

La Corniche



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SS 2005

INTRODUCTION

La Corniche, the beach side of Casablanca, with a gripping history.

Introduction



Beach zones and beach clubs of Casablanca

The history of La Corniche

“Silverly swimming pools sparkled like dead fish along the coast. Their names would have tanned a colony of albinos: Acapulco, Tahiti-Plage, Miami, Sun-Beach, and Kon-Tiki.

A strip of light illuminated Ain Diab like stage footlights. The public was the ocean, plunged into darkness. The first rows were creating an uproar, while, on stage, nightclubs, pools and bourgeois villa’s acted out their own scripts.”

Tito Topin, 1983.

Evolution of the beaches

Casablanca’s frenzied inland growth by no means constituted the sole focus of urban development, for the city’s sea-front also underwent alterations, based on the need for port facilities and a demand for recreational praised Casablanca’s fine beach of Sidi Belyout and its bathing amenities. Situated near the city walls, port and cemetery, this beach had become a favourite swimming spot.

Once the Europeans arrived, other beaches around the city started to be used too. Roches Noires beach (one of the earliest), with an alternating pattern of rocks and fine sand, lies east of Sidi Belyout. A lighthouse and casino were built on this spot, swiftly accompanied by recreational facilities where people could eat and socialize. Further east, the beach of Ain Sebaa borders an industrial, working-class district. To a certain degree, the Roches Noires and Ain Sebaa beaches suffered from their proximity to the city’s industrial zone, though they would continue to be used by the local population.

But more and more there was a need for a safe beach equipped with leisure facilities and within easy reach of the city, cause the Roches Noires beach was too dangerous, owing to the low outcrop of rocks from which the beach’s name derives, and Ain Sebaa had become swamped by industry.

The El Hank headland was also inhospitable, and so it was at Ain Diab , a site to the west of Casablanca, that a typically French beach resort was set up for the privileged classes.

Introduction

The beach clubs

Sports were central to Casablanqan life from 1940 onward. The Europeans living in Casablanca, welcomed modern life-style, in which sports, sun, beach and leisure were important elements. This turned out to be the genesis of a transformation of the coastline of Casablanca. France, for example, only discovered this new way of living 15 years later.

Beach and sun culture became ever more important. At the beginning the French could only build light constructions on Anfa Beach, because this was a protected maritime zone. However, as there was no proper control on the growing number of terraces and small beach huts, they soon transformed to become big beach clubs. Inside the clubs one experienced a small artificial world, far away from the Moroccan hustle-bustle. At the same time bars and dance halls mushroomed along the roadside. In a few years the shoreline was peppered with exotic commercial signs.



The sites of the beaches and beach clubs.
“Casablanca, Colonial Myths and Architectural Ventures”, Cohen and Eleb.



Plage de Sidi Belyout, 1913.
 “Casablanca Colonial Myths and Architectural Ventures”, Cohen and Eleb.



Miami, 1955. The pools are on the far right of the photo, hollowed into the rocks. The 800-meter-long dike opens directly onto the sea, with a viewing platform lashed by waves.

"Casablanca, Colonial Myths and Architectural Ventures", Cohen and Eleb.



Corniche, Ain Diab, the late 1950's

"Casablanca, Colonial Myths and Architectural Ventures", Cohen and Eleb.

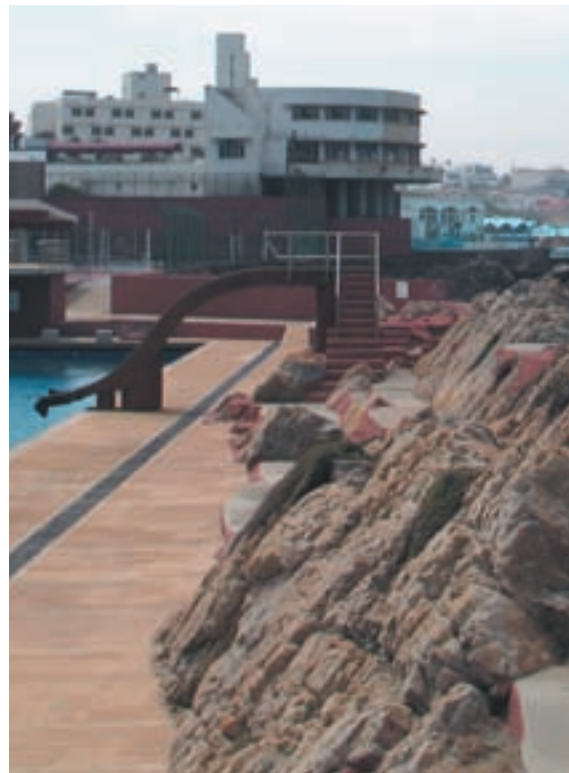
Introduction

The physical conditions

To a certain extent the French were forced to build an artificial border due to the rough physical conditions at the coast: the sea is rough, with big waves and even in summer the sea temperature doesn't go above 18°C. And the beach itself is not a pleasant white-sand beach, instead there are rocks and black sand. In order to fulfill their tropical dream, they imported white sand, built huts with palm tree leaves, deep blue swimming pools and named the beach clubs with tropical names, as Tahiti, Miami, Acapulco, Sun Beach, Tropicana and Kon-Tiki.



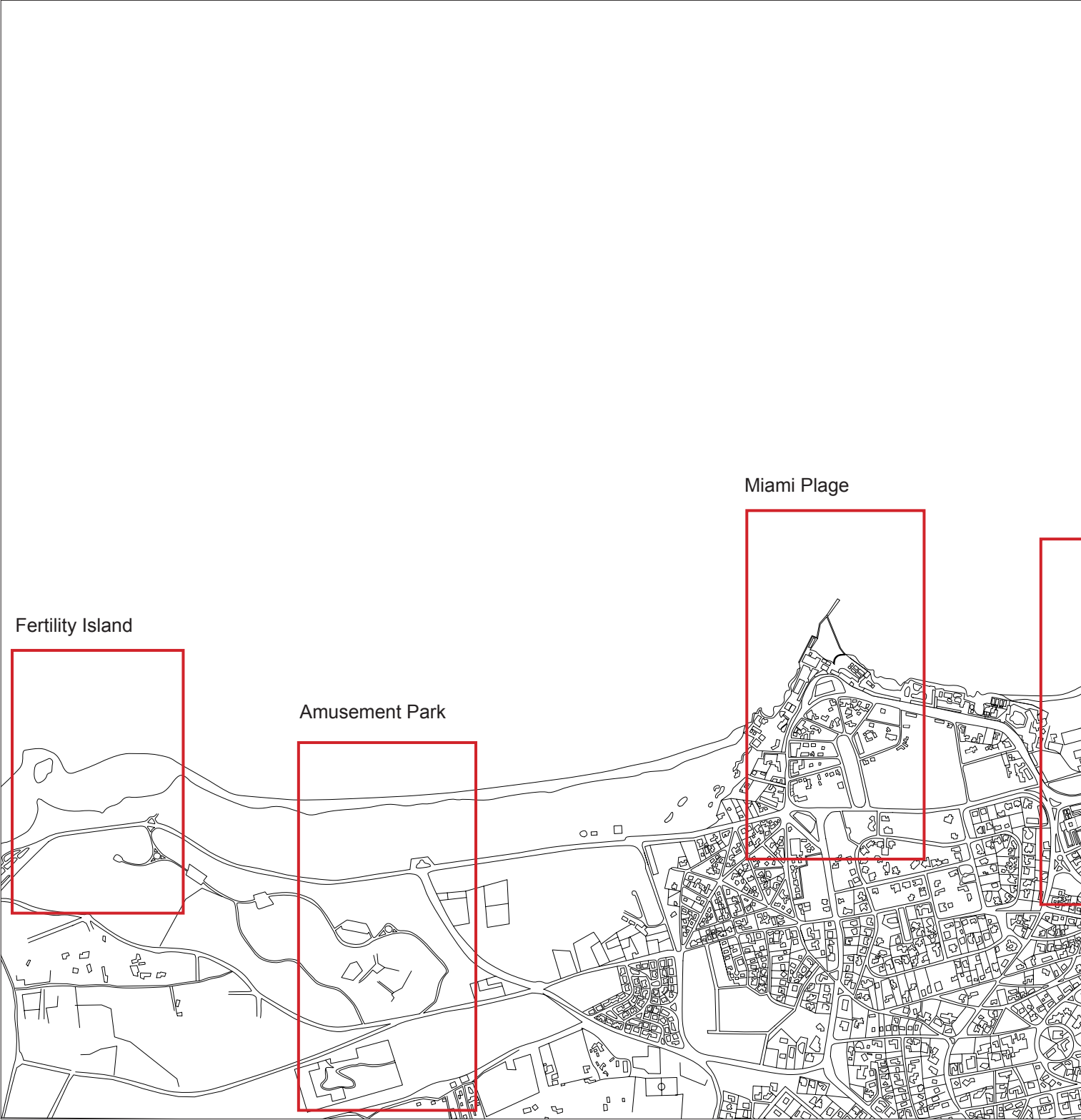
The rough physical conditions led to the building of an artificial border.

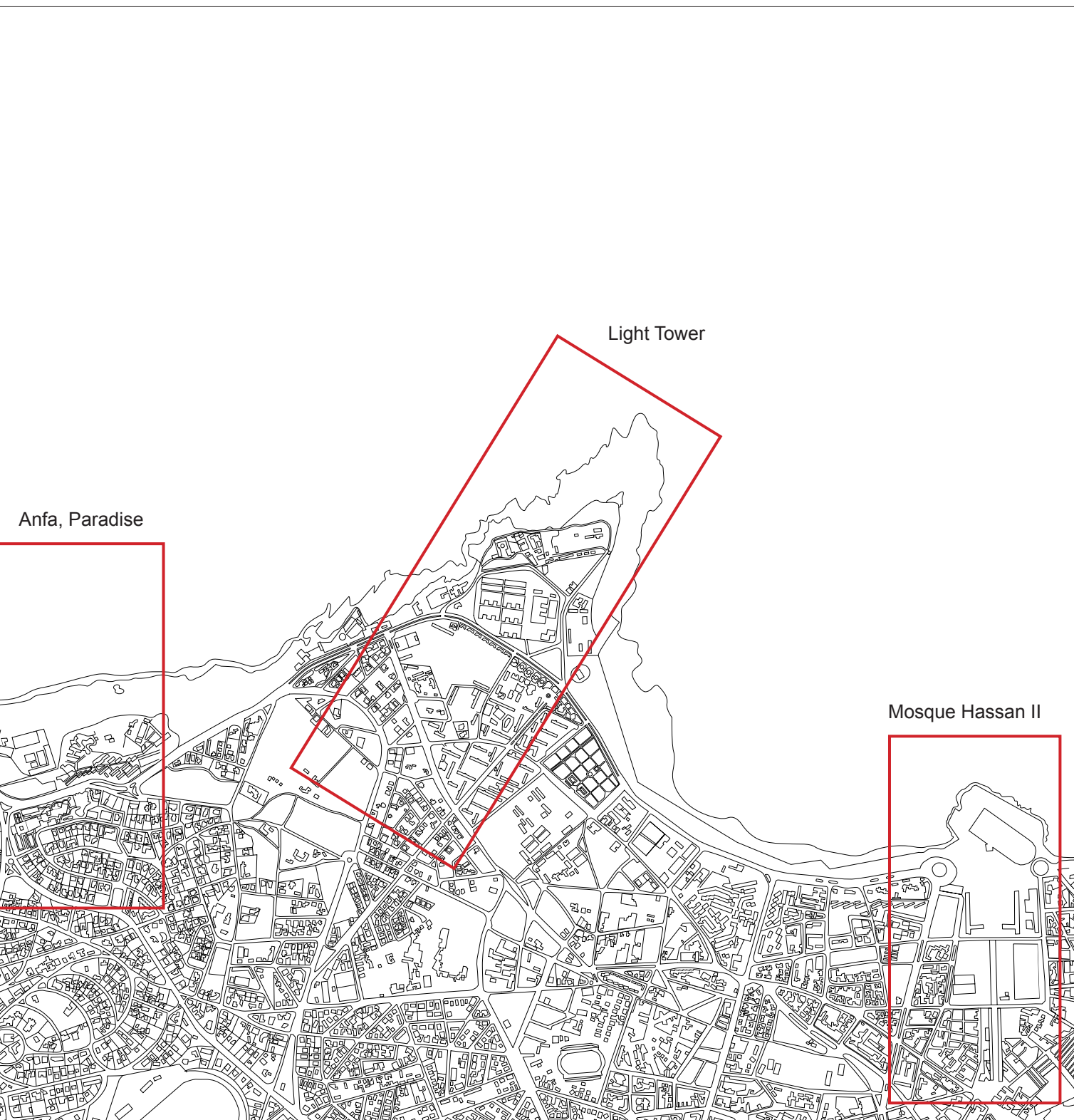


Sun Beach in 1950 and now. Left: Sun Beach in 1950's, in "Charles Penz and Bernard Rouget", Photoitinéraires de Casablanca, 1950.

La Corniche

Detailed study and mapping of the artificial coast of La Corniche



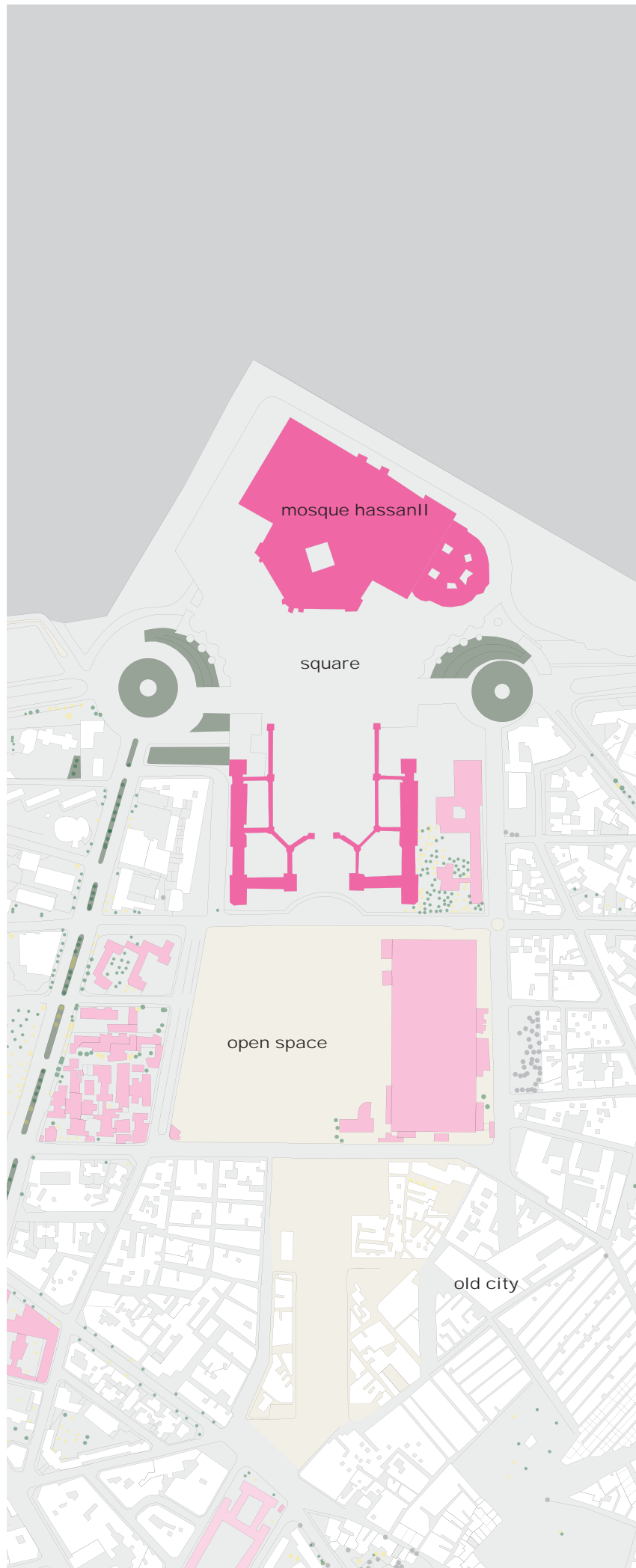


Anfa, Paradise

Light Tower

Mosque Hassan II

La Corniche



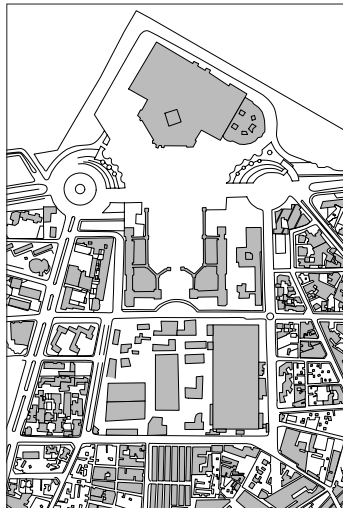
Mosque Hassan II

A place in transformation, with an attraction for ambitious projects

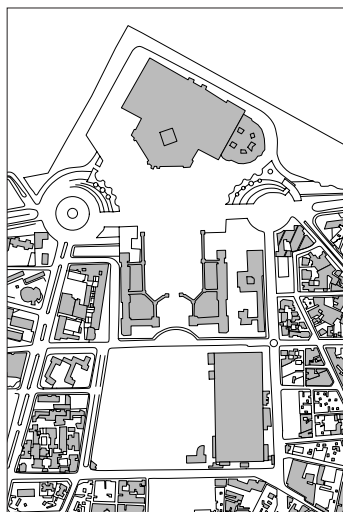
Mosque Hassan II



This spot seems to always attract the development of highly ambitious projects. It started on July 14, 1934 with the opening the of the largest bathing facility of the world.



On August 30, 1993 the Mosque Hassan II was opened in commemoration of the 60th birthday of the former Moroccan king.



The creation of the vast complex of the Mosque Hassan II was followed in 1999 by an extensive program of urban development, in which whole areas in the immediate vicinity were demolished and a wide access road was constructed.

A place for ambitious projects

Piscine Orthlieb

The municipal swimming pool, Orthlieb, was 300 metres long. The seawater of the pool was renewed daily by the rising tide, and a pump was installed to cope with cases of insufficient swell.

The first summer was a huge success, with four thousand daily visitors instead of the anticipated one thousand. The public pool was mainly used by a low-income population that did not know how to swim, which was true not only of most Muslims and Jewish Moroccans, but also of the poorer European classes. Although the pool was very large, it went no deeper than 1.5 metres. The locker rooms were shared by men and women.

The social mix found within the pool complex, which worked very well at the beginning, would eventually disappear, due to social and ethnic divides, followed by outright racism. The Europeans consequently stopped using the facility.



Piscine municipale Orthlieb
“Casablanca, Colonial Myths and Architectural Ventures”, Cohen and Eleb.

Mosque Hassan II



Mosque Hassan II

King Hassan II was assured that the mosque would be the North African equivalent of the Statue of Liberty. The pride of Morocco, it marries modern metallic titanium with traditional stonework.

Being the third largest mosque after Mecca and Medina, this building is perched on the precipice of a cliff, with part of it hanging over the sea. Inspired by the Koran, which says that "the throne of God was built on water".

Work began on the mosque in 1980, being built right over the sea on the site of a former Piscine Orthlieb. Financed largely by donations at an estimated cost of 8000 million DH, the astronomical cost is matched by designs of a gigantic scale.

The prayer hall can accommodate 250 000 worshippers with space for another 80 000 pilgrims on the esplanade. A laser beam, indicating the direction of Mecca, shines as far as 22 miles from atop one of the world's tallest minarets. Visible from everywhere in the city, they culminated in three gilded balls on its roof, which is the size of a football pitch.

A cultural centre, with a library, museum, and Muslim schools, will adjoin the main building.

Mosque Hassan II



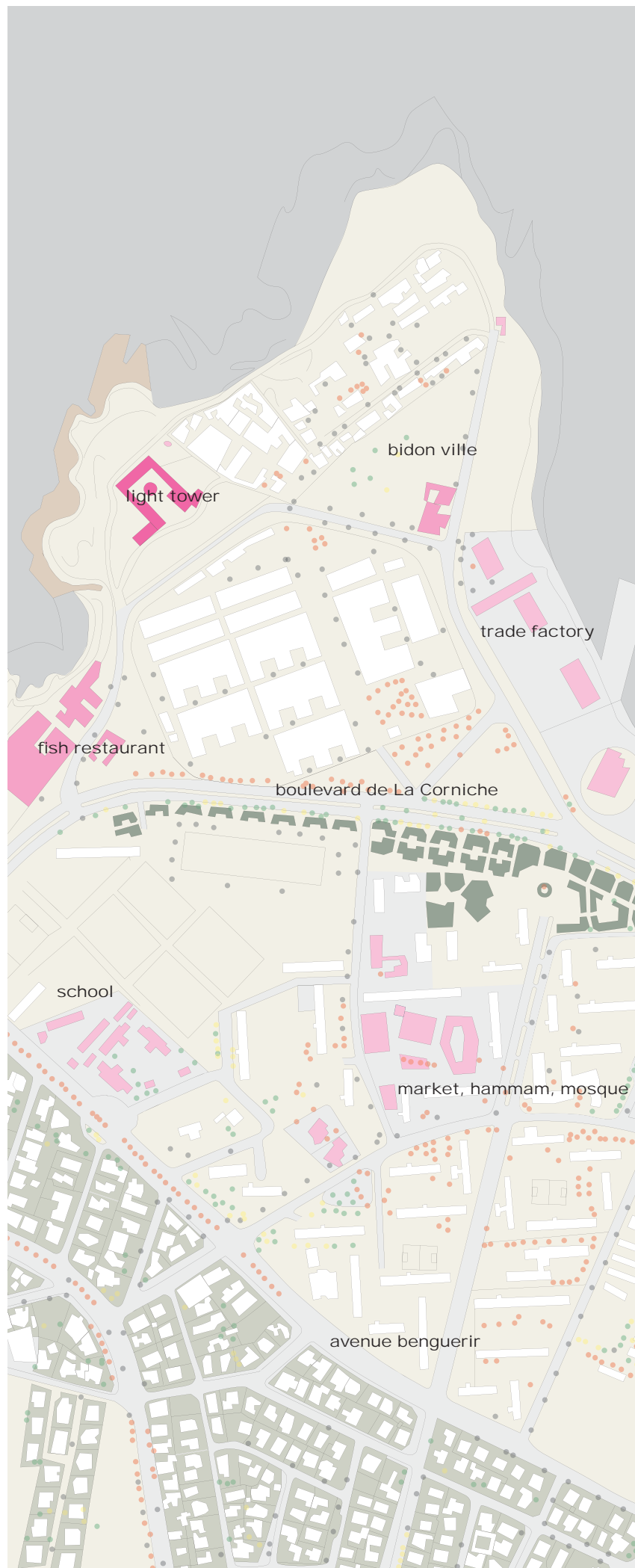
L'Avenue Royale

The creation of the vast complex of the Mosque Hassan II, was followed in 1999, by an extensive program of urban development in which whole areas in the immediate vicinity were demolished and a wide access road was constructed. The result is a big open, empty space that should be the first part of Avenue Royale, one of the most ambitious projects, Casablanca Vision 2012. But what is supposed to be a prestigious symbol, looks already like a warzone. (Appendix 2012)









Light Tower

Around the light tower of El Hank, there is a rich social diversity and social interactions

Light Tower



huge empty space between the sea and surrounding wall of the Bidonville



view to the Mosque HassanII

Light tower district isolated from leisure mood

Beautiful view from the outermost edge of the protruding coastline is rarely enjoyed by the Casablancans and the tourists as its location between the two popular spots in Casablanca coastline, the Mosque and Miami Plage districts, is inconveniently far to be reached from any one of them. Moreover its rough physical condition makes it difficult to be enjoyed as a normal beach resort.

The unpleasantness of the coastline due to the strong wind and high humidity, as the Muslims discovered a long time ago, resulted in the settlement of only the poor in this part of the district.

And although the bidonville faces the sea, they built thick wall around the their block as a protective measure against the unpleasant natural conditions.

Beyond the boulevard stand a group of white collective housings which were mostly constructed in the '50s for working class Jews at a low cost due to the unattractiveness/unpopularity of the location.

This explains why villas of the rich are situated some distance away from the coastline.

It is a great pity that in spite of the intensive planning process (Appendix 2012) initiated by the government, this part of the coastline has never actually been developed to fulfill its great potential as a pleasurable public place.

Nowadays one can find three social classes settling harmoniously next to each other in this district, as a result of the mutually advantageous complex interactions among them.



Light Tower



the surreal wall surrounding the Bidonville towards the sea as protections against the physical conditions of the place

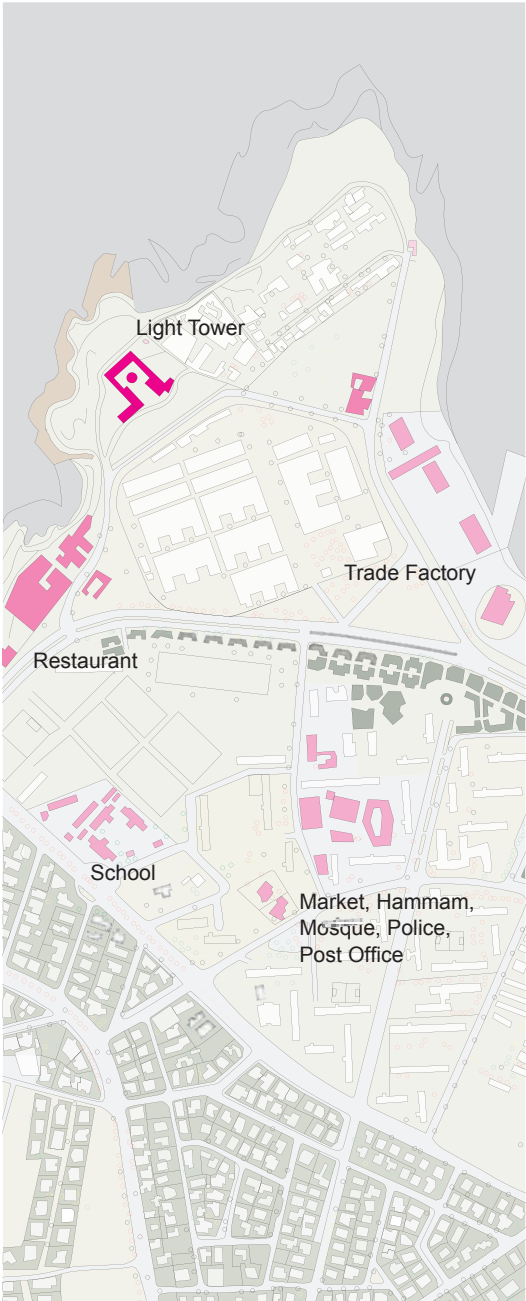


the Light tower, which is at this moment not the place to be...

Residences



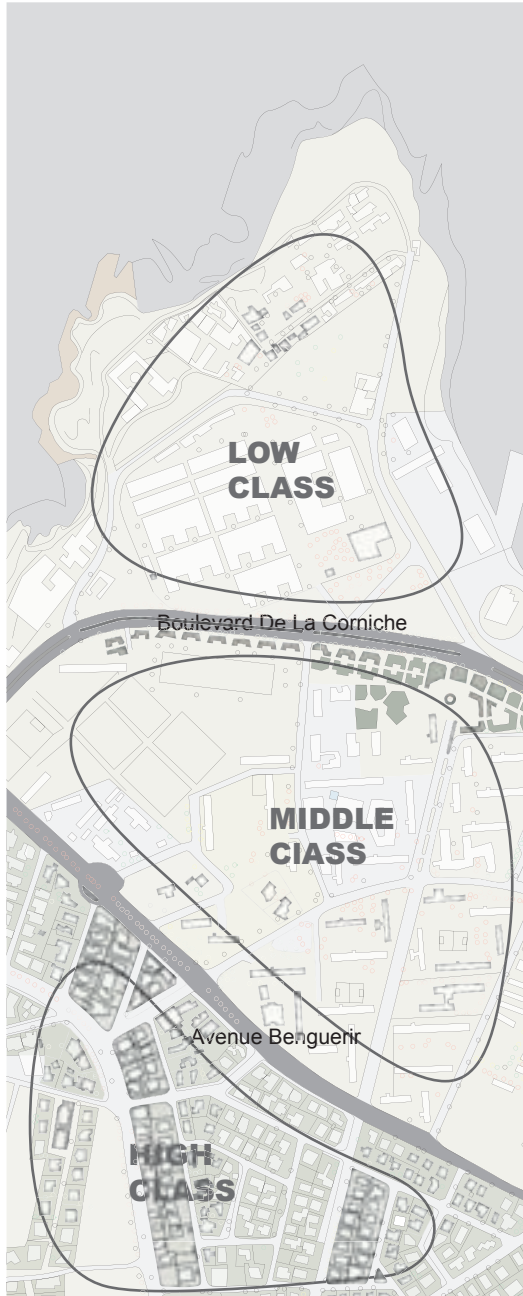
Facilities



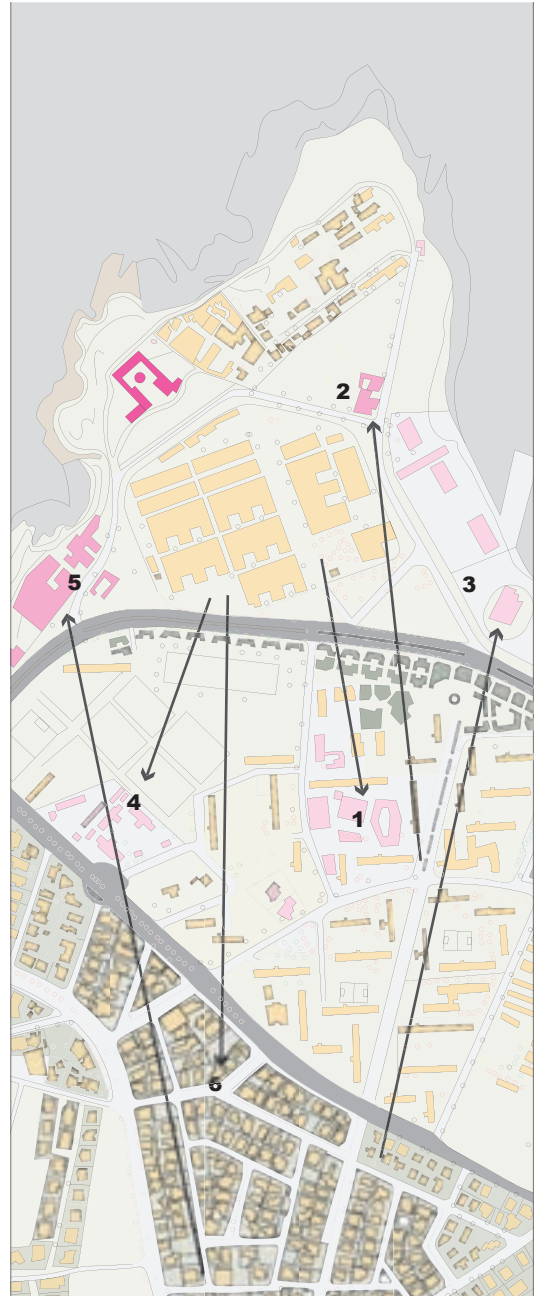
Social Diversity diagrams

Each of the four diagrams below depicts a specific characteristic of the Light Tower district which contributes to the complex mutual relationship among its socially diverse residents.

Boulevard



Interaction



Residences

Three different social classes live in different types of houses. Each has its own history





Bidonville for Soldiers

Built on the area closest to the sea, its buildings rigidly organised as it was initially intended for soldiers. It is surrounded by a thick wall, isolating it from the coast line.



Collective Housing for Jews

Owned by the government and is presently occupied by low- and middle-class Moroccans. These are mostly built in the '50s for the Jewish community to remove them out of the old medina and its surrounding neighbourhood. At the time of the project, the Jewish population was estimated to be 63,000.



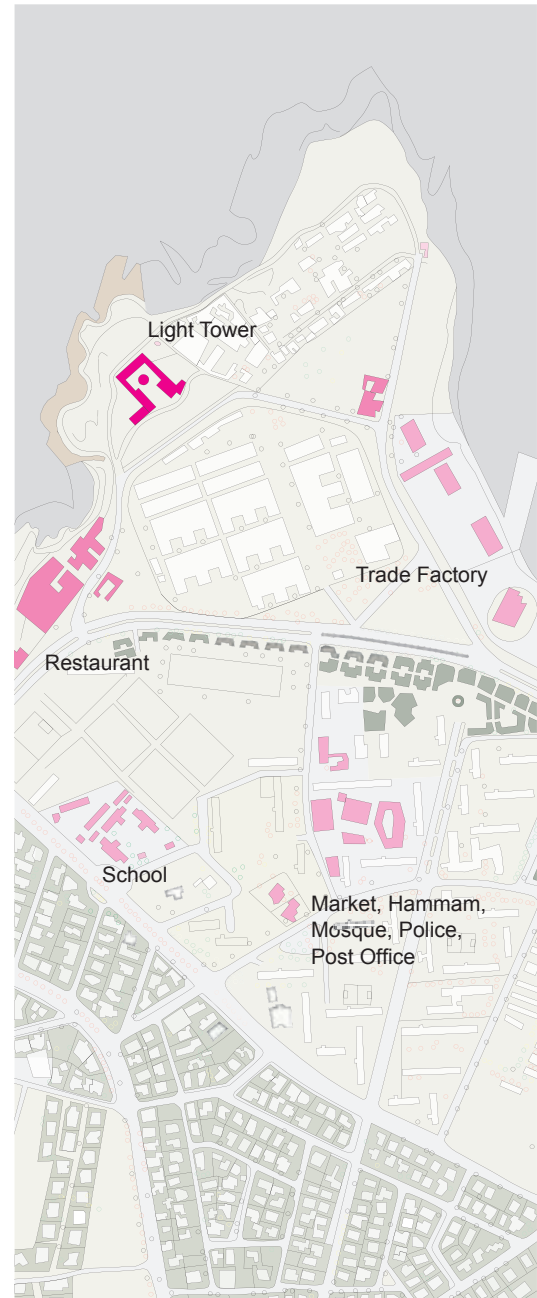
Villas for Bourgeois

Further away from the coastline lie the luxury and densely-built villas.

Light Tower

Facilities

They act as a catalyst for the interaction among the social classes





top expensive: restaurant
middle: school
bottom: square in front of the mosque

top: trading factory
middle: fruits market
bottom: hammam

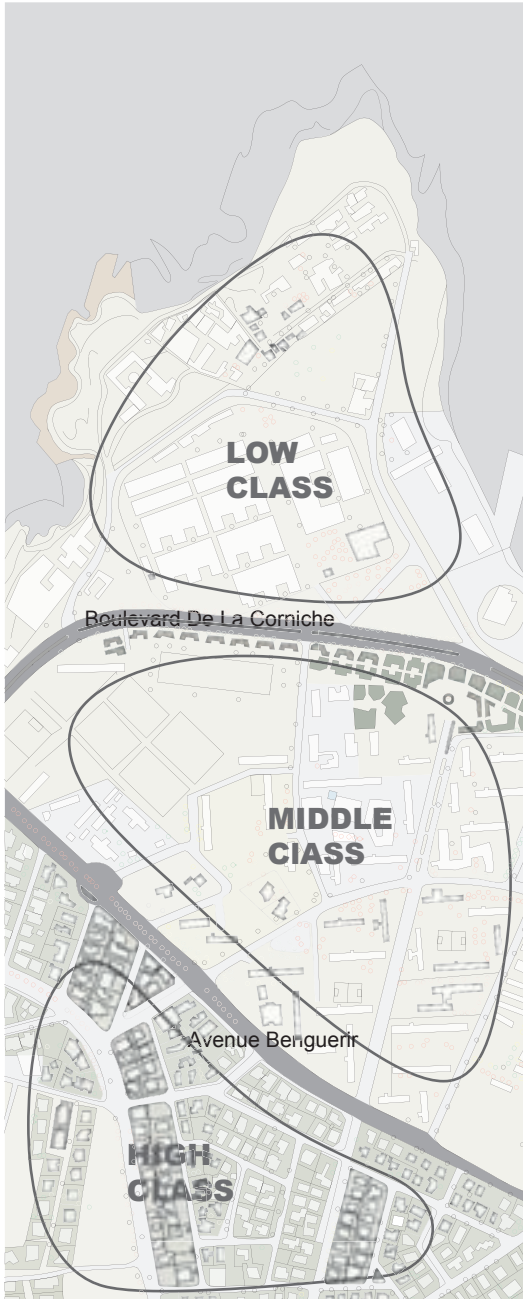
Light Tower



top: the Avenue Benguerir
bottom: Boulevard de La Corniche

Boulevard

A large street/boulevard physically separates the social classes, a visual frontier to a lower/higher class of society, and yet the people, such as children on their way home from school, cross it regularly seemingly without qualm.



**Interview about 2012 project
at the Bidonville in Light tower area**

We: Do you work or study?

Khalid: Yes, I'm a study auto mechanics.

Brother Khalid: I'm a cook.

We: Do you know that the government has some plans for this area?

Khalid: Yes, we know about it. But for already 30 years they are saying, that maybe we have to move.

We: Do you know exactly what they planed on El Hank?

Khalid: No.

(We show them the pictures of the new light tower, the aquarium and the opera.)

Brother: Nice, I like the light tower.

We: What do you think about the project?

Brother: I think it is good to have such a project, even that means that we have to move. I'm a cook, and for me this project means also new work possibilities. The project will attract a lot of tourists. But on the other hand we like to life here, close to the sea and the beach...I live here already since I'm born.

We: Do you know already where you will live, if you have to move.

Khalid: No, but probably far away from the sea...

06/05/2005



Khalid Iddan/ Student

B. 3N37 El Hank Casablanca Morocco

Brother/ Cook

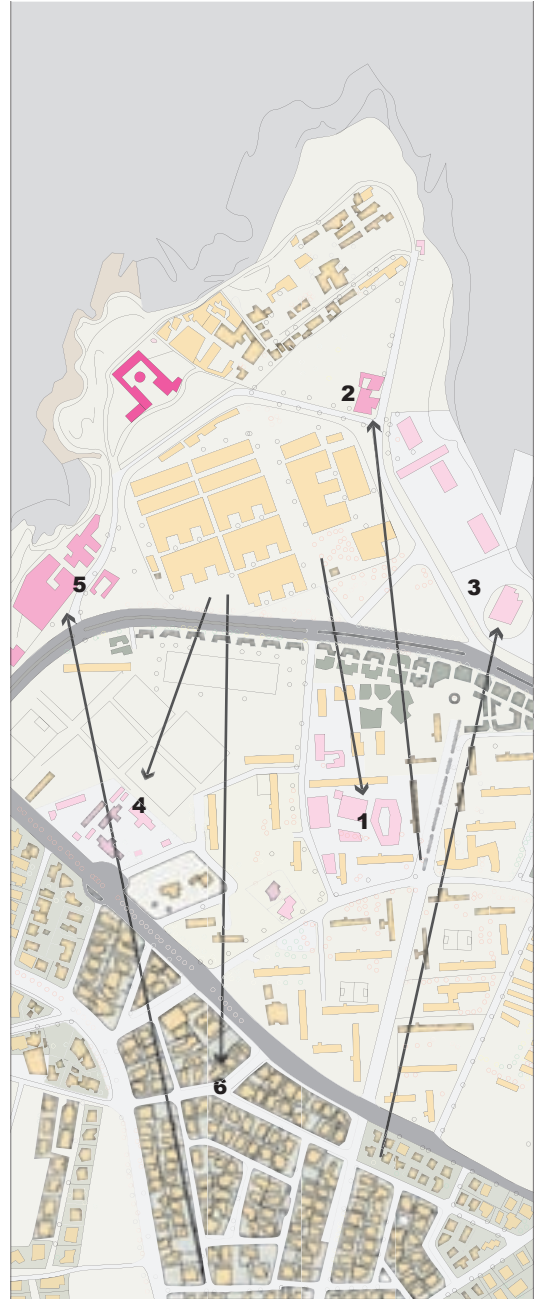
Father/ Electrician

(at the moment of the interview he had broken his leg, he slipped out in the hammam.)

Mother/ Housewife

Interaction

Relationship between the people of different social classes,
resulting in their dependency on each other



Interactive activity examples:

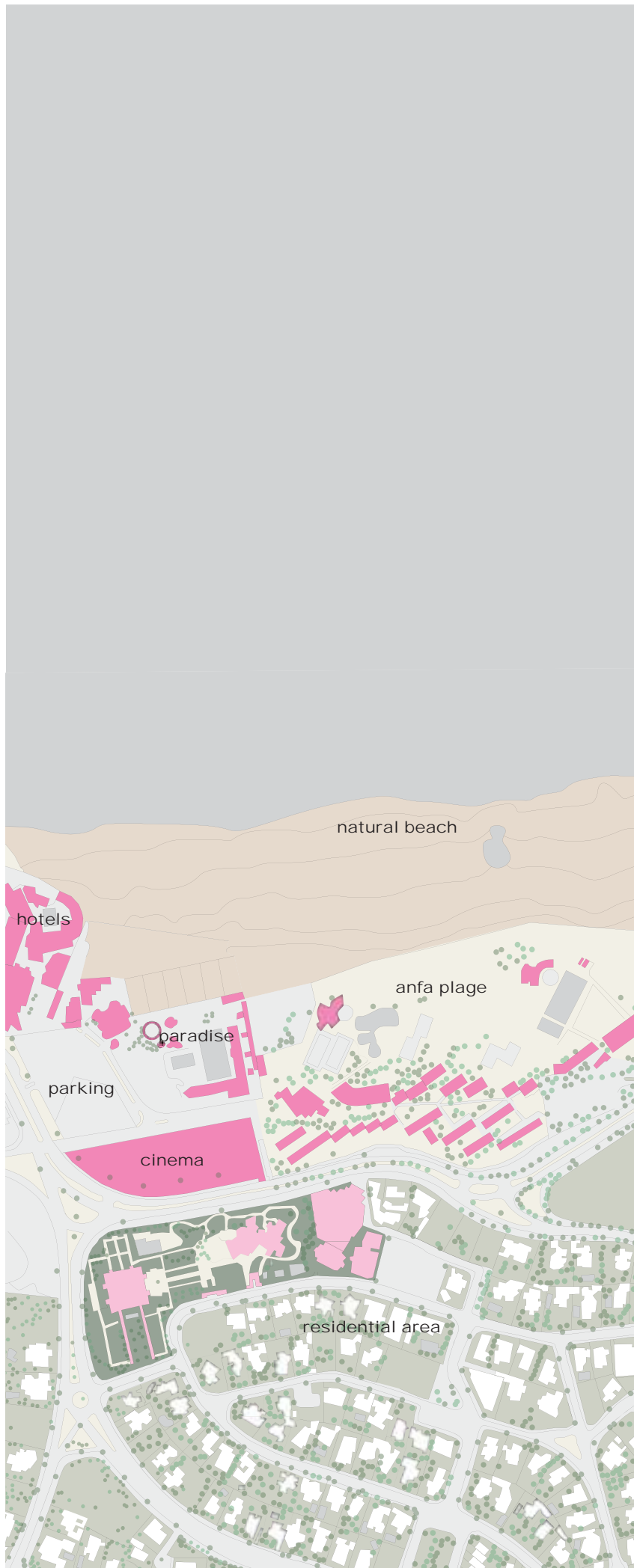
- 1 The low class from Bidonville shop at the market
- 2 The middle class from the Jewish collective housing work as a cook at expensive fish restaurant
- 3 The upper class from the Villas work at trading factory
- 4 Children from the Bidonville go to school
- 5 The upper class dine at the fish restaurant
- 6 The low class work as a guard or house keeper at villa





Collective Housing

Bidonville



Anfa Plage, Paradise

A place where the evolution of La Corniche is sensible: La Corniche became more and more public and the metamorphosis of European members and users into Moroccan

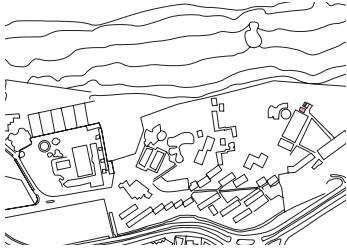




Evolution

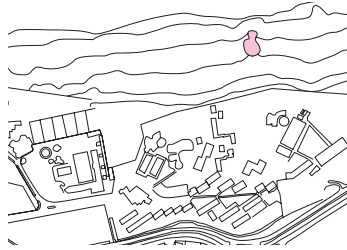
Conversion of La Corniche into public space

Anfa was one of the most sprawling beach clubs. It was in use until 1984, but is now totally deserted. It had a large infrastructure: swimming pools, tennis courts, volleyball courts, grill restaurant, bars and many bungalows. It is remarkable that only Anfa Plage and Paradise do not have an artificial border. Although one can still sense the atmosphere of this enormous beach club at their heights, Anfa Plage became a popular beach. This is a first evolution: La Corniche is not exclusive to the high society anymore, La Corniche has become more and more a public place for all Casablacans.

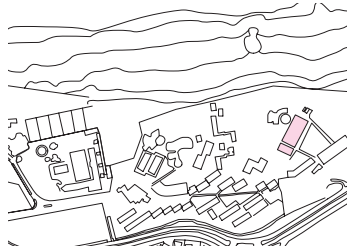


Springboard of Anfa

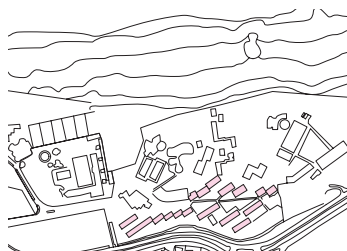




Salt swimming pool of Anfa



Main swimming pool of Anfa



Bungalows of Anfa



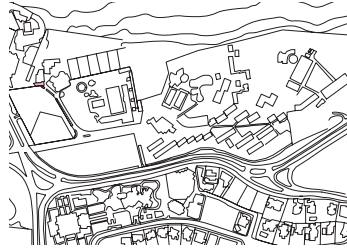


La Corniche evolved from a elite environment into a popular public beach

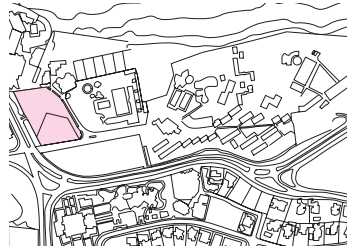


Anfa Plage, Paradise

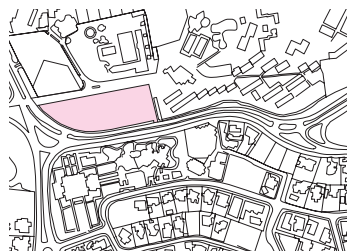
This evolution is also noticeable around and in Paradise. The private beach club lost most of its elite character, giving way to popular and public facilities: a side building of Paradise became a Renault garage, in front of the entrance is now a big parking park and at the other side is Megaramé, the largest cinema in Africa.



Renault garage in side building of Paradis



Parking of Paradise

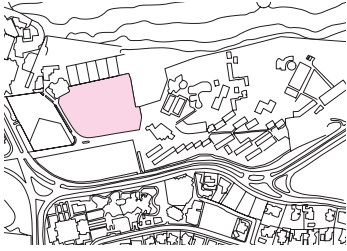


Megarama cinema



The 180° turn of La Corniche

A second evolution is the metamorphosis of European members and users into Moroccan. At the infrastructure of La Corniche was built by and for the Europeans. Paradise for example was based on a strict policy, as shown by the membership list of the 1950's: out of a thousand members, there were only 4 Muslims. Now Paradise is still a private club, but used by rich Moroccans. They just took over the policy of the French and left the plate with "members only" in front of the door.



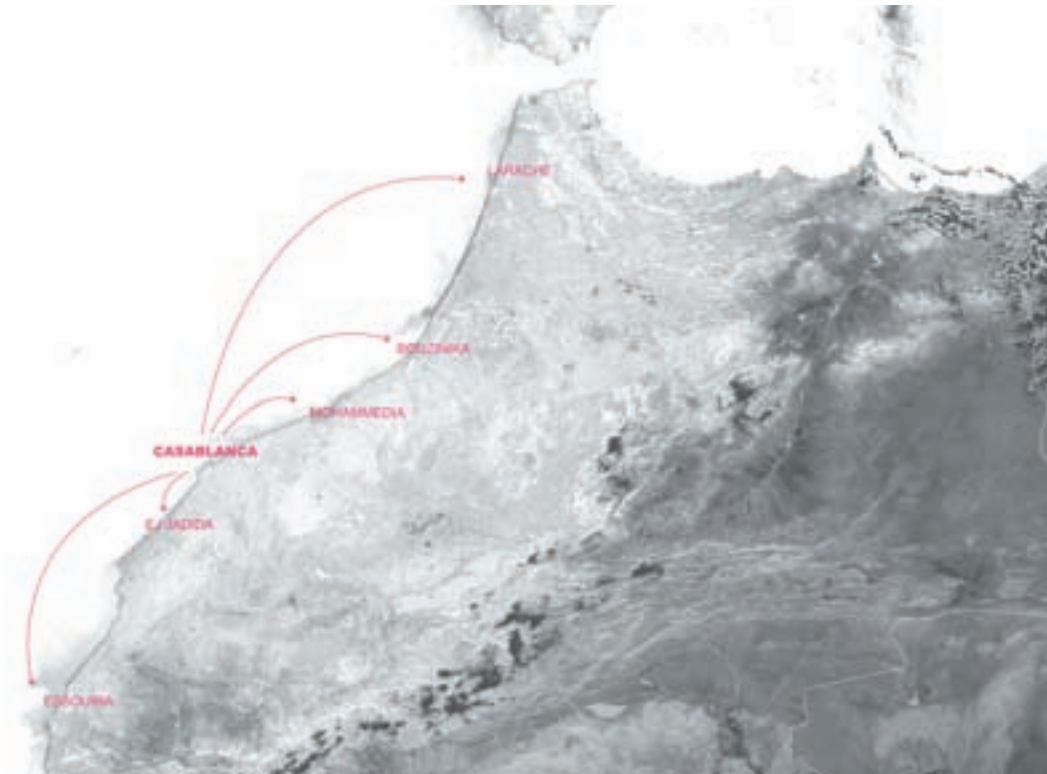
Paradise, beach club





Upper class

- Private beach clubs: Paradise, Sun Beach, Tropicana or Tahiti. Members have to pay annual membership fee and they usually hire a bungalow, (prices goes from 10 000 till 20 000 DH). Those bungalows are small huts, to change clothes or to rest. Non-members may only enter a beachclub if a member bought an invitation.
- For a longer stay at the coast, the wealthy have second houses outside of Casablanca. Larach, Bouznika, Mohammedia, El Jadida and Essouira are the favorite beach spots for rich Casablacans.



Rich people have second houses, for longer stays at the coast



Sun Beach, private beach club



Swimming pool, Paradise private beach club



Outside Casablanca, rich people have second houses, for longer stays at the coast

Anfa Plage, Paradise



Middle class society

The middle class goes to the public beach clubs: Miami, Kon-Tiki and also Tahiti allows one-day-visitors, and at the right side of the city Océanic and Zenata. A one day entrance costs 30DH. In public beach clubs it is also possible to rent a bungalow starting from 1500DH.



Discount on the entrance and the annual rent for bungalows in Miami Plage

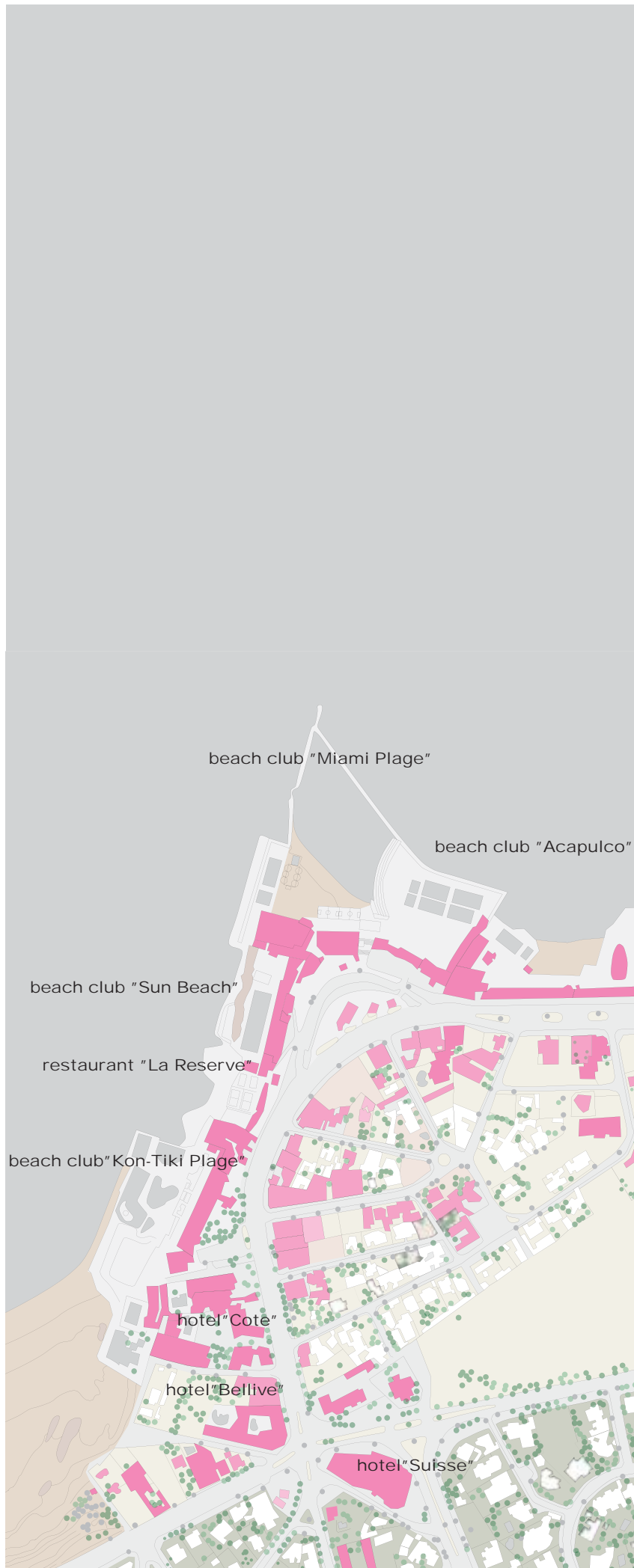


The lower class

Poor people, for who the 30DH entrance is too much, goes the natural beaches. Especially for young men's, these beaches are popular place to play football, run and for body-building exercises.



Natural beaches are 'reserved' for the lower society class



Miami Plage

A place with a high density of leisure elements: beach clubs, hotels, night clubs and restaurants

Leisure pole in Casablaca

This district, which was originally developed by Europeans for their leisure, is now undoubtedly one of the most popular spots for Moroccans. During French protectorate along the beach, european bourgeoisie built many artificially-natured beach clubs and have nothing to do with the original state of the beach except for a hollowed seawater pool and the view because of the physical and social conditions during the period. These clubs were exclusively members-only.

La Corniche was fully privatised in the mid-60s. After having been through many transformations and ownerships, this district becomes more public and important for the Moroccans. For example, the pool club Miami Plage, which was specifically for American clients, has now been converted into a semi-public club and allows the lower-income people to use their facilities at a lower entrance fee.

Not only bathing establishments but restaurants, bars, dance halls facing the boulevard contribute to Moroccan night life.

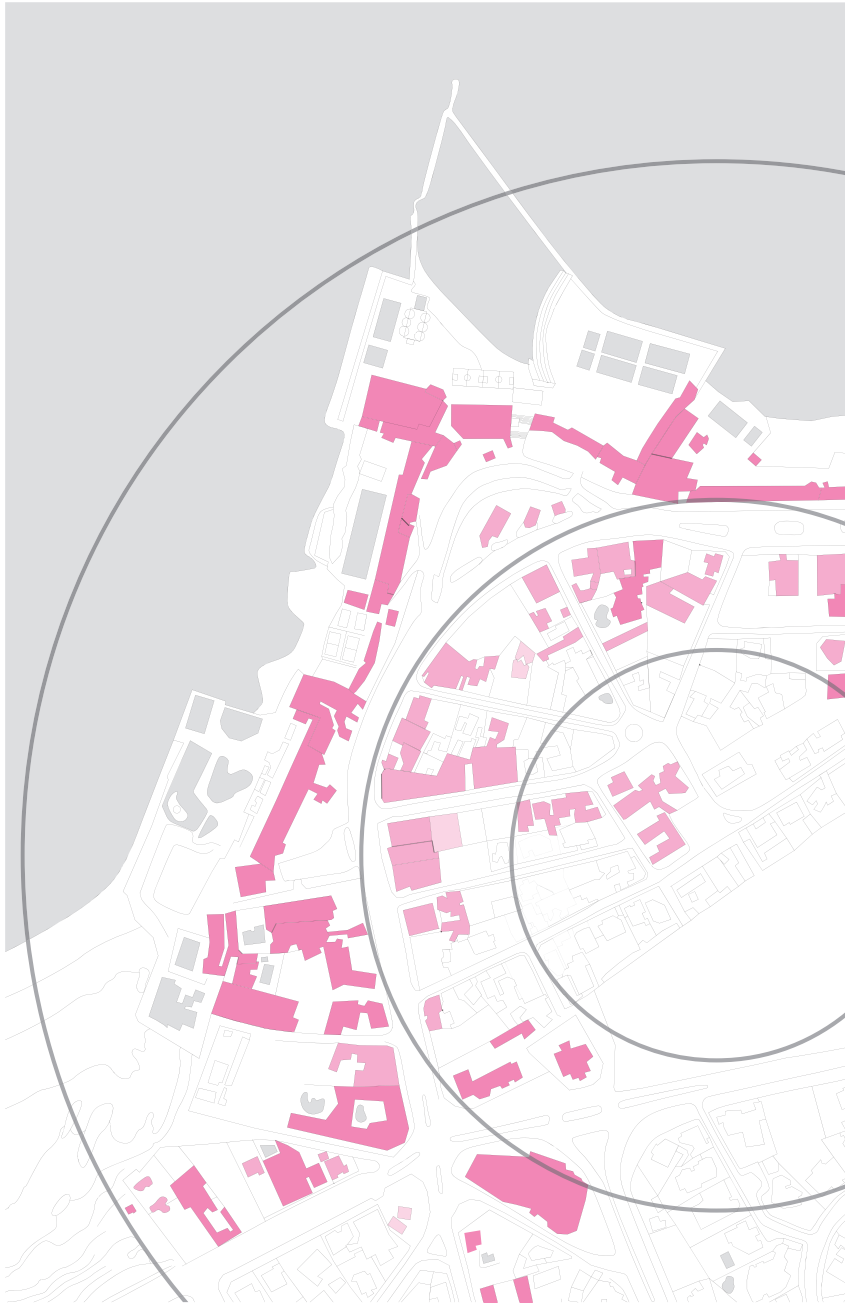
As a symbol of western and international atmosphere there are also several fast food shop (McDonalds, KFC) along the Boulevard.

The growth of this area still continues, and it becomes an ever more important place for Casablanca tourism industry. This trend has been taken into account in the 2012 project. (Appendix 2012)



Leisure activity diagram

With respect of the types of leisure activity, the Miami Plage district can be more or less divided into three zones. The further away the district is from the coastline, the less developed it is.



Level A

facilities: beach clubs, hotels, fast foods, etc.
activities: swimming, sunbathing, volleyball, basketball, fitness, etc.

Level B

facilities: restaurants, cafes, bars, night clubs, parking, etc.
activities: eating, chatting, drinking, meeting dancing, etc.

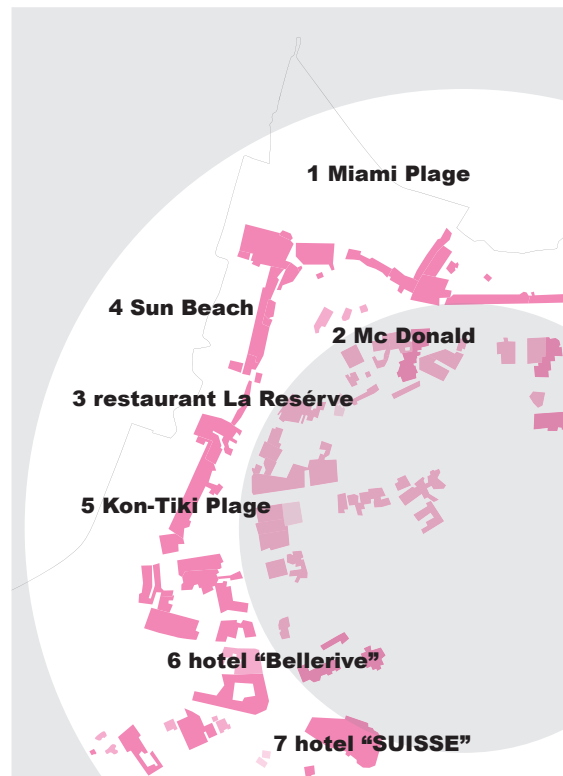
Level C

facilities: residence etc.
activities: dairy routine

Miami Plage

Leisure activity level A

This area is mainly developed as a beach resort along the coastline of Casablanca. Most of the beach clubs are located here. Some of them are now open for general public and because of that on weekends in summer this area is totally full of Moroccans and tourists.



1 Miami Plage







Miami plage, people jumping into the sea-water pool



2 Mc Donald



3 restaurant La Réserve

4 Sun Beach



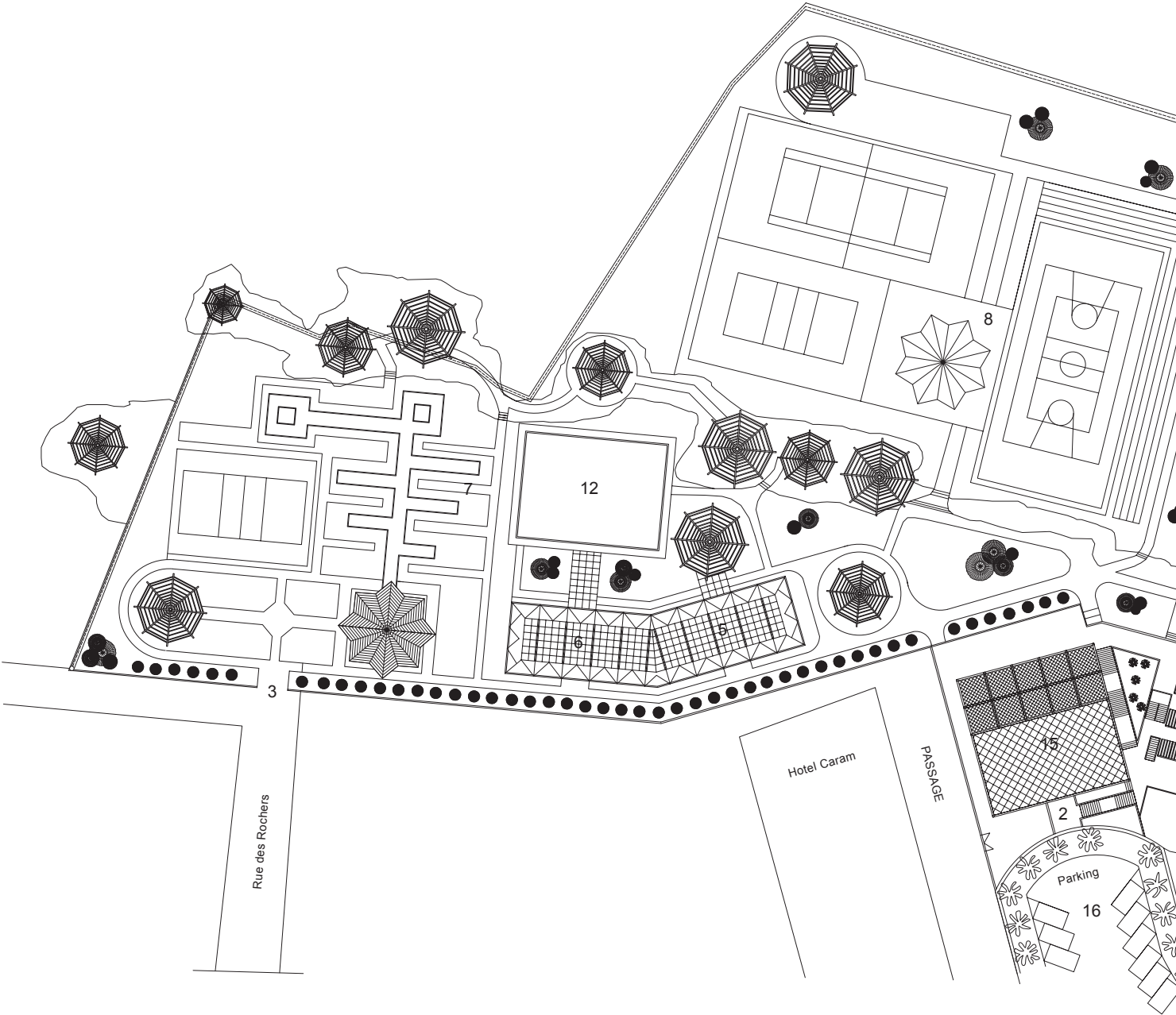
6 hotel "Bellerive"



7 hotel "SUISSE"

Miami Plage

5 Kon-Tiki Plage

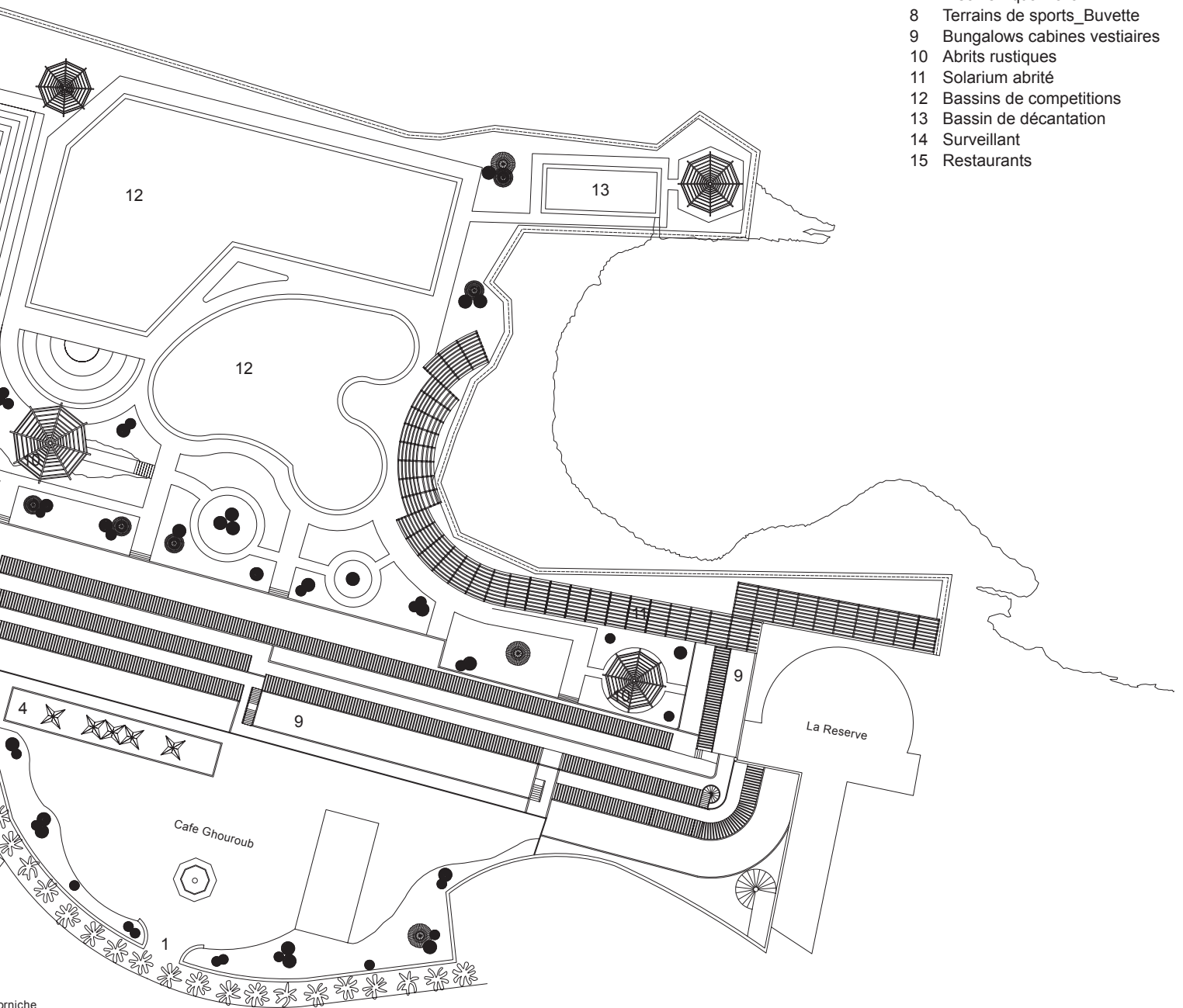


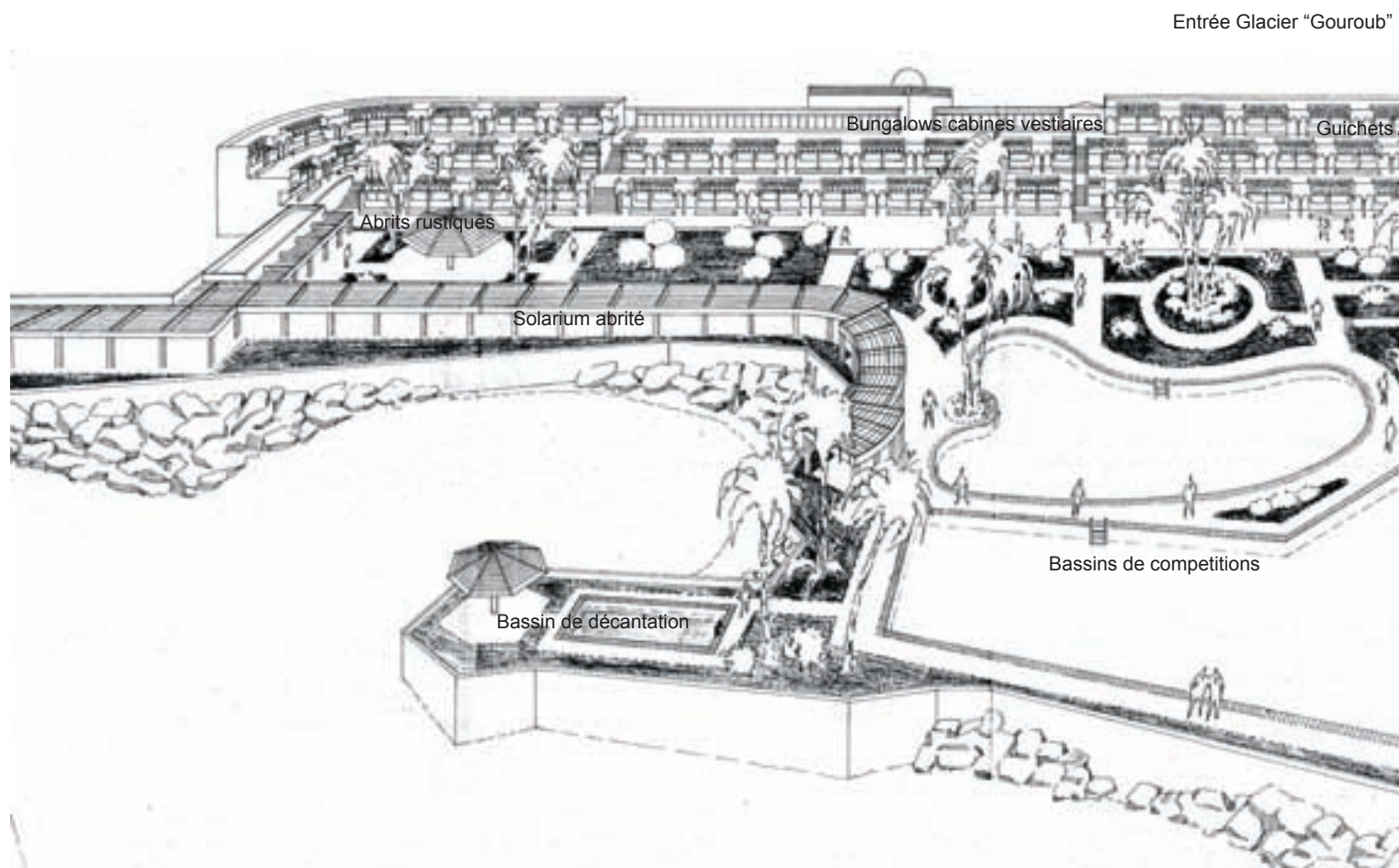
Route de La C...

KON-TIKI Plage Plan De Messe 1:800

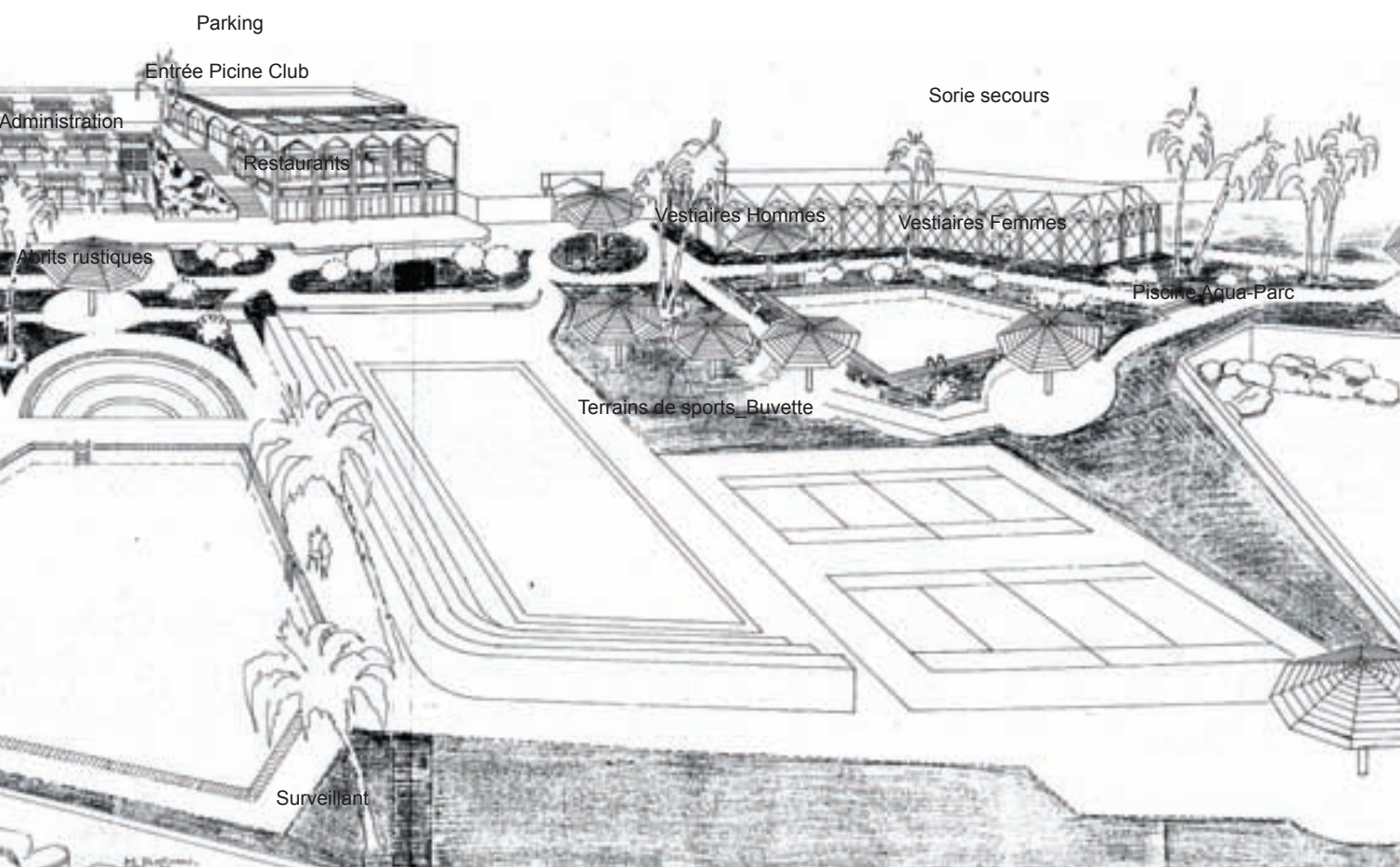
LEGENDE

- 1 Entrée Glacier "Gouroub"
- 2 Entrée Piscine Club
- 3 Soirée secours
- 4 Guichets Administration
- 5 Vestiaires Hommes
- 6 Vestiaires Femmes
- 7 Piscine Aqua-Parc
- 8 Terrains de sports_Buvette
- 9 Bungalows cabines vestiaires
- 10 Abris rustiques
- 11 Solarium abrité
- 12 Bassins de compétitions
- 13 Bassin de décantation
- 14 Surveillant
- 15 Restaurants





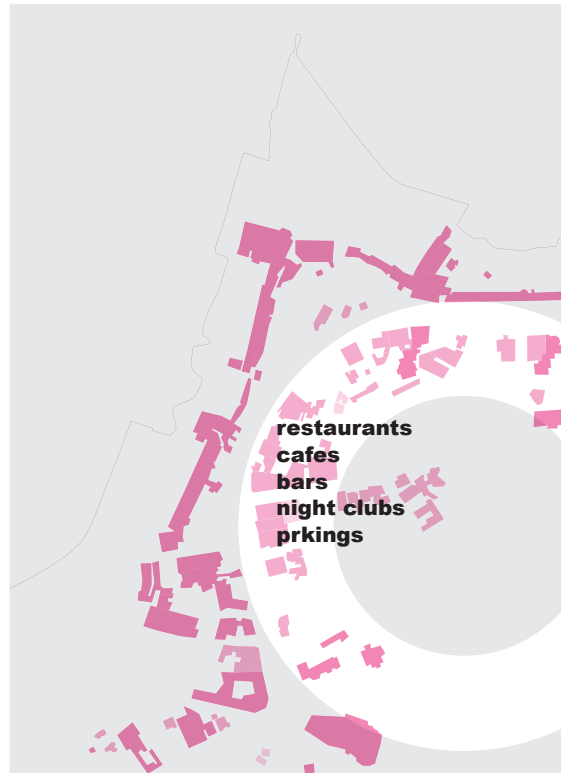
KON-TIKI Plage Perspective

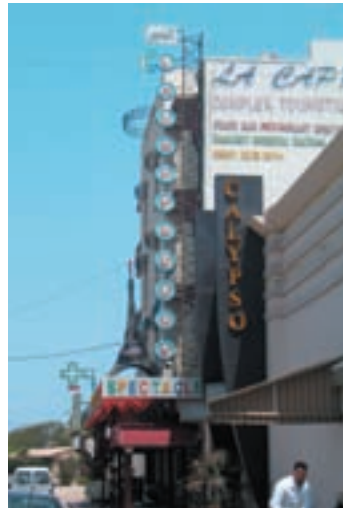


Miami Plage

Leisure activity level B

A lot of restaurants, bars, and night clubs are built densely facing the main street, Boulevard de La corniche, and open till late. There are several small streets radiating towards the boulevard. The inland side of these streets have a smaller number of leisure activities.





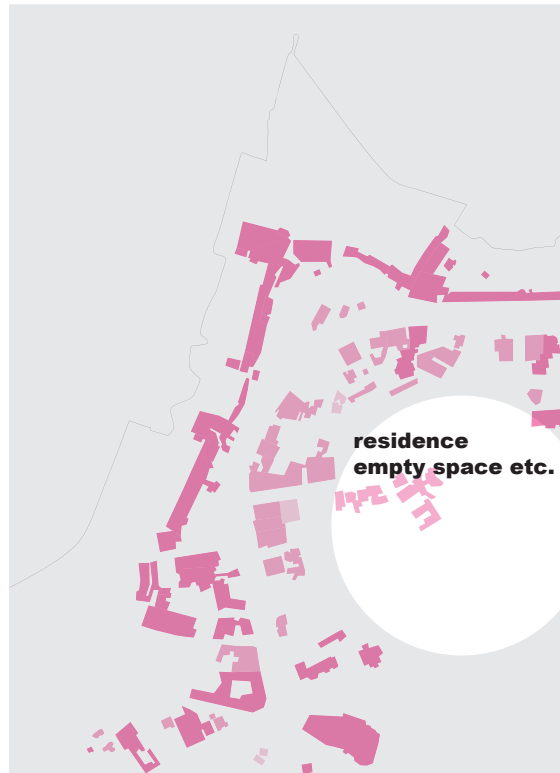
Day (ZoneA)

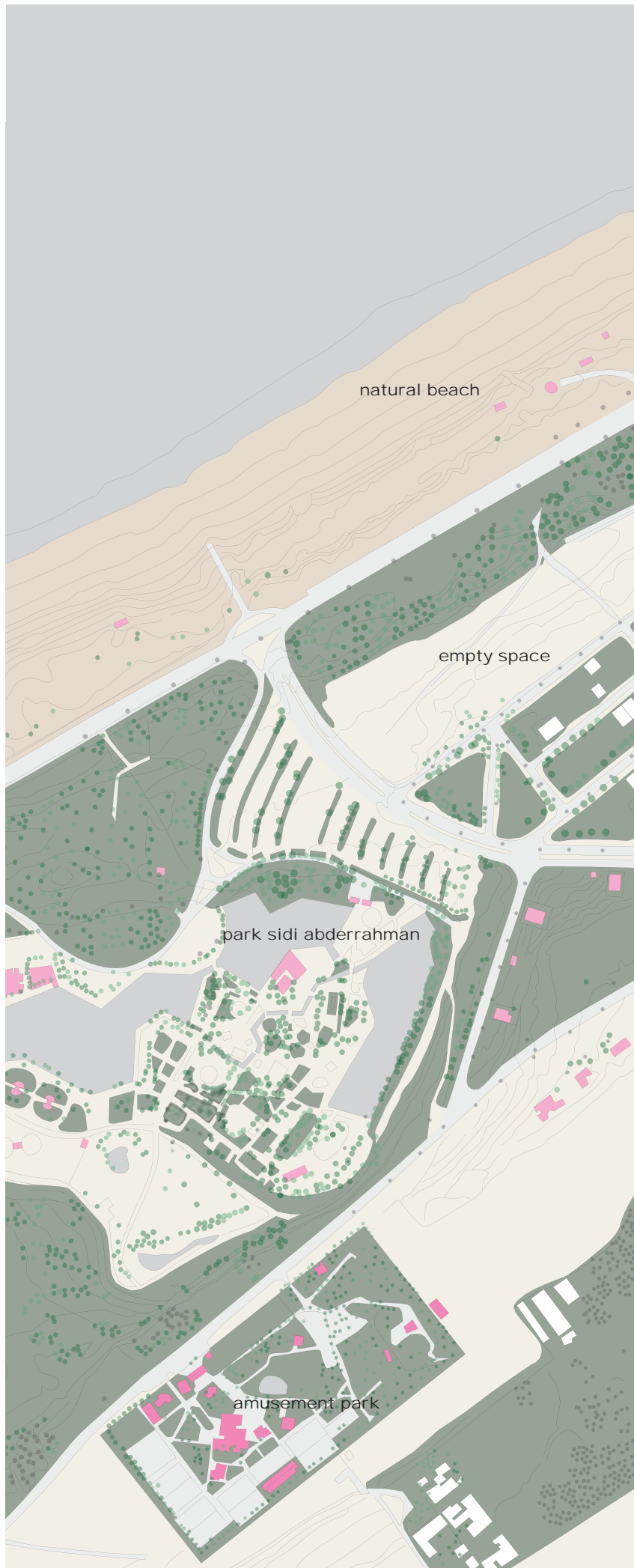


Night (ZoneB)

Leisure activity level C

In this area there are only very few leisure facilities, but one may notice an empty space which seems to be utilised as a parking space during high seasons. There is also a residential area for middle class people.





Amusement Park

Amusement park in an deserted environment, as a hyperartificial world within the already artificially-natured La Corniche



Amusement park in an deserted environment

Between the last beach club, Kon-Tiki, and Fertility Island is the Sidi Abderraham Park. In spite of the new projects planned for this park, it is now a dry and deserted place. (Appendix 2012)

But even in this empty environment, a big wheel brightens up the sky. About 1 kilometer from the coast is a small amusement park. For 1.50 DH one can take part in this hyperartificial world within the already artificially-natured La Corniche.



Amusement Park

Natural beach, for lower
class society



After the boulevard is a large
empty space

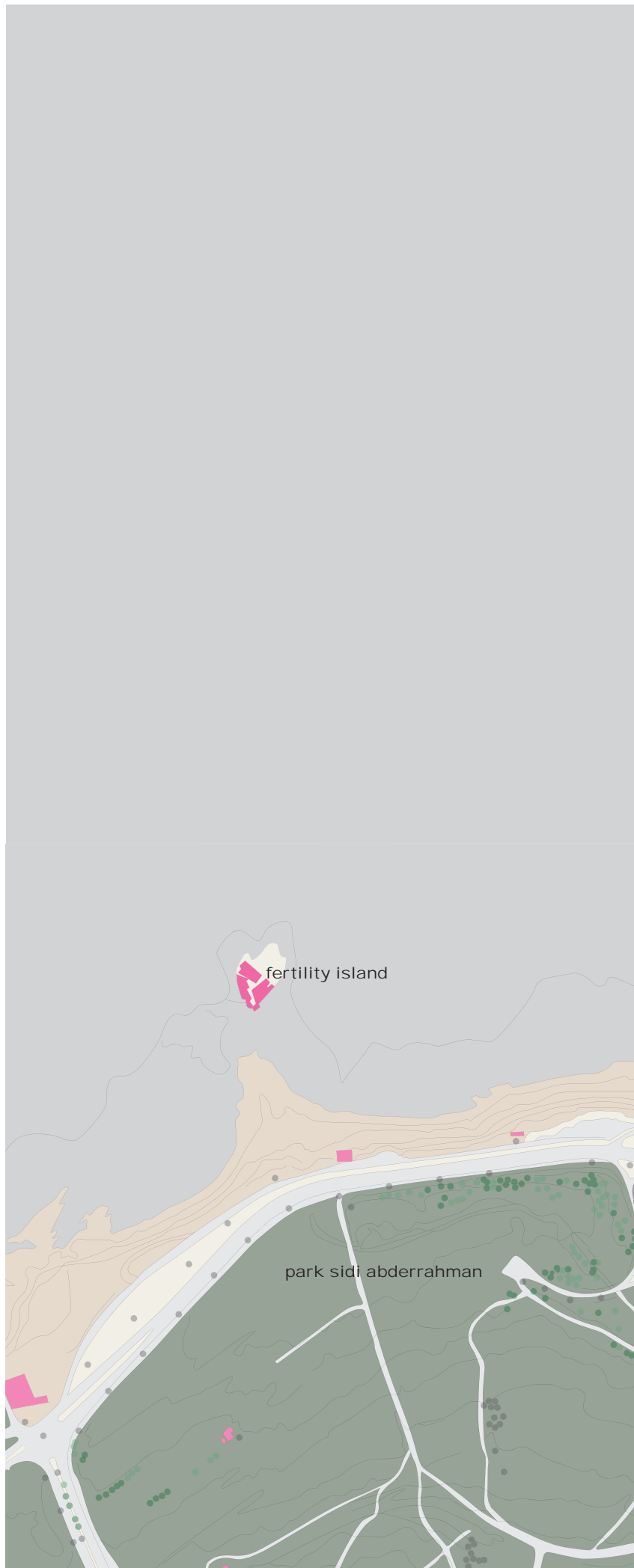


The deserted park of Sidi Ab-
derrhaman





Amusement park as a superlative of the already artificial-natured La Corniche



Fertility Island

The mystery of the Island Sidi Abderrahman

The mystery of the island of marabout Sidi Abderrahman

Some facts

Sufism, a mystical strain of Islam, arrived in Morocco in the 12th century AD. An attempt to democratize Islam and make it accessible to poor and illiterate segments of the population. It was both embraced and transformed by the indigenous population that was already slowly arabized. Sufi brotherhoods cropped up throughout the country, with holy men, the marabouts, espousing a simple and devotional life and acting as intercessors between human and divine beings. Claiming direct lineage from the Prophet, the marabouts were community leaders who led exemplary lives. More importantly, they were imbued with baraka, which might be loosely translated as „divine blessing.“ This concept appealed to the once-animist Berbers: special powers, once the domain of inanimate objects, were now invested in people themselves. Nowadays the term „marabout“ denotes the tomb and the surrounding shrine of one of these holy men, a site of pilgrimage for those seeking baraka.

A mystery

“...There is no clear explanation for the marabout, it is a mysterious place, also called “fertility island”. According to myths, it is a place where women go to find cure for infertility from the resident monks.”

“...the Marabout of Sidi Abderrahman (a holy shrine built on a rocky outcropping in the Atlantic ocean to which women travel from all over Morocco in search of miracles).”

“... At the furthest end is the Marabout (which means “religious tomb” or “religious brotherhood”) of Sidi Abderrahman. Muslim pilgrims gather here as it is believed to be a place of healing.”

“... A visit to The Marabout de Sidi Abderrahman a few kilometres from Casablanca, on a rocky island that can only be reached at low tide, magnificent in the light of the setting sun. The holy man was said to have had miraculous powers - and judging by the sick and infirm who come to visit his tomb hoping for a cure, there must be many who believe that it is true.”

“... A few miles away is the island of marabout Sidi Abderrahman. Holy men (designated by the title „Sidi“) are venerated in death in Morocco; their tombs become holy places to which pilgrims flock in search of certain blessings. In the case of this tomb, women who are unable to conceive come here for stays of up to one week. Around his tomb, on this rock outcropping, a series of pilgrims' quarters have sprung up. Non-Muslims are welcome on this island; women are especially welcome.”







Appendix 2012

Casablanca Vision 2012, an ambitious project or an illusion?

Casablanca Vision 2012

Casablanca Vision 2012 is a project that has the ambition to transform Casablanca before 2012 into a tourism city. The keys to succeed this urban ambition are 12 numbers:

- 1) 4 000 000 inhabitants in Casablanca
- 2) 1 000 000 international tourists each year
- 3) 100 000 new work possibilities
- 4) 10 000 hotel rooms
- 5) 100 hotel units
- 6) 200 restaurants and extra leisure units
- 7) 20 milliard DH by public and private investors
- 8) 10 kilometres developed area on La Corniche
- 9) 10 strategical urban projects
- 10) 10 stops for the 'Casa Corniche Rail'

The project concentrates on La Corniche, the Park Sidi Abderraham and the port.



The main projects of Casablanca Vision 2012 and the Casa Corniche Rail, a light train that connects the important tourism places
Screen shot: Movie Casablanca Vision 2012

L' Avenue Royale

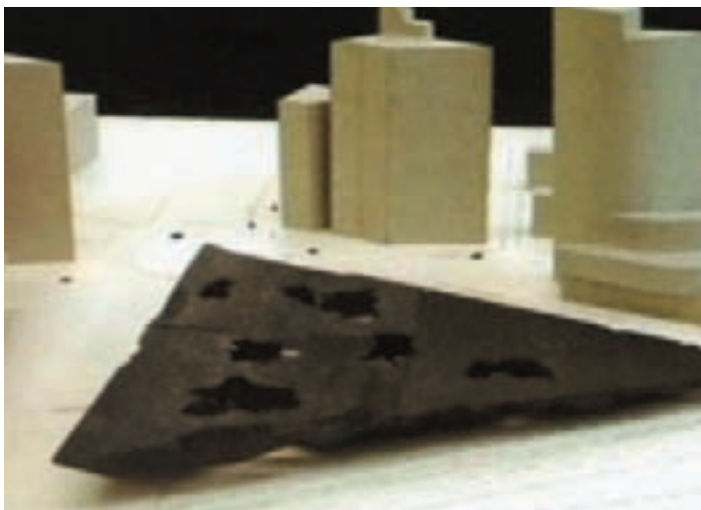
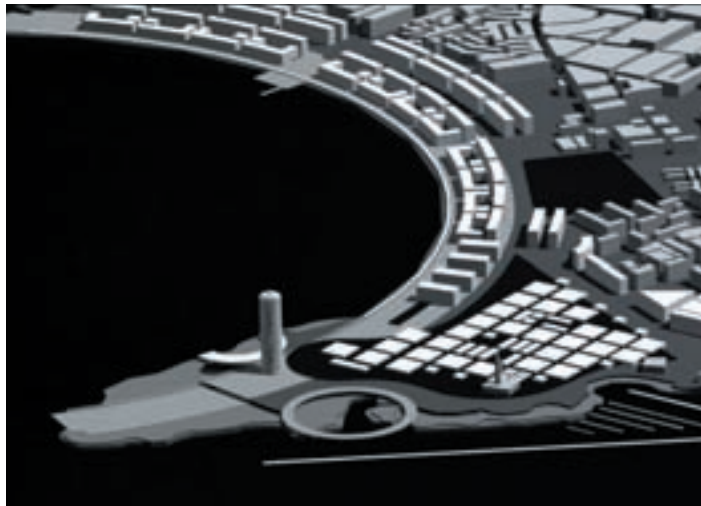
As a reference for the Avenue Royale, one use Les Champs Elysées in Paris and l'Avenida Castellana in Madrid, but the actual conditions, a warzone, shows how far this is from reality. In the 2012-project this avenue intends to connect the city centre, Place Mohammed V and the historical districts with the mosque. The avenue would spectacularly open up the city, and create an exceptional perspective. It would become a green zone, with many activities, hotels and prospects of new housing development.



L' Avenue Royale
Both images: "Labyrinthes" Nr 01, 2005

Development of El Hank

The area around the light tower, is the most important zone for the 2012-project, it must become the tourism attraction point of Casablanca. For that there is planned a new light tower, an opera, a congress complex and an aquarium. It is the strategic point to connect La Corniche with the city. The boulevard along the coast, between the mosque and the light tower, will be transformed into a nice promenade, also to strength this connection.



Design for the opera

Both images: Screen shot: Movie Casablanca Vision 2012



Design for the new light tower
Screen shot: Movie Casablanca Vision 2012

La Corniche Anfa

For La Corniche Anfa there are some extra fast food-restaurants and cyber café's planned, as a crucial point to attract tourists. To make the beach more open to the public, there is a need for beach chairs rental and some sport facilities: surf, windsurf and jet ski. To update the night live, there will come some new night clubs and cabbarets.

Park Sidi Abderrahman

Relaying of the park, play gardens for children and a jogging route must turn the Park Sidi Abderrahman into the green zone of Casablanca. The amusement park will be modernized with new attractions and luna parks. It will be open from 10 a.m. till midnight. The development of the beach and the park will fortify the statute of La Corniche as the leisure pole of Casablanca.



The relaying Park Sidi Abderrahman
Both pictures: "Labyrinthes" Nr 01, 2005

Mirina of Casablanca

A part of the port will be transformed into a leisure port for yachts. This must make the city more open to tourists. And a shopping complex must make this area also accessible for the normal inhabitants of the city centre. It is an important project to try to link the city more with the sea. This is the only project of Casablanca Vision 2012, which is already under construction.

Casa Corniche Rail

A light train with 10 stops, must connect the most important tourism places and must fortify the connection between La Corniche and the city centre.



The design of the leisure port of Casablanca
“Labyrinthes” Nr 01, 2005

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