

Housing for the Fishermen of Tyre

Abbasiyeh, South Lebanon



The fishermen's community of Tyre, a city of 25,000 residents on the southern coast of Lebanon, has been suffering from housing shortage and overcrowding. Strict preservation laws in this UNESCO World Heritage city and a weakened economy have further limited housing options. Additionally, the sea has not been good to the fishermen, and the Tyre region has greatly suffered from the successive wars between 1975 and 1990.

In order to reverse their dire conditions and to provide their marrying children with housing, the fishermen formed a housing cooperative and convinced the archdiocese of the city to donate a 6,500-square-meter piece of land in Abbasiyeh, on the agricultural fringe of Tyre. They also raised funds from several local and international agencies to build a housing project. In this

process, they were assisted by the Association for Rural Development, an NGO whose aims are "to develop human and natural resources in the rural areas of Lebanon," and to help "social actors to acquire the knowledge and capabilities necessary to the enhancement of their living conditions."

The new site is an agricultural field, surrounded by citrus orchards, a hospital, and chaotic speculative development that mushroomed illegally during the war. Subject to the implementation of a new master plan for the area, the site will be abutting a new road that will replace the existing agricultural road to link the city with its hinterland. Most of the surrounding agricultural property is already being subdivided for speculative construction. The site will therefore be one of the few large-scale parcels in the area.



Given the chaotic and unpredictable conditions of the new context and its isolation from the residential quarters of Tyre, the design defines a strong edge to the outside along the site perimeter. However, it introduces an organizational frame for the surrounding streets and new parcels. This edge is made of an extenuated building (7 meters thick) that wraps in on itself creating an internal road and an open space. The internal road continues the side street, provides access to the units, and connects the two main access points. The open space provides a common public garden and a playground. In order to avoid a closed, urban-block effect, the linear mass is broken down into a series of buildings separated by gaps that are used for public circulation. These spaces provide variety within the building volume. The corners are treated differently in response to different external



conditions.

One of the main concerns of the fishermen was to maintain equality among the units. In order to provide for equality, particularly in terms of access to private outdoor space and access to view, the units had to be different depending on their location in plan. The project consists of 80 two-bedroom units each about 86 square meters of interior space and about half the area in private outdoor open space.

The units are arranged in three types of blocks or groupings. The first type consists of simple one-story flats (simplexes) arranged around a common scissor stair. The second type of block consists of 4 duplexes, each duplex consisting of an open floor plan for living spaces and a second floor for bedrooms. This type is located around the main open space. All living floors have cross views and cross



ventilation and are extended to the outside by private outdoors spaces (gardens and porches for the lower units and balconies and roof decks for the upper units). The third type is a combination of duplexes and simplexes and is located at the corners of the main open space.

One of the main features of this project is the large open space. The space of the building mass in relation to the open space allows for an increasing enclosure and then release. The open space is made of two parts, a paved area with a collective water tank underneath and a planted area. Instead of framing the parts with trees, trees are used to mark entrances to paths between buildings. The landscape spills through these gaps between the buildings to the exterior to emphasize the connection between the interior open space and the street.

Ground Plan



CLIENT: Al Baqaa Housing Cooperative and the Association for the Development of Rural Areas in Southern Lebanon, Yousif Khalil, Director
DONORS: Greek Catholic Church of Tyre, Spanish Agency for International Cooperation, and several private donors
DESIGN TEAM: Hashim Sarkis, Anuraj Shah and Erkin Ozay (Project Coordinators), Ziad Jamaledine, Paul Kaloustian, Brian Mulder, David Hill, Mete Sonmez, Ryan Bollom, Ezra Block, Cynthia Gunadi, Scott Hagen, Cheyne Owens
STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS: Mohamed Chahine and Mounir Mabsout
PROJECT MANAGER: Mohamed Chahine
ELECTRO-MECHANICAL ENGINEERS: AURORA



CONTRACTOR: EBCO-BITAR
PHOTOGRAPHS: Dina Debbas, Evy Pappas
BUILT-UP AREA: 8,400 square meters (80 units at 100 square meters +4 shops)
DATE: 1998-2008