

URBAN
CULTURAL
HERITAGE
BEYROUTH
& THE
PALIMPSEST
POLITICS
OF THE OR
PUZZLE
PRESENT

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THE MIDDLE EAST STUDIO Wintersemester 2009

WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Professor George Habid from AUB, Professor Mona Fawaz from AUB, Simone Kosremelli, Zouheir Berjawi from Solidere, Nadim Souhaid from APSAD, Dr. Helga Seeden from AUB, Karim Nader from AUB, Shake from APSAD, Naji Assi from Sabbaq Architects, Tony Chakar, Jad Tabet and Oliver Kögler

BEYROUTH - PALIMPSEST OR PUZZLE

**URBAN CULTURAL HERITAGE &
THE POLITICS OF THE PRESENT**



Beirut 1991
Gabriele Basilico

“When he came to the end of his journey, Abd al-Karim didn’t realise he’d travelled more than all the shoe shiners in the world. Not because he had come all the way from Mashta Hasan in Akkar to Beirut, but because Beirut itself travels. You stay where you are and it travels. Instead of you travelling, the city travels. Look at Beirut, transforming from the Switzerland of the East to Hong Kong, to Saigon, to Calcutta, to Sri Lanka. It’s as if we circled the world in ten or twenty years. We stayed where we were and the world circled around us. Everything around us changed, and we have changed.”

Elias Khoury, *The Journey of the Little Ghandi*

“...the city however does not tell its past, but it contains it like the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the streets, the gratings of the windows, the artifacts, and the ruins, every segment marked in turn with scratches, indentations, scrolls,....”

Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*



“Blank or not, the city centre is a surface that will be inscribed in the coming years in ways that will help to determine the unfolding narrative of Lebanon’s national identity, which is now even more open to question. For it is in this highly contested space that various competing visions of that identity, as well as of Lebanon’s relationship to the region and to the rest of the Arab world, will be fought out. The battles this time will take the form of narratives written in space and time on the presently cleared-out blankness of the centre of Beirut; indeed, they will determine the extent to which this space can be regarded as a blankness or, instead, as a haunted space: a place of memories, ghosts.

The war was in a sense fought over different constructions of the nation. For although all nations and all nationalisms are artificial constructions, not all nations have faced the same difficulties of trying to invent a community as has Lebanon. Nor have many nations paid the terrible price that Lebanon has paid for not having successfully come to terms with itself as such an artificial entity (not that such a project of self-understanding needs to be understood in strictly nationalist terms, nor in terms that isolate Lebanon from the rest of the Arab world).

During the war, territories proliferated, defined according to subnational community or sectarian identities. Other spaces were abandoned, most dramatically the so-called Green Line dividing east and west Beirut, and above all the very heavily damaged city centre, which for more than fifteen years remained an emptied-out site marking the graveyard of national dialogue and reconciliation.”

Saree Makdisi, *Laying Claim to Beirut*



—
TOM DOWDALL, THOMAS SUMMERMATTER
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Literary context

“manuscript in roll or codex form carrying a text erased, or partly erased, underneath an apparent additional text. The underlying text is said to be “in palimpsest,” and, even though the parchment or other surface is much abraded, **the older text is recoverable in the laboratory** by such means as the use of ultraviolet light. The motive for making palimpsests usually seems to have been economic—reusing parchment was cheaper than preparing a new skin. Another motive may have been directed by Christian piety, as in the conversion of a pagan Greek manuscript to receive

Britannica

“A parchment or other writing surface on which the **original text has been effaced or partially erased**, and then overwritten by another; a manuscript in which later writing has been superimposed on earlier (effaced) writing.”

‘Holmes and I sat..., he engaged with a powerful lens deciphering the remains of the original inscription upon a palimpsest.’ — A. Conan Doyle - Return of Sherlock Holmes.

Oxford English Dictionary

“1. Writing material (as a parchment or tablet) used one or more times after earlier writing has been erased.

2. **Something having usually diverse layers or aspects apparent beneath the surface.**”

‘Canada...is a palimpsest, an overlay of classes and generations’ — Margaret Atwood

Miriam Webster Online Dictionary

Extended context

“A thing likened to such a writing surface, esp. in having been reused or altered while **still retaining traces of its earlier form**; a multilayered record.”

‘All history was a palimpsest, scraped clean and reinscribed exactly as often as was necessary.’ — G. Orwell - Nineteen Eighty-four.

Oxford English Dictionary

Geological context

“A structure characterized by **superimposed features** produced at two or more distinct periods.”

Oxford English Dictionary

Architectural context

“With time, the city grows upon itself; it acquires a consciousness and memory. In the course of its construction, its **original themes persist**, but at the same time it **modifies and renders these themes of its own development more specific.**”

“...I lay particular emphasis on the importance of the historical method; but I also maintain that we cannot study the city simply from a historical point of view. Instead we must carefully elaborate a city’s **enduring elements or permanences** so as to avoid seeing the history of the city solely as a function of them. I believe that permanent elements can even be considered pathological at times. The significance of permanent elements in the study of the city can be compared to that which fixed structures have in linguistics; this is especially evident as the study of the city presents analogies with that of linguistics, above all in terms of the complexity of its processes of transformation and permanence.”

Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*,

Thesis of the book

For the following areas we have researched in Beirut, we ask:

What are the enduring elements or permanences in each project?

How have these been developed and rendered more specific?

“1. Characterized by or pertaining to the preservation or exploitation of local and national features of historical, cultural, or scenic interest, esp. as tourist attractions.

2. That which comes from the circumstances of birth; an inherited lot or portion; the condition or state transmitted from ancestors.

3. That which has been or may be inherited; any property, and esp. land, which devolves by right of inheritance.”

Oxford English Dictionary

Heritage tourism

“Tourism to places of historical or cultural interest.”

Heritage trail

“A route linking features of historical interest, esp. one planned as a tourist attraction.”

Inheritance

“Natural derivation of qualities or characters from parents or ancestry.”

Oxford English Dictionary

In Arabic

Tourâth

“The meaning ranges from intellectual to historical, archaeological, cultural, natural, environmental and built. ‘Environment’ and ‘heritage’ are often used interchangeably.

The redundancy reveals, in a very flagrant way, the vagueness of the concept in the minds of the founding members. One should bear in mind, that in the Arabic language, there is a trend towards enumerating and piling up adjectives.”

Zeina Misk, Questions sur le patrimoine architectural et urbain au Liban

“To be included on the UNESCO World Heritage List, sites must be of outstanding universal value and meet at least one out of ten selection criteria.

Selection criteria:

1. to represent a masterpiece of human creative genius;

2. to exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;

3. to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;

4. to be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;

5. to be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;

6. to be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria);

7. to contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance;.....”

Unesco, World Heritage

Values of Urban Cultural Heritage

We identify **four general values of urban cultural heritage**.

The first value of urban cultural heritage is

artistic. The unique and admirable architectural styles of historic buildings are seen as a universal heritage, an outstanding example of the cultural production of humankind that must be preserved as such. This is along the same line of thought as UNESCO present opposite.

The second value is **socio-political**.

Urban cultural heritage is used to preserve or re-invent a certain identity. These identities can take many forms and range from ethnic, post-colonial, or class to other specific local identities that often exist in resistance to other more dominant identities, such as colonial, global, or commercial identities.

There is not only the idea of preserving one single identity. There is also that dealing with all the issues that would generate a profound discussion about the identities to be preserved and give all the different identities the right to be expressed in the landscape. This would help society grapple with a difficult history, and “the memory of stones” to use Jad Tabet’s phrase, would not only support certain identities but also help pacify unstable societies.

The third value of urban cultural heritage is

economic. “Authenticity sells” as Robert Saliba has stated, and is expressed in the use of existing local architecture and traditions, which can provide a ‘distinction’ and can help to promote and sell a city. Therefore, urban cultural preservation is also seen as an important contribution to the economic development of a city, region or country.

The former leader of the World Bank, John Wolfensohn, refers to this trend by saying:

“For too long the range of values provided by culture attributes and artefacts has not been recognised - their role in job creation, social cohesion, tourism, and so on. Cultural preservation and renewal is not a luxury good, something to be done later. It is a productive sector.”

The fourth value of urban cultural heritage is **academic**. Academic heritage is predominantly used by architects, historians, and art historians as a rare testimony of a specific society and culture in the past.

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PREHISTORIC BEIRUT

The Egyptian Empire collapsed in the 12th century B.C. The Greek period began after the battle of Issus in 333BC, and Beirut welcomed its new conquerors without objection. The settlement was renamed Berytus and remained under Lagid occupation for about a century. Archaeological finds for prehistorical Beirut are scarce. A few burial grounds yield only scattered information on this period of history. No organised dwellings are to be found.



PHOENICIAN BEIRUT

In 200BC, the victory of Antiochus III won over Ptolemy V at Banyas brought the city under the Seleucid occupation. It did not take the Seleucids long to Hellenise the city, which then took the name of Laodicea in Canaan or Phoenician, and coins were struck with this new name. In 83B.C. the states forming the Seleucid Empire, tired of civil wars and instability, invited the Armenian king Tigranes to govern the country. Phoenicia was ruled by this king from 83 to 63BC.



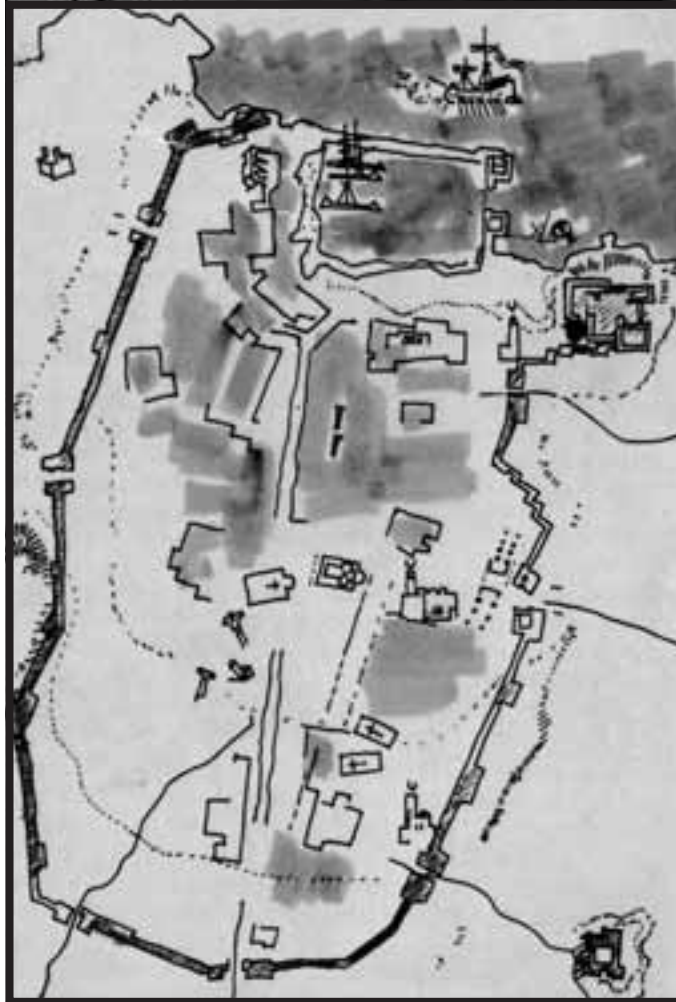
ROMAN CITY

The Romans arrived in 64BC when Pompey settled the Roman province of Syria and Mark Antony became master of the East after the battle of Philippi in 42BC. It was a grandiose city – a gentrified city for retired wealthy nobility. It enjoyed a full spectrum of Roman extravagance – thermae, a hippodrome, temples and most importantly, the famous Roman Law School, which still remains undiscovered.



EARTHQUAKES

In 551AD an earthquake flattened the Roman buildings, followed by a tidal wave and then fire, which completely wiped out the City. It is thought 30,000 died.



MIDDLE AGES

The Mamlukes, Crusaders and Arabs followed the Romans. Everyone's concern during this time was to fortify the city by reinforcing the city wall and gates. Attack from the sea was common, and a sea castle was introduced by the Crusaders to defend its harbour.



THE OTTOMAN PERIOD TILL 1919

The Ottoman occupation was another restless period in the history of Beirut. The fortifications remained as they were with improvements following each destruction. An administrative building was built on the hill overlooking the city, The Grand Serail, both with the purpose of defence from outsiders and of enforcing rule to the inhabitants inside the city walls.

The city stayed principally as an intramuros city during this time.

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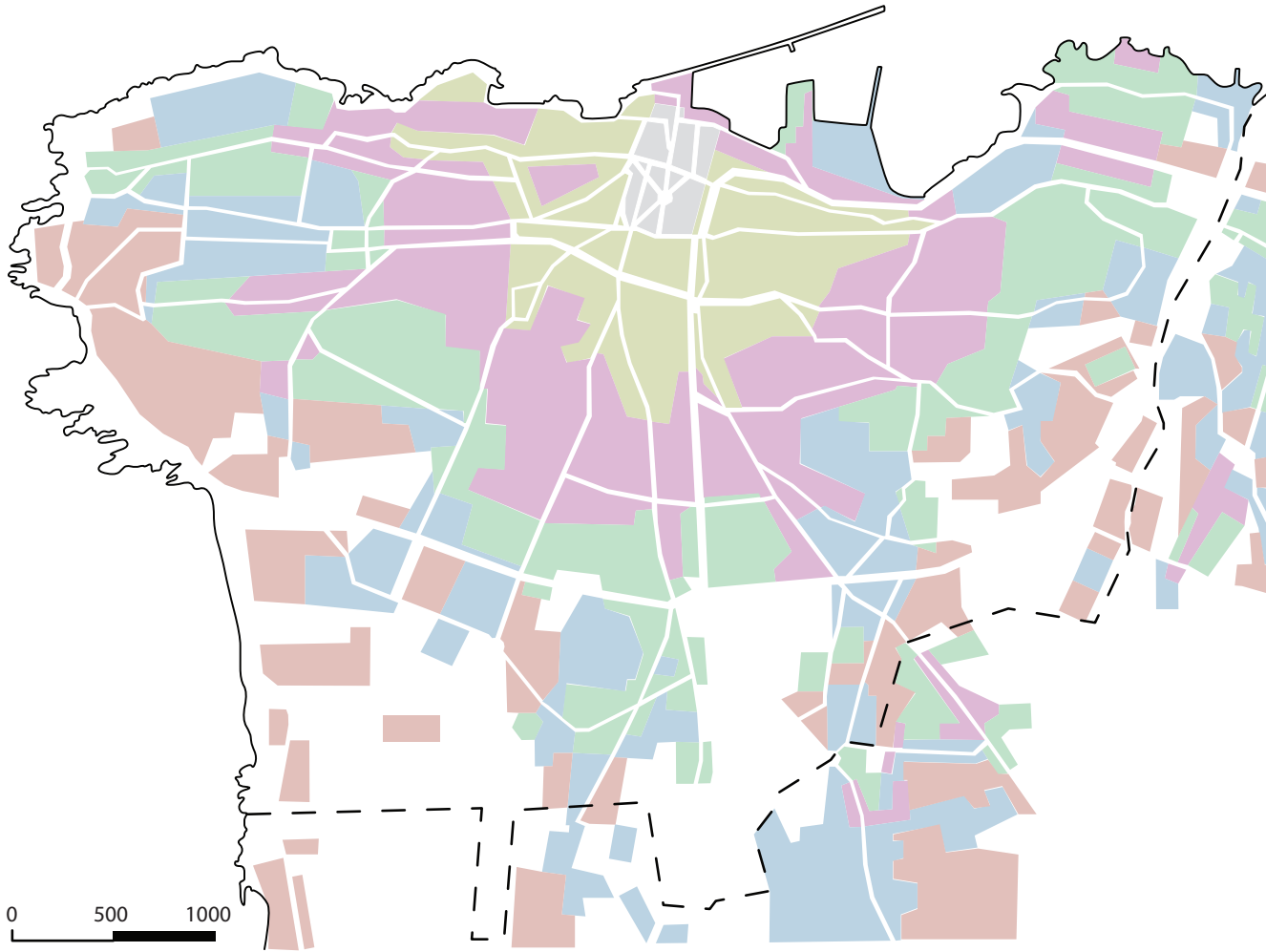
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Urban expansion of Beirut from 1840 to present day

- Untill 1840
- 1876
- 1921
- 1935
- 1950
- 1967

SPACIAL DEVELOPMENT OF BEIRUT

The rise of Beirut as a major commercial port goes back to the eighteenth-century coastal revival initiated by steamship navigation, which transferred economic activity from inland caravan cities like Damascus to coastal cities.

The establishment of Beirut as the capital of vilayet Sidon in 1832 under the Egyptian occupation attracted consular representation and foreign traders, “because if other ports include a few local merchants, Beirut has a greater number of them and among the richest”. The presence of military headquarters and garrisons furthered its economic growth, along with major improvements such as the creation of a quarantine area and the enlargement of the port. However, it is between 1840 and 1864 that Beirut underwent the most important changes constituted a turning point in its modern history. The establishment of the French-controlled Ottoman Bank (1850), the low import duties and the building of the wharf attracted foreign entrepreneurs and investors, followed by trading firms and consular representatives (including in the mid-fifties the French, English, Austrian, Greek, Italian, Belgian, Dutch, Spanish, Swedish, Norwegian, Turkish and Egyptian). Finally, the construction of the Beirut-Damascus mountain road opened Beirut to the Syrian/Arabian interior and made it the principal headquarters of the region.

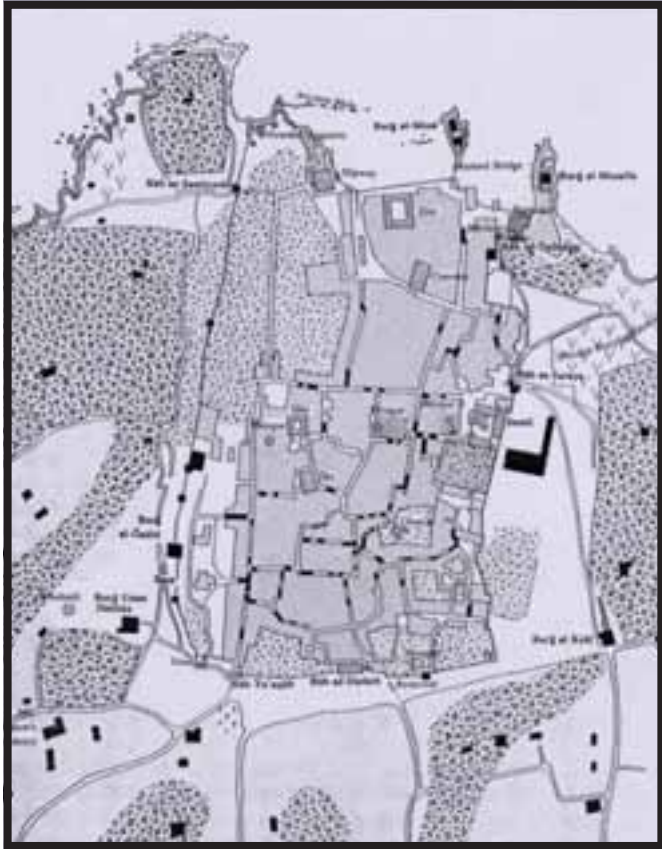
Prior to 1840, Beirut *intra muros*, like most port towns of the eastern Mediterranean, was formed by a diversity of ethnic and religious groups, with the predominance of a Sunni majority, followed in number by the Greek Orthodox community (estimated respectively around 45% and 26% in 1838).

However, the key factor in the rise of a new urban bourgeoisie would become the massive migrations of Maronites from the mixed Druze districts in Mount Lebanon and the Greek Orthodox influx from Damascus and Aleppo, following the 1845, 1850 and, mainly the 1860 sectarian upheavals. The accompanying promulgation of the Ottoman *Hatt-i Humayun* decree in 1856, under European pressure, affirmed the equal status and duties of all confessions, therefore recognizing and safeguarding Christian Ottoman subjects.

“Between 1840 and 1865 the number of Muslims in Beirut doubled; the number of the Christians tripled”. Due to the relative political security and stability and the expanding opportunities for trade and employment, rural and urban migrants settled in Beirut, starting therefore the formation of a middle class that conditioned the subsequent social structure, economic growth and urban expansion of the city.

By the mid-nineteenth century, economic life in Beirut revolved around silk traders, financiers, producers and entrepreneurs operating under consular protection.

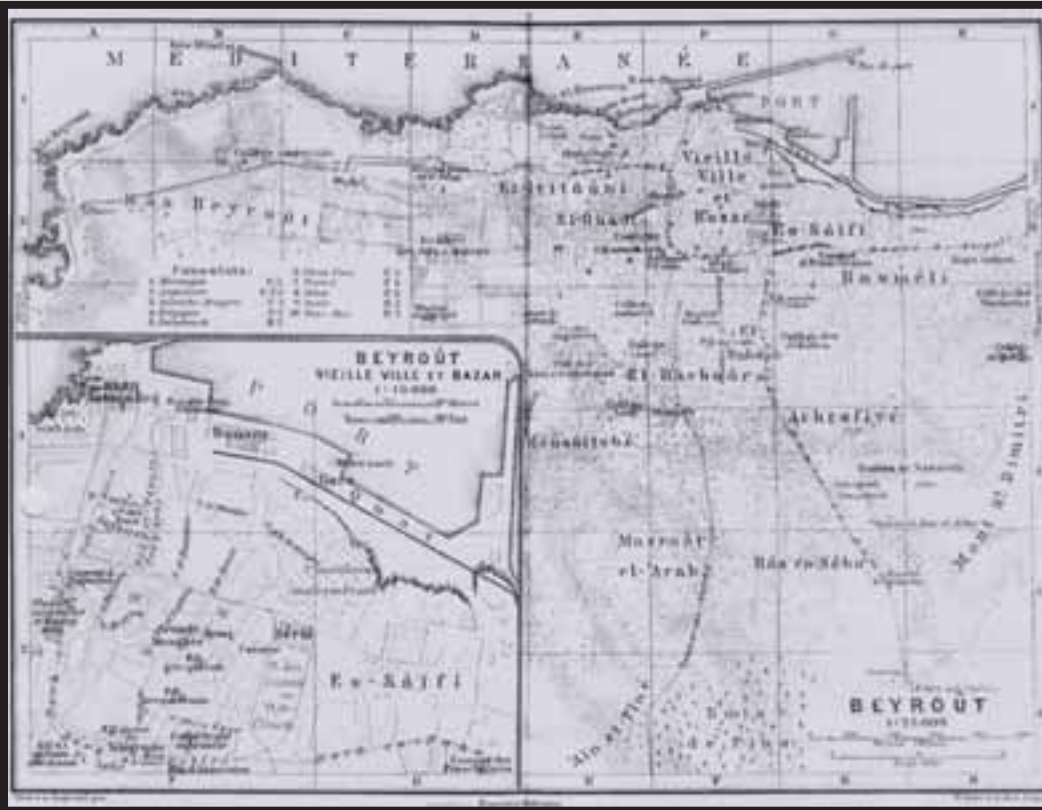
Between 1840 and 1880, the population of Beirut increased from 10,000 to 80,000. By 1920, it had reached 130,000 and in 1932 the count of the French population census was 160,000. This phenomenal demographic expansion initiated residential dynamics that shaped the social topography of municipal Beirut, both in terms of this current neighbourhood and district configuration and the spatial segregation of its inhabitants according to religious affiliation, income and place of origin.



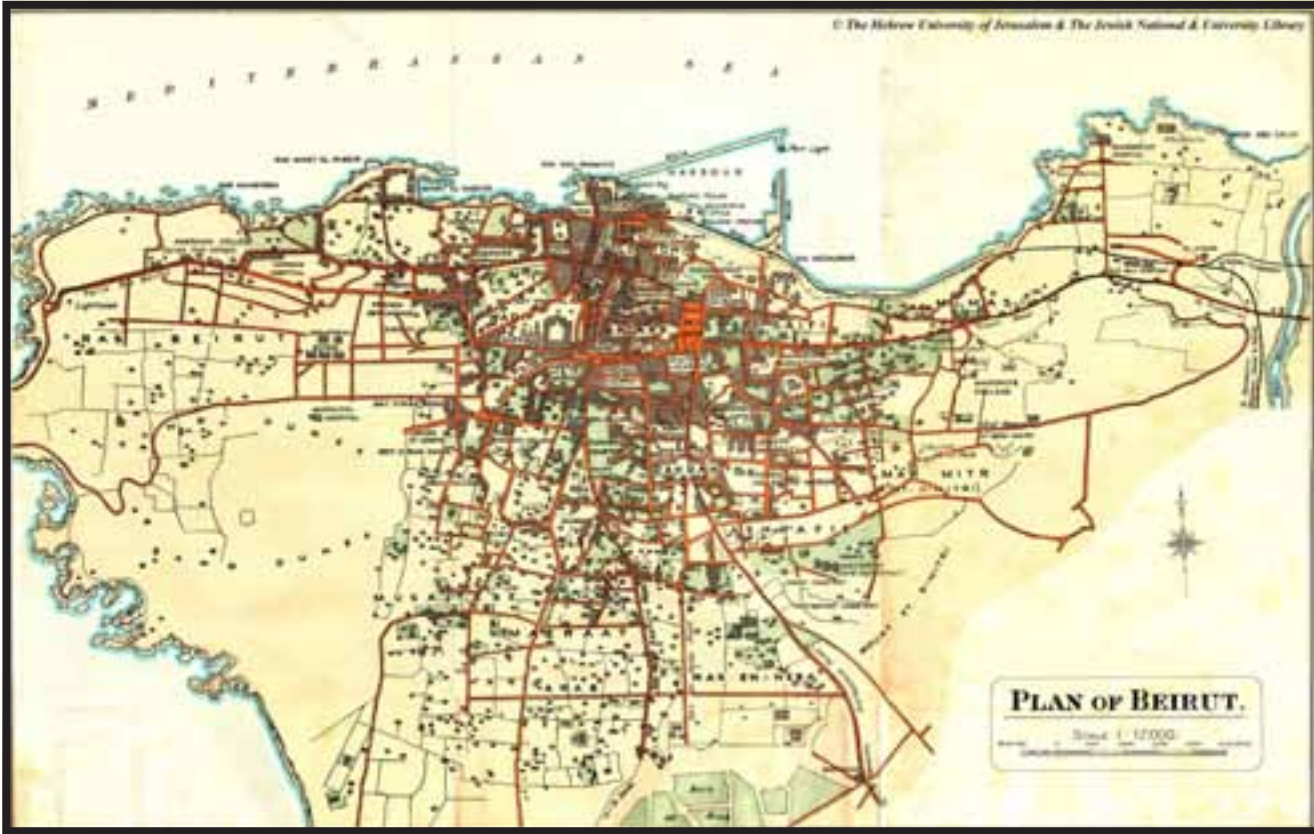
Beirut - 1841



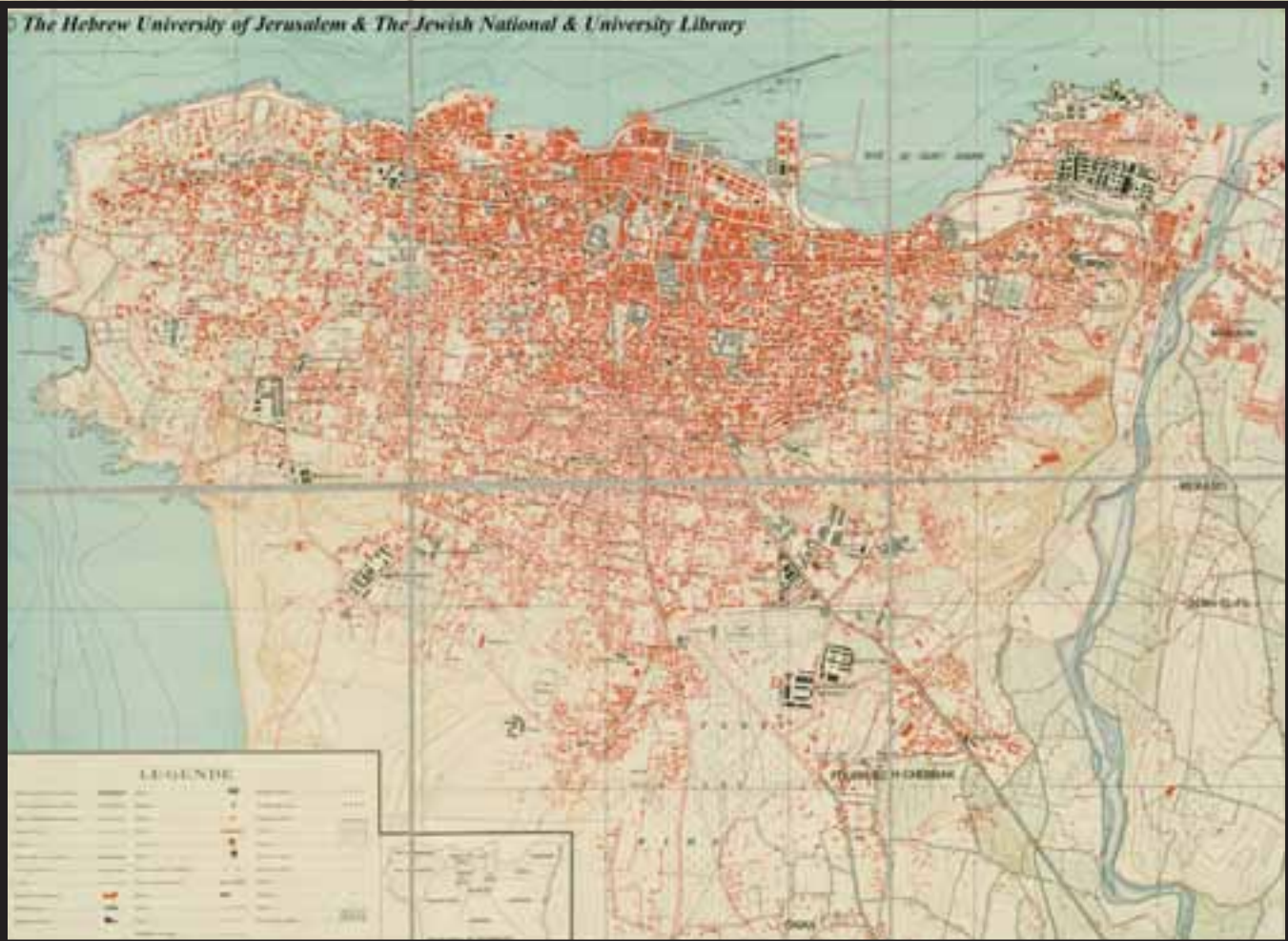
Beirut - 1876
Loytved Map



Beirut - 1912



Beirut - 1923





Beirut - 1968



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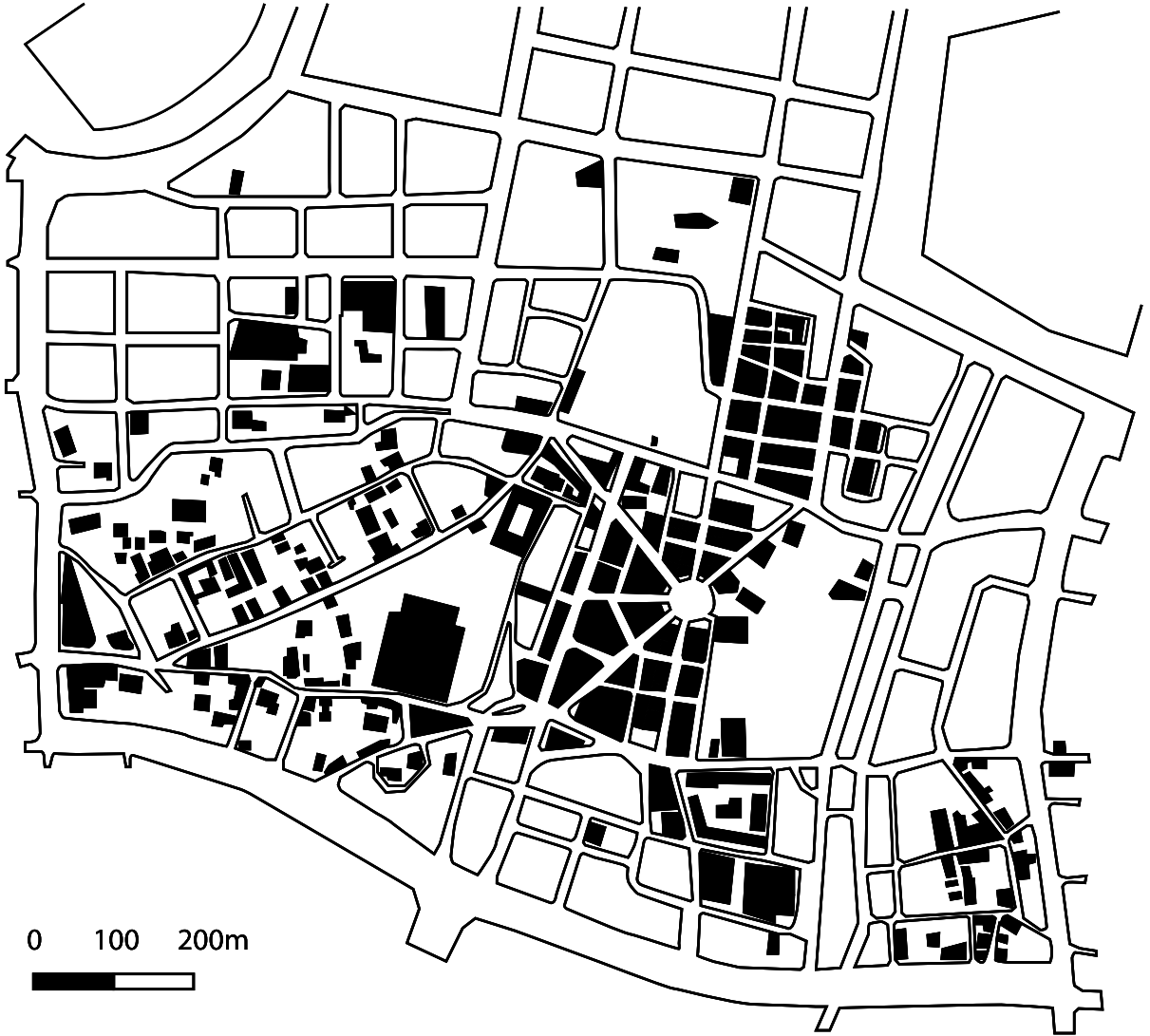
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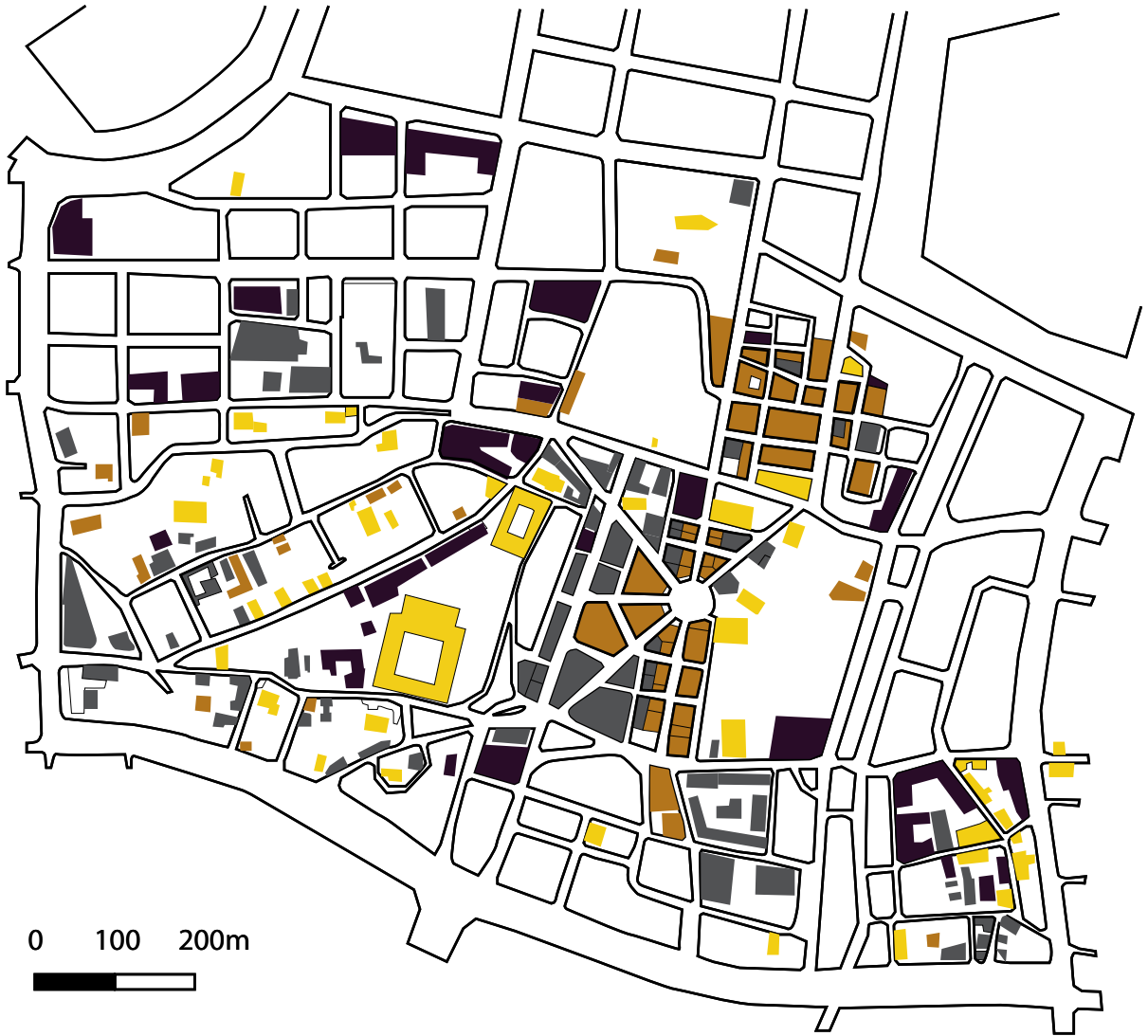
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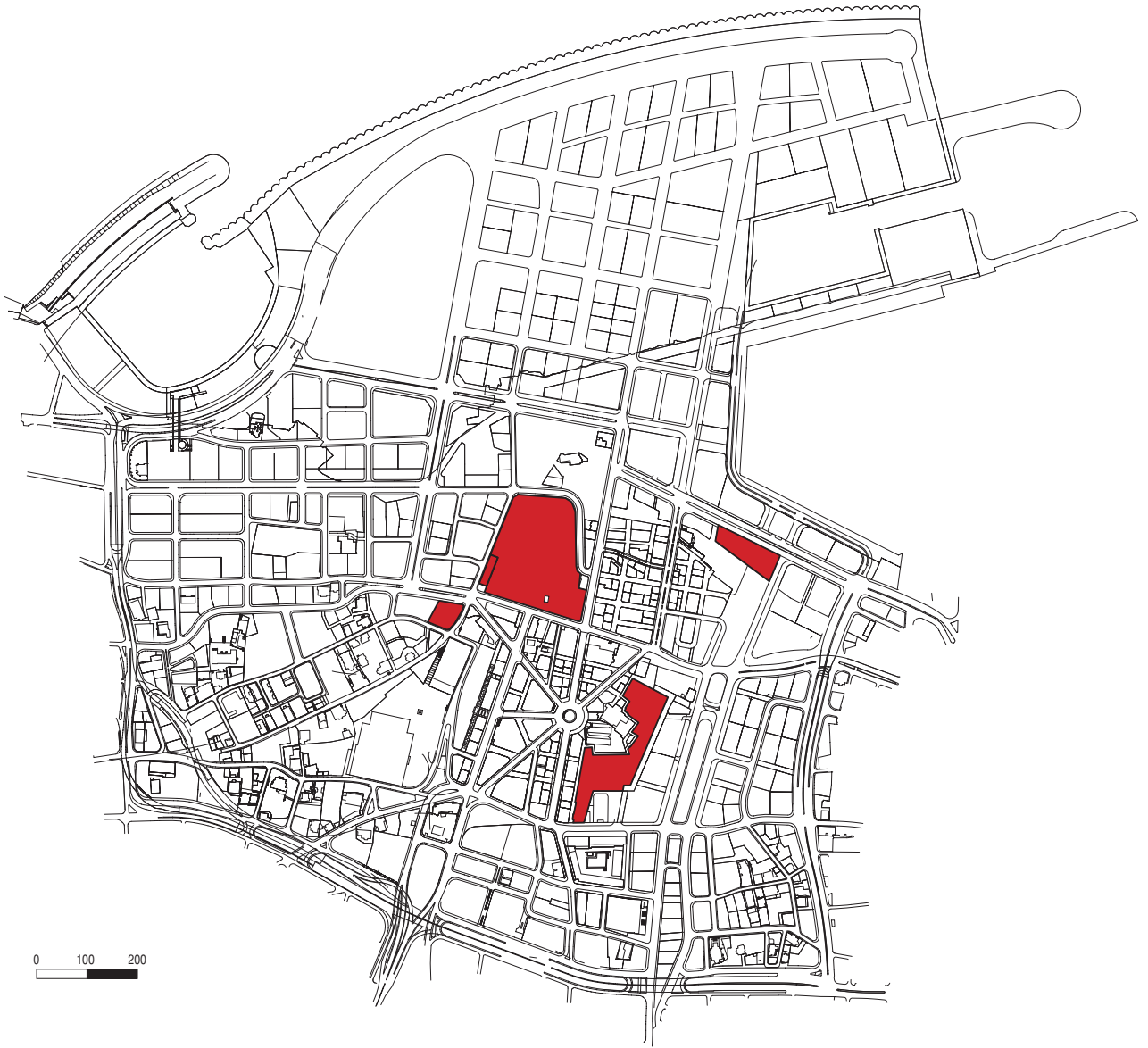


The preserved buildings in the Beirut Central District, as seen in the 1994 Master plan



The Age of buildings in the Beirut Central District

- Before 1920
- 1920-1945
- 1945-1990
- After 1990



Areas of research in the BCD

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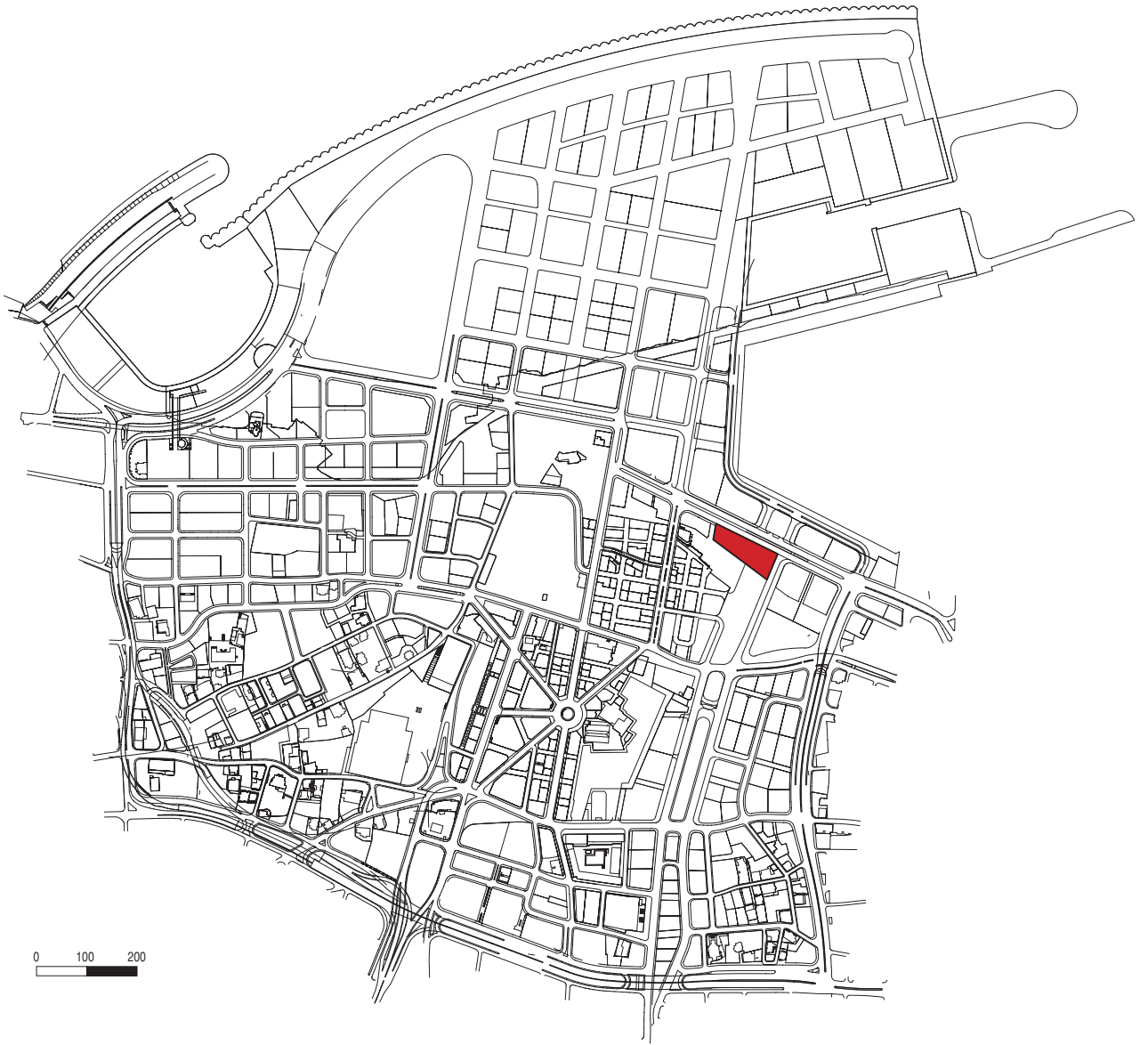
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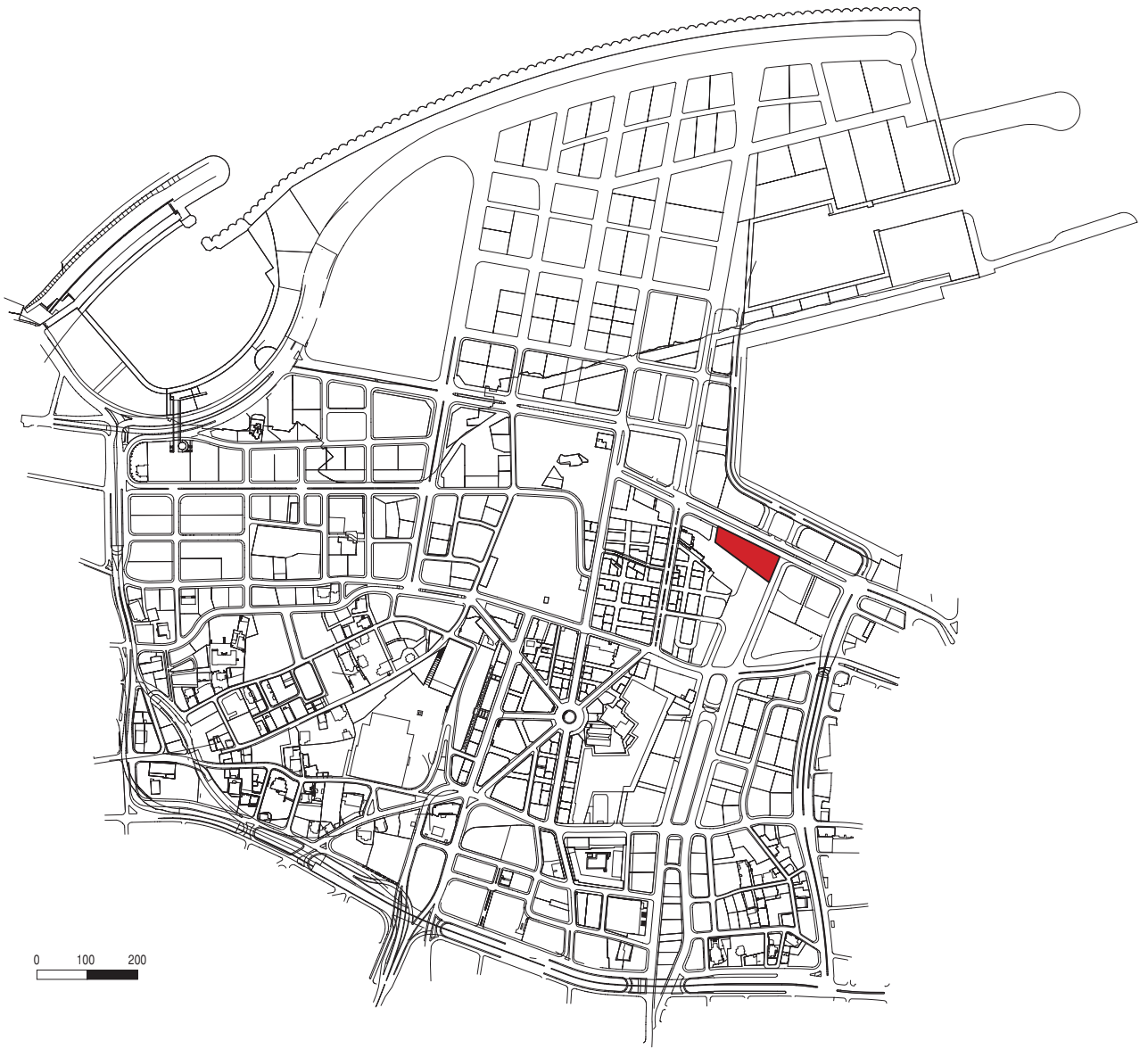
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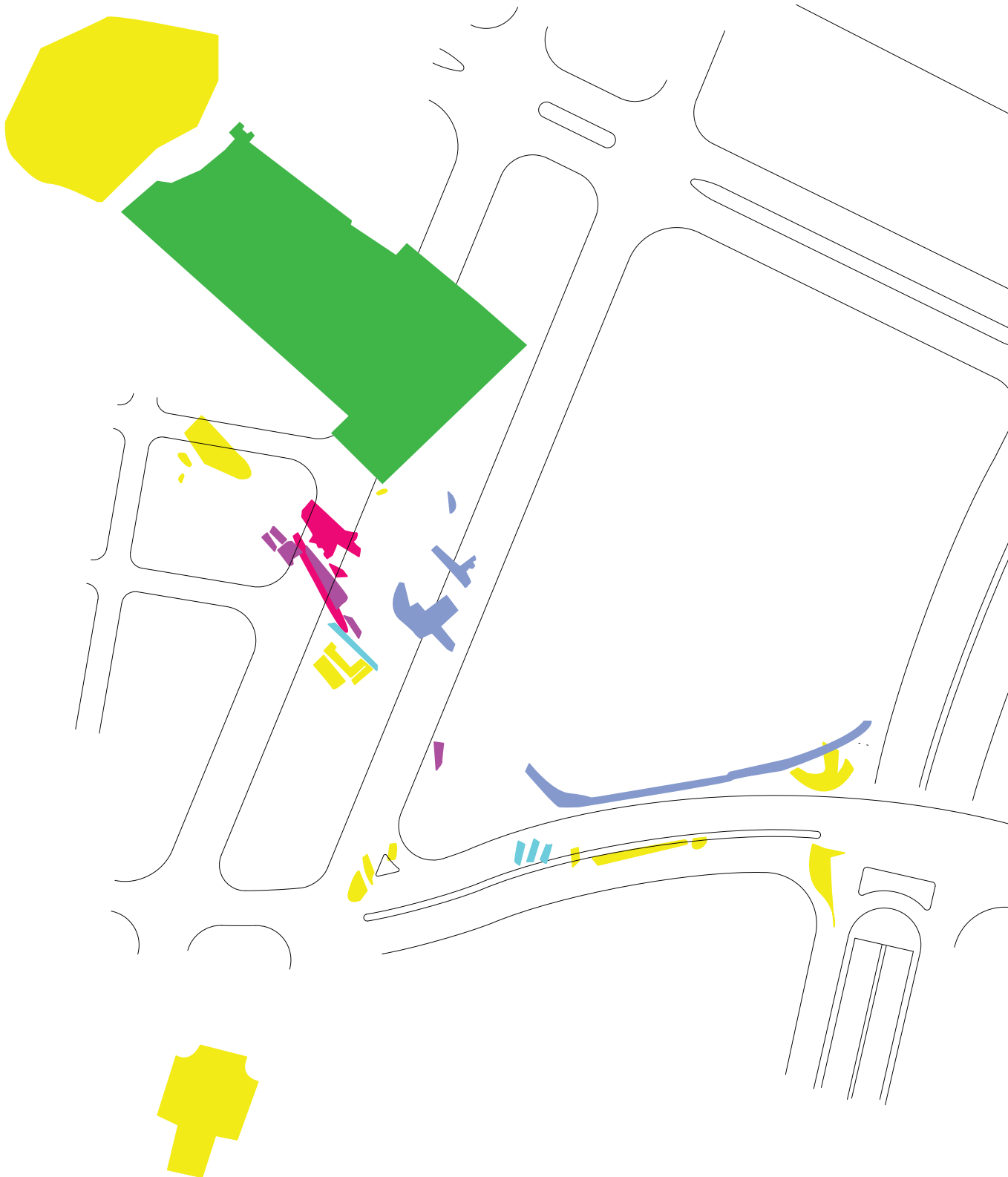
The Crusader castle was built in the 11th century as a sea fort, protecting the port from sea invasions. The castle was continually used during the middle ages, however in the 18th century, small land reclamations made the castle invalid being no longer on the coast. In the 1950s a cinema was built directly on top of the castle.



Concrete columns of the old souks rising through the roman walls. 2009



Remains of the Crusader castle. 2009



Archaeological remains sofar discovered around the
Crusader castle and ancient tell

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES IN THE AREA OF THE CRUSADER CASTLE

 The Bronze Age

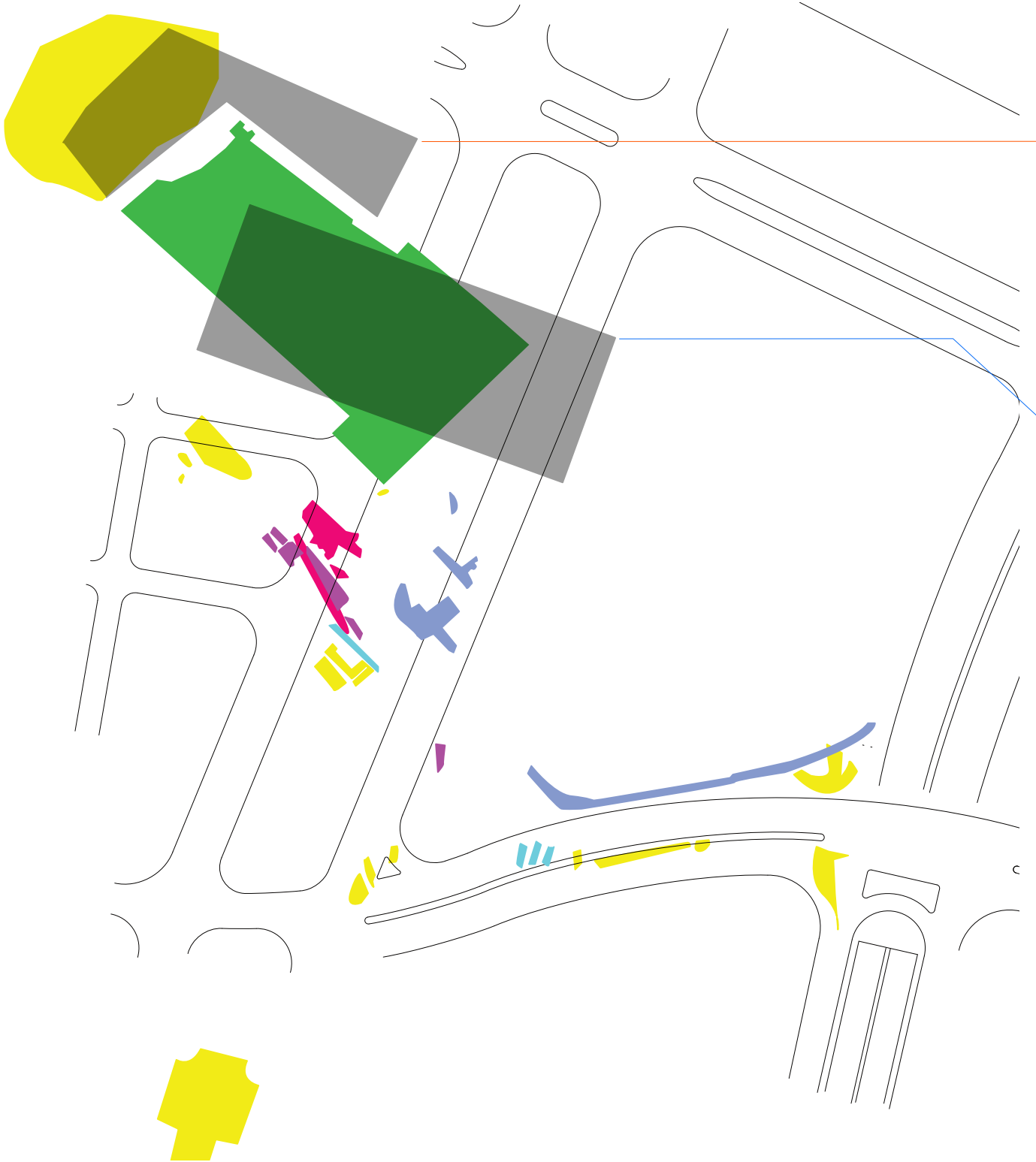
 Pheonician

 Hellenistic

 Persian

 The Crusaders

 Ottoman



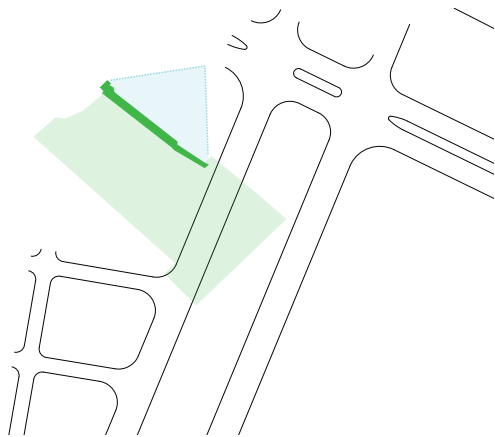
The Rivoli cinema and the souks were demolished in 1994, to reveal the Crusader castle and roman ruins underneath



The old souks. 1950



The Rivoli Cinema standing at the end of Place des Canons. 1991



The remains of the Crusader castle discovered beneath the Rivoli
Cinema, 2009

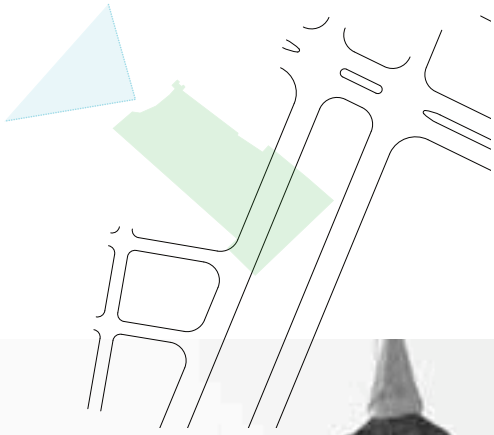




The foundations of the cinema penetrate through the remains of the ancient tell. 2005



Sketch of built layering



DRAFT
© ETH Studio Basel

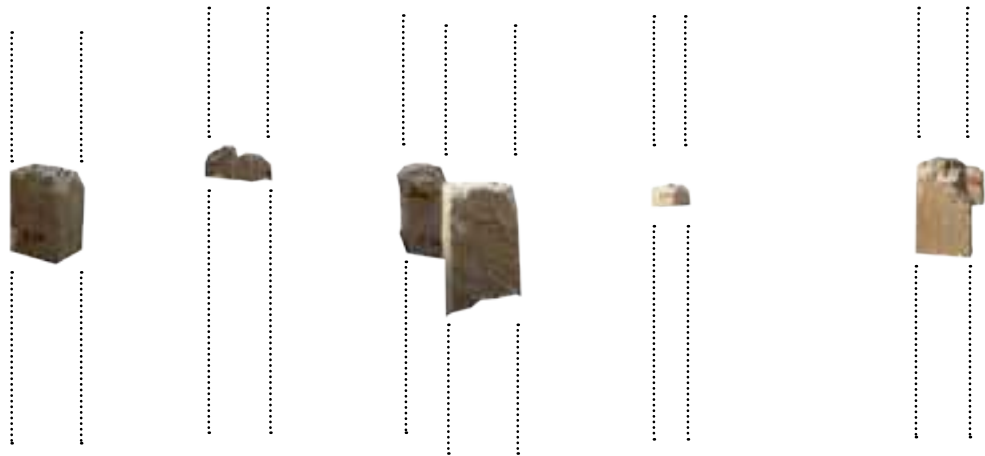
The old souks concrete columns penetrating through the remains of the roman wall. 2009







The old souk. 1960

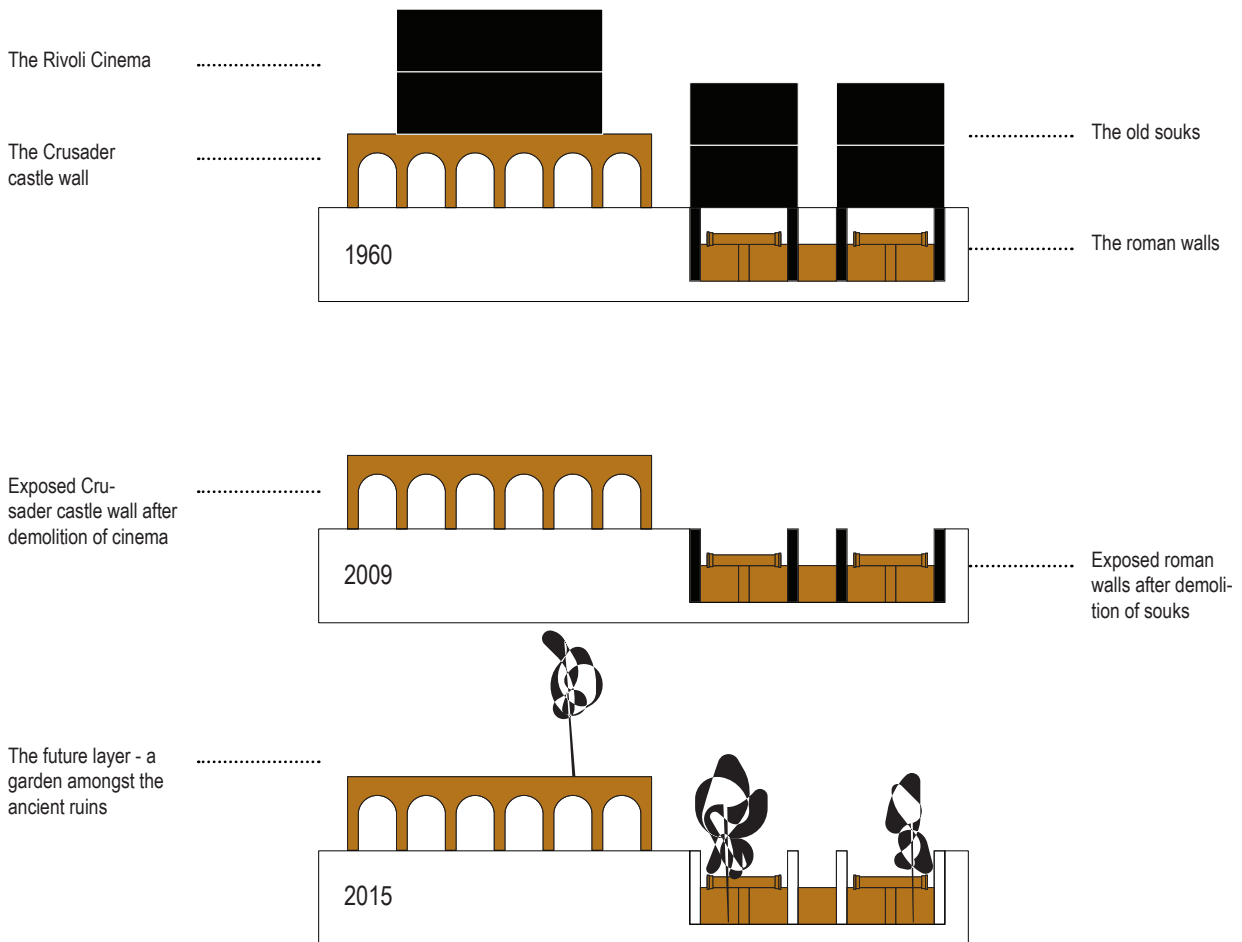


Sketch of historical layering



The Future Proposal

by Machado Silvetti Architects for the conversion of the castle and ancient tell into a garden



“original text has been effaced or partially erased”

Our definition: a natural palimpsest

The site existed in the 1960s as a literal layering of historical buildings - the cinema and souk built directly ontop of the layers of the past.

We see the future layer of a landscaped garden continuing this trend of building on the past layers.

The **permanent elements** of this example are the wall and the ruins which have survived, though been effaced, for 800 and 2000years respectively.



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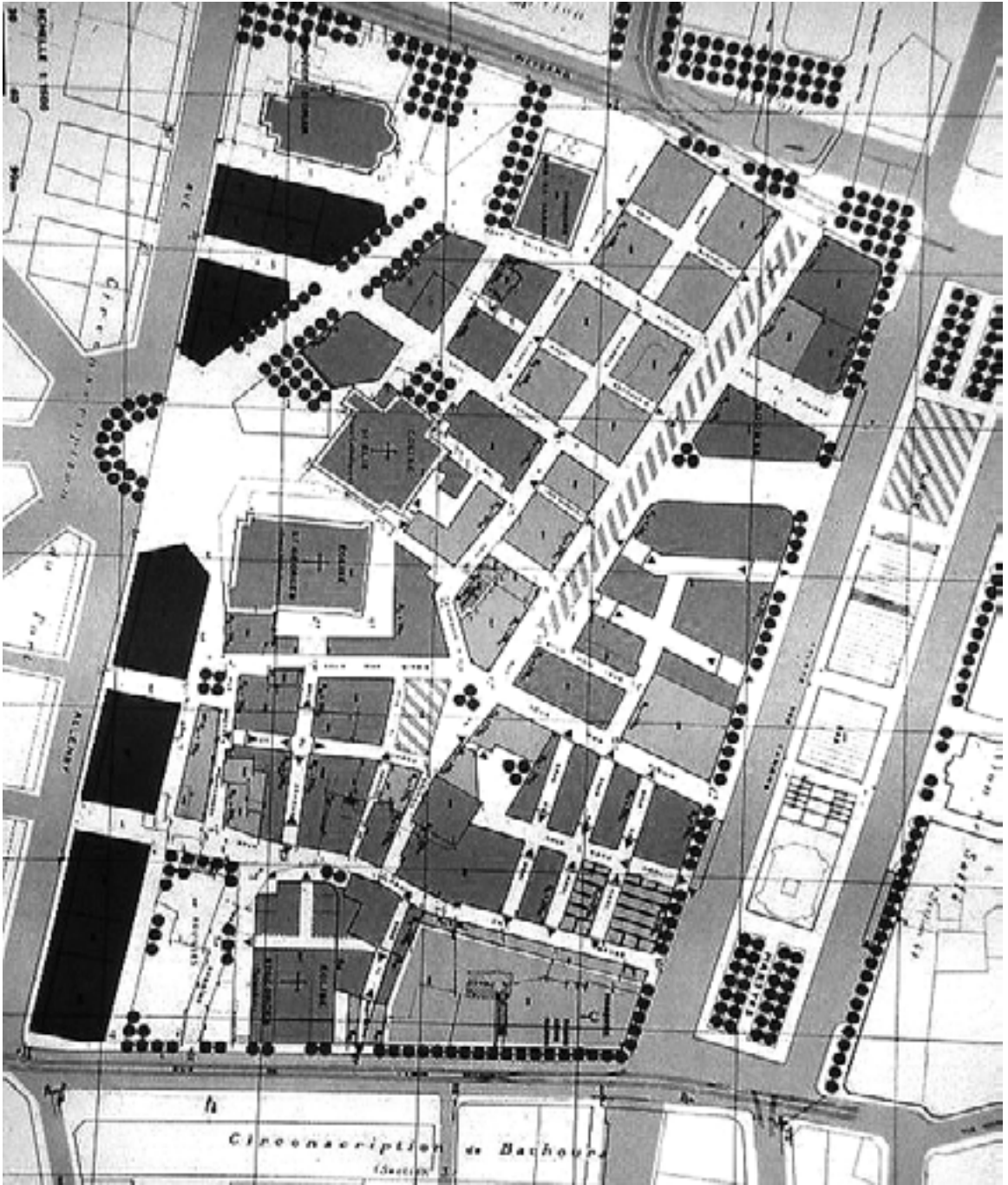


The 'Gardens of Forgiveness' is the name given to the new project for the area between the Hariri Mosque and l'Etoile Square. Prior to the civil war, the area was a dense commercial district with fruit and vegetable souks. Following the demolition of the souks in 1994 and exposing the ancient ruins, the site will become landscaped gardens.





The old souk. 1960



Plan of the old souk before its demolition in 1994



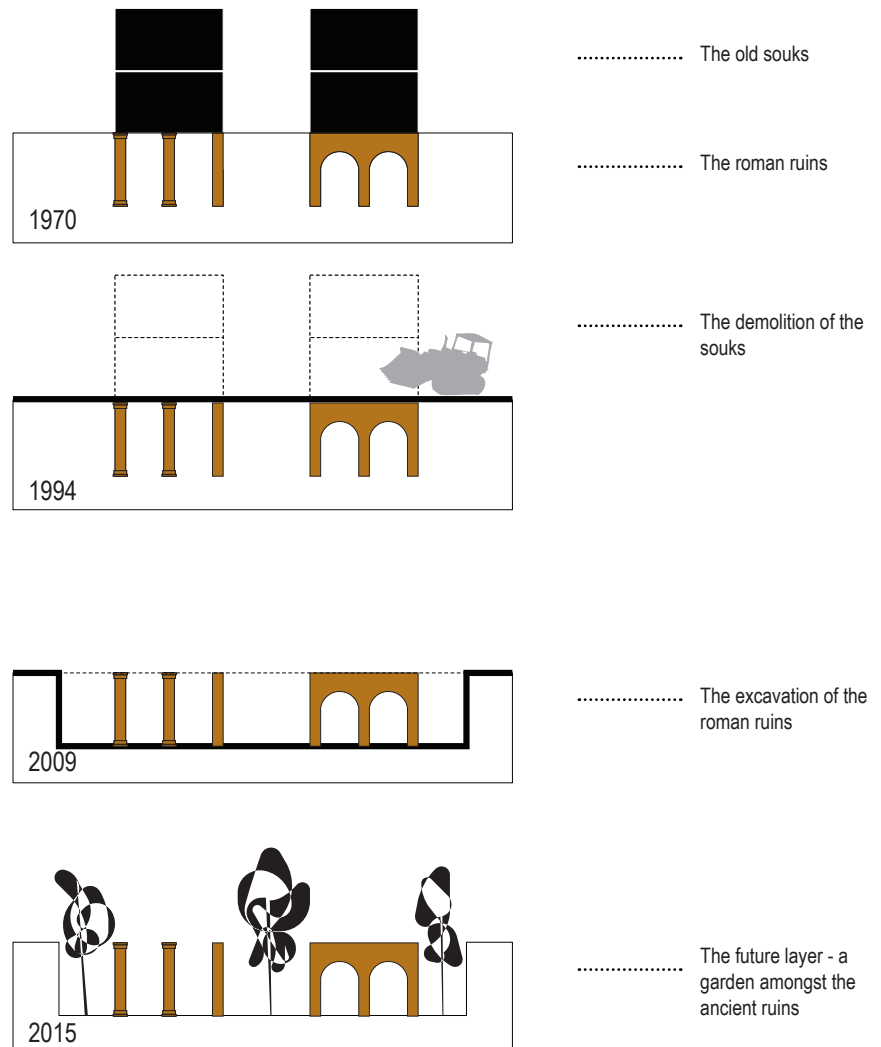
The remains of roman thermae
found under the souk. 2009



The Future Proposal by Hadiqat As-Samah Architects for the 'Garden of Forgiveness'



Plan view by Hadiqat As-Samah Architects for the 'Garden of Forgiveness'



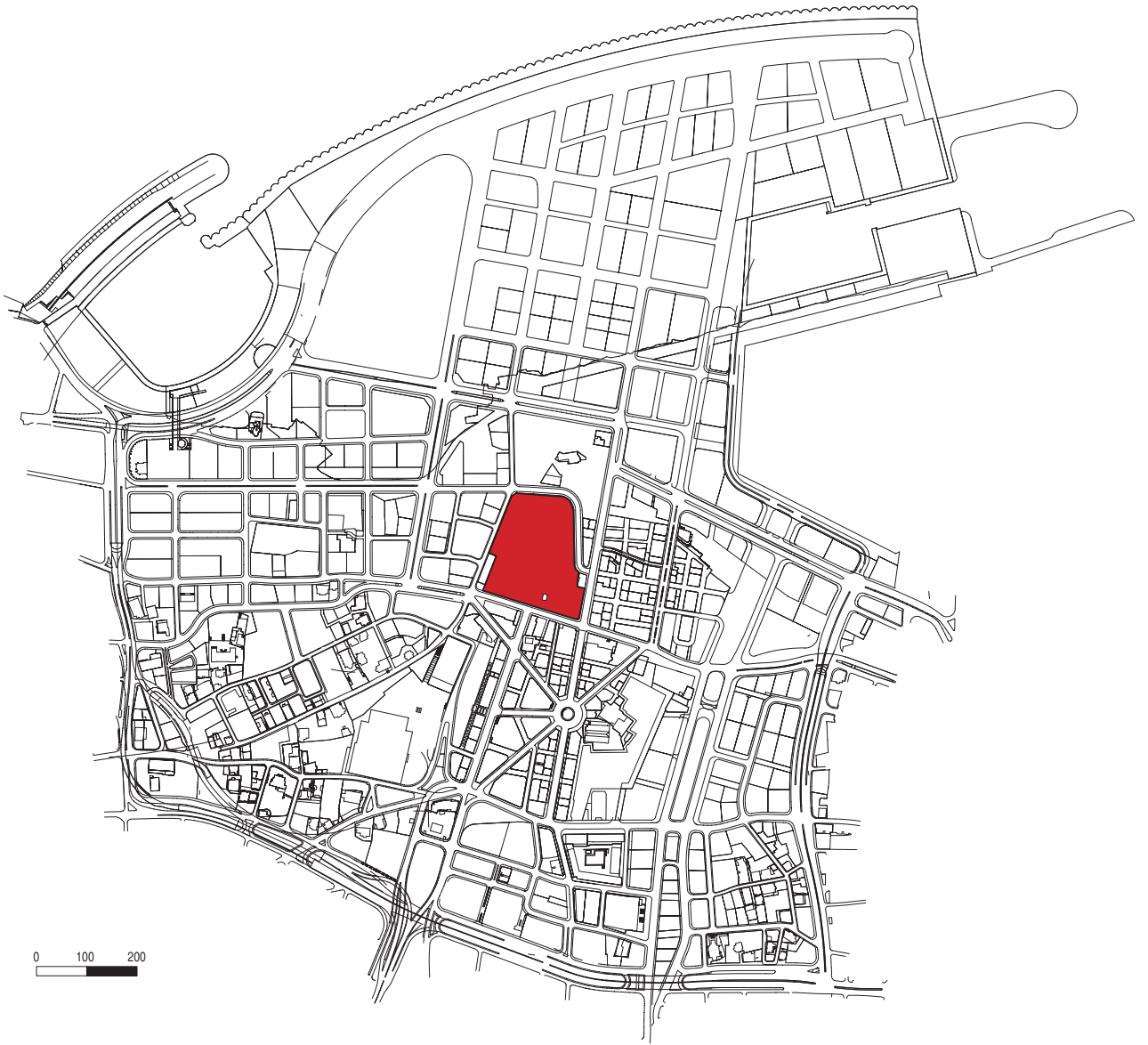
“still retaining traces of its earlier form”

Our definition: a natural palimpsest

Again, the site existed in the 1970s as a literal layering of historical buildings - the souks built directly on top of the layers of the past.

We see the future layer of a landscaped garden continuing this trend of building on the past layers.

The **permanent elements** of this example the ruins which have survived for 2000 years.



0 100 200

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Gemmayzeh

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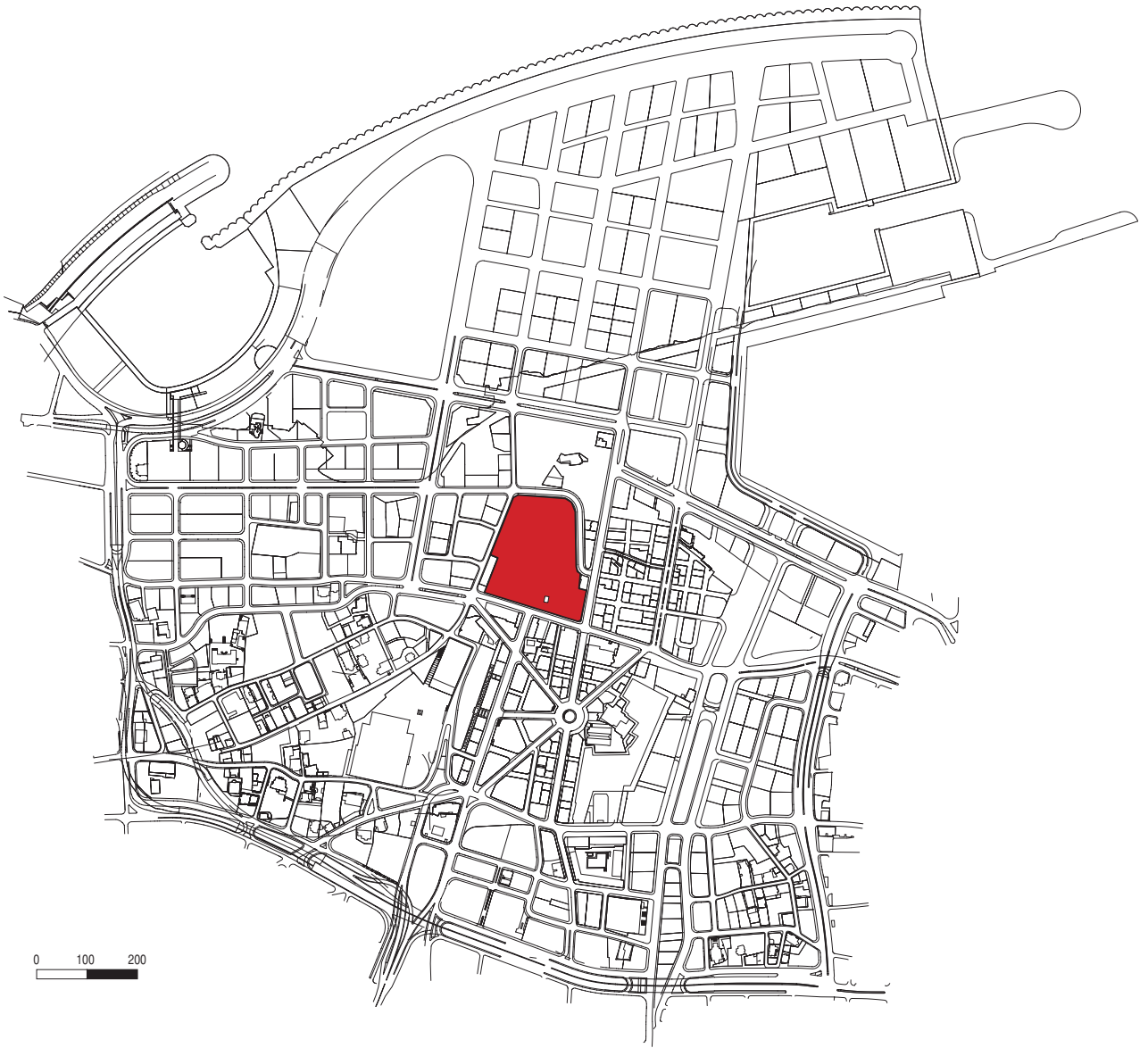
Mekkaoui Building

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The Beirut souks were designed by Raphael Moneo. The souks were opened on 2nd October this year, after a 10 year delay. They remain as the only souks in the city, where before the war, the centre thrived with many souks. Moneo's souks are built in the same location and to the same plan as previous old Arab souks before, and the previous roman street layout.

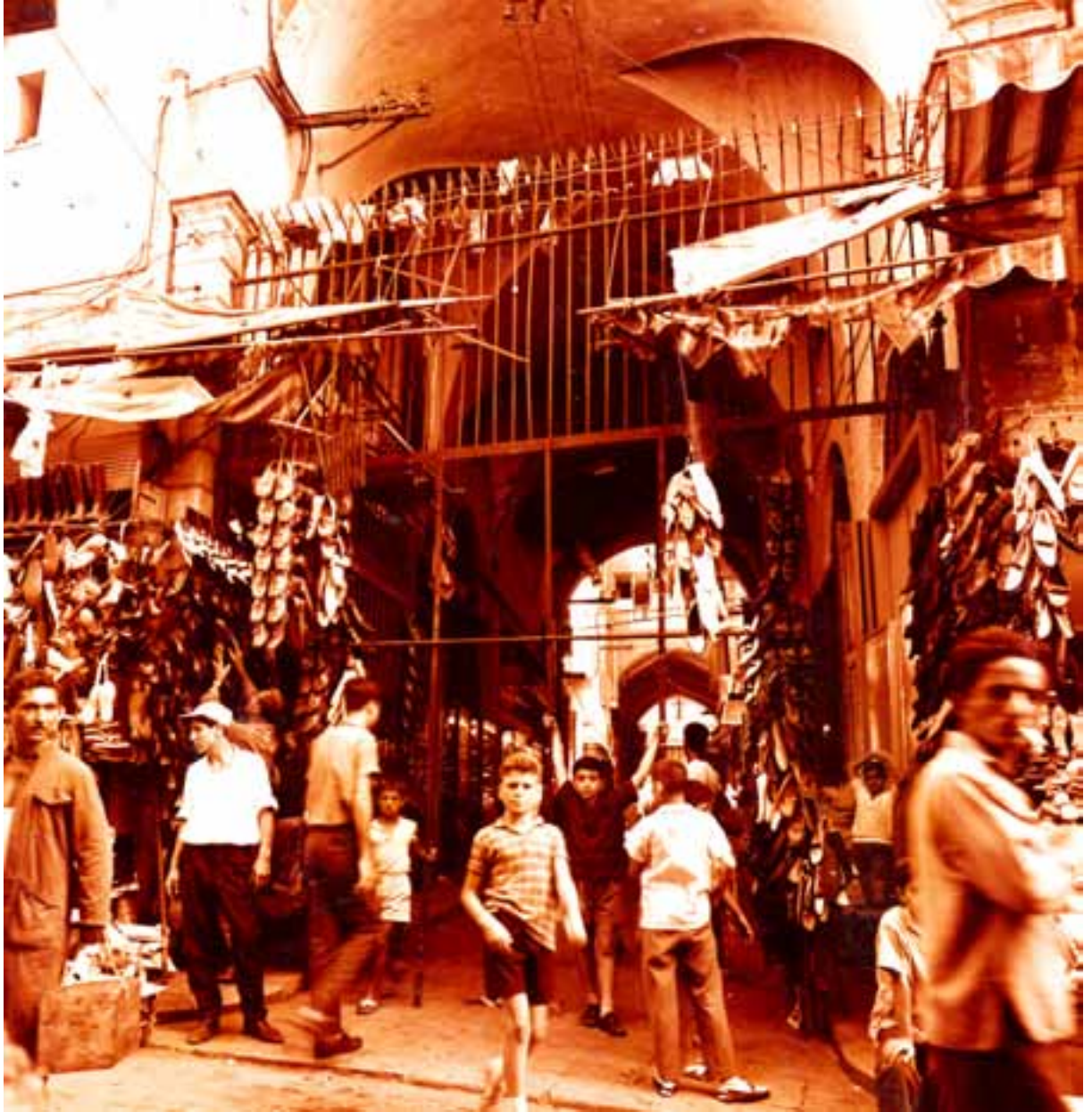


Beirut souks. 2009

„The Souk project forms part of the first phase of the overall reconstruction effort. Phase one is designed to set up two major magnets to draw life back into the central district - the banking area around Riad al-Solh Square and Place de l'Etoile, and the souk area.“

„The souk project is to recapture a lifestyle formerly identified with the city centre and re-create a marketplace where merchants prosper and all enjoy spending long hours.“

Information Booklet, Solidere, 1995



Souk Tawile before demolition in 1994.
1960



Souks Tawile. 1960





Plan of souk Tawile with superposition of the roman street plan. Archaeologists discovered the roman street plan when excavating the drainage pipes of the area. They found the drainage pipes were laid, from each era, one on top of the other.



Ground plan of the new Beirut souks by Rafael Moneo.



Initial stages of construction of the new souks, showing the extent of archaeological finds on the site. 1996



The remains of the roman city wall on the site of the new souks.
Adjacent to the roman wall was a moat, archaeologists discovered.
Both wall and moat were demolished. 1995

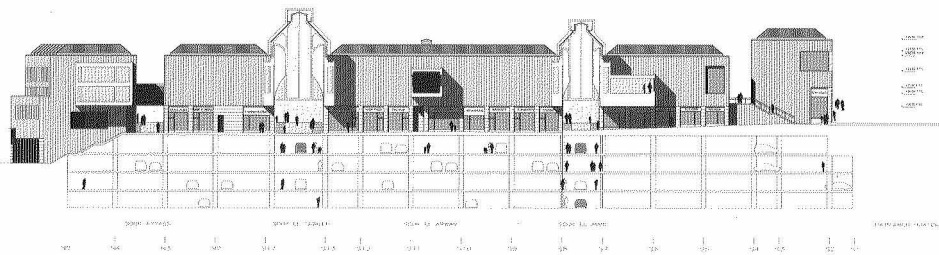
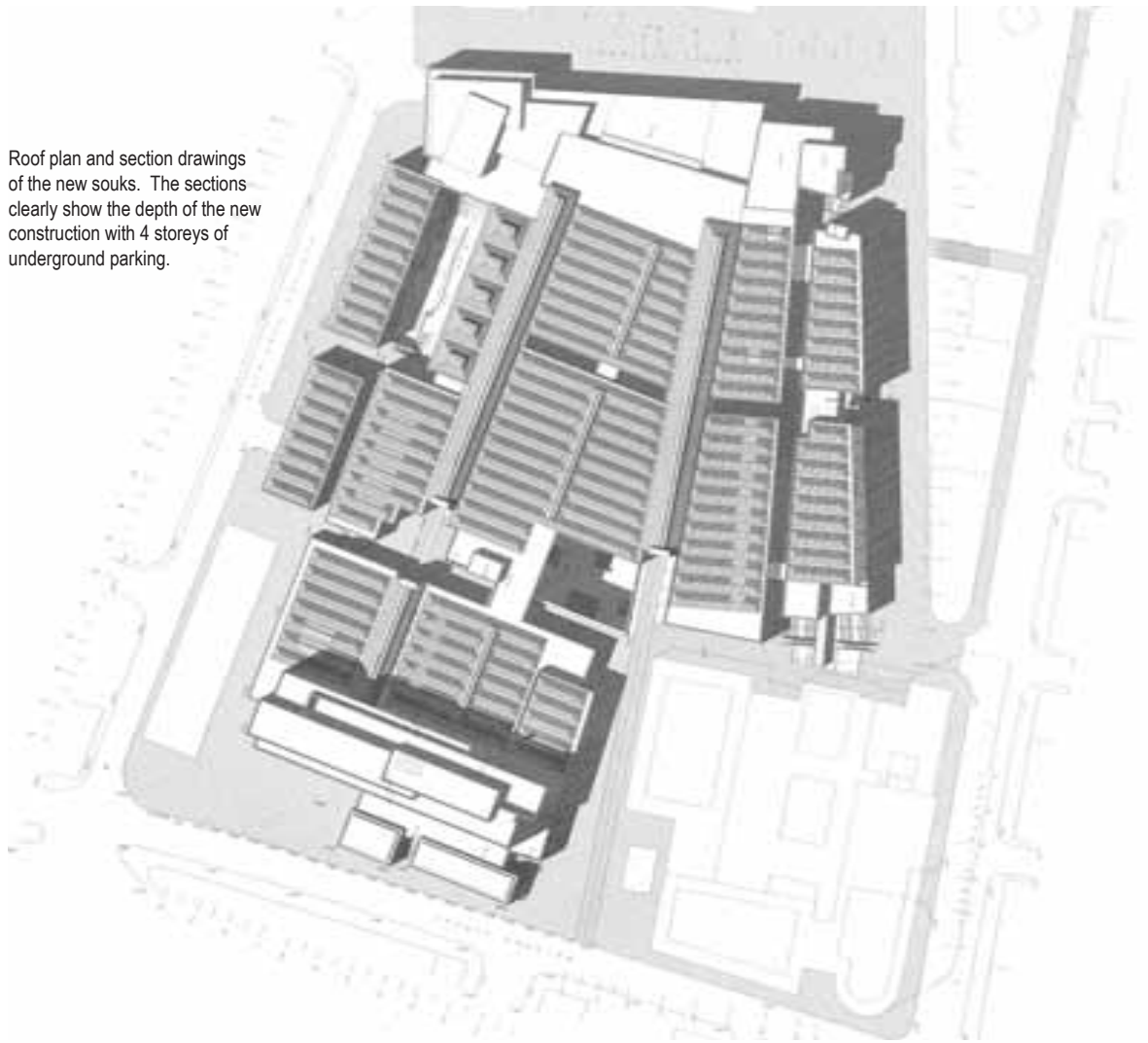


The preparation and levelling of the site, with the Mamluk shrine saved from demolition. 1997



The main entranceway to the new Beirut souks, following the ancient roman street pattern, and showing the preserved Mamluk shrine. 2009

Roof plan and section drawings of the new souks. The sections clearly show the depth of the new construction with 4 storeys of underground parking.



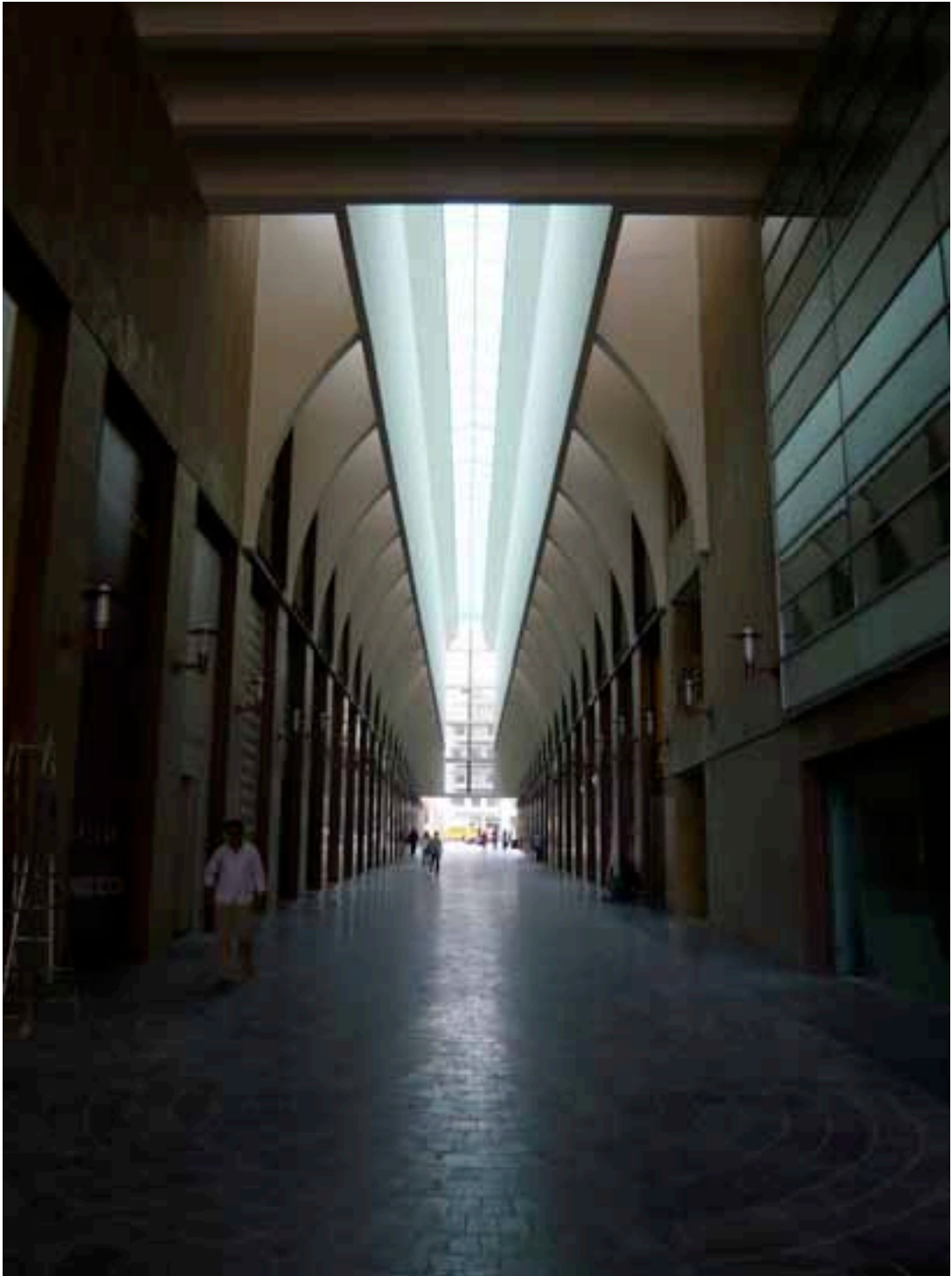


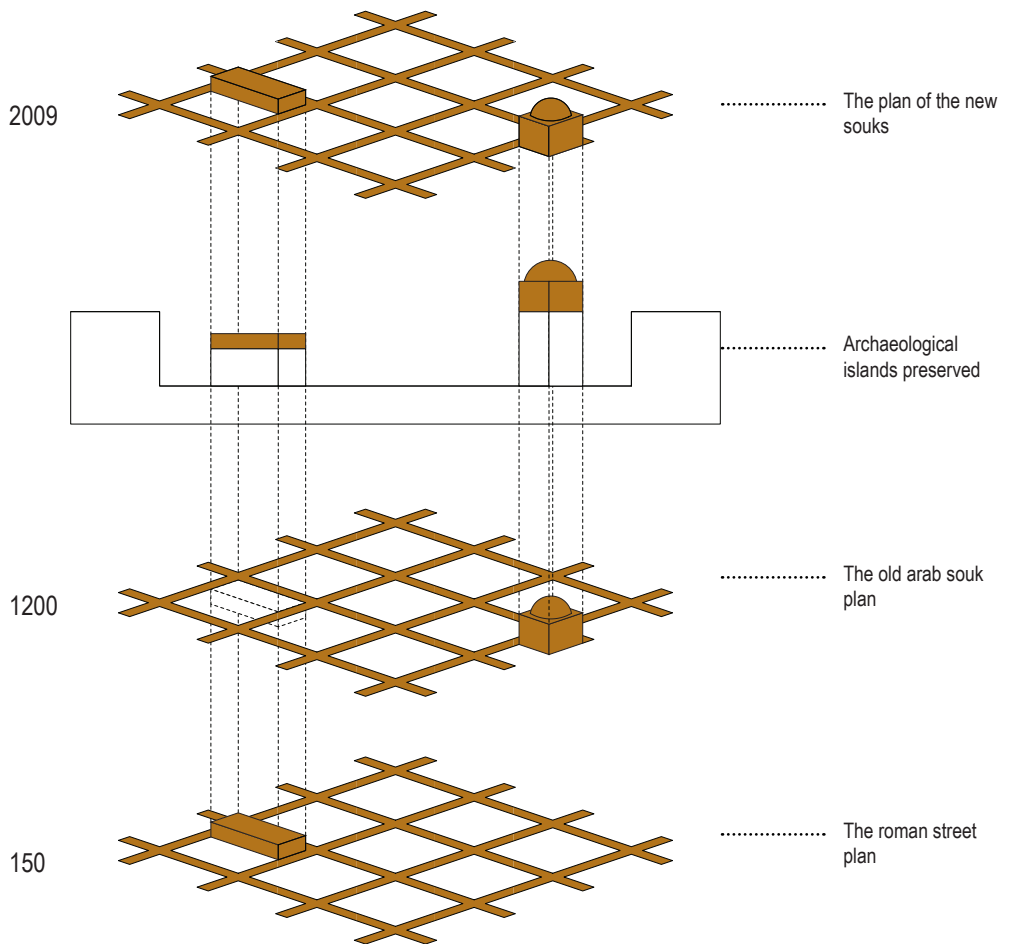
A section of the roman city wall incorporated in the new design. 2009



The Beirut souks. 2009







“original themes persist”

Our definition: a plan palimpsest

The site has historically inherited the street pattern from the people before. The purpose for doing this in the past, we believe, was for economical reasons - following the pre-existing drainage lines. The new Beirut souks have inherited the original street pattern as an identity for people with the past.

The **permanent element** of this example, most importantly, is the roman street plan which has survived for 2000years. Archaeological islands of the roman wall and a Mamluk shrine have also survived.



0 100 200

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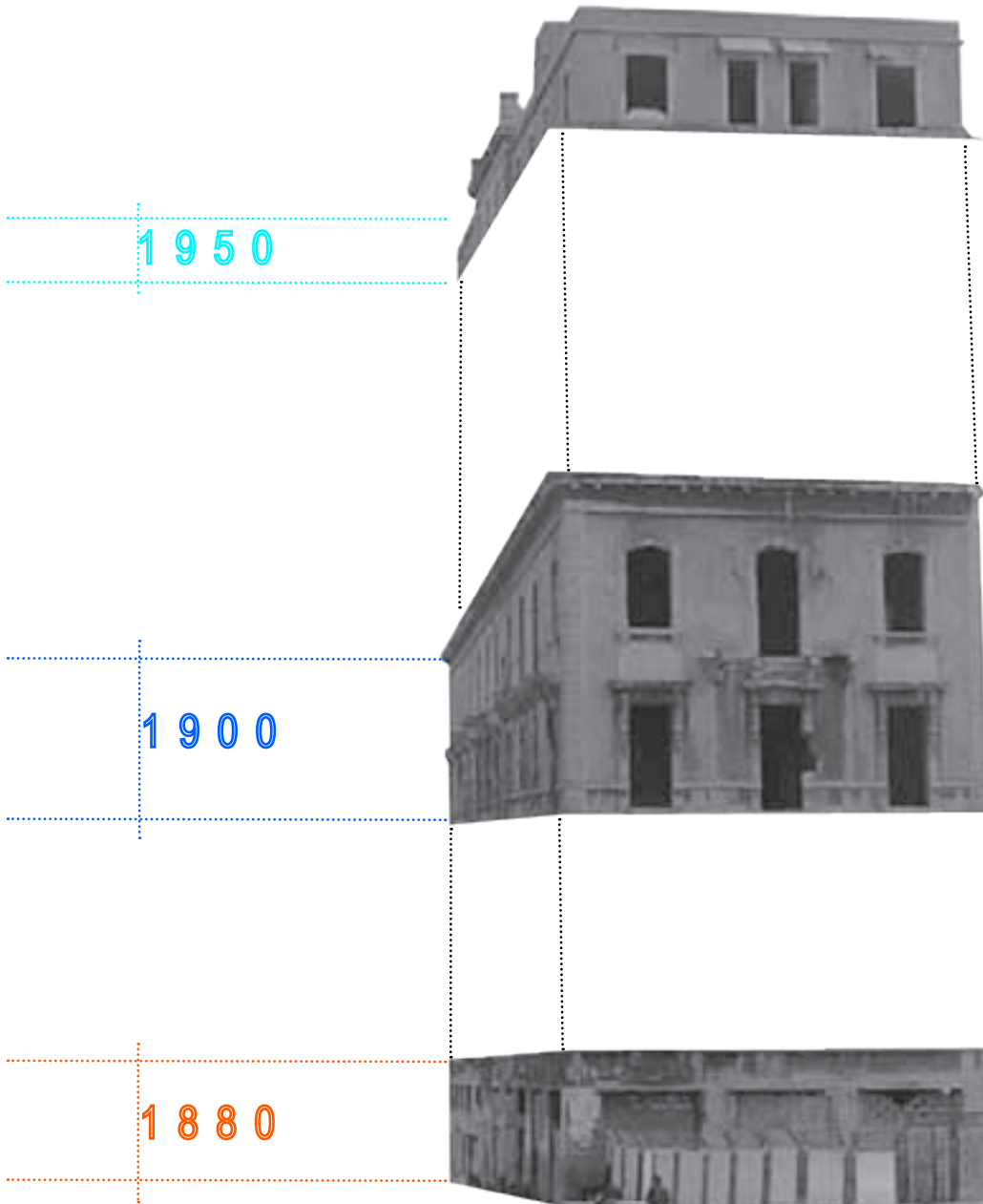
The Sabbaq building was renovated in 2000. The project involved a collaboration of Jad Tabet, who sketched the initial details of how the damaged facade should be minimally treated, and the Sabbaq Architects (Elie Pierre Sabbaq and Najji Assi). Hailed as the 'landmark of the souks' the building borrows almost methods of archaeology to expose the age and history of the building.



The Sabbaq building. 2009



The Sabbaq building. 1995



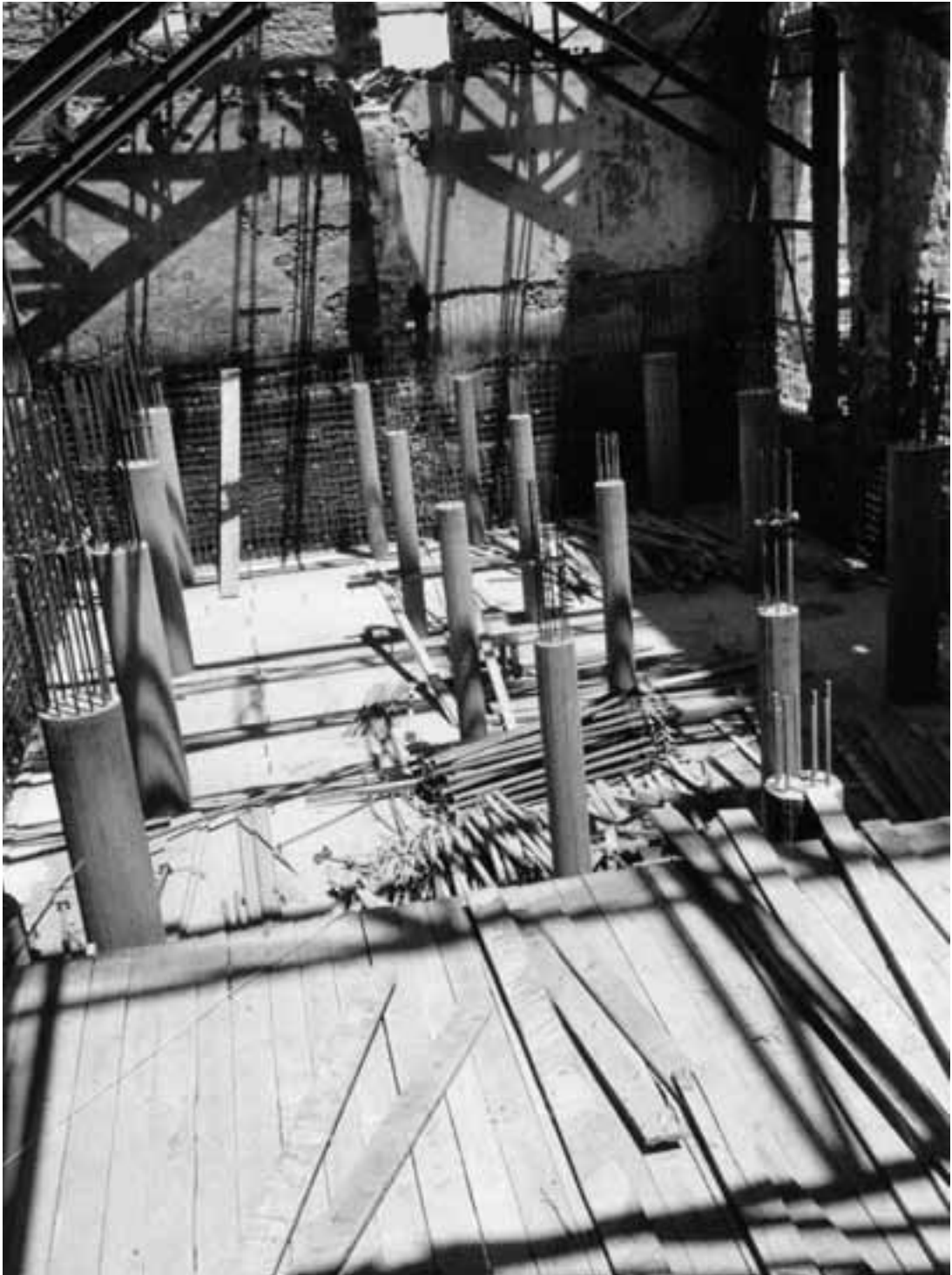
The layering of the Sabbaq building

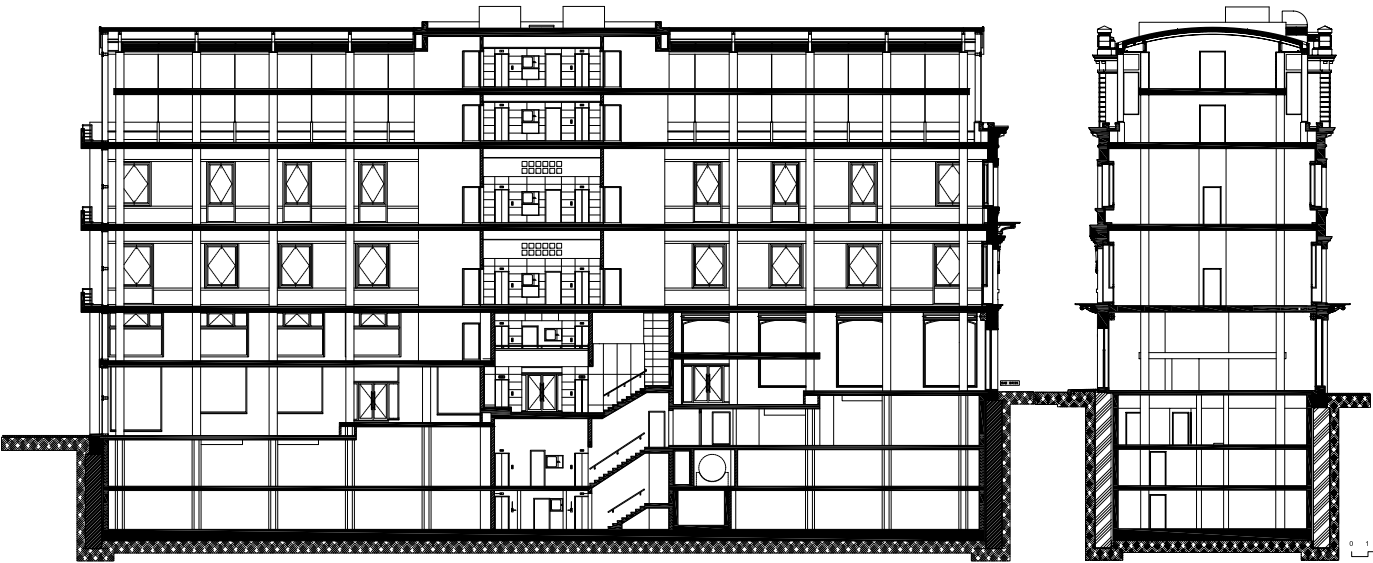


Reconstruction of the Sabbaq building. 1997

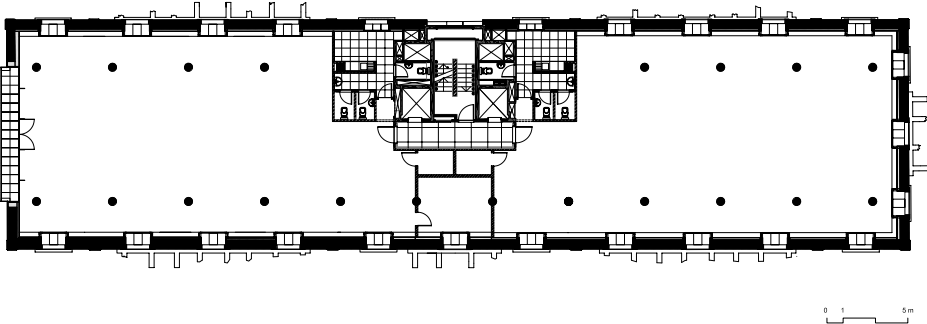


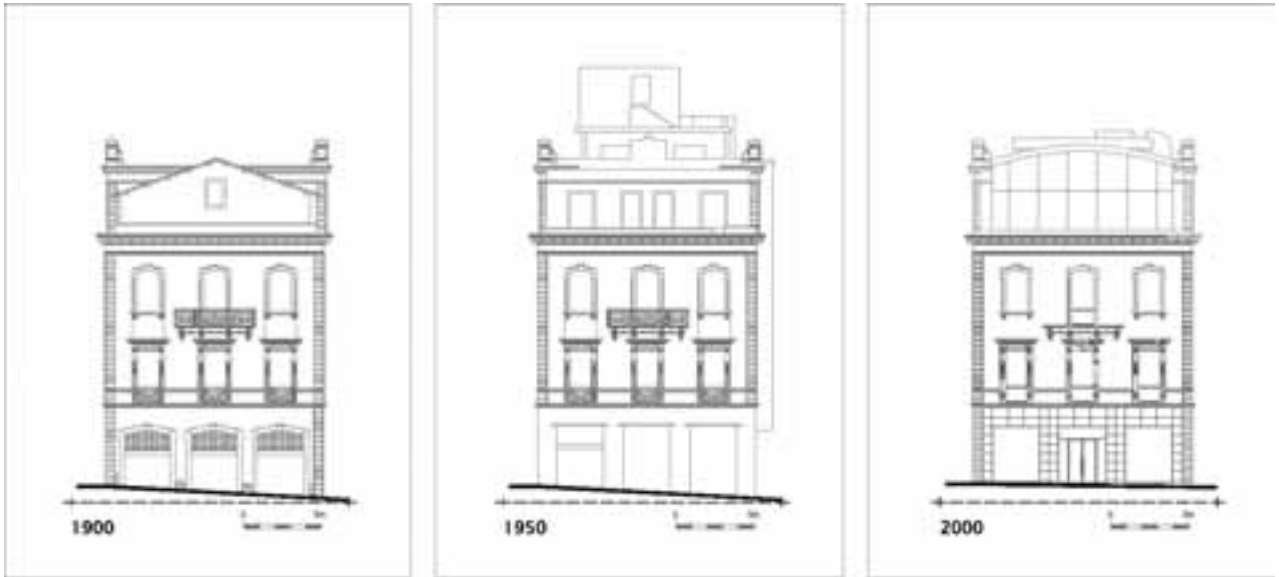
Sabbaq building, 1997



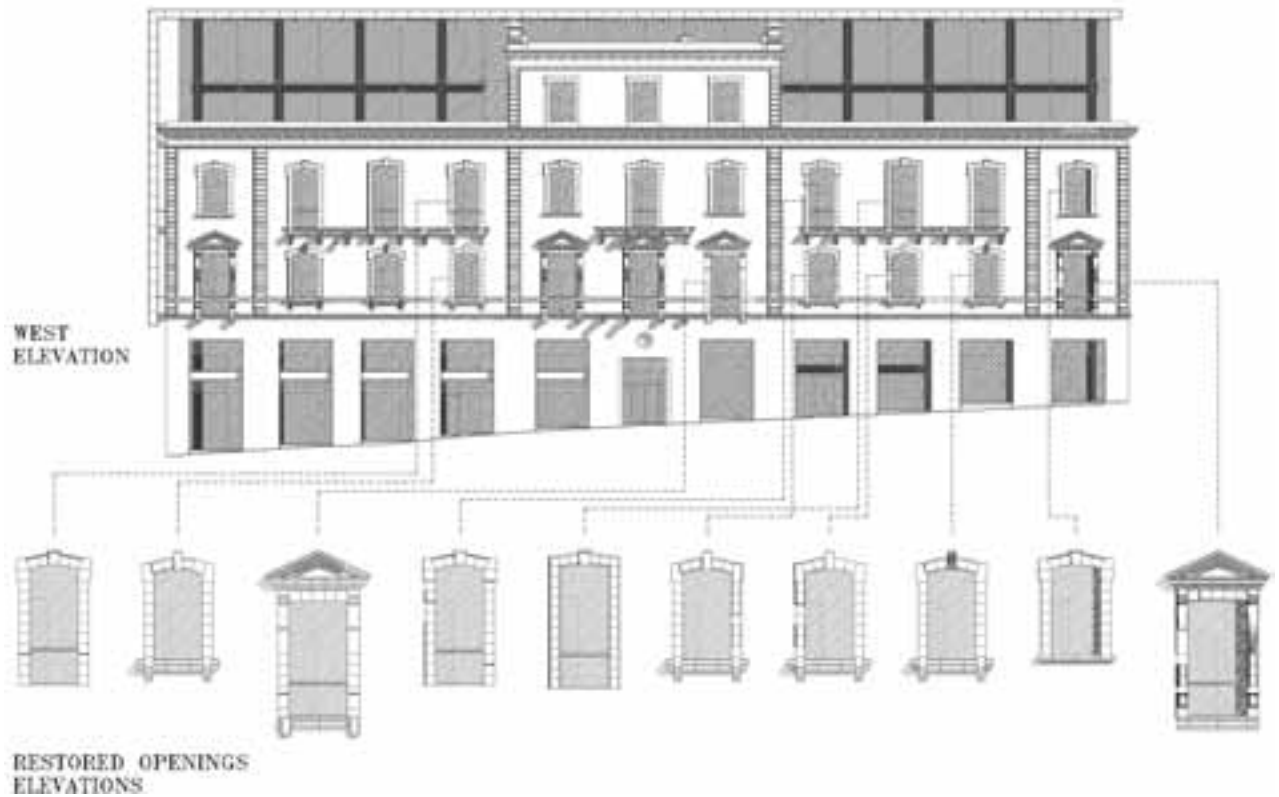


Typical floor plan and sections of the Sabbaq building.





Design evolution of the south facade.



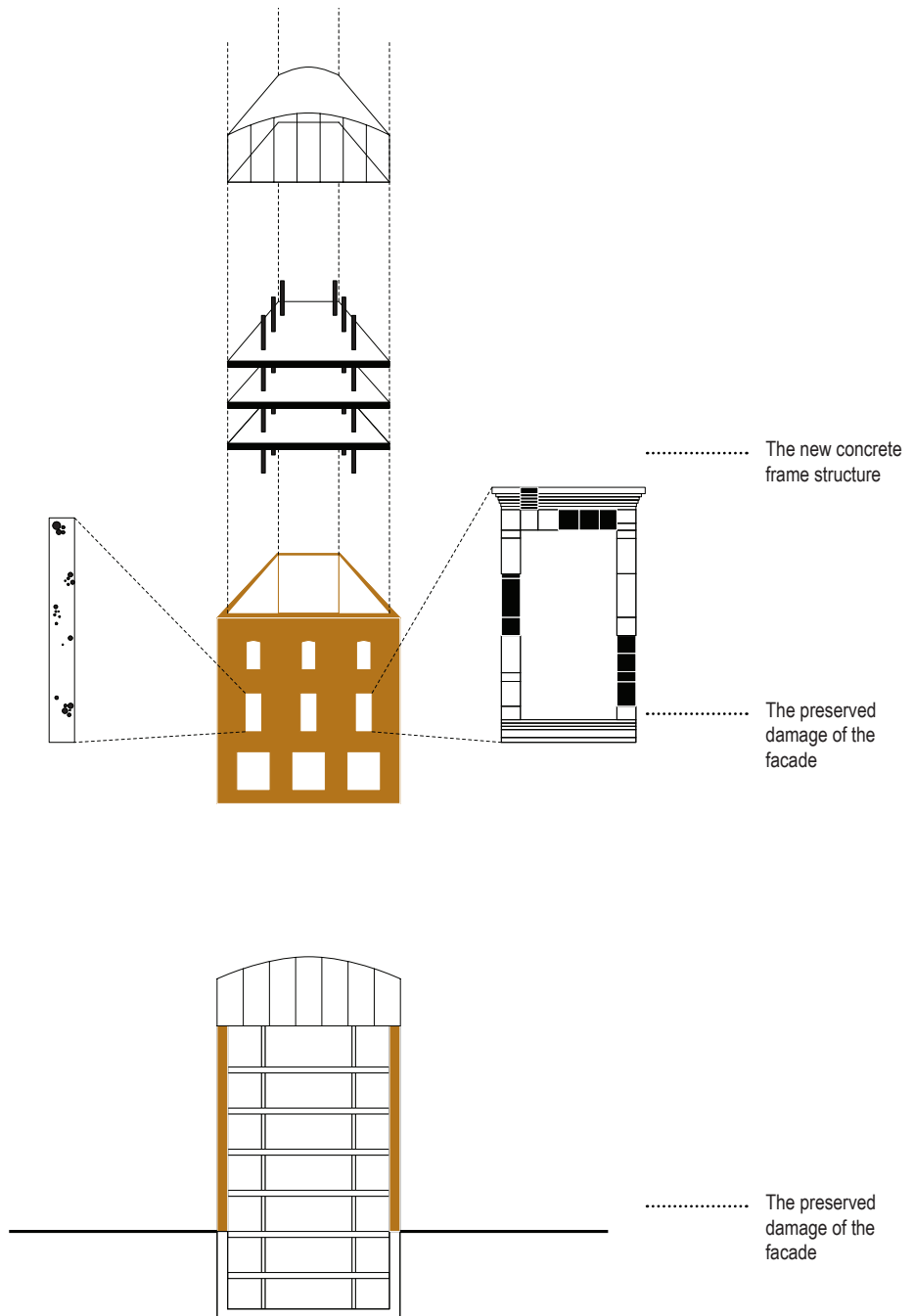
Drawings of each of the new window details. Jad Tabet sketched the initial details.



The abstract new details of the facade. 2009



2005



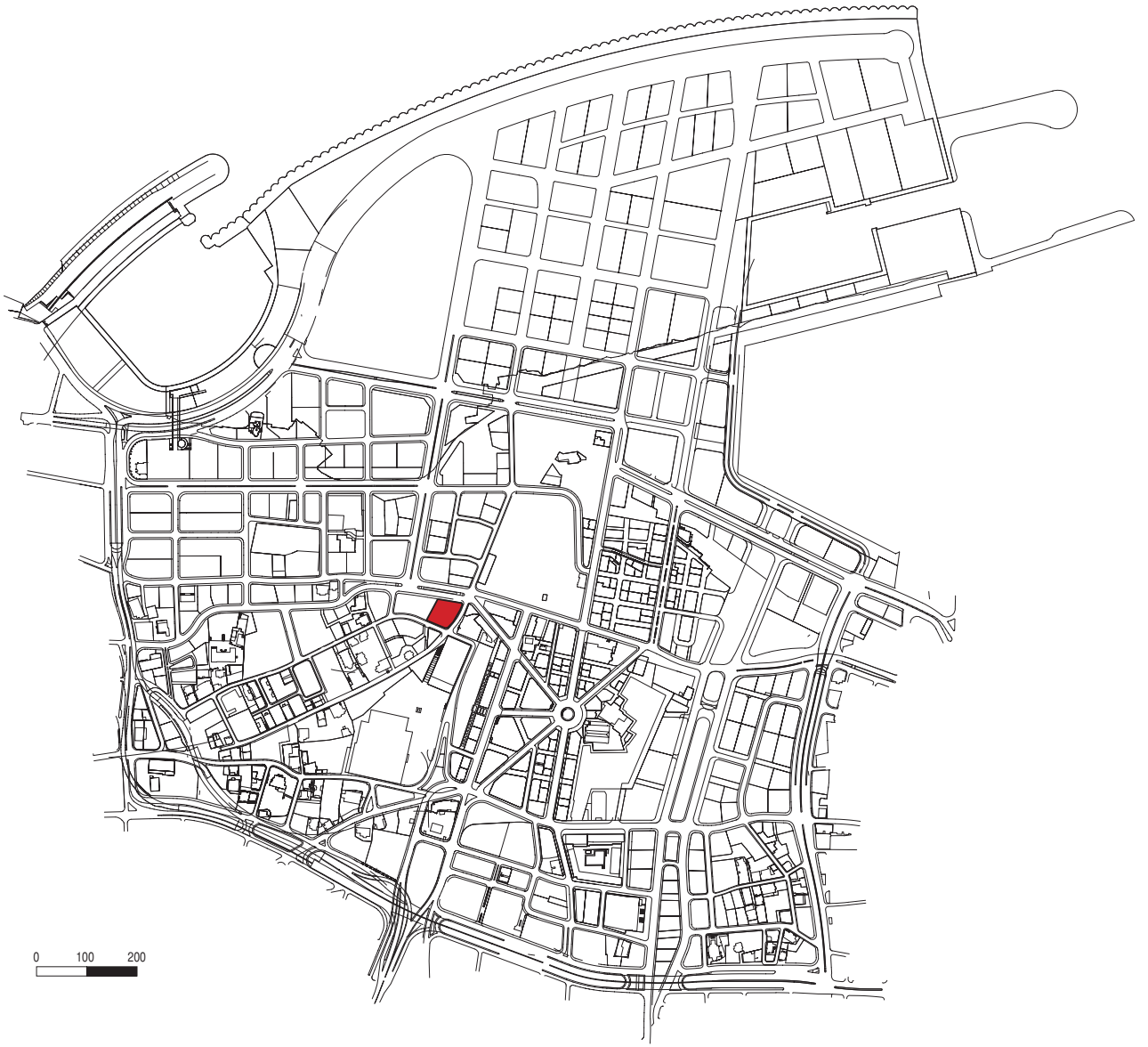
“modifies and renders original themes of its own development more specific.”

Our definition: an internal palimpsest

Initiated by Jad Tabet, and continued by the Sabbaq Architects, particular care has been taken to expose the conditions of the facade, and the realities of the war. This is an opposing stance to most of the reconstruction by Solidere, who try to erase all memories of the recent past.

The Sabbaq building has developed an ‘internal palimpsest’ by building inside the existing facade.

The **permanent element** of this example is the building skin.



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The Audi Bank was reconstructed in 2000 by Simone Kostremelli Architects, Beirut. The building, though being close to the Bank street, was extensively damaged during the war. The architects paid particular attention to the replication of the detail in the reconstruction, which included the building being moved to widen the adjacent road. Missing column capitals were found in the mountains.



The Audi Bank. 2009



The Audi Bank. 1991



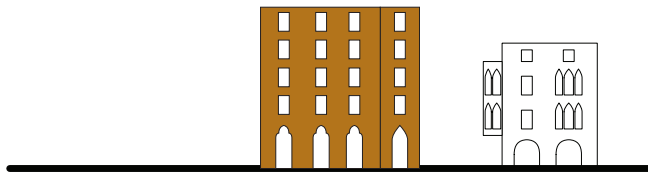
Huge damage during the war. 1991



The Audi Bank in its original position. 1991



During reconstruction, the front facade of the building was moved backward to accommodate the widening of the road

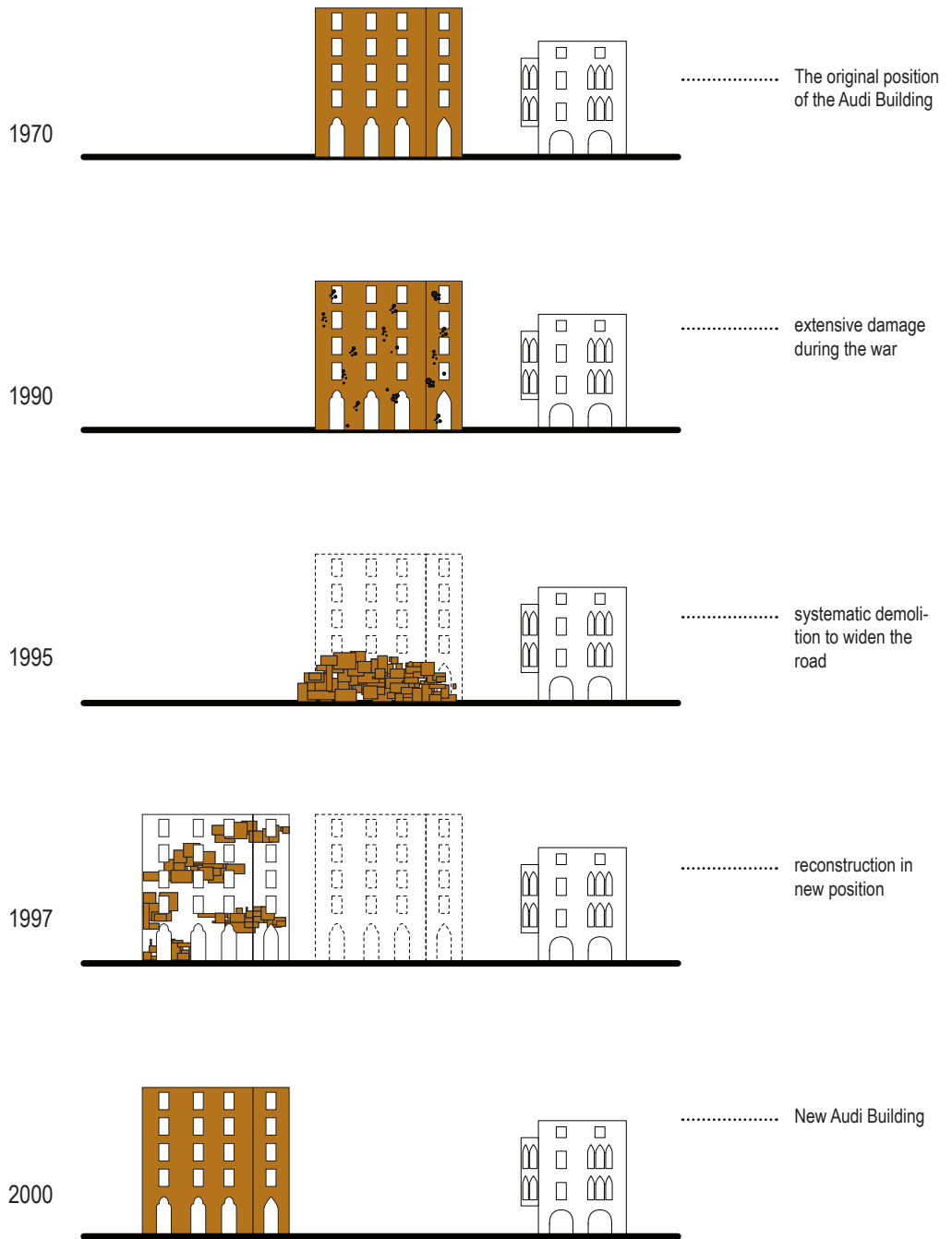




Missing column capitals either side of the door (below), were found in Mount Lebanon. The architect employed special stone masons to recreate the original details.



The Audi Bank in its damaged state, 1991, and in its reconstructed state, 2009. It is almost impossible to notice which stone is new and which is old.



“the older text is recoverable in the laboratory .”

Our definition: a resurrection palimpsest

The systematic demolition, documenting, moving and reconstruction of the building, including both old and newly worked stone, for us, constitutes in architectural terms - a resurrection of the building.

The **permanent element** of this example is the memory of the older style.



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GEMMAYZEH
figure ground plan



GEMMAYZEH
programme

- commercial small
- commercial big
- residential
- restauration







GEMMAYZEH
heights of buildings

- groundfloor
- groundfloor + 1
- groundfloor + 2
- groundfloor + 3
- groundfloor + 4
- 5 < height < 10
- height > 10



GEMMAYZEH
type of buildings

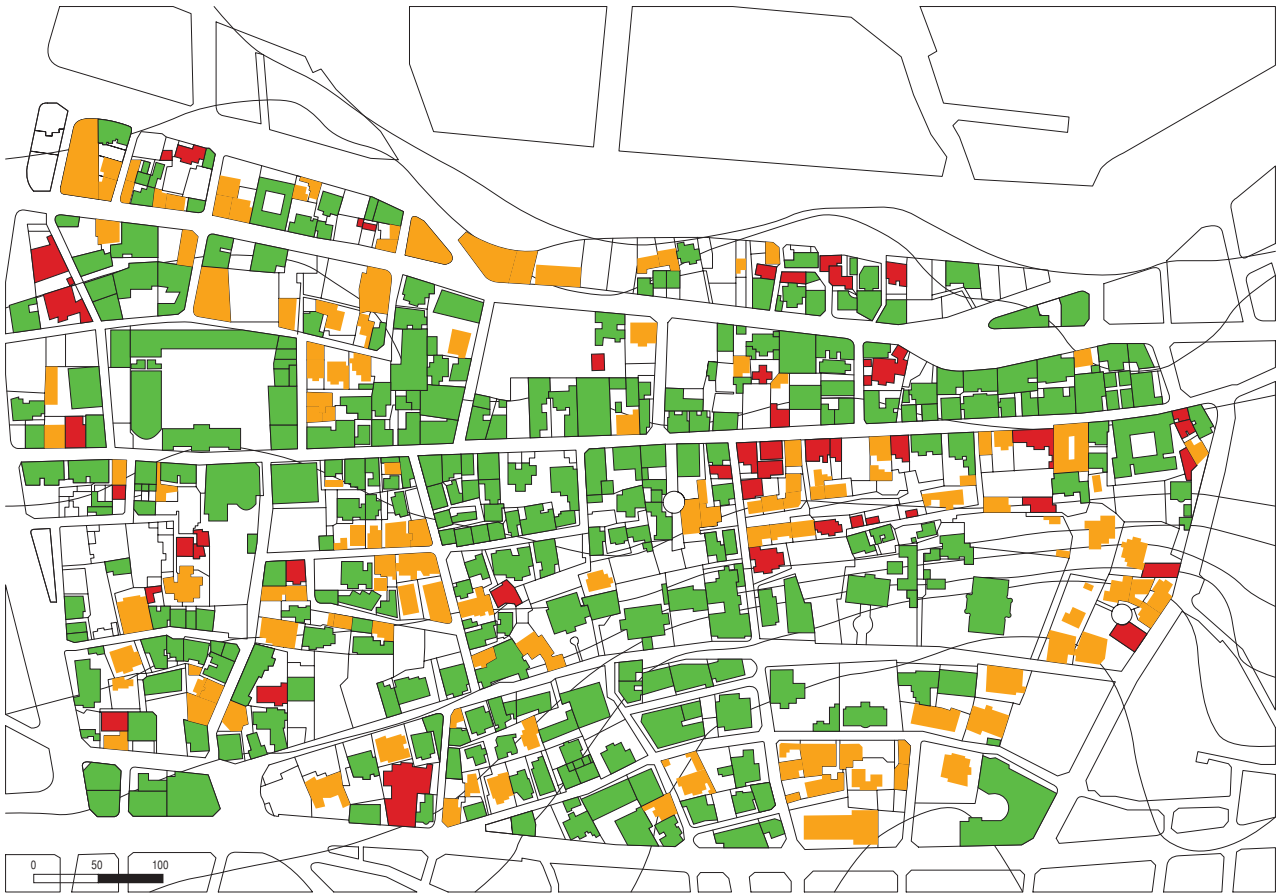
-  individual housing
-  urban housing
-  plot
-  religious building



GEMMAYZEH

style of buildings

- ottoman
- french
- modern



GEMMAYZEH
condition of buildings

- good
- middle
- bad





Street analysis of Rue Gouraud

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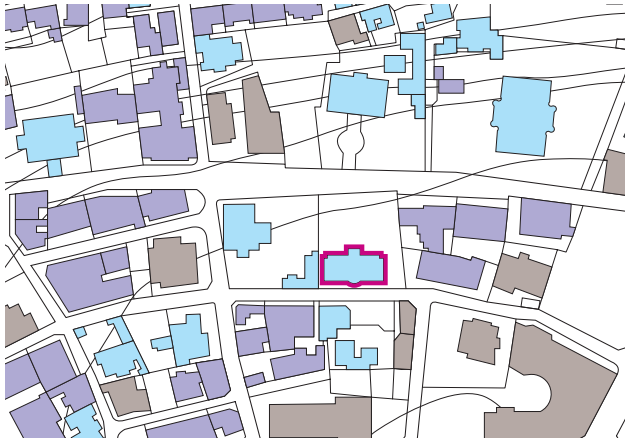
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GEMMAYZEH

type of buildings

- individual housing
- urban housing
- plot
- religious building



GEMMAYZEH

style of buildings

- ottoman
- french
- modern



GEMMAYZEH

condition of buildings

- good
- middle
- bad

The Sursock Museum was built around 1900, originally as a family house. The design contains a mix of Ottoman and Venetian styles, which expressed the status of the new bourgeoisie at the time. The museum used to be surrounded by a private garden. In the 1960s the museum was altered, with an additional facade on the back. Currently there is a new development of a residential tower, the Sursock Tower, which infringes upon the character of the museum. The tower is designed by Ziad Akl, a prominent academic figure in raising awareness of heritage issues.



Sursock Museum. 2009



Sursok Museum. 1912



Sursock Museum. 1902



Sursock Museum showing its surrounding gardens. 2005



The extension to the back of the Sursock
Museum, done in the 1960s. 2009



Photographic elevation of the 60s facade.
2009



The building appears as schizophrenic
with two distinctly different facades







The new development includes a 4 storey underground carpark. 2009



DRAFT
© ETH Studio Basel



Street elevation of Rue Surscock showing the close proximity of the new development, to both the Surscock Museum and the 1930s house on the street's corner. 2009



The Sursock Tower even cantilevers over the corner house in places. 2009



Rendered images of the Sursock Tower by Ziad Akl Architects.

“As designed, the project appears like an obelisk in town, a perfectly cut megalith, an inhabited urban sculpture, a parallelepiped object with impressive uprightness, smooth appearance and excluded from any reflective or shiny material, a paradoxical mass linking the two opposite extremities of absence and presence. It is a landmark identifying the street and strengthening the sense of belonging.”

Ziad Akl





“Something having usually diverse layers.”

Our definition: an inverted palimpsest

Since the first intervention in the 1960s, to the new Sursöck Tower development, the Sursöck museum has been encroached upon from all directions - from the back, from the side, from below, and almost because of the tower's height, from above.

This creates a mixed and inverted composition of historical layering.

The **permanent element** of this example is the front facade of the Museum.



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ZOKAK EL BLAT
figure ground plan

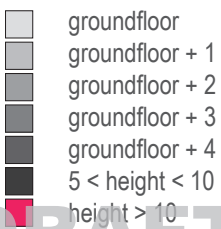


ZOKAK EL BLAT
programme

- commercial small
- commercial big
- residential
- restauration
- library / school







ZOKAK EL BLAT
heights of buildings





ZOKAK EL BLAT
type of buildings

-  individual housing
-  urban housing
-  plot
-  religious building



ZOKAK EL BLAT
style of buildings

- ottoman
- french
- modern



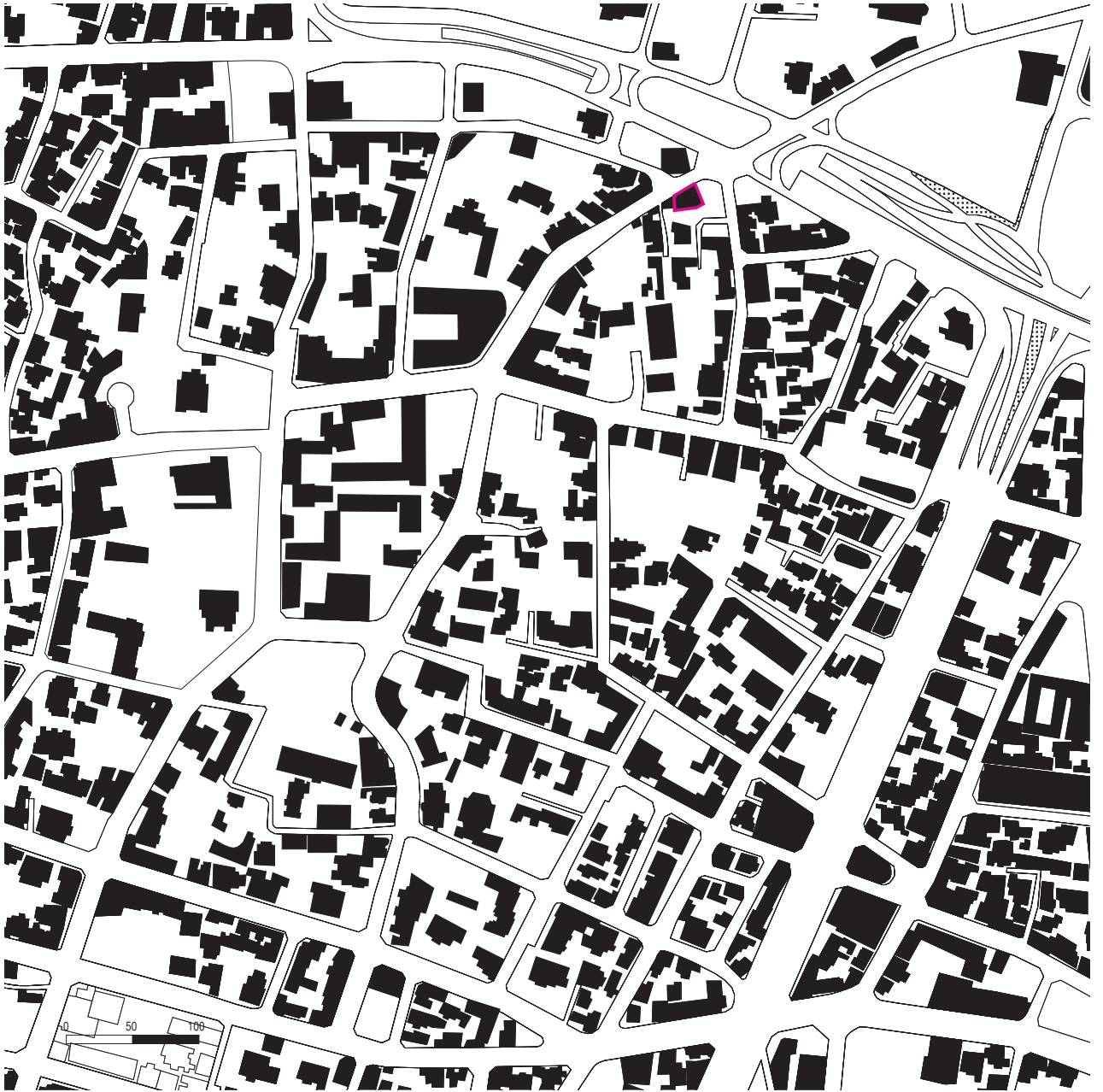
ZOKAK EL BLAT
condition of buildings

- good
- middle
- bad



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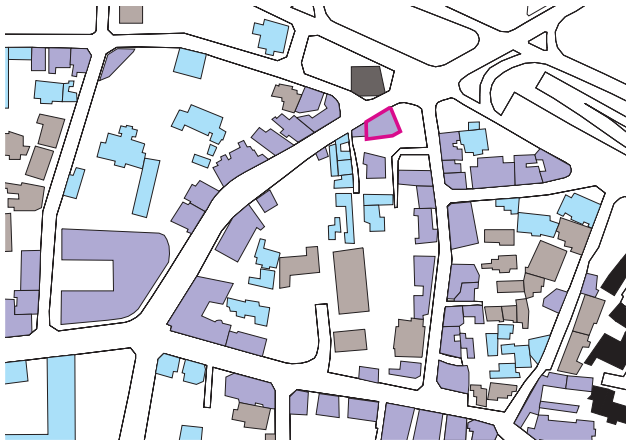
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ZOKAK EL BLAT

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- individual housing
- urban housing
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ZOKAK EL BLAT

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ZOKAK EL BLAT

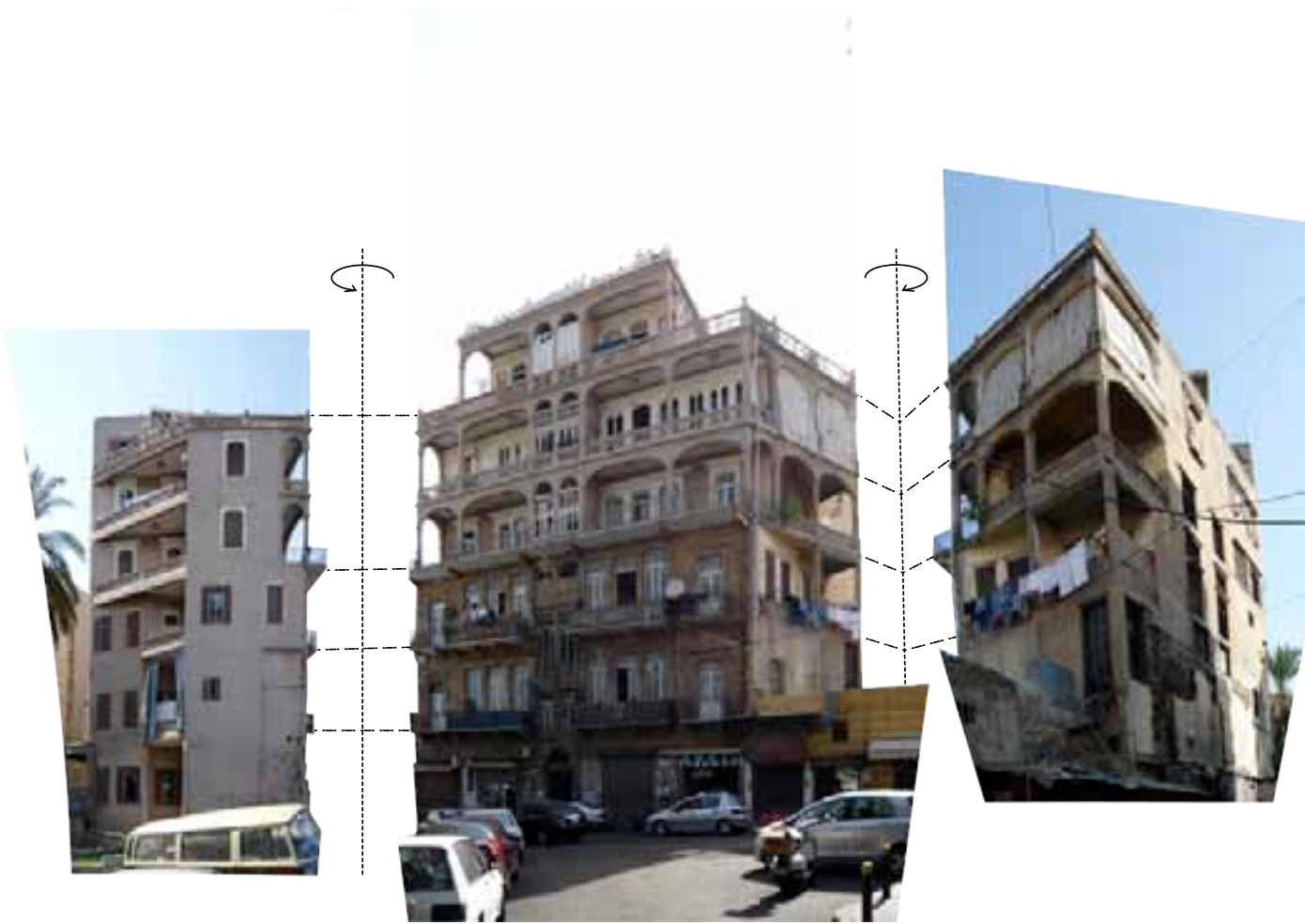
condition of buildings

- good
- middle
- bad

The first three floors of the Mekkaoui building was built in 1900, and another three floors were added in the late 1920s. The earlier building is of the typical late Ottoman style residential architecture, built in an area which was rapidly gaining notoriety for its academic institutions and its proximity to the city centre. The added floors are built in an interpretation of the Ottoman style, but with the newly available concrete, and showing the style of the rising bourgeoisie in the area.



The Mekkaoui House. 2009



The Mekkaoui House facades 'unwrapped'. 2009



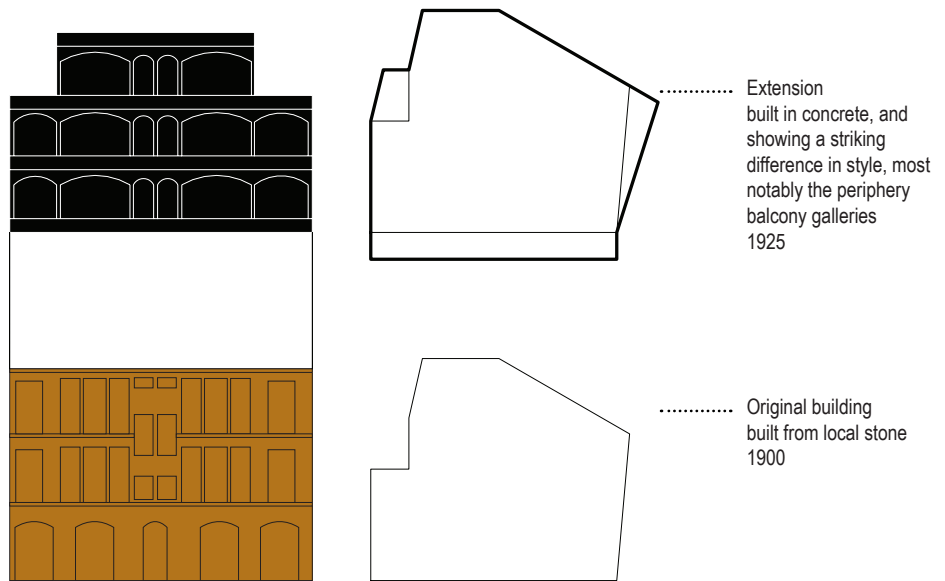
1925

1900

The historical layers



Front elevation of the House



“A structure characterized by superimposed features.”

Our definition: a natural palimpsest

We have returned to an example of a natural or traditional palimpsest. This type of palimpsest is economically driven, the new structure using the infrastructure already in place of the old building, and usually has no aesthetic consciousness. The height restriction during the late Ottoman period in Zokak El Blat was typically 3 storeys. With the arrival of the French, owners and developers were free to extend their buildings.

The **permanent element** of this example is the plot size of the building.

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Preservation Associations in Beirut

Name of Association	Date of foundation
Development Board in Beirut	1995
Lebanese Development Association	1991
National Heritage Foundation	1996
Lebanese History Association	1994
The Association for Construction and Restoration of Mosques in Lebanon	1956
Benevolent Association for Revival of Lebanese Heritage	1990
Plan B Association	1993
Lebanese Association for the Revival of Tourism	1993
Association of the Friends of the Lebanese	
Museum of Contemporary Arts	1993
Association of the National Museum Friends	1991
Beirut Festivals	1994
Beirut Development Board	1993
Defending Rights of Beirut Committee	1992
APSAD	1960
Lebanese Environmental Forum	1992
Waves of Environment	1996
Green Environment Association	1995
Cedars of Lebanon Association	1991
Association of the Friends of nature	1964
Beirut heritage	1991

The largest Association by a distance is
APSAD - L'Association pour la Protection
des Sites et Anciennes Demeures au Li-
ban



The Association for Protecting Natural Sites and Old Buildings in Lebanon was founded in 1960 by Lady Yvonne Sursock Cochrane, Mr. Assem Salam and Mr. Camille Aboussouan, with a group of active social, academic and professional figures bent on protecting the country's natural and cultural heritage.

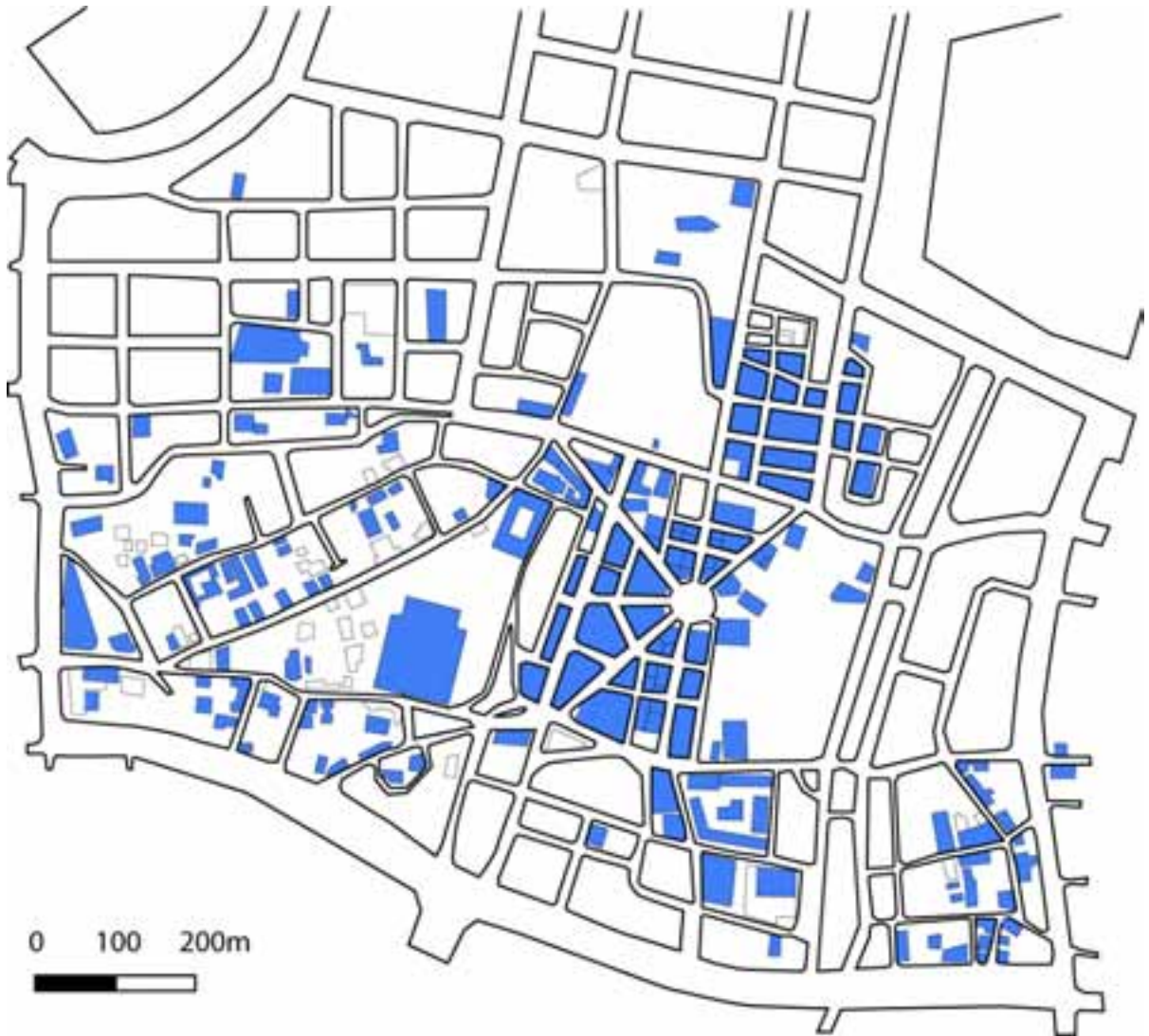
A pioneer in its field APSAD is a non-profit organization, which was officially, recognized as a non-profit public interest organization by Presidential Decree #765.

APSAD's role has acquired a new dimension, as unplanned postwar constructions are threatening to deprive Beirut, as well as other Lebanese cities, of their precious architectural treasures.

APSAD's current ultimatum

„There is no regulation to preserve any of the cultural heritage urban or others. This also apply to Zoukak El Blat, Gemayze and Lebanese area.

Effectively **APSAD** wrote a law project in order to try preserving these particular fields. This project is still a project and is not enforceable till this date.“



BEIRUT CENTRAL DISTRICT

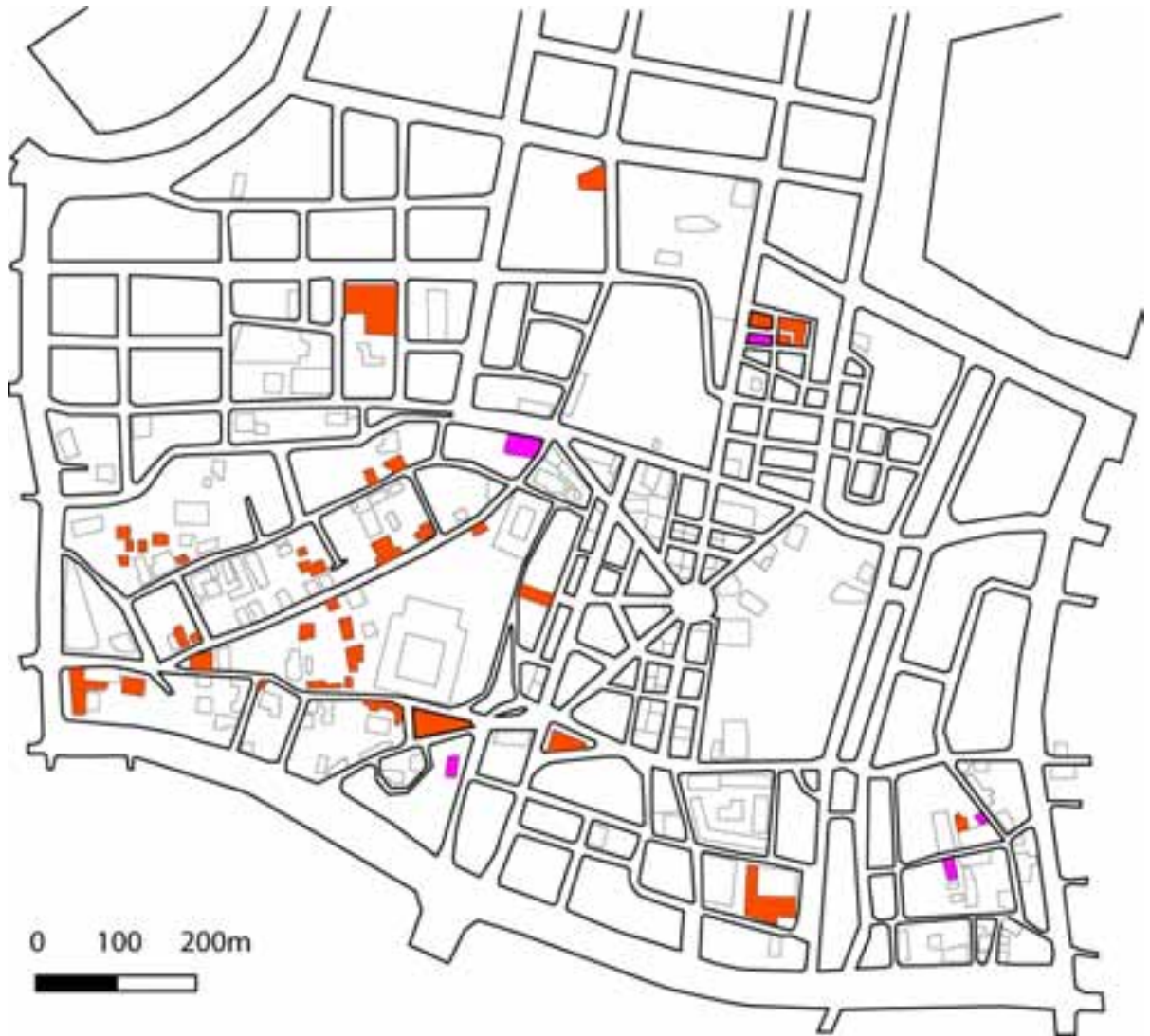
Buildings seen for preservation in the detailed masterplan of 1994

still extant

These maps are based on research conducted by Oliver Kogler for his PhD titles “Urban Cultural Heritage Preservation in Postwar Lebanon”.

His investigations are based on visual assessments of buildings and a GIS-supported interpretation of various maps and aerial photographs. We use the maps not to give exact numbers, but to suggest an appropriate scale of the demolition.

These investigations indicated that out of the approximately 300 buildings foreseen for preservation by the



BEIRUT CENTRAL DISTRICT

Buildings seen for preservation in the detailed masterplan of 1994 and consequently their demolition until 2004

- Demolished
- Demolished and reconstructed

1994 masterplan, a little less than 50 buildings were already demolished by 2004. Only ten of them were later rebuilt to their original style. Of the remaining buildings, roughly 150 buildings were built during the French Mandate and earlier, and around 30 belonged to public or religious institutions (Waqf). This would reduce the 300 buildings foreseen for preservation in the detailed 1994 masterplan to approximately 120 to 130 historic buildings preserved by Solidere in the year 2004.



PERICENTRAL DISTRICTS

Demolition of buildings identified as 'historic' in one of the three official surveys 1996-1998. APSAD-Study 1996, DGU-Study 1997, Khatib & Alami-Study 1998

- Demolished
- still extant

When Solidere destroyed most of the buildings in the Beirut Central District in the mid-1990s, the focus of the heritage activists switched to the directly adjacent quarters.

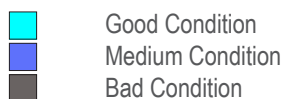
The heritage association APSAD conducted an inventory of all historic buildings in this area on the demand of the Ministry of Culture in 1995. **In 1996**, they presented an inventory of around **1,000 buildings** to the Minister of Culture, who decided to freeze all action on all of these buildings regardless of their condition or their architectural value.

In 1997 a more detailed study was prepared to identify the buildings worth preserving in the long-term. This time, the study was conducted by the concerned governmental authority, the Directorate General for Urbanism (DGU), although the DGU commissioned the same architects who had undertaken the first survey. These



PERICENTRAL DISTRICTS

Current condition of buildings identified as 'historic' in one of the three official surveys 1996-1998. APSAD-Study 1996, DGU-Study 1997, Khatib & Alami-Study 1998



architects, who volunteered their services, identified certain clusters of heritage buildings that were supposed to uphold the specific local identity of Old Beirut, as only these clusters would provide an „authentic“ urban experience. The final suggestion was to preserve four different clusters with approximately **530 buildings**. In **1998**, the government decided to do another study, this time conducted directly by the Council of Ministers who commissioned the private consulting company Khatib & Alami. This new study was seen as a direct attempt to reduce the number of historic buildings intended for preservation. The study denied the idea of a cluster approach and simply classified the historic buildings ‚heritage value‘ by looking at the single buildings. **200 buildings** were considered worth preserving, with the remaining buildings being unfrozen.



„Dig a hole in the ground almost anywhere in Arabia, it is said, and oil will gush out. Dig a hole in practically any Lebanese hillside, and a wealth of archaeological artifacts will tumble forth.“

The Economist, April 3, 1999

„Look at my lion‘, Amelie Beyhum shouts as she runs into the bullet-splattered old shop in which the archaeologists are sheltering from the rain. Pulled from the Beirut clay seconds before, the 9 inch marble lion has huge paws and a gaping maw. We hold it as it enjoys its first natural light in at least 15 centuries. It lay beneath the city as its inhabitants were slaughtered by the crusaders, it slept on as Arab invaders captured Beirut, it slumbered through 19th-century naval bombardments and rebellion against the Ottoman Turks. Only the 15-year civil war of our own age brought this tiny lion back to our world.“

The Independent Newspaper, Robert Frisk,
The City's Destruction in the Civil War.

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Virtually from the time of its founding, the physical fabric of the city of Beirut underwent waves of destruction, demolition and decay, punctuated by the devastation of souks at the heart of the old city by the Ottomans in 1915.

Again, Beirut is undergoing comprehensive reconstruction in the area of the old city. The usual conflicts between the urgency to build and the need for scientific excavation arose as soon as talk of reconstruction began. In the battle between construction finances pressed by interest rates and funding for archaeological investigation strapped for both funding and concern, many believe that science will lose. Not everyone is of the opinion that the inherent value of ancient remains and modern architecture should automatically favour the historical.



It is important to note that the government in Lebanon does not have sufficient funds to spend on archaeology. Solidere has taken the responsibility of funding the archaeologists, and the overall management of the archaeological digs. This clearly leads to a conflict of interests for Solidere who are selling the land-plots (rather than developing themselves), and a land-plot with archaeological remains reduces the value of the plot since the new developer is then responsible for excavation of the remains. Archaeologists are now being asked by developers to evaluate the plot 'archaeologically' before developers buy.

„It is also felt that while previous reconstructions of the city left the remains of demolition intact in the earth, the present round of construction is not so sensitive. Both the indiscriminate carting off of excavation material and deep foundations may be inflicting irreversible damage on historical evidence.“

<http://almashriq.hiof.no/lebanon/900/930/930.1/beirut/reconstruction/>



At the head of Solidere's archaeological research is a controversial Dutch archaeologist, **Hans Curvers**, who has pioneered the term , **emergency archaeology**'.

Emergency archaeology refers to the rapid excavating, documenting and recording of sites, under the looming pressure of developers to continue with construction. Archaeologists are often given strict dates by which they must have finished with their work, so that construction can continue. Hans Curvers has consequently legitimised the destruction of the remains after they have been documented.

„If we agree on the fact that `archeology is systematic destruction' we have to admit that by excavating ancient Beirut, the archeologists are the destructors. The `treaty of Malta' says the developer of a piece of land with archeological potential should allow and contribute to the archeological research. All authroities and companies involved in the reconstruction of downtown Beirut respect these guidelines.“

Hans Curvers,
<http://almashriq.hiof.no/lebanon/900/930/930.1/beirut/reconstruction/>



„at two thirty Thursday afternoon, Dr. Naji Karam, who is supervising the archeological digs in this site, left indicating to the engineer and the workers the region where they can continue digging with bulldozers, after having marked the site with stones. He asked them not to come close to the ancient wall, which was discovered a few days, until the next morning (i.e. yesterday on Friday). The representatives of UNESCO to the Directorate of Antiquities, Ibrahim Qawatli and Philippe Marquis also asked, the first one ion the morning and the latter in the afternoon, the engineer and the construction workers to stop because of the descovery of the anceint wall. This was in accordance to the law and the agreement on coordination that has been arrived at between the different parties. The engineer aswered as many times before: „we do not stop the work without a written order from SOLIDERE or the construction firm because we have a contract with them.“ When Dr. Karam arrived Friday morning at 7:40, the wall had been destroyed. The wall was 6 meters wide and nearly two meters high, and studies were supposed to decide its date and historical significance.“

<http://almashriq.hiof.no/lebanon/900/930/930.1/beirut/reconstruction/>



It is also important to note that it is not only Solidere who is creating the friction for successful archaeology. There is also resistance from some religious communities.

Professor Helga Seeden from the American University of Beirut, came across a different form of unease when she asked the Muslim religious authorities for permission to dig beneath their ruined property in the city centre. „They said: ‚No, absolutely not - we don't want any excavations, because all the archaeologists are going to find are roman remains‘. It took me a long time to explain to them that we are also digging up Islamic history“.

Seventy-five years of Christian-Muslim historical disputes have provoked concern. Even before they gained their own state under the french mandate in 1920, christian maronite writers had argued that the region of Lebanon was, in spirit and culture, Pheonician and Roman rather than Islamic and Arab - that it was western rather than oriental. Muslim academics said the pheonicians were arabised in antiquity and Lebanon was arab and thus should have remained a part of Syria. The 1975-1990 civil war was, in one sense, fought between christians who believed Lebanon was a western nation and Muslims who regarded themselves as arab nationalists.

Hence the islamic authorities' fears that beirut's archaeologists were only going to reassert maronite claims to Lebanon glorious roman past. Unfortunately, for them, the Omayad, Abbasid and Mamluke periods have yielded fewer treasures than the ages of Rome and Byzantium.

El-Fadl Shalak, head of the Lebanese Council for Redevelopment and Reconstruction, admits to the fear the lebanese have of their past. „ We are frightened of our history because we are not united in our understanding of it. If you dig three feet down, you find muslim remains and the muslims are interested in this. If you dig six feet, you come to the roman, then pheonician remains.....What we have got to realise is that it's all part of the same history. We have got to learn that the past and the future must be connected, that there were good, peaceful times, as well as bad times. Only in this way can we learn to understand ourselves“.



„Foreign archeologists have angered Lebanon by complaining to the United Nations about what they called “lamentable conditions” at important archeological sites in central Beirut, Lebanese newspapers said Friday.

A petition by 100 archeologists to Federico Mayor, Director General of the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), expressed “disquiet about the fate of the archeological sites of Beirut.” His ministry and Lebanon’s directorate of antiquities are backing excavations in central Beirut by more than 150 archeologists in 14 missions from the Netherlands, France, Italy, Germany, Britain and Lebanon.“



BEIRUT, Lebanon (Reuter)

„Mr. Federico Mayor,
Director-General of UNESCO

Dear Sir,

We would like to start our present petition by commending UNESCO on its work on preserving historical sites around the world.

The focus of the present petition is Beirut and the preservation of the archeological sites in this ancient city. We, the undersigned scholars, business persons, teachers, students etc., would like to bring to your attention the troubling news of the destruction of many sites in Beirut due to the reconstruction plans.

We understand that you will soon be making a visit to Beirut where you will be meeting with Lebanese authorities. We pray you to do all that is in your power to bring home to the Lebanese authorities the importance of these sites not only for Lebanon but the understanding of the past of the whole region. Moreover, the authorities should not underestimate the economical importance of such sites in Beirut Center.

We know that there are many contradicting interests concerning this issue. We all want to see Beirut rebuilt and regain its former glory. Yet this can not be achieved by effacing its past history, and depriving it of its historical depth. We pray therefore that UNESCO use its prerogatives in order to influence the situation such that Beirut be surveyed in a proper manner, and that important and worthy sites not be destroyed inadvertently.

Most reports note that the fund that is set to help preserve the archeological heritage of Beirut has not been used to its fullest. We urge that action be taken. We are all willing to help according to our capacities. Please feel free to call on us.

Sincerely,“

Elie Wardini



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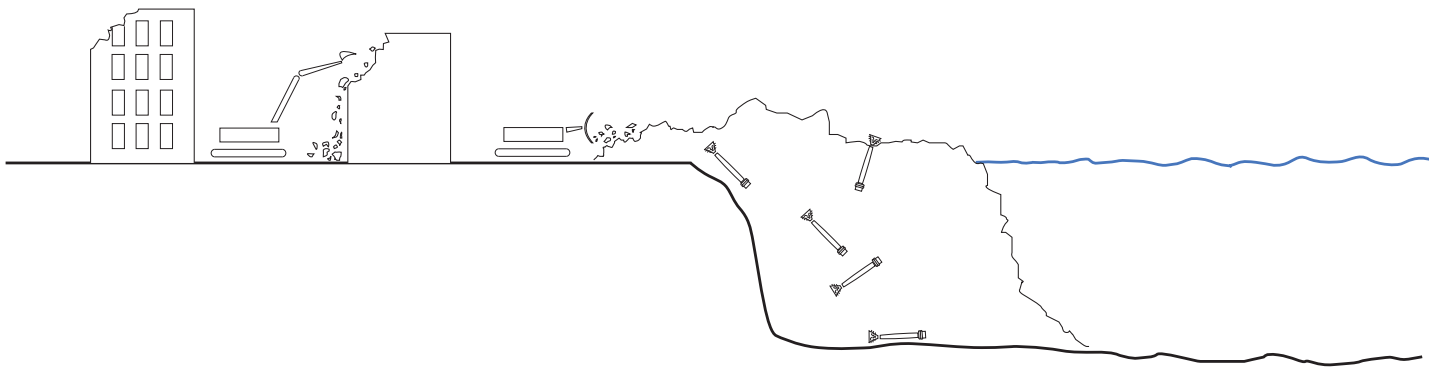
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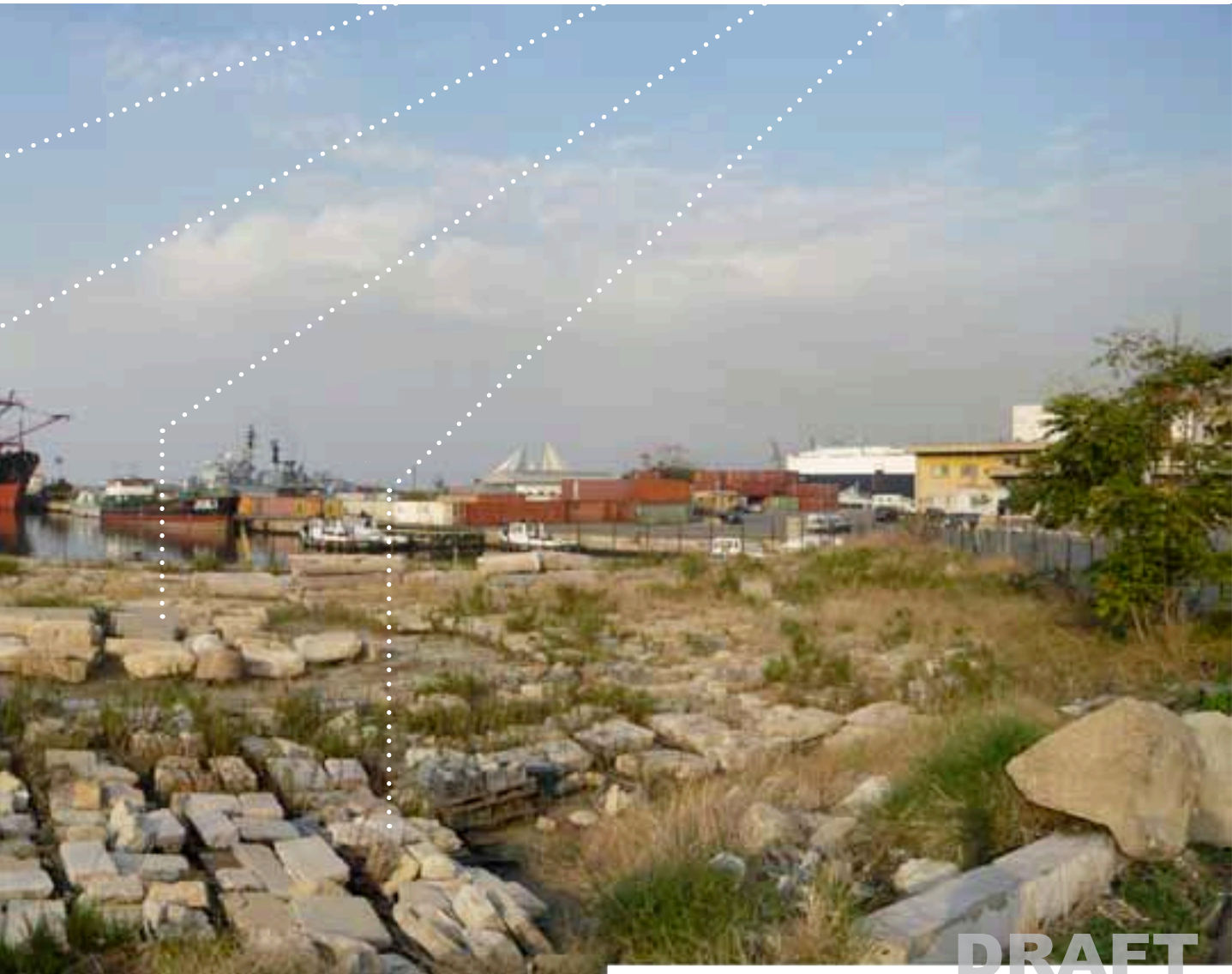


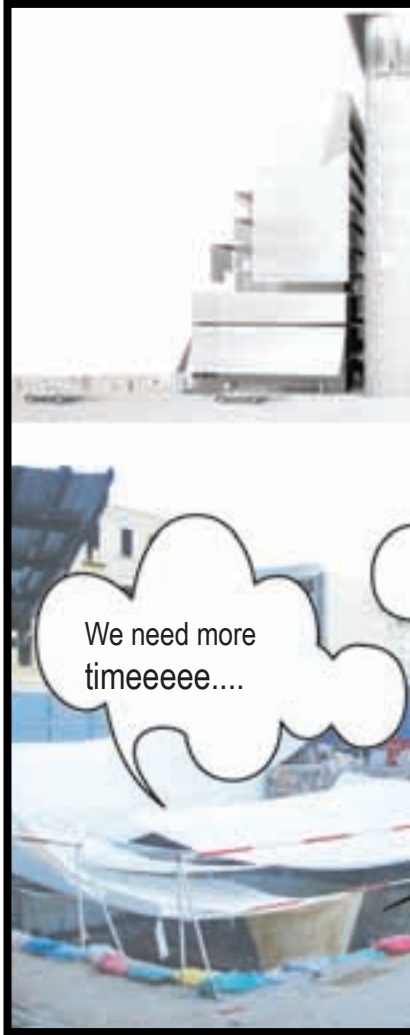
10,000\$

8,000\$

45,000\$

1,000\$










كان
اشارع ذو طابع تراثي
Etait une Rue
à Caractère Traditionnel



DRAFT
© ETH Studio Basel



"... while calling itself a souk, this can amount to nothing more than a postmodern pastiche of the concept of the souk. For how, in any case, could one re-create something like a souk, which is not only the product of a long historical process but is also characterised and even defined by spontaneity and above all heterogeneity? Indeed, to speak of planning a souk is something of a contradiction in terms."

Saree Makdisi, lying claim to Beirut

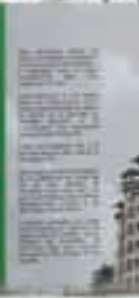







"Solidere's publications make use of the language of memory and affect to characterise what they promise will be the flavour of the new central district. But it seems clear that the simulacral effect of the reconstruction project is to be achieved specifically and solely in VISUAL TERMS or, to be precise, in terms of appearance and facade. Hence the souk area will be called a souk because it will (supposedly) somehow look like what a souks look like. But what does a souk look like? In particular, what did Beirut's old souk look like?"

Sami Makhlouf, *Bringing Beirut to Beirut*







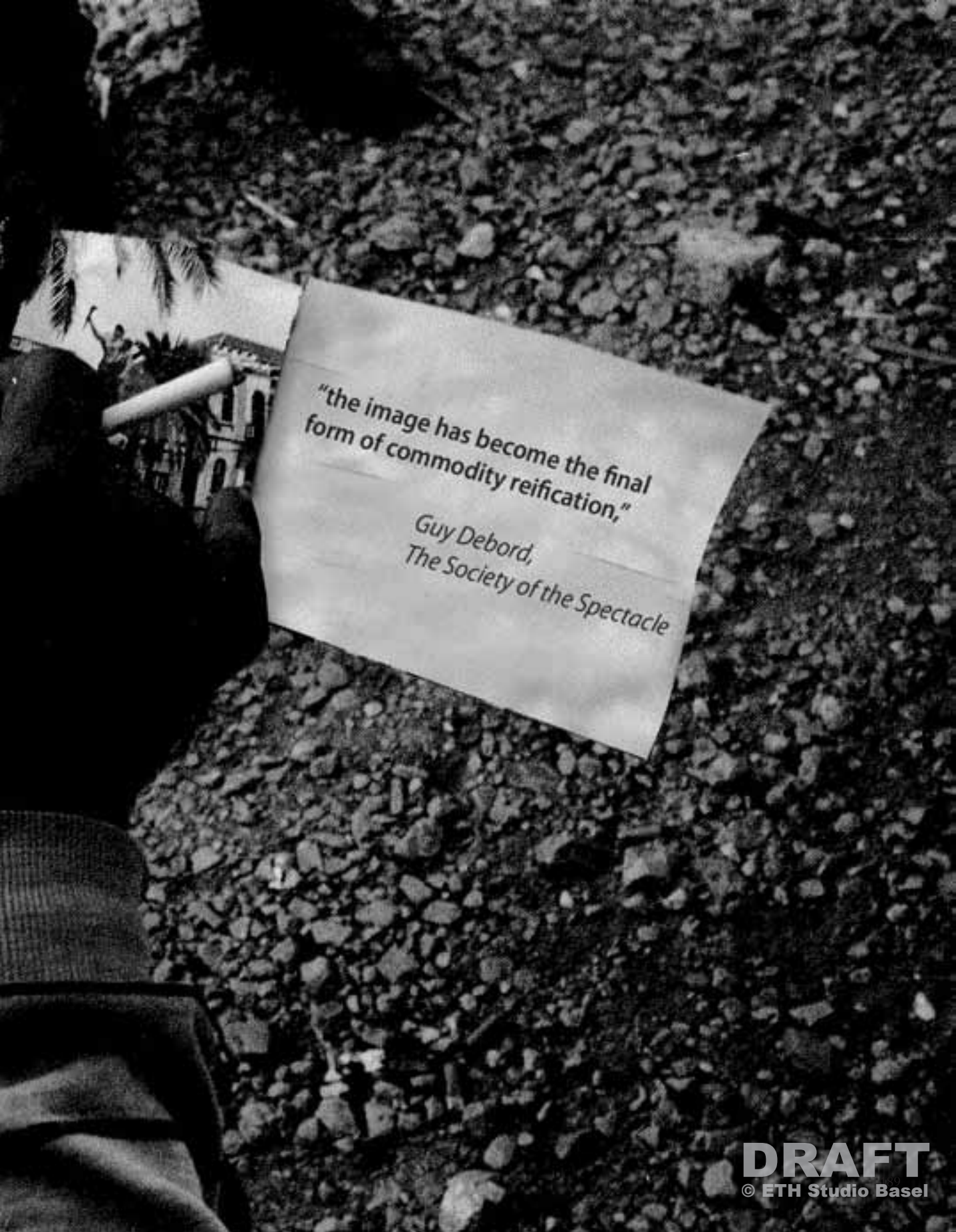
But if you try to see the rest of the archeology, you realise that it's not there after all; it just SEEMS to be there, as though it were serving as the figuration of some kind of ironic or visual unconsciousness of the area: there, but not there. AN ABSENT PRESENCE. As soon as you try to get access to the full 'image' of the past (for as I say the past is presented only in visual terms), you realise that it's not only a fragmentary image, a

fragment of a larger whole that has disappeared 'underneath' the weight of the 'present' text, and that there is no 'underneath' from which the print appears to protrude because the text itself is literally as well as metaphorically depthless."

Sally Mikhala, *Laying claim in Beirut*



DRAFT
© ETH Studio Base

A black and white photograph showing a hand holding a small, rectangular piece of paper. The paper is held against a background of dark, coarse gravel. In the upper left, a small, vintage-style photograph is visible, showing a building and palm trees. The paper contains a quote in a serif font, followed by the author's name and the title of the work in a smaller, italicized serif font.

*"the image has become the final
form of commodity reification,"*

*Guy Debord,
The Society of the Spectacle*



A call to save the Heritage

To the Lebanese architects:

- So attached to this marvelous country where you were born and to the sites and memories that surrounded your childhood
- Jealous of artistic heritage, proud of the Lebanese tradition handed on by our ancestors

To those who would like:

- To save our values,
- Houses that are in harmony with the setting and the landscape,
- Properly planned towns and cities
- A pleasant country, proud of its past and confident of the future

Be careful!

- This heritage, these sites, landscapes and memories are already being wrecked, abandoned, disregarded and ruined by hideous installations, slums, incoherent towns and suburbs and a regressive environment.

Save the heritage

Join APSAD and support its activities and endeavors.

We are grateful for initiatives and we accept all suggestions and coordinate all activities within the field.

Membership form

Regular Member \$100
 Student \$50
 Company \$100 (maximum)
 Honorary Member (please name)

Name:
 Company:
 Address:
 E-mail:
 Phone:
 Mobile:
 Fax:
 Date & signature:



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 BEIRUT, LEBANON

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