
The EGG, Beirut

**Nomination for Inclusion on the
World Heritage List**

Nomination Document 2020

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1. Identification of the Property

State Party

Lebanon

State, Province or Region

Beirut Province, Beirut City Center

Name of Property

The EGG (Beirut City Center)

Geographical co-ordinates

The center of the nominated World Heritage Site, situated in south of Beirut central district, about 1 km south-east of Beirut city center, is at: Latitude: 33.893495° N Longitude: 35.505989° E

Textual Description of the boundaries of the Nominated Property

The site is located within the borders of Beirut Central District BCD which is under the reconstruction plan by Solidere.

The Beirut City Center is located on the intersection of Bechara Khoury Road and Mere Gelas Road and Saint Vincent Road. Therefore, the complex is accessible from three main roads and a secondary road of 10 meters' width called Central.

(Wikipedia, 2019)

A4 (or "letter") size map of the Nominated Property, showing boundaries

(see next two pages, Fig. 1 illustration showing the location of Beirut on the Lebanese general map & Fig.2 Map illustration showing the Location and boundaries of the Nominated Site)



Figure 1 illustration showing the location of Beirut on the Lebanese general map

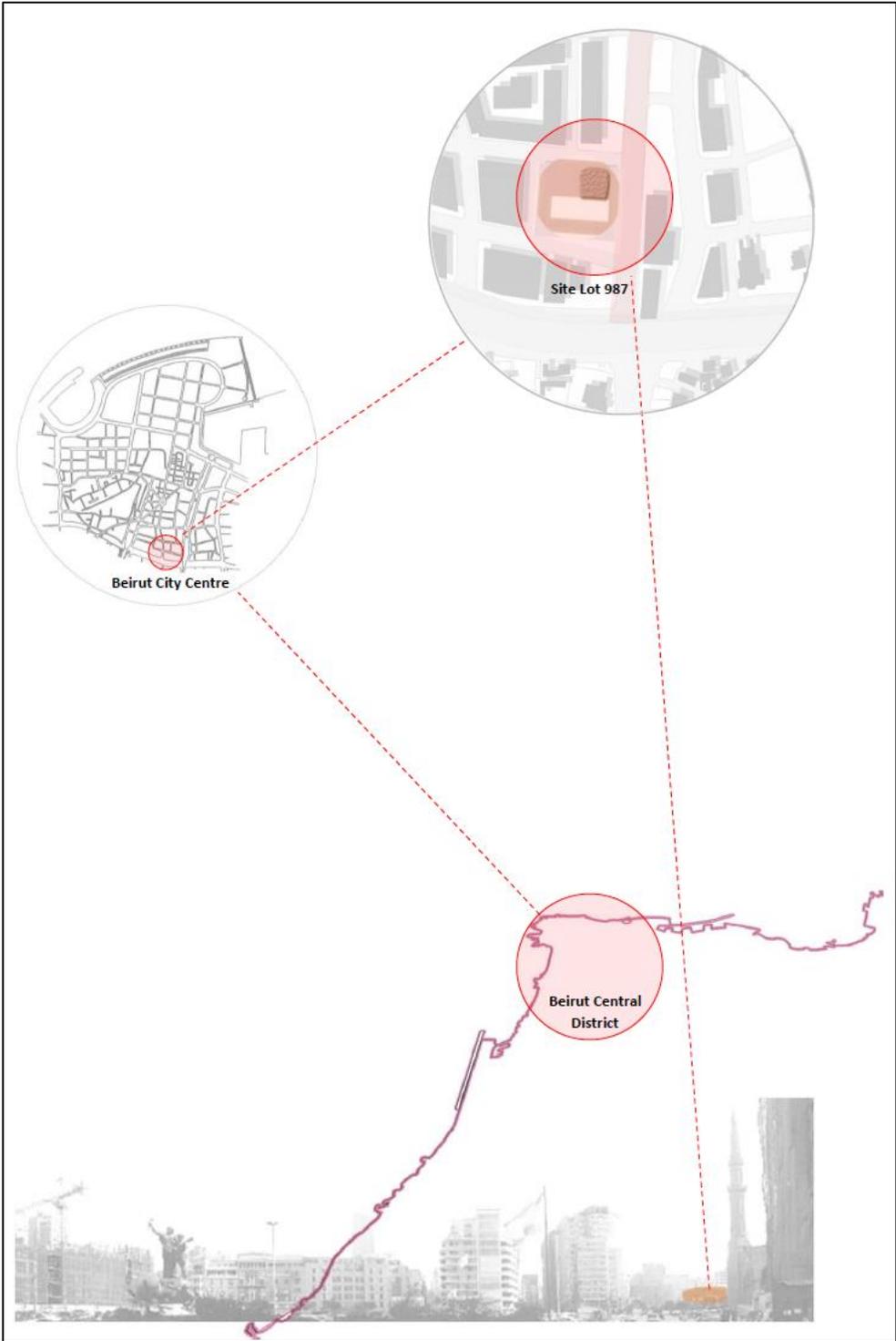


Figure 2 Map illustration showing the Location and boundaries of the Nominated Site



Photograph: Rami Kanaan, Edited by the author

The Monument / Brief

The Complex was used as a shelter during the fifteen-year duration of the civil war, and later the complex became a landmark in the city since the post-war reconstruction era. In its avant-garde Lebanese modernism, the architectural significance of the Egg lies, the unusual design with its curved roof still inspires artists today. It has a great significance in the fact that it reminds Beirut's people of their past and has a profound emotional value. This building is a product of Beirut's Golden Age.



Joseph Philippe Karam

Karam was born in 1923 to a family of a public worker and a Southeast Village homemaker in Beirut as the fourth child. He attended Jesuit College Notre Dame de Jamhour's primary and secondary school in Beiteddine, Christian Maronite. Karam graduated from the University of Saint Joseph's "Ecole Française d'Ingenieurs et d'Architectes" in 1946 with a degree in mathematics and engineering-architecture. He married Mona George Hayek, a graduate of law school, in 1951. Karam had a passion for modern architecture and his research and projects were very committed.



The Golden age of The EGG

The Egg was also considered monumental because it was part of the Lebanese film industry's Golden Age and reminded people of it. The idea of film and cinema flourished before the war, beginning with the French mandate (1920-1943), because it portrayed the picture of unity and diversity. Therefore, cinemas became the city's gathering place and a favored event for citizens of all classes. A number of theaters were built in the mid-1950s, including Empire, Majestic, and Roxy, which used to burst with people of all ages. For various political parties, the cinemas were also the meeting places. The irony lies here; although there was nothing predictable at the moment, with 18 sects preparing for the great war, the place that once supported the country was used as a tool for its destruction, and several basements of the largest theaters in Beirut were used to store weapons and ammunition. (H., 15)

2. Description

"A bunker in terms of Paul Virilio's 'Monolith' is more or less reminiscent of what can be seen now in Beirut's city center, a huge fortress that has survived many attacks but is still standing and has since become a landmark. The church of Sainte Bernadette de Banlay in Nevers (France) is also reminiscent of Claude Parent's brutalist architecture, however, with alarms, hole-work and other penetrations caused by continuing instability. Finally, the original plan for the 'Beirut City Center' has evolved into an increasingly barbaric monument, which is now seen as the Egg because of its remaining classic form." (Abboud, 2018)



Figure 3 The EGG 1990s (after the Civil War)

The Egg had the opportunity to look at the transformation of Beirut as it was part of wealth, anarchy and desolation, thanks to the negligence of its community. The site of this initiative is the main subject of frontiers, one historical and a green line (a virtual line dividing the two war zones during the civil war) that divides BCC (Beirut Central District) from the rest of the city; the two sides avoid coordination, separated by a wide avenue with a high bridge that even cuts visual communication.

3. Justification for Inscription

Brief Synthesis

The EGG lies some 0.8km South-East to the center of the capital Beirut (c. 20 meters above sea level).

The egg-shaped picture on Martyr Square's South-East corner was a modernist structure from the 1960s. The egg was once a wonderful gallery and cultural venue, designed by renowned Lebanese architect Joseph Philip Karam. A shopping center was formerly next to it, but it has been demolished since. The egg has flourished and continues to thrive with sponsorship of various civil society activities. In fact, so many people recognize the egg is most passionate about the egg and has given rise to more heated discussions than any other building in Beirut, and understandably so. Now it has been achieved by the Saudi Olayan group and, although the group was interested in the preservation of the structure, it was unable to provide its plans for the structure. (Tarraf, 2014)

In a short interview, Joana Hammour (Culture conservation activist) states, "I didn't know what it was when I first saw it. I figured something was made for the army. I felt it was so disgusting that I thought it was going to be demolished. I heard that my parents knew it and I saw what happened there. I knew what it meant to Beirutis and Beirut. This was there before the war, during the war and after the war this re-emerged. I don't know why nobody was taking the egg as a Beirut icon, renewing and cleaning it to allow visitors to see it. They should make it open to the public, because its history belongs to the Lebanese.

A Solidere spokeswoman said the company recommended the arrangement to be preserved when they sold the property to the Olayan group but could not clarify what it meant. They will make the structure public because it belongs to the Lebanese. ***It was always the egg that triggered the most angry reactions of people wherever the least news was about its death. It's the last thing that shows the enduring war in the square of the Martyrs.***

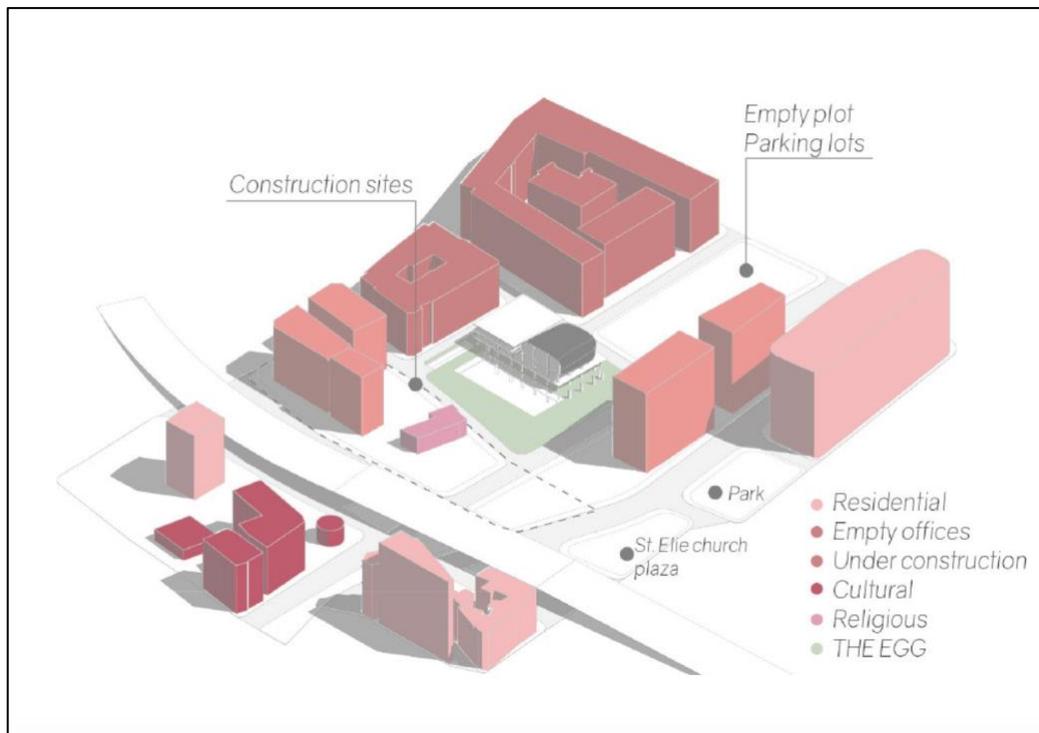


Figure 4 Land-use of the area where The EGG is located

Criteria under which property is nominated:

(i), (ii), (iv)

Justification for criteria Criterion

(i): to represent a masterpiece of human creative genius.

The EGG in Beirut is a major creation of human genius, which represents the living expression of the principles and ideals advanced by the modernist movement and effectively integrated in the context of the Middle East, In the historic center of the city of Beirut. The EGG project was closely linked to an ambitious development strategy and a process of self-affirmation of Lebanese modernity in the eyes of the world in the 1960s.

(ii) to exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;

The project of The EGG in Beirut expresses in an exceptional way the vast movement of modernization which developed in the Near East from the 1950s. The way of thinking of the architect for such an outstanding structure in that time and the shift it effect on the society when it was built, are all factors. The quality of the urban, architectural and landscape design has set standards and is still a source of motivation for architects in the Arab world.

(iv): It is an outstanding example of a type of architectural ensemble which illustrates a significant stage in human history

The EGG presents an architectural ensemble made up of dome-like structure; which was the first trial in the area; and playing a very important role in the economic and commercial dynamics of the time. On the other hand The EGG also presents an important architectural value mainly due to being the largest multi-use complex in the Middle East, with its Egg-shaped shell housing a cinema and two towers. In addition, the use of concrete as a material was an outstanding move to take in building such a huge structure.

Statements of authenticity and / or integrity

The Lebanese Modernist era was highlighted by the use of concrete in The EGG, which made a revolution in architecture and pushed architects towards new boundaries. (IBRAHIM, YAMMINE, & ZREIKA, 2017)

Although partially incomplete, the buildings is preserved in their state after the civil war of Lebanon. Construction projects which would have affected the integrity of the whole had been envisaged ten years ago but these projects were partially abandoned thanks to the pressure of the civil society. Disorders have appeared in some parts of the building in the form of cracks and cracks in the concrete with corrosion of the steels. An investigation campaign must be carried out to assess the extent of the damage, The Egg of Beirut has only been partially used since its construction. After the civil war ended, The EGG was never used up until the very late in the latest revolution happening in Lebanon. The EGG is used as a space to share ideas and raise awareness by the protests. (Barrington, 2019)



Figure 5 Demonstrators attend an open discussion inside The EGG 2019

Comparative Analysis

Most architects felt that the Egg resembles the Church of St. Bernadette of Banlay, designed by architect Claude Parent in France. Between 1963 to 1966 the church was built and completed in 1968. The building's design is influenced by shelters, because the area around it is meant to have been sacred. The substance is flat, heavily used concrete in the 20th century. The Second World War and the nuclear threat survived this temple. It represents a dark period through which France has gone, which has made it historic and significant for the people.

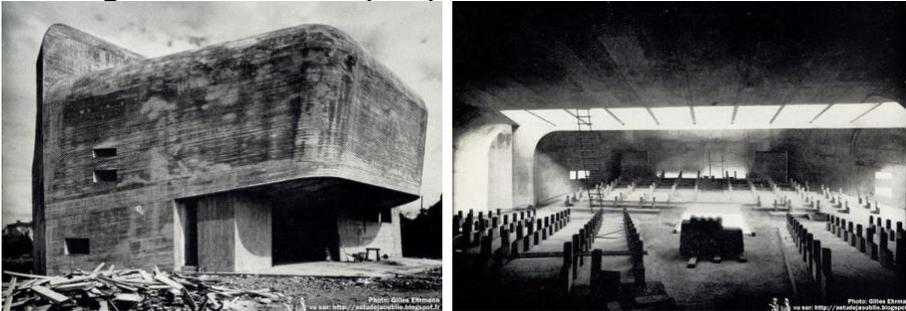


Figure 6 Église Sainte-Bernadette du Banlay

Once civil war began in 1975, the complex was supposed to be the focus of the assembly of the Lebanese people as spectators, but instead the building itself became the spectator of the war. The City Center was then transformed into an asset that changed its position constantly according to the changing dramatic trends of the region. Only one of the complex's towers was completed, but during the war years the Egg and the large underground parking gap were still part of Karam's initial Beirut City Center scheme, which was the dividing factor between the bombings of West Beirut and East Beirut. (Reda, 2019)

4. State Of Conservation And Factors Affecting The Property

4.1. After the Civil War – 1990

Most of Lebanon was devastated and left in ruins after the 15-year civil war. The City Center was demolished, with the division of West Beirut and East Beirut. The unfinished structure of a tower only worked for a few years after its completion, but its resilience to all bombings made it famous and made it one of the many landmarks in Beirut.



Figure 7 The attack on the Egg during the time of the war

After the battle, the Beirut City Center was in horrid shape; water filled the last 3 underground floors of the building. The nearby water source was historically used by the local fire station in fire emergencies. The reservoir's water pumps were out of service during the civil war, contributing to water leakage to these levels. When the war broke out, nobody expected it would take fifteen years to shield their vehicles from damage by using the underground parking levels. After the end of the war the vehicles were stored safely submerged, but they turned into rust upon their sudden exposure to air. Beirut's restoration had a strong political influence, but a poor architectural impact. Various efforts and ideas for the Egg were suggested, yet none failed to see the sun.



Figure 8 Demolition of the Tower

4.2. Current Situation

The Egg is still unused until this day, and the last effort to interfere dates back to 1998. Nobody really knows the fate of this complex because, clearly, it is unclear what the destiny of Egg is because of its external influence. Upon gathering some details from local authorities, there was no clear answer as to who the actual proprietors are, but it is definitely owned privately by a foreign entity. (Olyan Group)

This vagueness did not stop Lebanese artists from expressing their views openly on Egg; it has become the main topic of many works of art such as collages, caricatures, images, architectural ideas, etc.



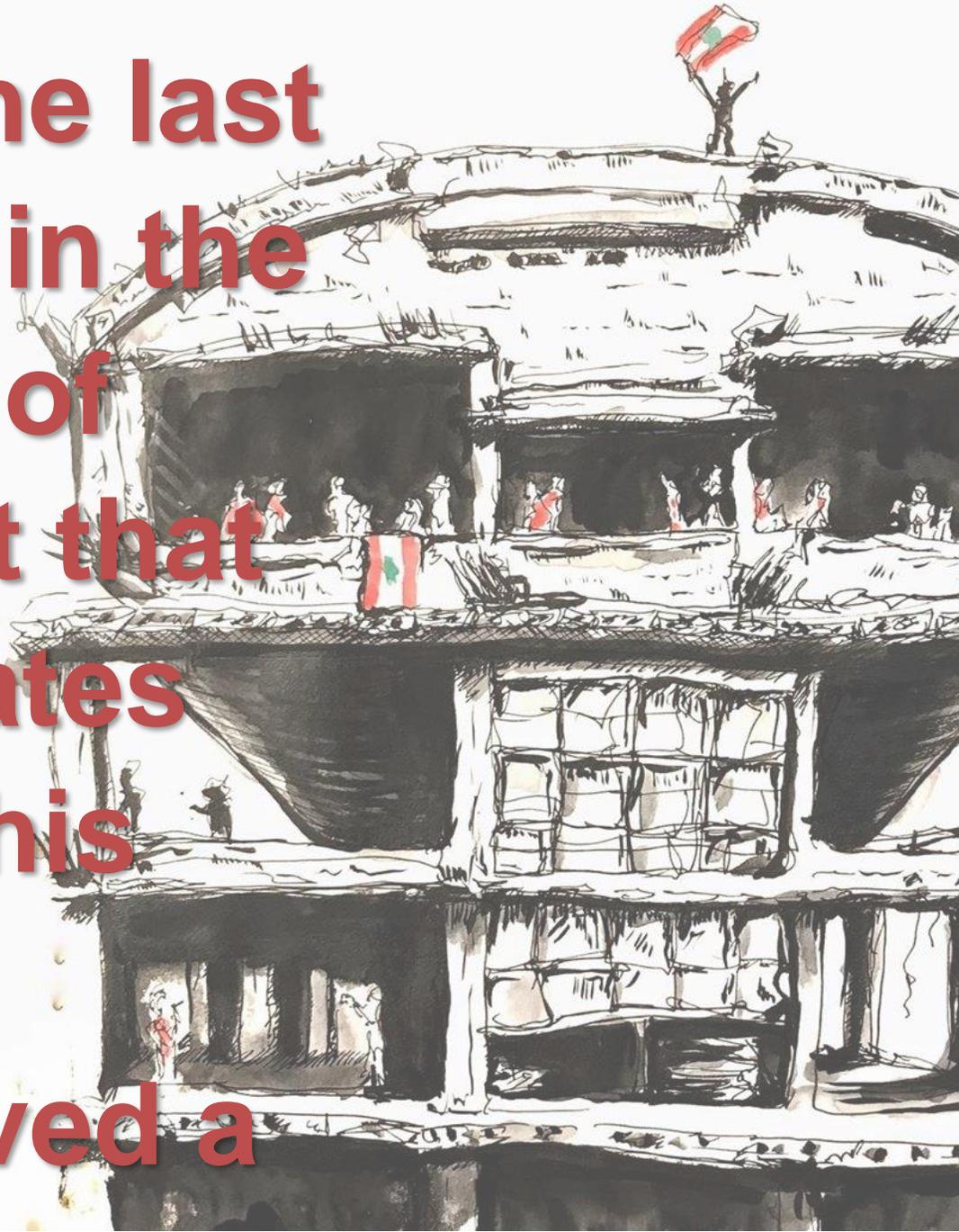
Figure 9 Hatty Pedder- *Luxury and Glam: the Egg as the city's hotspot.*

The Lebanese citizens have no written history or evidence of their civil war until this day. Second, the various political groups involved in the war offered various stories and no specifics were decided. Second, the purpose of war to make the country's civilization rubble allowed large powers to portray history as they wished. Politicians and officials have the power to manipulate circumstances that affect the views of the people. One of the contributors to the remembrance is filmmakers and authors who can put the self and the condition as a legacy of the civil war. They will put the present as a reference to the past, which can lead to the past being chased by the present and not the other way around. (Springer, 2013)

The Egg, originally a movie before the war, is seen as one of the forgotten parts of Beirut; sadly, it is one of the many abandoned buildings of the town after the war. Until now, it had either not been rebuilt or demolished by its successors. This complex was used as a combat barricade by rebels between 1975 and 1990; this led to the loss of legitimacy and purpose of the building. The Egg, the intellectual landmark it is, can also evoke violence and traumatic memories.

When people want to remember the war, they must decide to ignore it. Until this day, the protagonists of the war have denied their atrocities, which means that the war is over but the battle still continues. Creating a city's cemetery means that it must be unprejudiced, having no sense of religious or political affiliation. **The only path forward is for the country to understand what the war has done and learn from our predecessors' mistakes. To make architecture memorable, it must embrace the past with a forward-looking approach. It should be the link between culture and its past without ever burying it.**

**It is the last
thing in the
heart of
Beirut that
indicates
that this
city
survived a
civil war.**



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