains. The liwan is the name given to the covered central space, which almost always has its main opening on the front facade, and connects to all the other rooms surrounding it on the right and left.¹³ This open concept means that the house must be protected from animals, intruders and the elements, which is why the terrace that extends out of the liwan in front of the house is most often enclosed in a courtyard.

Though *Beit Noufaily* does not exhibit any characteristics of a Liwan House, the significance of this type and its influences on Lebanese architecture is nonetheless considerable. Accommodating the courtyard condition of the Liwan House on the sloped site of *Beit Noufaily* would be too expensive and laborious, but not impossible if one were, for example, to maintain the basic liwan design without an extending terrace and have it open to the view (valley or horizon) side, enclosed with nothing more than a railing. However, the Liwan House has arguably influenced the fourth Lebanese housing type, the Central Hall House¹⁴, a variation of which was built on the third level of *Beit Noufaily* beginning in 1939.

4. The Central Hall House: The Raised (sub)urban

Although the Central Hall House first appears in Lebanon at a later date than the other typical house types, it is the most prevalent kind of house in the country; indeed, it is completely unique to Lebanon.¹⁵ Among the house types studied in the surrounding countries of Israel (Palestine) and Syria, no central hall scheme is mentioned. Developed out of a close relationship with the mountain and the view of the horizon, the Central Hall House is very much the Lebanese vernacular. Located all over the Lebanese mountainside the type transcends the artificial sectarian and political boundaries of the country.

Though there are so many variants on the Central Hall House Type, there are several features that are common to the majority of

13. Makaroun, *Réhabilitation*, 14.

14. *Ibid.*, 89.

15. Ragette, *Architecture in Lebanon*, 92.

the homes that are of this type. Most are laid out in a symmetrical composition, and those with a middle entrance at the back are largely symmetrical. As most Central Hall Type homes are raised and oriented to view the horizon, access through the home down the axis of most of them is not possible.¹⁶

Observing the central hall as the nucleus of this type one can easily customize any number of rooms and configurations flanking the central hall. This makes the Central Hall Type the most versatile type in Lebanon. In fact, it is not uncommon to find this type in constant stages of renovation and extension. The adjacent rooms that make up the bedrooms and living spaces of the house are predominantly square to rectangular in plan with the smallest measurement rarely less than 4m wide. Just like its predecessor, the Closed Rectangular Type, the average area of the rooms in the Central Hall Type are roughly 20m².

The central hall in this scheme also has many variations. A central hall with two arches facing the view would generally be about 3.5m. When three arches are used, the width ranges between 4m and 5.5m. However, some homes occasionally can have widths that are as small as 3m and as wide as 6m, depending on the region and construction style. As for the length of the halls, the lengths vary from 3.5m to 12m. Long halls will usually break up the length with additional interior arcades.

Ragette points out that towards the end of the nineteenth century, due to western influences, the central hall scheme was the most widely adopted of all the types and the designs became increasingly more formal.¹⁷ These homes became villas that towered and dominated their surroundings, much like the French pavilions at Versailles and the Italian villa. This principle is mainly predicated on the siting of the villa in the middle of the lot and considered all elevations as having equal importance. The Central Hall House was the ideal type for offering an opportunity to maintain a local model under the increasingly popular western sitting conditions. The only major influence on the elevations was the introduction of a shallow



Fig.4.25. Image of a typical Central Hall House Type with a pitched terra-cotta roof. Photograph by Danny Noufaily.

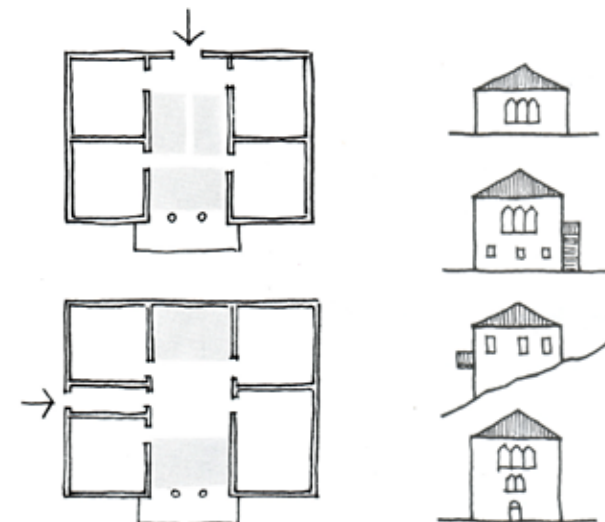


Fig.4.26. Typical sketch of the most common entry sequences found in the Central Hall House Types. The elevations illustrate the common treatment and configuration of the house in the different terrain conditions.

16. Makaroun, *Réhabilitation*, 16.

17. *Ibid.*, 106-107.

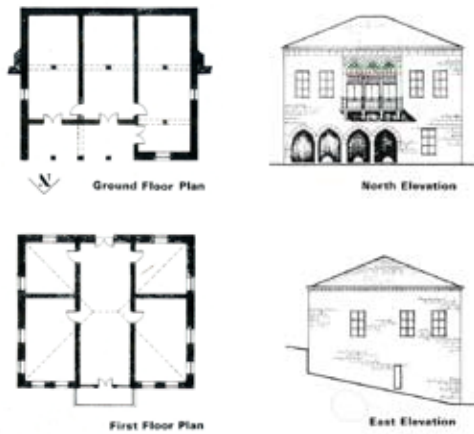


Fig.4.27. Composite House Type (Central Hall House addition above Liwan House Type. In most conditions there is a conscious attempt to maintain symmetry in the plan.

gabled terra-cotta roof that sloped on all sides. Traditionally the homes were designed with a flat roof that collected the rainwater and drained it to a nearby cistern (*bir*). Regardless of whether the Central Hall House was built up over phases or all at once, each level (or storey) is a separate house independent and internally inaccessible to the levels above and below it. External staircases in the landscape connected the levels to each other. Ease of construction and planning, plus tradition and climate explain the persistence of these external stairs. It was only the influence of western tradition at the end of the 19th century that relocated the staircase to the inside and allowed families to occupy more than one floor.

Beit Noufaily's third level fits this type, except for the fact that it lacks a terra-cotta roof. The entrance to the house's site has been reoriented from the location it held as a Closed Gallery House. It was moved from the North East level to the upper South Eastern access off of St. Joseph Street.

In studying *Beit Noufaily* in relationship to the evolution of Lebanese architecture one thing becomes clear. The evolution in construction and type of *Beit Noufaily* is deeply rooted in the development of Lebanese vernacular residential traditions. In essence, *Beit Noufaily* does not only represent a living active vessel of my family's growth, development, and prosperity but also a cross-section of Lebanese architectural history and ultimately the history of the country. Through the study of the family's ancestral home and its evolution in relation to building practices, political and economic conditions we see that quite literally, the Noufaily family is rooted in Lebanon and its fate is closely tied to that of Lebanon's. The house is a symbol of personal and political stability. But it also has a shadow. While it allowed the Noufaily family to survive the civil war, I would argue that it also contributed to that very war.

Within the extensive framework of communal attachments and traditional loyalties of Lebanese society, the family holds the central position.¹⁸ The Lebanese people pride themselves on their

18. Maha Yahya, "Reconstructing Space: The Aberration of the Urban in Beirut", in Samir Khalaf and Philip Khoury, *Recovering Beirut*, (The Netherlands: E. J. Brill,

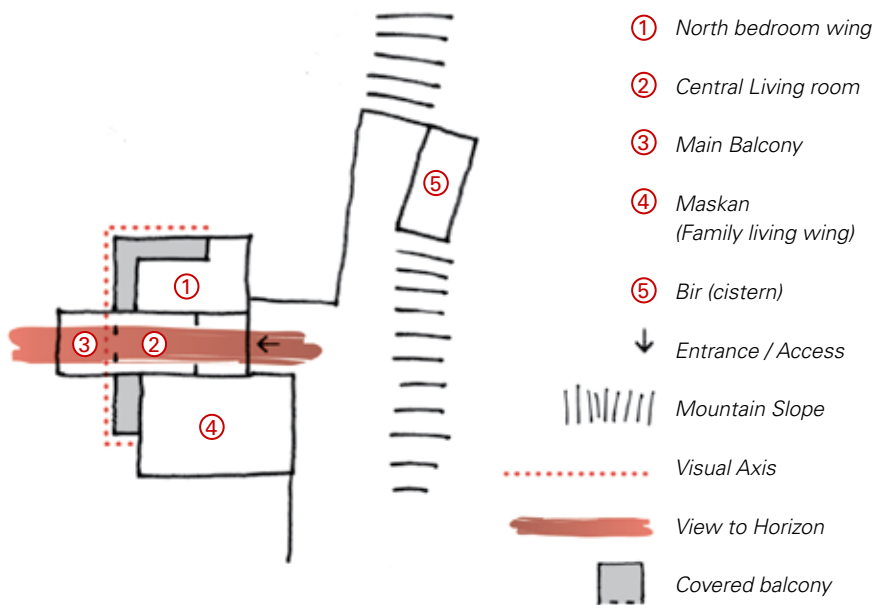


Fig.4.28. Sketch of the third level of Beit Noufaily illustrating the Central Hall House Type.

extended families and generous hospitality. During the civil war, as the fighting intensified and spread from district to district, the Lebanese turned to each other for support. Many people who were forced to flee the areas of the most intense fighting sought refuge in other parts of the country with family or friends. In her paper, “Reconstituting Space: The Aberration of the Urban in Beirut”, Lebanese urban planner and architectural historian Maha Yahya postulates that as the government’s control diminished, the private Lebanese house began to take on a more public role as extended families took shelter under the same roof:

During the civil war the public and private domains fluctuated, attaining sharp lucidity at the height of visible militia control of the streets.... This displacement meant the loss of not only one house but several, until the word home gained multiplicity of images, from a shack under the ruins of the sports stadium to a room in the destroyed post office. It became the only inner sanctum of most individuals as people turned towards the home, the family, friends and community to provide support in hard times. These choices were being dictated by various factors that under normal conditions would not have come into play. The meaning of the home inspired images of the safe abode in more welcoming areas, both physically away from the fighting and within one’s own confessional and kinship structure. They turned towards their neighbourhood, their families, their apartment buildings, and their religious communities to derive support and sustenance, thus creating their own micro-societies. In times of fighting these people become the crutches on which people lean to make it through the horror being wrought over their heads. This is the same micro-society that has sustained the Lebanese through the crisis when the national government disappeared has also prevented the full emergence of a national unity government. When

1993) 164.

the national water supply ceased *Beirutis* dug their own wells. When electricity became sporadic, they bought their own power generators. When the police ceased to exist they affiliated themselves with their ruling militias.¹⁹

Yahya's idea of Lebanon as a collection of micro-societies has remained true well after the end of the civil war. Although people have full access to public utilities, many Lebanese continue to maintain private power generators and private wells, as well as private community security, just in case hostilities break out again. Samir Khalaf, Lebanon's most acclaimed sociologist and Director of the Center for Behavioral Research at the American University of Beirut, made an astute observation immediately following the end of the civil war that still rings true to this day:

Though the average Lebanese derives much social support and psychological reinforcement from local and communal allegiances, these forces are the very same that prompt him on occasion to violate and betray his society's normative standards. The Lebanese is being demoralized by the very same forces that are supposed to make him a more human and sociable being. The formation and deformation of Lebanon so to speak, are rooted in the same forces.²⁰

These local and communal allegiances that Khalaf mentions range from geographically isolated extended families and communities to militia-divided urban neighbourhoods. Unfortunately, this very interdependency leaves groups of people vulnerable to the very same beliefs and prejudices that originally caused the divides within Lebanese society and still do today. Such micro-communities instill a distrust of all those outside their "family" or community circle, while simultaneously breeding a cult-like following that entrenches these

19. *Ibid.*, 163-147.

20. Khalaf, Samir, "Urban Planning in Lebanon," in Behnfeld and Traeder, *Urban Planning in Arab Countries*, (1987) 53-84.

biases into the individual members of these communities. As these communities begin to take on more civic and infrastructure responsibilities, they become less dependent on the greater government and eventually build up enough strength to pose a threat to the united national government. Moreover, as these groups influence of the daily lives of local inhabitants they begin to dictate new visible and invisible divisions in the city.

An example of such a scenario is the Shiite-dominated working-class neighborhood of *Haret Hreik*, a stronghold of *Hezbollah* located between the city centre and the airport. About 700,000 people were estimated to have lived in this neighbourhood before the summer of 2006, and it was well known that *Hezbollah*—a legally recognized political party in Lebanon, and represented in parliament—had many of its offices and social centres in this neighborhood. *Hezbollah* played—and very much still plays—a large role in day-to-day activity in *Haret Hreik*, managing hospitals, schools, and even a welfare system.²¹ Rumours also placed the military base of operations of the *Hezbollah* militia there, so it came as no surprise that when *Hezbollah* declared war on Israel in the summer of 2006—independent of the rest of the Lebanese government—Israel launched an air strike that leveled the entire neighbourhood (Fig.4.29.).

Even in my own small Maronite community of *Mtayleb*, just 12 km north of Beirut, such local and communal allegiances still exist, though not as overtly as during the civil war, when familial clans literally banded together in search of water, food, shelter, and security, usually choosing one home as the base for the extended families in which to gather when the fighting came their way. Today, most *Mtayleb* families only interact socially with other families who have the same lineage. These clan allegiances are a principal factor in undermining local electoral processes of government representatives. Indeed, although the local militias have officially disbanded, numerous friends and relatives have told me that they could be formed again within 24 hours. It is for this reason the spaces of shelter where



Fig. 4.29. Aerial photographs of the Neighbourhood of Haret hreik taken before and after the Israel Hezbollah war (Between July 12th 2006 and July 31st 2006.)

²¹ William Harris, *Faces of Lebanon : sects, wars, and global extensions* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1996), 301-302.

Lebanese citizens hid during the civil war still exist, abandoned for now, but certainly ready to be re-inhabited should the need arise.

In *Mtayleb*, the original foundations of *Beit Noufaily* (the Closed Rectangular House addressed previously) served not only as an impromptu bomb shelter for the family during the times of heavy shelling throughout the civil war, but also for the surrounding extended family and community. This space is currently used for long-term storage, though mattresses and bedding are stored there as well, mothballed in boxes ready to be used if the need arises. In a way, this house expresses a lack of faith in the stability of Lebanon. While the house expands and evolves during times of prosperity there still lurks in the dark origins of this house the greatest unspoken fear of this family, shared by many Lebanese, and undermining unified society. I recall an everyday ritual which my grandfather and I engaged in during my childhood in Lebanon:

Everyday my grandfather and I would walk down the steps of the north stair to the level below, crossing the patio, and down the closest stair to the level below clearing any debris off our path, which at the time for me would have been nothing more than twigs and small rocks. He and I would go down to ensure that the path was clear, the water jugs full, and that the provisions were stocked. As we did this he would remind me again that if anything happened I was to run down to the shelter as fast as I can, holding onto the railings or staying close to the walls. Once there it would be my job to count everyone that came in and report back to him. I certainly enjoyed this daily ritual down to the shelter. It would be those nightly trips that would come to haunt my dreams.²²

How can the Lebanese people begin to put an end to these dangerous cycles of undermining the emergence of a national unity government? As our modern model of western government is predicated on the foundations of Athens' concepts of the *polis* in

22. Excerpt from author's travel journal to Lebanon 2005.

relationship to the private home, I feel it would be useful to begin at this origin.

In *Architectural Principles in the Age of Historicism*, Robert Jan van Pelt quotes Hannah Arendt, who identifies the house as the basis for Athenian government:

Property meant no more or less than to have one's location in a particular part of the world and therefore to belong to the body politic, that is, to be the head of one of the families which together constituted the public realm... To own property meant here to be master over one's own necessities of life and therefore to potentially to be a free person, free to transcend his own life and enter the world all have in common.²³

Van Pelt then goes on to observe that “subsequent western government is predicated upon the idea of the home and the divisions between the public and the private life,” and that although those that owned their own homes were free and equal in the *polis*, within the private home it was another matter:

The equality of the polis (that is: of all the male citizens) stopped at the threshold of the house. Inside, the paterfamilias ruled with absolute authority. The house was his property.. What did matter was that it offered the owner a physical foundation for a sense of dignity and self-respect.²⁴

To actively engage in the public realm of government one must, to a certain degree, sacrifice autonomy for the sake of the collective. These sacrifices entail placing civic responsibility above one's personal interests, thus ensuring that all citizens are recognized as equal, entitled to the same privileges and subject to the same

23. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 70.

24. Robert Jan van Pelt and Carrol William Westfall, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Historicism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), 177.

laws. However, such a sacrifice can only be made by people who are secure in their place in the world, and the home offers each citizen such security. Within the walls of the home a person's autonomy was re-established as well as his responsibility—a responsibility not only to himself, but to those that resided within the home. This sacrifice is made easier if the home is a family home because in such an instance, the sacrifice is not only supported by the owning of the home, but also by the experience of the whole of one's life and that of one's ancestors. To quote writer and philosopher Jean Améry:

Home is security, I say. At home we are in full command of the dialectic of knowledge and recognition, of trust and confidence. Since we know them, we recognize them and we trust ourselves to speak and to act—for we may have justified confidence in our knowledge and recognition. The entire field of the related words loyal, familiar, confidence, to trust, to entrust, trusting belongs in the broader psychological area of feeling secure. One feels secure, however, where no chance occurrence is to be expected, nothing completely strange to be feared. To live in one's homeland means that what is already known to us occurs before our eyes again and again, in slight variants. That can lead to desolation and to intellectual wilting in provincialism—if one knows only one's homeland and nothing else. If one has no home, however, one becomes subject to disorder, confusion, and desultoriness.²⁵

I would argue that in the case of the Lebanese people this lack of clear boundary between the public and the private realm has eroded the dignity of ordinary citizens. In addition, concerning the Diaspora and their relationship to Lebanon, their ancestral home becomes their strongest link back to their place within Lebanese society. If ownership of property/home is the basis for engaging in the body politic and being recognized as “free,” it stands to

25. Jean Améry, “How Much Home Does a Person Need?” in Jean Améry, *At the Mind's Limits*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 47.

reason that the abandonment or neglect of one's property affects the legitimacy of one's citizenship. Therefore, in order to reconcile one's self with the government, one must take responsibility for and ownership of one's own family home.

How does one do this? How, in particular, does one regain ownership of and responsibility for a family home that was abandoned during a time of war? A home, that as Jean Améry writes, is very much part of one's childhood:

Only those signals that we absorbed very early, that we learned to interpret at the same time as we were gaining possession of our external world, became constitutional elements and constants of our personality. Just as one learns one's mother tongue without knowing its grammar, one experiences one's native surroundings. Mother tongue and native world grow with us, grow into us, and thus become the familiarity that guarantees us security. . . . Therefore, once again very clearly: there is no "new home." Home is the land of one's childhood and youth. Whoever has lost it remains lost himself.²⁶

I believed that it ought to be possible to regain a sense of home by redefining the boundaries of the public and private realms through an act of renovation and restoration. Through this act of renovation my family might be re-establishing a relationship to a healthy unified government, once again secure in our autonomy through our ancestral home. I acknowledged that it is impossible to re-inhabit *Beit Noufaily* as though nothing had happened between 1975 and the present. However, I believed that building, re-building, and adding on to a house can create a space appropriate for the family it will house and the community the family wishes to shape.

Based on this belief, I began to design the renovation and addition to *Beit Noufaily* to accommodate my own immediate family. On the existing levels, the renovations would be nothing more than light editing of each independent house type to better

26. Ibid., 48.

reflect each one's original intentions as one of the Lebanese House Types outlined earlier in this chapter. Therefore, the first level will be tidied up and divided into spaces for storage, a garage, and a pantry. It will also be useful if the family ever has to use the ground level as a bomb shelter again. On the second level, which would become the home of my brother, the walls that subdivide the original rooms—currently creating two apartments—will be removed to expose the intended unobstructed axis parallel to the mountain of the Gallery House Type living space. In addition, the exterior covered porch on the south side will be enclosed to make a private master bedroom with its own controlled-access garden. The Central Hall House—the third level of the house—will be renovated as a barrier-free home for my parents and my sister. The central hall access in the scheme will not be touched, but the surrounding private spaces that flank the central hall will be renovated to create new north and south master bedrooms that will accommodate the private needs of both my parents and my sister. The new house level on the very top of the existing house, where I would live, would draw its inspiration from the evolution process of the Lebanese house types, particularly the hypothesis put forward by Ragette that the Liwan House—from which the Central Hall House would evolve from—evolved from the Bedouin tents of the Middle East. Just as the Bedouin tent controlled the space directly in front of its opening, the new level would implicitly command the panoramic view of Beirut and the horizon.

When the scheme was done, I pinned it up on the wall. A friend, who had also read an earlier draft of this thesis, walked by and stopped to look at it. Then he asked:

But how is the renovation of the house meant to address the problem of the Lebanese state?²⁷

I had no convincing answer for him. Nor could I come up with one to justify the renovation and addition to the family home

²⁷ Comment by Edward Houle upon reading the a draft of the manuscript on June 20th 2007.

as anything more than a self-indulgent exercise. This comment was echoed a few weeks later in a thesis review meeting by various professors. So I removed the renovation from my argument, and decided to return to *Place des Martyrs*.

But had it all been in vain, my attempt to link to the site of Lebanon and the problem of its silence through my intervention on the family house? Had I blindly gone down a dead-end? After some soul-searching, I realized that the journey had been worthwhile after all. It had been a step towards understanding my own situation. As a Lebanese expatriate living in Canada, Beirut was, in the end, not something I could turn my back to. Because I am rooted in *Beit Noufaily*, I am rooted in Beirut and in Lebanon, and Lebanon is rooted in me. *Beit Noufaily* provides me with legitimacy. I could scrap the house design, but I could not walk away from *Place des Martyrs*. This means that whatever is to follow will not just be an exercise of the mind, but also a sacrifice of the heart.



CHAPTER 5: MISCONCEIVED AMBITION

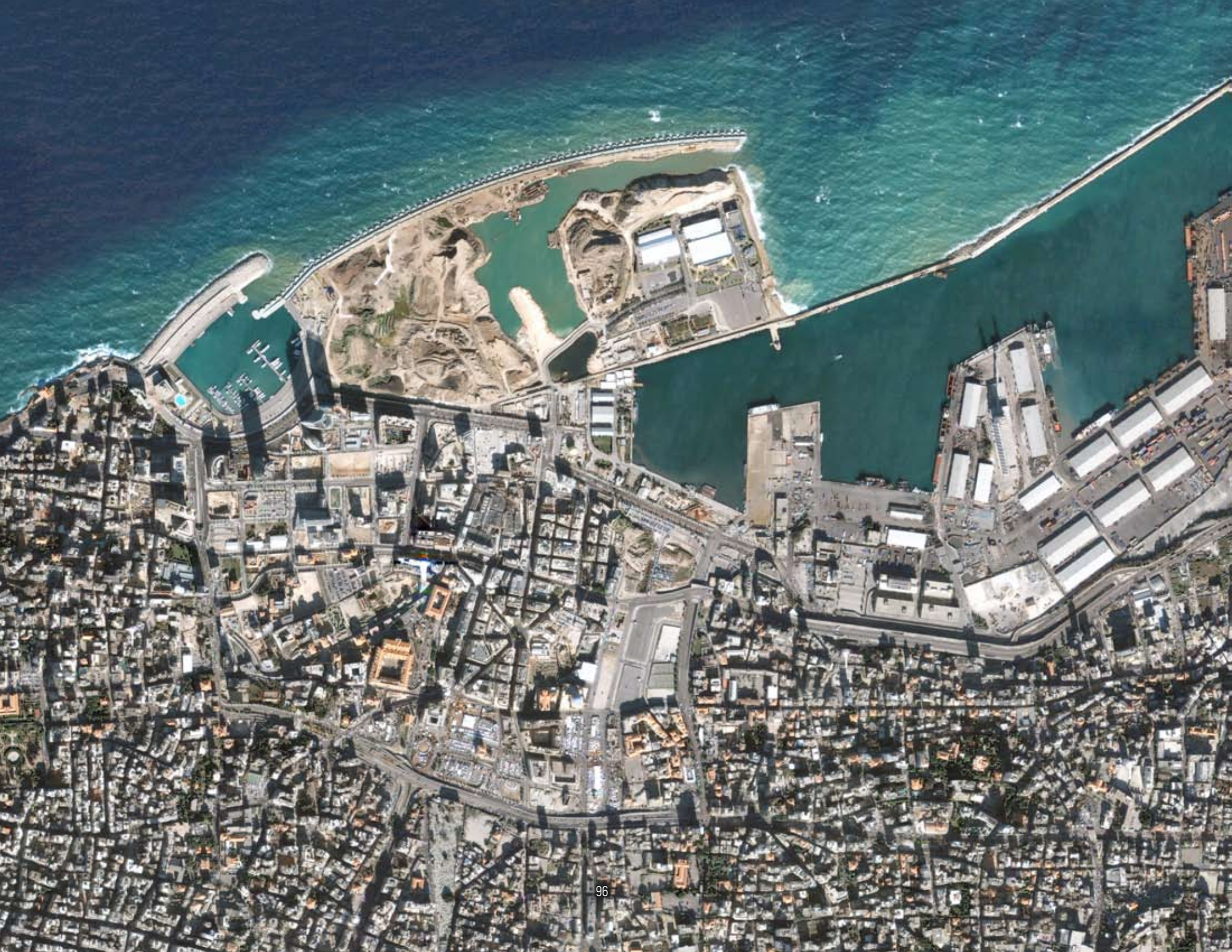
It's the middle of the night...

I awake with a shudder to loud rumbling outside. My grandmother has burst into the room, "Farid, wake up". Hurriedly, I grab for the slippers and jacket placed at the foot of the bed for just such an occasion. I hear rumbling outside along with the occasional whizzing sound just before a boom. I am barely awake when my grandfather picks me up and carries me out the front door. Just as we exit the house, a startling flash lights up the night sky and for an instant I see the look on everyone's face. They seem anxious. Tonight's trip down the path is an exceptionally energized one. Everyone takes turns run down the steps two at a time. In quick short breaths, my grandfather keeps reassures me that we're going to be all right and to hold onto him tightly. I look up just as he bounds down the first flight of stairs. Flashes of light streak across the night sky vividly illuminating the rough exterior stonewall of the house as well as the leaves and branches of the *Ackadinee* fruit tree that grows adjacent to the stairs. We're heading down to the shelter. Fleeing the lights... Soon we'll be safe. All goes dark.¹

What I now realize is that in my excited attempt to restore the family house I was in fact contributing to the silence of the war by limiting the scope of my intervention to the private realm. The only kind of restoration that is really useful is to create a restoration/intervention in the public realm. For those interested in seeing the fruits of my failure, I offer the redesign of *Beit Noufaily* in Appendix 2.

1. Recollection of a reoccurring dream of a childhood memory when the author was six years old. Excerpt from author's travel journal to Lebanon 2005.

Fig. 5.0 (opposite) Tracer bullets light up the night sky above Beirut. In 1976. Photograph by XXXX



CHAPTER 6: RETURN TO PLACE DES MARTYRS

Mtayled, 3 October 2005

I flag one of the many typical Beirut taxis—a beaten-up old Mercedes with red license plates, burnt-out lights and a colourful driver—that frequent the major streets. With a quick negotiation of one thousand Lebanese Lira—the standard fare for a ride into Beirut—we’re off.

“So, where are you from?” The driver asks me, peering curiously at me in the rear view mirror.

“How can you tell I’m from out of town?”

“Not many locals put their seat belts on when they get into a car.”

We have a good laugh and I learn that my driver is also an expatriate—from California. Chatting amicably, we make our way out of our quaint village, with its canopy of pine-lined streets and large patches of old-growth forests, past a gaudy French chateau reproduction and a faux-Victorian manor house, past the *Rabyeh* Hotel at the end of our street—a five star establishment nestled deep in the canopy pine forest of *Mtayleb*—and past the American ambassador’s compound. As we wind our way down the mountain I begin to notice the built environment jostling for space with the receding scenic greenery along the public road. The small traditional stone-built houses gradually give way to grotesque, almost Brutalist modern apartment buildings the closer we get to the coastline. More and more of these buildings are springing up as landowners and developers look for a quick and easy way to turn a profit. During the war illegal construction of apartment blocks did more damage to the coastline and mountain ranges than any amount of shelling. As displaced refugees fleeing the fiercest fighting in Beirut and the south needed accommodation in the north, property owners took advantage of the opportunity.

The taxi recklessly winds its way through the last narrow and tumultuous roundabout that connects the East-West Highway to the coastal North-South *Autostrade*. The *Autostrade* is a marvel

To the stern student of affairs, Beirut is a phenomenon, beguiling perhaps, but quite, impossible.

Jan Morris

The World: Life and Travel 1950-2000

Fig. 6.0 (opposite) Aerial photograph of Downtown Beirut (aka Beirut Central District) courtesy of Google Earth 2007.



Fig. 6.1 Joseph my taxi (service) driver. Photograph by author.



Fig. 6.2 Typical 1970s Mercedes Benz taxis that frequent the Lebanese roadways. Distinguished by their government issued red license plates.

of Lebanese traffic chaos. It has five lanes in each direction and is constantly flooded with vehicles of every size, age, shape, and style. Multicoloured advertising billboards of every size and shape punctuate the chaotic experience as we near Beirut. It began immediately after the war, as if by natural evolution the billboards began to flood the coastal highways. Seeing a way to make a quick profit, those who owned buildings along the highway began to lease to marketing companies, which were only too eager to take advantage of the advertising real estate. Since then the billboards have gone too far and become, in some cases, hazardously distracting to the traffic. As we make our way further south towards Beirut, the streets become more crowded and traffic lights only occasionally materialize—ornamentation that few notice and fewer use. It's lunchtime in Beirut. As the beaten Mercedes taxi honks its way through the city's chaotic traffic, the driver is paying little regard to lights or right of way. The street is a baroque tapestry ornamented by the swirling lane changes of cars, trucks, and insane pedestrians that cross with no apparent logic. As my driver waves his freehand frantically out the window to signal his intentions, I settle back in my seat, close my eyes, and try to drown out the honking horns and noxious diesel fumes. Other vehicles pass within a hair's breadth of the taxi. Lebanese roadways are like the traditional mezza table setting common in Lebanese restaurants—a tumultuous free for all.¹

My taxi screams through a red light with me literally screaming, as those attempting to cross our path brake to avoid catastrophe. The driver, sensing my panic, attempts to assure me that even though traffic lights have been installed since the late 1990s they haven't done much good. "In fact," he continues, "If you follow the lights and break at a red, then the people behind you will smash into you at full speed... can you imagine? It would be most terrible." Indeed I can, and it would.

We make our way into central Beirut. On any given street you can see an abandoned building that was clearly in the line of fire during the civil war. Right next to that building is a brand new

1. Nadim Karam, *The Autostrad: A Mezé Culture* (Rotterdam: FAAD, NDU Press, 2003).

gleaming hotel, skyscraper, or exotic boutique. I ask the driver to drop me off at the farthest north edge of *Place des Martyrs*, closest to the sea, and with a big grin he nods and veers the taxi two lanes over taking the next off ramp.

I finally arrive at my destination, Beirut Central District. My driver drops me off at the northern edge of *Place des Martyrs*. I can't see the Martyrs Monument. It appears I am on a plateau directly north of the square and about five meters below it. I head west, up *Rue de Triste*, past the ruins of what appear to be a castle. Enchanted by the call to prayer at a nearby mosque I make my way south onto *Rue Foch*, one of the major street axes of *Place de l'Etoile*. I quickly look into the restored shops: Gucci, Chanel, Tiffany's, and I can't help but lament the *Souks*² that once existed here, ones I had heard so much about but had never myself witnessed. Downtown Beirut offers the most dramatic contrasts between old and new I have seen anywhere. My Lonely Planet guidebook describes it as "Disneyesque."³ As I walk around the eerily clean and quiet streets, I can't help but agree. A little way south and I come to the intersection with *Rue Moutrane*, where I catch a glimpse of the new *Souks* designed by Rafael Moneo⁴. Drawn to the site, I cannot help but count the construction cranes. This site alone has about nine. I have a quick look around the Souks construction site for a way in and noticing a guard eyeing me suspiciously I decide to move on. If I'm going to be arrested for attempting to break into a construction site, it will not be this one. I look south on *Rue Allenby* and notice that there are still buildings in the downtown that have not yet been renovated. It is surreal to see such a bullet-riddled building abandoned among so much construction activity. It looks much like the newly renovated building across the street. I can't help but notice how out-of-place

2. *Souks*: a commercial quarter in an Arab city. The term is often used to designate the market or bazaar in any Middle Eastern city.

3. Of course it would appear strange that a returning local would need a Lonely planet Guide to his own country, but I must admit that the Beirut Central District had become so foreign to me I figured a guide was the best way to begin understanding the changes.

4. José Rafael Moneo Vallés: Is a Spanish architect and the recipient of the Pritzker Prize for architecture in 1996.



Fig.6.3. Oversized advertising billboards have entirely consumed the spaces along the coastal highways.



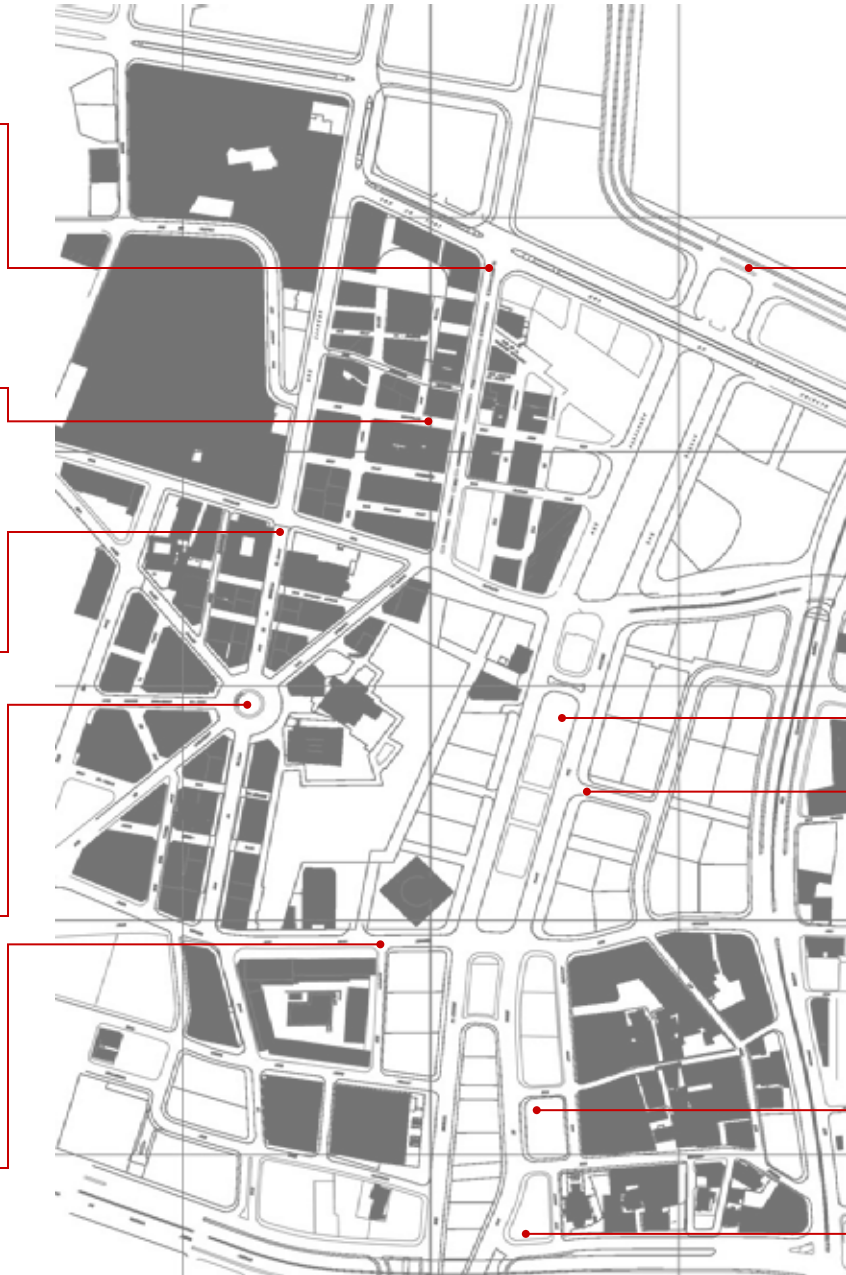
Fig. 6.4 Panoramic of Place de l'Etoile. The Lebanese parliament building is second from the left.

each building makes the other appear. I recall reading a review of Solidère's questionable skin-deep renovation practices. The restored elevations are but shells masking quite modern buildings equipped with wall the trappings of all that technology has to offer⁵. I continue south on *Rue Allenby*, making my way into the car-free oasis. The downtown flanking the western edge of *Place des Martyrs* is closed to traffic and buzzes with people in its cafés, restaurants, and designer stores. I walk around *Place de l'Etoile*, unable to comprehend the amount of restoration and rebuilding that has taken place in my ten-year absence. It might be due to the recent assassinations of anti-Syrian politicians and reporters that have scared off most of the wealthy and beautiful, but most of the downtown seems abandoned. The restored buildings, Ottoman-era replicas, are all thin and uncomfortable veneer. All evidence of the civil war has been torn down or covered up—replaced with an idealized car-free utopia—while just on the outskirts of downtown one is still surrounded by the bombed-out shells of the old city. I watch children on bicycles circling the roundabout of *Place de l'Etoile* under the watchful eyes of their mothers, nannies, and armed Lebanese Soldiers. I wonder at how insulated and fragile this oasis seems compared to the rest of the country. I make my way south of *Place de l'Etoile* down *Rue al Maarad* catching glimpses of the excavated Roman forum and the towering spires of the new *Muhammad Amin* Mosque, adjacent to *Place des Martyrs*. My last visit here with my father had been to a desolate plateau on which my father had painted the vivid memories of his youth. This is—and is not—the Lebanon I had come back to in my mind, the country I so often visited in my imagination. Perhaps that Lebanon never really existed at all. As I mull over my state of confusion I turn down *Rue Emir Bechir*, past renovated streets, exotic store fronts, The St. George Maronite Cathedral, directly next to the *Muhammad Amin* Mosque and arrive back at the edge of the newly built downtown area. Here was the infamous Green Line, the site of the physical division of the civil war that severed East and West Beirut, Muslim and Christian. Some of the fiercest fighting took place here. With



Fig.6.5. View down Rue Allenby towards the Mediterranean.

5. <http://www.Solidère.com/Solidère.html>



the city core behind me I gaze back out onto the barren and desolate plateau of *Place des Martyrs* to the North and the ruin of the “egg-shaped” Beirut City Center Building to the south. Memories of my youth flood back in vivid detail.

In 1994, my parents decided that my mother would take my brother, sister, and me back to Canada to continue our education. Before departing, my father took my brother and me to downtown Beirut to show us how the city had suffered during the civil war. As we stared at the rubble and the squatters’ shacks erected among the ruins, my father pointed to a desolate plateau, populated by shabby tents huddled around a bullet-riddled monument. “That’s *Place des Martyrs*,” he told us, and he began to talk about the Beirut of his youth, a city that had been the Paris of the Middle East, a city that had at its centre a beautiful square dedicated to the memory of patriotic defiance against the Ottomans. He did not talk about the reason that the place of his memories had become a site of utter destruction. And at that time, my brother and I did not dare to ask.

Eleven years later I stand at the edge of the reconstruction and renaissance, and realize that central Beirut is no more than an apparition of the past, as if the civil war had never happened. As a foundation for a “new” Lebanon and the architectural manifestation of the nation’s rebirth, the desolate state of the square and its lack of future direction are troubling. It is the visible manifestation of the confusion that surrounds the plurality of Lebanese life—the country’s independence and the new status quo created by the Ta’if Agreement and the General Amnesty Law. The emptiness of the square symbolizes the vacuum at the core of the state and the confusion of a society whose multiple factions are not yet fully reconciled.

Fig.6.6. (Opposite: Centre) Partial site plan of Beirut Central District centered on Place de l’Etoile.

Fig.6.7. (Opposite) Photographs corresponding to a walk through of BCD. Photographs by author.



CHAPTER 7: FECUND FAILURE

A failed attempt at Modernism...

A sinister sniper point along the infamous Green Line...

An impromptu brothel during the civil war...

A failed retrofit by the Ministry of Finance in 1992...

A venue for illegal raves in the mid 1990s...

Slated for demolition in 2003...

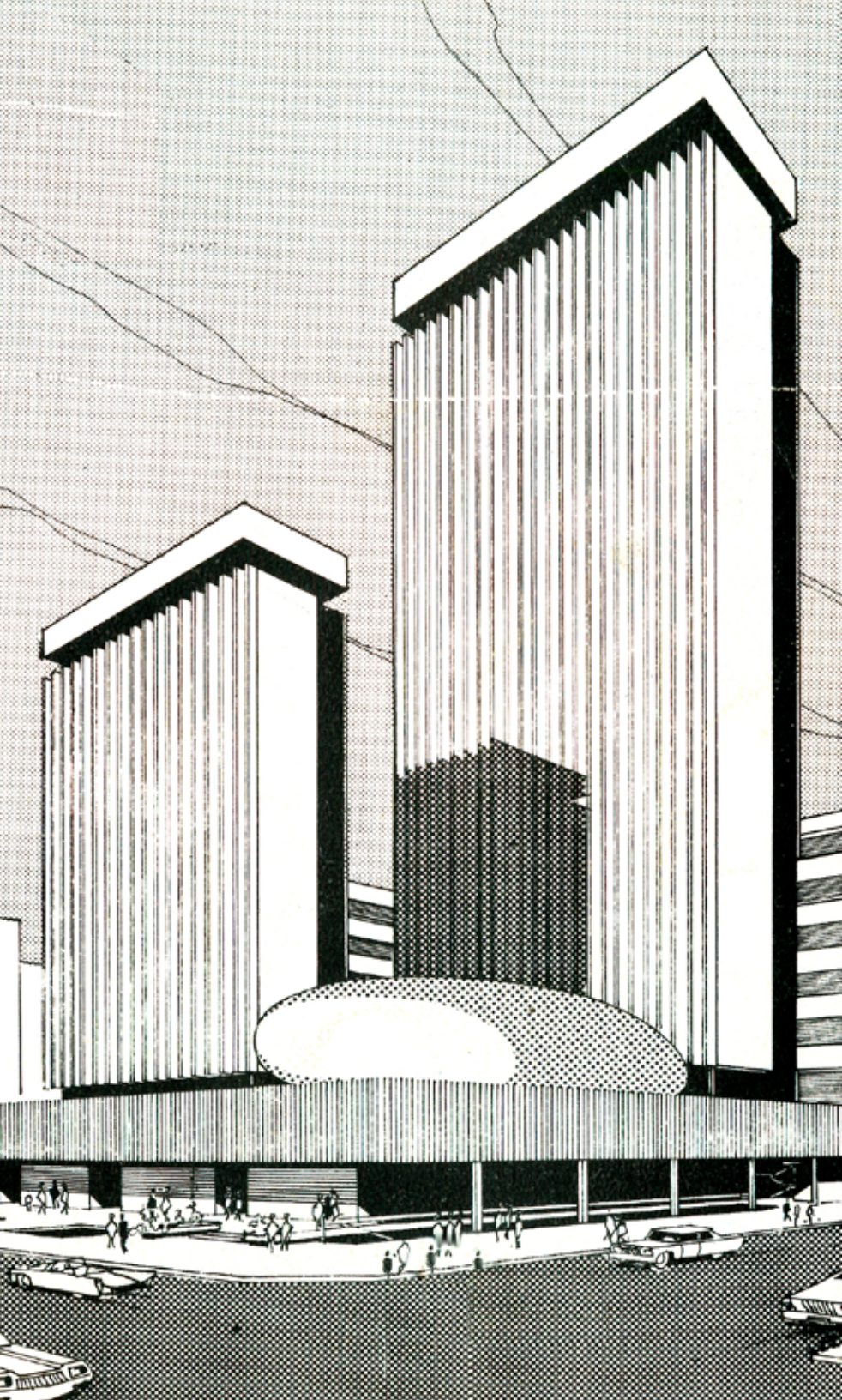
The Beirut City Centre Building (CCB)¹ stands today as the only remaining ruin in the centre of Solidère's newly-restored Beirut Central District. Referred to by locals as the “bubble”, “soap”, “blob” or “egg” because of its ovoid shape, the Beirut City Centre Building was cursed by the misfortune of being at the exact geographic centre of the civil war, and it has been blackened by neglect ever since the war ended. The 6,000m² building overlooking *Place des Martyrs* was estimated in 2001 by Solidère to be worth approximately \$40 million USD. Nevertheless, it remains even in ruin a remarkable edifice, recognizable as one of the few surviving icons from Beirut's ‘golden age’ of Modernist architecture—the thirty or so year period between independence and the beginning of the civil war in 1975. In 2003, wishing to capitalize on the financial potential of the building's site, Solidère slated the CCB for demolition to make way for new development.

1. Designed in 1969 by Joseph Phillippe Karam. Lebanon was coming into its own after two decades since gaining independence from the French. CCB would be Lebanon's contribution to the Global Modernist architectural movement of the time. Beneath the large white dome, which housed a theater and exhibition space, were six underground floors of shopping and parking.

**At the time of its conception...
City Center will become the most
important commercial complex in
the Middle East**

Centre Urbain 'City Center'; J. P. Karam,
“Al Mouhandess”; No.11, April 1968

Fig.7.0. (Opposite) Beirut City Center Building taken during the second half of the war.



Fortunately, the building was saved by the emphatic interest of the many renowned architects who had been invited by Solidère to aid in the redevelopment of the downtown. While being given a tour of Solidère sites, architects such as Jean Nouvel, Steven Holl and Zaha Hadid had each individually asked about the fate of the CCB, and had each expressed surprise and dismay to hear that it was slated for demolition, and they strongly encouraged Solidère to reconsider.

Lebanese architect Joseph Philippe Karam originally designed the Beirut City Centre Building complex in 1965. The urban complex was to be subdivided into three parts:

Block 1 would contain five underground floors with a total of 22,500m² reserved for car parking and a taxi service station.

Block 2 would comprise three floors linked by stairs, escalators and elevators, all joining together 144 shops, a 1000m² supermarket, a 900-seat cinema, a restaurant and a snack bar.

Block 3 would consist of three towers of eight, twelve and 21 floors respectively, for a total area of 13,500m² that, at the time of its conception, would have offered the widest range of commercial services under one roof.

The odd egg-like shape and raised location of the cinema in Block 2 is due to 1965 building code, which forbade any construction above a cinema. For this reason, Karam chose to elevate the cinema two floors above ground level before giving it its elegant, eye-catching volume. This not only made the cinema visible from a distance, it also gave theater patrons a feeling of ascending into the otherworldly.

Karam made the City Centre Building accessible from all sides, and designed it so visitors, regardless of the purpose of their visit, would be able to appreciate its design. There would be barrier-free access on the ground level to maximize the exposure of the many shops services that would be offered in the building. Careful attention was also given to the vertical circulation routes that connected the different levels to optimize the use of commercial space that descended down the level of the car park. Attention

was also devoted to the change of levels, optimizing commercial spaces as these followed the path of the shopper down to the car park. A general sense of serenity would flow inside this centre, while combining a variety of people and their various functions.²

Karam's vision of CCB would never be completed. When the civil war broke out in 1975, only part of his original proposal had been executed—the two floors of the base in Block 2, the cinema and one tower. The building's adjacency to *Place des Martyrs*, as well as its unique shape, made the CCB a prime target for heavy shelling during the war years, but it also suffered from serious drainage problems in the basements brought on by unfinished construction and neglect, and so the building was eventually abandoned to the downtown's no-man's land. After the end of armed hostilities in 1991, a new project for the Ministry of Finance was initiated, and the partial demolition and construction of a new building started on the south end of the site. But in 1993, construction of the new Ministry of Finance complex was halted at the second level below ground due to the extent of the basement drainage problems, leaving a nine meter deep pit of 1000m² facing the theater. The ruin then became a site for illegal rave concerts until 1995, when authorities hoarded the site off from the remainder of the downtown. Today, 24-hour security guards ensure that nobody gains unauthorized access to the ruin. Though Solidère has jurisdiction over the CCB, an anonymous investor who is keen on preserving this prime example of Lebanese modern architecture still privately owns the site.

The site of the ruined complex of the former Beirut City Centre Building is situated on Lot #987 *Bashoura*, Sector H, Bloc 112 of Beirut's Central District development. The eastern edge of the site fronts the (±14m) Southbound *Bechara El Khoury Avenue*, just south of *Place des Martyrs*, a coveted location in the Downtown. The north, south and west edges of the site are faced with narrower streets of 8m width. At this time, the site is surrounded by a temporary parking lot to the north, a ruin of a church to the south and *Place des Martyrs* to the east. The site is 2m higher on the south end. This is due to a stepping down of the built grade about midway on the

2. *Al Mouhandess Magazine*, No.11, April 1968.

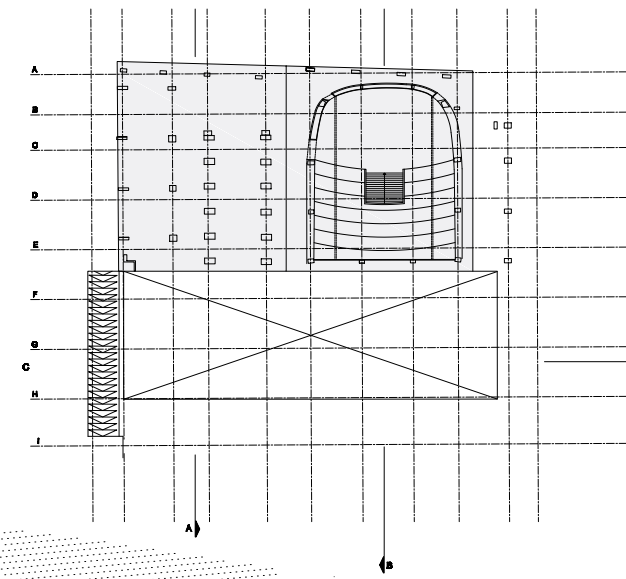
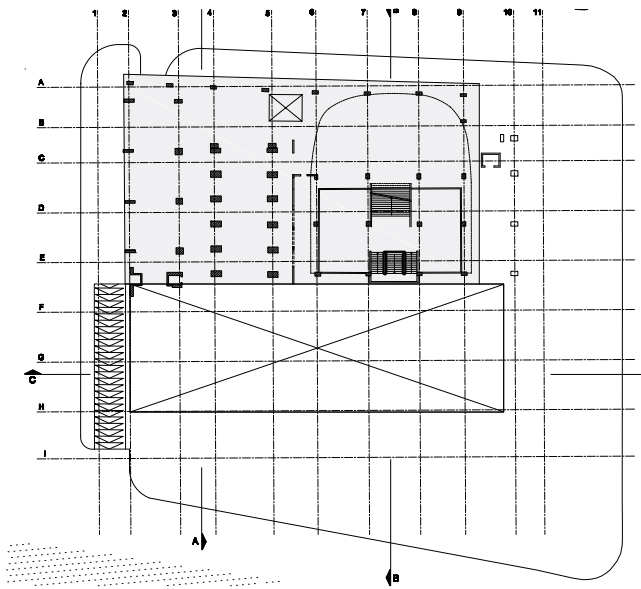
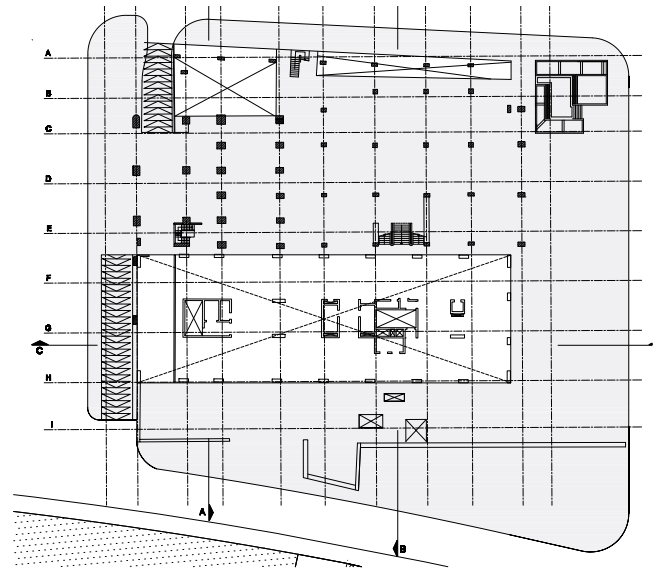
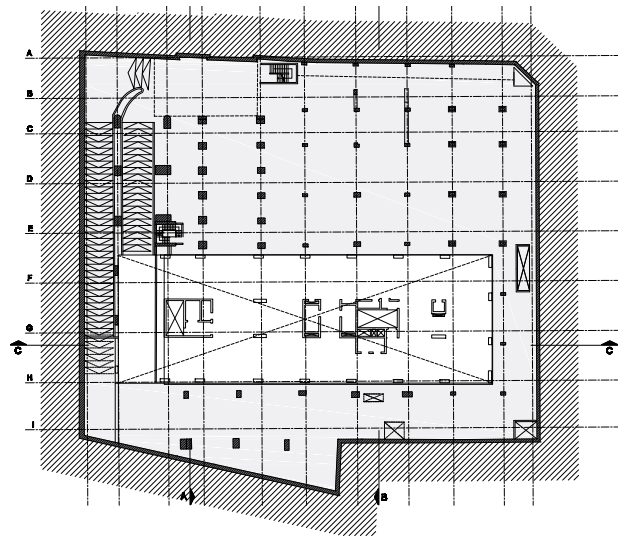
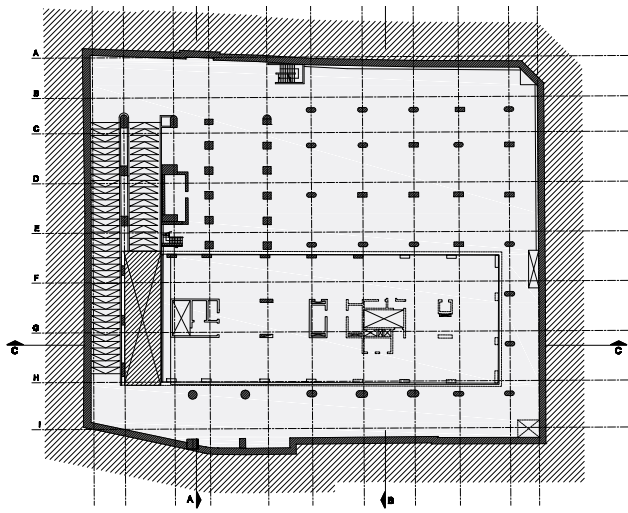


Fig.7.2. Toronto City Hall, designed by Viljo Revell in 1965 and completed in 1978. The 'tower plinth' style of the global modernist period is of the same time period.



Fig.7.3. The underground nightclub by B018 designed by Lebanese architect Bernard el Khoury.

Fig.7.1. (Opposite) Rendering of Centre Urbain 'City Center' by Joseph P. Karam, published *Al Mouhandess*, No.11, April 1968.



site. Parallel parking ramps, from either of these sides, descend from grade. The south ramp descends through all six of the basement levels, while the north ramp currently terminates at the second basement level. This variation is the result of the partial demolition of the north section of the building during the government's failed attempt to convert the ruin into the new financial administration building in 1992. During that renovation, the remnants of the original building—consisting of the stripped concrete shell, six underground floors—were reinforced, and a rectangular cavity of 20x60m was cut into the five basement levels to install the structure for the new tower that was to be erected. A staircase adjacent (north) to the slabs leads up the lobby level of the theater. The theater itself is a wonder of 1968 building technology, acoustically dampened from the rest of the building on an independent structure. Hovering over the second storey slab it overlooks the new mosque to the North and *Place des Martyrs* to the east.

In 2004, responding to public concern that the redevelopment of Beirut's city centre was excluding modernist buildings, Solidère approached Bernard Khoury, a controversial young Lebanese architect, to submit a proposal to renovate the CCB.³ Khoury is best known for designing nightclubs and restaurants that double as impromptu monuments intended to transform the trauma of civil war, the most striking of which is an underground nightclub, called B018, that bears a striking resemblance to a missile silo (Fig.7.3). Khoury's scheme for the CCB proposes to strip the site down to its iconic quality by demolishing the first and second level in order to expose the theatre shell, allowing it to float above the site on its independent structure. The shell would then be enveloped by a mosaic of mirrors, thus preserving the war-torn skin while reflecting fragmented images of the surrounding area. The new open space on the site and below the shell would become known as the electronic garden, containing a myriad of interactive, exhibition, performance, and concert areas as well as vistas to the subsequent spaces of exhibition below the surface. Khoury also

3. Nicolai Ouroussoff, "Lebanese Architect Troubled by Soul-Less Solidère," (New York Times, May 22, 2006), New York Times, <http://www.cggl.org/scripts/new.asp?id=540> (accessed 6/18/2006).

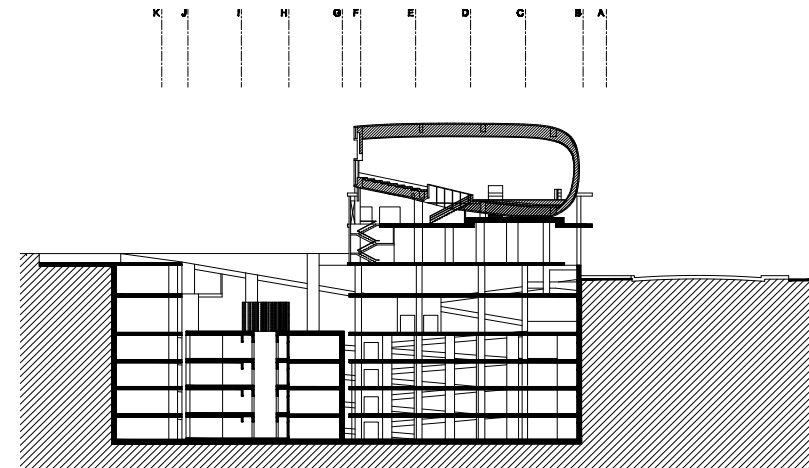


Fig.7.9. Existing north/ south section through the opening of the site. Courtesy of Bernard Khoury Architect.

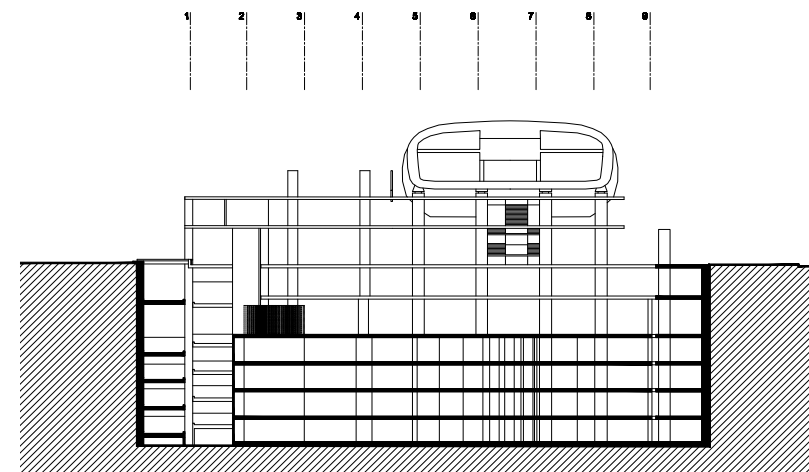


Fig.7.10. Existing east/ west section through the opening of the site. Courtesy of Bernard El Khoury architect.

Fig.7.4 - 7.8. (Opposite) Existing survey plans of CCB. Courtesy of Bernard El Khoury Architect.



Fig.711. Interior of grade level emmediately following the end of the Lebanese civil war. Panoramic begins North and rotates 180 degrees clockwise.



Fig.712. nterior of grade level emmediately following the end of the Lebanese civil war. Panoramic begins North and rotates 180 degrees counter clockwise.



Fig. 7.13.



Fig. 7.14.



Fig. 7.15.



Fig. 7.18.



Fig. 7.16.



Fig. 7.17.



Fig. 7.19.

Fig. 7.13. North face of theater shell and second floor.

Fig. 7.14. West face of theater shell across Place des Martyrs.

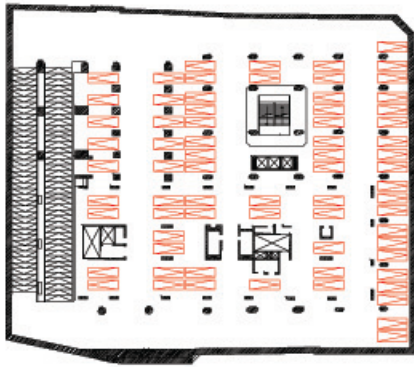
Fig. 7.15. Excavated void looking into the lower two levels of the existing void.

Fig. 7.16. Top of theater shell taken due east.

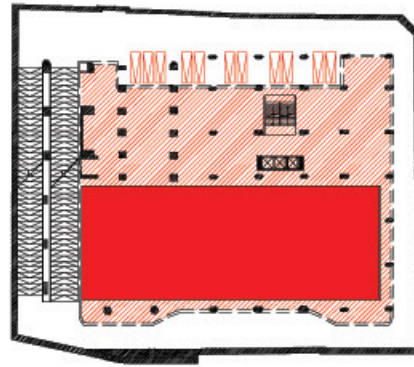
Fig. 7.17. Exposed rusted rebar and sheared face of existing shell and subsequent lower levels.

Fig. 7.18. Independent and isolated structure of theater shell.

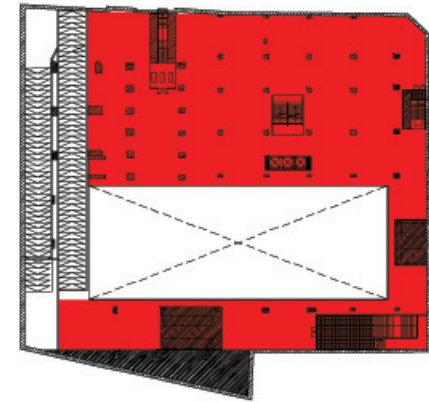
Fig. 7.19. Floating theater shell is structurally isolated from the remaining building.



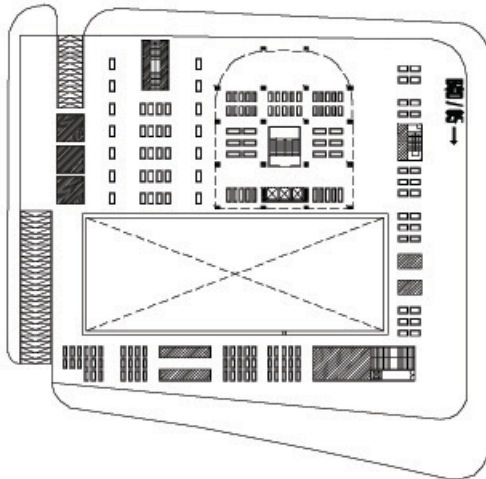
In constructing the sliced ramp, the third, fourth, fifth and sixth basements will be retrieved. 4080m² per floor will fit up to 70 cars for a total of 280 cars.



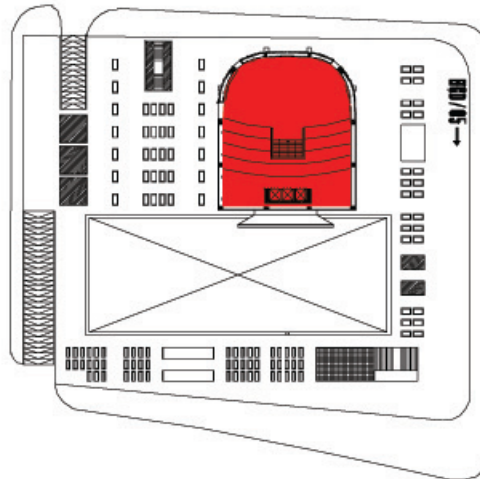
The second basement will have a gross area of 3457m² ; including 1057m² net of prime space, 9m deep, naturally lit and directly accessible from the ground floor, as well as 11 car parks.



The concourse level will have 2494m² of gross covered area, naturally lit and directly accessible from the ground floor at several points.



The ground floor will be one large open space.



The second floor will contain 563m² of prime rentable area.

Area per program

Amphitheater	563 m²
Concourse Level	2494 m²
Multipurpose Hall (-2)	1057 m²
Lower level -2 (11 cars)	1205 m²
Parking (70 cars x 4)	16320 m²



Fig. 7.21. Bernard El Khoury proposal for CCB. Image courtesy of Bernard El Khoury Architect 2005.

proposes what he terms a “prosthetic”—a 16.9m x 11.3m screen to complete the “amputated” south facade of the theatre shell.

Khoury’s proposal does much to root the CCB in the physical city and connect it to the global virtual community. Yet, to my mind, it also has a problem: while the program is very much rooted in the present *carpe diem* attitude of contemporary Lebanese youth (Lebanon has a booming nightlife and Beirut’s downtown alone boasts over a hundred bars and nightclubs that cater to every taste), the project fails to reconcile the present with the civil war, neither physically nor mentally. Still, I am intrigued by Khoury’s ambition and the idea of rehabilitating this extraordinary building fascinates me. To salve, suture, and inhabit the building’s history with its new role as a living monument has me very excited. Sensitively renovated, this building could come to represent the failures, abuses, hopes, dreams, and potential rebirth of the Lebanese nation. My contribution will be the embodiment of a place that not only contributes to the day-to-day life of the city, but also acts as a TRC-like catalyst that places the truth, as multi-faceted as it may be, firmly at its centre.



Fig. 7.22. View south of Bernard El Khoury’s proposal for CCB (Place des Martyrs is on the left). Image courtesy of Bernard El Khoury Architect 2005.

Fig. 7.20. (Opposite) Program distribution diagrams of Bernard El Khoury’s renovation proposal of CCB for Solidère. Plans courtesy of Bernard El Khoury Architect



CHAPTER 8: SPACE OF THE VOICE

Lebanon's civil war traumas have not been addressed in any collective manner. No official justice has been granted, no official remembrances have been made, and no official dialogue has been uttered. Silence and amnesia have been the only officially sanctioned forms of a collective urge to forget the civil war, an attitude that has greatly hindered the process of reconciliation and the search for a unified national identity. Though Public confessions, art, films, and novels have begun to open a space of discourse, architecture's role will be to gather and catalyze and give voice to the countless victims who were killed, maimed, imprisoned, or expatriated in the war. Architecture can begin to manifest this through the rehabilitation of the most potent vestige of the civil war in the heart of Beirut into a living memorial.

As one of the last modernist relics within the redeveloped downtown, CCB is a potent place because it promised, as did all modernist architecture, a rational future of increasing peace, prosperity and social justice. History betrayed this promise, and the CCB instead became a powerful symbol of the impotence of modernization when confronted with the unresolved and irrational social and ethnic conflicts from the past. Therefore CCB will stand as a beacon, a place for reconciliation of the rational and irrational, immersed in everyday life and in everyday discussion of ideas for the future. The program will radiate from the datum of the city street (*The Agora: Present*), down through the strata of the city's layers, to the space of dialogue, memory, and recollection (*The Stela: Past*), and finally upwards again to the commanding contemplative view of the city (*The Acropolis: Future*).

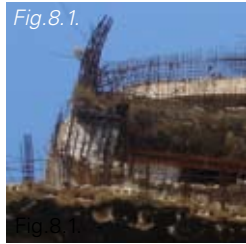
Speech belongs half to the speaker, half to the listener. The latter must prepare to receive it according to the motion it takes.

Michel de Montaigne, French essayist.
"Of Experience," *The Essays (Les Essais)*, Paris (1588).

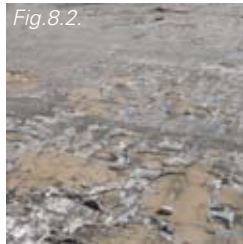
Fig.8.0. (Opposite) Deep Church mural titled: Remembering our past to face our future.

CCB MATERIAL PALETTE

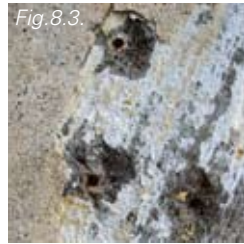
EXISTING MATERIAL PALETTE OF RUIN



Exposed rusted rebar (Sheared Theater)



Plaster shell (Theater)



Bullet ridden concrete



Rough cast concrete



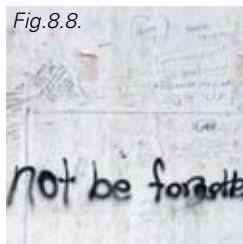
Fire and Carbon Monoxide staining



Rust stained concrete



Fine cast floor concrete



Graffiti covered perimeter hoarding wall

RENOVATION MATERIAL PALETTE



Concrete paving



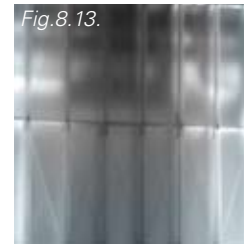
Gabion Basket (Reclaimed ruin material)



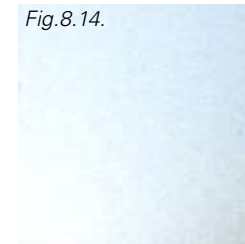
Shallow reflecting pool



Untreated expanded metal mesh



Translucent polycarbonate



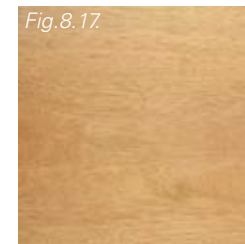
Translucent Glass



Powdercoated Steel (red)



Anodised aluminum (Silver)



Wood Equipment (Shelving)

Design Elements

CCB will cease to be an ignored ruin that occupies an illustrious site at the south end of Place des Martyrs. Like *Place des Martyrs*, CCB will become a symbol of national unity by the rebuilding and re-appropriation of what was once the symbol of a rational future. The scars and surviving elements of the ruin will be incorporated into the new building symbolizing the nation brought together by the history and hard earned lessons of the civil war. The plan makes use of the unique remains of the original City Centre Building to house the many program elements required to address the many roles that the building will play. The scars and ‘wounds’ the CCB has endured through its close proximity to the fiercest fighting during the civil war have become the physical manifestation of its experience through the war. Therefore the architectural approach to inhabiting the building is one of rehabilitation, reinhabitation, and distinguishing the new layer of inhabitation from the ruin. This approach of renovation is developed through a series of design elements:

INHABIT the ruin as an active viable building in the downtown;

MEND the building back into the city’s fabric as a place for the reconciliation immersed in the everyday life and discussion of ideas for the future;

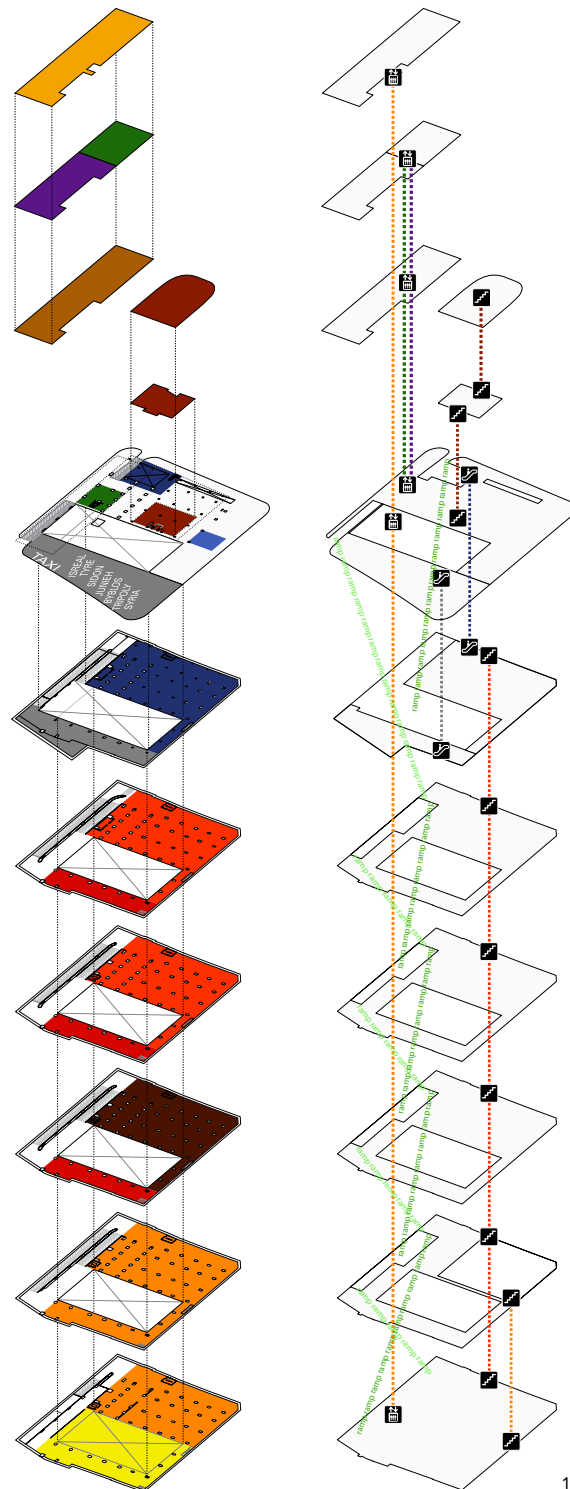
EMBED a protected quiet space for contemplation and recollection in close proximity to *Place des Martyrs*;

PROCLAIM the events, research, and projects pursued in the building for the benefit of all Lebanese;

HEARTEN the significance of *Place des Martyrs* as the country’s unified space by providing cultural and functional amenities;

SYNTHESIZE recollection and reconciliation through bringing together the stories of the Lebanese, both patriated and expatriated;





- 3.8% Event Space
- 19.5% Truth and Reconciliation Centre (TRC)
- 19.0% Cultural Centre
- 16.6% Entertainment
- 12.3% Residential
- 20.0% Commercial & Restaurant
- 8.5% Public Transportation Services

- 1,020m² Space of the Voice
- 650m² Truth and Reconciliation Centre (TRC)
- 4,600m² Archives
- 4,135m² Exhibition
- 938m² Resident Artist Studio
- 1,830m² Film and Digital Archive
- 1,500m² Cinema
- 1,080m² Nightclub
- 3,264m² Studio Apartment
- 2,176m² Office Space
- 1,480m² Restaurant
- 1,710m² Supermarket
- 2,260m² Public Transportation Station

Fig. 8.18. (Opposite) Rendered aerial of the new City Centre Building.

Fig. 8.19. Program distribution and circulation axonometric.

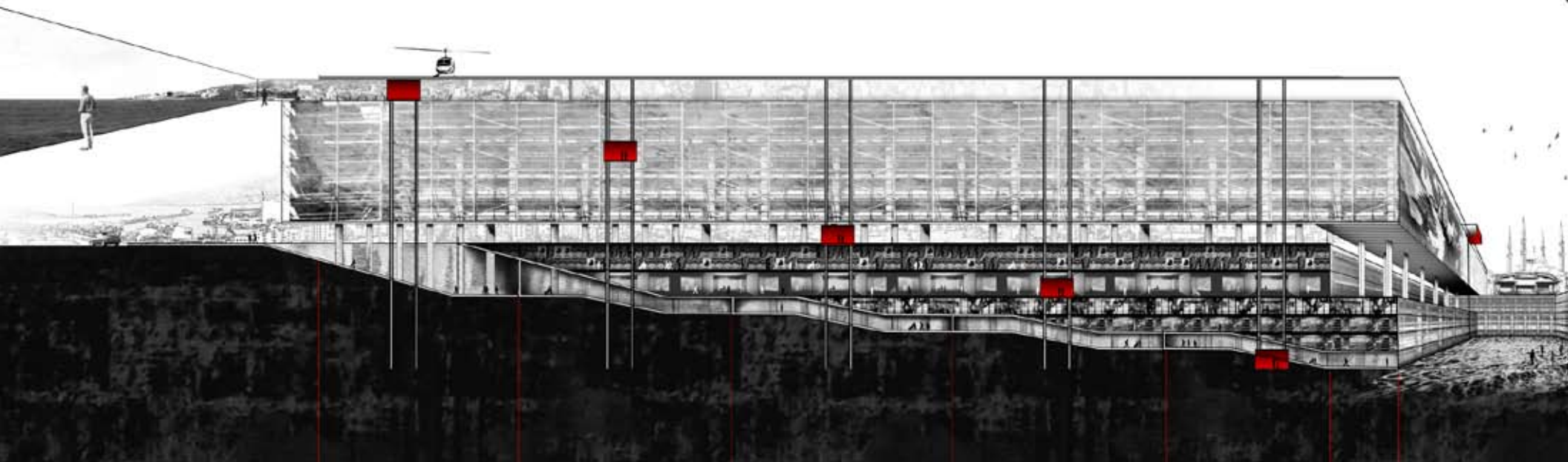
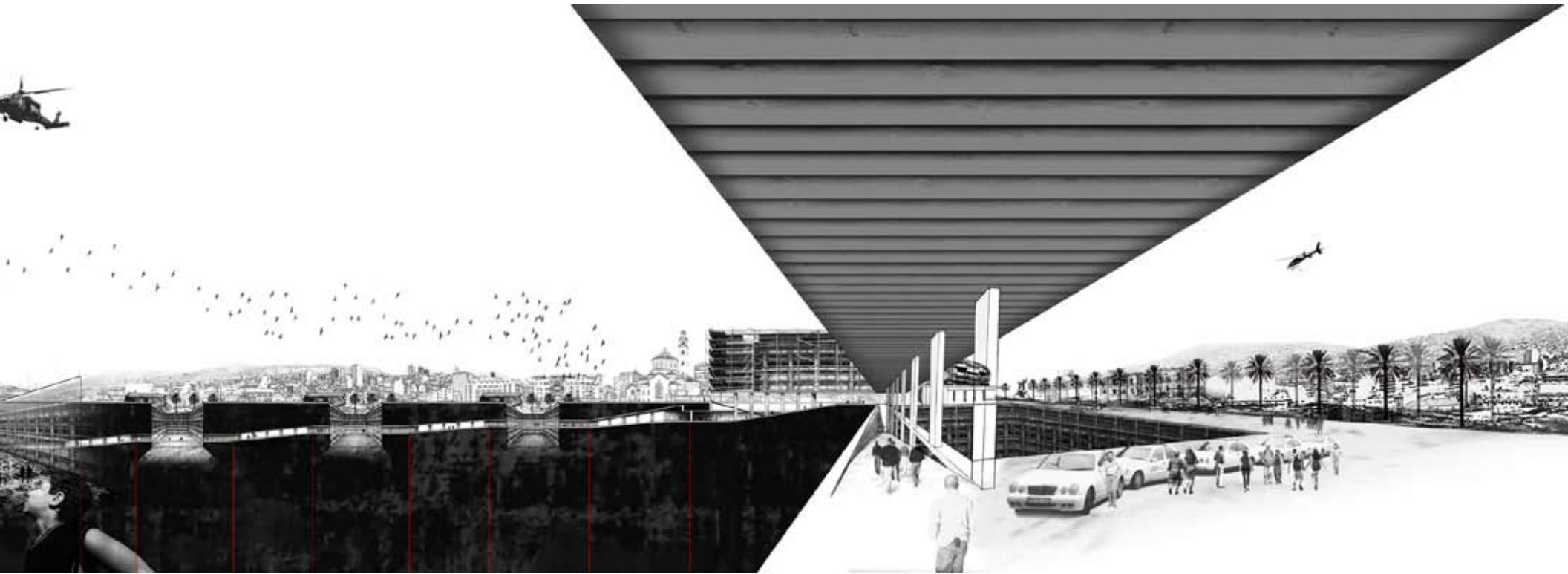
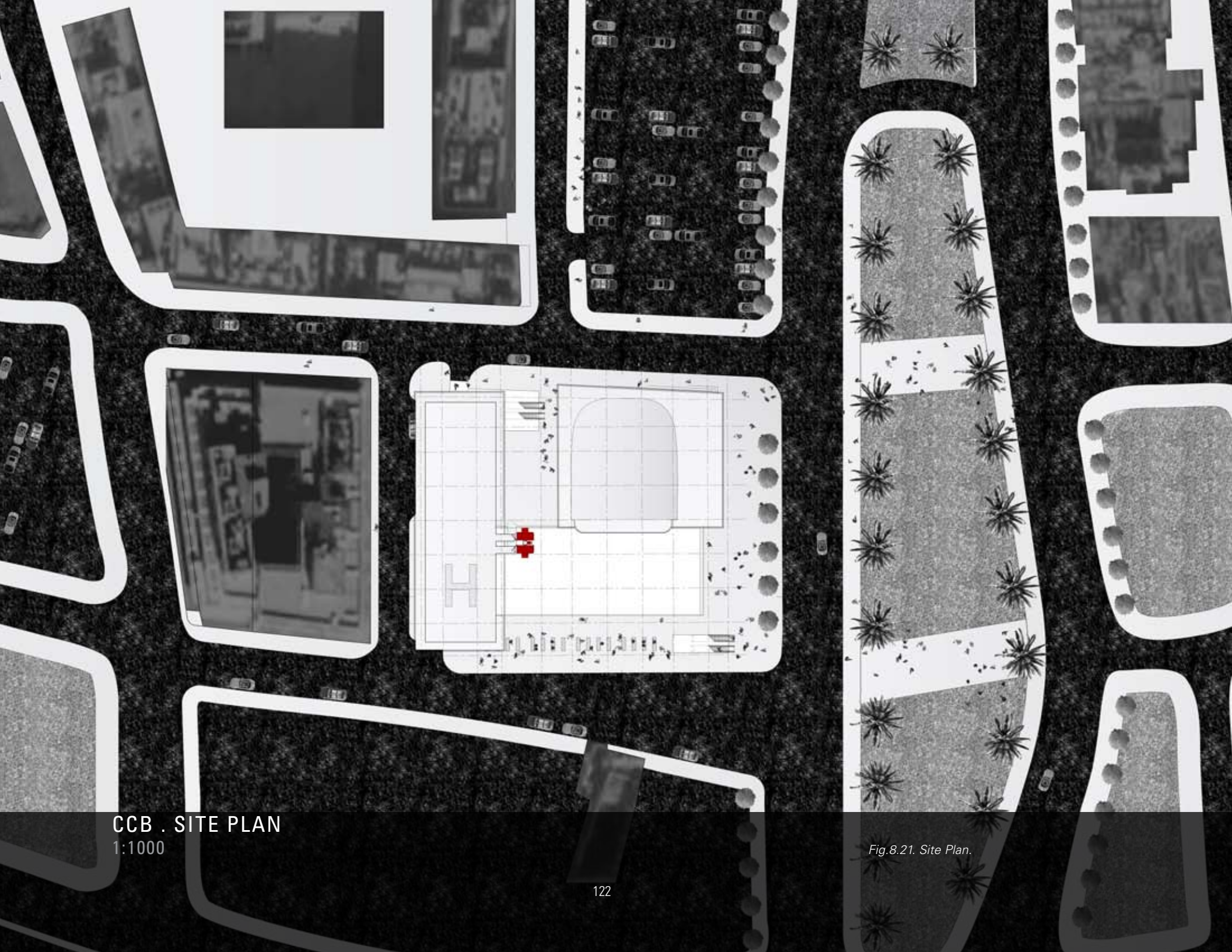


Fig.8.20. Experiential Section of CCB.





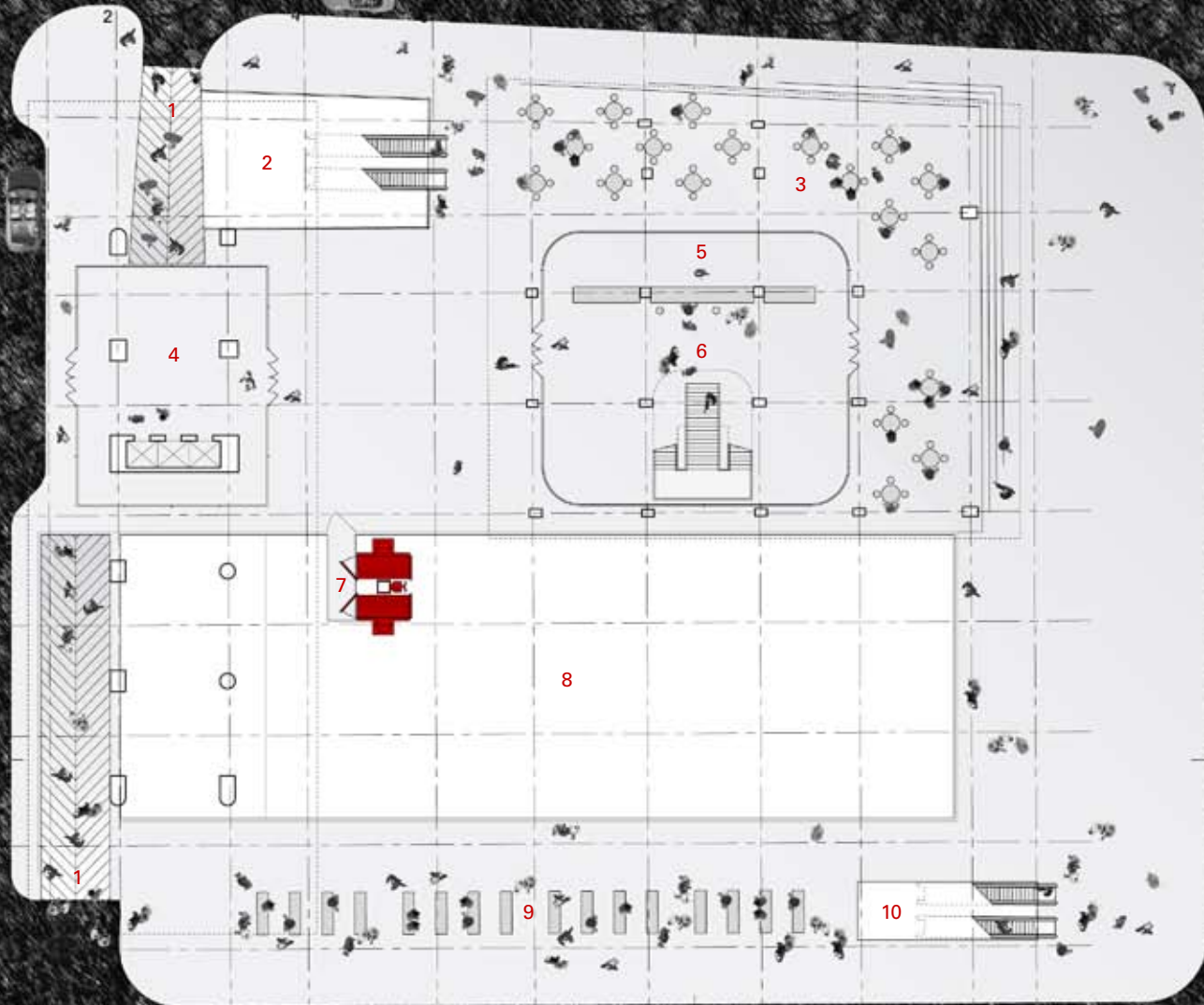
CCB . SITE PLAN
1:1000

Fig.8.21. Site Plan.



CCB . VIEW SOUTH FROM MOSQUE

Fig.8.22. View south from Mosque.



CCB . GROUND FLOOR PLAN

1:500

Fig.8.23. Ground Floor plan.

The Present: The Living Monument

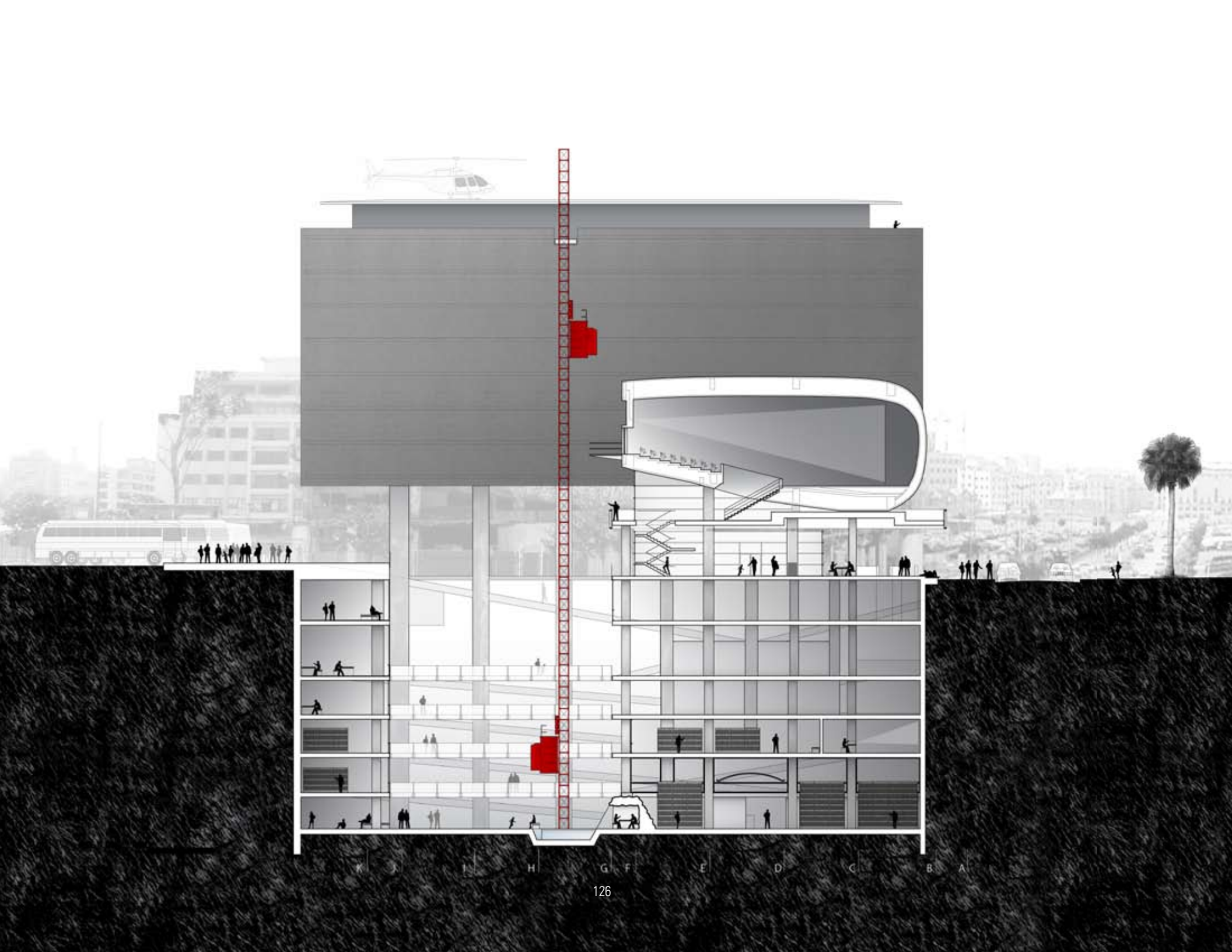
By incorporating a “non monumental” program that is part of the everyday life of the city, CCB will become a living monument, not only commemorating the history of the civil war but also reinforcing the present. CCB will contain the many services that function to sustain, entertain, and connect the city and country together. Visitors will be free to wander onto the premises of CCB directly off of the adjacent, redesigned pedestrian-friendly *Place des Martyrs*. Here, visitors will have access to pavilions that house the many vertical circulation cores. The pavilions will also house the lobby of the restored theatre, which will float above the site; a café that services visitors to the site; a lobby for the new tower block that will house residential and commercial spaces above the site as well as a nightclub; and bus and taxi station to the south which will once again initiate a centralized order to the transportation network that once ran so actively through *Place des Martyrs*.

The Past: Descent to Reconciliation

In Beirut, the public daily life exists at the grade of the present horizon. Below the level of the city lie the ruins and origins of Lebanon, the country and nation. Descending into the void brings one closer to the original level of the historic city and the sacred. As we escaped to the chthonic origins of our homes and into the safety of the underground in times of war, so too are the archives, containing the collective memories and voices of the citizens, both patriate and expatriate, located in the lowest levels, where they are protected from the current unstable and uncertain present. Here, they are not entombed, but frame a space of beginning, the space of the voice. It is in this space, where whispers echo, that the voices of all Lebanese—regardless of nationality and sect—are heard. Here, the three shared languages—Arabic, French, and English—resonate in the space, offering a common means for dialogue.

This concentrated space, safe from the pressures of the present critically challenges the Lebanese tradition of emigration from the mountain to the sea and subsequently to the horizon. One that gazes to the beyond in order to forget what remains sight in hand of it unredeemed. This denial of the horizon in the absence amplifies

- 1 TRC Entrance
- 2 Supermarket Entrance
- 3 Cafe Patio
- 4 Block Lobby
- 5 Cafe
- 6 Theater Lobby
- 7 Elevator
- 8 Space of the Voice Void
- 9 Bus Station Platform
- 10 Bus Station Entrance
- 11 Master bedroom



its importance to the Lebanese people; its absence allows it to be imagined and, more importantly, re-imagined now as a common horizon of all the Lebanese citizens.

The Future: Truth and Reconciliation Committee Centre (TRCC)

The archive itself, though effective at storing and encouraging dialogue, is only one step in mastering the past and imagining the future of the Lebanese people. The ascent from the sacred darkness is equally important. The elevator links the Space of the Voice with the level of the *Truth and Reconciliation Committee*. This level embodies a true “Space of Appearance” in the Arendt sense, as well as van Pelt’s third component of an urban and architectural manifestation of such a triad, the *Acropolis*: the future envisioned. Just as Emir Fakhr al-Din I built his tower (*the Burj*) in the garden that would become known as *Place des Martyrs*, to gaze upon the city of Beirut, the researchers, builders and planners of the future city can cast their gaze from the mountains to the horizon, and to the city in between.

CCB will not only become the origin of the space of the voice. In the middle of a landscape of silence, but a hub collecting research and art pertaining to the war and a place of preservation of the stories and memories of all of those affected by it. By gathering, in a single place, a wide range of works and research dealing with the civil war in many media, Lebanon can begin to articulate a single voice. The process of storytelling and discussion, reconciliation and tolerance among the diverse Lebanese communities can aid in the emergence of a unified national identity.



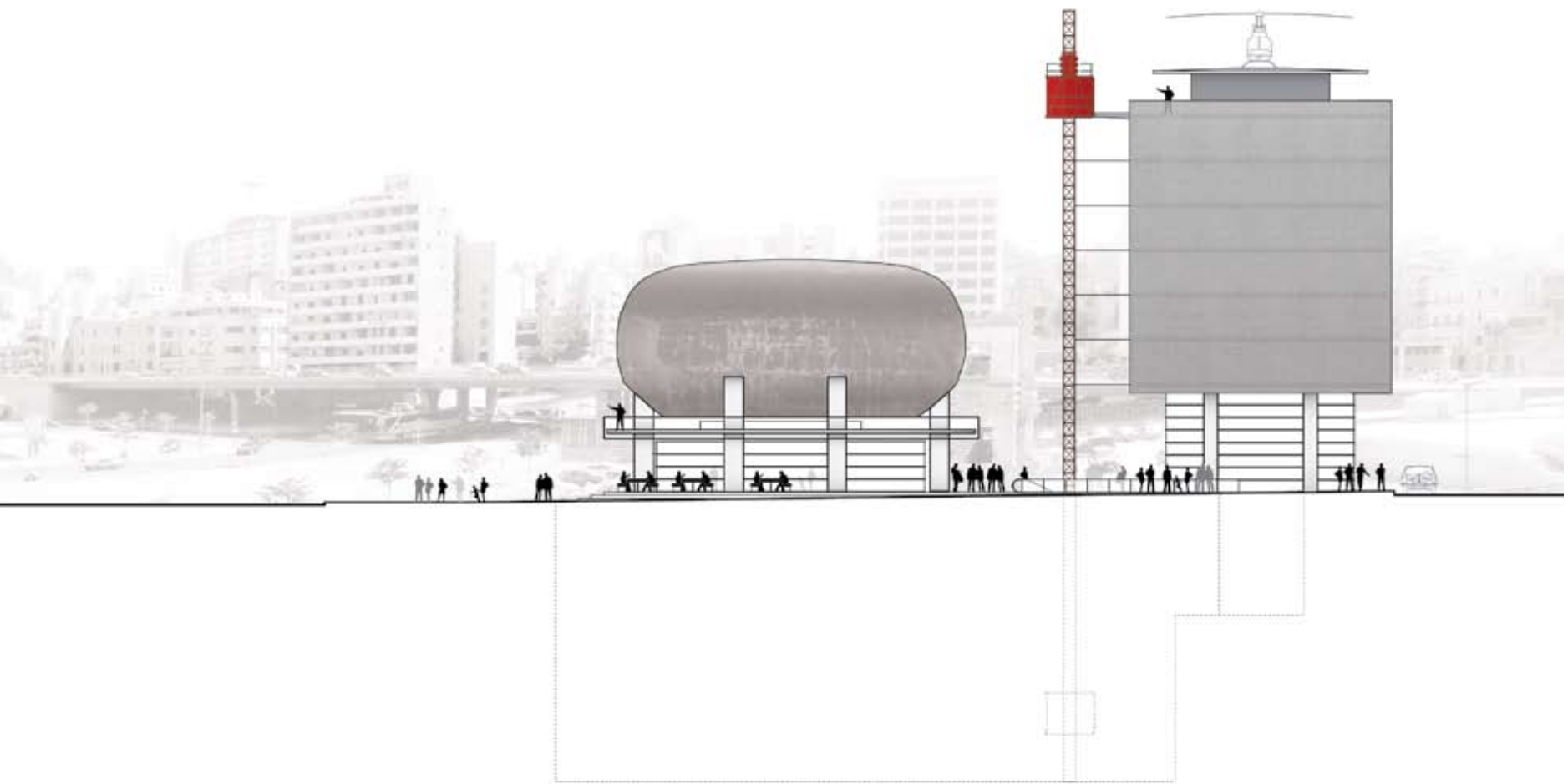
Fig.8.24. North / South Section including Place des Martyrs.



CCB . VIEW LOOKING SOUTH-WEST (MARTYRS MONUMENT IN FOREGROUND)

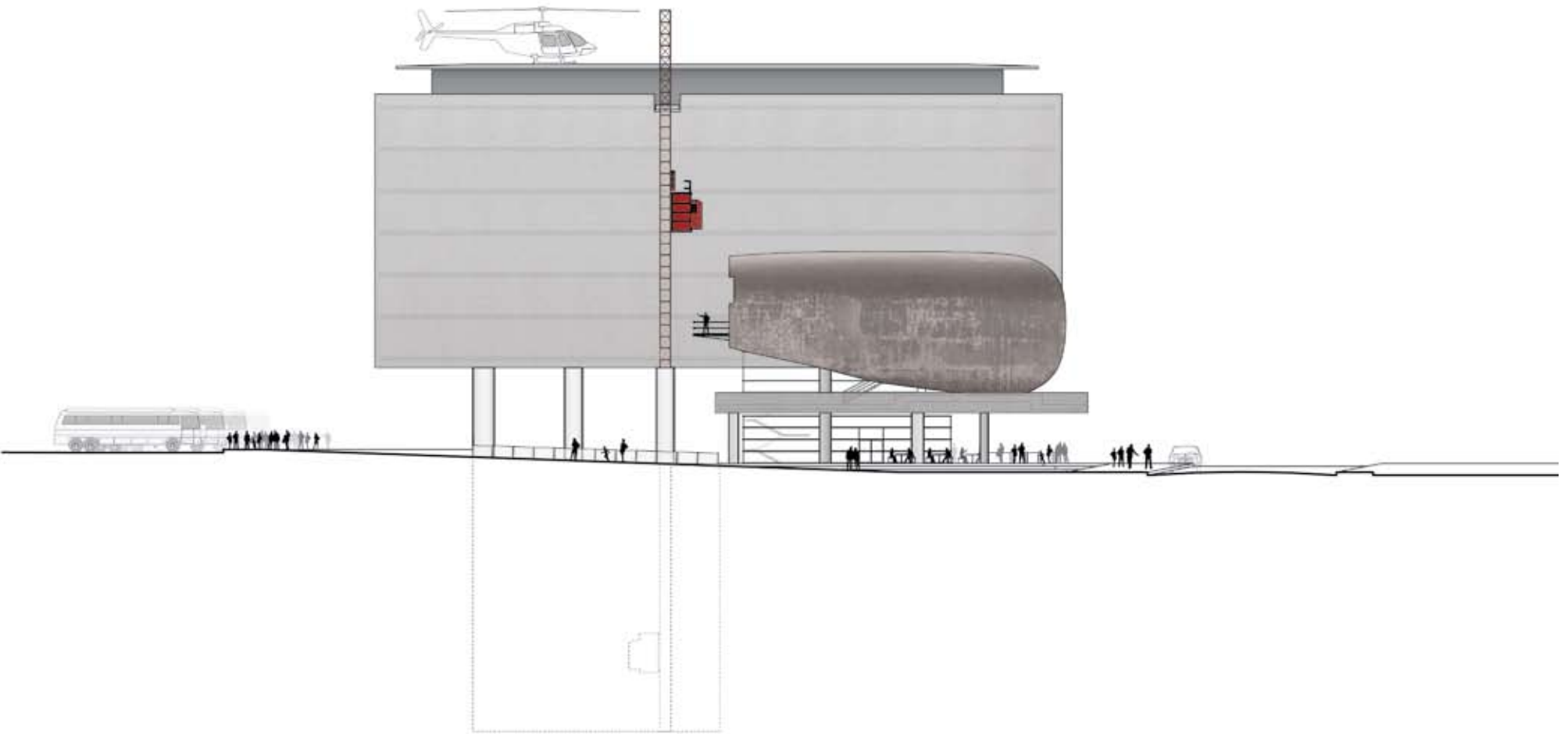


Fig.8.25. View Looking South / West.



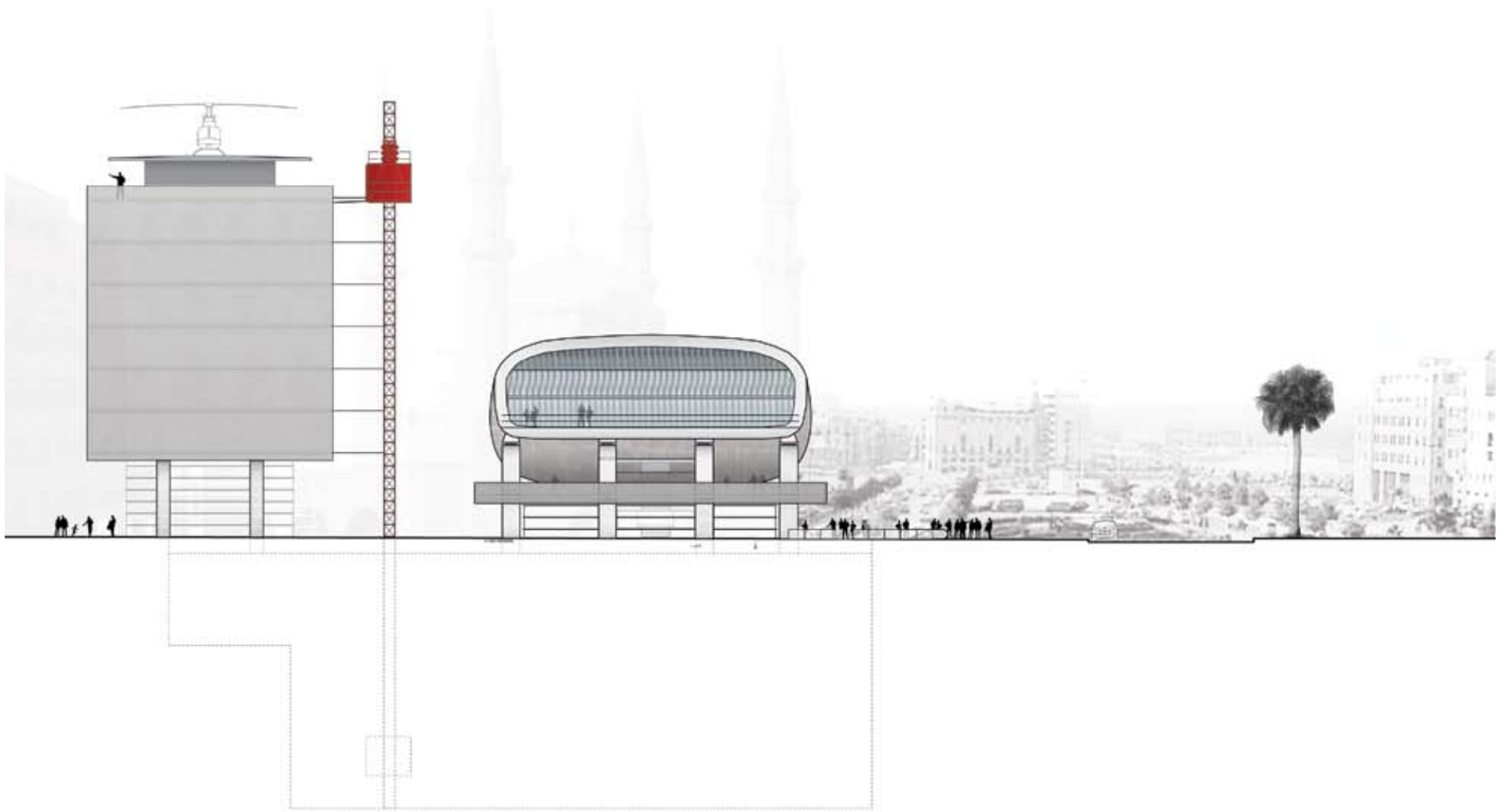
CCB . NORTH ELEVATION
1:500

Fig.8.26. North Elevation.



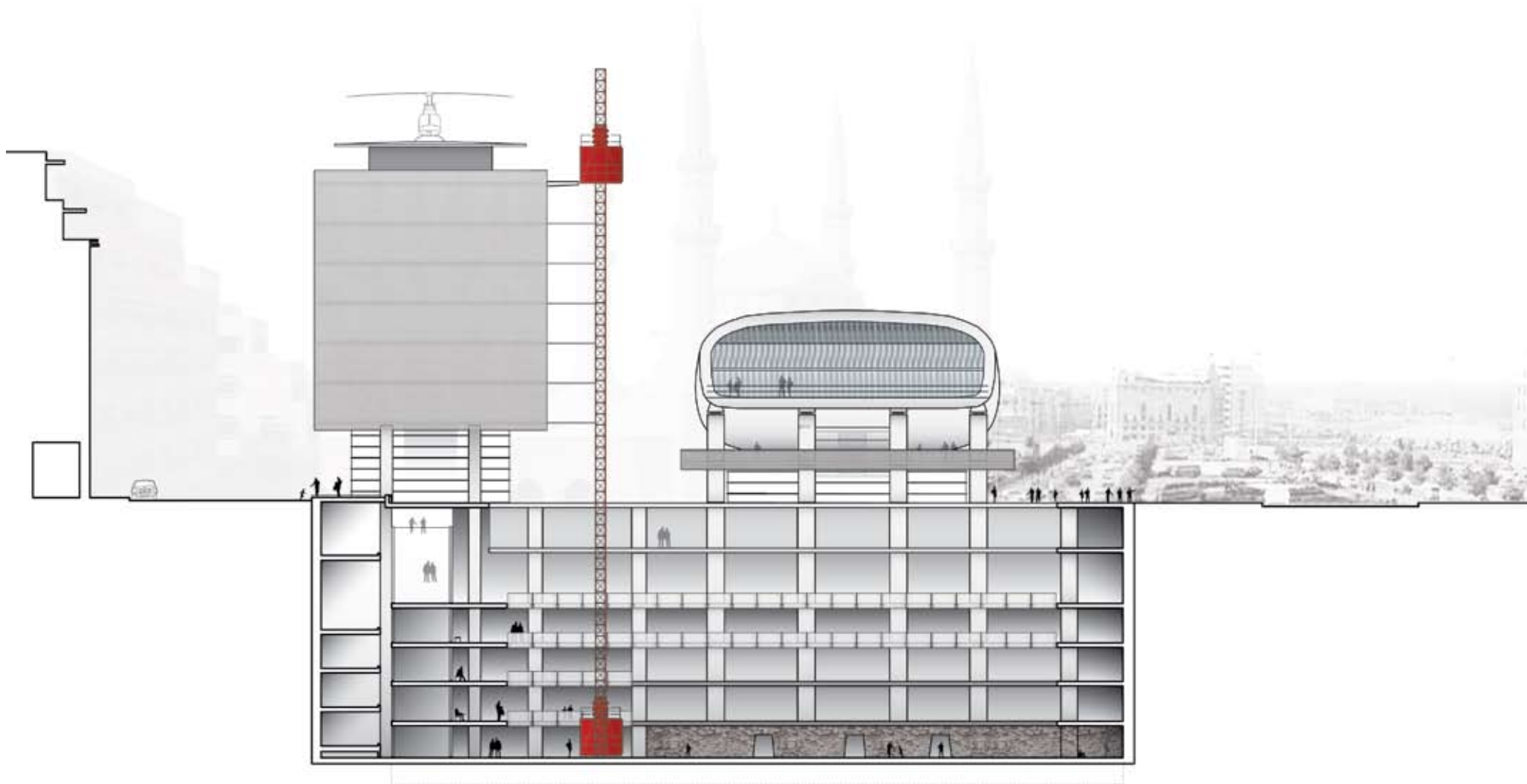
CCB . EAST ELEVATION
1:500

Fig.8.27. East Elevation



CCB . SOUTH ELEVATION
1:500

Fig.8.28. South Elevation



CCB . EAST-WEST SECTION

1:500

Fig.8.29. East West Section



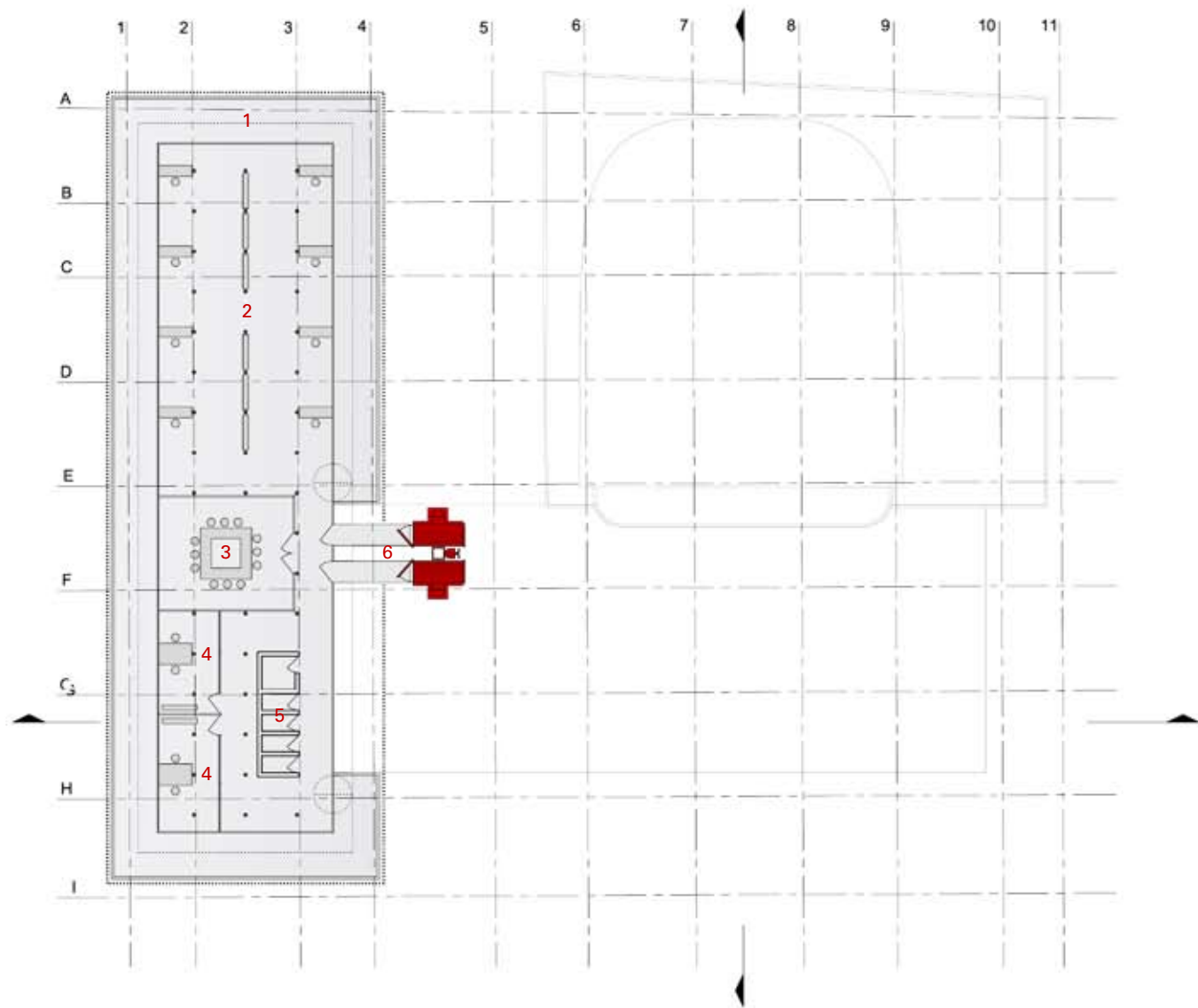
CCB . APPROACH FROM THE NORTH

Fig.8.30. Approach from the North.



CCB . SUNKEN ENTRANCE TO SUPERMARKET

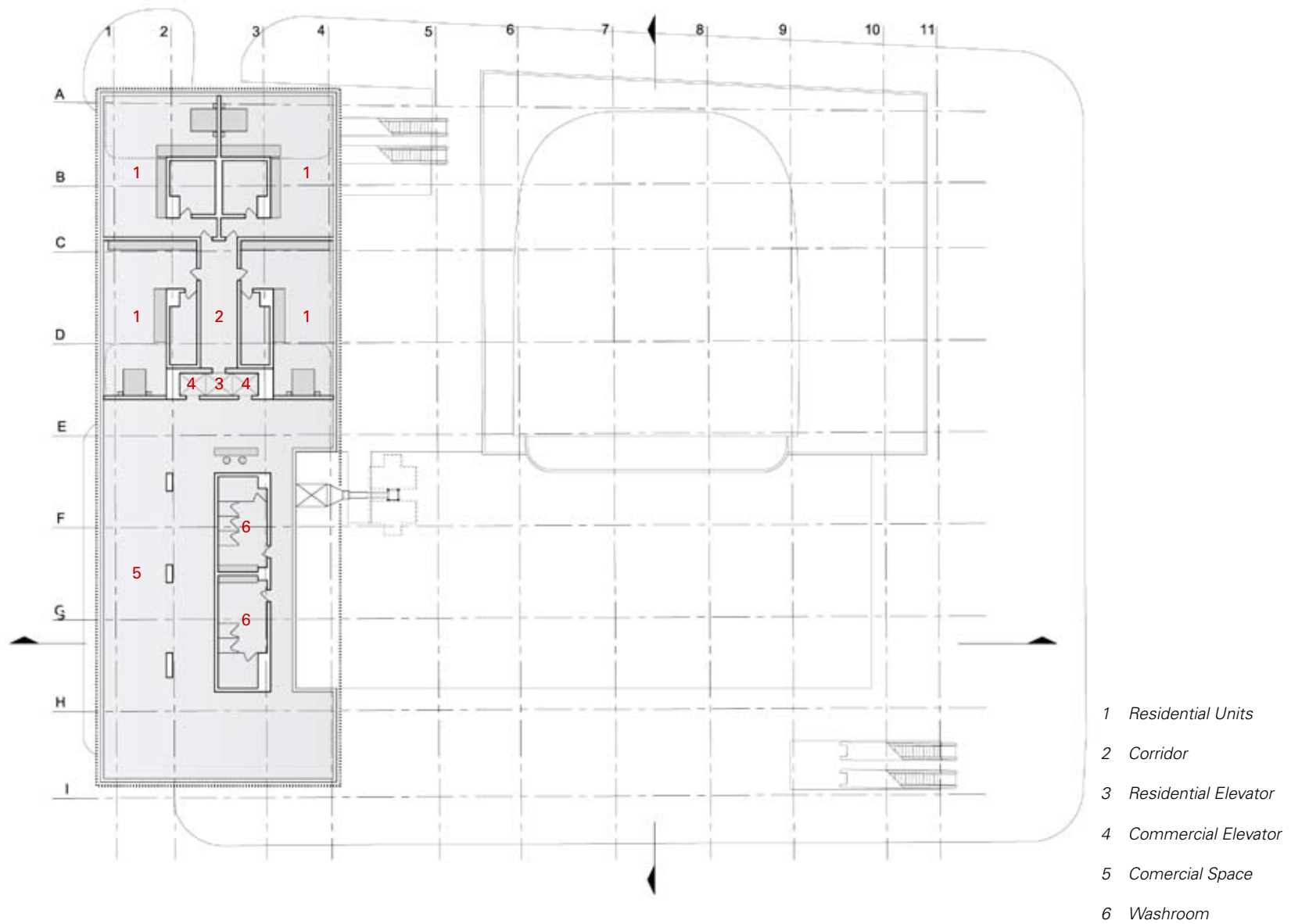
Fig.8.31. View from Helicopter at night



- 1 Perimeter Observation Deck
- 2 Individual Research Space
- 3 Meeting Room
- 4 Research & Interview space
- 5 Washrooms
- 6 Elevator

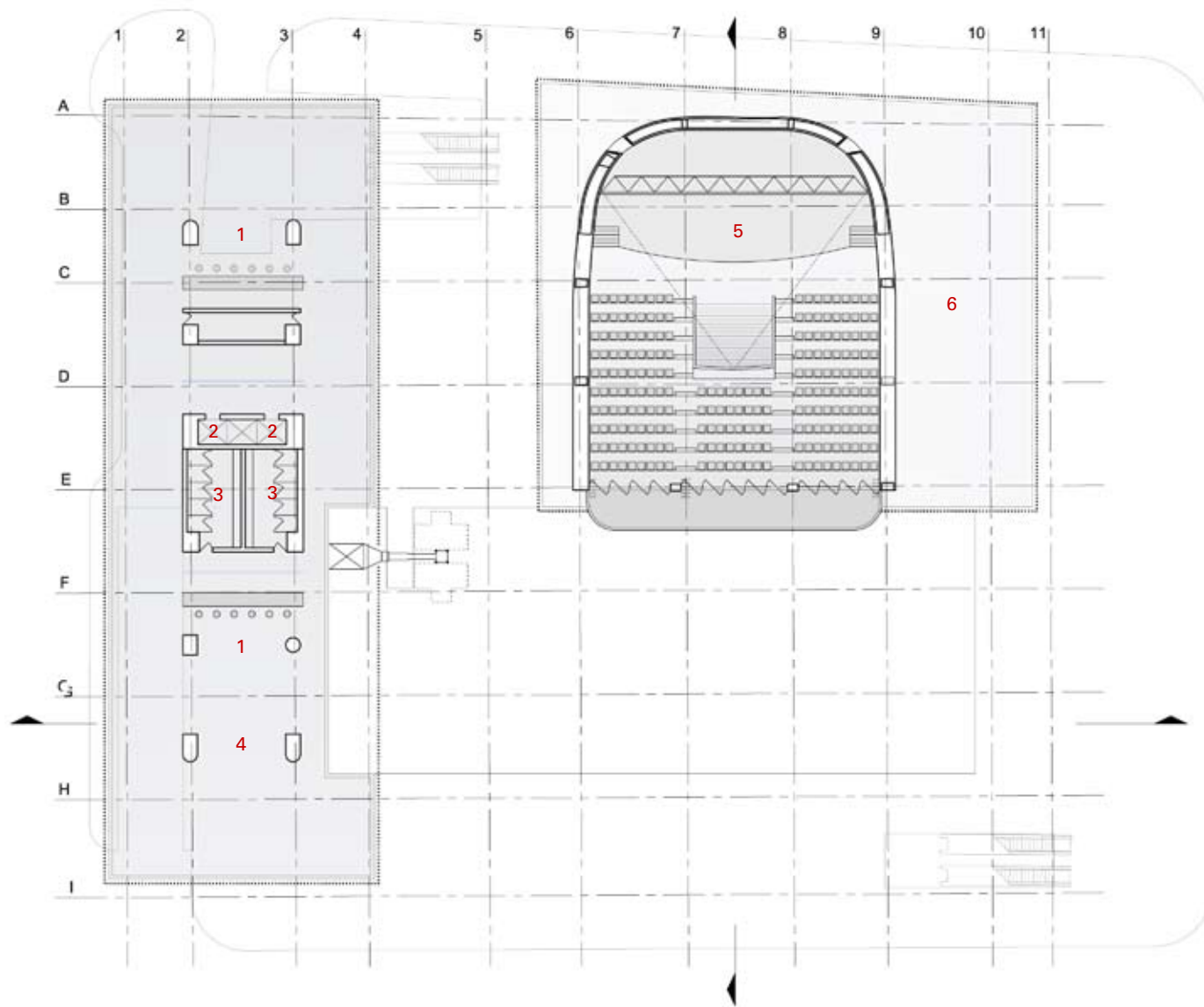
CCB . 7TH FLOOR PLAN
1:500

Fig.8.32. 7th Floor Plan.



CCB . 3RD -6TH TYPICAL FLOOR PLAN
 1:500

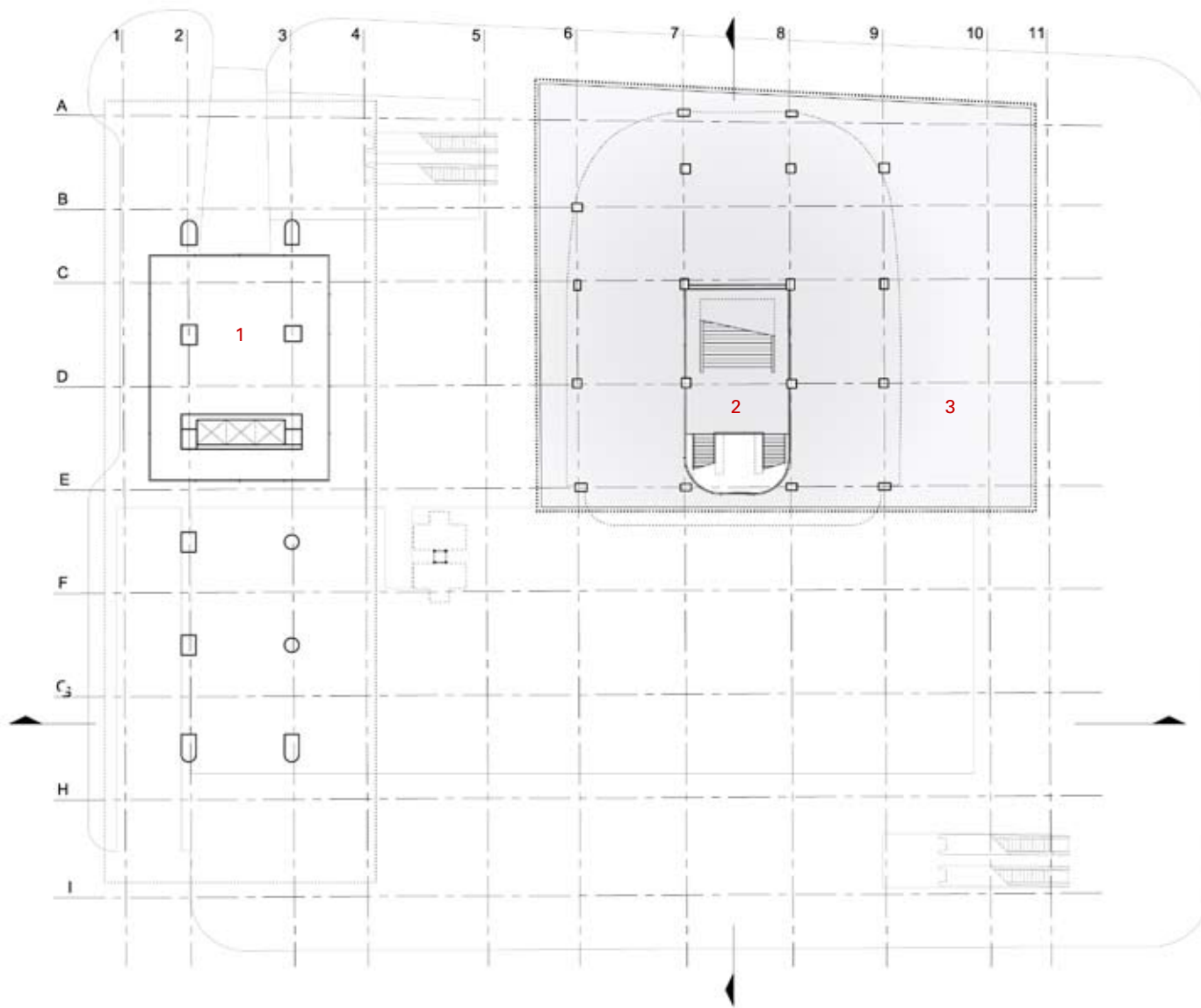
Fig.8.33. 3rd - 6th Floor Plan.



- 1 Bar
- 2 Commercial Elevator
- 3 Washrooms
- 4 Dance Floor
- 5 Film Theatre
- 6 Theatre Observation Deck

CCB . 2ND FLOOR PLAN
1:500

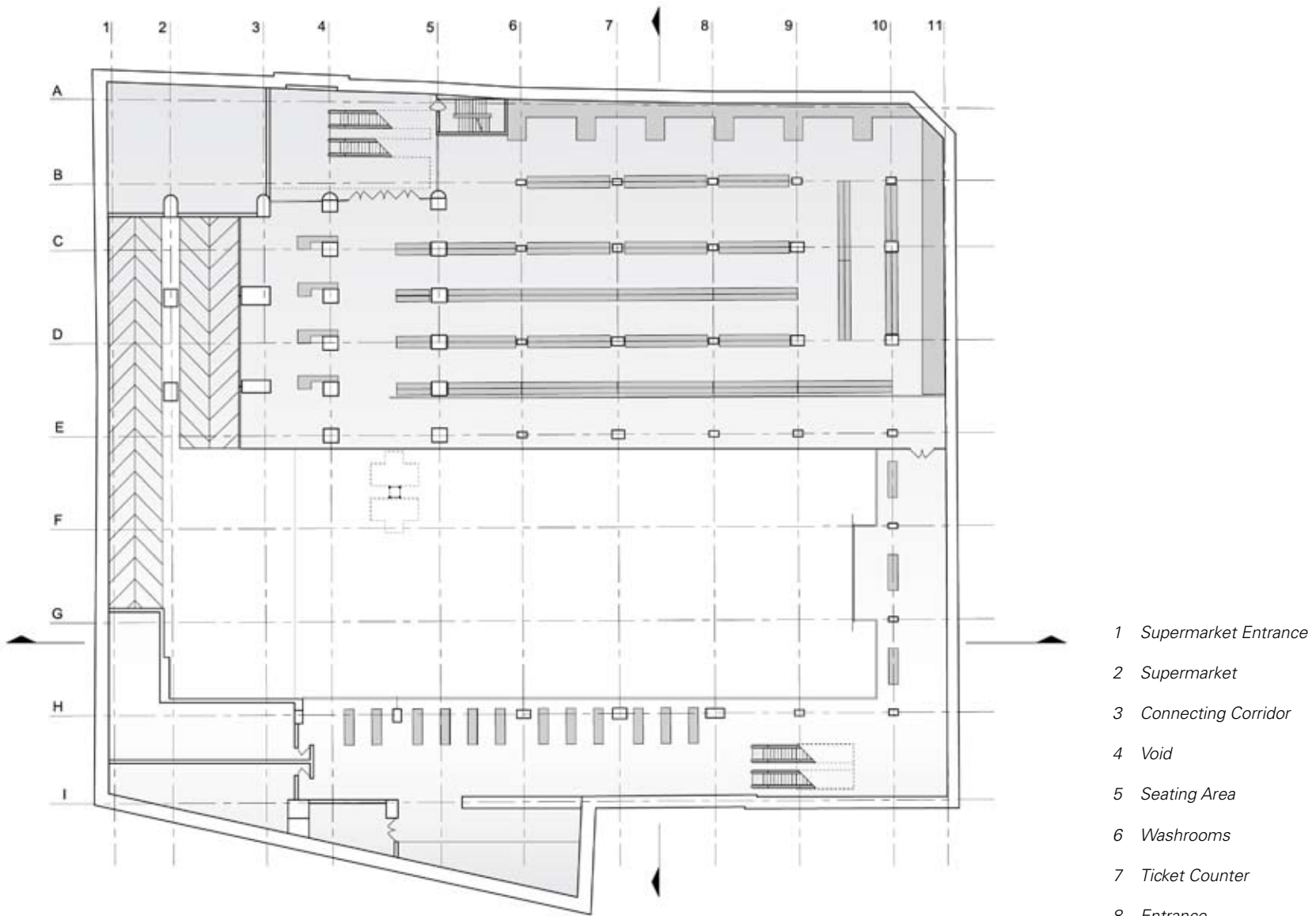
Fig.8.34. 2nd Floor Plan.



- 1 Block Lobby (Above)
- 2 Theater Landing
- 3 Theatre Observation Deck

CCB . 1ST FLOOR PLAN
1:500

Fig.8.35. 1st Floor Plan.



CCB . -1ST FLOOR PLAN

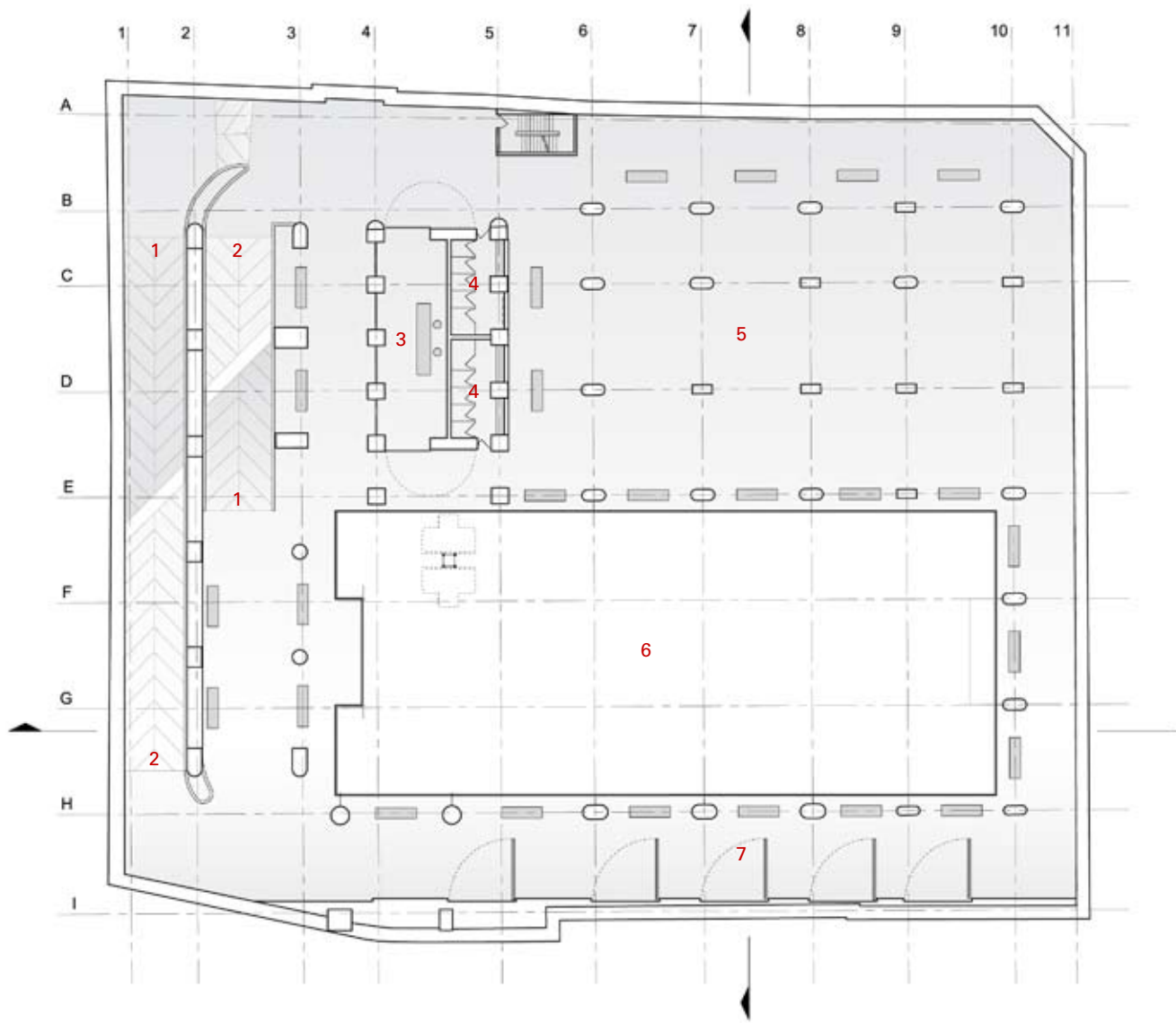
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Fig.8.36. -1st Floor Plan.



CCB . SUNKEN ENTRANCE TO SUPERMARKET

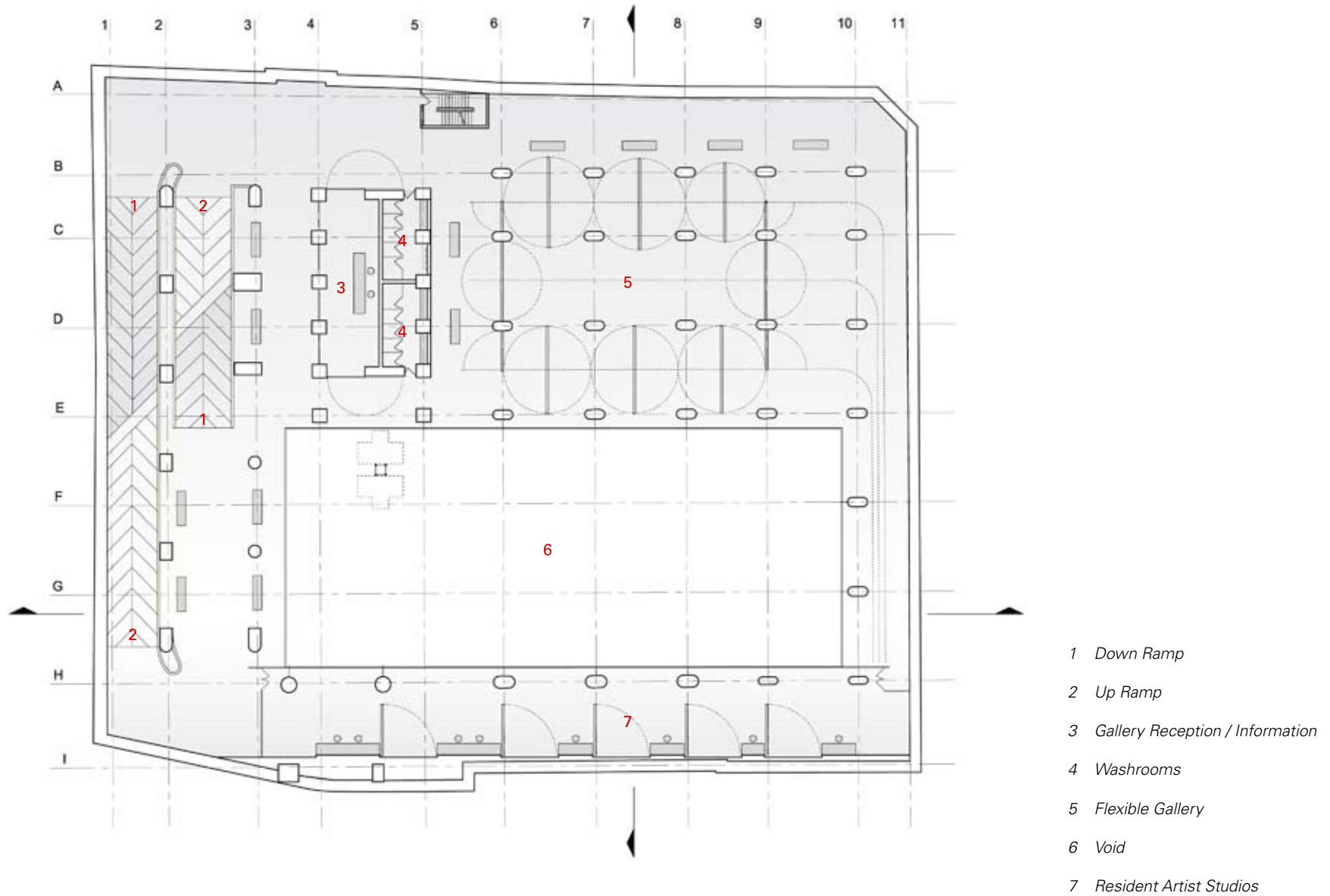
Fig.8.37. Sunken entrance to supermarket.



- 1 Down Ramp
- 2 Up Ramp
- 3 Gallery Reception / Information
- 4 Washrooms
- 5 Gallery
- 6 Void
- 7 Hanging Gallery

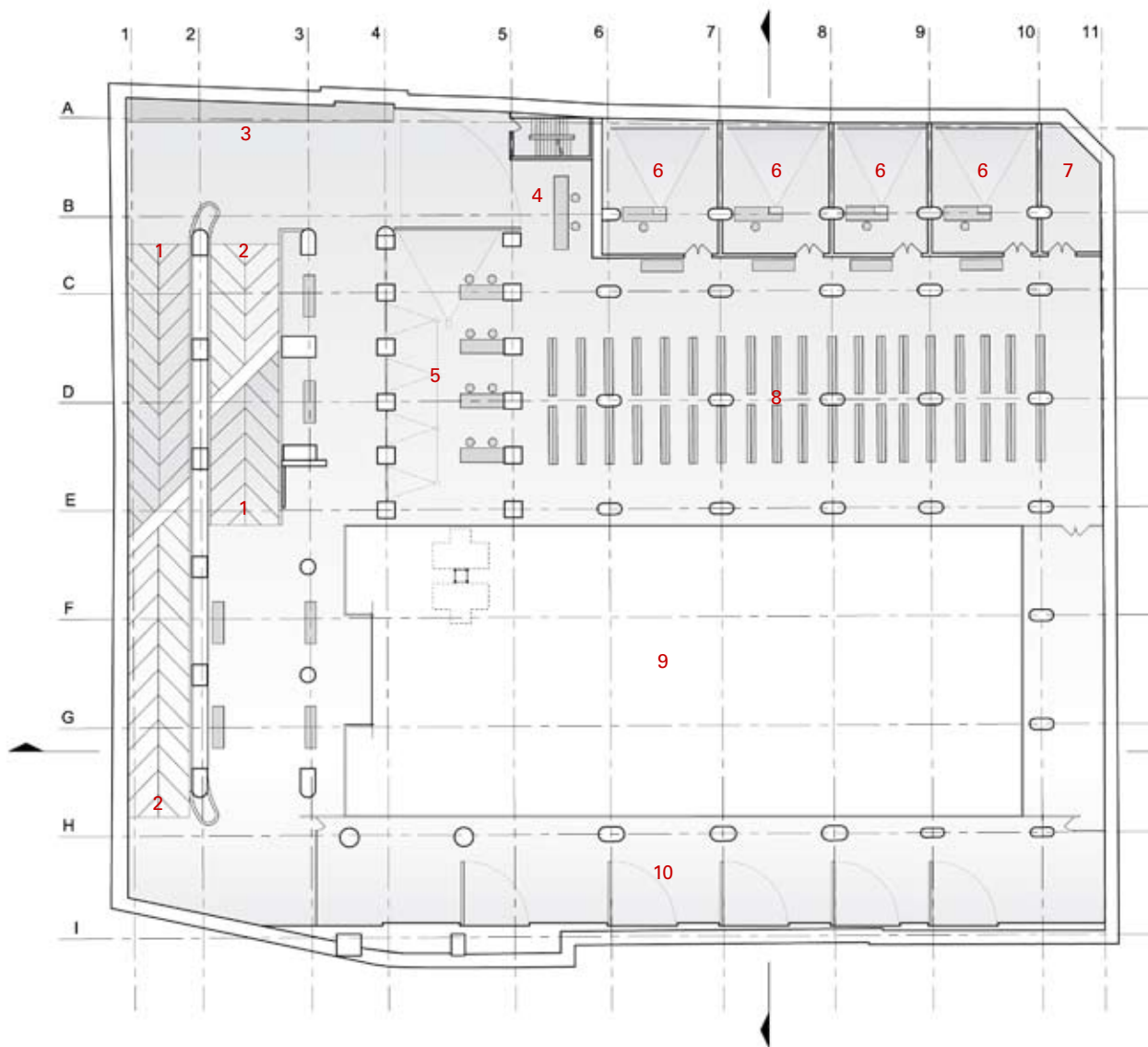
CCB . -2ND FLOOR PLAN
1:500

Fig.8.38. -2nd Floor Plan.



CCB . -3RD FLOOR PLAN
 1:500

Fig.8.39. -3rd Floor Plan.



- 1 Down Ramp
- 2 Up Ramp
- 3 Display Wall
- 4 Film Archive Reception
- 5 Interactive Projection / information Terminals
- 6 Video Editing / Viewing Suites
- 7 Sound Booth
- 8 Film Archive
- 9 Void
- 10 Fabrication Studio

CCB . -4TH FLOOR PLAN

1:500

Fig.8.40. -4th Floor Plan.



CCB . VIEW WEST INTO SPACE OF THE VOICE

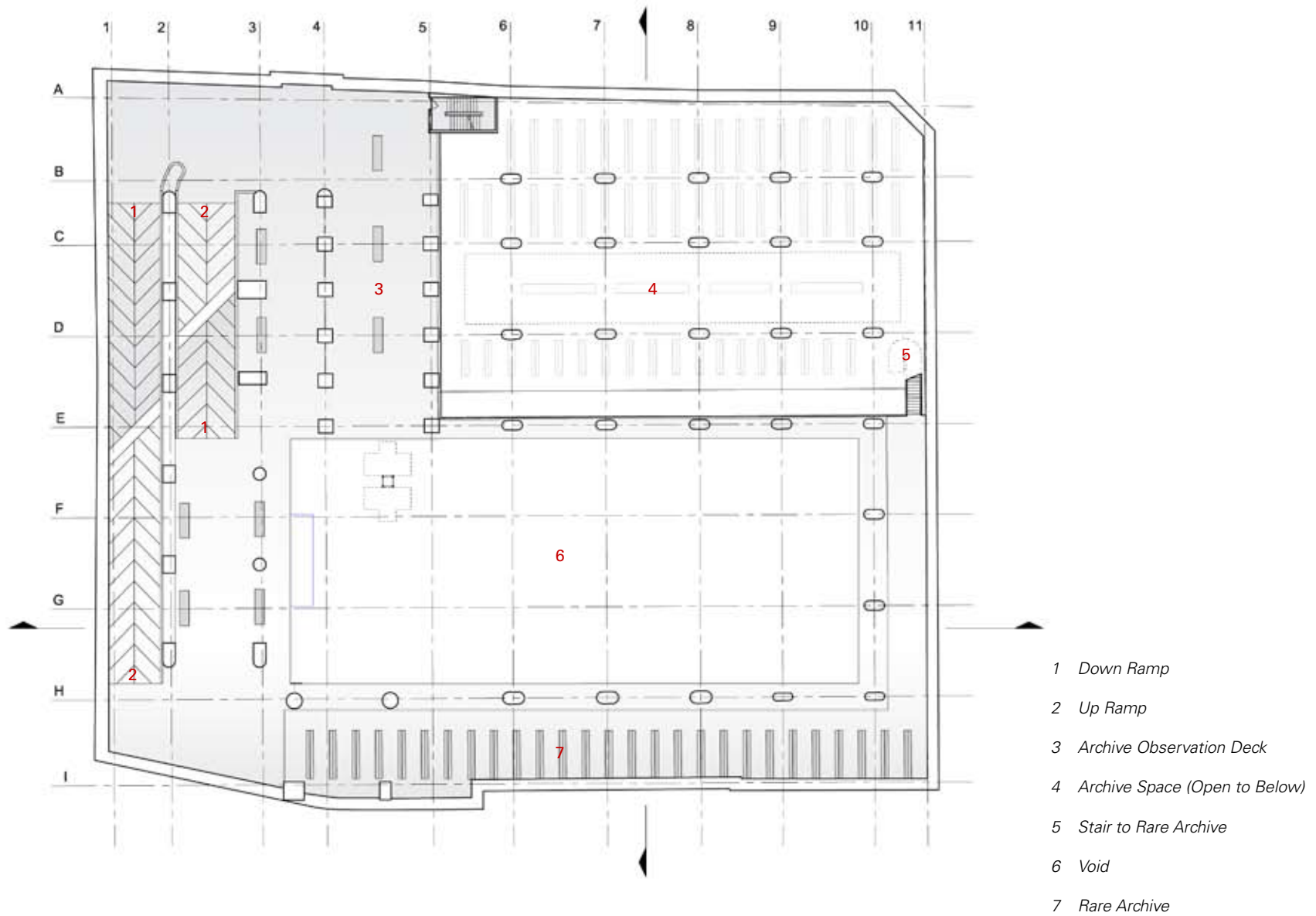
Fig 8.41. West into Space of the Voice



CCB . VIEW EAST INTO SPACE OF THE VOICE

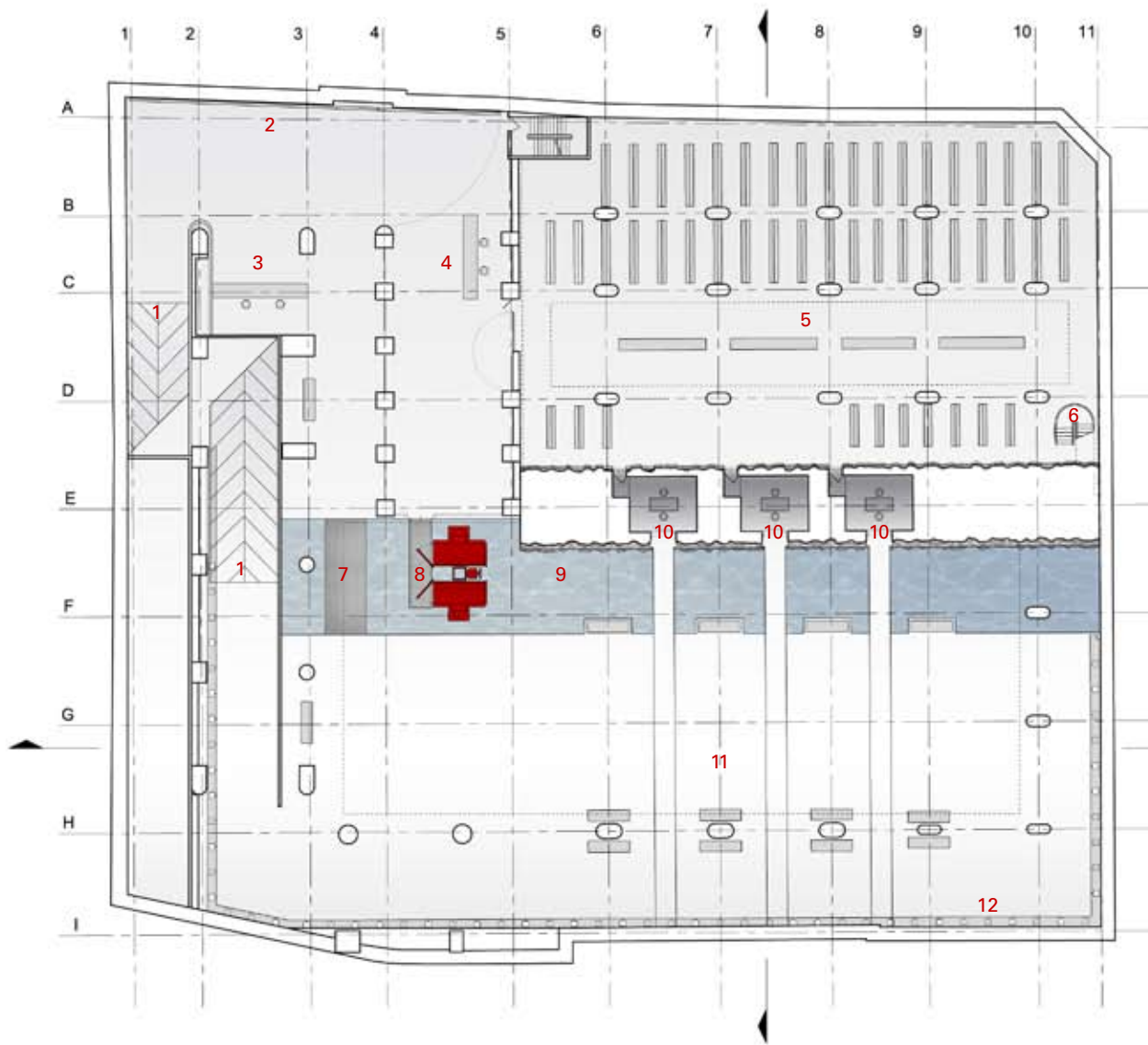


Fig.8.42. View east into Space of the Voice.



CCB . -5TH FLOOR PLAN
 1:500

Fig.8.43. -5th Floor Plan



- 1 Up Ramp
- 2 Reflecting Mirror
- 3 Space of the Voice Reception
- 4 TRC Reception Archive
- 5 TRC Archive
- 6 Stair to Rare Archive
- 7 Bridge
- 8 Elevator Platform
- 9 Moat
- 10 Space of the Voice (Interviewing Booth)
- 11 Gathering Event Space
- 12 Interactive Audio Wall

CCB . -6TH FLOOR PLAN

1:500

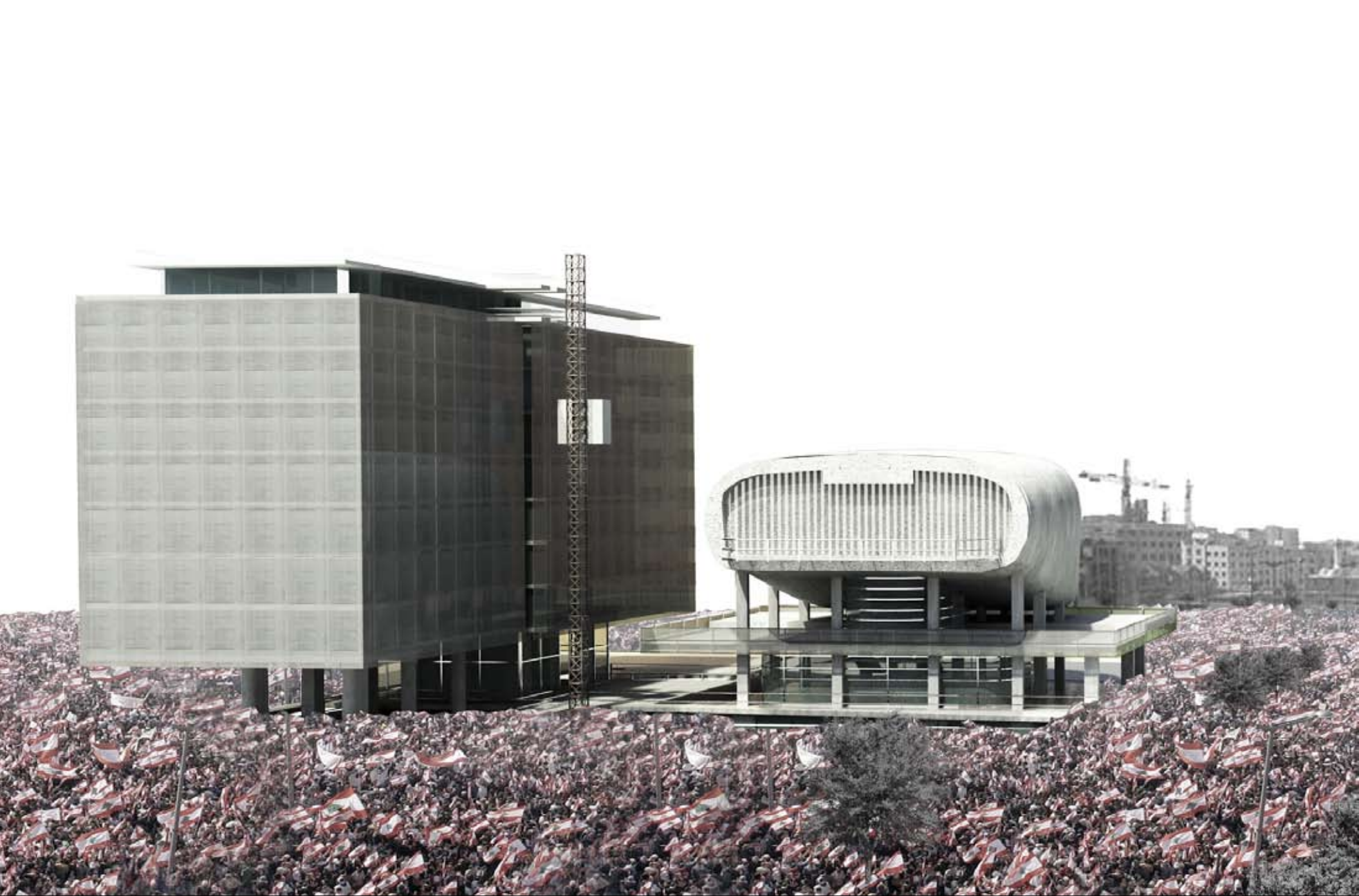
Fig.8.44. -6th Floor Plan



CCB . LEVEL OF THE SPACE OF THE VOICE



Fig.8.45. Level of the Space of the Voice



CCB . VIEW NORTH TOWARDS THE MEDITERRANEAN DURING A PUBLIC DEMONSTRATION



Fig.8.46. View north towards the Mediterranean during a public demonstration.



CCB . NIGHT VIEW DURING A PUBLIC CELEBRATION



Fig.8.47. Night view during a public celebration

Fig.9.0. (Next Page) Graffiti adorning the hoarding walls of the construction sites adjacent to Place des Martyrs left by mourners and protestors during the March 2005 Independence protest. Photograph by author on September 2005.



From The Face
MUST

The lord of
Devil town
PIE

the eye doesnt see you
I need the truth
my head hears you

ISSA
Joe

Amad

لا تترك اولادك في الشارع
لا تترك اولادك في الشارع
لا تترك اولادك في الشارع

موسام
Nadell

MUSSAM
Four Libon

We want
the truth
in our minds

RASHA
NAWAH
REIN

Sura
SABINE

قتلوا اكم الغائبين
قتلوا اكم الغائبين
قتلوا اكم الغائبين

دم الشهيد
الكل يزيد
الحقيقة

APPORTE. Bouam Bouam

موسام
موسام
موسام

CONCLUSION: BY WAY OF...

You Have Your Lebanon and I Have My Lebanon Gibran Khalil, Gibran (1883–1931)

You have your Lebanon and its dilemma. I have my Lebanon and its beauty.

Your Lebanon is an arena for men from the West and men from the East.

My Lebanon is a flock of birds fluttering in the early morning as shepherds lead their sheep into the meadows and rising in the evening as farmers return from their fields and vineyards.

You have your Lebanon and its people. I have my Lebanon and its people.

Yours are those whose souls were born in the hospitals of the West; they are as a ship without rudder or sail upon a raging sea . . . They are strong and eloquent among themselves but weak and dumb among Europeans.

They are brave, the liberators and the reformers, but only in their own area. But they are the cowards, always led backward by the Europeans. They are those who croak like frogs boasting that they have rid themselves of their ancient, tyrannical enemy, but the truth of the matter is that this tyrannical enemy still hides within their own souls. They are the slaves for whom time had exchanged rusty chains for shiny ones so that they thought themselves free. These are the children of your Lebanon. Is there anyone among them who represents the strength of the towering rocks of Lebanon, the purity of its water or the fragrance of its air? Who among them vouchsafes to say, "When I die I leave my country little better than when I was born?"

Who among them dares to say, "My life was a drop of blood in the veins of Lebanon, a tear in her eyes or a smile upon her lips?"

Those are the children of your Lebanon. They are, in your estimation, great; but insignificant in my estimation.

Let me tell you who are children of my Lebanon.

They are farmers who would turn fallow field into garden and grove.

They are the shepherds who head their flocks through the valleys to be fattened for your table meat and your woollens.

They are the vine-pressers who press the grape to wine and boil it to syrup.

They are the parents who tend the nurseries, the mothers who spin silken yarn.

They are the husbands who harvest the wheat and the wives who gather the sheaves.

They are the builders, the potters, the weavers and the bell-casters.

They are the poets who pour their souls in new cups.

They are those who migrate with nothing but courage in their hearts and strength in their arms but who return with wealth in their hands and a wreath of glory upon their heads.

They are the victorious wherever they go and loved and respected wherever they settle.

They are the ones born in huts but who died in palaces of learning.

These are the children of Lebanon; they are the

lamps that cannot be snuffed by the wind and the salt which remains unspoiled through the ages.

They are the ones who are steadily moving toward perfection, beauty and truth.

What will remain of your Lebanon after a century? Tell Me! Except bragging, lying and stupidity? Do you expect the ages to keep in its memory the traces of deceit and cheating and hyprorisy? Do you think the atmosphere will preserve in its pockets the shadows of death and stench of graves?

Do you believe life will accept a patched garment for a dress? Verily, I say to you that an olive plant in the hills of Lebanon will outlast all of your deeds and your works; that the wooden plow pulled by the oxen in the crannies of Lebanon are nobler than your dreams and aspirations.

I say to you, while the conscience of time listened to me, that the songs of a maiden collecting herbs in the valleys of Lebanon will outlast all the uttering of the most exalted prattler among you. I say to you that you are achieving nothing. If you knew that you are accomplishing nothing, I would feel sorry for you, but you know it not.

You have Your Lebanon and I have my Lebanon

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEWS

May 6th, 2005. 12:00pm

Hamilton, ontario

FARID: In English as best as you can.

DALAL: What do you want? (Aggressively)

FARID: Could you please tell me about... tell me about Lebanon before the war... when you were growing up, like where you were born and where you grew up.

DALAL: You are talking about Lebanon in the sixties and the seventies. Lebanon in the seventies was on the peak. It was the best. All tourism, it was open every summer they make big festival. Lots of tourism comes to Lebanon. You go everywhere... its day and night... there is no night, nobody sleep.

FARID: Ok. Tell me a typical day that you would have.

DALAL: What do you mean?

FARID: Tell me a typical day, where you hung out what you did.

DALAL: My typical day was like everybody... I was in school.

FARID: Ok

DALAL: I was going to... to Lebanese University.

FARID: Where was it?

DALAL: it wasn't too far from home... it was in Nakash, New Nakash

FARID: New Nakash, is that down near Beirut proper?

DALAL: No it was in the Beirut suburb. It was down under... under Rabieh station.

FARID: Under Rabieh station. Ok.

DALAL: You remember Lafoulier down there. Ingiliegh... hada(next to in Arabic)

FARID: Next to the Ingelieh and you lived on the top of Mtaileb mountain? Which was just the next mountain over.

DALAL: Yeah.. Yeah...Next mountain over Lebanon... Beirut.

FARID: so you used to go to school there... so tell me your typical day.. what time you got up?

DALAL: You know... You get up in the morning and you get yourself ready to go to school and you go to school and then you hang out with your friends... you know... having a beautiful weather most of the time we used to go out after school have coffee whatever... you know... go around... The weather helps

the society helps everything you know is provided for you to have fun... Lebanon is very open mind, very liberal, very accepting... very hospitable.

FARID: so tell me where you guys used to hang out?

DALAL: We go to café places, café trotoare places... we to go some restaurant... we go movies sometimes..

FARID: were these all places in Beirut...

DALAL: Some of them were Beirut, Some of them on the Mountain... Some of them in Junieh... like next cities.

FARID: Did you drive...

DALAL: Yeah I used to drive. I have my car for sure...

FARID: what kind of car did you have?

DALAL: Well I have very modern car... it was brand new car... it was those days... it was a Pontiac Lemon...

FARID: Pontiac...

DALAL: Lemon

FARID: Lemon.

DALAL: ...yeah... two three years old it was brand new...

FARID: And you lived at home with...

DALAL: I lived at home with mom and Dad and my brother....

FARID: and your brothers?

DALAL: One brother...

FARID: One brother... which brother did you live with?

DALAL: Pierre...

FARID: Pierre?

DALAL: Yeah... he had his supermarket...

FARID: He had a supermarket in the front of the building?

DALAL: Yeah... .. yeah...

FARID: Did you guys used to dress up and go out down to Beirut?

DALAL: Of Course.. of course...

FARID: Tell me about a time you did that...

DALAL: ...you know Saturday and Sunday it was party time... Friday night Saturday and Sunday... your part starts 11 o'clock... 12 o'clock and it doesn't finish up until early morning...

FARID: So tell me what would happen after you would come back from school... you come home from school

around three...

DALAL: No... we come up from school around 1:30

FARID: Around 1:30

DALAL: School starts early...

FARID: Around 7

DALAL: Yeah seven thirty... You come have lunch you have some siesta... nap and then... when you wake up four five o'clock.. you have enough time to go out.. study and go out...

FARID: So you would get up around five, do your homework.. get dressed call your friends and go out...

DALAL: Yeah... Yeah... around seven... eight.. you full shape you have enough time to go out... Catch up with your sleep in afternoon.. you finish your homework and... like I said the weather is more energetic over there.. no much humidity... the most you could have humidity over there is 80 percent... all dry. you have this pine weather.. all trees you are in a mood to do things... lots of oxygen...

FARID: And so you would go out. You leave the house around what time?

DALAL: Yeah... if you are going out you would always leave the house around 11 o'clock... sometimes we pick up friends and sometimes you meet... depends.

FARID: Would you guys go dancing... would you guys go eat out...

DALAL: No.. we would like to go places were you would eat and dance... major restaurants in Lebanon you eat and dance... you barely just eat... unless it is very prestige one where you would only eat and come which it wasn't so popular... people would like to go out and have fun around... you know... you eat from eleven to twelve to one and then one the dance floor start and two it's mixed between... it starts with Lebanese song, Arabic song... popular one... and then goes within maybe half an hour 45min then maybe you have 15min half an hour European song like you know... slow dance or jazz or whatever... then you go back to Arabic... then the party is mixed... until two three o'clock 4 o'clock...

FARID: 4 o'clock it would finish...?

DALAL: Yeah... yeah... you have people they don't like to leave. Like they are having fun because your barbecued meal comes around two three... so...your second meal... first you start with a meze... like you know...tartar meat... you know small small plates all kinds... kebbe, tabouleh, hummus...

FARID: Finger foods.

DALAL: Yeah finger foods... snasal... everything... all kinds of pastries all kinds of vegetable salads... everything...

FARID: So these restaurants would open specifically at ten o'clock.

DALAL: Yeah... we usually. what I like the most it used to be the big dish in the middle of the table provided with all fresh vegetables, all variety... you know what I'm saying.. so fresh and so good that you feel like to grab and cut and share. Big tomatoes... with the piece of tomato is around two pound three pound... big one where you can slice it and you can put alcohol in it and soak it and it tastes really good... while you are drinking you just snack...

FARID: And at four o'clock when the party ends... if the party ends... where does everyone go...

DALAL: Oh some crazy like ... on the weekend we used to go to some sweet places...

FARID: Like Bakeries?

DALAL: No no no... it's like specially pastries... like patisserie... sweets...

FARID: Pastry shops?

DALAL: Yeah... we go out for coffee and some sweet chat and then go home to bed... Once you go home... you sleep few hours and you get back on your feet... it doesn't take you much to just catch up on your sleep... because you are having fun and nice ambience, nice food and nice weather... it helps you... plus ...nice company...

FARID: And who did you used to go out with... your school friends or the neighbours

DALAL: I usually go with my school friends.. but to stay

late I go with my family friends... cousins brothers, sisters... go together...

FARID: And so you would go to these pastry shops... and you would be there from 4 o'clock till...

DALAL: Yeah.. we stay maybe half an hour an hour once the day starts to come out we just go home...

FARID: Around five...

DALAL: yeah... you just go home... you hit the bed in the morning... just for a few hours... but this is the days on the weekend when you have no school... In the weekdays maybe you go eat and dance and you would come home earlier...

FARID: You would go out on the weekdays?

DALAL: Weekdays yes... but not often... only on special occasions.

FARID: Would you hit any kind of bakeries on the way home...

DALAL: Yeah.. in Lebanon the bakeries are open in the nighttime... anytime you go you pick up the fresh bread, cookie, the fresh ka'ak and shee... you want to have a fresh one you go night... during the week it's good to go for a drive...

FARID: For a drive around the city.

DALAL: Yeah it's for a drive to get ice cream some sweet... it's fun you know nice breath... you go around you have an argileh... sometimes we order some lahmeh, a sandwich jebneh... it's more then enough... you come home happy...

FARID: Did you do anything during the day on weekends? Or did you go out only at night...

DALAL: During the day yes you go out... you go out... but usually more crowded... mainly in the afternoon... in the morning you mostly work...

FARID: Yeah... and you would work on the weekends...

DALAL: No... No work... some people they do... people that have their own business they work... Most works in Lebanon is a family business, like mom dad father son... they take after each other they release each other... everybody know what he is doing they don't have to worry too much about paper work

money wise... they all ditch in and grow up ditching with each other...

FARID: So on the weekend did you ever make it down to the beaches?

DALAL: I'm sorry?

FARID: Did you go down to the beaches...

DALAL: On the weekend in the afternoon... Friday afternoon, Saturday afternoon... and sometimes after school, when it's too hot, you feel like going down to the beach for a few hours...you go around two three when the UV is less and enjoy it for few hours...

FARID: And you would come home and have a nap before going out...

DALAL: Yes yes... I have to go... sorry I'm late...

FARID: Thanks mom.. we'll continue this when you get back?

DALAL: Yes... sorry...

May 14th, 2005. 3:00pm
Hamilton, ontario

FARID: Okay – I interviewed you each separately about growing up in Lebanon. Can we... (interrupted by Joseph)

JOSEPH: I still have a few things about growing up in Lebanon
FARID: Yes – you will have time to give me your thoughts.

I will give you the recorder. Mama – I want you to give me your thoughts as well.

DALAL: About?

FARID: Well about recording your thoughts about what you remember.

DALAL: About?

FARID: About Lebanon...about anything you can remember that comes to mind. We are going to begin to build a dialogue about this. I'm curious to see your memory about the place. But right now while I have you two together – I'd like to talk about....I'd like you guys to talk a bit about during the war, how you met, your wedding, where you ended off, and so forth.... so if you could start.

DALAL: Me??

JOSEPH: While originally my grandfather and her grandfather are cousins – not sure if you mentioned that earlier...So, kind of far relatives. We met during the war because of our political beliefs. We both believed in the same people, the same party, and the same Lebanon. We start getting together after we stopped getting attacked by the Palestinian and pro-Syrian group and we start getting together to see how we can protect our areas and how we can form a center for the political parties or an office for the parties at the time.

FARID: That was you and mom? Or just the family?

JOSEPH: At the time it was myself, her brother, herself, the father, because we needed the financial support. So her father, my father, her brother were pitching in and we start getting other people in our town to get together with us. We ended up first donating money to our headquarter and after we decided we're going to open up an office in our town.

JOSEPH: A little bit back to the years where we used to be in school together – where we met.

FARID: What year was that?

JOSEPH: Oh Jesus, uh, 1978 maybe, 77?

DALAL: 1977

JOSEPH: Yes 1977. Those years were funny. We didn't live them as a teenager or young adult because we felt like we had to be mature fast enough and responsible fast enough and involved in the political life faster than any normal people/kids living in a different country. This is basically why we had to try and grow faster and we didn't realize we were missing our teenager days, our university time - it was burned with the political situation in Lebanon. We were more in training with camps and political issues to survive and worrying about tomorrow if we're still going to be in our homes or fleeing, or being attached. Then really worrying about living a love story, or a normal situation as a teenager.

JOSEPH: When I met (pause) (you ask your mother something in Arabic) (she responds in Arabic)

DALAL: What can I say?

JOSEPH: Do you agree? Disagree?

DALAL: I agree with what you're saying. As a teenager we only see life in a teenager's way. We just want to live and just to keep our dignity, our family and area's dignity and supporting each other. We didn't realize how much we missed in our own life. Considering when you see our friends or distant cousins who got hurt during the war – life is becoming more and more realistic and we hit the reality of life – which is you can die, lose things, miss your friend or whatever. We kept sticking together to support our goals/our belief of Lebanon and for our rights.

JOSEPH: Regarding the way I met your mother. We were in highschool at the time. I used to have my car and pick up my sisters with me in the morning and take them to their school and then go to my school and this is why I met your mother. We weren't friends. We knew we were relatives. We used to take casually until we start knowing each other more. I knew my mother used to follow me in a cab to try and spy on me to see

whether or not I was going to school after I dropped off my sisters or whether I was just going to the headquarters or whatever. Especially more and more with the party, going on checkpoints....so what I used to do was park my car in front of the school in a visible place where my mom could see it and I used to ask your mom to borrow her car. So I borrowed her cars and go the extreme and wild things that we did when we were teens is used to take your mother's car and with a girlfriend, a friend, and his girlfriend – go to the mountains, or to lunch or for a drink and spend the whole day and then come back to school at the end of the day to return the car to your mother. And I think we used to do that once every 10-15 days where we skipped school. I had a very good relationship with the teachers and they let me do certain things without really raising issues with the Principal's office – and this is how we met. She knew most of my girlfriends and before we didn't have anything in common except being relatives. It was after those things happened.

FARID: Is there anything else you want to add? How did you guys get married? The proposal? The wedding? Open up a little.

DALAL: What proposal?

DALAL: Well, we start university. He started his own field at university and we were apart for awhile.

JOSEPH: I think maybe what brought us together is since we start getting more involved with the political party – we elected her brother to be president and I was the secretary at the time and I was very young. We start gathering people and I think your mother was responsible at one point...

DALAL: I was head of the feminine perspective

JOSEPH: Yes, the female views in the party. And her father donated a location to have the office in one of his homes and we opened the office - the political party office and we start getting more and more young people involved. I think at one point we reached a good number – Do you remember?

DALAL: Compared to other places we were in high number

JOSEPH: I mean...stuttering

JOSEPH: I think 40-50 people within a few months. We were very active – always dividing ourselves into groups and we had more people joining and the group of 6 or 7 used to go the front together and we used to designate that those people would go on certain days to the front and those guys used to go for (interrupted)

DALAL: I used to think it was service military for 15-20 days to learn to serve...the training bootcamp

JOSEPH: Yes – the training bootcamp. When we had to start getting involved in the front, we used to commit ourselves to feed the front with a certain number of people for a certain number of days. We had a couple of times where our guys got hurt, got shot.. (interrupted)

DALAL: Member some of our kids were missing for a few days too!

JOSEPH: Yeah and when you go to the front sometimes you get cut off from – it was an attack and a counter-attack and the enemy will attack us and you end up having some of your people that couldn't withdraw and they would stay there for a day or two and we had to draw another attack. We had to pull them back to keep more ground and Uh....

JOSEPH: Going back to how we got married and I proposed and all that...because of this bureau, and her brother and my family – she had a three brothers that used to live in Africa and they came to visit and met my sisters and this is where the two brothers wanted to marry my twin sisters. They were very young at the time so we had to hold it a year or two so because they were still teenagers when they got engaged. Before they got engaged I was getting more and more involved in the party and my parents were worried about me because I'm the only boy in the family. You have to keep the name of the family running traditionally – so therefore they wanted to protect me. So they decided they want me out of Lebanon and it was a big debate. I wanted first

to go to Italy to continue my studies and to be an architect and go to Florence. My dad was worried about that so he would like to see me getting married, established and then going wherever I want. He wanted me to get established and go to Africa to start working anywhere, doesn't matter where. The talks started then that your mother was single and we just started seeing each other and getting used to each other. My sisters were seeing her brothers so I started going with them to visit at her brother's supermarket. From one thing to another – she stopped coming with her brothers, and I stopped coming with my sisters.

DALAL: He proposed to me at the beginning it was a little bit of shock. I wasn't planning to get married. I was the last girl in the house. I was enjoying my schooling and my living. I never thought to settle down. I had my mom and my dad around me supporting me and enjoying myself. So then what happen Zuzu??

JOSEPH: So what happened – each one of us started university until Summer '79 when we were heavily attacked by the Syrians

DALAL: No – in '79 were married

JOSEPH: Yes, was it in '78..When did we have the big attack?? (long pause)

DALAL: ????

JOSEPH: They were in Lebanon during 75-77 but we were heavily attacked in Lebanon during some tests or something. I don't remember.

DALAL: You're talking about 77 when you were in school.

JOSEPH: Yeah but I think in '79 when we decided to get married the situation was getting more and more tough. We decided to get married and to get out of Lebanon. First my oldest sister got married 6 months before us and then the twin sisters married her two brothers in the August before. Then we planned our wedding for August 11th – a week later. After we got married – my sisters decided to leave to Africa, right?

DALAL: No. They left for their honeymoon – to Italy and

then to Africa ahead of us. A few weeks ahead? Within 6-7 weeks we left Lebanon.

JOSEPH: Yes we got married August 11th and we spent a few days out of the house on honeymoon. We came back home. We spent...

DALAL: Did you tell what happened on our honeymoon? (laughing)

JOSEPH: What? (laughing)

DALAL: The bombarding!

JOSEPH: Oh yeah! We had a reservation I think at the mountain.

DALAL: No it wasn't

JOSEPH: Yes – it was a rented chalet on the mountain used for skiing and nice weather in the summer. It's in a touristic attraction town/area. So they had during the summer – nice clubs in restaurants. I think we spent 5 days??

DALAL: No – we got married Saturday and the Sunday morning I woke up. I went home. I start crying. I felt awkward. You said lets go home and visit your parents. Remember we got out our summer clothes to come home. We left around 7-8 a.m.?? We start driving down the mountain to buy gifts for the family. We bought our gifts and we reach home and in your parents home there is no one. Then we went to my parents home and everyone was panicked and scared. They were shocked that there was an attack between the armies at where we had been and saw some bodies and they thought – maybe we had been hit by the bombs. They weren't even sure if we were one of the bodies. So they were very anxious to see us and asking us which way we came and what we heard. We weren't aware of any of this but we had left just a few minutes before the attacks started. They saw the problem. We didn't see anything.

FARID: Wow

DALAL: They were happy to see us and since then we were scared to go back so technically we stayed home and tried to have fun and sleep. It wasn't safe to go far anymore.

FARID: Right.

DALAL: What's happen again?

JOSEPH: I think we started to get ready for Africa. We left within a month?

DALAL: Well – about 6 weeks.

FARID: So, you moved to Africa – what did you take with you?

DALAL: Just our personal things

JOSEPH: Very minimal.

DALAL: We were lucky there was a house open for us.

JOSEPH: Yeah – what we did, was in Africa – I went with your mother. Before our arrival – your uncle rented a villa there and it has 4 bedrooms. 3 bedrooms and a guest room and a living room/dining room.

DALAL: It was a huge house.

JOSEPH: So we rented a big villa and we went straight to that place where we lived together on the second floor for a couple of years. When I arrived there we decided to split the business and open another division. So I went with your uncle Slemin and we opened another branch for the alcohol and John and Antonine stayed in the main store.

DALAL: The year you were born your dad and uncle were working together and they were booming. They made good money. They were young, very dynamic, working together, understanding eachother. Then I had you and BJ and then Mona. Before I had Mona actually your dad decided to have the jewellery business. And then Uncle Simon and Anthony can't handle it alone so he went back to them and they closed the second store and your dad did the jewelery business by himself.

JOSEPH: But prior to that the reason we closed the second branch the business started getting worse and worse. It's not as your mom said. The business was booming the year we arrived and we reached a point where we used to sell 65 containers a month. We used to order (interrupted)

DALAL: I remember they week Fred was born you made tons of money.

JOSEPH: Yes – like \$100,000 that week. But after 6 months

the business was booming and we were importing alcohol from all kinds 64-65 containers per month. And we were selling twelve containers/ month of AA batteries. We used to export our merchandise to Benin, mostly to Nigeria, to Ghana and to Mali. At the time it used to be Upper Volta, - today it's called something else. After a few years, the business started getting less and less so we started worrying. The government created a company to monopolize the agencies from us and they started this company to import themselves and to sell to us what we marketed in the Togolese, Nigerian markets. So that cut a lot of sales because the prices went up and this company wanted to make their profit. The company respected us so they cut our price at the original country and keep our cut there – then sell to the government – the government sold to us and we make money. By the time it reached the customer – it's way more then we sold for so we start losing business from Nigeria, etc. This is why we closed the second branch and move Simon to original one. We decided if we open jewellery business we can keep our money and buy raw gold. It's easier for us to transport these things and take money out of the country. We reduced the stock and got a presidential degree to export raw gold from Togo to Geneva and we started exporting with Calla and we combined with another guy to export 200Kg of gold to Switzerland who cleaned it and kept it for us whether we go and buy it or sell to them.

May 15th, 2005. 5:00pm

Hamilton, ontario

FARID: How old were you guys when you were there, and Mom were you always in Africa or were you flying back and forth?

DALAL: No, no, as a Lebanese your goal is first come your family and kids and think to provide best education and best support, best schooling, best medical for our kids (says emphatically)...Anyways, for every time whenever I'm pregnant I had to go deliver back home it is better hospitals, better care and better environment.

JOSEPH: He's asking how old you were when you went? (talking to Dalal)

DALAL: Well, I was 21 I guess... I was around 21/22.

JOSEPH: You were 22 because when we were married you were 21, I was 19.

DALAL: So, within two years I had BJ and then we start to have problems with his eye.

FARID: BJ was born in Africa?

DALAL: BJ was born in Africa.

FARID: Why was that? Did you miss the flight?

DALAL: No – we didn't miss the flight – the situation in Lebanon at the time was not really stable.

FARID: What was happening in Lebanon?

JOSEPH: June, 1982 we couldn't use the airport or fly straight to Beirut. Sometimes we used to drive to Togo, from Togo to Benin, sometimes from Benin we used to take the airflow which is a Russian company. We used to go from Benin to Moscow – to Cyprus – sometimes to Europe – from Greece to Cyprus, and sometimes from Lagos – to Egypt – to Cyprus – sometimes straight to Lebanon if airport was open. Sometimes we flew to the Ivory Coast to France – and then to Beirut if the situation permit. All the flights to Cyprus, we used to take the boat to Jounieh – sometimes it was faster boat then others. Sometimes 12 hours, sometimes 8 hours.

DALAL: Oh, you know when BJ was born the situation wasn't good in Lebanon – but when we had the situation with his eye – we decide to go back home to get checked by the doctors because the medical is better

there. I got BJ's eye checked and it was very bad time because there was bombs everywhere. It was a very scary moment (sighs)...I'm trying to remember.

FARID: How long did you stay in Africa?

JOSEPH: From '79 to '85 or '84....DALAL: It was '84 that you went to Canada. So Mona was only 1/5 years.

FARID: Tell me about when Mona was born.

DALAL: Mona was born in Lebanon. Actually we start to have in Africa, the yellow fever and I was pregnant and it was very dangerous for pregnant women so we packed and went back to Lebanon to be with better medical and family. We went there and Auntie Nidal was too skinny – she was pregnant with Danny? You weren't with me. BJ was with me. I went to Lebanon like usual. I planned to have the baby there. I had to get checked by the doctor, get blood tests and everything. Lucky I want. We ran the tests between Auntie Nidal and myself and I wasn't too skinny and I was feeling okay. I'm a good eater and nothing bothered me. I lived my normal life. The blood test showed I was very anaemic. The doctor was surprised and at first they thought there was a mistake between my blood and my sister-in-law's blood.

FARID: Did they do the test again?

DALAL: He re-did the test and it came out I am very anaemic. I had to get 15 daily injections before I delivered. Lucky I went through those injections. Within 2 weeks in Lebanon I get Mona. The delivery was fast. 15 minutes. Everything was fine – Mona was okay – I was okay. Mona's problem is checking baby after 20 days. She was supposed to gain weight and she wasn't. She lost weight. I tried to find out why she lost weight – thinking she was not well fed. She's not growing, you know....

FARID: So you took Mona back to Africa

DALAL: No, no – in the beginning they wanted to find out why Mona was sick. They wanted me to change her formula. I was breastfeeding. The doctor said I didn't have enough nutrition for the baby and I disagreed because my other kids were good with

nutrition. Apparently she was lazy because she has to be pushed to eat and wake her up to eat all the time. After the results came up and she was gaining weight and everything was back to normal. We came back to Africa February 28th – your dad's birthday. Within 2 months of coming back, everything was fine. You were with me because the situation was very bad in Lebanon. It was a big risk to kids.

JOSEPH: I was in Italy the night Mona was born

DALAL: when we came to Africa I left by boat. It was a trip 3-4 days on the road. Nidal came with me. Amo John went back to get his wife and kids. I'm thinking....it was Simon's family...John and his family...Antone's family...We had a total of 18 people. John was carrying 16 passports to try and pass the convoy together. Mona was the only baby in the basket.

JOSEPH: That trip 18 people from the Noufaily family came in one trip.

DALAL: Yes.

Phone rings. interrupted

DALAL: Um, since the situation was unbearable in Lebanon we couldn't leave any of the kids, we couldn't stay to live. It was very hard. The started bombing at night time and the kids were crying in their cribs. I forget the day when they start bombing really bad and the house was shaking and we had to run to the shelter and between you and BJ – we forgot Mona in the basket in the house. It was so dark. There was no light. We had to look for the flashlight to find the basket. Before I knew it I was crying. I had my boys with me and then searching for Mona – it was very tough, scary. I was alone. That's it. We decide to leave as soon as possible. I left Lebanon within 6-7 weeks of Mona's birth. Mona was born in '83 – it was February '84 that we left. We left Jounieh harbour. It was not equipped for the big boats so we had to be transferred by the small boats to the big boats. And if you weren't careful, or your foot slipped, you would fall and end up being in the sea and you're lost. A family lost 2 children in the sea a week of ahead of us

so we had to be careful for the kids. We had to be very secretive because they would come do checks on the harbour. We had around 7 children...I don't remember...Mostly kids with us. We had to carry bottles, formula, hot flasks, even water for the kids. We had 3 or 4 cabins in the boat. We spend the night in the boat reaching Cyprus. We were lucky – we end up being in hotel for a day. The customs in Cyprus were very bad to us. They searched every bag. Mona's crib was full of diapers and medication, and I remember they dumped the crib upside down just to search it. They were nasty to us. Everything was expensive for us. We couldn't buy anything.

JOSEPH: They built Cyprus because of the Lebanese war. (side note)

DALAL: Yeah – they took advantage of people because people were desperate to get out and were willing to pay anything. Then we got out and changed to the plane. Egypt was very hot. It was very hot to be in Egypt and it's not well-organized....so anyways, we get the plane. It was a Sunday – worst of all being a weekend. So we reached Canal in Nigeria and from there we had to go to Lagos. So imagine how many planes were moving all over the place. We had to run from the first plane because one of the wings were on fire.Luckily they gave the first seat to me because I had Mona. I grabbed her and tried to grab my beauty case when we were running out. And the guard said "Lady what are you doing" and I said "I want to grab my bag" and he said "Do you want your life or your bag?" – It was so scary because they were very scared to invade the area of the plane because it was full of fuel. After we ran out – we watched the whole thing full of flames and it was scary. We waited until god knows when we would leave with another plane because they had to get another plane for us. So we stayed 4-5 hours fighting. The airport was empty. They were trying to find a way to ship us back to Lagos. We end up drinking hot water from the flasks because there

was no water there. We needed to feed the kids. God help us – a plane came down to help us. We reached Lego around 9 p.m. Sunday night.... Then; Dad and your uncle send their cars to pick us up with the drivers. They had been waiting for us. We tried to move from one border to another in the cars.

FARID: Which border was this?

JOSEPH: From Lagos to Togolese.

DALAL: And this I'll never forget – Mona's back was all rotten from laying down and the kids – you were all finding some place to lay your bodies. Driving happened all night. We had no more water. We looked for African water to drink because we were thirsty. We went through the Togolese border. They were waiting for us at the Togolese border with the paperwork and here we are just looking for hope to see someone. Then I hear your dad and I see two cars parked. I hear them screaming in Arabic. And I'm yelling "Yes God – we are here!" and we are running and trying to catch each other from one border to another. It's an unforgettable time. Oh (big sigh) thanks god – it is over! I could make a book about this trip. It was quite a trip. It was one of those adventures in life – you know?

FARID: So the trip took about 4 days? And you took everything?

DALAL: Yes – well you have to get ready for you guys you know – formula water, we had to fill up as much as we can to provide for the kids. It was.....um, we went through it...everything was okay.

JOSEPH: I remember vividly – quarter to 2 you guys were at the border.

DALAL: Yes – it's over. Okay...so Mona is there. We reach Africa and she started to get back problems. Getting lazy and everything. We reached Africa in February. In June – no, in the summer Dad went to Lebanon and when he went I remember I was looking at Mona – and Danny was born in April after Mona 4months and come the summer, he started crawling and sitting and Mona wasn't doing anything, just sleeping and not responding much. As a mother I

start to think there is something wrong – how come my daughter is not moving ahead. So anyways, your dad was in Lebanon so I asked him, please can you ask the physician there why my daughter's not moving. He had all the birth reports. So he went to him and he gave him extra vitamin injections and the doctor told your dad "once she gets these injections she will have a boost and will be moving ahead" because Mona wasn't kicking, standing, anything....so he came back with those injections and I gave them to her and she responded a little bit – she started kicking. So he came back in November....No, not in November, in August/September....

DALAL: Within a few months I take Mona back to Lebanon to see myself why she's not moving ahead because Mona is almost one now and still like a new born.... So I went to Lebanon in October...

FARID: Of what year?

DALAL: It was October, 1984. Mona was only 10 month old. Within a week my dad passed away...no, not even a week. Reaching the airport, I remember (long pause).....You came with me; the three of you were with me going back to Lebanon (short pause). When we reached Lebanon, Mona was in a very bad situation – high fever, just barely holding her head up. You could just look at her and know she was sick. I spent my whole trip refreshing her because the fever wouldn't come down and Mona was looking really tiny. I got to the airport and your Grandma – as soon as she looked at Mona didn't like the way she looked – she was close to one year old and something was wrong...We went straight to the hospital. They quickly ask for blood tests and checking her. They recommended putting her on vitamins right away so she could catch up with all the vitamins she had been losing. Anyways, the next day we went for blood tests and remember the hospital is close to my sister – in Lebanon nobody knew I was going though, even my own dad...So my sister meet me at the hospital door and she gave us

a call and ask if I'm there and grandma said yes, I was there and I had just arrived with the three kids and the youngest was not good. We didn't know if it was long term problem or whatever, or maybe physically she didn't have enough immunization. Perhaps she only needed temporary boost to grow... we don't know??... Anyway, my sister she called me my dad had called Auntie Pierrette right beside and said I was here – 'my favourite' – because I was his favourite, I was the last one. He said he wanted to come visit me. Everybody was excited to see me. He just left the place and he fall down outside. He had brain damage. He cut his head and ended up in the hospital in a coma and that's it....That's it. Within two, three days.....

FARID: That's it – he just cut his head??

DALAL: Yes that's it – apparently as soon as he fell he was gone – because he wasn't responding at all.

FARID: Did he fall by himself? Or was it a seizure?

DALAL: What do you mean???No – he didn't have seizure. Just brain damage

JOSEPH: Yes it was a seizure...

DALAL: No – it's brain damage...well, kind of. (speaks Arabic briefly)

DALAL: Anyway – I was lost between my Mona...thanks god I had medication for her...and were running cat scan for Mona and everything....and at the same time I was worried about my father in the hospital. So, within three days I reached Lebanon. I remember three days – Saturday/Sunday – your uncles were in Lebanon??? John? Simon?

FARID: And they went to visit Jido?

DALAL: Yeah – they went to visit Jido and they don't know what to do in the hospital. They were dealing with a body with no hope. They called all kinds of doctors but there was no hope – he was gone. Like, technically I didn't see him die but he knew I was there....So it was a big hurt to me because I was there and it was a big mess. So (pause) Monday they announced the death on All Saints Day. I will never

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forget it was All Saints Day (October 31). After the funeral and everything – your uncles left and I start to deal with Mona – put her on the medication and taking care of her- she started to respond. With the weather in Lebanon it's wintertime – it's cold and strong weather. It boosts Mona to become... aware of what's going on and make her more active and respond for almost everything, you know. She was moving normally ahead until October... like I stayed in Lebanon until November, December. December was when your dad's cousin passed away from a car accident – not even 40 days past my dad's death ??? Your dad's cousin – Patrick – his uncle had a car accident and died. Well, It was a big problem in the family because he was only 21 and girl shes in coma

FARID: His girlfriend?

DALAL: yes his girlfriend.

DALAL: It was a shock to everyone. The funeral went to around a week – we had to deal with it... and it was a bad struggle in Lebanon because it was a time when the Lebanese money started to drop very bad. I will never forget it – you guys were getting sick every week because of the weather change. Every week we have a child sick... antibiotic is jumping from 5 pound to 50 pound to 10...

.....end of tape

FARID: Tell me your experience of Lebanon before the war. Tell me a typical day of growing up in Lebanon.

JOSEPH: As a student? Weekends?

FARID: Start with Lebanon before the war.

JOSEPH: Well before the war, as you probably read, Lebanon was called so many names, the Swiss of eh the Middle East, the jewel of the middle east... you know all those countries because it was the eh... still till now, we don't know how long it is going to stay that way... it was the only Arab country with a Christian president and they had a kind of democracy... it was the only country in the middle east with a true democracy, where president was elected every six years.

When I grew up... unfortunately... it was until maybe thirteen fourteen... when I was thirteen fourteen when things started to chance.

FARID: what year was that?

JOSEPH: ...I will say seventy. I was born in nineteen sixty so I will say seventy... four seventy three the was kind of started. The war started with the Palestinians going on the Place-Des-Martyr and trying to do certain things... certain military things, but before that a typical day for me I was a student and I was going to a private school.

They used to call it the Chan Ville... which is the freres Marist. We used to wake up in the morning six thirty seven o'clock. We used to get to school for eight, eight-thirty, we were done around three o'clock. We used to have... maybe half an hour break and then we go and do our homeworks, we used to do our homeworks at school... and by the time... like we... after an hour and a half or hour, another break... and we were done around six o'clock... and by the time we're home it was around seven, seven-thirty... and this is... and we had to hand in most of our homework during what we call etude period, which is doing our homework at school. We arrive at home and have supper and we start studying for oral exams, readings and things like that... I can't remember exactly... but I know we never home before

seven thirty. We used to do two hours of study after class and that was mandatory for everybody.

FARID: What did you do during the weekends?

JOSEPH: During the weekends... I used to... I used to go watch movies in Beirut and things like that. I used to have a friend of mine almost my age... and my advantage they were foreigners. he lived with his mother... he rented one of the apartments in our home... downstairs and his mother used to have a good connections with the university, the American university of Beirut and we used to go to the university and watch kids playing baseball or American football and things like that... watch some plays at the university, watch some music, you know, pieces played by the orchestra, the university orchestra, like I mean, the student university. We used to go... we used to go do our... our tours after that in Beirut and it was mostly walking between the streets of Beirut, sometimes with his mother... Most of the time we used to go... autostop... you say it in English it's like... (joseph sticks his thumb out in a hitchhiker motion)

FARID: Hitchhike?

JOSEPH: Hitchhike Yeah we used to hitchhike as couple of kids or we used to pay very minimum...like maybe quarter of a pound to go to Beirut from our area... We lived 14km. No we lived 12km from downtown Beirut and we used to go...sometimes we used to pay ten fifteen what we called piaster... in the bus to Antilies from there of twenty five piaster, which is a quarter of a Lebanese pound...actually one dollar used to equal 2.25 Lebanese pounds...so we... we used to hitchhike to downtown Beirut to Place-Des-Martyr or... and we used to sometimes take another cab to El Hamra, most of the cinema's used to be on El Hamra street.

FARID: Where is El Hamra?

JOSEPH: El Hamra Street is in Beirut... it is in the west side of Beirut. And we used to go to those movies and we used to sneak in within the crowds... sometimes we

used to arrive and the movie is started and there is no more seats sold-out... and we used to talk to the guys at the door and tell them that we are coming from a far place and we would like to...and we will sit on the floor to watch the movies and they used to let us in...Sometimes we used to pay the tickets...After that we used to go to some restaurants to spend as little money as we can...and back again on the same route.

I remember we used to be so young and sweet-talking the cab driver and telling him how much money we have and how much money lets and what we want to do and they used to take us for rides for free as well.

FARID: So, in your teens were you active in the university and with your schoolwork and your friends and you were getting down to Beirut often?

JOSEPH: Yes we lived in Mtaileb...but as a teenager when I woke up and start to notice the situation around me, fourteen fifteen...the war was already started and everything shifted...we limited our movies, the minimum we could have gone to the movies was in our area... we were involved in the political party... I was seventeen and, believe it or not, I was the Secretary of the party in Mtaileb...we used to have like fifty, fifty-four or fifty-seven...and some of them were married and somewhere kids like myself.

We got involved very young...we didn't have much choice because...

FARID: was this before university?

JOSEPH: Yeah... before and during. You didn't have a choice, the war is going on... the Syrians were everywhere. The... the other parties... unfortunately at one point Lebanon... every embassy had a political party on the Lebanese soil and every embassy used to get involved in our politics... it was the war of the other countries on Lebanon.

We were very young and we end up going to training camp and it was a little bit scary because it was the first time when we get involved in arms and things like that... we used to be trained like... we used to be trained with the live ammunition getting

shot beside us, you know, beside our feet. And we were on the floor trying to move and we used to hear the bullets above our heads. It was a little bit heavy and...different training. Some of us got involved more and more and some of us got involved really only level-one training and others went beyond that.

FARID: Was it mandatory?

JOSEPH: It's not mandatory but you have to do it because you belong there... you were like a brainwashed like this is it, this is the war for your survival, because we heard what happened to other towns when the other army or militia got in whether they destroy the churches or they... they did bad things to the populations... some of them fled some they burned, some of them had their houses burned and all this...Syria was heavily involved and they were on the mountains overlooking our area, so it was difficult for us to live without thinking too much what was going on... you can't be a neutral person living in the middle of all this stories so we had to go to training camps.

They used to...the party used to, there is no obligation, everything was volunteer, but when it comes to the point and you say; "I want to go to the front"...they usually study your case and if you were the only boy in the family... they won't let you. They keeps you in the back and you end up doing some ammunition or preparing logistics part of the war or even doing internal checkpoints in our area. If it was for, somebody that has more then one kid in the family boys, it doesn't matter if it was boys or girls; everybody goes to the front...

My teens was very disturbing in a way that I lost a lot of my close friends... during the war on the front or even a bomb drop on the city. I was sad to... and we didn't, we didn't have like here you go through emotions and the school picks it up and they send you to a specialist and you sit down and talk about it.

It was difficult, like I mean. I had lost... I lost few of my close friends, matter of fact one of my closest friends just the last year in high school, he

got shot. He died. It was... it was touching to go to a funeral or to miss a funeral because you are involved in your military things. You come back after a week and you hear... The first question was after... when the situation goes really bad and everybody goes to his village, town or city and do his military activity, when we come back to the school... after we come back after a week or two or three... the first question was; Who died? Who survived... who was wounded?

I remember... I remember we had a few teachers, we wanted to maintain a regular life but a the same time it was difficult because the bombs, the bombs, especially the Syrian cannons were shooting over our heads so all the bombs were dropping in our area and we wanted to maintain a normal life, we wanted to maintain the school, so the school was open and the teachers used to come and teach us and I remember vividly lots of times we had teachers coming to give us a class and usually they are coming back straight from the front, or from a training camp, or wherever, mostly coming back from the front and they are very tired and exhausted and the come in and they remove their guns and put them on the desk and everybody sits in the class to carry on a lesson and when it's done the teacher picks up his arms and goes.

FARID: Did everyone have guns?

JOSEPH: I remember each one of us at one point or another we had our own guns. I had my own gun. Every car used to have military equipments like that whether in the trunk or on the dashboard and you used to have a member card for the political party and lots of checkpoints in the area. It was a mess situation and it struck me very very hard a few years later...

When I grew up...after university...I...this image struck me very very...I don't know...I tried to...what happened is I didn't realize that when we were living in Lebanon in the middle of all these things, we thought this was normal life. I mean you hear like a twelve years old went in the middle of the darkness of the night to implement a bomb under a bridge,

because the Syrians were planning to attack...you know...And that kid blew up the bridge and blew himself with it...to save the town or something...and this was daily stories that you hear.

I was after like my parents decided that they want me to leave Lebanon because I was too much involved and they said; "ok, you have to get out of Lebanon" because I was the only son in the family.

FARID: How old were you?

JOSEPH: ...Nineteen...I had my two, two and a half years of architect and... actually three years by that time.

FARID: Which school had you been going to?

JOSEPH: I went to the, like I said before, the Freres Marist before then we went to school in Bekfaya, then I went into the Lebanese University. I had a pre-architect school and the problem every time there is an exam it was very tough to do the exam, very tough to study under the bombs and all this, but I remember august seventy-nine, before that my parents wanted me to Leave Lebanon so I decided to get married and go to Africa and all this. Once I went to Africa, we opened a jewelry store in ninety...I think it was maybe...eighty, pardon me...eighty or eighty-one because I remember it was before the Israeli invasion to Lebanon. So in eighty or eighty-one I was in Europe, like I came to Africa and we opened a business and then I opened a jewelry store so I used to go and buy gold, sometimes to Lebanon, sometimes to Italy, but my trip used to go from Lome to Togo to Paris. From Paris to Geneva to do some business and exchange some money because we used to export gold to Geneva.

I used to...I went to Geneva on one of my business trips and I...I cried walking on the riverside because it was the first time in my life that I see young people laying down on the grass as couples and kids playing, it wasn't rollerblade at the time...it was roller-skate or something...So, it was the first time I saw an old guy, he was seventy seven because he was speaking French and those guys were doing some exercises and he kept telling them that: "Remember

I'm seventy-seven, I can't do the same things". And with him he had teenagers and he had a couple of ten years old, eleven or twelve and most, most of them were teenagers playing with him. And you see a couple laying down on the grass and a couple there kissing each other and suddenly I had like a lightning in my brain and I start thinking the difference between the two worlds and the Lebanese situation and what is going on... and I was at the hotel hearing that the Palestinians did this and that and the Syrians were attacking our area trying to come down to the Christian, the last piece of the Christian area, between Matin and K'srwan, which is two big places were a big percentage of Christians lives in those areas.

It was... I don't know... I start crying... I was walking and looking at those guys... I don't know if I felt jealous... I felt jealous I don't know... and it was that day when I heard that another kid, twelve years old blew himself up trying to stop a Syrian tank... you know... that was painful...Really over all, going back to the original question...it was a short period by the time you can go on your own to go to Beirut and enjoy Beirut and all this and then suddenly we are adults we are adults and we are responsible, we are carrying guns and we are checking cars and trucks and doing checkpoints, and preparing a mission and preparing ourselves to go to the front and preparing food to the front...I can't say that I had a normal teenager life...

We dealt with it... We dealt with it with the way we had to deal with it without knowing whether it was the right way or the wrong way...without getting any medical support or any guidance and we were, kind of, almost on our own. The parents were busy... my mom never worked and she was a housewife and she was taking care of us and...

JOSEPH: I remember one thing... I used to drive a car when I was fourteen and I used to drive my sisters to school. I remember, we'd tell my mother we were going to school and sometimes she believed me,

sometimes she didn't...If I had a mission I wouldn't tell her because she would freak out. I used to go on the balcony from my home and throw my Rangers, which were my military shoes, and my military suits and belts and all this, throw them from the balcony, carry my book and say bye to my mother, like I was going to school, carrying my normal books with my normal clothes going down to the driveway to drive, as soon I run down and pick up what I dropped from the balcony and put in the trunk of the car and go to school, stop my car at the school, change. I leave the car in front of the school, in case my mother wanted to check me out, and I hit the road going with the others in different cars to the centre were we are dispatched for either a checkpoint, or ammunition, or food supply, anything for the front.

FARID: So what were these centres?

JOSEPH: Every town had a centre. Every town has a place where we meet. In Mtaileb we had one, all the towns and cities around us, but we used to have a Quarter... Head Quarter in Bekfaya and it was in the same city where my school was, my last two years of high school was. We used to get ready and go to the centre and they used to dispatch us from there, and to come back before, make sure... To come back before... before the school day ends because I had pick up my sisters from school. Sometimes we used to do exercises during the night; we used to do training during the weekend. It was different. We were so busy in doing so many things we weren't thinking, nobody was thinking whether we were going to survive or whether... I was really blessed that everything that I went through with minimal damage. Minimum spiritual damage and minimum physical damage when comparing to other people, some of them lost their life, some of them lost like the functions of their hands and feet and some of them are in wheelchairs still...

FARID: Is there anything else you would like to add?

JOSEPH: No... not for now... I think that's enough for now.

Evening of May 9, 2005
Hamilton, Ontario

JOSEPH: I can't remember exactly the date, but one day... what happened was that we heard that the headquarter was hit very hard and we... we heard that my wife brother, before I got married, he was the president of the centre in Mtaieb and... when we heard that the headquarter was directly hit so like crazy we jump in his car... he had a Pontiac GTO and he drives like a maniac and so we almost like... had like fifteen twenty kilometers and it usually takes you a few... in three four minutes we where at the centre... it wasn't a direct hit, but it was pretty close and we tried to help the people and all this...It was on our way back after an hour of no bombardment... the attack stopped for... maybe an hour... hour and a half we tried to help the people over there.

I remember, we where on our way back... I remember I was sitting on the back of the GTO and suddenly the car jumped... the end of the car, you know, flew off the road and started bouncing and we heard a...the... crazy noise like it was the bomb dropped right beside us. Pierre, which is my brother-in-law, he is crazy. He made a U-turn and he came back and he wanted to know exactly if somebody was it because it was very close to the car that we felt it and the car jumped... that bomb missed us by maybe... I'll say no more then fifteen, fifteen-feet and what happened it was on the main street and we where just passing a building where the bomb hit the wall of that building... We missed it by a fraction of a second and the bomb hit that building and everything behind it was like a war zone... and... I remember like it took us probably a fraction of a second and we could have been dead... If he slowed down a little bit we could have had the bomb right in our face and we could have been gone a long time ago.

May 16, 2005
Hamilton, Ontario

JOSEPH: I remember when we used to be at school... I had a good relationship. Actually it became like a friendship with the teachers. Especially when I was elected, the first year, when I moved to High School, I was elected the president of the student council and... I was dealing with the principal and the teachers most of the time. During the war... we used to go to school but our mind was always out of the school... we where trying to keep on with the classes and at the same time the principle and the office couldn't do much with us, like if we decided to leave or to stay, it wasn't very strict that they are going to call your parents and tell them that you missed the class and things like that. As long as I kept a good relationship with teachers, as long as the teachers still get paid for the hours. So, I used to hang around the school and if we decide that we don't want the class everybody decides to leave for example. Everybody will leave, I will stay behind to make the teacher sign for his lesson, so he can get paid and I leave. Come back, you know, an hour or two, make the other teachers sign and then... I kept doing this for a while until I built a trust with the teachers. So I start, I made a joke one day and I signed on behalf of a teacher and he looked at me and he smiled and he said "you know what, it saves me from coming." And I said to him; "that it saves me from coming too! So, if we decide we don't want to have a class I'll let you know in advance, so I'll sign your documents in advanced and you get paid." I know it was... At the time I didn't think about as it was illegal or things like that. The life was like that... disorganized and nobody cares, you know... all that we care is that if you come to the class and you go back hoping that there is no attacks, no shootings, and no fights between, sometimes the same political members for stupidity. Every time there is a fight people... people died because everybody has a gun... including myself. Most of us used to have our own guns, whether we carry it on us or

in the glove compartments of the car... that was something normal. It was a routine, a daily routine. You check on your bag, you check on your gun, you check on your munitions, you check on certain things before you leave home... I don't know... it was a different way of thinking... ok... it was... definitely it wasn't the appropriate way, it wasn't the right way, but it was the war way... Sometimes I don't... now... not now, but on this occasion because I'm talking about it, but I had a thought few times how stupid we were, you know. We were carrying grenades in the glove compartments. Anything could happen, you know... we never thought about that it could blow or any accident and people... we never thought about these things... it was stupid... but it was the way that everybody was dealing with. One day I was driving and I was making a U-turn in the middle of a main street and I had people with me in the car and I start to make a U-turn in the middle of the road and a poor guy was driving and he hit my car... just because it happens that a team... a military team was driving by and they saw my car, they knew me so they stopped and they kind of forced the guys hand to let it go, you know... they said that's fine it's only steel let it go and that's it... so I had to go, to rush to a garage to fix the car before the end of the day, before I go back home, because I didn't want my dad to notice that I had an accident because then I'll lose my car. After when you think what happened with that guy, I was responsible, and that guy ended up with damages to his car and he had to fix it for his own. I mean, not that we had insurance. We didn't have insurance during the war, because nobody will give you any insurance and the insurance company closed and most of them during the war left Lebanon and the local ones weren't working because nobody believed that you can take an insurance on anything in a time where can't insure your own life for a full day.

May 16, 2005
Hamilton, Ontario

JOSEPH: When I proposed to your mother and I decided that we were going to get married... actually when my parents decided that I have to leave Lebanon because of the situation and kind of a no future and they were worried about me because I got more and more involved with the political party and... so they want me out, and like I said the thought was; you get married and you leave.

So, when I proposed to your mother at the time... she was in love with another guy and I was in love with another woman... the woman I was in love with, a year prior to me proposing to your mother... she came to me, we where in High School, I don't know what to say but, somebody came and proposed to me and I don't love him and I don't know what to do and my mother wants me... because she lost her dad during the war. Her dad died during the war and she was living with her mother, two sisters and, a brother.

So, when this guy came and proposed, for the mother it was a relief because he is relieving her from the responsibility of one of her daughters and she's gonna get married and she's gonna leave the house. So, when she told me that I told her that I can't... I can't propose, I can't get married because I want to become an architect. So, she kept postponing that guy until a few months later she accepted her proposal... After I knew that her wedding was one week before our wedding. He had proposed to her one year before and they got married one week before I got married.

So, when we got married, my friend used to call me, you know. A girlfriend, like a friend of my girlfriend used to call me to have some information about me and things like that, to pass on to my previous girlfriend or ex-girlfriend... So I told her that I was getting married and she was shocked and she was more even shocked when I told her to whom I was married to because everybody kind of knew that I was in love with another woman and

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your mother was in love with that guy. He was a nice guy... He was a very popular guy and actually he was one of my friends and unfortunately, a couple of years after we got married he got married and he had a couple of kids and he died with a bomb attack a few years later. Your mother, when her friends called or she called them to tell them that she was getting married to me they didn't believe her. They thought it was a joke, and they didn't believe her, and she invited them even to the wedding and I guess that they were upset or something... They didn't even show up.

So, the combination or the thing we put with your mother you know it was against all odds I guess... but we lasted over 25 years.

JOSEPH: ... I remember when we used to be, like I mean, teenagers. A couple of our friends used to be responsible about the communication with the party so we had a villa full of CB or communication equipments, you know, and doing some servailance and things like that. We used to use those villas to throw a kind of a party and... we used... we used to go with the teachers as well. We used to invite the teachers and the guys that didn't have cars we picked them up. We would make the arrangements and each one would bring a dish or food and we ended up having a party for the whole day. So, what we usually do, we skip school we go early in the morning , we prepare the food and all this .

But with your mother you know it was against all odds I guess... but we lasted over 25 years.

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JOSEPH: I discussed this before, but I don't remember if this was taped or not. We were talking about what I believe and think the situation of your mom towards Lebanon... The experience your mother had in Lebanon after we got married and we came to Canada and we decided to go back in 1992. That when we went back... she didn't feel that she really went back to her house or home, I should say, because since your grand mother is still alive and she lives in the house and this is what we call a family house since it was inherited from my... my dad and he inherited from his father. He did some improvement on the house he inherited... same situation with me, I did a lot of improvements on the house I inherited, so out of respect with our culture... you have to stay in the family house... especially when you are have the only son in the family. So, it was a shame if I go and rent another house or move outside the house when really it's a big house and my mother lives alone. It looks like towards everybody and towards the family that there is a big conflict. So really your mother didn't feel like she has her own home because this house or this home was opened to all my sisters and relatives and everyone was coming there for a visit and she always felt that they were coming to visit my mother... more then coming and visiting her. Plus, the problem your mother faced when we went back to Lebanon... she... she lost contact with all her friends and the only friends she was left with is either her sisters or... my sisters friends, or my relatives and some of her relatives.

So it was... she felt like there was in an emptiness... you know... not that in Canada she had a lot, but it's different when you go there, you feel like you are in a warm situation, you feel like you are in a warm country, but still... between... and when you sit deep in yourself you feel like you don't have a lot of friends. Therefore we started getting a little bit involved, I started getting a little bit involved with Brummana Highschool and I was on the Parent

Committee. I met other kids coming from the states and from Canada... and this is where we ended up meeting the Dib family. So, in the situation of your mother really being at home and not having a group to belong to and not having friends to socialize with and Mona, in her... in her situation. So it always withdrew us from going anytime we want and anywhere we want... and my mother she has a group of ladies and they are involved in different social activities and she used to go with them... you know whether having lunch or doing different activities, supporting each other. They are from different towns... and since they are older then your mother, your mother didn't feel that she belongs to this group either. So, she started getting more and more involved with the Dib family since Mrs Dib was an Italian or American Italian origin and she had a lot of contacts with other families basically in the same situation as us... your mom went a couple of time... she liked it and she didn't like it because at the time we went back to Lebanon... basically your mom didn't work and she didn't gain a lot of English experience in the years we lived in Canada... So, she didn't feel comfortable in the group either, because she was probably missing some conversations and things like that. She used to go in one or two social activity and skip a couple or three finding excuses that she can't go and she doesn't have the time or whatever... So really, she didn't feel comfortable and plus, since it wasn't her home and it was Grandma's furniture and Grandma's activities and things like that. And you know that their personality is different. My mother is an open person, your grandma, and she likes social activities and the house is always open and every Saturday we have the AbeNour family and the Zarkis family or the friends that used to come and spend some time for drink and food... your mother felt that she was always... kind of... not like a second class... but the priority was always for the "lady of the house", which it was was

mother. That really did bother your mother... but unfortunately we didn't have... another way. So we where planning to more downstairs. We had two apartments downstairs. Ok. One of the... both of them where occupied until one of the was empty... and this is where I tried very hard to take the guy out or ask him to leave and we tried to negotiate to see is he could leave the apartment so we can fix it and move. We would leave my mother upstairs and we would move downstairs... we had to have both apartments because one of the apartments was too small for us but, both of them would be enough for our family. We did the plan and we thought that if we succeed with the guy leaving then we would end up moving down that the situation would be better.

Unfortunately the situation in Lebanon, the overall situation wasn't the greatest and so... plus that guy didn't want to budge and we started with a compensation of 10thousand and he wanted... when I agreed with him he asked for 20 and when I agreed for twenty he asked for 25 and when I agreed with twenty five he asked for 35 and this is where I dropped it... at thirty thousand... so it didn't work. And this is finally when we came up with the decision to come back to Canada... At that point your mother felt that we will go back to the same area right by the red hill creek by the Saint Luke. You would be in the High School close to home and your brother Bj would be back to St. Luke... and she asked for an apartment on a top floor and in a corner, so it would be ventilated... and that is how we ended up with me coming here, ahead of you guys a couple of weeks, to rent the apartment, furnish it and it was exactly what your mother asked for.

This is why she has a bitter taste of going back to Lebanon and going back home. She felt shadowed with the personality of my mother and she never felt that this was her own home in Lebanon.



APPENDIX 2: RECONCILING HOME

There is a family house situated in the *Rabyeh* Mountains with a panoramic view of the city and the harbour below. The original bottom level of the house was built several generations ago. With time, the family grew, and some of its members began to travel. The house also grew, as travelers, prosperous in Africa and eventually Canada, returned home. With each new pulse of energy and activity, the house got taller, level upon level, rising one floor each generation, sometimes two, rising above its surroundings, casting its gaze farther and farther afield. Longing for the horizon, the house yearned to free itself from the mountain. Then a war broke out and the family retreated into the lowest level of the house. There, in a series of caverns carved out of the hill, the house sheltered the family. But as the war continued, the family began to leave the house, the city, and the country. The house remained.

Years later, after the war had ended, the family returned. The couple now had two grown boys and a girl. The girl had been born handicapped and needed a wheelchair. The family began to think of how they could turn the house back into a home. The city had begun to encroach upon the house, and the family needed to reestablish the boundaries of the home). All of this had to be done with consideration that though there would be three independent homes they would be linked by their close relationship to each other and to the girl.

The eldest son, an architect, proposed a renovation. The house would become three houses on top of each other. The lowest level, where it all began, would become a common space for all family members to gather. The middle son would take the second level, the couple and the daughter would inhabit the third level, which longed for the sea and horizon, and the eldest son would inhabit a new fourth house, the highest of them all. The highest house would also be

**Your house shall be not an anchor
but a mast.**

**It shall not be a glistening film
that covers a wound, but an eyelid
that guards the eye.**

Gibran Khalil Gibran
The Prophet, Chapter IX

Fig. 10.0. (Opposite) Halftone image of Beit Noufaily. Photograph by Danny Noufaily.



the most important house as it perched above the others, free of the mountain, able to reach the horizon and the sea. Where the “original” pre-civil war levels of the house were built out of the mountain, one on top of each other, the new addition is different. Simultaneously familiar and foreign, the new house hovers over the existing levels as if suspended from the sky. Its skin, while at first glance similar to the traditional terra-cotta roofs that cap many of the houses in the region, is manufactured out of recycled corrugated shipping container metal exposed to the elements to achieve a natural redish patena. Covers three facades of the house. In contra. Sheltering the eldest son from prying eyes, the skin—fabricated from st, the eastern facade dissolves into a series of glass planes that present an unobstructed explicit view towards the western horizon.

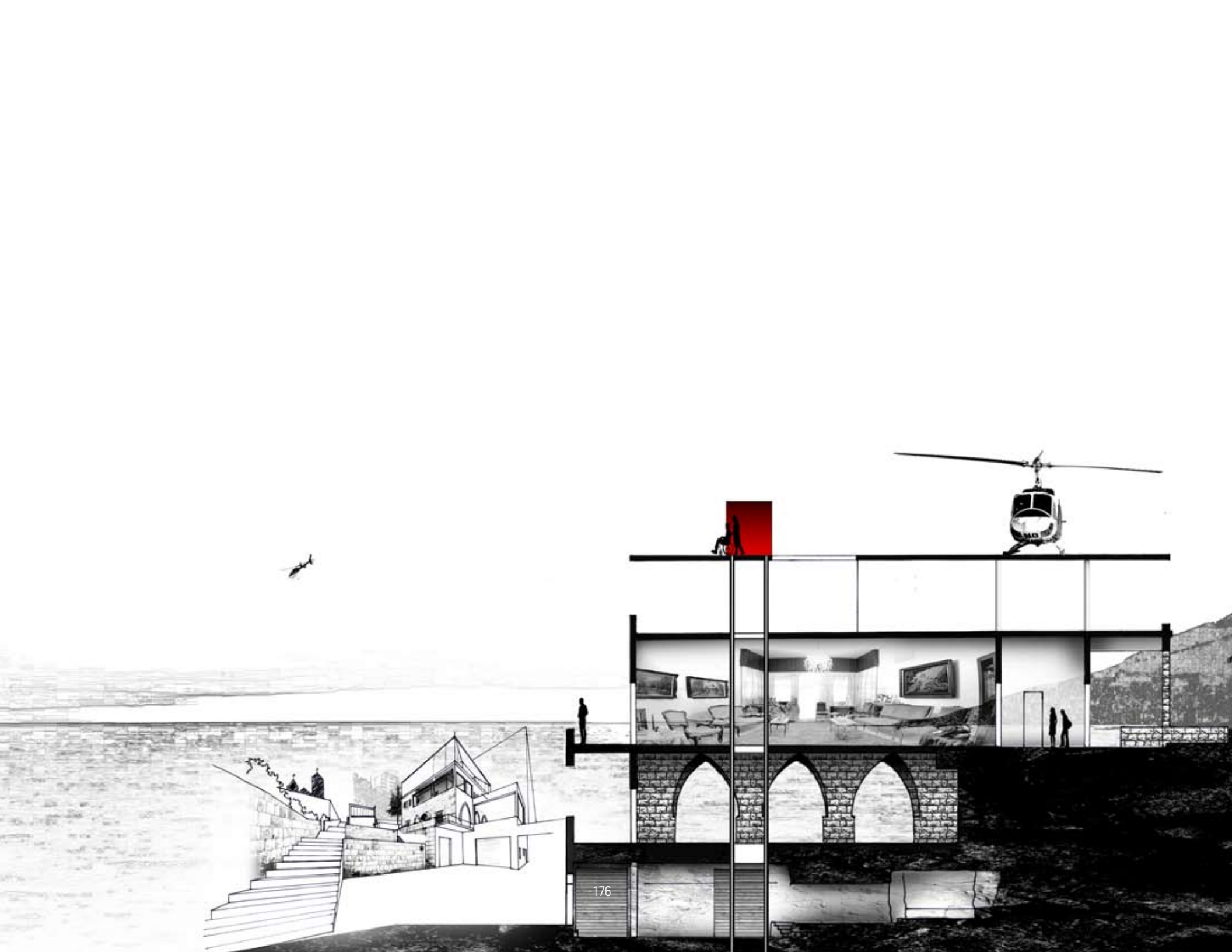
Within the four houses in one, the daughter has her own ambulatory room, or rather a station. A lift of 3.5 x 2.5 meters moves freely among the four houses, linking the different layers of the house together, free of the mountain. The lift changes the architecture of the house wherever she is. Her presence (or absence) is most felt on the parents’ level where certain rooms become inaccessible when she is not there. On the levels of the two brothers’ homes, her lift opens directly into the family rooms, placing her arrival at the centre of the family’s communal space. This lift gives the daughter her independence and mobility while keeping her connected to every member of the family, and every member of the family is connected to her.

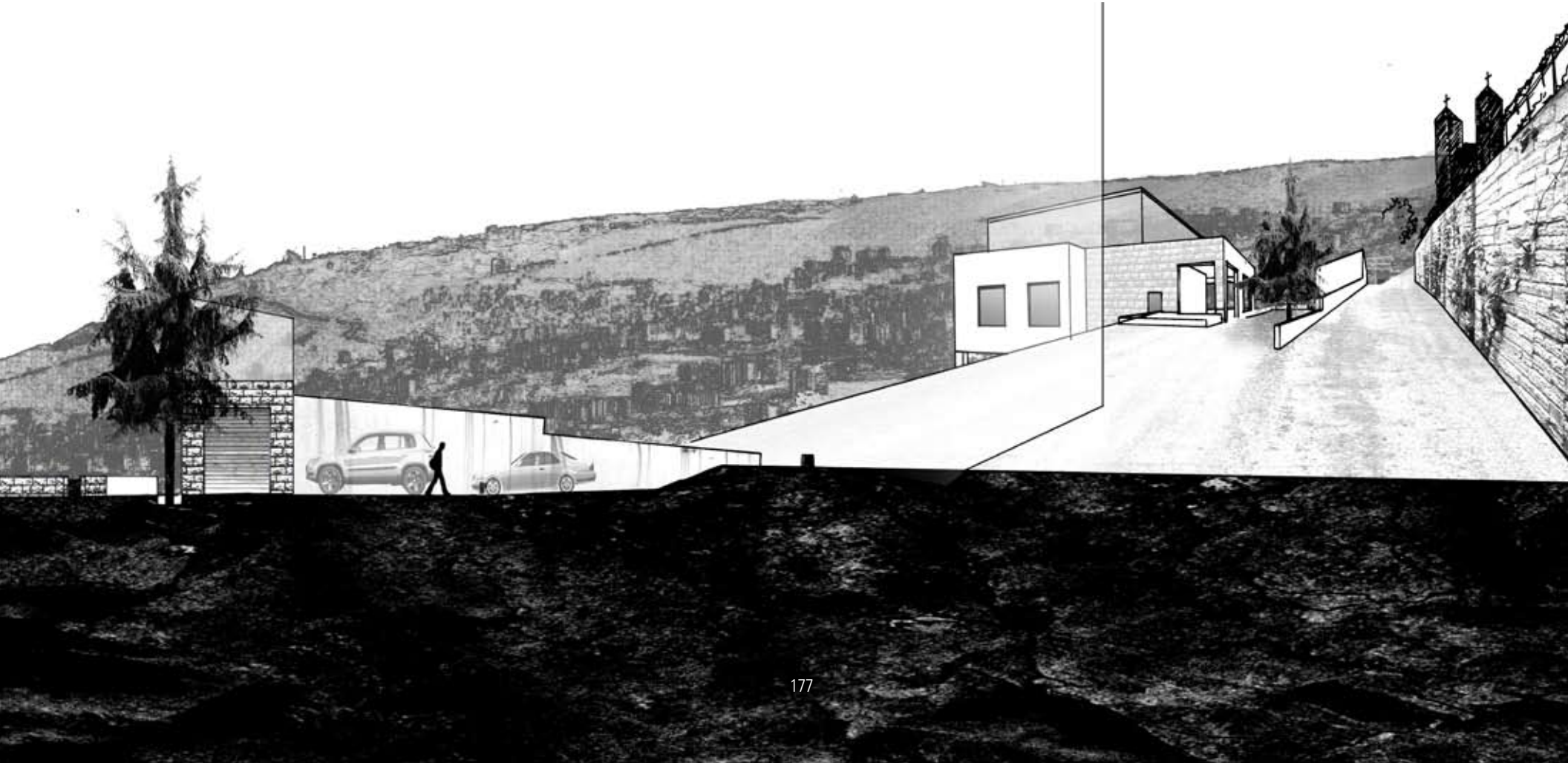
Reconciliation through Renovation

On the existing levels, the renovations will be nothing more than a simple and light “editing” of each independent house to better reflect its original intentions as one of the Lebanese House Types outlined in the previous chapter. Therefore, the first level will be tidied up and divided into spaces for storage, a garage, and a pantry. It will also be useful if the family ever has to use the ground level as a bomb shelter again. On the second level, the home of the second brother, the walls that subdivide the original rooms—currently creating two apartments—will be removed to expose the intended unobstructed access of the Gallery House Type living space. In

Fig. 10.1. (Opposite) Roof top evacuation of the American Embassy during the fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975. Photograph taken by Hubert van Es.

Fig. 10.2. (Next Page) Experiential Section of the renovation of Beit Noufaily by author.







addition, the exterior covered porch on the south side will be enclosed to make a private master bedroom with its own controlled-access garden. The Central Hall House—the third level of the house—will be renovated as a barrier-free home. The central hall access in the scheme will not be touched, but the surrounding private spaces that flank the central hall will be renovated to create new north and south master bedrooms that will accommodate the private needs of both the parents and the girl.

The Addition Design

In designing the new house level inspiration was drawn from the evolution process of the Lebanese house types studies in the previous chapter. Particularly the hypothesis put forward by Ragette that the *Liwan House*—from which the *Central Hall House* would evolve from—evolved from the Bedouin tents of the Middle East. Just as the *Bedouin* tent controlled the space directly in front of its opening, the New Level implicitly commands the panoramic view of *Beirut* and the horizon.

Perched above the existing levels below, the new addition hovers above the existing house seeming never to connect with the from the existing house. Its material finish of corrugated Cor-Ten Steel hints at the terra-cotta shingles which cap the many “completed” Central Hall House types that scatter the mountainside.

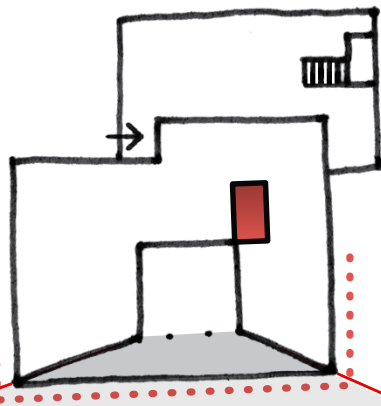
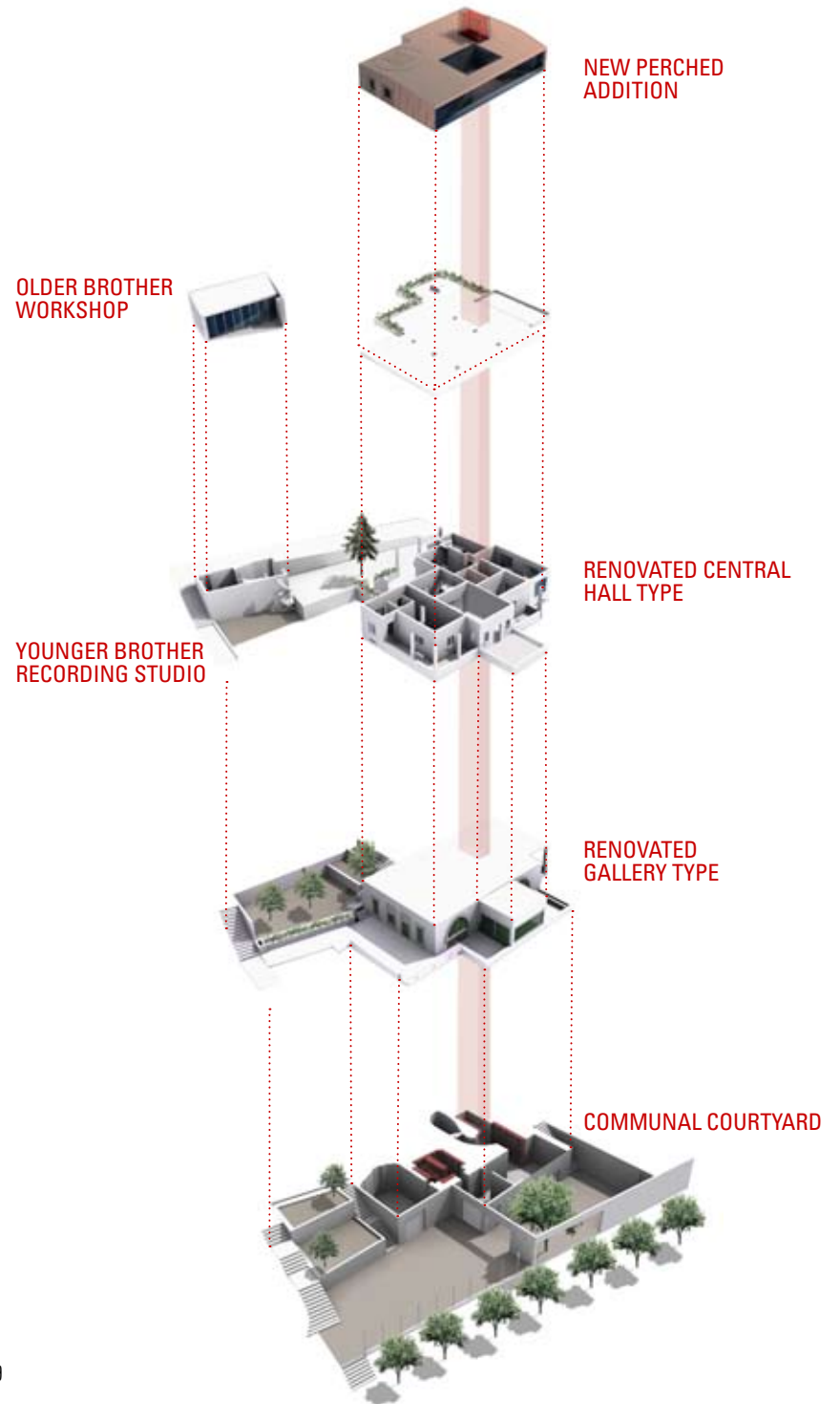
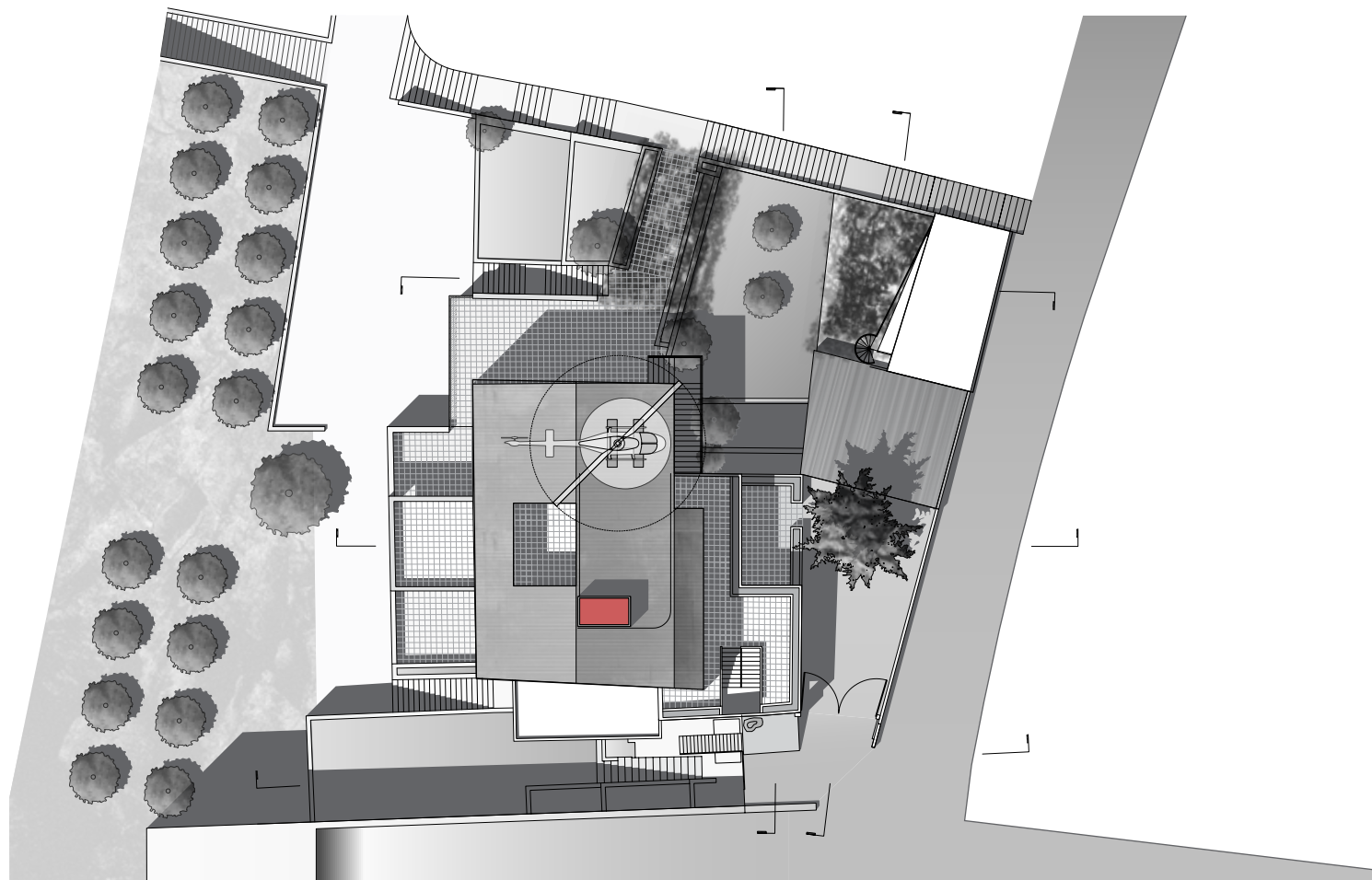


Fig.10.3. Design parti of the new addition floor compared to Ragette's Bedouin tent. Where the Bedouin tent commands the space in front, the "Perched House" commands the view of the horizon.

Fig.10.4. (Opposite) Exploded axonometric of the renovation of Beit Noufaily.

The renovation not only makes the house more livable for the returning family, but also contributes to the ancestral tradition of continual growth, as well as reinforcing the security of “autonomy” discussed in the previous chapter. The act of renovation effectively redefines and enforces the boundary of the home(s), establishing the boundary between the inside and the outside, the private and public. Each member of the family is firmly linked together in the larger shared home, connected vertically in that the girl’s elevator shares each family member’s home. This greater home is in turn anchored in the community of *Mtayleb*, which is linked to the family’s history and ultimately connected to the national government of Lebanon.





BEIT NOUFAILY . SITE PLAN
1:200

Fig.10.5. Renovated site plan of Beit Noufaily.

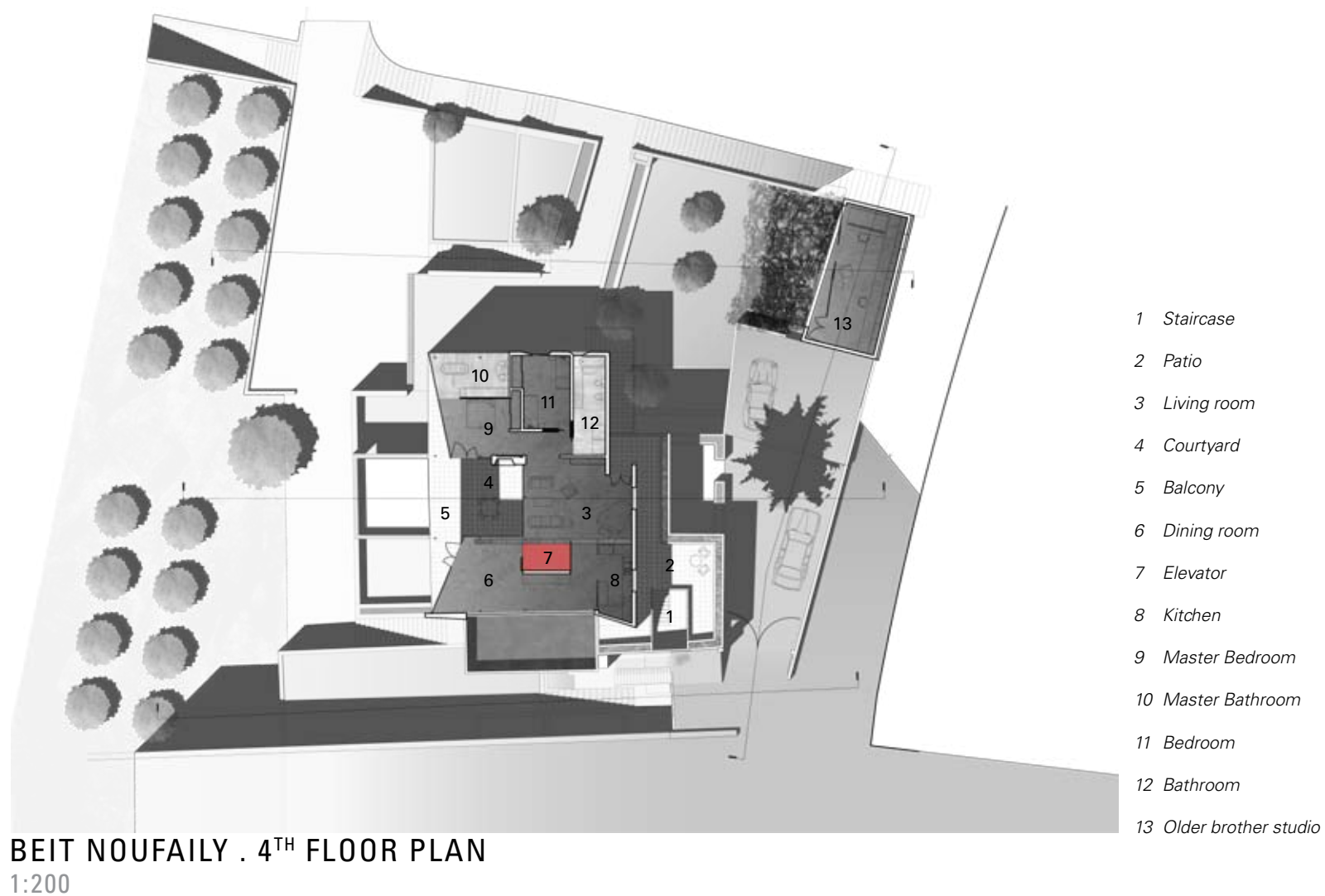
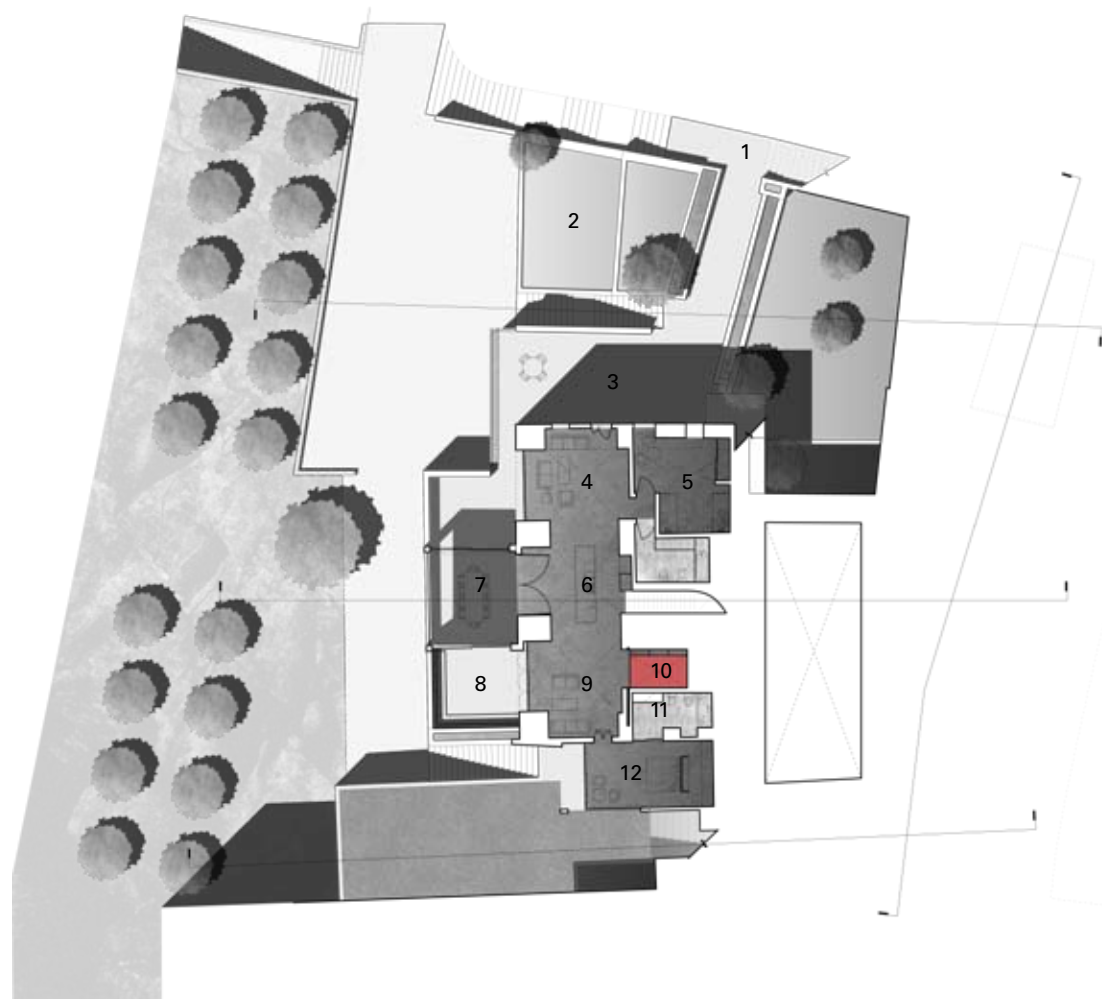


Fig.10.6. Renovated new 4th floor plan of Beit Noufaily.



BEIT NOUFAILY . 3RD FLOOR PLAN
 1:200

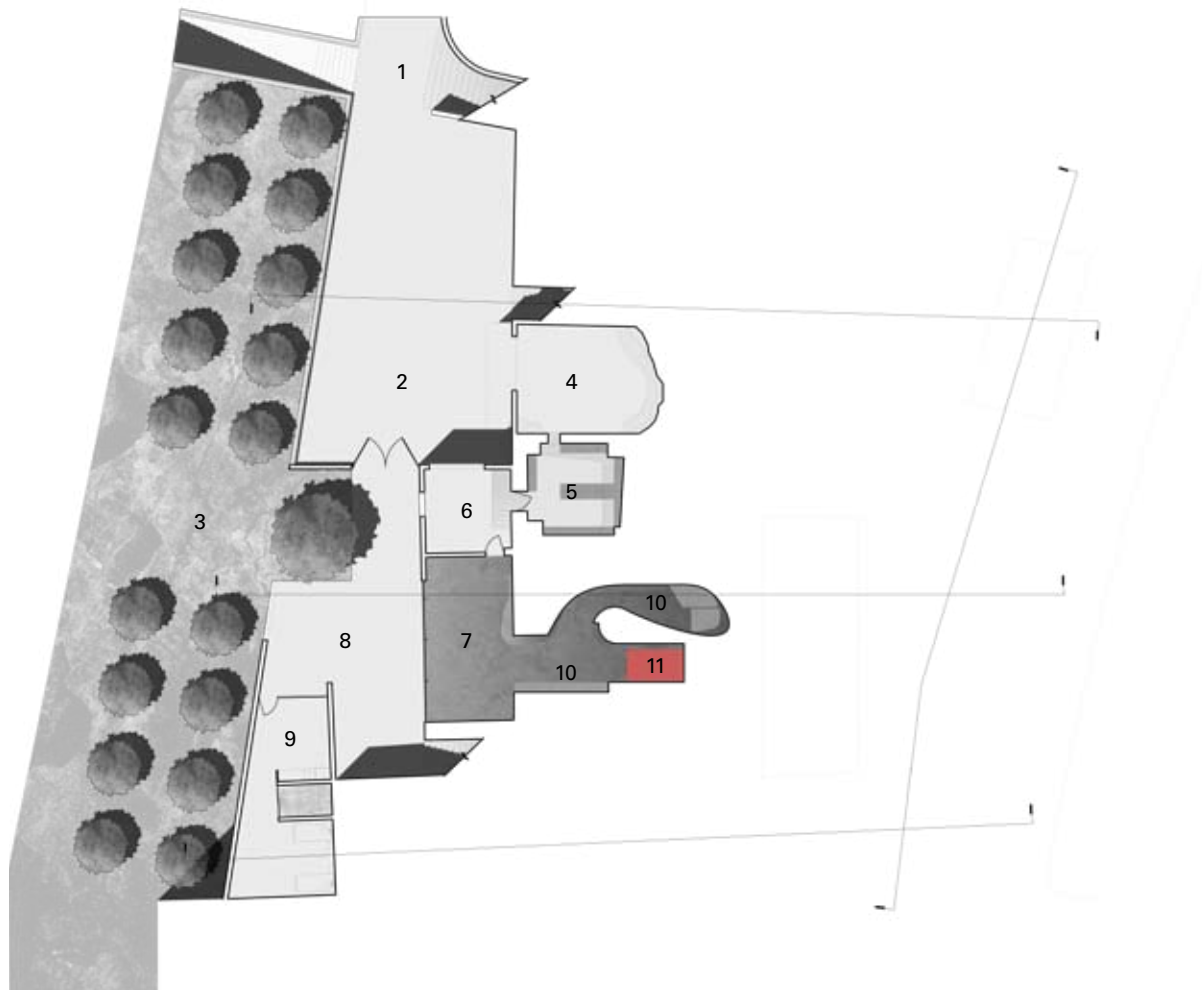
Fig.10.7. Renovated 3rd Floor Plan of Beit Noufaily.



- 1 Public stair (east-west connection)
- 2 Stepped orchard
- 3 Patio
- 4 Formal Living-room
- 5 Bedroom
- 6 Kitchen
- 7 Dining room
- 8 Balcony
- 9 Informal Living-room
- 10 Elevator
- 11 Master Bathroom
- 12 Master Bedroom

BEIT NOUFAILY . 2ND FLOOR PLAN
1:200

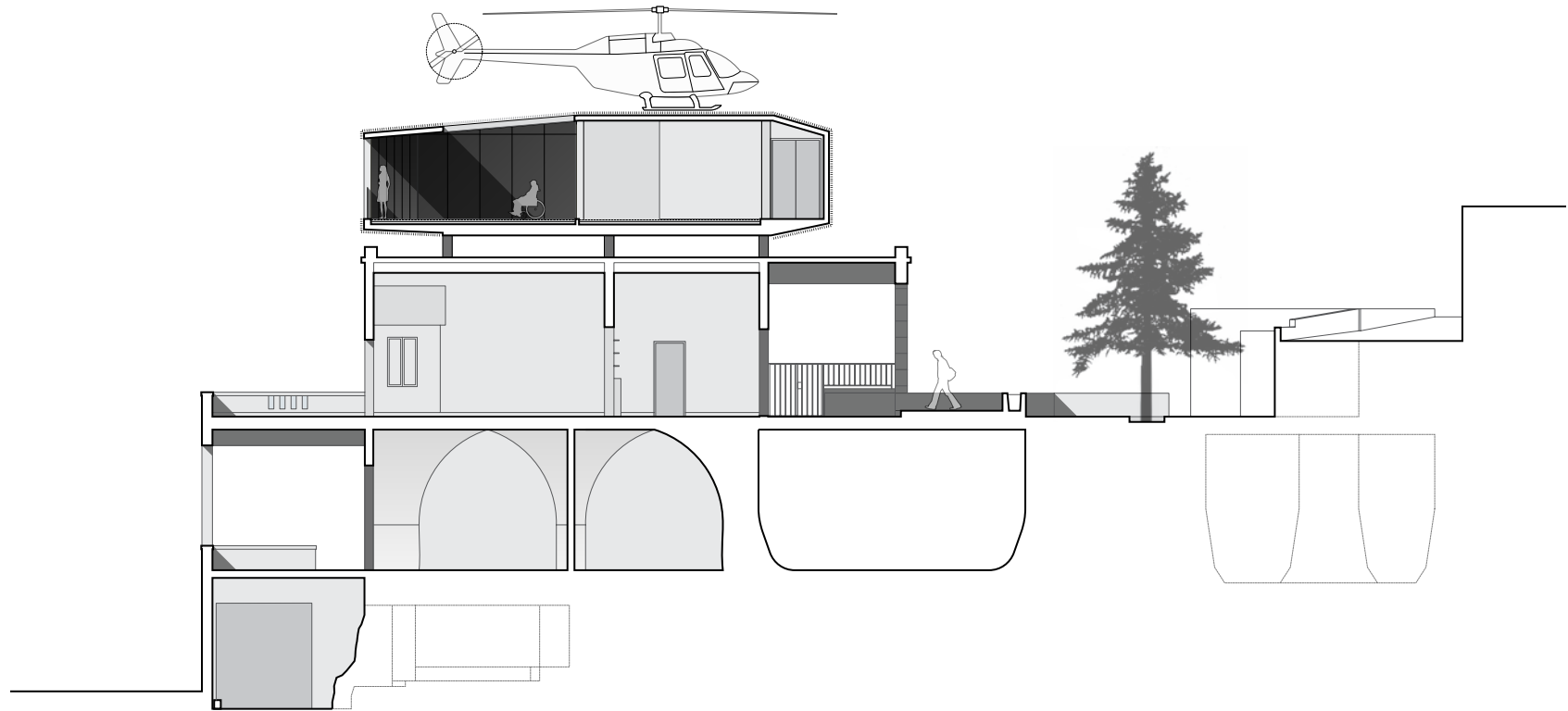
Fig.10.8. Renovated 2nd Floor Plan of Beit Noufaily.



- 1 Access north to Highway (Antilyas- Bikfaya)
- 2 Driveway
- 3 Orchard
- 4 Garage
- 5 Wine Cellar
- 6 Garage / tool storage
- 7 Communal gathering space
- 8 Enclosed courtyard
- 9 Visitor residence
- 10 Pantry
- 11 Elevator
- 12 Staircase

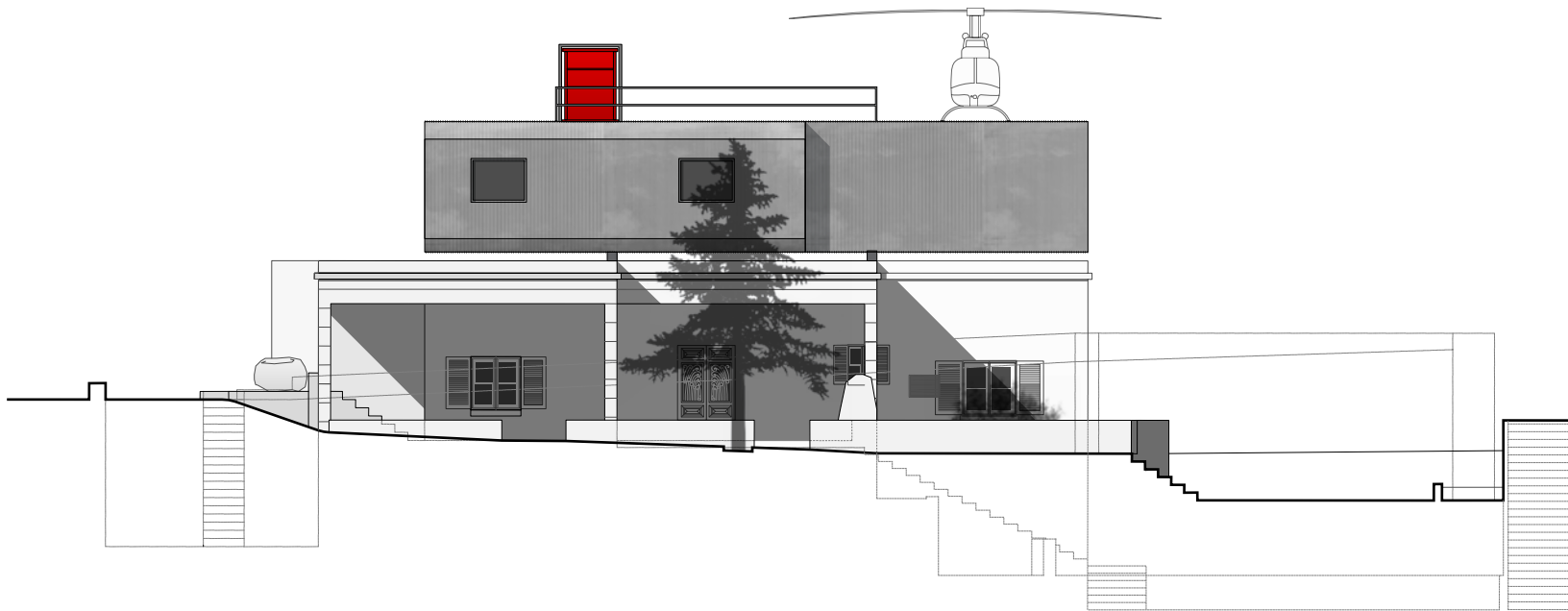
BEIT NOUFAILY . 1ST FLOOR PLAN
1:200

Fig.10.9. Renovated 1st Floor Plan of Beit Noufaily.



BEIT NOUFAILY . EAST / WEST SECTION
1:200

Fig.10.10. Renovated East / West Section of Beit Noufaily.



BEIT NOUFAILY . EAST ELEVATION
1:100

Fig.10.11. Renovated East Elevation of Beit Noufaily.



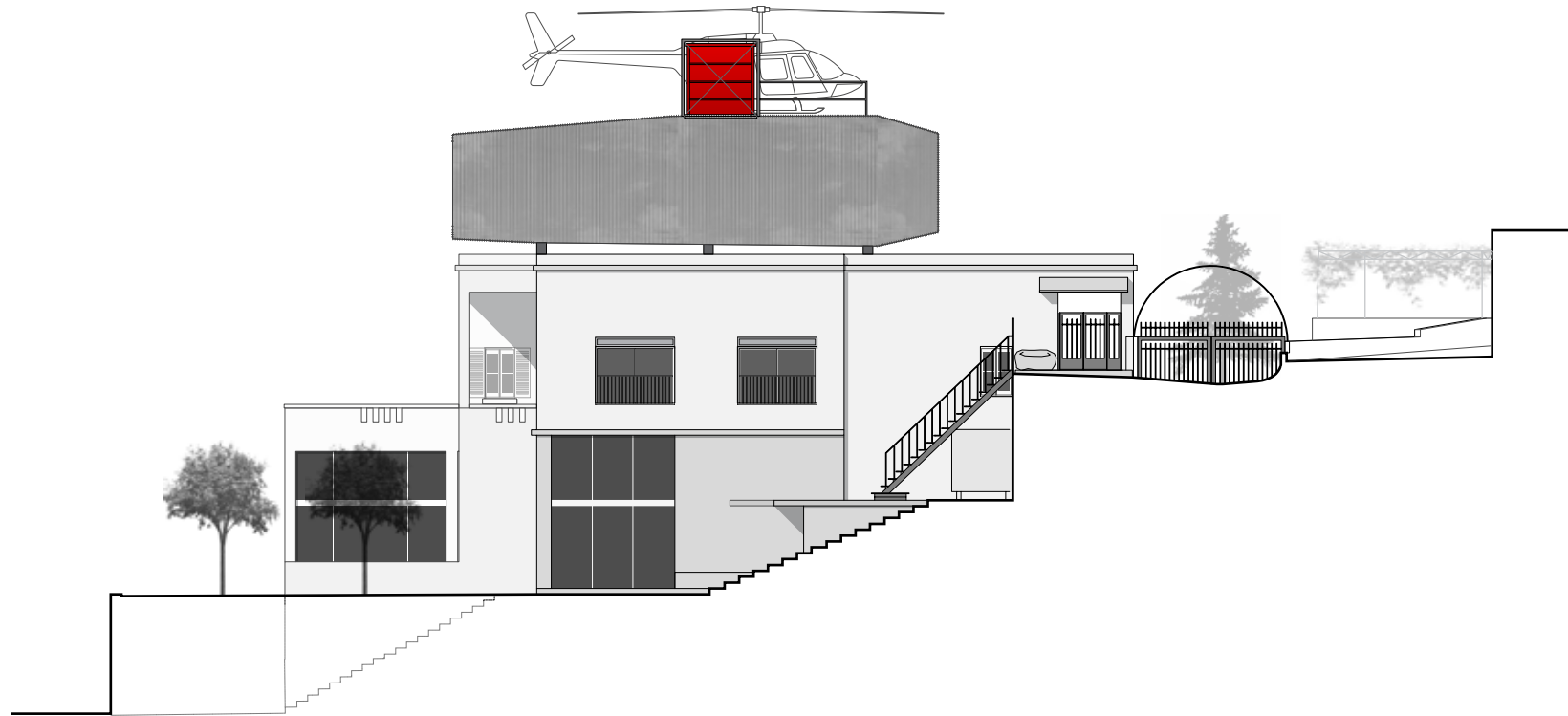
BEIT NOUFAILY . WEST ELEVATION
1:100

Fig.10.12. Renovated West Elevation of Beit Noufaily.



BEIT NOUFAILY . NORTH ELEVATION
1:100

Fig.10.13. Renovated North Elevation of Beit Noufaily.



BEIT NOUFAILY . SOUTH ELEVATION
1:100

Fig.10.14. Renovated South Elevation of Beit Noufaily.



BEIT NOUFAILY . VIGNETTE FROM NORTH STAIR

Fig.10.15. Vignette from north stair of Beit Noufaily.



BEIT NOUFAILY . VIGNETTE FROM NORTH-WEST

Fig. 10.16. Vignette from base of north stair of Beit Noufaily.



BEIT NOUFAILY . VIGNETTE OF SOUTH ENTRANCE

Fig.10.17. Vignette from north stair of Beit Noufaily.



BEIT NOUFAILY . INTERIOR PANORAMIC TOWARDS BEIRUT

Fig.10.18. Vignette from the interior of the addition looking south towards Beirut and the horizon..

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