Redefining Public Spaces in Egypt:
Architecture of Change and Ownership Empowered by the Citizens

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KEY WORDS: PUBLIC SPACES, PUBLIC PARTICIPATION, URBAN ARCHITECTURE, SOCIAL SPACES.

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Redefining Public Spaces in Egypt: Architecture of Change and Ownership Empowered by the Citizens

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ABSTRACT

Architecture and Politics are connected in various ways, and one of the most notable functions of architecture in a political context is to reflect the voice and needs of people. This paper asks how architecture can become a catalyst for citizens to gain ownership of public spaces specifically, in Egypt. As an Egyptian citizen, I experienced the 18 days of the 2011 Egyptian revolution when people were able to temporarily gain their right to urban public spaces. As an architect, how can my design facilitate community engagement with public space becoming points of attraction that connect people to the city? I challenge the way we, Egyptians currently design, inhabit and create urban public spaces. This paper introduces a new concept of public spaces in Egypt by proposing a space where people have the power to create the place around them through communication, freedom, art, expressing ideas, and using technology. I suggest the principles of the revolution into the architectural design that means, redefining the traditional relationship between the architect and the community members focusing on a participatory design process.

By creating urban public spaces through architectural strategies that respond to people's need, physical site, history, memory and that promote expression, gathering, and becomes a physical connection to the city. Interviews were conducted with citizens (stakeholders), planners, and those engaged in architectural practice and study in Egypt. Case studies include Downtown Cairo's urban planning, in general, and, specifically, Tahrir Square is the major case study.

Keywords: Urban Public Space, Space Adaptation, Tahrir Square, Community engagement.

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INTRODUCTION

"Looking at cities can give a special pleasure, however commonplace the sight might be. Like a piece of architecture, the city is a construction in space, but not vast scale, a thing perceived only in the course of long spans of time. (…) At every instance, there is more than the eye can see, more than the ear can hear a setting or a view waiting to be explored. Nothing experienced by itself, but always in relation to its surrounding the sequence of events leading up to it, the memory of past experiences"[1]

Friday, January 28th, 2011, history unfolds. My family and I are in the car driving back home from my Grandmother's house. We come across the deserted streets of my city, Alexandria, which is unconventional for the weekend in Egypt. The streets are vaguely dark. All we can hear are echoes of unfamiliar shouts coming towards us. Suddenly, I see a crowd of fifty people running in our direction; I think I am maybe about to die. I leap out of my seat to look around at what is happening. My father stops and pulls over at a dark shadowy intersection, hammering down the door locks. We see shadows of people piercing through the night. In that instance, we became thoroughly familiar with the language of fear. Once they are all gone, my father rushes to reach our apartment building; we see a bright light coming from the governor's house next door. At this moment, we hear an explosion that confirms our doubts. Every single piece of the governor's three-story house is burning into ashes disappearing into the darkness of the night. Looking back, it all seems like a nightmare; I wish I could wake up from, hoping for a better tomorrow. We tried to call the police, the fire department, and even an ambulance, but no one responded. Later that night, we were told thugs were recruited by the Mubarak's regime to convince the media and the world that the protesters marching in the streets of Egypt are not peaceful.

On that same day, thousands of peaceful Egyptians broke down the barrier of fear that they knew for years. We rose and revolted against our president (Hosni Mubarak). People were chanting "salmiya, salmiya" (We are peaceful, we are peaceful). Mubarak's regime was trying it's best to shut people down by making the police disappear completely from the streets. They want us to be silent and not fight back. However, we decided that we are not turning back,

[1] The Image of the city, Kevin Lynch-MIT Press-1960.

we are only moving forward, and nothing but genuine democracy will carry our country forward.

This moment was the moment when I was fortunate enough to witness history written by the Egyptian people. We have spoken and for the first time, I felt that my voice and the voice of my fellow Egyptians are heard. We declared that we will never be silent again and that our country will never be the same. These demonstrations established a new meaning to already existing governmental controlled spaces. This paper focuses on the significance of public space in contemporary Egypt at a time of political and social unrest. What is the real definition of public space in Egypt historically and currently? How can design facilitate community engagement with public spaces become points of attraction connecting the people to the city? Furthermore, how can I, an architect of the 21st century use architecture as catalyst for citizens to gain ownership of public spaces, specifically in Egypt.

METHODOLOGY

The process is a multidisciplinary exploration including architectural, political and social consideration of public space in Cairo in order to understand what people need in a public space and how they interact within that space. A participatory approach is used by directly engaging users of public spaces designed, urban planners, and those engaged in the practice and study of architecture in Cairo. The participatory process is a manual serving as a tool for genuine participation of the public by concentrating on the design process, and collaborating with local partners including young adults since they are the future. As architect and theorist, Christopher Alexander states in The Timeless Way of Building "To work our way towards a shared and living language, we need to discover patterns which are deep, and capable of generating life".[2] This process intends to serve a particular group of people in a specific community in downtown Cairo, and works as a prototype for public spaces in Egypt. At this point and only at this point I believe that the youth of Egypt striving for change will take control of their future.

An understanding of Cairo's city planning is essential, a study of the birth of the city to its most recent appropriation. This paper will explore the making of a new architecture that is rooted in a newly discovered heritage, affected by the Egyptian revolution. As discussed by Beth Stryker, Omar Nagati, and Magda Mostafa in Learning from Cairo: Global Perspectives

and Future Visions, "The 2011 Revolution is considered an urban revolution."[3] It is about the sense of ownership that an architectural experience provides its users in the 21st century. I draw inspiration from my personal experience in the Egyptian revolution. In the following discussion, I will compare and contrast the concept of public spaces in Egypt and United States. In particular, Tahrir Square is examined through historical context, and, currently in the aftermath of 2011 revolution. To consider participatory design as a democratic process to create a place, the works Egyptian architect Dr. Abdelhalim Ibrahim and Christopher Alexander show how architecture can help citizens to gain ownership of public spaces and buildings under different circumstances. I also need to understand the meaning of place and space through the lens of humanist Yi-Fu Tuan.

MEANING OF SPACE AND PLACE

Humanist Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan in his book, Space and Place: The Meaning of Place and space Perspective of Experience, suggest "Space" is more abstract while "place" is more sensory, yet their relation to one another is not an exclusive one. According to Tuan, both ideas are interconnected. He points out that it is space that allows movement, and "that each pause in movement makes it possible for a location to be transformed into place... from the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and the threat of space and vice versa.[4]" The architect looking to promote place provides an environment to invite pause and "know it better"[5].

EGYPTIANS DEFINITION OF PUBLIC SPACE

Egypt's definition of public space has been questioned for the past six decades. In Arabic, public spaces are referred to as "Melk el hokoma", which means (Owned by the government) is the term that the people use when describing public spaces in Egypt. Egyptians do not have a say in the social or political aspects of their country. Public spaces have been fenced off from public use, or the government will simply change its use from public spaces to gardens or just an empty space with no specific function. One would think that public space is a place for people to gather and interact, but it is the

[3] The Timeless way of Building, Christopher Alexander
[3] Beth Stryker, Omar Nagati, and Magda Mostafa in Learning from Cairo: Global Perspectives and Future Visions

[4] Space and Place: The Meaning of Place and space Perspective of Experience
[5] IBID

complete opposite. Public spaces are meant to limit human gathering and interactions. This limitation managed to hinder all forms of socio-political disclosure in public space.

THE CONCEPT OF PUBLIC SPACE

A public space is a place that promotes a sense of community. According to urban planning public space is considered a space between neighborhoods, downtown, plazas, recreational areas and other publicly owned and managed areas. Public space is a place that can be easily and safely accessed by citizens without any form of membership or fees. Public spaces are for members of the community to come together to socialize, interact and exchange goods which is a concept in the Arab world which is called public "souk".

Today, people need to understand the real meaning of public space that is different from both public domain and its subdivisions; instead, public space is a place accessible by the public that has its own history, cultural identity and unique sense of belonging. It is a place for people to gather and feel free. The notion of public space can best be explained by social sciences as two different conceptions that lead to independent existence. The first is political philosophy that leads to the concept of public inspired from the Greek agora and the Roman forum. This concept was a model of public arenas where the city's public affairs was discussed among a crowd of its citizens. While political theorist Hannah Arendt states that since the golden age of democracy in western civilizations have been declining socialist and philosopher Jürgen Habermas argues that forum of public discussions have been re-emerging in the bourgeois salons as a platform for the public to have political discussions. The salons were on a much smaller scale than the agora, the activities in the salons but able to challenge the action of the monarchs and the state.

HISTORY OF TAHRIR SQUARE

In 1867, Ismail Pasha Khedive of Egypt (1830-1895) was invited to 'Exposition Universelle' in Paris, organized by Haussmann architect chosen by Napoleon III to work on a massive project of urban planning project in Paris. During his visit, Ismail was impressed by the Parisian architectural style that made him decide to develop a similar architectural style in Cairo. As stated by Professor Nezar AlSayyad, "That provided Ismail with a comprehensive model to the transformation and beautification of the city."[6] Haussmann

[6] Cairo: histories of a city Book, Belknap Press of

convinced Ismail Pasha to change his vision of a new Cairo; however there was great complexity in the streets of Old Cairo known as Downtown Cairo which was hard to approach, especially on such a large scale as he had seen in Paris. Therefore, he decided to focus on the western portion of Cairo. Khedive wanted to transform Cairo into Paris of the Nile.

Ismail had a significant influence on Cairo during his time. While Cairo had some major similarities to Paris, there were major differences including Haussmann's planning of Paris was influenced by political motives. Cairo focused on the aesthetic in relation to the Downtown area. It is important to see the contrast of this same area during Mubarak's regime when Tahrir square became the public space of protest, especially when the emergency laws were enacted. How did urban planning of Tahrir Square help the uprising to reach its goal during the 18 days of the revolution?

ALSayyed argues in his book Histories of a City while the square is inspired from Parisian urban design is completely different. ALSayyed argues that while the square in located within the urban fabric it is not surrounded by boulevards from all directions. Secondly, its closeness to the river Nile adds to its value. ALSayyed argues that the space was not similar to Haussmann's clear vision for Paris; on the contrary, he describes it as "Ill-defined space"[7]. When Alsayyed was asked why does he think people chose Tahrir Square? He said, "Twenty-three streets lead to different parts of it, which is why it was so successful with the demonstrators"[8]. Therefore, Tahrir square has political value that cannot be compared with Haussmann's vision of Paris. He explains "There isn't one big boulevard that you can block off, and there are two bridges that lead to it as well"[9].

Governmental buildings are nested all around Tahrir. Protesters chose Tahrir Square considering the unique location as a way of confrontation between the people and the regime. Some of the most notable buildings in the area are: The National Democratic Party's (NDP) headquarters and The Arab League just to name a few. The NDP headquarters location had a great significance throughout history; this building was the Arab Socialist Union under the rule of Nasr. The NDP was burned during the 2011 revolution as a clear message to the ruling party from the people to end Mubarak's regime.

Harvard University Press, 2013

[7] IBID
[8] IBID
[9] IBID

Tahrir square is a centered located square that doesn't have an exact firm shape and lacks human scale because of the huge adjacent unbuilt area of the square. Even though the square has an enormous political, historical and cultural importance to Egypt, yet its surroundings are not used to its full potential and have remained unfinished for years. I believe that the area of Tahrir has great potential to be one of the world's urban hubs.

URBAN PLANNING OF DOWNTOWN CAIRO

Egypt's modern identity has been formed by what is not shown. As Timothy Mitchell states "the identity of the modern city Cairo is created by what it keeps out. Its modernity is something contingent upon the exclusion of its opposite." Mitchell's argument references to the era when Sadat was president of Egypt. In addition, Farha Ghannam in Remaking the Modern criticized that downtown was for privileging of tourists and upper-class Egyptians. She explains that part of Sadat's plan to build a modern Cairo was to relocate its disadvantaged lower classes to the periphery, leaving the center of the city for the upper classes and foreigners to occupy.

While the origin of modern Cairo, remained a business district that serves the intermediate and lower class population. The majority of Cairo's city center is for the wealthy population. The wealthiest population, though, lives in places like Zamalek, Dokki, and Heliopolis, which are areas around downtown Cairo. Those areas by passed by a high speed road that was constructed to reach the old city center. During the second half of the twentieth century, there was a great improvement in the architectural image of the contemporary city, when Cairo, and especially the downtown area experienced a significant rise in its skyline. During the same period large scale projects like Ramses Hilton hotel, television building (Mespetro) and the radio station building (Ezzat El Shark El Awsat), just to name a few were forming the identity of the city. Those buildings and others are what engineer Milad Hanna refers to as "the golden peel that covers the surface, [hiding] the miserable conditions of popular areas."

Downtown Cairo is not like the outskirts of the city, as it still maintains the features that form its identity such as: streets, squares, and promenades, that form its boundaries. However, those features by themselves cannot form the city. According to Jane Jacobs "There is no logic that can be superimposed on the city; people make it,

and it is to them, not buildings, that we must fit our plans."

The public life in the central city combines the Mediterranean, medieval, touristic, giving the downtown area a specific architectural sense that is still sustained and developed beneath the different layers of historical urbanism, including elevated high speed bridges such as the Sixth of October Bridge cutting through the fabric of modern Cairo with its heavy flow of traffic multiple stories above the traditional street. Although bustling street life continues to exist all over the city, it is particularly in downtown, where the connection between urbanism and social engineering is most evident within a modern urbanist vision.

Norberg-Schultz recognizes an imbalance between space and character. This shift toward space away from social character detaches us from where we live. To re-build Places, we need to engage a multiplicity of spatial scales, urban foci to sub-place; and social scales, individual to the community.

In addition, Jane Jacobs was among the first people that criticized the modernist movement. She wrote about Greenwich Village Manhattan, New York, her own neighborhood. In her book The Death and Life of Great American Cities, Jacobs explains the significance of the built environment in the social well-being of the area. She recognizes four factors that both planners and architects should consider when designing. The buildings should be small mixed uses that represent diversity of ages. The diversity makes the city easily livable and accessible to everybody. Those characteristics also embody the built form that can be a return to the streets instead of just an open space that was promoted by modern development. Jacobs envisioned a better public space that fosters an enjoyable experience for its users. In addition, American software developer Kevin Lynch was able to find the connection between the build form and the representation of the people in the city of Boston. In his study, he had five elements that can help people find their way through the city. Those elements were (nodes, landmarks districts, edges and paths). The study indicated that public space was the primarily element from which the people started the representation of the city. This indicates that public spaces are the core of the city that people can't live without.

CASE STUDY I

THE CULTURAL PARK FOR CHILDREN

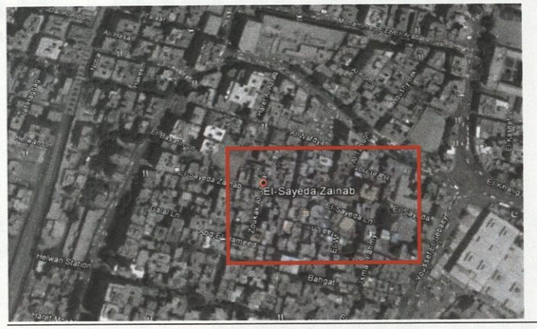

Figure 1: Google earth snap shot of the project location
Source: google earth

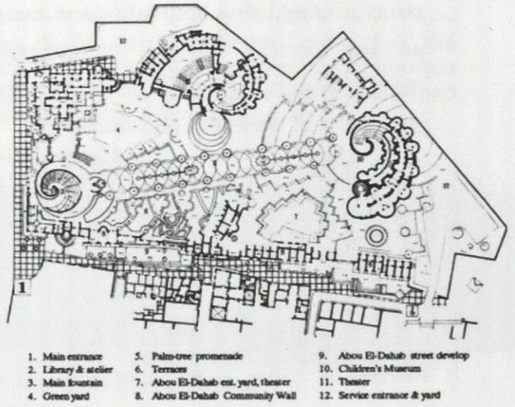

Figure 2: Arial veiw of the
Source:http://www.akdn.org
Figure 3: park.Source:http://archnet.org

SITE

The park is located in Al Sayyada Zeinab area one of the old parts of Cario. The project's site is1.25 hectors of green space. This space was formely a garden which was known as El Hod El Marsoud garden. The area surrounding the site is a complex area with layers of historic urban fabric that was deterorated over time. One of the notable landmarks in the area in Ahmed Ibn Toulon mosque. The design incorprated some of the existing landscape and trees as a part of the project.

The concept of attracting members of the community to regain and use empty lots and transform empty and unused sites in to attraction points that acts as a catalyst to develop other sites.Ibrahim constructed a set of gathering events to convert unutilized sites into a community space for people to use. By providing people with a sense of ownership in order to let citizens feel the ture sense of ownership, Ibrahim integrated community members in all stages of design and construction process. Part of the design was a wall that works as a connector to the community by providing spaces for social,commecial and cultural spaces. Incompleteness of design by blending between the authentic and contemporary architectural style and reclaim incomplete

structure.And,using both labor and materials as well as the freedom of adjustingthe design and construction according to the avaiability of skills and materiality. [ii]

[i] Google earth snap shot
[ii] Abdelhalim I. Abdelhalim, "A Ceremonial Approach to Community Building," Theories and
Principles of Design in the Architecture of Islamic

PROJECT ANALYSIS

1) Site and Surroundings:

The concept of attracting members of the community to regain and use empty lots and transform empty and unused sites in to attraction points that acts as a catalyst to develop other sites.

2) Gathering Events and Festivals:

The concept of gathering events converts unutilized sites into a community space for people to use.



Figure 13: Community gathering events
Source:http://www.akdn.org/sites/akdn/files/media/documents/AKAA%20press%20kits/1992%20AKAA/Park%20of%20Children-%20Egypt.pdf[i]

3) Providing People With The Sense Of Ownership:

In order to let citizens feel the ture sense of ownership, Ibrahim integrated community members in all stages of design and construction process.

4)Community Wall

The wall works as a connector to the community by providing spaces for social,commecial and cultural spaces.

5) Incompleteness:
By blending between the authentic and contemporary architectural style and reclaim incomplete structure.

6) Locality:

Localitiy of both labor and materials as well as the freedom of adjustingthe design and construction according to the avaiability of skills and materiality.

CASE STUDY II:

THE ELECTRICAL MANAGEMENT BUILDING IN SARAJEVO, BOSNIA



"The Reality Theory" The Electrical Management building is located in Sarajevo, Bosnia. The project is designed by Lebbeus Woods .

It was there during the war, however Lebbeus woods proposal was never constructed.

A) Project's Concept

In his project "The Reality Theory" Lebbeus Woods argues how theory should be implemented in practice. The project helps us as architects better understand how to transfer our ideas to meet specific user's needs.

B) History Of Sarajevo

From 1992 to 1995, the city of Sarajevo was under a military siege, and completely sealed off preventing any goods or people from entering or leaving the city There weren't any supplies of food, water, electricity, gas or even heat. Thousands were killed as a result of the continuous civil war in Sarajevo. The only way that the people of Sarajevo were able to survive was because the UN provided them with canned food and basic medical supplies.

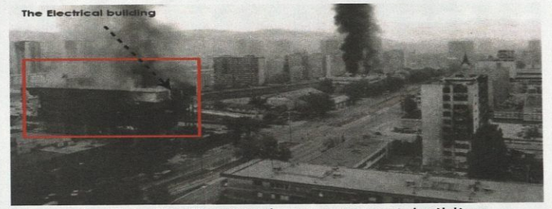

Figure 2: The Old Electrical Management building burning down during the war.
Source:
https://lebbeuswoods.wordpress.com/2008/02/06/the-reality-of-theory/

C) How Woods started his journey in Sarajevo

In Lebbeus Wood's website he states he was invited to the Sarajevo International Film and Theater Festival. Lebbeus Woods was invited to Sarajevo in November of 1993. His main aim was to help architects understand how they can contribute in finding solutions to provide better living for the people of Bosnia not only during the war, but also most importantly after the war.

The Electrical Management Building, along with the service, civic and religious buildings was the main symbols of the civic life in the city, that's why these buildings were the major target for the enemy. This caused the people of Sarajevo to suffer a lot. Woods proposed a theory not only for the electrical management building, but also for other public buildings in the city of Sarajevo.

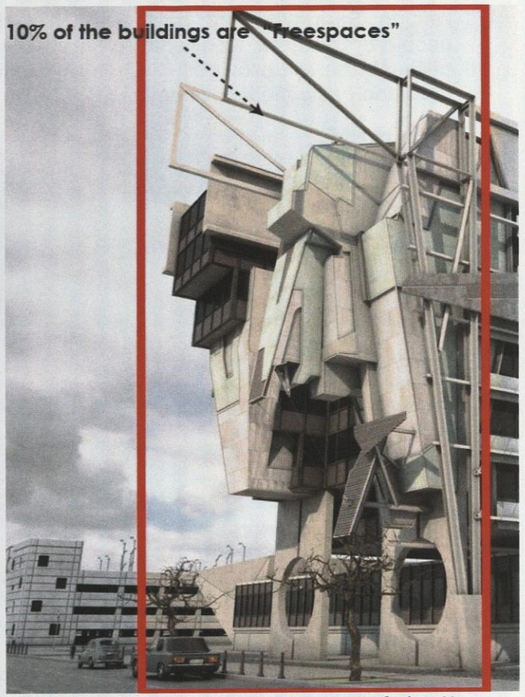

Figure 3: showing an exterior view of the New Electrical Management building.
Source:
https://lebbeuswoods.wordpress.com/2008/02/06/the-reality-of-theory/

D) Wood's Solution

His solution was that architecture as a social act could help the people of Bosnia to rebuild the city. I chose the Electrical management building as one of my case studies because it explains how theory can be applied in practice and that they are not two separate things. On the contrary they actually go side by side together. Woods suggested that 90% of the building would stay the same for the people that wanted to relive the memory of the city before the war and 10% of the building was what he called "Free Spaces" which are spaces that have no labels or specific function, rather the people using the space will decide its function. As a form of freedom of expression and democracy to make them decide means that they have a say and an opinion that is heard.

Even though Wood's proposal was never constructed, I still believe that there is great potential in Woods's the concept behind his proposal. It's about the idea, the place, the people, and how we as architect not only convert our abstract ideas into a concrete project, but also integrate our designs to make them as helpful and beneficial as possible for the user of the building. The project also helps us understand how to inhabit different spaces with or without specific function.

REDEFINING THE ROLE OF THE ARCHITECT AND THE COMMUNITY MEMBERS

The work of architect and theorist Christopher Alexander and Dr. Abdel Halim Ibrahim helped me understand and set the theoretical work of redefining the role of the architect in the community. By setting the design process Christopher Alexander pattern language helps facilitate a better experience for the users in their own neighborhood, town, and city by making the community participate in the design and construction process of their own neighborhood or building. According to The Pattern Language, a set of repetitive patterns occurs. Those patterns are directly connected to a spatial logic with relationships in that place. Therefore, the pattern is considered a problem that is enclosed in its own context, so by analyzing

the context we can figure out a solution for the problem. Patterns are interconnected to communicate the identity of a region or a place and allow stakeholders to improve their own neighborhood, town or city.[ii] This is not just a way to decide good practice, a pattern is not the absolute best solution for the problem however, it is an efficient one. In his book, The Pattern Language Christopher Alexander states, "so long as the people of society are separated from the language which is being used to shape their buildings, the buildings can't be alive".[ii] That is the reason why newly opposed projects that are forced and unwanted by the people are least engaged by its inhabitants. The statement above also explains that long-term development can be achieved by a design that comes from within the community. As architect, Ibrahim states, "the task of architect/designer is to disentangle the patterns of the community, and discover their underlying geometry"[ii]. Ibrahim believes that the architect is a representative of the culture, and if an architect wants to help a society self-build its own, he needs to study and investigate the social, cultural and economic forces in that specific community. Dr. Ibrahim proposed in his Ph.D., the building concept that works as a tool to link the community with the built environment. According to Ibrahim in The Building Ceremony, "the order of the community is identified, the creative energy of people is released, and the community resources and skills are regenerated."[ii] The Building Ceremony advocates better productivity and performance. By improving the building efficacy and productivity can result in economic growth, make the people actively, and creatively build their own communities. This will result in a new cultural identity that is created by the people that strive to build their communities themselves.

CONCLUSION

Redefining public spaces in an essential step towards making citizens gain ownership of their city. I was able to explain the status of public spaces in Egypt from my personal experience in the Egyptian revolution and proposed methodology of a participatory design approach to public spaces in Egypt. This approach will work as a catalyst to help the Egyptian citizen's gain back the right to public space. My proposed solution is not the absolute best solution for the problem however, it is an effective one. By redefining the role of the architect as an active member of the community that can manage and direct the community members to make them reach their goal. The public space proposed will get the community together to socialize, interactive and have all kinds of social and political discussions. A space that it a platform for streets artists, local craftsmen, street vendors and community events. Where citizens feel engaged with the community and make sure that they are the best protector if their neighborhood and city. I think that architecture is not just about context but it is also about the culture and the identity of individuals that bring life to such places and only at this point the architect will succeed in his/her design.

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[30]http://archnet.org/system/publications/contents/2980/original/DPT0665.pdf?13847692

[31] IBID

[32] IBID

[33] IBID

[34] IBID

IMAGES CITATION

Figure 1:(https://lebbeuswoods.wordpress.com/2008/02/06/the-reality-of-theory/)

Figure2:
http://www.domusweb.it/en/architecture/2010/06/30/lucien-kroll-utopia-interrupted.html

Figure3:
http://www.domusweb.it/en/architecture/2010/06/30/lucien-kroll-utopia-interrupted.html

Figure 4: A map showing the location of the The Maison Medical Accommodation Building.
Source: https://googlemaps.com

Figure 5 and Figure 6 : Showing an exterior view of the building
Source:
http://www.domusweb.it/en/architecture/2010/06/30/lucien-kroll-utopia-interrupted.html
Figure 7:
Source:

Figure 8: Google earth snap shot of the project location
Source: google earth[ii]

Figure 9: Arial veiw of the park.*Source:http://archnet.org/system/publications/contents/2980/original/DPT0665.pdf?1384769216[ii]*

Figure 10: Master plan of the project
Source:http://www.akdn.org/sites/akdn/files/media/documents/AKAA%20press%20kits/1992%20AKAA/Park%20of%20Children-%20Egypt.pdf [ii]

Figure 11&12
Source:http://www.akdn.org/sites/akdn/files/media/documents/AKAA%20press%20kits/1992%20AKAA/Park%20of%20Children-%20Egypt.pdf [ii]

Figure 13: Community gathering events
Source:http://www.akdn.org/sites/akdn/files/media/documents/AKAA%20press%20kits/1992%20AKAA/Park%20of%20Children-%20Egypt.pdf[ii]

Figure 14:
Source:

Figure 15: Local labor and local material
Source:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/media/images/45826000/jpg/_45826090_hands766.jpg

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Addendum

SAMIA EID
Miami University

My Journey

Throughout my life I always liked to sketch and was always interested in the field of creative arts. I believe that architecture is the most public type of art amongst all the different fields of arts, where you can use design as a tool to make a difference in people's lives.

In my thesis project I tried to answer my thesis question: How can I an architect of the 21st century use architecture as a catalyst to help people gain ownership of public spaces in Egypt?

My approach was by learning lessons from my personal experience in the Egyptian revolution where people came together to participated in the different type of arts and crafts. Everyone was gathered in all the public spaces in Egypt for the common goal which is breaking all the barriers of fear and inhabits public spaces the way they are supposed to be inhabited.

My real journey began in 2012 when my family immigrated to the United States. Being the first Masters of Architecture student from an Egyptian descent made my thesis such an important part of my life for the past 2 years.

In the written portion of my thesis I attempt to establish the main design principles that I can use to move forward with my design project. With all the research I have done on the history of urban planning in Cairo and studying Tahrir Square as my main case study inspired me to my thesis deign project.

In my design process I tried to express some of the aspects of history and culture of the Egyptian heritage. I focused my design on the architectural experience where people get to have different experiences throughout their journey exploring the site. By abstracting that rich culture to reach the essence of such an experience. It is an architecture that celebrates the past, present an embraces the future.

My Presentation Feedback

I presented my thesis project on April 18th, 2017 I had a great conversation with the guest critics. I started off my presentation with a video to make the audience more familiar with the Egyptian context, specifically Tahrir area in Downtown Cairo and its relationship to the River Nile. They had wonderful insight on my project and gave me very beneficial feedback. They also appreciated my understanding to the heritage and culture and how I tried to integrated in a contemporary way that fit the users of the 21st century. Lastly, they agreed with the importance of social role of architecture and that architects should focus more on being the active agent of change in society.

Conclusion

This journey has been like a roller coaster for me. The amount of knowledge and exploration that I've had in the past 2 year was definitely more than what I had in my life time. Looking forward I would like to explore more the social aspect of architecture and how architecture can be a catalyst of change. I believe that design can break out of the boundaries of norms and help people live a better life. I would love to apply what I learned from my thesis project in the new chapter of life and my future career.

DESIGN PROCESS



REDEFINING PUBLIC SPACES IN EGYPT:
ARCHITECTURE OF CHANGE AND OWNERSHIP
EMPOWERED BY THE CITIZENS

gypt's 2011 revolution is a catalyst for a new architectural design proces to
reate urban public spaces addressing the neds of citizens of the 21st century,
d the remembrances of events connecting those spaces to the urban life .

SITE LOCATION

Vicinity Maps

EGYPT'S MAP

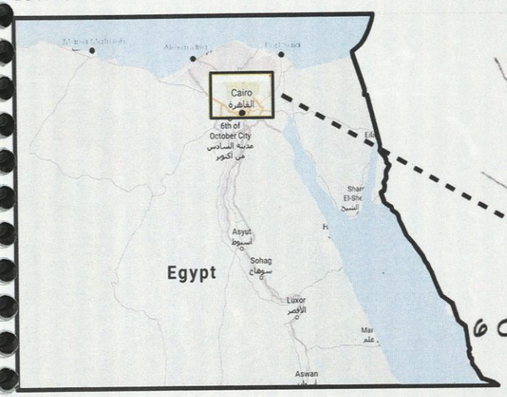


Figure 1: Zoomed out map showing Cario's location in relationship to Egypt as a whole.

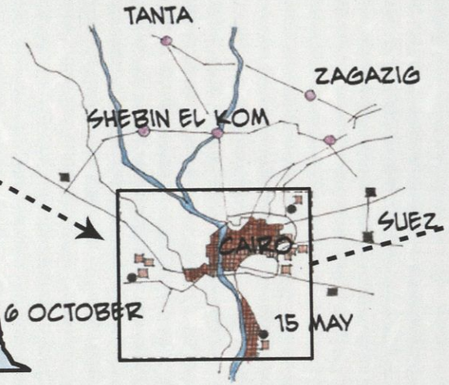


Figure 2:A Closer look at Cairo and it's suburbs.

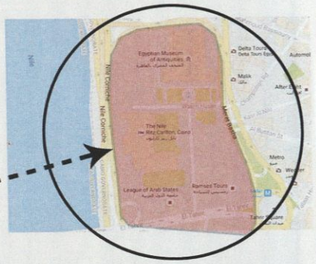
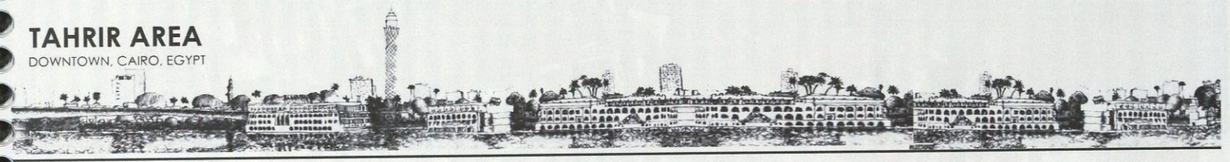


Figure 3:Zoomed in on the downtown area.

TAHRIR AREA
DOWNTOWN, CAIRO, EGYPT

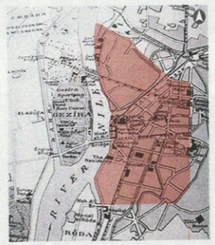


HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

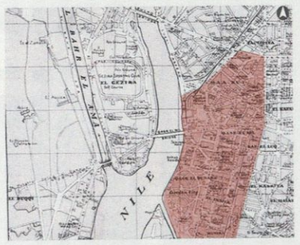
A map of Downtown Cairo before 1916 showing the ancient city.



A map of Downtown Cairo from the year 1916 showing the Downtown Cairo Area.



A map of Downtown Cairo showing the development of Downown's masterplan from1916 until 1933.



A map current map of Downtown Cairo showing the development of Downown's masterplan throughout the years.



Timeline of Downtown Cairo

369
Cairo was founded



1865
Khedivial Opera House was constructed.



1902
The Egyptian Museum was constructed.



19th Century
Tahrir Square was constructed.



1946
Mogamma El Tahrir was constructed.

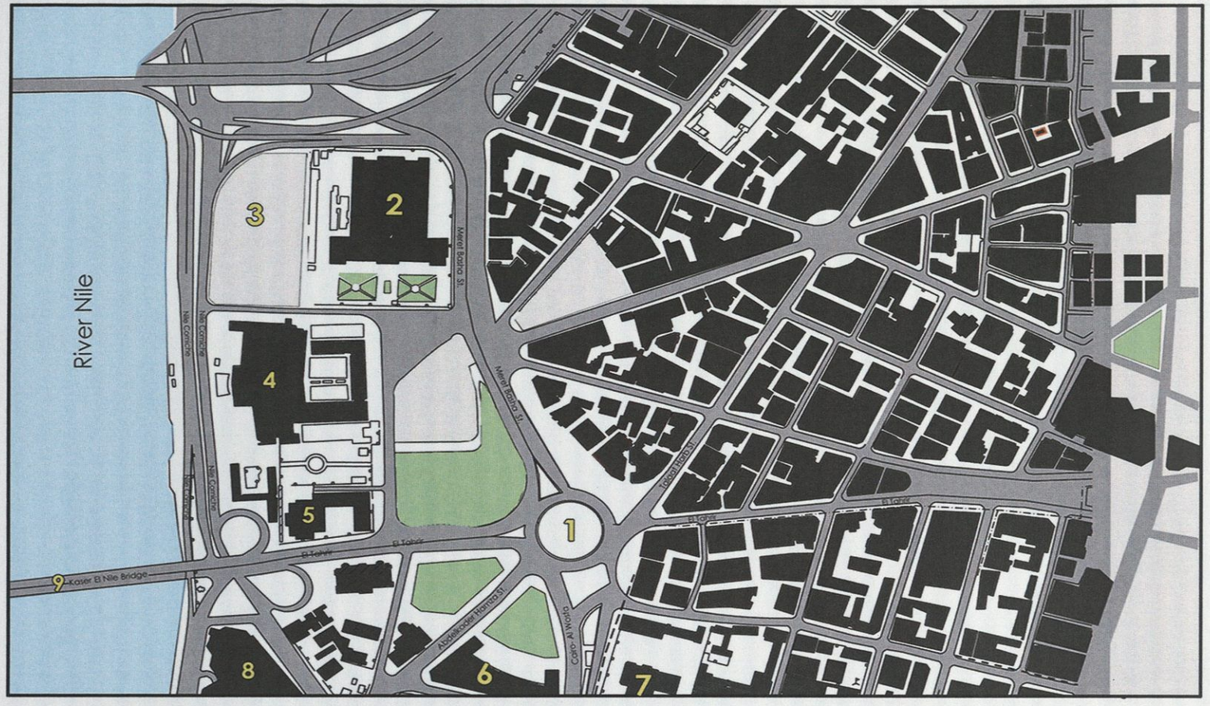


1964
The Arab League was constructed.



AREA LANDMARKS

Site Analysis



1. Tahrir Square



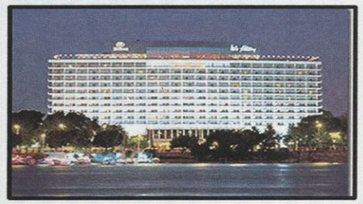
2. The Egyptian Museum



3. The National Party's Headquartes



4. The Nile Ritz-Carlton



5. The Arab League



6. Mogamaa El Tahrir



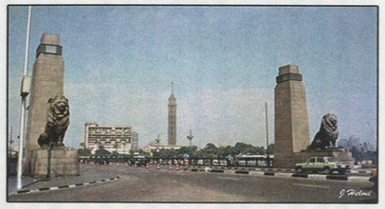
7. The American University



8. The American Embassy



9. Kasr el nile bridge



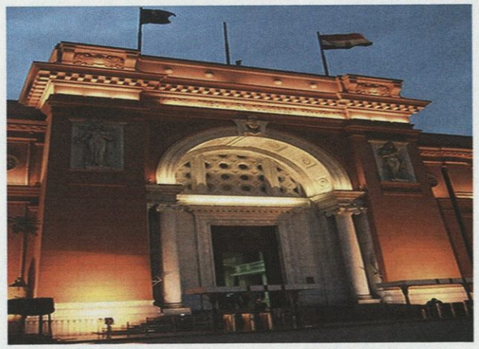
LAND USE DIAGRAM

Site Analysis





An example of residential commercial building.



An example of cultural building

KEY:

- ISM. Build
- Ministries
- Banks
- Adm. Gr
- Adm.
- Hospital
- Pedestrian st.
- Health Care
- Embassy
- Religion
- Tourism
- Musuem
- Education
- Hotel
- Cenima & Thea
- Retail
- Club
- Direction
- Vacant
- Gas
- Garage
- Culture
- Street



SITE ANALYSIS

Site Accessibility

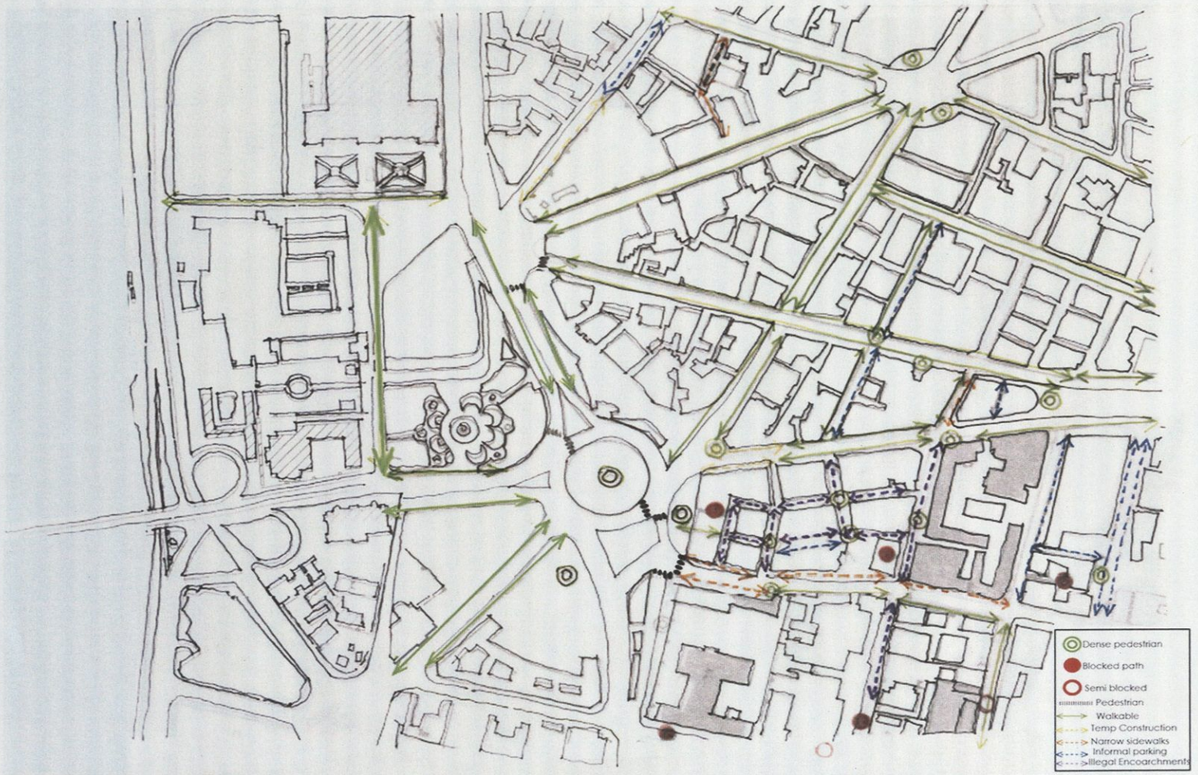




Figure 1 : Showing a blocked street



Figure 2 : Showing a semi-blocked stree



Figure 3 : Showing a fence on the curb blocking half the curb.

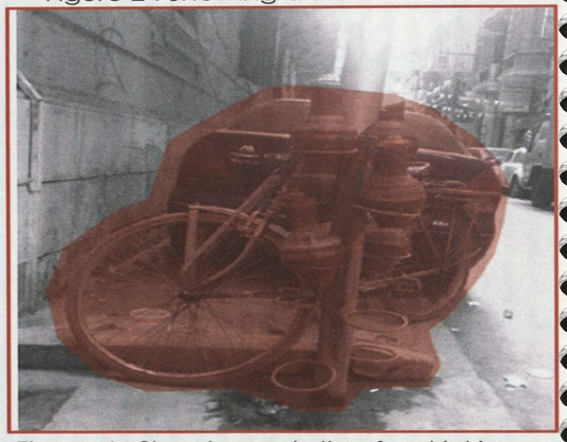
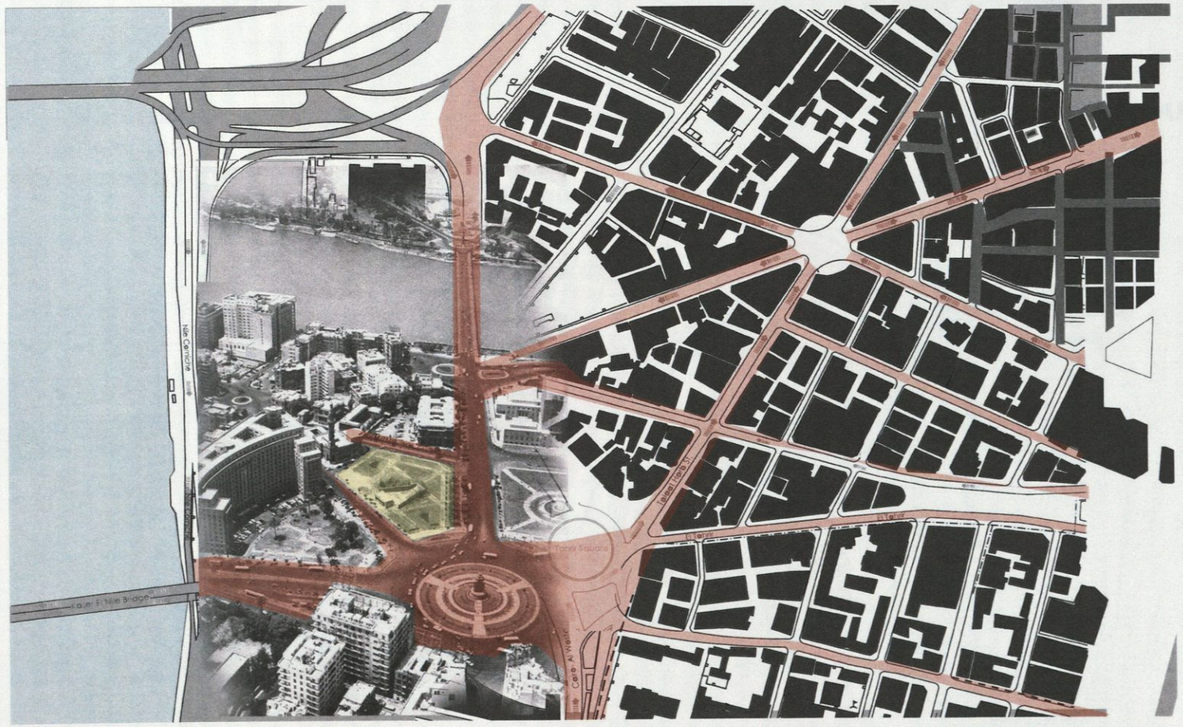


Figure 4 : Showing a station for drinking wate on the curb.

EARLY COLLAGES

Conceptual Collages



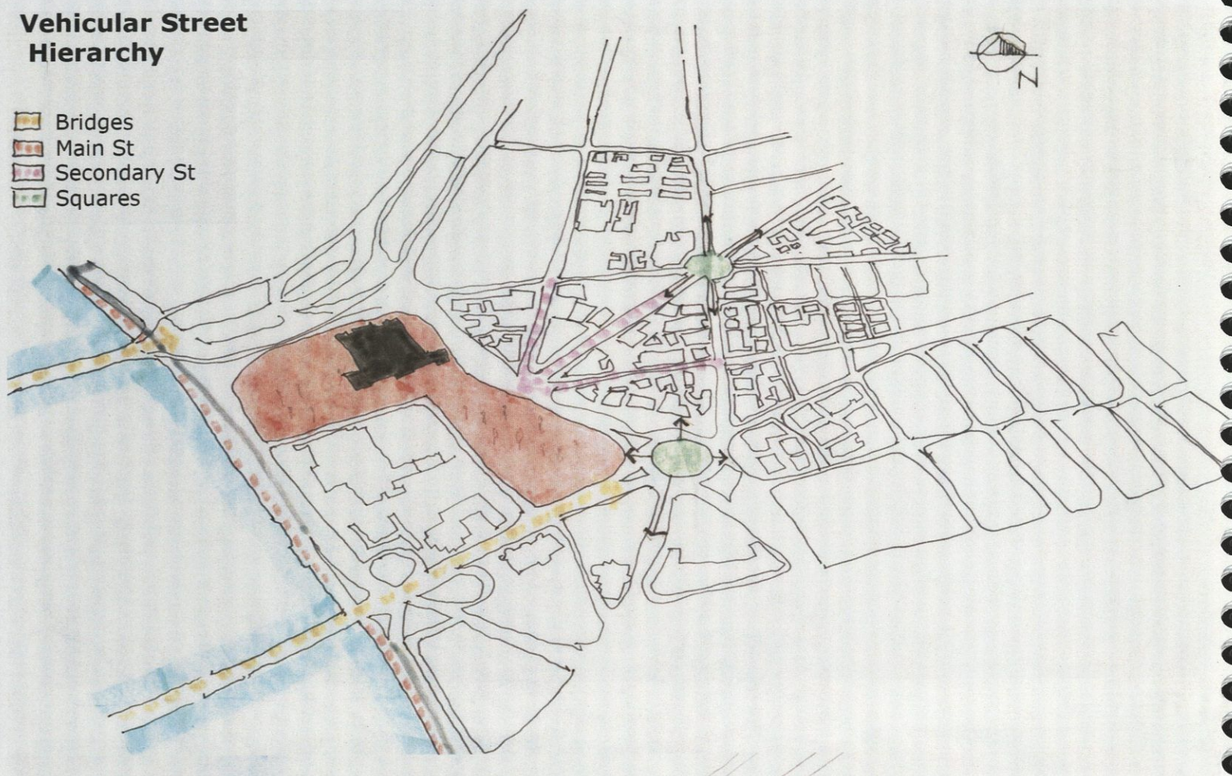


SITE ANALYSIS

Site Diagrams

Vehicular Street Hierarchy

- Bridges
- Main St
- Secondary St
- Squares



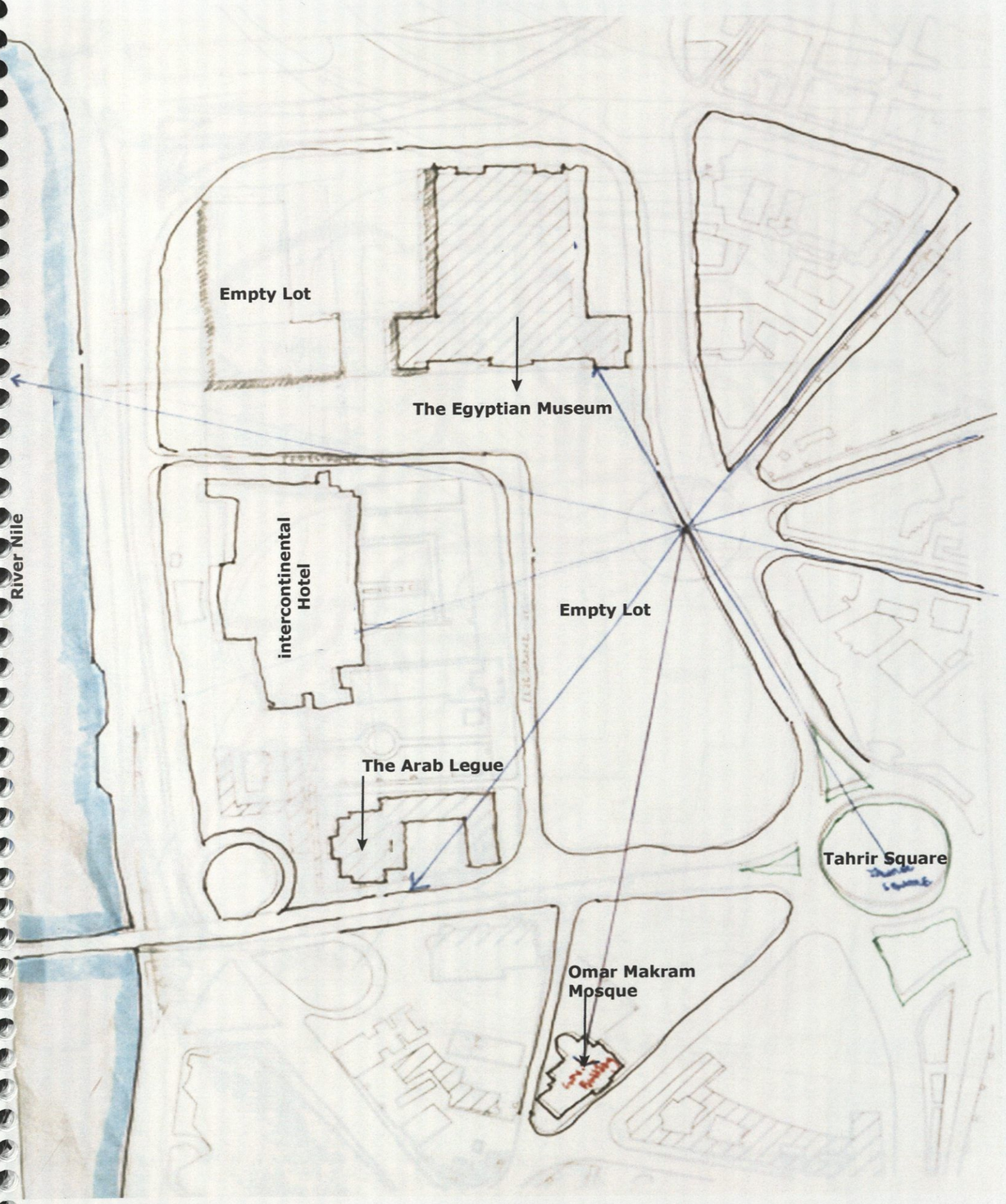
Unutilized Lots

- Lets Zip it!
- Site Proposal
- Connecting Area



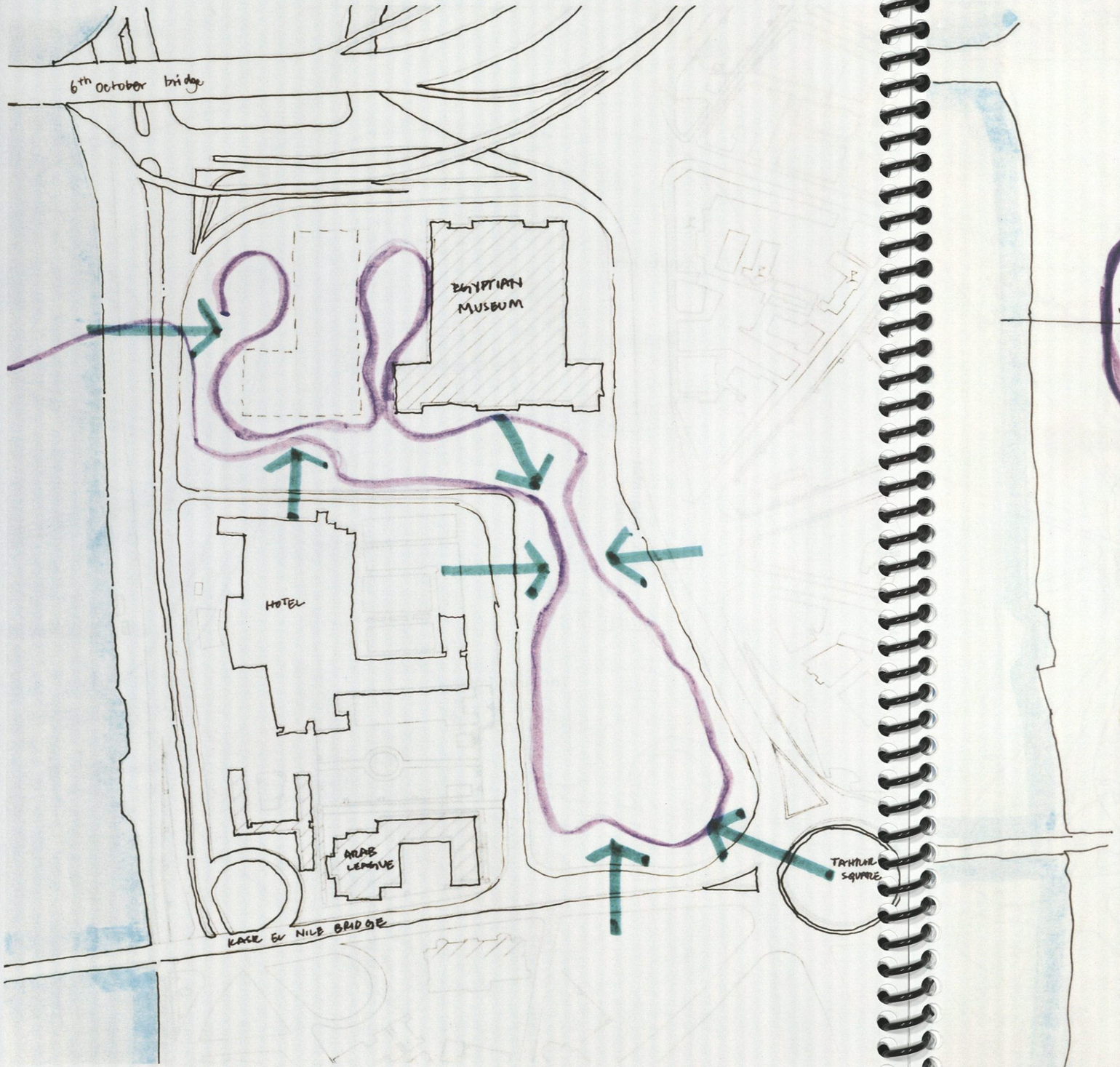
SITE ANALYSIS

Site Veiws



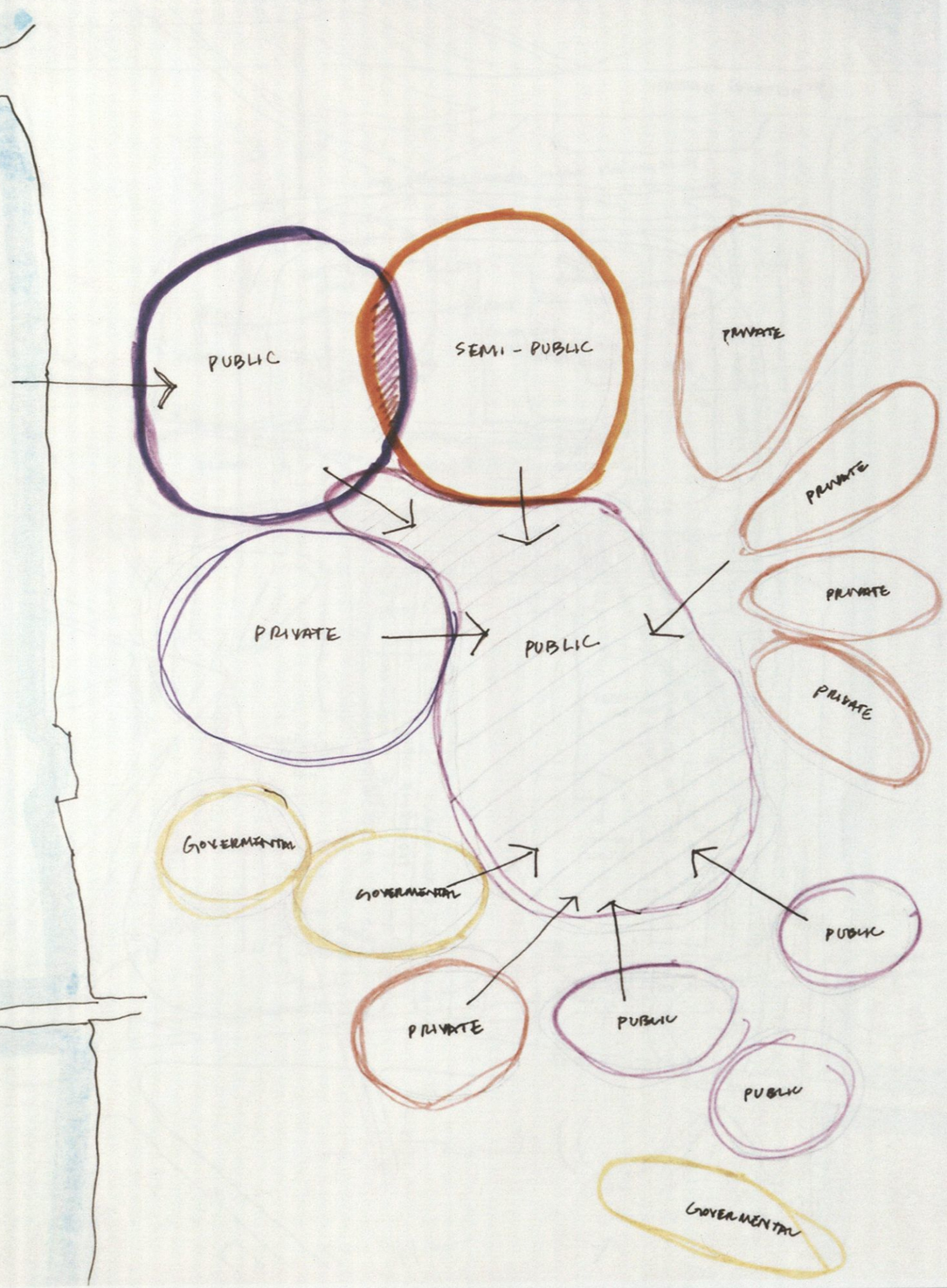
SITE ANALYSIS

Site Forces Diagram



SITE ANALYSIS

Proposed Masterplan Bubble Diagram



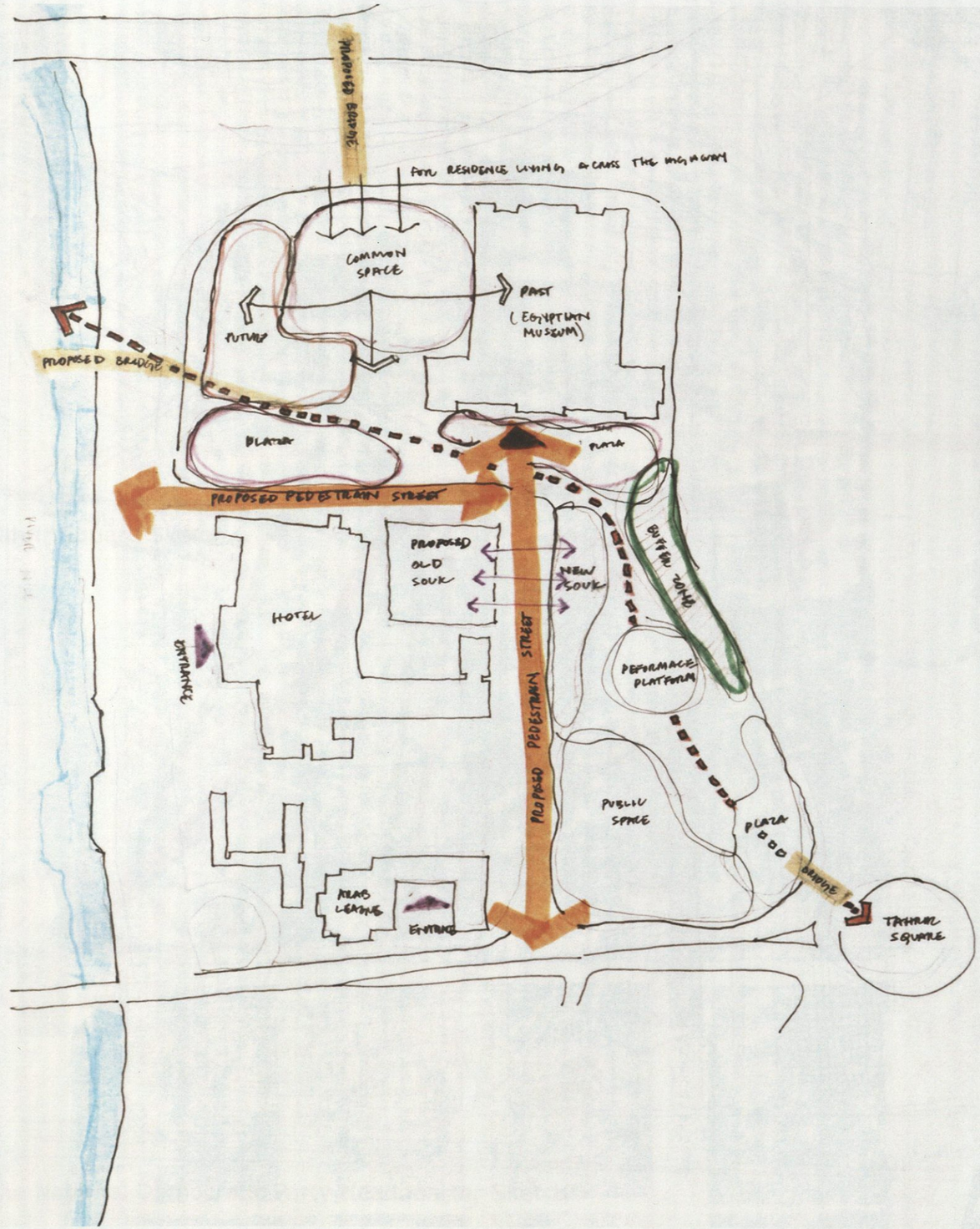
SITE ANALYSIS

Proposed Condition



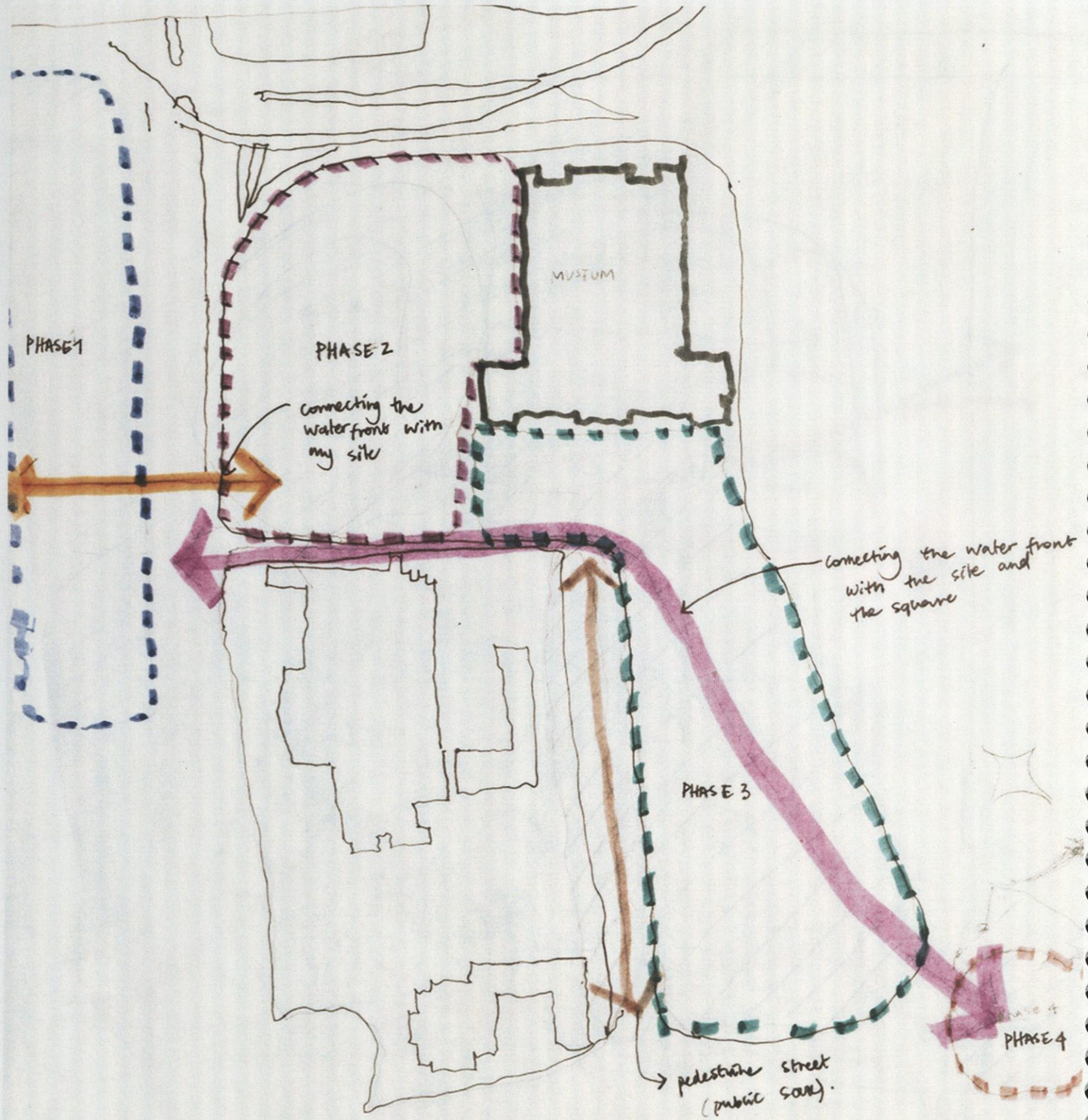
SITE ANALYSIS

Site Zoning



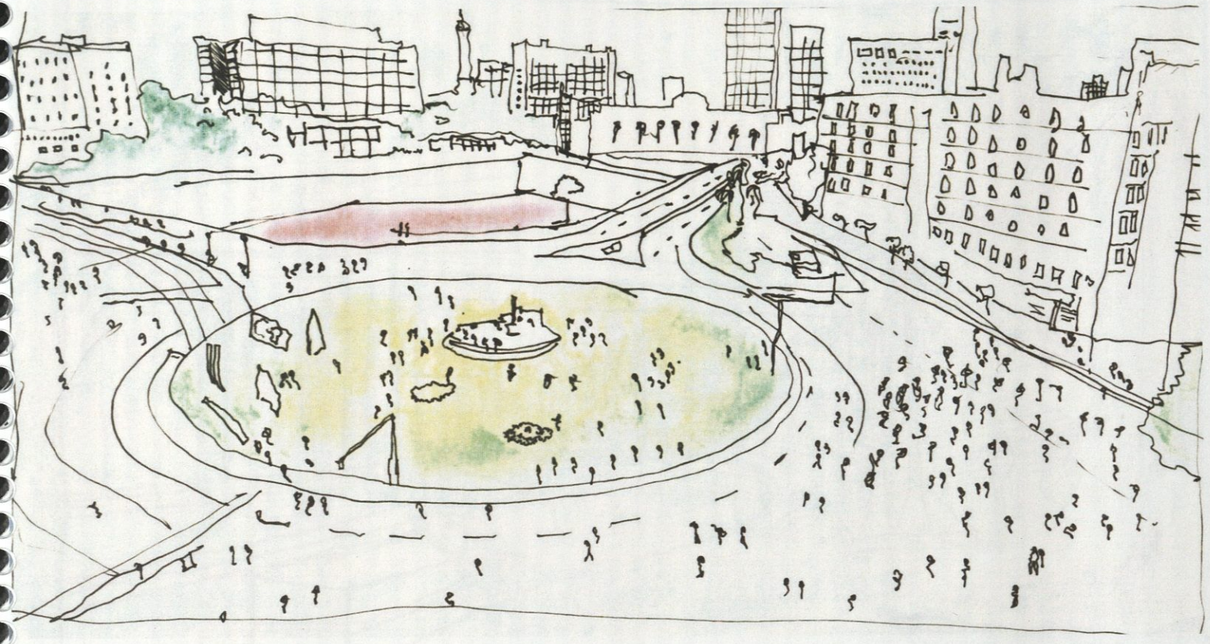
SITE ANALYSIS

Masterplan Phases



SKETCHES

Site Sketches



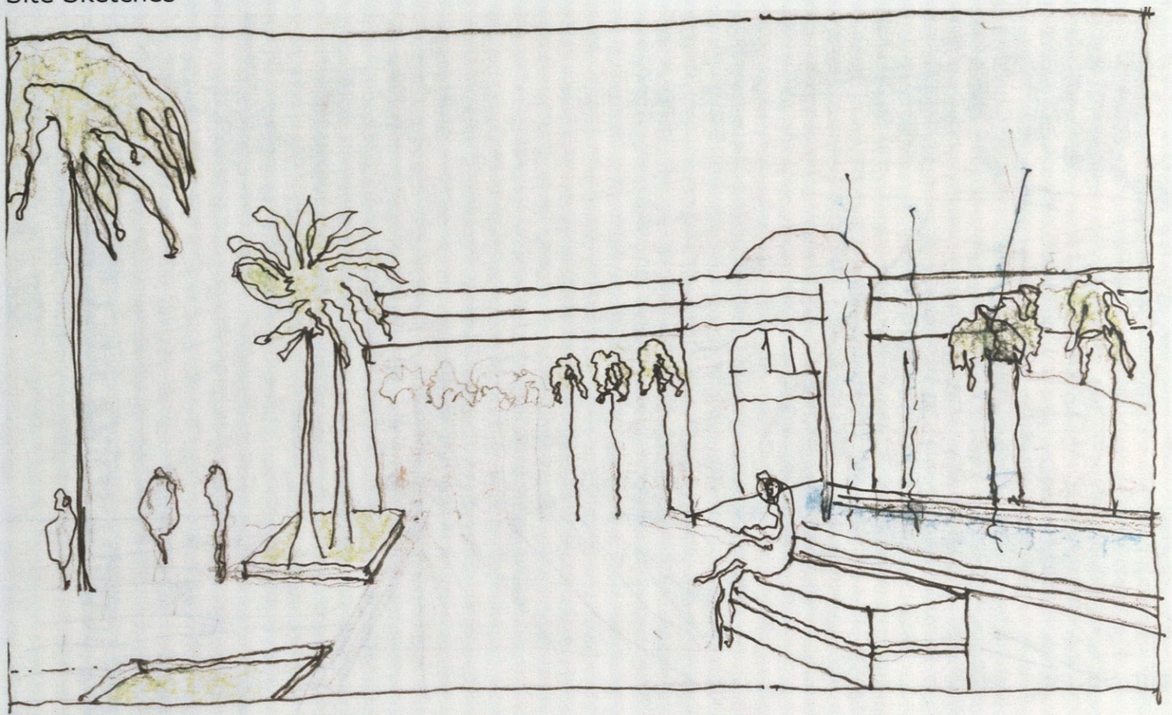
Tahrir Square Sketch



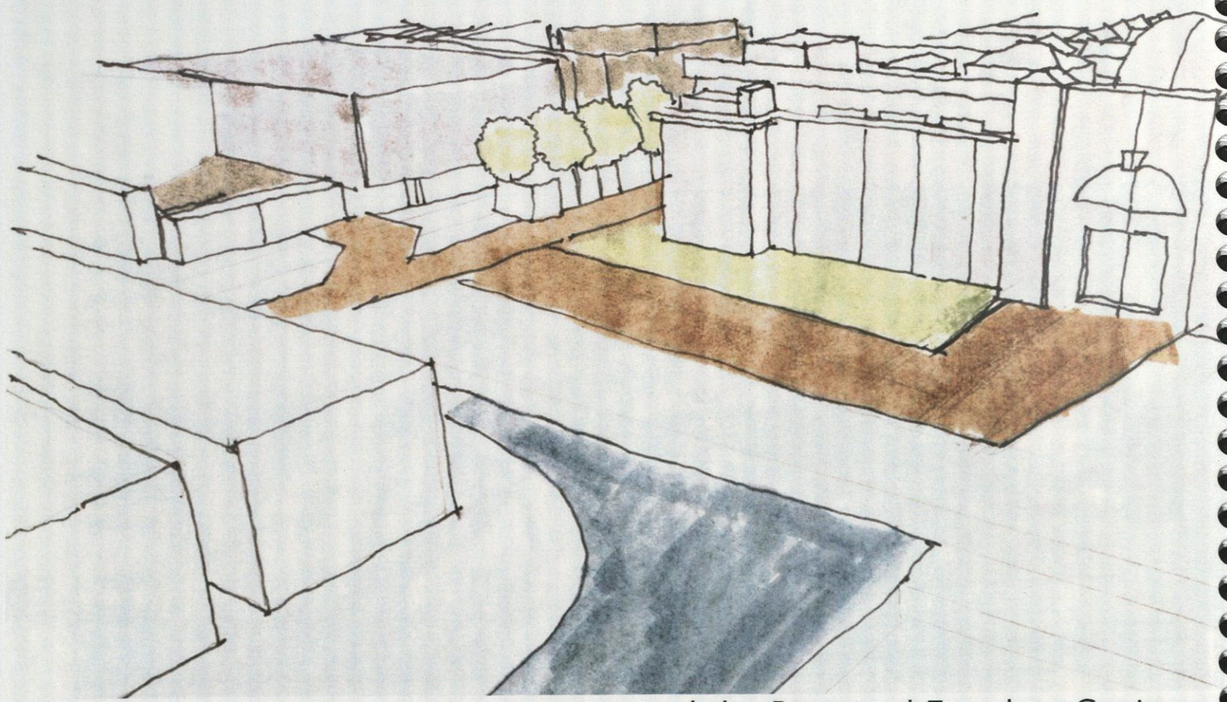
The National Democratic Party Headquarter Sketch

SKETCHES

Site Sketches



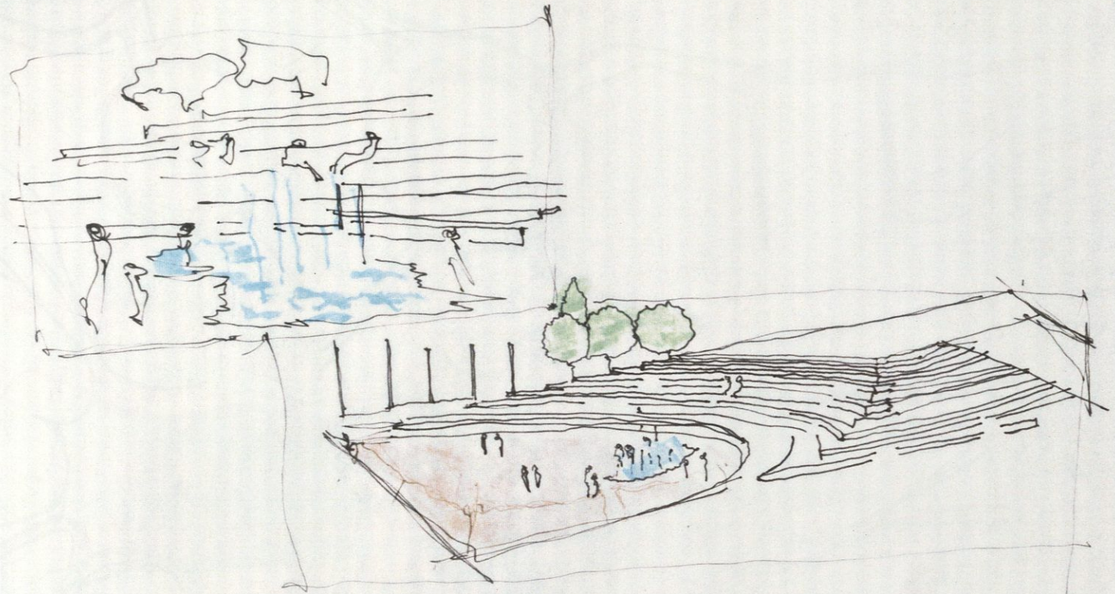
Proposed Museum Entrance Plaza



The Relationship between the Museum and the Proposed Freedom Center

SKETCHES

Site Sketches



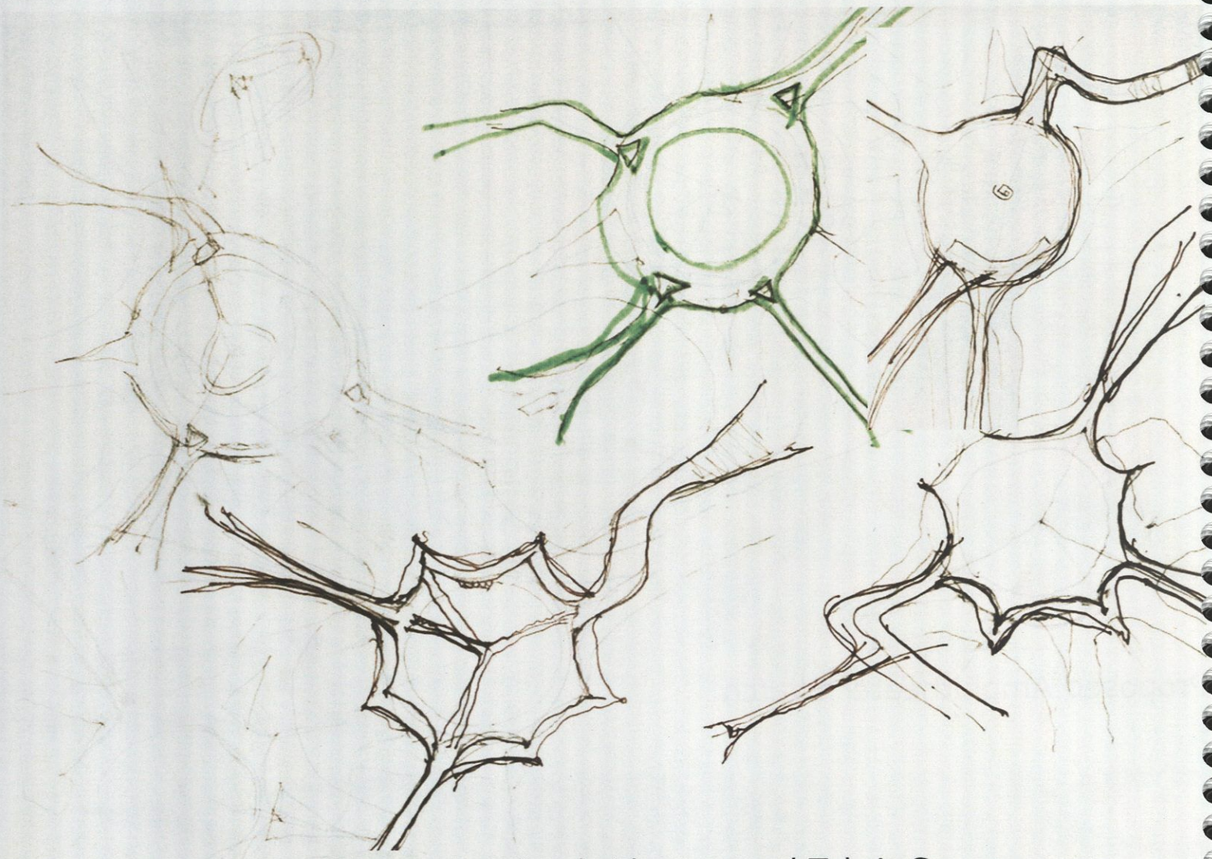
Proposed Amphitheater Sketch



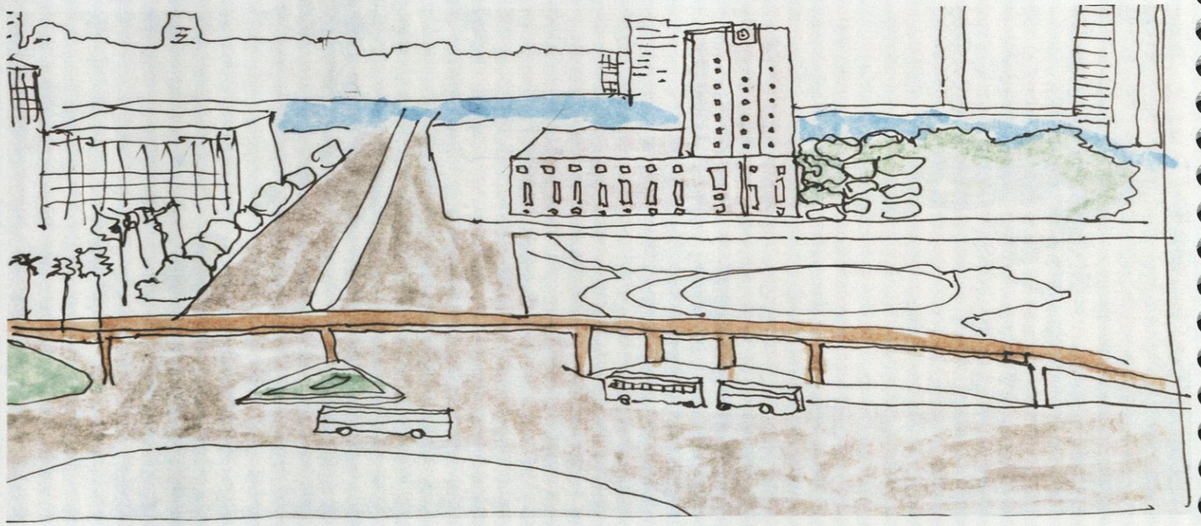
Proposal of one of the on site publc urban spaces.

SKETCHES

Tahrir Pedestrian Tahrir Bridge



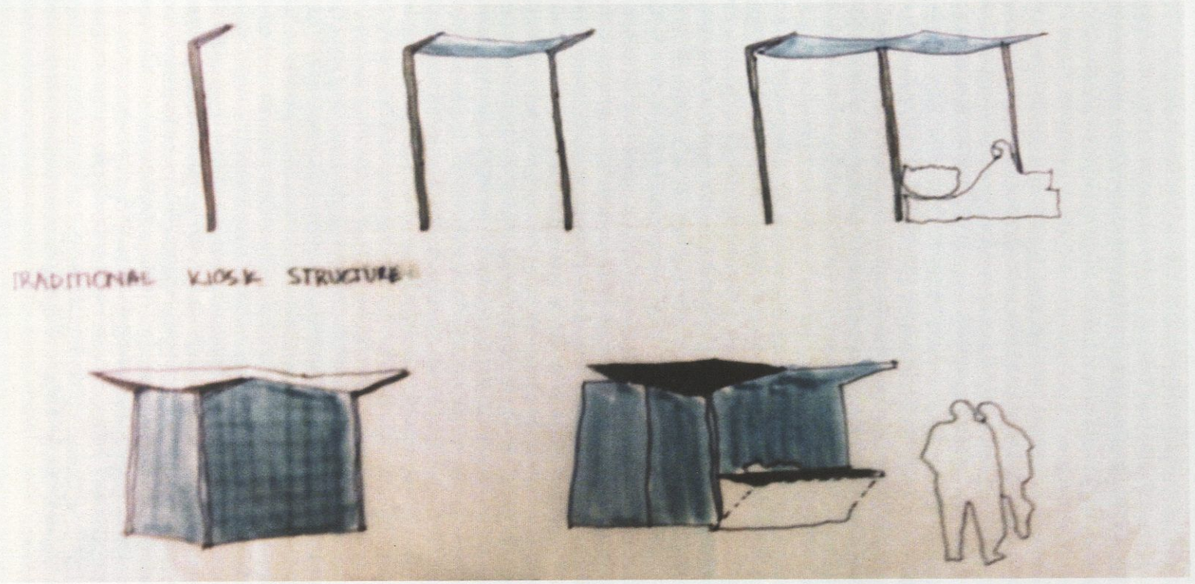
Different iteration of the pedestrine bridge around Tahrir Square



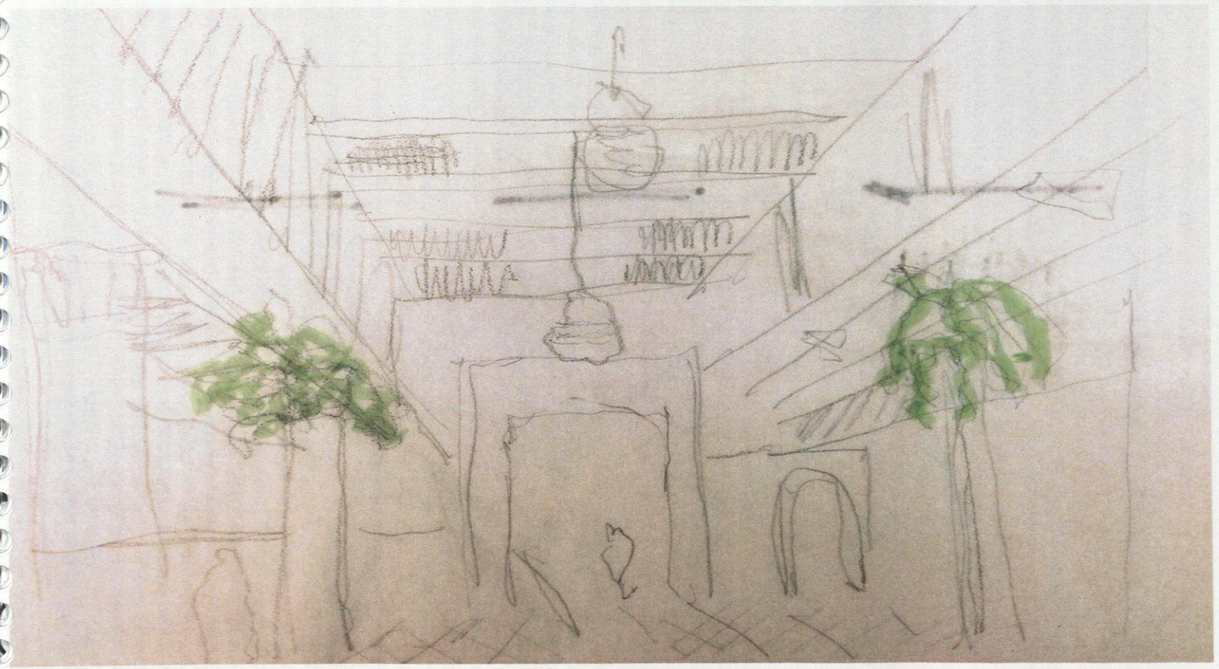
Proposed Pedestrine Bridge Connecting my site to the Square

SKETCHES

Souk Experiences



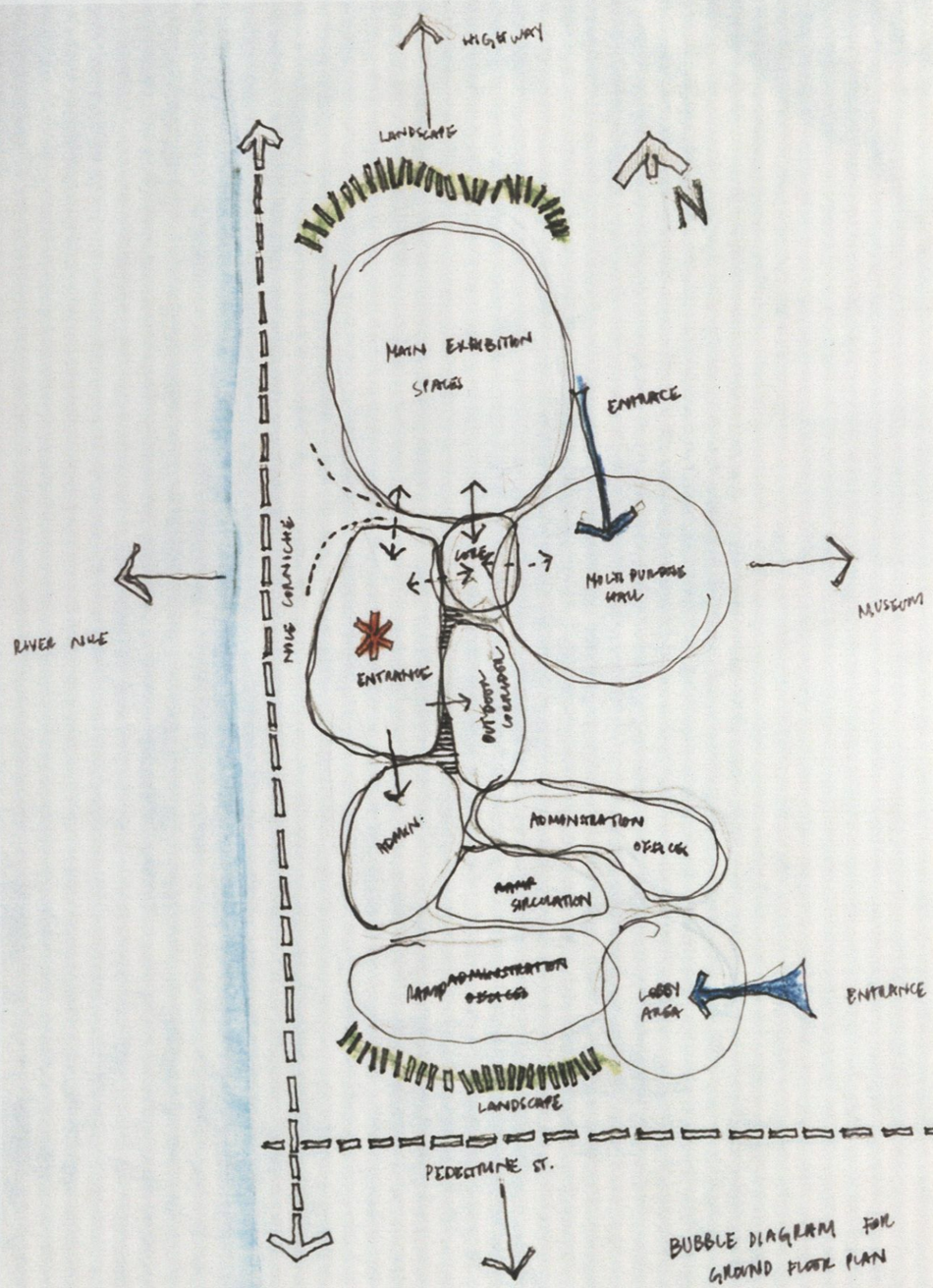
Souk Kiosk Structures



Souk entrance proposal

SITE INTENSION

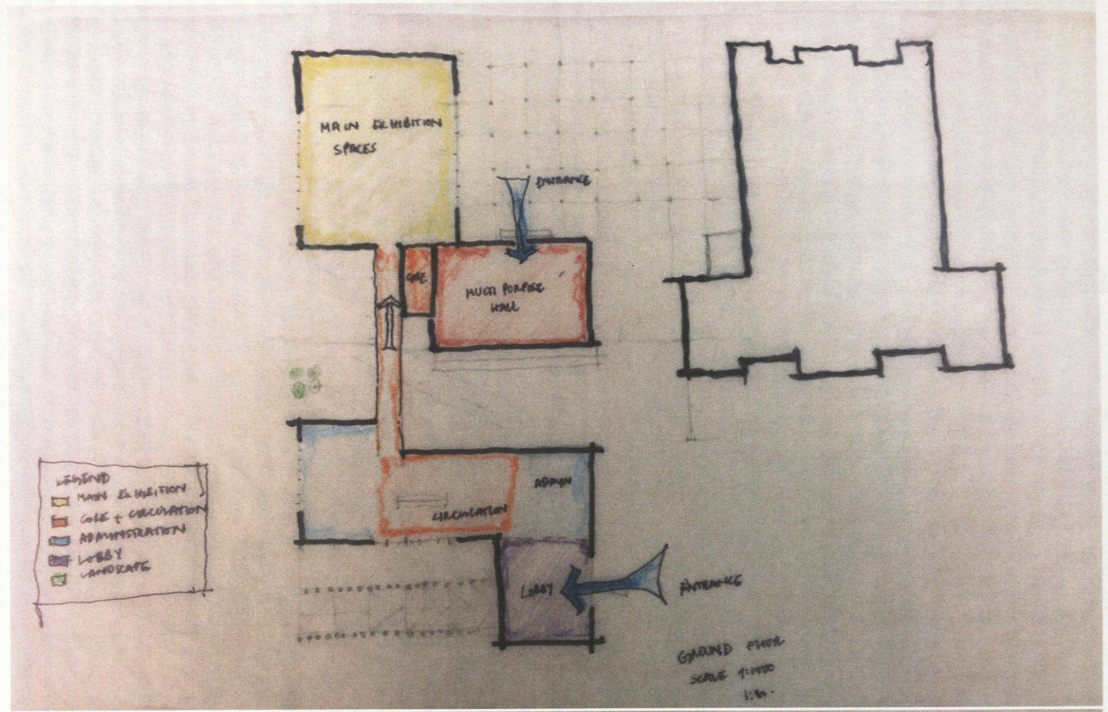
Program- Bubble Diagram

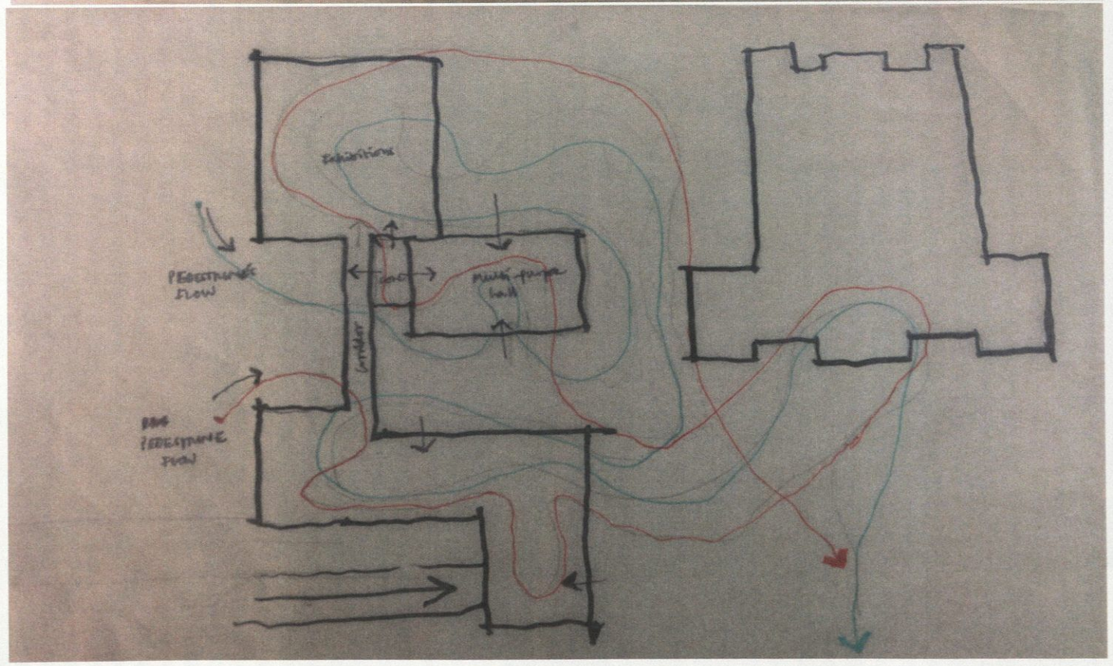


BUBBLE DIAGRAM FOR GROUND FLOOR PLAN

BulDING PROPOSAL

Program & Acessability





BulDING PROPOSAL

Program

FREEDOM CENTER

GROUND FLOOR PROGRAM

- AUDITORIUM
- WORKSHOP
- CUSTOMER SERVICES
- MULTI-PURPOSE HALL
- EXHIBITIONS → INDOOR / OUTDOOR
- CIRCULATION
- F&B

∴ GROUND FLOOR TOTAL AREA

9435 m² = 101557.5 sq.ft

FIRST FLOOR PROGRAM

- LIBRARY
- F&B
- PRAYER ROOM
- REST ROOMS
- GALLERIES / ENTERTAINMENT
- CIRCULATION

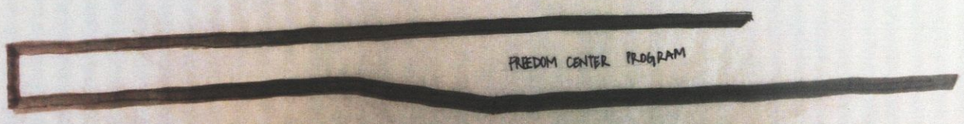
∴ FIRST FLOOR TOTAL AREA = 7098 m² = 76305.96 sq. ft.

SECOND FLOOR PROGRAM

- LECTURE AND SEMINARS
- CHILDREN'S WORK SHOP
- LIBRARY
- MUSEUM SPACE
- NURSERY
- MULTI-MEDIA
- CIRCULATION

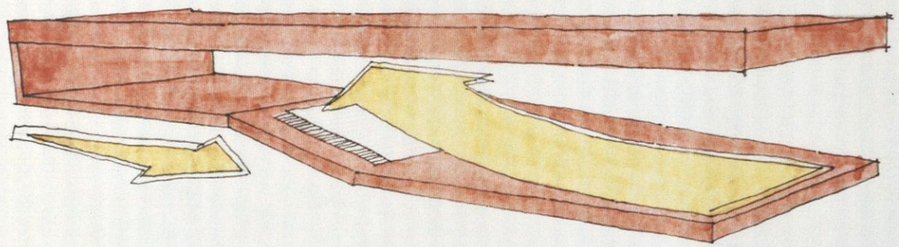
∴ SECOND FLOOR TOTAL AREA = 5247 m² = 56424.4 sq.ft

BTA . 24,194 m² = 260422.5 sq.ft

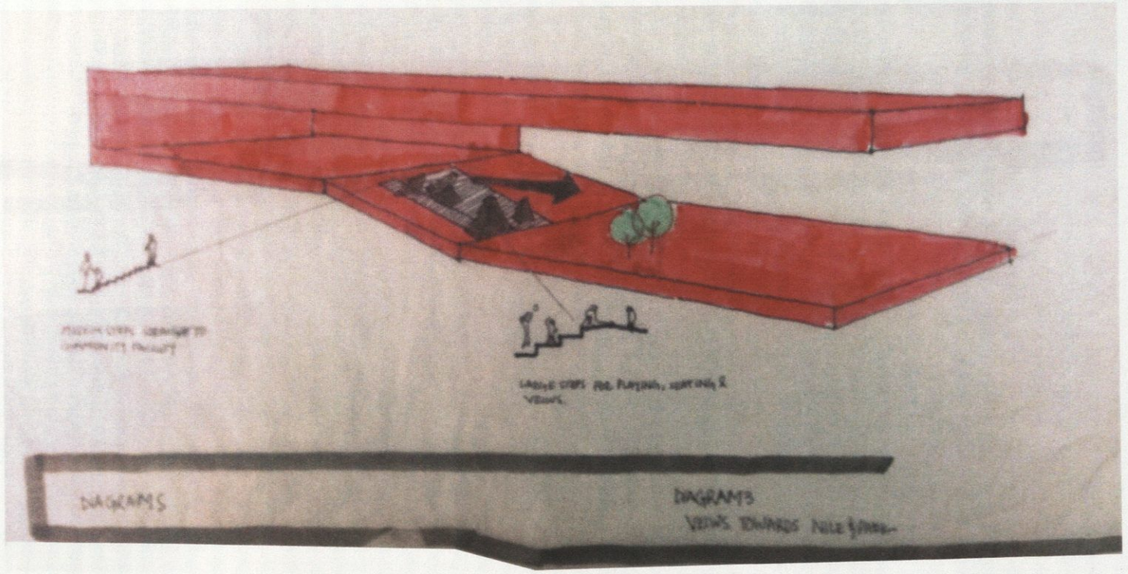


BulDING PROPOSAL

Concept & Form Development

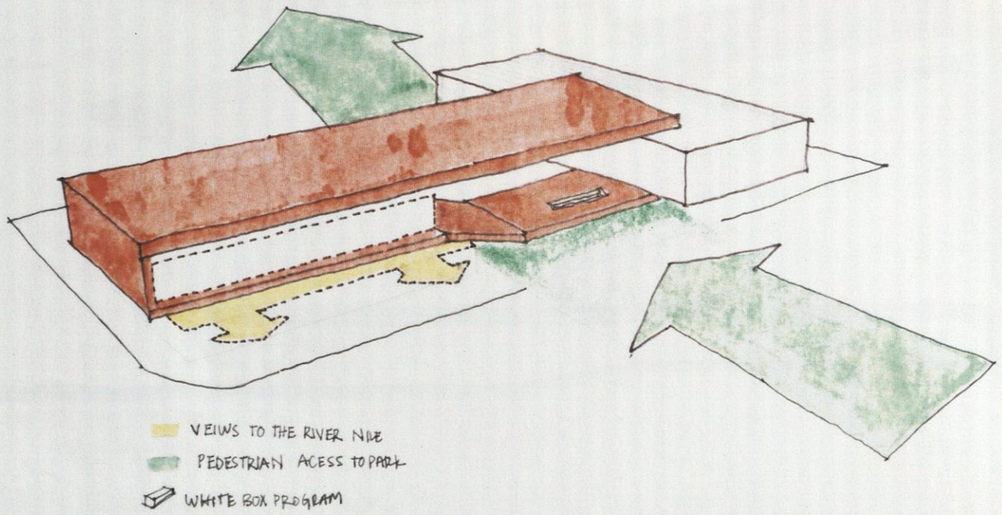






BulDING PROPOSAL

Concept & Form Development

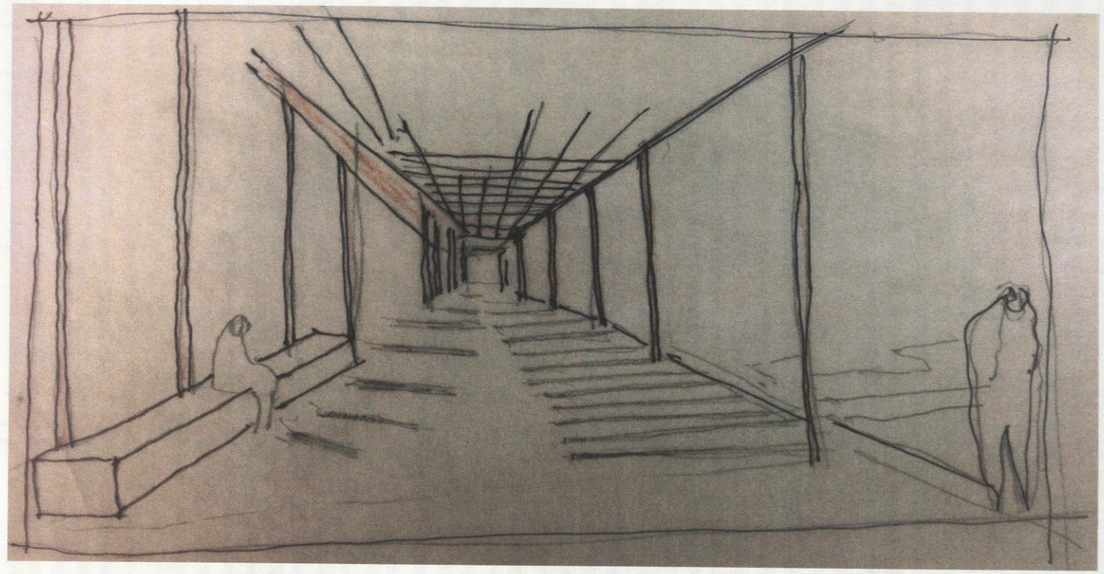


DIAGRAMS

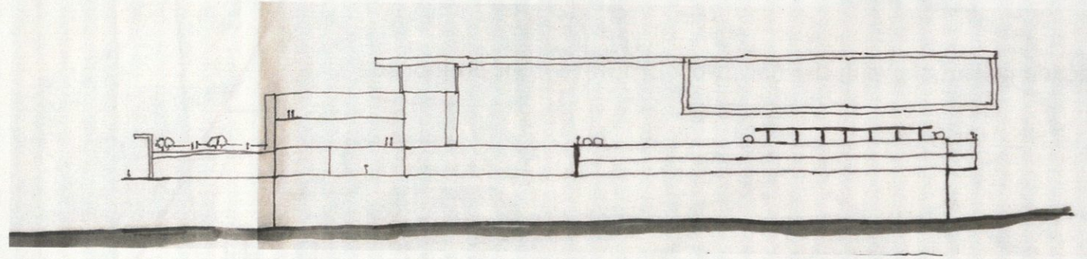
VEIWS & ACESSABILITY

BulDING PROPOSAL

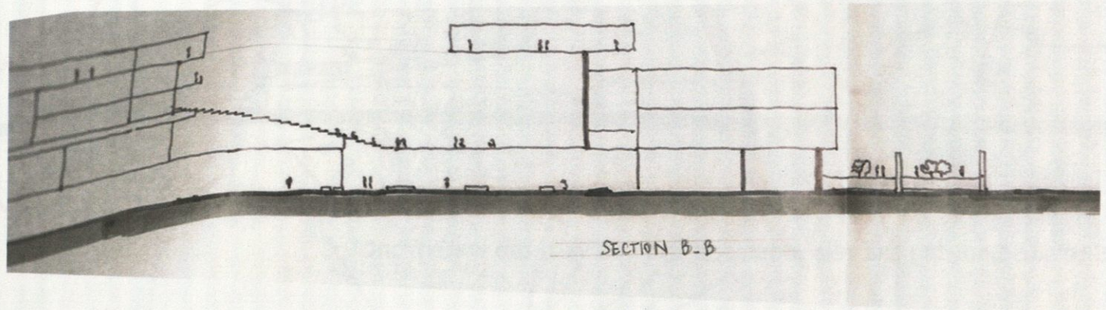
Concept & Form Development



Sketch showing shaded areas on site



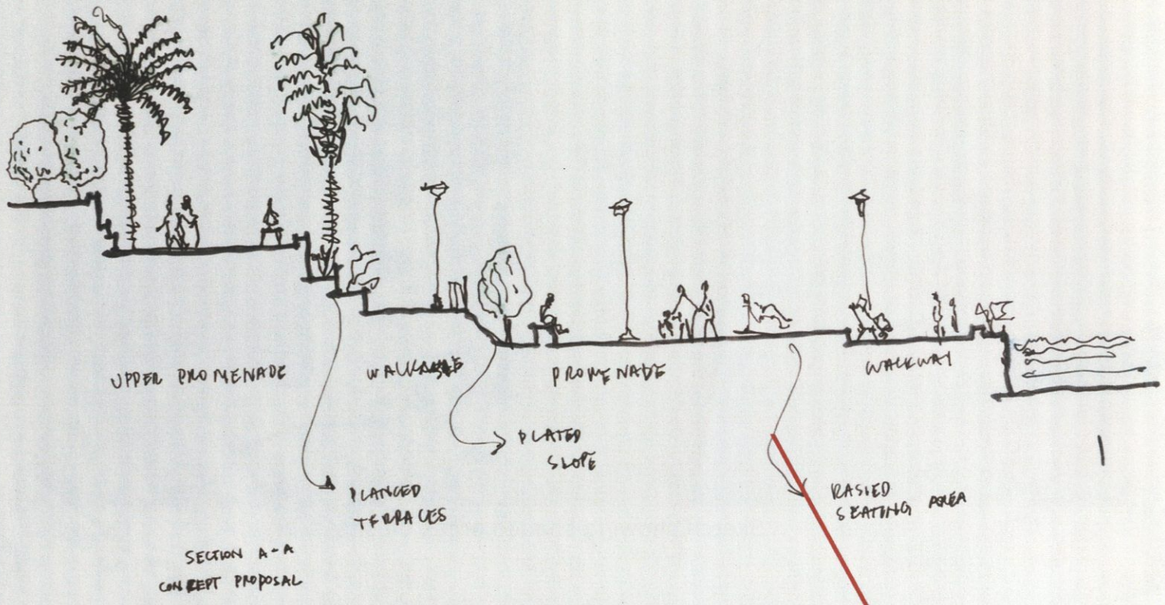
Section A-A



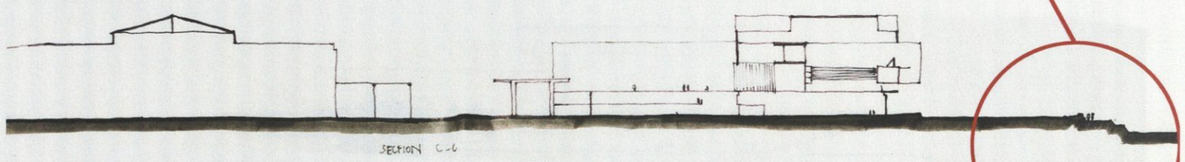
Section B-B

BUIDING PROPOSAL

sections



Section callout showing the new proposed waterfront promonade



Site site Showing the relationship of the site with the waterfront

MASTERPLAN PROPOSAL

Sit Plan



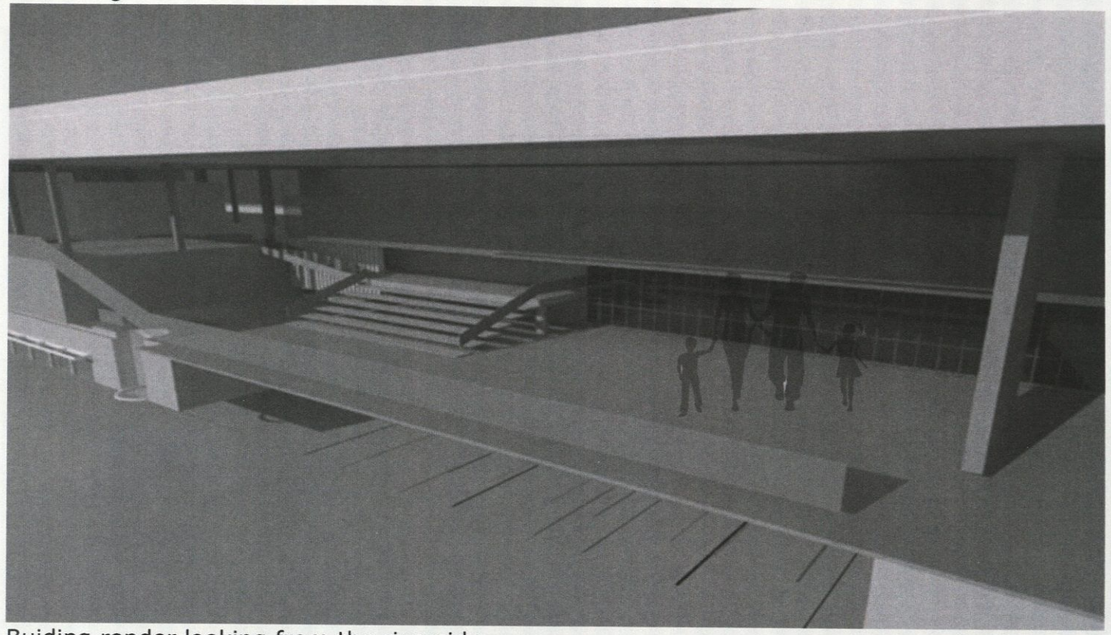
SITE DEVELOPMENT

Site Plan

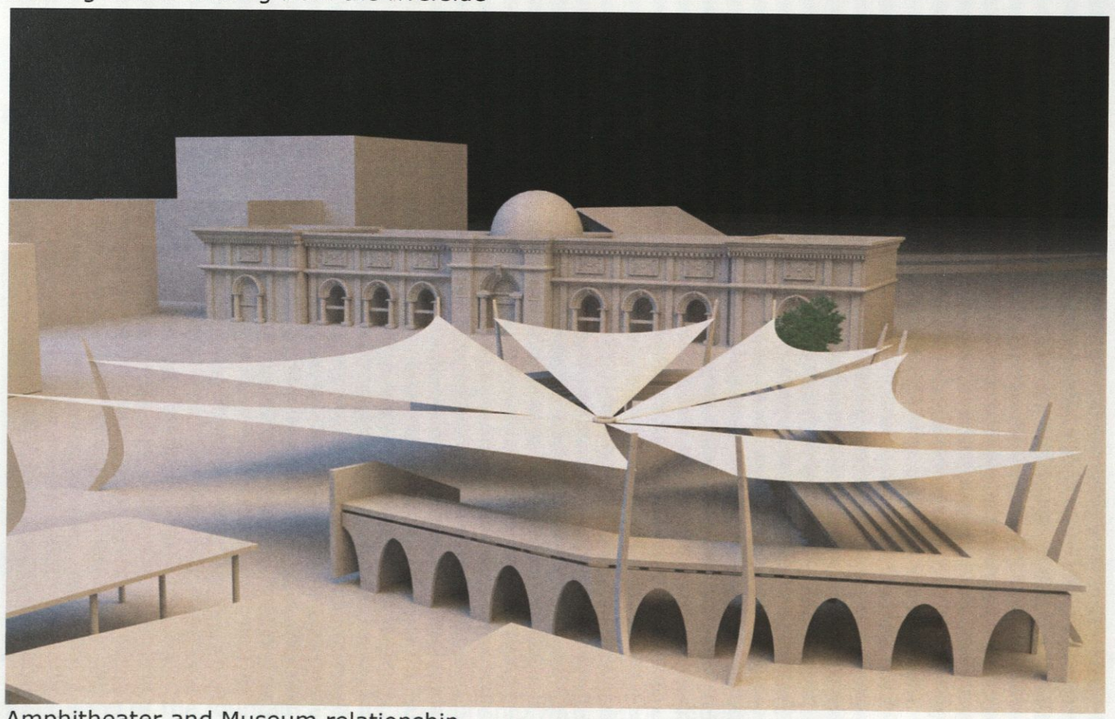


SITE DEVELOPMENT

Rendering



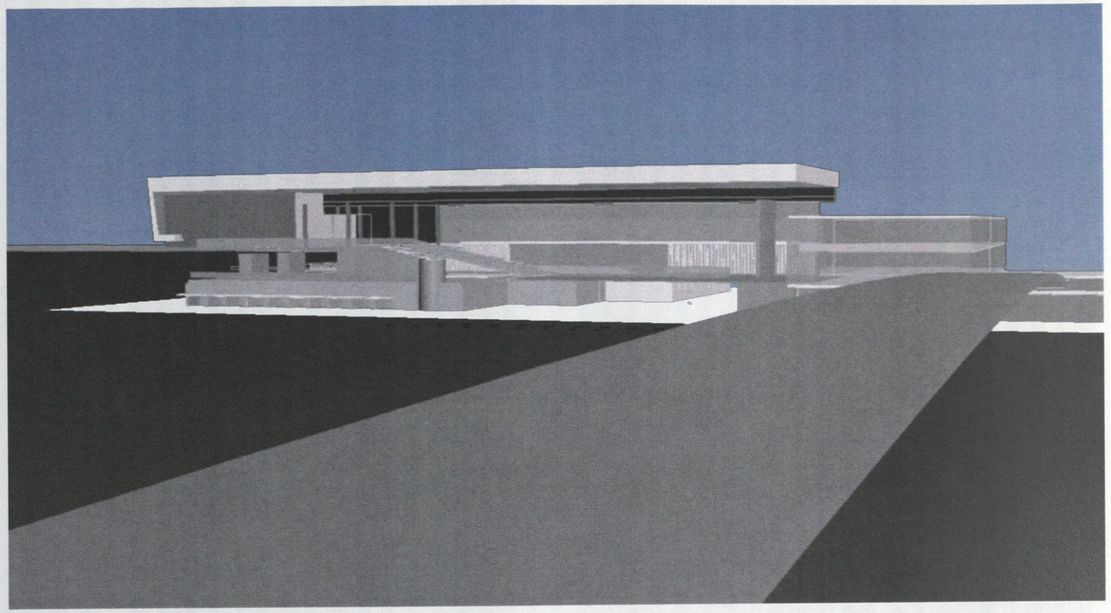
Buiding render looking from the riverside



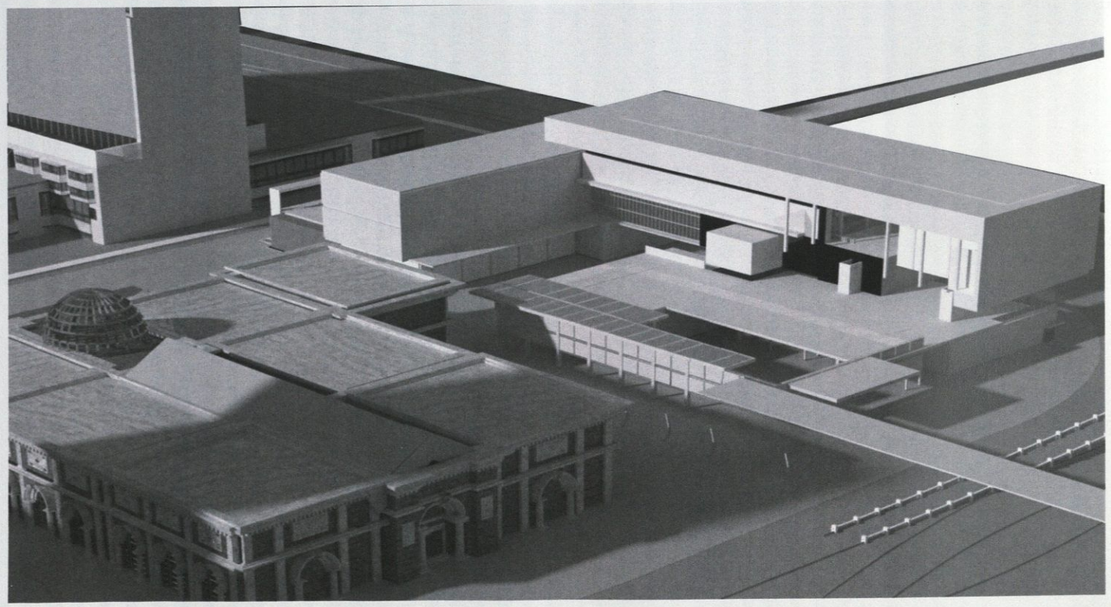
Amphitheater and Museum relationship

SITE DEVELOPMENT

Rendering



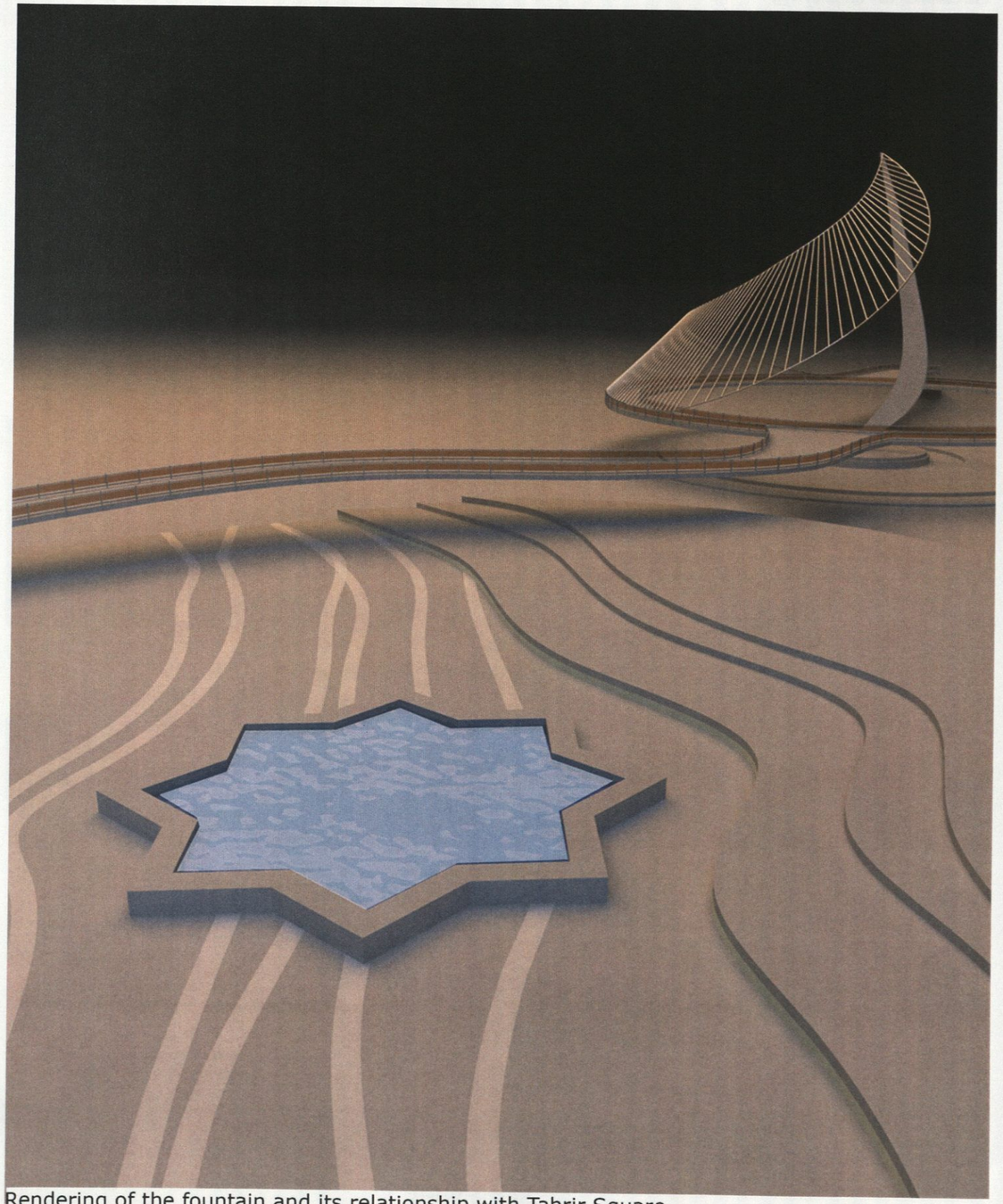
Render showing the relationship between the building and pedestrian bridge from the Gezira



The relationship between my building proposal and the Egyptian Museum

SITE DEVELOPMENT

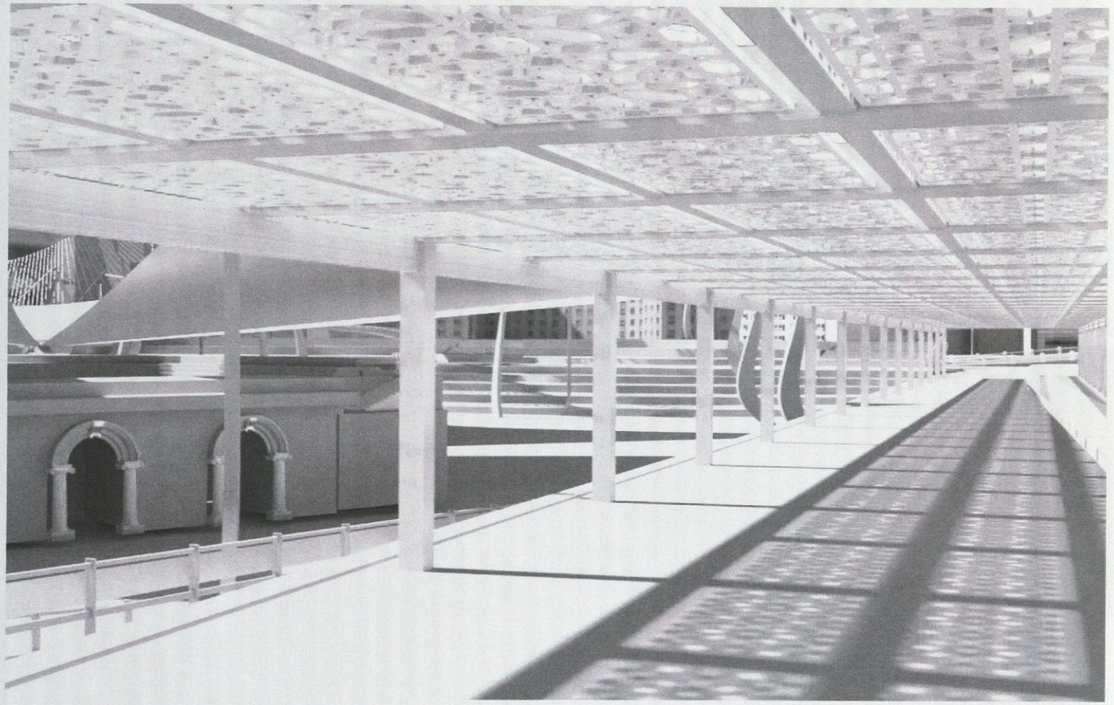
Rendering



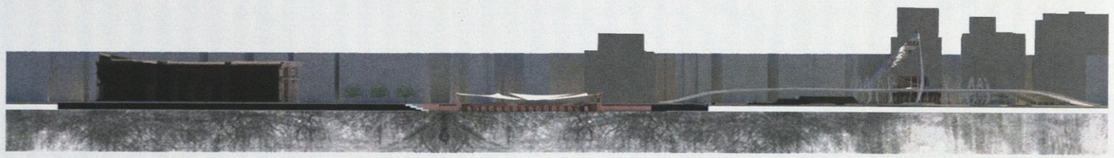
Rendering of the fountain and its relationship with Tahrir Square

SITE DEVELOPMENT

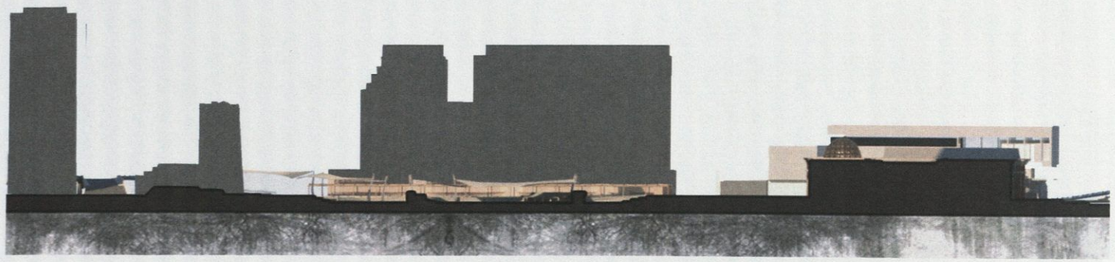
Sections & Rendering



Shaded outdoor exhibition



Section A-A



Section B-B

FINAL DESIGN

FINAL PRESENTATION
Final Boards



FINAL PRESENTATION
Final Boards



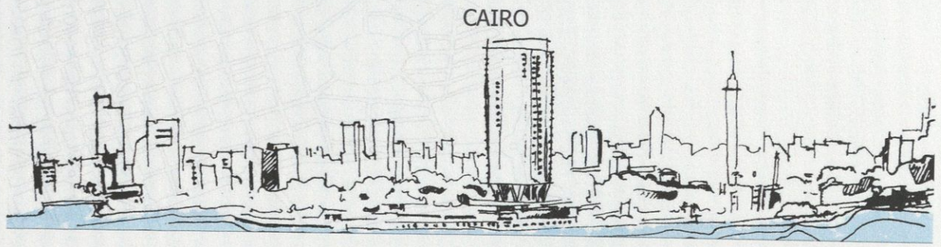
FINAL POSTER

Redefining Public Spaces in Egypt: Architecture of Ownership Empowered By The Citizens

DOWNTOWN CAIRO

Egypt's 2011 revolution is a catalyst for a new architectural design process to create urban public spaces addressing the needs of citizens of the 21st century,and the remebrance of events connecting those spaces to the urban life.

CAIRO

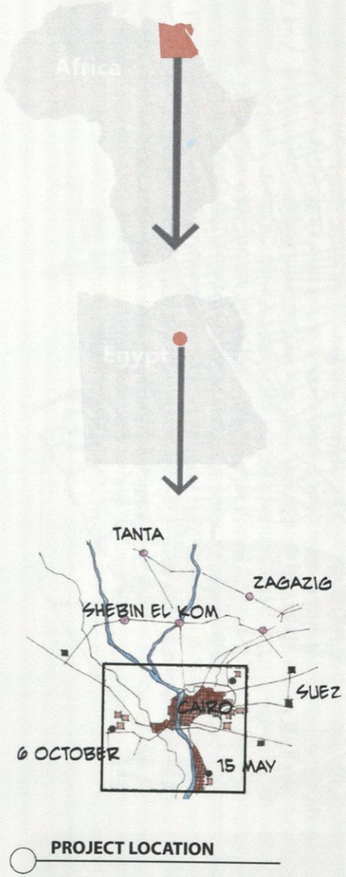


SITE DIAGRAMS

REDEFINING PUBLIC SPACES IN EGYPT

THESIS STATMENT

Egypt's 2011 revolution is a catalyst for a new architectural design process to create urban public spaces addressing the needs of citizens of the 21st century, and the remembrances of events connecting those spaces to the urban life.



PROJECT LOCATION

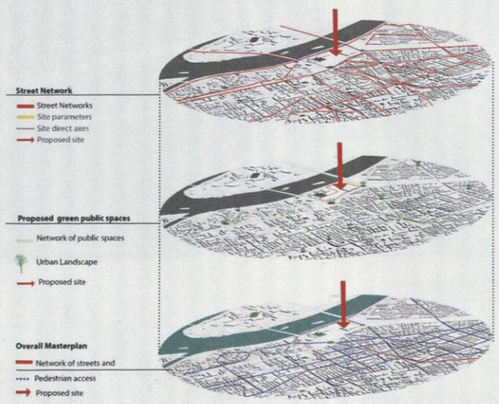


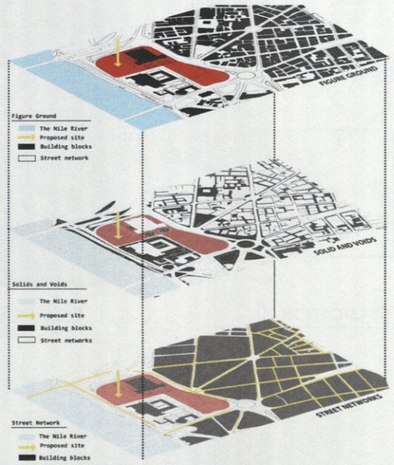
FIGURE GROUND MAP

SITE DIAGRAMS

Proposed Public Spaces Plan







MASTERPLAN ANALYSIS

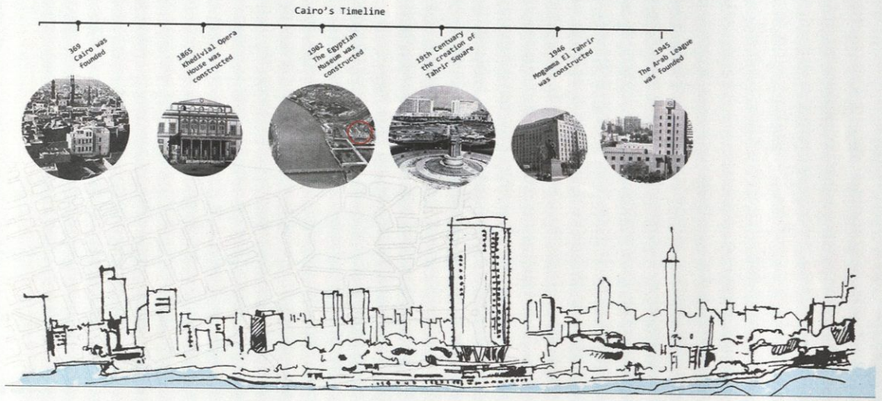
SITE DIAGRAMS











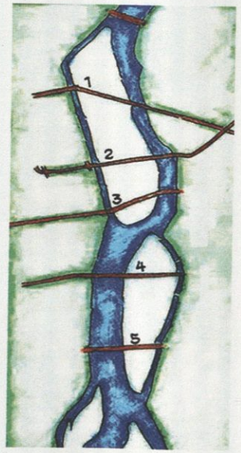




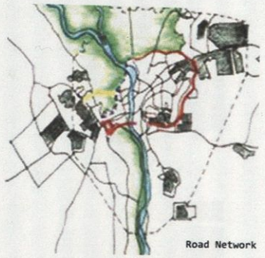
City Regional Relationship



Existing Bridges



Existing Bridges



Road Network



SITE DIAGRAMS

Site Analysis

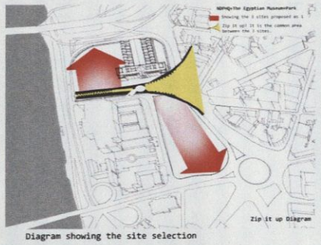


Diagram showing the site selection



Diagram Showing the Site footprint

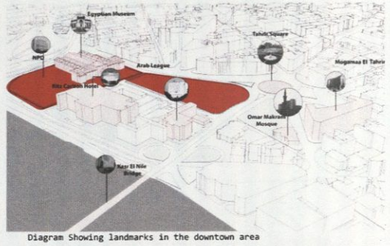
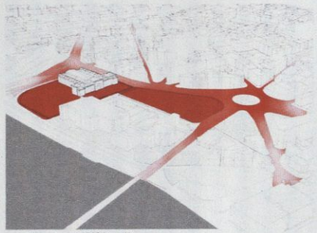
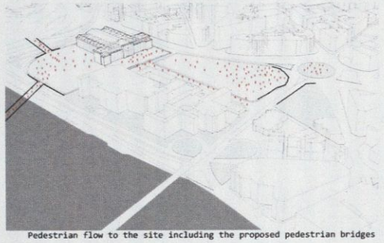


Diagram Showing landmarks in the downtown area



Site accessibility diagram



Pedestrian flow to the site including the proposed pedestrian bridges

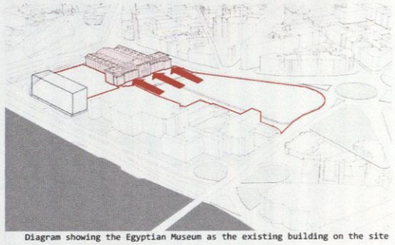


Diagram showing the Egyptian Museum as the existing building on the site

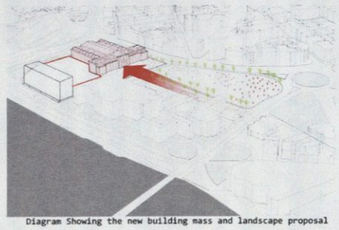


Diagram Showing the new building mass and landscape proposal

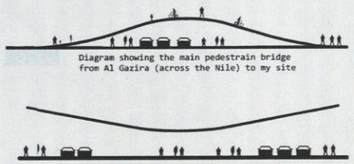
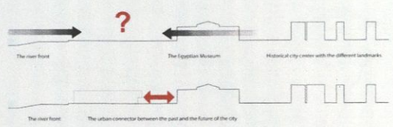
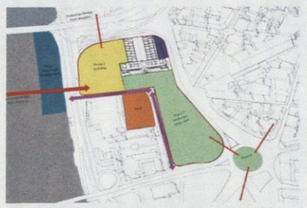


Diagram showing the main pedestrain bridge from Al Gazira (across the Nile) to my site

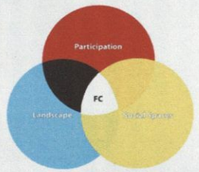
Diagram showing the secondary pedestrain bridge from Maspero(Low income neighborhood) to my site



Section diagram showing the significance of the Freedom center being the anchor that connects egypts present, past and future.



Phasing Diagram showing the different phases for the project



How can I allow maximum participatiojn of the public while still preserving the individual identity of the Egyptain youth. My Proposal is to merge and encourage participation,social spaces and Landscape all in one institute the Freedom Center (FC). Three goals one identity

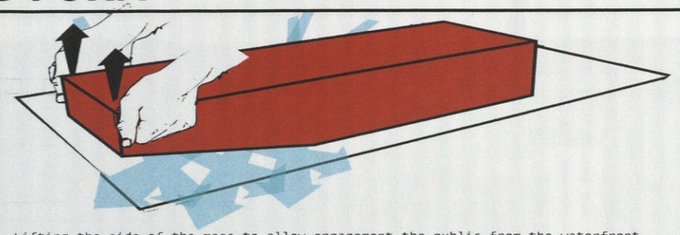


Sketch showing tahrir square and it's relationship to the site

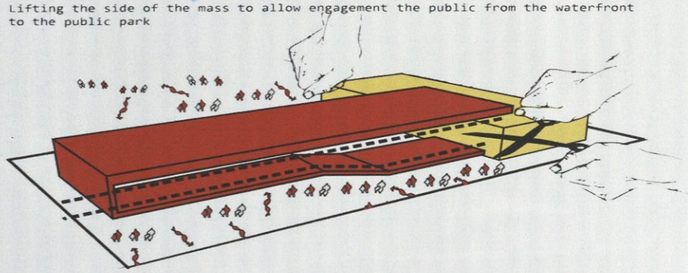
MASTERPLAN



BUILDING FORM



Lifting the side of the mass to allow engagement the public from the waterfront to the public park



Users will experience the site while the building is floating on top of them

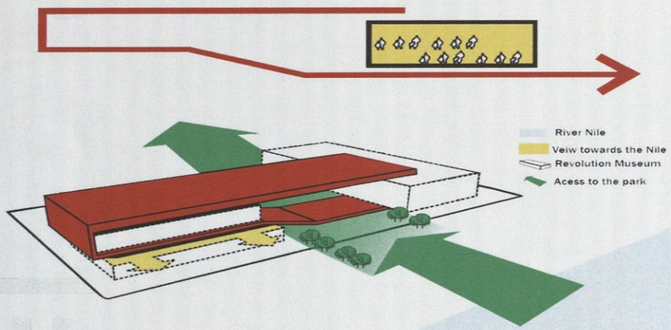


Diagram showing the buildings relationship to the Nile, the museum and the park and the pedestrian flow in to the site.

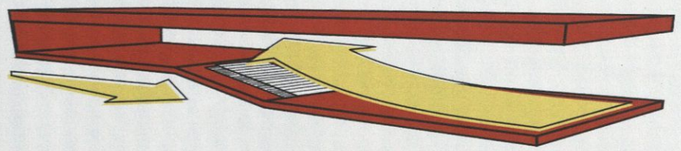


Diagram showing how the building is lifted up to provide framing for the river veiw and an open veiw to the museum.

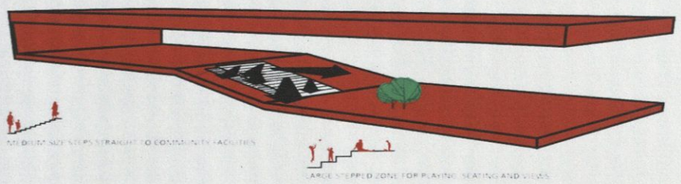


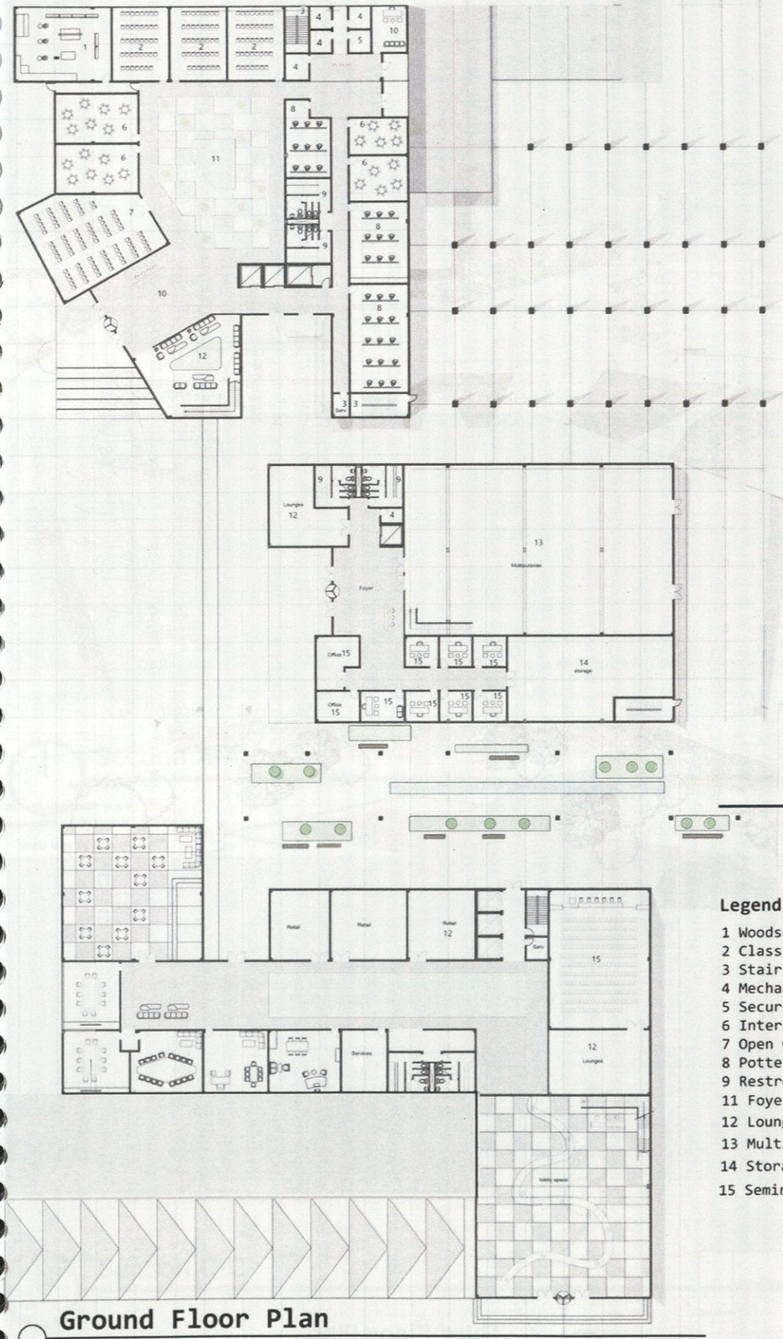
Diagram showing how the elevated part of the building can be utilized as urban steps fo to enjoy the river veiw and provides community interaction.

Form Development Diagrams

FLOOR PLANS

Ground Floor Plan

Freedom Center

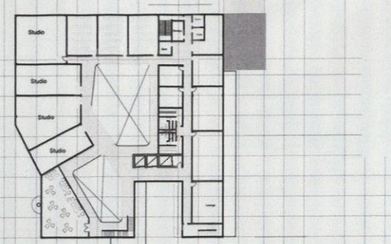


Legend

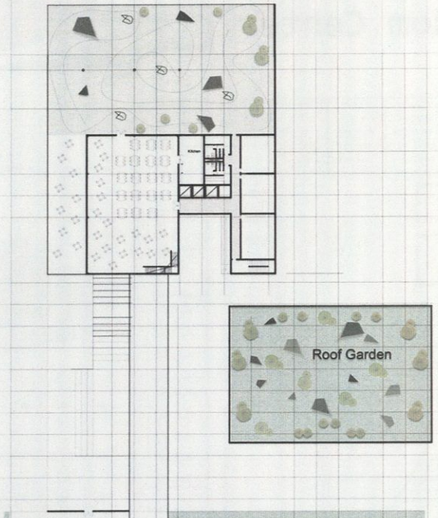
1 Woodshop
2 Classroom workshop
3 Stairs
4 Mechanical room
5 Security room
6 Interactive workshop
7 Open workshop
8 Pottery workshop
9 Restrooms
11 Foyer
12 Lounges
13 Multipurpose Hall
14 Storage
15 Seminar room

Ground Floor Plan
Scale 1:200

FLOOR PLANS



First Floor Plan



Second Floor Plan

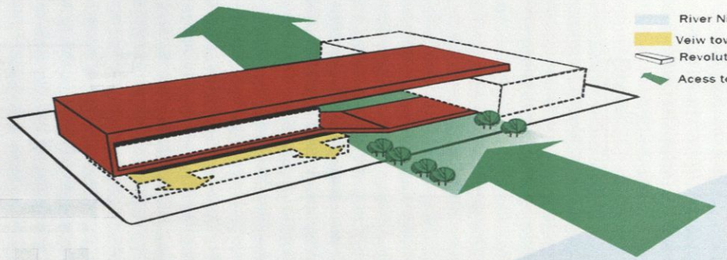
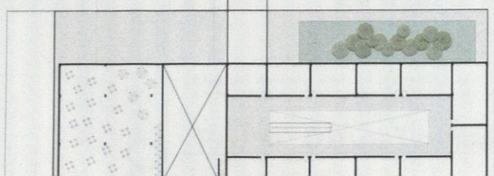


Diagram showing the buildings relationship to the Nile, the museum and the park and the pedestrian flow in to the site.

Building Concept



Third Floor Plan

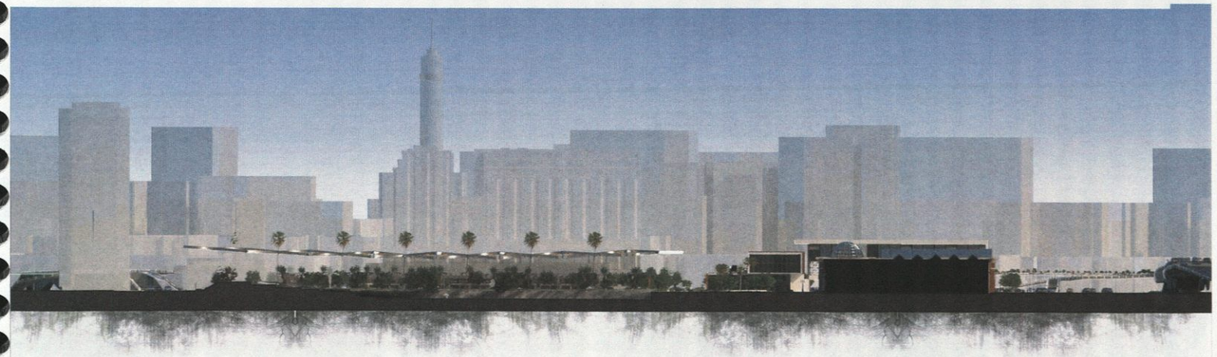
SITE SECTIONS



Section B-B



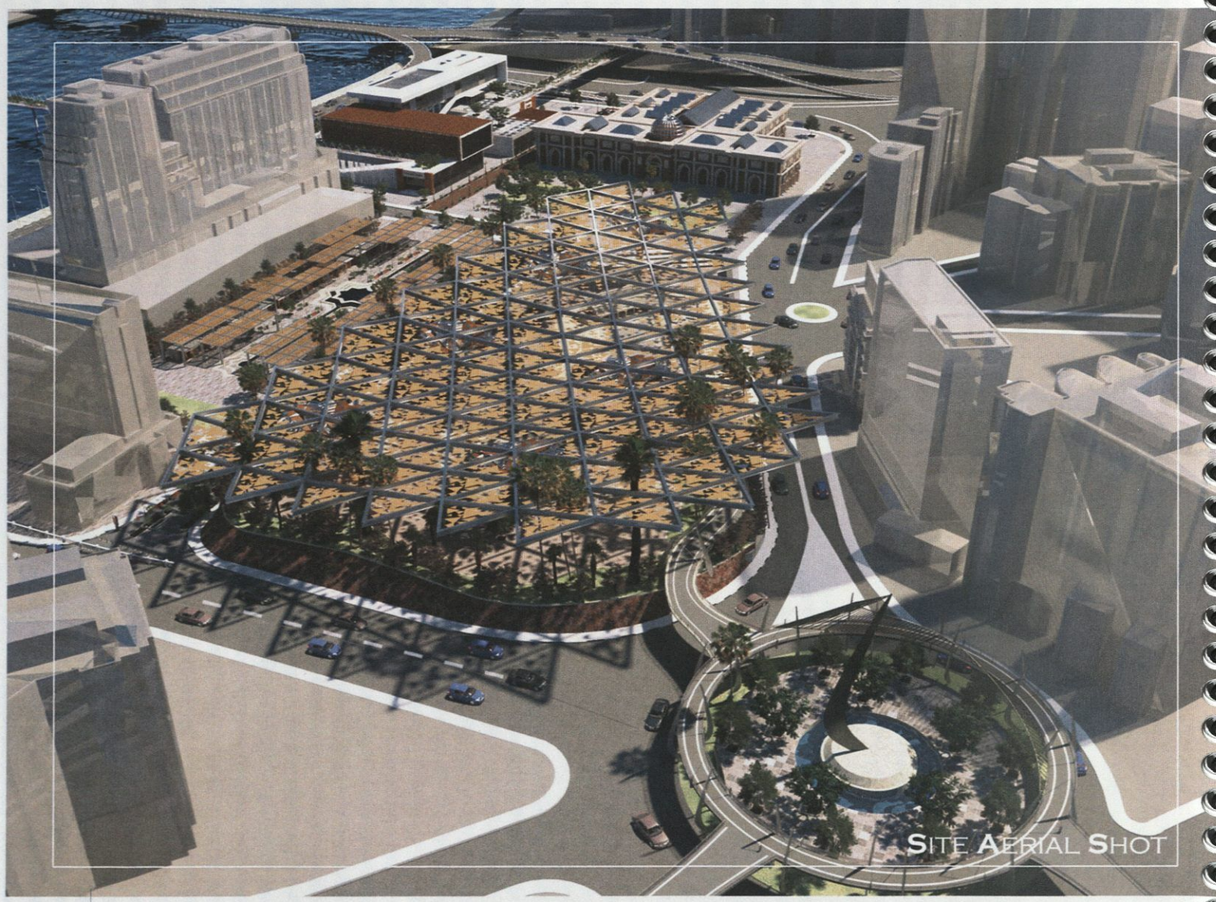
Section A-A



Section C-C

SITE EXPERIENCES

Site Plan Arial Shot



SITE AERIAL SHOT

SITE EXPERIENCES

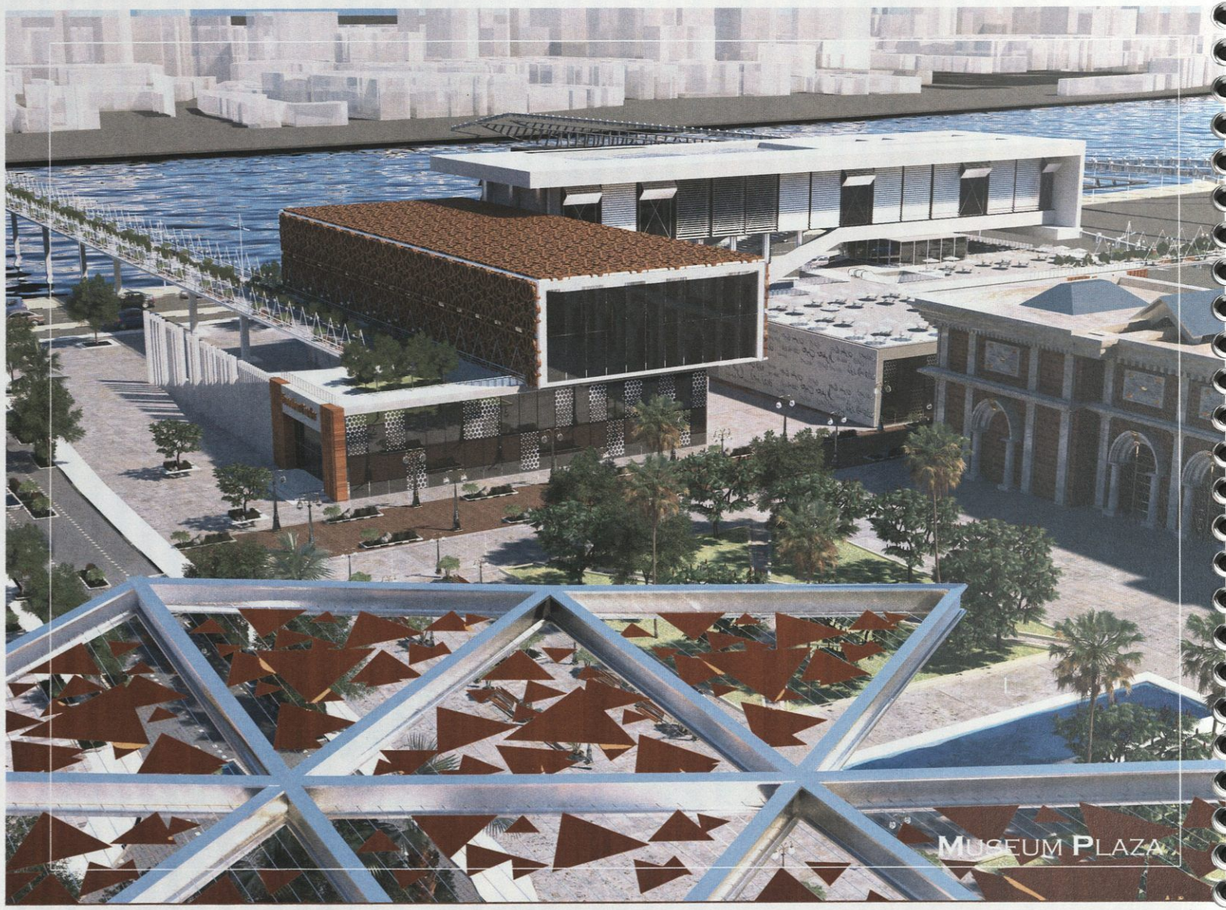
Night Shot of the Waterfornt Side



BUILDING "NIGHT SHOT"

SITE EXPERIENCES

Shot showing the relationship between the bridge from the Nile side to the elevated plaza



MUSEUM PLAZA

SITE EXPERIENCES



MUSEUM ENTRANCE



AMPHITHEATER SHOT

SITE EXPERIENCES

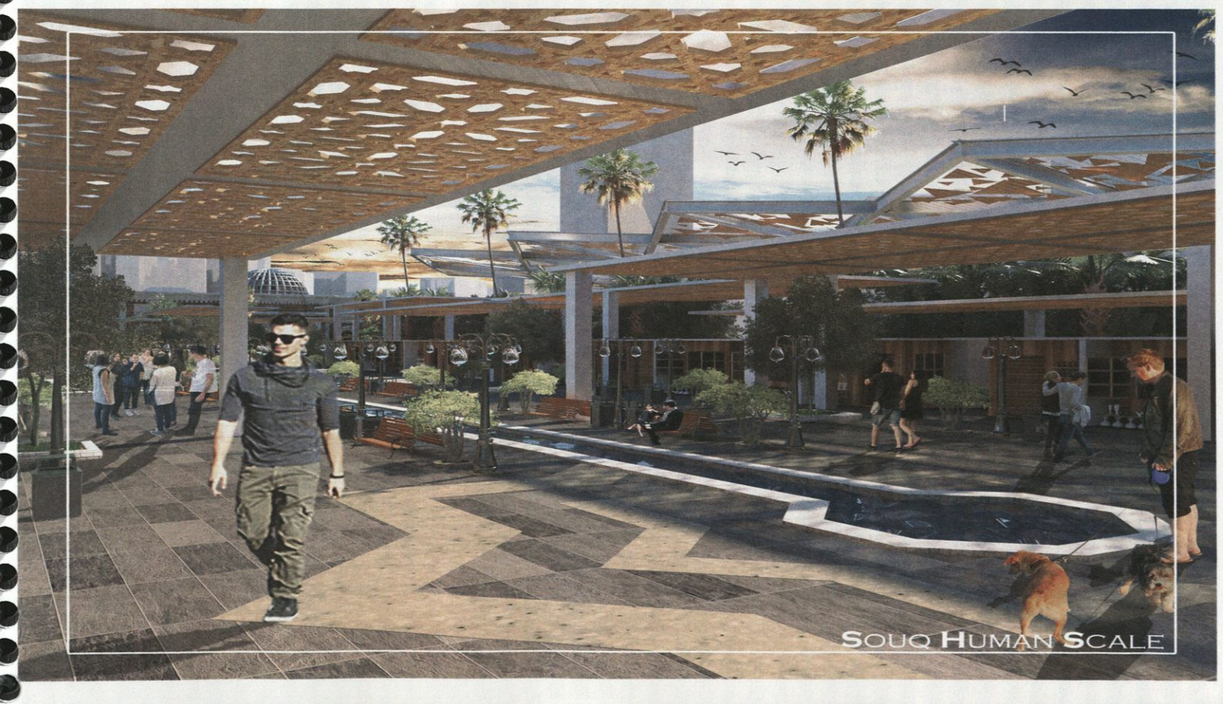


CALLIGRAPHY WALL

SITE EXPERIENCES

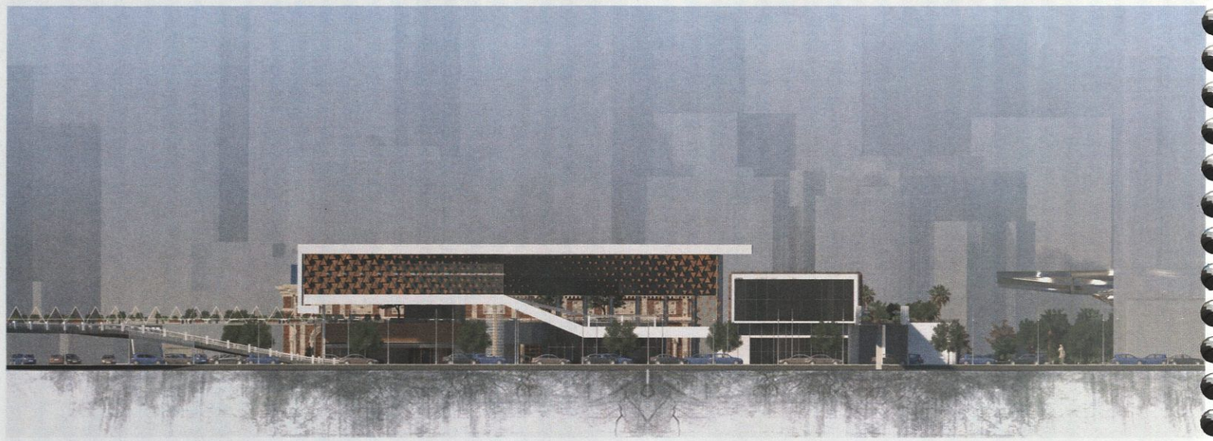


SOUQ ARIAL VIEW



SOUQ HUMAN SCALE

BUILDING ELEVATIONS



West Elevation



East Elevation

MODEL IMAGES

