

[Aalto in Beirut] Contribution, Collaboration and Continuity: The Case of Sabbag Center

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Designed in collaboration with Alfred Roth, the Sabbag Center is one of the last and lesser known works of Alvar Aalto. Despite distinguishable references to Aalto's previous works, and in addition to the project's systematic role in projecting an iconic image for Banque Sabbag, the reading of Sabbag Center is predominantly dictated by its scale and inscription within a larger cluster of modern buildings, and by its use as a significant social reference within oral histories about Beirut. This paper argues that the Sabbag Center largely contributed to the understanding of local economic and political context of the time – Lebanon's modern history – and should therefore be addressed as such. The local significance of the building is legitimate reason to preserve the site. In the absence of any governmental initiative to protect modern heritage, Fransabank SAL, the private financial institution that presently inhabits the Sabbag Center, is in a position to actively safeguard the complex as part of an important area.



fig.1 Sabbag Center, Alvar Aalto and Alfred Roth, 1967–1970

Beirut Local Context and Hamra Street Development

Beirut flourished in the 1930's. Various local and foreign architects, greatly influenced by International Style Architecture and "Western" cultures, contributed to the construction of the beautiful city (Helmet Rupert, 1967). This influence was best represented in Hamra Street, with its famous café trottoirs serving various cuisines, its movie theaters projecting international films, its glamorous vitrines and flamboyant shopping district. Lebanon witnessed prosperous development after its independence in 1943, becoming a source for artistic and cultural innovation as well as the financial hub of the Middle East. Once again, Hamra benefited from this developmental growth as the location of the newly established Central Bank (1963), one of the most significant milestones in the process of building a modern Lebanon, which mostly occurred in the 1960's during the mandate of President Fouad Chehab. Actively engaged in reform and large-scale development projects, the Office of the President commissioned Swiss architects Addor and Julliard to design the building. The chosen site was characterized by its location at the beginning of Hamra Street as the perfect example of economic, political and touristic proliferation.

Strategically located on a neighboring corner plot on Hamra Street, less than one blocks away from the Central Bank, the Sabbag Centre was completed in 1970. The L-shape building was designed on the southwestern edge of the site, making room for a generous 800 square-meter piazza at the intersection of two streets (fig. 1). The complex consists of an elevated 15-storey structure set back off the main street, and another shorter building that steps down to meet the existing adjacent building's roofline, reaching Hamra's plot limit. A metallic roof structure embraces the open space from the north and east, extending the building along the public sidewalk and emphasizing a strong site identity. The ground floor was intended for commercial spaces and provides access to a large stairway leading to a 600-seat underground cinema. A piazza escalator leads to the first-floor main entrance of Banque Sabbag and to a passageway to the Rue de Rome. The focal point of the project is the bank's central hall, with monumental double height ceiling openings and original light fixtures. The second floor was designed to include bank offices that overlook the central hall. All other floors provided office space for sale or rent. In addition to the basement cinema, the project extends 5 floors underground providing parking spaces for 300 cars, and was planned to include a car wash, 2000 square meters of storage space, a 700 square meter air-raid shelter and the bank's safes (Roth, 1985).

The project was, without a doubt, a monumental representation of Banque Sabbag's leading role in the country's economy. The complex's International Style Architecture and setback off the street arguably contribute to a representation of power and the building's association to the Central Bank. Furthermore, Sabbag Center is a very famous and successful example of a multipurpose center that began appearing in Beirut in the late 1950's. Such developments typically occupied larger sites, and in return, provided programmatically diverse buildings with flexible spaces, important urban amenities and public entertainment facilities.

1 Contribution

The Sabbag Center can be placed within a larger pool of Aalto's work through a close description of mood, atmosphere, character and spatial qualities. The comparisons serve to emphasize his belief in a softer functionalism and a more natural environment. They also highlight Aalto's contribution in developing an organic dimension for modern architecture as well as his ambition to design for a more human, humane and just society.

1.1 Aalto in Beirut

Building with various activities always appealed to Aalto. The challenge of bringing different components together under one harmonious roof was very often a driving principle in his designs. Each element of Sabbag Center's composition is emphasized through distinct architectural language and building technology. It is very difficult to miss the meticulous and careful assemblage of the main building, the western shorter limb and bank annex built on the first and second floors, the latter of which anchors the project on the rear sloped site (fig. 2 Left). Despite their different qualities, the built forms contribute to a unique spatial configuration that mediates between the two street levels.



fig. 2

Left: Sabbag Center from East

Middle: North and East Facades

Right: Southwest View

When describing the Saynatsalo Town Hall and the House of Culture projects, Christian Norberg-Schulz portrays Aalto's attempt to revive the "gestalt quality" through a collage of qualitatively different but complementary forms (Norberg-Schulz, 1996). This "gestalt quality" is reiterated through the play of vertical and horizontal elements and the alternation of continuous flat sheets and repetitive protrusions on the north and east facades (fig. 2 Middle). From the south, the composition of the main building and the bank annex create a dynamic expression of shade and shadow play. The southern facade of the main building is broken up into four vertical sections. The divide is made more dramatic through the projected and slanted white marble covered sun breakers, creating a dynamic sculptural effect throughout the day (fig. 2 Right). The bank annex hugs the building at the bottom, enhancing its expressionist character through rounded corners and white semi-rounded ceramic tiles designed by Aalto and imported from

Finland. The irregular heights of the narrow windows and the alternating rhythm of the bank's recesses and protrusions further emphasize its organic nature and facilitate its integration with the taller structure. The choice of material obviously represented an inclination to natural products and organic forms, which Aalto's work is most famous for. By choosing natural materials, Aalto accepts their natural irregularities, making their use more expressive and the surfaces they cover more alive. His use of the standardized unit was balanced out by a very conscious decision not to make his projects boring or monotone.

While describing Aalto's Technical College (1964), Christian Norberg-Schulz discusses the "differentiation within one topological continuum", hinting at the relevance of the site in bringing together the architectural form (Norberg-Schulz, 1996). Norberg-Schulz's notion of continuum can be reinterpreted as the flow of people inside Aalto's projects. Their movement in space can be regarded as a main driver for his designs. In fact, Aalto's spaces, often expressionist in style, are "imbued with a keen awareness for those who would live and work inside" (Sisson, 2014). Light is therefore also a part of the architectural space. The central hall of the bank is an excellent example of a functional space meticulously designed for banking purposes, but also infused with atmosphere, character and spatial qualities. The double height can be best described as luxurious and monumental, a space filled with natural light. On one hand, the bold geometry is an expression of the institution's pride and control over the sector. On the other, the central open space is an inspiring platform designed to be easily accessible from the street and filled with human interaction, reflecting an image of transparency and trust. The ceiling is integral. Natural light blends with the artificial lights to diffuse across the entire area. There is a clear resemblance between Banque Sabbag and Pension Bank in Helsinki (1956), two institutions that were constructed as an expression of national identity.

Another distinct and recognizable feature of the project is the metallic roof structure that is identifiable in some of Aalto's previous projects, namely the House of Culture in Helsinki. The metallic canopy brings together different parts of the project under one composition that recognizes the urban plot limit and, at the same time, intentionally brings the project back away from the street. The space under the canopy represents a harmonious environment and flowing experience between interior and exterior, open and sheltered and shaded and lit spaces (fig. 3).



Fig.3 Canopy above Main Cinema Entrance

1.2 A Human Touch

Aalto approved of technology and its capability to liberate human kind. He believed that mechanization and standardization were necessary for a prosperous world. He even went as far as to claim that mass production was part of social justice as it provided “more to more people” (Jalander, 1996). He was, however, also critical of the extent to which technology could enslave its users. This paradox is at the heart of Aalto’s take on Modernism. His work is known for drawing inspiration from nature, more specifically Finland’s scenic and untouched landscapes, as a mediator between technology and man. He believed nature’s wealth was derived from the infinite variations of its combined or layered natural elements, and used local natural materials to conceive every unique project as an organic space, emphasizing his belief in a more inviting and human environment.

For S. Giedion, Aalto’s projects are exemplary works that “bridg[e] between integration and disintegration, reason and feeling”. He describes his architectural journey as a courageous shift from a rational functionalist approach, towards a more organic “softer functionalism” (Giedion, c1962). The transition in Aalto’s work was first made apparent in his design for the Vyborg Library, which, with its warm, curvilinear, continuous walls and ceiling, is considered to be one of the first manifestations of organic modernism and a reference for regional modernism. In his more mature works, Aalto interpreted the Free Plan as natural anatomy rather than pure geometric form. He organized spaces to respond to functions but, at the same time, complemented them with mood, atmosphere, character and spatial qualities. Unlike his modernists counterparts, who deeply believed in a house as a “machine for living”, Aalto sought after multi-functional, human and more individualized projects.

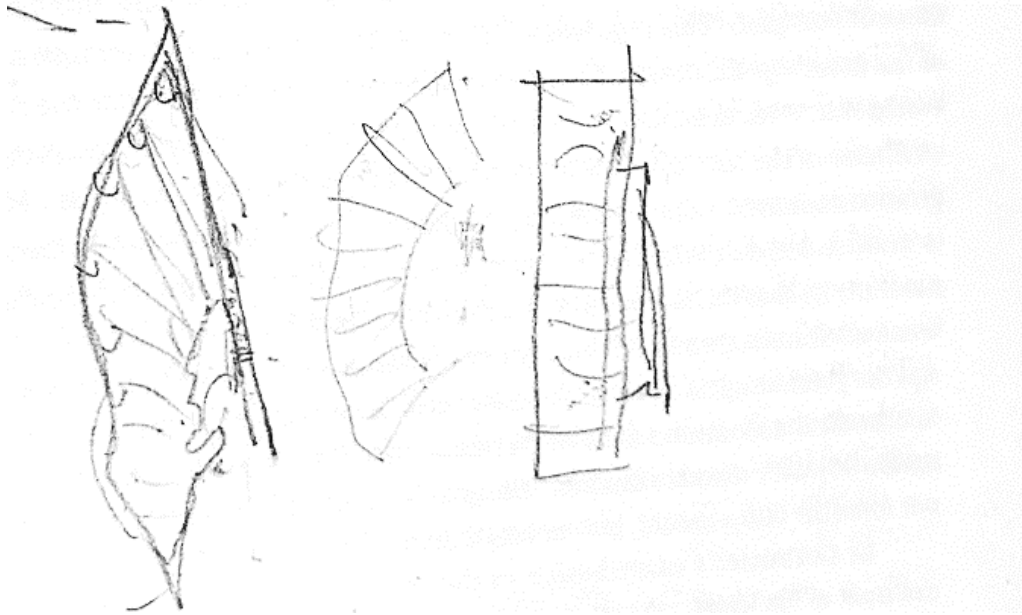


fig. 4 Sketch Comparing Aalto's Fan-shaped Plan with an Orthogonal Layout, Aalto, undated

Aalto's response to designing high-rise residential projects, such as the Hansaviertel housing blocks and the high-rise residential towers in Bremen and Lucerne, was radical and against standardizing the spaces (fig. 4). He instead resorted to standardized architectural elements, creating a diverse range of living units that benefitted from different entrances, views, light quality and character. In comparing the Sabbag Center to the above mentioned projects, one can understand the different layout and orientation of the offices on the southern facade as a confirmation of Aalto's stance against standardization. Although there is no guaranteed functional gain for the interior office spaces laid out on the broken-up facade, the building plan symbolizes Aalto's respect for individuality, variations and responsiveness, and can therefore be read as a semiotic reaction to the abstract discourse of architectural modernism (Anderson, Fenske, Fixler, 2012). Aalto has indeed impregnated modernist architecture with a human touch. His sensitivity to site, climate, material and lived interior experience is why his work is representative of the "other tradition of modernism", and can be referred to as a form of "human modernism" (Sisson, 2014).

2 Collaboration

In an interview, Mrs. Sabbag expressed her desire to construct a "building with character" to house the Hamra Street headquarters of Banque Sabbag. Despite her friendships with renowned local architects, she went after the most famous architects in the world. She chose Alvar Aalto who, at the age of 66, thought he was "too old and too far away from Beirut", and therefore proposed to design the project in collaboration with Alfred Roth (Arbid, 2001). Despite the strong and long friendship between the two architects, this paper argues that their collaboration on the Sabbag Center was not very intuitive or natural. Considering project conditions and Aalto's Roth-recommended Lucerne commission, it is

reasonable to think that the Beirut collaboration was more convenient than strategic or a merging of ideas. In fact, the partnership could simply be a “return of favor”.

2.1 Collaboration and Duality

In *Alfred Roth: Architect of Continuity*, Roth, whose work was relatively conservative and aligned with main stream modern discourse, commends Aalto’s more natural and organic approach to modern architecture. The two different languages are strongly reflected in the design of the Sabbag Center, accentuating its dual identity. “The building is more Roth’s design than Aalto’s, except for the rear elevation, broken and treated with sharp-edged horizontal profiles, and the enameled tiles covering the bank headquarters, produced by Aalto in Finland. The rest is very Swiss, straightforward, precise and well detailed,” describes George Arbid (Arbid, 2001). The building is, in fact, very often described as a schizophrenic structure with a dual facade.

Different stories and scenarios of how the two architects split their tasks circulate among people interested in the project. The duality seems to have emerged very early on in the design process. Pictures of an early project model reveal two separate and quite distinct buildings (fig. 5). One faces Hamra Street and reads as very well integrated, respecting the existing street alignment and rooftop limit. The other building faces Rue de Rome and is much more elevated and set back off the street, giving birth to a recessed courtyard facing the site designated for the Ministry of Tourism. The bank is located on the ground floor, facing the large courtyard, which contributes to the banks monumental image.

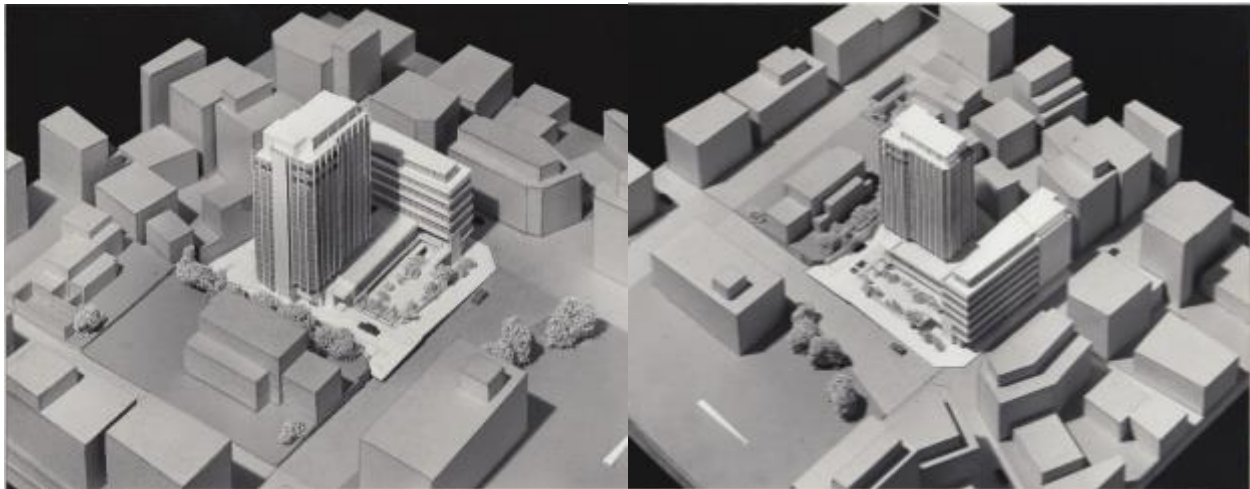


fig. 5 Early Models for Sabbag Center, Date??

In a later development, the two separate buildings were replaced by one tall, more massive building facing Hamra. The one structure combined the two different languages earlier proposed through a different and quite distinct treatment of its two most dominant facades on the north and south sides (fig. 6). The building was setback off the street, creating a large piazza which acted as an anchor point for several surrounding shops, and also brought Hamra’s commercial strip into the plot. The proposed design

also included a 500-seat cinema located on the eastern plot limit, which protruded out from the ground floor and framed the piazza.

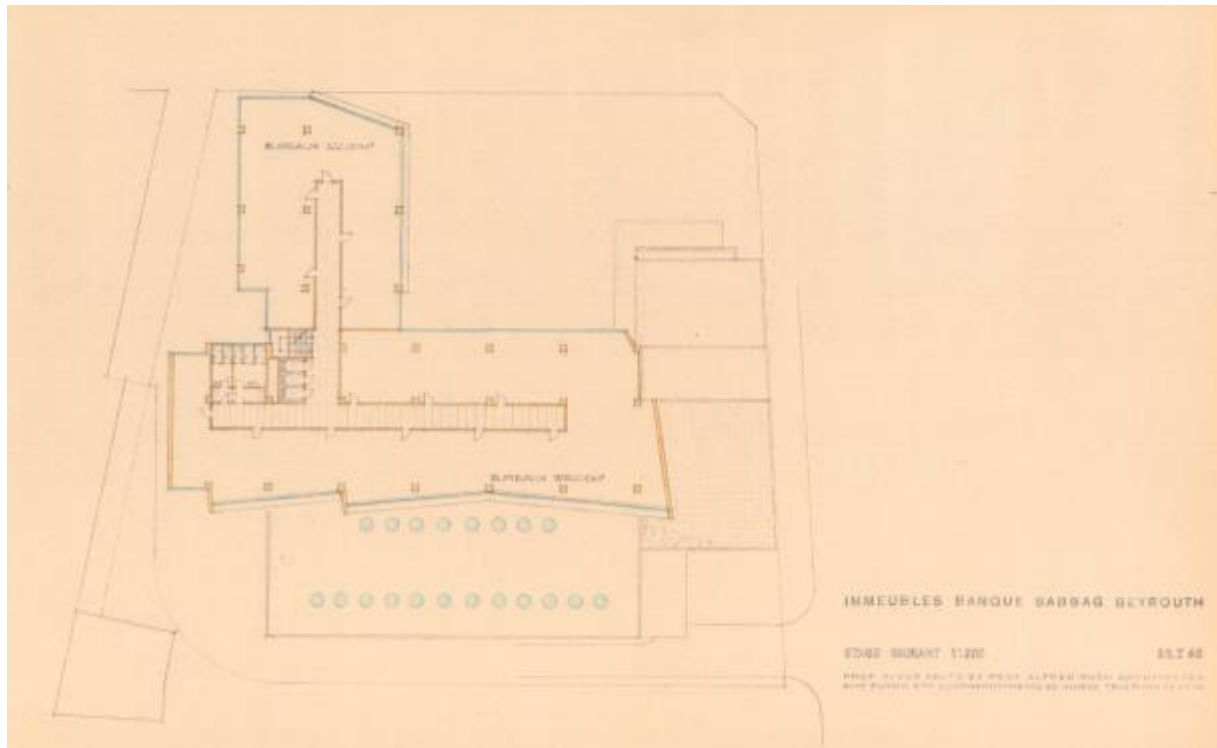


fig. 6 Preliminary design for a typical plan of Sabbag Center, 1965

2.2 Development and Rationalization

In its final version, the cinema was completely sunk underground and enlarged to house 600 seats. The piazza gained more frontage on both streets and provided access to the cinema from underneath a metallic canopy. More space for commercial shops and retail was provided on the ground and first floors. The bank area was stretched out to connect both streets and benefit from more exposure and easier access. The volume of the main building was fine-tuned and the structure completely detached from its southern facade, allowing for a more horizontal and fluid expression.

The more straight-forward, functional and rational outcomes of the project development are often associated to the school Alfred Roth strongly belongs to. In an interview, Hagop Atechian, the Operations Architect in charge of the Sabbag Center, explains his role in the project as the architect representing Roth in Lebanon. He mentions that he only met Alvar Aalto once, in a very brief encounter in his Beirut hotel room in 1964. He describes it as “a social and human encounter”. In fact, there is no evidence of Aalto ever making a second visit. According to Atechian, Alfred Roth found the Lebanese building code to be quite loose because it allowed for different massing and no restrictions on facade articulation. It is evident, however, that the architects encountered issues related to building height limits and surface exploitation ratios. An emblematic trapezoidal volume on the second floor, bearing strong resemblance to

the studio space of Aalto's Villa Mairea, appears on top of the main building in various different representations of the project. On the permit drawings the volume was scratched out, rectified with a sharp edge and inscribed within the building's allowable gabaris. The cinema building was also sunk underground because, by law, it was not permitted to protrude above the ground floor without being considered part of the project's total surface exploitation. It is also worth mentioning that the increase in the number of seats from 500 to 600, would not have been possible without the contribution of the Engineer Noel Abou Hamad, who designed a significant transfer of loads at the level of the cinema, allowing for a wider beam span and a state-of-the-art seismic system.

2.3 A Tradition of International Commissions and "Long Distance Practice"

Through the 1950's and 1960's, many projects in Beirut were commissioned to international architects. Habib Sanyal addresses long distance architectural practice at the time as being characterized by international architects seizing local prestigious projects and the challenge of developing and executing projects in a different context (Sanyal, 2007). It is interesting to note that Alfred Roth realized relatively few projects in his home country, Switzerland. The Sabbag Center and other projects he built in Kuwait are of a much higher caliber and impact. Alvar Aalto, on the other hand, produced extensively in and around his home country. He often claimed that he preferred building in Finland because of his strong connection to and familiarity with the land, people and prevailing conditions. Designed during a time in which Aalto had a large number of commissioned projects and considering the distance from Finland, the Sabbag Center seems to have lost some of the immediacy and intimacy of Aalto's more mature works. Some critics claim that Aalto's later projects were contaminated by his extensive use of distinctive architectural elements, materials and organic shapes (Christian Norberg-Schulz, 1993). Others, such as Manfredo Tafuri and Francesco Dal Co, considered Aalto's more mature works as "master pieces", though they did not give priority to urbanism and were not appropriate for reproduction in urban settings.

3 Continuity

While Sabbag Center certainly stands out as being a very unique project, it remains strongly bound to its urban context and is instrumental in understanding the historical development of Hamra Street, both as a popular reference and as a representation of Beirut's urban fabric. With its symbolic values and recognizable form communicating "progress" and "democracy", International Style architecture in Beirut was the product of the economic and political agenda prevalent in the 1960's, shortly before the Civil War. The reading of the Sabbag Center within its urban context is the main reason to protect and preserve Aalto's work as part of a uniform body of buildings potentially representing national heritage.

3.2 The Oral History of Modern Beirut: Cinema Etoile and Café Express



fig. 7 Etoile Cinema and Express Café, Ministry of Tourism Archive at the American University of Beirut

The Sabbag Center, also known as Center Etoile in reference to the underground Etoile Cinema, is very present in the oral history of modern Beirut. The cinema was characterized by the latest technology, modern design and a blue geometric ceramic mural designed by Alfred Roth on the piazza staircase landing. Run by Circuit Empire, Etoile Cinema was the first movie theater to show a locally produced movie, "Ajmal Ayyam Hayati", in 1971. Many Beirutis who lived through the Lebanese Civil War remember the cinema well, as it remained operational until late 1988. Etoile hosted the premiere of Gandhi on April 1st, 1983, which was attended by then president, Amine el Gemmayel, during very controversial circumstances. Some believed that attending an entertaining film premiere in West Beirut was a provocative statement by the president against the more left-inclined political parties and militia groups in the area. Others believed that the president was making a statement of peace with Israel, as one month later he signed the 17th of May Agreement with the country after it had invaded Lebanon and besieged Beirut in 1982. The agreement met strong opposition from the majority of Lebanese and the Arab world, and was revoked less than a year later. Cinema Etoile cannot be dissociated from the local politics of the time, nor from the memory of Beirut's inhabitants. The theatre still remains a reference almost 30 years after its closure.

Another important Hamra reference was Express Café, strategically located on the ground floor of Sabbag Center. The restaurant was famous for its international cuisine and simple modern interior. The café's position at the intersection at the beginning of Hamra Street allowed for easy vehicular access and avoidance of commercial district traffic. The underground parking lot was also secure and easy to access. Café Express became very famous during the Civil War, after Red Horse Café, just two blocks down the street, closed. The café hosted important political meetings and was frequented by journalists, intellectuals, activists and politicians. Its location across the street from Dar An Nahar publishing house also attracted artists, poets and writers.

Both Cinema Etoile and Café Express are significant references for Beirutis (fig. 7), as part of their collective memory. Both venues have witnessed warm and significant moments in Sabbag Center's and Hamra Street's history, overriding the physical monumentality of the building's architecture.

3.2 Why Sabbag Center?

Sabbag Center qualifies as a prototype of modern urban intervention in Beirut. Similar to Starco, Gefinor and other commercial centers designed by local and international architects, the Sabbag Center also played a catalyst role in the Hamra neighborhood by engaging urban development (Sayah, 2007), such as fast-tracking surrounding growth, reinforcing the commercial strip at street level and encouraging mixed usage. It became a reference that projected a modern image for Beirut.

At ground level, the Sabbag Center is part of a three kilometer commercial stretch of uniform modern buildings aligning both sides of Hamra Street. The continuous fabric is testament to the area's growth and prosperity during the 50's and 60's, and is a clear manifestation of modern trends imported from abroad, more specifically the "West". They include: the use of new materials, curtain wall technologies, functional and stylized architectural elements and the design of abstract geometric volumes. The buildings, which include key developments, have undergone no to minor and drastic changes, depending on how they perpetuate street life. It is worth mentioning that despite the dire economic and political situation plaguing Lebanon, Hamra is still a main commercial artery, a sleepless street, active both day and night. The protection of life on the street and the distinct urban fabric is neither assumed by any government entity nor legislated by any law. The planning and development of Beirut have been unofficially delegated to the private sector, namely banks, developers and real estate traders (Fayad, 2014). As a result, many of the modern and more recent heritage buildings, as well as some public spaces in the city, have been threatened because of the non-profitability of restoration and maintenance, and their simple irrelevance to the interests of the private sector.

4 The Role of Fransabank

Banque Sabbag and Banque Française pour le Moyen-Orient SAL merged into Fransabank in 1978, due to financial distress and a consequent need for restructuring. The merger was then bought by the Kassab Group in 1980, retaining its name as well as its location. Fransabank SAL, which still occupies and owns the Sabbag Center, is able to actively engage in the preservation of the building and other modern architectural works, as part of a significant area. Like its predecessor, Banque Sabbag – first established to promote the silk industry, and later financing Dar Al Nahar Publishing House and Lebanese International Airways, all pillars of national identity, development and growth – Fransabank can also potentially participate and play a responsible role in the country's public life.

4.1 From Banque Sabbag to Fransabank

Since its acquisition by the Kassab Group, the building has undergone many renovations that have changed and drifted away from its original architectural identity (fig. 8 Left). In 1996, the bank expanded its offices by adding two floors on the southwestern terrace. The old travertine stone on the exiting two floors of the bank were substituted with a red stone. Additionally, the thin black metallic columns holding up the upper floor were covered with stainless steel sheets and new Italian lighting fixtures were installed (fig. 8 Middle). In 2000, Fransabank acquired the entire building and converted it into its headquarters. In 2008, the slanted marbles stones on the southern elevation were replaced with white AlucoBond panels, and a flat and more resistant transparent material was installed in place of the plastic cupolas above the central hall. In 2014, the bank revamped the first two floors again. Fluorescent lights were embedded in the stainless steel column, the suspended Italian fixtures were replaced with stronger spots and the facades of the second floor offices overlooking the void were glazed (fig. 8 Right). A student competition, WeDesignFransaBank Headquarters, was launched in 2015, intending to “face-lift” the northern facade and revamp the piazza to “reflect the values of the bank while staying true to the architect's initial design”. Though the competition raised concerns among architects and other professionals, it was carried out anyway. A winner was selected but the project will never be implemented. Recently, some areas in the basement were converted into additional office spaces, and the movie theatre was split into two separate floors to host two large meeting/conference rooms.



Fig. 8

Left: Banque Sabbag Central Hall, Sabbag Centre, in 1970's

Middle: Fransabank Central Hall, Sabbag Center, before 2000

Right: Fransabank Central Hall, Sabbag Center, post 2008

4.2 Proposal for an Extension to Sabbag Center

In 2010, Fransabank commissioned architecture firm Sabbag-Assi SA47 to design an extension of the bank headquarters onto a neighboring site. The narrow rectangular island is not connected to any street, but is visible over the existing parking ramp from Rue de Rome (fig. 9 Left). The new project consists of 7 repeated free plans designed to host mostly offices. They are elevated on a double height lobby at the bottom and topped with two special office floors for higher-ranking administration. Two floating bridges connect the new extension to the existing 15-storey building on two different levels. A narrow rectangular window module is repeated on all 4 facades, drawing a rigid grid that is distinct from the treatment of the existing facades and rather similar to the treatment of the Central Bank.

The extension proposal also consisted of revamping the piazza as well as the facades of the existing building. The firm's strategy was to increase transparency and fluidity on site and on the facades (SA47, 2010). The windows were remodeled into continuous horizontal strips running across the L-shape building, and the piazza was relieved from the metallic canopy over the entrance of the cinema (fig. 9 Right), which is now obsolete in the absence of any public underground program. The proposal of SA47 was not carried further and the project for extension is on hold for the moment.



fig. 9

Left: Proposal for Extension of Fransabank, View from Rue de Rome, SA47

Right: Proposal for Revamping of Northern Facades, View from Hamra, SA47

4.3 A New Image with Old Architecture

Since the 1990's, commercial banks in Lebanon have been witnessing an unprecedented surge. Due to their growing role in Lebanon's economy and active participation in public affairs, banks have increased the number of branches, agencies and other forms of representation throughout the city. These representations have been made more present and widespread on a street level, in order to attract the rising consumerist population by providing simple conveniences. Heavy investment in the construction of new bank headquarters have also produced a set of highly visible references that seek attraction and singularity (Roula, 2016). The city has become the site for experimental architecture and new forms proposed by a new elite of star architects commissioned to work on these highly visible and visual projects. Fransabank, does not need to import a new icon or seek singularity beyond its current headquarters. The Sabbag Center on Hamra is not only a "Land Mark", but a real reference for people (the term "Land Mark" is borrowed from Arbid). In fact, Fransabank could easily build on its existing assets and promote the protection and preservation of Lebanon's modern heritage as part of its marketing campaign.



fig. 10

Left: Exterior View of Inter Design Building

Right: Interior View of Interior Design Building

Furthermore, the bank recently appropriated the Inter Design Building (fig. 10), another important modern architectural reference located just a block away from Sabbag Center. Designed by one of the most prominent local architects, Khalil Khoury, in 1970, the building was constructed to house a gallery space for a family-owned furniture design business. The plan consists of 4 varied-level platforms that overlook each other. They are organized around a central staircase and are repeated on 8 floors. The building,

often described as a reference for brutalist architecture in Lebanon, is characterized by its use of fair faced concrete, its massive and yet very meticulously sculpted volumes, its exposure to natural light throughout the day, as well as its unique silhouette derived from local building codes.

Fransbank now occupies the entirety of Sabbag Centre. All spaces previously designed for commercial and public use have been adapted for bank related functions. Similarly, the Inter Design Building has been converted into offices for Fransabank employees and venues for training sessions and occasional workshops. All platforms have been glazed with temporary glass panels in order to accommodate the new functions. The adaptive reuse of the two buildings have incurred different levels of intervention and change, with damage to the original design varying from minor variants to more drastic transformations. It is not too late to consider a meticulous restoration project to ensure the efficient operation of the buildings, while keeping the original materials and qualities of spaces. The process is expensive and can only be undertaken by wealthy entities such as Fransabank or similarly stable financial institutions.

Rather than impose new alien structures onto the city, Fransabank is in a position to adaptively reuse its existing buildings, and adopt a more sustainable and protective strategy that actively helps preserve rather than disrupt the existing urban fabric and morphology. This paper ends as an invitation to Fransabank to use its designated promotional budget to consciously and ethically preserve our shared context. Rather than invest in more trendy short-term marketing solutions, raise urban awareness and make preservation of urban fabric part of your institutional culture and overall long-lasting image.

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