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*The restructuring of the "Quartier de la Marine" in Algiers:
An urban opportunity*

A thesis presented to the Mackintosh School of Architecture
for the degree of Master of Architecture of the University
of Glasgow

by

Poussad AICHE

June 1986

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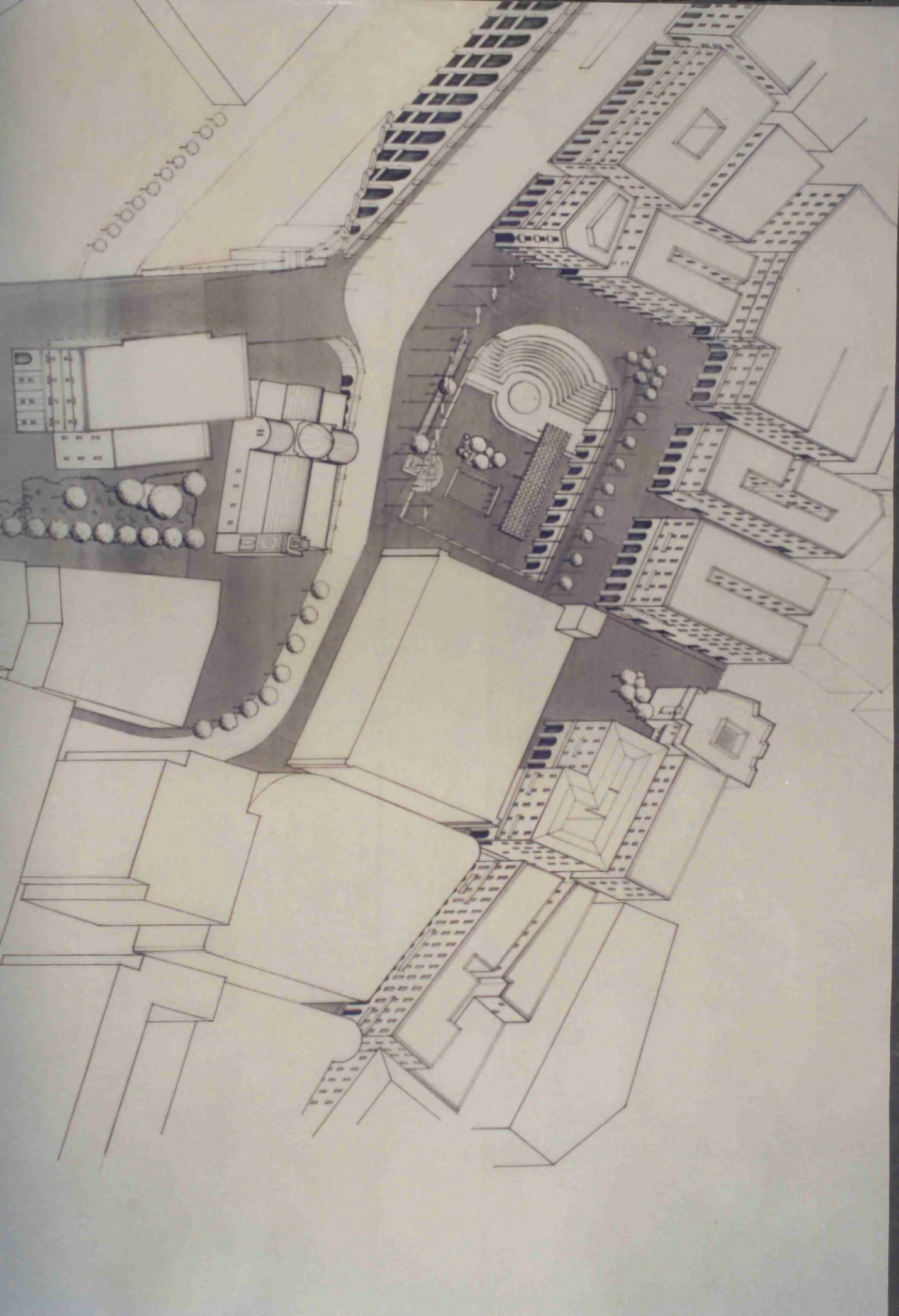
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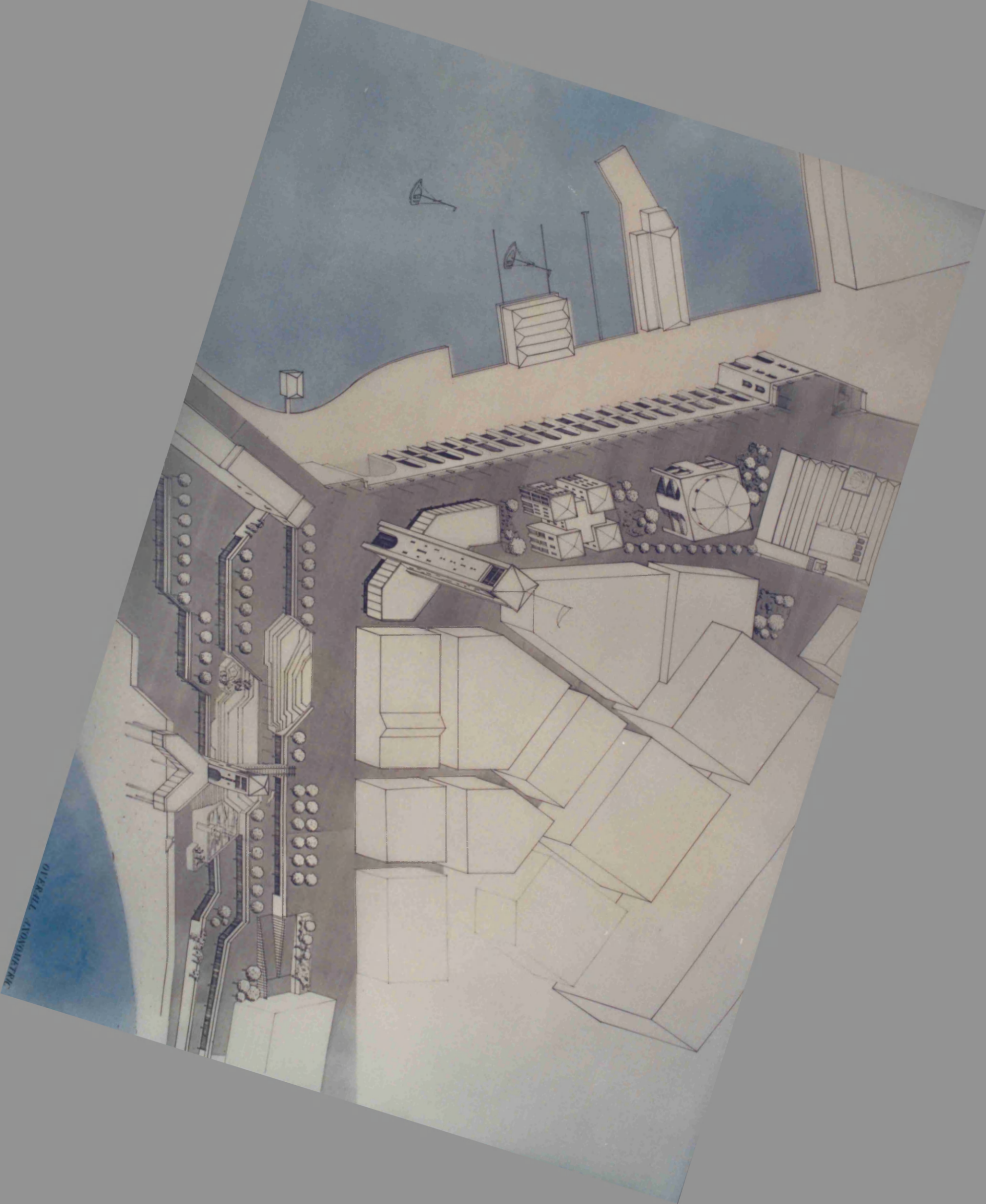
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LE QUARTIER DE LA MARINNE





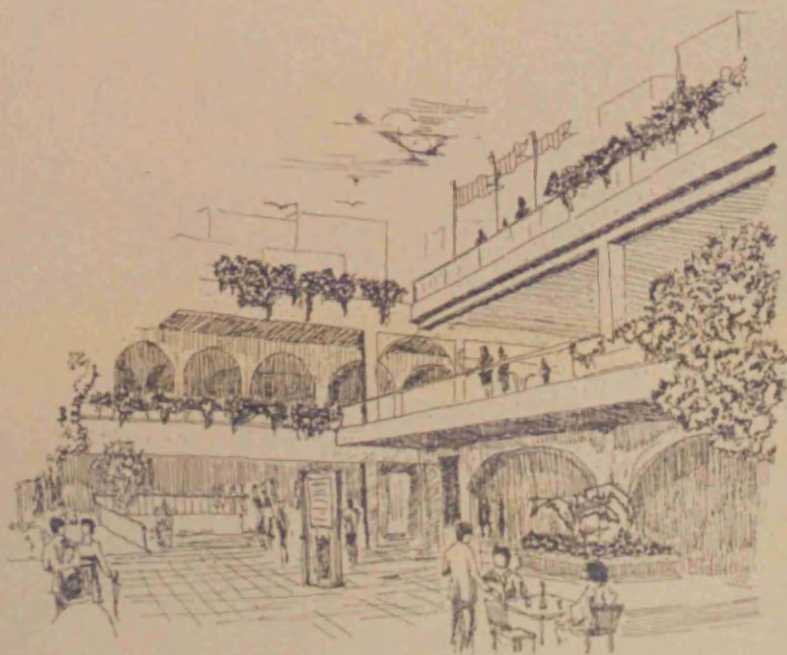
For my Parents



OVERALL ANOMOMETRY



The new waterfront

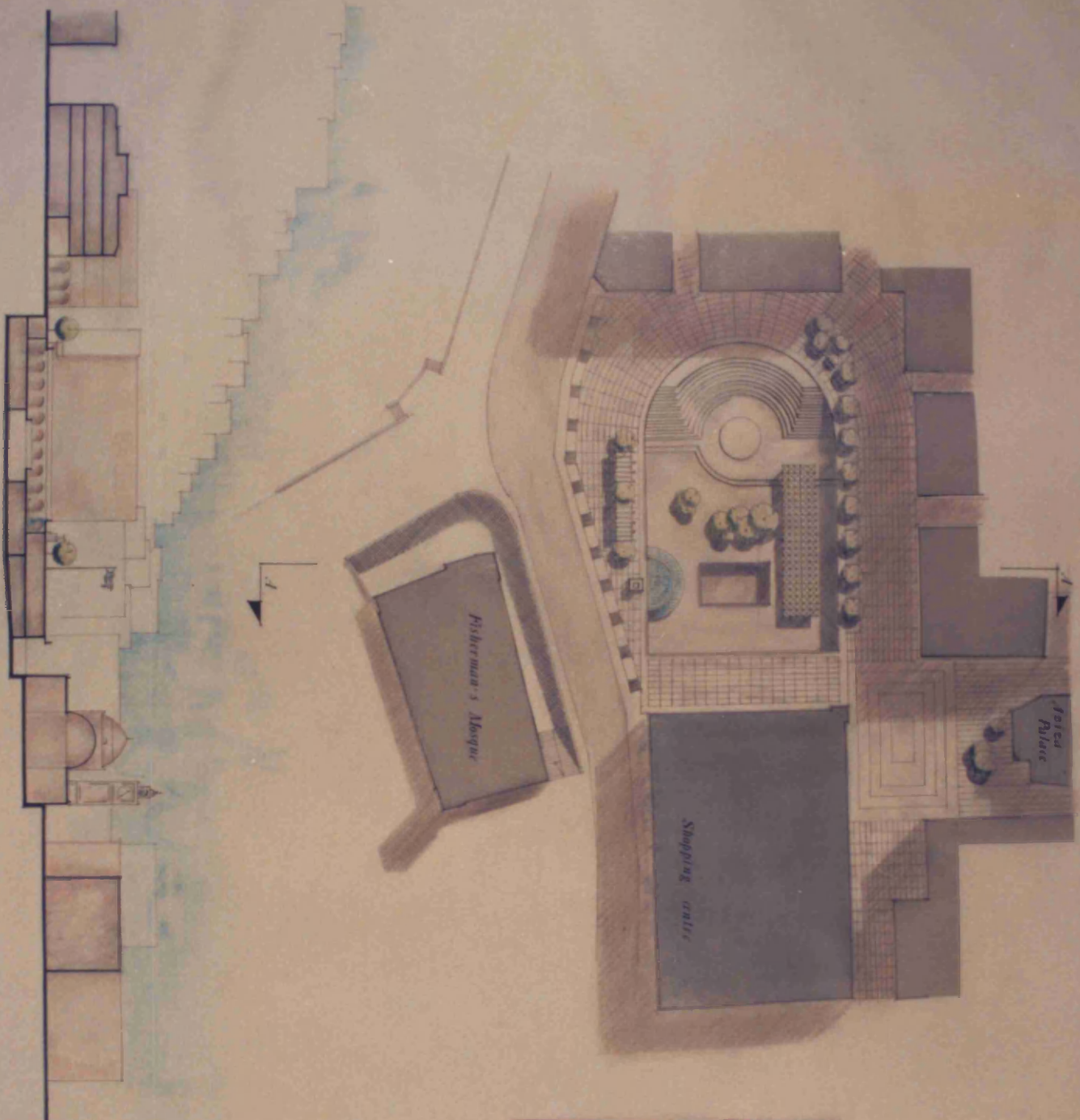


View inside the Place des Martyrs

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank especially Mr. Tony Vogt, my tutor for giving advice and stimulating my interest throughout the period of work. I would also like to thank the many individuals who gave me advice along the way including Mr. Alan Wightman and Mr. John Yarwood. My grateful thanks to Mr. Mike Strang for his help.

I am much obliged to Mr. Rabal from the Atelier Casbah in Algiers, who kindly supplied the ordnance survey maps upon which the maps within this thesis are based.



The Fisherman's Mosque, obscured today, will
 seen in its original setting.

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SUMMARY.

As many other historic centres which underwent profound changes the old Algiers had to accommodate contemporary socio-economic, cultural and technological activities. The Casbah, old town of Algiers has been subjected to these regrettable and irreversible changes and is left today with a physically and functionally damaged urban fabric. This thesis is concerned with the coexistence and reconciliation of the old core with the present and future urban fabric in order to ensure that its links with the modern urban development are maintained.

This is therefore a study on the old core of Algiers which explores its historical growth and urban structure, underlying the conflict between old and new parts. It establishes at the end a general framework for its future development.

INTRODUCTION.

Many historic centres have lost their traditional functions as centres. They have been a casualty of contemporary urban growth and changes. Today the social and economic system which gave birth to the old towns is gone. Without it they cannot always adapt to the harsh pressures of new times.

Although, the historic centre of Algiers covers a relatively small area of the major city, its cultural and artistic values are very considerable. The restructuring of the "Quartier de la Marine", the old core of the Casbah has the aim to protect the relationship of the old town with the city to which it gave birth.

This study intends to underline the particular characteristics belonging to the old and the new city. The objective is to highlight the conflict between old and new parts of the city and, by focussing the study on the old core, to outline an urban design policy by which future development may be guided.

It is not the intention of this thesis to explore all aspects of planning, traffic engineering and land use. It has not been possible to investigate thoroughly all the aspects and potential of the site.

Such study would require a team of specialists and a lot more basic survey information.

The intention is to study the problems associated with the urban fabric and the physical character of the place and in the process, to outline a design concept which sets out the guidelines within which all aspects of possible solutions can be tested.

The part I is intended to be introductory it describes the site study and explores the area. The part II examines and analyses the main aspects of the "Quartier de la Marine" and throws light on some of the the problems which arise suggesting than certain basic lines of thought. A concept design is developed at the end explaining the general strategy adopted.

The terms "Quartier de la Marine", "Lower Casbah", "old core" and "Marine neighbourhood" have been treated as synonyms for the purpose of this study. The term "Casbah" designates the entire old town of Algiers; it includes the Upper Casbah, the Lower Casbah and the Admiralty.

PART I

The following survey of the present features of the "Quartier de la Marine" provides the basis for the analysis and the design concept developed in part II.



الجزيرة الجزائرية في سنة 1830
D. P. 48 1830 MULLER & CO. PARIS
Thomas Duffield del. 1830

Algiers in 1830, The Fisherman's Mosque and the Great Mosque

1. THE HISTORICAL GROWTH.

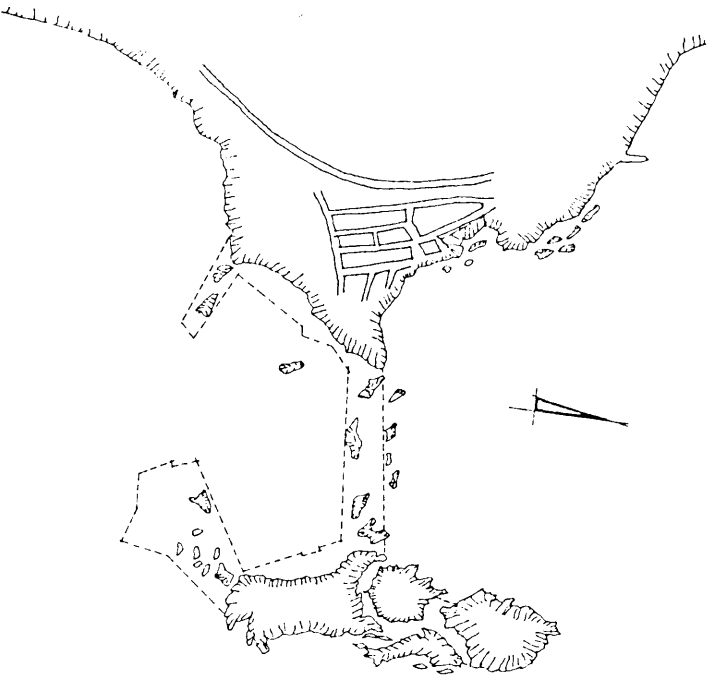
In order to plan a coherent future for any area it is necessary to appreciate its past. The Casbah is one of the most prestigious of Algerian urban forms. Its role in the history of the Mediterranean sea, its outstanding site, underline the great interest of the Casbah not only for Algiers but for the whole country. If the city is considered as a whole, its past and present are revealed in its physical structure.

1-1. The Phoenician era.

Known as Icosium this early settlement was serving as crossroads for routes. The small city was based on the Phoenician trading post supported by the small harbour located on the site of the present "Quartier de la marine". The four islands facing this settlement might have been the reason for choosing this site, they created a shelter for the harbour.

1-2. The Roman era.

In 40 AD Icosium was a small prosperous city of the Roman empire,



which retained the Phoenician Icosium. The city grew steadily until the 4th. century AD. The next century saw the end of the Roman empire, and until the 10th century the development of the city was stopped with the Vandal and Byzantine invasion in north Africa. A major route running from north to south cut right across the western part of the city corresponding today to the axis generated by the "Rue Bab azoun" and "Rue Bab el oued". Another route going down to the sea and to the port followed roughly the layout of the future "Rue de la Marine". The reconstruction of the Roman layout in the lower part of the city shows an urban structure with streets crossing at right angles. (1)

2 Plan of the Roman city.

1-3. The Arabo-Berber era.

In the middle of the eleventh century the Almoravids the first of the two great Berber empires was being formed.

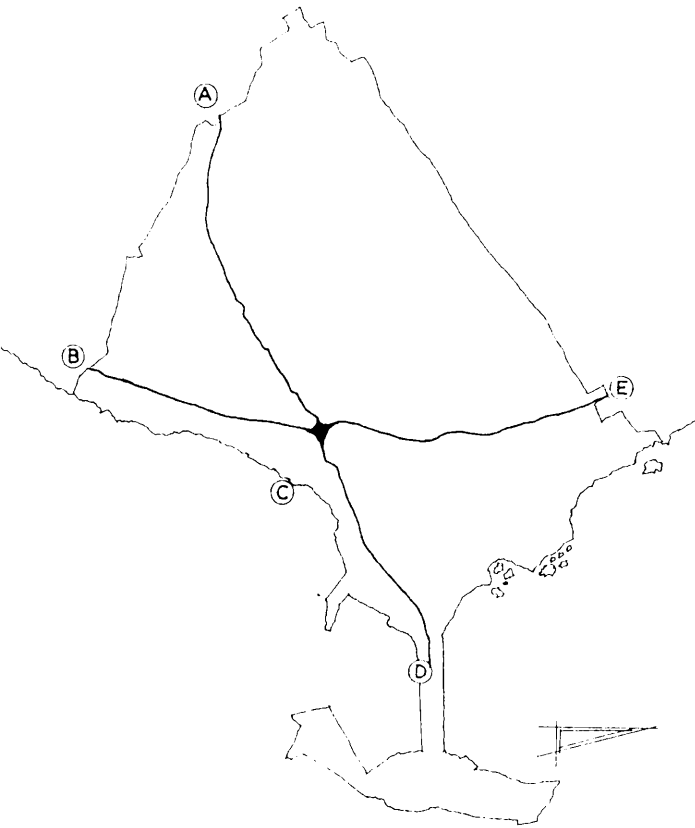
Prince Bologhine Ibn-Ziri founded the first nucleus of the city and named Icosium "El-djazair" (*), after the four islands facing the city. (The geographer El Bekir in the 12th century described Algiers with four islands facing the coast). The Almoravids have left little in the way of major buildings, but the Great mosque of Algiers on the south east of the old town.

Succeeding the Almoravids, the Almohads empire covered the whole of north Africa, and muslim Spain, annexed by 1160. The strategical position of Algiers on the north African coast, and in the Mediterranean sea, was coveted by a number of conquerors, and in the 16th century, Spanish attacks on Algiers precipitated the Turkish interference and led to the creation of Ottoman vassal states in Algeria. (2)

(*) means islands in Algerian.

1-4. The Turkish city.

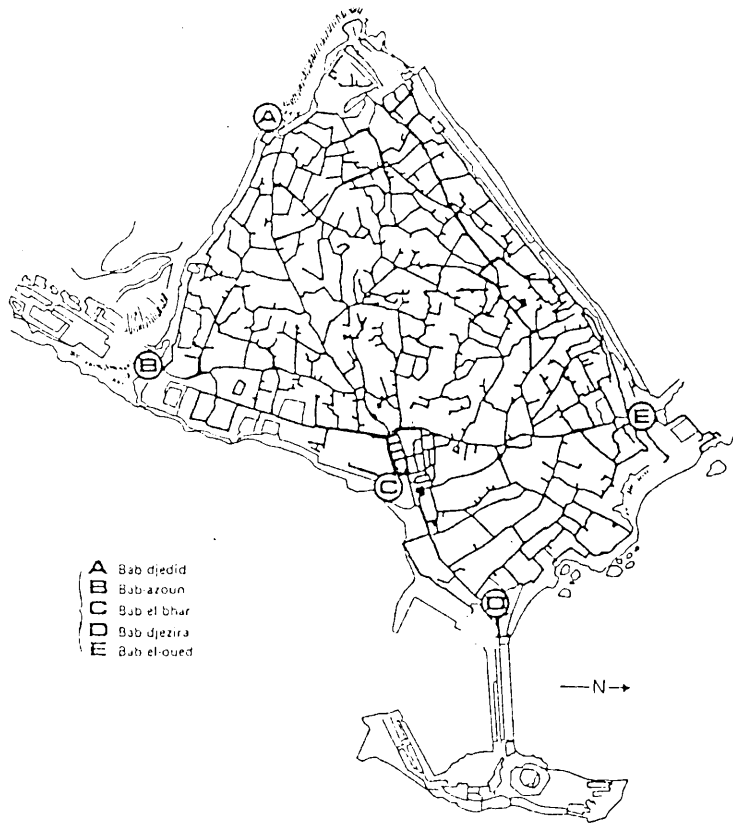
During the 16th. century the town underwent profound changes, and became one of the most powerful cities in the Mediterranean sea. Algiers became strategical for the expansion of the Ottoman empire with the support of Kheirredine Barberousse. Algiers appears to have been in full activity between 1516 and 1830. Not only did the lower Casbah become the heart of the city, once again but a large amount of constructions took place in the harbour, now protected more than ever. In 1529 the Turkish Kheirredine attacked the island occupied by the Spanish at that time, and pulled down one of the two towers of the fortress, and used the other one for building the lighthouse. He then built the breakwater by linking the islands to the coast. Additionally an improvement of the fortification system was accomplished as a defence against enemies.



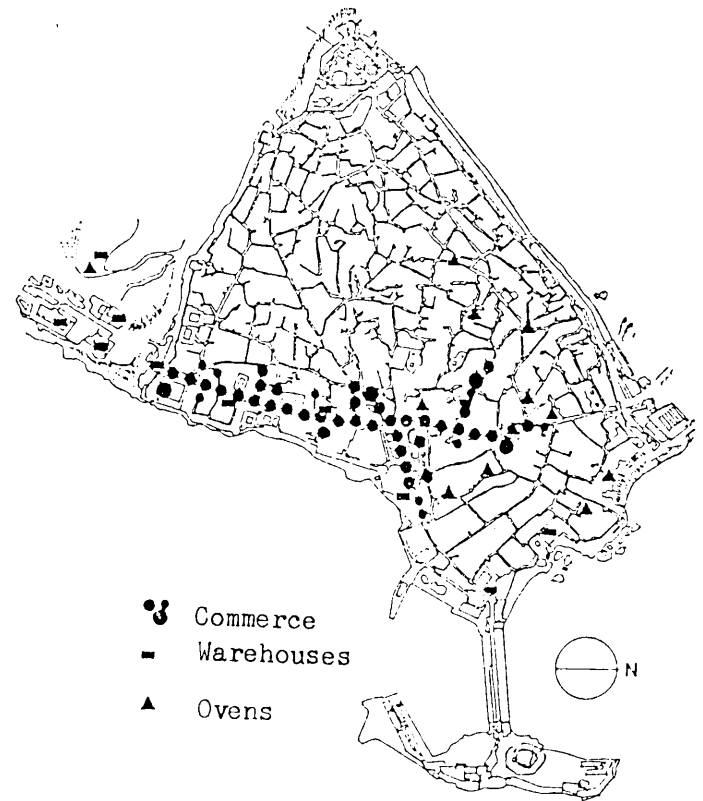
The walled Turkish city with the five gates.

The impregnable walled city was entered by five gates:

- A - Bab djedid : The new gate
- B - Bab azoun : The azoun gate
- C - Bab el bhar : The sea gate
- D - Bab el dzira : The island gate



4 The fabric of the Turkish city as revealed by the circulation routes before 1830.



5 Focus of commercial activities before 1830.

E - Bab el oued : The el oued gate

The main routes running into the city from the city gates converged to the main public space known today as the "Place des Martyrs" in the lower Casbah where retail trading establishment, craft workshops, local administration offices, mosques and palaces of the Djenina were located. (Until 1816 the Djenina in the lower Casbah housed the successive rulers of the country, before moving to the Castle on the top of the hill, dominating the whole city).

The axis generated by the "Rue Bab el oued" and "Rue Bab azoun" linked the two gates (Bab el oued and Bab azoun). The "Rue de la Marine" leading to the sea gate (Bab-el bhar) and the island gate (Bab el dzira) met this axis in the "Place des Martyrs" at crossroads.

1-5. The early French colonial era: 1830 - 1880.



7 Algiers between 1833 and 1880.

Under the French military domination Algiers underwent profound transformation. To bring Algiers under control, the army occupation modified tragically the structure of the city. The strategical "Quartier de la marine" beside the harbour was the first target. This flat site had a number of important buildings.

a- 1830 - 1833:

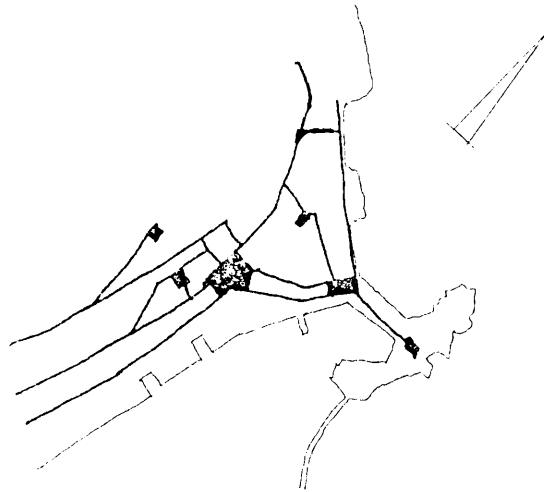
New streets are cut through and others were made wider in the lower Casbah: the streets changed in appearance.

-The "Rue de la Marine", "Rue Bab-el oued" and "Rue Bab-azoun" were redrawn with a new building line.

-The "Place des Martyrs" was made wider by pulling down an important number of buildings, for military purposes, including some of the palaces of the Djenina.

b- 1833 - 1880:

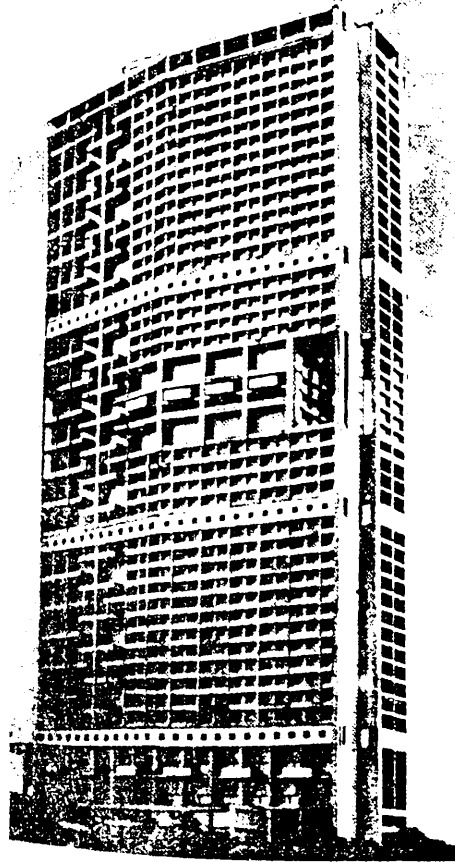
During this period Algiers was undergoing full expansion. Due to lack of space a new development occurred outside the city walls to accommodate the growing population. Strong alterations to the



6 Algiers between 1830 and 1833.

Existing urban fabric of the Casbah were still occurring. New streets were cut through again in the lower Casbah (Rue Amara Rachid) and new Places were laid. The Turkish city walls were partially demolished.

As early as the end of the 19th. century the Marine neighbourhood was regarded as insalubrious quarter. The local government at that time used the argument of hygiene to justify the complet demolition of this quarter by 1930. Meanwhile several proposals for the restructuring of the Marine neighbourhood were submitted to the city council.

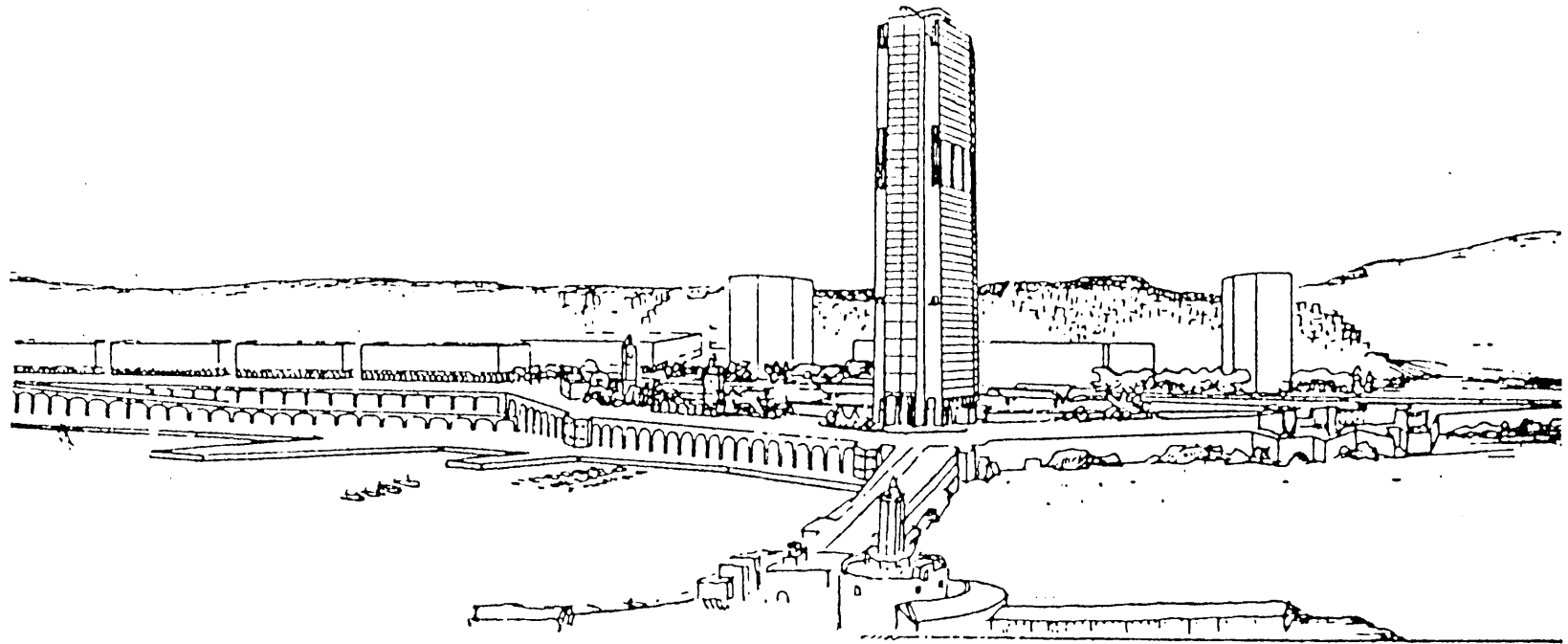


1-6. Le corbusier's proposal.

During the century preceding independence, Algiers experienced a remarkable period of architecture and town planning. Le Corbusier enjoyed a "special relationship" with the city and was consulted in 1933 over the reconstruction of the Marine neighbourhood. A new town planning scheme for Algiers was then proposed. " The entire area is cleared to be replaced by a skyscraper in the completely razed "Quartier de la marine", containing a business district skirting the historic Casbah on the west"(3). This was at that time one of the

9 Le corbusier's proposal; the skyscraper.

most provocative example of a very contemporary idea.

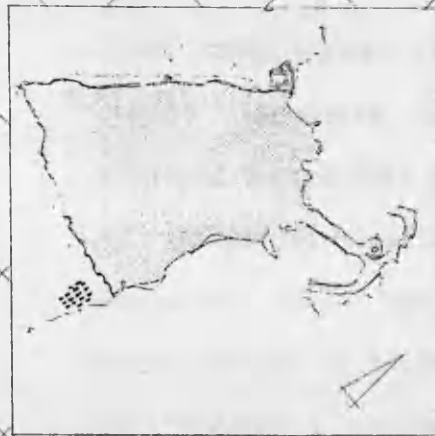


10 Le corbusier's proposal for the Marine neighbourhood.

8 - The historical growth



1



2

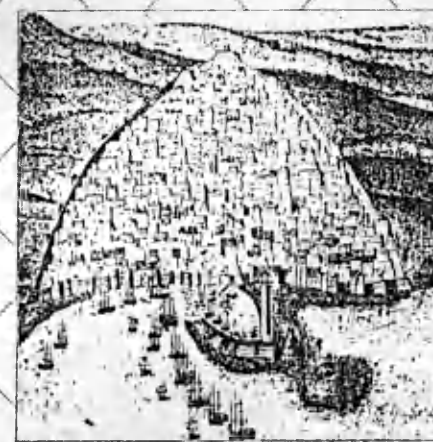


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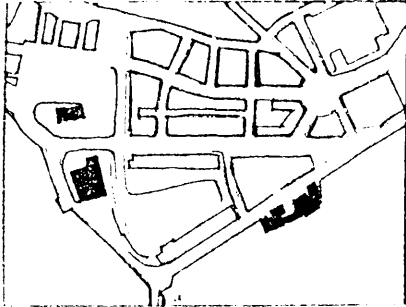
1. The Roman era
2. The Turkish era
3. The French era
1830-1833
4. The French era
1833-1880
5. General view of
Algiers during the
Turkish era.



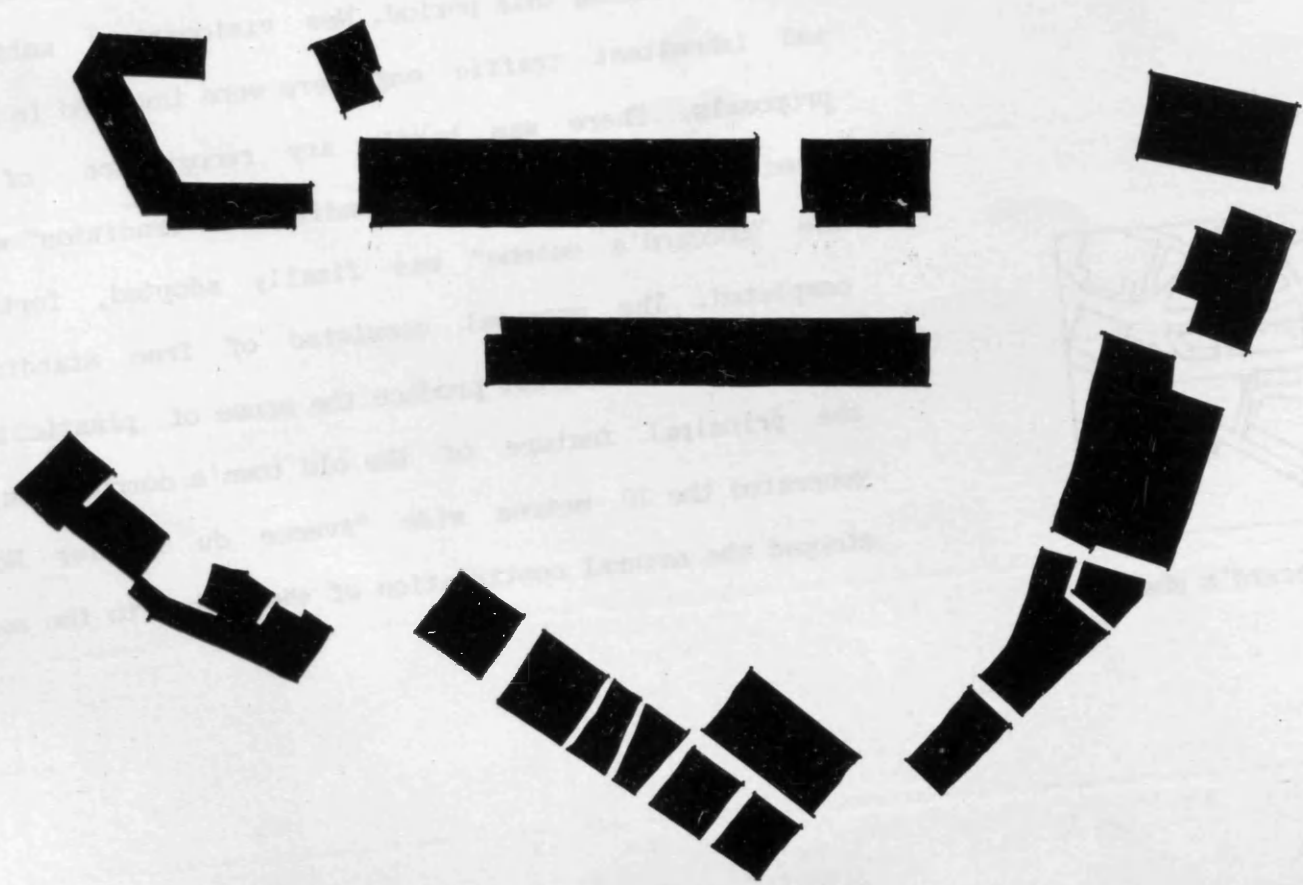
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1-7. 1945 - 1950; the Soccard's scheme.

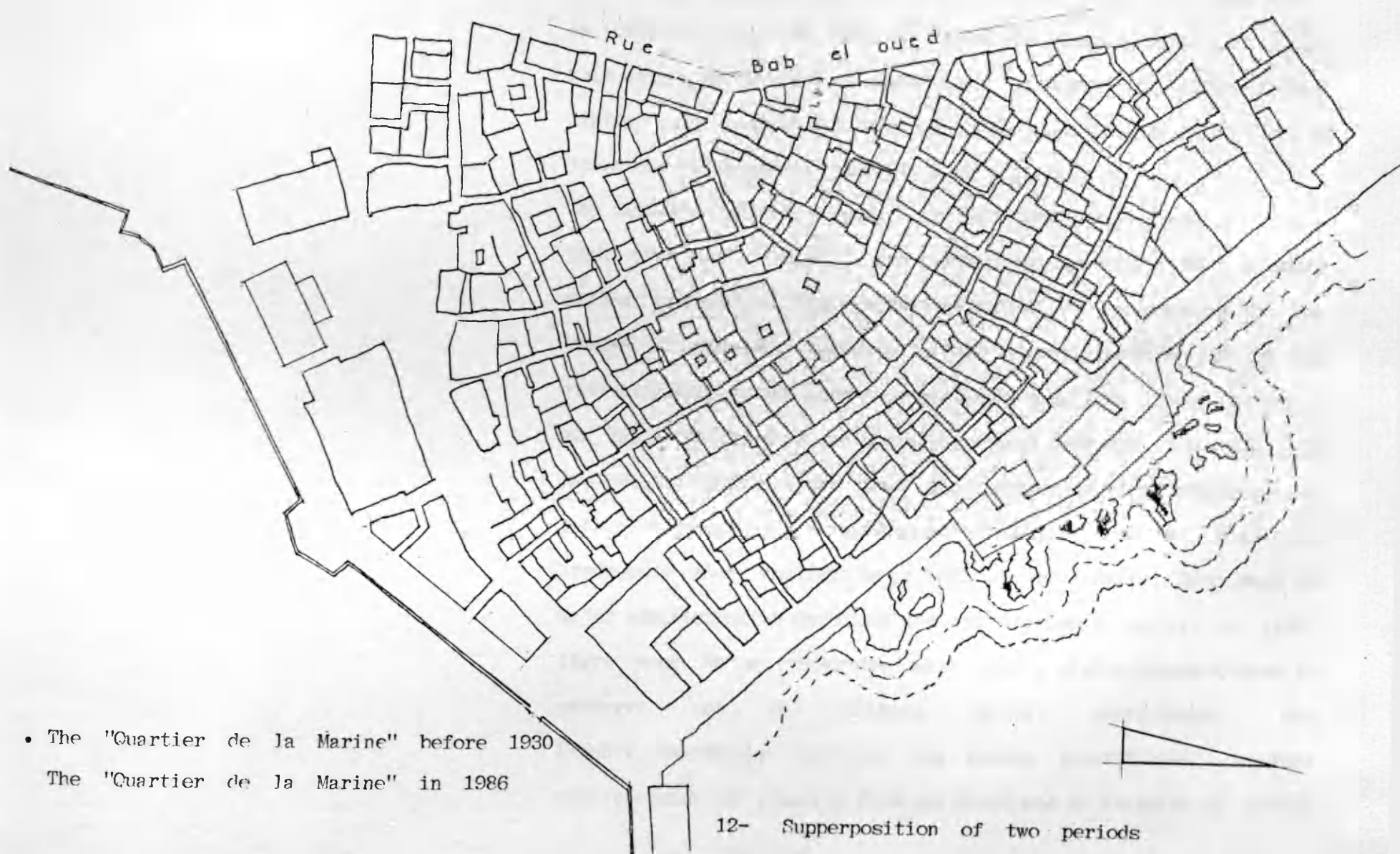
Several proposals for the restructuring of the lower Casbah were submitted during this period. New visionaries, ambitious utopians and inhesitant traffic engineers were involved in the various new proposals. There was hardly any recognition of the hidden possibilities in taking up "tradition". "Tradition" was eliminated. The "Soccard's scheme" was finally adopted, fortunately never completed. The proposal consisted of free standing high rise buildings which did not produce the sense of plasticity, that was the principal feature of the old town's composition. This scheme generated the 30 metres wide "Avenue du Premier Novembre" and stopped the natural continuation of the Casbah to the sea.



11 Soccard's sheme.



The free standing high rise buildings
in the centre are part of the Soccard's
scheme which had never been completed.



1-8. The "Comedor" and the "Atelier casbah": the 70's and 80's.

In 1970 for the first time the "Comedor" a planning firm, put a plan into action which aimed to protect and preserve the whole Casbah taking into account not only the socio-economical problems but its insertion in the whole city fabric of Algiers.

The "Atelier Casbah", a public architectural and planning office took over the "Comedor", and carried out recently (1981), a study called "Proposal for the revitalization and the conservation of the Casbah of Algiers". According to this report the safeguard and the revitalization is not seen as a restoration of some listed buildings but the restoration of the whole historical site and townscape. It has become quite clear that the strategies for restoring and rehabilitating a single building or even a group of buildings are inadequate when applied to a built up environment. There must be major administrative decisions enforced through a period of time, there must be a collective will and a viable economic base to preserve and to maintain special environment. The E-N-E-T, "Entreprise nationale des etudes touristiques", another architectural and planning firm has developed an awareness of taking

advantages of waterfront potential to increase the economy in the country. Programmes were established to develop and revitalize the waterfronts in the entire country. Algiers was one of the studied sites devoted to future revitalization and development.

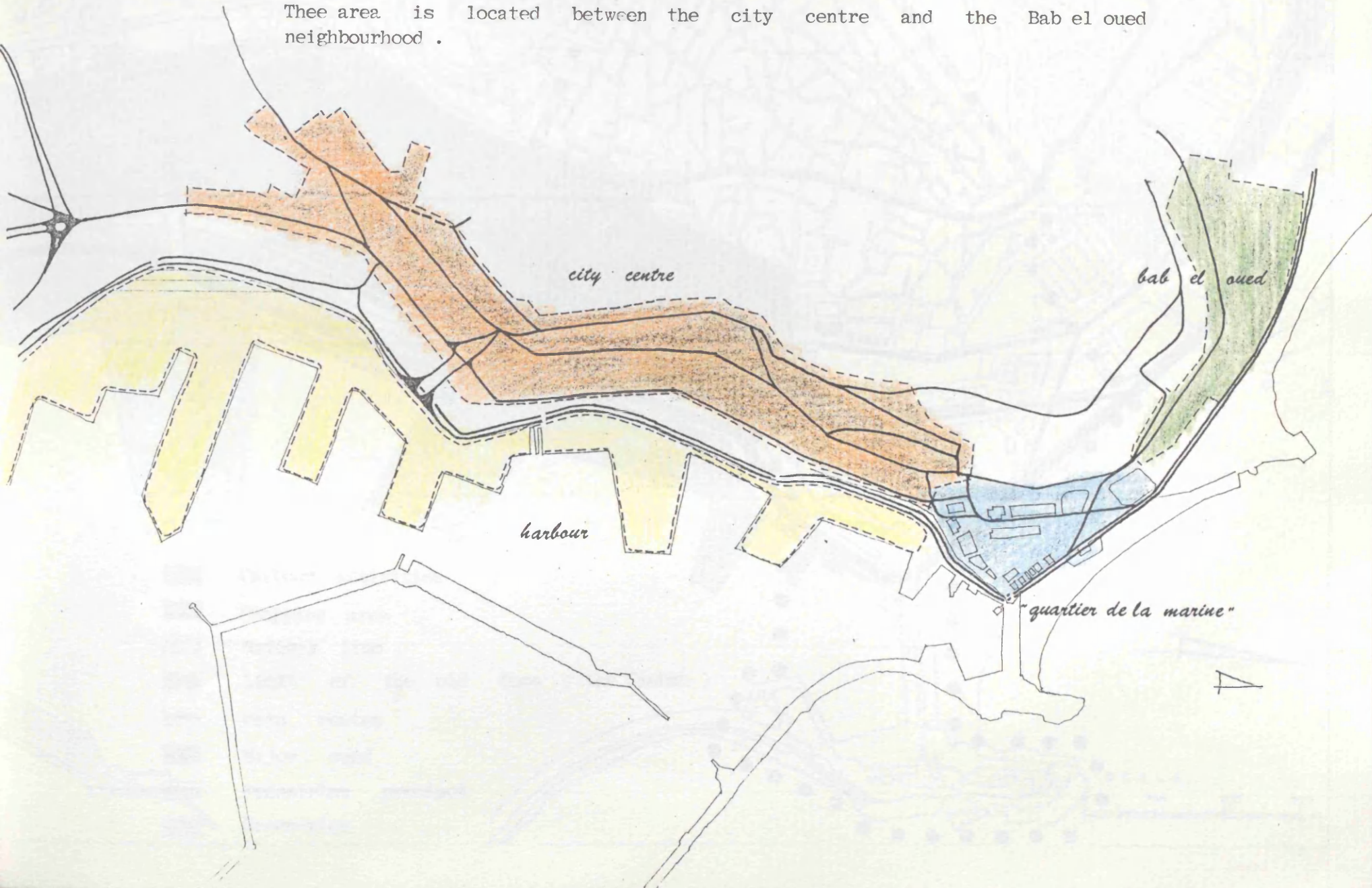
2. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE "QUARTIER DE LA MARINE".

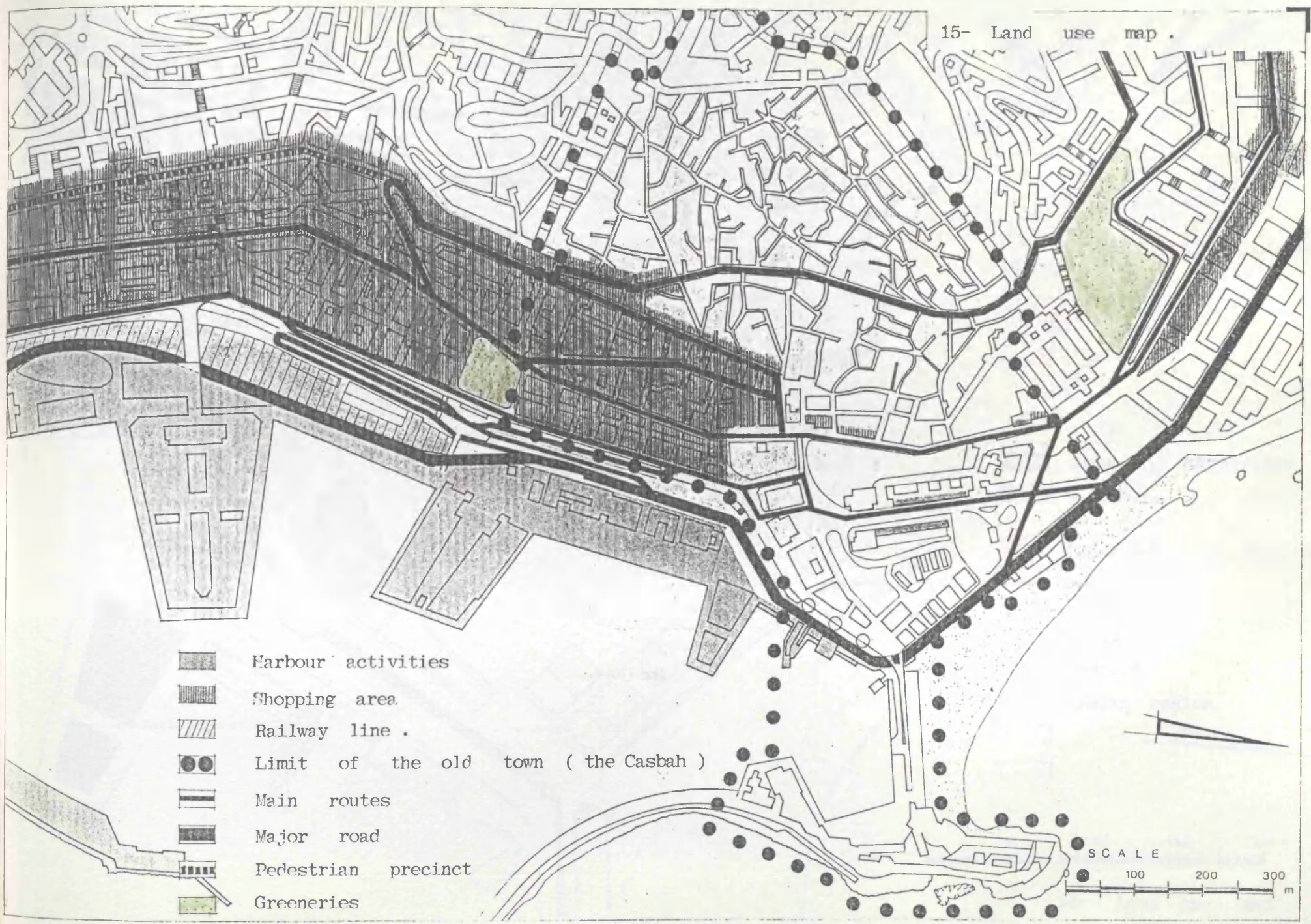
2-1. The "Quartier de la Marine" in its context.









The restructuring of the Casbah's old core must not be carried out regardless to the rest of the old town, nor to the whole city of Algiers. Therefore we will, first study old Algiers in its context and then focus attention on the "Quartier de la Marine": the case study. Historically the upper Casbah formed an urban system which, worked as a whole with its centre located in the lower part (see historical growth). During the colonial era, under the pressure of various phenomenon, not only related to the topography but also to social and political changes, the city grew eastwards. With the harbour extending east, new activities connected to the port started to develop. Meanwhile the centre moved towards this direction on a linear development along the coast. The Bab el oued neighbourhood to the north west is a secondary centre operating at a local level. The old core, the generating point of the linear "modern" centre of Algiers is today one of the most derelict inner urban areas of the city.

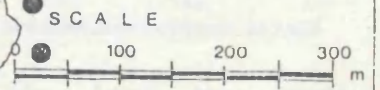
14- The Quartier de la Marine : the enclave.

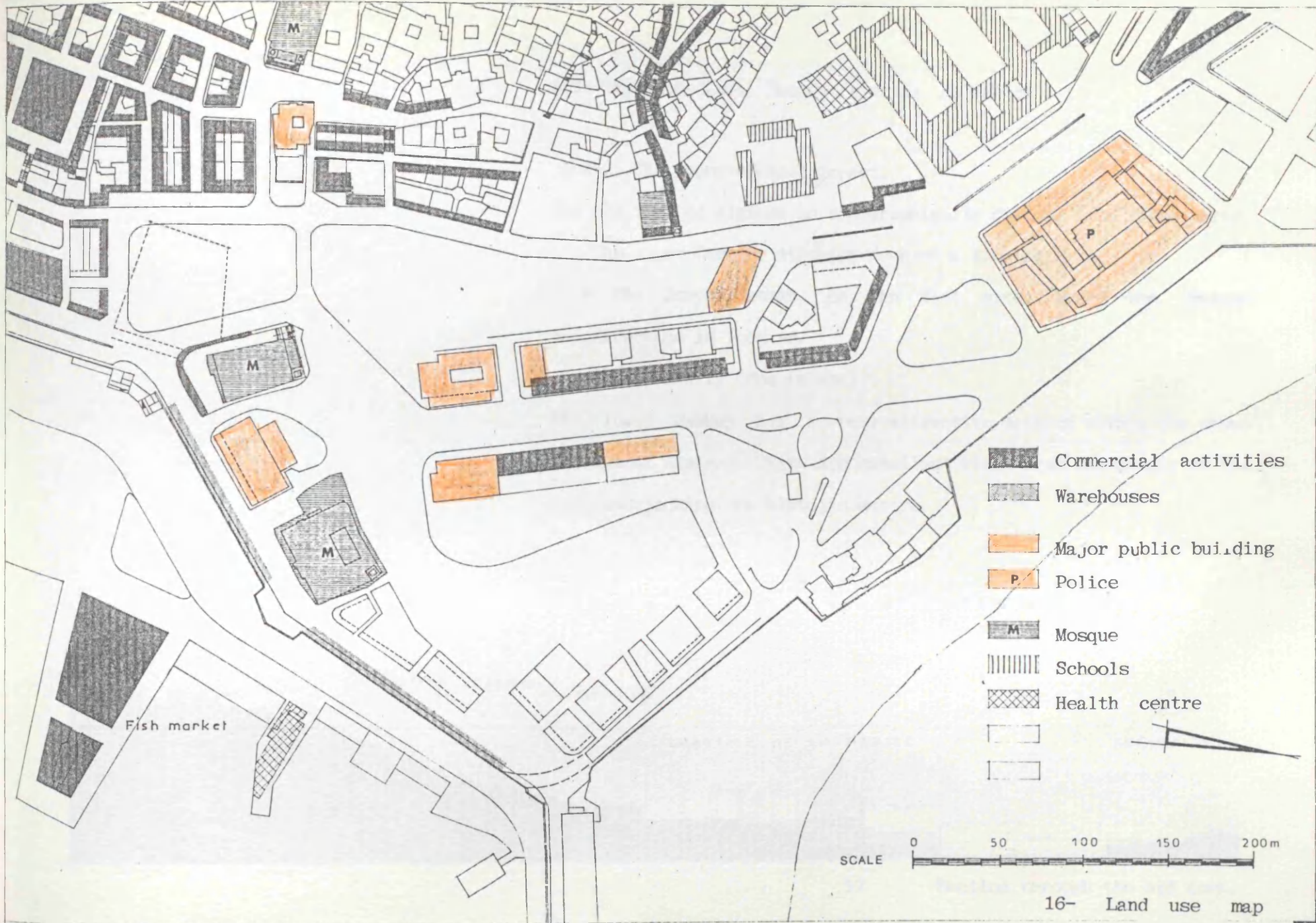
Thee area is located between the city centre and the Bab el oued neighbourhood .












-  Harbour activities
-  Shopping area
-  Railway line .
-  Limit of the old town (the Casbah)
-  Main routes
-  Major road
-  Pedestrian precinct
-  Greeneries





-  Commercial activities
-  Warehouses
-  Major public building
-  Police
-  Mosque
-  Schools
-  Health centre

SCALE 0 50 100 150 200m

16- Land use map

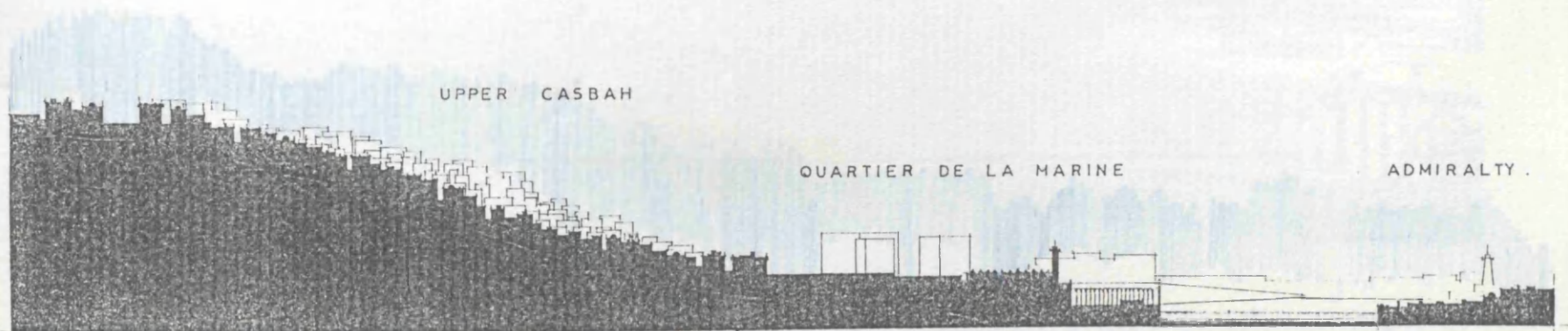
2-2. The study area: "Le Quartier de La Marine".

2-2-2. The topographical impact.

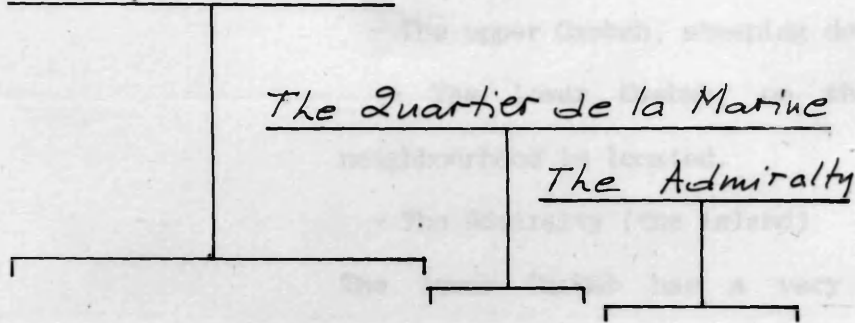
The old town of Algiers is topographically divided into three parts:

- The upper Casbah, steeping down on a sloping site,
- The lower Casbah, on the flat site, where the Marine neighbourhood is located.
- The Admiralty (the island)

The lower Casbah has a very attractive setting within the urban context of Algiers. There are excellent views from the height of the city overlooking the historic centre.



The Upper Casbah



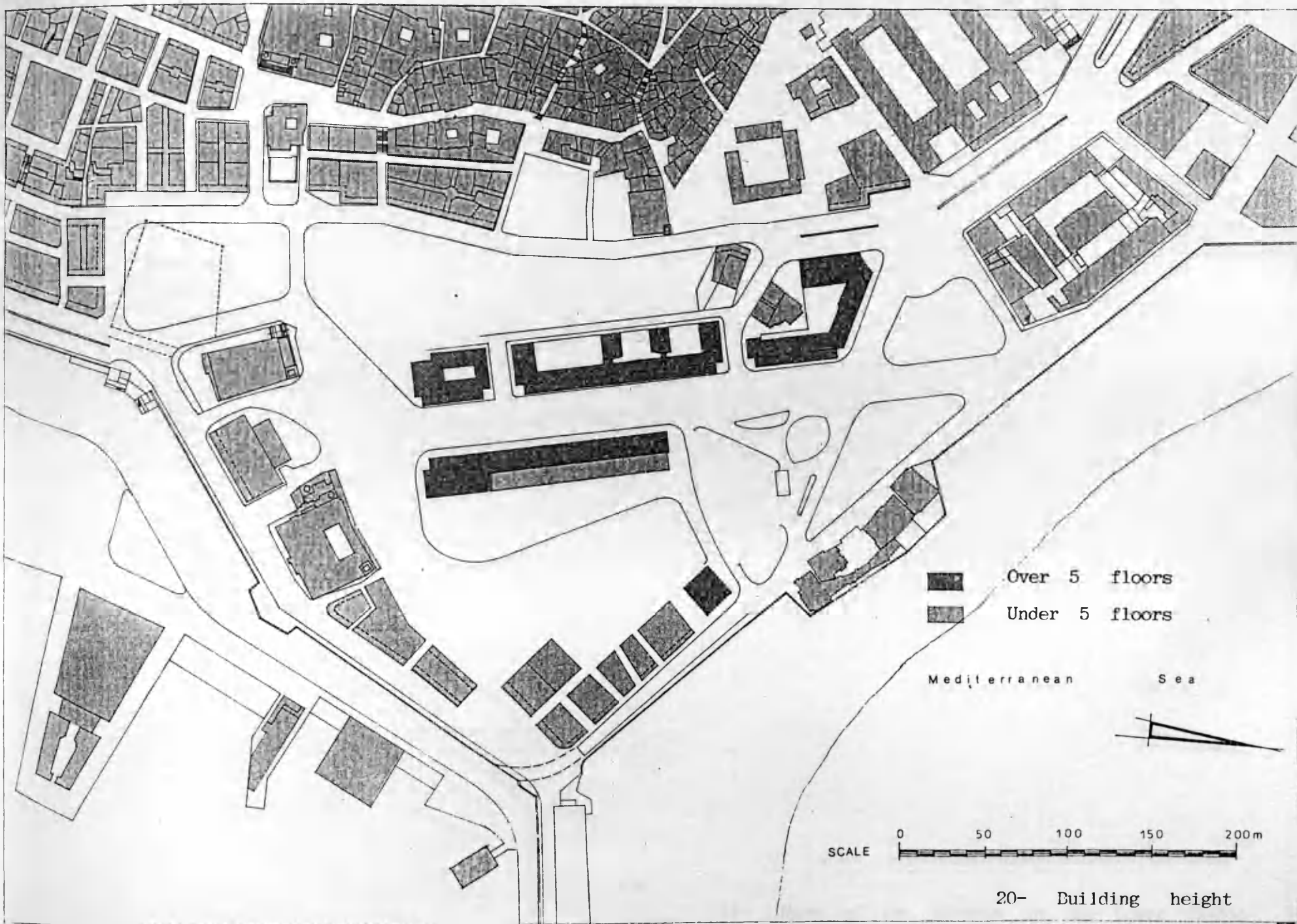
The Quartier de la Marine

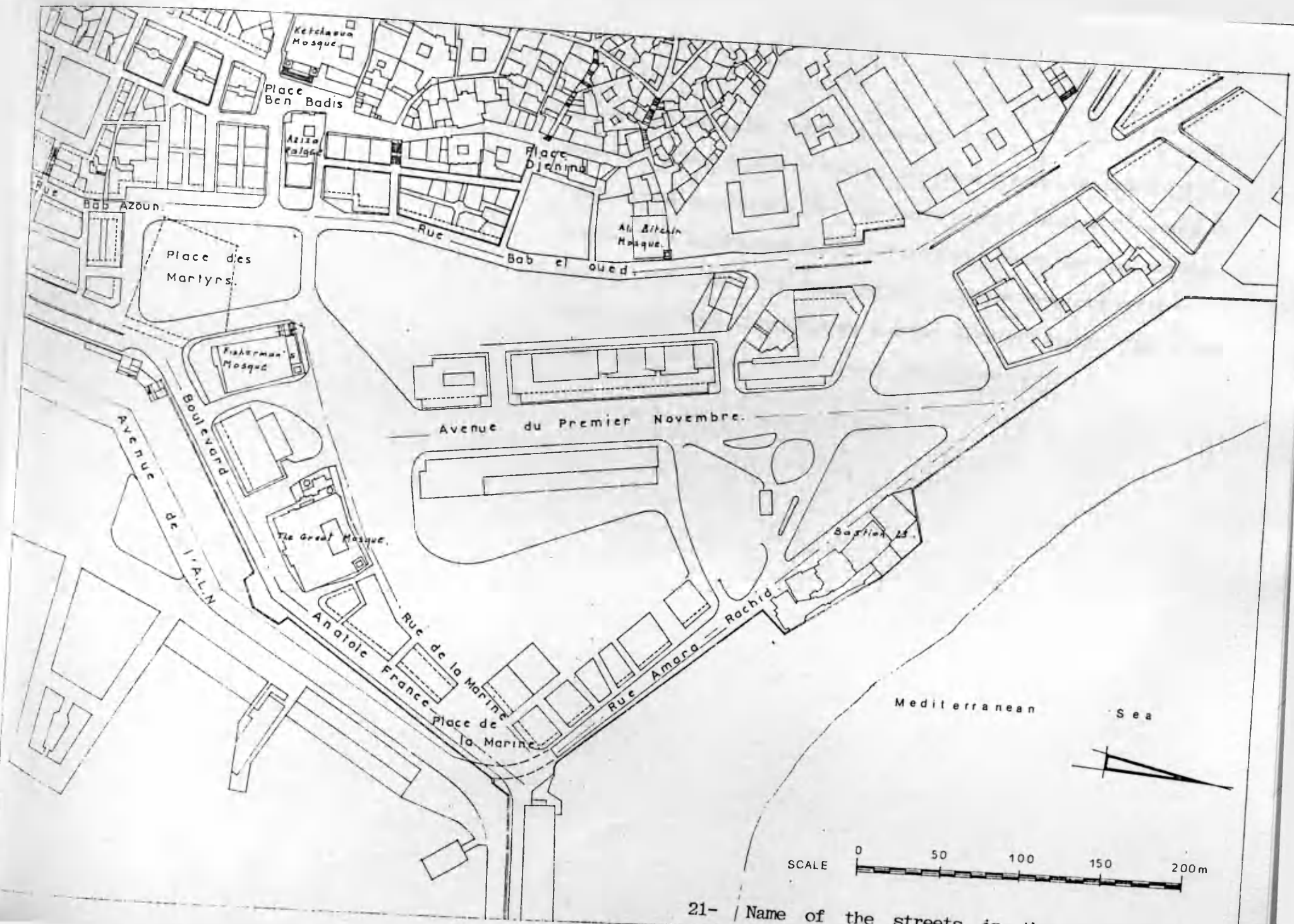
The Admiralty



18- The old town within the urban context of Algiers



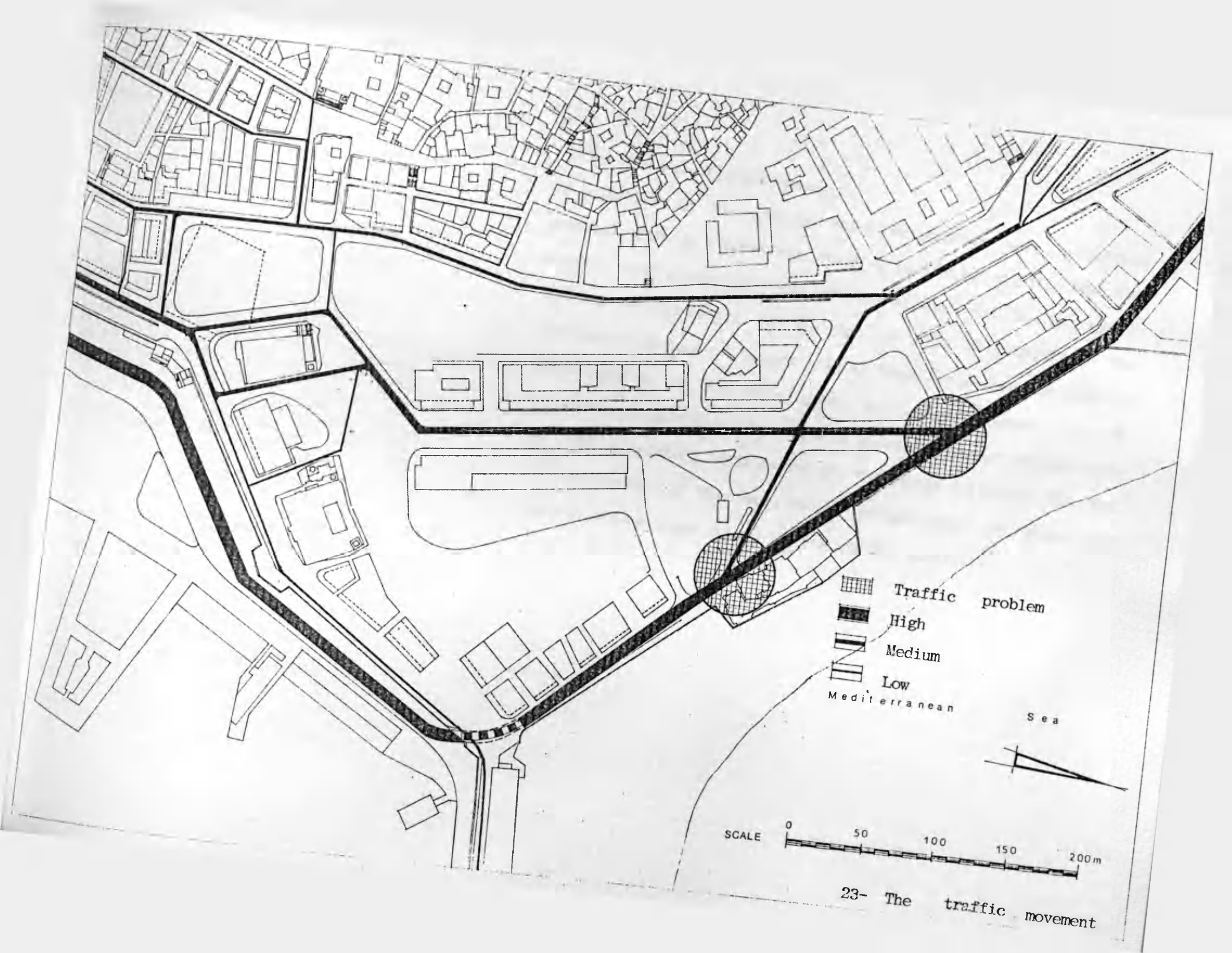




21- Name of the streets in the Lower Casbah

2-2-3. The Vehicular traffic movement.

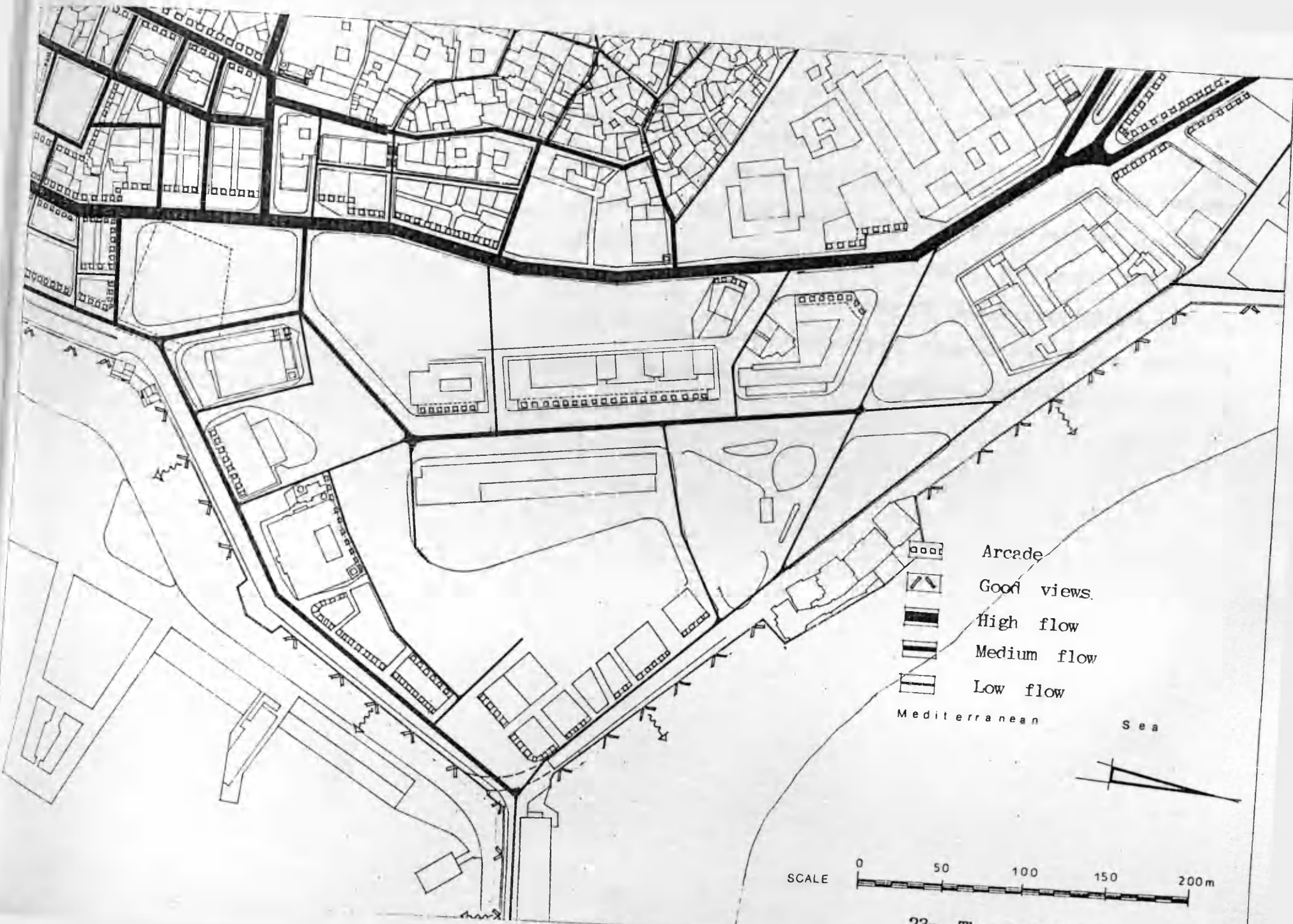
Today's traffic situation destroys the formerly quiet character of the "Quartier de la Marine". The "Rue Amara Rachid" leading the transit traffic in a south-north direction carries a heavy and busy traffic, cutting off, the area from the sea. Anti-environmental effects of traffic have been identified as a major problem within the study area, such as danger, noise, fumes, vibrations, etc.



23- The traffic movement

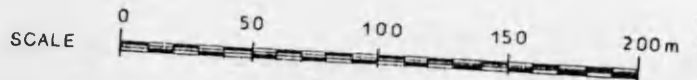
2-2-4. The Pedestrian movement.

In addition to the streets which accommodate most pedestrian movement there is a pedestrian route of particular significance; the historic axis generated by the "Rue Bab el oued" and "Rue Bab azoun" linking the city centre to the Bab el oued neighbourhood. The continuous system of arcade lining these two streets is suddenly interrupted in the "Rue Bab el oued", where only the west side of the street is partially bordered with arcades, whereas the east side is left completely open facing the ten storey buildings. The "Rue Anatole France" and "Rue Amara Rachid" present great potential and offer excellent views out to the sea and the Admiralty.



- Arcade
- Good views.
- High flow
- Medium flow
- Low flow

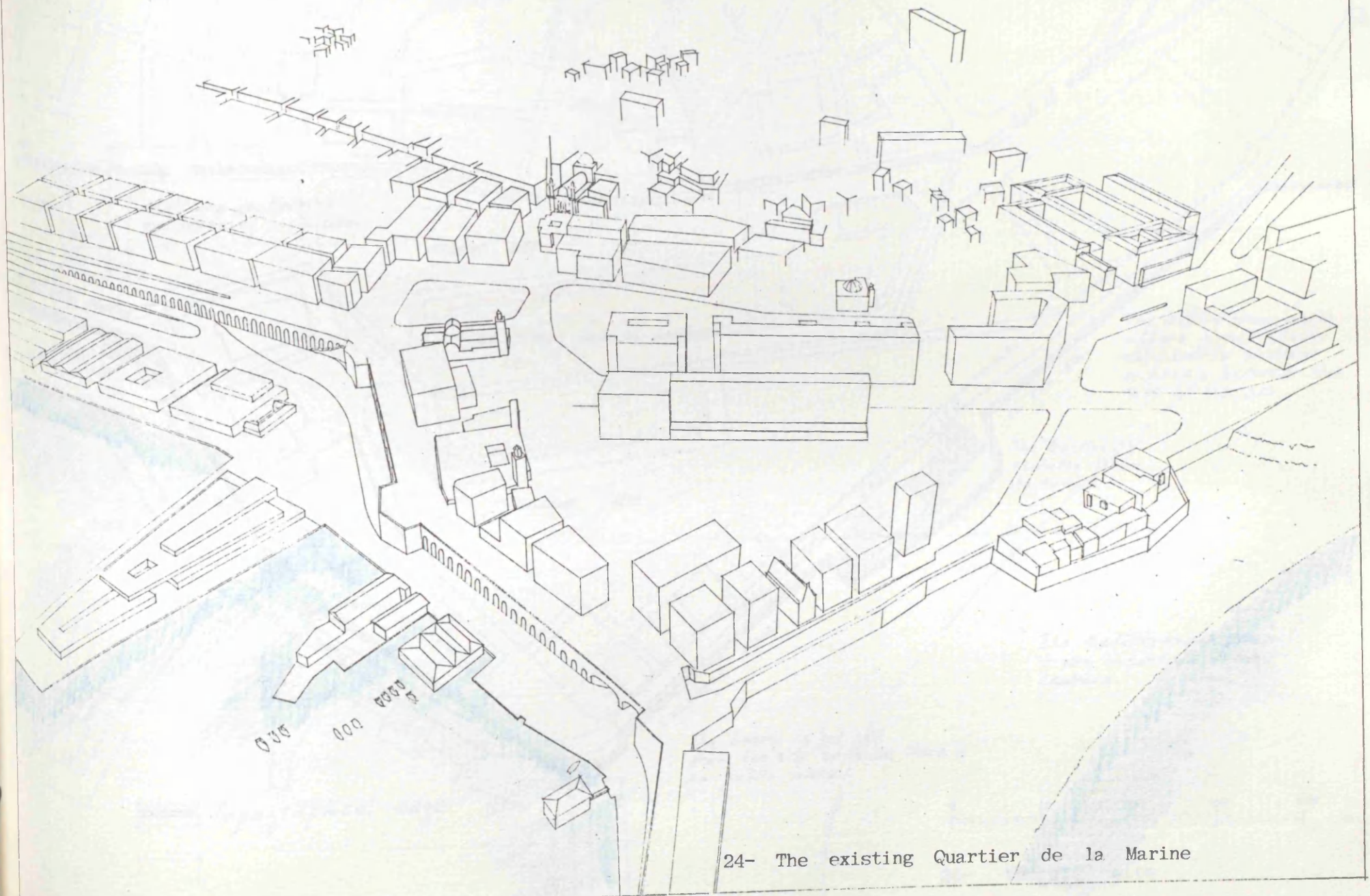
Mediterranean Sea



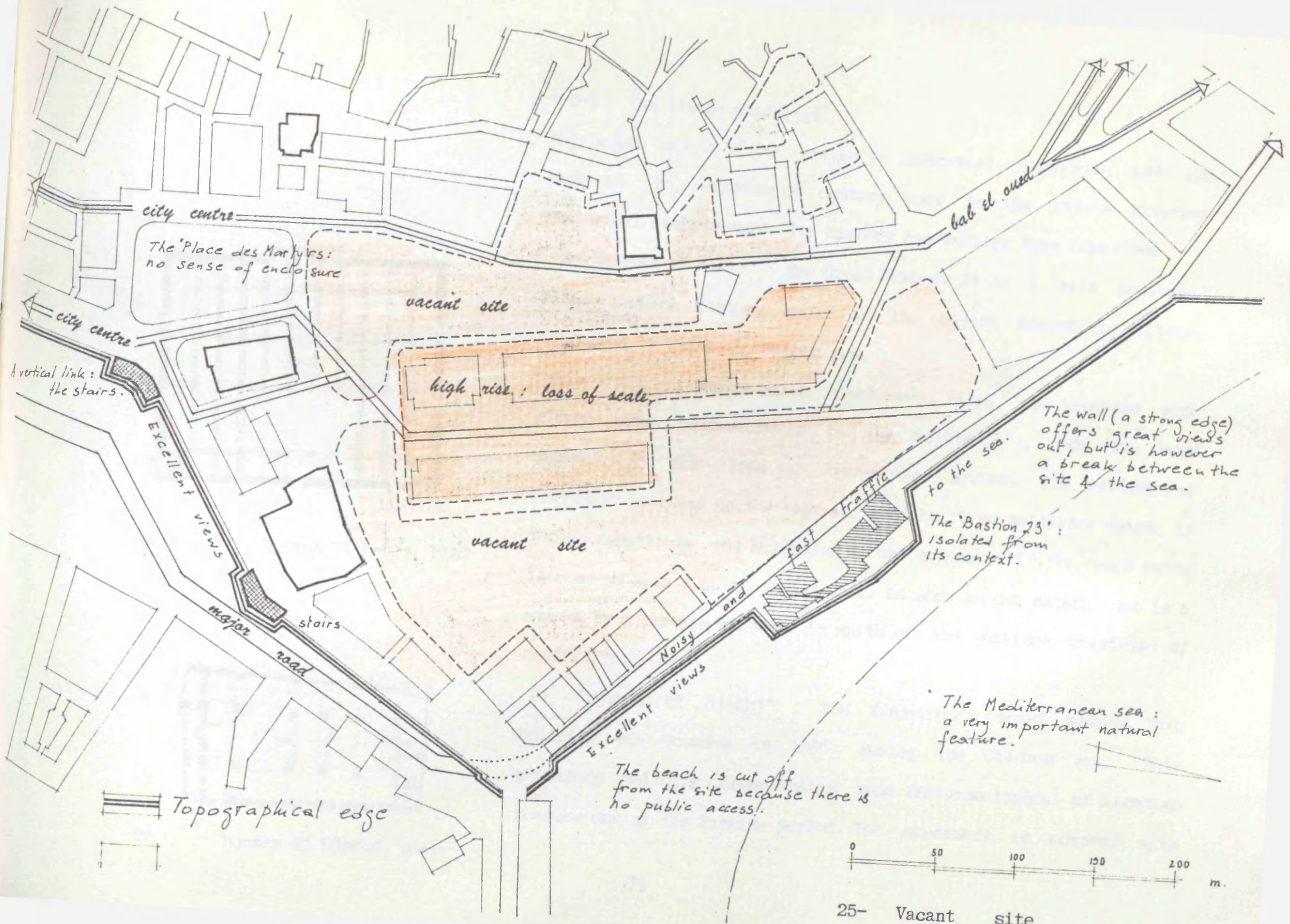
23- The pedestrian movement

2-2-6. The vacant sites.

Negative open spaces were left after the old buildings had been pulled down. The tall and self righteous blocks laid out in 1950 are an unreleated feature destroying the whole townscape. The traffic movement in addition destroyed the relationship of this old core with the whole Casbah. Considerable areas of the chosen site are vacant, and present great possibilities to restrusture this decaying centre.



24- The existing Quartier de la Marine



city centre

The 'Place des Martyrs':
no sense of enclosure

vacant site

high rise: loss of scale

vacant site

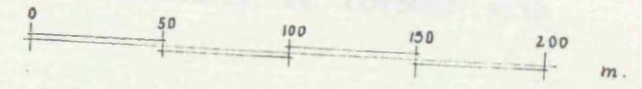
Bab el oued

The wall (a strong edge)
offers great views
out, but is however
a break between the
site & the sea.

The 'Bastion 23':
isolated from
its context.

The Mediterranean sea:
a very important natural
feature.

The beach is cut off
from the site because there is
no public access.



25- Vacant site

Topographical edge



A vertical link:
the stairs.

Excellent views

major road stairs

Noisy
and
fast traffic

Excellent views

city centre

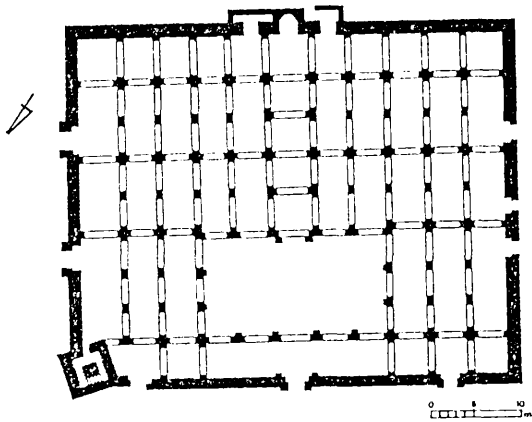
2-2-7. The listed buildings.

The Casbah is one of the nation's historical treasures; and its eleventh to nineteenth century work is the city's greatest historical architecture. Its history has earlier been described .

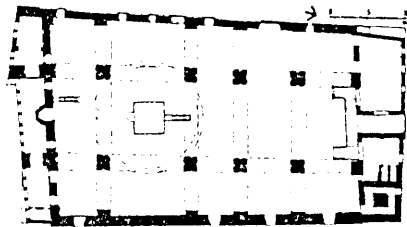
A- 'Djamaa el kebir' : The Great Mosque. It is a well preserved 11th. century mosque, known as the oldest mosque in Algiers, belonging to the Arabo-Berber era.

"This Almoravid mosque which is not very large, is provided with eleven naves perpendicular to the Quibla (*), and five bays separated by two lines of transversal arches. The rectangular courtyard is lined on the east and west by three galleries which, in fact, constitute the extension of the prayer hall". "...each naves is covered with a gutter-tiled roof. As soon as one enters, one is struck by a certain grandeur in spite of the extreme sobriety of decoration." (4)

B- 'Djamaa el djedid' : The fisherman's wharf mosque. This building was founded in 1660, during the Ottoman era. "This cruciform building demonstrates some features typical of Algerian mosques during the Turkish period. The sanctuary is covered with



26 Djamaa El kebir; plan



27 Djamaa El Djedid; plan.

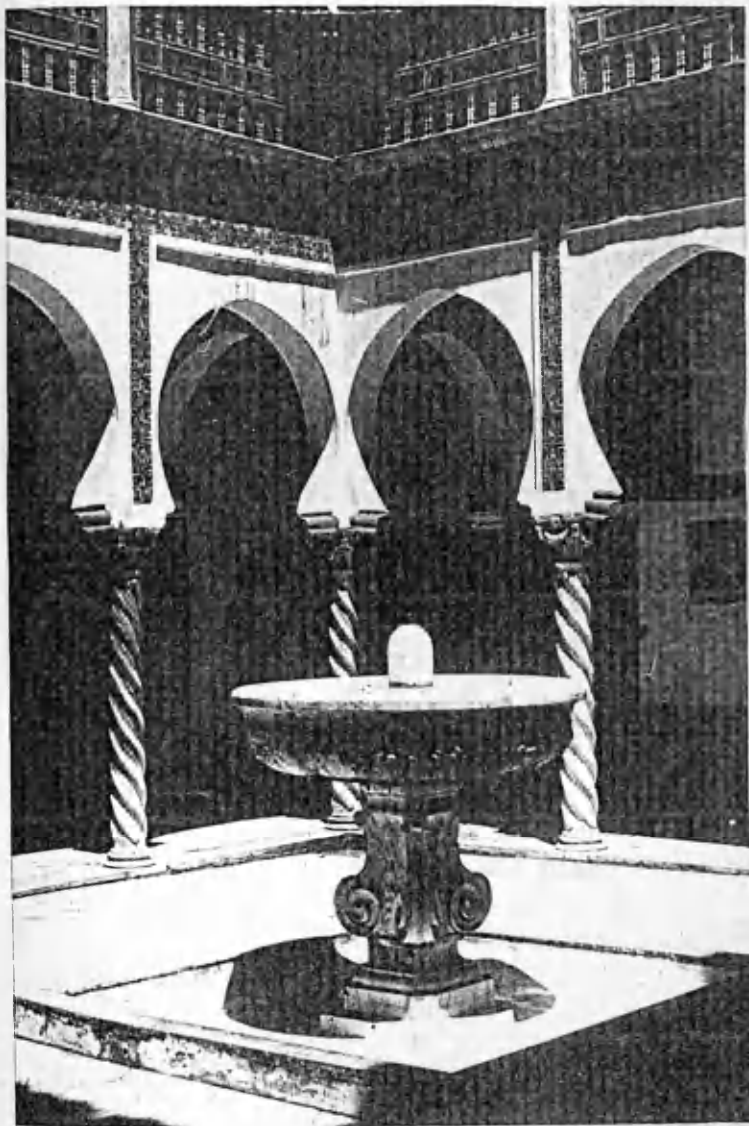
barrel vaults and there is a central ovoid dome supported on Ottoman type pendentives and semicircular arches.

The square North African minaret has nonetheless been retained." (5)

C- The "Katshawa" mosque . "This mosque which was probably erected in 1612, was entirely rebuilt in 1794 by Pasha Hassan, but its transformation into a church, has considerably altered its aspect. One can suppose however , that the enormous central cupola reposing on shell shaped pendentives indicates its original condition, and old prints of the mosque confirm this." (6)

D- The waterfront. This arcade system supports the waterfront. It was designed by Chasseriau and built in the mid-19th. century. This impressive and monumental realisation is today a break between the port and the city. This very elegant waterfront presents however many possibilities for re-using the volumes underneath.

E- The "Dar Aziza" palace. "This delightful building, which faces the Katshawa mosque, is constructed round a central square courtyard reached by a narrow corridor. Diverse rooms open out into this courtyard on the ground floor , whilst, on the first floor a gallery with carved wooden balconies and wreathed columns precedes other



28- Aziza Palace : the courtyard



29- Aziza Palace and Katchaoua mosque

Chambers. Decorated faience tiles, stucco work, stained-glass windows and painted wooden ceilings embellish the ensemble of this place which serves as a classical example of other similar constructions in old Algiers. (7)

This building is today isolated from its context .

F- The vaults of the "Place des Martyrs". The lower level, belongs to the Turkish era. Materials of old Roman buildings were re-used to build the vaults. The upper level on which stands the present "Place des Martyrs" was raised in the 19th. century .

G- THE "Bastion 23" .

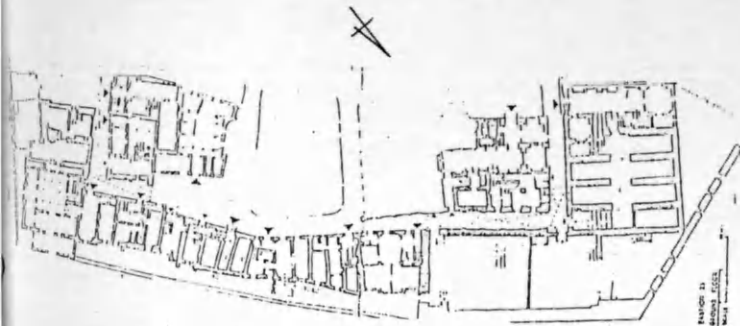
The unique historical grouping of houses and palaces surviving the old town on the edge of the sea.

They need to be restored.

H- The "Ali Bitchin" Mosque.

"Built in 1662, its transformation into a Christian church (Notre Dame de la victoire) has certainly not favoured the preservation of its original plan.

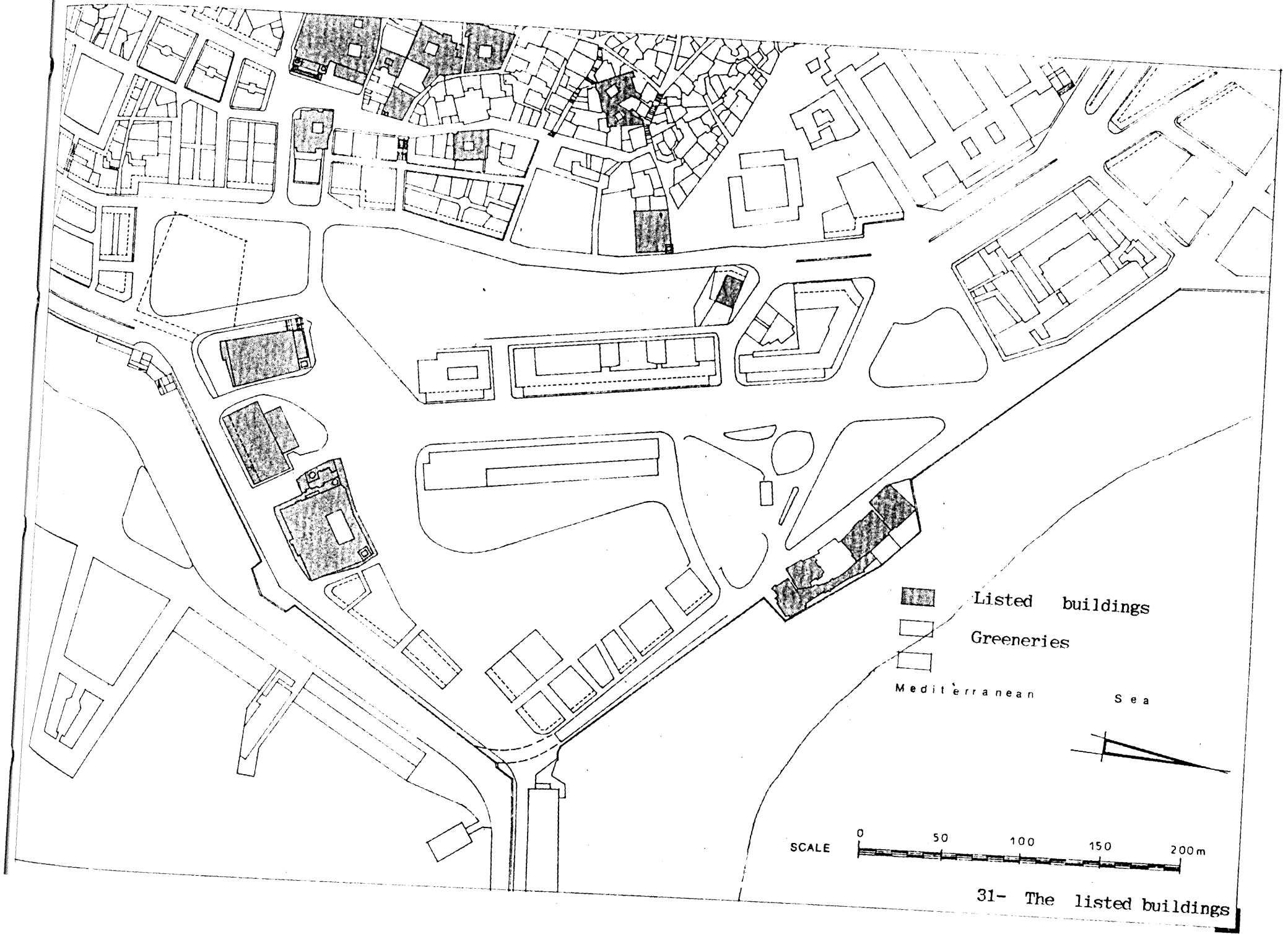
This building which has once again become a mosque, now has a vast square central part surmounted by an octogonal cupola, supported by four large pillars . The east, west and north sides are lined with



30 Bastion 23; plan.

galleries covered by twenty little cupolas." (8)

I- The "Chambre de commerce". Located between the two mosques Djamaa el kebir (A), and Djamaa el djedid (B), this realisation is one of the first steel building of the 19th. century built in Algiers.



Listed buildings

Greeneries

Mediterranean Sea

SCALE 0 50 100 150 200m

31- The listed buildings

2-3. New proposition and programme for the Marine neighbourhood. The Atelier Casbah has determined a programme and a proposal for a new major road running in a tunnel beneath the site of the "Quartier de la Marine" in order to improve and to reduce the vehicular traffic (see fig.34) The main objectives of the Atelier Casbah are:

1- continuity in the activities of the city centre into the old core.

2- improvement of the pedestrian movement between the old town and the city centre.

3- rehabilitation of the Bastion 23.

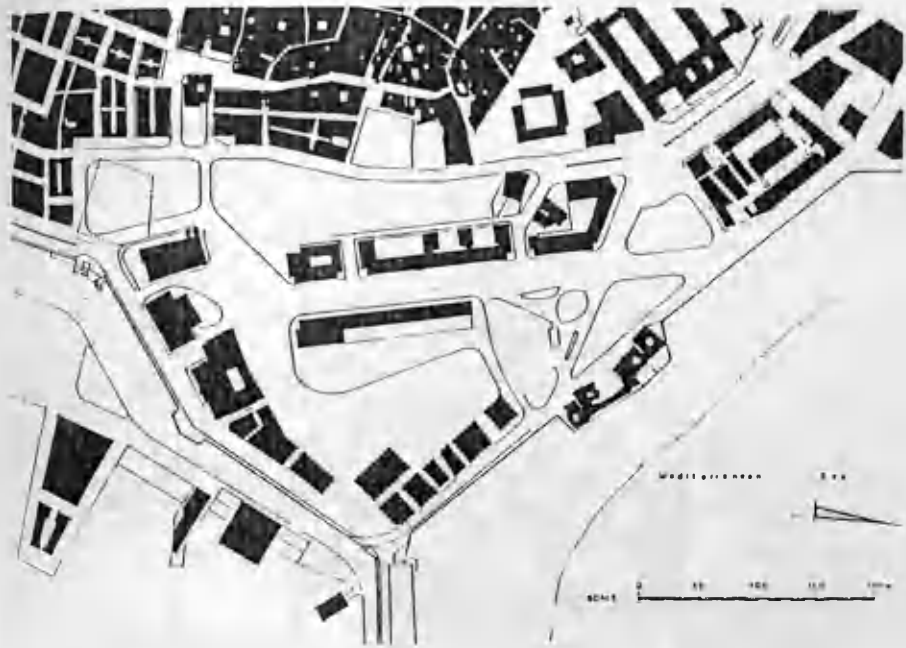
4- opening the Admiralty to the public for a full restitution of the public domain to public use.

On the other hand the E-N-E-T responsible for the revitalization of Algiers waterfront have offered alternative proposals as follows:

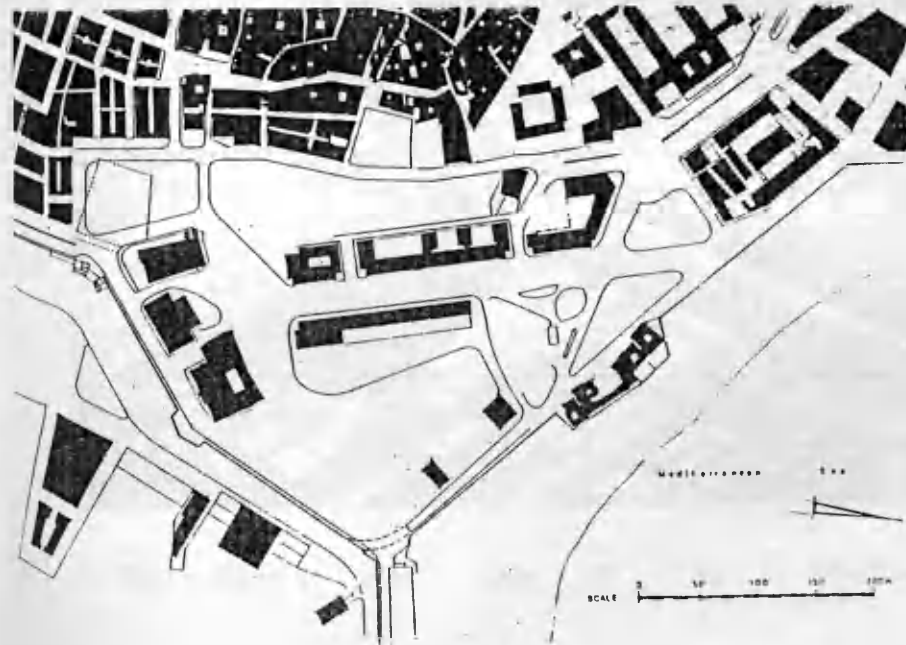
1- connect the harbour to the city,

2- remove the detrimental activities (warehouses)

3- have an adaptative re-use plan for some of the buildings that are in good condition and destroy the rundown for a better use of the sites.



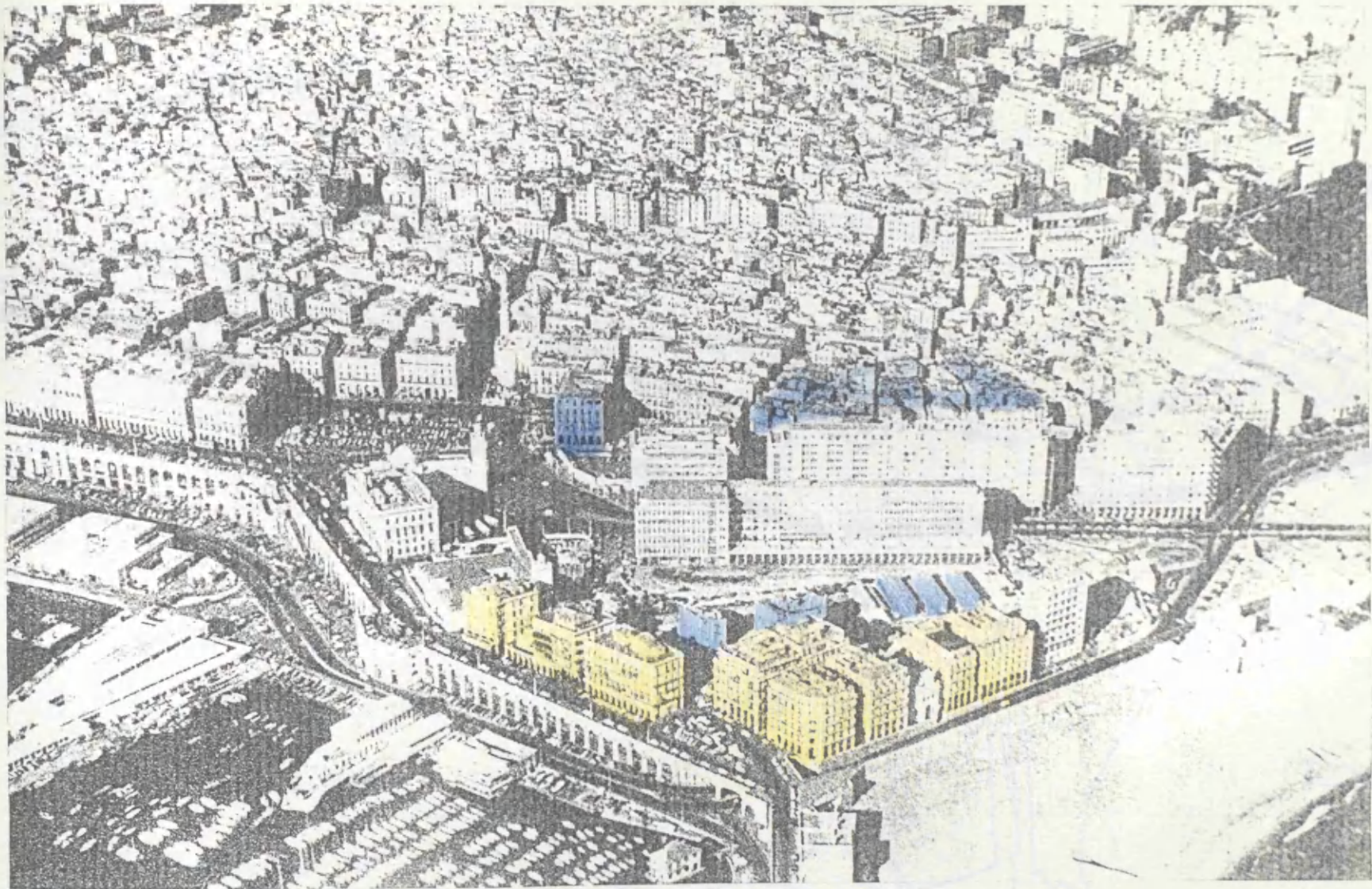
Site as existing



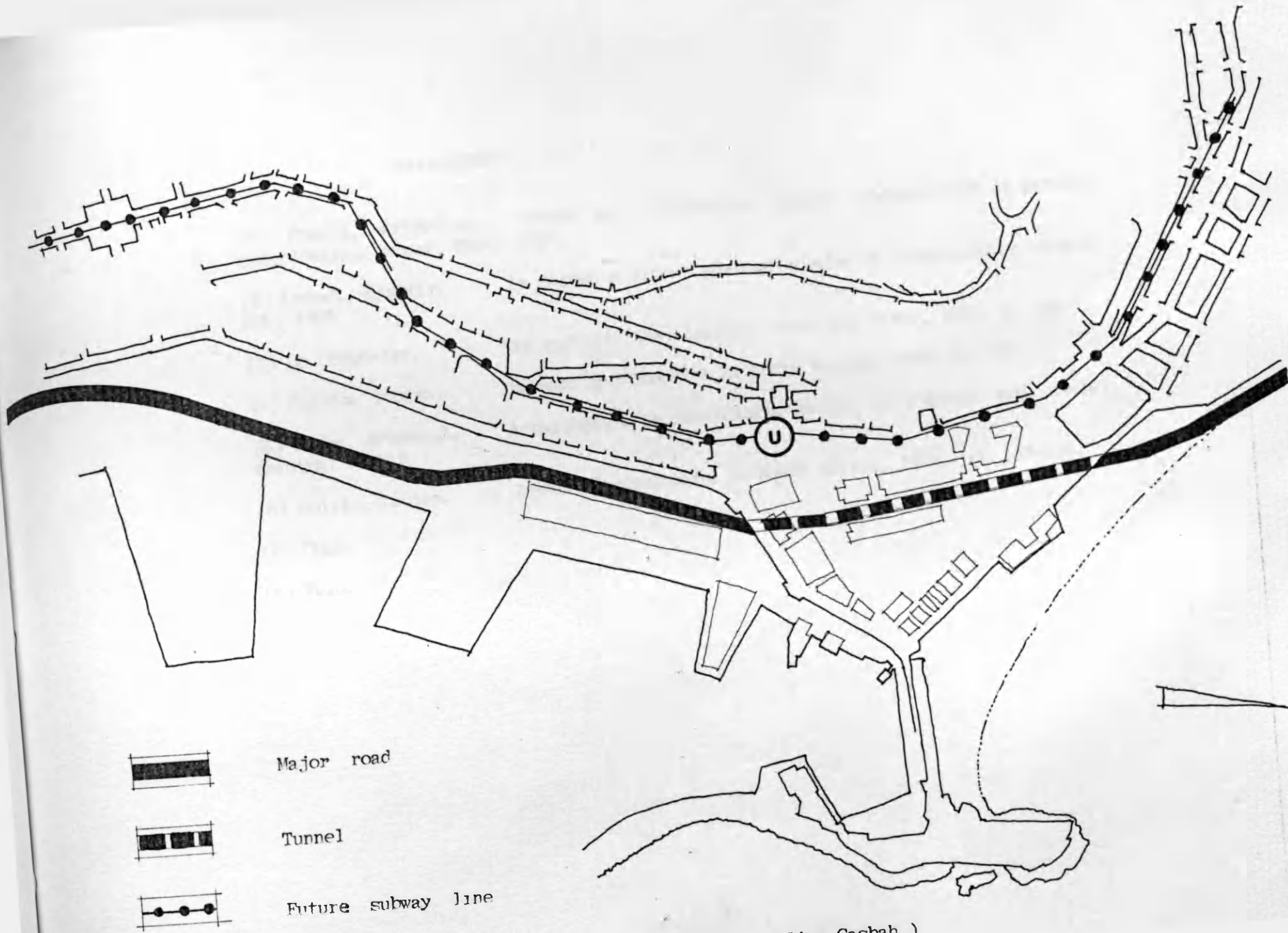
Site as taken

The following photograph shows a bird's eye view of the site. In blue are represented the buildings which have been pulled down during the last few years and in yellow those to be pulled down according to the Atelier Casbah because of their very bad state.





33- Bird's eye view of the "Quartier de la Marine" dating from the 60's.



34- Proposal for a new tunnel (Atelier Cashah)

REFERENCES

- (1) Cresti, Frederico. Notes sur l'histoire urbaine d'Alger dans la periode precoloniale. Alger, EPAU, 1980.
- (2) Lesbet, Djaffar. La Casbah d'Alger; gestion urbaine et vide sociale. Alger, CPU, 1985.
- (3) Le Corbusier. The radiant city. London, Faber and Faber, 1964. p. 226.
- (4) Golvin, Lucien. Islamic Architecture in North Africa. 1976. p. 115.
- (5) Grube, Ernest.J. Architecture of the islamic world; its history and social meaning. P. 218.
- (6) Golvin, Lucien. Islamic Architecture in North Africa, 1976. pp. 117-118.
- (7) Ibid.
- (8) Ibid.

PART II

Introduction.

The first part of this study has been devoted to a comprehensive survey of the Marine neighbourhood's present physical characteristics. This second part is an attempt to establish the framework essential to the realisation of the opportunities presented by the area and its potential for redevelopment.

1. SITE ANALYSIS.

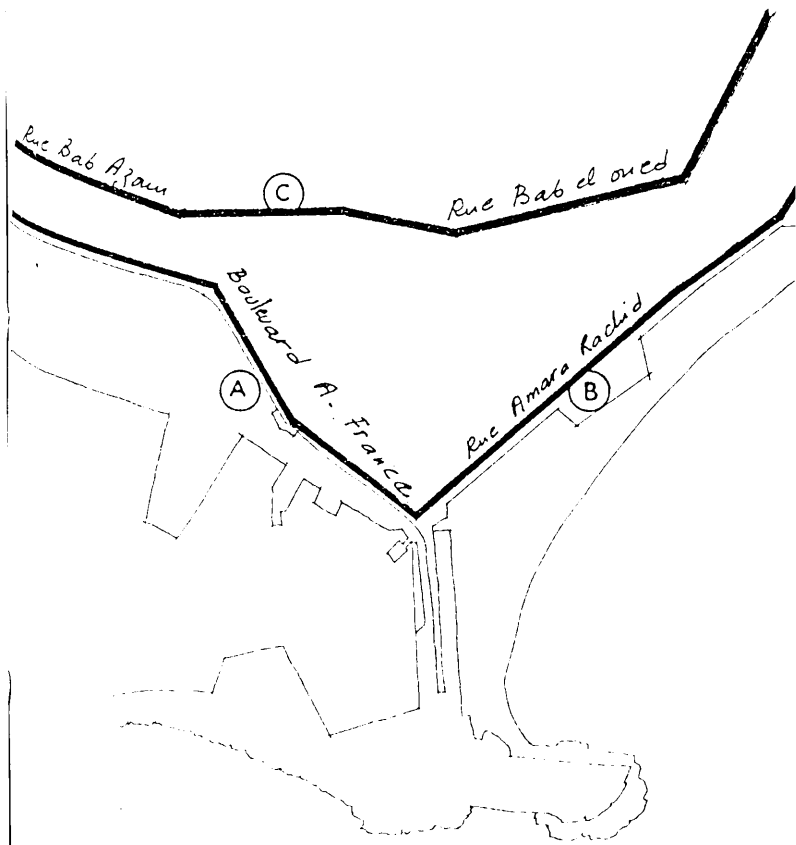
1-1. The edges.

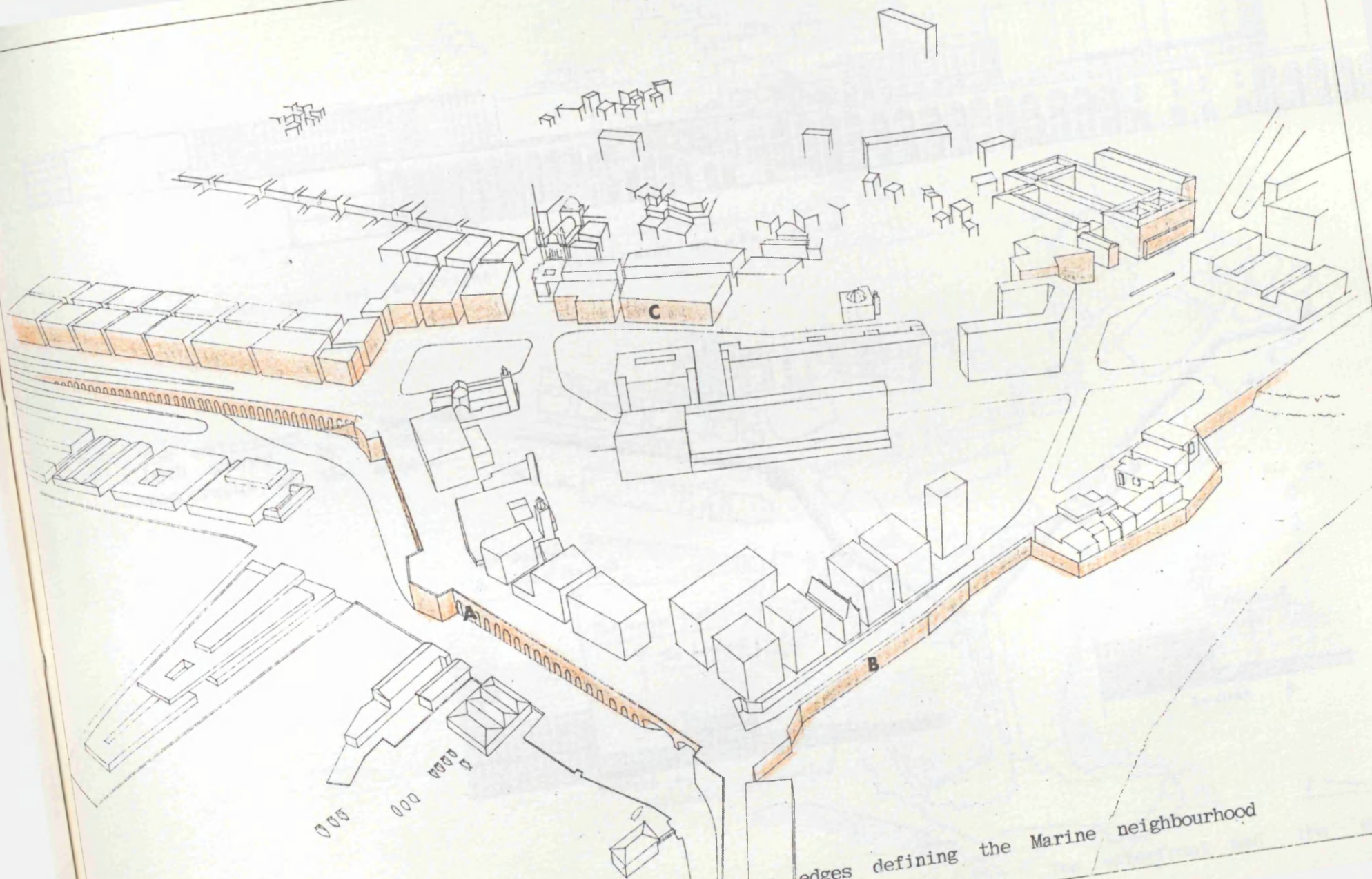
The area is delimited by three very strong edges: the waterfront, the wall _both shaped by the topography of the site_, and the 19th. century French colonial building line.

A- To the south west the impressive and monumental waterfront makes a very important edge to the space. This 19th century realisation is physically a break between the port and the Marine neighbourhood. However it presents great potential for a possible future rehabilitation of the arcade.

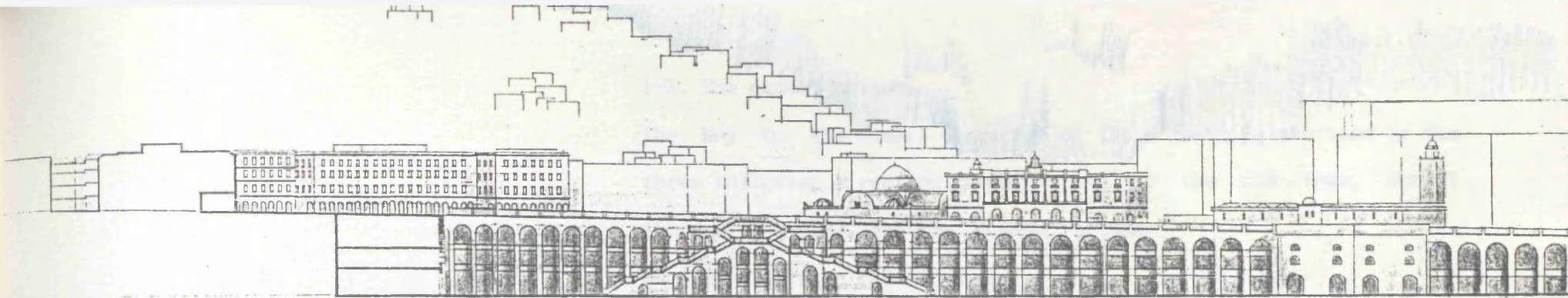
B- To the north east, the wall built upon the remain of the old fortifications is another edge to the site. It is a break between the area and the beach, today unexploited and isolated from the context of the old town.

C- The "Rue Bab azoun" and "Rue Bab el oued" were designed as a screen hiding the old town. The arcade created a new "order" and made a severe segregation between the organic old town, and the colonial development. This edge isolated the Marine neighbourhood from its context and did not encourage the proliferation of the old town downhill.



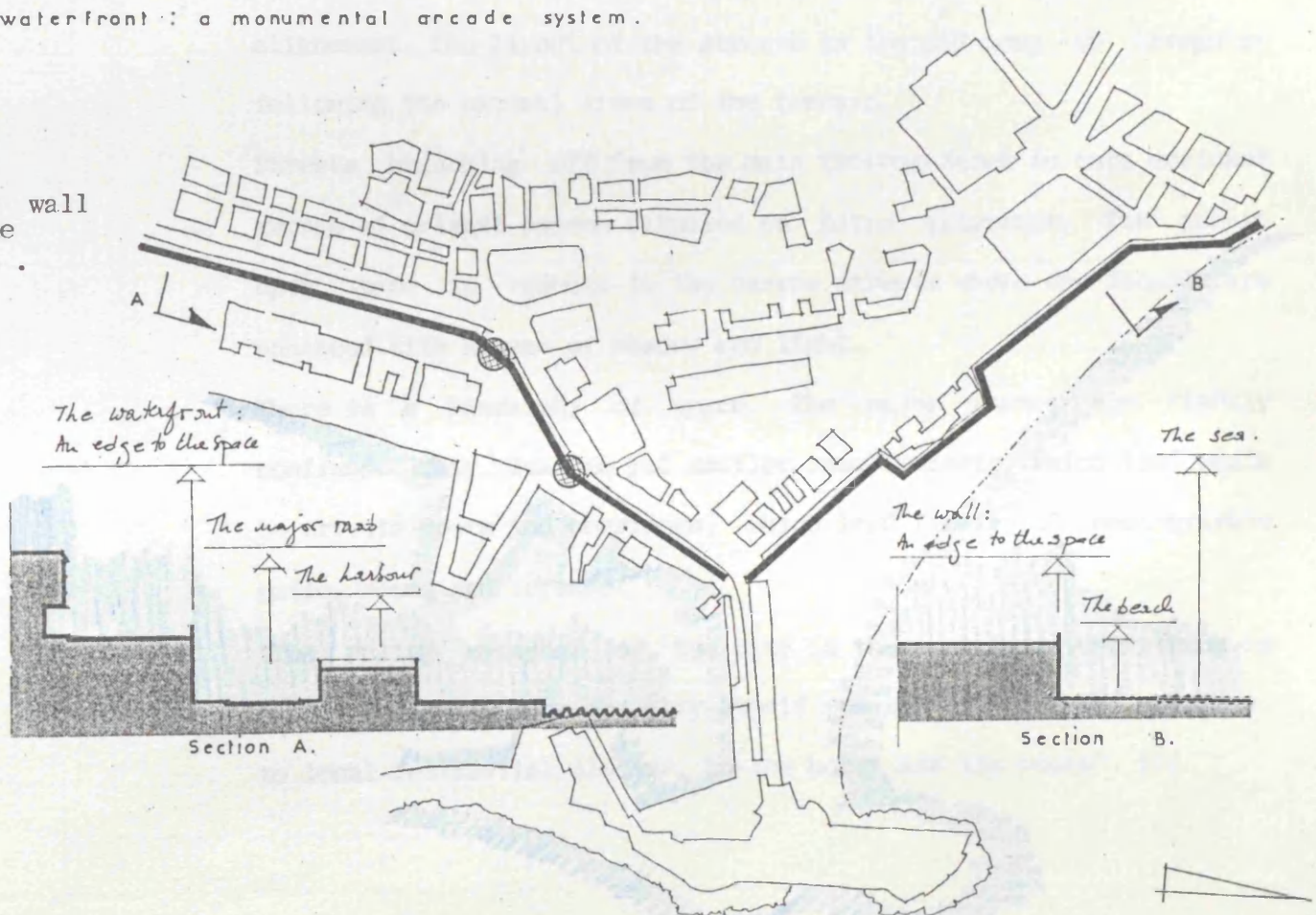


36- The three edges defining the Marine neighbourhood



The south east waterfront : a monumental arcade system.

The waterfront and the wall both shaped by the topography of the site.



1-2. The street pattern.

The key to the visual character of the streets is provided by the three following street patterns: street in the old town, street lined with arcade, and the "modern" Avenue.

A- The streets in the old town.

The Casbah has a high density of urbanization with a free road alignment. The layout of the streets in the old town is irregular following the natural lines of the terrain.

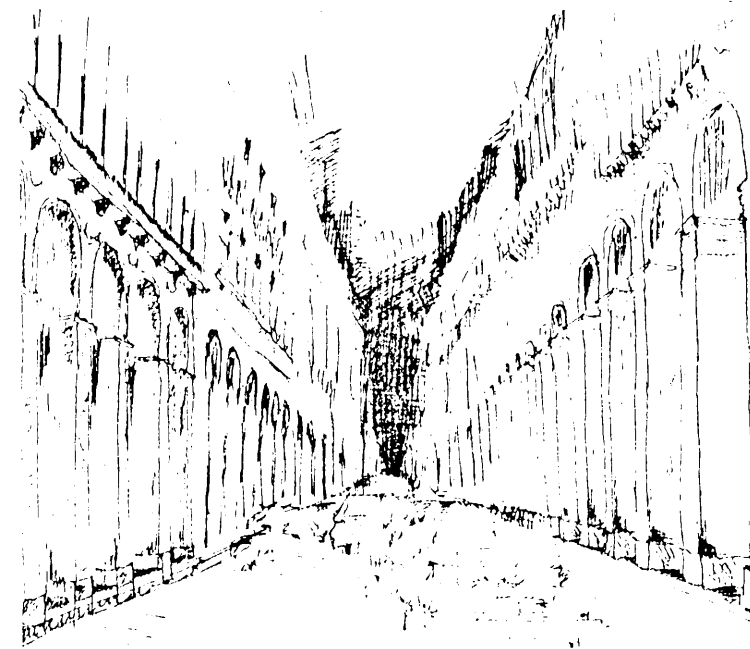
Streets branching off from the main thoroughfares in turn enclosed groups of private houses situated on blind alleyways. The public open space is reduced to the narrow streets where the facades are enhanced with a game of shadow and light.

There is a hierarchy of space. The major routes are tightly confined. They lead to yet smaller local streets, which lead again to private doors and corridors, which lead finally to semi-private patio, rooms and terrace.

"The ruling metaphor of the city is the container: everything is walled and gated from the city itself towards streets and quarters, to local residential cluster, to the house and its rooms". (1)



The inner townscape reveals a degree of plasticity. "Although they had no planning regulations to guide them, the builders of past centuries had a highly developed aesthetic sense and voluntarily observed the unwritten regulations of traditional practice" (2). Before the advent of western type town planning there was a traditional city forming an indissoluble whole. The Casbah has now lost this unity.



39 Rue Bab Azoun.



B- The street lined with arcade:

The 19th. century development was determined by the axial and symmetrical character of the streets emphasized by means of visual structures; the arches.

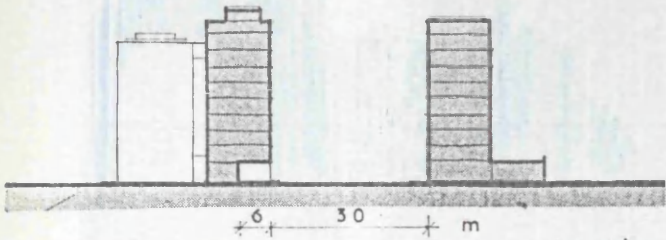
The long and ordered facades erected on "Rue Bab azoun", and around the "Place des Martyrs", have all arcades of the same height (approximately 7 metres high) at ground level, producing harmonious proportions of their general design.

C- The Avenue.

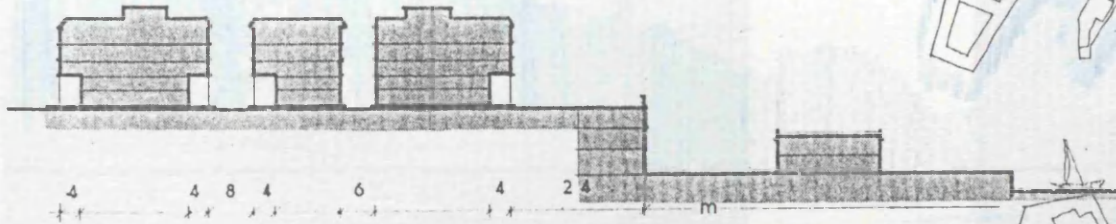
The new availability of new building techniques led to brutal changes in the character of the historical centre of the Casbah. The "Avenue du Premier Novembre" (30 metres wide) leading the traffic in a south-north direction is lined on both sides with high buildings (approximately 30 metres high) blocking therefore the eventual link between the upper Casbah and the sea.



The old town



The slabs

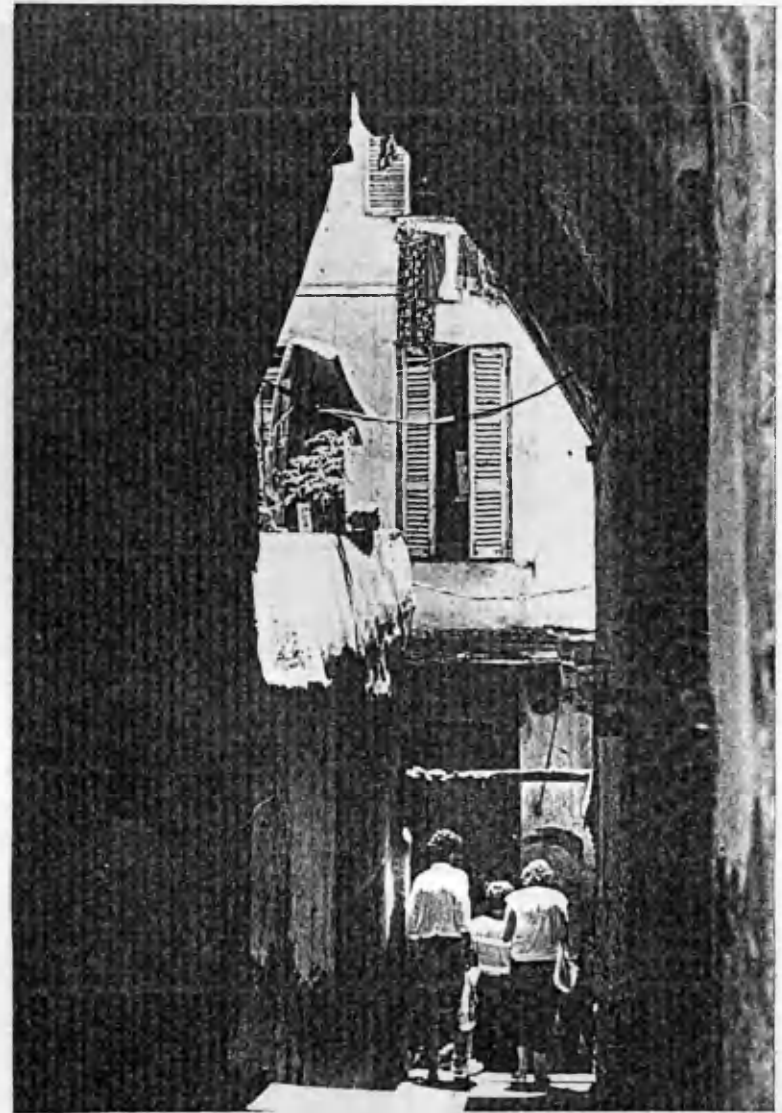


The French colonial block . section C .





41- Rue Bab azoun : a street lined with arcade.



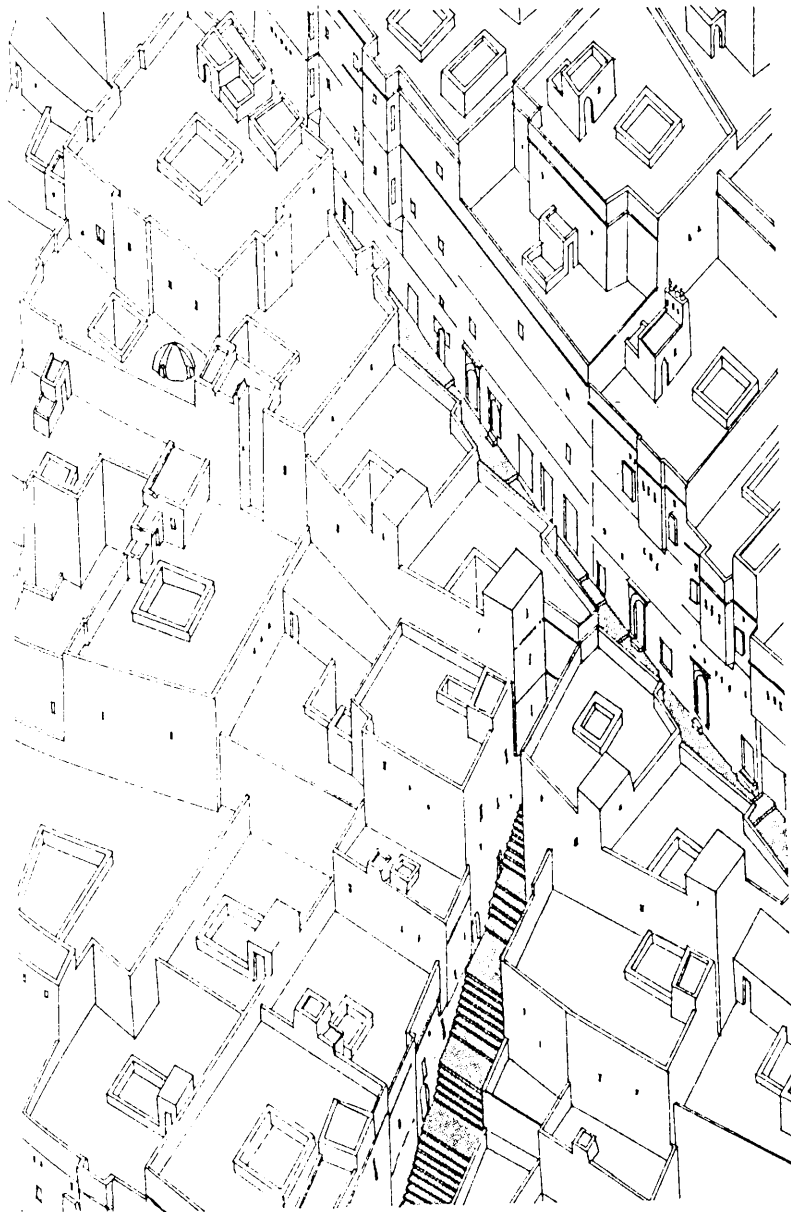
42- Street in the upper Casbah.



43- Detail of a corner



44- The upper level of the waterfront
the vista is closed with the
Fisherman's Mosque.



45 The old urban form: an inward-looking architecture.

1-3. The three different urban forms.

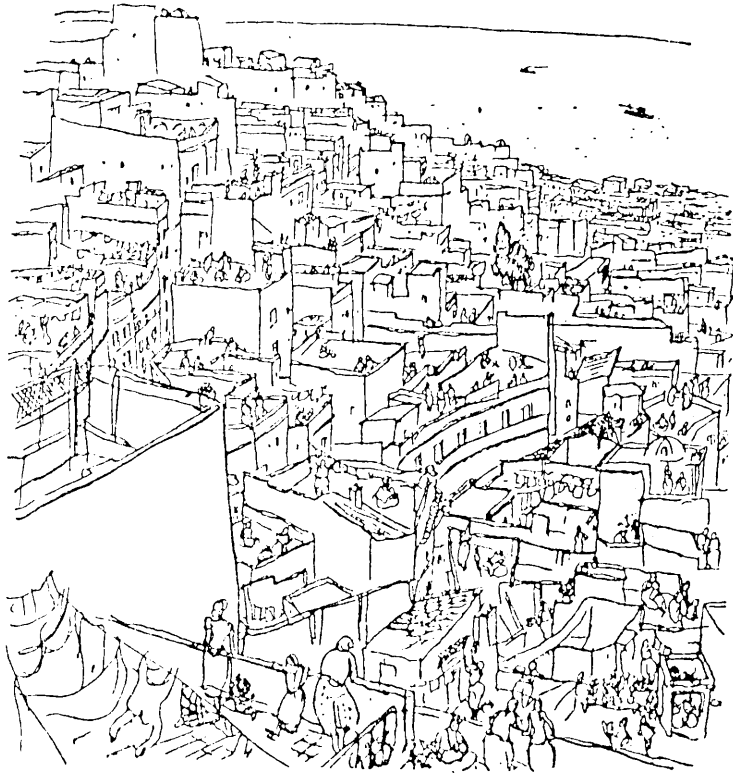
Unlike the upper Casbah with its narrow streets and courtyard houses, the lower Casbah (Quartier de la Marine) has been severely damaged during the first half of this century. There is today a critical dilemma between the three different urban forms:

- A- the old urban form; the Casbah,
- B- the 19th. century development,
- C- the mid-20th. century development.

A- The old Urban form.

By its geographical situation on the slopes of a hill which overlook the bay of Algiers, the old town has exceptional, climatic, aesthetic and panoramic conditions, which promote its historical values and the necessity of its conservation and restructuring.

Instead of erecting free standing buildings the medieval builders created compact blocks of buildings with irregular shape, which they interspersed most of the time with buildings of special symbolic and practical significance, such as the mosques. The houses laid out on the sloping site were combined in such a way that every single



house will overlook the other. This grouping type has allowed therefore a view upon the rest of the city and to the sea. A regulation prohibited the construction of buildings blocking the view to the sea, or to the rest of the city during the Turkish era (3).

The terrace is a unique and privileged space where it is agreeable to stay during the evenings in the summer. If streets and markets were the main places where the men met, the terrace was the main meeting space for the women. Before transformations occurred, it was possible to communicate through terraces not only from one building to another, but from a grouping to another, as well. This upper level of the houses reserved for the female, use to be the "women's public space".

This combinaison of terraces, generated by the particular grouping type of houses , "an urban space", at an upper level of the city. This very complex urban fabric stepping down the hill gives to the old town a very strong identity. In fact the rich skyline of the Casbah has always been associated with Algiers. The restoration of the upper Casbah, and the restructuring of the "Quartier de la

marine" should therefore consider this important aspect in order to preserve this skyline, "image of the city".

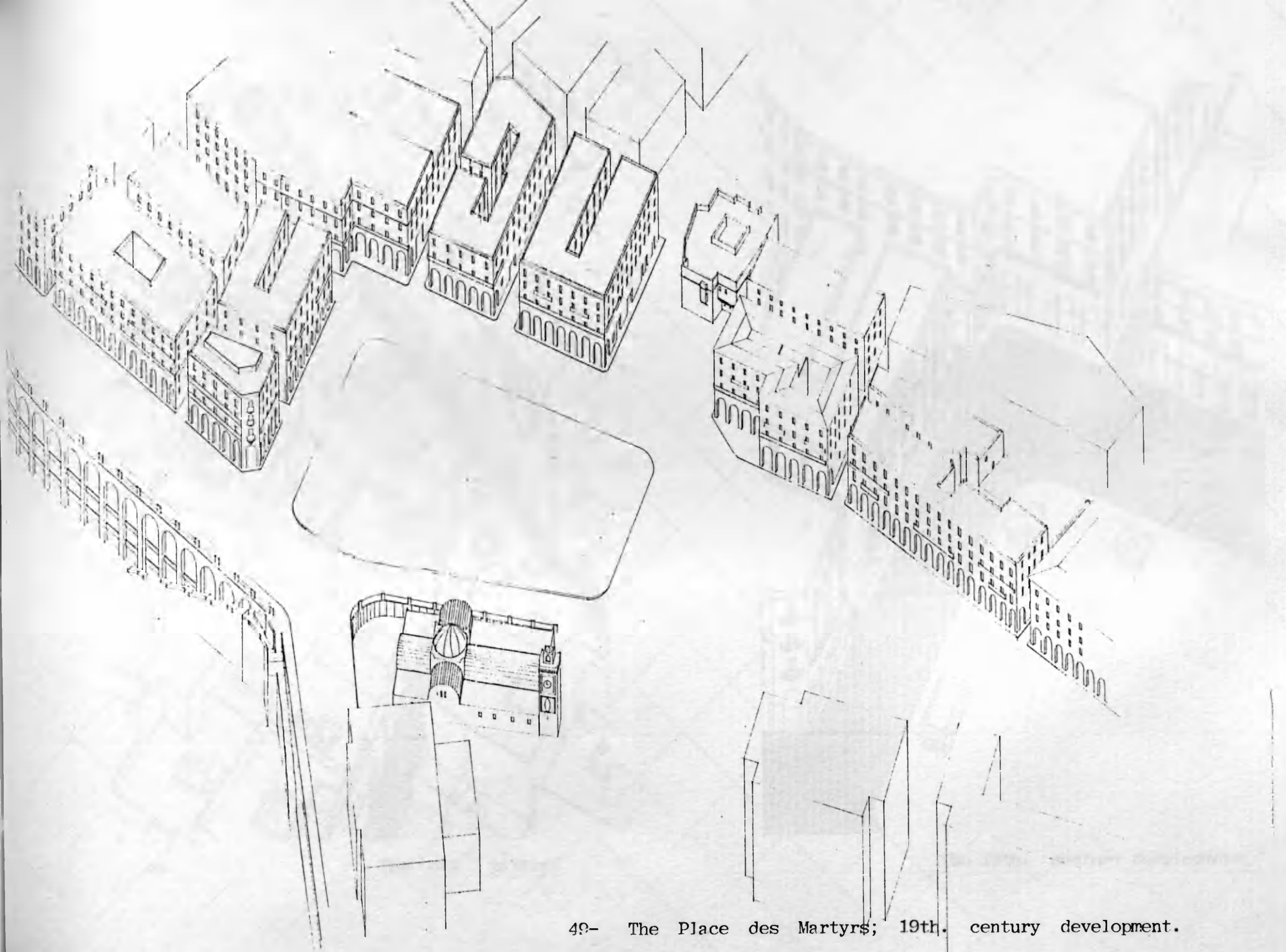
B- The 19th. century development.

If the house, the unit of the neighborhood, in the upper casbah turns inwards for light and air, the early colonial development adopted the block as a unit, with an outwards looking architecture. The "apartment blocks" are four or five stories high. The concept of the inner central space was eliminated. This central space has an important symbolic meaning; it is a place where the family meets, talks and uses it for the every day tasks. "In spite of its undisputed advantages, the courtyard house has become discredited, it is all too easily subject to ideological misinterpretation, and people are afraid that this design may imply enforced conformity to a communal lifestyle or a particular philosophy". (4)

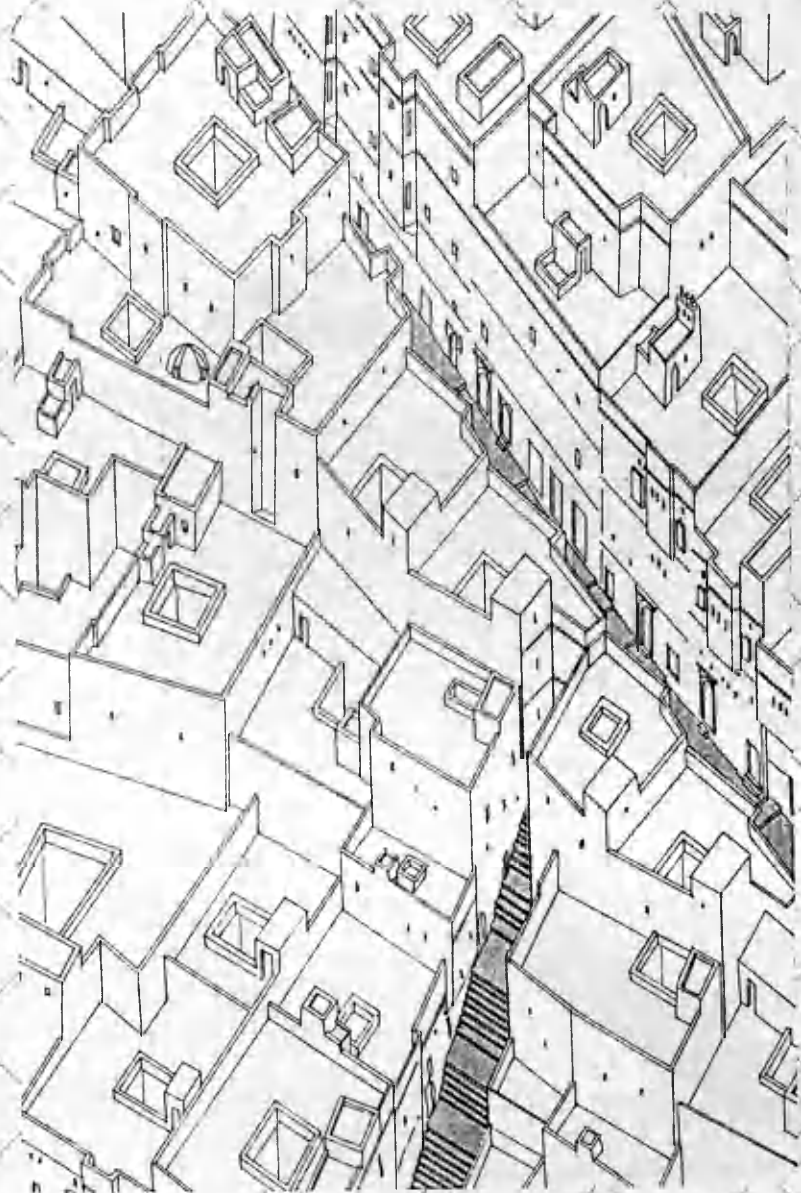
Today the patio, (wast eddar), has lost its function of communal space. This central space is a well adapted space for family meetings. Most of the social events, took place in this space, common to all the inhabitants. The courtyard as a central space is one of the major feature of the Casbah that has to be considered for the restructuring of the "Quartier de la Marine".

C- The mid-20th. century development.

Before its demolition the "Quartier de la Marine" has always been a close-knit quarter, with few powerful dominants and strong structures. The architectural attractions of the Casbah arise largely from domestic scale and intimate visual incident. The modern counterparts are not only larger and taller but less varied in their articulation. The result is a "bulkier apparent unit size" which produces an entirely different rythm in the street. In fact, contrasts between the scale of buildings appears dramatically in the "Avenue du Premier Novembre" with the tall free standing buildings.

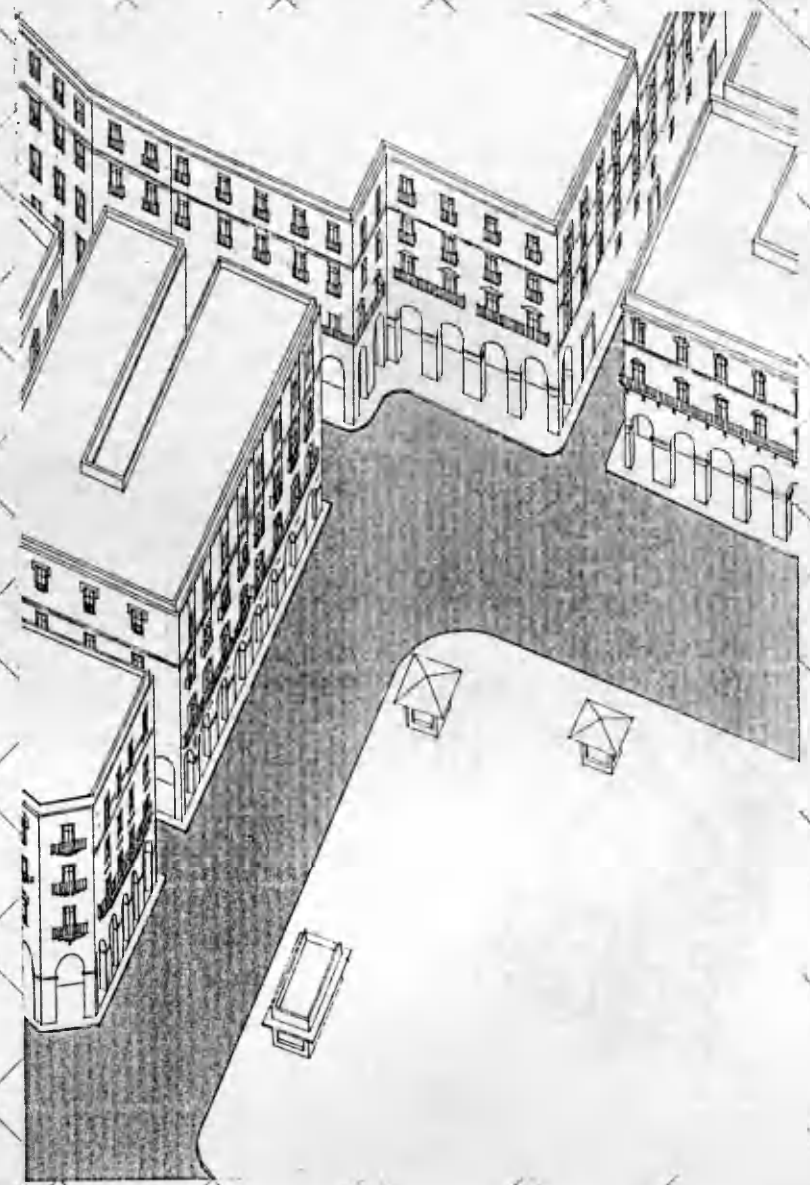


49- The Place des Martyrs; 19th. century development.



49-

The old pattern



The 19th. century development

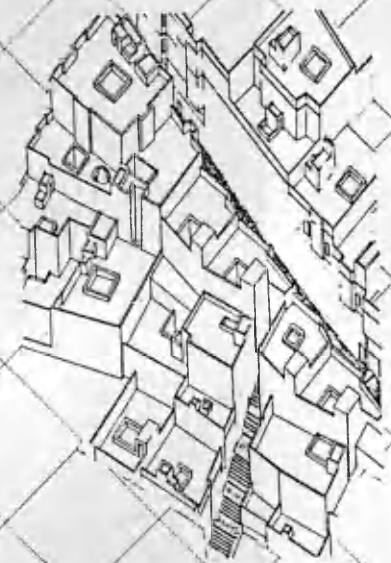
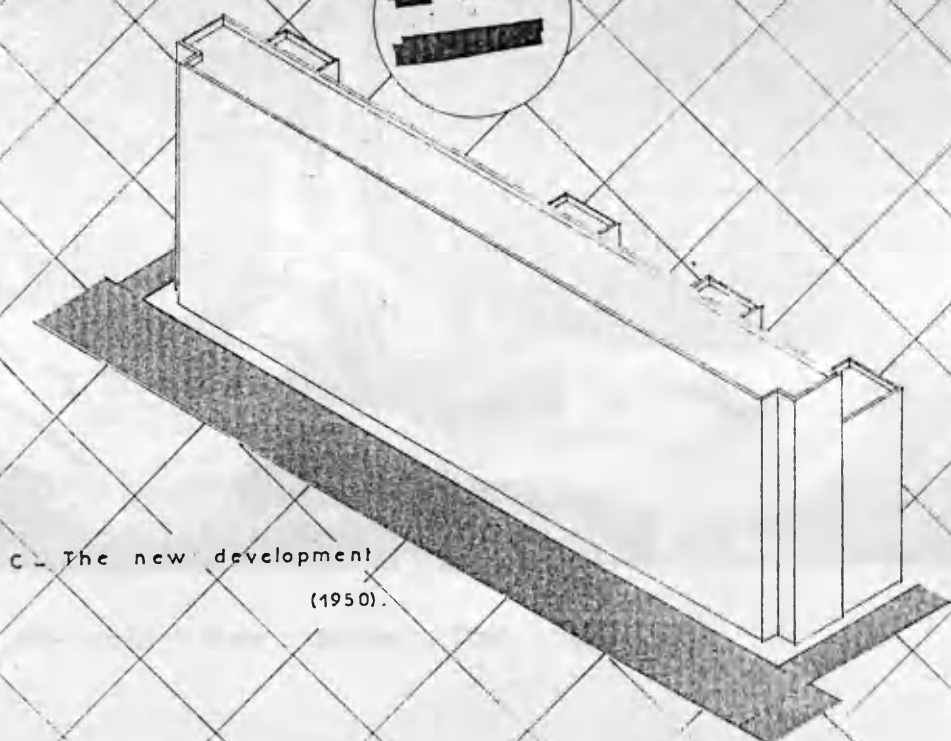
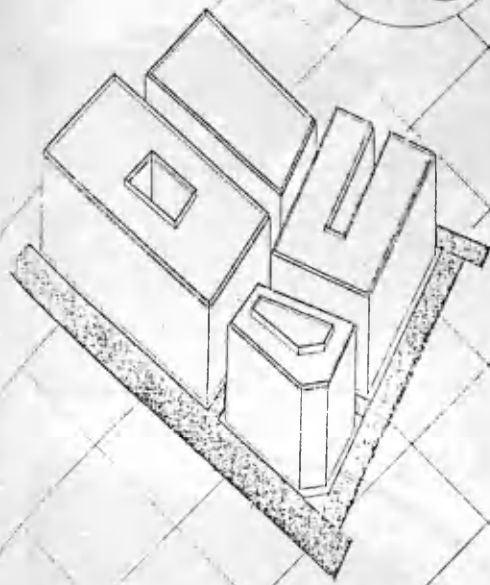
B - The 19th. century development:
the block.



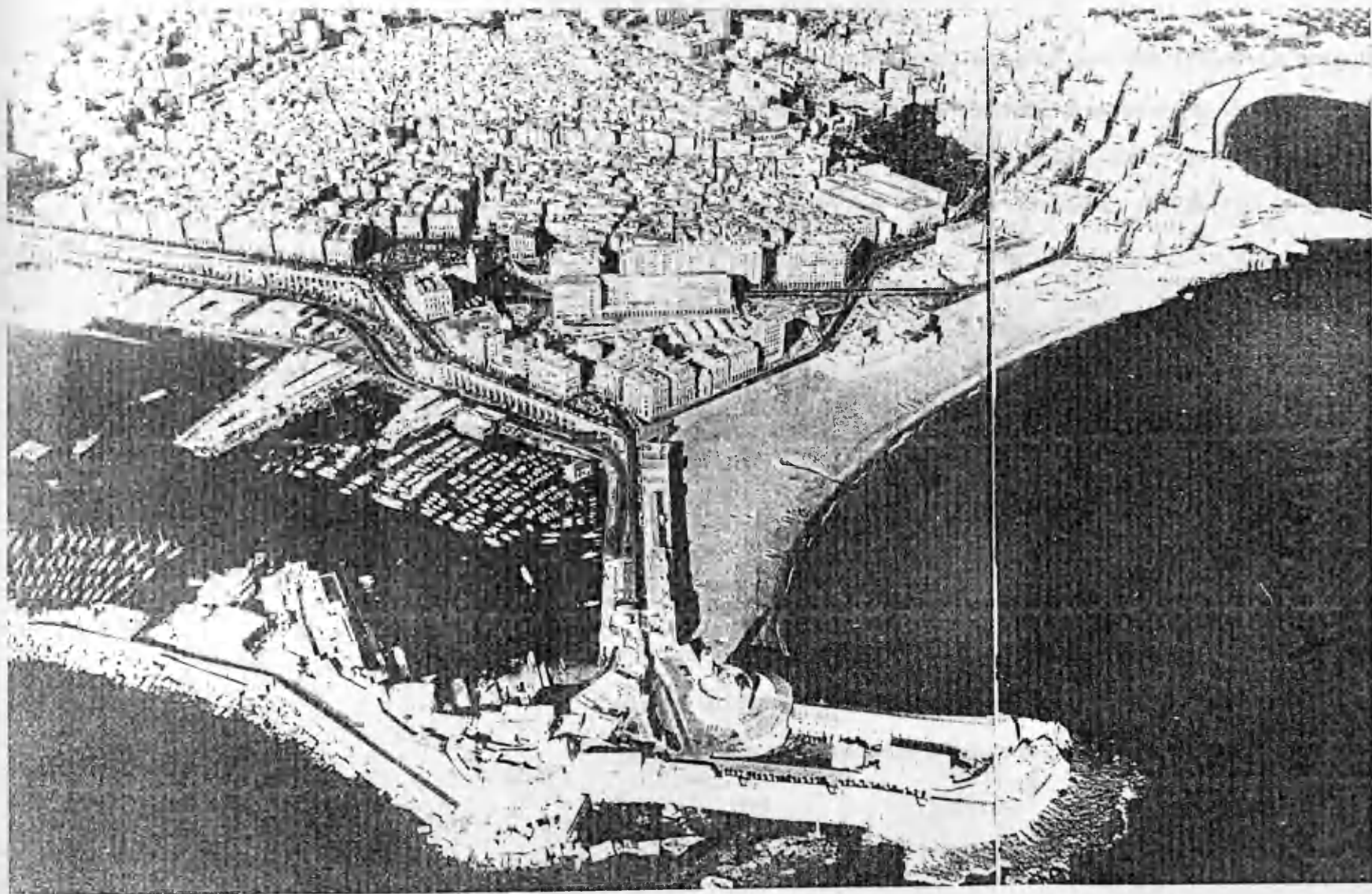
A - The old urban form:
the 'Casbah'.



50- The three different urban forms



C - The new development
(1950).



51- General view of the old town dating from the 60's.

2. The concept.

2-1. The planning goals.

This chapter is an attempt to establish the framework essential to the realisation of the opportunities presented by the area and its potential for redevelopment. It should refer to fig.69 showing the new design proposal for the Quartier de la Marine (p. 95 and 95b).

The intervention excels as an urban scale solution which recognises its context on both, local and city level.

A-City level.

It aims to create a unifying structure for the entire area. This is an attempt to bring the Casbah and the new development into the city to which it gave birth and make it part of the city fabric. An intervention at the scale of the whole Algiers considering the cultural and historical importance of the Casbah, which not only provides a memorable and pleasant experience for the visitor but as well a unified, complex image which richely represents the city of Algiers on a physical and historical level.

B-Local level

An intervention at a local level will revitalize and give a new

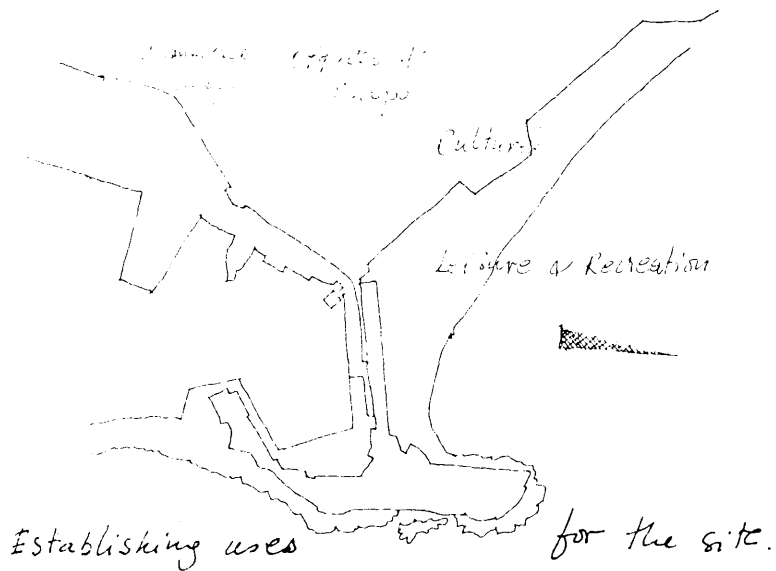
dynamic to the Casbah by redeveloping and rethinking its historical core; the "Quartier de la Marine". The main objective is to redefine and restructure the area in order to regenerate and protect its relationship with the upper Casbah, the Admiralty and the sea.

C-Programme.

The city of Algiers is today lacking in recreational facilities. The proximity of the site available to the centre, the upper Casbah and the waterfront offers a unique opportunity to connect them and at the same time create a pleasant successful and usable waterfront with a good relationship with the major city. This could be done by finding the adequate activities for the area such as recreational and cultural.

On the other hand the Casbah suffers today from a lack of community facilities and commerce.

The following ideas are therefore put forward as being appropriate for the future development of this area. The proposal calls for the creation of cultural and recreational facilities on one hand, and commerce and community facilities on the other.



A-Leisure and recreation:

- Sailing centre (with boat trips along the bay of Algiers)
- Cinemas
- Hotel
- Fishing pier
- Restaurants and cafes,
- Promenade along the waterfront and the Admiralty, including an urban park and playing areas

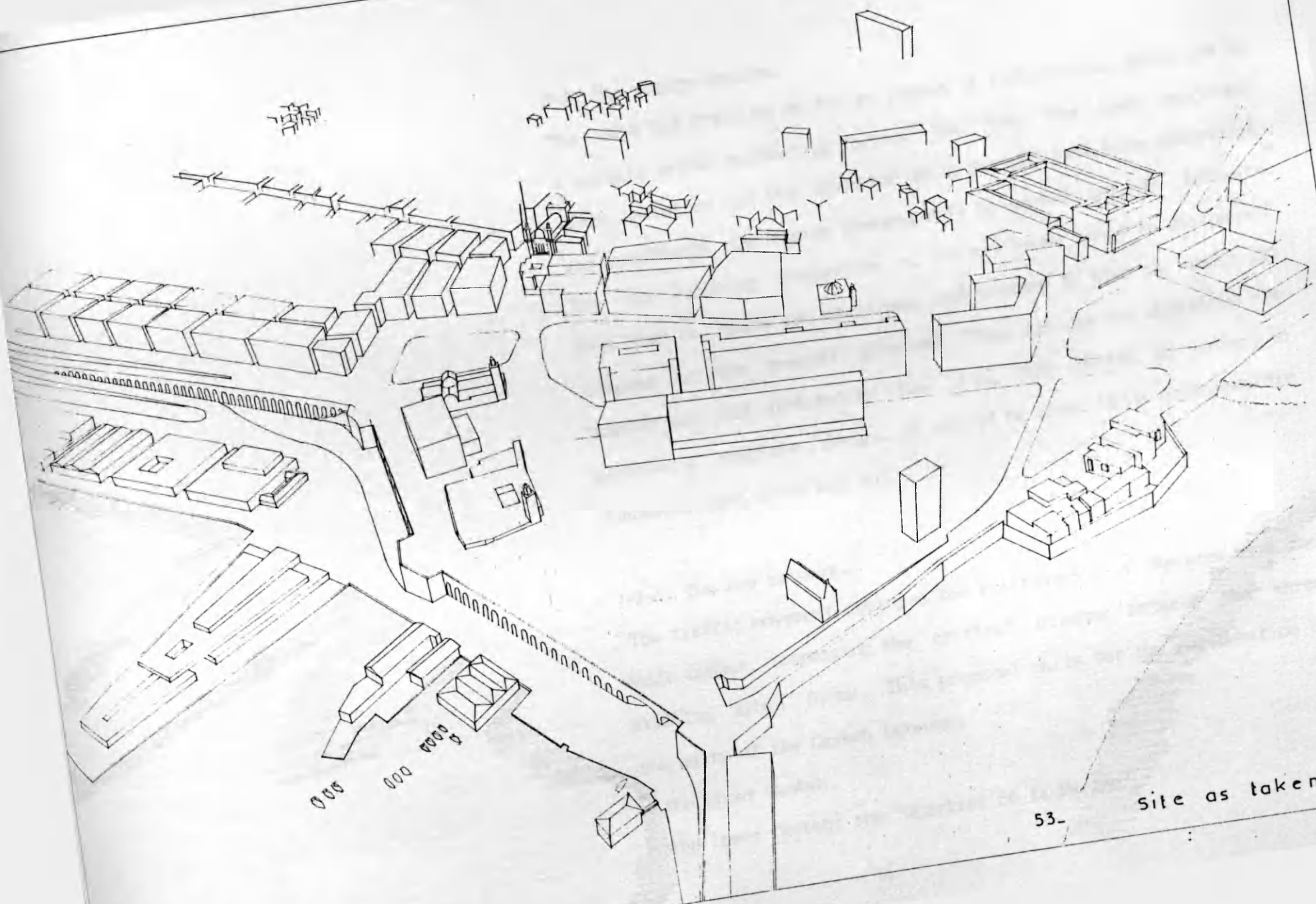
B- Cultural and educational:

- Museum centre including the rehabilitation of the Bastion 23 into a museum for the traditional art
- Library
- Accommodation for young people (students, etc.)

C- Shopping facilities (at a local and city level)

D- Community facilities (local level)

E- Car parks.



53-

Site as taken.

2-2. The design process

The site has given us so far an amount of information, which are to a certain extent generating forces. Now that the most important characteristics of the "Quartier de la Marine" have been identified and considered, the design process will be carried out to indicate how the existing characters of the key areas could be sharpened. From then on, there are decisions, and actions to take in order to respond to the present problems. These actions and decisions are however not just dictated by the site, but chosen in order to achieve a complete design. It should be clear which decisions are fundamental and which are not.

2-2-1. The new network.

The traffic movement destroys the relationship of the area with the whole Casbah, increasing the critical dilemma between the three existing urban forms. This proposal calls for the regeneration of the unity of the Casbah between:

- the upper Casbah,
- the lower Casbah; the "Quartier de la Marine",

- the Admiralty, and the sea.

A/ The new transport proposal.

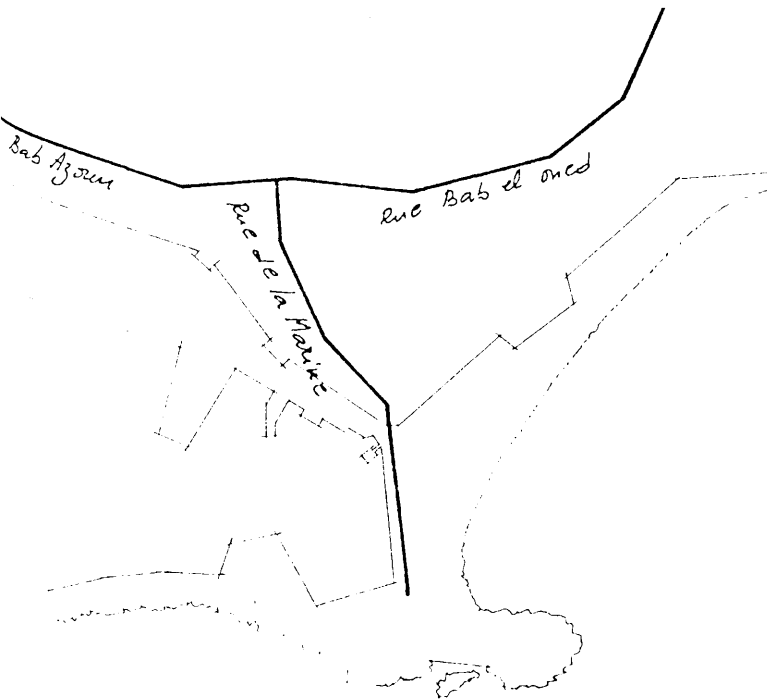
The proposal for a tunnel running north-south carrying the transit traffic, would reduce, vehicular traffic and encourage pedestrian activities and public transportation. Considering this future realisation the new transport proposal for the area is therefore as described in fig.54.

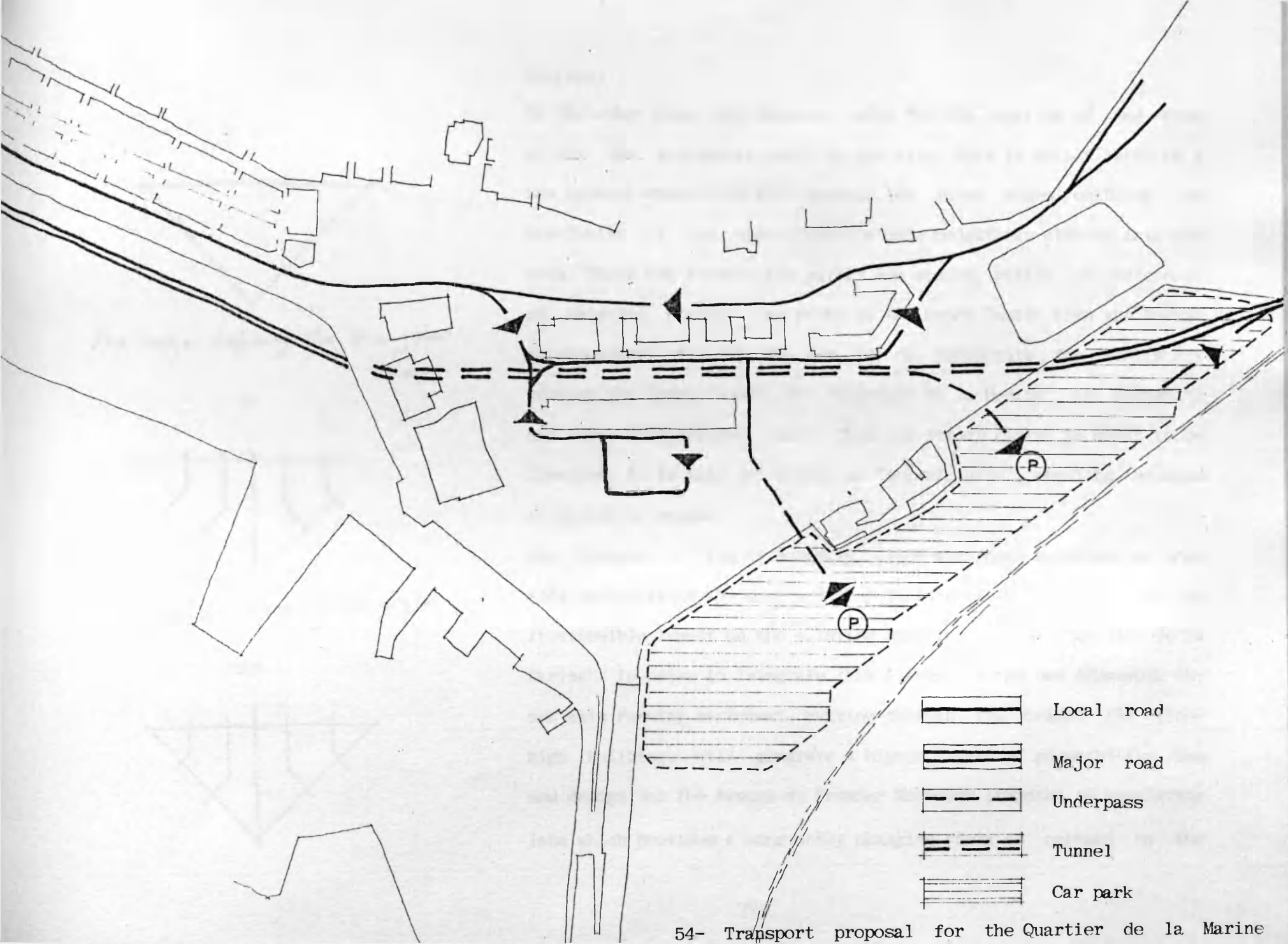
Apart from the local traffic and the problem of servicing, the whole area will be devoted to the pedestrians. On the other hand the parking area will be made available on the north-east side of the wall. The multi-storey car park will accommodate vehicles on three levels.


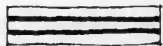
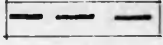
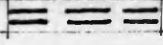

B/ The new pedestrian movement.

This is mainly based on the formulation of a new street network and the regeneration of the old communication routes (fig.55).

From a historical point of view, "Rue Bab el oued", "Rue Bab Azoun" and "Rue de la Marine" have always been lined with important activities (see historical growth). The guideline is therefore to continue this tradition and the historic perception of these



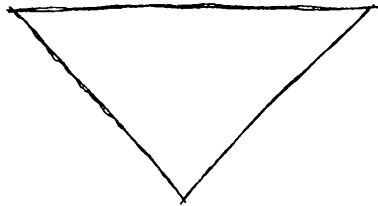


-  Local road
-  Major road
-  Underpass
-  Tunnel
-  Car park

streets.

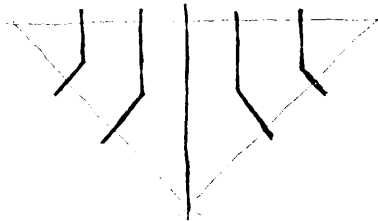
On the other hand this proposal calls for the creation of new axes within the triangular shape of the site. This is mainly based on a new network where axes will connect the three edges enabling the continuity of the upper Casbah's main pedestrian streets into the area. Those new streets are partly new routes, partly an extension of existing streets and paths of the Upper Casbah into the Marine neighbourhood (fig.56). The aim is to regenerate the continuity between the Upper Casbah, the "Quartier de la Marine", the Admiralty and the Mediterranean sea. This new street system is meant to be flexible. It is laid out within an "organic grid", enabling various situations to happen.

The "Avenue du Premier Novembre" lined with high buildings on both sides is certainly the most critical feature of the area. This has an irreversible impact on the existing structure of the "Quartier de la Marine". In order to integrate this Avenue, in the new framework the new axis running east-west, cutting through the height (8) floor high building, will generate a higher degree of permeability. The new design for the Avenue du Premier Novembre proposes an undulating lane which provides a constantly changing vista as opposed to the



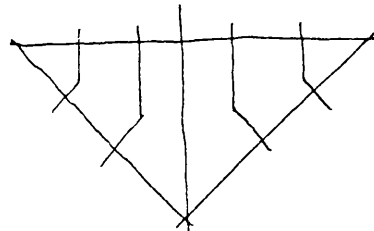
The edge defining the triangular shape.

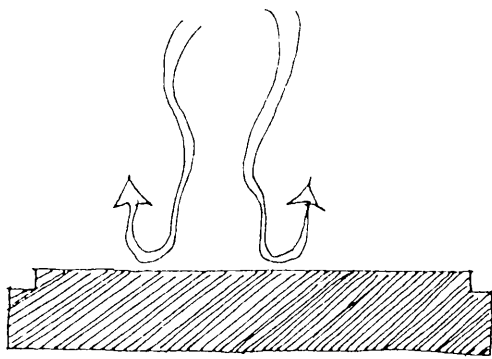
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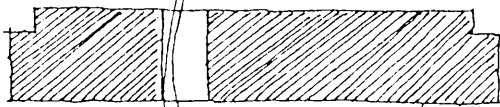
New axes connecting the edges

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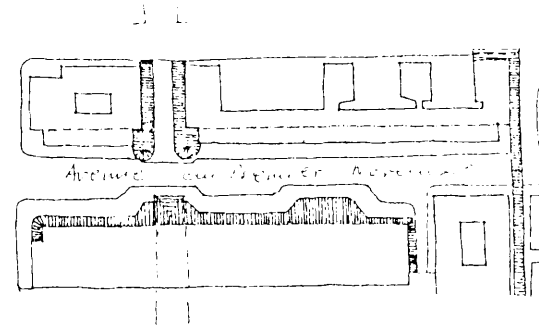


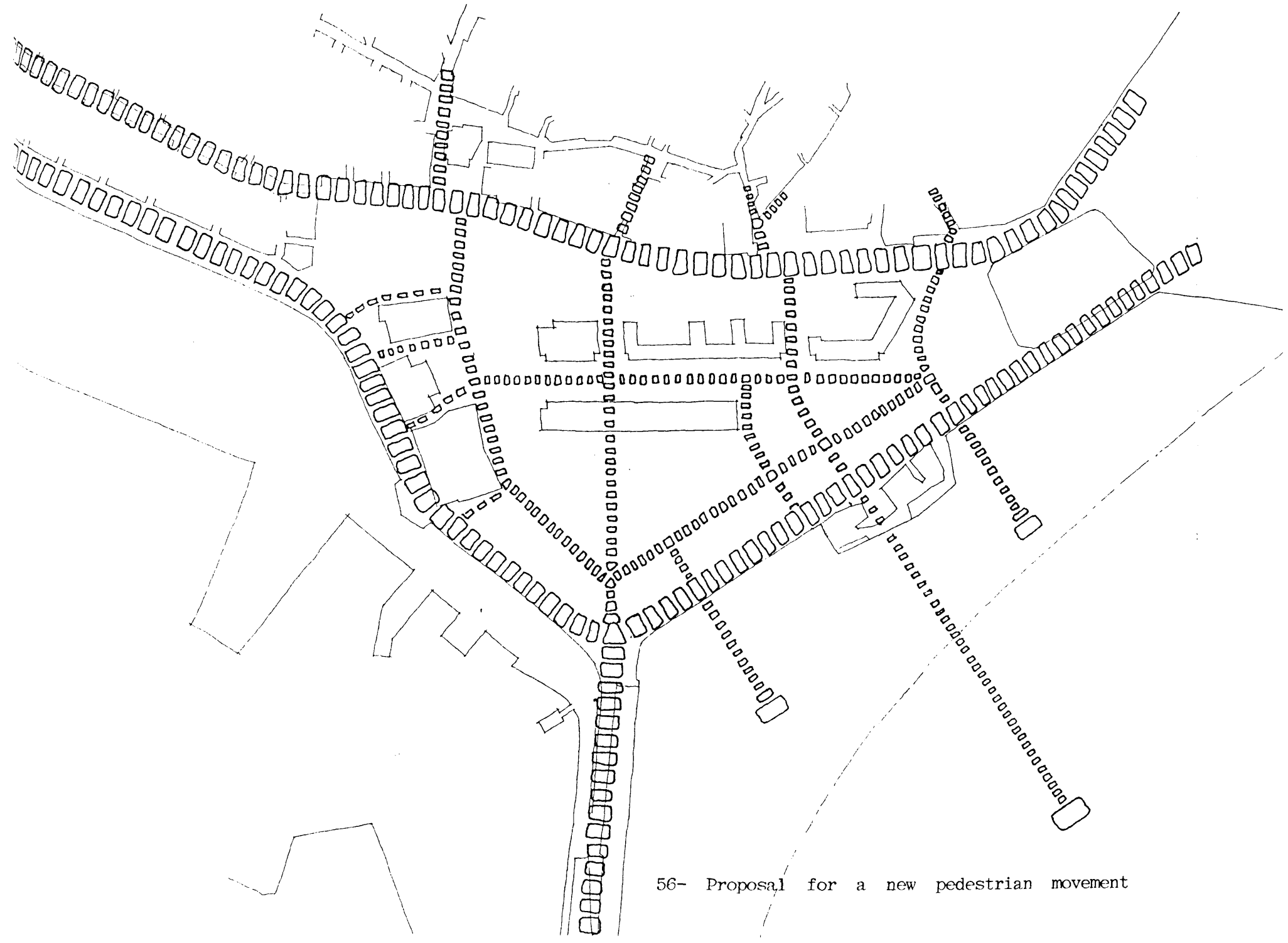
The slab (Avenue du Premier Novembre) is a visual and physical barrier.



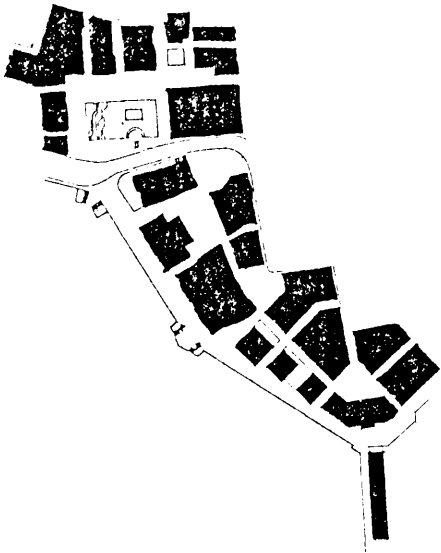
A new alternative route cutting through will generate a physical and visual permeability.

unexciting linearity of the conventionally planned Avenue. Although a local traffic is maintained, the rest of the pavement has been widened to become a place for people, where all kinds of events are now possible. By widening the vehicular lane across the Avenue du Premier Novembre this will avoid having a repetitive and restrictively constant pavement. Looking northward the vista will be closed with the bridge leading to the museum centre which steps forward. At this point the Avenue becomes narrower and changes its direction.





56- Proposal for a new pedestrian movement



2-2-2. Redefining the three edges.

Three edges have been identified earlier; they are supported by:

A/ Boulevard Anatole France: the existing waterfront,

B/ Rue Amara Rachid: the new waterfront

C/ Rue Bab el oued.

A/ Boulevard Anatole France.

The arcade supporting the waterfront presents a great potential.

This proposal calls for the re-use of the volumes as a linear urban

market on three levels, which will give a "new dynamic" to this

elegant 19th. century waterfront. They are for the moment used as

warehouses and will be removed to another area, according to the

ENET. The arcade will be therefore rehabilitated into a linear urban

market open on one side to the sea and lined with shops on the

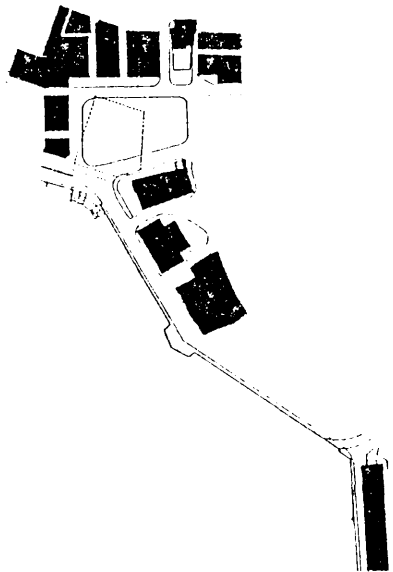
other. This will link at an underground level, the Place des

Martyrs, redesigned as a multi-level square, to the Place de la

Marine with the tower (fig. 59). The upper level of this waterfront

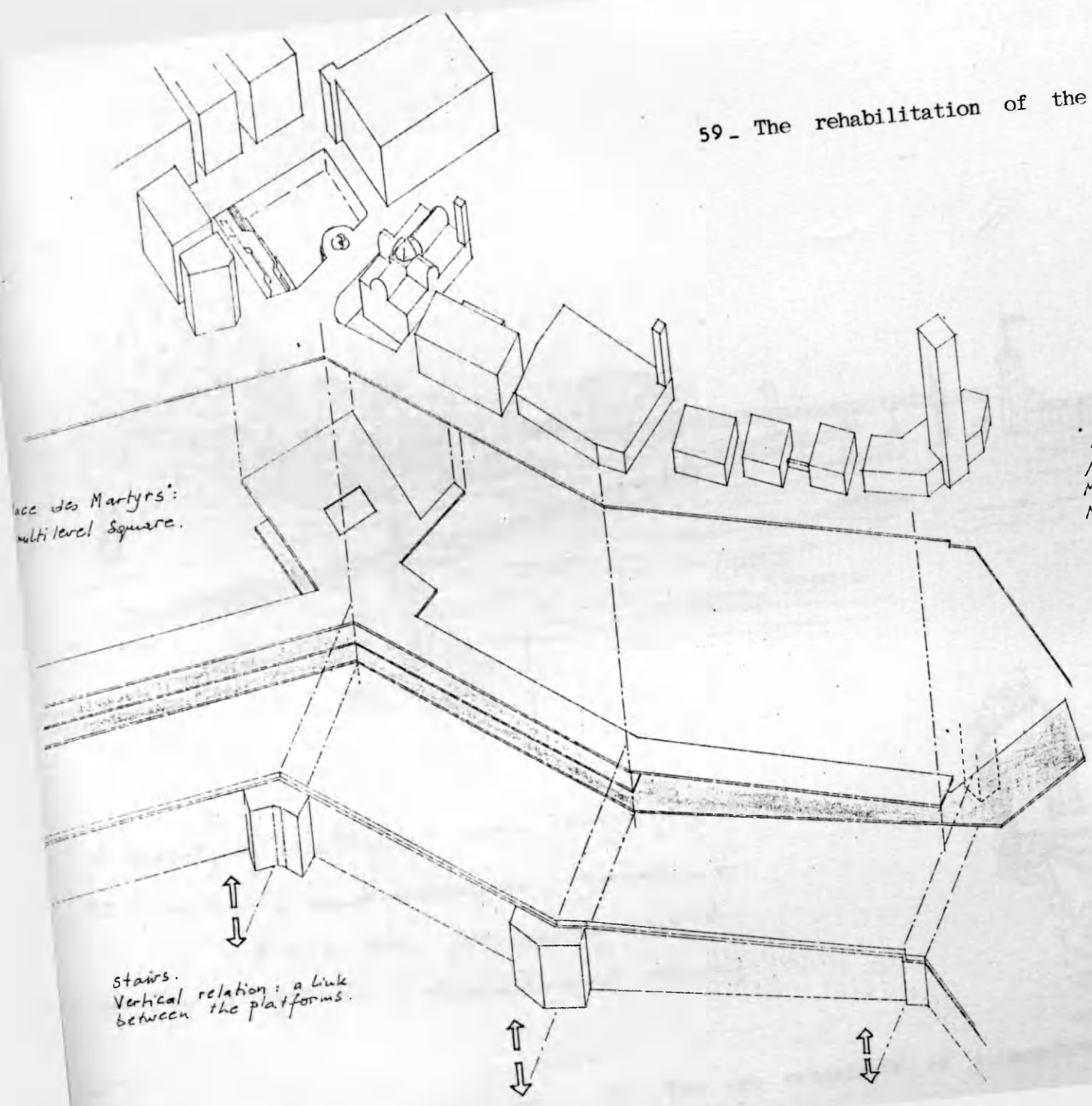
will be redesigned as an edge with a number of pavillion buildings

to follow the pattern set by the existing three buildings. This new



Boulevard Anatole France as existing and as proposed.

59 - The rehabilitation of the waterfront

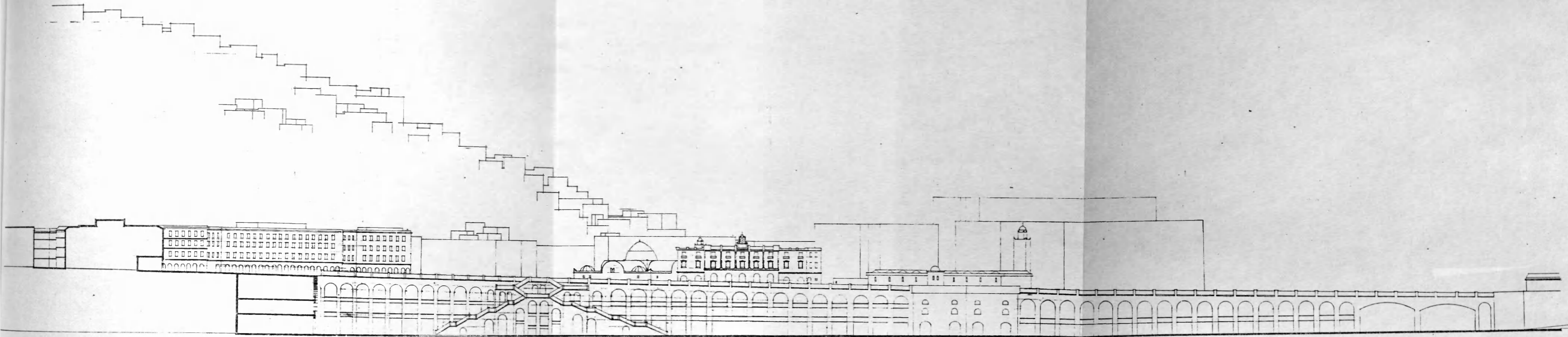


Place des Martyrs:
multi level square.

Place de la Marine:
linked to the Place des
Martyrs by the new urban
Market (the Arcade).

Stairs.
Vertical relation: a link
between the platforms.

Link of the Place de la Marine
with the lower level.



South east waterfront

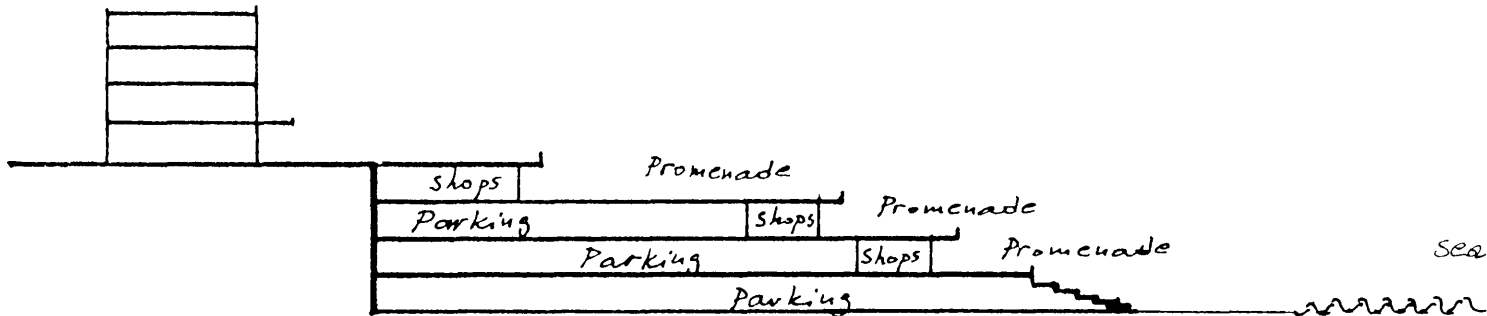
concept of redefining the south-east waterfront tries cautiously to accept the existing fragments left over after the destruction of the whole area (the Fisherman's wharf Mosque, the "Chambre de commerce", The Great mosque).

It is a continuation of a typical form of building culture dating back to the early 11th. century. Contemporary architecture is important too, and new pavillions placed on this prominent site are both as a conscious documentation of our age and by virtue of the controversy, as a cultural stimilus.

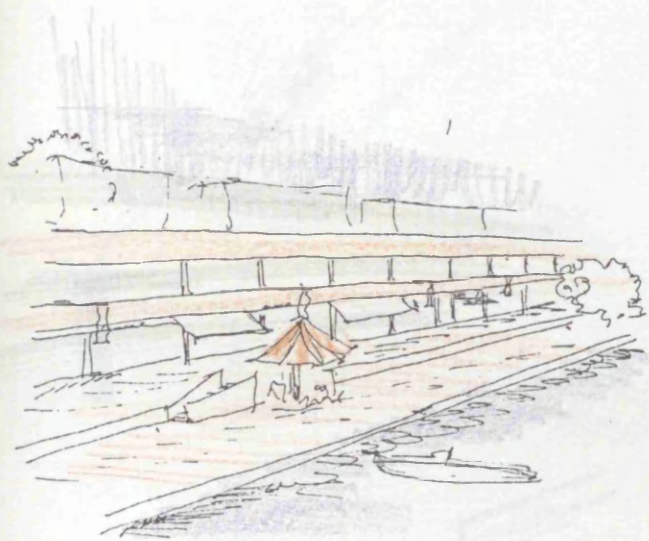
B/ Rue Amara Rachid: the new waterfront

This proposal calls for the creation of a new waterfront to the north-east which opens views to the Admiralty. It will integrate an urban park for daily use of a rather leisurely, recreation and informal kind of activities, such as walking, cycling, sitting out, informal games, etc. as well as a variety of waterfront uses, ranging from restaurants, cafes, small shops, kiosks, toilet facilities, etc. all set within a landscaped area. The remove of the vehicular traffic from the Rue Amara Rachid will able the creation of a safer and more enjoyable promenade along the waterfront. The

platforms will accommodate the car park on three levels, providing parking space for shoppers, visitors and residents. The accessibility to the parking will be from the major road running beneath in a tunnel, and from the local street, the "Avenue du Premier Novembre", connected by an underpass. As an alternative solution this new waterfront could as well incorporate an underground level sewerage plant which is today needed for the old town.



*Section showing the layers of underground parking
The platforms will be all connected with each other by ramps
and stairs from different levels.*



The routes continuing the upper Casbah into the lower Casbah end on the north east waterfront. New architectural objects end the vistas; two towers and a fishing pier mark the event. The long fishing pier, driven into the sea extends the recreational area into the the Mediterranean sea. It reinforces the continuity of the Casbah with the water. On the other hand it offers attractive views of the Casbah and the new waterfront, with the Bastion 23 surviving the old town, on the foreground.

The new proposed waterside for recreational activities is one of the major feature of this proposal. It is not meant to be impressive nor monumental as the formal existing waterfront supported by the arcade system. It allows the relation with the water by means of a multilevel system, steeping down to the sea like the terraces of the Casbah. The new image given to the north east waterfront is redefining this edge of the old town. The promenade along the new waterfront will offer the pedestrian a safe, relaxing and pleasant walk. The Admiralty is punctuating the node where the two waterfontes meet, and marks the change which is occuring from the 19th. century waterfront to the proposed platforms. This node is designed as a focus for main routes, and is strongly marked with a tower.

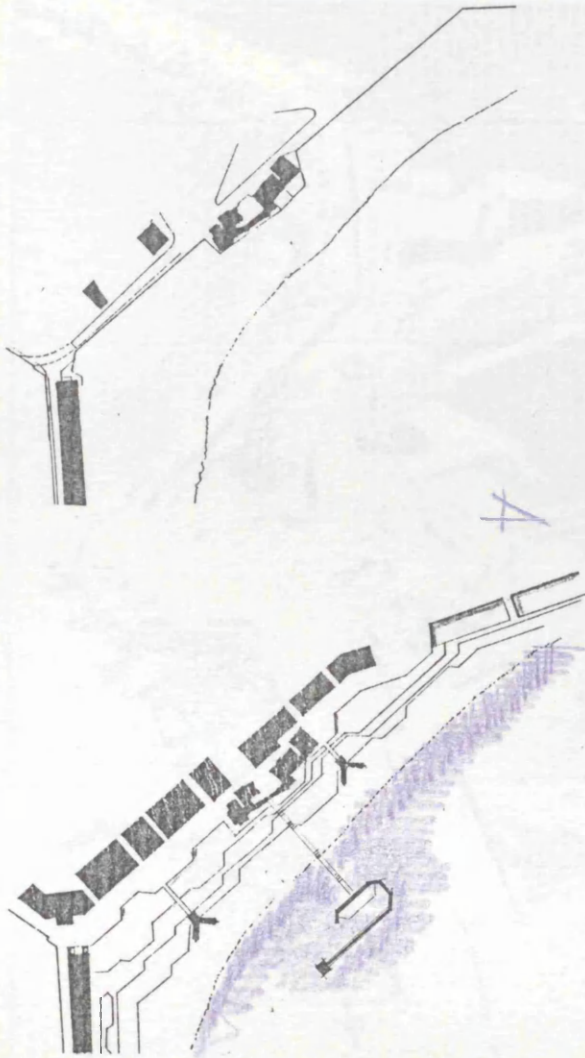
63 The new waterfront as a recreational area.

The full restitution of the Admiralty -once a grouping of four islands from which Algiers was named- to the public has an important historical meaning. It will offer, new forgotten views of the city skyline and its historic buildings. Viewed from a distance the waterfront (existing and proposed) will be more appreciated by the public; to the south east a display of pavillions are supported by the monumental arcade system, and to the north-east, the proposed waterfront, will generate a multi level space, extending the recreational area to the sea.

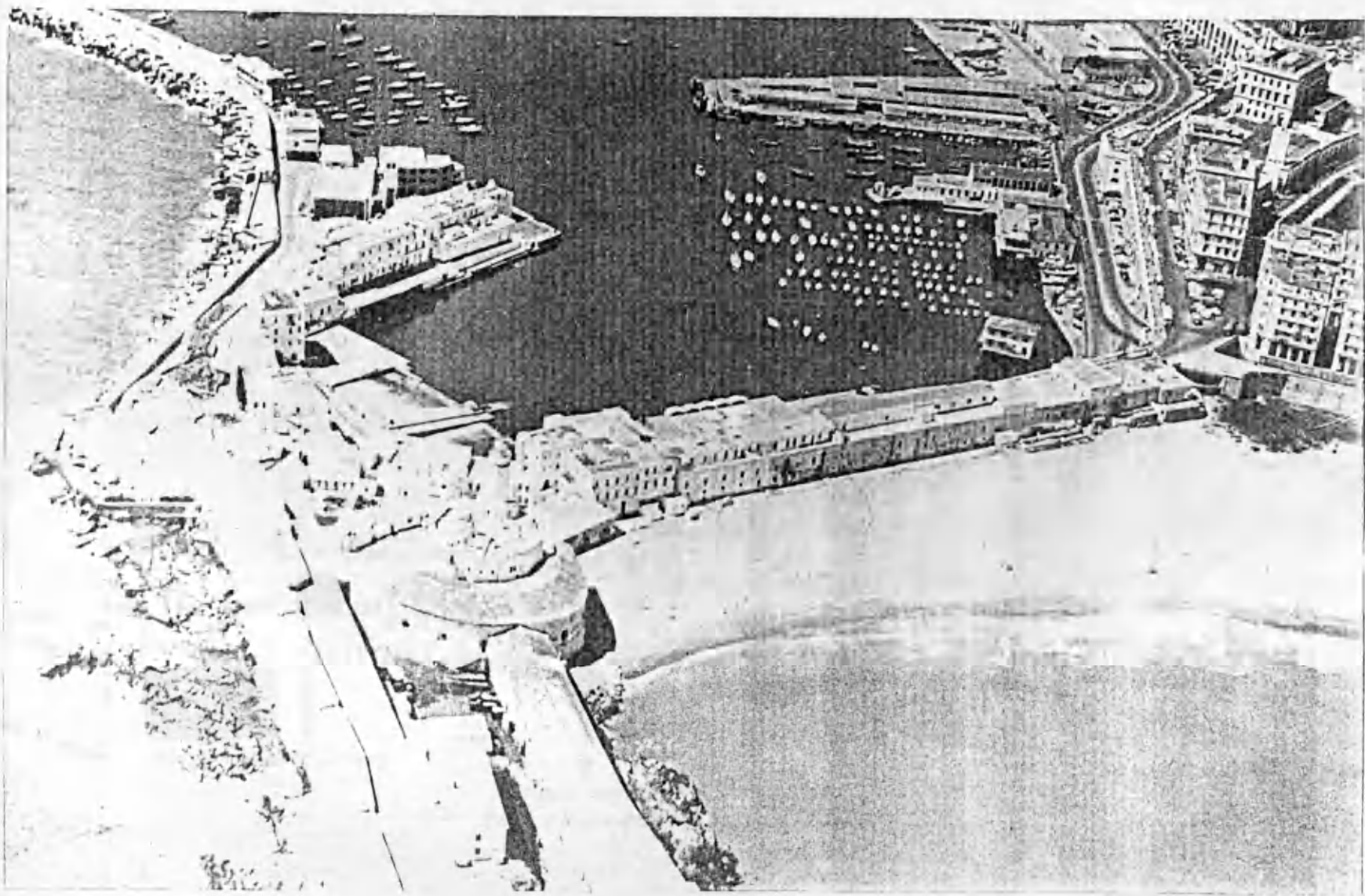
C/ Rue Bab el oued.

The new proposal calls for the regeneration and the revitalization of this major historical axis.

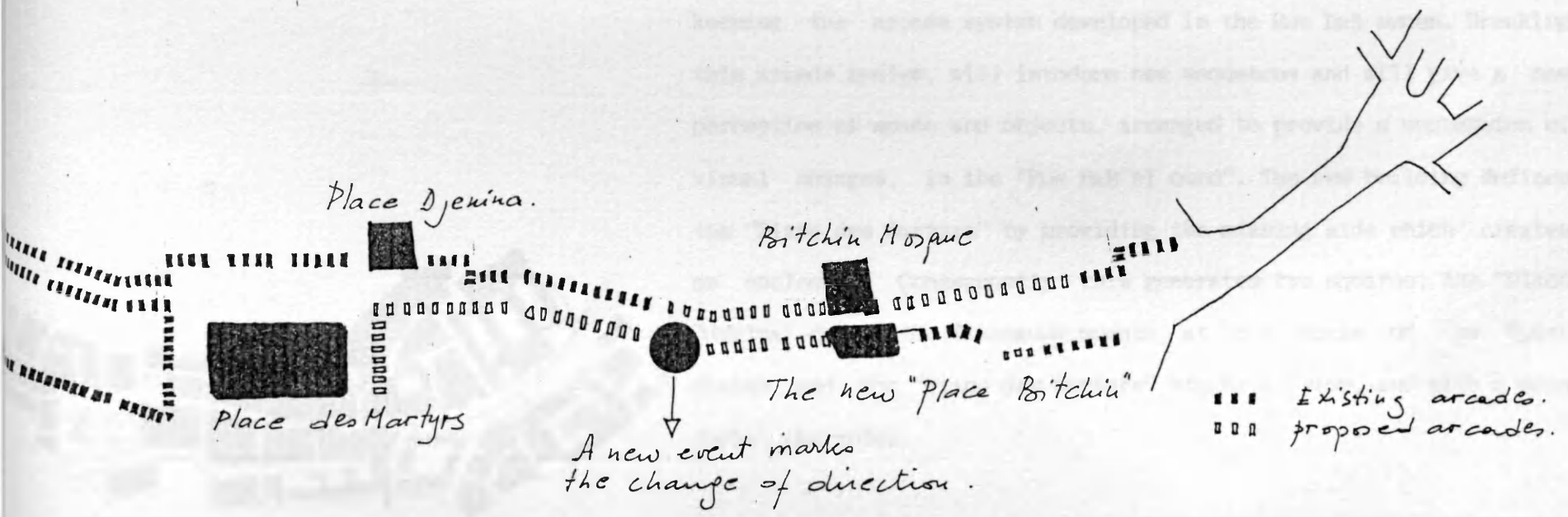
- The full restitution of the streets Bab el oued and Bab azoun to the public realm involves a new policy toward the pedestianisation of this axis.
- Redesigning the Rue Bab el oued by creating a new building line on the east side, punctuated with an open place facing the "Ali Bitchin Mosque".
- Recreating a new building line on the west side, by rebuilding



Rue Amara Rachid and the new waterfront as existing and as proposed.



65- Bird's eye view of the Admiralty.



the gapes (completion of block structure) which will include activities at a local level. This axis between the city centre and the Bab el oued neighbourhood connects two major existing centres. Its commercial character should be strengthened. Redrawn and supported with new activities, the Rue Bab el oued will reinforce the link between these two neighbourhoods, and will create this continuity.

From the design point of view, continuity could be achieved by keeping the arcade system developed in the Rue Bab azoun. Breaking this arcade system, will introduce new sequences and will give a new perception of space and objects, arranged to provide a succession of visual changes, in the "Rue Bab el oued". The new building defines the "Place des Martyrs" by providing the missing side which creates an enclosure. Consequently this generates two squares; the "Place Djenina" facing the Katchaoua mosque, at the scale of the Upper Casbah and the "Place des Martyrs" bigger in size, and with a more formal character.



Rue Bab El oued as existing and as proposed.

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2-2-3. Design studies.

This chapter illustrates how the initial conceptual studies relate to the final studies. One must also refer to the drawings which complement this study.

Obviously a project of this size will take a great deal of money and time to complete. Therefore one must make provision of incremental implementation.

This proposal breaks down in a number of independent and interdependent parts.

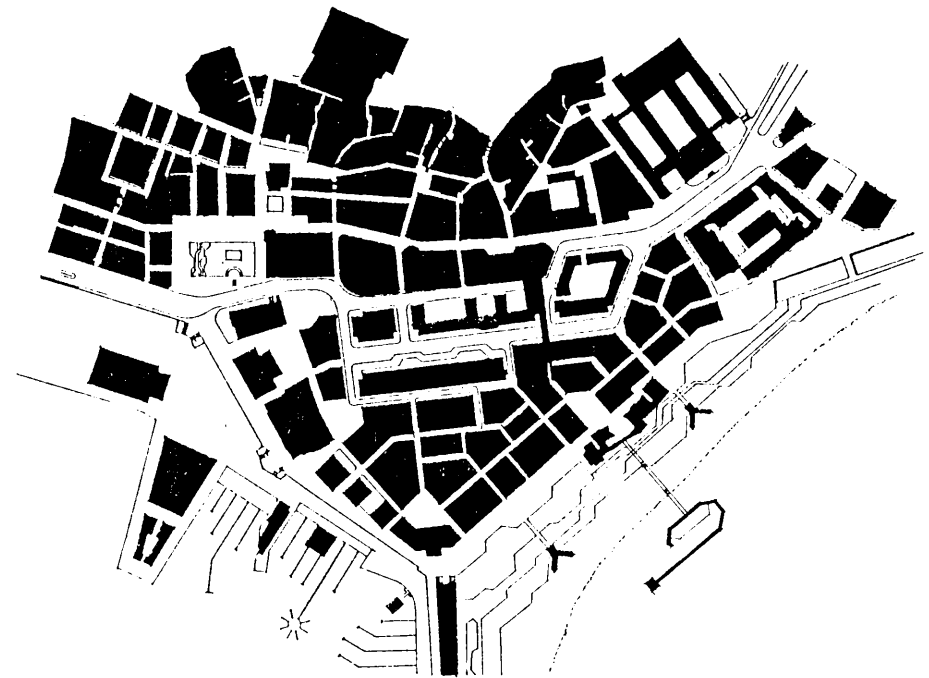
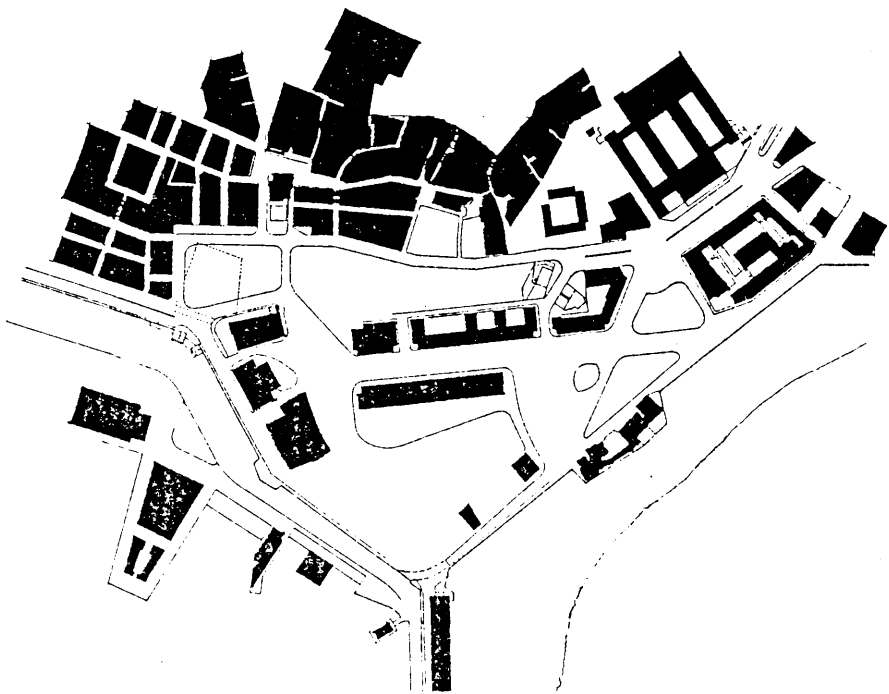
1- The enclosure of the Place des Martyrs and the regeneration of the Rue Bab el oued are a priority.

2- The general road layout proposed and the rebuilding of the vacant sites should start immediately; they would encourage development and reduce the desolation of the present situation. Each of the sites in the general area is an independent unit so that a particular building form, is not envisaged except for a general restriction in height from two (2), to three (3) storeys at the sea edge rising to maximum eight (8) in the centre.

3- The tunnel is costly, but necessary; upon this depends the

pedestrianisation of the Marine neighbourhood.

4- The new waterfront is dependant of the tunnel and the new car park,(with the eventual sewerage plant). After these are installed, the completion could take place inevitably.

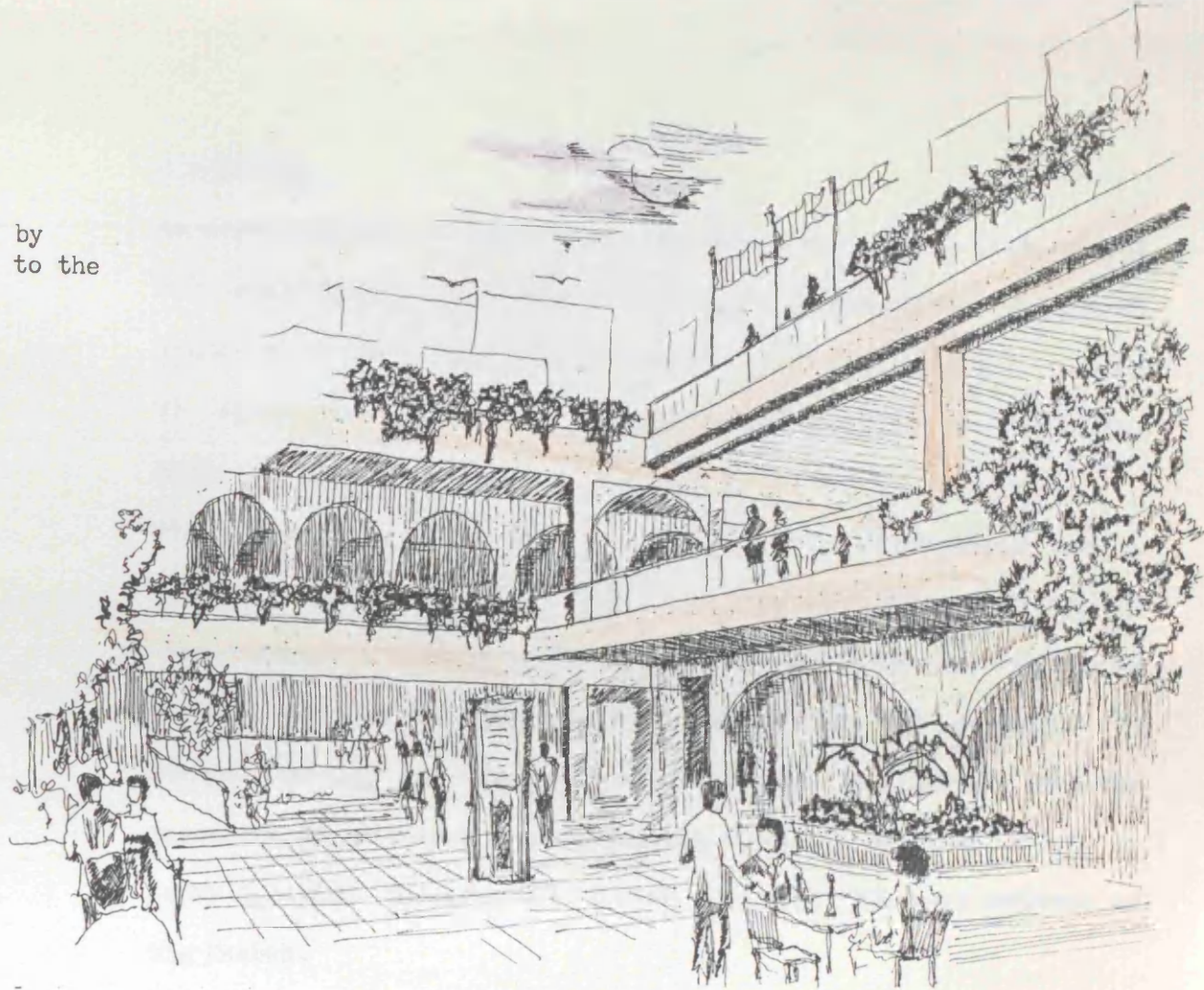


0 100 200 300 m.



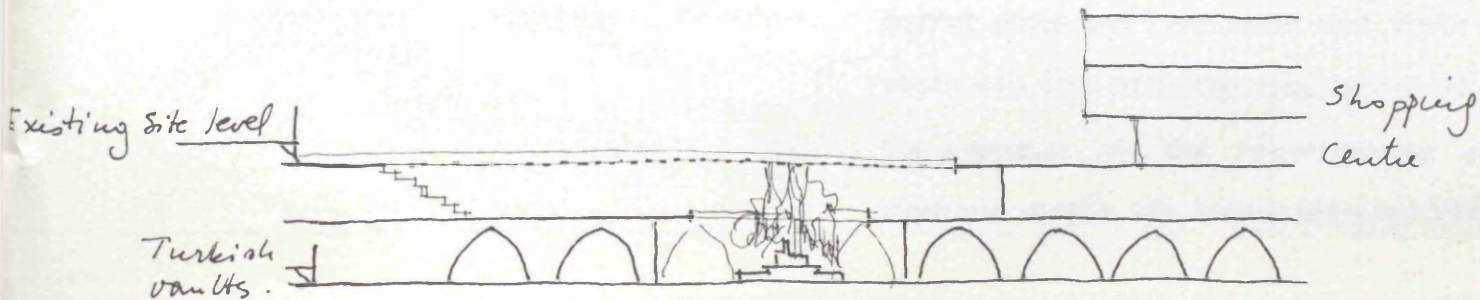


The underground level supported by the Turkish vaults will be open to the public and will integrate shops and other facilities.



An alternative idea -

70. The Place des Martyrs: the multilevel square.



CONCLUSION.

As stated earlier, this study is not based on a detailed analysis of all the Quartier de la Marine's aspects. However given the immense potential of the area, the goal of this study was important in that it stimulated ideas, some of which found expression in the present work.

The attempt to establish a strategy for redevelopment and a framework was essential to the realisation of the unique opportunities presented by the site. Developed within the context of such a framework the "Quartier de la Marine" has the potential to become one of the greatest urban dramas in Algiers. Moreover regenerating this area means promoting the whole old town which is today decaying. The area will become once again the real backbone of the Casbah.

What is missing today in the "Quartier de la Marine" is a sense of market place and liveliness that would provide a focus and unify the whole old town with the city centre of Algiers.

The approach to the restructuring of the Marine neighbourhood explored deeply its strong physical elements revealing an underlying

drama: the edges. Redefining the edges of the old town has physically a very important impact. The new waterside will function as a traditional meeting place; restaurant, cafes, stands and kiosks will produce a vivic waterfront fulfilling this role.

The basic design consideration was to embrace the shore without blocking it, with the multilevel platforms. The new promenade along this recreational area is connected at an underground level to the 19th. century south-east waterfront now turned into a linear urban market. This connection reinforces the continuity between the old and the new, and fulfill both the historic and modern function of giving people places to view the passing scene. On the other hand the new waterside steeping down to the sea comes from the need for modern structures over car parking, and responds to new needs for having recreational and leisure facilities. The night life in social terms has to be considered, when the waterside will become the major cultural and recreational activity in a centre that desperately needed one.

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