

Beirut the Connector: Rebuilding the City and its Collective Memory Beyond Trauma

by

Christina Lawen

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Dalhousie University is located in Mi'kmaq'i,
the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq.
We are all Treaty people.

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Abstract

Beirut's history of conflicts has left destruction throughout the city leading to voids of disconnection. Understanding these voids of disconnection through the lens of sites of memory that serve as links between past and future become points of investigation. Analysing such sites of memory along the "Green Line", a void established during the Civil War from 1975 to 1990, these moments may be re-integrated into the public realm by strengthening their program and connection within the city through an addition to the sites of memory that reflects these ideas. The intent is to approach these additions to the sites of memory that engage the broader communities through redefining the "Green Line" as a point around social engagement instead of one of division, integrating existing architectural language to inform familiar spatial qualities within the design, and re-integrating unused materials into the spaces to connect between the past and future.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Motivation

Lebanon will always be considered home to myself and my family. As a second-generation immigrant and growing up outside the country's boundaries, I have come to recognize the beauty of a country and the capital city of Beirut as a place that is in constant movement; one that has witnessed violence and trauma, yet nonetheless, the importance and strength to continue forward, reconstruct, and recover has always become engrained in the Lebanese identity.

1.2 Statement

As Beirut is located between this point of Western Europe and Eastern Arab worlds, it holds a history as a site of violent conflicts, where reconstruction and reconciliation are an important element to the urban realm. Previous methods or approaches to reconstruction mainly focused on Beirut's Central District in its downtown core, with little attention on reconstruction of the city at large.

The intent of this thesis is to develop an approach to reconstruction and reconnection of Beirut through a lens of enriching and strengthening its collective memory post-civil war by bringing the country's rich collage of cultures back into voided spaces, the reconstruction of significant sites of memory and the re-integration of public space into the city's divided urban landscape.

How can a gradual approach to reconnection of designated sites of memory be developed to strengthen and integrate the dividing voids into the urban fabric of a city following cycles of trauma and conflict?

Looking ahead at analysing such an approach, a background to Beirut's history, current culture, and architecture will be reviewed in chapter 2. Attention will be focussed on the void as destruction and opportunity, as well as existing precedents in the city that intend to frame discussion in the following chapters. Chapter 3 will incorporate approaches to moving forward with the void of the "Green Line" and the acknowledgement of trauma and the integration of plurality in new ways into the city and neighbourhood scales. The architectural language and a critique on existing ideas regarding Beirut's reconstruction and spaces of commemoration will be addressed in chapter 4, where a new design language and approach will be presented. Lastly, description and detail on the site of focus for this thesis will be provided in chapter 5 before further describing the approach to design intentions on this site in chapter 6.

Chapter 2: History of Lebanon

2.1 Historical Background

Beirut, Lebanon can be described as the connector between Western Europe and Eastern Arab World and frames its position through the country's history. The Phoenicians, were the ancestral people of the region from 1500 BC to about 300 BC. Being strong ship builders and sailors, they navigated the Mediterranean and continued when the Assyrians ruled from 1392 to 1056 BC. The Babylonians came shortly after and ruled from 605 to 538 BC. The Romans eventually rule from 64 BC to 636, until the Ummayyuds and Mamluks took control, bringing with them Arabic ideas and architectural influences. The Ottomans took control from 1516 to 1860, and following World War

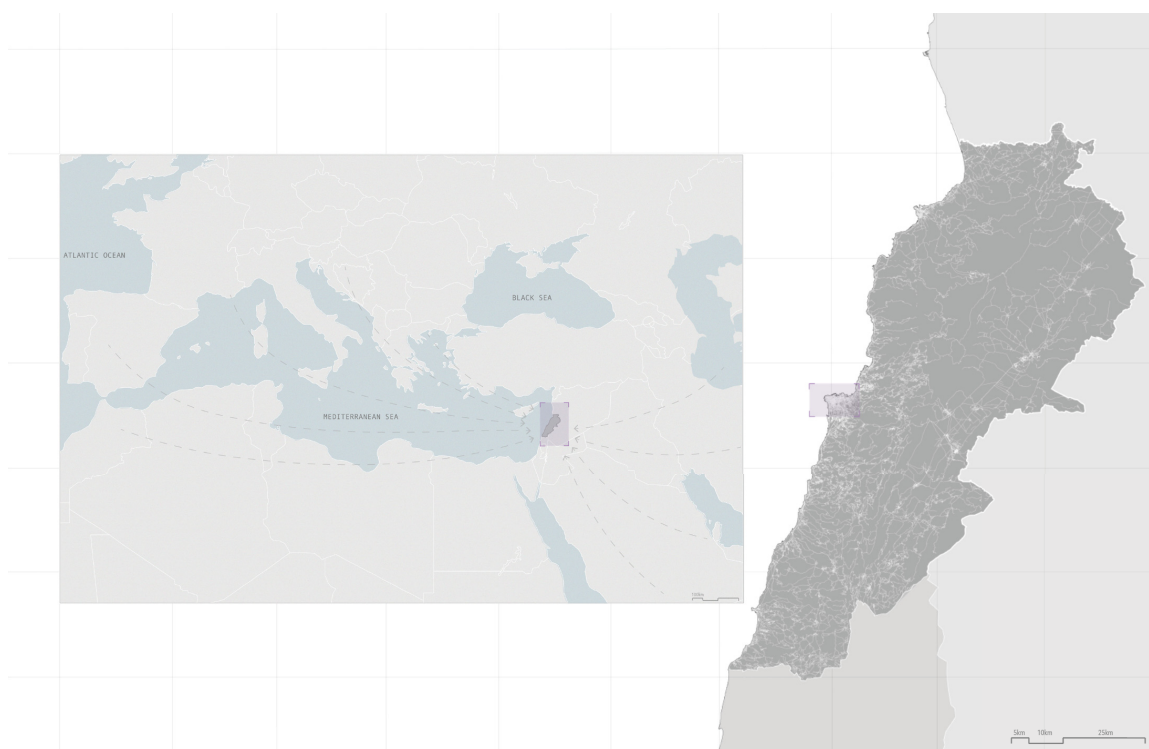


Figure 1: Map of Lebanon in its context along the Mediterranean Sea.
Country boundary map of the region around the Mediterranean Sea (Mediterranean 2021)

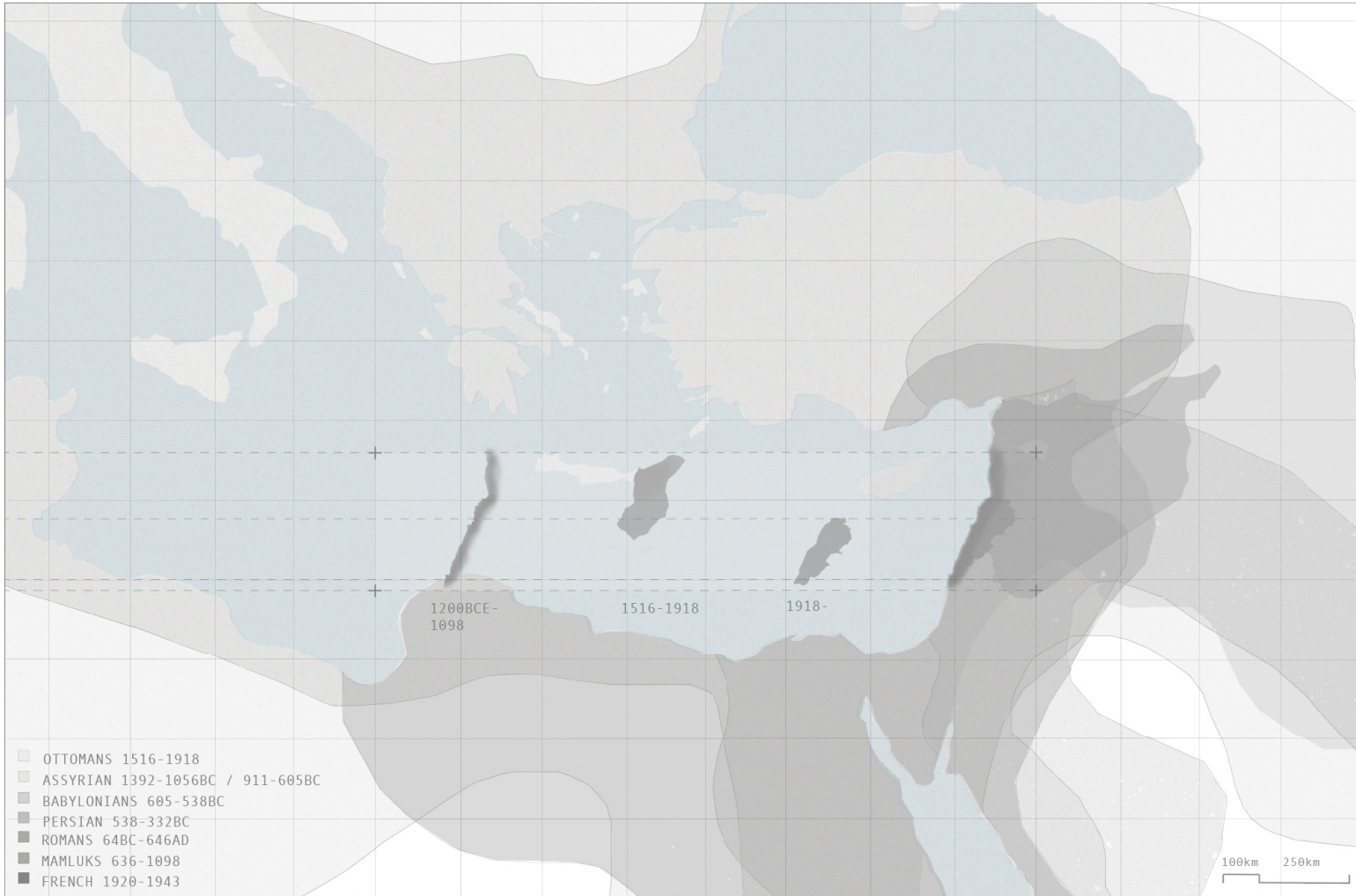


Figure 2: Map showing the shift in the region's influences throughout history and the boundaries of Phoenicia to its shift into present day Lebanon.

II, the region came under the French's colony of Syria. The country later gained independence in 1943 and became the Republic of Lebanon. The region's different influences inform the region's cultural identity (Doyle 2012, 9–20).

2.2 Demographics

Lebanon sits at the Eastern edge of the Mediterranean Sea, bordering between present day Syria and Israel. Its existing population is about 6.78 million individuals, yet the majority of Lebanese fall within the diaspora estimating to about 15 million individuals globally. Within the country's borders, there is a combination of Christians and Muslims, including Maronite Catholics, Greek Orthodox, Sunni and Shia Muslims, and Druze communities, all of which are dispersed throughout the country's mountainous regions. There are five main provinces within Lebanon, yet most of the population resides in dense Beirut (Doyle 2012, 183–297).



Figure 3: This visual is intended to portray demographics within the country including religion by region, population by province, topography of the region. Lebanese Demographics (World Population Review 2022)

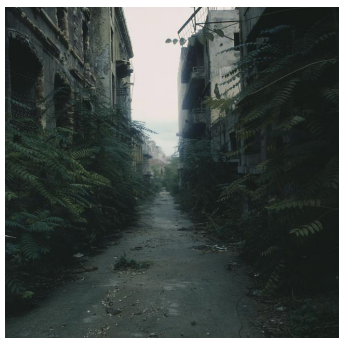


Figure 4:
The “Green Line”
represented through
photographs, early 1980s.
Photograph of the “Green
Line” (The Green Line
Demarcation Zone 1982)

Figure 5:
Former “Green Line”
currently known as Bechara
El Khoury, a main road
connecting northern and
southern parts of the capital.
Photograph of the “Green
Line” (Ali F. ARCH n.d.)

Figure 6: Photograph of
Bechara El Khoury (Google
Maps 2021)

2.3 Civil War 1975-1990

Beirut itself has been referred to as the “Paris of the Middle East” and its position has made itself at the centre of violence and conflict, from the time of independence until the Civil War that began in 1975. Political conflicts and segregation brought about the Civil War which affected the whole country, yet these violent conflicts were mostly focused within the boundaries of Beirut. Consequences of the war left a physical imprint on the city, once a city of coexistence eventually became one that was divided by what is referred to as the “Green Line”. At the time, this was a demarcation point dividing Western Muslim and Eastern Christian parts of the city that extended from Martyrs’ Square and along Damascus Road until the suburbs south of the city of Beirut.

“Ideas persist that “West Beirut” is Muslim, fundamentalist, overrun by terrorists, under the control of foreign renegade countries, disorganized, dangerous and that “East Beirut” is Christian, prosperous, organized, pro-Western, tolerant and safe” (Davie 2002, as cited in Charlesworth 2006, 62). The “Green Line” can be regarded as a void that still informs spatial organization within the city as a wide road where vehicles have become a point of focus, further addressing this divide in the post-civil war city. Cities such as Nicosia, Cyprus and Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina have experienced a similar regional divide, whether it is the United Nations Buffer Zone established in 1964 dividing northern Greek and southern Turkish regions of Nicosia (Charlesworth 2006, 89) or the divide among post-civil war Muslim, Serbian, and Croatian communities residing in Mostar (Charlesworth 2006, 100).

2.3.1 Conflict

Throughout Lebanon's history, there has been ongoing violent conflicts that have informed an integration of cultural influences and layered forms of reconstruction and growth. Reconstruction as a form of healing has become engrained in the identity of the Lebanese (Larkin 2012, 100). As a result, this idea of the void is a clear part of Beirut's urban fabric in its identity as becoming voids by destruction, whether that is in the form of war-torn buildings or even building remnants following the August 2020 explosion. These destroyed voids have become scars of the city, forming separations in the urban fabric of the city. Yet, within these sites voided by destruction, there is opportunity for new structures, spaces within other spaces, looking at gaps between the



Figure 7: Map of Beirut highlighting the location of the “Green Line”. (Lebanese Arab Institute 2022)

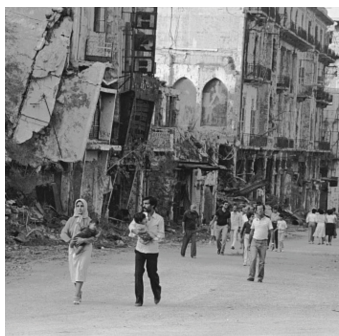


Figure 8–10: Photographs of streetscapes during the Lebanese Civil War (American University of Beirut 1975–1990 n.d.)

destructured and what is not (Ghazal 2016, 43). According to Lebbeus Woods, these spaces are emotionally charged environments, whatever existed obtains new meanings and value and whatever exists experiences new change (Ghazal 2016, 43).

Beirut in its current position has experienced reconstruction mostly following the end of the Civil War in 1990, which resulted in its government passing a law in December 1991 and Assem Salam states this “gave municipal administration the authority to create real estate companies in war-damaged areas, and to entrust them with the implementation of the urban plan” (Rowe and Sarkis 1998, 131). Three major schemes were taken on including the reconstruction of the Beirut’s Central District by Solidere, the reconstruction of the southern region by Elisar, and the rehabilitation of the northern coastline by Linord. All of these schemes were intended to be established within the first 15 years post-civil war. During this time, Solidere focused much on demolition, reconstruction of modern buildings, and preservation of facades of older buildings in Beirut’s Central District. Solidere’s master plan overview aims to address points including the “recovery of the public domain, creating public spaces, re-establishing the fabric and neighbourhood structures, offering a flexible market oriented development framework, and providing an urban design framework for new construction and for the restoration of preserved and historic buildings” (Solidere 2022). The master plan outlines such approaches that are only present within Beirut’s downtown core, treating it more as a tourist attraction rather than an effort to rebuild fragmented and disconnected parts of the city impacted by the war (Solidere 2022).

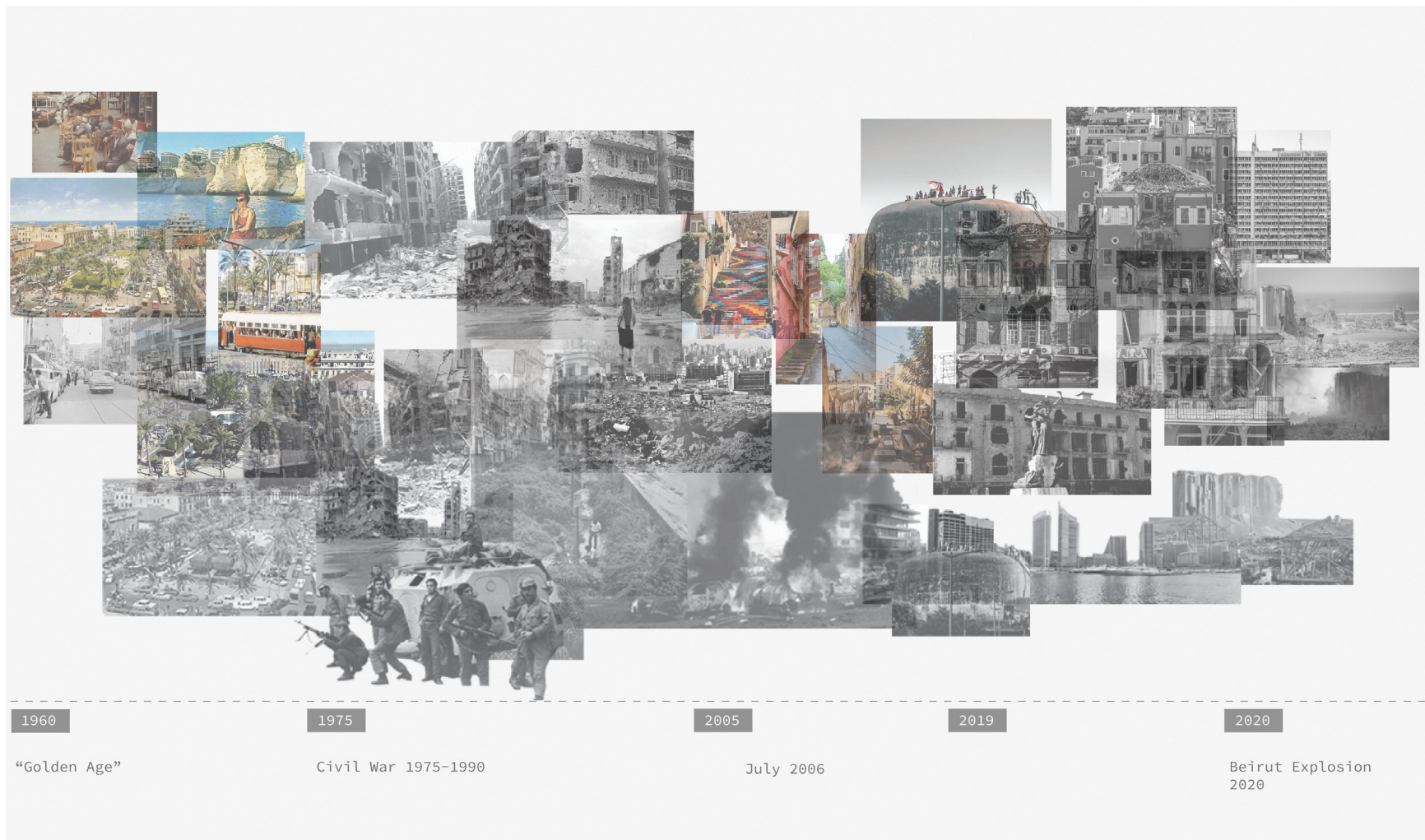


Figure 11: Cycles of destruction extending from the “golden age” 1950s/1960s, the Civil War 1975-1990, and post Beirut blast 2020.

Architect Esther Charlesworth describes Solidere's approach to reconstruction as "City as Heart" which "sees the city as one large self-contained development field for real estate speculation – based upon the agreement that the focus on reconstruction should be the centre as the metaphorical heart of a destroyed city-body" (Charlesworth 2006, 55). Charlesworth opposes this view of the city as it supports further disconnection from the city centre to its surrounding neighbourhoods and the rest of the city at large. Alternatively, Charlesworth presents a new way of viewing the city, more specifically, Beirut, describing it as "City as Spine". This approach "views the city as a dynamic and democratic entity. Reconstruction is therefore seen as a longer, sequential process based upon the gradual implementation of a number of small regeneration projects, that in time, repair and strengthen the social and physical backbone of both the city and its many communities" (Charlesworth 2006, 55).

2.4 Precedents in Beirut

Understanding influences on the region's architecture is significant in framing the city and its culture. Much of the influences were brought in during the Roman and Ottoman occupation of the region and elements of these regions' architectural language are maintained as part of Beirut's architectural heritage. Lebanon became split between Western and Arab identity and its identity has become this in between, connector and middle ground (Mackey 1989, 261).

Within the city, there are markings of memory within the built environment, to which Nora Pierre refers to as "lieux de memoire". These are "lieux de memoirs, sites of memory,



Figure 12: Map of the Solidere approach to redevelopment of Beirut's Central District in comparison to Esther Charlesworth's suggestion of the "City as Spine". Map of Solidere's interventions in downtown Beirut (data from Solidere 2022a)

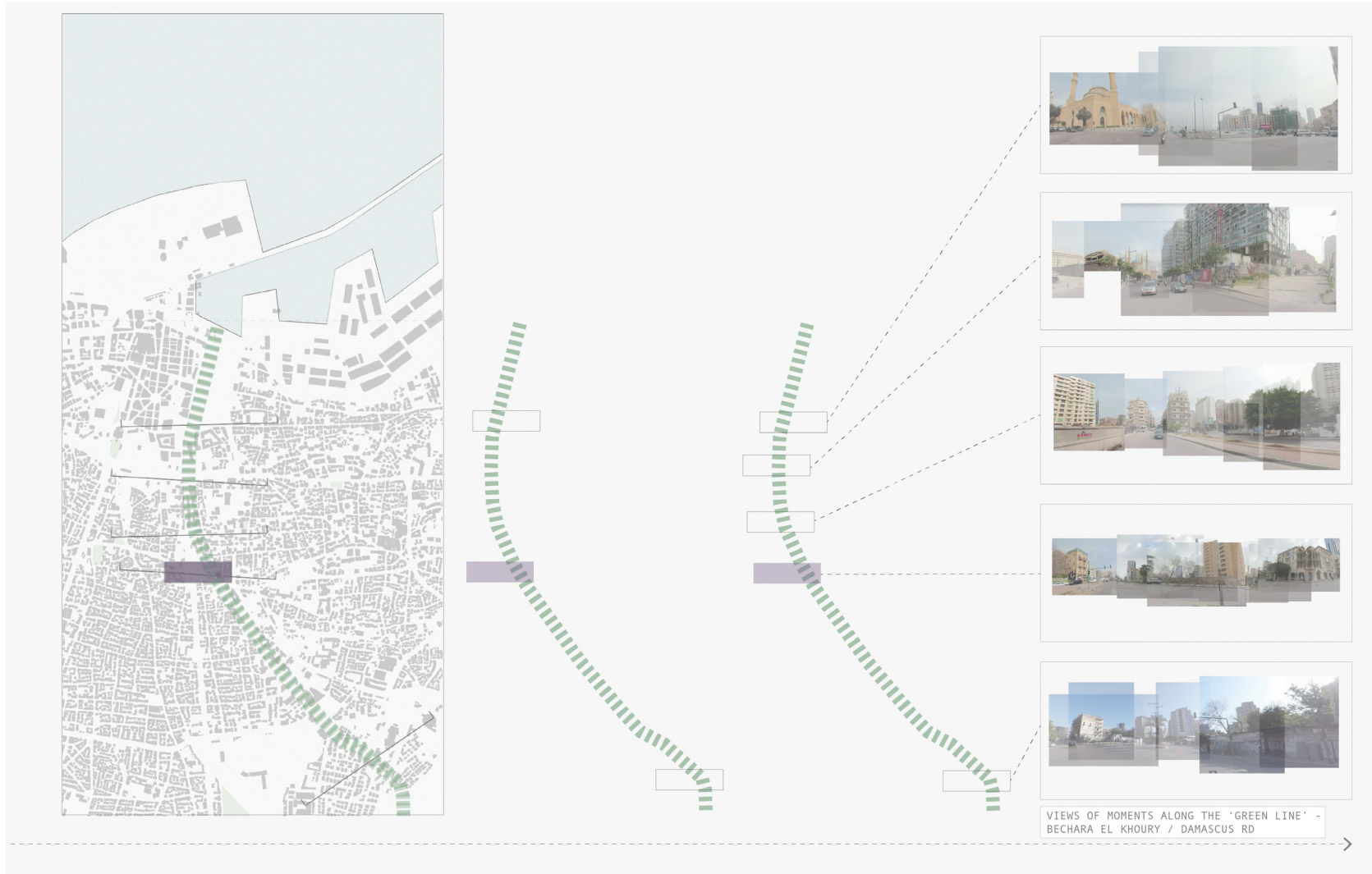


Figure 13: Charlesworth's "City as Spine" diagram in Beirut, Lebanon reflected through an analysis of the gradual strengthening of significant sites along the "Green Line".

because there are no longer milieux de memoire, real environments of memory” (Nora 1989, 7). These sites may include built sites of memory or war-torn buildings, and recognized sites in Beirut include the Egg, Martyrs’ Square, and Beit Beirut Museum (refer to figure 19). The Egg is an abandoned modern cinema designed by Joseph Philippe Karam, where construction had begun in 1965 but was interrupted by the onset of the Civil War. It became a key moment of representation and revolution over the years, as its physical position falls close to Martyrs’ Square (Yahfouf 2020). Martyrs’ Square, also located along the Green Line, became one of many key points of violence during the Civil War (refer to figure 19). “Marino Mazzacurati’s sculpture, installed in May 1960 in *Sahat al-Shuhada* (Martyrs’ Square), while a memorial to the infamous martyrs in the struggle against Ottoman oppression, more broadly celebrates the ever-present struggles for freedom and Independence” (Larkin 2012, 127).

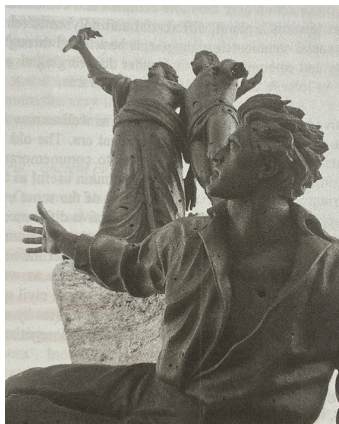
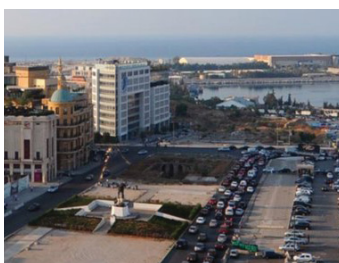


Figure 14: Photograph of Martyrs’ Square (Solidere 2022b)

Figure 15: A photograph of the Martyrs’ Memorial Statue from *Memory and Conflict in Lebanon*, 2006; photograph by Craig Larkin (Larkin 2012, 127)

2.5 Museums

The intention of the museum is important to understanding the significance of Beit Beirut in Lebanon’s capital. “Museums stand at the intersection of scientific work and public display and, as such, must be of major interest to scientific historians. Themes studied in recent years have included the museum’s didactic role, the ways in which it has helped to shape knowledge, its civic status, and its diverse social and cultural roles” (Forgan 2005, 573). Schroeder-Gudehus states that: “Buildings are artefacts in themselves, created at considerable expense and reflecting the intellectual and material context of the society in which they were founded” (Brigitte Schroeder-Gudehus 1993, 1–3). In David Livingstone’s *Putting Science in Its Place*, he emphasizes

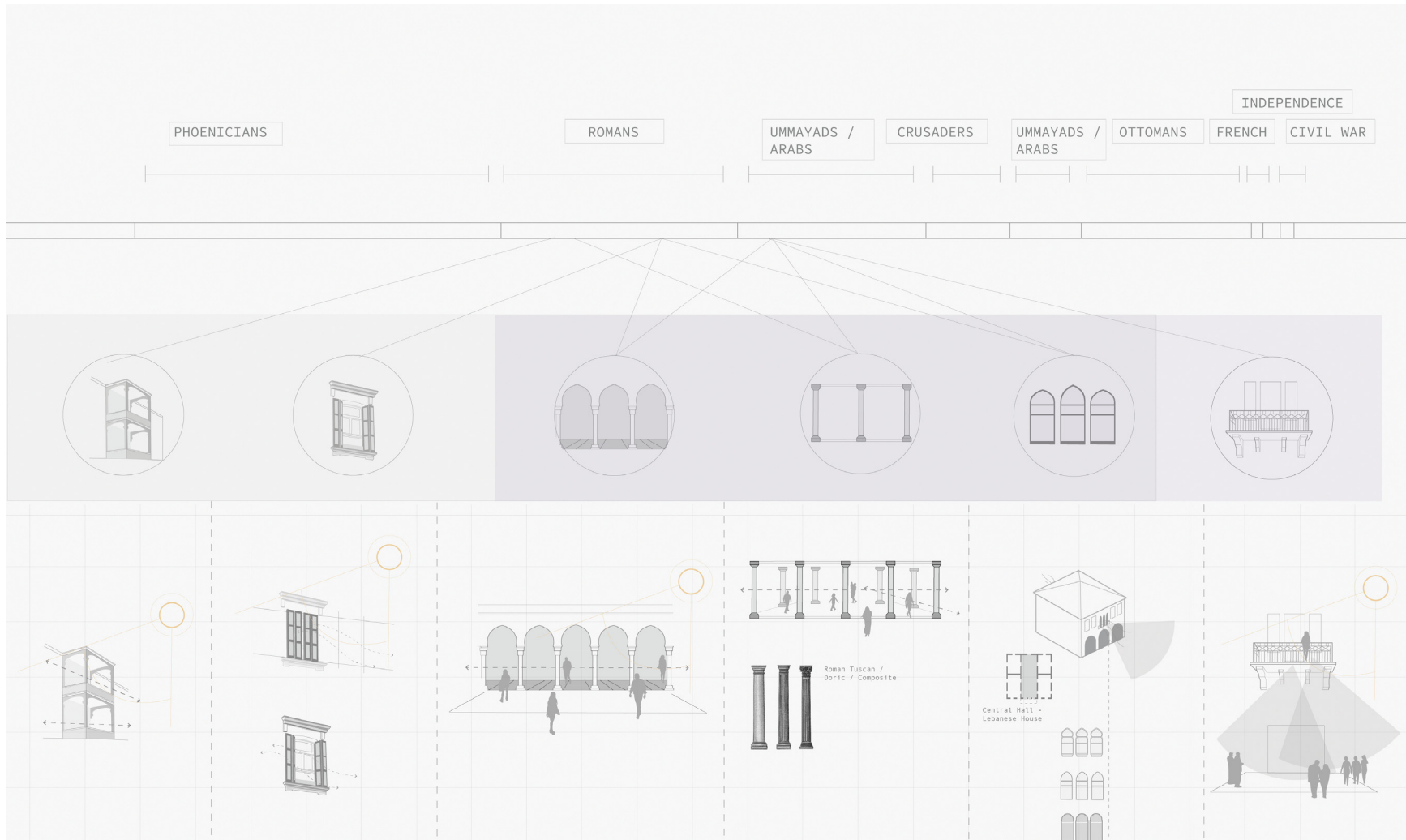


Figure 16: Elements of Hashim Sarkis' approach to pluralistic thinking reflected through the architectural language showcased throughout Beirut and the region,



Figure 17: Explorations of Beirut's local architectural language in the context of recognized or war-torn buildings.

the important characteristics of location, whether they be regarding site, region or knowledge. “For Livingstone, the museum occupies a distinctive niche in the development of scientific enquiry, both as a site of accumulation where objects were arranged in specified orders and as the location where people were taught to look at the world and to value the past” (Forgan 2005, 579). On the other hand, Bradburne describes his own interpretation of the museum as “a public space, a social space, and its effectiveness and that of its architecture must be understood in social terms. While a museum’s architecture serves other masters, it must first and foremost contribute to and support the social interaction that is the foundation of the skills of appropriating culture” (Bradburne 1999, 19). Examples of museums that act as an interplay between the context of urban strategies and place attention on the users’ experience include the new Metropolis Science and Technology Center in Amsterdam

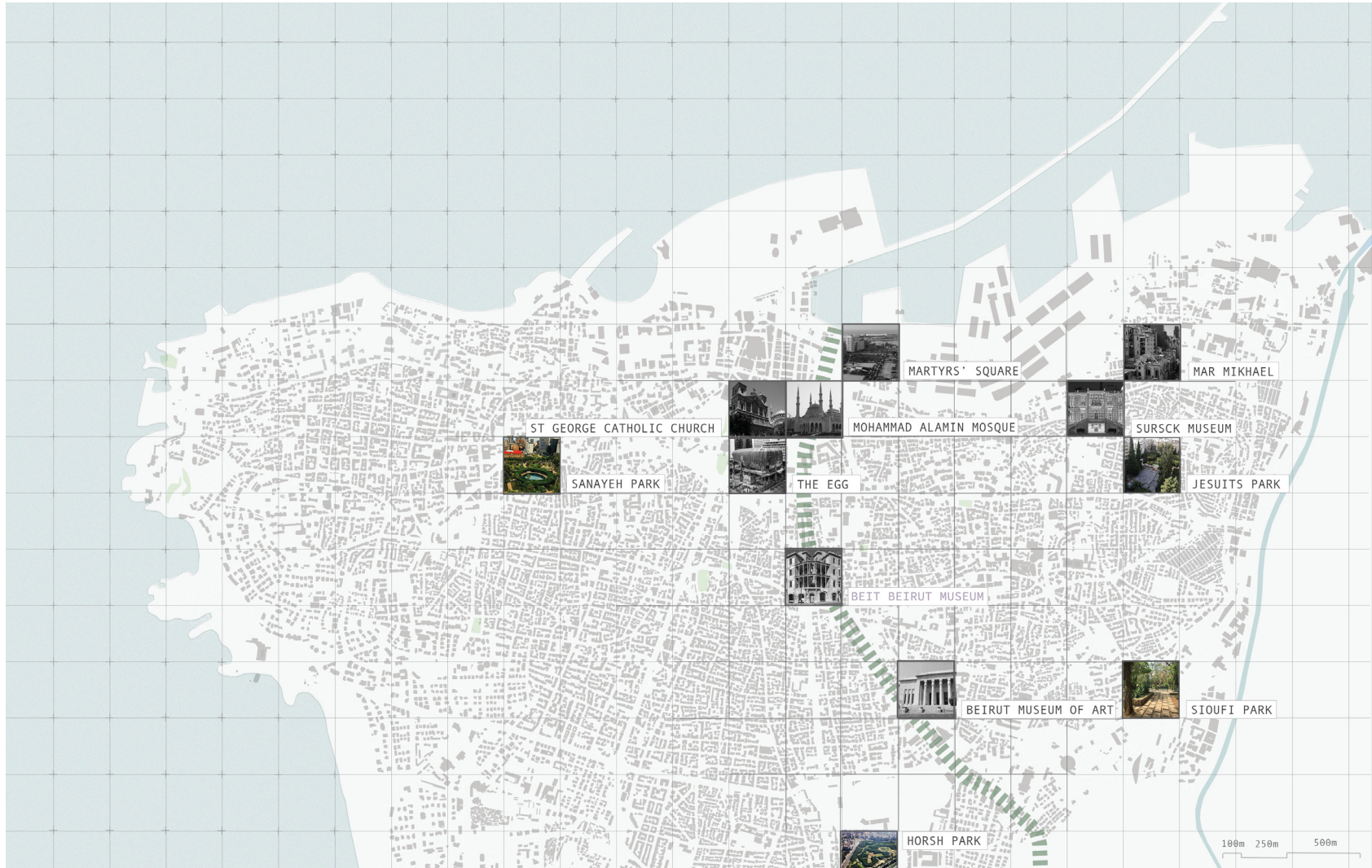


Figure 18: Elements of Hashim Sarkis' approach to pluralistic thinking through design.



Figure 19: Photograph of Museum für Kunsthandwerk in Frankfurt (The Arts and Crafts Association in Frankfurt am Main 2021)

Figure 20: Photograph of and new Metropolis Center in Amsterdam (NEMO Science Museum — Amsterdam n.d.)

and the Museum für Kunsthandwerk in Frankfurt (Bradburne 1999, 16).

Connecting the program of the museum to similar spaces, such as art galleries and heritage research organizations, one can begin to engage the overall intention of these spaces around the city. Along with the ideas of shared spaces around the gallery, heritage research and museums are significant to this collaboration around rebuilding memory in the city (Larkin 2012, 72). There is a clear spatial trend in how most of these sites are situated to the North-Eastern part of Beirut (see figure 28).

2.5.1 Beit Beirut Museum

Beit Beirut Museum falls between Achrafieh and part of Bachoura and Ras El-Nabaa neighbourhoods along the “Green Line,” and served as a direct point of violence during the Civil War (refer to figure 19, 25, 41). Over the last century, Beit Beirut has shifted in its use and purpose. Initially in 1924, Nicolas and Victoria Barakat commissioned Youssef Aftimos to design their ochre sandstone mansion, also referred to as the Yellow house. In 1932, Fouad Kozah designed the residential buildings upper levels. During the Civil War, the Barakat family fled to a safer area north of the capital, and a right-wing Christian militia moved in and converted the building into a snipers’ nest. After the war, the family intended to sell the property, yet a coalition of architects superheaded by Mona El Hallak, a Lebanese architect and heritage-preservation activist, fought for its preservation, leading to a seven-year campaign to convince the municipality to expropriate the building. Following the expropriation of the building in 2003, the municipality embarked on its shift into: Beit Beirut or “House of Beirut”.



Figure 21: Beit Beirut Museum, 2013; photograph by Craig Larkin (Larkin 2013, 101)

Figure 22–23: Youssef Aftimos, Beit Beirut Museum, Beirut, 2021

Yousef Haidar then became the architect designated to transform this building into what it is today. The old Barakat building has recently become a site of commemoration of the Civil War, and “its restoration should provide, ‘a place for meeting and reconciliation a space for memory so as not to be swept by amnesia’” (Wheeler 2007 as cited Larkin 2012, 126).

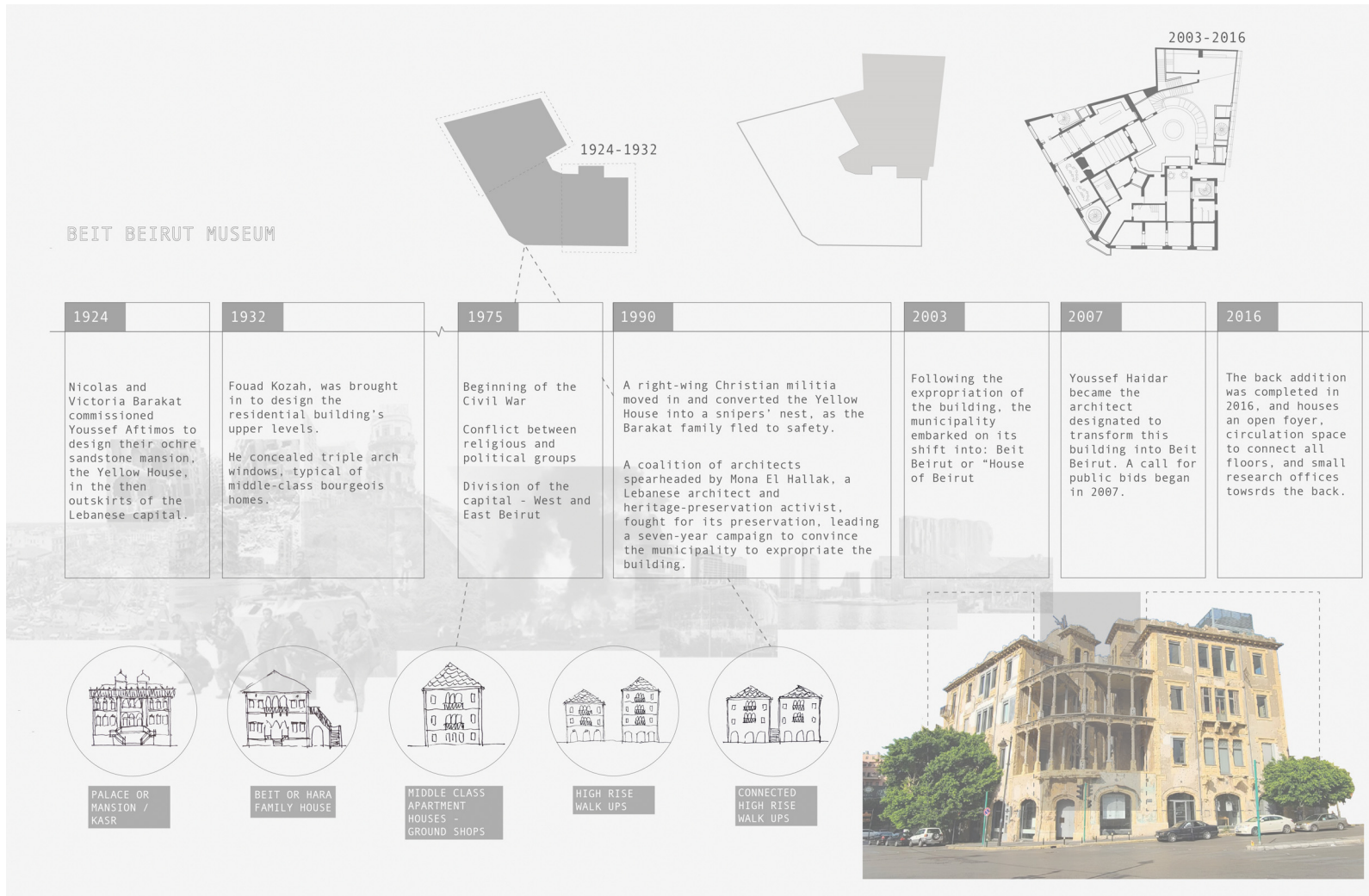


Figure 24: A timeline of Beit Beirut's history from the beginning of construction in 1924 to its current position today. History of the Museum of Beit Beirut, Lebanon (data from Mollard 2018)

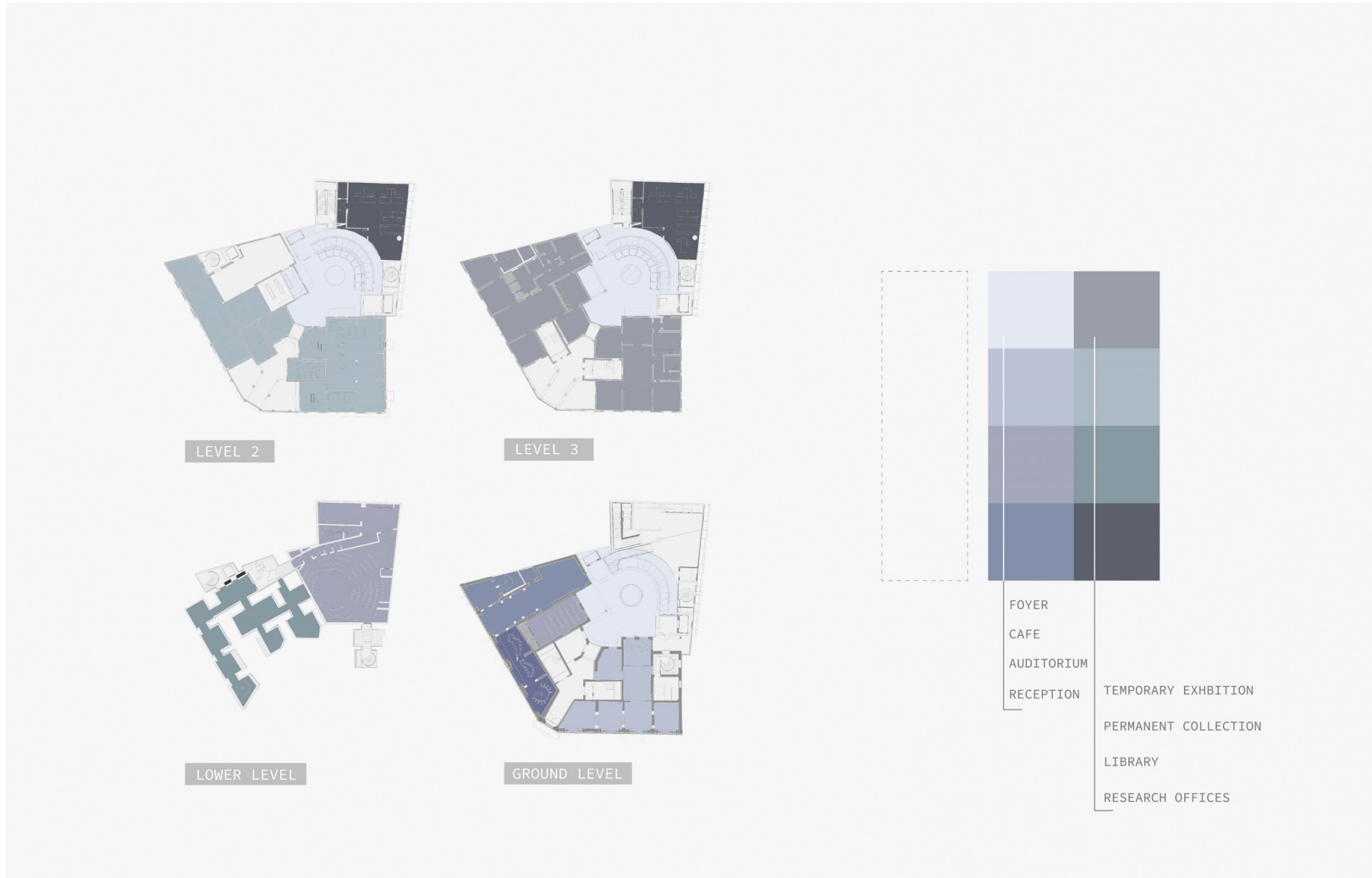


Figure 25: An analysis of the museum of Beit Beirrut's existing program and spaces.

Chapter 3: A New Direction

Reconstruction as a form of healing post trauma or experience is important to adapting to circumstances and this may be understood by means of approaches to healing post trauma as it relates to memory, rebuilding collective memory through physical reconstruction, and examining existing precedence regarding current reconstruction efforts in Beirut. Aseel Sawalha states that the “urban planning may be seen as a form of spatial domination and control of the ways communities construct their past and narrate their collective memories” (Sawalha 2010, 46). The act of reconstruction in new ways may support this formation of a new narration of peoples’ collective memories. Moving forward, points of focus become the idea of trauma, memory in the city, spolia or material integration into new spaces, and the idea of plurality to be considered in the future of the city. There is significance in acknowledging the past and its differences of perspectives or communities in new ways that serve to integrate ideas across the collective divide of Beirut, the “Green Line”.

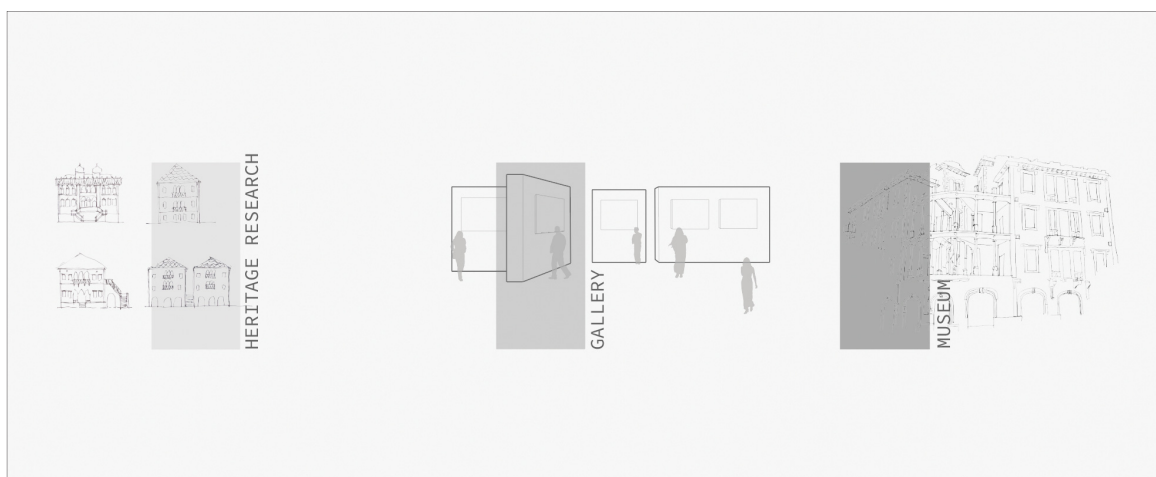


Figure 26: Visual diagram of programmatic spaces including heritage research spaces, art galleries, and museums to be referred to in figure 28.

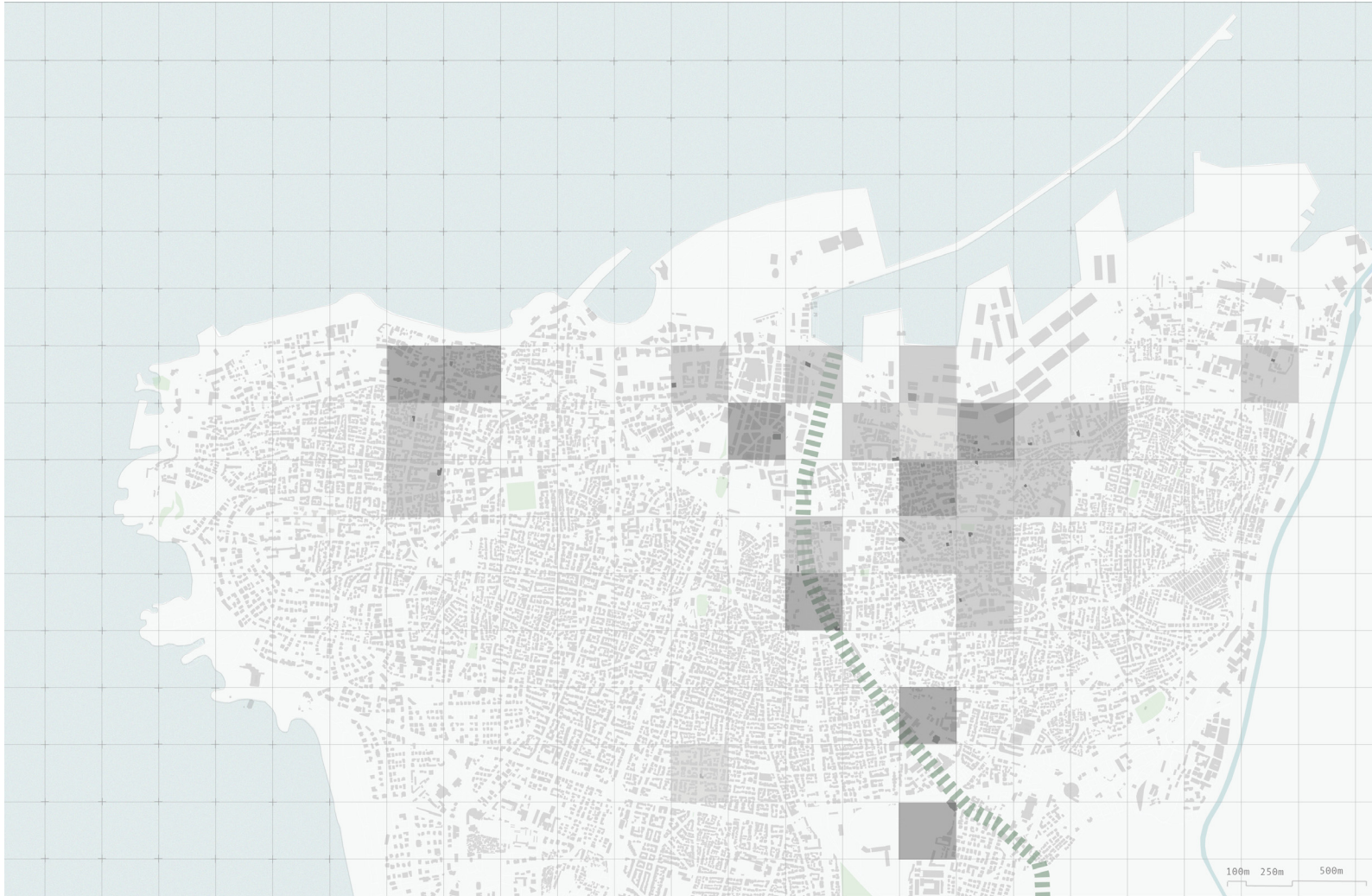


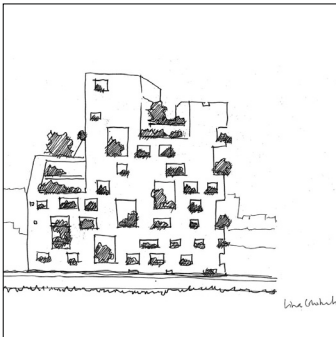
Figure 27: A map showcasing existing heritage research organizations, art galleries, and museums in Beirut, Lebanon.

3.1 Trauma

Along with this intention of reconstruction as a form of healing, the meaning of trauma is necessary to understand the extent of its effects. The Oxford dictionary defines trauma in psychology terms as “a mental condition caused by severe shock, especially when the harmful effects last for a long time” (*Oxford Learning Dictionaries* 2022). The APA Dictionary of Psychology further defines intergenerational trauma as “a phenomenon in which the descendants of a person who has experienced a terrifying event show adverse emotional and behavioral reactions to the event that are similar to those of the person himself or herself.” (APA 2022).

In the context of Lebanon, there are cycles of ongoing periods of trauma, whether that be the Civil War, the war of July 2006, or the Beirut explosion in 2020, and between those lie periods of reconstruction or action on improvement from such events. “Beirut’s reconstruction needs to be seen within broader historical cycles of destruction and reconstruction and the subsequent rebuilding and re-mapping of political and sectarian boundaries” (Charlesworth 2006, 57). Trauma and violent conflicts have become inevitable to such a place that geographically serves as this connector between different cultures. Andreas Huyssen states that “the focus on trauma is legitimate where nations or groups of people are trying to come to terms with a history of violence suffered or violence perpetuated” (Huyssen 2003, 9).

Woods understands that “architecture must learn to transform violence, even as violence knows how to transform architecture” (Woods 1997, 16). Such is reflected in Lina Ghotmeh’s “Stone Garden” (see figures 30-31) that



Figures 28-29:
Sketch photograph of Stone
Garden Housing - Beirut
(Ghotmeh 2020)



Figure 30: Explorations of Beirut's local architectural language in context of recognized or war-torn buildings. Photograph of Martyrs Square (Boulghourjian 2022). Photograph of war-torn building (Lebanese-Civil-War. n.d.)

was able to withstand much of the destruction as a result of Beirut's Port explosion in August 2020. In a similar approach, Craig Larkin states that "Beirut's recovery must inevitably involve an acceptance of contested pasts and a reimagining of shared futures, moving beyond the nostalgia for the city's cosmopolitan history to an everyday experience of social integration and civic participation" (Larkin 2010, 436).

Although challenging and difficult, this idea of reconstruction from trauma is part of the city's identity, the ways of the past inform a certain approach to future movement. The intent to overcome trauma through reconstruction as discussed by Charlesworth, Huysen, and Larkin are key supporting factors in this new approach of building Beirut's future that this thesis aims to present. These investigations will in turn serve as efforts to understanding how a city's urban

reconstruction can support the healing process and how to best approach these efforts.

3.2 Memory in the City

3.2.1 Collective Memory

Shifting towards a reflection on how memory ties into the individual and the community narrative, we may be able to address its impact on the post-war landscape of Beirut. Halbwachs views on the collective memory inform the basis of this approach to reconnecting communities around past experiences and trauma. He states that “it is in this sense that there still exists collective memory and social frameworks for memory; it is so to the degree that our individual thought places itself in these frameworks and participates in this memory that it is capable of the act of recollection” (Halbwachs 1992, 38). This approach to viewing the collective as a set of frameworks that carry themselves through the lens of different groups and perspectives of the past is that to which connects to the dynamics of reconstruction and reconciliation. These groups may come in the form of age demographics, cultural background, and religious background.

Through all of this, Halbwachs presents this interest in the possible reason for the collective feeling of the past through some positive light, whether through individual experience or the individual as part of the collective. He states “that faraway world where we remember that we suffered nevertheless exercises an incomprehensible attraction on the person who has survived it and who seems to think he has left there the best part of himself, which he tries to recapture. This is why, given a few exceptions, it is the case that the great majority of people more or less frequently are given to what

one might call nostalgia for the past” (Halbwachs 49). To further his thoughts on the past and nostalgia in this way, the different collective perspectives within present society may very well connect or immerse themselves in their own chosen perceptions or groups of the past. “Not only can we roam freely within these groups, going from one to another, but within each of them—even when we decide to linger with them in through—we will not encounter this feeling of human constraint in the same degree that we so strongly experience today” (Halbwachs 50). The individual in relation to this idea of frameworks of memory or differentiations of groups is constantly shifting within these perceptions or groups, forming this overlap between the individual and collective through various lenses.

3.2.2 Memory and History

Violence and trauma have inflicted themselves on the built environment and the city’s architecture. Aldo Rossi’s perspective is that destruction inflicted itself on a building does not mere it to become useless or an abandoned void, instead views the transformation into an impactful urban artifact that shares a strong “intensified visibility” (Rossi and Eisenmann 1966, 88). “The buildings—riddled with bullets, exposed by rocket-shaped gaps, and crumbling through dereliction and abandonment—that are the visible reminders of the past. These are the unintentional detritus of war, which continually thrusts the violent past back into the recovering present” (Larkin 2012, 108). Larkin discusses this connection between postmemory and memoryscapes: “postmemory is mediated and transformed through the mnemonic lenses of visual landscapes and oral narratives. Consideration is given to the dynamic production of ‘memoryscapes’—memories of violence localized in particular sites—and to



Figure 31: Photograph of war-torn building (Beirut 2019)

narrative constructions of the past implicated in the ongoing search for meaning, historical truth, and identity” (Larkin 2010, 615). The idea of postmemory and memoryscapes as it relates to trauma is significant in the representation and recovery of intergenerational trauma and reflections on designated sites of memory.

The importance of these sites is outlined in their relation to the visual built environment, in a way very much connected to Pierre Nora’s “lieux de memoire” as previously mentioned. Memory and history’s integration into the recognized monuments of war or sites of memory are carried in the identity of these spaces. Nora’s “lieux de memoire” addresses the significance of these places of memory as contributing to the urban fabric of the city. He states that “memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past” (Nora 1989, 8). Nora’s views on these sites of memory aligns with Larkin’s description of memoryscapes and their connection to their history and narratives. Maurice Halbwachs also differentiates memory and history in “that there are as many memories as there are groups, that memory is by nature multiple and yet specific; collective, plural, yet individual. History, on the other hand, belongs to everyone and to no one, whence its claim to universal authority. Memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images and objects; history binds itself strictly to temporal continuities” (Nora 1989, 9).

“The space we occupy, work in, dwell in, and otherwise live in, according to French intellectual Henri Lefebvre, is essentially produced by social processes and practices” (Rowe 1997, 129). Samir Khalaf expands upon these ideas of spaces of memory in the essay *Socio-Economic*

Framework and places importance on urbanists in the city's movement forward. This approach outlines benefits of the public's effort in contributing to the transformation of 'spaces' into 'places' (Rowe and Sarkis 1998, 142). Khalaf discusses the inaccessibility of the city's open institutions and serves to address "this ongoing interplay between collective memory or obsession with 'heritage', the reassertion of space, and the forging of new cultural identities (Rowe and Sarkis 1998, 143). Khalaf shares views that inform a new approach to sites of memory and institutions within the city that need a sense of connection to the public. This interaction of spaces needs to be further integrated to the public realm in order to form collective places of memory within the city and forms the basis of reference of this thesis.

Reflecting on Larkin's points of memoryscapes and Nora's "lieux de memoire", there is clear connection to the investigation regarding memory in the city of Beirut. These sites of memory become significant points in the investigation of rebuilding collective memory and connecting the past and the future. They serve as charged spaces of opportunity. Connecting these sites of memory within Beirut at the urban scale through ideas of community and collective memory becomes an important point to understand how these spaces may become further integrated into the discourse of community rebuilding.

3.2.3 Solidere's Central District

Through considering the ideas that Solidere presents on preservation that are important to the idea of reconstruction in Beirut, there is a lack of honouring the intended use of spaces and some form of erasure on the sense of place, and what Larkin describes as having "razed the slate clean,

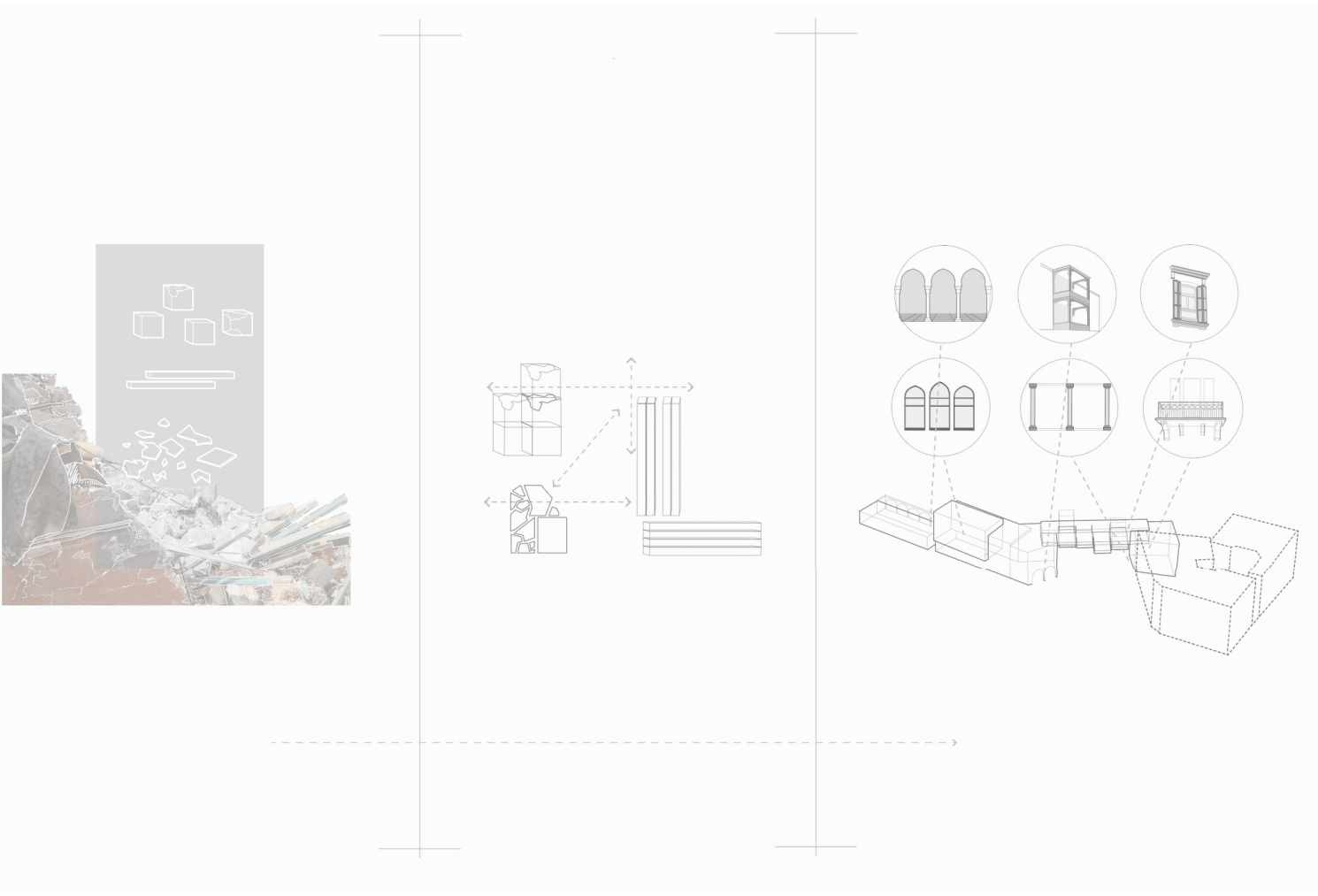


Figure 32: A diagram around the integration of spolia or unused materials into new spaces and through material's use in familiar architectural elements of the region.

creating a virtual tabula rasa at the heart of the city” (Larkin 2012, 129). Larkin compares the division of the “Green Line” to what Solidere has developed into another equally demarcating red line, disconnecting the downtown from the rest of the capital (Larkin 2012, 101). “The reconstruction plans currently being implemented fail to address the persistent religious and socioeconomic tensions still dividing the physical, intellectual, ethnic and emotional terrain of Lebanese society” (Charlesworth 2006, 53). As previously mentioned, Charlesworth presents a new perspective in redeveloping Beirut under the “City as Spine” approach (Charlesworth 2006, 55). Located along the void of what was once the Green Line, the “spine” approach to redeveloping sites and preserving voids allows for more opportunity and continuous sites of focus for redevelopment to strengthen collective memory and connect neighbourhoods along this void. The effort of restoration and preservation of buildings is an important element to the strengthening of the city’s urban fabric, yet in the case of Solidere, there is a disconnect in the essence of the buildings.

In examining sites along the void of the “Green Line”, there may be differences in program and ways of strengthening and connecting differences (refer to figure 36).

Understanding sites along the “Green Line” including Martyrs Square, the Egg or Dome, Beit Beirut Museum, Beirut’s Museum of Art as significant places of memory that may become key moments in further connecting this divide within the city is significant in Beirut’s reconstruction through this gradual approach (refer to figure 36).

These sites of potential exploration as part of the “City as Spine” approach to reconstruction and rebuilding the city’s

collective memory may connect to the intention of Nora's "lieux de memoire" in how they have become designated moments of commemoration or importance to maintaining memory of the past (Nora 1989, 12).

3.3 Spolia

The material qualities in reconstruction of these spaces of memory within the region may connect to the principles of spolia. "The term is used in archaeology and art history. It is derived from Latin 'spolium' (plural: 'spolia'), meaning "spoils" (as in 'spoils of war'). What it describes is simply the reuse of elements from earlier buildings in more recent ones, most typically the reuse of Greek or Roman architectural sculpture in Early Christian or medieval structures" (Hall 2013).

Brandenburg addresses more of the practical use of spolia within this context, and that it was more likely gathered from already destroyed buildings. Elements of a salvageable building implies neglect on the values of the materials (Brandenburg 2011, 57). Kinney shares thoughts on the noble intention of spolia and its use within ideological purposes. The concept carries with it a shift in redefinition the material or object that is defined as spolia (Kinney 2011, 2–5). Aldo Rossi's views on the redefinition of destroyed buildings carry significance here, in that his interpretation of the buildings aligns in the material intention of spolia.

The intentions of spolia can also stem from a more historical point of view, where it has a positive association and used as a form of translation or innovation (Hanssen 2003, 7–9). Lowenthal contributes to these ideas in that the experiential qualities of historical materials can be transmitted from the original construction to the physical relocation of some

components into a different architectural ensemble, serving as 'essential bridges between then and now' (Lowenthal 1985).

The re-integration of previously used materials into new spaces becomes the point of relation between past and future, and this understanding of spolia connects directly to rebuilding Beirut's collective memory. Brandenburg and Kinney's views on the practical use and material identity surrounding this concept serve as a significant basis within the considerations of this thesis.

3.4 Plurality

Various approaches to plurality of spaces inform its ways of integration into architecture. One on hand, Seyla Benhabib "yearns for a public discourse that is not structured, that does not mark the speaker" (Sarkis 1997, 168) while Kevin Lynch and John Rawls "prefer a more formal and restrained space: . . . the civic plaza located between ethnically different neighbourhoods" (Sarkis 1997, 166).

Lebanese architect Hashim Sarkis states that "in order to radicalize the pluralist conception of contemporary society, that is, in order to acknowledge the conceptions of what is right, what is good, and what is of value, will remain in contention, "pluralism", as Chantal Mouffe insists, "must also be distinguished from the postmodern conception of the fragmentation of the social" (Rowe and Sarkis 1998, 155). Sarkis continues a direction through plurality in architecture and its importance as represented in the urban building scale, as well as the individual human scale. He states that: "through due process, what is also evolving, both in the city centre and elsewhere, is a debate

about the need to preserve the urban configuration of neighbourhoods, as in the case of Gemmayzeh described by Samir Khalaf, and not just the individual buildings. This provides an interpretation of the issue of preservation that is better linked to the impact of old buildings on their inhabitants, rather than in terms of architectural merit” (Sarkis 1997, 282). In terms of bringing these ideas into the context of Beirut, he presents these ideas in his text in “Space for Recognition: On the Design of Public Space in a Multicultural Society” and brings forward ideas to be implemented in pluralistic spaces and community. Sarkis discusses the integration of a common ground between communities, the integration of spatial commonalities between groups, a clear representation of diversity, and providing public accessibility to space (Sarkis 1997, 159–160). Sarkis’ breakdown of plurality in architecture and the principles he understands to be significant in the design of such spaces directly relate to connecting spaces within a city’s future reconstruction.

In a similar capacity, Kevin Lynch identifies components that make up people’s movement in the city: districts, edges, paths, nodes and landmarks in his book *The Image of the City* (Lynch 1960). His understanding of these edges strongly demarcate ethnic and class districts. “The clearer the image of the city, the more citizens were able to understand their placement with respect to other citizens” (Sarkis 1997, 159). Khalaf expands on this similar idea, that the role of urbanists to create “opportunities for disengaged groups to reclaim their right to be engaged in redefining their collective memory and stewardship over the spaces they inhabit” (Rowe and Sarkis 1998, 162). He

suggests that urbanists have to design “weak borders” and defines them as spaces that should be made malleable and open to potential shifts and alterations (Rowe and Sarkis 1998, 162). There is a need to address these edges or borders of divisions to form clearer understanding of the city and achieve more integrated spaces.

Within the context of Beirut, the division among groups at the city scale has informed how people connect to their communities and their past. Through the integration and representations of diversity between Western Muslims and Eastern Christian parts of the city and around a point of enriching the past into the future of the city, there may be opportunity for connection and rebuilding of collective memory around shared public spaces and sites of memory. This thesis serves as a point to understand how such different communities can integrate around ideas of the past in new shared spaces.

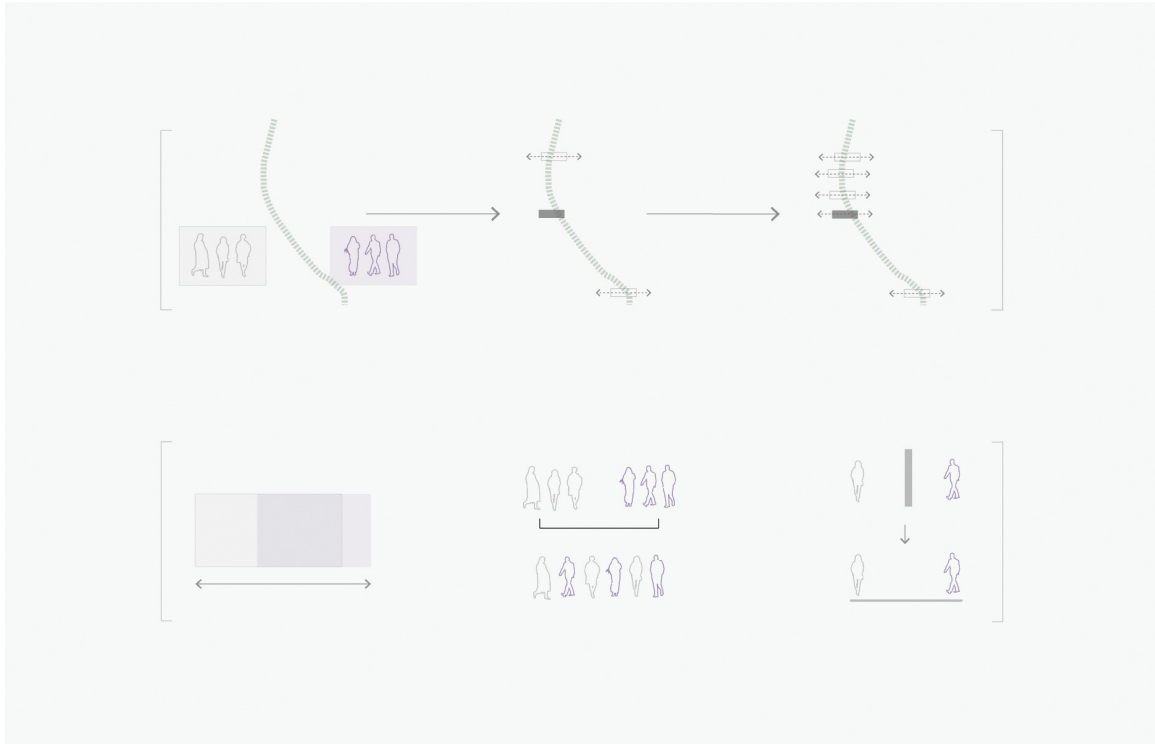


Figure 33: A breakdown of Sarkis' components to plurality in space in relation to its integration into the greater context of strengthening Beirut's "Green Line" void.

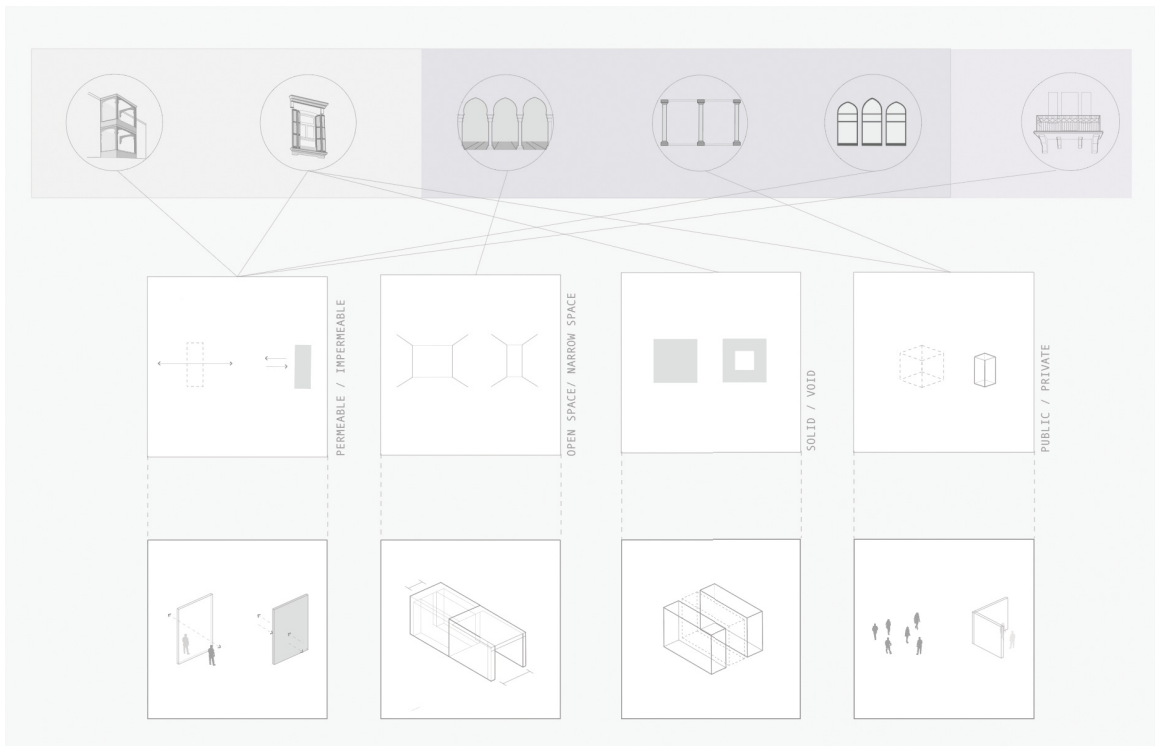


Figure 34: Connections between Beirut's local architectural language and its association with spatial characteristics that are to be further considered.

Chapter 4: Concepts through Architecture

Moving forward, we may start breaking down ideas of other concepts to Beirut's reconstruction and elements of reconstruction to better capture and develop a new approach to this process. In doing so, we may consider Solidere's principles of reconstructing Beirut's Central District post-civil war, points from some of Beirut's sites of memory and commemoration and how they support the city's collective memory, and lastly, analysing effective ways of reconstructing or filling voids of local architectural language through material forms in the urban context.

4.1 Redefining the "Spine"

The "Green Line", a significant point established during the Civil War, formed a clear divide among the Beirut population. Majority Muslims and Christians polarized to either end of the line, the West and East areas respectively. As previously mentioned, Charlesworth shares the approach of reconstruction within Beirut as needing to be addressed along this "Spine".

In terms of redefining the "Spine", beginning to blur the boundaries between the divided parts of the city through a form of architecture to provide some middle ground may be a useful approach to be investigated. Moments of redefining the "Spine" stem from explorations of sites where rebuilding collective memory of the past is needed to reconnect across the dividing boundary. Through gradual reconnection and reconstruction of sites along the "Green Line", this dividing boundary continuously begins to blur and softens the previous point of division.

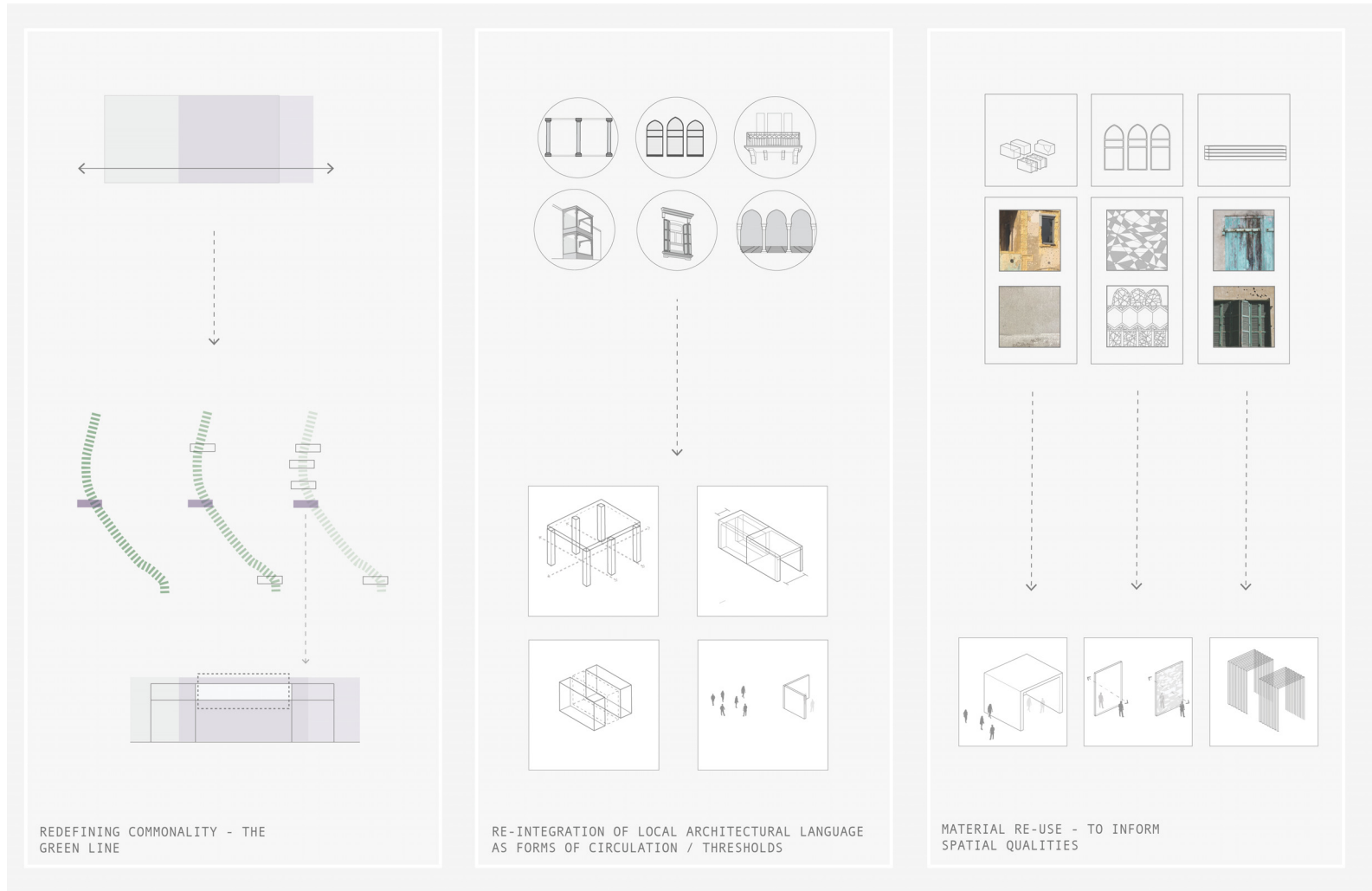


Figure 35: Diagram highlighting concepts in architecture that are intended to be taken forward into the design process of the proposed intervention.

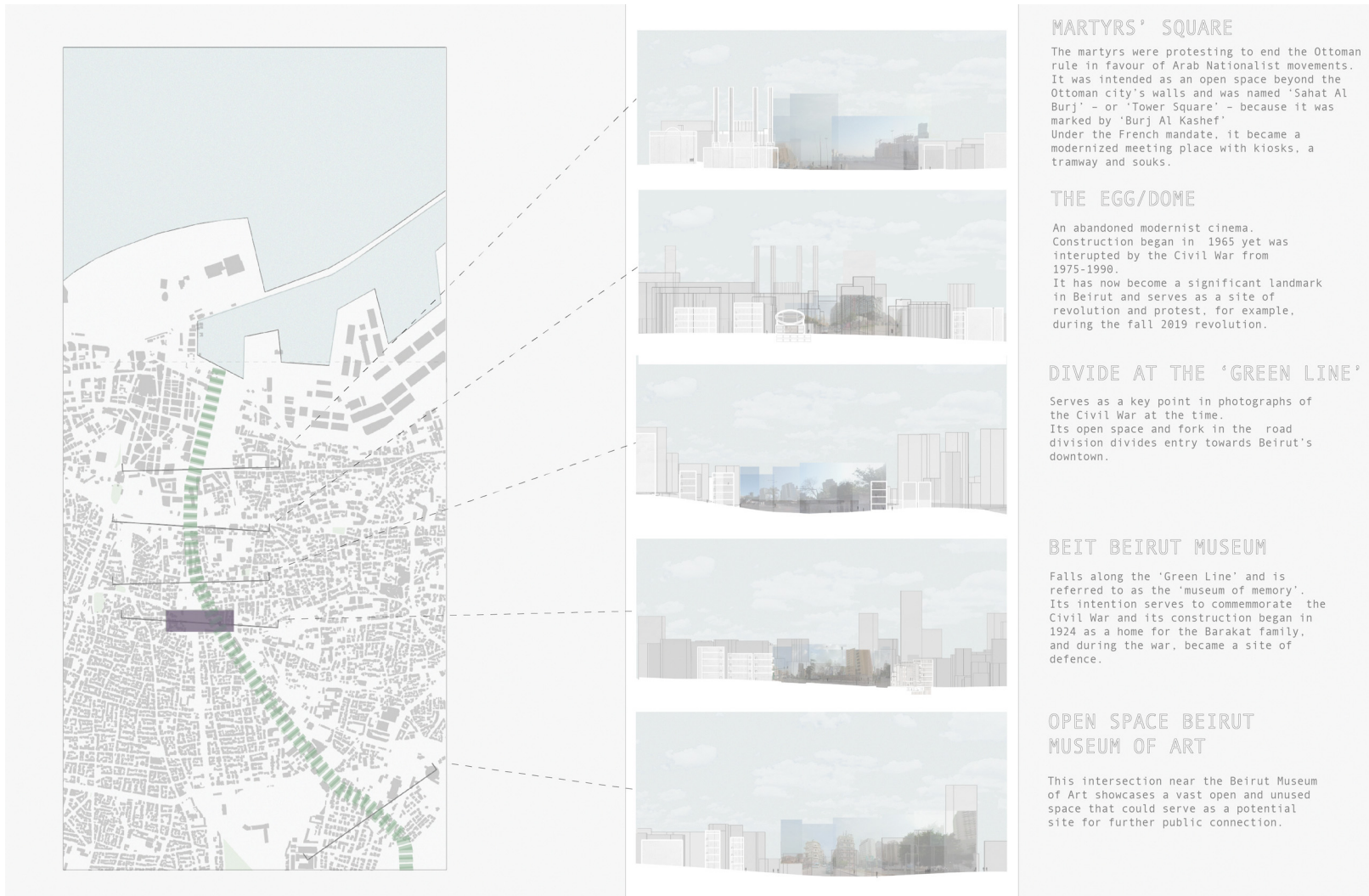


Figure 36: A representation of Charlesworth's "City as Spine" approach within the context of Beirut, where an extension of design interventions may be applied along the "Green Line".

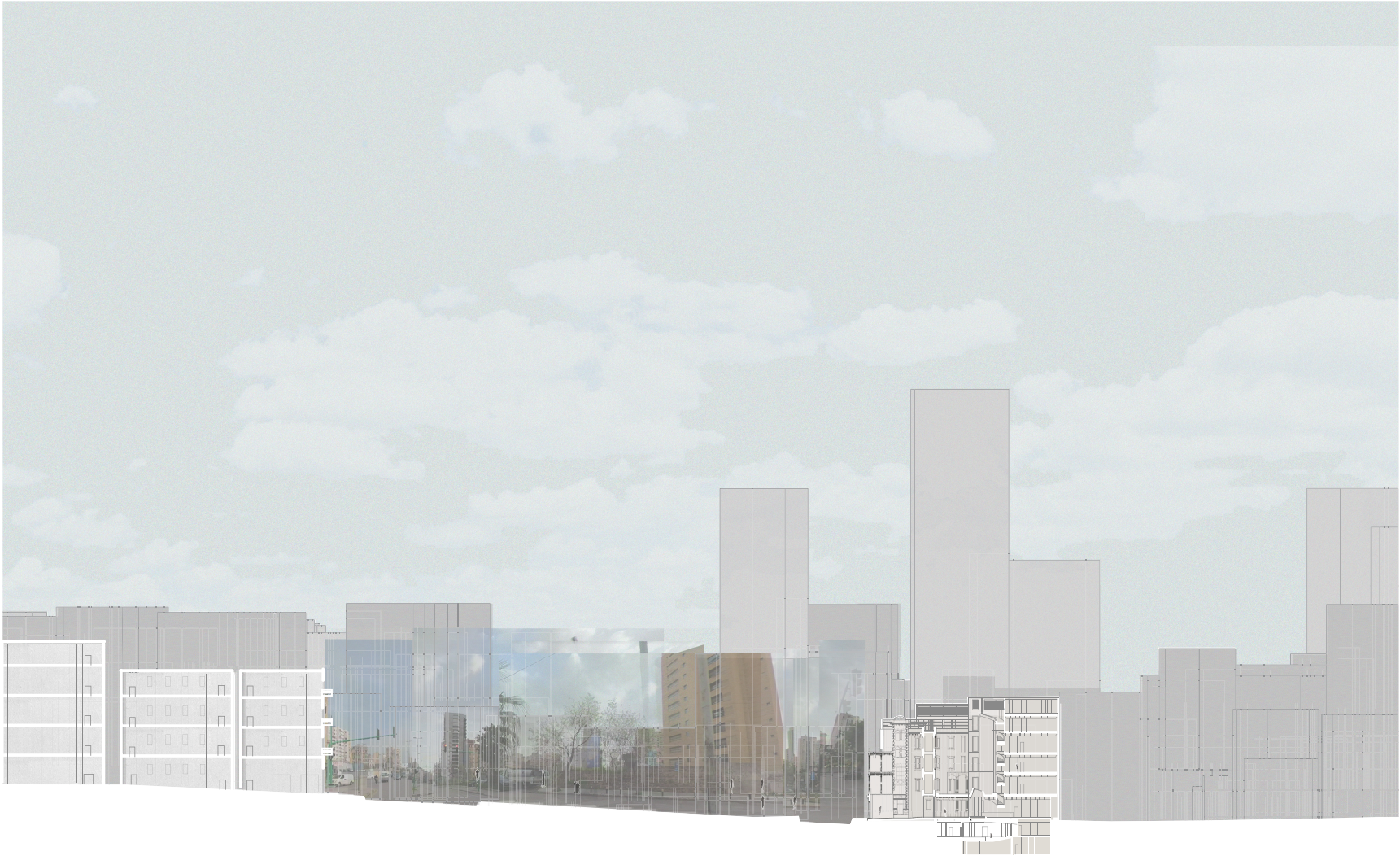


Figure 37: A closer look at a section through the intended site for this thesis near Beit Beirut Museum.

4.2 Sites of Memory

Tying in this idea of the “Spine” to sites of memory, we can begin to analyse ways in which sites of memory may be effective and what makes them significant to their surrounding space in their strengthening of the collective memory. By addressing new ways in which these sites of memory may be used, they may become key components to the city’s public space that become accessible spaces of interaction and commemoration. In the case of Beirut, this may be those that are divided along the city’s Eastern and Western division.

Samir Khalaf expands upon these ideas in his essay “Socio-Economic framework” in *Projecting Beirut*. The importance of urbanists in the city’s movement forward is shared in this approach that the public be a part of the transformation ‘spaces’ into ‘places’ (Rowe and Sarkis, 1998, 142). Khalaf discusses the inaccessibility of the city’s open institutions and serves to address “this ongoing interplay between collective memory or obsession with ‘heritage’, the reassertion of space, and the forging of new cultural identities (Rowe and Sarkis 1998, 143).

Although the idea of war-torn buildings with bullet holes around the city serve as a reminder of the trauma (Larkin 2012, 108), there may be a way to bring some form of reconciliation and connection through the history of the war to rebuild community and sense of collective memory. Historian Robert Bevan describes in his work *The Destruction of Memory* the differences between the ‘intentional’ and ‘unintentional’ monuments of war, the first being commemorative spaces while the latter are buildings “by virtue of their history and the identification of their builders

or users have with them, have had meaning thrust upon them” (Bevan 2006, 14). By shifting sites of memory from unintentional monuments of war to serve more intentional purpose within the public realm, they may serve as stronger connections to rebuild collective memory within the city.

Beit Beirut Museum may serve as one example of focus, as it lies along the “Green Line”, and is an intended site of commemoration of the Civil War. The way Beit Beirut is currently used, there is a lack of connection and integrating along the “Green Line” and its program only serves those who physically enter the walls of the building.

As Bradburne states, “the museum becomes a site for learning new skills of public interaction, skills that are needed more than ever in a world that has largely squeezed out public space and replaced it with private individual

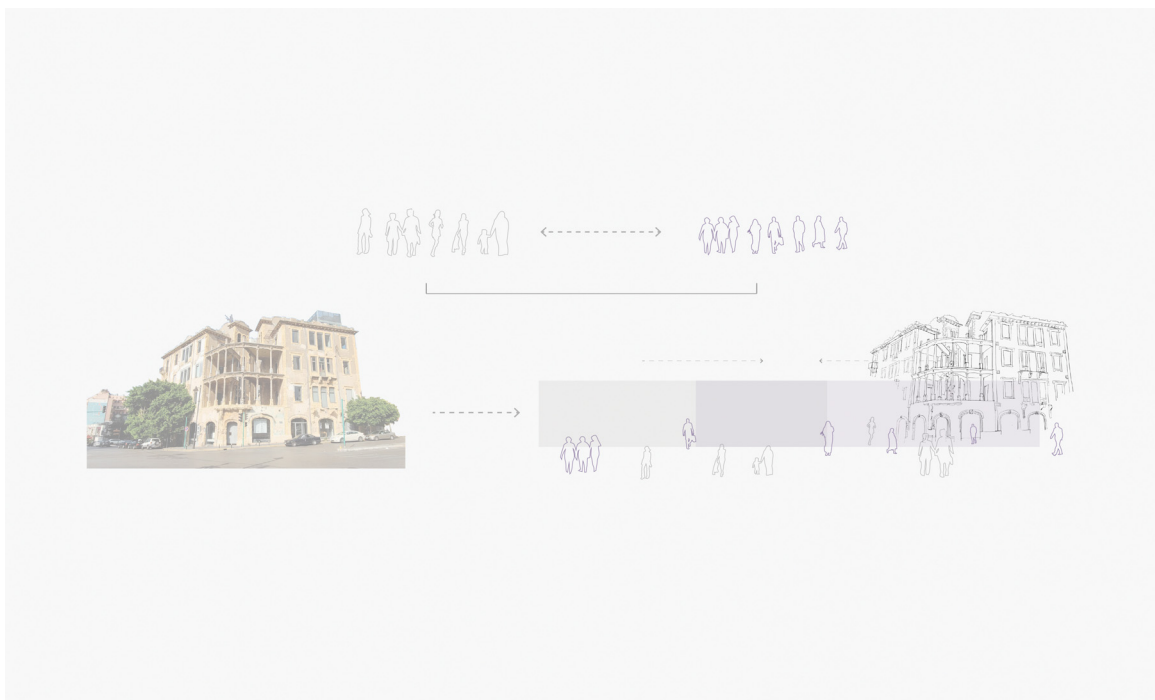


Figure 38: A visual supporting Khalaf's ideas on strengthening significant sites within a city into places through the engagement of the public.

encounters” (Bradburne 1999, 18). In shifting the intention and reasserting Beit Beirut as a museum, an expansion of program and use may need to come forward where the interior space expands into a place, supporting the shift into the public realm and allowing accessibility in all directions. By integrating the history of the site into an active moment of memory at a more public scale, this shift may be possible along the void of the “Green Line” (Bradburne 1999, 19).

The approach is to therefore integrate Beit Beirut into the public realm to further strengthen its connection to memory and place within the city.

4.3 Material Integration

Along with the intention of reconstruction of preservation of spaces and voids, there is importance in determining new ways of strengthening collective memory and future identity of the city. Influences that have informed the local architectural language of the region have formed this layering of architectural elements and cultures presented throughout the country’s-built environment (Nardella and Abbas n.d., 2). Examples of known buildings around the city that capture these ideas include the Rose House, Beit Beirut Museum, and Sursock Museum (refer to figure 17).

Expanding upon this view of reconstruction, existing materials and architectural elements may be brought into new forms or extensions of memory sites to further support rebuilding collective memory of the city.

Considering spolia as a concept to shifting and reusing materials in the reconstruction of built spaces, the material form that is taken to rebuild elements from the region’s local architecture is an important part to shape the individual

experience of such spaces. This connection to the individual experience and memory has a clear relation to visual records that serve as connections to our experiences and history, in a similar way to Lefebvre description of the lived space of the city (Hansen 2003).

Taking this form of material integration into the rebuilding of spaces, the past trauma may be reconfigured in new forms of the built environment. As previously mentioned, this reconfigured analysis of the collage of architectural language in the built form may also manifest in the material components of these forms. In this shift or relocation of these materials in forming architectural components common to the region, a focus on the intention of these spaces is necessary. The quality of spatial conditions can be addressed through how its materiality and spolia is being carried in this manner is simply in spolia's traditional definition (Kalakoski and Huuhka 2017, 12).

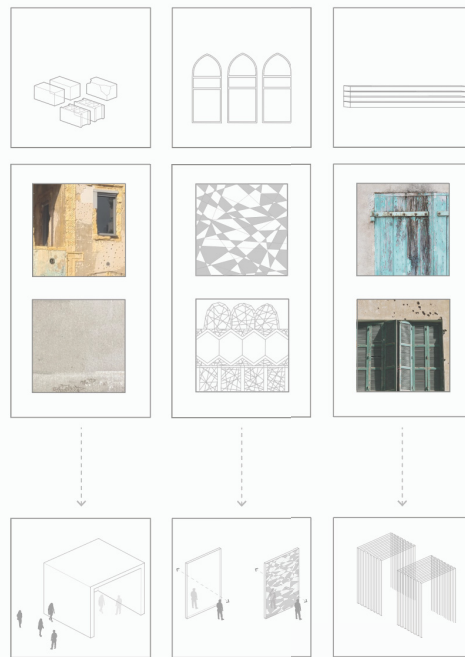


Figure 39: A breakdown of existing common material in Beirut and how they are used, in direct connection to new ways of using abandoned materials within the city.

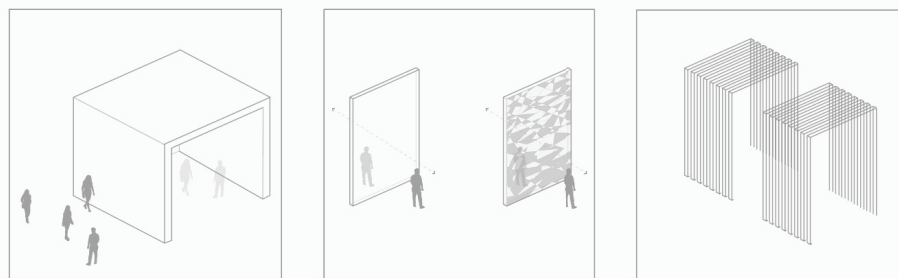


Figure 40: A closer look at principles to consider in the design of new spaces within the city to strengthen this connection between the past and the future.

Chapter 5: Site of Beit Beirut

5.1 The Neighbourhood

Bringing these ideas into site, the connection of Beit Beirut Museum towards an extension beyond the void of the “Green Line” and integrating this site of memory into the public realm will serve a focus point for this thesis. Although, in review of the “City as Spine” approach, further connections may be reviewed along other points of the “Green Line” based on their intended programs that may better serve those spaces (refer to figure 36).

The site for this thesis is nearby to main roadways including Damascus Road and Independence Road that serve as voids within the space. Beit Beirut’s program may be expanded across Damascus Road to an unused block to reconnect this site of memory to the public (refer to figures 41, 44).

5.2 The Communities

The space falls between neighbouring communities, Christian Achrafieh and Muslim Bachoura and Ras El-Nabaa areas. Although these spaces connected by roadways are near to one another, the history of the site informs spatial use at the individual and community level. As an active point of violence during the Civil War and a space of disconnection, the area has become a point of continuous vehicular movement with little other programmatic intention. (refer to figure 41).

Hayat and Wafa are examples of individuals who live and function around these two communities. They carry with them their own experience of the war and divisions. Each

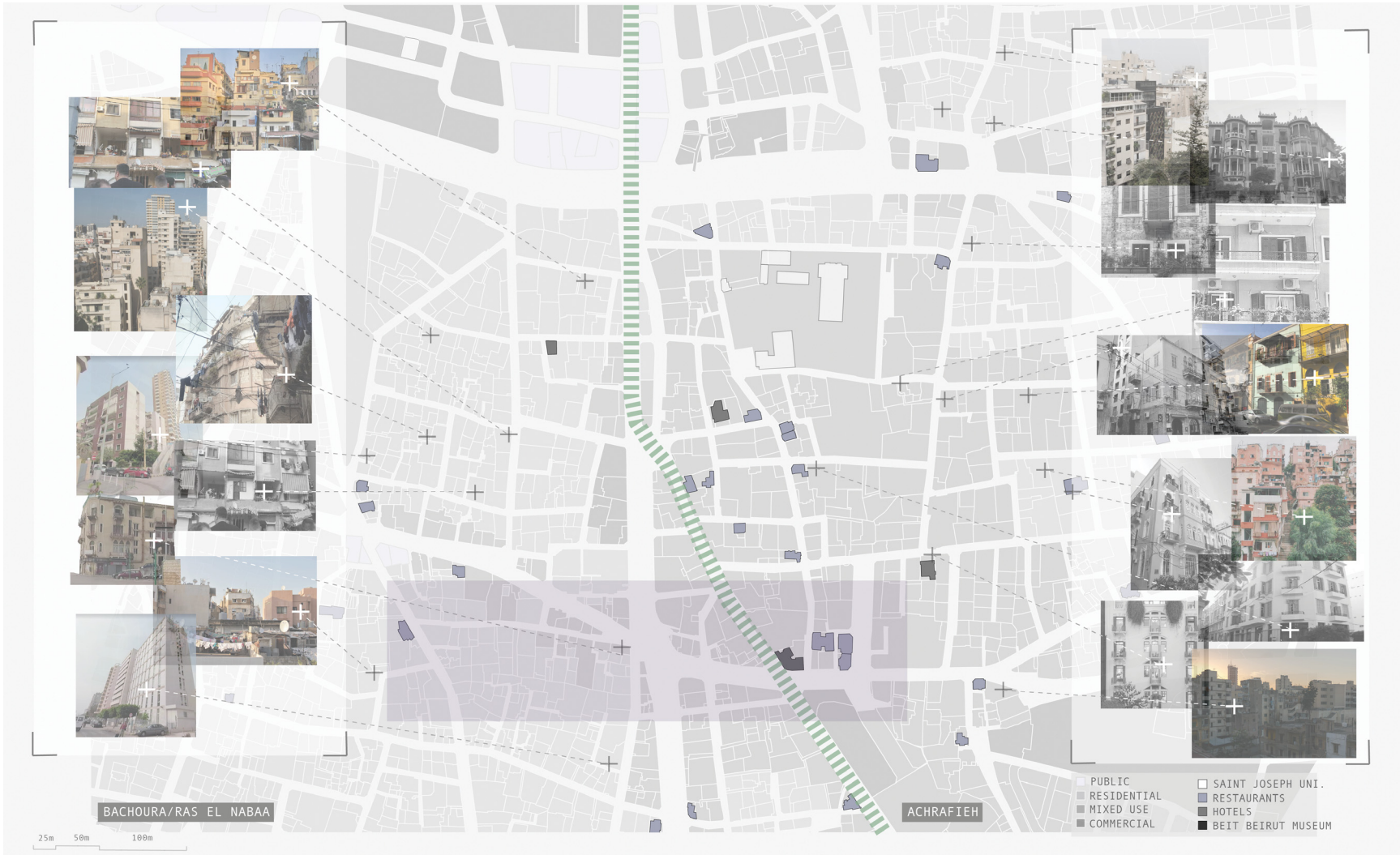


Figure 41: Map of the edge between Ras El-Nabaa and Achrafieh neighbourhoods in Beirut, showcasing the context, spaces and buildings within these neighbourhoods.

living separate lives with little social interaction or movement beyond the point of the “Green Line” crossing over to the neighbouring community. Hayat is a local of the Nabaa neighbourhood and works for an organization supporting refugees. She views the divide as a point of division that no longer serves the identity of the people, and that the integration of communities needs to happen to honour the region’s cultural wealth. Wafa lives in Achrafieh and works at a security company. She views the perception of war and division as elements holding back from the future development of the city and that change is needed to honour the past (refer to figure 42).

During the war, the neighbourhoods of Bachoura and parts of Ras El Nabaa proximity to the demarcation line became fatal to the communities that fled and abandoned their homes for safety. “Bachoura has remained, for the most part, intact; or one should say, appearing as a war-torn zone. Some buildings were turned into workers’ housing, providing them with one-room apartments or larger, but over-crowded ones” (Levesque 2019). Although, the neighbourhood is not vacated, despite some of its empty buildings, it is densely inhabited with people over various ages who use the space in a variety of ways.

The point between the neighbouring communities of Bachoura, Ras El Nabaa and Achrafieh along Damascus Road once occupied a variety of souks or markets. Although Achrafieh encompasses many smaller neighbourhoods, its connection to the arts and strong mixture of commercial and residential spaces within its narrow streets and many French and Ottoman homes, quaint cafes, restaurants and shops (Doyle 2012, 171).

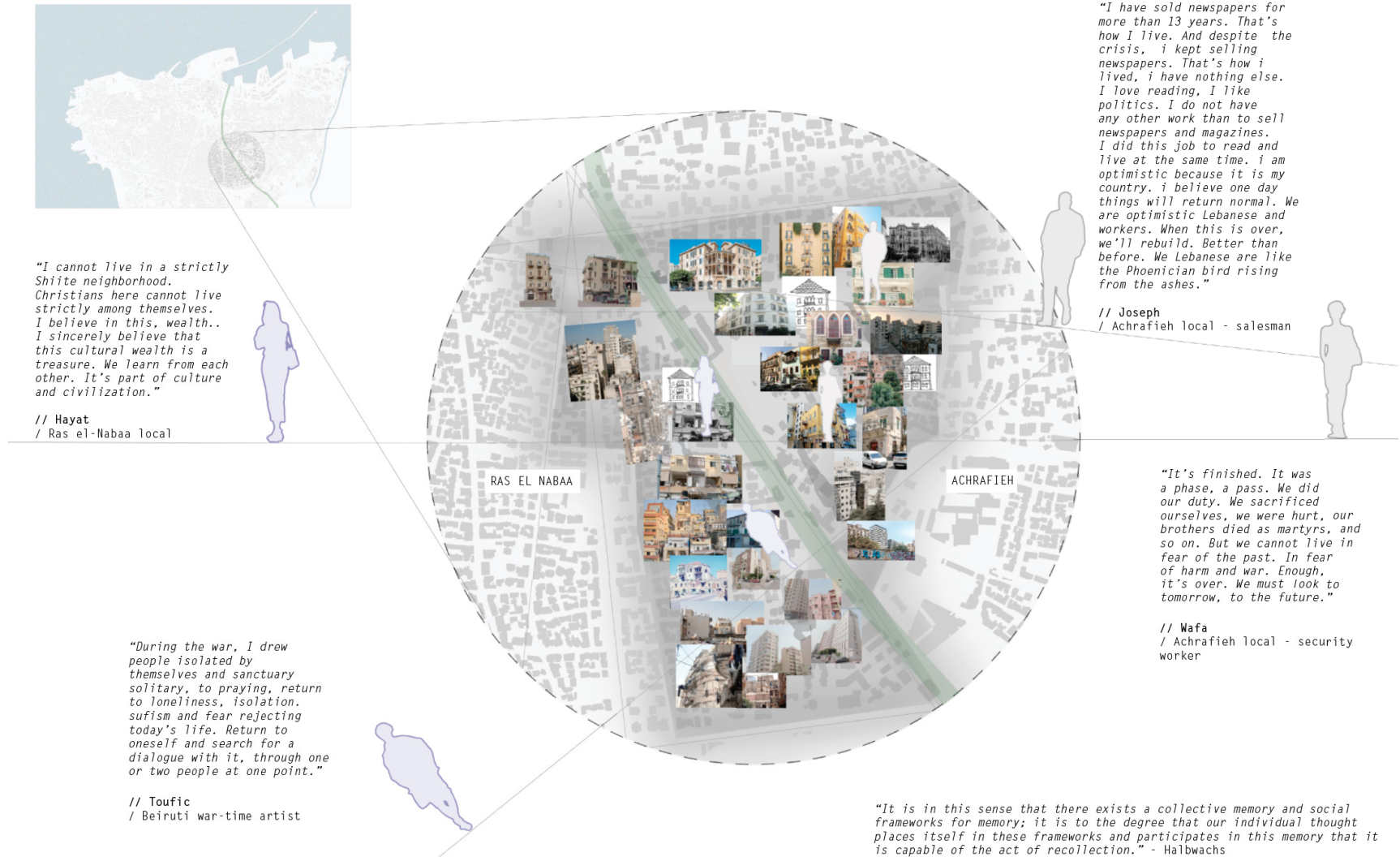


Figure 42: Map of the edge between Ras El-Nabaa and Achrafieh neighbourhoods in Beirut, highlighting different personal perspectives of the war.

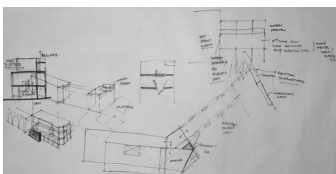
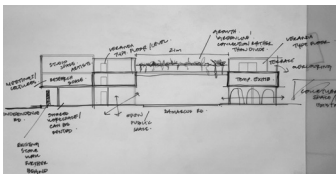
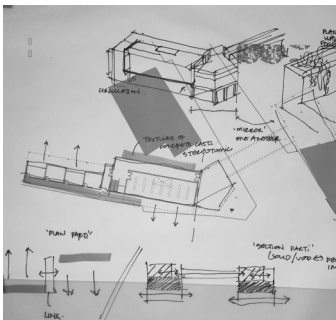
Chapter 6: Designing the Addition

6.1 The Addition

By expanding upon the existing Beit Beirut Museum to extend over what was once the “Green Line” demarcation line to take on the opposite side of Damascus Road to form more integration into public space, this site may serve as a catalyst for various future sites along the line following Charlesworth’s “City as Spine” approach to reconstruction.

Beit Beirut becomes an anchor point to this design thesis and the central moment of other potential sites along the “Green Line”. Investigating this museum as a case study to understand what exists in terms of program and what voids there are in its connecting to the public realm of the city, has directed the process on exploring ways the museum may better connect to the urban fabric of the city.

In the case of this thesis, the program becomes integrated into this particular ‘museum of memory’. The existing museum serves spaces including permanent exhibitions, some temporary exhibitions, small research offices, a café and seating space, a library and database, and a large auditorium space for gatherings. With the purpose of connecting the city, an extended program to this museum may serve the public realm and community at large through the integration of outdoor public space, studio spaces, small individual workspaces, a larger social café, a large research workspace and small lecture spaces to integrate the community of local researchers and artists to the cultural hub of the museum and through connecting the surrounding communities. The intention is to better serve the community and integrate work around the arts and heritage research



Figures 43-45: Design process sketches through parti and section

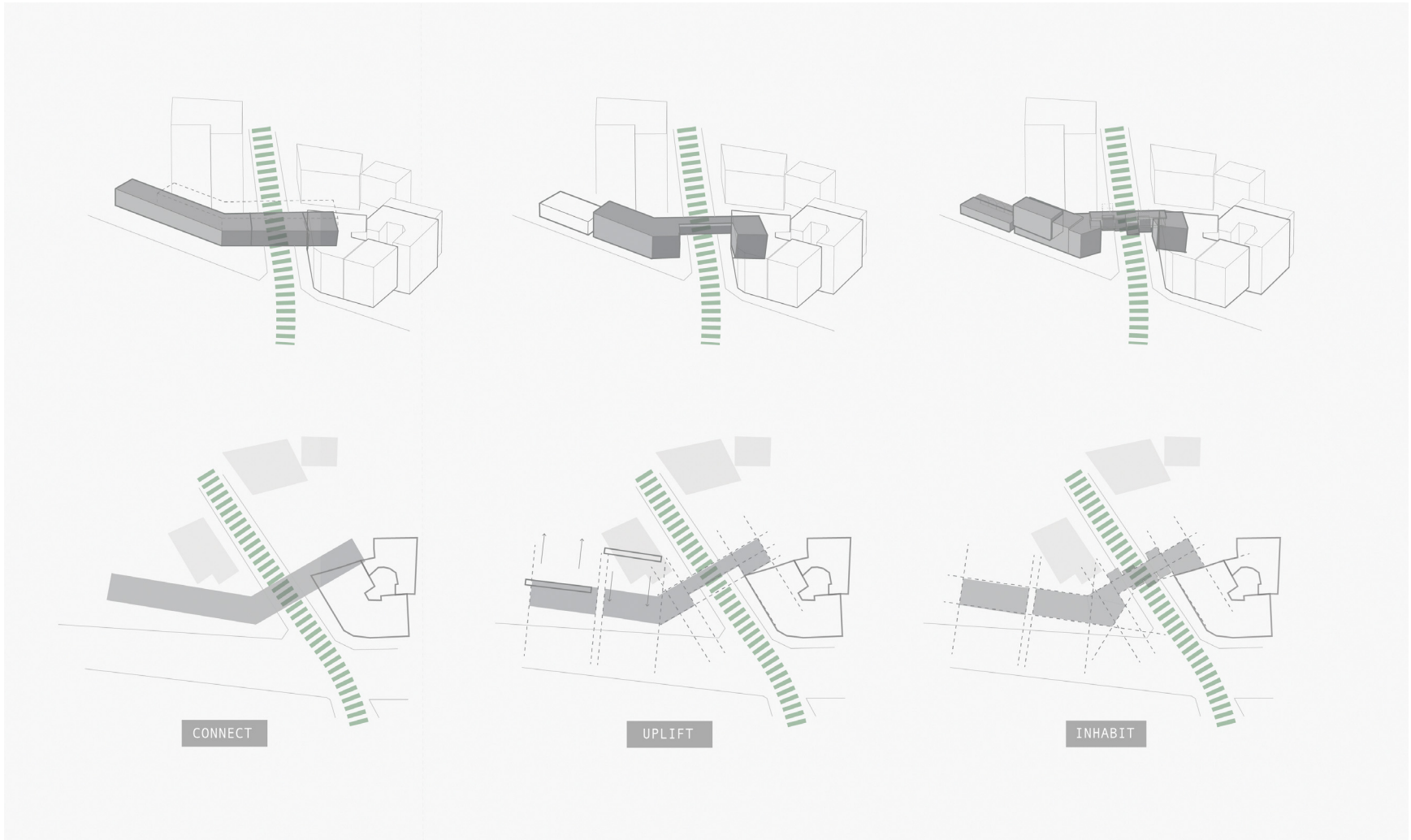


Figure 46: A diagram of the breakdown towards the building form of this thesis project, an extension of Beit Beirut.



Figure 47: A breakdown of the site and building extension in relation to Beit Beirut. There are three levels to the addition, ground level, second level in the middle of the image, and third level towards the top that encompasses a bridge, connecting both parts of the addition together and towards the third level of the museum.

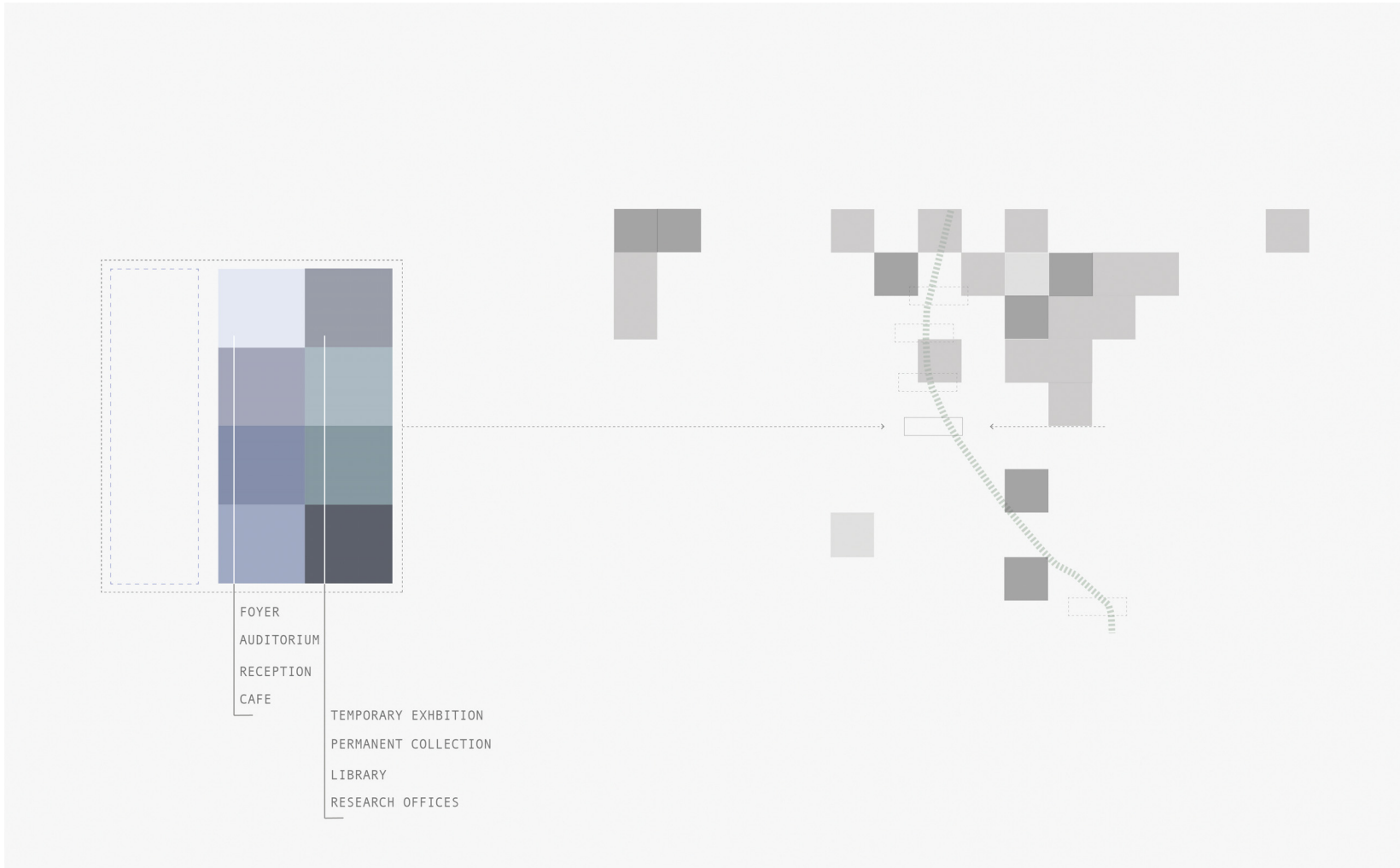


Figure 48: A visual to highlight the need to integrate the museum and the extension's additional program into the broader context of Beirut to further link its existing spaces of heritage research, art galleries, and museums.

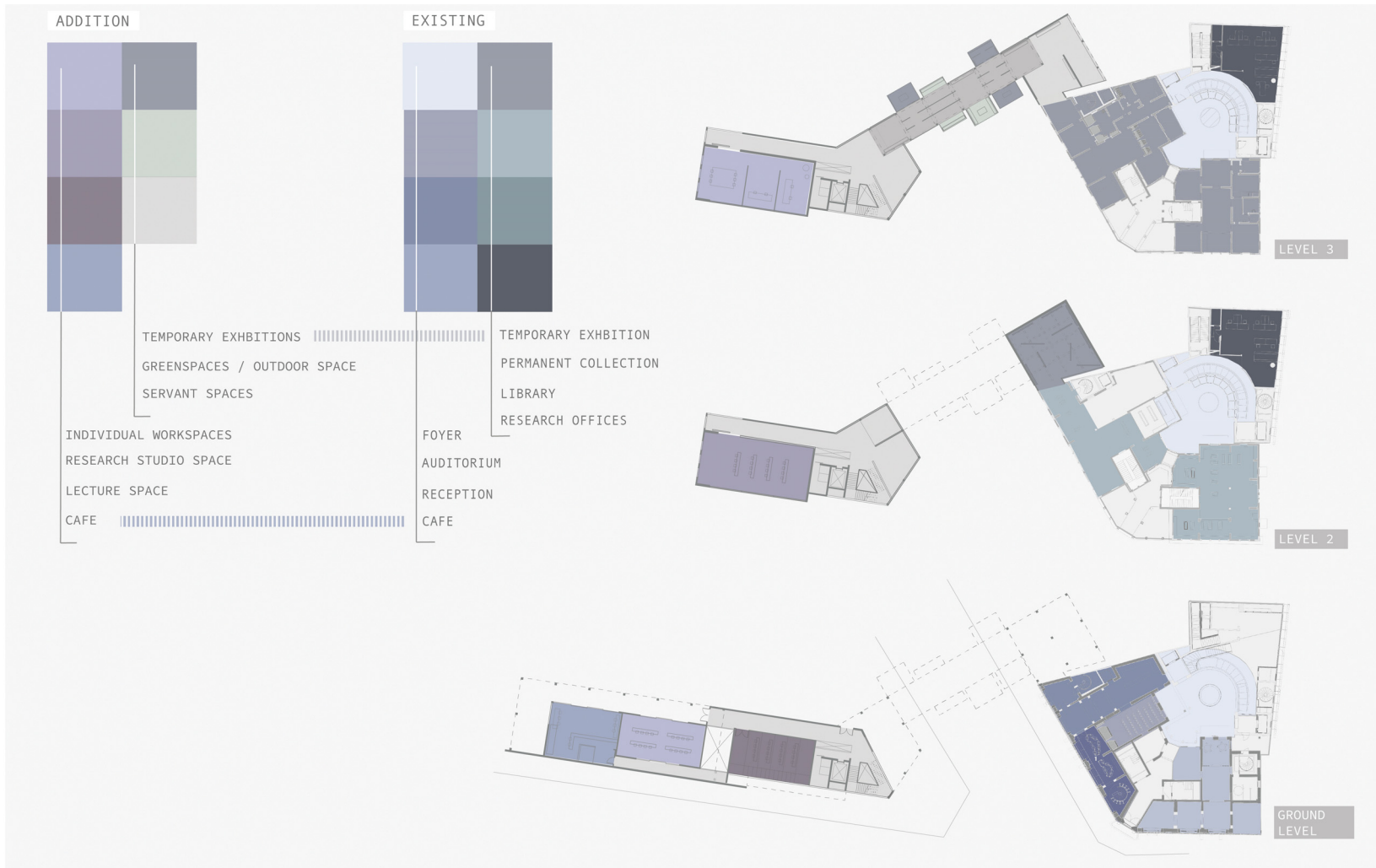


Figure 49: A breakdown of the additional program that the proposed extension will serve in relation to Beit Beirut's existing program and spaces.

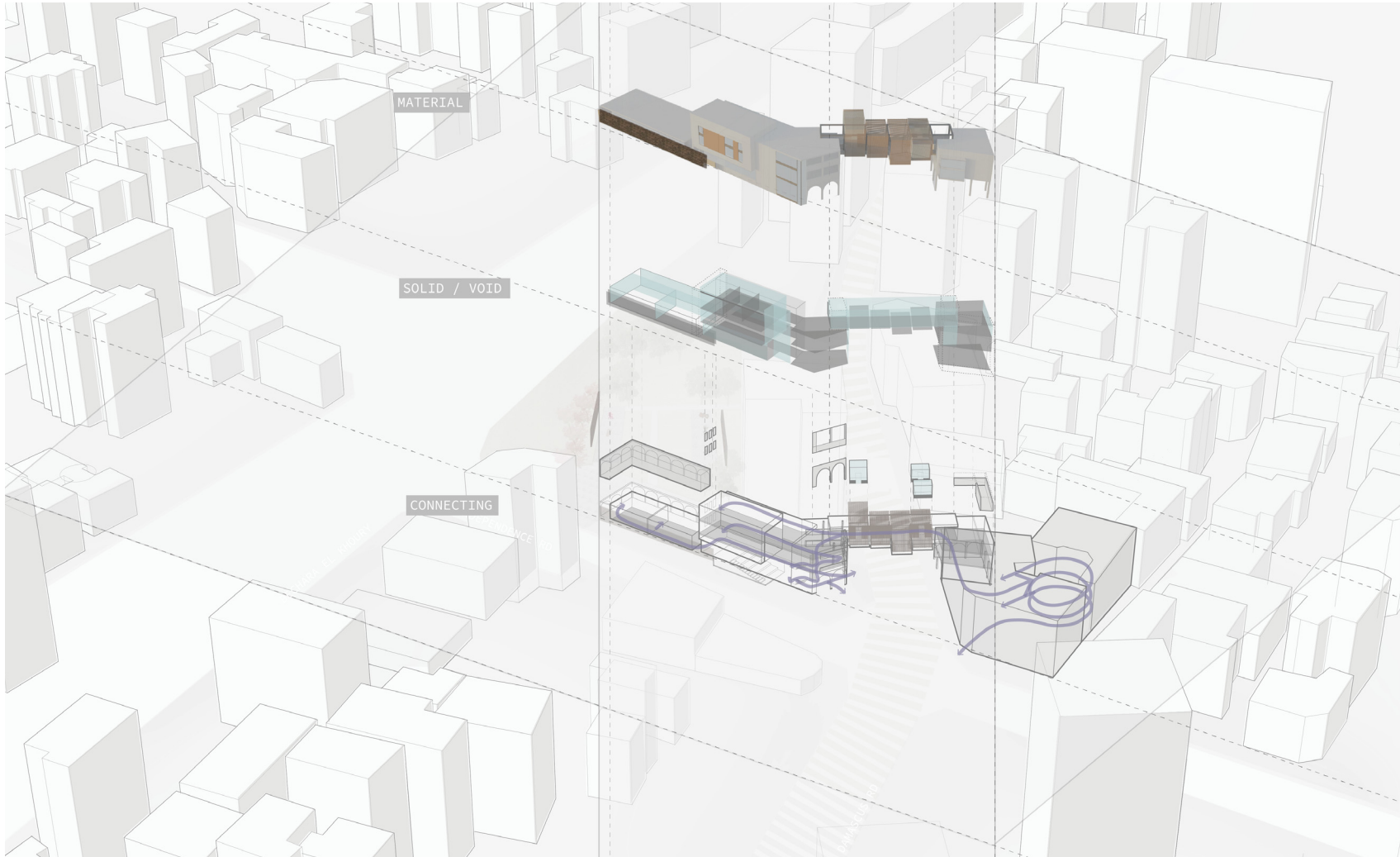


Figure 50: This integrated drawing intends to capture the elements that serve as a part of this design proposal, highlighting materiality, the differences between solid and void, and the circulation paths of the museum and the addition.



Figure 51: A cross section through the bridge that acts to connect both parts of the proposed museum extension and carries symbolic meaning in its location above the “Green Line”. The bridge becomes a link between past and the future in redefining what this space can be.

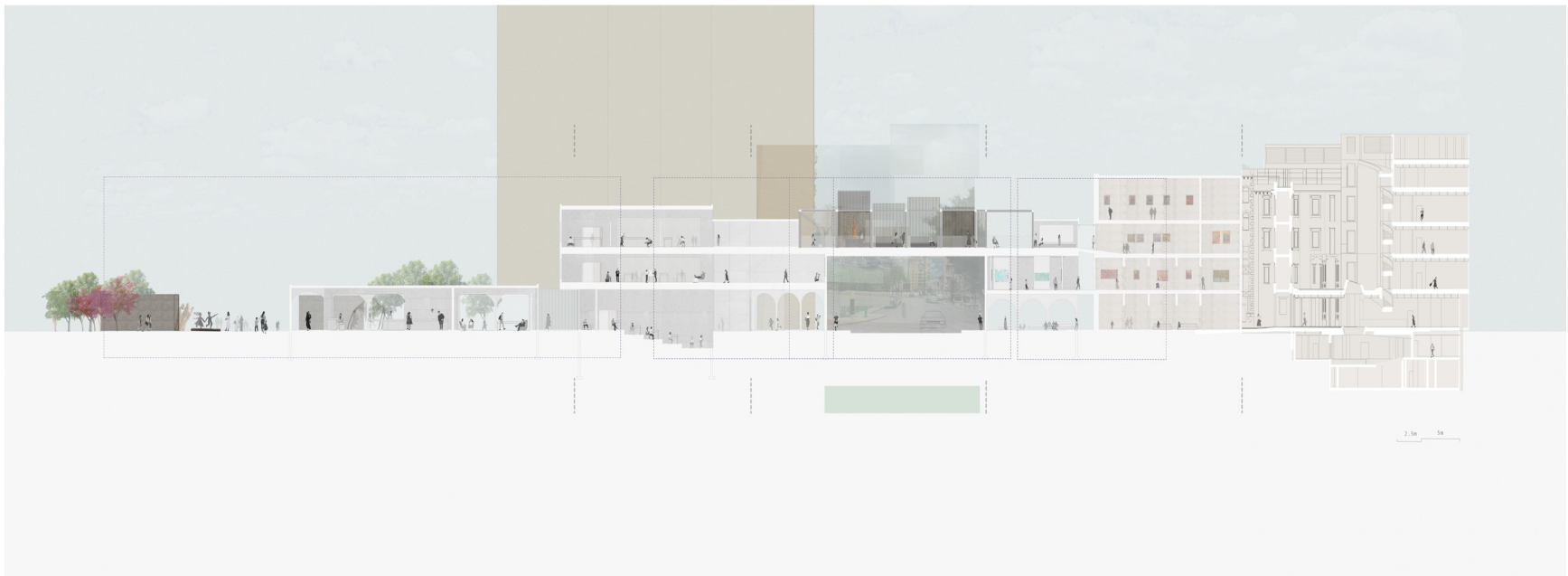


Figure 52: This long section serves to showcase the connection of the extension to the existing museum, in highlighting key moments of interaction of spaces in the process. The enclosed boxes will be further analysed (refer to figures 53-54).

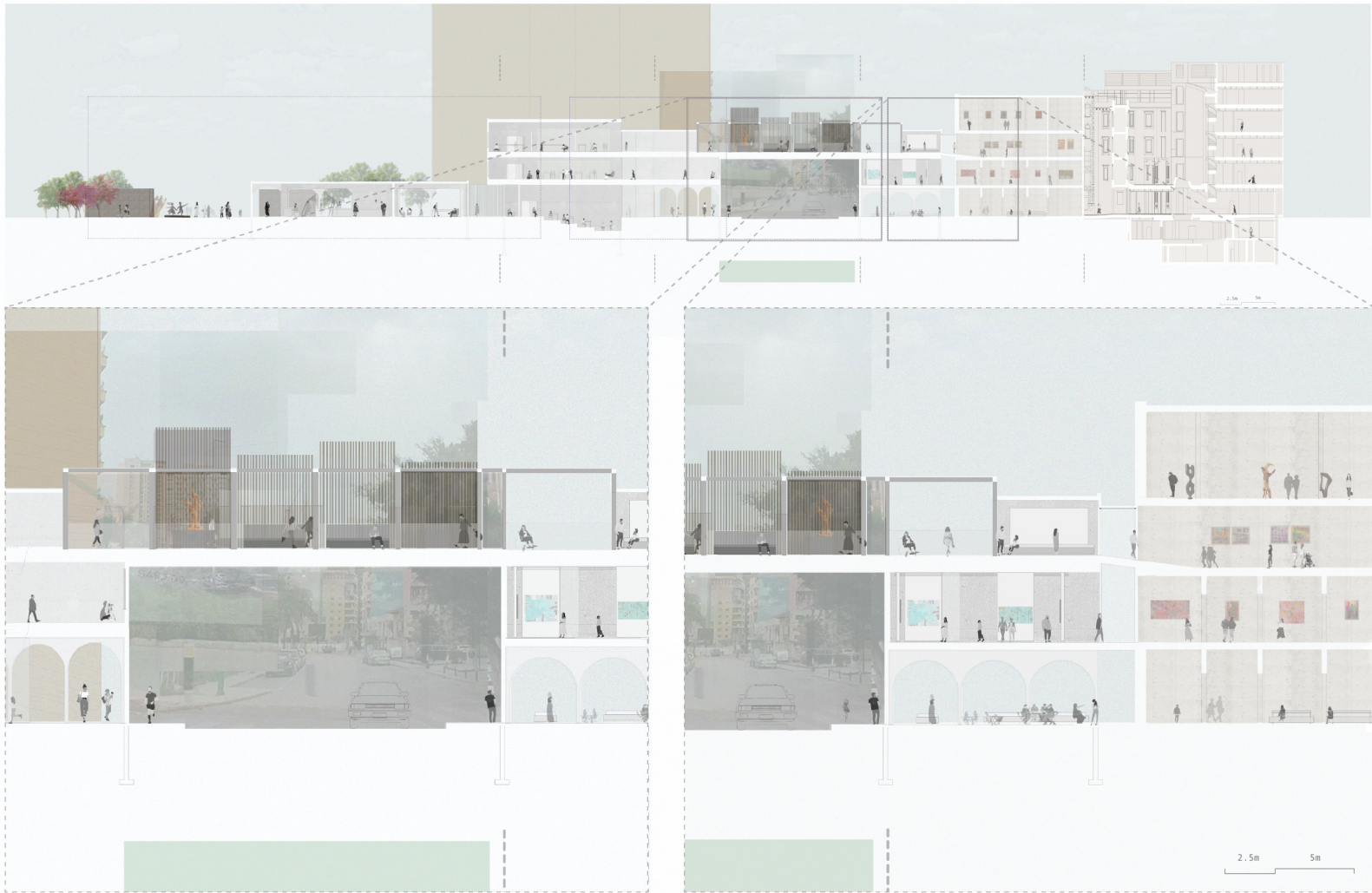


Figure 53: A closer look at the section showcasing the connection between the existing museum and its entrance to the proposed extension and the bridge across the 'Green Line'.



Figure 54: A closer look at the connection between the interior spaces of the proposed extension and its outdoor spaces.

that engages the recollection and rebuilding of collective memory through space (refer to figures 46, 47, 49, 50).

6.1.1 The Connector

To further embody the significance of this void, an extension to an existing space into the public realm that exhibits a form of community and welcoming nature may direct the community's past collective memory in a positive and helpful way.

The bridge acts as the connection between the past and the future in a way that redefines what was once the "Green Line" into a space of interaction and inhabitation. In bringing back this idea of natural greenspace and vegetation across a wide inhabited bridge that connects beyond both ends of these areas—the existing museum and the addition—the idea around greenspace as a divide formed during the war may shift into this point of social connection (refer to figures 51, 52, 53).

The form is one that allows movement between both ends of the museum addition, while becoming more narrow and wider at times to allow for rooms and spaces inhabited by extended greenery and seating or small extensions of the temporary exhibitions from inside the museum.

6.1.2 The Collective

Reconnecting different communities to this space is an important factor to the program and intention of this museum extension. Providing moments of simple interaction between intended programmed spaces and the public visitor to the space is kept constant. The programs address the public, artists, gallery owners, and heritage research workers in this collective integrated museum and extension.

Tying back to elements of the region's local architectural language into the project to honour its true identity in its surrounding context as an extension to Beit Beirut Museum and a new place, yet one of familiarity and transparency in its form, program, and users (refer to figures 52, 54).

6.1.3 Public Space

Beyond the point of the bridge that serves to re-establish and shift the past connections of the "Green Line" to a place of connection and interaction, different outdoor public spaces serve to further connect this museum to Beirut's greater urban fabric. Integrating a larger garden that serves as a place of connection which showcasing various sculptures as part of shifting museum exhibits. This space becomes a space of gathering around visible museum studios and a public café. Reconnecting the public to museum exhibits that showcase work of those from varying backgrounds within the city, including Christian, Muslim, and other communities, the space may become one of connection around re-integrating the discourse of rebuilding and sharing collective memory around experiences. Another courtyard space extends beyond the back entrance of the existing museum and is wrapped by the addition presented in this thesis that serves as a permeable buffer between Damascus Road and this back space (refer to figures 52, 54).

6.1.4 Preservation

The reconnection and integration of the past through the re-use of materials from destroyed uninhabited spaces within Beirut is an important component to the reconnection of sites of memory further into the public realm.

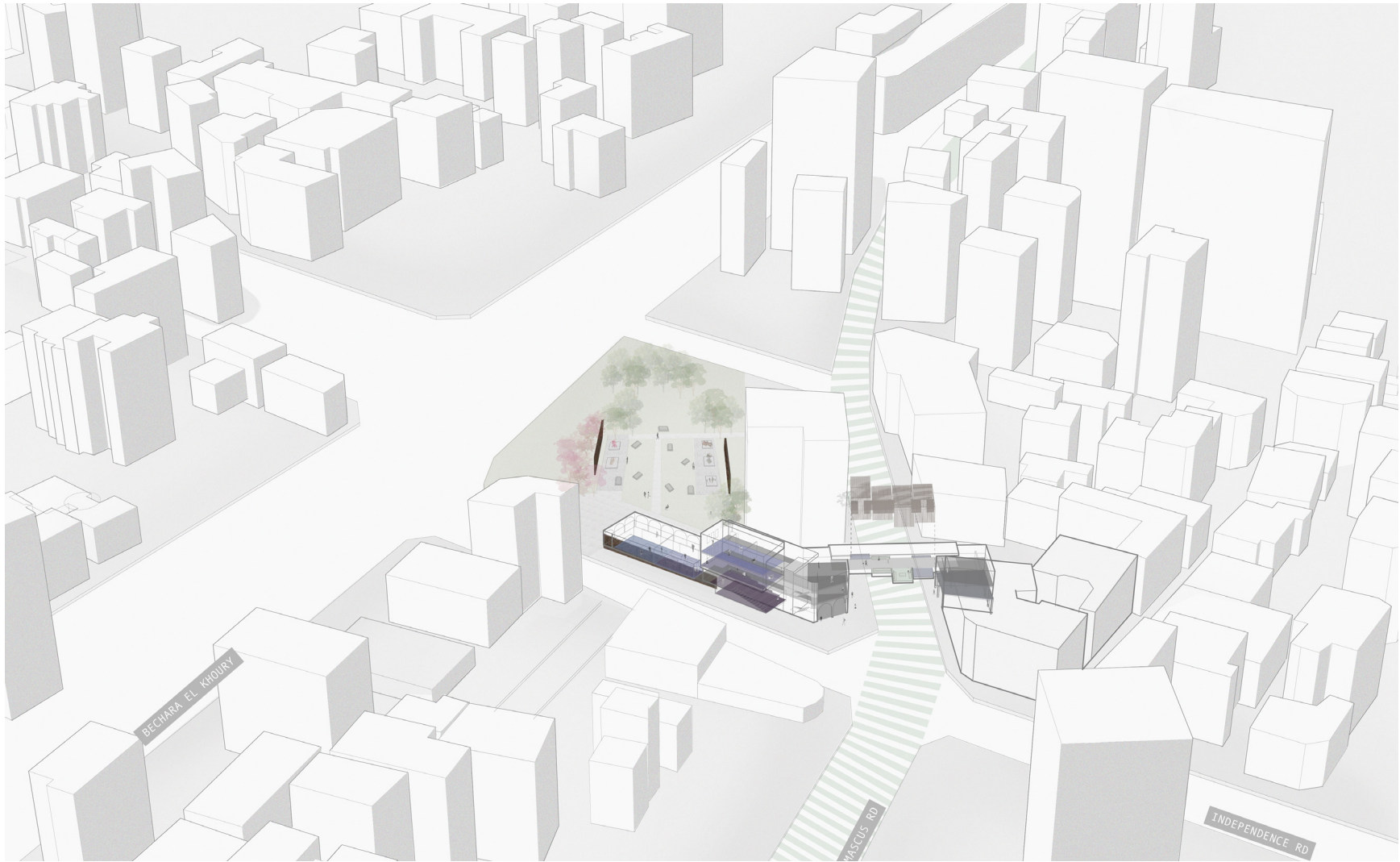


Figure 55: This visual showcases the interaction of the public around these spaces of Beit Beirut and the proposed extension and its integration into the public realm of the city.

Considering interior moments of this museum addition, an emphasis on the experience of the individual is constant. Shifting from moments of light permeable to light impermeable spaces, fully enclosed spaces to corridors open to the outdoors, this altering and awareness between these moments becomes a key point to the experience. With this, a regular connection to the street front or open views towards the front of the existing Beit Beirut Museum, the connection to the public and surrounding space is maintained (refer to figures 55, 58).



Figure 56: An image showcasing the spaces within the bridge from the outdoor ground level entry of the existing Beit Beirut.



Figure 57: An image taken from within the extension's veranda looking out toward part of the bridge and its proximity to the existing Beit Beirut across the intersection.



Figure 58: An image taken from the edge of the addition where it overlaps with the collective public space and sculpture garden.



Figure 59: An image showcasing the proposed extension's entrance in relation to the bridge, highlighting its lighting qualities in the evening as it reflects into the streetscape of Damascus Road.



Figure 60: An image showcasing a perspective from the proposed addition's entrance.



Figure 61: An image showcasing the proposed addition's interior collective studio overlooking moments in the city.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Beirut, Lebanon has become a site of significance through its ongoing history of shifting different cultural influences whether that is of Western Europe exposure or from the Arab World. The effects of the Civil War that lasted from 1975 to 1990, left a physical imprint on the city, once a city of coexistence and unity eventually became one that was divided by what is referred to as the “Green Line”. This resulted in a polarization into Western Muslim and Eastern Christian parts of the city that extended from Martyrs’ Square and along Damascus Road until the suburbs south of the city of Beirut, this imprint has left its mark on this divided city.

The purpose of this thesis is to develop an approach to ongoing reconnection and reconciliation of Beirut through a lens of enriching and strengthening its collective memory post-civil war by bringing the country’s rich collage of cultures back into voided spaces and spaces of memory within the city’s urban fabric through the reintegration of these buildings into the public realm that acts to reconnect the city’s divided urban landscape.

Through reflection on the city as one of past traumas and violence that is inevitable to experience ongoing cycles of these traumas (Charlesworth 2006, 57) and one that carries with it designated “memoryscapes” as Larkin describes (Larkin 2010, 615) or important sites in relation to the discourse around memory beyond trauma, a greater understanding on the political climate of this region has been formed. Furthermore, through the inclusion of materials from different spaces of destruction or unused materials there is opportunity to incorporate such integration of local architectural language within the city that act as moments

of inclusion of past historic influences and communities. Sarkis' ideas on plurality and forms of inclusion and representation in public spaces have shaped the approach and incorporation of further programmed spaces around Beit Beirut Museum that acts as a connection of communities beyond the Western and Eastern parts of the capital.

The approach of this design intervention is therefore a gradual form of reconstruction of the city that reflects upon various sites of memory along the "Green Line". These sites aim to strengthen the collective memory and public spaces within Beirut's urban landscape. This thesis considers Beit Beirut Museum as an anchor or catalyst to this approach to reconstruction from which each site may embody its own specific program and intentions.

By extending Beit Beirut to connect to the "Green Line" and transforming the meaning of this space in direct relation to the museum, the intention of this space attempts to rebuild collective memory in the city to strengthen its connection within the urban landscape.

Gradually integrating the other numerous designated sites of memory along the "Green Line" as part of Beirut's future reconstruction of its urban landscape and collective memory, there may be hope to shift the identity of this city from a historically divided and disconnected city towards some connection with the past through common public spaces around collective memory.

With such future considerations of some form of reconciliation within Beirut, such an understanding to reconnecting divided communities or cities may be applied to a variety of places where similar conditions may occur. Through applying forms of reconstruction and reconciliation to different cities

will vary, the intent to reconnect divided places post trauma or throughout ongoing conflicts is significant to rebuilding a strong social and cultural identity for the people of the region and strengthening this idea of the collective. There is importance in rebuilding the collective memory and identity of our cities, whether that be in Beirut, Lebanon or other similarly divided cities.

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