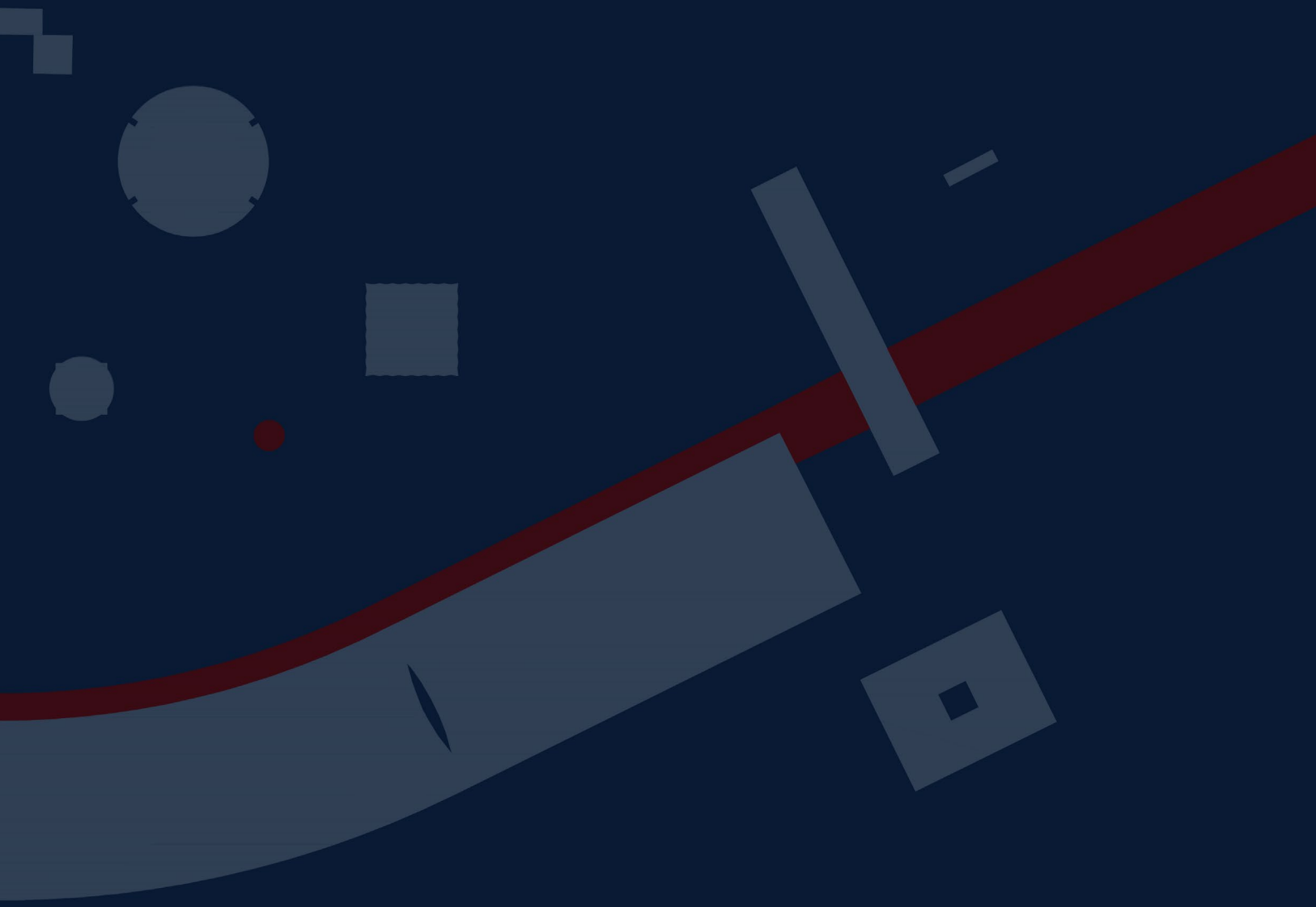

The Fair for **Tripolitans**

Bridging Marginality and Monumentality through the Adaptive Reuse of the Rachid Karame International Fair in Tripoli

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Advisor: Prof. Davide Rolfo

Candidate: Yana Chouceir

Acknowledgments

My family raised me to believe that with opportunity comes responsibility. As an architect, I am fortunate to design and shape how people interact with their surrounding environment. This makes it my duty to ensure that such interactions are inclusive, accessible, and sustainable, values that guide both my work and my commitment to the communities I serve.

This, has guided every step of my work, including the research, reflections, and design decisions that shaped this thesis.

This work would not have been possible without the valuable support and guidance of my supervisor, Prof. Davide Rolfo.

I also wish to thank the people who have accompanied me not only throughout the work on this book but throughout my entire academic journey in architecture.

To my family: my father, the pillar I have leaned on since day one; my mother, who devoted countless hours to ensuring I always had the best academic support; and my brother Antoine, my fellow architect in the making.

To my friends, who never ceased to encourage and uplift me, especially Sophie, my companion throughout this journey and my most unwavering supporter.

Lastly, I dedicate this work to the memory of my late uncle Bob, who remains with me in spirit. Thank you for being my biggest fan and cheerleader. I hope I have made you proud.

YANA

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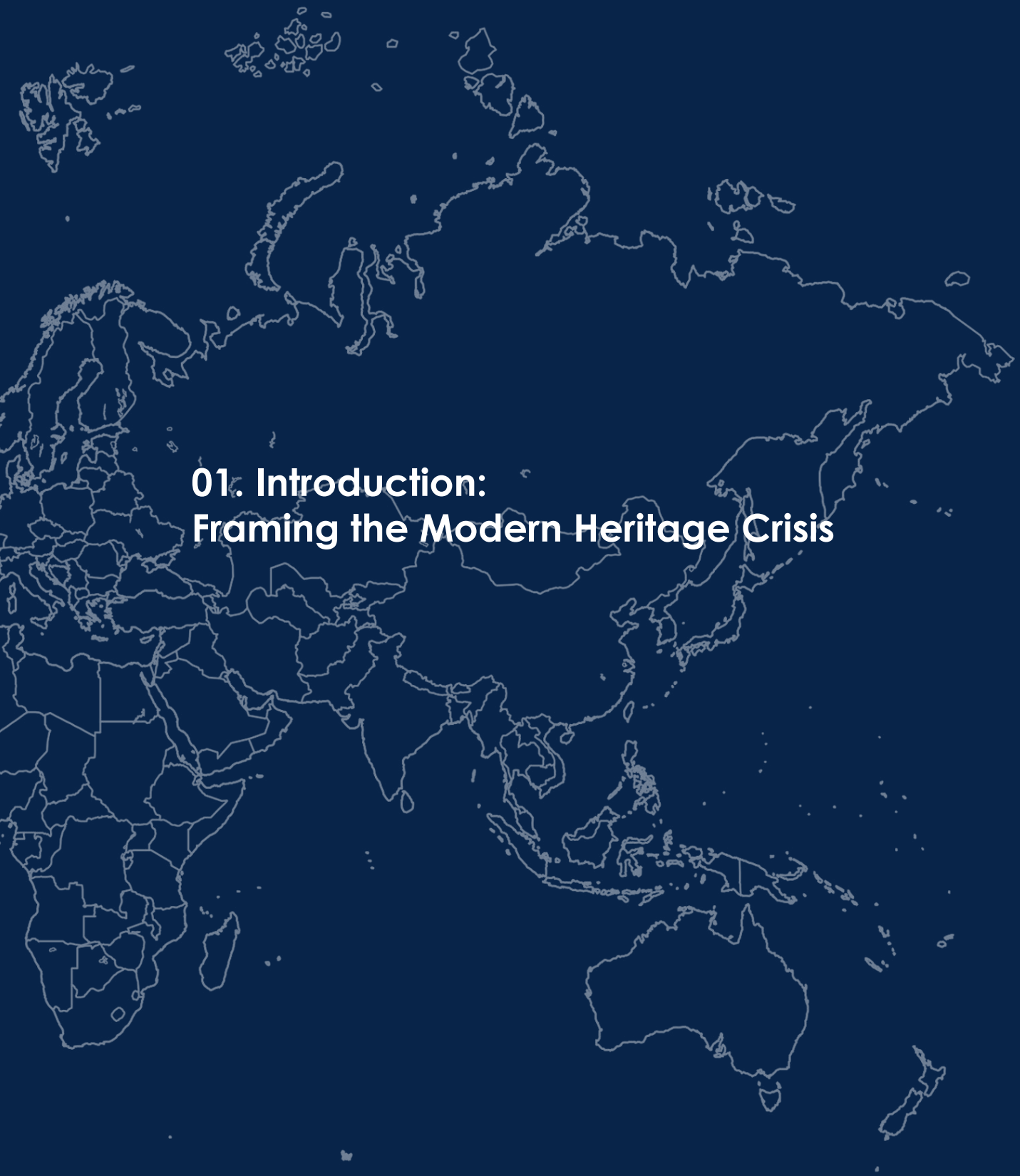
Abbreviations

+ **ACE :** Associated Contracting Engineers
+ **ADF :** Arab Deterrent Force
+ **AIA** : American Institute of Architects
+ **BECA** : Bureau d'Etudes Civiles et d'Architecture
+ **BnF** : Bibliothèque nationale de France
+ **CAS** : Central Administration of Statistics (Lebanon)
+ **CEGP** : Conseil Exécutif des Grands Projets
+ **CMP** : Conservation Management Plan
+ **CPQP** : Construction Product Quality Planning (DfMA guideline)
+ **DfA** : Design for Assembly
+ **DfMA** : Design for Manufacture and Assembly
+ **EU** : European Union
+ **ICC** : Instituto Central de Ciências (University of Brasília)
+ **ICOMOS** : International Council on Monuments and Sites
+ **ILO** : International Labor Organization
+ **ISO** : International Organization for Standardization
+ **LED:** Light-Emitting Diode
+ **MoMA** : Museum of Modern Art (New York)
+ **OAT** : Open-Air Theatre
+ **OEA** : Order of Engineers and Architects
+ **RKIF** : Rachid Karame International Fair
+ **SDG:** Sustainable Development Goal
+ **TSEZ** : Tripoli Special Economic Zone
+ **UN** : United Nations
+ **UN-Habitat** : United Nations Human Settlements Programme
+ **UNESCO** : United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
+ **UNHCR** : United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
+ **UNRWA** : United Nations Relief and Works Agency
+ **WFP** : World Food Programme

00. Abstract

The Rachid Karame International Fair in Tripoli, Lebanon, is one of Oscar Niemeyer's most ambitious modernist works. However, it is now an unfinished landscape that is stuck between memory and neglect. This thesis re-imagines the Fair not as a relic of a lost modernity but as a living territory capable of healing the fractures that shape Tripoli. By tracing the historical evolution of the city, its socio-spatial contrasts, and the Fair's interrupted trajectory, the research reveals how a monumental project that never served its intended purpose has become isolated within a city struggling with poverty, displacement, and marginalization.

This thesis argues that the Fair's survival depends on a shift from preservation as a static act to preservation as a social, economic, and spatial tool. The research demonstrates that RKIF's decline is inseparable from the marginalization of Tripoli itself. In response, the project proposes an adaptive reuse model grounded in reversible, Design-for-Assembly strategies that accommodate uncertainty while supporting community needs. The proposal brings life back to the Fair through a strategy that emerges from Tripolitans themselves: their markets, their crafts, their agricultural past, and their need for public space. It treats the Fair gently, adding without harming and activating without overwhelming. In doing so, it transforms RKIF into a space for all, where monumentality and daily life finally meet. The Fair becomes a laboratory for rethinking modern heritage: not as a monument frozen in time, but as an agent of societal transformation.



01. Introduction: Framing the Modern Heritage Crisis

A growing heritage gap defining our time

Across many cities today, buildings from the 20th century, once symbols of progress and innovation, architects' dreams and visions, are deteriorating or being demolished (ICOMOS, 2011). These structures, often built with modernist ideals and materials, are not yet old enough to be considered ancient heritage, yet not new enough to be seen as contemporary assets. As a result, they occupy an uncertain place in heritage discourse, frequently overlooked by institutional frameworks, funding priorities, and public awareness.

Modernity pleading for recognition.

Modern heritage refers to architectural and urban developments from the 20th century, particularly those **shaped by industrialization, golden ages, post-war reconstruction, or decolonization.**

These works were often designed with strong social and cultural ambitions: to house growing populations, reflect national identity, or embody technological advancement. However, many of these buildings now face a crisis of relevance and recognition.

A crisis both material and symbolic.

This crisis is not only physical; it is conceptual, cultural, political, economic and social. **Modern architecture** is underrepresented in official heritage listings and lacks the societal consensus that often supports the conservation of older sites. The materials used, especially concrete, age poorly and require specific technical knowledge to restore. Furthermore, modernist buildings are associated with political regimes or failed social models, making them controversial candidates for preservation.

A global erosion of memory.

The **global scope** of this issue is increasingly visible [Figure 01]. From social housing estates in Western Europe to post-independence public buildings in Africa and the Middle East, the deterioration or erasure of modern heritage is a widespread phenomenon.

In Lebanon, modern architecture flourished under multiple waves of influence, ranging from the rationalism of Auguste Perret during the French Mandate to the international style of the 1950s, and later postmodern adaptations during the civil war era. Yet despite its cultural and infrastructural relevance, much of this architecture remains unrecognized as heritage. (SAYAH H., Docomomo, 2006). Reconstruction efforts in post-war Beirut prioritized nostalgic 'traditional' forms, marginalizing modernist contributions and allowing many to deteriorate or disappear.

"The loss of modern buildings in Lebanon signifies more than physical disappearance; it is the fading of a cultural and architectural consciousness." In many cases, these sites are structurally sound but no longer aligned with current functional demands, situated in areas that are undergoing redevelopment or gentrification. Their scale and complexity also present challenges, as restoration costs often outweigh the perceived cultural value.

Definitions that fail to address Modernism.

The lack of a clear definition and consistent criteria for evaluating modern heritage further complicates efforts to protect it. (ICOMOS, 2011) Conservation charters and legal frameworks were primarily developed for pre-modern heritage, leaving a gap in how to assess the historical, social, and architectural significance of recent past structures. This has led to delays in action, policy inaction, and in many cases, irreversible losses.

Preserving the unfinished present.

Preserving the architectural heritage of the twentieth century is as important as protecting heritage from previous eras. This heritage is still part of our living environment, and thus it is essential to understand, define, interpret, and manage it carefully for future generations. Modern architecture reflects the time, place, and purpose for which it was built. Its value may stem from tangible features, such as location, design, materials, and intended use, as well as intangible ones including historical, social, scientific, or spiritual relevance. Evaluating interior elements, furniture, and artworks that form part of the architectural whole is equally important, as is assessing the setting and surrounding landscape. Comparative analysis with similar cases helps place each site in a broader context and assesses its relative significance.

Rethinking value to reclaim memory.

Understanding and addressing the modern heritage crisis, therefore, requires rethinking what constitutes cultural value and how

architectural memory is preserved. This thesis begins by situating the problem within its broader historical and institutional context, examining why modern heritage continues to be excluded from mainstream conservation practices and what is at stake in its disappearance.

By critically framing the issue, this introduction aims to demonstrate that **modern heritage is not a secondary concern**, but a fundamental part of understanding how the built environment evolves and how it should be preserved for future generations.

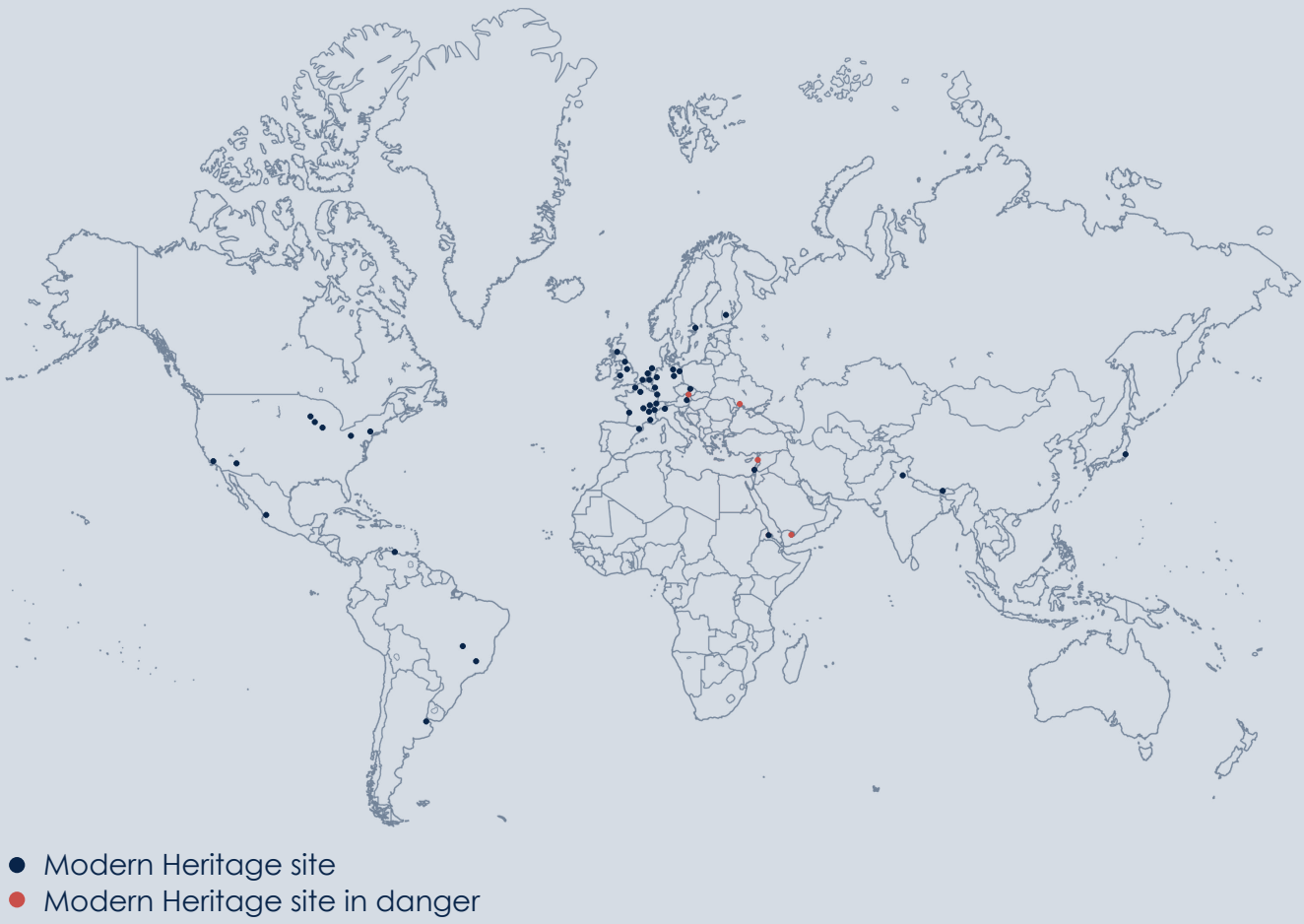


Figure 01. *Modern Heritage sites as classified by UNESCO, until June 2025.*

Approaching the Site

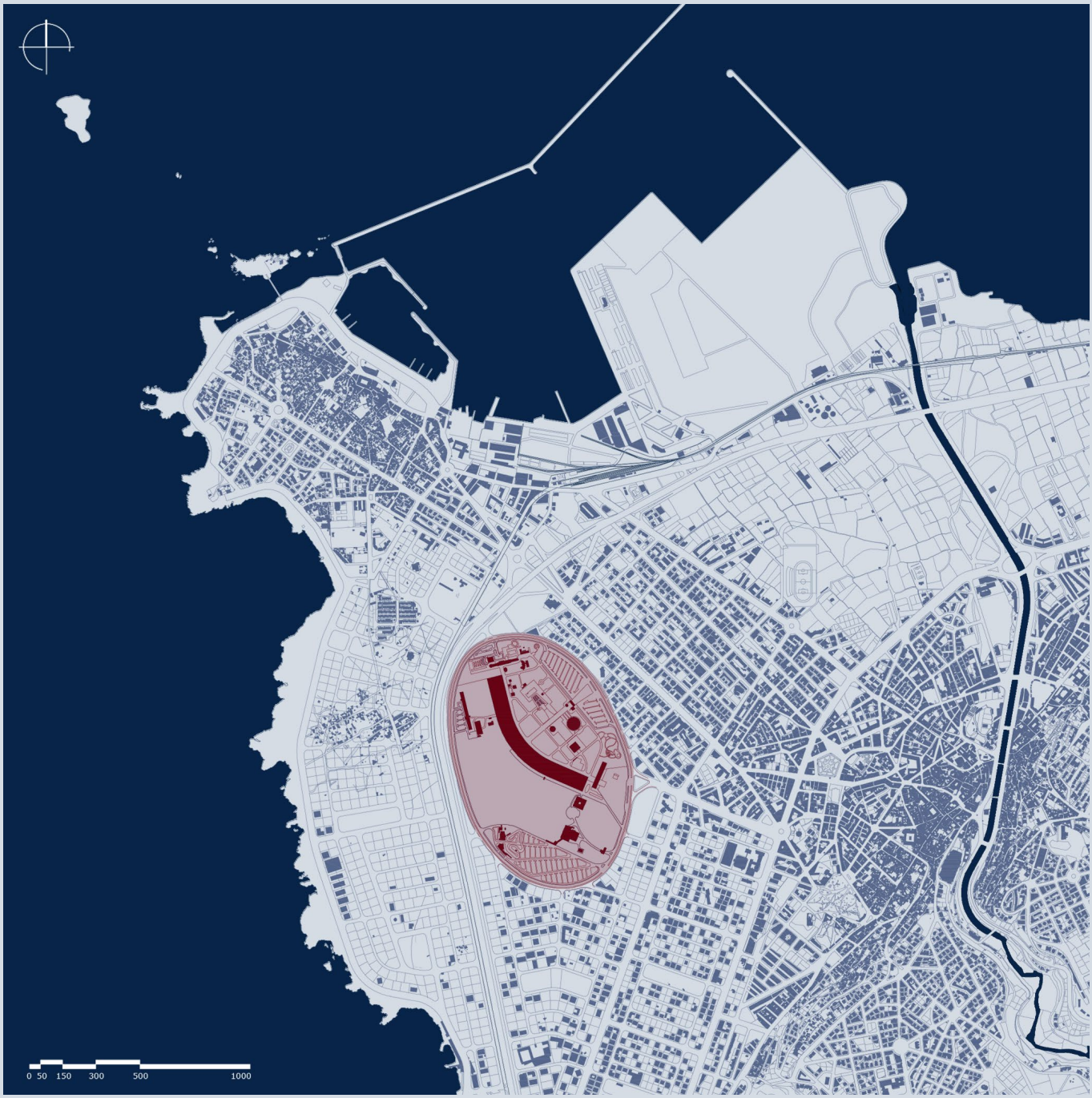
From global network to national ground.

Following the global overview of modern heritage sites, the map of Lebanon narrows the focus to the national scale, revealing how the country's own modern legacy fits within this broader narrative. Across its coastal cities and mountainous regions, fragments of twentieth-century architecture testify to Lebanon's once-ambitious pursuit of modernization. Among these, Tripoli emerges as a crucial case where the dialogue between tradition and modernity remains unresolved.


TRIPOLI
BEIRUT
LEBANON
0 10 20 30 50Km

Tripoli, where layers of history collide.

Located in the **northern region of Lebanon**, the city of Tripoli presents a layered urban landscape where ancient fabrics coexist with ambitious twentieth-century interventions. As the country's second-largest city, Tripoli has long played a significant cultural and economic role. Yet, despite its historical relevance, it remains politically marginalized and economically under-resourced, conditions that have left many of its urban assets vulnerable, including one of its most important modern landmarks: **The Rachid Karame International Fair (RKIF).**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A monument to ambition and interruption.
Designed in the 1960s by Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer, the Rachid Karame International Fair stands as one of the most prominent examples of modern architecture in the Arab world (UNESCO World Heritage Centre ,2023). Its monumental composition, expressive concrete forms, and utopian program reflected Lebanon's ambition to position itself as a hub for international exchange. However, the project was never completed due to the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War in 1975. Since then, the site has remained largely unused, structurally intact but symbolically suspended, caught between national pride and urban neglect.

From monumentality to marginality.
Today, the RKIF exemplifies the challenges facing modern heritage in contexts of political fragility and economic inequality. While officially inscribed as Heritage site in danger by UNESCO (UNESCO World Heritage Centre ,2023), the site has yet to benefit from effective governance, protection, or integration into the life of the city. Its deteriorating structures and underutilized grounds are not merely architectural issues; they reflect a broader disconnection between the ideals of monumentality and the daily realities of Tripoli's residents.

Re-framing the Fair as a civic asset.
By re-framing the Rachid Karame International Fair not only as a modernist monument but as an unrealized civic asset, this thesis proposes an adaptive reuse strategy that addresses **Tripoli's urban inequalities**, particularly the t**ension between neglected monumentality and everyday marginality.** Through newly developed drawings and diagrams, it challenges dominant narratives of heritage preservation and offers a re-imagined, community-centered vision for the site's future.

From Tripoli to the world.
This thesis argues that **adaptive reuse can serve as an example for other modern sites facing similar conditions of abandonment** and disconnection. In doing so, the project positions RKIF as a case study in how architectural heritage can be reactivated not only as memory but as a driver of urban reintegration and equity.
Bridging monumentality and marginality.
Most importantly, this thesis positions the adaptive reuse of the Rachid Karame International Fair as an **attempt to bridge the divide between monumentality and marginality in Tripoli,** proposing an approach where heritage preservation becomes a tool for social and spatial reintegration.


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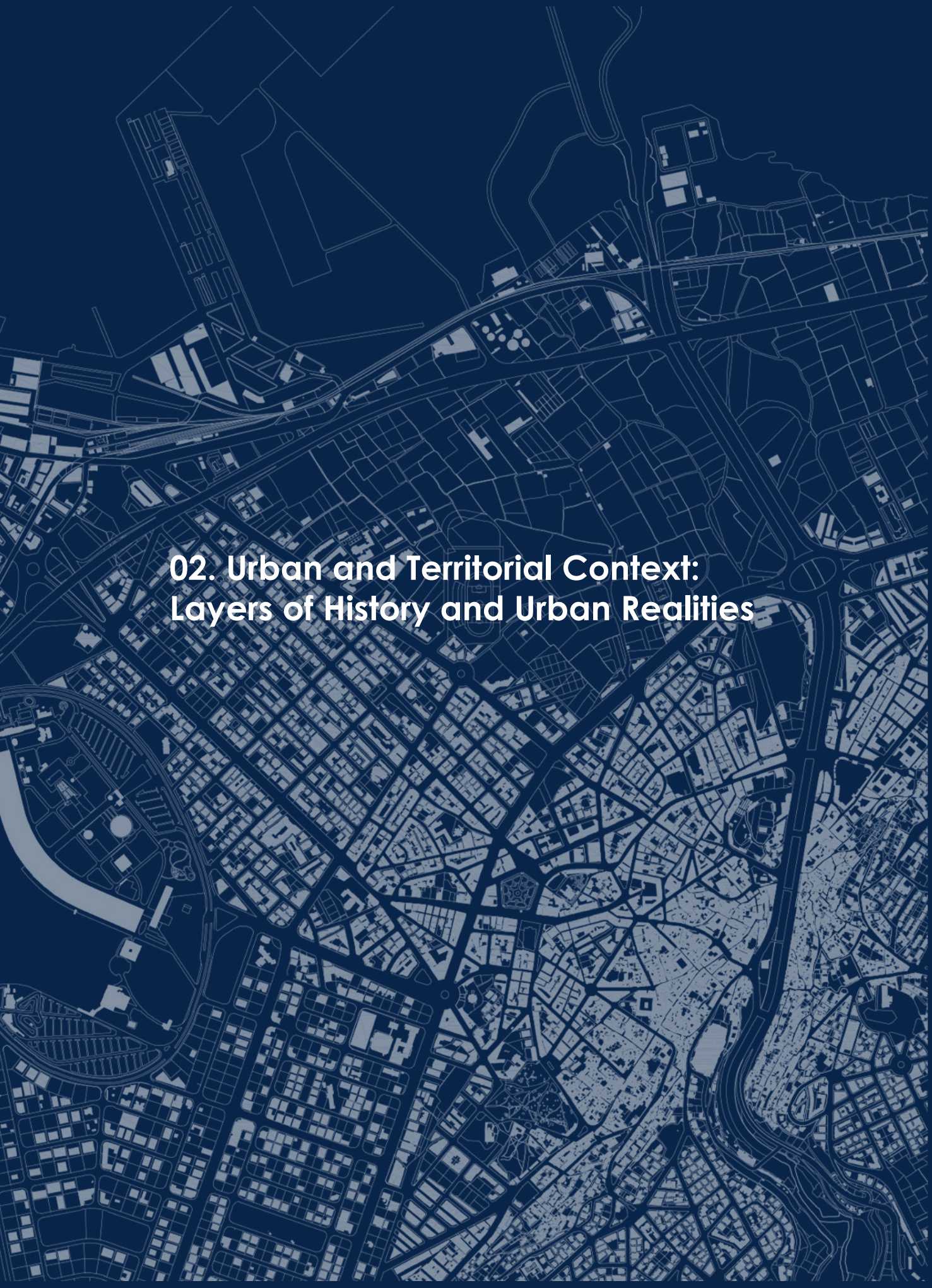


02. Urban and Territorial Context: Layers of History and Urban Realities

02.1. Historical Context

Old historical context (c. 9000 BC – Early 16th Century AD)

Lebanon's history and its cities are closely linked to the larger stories of the eastern Mediterranean and the Fertile Crescent. This summary highlights key historical events before Ottoman rule, with a particular focus on Tripoli, which often had a unique path within Lebanon.

1. The Fertile Crescent (9000 BC to the Prehistoric Era)

Lebanon, situated along the western edge of the Fertile Crescent, has long been central to one of the earliest centers of civilization. This region experienced the advent of agriculture, the establishment of permanent settlements, and a transition from nomadic to settled lifestyles. Archaeological finds at Byblos and Tell Arqa in northern Lebanon reveal that Neolithic and Chalcolithic communities lived there, practicing early farming and metalworking.

People often call the Fertile Crescent the birthplace of civilization because of its fertile, arable land. Around 9000 BC, farming started here, and by about 2500 BC, the Sumerians had built one of the world's first complex societies, with written laws and a government. This arc of land covers a lot of what is now Iraq, Syria, Jordan, and Palestine. Sometimes, it is also used to refer to the Nile Valley in Egypt.

2. Phoenicia (about 1500–539 BC)

The Phoenicians, renowned for their trade networks, shipbuilding, and spreading the alphabet, contributed to the growth of Lebanon's coastal cities. (Markoe, 2000) Tyre, Sidon, and Byblos were city-states that became important centers of trade and culture in the Mediterranean. Tripoli is not yet a big city, but it was made up of three Phoenician cities: Tyre, Sidon, and Arados (now Arwad). Each city had a quarter in what would become the "Triple City." The Greeks called it "Tripolis," which means "Three Cities," because of its unusual shape. Tripoli's harbor helped trade between regions and the Phoenicians expand, but it wasn't as important as Tyre or Sidon. (Markoe, 2000)

3. The Roman Empire (64 BC to the 4th Century AD)

Lebanon became part of the roman empire following Pompey's victory. A lot of cities, roads, and temples were built in the area. Tripoli was officially made a city and became a major center for business and government. (Butcher, 2003)

4. Byzantine Empire (4th Century – Early 7th Century AD)

When the Roman Empire split up, the Byzantine Empire took over Lebanon. Christianity spread a lot, and the cities on the coast became important places for religious life and theological debate. There were many churches and monasteries in the area. Tripoli became a bishopric and stayed an important port city. But it also became open to both internal religious conflicts and outside threats. The city's stability changed a lot because of changing imperial and theological dynamics, just like in most of the region.

5. The Early Islamic Period (645–1109 AD)

By the middle of the 7th century, Muslim Arabs had taken over Lebanon. The Umayyads and later the Abbasids added Lebanon to the larger Islamic Caliphate (Kennedy, 2015). Arabic became common, and many cities changed to fit the new ways of running things and the new cultures. Tripoli became a major Islamic city and a center of learning, especially when the qadi Ibn Ammar was in charge. He built a huge library and encouraged a lively intellectual climate. During this period, the city thrived culturally and economically due to its coastal location and a degree of independence. (Kennedy, 2015)

Figure 02. *Edited from map showing Tripoli, with nearby description of the area. 1500-1599. Map author Jakob Ziegler (1470-1549).*

6. The Crusaders (1109–1289 AD)

After the Crusaders invaded it, the Levant changed. They took Tripoli in 1109 after a long siege. It became the capital of the County of Tripoli, one of the four main Crusader states in the Levant (Folda, 2005). The Crusaders built a new city inland from the old coastal settlement. It was on a hilltop, which made it a good place for a city. In the middle was a strong fortress that is now known as the **Citadel of Raymond de Saint-Gilles [Figure3].** The citadel was first built as a military stronghold, and over the years it was expanded and changed to show the different styles of architecture used by the Crusaders, Mamluks, and Ottomans. The citadel is still very famous and acts as a landmark in Tripoli, it shows the city's strategic and long lasting history (Folda, 2005).

7. The Mamluk Period (1289 to the early 16th century)

The Mamluks built a new city about 2 kilometers from the old citadel in 1289, after they beat the Crusaders. This new city was built in a way that made it easier to protect against future invasions. They took back Tripoli, tearing down the Crusader city and rebuilding it closer to the coast. The new Mamluk Tripoli became a major provincial capital with monuments that are still standing today. The city was designed as a defensive city with narrow streets. For this reason, Tripoli grew on its own, as a separate city from the port city of "Al Mina". It developed a Mamluk style, one of the best preserved with about 40 monuments still standing around the citadel. Tripoli, on the other hand, was a busy city under the Mamluks. It was known for its intellectual, commercial, and architectural advancements. Simultaneously, its markets, and workshops attracted merchants and artisans from across the region. The Mamluks spent a lot of money on the city's infrastructure, giving it a strong civic structure that combined religious, economic, and social roles. This growth made Tripoli one of the most important cities in the eastern Mediterranean and set the stage for its future under Ottoman rule (Rabbat, 1995).

Figure 03. *Citadel of Raymond de Saint-Gilles in Tripoli, Lebanon.*

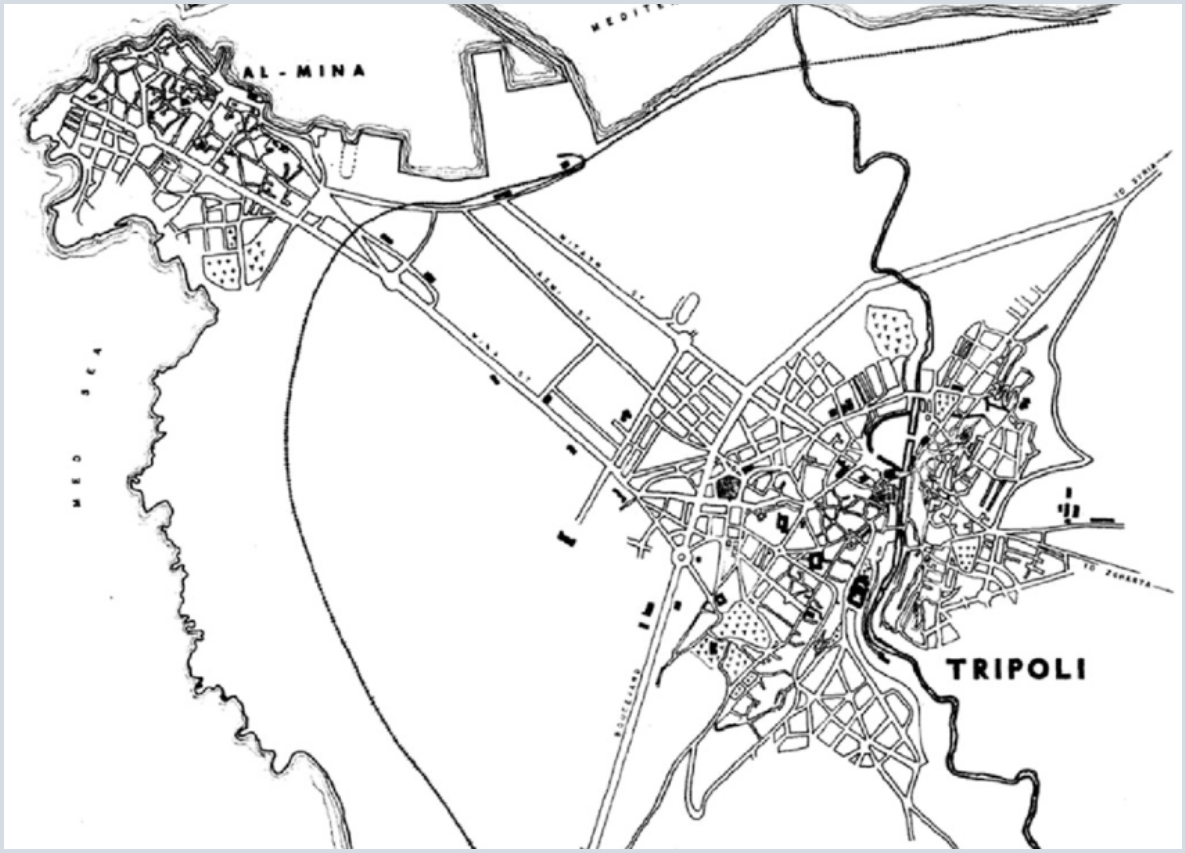
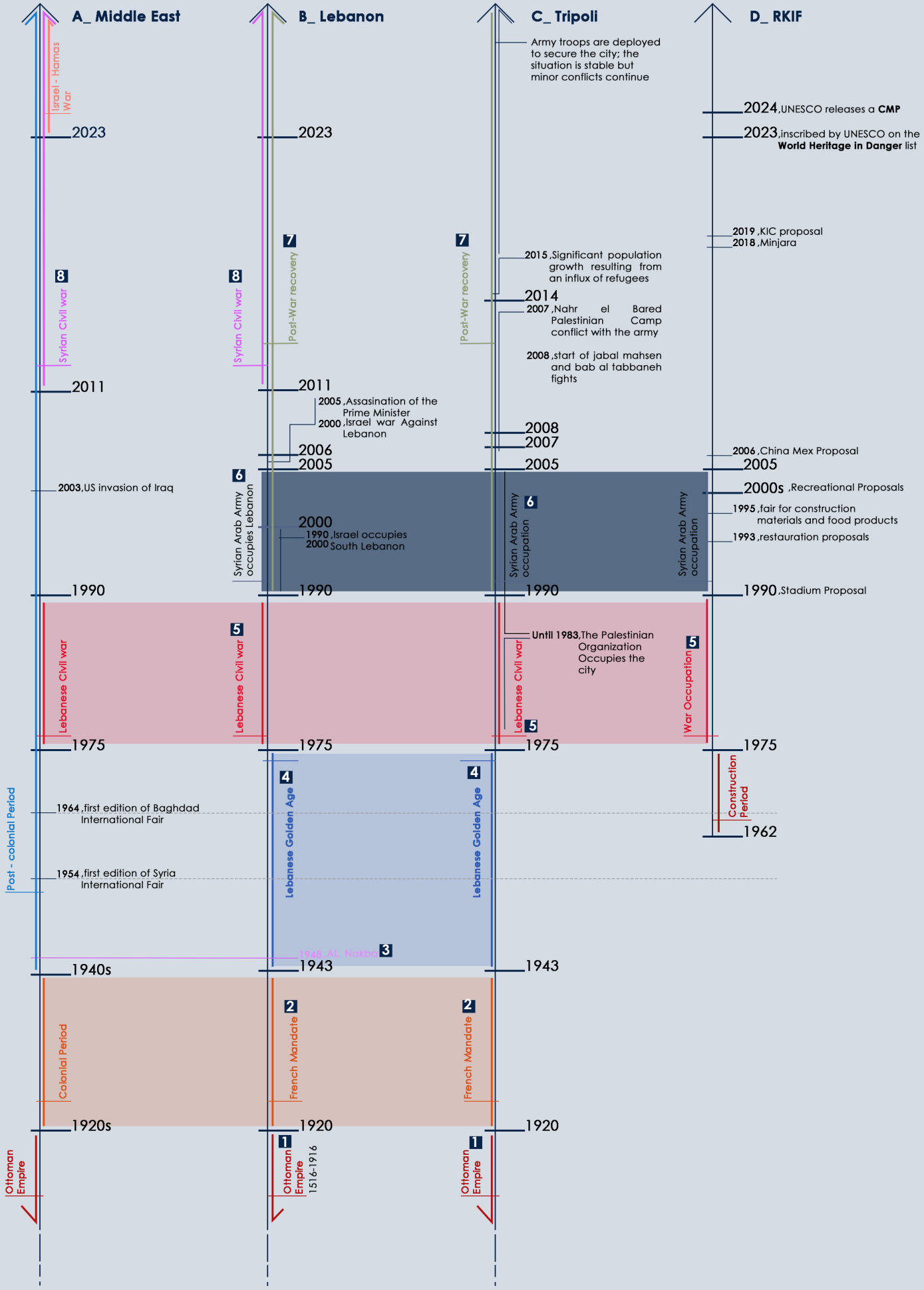


Figure 04. *Holistic zoning of El Mina and Mamluk in old Tripoli, shown as two small separated cities.*

Modern historical context (Early 16th Century - Present)

By the early 1500s, the Eastern Mediterranean was on the verge of significant change.
After the Mamluks were defeated by the Ottomans, Lebanon, which implemented a new political and administrative system, underwent enduring shifts that lasted for centuries.
This era saw the rise of innovative approaches in governance, trade, urban development, and international aid.
To understand how modern Tripoli evolved and how the Rachid Karame International Fair (RKIF) contributed to that transformation, we must examine key events and shifts in power across four principal axes: the Middle East (A), Lebanon as a nation (B), Tripoli as a city (C), and the Fair itself (D) as it expanded.
These axes, extending from the Ottoman conquest to today, illustrate how major regional powers and local developments combined to influence Tripoli's identity and city structure.


A_ Middle East
B_ Lebanon
C_ Tripoli
D_ RKIF
Israel- Hamas War
2023
Syrian Civil war
8
2011
2003,US invasion of Iraq
1990
Lebanese Civil war
1975
1964,first edition of Baghdad International Fair
Post - colonial Period
1954,first edition of Syria International Fair
1940s
Colonial Period
1920s
Ottoman Empire
Post-War recovery
7
2005,Assasination of the Prime Minister
2000,Israel war Against Lebanon
2006
2005
Syrian Arab Army occupies Lebanon
6
2000
1990,Israel occupies
2000 South Lebanon
5
4
Lebanese Golden Age
1948,Al Nakba
3
1943
2
French Mandate
1920
1
1516-1916
Army troops are deployed to secure the city; the situation is stable but minor conflicts continue
2015,Significant population growth resulting from an influx of refugees
2014
2007,Nahr el Bared Palestinian Camp conflict with the army
2008,start of jabal mahsen and bab al tabbaneh fights
2008
2007
Syrian Arab Army occupation
Until 1983,The Palestinian Organization Occupies the city
2024,UNESCO releases a CMP
2023,inscribed by UNESCO on the World Heritage in Danger list
2019,KIC proposal
2018,Minjara
2006,China Mex Proposal
2005
2000s ,Recreational Proposals
1995,fair for construction materials and food products
1993,restauration proposals
1990,Stadium Proposal
War Occupation
Construction Period
1962

1. The Ottoman Empire

The Ottoman Empire controlled most of the Middle East, including what is now Lebanon, from the early 1500s until the end of World War I. The region was split up into administrative units called vilayets. Each one was run by officials who were sent from Istanbul. Tripoli was part of the Syrian Vilayet. It was important because it was on the coast, had a strategic port, and was surrounded by farmland (Hanssen, 2005). In practice, the Ottomans kept control of Tripoli by working with powerful local families who had religious, social, and economic power. The Ottomans had a lasting effect on the city's institutions, architecture, and urban planning, even though the central government changed in strength over time.

During this time, Tripoli's urban fabric was made up of a lot of mosques, madrassas, hammams, and khans. Many of these were paid for by waqf. These architectural styles not only showed what the Ottomans liked, but they also showed how important religion and civic life were in everyday life. Tripoli's identity as a provincial capital within the larger imperial system was shaped by narrow alleys, courtyards, and integrated public spaces that created a unique spatial logic that was both defensive and communal.

2. The French Mandate

After World war 1, and the defeat of the Roman Empire, European powers split up the Middle East. **In 1920, Lebanon became part of France through the League of Nations Mandate system** (Thompson, 2000). This led to a change in politics and administration. French modernization and power took over the country: centralized administration, civil law, French schools and a French educational system in general. Naturally, this transition faced resistance especially in Tripoli due to its strong Sunni identity back at the time and its previous Ottoman legacy. Still, it made visible changes to the built environment (Salibi, 1988). French urbanists built public buildings and civic buildings in European styles, which brought order to the city's organic growth at the time. Neo-classical facades, rational street grids, and Beaux-Arts influences were used to design administrative quarters and transportation infrastructure. These influences weren't as strong as those in Beirut, the capital, but they still changed the way buildings and cities looked, showing colonial ideas and influence in Tripoli (Tabet, 1998). The French colonial vision kept Tripoli on the edge of things because they were mostly interested in politics and business in the capital.

In 1943, Lebanon gained independence from French rule and the National Pact of 1943 was made that divided power among the country's religious groups.

Beirut became the political and economic center of the new independent state, but Tripoli was still only a secondary part of national development plans. The city had a long history and strong business ties, but it didn't get a lot of investment and wasn't fully included in the central government's modernization programs. **The time after independence, which is often called Lebanon's "Golden Age," was a time of economic and cultural activity in Tripoli and all over Lebanon.**

3. The Nakba

Following the establishment of the Jewish state in 1948, **Palestinians sought refuge in Tripoli, significantly impacting the city.** Over 100,000 Palestinian refugees migrated to Lebanon, residing in camps and temporary shelters near urban areas. Many of these displaced communities naturally sought refuge in Tripoli because it is close to the borders.

The sudden influx put a strain on the city's already limited infrastructure and caused poor neighborhoods on the outskirts to grow. These neighborhoods are known for their poverty, informal settlements, and social exclusion. Not only did the presence of these refugees change the social and demographic landscape of Tripoli, but it also caused new political tensions that would affect the city for decades. The settlement of Palestinians in Tripoli led to the opening of UNRWA-run schools, clinics, and services that worked alongside state systems.

Refugee problems were linked to local problems, economic marginalization, and sectarian imbalance, which made the city's social and political landscape even more fragmented (Sayigh, 1999).

Figure 05. *Lebanese celebrating Independence Day on November 22nd 1943.*

Figure 06. *Palestinian Camps in Lebanon.*

4. The Golden Age

Lebanon's Golden Age spanned from the 1940s to the 1970s, **a period marked by political stability and rapid economic growth. The county became a center for cultural, economic, and political activities,** which drew investors from all over the world. People started calling Beirut the **"Paris of the Middle East"** at this time (Salibi, 1988).

Tripoli didn't get as much attention or investment as the capital city, but it still benefited from the country's overall wealth. The port of Tripoli was a place where investments and business took place.

These goals and plans included cultural projects and city growth, which set the stage for big building and city projects in that time. In this case, the building of the Rachid Karame International Fair in Tripoli began in 1962 (Tabet, 2012).

Architecture in Lebanon During the Golden Age: A New Republic, a new image

Coming out of the French mandate, the republic of Lebanon was off to a strong, fresh start. The country wanted to be a modern, cosmopolitan, and liberal state. Beirut became a center for business and culture because of its open economy, financial freedom, and location between the East and the West (Kaufman, 2021).

During Lebanon's "Golden Age," the country experienced significant improvements in infrastructure, the growth of a robust banking sector, and a thriving travel and tourism industry. Asher Kaufman (2021) says that people often called Lebanon's economy a "economic miracle" at this time, especially when compared to its neighboring countries, which were less politically flexible .

This economic growth brought about changes in cities and buildings that had never happened before. Buildings were used to show how modern people live, how progress is possible, and what the country wants to achieve. They were no longer just places to live or show off. A new architectural vocabulary came about in Beirut and other Lebanese cities. It was influenced by outside ideals but firmly based on local needs, climate and society (Tabet, 1998).

Local architects with global ideas

After studying architecture in other countries, mostly in Paris and the United States, Lebanese leading architects came back with a fresh understanding of modernist ideas (Trad, 2010). The application of these ideas: rationalism, functionalism, and the International Style, took place in a place with steep hills and a lot of history.

Andre Trad (2010) emphasizes the simultaneous existence of foreign and domestic talents during this period. Michel Écochard and André Wogenscky were well-known foreign architects who worked on government and institutional projects. Lebanese architects like Khalil Khoury, Pierre el-Khoury, Joseph Philippe Karam, and Victor Raad worked on making the private sector more modern. Without copying European or American models, Lebanese Architects experimented with concrete and designed based on the country's climate, topography, and urban patterns (Trad, 2010). **Écochard's 1963 Master Plan for Beirut and its suburbs [Figure 07]** is one important project.

Another famous example is Khalil Khoury's Interdesign Building, which was built in 1964 in the middle of Beirut (Foppiano, 2012). It used exposed concrete and sculpted shapes in a bold way to mix Brutalist aesthetics with a strong personal language of form and rhythm. The building became famous as a symbol of modern commercial architecture and the boldness of the time.

During the Golden Age, architecture was not only about new ideas, but also about how things looked. **As Beirut fought for cultural and economic dominance with cities like Cairo and Tehran, its buildings became symbols of modernity and sophistication (Tabet, 1998).**

At that time, the way Beirut looked was very important; the architecture of the golden age wasn't just about new ideas. The city was trying to be the best in the Middle East when it came to culture and business, competing with cities like Cairo and Tehran. **In this context, the architecture became a symbol of modernity and sophistication.**

The Hôtel Saint-Georges [Figure 08] was built in the 1920s and became a symbol of Beirut's elegance in the middle of the 20th century (Arbid, 2024). The hotel, which was on the Mediterranean coast, was a sign of Beirut's reputation as the **"Paris of the Middle East."**

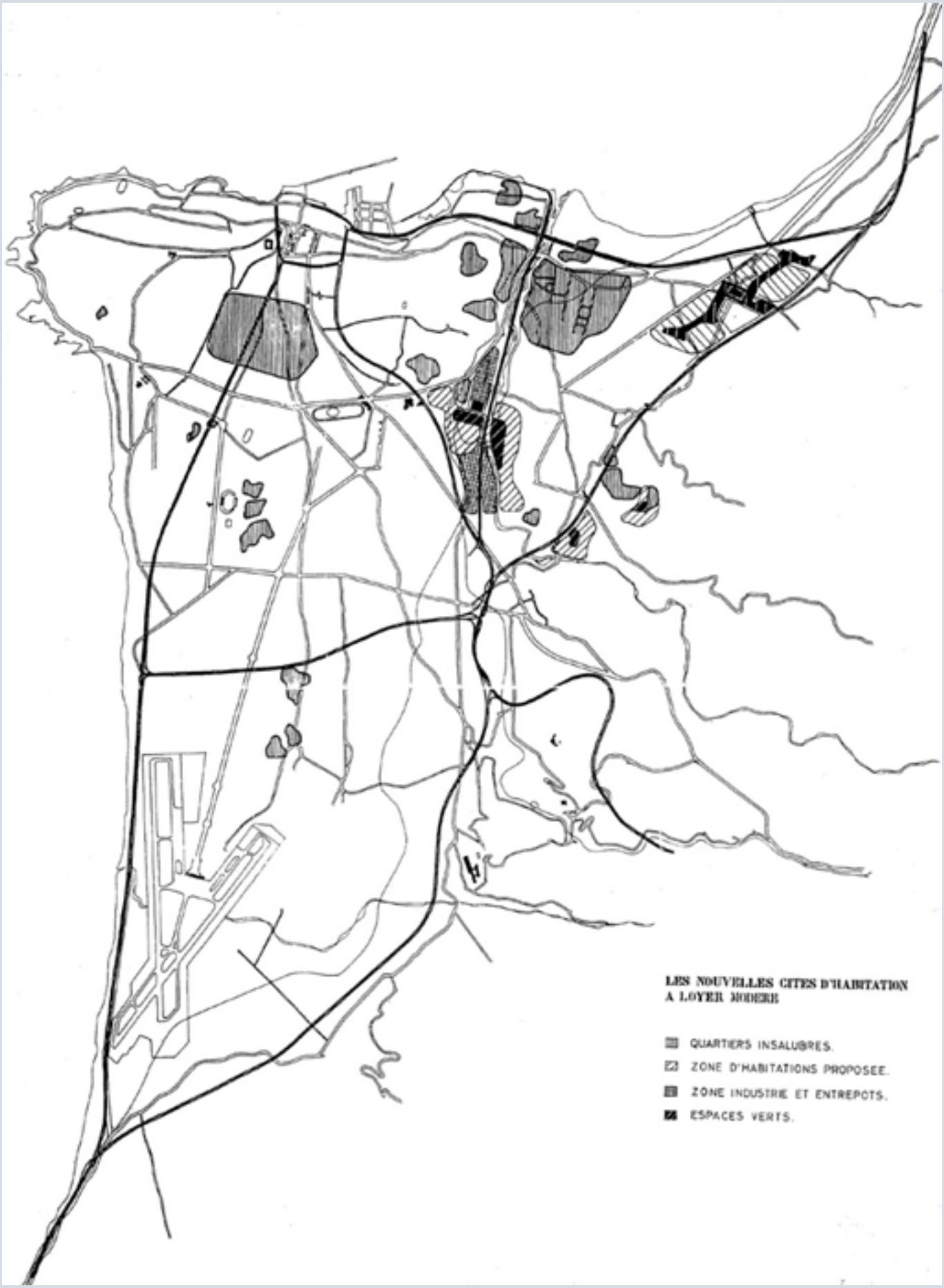


Figure 07. *Master plan of Beirut and its suburbs, Écochard, 1963.*

In this context, The Rachid Karame International Fair [Figure 9] in Tripoli was designed by the famous Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer in the late 1960s. It was just as ambitious as the others, but it was never finished. The Lebanese government built this huge complex to show off Tripoli to the world and hold international exhibitions. Niemeyer's design started a conversation between the modernism of Latin America and the Levantine setting. Jad Tabet (2012) says that this project marked the end of functional architecture and the beginning of design-based cultural diplomacy.

The Ministry of Defense at Yarzeh [Figure 10], built in the late 1960s, was another sign of the government's ambition. The complex's imposing shape and location on a hill showed the strength of the institution and the country (Tabet, 1998).

The Sabbag Center [Figure 13], which was designed by Jacques Liger and Alvar Aalto, is one of the best examples of mixed-use design. It was a rare example of Nordic-Mediterranean synthesis because it brought together public, cultural, and commercial spaces into one urban area. The study of regional and international idioms in this effort showed how open and complicated things were at the time.

The landscape of everyday life was also changed. As the need for housing grew quickly, the idea of the modern apartment block came about.

Architects started to adapt modernist ideas like pilotis, free façades, and huge horizontal windows to fit the culture of Lebanon (Haddad, 2008). Roof terraces offered views and fresh air, balconies served as semi-public entrances, and brise-soleils were used to control sunlight. This combination of modern design with climate-adapted design made Lebanese homes of that time stand out.

Victor H. Bishara's **Koujak Jaber Building [Figure 12]** is an example of this style. The building's focus on livability, well-proportioned volumes, and clean lines shows what the growing middle class in Beirut wants. **The Electricité du Liban offices [Figure 11]** also became a symbol of state-sponsored modernism. Their imposing presence and grid-like façade suggested efficiency, transparency, and control.

By the early 1970s, Lebanon had a rich and varied architectural culture. But this growth would soon come to an end.

When the Lebanese Civil War broke out in 1975, many famous buildings were damaged or left empty, which stopped construction (Picard, 2002).

A lot of the Golden Age's buildings are in danger of being destroyed or are already falling apart.

The legacy of this time is still an important part of Lebanon's identity. Structures like the Ministry of Defense, the Niemeyer Fair, and the Hôtel Saint-Georges show us the hopes of a generation that wanted to build a modern Arab nation based on openness, style, and new ideas.

There is potential in reexamining this legacy, not only to protect what is left, but to reignite the creative force that once defined Lebanon's architectural golden era (Haddad, 2008).

Figure 08. *Hotel Saint Georges, Beirut.*

Figure 09. *Aerial view of Tripoli Fair in 1973).*

Figure 10. *Arial photo of the ministry of defence.*

Figure 11. *Electricité du Liban.*

Figure 12. *Koujak Jaber Building.*

Figure 13. *Photo of the Sabbagh center showing its modern facade.*

Figure 14. *The Green Line in Beirut 1990, after the Lebanese civil war.*

5. The Lebanese Civil War

In 1975, Lebanon's internal problems turned into a full-blown civil war, lasting for fifteen years and destroying the country's institutions, economy, and social cohesion.
The fight started because of sectarian differences, social inequality, regional politics, and unresolved tensions over the presence of Palestinians. The war quickly made Tripoli, which is mostly Sunni, unstable as armed groups, both local and Palestinian, set up bases in different parts of the city. Over time, this led to more violence. In Tripoli, different militias were fighting by the early 1980s. In 1983, there was a lot of fighting in the city between the Syrian-backed Arab Democratic Party and Islamic groups (Lefèvre, 2014).
Syria then sent in its own troops and kicked Arafat's troops out. This made it clear that the Syrian army would stay in Tripoli and Lebanon. Residents had to deal with curfews, bombings, and the shutdown of city services, which left lasting mental and physical scars on the community. During this time, the historic center and nearby neighborhoods of Tripoli were ignored and no investments were made regarding the preservation of old towns and historical centers (Picard, 2002).
The civil war not only stopped the city's growth, but it also strengthened social exclusion and conflicts. This feeling lasted long after the fighting ended in 1990.

6. The Syrian army occupation.

Lebanon did not regain full sovereignty after the civil war ended in 1990. Instead, **it started a long time when the Syrian military and politics were in charge.** Syria had a strong presence in Tripoli since 1983 and kept troops and intelligence networks in Lebanon to "stabilize" the country. For Tripoli, this meant that Syrian-backed forces were always watching over the city, often working with local militias like the Arab Democratic Party.
The city was still closely watched, and dissenting voices were silenced.
Some rebuilding work started in Beirut in the 1990s, but Tripoli stayed on the outside. The government didn't invest much, and the security-first approach that Syria pushed made it hard for cities to grow. People in the area often felt more alone because they had to get approval from Damascus for political appointments, economic contracts, and city decisions.

During this time, Tripoli's public spaces and architectural heritage also got worse. People didn't take care of things, and the lack of planning for culture or the economy made civic life even worse. **The Syrian troops didn't leave Lebanon until 2005**, after the assassination of Prime Minister Rafic Hariri and the Cedar Revolution protests (Haddad, 2011). This officially ended their occupation. **However, this occupation is still affecting Tripoli until this day since its still suffering of neglect, repression and economic stagnation (Lefèvre, 2014).**

7. Post war recovery

After the civil war ended and Syrian troops left in 2005, Lebanon went through a period of rebuilding a regenerating. Even though there were still occasional acts of political violence like assassinations, bombings, and fights between rival groups, the country worked on rebuilding its economy and institutions (Salloukh, 2019). In the south, tensions with Israel escalated during the 2006 conflict. This made Lebanon's infrastructure even weaker and showed how weak national sovereignty is. At the same time, Tripoli was having its own problems after the war. The city was the scene of repeated fights between rival neighborhoods, especially the Sunni-majority Bab al-Tabbaneh and the Alawite-majority Jabal Mohsen (Fawaz, 2009). These fights led to several rounds of urban violence between 2008 and 2014. These small fights were often caused by bigger political issues in the region and made worse by Lebanon's weak security and judicial systems. Since the government couldn't take charge, Tripoli stayed tense and underdeveloped for a long time. **The city was the scene of repeated fights between rival neighborhoods,** especially the Sunni-majority Bab al-Tabbaneh and the Alawite-majority Jabal Mohsen. **These fights led to several rounds of urban violence between 2008 and 2014.**
These small fights were often caused by bigger political issues in the region and made worse by Lebanon's weak security and judicial systems (Lefèvre, 2014). **Since the government couldn't take charge, Tripoli stayed tense and underdeveloped for a long time.**

8. Syrian Civil war

The start of the Syrian civil war in 2011 was a major problem for Lebanon. As violence grew worse across the border, Lebanon became a refuge for Syrians. By 2014, more than a million Syrian refugees had come to Lebanon. **This led to massive demographic changes**, making Lebanon the country with the most refugees per capita in the world (UNHCR, 2015).

This influx had a huge effect on northern areas like Tripoli, which were already struggling with weak social conditions and little government investment.

The arrival of displaced people put a lot of stress on the job market, infrastructure, and public services.

Schools and hospitals in Tripoli suffered of overpopulation, and the lack of affordable housing made things worse for the city's poorest people. Sometimes, tensions between Lebanese residents and refugees turned violent because they thought they were competing for resources and had different political views on the Syrian government (El Mufti, 2014).

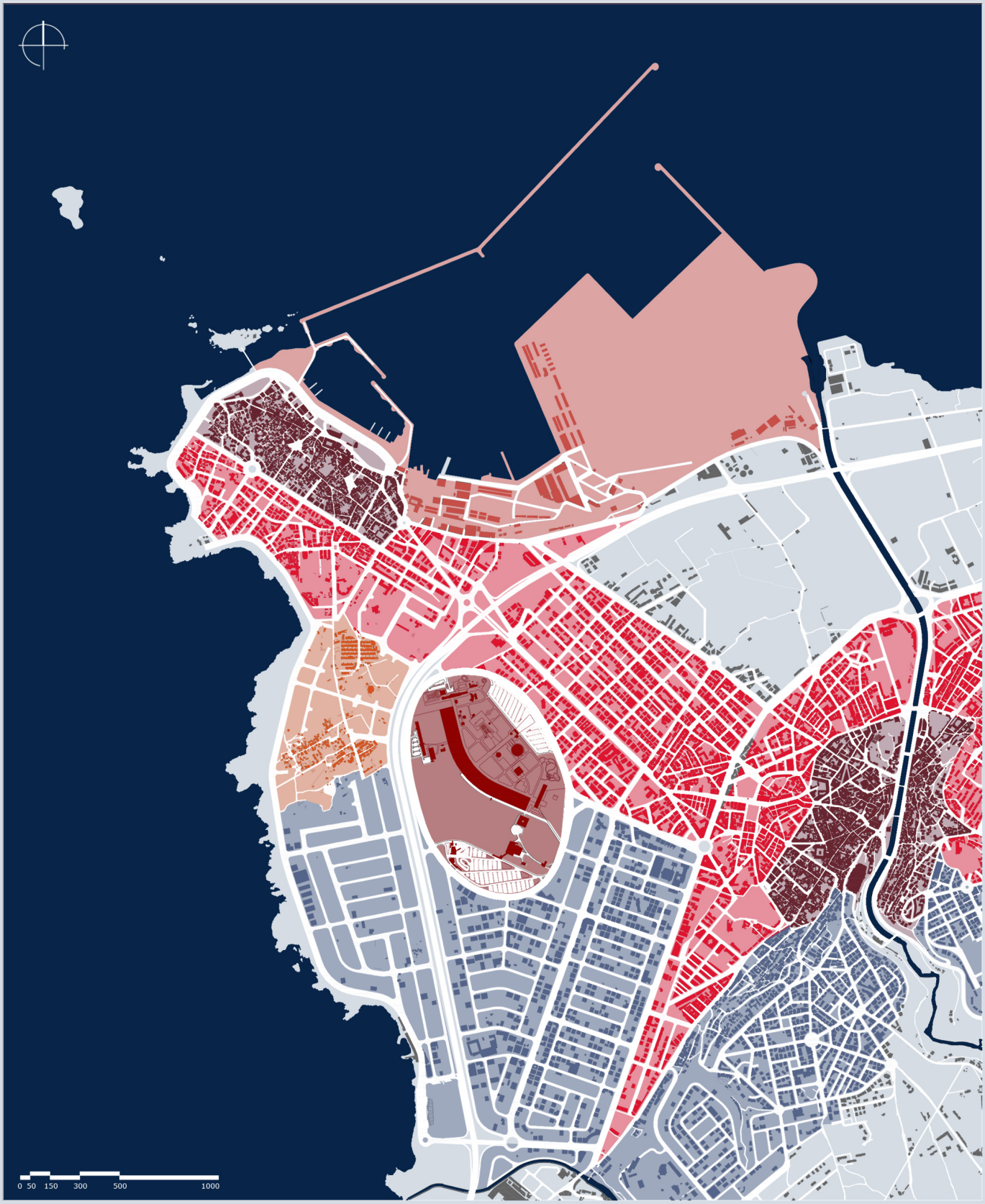
Tripoli and Lebanon as a whole are still not fully recovered, even though there have been some efforts to revitalize the city. Political instability, along with problems in the economy, makes it hard to plan for the future and keep society together. Let's not forget the horrible Beirut port explosion of 2020, which shocked and saddened the country and made its political and economic situation even worse. The path of Tripoli shows how unresolved historical wrongs, broken government, and repeated outside shocks have kept the city in a long state of limbo, caught between getting better and getting worse (Kaufman, 2021).

Figure 15. *Beirut Port Explosion.*

02.2. Current Territorial Situation
Tripoli, Liban Nord, Lebanon

The drawings included in this chapter were collected from the Municipality of Tripoli and the Rachid Karame International Fair archives, and have been revised and adapted by the author.

02.2.1. Socio-Spatial Diversity
Tripoli: A mosaic of lived experiences



Tripoli is a ground for huge **spatial diversity** in terms of social classes, races, nationalities and religions.
Different districts reveal strong contrasts in socio economic status, architectural characteristics and urban density.
The city is a mosaic of lived experiences: wealthy areas are found near the coast, central nodes are strongly commercial and peripheries are marginalized and informal. Shaped by decades of uneven development, unstable politics and war, these differences are economic, cultural, ideological and infrastructural.
To understand the dynamics of this diversity, mapping is essential. This part of the chapter interprets both historical legacies and explores future urban interventions.

Area 1: El Mina

Located on the coastal area of west Tripoli, this area is mainly residential alongside commercial activities especially on the waterfront. It's architecture includes traditional stone houses and narrow streets. **Middle class** population mainly occupies the neighborhood.

Photographs sources:
1.Lebanontours.com
2.Photo by the author, April 2025.

Area 2: Hay El Tanak

Hay al-Tanak is an i**nformal neighborhood** located on the peripheries of Tripoli. It is primarily residential, with self-built structures and limited infrastructure. Conditions of living are extremely poor in this area. **It is inhabited mainly by low-income communities, including displaced populations and refugees.**

Photographs sources:
1.WFP/Giulio Origlia
2.João Sousa

Area 3: El Maarad

El maarad area is the area situated just outside te rachid karame international fair.
It is characterized by a modern urbanism, wide streets and good living conditions. **Middle to higher class population mostly reside here.**

Photographs sources:
1.Photo by the author, January 2025
2.Photo by the author, April 2025

Area 4: DownTown Tripoli

Downtown Tripoli is the city's institutional and commercial center.
The area includes Ottoman, Mamluk, and French Mandate architecture. It is characterized by administrative buildings, commercial activity, and public services. **The population is mixed, with both middle- and lower-income groups.**

Photographs sources:
Photographs by Mouzner Hamze September 2020.

Area 5: The Historical Center

This dense pedestrian zone is dominated by **commercial activities** especially traditional merchandise. It has the medieval mosques, hammams and khans. It features the Tripolitan **arts and crafts** such as soap making, pottery and carving. The area is inhabited mainly by **lower-income groups.**

Photographs sources:
by Mouzner Hamze September 2020.

Area 6: Abou Ali riverbank

This area occupies the eastern bank of the Abou Ali river; **it is the densest and marginalized urban fringe.** The river separates physically but also socially from the historical center. The urban fabric is mostly informal with very few services and poor living conditions. It houses street markets selling different goods such as clothes, vegetables and food. **It is inhabited by a low-income society.**

Photographs sources:
Photographs by the author, January 2025.

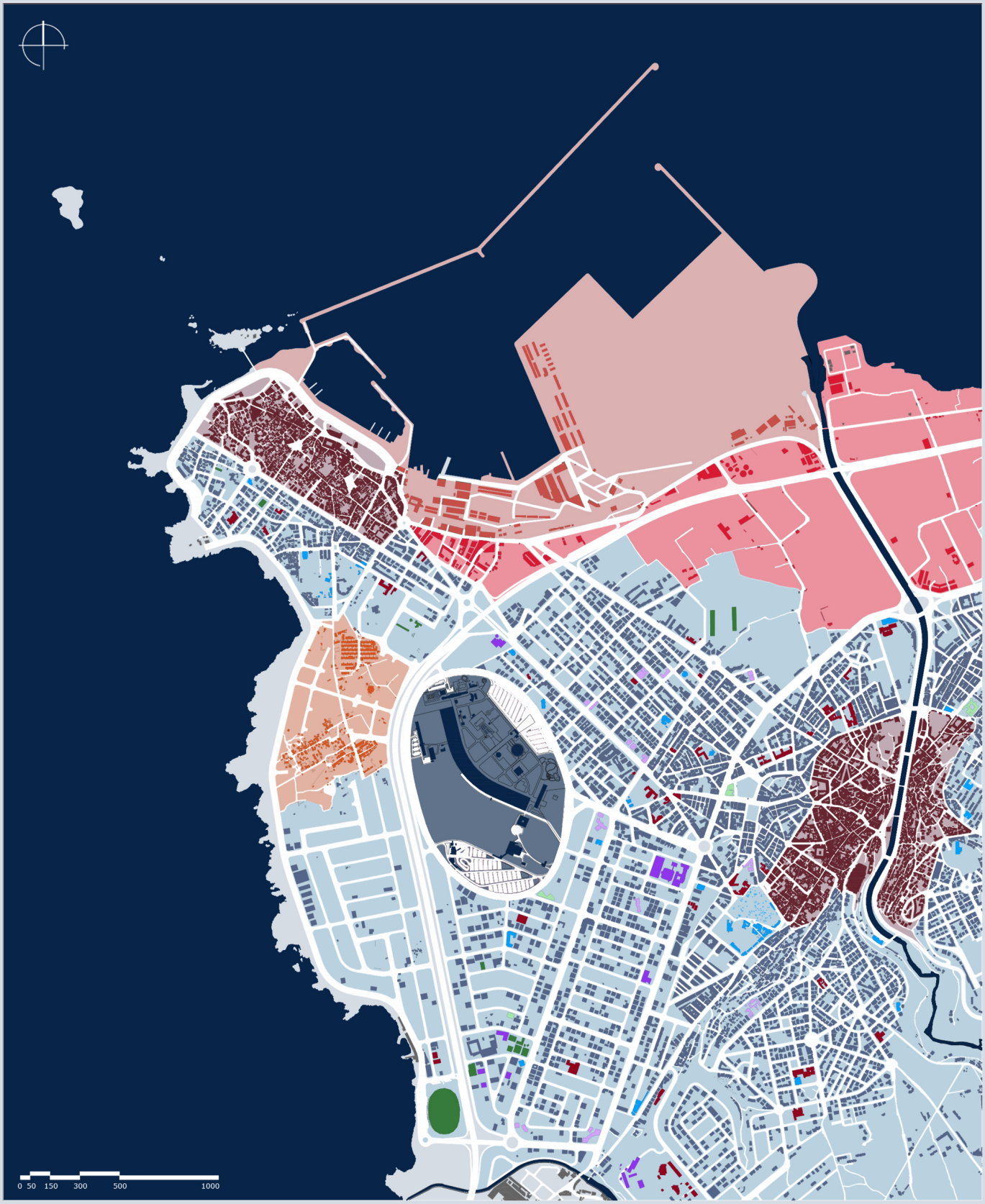
02.2.2. Built / Unbuilt

The contrast between built and unbuilt tells a lot about the spatial logic of Tripoli's urban evolution.
Dense construction patterns are mostly seen in older neighborhoods and areas where heavy commercial activities take place.
In contrast, industrial zones and informal areas forecast a lot of vacant lots. This reflects deeper issues such as unresolved land ownership (a common matter in Lebanon), interrupted public projects or outdated regulatory frameworks. **These plots, often regarded as urban voids, hold potential to function as the city's lungs and could house its future needs.** Locating the negative patters not only helps highlighting areas of neglect but also draws the attention to strategic places full of potential and opportunities.

02.2.3. Roads Network

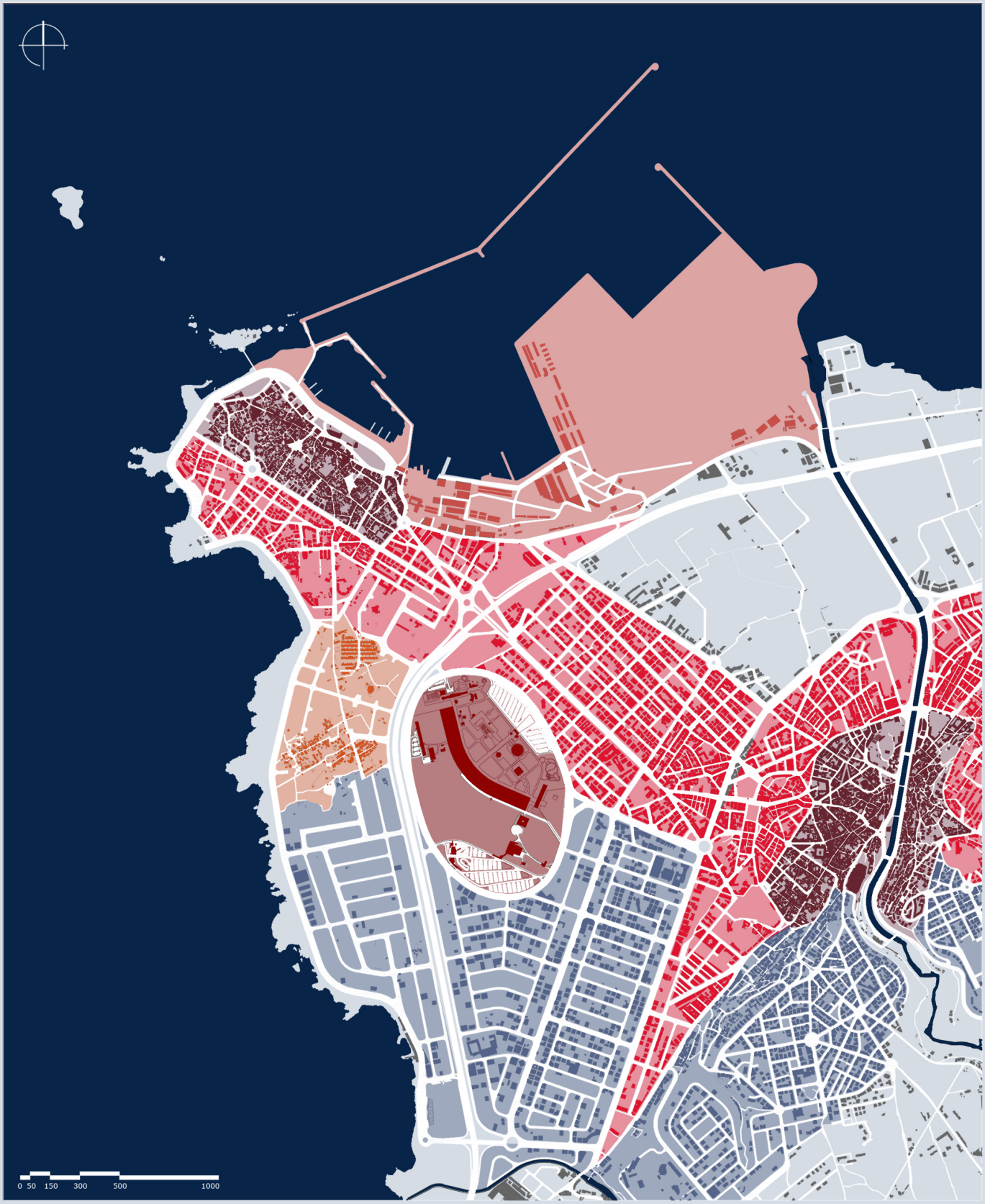
Suffering from congestion, flooding and low maintenance, Tripoli's main road network is organized around main arteries.
Movement patterns are shaped by the hierarchy of roads: going from the highway to narrow internal streets.
The railway, no longer working, was once an essential connector between Tripoli, Beirut and Homs. Operations stopped as the result of the Lebanese civil war in 1975 and were never continued due to political instability and conflicts in the country in general.
The tracks and the station remain unused until this day, relics of the past.

02.2.4. Functions




RKIF
Port Area
Historic City Center
Industrial Area
Informal Settlements
Residential Area
Educational
Religous
Sports Centers
Governmental
Health Centers
Cultural

02.2.5. Urban Development



Rachid Karami International Fair
Tripoli Port
Historical Center
1st Expansion Areas
Informal Settlements
Modern Urban Expansion

02.2.6. Public Spaces

Rachid Karami International Fair

Public Spaces

Despite the presence of many vacant plots in Tripoli, the city still suffers from very few accessible public spaces.
The area of parks, squares or open civic spaces is unproportional to the city's size, population and its needs.
Most green spaces are either neglected land, private lots or near public institutions. This is the result of decades of poor urban planning and instability.
A major problem is: dense districts often suffer from overcrowded streets and an absence of a safe, sanitary and inclusive area for everyday social interactions.
The implications of this problem are not only spatial but also social.
The absence of welcoming public environments contributes to social exclusion, limits civic engagement, and weakens the sense of community.

02.3. Demographics

Influenced by rural migration, Palestinian refugee influx and more recently the Syrian crisis, the population in Tripoli **has grown from 36 000 in 1920 to 508 990** in 2016 approximately (World Population Review, 2025).

In 2015, the Lebanese population was estimated at 365 381 in Tripoli, with all the remaining residents being refugees (UN-Habitat, 2016).

These numbers have led to **harsh density contrasts** across the city. In some areas, like El-Qobbe, population ranks among the most overcrowded sectors regionally, exceeding **230 000 persons per square kilometer (UN-Habitat, 2016).**

Due to the absence of a recent national census, exact numbers are difficult to confirm, but the most recent estimates suggest that Tripoli's population ranges from 500 000 to 800 000, the number depends on whether refugees are included (World Population Review, 2025; Worldometer, 2025).

10 to 17% of the city's population consists of Syrian and Palestinian refugees (Worldometer, 2025). Given that the national urbanization rate is 86%, **Tripoli remains one of the densest and the most demographically pressured cities (Worldometer, 2025).**

In 2016, almost 20% of Tripoli's population consisted of refugees. The city had 31,797 Palestinian refugees (PRL), 2,876 Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS), and 61,556 Syrian refugees (SyR). This is a 202% increase in the number of refugees since the start of the Syrian war (UNHCR, 2025). While PRS are still mostly in Beddaoui camp (78%), Syrians tend to move to low-income Lebanese neighborhoods, which makes the overcrowding problems that are already there worse. This increase significantly impacted demographics and space, stressing infrastructure and social services. Chronic poverty, high population density and deep socioeconomic disparities are major problems of the city (UN-Habitat, 2016). Entire neighborhoods like Tabbaneh, El-Qobbe, and El-Haddadine suffer from high unemployment rates, low to absence of educational attainment, and limited access to quality housing, mostly residing in informal settlements (UN-Habitat, 2016). These zones are historically neglected and under-resourced, however they have become even more vulnerable after refugee influxes and economic crisis in the country.

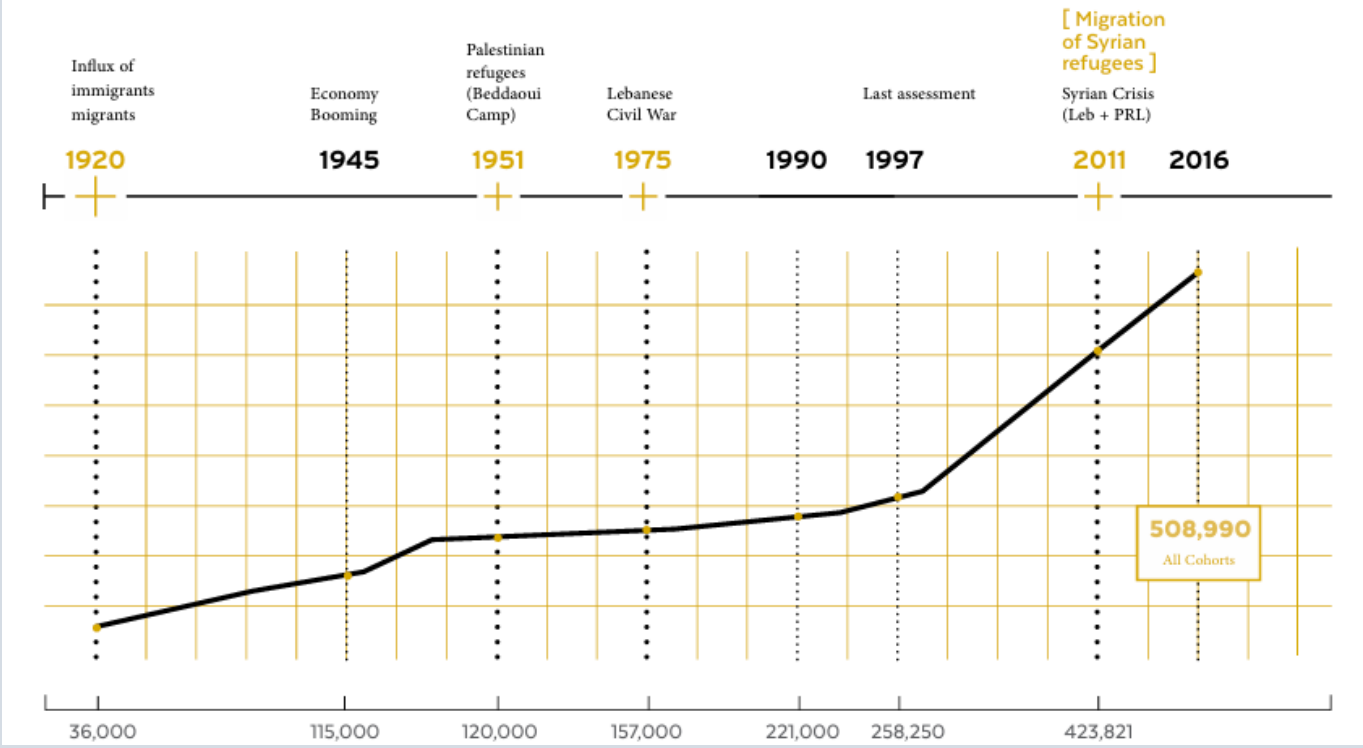
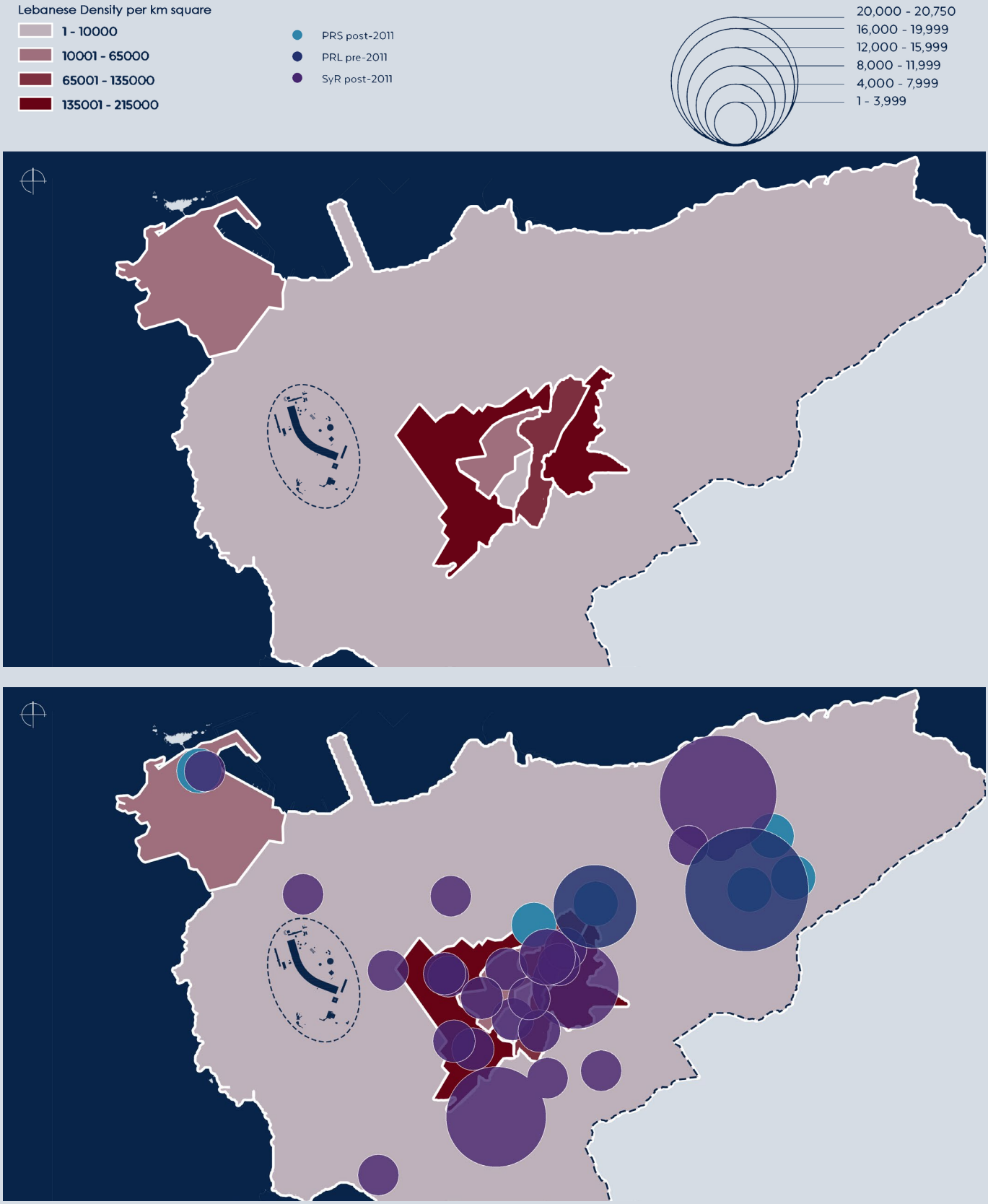


Figure 16. *Timeline City Population Growth - 1920 - 2016.*

Population density of Lebanese by cadastre

Adapted from UN-Habitat, 2016



Tripolitans: Employment and Skills

Both formal and informal sectors shape the economy of the city. **20.5% of Tripolitans work in handcrafts and traditional manufacturing** including soap, sweets, copper, silver, blown glass, woodwork, and leather (UN-Habitat, 2016). Education and services come next forming 13.5% of employment. **Furthermore, following a survey by UN habitat, 2016, most economic activity in tripoli relies on trade with a rate of 54%.** However these sectors remain fragile due to instability and market downturns, plus a problem of dual labor economy with growing inequality caused by the low rates and wages of refugees.

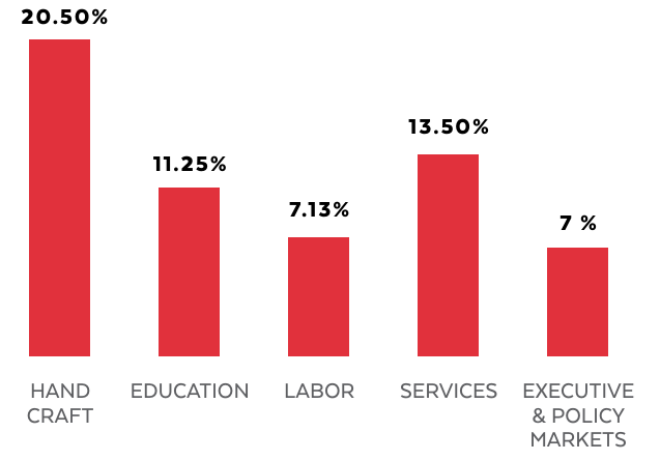


Figure 17. *Main jobs distribution in Tripoli municipality.*

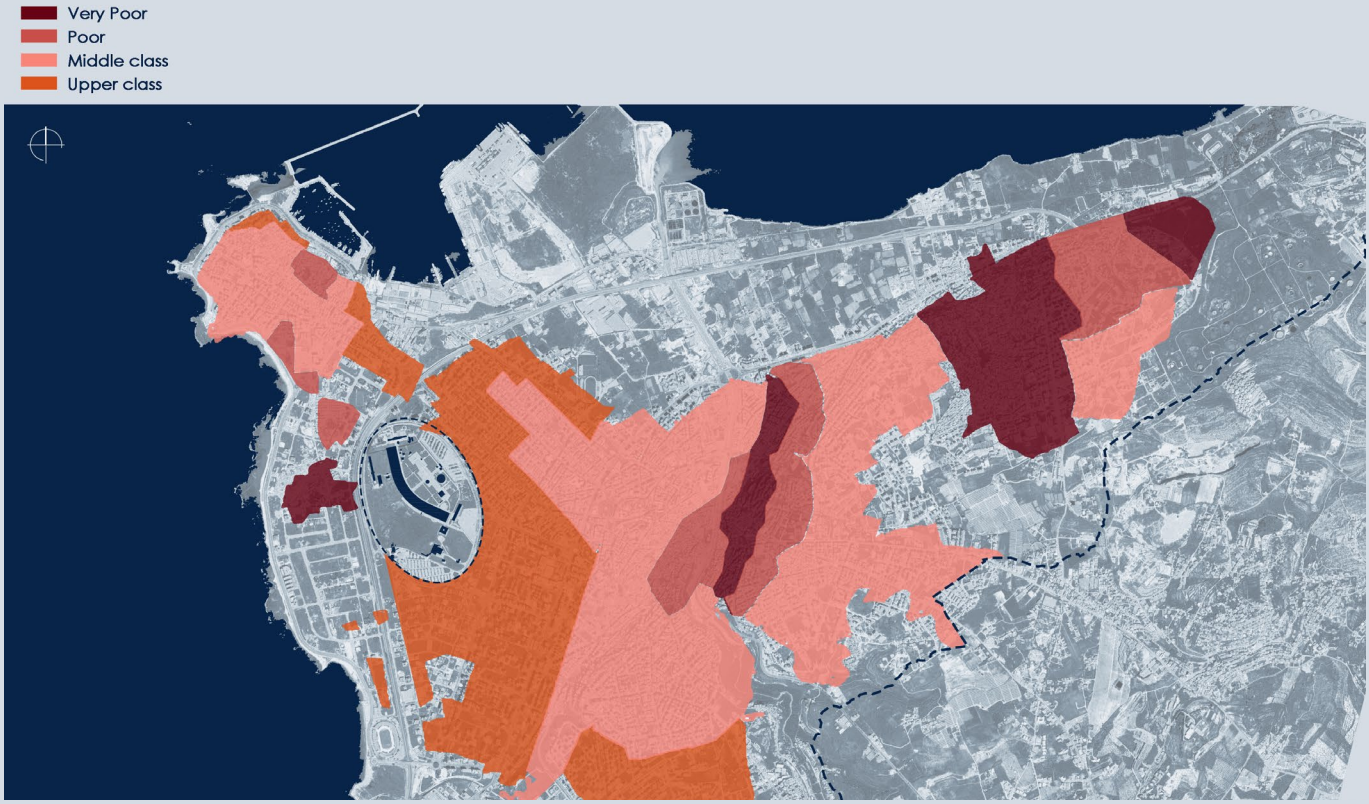
	% of economically active people	*% of companies*
Trade	*54*	*58*
Services	*> 14*	*23*
Industry	*14*	*19*
Manufacturing & Handicraft	*2*	*< 1%*
Construction	*10*	*1*
Tourism	*> 6*	*< 1*

Figures shown with '<' are inferred from the other sectoral data and are thus approximations only

Figure 18. *Economic sectors in Tripoli, Mina & Beddaoui by % of economically active people & % of companies.*

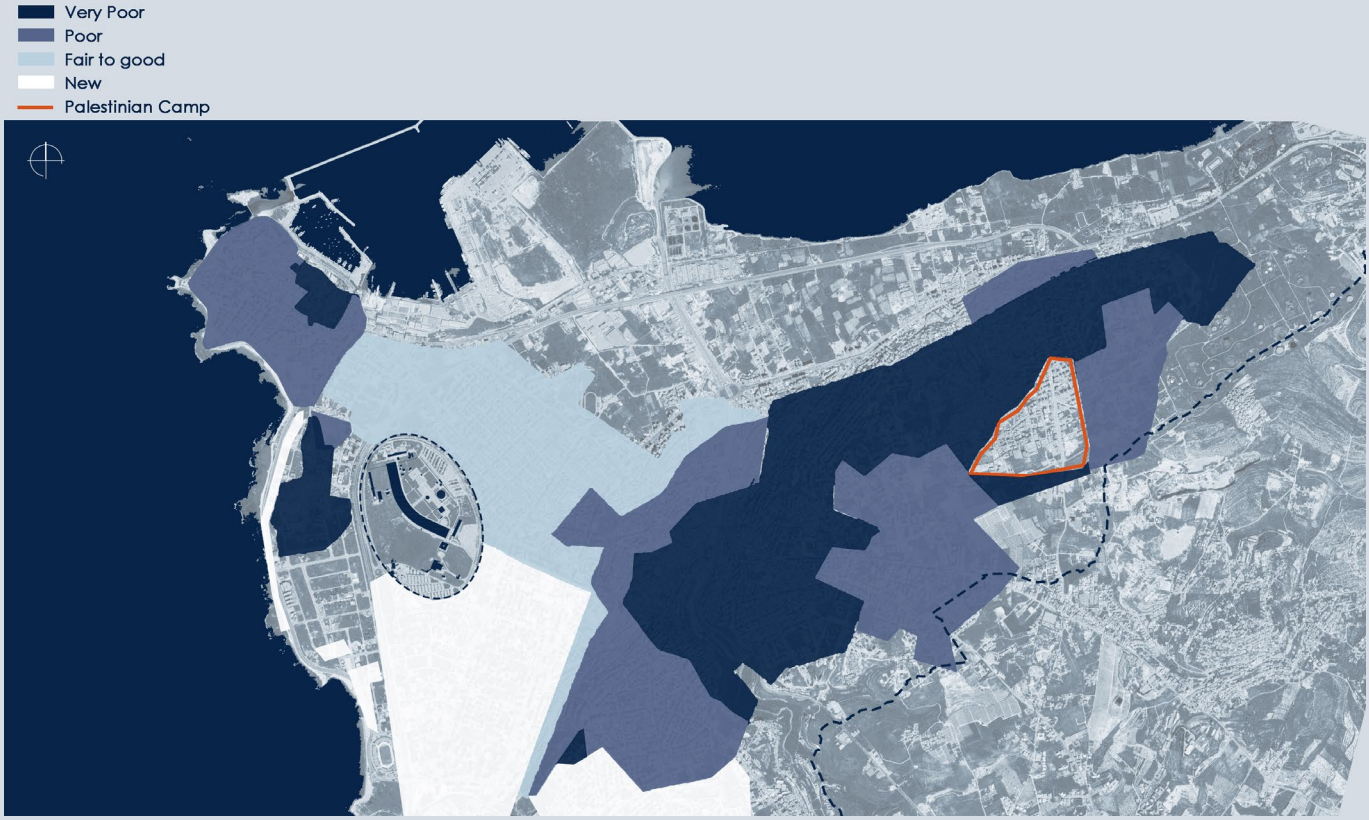
Socio-economic groups in Tripoli

Adapted from Schinder 2014



Building quality map in Tripoli

Adapted from Schinder 2014



02.4. Synthesis

The previous analysis highlights issues regarding mainly accessibility to the RKIF and its surrounding:

1. Physical, Visual, and Accessibility Fragmentation

Cutting the RKIF from its surroundings, the highway acts as a hard barrier. This connection is physical, limiting vehicular and pedestrian access but also visual, isolating the fair but also the inner part of the city from the sea. This creates a sense of detachment.

2. Lack of Visual Integration with the Sea

Despite the proximity of the RKIF to the sea, a direct visual connection to it is still absent. This is because of urban developments and barriers along the coast, limiting the site's potential for spatial openness.

3. Socio-Spatial Contrast

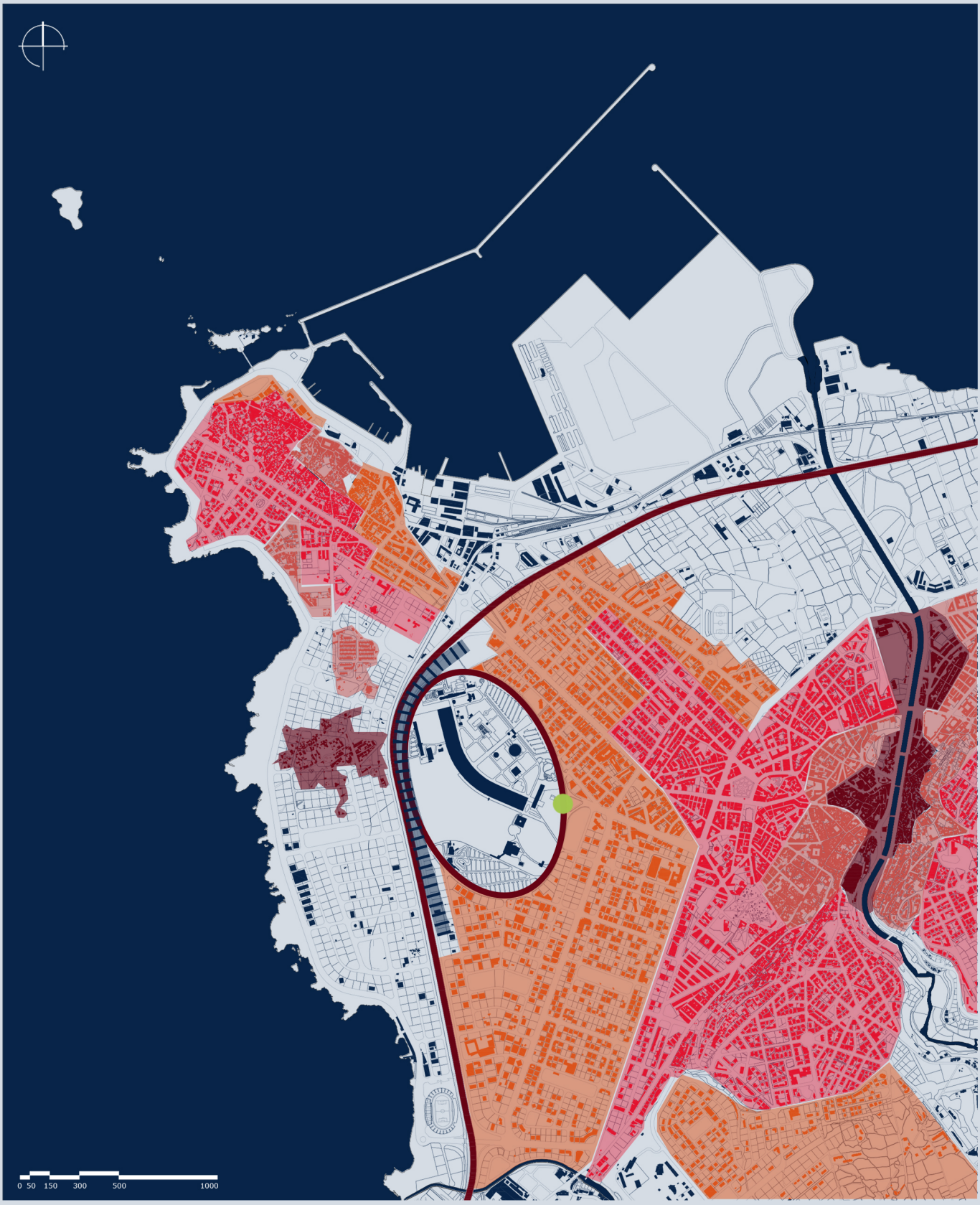
Just outside the perimeter of the fair a stark contrast is observed:

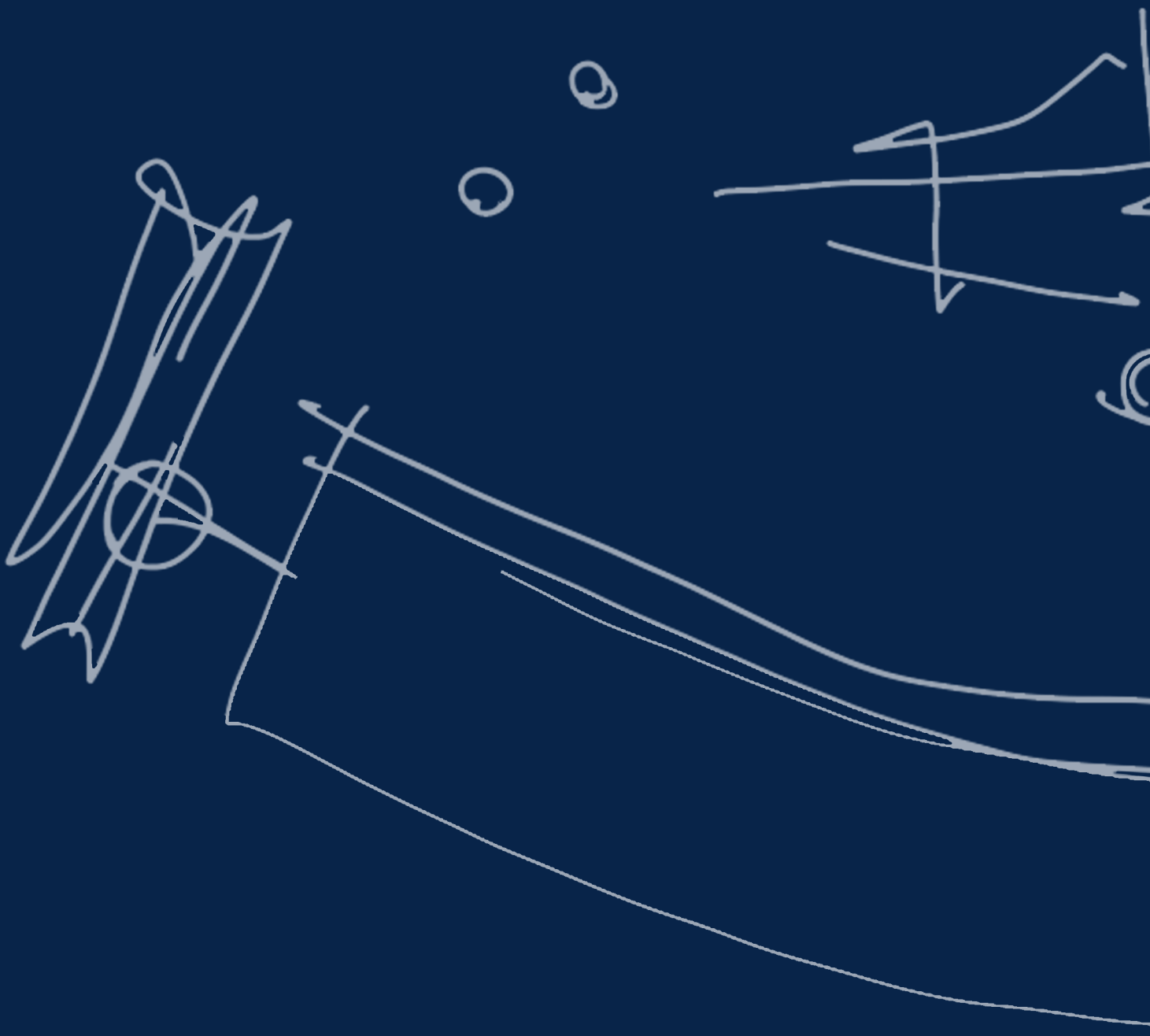
-On one side, informal settlements, marginalization, extreme poverty and poor building conditions.

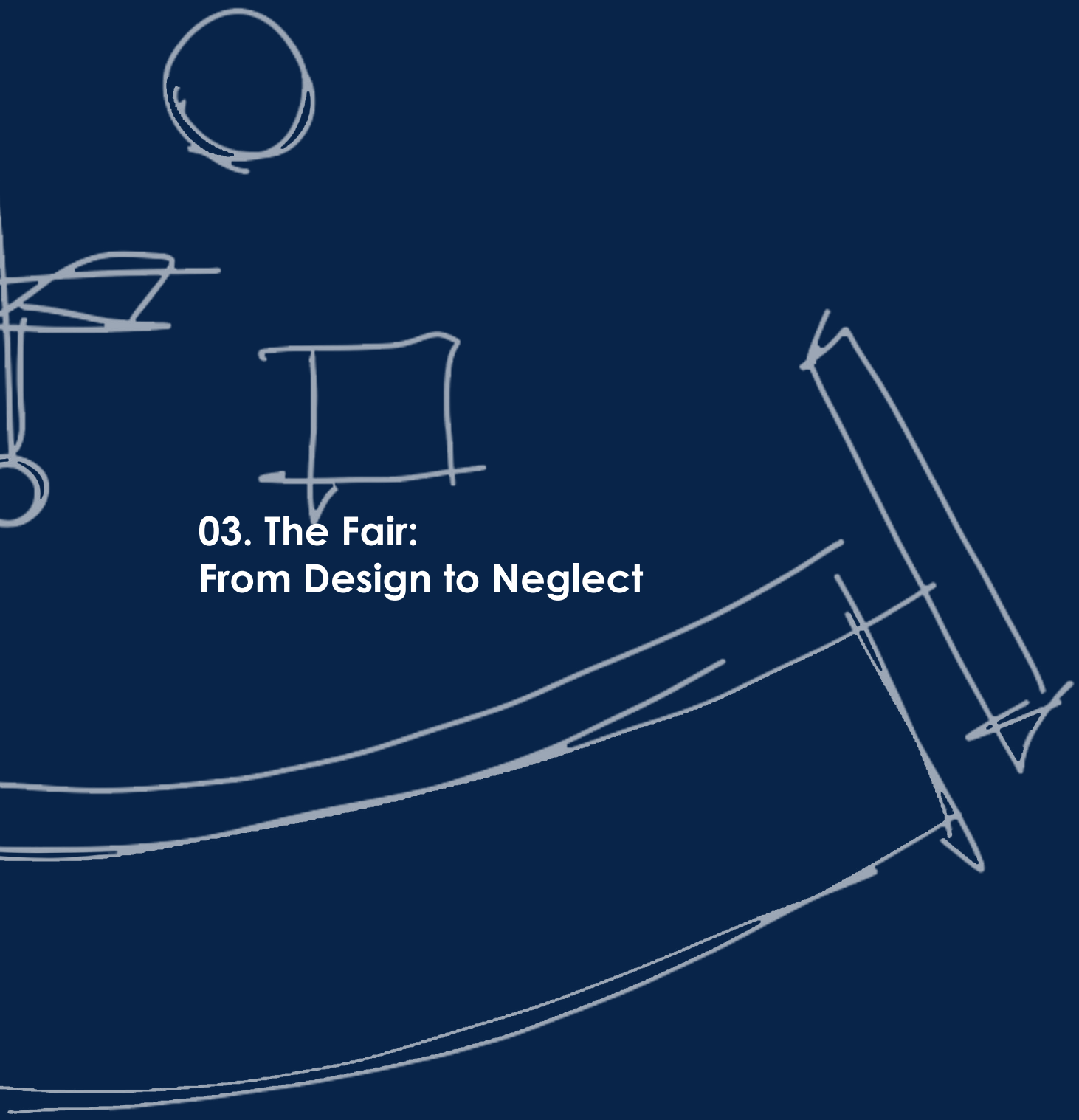
-On the other side, modern urbanism, new residential blocks and high income population.

4. Urban Pressure and Latent Potential

Tripoli faces extreme poverty and overpopulation. However, it also presents significant opportunities through deep-rooted traditional unique craftsmanship, a huge market force and underutilized structures that could save it and properly revitalize it


0 50 150 300 500 1000
Vehicular circulation
Bloked / Potential connection to RKIF
The only RKIF entrance (restricted)
Very Poor
Poor
Middle class
Upper class





03. The Fair:
From Design to Neglect

03.1. Historical Context

This chapter delineates significant events that influenced the establishment of the Rachid Karame International Fair (RKIF), from its inception until its recent designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The project commences with the first design and development phase, propelled by the Lebanese government's initiative to create an international fair in Tripoli and the involvement of acclaimed Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer, whose modernist perspective directed the endeavor. The Lebanese Civil War, commencing in 1975, drastically impeded construction as the Fair approached its completion.

This initiated an extended phase of neglect, during which the facility was seized by armed personnel and subsequently abandoned. After the war, many efforts and restoration projects were made including partial reopening of the fair after naming it Rachid karame international fair. However, starting 2000, these projects faced limitations because they often conflicted with the Fair's original purpose and architectural expression. These projects included commercial developments, international partnerships and localized restoration.

Efforts by Lebanese activists were made several times to protect the site's heritage. The upcoming historical timeline chronologically highlights the fair's framework from design to neglect. It helps understand RKIF's evolving role from its vision, to its wartime challenges, restorations then it's current dramatic neglect.

Following the chronological axis, key events will be explored in greater detail.

Lebanese Golden Age

Lebanese Civil War

Syrian Arab Army occupation

1960 The Lebanese government officially declared Tripoli as the site for the Permanent International Fair, despite political opposition.

1961 Prime Minister Saeb Salam announced the Fair's location on 400,000 m² of expropriated land near the El Mina road in western Tripoli.

1962 Oscar Niemeyer accepted the commission and traveled to Beirut, after meeting Lebanese envoy Ferdinand Dagher in Rio de Janeiro.

3.2. The Design Phase, Neimeyer's Vision

1963 The foundation stone of the International and Permanent Lebanon Fair was laid on October 1st.

1964 Dar Al-Handasah and ACE were appointed as principal consultants for architecture and engineering.

1966 Niemeyer made his second and final visit to Tripoli to inspect progress and meet with consultants and contractors.

1969 An additional 300,000 m² was expropriated to expand the Fair with new facilities like a planetarium and open-air cinema.

1970 Niemeyer acknowledged the stage height issue and proposed an alternative study to adjust the design.

In May, Niemeyer praised the work but expressed concern over delays, urging faster progress on one of his favorite projects.

3.3. The Civil War Occupation

1975 The Civil War halted the project just before its planned opening in July.

1976 The site was taken over by the Arab Deterrent Force, mainly Syrian troops.

1977 The Fair remained abandoned, with finished structures stripped due to the ongoing conflict.

1979 On November 5, Jemp Michels visited Dar Al-Handasah in Tripoli and proposed updates to Niemeyer's Fair. His suggestions were later reflected in a 1980 masterplan revision of Tripoli.

1980 A Tripoli Fair delegation toured European fairs to gain insights for development.

1982 All activity at the Fair stopped following failed negotiations with Syria and the Israeli invasion.

1994 Partial Syrian withdrawal allowed Prime Minister Rafik Hariri to initiate a rehabilitation plan.

1995 The Fair was officially renamed Rachid Karami International Fair, after complete military withdrawal.

3.4. Adaptations and Post-war Reconstructions

1994-1998 The Rehabilitation of the Grand cover.

1996-1998 Transformations of the entrance portico.

1997 The transformation of the original landscaping plan.

The Introduction of a Secondary Entrance and the Partial Demolition of the Manège Annexes.

1999-2000 Transformation of the collective housing.

Ambitious masterplans

2000 The Directorate General of Urbanism commissioned a new master plan for Tripoli, El Mina, and Beddaoui, including guidelines for preserving the RKIF.

2001 RKIF's board launched DBOT tenders to attract large-scale redevelopment proposals and reactivate the Fair complex.

2004 RKIF entered negotiations with Cedarland International Development Group for a major revitalization project aligned with DBOT ambitions.

2005 Concerned by development threats, local intellectuals and architects formed a group to research Niemeyer's legacy and promote the Fair as modern heritage.

2006 The China Mex project proposal. It was halted by the July war between Israel and Hezbollah.

2017 The UNESCO Regional Office in Beirut included a visit to RKIF during its modern heritage conference, bringing renewed institutional interest.

2018 The site was added to UNESCO's Tentative List and a Keeping It Modern grant application was submitted to the Getty Foundation.

The Minjara project transformed Niemeyer's Guest House pavilion into a vibrant woodworking platform.

2019 Under the Keeping It Modern initiative funded by the Getty Foundation and UNESCO, a Knowledge and Innovation Centre (KIC) proposal was submitted.

3.5. RKIF IN DANGER!

2022 An emergency nomination file for World Heritage status was officially submitted.

2023 RKIF was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Danger, confirming its global cultural and architectural value.

2024 UNESCO completed a comprehensive Conservation Management Plan to guide the protection and sustainable reuse of RKIF.

03.2. The Design Phase, Neimeyer's Vision

Le Commerce du Levant organized an interview with the Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer, who was commissioned to design the project of an international fair in Tripoli.

"I received a letter from the administration of the Tripoli Fair asking if I was willing to take on the project for this Fair. In parallel, the Ambassador of Brazil in Lebanon recommended I accept such a request. I have all the more gladly accepted this mission considering the many friendships I have in Brazil among the Lebanese community. I have therefore accepted the request of the administration of the Fair, with great pleasure and without setting conditions nor any compensation." (Kassab, 1962)

The project was first proposed for Beirut, but was eventually moved to Tripoli following demands from local stakeholders, who wanted more attention on regional peripheries and to reduce the pressure on central Beirut. On May 4, 1960, the Lebanese government issued a decree stating that Tripoli would be the new location for Lebanon's future fair, called the "Permanent International Fair in Tripoli."

This decision was made despite disagreement and objections from some Lebanese political figures, including former Prime Minister Rachid Karame.

After several rejected proposals for the fair's site due to issues of size, Prime Minister Saeb Salam announced in August 1961 that **the fair would be located in the agricultural areas of Tripoli, covering 400,000 square meters.**

The Fair was conceived two years after the inauguration of Brasília, a period when Niemeyer's work was gaining wide international attention. Although he was based in Brasília, he met with the Lebanese envoy Ferdinand Dagher, representative of the Conseil Exécutif des Grands Projets (CEGP), the government agency responsible for the commission, at his residence in Rio de Janeiro, Casa das Canoas. According to Niemeyer, he later traveled to Beirut in July 1962, where he was joined by his model-maker and assistant, Carlos de Camargo, who had arrived before him.

In his 1968 travel memoir Quase Memórias: Viagens, Niemeyer recounted this period in Lebanon. He wrote that he spent three days in Beirut, about two months in Tripoli, and another two weeks in the capital before leaving for Brazil. In the same account, he explained that he first learned about the commission through a telegram from the Brazilian Ambassador to Lebanon, Bolívar de Freitas, followed by early discussions with Amado Chalhoub, the Fair's Director General, who had been the one to propose his name for the project.

During his two and a half months in Lebanon, Niemeyer noted that he completed "a model, a report" (UNESCO, 2024).

Both relied on a collection of drawings now preserved at the Niemeyer Foundation in Rio de Janeiro. These drawings followed Niemeyer's usual method of producing an "album" made up of numbered plates with sketches and explanatory notes, intended to guide the reader through the logic of the project.

This collection of drawings also presented the project's first version, placed at the heart of what was envisioned as a large urban development.

The plan included vast gardens, housing blocks, schools, shops, clubs, churches, mosques, and cinemas, all arranged along an elevated horizon line in Tripoli. It is uncertain whether Niemeyer went beyond his original commission in proposing such an expanded vision, but at the time the influence of Brasília and the enthusiasm for large-scale projects were at their peak.

Figure 19. *Oscar Niemeyer and Ferdinand Dagher at the Port of Beirut in 1962.*

The role of the "album" was central in Niemeyer's work, as it often shaped the direction of a project. In the texts included in both the 1962 article and the 1963 brochure, Niemeyer argued that, unlike other fairs, Tripoli's would follow ***"the fundamental principles of unity and harmony demanded by any comprehensive architectural project, as though in dealing with mere fairs such principles ceased to be permanently valid." (UNESCO, 2024).***

Niemeyer criticized the usual pavilion-based layout of international fairs, pointing out the contradiction between the quality of individual buildings and the disordered whole, something that would not be accepted in projects of similar scale elsewhere.

This rejection of unrelated pavilions, and his rhetorical habit of stating first what "I will not do," appears in many of his albums. **For the Tripoli Fair, he proposed that all pavilions be placed under a single vast roof, about 750 meters long and 70 meters wide, where exhibitors could occupy as many bays as they needed or could afford to rent.**

[Figure 20] shows, Vertically in respective order:
-Oscar Niemeyer's 1962 Master Plan, illustrating the curve of the Grand Canopy facing the sea along with the envisioned urban development.
-A plate from Niemeyer's original "album" for the RKIF, depicting structural details of the Grand Canopy and the possible variations of its form.
-Niemeyer's sketches illustrating a traditional pavilion-based scheme, which he ultimately dismissed as an appropriate solution.

Apart from representing a democratic assembly under a single roof, this approach provided tangible advantages: it facilitated rentable or sellable space, accelerated construction processes, and resulted in an architecturally impressive landmark.

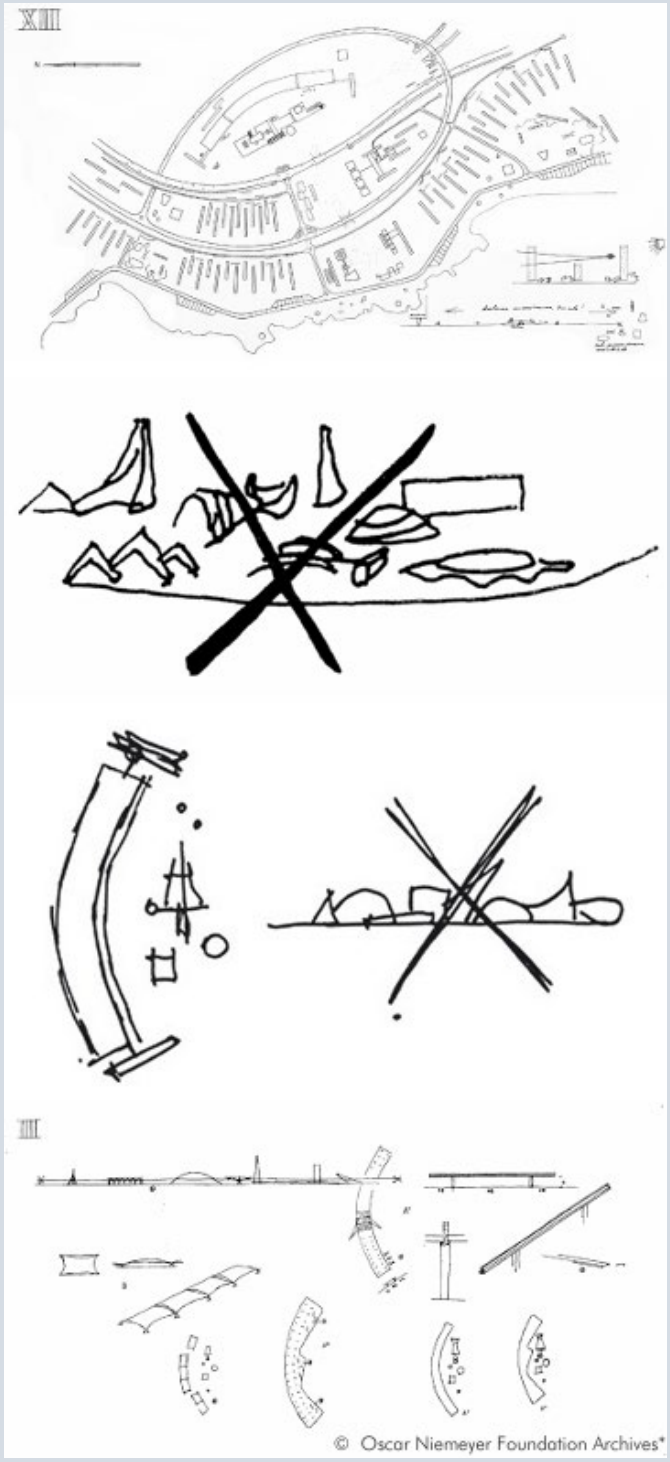
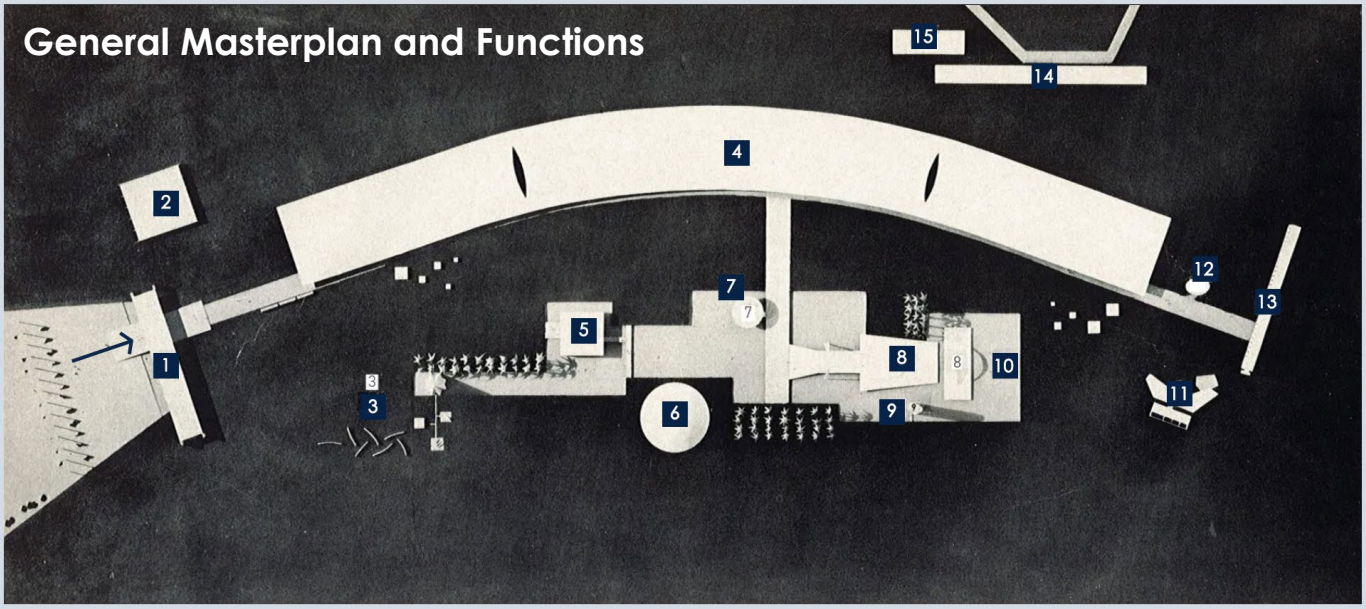
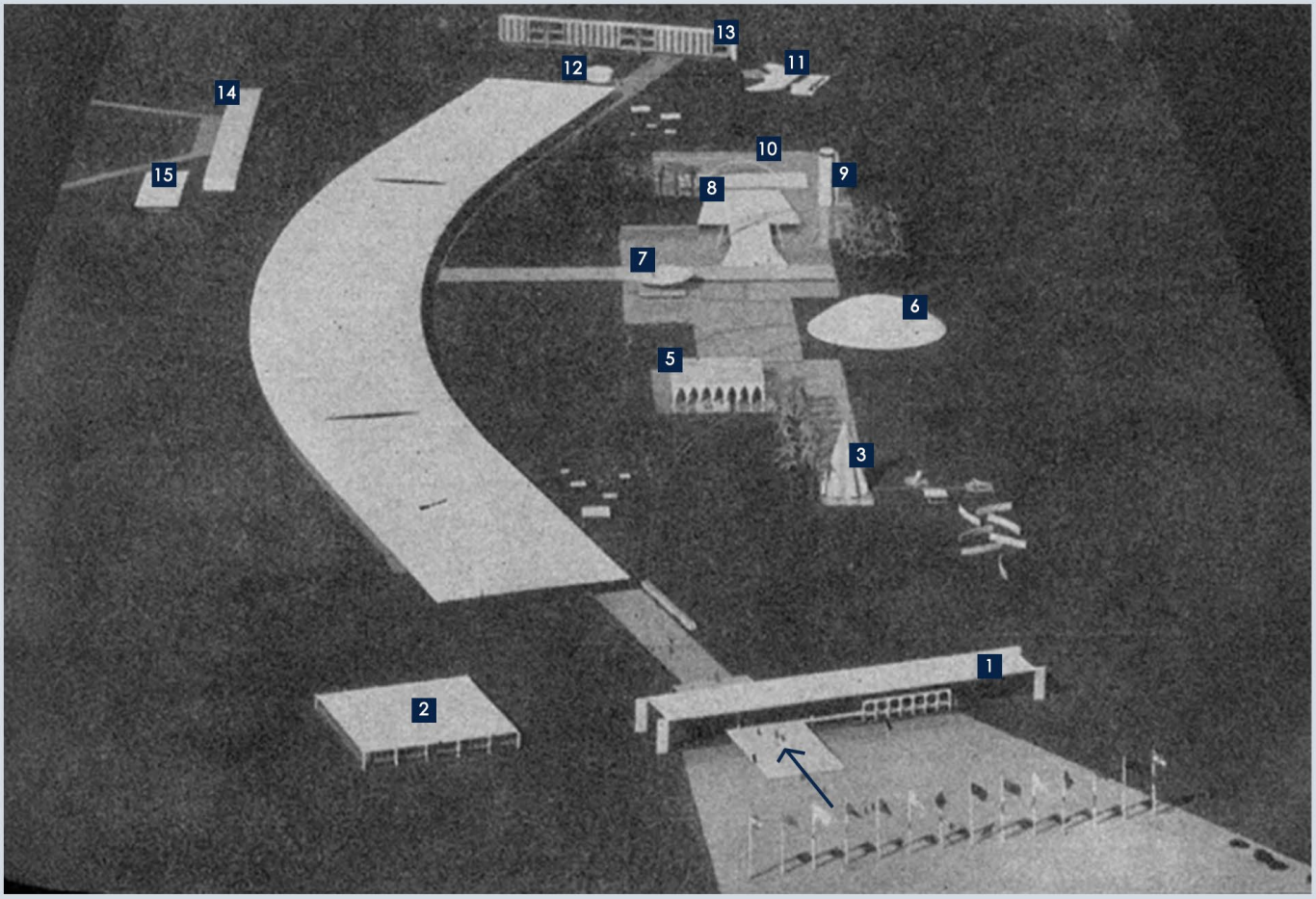


Figure 20.

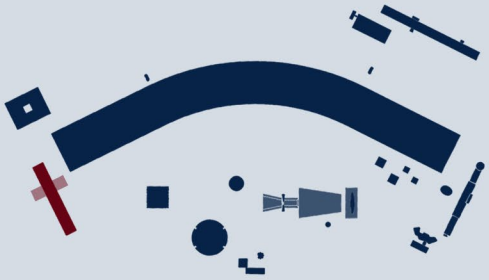


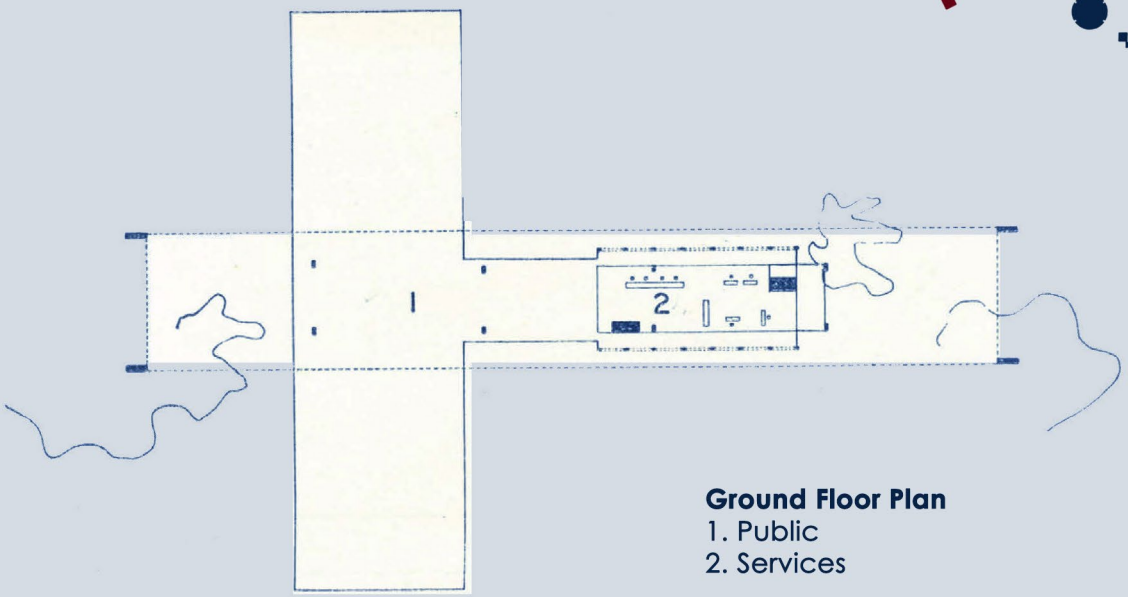


1. Entrance portico
2. Guest house
3. Circus and Playground
4. Boomerang: Pavilions & stands
5. Lebanese pavilion
6. Experimental dome theatre
7. Heliport and space museum
8. Open-air theatre

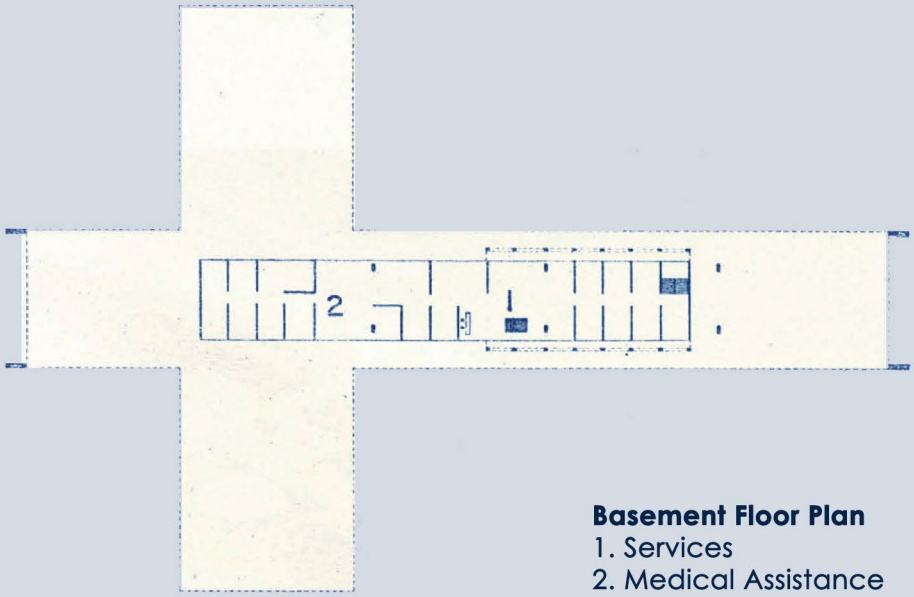
→ Entrance to the Fair
9. Water tower restaurant
10. Reflective pools
11. Model residence
12. Housing museum
13. Collective housing
14. Administration
15. Customs, fire house, depots

1. Entrance portico

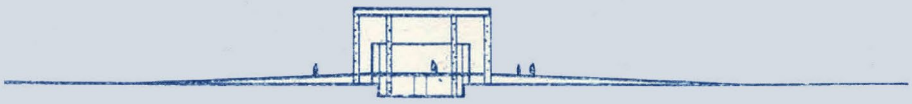




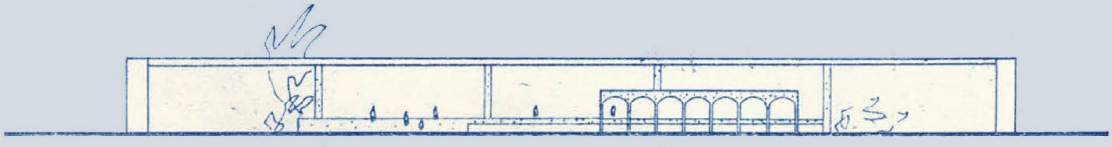
Ground Floor Plan
1. Public
2. Services



Basement Floor Plan
1. Services
2. Medical Assistance

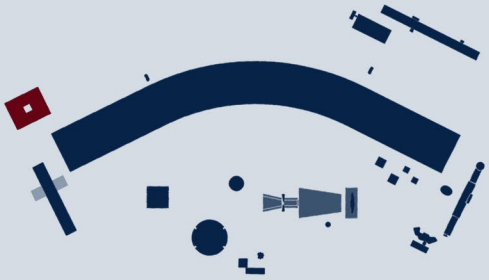


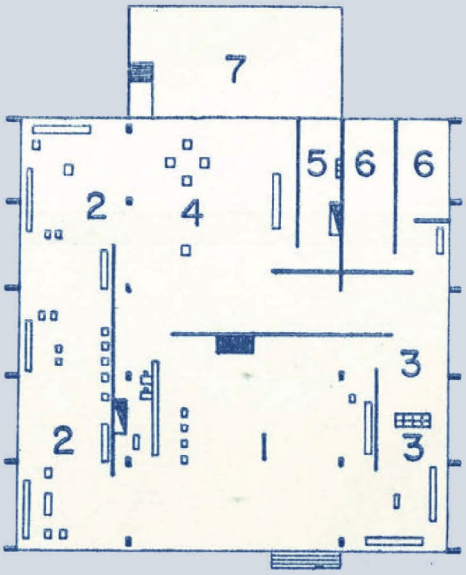
Cross Section



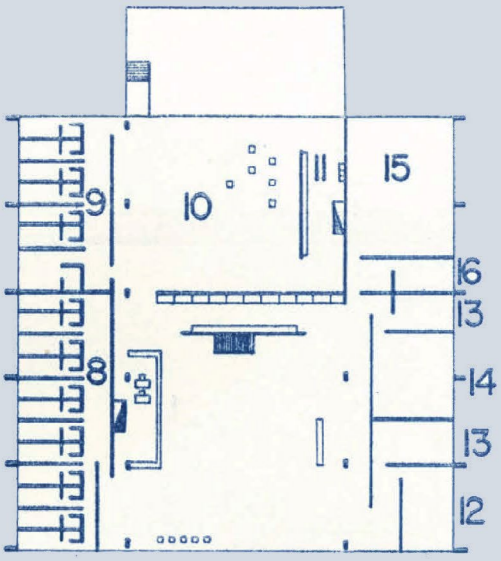
Elevation

2. Guest House



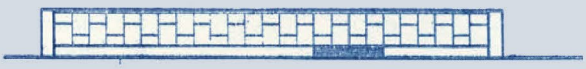


Ground Floor Plan
1. Hall and Reception
2. Lounge
3. Writing room, telephone
4. Restaurant
5. Kitchen
6. Lavatory
7. Foyer



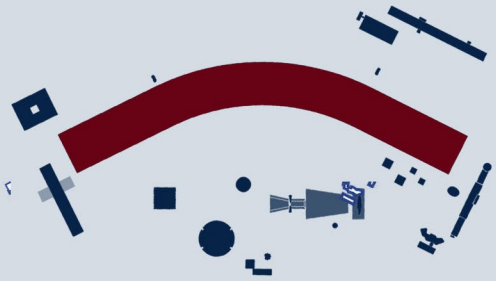
Basement Floor Plan
8. Bedrooms
9. Children's bedroom
10. Children's cafeteria
11. Children's kitchen
12. Barber shop
13. Lavatory
14. Beauty Parlor
15. Laundry
16. Servants' lavatory

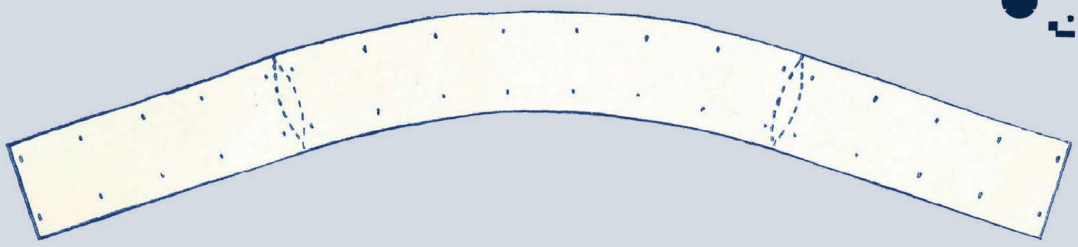
Cross Section

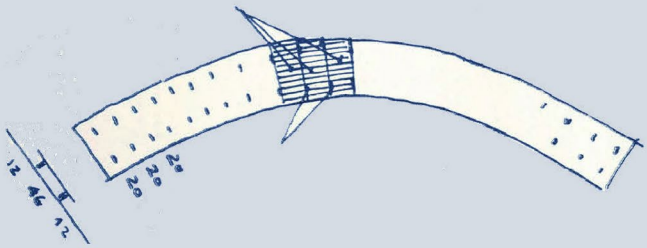


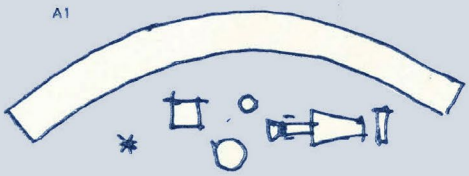
Elevation

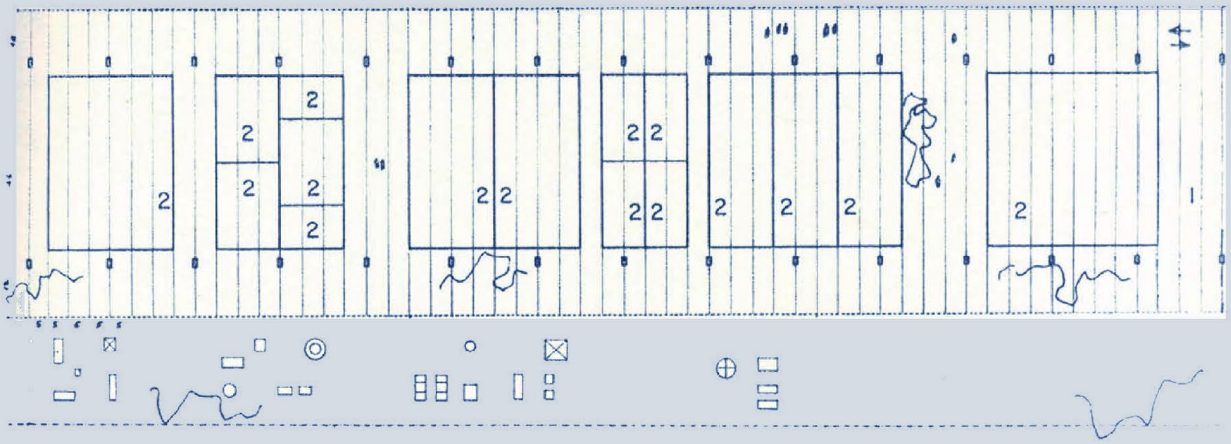
4. The Boomerang





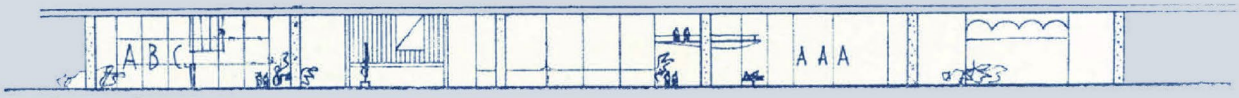






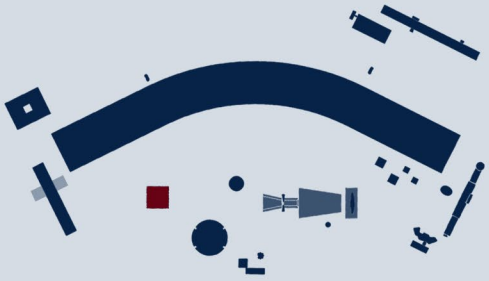
Pavillions Floor Plan
1. Pavillion Roof Outline
2. Pavillions

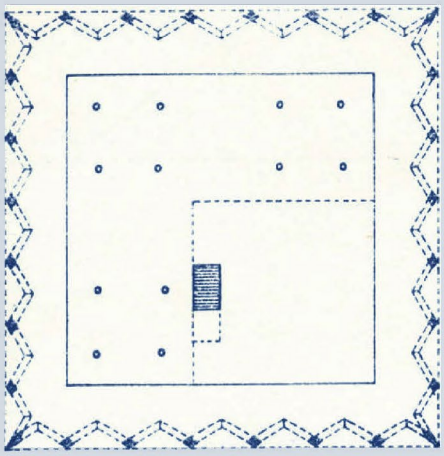
Cross Section



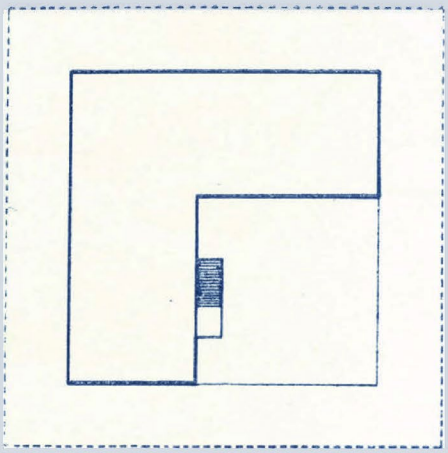
Elevation

5. The Lebanon Pavillion

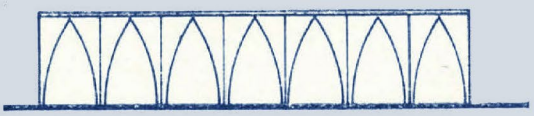




Ground Floor Plan

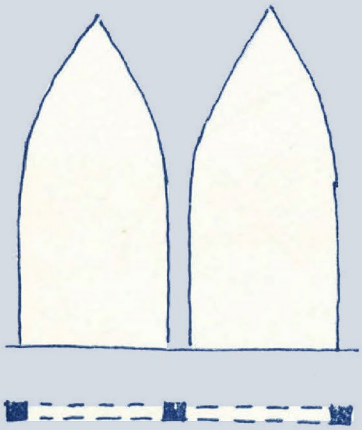


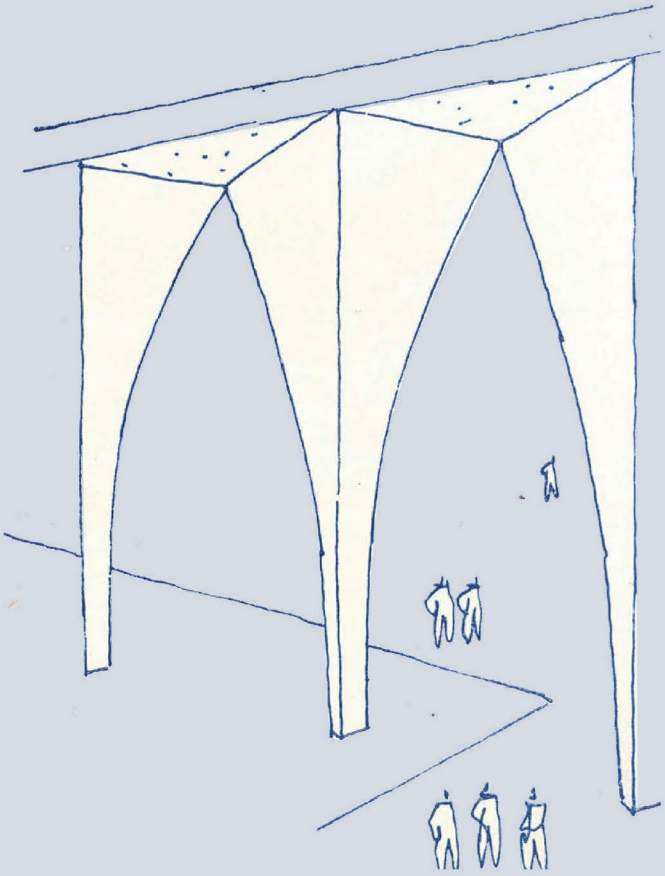
Mezanine



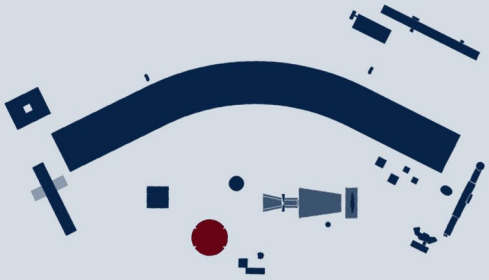
Elevation

Cross Section

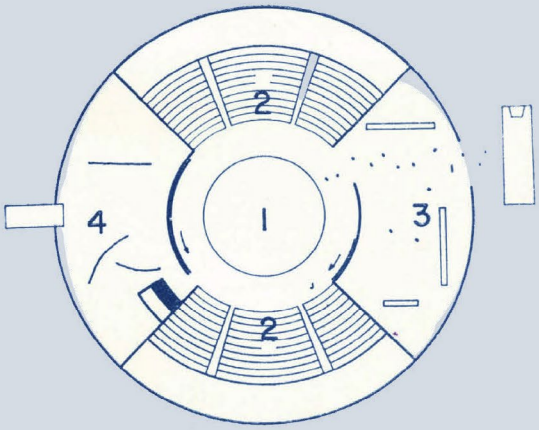




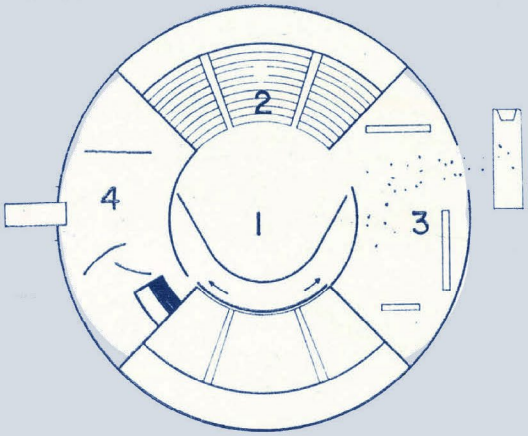
6. Experimental Dome Theatre



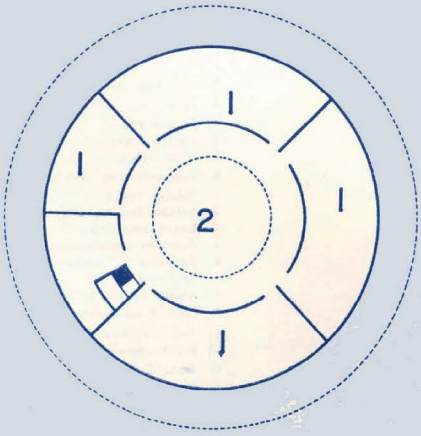
Elevation



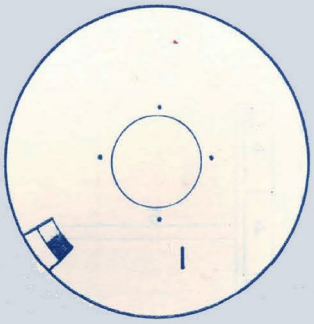
Arena Theatre
1. Stage
2. Auditorium
3. Foyer
4. Services



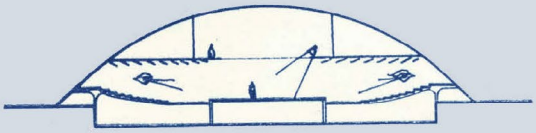
Drama Theatre
1. Stage
2. Auditorium
3. Foyer
4. Services



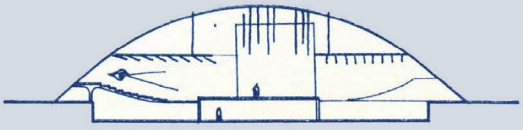
Basement
1. Services and dressing rooms
2. Void for stage



Mezzanine
1. Technical area

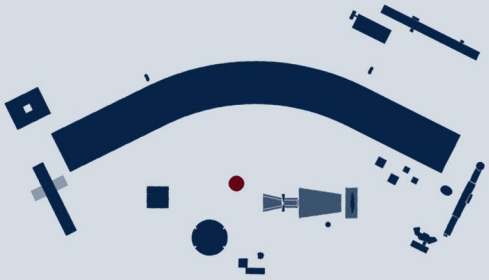


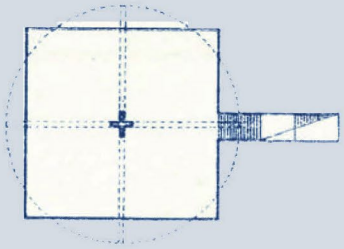
Arena Theatre Cross Section



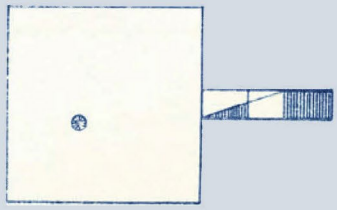
Drama Theatre Cross Section

7. Heliport and space museum

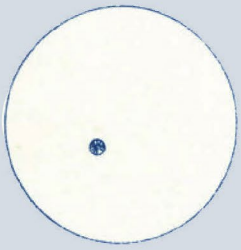




Exhibition

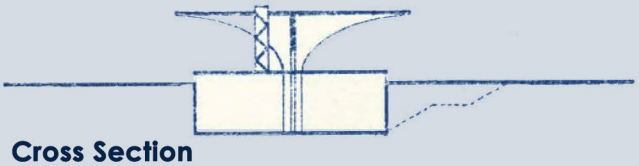


Pilotis



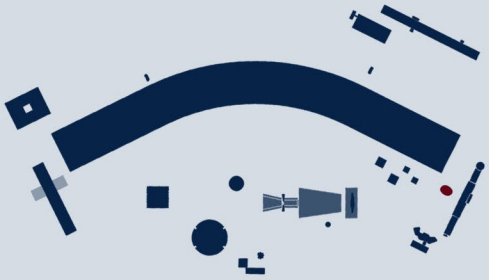
Helicopter Landing Apron

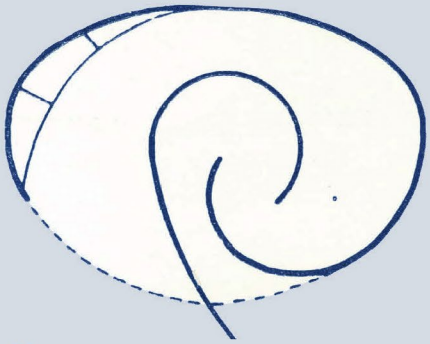
Elevation



Cross Section

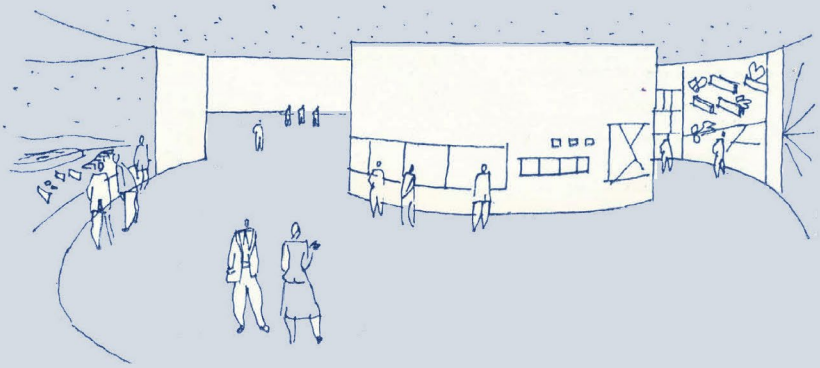
12. Housing Museum



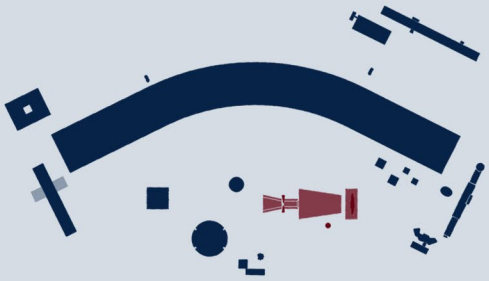


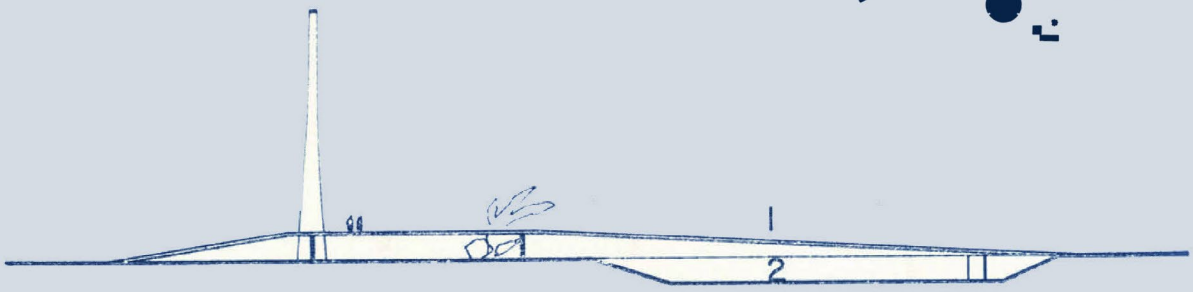
Plan

Cross Section

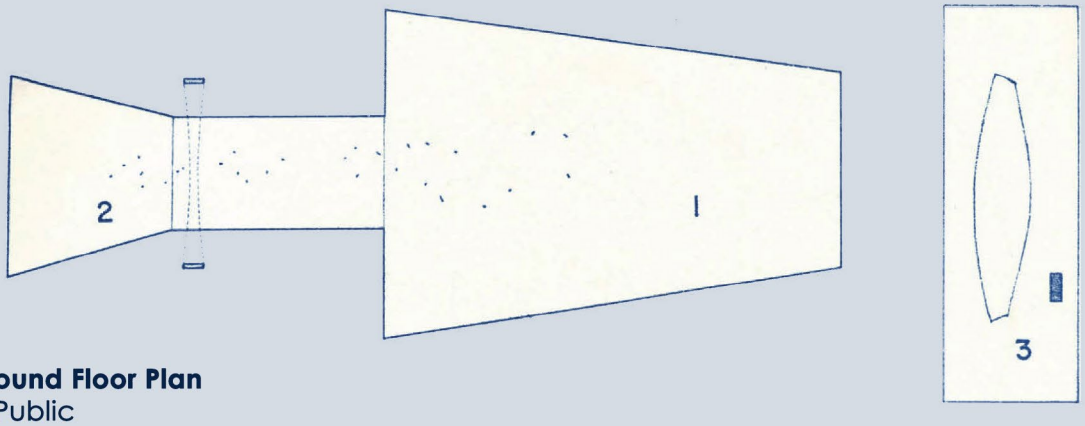


8. Open-air theatre

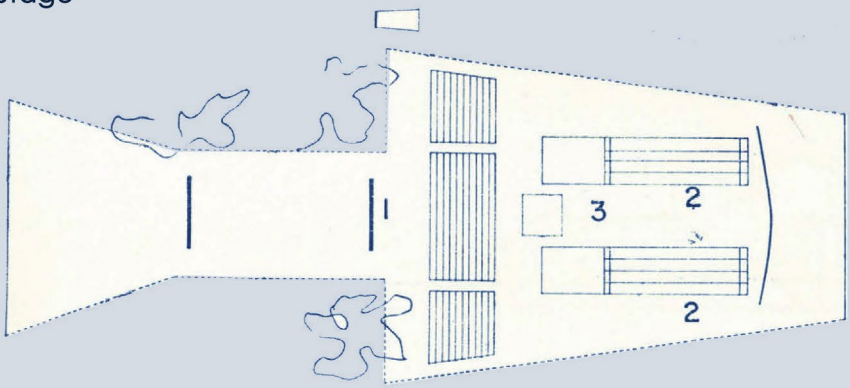




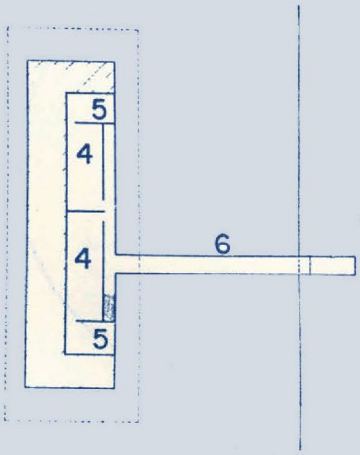
Cross Section
1. Theatre
2. Bowling Alley



Ground Floor Plan
1. Public
2. Main Access
3. Stage

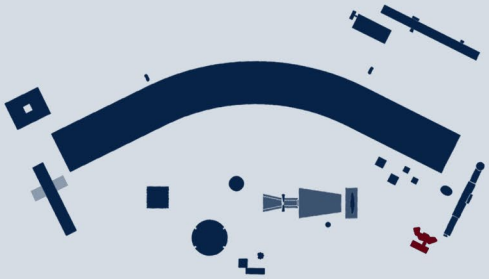


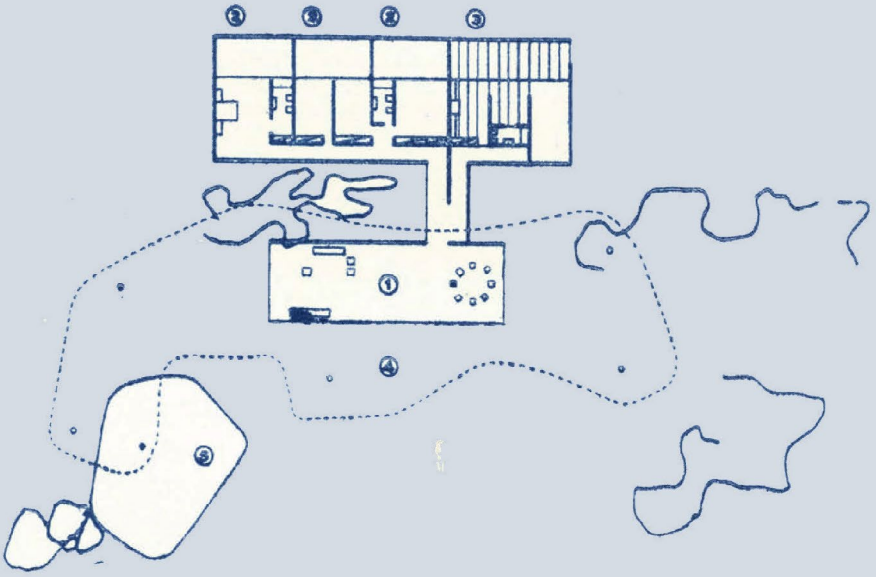
Basement Floor Plan
1. Public
2. Bowling Alley
3. Boxing Ring
4. Dressing Rooms
5. Lavatories
6. Stage Entrance



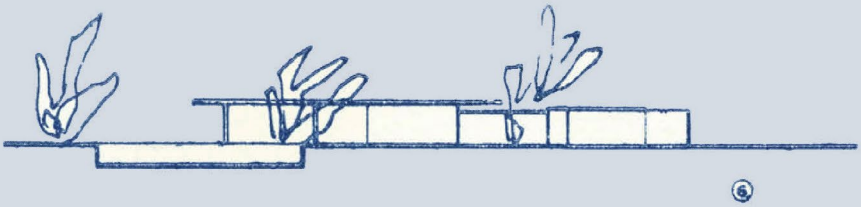
Cross Section
1. Dressing rooms
2. Stage entrance

11. Model Residence

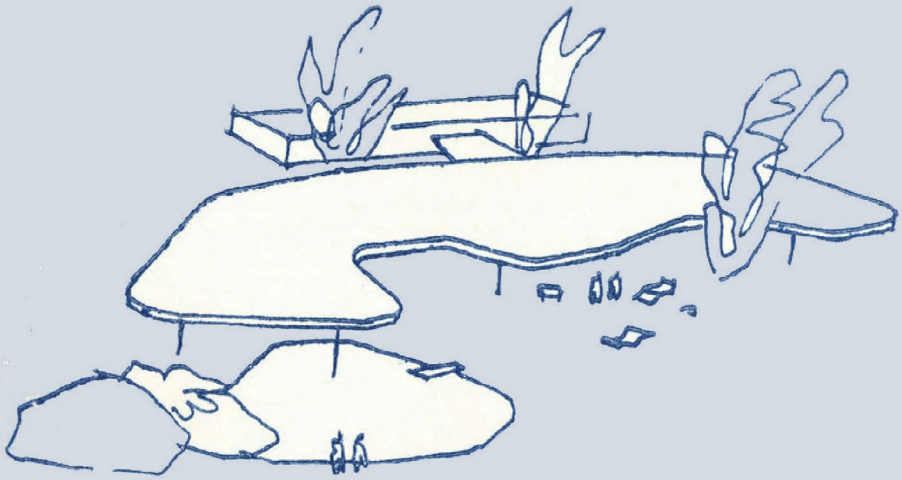


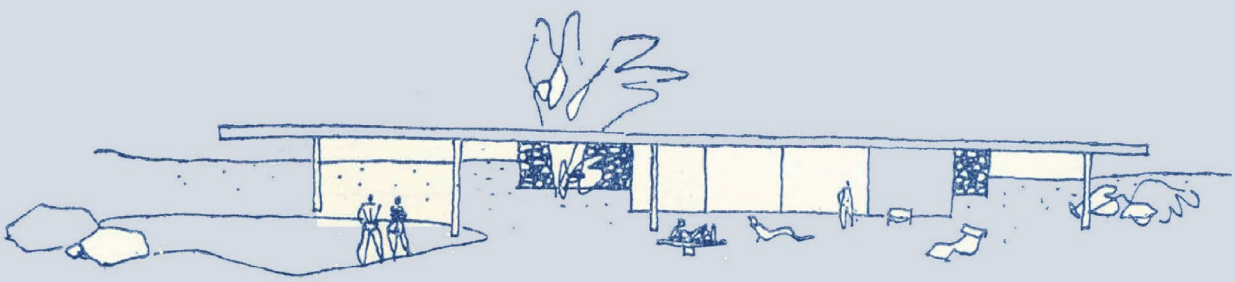


Ground Floor Plan
1. Rooms
2. Bedrooms
3. Services
4. Indoor Garden
5. Swimming Pool

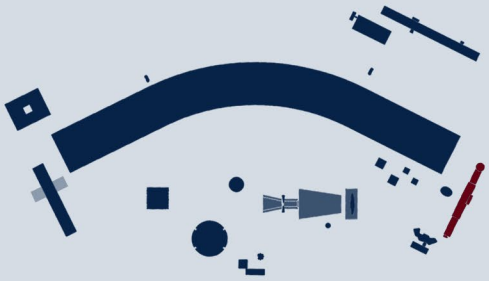


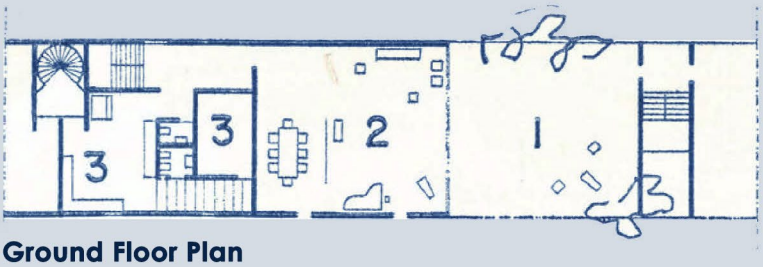
Cross Section



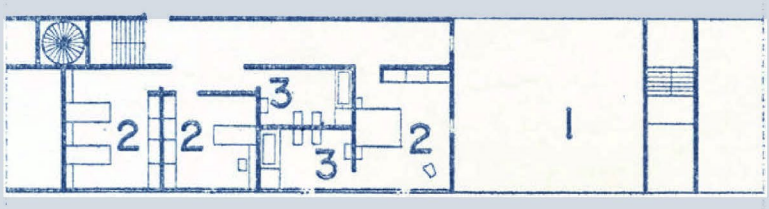


13. Collective Housing

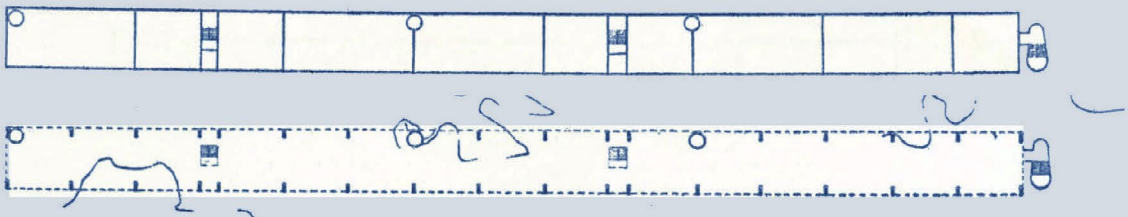




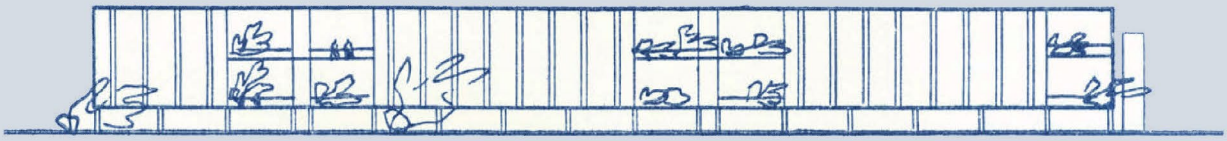
Ground Floor Plan
1. Garden
2. Rooms
3. Services



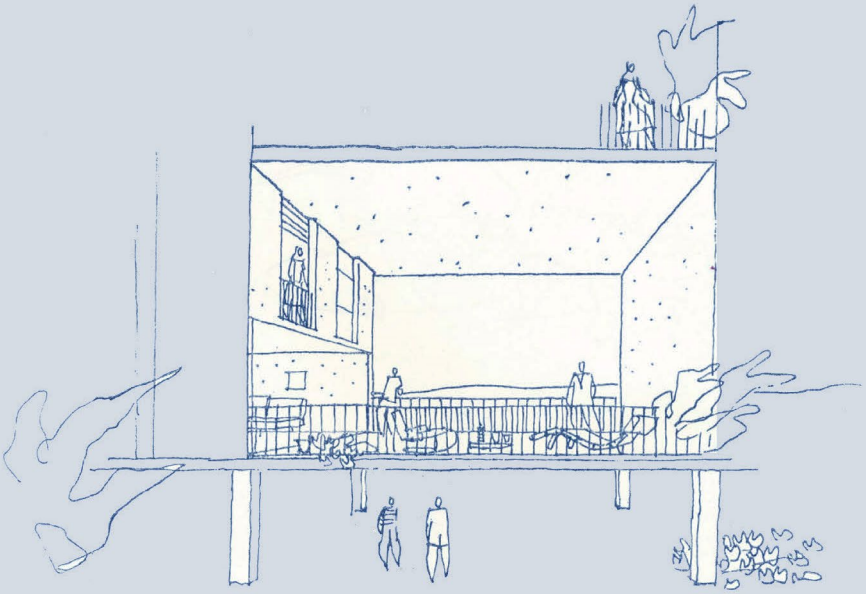
First Floor Plan
1. Void
2. Bedrooms
3. Bathrooms



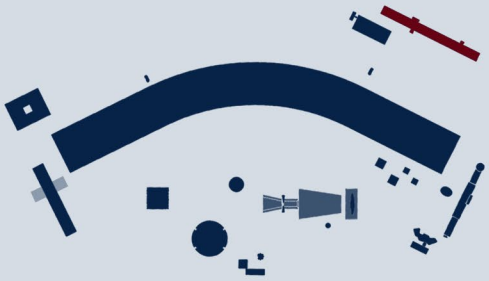
Blocks, Plan View

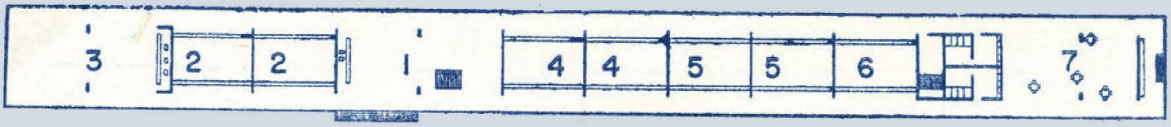


Elevation

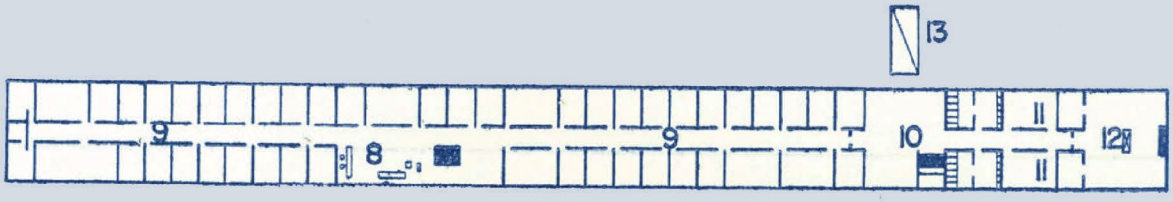


14. Administration

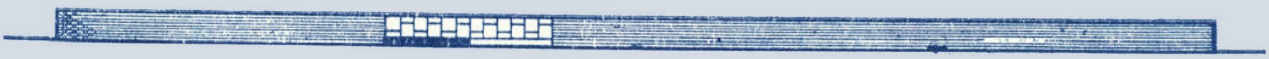




Ground Floor Plan
1. Hall
2. Porter's Office
3. Chamber of Commerce
4. Bank
5. Communications
6. Press
7. Restaurant



Basement Floor Plan
8. Inquiries
9. Managing Director & Departments
10. Service
11. Store Room
12. Kitchen
13. Access



Elevation

Cross Section

The Foundation Stone

The foundation stone of the International and Permanent Lebanon Fair in Tripoli (later renamed the Rachid Karame International Fair in 1995) was laid on October 1, 1963, (UNESCO, 2024) **as shown in the newspaper in [Figure 21].** It says: "Today, under the patronage of the First President, represented by Prime Minsiter Karame, the foundation stone was laid for the two largest urban projects for Tripoli and the North". In the picture on the bottom of the page, the Prime minister rachid karami, next to neimeyer's maquette in a press conference on September 3, 1962.

Construction was entrusted to the Conseil Exécutif des Grands Projets (CEGP), led by Malik Salam, and financed by the Lebanese state.

That same year, architect Ferdinand Dagher, responsible for coordination and supervision, appointed the design office of engineer Noël Abou Hamad as consultant for the study and development of the Grand Cover.

Contractor Michel Malek was assigned to its construction. Unwritten history also helps identify other participants in this first execution phase of the Grand Cover, such as subcontractor Darwich Haddad, who handled the post-tensioned concrete, and Aouni al-Ahdab, who worked on behalf of Michel Malek.

تم اليوم برعاية الرئيس الاول ممثلا بالرئيس كرامي ارساء حجر الاساس لاكبر مشروعين عمرانيين لطرابلس والشمال

(تتمة) المنشور على الصفحة الاولى

بعدة ثانية عشر شهراً .

افضلية طرازه

على المعارض العالمية

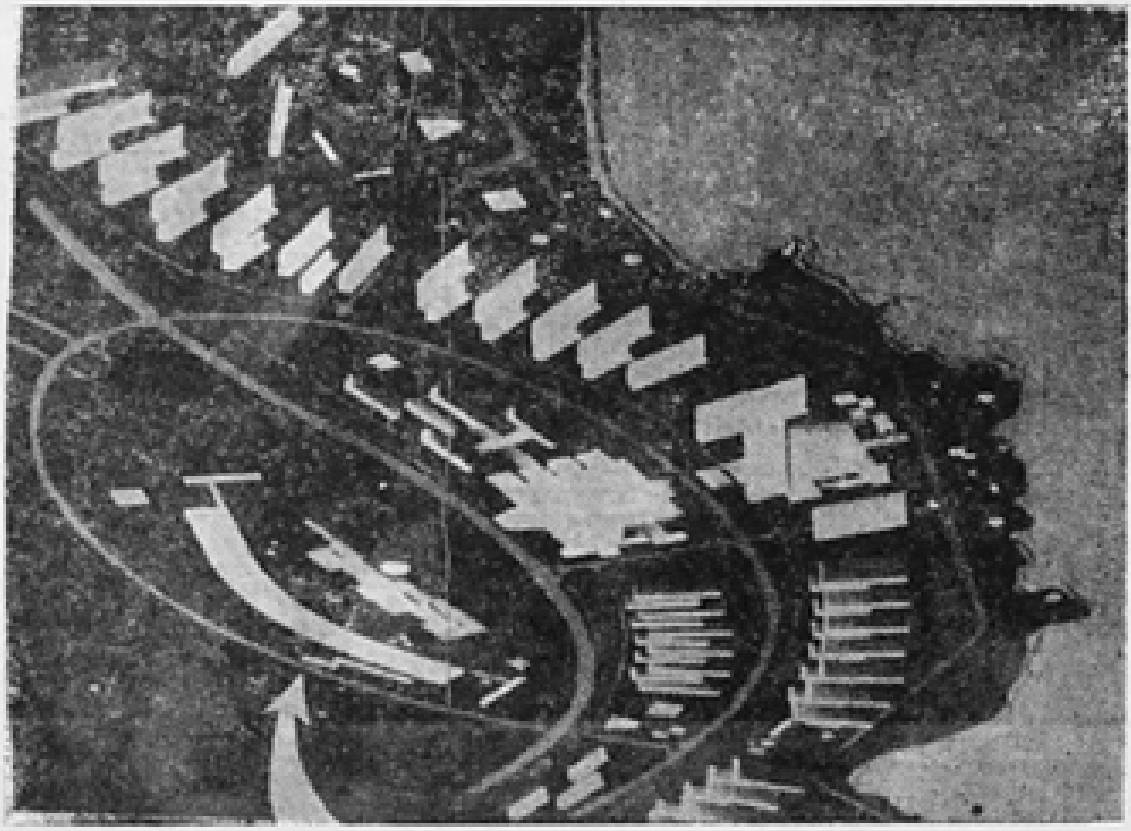
ويؤكد خبراء بناء المعارض الدولية ومهندسوها الذين اطلعوا على تصاميمه التي وضعها الخبير البرازيلي اوسكار نيامايير، بانه سيكون الاول من نوعه في العالم ، اذ يتألف لاجنحة العرض كافة سقفاً واحداً مما يؤمن تنظيم الاجنحة ومعروضاتها ويسهل على روادة وزواره التنقل بينها دونما عناء او تعب ، بعكس المعارض المعروفة التي تشاد حالياً وبناء بين اجنحتها مساحات واسعة ومتباعدة .

تلزيم القسمين الباقيين

خلال ٣ اشهر

وقد صرح مدير المعرض الاستاذ امادو شلهوب لمندوب (الانشاء) بان القسم الثاني من بناء المعرض سيلزم خلال ٤٥ يوماً من تاريخ اليوم .

اما القسم الثالث والاخير من بنائه بما فيه المداخل والطرقات فسلزم خلال ثلاثة اشهر ، بعد ان يكون مجلس المشاريع قد اقر تصميم هذه المداخل والطرقات المؤدية للمعرض على ضوء صلتها بالاوتوستراد الدولي وبقية الطرقات الرئيسية والفرعية المحيطة بالمعرض .



يبدو المعرض في الصورة وقد احاطت به تصاميم المدينة النموذجية التي اقترح اقامتها حوله واضع تصميمه الخبير البرازيلي المهندس اوسكار نيامايير

الرئيس كرامي وقد كان الى الامس القريب يتأمل (ماكيت) تصاميم المعرض والمدينة النموذجية التي تحيط به ، وهي موضوعة امامه على الطاولة . . .

اما اليوم فقد كان يقف على الارض التي ستتحول الى بناء ضخم يضم هذه المنشآت جميعها،

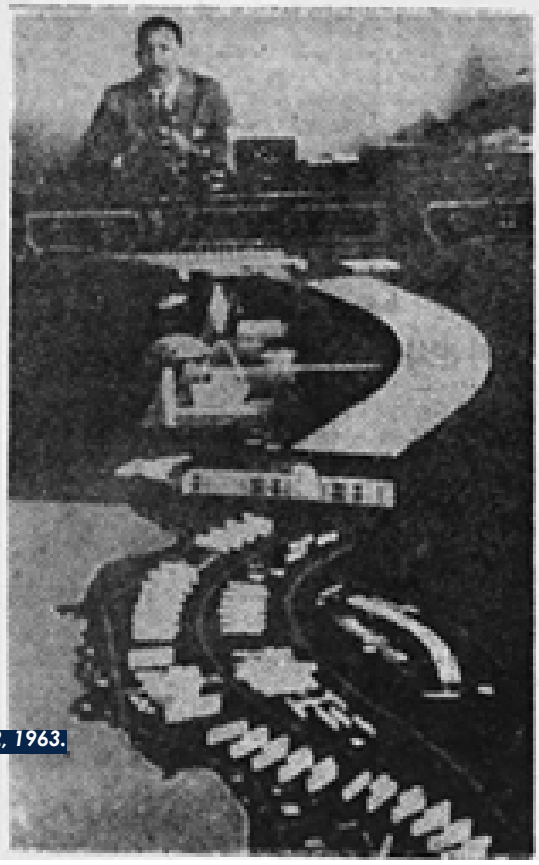


Figure 21. *Al Inshaa*, October 2, 1963.

درس قضية

شبكة المجارير الصحية في طرابلس

زار السيد محمود الخلاب رئيس مصلحة الهندسة الصحية في وزارة الصحة العامة بلدية طرابلس بناء لدعوتها وتدارس مع المسؤولين قضية شبكة المجارير الصحية في طرابلس ، وقدم تقريرا بشأن ايجاد البلاك اللازم للمراقبة واتخاذ الاجراءات القانونية المتعلقة بطريقة ربط المجارير الخاصة في الابنية بالشبكة [illegible] لاستعمال الشبكة الجديدة .

Figure 22. *Prime Minister Rachid Karame (2nd left) and Minister of Public Works Pierre Gemayel (2nd right) during the official ceremony for the laying of RKIF's foundation stone on October 1, 1963.*

Figure 23. *RKIF foundation stone during the opening ceremony. It reads "The International and Permanent Lebanon Fair in Tripoli, October 1, 1963".*

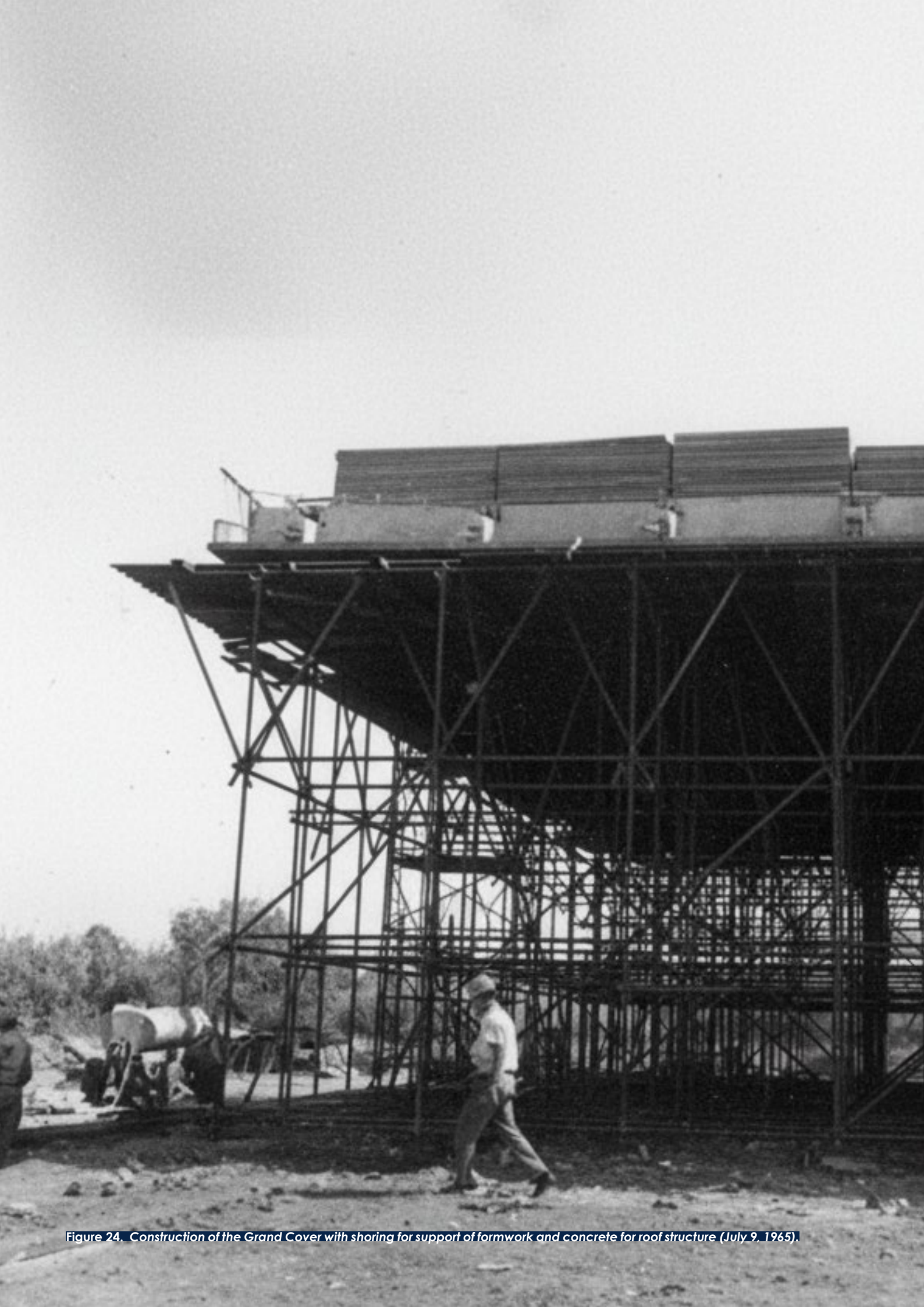


Figure 24. *Construction of the Grand Cover with shoring for support of formwork and concrete for roof structure (July 9, 1965).*

Archival data indicate the involvement of two additional primary consultants commencing in 1964: **Dar Al-Handasah Consulting Engineers and Associated Contracting Engineers (ACE)**. Dar Al-Handasah was tasked with the study and design of Lot B, which includes the Lebanon Pavilion, Experimental Theatre, and Open-Air Theatre, whereas ACE was designated to Lot C, comprising the Administration Building, Customs-Firehouse-Depots Building, Entrance Portico, Ticket Booth, and Guest House.

During the construction phase, spanning from 1963 to the mid-1970s, collaboration with Niemeyer persisted via the CEGP. Nonetheless, both companies implemented certain alterations they deemed essential. Records from Dar Al-Handasah in 1964 offer comprehensive insights into the changes and modifications implemented during the project, while affirming that the materials designated by Niemeyer were predominantly adhered to. The contracting firm Khlat and Mouawad, engaged in extensive projects in Lebanon since the late 1950s, was assigned the execution of Lots B and C. **[Figure 26]** shows a newspaper clipping on the work of the contractor, Khlat and Mouawad, at RKIF in 1966. The title praises the company for implementing the structures at the Fair with immense capabilities, high-tech equipment, and great technical competencies.

Reports indicate that the reinforced concrete portions initially proposed were deemed insufficient by Dar Al-Handasah, owing to Lebanon's environment and the site's proximity to the sea.

Upon Niemeyer's endorsement, numerous design modifications were implemented. The thickness of the Open-Air Theatre's roof was augmented from 100 cm to 120 cm, while its beams were doubled from 75 cm to 140 cm. Comparable modifications were implemented at the Space Museum, where beams increased from 30 cm to 50 cm, and at the Lebanon Pavilion, where a metal framework covered in concrete was introduced to bear all weights.

Niemeyer's second and final recorded journey to Tripoli was from late December 1966 to early February 1967. [Figure 27] shows Niemeyer during this visit on December 28, 1966 with CEGP members, Lebanese consultants and contractors. During this visit, he assessed the ongoing projects and interacted directly with consultants, contractors, and construction supervisors. Archival documents, comprising final mission reports from the Conseil Exécutif des Grands Projets authored in 1970 by architect Nicolas Rizk and in 1972 by architect Georges Doumani, substantiate that consultation with Niemeyer persisted for a minimum of ten years following the initial design phase.

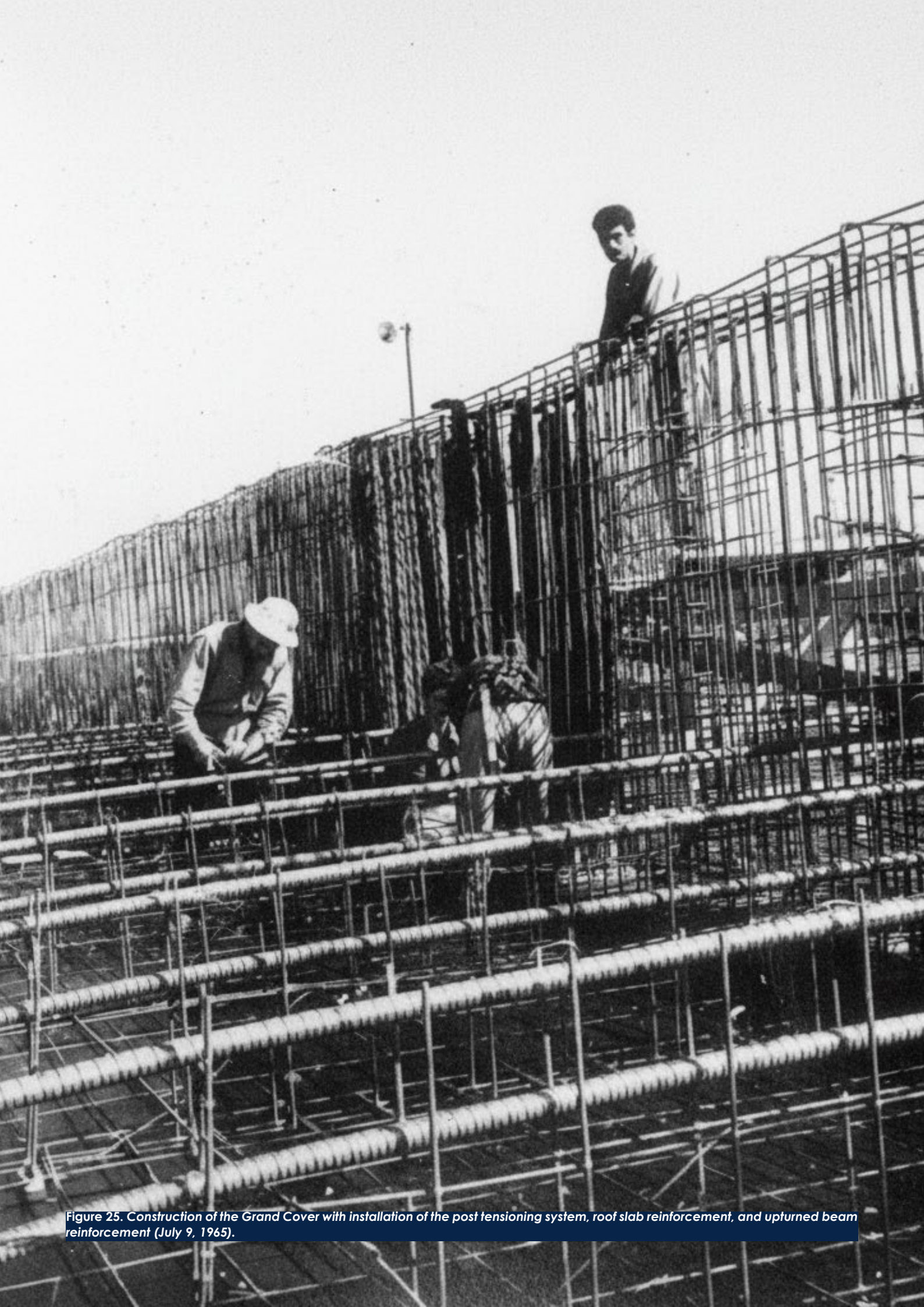
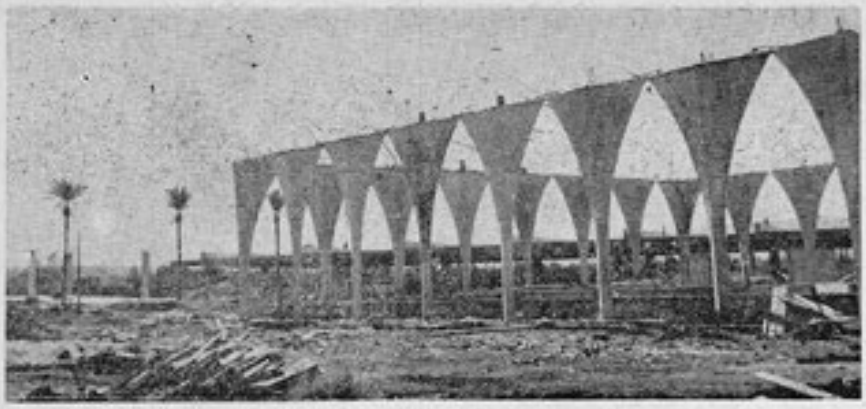
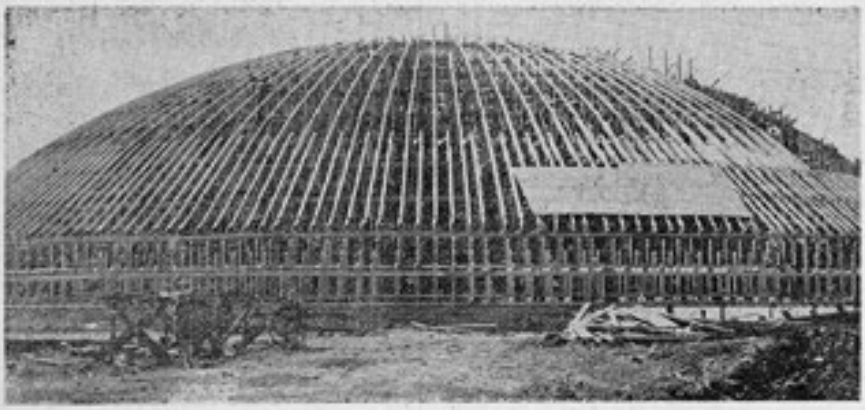


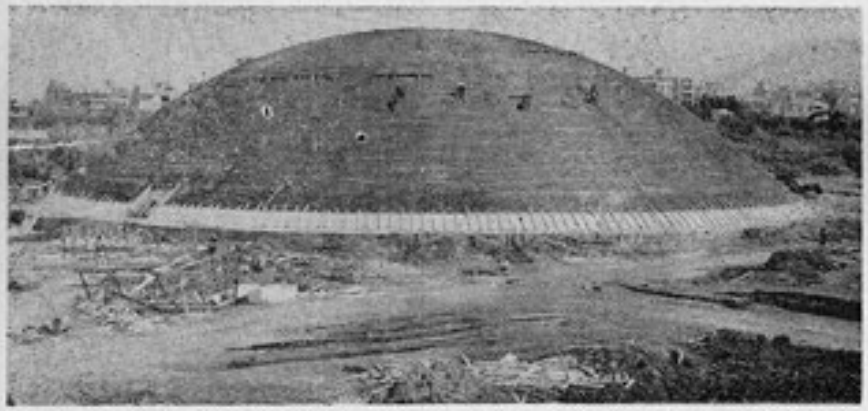
Figure 25. Construction of the Grand Cover with installation of the post tensioning system, roof slab reinforcement, and upturned beam reinforcement (July 9, 1965).

ومعوّض

بامكانات جبّارة







القناطر العربية في الجناح اللبناني
الهيكل الخشبي الضخم الذي صب عليه سقف المسرح المسقوف
كي الهيكل بالخشب المصقول لكي يأتي بدون حاجة الى تلييس

الجناح اللبناني ، يقوم ضمن البحيرة ، ويتميز بقناطره العربية.

هرم متعدد الاوجه ، ارتفاعه ١٥ متراً ، داخله ملاعب للاطفال ، وفي خارجه ملاعب اخرى مكشوفة .

مطار طائرات الهليكوبتر ، مستدير الشكل ، قطره ٢٥ مترا وارتفاعه سبعة امتار ، ويتميز بانه يرتكز على عمود ضخم واحد يلفه درج ، ويقوم تحته مقهى وتحت المقهى متحف يعرض فيه اخر مبتكرات الفضاء ، كما تقوم تحته وتحت العامود المرتكز عليه مقهى لاستراحة الزوار المحايطين عليه بالطائرات .

مسرح مستدير ، قطره ٧٠ متراً ، تعلوه قبة ارتفاعها ١٥ مترا ذو اربعة مداخل وليس فيه اية نافذة . ويعتبر من الناحية الهندسية فريداً من نوعه ، وهو معجزة بناء ، لا قبل لشركة اخرى على تنفيذه ، من الناحية الفنية وتوافر المعدات والاخصائيين . ويتسع لالف ومئتين واربعين متفرجاً ، ويتميز بمسرح للتمثيل متحرك اوتوماتيكياً ، بحيث يعرض الفصل الاول امام جانب من المشاهدين ، ثم يدور اوتوماتيكيا ليعاد تمثيل هذا الفصل امام جانب اخر من المشاهدين ، بينما يكون الفصل الثاني يمثل امام المشاهدين في الجانب الاول .

مسرح الهواء الطلق ، وهو يقوم ضمن البحيرة ، يدخل اليه بواسطة جسر بر تحت قنطرة فنية ترتفع ٣٣ متراً بعرض ٢٨ متراً . ويحتوي هذا المسرح على مدرجات تتسع لالفين واربعمئة متفرج . ويمتاز بان مسرح التمثيل فيه بني على شكل محراب او وصدفة » .

برج اسطواني الشكل ، ارتفاعه ٢٣ متراً لخزن المياه لاحتياجات المعرض ، يعلوه مطعم مستدير قطره تسعة امتار.

مركز الاستقبال مساحته ٣٦٠٠ متر مربع ، يقوم قرب المدخل ، يحتوي على مطعم وباحة استقبال كبيرة ، وعلى فندق من ١٣ غرفة للزوار الرسميين . وتؤمن فيه جميع الخدمات العامة ، من محلات للحلاقة ومصبغة وغيرها .

بناية ذات تصميم حديث ، تقوم خلف جناح العرض ، تتألف من اربعة طوابق ، يحتوي كل طابق منها على ثلاث شقق للسكن ، بين الشقة والثانية ، وفي كل طابق ، حديقة على شكل حدائق بابل المعلقة .

متحف السكن ، يقوم في نهاية جناح العرض ، مبني بشكل حلزوني ، يعرض فيه تطور سكن الانسان في مختلف مراحل التاريخ .

بيت نموذجي ، يعتبر مثالا للتصميم الحديث لبيوت السكن ، بني حسب آخر ما توصل اليه الانسان في بناء السكن المرفه . وتقوم على سطحه حديقة وحوض للسباحة .

مبنى الادارة ، طوله ١٧٥ متراً ، يحتوي على مكاتب مدراء المعرض وفنييه وموظفيه ، وبقربه مبنى الجمارك والاطفائية الخاصة بالمعرض .

والشيء الذي يلفت النظر ، في جميع هذه الانشاءات ، ان تصميم المعرض يرتكز على النظرية الحديثة ، التي تؤمن بان الباطون ، هو في الحقيقة من من اجمل عناصر البناء ، بعكس الفكرة الشائعة ، بوجوب طلي الباطون بالدهان او الطرش . وتقضي النظرية الحديثة اليوم ، بابقاء الباطون على لونه دون طليه بأية مادة ، وذلك لان الباطون اكثر احتمالا للعوامل الطبيعية ، بعكس الدهانات التي تتشقق وتبوخ الوانها ، بفعل الامطار واشعة الشمس ، مما يقتضي اعادة دهان المظاهر الخارجية من البناء ، كل مدة .

وتحقيقاً لهذه الغاية ، فان قوالب الباطون ، تصنع بشكل خاص ، بحيث يبدو الباطون بعد فك القالب ناعماً مالساً ، تجري عليه فيما بعد عملية الصقل بوسائل وادوات خاصة ، تجعل منظره غاية في الجمال والانسجام .

وقد اكد لنا المهندس همام ، انه بفضل الوسائل الحديثة والمعدات والآليات الضخمة ، التي حشدتها شركة خلاط ومعوض لتنفيذ اعمال هذا المشروع الكبير ، فان العمل في المرحلتين التي التزمت الشركة انجازها ، قد ينتهي قبل الموعد المحدد في نهاية عام ١٩٦٧ .

وفي انتظار موعد افتتاح المعرض ، المقدر له ربيع عام ١٩٧٠ ، يؤكد الاستاذ امادو شاهوب مدير المعرض ، ان عدد الدول التي طلبت الاشتراك بمعرض طرابلس ، بلغ اربعين دولة ، وهي بداية مشرفة ، اذا علمنا بان اكبر المعارض الاوروبية والاميركية ، لم يبلغ عدد الدول المشتركة فيها هذا الرقم ، مع ان معرض طرابلس لم يفتتح بعد .

شركة خلاط

المشروع الضخم يتطلب تنفيذه شركة ضخمة مرتبطة

تنفذ انشاءآت المعرض ومعدات وكفاءآت فنية

لا يمكن المرء ، مهما اوتي من خصوبة الخيال ، ان يدرك ضخامة الانشاءات التي نفذت والتي هي قيد التنفيذ ، في معرض طرابلس ، اذا لم يشاهدها بام العين ، وذلك لان الفارق الهائل بين ماتسمعه عن هذه الانشاءات ، وبين ما تراه قائما امامك .

وكذلك فانه من الصعب على المرء ، ان يعرف ضخامة الجهود التي تبذل ، والمعدات التي تستخدم ، في تنفيذ هذه الانشاءات ، الاولى من نوعها في الشرق وفي كثير من بلدان العالم الكبرى ، ان لم يقم بمشاهدتها بنفسه ، لانها تفوق كل تصور .

ولاعطاء فكرة سريعة ، عن ضخامة المعدات ، التي تستخدمها شركة خلاط ومعوض ملتزمة المرحلتين الثانية والثالثة من المعرض ، نذكر مثالا على هذه الضخامة ، ان اربع آلات «بولدوفر» ثمنها يقارب المليون ليرة ، كانت تعمل دفعة واحدة في حفر قاعدة واحدة من عديد الانشاءات ورفع الاتربة منها .

وان صب الاسمنت حسب الطرق الحديثة ، التي تتبع لاول مرة في لبنان ، اقتضى ان تنشيء الشركة معملا للنجارة مزوداً باحدث الآلات ، لصنع الهياكل الخشبية لنصب عليها الاسمنت . وان هيكل المسرح المسقوف المصنوع بشكل قبة ، استنفد كل ما لدى النجار من اخشاب . وان تركيب كل قطعة خشب من هذا الهيكل ، كان يخضع لاشراف مهندس خاص ، وكذلك كل قطعة حديد ، وكل جبلة باطون ، بل وكل كيس من الاسمنت . وان قضبانا حديدية طول الواحد منها ستة عشر مترا ، استقدمت رأساً من اوروبا ، لتستخدم في بناء مطار الهليكوبتر القائم على عمود ضخم واحد .

الاعمال في المرحلة الاولى انتهت ولم يبق سوى اللمسات الاخيرة ، وهي تشتمل على جناح العرض وطوله ٧٥٠ مترا بعرض ٧٠ مترا ، يقوم سقفه على سلسلة اعمدة ضخمة جانبية ، بين العمود والاخر لجهة العرض ، سبعون متراً دون اي عمود في الوسط .

اما اعمال المرحلتين الثانية والثالثة ، فقد التزمتها شركة خلاط ومعوض ، الكبيرة الكفاءة والضخمة الامكانيات الفنية والمعدات ، والتي تقوم بالانشاءات الضخمة الباهظة التكاليف ، بدقة لا تجاوى وبحرص تعدى شروط دفتر الالتزام ذاته ، وذلك لحرصها على ان يأتي هذا المشروع الضخم ، مفخرة طرابلس ولبنان ومفخرة شركة خلاط ومعوض .

وتشتمل اعمال هاتين المرحلتين كما شرحها لنا المهندس الشاب السيد نجاد همام على كل ما يشتمل عليه المعرض من ابنية وانشاءات بعد جناح العرض ، وهي :

مدخل المعرض الذي تبلغ واجهته ١٢٥ متراً بعمق عشرين ، وعلو عشرة امتار ، تتألف من سبع قناطر على شكل روماني ، يقوم وراءها مكتب استقبال الزوار . ويتاز هذا المدخل ، بان بر الدخول فيه ، صنع بشكل قوس يصعد عليه الزوار من الخارج ، ويدخلون الى المعرض وكأنهم مشرفون على المعرض من عل ، حيث تتبسط امام انظارهم جميع ابنية المعرض واقسامه ، وكأنهم هابطون عليه بطائرة .

بحيرة مساحتها ٣٠ الف متر مربع ، بشكل هندسي رائع ، يقوم عليها عدد من الجسور .

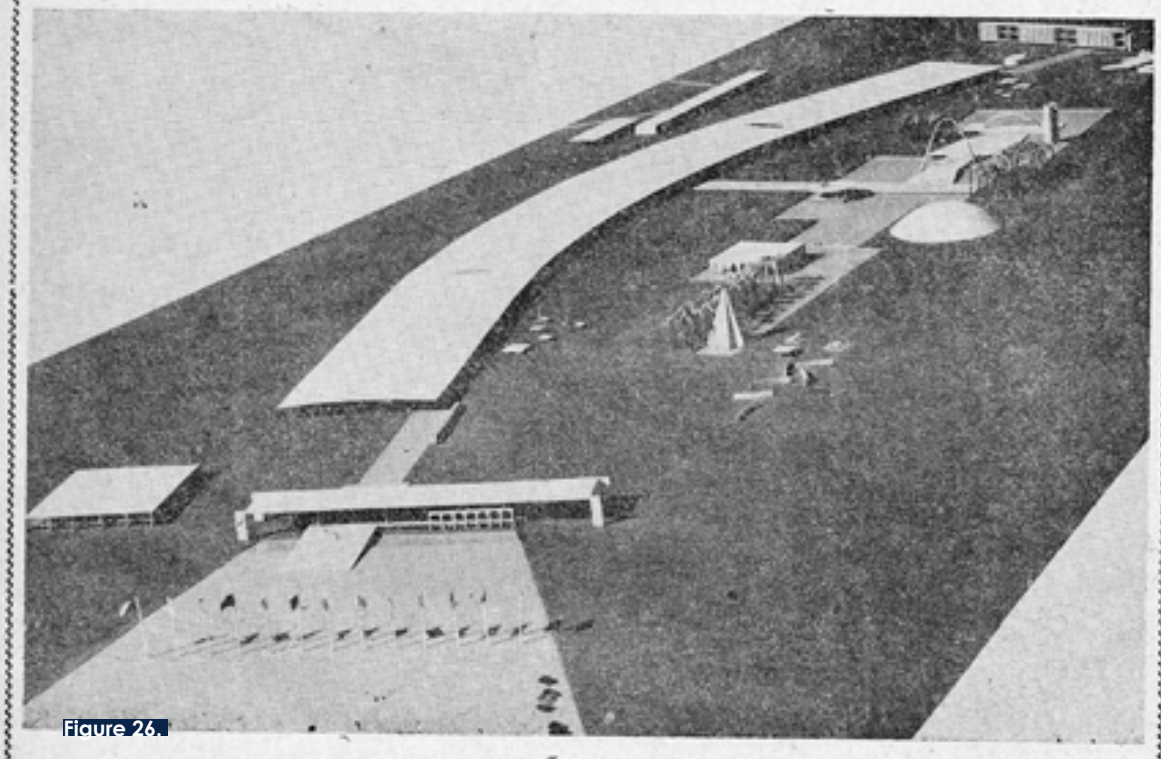


Figure 26

منظر عام لمنشآت المعرض

Figure 27.

Figure 28. *RKIF under construction during the late 1960s.*

Other modifications implemented during construction are also reported as Neimeyer responds to them.
300000 square meters were added in 1969 to accomodate a new Planetarium and an Open Air cinema. The stage of the open-air theatre was elevated to enhance visibility. At the Lebanon Pavilion, aluminum profiles supplanted reinforced-concrete portions, prompting Niemeyer to reengineer the glazing system with steel louvers. Additional technological adjustments pertained to water distribution, purification, firefighting, illumination, and climate control systems.
Financial problems and insufficient governmental support resulted in recurrent delays, as the fair was originally meant to be finished in three years. The inauguration, initially scheduled for 1966, was delayed many times until 1976. In a letter from 1970 **[Figure 29]** , Niemeyer conveyed his contentment with the quality of the work yet voiced exasperation with the slow progress, urging for enhanced efforts to expedite construction.
The delays worsened public dissatisfaction and criticism of political leaders, while local hopes for economic growth were further blocked by the beginning of the Civil War in 1975.

(Mai 1970)

Conseil Exécutif des Grands Projets

Beyrouth

Très Chers Amis,

Avec la visite de notre ami Nicolas Rizk au Brésil j'ai vérifié avec satisfaction que mon projet pour la Foire de Tripoli est respecté et que le travail est correctement conduit.

Seulement il y a un aspect qui me préoccupe, c'est la lenteur avec laquelle la construction va se réalisant, chose que je trouverais du mal à expliquer à mes amis du Brésil et de l'Europe, qui admirent le projet et aimeraient le voir réalisé.

D'autre part la Foire de Tripoli est basée sur des principes très différents des foires internationales et ce retard pourrait porter préjudice au caractère commercial qui devrait constituer son principal intérêt. Pour tout cela je me permets de vous suggérer mes amis un effort de plus dans la concrétisation de cette oeuvre - un an serait l'idéal - le demandant avec le plus d'élan surtout qu'il s'agit de l'un des projets que j'apprécie le plus.

Attentivement

Signé: Oscar Niemeyer

Figure 29

Figure 30. *Aerial view of Tripoli Fair in* ***1967****.*

Figure 31. *Aerial view of Tripoli Fair in* ***1973****.*

03.3. The Civil War Occupation

When the Lebanese Civil War broke out in 1975, the project was nearly complete. Construction stopped abruptly, and in 1976 the Arab Deterrent Force (ADF), composed mainly of Syrian Armed Forces, occupied the fairgrounds. In 1977, Amado Chalhoub, then director of the RKIF, described the state of the fair during the conflict, confirming that the inauguration had been scheduled for July 1975. **The mostly finished yet unused structures were stripped, looted, and ultimately abandoned due to escalating insecurity.**

The abandonment of such a vast site exposed it to deterioration, weathering, makeshift alterations, and vandalism. Many buildings suffered continuous misuse by military troops, who settled in spaces such as the Guest House, the Grand Cover, the Administration Building, the Bars, and the Housing Museum.

Traces of explosions and bullets are still visible to this day on fair-faced concrete surfaces, especially in structures that were never rehabilitated. **[Figure 32]** for example shows traces of bullets on the experimental theater's façade. **[Figure 33]** shows graffiti and bullet holes by the Syrian military of the Customs-Firehouse Depots Building. Some scars were the result of shelling; others were caused by military practices such as target training such as the ones seen on the experimental theater and the southern façade of the administration building. **Many structures, like the bars and the housing museum, were changed and provisionally extended to be used as shelters for the military.** Original materials like marble panels, doors, and handrails were stripped from the Lebanon pavilion leaving marks on the architecture. These traces stand until this day as a reminder of this violent occupation and Lebanon's tragic history. **Despite the silence of the press at the time, oral histories and personal accounts prove the society's negative perception of the fair during this period.**

During this period, both the CEGP and the RKIF Administrative Board continued planning activities for the fairground despite the war. In 1979, Jean Pierre Michels (Jemp Michels), vice president of the Union of International Fairs and founder of the Luxembourg International Fair, was invited for a second study mission to advise on the state of the project. His report confirms that on 5 November 1979 he visited the offices of Dar el Handasah (Nazih Taleb), which was still working on the Tripoli Fair. Michels presented recommendations to CEGP aimed at adapting Niemeyer's fair to the standards of modern international fairs, and his suggestions influenced proposals prepared by Dar el Handasah in 1980.

As a result, the Administrative Board and CEGP managed to implement an eastern parking area and a secondary entrance in the early 1980s, attempting to activate at least the cultural spaces. In May 1980, a delegation from the Tripoli Fair toured several international fairs in Europe to learn from their operations. However, negotiations with the Syrian high command failed, and the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982 put an end to all works and efforts to use the fair from 1982–1983 onward.

In 1994, after the partial withdrawal of the Syrian army from the fairgrounds, Prime Minister Rafik Hariri initiated a rehabilitation plan. By that time, when the fair was officially returned to Lebanese control, valuable elements such as electrical cables, light fixtures, air conditioning systems, Carrara marble tiles, and even bricks had already been removed and smuggled across the border.

The post war years opened the way for the resumption of construction works at the site, but also introduced a series of alterations that affected many of its original architectural qualities. In 1995, following the complete military withdrawal, the fair was renamed the Rachid Karame International Fair.

Figure 32.


المغاوير
جميل كوكب

Figure 33.

03.4. Adaptations and Post-war reconstructions

The RKIF administration board had two objectives: first, to rehabilitate selected areas of the fair to allow the quick organization of exhibitions, around 8,000 square meters of exhibition halls plus offices for administration, and second, to promote the fair nationally, regionally, and internationally.

Major interventions with the immediate aim of reusing specific units took place between 1994 and 1998. These works were carried out by Dar Al Handasah Shair and Partners together with the Bureau d'Etudes Civiles et d'Architecture (BECA). As described in the local press, most of these operations fell into the category of "resuming suspended construction works."

Although the rehabilitation project did not entirely disregard Niemeyer's design, it introduced changes that affected the concept of fluidity and quietude characterizing the original program.

The Grand Cover was partially transformed, the Open Air Theatre was partially rehabilitated with a new seating layout. The Reception/ Visitor Centre under the Entrance Portico was adapted to house the administration offices and an auditorium. Landscaping was also altered, with fountains added to the reflecting pools at the Entrance Portico.

The Rehabilitation of the Grand Cover

The first documented post-war rehabilitation works at the fair date back to 1994.

On the occasion of the first exhibition held in the Grand Cover that year, repair work was undertaken on about a quarter of its total area. Between 1994 and 1997, a 170 meter stretch of the Grand Cover on the southern side, near the Entrance Portico, was made operational through the addition of **lightweight pavilion structures** placed between pillars and projecting from three sides, both concave and convex. Works also included waterproofing part of the roof, patching and painting fair faced concrete surfaces, installing an exposed electrical lighting system, and covering the ground with a concrete slab.

This seemingly minor intervention opened the way for targeted works beneath the Grand Cover, which was no longer treated as a single continuous hall. **Between 1997 and 1998, Dar Al Handasah Shair and Partners executed a project that significantly altered the original design and appearance. The lightweight pavilion structures were dismantled, and half of the Grand Cover (around 20,000 m²) was enclosed using a mix of transparent glazing and opaque partitions.**

On the concave side facing the Cultural and Recreational Sector, aluminum frames with glass infill were installed, aligned with the outer edge of the rectangular pillars. **On the convex side, however, a new structure in reinforced concrete and exposed concrete blocks was added as shown in [Figure 34].** The short edge toward the main southeast entrance and the first two modules of the concave side were also closed in the same way. While on the concave side the intervention respected the cantilevered roof surface shading the glazed exhibition area, on the convex side the enlargement of the interior space completely erased the original visual effect of the flying curved roof.

The transformation of the entrance portico

The building under the Entrance Portico, originally designed as a reception and visitor center, was also subject to major interior transformations **to serve as the new RKIF administration quarters.** These interventions, carried out by BECA between 1996 and 1997, modified the interior spaces by replacing the original white marble tiling with colored tiles and removing the red brick wall cladding. The exterior aspect of the structure, however, remained relatively unchanged.

Figure 34. *The convex side (above) and the concave side (below) of the rehabilitated grand cover.*

Figure 35. *The convex side of the Grand Cover, showing the rehabilitated half to the right.*

The Transformation of the Original Landscaping Plan and the addition of a secondary entrance

The original landscape designed by Niemeyer, documented in 1970 aerial views and in 1964 technical drawings by the Associated Consulting Engineers (ACE), underwent a major transformation. This redesign of open spaces seems to have taken place in two phases between 1980 and 1996–1997. **While originally public access was located only at the Entrance Portico, in 1980 a lateral entrance was created on the northeastern side as suggested by Michels in 1979**, a large covered concrete structure with metal gates between columns was added to the east of the Cultural and Recreation Sector during the 1980s.
This intervention cut through the "Manège" and its annexes by extending the wide transversal walkway that connects the Grand Cover with this side entrance. The curvilinear fair faced concrete walls and circular gravel beds originally forming part of the children's outdoor playground (Manège Annexes) were removed, probably before the 1997 landscaping works **[Figure 36]**. **A new parking lot was also added between 1986 and 1993, as confirmed by aerial imagery.** This secondary entrance triggered a series of rearrangements of pedestrian pathways in the area, executed by BECA in 1996–1997.
The central alleyway was extended to the new gate, incorporating the children's recreational area (Merry Go Round Annexes/Manège), and new orthogonal paths were created. **At the same time, the original oblique paths leading from the Open Air Theatre and the Lebanon Pavilion toward the Grand Cover were eliminated and replaced by orthogonal walkways, disregarding Niemeyer's original design.**
On the northern side of the Grand Cover, a new cast concrete floor was poured over the original one, widening the "outdoor promenade" and reducing the sharp perspective effect produced by the overhead structure.
This period also marked changes to the soft landscape. The site landscape was otherwise bare of trees. The report confirms the absence of woody plants, trees, and shrubs, noting that open spaces were instead covered by dense layers of spontaneous vegetation. BECA worked on a landscape plan introducing a wide variety of ornamental tree species, 531 mature trees in total. The planting scheme, with its mixture of species and hedges marking lawn peripheries, followed the approach commonly seen in municipal gardens in Lebanon. In the following years, some of the newly planted trees died and were replaced, yet the structure and diversity of plantings from 1996 remained dominant. **This shift contrasted with Oscar Niemeyer's original vision, which emphasized open lawns to preserve unobstructed views to and from the buildings east of the Grand Cover.**

The Transformation of the Collective Housing

One of the most drastic post-war interventions was the transformation of the Collective Housing building into the Quality Inn hotel in 2000.
This project, promoted by former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and financed by the Cabinet, was executed by Dar Al Handasah Shair and Partners.
The interiors were completely remodeled, erasing their original character. The visual porosity between the fairground and the sea, that was possible through open terraces on the first and second floors, was also eliminated. The exterior oval-shaped service staircase in reinforced concrete remains one of the few elements recalling the original project, though it has been heightened by several meters.

The Rehabilitation of the Guest House

The rehabilitation project of the Guest House building by East Architecture Studio effectively converted the Guest House into a design platform and production facility that supports Tripoli's historically significant now waning wood and handcraft industry. East Architecture Studio was driven by a desire to reinstate the original design and architectural integrity of the space. In addition to fixing the external stucco, the rehabilitation has included the cleaning of several interior walls, including the stone partitions.
This intervention was restricted to the public portions of the building, the formal restaurant, and the atrium due to cost limitations. The guest rooms remain in a fragile state, evidencing the era of occupation through extensive graffiti.

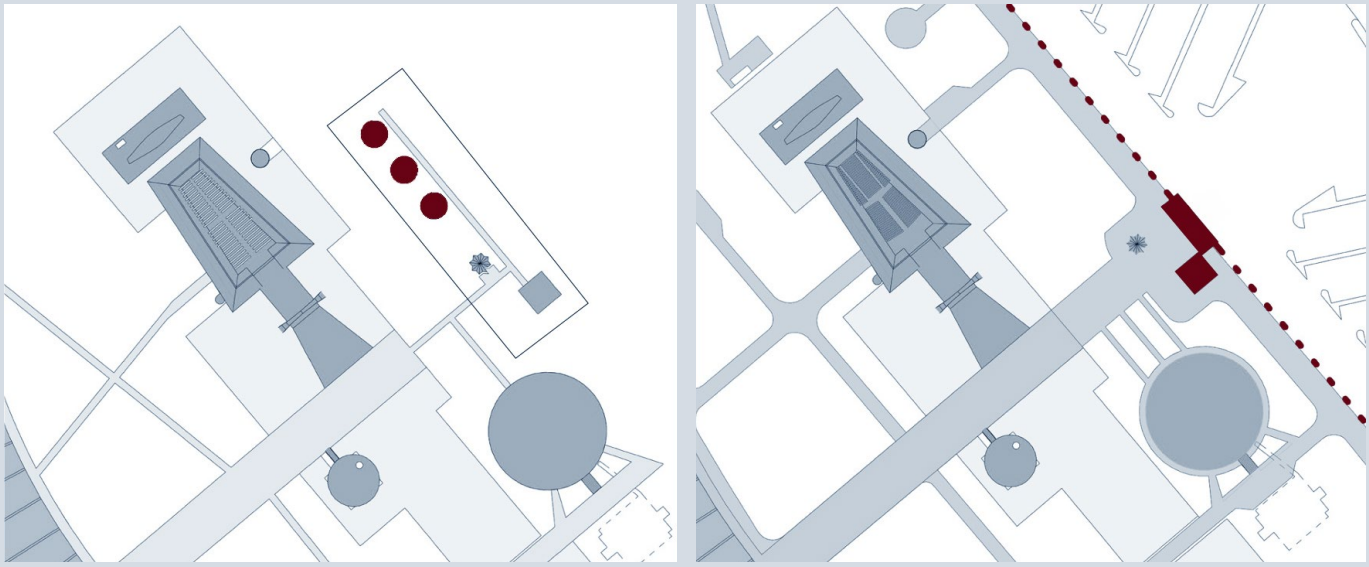


Figure 36. *Plan of the Fair until the early 1970s (left) and that of today (right), showing the transformation that occurred to the area of the Manège and its Annexes. Note the demolition of the circular features and the addition of the Secondary Entrance (3) and metal fence.*

Figure 37. *Collective Housing before (above) and after (below) its transformation into Quality Inn hotel.*

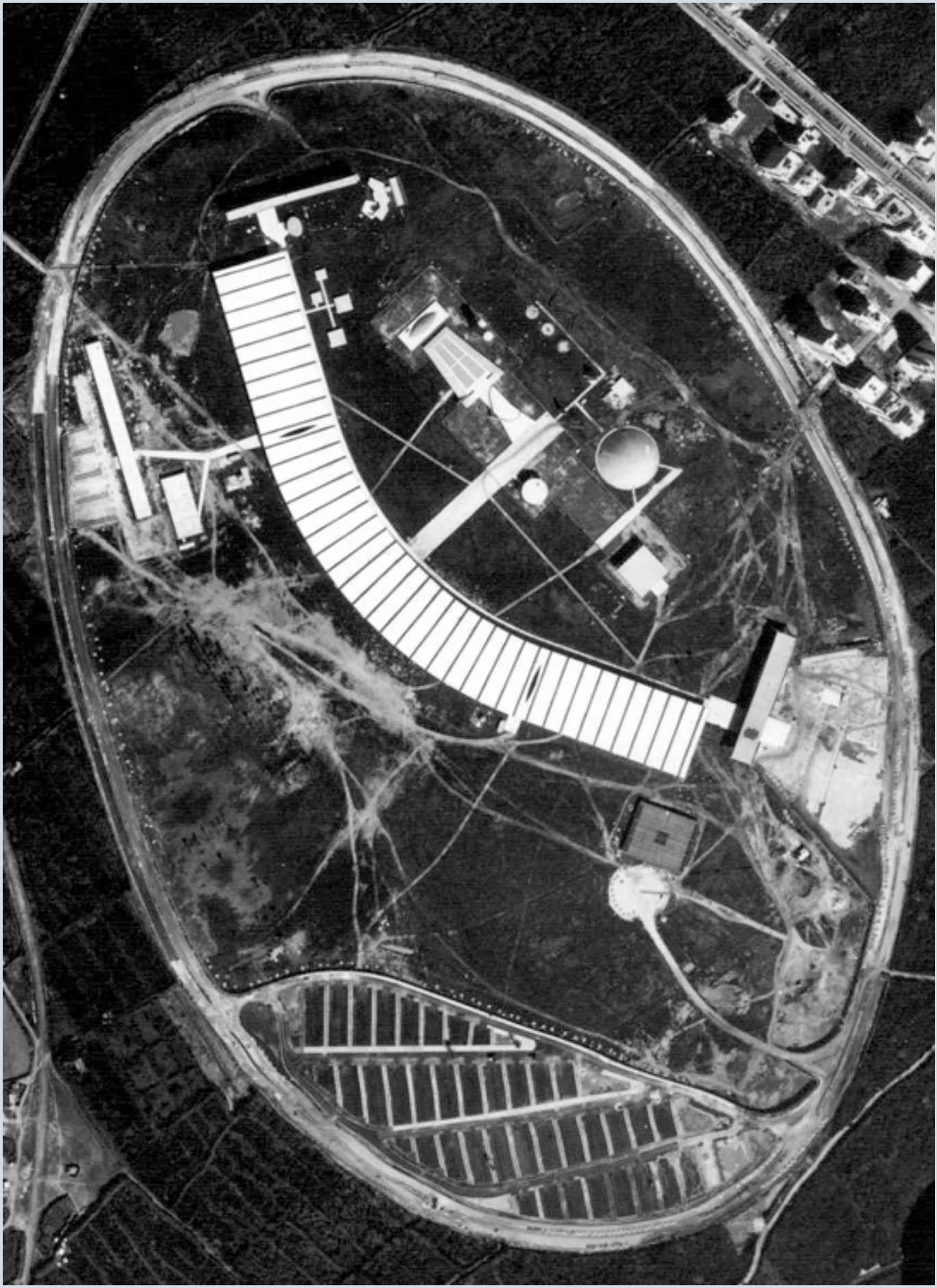


Figure 38. *Aerial image of RKIF in 1974 showing the initial walkways as designed by Niemeyer.*

Figure 39. *Aerial image of RKIF in 1999 showing the initial walkways as designed by Niemeyer.*

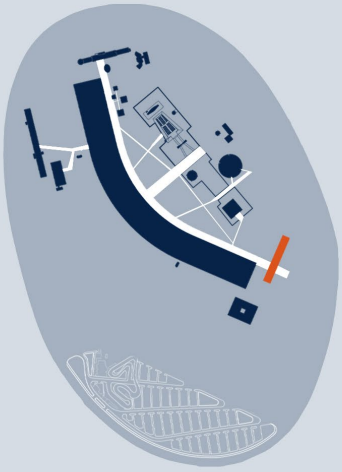
Figure 40. *The Guest House main facade after its rehabilitation in 2018.*

Adaptations and Post-war reconstructions

1994

The Rehabilitation of the Grand Cover

1996

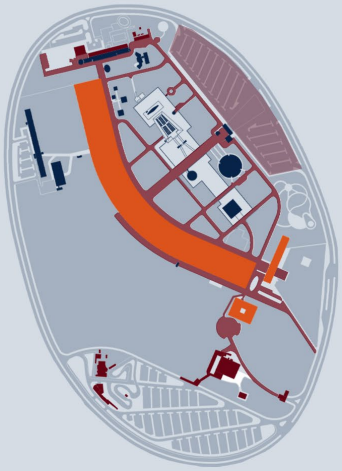


The transformation of the entrance portico

1997

The Transformation of the Landscaping Plan and the addition of a secondary entrance

2025

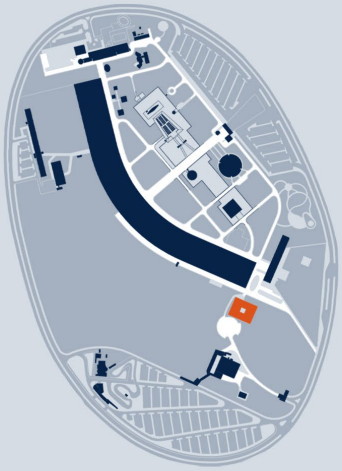


Unchanged Structure

Rehabilitated Structure, Altered architecture and/or interior

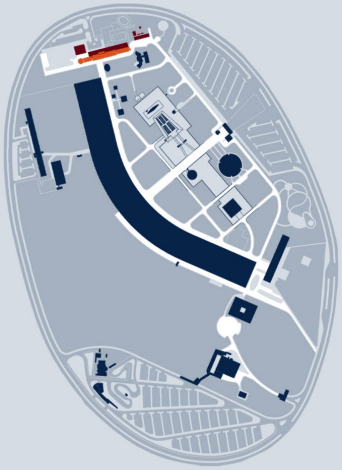
New Structure

2018



The Rehabilitation of the Guest House

2000



The Transformation of the Collective Housing

03.5. RKIF in danger
From Unfinished Vision to Endangered Heritage

After the war, between 2001 and 2010, RKIF continued to host exhibitions and events while several large-scale masterplan proposals were put forward, such as the Chinamex and Cedar Land projects. **None of these schemes was executed, but if they had been, they would have drastically altered Niemeyer's work and vision.**

The fair thus remained under threat from speculative development while also suffering from deferred maintenance. Thanks to the efforts of activists, **RKIF was placed on the World Monuments Watch in 2006 to call attention to its preservation.** In 2017, the UNESCO Regional Office in Beirut dedicated a half day visit to RKIF during its international conference on modern heritage, a step that prompted the application for a Keeping It Modern grant from the Getty Foundation in 2018.

This was followed by the fair's inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List in July 2018, and the preparation of an emergency nomination file by April 2022. **In January 2023, RKIF was officially inscribed as a World Heritage Site by the World Heritage Committee.**

As recognition of its architectural significance increased internationally, large-scale development proposals declined. The declining condition of Niemeyer's structures and ongoing regional instability, which discouraged foreign investment, prompted the RKIF Administrative Board to adopt a new approach. They started promoting smaller investment initiatives based on a Rehabilitate, Operate, and Transfer model, where users are required to restore structures while preserving Niemeyer's original design, though they do not completely dismiss the possibility of future large-scale projects.

In 2024, UNESCO finalized a Conservation Management Plan to ensure the protection and sustainable reuse of RKIF following its listing as a World Heritage site in Danger as a piece of modern heritage.

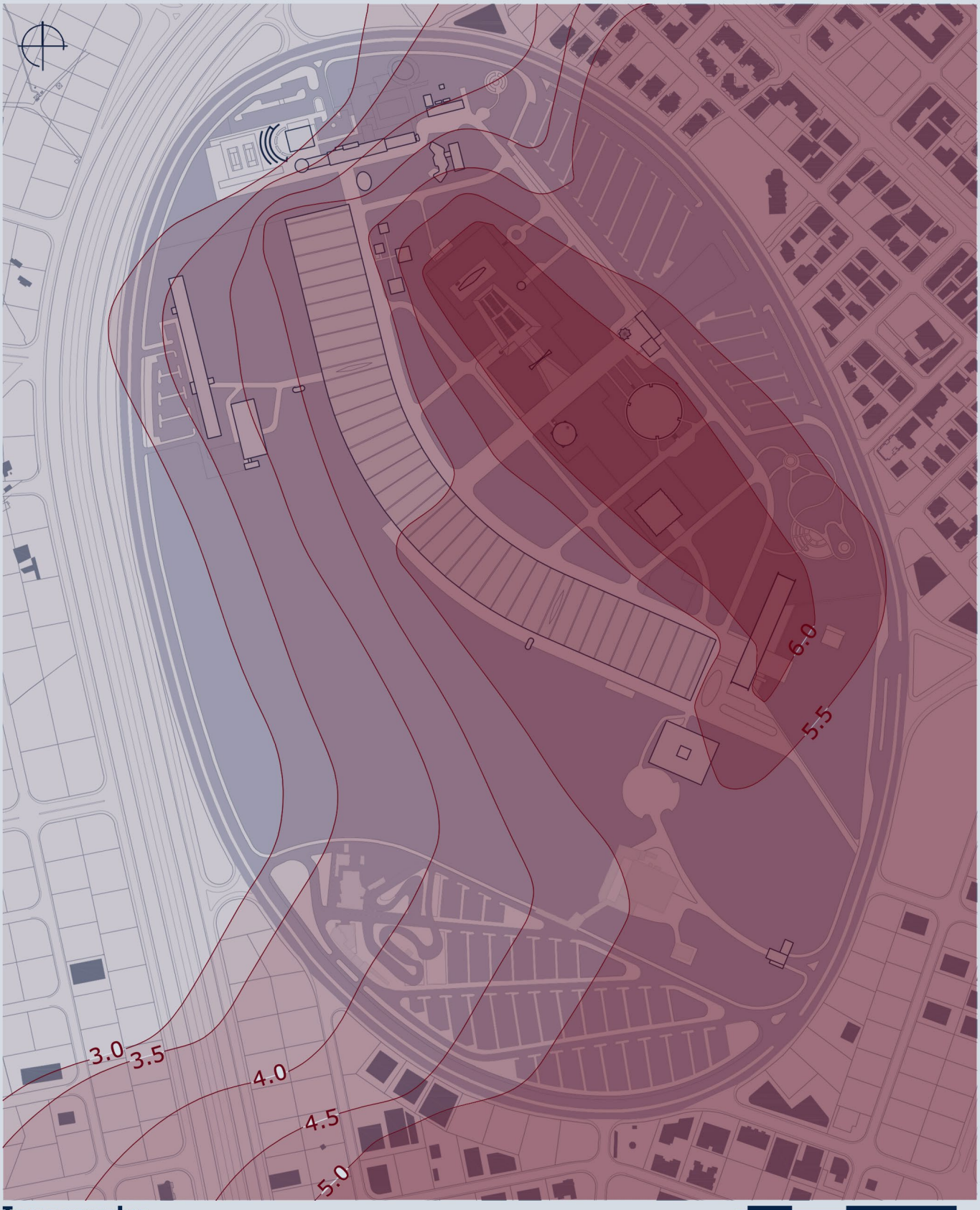
04. The Fair Today:
“What an architecture lost in time” - Oscar Niemeyer

04.1. Site Analysis

Figure 41. *Aerial view of the RKIF.*

Figure 42. Aerial view of the RKIF.

The drawings included in this chapter were collected from the Municipality of Tripoli and the Rachid Karame International Fair archives, and have been revised and adapted by the author.



Topography

Barriers and Boundaries

Legend	Height
PNA Barriers	-
Concrete Barriers	2m
Metal Barriers	1.6 - 3 m

Vehicular Access and Parking Areas

Internal Circulation

Legend

- PNA Barriers
- Concrete Barriers
- Metal Barriers
- Internal Circulation
- Concrete Paths
- Closed Access Point

Buildings

Legend

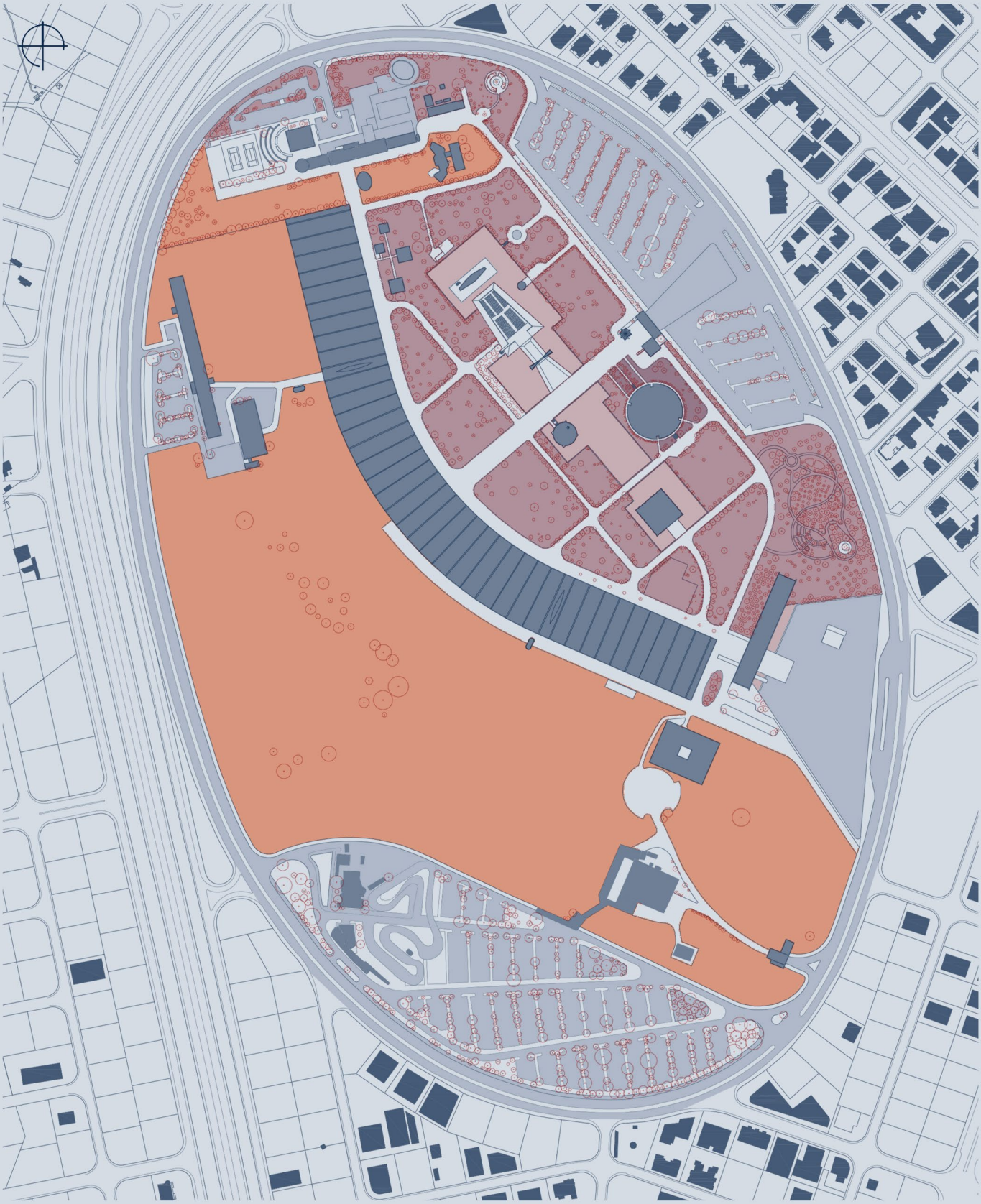
Original Buildings

Added Buildings (PNA)

Municipal Boundaries

Landscape

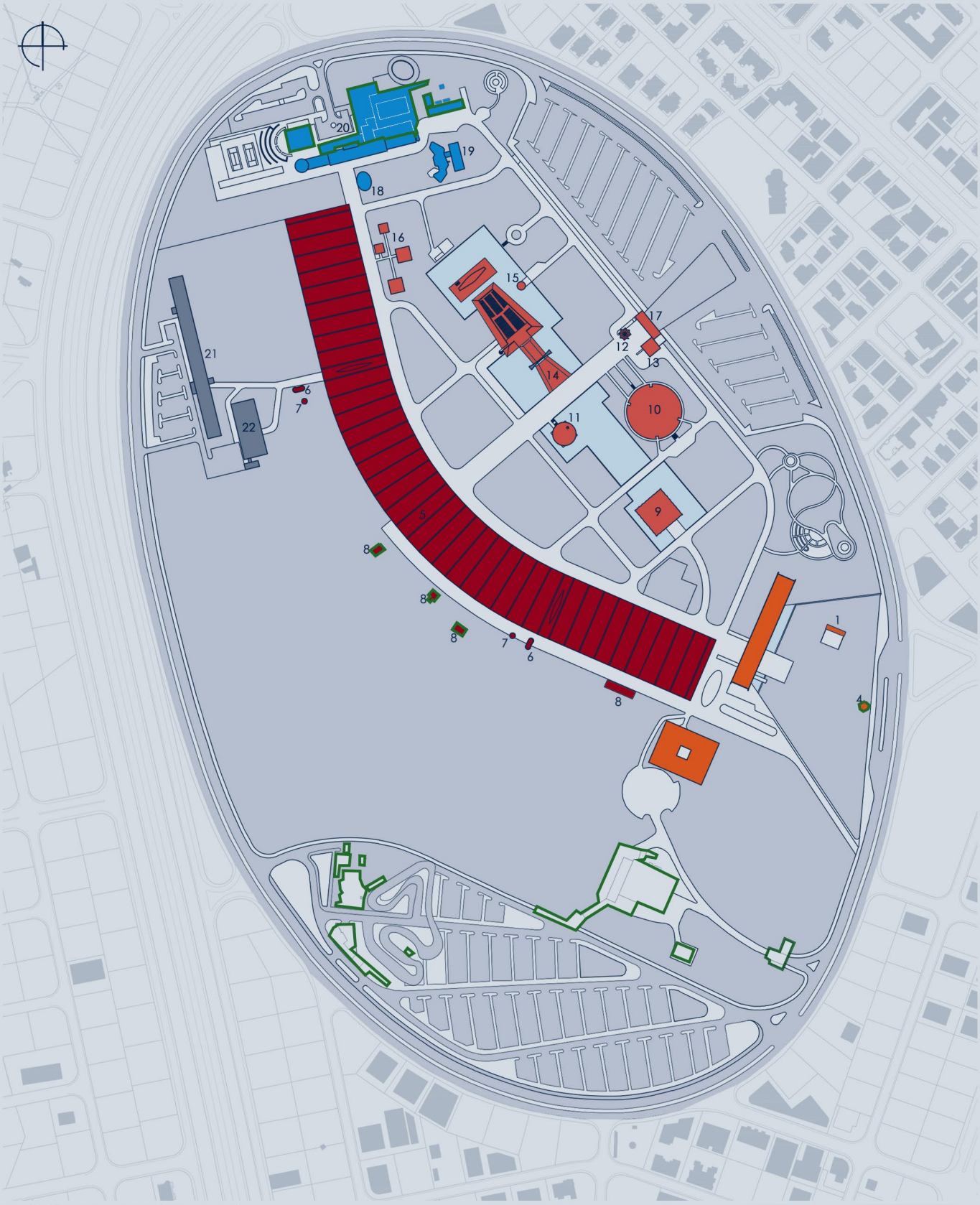
Reflecting Pools



Landscape, used and unused

Worked, used landscape

Neglected, unused landscape



Buildings and Functions

Buildings and Functions
Legend

Rest Sector

1 Ticket Booth
2 Entrance Portico and Reception
Current RKIF Administration
3 Guest House
Current Minjara
4 Guard Room
Post Niemeyer Additions (PNA)

Covered Pavilions

5 Grand Cover
Exhibition Space and Covention Centre
6 Restrooms
7 Transformers
8 Post-war Utility Buildings (PNA)

Cultural and Recreational Sector

9 Lebanon Pavilion
10 Experimental Theatre
11 Space Museum and Helipad
12 Merry-Go-Round
13 Merry-Go-Round Annex
Ticket / Guard Booth
14 Open-Air Theatre
15 Water Tower
16 Bars
17 Secondary Entrance Structure

Housing Sector

18 Housing Museum
19 Model Residence
20 Collective Housing
Current Collective Housing and Additional Facilities

Services Sector

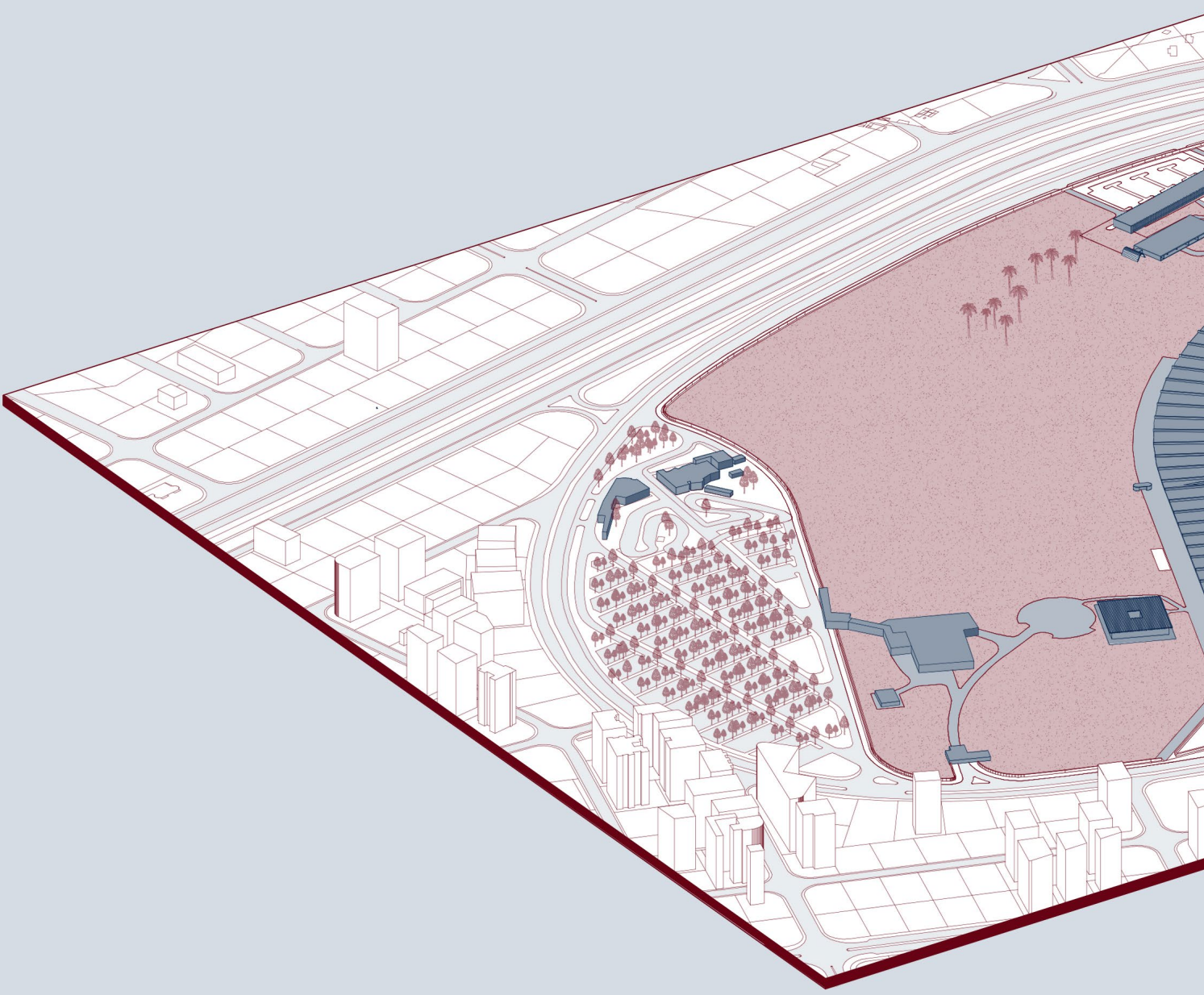
21 Administration Building
22 Customs - Firehouse - Depots

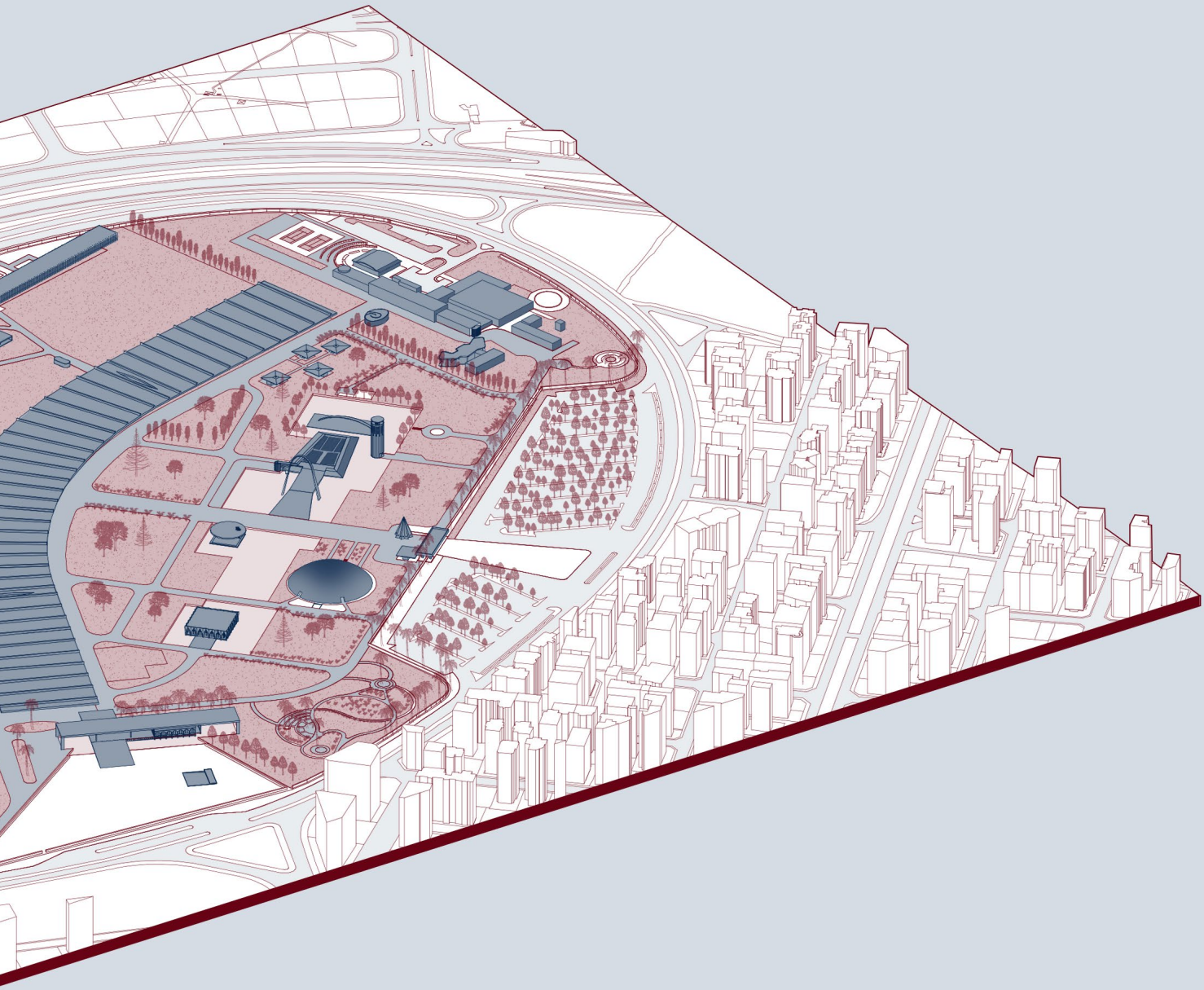
Reflecting Pools

Walkways

Post-Niemeyer Additions (PNA)

04.2. Architectural Survey



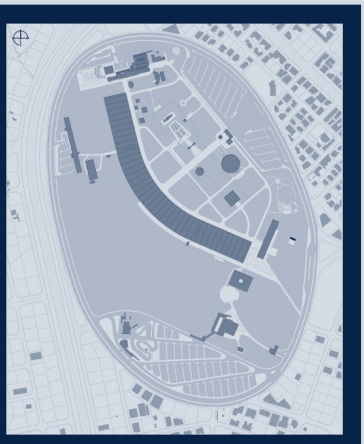


Ticket Booth

To the east of the Main Entrance Plaza, there is the ticket booth. It is reached directly before the Entrance Portico and Reception Centre. The structure is mostly underground, placed under a reinforced concrete roof slab that slightly goes above the surrounding ground level. This slab, characterized by its fair-faced exposed concrete defines the building's minimal architectural expression. The facades combine exposed concrete and brick masonry, interrupted by horizontal ticket slots. Access to the Ticket Booth is provided from the Main Entrance Plaza; however, periodic flooding often makes entry impossible. Currently disused, the structure displays widespread deterioration affecting both the concrete and brick masonry, conditions most likely caused by water infiltration, poor drainage, and the building's sunken configuration relative to the adjacent pavement.

State of conservation

The ticket booth is in a state of neglect. The roof has extensive concrete delamination, spalling, and moisture staining, which indicates an ongoing leakage through structural joints. Evidence of past repair interventions can be seen, notably at roof seams. In some areas, corroded reinforcing steel is exposed where the concrete has failed, and older patch repairs have begun to deteriorate too. The brick masonry shows localized decay as well, with loose mortar joints and surface disintegration.

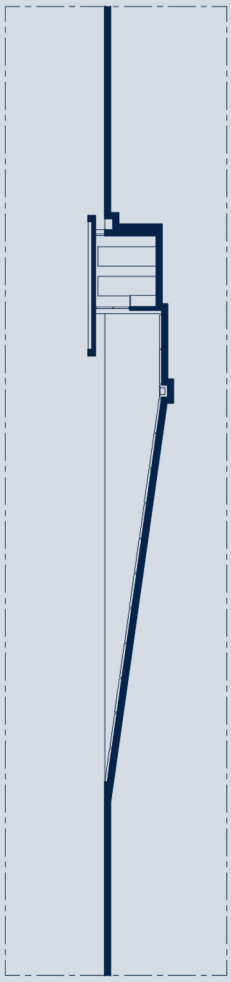


KEY PLAN

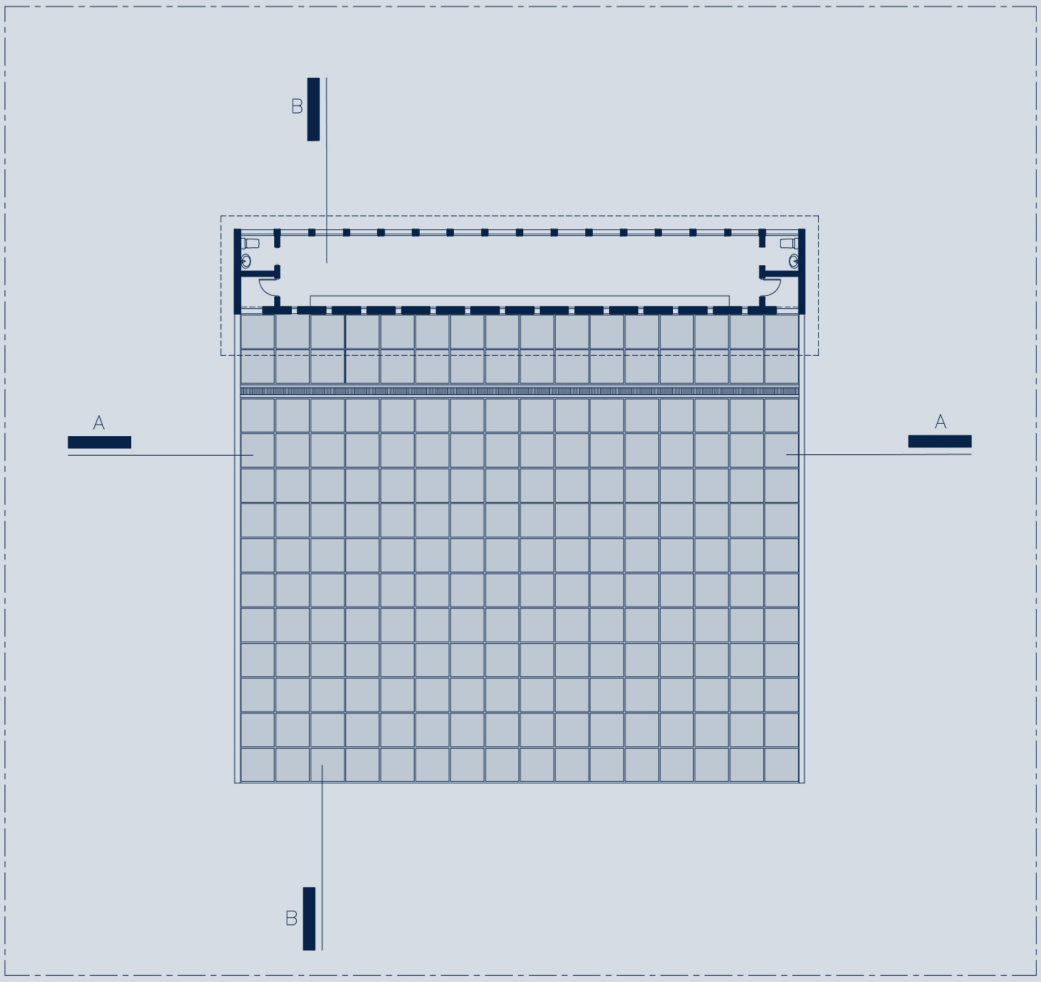
Gross Area:
434 m²

Original Function:
Ticket Booth

Current Function:
Abandonned



Ticket Booth, Section B



Ticket Booth, Ground Floor Plan

Ticket Booth, Section A

Ticket Booth, North East Elevation

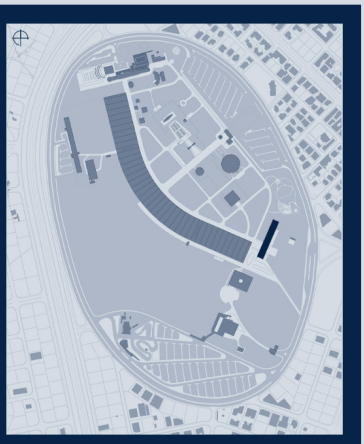
0 1 2 5 10m

Entrance Portico and Reception Center

The Entrance Portico and its canopy are defined by a monumental concrete slab supported by twelve concrete columns, this structure is the welcoming architectural statement of the Fair. It is accessible by an elevated access ramp that reinforces the sense of discovery and scenography adopted by Neimeyer. Beneath the portico lies the Reception Centre, whose façade remains largely unaltered since its construction. It consists of a rhythmic sequence of cast-in-place arched concrete frames. The cantilevered roof slab of the Entrance Portico extends beyond the main volume, this visually unifies the portico and the reception center into one sculpture. Originally conceived as the Reception Centre for the Fair, the interiors spaces were later adapted to host the administration of the RKIF during a rehabilitation phase. Although the Reception Centre's function has evolved, the ensemble preserves its monumental character and continues to embody Niemeyer's original vision for a civic entry pavilion.

State of conservation

The ensemble shows advanced concrete deterioration, particularly along the underside of the bridge decks, ramps, and plaza edges, where spalling, delamination, and exposed corroded reinforcement are visible and worsened due to the direct contact with the pool under it. The underside of the portico slab is subject to extensive efflorescence and water staining, signaling active moisture infiltration.



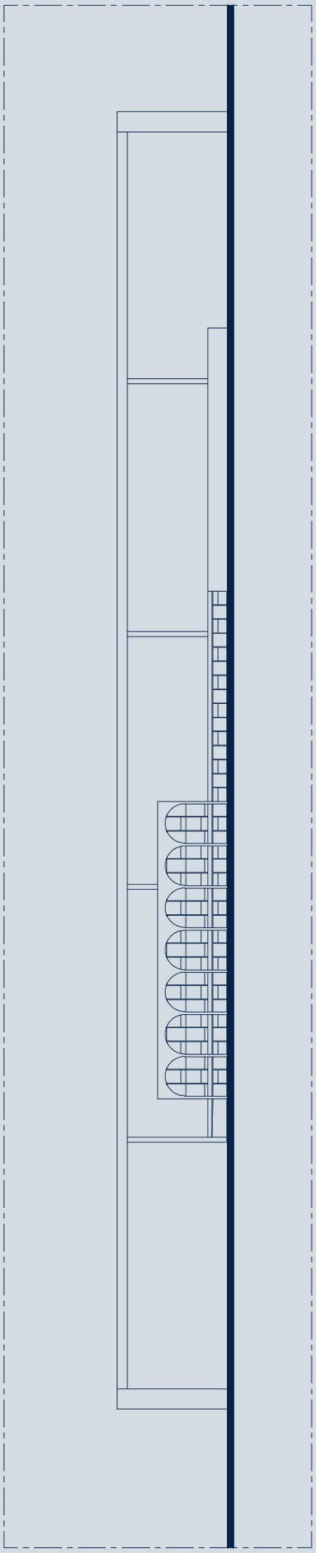
KEY PLAN

Gross Area:
2400 m²

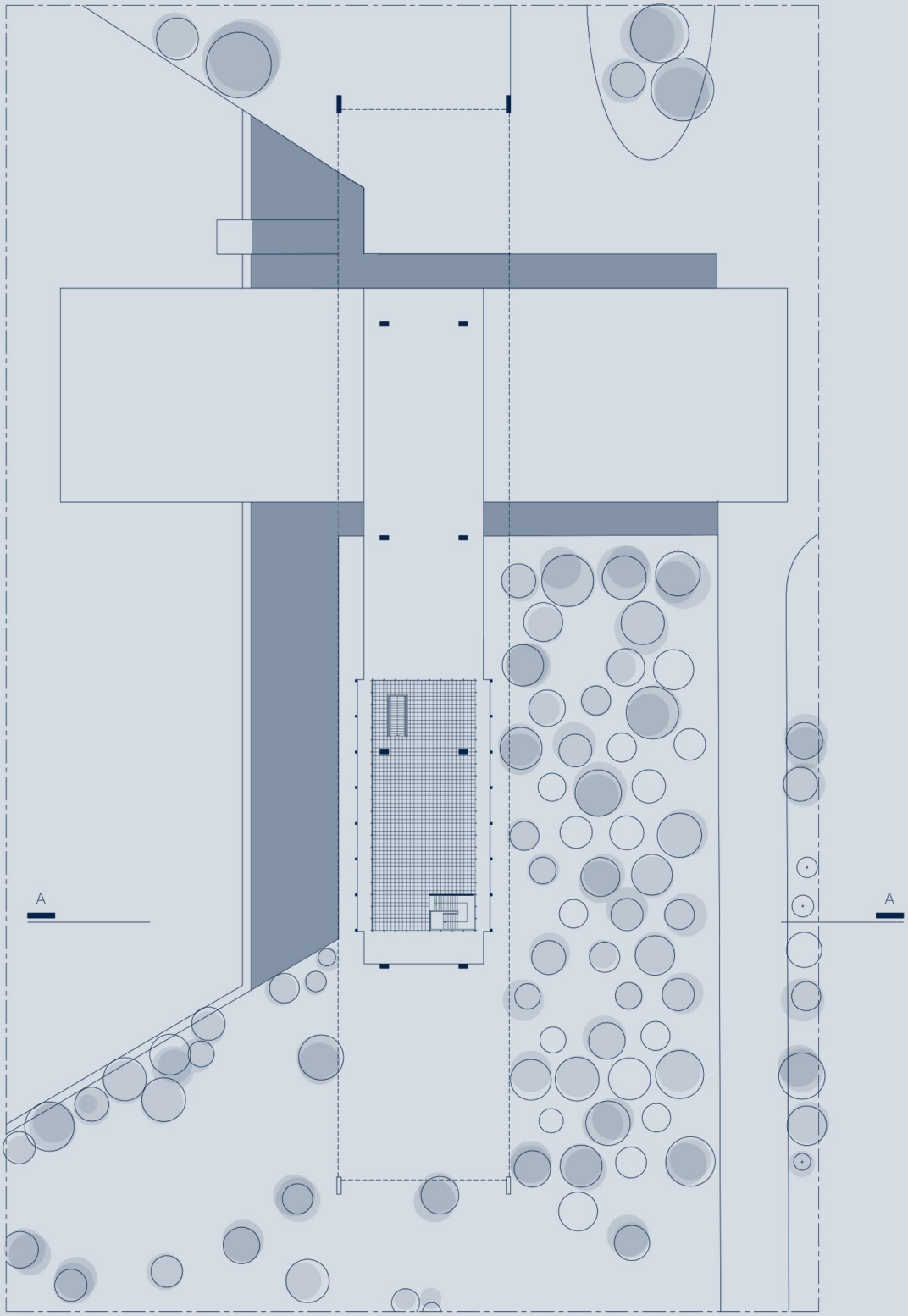
Original Function:
Reception Center

Current Function:
RKIF Administration

Reception Center, Section A



Entrance Portico, West Elevation



Reception Center, Ground Floor Plan

0 20m

Figure 43. *General View of the Main Entrance, showing the sunken ticket booth.*

Figure 44. *View of the main façade of the ticket booth. Notice the trace of water at the front.*

Guest House (Minjara)

Being one of the few structure adaptively reused, the guest house was subject to a recent rehabilitation project. It was inaugurated in 2018 under the project name "Minjara", consisting of a platform to support Tripoli's renowned furniture-making industry. It was transformed into a collaborative hub hosting designers, craftsmen, suppliers, and producers accomodating Minjara's activities, while other sections across both levels remain unused and await future rehabilitation. The facility remained operational until early 2024. (UNESCO 2024) Architecturally, the building is composed of two levels constructed entirely in reinforced concrete. The roof structure features board-formed concrete beams extending along both north–south and east–west axes, with their ends expressed along the roofline on the north and south façades. Being free from any opening or ornamentation, the external walls are finished with fair faced concrete. In the renovated portion, the plan layout organizes offices along the eastern side and integrates a central open-air garden, framed by concrete roof beams that continue over the void. This garden is enclosed by operable metal-and-glass partitions, allowing light and natural ventilation into the interiors.

State of conservation

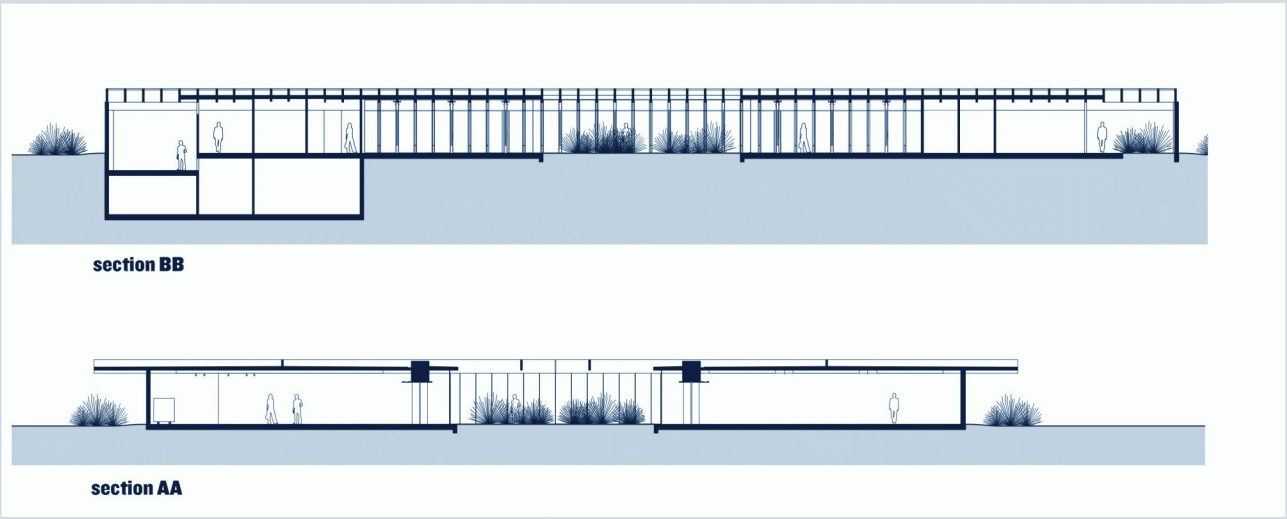
As part of the rehabilitation, most exposed concrete surfaces were treated with protective coatings to mitigate further deterioration. The perimeter wings of the main level still contain guest rooms, each equipped with private bathrooms and individual gardens, although these areas were not included in the recent renovation. Concrete decay is evident, including spalling and corrosion of reinforcement, this s the result of roof water infiltration and aging structural elements. However, the Guest House remains an exemplary case of adaptive reuse within the RKIF, preserving its material authenticity while introducing a contemporary function rooted in the city's artisanal heritage.

KEY PLAN

Gross Area:
3590 m^2

Original Function:
Hotel

Current Function:
Production and Exhibition space



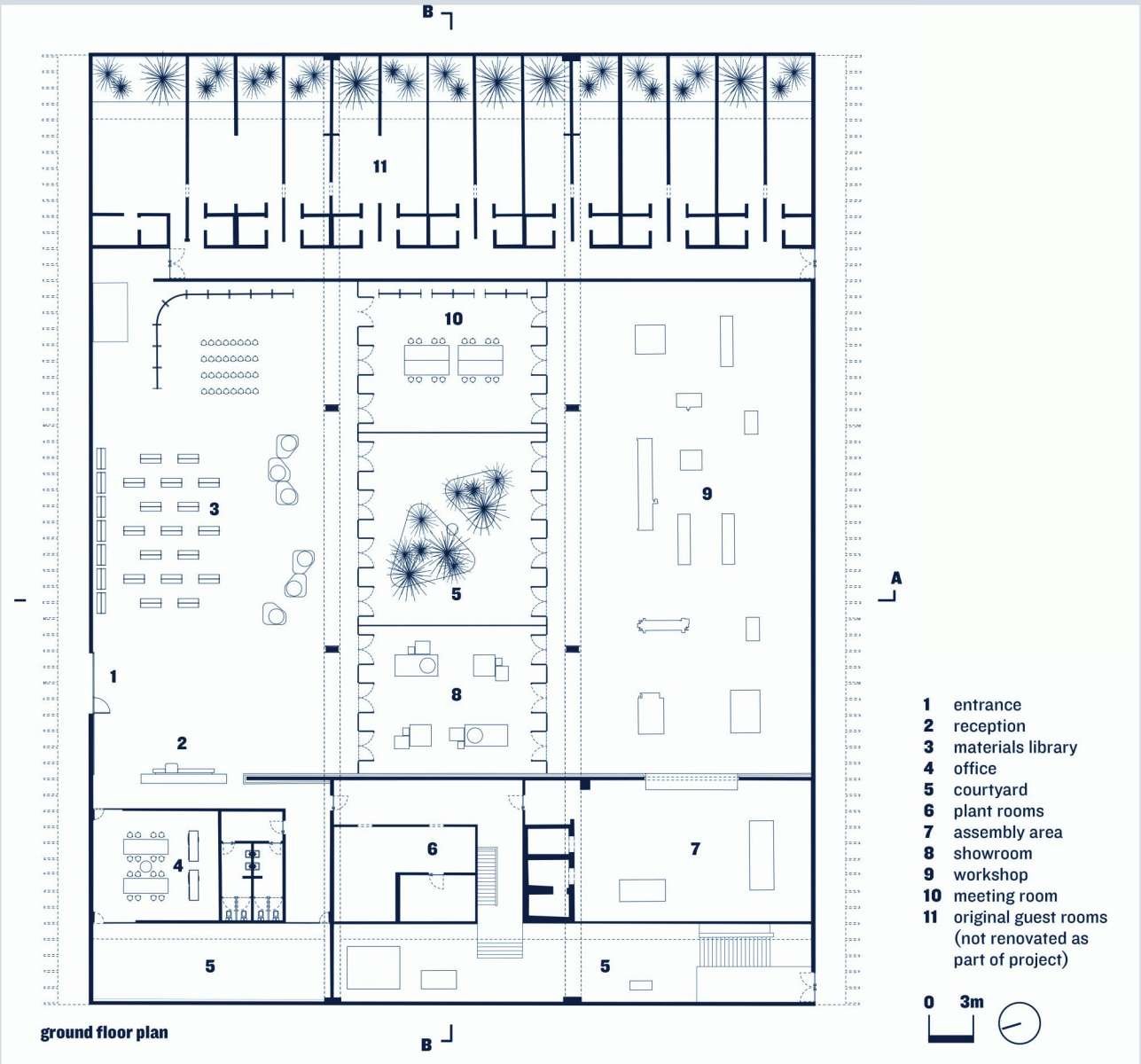


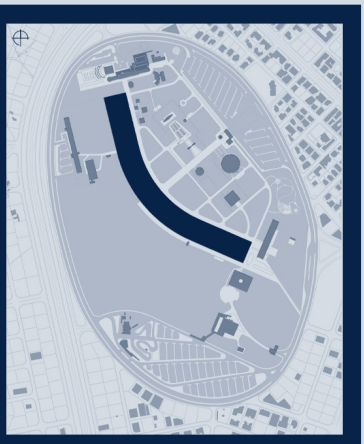
Figure 45. *Plan and sections of the guesthouse after its rehabilitation.*

Grand Cover (Boomerang)

The Grand Cover, also known as the Boomerang, is one of Niemeyer's most iconic designs of the Fair, conceived to cover the national pavilions and unify them beneath a single roof plane. Its monumental yet fluid form embodies both technological innovation of the 1960s and architectural symbolism, achieved through the use of post-tensioned reinforced concrete. The roof's curvature and orientation purposely face the historic core of Tripoli, maintaining a visual and conceptual dialogue between the Fair and the city. Niemeyer's vision for the Grand Cover proposed a collective exhibition environment that was in principle inspired from the traditional typology of world fairs at the time. Instead of constructing individual pavilions dispersed across the site, lightweight modular structures were meant to be installed under the vast canopy, arranged between recessed pillars. Architecturally, the Grand Cover remains of exceptional cultural significance, representing both a structural and conceptual centerpiece of the RKIF. Its spatial system allows for flexible, temporary exhibition layouts. The southern portion underwent partial rehabilitation between 1994 and 1998, transforming it into an exhibition hall and convention center that continues to host local and regional events. In contrast, the northern half remains unfinished, with exposed soil and unpaved areas beneath the slab (UNESCO 2024). Major transformations occurred in the late 1990s, these interventions, extending beyond Niemeyer's visions, conflicts with the original design vocabulary.

State of conservation

The Grand Cover exhibits several deterioration patterns, such as cracked and delaminated concrete, spalling, and corroded reinforcement particularly along the precast roof-edge band and main roof beams.

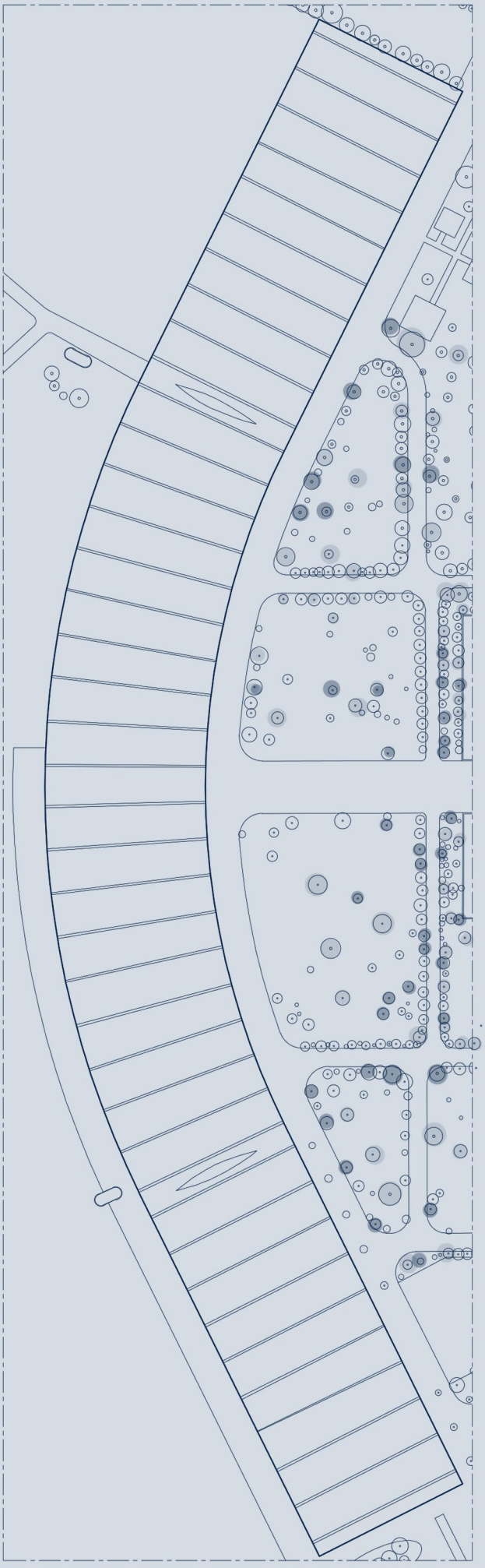


KEY PLAN

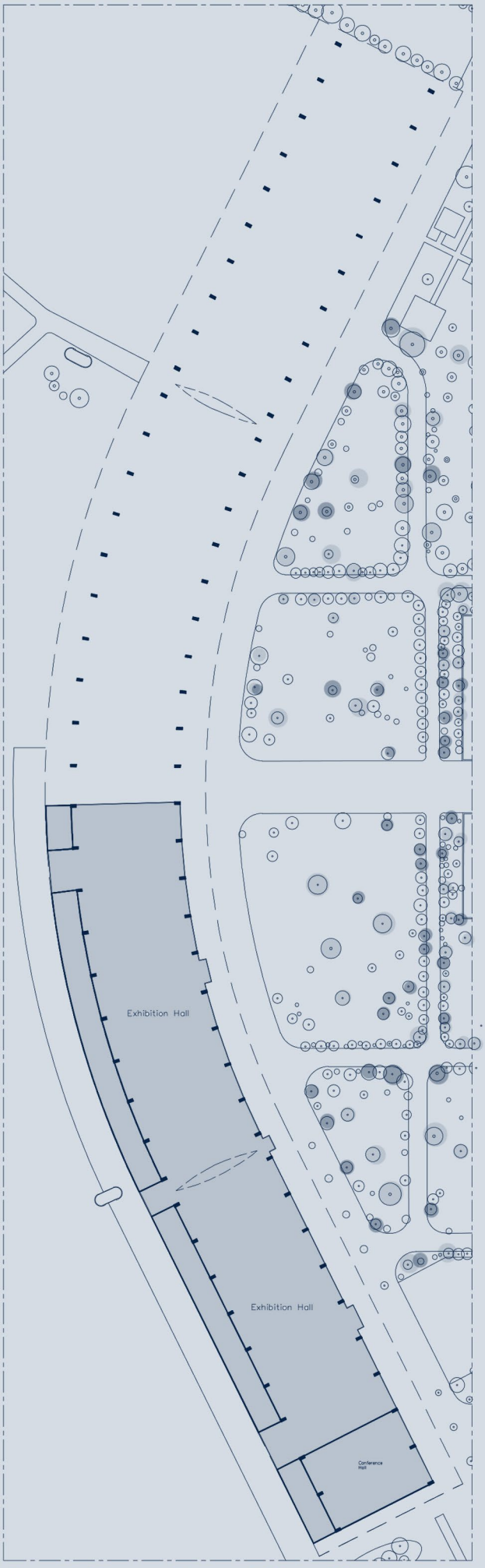
Gross Area:
45000 m^2

Original Function:
Exhibition space

Current Function:
Exhibition spaces (southern renovated part)
Abadonned (northen part)



Grand Cover, Roof Plan



Grand Cover, Ground Floor Plan

0 10 30 50m

Figure 46. *Front and back of the Guest house after its rehabilitation.*

Figure 47. *The Grand cover's concave side.*

Similar Structure

ICC – Instituto Central de Ciências (University of Brasília)

Location: Darcy Ribeiro campus, University of Brasília – Brasília, Brazil
Year of construction: 1963–1971
Architect: Oscar Niemeyer

Similar to the Grand Cover, also known as the Boomrang, of the RKIF, the unniversity is a monumental horizontal structure roughly 700 meters long, consisting of two parallel concrete wings elevated on pilotis. In terms of scale, the two buildings are quite close with the boomerang being 750 meters long approximately.
The plan of the university features a grand central plaza between the wings to encourage academic and social interaction, though this space was never fully developed. The building's form is highly linear and modular, with repetitive precast concrete elements and continuous open galleries creating an "urban scale" interior street (Museum of Modern Art [MoMA], 2015). Large sections of the ground level are open, and the roof was made accessible, reflecting Niemeyer's modernist ideals of permeability and public space. The exposed concrete, long span structure and minimal partitions provide flexibility for various laboratories, classrooms, and offices, making the ICC a functional mega-structure that epitomizes Brasilia's bold architectural language (Museum of Modern Art [MoMA], 2015).

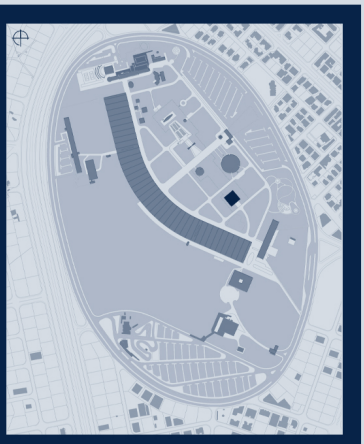
Figure 48. *Aerial view of the ICC - Instituto Central de Ciências.*

Lebanon Pavillion

The Lebanon Pavilion occupies a strategic position within the RKIF and is distinguished by its pointed arches and monumental features. It forms part of the Cultural and Recreational Sector, reinforcing Niemeyer's composition of space for the Fair. Constructed during a period of significant structural experimentation in Lebanon, the pavilion stands as an example of architectural and technological innovation. Originally positioned along the principal entrance axis, the pavilion was reached through two oblique approach paths, which have since been replaced by more orthogonal routes. Designed as a national symbol, the pavilion's design demonstrates a dialogue between modernist structural expression and local architectural traditions. The use of the pointed arch reminds Lebanon's cultural heritage while maintaining the modernity of Niemeyer's language. The pavilion's monumentality is enhanced by the reflecting pool beneath it and landscaped areas. A narrow pedestrian bridge provides access across the pool, emphasizing the scenic approach. Over time, the structure has been subjected to several repainting projects, during which multiple layers of earth-toned coatings were applied to the previously exposed concrete surfaces, significantly altering Niemeyer's intended contrast between smooth whitewashed planes and raw concrete textures.

State of conservation

The structure shows localized deterioration, particularly along the roof slab, façades, and bridge deck over the reflecting pool. These decays are primarily attributed to corrosion of embedded steel, resulting in spalling, minor cracking, and delamination of concrete surfaces.

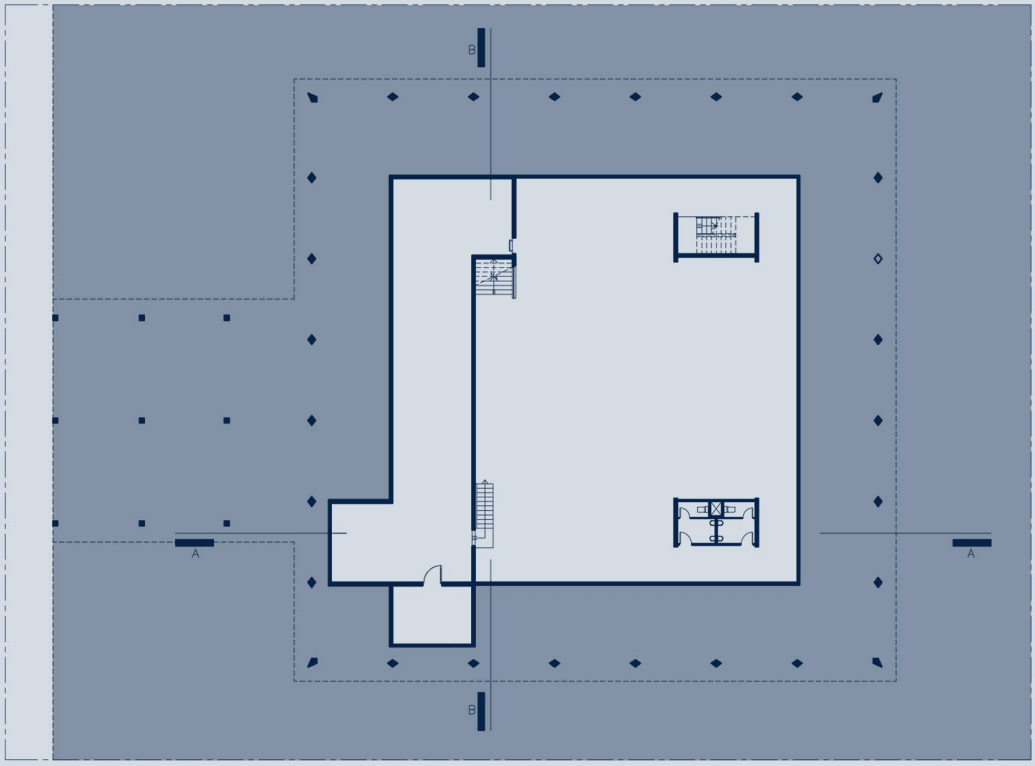


KEY PLAN

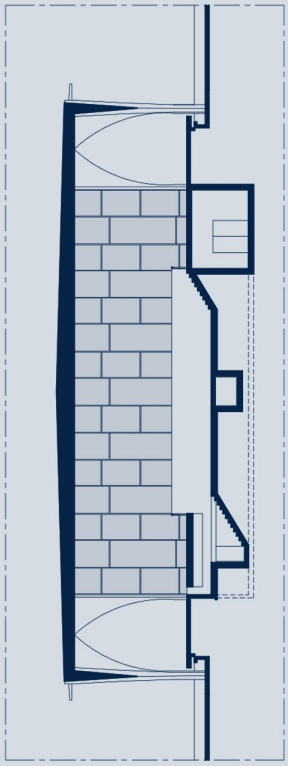
Gross Area:
3250 m^2

Original Function:
Lebanese
Exhibition pavilion

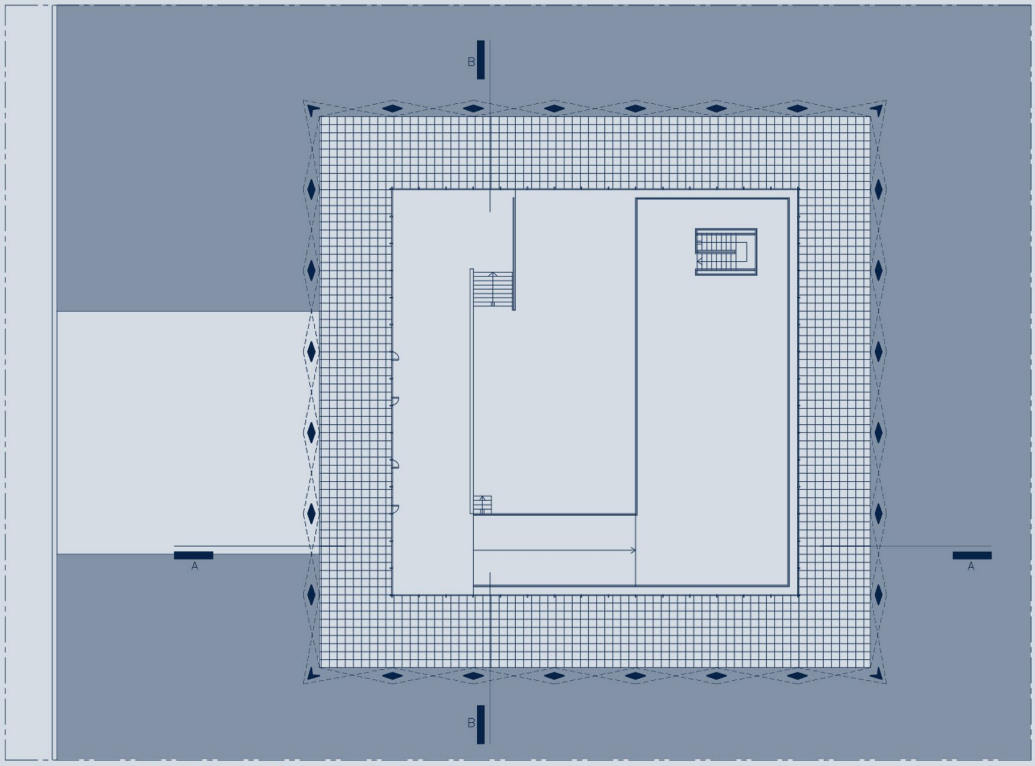
Current Function:
Abadonned



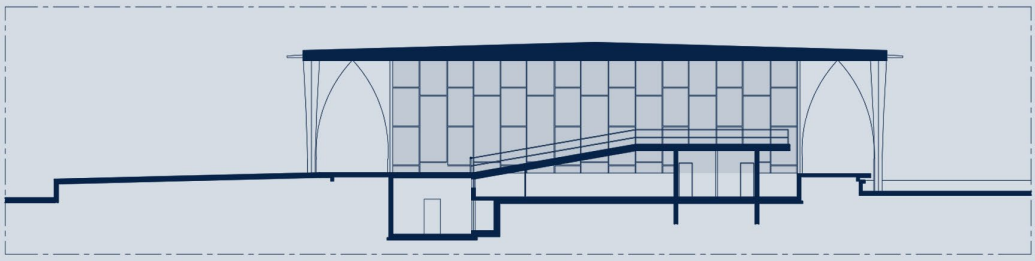
Lebanon Pavillion, Underground Floor Plan



Lebanon Pavillion, Section B

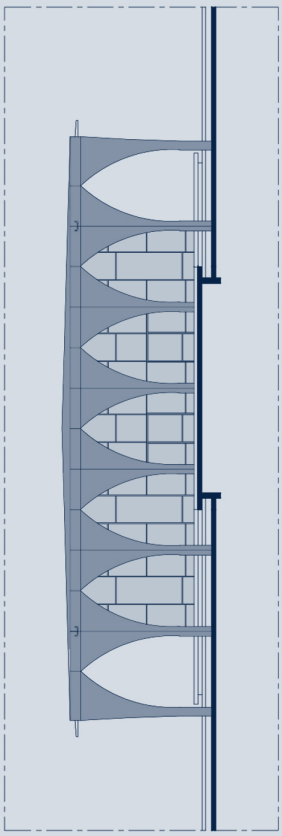


Lebanon Pavillion, Ground Floor Plan

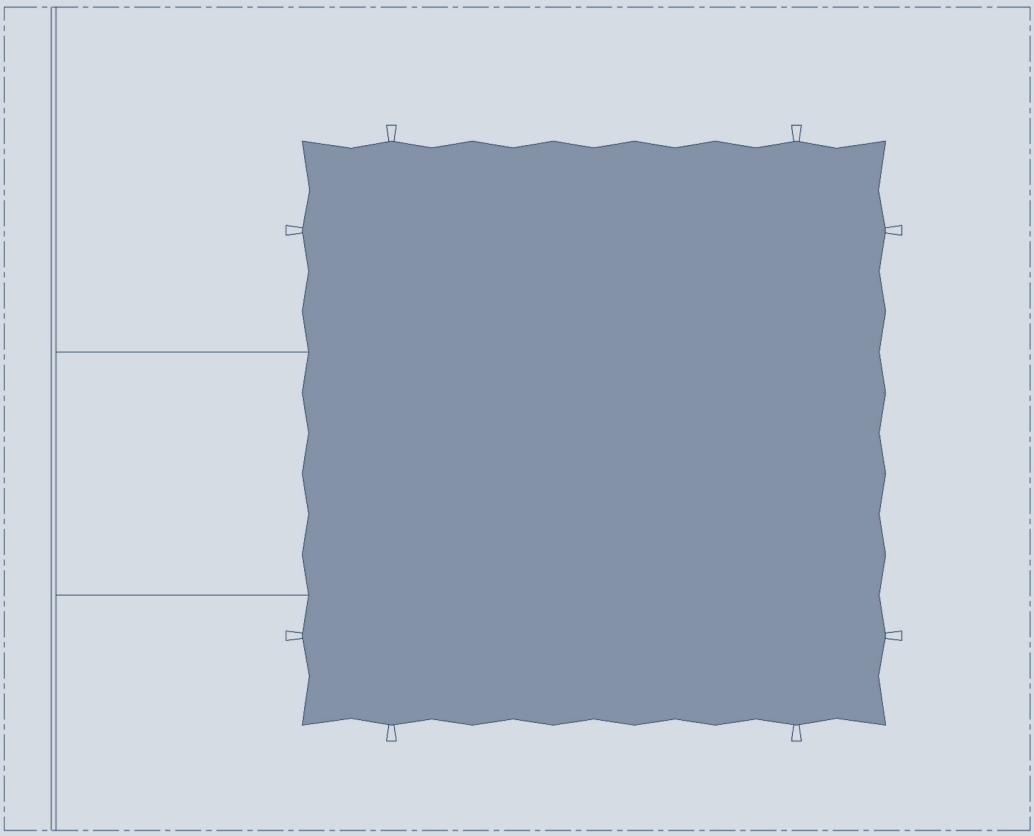


Lebanon Pavillion, Section A

0 1 10 20m



Lebanon Pavillion, South East Elevation



Lebanon Pavillion, Roof Floor Plan

0 1 10 20m

Similar Structure

Itamaraty Palace (Palácio do Itamaraty), Brasília

Location: Esplanade of Ministries, Brasília, Brazil
Year of construction: 1962–1970
Architect: Oscar Niemeyer

Built to house Brazil's Ministry of Foreign Affairs as part of Brasilia's original government complex. Initiated in the early 1960s. **Similarly to the Lebanon Pavilion,** the palace was intended to reflect a modern and emblematic image of Brazil on the world stage (UNESCO, 2024). Culturally and politically, it symbolized the ideals of Brasilia.

The project, at the time, was landmark of modernist elegance, often called the "Palace of the Arches" for its striking facade, also visible in the RKIF, of rhythmic concrete arches encircling a rectangular glass volume. Similar to the Lebanon pavilion the design uses a structural exoskeleton: slender reinforced-concrete arches on all sides support a flat roof, freeing the floor of columns. Always resembling the design philosophy adopted in the RKIF, the building is surrounded by a broad reflecting pool and gardens.

Mondadori Editorial Headquarters, Italy

Location: Segrate (Milan metropolitan area), Lombardy, Italy
Year of construction: 1968–1975
Architect: Oscar Niemeyer

Also similar to the Lebanon pavilion, this project was designed during Niemeyer's exile from Brazil, reflecting the international expansion of his work. In the late 1960s Italy was embracing bold modern architecture for corporate and cultural buildings; Niemeyer's commission came at a time when his reputation as a leading modernist allowed his Brazilian design vocabulary to influence European contexts.

The headquarters' completion in 1975 symbolized a cultural fusion :a Brazilian modernist landmark on Italian soil and underscored the global reach of modern architecture.

The building's signature feature is a series of grand, this time asymmetrical, concrete arches along the facade, which support an elevated horizontal office block. The office volume, a long glass curtain-walled slab, is set back behind the arch colonnade and hovers above landscaped reflecting pools (Marques & Lira, 2008).

Overall, the Mondadori Headquarters balances Niemeyer's free-form modernism with an Italian sense of elegance, standing as one of his most iconic works outside Brazil.

Figure 49. *Itamaraty Palace, Brasilia.*

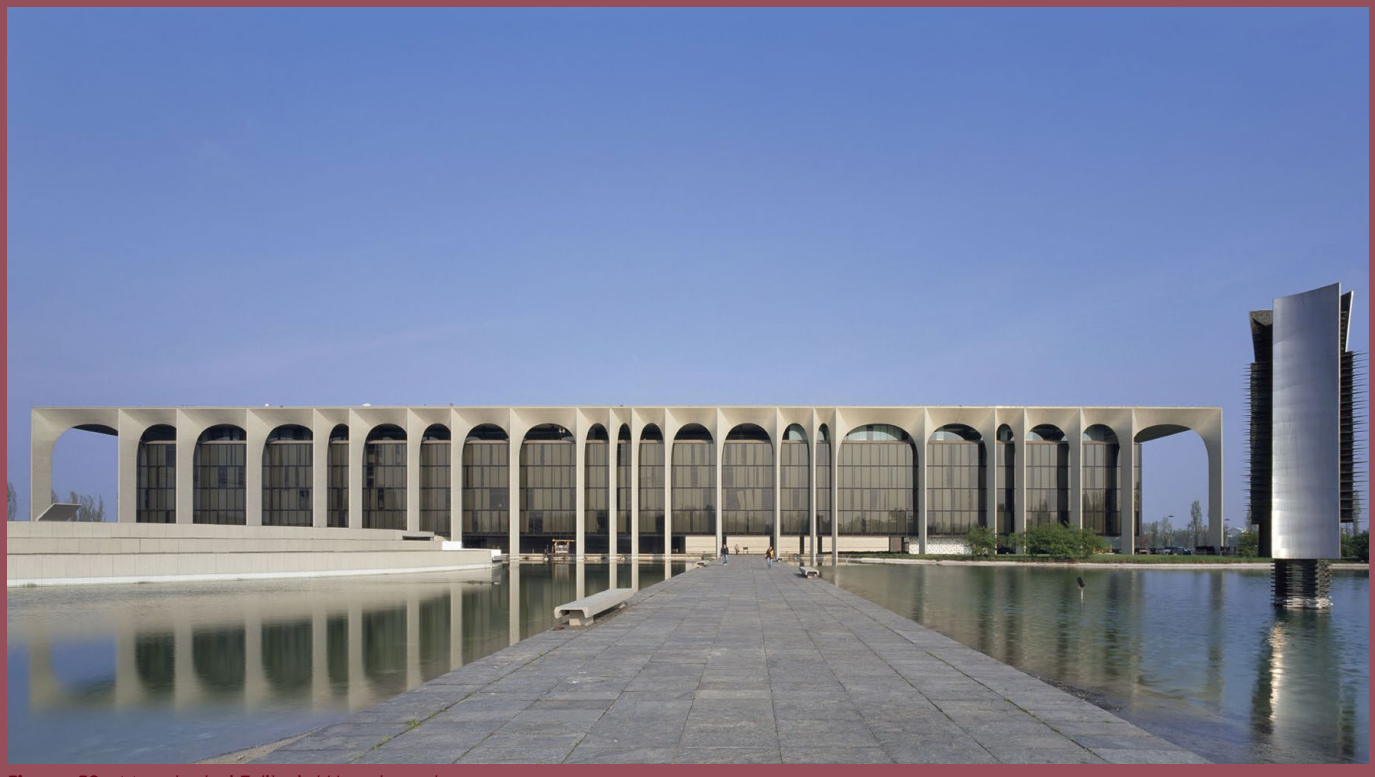


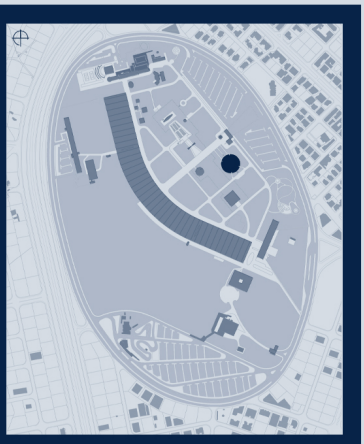
Figure 50. *Mondadori Editorial Headquarters.*

Experimental Theatre

The Experimental Theatre is situated beside the rectangular reflecting pool in front of the Lebanon Pavilion and directly opposite the Open-Air Theatre, forming part of a spatial dialogue among these key cultural structures. The reflecting pool establishes a visual and conceptual relationship between the Experimental Theatre and the Lebanon Pavilion, while the Pavilion embodies a reference to tradition through its arches, the Theatre, with its opaque dome, symbolizes the forward-looking modernity of Niemeyer's vision. Constructed entirely of reinforced concrete, the Experimental Theatre features a dome covering a circular stage designed to be mechanically lifted from the basement level to the main performance space, an ambitious innovative vision that was unfortunately never fully realized. The ground level consists of seating, walkways, and stage platforms, while the underground level consists of mechanical rooms, corridors, and service facilities. A submerged entrance stair gives access to the main interior, complemented by four emergency exits located symmetrically along the building's axes.

State of conservation

Although the Experimental Theatre was never completed, the structure remains largely intact. The exterior dome has been coated with a waterproofing membrane, showing traces of previous repair campaigns. Evidence of water infiltration, staining, and efflorescence are visible at the interior of the dome, alongside localized spalling and corroded reinforcement. Seasonal flooding of lower areas further exacerbates the deterioration of underground spaces.

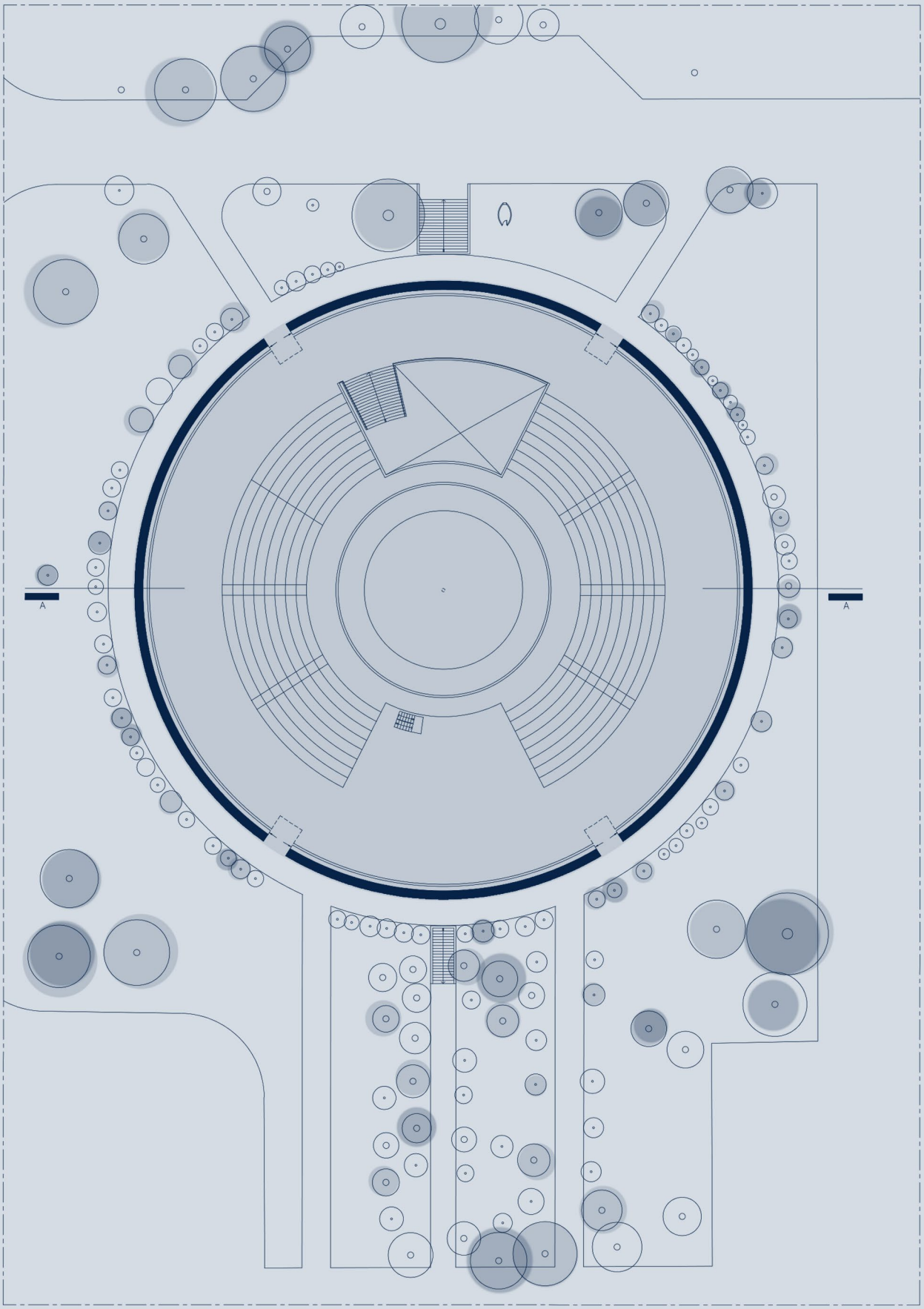


KEY PLAN

Gross Area:
2700 m²

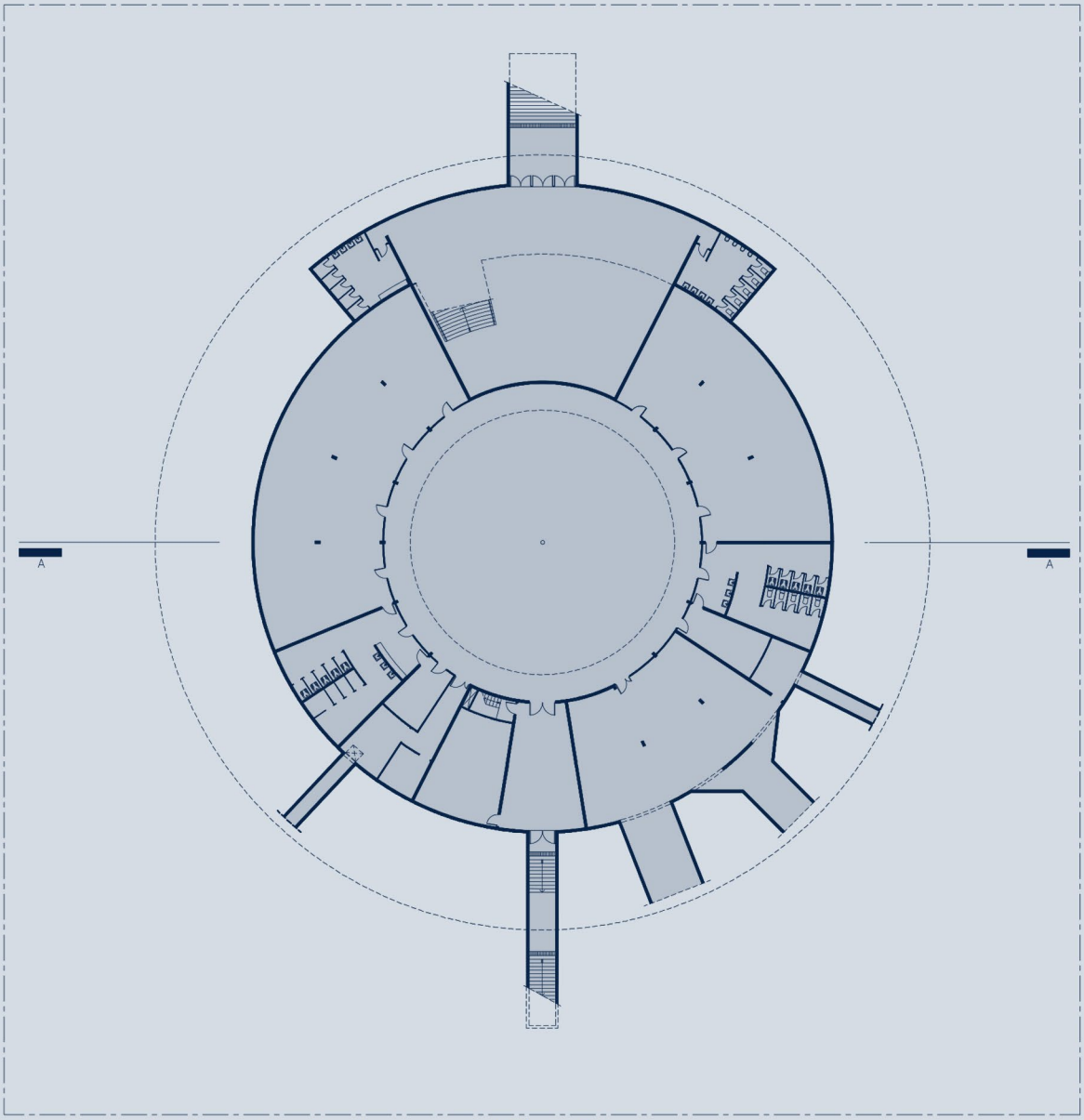
Original Function:
Theatre

Current Function:
Abandonned

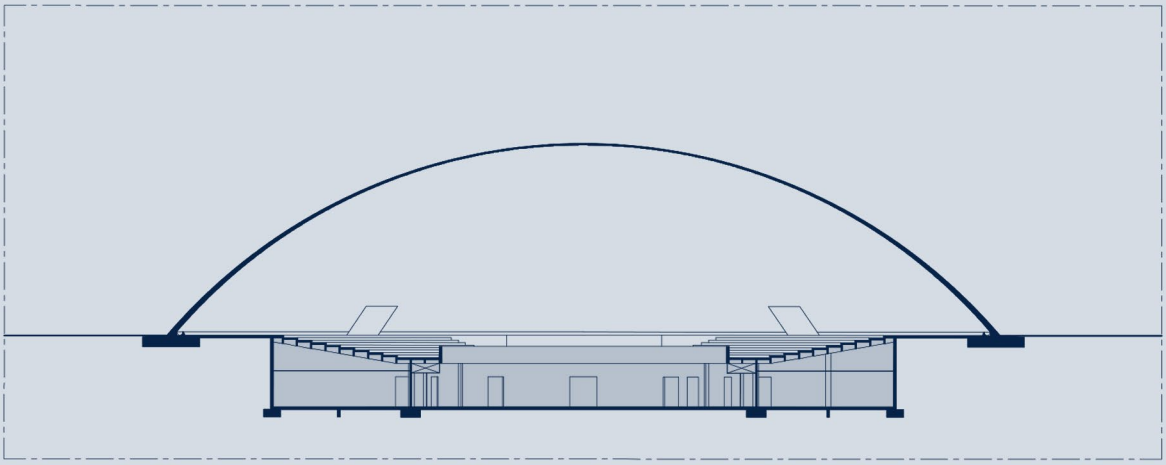


Experimental Theatre, Ground Floor Plan

0 1 10 20m



Experimental Theatre, Underground Floor Plan



Experimental Theatre, Section A

0 1 10 20m

Figure 51. *Interior of the Lebanon pavilion stripped from its linoleum tiles and white marble.*

Figure 52. *The Lebanon Pavilion.*

Figure 53. *:The unfinished interior of the experimental theatre.*

Figure 54. *The Experimental Theatre.*

Similar Structure

Oca Pavilion, Ibirapuera Park, São Paulo

Location: Ibirapuera Park, São Paulo, Brazil
Year of construction: 1954
Architect: Oscar Niemeyer

Designed as part of the Ibirapuera Park cultural complex for the IV Centenary of São Paulo, a celebration of the city's 400th anniversary. The Oca pavilion (originally called the Palácio das Exposições) was one of several exhibition buildings that opened during the commemorative Exposition, reflecting the optimistic, nation-building spirit of the era.

The design of the Experimental Theatre of the RKIF is quite similar: A white hemispherical exhibition hall whose nickname "Oca" (meaning a traditional indigenous hut) reflects its simplified dome-like form. The pavilion is essentially a massive circular shell structure of reinforced concrete, approximately 70 meters in diameter, painted white to emphasize its pure geometry. Its profile is smooth and continuous, rising gently from the ground. Inside, the dome encloses a vast column-free space for exhibitions, made possible by the shell's structural capacity. Daylight enters through a pattern of round skylights in the roof, dotting the interior with natural light. The design exemplifies Niemeyer's fascination with bold geometric forms and innovative engineering; it merges functional requirements (a flexible open-plan gallery) with a poetic, sculptural presence (Mindlin, 1956).

National Museum of Brasília

Location: Ministries Esplanade (Cultural Complex of the Republic), Brasília, Brazil
Year of construction: 2002-2006
Architect: Oscar Niemeyer

Developed in the early 21st century as part of a new cultural complex in Brasília, this museum was completed in 2006 as the city was preparing to celebrate its 50th anniversary. Its construction came during Brazil's post-millennium cultural resurgence and under a democratic government keen on investing in public institutions. The project is a continuation of Niemeyer's involvement in Brasília's urban narrative : a modern cultural monument added to the original 1960 masterplan.

Similar to the Experimental Theatre of the RKIF: A monumental contemporary museum defined by simple geometric forms and vast open spaces. The primary form is a white spherical dome emerging from a large public plaza. This dome, a thin-shell concrete structure, houses two floors of exhibition galleries in a mostly undivided interior, allowing great flexibility for large art installations and exhibitions. A remarkable feature of the design is a long, curving ramp that sweeps upwards from the plaza, crossing over a reflecting pool and leading to the entrance on an elevated terrace (Ramos, 2006).

Figure 56. *Oca Pavilion, Ibirapuera Park, São Paulo.*

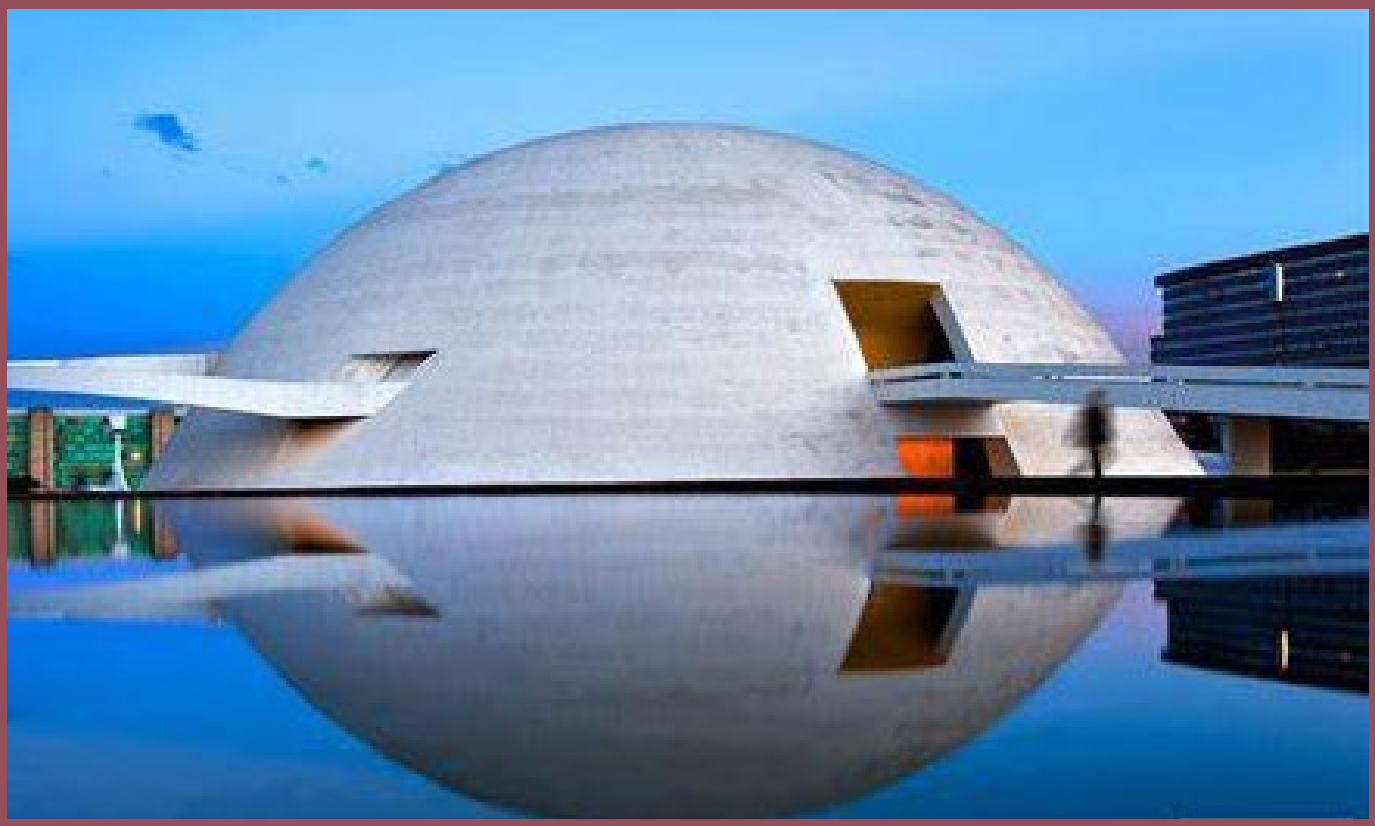


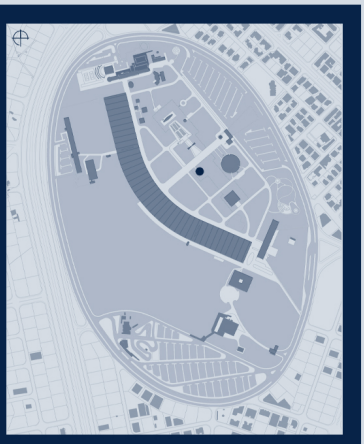
Figure 55. *The National Museum of Brazilia.*

Space Museum and Helipad

The Space Museum, located next to the Experimental Theatre, is surrounded by a rectangular reflecting pool, creating a visual and conceptual interaction with adjacent buildings. Unlike the Lebanon Pavilion, which reminds of the past and tradition, the Space Museum shows Niemeyer's futuristic vision, celebrating scientific advancement and the optimism of the space era. Built of reinforced concrete, it features an underground exhibition hall and an elevated inverted platform intended as a helipad. A central structural column unifies the two levels, extending from the exhibition floor underground to the roof. The upper level, reachable via a circular steel staircase, exemplifies one of Niemeyer's most audacious structural experiments of the Fair. The ground level is structured around a rectangular foundation encircled by the reflecting pool, enhancing the impression of elevation and disconnection from the surroundings. The Space Museum serves as a metaphor for advancement and a tribute to Niemeyer's intrigue with futuristic architecture.

State of conservation

The construction is mainly intact, however it possesses an incomplete interior, marked by remnants of black soot from a previous fire. Localized concrete degradation is apparent at both above- and below-grade levels, especially on the underside of the platform due to direct contact with water. The circular staircase displays significant corrosion and deterioration of concrete cover. No evidence of prior repairs or protective coatings was noted.

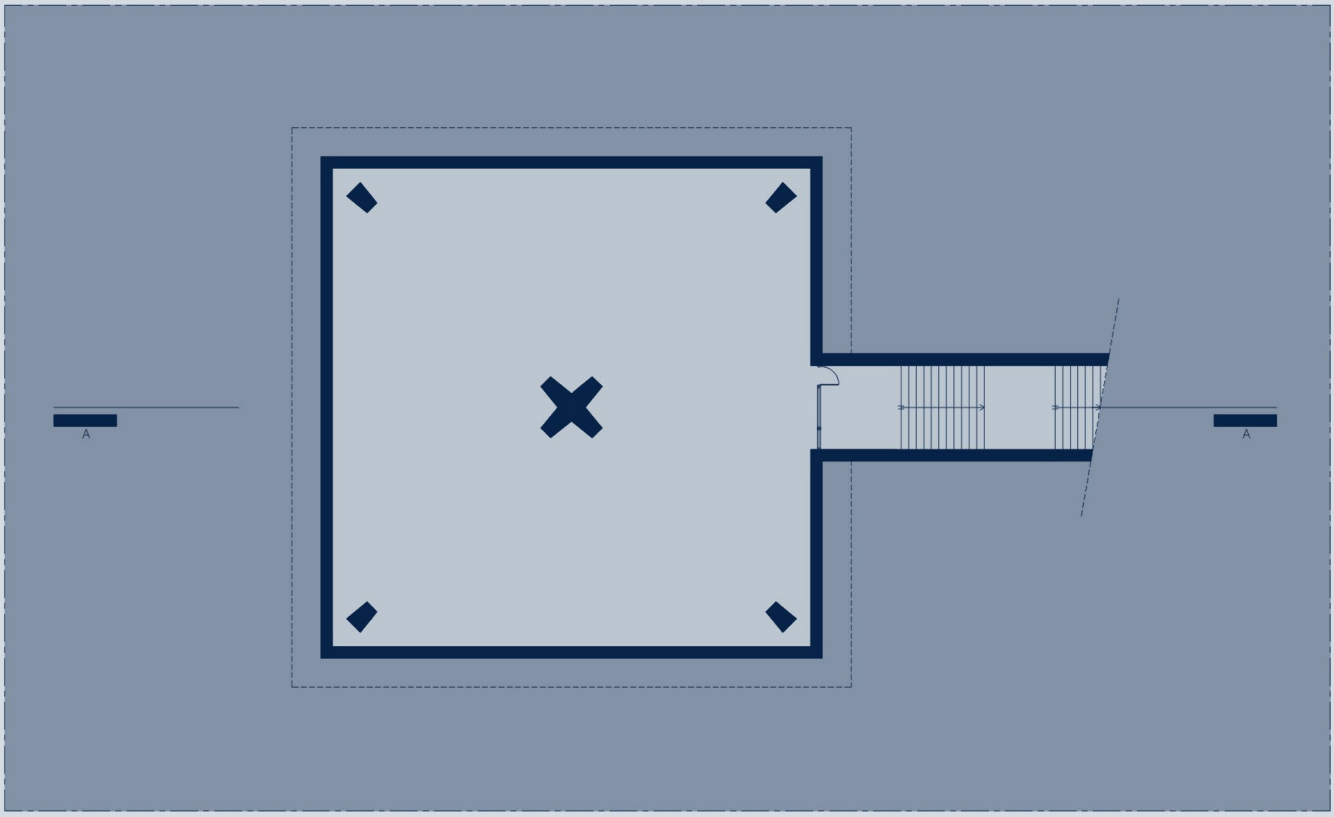


KEY PLAN

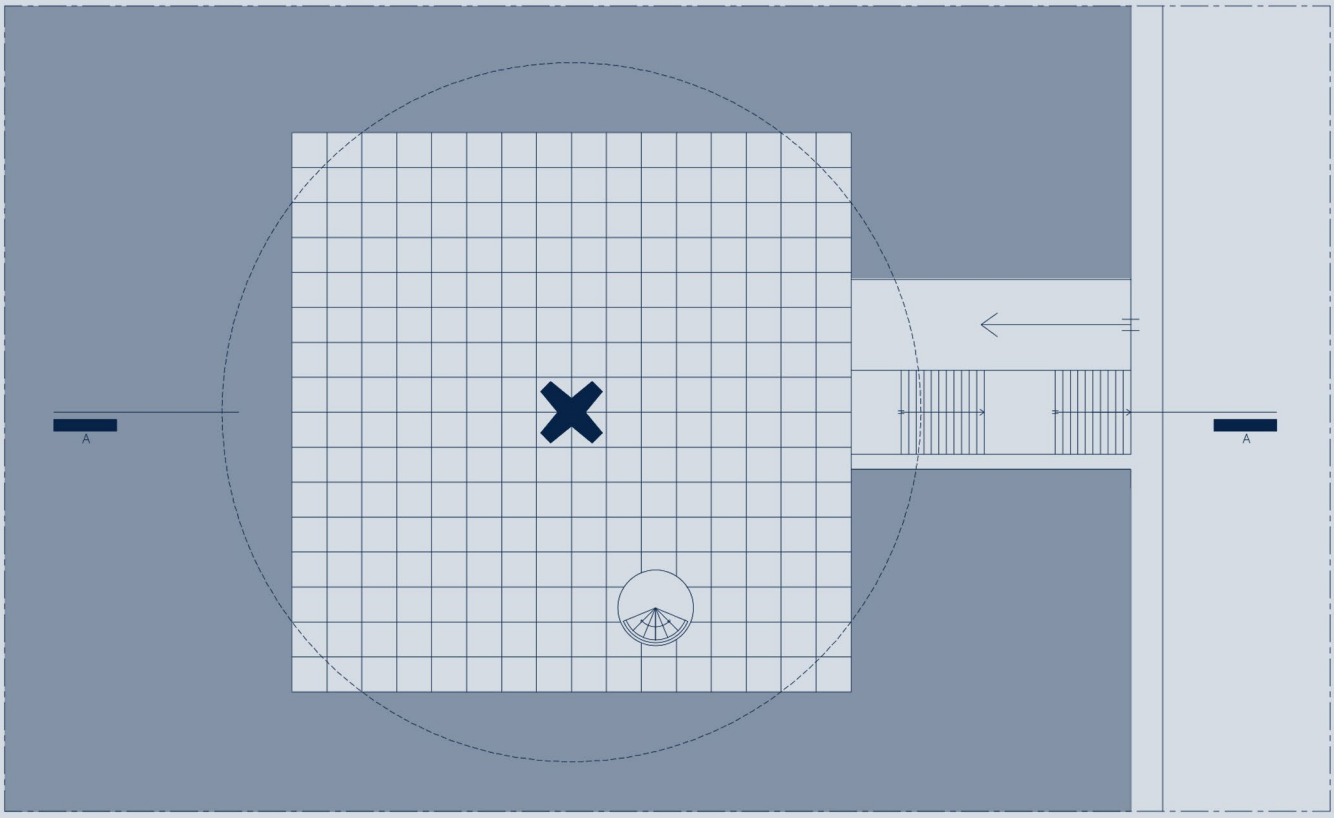
Gross Area:
800 m²

Original Function:
Space museum

Current Function:
Abandonned

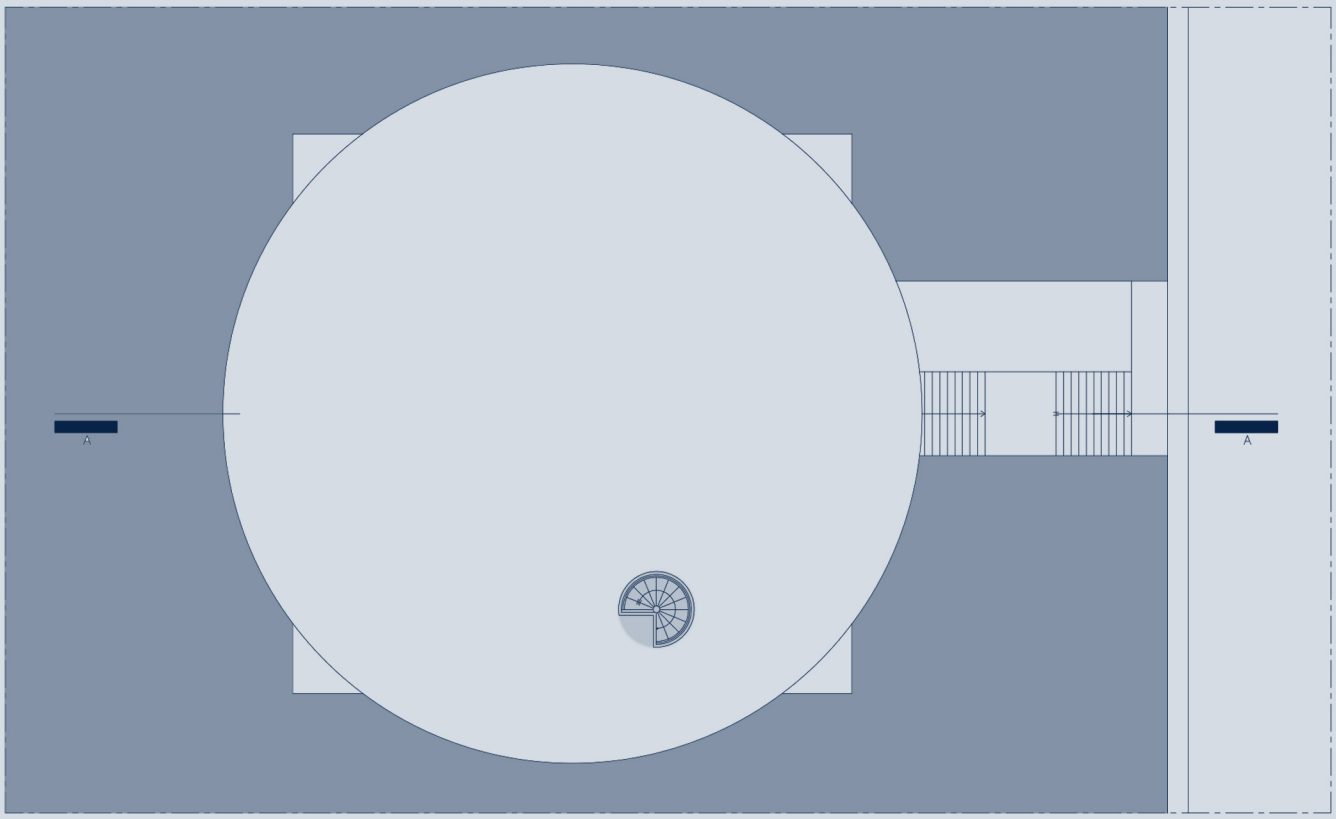


Space Museum, Underground Floor Plan

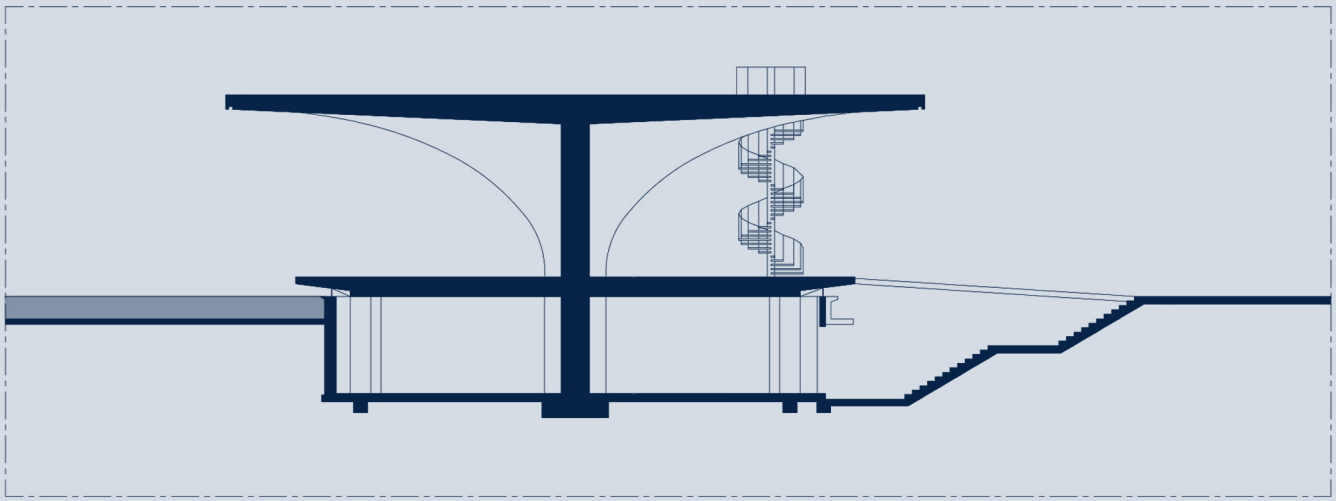


Space Museum, Ground Floor Plan / Roof

0 1 10m



Hellipad, Top of Roof Plan



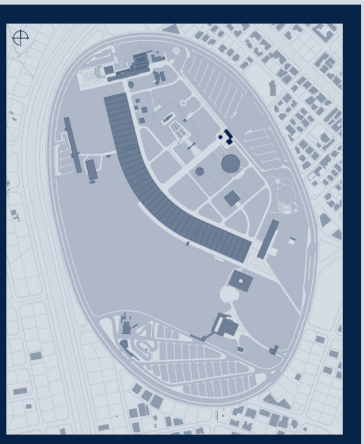
Space Museum, Section A

Manège and Secondary Entrance Structure

The Manège, together with its Annex (currently functioning as the secondary Ticket/Guard Booth) and the Secondary Entrance Structure, are situated directly opposite the Open-Air Theatre, positioned along the main pedestrian axis leading toward the Grand Cover. Originally conceived as a children's playground, the Manège shows Niemeyer's playful engagement with geometric form. The structure is composed of cast-in-place reinforced concrete shaped into a pyramidal volume with a pronounced portal opening for natural ventilation. The design recalls a cone or tipi-like form, lending the building a symbolic and sculptural presence despite its modest scale. To the north of the main structure, a set of concrete walls and circular gravel play zones once complemented the playground setting; these were later removed during the post-war period. The adjacent Annex, located across from the Manège, originally contained restrooms and a small gathering space to support the playground. Today, it serves as a Ticket/Guard Booth associated with the Secondary Entrance. The Secondary Entrance Structure, situated along the same axis, was added in the 1980s. Despite not belonging to Niemeyer's original plan, it maintains architectural coherence with the RKIF complex. The entrance is defined by a rectangular flat roof supported by slender vertical columns and surrounded by transparent screens, forming an ordered gateway to the Fair.

State of conservation

The Manège survives in largely intact condition, though minor concrete deterioration and soot deposits are visible on interior surfaces. Evidence of prior patch repairs is discernible at specific locations. The Annex is structurally sound but has coating deterioration and surface degradation from exposure. The Secondary Entrance displays fissures, concrete deterioration, and rusted steel, particularly along the columns and roof slab.

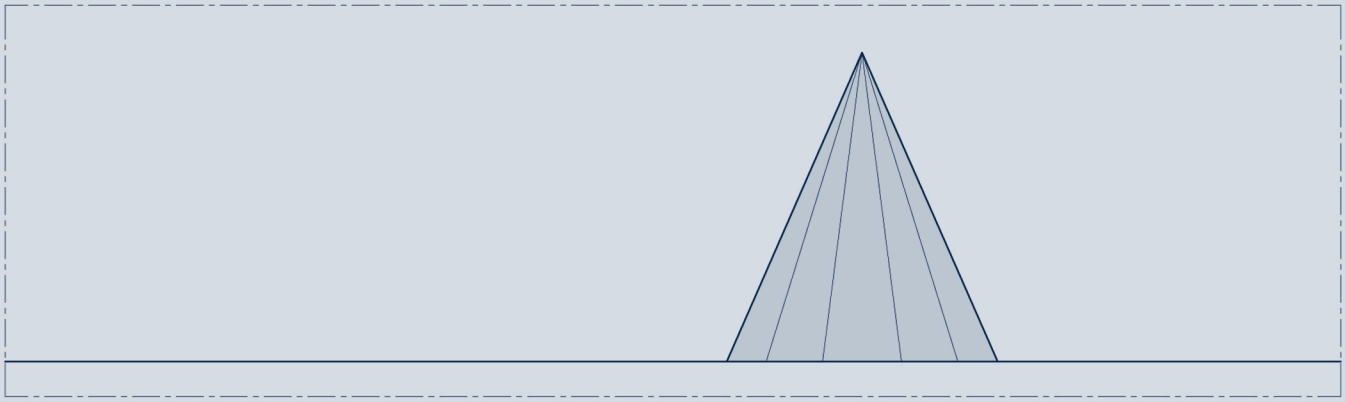


KEY PLAN

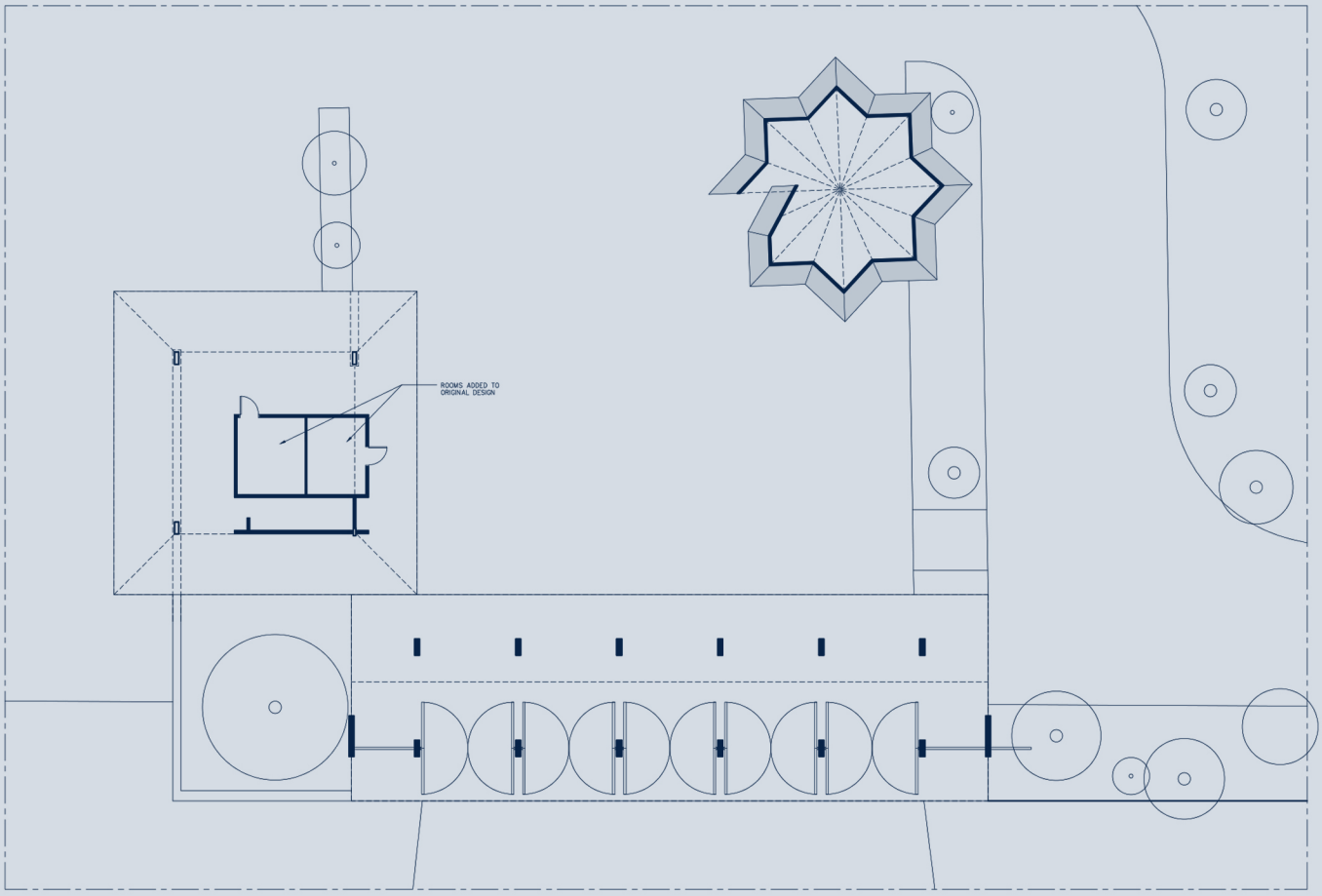
Gross Area:
325 m²

Original Function:
Manege/
Gate

Current Function:
Abandonned



Manege, North East Elavation



Ground Floor Plan

Figure 57. *The Helipad on top of the underground Space Museum, looking west.*

Figure 58. *The Manège (right) and the Secondary Entrance Structure (left) with the Manège Annex in the center as seen from the Water Tower, looking east.*

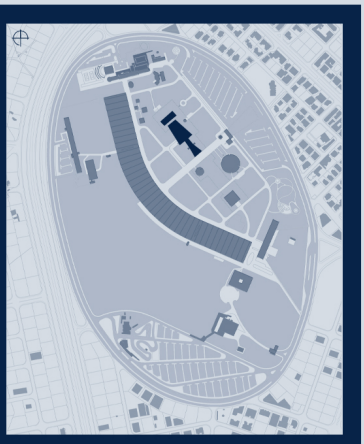
Open-Air Theatre

The Open-Air Theatre (OAT) stands as one of the most emblematic structures within the RKIF and remains largely unaltered in both its architectural form and structural integrity since its completion. Designed to accommodate outdoor theatrical performances, the complex also includes a Bowling Alley and a Boxing Ring located beneath the amphitheater seating, reflecting Niemeyer's vision for multi functional and socially inclusive spaces.

Access to the theatre's outdoor seating is choreographed through a rising ramp and bridge that pass beneath a monumental 33-meter-high arch, which serves as both a gateway and a sculptural landmark. The stage platform, separated from the seating area by a reflecting pool, appears to float on water, reinforcing the theatricality of the experience. The concrete bleachers, however, were replaced during later interventions, altering the original layout and increasing the seating capacity by modifying the central aisle.

State of conservation

Despite its enduring monumentality, the Open-Air Theatre shows localized deterioration typical of exposed reinforced concrete. Areas of the arch, seating, and bridge have been repainted, masking underlying deterioration. Cracks, delamination, and water staining are visible, particularly on the underside of the stage roof, while spalled concrete and corroded reinforcement are present in several areas. A major soffit collapse has been recorded below the theatre level, with additional incipient spalling along the underside of the bleachers and arch structure. These conditions indicate the urgent need for structural stabilization and moisture control, ensuring the long-term preservation of one of Niemeyer's most striking architectural compositions in Tripoli.

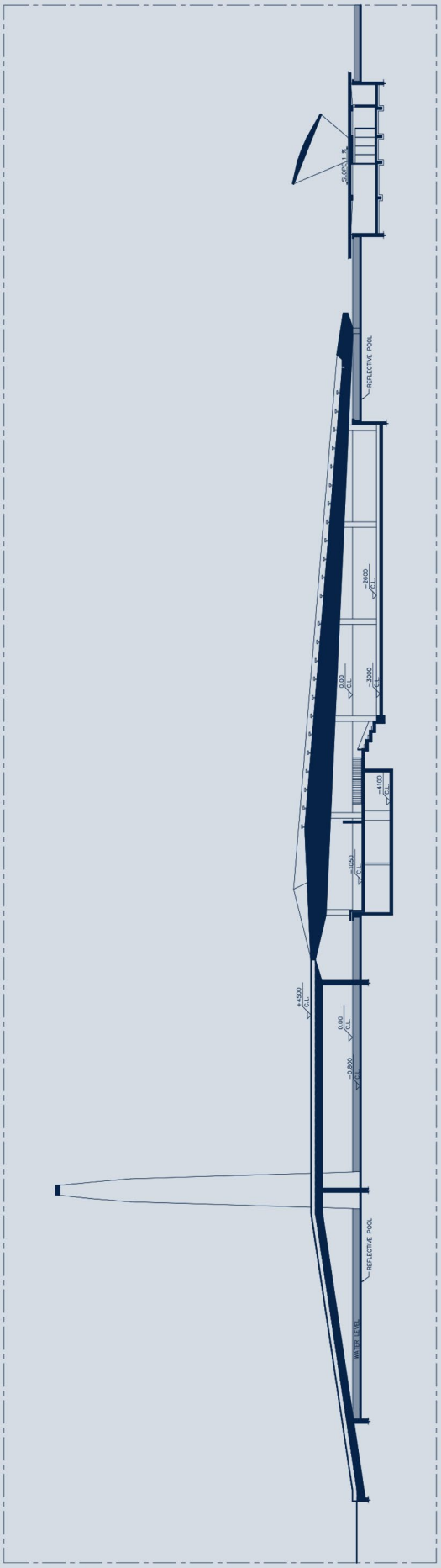


KEY PLAN

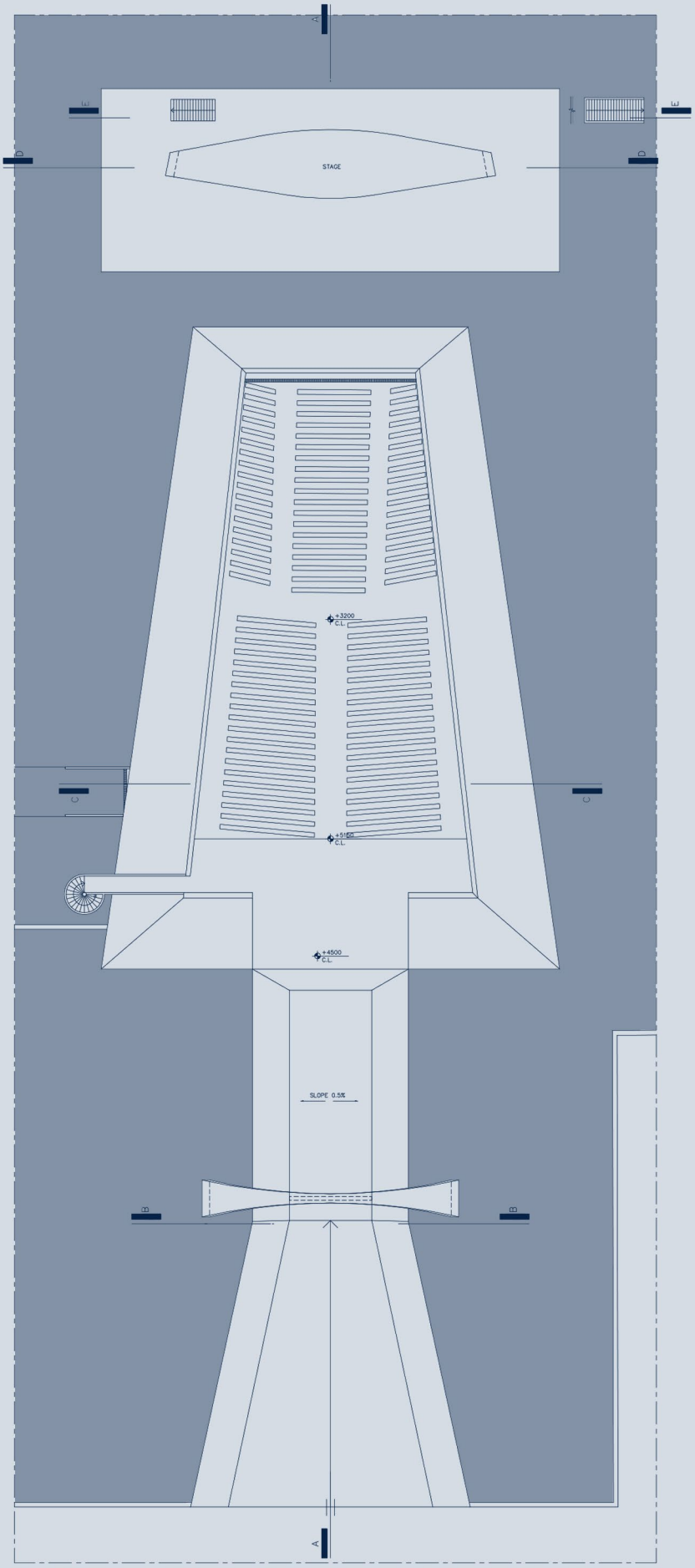
Gross Area:
50000 m²

Original Function:
Occasionally used but stopped being used in 2016 due to collapse

Current Function:
Abandonned

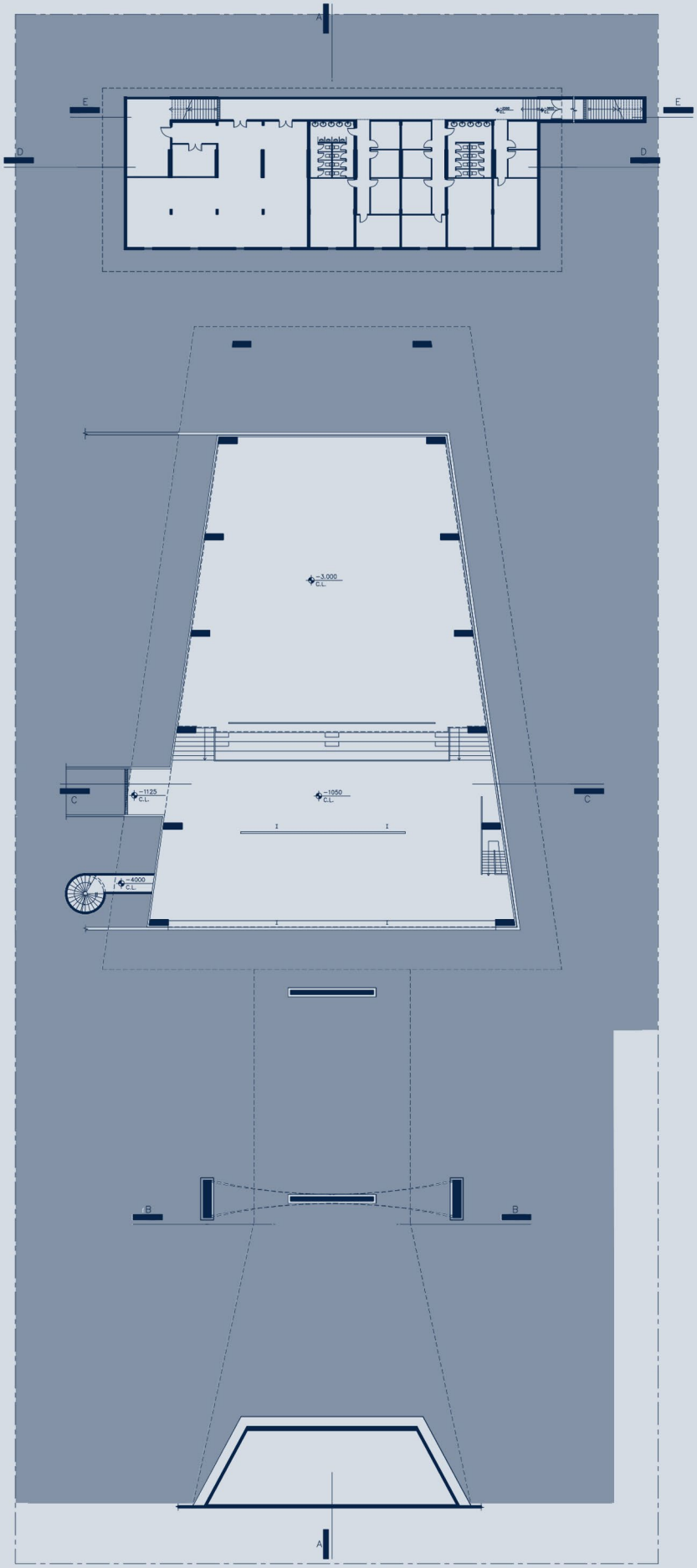


OAT, Section A



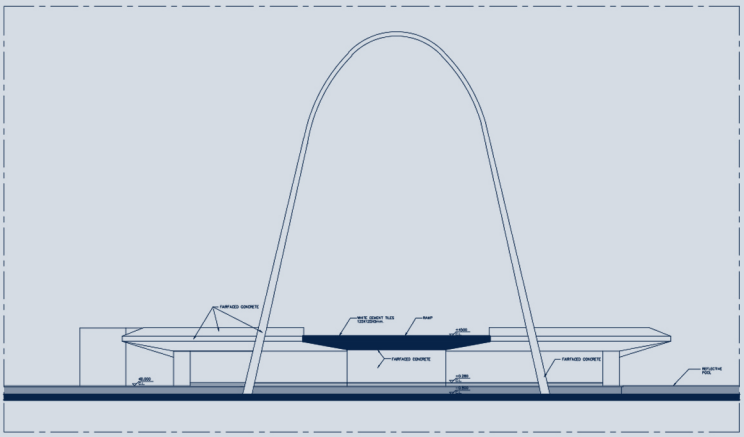
OAT, Ground Floor Plan

01 20m

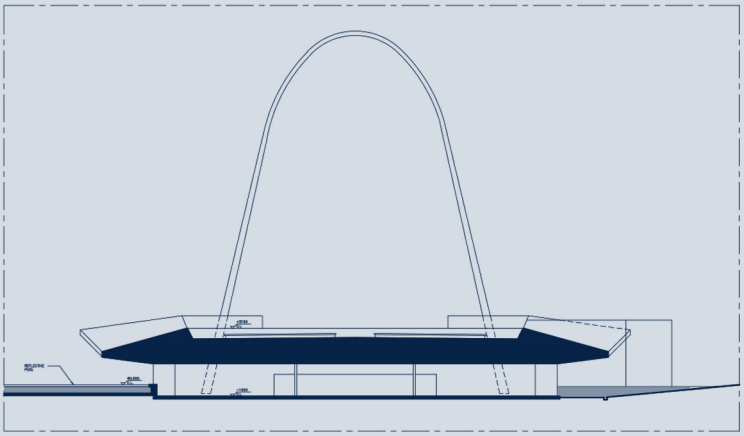


OAT, Underground Floor Plan

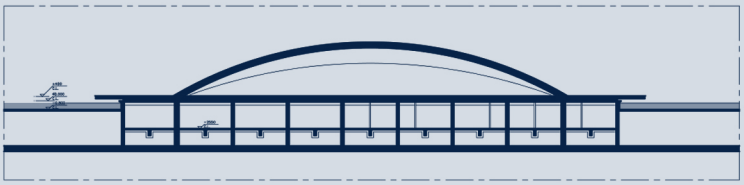
01 20m



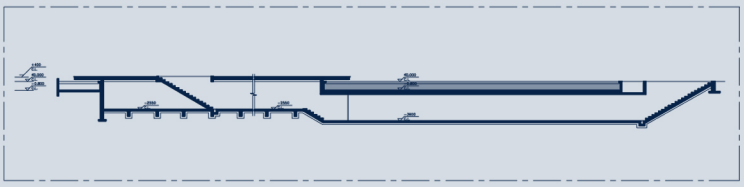
OAT, Section B



OAT, Section C



OAT, Section D



OAT, Section E

01 20m

Figure 59. *Photo of the OAT taken from its stage.*

Figure 60. *Photo of the collapsing ceiling of the underside of the OAT.*

Similar Structure

Sambódromo (Passarela do Samba), Rio de Janeiro

Location: Marquês de Sapucaí Avenue, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Year of construction: 1984
Architect: Oscar Niemeyer

Created as a dedicated parade ground for Rio's annual Carnival, inaugurated in time for the 1984 Carnival. The project was commissioned by Rio's state government as part of a broader effort to provide infrastructure for cultural events and public education. It addressed the need for a permanent facility to host the world-famous Carnival samba school parades, which were previously held on temporary stands. **Similar to the open-air theatre** in design but unique in its dual purpose: the Sambódromo was used after the Carnival season, to house public schools, thus integrating an expensive event-space into the fabric of daily urban life. This multi-use social aspect was emblematic of early-1980s Brazil, a time of re-democratization, when public architecture often aimed to serve populist and educational goals in addition to its primary function.
An open-air linear stadium, consisting of a central parade avenue flanked by concrete spectator stands. The design is straightforward and modular, with grandstands (seating tens of thousands) divided into sectors and built of repetitive precast concrete components for speed of construction (Segre, 2010).

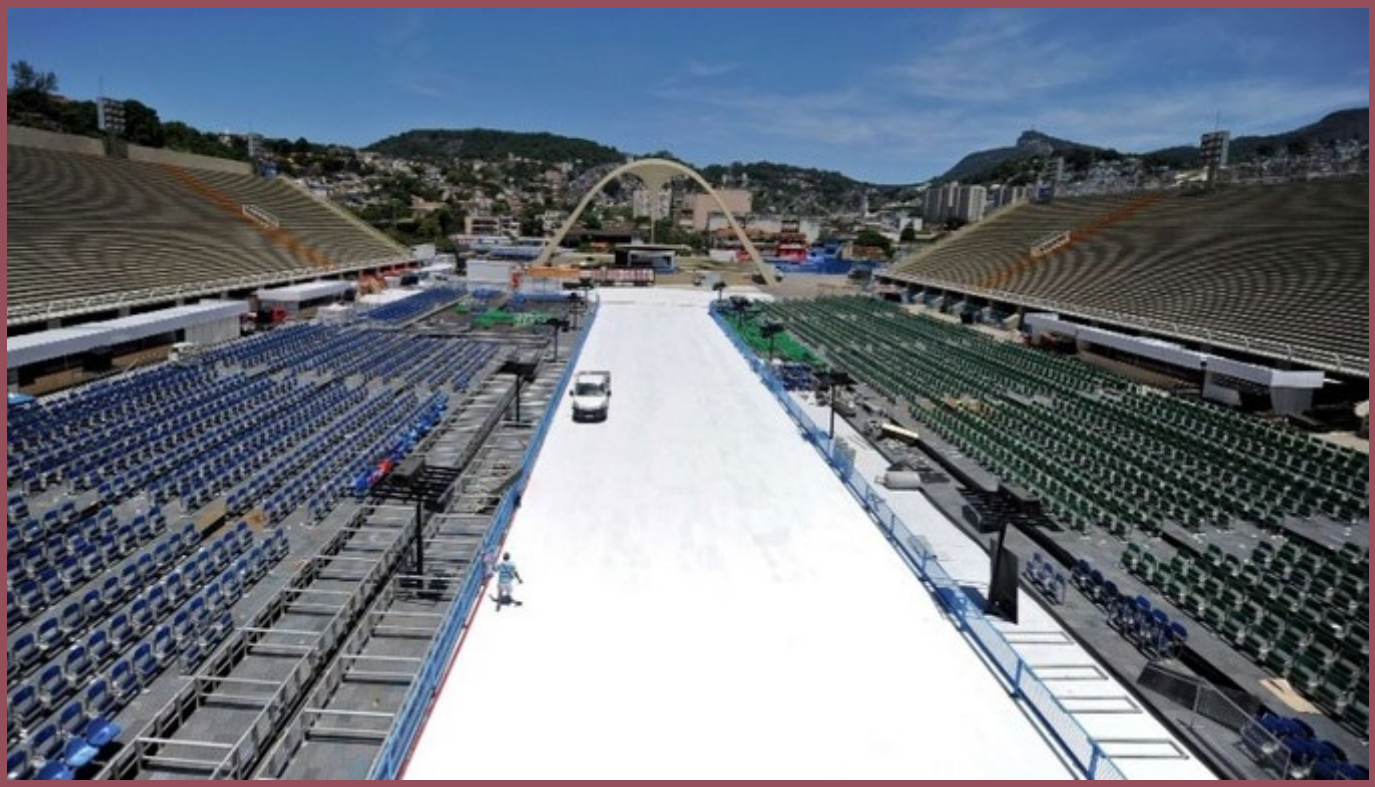


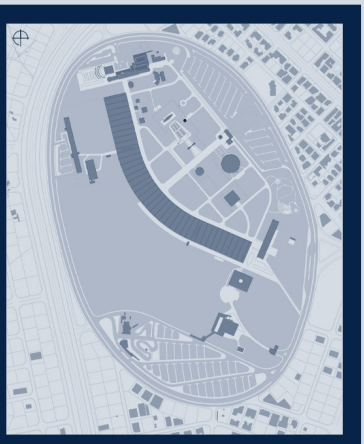
Figure 61. *Sambódromo.*

Water Tower and Restaurant

The Water Tower, also referred to as the Elevated Water Tank, stands next to the Open-Air Theatre, surrounded by a reflecting pool. As a watchtower, the structure offers commanding views over the theatre, the surrounding fairground and the city. Its design, characterized by vertical slot-like openings, reinterprets the forms of medieval towers and fortifications, elements deeply rooted in Tripoli's architectural heritage. Niemeyer designed the upper levels. From the uppermost terrace, visitors were meant to enjoy panoramic views of the Fairground, including the Open-Air Theatre and its adjoining reflecting pools. This multi-purpose configuration, combining infrastructure and leisure, demonstrates Niemeyer's ingenuity in merging utility, architecture, and landscape experience. The Water Tower thus operates not only as an infrastructural element but also as a symbolic observatory, embodying the architect's belief in uniting form, function, and experience.

State of conservation

The structure retains much of its original interior finishes, including white glazed ceramic tiles in the kitchen and service areas, marble flooring in the restaurant lobby, and traces of green linoleum in the dining area. Evidence of Civil War shelling can still be seen on its surfaces. Although the concrete structure has not been significantly altered, it now exhibits spalling, water infiltration, and corrosion of reinforcement on both interior and exterior faces, particularly along the circular staircase. **It's central columns is starting to collapse which makes the tower damaged irreversibly and very dangerously accessible.**

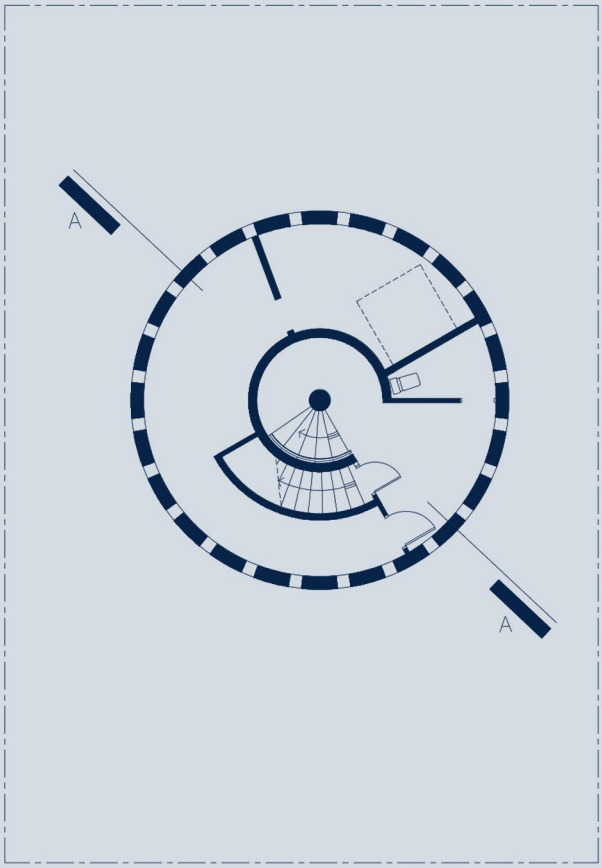


KEY PLAN

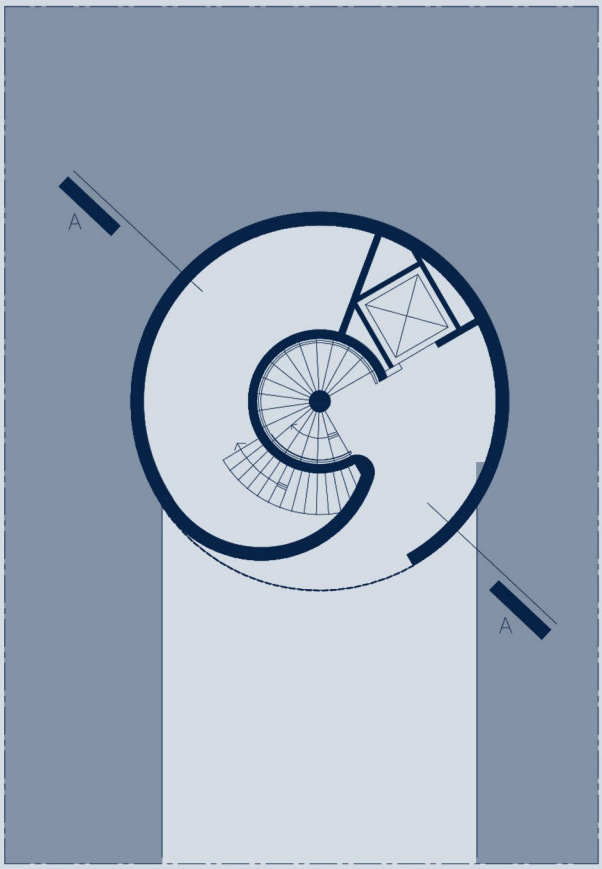
Gross Area:
420 m²

Original Function:
Restaurant
& panoramic view

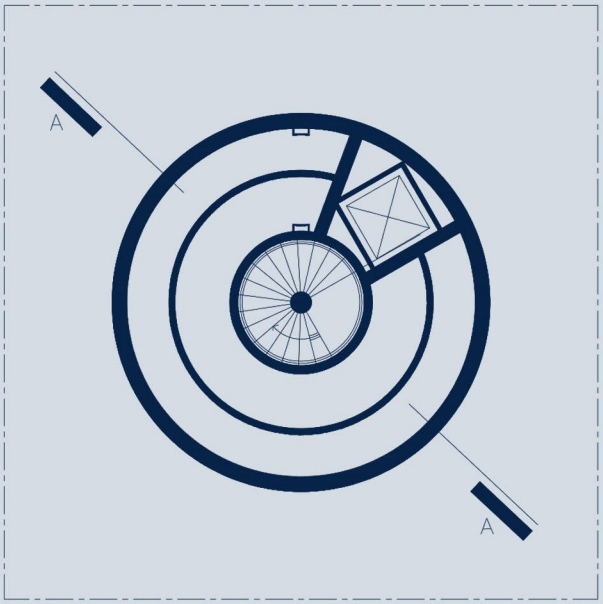
Current Function:
Abandonned



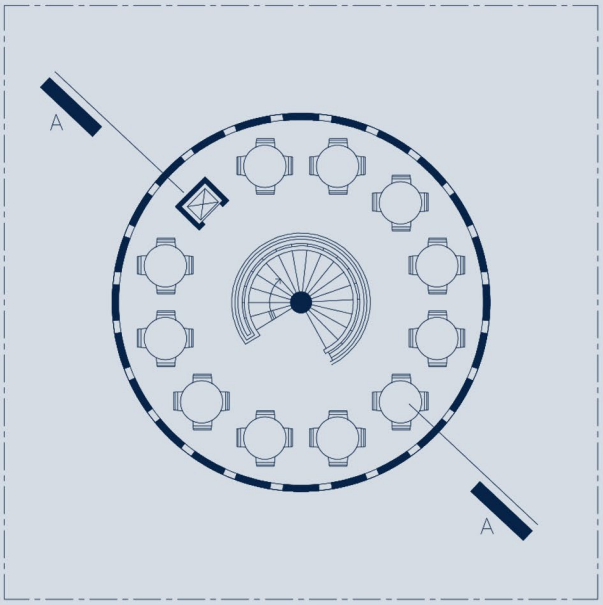
Water Tower, Underground Floor Plan



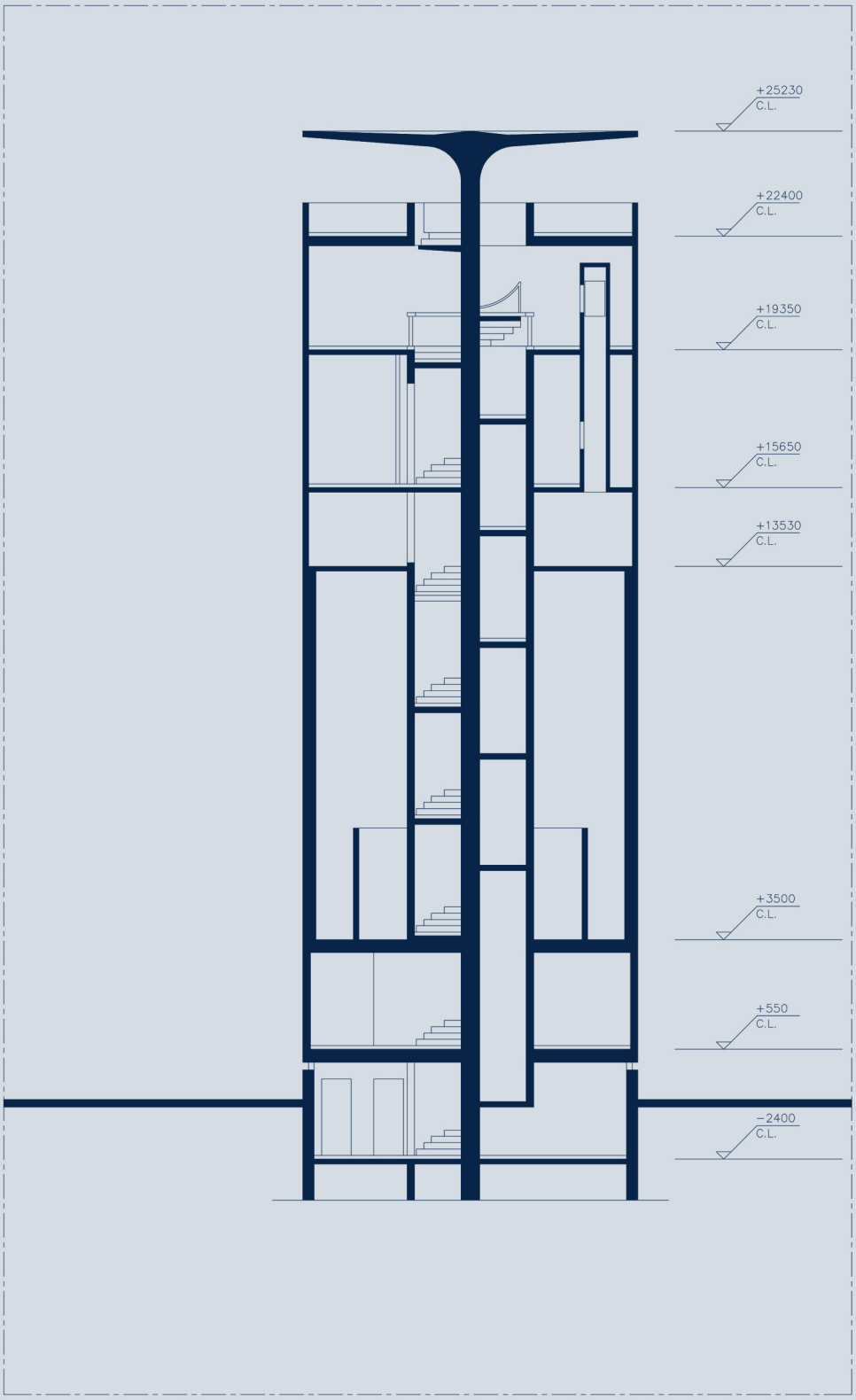
Water Tower, Ground Floor Plan



Water Tower, First Floor Plan

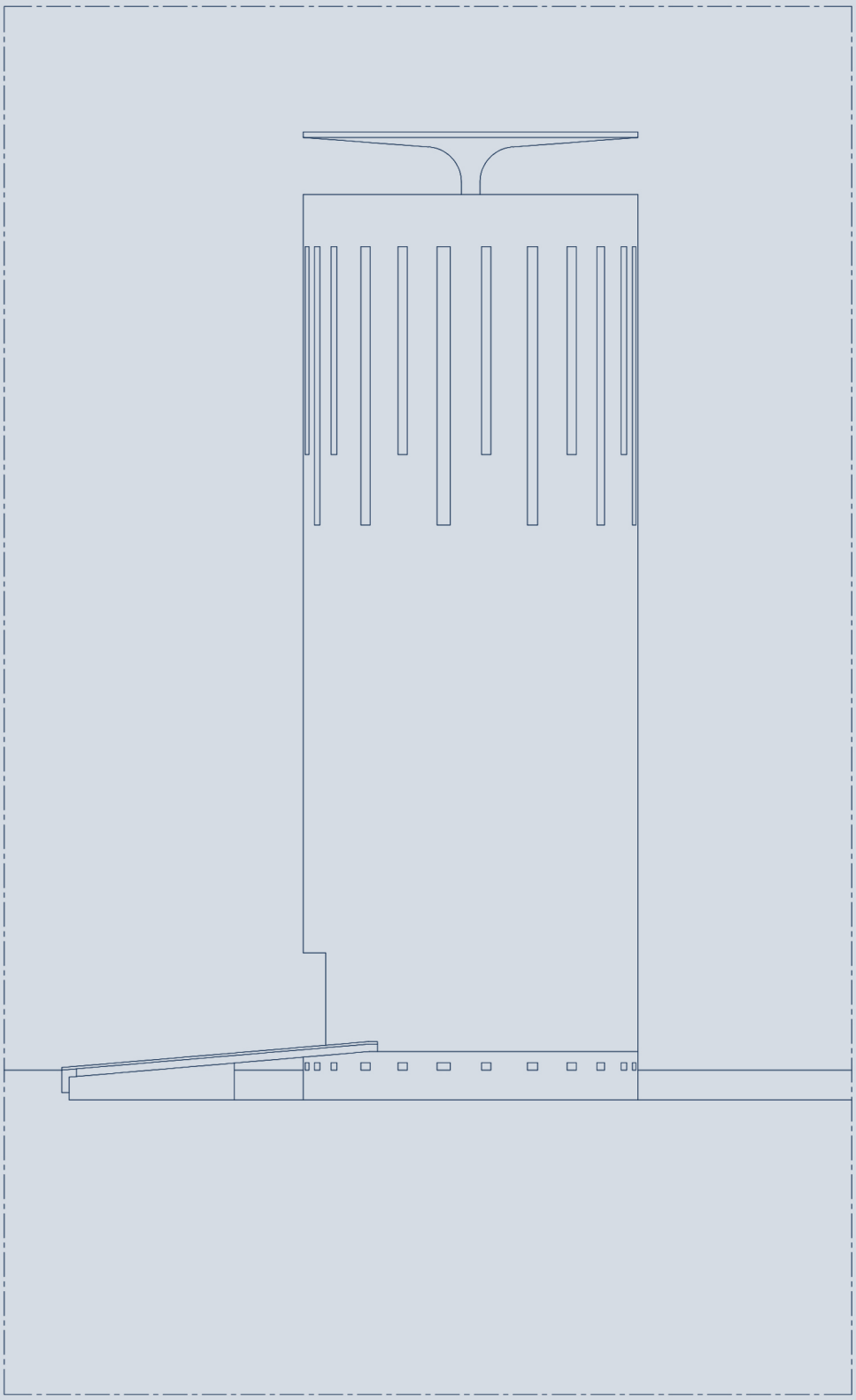


Water Tower, Third Floor Plan



Water Tower, Section A

0 1 10m



Water Tower, South Elevation

0 1 10m

Figure 62. *Interior photograph of the 3rd level of the tower (restaurant). Notice the deterioration of the central column.*

Figure 63. *Main Facade of the tower.*

Customs, Firehouse and Administration

The Administration Building was intended to house offices, administrative services, and amenity spaces, including a restaurant, kitchen, and bathrooms. The building spans a ground floor and first basement, with an open layout that facilitates flexibility, separated only by solid walls enclosing the service areas.

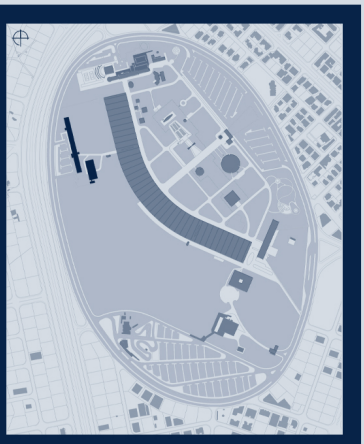
State of conservation

The building's rectilinear geometry and play of light and shadow reflect Niemeyer's mastery of proportion and rhythm. However, exposure and neglect have resulted in the deterioration of the façade panels, water infiltration, and interior stripping of finishes. Flooding frequently affects the basement level. Bullet holes on the west façade, and graffiti on the interior walls dating to the Civil War period, bear witness to the site's layered history, possibly evidence of target practice or executions.

The Customs–Firehouse–Depots Building, now in an advanced state of decay, was designed to facilitate goods distribution and firefighting services across the Fairground. The single-story rectangular structure is divided into four zones: customs administration, customs depots, firefighters' quarters, and the exterior parabolic firetruck shelter, cast in reinforced concrete.

State of conservation

Today, the Customs–Firehouse–Depots Building survives as a structural shell, its interior and exterior open to the elements. Vegetation has overtaken large portions of it, accelerating material degradation. Despite the absence of original finishes and fittings, the volumetric integrity of the building remains as the original, continuing to reflect Niemeyer's conceptual approach to modular service structures. The concrete envelope shows localized damage, spalling, and surface erosion, though no major structural instability has been identified.



KEY PLAN

Gross Area:
7285 m^2

Original Function:
Administration and auxiliary services

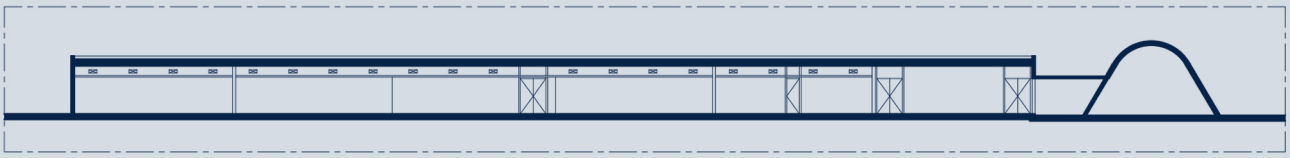
Current Function:
Abandonned

East Elevation

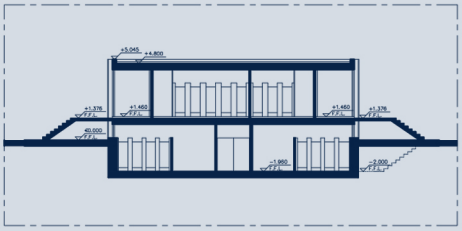
East Elevation

Ground Floor Plan

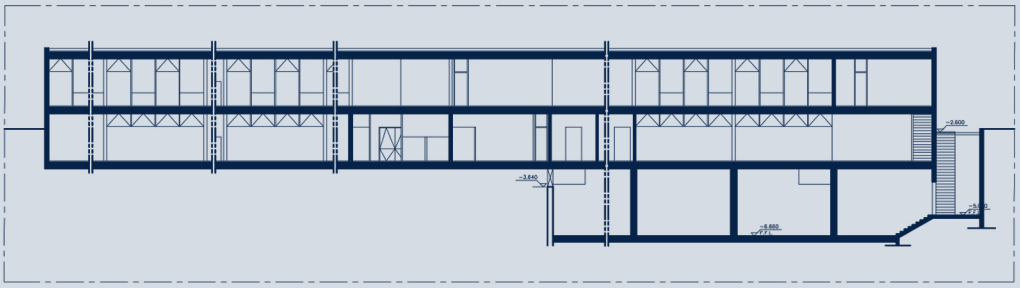
0 20m



Section A



Section B



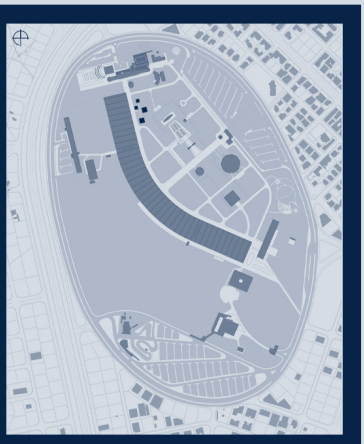
Section A

Bars

The Bars are situated next to the Grand Cover and opposite the Open-Air Theatre, within the landscaped area that separates the primary structures of the Fairground. Niemeyer built an ensemble of four pavilion-like structures as an element of the RKIF leisure network, intended to enhance the bigger monumental edifices by a series of smaller, human-scaled interventions. The Bars were designed as auxiliary service areas for public assemblies and events at the Fair, providing refreshment zones integrated with the open-air circulation system. The four pavilions are structurally intact today, but minor modifications have taken place over time. Their central cores, initially intended for kitchen usage in three units and restroom facilities in one, have remnants of white glazed ceramic tiles and surface coatings in diverse hues from multiple repainting efforts. The Bars serve as distinct architectural follies within the landscape, enhancing the experiential aspect of the RKIF. Their diminutive stature and smart placement enable them to function as both visual focal points and resting spots, framing vistas throughout the Fairground. The pedestrian walkways leading to them were deliberately crafted to evoke a sense of discovery, supporting Niemeyer's methodology of blending massive and intimate proportions across the complex.

State of conservation

The Bars rank among the most well-preserved edifices inside the RKIF. The fair-faced concrete surfaces demonstrate minimal deterioration, predominantly confined to mild spalling and localized cracking.

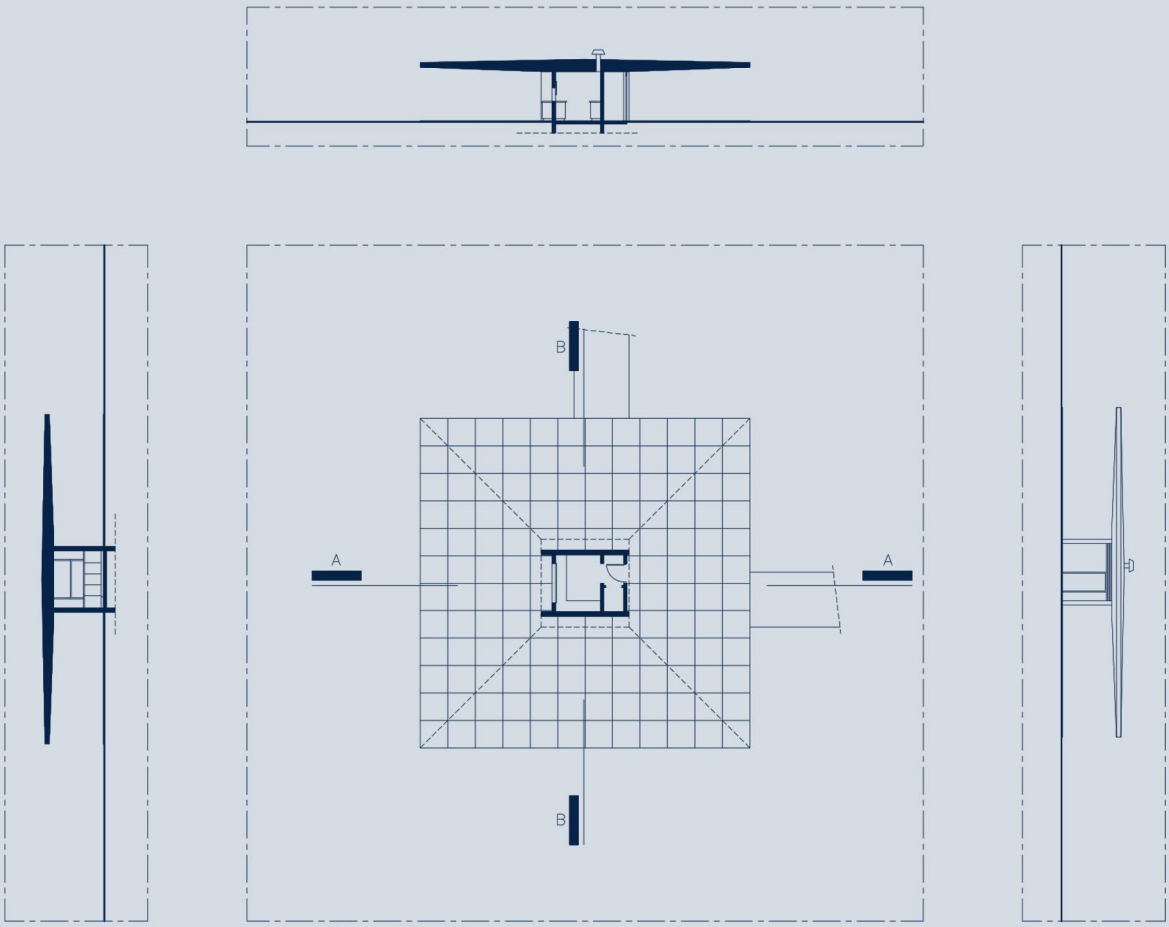


KEY PLAN

Gross Area:
225 m²

Original Function:
Bars

Current Function:
Abandonned



Bars, Ground Floor Plan

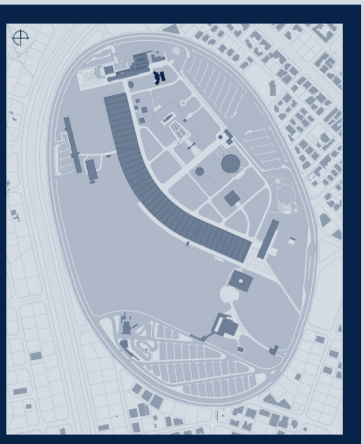
0 1 20m

Housing Museum

Characterized by its elliptical plan, the structure unfolds through curvilinear spiraling walls that create a continuous, fluid spatial sequence. Constructed in reinforced concrete, the building's interior and exterior surfaces once displayed the texture of the wooden formwork, though these have since been painted over, concealing their original tactile quality.
The interior flooring, originally finished in green linoleum, was designed to enhance the visitor's perception of flow and movement, allowing for unrestricted circulation throughout the space.

State of conservation

The Housing Museum remains preserved due to its ongoing utilization over time. However, its utilization as a storage place by the no longer operating Quality Inn hotel should be reevaluated to align more closely with its designated use as an exhibition venue.



KEY PLAN

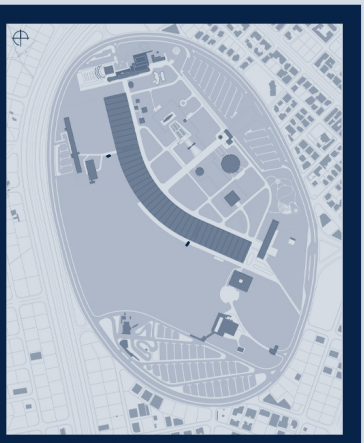
Gross Area:
450 m²

Original Function:
Residence prototype

Current Function:
Abandonned

Toilets

The two restroom facilities are located behind the Grand Cover. These were initially intended as auxiliary areas that might be employed throughout the Fair's activities. The outside walls of the structures are curved at both ends and exhibit an overall circular shape in plan view. The cast-in-place concrete structures exhibit curved forms that harmonize with the adjacent curved edifices of the Fairground. Like the Bars, the external framework of the Restrooms is mostly preserved, with visible cast-in-place board-formed concrete.
However, the interior fixtures are no longer present.

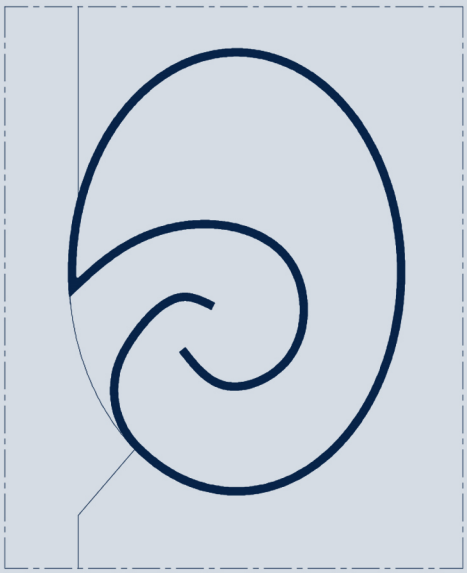


KEY PLAN

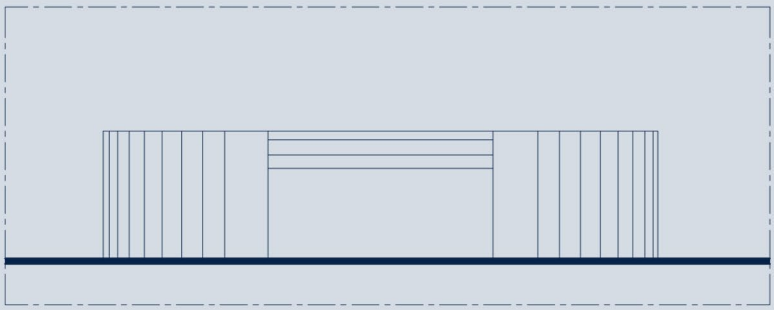
Gross Area:
2 x 50 m²

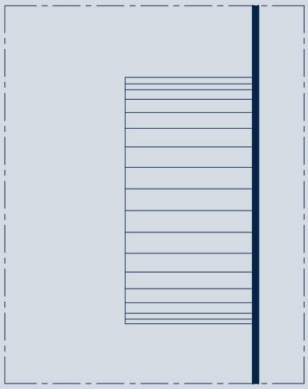
Original Function:
Toilets

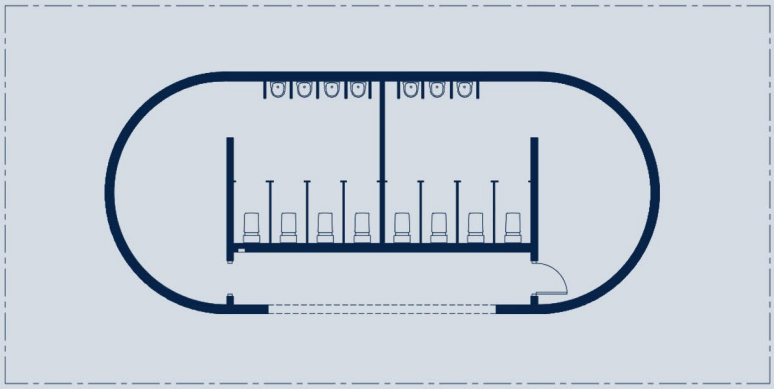
Current Function:
Abandonned



Housing Museum, Ground Floor Plan







Toilets, Ground Floor Plan

Model Residence

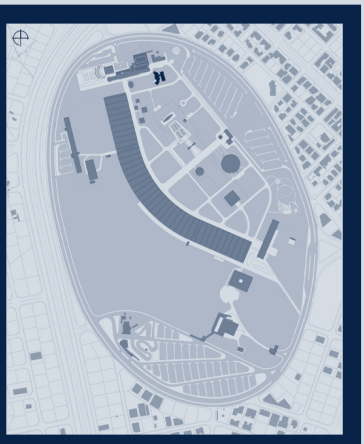
The Model Residence building comprises a single-level reinforced concrete structure, featuring open roof spaces, gardens, and an outdoor pool. Oral history indicates that it was first designed for the administrative director of the Fair, encompassing living and sleeping accommodations along with a service area. The living room was a rectangular space with glass walls, topped by a cantilevered, amoeba-shaped roof.

The concrete roof consists of a sequence of concrete joists that frame into beams, which are supported by concrete columns. The joists are encased with a slender slab that integrates into the lower portion of the joists. The perimeter of the roof features an architectural board-formed finish.

The building's face is recessed from the roof's edge, accompanied by stone-clad walls that project outward. Sections of the roof extend beyond the external columns in a cantilevered manner.

State of conservation

Due to its exposure to the weather, vegetation has proliferated in various sections, both around the exterior and throughout most of the inside, as a result of neglect. The building is currently unoccupied, and similar to most concrete edifices within the Fair complex, the Model Residence displays degradation of the concrete exposed to the elements, exacerbated by leaky roof sections. Embedded reinforcing steel in much of the concrete exhibits corrosion, and several parts have spalled and detached from the ceiling. All loose and unstable sections of concrete must be eliminated.

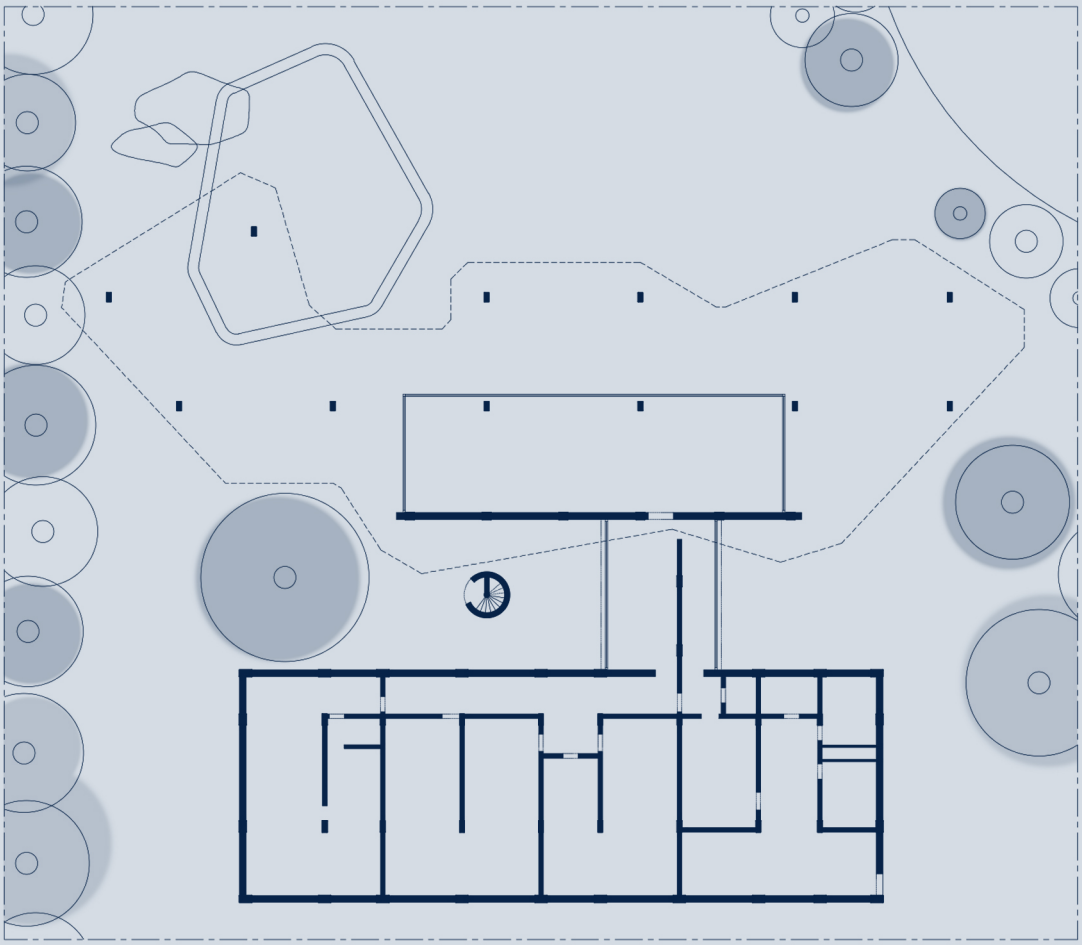


KEY PLAN

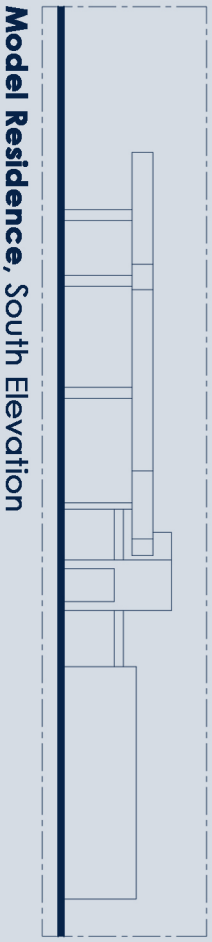
Gross Area:
450 m²

Original Function:
Residence prototype

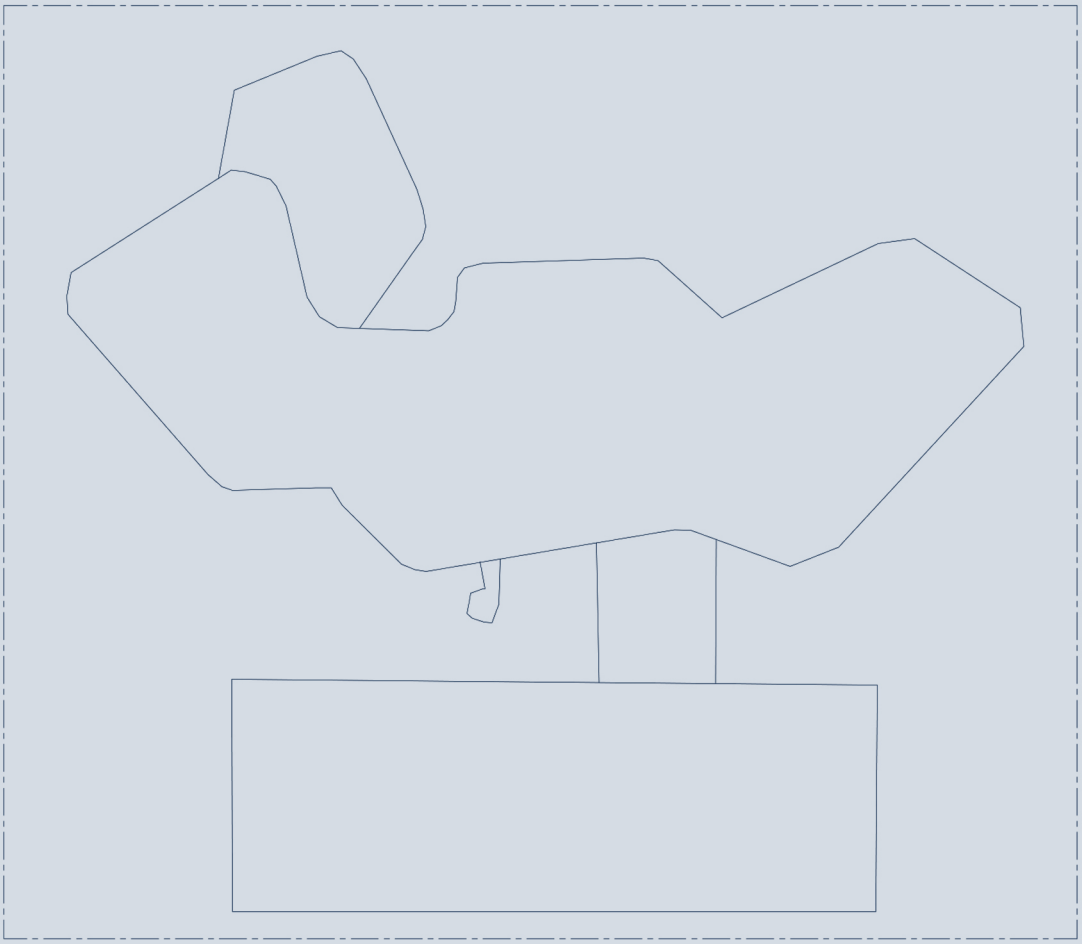
Current Function:
Abandonned



Model Residence, Ground Floor Plan



Model Residence, South Elevation



Model Residence, Top of Roof Floor Plan

0 1 20m

Similar Structure

Casa das Canoas, Rio de Janeiro

Location: Estrada das Canoas, São Conrado, Rio de Janeiro,
Brazil Year of construction: 1953
Architect: Oscar Niemeyer

Designed similarly to the Model Residence of the RKIF, Casa das Canoas served as Niemeyer's own residence.
The house was a personal project set in a secluded, forested site on the outskirts of Rio, reflecting the era's fascination with integrating modern architecture into lush tropical landscapes. Culturally, Casa das Canoas became emblematic of the Carioca (Rio) approach to modernism: free-flowing forms, indoor-outdoor living, and harmony with nature. Niemeyer himself noted that this project allowed him to explore a more organic architecture, in contrast to the rigid functionalism then dominant internationally.
A celebrated example of organic modern architecture, gracefully melding a Modernist vocabulary with the irregular topography of its site. The house is in essence designed around a rock, (same for the residence in RKIF where the rock is transported from elsewhere) which also abuts an outdoor swimming pool, establishing a direct dialogue between man-made structure and natural landscape.
Casa das Canoas is widely acclaimed for its sculptural quality and integration with nature the curving roof and free-form plan form a poetic "conversation" with the organic forms of the giant rock, surrounding trees, and the slope itself. Niemeyer demonstrated here that modern architecture could be sensual and context-sensitive: the house achieves a fusion of the rational and the organic, often cited as one of the most beautiful modern residences in the world for its innovative relationship between architecture and environment (Curtis, 1994).

Figure 64. *Casa Das Canoas.*

04.3 Governance, Ownership, and Stakeholders

Understanding the institutional and governance framework of the Rachid Karame International Fair is essential for assessing its present condition and identifying the constraints and opportunities for future intervention. The Fair is not only a modern architectural landmark but also a public institution embedded within layers of state oversight, heritage regulation, and municipal interests. This section examines the ownership structure, governance hierarchy, and key stakeholders currently influencing the Fair's management and potential adaptive reuse.

The Rachid Karame International Fair in Tripoli is a **publicly owned national property.** The site was originally created through state expropriation measures for public benefit, whereby **the Lebanese government declared the project a public utility and acquired the necessary lands in 1961 and 1968 under the oversight of the Conseil Exécutif des Grands Projets (CEGP)**, the governmental body responsible for its construction. *"The necessary adjoining plots were expropriated later in 1961 and then in 1968 by CEGP to launch the construction works."* ***It was only "in 1998, that the ownership of the expropriated lands was officially transferred to the RKIF Administration."*** (UNESCO, 2024)

Therefore, before 1998, the land belonged to the Lebanese State, administered through the CEGP; since 1998, it has been held by the RKIF Administration (UNESCO, 2024).

Institutionally, RKIF functions as an independent public institution. Its administrative identity was defined early on through Decree no. 6247 (1961), which *"stipulated the creation of a public institution called 'the Permanent Tripoli Fair Administration' that had a civil status to manage and exploit the Fair." (UNESCO, 2024)*. **This status means that RKIF is neither municipal nor private: it is a state public body with managerial autonomy, though still embedded in national oversight mechanisms.**

The Fair is governed through a dual structure comprising an **Administrative Board** and a **General Director.**

The Administrative Board holds decision-making authority, while the General Director takes care of the execution of ideas and decisions.

This structure is typical of Lebanese public institutions.

Historically, RKIF operated under two governmental guardianships: **the Ministry of Economy and Trade**, which oversaw operation and representation, and **the Ministry of Finance**, which supervised financial approvals.

However, Law 274/2022 restructured governance to simplify procedures, **reduce Ministry of Finance oversight**, and accelerate contract approval processes.

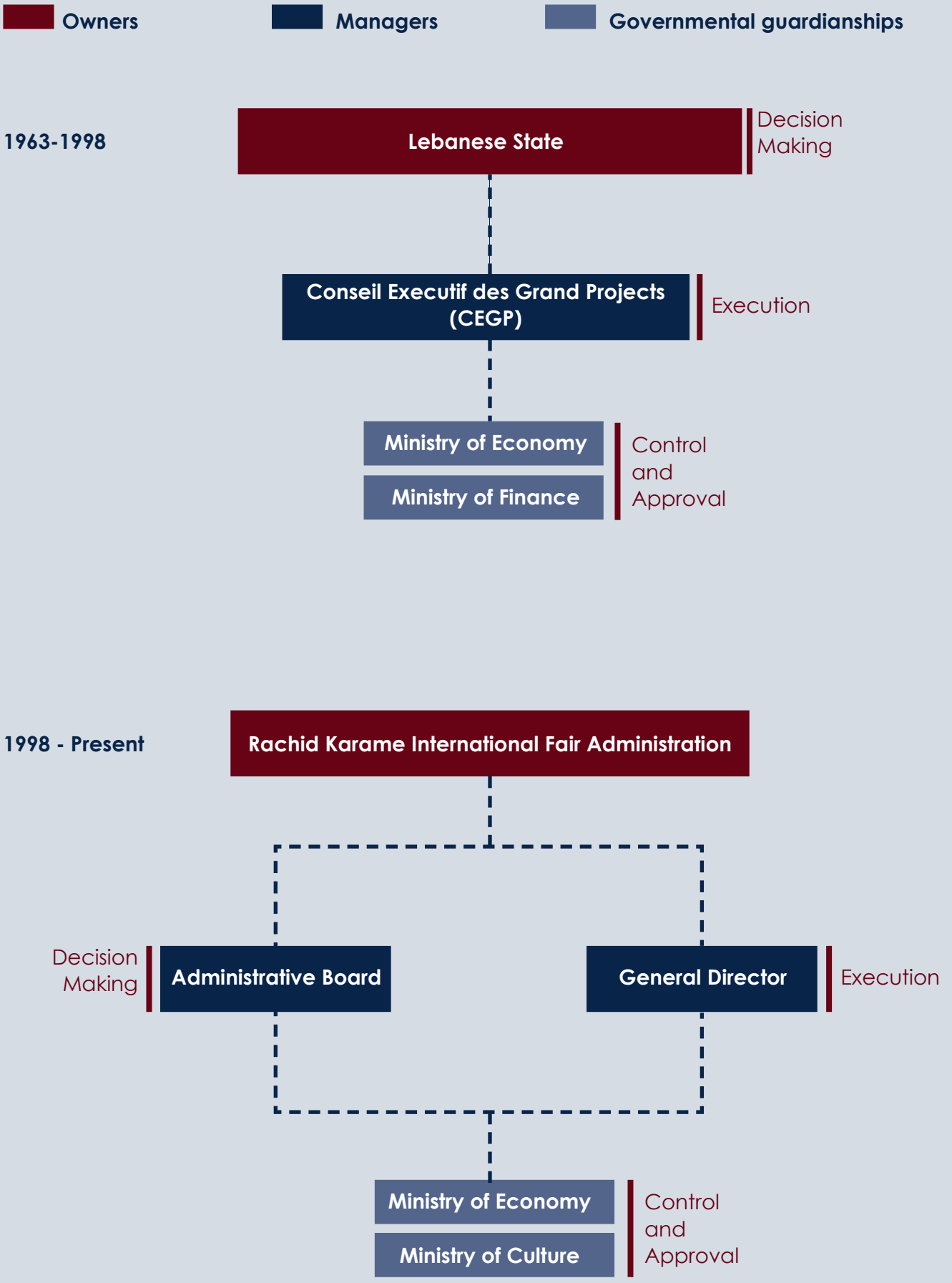
At the same time, because the Fair is now inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, **the Ministry of Culture** must approve all interventions in the core and buffer zones: "any intervention… is subject to the approval of the Ministry of Culture" (UNESCO, 2024).

This ensures that development cannot compromise architectural integrity or heritage value.

Finally, RKIF's future is shaped by a broad constellation of stakeholders, reflecting its economic, cultural, and civic importance. The Conservation Management Plan identifies active parties including: the Municipality of Tripoli, Al-Mina Municipality, the Union of Municipalities of Al-Fayhaa, the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture of Tripoli and North Lebanon, the Tripoli Special Economic Zone (TSEZ), the Order of Engineers and Architects (Tripoli branch), the Lebanese University, and local cultural and civil society organizations.

The involvement of these actors reflects a shared public expectation that the Fair should function as both a cultural landmark and a civic-economic engine for Tripoli (UNESCO, 2024).

In summary, the Rachid Karame International Fair is owned by the Lebanese State, managed through an autonomous public institution, governed at the policy level by the Ministry of Economy, and protected at the heritage level by the Ministry of Culture due to its World Heritage inscription. Its future trajectory depends on coordinated engagement among state authorities, municipal entities, economic institutions, professional bodies, and civil society stakeholders, a condition necessary to reconcile heritage conservation with development and local benefit.


Owners
Managers
Governmental guardianships
1963-1998
Lebanese State
Decision Making
Conseil Executif des Grand Projects (CEGP)
Execution
Ministry of Economy
Ministry of Finance
Control and Approval
1998 - Present
Rachid Karame International Fair Administration
Decision Making
Administrative Board
General Director
Execution
Ministry of Economy
Ministry of Culture
Control and Approval

04.4. UNESCO Guidelines for Adaptive Reuse

1. Promoting Compatible Uses
The adaptive reuse strategy chosen for the Rachid Karame International Fair should prioritize functions that are compatible with the site's heritage values. Activities such as cultural exhibitions, educational programs, recreational events, and light commercial functions, including museums, galleries, performance spaces, cafés, and botanical gardens, can contribute to revitalizing the site without compromising its architectural integrity. These function sustain public engagement without discarding its cultural value. Moreover, the variety of functions, the fair can contribute to local economic development while reinforcing its cultural significance (UNESCO, 2024).

2. Minimizing New Construction
New interventions should be minimal, carefully placed, and architecturally discreet in order to preserve the spatial clarity and horizontality that characterize Niemeyer's design.
Underground or low-impact additions minimizes visual and physical intrusion into the existing heritage fabric, they remain minimal, reversible or even invisible, prioritizing functionality without interfering with the existing architecture. This approach aligns with UNESCO's conservation principles of minimal intervention and reversibility, ensuring that new additions enhance rather than compete with the original architecture (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2019).

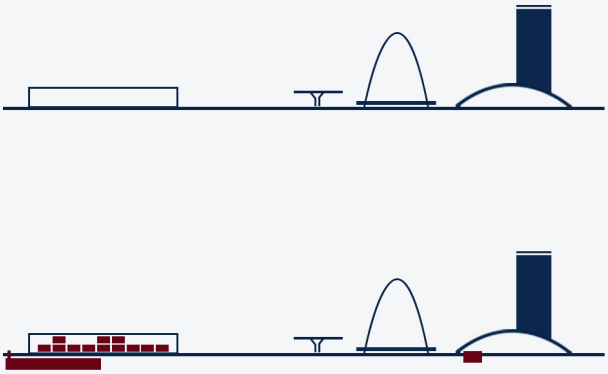
3. Encouraging Temporary and Modular Interventions
Temporary, flexible, and modular structures represent a strategic response to evolving functional requirements while maintaining the site's heritage values. Such interventions can accommodate seasonal programs, educational activities, or temporary markets without necessitating permanent alterations to the historic fabric. This strategy promotes programmatic adaptability and ensures that the Fair can respond to community needs over time, consistent with UNESCO's advocacy for sustainable and reversible reuse (UNESCO, 2024).

4. Preserving the Landscape and Palm Groves
The landscape and date palm groves of RKIF are integral components of its cultural significance, reflecting Niemeyer's synthesis of modernist architecture and landscape design. Preserving and enhancing these elements is essential to maintaining the site's original spatial composition and environmental character. This approach reinforces the cultural and ecological values of the Fair, contributing to environmental sustainability and improving the overall visitor experience (UNESCO, 2024).

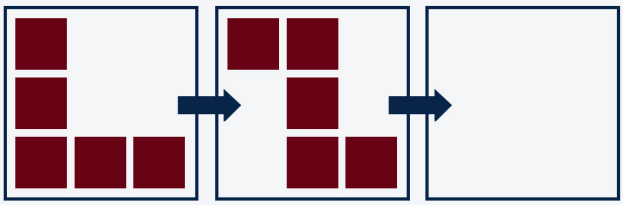
5. Reconnecting to the Urban Fabric
The current physical and functional detachment of the Fair from the surrounding urban environment of Tripoli and El Mina limits its role as a civic and cultural space. Re-establishing these connections through pedestrian pathways, public transport systems, and urban corridors can reintegrate the Fair into the daily life of the city. This reconnection promotes urban continuity, accessibility, and community ownership, transforming the Fair into an active civic node within Tripoli's urban structure (UNESCO, 2024).

6. Integrating into the National Tourism Network
The adaptive reuse strategy should situate the Fair within Lebanon's broader cultural and tourism infrastructure. Once stabilized and secured, the site can serve as a landmark destination complementing other heritage and natural attractions in the region. Integration into national tourism circuits enhances its visibility, economic value, and cultural relevance, aligning with UNESCO's long-term vision for sustainable cultural tourism (UNESCO, 2024; UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2019).

1. Compatible Uses

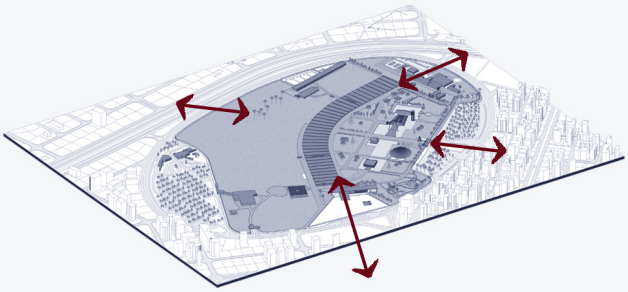


2. Minimal New Construction



3. Temporary and Modular

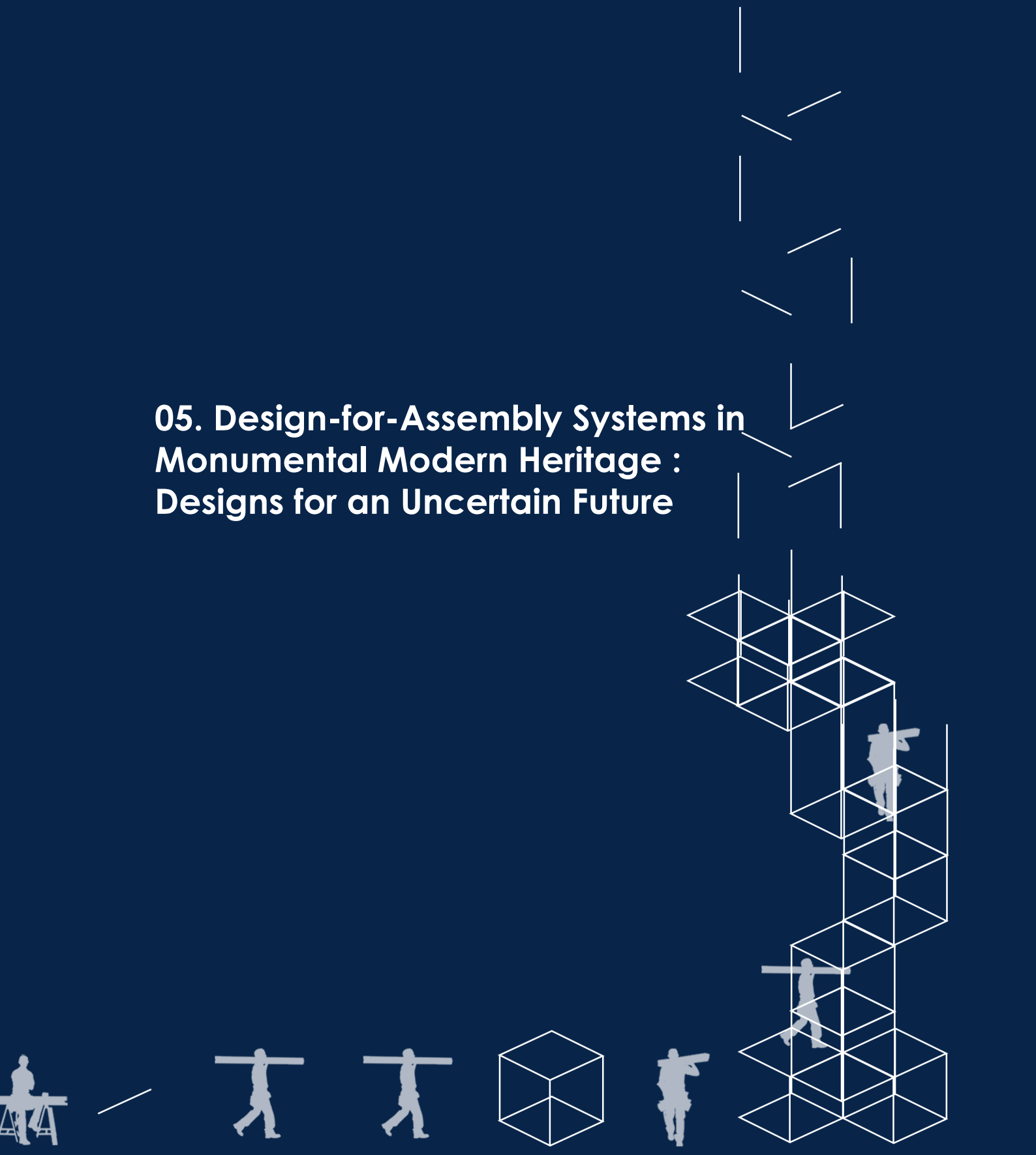
4. Preserve the Landscape



5. Reconnect to the Urban Fabric

6. The National Tourism Network

05. Design-for-Assembly Systems in Monumental Modern Heritage : Designs for an Uncertain Future



05.1.Design for Assembly: definition and relevance

After analyzing the territory, and demographics, visiting the site and exploring local ideas and points of views, it appears that a full-scale rehabilitation is neither financially nor politically feasible, the proof being the **numerous failed attempts in the past.**

The unstable security situation and political circumstances in the country, along with the legal, financial, and administrative framework, have significantly impacted the overall management and the current conservation, operation, and development context of the RKIF complex (UNESCO, 2024).

The absence of state-level funding has placed the RKIF in a dangerous situation, necessitating a revenue stream among a continually diminishing budget that hardly pays salaries (UNESCO, 2024).

This chapter explores a realistic, conservation friendly strategy for a gradual reactivation of the site. **It introduces an adaptable architectural work-plan that responds to shifting financial, political, social, and cultural conditions.**

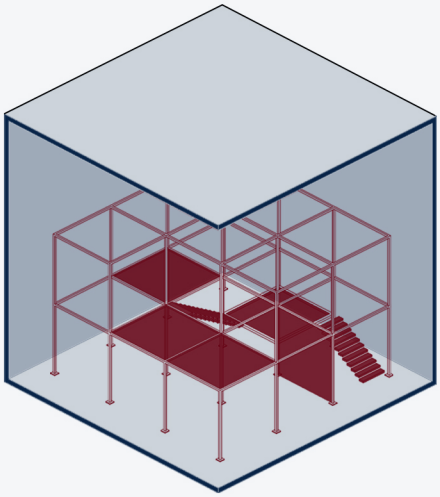
This approach is context-sensitive and grounded in the evolving needs and problems of the city and its inhabitants.

A toolkit of modular, dry-assembled architectural elements. These elements can be inserted, removed, or modified over time without compromising the integrity of existing modern structures. The design-for-assembly logic responds to the site's legal status, material conditions, and urgent need for flexible, low-cost interventions.

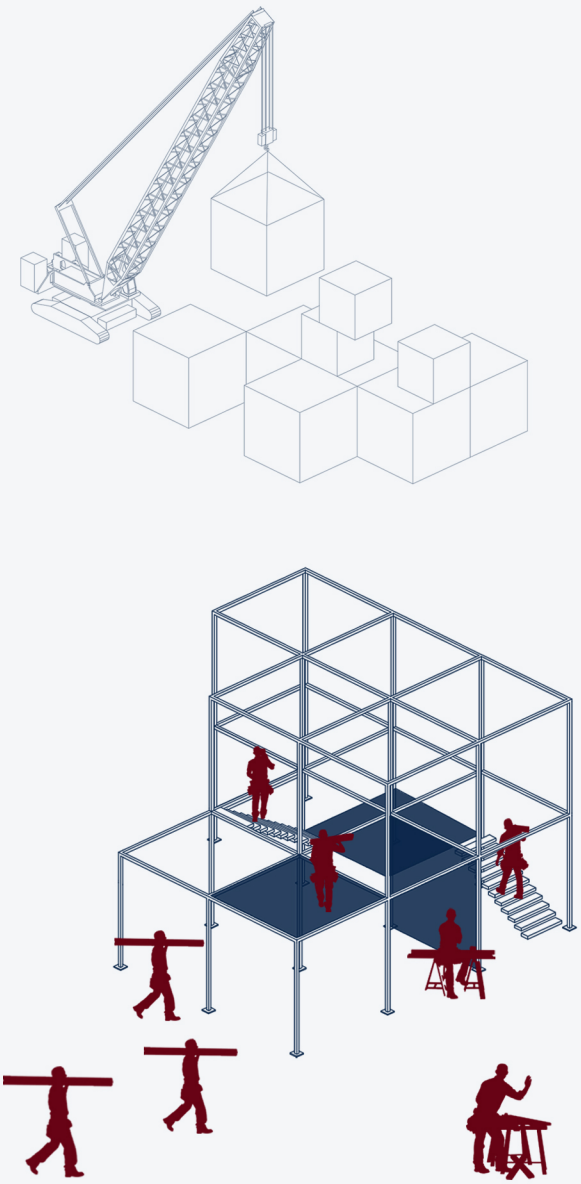
Design-for-Assembly (DfA) is an architectural and engineering approach that aims to simplify construction processes by designing components that are easy to assemble, disassemble, and transport. DfA minimizes part count, optimizes joinery, and enhances efficiency in assembly. (Boothroyd and Dewhurst, 1983)

While it originated in manufacturing, DfA is increasingly applied in architecture to reduce labor, time, and cost especially in low-resource or adaptive reuse scenarios. In heritage contexts, its principles support reversibility and minimal intervention, making it highly compatible with conservation goals.

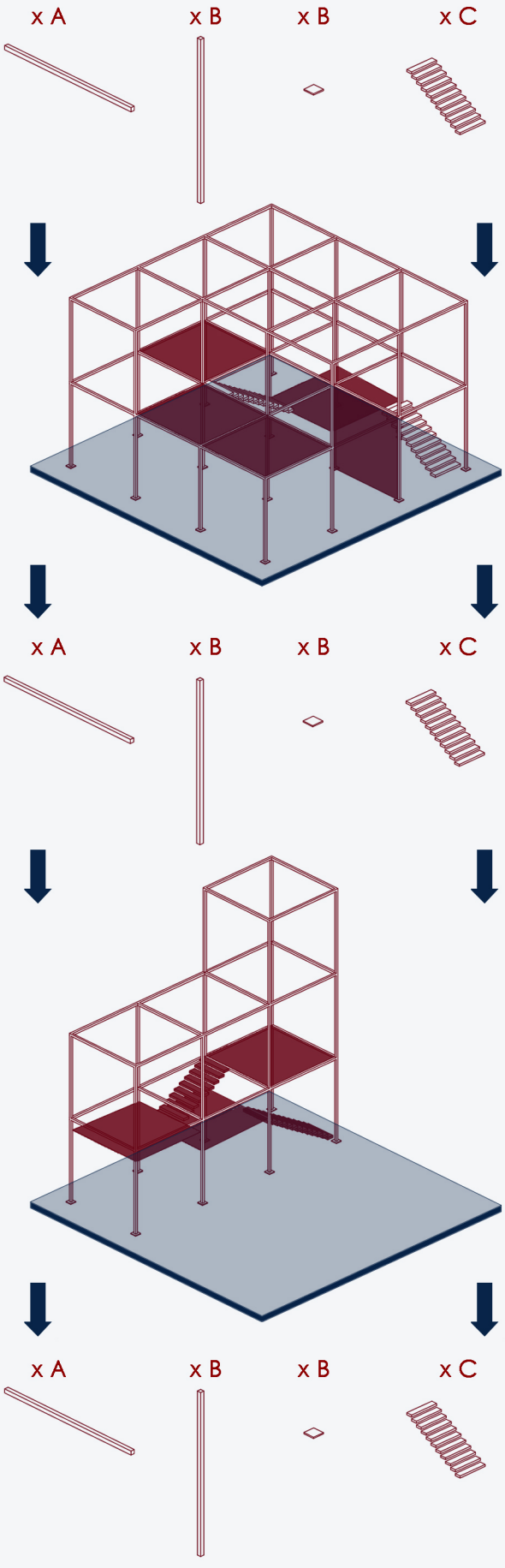
Designing for adaptability and deconstruction not only mitigates environmental impact but also enables buildings to accommodate change over time, thereby preserving cultural value and reducing demolition rates. These principles are especially aligned with heritage conservation, where reversibility and minimal intervention are essential to maintaining historical integrity and cultural value (American Institute of Architects, 2024).



1. Dry Assembly
preserving original slabs and walls



2. Enables local participation
Simple tools and minimal labor



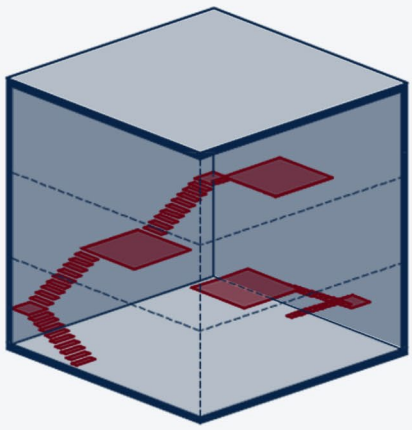
3. Reversible joints
Interlocking systems, Surface foundations

When applied to heritage sites, core principles such as dry assembly, reversible joints, non-invasive foundations, and the use of simple tools collectively aim to preserve authenticity while allowing respectful intervention. Dry construction methods avoid the use of concrete, mortar and other wet materials. Instead, most elements are pre-fabricated in industries and later assembled on site. One of the most important purposes of this approach is protecting original materials of the heritage site from mechanical or chemical alterations. To allow the intervention to be fully or partially removed without damaging the original structure, the use of reversible joints such as bolted, clipped or interlocking connections is mandatory. This preserves the integrity of the heritage fabric and supports the principle of minimum intervention.

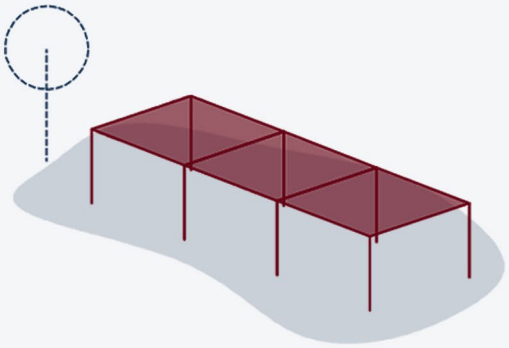
In marginalized cities, where resources and technical expertise may be limited, the use of simple tools and minimal labor plays a critical role in heritage conservation. Relying on low-tech methods facilitates easier implementation and encourages local participation, empowering communities to engage directly in the preservation of their built environment. This approach democratizes the conservation process by making it accessible and replicable, while also supporting local craftsmanship and reducing dependency on specialized contractors or imported solutions.

In the case of RKIF, where financial and administrative constraints limit large-scale investment, the use of this method offers a practical way to reactivation that is faster, less expensive, and easier to implement than traditional rehabilitation efforts. A toolkit approach could be implemented to align with this logic, supporting phased interventions that require minimal upfront capital while providing tangible, usable results.

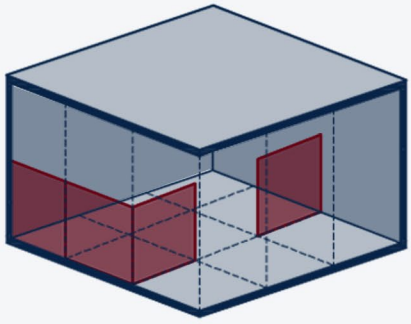
Possible application to heritage sites could be **elevated platforms** to create human-scale zones in high ceiling interiors, **roof frame shelters** to cover outdoor spaces for temporary events, **partition panels** to subdivide large halls, **viewing decks** to re-engage vertical space and create observation spots for the existing architecture. Instead of damaging the existing structures with sanitary works, **service core units** could be used inside and outside the structures. Finally, **lightweight steel braces** could be included to support deteriorating architectural elements.



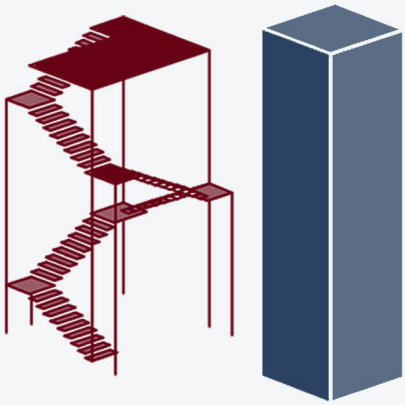
1. Elevated Platforms



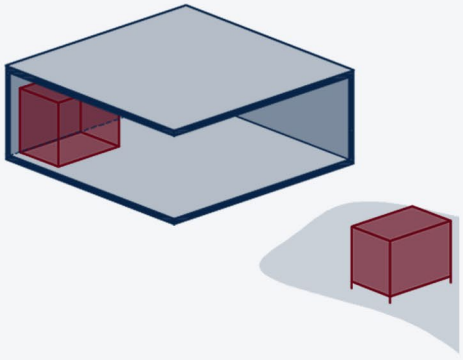
2. Roof Frames



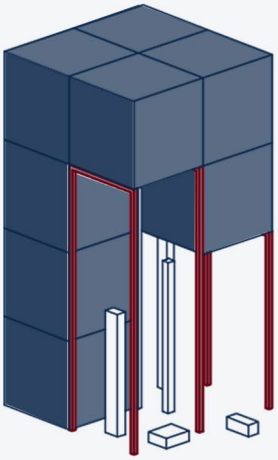
3. Partition Panels



4. Viewing Decks



5. Service core units



6. Structural Supports

05.2.Cost and Time Efficiency

The integration of Design-for-Manufacture and Assembly (DfMA) within quality-focused has demonstrated substantial benefits that are increasingly applicable to architecture and construction. These include **reduced overall design and manufacturing costs**, shortened assembly time, improved design efficiency, and lower overheads related to logistics and materials management [Figure 64]. By streamlining components and simplifying the assembly process, DfMA reduces reliance on skilled labor and **minimizes time on site**, factors that are particularly valuable in low-resource contexts, where workforce availability, tools, or budget may be limited. Moreover, when applied early in the design phase, DfMA allows for the refinement of solutions when both financial and construction risks are still low. This approach is also **highly compatible with adaptive reuse scenarios**, where minimizing disruption to the existing structure and enabling precise, modular interventions are key to achieving reversible and respectful upgrades (Construction Innovation Hub, 2022).

Modular construction, when deployed in appropriate condition, can reduce construction timelines by 20–50% [Figure 65] and lower costs by up to 20% [Figure 66]. These advantages arise from parallel off-site manufacturing, decreased reliance on subcontractors, reduced rework, and lower site overheads due to shorter project durations (McKinsey Global Institute, 2017).

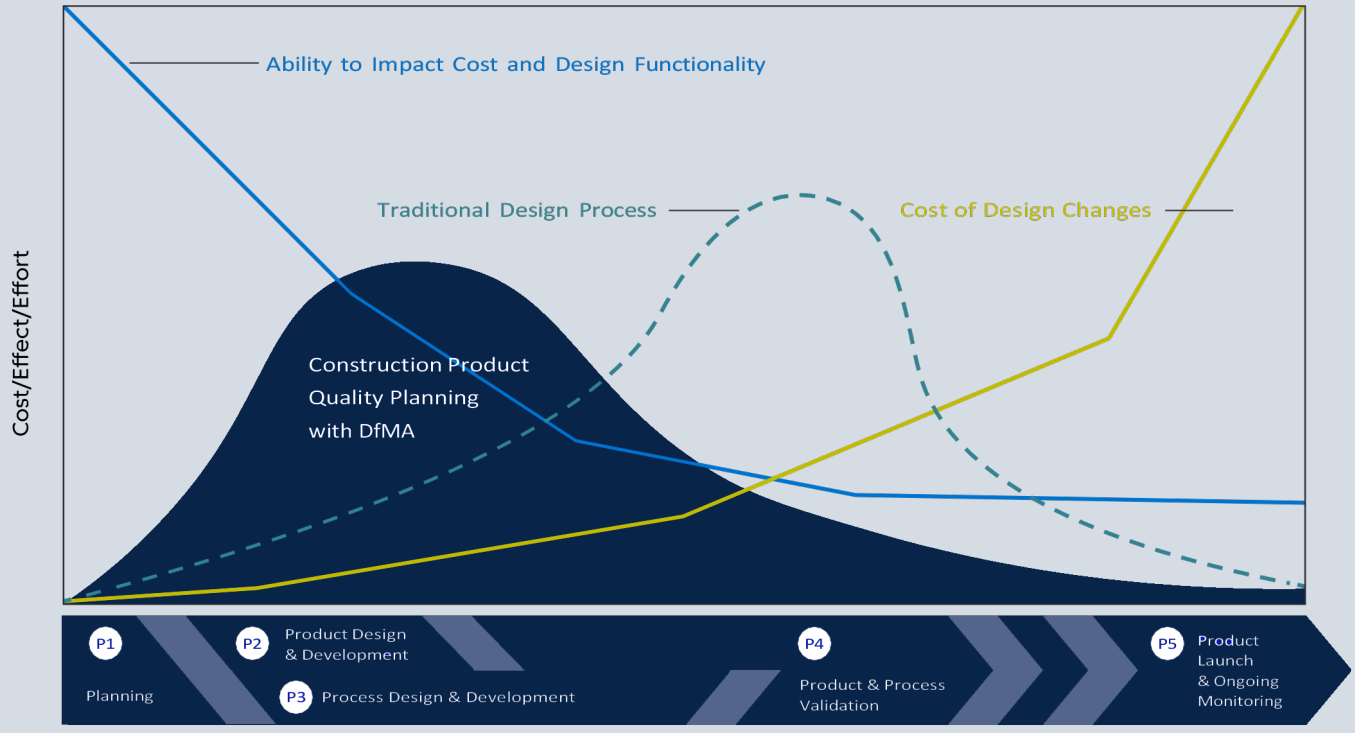


Figure 65. *Impact vs. cost across the product development cycle.*

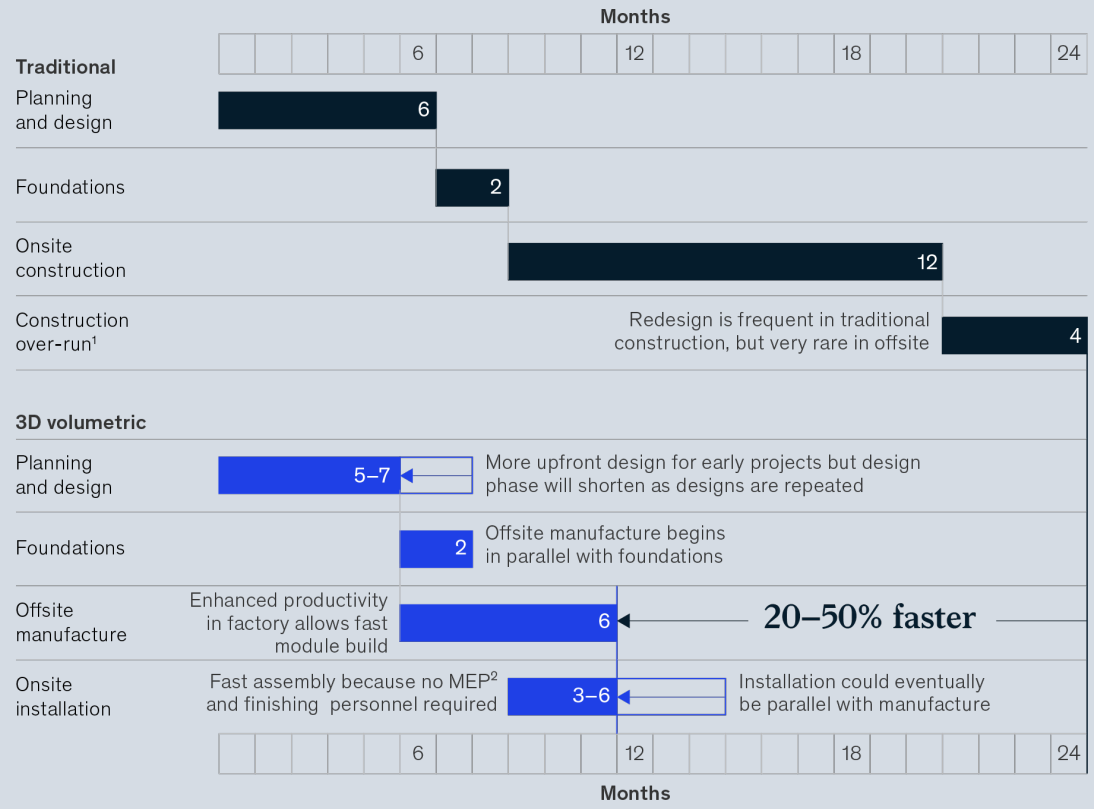


Figure 66. *Using 3D volumetric modules can deliver 20–50 percent schedule compression.*

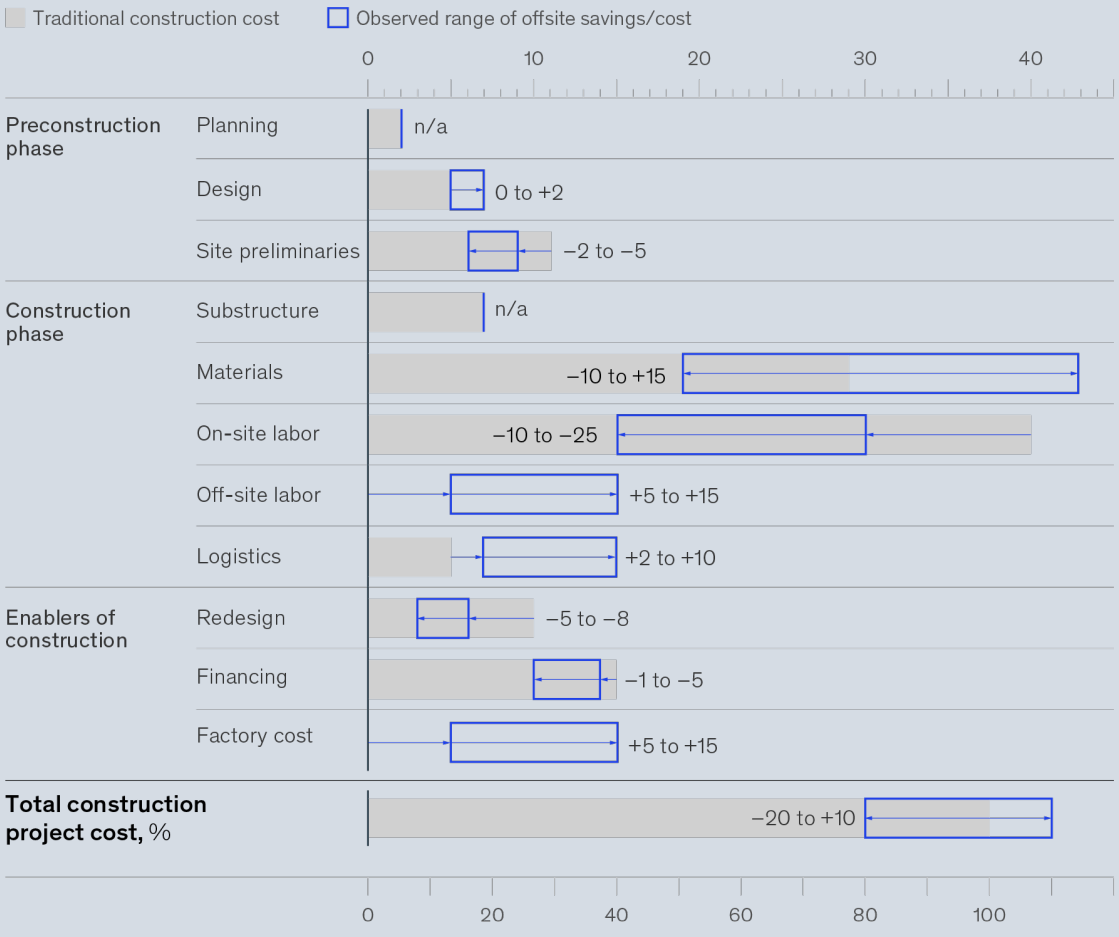


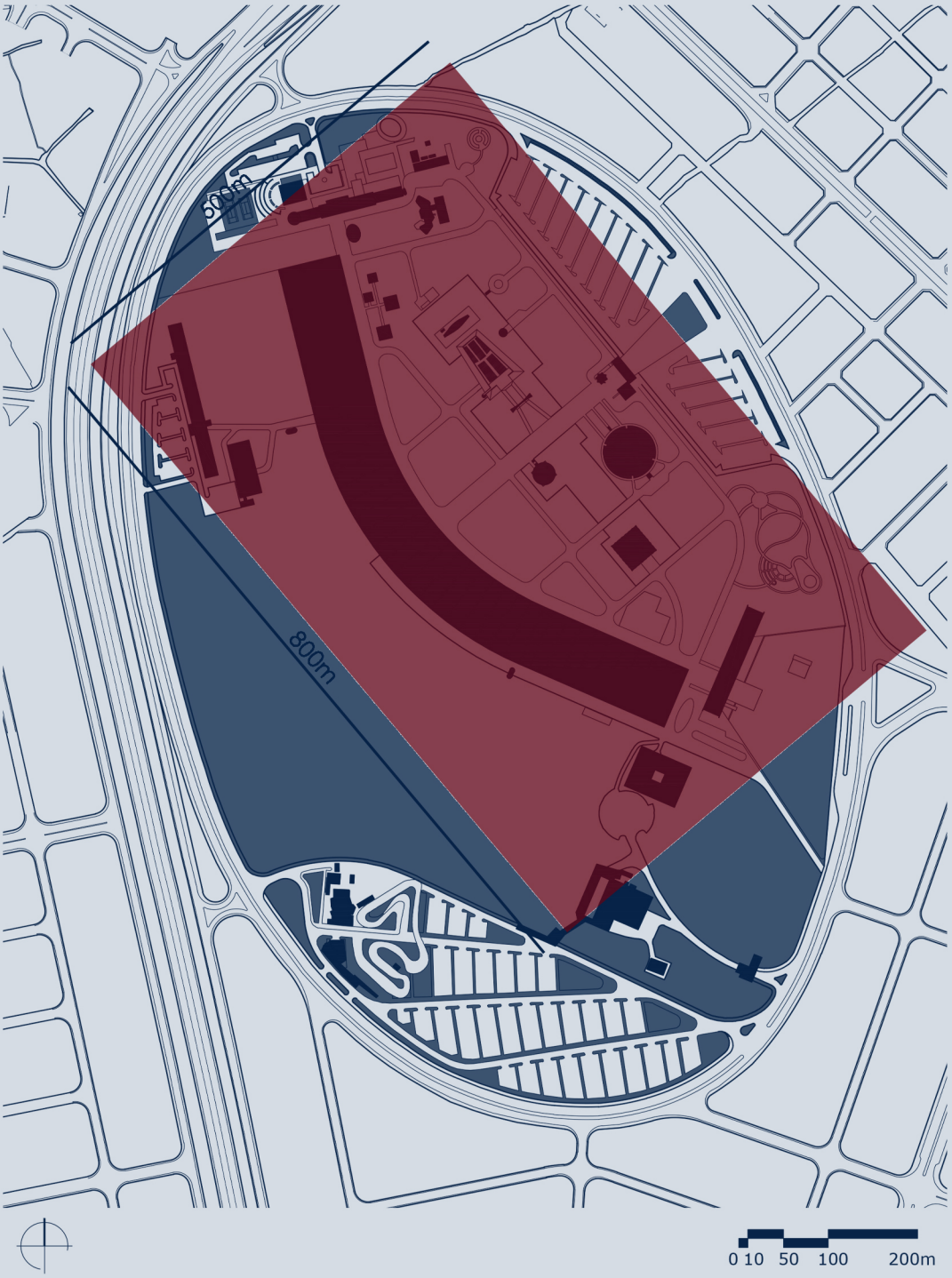
Figure 67. *Observed range of off-site savings.*

05.3.Conservation Policies and Laws, alignment with DFA

FRAMEWORK / GUIDELINE	APPLICATION	ALLIGNMENT
UNESCO and ICOMOS		
Reversibility	All components are designed to be detached, disassembled, and removed without causing any permanent alteration or physical damage to the original structure or materials.	Design for assembly complies with the principle of reversibility, allowing all components to be removed without permanent alteration.
Compatibility and Integrity (Reinforced by Article 18 of Lebanese Law No. 274 (2022)) *	All interventions must avoid physical alteration or impact on facades, roofs, or structural systems of the original buildings.	Structural connections rely on dry joints, avoiding any dependence on or alteration of the existing fabric.
Minimal intervention	Any restoration work must stop at the point where conjecture begins, and additions must be distinguishable from the original.	The architectural character of the new additions will ensure they remain clearly distinguishable from the original structures.
Use and function	Continued use and adaptive reuse of heritage sites are encouraged if done without harming their value.	New functions will be introduced to address citizens' needs and ensure continuous public use of the site.
Law No. 274 / 2022 (Lebanon)		
Designated use	RKIF is legally intended to host exhibitions, conferences, cultural, commercial, artistic and tourism-related events.	Cultural use and value prioritization.
Conservation and Architectural Integrity	Any intervention must preserve the authenticity and external architectural character of the buildings.	The technique avoids any dependence on or physical alteration of Niemeyer's structures.
Zoning	RKIF is divided into two zones. [Figure 67]	Reversibility could ease approval by classifying it under reversible interventions.

UNESCO Conservation Management Plan, 2024		
Interior Adaptation	*"While the exteriors of RKIF's structures must be preserved in accordance with Niemeyer's original design, interior spaces may undergo adaptive interventions, provided they are reversible, documented, and respectful of the original architectural intent."*	Interior functions are here to serve new use but not to harm the existing structures.
Strategic prioritization	*"Non-invasive, cost-effective strategies should be prioritized to address community needs and financial constraints while preserving the original design intent."*	The approach ensures cost and time efficiency, adapting to available resources and implementation capacity.

* States that "any development within the RKIF site must preserve the authenticity and external architectural character of the existing structures, in alignment with its UNESCO Tentative Listing. Structural independence, light contact systems, and visual separation from heritage components are essential to maintain this integrity."



ZONE A

- A rectangular area (80 x 500 meters) that includes the core of Niemeyer's designed complex.
- Interventions limited to restoration, reconstruction, or internal development.
- All works are subject to strict approval by the Ministry of Culture.

ZONE B

- Covers the rest of the site within the elliptical shape of the Fairground. (Buffer zone)
- Permits new construction as long as it meets heritage buffer zone guidelines.
- Also subject to Ministry of Culture approval, but with greater design freedom than Zone A.

Figure 68. *Zoning and Restrictions following Law No. 274 / 2022 (Lebanon).*

05.4.Justification and impact

1. Architectural Justification: Harmonizing Innovation with Heritage

Design for Assembly (DfA) systems provide an opportunity to introduce new architectural elements into heritage sites without imposing the addition on the original fabric. By avoiding wet connections and relying on dry joints and prefabricated elements, these systems align with international conservation principles such as minimal intervention, reversibility, and legibility (ICOMOS, 1964; ICOMOS, 2011). These systems are designed to interact lightly with their context. They have independent foundations, they are different from the heritage in terms of form and physically detachable.

DfA allows architects to create contemporary insertions that neither mimic nor clash with the historic environment, but instead contribute a distinct layer of interpretation. This supports the conservation philosophy of **legibility**, where each era's contribution remains identifiable. Furthermore, the modular nature of DfA enhances geometric precision, making it adaptable to the irregularities often found in heritage sites (Boothroyd, Dewhurst, & Knight, 2010).

2. Functional Justification: Supporting Adaptive Reuse Cycles

Monumental heritage sites often face **uncertain futures**, evolving societal roles, and changing functional demands. Traditional models of reuse frequently struggle to adapt quickly to these shifts due to their reliance on fixed, irreversible construction methods. In contrast, DfA systems introduce a **flexible architectural language that supports transformation,** both temporary and permanent, without compromising the original structure.

This flexibility is particularly critical in underutilized monumental spaces, which often remain empty for years due to limited funding or overly rigid planning frameworks. By enabling modular insertions such as classrooms, workshops, or exhibition modules, DfA facilitates immediate activation of space with minimal resource investment (Cornell University Circular Construction Lab, 2023).

These components can be reconfigured, expanded, or removed altogether, allowing for a responsive, trial-and-error approach to adaptive reuse.

The **phased deployment** made possible by DfA also supports strategic long-term planning: testing potential uses before large-scale commitment, engaging local actors progressively, and building momentum toward comprehensive regeneration. In this way, **DfA transforms adaptive reuse from a singular act into a dynamic and evolving process.**

3. Technical and Environmental Justification: Time, Cost, and Carbon

DfA strategies optimize the construction process by optimizing both the logistics and the physical act of building. Components are prefabricated off-site, enabling significant reductions in on-site labor time and limiting the need for specialized tools or advanced technical expertise. This makes them particularly suitable for implementation in regions with limited construction infrastructure or economic resources.

Their **ease of transport** and manual assembly allows installations to be carried out with minimal site disruption, which is especially valuable in sensitive heritage environments. From an environmental standpoint, DfA systems significantly reduce waste generation and material overuse. Since most components can be disassembled without damage, they can be reused elsewhere, forming the basis of a circular material economy (European Commission, 2020).

Furthermore, by eliminating the need to demolish existing structures or pour concrete, DfA strategies preserve the embodied energy of both the heritage fabric and the new intervention. This not only helps lower the overall carbon footprint of the project (McKinsey Global Institute, 2017) but also ensures compliance with modern sustainability metrics increasingly adopted in heritage and public architecture.

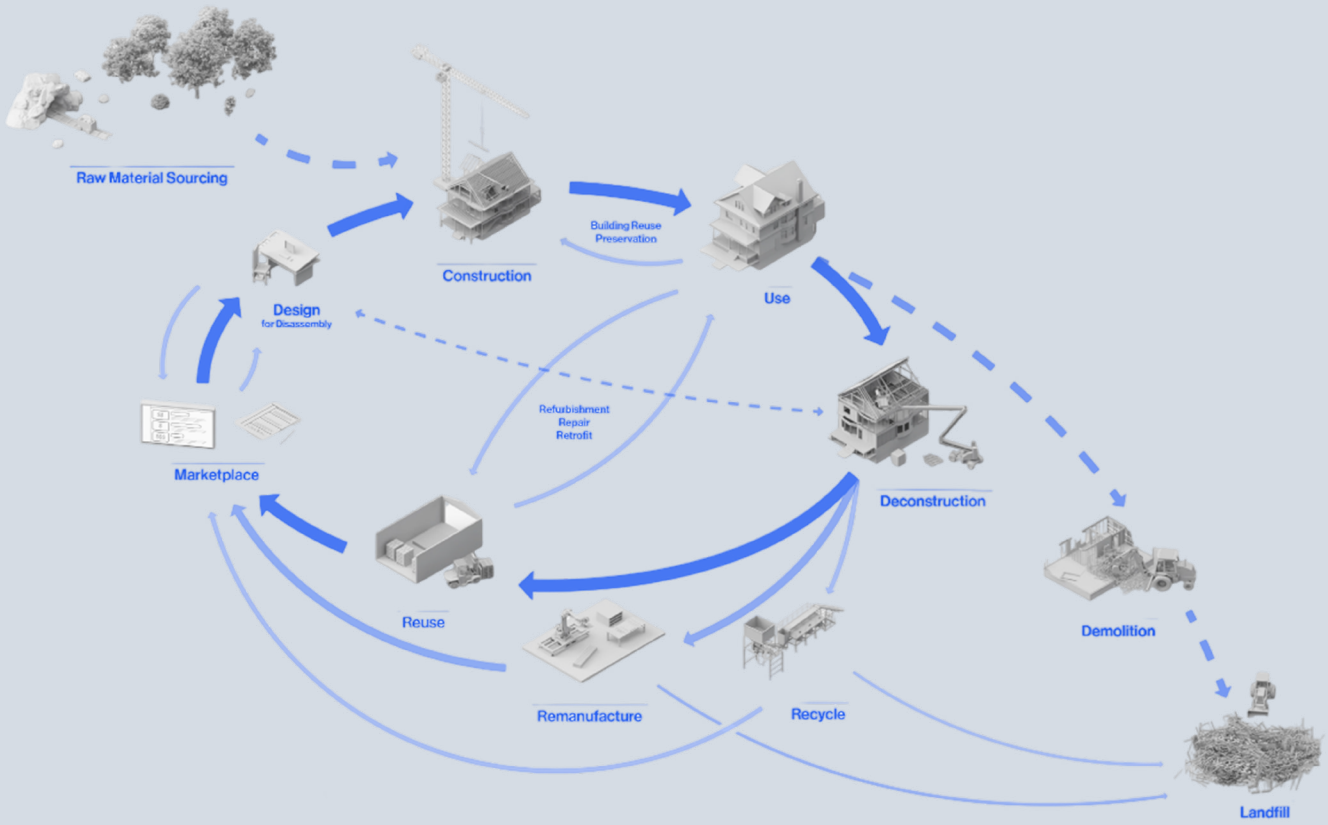


Figure 69. *Building + Constructing a Circular Economy.*

4. Socio-Cultural Justification: Empowerment and Accessibility

Beyond technical benefits, DfA empowers communities to actively engage in the preservation and transformation of heritage sites. The use of simple, low-tech tools facilitates **on-site participation** from artisans, students, and non-specialized workers, lowering barriers to entry and fostering a sense of ownership. This inclusive approach not only stimulates employment and skill development but also supports local craftsmanship traditions.

When implemented as community-led projects or within institutional partnerships, DfA-based interventions have the potential to trigger long-term cultural and social value, connecting marginalized populations with their built environment and empowering them to play a role in its long-term care and adaptive management (UNESCO, 2024).

5. Long-Term Impact: Bridging Permanence and Change

DfA systems embody a mindset of flexible permanence, acknowledging that architectural interventions in heritage contexts may need to evolve over time. Rather than locking a building into a fixed solution, DfA encourages provisional, scalable approaches where **architectural elements can be assembled, disassembled, relocated, or modified with minimal impact.** This flexibility is particularly valuable in environments shaped by volatility, whether economic instability, political change, or evolving urban needs. By enabling a **"test-and-adapt"** cycle, DfA empowers designers to experiment and refine spatial strategies before implementing long-term solutions. This not only minimizes the risk of inappropriate or underused interventions but also promotes a responsive planning culture. It accommodates phased occupation strategies, where heritage sites are progressively reactivated **in sync with funding availability and community readiness.**

Moreover, because DfA relies on dry connections and minimal foundations, it provides a compliance-friendly path for inserting contemporary uses into legally protected sites. As building regulations and heritage protection laws are strict, this reversibility helps navigate administrative constraints without forgoing innovation. Ultimately, DfA supports a future-oriented heritage reuse model, one that embraces uncertainty, anticipates change, and promotes resilience through architectural adaptability (UNESCO, 2024).

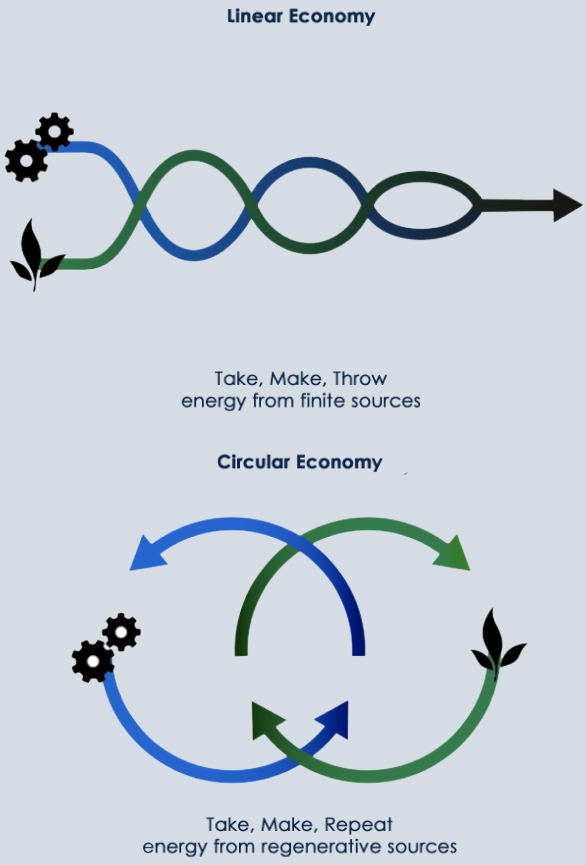


Figure 70. *Towards a Circular Economy.*

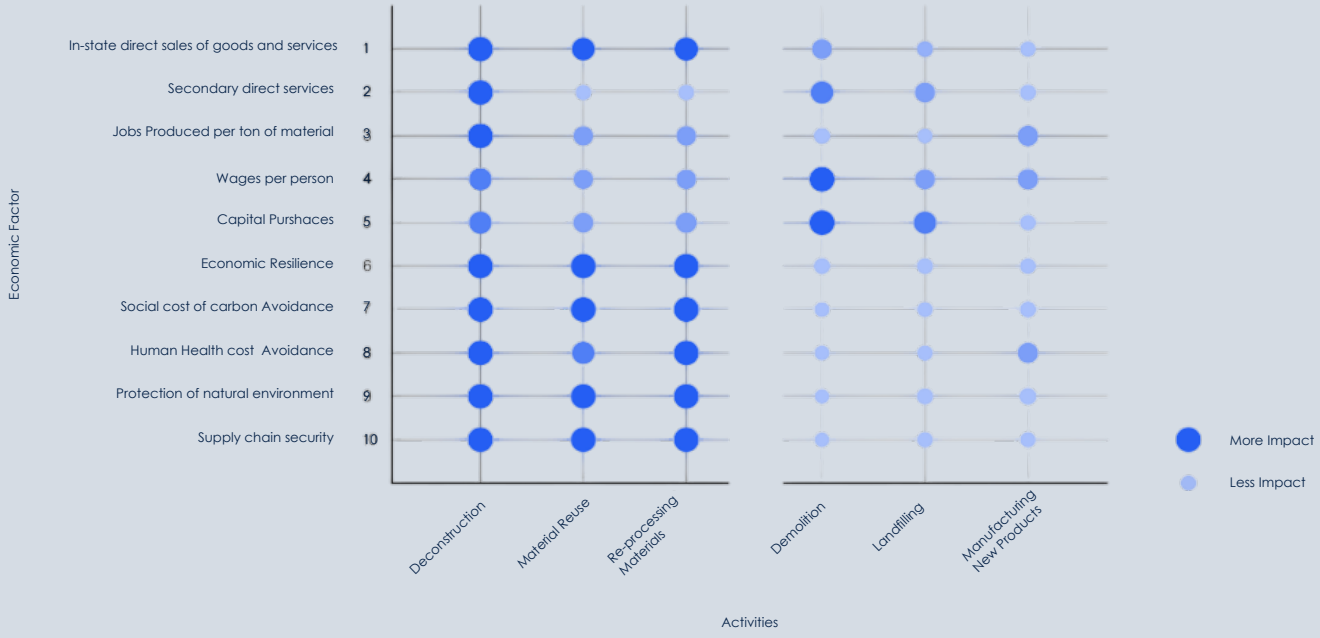


Figure 71. *Economic benefits of building management.*

06. Adaptive Reuse Proposal: Human Centric Strategy, A Space for All

06.1. Synthesis and Design Guidelines

After synthesizing the outcomes of the territorial and site analysis, the conceptual framework begins with this logic: identifying the problems and needs of the city and its inhabitants.

The primary objective of this thesis is to reevaluate the Rachid Karame International Fair not solely as a standalone modern monument, but a catalyst for social and spatial integration in Tripoli.

Instead of the fair being an island within the city, it should be treated as a civic asset capable of saving tripoli's critical situation. The section **"Diagnosis"** analyzes the issues that need urgent care, identifying the main reasons that have led to the neglect, abandonment, and disconnection of the fair from the daily lives of Tripolitans.

In contrast, the **"Needs"** section aims to frame the ambitions and necessities of the city and its residents. It aims to create a foundation for design choices that arise **not in conflict with the local community but in conversation with it.**

Niemeyer's original design was not meant for the residents of Tripoli, but for an international audience attracted to the concept of a world-class fairground.

Today, in a community characterized by significant marginality, such a monumental place possesses the potential to save the city.

The design strategy aims to reconfigure the site as a tool of community engagement in a city full of social, economic, and cultural contrasts. The adaptive reuse of the fair could be the lifeline Tripoli needs to bridge the gap between marginality and monumentality.

Diagnosis:
The identification of problems

1. The site's original function is no longer relevant

The Rachid Karame International Fair was originally design as an international exhibition ground, intended to host international fairs, cultural events, and large-scale gatherings. This function, however, was never fully realized: **the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War in 1975 interrupted construction, and the anticipated vision of the Fair was never satisfied.**

Right after the war, both the economic and political conditions that once justified such a project have changed with the country's overall situation. The global fair model has shifted elsewhere, while Tripoli's local economy remains critical and stability to sustain international exhibitions on such a scale is now impossible.

As a result, the Fair's original program is outdated. Disconnected from the current needs of Tripolitans, its grandiose halls and pavilions are now empty. The tension between its monumental original vision and its current neglect is undeniable: **a site designed for international elites now stands unused in a city struggling with poverty and marginality.** A context-specific program is now necessary, so that RKIF does not remain an architectural relic, admired for its design but irrelevant to its context and the daily life.

2. The lack of funds and stability

One of the most critical obstacles to the use of the RKIF is the recurrent lack of financial resources and political stability in Lebanon. Since its interruption during the Civil War, the site has remained vulnerable to cycles of neglect, with limited or inconsistent investment from state institutions.

Lebanon's political and economic crises, have left little room for sustained cultural or urban projects. In this context, RKIF has often been proposed as the subject of large-scale masterplans, often involving foreign investors, but these initiatives have failed.

Without stable institutions capable of managing heritage and urban development, the site is stuck between abandonment and empty proposals, neither of which secures sustainability and survival.

The lack of resources is not only financial but also systemic: it reflects a governance where heritage is undervalued, cultural significance is irrelevant, and the capacity for long-term planning is eroding.

This condition has left the Fair in a state of suspended decay, symbolizing both the fragility of modern heritage in Lebanon and the difficulty of mobilizing resources in times of instability.

3. The Site is an Urban Island

Looking at the city's masterplan, RKIF feels like an urban island, detached from the life and dynamics of Tripoli. **Despite its central location and vast scale, the site is surrounded by physical and experimental barriers that prevent it from being part of the city's daily perception.** The elevated perimeter walls around the fair and its only entrance enhances this division. The lack of visual and physical connection between the Fair and adjacent areas fosters its isolation. As a result, urban flows, whether pedestrian or vehicular, are forced to circulate around the site rather than through it.

This condition has problematic implications. **On one hand, it erases the potential of RKIF to operate as a connective tissue that could link fragmented parts of the city. On the other, it strengthens the perception of the Fair as an abandoned site, inaccessible and unfamiliar to most residents.** In urban morphology, such "island" conditions generate voids: large-scale sites that occupy space but fail to contribute to social, cultural, or economic life. In Tripoli, where public spaces are rare and mostly unaccessible for everyone, such a void strengthens the sense of marginality and social fragmentation.


0 50 150 300 500 1000

4. The site is disconnected and only accessible by vehicles

Even though the RKIF is part of the urban fabric of Tripoli, its accessibility is limited to vehicular traffic. Pedestrian pathways from the city to the fairground are absent, and public transport connections do not exist. This condition only reinforces the site's detachment and separation from the daily life of surrounding neighborhoods.

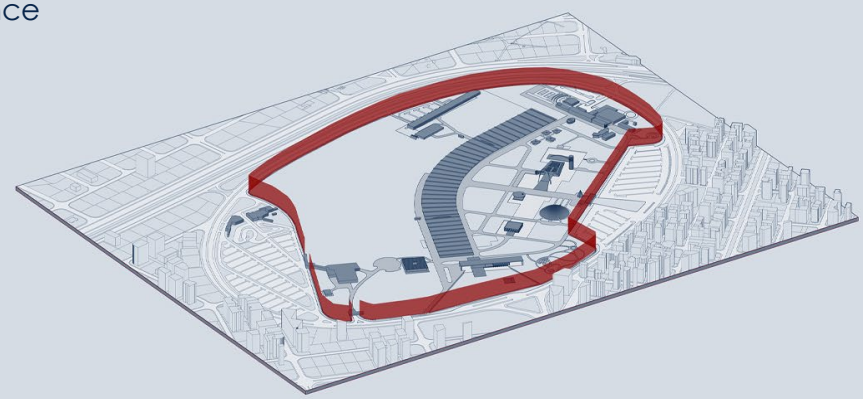
For most residents, particularly those without private vehicles, the Fair is completely unreachable.

The reliance on vehicular access was the result of the planning logic of the 1960s, when the design envisioned the Fair as an international exhibition ground rather than a locally integrated public space. In today's context however, this car-oriented accessibility stands against the urgent need for inclusive and sustainable mobility. **The lack of walkable connections towards and from the city reinforces marginalization.** Instead of being a porous site, RKIF is viewed as a destination on the periphery, only reachable by car, and abandoned just as quickly.

RKIF Restricted entrance

Vehicular Access

Barriers
2-3 meters height
(Height exaggerated in axonometry)

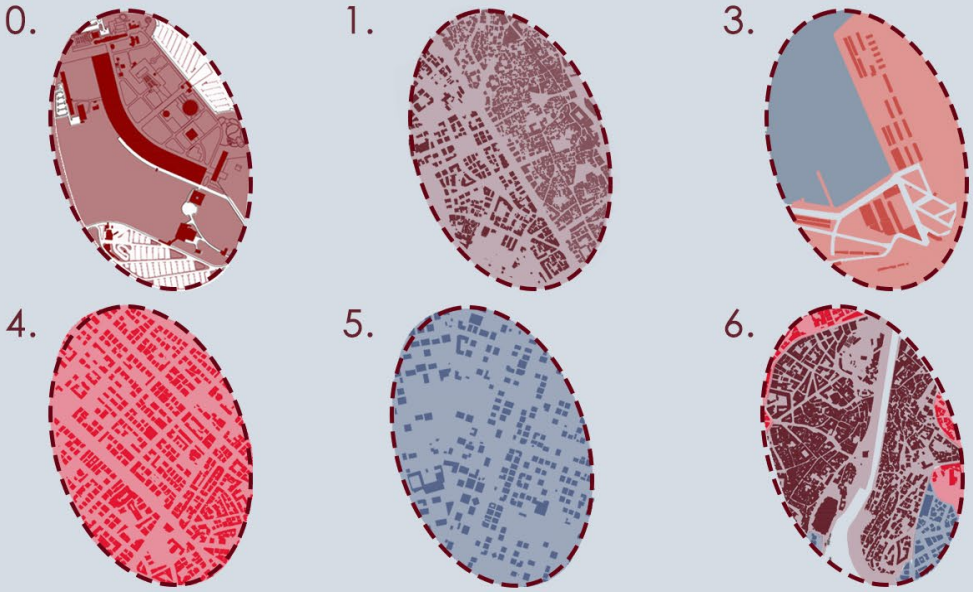


5. The harsh difference in scale compared to the city

The RKIF expands on 700 000 square meters, making it the largest single land parcel in Tripoli. Niemeyer wanted this immense scale to bring to life his modernist ambition to create a monument, but it stands in stark contrast to the fine-grained, compact fabric of Tripoli's neighborhoods. Most areas of the city are composed of dense residential quarters, narrow streets, and small-scale commercial spaces, all of which operate at a human scale. In contrast, the Fair's vast spaces and monumentality appear out of place and disconnected.

This contrast in scale has major consequences. It prevents the RKIF from integrating into the city's rhythms, reinforcing its perception as "intruder" rather than part of it.

This disproportion could be resolved by a scale mediation in the adaptive reuse strategy, encouraging local engagement and feasible programs resonating with tripolitans needs.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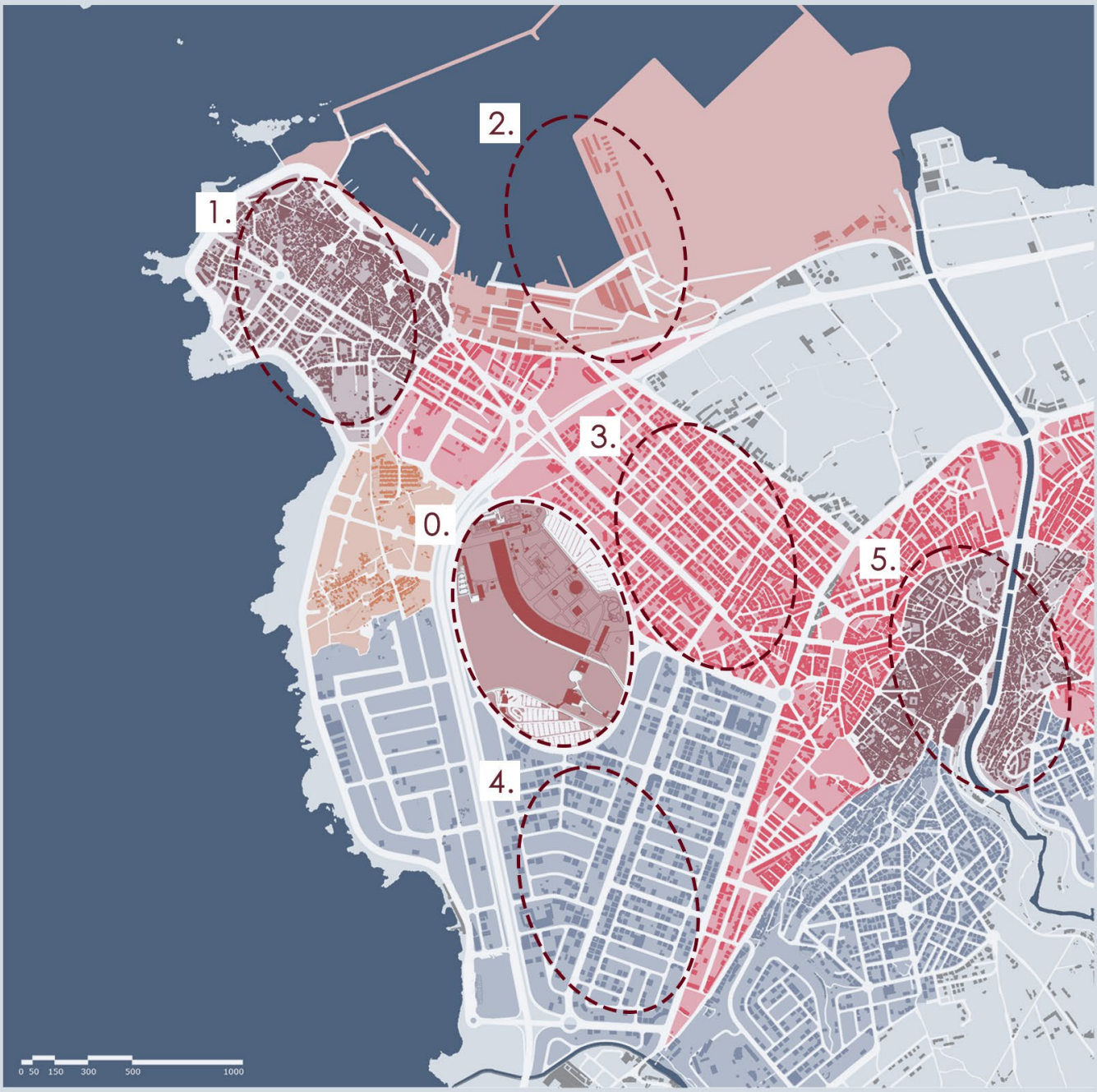
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Needs:
Shaped by People

1. Accessible public green spaces
The city suffers from a lack of open areas where residents can gather, exercise, and experience nature within the urban fabric. Existing green spaces are limited, unevenly distributed, and often have restricted access. Most of the time, green spaces are private gardens or institutional grounds, leaving much of the citizens without access to public social environments.

The RKIF site, with its big unused open areas, is a unique opportunity to address this need. Its scale allows for the integration of different forms of green space: parks, shaded walkways, ecological landscapes, and community gardens, that can respond to both individual leisure and collective gathering needs.
By opening its gates and providing accessible landscapes, the site can transform from an urban void into Tripoli's largest and most inclusive green lung.

2. Agricultural fields
Tripoli has long been known for its thriving street market culture, where a large portion of the city's unofficial economy and street activity are characterized by fruits and vegetables. The production and sale of agricultural goods serves as both a necessary source of income and a means of expressing local identity for many locals.
However, back in the 1960s, the construction of the RKIF disrupted this tradition: the land on which Niemeyer's project was built was originally used for agriculture. Oral accounts suggest that Tripolitans felt anger toward the Fair, perceiving it as an imposed project that erased their productive landscape and, with it, a piece of their cultural identity.
Reintroducing agricultural fields within the new adapted program of the fair therefore responds not only to present-day needs for food security, employment, and social inclusion, but also to the memory of the place.
It acknowledges the site's history and restores part of what was lost. By dedicating parts of the large land to urban farming, orchards, or indoor planting, the RKIF can begin to reconcile with its past while offering new, productive functions for the future.

Figure 72. *Arial historical photos of the RKIF and surrounding agricultural fields.*

3. Spaces for commercial activity

A safe, organized and supportive space for commercial activity is an essential need for the city's population.

It city is known for its craftsmanship, particularly in furniture making, soap making , pottery making, and others, which constitute a strong local industries.

However, much of this production and trade takes place under bad conditions, with workshops scattered informally and markets often set up in narrow streets.

This problem is most visible in Tripoli's street markets, where fruits, vegetables, clothes, and household goods are sold directly on the roads in an unsafe environment.

While these markets are vital for the livelihoods of countless families. Vendors block traffic, pedestrians are exposed to danger, and basic infrastructure for hygiene, storage, or waste management is absent.

This informality reflects the resilience of Tripolitans, their attachment to their traditions and the lack of support for their economic activity.

The RKIF offers a unique opportunity to host and organize these commercial practices by dedicating spaces for markets, workshops, and exhibitions. The site could absorb some of the pressure from Tripoli's congested and marginalized streets while giving artisans a platform to showcase their work.

Arabic Name	English Translation	Main Merchandise / Specialty
ساحة التل	Al-Tall Square Market	Central commercial square with mixed merchandise **clothing, accessories, cafés, and general goods.**
ساحة النور	Al-Nour Square Market	Major urban intersection and commercial hub, **clothing, electronics, accessories, and daily goods.**
خان الخيّاطين	Tailors' Khan	Historic khan specialized in tailoring, fabrics, and **textile-related goods.**
سوق البالي	Secondhand Market	**Secondhand and vintage clothing,** shoes, and accessories.
سوق العمي	Grain Market	**Grains, cereals**, legumes, and other staple food products.
سوق الخضرة	Vegetable Market	**Fresh vegetables and fruits** , one of Tripoli's busiest food markets.

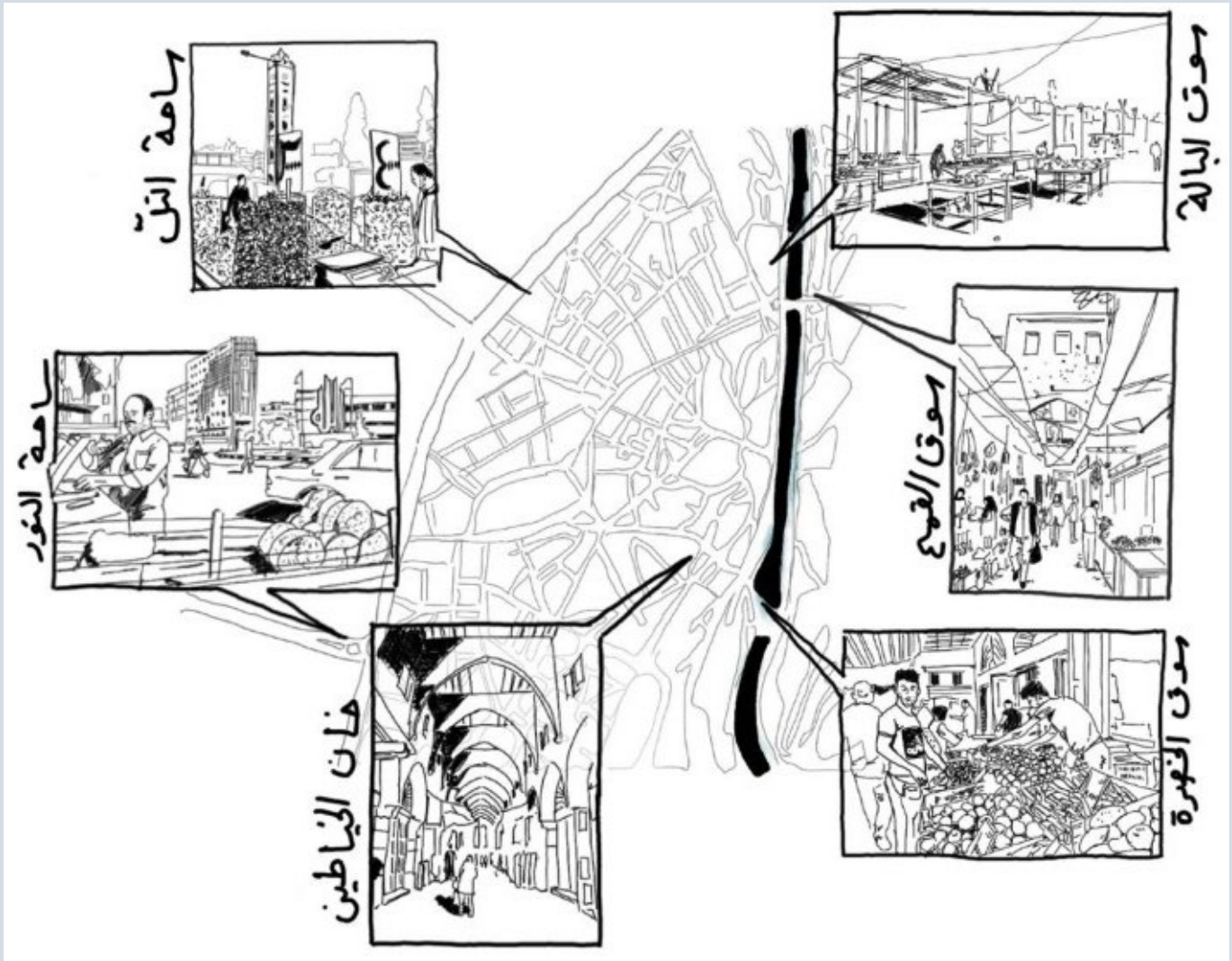


Figure 73. *Tripoli, une mosaique de marchés. Map showing the distinct Tripoli markets (Translation in the above table).*


Sport


١٠ ش
سبانخ بلدي

4. Co-working spaces for freelancers

Tripoli is experiencing gradual transformation into a digital district. Young people increasingly work as freelancers in design, media and other fields.

This trend has accelerated in recent years due to the Lebanese economic crisis and the growth of global online platforms. For many young citizens, freelancing has become one essential form of employment.

However, this shift is not quite supported by the city's current infrastructure. Most freelancers work from cafés, homes, or improvised spaces, often without reliable electricity and internet, lacking a stable workspace. As a result, the digital potential of Tripoli remains underdeveloped, despite the abundance of skilled people.

Integrating co-working spaces within the RKIF could directly address this gap.

By aligning with present work trends, the Fair would no longer be a relic of past ambitions but a catalyst for digital opportunities that connect local youth to the global economy.

5. Connection of the site to the city

At present, the site is enclosed, opaque, and functionally cut off, which reinforces its status as an urban island. Re-establishing connections involves three intertwined dimensions:

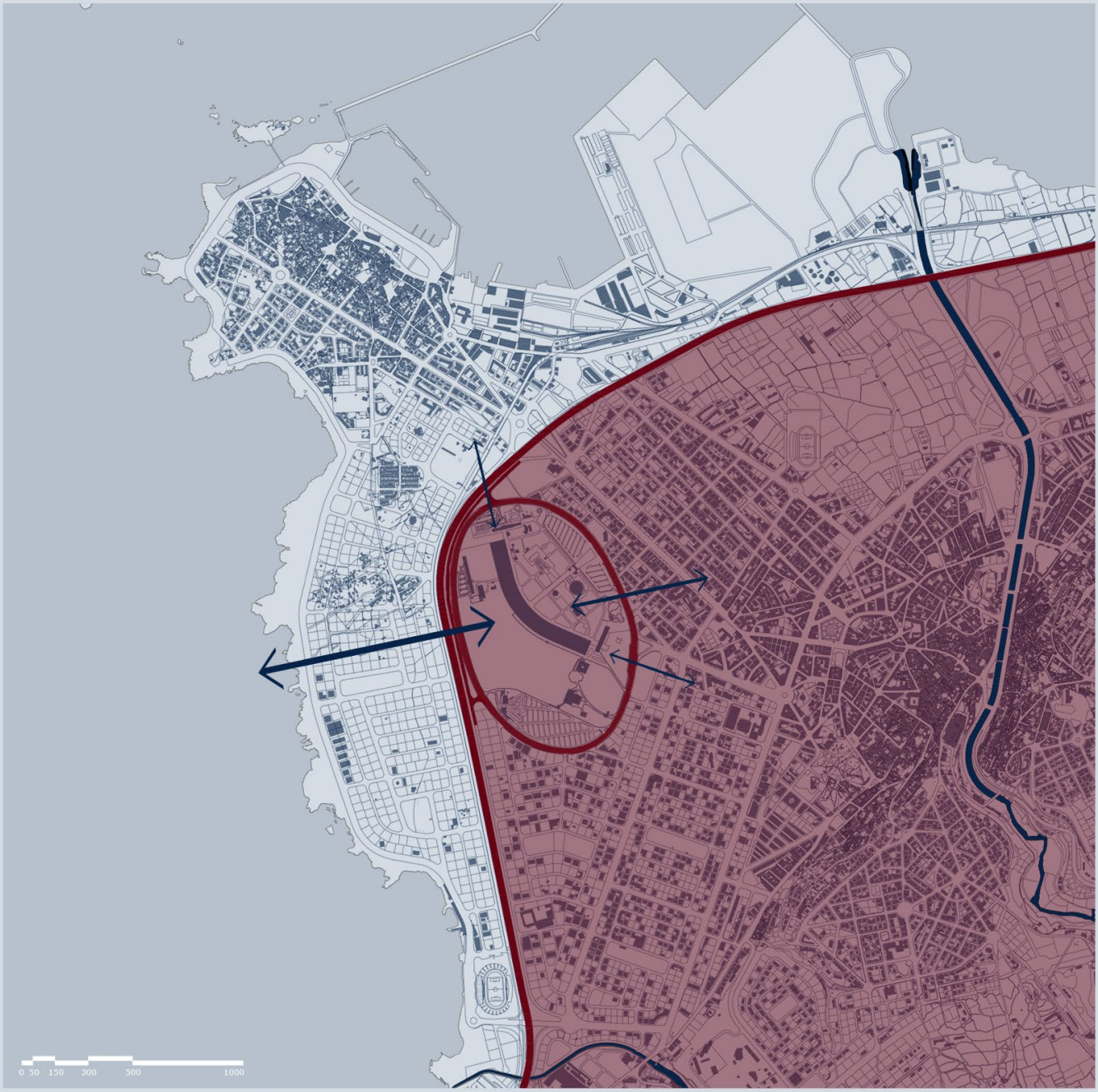
The connection of the RKIF to the city on multiple levels is essential for it to become a meaningful part of Tripoli. Today, the site is enclosed and opaque. It functions alone independently from its surrounding. The following intertwined connections are needed:

- **Physical connection:** Creating pedestrian-friendly access, integrating public transport stops, and opening more than one gate depending on the surrounding to allow circulation through the site. Instead of forcing the city to flow around it, the Fair should become a porous space that people naturally move across and inhabit as part of their daily routine.
- **Visual connection:** Reducing the sense of opacity by making the Fair visible and legible from the outside. The first step towards completing this would consist of removing the high opaque walls surrounding the fair and disconnecting it from Tripoli.
- **Civic connection:** Beyond infrastructure, the Fair must gain a civic role in the lives of Tripolitans. **This means programming spaces that Tripolitans need in their daily life. Without these layers of reconnection, the Fair will remain an isolated landmark whereas it has the potential to act as a bridge between the people and the different social classes in the city.**

Potential connection

Area Isolated from the seaside

Vehicular circulation, creating a boundary



6. Spaces for cultural activities

Spaces that have the capacity to host cultural traditions and artistic expressions are very rare in Tripoli. RKIF, in the past, has already hosted concerts, but these events rarely happened and it s never a sustained managed plan.

The city urgently needs flexible, open spaces, organized somewhat, capable of hosting temporary festive events. This is because, Tripolitans are already using the fair for this matter, but in an informal, unorganized way that diminishes of the fair's architectural and cultural value **[Figure 73].**

Working on modular and reversible setups, could transform the fair into a platform where modern heritage meets creativity. This approach would prioritize the city's contemporary needs without clashing with the site's architectural value.

7. Job opportunities

Tripoli suffers from one of the highest unemployment rates in Lebanon **[Figure 74]**. The city's economy has been weakened by decades of national instability and marginalization, leaving many residents dependent on instable informal work. In this context, the adaptive reuse of the RKIF must not only preserve heritage but also act as a driver of economic catalyst by offering a responsive workplace and more job opportunities.

The site has the potential to accommodate diverse forms of employment in correspondence of the job market in tripoli:

- Craft-based jobs, by supporting local industries such as furniture-making and artisan traditional work.
- Market-based jobs, by providing safe and organized spaces for vendors currently working in unsafe, unstable conditions.
- Cultural and service jobs, through the creation of spaces for events, exhibitions, tourism, and hospitality.
- Digital jobs, by hosting co-working spaces.

By activating these multiple sectors, the RKIF can function as a productive space rather than a passive monument.

Creating job opportunities within the site would directly respond to the urgent socio-economic needs of Tripolitans. This, would move the Fair from being abandoned to becoming a platform of opportunity.

8. Enhance the cultural significance of RKIF

The RKIF is one of the most significant modern complexes in The Middle east, however, its cultural value is largely neglected at both the local and the national level.

Most Lebanese are unaware of its existence, and very few people have visited it.

This lack of visibility stands in sharp contrast to the Fair's architectural and symbolic importance.

To preserve and express its cultural value, RKIF must be re-imagined not only as a responsive site but also as a heritage landmark of national and international significance.

This requires strategies that elevate its visibility and attracts people to come visit it. By positioning RKIF as a destination for cultural tourism and architectural appreciation, it can gain recognition as a monument that all Lebanese and tourists should come to see.

Enhancing its cultural significance also means safeguard its modern legacy. This shift in perception is crucial if RKIF is to move from obscurity to prominence, from being forgotten to being celebrated.

Figure 74. *Photo of temporary structures put in the RKIF in front of the grand cover for a temporary event.*

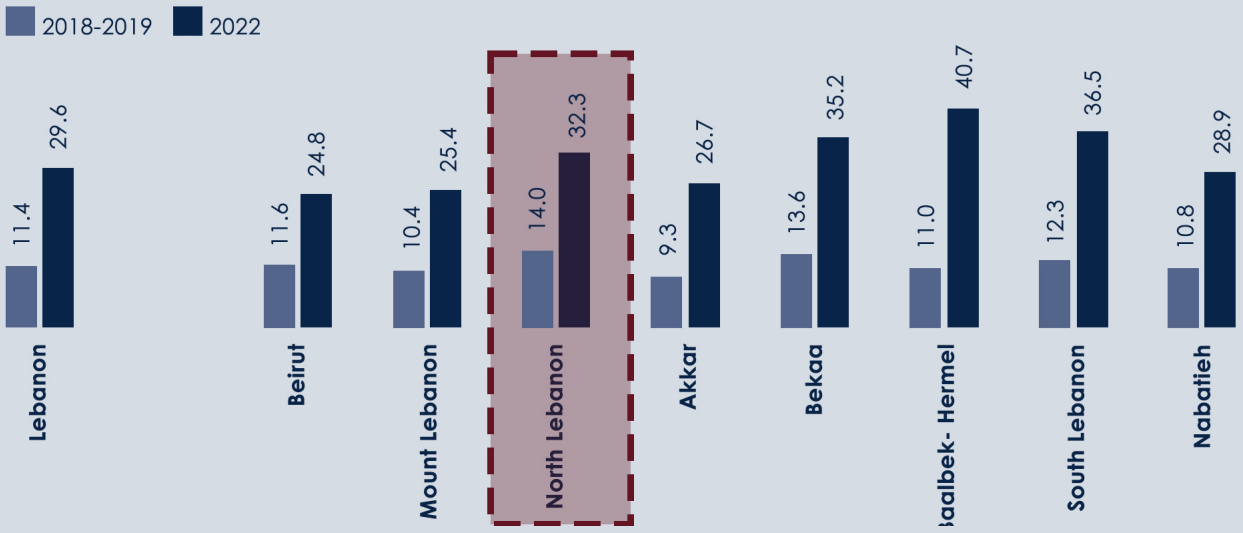


Figure 75. *Unemployment rate by governorate, Lebanon LFHLCS 2018-2019 vs LFS 2022 (%).*

Design Guidelines

1. Do Not Build New
Instead of building new permanent structures, the approach emphasizes preservation and reuse. This minimizes environmental impact, reduces costs, and respects the cultural and historical value of the site. It also protects the architectural character of the space.

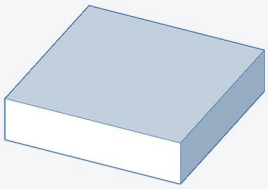
2. Integrate What Is Already on Site
Existing structures, landscapes, and traces of history should be incorporated into the design, allowing the site to evolve without erasing gits identity. Use the existing structures by adding to them, integrating them or completing them. By enhancing what is already present, the intervention maintains continuity and acknowledges memory while reducing waste.

3. Design for Flexible Use and Shared Facilities
Design for adaptability should be priority. As designing for one exclusive function is unsustainable, because needs change overtime. Shared resources, such as service cores, ensure efficiency while fostering collaboration among different users.

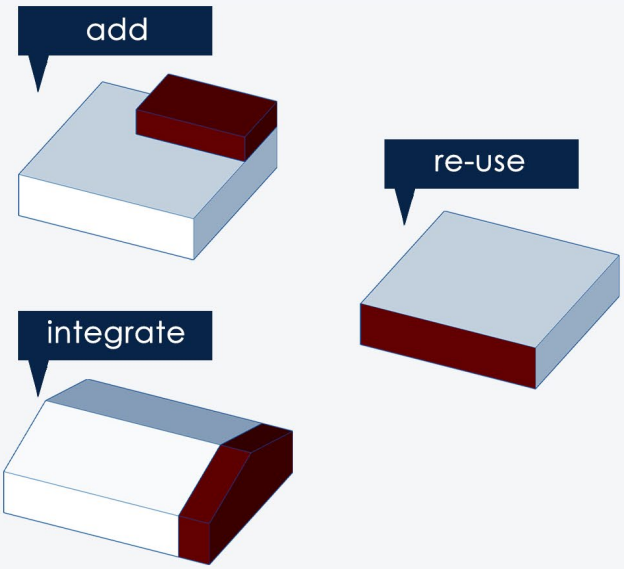
4. Reduce Weight
Interventions must remain lightweight. Using reversible systems, prefabricated elements, lightweight materials or temporary installations allows minimal impact on the ground and ensures easy removal or transformation.

5. Build Simple, Clean and Adaptable
Simple forms and neutral materials ensure reinterpretation of spaces over time. A clean design language avoids over determining use, leaving space for future adaptation. Work on clean floor plans, that can adapt multiple furniture layouts changeable upon need and request.

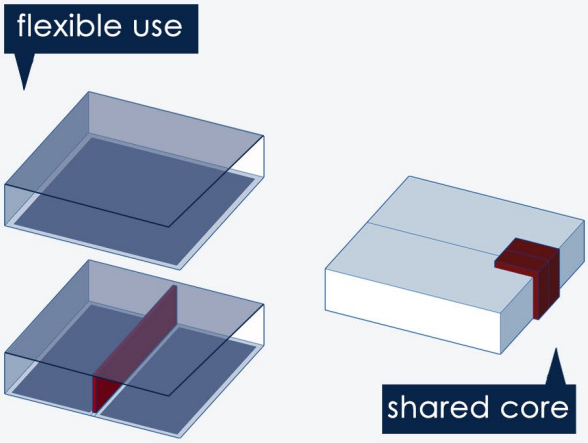
6. Break Marginality and Create a Space for All
Finally, the design must prioritize inclusion. It should provide accessible, welcoming spaces for diverse social groups and overcome existing barriers of inequality. By offering a platform for cultural exchange, economic opportunity, and collective use, the site can transform into a shared civic landmark.



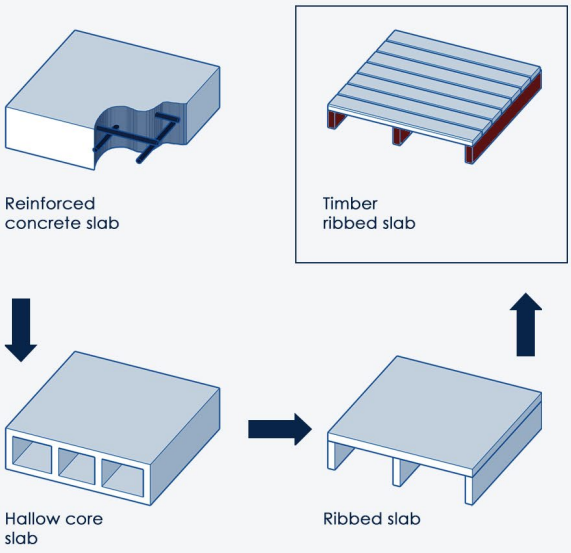
1. DO NOT BUILD NEW!



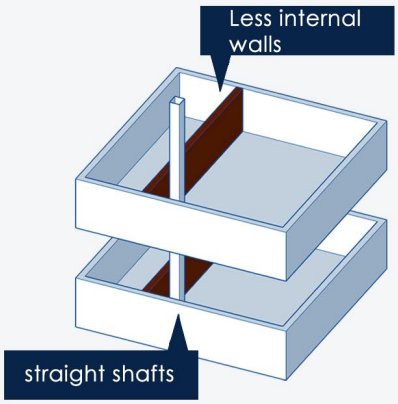
2. Integrate What Is Already on Site



3. Flexible Use and Shared Facilities



4. Reduced Weight



5. Built Simple and Clean

6. Break Marginality

06.2. The Masterplan

Both the persistent problems and the pressing needs of Tripolitans were an inspiration to develop the design concept for the masterplan of the Rachid karame international fair.
This proposal takes into account the already explained design guidelines, with particular attention to reconnecting the fair to the city.
To respond to one major problem of the site standing as "urban island", **pedestrian bridges** are proposed to re-establish physical and civic continuity between the fairground and the city.

The reprogramming of functions directly responds to the previously elaborated needs of Tripolitans while respecting and engaging withe the memory of the place. The proposed program acts for the mobility of economic activity and job creation.
The now land occupied by the abandoned fair was used for agriculture before Niemeyer's intervention. This used to reflect the city's reliance on markets and trading. Today, informal street markets remain an essential aspect of Tripoli, particularly, vegetable markets. However, their current manifestation is very organic, lacks of infrastructure, and safety concerns, as they are often located along congested roads.
In response, the masterplan introduces an urban spine within the RKIF, conceived as an organized recreation of these markets. This spine will be adjacent to the Grand Cover, reinterpreting the agricultural and commercial legacy of the site in a contemporary, adapted form.
In parallel, an **observation tower** is integrated. This is to treat the Fair as an urban museum and reinforcing its cultural and heritage significance.
By enhancing the site's symbolic value while reactivating its spaces, the proposal fosters both recognition and reuse of the Fair as a modern heritage site.
The project also articulates a Utopian vision: the urban spine extends beyond the RKIF to spread across the city, serving additional organized spaces for cultivation, production, and trade.
Ultimately, when the Fair reopens to people and functions as both a museum and a marketplace, it will respond to the collective needs of Tripoli.

ADAPTABLE INTERVENTION

TOOLKIT APPROACH

DESIGN GUIDELINES

RECREATION OF STREET MARKETS

INTRODUCING THE URBAN SPINE

BRIDGING THE GAPS

A SPACE FOR ALL

URBAN MUSEUM

MEMORY OF THE PLACE

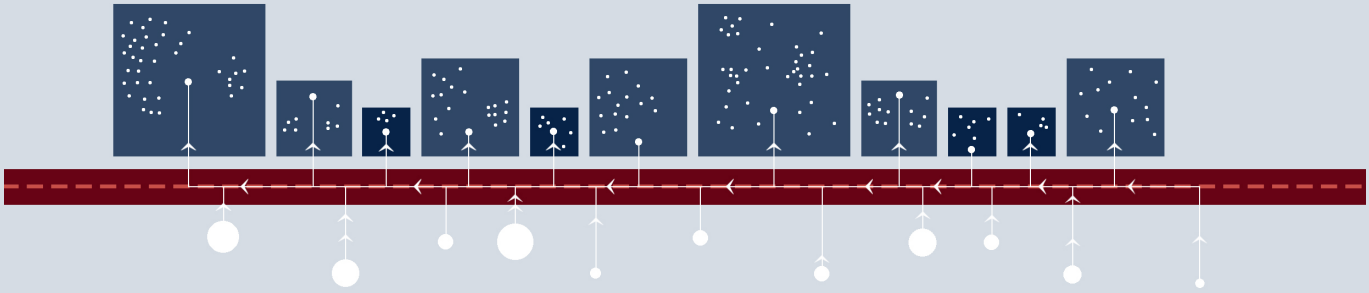
BREAKING THE BOUNDARIES

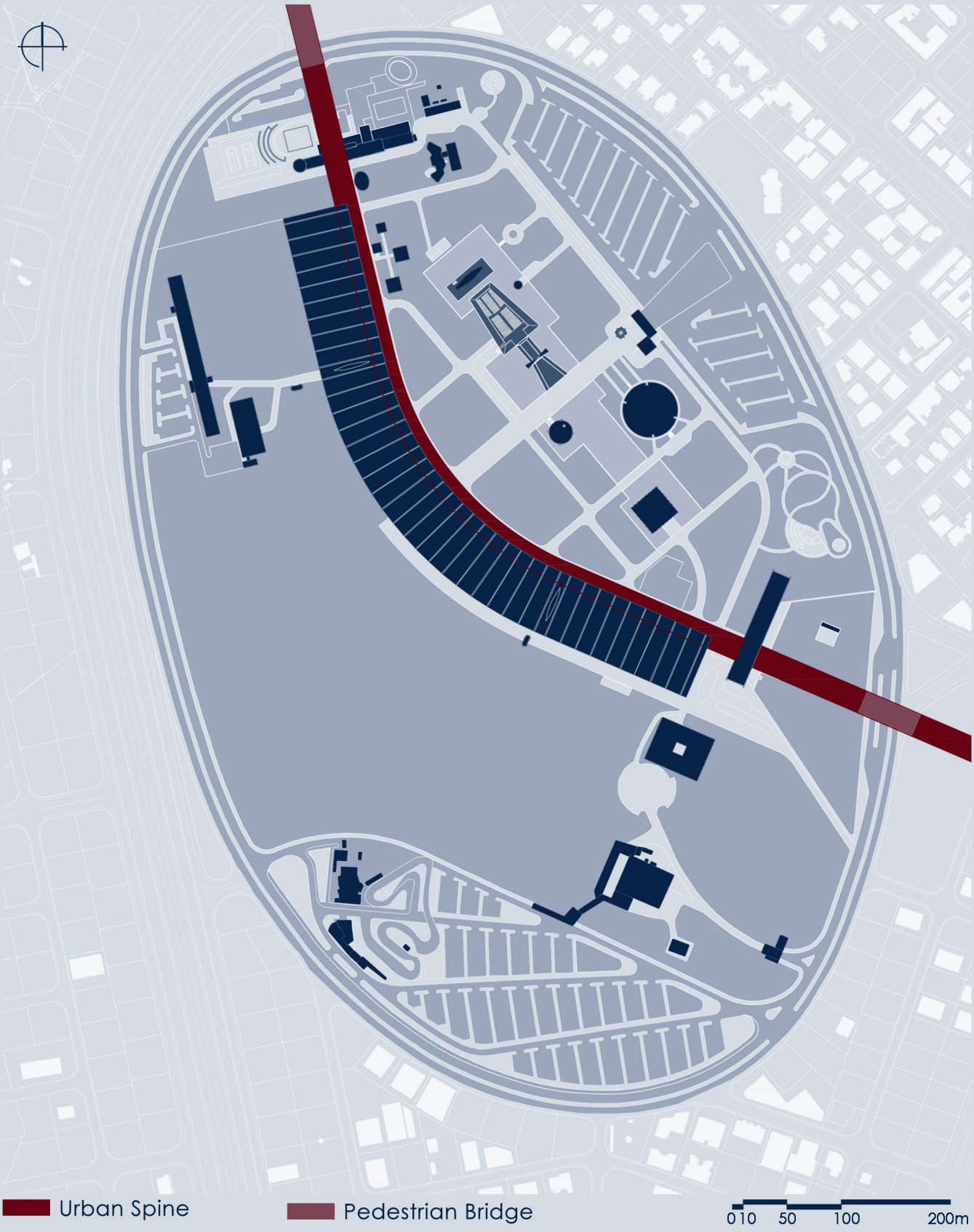
1. The urban spine

Envisioned as an urban spine, a new pedestrian street is introduced within the site, it extends to its surroundings connecting it to urban fabric and crossing the adjacent roads by aligned bridges. **This street symbolizes the streets of the city where markets are usually held.** This duplication brings familiarity inside the fair and thus brings everyday life inside the boomerang. By relocating and reinterpreting Tripoli's traditional street markets inside the Fair, it becomes an organized, safe, familiar and architecturally dignified setting.

At the same time, this spine is more than a cultural gesture, it is an economic engine, it serves as the motor for the whole project. Markets have always been at the heart of Tripoli's economy, connecting farmers, craftsmen, and consumers.

This way, local economic practices are included within monumentality, ensuring that the site is no longer isolated but an active participant in the city's growth.




Urban Spine
Pedestrian Bridge
0 10 50 100 200m

2. Pedestrian bridges

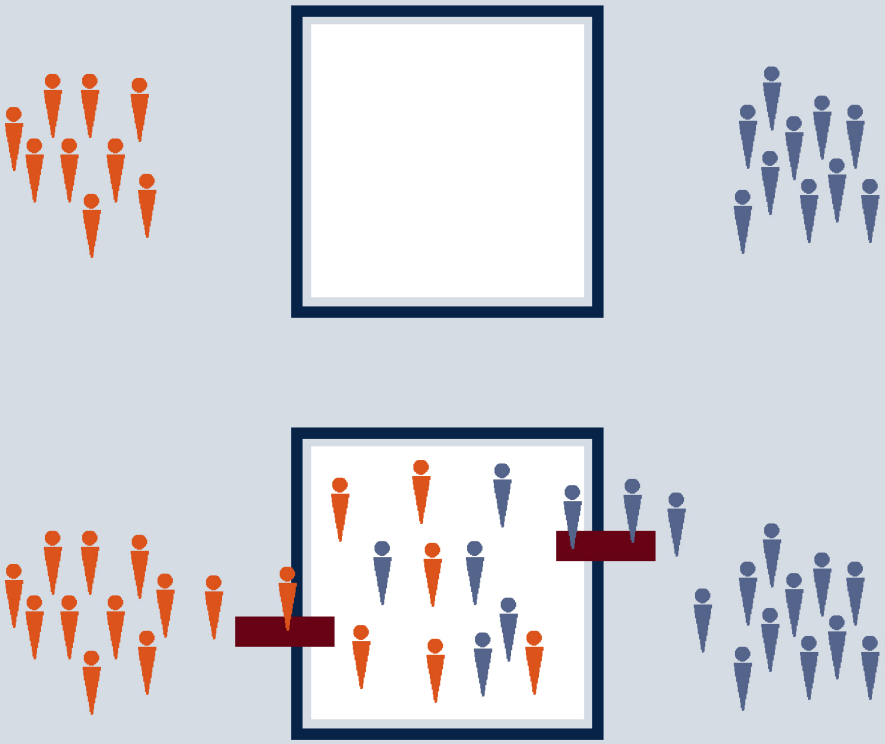
Other than the bridges that align with the spine, two pedestrian bridges are introduced **in the extension of the main axis designed by Niemeyer** and later extended after the war. This choice was carefully maid, the bridges respect the architectural order of the Fair while responding to current needs.

These bridges play a crucial role in reconnecting the Fair to the city. Today, the site suffers from isolation. This is because of the rigid, high fence that surrounds it, combined with the large vehicular roads that cut through its perimeter, create a physical and visual barrier.

As a result, pedestrians find it difficult, if not impossible, to enter the site.

The bridges are designed specifically to break this "island effect." They allow people to easily move across the barriers and into the Fair, reinforcing its role as a public and inclusive space. The bridges create safe, visible, and welcoming entry points that encourage people to use the site.

In essence, the pedestrian bridges are both a practical, as they facilitate accessibility and symbolic as they mark the transformation of the Fair from a fenced-off monument into an integrated place that connects with Tripoli's daily life.




Pedestrian Bridge
0 10 50 100 200m

3. The urban museum

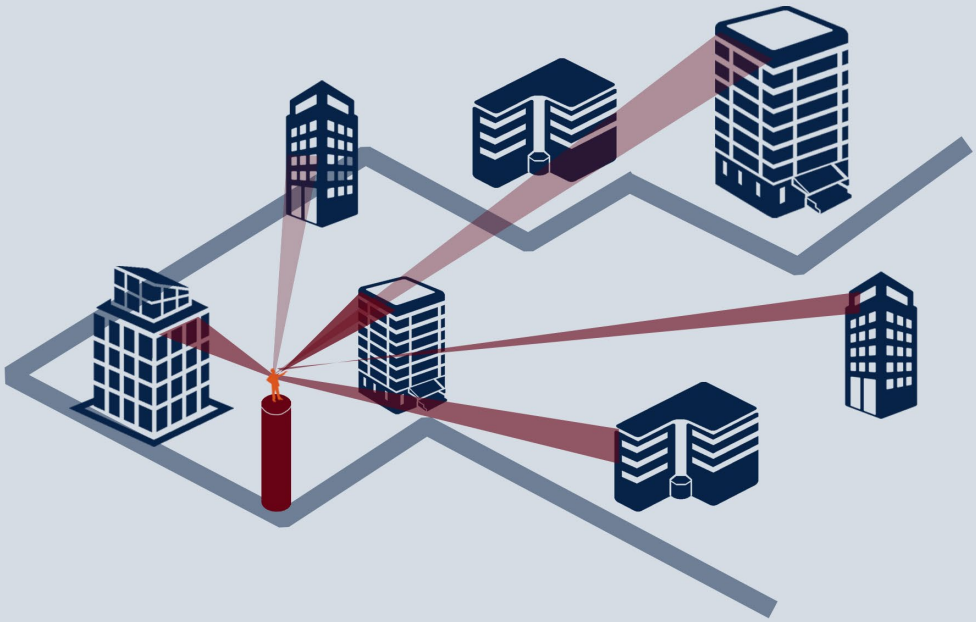
An observation tower will be strategically inserted in the Fair to enhance its touristic and experimental value. This vertical element acts as a new landmark that engage visitors to pause, pass by, and observe the Fair from a new perspective.

The tower stands 30 meters tall, aligned with the highest structure of the fair that is irreversibly decayed, the water tower. It has a circular form, to respects the site's architectural perfection and forms. Its stairs wrap around a cylindric elevator alternating scenic perspectives on every stair. After each flight of stairs, a circular balcony serves as break but also as an observation deck.

From these elevated platforms, the relationship between the individual buildings is perceived by visitors, the open landscape, and the city beyond perspectives that are inaccessible from the ground.

The tower is respectfully designed: it is as transparent as possible, in terms of materials but also in terms of form and finesse. The materials and the architectural character are carefully chosen not to clash with Neimeyer's identity.

This subtle approach ensures it remains secondary, serving as an instrument of observation rather than a visual distraction.




Observation Tower
0 10 50 100 200m

4. Re-integration of the agricultural fields

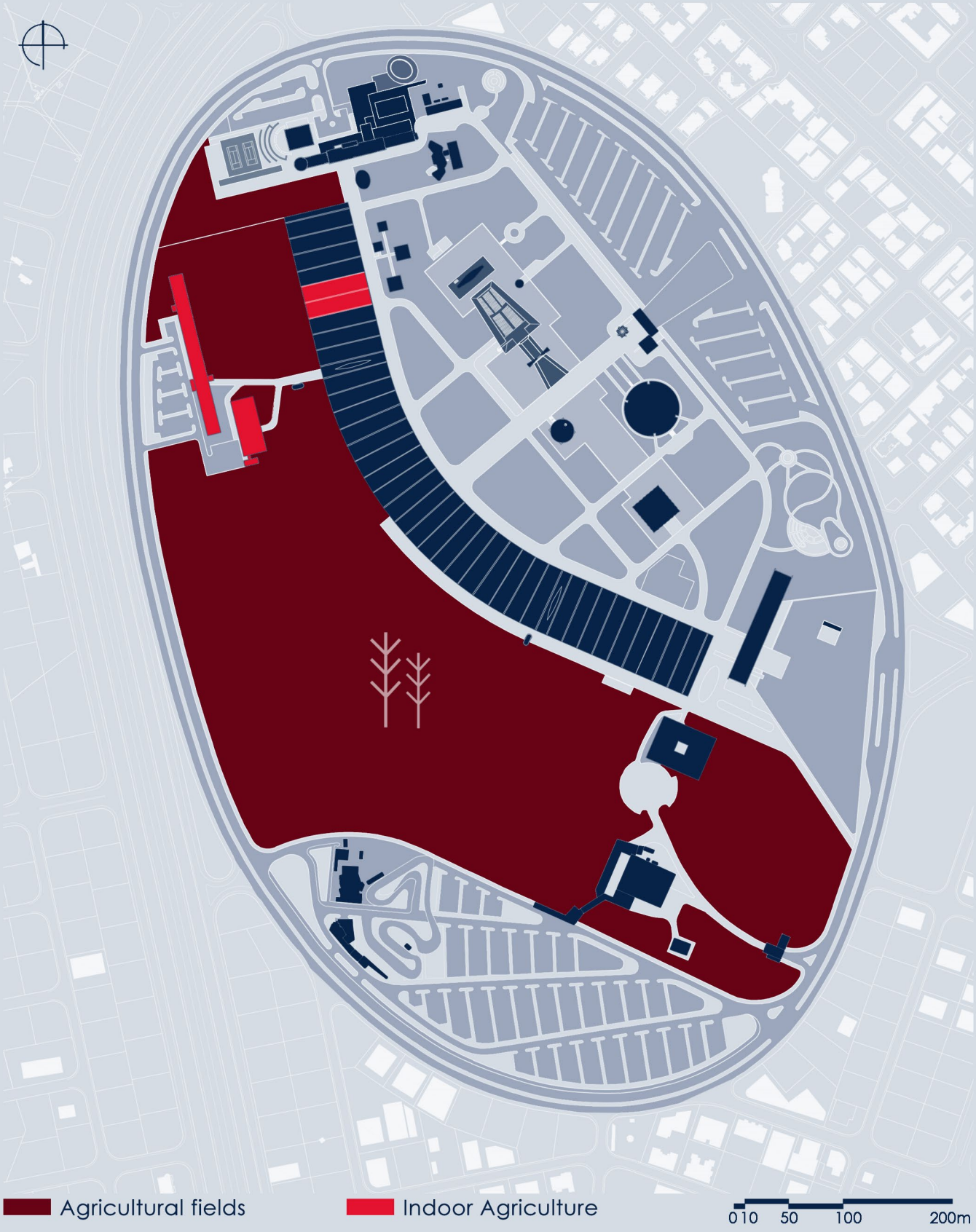
Before Neimeyer's design, the area occupied by the fair consisted of agricultural fields. The residents of Tripoli were noted for their exceptional vegetable production, which formed a crucial component of their local identity and economic structure. The state's appropriation of this land for the construction of the Fair generated frustration and a sense of loss among residents, as the project displaced an activity essential to their livelihood and culture. Tripolitans remained rooted in their agricultural heritage. Despite the loss of most fields in Tripoli, from this project and fast urbanization in general, Tripolitans preserved their identity by transporting and selling vegetables from other regions in the city's street markets, illustrating the continuity of their productive traditions and functioning as a primary economic source. The masterplan proposes the reintegration of agriculture within the site, not only in its vacant neglected landscape but also in some of its abandoned structures as models of "urban farming". This design choice acknowledges the **"memory of the place"** and addresses current economic and social needs.

The south-eastern section of the Fair will be allocated to cultivation, reinstating the productive essence that previously characterized the land.

The integration of productive landscapes and community-oriented market spaces within the adaptive reuse strategy supports several **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals**, particularly SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), and SDG 13 (Climate Action). Urban agriculture research demonstrates that such interventions generate economic benefits by creating **local employment opportunities**, shortening supply chains, and strengthening city-level food systems (Yuan et al., 2022). They also offer substantial social value, fostering community cohesion, education, and inclusion when implemented in an accessible and participatory way (Yuan et al., 2022). In contexts of instability or food insecurity, productive green spaces further contribute to disaster-risk reduction, enhancing urban resilience by decentralising food production and reducing dependence on vulnerable supply chains (Yuan et al., 2022). These spaces also support health and well-being, improving access to fresh produce while providing restorative environments that reduce stress and promote mental health (Yuan et al., 2022). By embedding these multifunctional benefits into the project, the proposal aligns its architectural choices with global sustainability agendas while directly responding to the needs and capacities of Tripoli.

On another note, urban and peri-urban agriculture demonstrate how food production can operate as a **strategic component of local development,** delivering environmental, social, and economic value within contemporary urban planning (Artuso, 2015). The study also highlights that municipal planning tools alone are insufficient to unlock this potential; instead, multi-municipal coordination and structural metropolitan planning are needed to integrate agriculture into wider mobility, heritage, and territorial strategies (Artuso, 2015). These findings reinforce the relevance of embedding food production, green infrastructure, and rural-urban linkages into sustainable urban development policies, supporting both community well-being and long-term territorial resilience (Artuso, 2015).

The evolution of soilless and building-integrated agriculture has transformed earlier utopian visions, such as vertical farming and multilevel cultivation systems, into technologically advanced forms of production supported by rapid innovation in LED lighting, hydroponics and closed-loop metabolisms (Negrello, 2024). As these systems shifted from experimental pilot projects in abandoned industrial buildings to large-scale commercial operations, they generated new hybrid architectural models and positioned **food production as an urban economic activity rather than a recreational practice** (Negrello, 2024).


Agricultural fields
Indoor Agriculture
0 10 50 100 200m

The design strategy in general, focuses on connection and continuity, transforming the site from isolated to integrated.
Spatial, functional or symbolic, each design element contributes to a system where architecture, economy and culture work in harmony.
The production layer (agriculture) feeds the commercial and cultural layers while the spine, bridges and tower ensure accessibility and permeability.
Now,the Fair evolves from a static relic of modernity into a dynamic and adaptive place that mirrors the identity, aspirations and needs of Tripoli.

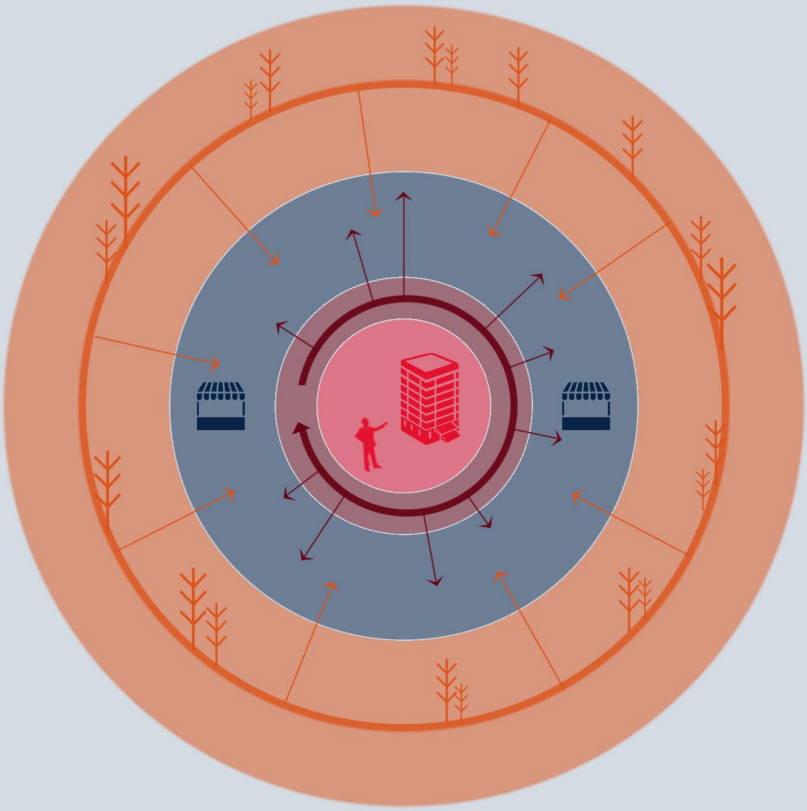
Spatial and Programmatic Interactions

Spatial interactions, form the foundation of the masterplan, which operates as a system of dialogue between functions, creating a balanced self-sufficient whole. Rather than organizing the Fair as a collection of isolated zones, the proposal establishes a continuous chain of intertwining activities that unfold from the reintroduced agricultural fields toward the heart of the complex.
This sequence moves from cultivation to production and trade within the Grand Cover, and extends to commerce and exchange along the urban spine, where daily life takes place.
The progression converges in the urban museum that values Niemeyer's fifteen structures through the integration of the tower, shifting the focus from economy to culture and heritage.

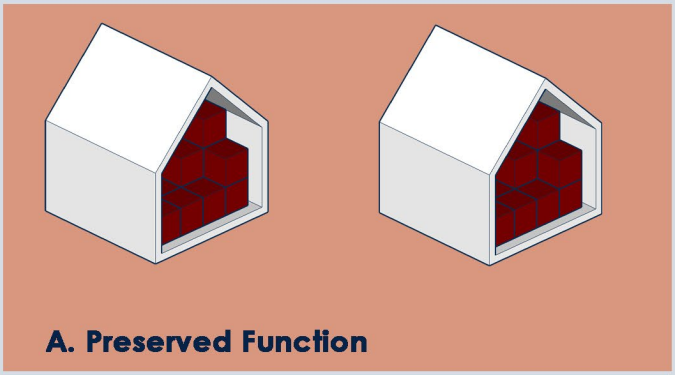
Newly Adapted Functions

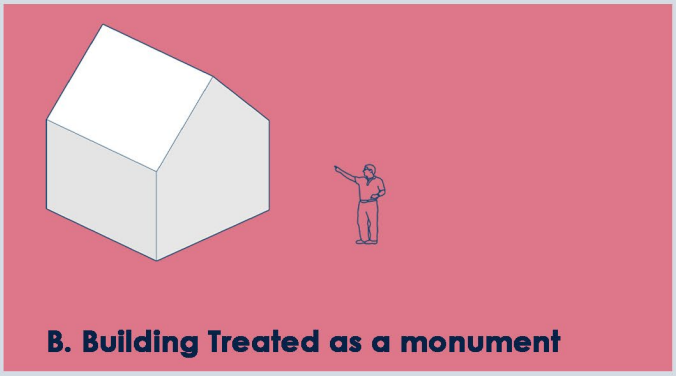
Finally, this comprehensive strategy informs the **Newly Adapted Functions** of the existing structures, which are approached through four distinct modes: (A) preserved functions, (B)buildings treated as monuments, (C) re-purposed buildings, and (D) demolished buildings.
These interventions are carefully assigned to balance preservation with transformation, ensuring that each architectural gesture contributes to the site's reboot as a sustainable, inclusive, and futuristic urban ecosystem.

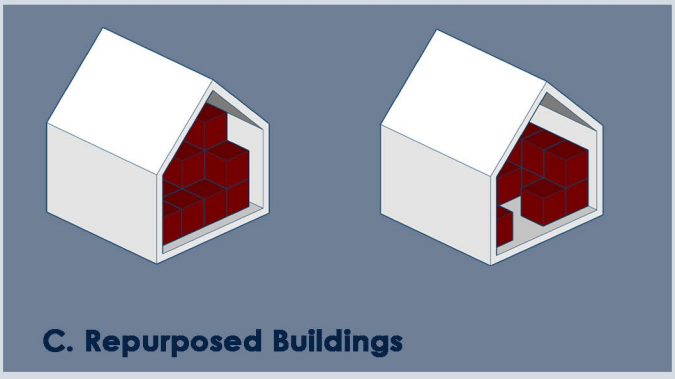
Spatial Interactions

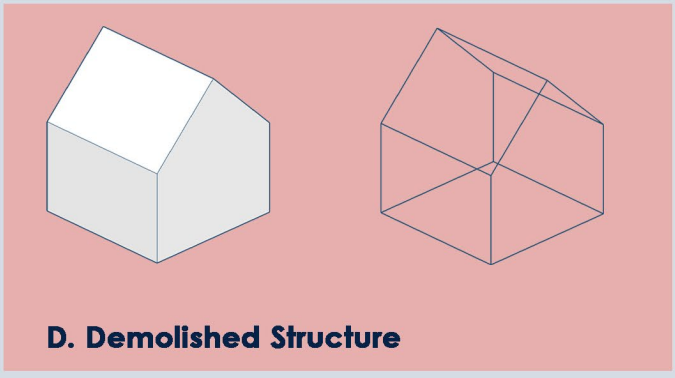


Newly Adapted Functions









Newly Adapted Functions

A. Preserved Function

1 Quality In Hotel
Original Architecture altered in 1999
Original Function: Collective Housing

2 RKIF Administration
Interior restored in 1996
Original Function: Reception

3 Ticket Booth
Needs Restauration
Original Function: Ticket Booth

4 Minjara
Restaured and transformed to a woodworking platform in 2018
Original Function: Guest House

5 UNHCR Tripoli
Built in the 1980s

B. Building Treated as a monument

6 Neimeyer's structures, Unaltered
Structures in need for restauration

C. Repurposed Buildings

7 Outdoor Restaurant Extentions
Original Function: Bars

8 Tripoli's Central Market
Original Function: Covered Pavillions

9 Indoor Planting Area
Original Function: Rkif Administration

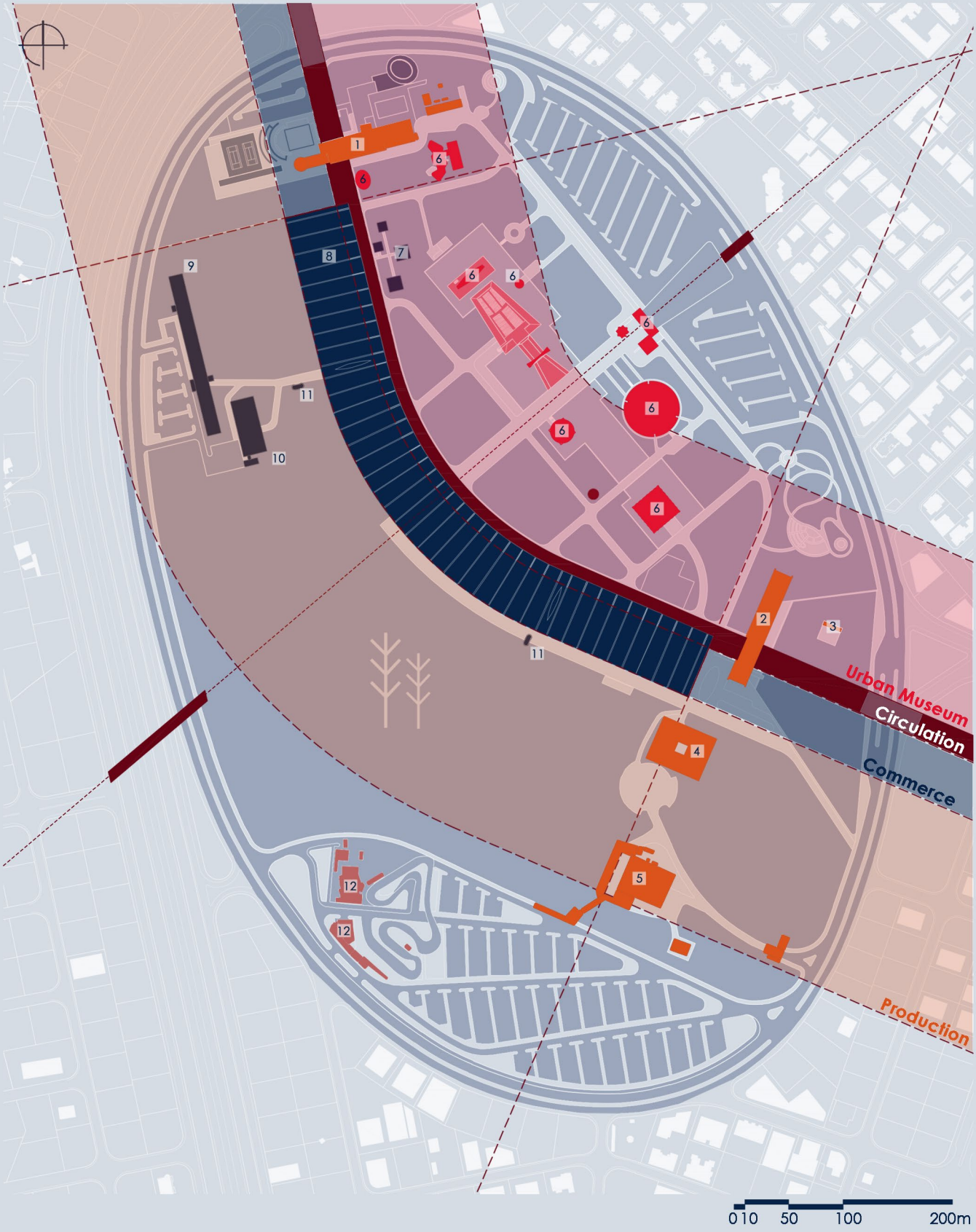
10 Storage for Agricultural Activities
Original Function: Customs, Firefighters and storage

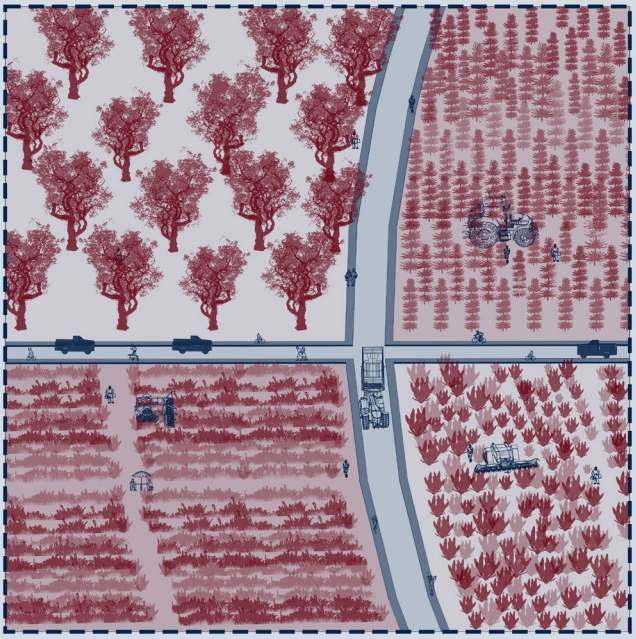
11 Storage for Agricultural Activities
Original Function: Toilets

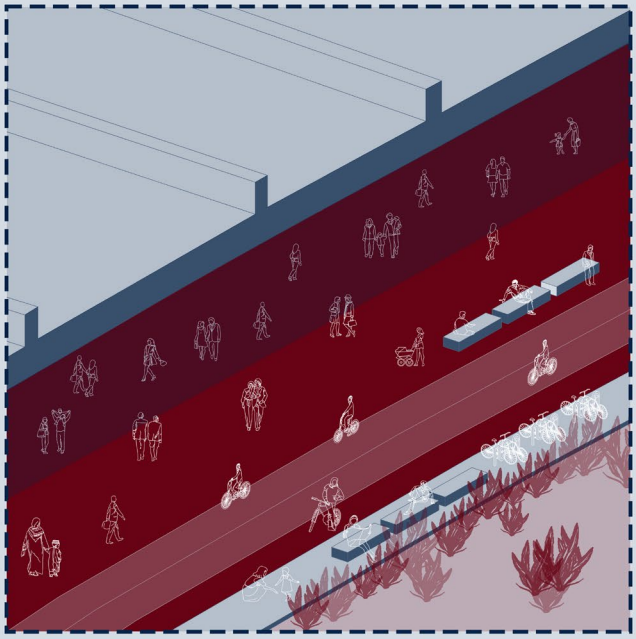
D. Demolished Structure

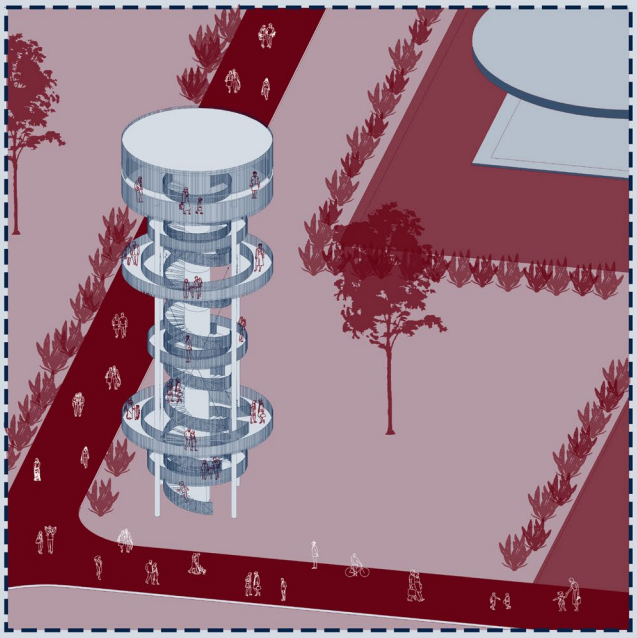
12 Red Power Ralley Park
Informal Structures used for commercial activities

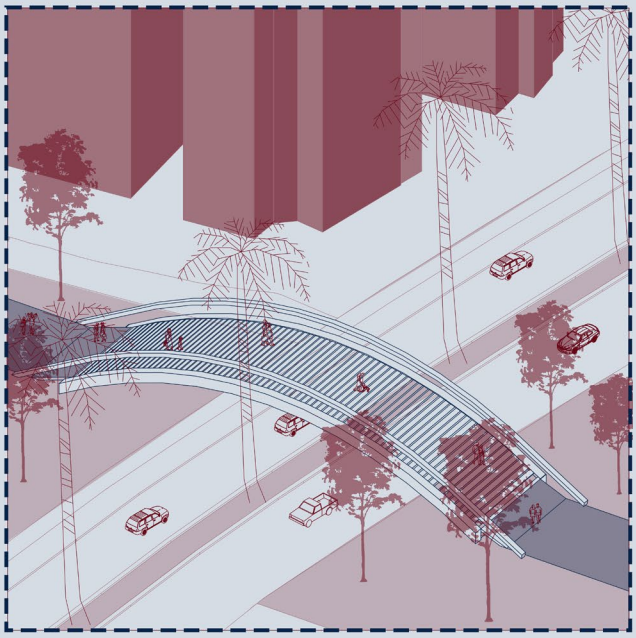
Overall Design Strategy

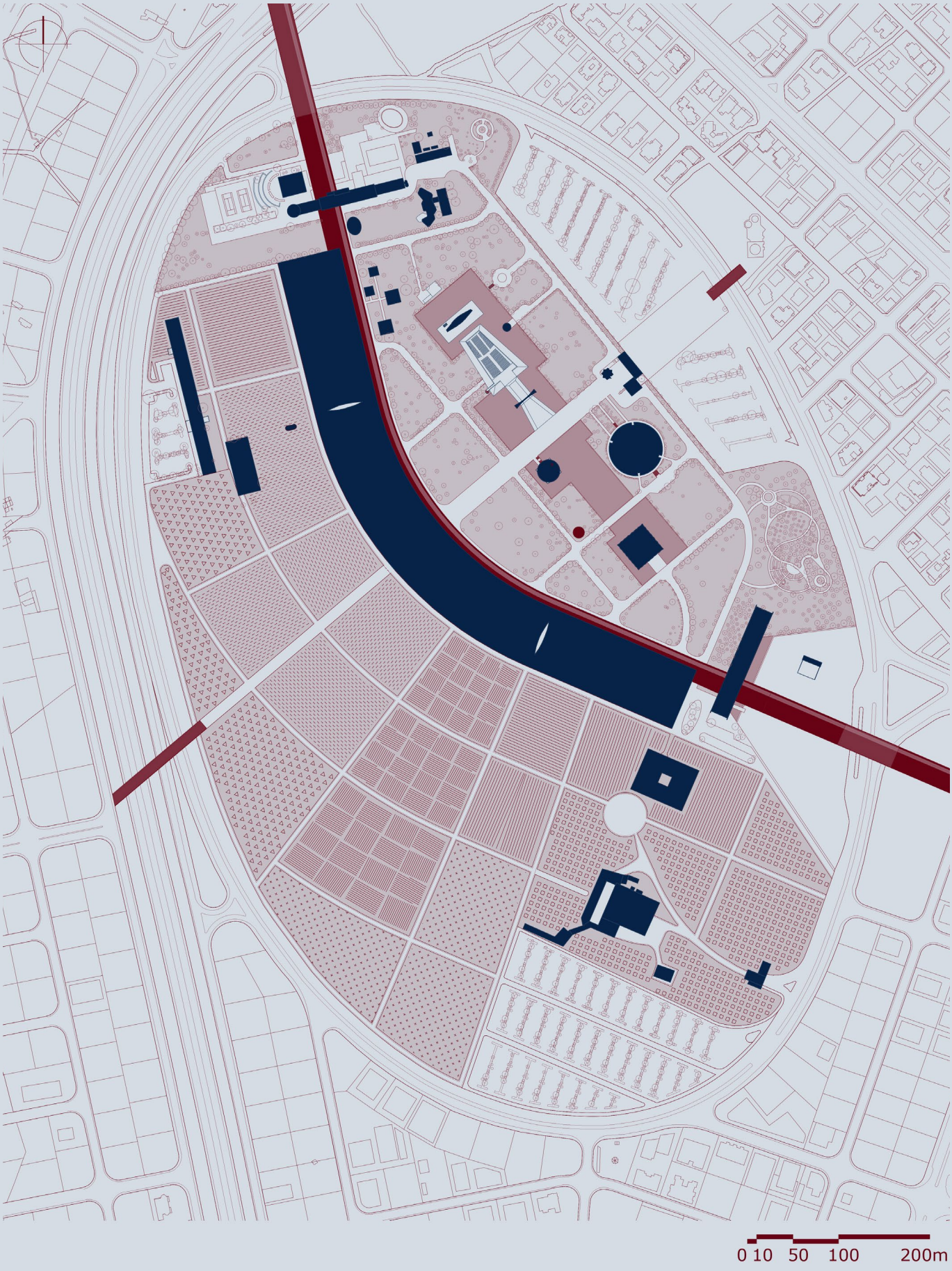








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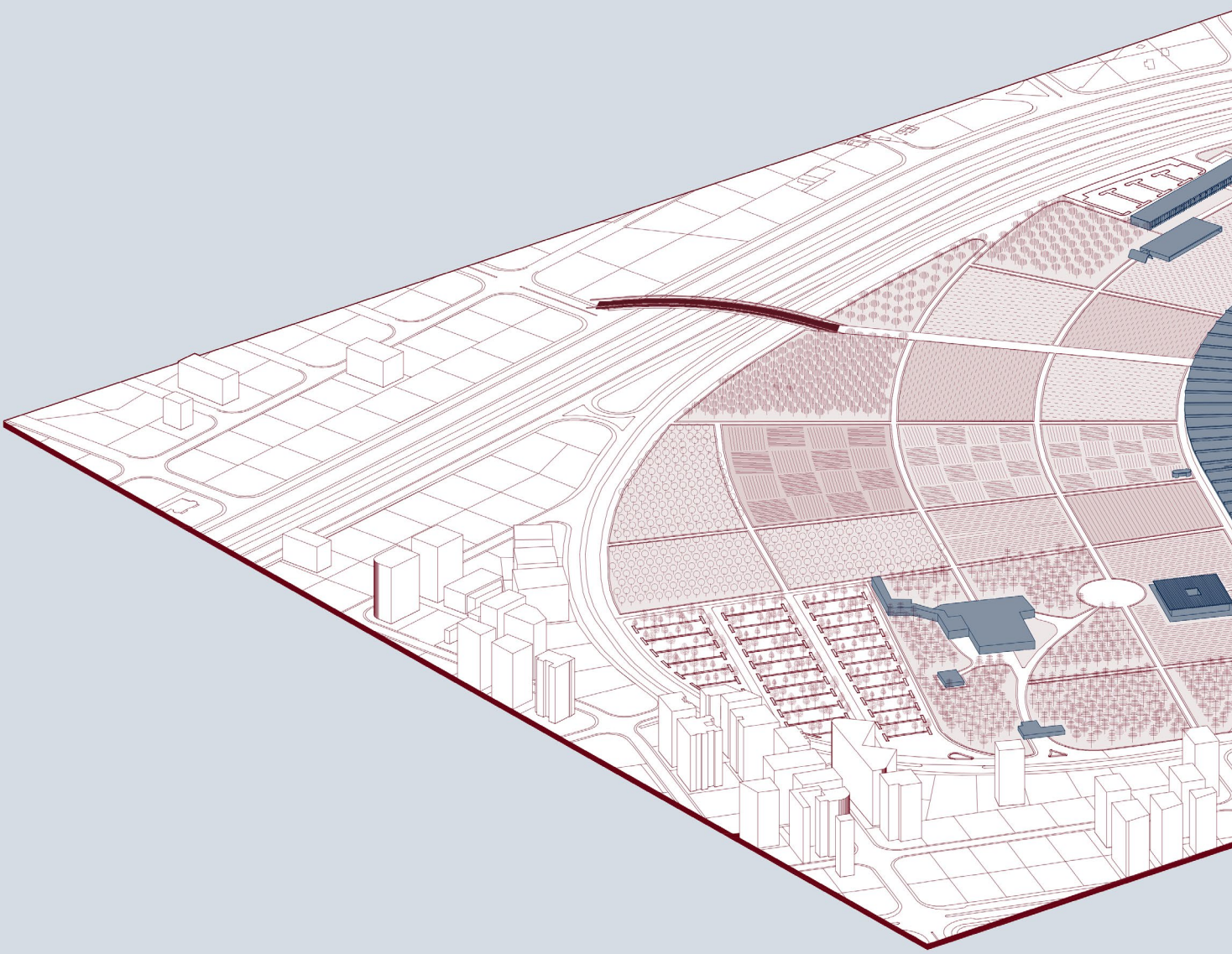
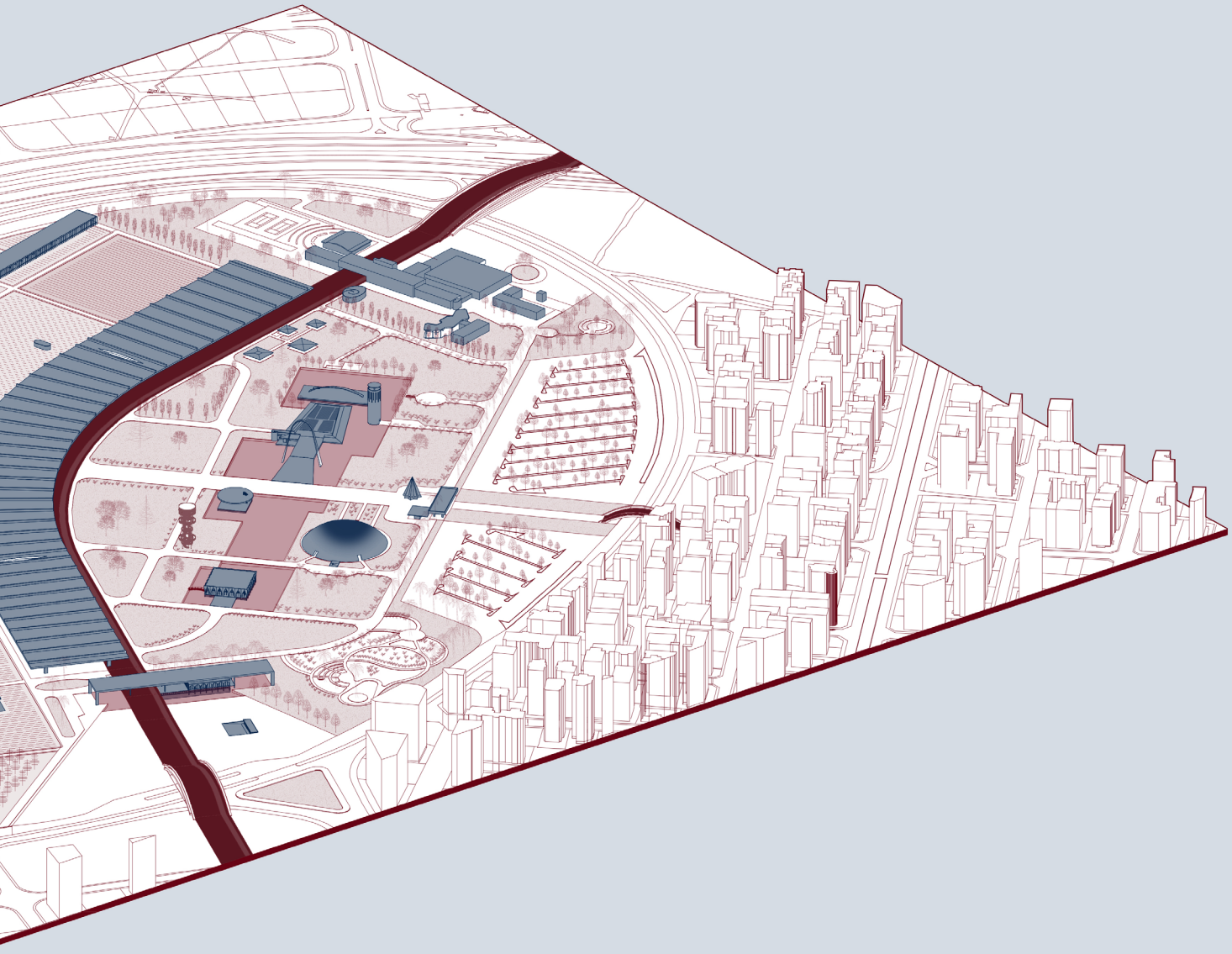
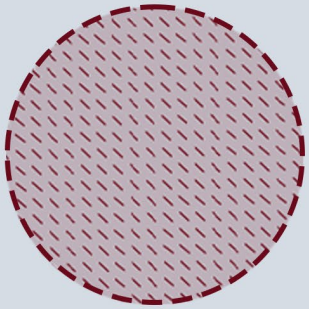
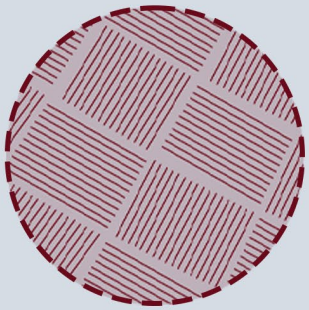




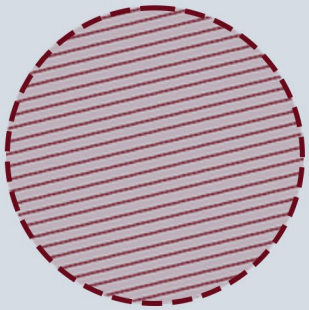
The Agriculture



1. Grains
Used in rotation to enrich soil and diversify the landscape. Their seasonal growth adds texture, rhythm, and visual contrast within the agricultural fields while contributing to soil regeneration.

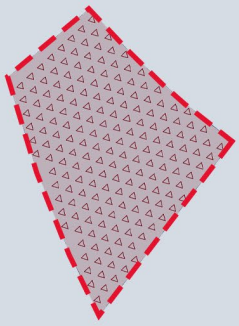


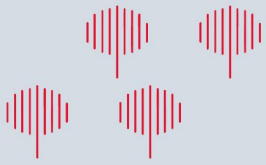
2. Vegetables
Chosen for their rapid growth cycles, strong local market demand, and suitability for open-field drip irrigation during the warm season. They ensure a steady yield and visible agricultural activity throughout spring and summer.



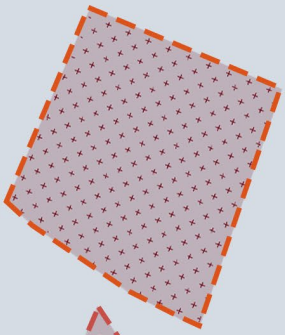
3. Leafy Greens
Selected for short cultivation periods and compatibility with cooler seasons. These crops support year-round rotation and provide daily fresh produce for local consumption.

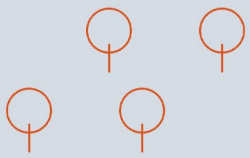
Trees
These three species were selected for their adaptability to Tripoli's Mediterranean climate, their complementary irrigation needs, and their visual and cultural value.



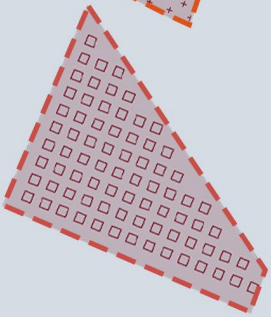


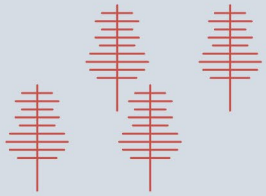
Olive Trees
Reflects local agricultural heritage and thrives with minimal water.



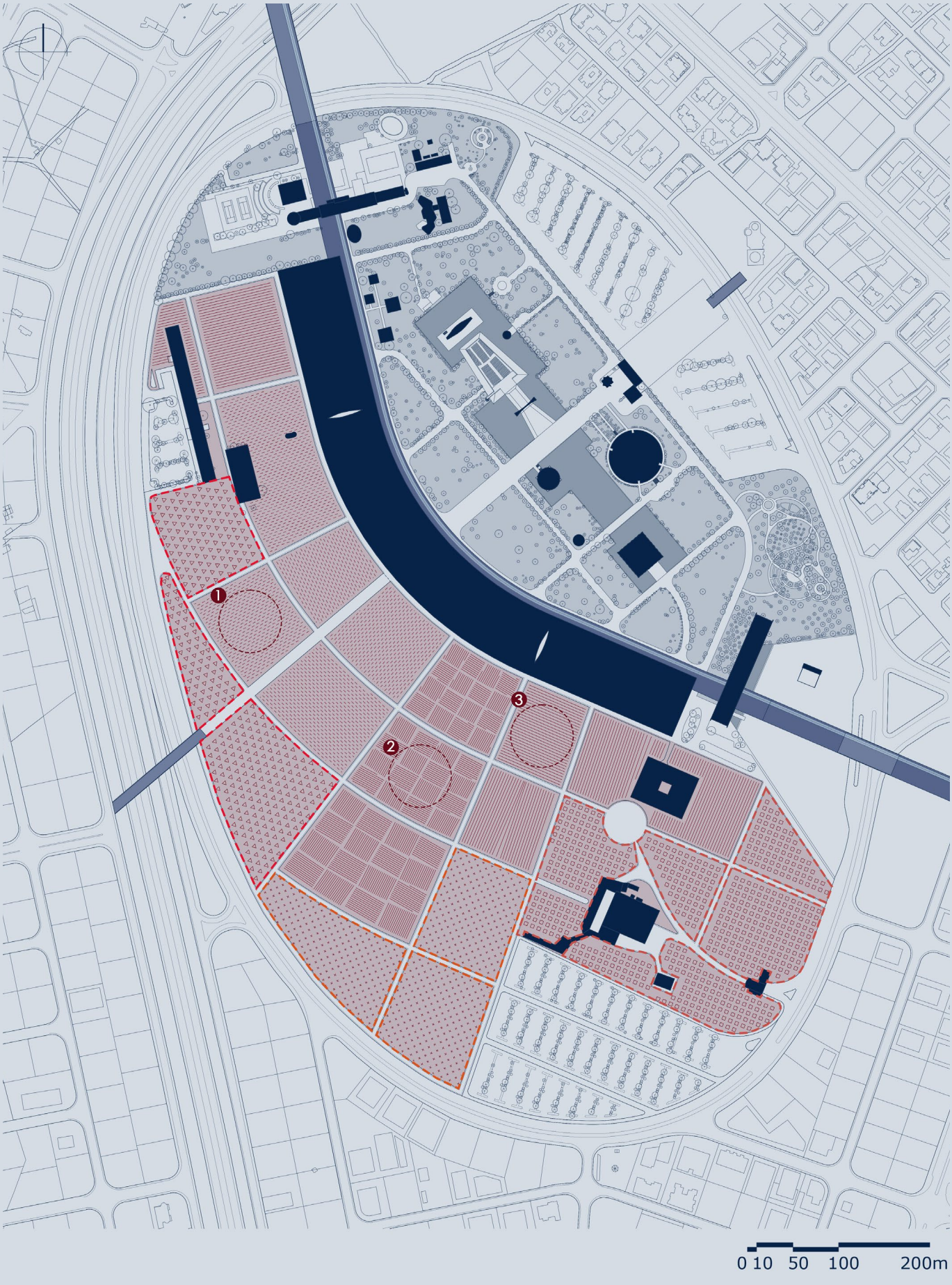


Citrus Trees
Offers seasonal color, aromatic scent and continuous greenery, reinforcing the site's identity and productivity.

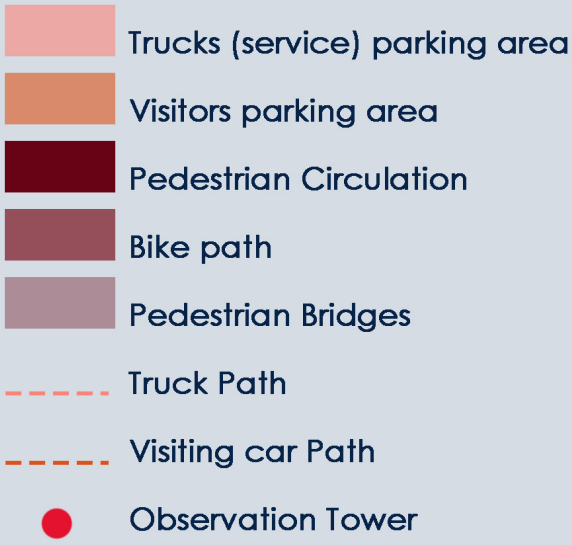


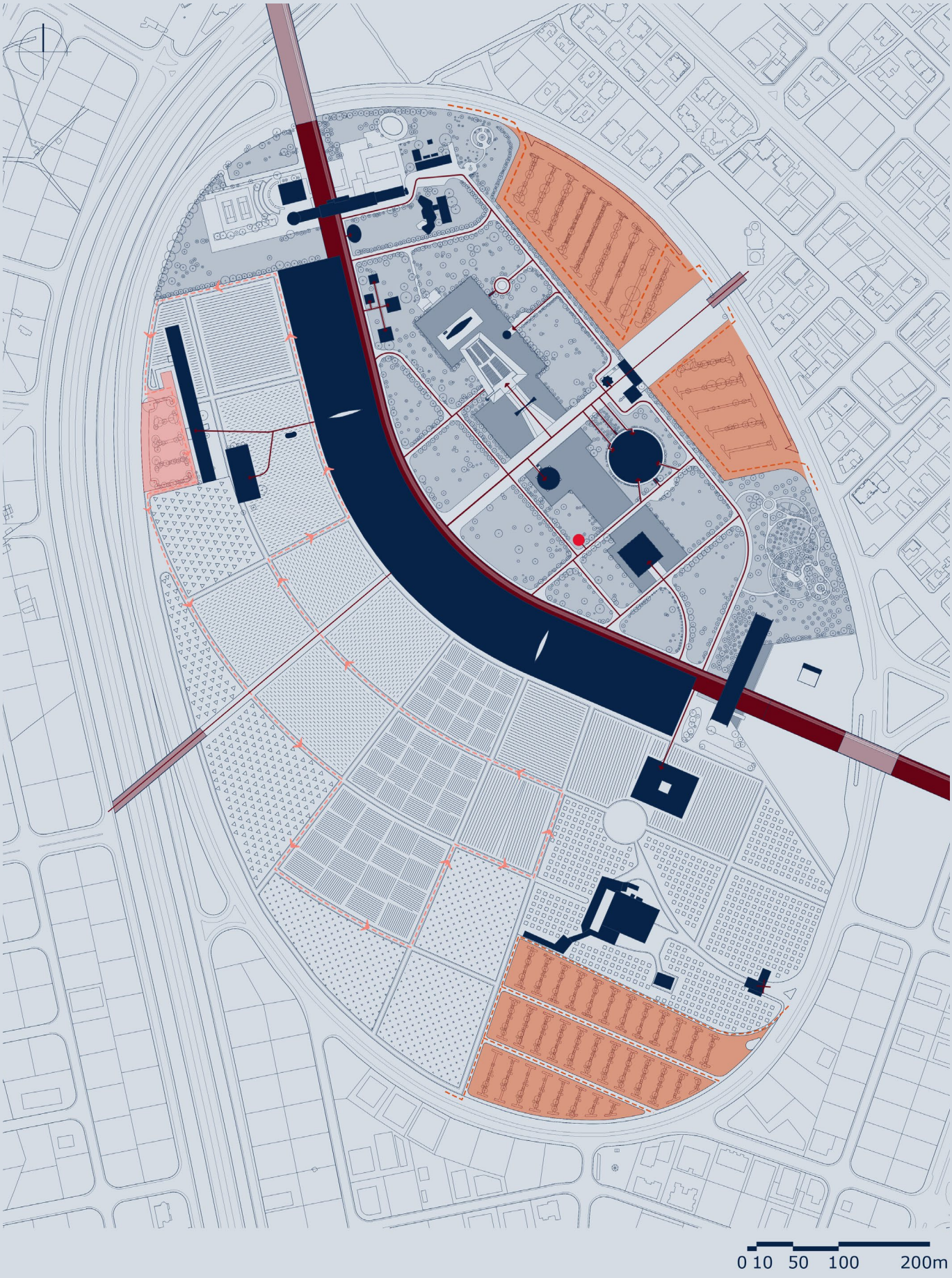


Avocado Trees
Provides a high-value crop suited to the humid coastal air.


1
2
3
0 10 50 100 200m

The Circulation

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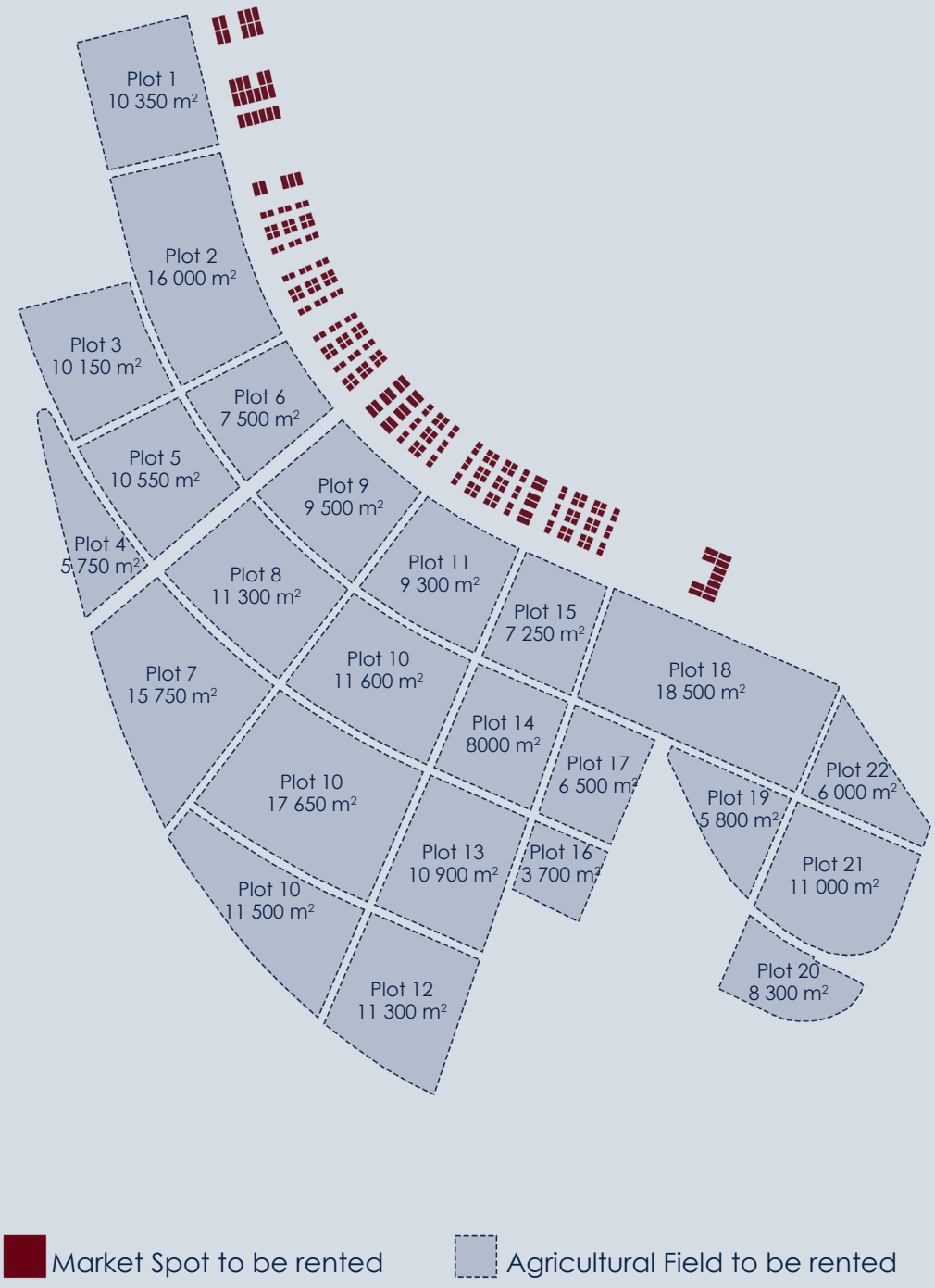
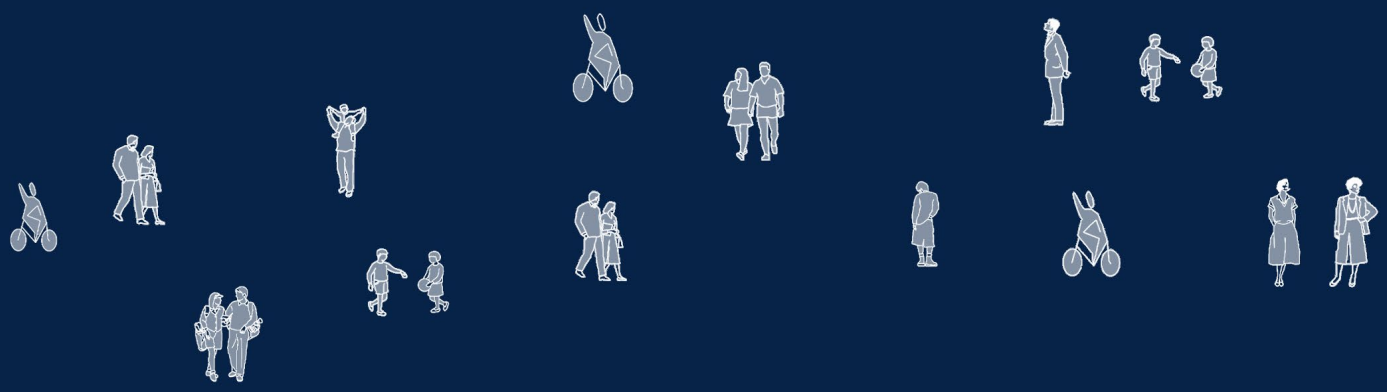
The Management Strategy

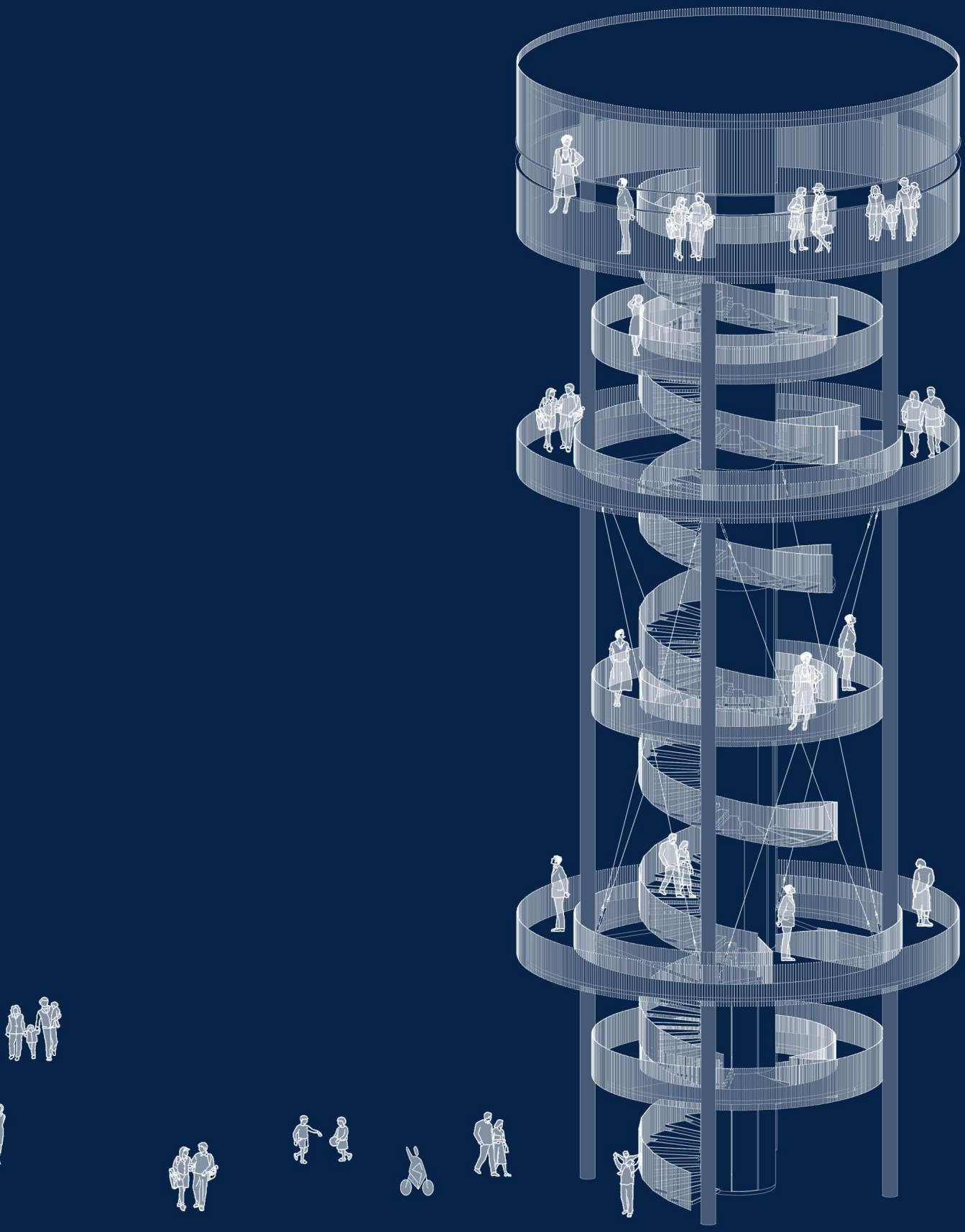
The proposed masterplan extends beyond spatial reconfiguration and introduces a **concrete operational and management** model that enables the Rachid Karame International Fair to function as an economically active and socially rooted civic landscape.
While the Fair **remains publicly owned** and controlled by the RKIF administration, its grounds and structures, specifically the agricultural fields and the Grand Cover are capable of being activated through **controlled leasing mechanisms**.
The agricultural fields, divided into manageable cultivated parcels of approximately one hectare each, can be rented to individual farmers, cooperatives, or local agricultural initiatives through renewable contracts.
In this way, the Fair re-establishes a productive relationship with Tripoli's long-standing agricultural economy, generating employment opportunities, supporting small-scale cultivation practices, and **providing a stable revenue stream for the Administration without relinquishing public ownership.**

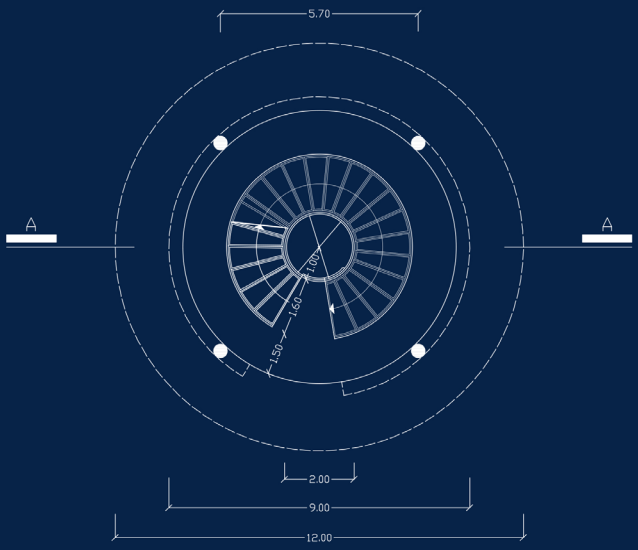
Similarly, the market ground composed of the 6×6 modular units are conceived as **micro-leasable commercial spaces,** accessible to vendors, artisans, small businesses, and community-based cultural or social initiatives. The simplicity and standardization of these modules reduce economic entry barriers, allowing diverse participants to operate within the Fair without requiring construction capital or permanent installations. This makes participation accessible to people who **do not have capital to build structures but can operate them.**
This approach enables the site to host a variety of economic and cultural activities that evolve over time while maintaining architectural coherence and spatial clarity.

Together, these leasing systems constitute a participatory operational model in which public ownership is preserved, but day-to-day economic activity is distributed among local actors.
Rather than privatizing the Fair, the strategy encourages the involvement of private and community stakeholders in activating spaces, producing goods, hosting cultural programs, and circulating value within the city.
The Administration retains its regulatory, supervisory, and heritage protection role, while citizens, cooperatives, and entrepreneurs become active participants in the Fair's ongoing life. In doing so, the project shifts from a purely architectural and theoretical proposition to a structured, feasible, and sustainable framework for long-term activation.

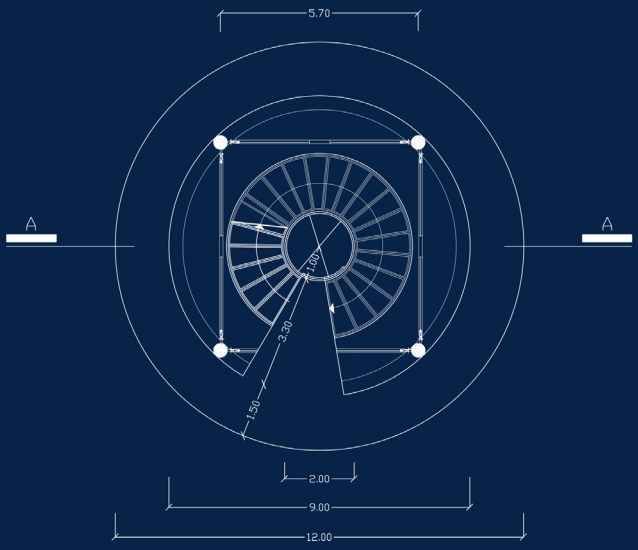

Plot 1
10 350 m²
Plot 2
16 000 m²
Plot 3
10 150 m²
Plot 6
7 500 m²
Plot 5
10 550 m²
Plot 9
9 500 m²
Plot 4
5 750 m²
Plot 8
11 300 m²
Plot 11
9 300 m²
Plot 15
7 250 m²
Plot 18
18 500 m²
Plot 7
15 750 m²
Plot 10
11 600 m²
Plot 14
8000 m²
Plot 17
6 500 m²
Plot 22
6 000 m²
Plot 10
17 650 m²
Plot 19
5 800 m²
Plot 21
11 000 m²
Plot 13
10 900 m²
Plot 16
3 700 m²
Plot 10
11 500 m²
Plot 20
8 300 m²
Plot 12
11 300 m²
Market Spot to be rented
Agricultural Field to be rented



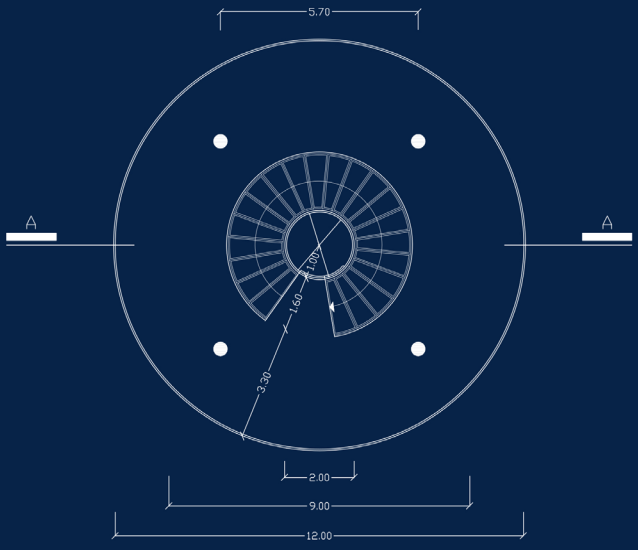




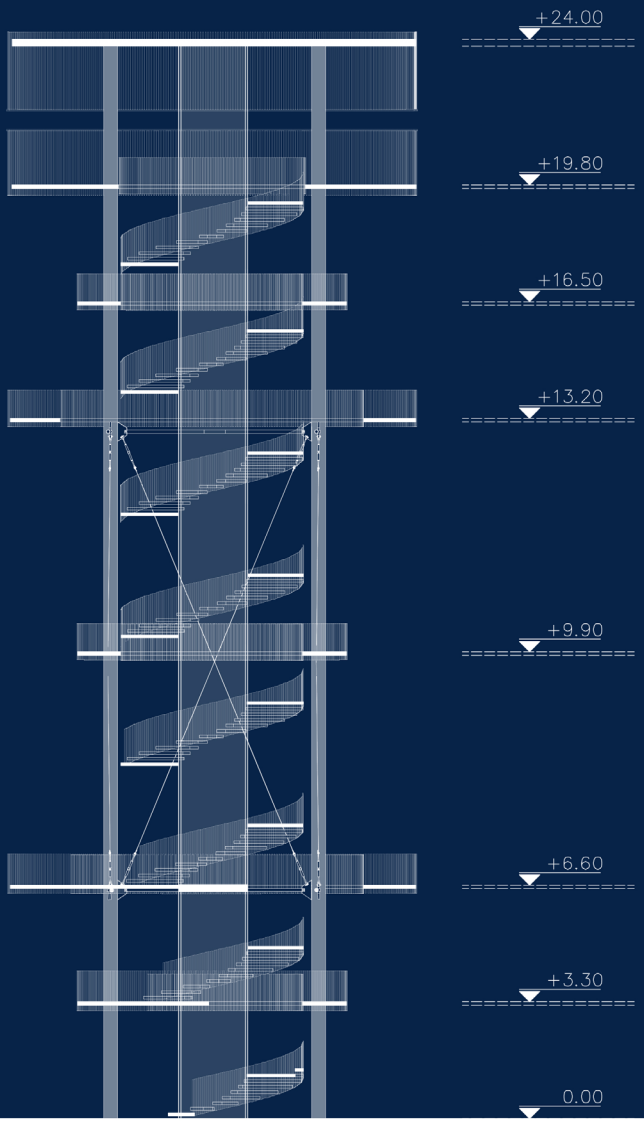
Typical Floor Plan 1
Levels +3.30, +9.90, +16.50



Typical Floor Plan 2
Levels +6.60, +13.20



Roof Floor Plan 2
Level +19.80



Section A.A.

0 1 10 m

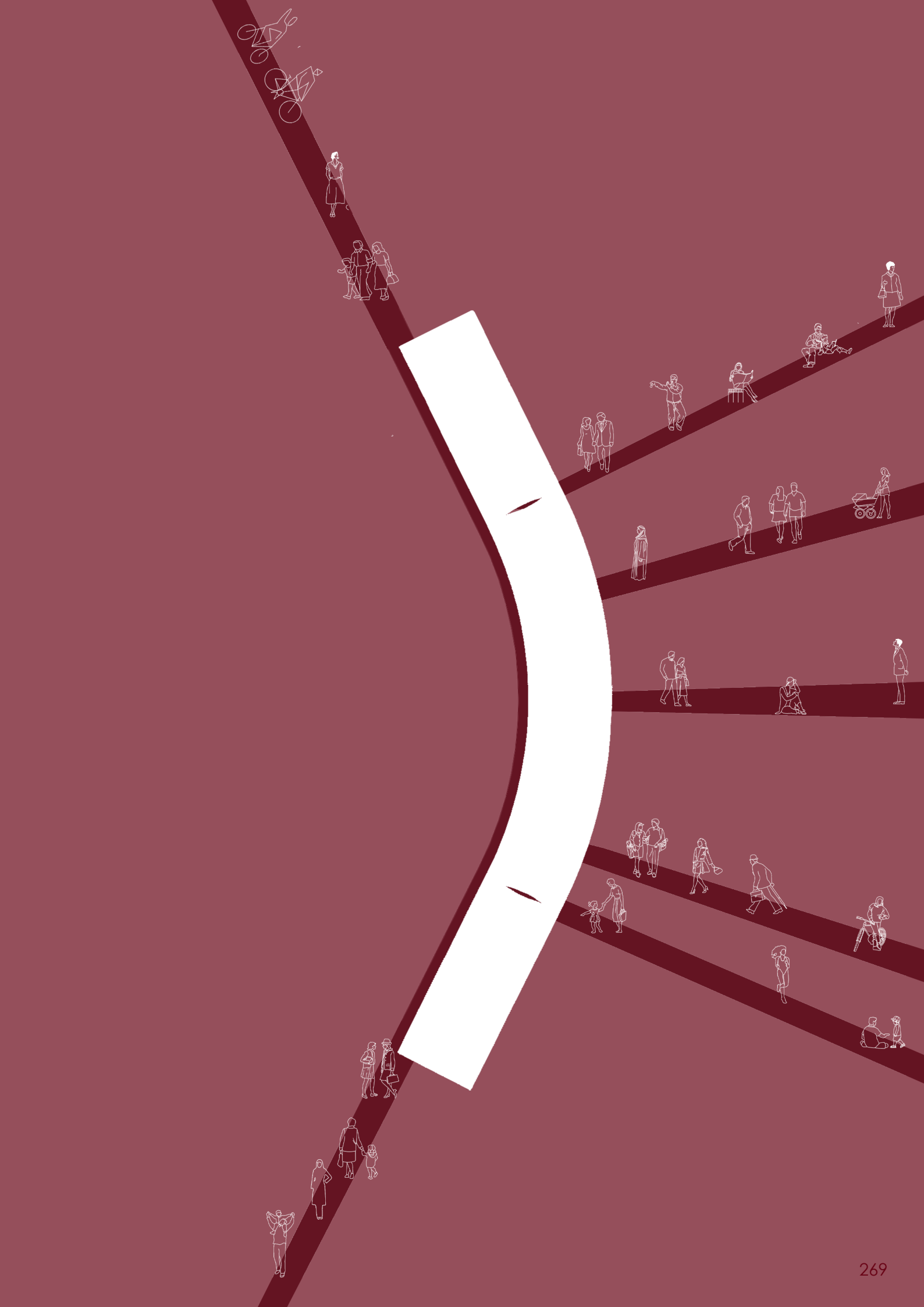
06.3. The Grand Cover

The Grand Cover, also referred to as the Boomerang, is the core of the intervention and is directly served by the Urban Spine, connecting the Fair to the urban fabric of Tripoli.
In this context, the spine reminds us of the city's traditional main streets, where markets, vendors, and social interactions take place, becoming both a practical and symbolic aspect of Tripoli's street life within the Fair.
Following the neighborhood typology characteristic of Tripoli, a hierarchical system of streets emerges from this main axis. Primary routes gradually branch into secondary and tertiary lanes, structuring the area into smaller, human sized, distinct districts.
Within these districts, lightweight and removable units are strategically positioned to ensure flexibility of use and allow transformation. Some of these internal routes extend toward the agricultural fields, reinforcing connectivity and visual transparency between the cultivated landscape and the built environment.
In this way, the design reproduces the social rhythm and urban logic of Tripoli, an open, accessible, and evolving environment that accommodates diverse activities and fosters continuous interaction.

The functional program of the Boomerang responds to the current socioeconomic conditions of Tripoli. Each function has been carefully selected to address local needs while fostering productivity, education, and cultural continuity.

1. Farm-to-Table Restaurant:
Spatially and logically connected to the surrounding agricultural fields, it promotes local food production and short supply chains, highlighting the relationship between cultivation and consumption.
2. Indoor Planting Area:
A controlled environment for agricultural experimentation, partly accessible to the public as an educational and exhibition space.
3. Research Center:
Supporting agricultural innovation through collaboration between local farmers and experts, ensuring a continuous exchange of knowledge and experimentation.
4. Co-Working Area:
Supporting locals and providing a comprehensive, suitable work environment for everyone.
5. Vegetable Market:
Reviving the city's traditional open-air market culture, enabling direct sale of local produce and reinforcing economic sustainability.
6. Furniture Workshops:
Reflecting one of Tripoli's most established crafts, the fair now gives the right place to talented furniture workers to show and practice their work.
7. Tripoli Crafts:
Dedicated to the city's traditional industries such as woodwork, metalwork, and textile fabrication, reinforcing cultural identity and heritage.
8. Clothing Stores:
Providing accessible retail spaces for locally produced clothes and second hand markets, supporting the city's informal commercial sector.
9. Tailors' Workshops:
Sustaining small-scale clothes production and craftsmanship, deeply rooted in Tripoli's traditional economy.
10. Occasional Market Spaces:
Flexible zones activated during specific events, festivals, or humanitarian needs, ensuring the site's adaptability and vitality.

Two standard units will be designed based on the selected functions. The initial unit measures 6 by 6 meters and is designed to be customer-friendly, encouraging interaction between buyers and sellers while extending into the streets. The second unit measures 6 by 12 meters, thereby doubling the size. This area features an open plan layout, offering flexibility for functions requiring ample room. This unit can be multiplied and grouped to make a substantial area. The chosen material is wood given it's availability in the area and it's flexibility and ease of assembly.



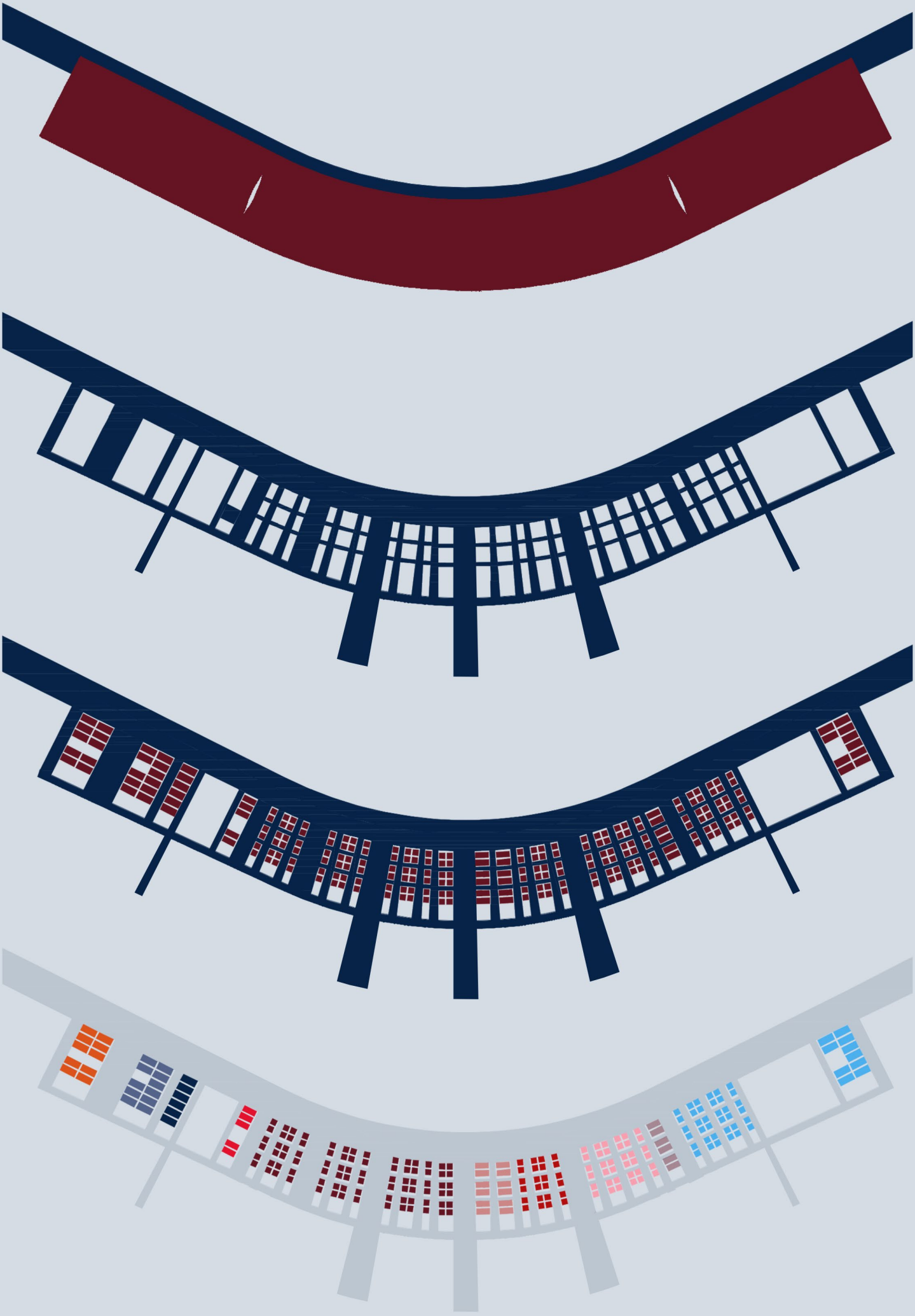
A. Served by the Urban Spine

B. Following a neiborhood's typology

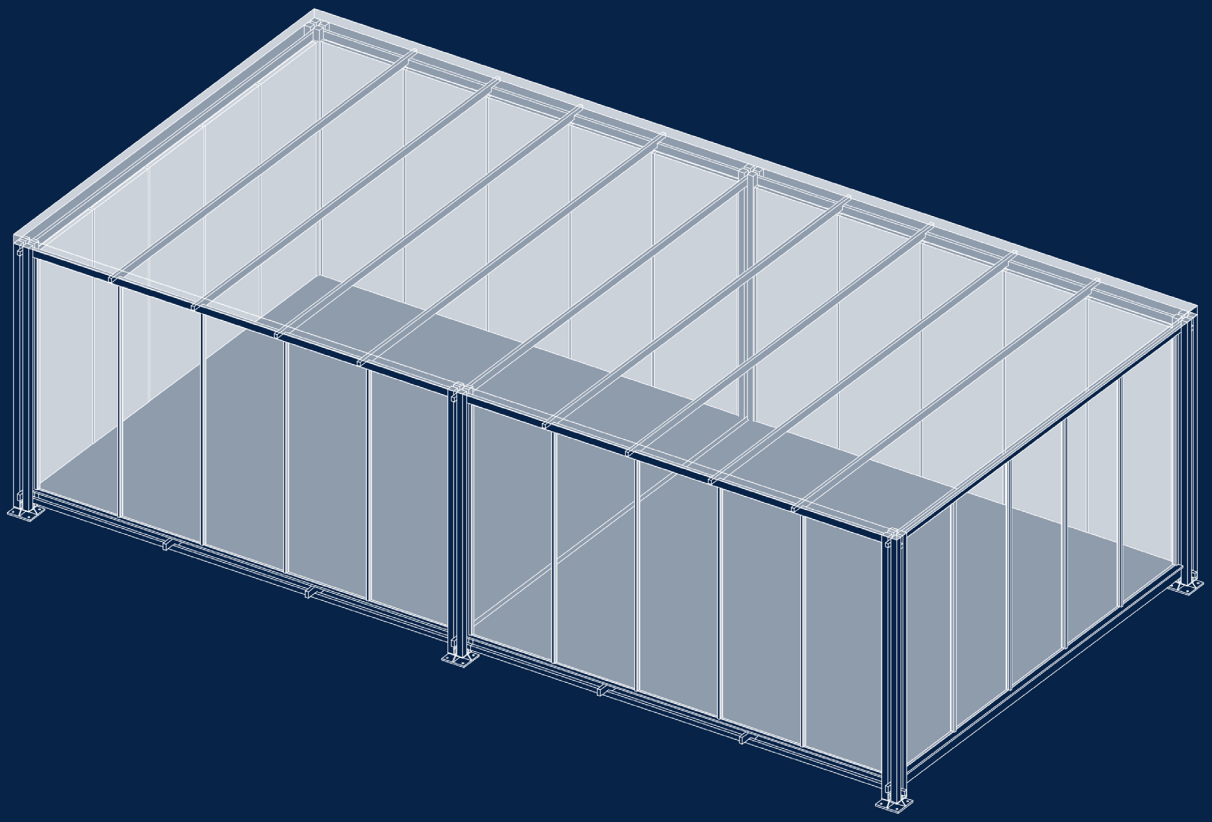
C. Duplicating Tripoli's street markets

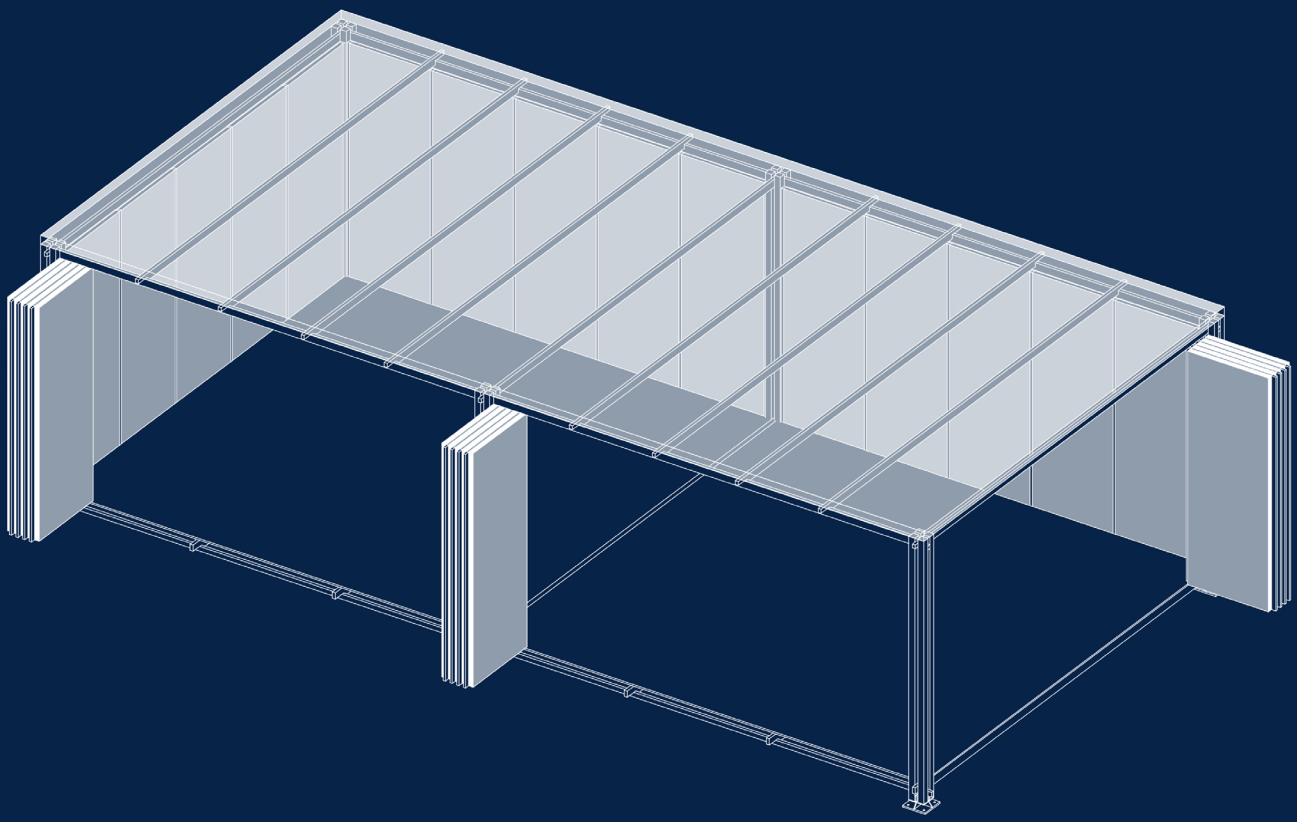
D. Assigning Functions (legend from right to left)

1. Farm to table restaurant
2. Indoor Planting Area
3. Research Center
4. Co-working Area
5. Vegetables Market
6. Furniture Making
7. Tripoli's Arts and Crafts
8. Clothing Stores
9. Tailors' Market
10. Occasional Market

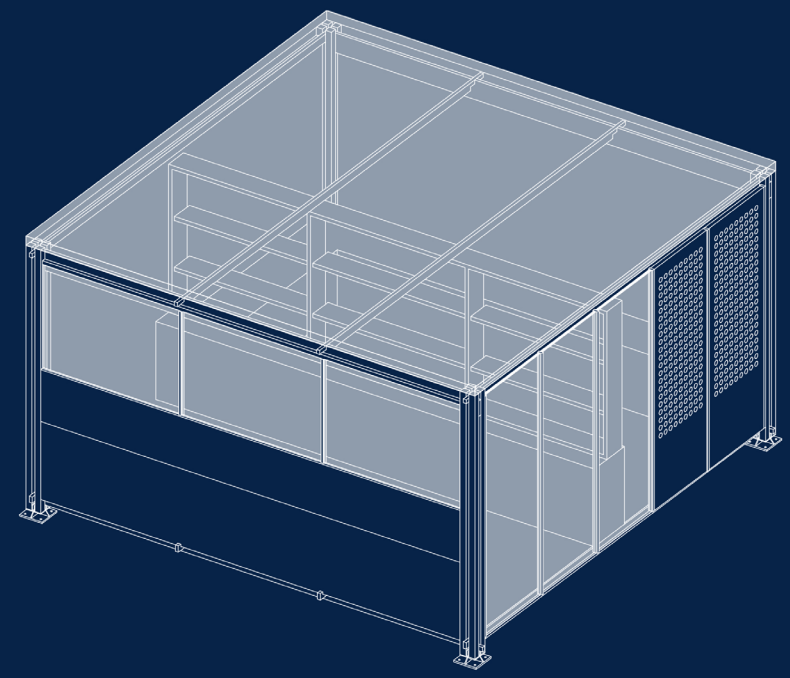


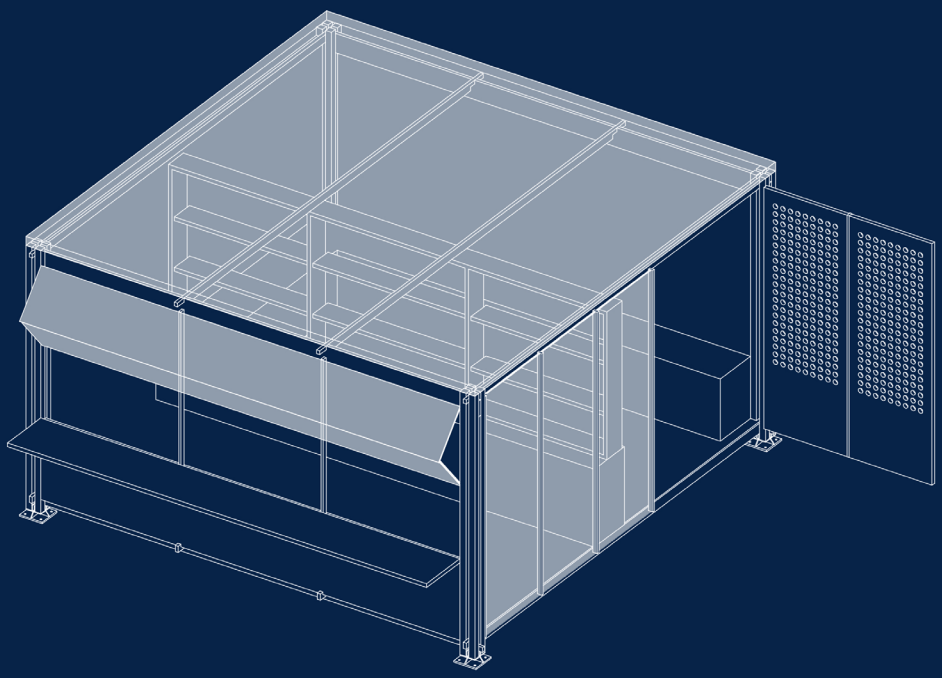
6 by 12 meters Unit

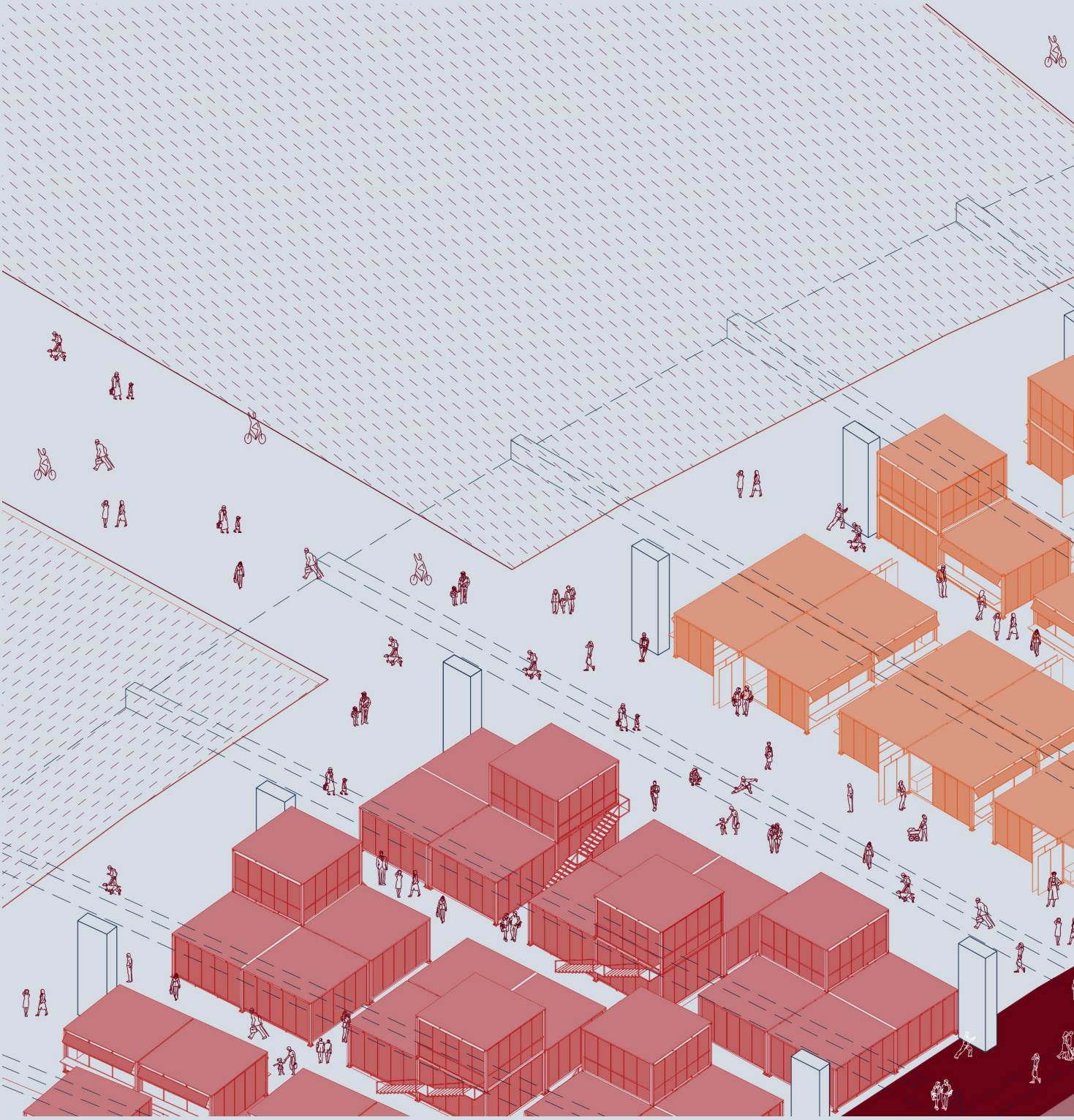




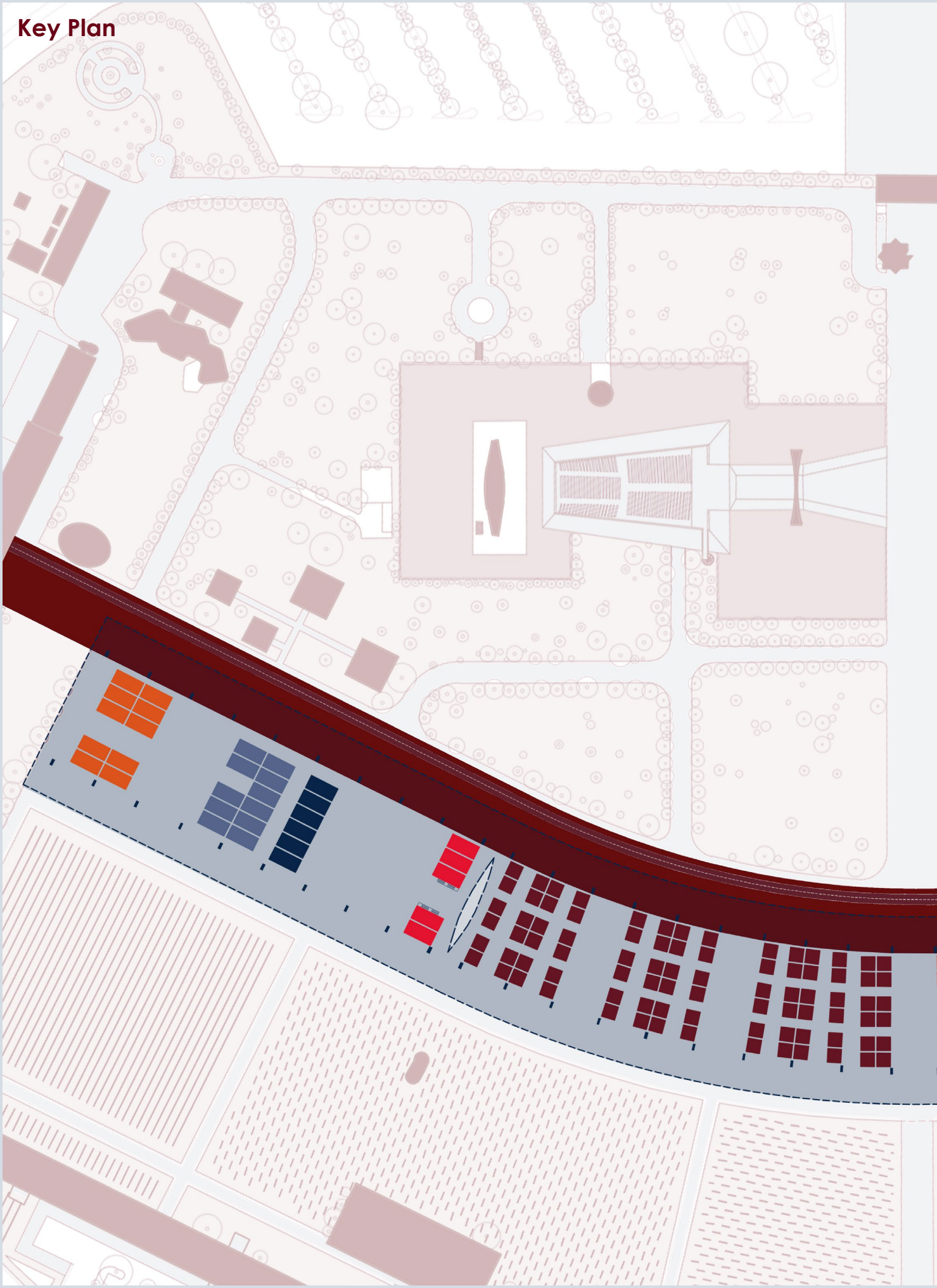
6 by 6 meters Unit

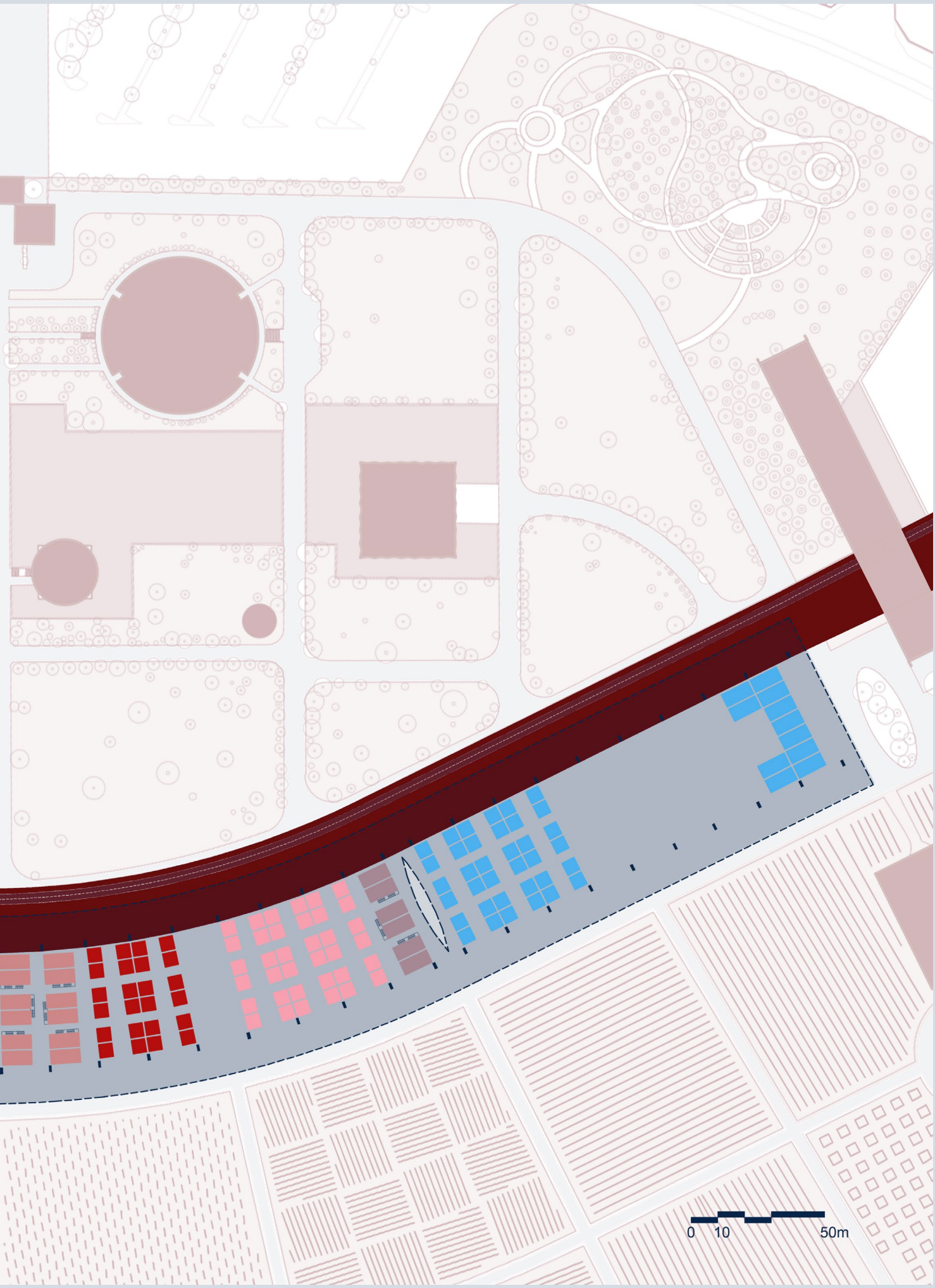






Key Plan




0
10
50m

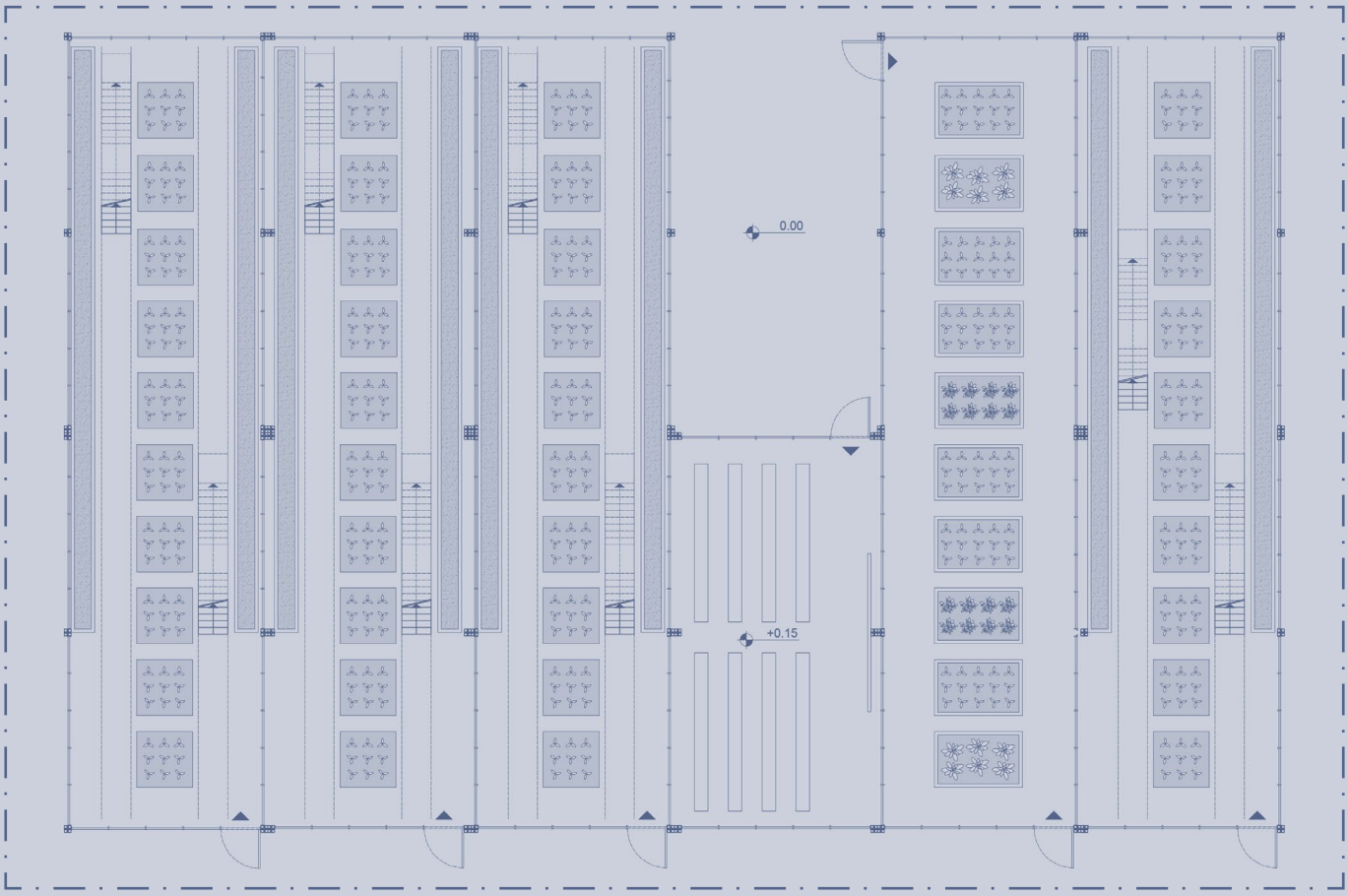
1. Farm-to-Table Restaurant

Ground Floor Plan, Scale 1:200

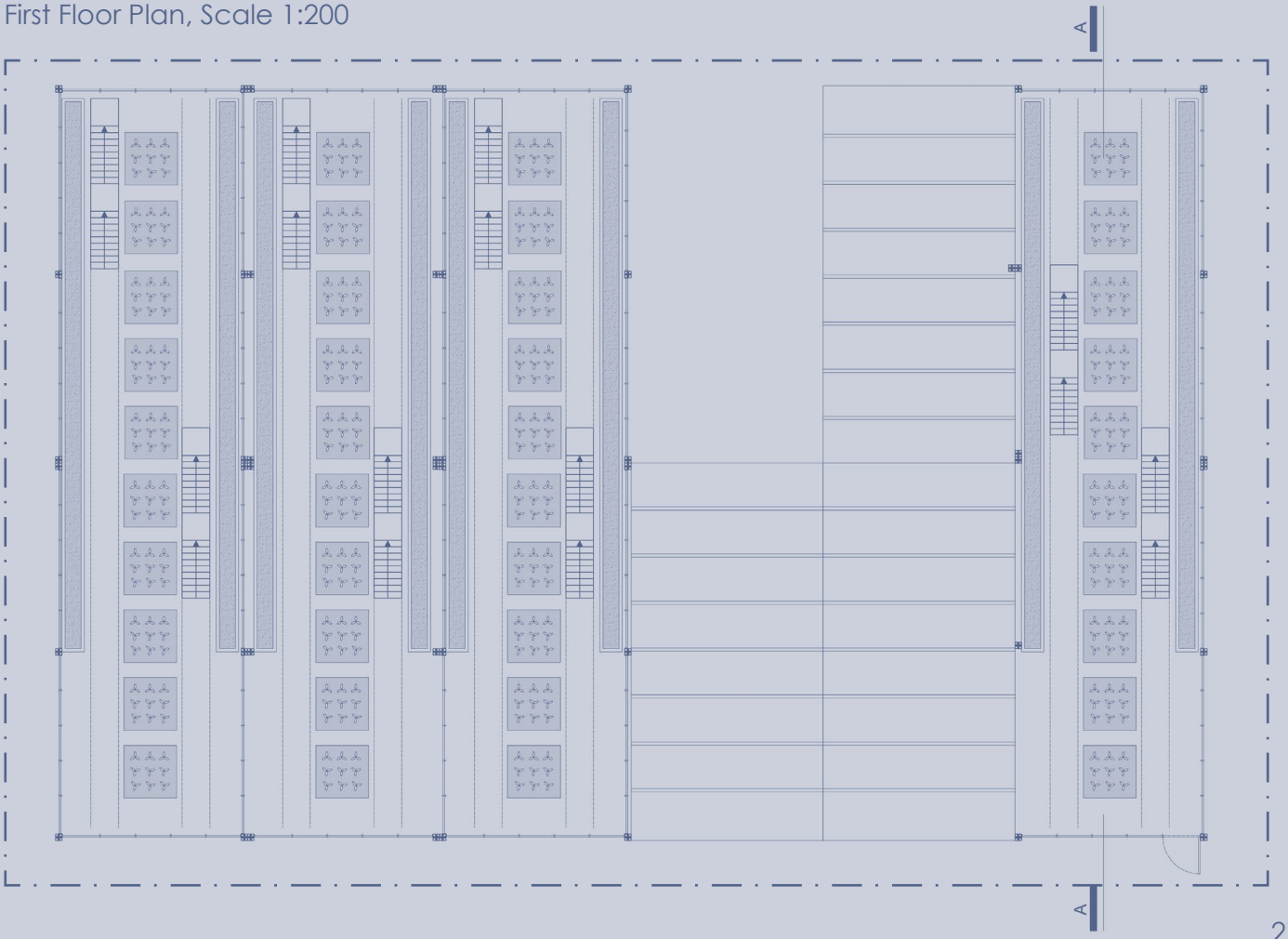
2. Indoor Planting

0 1 5m

Ground Floor Plan, Scale 1:200



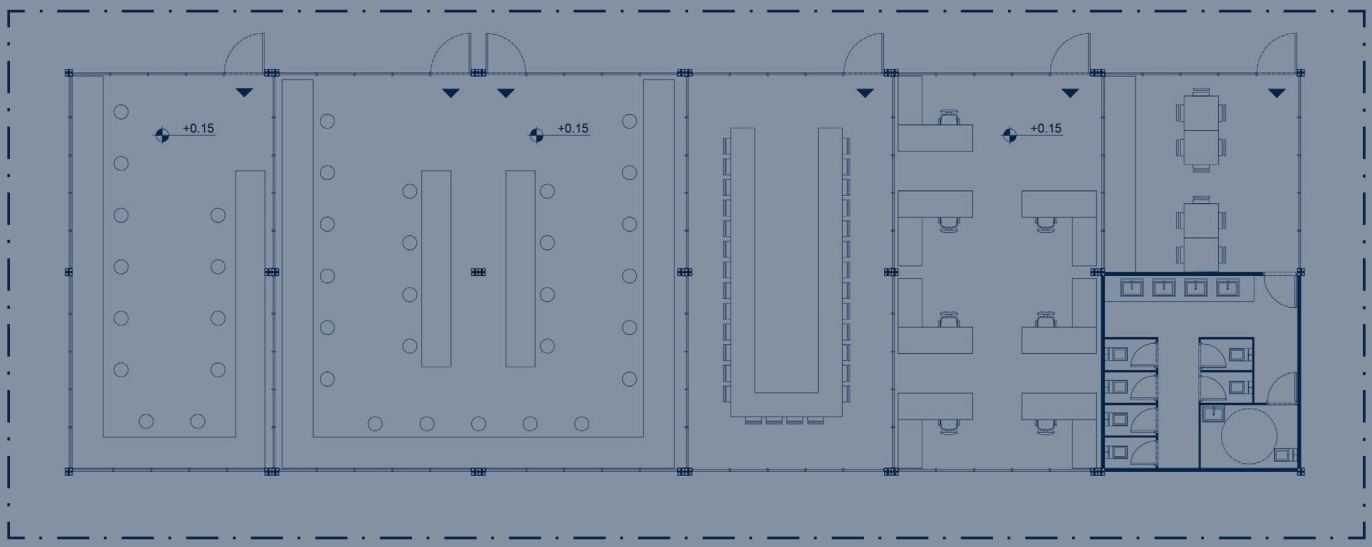
First Floor Plan, Scale 1:200



3. Research Center

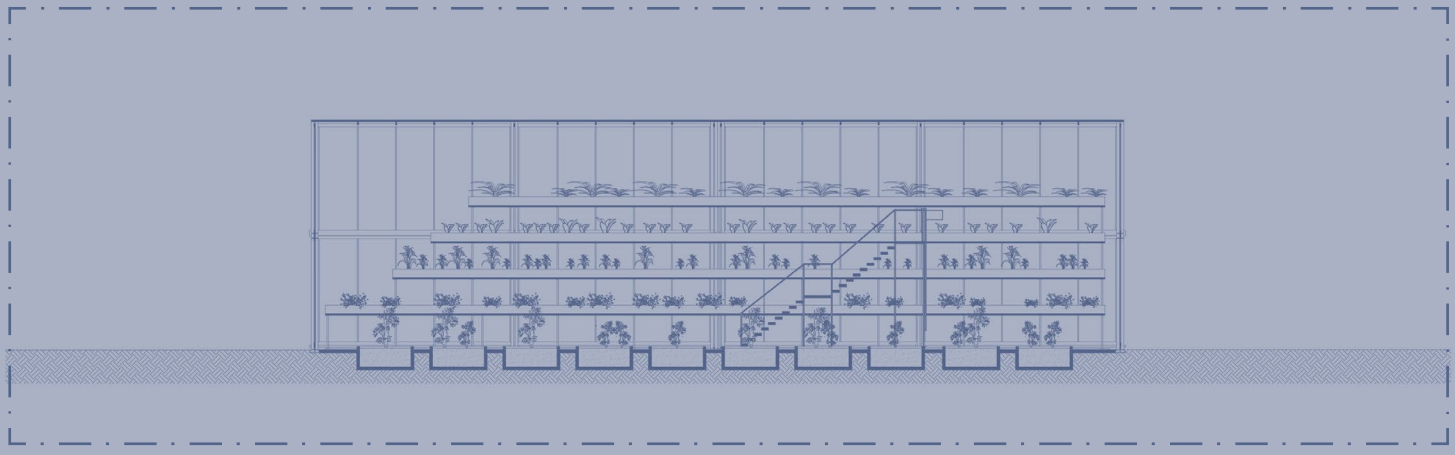
0 1 5m

Ground Floor Plan, Scale 1:200



2. Indoor Planting

Section A.A., Scale 1:200

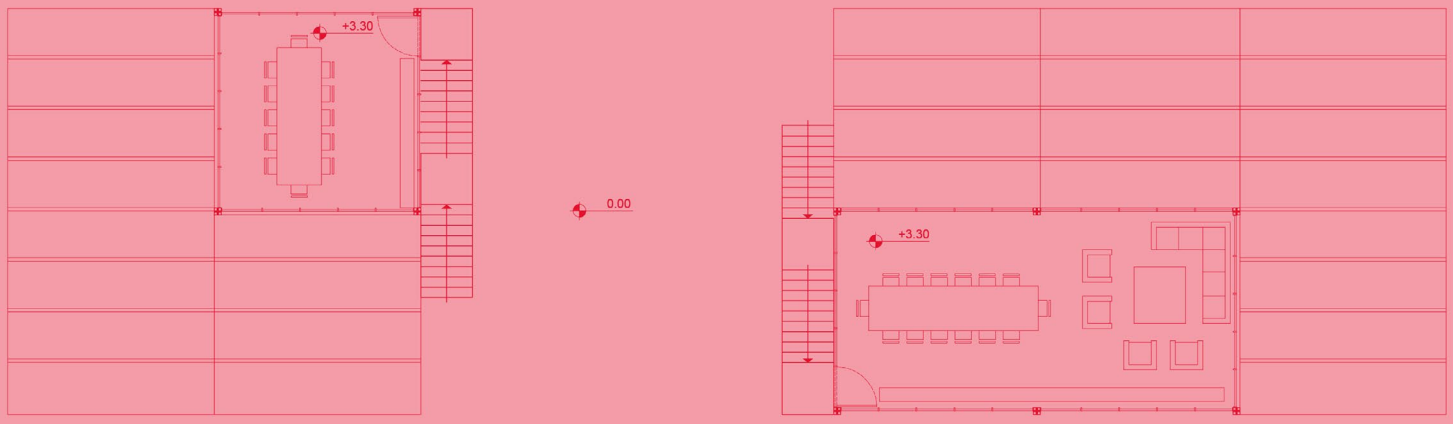


4. Co-working Area

0 1 5m

Ground Floor Plan, Scale 1:200

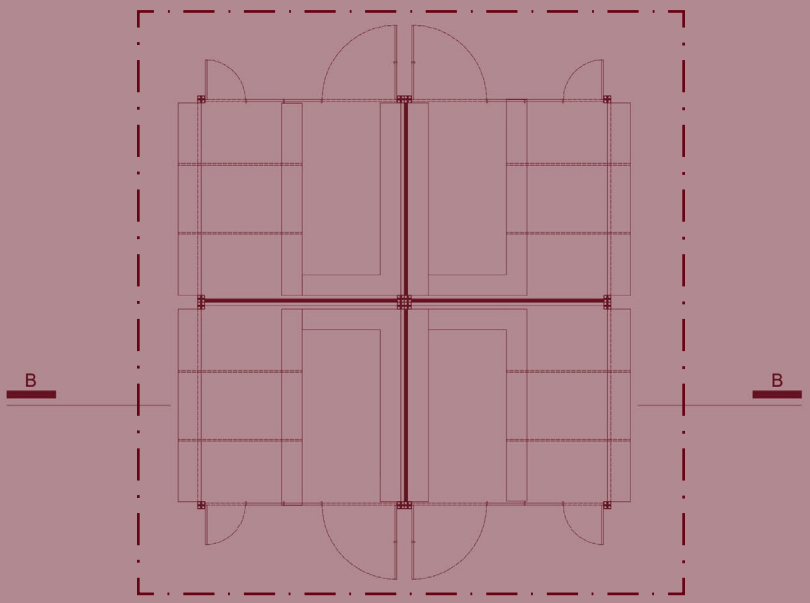
First Floor Plan, Scale 1:200

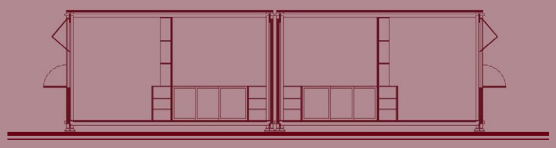


5. Vegetables Market

0 1 5m

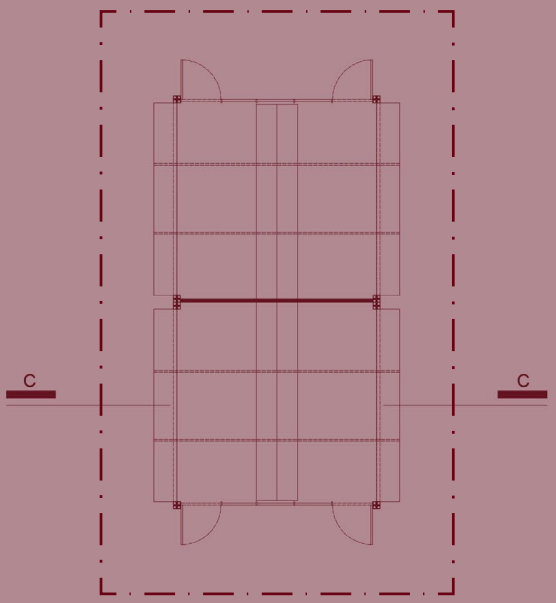
Layout A Ground Floor Plan, Scale 1:200

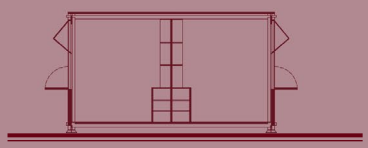




Section B.B.

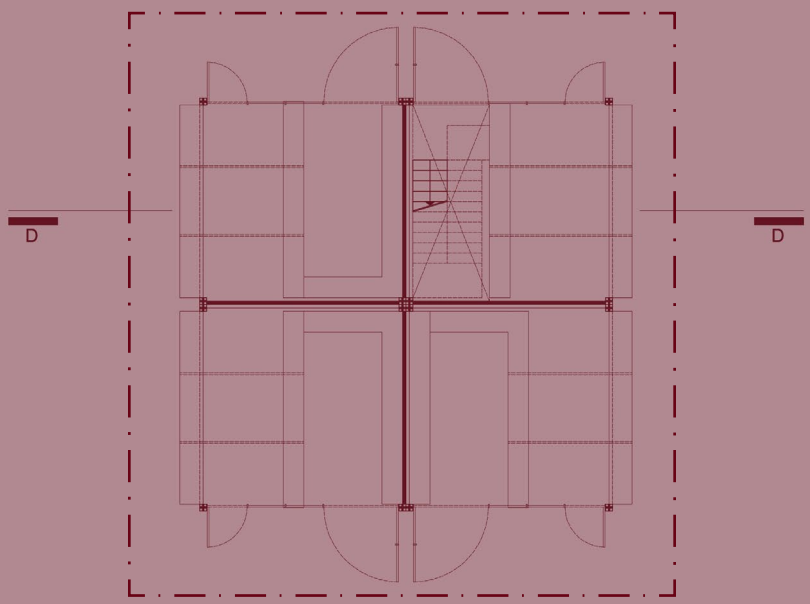
Layout B Ground Floor Plan, Scale 1:200

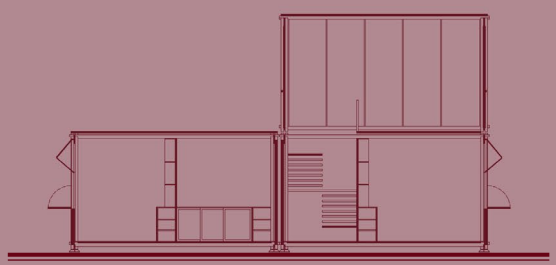




Section C.C.

Layout C Ground Floor Plan, Scale 1:200





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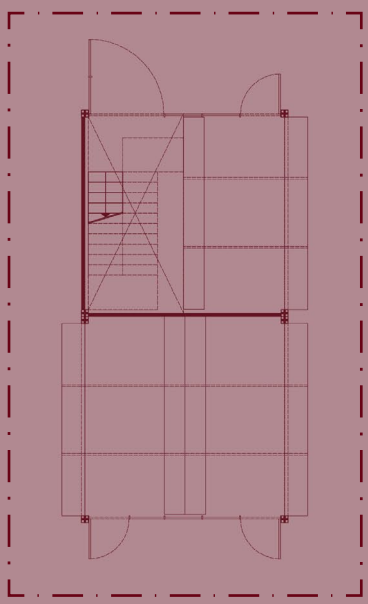
Layout D Ground Floor Plan, Scale 1:200



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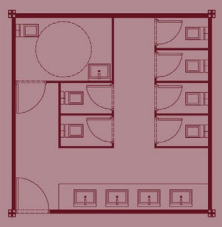
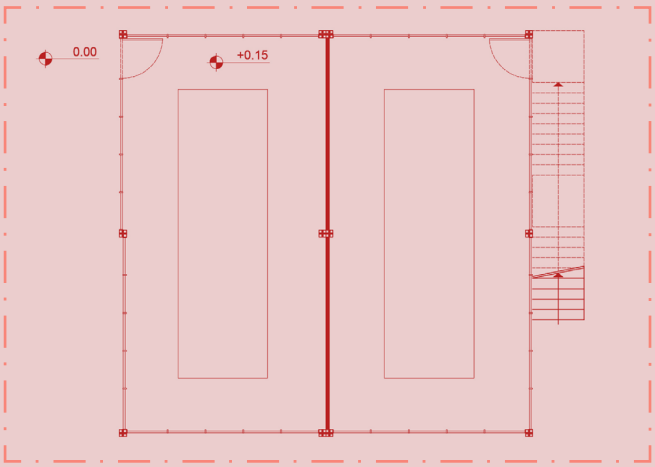


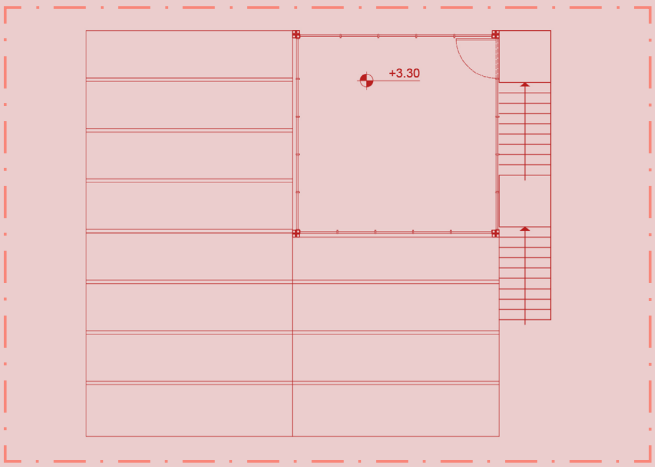
6. Furniture Making Workshops

0 1 5m

Ground Floor Plan, Scale 1:200

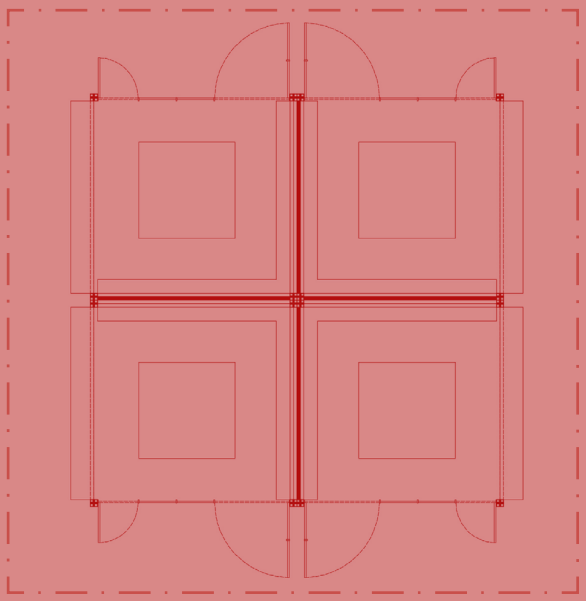


First Floor Plan, Scale 1:200

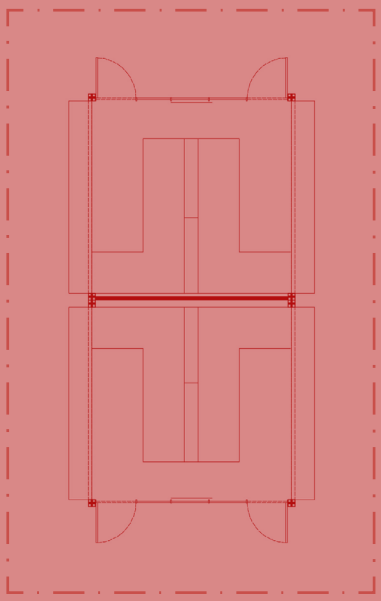


7. Tripoli Arts and Crafts

Ground Floor Plan, Scale 1:200

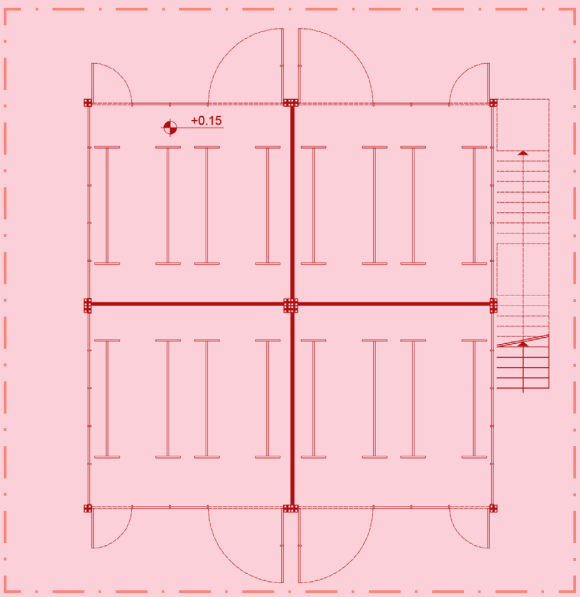


First Floor Plan, Scale 1:200

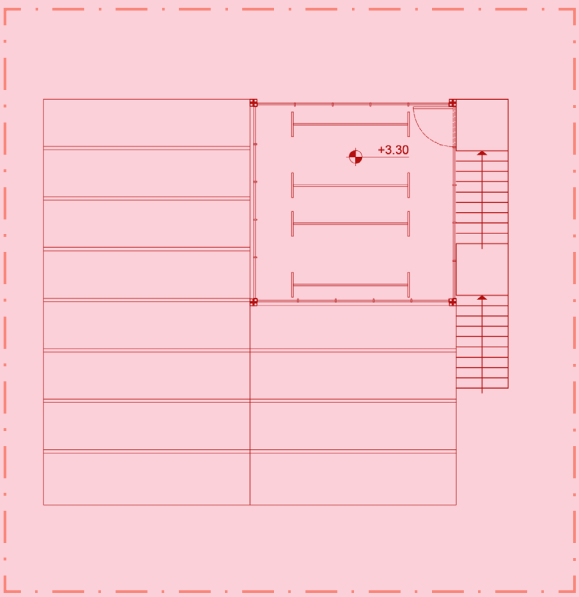


8. Clothing Stores

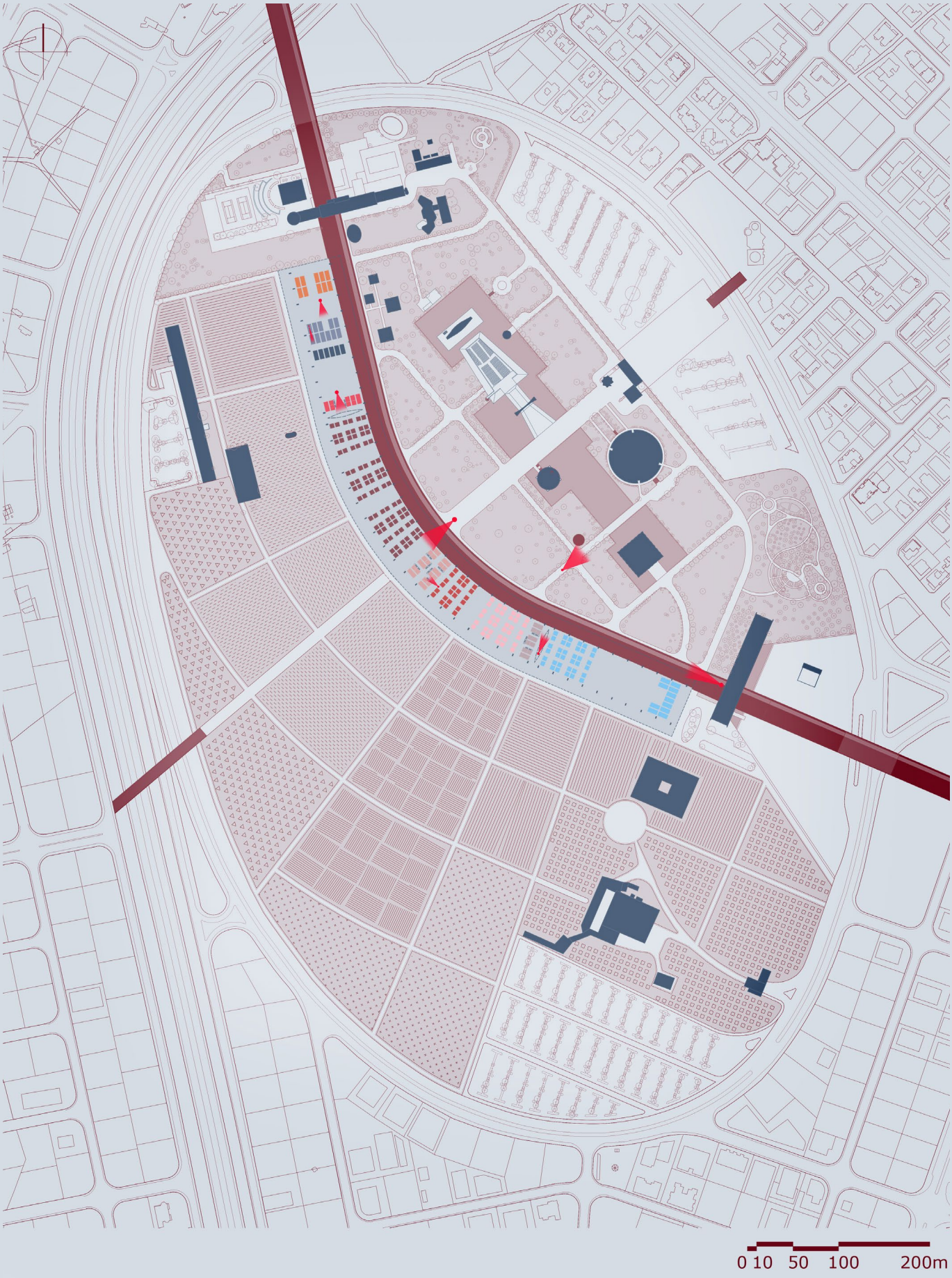
Ground Floor Plan, Scale 1:200



First Floor Plan, Scale 1:200



06.4. Spatial Experiences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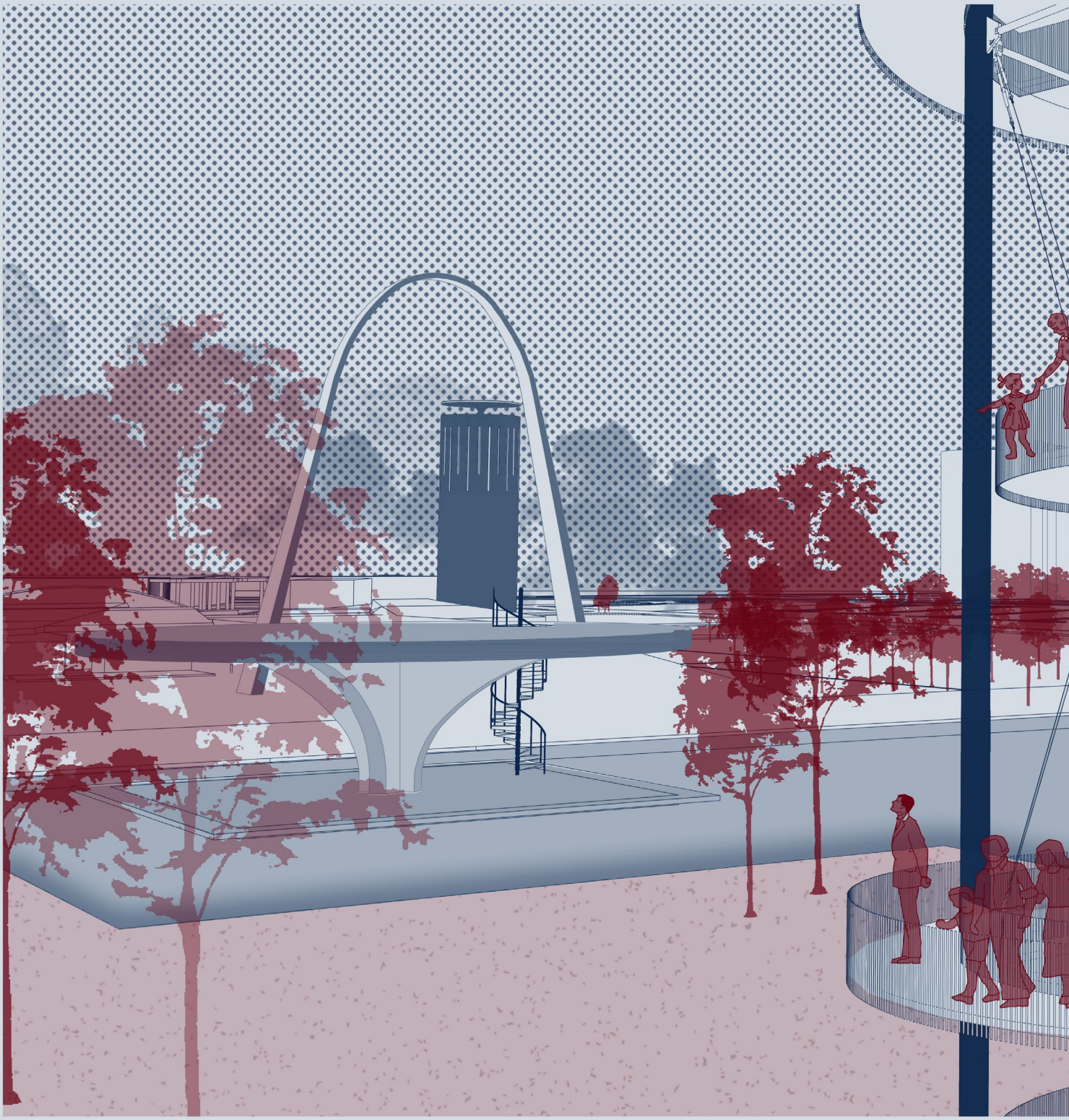

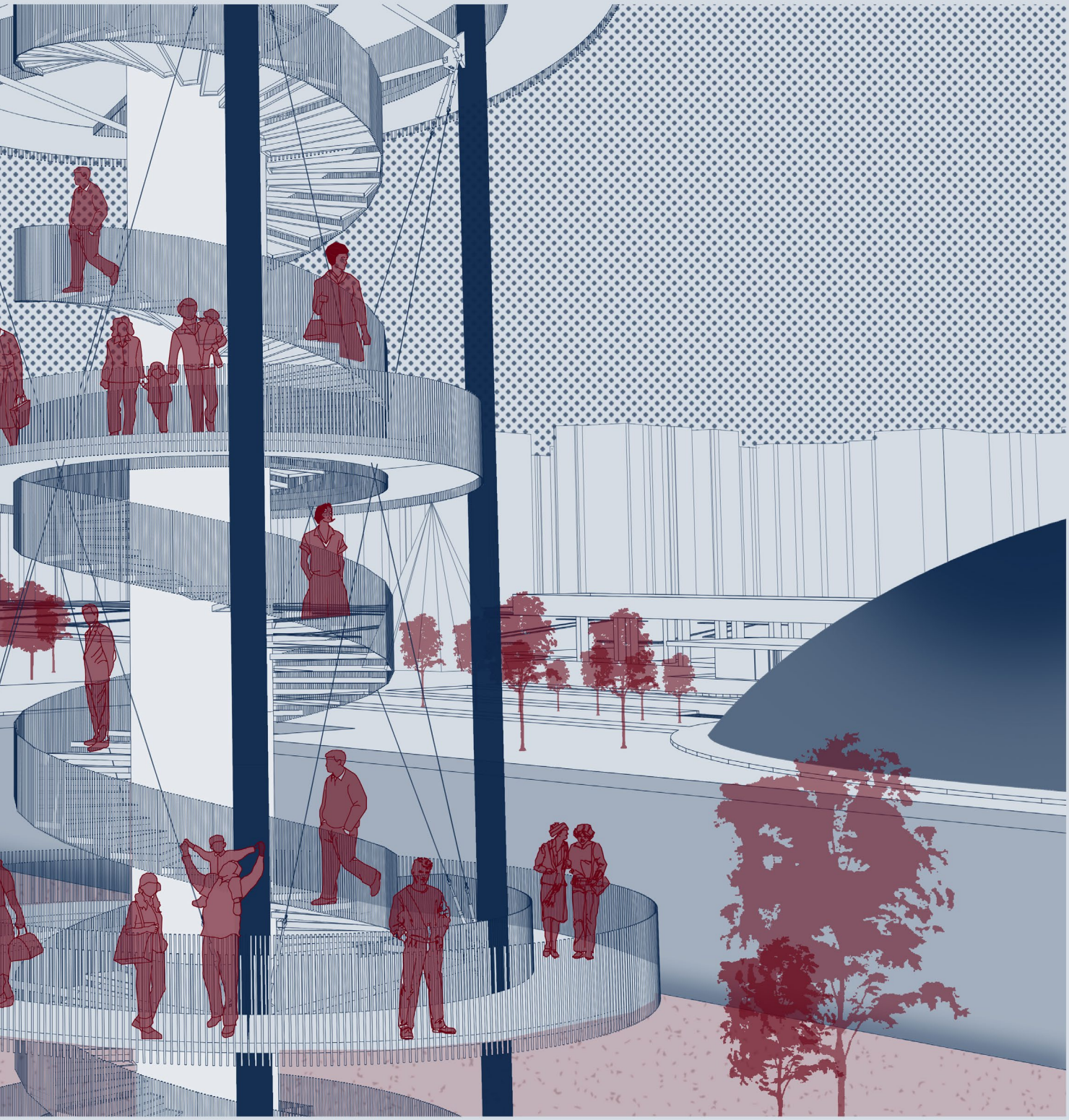

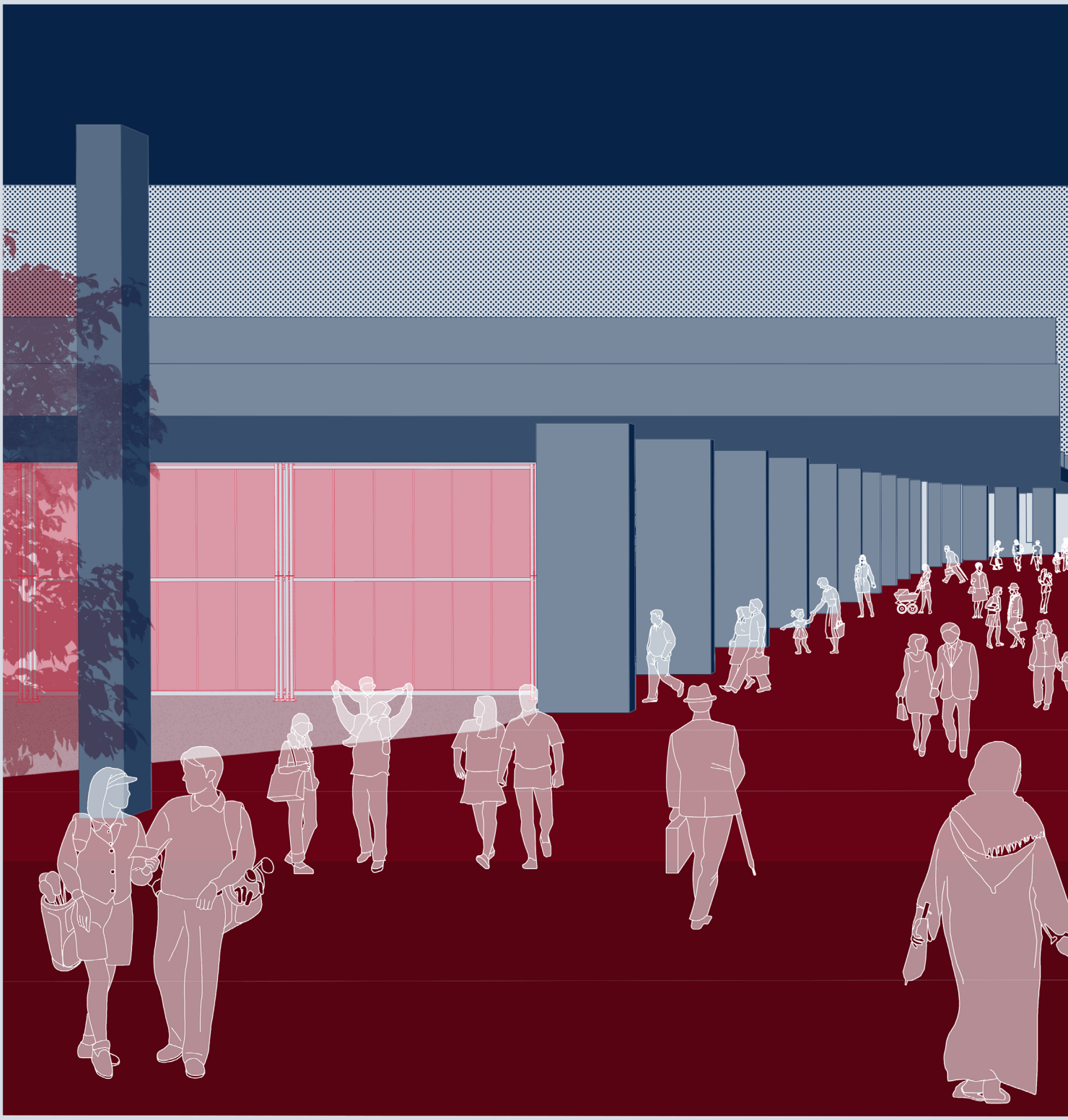

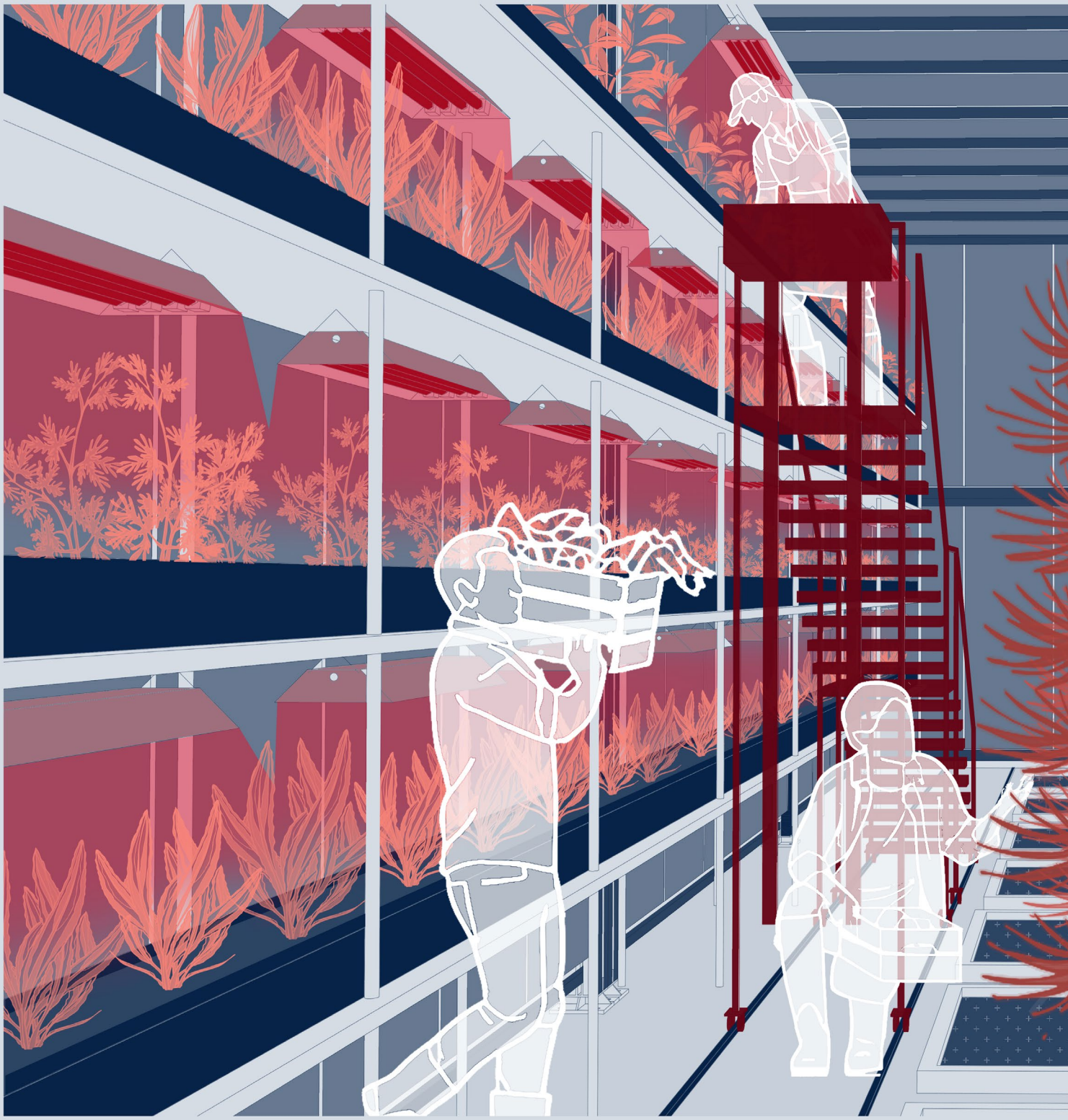

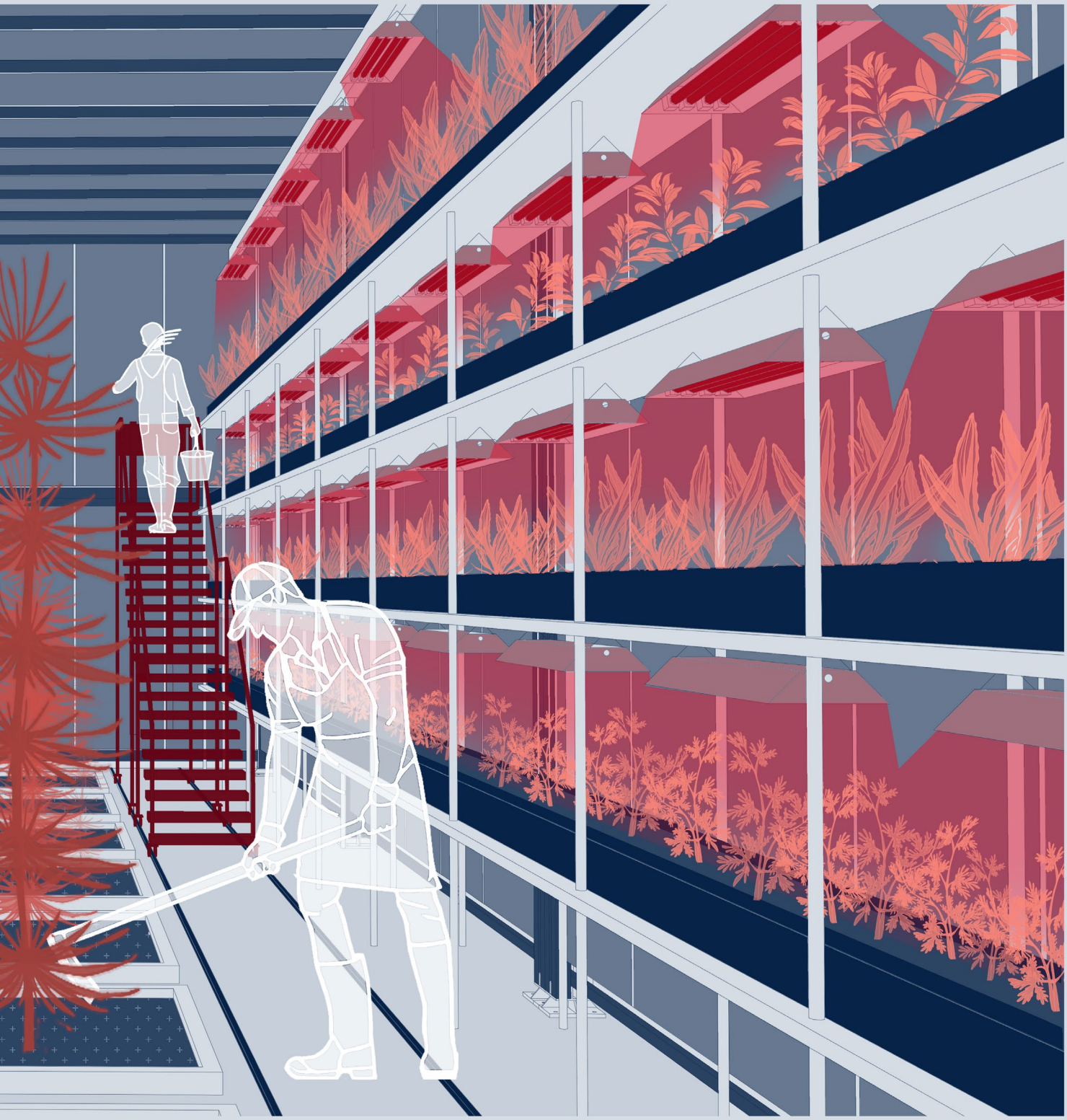

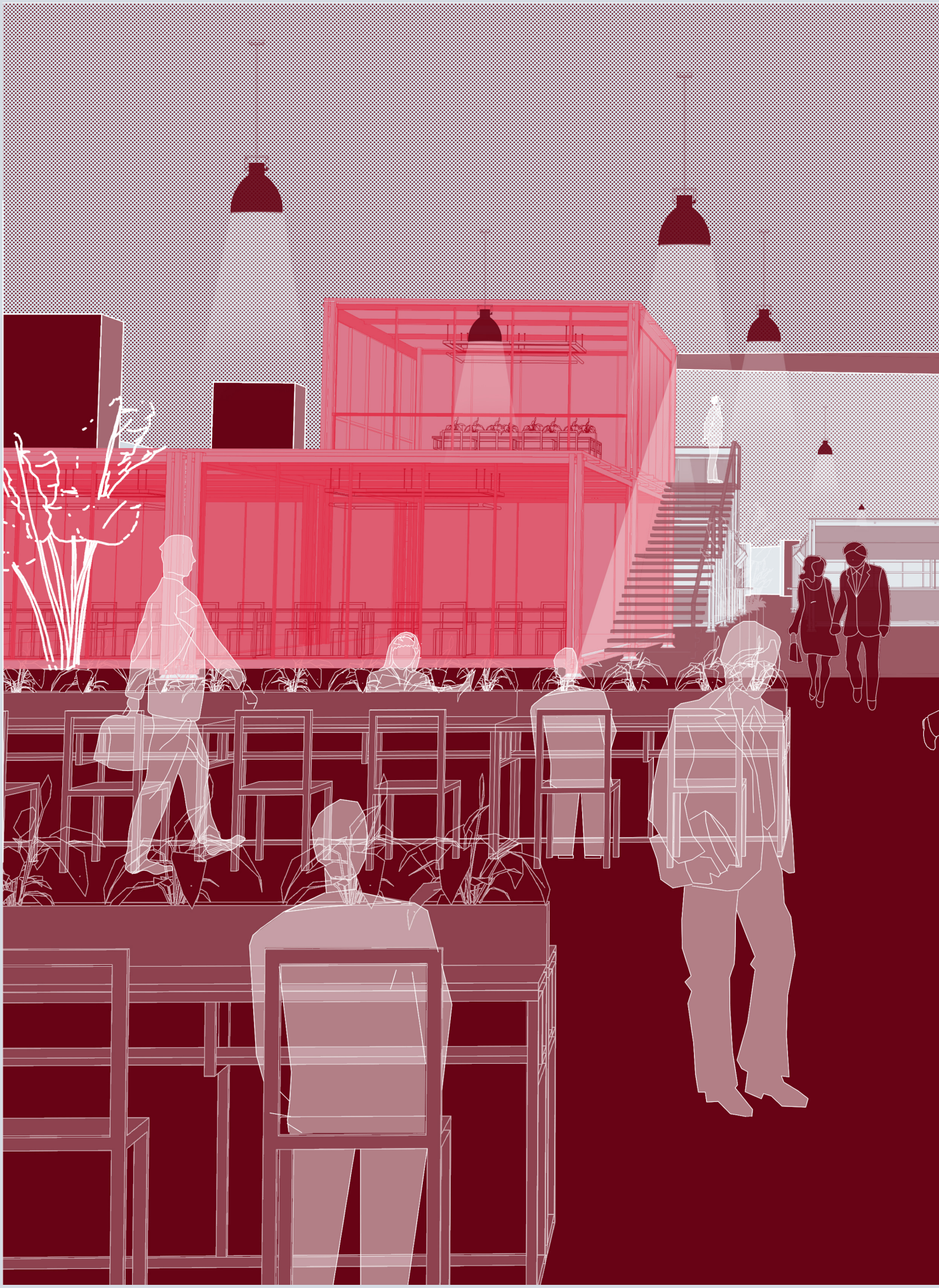

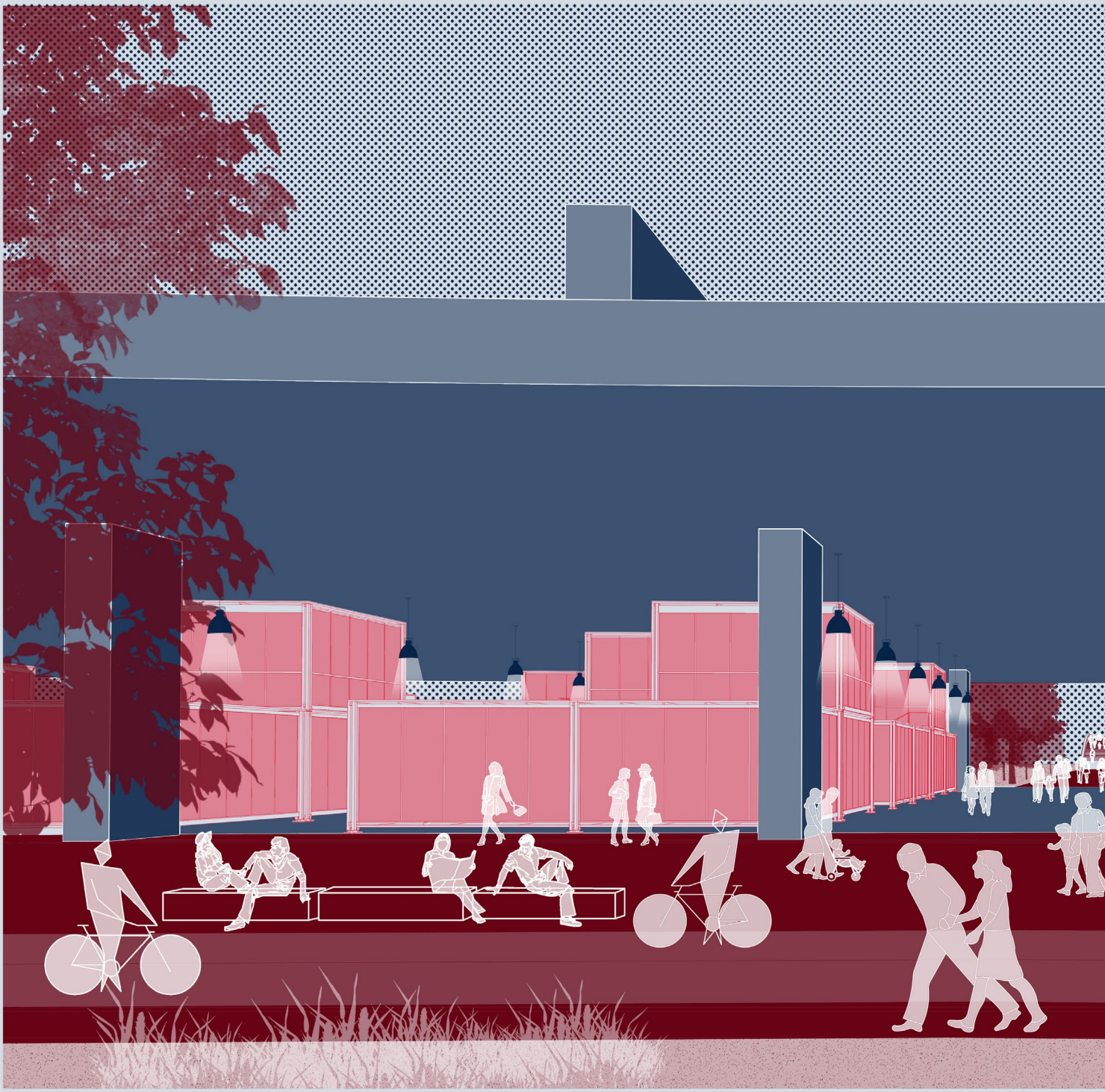

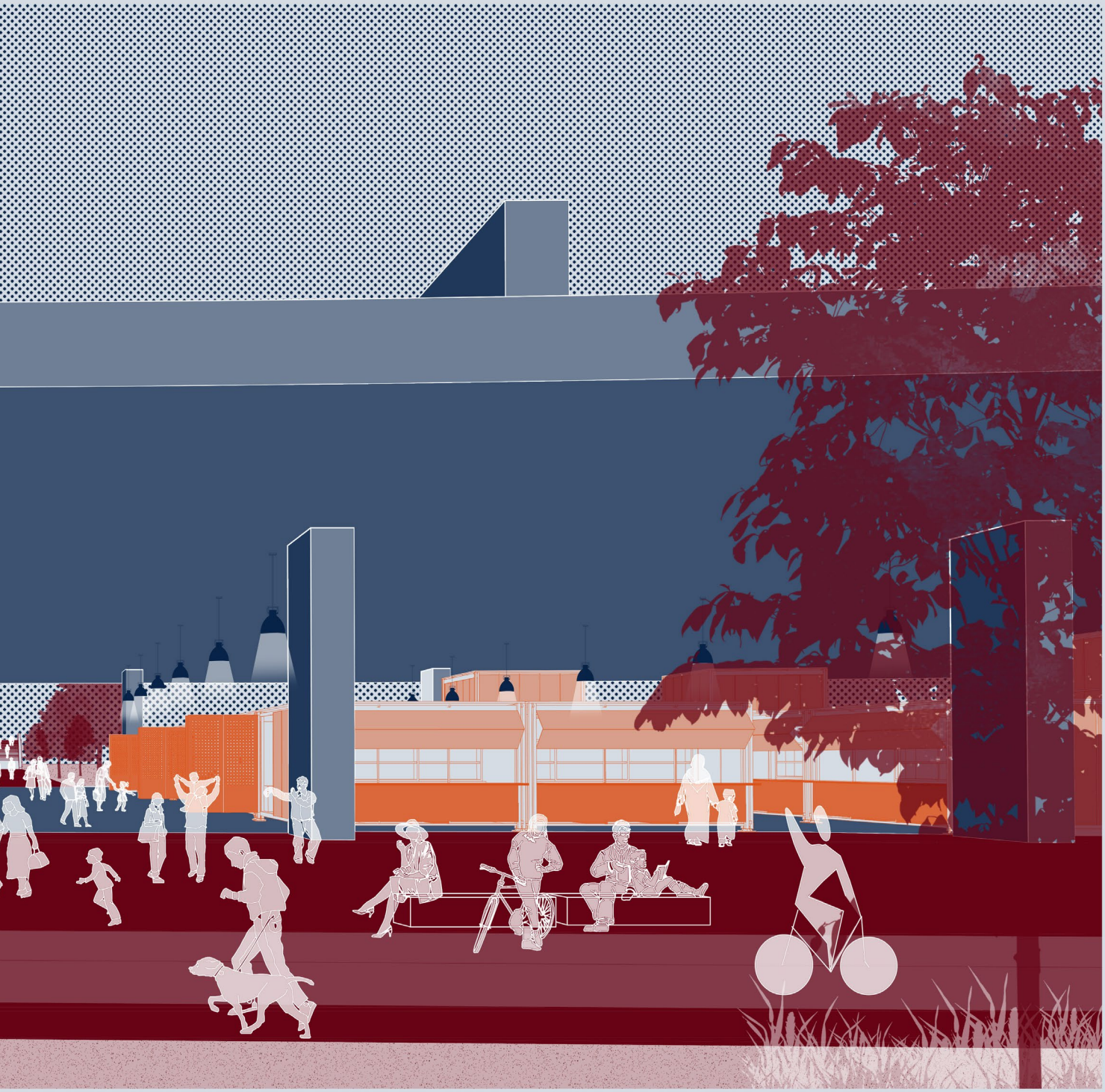

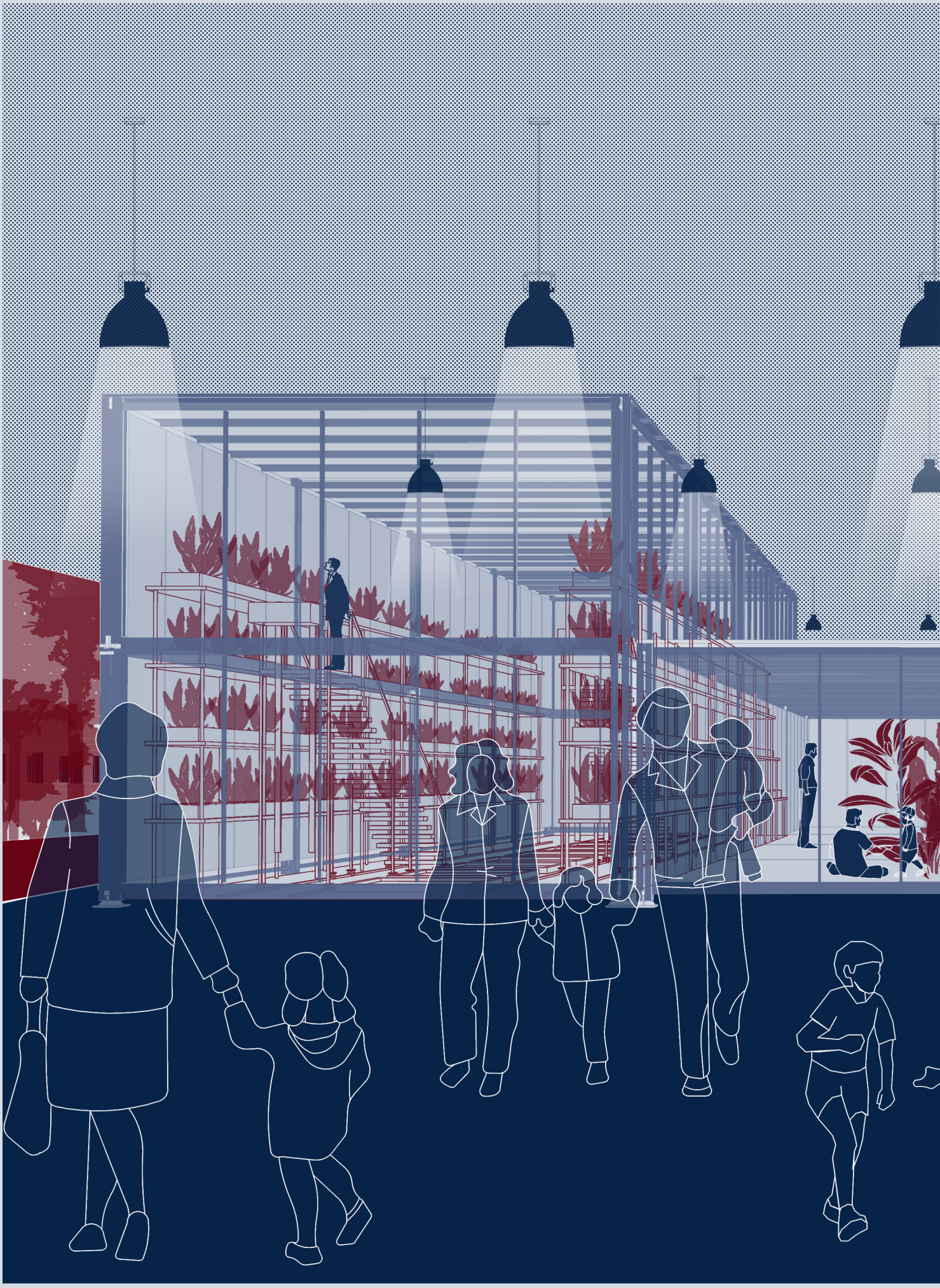

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