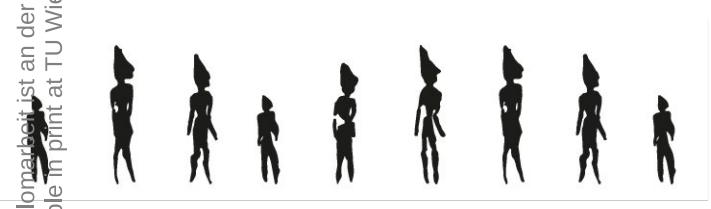

House for an Expat

A Typology of Transience

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architektur + raumplanung

Master Thesis | Diplomarbeit

House for an Expat

A Typology of Transience

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Die Frage, mit der sich diese Arbeit befasst, ist die nach dem Expat und der Architektur, die seinem transitorischen Lebensstil zugrunde liegt. Seine einzigartigen Erfahrungen, die sich in der Wahl seines Lebensraums widerspiegeln, könnten auf den ersten Blick als liminal eingestuft werden, wie andere Arten von nomadischen, reisenden oder sonst staatenlosen Menschen. Der Expat, der zwischen Grenzen lebt, ist überall auf der Welt in allen möglichen Behausungen anzutreffen, aber nirgendwo ist seine Existenz durchdringender vorausgesetzt als im Nahen Osten, wo Grenzen, Geschichten und Traditionen unaufhörlich fluktuieren. In diesem Fluss entstehen einige der historisch relevantesten Typologien der Region, die tief in dieser Frage des „flüchtigen Wohnens“ verwurzelt sind und in unsere Zeit übertragen werden. Der Libanon—das Land, aus dem ich stamme—aus dem etwa drei Viertel der Bevölkerung wie ich ins Ausland zogen, ist dafür ein ideales Schauglas. Die zeitgenössische Geschichte libanesischer Expats und ihre verschiedenen Erfahrungen und Unterbringungen im Ausland hingegen dienen als Fallstudien, die helfen, den Status quo zu definieren. So entsteht ein Rahmenwerk, welches die paradoxe Natur der Expats selbst widerspiegelt, ihre angestrengte Elastizität, ihr überholter Zeitgeist, ihre statische Überschwänglichkeit, die sich aus der eigenen Betroffenheit über den Zustand ihrer Heimat im Ausland ergibt. Das Ergebnis, in Form einer neuen Art von transientem, kollektivem Lebensraum, wird im Kontext von Bejjeh, einem kleinen Dorf im Zentralmassiv des Libanon-Gebirges, ausgearbeitet. Das Haus für einen Expat ist eine Antwort auf jenen Reduktionismus, der auf den Mustern der Geschichte, der Typologie und der Reproduzierbarkeit beruht und der dazu führt, dass unsere heutigen Vorstellungen von flexiblem Wohnen und in gewissem Maße auch vom Leben selbst nur der symptomatische Hintergrund für die Ausdrucksformen des Transienten sind.

EN

Keywords: Lebanon, expat, transient, typology, nomadic, rural, community

The question this work approaches is that of the expat and the architecture that underlies their transitory lifestyle. Their unique experiences, reflected in their choice of habitat, might at first glance be classified as liminal, in the vein of other types of nomadic, traveling, or otherwise stateless people around the world. Existing between borders, the expat is found across the globe, in dwellings of all kinds, but nowhere is their existence more of a presupposition than in the Middle East, where boundaries, histories, and traditions fluctuate incessantly. In this flux, some of the region’s historically most pertinent typologies, which are deeply rooted in this question of ‘transient living’, are born and carried over into our time. Lebanon—the country I am from—with roughly three-quarters of the population living abroad as I do, provides the ideal looking-glass. Contemporary examples of Lebanese expats and their various experiences and accommodations abroad are case studies that help define the status quo. A framework emerges then, extracted from the region’s own commotion to the state of its home abroad, that reflects the paradoxical nature of the expat themselves, of their strenuous elasticity, their outdated contemporaneity, their static exuberance. The resulting proposal for a new kind of transient, collective living space is placed in the context of Bejjeh, a small village on the central massif of Mount Lebanon. The House for an Expat exists in response to that reductionism which is based in the patterns of history, typology, replicability, which results in our current notions on flexible living and to an extent, life itself, being only the symptomatic background to the expressions of transient form.

Should you sit upon a cloud you would
not see the boundary line between one
country and another, nor the boundary
stone between a farm and a farm.

It is a pity you cannot sit upon a cloud.

Gibran Khalil Gibran, *Sand and Foam,* 1926

Acknowledgement

In light of the topic of this thesis, it goes without saying that I owe the fruits of my work in large part to my family, especially my parents, Firas and Daniela. To the expats who shared their lives with me, and to those countless and often nameless individuals who dedicated precious time and effort into documenting a place so rich and worthwhile, and one so difficult. For their many contributions in helping me navigate the Levant, its people, its architecture— that part of me I sometimes consider foreign—I am thankful.

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This work is dedicated to Lebanon's restless people, to the ones who keep things moving and changing, who understand that nothing, neither happiness nor hardship, can last forever.

We would often sit under the pergola and listen to Jeddo's many stories. We called them the 'pergola stories', some as funny as this one, but some also sad, excerpts from family history, stories of war, plagues of locusts, famine, but also of youthful pranks and heroic deeds.

Theresa Corcchiani, *Wilder Osten, Heiliges Land,* 2010
(transl. G. Khalife, 2023)

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Fig 1. *'genivs hvivs loci montis', copy of a roman mural found in Ercolano (Herculaneum).*

Chapter I

Context. A *Place* in a Nutshell

Introduction

MOTIVATION

To know a place takes time. And then you only know the place for its time. One can live in a country, for example Lebanon, for numerous years, as did I, and still be a stranger to some of its most basic customs. I grew up in Lebanon. As an expat, the frequency of my visits has since diminished with every passing year. For such an integral part of my life, I now realise that the place I knew was in fact a static thing—an imagination—and its realities more of a mystery to me than on the day it first became my home. The complication lies in the fundamental paradoxes of a place, and a place so rich in paradox as Lebanon begs constant re-evaluation. For instance, my memories of a divided country would have me believe in the absolute nature of its borders. My research however shows a much more fluid environment, both historically and in current times, like a stiff curtain of normality draped over an amorphous, abnormal shape, there is luxury in poverty, celebration in wartime, humour in tragedy.

To know a place intimately takes more than time. To understand its underlying motifs, it is arguably even counterproductive to have spent too much time in it. The passivity that comes with being accustomed to a place actively denies the re-evaluation of its taught principles and one's solidified beliefs grow increasingly difficult to shed, while the parasitic comfort of the one-word answer settles in. Most of my childhood was spent in this kind of bubble—Lebanon was a simple world to me, with an answer for every problem, although problems never seemed to get solved. Now, with distance between us, the gap in intimacy has equally crystallised and so, in an effort to recontextualize my own story, this work aims to capture the *spirit of this part of the mountain* (Fig. 1)—and in so doing conjure a way of intensifying its presence. In Winslow's *Lebanon: War and Politics* (1996), he writes of the small coastal land and its immediate surroundings:

> "While the Middle East as a whole is truly a mosaic, as is Syria, that part of it called Lebanon is even more so. (...) an area of hyper-particularism, one square of the four centre squares of the global chess-board, an urban culture in a desert-oasis ecology, an arena for those in and out of the garden, a place of vulnerability, of outside intervention, of amoral relativism, of glorified expediency, of the transient moment." [1]

Transience is the key word here. From my own house to the greater systems that shape the Levantine ecology (*eco* coming from the Greek *oik-, oiko-,* from *oikos,* meaning house), the journey from the individual to the collective is a challenging one, and a restlessness underlies even the seemingly immovable aspects of this world like a lingering electrical charge. It is a home in constant flux, then easily identified by the capacity its residents, its architecture, its customs and traditions hold to do the same. The expat, especially in the Lebanese context, epitomises those tendencies of their milieu, and is an example that demands a closer look. Are they nomadic? hermetic? anarchic? They are sporadic, certainly, and both an attractor to and detractor from the communal. Their case is central to the study of Lebanon's own. The conclusion is that an analysis of the spaces they inhabit and the link between their and other tradi-

1 WINSLOW, Charles, *Lebanon, War and Politics in a Fragmented Society* (Routledge, 1996), 285.

tions of transient living in and around the Levant is necessary in order for any sort of intervention to be justified. After all, the mountain village of my childhood, Bejjeh, is and has long been a village of expats.

METHOD

This thesis begins with an overview of Lebanon in *Chapter I. Context*, from its geography and rich historical background to the contemporary state of things. To narrow the scope of this work, the focus lies on *patterns of dwelling and movement,* from the early stone age (3500 BCE) that saw the Giblites settle the coastal Gebal, now Jbeil (Byblos)[2], to the Canaanites' *great migration*, the birth of the seafaring Phoenicians, and the many powers that held sway over its diverse peoples along the way. Ottoman rule and the French mandate opened the door for the age of the modern Lebanese expat, and brought together for the first time two distinct cultures which had previously developed more or less independently from one another, namely those of the mountain and the sea. Retracing the expat's footsteps, one is led away from the Mediterranean and its geopolitics, up the mountain, to the village of Bejjeh, and introduced to a typical community in Mount Lebanon.

To understand where and how the expat lives today, a series of interviews were held (mostly with former and current residents of Bejjeh) following the format of an *ethnographic questionnaire.* The results are analysed in *Chapter II. Expat* through the lens of a series of collages depicting the layering of their homes abroad, accompanied by selected outtakes from the interviews. The insight gained from these 'snapshots' of an expat's life is coupled with a delineation of the region's pertinent typologies (from the ancient hermetic cave to the modernist chalet) in *Chapter III. Transience,* forming an atlas—a *Catalogue of Transience* in and around Lebanon. The result of these two (somewhat contrary) approaches, one concerned with the personal experiences of people living semi-nomadic lives, the other an historic time lapse of some of Lebanon's most well-known architecture concerned with temporary dwelling, is dissected in *Chapter IV. Home.*

In finding support for the idea of transient dwelling in Lebanon, the research compiled may serve as an opportunity for new perspectives to arise from old ideas, especially concerning our understanding of the deeper challenges underlying the depopulation of Mount Lebanon's rural communities. In *Chapter V. Brief* and *Chapter VI. Project,* a design is tasked with providing residents, expats, and visitors alike with an intensely communal, but temporary stay—this kind of house, the *House for an Expat* (as opposed to the *Expat's House*), is approached based on the collective values of history, type, and experience. The site chosen for this task contains two plots of land and a family home, which are reinterpreted and adapted to demonstrate an alternative to current dwelling.

The *Appendix* is the last section of this work, containing all ten interviews along with their respective floor plans, and a repository of sketches examining the language that emerges from those symbols and objects which became commonly held—through travel, trade and so on—across the once vital routes of the Mediterranean basin and Arabian Peninsula.

GOAL

While Lebanon's coastal cities continue to endure (despite over-population and other serious challenges), the question of whether its mountain regions can do the same looms large amidst rural exodus and mass-migration. It is a question of *identity,* first and foremost, that either separates or unites the two. The latter's precarious situation warrants a reimagining of the mountain village, of rural dwelling and community, and of the necessity to adapt to an ever more transitory lifestyle.

2 HERM, Gerhard, *Die Phönizier, Das Purpurreich der Antike* (Econ Verlag, 1974), 39 - 42.

Fig 2. *Goat herder on the road.* Mount Lebanon. 1992.

Fig 3. *Marina, Kaslik.* Keserwan-Jbeil. 2002.

Before it was Lebanon

The modern state of Lebanon lies, as the western-most part of the Levant, on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean where, going as far back as the early stone age, various tribes on their peregrinations found in this abundant and varied landscape a cornucopia of sorts—a place of extremes that stood in stark contrast to their homeland—it was narrow, steep, furrowed by countless rivers feeding into the sea, covered by a dense forest of towering cedar trees.[3] They had found a place to be worshipped, worked, and settled. It became, thanks to the syncretism of its inhabitants, a vital passageway, trading and travel hub of the ancient Mediterranean world.[4]

CANAAN/PHOENICIA

The first substantial settlement, which has solidified itself as the history of a country and its people's past, occurred between 2300 and 2000 BCE in what is known as the great migration of the Amorite and Canaanite peoples.[5] They were nomads under chieftains, predecessors to the Bedouin tradition,[6] thought to have left the Sinai region and the shores of the red sea in favour of the fertile crescent (the eastern coast of the Mediterranean) and Mesopotamia.[7] The Canaanites (likely from the Akkadian *Kinahhu*, meaning red ones)[8] settled the coast, and would later merge with the Indo-Germanic seafaring people (ca. 1100 BCE),[9] and come to be called *Phoinikes* by the Greek (likely from *porphyra* meaning purpure, the locally produced shade of red).[10] Apart from their skill in trade and diplomacy, Phoenicians learned to settle difficult terrain—having no ambitions to expand inland,[11] they instead found rock formations and peninsulas along the coast to detach and fortify, resulting in unusually dense living conditions, often within semi-high rise structures.[12] This was made possible by the abundance of otherwise scarce natural resources, stone and timber in particular, which meant both interested trading parties (Ancient Egyptians and Sumerians mainly) and expansionist empires (Assyrians, Babylonians, Hellenes, and Romans to name a few) became constant companions and threats to the small city states.

> "During the transition period, while it was uncertain whether Babylonia or Egypt would emerge from the troubles of the time in the better position, Phoenicia, with the prudence that is inculcated by commercial pursuits, strove to stand well with both parties." [13]

Canaanite architecture is thought to have relied heavily on stone, especially in religious buildings, where giant blocks were sourced and cut on site, as in Baalbek.[14] Private houses, which Moscati argues followed the Mesopotamian tradition of the courtyard house—a *yard around which rooms are lined up*[15]—saw their smaller building blocks eroded over time in a cycle of reuse which is visible in Lebanon's heritage to this day. What remains more intact is Phoenician culture, objects of everyday life and ones of ritual status alike. They speak of the Levant as a bridge over three continents, of migratory tendencies, cultural acceptance, and a *love of* (crafting) *little things*.[16]

CRUSADES

In short order the eastern Mediterranean city states we collectively call Phoenicia today (though they were never once unified)—having been annexed by a succession of blossoming empires for the past two millennia—were swept up by the *Muslim conquest* in 634 AD at the hands of its first dynasty, the Umayyad Caliphate.[17] By the 11th century—having been fully absorbed into the Arab world—the narrow strip of coast found itself under the rule of the Ayyubid Sultanate (of which Saladin is the most recognizable name) when the Crusades began. The developing interest to protect and expand Christian influence in the region thus first manifests in the lasting legacy of their military architecture, present along the coastline and in strategic points of passage across both mountain ranges.[18]

MUTASARRIFATE

The autonomous state of Mount Lebanon, then a part of Syria under Ottoman rule (1516-1918), was an enclave allowed greater freedoms due to its geography and economic importance. Feudal families held power here (most notably two dynasties—the Druze Ma'ani and Maronite Chehabi families),[19] with their administrative seat first in Deir al-Qamar, then the Beiteddine Palace.[20] Exports grew to support this newly prospering economy, as Syria's largest *silk reeling plants* were located here.[21] Silk-worms were fed mulberry leaves not only in factory conditions but in the privacy of family homes, on dining tables (including my great-grandparents'), or even in specifically assigned rooms (preferred due to the fact that silk worms chew at a noticeable volume all through the night). During this time, a back-and-forth between locals vying for Ottoman or European support and establishing region-defining alliances began to take place—a preview to the coming power-shift of the 20th century.

> "The old established families, whose traditional wealth was based on urban and rural landholdings, amassed considerable fortunes by adapting to a Western economy of transit trade, while a new merchant class of selfmade entrepreneurs and professionals went up the social scale, following the same process of cultivating European connections and extending and diversifying their economic base." [22]

MANDATE

The French mandate (1918-1943) shaped Lebanon's borders as we know them (page 10 depicts them today and over the course of history), expanding its coastline and hinterland, and positioning Beirut as its capital city (the city centre was demolished and reconstructed during this time following an axial model centred around the Place de L'Étoile.[23] All this began after Western influence first took hold of the Mount Lebanon region in the 1840s, following Egypt's declaration of war on the Ottoman empire. The support Christians in the region received from European allies led to twenty years of civil war, culminating in the French first exerting their influence in 1860 to guarantee Lebanon's autonomy.[24] With the conclusion of World War, they gained direct control over Syria alongside the British, and the Mount Lebanon Mutasarrifate was expanded into *Greater Lebanon* under French mandate.[25] European influence however brought with it the gradual decline of local industry, especially silk production and handicraft, as larger industrial powers sought to establish their markets in the region—an era her-

3 MOSCATI, Sabatino, *Geschichte und Kultur der Semitischen Völker* (W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1955), 236-7.
4 FRIEDELL, Egon, *Kultur-Geschichte Ägyptens und des Alten Orients* (Verlag C. H. Beck, 1967), 71.
5 HERM (1974), 30.
6 Ibid, 16.
7 RAWLINSON, George, *Phoenicia* (T. Fisher Unwin, 1890), 21-2.
8 HERM (1974), 32.
9 Ibid, 75.
10 Ibid, 115.
11 FRIEDELL (1967), 239.
12 Ibid, 238.
13 RAWLINSON (1890), 175.
14 MOSCATI (1955), 106-7.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid, 19 - 20.
17 CHAMOUN, Rashid et al, *Umayyad Route* (LAU/ Safadi Foundation, 2016), 12.
18 Ibid, 13.
19 RAGETTE, Friedrich, *Architecture in Lebanon* (Caravan Books, 1980), 9.
20 CHAMOUN et al (2016), 14.
21 SALIBA, Robert, *Beirut 1920-1940* (The Order of Engineers and Architects, 1988), 8 - 9.
22 SALIBA (1988), 9.
23 CHAMOUN et al (2016), 15.
24 RAGETTE (1980), 9.
25 Ibid.

Lebanon today

alded by the arrival of concrete and steel construction methods.[26]

Lebanon is small in terms of land size with roughly 10,5 km^2, a length of about 223 km, and an average width of 60 km. The Mount Lebanon massif, to which it owes its name, peaks at a height of about 3000 metres.[27]

Its capital, Beirut, a major commercial hub on the Mediterranean, is home to 2.4 million people, almost half of Lebanon's population.[28] Only about 5% of Lebanon's inhabitants today are permanent residents of non-urban settlements. A rural exodus can be observed over the last few decades, from the nineteen-sixties (60% living in rural areas), to the seventies (40%) and mid-noughties (10%).[29] Mass-emigration from the Lebanese mountains notably began much earlier though, with the civil war of 1860 between Druze and Maronite populations resulting in a large number of Maronites moving to Beirut and its surroundings.[30] This trend continued past the dissolution of the *Mutasarrifate* (a term describing the autonomous Mount Lebanon region under Ottoman rule) by the start of the First World War, and the ensuing embargo and mass starvation faced as a result. After 1943, the year Lebanon gained independence, rural populations began returning, but no longer with permanent residency in mind. A tradition of expatism emerged, with young adults moving to the coast or abroad to study and work, with the ultimate goal of returning to their village with something to show for it (see page 11 for an illustration of expat populations abroad). As a result, many houses now remain empty throughout most of the year, functioning as secondary residences, or rural getaways for those who can afford them. The expats, also referred to as the Lebanese diaspora, are estimated to number somewhere between 4 and 14 million.[31]

> "It is not surprising (...) that large-scale architectural enterprises were undertaken during the rule of foreign powers, such as the Roman, and though these frequently reveal strong local characteristics, they are nonetheless of foreign origin." [32]

Lebanon's architecture is divided into during- and post-Ottoman rule. The former denotes triple arched mansions, the *Lebanese House*, Italianate, Islamic, load-bearing masonry, and simple vaulted abodes in rural areas, while the latter post-war period revolves around the introduction of concrete, stronger influence from France, European modernism, and what can be described as *mandate architecture,* blending established Ottoman building tradition with novel concepts and materials.[33] New construction is performed in reinforced or block concrete—the once omnipresent stone and timber building tradition being relegated to secondary uses.

Despite a 'new normal' of political turmoil, economic instability, and constant emigration, Lebanon

26 Ibid, 11.
27 CHAMOUN et al (2016), 8.
28 U.N., *World Population Prospects* (2024). https://population.un.org/wpp/ (Accessed 14.07.2024)
29 ABI SAMRA, Marwan, *L'émigration libanaise et son impact sur l'économie et le développement* (Bureau International du Travail, 2010), 5.
30 WINSLOW (1996), 36-9.
31 U.N. (2024). https://population.un.org/wpp/ (Accessed 14.07.2024)
32 RAGETTE (1980), 2.
33 ABOU HARB, Paula et al, *Houses of Beirut 1860- 1925* (Beirut Heritage Initiative, 2021), 15.

Fig 4. *Dance at the restaurant.* Mount Lebanon. 1992.

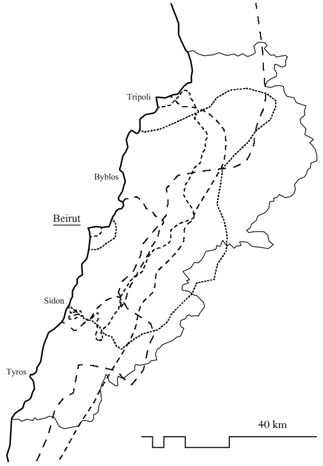
Lebanon in 2024

Mediterranean Coastline

State Border and Governorate

District

Bejjeh (B)



Lebanon's Borders over Time

Bronze Age Phoenicia (2200 BCE)

Phoenicia/ Canaan (1200 BCE)

Ayyubid Sultanate (1193)

Ottoman Mutasarrifiya (1862)

Expanded Ottoman M. (1900)

French Mandate (1920)

Population Abroad

upper estim. of 14 mio abroad

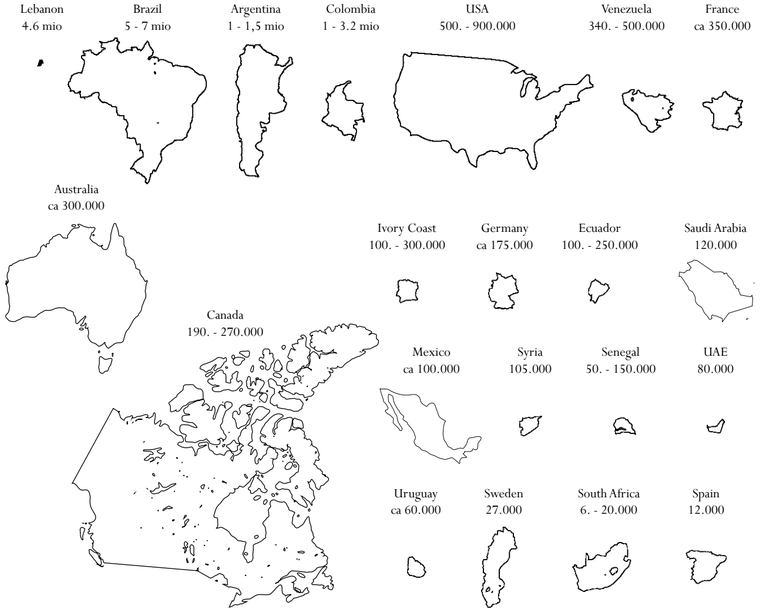


Fig 5. *Procession of St Therese passing by the house.*
Bejjeh, Mount Lebanon. 2003.

Bejjeh

and its people stand among the most resilient cultures historically speaking, and continue to hold on to that difficult inheritance through their symbolic tie to the undying phoenix.

Bejjeh, a small village 54 kilometres north of Beirut, at 560 metres above sea level in the Keserwan-Jbeil Governorate of Mount Lebanon, was my childhood home. Seven hills encircle it. Eleven chapels and churches dot those hills. Grapes and figs, olive oil and *arak*, a strong spirit similar to the Turkish *raki* or Greek *rakia*, are its main exports. Its historic role as a Maronite stronghold is present in the villagers' minds to this day.

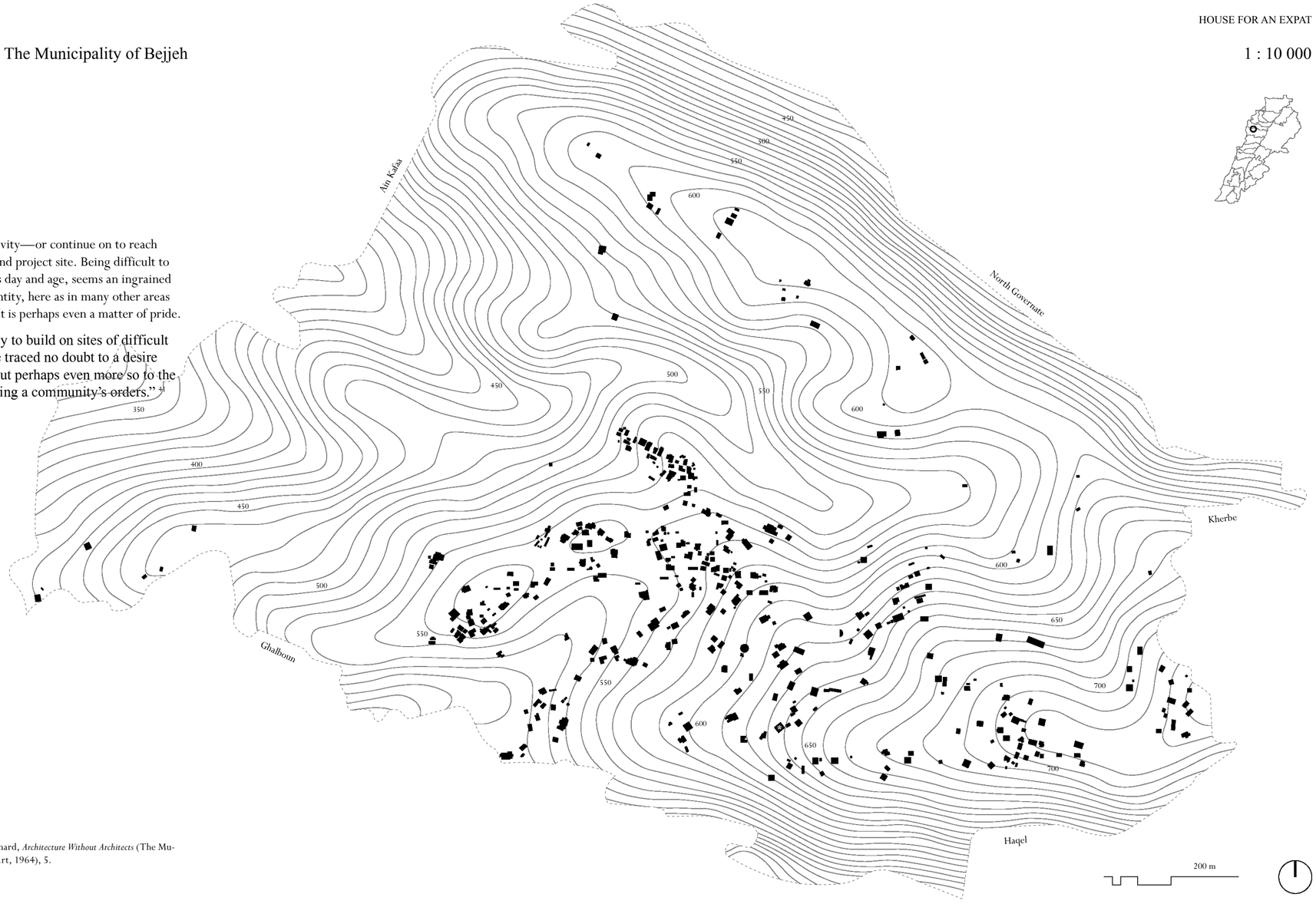
According to local sources, the etymological root is the Syriac *baggé*, roughly translating to gardens. There is a town of the same name in the Horan area of Syria, from which it is speculated the village's original population may have migrated.[34] Villagers have assigned to the older foundations and objects in the area origins related to sites such as Qadisha Valley and the mountain region crusader forts; The chapel of Mar Abda is said to have been built on the remains of a monastery, or perhaps even a Phoenician site, the cave of Shmeis al Qalaa could once have been a fortified stronghold, while the Al A'araj cave may have housed the earliest persecuted Christians.[35] These claims, regardless of their historical accuracy, speak to Bejjeh belonging to a greater regional and socio-cultural phenomenon which presents itself in all aspects of its domestic life; The *collective narrative* of Mount Lebanon is present in its architecture, its means of production, and general way of life. Equally present, if not stronger though, is the presence of the expat, whose environment is shaped around the pretence of his migratory movements. Leaving and returning, expanding and constructing from scratch the seat of residence—the nest an expat builds is more so a product of external influences than any rural Lebanese typology that came before it.[36]

Bejjeh struggles with a waning—and seasonally fluctuating—population. While a weekend in the summer season might see the village host up to 1600 people, the winter months and work days especially will see that number shrink down to around 200. In that aspect, it encapsulates perfectly the role that the country's peripheral localities have come to play. The village's expansion in the wake of Lebanon's independence and returning expats is visible in the spread of increasingly looser settlements away from the village centre and along the main and secondary roads (pages 14-5).[37] There was a period of growth then, similar to the time of 1860-80, when French support and an emerging silk worm industry gave the mountain regions new means of sustaining themselves, which proceeded a period of hardship.[38] In 1860 it was the mass exodus towards Beirut,[39] while the years of the First World War saw a famine unlike any other take hold after Ottoman trade embargos massively stifled food imports. Father Joseph Delore, a Jesuit from Lyon who spent much of his life in Lebanon, documented Bejjeh, among other villages, after the matter. On the back of a photograph of the desolate village (Fig. 6), he wrote the following:

34 JBEIL-BYBLOS TOURISM, *Bejjeh* (2016). https://jbail-byblos-tourism.org/wp/2016/12/04/bejjeh/ (Accessed 07.10.2023)
35 Ibid.
36 DADOUR, Stephanie, *Redefining Vernacular* (Emerald Publishing, 2013), 89 - 91.
37 ABI SAMRA (2010), 21.
38 Ibid, 23.
39 ABOU HARB et al (2021), 16.

The Municipality of Bejjeh

1 : 10 000



> "In Lebanon, a third of the inhabitants died of hunger during the Great War. There are villages, especially in the mountains, where more than a third died. This village is Bijjé, where I have two schools. Before the war there were about 1000 inhabitants. There are barely 500 left. The others are dead: see their houses fallen into ruin. 1929." [40]

Today, the village of Bejjeh consists almost entirely of private, single-family homes. There is no rented housing, with the exception of a few families offering holiday rentals (a growing trend in the Mount Lebanon region). The only public buildings are religious and municipal, with smaller buildings used as gathering spaces in the vicinity. Communal outdoor spaces in the mountains are commonly located near these, or otherwise restaurants and similar gathering spaces, of which Bejjeh has little.

Another topic of contention are shortages in the supply of basic necessities such as electricity, potable water, and infrastructure upkeep, most of which is locally or privately handled. Roads therefore play a vital role in everyday life, and supply is always limited.

It is roughly an hour's drive from Beirut to Bejjeh. One exits the coastal highway just before Amchit, ascending the mountain and passing through Gharfine, Hbaline, Chamat, and finally Ghalboun, before crossing into Bejjeh (page 17). From there the main road takes one past the newly built municipal town hall to a u-turn from which one may exit to the village church of St Sarkis & Bakhos—the heart of Bejjeh's social activity—or continue on to reach the *Expat's House* and project site. Being difficult to reach, even in this day and age, seems an ingrained part of village identity, here as in many other areas of the mountain. It is perhaps even a matter of pride.

> "The tendency to build on sites of difficult access can be traced no doubt to a desire for security but perhaps even more so to the need of defining a community's orders." [41]

40 ARCHÉORIENT, *Landscapes of the Eastern Front* (2016). https://archeorient.hypotheses.org/5791 (Accessed 28.12.2023)

41 RUDOFSKY, Bernard, *Architecture Without Architects* (The Museum of Modern Art, 1964), 5.

Fig 6. *Bejjeh abandoned after the famine of the First World War.*
J. Delore, ca 1925.

The Village Centre

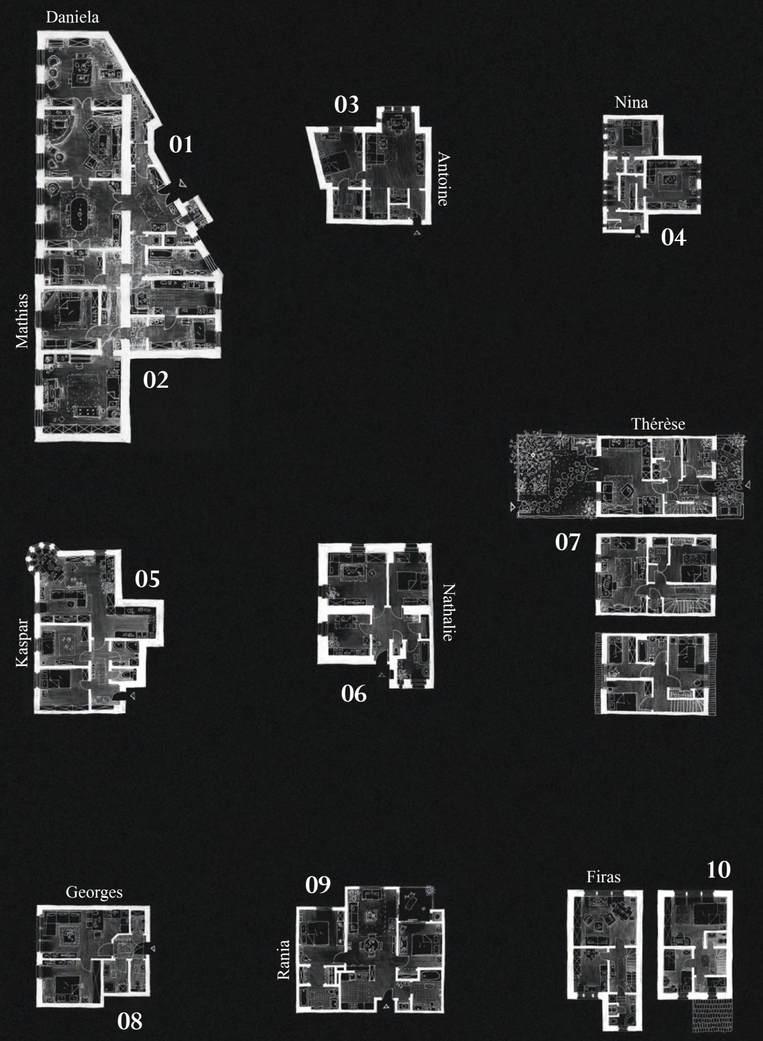


Fig 7. *10 expats. A series of decisions.*

Chapter II

Expat. Here, There, and *Everywhere*

Ex-who?

Who or what is an expat? The Cambridge Dictionary defines an expat, or expatriate, as a 'person who resides outside of their country of citizenship' (*ex-patria* meaning 'out of the father's land'). A community of expats—if they have lived abroad across multiple generations—is referred to as a diaspora (*diasporá* meaning 'scattered' in ancient Greek).

Lebanon, from its early days as the Phoenicians' hub of commerce to its heyday as an exoticized hub of tourism in the 1960s, has experienced non-stop what few other parts of the world have—a state of inconsistency, of *transience*. The perceived result was and is a state of unaccountability in economic, cultural, religious, and similar customs and institutions—a sort of *identity crisis* that comes about under the unique circumstances faced by a fractured whole.

In Friedrich Ragette's *Architecture in Lebanon, The Lebanese House During the 18th and 19th Centuries* (1980), an invisible border is drawn to help explain this dissonance—one which separates mountain from sea, citizen from stateless, essentially the 'haves' from the 'have-nots':

> "The discovery of the sea route to India (1488) lessened the commercial importance of the Levant. The beginning of Ottoman rule (1516) also reduced its strategic value. In 1521 the Venetians concluded the first trade agreement with Sulayman the Magnificent. Trade now consisted increasingly of local products, particularly silk, which stimulated the development of the country. The Sultan contented himself with the collection of taxes, and left a large measure of independence to the inaccessible mountain areas." [42]

Here we see a shift, as trade is replaced by industry, and industry then abandoned, in the fragile balance that had held until the late 19th century, when truly rural areas flourished, only to abruptly find their usefulness in the context of a now global supply system had passed:

> "In 1775 Beirut counted only 6,000 inhabitants and in 1848 not more than 15,000. After 1860, however, the rural exodus, which has been mainly responsible for Beirut's spectacular growth began. The massacres of 1860 in Mount Lebanon, the collapse of the silk industry under the impact of European industrial fibres and the decline in local handicrafts due to European industrial competition brought about a lasting flow of emigrants. The emigrants remained attached to their home communities, kept sending money in support of their relatives and often returned later to pass their retirement days in their native country. This is due to the fact that the family holds the central position in the extensive framework of communal attachments and traditional loyalties of Lebanese society." [43]

The expat, having first fled the mountains for a chance at proper citizenship and 'equal status among confessions'[44] in the face of a collapsing (village) economy, fled again when the city, that is the state,

42 RAGETTE (1980), 11.
43 Ibid.
44 SALIBA (1988), 8.

met a similar fate. The Lebanese expat therefore is both cause and effect of this turmoil, as they have both significant impact on those previously mentioned facets of their country, as well as a central role in the back-and-forth of Lebanon's two geographically distinct regions, its coastline and its mountains.

Historically, the expat's origins may be traced back to the mid-to-late 19th century, and, following Ragette's observations, their existence manifests as that of an outlier—the intrinsic link, that duality of the sea-faring and mountain-dwelling folk, yet being neither—a vagueness which is only amplified by their repeated struggle with outside forces. As a result of these external forces however, the Expat community, originally from a niche socio-cultural background (rural Maronite turned *trader, local retailer, silk cultivator, entrepreneur*),[45] now occupy their own slice of culture, forming a broader group of individuals less attached to sectarian boundaries or economic background.

A closer inspection of the expat today therefore seems necessary, especially when one is concerned with the kinds of space they choose to inhabit abroad, and (often) choose to build upon returning to Lebanon. What differentiates the expat from, say, a nomad, is that they do remain attached—if only in name—and define their impermanent living style through the existence of a *source.* This is expressed in terms of family, soil, root. The nomad, on the other hand, as the Phoenicians and their progenitors, the Canaanites, might be described, believed in a lack of stability within their environment, and therefore a need to *keep up* with seasonal change.[46] Despite this, the settlements they did leave to future generations would remain largely unchanged, the major cities of Lebanon to this day.[47] The factories[48] they left behind also came to represent more permanent towns and cities over time, as with *Qart-hadasht* (New City), the Tyrian colony founded in the 9th century BCE that eventually became Carthage, and would go to war with the Roman empire under Hannibal.[49]

Heidegger gives us another interpretation of this in *Building Dwelling Thinking* (1951), arguing that the basic act of building, which expresses our natural desire to dwell, in itself is a permanent search of being.[50] We *are* when we *dwell,* as is the place we inhabit. That notion of dwelling, or experience, being what brings out the *place* in things, houses, sites, etc. being the *phenomenon of place* that Norberg-Schulz also describes in *Genius Loci* (1979).[51] The expat's *existential dimension* today (Norberg-Schulz calls it a *truth manifest in history, but transcending historical situation*),[52] and therefore the way they *dwell,* has perhaps only folkloric ties to their past—putting the number of times Lebanon's Phoenician heritage is mentioned in relation to its diaspora in line with the amount of times the mythical phoenix is—but these and other stories characterize them, and are no less potent than stories of national or religious identity.

45 SALIBA (1988), 8.

46 HERM (1974), 14.
47 MASSA, Aldo, *Die Welt der Phönizier* (F. A. Herbig Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1977), 22.
48 In the pre-modern sense meaning a trading outpost.
49 MASSA (1977), 41-2.
50 HEIDEGGER, Martin, *Bauen Wohnen Denken* (1951), 163-4.
51 NORBERG-SCHULZ, Christian, *Genius Loci* (Rizzoli, 1979), 6.
52 Ibid.

Interviews

Ten interviews were held with Lebanese expats, based on an ethnographic questionnaire mapping personal experience, in order to better understand *transience* as a *contemporary experience.* The resulting answers—and plans drawn of each expat's home abroad—are collaged into a collective expression of their specific sub-culture. The difficulty in identifying a clear *typology of transience* stems from our common definition of typology being something that is in itself transformative[53] and imprecise until implemented and characterized in the form of a built type.[54]

Perhaps for that reason it is most useful to approach *transience* from an experiential standpoint first, on which one can then build with the help of specific examples in the form of case studies. This series of collages, titled *10 Expats Decide,* configures living spaces and stories into groups, or layers, finding in each a confirmation or contradiction of the established narrative that is the expat's *identity*—an abstraction which concretizes in the form of his *home.*

Each collage focuses on a distinct aspect of home: *Shape* creates an impossibly dense agglomeration of homes, providing an idea of the scale of residence inhabited by ten expats.

Orientation aligns these homes northward, with the side-effect of odd spaces opening up in between.

Rooms around a Courtyard juxtaposes the western apartment type with the traditional courtyard house, using only bedrooms.

Dynamic Living uses those rooms or exterior spaces assigned an activity; living, working, and dining rooms, kitchens, and gardens all arranged into an irregular puzzle.

The Unique celebrates each expat's favourite room, or moment in their home abroad, combining them to parallel a sort of shared positive memory.

The Everyday is a result of the left-over rooms, which often find themselves designed into a corner, or left to be the last room along the corridor.

These collages serve as a precursor, or *primer* to the case studies, having been drawn in response to the spaces represented in them. They offer a way of comparing directly the domestic settings of a typical western apartment, condo, or terraced housing typology (in which most of the expats dwell) with an abstract reimagining of those typologies for temporary or *transient dwelling* that Lebanon has to offer.

Transience is not a new type, but it is rooted in typology. It is simply a collection of features we have *grown comfortable with* in the context of temporary dwelling. One could call these collages typological studies therefore, being interpretatively based on a set of built examples, (in the vein of what Vidler calls a typology concerned with the *ontology of the city*)[55] and serving to highlight their common traits in a way that attributes the *overarching* result to the *underlying* need.

53 MONEO, Rafael, *On Typology* (MIT Press, 1978), 23.
54 AURELI, Pier Vittorio, *The Possibility Of An Absolute Architecture* (MIT Press, 2011), 33.
55 MEDIUM, *On the 'Three Typologies',* Luke Jones (2017). https://medium.com/@tlukejones/on-the-three-typologies-ed-0b5747fd9c (Accessed 11.04.2024)

Shape.

10 expats decide to live wall-to-wall

Fig 8. *10 expats. Shape.*

10 Expats Decide

Ten expats decided to live wall-to-wall. This decision was not an easy one. Many factors had influenced them—including those that stood above choice.

> The war lasted 15 years. It hadn't brought the answers to the problems that caused it in the first place … Since I was a child, I moved with my parents … I think it's a matter of fitting in … I wanted opportunities that were not available … It was an adventure for us … The war. The Lebanese civil war, which started in 1975 … That was the first step; I had to think of an alternative … If you're leaving with the intention of moving abroad, you definitely take your time, you say your goodbyes, you make peace with it—but this was, well, completely unplanned … I found out it was not what I wanted to do.

After a fortnight, the walls stood. Then came the roof. It was a mess of a building. Despite that, they found it impossible not to call it home.

> It's well-maintained, old, elegant … Very spacious … Well accessible in terms of transportation … Near greener parts … The neighbourhood is very family-oriented … It's a cosy apartment … A different kind of mentality here … Well-organised … It's part of a complex. It has a nice density, I would say … A nice house, but small, you know?

They looked to the swaying sea from their window. When they opened the door, there stood the mountains.

> A villa over three storeys, flooded with light, surrounded by our own land—and it had a fantastic view … It was pretty isolated … There is water that stagnates behind the house and eventually soaks in … I feel like sometimes, when you enter an Arab household, you can smell it … They would have to come from far away … The ground floor is built like a cave and winters were cold in the mountains … I have to learn not to visit anymore, because I'd like to keep my memories of how it was … People have to adapt, to live a better life … We made little improvements wherever we could. I think, when I was a kid, we didn't even have a water heater … I've moved most of my living to the second floor. You have a nice view from up there and it's all open. I hardly use the first floor now—only when there are guests.

They had planted seedlings early in their youth, and watched them grow, year for year.

> Ahwé under the arishé. Family lunches on Sundays. The sandstone, the wide arches … The trees in Lebanon—our trees—were great for climbing. We had a garden there as well and we had access to our grandfather's garden; he was growing lots of different stuff and it was right in front of our door essentially … So, the house in Lebanon would be something to 'show off' … I didn't mind sharing a room and while it was a kind of guest room, it still felt like our room when I visited … That was like the one thing I could connect with them on, but most of them were older than me too and also de-

10 expats decide to leave space in between

Fig 9. *10 expats. Orientation.*

veloped other interests like driving to other villages and going out in the evening and partying … We were a bit, you know, out of the way. Every now and then we had friends come for a sleepover … I used to help my grandparents with picking the grapes, apples, pears—all types of fruits and vegetables. And then we would bring them to the market to sell … If you go into my room, you can understand my personality. It was my little home. I miss it … We always had people visiting. And they don't need a reason to visit, really … People don't just come by and expect everything to be ready—coffee, cake, etc.—not like in the old days.

Summer after summer. But each summer was—almost unnoticeably so—a little different. They came and went, left and right, were abandoned and returned. It only served to deepen their paths, to pack the earth under their busy feet.

There was always a table full of food, even though everybody was poor … The edge of the carpet was our coastline, the sofa the mountains, and so on … It used to feel more like a typical holiday. I went back during those times I had nothing else to do… My city, the streets, the supermarket I like to go to, my coffee place … If I came back late at night, I remember the electricity would just cut off, so there would be no street lights. It was pitch black and I couldn't see a thing in front of me. You could hear wolves howling, or coyote's maybe … We had a few friends in the village, but even then, they weren't always there, since they moved down somewhere closer by the sea in winter … It was tough. I was quite young when I left. I was 23 years old and coming to a strange country … Every generation, everyone has a floor to themselves … We didn't have fencing around our land at the time. I remember, as a kid, we just loved to stand right on top of that edge onto the road … You know, the whole world today is on the same rail tracks, whether they like it or not.

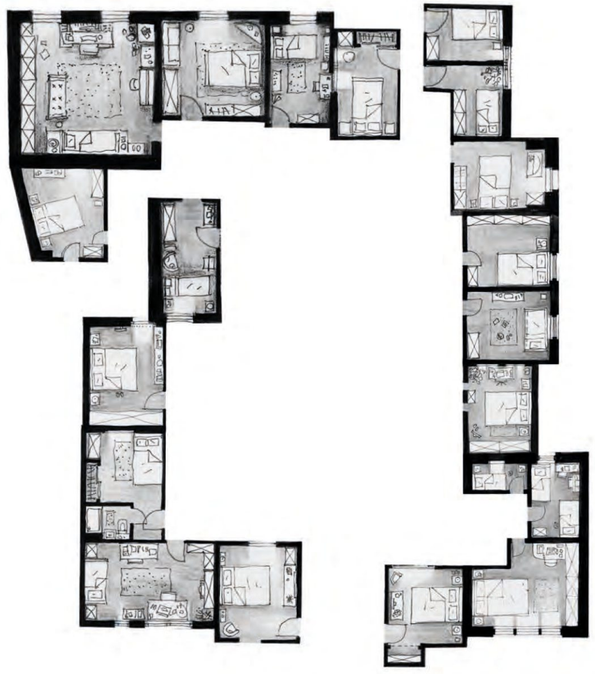
The same paths they had grown fond of were now no longer there. It was no longer a question of difficulty or ease. So, when they spoke, suddenly, they were as one. Their home was one.

Where everybody acts in the interest of everyone else … Home is a place where I feel safe … I can be who I am without thinking about the consequences of it … As long as you find a group or society, or you have a passion for something … I can relax at the end of a long day of work … It's the people you live with, loving them, and the fact that it's individual, that I can put some of myself into it … I want to be surrounded by people I love … Home is where my family is … It's a place where you can rejuvenate, reset, get your energy back … I built it.

Winter was a brusque, foreboding wind. But the house they had built stood well. The expats sat around a fire, sharing a meal. In the cold they found their ideals, and, clinging to them, withstood the persistent rains by sharing their favourite stories.

The light would be coming through the blind beautifully … I remember thinking it was beautiful and mysterious as a child and I played by that pillar a lot … The attic, was where we could do anything we wanted, whatever the weather was outside … To me, that signified that 'We're here now. We're home' … We spent almost every evening watching a movie there, which I remember very fondly … When the sun shone through the curtains, it looked like the whole room was underwater … Sitting on the balcony and seeing both the sea and the mountains … We held these weekly reunions at my family's residence, where we would congregate for lunch … It was these two beds—really old, clunky beds with those metal springs and the head- and footboards out of metal … I missed it. The more I went back, the more I saw myself living there.

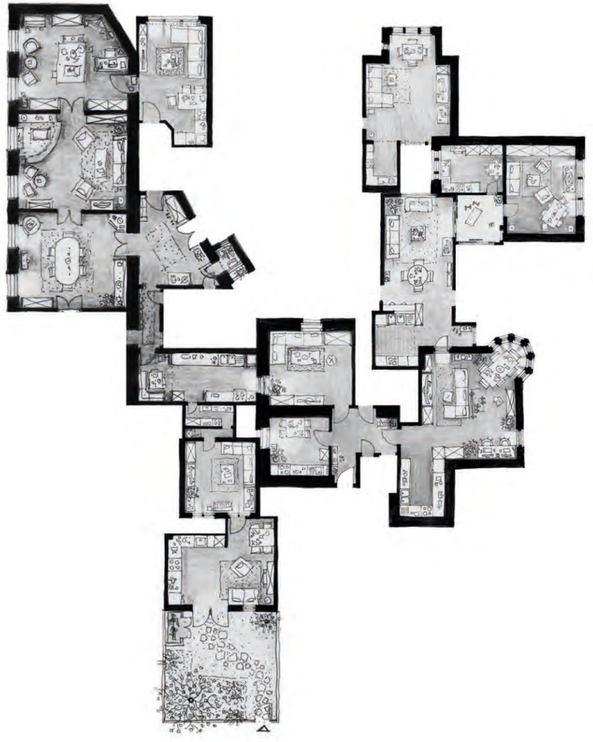
Rooms around a Courtyard.



10 expats decide to make a place

Fig 10. *10 expats. Rooms around a Courtyard.*

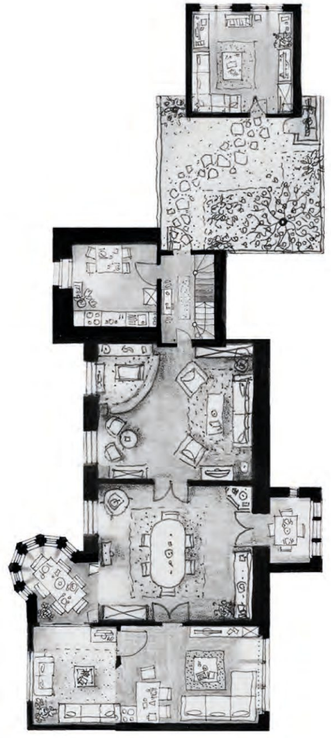
Dynamic Living.



10 expats decide to introduce a sense of urgency

Fig 11. *10 expats. Dynamic Living.*

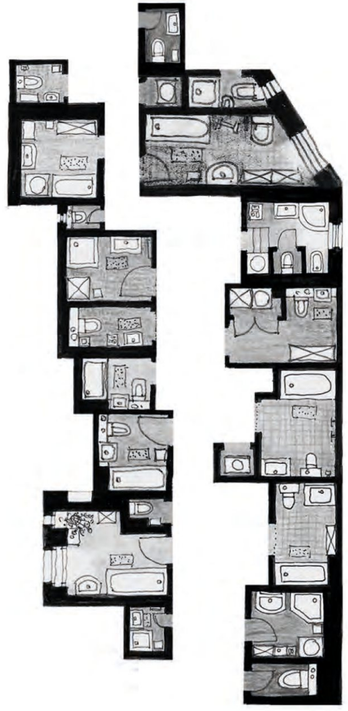
The Unique.



10 expats decide to combine their memorabilia

Fig 12. *10 expats. The Unique.*

The Everyday.



10 expats decide to avoid the question

Fig 13. *10 expats. The Everyday.*

Fig 14. *Maronite soldiers of the Mount Lebanon Mutasarrifate.* Lewis Gaston Leary, 1913.

Fig 15. *Tourists sleeping on the hotel roof in summer in Baghdad, Irak.* Unknown, 1955.

Remember to Return

The essential role of the family in Maronitic mountain culture is that dwelling which manifests in a built identity of equal importance. The architectural elements of the home find an equal rigidity to that tradition established in response to exterior pressures. Bejjeh, and many villages like it, express their belonging through the complete composition of elements ranging from the larger *townscape* and how strange visitors are greeted to the *liwan* and how intimate guests are received.

It is a *hard architecture* on the surface. Squat stone structures, sat on a relatively inhospitable slope. While the summers are dry, the winters are exceedingly wet. The house is inclined to be defensive, hidden, tucked away. But one side remains open, facing the sea. That facade is marked by the arcaded porch one traditionally enters from the side (Fig. 14)—an evolution Ragette describes as originating from the need to adapt the courtyard house (moving from hillside to valleyside).[56] Thus the idea of a stepped courtyard was abandoned with the development of a new, internalized 'courtyard' in the form of the central hall.[57]

Other elements of the home were lost also—the rammed earth flat roof, an ideal place for families to sleep during hot summer nights (Fig. 15), was abandoned with the introduction of those red roof tiles that are now considered traditional on pitched roofs. The idea of *presenting the front* though remained.

56 RAGETTE, Friedrich, *Traditional Domestic Architecture of the Arab Region* (Edition Axel Menges, 2003), 97.
57 Ibid, 98.

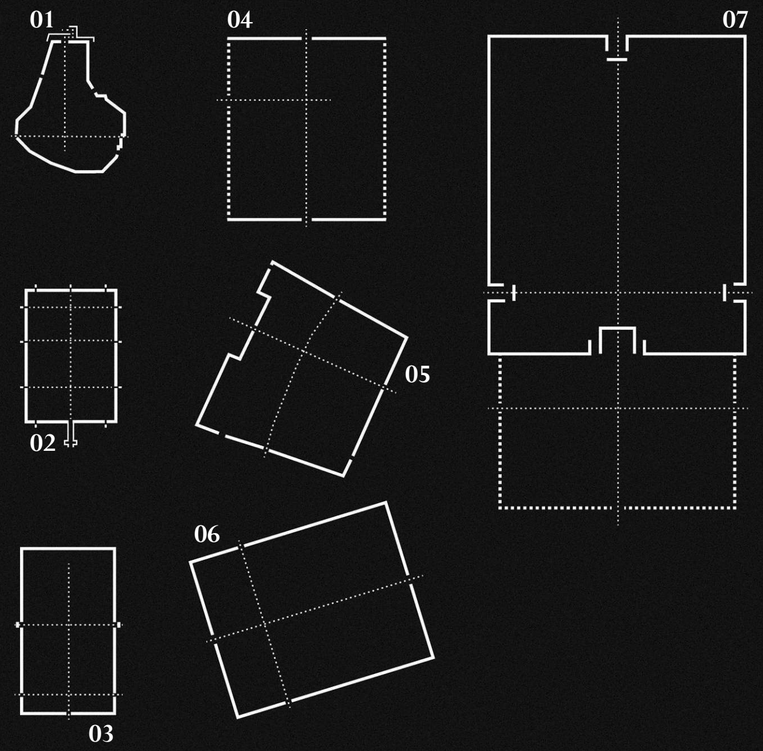


Fig 16. *Safe quarters.*
The castrum across scale and time.

01 The ancient greek settlement Selinus in modern-day Gazipasa, Turkey, 7th c. BCE.
02 Angkor Wat, Cambodia, ca 1120 CE.
03 Taj Mahal, Agra, India, 1647 CE.
04 The Aztec capital Tenochtitlán in modern-day Mexico City, Mexico, ca 900 CE.
05 The Great Temple of Amun, Karnak, Egypt, ca 1550 BCE.
06 The Roman castrum Augusta Praetoria in modern-day Aosta, Italy, 25 BCE.
07 The Forbidden City, Beijing, China, 15th c. CE.

Chapter III

Transience. A *Catalogue* of Change

Framing the Study

The question of what *transience* is, or represents in the context of an architecture of dwelling, is the main link established between the contemporary expat and his historical counterparts, and therefore demands a closer look at the forms that catered to a *transitory habit(-at). Transience* in the form of the *urban,* the conglomeration, absorption, and amorphism that defines modern cities, has long been debated. In *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture* (2011), Aureli describes the synthetic process that characterises urbanisation as such:

> "This cognitive metabolism, exemplified by terms such as *mutation, transurbanism, postmetropolis, city in transition, city on the move*—terms that have characterized fundamental moments in reflections on the city in recent years—gives place to a certain imaginary in which it is impossible to identify the parts that constitute the ensemble of the city." [58]

Perhaps it could be argued that if urbanity is that answering of freedoms with constant, harsh change—an *extraction and consumption of value* through import—then a rural counterpart must ultimately be concerned with *anti-transfigurative measures,* preservation, and production efforts through export. This idea finds support in the development of architectures along rural trade routes like the silk roads, and networks of military outposts, like the Roman castrum. As a natural manifestation of the human desire to dwell in remote or hostile areas—in the way that the idea for a staircase might come into being independently across the minds of those on the ground-floor—it seems that 'four enclosing walls around a yard, along which rooms naturally find their place', has sprung into the mind as a kind of *collective idea.* The oblong depictions of Serlio's *Castrametation of the Romans* (Fig. 17) and Aldo Rossi's *Plan for the Cimitero San Cataldo* (Fig. 18) illustrate this idea alongside countless other examples. These forms of settlement are somehow an in-between step from the boundless landscape of rural isolation to the crowded spheres of urban agglomeration. In the days of the caravan, it meant that converging of rural and urban, of proximity and distance, which formed an uncertain equilibrium.

> "Caravans feature most definitely in the writings of Arab compulsive traveller Ibn Battuta. Setting out from Morocco in 1325, his first trip lasted twenty-four years before he returned but he was off again within a year, returning fifteen years later, to spend three years (presumably) documenting his previous journeys before setting out on his third journey that lasted a mere six." [59]

Travel, especially on one's own, was something else in the days of Ibn Battuta—a commitment of immense proportions, an itinerary painstakingly planned, undertaken at the risk of great peril, and at high cost. Today, travel is ubiquitous. There is little difference between those *transient spaces* frequented and the destination they serve, as the act of transit in itself continues to lose significance. This vanishing concerns all forms of passage. To be sure, even in rural Lebanon the act of *passing by* is near extinct.

58 AURELI (2011), 33.

59 MISFITS' ARCHITECTURE, *Caravanserai,* Graham McKay (2017). https://misfitsarchitecture.com/2017/12/09/caravanserai/ (Accessed 01.05.2024)

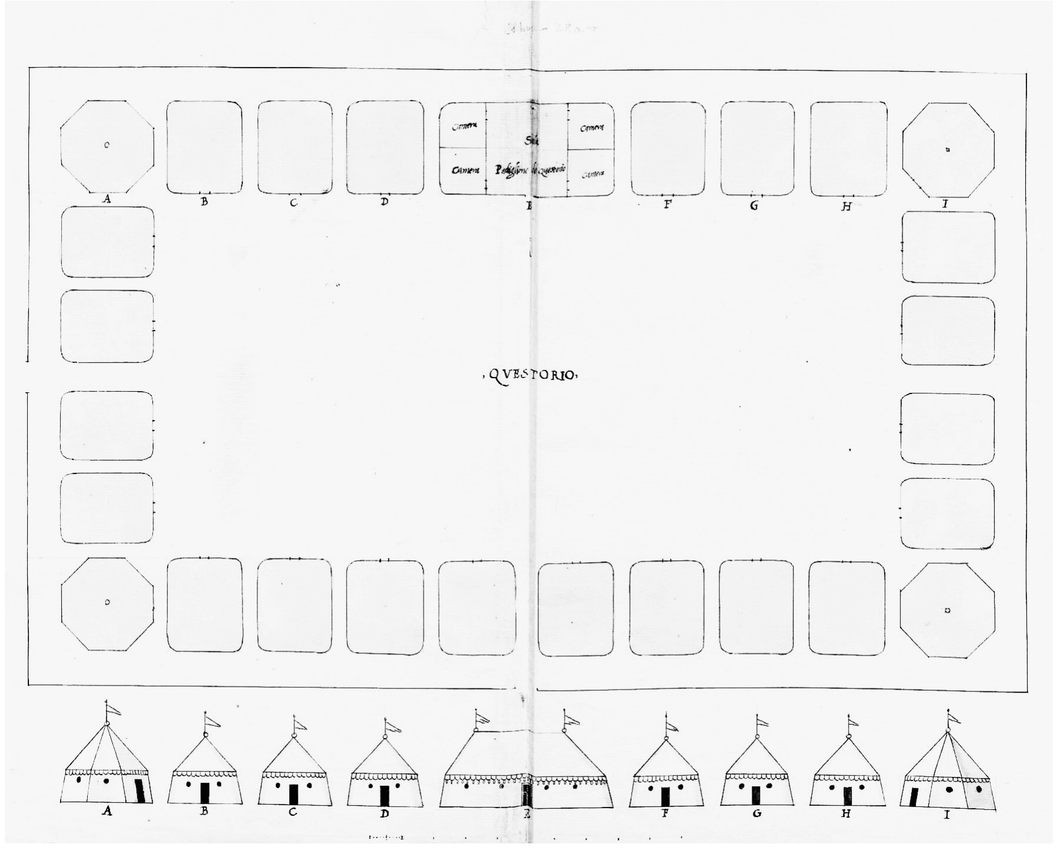


Fig 17. *Castrametation of the Romans, 1551-54.*
Sebastiano Serlio, 1920.

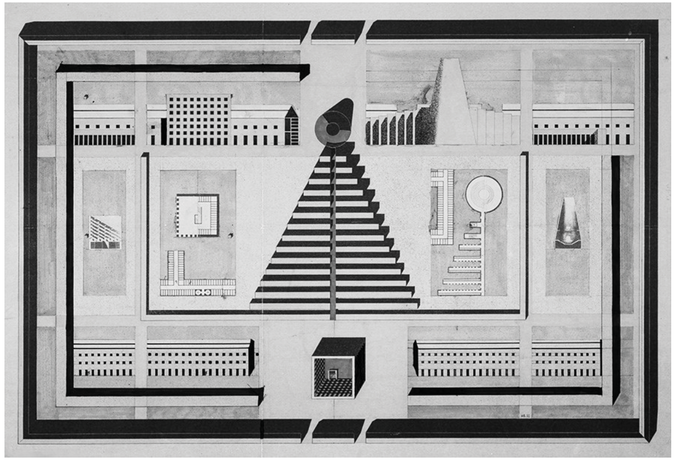


Fig 18. *Plan for the Cimitero San Cataldo, Modena.*
Aldo Rossi, 1971.

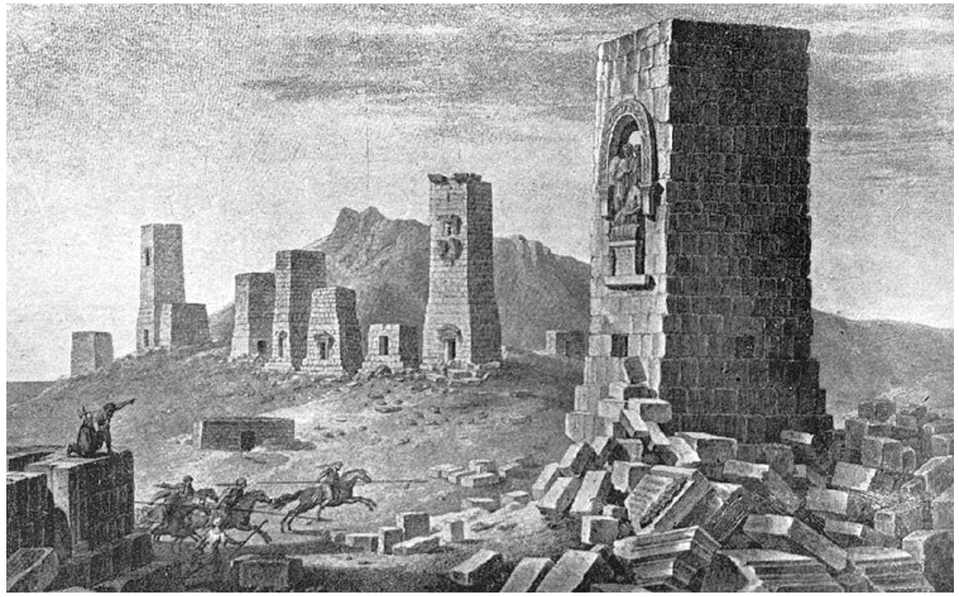


Fig 19. *Valley of the Tombs, Palmyra.*
Louis-François Cassas, ca 1798.

I MET a traveller from an antique land,
Who said, “ Two vast and
trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desart. Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read,
Which yet survive, stamped
on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them,
and the heart that fed :
And on the pedestal, these words appear :
“ My name is OZYMANDIAS, King of Kings. ”
Look on my works ye Mighty, and despair !
No thing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that Colossal Wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

Percy Shelley, *Ozymandias,* 1818

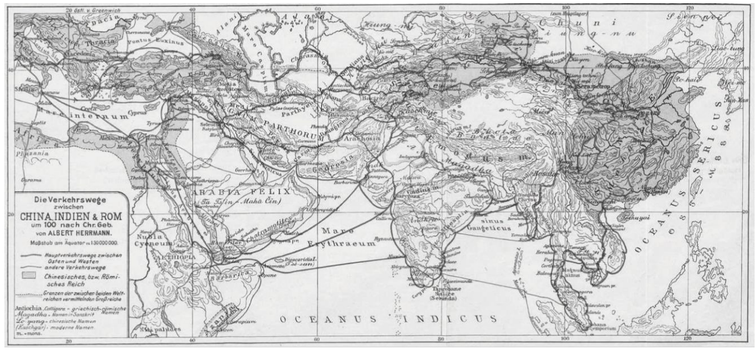


Fig 20. *The Silk Roads.* Albert Hermann, 1922.

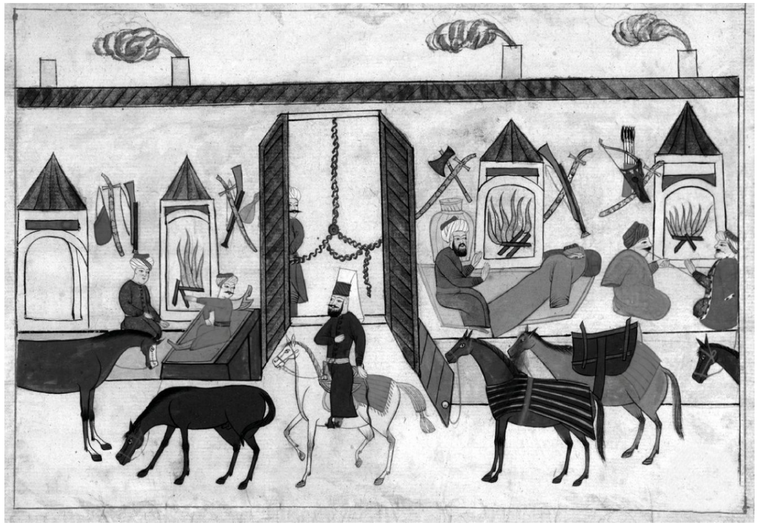


Fig 21. *Inside the caravanserai.* Codex Cicogna, Venetian School, 1971.

Case Study 00

anarchic. Caravanserai

Caravanserai (or *khan, han, or funduq,* in other regions) is the Persian term, from *karvan* (group of travellers) and *sara* (enclosed building), used to describe those fortified inns that sprang up along the well-travelled routes of the early mediaeval world—most famous among them the silk roads.[60] The earliest known caravanserai, located in Palmyra (see Fig. 19), Syria, dates back to the 3rd century AD.[61] But it wasn't until the 7th century saw the region largely under unified Islamic rule that such long-distance travel became common practice.[62] For near a millennium, they served as pit-stop hotels, within a day's journey of each other, providing accomodation, but more importantly protection, potable water, and opportunities for trade and talk. They were built by—and therefore required tribute to—either governments or wealthy private individuals. Despite that semblance of a regulatory body, they were naturally chaotic places, where the sheer proximity and density of travellers trying to rest, trade, transport, cattle, etc. all at once must have been a sight to behold.[63] Their use came to an end with the arrival of steam engine transportation,[64] though they offered a flexible-enough plan (as we will come to see), resulting in a high degree of variation in how they came to be reappropriated. Three examples were chosen outside of Lebanon—though there are some within the country, such as Fakhreddine's *funduq* in Sidon—to underline their specific sub-types. They are in order of appearance:

1. Khan Marjan (1538) in Baghdad, Iraq. The urban *khan* or *funduq,* a denser version of the caravanserai with a smaller (in this case covered) central space, though it usually offered larger rooms on an upper floor. This example was repurposed into an armoury, museum, and restaurant.[65]

2. Deir e-Gachin Caravanserai (224 - 651) in Kavir National Park, Iran. A typical trade road *caravanserai,* revolving around a large, open courtyard surrounded by elevated rooms.[66]

3. Sultan Han (1236) in Sultanhanı, Turkey. The *han* includes religious elements, here in the form of a long nave and kiosk mosque.[67]

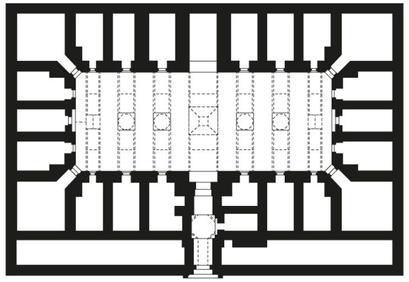
The requirements of a caravanserai and period in which it flourished naturally resulted in a plan that closely resembles that of a typical *masjid* (mosque) or *madrasa* (school). Interestingly, it parallels other types of fortified structures meant to host transient residents, like the eventual crusader forts and monasteries that came to dot the same landscapes,[68] and would often make use of these and older existing structures in order to accommodate their specific programme. Centuries of crossing borders and establishing fortified positions resulted in this archetypal form. But in the case of the caravanserai especially, one could describe it as *unified* on the outside, and *anarchic* on the inside.

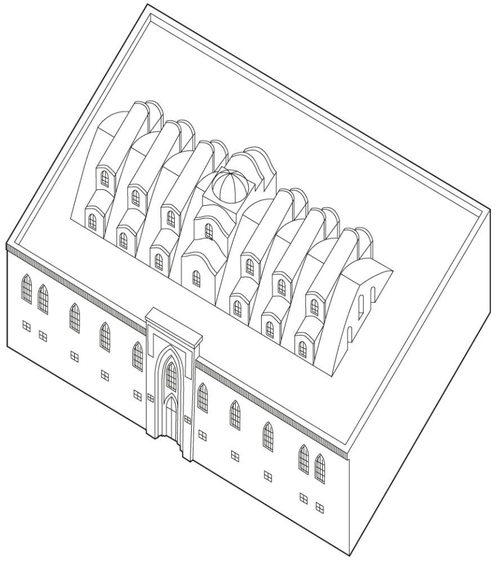
60 MISFITS' ARCHITECTURE (2017). https://misfitsarchitecture.com/2017/12/09/caravanserai/ (Accessed 01.05.2024)
61 Ibid.
62 ARAMCO WORLD, *Spine of the Silk Roads,* Andrew F. Lawler; Tom Schutyser (2011). https://archive.aramcoworld.com/issue/201104/spine.of.the.silk.roads.htm (Accessed 10.05.2024)
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
65 ARCHNET, *Khan Marjan,* author & date unknown. https://www.archnet.org/sites/15578 (Accessed 03.05.2024)
66 MISFITS' ARCHITECTURE (2017). https://misfitsarchitecture.com/2017/12/09/caravanserai/ (Accessed 01.05.2024)
67 TURKISH HAN, *Sultan Han Aksaray,* author & date unknown. http://www.turkishhan.org/sultanaksaray.htm (Accessed 03.05.2024)
68 MISFITS' ARCHITECTURE (2017). https://misfitsarchitecture.com/2017/12/09/caravanserai/ (Accessed 01.05.2024)

First Floor Plan

1: 500

Location: Baghdad, Iraq
Date: 1538
Plot Area: 0,15 ha
Footprint: 1.350 m²





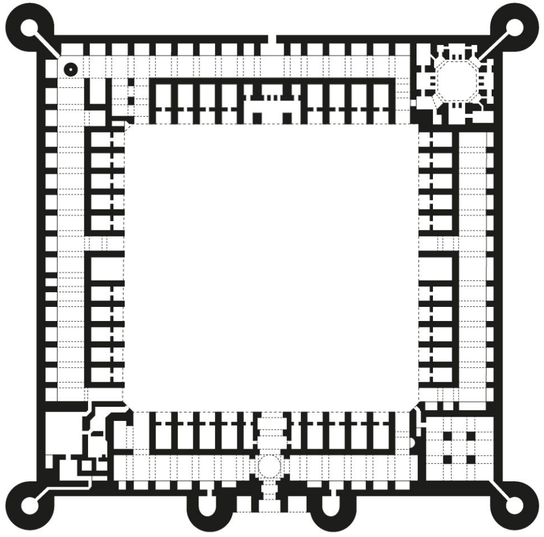
10 m

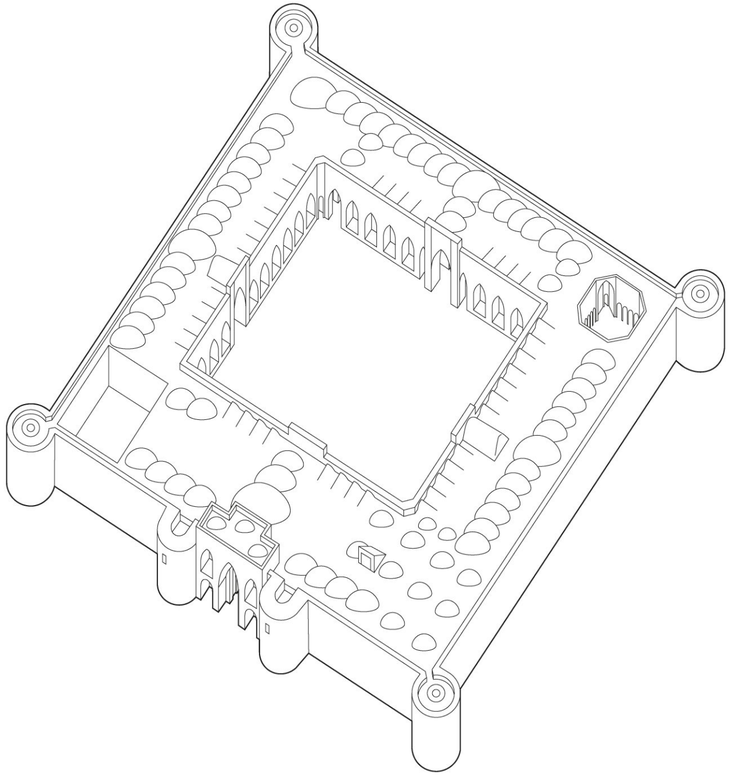
Khan Marjan, Irak

Ground Floor Plan

1: 500

Location: Kavir National Park, Iran
Date: between 224 - 651
Plot Area: 1,2 ha
Footprint: 2.800 m²





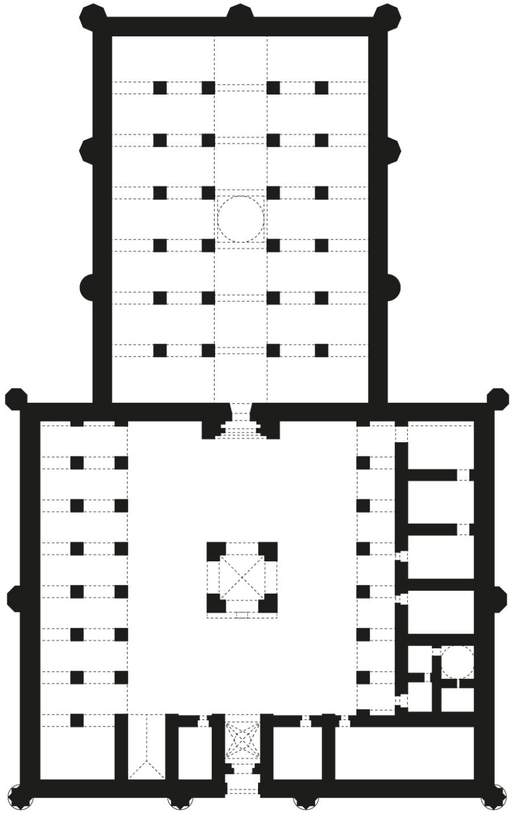
10 m

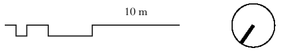
Deir-e Gachin Caravanserai, Iran

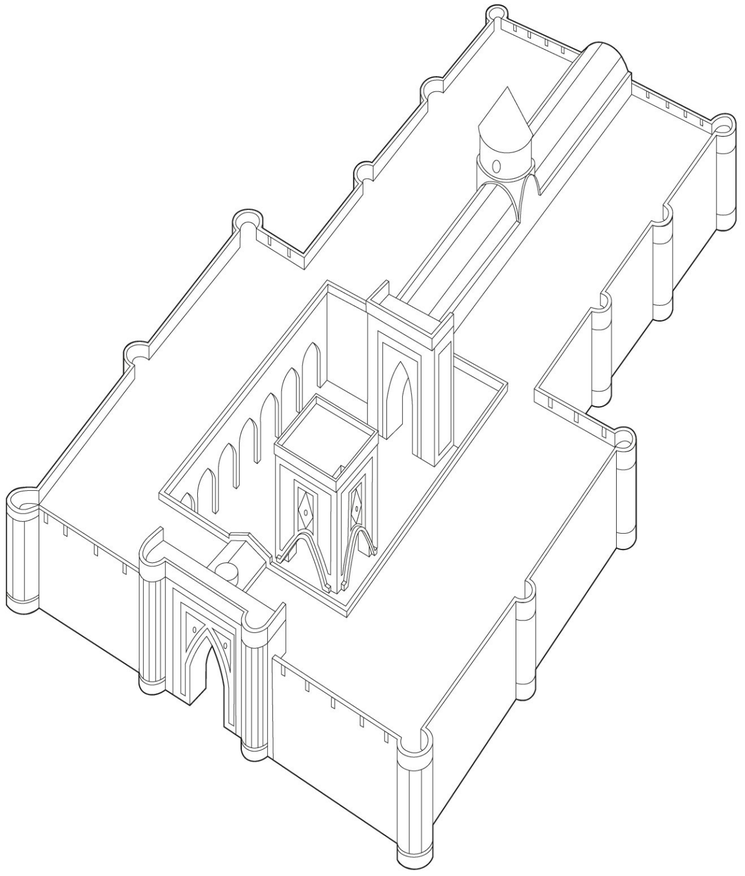
Ground Floor Plan

1: 500

Location: Sultanhanı, Turkey
Date: 1236 (Seljuk period)
Plot Area: 2,2 ha
Footprint: 3.825 m²







Sultan Han, Turkey

Fig 22. *Interior gallery and court, Khan Marjan.*
David Stanley/Flickr, 2016.

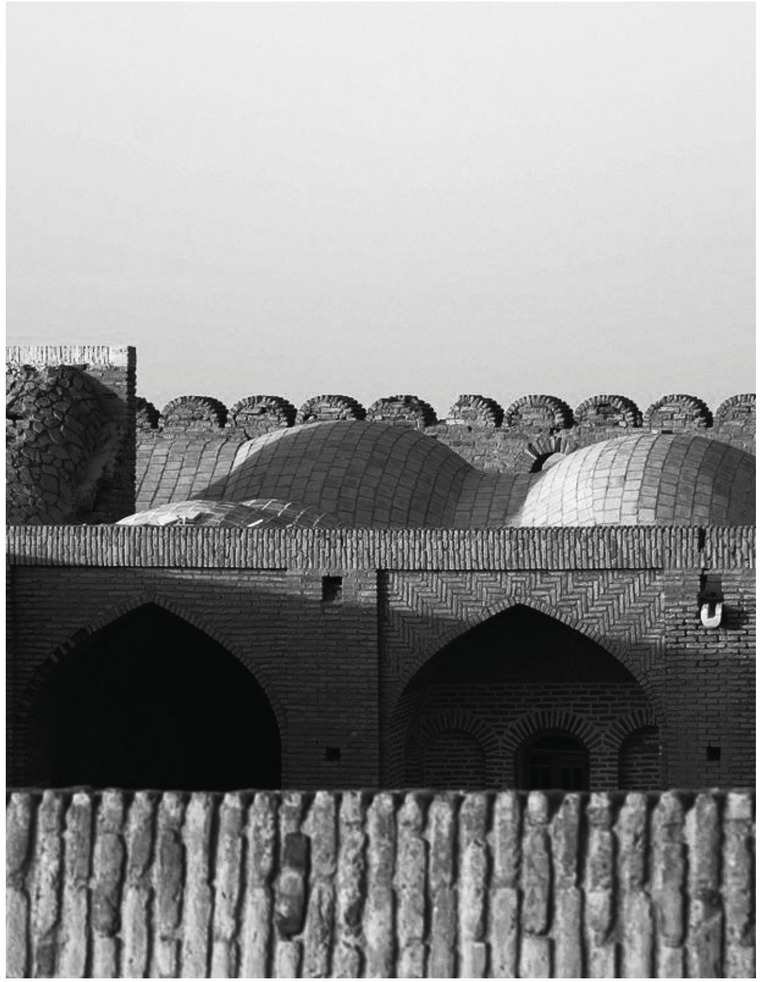


Fig 23. *Courtyard and roof, Deir-e Gachin Caravanserai.*
Mostafa Meraji/Flickr, 2022.

Fig 24. *Nave, Sultan Han.*
Kurt Erdmann, 1961.

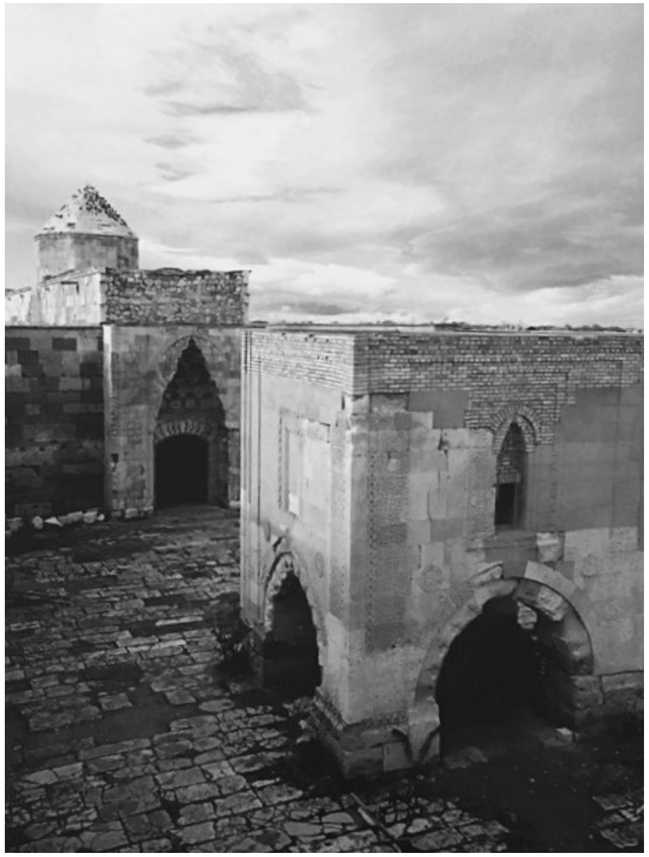
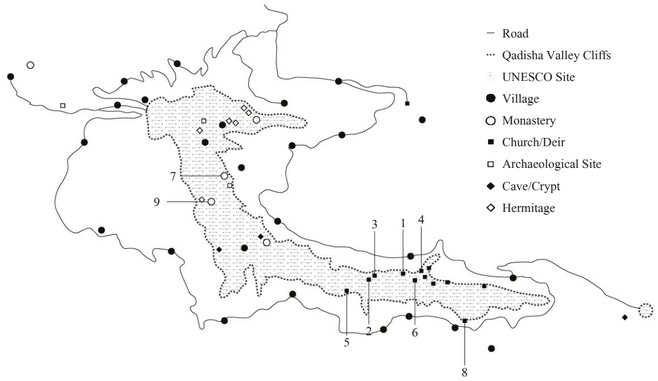


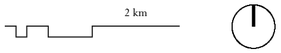
Fig 25. *Kiosk mosque in the courtyard, Sultan Han.*
Hasim Karpuz, 2008.

Map of Qadisha Valley

Location: Bcharré/Zgharta, Northern Lebanon
Date: -
Plot Area: 1.720,2 ha
Footprint: 6+ m²



1	Mar Youhanna	P	**6**	Mar Antonios	P + S
2	Mar Challita	P	**7**	Saydet Hawqa	P + S
3	Mar Gerios	P	**8**	Mar Semaan	P + S
4	Deir el Salib	P	**9**	Mar Aboun	P + S
5	Mar Assia	P + S		(P … Plan, S … Section)	



Case Study 01

h e r m e t i c . Chapels and Caves, Qadisha Valley

In 1998 the UNESCO World Heritage Committee's 22nd session inscribed the *Wadi Qadisha* (Holy Valley) and *Horsh Arz el-Rab* (Forest of the Cedars of God) sites. Located in the *mouhafazat* (district) of North Lebanon, between Bcharré and Zgharta, north of the Mount Lebanon chain, and covering an area of 1710 hectares, the Qadisha Valley heritage site hosts both coenobitic and hermetic monastic life.[69] Scattered across its steep cliff sides (carved by the Kadisha River) lie natural cave formations, alcoves and protruding rock faces, which were adapted into hermetic living cells, chapels, and larger monastic complexes. The terraced landscapes below served as a source of grain, olive, and grape production. Traditional rock carving techniques and the resulting troglodyte structures transform a harsh environment into one suitable for those early Christian monks who sought refuge in the mountains (predominantly Maronites, although many other Christian denominations either settled in or visited the area). Speleological reports on the caves indicate use dating back to palaeolithic, and later roman and early mediaeval times.

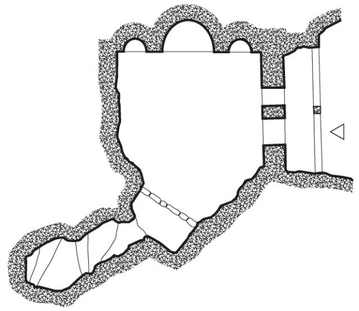
It is widely held that the earliest Maronite settlers arrived in the 8th century, with their numbers increasing in the 10th century after the destruction of Deir Mar Maroun. Persecution led to largely self-sustaining communities, having little to no contact with the outside world for centuries, dealing in bare essentials.[70] Hermits went further still, opting for an ascetic form of seclusion that was both physically and mentally taxing, and seen as an exercise in spiritual fortitude. It is the extremity of the cave, its openness to the elements, to the dampness and cold, and its restrictive nature, being only a few square metres on average with, in many cases, a fortresslike detachment from the exterior, from view, light, wind, and rain.

The following nine examples provide an overview of the different types of hermetic cave structures present, which range from single cells to larger groupings along a precipice. Common traits include the presence of water basins, niches formed to house religious artefacts, and the occasional frescoes or inscriptions, which, due to weathering and lack of maintenance, are almost exclusively in poor condition.[71] The markings of a room, or cell, are chiefly: remoteness, austerity, a potential for the claustrophobic weight of the mountain to be felt, the organic nature of a single entity which is dug into, the sparing use of furniture or items to emphasise presence rather than ownership, and therefore a reduction of descriptive elements and sensation of being left *out-of-time*. The potential of the *hermetic* lies in those core principles of a detached form, both in its architectural expression through location, permeability, furnishing, raw materiality, the unpolished, the unambiguous, and in its modes of inhabitation, which take cues from the *coenobitic* in their application of stringent method, or ritual, where place becomes consecrated vessel[72]—a recall of excess in all forms—relating strongly to the mythos of the Maronite monks' search for spirituality in remoteness, and their perceiving of divinity in raw creation.

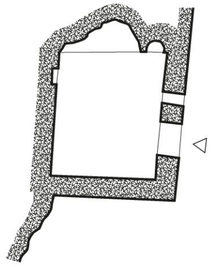
69 UNESCO, *Ouadi Qadisha (the Holy Valley) and the Forest of the Cedars of God (Horsh Arz el-Rab)* (1998). https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/850/ (Accessed 14.11.2023)
70 WINSLOW (1996), 10 -12.
71 UNESCO (1998). https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/850/ (Accessed 14.11.2023)
72 AURELI (2023), xv.

Sites 1. - 4. in Plan

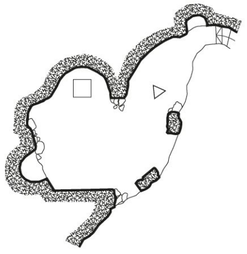
1: 150



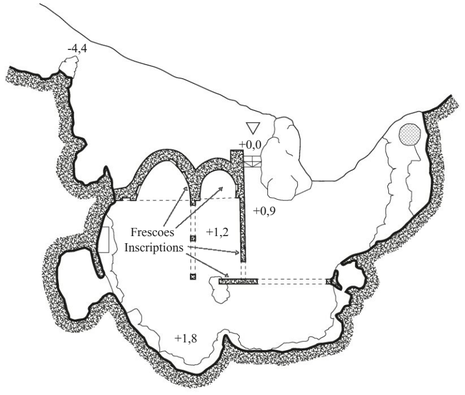
1. Mar Youhanna



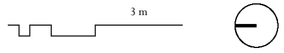
2. Mar Challita



3. Mar Gerios

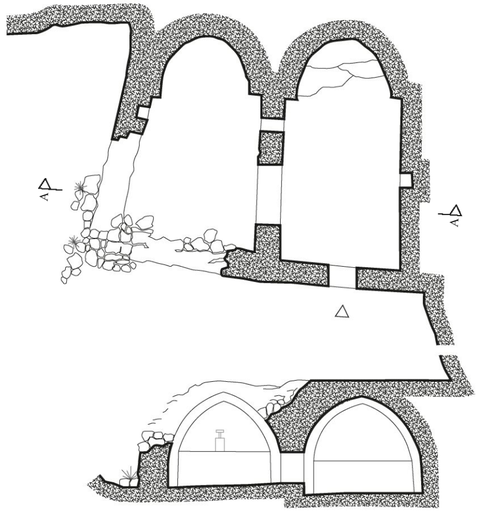


4. Deir el Salib

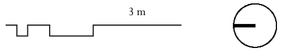


5. Mar Assia in Plan & Section

1: 150

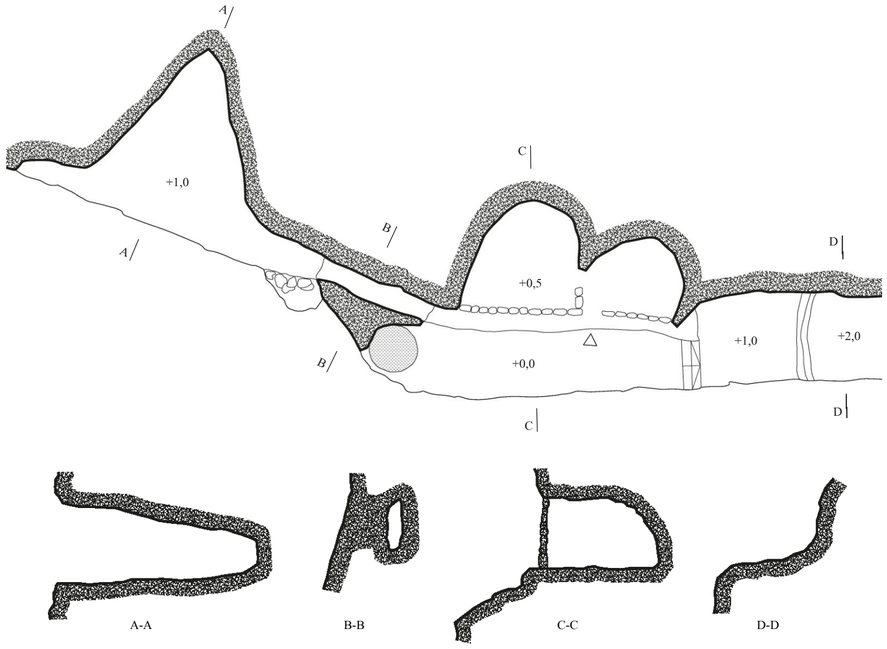


A-A



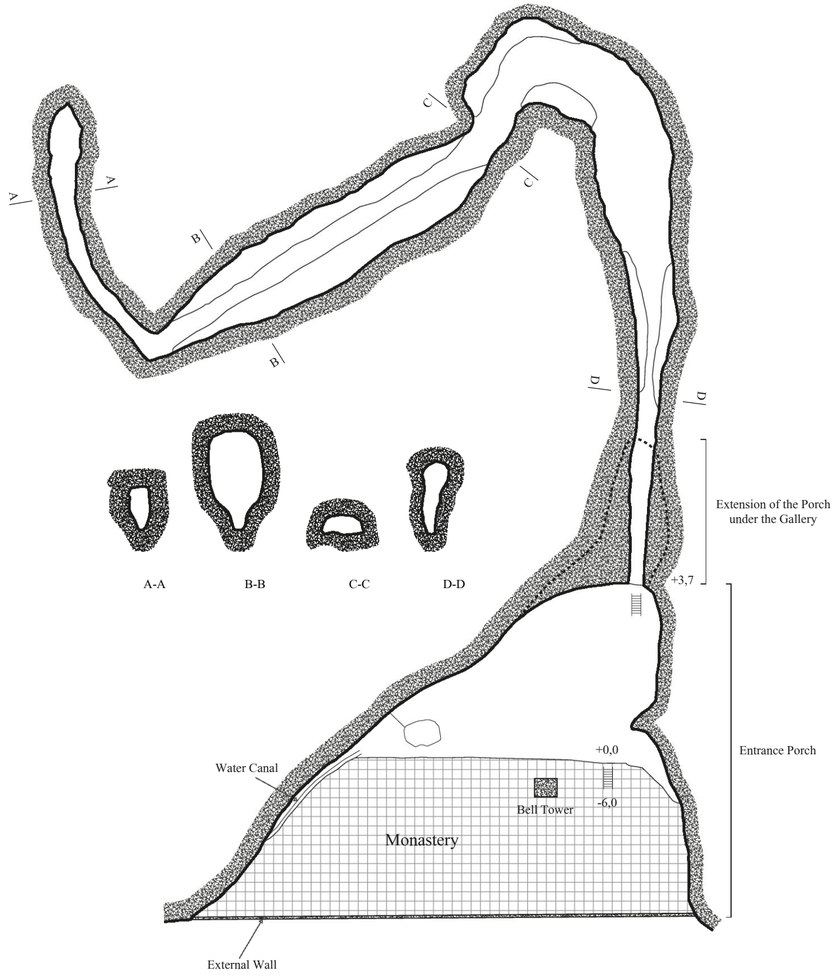
6. Mar Antonios in Plan & Section

1: 150



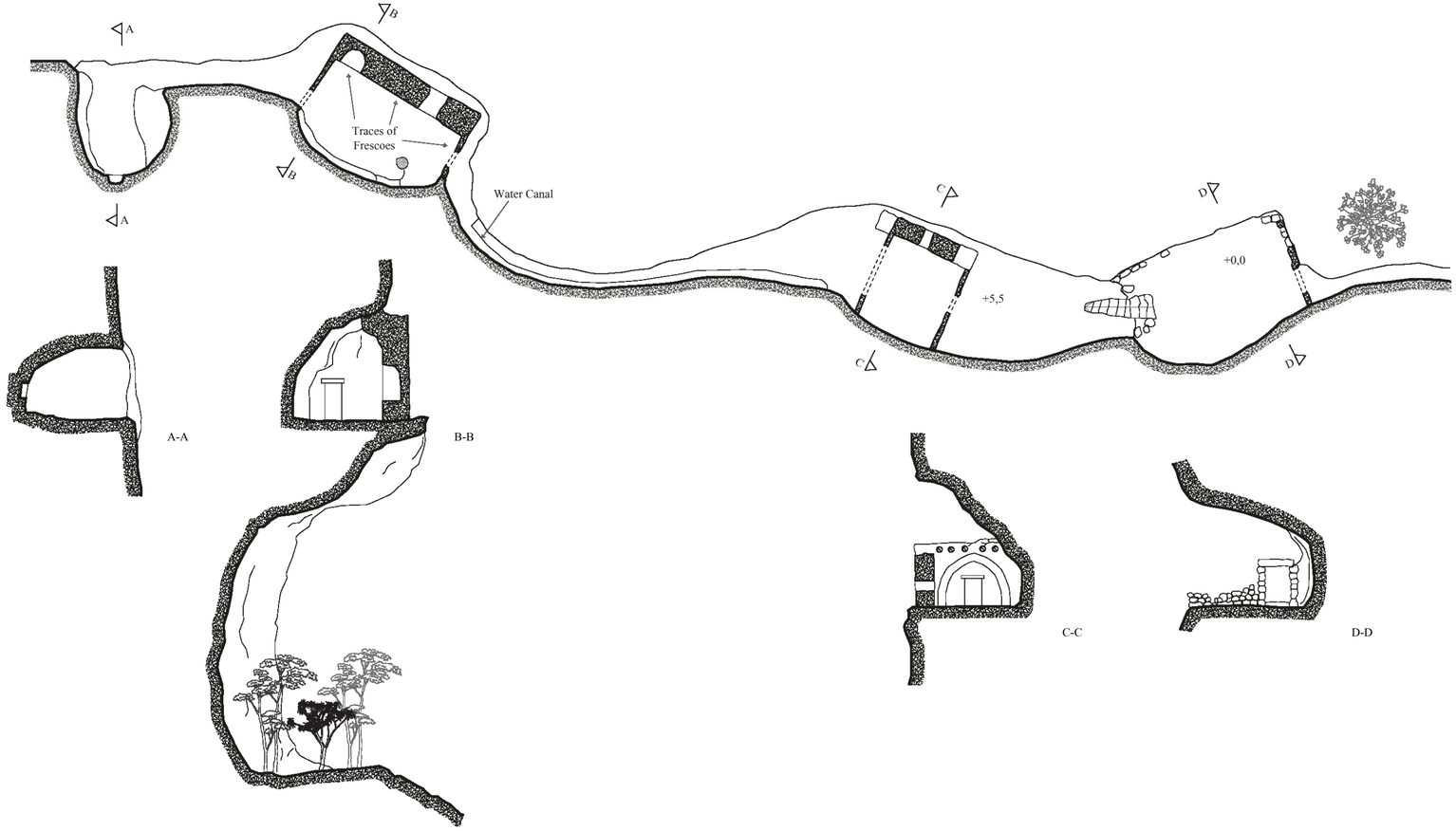
7. Saydet Hawqa in Plan & Section

1: 150



8. Mar Semaan in Plan & Section

1: 150



3 m

9. Mar Aboun in Plan & Section 1: 300

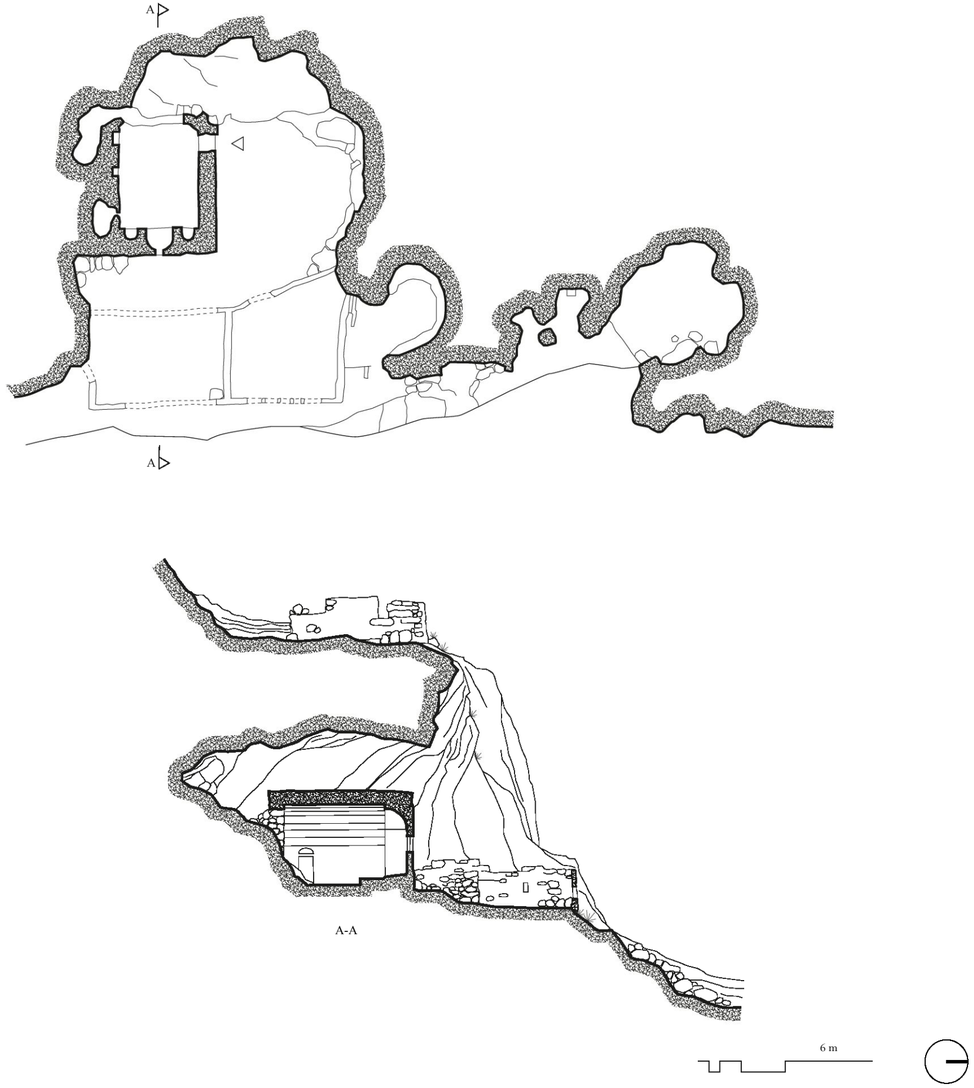


Fig 26. *Cliffsides.* Gripoil, 2017.

Fig 27. *Terraced Fields.* Gripoil, 2017.

Fig 28. *Structures in the rock.*
Adventurous Travels, 2017.

Fig 29. *Protruding chapel.*
Adventurous Travels, 2017.

Fig 30. *Chapel of the Holy Cross.*
Adventurous Travels, 2017.

Fig 31. *Interior.*
Adventurous Travels, 2017.

Fig 32. *Frescoes.*
Adventurous Travels, 2017.

Map of Bedouin Settlements (Regional and Local)

Location: Bekaa, Baalbek-Hermel
Date: 13th century onwards
Plot Area: ca 192.000 ha
Footprint: 30+ m²

Case Study 02

nomadic. Bedouin Tent, Bekaa Valley

The term Bedouin (or *bedu*) derives from *badia*, or *bayda'*, meaning desert, or wilderness, and referring to the semi-arid steppes covering most of northern Arabia.[73] Lebanon's eastern border with Syria, which both nomadic Bedouin, and those who, since the 1960s, have increasingly become settled there, call their home, is perhaps one of the country's least-studied regions—where the arid mountains of the Anti-Lebanon transition into the fertile plateau of the Bekaa Valley—the only abundant source of grain, of grazing land, and of clay, and therefore brick production, in Lebanon. The Bekaa Valley is seen as the north-westernmost finger of the Arabian steppelands, and therefore a vital part of migratory routes. Since as early as the 13th century, Bedouin tribes have been passing over the mountains in early spring and late summer to make use of the valley's ample grazing territory.[74] The marginalisation of Bedouin in Lebanon came by means of nationalisation—through customs barriers, tariffs, deprivation of land ownership, healthcare, and education opportunities, as well as downsizing migratory routes, herd sizes etc. enforced by the French mandate following the end of Ottoman rule in an effort to force Bedouin into permanent agro-pastoralism.[75]

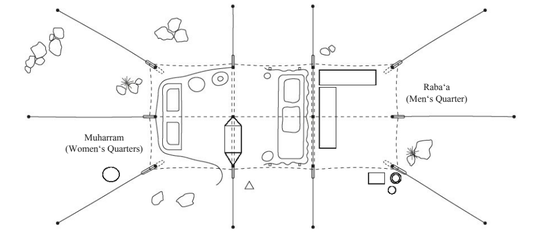
Traditionally, the lives of the Bedouin centre around their *qabilah*, their tribe, and *'ailat*, their clan, which manifest in their choice of accommodation—the tent. The *bedu*, as opposed to the *hadar*, the sedentary inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula, reside in rectangular tents referred to as *beit al-sha'r* (house of hair), made of short wooden posts supporting either black goat or camel hair woven into ropes (pegged to the ground) and draped over as a cloth membrane. The tent is pitched by the tribe's women, under supervision of the chief, or *shaykh* (elder), with the back of the tent being the longside facing the prevailing winds. One's tent must always be open to visitors or those seeking help, in accordance with the laws of hospitality (those who touch the entry post).[76] The home is divided into the *raba'a* (men's area), used to entertain guests, and *muharram* (women and children), the private area taking up roughly three quarters of the space, shielded from outside view. Tents can also serve as workplaces, or places of assembly, festivity, etc., with the only distinction being the degree to which they are rendered permeable.

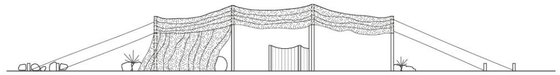
What is the crux of the *nomadic* then, and what can be adapted in principle from its architectural heritage? There are certainly parallels between the Bedouin home and that of any *hadar,* both in the division of their spaces and functions of each room, especially those for hosting guests, or entertaining. The tent functions not individually or in a set environment, but as a constellation of shifting landscape and community, adhering to season and observing supply. In that sense, the objective of Bedouin existence, and the nomadic in general, is not rooted in certain items or amenities, but a sort of responsiveness that remains intact as long as movement is involved.

73 JOSEPH, Suzanne E., *Fertile Bonds, Bedouine Class, Kinship, and Gender in the Bekaa Valley,* (University Press of Florida, 2013), 25.
74 CHATTY, Dawn et al., *Statelessness and Tribal Identity on Lebanon's Eastern Borders* (Taylor & Francis, 2013), 413.
75 Ibid, 414.
76 GEOGRAPHISCH-KULTURELLE GESELLSCHAFT IM KUNST-KREIS, *Länder und Völker, Vorderasien I* (Kunstkreis-Buchverlag, 1960), 205-7.

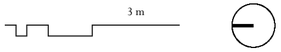
Schematic Plan & Elevation

1: 150





Beit al-Sha'r (house of hair). The Bedouin tent



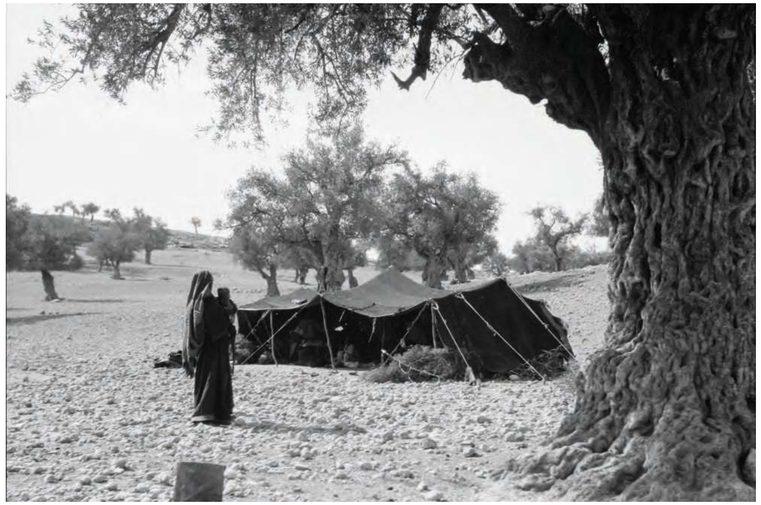


Fig 33. *Bedouin home.*
G. Eric and Edith Matson
Photograph Collection, 1920.

Fig 34. *Weaving tent.*
Matson Photo Service, 1898.

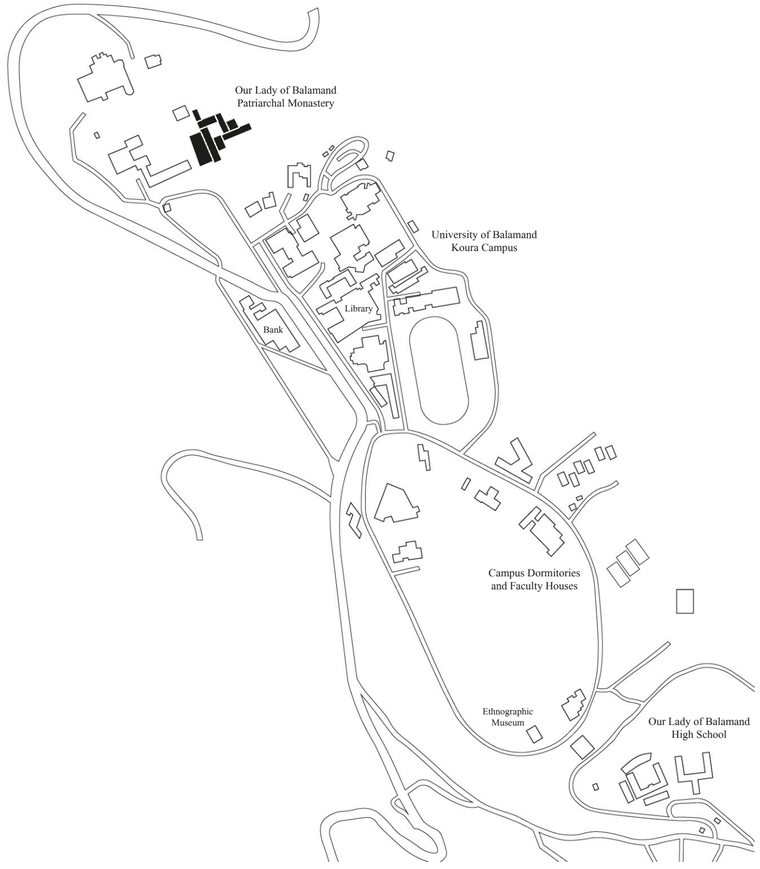
Fig 35. *Sword dance for a wedding ceremony.*
Matson Photo Service, 1898.

Fig 36. *Bedouin Falconer.*
Matson Photo Service, 1898.

Site Plan

1: 5 000

Location: Koura, Northern Lebanon
Date: 1169
Plot Area: 1,2 ha
Footprint: 7.500 m²



Case Study 03

coenobitic. Balamand Monastery, Koura

According to the *Chronicles of the Holy Land* (1224), the Cistercian monastery of Balamand, or Belmont (the Norman version of Beaumont, meaning beautiful mountain) in Koura near Tripoli, was consecrated on the 30th of May 1157, although construction lasted up until 1169, and additions continued to be made in later years.[77] The Cistercians, although reluctant, would establish a few sites across the Franks' conquered territories during the course of the Crusades—Belmont being one of the sites that managed to survive constant clashes with the Ayyubids under Saladin and subsequent dynasties hoping to recapture the region.[78] This was in part due to the monastery sitting on the edge of a steep ravine, at roughly 200 metres above sea level on the road from Jbeil to Tripoli, and it being not so far off the Crusader's castles in terms of fortification.[79]

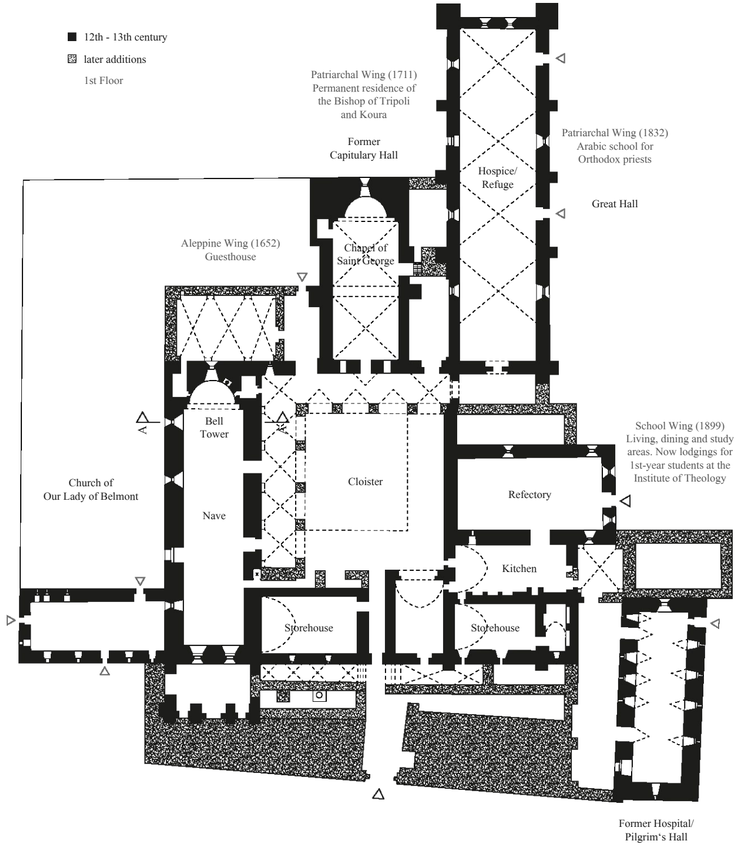
Camille Enlart, who made prominent contributions in the documentation of Lebanon's built heritage, spent two weeks in Balamand, after which he published a detailed study of it in 1921. His account, especially concerning the monastery's original state, is reflected in this text. In typical Cistercian fashion, one enters at the point farthest from the church, which occupies the north-western corner of the monastery, flanked by what was formerly the Capitulary Hall, where monks received their daily appraisal and tasks (now a chapel), while the refectory (now the main entrance), kitchens and pantries lay to the south-east. The cloister covers the two south-facing facades of the court and serves to cover the entrances to the church and chapel. The largest finger, pointing north-east, is the great hall, which served at times as a shelter for refugees, while the smaller hall in the south-east, an infirmary, could be set up to house travelling pilgrims.[80] The first floor was expanded upon in 1652 (Aleppine Wing, guest rooms), 1711 (Patriarchal Wing, permanent residence of the Bishop of Tripoli and Koura), 1832 (Arabic school for Orthodox priests), and 1899 (School Wing, study rooms and lodgings for students). The University of Balamand was finally established in 1988 by Patriarch Ignatius the IV, and today contains the monastery, university campus, a school and dormitories.[81] An austere form of the Romanesque was employed, which is best exemplified by the church itself, with a single nave and apse under a 10.5 metre high pointed barrel vault resting on 2 metre thick stone walls. No buttresses line the 50 metre long northern facade, nor is any other auxiliary construction applied to the facade, which is only broken by three bare windows and a sealed doorway.[82]

Naturally, the humility invoked by the coenobite's sacred and gathering spaces, more fortress than temple, and utilitarian sleeping cells and shared rooms provided to monks and guests, which remained flexible in their use (the infirmary and great hall doubling as dorm halls for refugees and pilgrims), all speak to the abbey's purpose as a foreign religious base—its agrarian element and hospitality towards Christian refugees and pilgrims included—not unlike the Crusader's own.

77 ENLART, Camille, *L'Abbaye cistercienne de Belmont en Syrie* (L'Institut Français d'Archéologie de Beyrouth, 1923), 1.
78 STÉTIÉ, Salah, *Clef pour le Liban* (Éditions Garnet France, 2000), 15.
79 ENLART (1923), 3.
80 Ibid, 3 - 5.
81 UNIVERSITY OF BALAMAND, *About the University of Balamand,* 2024. https://www.balamand.edu.lb/AboutUIOB/Pages/about.aspx (Accessed 02.03.2024)
82 ENLART (1923), 6 - 9.

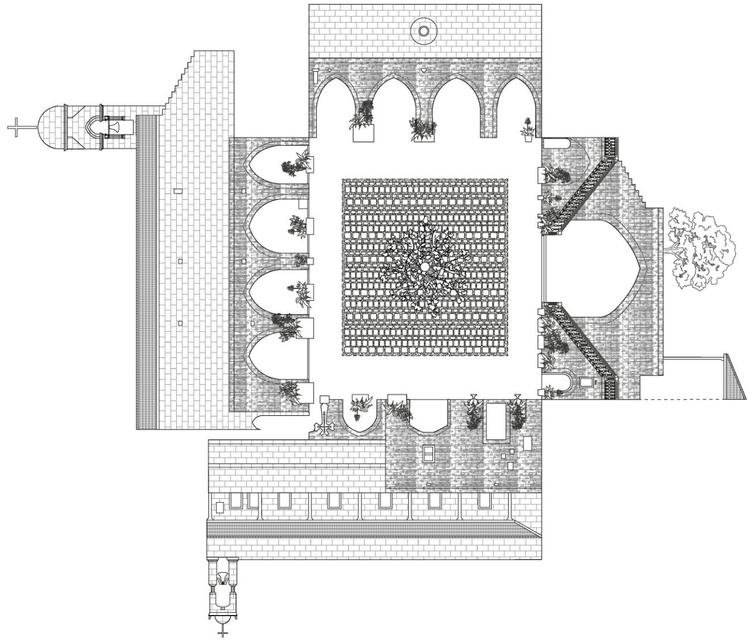
Ground Floor Plan

1: 500



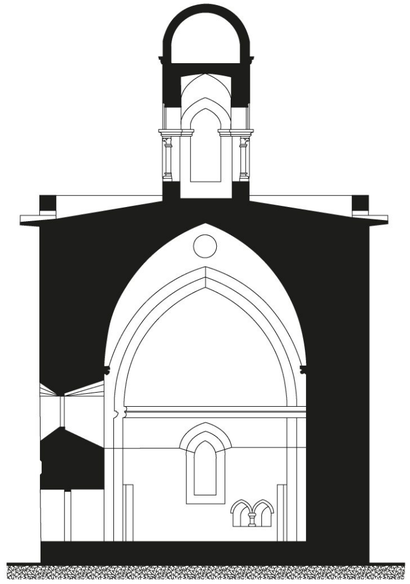
Courtyard Elevation Plan

1: 300



Church of Our Lady of Belmont in Section

1: 150



A-A

6 m

Fig 37. *Courtyard.*
Pygmalion Karatzas, 2017.

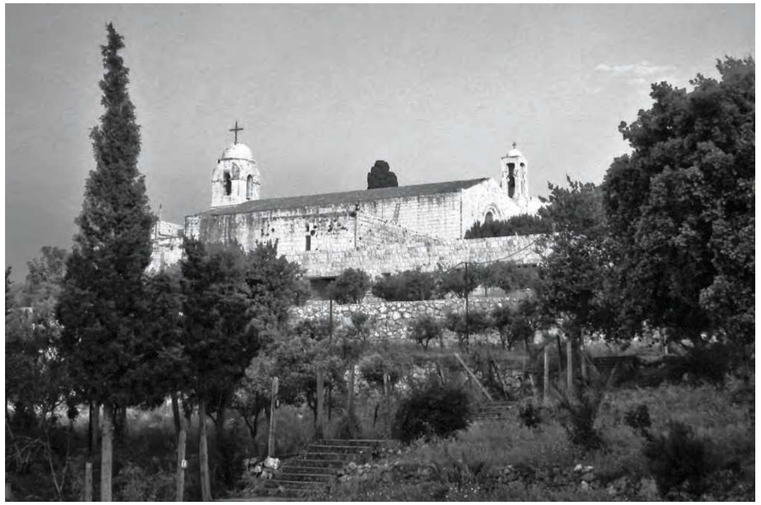


Fig 38. *Orchard.*
Hector Abouid/Flickr, 2009.

Fig 39. *Fields.*
Camille Enlart, 1921.

Fig 40. *End of the great hall.*
Camille Enlart, 1921.

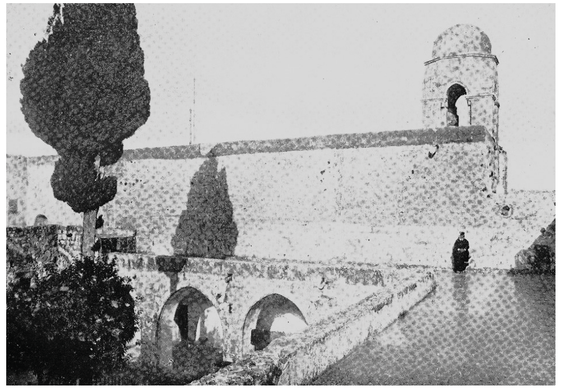


Fig 41. *Central cloister.*
Camille Enlart, 1921.

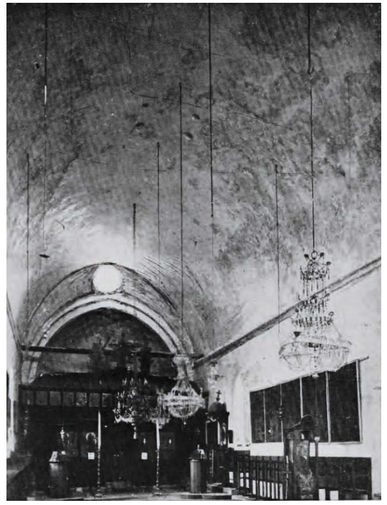


Fig 42. *Church nave.*
Camille Enlart, 1921.

Fig 43. *Stone bell tower.*
Camille Enlart, 1921.

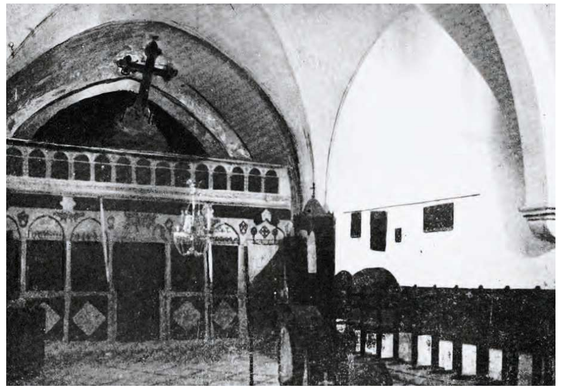


Fig 44. *Capitulary hall.*
Camille Enlart, 1921.

Fig 45. *External doorway.*
Camille Enlart, 1921.

Site Plan

1: 2 000

Location: Byblos, Jbeil-Keserwan
Date: early 12th century
Plot Area: 1,5 ha
Footprint: 7.250 m²

40 m

Case Study 04

antagonistic. Gibelet Crusader Fort, Byblos.

A few years after Crusaders had captured Jerusalem, Raymond de Saint Gilles set his sights on the city states of Lebanon.[83] On the 28th of April 1104, the city of Gibelet (known as ancient Byblos then, Jbeil today) surrendered to the invading Franks, after some 40 Genoese ships had come to support his conquest (the Genoese state was rewarded with a third of the city, though the Embriaco family would later establish an hereditary rule over its entirety, making the castle of Gibelet their local seat of power).[84] It was neither the first nor the last time the arguably oldest continually inhabited settlement in the world[85] would change hands. The Assyrians, Persians, Seleucids, and Romans all left their mark before the Arabs and European Crusaders would eventually embark on their long-lasting struggle over the Holy Land.[86]

After its capture, work began almost immediately on the *Château de Gibelet,* with ruins of the Phoenician settlement repurposed as building materials, in line with the *bossage* technique.[87] The rounded and weathered columns, carefully worked into the lower sections of the outer wall, are still visible today. The castle's slightly irregular square plan is thought to be in line with older foundations also.[88] Over the course of Saladin's capture of the city, the 3rd crusades, and later Ottoman rule, ancient Byblos was buried, leaving only the fort to dominate the image of the city with its massive donjon and curtain wall. In 1860, Ernest Renan was sent by Napoleon III to uncover the region's forgotten history (and treasure). He took note of the granite columns, as well as other ancient fragments incorporated into nearby houses, which he described in *Mission de Phénicie* (1864-74).[89] Nearly a century later, Maurice Dunand and his colleagues began excavations of the archaeological site in 1921, and new discoveries have been made ever since.[90]

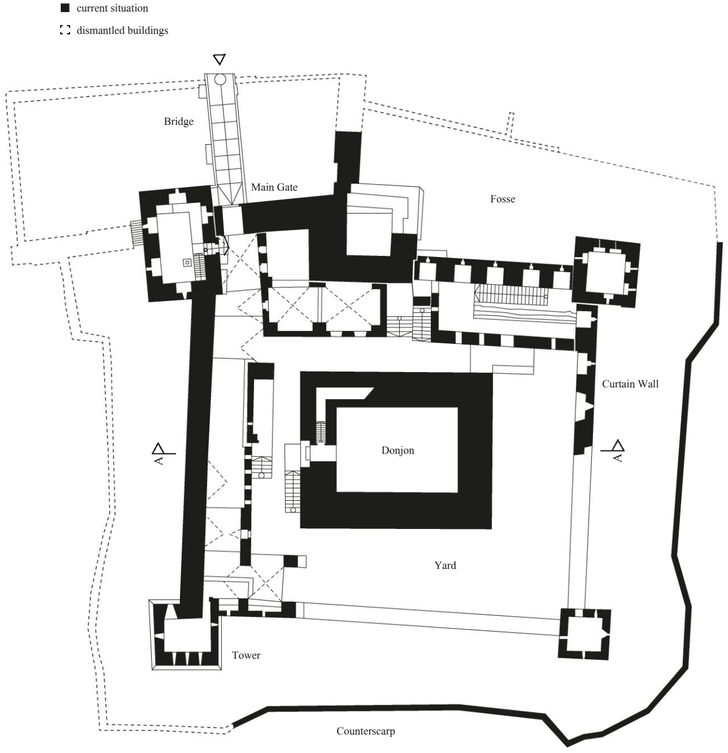
Despite the negative tag, *antagonistic* architecture is in many ways present in local typologies we view more positively. It shares aspects of fortification, access restriction, programme and layout of other transient types. The *hermetic* and *coenobitic* both attribute living quarters with the same minimal spaces, while the *holistic* similarly applies its layering of spaces through a succession of smaller enclosures and points of entry, culminating in a source of some kind (the donjon's reservoir mirrors the supply stores, treasure troves or sacred spaces usually present).

What makes the Gibelet Crusader Fort truly antagonistic, in an architectural sense, is the sheer presence of its footprint and volume, which signalled the permanent kind of imposition presented by the Crusaders onto Jbeil from the moment of its construction. In addition, the traditional reuse of present materials—especially stone—meant that a large part of the city's identity, the history present in its ruins, was absorbed into the castle in a very visible way. Though this way of building is no longer supported today, it remains an important part of transient types with the potential of being reinterpreted.

83 DECHAMPS, Paul, *Les Châteaux des Croisés en Terre Sainte III, La Défense du Comté de Tripoli et de la Principauté d'Antioche* (L'Institut Français d'Archéologie de Beyrouth, 1973), 203.
84 Ibid, 205.
85 HERM (1974), 39.
86 DECHAMPS (1973), 203.
87 Moulded projection in the facade serving ornamental, and sometimes defensive purposes. The same application is found in many of the Franks' forts from the first half of the 12th century.
88 DECHAMPS (1973), 210.
89 HERM (1974), 34-5.
90 DECHAMPS (1973), 203.

Ground Floor Plan

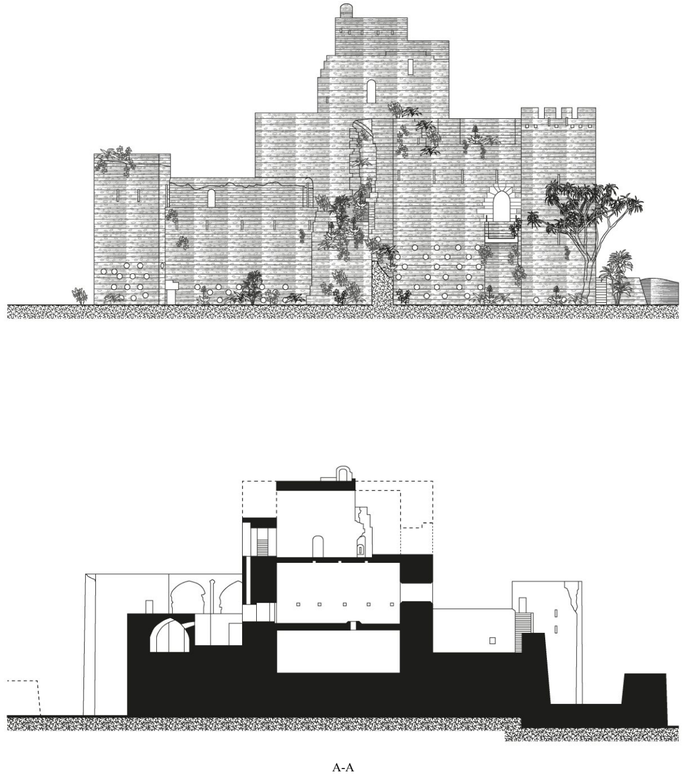
1: 500



10 m

North Elevation & Main Section

1: 500



A-A

10 m

Fig 46. *Northern facade.*
Lebanon Archive, 1926.

Fig 47. *Eastern facade.*
Moovtoo, 2023.

Fig 48. *Southern facade.*
Jbeil municipality.

Fig 49. *Stairs by a tower.*
Moovtoo, 2023.

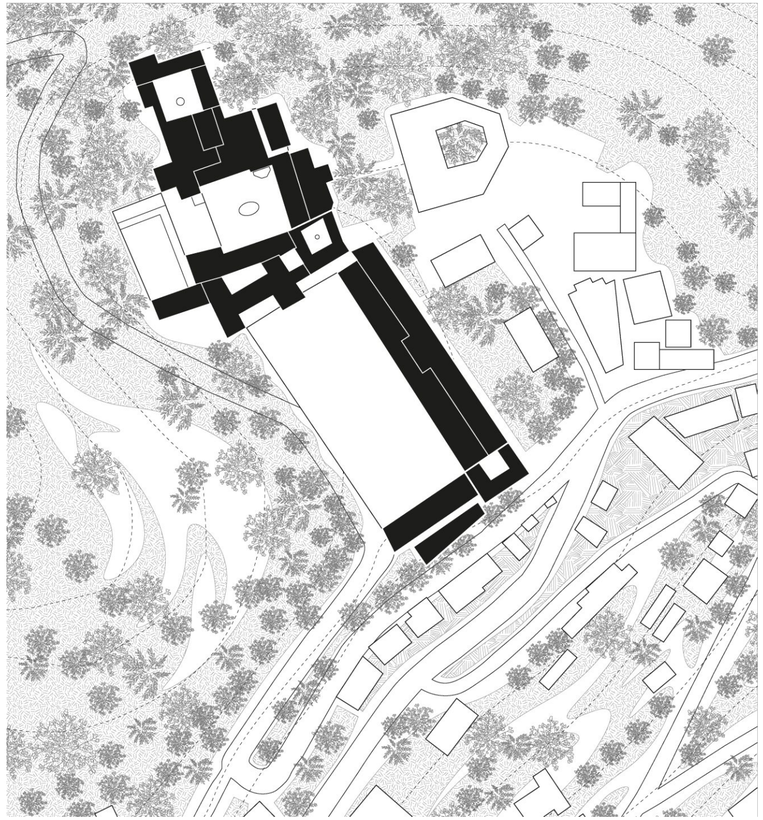
Fig 50. *Passageway by the yard.*
Moovtoo, 2023.

Fig 51. *Donjon.*
Marwan G. Nassar, 2018.

Site Plan

1: 2 000

Location: Beit ed-Dine, Mount Lebanon
Date: 1818
Plot Area: 2,75 ha
Footprint: 3.000 m²



40 m

Case Study 05

holistic. Beiteddine Palace, Beit ed-Dine

In the south-western part of the Mount Lebanon range lie Deir el-Qamar and Beiteddine, the two capitals of the *Mount Lebanon Emirate* era. Deir el-Qamar should be mentioned for Fakhreddine's palace. As the progenitor of the Druze Emirate, he also rebuilt many of the crusader forts the Ottomans had destroyed due to their tactical advantages, and held close ties to Pope Leo X and the Medici family,[91] essentially bringing the late Renaissance of Tuscany to Lebanon.[92]

When his descendants—and thus the Ma'ani dynasty—eventually went heirless, the Chehabi family succeeded them, whereupon Beiteddine, then a Druze hermitage,[93] was where Emir Bashir II commissioned his own Renaissance palace to be built at the end of the 17th century.[94] It would serve as his residence and administrative seat, as well as a testament to the wealth of Lebanon's feudal dynastic period. This wealth was in no small part due to Ottoman tax leniency and the emirate's close bond with Tuscan trading powers, whose influence is felt in the design of the palace. Italian builders and craftsmen were in fact a common sight in Mount Lebanon during this period, as Italianate stylistic influences (the mandaloun window comes to mind) went hand in hand with warming trade relations.[95] The Emir, whose background included Druze, Sunni, and Maronite influences, expressed the diversity of beliefs present in his life through the architecture of his palace, opting for an eclectic use of spaces and styles from all three. The palace is colloquially referred to as the 'Alhambra of Lebanon', as it features an assortment of artistic expressions, from 5th century Byzantine mosaics, to Koranic inscriptions on marble walls, and Italian pine trees lining small courtyards fashioned after Florentine Renaissance gardens.[96]

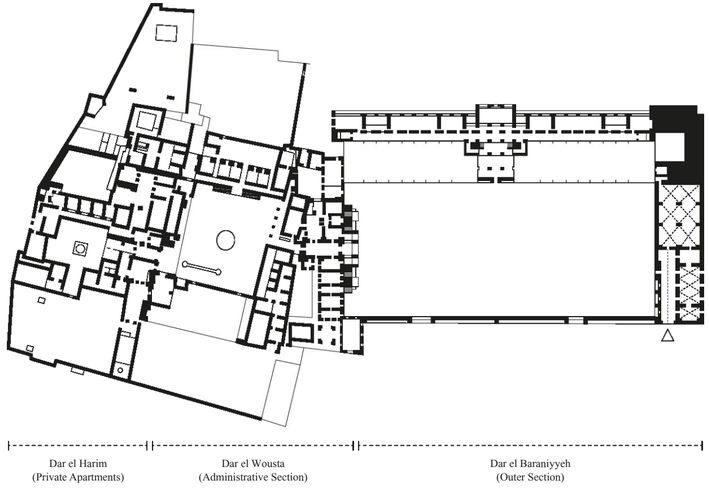
Emirate rule came to an end in 1842, and the palace became the seat of government until 1915.[97] Today, the western *harim* section of the palace functions as the President's private summer residence, while the administrative and guest rooms are open to the public as a museum. The *meidan* (assembly square) of the palace hosts the Beiteddine summer festival now.[98] The overall concept of its palatial structure was adapted from Ottoman exemplaries, with the peculiarity of its location on a cliffside—using the natural height variations towards the edge of the precipice to accentuate different sections and layers of privacy—being more in line with the local preference of vantage point sites.

Holistic architecture may well be tied to the idea of a ruling class, but is arguably present in modernist architectural narratives as well, which sought to rid architecture of class-dominated form. In the end, what is remembered of the Tuscan influence, as with that of the Ottomans, has simply been incorporated into the Lebanese identity, and the idea of a *Lebanese House*.[99]

91 SCHAM, Sandra A, *The Legacy of Fakhreddine II* (Penn State University Press, 2015), 428-9.
92 HADDAD, Elie, *Between Myth and Reality* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 161.
93 VISIT LEBANON, *Beiteddine,* Lebanese Ministry of Tourism (date unknown). https://www.visit-lebanon.org/leisure/beit-eddine (Accessed 14.02.2024)
94 CHAMOUN et al (2016), 15.
95 SCHAM (2015), 429.
96 VISIT LEBANON (date unknown). https://www.visit-lebanon.org/leisure/beiteddine (Accessed 14.02.2024)
97 Ibid.
98 CHAMOUN et al (2016), 53.
99 HADDAD (2007), 162-3.

Ground Floor Plan

1: 1 500



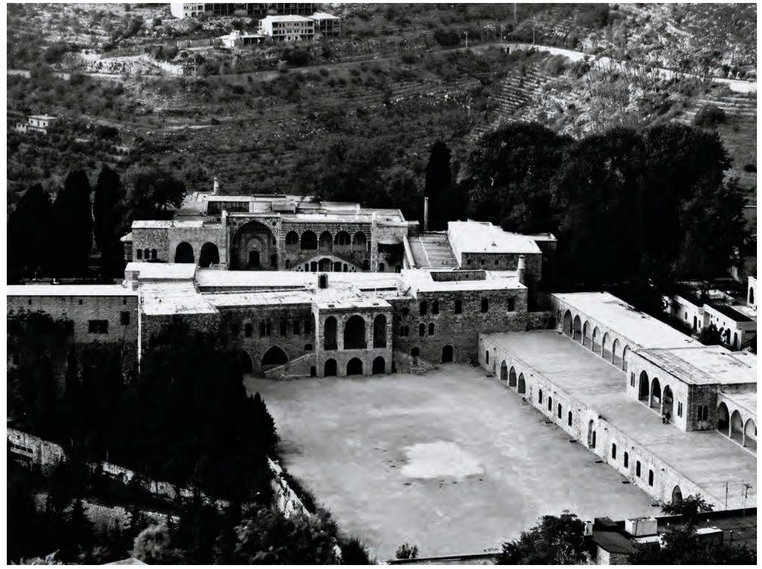


Fig 52. *View from the opposite hill.* Reji/Flickr, 2009.

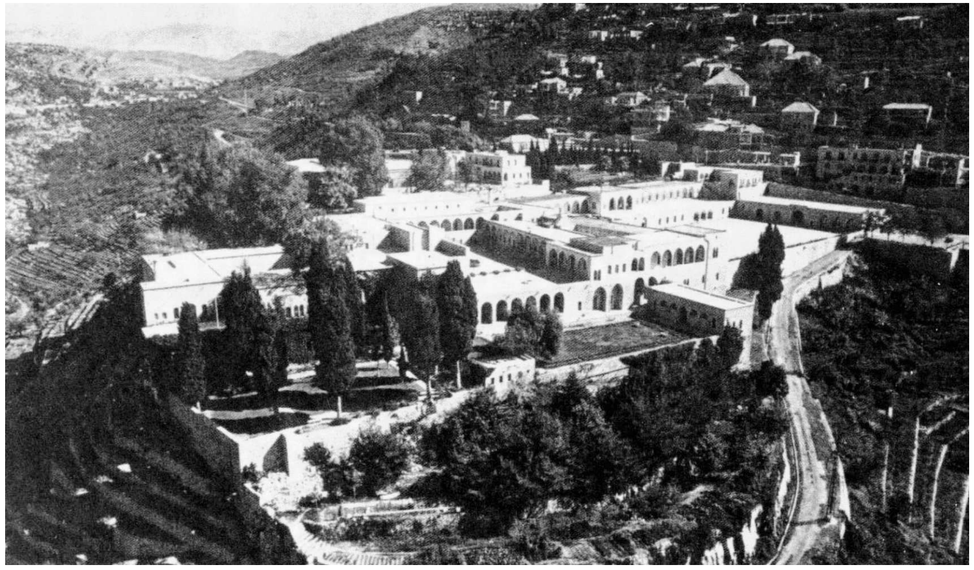


Fig 53. *Aerial view.*
Lebanon Archive, 1940s.

Fig 54. *Guestrooms' terrace overlooking the meidan.*
Habeeb.com, 1973.

Fig 55. *Terrace overlooking the gardens.*
Roberto Piperno, date unknown.

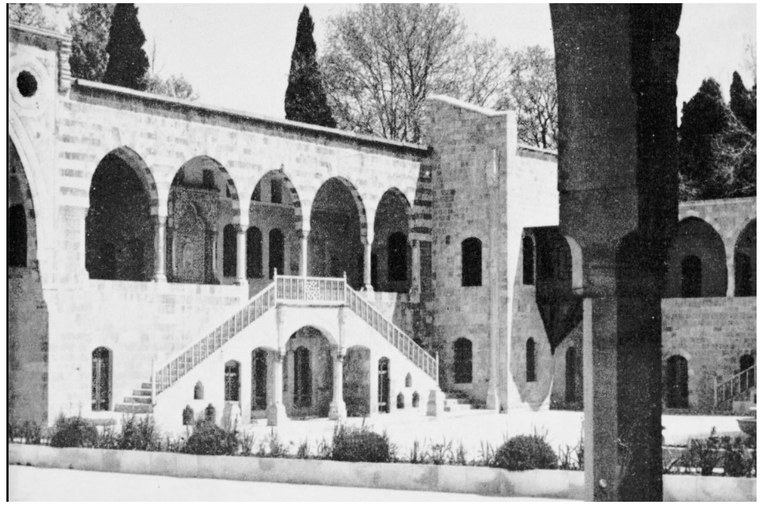


Fig 56. *Internal courtyard (facing the comandaloune).*
Roberto Piperno,
date unknown.

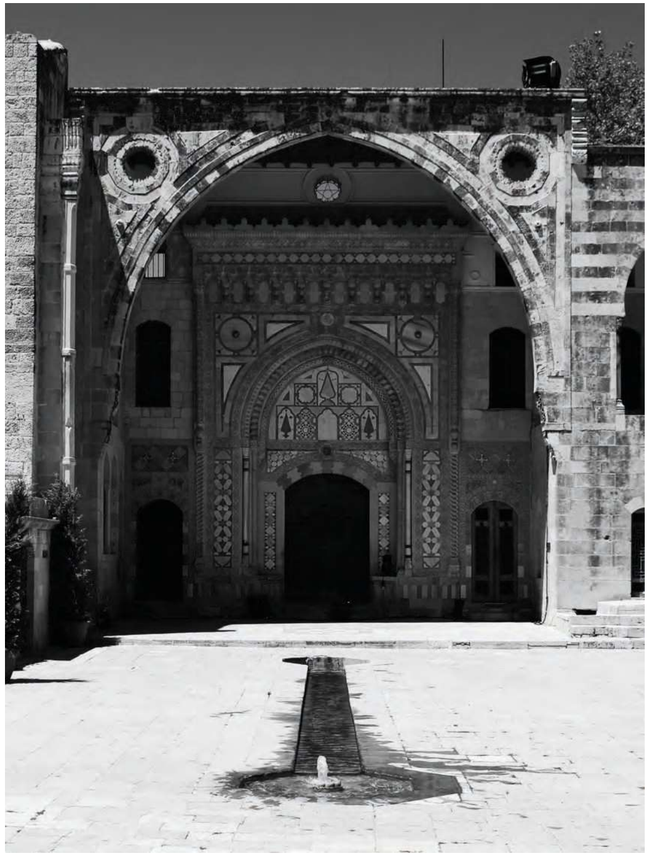


Fig 57. *Inner gate to the harim.*
Peripitus/Wikimedia commons, 2009.

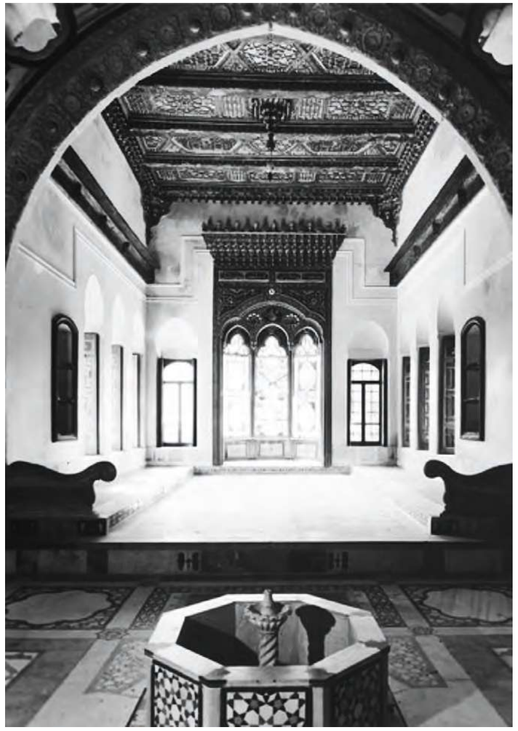


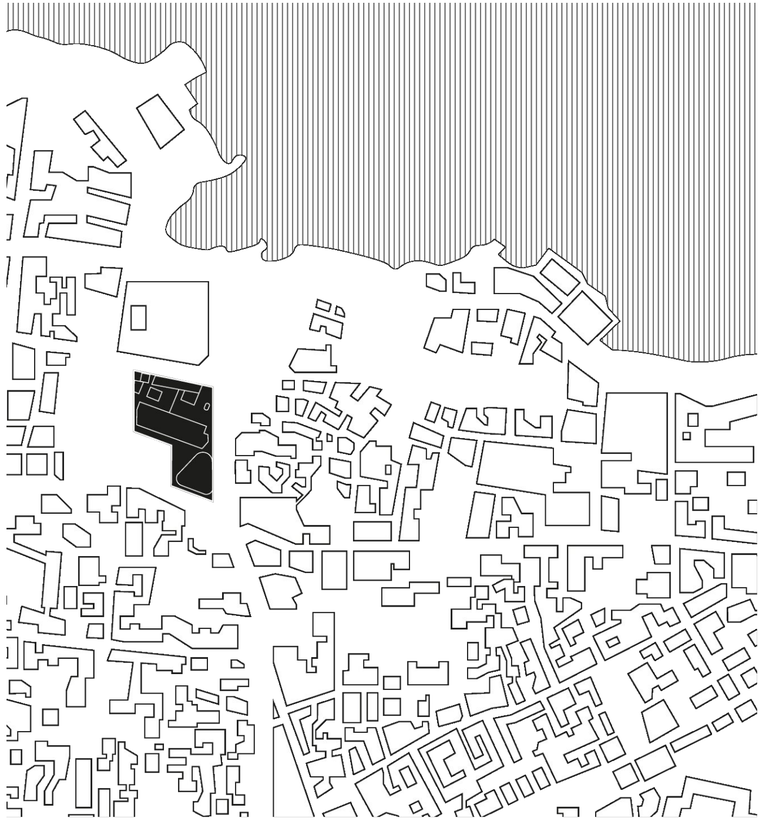
Fig 58. *Salon in the selamlik.*
Manoug Alemian, ca 1930.

Fig 59. *Antechamber to the selamlik (men's quarters).*
M. Seragledin, 2019.

Site Plan

1: 5 000

Location: Beirut
Date: 1974
Plot Area: 1,375 ha
Footprint: 5.500 m²



100 m

Case Study 06

touristic. Old Holiday Inn, Beirut

It opened in 1974—only a year prior to the civil war (1975 - 1990) breaking out. The Holiday Inn Hotel was constructed by developer Abdal Mohsin Kattan, and designed by French modernist architect André Wogenscky (a student of Le Corbusier) in collaboration with Lebanese architect Maurice Hindié.[100] Located on the waterfront of downtown Beirut, the 24-storey slab towered over its competition in the hotel district, offering 400 guest rooms. It was part of a new mixed-use complex called St. Charles City Centre (named after the site's former use as a hospital by the German order of St. Charles Borromeo), and included a cinema, nightclub, revolving rooftop restaurant, supermarket, and offices.[101]

Only a few months into the conflict, with Muslim and Lebanese Christian militias beginning to take hold of and divide Beirut along the Greenline,[102] the hotel district was occupied by both factions for its strategic importance. The advantages of their access to the waterfront and towering height meant that the Holiday Inn Hotel and neighbouring Hotel Phoenicia were centre stage to the sub-conflict termed the 'Battle of the Hotels'.[103] The al-Mourabitoun group (Muslim militia) overpowered the Christian Phalangists a year later, in 1976, annexing the Holiday Inn Hotel floor by floor.[104] Since the end of the civil war in 1990,[105] following Israeli and Syrian armies occupying the country, the Holiday Inn has been left to a 40-year-long slow decay, standing as a reminder of the war, its riddled husk looming over downtown Beirut.[106]

Beirut's development rush of the late sixties and early seventies met with a premature end, a fate which altered the city's image not only in the eyes of foreigners, but the residents themselves—to which the physical presence of the hotel is only a reminder.[107] The element of the *touristic,* stunted by conflict, could never fully adapt, although multiple attempts were made—most famously with the redevelopment of the downtown area under former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri's company Solidere. Despite that, its architectural presence remains invisible in most of the country's large-scale plans (for Beirut, think of the most recent plans to revamp its devastated shipping port as a 'waterside attraction' in the wake of 2020's explosion). The growing number of holiday rentals being set up in the mountains also speaks of the hope that tourism will have a significant role in preserving Lebanon's fragile economy. The focus remains on its reputation as an exotic travel destination despite being hampered by political instability.

100 THE GUARDIAN, *Beirut's bullet-riddled Holiday Inn,* Moel-Ali Nayel (2015). https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/may/01/beirut-holiday-inn-civil-war-history-cities-50-buildings (Accessed 23.11.2023)

101 NPR, *Beirut's Holiday Inn,* Alice Fordham (2014). https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2014/05/27/313960524/beiruts-holiday-inn-once-chic-then-battered-still-contested (Accessed 21.11.2023)

102 ALJAZEERA, *How the Holiday Inn became a symbol of the Lebanese Civil War,* author unknown (2018). https://www.aljazeera.com/program/war-hotels/2018/12/3/how-the-holiday-inn-became-a-symbol-of-the-lebanese-civil-war (Accessed 10.11.2023)

103 BBC WORLD SERVICE, *The Holiday Inn in Beirut,* Witness History series (2014). https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02cytbv (Accessed 10.11.2023)

104 Ibid.

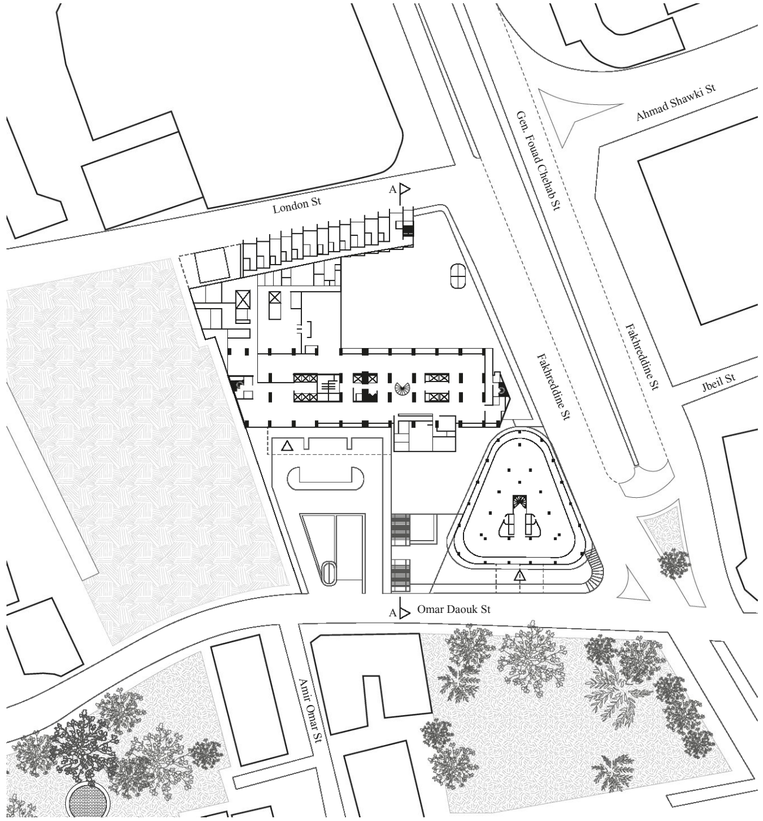
105 WINSLOW (1996), 267-8.

106 THE GUARDIAN (2015). https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/may/01/beirut-holiday-inn-civil-war-history-cities-50-buildings (Accessed 23.11.2023)

107 NPR (2014). https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2014/05/27/313960524/beiruts-holiday-inn-once-chic-then-battered-still-contested (Accessed 21.11.2023)

Ground Floor Plan

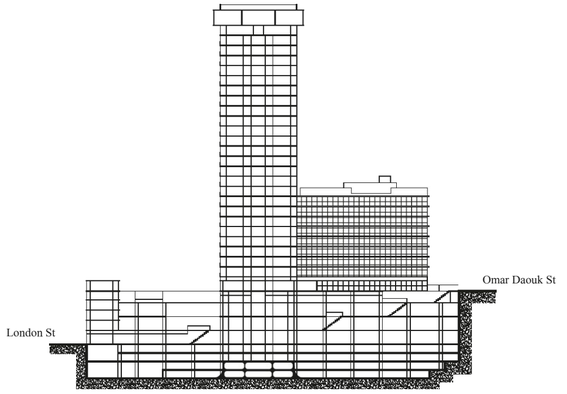
1: 1 500



30 m

Section of the Tower

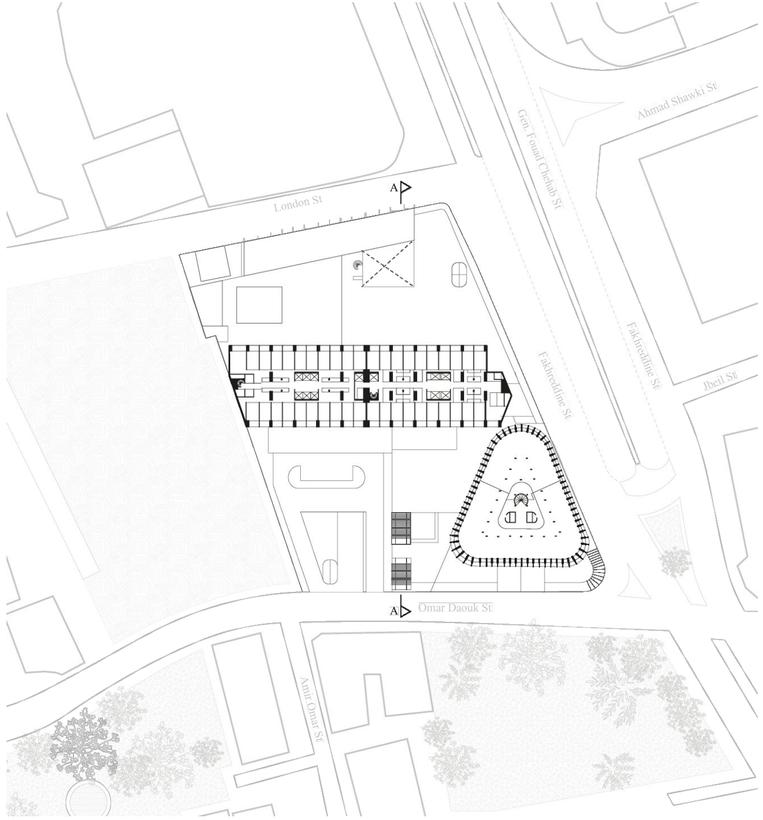
1: 1 500

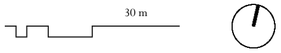


A-A

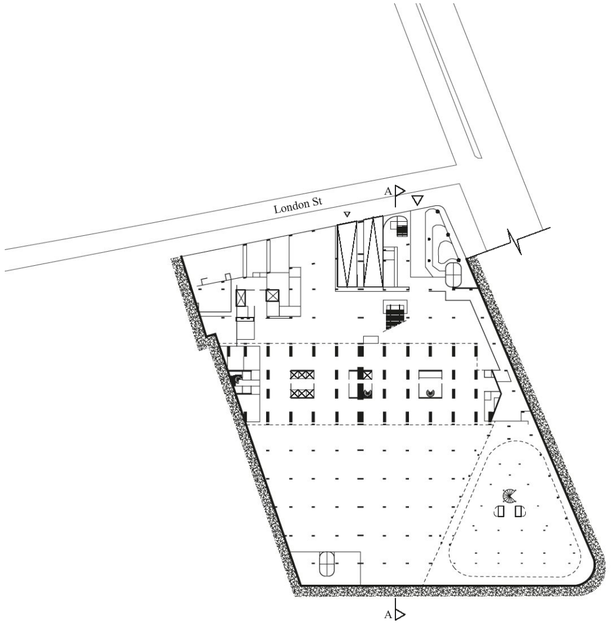
30 m

Typical Upper Floor Plan 1: 1 500





Basement Level Plan 1: 1 500



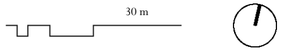


Fig 60. *Exterior view.* booklebanon, 1974.

Fig 61. *Advertisement.* Holiday Inn Beirut, 1974.

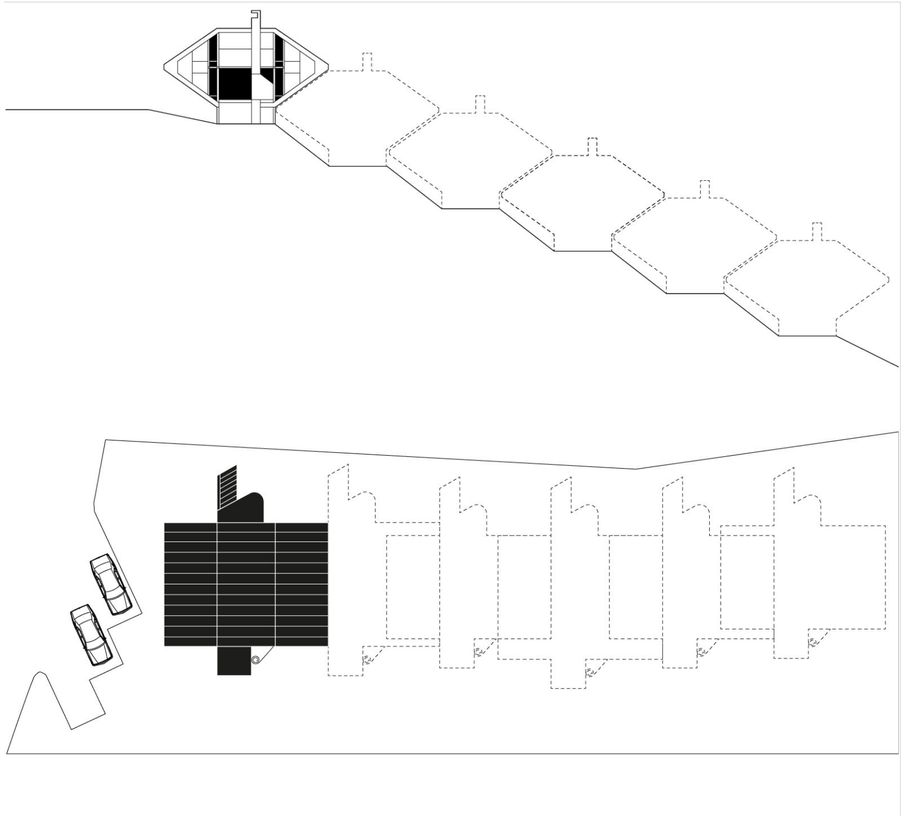
Fig 62. *The Holiday Inn on fire.*
AP, 1975.

Fig 63. *Militiamen taking cover in the hotel lobby.*
Don McCullin, 1976.

Ensemble Elevation South-West & Plan

1: 300

Location: Faraya, Jbeil-Keserwan
Date: 1972
Plot Area: 0,12 ha
Footprint: 14 m²



6 m

Case Study 07

individualistic. Chalet Hindié, Faraya

Lebanon is the only country that uses the term *chalet* (from the Swiss) to describe both mountain huts and beach cabins. Maurice Hindié—co-architect of the Holiday Inn Hotel in Beirut—designed this one in 1970, as a retreat for himself and his family during ski season.[108] Located in Faraya, a village in Mount Lebanon's Keserwan District only an hour from the Mediterranean Sea, it was a modernist's effort to introduce pre-fabricated, modular living to Lebanon.

The initial design as an ensemble of six units (only one was built in the end) used the site's slope to its advantage in order to stack units in a stepped manner. These six hexagonal units were to be pre-cast in factory and assembled on site. With the outbreak of the civil war, the project was abandoned as the architect and his family fled to France, leaving the single unit to be occupied by militias, who promptly repurposed the double-height shell into a bunker.[109]

The idea of owning a secondary residence in the mountains, emerging from the initial troubles faced by the rural population, and their eventual return, was carried over into Hindié's time. Its purpose though, initially as a family residence and patriarchal seat, morphed into a retreat, an escapist sentiment, with somewhat more individualistic undertones. Despite that, the architect argued that it was precisely the traditional values of the family that would be carried over in his design, and would serve as one of the distinguishing tenets of Lebanese modernism. This was to be achieved through an open space, where the individual functions would correspond across visual axes, alongside the connecting element of a stepped sitting area to either side of the ground level reaching the intermediate service level and bedroom level above. Following a successful pre-fabrication, the chalet was built in sixty days. [110]

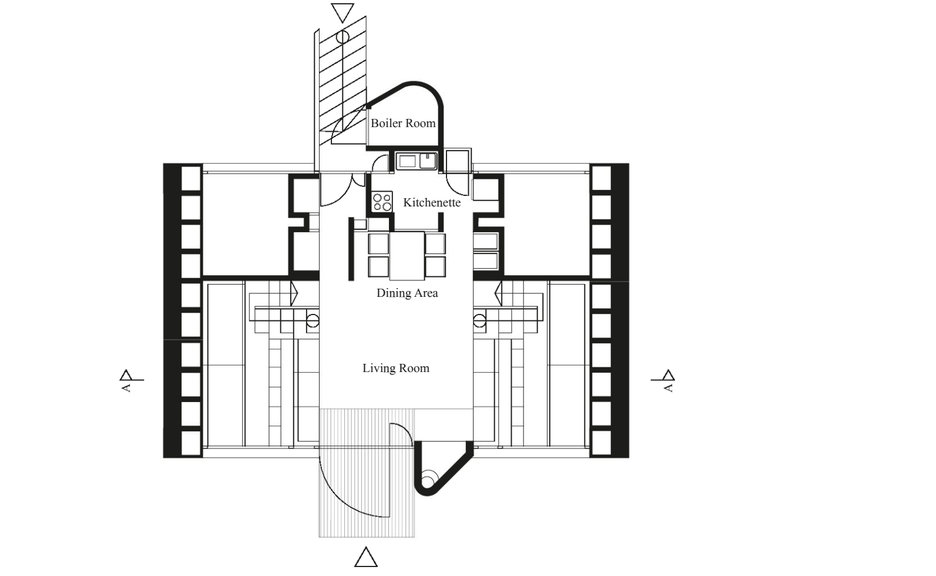
Modernism allowed the individual more freedom of movement than ever before. Conversely, its architectural dialectic, far from individualistic, being pre-occupied with a new freedom of form and large-scale rationale of functional efficiency, and focused on universal materiality and a cosmopolitan way of life meant a complete upheaval of the established forms of Lebanese craftsmanship, building methods, and households in general.

The superficial characteristics of the *individualistic* might overlap with those of the *hermetic* at first glance—a remote setting and sparing execution being tethered to the idea of *bare living*—but they have much more in common with the *touristic* in the end, relying on external provisions made possible by infrastructural improvements, serialization, and detachment from local building customs which emerged out of necessity rather than choice. The requirement of a precise knowledge of local climate impact on architectural design,[111] having shown signs of diminishing during Lebanon's Ottoman period, now received that final blow towards irrelevance in light of these arriving technologies. The locality of architectural expression, revolving around artisanry and the domestic,[112] was effectively replaced by a number of large-scale *movements* seeking to define a new norm of domesticity by overarching design.

108 HIDDEN ARCHITECTURE, *Chalet Hindié*. https://hiddenarchitecture.net/chalet-hindie/ (Accessed 24.10.2023)
109 Ibid.
110 Ibid.
111 Rudofsky (1964), 5.
112 PARENT, Michel, *L'architecture vernaculaire rurale* (Icomos, 1977), 1 - 2.

Unit Plan & Section

1: 100



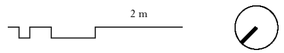


Fig 64. *Exterior.*
Maurice Hindié, 1970.

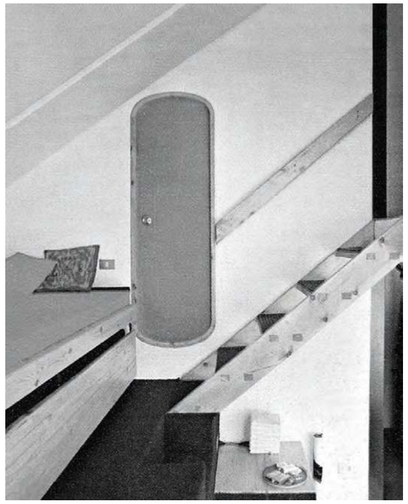


Fig 65. *Mezzanine.*
Maurice Hindié, 1970.

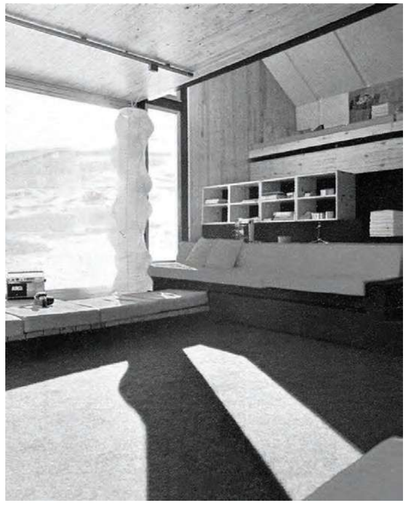


Fig 66. *Living room.*
Maurice Hindié, 1970.

Fig 67. *Exterior in 2021.*
Anthony Saroufim, 2021.

Fig 68. *Interior in 2021.*
Anthony Saroufim, 2021.

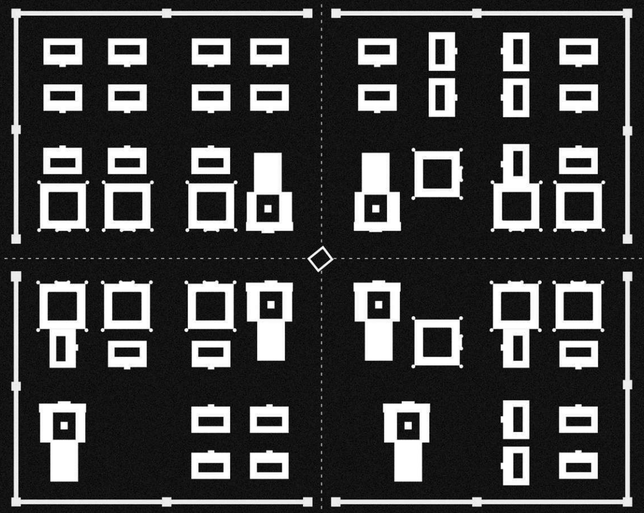


Fig 69. *A village of expats.*

Chapter IV

Home. The *One*-Word Answer

Synthesis

What is the nature of *transience*, as it relates to our understanding of *home,* and the expat's in particular? How to live closer to nature perhaps? How to live according to ours? Are the two entirely separate, or even separable? Here is an excerpt from George Rawlinson's *Phoenicia* (1890):

> "Imagine the arrival of a Tyrian caravan at Babylon. The travellers have been on the march for three or four months. They have either toiled up the long Coele-Syrian valley, crossed the chalky downs about Aleppo, and then proceeded down the course of the Euphrates from Balis, past Tiphsach and Sirki (Circesium) and Anat and Hit, to the lorn flat alluvium; or they have taken the shorter, but far more difficult, route, by Damascus and Tadmor, to the middle Euphrates about Anat, and thence along the river course, as by the former line of travel." [113]

It should be apparent from his description and from the accounts of travellers of the silk trade period, that, while *transient living* has remained the same at its core, surrounding circumstances have caused a drastic enough shift in how its architecture is conceived. Exterior fortification and interior anarchic togetherness are no longer expected *a priori,* instead an orderly individualism within a selectively open plan emerges. Change occurs naturally in typologies where formal elements are added or fall away, and, as Moneo puts it, type can be viewed as an *evolving dialect* rather than a *frozen mechanism,*[114] organic in the sense that it is not purely reactive, but *proactive* to our needs. The case studies of both Lebanon and the broader region thus offer a sort of regional *dialect of transience* over time, from which an initial set of abstract principles may be extracted that can then be either aligned or set against our pre-conceptions of home. To mention the castrum and the caravanserai in the same breath, for example, one must frame them in the same space (Fig. 69), at the centre of which lies a completely different scale—the home.

The caravanserai, to start with, uses the simplest possible geometry and room configuration to accommodate its guests. The limitations of travel during the period required an expansive footprint to host animal companions (an additional storey for rooming would be found almost exclusively in urban *khans*). The central space was constrained to being a courtyard only in name, as its true character, as Norberg-Schulz describes it, a *structure of place*[115], depended solely on the hosted activity—souk, trading post, open-air sleeping, town square, basilica, salon, dining hall, kitchen. The perception of such a place being inside or outside also shifts with said activity, and other elements which come into play (climate, materiality, furnishing). Both qualities align with the idea of home, of a space of defined architectural quality in which a *flexibility of character* allows for a *microcosmos* of perception.[116]

> "The discovery or projection of a fixed point—the center—is equivalent to the creation of the world; (...) the cosmogonic value of the ritual orientation and construction of sacred space. For profane experience, on the contrary, space is homogeneous and neutral;

113 RAWLINSON (1890), 157.
114 MONEO (1978), 23-4.
115 NORBERG-SCHULZ (1979), 15.
116 Ibid, 17.

> no break qualitatively differentiates the various parts of its mass." [117]

A transient space in which such a quality is less prevalent then is one where the character is constrained to one activity, and all other aspects of the space enforce that constraint. This is the hotel room of transient spaces. A closed-off cell, designed to be distributed along linear access. Since there is no central space for these cells to converge on, they self-centre, further distancing them from any kind of place that offers shared experience. Vertical complexes challenge flexibility of character in more ways than one.

The end of the early Middle Ages, for Lebanon especially, meant that transient spaces came predominantly in the form of a kind of *parasitic* living. Here, the crusader castles and monasteries of the time demonstrate clear purpose in their positioning, exterior fortification and interior labyrinthine layouts. While the courtyard as a linchpin of activity remains present, in and around it gather far less transparent spaces. Seal, conceal, detach, layer. Such techniques are intentionally used to both secure inhabitants and confuse invaders, should the need arise. Attempting to somehow calibrate a constant flow of temporary residents also leads to interesting spatial configurations. With most transient typologies, circulation is effectively controlled through a single focus point of entry and exit, though the use of hidden access points is also common. Think of the moat and drawbridge, or the camel passing through the eye of the needle. Even caravanserai opt for intentionally small openings in order to both secure the product within their walls, but also restrain the amount. Difficulty in entering, the *myth of the gate* in other words, often correlates to material wealth, and is reflected in monotheistic spiritual canon, where oasis becomes paradise—a walled garden (from the Old Iranian Avestan word *pairidaeza*) after divine standards.[118]

Genius loci, being a concept introduced by the Romans, but existing in similar forms across different cultures, defines a place's character as the result of its guardian spirit, or 'genie'.[119] This spirit is born from what experiences occur, habits form and work is done in any particular *locus.* It is interesting to compare this concept with the spatial product of the Roman military's expansion efforts. The castrum is defined by the rigidity of its setup (Fig. 70 shows Augusta Praetoria), which distances itself from the locus and instead imposes a sort of spatial dogma on a tabula rasa site. And yet, despite that rigidity, many castra have lived past their initial purpose, transforming into urban centres (the old town of Turin is one example). The castrum's influence is seemingly everywhere. From the silk roads to the Swiss Alps, where monastic complexes like St. Gallen have drawn comparisons to its layout, the true extent of its impact is widely debated, as arguments largely rely on spatial narrative.

If, in fact, a *typology of transience* is little more than an interpretation of those narratives which transcend typological surveying, then it is perhaps an ontological approach instead, as it describes transformation and in that sense cannot mean a classification has taken place.

117 ELIADE, Mircea, *The Sacred and the Profane* (Harvest House Publishers, 1963), 22.

118 ELIADE (1963), 152-3.
119 NORBERG-SCHULZ (1979), 18.

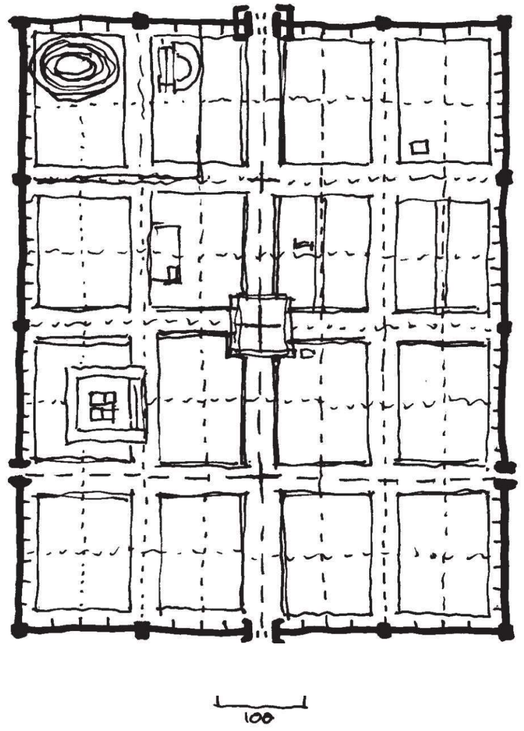
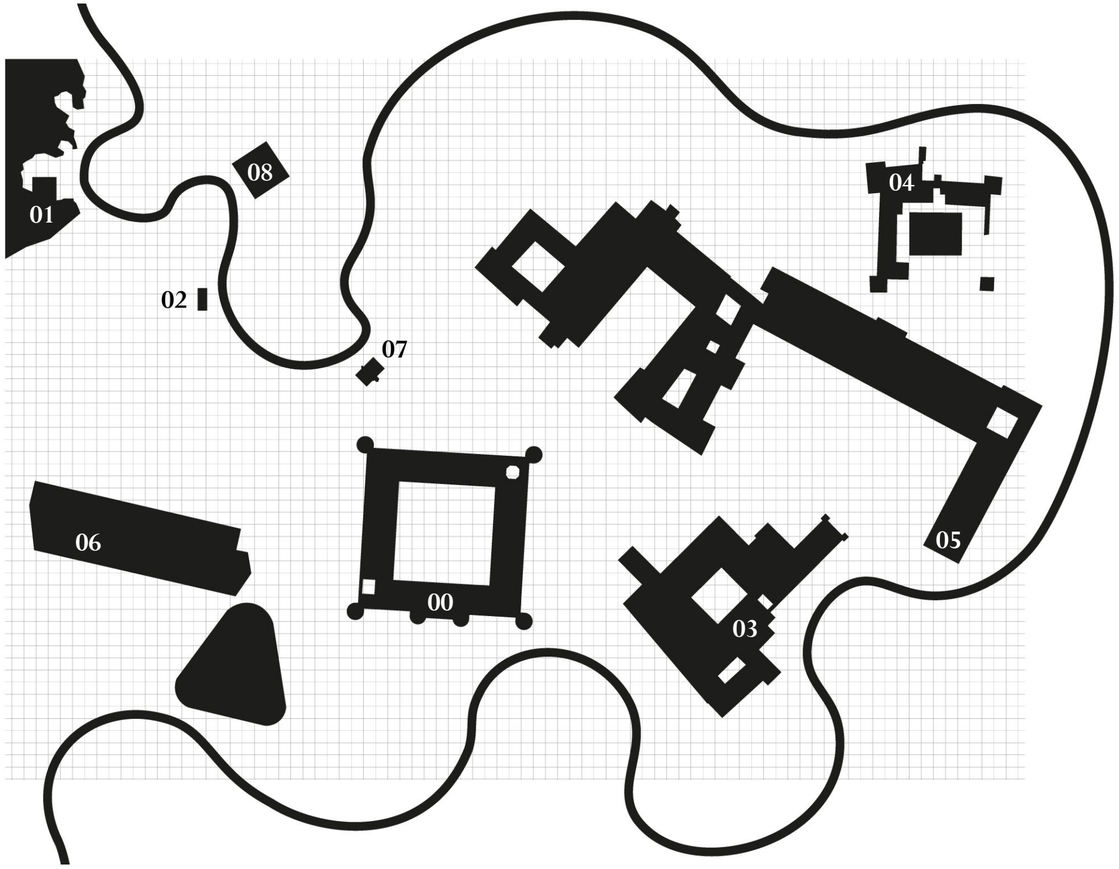


Fig 70. *Schematic plan of Augusta Praetoria, Aosta, Italy (25 BCE).*



00 Deir-e Gachin Caravanserai, Iran.
01 Mar Aboun, Qadisha Valley.
02 Bedouin Tent, Bekaa Valley.
03 Balamand Monastery, Koura.
04 Gibelet Crusader Fort, Byblos.
05 Beiteddine Palace, Beit ed-Din.
06 Old Holiday Inn, Beirut.
07 Chalet Hindié, Faraya.
08 The Expat's House, Bejjeh.

Fig 71. *Case study road trip.*

On a 'road map of *transience*' (Fig. 71), we are able to take a trip across time and see the case studies previously dealt with in a comparative scale. Similarly, the Khan-strum (Fig. 72) is an exercise in spatial compounding where the boundaries of a typically sized castrum are filled with caravanserai, which in turn defer to the boundary of their smallest cell. The Khan-strum is roughly able to hold the summer population of a village like Bejjeh within a footprint about one-twentieth the size. It certainly helps to visualize certain examples (as thought experiments) in order to quantifiably entertain a *transient typology,* attempt to list the characteristics of such a place or otherwise understand what the discussed cases and that of the contemporary expat hold in common.

In summary, *transience...*

... takes hold within the strange or unusual.
... stimulates us through internal conflict.
... breaks down complexity by repetition.
... builds on past environments and takes from its new environment.
... collects and brings along with it both ideas and substance.
... reinterprets form and language to suit its needs.
... sees the impermanent, chaotic pass through the permanent, orderly.
... brings life closer to what it produces and consumes.
... limits possession to what you can carry and what can pass through the gate.
... provides quarters in both good and bad times.
... comforts in the face of external conflict.

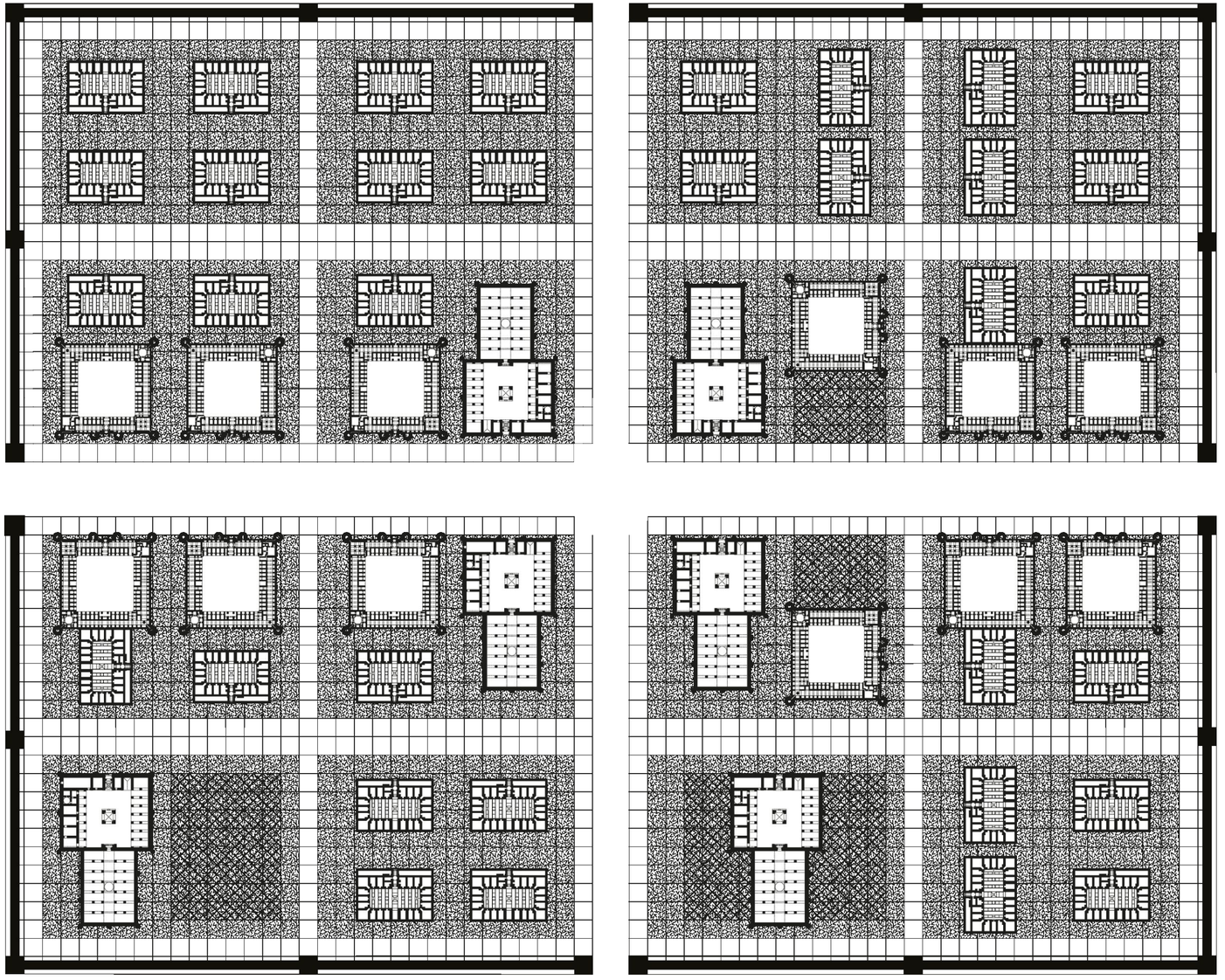


Fig 72. *The Khan-strum.*

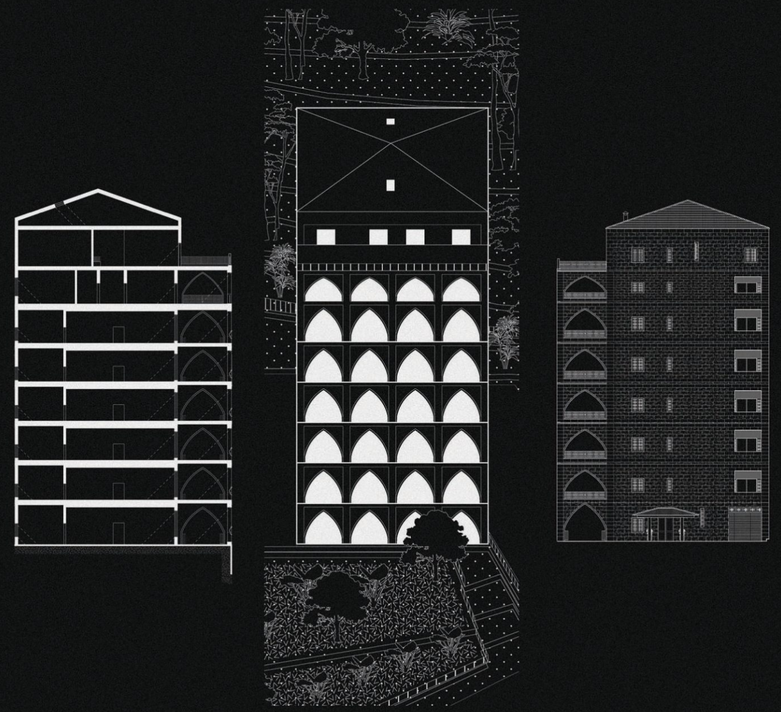


Fig 73. *A Time to Return!*
The Expat generates extrusion.

Chapter V

Brief. *Why* House an Expat?

Broach the Subject

The *House for an Expat* is not his alone. Its purpose is and should be an offering of temporary respite, as is the case for any of the examples studied in previous chapters, but, more so it should go against the trend of disuse and abandonment that temporary accommodations—especially the rural single-family home of the Lebanese expat—face today. Why is it that monasteries can survive without monks, and caravanserai without silk road traders on camelback? Why do some structures find purpose, regardless of age, while others risk falling into decay? Is there perhaps an alternative to the life cycle of the *Expat's House,* by which each generation returns to impose its addition onto the shell of the old (Fig. 73)?

This thesis proposes a brief that hinges on the idea that a *typology of transience* cannot survive without an underlying set of formal principles that implicate the attendant as an active participator through common, constant, and pliable use—*flexibility,* in other words. This kind of flexibility though, if one should even call it that in light of the term's contemporary overuse, is not rooted in modern discourses of open space and free-form traversal, or even dismantlement and reconfigurability, or the temporary, or ambiguity, but rather allows for freedom of use within the framework that a close reading of the case studies provides—a *state of transience*, of the incremental, which manifests in measurable form.

At the heart of the transient edifice lie these basic principles of form that first came to my attention while studying the Roman castrum. In its simplest form, the *castrum* (lit. fortified place), or *castra* (pl.) (camp), adapted previous versions of the grid laid out in ancient Greek, Mesopotamian, and Indo-German towns, and developed iterations that effectively crystallised into a form of the Hippodamian Plan suitable for the peripatetic nature of an expansionist Roman military. The castrum is an enclosed rectangular encampment, set up on a point along a path or axis deemed valuable enough for soldiers to establish as their centre for operating in the region—and consequently have their lives revolve around it. The camp is split into four sections (the origin of the expression *sleeping quarters*) by two main roads leading to four main gates (Fig. 70). This *castrametation* (setting up camp) can also solidify into a form of habitation that is non-temporary and non-military. A similar story concerns Lebanon also—the Phoenicians set up countless outposts for trade (known as *factories*) beyond the borders of their own city-states—most notably Carthage—which, like the Roman castra after them, eventually outgrew their use and transformed into the cores of full-fledged towns.

The caravanserai (or *khan, han, funduq* in its other forms) is a type of fortified structure that, like the castrum, exists to occupy a path deemed valuable—in this case trading routes—yet is already pitched in its concrete form and compacted, as it serves a nucleus of travellers and traders rather than an army. The caravanserai likely gave inspiration to the forts and monasteries established during the crusades, as it was necessary for pilgrims, missionaries, emissaries, etc. like the soldiers and merchants who ventured here before them, to find a safe haven within a day's travel and the opportunity to share what information and goods they had acquired along the way. It is that delineation of certain pathways and subsequent demarcation of important points along them that serves as the basis of a transient typology.

The region that is Lebanon today, cut off from the Arabian desert by two mountain ranges, sat on the easternmost shores of the Mediterranean Sea, fertile crossroads to so many geo-politically significant destinations even today, has attracted its fair share of castrum-like or caravanserai-like buildings. The ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian Delta civilisations struggled over its vital sea-access, while early mediaeval Muslim armies found in it their causeway to Byzantium and the West.[120] The Maronites fled into its mountains' natural hermitage. The Bedouin tribes sought fertile ground and water in its valleys. The crusaders captured and secured in it a strategic vantage towards Jerusalem and the Holy Land. During all this, the Lebanese house, the village house, went on more or less unchanged.

> "The construction of a house was the task of the master mason of the village, who agreed with the client on one of the common types of plan, without any formal documents. The house was built by simply following tradition, usually with the participation of the whole family. This process rendered deviations from the acknowledged standards of correct and proper building impossible." [121]

Only with the introduction of European industry, modernity and mass-tourism was that notion challenged, parallel to which came new definitions of transitory stay that were more economically-minded and for the first time in history catered to a wider population in the newly introduced middle- and upper-classes.[122] The turn of the 20th century to a large extent did away with seasonal cycles and the family nucleus, while the 21st century shaped the identity of the Lebanese expat we know today in much the same way it shaped his country, producing those houses which slowly begin to define the appearance of the Mount Lebanon (Fig. 74 for Bejjeh). Perhaps they will come to define it entirely. If not, the question remains: Which form will host the expat of tomorrow?

120 MOSCATI (1955), 15 - 16.
121 RAGETTE (1980), 184-5.
122 Ibid, 190-1.

Fig 74. *Expat Houses.*
Bejjeh, Mount Lebanon. 1992 - 2016.

Eager to be reborn she leaves the sacred place
And wings her way towards this
world where death holds sway.
The long-lived bird flies swiftly
in the direction of Syria
To which she herself long ago
gave the name Phoenicia.

Lactantius, *The Phoenix,* 63-66
(transl. M.C. Fitzpatrick, 1933)

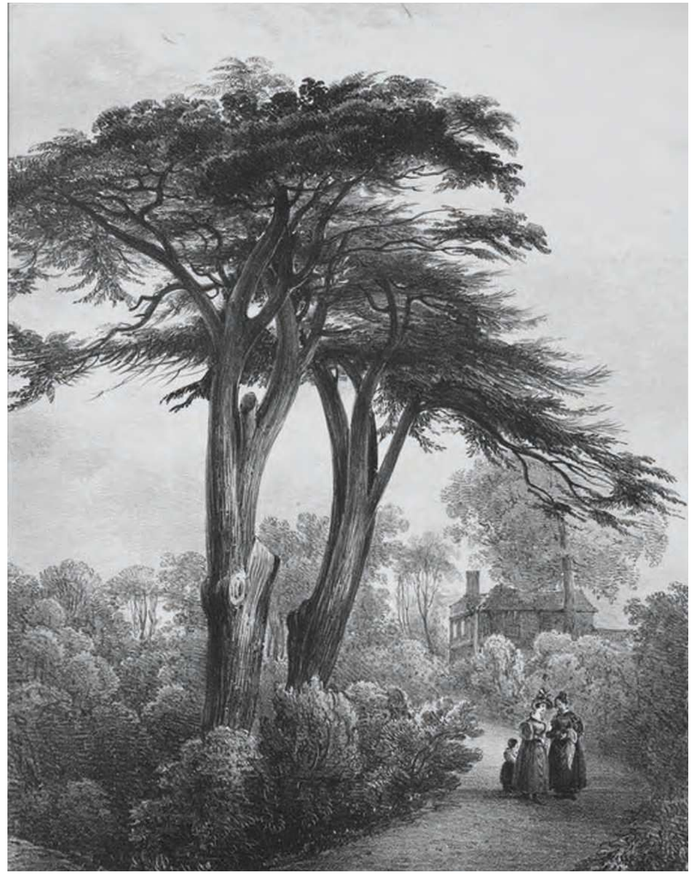


Fig 75. *Ancient Cedar of Lebanon, in the Botanical Gardens, Chelsea.* Henry William Burgess, 1827.

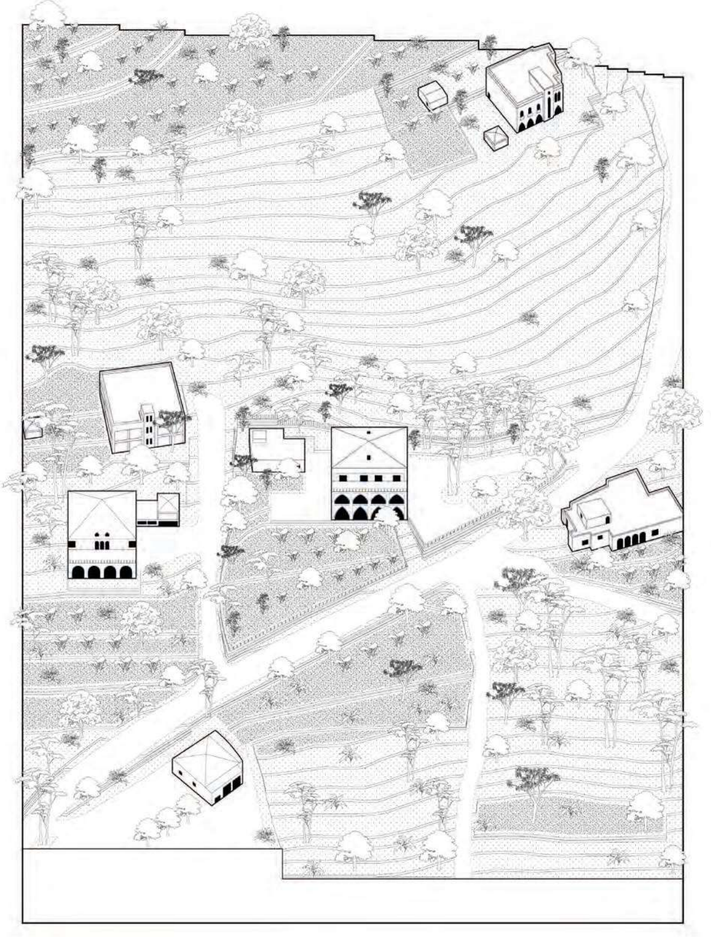
Fig 76. *Fields below the house.*
Bejjeh, Mount Lebanon. 2004.

Site Documentation (2023 - 2024)

Frontal Axonometry

1: 1 000

Location: Bejjeh, Mount Lebanon
Date: 1947 - 2002
Plot Area: 1,1 ha
Footprint: 307 m²



Case Study 08

opportunistic. The Expat House, Bejjeh

Our final case study and stop on this journey of transient types is the *Expat's House*, being Lebanon's most recent and widespread condition of impermanent living. It exists in many villages, in many forms, but one and all offer insight into the idea of the expat and the identity created by and for them. This is the house I grew up in, where every room was once in use and every field and garden tended. Over time the natural predications of the *Expat's House* take hold though and since its inception many spaces have fallen into disuse. Many of Bejjeh's expat houses—whether construction was halted prematurely, or the family moved abroad permanently, or grandparents no longer saw themselves capable of upkeeping the house and land—can be said to follow the same pattern of opportunistic achievement and gradual neglect.

At the turn of the 20th century, Fares and Basma, my paternal great-grandparents, resided in a small house near the church of St. Sarkis and Bachos—then the centre of a much smaller and denser village. Eventually, their firstborn, Youssef—my grandfather—would move the family to the outskirts of the village, acquiring the large piece of land the house still stands on today in the early 1940s and erecting their single-storey, barrel-vaulted home (now the ground floor of a larger structure) in 1947. The steep and arid land he had purchased—sat on the hill's inclined rockface—was softened by a series of stacked retaining walls and infilled soil (brought from elsewhere by the truckload)—a long-established method of terracing to create a landscape both fertile and accessible. The fields were not alone in needing to adapt to the hill's demands though, as every home required the rock to be incorporated into its foundation.

Over time the abundance of olive, oak, pine and dry brush was offset by vineyards of grape, crops of cabbage, tomato, peas, cauliflower, trees bearing apples, oranges, figs, and dates and more. Dirt roads were replaced with asphalted ones. In the 50s Youssef moved his family to Beirut for work, leaving his childhood home to be a summer home. In later years the house would see its (traditionally rammed earth) Baghdadi roof covered with reinforced concrete due to leakage in the 60s and the raw stone of its barrel vaults cemented and painted in white. A staircase to the roof (previously a ladder was used) and a columned porch, also concrete rebar, were finally added in the 80s. Meanwhile, an animal outhouse, a stone crushing machine and an arak distillery (under the registered trademark 'Khalife Arak') had come and gone. By then the land was split in three among Youssef and his two brothers, who established their own households and lived and worked abroad for long periods of time.

Youssef's son, Firas, had left to study abroad in the 80s also and would return in the early 2000s with his own family, topping up the original house by two storeys and an attic, building the *abou* (a storage shed and water reservoir holding up to 130.000 litres) and formalising the gate, driveway and garden to the south-west. The structural additions were made using a reinforced concrete framework filled in with blockwork. Since 2002, the house has remained largely the same, with only smaller interventions occurring. The addition was to be typically neo-traditional in appearance—a blend of Neo-Ottoman, -Egyptian and Art Deco colloquially

Site Plan

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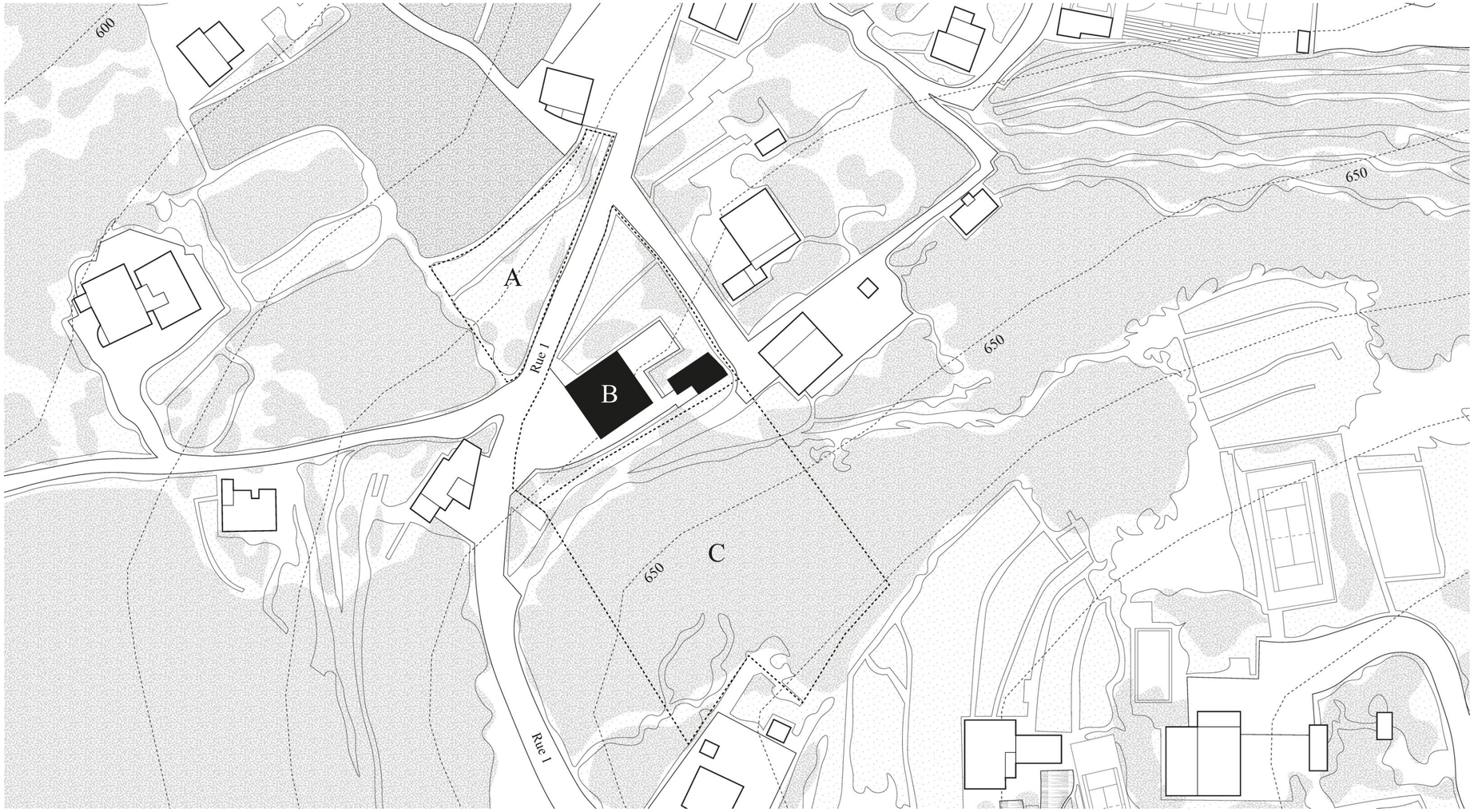


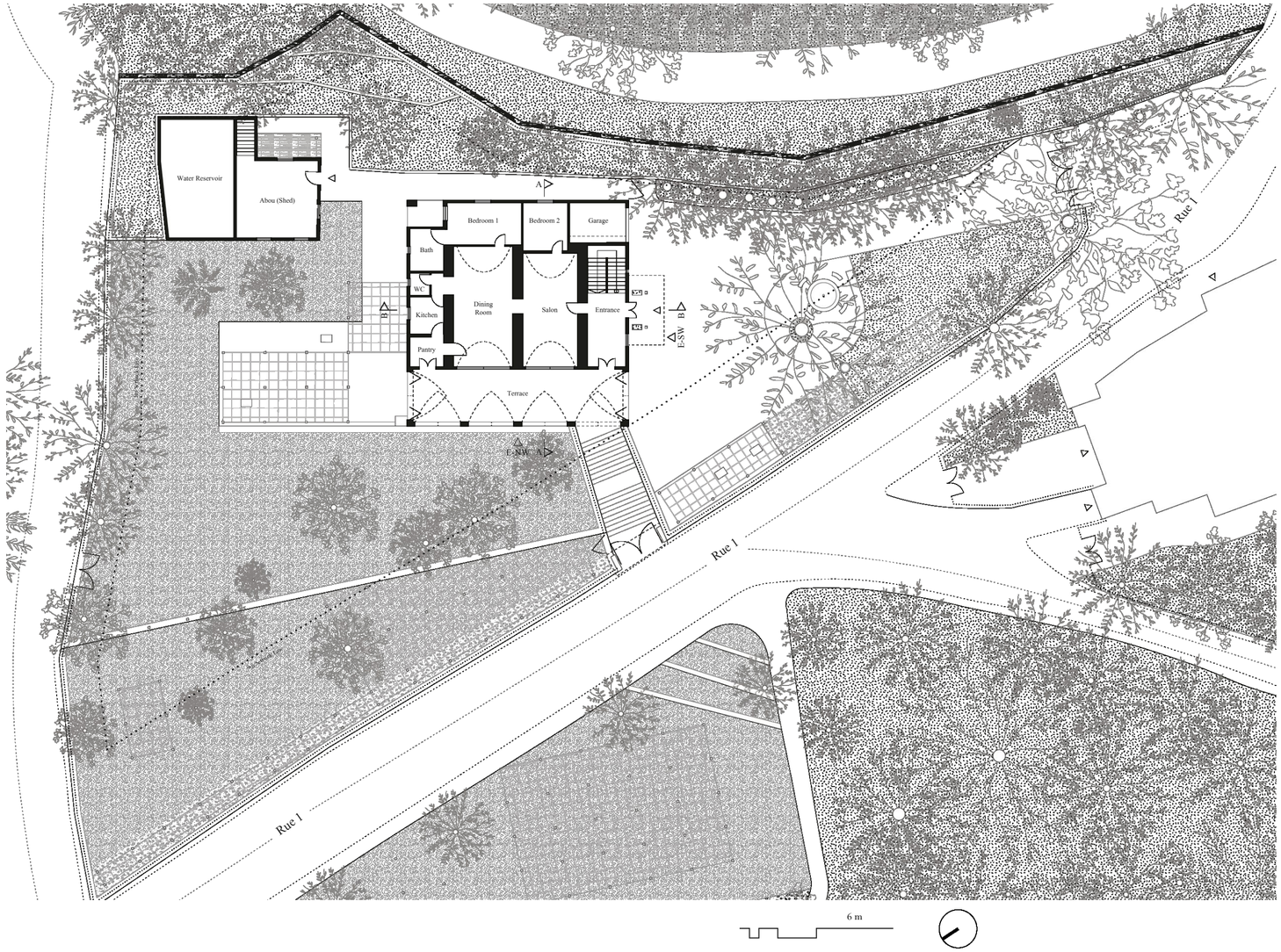
A lower fields (900 m²). **B** the house, garden, abou, and upper fields (2750 m²).
C forrested land (7200 m²). **Total** 10 850 m² (approximately 1,1 ha)

referred to as *mandate architecture*—a Palladian house typology with the interior hall open to a curtained balcony, the *riwaq*, with Persian arches rather than the rounded Roman type (a personal preference), sand-coloured limestone cladding from Hama, in Syria, to match the ground floor and the *Tuile de Marseille,* a red roof tile imported from France in the late 19th century.

With a footprint of roughly 307 m² (including the porch), and a gross floor area of 1.161 m² over three floors and an attic, the house occupies a middle-ground in terms of both the scale and proportion of local residential buildings. In fact those formerly dominant structures of the villagescape, notably the main church and town hall, have lost that distinction in recent years. Village zoning was introduced alongside more restrictive planning laws only recently, with the neighbourhood of our house being deemed a 'Villa Zone' (residential, three-storey, 45-degree setback from the main road, guidelines on permissible facade cladding and roofing options, etc.). Retaining walls such as the primary one built up against the main road in the 1940s, which reaches almost 4,5 m in height at the lower gate, and holds the plateau of the driveway and garden, are no longer feasible.

At first glance, Bejjeh has preserved much of its architectural heritage. But the squat stone houses of its infancy, upon closer inspection, stand in stark contrast to their sprouting neighbours. In its architecture the *Expat's House* has always wished to express wealth and order in a country known for its lack of either. It is the owners' alone, private and enclosed, with as much land around it as possible. With ample

Ground Floor Plan 1 : 300



distance to their neighbour perhaps, the expat once felt the pilgrimage to his house was one of exclusivity. This journey was marked by the arrival—a line of arches curtaining a large semi-outdoor space, the *liwan* of old, the open parlour, perhaps the *saha* (yard, field, or piazza) today, which ultimately served to impress on the pilgrim that they were in a house of plenty and would want for nothing. It was the frontispiece—the principal viewing-, guest-, dining- and sitting area all in one.

The dynamic relation between a modern expat family and that image of the traditional Lebanese village household—of a family's 'roots and roles'—naturally clash and give rise to the exigent circumstances under which the *Expat's House* is built (and built over), sometimes successfully prolonging the dominant narrative, the village mythos, while at other times producing absurdity in a landscape otherwise prudent and unchanging. The house and the expat therefore both wish to *fit in*—to preserve tradition—but also to *stand out,* and be seen as more than just another villager('s home).

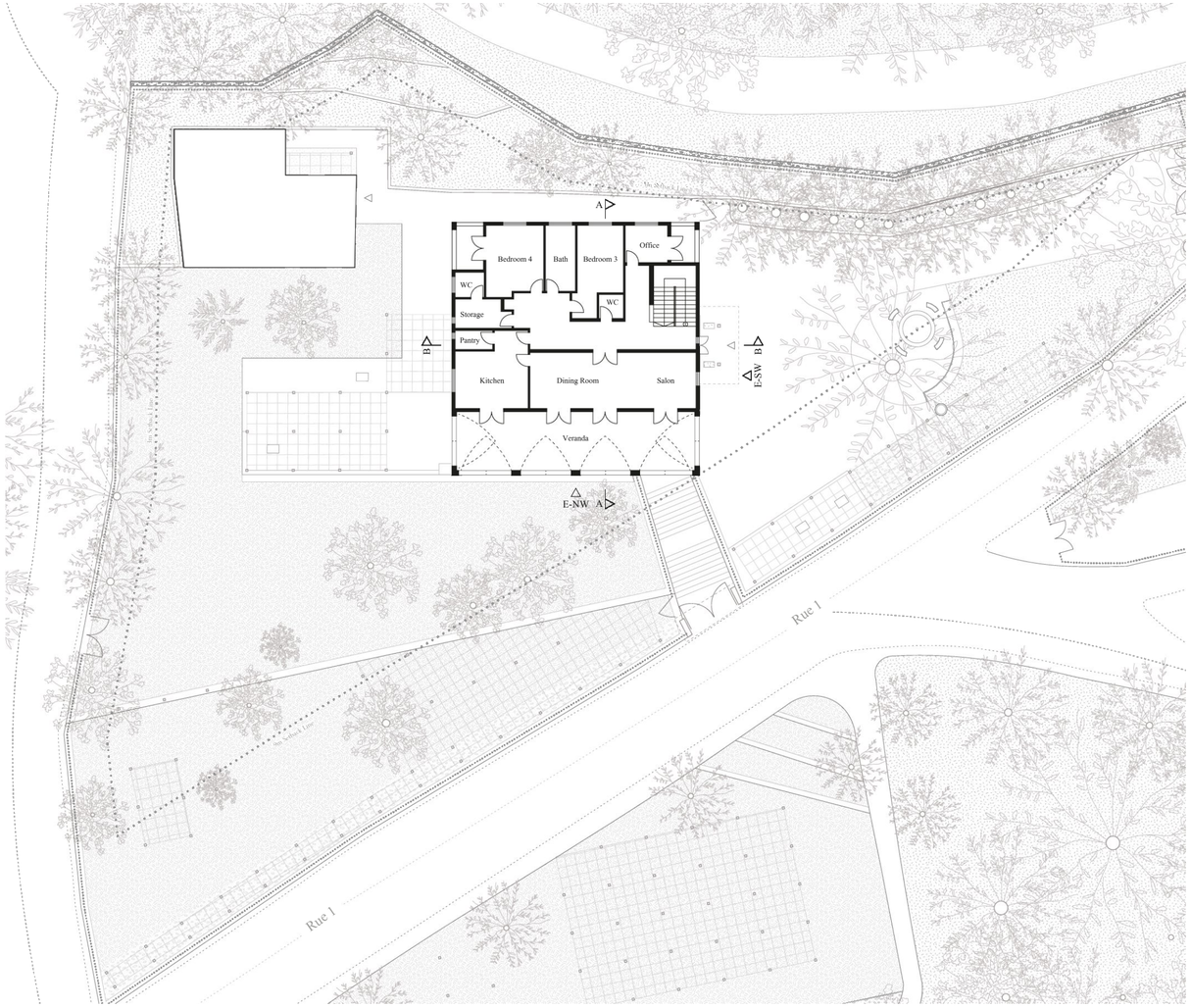
The expat recalls their childhood home, its appearance often unaltered upon their return and seeks, like a child, to replicate and magnify those elements which stuck out in their mind—leading to the kind of unidentifiable result which Anthony Vidler puts well to the point in *The Architectural Uncanny* (1992):

> "But of course this house was only a remembered house, and this itself recalled in a dream. Its aspect was clear, but "as sometimes happens in dreams, raised a little above itself," heightened, half-spiritual, and merged with the knowledge, later acquired, of its essential impermanence." [123]

123 VIDLER, Anthony, *The Architectural Uncanny* (MIT Press, 1992), 58.

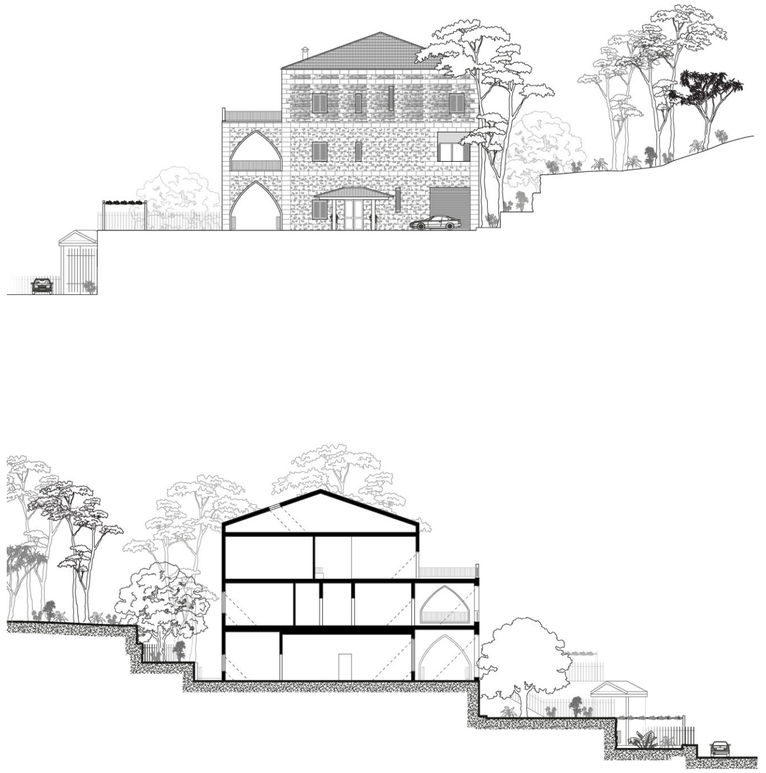
First Floor Plan

1 : 300



Elevation South-West & Section A-A

1 : 300



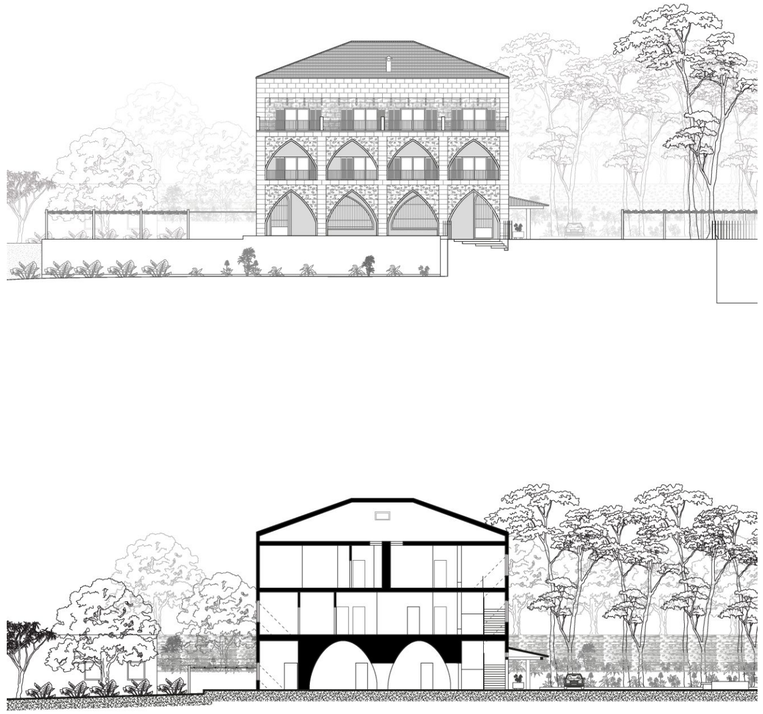
Second Floor Plan

1 : 300

6 m

Elevation North-West & Section B-B

1 : 300



6 m

Fig 77. *Under the arishé.*
Bejjeh, Mount Lebanon. 2004.

Photo Documentation (1992 - 2005)

Fig 78. *Looking up at the house.*
Bejjeh, Mount Lebanon. 2002.

Fig 79. *Banners hung across the road for the procession of St Therese.*
Bejjeh, Mount Lebanon. 2003.

Fig 80.
The original house, built in 1947, with reinforced concrete posts (60s) and a staircase (80s) added later.
Bejjeh, Mount Lebanon. 1992.

Fig 81.
Movers arrive beside the near-completed shell of the house.
Bejjeh, Mount Lebanon. 2001.

Fig 82.
Concrete block visible pre-render, Bedroom 7 on the second floor.
Bejjeh, Mount Lebanon. 2001.

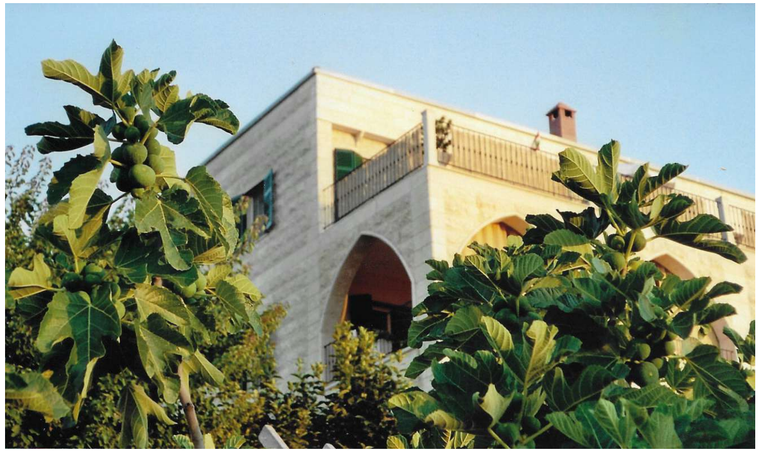


Fig 83.
Northern corner, veranda,
as seen from the upper fields.
Bejjeh, Mount Lebanon. 2005.

Fig 84.
North-eastern facade.
Bejjeh, Mount Lebanon. 2004.

Fig 85.
South-eastern facade.
Bejjeh, Mount Lebanon. 2004.

Fig 86.
View from the roof of the abou.
Bejjeh, Mount Lebanon. 1992.

Fig 87.
View over the fields, atop the old house.
Bejjeh, Mount Lebanon. 1992.

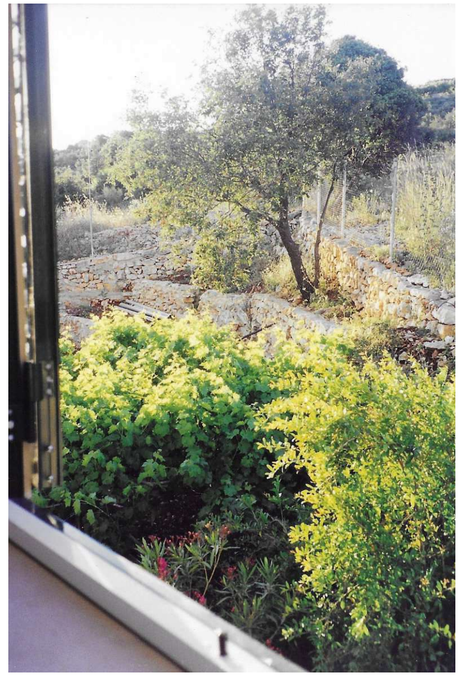


Fig 88.
Terraces by the north-eastern corner, below the kitchen.
Bejjeh, Mount Lebanon. 2002.

Fig 89.
First floor veranda, facing east.
Bejjeh, Mount Lebanon. 2005.

Fig 90.
Ground floor, facing west.
Bejjeh, Mount Lebanon. 2004.

Fig 91.
Facade of the upper floors.
Bejjeh, Mount Lebanon. 2003.

Fig 92.
Main road and retaining wall.
Bejjeh, Mount Lebanon. 1992.

Fig 93.
Trees and retaining wall outside the entrance to the driveway.
Bejjeh, Mount Lebanon. 2005.

Fig 94.
Entry gate to the driveway and eucalyptus tree.
Bejjeh, Mount Lebanon. 2005.

Fig 95.
Ground Floor, Bedroom 2.
Bejjeh, Mount Lebanon. 2002.

Fig 96.
First floor, dining room and salon.
Bejjeh, Mount Lebanon. 2003.

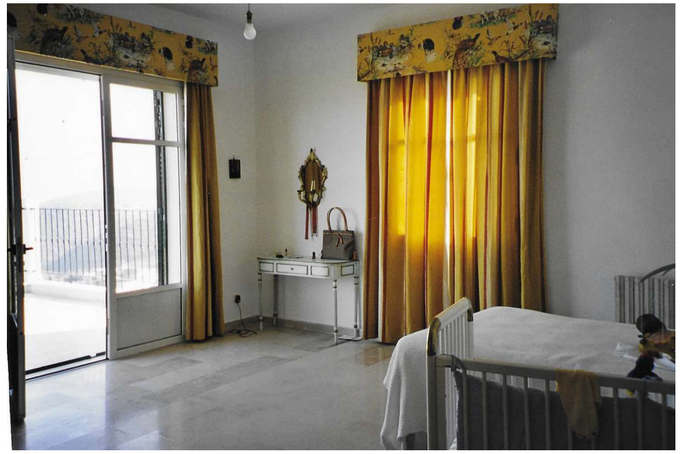
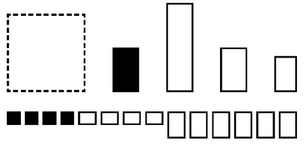


Fig 97.
Second floor, Bedroom 6.
Bejjeh, Mount Lebanon. 2004.

Brief

	sqm	dim	n	
Halls	60	6 x 10	1	central (house)
	120	6 x 20	1	assembly
	60	6 x 10	1	refectory
	40	5 x 8	1	promontory
Total	*280*	-	*4*	
Rooms	9	3 x 3	4	(house)
	12	3 x 4	4	alt. use
	24	6 x 4	6	alt. use
Total	*228*	-	*14*	



Brief. Repose

The impetus for *House for an Expat* is the idea of *transience*, which disrupts over time and allows a single-family home and its surrounding land to be repurposed into a village-owned space for communicative and productive living and working.

Inspiration came from the castrum as the *base form* of temporary settlement with potential for permanence and from the caravanserai, khan and han in how their initial use required a *flexible structure,* which has found constant new life throughout history, connecting various typologies from the institutional to the religious and the domestic.

The proposal should therefore focus equally on the room and the courtyard (interior and exterior), on the private, the collective and the transition between the two. Importance is given to the landscape and its naturally sloped rock-face as both a connective and productive space, with social interaction focusing around central halls and their adjacent exteriors, while rooms generally occupy an elevated position and are accessed directly over a progression of terraces. The path—expressed through arrival, entry and passage—follows the same principle of narrative redirection within a linear structure present in much of the region's architecture, with a clear starting point and conclusion, following a series of increasingly intimate spaces.

At the heart of *House for an Expat* are those themes of search, return and repose underlined by both case studies and interviews. They engender a direct relation to the expat's nature, manifesting in the fortified, hidden environment they identify with and punctuated by the stimulus of collaboration.

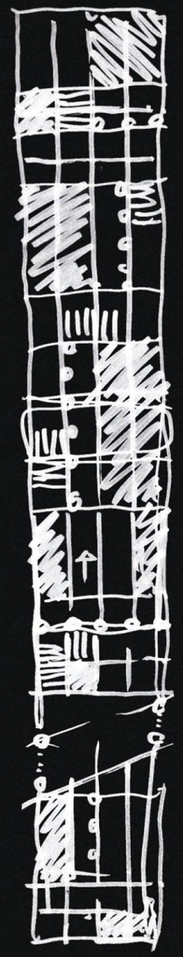


Fig 98. *Courtyard, Terrace, Garden.*

Chapter VI

Project. House *for* an Expat

Description

The purpose of *House for an Expat* is to demonstrate an alternative approach to creating communicative and collaborative spaces in rural Lebanon. This is done by focusing spaces into a compound structure, similar to the caravanserai, where interior and exterior, based on the typologies present in the *Catalogue of Change,* offer a solid framework for multiple uses. The identity of the Lebanese expat allows for a duality that is present in the architecture of their home and family, but diminishes the village in its entirety. Therefore, the priority was to maximize interaction and encounter along with a high density of use.

Focusing on the *within the garden* (an initial sketch in Fig. 98 shows this idea) and filling out every bit of space, while allowing the rest of the site to be used in a non-disruptive manner, was done in order to create a clear framework for the project and allow for replicability. Elements of the case studies remain separate (the hall, the room, the courtyard, the field and the garden) yet connected by a rising network of terraces. These aspects are reinforced by minimizing footprint and reintroducing a sense of density in the village.

Centre stage lies the house, functioning as a gateway through which a non-linear path leads from one's arrival before the grand arched facade into a dark tunnel and finally out into the main *saha* (sitting area) of the garden itself. This area functions as the central *meidan* or open courtyard of the caravanserai, connecting to the *Assembly Hall* and the first floor of the house which—now the centre of interaction in the tradition of the ground floor—becomes a double-height *Central Hall.* Following the Assembly Hall (based on the gallery house), which serves as a platform for accessing the rooms above it, one encounters the *Refectory,* where work and meals are shared, and finally the *Promontory* (a closed rectangular type with the addition of a lookout above), from which a view over the entire village is given above the hall itself. According to the principles of *transience* rooms offer only a chance to sleep and wash, with all other daily activity being assigned to either the halls or the outdoors and the transition between the two being intentionally blurred. This allows for a seasonal opening and closing of shared areas as well as an alternate use of the remoter rooms during winter months, when fewer guests are to be expected. Volumes are oriented in a way that provides additional shade in summer and protection from dominant winds and rains in winter. Their distribution equally encourages a seasonal cycle of *spilling out into* and *receding from* within the confines of the garden.

The path, or passage, is another important aspect that is highlighted not only in the house's function as a gateway, but in the ascent through the garden itself and arrival at the Promontory and the enclosed *paradiso.* Four primary areas within the compound are distinguishable—the lower fields, the house, the courtyard and the upper gardens—an innate concept of layering or stacking public and private sections present within the architecture and public conscience of the region. The four primary types of the Lebanese house (closed rectangular, liwan, gallery and central hall) were drawn upon, elements of which can be found not only in the structures themselves but across the entire garden and in its outer walls, allowing the compound to blend into a single entity.

Site Plan

1 : 300

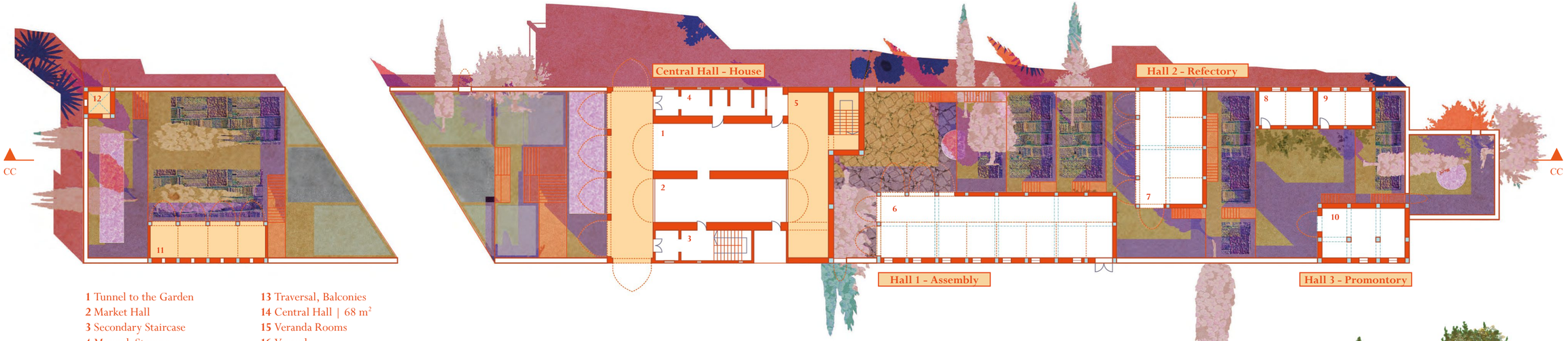
Enclosed Area 2230 m² (20% of Total). **Built Footprint** 808 m² (36% of Enclosed Area, 7.5% of Total). **Remaining Site Area** 8620 m² (80%). **Total** 10 850 m² (approximately 1,1 ha)

Hall (shared) | Outdoor Element | Site Boundary | ± Level | Opening | Entrance | Room

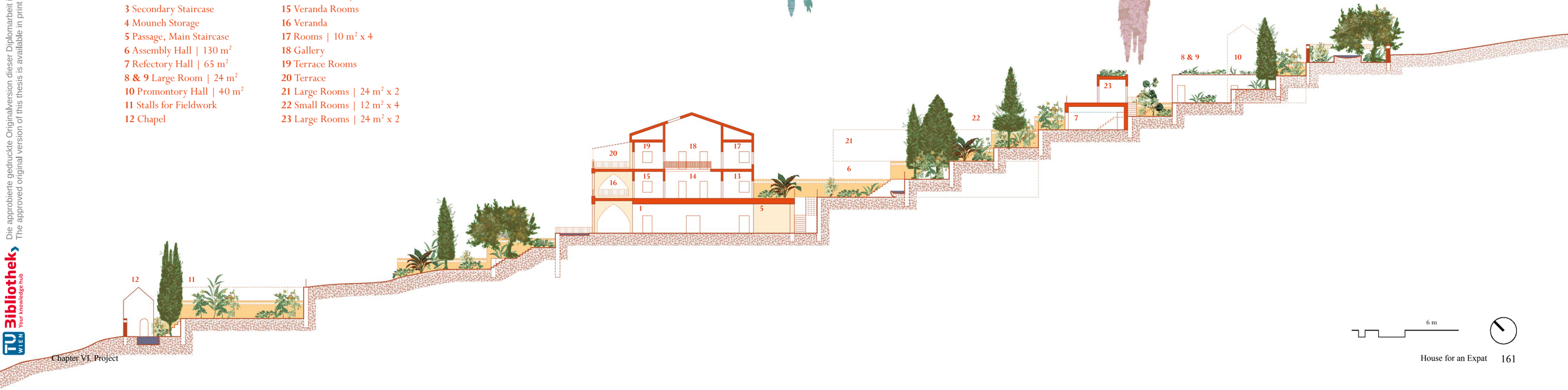
6 m

Ground Floor Plan & Section CC

1 : 300

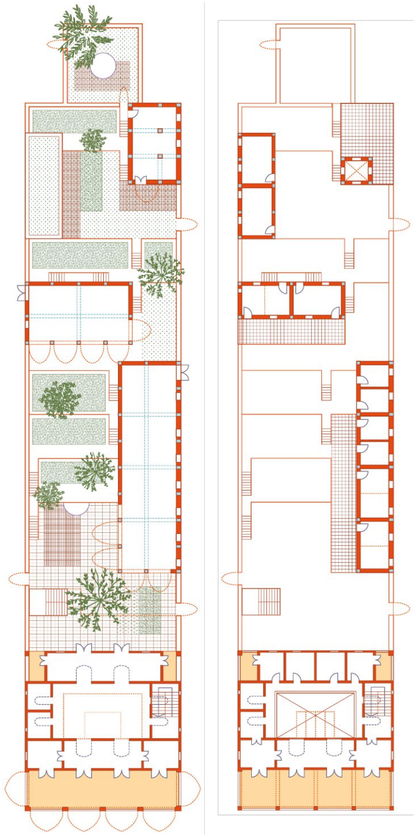


1 Tunnel to the Garden
2 Market Hall
3 Secondary Staircase
4 Mouneh Storage
5 Passage, Main Staircase
6 Assembly Hall | 130 m²
7 Refectory Hall | 65 m²
8 & 9 Large Room | 24 m²
10 Promontory Hall | 40 m²
11 Stalls for Fieldwork
12 Chapel
13 Traversal, Balconies
14 Central Hall | 68 m²
15 Veranda Rooms
16 Veranda
17 Rooms | 10 m² x 4
18 Gallery
19 Terrace Rooms
20 Terrace
21 Large Rooms | 24 m² x 2
22 Small Rooms | 12 m² x 4
23 Large Rooms | 24 m² x 2



First & Second Floor Plan

1 : 500



1F - Halls

2F - Rooms

Conclusion

House for an Expat understands Lebanon's architectural tradition as a transient one, where public and private, interior and exterior, communal and reclusive exist in a constant flux of meaning and expression, yet remain bound to the principles of their heritage.

The expat's precarious role in shaping Lebanon's rural settlements is reimagined in order to introduce new ways of inhabiting Mount Lebanon's villages. Residents, returning expats, visitors, etc. are offered a place in which to interact, learn from one another and introduce foreign concepts in a non-disruptive manner. In this way the compound can serve as more than a seasonal retreat, providing events, lectures and workshops that underline Mount Lebanon's handicrafts as well as continue the expat tradition of collecting and presenting new ideas to the village community.

10 m

Conversion Plans of the House

1 : 300

Existing
Removed
Addition

6 m

In the Garden

The Assembly by Night.

Exiting the hall, entering the home.

The Promontory by Day.

As seen from above.

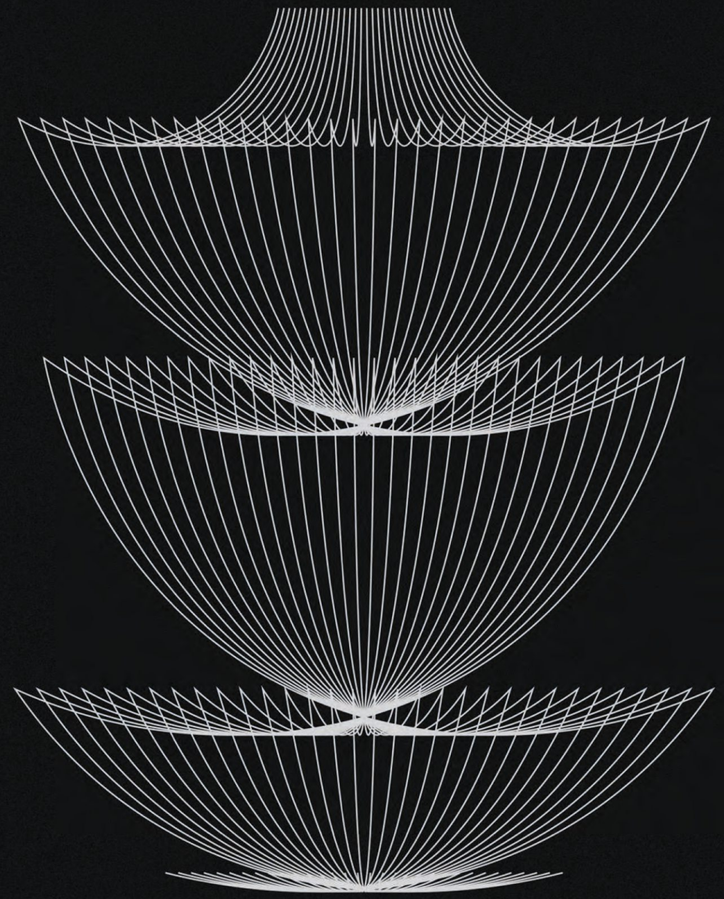


Fig 100. *The Fountain of Ersilia.*

Appendix. More than *Meets* the Eye

Notes on Additional Materials

The appendix offers up the information that this work was built on. Like the city of Ersilia in Italo Calvino's novel, *Invisible Cities* (1972), Lebanon and the places it has grown to be a part of exhibit a constant state of information overload. The result is an overwhelmed landscape. Mountains of bare thread sway in the empty breeze that once connected names, places, and ideas, which, finding that the sheer amount of them was suffocating, simply moved on, shedding their connections. The *Fountain of Ersilia* (Fig. 100), as I imagine it, stands in the town square as the purest form of that knowledge which binds its city's occupants and the source they tap into. Its strings are everywhere now, but they had to start somewhere, didn't they? The tale that Ersilia spins from the waters of its fountain is *transience* itself, a fleeting form of connection that crisses and crosses and covers ground at a frightening pace.

Apart from the general bibliography and list of figures, the following items are included here: a glossary of Arabic terms (appearing in the course of the case studies, interviews and research), some of which are rather rare, the ethnographic questionnaire in conjunction with the ten interviews that were held with Lebanese expats and a repository of drawings (based on the *language of objects* in the region). The appendix offers an 'information overload', in the context of this work, but also as a free-standing network of strings, grown and extracted from the fountain.

The glossary holds a collection of Arabic terms mentioned throughout the course of the research which, in keeping with the spirit of *transience*, form an unusual mix of archaic and contemporary words and expressions. From ancient Aramaic and Assyrian to more modern word forms and adaptations spread by Ottoman and European influences, a mosaic of expressions unfolded alongside the thesis itself.

The questionnaire was compiled with an *ethnographic* (meaning culture-mapping) approach in mind. Capturing experience and dealing in memory, nostalgia, feelings, can be tricky, but offers a direct counterpart to the case studies, which frame the *architecture of transience* and can therefore only benefit from the contemporary transient subject's point of view. The expat, as the dominant transient subject of our time, the latest in a long line of traders, invaders, emigrants, tourists, etc. can only be understood by means of both their own and their predecessors' modes of living.

The repository, finally, aims to capture the *transient spirit* through the objects it creates and replicates. Across space and time, reborn in various stages, they are never twice the same, and always speak of something else. The language of these objects, which historically travelled over various trade routes, over land and sea, or were carried from village to village, from fortress to fortress, serving across borders of race, religion and class, are of great importance to any architectural expression that wishes to be considered intentional or otherwise sensitive to its context.

الخيل والليل والبيداء تعرفني
والسيف والرمح والقرطاس والقلم
أنا الذي نظر الأعمى إلى أدبي
وأسمعت كلماتي من به صمم

Part of a poem by al-Mutanabbi (915 - 965 AD)

A Glossary of Transience

abou, abu	أبو	father (of)	madina	مدينة	city, town
ahwe	قهوة	coffee	madrasa	مَدْرَسة	school
‘ailat	عائلة	family, clan	mar	مار	saint (lit. *lord, lady,* Aramaic)
akala	أَكَلَ	to eat	maranatha	مارانا ثا	Our Lord is come! (Aramaic)
akhawie	أخوية	fraternity, brotherhood, order	mashrabiya	مشربية	vernacular latticed balcony
ard	أرض	land, earth, floor	masjid	مَسْجِد	mosque
arishe	عريشة	pergola	maydan	مَيْدَان	public gathering space
arz	أرز	cedar	mouneh	مونِي	food preservation (lit. *pantry*)
bab	باب	door	mughtarib	مغترب	expat, migrant, foreigner, exile
badw	بَدْو	Bedouin (lit. *desert dweller*)	muhafazah	محافظات	governorate
bahr	بحر	sea	muharram	محرم	private quarters (Bedouin tent)
baladiyeh	بلدية	municipality, district	mutasariffiya	مُتَصَرِّفِيَّة	autonomous state (Ottoman)
bayda’	بَيْداء	desert, wilderness	nadi	ندي	club, council
beit	بيت	house, home	nahr	نهر	river, stream
bejjeh	بجه	Bejjeh (village, Mt Lebanon)	nar	نار	fire
burj	برج	tower	qabilah	قبيلة	tribe
dar	دَار	dwelling, building	qadisha	قاديشا	holy (Aramaic)
deir	دَيْر	monastery, church, chapel	raba’a	ربع	open quarters (Bedouin tent)
din	دِين	religion, custom, judgement	riwaq	رواق	arcade, portico, colonnade
divan, diwan	ديوان	sitting furniture (Persian)	sahn	صَحْن	courtyard
fallah, fellache	فَلَّاح	peasant, ploughman (Egyptian)	salib	صليب	Holy Cross (Christian)
furn	فرن	oven, kiln, furnace, bakery	sath	سَطْح	roof
hadar	حضر	sedentary, settled, civilized	sayyid, sayde	سيد	lord, lady, Mr., Mrs.
harim	حريم	harem, seraglio	shai	شاي	tea
horsh	حرج	forest	shajar	شجرة	tree
jabal	جبل	mountain	sha’r	شعر	hair
jeddo	جدو	grandpa	shariba	شَرِبَ	to drink
kahraba	كهرباء	electricity	sharie	شارع	street
kanisa	كنيسة	church	shaykh	شيخ	chief, elder
khan, han	خان	inn, hotel	shibak	شباك	window
khawaja	خواجه	Lord, Master (Persian)	tariq	طريق	road
liwan, iwan	ليوان	entrance hall (Persian)	teta	تاتا	grandma
lubnan	لُبْنَان	Lebanon	thabeit	ثبات	stability
ma’	ماء	water	wadi	وادي	valley, river bed, ravine
ma’ad	مَعَاد	a place of return	wasta	واسِطة	clout, nepotism (lit. *means*)
madkhal	مدخل	entrance, gateway	wejbet	وجبت	social obligations (lit. *necessary*)

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House for an Expat – Ethnographic Questionnaire

Interview n° – Name (N)

Demographic Information

Age, gender
Nationality
Residence in Lebanon, duration of stay
Residence Abroad, duration of stay
Occupation
Familial status
Languages

Experience Abroad

What prompted your decision to move abroad?
Have you lived in multiple countries?
Could you describe your current living arrangement; apartment, house, shared accommodation, etc.?
How does your current residence compare to the home you had in Lebanon, in a broad sense?
What differs from your experience in Lebanon in terms of purchasing or renting, and maintenance in either case?
What were the biggest aspects of maintenance in Lebanon?
How do the two compare in terms of individualizing your living space?
What aspects of socializing or sharing your space can you think of that differ?
How has living abroad influenced your sense of cultural identity post living in Lebanon?
Are there specific cultural elements or items from Lebanon that you appreciated?
Are there specific cultural practices or traditions from Lebanon that left a lingering impression?

Experience in Lebanon

How frequently have you visited Lebanon since moving abroad?
How do you maintain connections with family and friends in Lebanon?
Were you part of any local communities or networks in Lebanon?
How do you feel when you return to Lebanon?
What are aspects of your home in Lebanon that you miss?
Do you envision returning to Lebanon in the future and if so in what capacity?
How do you think your experiences abroad will shape your future housing and living choices?

Perceptions of Home

What does home mean to you?
How has your definition of home evolved since leaving Lebanon?
Which elements of your house in Lebanon come to mind when you think about home? What are their stories and what kind of personal significance do they hold?

Sense of Belonging

What sense of belonging do you feel in your home abroad?
What differs from your experience in Lebanon in terms of community involvement and familial network?
What sort of commute did you have?
What was your experience establishing yourself abroad?
How has your experience affected your perception of social structure and network in Lebanon?

This questionnaire was created by the author. The interviews that follow were held either in person or via videotelephony from January to April of 2024, and later transcribed by the author/interviewer (G) and redacted in correspondence with their respective interviewees. Each interview lasted 70 minutes on average.

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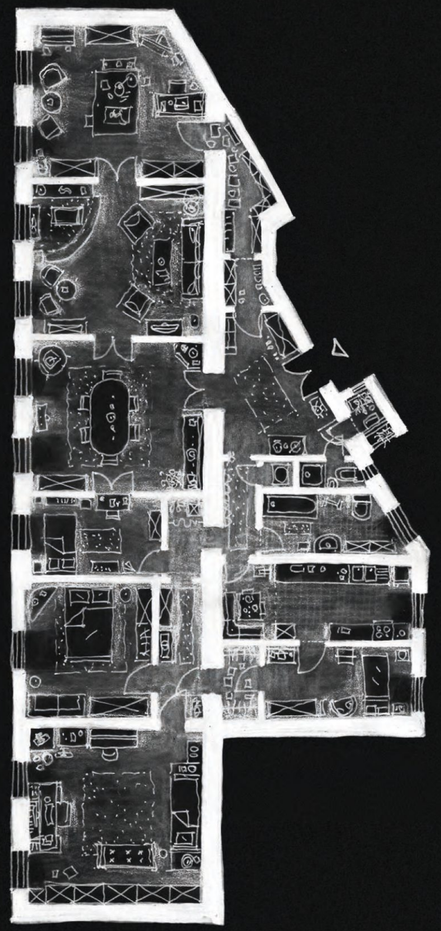
01 – Daniela

1: 150

Location: Vienna, Austria
Date: 1898
Floor Area: 220 m²
First Floor



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House for an Expat – Ethnographic Questionnaire

Interview 01 – Daniela (D)

Demographic Information

Age 60, female
Nationality: Italian
Residence in Lebanon: Bejjeh, Mount Lebanon. 8 years
Residence Abroad: London, United Kingdom. 14 years. Vienna, Austria. 14 years
Occupation: Art Restorer, Life Coach
Familial status: Married, 4 children
Languages: English, German, French, Italian, basic Arabic

G: What prompted your decision to move abroad?

D: I was worried about our children's development in a country that still bore the scars of a civil war. There was too much tension in the air between the various religious and political parties, the reason being that although the war lasted 15 years, it had not resolved anything. It hadn't brought the answers to the problems that caused it in the first place, and to me, there was no opportunity for that in sight.

G: Have you lived in multiple countries?

D: Yes, I have lived in London for 14 years also.

G: Could you describe your current living arrangement; apartment, house, shared accommodation, etc.?

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D: It is a large apartment in the centre of Vienna. The house was built in 1898 and it's well-maintained, old, elegant. I live here with two of my four children.

G: How does your current residence compare to the home you had in Lebanon, in a broad sense?

D: My home in Lebanon was a large country house, a villa over three storeys, flooded with light, surrounded by our own land—and it had a fantastic view. Our apartment in Vienna has other advantages, especially the practicality of living in walking distance of everything that I might need—the shops, the pharmacies, doctors and so on. That was difficult in Lebanon—if there was an emergency there was no hospital, not even basic first aid, in the village, though by now they probably have done something about it. There is clean tap water here, the electricity supply is uninterrupted, garbage collection works smoothly, and public transport is cheap and very reliable. So, I don't have to struggle to maintain that standard of living.

G: What differs from your experience in Lebanon in terms of purchasing or renting, and maintenance in either case?

D: In Lebanon we owned the house and land and had to pay for maintenance, while in Vienna we rent and that includes maintenance. I think our current arrangement ends up being cheaper, since the upkeep of a place of that size, all the bills for water, electricity, diesel, etc. that we paid to the government and private expenses to fill the gaps in their supply were very costly.

G: What were the biggest aspects of maintenance in Lebanon?

D: Nothing really worked! The electricity didn't work properly, it came intermittently, randomly. The water was a problem, because some people in the village siphoned off from our water supply, which we had paid for. We paid for electricity which didn't come. We had to have a generator, we had to buy the fuel for the generators separately… all those things didn't really work very well. The climate affected our building too: storms tore at the shutters, ripped any outdoor curtains not properly fastened; torrential rains caused flooding in the attic and on the weatherside even the stone cladding couldn't resist the sheer amount of water that found its way into every crack and crevice. Those walls never really had time to dry out, even with the long, dry summers. And the humidity rising from the sea would cause the fence and (terrace and veranda) railings to rust. The terraced fields that belong to our grounds, their walls also came down sometimes, during heavy rains. Our diesel generator was another thing that broke down often.

G: How do the two compare in terms of individualizing your living space?

D: There was a certain rigidity about what a home had to look like in Lebanon if you want to be seen as a well-to-do person—things had to be a certain way and there was not much flexibility there. The upper floors were our private living space and didn't necessarily follow the typical notions of a Lebanese home, but our ground floor very much did, seeing as it was a lot older. The interior layout of the home and the way you have to be open to visitors is different to Vienna. And especially when you are a housewife, or you work from home, it's customary for people to come and go and visit without announcing themselves. In Vienna, I would never expect somebody to come and ring my bell while I'm in my pyjamas and still have to make them coffee. If it's your best friend and neighbour that's nice, but if it's somebody who's just passing by on his way up the mountain—and since you're on the way just stops whenever he is passing by—it's something that I feel maybe the younger people don't do anymore, because their lifestyle has changed but the tradition hasn't caught up. Perhaps due to the general instability of the country, people want to cling to their traditions at least.

G: What aspects of socializing or sharing your space can you think of that differ?

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D: Socializing was traditionally a spontaneous affair. Hospitality demanded that unannounced visits for coffee (usually for half an hour to an hour) be obliged with cake, fruits, and other sweets, but other occasions such as dinner invitations were always overgenerous—it was about the host's reputation and he had to make sure that there was no chance anyone could leave his table and not be stuffed to the eyeballs. Being called 'stingy' was about the worst thing for a host. Here in Vienna, visits don't really happen unannounced—in general, there is less 'protocol' involved. Sharing your space with extended family, or house help who live with the family, is something I haven't experienced here either. In my personal experience, this sort of arrangement often led to difficult situations and reduced my sense of 'home' and privacy. As my father-in-law saw himself as the 'head of the house', which according to Lebanese tradition he was, that made it difficult to feel like masters of our own home.

G: How has living abroad influenced your sense of cultural identity post living in Lebanon?

D: I think that issues of human rights and social security are better addressed here. Learning is something that I would say also in Lebanon was very important and very high up on the list of priorities of people—especially the people in our area—children had to study, had to perform, and had to achieve. It was always a competition, whereas here I feel the priority is looking at the individual's talents and capacities and not to force them into what their father pursued, or the generations before him. A doctor, lawyer, or engineer.

G: Are there specific cultural elements or items from Lebanon that you appreciated?

D: The Lebanese cuisine for one. *Ahwé* (coffee) under the *arishé* (grapevine). Family lunches on Sundays. The sandstone, the wide arches. The sentiment of 'carrying on despite everything'. In terms of furnishing, I would say that originally of course my ideas were Central European ones and English in particular. But I was very open to influences from Lebanon. There were beautiful houses I loved, with Persian arches, and aspects of colour and stone and other natural building materials. The craftsmen, the carpenters, stonemasons, were very skilled people who could make something according to your wishes—they were quite skilled, working with materials and a precision you could not afford in Vienna. The whole house would, in fact, be impossible to build like that here in Europe.

G: Are there specific cultural practices or traditions from Lebanon that left a lingering impression?

D: The main thing that comes to mind now are the times where we sat outdoors with our coffee and people came and joined us, neighbours. Even in Beirut, I doubt that people are still doing this. I think they do it mainly when they come to the mountains, to the village. Then they sit together and chat, often in big circles. Especially on Sundays, there was certainly an aspect of ritual that was supposed to foster a sense of community and belonging. Another event was the 15th of August, where a mass is celebrated outdoors in a little chapel in walking distance from the village. And funerals. The 40th day, that was another, 40 days after the funeral and one year later again, a sort of commemoration. Village meetings in the *Nadi* (local sport field), for the big sports events that were also a good occasion for people to mingle and those sorts of festivals, when a group or a singer came to the village and there were tables set out—this happens mainly in summer—because all the expats come to the village.

G: How frequently have you visited Lebanon since moving abroad?

D: When my children were still in school, we used to spend our summer holidays, six or seven weeks, there. Then gradually less and less during their studies, working lives and since Covid almost not at all. The last time I visited was for two weeks in 2022.

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G: How do you maintain connections with family and friends in Lebanon?

D: With family through my husband, mostly over WhatsApp. My closest friend is an American married to a Lebanese man and I keep in touch with her. She updates me on our wider circle of friends that I used to be a part of. Most of them are couples where the man is Lebanese and the woman from almost anywhere in the world. And that is a bond we all share in common, seeing Lebanon through the eyes of an outsider.

G: Were you part of any local communities or networks in Lebanon?

D: There was one, the catholic Opus Dei (their 'litany centre' being in Altilal, on the road from Bejjeh to Amchit). They have a large retreat which also functions as an educational centre for people who want to learn things like computer skills, or what they call the *mune* (or *mooneh*)—that is a traditional way of preserving food. Also how to market it—PR, in short. There was a hospitality school, too (run by WIRLA – Women in rural Lebanese areas).

G: How do you feel when you return to Lebanon?

D: Confused. For me, Lebanon was always a roller coaster ride. One day was absolutely great and the next some unpleasant experience would jar me.

G: What are aspects of your home in Lebanon that you miss?

D: The view is the main thing. The fact that we grew our own vegetables and fruits. Sometimes the weather—there were times when the weather was wonderful, especially in autumn. I also loved going up into the mountains and to the seaside. Actually, my favourite experiences where the cedar forests in Tannourine and Bsharri, where you see Lebanon in its natural state and the goats there and herders and you feel away from all the consumerism and politics. All the tension. And the architecture there—my favourite place was Beiteddine Palace, which is really impressive. We went to Baalbek, which was impressive too, but I didn't like the atmosphere there. They had some camels that you could ride that looked like they would fall over if you sat on them because they were such bad shape.

G: Do you envision returning to Lebanon in the future and if so in what capacity?

D: I think to begin with I would only go for a holiday—but only if there is no threat of war, because I was part of one evacuation already and I don't need another one. I'd be careful about when to go.

G: How do you think your experiences abroad will shape your future housing and living choices?

D: I'm in an easy situation here in Vienna, in the sense that I live in the centre of a beautiful city with so many options—provided I can pay my rent. I have a wonderful place here and many friends, but I also dream about what's on the other side; to have a totally off-grid, self-maintained house, somewhere in nature, where whatever happens in the world I would not be so affected. A place my children can come to whenever they want. That is what Bejjeh was originally meant to be. That's a dream that I still have, to live away from all the turmoil, wherever that is. Where I have enough drinking water, food, and a chance to raise animals or to grow vegetables. Electricity—a way of making my own electricity. And to have some kind of vehicle to get about with, like a bus that stops nearby, or a donkey and cart.

G: What does home mean to you?

D: Harmony. Peace. A place where people live with whom I have loving relationship. Where everybody acts in the interest of everyone else.

G: Which elements of your house in Lebanon come to mind when you think about home? What are their stories and what kind of personal significance do they hold?

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D: All the children's bedrooms—the rooms they played in. I loved my kitchen—loved working in it, sitting in it. We had a sitting area which was really nice, especially when the children were drawing there, or doing homework or whatever. And I liked that it had direct access to the veranda. The kitchen is facing northeast, so in the morning the light would be coming through the blind beautifully. Drawing the curtains on the veranda also made this yellow light, a very cozy feeling.

G: What sense of belonging do you feel in your current home abroad?

D: It's my childhood home. I feel I belong here, but not exclusively.

G: What differs from your experience in Lebanon in terms of community involvement and familial network?

D: Being a foreigner in the Lebanese mountains who didn't speak Arabic well enough, I was not involved in communities the village had to offer. I tried the 'ladies' guild', a group of women in charge of keeping the church clean, making arrangements and organizing events, but that was not for me. Our family tree in Lebanon was also much bigger, a lot of people on my father-in-law's side—it was his village that we lived in. And the trend in Lebanon, at least in the mountains, in the old days, used to be that you follow the father's side of the family. So his brothers and their families. Here in Vienna, I still prefer friends over being involved in actual communities—the extended family doesn't live with me either, which gives me a sense of being more 'in charge' of my home.

G: What sort of commute did you have?

D: My husband was working (in Beirut) and needed the car most days, so I couldn't come and go so easily and when we arrived Lebanon (in 2001) the roads were really dangerous as well. I often took the children to school, which the drive to school was around 40 minutes, from the mountain roads in Bejjeh to the motorway and into Jounieh. The motorway was terrible … with huge potholes you couldn't see in time. Later on, they started to work on a new road that connected the motorway to our village and it was a lot safer and faster. The effort of changing altitude cost me some energy too—that is an aspect that I had forgotten.

G: What was your experience establishing yourself abroad?

D: I was lucky every step of the way. I always found just the thing that made the next step possible and made it possible for me to carry on raising my children and finding means of supporting us.

G: How has your experience affected your perception of social structure and network in Lebanon?

D: There's too much weight on what the older generation think and say and expect from you. That's like trying to swim with a millstone around your neck. 'This is the way we do it' or 'that's not done' are statements that I have heard all too often. Also, the fact that you can 'make enemies', like officially—by some sort of procedure, not a handshake but something of the sort—was astounding to me. My Father-in-Law taught me once. These feuds; entire families don't talk to each other if their two heads of households don't get along for whatever reason. And it can absolutely be intrafamilial. I went during the civil war (late 1980s) to Lebanon, to visit my future parents-in-law and to introduce myself and that was the time where really the fight took root in the culture. On the other hand, when we were invited to visit various relatives, to introduce me, there was always a table full of food, even though everybody was poor and any one family could never have put up such a big feast. Everyone who came brought something and they all made it a big welcome. My wedding dress was another little miracle. I bought the material and one of our relatives, an old lady, was going to make the dress. We were only supposed to be there for two or three weeks—and we were supposed to fly in and out—but the airport closed due to bombing and that meant we had to leave by ship as soon as

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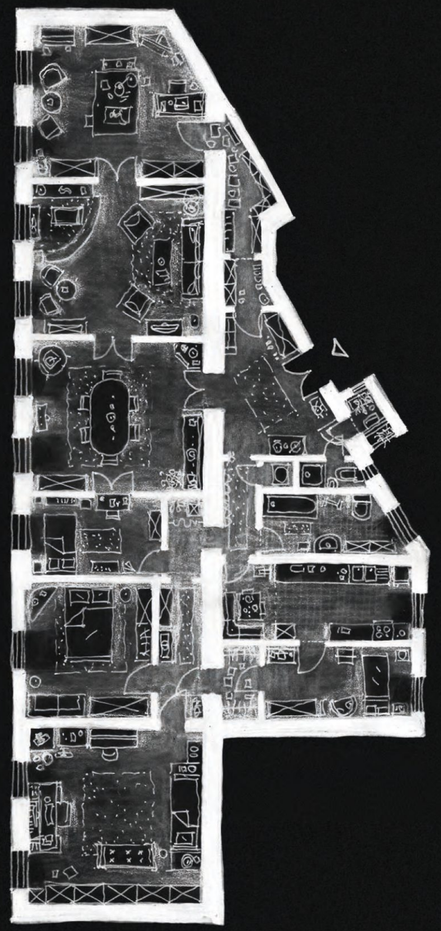
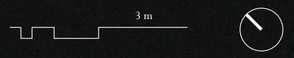
possible. We had to take the first ferry out to Cyprus, so suddenly the thing with the wedding dress became an urgent matter. She could not sew it so quickly by herself, so she got all the women in her building, from six, seven apartments, to help her and somehow it ended up being ready in time to take it with us. The people can be giving. If they have a harvest of plenty, villagers share with their neighbours. I would say neighbours play almost as big a role as actual family in Lebanese society.

02 – Mathias

1: 150

Location: Vienna, Austria
Date: 1898
Floor Area: 220 m²
First Floor





House for an Expat – Ethnographic Questionnaire

Interview 02 – Mathias (M)

Demographic Information

Age 20, male
Nationality: Italian
Residence in Lebanon: Bejjeh, Mount Lebanon. 6 years
Residence Abroad: Vienna, Austria. 14 years
Occupation: Student
Familial status: Unmarried
Languages: English, German, basic French

G: What prompted your decision to move abroad?

M: My parents. Since I was a child, I moved with them.

G: Have you lived in multiple countries?

M: Only Lebanon and Austria so far.

G: Could you describe your current living arrangement; apartment, house, shared accommodation, etc.?

M: I live in an apartment in Vienna, near the city centre. It's very spacious, allows for a lot of activities, a lot of freedom. Well-connected to public transportation.

G: How does your current residence compare to the home you had in Lebanon, in a broad sense?

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M: Better connected in general—friends, school, university. Not as much nature, since our house in Lebanon was up in the mountains. It was a lot greener. We had a garden there as well and we had access to our grandfather's garden; he was growing lots of different stuff and it was right in front of our door essentially. In Vienna, the closest thing we have is the city park, which is only about a minute's walk away, but there is a difference in privacy and access.

G: What differs from your experience in Lebanon in terms of purchasing or renting, and maintenance in either case?

M: Well, I haven't purchased or rented any property, but the difference in maintenance from what I could tell was that in Lebanon, since we were right by the sea and it was also quite humid, there was a lot of rust and the paint on the walls was flaking off, so things decayed quicker—whereas in Vienna, the weather is a lot more temperate, so the main thing is old pipes needing to be replaced, that kind of stuff.

G: How do the two compare in terms of individualizing your living space?

M: I was living with my brother in a somewhat smaller room than the one I am in right now. I didn't really feel the need to spend much time indoors because there were lots of interesting things happening outside of our house; we had a forest nearby, the garden, plenty to explore. In Vienna I spend more time indoors, but that's impacted how I design my living space as well. I have lots of instruments here, paintings on the wall, etc. When I was younger, I didn't really consider that stuff. Also, if I want to go to the park here in Vienna, while it's only a minute away, it's still a small hurdle, whereas my house in Lebanon had that right on the doorstep. The park here does feel almost like an extension of home though, I go there quite regularly.

G: What aspects of socializing or sharing your space can you think of that differ?

M: In Vienna I think it's a lot easier and a lot more fluid because in Lebanon you would need a car or have access to somebody else's, like your parent's—have somebody chauffeuring you around, if you wanted to meet up with friends, most of whom live on the coast. It was pretty isolated, and the roads are not very walking-friendly. It's asphalt with a dirt path on either side basically, so you had to jump to the side if a car drove past you. It would always be a big commitment to visit or invite school friends, whereas in Vienna it is a lot easier, and it's happened to me more than once that I've met a person, befriended them, and then found out that they happen to live within 10 minutes of me. That would never happen in Lebanon. You've also got amazing public transport which is affordable. Maybe also the topography is a factor. In Bejjeh, I would often bike to this store called Valentine's. It's a gas station that sells general goods, about a five-minute drive from our house, up a steep incline. The route by bike was about 15 minutes and I could imagine that being my daily exercise if I lived there.

G: How has living abroad influenced your sense of cultural identity post living in Lebanon?

M: When I left, I was seven years old, so I wasn't a teenager yet and didn't really have the urge to go out partying and wasn't that 'in tune' with the culture around me to begin with. I don't really feel that my personality is intertwined with any of the places I've lived in.

G: Are there specific cultural elements or items from Lebanon that you appreciated?

M: The food! Lebanese food is amazing. Hummus, tabbouleh, basella, kafta. I do think that I have been influenced by the customs of hospitality.

G: How frequently have you visited Lebanon since moving abroad?

M: For seven or eight years we went every summer and then we went like every second summer maybe. We'd stay for a month or two. It was our

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whole summer experience in between school years. After that, in 2019 I think, we stopped going regularly (around the time of the protests). The last time I went was in 2022 for two weeks. Mainly it was the worsening economy that led to our visits becoming more sporadic. My father still lives in Lebanon, he works in Beirut, so we still have reason to visit. On the other hand, my two eldest siblings stopped visiting the country because they didn't really feel a sense of connection to it anymore. I think that's due to our specific situation, where they grew up in London, which is always busy, and moved to an isolated mountain village.

G: How do you maintain connections with family and friends in Lebanon?

M: Not much, really. We have a WhatsApp group for family calls, but I'm personally not big on calls. My grandparents naturally aren't very tech-savvy and also a little hard of hearing, so it's difficult to talk to them regularly.

G: How do you feel when you return to Lebanon?

M: A little nostalgic. It is the place I grew up in and it is also a beautiful country. The landscape, the fresh air. I enjoy visiting, but if I stayed for too long, I could imagine it might become a bit boring. For short periods, it can be a relief to slow down, to enjoy the change from the city. Visiting has also meant a slight sense of sadness for me; every time I do go back the country seems slightly more 'dishevelled' somehow. And while I've gained a great deal of independence in Vienna, my freedom—especially freedom of movement—in Lebanon hasn't changed, since I can't drive. If I could, I'd certainly explore, tour the country, meet new people.

G: What are aspects of your home in Lebanon that you miss?

M: The spaciousness. Our house had endless polished stone floors. The Garden. The Light—there's something different about the sunlight in Lebanon. There's just a sort of a golden glow about everything. Here in Vienna the light is a bit colder, maybe neutral. Also, the trees in Lebanon—our trees—were great for climbing.

G: Do you envision returning to Lebanon in the future and if so in what capacity?

M: Maybe for visits, but not to live in. The level of instability and corruption, bribery—that means the country simply can't function effectively. I would think a lot of things would have to change.

G: How do you think your experiences abroad will shape your future housing and living choices?

M: I want to live in Vienna. Stable housing, secure employment. My time in Austria has also made me value living in a good neighbourhood, with public transport, not needing a car to buy groceries, etc.

G: What does home mean to you?

M: Home is a place where I feel safe. Where I can be myself and unwind completely.

G: How has your definition of home evolved since leaving Lebanon?

M: I didn't really think about that too much then. Home was where my family lived, where I slept, where my toys were. Where I could draw in peace run around and play. The time I spent there and the people I spent it with. That's home for me. It's not really location-based. For example, when I go to the park here in Vienna to play basketball, on my way to the park I'm just walking over this patch of grass, over a patch of dirt, or patch of asphalt, then walking over a patch of grass again, then I get to the court and it's a reddish sort of clay court—it's a square. When I get there, with the fence around it covering three sides, it just feels like another room in my home. So, while that basketball court doesn't belong to me—it's not a place where I can just sit down in my underwear and watch a movie—it still

feels like home, because as I mentioned previously, I can just be myself. I can just be loose. So, in a sense I think I can stretch my home further now. It's no longer tied to strictly where I eat and sleep.

G: Which elements of your house in Lebanon come to mind when you think about home? What are their stories and what kind of personal significance do they hold?

M: There is a large, round supporting pillar in the middle of our home which stretched up from the ground floor to the second floor and went up to the attic and there was a circular window around it, allowing light to come in from the attic to the second floor. I remember thinking it was beautiful and mysterious as a child and I played by that pillar a lot. The kitchen table, that was our creative space. We had an L-shaped bench and then a counter on one side full of drawing tools. The glass door facing the veranda. Also, the space between my brother's bed and mine, about a meter apart, we used to play there and pretended it was a valley. It was a room within our room. Our imagination lent it a much grander sense of scale. In relation to the rest of the room, the open world, too. Each area had its own identity, so the beds, while they took up space, really gave a lot in terms of character. The edge of the carpet was our coastline, the sofa the mountains, and so on. Outside the house I had an apple tree to climb in the fields. A large eucalyptus by the driveway. The apple tree was perfect because the main branches formed a low-hanging triangle, so a little kid like me could already climb up there, and then the branches spread out at the top.

G: What sense of belonging do you feel in your home abroad?

M: My family and friends make me feel I belong here.

G: What differs here from your experience in Lebanon in terms of community involvement and familial network?

M: As a child, I was sort of brought along for the ride and asked to socialize with people I didn't know—people who were very enthusiastic about meeting me. My interactions here are now more proactive than reactive, I would say. My meeting and being introduced to people isn't so much a cultural mandate.

G: What was your experience establishing yourself abroad?

M: It wasn't very difficult, since I already spoke German fluently. My mother spoke it at home. There were some issues with understanding spoken dialect at the start. In Lebanon, I had few interactions outside of school, so when we got here, I wasn't really used to inviting friends over and didn't know one could spend so much time together!

G: How has your experience affected your perception of social structure and network in Lebanon?

M: I found the isolation not just physical, but also social, in the sense that I didn't speak the language (Arabic), or actively participate in the customs. Being socially connected here also feels like less of a necessity. *Wasta* (nepotism, clout) is an essential part of Lebanese culture. It felt like an additional layer of 'ok, we have to get along'. In Austria, it doesn't feel like people are as reliant on each other in that sense—at least not as openly.

03 – Antoine

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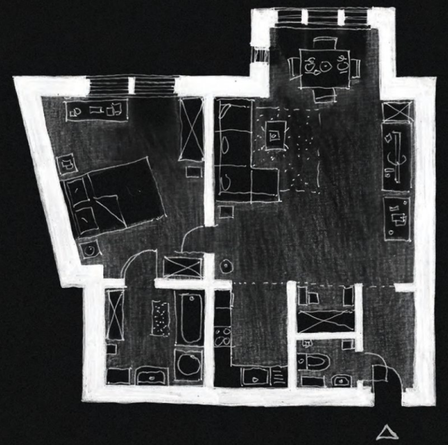
Location: Vienna, Austria
Date: 1992
Floor Area: 55 m²
Third Floor



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House for an Expat – Ethnographic Questionnaire

Interview 03 – Antoine (A)

Demographic Information

Age 27, male
Nationality: French, Lebanese
Residence in Lebanon: Bejjeh, Mount Lebanon. 18 years
Residence Abroad: Paris, France. 6 years. London, United Kingdom. 1 year. Vienna, Austria. 2 years
Occupation: Ph.D. Student
Familial status: Unmarried
Languages: English, French, Arabic, basic Spanish

G: What prompted your decision to move abroad?

A: I would say my studies. The choice of France was because I had relatives there and I was told my whole life that I was more French than Lebanese. So maybe that prompted me to go there. I think it's a matter of fitting in. While in Lebanon, I was always referred to as 'the French' whereas in France I'm just a regular guy. Also, the idea that it was more 'prestigious' to study in France.

G: Have you lived in multiple countries?

A: Lebanon, France, England and Austria.

G: Could you describe your current living arrangement; apartment, house, shared accommodation, etc.?

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A: I'm in a flat. It's well accessible in terms of transportation network, on a busy street with a tram stop 50 meters away and an underground station 10 minutes away. It's large enough for my needs, like 50 square meters.

G: How does your current residence compare to the home you had in Lebanon, in a broad sense?

M: So, it's much smaller. We have a big house in Lebanon, with a garden. On the other hand, our house is in a small village, so it's not connected in any way, whereas now I live in a city where you are connected to everything. The big difference is that here, I can get wherever I want, quite fast, whereas I had to travel at least 20 minutes by car in Lebanon.

G: What differs from your experience in Lebanon in terms of purchasing or renting, and maintenance in either case?

A: Here I rent and in Lebanon it's my parents' house. So, here, I don't really care too much about the long-term maintenance of the flat because that's the landlord's job—in Lebanon we have to care about the long-term maintenance of the house, constantly. I can just outsource that here.

G: What were the biggest aspects of maintenance in Lebanon?

A: Our big issue has always been water damage. That's the biggest problem—trying to not get water into the house and then once it's in the house, what do you do with it? It's mainly rain water. I'm not sure what the problem is, but it seems like the water on the roof doesn't fall away, instead it collects there. You have moisture too. And because we live on a mountainside there is water that stagnates behind the house and eventually soaks in. We have a retaining wall on the side of the house wall and a balcony between the two—that's where the water collects. People in Lebanon really like iron for their fences too, so you're constantly painting them, otherwise they rust. Then you have the fact that everything electrical will always suffer because of the changes in voltage (due to the inconsistent supply) and you always have to check that your electronic appliances are still intact.

G: How do the two compare in terms of individualizing your living space?

A: I would say in Lebanon you have guests more often and they will judge your house more openly than they do here. So, the house in Lebanon would be something to 'show off'—to fit in with standards. Even my room was according to my parents' standards and how I wanted them to see me. I guess the main thing were religious icons hanging on all the walls. I didn't buy any of it, but they give you that sort of stuff and say 'Oh, you should put this in your room!' And on the door of my room you can still see where, at some point—I don't remember the exact occasion—but we drew a cross with oil and the oil never really faded. At the right angle, with the light and everything, you can still see it there … Here, the place is my place, whatever I want it to be, and people won't openly judge it or me. I can have gay flags hanging on the walls—so I would say I have less pressure here to conform.

G: What aspects of socializing or sharing your space can you think of that differ?

A: Well, in Lebanon, I wouldn't have many friends over because I lived in a small village and most of my friends live in the city, the same city, so I would usually meet them and not the other way around. On the other hand, a lot of people from the village do come visit, which I'm not necessarily friends with—mostly my parents are—I mean they literally use the word *wejbet* (duties, obligations), right? You do your obligations and go visit someone, usually when they get married or when there is a funeral or someone is sick. So, you end up in these weird situations where they don't want you to be here you don't want to be here, but you still have to spend 30 minutes accepting coffee and cake and discussing topics that interest neither of you. That doesn't really happen here. I wouldn't invite someone if I didn't want their company! I think the reason is that in Lebanon, people actually keep

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records of who did what, visited whom, right? Especially when it comes to elections or stuff like that, people who do their obligations, they have better chances at being elected than others! Even for governmental positions, like MPs.

G: How has living abroad influenced your sense of cultural identity post living in Lebanon?

A: I think the biggest change I had regarding my identity was that growing up, I used to regard people who weren't Catholic conservatives as borderline 'heretics'. That's changed. I think what I learned is to see the good in other discourses apart from the one I grew up on. Since I moved just after my 18th birthday, I'm not sure those changes happened because I moved away from Lebanon, or simply because I went to university.

G: Are there specific cultural elements or items from Lebanon that you appreciated?

A: The food. If I express my Lebanese identity to people around me the main factors: the food, and then to a smaller extent the many languages, like speaking them without a distinguishable accent. Knowing Lebanese people that are successful or famous is another thing that comes to mind as being part of the culture.

G: Are there specific cultural practices or traditions from Lebanon that left a lingering impression?

A: Where I grew up, everything in the community was related to the church in some way, all the activities—an impressive amount of effort went into organizing all these events and gatherings. After the mass for the church's patron saint (St. Sergius) on the first week of October for example, everyone brings their own food and sits down together in front of the church where they've prepared tents and tables and chairs—sometimes music, or some kind of animations. Not all the way around though, you have to have room for cars after all. But I don't think people gather as often as they did. Now they have the *baladiyeh*'s (municipality) yearly dinner and other municipal events for the first time. The town hall opened in stages, right? I remember they had the big dinner outside, in front of it on the parking lot. The walls and roof were up, but no windows or doors. That was in 2018, I think. I'm not sure how far it's come now.

G: How frequently have you visited Lebanon since moving abroad?

A: Around twice a year. There's always some reason to visit more than once, mainly to check up on my family, after my mother passed last year. Up until two years ago I thought 'why not go?' when I had the time, whereas now I feel I 'need' to go.

G: How do you maintain connections with family and friends in Lebanon?

A: With family, it's a regular call—usually once a week—and yearly visits. With friends it's been more complicated. I put in a lot of efforts for a while to keep in touch, but then gradually the contact fell short and now I'd say I have one friend left whom I still actively keep in touch with. Another thing is that I'm usually there during the holidays, so not everyone has the time to spend away from family.

G: Were you part of any local communities or networks in Lebanon?

A: I was very involved in the church. The organisational body is called the *akhawiet alhabl bila danas* or just *akhawie* (fraternity/sorority of the Immaculate Conception). There was a youth group too, called something like the 'Marian Apostolic Movement'. We used to meet as the church youth group to hang out and stuff, before it was something official or really had a name. Then there was a kind of controversy when the village priest left and a lot of church-goers decided to stay at home in protest of the new priest. That basically left a void to fill, so we (the youth group) had to step in and help with the service, the choir and other tasks like decorating for Christmas

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or Easter festivities. Then that priest also got replaced and the new one decided our group needed to be incorporated in an official structure, which was the national Marian apostolic movement that he decided to implement in our village. It was a bit weird; we started doing stuff we didn't really know or understand, especially with meetings and briefings etc. that kind of removed all the 'personality' of the group.

G: How do you feel when you return to Lebanon?

A: Right now, it's a bit of a chore really. I go because my family needs me; to see that everything's alright, try to help a bit, take my dad to his medical examination, and so on. Make sure the house is in order. It used to feel more like a typical holiday. I went back during those times I had nothing else to do. For a while I was involved in the village happenings when I went back, there was a summer camp for about three weeks where young people take care of children so their parents can go to work for example. I think now my identity has shifted quite a bit and there is always that increasing pressure with questions on if I have a girlfriend, or if I'm married yet—the standards of a heterosexual relationship. That's something uncomfortable that I didn't really have to deal with when I was younger.

G: What are aspects of your home in Lebanon that you miss?

A: I have all my books there! Especially the comic books. It's also nice to have family around—to know they're okay. When you're abroad they can just lie to you and say everything's all right. Being able to see them day by day, that's something I miss. And the house itself being so big that you never run out of space. The views are incredible.

G: Do you envision returning to Lebanon in the future and if so in what capacity?

A: Long-term I don't think is ever going to happen. I plan to continue visiting family though.

G: How do you think your experiences abroad will shape your future housing and living choices?

A: The biggest thing is that I want to be able to live without a car, which is something you cannot even think of doing in Lebanon. Ideally somewhere I can either cycle or take public transport—I like being able to anticipate how much time it takes to get somewhere. Also, living in a flat that has a manageable size, that I can easily clean and maintain and being in a building where everyone is responsible.

G: What does home mean to you?

A: That's a big question. Home is where I feel comfortable, I would say. I can be who I am without thinking about the consequences of it. Somewhere I have friends around so I can have fun time if I want to, but also alone-time if I need it. Yeah, surrounded by people I can trust.

G: How has your definition of home evolved since leaving Lebanon?

A: I think the biggest thing was my support system being overdependent on my family for very long time. And then I had to come out … I had to shift my support system from family to friends. I would say if 100 percent of my support system was family before, now it's more like 50. I think it just depends on the person—what makes you feel comfortable being yourself. Put simply, as soon as you have something you want to talk about and no one to talk about it with, there's a problem.

G: Which elements of your house in Lebanon come to mind when you think about home? What are their stories and what kind of personal significance do they hold?

A: Well, it's big. The ground floor is almost entirely one big space. The entry is a big hall, maybe 4 by 15 meters, a little over 3 meters high. There's a wall on the left side that covers about a third of that and then the second large space is the representative room—the living room, with a huge sitting

area, lots of sofas and coffee tables. There's a large piano too. The floors are all some kind of marble or stone with Persian carpets everywhere. We had so many small tables to put stuff down—we didn't really need them, but there was space, so why not? I don't know what you would call the interior, maybe French classical, Louis XIV? I don't know. The attic, was where we could do anything we wanted, whatever the weather was outside. A play area that was cleaned about once a year maybe.

G: What sense of belonging do you feel in your home abroad?

A: I feel like I belong to Paris. That's where all of my friends from university are and it really does feel like we grew together, share the same values and opinions—that's the second half of my support system. We'll see if I can build something like that here in Vienna, I guess up until now circumstances got in the way more than anything. Covid, working from home. It really feels like I've just started meeting new people.

G: What differs from your experience in Lebanon in terms of community involvement and familial network?

A: So, back then it was the church and most things revolved around family. Now there's a lot of influence from university, students and connections to ecology NGOs (The Climate Fresk) I'm involved in. I'm also more in touch with the half of the family living in France

G: What sort of commute did you have?

A: For all of primary and middle school, I had to commute about 15 minutes (by car) to the next village (Maad), where my school was. In high school I went to Jbeil, so a 30-minute drive away, but then my parents didn't drive me there, so it ended up much longer. I had to take the school bus which needed an hour for the trip, picking up each individual student from their home, and wasn't synchronized to the school times—so, we'd arrive half an hour early and leave an hour after school finished. I don't know why they did it that way, but that's the way it was. That bus was very old too, from the 80s I think, so the windows were badly insulated and didn't open. In winter I would constantly catch colds and in summer it was too hot—the heat was unbearable—so we just kept the door open! We were driving along these winding mountain roads, the seats only 20 centimetres deep and without seatbelts … only the 'big kids' were allowed to sit next to the door. The driver was going as fast as he could too, under the circumstances.

G: What was your experience establishing yourself abroad?

A: It was way easier than I expected. I was a bit scared of all the administrative stuff, because I'm used to that (in Lebanon) meaning you go somewhere, spend the day there trying to find the right person to bribe—no one tells you who that is, or what the right amount of money is. But then I got to France and you could do everything online. I remember the very first things being registering for university, opening a bank account, etc. After that it was easy, anything I had to do I would just look up on the internet.

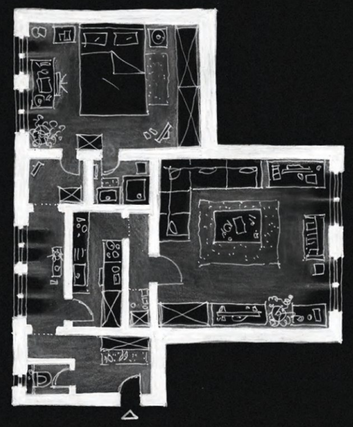
G: How has your experience affected your perception of social structure and network in Lebanon?

A: I think the one thing I still don't understand in Lebanon is politics. How do people still vote for the same politicians? I really don't get it. Back then I thought that a political party is like a team and you vote for your team, like in sports. That's something that hasn't really shifted at all, like you aren't allowed to change your mind or opinions. I think most of the decisions they (parties) make back go back to the civil war and I'm still not sure what happened, because we don't talk about it or really teach children about it in school. It feels like a problem that is generational, but also in a sense the mentality at large.

04 – Nina

1: 100

Location: Vienna, Austria
Date: 1962
Floor Area: 42 m²
Fourth Floor



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House for an Expat – Ethnographic Questionnaire

Interview 04 – Nina (N)

Demographic Information

Age 27, female
Nationality: Austrian
Residence in Lebanon: Beirut. Intermittent stay
Residence Abroad: Amman, Jordan. 6 months. Vienna, Austria
Occupation: Student
Familial status: Unmarried
Languages: English, French, German, Spanish, basic Arabic

G: Have you lived in multiple countries?

N: Yes, Jordan, Egypt and Austria.

G: Could you describe your current living arrangement; apartment, house, shared accommodation, etc.?

N: I've been living on my own in a two-bedroom apartment in the 19th district since 2021, so near greener parts, I would say, of Vienna.

G: How does your current residence compare to the home you had in Lebanon, in a broad sense?

N: My grandma's was quite central in Beirut compared to where I live in the 19th, but I'm not far away—like people think I live in a villa somewhere in the hills—no, I'm luckily in the district's centre near the main road where you have a bus station, a tram, etc. so I can make it to university in 20

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minutes. It's also different to when I lived at my mom's place (pre-2021, in Vienna)—because I would compare my mom's apartment to my grandma's apartment since it's also larger and in walking distance from the city centre. In Lebanon, one important thing was the flat had two floors and a staircase, so you enter—that's also I think a typical Lebanese thing—you take the elevator, and it stops right in front of your door. That was always something I thought was fun. The elevator opens in front of the apartment's door, you open the door and enter; on the right there's the kitchen, on the left a big living room and a balcony too and when you walk up the stairs there are three bedrooms. I think the balconies were all on top of each other, so I think it's kind of the same structure. The interior was beautiful, like traditional Lebanese but different—I'd say a combination of oriental, the tables and carpets and more traditional elements, and a more modern touch. I feel like sometimes, when you enter an Arab household, you can smell it—maybe not the food, but the type of humidifier they use, or perfumes. And you kind of know immediately that it's an Oriental household.

G: What differs from your experience in Lebanon in terms of purchasing or renting, and maintenance in either case?

N: The only issue I have in Vienna is that the apartment I rent gets way warmer than I think it should—I have the feeling the moment my apartment heats that it has like 30 degrees, so there's something wrong there. I'm on the second floor too, so not even that bad. My grandma owns an apartment in Lebanon, but she doesn't live there anymore. The last time I went was sadly in 2014, so quite a while ago. My aunt and my uncle, before he passed away, and also my grandpa, used to live there too, the three of them—my aunt still lives in Beirut. That apartment was a big one in the city centre of Beirut, near Hamra Street. Now my aunt lives in Beirut alone. I'm counting on visiting her again soon but because of the current situation I feel like that's not a good idea. My grandma, that's my Iraqi grandma, on my mother's side, also had an apartment in Beirut for a little while. She felt very comfortable there after she left Vienna some years ago. She lived for quite a while in Beirut but because of age and stuff it wasn't a good idea to leave her alone in Lebanon. The apartment is still there, we didn't sell it but I don't know what exactly is happening there now. It was also very central, like a 10-minute walk to Hamra Street. I'm not sure what the district is called, but that's where we actually used to stay. So, I used to visit my aunt, my uncle, my grandpa, but I would just go there for lunch or dinner. And we stayed at my grandma's place since she had a very big apartment.

G: What were the biggest aspects of maintenance in Lebanon?

N: I mean sometimes we didn't have electricity, but that's typical—so we'd just light candles. Another was the warm water, which took quite a while—when I showered it would be cold water for like 10 minutes. I noticed though, that people tend to say 'oh, Vienna is such a modern city', but if you are in the global south, sometimes at least, I do have the feeling that it's more 'intact'. Like windows and these kinds of things. At my grandma's place—except for electricity of course, which affects the entire city—I feel that it's way safer, like if you'd want to invest. Regarding the poorer areas … that's a question of strong inequality in countries like Lebanon, but if we're talking about a good building there, then it tends to be better than a good building here, I'd say.

G: How do the two compare in terms of individualizing your living space?

N: In Lebanon, it was a guest room for me and my sister, and we shared a bed, but I think my perception would change now considering the last time I was there, I was 17. I didn't mind sharing a room and while it was a kind of guest room, it still felt like our room when I visited. I would feel like more of a guest now—back then I was just happy that it was quite a pretty room and felt like a home. So, I wouldn't compare to a hotel room, although it had this nice, kind of decorative style. That has definitely been something I've struggled with here, but I think once I have a good job, earn enough of

money, I know I'd take my décor very seriously. I think sometimes I have this idea in my head that it's just an apartment I'm renting at the moment, because I wanted to move out. Now I've been there for over two years, and while there is always something I want to change, I also wonder if it's worth it. Yes, it's my personal space, but then I get lazy or maybe it's just an aspect of being a student.

G: What aspects of socializing or sharing your space can you think of that differ?

N: Inviting friends over is hard in this small apartment. It's also not something I could share because it's just one single small bedroom and living room, so if someone needs to sleep over after a night clubbing they can, but for gatherings I would rather go to someone else's place or go out. I just see it as the place where I chill, but it's not the beautiful apartment or that I somehow envision. In Lebanon, I sadly didn't know many people, because we only spent our summers there. It was mostly family friends but yeah, everyone always wants to meet up outside in summer. I'd chill at the Corniche with my uncle or just walk in that area, because I always thought it was super beautiful. And those typical activities you do with the family, watching movies, going to restaurants and the mall (ABC Ashrafieh). Now I think I'd do completely different things; go out to explore the city, see the nightlife—go away from this typical 'downtown Beirut'.

G: How has living abroad influenced your sense of cultural identity post living in Lebanon?

N: For a few years I had trouble, because I went to a French school here (in Vienna), and in my case I felt more French and sort of Anglophone than Austrian or Arab—and I also spoke French with my mom and English with my dad. So, I was the Arab girl that didn't really speak perfect or proper Arabic. I didn't really concern myself enough with my 'Arab identity' until around 2022 or so. Now that I'm older, I feel like I understand my culture a bit better and know who I really am. I get really mad when someone makes a racist joke or remark on Arabs—as a child and teenager I was uncomfortable but didn't react enough to racist comments. I don't know how it happened, but now it feels like it's clear that I'm Austrian and Arab. I'm more and more interested in getting closer to the culture. There's not really a barrier anymore and being Lebanese is somehow 'officially' a part of my identity now. I think it's small things that happened naturally, like listening to more Arabic music, eating more of the food. Identity is a complicated thing, but I didn't really force any of it. It's just a part of me now.

G: Are there specific cultural elements or items from Lebanon that you appreciated?

N: The food. And I do love to discuss with Lebanese people, because sometimes they just think everything was invented by them! But the culture there, just the way the people are—they say it's a 'combination of East and West' and that's also how people describe me, but somehow that always links to us being more open-minded than the other Arab countries in the Middle East. I think that you have very open-minded people in Iraq also. In Cairo, speaking from experience, there is such an alternative youth and I thought 'well, even if you don't always have the option to, for instance, drink everywhere, some of the young people here are certainly more open-minded than a lot of Westerners I know'. In Lebanon, everyone is dealing with this combination of different identities—I mean thinking about the French mandate—and still I think they're very open to getting to know other cultures and peoples.

G: Are there specific cultural practices or traditions from Lebanon that left a lingering impression?

N: I'm not religious. My family has never really been either. We have a Muslim background, but people often thought I was Christian—again for the perception of being more open-minded and those kinds of critical biases.

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We're not religious, but during Ramadan and often on the Eid we would get together as a family because it's a good occasion and has a general cultural meaning in the Arab world. I also think that if you live in in Lebanon you're more likely to know your neighbours—my grandma knew everyone in her building and she'd tell me whether she liked them or not—you just know everyone and that is something I've had in me since I was a child too, that I just find it very weird when you just don't know your neighbours, or when they hardly greet you back when you say hello. And bringing gifts when you visit people, flowers and cake, that sort of stuff; I don't feel like people do that enough here.

G: How frequently have you visited Lebanon since moving abroad?

N: The last time was in 2014 and before that every other summer. Sometimes we'd spend the summer in Italy or Spain instead, but I'd say that, when I was a child, we did go a lot to Lebanon.

G: How do you maintain connections with family and friends in Lebanon?

N: For family, we have a WhatsApp group with my aunt, and we write sometimes. We just don't see each other very much—she did come to Austria last year, in summer and that was great. Before that, I hadn't seen her since 2014. I didn't realize how fast time flies until I saw her, and it really didn't feel like we hadn't seen one another in like eight years or so. My uncle passed away in 2020 and I sadly wasn't able to see him before; to say goodbye. And with my grandma, she's been back and forth between Austria and Iraq these past few years.

G: How do you feel when you return to Lebanon?

N: The first thing I think about is big balconies and nice weather and sometimes it will get too warm, but it's not that bad—you always have the sea to cool you off. I enjoy being around the people, maybe apart from some upper-class Lebanese, who are more unfriendly. But you know, the fact that you can just ask anyone for help if you have an issue and their natural response is being helpful; there's not that uncomfortable aspect, like here (Vienna), when you ask someone for directions. I guess the way one responds is a bit different. The language is somehow a part of that too. And with my aunt, who works at the Lebanese American University (LAU) as a professor, when we walked past that campus, I was always thinking that I want to study there, because I feel like students there are so relaxed, so different, and people that managed to do an Erasmus there really enjoyed the atmosphere.

G: What are aspects of your home in Lebanon that you miss?

N: It's funny. I'd say I miss it and I do think about what it would have been like there as a student. I'd probably say that I miss being a student there then, if I had stayed. But then I didn't get to know these people—it's just seeing that life gave me the feeling of wanting to sit down with them and have a coffee. Just the way they are, the atmosphere of the campus, is something I found very attractive.

G: Do you envision returning to Lebanon in the future and if so in what capacity?

N: I do sometimes wonder if I should find an NGO there and that was somehow an idea I had, that after my MA I'd try to look into doing something there, but now I don't think it'll be any time soon with the conflict going on—although the North is not really affected. I'd want to go to different parts of Lebanon though, something related to humanitarian aid, where, say my office was in Beirut, I was based there, but then the projects were spread across the country. I'd be very interested in that, it would help me a lot in getting closer to the culture—and the same thing goes for Iraq—but there are still differences, where I would say Iraq is more conservative, more controlled, whereas Lebanon, while you don't have complete freedom, you can still find these pockets, areas with parties in the LGBT community,

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where you're not completely terrified to go. I mean you can always find ways. There are still places, as a woman, that you have to avoid, places where you have to pay special attention but can still more or less be yourself. I think that's more of a challenge in Iraq. They might have limited or hidden spots, like when I lived in Kairo I had similar experiences—Lebanon is sadly getting more conservative too, but there are still places you can go, and I think it's brave. You can get attacked at any time, but one can't really shut an LGBTIQ-friendly bar down, for example.

G: How do you think your experiences abroad will shape your future housing and living choices?

N: Now that I'm almost done with my studies it's different but seeing as a teenager how student life was there, that was something I would have wanted here—which I couldn't get. Thinking about wanting to go back, to work there, is a bit weird, but this East-West mixture and the lifestyle there is something that always comes to my mind somehow. It is something I want to experience more of, and if I don't go to Lebanon necessarily, then I'd look to find a place that is similar in that regard. Thinking of Greece or Spain, for example—still different, but this kind of beach city, where you're not just relaxing all day, although people often think that's the lifestyle. Of course, I don't speak Greek, which would be a concern of mine. I do speak Spanish, but I would still hang out with an international community, I think. I do see myself as Arab though, so living in those circles is more enticing to me.

G: What does home mean to you?

N: I think I do relate it to a city. When I'm in a new city I don't sleep well the first night, even if it's a pretty Airbnb or hotel, but I wouldn't say my bed is my home—but my city, the streets, the supermarket I like to go to, my coffee place. It's interesting, because there was a period where I really wanted to leave (Vienna), but when Covid happened, that made me appreciate it more. I think the older you get the more you understand all that you can afford in Vienna. Maybe in London I'd have a way better time, for example, and I love it there, but it's so expensive at the same time that you'd need a great job and would have to live on the outskirts, really. So now, I feel like if you find your people, things like changing environments, changing lifestyle—that solves the problem for me. In 2018, I didn't really want to stay here, but then I got engaged in youth politics, had a five-month internship at the House of the European Parliament, just opposite the Börse, and my environment expanded, and I was doing more than just studying. Now I'm no longer in that place—I'm looking for what's next, but I'd say as long as you find a group or society, or you have a passion for something, that just changes things a lot. And if it's the city you're born in, or grew up in, you're fine. I think I do want more experience abroad though, to change cities for a few years, maybe two or three, and see how that goes.

G: Which elements of your house in Lebanon come to mind when you think about home? What are their stories and what kind of personal significance do they hold?

N: That would be the balcony and the street below it, first and foremost. Every time we arrived in Beirut and the taxi would drop us off there—I still have exactly in mind what it looked like. Opposite our place, there was an empty parking lot and that, to me, signified that 'we're here now. We're home'. The street itself is inclined, so you walk slightly uphill and there's a hotel where my uncle used to stay sometimes and when you pass by that hotel there was a small square with a French bakery, a hairdresser and a newspaper stand. It might have changed, I don't know. I do remember the feeling, thinking 'we're gonna have coffee at that bakery and then me or my mom are gonna go to the hairdresser's'. So, these particular things, like down the street, there was this long road you walked down for a few minutes and you're at the Corniche (seaside promenade).

G: What sense of belonging do you feel in your home abroad?

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N: Definitely, it's temporary—this is the first place I have on my own, but if I go visit my mom's place, her apartment in the 9th district, then I feel more at home, since it's where I grew up in the near past. We did move two or three times—I don't remember exactly. It's odd, but I'd rather call that apartment home and say my place was more of an escape because I need my privacy. That's just a part of growing up and doing your own thing. It's nice under the circumstances, but you know after a few years I'm a bit fed up with the small kitchen and not having a dishwasher and every big plate taking up so much space. So, I'm almost done with my studies and with a full-time job I'd want to move into something more permanent.

G: What differs from your experience in Lebanon in terms of community involvement and familial network?

N: I had my Iraqi cousins that also came to visit my grandma. And then my dad's family, so my Lebanese side. But I guess what I liked as a child and a teenager, these huge family reunions, would be a bit exhausting in the long-term now. Here I can sort of decide if I have time to go to a big gathering, how long I want to stay etc. And I know I need my privacy, otherwise I explode, but there is something nice about these reunions too, somehow. And being in Lebanon was a part of it—it wouldn't feel the same doing like that here in Vienna.

G: What was your experience establishing yourself abroad?

N: So, in the 22nd district, that was a very international environment. I grew up there with my mom, dad, and sister, before my brother was born—there was a small cluster of houses next to each other in a big neighbourhood and many people there went to the Vienna International School (VIS) and worked at the UN. It was very, very American. We'd celebrate Halloween, like proper trick-or-treating. We mainly spoke English with the neighbours. It was very green too, near Stadlau, there was a big forest a short walk away. Where we went to school, in the 9th district, it was definitely more Austrian, but it also had a strong French influence. We went to a French school there and a lot of students and teachers lived in the area. In the 19th, where I live now—it's definitely the most Austrian—I would say the average age is higher too; it's a quieter area.

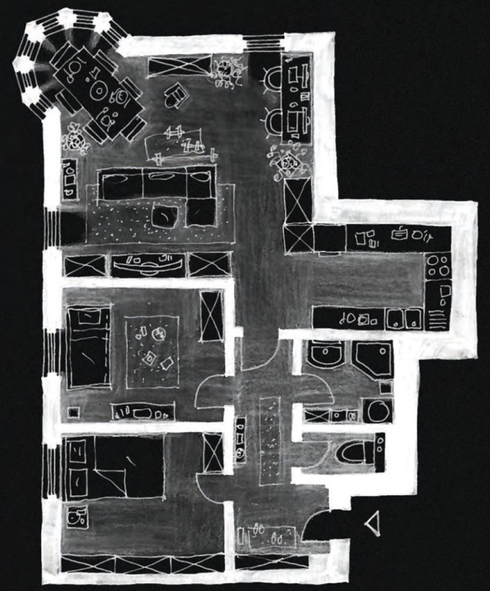
G: How has your experience affected your perception of social structure and network in Lebanon?

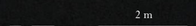
N: In general, I would say I don't need to put as much effort into it in Lebanon. But I think that in Vienna, if you find the right community you'll automatically find people like yourself, too. I think it just depends on what type of social person you are, so maybe it's not completely about one's culture or some general specific structure of that, but just finding that specific person or group you can attach to.

05 – Kaspar

1: 100

Location: Vienna, Austria
Date: 1972
Floor Area: 75 m²
Third Floor





House for an Expat – Ethnographic Questionnaire

Interview 05 – Kaspar (K)

Demographic Information

Age 31, male
Nationality: Italian
Residence in Lebanon: Bejjeh, Mount Lebanon. 8 years
Residence Abroad: London, United Kingdom. 8 years. Vienna, Austria. 15 years
Occupation: Video Game Designer
Familial status: Married, 1 child
Languages: English, French, German, basic Arabic

G: What prompted your decision to move abroad?

K: Study. I wanted opportunities in the video game development sector that were not available in Lebanon.

G: Have you lived in multiple countries?

K: Yes. England, Austria, and Lebanon.

G: Could you describe your current living arrangement; apartment, house, shared accommodation, etc.?

K: I live in an apartment, which we rent, in the 9th district. Me and my wife and our son. The apartment itself is 78 square meters and we've been living here for about four and a half years. Before that, we were living for a year in an apartment that was 42 square meters. I think the neighbourhood

05

is very family-oriented, it's very green as well. You can tell, because there are lots of bike stations everywhere and they remove parking spaces more and more. There's also many schools and kindergartens, which is why I say it's family-oriented. You also just see lots of children running about; there's six or seven different parks that all have playgrounds in them as well. So, yeah, in any direction you walk in here, you will find greenery and playgrounds for children, which we thought was very good for the future, for raising our own child.

G: How does your current residence compare to the home you had in Lebanon, in a broad sense?

K: In Lebanon, we had a massive house which was three stories tall. We had land around it; there was a garden, which we used mostly, but then there were also terraces of fields, with olive trees and vineyards, and all kinds of other stuff that my grandfather would plant. Me personally, I did not involve myself much in the field, being the video-game enthusiast, I was mostly shut in my room playing video games and reading. I did enjoy going outdoors though and having that option and the big house was, yeah, big I would say. Not necessary really, but it was nice as a child to have a lot of space to roam free. Now, as an adult, I don't think I would have that much space, unless I was insanely rich in and it wouldn't mean anything to me. I feel more comfortable here, I would say, because it's smaller, more manageable. I think if I were to live in a really big home now—I mean if there were cleaners that cleaned the whole thing for us and people taking care of all the maintenance that needed to be done, then sure—but I think for us 'two-and-a-quarter people' 80 square meters is more than enough. We'd maybe go up to 100.

G: What differs from your experience in Lebanon in terms of purchasing or renting, and maintenance in either case?

K: Well, when I was in Lebanon, I was still a minor, so I wasn't paying for anything. Here we've been renting and since we moved in four and a half years ago it's risen quite significantly due to the inflation period last year mainly. Living in Lebanon is cheaper I'm guessing, in terms of rent prices, but then also the salaries that you get there are probably also proportionately a lot less. So, another big difference is that here, everything is so stable. There's financial stability, social stability, relatively speaking, political stability. And while there's always something happening somewhere, I would say that on the political spectrum, I'm much less afraid of war breaking out here, whereas in Lebanon, you have to constantly be afraid of that. As an environment to live in and also to raise a child in, I prefer this and it's definitely a big reason why I'm still in Vienna. In terms of maintenance, being that the house was in a village up in the mountains, if you wanted any maintenance done, any sort of worker, they would have to come from far away. Having things done, you know, 'the day of', if it was something urgent, was almost never possible, as far as I remember, unless you had a cousin who knew how to do something, or an uncle or something. But if, for instance—regarding a generator, which we had one from the municipality installed, because they had a shared generator system, which they set up a couple years before I left—before that, we had our own private generator and there was no one in the village who could fix it if something went wrong. So, you just had to wait for days until someone came up to the village. In Vienna, you have 500,000 companies with electricians, or whatever you would need, plumbers, people that will come same-day if you pay them enough.

G: What were the biggest aspects of maintenance in Lebanon?

K: Well, it was a big household. We each did our own respective chores. From our side, the children's side, that wasn't many though. We had a maid who did a lot of the cleaning, my mom did most of the cooking, my dad did the garden work—I would say we helped out here and there, whenever nec-

essary, or when our parents wanted to teach us something. But we couldn't really do much ourselves around the house, which is definitely something I'm going to do differently with my son, teaching life skills.

G: How do the two compare in terms of individualizing your living space?

K: So, the only sort of individual space I had back then was my own room. Here, our interior design is mostly thanks to my wife—I myself am not much of an 'interior design person'—if I could, I'd live in a room with just a bed, a computer, and a table and that's it, but if you want to have guests you have to make the place nice, so I'm glad there's someone else to do that for me. If I had my own apartment, I would just buy everything from an Ikea or somewhere like that and then on the same day just choose all my furniture. I would say that I'm very minimalist and don't have a lot of needs. I did decorate my room in Lebanon; I had posters of video games and movies I liked. There was this sort of display cabinet in which I had some LEGO statues, model cars, some wood carving and things like that. Actually, now that I look around here (apartment in Vienna), I do collect these sorts of 'trophies', but it's more the personal story of the items rather than an aspect of the apartment's design. There are a few statues that were game character statues; some were given to me by family and friends, but there's also some 3D-printed stuff that I made myself when I was a 3D artist. Medals from triathlons and marathons I did, too. Maybe my personality is very split between sports and video games, so having those things around reminds me of projects I've completed in the past and I like to look back on those. I also imagine it'll be nice when my son grows up and asks what they are, that I can explain the story behind them.

G: What aspects of socializing or sharing your space can you think of that differ?

K: I personally didn't have many guests in Lebanon. There weren't many children my age there and the ones that were—we didn't really have many interests in common. There were some that went to this sort of 'network' it was called, like an internet café, but it was basically just for gaming. That was like the one thing I could connect with them on, but most of them were older than me too and also developed other interests like driving to other villages and going out in the evening and partying—stuff that I was too young to join. There was the *Nadi* (village sporting ground), which had yearly sports tournaments in summer where they hosted football and basketball matches, and volleyball, I think, between the villages in the surrounding area. I went to those mainly when our cousins were in the village though. We have lots of cousins—some in Lebanon, others in France, England—and whenever any one of those was there visiting extended family we would meet up. The main difference here was, first of all, public transport—that you could go anywhere by yourself, even at a young age, and just take a train and see a friend who lives on the other side of town. In Lebanon, my nearest friend was probably 30 to 40 minutes away by car and my dad would have to drive me to him and back, so I would often just sleep over at a friend's place after school instead.

G: How has living abroad influenced your sense of cultural identity post living in Lebanon?

K: In Lebanon, I was still a teenager and I just wanted to adapt and be part of, you know, the 'cool gangs' and stuff. Popularity was more important to me than it is nowadays. I think the moment I came to Vienna I saw a shift in people's behaviour—in Lebanon there is more of a 'macho' element to the culture, you could say it was a lot rougher than Vienna; there you felt a need to prove yourself, always. There was a lot of posturing—people cared about having the newest car and clothes, and showing that off, even if it meant living in a literal crap-hole. Reflecting on that showed me how little was behind it all, that it always felt fake and maybe that's a symptom of all that the country's been through—wars, hardship—that you maybe don't have much, so you 'fake it till you make it'. That sort of thing. So, grow-

ing up, I felt maybe 'half Lebanese' or less than that even. A lot of people there also just labelled me as 'the foreigner', even though I spoke Arabic and French perfectly, since I'd lived elsewhere and spoke other languages. So, when I finally came here, because I felt like no one was posturing anymore, I dropped a lot of my own act that I'd taken up to adapt in Lebanon. I felt that I could just be myself. But I think we are actually very fortunate as a family, because of our diverse cultural background and the fact that we can identify and adapt to different cultures like chameleons—we're hard to label as just one thing, so people can't tell us 'you're this or that'.

G: Are there specific cultural elements or items from Lebanon that you appreciated?

K: The food! Second thing, because I do have this nerdy side to me, is the history and mythology—the parts of Lebanon that have the temples, like Baalbek, or the old souks, the Roman garrisons in Batroun or Byblos that survived. Stuff like that.

G: Are there specific cultural practices or traditions from Lebanon that left a lingering impression?

K: Something that all of Lebanon did, or does, which I find fascinating to this day—I would say very modern, to their credit—they just combine Arabic, French and English, all three languages, and make that into their spoken language. So, if you greeted someone, they would never just say 'hi', they would say 'hi, *kifaq,* ça va?' There's no need to say all three of those things, as they mean pretty much the same thing, but they sort of let French and English slip into their language and you hear that in cities now, like in Vienna, people use English words as substitutes for things all the time—you hear kids nowadays especially using a lot of Turkish and Arabic words, because it's a trend and to some extent influenced by pop culture. But I feel that no one does it as much as Lebanese people, and they did that much earlier as well. And while in the Austrian alps, you wouldn't hear anyone say *habibi,* here in Vienna, there's just that mixing pot of cultures, whereas in Lebanon, they did that everywhere. Another thing, familial ties, which people there place a lot more value on than in Europe—that also is a reason why I feel they gather a lot more and have contact with each other more frequently. I know my old friends in Lebanon, most of them would find it unimaginable not to be in constant contact with your relatives.

G: How frequently have you visited Lebanon since moving abroad?

K: I think two times, since 2010. The last time was eight or nine years ago. In the beginning, I went more frequently before then, but stopped after we moved to Vienna. With it not being a village, having 24-hour electricity and hot water and fast internet—compared to Lebanon, where we had dial-up internet—you can imagine, I couldn't play any online games in Lebanon, but then as soon as I came here, I could explore things like the internet as much as I wanted and I very much fell down that rabbit hole. I did go back to visit my father, who still works there. After we moved, he would come visit us for Christmas and Eastern, then we'd go in the summer and I did that twice, I think. The reason I initially stopped going was my Bachelor thesis, and then I got a job which I couldn't take a vacation from at the start. One thing led to another.

G: How do you maintain connections with family and friends in Lebanon?

K: I actually only keep in touch with family, my dad mostly, and grandparents. I have a close friend who moved to Vienna as well, so I obviously am in touch with her. Other than that, I did keep in contact with a couple of people for a few years but then, since I didn't go back—and the last friend I had in Lebanon tried to get me to buy into a pyramid scheme, so yeah.

G: Were you part of any local communities or networks in Lebanon?

K: In the village, not really. There was the internet café, but I wasn't part of the village youth or anything. There wasn't anything extracurricular

either, it was school and then home, because of driving up and down the mountain and the logistics of picking everyone up and dropping them off and so on. After school, I'd usually play basketball on the school roof, or draw, or something like that.

G: What are aspects of your home in Lebanon that you miss?

K: I can imagine a lot of nostalgic feelings. Going back, I would like to see all the spots in the village that were a part of my childhood. I did spend a lot of my time in nature, wondering around—I had a mountain bike and I would go biking around with that, or walking with our dog, exploring the forest, which was more dry brush and thorns, I guess. I did see a snake, once or twice, but they never attacked me. I do remember, at night though, when I would come back from the *Nadi* tournament, or from visiting our cousins, or going to the network, if I came back late at night, I remember the electricity would just cut off, so there would be no street lights. It was pitch black and I couldn't see a thing in front of me and back then, I didn't have a phone with a flashlight, and you could hear wolves howling, or coyote's maybe. That's when I got my leg training! I would run uphill to our house, scared for my life, as fast as I could. I remember the neighbours saying that they always knew when I came home, because they could hear my heavy breathing from like 200 meters away, like a horse coming along a race track.

G: Do you envision returning to Lebanon in the future and if so in what capacity?

K: Only once, I'd say, to show my wife and son where I grew up. I want to show them the house, my room, the garden, the fields. To show them that part of myself.

G: How do you think your experiences abroad will shape your future housing and living choices?

K: I think since Vienna has been consistently voted the 'most liveable city in the world', for the past however many years, it's safe to say that we're going to stay here. My wife and I also have our families here and there are so many opportunities and the support from the welfare system. There's so much freedom of choice and I want my son to have all those opportunities.

G: What does home mean to you?

K: Home is wherever my family is; my wife and my son, my brothers and sister and mother. I like having them close by, but not necessarily in the same house, as was the case in Lebanon. I would also say feeling comfortable—that I can relax at the end of a long day of work, have all the comforts and amenities I mentioned earlier, electricity, water, etc. Not having to worry about those things.

G: How has your definition of home evolved since leaving Lebanon?

K: I think my character has stayed consistent in the sense that I'm a minimalist and don't need much to survive. I don't like it crowded and I'm always asking myself how I can reduce the clutter, remove the unnecessary.

G: Which elements of your house in Lebanon come to mind when you think about home? What are their stories and what kind of personal significance do they hold?

K: The balcony. We had a very big, nice balcony, from which we could watch the sunset every evening. We had a table there and I remember my parents having a glass of wine after a hard day's work, the warm wind blowing through the terrace. The adjacent living room, where we had a big TV and a huge cabinet full of DVDs my dad had bought. Now, with streaming, that's something I would find redundant. But yeah, we spent almost every evening watching a movie there, which I remember very fondly. Obviously, my own room, since that's where I played my video games and that's where I discovered my creativity and my passion for games, for stories.

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G: What sense of belonging do you feel in your home abroad?

K: Since we've been living here for four and a half years already, I know this apartment inside-out. I could walk around it with my eyes closed, which I do at night, when I have to feed my son when he wakes up and I don't want to open my eyes and wake up. There's the fact that our home has a certain smell too, which is a mix of all three of us.

G: What differs from your experience in Lebanon in terms of community involvement and familial network?

K: It's pretty much my inner circle here, not extended family, cousins, uncles, aunts, and large family gatherings. People do visit, but it's different, and I quite enjoy having a small circle. When I think about it, as a teenager in Lebanon, I didn't really have responsibilities, but organizing those huge gatherings and if something goes wrong, or you have some kind of technical breakdown—I couldn't image having to deal with that. As a child it was awesome, but as a grownup it would absolutely be overwhelming. Those kinds of social engagements I don't really have here in Vienna—it's not extended family you see once a year and barely know; it's people I like and actively seek out, share common interests with and so on. I have friends I met when I first moved here, at 13 or 14, whom I'm still friends with, even though they moved to different countries.

G: What sort of commute did you have?

K: A 40 to 50-minute car ride to our school in Jounieh. Sometimes, to go shopping, or visit friends, it would take a little over an hour to places like Beirut. I think it's faster now, because the roads are improved and they built shortcuts across the mountains, but back then it was longer.

G: What was your experience establishing yourself abroad?

K: It was very easy finding communities and people like me, with similar interests. Also, my diverse background helped me connect to rather different people, whether our common interest was something Lebanese, or English, etc. In Bejjeh, let's say, you had three interests to choose from: there was cars, hunting, and sports. Here you can find something and someone basically tailor-made to your specific interest.

G: How has your experience affected your perception of social structure and network in Lebanon?

K: At first, I was just relieved, happy that all these amenities we take for granted were suddenly available—it was an upgrade on so many levels. Public transport that can take you to parties, or just walking to them, and I didn't have to ask and wait for my dad to drive me somewhere for 45 minutes. So, when I was younger, Vienna was just an upgrade to me, but now that I've gotten older, or 'wiser' if you like, I think I've come to terms a bit more with the factors at play, with everything the country has gone through, but also, regrettably, the general mindset of the people that results from that.

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06 – Nathalie

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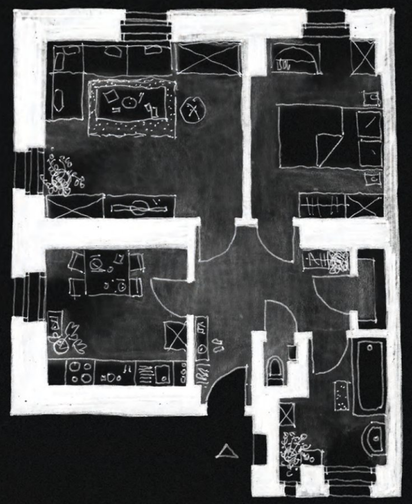
Location: Vienna, Austria
Date: 1930
Floor Area: 55 m²
Ground Floor



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House for an Expat – Ethnographic Questionnaire

Interview 06 – Nathalie (N)

Demographic Information

Age 33, female
Nationality: Austrian
Residence in Lebanon: Bejjeh, Mount Lebanon. 5 years
Residence Abroad: London, United Kingdom. 11 years. Vienna, Austria. 17 years
Occupation: Policewoman
Familial status: Engaged
Languages: English, French, German, basic Spanish

G: What prompted your decision to move abroad?

N: The war (in 2006). When the war started, we were told by the Italian embassy to prepare for evacuation. So, it wasn't much of a choice, but in hindsight a good thing. When we arrived in Vienna, I had one more year until I graduated from high school and I was planning on attending university in Austria, so staying made that easier. The decision to move to Lebanon wasn't really ours (the children's), but we weren't really opposed to it either. It was an adventure for us.

G: Have you lived in multiple countries?

N: Yes, I had a great childhood in England; good memories, although I don't remember much, because I moved to Lebanon when I was 11. I do remember outings with my family, nice parks, and lots of rain—our baby-

sitter too, and the school we went to was fun, that was a German school. After Lebanon, Austria was another kind of adventure, moving back to the city, but it also came with a lot more freedom to move around by oneself. We'd been coming here for the holidays, Christmas and summer mainly, all along, so there was a nice sense of familiarity to it.

G: Could you describe your current living arrangement; apartment, house, shared accommodation, etc.?

N: I live in an apartment, by myself. It's in the 9th district, about 56 square meters, and close to a tube station the river (Donaukanal) and a bit of nature. The rooms are divided well. I feel very comfortable here—it's a cozy apartment. I am planning on moving in with my fiancé though, so I'll be giving this apartment up, back to the city of Vienna with it being subsidized housing. As a police officer, you get these apartments quite quickly, otherwise there's a long waitlist.

G: How does your current residence compare to the home you had in Lebanon, in a broad sense?

N: We lived in a big house in Lebanon. Very big, compared to this! It was a house we built ourselves, too. We had loads of indoor and outdoor space, and it was fun, growing up there, because we each had our private area, to be alone in peace, but then also nice communal areas—the kitchen, living room, and the garden and fields were fun to play in. I was 11, so my mom and dad took care of the whole process. When I moved out on my own here, into my own apartment, that was obviously a big change. When we got to Lebanon, there was only a ground floor, which is where our grandparents lived, and we built on top of that. We erected two more stories and an attic. During construction we were all living downstairs with our grandfather—back then our grandmother was still in America—so it was just him and us. It was interesting, because the ground floor is built like a cave and winters were cold in the mountains, so we would often gather around the gas heater and read Harry Potter books together—I remember that being a good time. The electricity would be out a lot of times and we didn't have a generator back then, so it was just the heater and candles. Then, gradually, when the upstairs got far enough along, we moved in. Decorating our house was fun, basically seeing it all come together, and giving a bit of input, like what colour we wanted our rooms to be.

G: What were the biggest aspects of maintenance in Lebanon?

N: The weather. Since winters would be very wet and cold, we'd have to keep a close eye on the walls for water damage. In summer then, we had to watch out for bleaching. The temperature indoors was also important; we had to keep the blinds shut during the day, keep the rooms cool. The garden wasn't exactly 'lush' and didn't really require much maintenance, mostly just a bit of watering. My grandfather took care of the fields and my brothers sometimes helped there.

G: How do the two compare in terms of individualizing your living space?

N: Seeing as in Lebanon, it was the family house, most of the decision making came from our parents' side, but they did ask for our input, which was nice. You can't really compare that to a space which is only yours. I have no one to compromise with, so my apartment is completely by my design here in Vienna. When my family first came to Vienna, that was sort of an in-between state, since we more or less took over my grandparents' apartment and there was a three-year period before that where I lived in a sort of boarding house for girls, run by nuns, which was four floors of a house. My first room there had two beds, a wardrobe, a desk. It was quite cramped; we had a shared bathroom for the whole floor. When my mother and brothers returned to Vienna in 2010, we moved back into my grandma's apartment and she moved out then, into a smaller apartment. I chose the smallest room in the apartment for myself, being that it used to be my grandfather's study and I had an emotional connection to the *grotto*

(Italian for 'cave'), we used to call it, and it was very cozy. I could in visualize it being a great space. I would say that I have a bit of an eye for whether a space has potential or not.

G: What aspects of socializing or sharing your space can you think of that differ?

N: I did have my own room in Lebanon—obviously you watch out for the other people who live in the house with you—I mean, there's certain aspects like not being able to go to the loo with the door open; you can't really run around naked, and you have to be considerate in regard to people sleeping, etc. When we shared an apartment here, which was smaller, I think we still made it work quite well. Outside of family though, in Lebanon, we didn't really have friends come over often—I mean we were a bit, you know, out of the way. Every now and then we had friends come for a sleepover. I can do more or less whatever I want now though, so that's practical now, because I have very random shifts at work, as a police officer. I come home in the morning after night shift for example, and then I sleep during the day. That would be a bit hard to reconcile with someone else, especially if it's a smaller place and you can hear the other personal going about. My fiancé, who comes from Upper Austria, stays here from time to time and I stay at his place—either I go there when I'm off work, or he comes here when he's off, basically.

G: How has living abroad influenced your sense of cultural identity post living in Lebanon?

N: I always felt at home in Austria; apart from being born here, before we moved to London, German is our mother tongue, and I think if you're in a country where you hear the language all the time, you automatically feel more at home. We had a lot of good memories spending the holidays here with my grandparents. Being in England too, or hearing people speak with a British accent—that makes me feel a sense of home as well. Lebanon was different—the whole experience was an adventure, but it was never somewhere I felt completely at home. So, it was the only place I didn't think 'I belong here' or 'I could spend the rest of my life here'. I'd say my cultural identity is based off the languages I grew up with, and that's England and Austria. I've obviously lived here the longest, so I've come to appreciate Austria the most.

G: Are there specific cultural elements or items from Lebanon that you appreciated?

N: I like that the people are very accommodating. They love get-togethers, they love parties and having lots of food and music. It's fun seeing all your extended family. To a degree, I would say the fact that they're so proud of the country and their heritage.

G: Are there specific cultural practices or traditions from Lebanon that left a lingering impression?

N: The whole ritual aspect of big days, say weddings, funerals—especially funerals—they have a certain pomp to them. It's like they feel they have to satisfy the expectations of all of society when they do throw an occasion like that. It definitely left an impact. In my opinion though, these are rituals which are quite personal, and I think they should be done in a way where every person feels comfortable with them. That's the thing—I think protocol in Lebanon is a huge issue. In every aspect of everyday life, there's always protocol to watch out for. Always making sure you don't offend anyone—that's something that stuck with me, although not necessarily in a good way.

G: How frequently have you visited Lebanon since moving abroad?

N: The last time was in 2019. I went for three days to a wedding. Before that was in 2011. And before that, when my family was back in Lebanon

and I was here, it was obviously more frequently. I flew there every summer back then.

G: How do you maintain connections with family and friends in Lebanon?

N: For family, there's basically only my dad and my grandparents, whom we're in contact with over the phone. I keep in contact with one friend, whom I met when I was 11, so that's a very old friendship already. Everyone else over Facebook, I'd say, and not necessarily constant. Not really in contact but seeing what they're up to once in a while.

G: How do you feel when you return to Lebanon?

N: The last times I was there, it was nice seeing people I hadn't in a while. The thing is, I couldn't drive a car, so you're kind of stuck in the mountains and there's not much you can do other than rely on the person who has one. I do feel like if I went again at some point, which I'm planning on doing with my fiancé after we're married, then we would like to actually see more of the country's nature, since I feel like I haven't really explored that. When we lived there, we never really went hiking or anything, but I do think there's loads of beautiful places to see in Lebanon.

G: What are aspects of your home in Lebanon that you miss?

N: Having that view from the balcony was nice. The sunsets, having nature all around you. I'd say that's worth a lot. On the coast, the beaches and souks where fun and there's always something going on, nightlife-wise, so you don't really get bored down there. And then the food, of course. The food, actually, is amazing—I could eat Lebanese food every day.

G: Do you envision returning to Lebanon in the future and if so in what capacity?

N: I can see myself going on holidays, but that's all it is for me. The reason I can't see myself living there is quite straightforward; Lebanon is a very politically chaotic country, financially unstable—I think daily life there would be very complicated and hard work. Compare that to Austria, where the welfare system is so good, even if I lose my job and my apartment, there's still ways to get through it. You've got healthcare, a pension to live off after you stop working. Simply put, you're missing any sense of security in Lebanon.

G: How do you think your experiences abroad will shape your future housing and living choices?

N: It might be a combination of living in the city and growing older, but I've come to the conclusion that I don't want to be living in a city all my life, so my fiancé and I are planning on building a house in the future—and it'll definitely be in the middle of nowhere. We both love the countryside and self-reliance is a big issue for us. So, you can envision us in a cottage somewhere with nothing around but some chickens, a huge garden with fruit and vegetables and herbs and so on. Being as self-sustainable as possible in terms of energy too.

G: What does home mean to you?

N: It's a combination of two things for me. It's the people you live with, loving them, and the fact that it's individual, that I can put some of myself into it. I'd explain it, in a way, I put my soul into my apartment. Into the furniture, the decoration, the plants. There's thought and love behind it and that's why it feels like home to me.

G: How has your definition of home evolved since leaving Lebanon?

N: The personal aspect of home I found in my own apartment—I didn't have that before, since I was always living in someone else's home. It was home to me too, because my family was there, but it's not quite the same.

06

G: Which elements of your house in Lebanon come to mind when you think about home? What are their stories and what kind of personal significance do they hold?

N: My room being lime green is something that's very vivid, because I remember being 11 and my mom asking what colour we wanted, and my favourite colour was lime green. Everything in that room was lime green: the walls, curtains, the fluffy blanket on my bed, the lava lamp. When the sun shone through the curtains, it looked like the whole room was underwater. The little terrarium I had with turtles in it. The large bookcase in our upstairs living room with loads of really good books and our collection of VCR tapes. My brother's room, because we played video games there together, on his PlayStation 2. I remember running up and down the stairs, chasing, playing games like that. In my mind though, if I think about Lebanon, it's really the living room, where we used to have movie nights, and we had this huge cabinet full of DVDs. Sometimes I think about the summer evenings we had on the terrace, with the living room doors open and music playing inside.

G: What sense of belonging do you feel in your home abroad?

N: A big one. I feel like I've come to the place where I want to stay—not necessarily Vienna, but Austria as a country. I feel so at home here—there's so many aspects to it that I can't even name them all, but it's that combination of support and security—being able to feel like you can live in peace.

G: What differs from your experience in Lebanon in terms of community involvement and familial network?

N: We were just far away from everything in Lebanon. We had a few friends in the village, but even then, they weren't always there, since they moved down somewhere closer by the sea in winter and autumn. It took us 45 minutes to drive to school, and then you can imagine, since our father then drove on to Beirut, to work, for another 20 minutes or something, he didn't feel like driving us to extracurricular activities in the afternoon, so there weren't really any, you know, after-school clubs. So, we were basically amongst ourselves, my brothers and me, and then the occasional friends who came in summer. It was always more fun with more people around, like whenever our family from England came over. It was mind-blowing though, as a teenager moving to the city, that you could get around so easily and then, making friends at school and later university, meeting people with the same hobbies and interests as you. Building up a social circle was a lot easier.

G: What sort of commute did you have?

N: The first stretch was serpentine mountain roads, and then the motorway. The closest place where you could do stuff was probably Byblos, which I liked a lot, since it was clean and had those Phoenician vibes—lots of old buildings from thousands of years ago and still intact. So, it was a 20-minute drive there and that was the closest place where you could really do stuff. For visiting friends though, the commute was just ridiculous.

G: What was your experience establishing yourself abroad?

N: I think I adapted really quickly. Obviously, speaking German as a first language was very helpful. Also, I'm someone who actually gets along with most people, and when I came to class here I was the 'exotic person' from abroad, but not really in a bad way, so all I remember is the girls all being excited and wanting to befriend me, and the boys thinking I was cool, because I was a bit of a tomboy and played football with them and so on. So, I didn't really have trouble fitting in. It does make a huge difference though, I think, for someone moving to a new country, if they feel accepted straight away.

G: How has your experience affected your perception of social structure and network in Lebanon?

06

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N: I have noticed that a lot of people are overly friendly, maybe 'phony' is the best way to describe it. I do know a lot of Lebanese people who are very warm-hearted and genuine, but it's common for people to be friendly to someone's face—because again, protocol has to be upheld. Not being yourself because you're afraid of being condemned for it, or that you don't fit into a certain role you've been ascribed. Whether that's gender, religion, class; if you don't defer to that, then you're an outsider—that's something that harms the individuality of people, which, to me, is an important aspect of a functioning community. It is important to adapt to a place, but at the same time I do think that one's individuality shouldn't be lost on account of it. Condemning people for expressing themselves differently is a big issue. I mean, it's not perfect here (in Vienna), but I do feel that you have more freedom and less of a fear of your reputation being tarnished. Lebanon does have a lot of potential, but the people especially need to get their priorities straight. And if they didn't just hang themselves up on the fact that it has potential, but actually took steps towards meaningful change … There are deep-rooted issues, of course; corruption, the role religion plays in politics, but starting with the big problems is the only way to change something for the better—to fulfil the potential that is there.

House for an Expat – Ethnographic Questionnaire

Interview 07 – Thérèse (T)

Demographic Information

Age 59, female
Nationality: British, Lebanese
Residence in Lebanon: Achrafieh, Beirut. 23 years
Residence Abroad: London, United Kingdom. 36 years
Occupation: Garden Designer
Familial status: Married, 2 children
Languages: English, French, Arabic

G: What prompted your decision to move abroad?

T: The war. The Lebanese civil war, which started in 1975. I moved to London with my husband—he was my fiancé at the time. He moved to London in 1987 and I followed in 1988, so it was just at the end of the Civil War—we missed the last two years of it. We had graduated from university and for job reasons and security reasons, when we got an opportunity to move to London, we did.

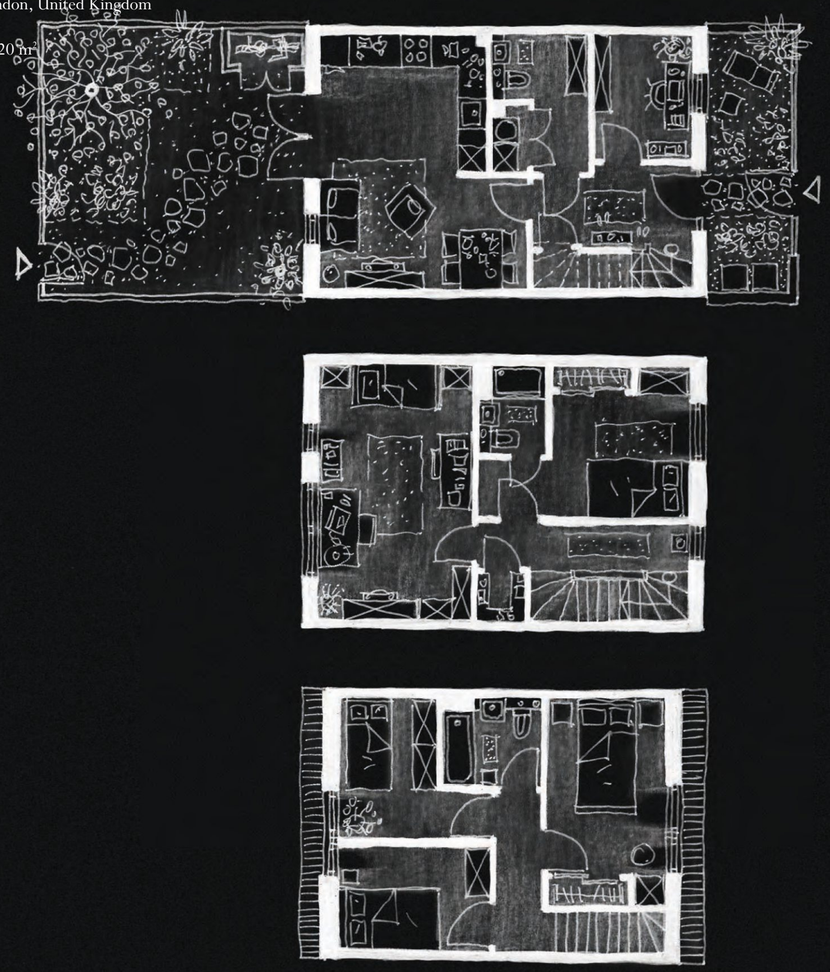
G: Could you describe your current living arrangement; apartment, house, shared accommodation, etc.?

T: It's a townhouse in Richmond, London, owned by us. The house is on three floors, with four bedrooms. We live in a very green area. I love the area we live in. It's called Ham—it's part of Richmond—just between the River Thames and Richmond Park. We have so much green space, and as

07 – Thérèse

1: 100

Location: London, United Kingdom
Date: 1978
Floor Area: 120 m²



a Garden Designer, of course, I'm very passionate about that. I've got my garden, but there are also lots of landscape gardens around that I'm involved in—management, maintenance, etc. We have a very friendly community here; it's peaceful. I run a garden design group every Saturday, so I know the community very well.

G: How does your current residence compare to the home you had in Lebanon, in a broad sense?

T: I love both residences. So, in Lebanon, although we were right in the middle of the city, we were in a relatively big house, with a garden—it was on a very private the road, because my dad was an officer in the Lebanese army, so we lived in an 'officers' residence', which is a very unusual kind of accommodation. It's a private road, so you'd only get to us with the necessary clearance, and there was security at the entrance to the road. We had two big gardens, the street in front, which we used to play tennis on, because cars wouldn't come unless announced. We really had a lot of freedom, despite the war. I adore the house. I always visit, but it changes, so I have to learn not to visit anymore, because I'd like to keep my memories of how it was. With our neighbours there, I would say we were closer, in terms of like day-to-day activity. It's a different kind of mentality here (in England), you know. It's more reserved, and you make an appointment to see each other, whereas in Lebanon, you can get a knock at the door and somebody walking in at any time. That is nice, but I think I'd like a balance between the two.

G: What differs from your experience in Lebanon in terms of purchasing or renting, and maintenance in either case?

T: It was my parent's home in Lebanon, so I wasn't responsible for any of that, whereas here obviously, it's my home—I'm responsible for it, together with my husband, so there is a lot of financial stress on keeping the home, paying the mortgage, the maintenance, etc. You definitely feel the stress of maintaining a home and keeping it in good condition.

G: What were the biggest aspects of maintenance in Lebanon?

T: Not to be hit by a bomb! To be honest—I mean that was, for the longest time, for me, the world, and a big aspect of my growing up. The biggest aspect, actually. When the house was hit, we needed to clean up after. Luckily, we only got shrapnel, you know, on the outside, and the glass broke a few times. We actually had a short set of stairs, a heavy iron staircase, by the ground floor—the property was two floors, with us on the ground floor and our very close neighbours on the upper floor—and the banister, which was super heavy, flew maybe a hundred meters, if not more, when a bomb hit it. That was really the kind of maintenance we had to do back then. I have to say also, that the ceiling was around five meters high, and we had these wooden shutters on the windows that were maybe three meters tall–you could really divide the room height in two and still make up our space here—so we couldn't really clean them or anything, and we needed real manpower to lift them off their hinges. It gets very dusty in Lebanon too, so that's something you had to do at least twice a year. But to be honest, the house itself wasn't luxurious, but the actual space, the actual size of the space—to have this added height—we did not appreciate it back then, since it was what we knew, but then coming here and being able to just touch the ceiling, you realize what luxury you had in terms of actual physical space. With the seasons in Lebanon also, we had all our carpets, which we unrolled in winter and put away in the summer again, because of the heat—same for the curtains. And we had to have clip covers on the furniture for all the dust. That whole aspect of transforming the house, where twice a year you 'dress it'—once for winter and once for summer—I do miss that. I like that big change. It's like you've moved, even though you're still in the same house. Like you went on holidays, because everything has changed around you.

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G: How do the two compare in terms of individualizing your living space?

T: I like to move my furniture around here; at the moment I'm sitting in my office, but it used to be my daughter's bedroom—she lives overseas now—so I just shifted a lot of the furniture, changed rooms around. I like to have this kind of change—my husband hates it, he doesn't like change at all—but for me, I feel I need it; moving things around, putting up wallpaper downstairs, repainting, with my sister's help, and so on. I think that because of the way we lived in Lebanon, it just gives me this uplifting experience—something new to look forward to. In winter it was cozy and nice and warm, and then in summer you open all the windows and you have this breeze coming in, and I just love that. I try to apply that here whenever I can.

G: What aspects of socializing or sharing your space can you think of that differ?

T: In Lebanon you have more people knocking at your door, like at any time of day. Here, if I say, you know, 'come in, come in!' there is always this hesitation, and 'no, I don't want to be a bother', but I think that by now, they know that when I say 'come in!', I actually mean it. If I'm busy though—that's the beauty of it—I can say I'm busy, whereas in Lebanon, you would never say that. I'd say finding that middle ground between over-socializing and being on your own is what I'd want.

G: How has living abroad influenced your sense of cultural identity post living in Lebanon?

T: I think I've become more attached to Lebanon. When we lived there, we didn't understand that the food was great, the weather was amazing, and that speaking three languages is not common at all. It's what everybody did. So, it didn't really feel, you know, exceptional back then. But then, moving here, you realize all those things you took for granted.

G: Are there specific cultural elements or items from Lebanon that you appreciated?

T: I'm a garden designer, so specifically because of the way I grew up—we grew up in the city, but we had a house in the mountains, in Moussa, near Beit ed-Dine, that was our grandparents' house—we would move for three months of the summer to this house in the mountains, and it had a huge garden, an orchard and vineyards, and I used to help my grandparents with picking the grapes, apples, pears—all types of fruits and vegetables. And then we would bring them to the market to sell. At the time, I didn't know how much this affected me, until I came back to visit. I studied agriculture at university in Lebanon—at the American University of Beirut—and when I came to London, I did my Landscape Design degree. I know now, as an adult, how much that experience affected me. Obviously, the food was an aspect, but for me personally, it was gardening, the flowers, the orchards, the vineyards. It's the Lebanese landscape that has so deeply impacted me, and that I miss. So, yes, of course the food, the music—Fairuz, I'm sure Fairuz is mentioned again and again.

G: Are there specific cultural practices or traditions from Lebanon that left a lingering impression?

T: I would say that with our Lebanese friends, we feel there's more connecting, or more effort—and it's more spontaneous. There is a large community here, but we have a close circle, I would say. We used to go to church, for a long time, where you can connect with a lot of families—a lot of people. We haven't been in a long while though, because it can be a bit too intrusive. I don't know, I think I prefer to have a direct line with God, rather than going through the church. In Lebanon, I would say, church was a lot, in the sense of tradition. On Sundays, we had to go to church—it was a must—whether we liked it or not, it was just something we had to do. It was all about meeting people and socializing, maybe more so than anything else. It was a social experience, rather than a religious one.

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G: How frequently have you visited Lebanon since moving abroad?

T: As frequently as possible. Every year, and more than once a year, especially in the last couple of years, to see my sister. Being in London, you're only four and a half hours away from Lebanon, so it's never felt like a very long trip. Obviously, finances play a large role, but sometimes you have to put family ahead of finance, so even if we're going to be squeezing ourselves, if somebody needs us in Lebanon, we will be there. And if I don't go, they come, you know? So, we'll always stay connected with each other, with my family.

G: How do you maintain connections with family and friends in Lebanon?

T: We're always trying to connect. We live—I mean, we are five siblings—we all live in different countries, so we have to make that effort. And then, with all the technology stuff, we feel we are even closer, because we can stay in touch on a daily basis; we have our family group chat, but we try to physically connect as much as possible.

G: Were you part of any local communities or networks in Lebanon?

T: I did volunteer at a charity called Help Lebanon. We used to take care of orphaned children, look after them, take them on camps in the summer and so on. My brothers and sister were all part of the Lebanese Red Cross—again, this was during the civil war—so, to help, to feel that we were contributing somehow. I just couldn't stand the sight of blood, so I found a different way to contribute. I also played volleyball a lot, and I remember going to all these different villages for volleyball tournaments.

G: How do you feel when you return to Lebanon?

T: I feel happiness and frustration, at the same time. I mean, you are happy, like immediately, as soon as you land, but then you smell the stench at the airport and you just think 'how did it get to this?' It's definitely a mix of the two—I always say it's a passionate affair. It's a love-hate relationship with Lebanon. Lebanon—the country itself—I adore, but I don't like the people who are running it, so I always try to separate those two elements. My Lebanon is the physical presence of the mountains, and it's the sea, and it's everything that has nothing to do with humans. That, for me, is my Lebanon. But then you have to live with people there.

G: What are aspects of your home in Lebanon that you miss?

T: I miss the weather the weather. I miss opening the doors and the windows, and stepping outside into the sunshine and the breeze. I miss the blue sky—that typical blue sky, the deep blue of Lebanon. I mean here, it's been grey skies for the past however many months. Whenever someone calls from Lebanon and I see a little bit of blue in the background, I always say 'please, show me the sky!' I miss the smell of spring, and the orchard, the vineyards. That doesn't exist anymore; we lost it in the war. The house is still there, the garden is still there, but it's not what I remember. I miss our setup in Beirut, like the fact that we could go out and play without my parents having to worry about us. We felt secure there, despite the times we were living through. I mean, they did worry, of course, when the bombs were falling and we had to get to the shelter.

G: Do you envision returning to Lebanon in the future and if so in what capacity?

T: We don't see ourselves retiring just yet, so we don't have a plan yet, concerning Lebanon. I do go back frequently, and I do get involved in projects related to my field, to landscaping and agriculture. I love that, and I would like to do more in that area. I was mentoring students at the Environment Academy (of the AUB), a team in Rmeich—it was relating to a forest they've lost, so regenerating the forest and creating some nice green space. I also got involved in vertical gardening with a friend of mine. Volunteering, and helping through my field—that's what I want to do. You know, just creating a greener Lebanon—that's my dream. Whenever the

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opportunity arises and I find somebody I can work with, or help, or share ideas, I would like to do that. So, if I ever return on Lebanon, it would be to focus on improving that.

G: How do you think your experiences abroad will shape your future housing and living choices?

T: Well, I need to have a garden. It's my biggest passion, and gardening is my exercise too—it makes me feel alive, to be honest. It would be a miserable day for me if I can't garden! That would certainly influence my decision, wherever I go.

G: What does home mean to you?

T: The garden is obviously also a big part of that too—I feel I'm alive when I'm in my garden—but then home also means my family, you know? I don't want to live alone—not that I don't enjoy my own company—but I want my family there too. I want to be surrounded by people I love. So, it's definitely nice having both.

G: How has your definition of home evolved since leaving Lebanon?

T: I think—having left Lebanon, and left the family behind—we had to grow up. It was tough. I was quite young when I left. I was 23 years old and coming to a strange country, having spent most of my life in the war. It was really having to adjust, and missing, big-time, the support of my family. But then I think you move on—you learn to adapt and that gives you some strength. You learn to appreciate it, to seize the moment. I think I learned both—to appreciate family more, but also what I have here. To be grateful everyone is well overseas, wherever they are, and that we are always in touch. I think I'm more grounded, more content. It's always a work in progress though, because you have to remind yourself that no place is perfect, and learn to value what you actually have. At my age, I think I've reached that stage.

G: Which elements of your house in Lebanon come to mind when you think about home? What are their stories and what kind of personal significance do they hold?

T: Sitting on the balcony and seeing both the sea and the mountains. We could see the boats to our left, in the port of Beirut, we had the extensive blue sea in front of us, and then, on the right, the mountains—the snow-capped mountains. That contrast of blue and white and a bit of green, I definitely miss. I always think of the horizon too. Here, there is nowhere I can turn and see it, but in Lebanon, on the coast, it's wherever you go! I love that blending of sky and sea. My garden in Achrafieh played a big role, but more so the garden in the village. I think a lot of time I spent there helping my grandpa, being in the fields, watering the plants. All of that—I did not know that it so strongly influenced me until much later in my life.

G: What sense of belonging do you feel in your home abroad?

T: I do feel I belong here, as long as I can go back to Lebanon, you know? I think it's funny, with us, because we come from these two cultures, we feel that you cannot have one without the other. I'm very happy here, but only in the knowledge that Lebanon is there, waiting for me.

G: What differs from your experience in Lebanon in terms of community involvement and familial network?

T: Community involvement is a big thing I learned here that we didn't have much of in Lebanon—we were centred on our family, our immediate relatives, neighbours and friends, whereas here, for example, I'm involved in our local gardening team—the Green Grafters—which has about 49 members and meets every Saturday. Our neighbourhood is all landscaped and we have our group to thank for it. It really has brought us all much closer together, actually, having presentations and talks, just being involved. It's a commitment, to volunteer and meet regularly, but it's also a pleasure, and that's something I'd like to take to Lebanon. With our familial network,

it's not as overwhelming now, where you want to step outside for a moment and it's like 'where are you going? what time are you coming back?' Even as adults, you know, there will be that kind of interference in our day-to-day life, being in such close proximity to your family, your in-laws, and so on. A good balance between independence and family—that was definitely a welcome shift, moving here.

G: What sort of commute did you have?

T: When school finished, by the end of June, we would have packed all our stuff and have a van, or a truck, to move our it all to the mountains, and then we'd settle up there for the next three months or so. And that would be our life. It was cooler up there too, so we had regular visits from neighbours—I remember one time, they showed up at midnight, because it was so hot in Beirut, and we loved it! As children, it was like 'wow, waking up at midnight'. You know, where else would this happen?

G: What was your experience establishing yourself abroad?

T: It was hard. I spoke English, but I was more fluent in French. I went to the AUB, but I didn't speak fluent English. Also, coming from the war, spending so much time running for shelter, etc. and then suddenly there was nothing to fear—it took time to get over the fact that there is no war. So, it wasn't just having to adapt to a strange country and language. It took a long time, and I still feel that, sometimes. Like, for me, lightning and thunder—that's something I can't deal with. It was hard to adjust, but finally you do, as much as possible.

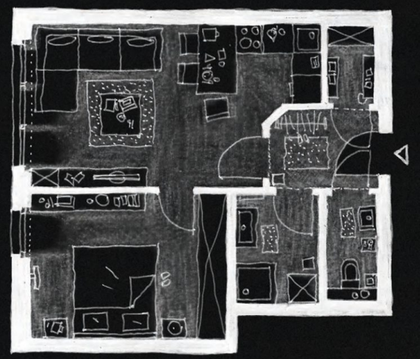
G: How has your experience affected your perception of social structure and network in Lebanon?

T: It showed me how dysfunctional things can be. It's broken, somehow. From the vantage of a place where everything functions, I see now that when we were in Lebanon, it was all we knew, so we thought everywhere else is like this too. But then, after living here, we realized that you can, in fact, be respected. You can be more than a number. There was also always this aspect of showing off—and I don't want to generalize—but it was often a factor. I know that it can be more relaxed now, more organized, and I'd like to bring some of these elements to Lebanon, to maybe help people focus on more important things in life—not how they look, or things like that. If you want to live your life, somebody told me, you have to create a cocoon for yourself and your friends, because society often won't accept you if you don't conform to those superficial expectations.

08 – Georges

1: 100

Location: Vienna, Austria
Date: 2019
Floor Area: 45 m²
Fifth Floor



House for an Expat – Ethnographic Questionnaire

Interview 08 – Georges (GB)

Demographic Information

Age 29, male
Nationality: Hungarian
Residence in Lebanon: Sahel Aalma, Jounieh. 26 years
Residence Abroad: Budapest, Hungary. 2 years, 6 months. Vienna, Austria. 6 months
Occupation: Commercial Airline Pilot
Familial status: Unmarried
Languages: English, French, Hungarian, Arabic

G: What prompted your decision to move abroad?

GB: The Lebanese situation—the politics, the corruption—I applied to Middle East Airlines at first, and everything was good up until Covid came and together with the economic crisis and everything else, they had to cancel the program. That was the first step; I had to think of an alternative. No airlines were recruiting at the time because of Covid, except Wizz Air. So, I decided to go to Hungary, to apply there, and finally got into flight school.

G: Have you lived in multiple countries?

GB: Lebanon was my home. It was where I went to school for most of my childhood, and also later university. After that, I applied for and moved to Hungary, where I studied for two and a half years. I also used to go for vacation to Hungary, like every summer before that. Then, after I finished

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flight school, I moved to Prague for a short while, to train on the big airplanes, and then I was directly based here in Vienna. And now I've started working here.

G: Could you describe your current living arrangement; apartment, house, shared accommodation, etc.?

GB: I'm renting an apartment in Floridsdorf, in the 21st district. It's a small apartment. It's for me—I mean, I'm living alone. In Hungary, I have my grandparents' house too. I would say, the neighbourhood, it's convenient. I have everything around me, in terms of shops. It's relatively safe, when you walk outside, especially at night. You have parks nearby, the river, and everything—and especially from a financial standpoint, this is good for me.

G: How does your current residence compare to the home you had in Lebanon, in a broad sense?

GB: Of course, my house in Lebanon is way bigger. I was living with my family. I have a car there, you know. All of my friends. I have a smaller apartment I'm renting here, and I don't have a car—I have one in Hungary but I can't bring it here—but it's well organized, so having public transportation on this level, it's not like in Lebanon, where you have buses—but nobody uses them, really—and taxis. Before I had a car there, before I was 18 years old, I used to get around with the taxi or with buses, but on the highway, you know, they're not the best.

G: What differs from your experience in Lebanon in terms of purchasing or renting, and maintenance in either case?

GB: Again, in Lebanon we owned the house. Here, I rent, which is a bit harder, because I'm in charge of cleaning the apartment, paying the the rent, etc. My family took care of basically everything, the upkeep, so that's something I've had to learn, but it was quite extensive (in Lebanon), whereas here it's a lot more straightforward. In Lebanon you have to provide your own electricity supply, because the electricity from the power plants, government electricity, comes for something like two hours a day. And then, you know, people have to adapt, to live a better life. We were renting electricity from private generators, you know, and my father recently installed solar panels on the roof. He also used to rent these big trucks full of water and provide drinking water for the whole building. It's just more convenient here, where you just pay the bill.

G: What were the biggest aspects of maintenance in Lebanon?

GB: The buildings may not be built in the best way, you know, structurally. Our building is good, but it's a bit old right now and it was leaking some water onto our apartment at one point—the people in the building, they don't have money to pay for this, to assist us—so, my father is paying for the renovation. You need to take care of yourself over there, and there's always something.

G: How do the two compare in terms of individualizing your living space?

GB: Back home, my mother used to furnish the house, to take care of it, to buy new things like furniture. I'm in a small apartment now and it was already furnished, basically. I have my bedroom, living room with a sofa and a little bar. There isn't really much work to do in the apartment—just buying some stuff occasionally. I mean my room (in Lebanon) is maybe as big as my apartment here—I'm exaggerating, but, of course, if you go into my room, you can understand my personality. It was my little home, I miss it. I had desk with my gaming laptop—I like gaming, so I had all the setup—headset, joysticks for aviation, flight simulation games. I liked to collect airplane models and display them all around. It was a simple room, but yeah, everything I liked, I just filled it with. Speakers, also. I like music, so I had a sound system and a CD collection, back when they used to sell these things.

G: What aspects of socializing or sharing your space can you think of that differ?

GB: I mean, living with family, of course, I was raised with the mentality to 'stay with the family'. Right now, of course, I can't, because they're all in Lebanon. But I actually don't like the idea of sharing an apartment with another colleague or something like that. I like my privacy, and that's the type of apartment I was looking for when I moved here, which was actually hard to find. I enjoy the social aspects of my life, of course—friends visiting, and going to visit them—but living alone, I enjoy that sense of privacy and I want to keep it that way, for now.

G: How has living abroad influenced your sense of cultural identity post living in Lebanon?

GB: It has, in the sense that living alone will definitely help you mature, you know? You have to take care of things, keep the apartment functioning, cleaning, cooking, plus working. At the same time, you don't have the support of your family members around you, so if they're not there it's a bit harder. I think these things, also the loneliness you can experience, made me a little bit stronger. I do still miss home a lot, but I can handle it now. It's a good experience, I would say, for anyone. I lived my whole life around family and friends, in Lebanon, so I had to build up my own thing over here, in a sense.

G: Are there specific cultural elements or items from Lebanon that you appreciated?

GB: Yes, family, first of all, and the kind of hospitality that people in Lebanon have. I mean, if you go on the street, people will offer you coffee—everyone knows everyone—people are, I think, less cold than here. I would call it 'European-minded', which is not a problem, of course, and I can understand that it's just a different kind of mentality, but I definitely miss the hospitality of people in Lebanon. The openness. Also, the nightlife. I'm not just talking about partying, but for example if you go out at one or two o'clock at night, it's still busy—the shops, the restaurants, etc. are open, and people are always out.

G: Are there specific cultural practices or traditions from Lebanon that left a lingering impression?

GB: Well, in Lebanon, for example, when you greet someone, you kiss them three times on the cheek. I think it's two here, so that's something people find confusing sometimes. People are also more religious; they practice it more. I used to go to church, as well, and sometimes I go here, with the family. I like to keep these kinds of traditions—I think they're a positive thing.

G: How frequently have you visited Lebanon since moving abroad?

GB: Since moving here, I was there once in December, for two weeks. Now, I'll be going in June, for a week.

G: How do you maintain connections with family and friends in Lebanon?

GB: On the phone; video calls. Social media with friends—Facebook. I'm in touch a lot. I talk with them almost on a daily basis—my father, my sister, my cousins, everyone. We have a group, and we keep each other updated. I mean, after the crisis and everything, everyone left. Most of them left—especially the younger generation, like me—because they didn't find work. The situation is bad. More than half of my classmates from university and school are now abroad. It's a bit sad, but what can we do? I have four friends working and studying in Paris, whom I went to visit just two weeks ago. My father has three sisters, so I have six cousins, and some of them are in Madrid, some in Los Angeles, and some, as far as I remember, in France. I don't know what they call it—like the technical term—but there are more Lebanese people living outside Lebanon then inside.

G: Were you part of any local communities or networks in Lebanon?

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GB: I was in the Lebanese scouts for like six or seven years. It was good—and then also, I was training. I did martial arts—boxing, kickboxing, basically—and I was on the national team of kickboxing, and I won several championships. I did that for 10 years maybe. We used to travel to a lot of places for the competitions. There are some good Lebanese boxers, but there's no money or support to go outside and play. With the scouts, it was meeting new friends, going every Saturday, and we used to have these local gatherings where we did activities. We went to some nice places in Lebanon—to the mountains, especially. That was the best part, camping in summer. It was amazing; we'd stay in the forest for two weeks and, you know, bring everything we needed with us. We'd build our own shelter from timber and so on. It was a very nice experience.

G: How do you feel when you return to Lebanon?

GB: I feel happy to see the family, and nostalgic, of course. It's always a nice moment—going back, being there—even though the country's messed up, it was my home, my childhood.

G: What are aspects of your home in Lebanon that you miss?

GB: I miss the space; the fact that it was so big, because we have three storeys—one for us, one for my aunt, and one for my grandparents. I liked that, that every generation, everyone has a floor to themselves. I liked that I could I go down and see them whenever. I also miss the view I had from my room onto the seaside and the port. I drove most places—you can't really walk around in the area, because you don't really have organized sidewalks like here in Europe. We used to play outside a lot though, when we were kids.

G: Do you envision returning to Lebanon in the future and if so in what capacity?

GB: Right now, I'm not thinking about it, because of the experience I had with flight school. I mean, if anything happens—and we know that something will always happen—it can mess up your work, your life, and everything you built up—especially in aviation. I am thinking of going back, but with the lack of stability, right now, I don't have any plans to return, other than visiting, of course.

G: How do you think your experiences abroad will shape your future housing and living choices?

GB: I have plans to buy a house at some point, because I feel I'm spending a lot of money on renting, and, of course, I would like a bigger space, maybe in a nicer environment. But I need money for that, so I'm waiting for a promotion, or until I can put enough money aside—then start thinking about moving into a bigger place, buying, and maybe even somewhere other than Vienna.

G: What does home mean to you?

GB: Maybe it's a bit of a cliché, but home is where family is. Wherever you are. I mean even here, I sometimes feel lonely—you don't have anyone around—but when my father came to visit recently, it felt like home again. I didn't feel anymore, you know, that homesickness. I would say family and friends—that's home. If you have people that love you and support you, you can create a home basically anywhere.

G: Which elements of your house in Lebanon come to mind when you think about home? What are their stories and what kind of personal significance do they hold?

GB: When contemplating the concept of home, I'm reminded of Sunday gatherings we had with my extended family—it was a cherished tradition. We held these weekly reunions at my family's residence, where we would congregate for lunch and spend quality time together. I found it delightful.

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My home there provokes a sense of security in me—a profound one—and the care that family can provide, which I often need, or yearn for, you could say. Our spacious living room is particularly memorable, in my grandparent's apartment. It served as this central meeting place for significant family occasions like Christmas and New Year's Eve.

G: What sense of belonging do you feel in your home abroad?

GB: It's definitely a transitory apartment. For now, it's convenient for me, especially because I live near relatives of mine. I might stay in Vienna for four or five years, I think, but I will change apartments at some point—an upgrade.

G: What differs from your experience in Lebanon in terms of community involvement and familial network?

GB: Family ties are stronger, I would say. If you have a problem, any problem—paperwork, or anything like that—for example, you have a problem with your car, here, you have to rely on yourself, whereas there, you always know people that can help you. Maybe, if you're from here, and you have family here, you'd say the same—I don't know. For me, that's the difference I felt. If you know someone that knows someone in Lebanon, it's easier.

G: What sort of commute did you have?

GB: Visiting Lebanon, you have to go by plane, and, of course, there's no direct flights. I'd just take the bus or train to Hungary, to visit my grandparents, which wouldn't be that long.

G: What was your experience establishing yourself abroad?

GB: It was very hard to find an apartment. My friends actually helped me, from Lebanon, searching for one, and one of them found it for me. When I came here, I was staying at the airport, at the hotel, for a month, which the company provided for us. After that, I had to find something, so it was during that time my friends and I were looking. The culture here is a bit different—maybe the one thing I found annoying is that some people here, if you don't speak German, can be unfriendly, and even though you both speak English, they won't answer you—that's something I experienced a few times. On the other hand, there are very friendly, helpful people here too, but you can't really compare it to Lebanon, where even if you're in foreigner and you don't speak any Arabic, they greet you like crazy. It was definitely easier, coming from Hungary. The culture, the way people drive, public transportation, and things like that.

G: How has your experience affected your perception of social structure and network in Lebanon?

GB: I can only say that, generally, from what I've seen in Europe, people in Lebanon are more willing to help you in everyday life. It makes sense, since you cannot rely on the government, whereas here, if you pay your taxes, you do everything right, they will give you everything. In a way, Lebanese people are more self-reliant, and rely on neighbours and friends more, to help each other out. Here, all your basic needs are covered, so maybe that's why people don't rely on each other that much. Everyone is kind of living his own life, I would say. I think we should be grateful though, to the countries that accept us, and welcome expats, giving us a chance where our government failed us and everything, so I'm really grateful to be here and I can accommodate the minor grievances that come with it.

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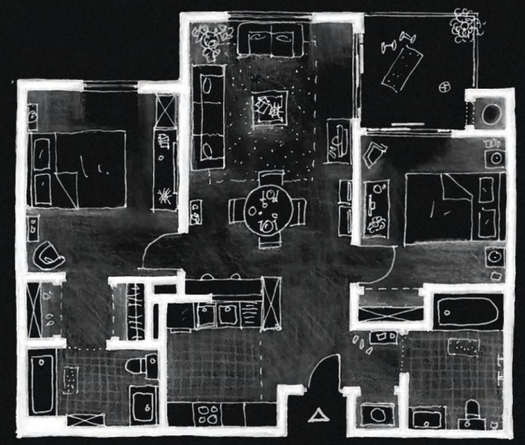
09 – Rania

1: 100

Location: Dublin, California
Date: 1986
Floor Area: 80 m²
First Floor



House for an Expat – Ethnographic Questionnaire

Interview 09 – Rania (R)

Demographic Information

Age 51, female
Nationality: American, Lebanese
Residence in Lebanon: Furn el Chebbak, Beirut. 16 years
Residence Abroad: California (various cities), USA. 35 years
Occupation: Senior Manager for Design Quality
Familial status: Married, 1 child
Languages: English, French, Arabic

G: What prompted your decision to move abroad?

R: It wasn't my decision. We had no intention of going abroad—it just kind of happened due to circumstances. We were in Europe at the time, attending my brother's wedding, and the situation in Lebanon was really bad, so we decided to just fly over to the US, to visit my mother's family, and when we arrived, we just decided to stay! The move was very traumatic, because it wasn't planned. I mean, we arrived, I think, with two suitcases, and we didn't really say goodbye to anyone with the intention of, you know, moving to another country; I didn't really get to see my friends before the trip. There were a couple of incidents during the trip as well. I mean, it just seems like we never got closure on it, right? If you're leaving with the intention of moving abroad, you definitely take your time, you say your goodbyes, you make peace with it—but this was, well, completely unplanned.

G: Have you lived in multiple countries?

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R: Just Lebanon and the US. When we first came here, we lived with our relatives in a suburb of San Francisco—I only lived there for a couple of years, while I was going to high school—but then I moved to another city, about an hour and a half north, called Davis, to go to college. After I graduated, like five years later, I moved back to the 'Bay Area', as we call it. That was another city, Belmont, where my parents moved also. We all moved into an apartment and stayed there together up until my parents retired and went back to Lebanon. After that, I bought my place here in Dublin, where I've been since 2003.

G: Could you describe your current living arrangement; apartment, house, shared accommodation, etc.?

R: It's called a condo here, but it's like an apartment house. It's a two-bedroom, two-bathroom, second floor unit with a kitchen, living room, dining room, and we have a detached garage too. It's part of a complex, each building has eight units—it has a nice density, I would say—not like apartments in the Beirut area, where you have six or seven storey complexes and it's a lot denser—I mean, this is a suburb, so there's a lot of space around each building, and there are lots of green spaces and hiking trails outside, and things like that.

G: How does your current residence compare to the home you had in Lebanon, in a broad sense?

R: Size-wise, it's very similar probably to our apartment in Beirut—but obviously very different to our place in Bejjeh, you know, the house in the mountains that we used to go to in the summer. I am used to this kind of space though, but of course, like I said, Beirut is really, really dense. This is 'suburb living'—there's a lot of open spaces. There's green all around us and hiking trails, and we're not far from San Francisco, which is the closest big city to us—it's about 35 minutes away. So, Beirut was a *city* city, you know. Obviously, that's a different kind of living. In Beirut, I used to walk everywhere. I used to walk to school; we used to walk to go get our groceries—here, you have to take your car. I mean, you could potentially walk, but it would take you 40-45 minutes to get anywhere. Right now, I like this kind of living. I don't want to say it's 'countryside', but it almost has that feeling.

G: What differs from your experience in Lebanon in terms of purchasing or renting, and maintenance in either case?

R: My parents were the ones in charge of that sort of stuff in Beirut, of course. Our apartment had rent control—they had rented that place back in the 60s—so they had very little rent to pay. And then the house in Bejjeh, they owned. In Beirut, the apartment was in OK shape, and it was mainly about taking care of the interior—painting walls, doors, etc. I remember painting—I think my parents put in wallpaper at some point, so then we stopped painting the walls. But then—like the doors—I remember helping my mom paint the doors once. We made little improvements wherever we could. I think, when I was a kid, we didn't even have a water heater. They installed one when I was really young, but it was this water heater that burned some sort of firewood material, like brown-ish blocks. When I was 11, I think, we got an actual electric water heater. Before that, we were just heating water on the stovetop. We also got an electric generator—this was in Beirut—everyone had to have one of those, otherwise you didn't get electricity. There was very little maintenance to do in Bejjeh, almost nothing—just minor improvements here and there. In the US, it's quite different. I mean, we really have to do maintenance on our apartment house constantly, or it'll just fall apart. It's different—the building material is different—the way we build is more 'short-term', I guess, than in Lebanon. Most of these condos are built out of wood, not blocks like in Lebanon. There's a lot of upkeep you have to do, and especially with appliances, because—at least for me—I have a lot more appliances here than we did in Lebanon. Because we live in a condo though, the homeowners' association

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takes care of all the outside stuff—you pay a monthly fee for them to take care of the roofing, the outside walls, clearing rain gutters, etc.

G: What were the biggest aspects of maintenance in Lebanon?

R: In Bejjeh, the land was used for planting, and my father did a lot of that. I did support a little bit, but basically, he had to work the land every year—you know, to plough the earth, turn the soil. Our soil over there has a lot of stone mixed in with it—big stones, that every year, it seemed to take him forever to pick out and clear the field of—and every year, they would just come back. There were vegetables and fruit trees, which needed pruning every year. The weather in Bejjeh is really rough too. Especially in winter, you sometimes had garden walls that collapsed, and you had to rebuild them—we had these terraced gardens—and I don't think they used cement to fill the gaps in between those walls. They were built purely by the weight, or pressure, of stacking stones. We didn't have fencing around our land at the time either—that's something my brother did later. I remember, as a kid, we just loved to stand right on top of that edge onto the road, since there's this gradual height difference from the road going downhill. We'd jump the lower parts too. It wasn't really a safety concern for us at the time, we just stayed away from the edge. Water seepage was another big issue with a lot of the houses—getting in through the roof, and the finish on the walls peeling off.

G: How do the two compare in terms of individualizing your living space?

R: In Bejjeh, of course, you had a lot of opportunity to individualize it, because it's a standalone, single-family home. It could be whatever you want. Here in our condo, even though we own it, you are very limited by what you can do with the exterior. The interior itself, apart from furnishing and decoration, is also pretty much predetermined, right? You could add walls, but moving or removing them probably wouldn't be allowed for structural reasons.

G: What aspects of socializing or sharing your space can you think of that differ?

R: I don't know if that has to do with the space itself, or just us and how we live our lives. In Lebanon, we had much more socializing happening—whether that was in our apartment in Beirut or in the house in Bejjeh, we always had people visiting. And they don't need a reason to visit, really. I mean, visiting is just part of the culture, right? It's not just around the holidays either—obviously, you get a lot more around that time—but it's almost like you have this schedule. I remember when I was kid, we had the weekends, where we would go and visit my dad's uncle, then his aunt, then my other aunts, and so on. That was a very integral part of social life. Here, we have a lot less of that. Of course, I have relatives coming to visit me too, but it's rare. I'm not sure if it's because of distance also, because people do live far apart. My uncle, for example, lives like an hour away, and my cousins too. My husband's family—his parents, his sisters—live at least an hour away, so it's not easy. As far as socializing with friends, I feel like often, it's easier to just meet at a restaurant or coffee shop. I think the issue is one of time too. Typically, when you invite people over, you have to really prepare for them—get the house ready and organized, clean, cook, etc. So, people find it much easier to just say 'oh, lets meet at this or that restaurant'. Again, it probably has to do also with where I am in my life. I mean, it's very busy for us right now, with the kid especially. Our house is currently always a mess! It's just much easier to meet outside, rather than here. We have invited people over multiple times for our daughter to have her friends over for play dates—and they come with their parents—it's always nice to have a chat and some space for adult conversations.

G: How has living abroad influenced your sense of cultural identity post living in Lebanon?

R: I mean there are a lot of things that haven't changed in me. Obviously, I identify as being Lebanese, but also American, so there are many things that

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I kept, from my Lebanese identity—a lot of the traditions like religious, or even social ones. Things like cooking, for example. I cook a lot of Lebanese food. The religious traditions, we're still practicing, although it's kind of hard here—you know, in this country, there are so many different religions. Typically, religious holidays don't feel the same as in Lebanon. It's so unified there, at least in our area. When there's a holiday, you can feel that really everyone is celebrating. As far as my American identity, I definitely adapted to some of the cultural aspects they have—but again, there's not like one culture, because it is a country of so many different immigrants, from so many different places. So, there are lots of traditions—like just recently, we had the Saint Patrick's Day celebration—which I think that in Ireland even, they don't celebrate as much as in the US—and we live in Dublin, right? So, the people who first settled here were of Irish descent, and we have a proper parade, and a carnival, amusement rides and everything. There are so many festivals around the area—Greek ones, and German ones, like the Christmas market. Participating in all of these different events is something we do every year. Sports are another big thing here in the US, like college football, basketball—I mean, a lot of people do watch parties, and they're really into that. I just never got into it because sports, in general, even back in Lebanon, I never watched much. Maybe the world cup and things like that.

G: Are there specific cultural elements or items from Lebanon that you appreciated?

R: I liked the sense of community—that was really nice. But again, Lebanon is very homogeneous in that regard, and you're all celebrating the same things, depending on the area you live in, which kind of creates that sense of community and belonging. We kind of carried that over a little bit, because we have a Lebanese church here, and they have activities and get-togethers, and on Sundays, for mass, it does kind of feel similar to back home. At the same time, I do have other communities I feel I'm a part of—you know, you have your professional community, that you develop through your work, your job—there's my daughter's daycare group. As for physical items, there are small things I kept from when I was a kid. I had these little jewellery things that I got for my First Communion—a little ring, and then a necklace with my name spelled out. Those things are more for the sake of nostalgia, you know? I keep them with me, and I want to give them to my daughter at some point. I already gave her one, and she's really happy with it. It reminds me of my childhood and, of course, it's a good conversation starter. When I give her these things, or I show them to her, I can talk to her about my own childhood, which is nice.

G: Are there specific cultural practices or traditions from Lebanon that left a lingering impression?

R: I remember something from my childhood, but it's a very specific thing. In the summers, I remember in August—and this is tied to religion again—we had *Eid al Saydeh* (Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary), and we would wake up really early in the morning—and the night before, you're supposed to boil eggs and potatoes and mash them together with a little bit of sumac, and rock salt on top, and then you wake up the next day, like at four o'clock in the morning, and me and my cousins used to walk together to *Saydet al Mazraa* (Our Lady of the Farm, a chapel) and take our Tupperware with us. That was our lunch for the day. We'd hang out there the whole day—we used to play there with other kids. It was just kids—there were no adults—and we had a lot of fun. It was, you know, freedom. Independence. I loved this tradition. I also liked the volleyball tournaments, where my uncle or cousin used to drive us from town to town to watch the games. Bu then also, when we were coming back down to Beirut at the end of summer, at the beginning of the school year—that whole ritual of preparation, going to the school to get your uniforms and your books. We used to basically rent the books from the school, and you had to return them at the end of the school year, so you put on those plastic

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covers to protect them. I used to look forward to it. It was fun. Hopefully now, with my daughter, we can create new kinds of traditions that they will remember.

G: How frequently have you visited Lebanon since moving abroad?

R: I think maybe seven times or so, always for a short period, like a few weeks or so. I usually go in the summer, or around Christmas time or Easter.

G: How do you maintain connections with family and friends in Lebanon?

R: Phone calls, WhatsApp—you know, video calls and messaging. Just seeing updates from people. For immediate family, it's definitely weekly, and for extended family, I look at Facebook every day see what they're up to.

G: Were you part of any local communities or networks in Lebanon?

R: Back there, I was part of girl scouts, when I was in school. That's the only one I remember.

G: How do you feel when you return to Lebanon?

R: It's a very nice feeling. It's a happy feeling. It's a little bit hard to describe—I've mentioned this to my husband too—the second you touch down, you land at the airport, in Beirut, there's this kind of energy which is really different. You sense that difference, coming from the US—I never feel that coming here, but, I mean, it could just be because my connection to Lebanon is deeper—I don't know. But yeah, it just feels contagious, you know? The people themselves are just more energetic. I don't know how to describe it, but the vibrations around them, the sense of urgency—there's a lot of movement and energy … and there's action—a lot of action. It feels more alive, somehow. I'm used to people being more, I'd say, subdued. There, it's no limits, no boundaries, no laws. Because it's your childhood, it has an influence on you, and just becomes a part of you—and then when you're away from it, you feel like something is missing. When you go back, then you just feel that strong connection to your physical surroundings.

G: What are aspects of your home in Lebanon that you miss?

R: Especially the need to be in nature. In Bejjeh, nature is right there, and when I was a kid, we used to play a lot, and we were always outside. We probably only went back home to eat for lunch, and then at night just to take a bath and go to sleep. You develop a very strong connection to nature—I think that makes you feel very … well-rooted. I don't know how to describe it, but I don't really have that here, because I just don't have that opportunity. We do have hiking trails and we do hike often, but it's a bit different. That closeness to nature, definitely. As far as the people, I do miss that small town environment, and that you just walk through the village to a family shop, and you know all the neighbours. They see you, and then they say 'hi! stop by for a coffee!' It's just nice to feel that people see you, right? You're much more seen than somewhere like here, because people are from everywhere and there's a lot of them too. When you're walking through town, you don't get that same connection, the eye contact, or just the feeling of someone noticing you, specifically talking to you, and asking about you. People here are nice, of course—it's not that they won't say hello, but it's quite different to someone actually looking at you, trying to figure out 'who is she?' and then 'oh yeah, I know!' That's a nice feeling.

G: Do you envision returning to Lebanon in the future and if so in what capacity?

R: At this point, I am not envisioning it, unless something drastically changes in my situation. And, of course, there's the country's own situation. I mean, for me, if I had enough money, and didn't have to rely on finding a job in Lebanon to support myself, I would return probably—I wouldn't mind that at all. But, being a family, it's hard, because of my husband and our daughter—most importantly our daughter's future—what opportunities

lay ahead for her. It is also kind of sad, because I really want her to learn about the country and the people, because it's a part of who I am, so it would be nice for her to get to know that. Who knows. If the political and economic situation does turn around in the future, and we're financially able to handle it, maybe. I'm not going to discount it or close the door on the idea, but not at this point in time.

G: How do you think your experiences abroad will shape your future housing and living choices?

R: I mean, we can't live in a condo for the rest of our lives. I think, already, we've outgrown the space—especially with a little kid and all her stuff. And here in the US, you definitely want to buy a single-family home, right? They call it a 'stand-alone home', with a lot, or even green space—a front yard and a backyard. We currently have a balcony, but a backyard would be nice, because my daughter always keeps telling me 'I wish I had a swing set!' So, I keep telling her 'Yeah, we're gonna buy a house soon, and we'll make sure you have a swing in the backyard'. It would also be nice to have somewhere I can even do a little bit of gardening; have an herb garden, some fruit trees. That was part of my past, so it would be a nice to have that also, here in the US.

G: What does home mean to you?

R: It's a place where you feel safe and secure—where you feel warmth and love, I guess. That's what home means to me. Somewhere you can be you, can relax. It's a place where you can rejuvenate, reset, get your energy back. Having said that, it's funny, but that concept is sort of upside-down now, because we both work remotely. It used to be that you go out into the world, you leave your house, you go to work, and then, after a long day of work, you come back really late, and you're supposed to relax and reset for the next one. But this concept is really blurred for us right now because we work from home—I have been since right after the pandemic, when I started this new job in December of 2020. I did, on the other hand, commute for over an hour each way to my job, and now I have that time back—but not really. We have a daughter too, so that factors in. But there is no separation of your time at work versus when it's your personal time. My desk is actually on the dining room table, so we've lost that space to work a bit. Maybe it'll be nice to work remotely if we get a bigger home, and maybe then we'll get a separate space, like an office or something, that we can close the door on at the end of the day.

G: How has your definition of home evolved since leaving Lebanon?

R: Maybe my definition hasn't changed so much—or what it feels like being at home, at least, has changed, but not the definition itself. To me, it's always been a place of safety, security, and warmth. Of course, now, I can verbalize what I think of home, while as a kid I don't think I could have—you know, in Lebanon, sometimes home felt safe and secure, but other times, living through a war—but that feeling of warmth from family and friends was always there. Now I don't have my original family around me, but I have my own instead, so the warmth part comes from my husband and daughter, and I need to provide my daughter with those same things—she needs to feel safe, secure.

G: Which elements of your house in Lebanon come to mind when you think about home? What are their stories and what kind of personal significance do they hold?

R: In Beirut, there were like little areas, where I just considered them to be mine. My room, which, when my brother was still at home—before he left for college—we shared, and it was these two beds—really old, clunky beds with those metal springs and the head- and footboards out of metal. I remember our old closet in which we had this plastic racetrack set with little cars that belonged to my brother—and then, of course, I inherited his toys. We also inherited a stereo system from my uncle, once he left for

America, and we put it in the dining room. I remember spending so much time on it—because we had the headphones, I could listen to it with my parents watching the TV—I could just listen to all this music on my own. It was some really nice time I spent there, just listening to music. I was in my own space. And in Bejjeh, again, I just think of being out in nature. That's the first thing that comes to mind—I mean, the house itself was so small, but everything else was big. I remember one thing, a good memory, was just playing with my cousins—where the kitchen is now, that was actually outside back then—a tiled floor in front of the house—and we used to play this game where you throw a stone in the air and then try to pick up a couple of stones on the floor with your hand before catching the one you threw again. I forget what we called it. We used to sit there and play cards too, and backgammon. In the summer, it was just nice to sit on the cool tile floor, when it was really hot.

G: What sense of belonging do you feel in your home abroad?

R: You feel belonging in a place where you feel like you're respected and can trust people—that you can be who you are, you know, without people laying judgement on you. I think in the US—I mean, I feel that in my community and in professional circles, there's no judgement in general—maybe people just don't show it, but in Lebanon, it's much more obvious. People are judgmental and it's sometimes hard to be yourself. In the US, it doesn't matter so much what your background is, or where you come from, or the type of person you are, or what you believe in. Everyone is sort of 'valuable' for their unique experiences and backgrounds. Again, Lebanon can be kind of homogeneous in that regard, as far as like people's beliefs and societal norms. I do feel accepted and valued for my individuality here—and respect is a big one, also. Over there, there's just no respect for people, for individuals. Obviously, the government doesn't respect the people, but then people between each other can be the same. It's how you act towards each other.

G: What differs from your experience in Lebanon in terms of community involvement and familial network?

R: In Lebanon, really, involvement is very set for you, right? If you come from a small town, it's that community, or if it's Beirut, it'll be your neighbours. It's very limited, I think. You have a lot more opportunity here, to do various things, and to be involved in so many different ways that sometimes it's hard to decide even. You're almost spoiled for choice. Back in Lebanon, lot of our activities happened in the context of family, whether that was celebrating holidays, or visiting your uncles and cousins—it was this constant. Here, of course, I don't see my extended family with that kind of frequency.

G: What sort of commute did you have?

R: When I was kid, it was about one hour and fifteen minutes, I think. It was much easier going up to Bejjeh since you don't run into traffic. Coming back into Beirut was a nightmare—sometimes it took up to two to three hours on the coastal highway. It was an interesting experience though, because I remember we had to stop halfway there, and in summer, around June, we would stop by this ice cream place every time. We'd get ice cream and then, you know, wait for the traffic to loosen up a little bit. It became almost a tradition. So, we used to go up to Bejjeh on Friday night or Saturday morning, and then come back down Sunday night—and Sunday night there was always traffic, of course. Sometimes I would sleep in the car and then I'd watch all the buildings pass by the window and imagine the people already in their living rooms or in bed. In winter and spring, we wouldn't go every week though. Here in the US, the commute is a daily commitment. Well, not anymore, but it used to be daily, and it was really tough—we're in the Bay Area, so the traffic here is comparable to the Los Angeles area—it's famously bad. The issue is definitely a city planning one. When you develop new neighbourhoods, you have to know where the major companies are situated, and where people will likely be commuting to from hours away.

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There's always a concentration of them, like in the South Bay for example, the San Jose area. And the public transportation in California is different from the east coast. On the East Coast, people actually use the trains. We do have some trains, but you can't really call it a network and it's not what most people going to work need.

G: What was your experience establishing yourself abroad?

R: We were lucky because we had relatives here already. Many immigrants come to the US and don't have anyone they know—that's a really hard situation, and I really have the most respect and admiration for people who can manage that—it's not easy. We had family here that we actually stayed with. They had a big house, so they could accommodate us, and I was able to go to a public school, so I didn't have to pay for that—everything was provided for us. So, the first two years here, our expenses were very low. Our relatives helped my parents find jobs really quickly too. If you already have that support here, it makes everything much easier. Getting into university, I luckily had good grades and managed to receive a 'California Grant', which paid my tuition for the first four years. It was more or less a pleasant experience, and we didn't feel as much hardship as we could have. It really was thanks to the existing support we had here, our family, the church, and the Lebanese community—you always had someone you could talk to if you needed anything.

G: How has your experience affected your perception of social structure and network in Lebanon?

R: In Lebanon, it seems like you establish your social connections based on very limited factors. It's family, neighbours, just people in physical proximity to you. Here, for example, with my neighbours, for the longest time, we didn't really interact. Now that we've been here for a few years, that's changed, of course, but people don't necessarily interact like they do in Lebanon—there's just a lot of visits and interaction in the whole building. People here tend to do their own thing. The application process for jobs is a good example: in the US, you might get a referral, or use a job app, or see an listing somewhere, and then go through a process of interviews and sorting out, while in Lebanon, a lot of it is about who you know—if you have someone working in a bank, he'll try to get you a job there—or whatever it is, it's not so much based upon your qualifications, education, and experience. So yeah, networking plays a vital role, maybe more so than here in the US.

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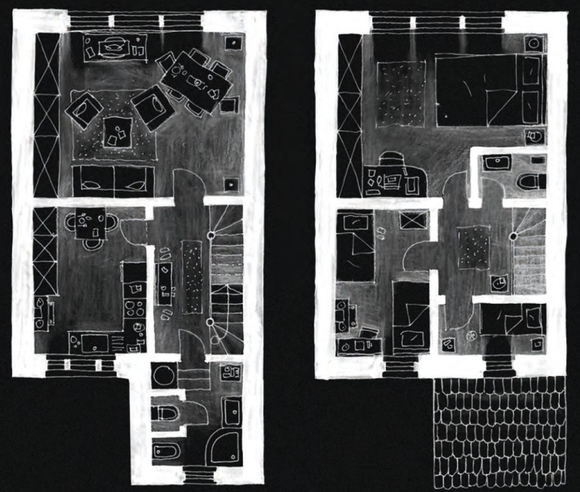
10 – Firas

1: 100

Location: London, United Kingdom
Date: 1894
Floor Area: 75 m²
First & Second Floor



House for an Expat – Ethnographic Questionnaire

Interview 10 – Firas (F)

Demographic Information

Age 62, male
Nationality: Italian, Lebanese
Residence in Lebanon: Furn el Chebbak, Beirut. 17 years. Bejjeh, Mount Lebanon. 21 years
Residence Abroad: Dijon, France. 2 years. London, United Kingdom. 22 years
Occupation: Boat Dealer
Familial status: Married, 4 children
Languages: English, German, French, Italian, Arabic

G: What prompted your decision to move abroad?

F: The first time I moved, in 1979, was for education. I went to study abroad in France—since the Lebanese education system was French, we only had the opportunity to continue our education in France. I spent one year studying medicine—which I found out was not what I wanted to do—and then I went to England, continued my education there and stayed there.

G: Have you lived in multiple countries?

F: I had one year in France, where I was at the University of Dijon, in the medicinal department. That went OK, basically—you know, student life—I lived in a student hostel and worked a bit, to support myself. After that, I moved to London, in 1981, not knowing that I would be there for

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a long time. I went to university and did a three-year degree—business studies—and I ended up staying. Basically, the situation in Lebanon was not brilliant—it was deteriorating, so I decided to stay.

G: Could you describe your current living arrangement; apartment, house, shared accommodation, etc.?

F: I live in my own house, in my village—my ancestral village—and the house I built by myself. I live there with my parents. Bejjeh is a village in the upper mountains, in the District of Byblos, Jbeil. It's an old village, its roots go back hundreds of years—there's history. It's still a village, in the sense that it doesn't have main roads or main access, so it's basically a village for residence. It's an idyllic life. A quiet life, where everybody has his plot of land and his own house. Everybody owns their own house in the village—there's no rentals. It's around 50 kilometres from Beirut, the capital, and about 16 kilometres from Byblos, which is the next big city. The house itself is a traditional Lebanese stone house with arches and a tiled roof that I built when we came back to Lebanon in 2001. We started building the house that year and finished a year later, in 2002. It's a three-storey house with the ground floor built by my grandfather in the 40s—so the ground floor is 80 plus years old already, with traditionally vaulted ceilings inside and old stone construction. I built two floors on top of that and made the ground floor area a little bit bigger, which gives us approximately 307 square metres on each floor—multiplied by 3, so 921 square metres in total—plus a 240 square metre attic under roof, which is empty at present—only the utilities are up there, like water tanks and solar panels and stuff. The house is built on a plot of approximately 3000 square metres, which gives us a nice amount of agricultural land around the house, a big garden planted with mainly fruit trees and vineyards. There's a frontal garden along the driveway that brings you from the village's main road (Rue 1) to the house, lined with big cypress trees that were planted in the 60s by my father—so we have trees there that are 60 years old and taller than the house itself actually.

G: How does your current residence compare to the home you had in Lebanon, in a broad sense?

F: Life in London, for me, basically went from being a student to a business owner, and many jobs in between. House-wise, it started with a one-bedroom apartment, to a two-bedroom apartment, to three-bedroom house with a garden. Of course, property in England is still small compared to Lebanon, because real estate prices are much higher there. It was a nice house, but small, you know? I mean, in comparison to a bedroom that's like 10 square metres in London, the average bedroom in our house in Lebanon is about 35 square metres! So, it's a big difference in space—it gives you a certain sense of freedom. Our house in London was a semi-detached house in Ham, with a big garden in the back and a garage at the end of the garden. That was in suburbs of London—a nice area close to Richmond Park. I mean, nothing compares to the house in Lebanon, in terms of size. The only comparison that comes to mind would probably be in the States, but in Europe, they don't build houses that big. But the process is also completely different there to how we build here. I mean, in Lebanon, we build solid houses with cement and steel reinforcement, or cement blocks—everything from the foundations to the outer walls, to the floors and even roof sometimes—and the outer walls are double, which means two blocks with space in-between. Plus, on the outer wall, you add your stone cladding, which means you have basically roughly an outer wall of 30 to 35 centimetres in thickness. For the roof, you usually have a steel structure that you tie the roof tiles to.

G: What differs from your experience in Lebanon in terms of purchasing or renting, and maintenance in either case?

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F: Well, in London, still being on the verge of home ownership, you had to take a mortgage to buy your property—which meant paying the deposit, and the rest came from the bank. That is what we did for the three houses we owned, and then the fourth we moved into was actually over our coffee shop in Barnes—we had the business on the ground floor and lived upstairs. It came with a small back garden too. The difference is, in Lebanon, we built the house with the money actually—no mortgage—so, we had to pay outright for it. Living in Lebanon, you don't have property prices to pay—rent, or mortgage, or even council tax, really—at least not like in London. So, water, heating, and other expenses like that is all you have to take care of.

G: What were the biggest aspects of maintenance in Lebanon?

F: The biggest aspect, because we do have a lot of rain in winter, and a lot of humidity, is probably painting. We have a lot of metal structure outside the house too—the fences and all that—they need to be repainted every so many years. Inside the house, the ceilings and walls are affected by the humidity. The windows are all aluminium though, so they require zero maintenance, basically. For plumbing and heating and all that, we used, at the time, prime materials—the best we could get, in terms of quality. Everything is still like new, even after 22 years. Nowadays, in the village, people building new houses are using a lot of cheap material—by the amount of maintenance it requires, you can tell a lot of the plumbing and electric wiring is not going to last long. As far as the land itself, the front garden requires very little attention. My father works the fields—for the land, the main thing we had to do was rebuild the retaining wall that went down in heavy rains a couple of years ago—it was a long wall, maybe 78 metres, and the whole thing collapsed. But we rebuilt it with raw stones—no cement—because the cement couldn't hold the amount of water coming inside the field, which pushed it out from underneath. Now, with just the stones, you have space in-between, and the water can pass through.

G: How do the two compare in terms of individualizing your living space?

F: First off, you can't even compare the two, size-wise. What we had in Barnes—you had to go over our coffee shop, over a narrow staircase, to get on the first and second floor. We had a nice garden—but really small—at the back, that we only started using a couple of years after we had settled into the place, because it had to be redone. Here in Lebanon, I've moved most of my living to the second floor, because I now have a nice terrace with artificial grass and a nice area to sit in during summers. You have a nice view from up there and it's all open, so you get the sun, and you have shade, if you want it. I hardly use the first floor now—only when there are guests, with dinners and stuff like that. I also have four cars, so they need the space, too. I had five until recently—just sold one—and two bikes. I drive all of them—you've got to keep them in shape. I want to do things with the land, but not while my parents are around. Maybe at some point I'll build a pool or rearrange the land in a way that it's less food-centred and more ornamental. Everything that's planted there now, we don't really make use of—half of it goes on the ground. And, being so close to the house, some of them bring wasps and other insect, so better to have ornamental trees. 20 years ago, nobody had a pool either. Now a lot of people are immediately planning one in when they are building. Three of my friends who built houses recently also did that.

G: What aspects of socializing or sharing your space can you think of that differ?

F: There's no difference really. To me, socializing is socialising, whether in a small or a big space. The only difference, I guess, is that I can invite 50 people now, if I want. Regarding visits, I don't think nowadays there's anything spontaneous. Everything is pre-arranged. Lebanon is pretty much the same as Europe now—if you want to invite people, you have to give them a time and a place, and people don't just come by and expect everything to be ready—coffee, cake, etc.—not like in the old days. So, Lebanon is

a little bit more like the rest of the world now, where you actually have to plan before you invite. Maybe neighbours coming for a coffee is still a thing, you know, but that's something different.

G: How has living abroad influenced your sense of cultural identity post living in Lebanon?

F: Living abroad teaches you a lot, but it doesn't take away your identity. Your identity never goes. I mean, I know my identity—I'm not confused. I know I'm 100 percent Lebanese, but being abroad teaches you stuff that you can add to your identity, without taking away from it, from your basics. You learn new things that you might choose to use or not, depending on if you think it will take you forward. There are a lot of things I learned in England that, me being Eastern, are not applicable to my situation or where I live. Take, for example, living with my parents. They need somebody to take care of them, and since there's no system in Lebanon, no retirement home or something similar where they can go, the mentality that keeps me there looking after them is different from what you would expect people to do in Europe. I did learn things—like not to lead a chaotic life. I learned how to be organized, how to respect the nature of things, to respect to rules and regulations.

G: Are there specific cultural elements or items from Lebanon that you appreciated?

F: Lebanon is a place of culture. It's very old, to start with—it's biblical. Civilizations has been present in these parts for seven or eight thousand years. It's the holy land—Lebanon is North Galilee, which means Christ walked the land. So, it has a lot of meaning, a lot of history, and if today the whole area were not so chaotic … it's constantly at war. But being of significant historical importance—you can't ignore that. It has a meaning, somehow. One day, this will be important. When and how, I don't know, but somehow these countries—you know, Iraq, Syria, Jordan—they're important. Egypt—land of the Pharaohs. Somehow, they will have their place in history—it will come back. They are going through a phase—you know, life is a cycle—and things will turn and come back. It's a multicultural society that welcomes everything. People are not narrow-minded, and they speak so many languages, which is the main advantage of Lebanese people—they all speak two or three languages and then they go on to study more. Lebanese people know a lot about the rest of the word, whereas the rest of the world doesn't know much about them. They are people who like knowledge and absorb it, and go into the world and learn about other cultures and histories.

G: Are there specific cultural practices or traditions from Lebanon that left a lingering impression?

F: Lebanon is a big social network. People like to socialise a lot. They like to go out a lot. They're not people who like to stay at home. In Europe, you work, you come home. Lebanese people have a passion for restaurants, for pubs, going to the beach, skiing. In their houses, they like having guests—maybe that's changed not so much because of a cultural shift, but because of economic hardship. You know, when people used to offer you lunch and sweets and everything—now they don't have a lot of money. Another thing about Lebanon is religion—it's home to many religions, you know, we have 18 official religious groups here. People like their religion. And if it goes to the crunch, the Lebanese are definitely a God-fearing people.

G: How frequently have you been abroad since returning to Lebanon?

F: I travel a lot. Not as much as before, but still. I used to do maybe eight to ten trips a year—now I do three or four. Travel keeps the spirit going. You have to travel! Even if you leave your country once a year, at least you leave and you see something else. I frequently visit Vienna, because my children live there—the rest is mainly work—boat shows and things like that.

G: How do you maintain connections with family and friends abroad?

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F: On the phone. WhatsApp. Today, this is the universal type of communication between people all around the world. It's probably why people don't need to—or don't want to—travel as often as I they did before. Today, with video calls and what have you, you can actually speak to people every day that you would otherwise never see. I definitely feel that it's brought people closer.

G: Are you part of any local communities or networks in Lebanon?

F: I've been a member of the local council (*baladiyeh*) of my village for the last 14 years. We're in charge of regulating the village and solving problems, making people's lives better, and providing them with things like electricity and water—making sure everything is functioning, like roads, waste disposal, etc.

G: How do you feel when you return to Lebanon?

F: Because I've been travelling since—1979 was my first flight—I've been travelling 45 years, for me, it's not that exciting anymore, you know? The whole thing is a bit of going through the motions, with airports and stuff like that. It kills the joy of actually reaching your destination a bit. When I leave Lebanon, I have mixed feelings—I'm happy that I'm actually leaving the state that Lebanon is in now, just to go out and relax a little bit, or to see my family in Vienna, and of course, when I go back, I'm also happy, because I go back to my house, my work, my routine—it's fine both ways. When I returned to Lebanon after having lived in England, it was great. That was a wonderful feeling, because you looked forward to a new life ahead, something completely different. The country that I left for 22 years, and then suddenly I came back to it, after telling myself I would never go back. I'm not sure what changed my mind—probably the weather in London. I wanted better climate, a different routine. I might have moved to Italy instead, if I'd had the chance. Maybe I could have lived in California, or maybe I wouldn't have left, you know, if we had the opportunity to stay back when we went in 1990.

G: What are aspects of your home in Lebanon that you miss when abroad?

F: The main thing I miss is my bed. I miss the dogs. I miss driving, the weather—mainly that it's sunny all the time. You know, you miss the familiarity, basically. That's your environment, your friends and so on.

G: Do you envision moving away from Lebanon again in the future and if so in what capacity?

F: I mean, we are talking about the future, and nobody really knows what that brings. I really don't know. Once my parents are not there anymore, if the situation doesn't get better, meaning the country remains status quo, as it is, I might think of moving. Maybe to Italy, which I'm a citizen of. Especially in the south of Italy, where the atmosphere is similar to Lebanon—and the climate—and it's also nearer to my family in Austria. Mainly, I want to live in a warm country when I'm older. On the other hand, if Lebanon gets better, we rebuild our democracy, our economy, and things start improving, then I'd want to stay.

G: What does home mean to you?

F: My home is special to me because I built it myself. Not many people have built their own homes, but I built it myself—from my work, from my efforts, from my years of working abroad. I put almost all my savings into it, so it has special meaning to me. Plus, it's my family home, you know? I mean, the land is my grandfather's, and the house, so it has a lot of spiritual meaning. The village is my origin—I come from there, I belong to that village. I built that house, I belong to that place, you know? It's a 'root' thing. You're rooted in that place. I never felt like that years ago, but the more you grow older, and the more you know the meaning of actually belong-

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ing to some place, you know—it's safety. It's all the people knowing you, everybody around you. It's like you have your own little army around you.

G: How has your definition of home evolved since leaving Lebanon?

F: When I was younger and lived here, I did not have this attachment. I wanted to leave because of the war, because I wasn't happy, because I wanted to do my own thing—like every young man. Then I went and worked abroad, and the situation kept going downhill in Lebanon, and I never thought about going back. And then, suddenly, in the year 2000, when my father came back from America and I went back to visit him—yeah—I saw things again in Lebanon that brought me back, and made me think, you know, 'what if I come back? What if I try to live here again?' That year, when I went back to visit my father, I went to Lebanon four times in one year. Having lived in England for over 20 years, I had been back a total of three times prior to that. That is to say, I missed it. The more I went back, the more I saw myself living there. 'If I have a house, I could live here'. And the state of the country was, you know, dramatically improved. They were building again and, slowly, I saw potential. So, potential … and the rest is history.

G: Which elements of your house in Lebanon come to mind when you think about home? What are their stories and what kind of personal significance do they hold?

F: I mean, I keep telling myself that space is not important, but it is. It is important to actually walk into a house where you have a lot of room and don't feel cramped. And you can go outside, the weather is nice, and sit anywhere you like—behind your house, or in front—anywhere. On your terrace. You are spoiled for choice, really. I don't feel restrained. I mean, in the last 20 years, I've never had to park my car on the road.

G: What sense of belonging do you feel in your home abroad?

F: In Vienna, I only come to visit. I never lived here, and the lifestyle here doesn't really agree with me. Going back to living in an apartment, for example, even though it's a nice apartment. Not having nature outside, or the outdoors. I am an outdoor person. I don't like being indoors too much, and we're not an indoor culture, in general. In Vienna, in central and northern Europe, it's an indoor country for sure. Whether you like it or not, the weather pushes you to live inside.

G: What differs from your experience in Lebanon in terms of community involvement and familial network?

F: Because I had a local business, I interacted with my community a lot (in Barnes). We had a coffee shop, so I got to know most of the neighbourhood, and they got to know me, and I liked that in London. I liked that a lot, because I'm a social person, so we made a lot of friends, made a lot of acquaintances, you know. It was nice, meeting people and being outside the coffee shop, where we had tables on the pavement, and people walking in and out of the park next to us—the Barnes common. London, apart from the weather factor, was a great place to live in. As for Lebanon, there is the familial network, for one, but also being a member of the local council. Apart from that, I'm not really involved in the village community as such. I know everybody, yeah, but—and maybe this is something I picked up in Europe—when I went back to Lebanon, I was not that open to accepting random visits and mixing with all the relatives and all that—there's a part of me which is private. I like my privacy, so I do my job on the local council, but I'm not really into the heavy mixing with extended family, neighbours, etc.

G: What sort of commute do you have?

F: I've been, for the past 20 years, commuting to work in Beirut from Bejjeh and back. It's long. It's 100 kilometres, every day, but I got you used to it—I'm still okay with it and it's not affecting me that much, because I

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like driving. If I didn't, I would probably be hating it. But I do like driving, and because I have a few cars, I get to drive a different one every time I feel like it. Sometimes I even go down to work on the bike. One thing though is that, in Lebanon, there is very little law on the road. People really drive erratically, and you have to be careful. You have to drive defensively, really. It helps to be experienced. Knowing how to observe the road around, assess the risks, the dangers, and act accordingly. You have to be sure of yourself and, occasionally, you have to be able to drive fast to get out of a sticky situation.

G: What was your experience establishing yourself abroad?

F: In London, I was lucky, in a way, to have my uncle there who had the restaurant. I have to say so. I had a job whenever I needed it that made me good money at the time. Then I wanted more experience outside of restaurants, so I went to work for British Airways for four years—that gave me some corporate experience. When we started the family, I needed more money though, and that's why I decided to go independent, and we started the coffee shop in Barnes. When I came back to Lebanon, I went into the boating business—just by chance, really, because we owned a boat and I thought 'why don't I own two or three and charter them?' That's how the idea started, and then eventually I went into a company as a partner. You know, it's a nice and easy job—not really heavy—brokerage and selling boats. So, variety is the spice of life. I worked in restaurants, for an airline, selling boats, and recently classic cars.

G: How has your experience affected your perception of social structure and network in Lebanon?

F: It's changed a lot. I mean, Lebanon has become more and more Europeanized since I first came back. Not only here, but in the whole world, today, with social media, everyone is going in one direction—whether it's Lebanon, or Afghanistan, or Italy, or Germany. Yeah, Lebanon changed change a lot. Tradition still exists in Lebanon, but it's mixed in with global networking, you know, the whole world today is on the same rail tracks, whether they like it or not. Whether they're different religions, different cultures—we see the same things and we're influenced by the same things, you know? Of course, if you are not living in the city, like me, if you live in a village—and probably all other villages around the world are like this—you still have traditionalism that preserves them from all-out modernization. One example is, in Bejjeh, that on Palm Sunday, they still go around the church with the candles and olive branches, which they don't do in the big cities anymore. Villages keep these little traditions alive everywhere in the world, you know, so you still have a little bit of it left.

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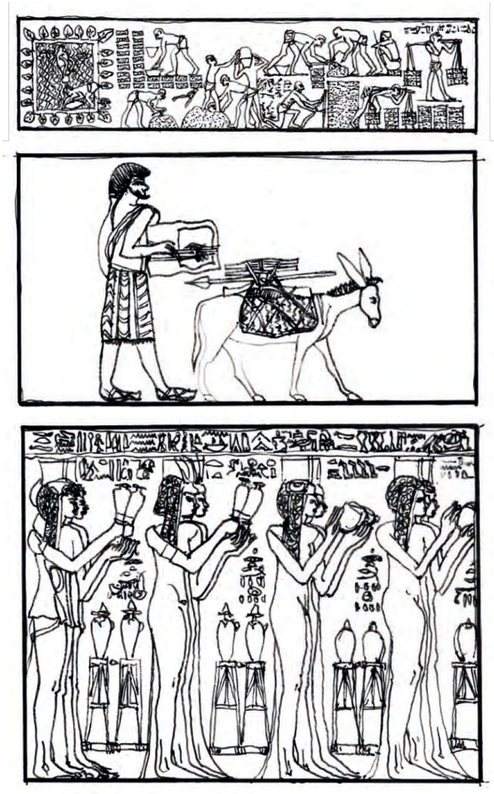
Phoenician Gilded Bronze Statue
2nd millenium BCE. Byblos, Lebanon

Object & Language

Below the surface of the Levant's ebb and flow of cultures and architectures lie everyday objects that speak a language older than themselves. We tend to forget that this constant layering of meaning hides in both the simplest of tools, and the most intricate of constructions. Objects and their language naturally inform architecture, whether directly or not, in subtlety or loud presence, in their most basic forms or as concrete, referential shapes. They can be symbols of power, can defer to lofty ideals, or simply mimic, copy, steal, or impersonate. They can stand in solitude, or in groupings, merged, dissected, reconfigured. They can cover the frieze of an ancient Greco-Roman temple, or line the counter of a modern kitchen.

A repository is a receptacle where information may be stored, collected, and managed. One collects and studies these items so that one may ultimately draw from them. This repository is one of *transience*, rooted in region, and therefore culture. Thematically, it deals in influences— in the spreading, adapting, and growing of them, across borders and time. The Lebanon, the Levant, the Mediterranean Basin, the Arabian Peninsula—on a slowly dissolving scale of metres and seconds—are interwoven in their creation and care for the language of these objects. They are reference for those who need it, and influence for those who want it.

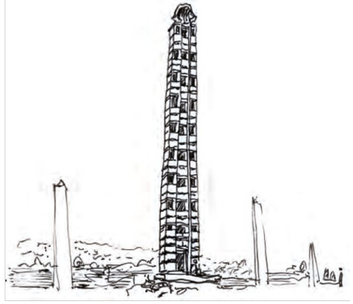
These sketches in charcoal and ink were adapted from various primary or secondary sources on the history of the Middle East, and occasionally rendered and referred to as 'impressions', abstracted in order to underline certain characteristics of an object.



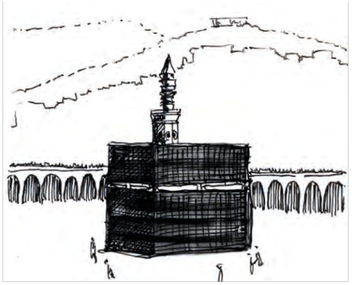
Ancient Egyptian Murals
ca 1450 BCE. near Kurna, Egypt

Terracotta Basrelief, Head of Medusa
600-580 BCE. Syracuse, Sicily

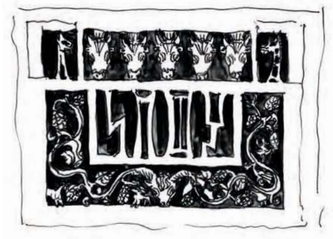
Bronze Statue of Ma'ad Yakrib
ca 380 BCE. Marib, Yemen



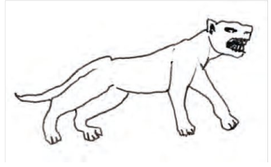
Obelisk of Axum
4th century CE. Axum, Ethiopia



The Ka'aba
624 CE. Mecca, Saudi Arabia



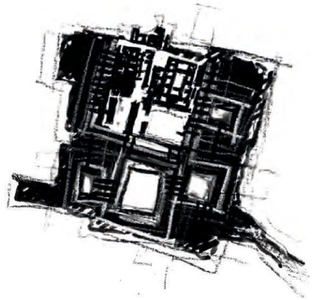
Bullheads and Vines, Relief
1st - 3rd century CE. Yemen



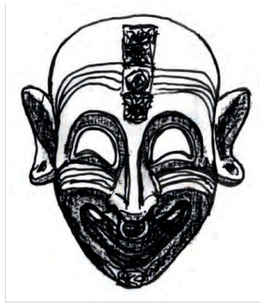
Lioness of Gôbedrâ
Gobo Dura, Ethiopia

Royal Tombs of Petra
1st century CE. Wadi Musa, Jordan

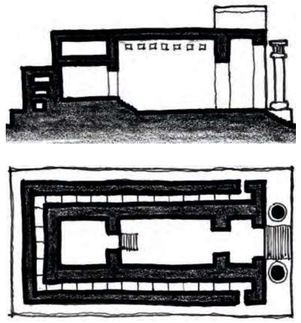
Impressions – The Code of Hammurabi
1750 BCE. Sippar, Mesopotamia



Impressions – Aerial Plan, Royal Palace of Mari
2500-2300 BCE. near Abu Kamal, Syria

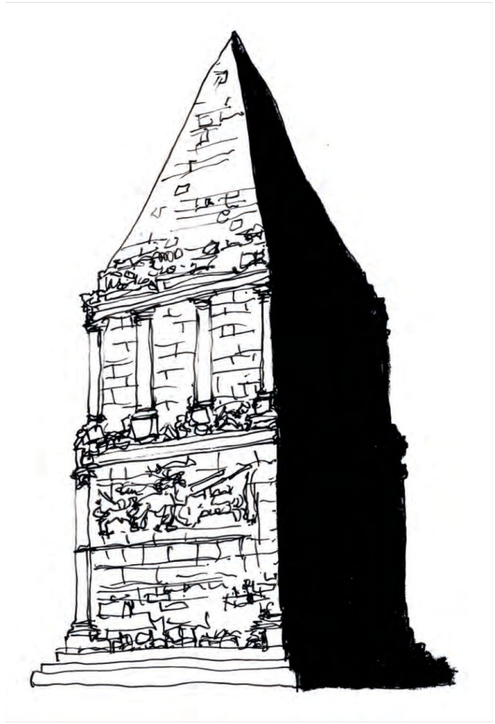


Phoenician Grinning Mask
4th century BCE. San Sperate, Sardinia



Solomon's Temple
10th - 8th century BCE. Jerusalem, Israel

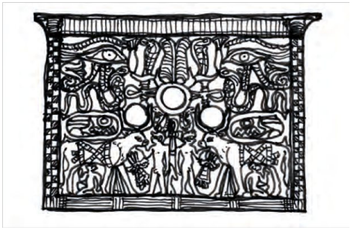
Phoenician Mask Bead
350-300 BCE. Carthage, Tunisia



Pyramid of Hermel
2nd - 1st century BCE. Hermel, Lebanon

Engravings on a Dagger Sheath
Byblos, Lebanon

Pectoral of Ip Shemou Abi
18th century BCE. Byblos, Lebanon

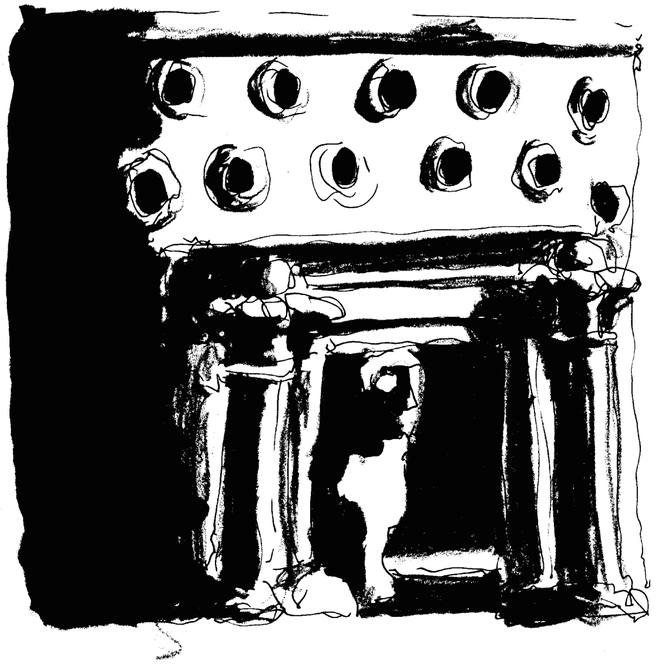


Pectoral of Amenemhat III
19th century BCE. Byblos, Lebanon

Funerary Rock Carving
Qana near Tyre, Lebanon

Unloading of a Phoenician Ship
6th century BCE. Tyre, Lebanon

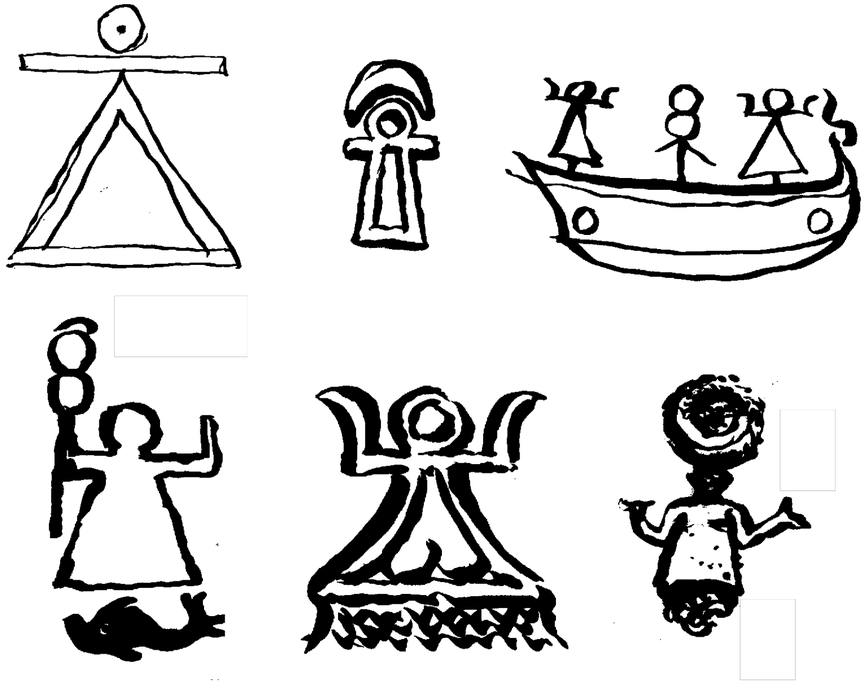
Impressions – Phoenician Statues
14th - 13th century BCE. Ugarit, Syria



Depiction of a Phoenician House
Tyre, Lebanon.

Impressions – Depiction of a City
400 BCE. Tyre, Lebanon

Punic Statue
Cagliari, Sardinia



Impressions – Symbols, Human and Divine
Phoenician

Faces of the Necropolis
Sidon, Lebanon.

Female Figure, Clay
5th century BCE. Sidon, Lebanon

Bull's Head, Clay
5th century BCE. Sidon, Lebanon

Phoenician Relief, Obelisk Temple
Byblos, Lebanon

Ta'anakh Stand
10th century BCE. near Megiddo, Israel

Master Thesis | Diplomarbeit

House for an Expat
A Typology of Transience

Typeface: Mongolian Baiti, Perpetua 12
Printing: Printpool AT
Paper: 120 g/m² Munken Lynx Rough
Binding: Buchbinderei Flieger
Cover: Linen

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