WHO OWNS THE CITY?
A RESPONSE TO PRIVATISED PUBLIC SPACE

Pien Nods
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Research essay & design research

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A RESPONSE TO PRIVATELY OWNED PUBLIC SPACES

Figure 1. *Our Town*, by L.S. Lowry (1943), photo credit: Rochdale Arts & Heritage Service.

Gaston Bachelard, a French philosopher, wrote in the first chapter of *The Poetics of Space* about the house being a shelter for our daydreaming: *"The house shelters daydreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace."* [1] (p. 50) Bachelard's work is and has been admired by both philosophers, architects, writers and literary theorists. It has inspired me in the way he describes the house and the memories you maintain from when you were young. I think about what I specifically remember from the home where I was born and spent my first years. The things I remember are mainly detailed things: materials, sounds, smells. An interesting example is a memory from a while ago. I visited my cousin and his wife, they live with their two children in this farmhouse which initially belonged to my grandparents in the North of Holland. I had not been there for a while and I noticed the playpen with a small rusty detail. The bracket which holds the thing together suddenly reminded me of how I used to play with this. Putting it up and down, back and forth. Just that single little detail made me remember that this was the playpen I used to play in, while I had no clue my mother gave it to them. I find it fascinating that not the form, shape or coloured abacus made me realise this: just the little detail which I played with when I got bored. This daydreaming is for me personally directly related to the things I memorise from a place and what makes a place special: the daydreaming triggers my memory. These daydreams can be found in materiality, textures, sounds, smells, shadows, sights and views: material memories. It is interesting to see how the places we create can trigger people's memories in a different way and make them feel individually familiar with these places or objects. My interests lay in these small things that make architecture as it is and how architecture can trigger the individual's memory, this is something I try to implement in many of my projects.

Publicness - and public space - have therefore always interested me in a way. These spaces create collectivity and form the connections within the city. It is a shared space of all, which should be looked at critically when designing: since it is made for - and used by - many different individuals. The image shown on the previous page *Our Town*, which was painted by British artist Laurence Lowry, shows this publicness. Interesting about this, is how the people play a central role in these spaces as Lowry visualises it. As if the people form publicness, while the space itself in this image is not necessarily defined by many particular elements. In current times, -especially during the pandemic-, we have become more aware of the importance of public space. And it remains challenging to create spaces for the public and trigger multiple individuals in order to be inclusive and involve people to use public space. This has been for what I have noticed, an issue in particular parts of the City of London and has become the incentive for my graduation research.

[1] Bachelard, G.
The Poetics of Space
(2014) p.50

Figure 2. *Men vote to ostracize a fellow citizen in the Athenian Agora,* colour lithograph, H.M. Herbert, 1885-1950

Throughout history the notion of 'public space' has always been evolving[1], although it is still often misunderstood as being constant. Not only does public space change in meaning and therefore form, but as well as how they are used by the people who inhabit the city. Public space gives people the freedom to move from one place to another, creates places of rest and places of planned or unplanned encounter and exchange, it can function as a transition zone or destination and could be a place of democracy.

Defining public space is difficult, because many spaces are not even truly public or never have been. Actually many public spaces are regulated by the government or private investors in order to move responsibility of maintenance, or for example to prevent criminality.[2] 'Ownership' is therefore an inevitable part of public space, especially the tension it can create between who 'owns' the space legally, and the 'sense of ownership'[3] which is to be created for the public. Public space can mean different things for different domains, and since there seems to be no consensus then what is the value of such definition? As an example, Don Mitchell - a professor of Cultural Geography who is specialised in the relation between historical struggles and their embodiment in urban landscapes -, related public space to the Greek *agora* and showed the importance of public space within democratic cities. The agora or marketplace was the heart of the polis and had a social, political and commercial character. It was described here as a place of gathering, socialising, trade and politics: a representation of democracy.[4] Although the democratic nature of public space sounds logical, this idea of 'public space' in England has not always existed. *Katie Mingle's Right to Roam* - an episode by 99% Invisible, discusses how from the 5th to 15th century kings and lords controlled all land in exchange for services, while peasants had rights to live on it and use it: this idea was called 'the commons'.[5] Eventually because of a movement which started in the 1930's, nowadays in England you have the 'right to roam' which means everyone has the freedom to walk through privately owned land.

[1] Avermaete, T. et al. *Architectural Positions: Architecture, Modernity and the Public Sphere* (2009)

[2] Minton, A. *The Privatisation of Public Space* (2006)

[3] Greater London Authority *Expanding London's Public Realm.* (2020)

[4] Mitchell, D. *The End of Public Space? People's Park, Definitions of the Public, and Democracy* (1995)

[5] 99% Invisible *Katie Mingle's Right to Roam* (2021)

But one thing is to 'roam', another is to 'own' and while the agora in Ancient Greek times initially seemed to have a democratic character, inclusion has always been a problem: women, slaves and foreigners were at that time not even allowed to participate in the political activities in these public spaces.[4] Apparently ownership, the democratic character of public space and accessibility for all are important aspects of these spaces, but this is not always as black and white as we think.

This grey area of public and private has become a problem in contemporary London. Anna Minton - a British writer, journalist and academic -, addresses in her book *Ground Control* this issue of how the nature of public space in London has shifted over the past decades due to political influences.[6] The number of POPS or so-called 'privately owned public spaces' has increased extensively within the UK and especially in London.[7] Comparable with the idea of 'the commons' in England, these spaces are publicly accessible but are provided and maintained by private developers, offices or residential building owners.[8] This was mainly the result of the financial crisis in the 1980's when 'Thatcherism' introduced privatisation as a solution to bring prosperity to poor areas in London, by creating engines of regional economic growth, focusing on consumerism.[6] Although Thatcherism, - which promoted the interests of conservatives in Great-Britain after the financial crisis - has boosted poor neighbourhoods economically, it resulted in large scale gentrification and the negligence of local people's needs. An extreme form of this was seen during the development of the London Olympic Area in 2012. Where local promises to give back to the community after the games were ignored and what eventually was sold to the highest bidder with no respect for public interests. Resulting in over-development, sky high rents of new built houses and large scale gentrification. Besides, Thatcherism has changed the dynamics of public spaces in freedom of use since these spaces are now regulated by private investors which can indirectly determine how we use public space.
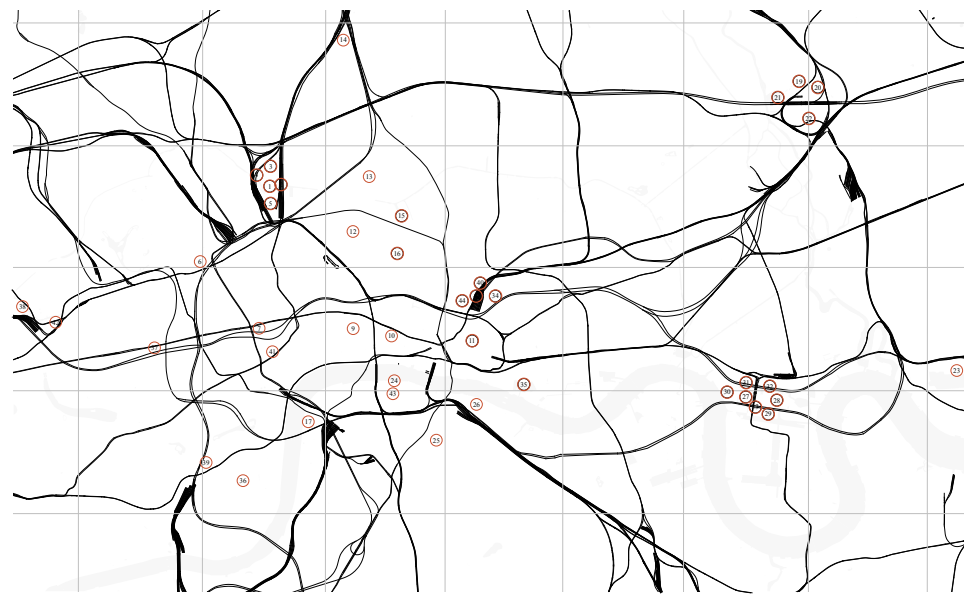

Figure 3. *Inventory of POPS and connectivity to railway system,* image by Author (2021)

[6] Minton, A.
Ground Control: Fear and Happiness in the Twenty-first-century City. (2012)

[7] CBRE Group
Privatisation of Public Space: an inevitable rise in privately owned public spaces within our cities by 2040. (2021)

[8] Minton, A.
The Privatisation of Public Space (2006)

It would be naive to think the privatisation of public spaces in London will stagnate, but the additional problems it creates should not be ignored. The over-development of certain areas - in this case the London Olympic Area, have proven itself to increase regional economic growth, as well as how it can have damaging effects on the people who live or used to live there. The current ways of development are instead of improving, moving issues like this. Rethinking how public and private interests might benefit from one another therefore has become crucial.

If architecture could mediate between different disciplines, contemporary architectural research should focus on how to improve these spaces and take responsibility. By understanding the change in nature of public space throughout history and the reasons behind these changes politically, economically and socially: architecture can attempt to contribute in creating places where public, as well as private interests can benefit both. Possibly, create spaces where the imbalance between private and public will be less visible and tangible.

The aim of this research is to discuss the complexity of this grey area between privately owned public space and public space, not necessarily to reflect on morality. The nature of public space shifts, and it is important to know why these changes occur and if these changes are still relevant in current times. This research aims to answer the following question:

To what extent could architecture contribute to a more symbiotic relationship - and mediate - between public and private interests, as a response to the privatisation of public spaces in the City of London?

The methodology can be divided in three domains: literature review, selective mapping and site research. This should not be seen as a linear process, but as an exploration through these different domains (figure 4). It will be a constant process of reflection and use new knowledge to reflect on previous work. Tony Fretton, a London based architect and former professor of the Chair of *Interiors, Buildings, Cities* in Delft, has been so kind to make time to meet via Zoom, once in two weeks. These conversations are part of this research' methodology and will help to understand the city, having an experienced practitioner's view on this topic. The extensive literature review will define the terms and create a theoretical framework which forms the start of this research. The selective mapping and site research will support this theoretical framework and are implemented in each chapter.

The first part of this research will discuss the nature of public space and how it is different from privately owned public space. The theoretical framework used for this consists of readings discussing the nature of public space, its history and the political influences that changed the nature of public space through time. Anna Minton and Owen Hatherley's critical and reflective writings will be used to discuss the social issues London is facing today and clarify the social, economical and political context. Alexi Marmot - an academic and practitioner -, provides a historical background on how public space has changed since the Great Fire, the Blitz and the Big Bang. This reading could show how important moments in history like these have influenced public space. The historical map shown in this first chapter does not bring forward the connections between different larger systems, but provides knowledge of London's historical expansion. On top of that, it aims to present the shifts from privately owned public land to more publicly owned land, compared again to current privately owned public spaces in London. This data is obtained from educational videos, articles from The Guardian and books discussing England's land ownership.

The second part consists of the translation into spatial dimensions of public space and privately
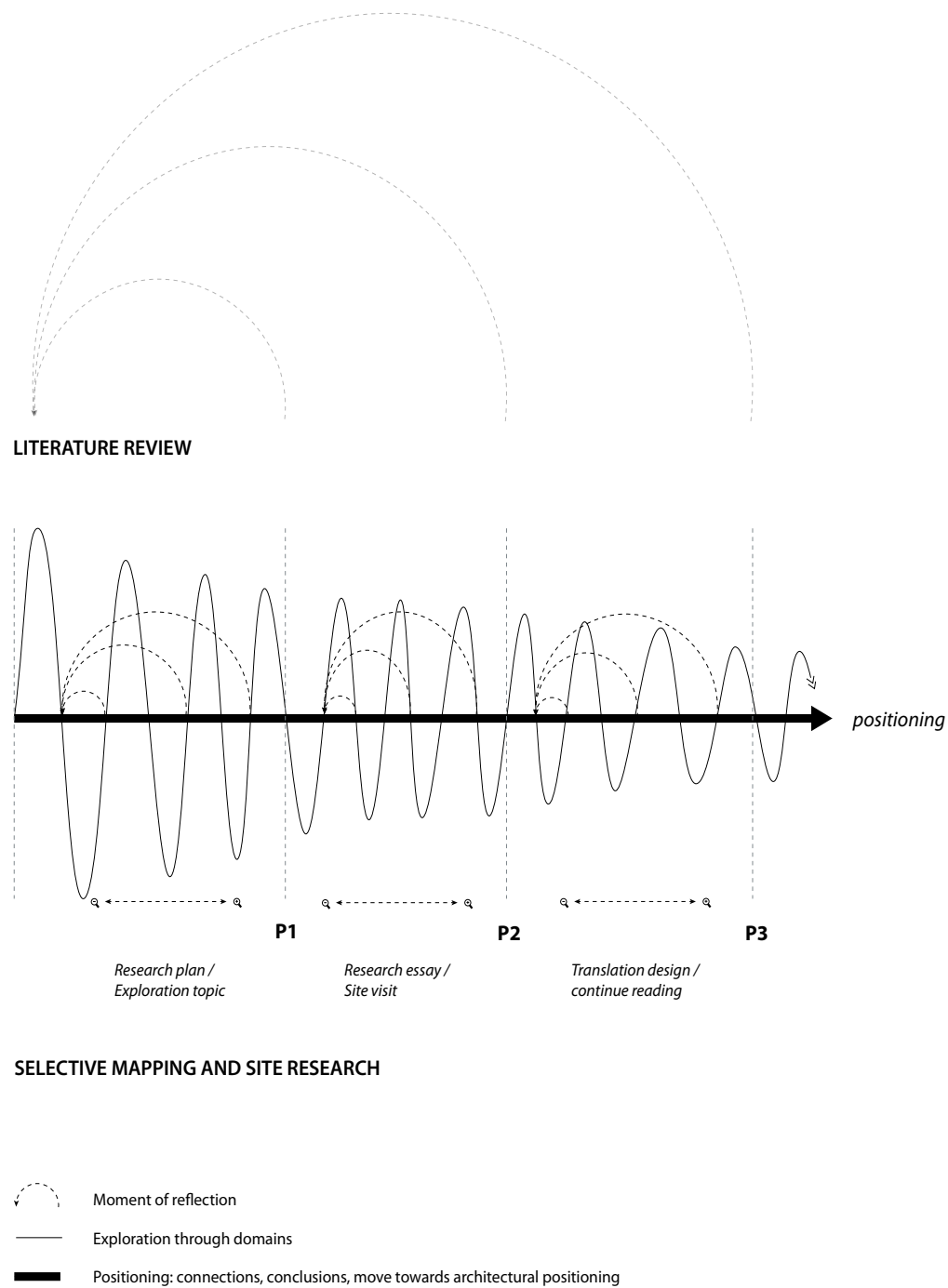
LITERATURE REVIEW

positioning

P1   **P2**   **P3**

Research plan /   *Research essay /*   *Translation design /*
Exploration topic   *Site visit*   *continue reading*

SELECTIVE MAPPING AND SITE RESEARCH

Moment of reflection

Exploration through domains

Positioning: connections, conclusions, move towards architectural positioning

Figure 4. *Methodology Diagram,* image by author (2021)

RESEARCH & DESIGN BOOKLET

WHO OWNS THE CITY?

15 POPS

USAGE
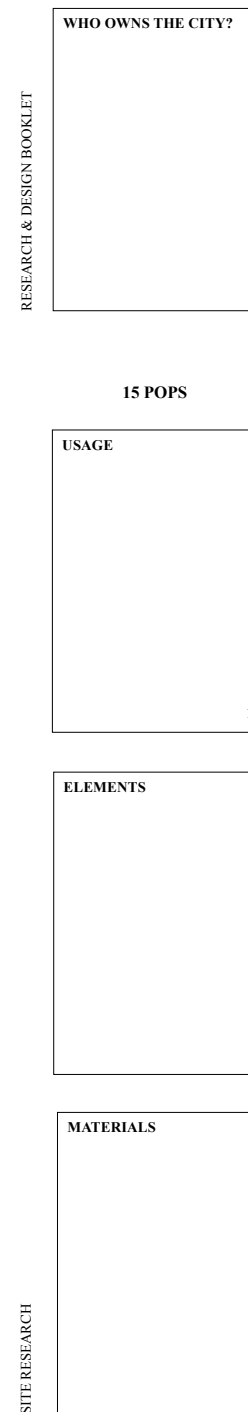
1

ELEMENTS

2

MATERIALS

3

SITE RESEARCH

Figure 5. *Research documentation,* image by author (2021)

owned public spaces and how these terms can be defined. The book *Architectural Positions* will help to define public space: as well as the readings from writers such as Jane Jacobs and Lewis Mumford. These will also define privately owned public spaces, social exclusion and how this can be visible in spatial dimensions. Besides, provide useful knowledge and examples of well-functioning designs triggering a diverse public. The selective mapping of POPS within London City is used as a next step. This will help to narrow the focus on places of interest: where are POPS seen most frequently? Visiting London allowed us to analyse the site, look at the hubs of POPS more closely and explore the connections with larger systems in London on which they depend. Photography was used as a tool to document the *Usage, Materials* and *Elements* which define public space and privately owned public space. These studies form a series of booklets, in which the documentation aims to help articulate this grey area of public and private into spatial dimensions and eventually be means in which there can be mediated between the two (figure 5).

The aforementioned study contains photographs of 15 POPS in London visited during the field trip. 'Usage' visualises how these spaces are used by the public, how people behave in these spaces and who actually uses the space. 'Elements' shows what role architectural elements or objects play in these spaces. What do these elements initiate, are they used as a division tool or do they frame these spaces, are they static or changeable, is there a specific function bound to this or not? 'Materials' is the final part of the series and shows how materials can be an indication of borders, thresholds or function and can make privatisation visible or tangible. Just by looking at one patchwork of materials, it not only implies transitioning, as well it can give an impression of the physical state of a certain object or even a part of the city. The combination of literature review which discusses the different manifestations of POPS and the mappings and site research documentation will help to eventually see connections between different disciplines. All together it will help with positioning and create the translation towards my design project, as a response to privately owned public space as we know now.

The final part will discuss *if* architecture can mediate between private and public interests: and if there is one architecture, or many minor forms of architectural practice that make the (im)balance between private and public visible. In which the characteristics will be discussed, the role of the architect and through which mechanisms these architectural practices challenge and overturn these (un)balanced, (un)equal relations.

The problem addressed in this research is relevant in the City of London, Great-Britain, as well on a global scale. Many metropolitan cities are dealing with this issue and should invest in creating spaces for the public. This research investigates the emerging issues related to the privatisation of public spaces in London, but should as well present insights for other case studies. It aims to give a different perspective: discussing how it was formed, the initial intention and the role of the architect in improving these spaces. As well to give a critical view on ownership, the changing nature of public space and if this genuine public space still exists.
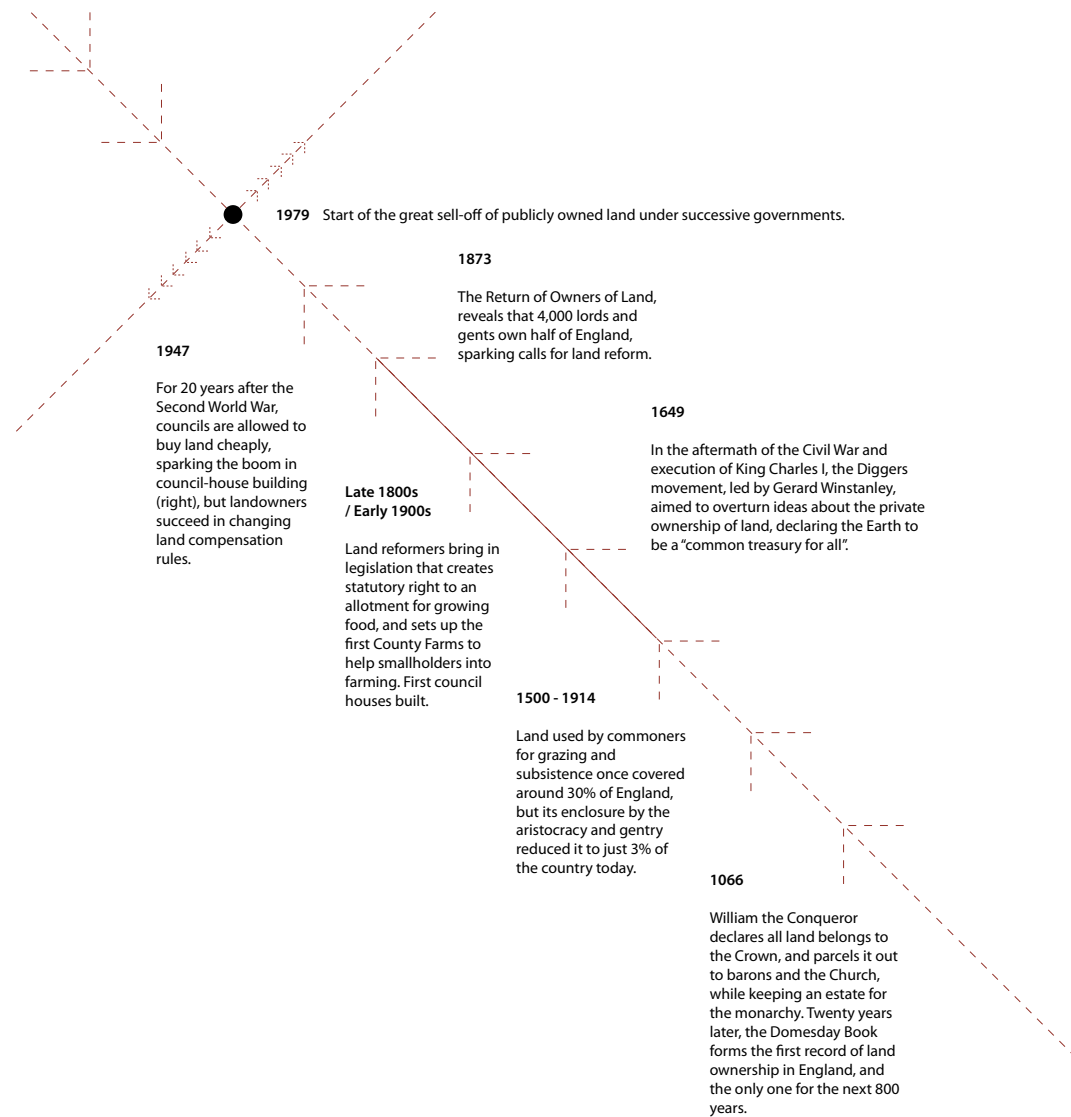
1979 Start of the great sell-off of publicly owned land under successive governments.

1873

The Return of Owners of Land, reveals that 4,000 lords and gents own half of England, sparking calls for land reform.

1649

In the aftermath of the Civil War and execution of King Charles I, the Diggers movement, led by Gerard Winstanley, aimed to overturn ideas about the private ownership of land, declaring the Earth to be a "common treasury for all".

1947

For 20 years after the Second World War, councils are allowed to buy land cheaply, sparking the boom in council-house building (right), but landowners succeed in changing land compensation rules.

Late 1800s / Early 1900s

Land reformers bring in legislation that creates statutory right to an allotment for growing food, and sets up the first County Farms to help smallholders into farming. First council houses built.

1500 - 1914

Land used by commoners for grazing and subsistence once covered around 30% of England, but its enclosure by the aristocracy and gentry reduced it to just 3% of the country today.

1066

William the Conqueror declares all land belongs to the Crown, and parcels it out to barons and the Church, while keeping an estate for the monarchy. Twenty years later, the Domesday Book forms the first record of land ownership in England, and the only one for the next 800 years.

Figure 6. *England's land ownership 1066 - 1979*, image by author (2021). Used source: Countryfile, *Who Owns England?* [1]

The elusive nature of public space can be difficult to comprehend and the way in which it can be influenced has been discussed extensively throughout history. In order to understand why public space changes and if these changes are still relevant in current times the following chapter presents the historical shifts and how the social, political and economic context influences the nature of public space.

As discussed in the introduction, England knows a long history of land ownership.[1] The book *Who Owns England*, written by Guy Shrubsole - a British researcher, writer and campaigner - explains how initially all land belonged to the Crown after the declaration of William the Conqueror in 1066. For a long time, common land was enclosed by aristocracy and gentry, yet in 1649 the ideas about private ownership of land started to change because of a movement, claiming land had to be accessible for all.[1] Alexi Marmot and John Worthington wrote in *Great Fire to Big Bang: Private and Public Designs on the City of London* about particular disasters in history - natural or man-made - and their influence on the urban environment and so public space. They lay emphasis on how along with disasters comes political action: the Great Fire in 1666 asked for a large-scale urban renewal led by the government and private individuals. New design regulations for the width of streets, height of buildings and materials were introduced to replace the irregular mediaeval streets and timber buildings and a land ownership survey was to be created as a guidance for rebuilding. Although there were many new plans, the overall urban structure remained quite similar.[2] After 800 years, in 1873, a second record of land ownership revealed that only 4000 individuals of the aristocracy owned half of England, now resulting in calls for land reform. This created legislation, giving more rights to small farmers to grow their food.[1] Just like the Great Fire had ruined a large part of the city, so did the Blitz. According to Marmot and Worthington now the public sector took the lead in creating plans for more open space and the alteration of roads in which they created room for tall buildings. In terms of architecture the Modern Movement ideals became more visible but the urban structure again remained quite the same.[2] But after 1979 a huge sell-off of public land would start.[1]

[1] Countryfile
Who Owns England? History of England's land ownership and how much is privately owned today (2019)

[2] Marmot, A. and Worthington, J. *Great Fire to Big Bang: Private and Public Designs on the City of London* (1986)
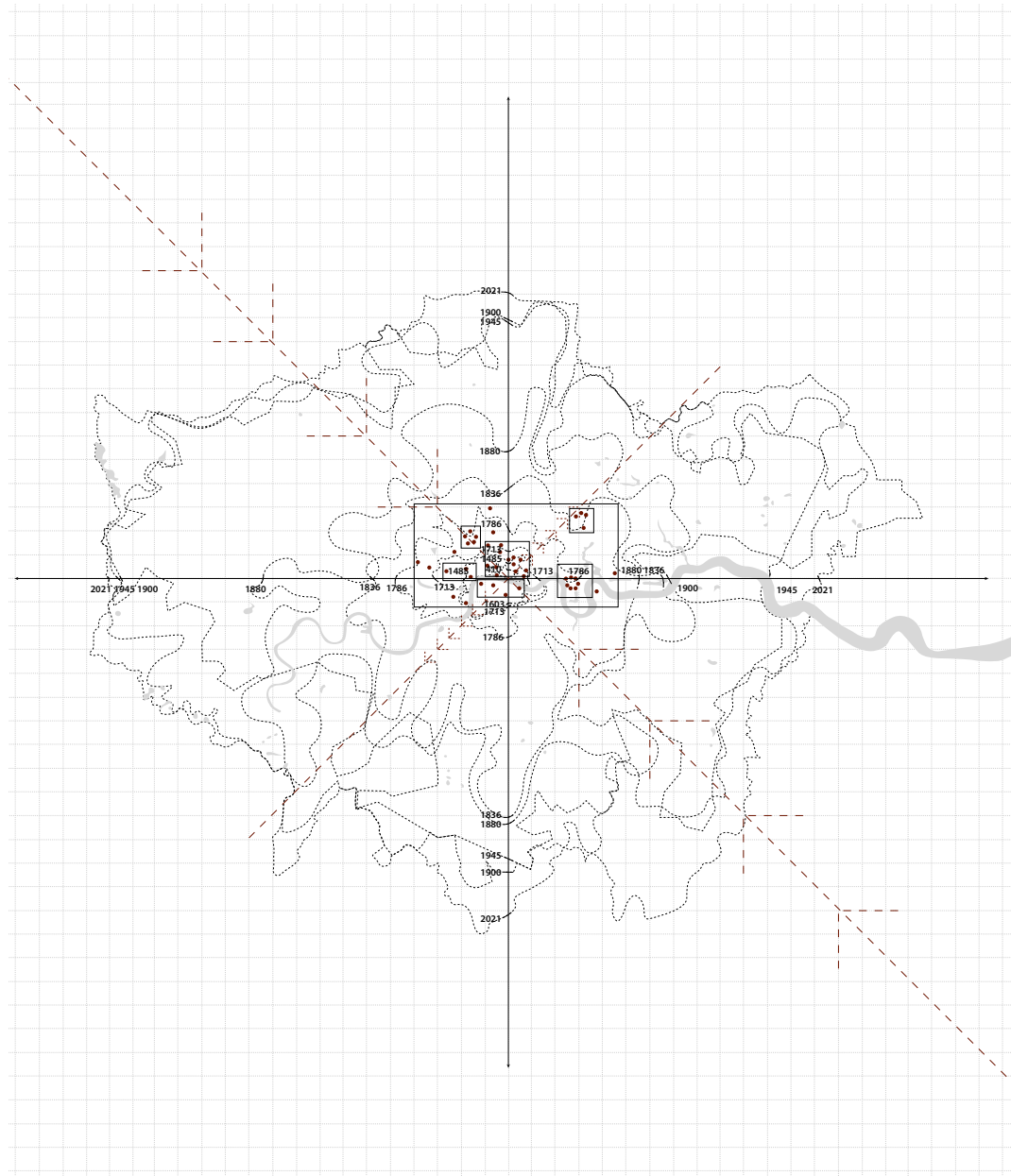
Figure 7. *Historical analysis of city expansion and shifts from public to private,* image by author (2021)

Owen Hatherley, a British writer and journalist who writes about architecture and politics, criticises in his book *A Guide to the New Ruins of Great Britain* on the way England has become over the past decades due to political changes. According to Hatherley, gentrification has been one of the results of the New Labour's attempt to transform Britain into a giant business: a metropolitan city focussed on business instead of its citizens.[3] He describes how after 1979 'Thatcherism' became visible in multiple policies where "*building was to be dense, in flats, on 'brownfield' such as ex-industrial land, should be 'mixed tenure' and informed by 'good design', whatever that might be.*"(p.13) Owen Hatherley thinks that by awakening people and drawing attention to their urban environment, it will become clear that the urban environment is consciously made and can be consciously transformed.[4]

Comparable with Hatherley, Anna Minton believes the created urban environment forms a reflection of political realities and the health of our society and democracy. As an example for current times, Minton calls in her book *Ground Control: Fear and Happiness in the Twenty-First Century City*, the Olympic Park in East London:

> *"...the architecture of extreme capitalism, which produces a divided landscape of privately owned, disconnected, high security, gated enclaves side by side with enclaves of poverty which remain untouched by the wealth around them. The stark segregation and highly visible differences create a climate of fear and growing mistrust between people, which together with the undemocratic nature of these new private places, erodes civil society."* (p.9) [5]

[4] Hatherley, O.
A Guide to the New Ruins of Great Britain. (2010)

[5] Minton, A.
Ground Control: Fear and Happiness in the Twenty-first-century City. (2012)

King's Cross area

Broadgate area

Canary Wharf

Figure 8. *Analysed hubs of privately owned public spaces in London and their connectivity to railway system,* image by author (2021)

Minton provides an overview on how the Docklands in London were the place where it all started and how Margaret Thatcher and Michael Heseltine were the minds behind the privatisation in 1979. At that time, Britain's industrial economy was crumbling down and many people lost their jobs. This is one of the reasons why Thatcher started to replace the old industrial economy with a new financial services industry. Based on the idea that creating wealth would trickle-down to the most deprived areas, Thatcher introduced privatisation.[5] The 'Big Bang' in 1986 - as discussed by Minton - was the result of Thatcher's created free-market which increased market activity and enormous growth in property development, along with it came a more corporate architecture. The Docklands and Broadgate Centre became examples of this corporate architecture and showed a new way of living in gated communities.[5]

According to Minton, the large-scale privatisation of land started in the 1990's with the privatisation of British Rail and the building of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link. It is therefore not surprising at all, many pops appear around large railway stations (figure 8).

[5] Minton, A.
Ground Control: Fear and Happiness in the Twenty-first-century City. (2012)
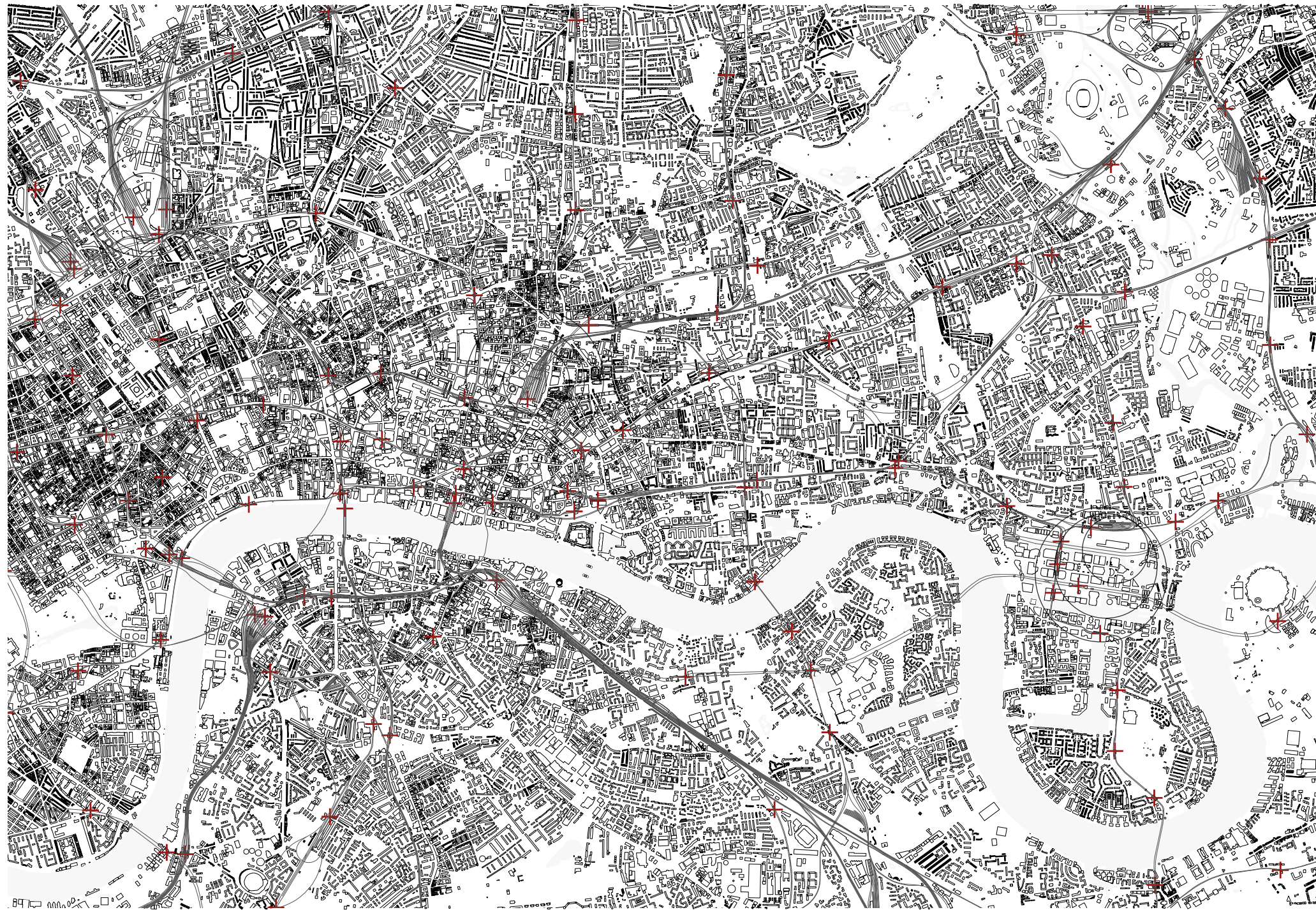
Figure 9. *London 2021, railway stations and effect of the power of 'Land assembly',* image by author (2021)

Selling the railway system gave a large amount of land around the new proposed stations, in which the policy of 'land assembly' plays an important role: it made it possible to join land and property together, creating new areas owned by private investors.[5] The power of land assembly (figure 9), is just one of multiple policies she addresses. For example, public money was used to fund the newly created 'Urban Development Corporation' in 1980 to attract private investors and increase property prices, even though the corporation was not even elected by the public. The UDC made it possible to bypass local authorities and gave the ability to operate without public discussion, which brought in billions of money.[5] So instead of focussing on public interests with public money, public space has become a business model for London and many other metropolitan cities.

[5] Minton, A.
Ground Control: Fear and Happiness in the Twenty-first-century City. (2012)

Today, we are able to see the large shift public space has gone through over the years, as well as the effects on architecture and the people who inhabit the city. These changes are the result of social, political and economic influences specific to their time. At this moment, private companies have become the owners of large parts of London and many other cities.[5] Not only Minton addresses this issue, as well the introduction of the book *Architectural Positions* shows how nowadays the private has become more public and the public more private.[6] In my opinion, one should look critical at the way our environment is formed. The Blitz, the Great Fire, Big Bang or any other disruption asked for quick fundamental change, as well as it creates room for exploration of new styles and ideas. But to reflect on those changes is essential, especially when the believed positive effects turn out to be damaging. Besides, one should not see this merely as a political issue and underestimate the ability of other layers of influence to intervene.

Although often the idea is created that public space has shifted back towards the Georgian gated squares and terraces - such as *Argyle Square*, seen in one of the oldest conservation areas in London and part of the chosen location for my design project - contemporary public spaces are different.[5] Minton, as well as the book *Architectural Positions*, shows how the distinction between public and private has become an increasingly vague and grey terrain over the years. The next chapter will discuss the complexity of these terms and how this grey area has become visible to me, after analysing 15 POPS in London.

[6] Avermaete, T. et al.
Architectural Positions: Architecture, Modernity and the Public Sphere (2009)

The previous chapter brought forward the changing nature of public space through a short history of urban transformations in London. Yet, since POPS seen nowadays tend to be associated with the old Georgian gated squares and terraces, it is important to know the actual difference.[1] This following chapter aims to explain the difference between privately owned public space and public space, as well as how it is unique compared to previous times.

Don Mitchell explained how nowadays the notion of public space is interwoven with our understanding of the Greek *agora* and showed the importance of public space within democratic cities. This importance becomes visible in the way he relates this to Levebre's distinction between *representational space* and *representations of space*. Public space as a 'representational space' is essential in creating a realistic representation of the 'public': by excluding large groups, these people will not be seen and the democratic character will be lost.[2] According to Mitchell, the notion of public space can quite diverge since it is looked at from different perspectives: it can be seen as a democratic space in which there is freedom of use for all people, an unconstrained space tolerating the risks of disorder. On the other hand public space is often to be planned, orderly and safe, which has formed public spaces that are more a controlled and orderly retreat in which well-behaving people are 'allowed' to experience publicness.[2] There seems to be a contradiction between public space as 'representational space' and the 'representations of space' when one analyses contemporary public spaces. Over the years, public space has often become conditional instead of unconditional for the public. The exclusion of groups can be the result

[1] Minton, A.
Ground Control: Fear and Happiness in the Twenty-first-century City. (2012)

[2] Mitchell, D.
The End of Public Space? People's Park, Definitions of the Public, and Democracy. (1995)

of the aim to improve the representation of spaces, especially when different interests diverge by handing over responsibility of public good to private interests. In my opinion, there lay opportunities in narrowing the gap between creating representational space and representations of space. Instead of laying emphasis on the distinction described by Levebre and Mitchell, one should find ways to create representations of space *by creating* representational spaces.

Lewis Mumford is an historian who focuses on community values and the city's role in enlarging the human personality. He calls the city the theatre of social action and an aesthetic symbol of collective unity.[3] Besides, Mumford has an interesting view on the cities' limitations in which it still supports effective social intercourse. Public space as a common ground and how it is designed plays a very important role in this. According to the book *Architectural Positions* - edited by Tom Avermaete, Klaske Havik and Hans Teerds, the distinction between public and private was formed during the French Revolution, when it became possible to formally 'own' land. By 'owning' land or property automatically things became either public or private and gave the 'owner' the responsibility of maintenance, along with the right to create the rules in terms of accessibility and purpose.[4]

Public space is defined here as a space which serves the interests of the public, promotes 'public experience', is owned and managed by the government or public sector, accessible to all and inclusive: it involves shared spaces such as streets, squares and parks in which people can act unrestricted. Using the ideas of philosophers Jürgen Habermas and Hannah Arendt, the book explains how public space should allow a broad public to relate to one another and create a common world, in which people can participate freely. Compared to public space, POPS are managed by the private sector, often come with restrictions in terms of accessibility, are therefore exclusive and serve a different purpose in the interest of an individual or private body.[4] For private developers buying public land becomes profitable since some countries allow to build wider or taller buildings in return, it can be a way to attract the 'right sort' or collect data.[5] From my point of view, the way architects give form to public space can make publicness visible and tangible. The composition of elements and materiality, as well as the program related to it can have a major effect on the usage of spaces and the way they are perceived. Therefore, this research focuses on *usage, elements* and *materials* which define pops in order to move towards a design proposal where there can be mediated between private and public interests.

The distinction between private and public has been, and has become even more vague over the years. In London specifically, there is no transparency about who owns the streets.[6] Minton explains how compared to the way some parks or squares would be gated in history, now these spaces are not gated anymore but can 'feel' gated.[6] This has become visible in the documentation of this research' site photography. 'Usage', 'Elements' and 'Materials' form three booklets added to this research, which contain photographs of King's Cross area, Broadgate area and Canary Wharf: involving 15 POPS in total.[7]

In terms of *usage*, the photographs not only display *how* these spaces are used, but as well as *who* uses the space. What do people wear, where are they going or are they staying, how do they interact with other people or the architectural objects they come across? The photographs show many tourists, working people and people wandering around to shop, eat and drink. Surprisingly, not a sign of homeless people, which is

quite unique in a metropolitan city such as London. These spaces are surrounded by offices, retail, bars and restaurants which automatically attracts a certain audience. The minority is residential, especially in the more corporate areas like Broadgate and Canary Wharf. In relation to the literature, Minton describes POPS as consumer hubs near transport networks which are comparable with airport departure lounges and designed in the interest of the retailer.[6] Marc Augé calls it 'non-places' and discusses the genericness of these spaces and how they fail to be considerate with the historical and social context.[4] This makes a place like *Granary Square* stand out, since it is compared to all other pops way more interwoven with the historical fabric and besides, one of the more vibrant privately owned public spaces.[8] The connection to the railway network generates a constant flow of people. Besides tourists, passengers and business people using the space, maintenance is visible. Men wearing red hats and blue jackets clean walkways and benches: even though autumn has started, almost no sign of yellow tree leaves. Security guards are walking around the place, maintaining order: it creates 'serviced' spaces. It is not surprising to see these spaces exclude not only the homeless but also young adults and protesters, since there are no clear regulations defined by law for private owners.[6] The photographs suggest that without consumerism, these spaces would empty out. As well as the fact that random social encounters are not necessarily promoted. Most people seem to know each other and meet up for lunch or coffee, either we experience a more individualised society in these photographs.

Figure 10. *Pancras Square: King's Cross Central maintenance,* in 'Usage' (2021)

[3] Mumford, L. "What is a City?", in *The City Reader.* (2016)

[4] Avermaete, T. et al. *Architectural Positions: Architecture, Modernity and the Public Sphere.* (2009)

[5] Nugent, C. *Owning public space is expensive. So why do developers want to do it?* (2017)

[6] Minton, A. *Ground Control: Fear and Happiness in the Twenty-first-century City.* (2012)

[7] Nods, P. *Usage, Elements and Materials.* (2021)

[8] Fretton, T. *Online conversations with author.* (2021)

Figure 11. *Broadgate Circle: security guards wearing uniform "here to help",* in 'Usage' (2021)

Figure 13. *Finsbury Avenue Square: demarcations and single-use benches,* in 'Usage' (2021)

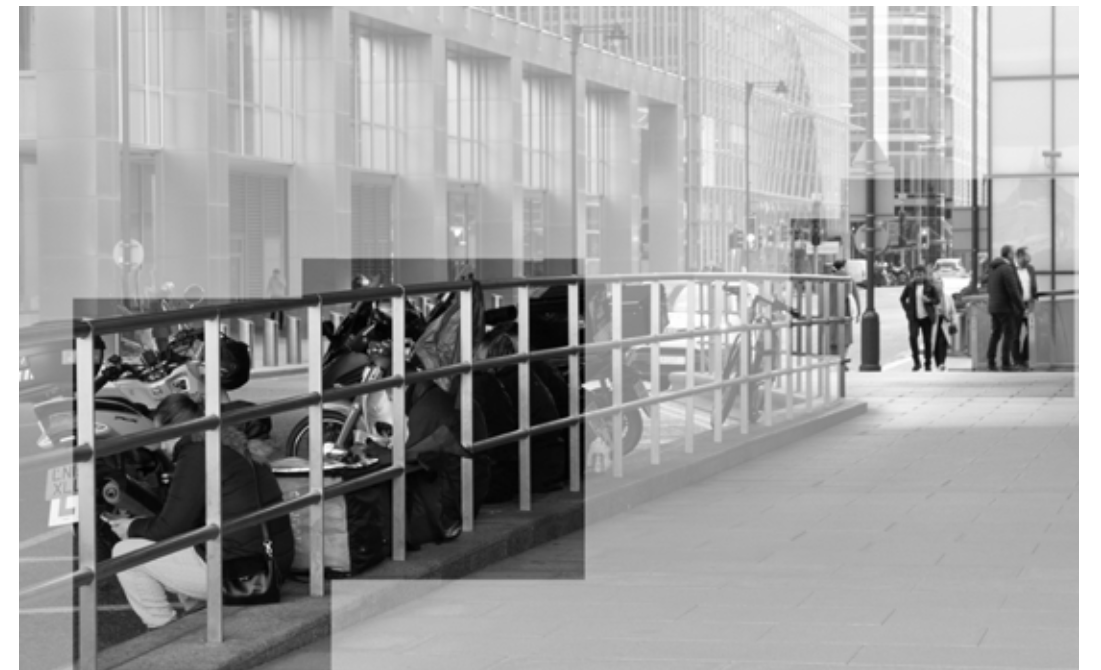**Figure 12.** *Pancras Square: elemental guidance along retail,* in 'Usage' (2021)

Figure 14. *Canary Wharf: food delivery workers having lunch at the traffic entrance security check,* in 'Usage' (2021)

A possible intervention in such a privatised public life scenery should focus on improving the relations with the historical and social fabric, in order to create *places* instead of *non-places*. The design assignment would therefore be of more value in a context such as King's Cross area, rather than Broadgate area or Canary Wharf. It is essential the intervention is closely connected to the railway system which generates a constant flow of people. The program should be meaningful for public, as well as private interests, should be less conditional and promote sudden social encounter. The way these spaces are used, suggests the need for an open architecture in which people can act more freely.

Looking at *elements,* it becomes clear these do not only define the spatial dimensions or aesthetics, but as well determine usage in a way: how people interact with the elements.[9] The elements seen in contemporary pops are not necessarily 'private', but the repetition and use of certain elements or materials triggers our memory and makes it more tangible. It tells something about ownership: places which are owned by the same investor often show repetition. A lot of these elements are static and well-defined in how to use them. There is not much room for own interpretation, but allows the public to use the space in a specific way.[10] Creating an atlas of POPS showed the scope of the research and visualises the scale of the analysed spaces (figure 15). The sections - based on King's Cross area -, show how many elements are used as division tool in which people are guided through the space: they can either walk along or pause (figure 16). This guidance brings them along different consuming functions. Therefore, the surrounding facades are a very important part in the creation of these spaces. Instead of promoting sudden social interaction, elements are often placed in a linear way meant to guide or divide: which creates traffic zones instead of recreation zones. Long term recreation is not very common. Another element which will appear anywhere in England and especially at pops are CCTV cameras. Minton criticises this, since there is so much evidence supporting the fact that the most secured environments actually increase levels of fear - both for inside and outside these spaces.[11] How these spaces are designed has according to Minton a lot to do with liability. But why not design safe and orderly spaces in a different way? One would need to rethink how to design safe spaces more open for own interpretation, in order to trigger a broader public and design representational spaces. Elements should focus on multi-use in order to do so, on the other hand not be too overdetermined.

Materials tell something about quality, can form thresholds, transitions, as well lay relations between different spaces.[9] The fact that the spaces are experienced in a certain sequence makes one aware of the repetition and relates certain elements with one another. Just like elements, materials tell something about ownership. The study shows how materials such as steel, concrete, grey wood and metal are often used, along with nicely paved streets and carefully detailed transitions from material to material. The materials show in a way the exclusivity, eliteness and corporateness of these places which might make people feel uncomfortable to even use such space. For example, the decay of materials is often not visible at all. Compared to many other streets and places in the city POPS demonstrate newness, while others demonstrate newness as well as decay and random disruptions. One could work with materials and the idea of private and public: using certain materials inside or outside might blur the borders between the two. Ownership could become less tangible and visible when one uses a mixture of material compositions and less repetition. In the end, the messiness or randomness of streets sometimes actually define the liveliness of the streets. It allows things to happen. In a way disorder is sometimes needed to create less homogeneous spaces.

[9] Nods, P. *Usage, Elements and Materials*. (2021)

[10] Avermaete, T. et al. *Architectural Positions: Architecture, Modernity and the Public Sphere.* (2009)

[11] Minton, A. *Ground Control: Fear and Happiness in the Twenty-first-century City.* (2012)
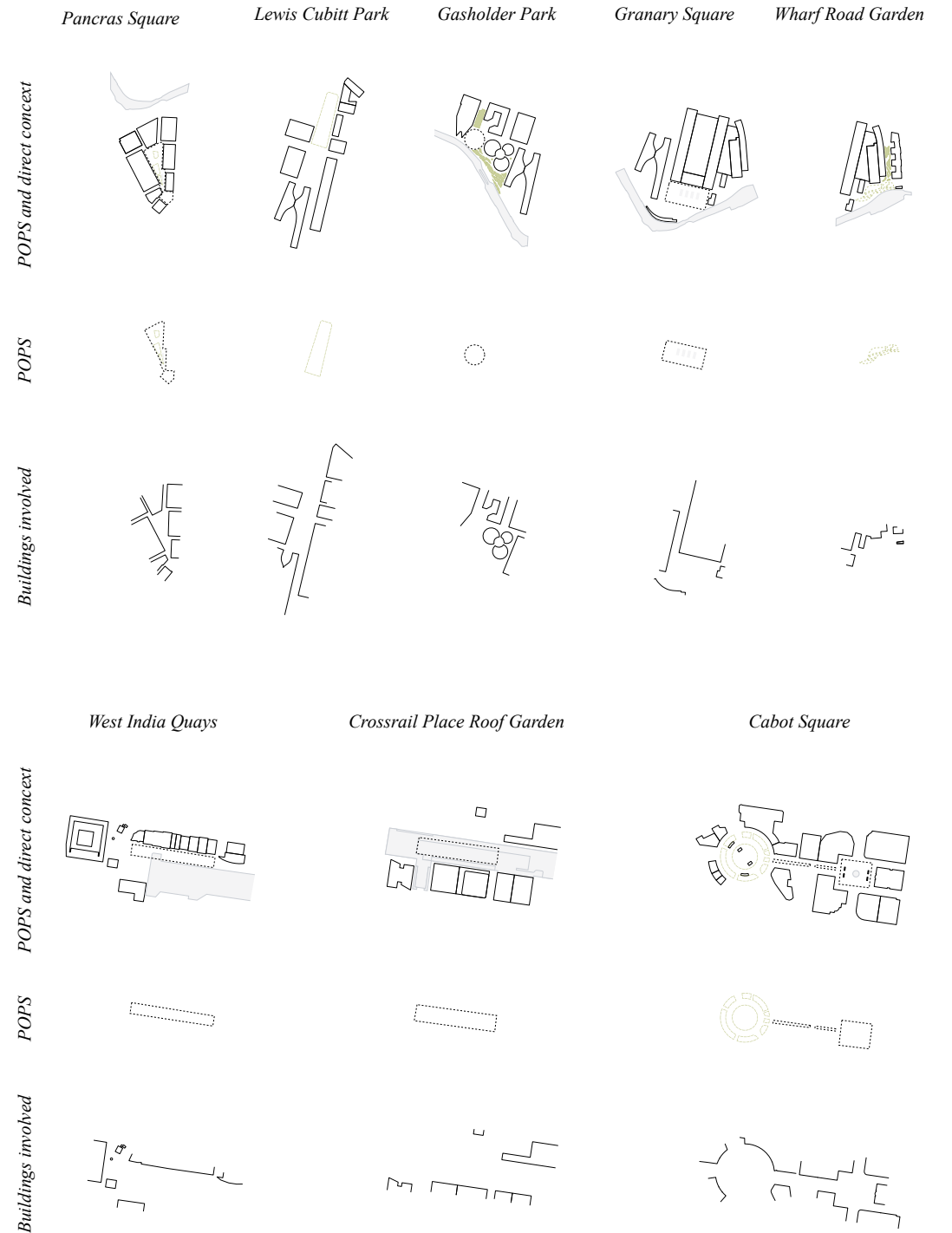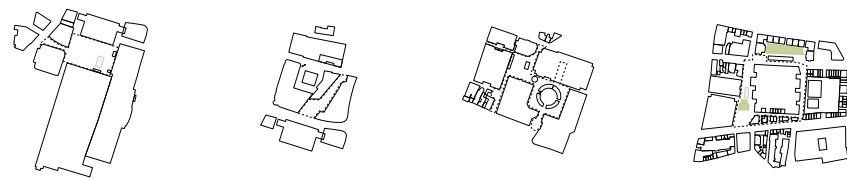
Figure 15. *Scope of research: atlas of pops,* image by author (2021)

Exchange Square　　Broadgate Plaza　　Broadgate Circle　　Finsbury Square
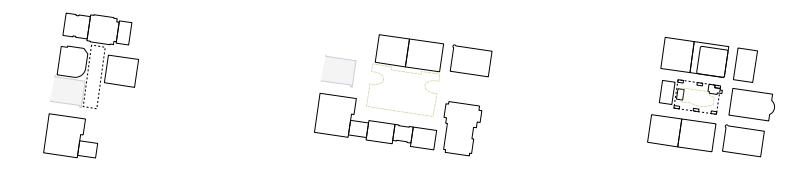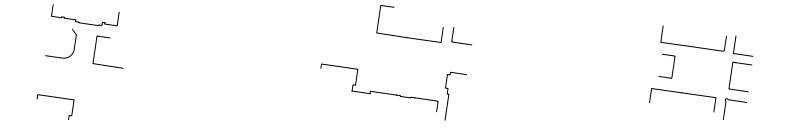

POPS and direct concext

POPS

Buildings involved

Reuters Plaza　　Jubilee Park　　Canada Square Park
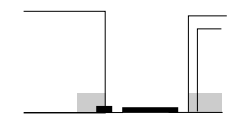
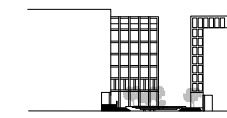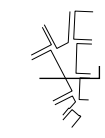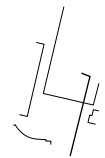*POPS and direct concext*

POPS

Buildings involved

Figure 15. *Scope of research: atlas of pops,* image by author (2021)

Cut　　Section　　Elements as division tool

Pancras Square
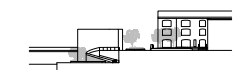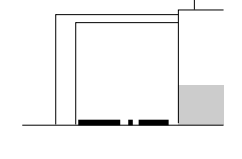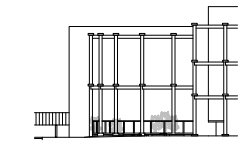
Granary Square
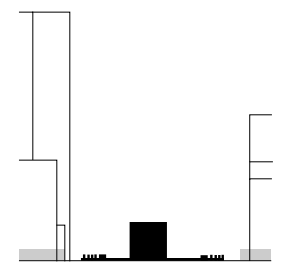
Wharf Road Garden

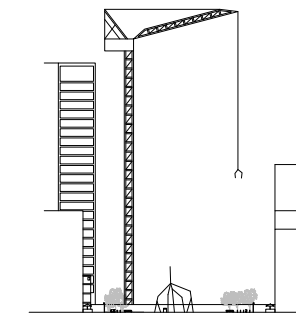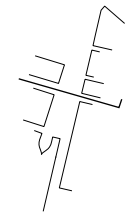*Gasholder Park*

Lewis Cubitt Park

Figure 16. *Elements as division tool: King's Cross area,* image by author (2021)

Figure 17. *Pancras Square: elements as guidance and division tool,* in 'Elements' (2021)

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Figure 18. *Pancras Square: elements as guidance and division tool along retail,* in 'Elements' (2021)

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DEFINING PRIVATELY OWNED PUBLIC SPACE AND PUBLIC SPACE

Figure 19. *Between Pancras Square and Granary Square: guiding elements towards other POPS,* in 'Elements' (2021)

Figure 20. *Pancras Square: disruption and maintenance elements,* in 'Elements' (2021)

DEFINING PRIVATELY OWNED PUBLIC SPACE AND PUBLIC SPACE

Figure 21. *Food for All: initiative handing out food to the vulnerable behind King's Cross,* photograph by author (2021)

The previous chapter demonstrated the pitfalls or shortcomings of contemporary POPS, as well as possible advantages or opportunities. The following chapter will discuss *if* architecture can mediate between private and public interests.

To find a suitable plot for an intervention in a privatised scenery such as King's Cross area one has to look further and find the borders where segregation becomes visible. At the back-side of King's Cross Station one is able to see how food is handed out to the vulnerable, while on the other side of the station one would not see any of that at all (figure 21). A meaningful intervention could appear around these borders: often a target for overdevelopment because of the unique and highly accessible location. *Belgrove House,* the former King's Cross coach station - built in the 1930's -, is an example of such place. The memory of the site is not only a possible stage or a decorum which can be used, it also puts the significance of the site with a completely new function back in the urban stage. It is part of an ongoing discussion where private investors have been trying to redevelop the building into a life-sciences centre. Without careful consideration of the significant historical context the former building will be demolished to make place for a new ten-storey high building. Heritage organisations have objected to these redevelopments since it is located in one of the oldest conservation areas in England surrounded by Grade-I and Grade-II listed Georgian terraces, Argyle Square, King's Cross & St. Pancras Station.[1] Therefore, Belgrove House has great potential to intervene as well as it gives back something which once used to be public.

It has become clear that *safety* in contemporary pops is an important aspect of why spaces are designed the way it is done and how London - and many other cities - have reached out to solutions such as CCTV surveillance. As well as the fact these design solutions are not creating representational spaces. According to Jane Jacobs there are other ways in which one could create safe places: she discusses how sidewalks, streets and the program surrounding those spaces play an important role in this and the urban vitality which comes from human activity.[2] In order to stimulate human participation, Jacobs believes a sense of personal belonging and social cohesiveness comes from narrow crowded multi-use streets: one should give reasons to occupy the streets during the day - and night - and allow different rituals to happen. POPS as seen in the site analysis show

[1] Ward, O.
Monstrosity Proposed on Euston Road (2020)

[2] Jacobs, J.
"The Uses of Sidewalks: Safety", in *The City Reader* (2016)

more of the large-scaled character, nothing comparable with a narrow crowded multi-use street. The initial program of an intervention could be formed taking this into consideration.

In *Architectural Positions* it is discussed how Herman Hertzberger and De Solà-Morales both notice the potential of the grey area between public and private.[3] Hertzberger believes architects should focus on creating social interaction within buildings, rather than focus too much on relative concepts such as private and public. Therefore many of his designs focus on creating cities within buildings, where he creates interior streets and squares and the boundary between private and public starts to become more vague. This is seen in his designs for schools, the Centraal Beheer Office, Tivoli in Utrecht and many other projects. The visual relations between levels create sights and views, playing with different heights, light and dark spaces are ways in which the hallways become lively streets where social interaction takes place. One could consider Belgrove House as a potential representation or exploration of the grey area between public and private. Architecture could intervene by moving or blurring thresholds, staging publicness.

Figure 22. *Centraal Beheer Offices,* Herman Hertzberger, 1968-1972

Figure 23. *Delft Montessori School,* Herman Hertzberger

The way POPS are used, suggests the need for an open architecture in which people can act more freely. In my opinion there lay opportunities in designing *affordances* when creating these places. Rob Withagen discusses how the notion of affordances was introduced by Gibson during the 1960's. James Gibson was an American psychologist and considered affordances opportunities for action: not necessarily causing certain behaviour but creating possibilities. Yet, according to Withagen architects do not only create opportunities but can also *invite* certain behavior.[4] Affordances allow many things to happen and trigger the individual's memory in a different way, giving people room to act more freely. Sometimes affordances might happen accidentally. But consciously creating affordances where people are invited to act freely - on the other hand to keep control over how the space will be used -, could be extremely valuable when designing future POPS. Hence, the following paragraphs will discuss multiple precedents.

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[3] Hertzberger, H. in *Architectural Positions: Architecture, Modernity and the Public Sphere.* (2009)

[4] Withagen, R. et al. *Affordances can invite behavior: Reconsidering the relationship between affordances and agency.* (2012)

On March 14th 2022 I joined the conversations 'Afbraak van de architectuur' with Herman Hertzberger and Arna Mačkić at De Balie in Amsterdam. Its main discussion was about the lack of social engagement in contemporary architecture. Hertzberger showed in his presentation a few photographs explaining how a 'simple' element meant for the prevention of car parking can afford so many things. Many of the photographs visualise how people and their participation become part of the design. It is surprising how people will always try to make places their own and create a sense of ownership, whether it is to add something, move stuff around or use it in different ways.

Figure 24. *Photographs from presentation 'Afbraak van de Architectuur',* Herman Hertzberger, 2022

Figure 25. *Photograph from presentation 'Afbraak van de Architectuur',* Herman Hertzberger, 2022

Figure 26. *Photograph from presentation 'Afbraak van de Architectuur',* Herman Hertzberger, 2022

Aldo van Eyck was well known for his playgrounds in Amsterdam. With minimal means he created places for kids, as well as it became a place to gather for their parents (figure 27). The elements used are less determined compared to playing elements often seen at playgrounds. The sand pit was part of the urban square instead of seeing it as a separate element. Besides, it affords a place to sit for the parents to keep an eye on their kids, play with them or socialise with others. Poles were not only division tools, but were - as often on the streets - used to jump over. A lot of the elements used by Aldo van Eyck seem to be a response to the day to day life on the streets: how the streets afford different uses and how they are appropriated by the public.

Figure 27. *Amsterdam Playground,* by Aldo van Eyck, Amsterdam City Archive.

Figure 28. *Hyde Park: appropriation of streets,* photograph by author (2021)

Architectural *appropriation* could as well be seen as an opportunity when designing POPS. Giving people the opportunity to appropriate a space allows them to make it their own (figure 28). An exhibition called 'Architecture of Appropriation' at the Nieuwe Instituut in Rotterdam (2017) showed how the built environment could be seen as a constant invitation to transform. Along with designing elements or spaces which afford multiple uses, an intervention could act as an invitation to transform or appropriate according to the needs of the user. One could balance between static and / or transformable elements which allow multi-use, as well as reconsider whether to design or sometimes not to design at all. The 'staging' of publicness could change during the day and moves along with the people who inhabit the space. In the end, research has shown how sometimes open and seemingly untouched spaces form the most lively and exciting places.[5]

Rethinking privately owned public spaces means thinking about how to invite the public to use the spaces we create beyond consumerism. Rethinking ways in which the architect can create safe spaces without limiting the public too much. As well as to rethink how the built environment could be used in multiple ways and ask questions whether to design or not to design. Architects should be aware of their responsibility and ability to create spaces for the public, sometimes beyond their architectural assignments. Instead of focussing too much on the limitations of certain clients, architects carry the responsibility to think for the public when others won't.

[5] Minton, A.
Ground Control: Fear and Happiness in the Twenty-first-century City. (2012)

The aim of this research has been to discuss the complexity of the grey area between privately owned public space and public space and the emerging issues related to this topic. It tries to give a different perspective on the discussed issue: how it was formed, the initial intention and the role of the architect in creating a more balanced relationship between public and private interests more suitable in current times.

First of all, the shift public space has gone through is seen as a result of social, political and economic influences specific to its time: described according to the influence of disruptions such as the Blitz, the Great Fire and Big Bang. These disruptions asked for quick fundamental change, as well as it created room for exploration of new styles and ideas. These spaces are a repsonse to time-specific needs and therefore can be seen as a reflection of its Zeitgeist. To acknowledge the temporality of this and reflect on those changes is essential, especially when the believed positive effects turn out to be damaging. One should not see this merely as a political issue and underestimate the ability of architecture to direct these shifts.

Secondly, the contradiction between public space as 'representational space' and 'representations of space' is seen as a cause of contemporary pops to be more conditional instead of unconditional for the public. The exclusion of groups can be the result of the aim to improve the representation of spaces, especially when different interests diverge by handing over responsibility of public good to private interests. An intervention should focus on narrowing the gap between creating representational space and representations of space. Instead of laying emphasis on the distinction described by Levebre and Mitchell, one should find ways to create representations of space *by creating* representational spaces. Following the ideas of Augé, a possible intervention in such a privatised public life scenery should focus on improving the relations with the historical and social fabric, in order to create *places* instead of *non-places*. As a result, Belgrove House and its significant location around King's Cross became a place of interest to respond to the current privatisation.

'Usage' has shown how an intervention should be closely connected to the railway system to generate constant flows of people, should be meaningful for public as well as private interests, less conditional and promote sudden social encounter. The way these spaces are used, suggests the need for an open architecture in which people can act more freely. One would need to rethink how to design safe spaces more open for own interpretation, in order to trigger a broader public and design *representational* spaces. 'Elements' are seen as an extra layer influencing this usage. These elements should focus on multi-use in order to trigger a broader public, on the other hand not be too overdetermined or static. Instead of using elements merely as a way to divide, guide or trigger one specific usage, these should allow more things to happen. Besides, attract a diverse public and bring them together. The third layer: 'Materials' can be indications of private and public: using certain materials inside or outside might blur the borders between the two. Besides, ownership could become less tangible and visible when one uses a mixture of material compositions and less repetition. In the end, the messiness or randomness of streets sometimes actually define the liveliness of the streets. It allows things to happen. In a way disorder is sometimes needed to create less homogeneous spaces.

Finally, this research makes use of the potential of the grey area between public and private based on ideas of Hertzberger, De Solà-Morales, Jacobs and the knowledge obtained from the 'Usage', 'Elements' and 'Materials' studies in order to create a more balanced relationship between public and private interests. One should treat the site as a representation or exploration of this grey area, where the boundaries between public and private become more vague. In relation to the need for an open architecture and the ideas of Jacobs to stimulate human participation, the research suggests to consciously design *affordances* in which people are invited to act freely - on the other hand to keep control over how the space will be used. Along with designing elements or spaces which afford multiple uses, the intervention should act as an invitation to transform or *appropriate* according to the needs of the user. One could balance between static and / or transformable elements which allow multi-use, as well as reconsider whether to design or sometimes not to design at all.

To conclude, privately owned public spaces call for reconsideration of new civic programs and spaces. These spaces form enclaves creating in-betweens or thresholds in which architecture could mediate with careful consideration of site, used elements and materials. This research understands the site not merely as a horizontal surface, but more as a four-dimensional space existing of layers which have to be reconsidered. An intervention in such site, should try to find opportunities and possibilities by making use of the identified grey area and memory of site, space, elements and materials. The memory of the site is not only a stage or a decorum which is used, it also puts the significance of the site with a completely new function back in the urban stage. An intervention has to trigger the memory of site, elements and materials and thereby the memory of the people who use it. The borders between outside and inside become more vague, as well as the usage of the space which changes during day and night. This results in an intervention and program that *invites* and *allows* different uses or behaviour which in the end will trigger the memory of a more diverse and broader public. Using this grey area, elemental and material memories allows POPS to be less determined and more open for own interpretation, as it promotes a more free use of public space. The users or actors play a vital role in this, since they are the ones who should change the space into the desired program. Something is asked from the

public, as well as it gives back. In relation to the identified grey area and material memories, affordances and appropriation of space are tools in which less determined spaces can be created. It is a way there can be balanced between to design or not to design. By triggering the individual's memory invitations for particular *usage* are composed. As well as *elements* open for own interpretation and the use of *materials* as indications for public and private are the means in which the architect could have influence and create 'representational spaces'. In doing so, the intervention will rediscover ways in which the architect creates safe spaces without limiting the public too much. As well as it rethinks how the built environment could be used in multiple ways and ask questions whether to design or not to design. Architects should be aware of their responsibility and ability to create spaces for the public, sometimes beyond their architectural assignments. Instead of focussing too much on the limitations of certain clients, architects carry the responsibility to think for the public when others won't. Creating a sense of ownership by mediating between public and private, seems to have become the most important task for the architect. Following this, my design proposal seeks for an architecture which embodies these outcomes.

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Lowry, L.S. *Our Town*, 1943. Oil on canvas. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2022. Photo credit: Rochdale Arts & Heritage Service. Art UK. https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/our-town-90199

Nods, P. *Usage, Elements, Materials.* (2021)

Historical analysis

With my interests in privately owned public spaces, the first thing I wanted to investigate is how the notion of public space has changed through time. Land ownership in England has always been a touchy subject, since large parts of England were initially owned by aristocracy. Even today, around 17% of land ownership remains unknown and if you would want to know who owns what, it would cost you an incredible amount of money.

Therefore, creating a historical map of the historical shifts was essential to eventually understand these spaces. The map shows an inventory of privately owned public spaces in London (2021), in relation to the city expansion through time. It is not surprising at all that these spaces appear in the heart of the city, where it is most dense, the commercial functions appear the most and the flows of people are generated consequently. Along with that a timeline in which you are able to see the shifts of land ownership, shown more closely on page 68. It becomes visible that land was once owned by the rich and powerful, but became more public over time. Nowadays, we experience how public space has shifted back towards more privatised due to political changes. The inventory of privately owned public spaces already narrowed down the scope of this research at an early stage.

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Figure 29. *Historical shifts of landownership, city expansion and POPS*

1979 Start of the great sell-off of publicly owned land under successive governments.

1873

The Return of Owners of Land, reveals that 4,000 lords and gents own half of England, sparking calls for land reform.

1947

For 20 years after the Second World War, councils are allowed to buy land cheaply, sparking the boom in council-house building (right), but landowners succeed in changing land compensation rules.

Late 1800s / Early 1900s

Land reformers bring in legislation that creates statutory right to an allotment for growing food, and sets up the first County Farms to help smallholders into farming. First council houses built.

1649

In the aftermath of the Civil War and execution of King Charles I, the Diggers movement, led by Gerard Winstanley, aimed to overturn ideas about the private ownership of land, declaring the Earth to be a "common treasury for all".

1500 - 1914

Land used by commoners for grazing and subsistence once covered around 30% of England, but its enclosure by the aristocracy and gentry reduced it to just 3% of the country today.

1066

William the Conqueror declares all land belongs to the Crown, and parcels it out to barons and the Church, while keeping an estate for the monarchy. Twenty years later, the Domesday Book forms the first record of land ownership in England, and the only one for the next 800 years.

Figure 30. *Historical shifts of landownership*

Inventory of privately owned public spaces

The privately owned public spaces shown in the historical mapping are a result of the data obtained from QGIS. The image above shows an inventory of all te privately owned public spaces in London today and their relation to the railway system. It is clearly visible that the hubs of pops appear near large railway stations in the city. It therefore made sense to look into these particular places more closely since it would be the most time efficient and besides, give a better understanding of the relation between these spaces. On the next page an overview is given from the privately owned public spaces seen in London, along with the area in hectares and registered owners relating to the numbers of the image above.
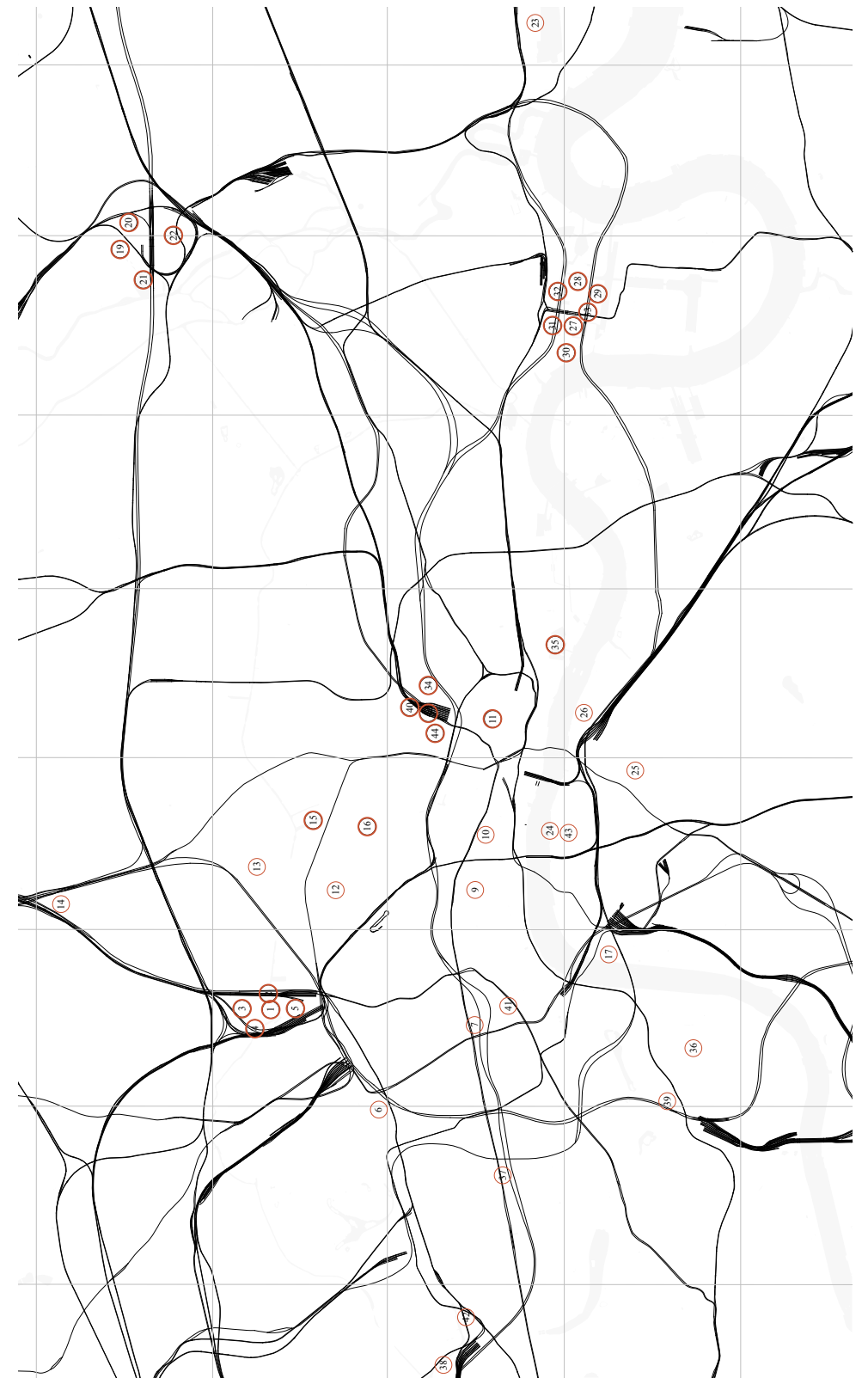
Figure 31. *Inventory of privately owned public spaces London 2021*

#	Name	Value	Owner
1.	**Granary Square (Camden)**	**0,45**	**King's Cross Central: a partnership between Argent Kings Cross and Australian Super**
2.	**Wharf Road Gardens (Camden)**	**0,23**	**King's Cross Central: a partnership between Argent Kings Cross and Australian Super**
3.	**Lewis Cubitt Park (Camden)**	**0,15**	**King's Cross Central: a partnership between Argent Kings Cross and Australian Super**
4.	**Gasholder Park (Camden)**	**0,44**	**King's Cross Central: a partnership between Argent Kings Cross and Australian Super**
5.	**Pancras Square (Camden)**	**0,44**	**King's Cross Central: a partnership between Argent Kings Cross and Australian Super**
6.	Regents Place (Camden)	1,78	British Land
7.	Central St Giles (Camden)	0,12	Central Saint Giles Ltd Partnership
8.	**Exchange Square (City of London)**	**0,71**	**British Land and GIC**
9.	New Street Square (City of London)	0,25	Land Securities
10.	Paternoster Square (City of London)	0,43	Mitsubishi Estate London
11.	Open space at Leadenhall Building (City of London)	0,22	CC Land: a Hong Kong-listed company run by Chinese billionaire Cheung Chung-kiu
12.	New River Head (Islington)	0,36	Manhattan Loft Corp
13.	Angel-on-the-Green (Islington)	0,04	Groveworld
14.	Arsenal Podium (Islington)	2,70	Arsenal Ltd
15.	City Road Basin (Islington)	0,54	Miller Group, Groveworld and British Waterways
16.	Pear Tree Street (Islington)	0,11	Silvertown Properties
17.	The London Eye (Lambeth)	0,48	Owned by a subsidiary of Merlin Entertainments
18.	Merton Mansions Gardens (Merton)	0,35	Private
19.	Victory Park and Portlands (East Village) (Newham)	2,38	Get Living London (owned by Qatari Diar)
20.	Mirabelle Gardens (East Village) (Newham)	0,32	Get Living London (owned by Qatari Diar)
21.	Water Glades (East Village) (Newham)	2,11	Get Living London (owned by Qatari Diar)
22.	Westfield Stratford City (Newham)	1,01	Westfield Corporation
23.	Excel Centre (Newham)	2,59	ADNEC (Abu Dhabi National Exhibitions Company)
24.	Bankside (Southwark)	3,73	Private
25.	Tabard Square (Southwark)	0,40	Private
26.	More London (Southwark)	4,35	St Martins Property Group (controlled by the Kuwaiti state)
27.	**Cabot Square (Tower Hamlets)**	**0,47**	**Canary Wharf Group**
28.	**Canada Square Park (Tower Hamlets)**	**0,49**	**Canary Wharf Group**
29.	**Jubilee Park (Tower Hamlets)**	**1,13**	**Canary Wharf Group**
30.	Westferry Circus (Tower Hamlets)	0,31	Canary Wharf Group
31.	**West India Quays (Tower Hamlets)**	**0,49**	**Canary Wharf Group**
32.	**Crossrail Place Roof Garden (Tower Hamlets)**	**0,77**	**Canary Wharf Group**
33.	**Reuters Plaza (Tower Hamlets)**	**0,08**	**Canary Wharf Group**
34.	**Bishops Square, Spitalfields (Tower Hamlets)**	**1,23**	**JP Morgan**
35.	St Katherine Dock's Surrounds (Tower Hamlets)	0,85	Private
36.	Channel Four Community Garden (Westminster)	0,18	Channel Four
37.	Brown Hart Gardens (Westminster)	0,12	Grosvenor Group
38.	Paddington Central (Westminster)	0,57	British Land
39.	Cardinal Place (Westminster)	0,91	Land Securities
40.	**Broadgate Plaza (City of London)**	**0,30**	**British Land and GIC**
41.	St Martin's Courtyard (Westminster)	0,09	Longmartin Properties and Shaftesbury
42.	Merchant Square (Westminster)	1,29	European Land & Property
43.	NEO Bankside (Southwark)	0,23	Native and Grosvenor
44.	**Broadgate Circle and Finsbury Avenue Square (City of London)**		**British Land and GIC**
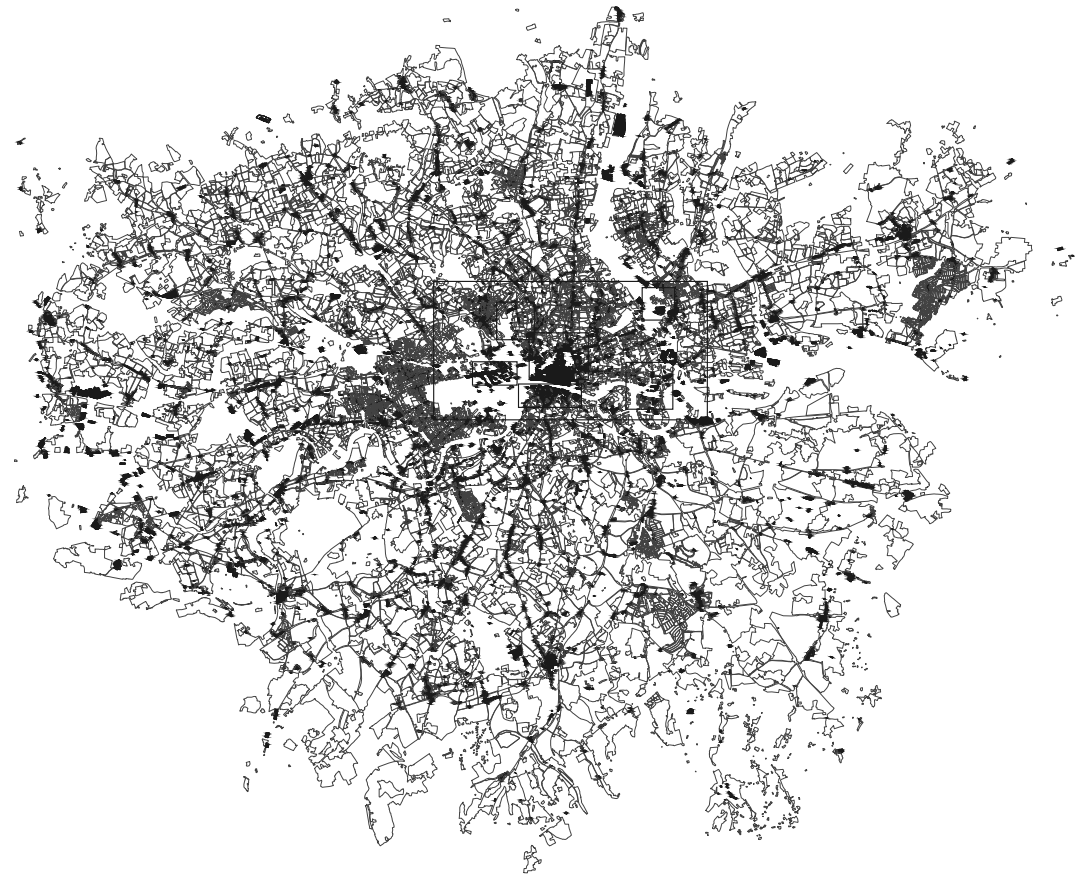
Figure 32. *Commercial (black), residential (grey) and POPS zones*

Commercial character

It is not very surprising to see contemporary POPS appear in and around the most commercial areas of the city. These spaces are bound to the commercial character and dependant on the surrounding retail in order to be profitable. The inventory of POPS made me zoom in to the places where hubs of POPS appear, located around the railway network and in the most commercial areas.
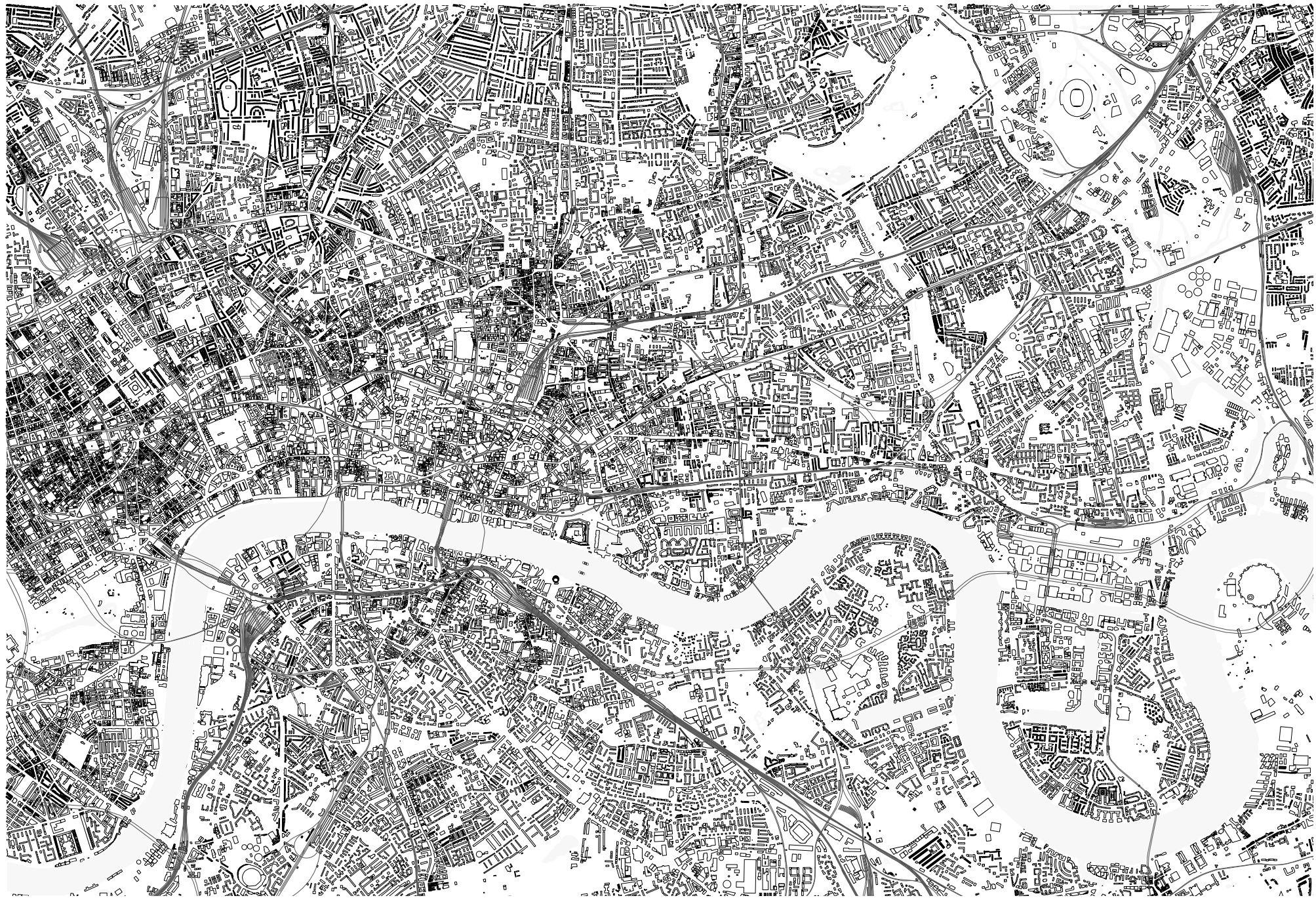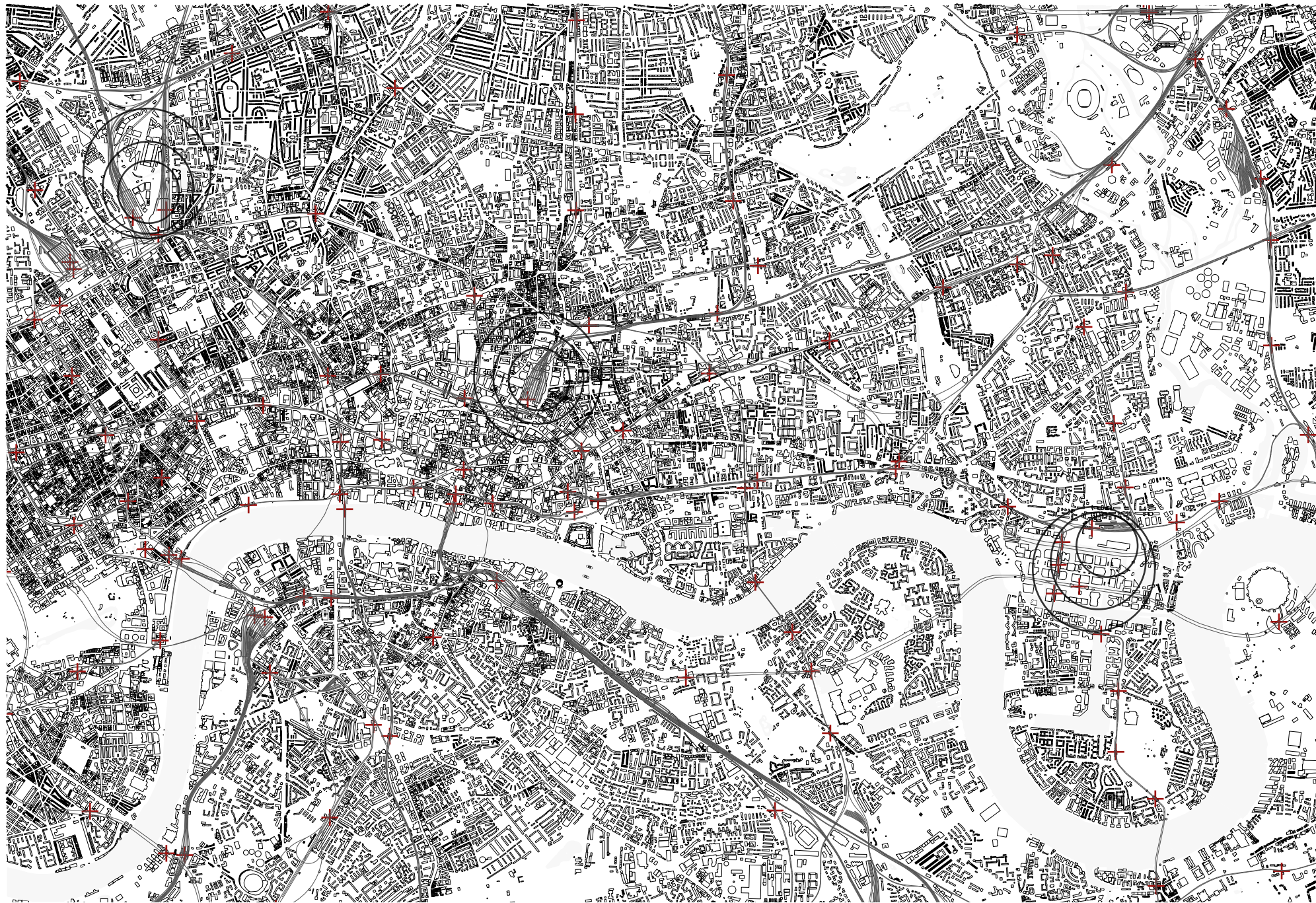
Figure 33. *Research location 1:40.000*

Figure 34. *Research location and POPS 1:40.000*

Figure 35. *Power of landassembly around railway stations*

As discussed in the research essay, along with the privatisation of the railway system in England the power of land assembly made it possible for investors to expand and increase their land around the train stations. Therefore, it is not surprising to see that large hubs of privately owned public spaces appear around those areas. Besides, the great connection to the railway system makes these places easily accessible for the public.

Figure 36. *Research areas: King's Cross, Broadgate and Canary Wharf*

SITE ANALYSIS

King's Cross Area

Before going to London, I wanted to look into the hubs of privately owned public spaces: *King's Cross area, Canary Wharf and Broadgate area.* Inspired by Jan Rothuizen - a Dutch artist known for *The Soft Atlas of the Netherlands* -, I started exploring King's Cross area in Google Streetview to get a better understanding of this site. This resulted in the following pen drawing. The drawing shows the connection to the King's Cross and St. Pancras station, as well as the flows of people it generates. The sequence of spaces is visible: people are guided from one privately owned public space to another. Each place has its own character but small relations become visible by repetition of elements and materials. Perhaps this drawing is not necessarily readable to others, but it helped me to know from the start what to look for when visiting London. It was a preperation of my site research, to be as efficient as possible during my stay.
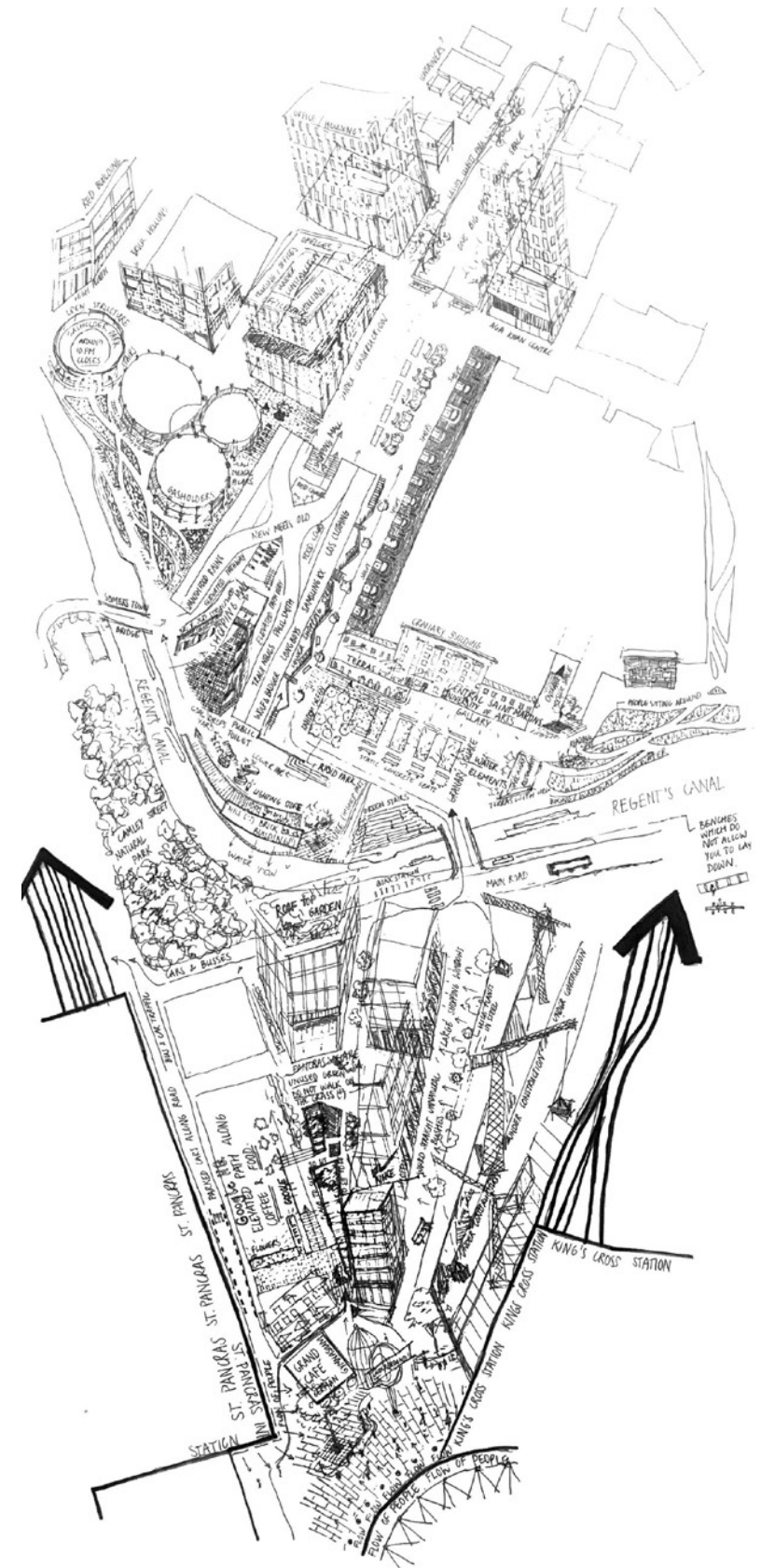
Figure 37. Exploration of King's Cross area based on Google streetview

POPS and direct conext

POPS

Buildings involved

POPS and direct conext

POPS

Buildings involved

POPS and direct conext

POPS

Buildings involved

POPS and direct conext

POPS

Buildings involved
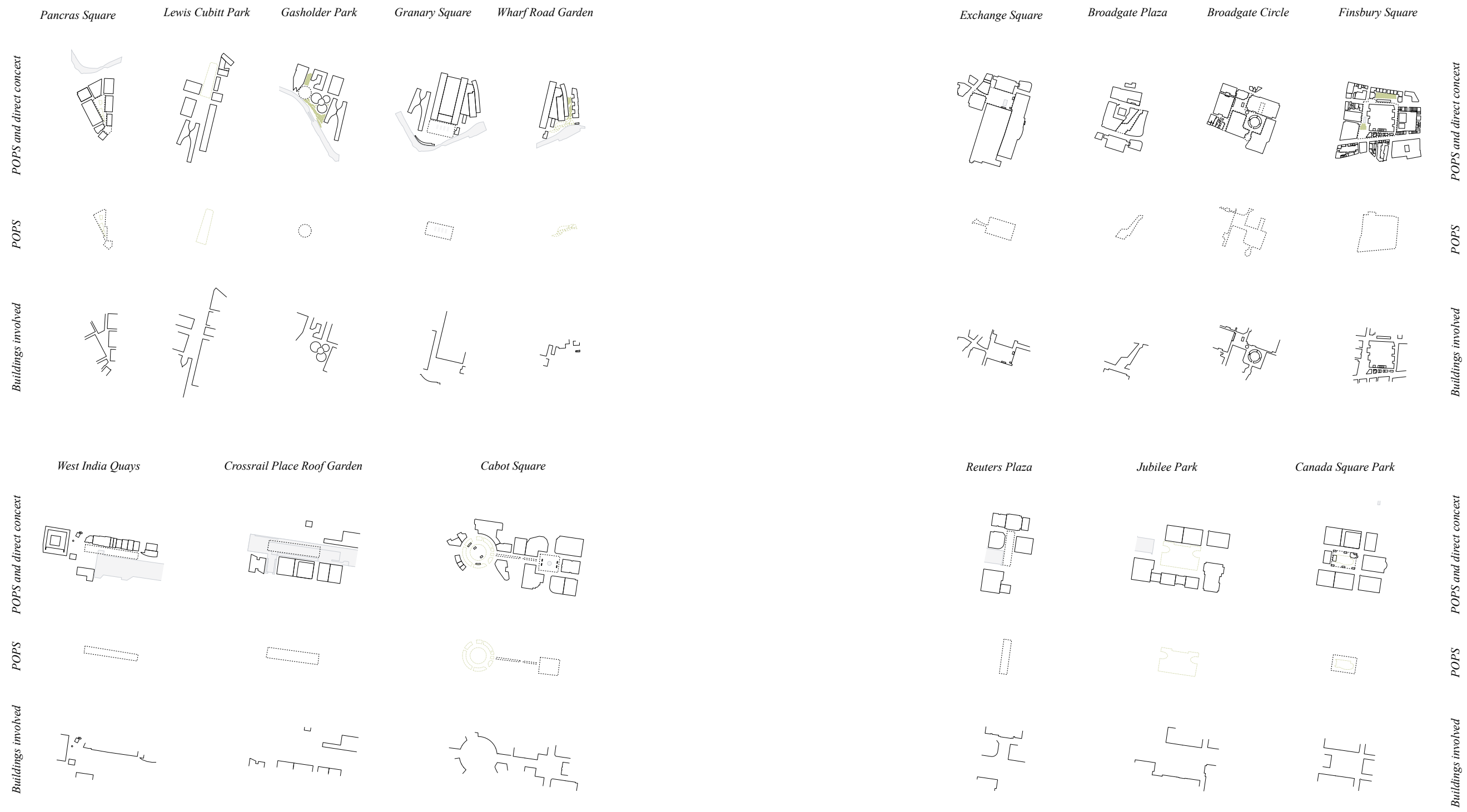
Figure 38. *Scope of research: atlas of POPS*

Cut	*Section*	*Elements as division tool*

Pancras Square

Granary Square

Wharf Road Garden

Gasholder Park

Lewis Cubitt Park
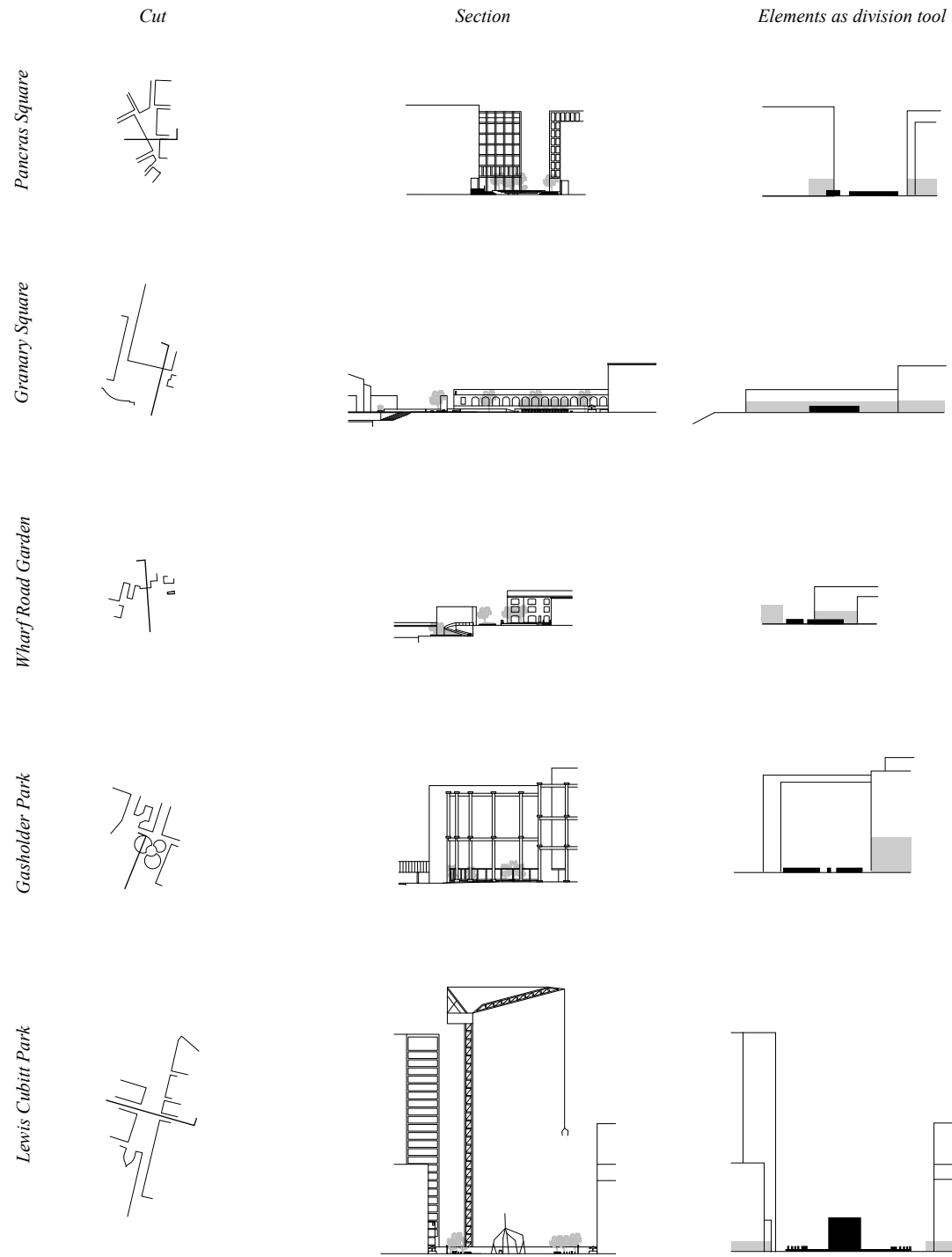
Figure 39. *Elements as division tool: King's Cross area*

Atlas of POPS

After going to London I made a documentation of 3 booklets: 'Usage', 'Elements' and 'Materials'. These booklets visualise 15 POPS visited during my stay. Along with that I tried to map these places to give an overview of the scale, their form and context.

King's Cross area has compared to Broadgate area and Canary Wharf a more residential character and is less corporate. Broadgate area and Canary Wharf form business districts which becomes visible in *how* and *by whom* these places are used. The scale of these places is huge and the human scale is often lost. This makes King's Cross area generally a more appreciated place to recreate compared to the more corporate privately owned public spaces.

What we see is a more individualised society within these spaces. Elements are more used as division tools instead of promoting social encounters. The relations and interactions between the users, objects and places is minimal - except for the interaction with surrounding retail. The POPS form short term recreation zones or even transition or traffic zones which are more focussed on consumerism rather than facilitating comfortable places outside for the public. Not only is there minimal freedom of use: it also excludes certain groups such as young adults or homeless people. Along with the anti-social behavior - whatever that might be - which is not allowed.

All conclusions from these studies are summarized in the research essay within this booklet.

Figure 40. *Usage: adding 5 dots, boosts the whole area.*
People play a vital role in consumerism, without these zones almost remain un-used.

Figure 41. *Physical or non-physical barriers King's Cross area.*
Thresholds which some people do not want or may not cross.

Figure 42. *Food For All: initiative giving free produce to the vulnerable, backside King's Cross Station*

After experiencing these places in real life and having read most of the literature I started to formulate different site conditions. Firstly, a possible intervention in such a privatised scenery should arise in an area close to the current privatisation in order to respond to it. Secondly, it should be highly accessible which generates flows of people, as well as the area should have a diverse public. King's Cross area therefore became an interesting site to intervene since it has a more residential character compared to other privatised areas. Finally, the site should preferrably be an open plot or existing structure where there is room for appropriation of the streets and form a public square. Finding a proper place to respond to the current privatisation in such a dense area one has to look further around the created borders. At the backside of King's Cross Station one will find different usage, different physical states of public spaces and different people. Figure 42 shows how *Food for All* is handing out produce to the vulnerable. I started wandering around this area to see the stark contrast between POPS and other public spaces and stumbled upon Belgrove House.

Memory of site

Right in front of the current King's Cross Station and one of the oldest conservation areas one will find Belgrove House, a Victorian aged brick structure now in use by Access Selfstorage (figure 43). At first it seems to most people poorly maintained, but it triggered some memories as I looked more closely. By analysing the existing facade, one can already see the facade used to be open. It made me wonder about the previous program.

Figure 43. *Belgrove House, Crestfield St. (Camden)*

Figure 44. *Belgrove House, Crestfield Str. (Camden)*

Figure 45. *Belgrove House, Argyle Square (Camden)*
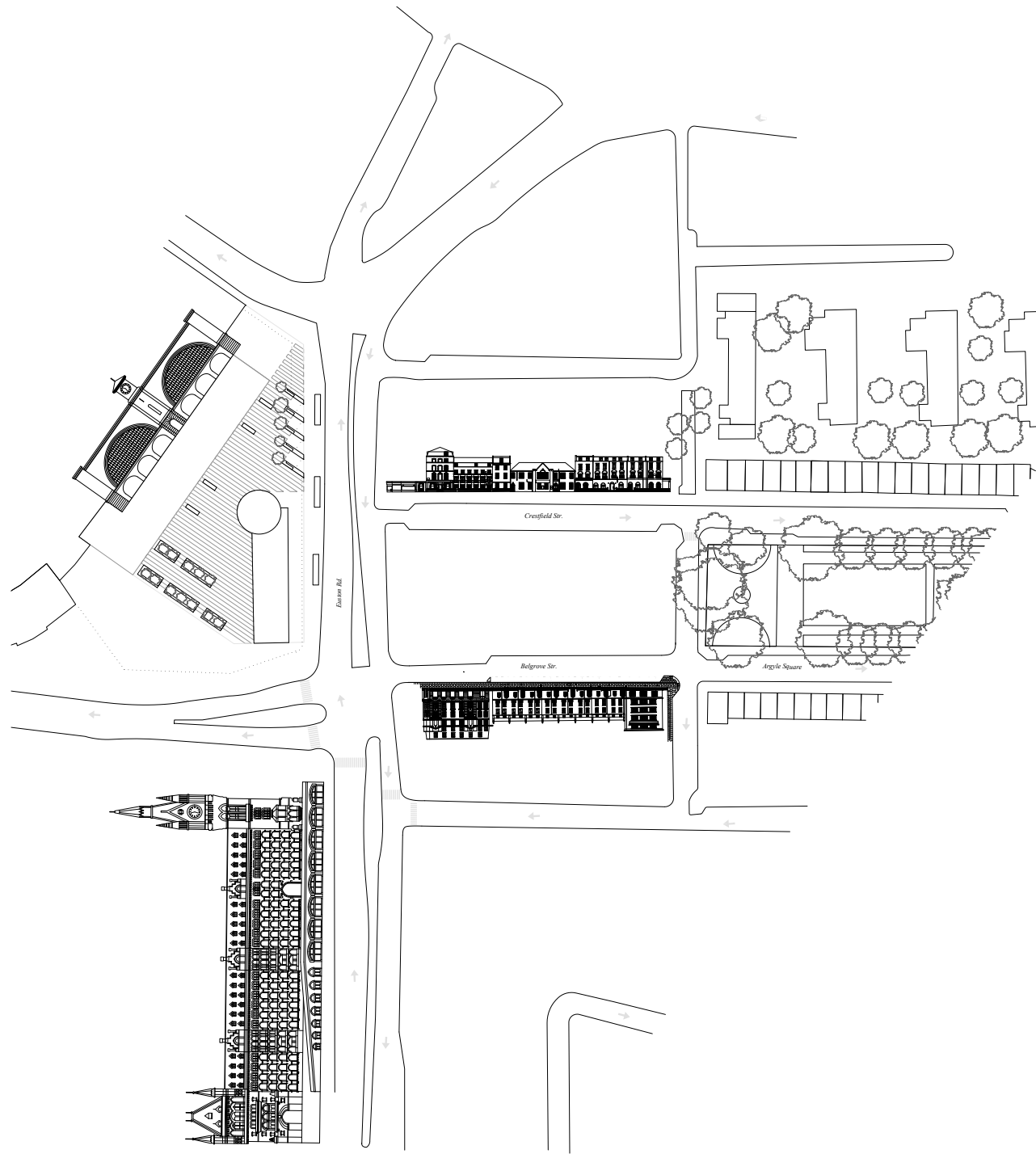
Figure 46. *Significance of site: King's Cross station, St. Pancras station, Georgian terraces and Argyle Park*

After speaking to Minna - a man who worked as a butler at one of the hotels in Crestfield Street -, I got a better understanding of the memory of site. This building used to be the King's Cross Coach station (figure 47) and is now part of a huge discussion about redeveloping the site. In the 1950's the building became a warehouse and was closed off for the public. The facades were filled with brickwork and it lost its open and public character. As many other buildings become victim of the large-scale redevelopment plans within this popular and expensive area, the historical significance of Belgrove House specifically has been completely ignored. Many heritage organisations expressed their concern to the way Camden Council has already accepted plans for a huge 'Knowledge Quarter' designed by Alford Hall Monaghan Morris. According to many people there is a lack of scale, as well as the lack of regard to heritage in this highly sensitive setting. And while the area is still pre-dominantly residential developers claim this area would nowadays be home to the 'growing knowledge economy'. People call the new development plans the *'Belgrove Monstrosotiy'* (figure 48).

Figure 47. *King's Cross Coach Station (built c. 1930): now Belgrove House since 1950*

Figure 48. *Belgrove House Life-sciences research center: a redevelopment proposal by Alford Hall Monaghan Morris*

Figure 49. *Belgrove House, interior photo*

The new plans for Belgrove House form a very good example of what is happening with large metropolitan cities. Belgrove House became an example to me, of how London has become and to what I wanted to respond. This research understands the site not merely as a horizontal surface, but more as a four-dimensional space existing of layers which have to be reconsidered. An intervention in such site, should try to find opportunities and possibilities by making use of the identified grey area and memory of site, space, elements and materials. The memory of the site is not only a stage or a decorum which is used, it also puts the significance of the site with a completely new function back in the urban stage.

The following pages show some additional photos of the existing Belgrove House.

Figure 50. *Belgrove House, facade and interior photo*

Figure 51. *Site, scale 1:3000*

Figure 52. *Appropriation of the streets at Hyde Park, London*

Around the existing Belgrove House one will experience one of the oldest conservation areas in London. The building is surrounded by King's Cross Station, St. Pancras International Station, Argyle Park and many Georgian terraces houses. This makes it an important part of the city, as well as it needs a very sensitive design approach because of it's sensitive context. Besides the significant buildings and the good accessibility, the site is appealing because it is characterized by the many hotels at Belgrove St., Crestfield St. and Argyle Square. Behind those hotels you will find more residential areas, schools, restaurants / bars or religious buildings.

The considered program

Should be profitable
Should give back to community / locals
Should promote accidental encounter between people
Should allow unexpected things to happen
Should either include or allow to participate
Should be beneficial to both public / private interests
Should mediate between private and public

Design intentions

With my design proposal I would like to narrow the gap between creating *representational space* and *representations of space*. Instead of laying emphasis on the distinction described by Levebre and Mitchell, one should find ways to create representations of space *by creating* representational spaces. A possible intervention in such a privatised public life scenery should focus on improving the relation with the historical and social fabric, in order to create *places* instead of *non-places*. Besides, it is essential the intervention is *closely connected to the railway system which generates a constant flow of people*.

The program should be meaningful for public, as well as private interests, should be less conditional and promote sudden social encounter. There is need for *an open architecture in which people can act more freely: affordances and appropriation.* The potential of the *grey area* between public and private needs to be explored and how to design safe spaces more open for own interpretation. In order to trigger a broader public and design representational spaces. Elements should focus on multi-use in order to do so, on the other hand not be too overdetermined. Ownership could become less tangible and visible when one uses a mixture of material compositions and less repetition. In the end, the messiness or randomness of streets sometimes actually define the liveliness of the streets. It allows things to happen. In a way disorder is sometimes needed to create less homogeneous spaces.
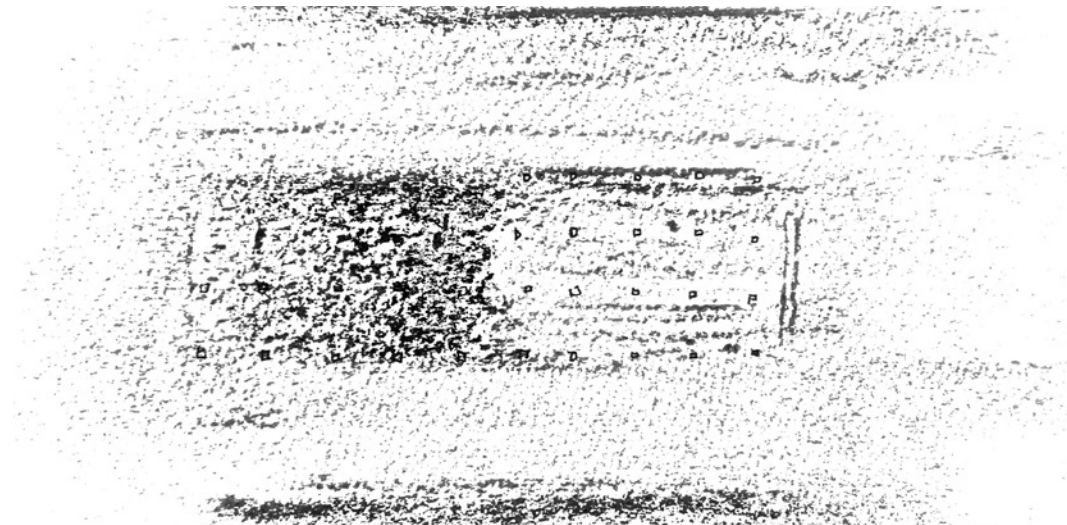
The Hall

Therefore, I am proposing a hall. By definition the room or space right behind the door. In my project it represents the *grey area* between public and private and functions as an urban threshold. It should be meaningful to the community, but might turn out to be of greater importance to the city.

Based on the ideas of *Jacobs*, *Hertzberger* and *Sola-de-Morales* the hall facilitates multiple functions for a larger public, finds opportunities or possibilities in the grey area between public and private and establishes a relationship with the historical context of the place by transforming the former King's Cross Coach Station.

An open podium

The building intents to act as a small open podium for (local) upcoming artists. Something is asked from the public, as well as it gives back to the public: an open podium at a central location surrounded by hotels and tourism. Participation is free for everyone: music, dance, theater, street artists, writers, poets or cabaret.

A part of the building contains studios which can be rented to talents, but can also be used by small companies or as study places. This way it becomes beneficial for the public, as well as it is profitable for private investors. On the corners there is room for a public market, the existing postal office and a laundry store.
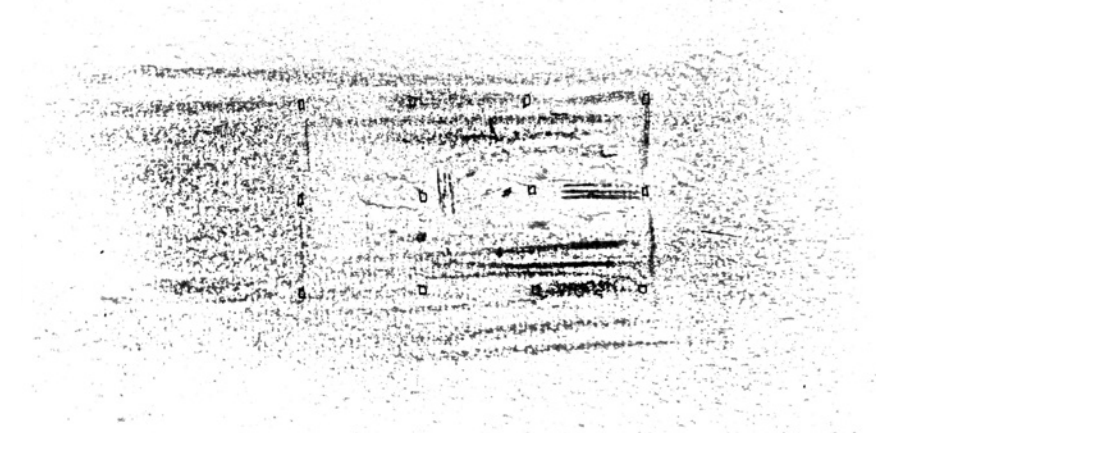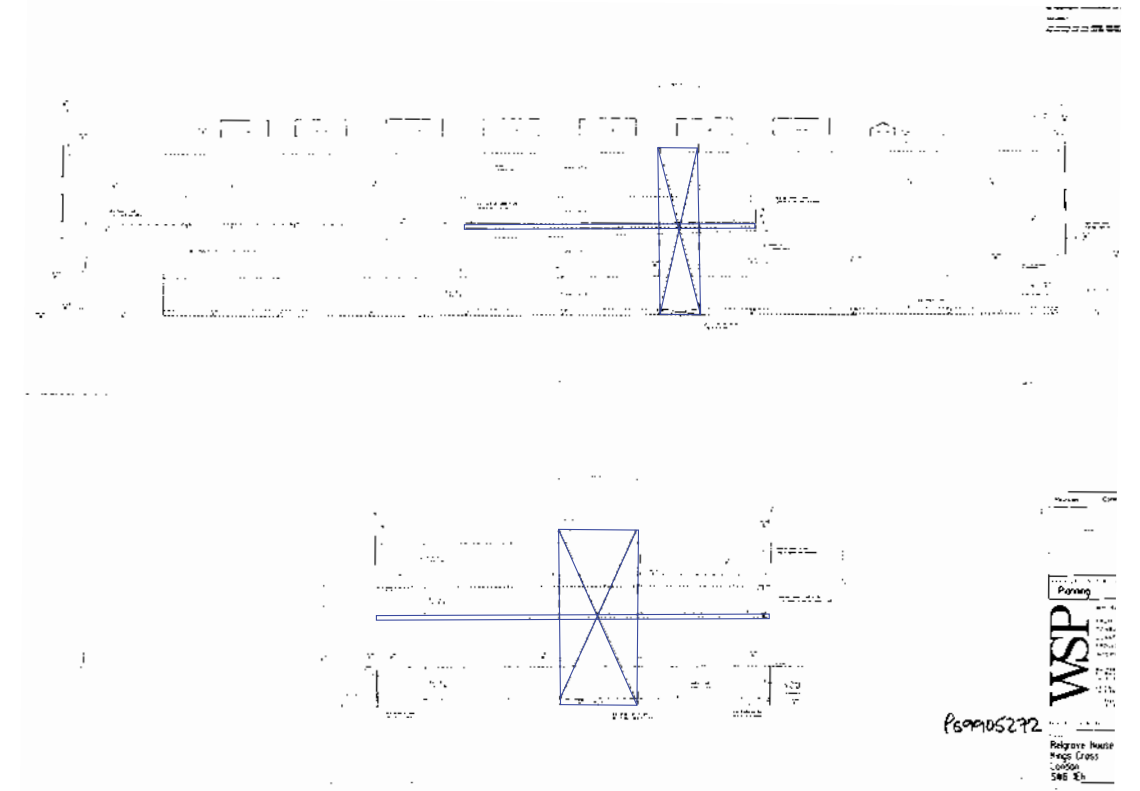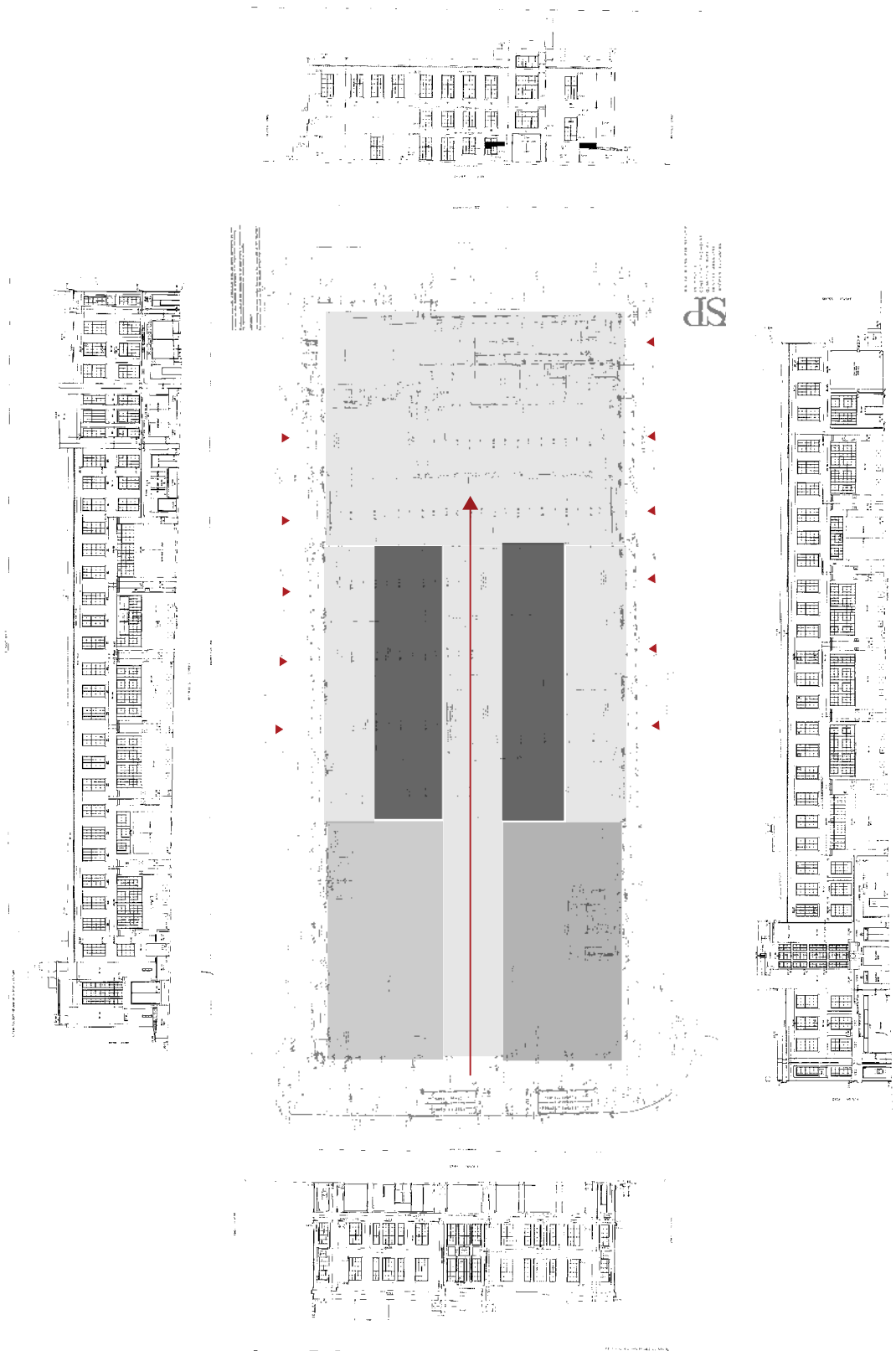
Left: existing floorplan and facades Belgrove House
Right: adjustments in section by Access Selfstorage

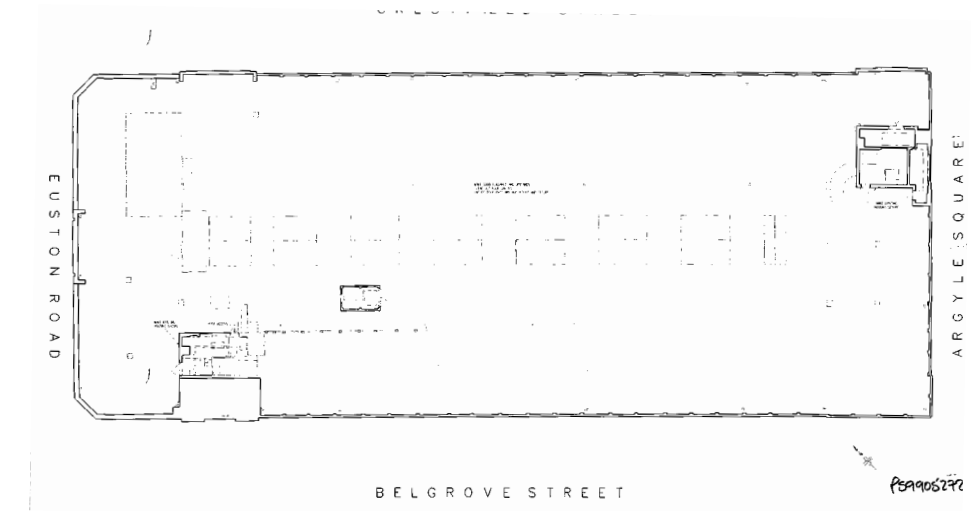*Drawings accessible at Camden Council, bad quality because of downsizing images.*

-1
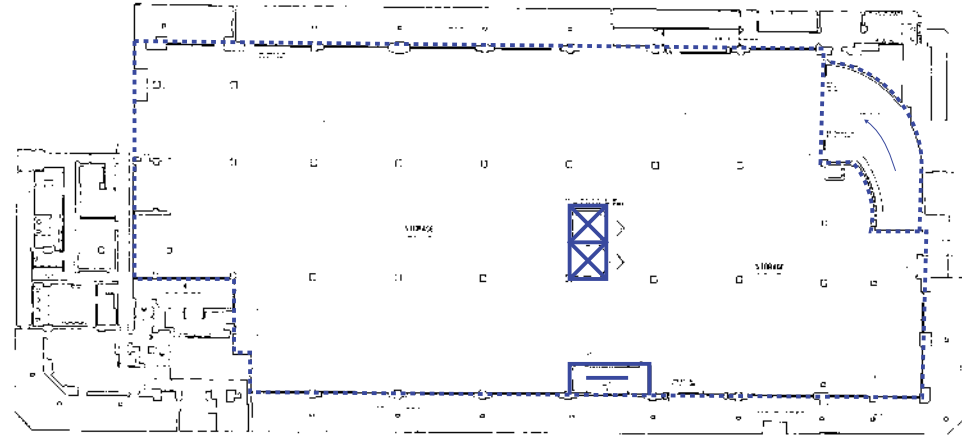
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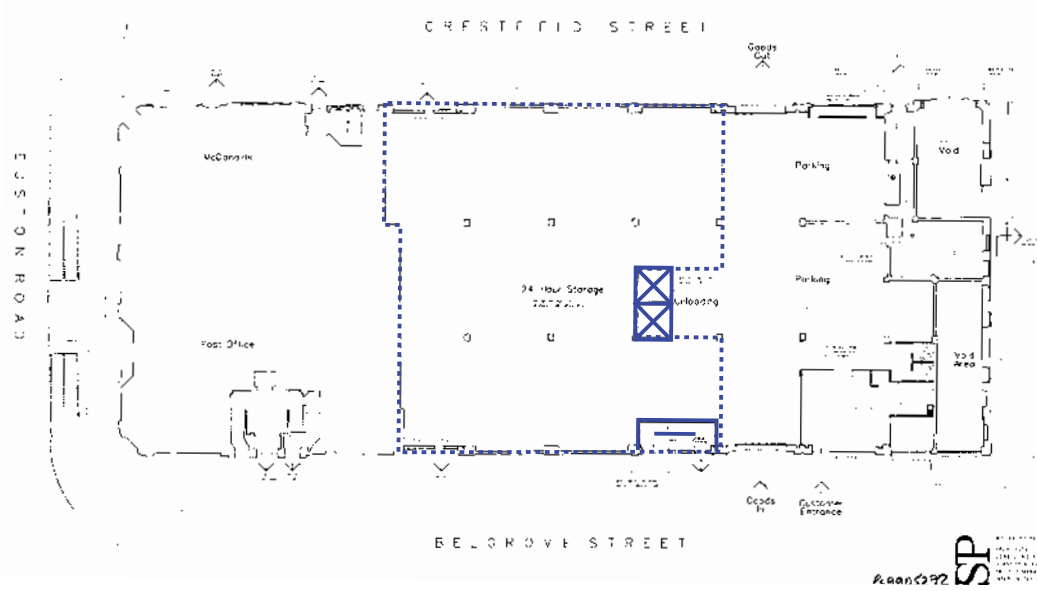
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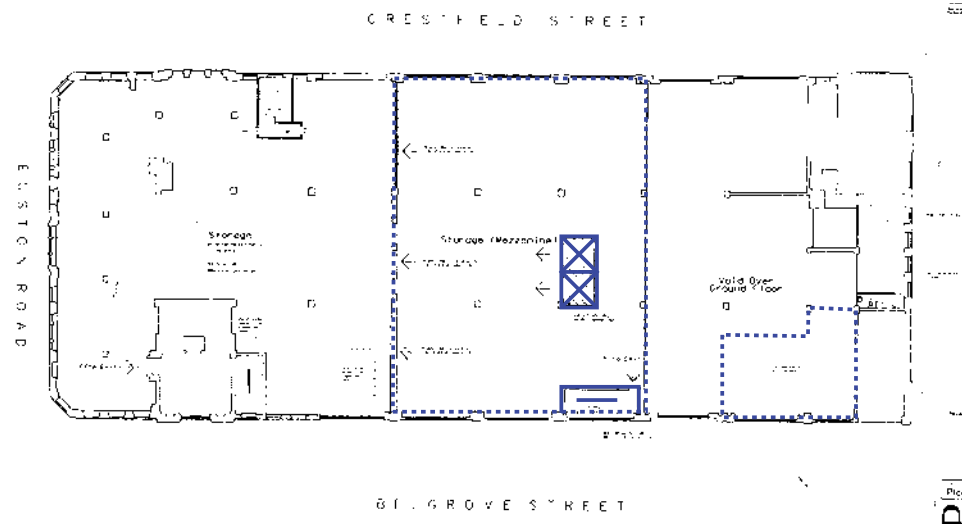
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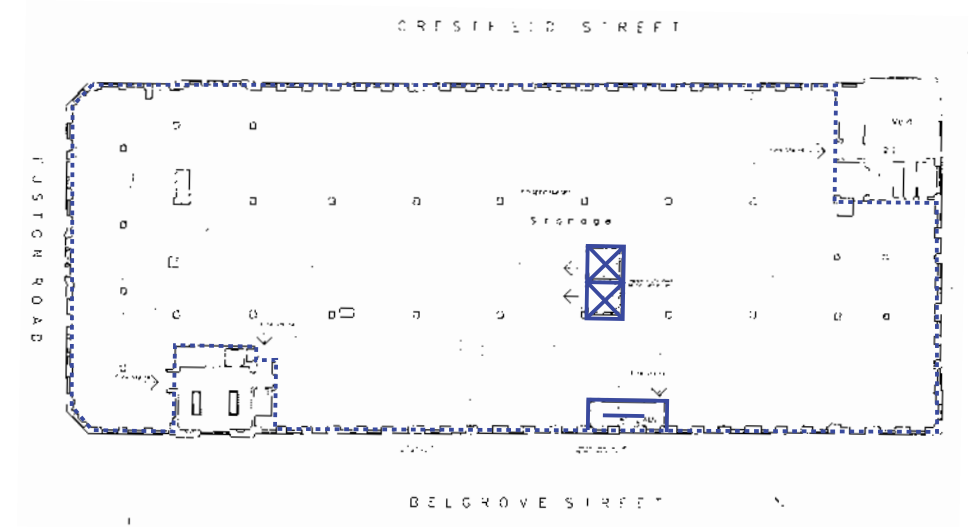
3

Adjustments by Access Selfstorage in floorplans

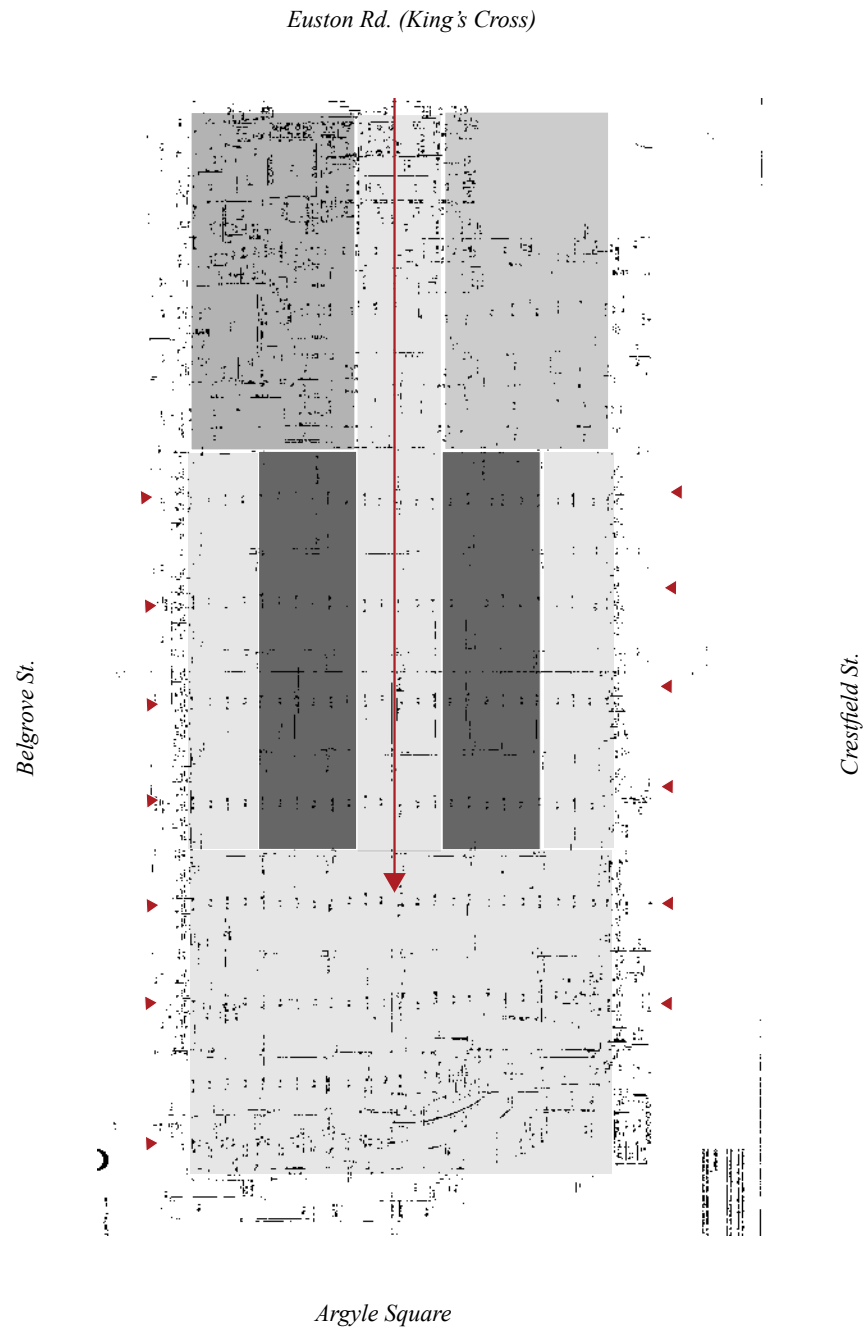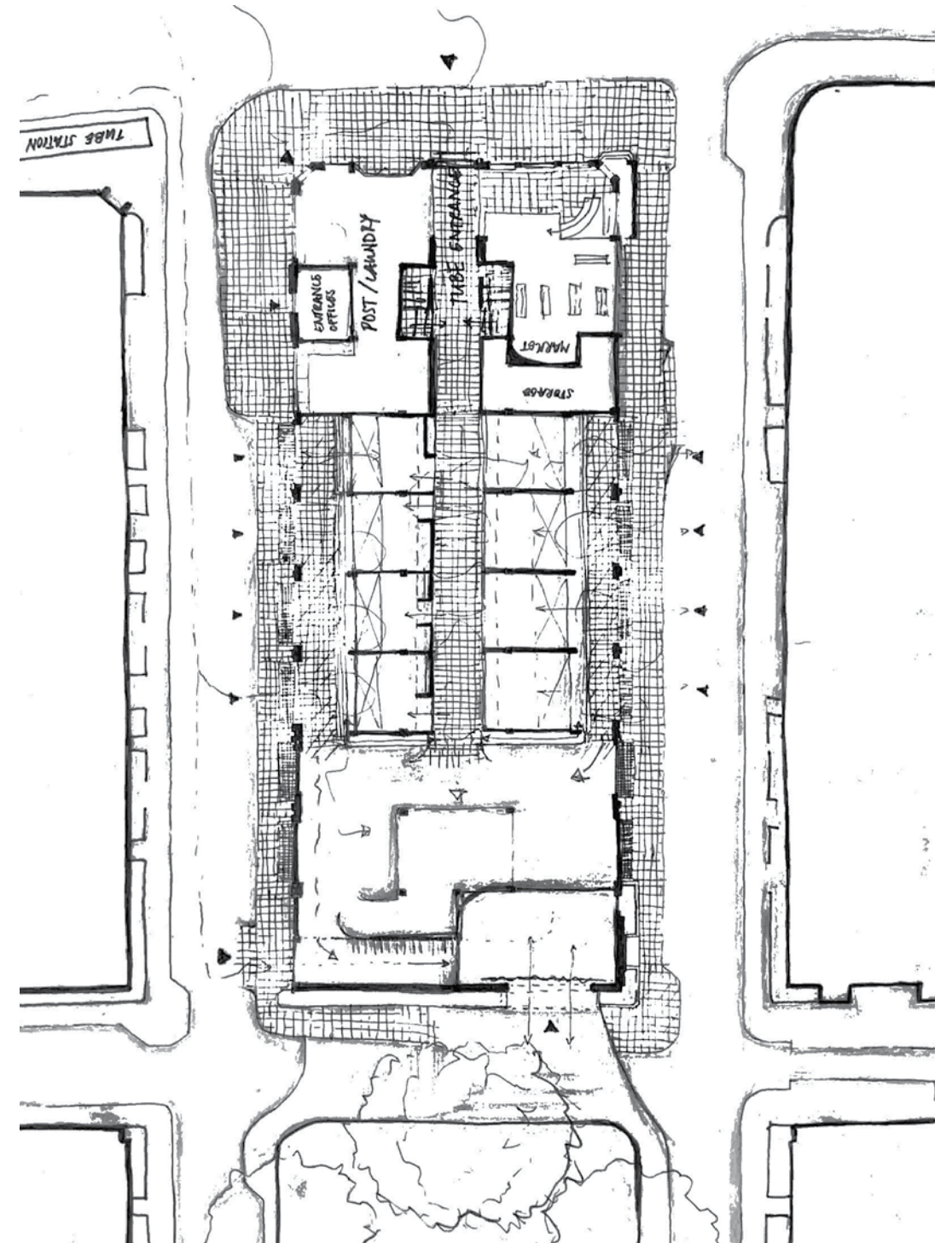*Drawings accessible at Camden Council, bad quality because of downsizing images.*

Euston Rd. (King's Cross)

Belgrove St.

Crestfield St.

Argyle Square

Figure 53. *Conceptual plan*

Figure 54. *First sketches ground floor: creating grey zones*

Figure 55. *First sketches facade Belgrove St.*
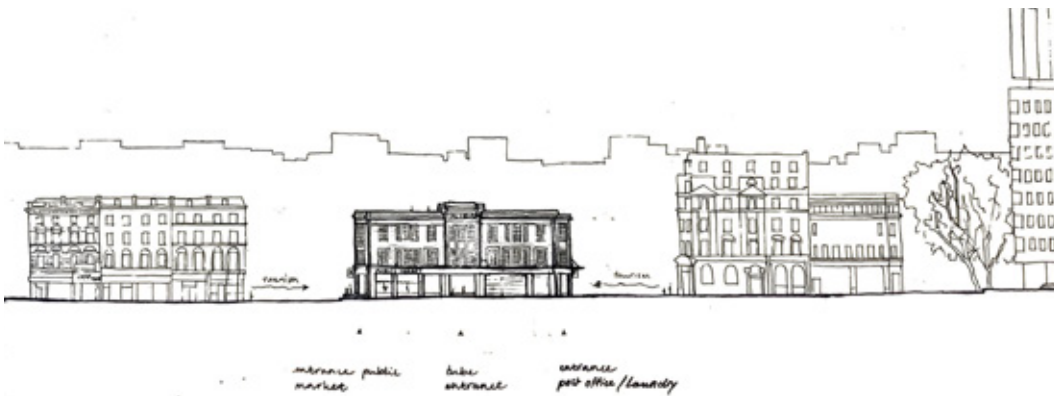
Figure 56. *First sketches facade Euston Road*

Figure 57. *First sketches facade Argyle Square*

Figure 58. *First sketches facade Crestfield St.*
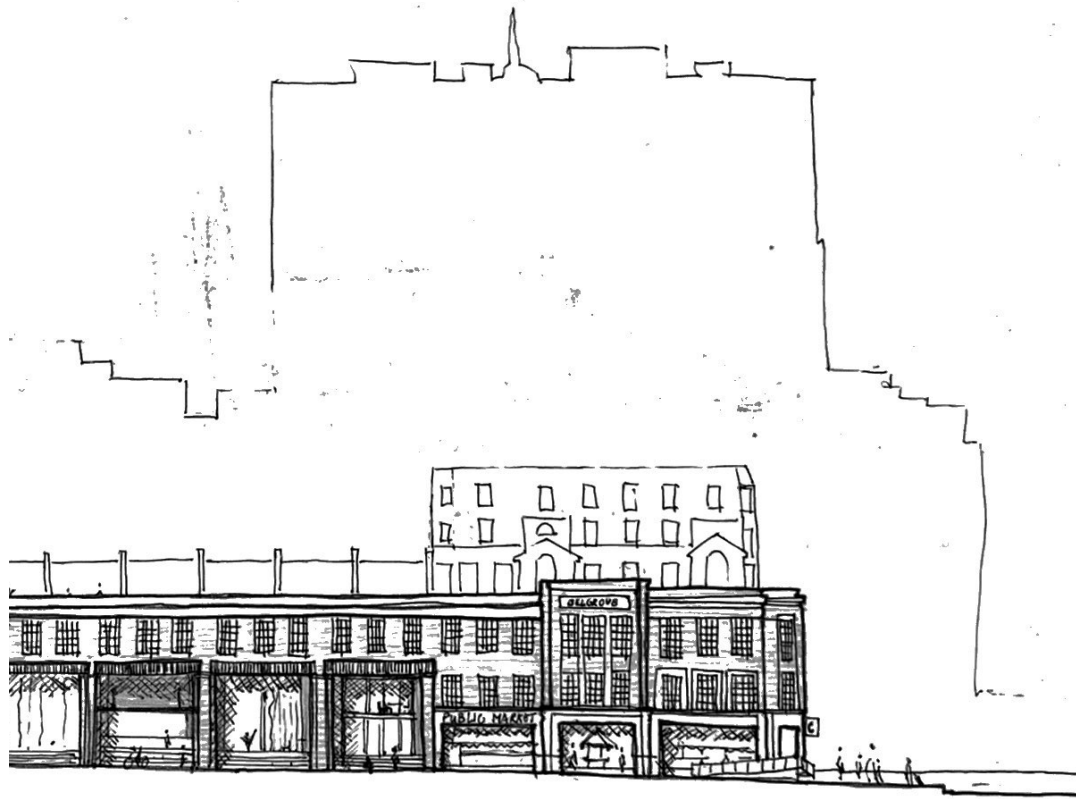
Figure 59. *First sketches facade Crestfield St. - Zoom in*
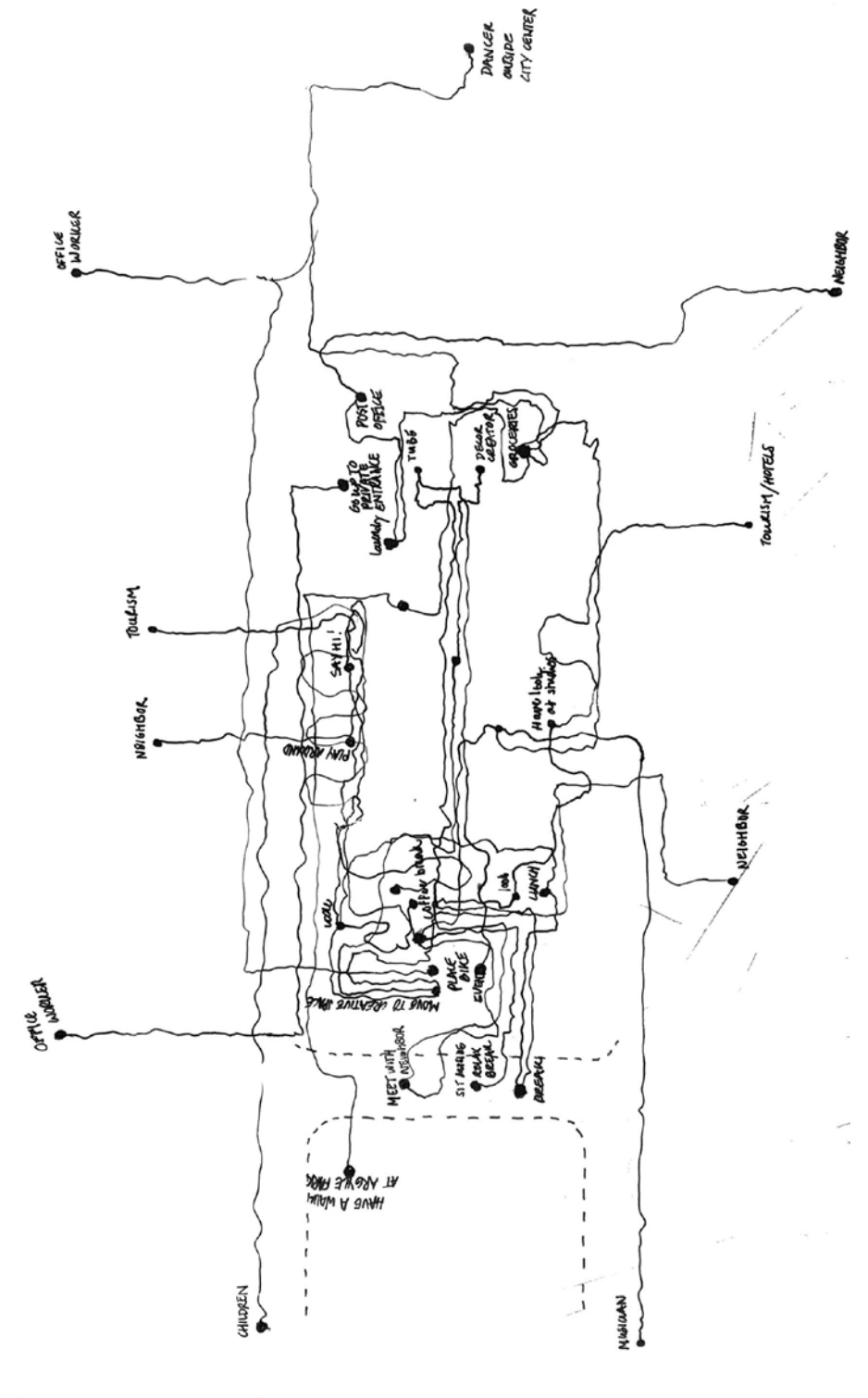
Figure 60. *Patterns of actors and creating social encounters*
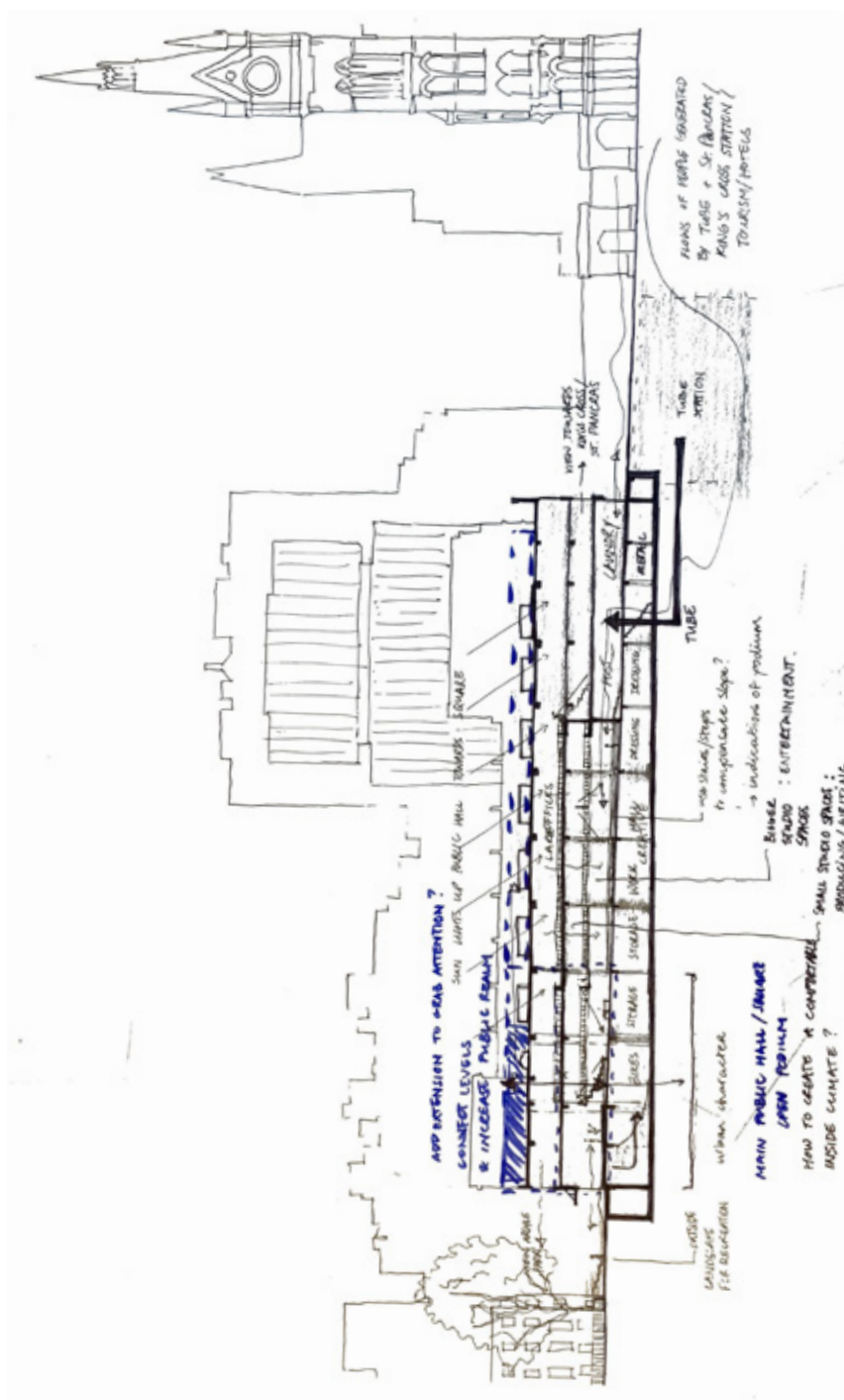
Figure 61. *Conceptual plan in longitudinal section*
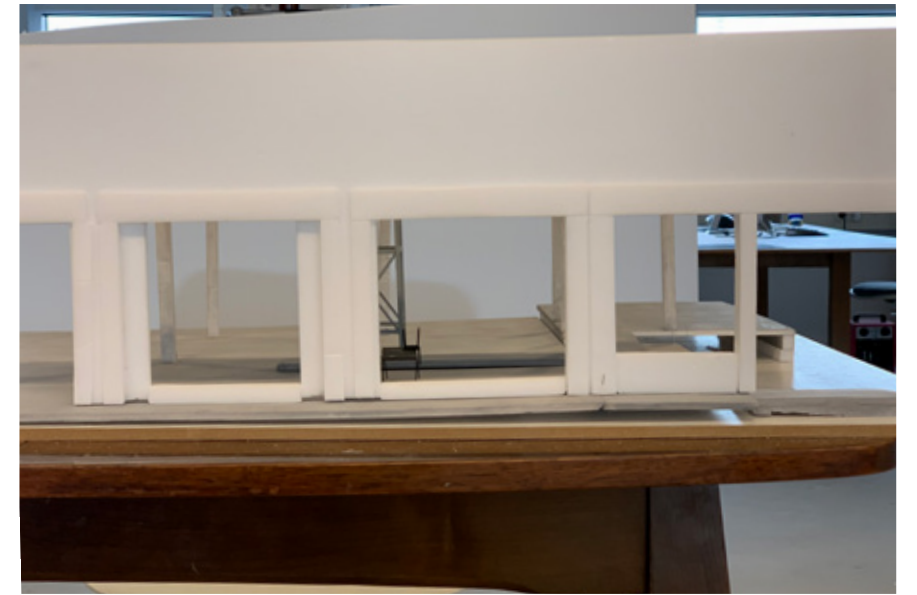
Figure 62. *Exploration through modelmaking*
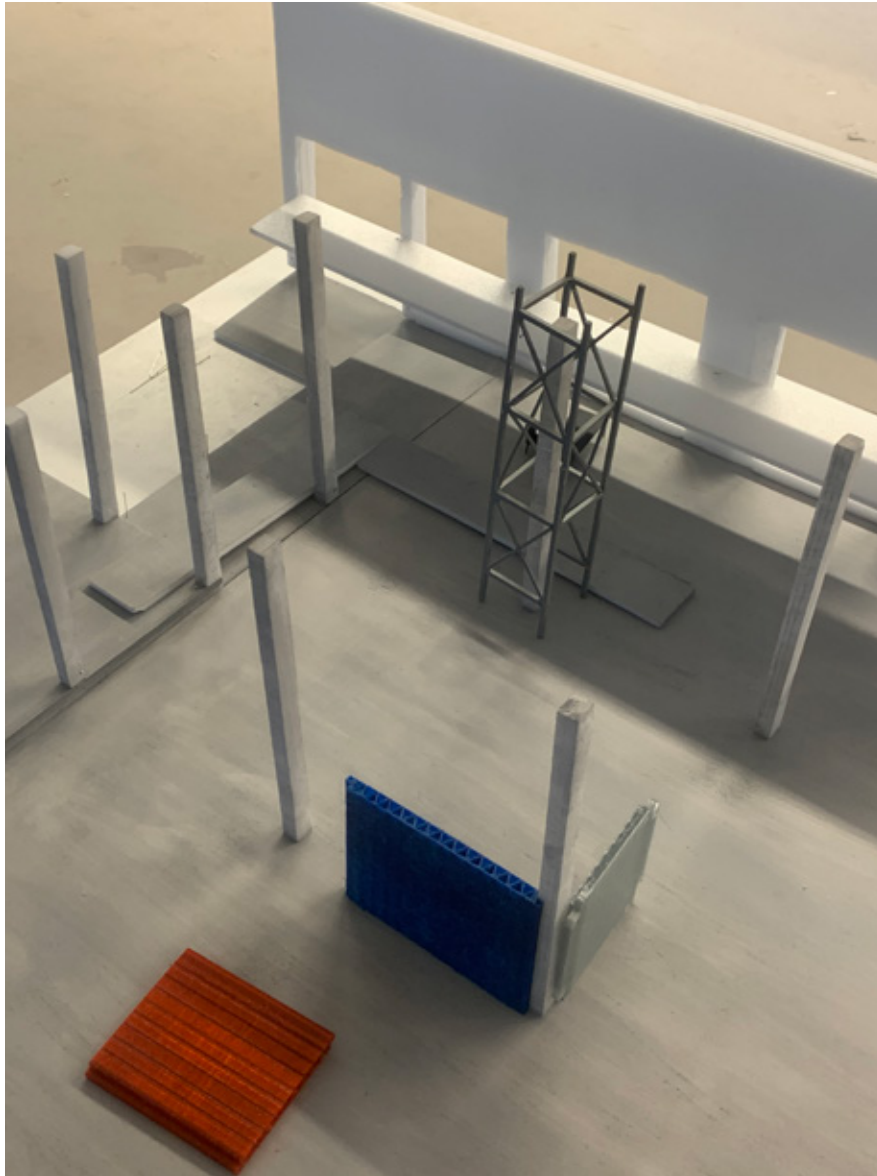
Figure 63. *Exploration through modelmaking*

added
sitting
elements

able to
see what is
happening

providing more social control over
the square.

possibility to close of for larger events
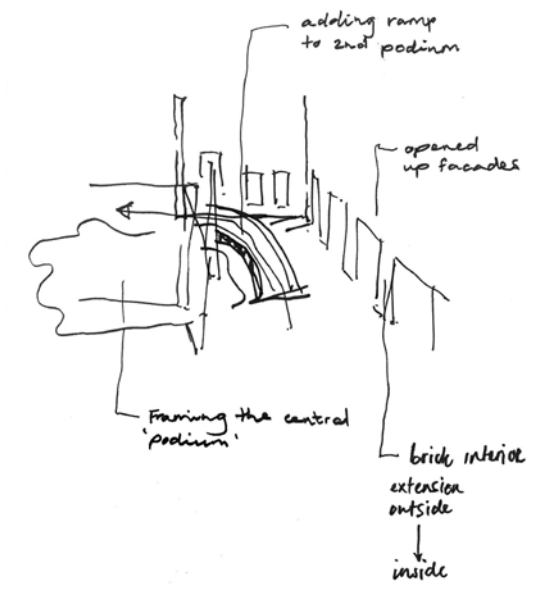
adding ramp
to 2nd podium

opened
up facades

Framing the central
'podium'

brick interior
extension
outside
↓
inside

Figure 64. *Exploration through modelmaking and conclusions about facade and square*

MSc 3 / Architectural Design Crossovers / AR3DC100

truss used for
lights as well shows
temporality

the routing hang
from ceiling

No columns on square
so more recreation
space

roof terrace

podium

podium.

added
brick (adding
borders +
recreation zones/
seights)
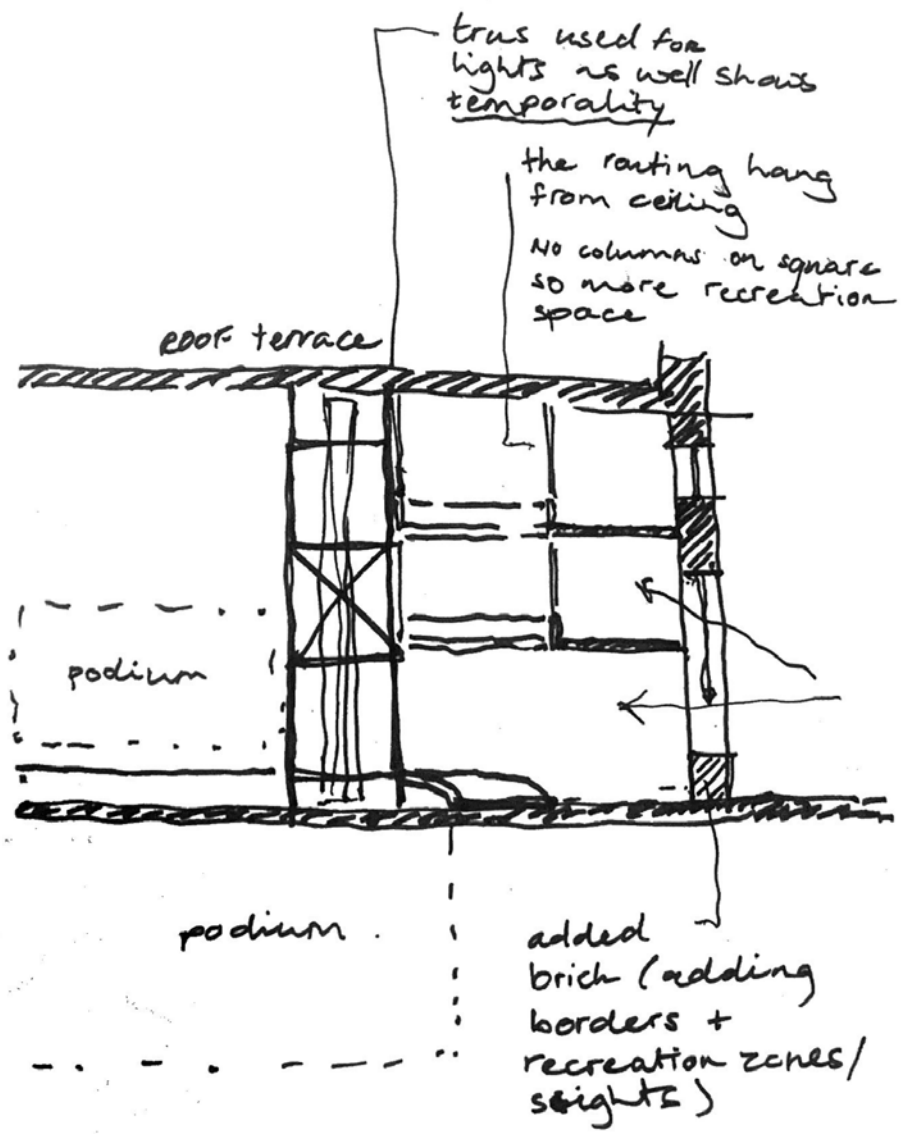
Figure 65. *Exploration through modelmaking and conclusions about atrium*

elevator towards
roof top

argyll
square

sort borders
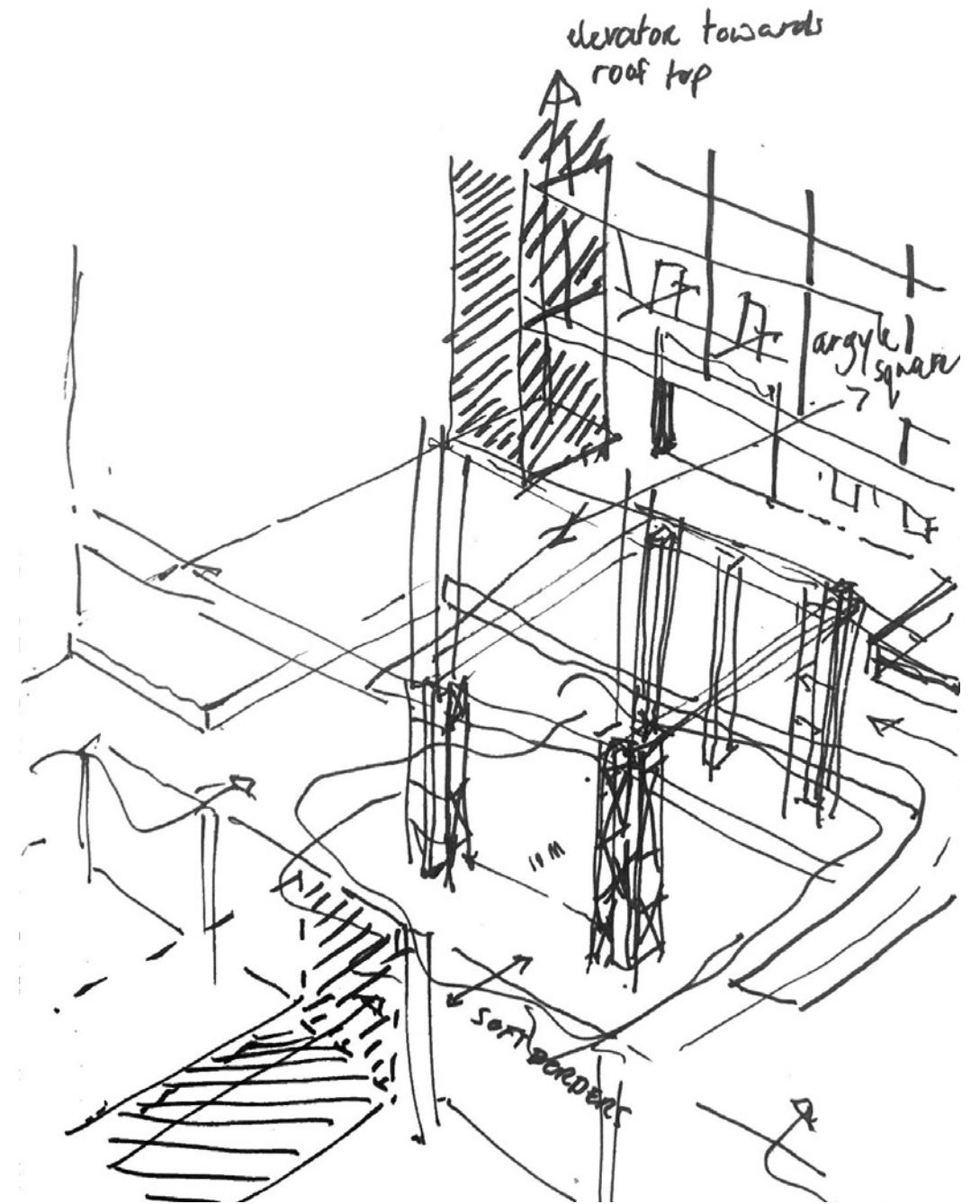
Figure 66. *Exploration through modelmaking and conclusions about atrium*
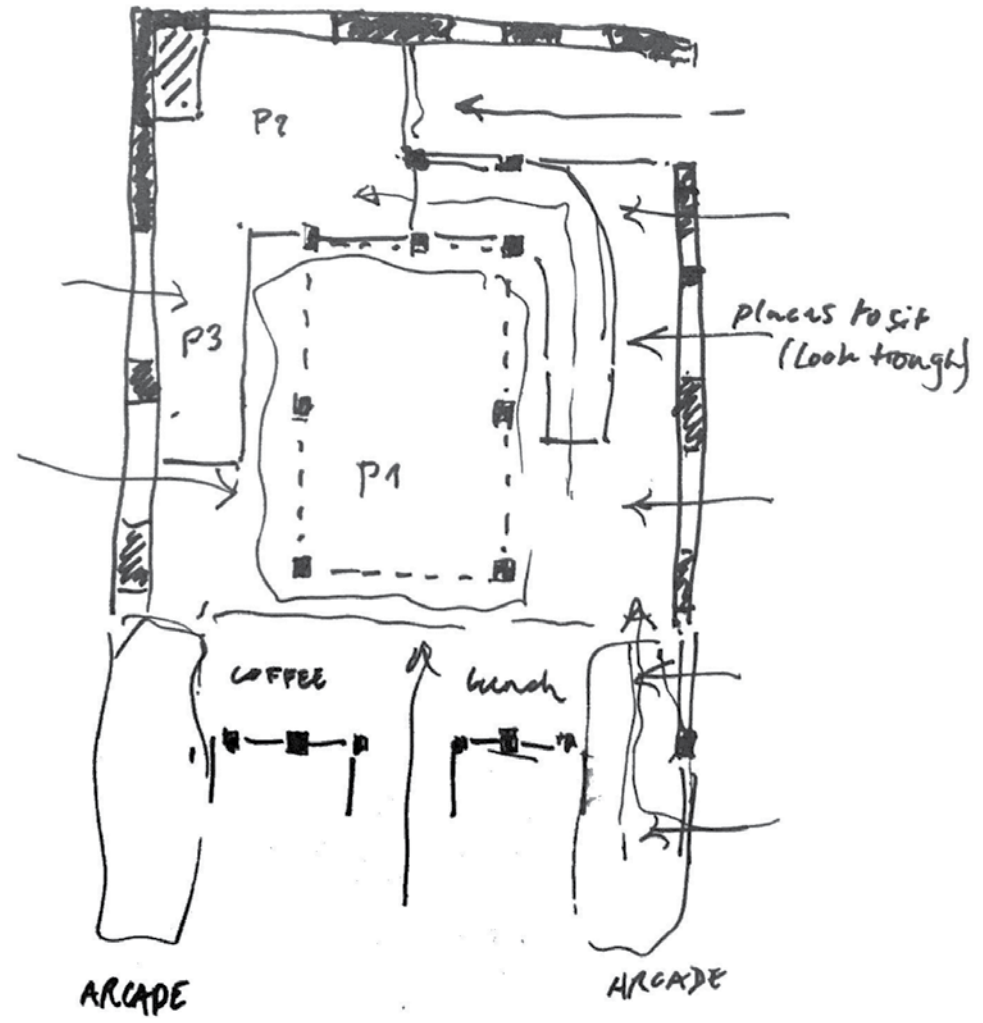
Figure 67. *Exploration through modelmaking: 3 elevated floors and a slope as indications of the open podium*
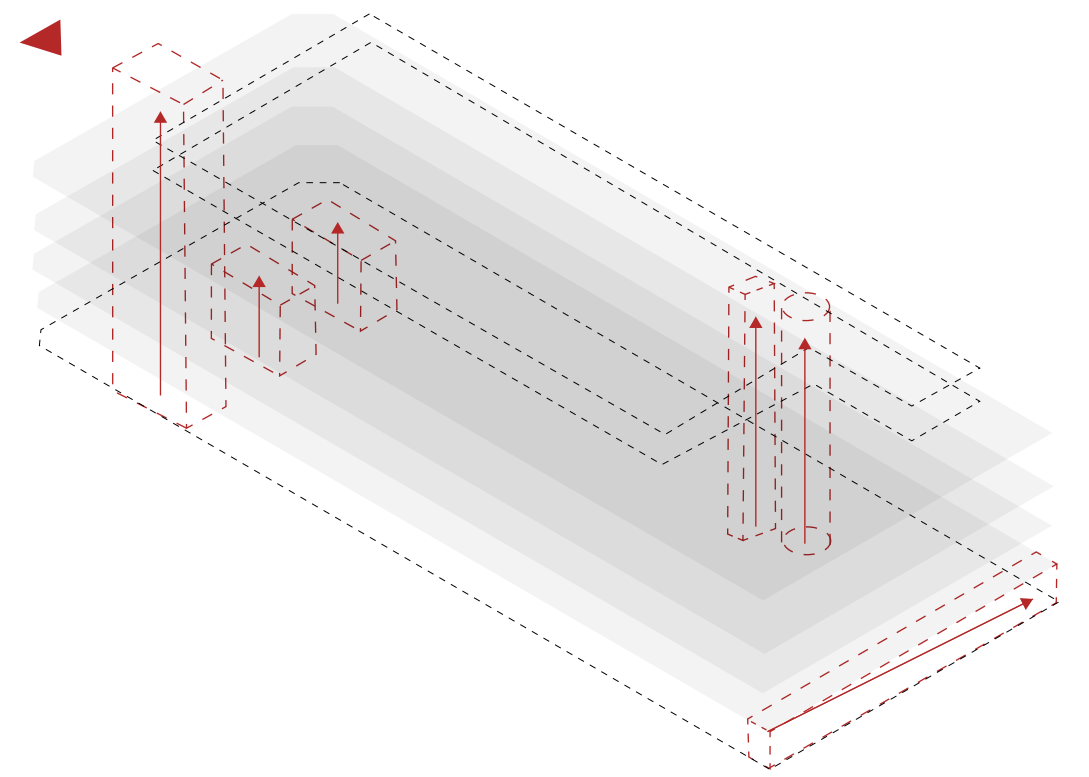
Figure 68. *Schematic visualisation of staircases and elevators*

Figure 69. *Affordances precedents study: Atelier Kempe Thill, Open Podium Rotterdam*

Figure 70. *Exploration of affordances through modelmaking*
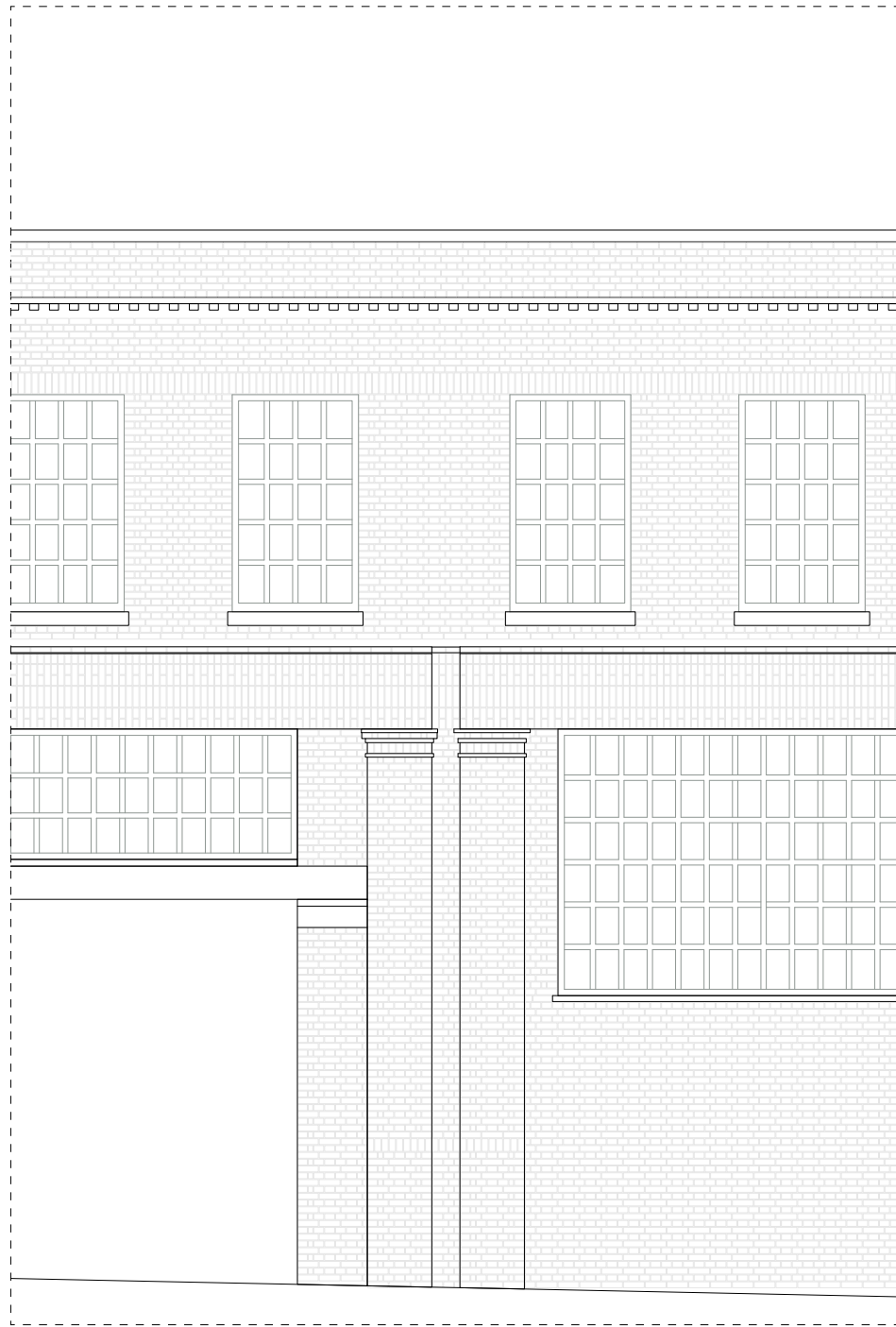
Figure 71. *Analysis existing facade: English bond, victorian age*
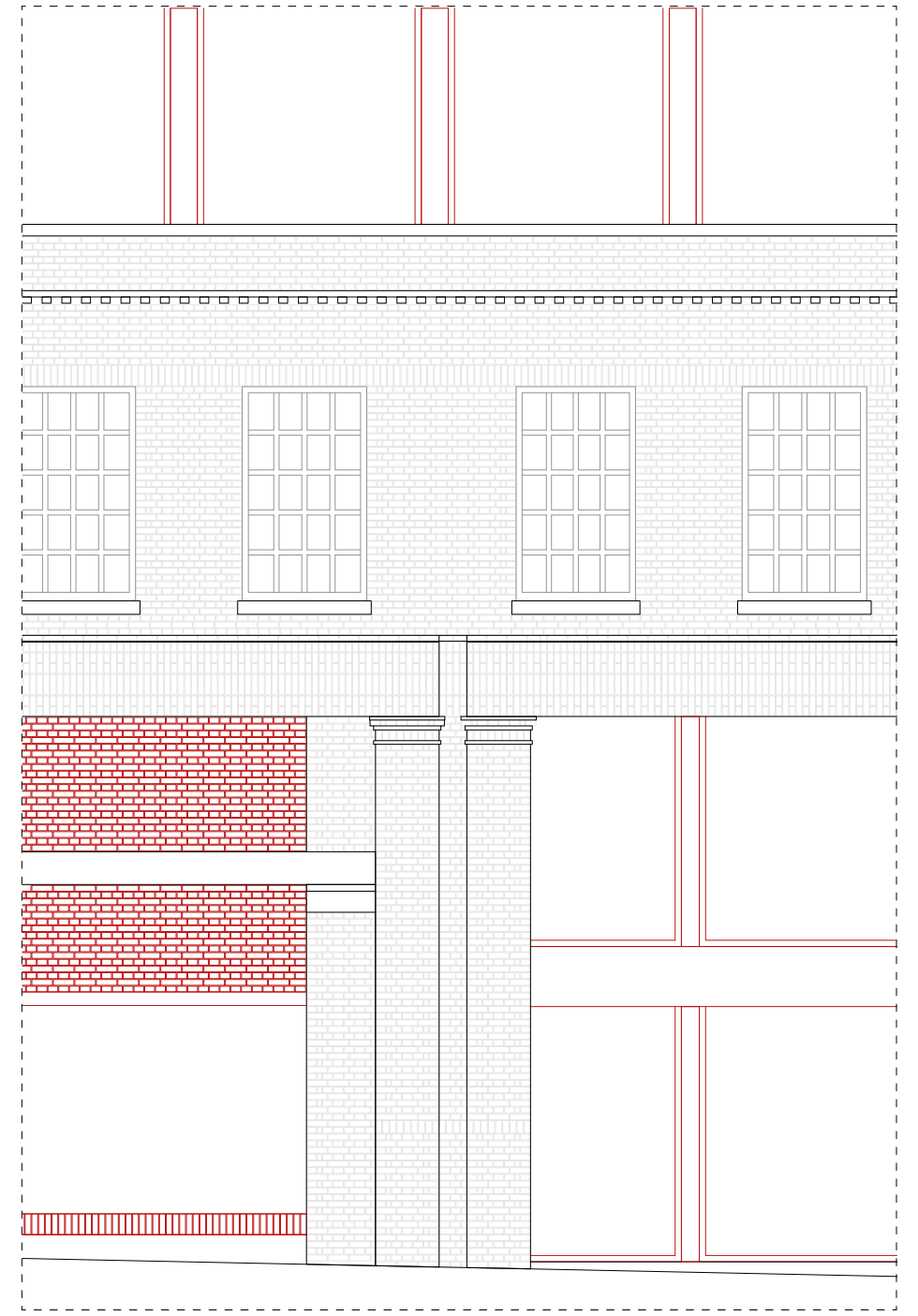
Figure 72. *Proposed adjustments at P3*

MSc 3 / Architectural Design Crossovers / AR3DC100
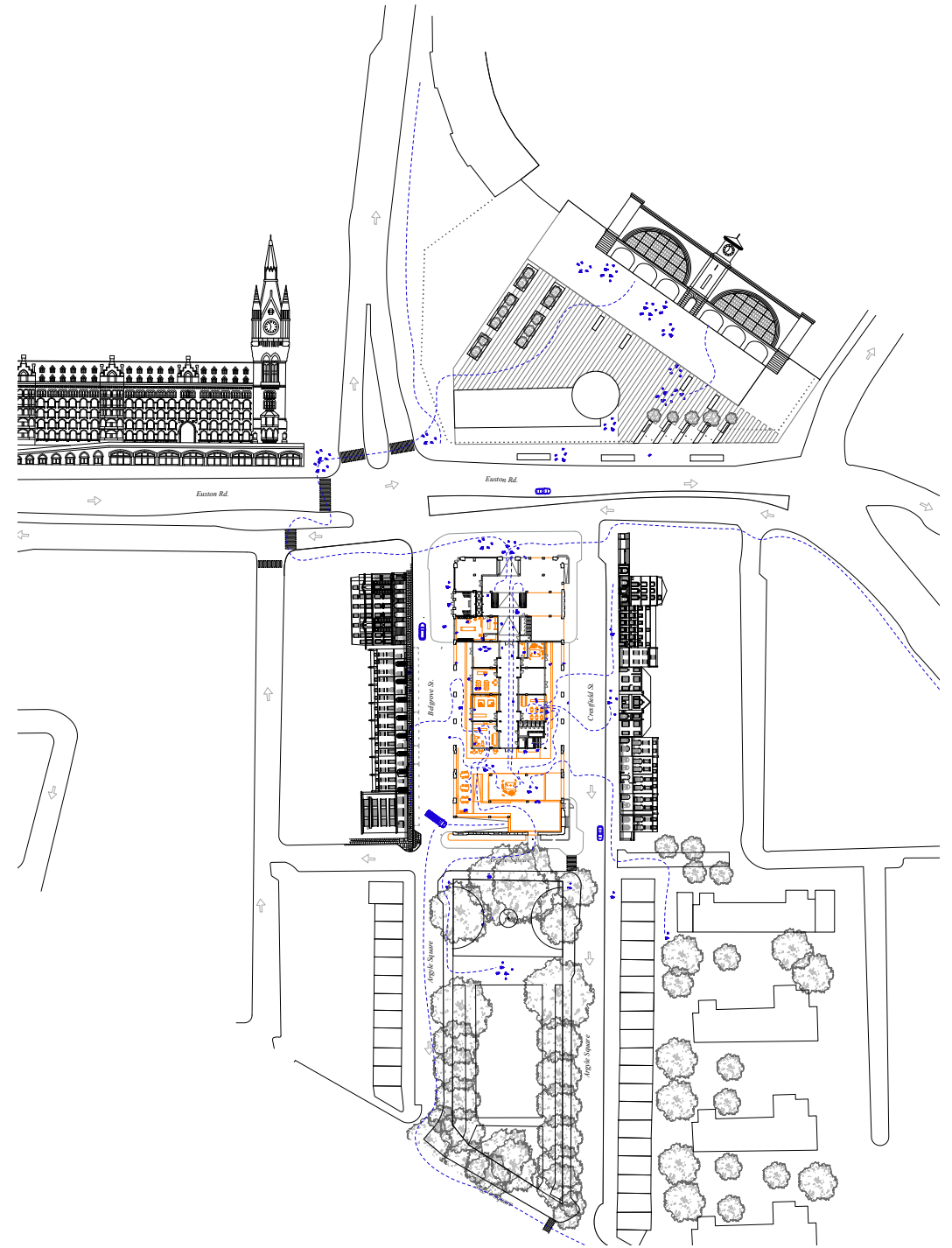
Figure 73. *The public hall: an open podium, in site plan*

DESIGN PROPOSAL
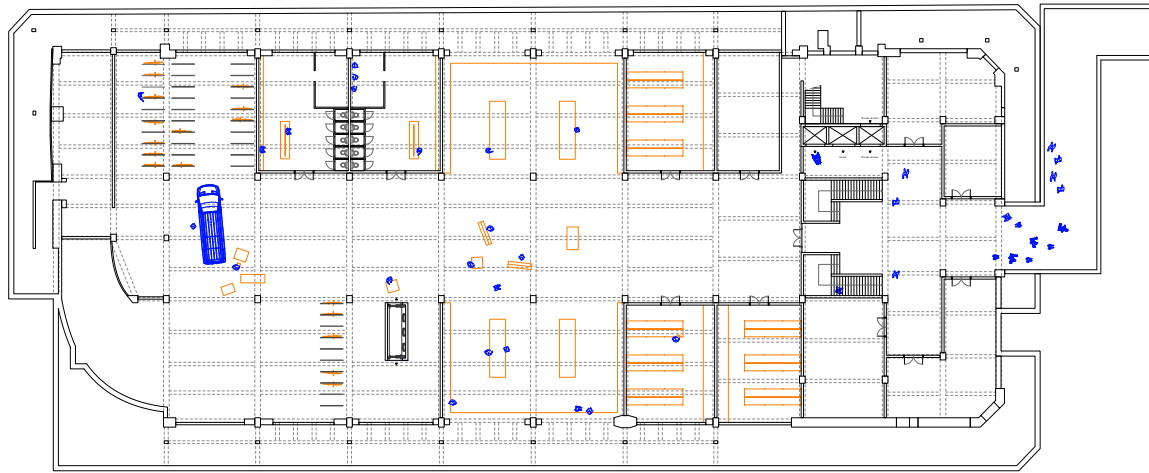
Figure 74. *The public hall: an open podium, basement*

Figure 75. *The public hall: an open podium, ground floor*
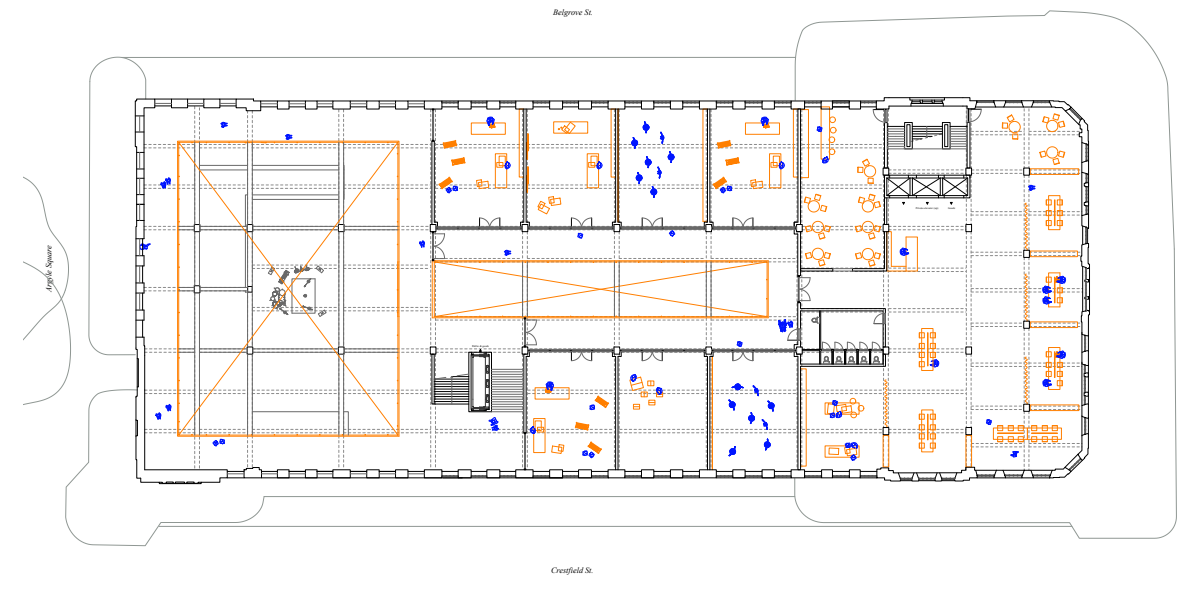

Figure 76. *The public hall: an open podium, first floor*

Figure 77. *The public hall: an open podium, second floor*

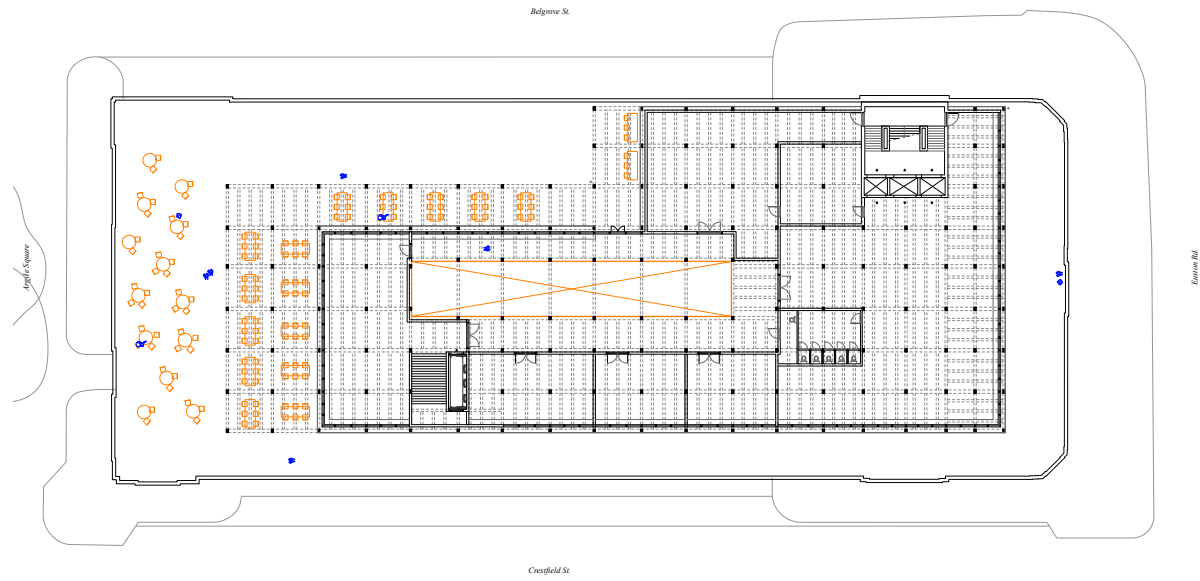**Figure 78.** *The public hall: an open podium, third floor*
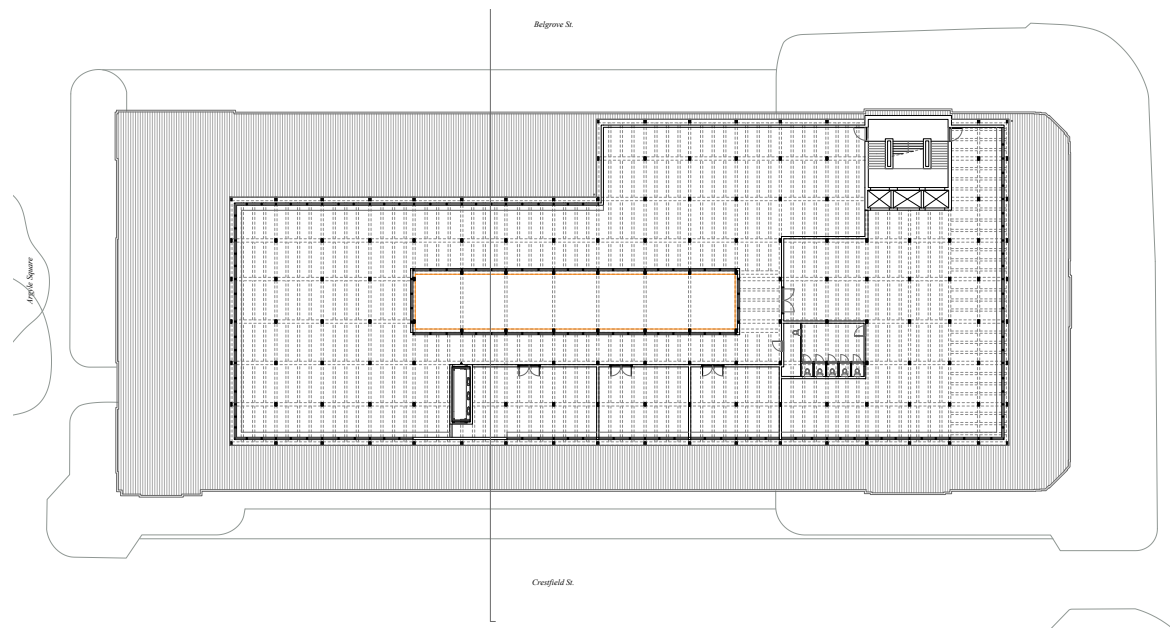

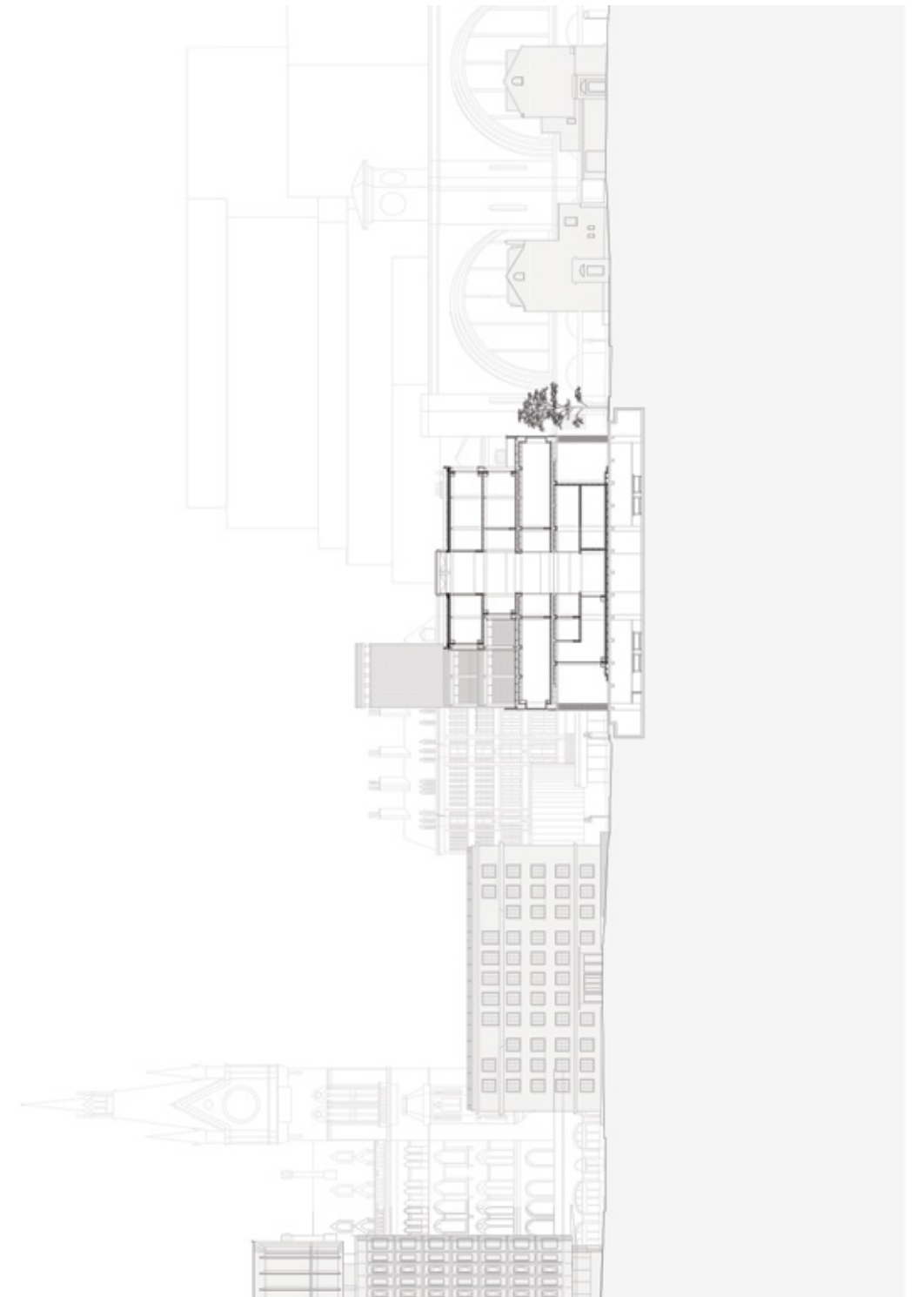**Figure 78.** *The public hall: an open podium, fourth floor*

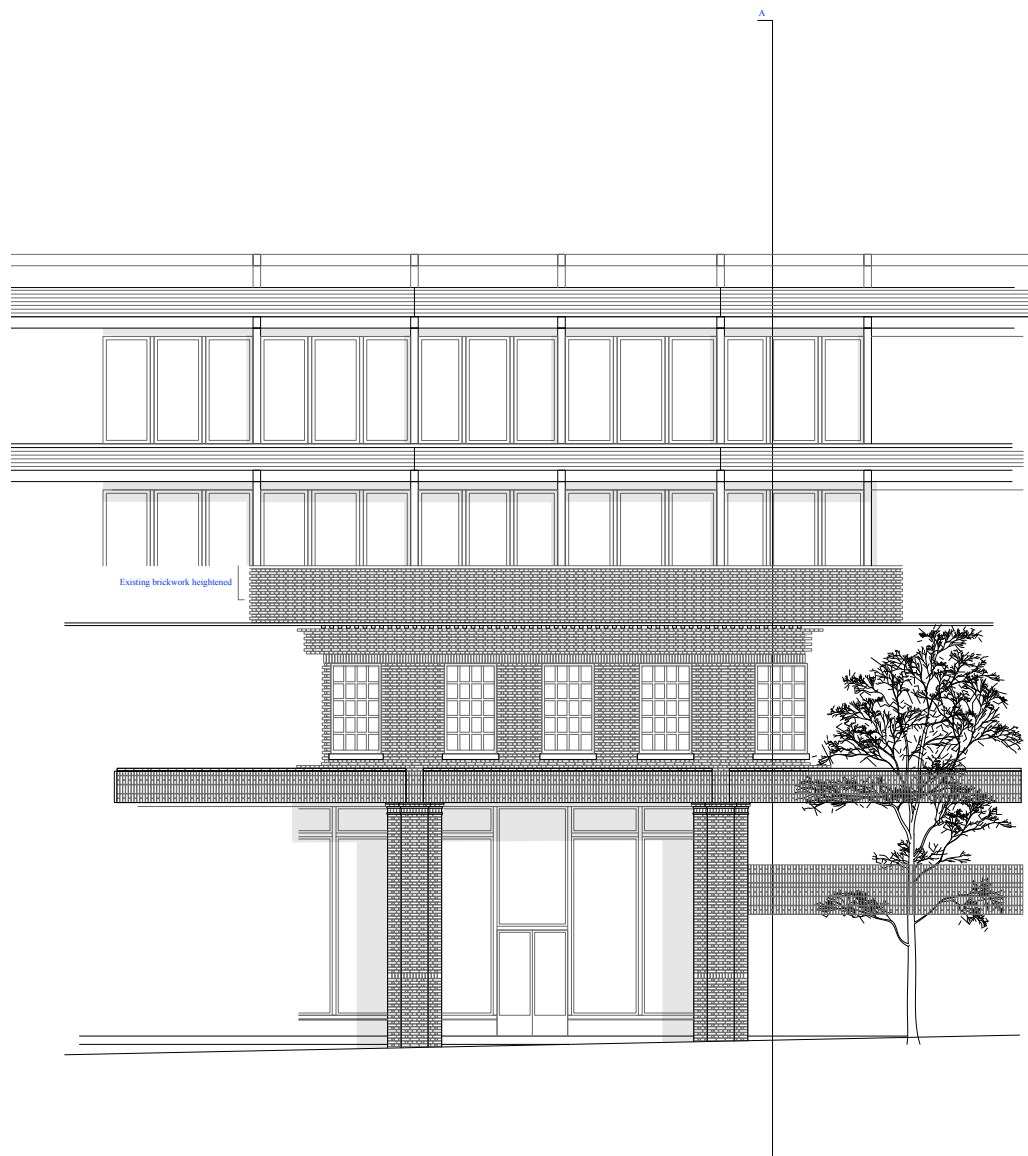**Figure 79.** *The public hall: an open podium, cross section in site*

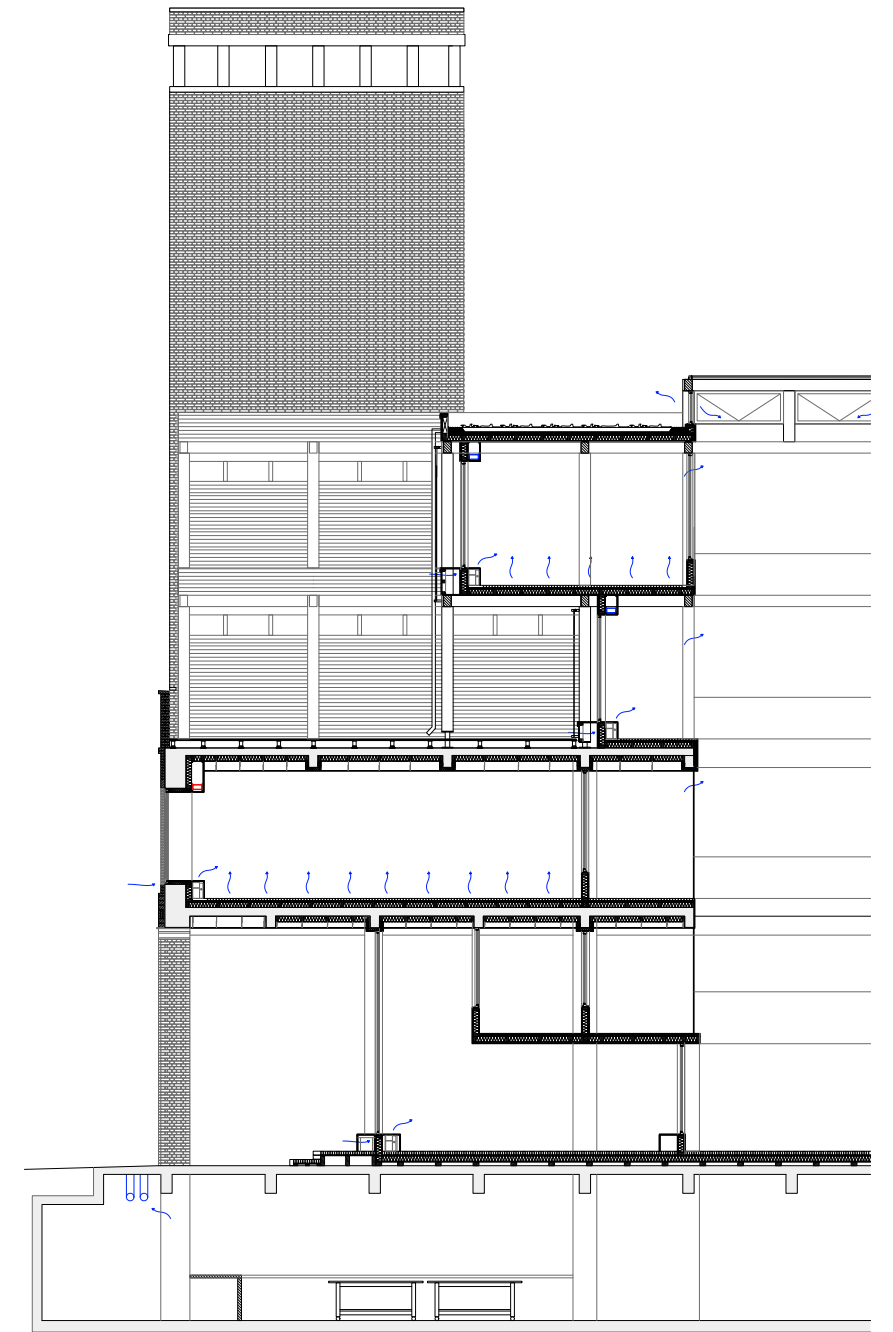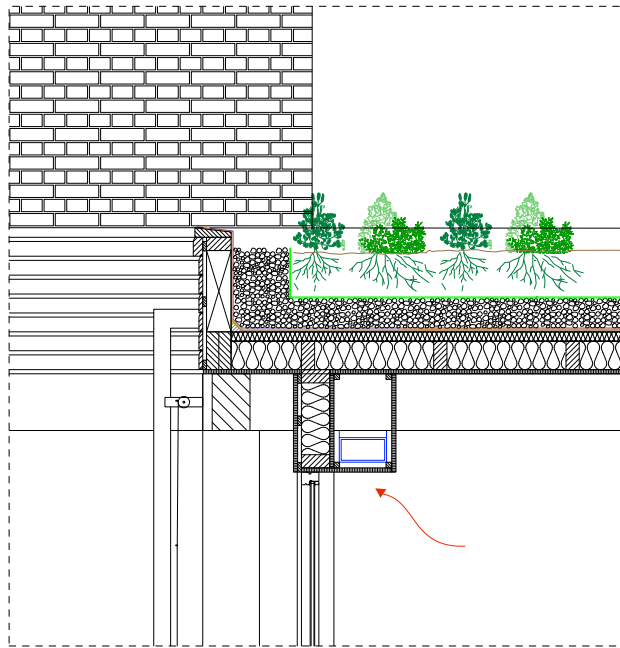Figure 80. *The public hall: an open podium, elevation drawing*

Figure 81. *The public hall: an open podium, cross section and climatisation*

Vegetation roof

1. Gypsum board 22 mm (stuc)
2. Vapor layer
3. Wooden framework 150 x 70 mm
4. EPS roof insulation 150 mm
5. Sloping insulation 70 mm (2%)
6. Roofing system 10 mm
7. Protection layer 10 mm
8. Drainage layer 10 mm
9. Vegetation free zone 300 mm
10. Substrate layer 150 mm
11. Vegetation

Roof trim

1. Wooden roof trim
Sloping - water drainage
2. Wooden beam 130 x 70 mm
In order to heighten roof trim
3. Wooden framework 50 x 20 mm
4. European dark hard wood cladding
100 x 20 mm
5. Sunshading between metal and steel
thread - attached to loadbearing structure
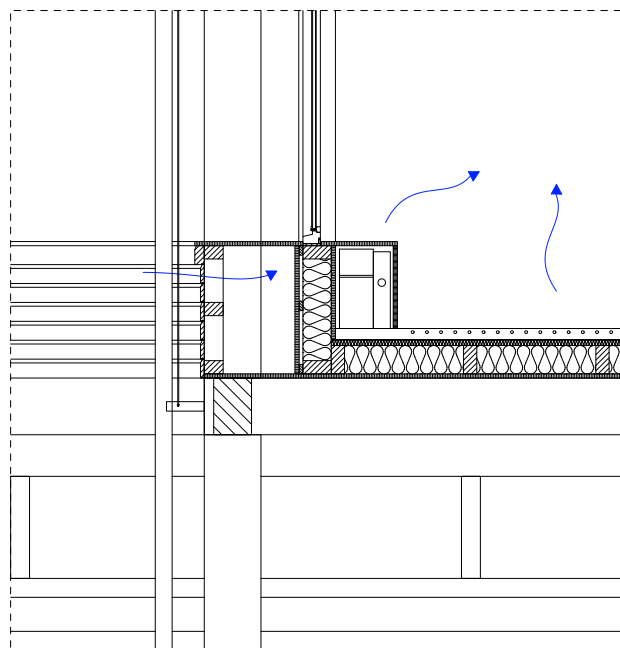
Wooden extension facade

1. Sunshading with metal and steel thread
attatched to loadbearing structure
2. European dark hard wood cladding
100 x 20 mm
3. Wooden framework (100 x 70 mm)
4. Load bearing wooden structure
European dark hard wood 200 x 300 mm)
5. Ventilation cavity (ClimaRad)
6. Gypsum board 20 mm
7. Wooden framework 20 x 50 mm
8. Wood fibre insulation 150 mm
9. Window frames, iroko wood HR+++

Wooden extension floor detail

1. Screed (floor heating) 60 mm
2. EPS insulation 30 mm
3. EPS insulation 150 mm
4. Wooden framework 70 x 150 mm
5. Gypsum board 22 mm (stuc finish)
6. Load bearing wooden structure
Dark European hardwood 200 x 300 mm
7. Ventilation shafts integrated in ceiling
(in line with seating element)
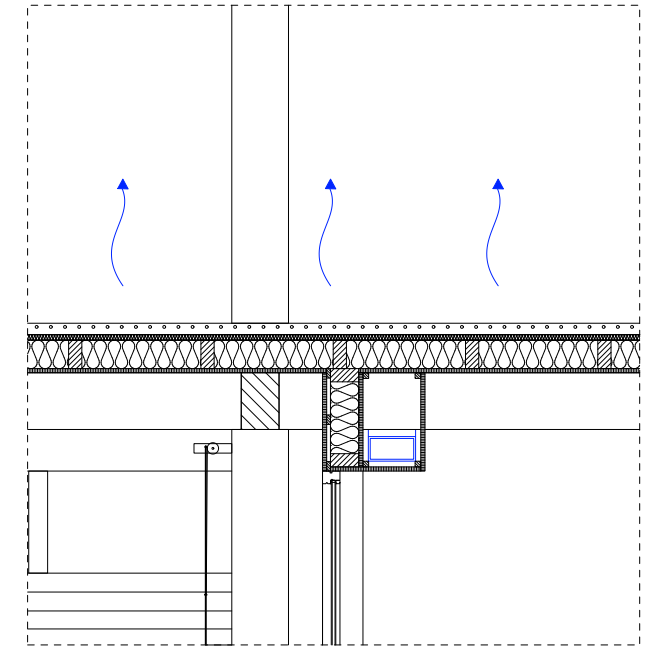
Elevated ground floor

1. Existing concrete slope 200 mm
Lowering from Argyle Square towards
King's Cross Station.
2. Inclined steps towards public square
3. 'Klinkers' 230 x 100 x 65 mm
4. Wooden board 40 mm
5. Wooden beams treated for weathering
100 x 245 mm
4. Horizontal: EPS insulation 150 mm
5. Vertical: Wood fibre 150 mm
6. ClimaRad integrated in seating
7. Seating: Iroko wood finish
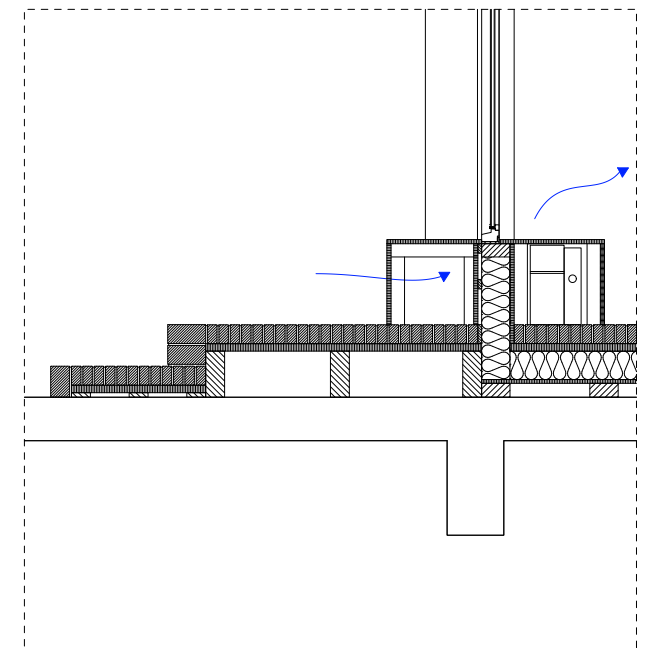
Figure 82. *The public hall: an open podium, zoom-in sections and materialisation*

Figure 83. *The public hall: an open podium, visualisations of public square / open podium: empty & performance*

Figure 84. *The public hall: an open podium, visualisations of public square / open podium: exhibition and appropriation*

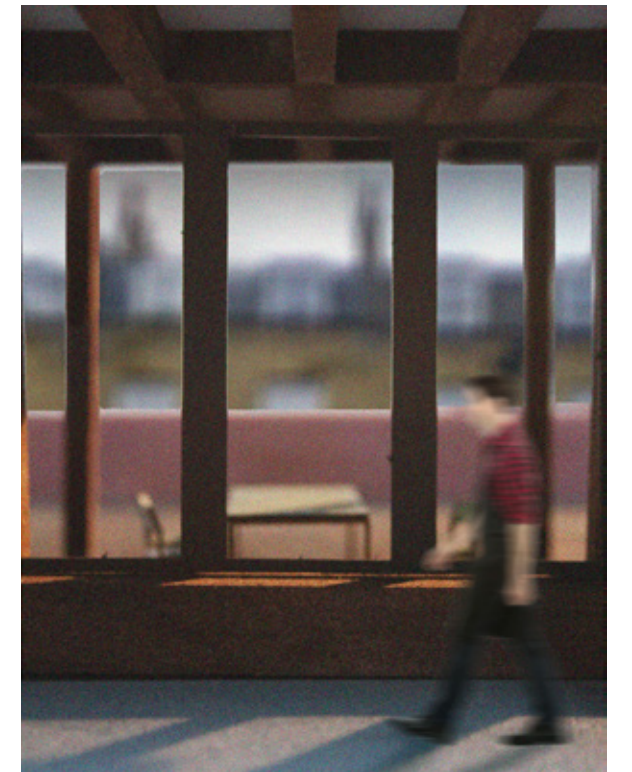**Figure 86.** *The public hall: an open podium, visualisations of design studios*

Figure 85. *The public hall: an open podium, visualisations of coffee corner and artist studio*

Figure 87. *The public hall: an open podium, visualisations of rooftop extension and material expression*

A response to privately owned public spaces

The aim of this research has been to discuss the complexity of the grey area between privately owned public space and public space, as well as the emerging issues related to POPS within London. In which my design proposal acts as an investigation to how architecture could create a more balanced relationship between public and private interests as a response to the current privatisation of public spaces. It tries to find opportunities and possibilities by making use of this identified grey area and memory of site, space, elements and materials. Therefore, the research and design research has focussed on the architectural translation of this grey area as a means to understand how the architect could have influence: analysing the *usage*, *elements* and *materials* of existing POPS. It brings forward the notion of affordances and appropriation of space in order to create places which *invite* and *allow* different uses or behaviour and might trigger a more diverse and broader public. This allows POPS to be less determined and more open for own interpretation, as it promotes a more free use of public space. The users or actors play a vital role in this, since they are the ones who change the space into the desired program. Which in the end creates a sense of ownership.

In London - and many other metropolitan cities -, we have seen the large shifts public space has gone through over the years, as well as the effects on architecture and the people who inhabit the city. These changes have been the result of social, political and economic influences specific to their time. The last decades London has

become a city where public good is being sold off to the highest bid. Private investors have become owners of large parts of the city and along with that, the number of 'genuine' public space decreases. My research tries to obtain a better understanding of why these changes occur and if these changes are still relevant in current times. As well as it aims to take a critical stand within this discussion, since it has become clear the believed positive effects of selling public good to private investors has caused large scale gentrification and created places of exclusion. By identifying the grey area within privately owned public spaces in London, my project seeks for an architecture in which the potential of the grey area is fully utilised and can result in a more *representational* space grounded in time and place.

Belgrove House, Camden

To respond to the many privately owned public spaces within London, it became logical the site could be found around those areas I visited. This particular site was chosen based on the outcomes of my site research - visiting 15 pops - and the literature review. The research brought forward multiple site conditions such as high accessibility in order to generate flows of people, how it should be preferably an open plot or existing structure which could be transformed, located near borders or thresholds formed by existing POPS and how a diverse public to attract is essential. In relation to many other privately owned public spaces, King's Cross area became very interesting since it is characterised by business and retail, as well as it is residential. While other POPS often have a way more corporate character.

Looking for an open plot in such dense areas is difficult. Therefore I looked further around those areas to experience the borders, which became clearly visible at King's Cross. Compared to privately owned public spaces north from King's Cross, its south-east side shows the sudden appearance of homeless people and less maintained buildings, squares and streets. This made me wander around the area in which I stumbled upon *Belgrove House*, the former King's Cross coach station built in 1930 - now in use by Access Selfstorage. Its appearance already showed the lack of maintenance. This seemed odd, since it was located right in front of King's Cross Central Station. After talking to some people around the building I talked to Minna, a butler at one of the hotels. He explained to me the current program and how it has been part of a discussion to redevelop the place into a large science center. Many people and heritage organisations have made their complaints about the current proposal: how it is out of scale and how it is disrupting one of the oldest conservation areas in London at such a significant location near King's Cross, St. Pancras, Argyle Park and multiple Georgian terraces houses. Belgrove House became an example to me, of how London has become and to what I wanted to respond.

Memory

In relation to my personal interest in memory and the outcomes of my research, the memory of the site is and should not only be a stage or a decorum which is used, it also puts the significance of the site with a completely new function back in the urban stage. My intervention tries to trigger the memory of site, elements and materials and thereby the memory of the people who use it. This resulted in an intervention and program that *invites* and *allows* different uses or behaviour which in the end will trigger the memory of a more diverse

and broader public. By giving back something which once used to be public, I am trying to add new meaning to an existing structure which is meaningful to a broader public. Using the historical value of the previous coach station and the potential of the brick structure to open up, my project seeks to be valuable to private as well as public interests. Next to the memory of the site and space, element and material memories function as indications and trigger certain usage. It creates relations and sometimes contradictions between public and private within the building, new and old, which results in the identified grey area.

The Public Hall

As a starting point, I wanted to create a *Public Hall: an open podium for local upcoming talent*. This was based on the idea how music brings lots of cultures together, young and old as well as it could form a sinergy with the surrounding hotels near Belgrove House. The public hall forms within my project the representation of the *grey area* between public and private and functions as an urban threshold. It should be meaningful to the community, but might turn out to be of greater importance to the city. Based on the ideas of *Jacobs*, *Hertzberger* and *Sola-de-Morales* the hall facilitates multiple functions for a larger public, finds opportunities or possibilities in the grey area between public and private and establishes a relationship with the historical context by transforming the former King's Cross Coach Station. The building intents to act as a small open podium for (local) upcoming artists. Something is asked from the public, as well as it gives back to the public: an open podium at a central location surrounded by hotels and tourism. Participation is free for everyone: music, dance, theater, street artists, writers, poets or cabaret. Along with that, a part of the building contains studios which can be rented to talents or can also be used for retail and small companies. On top of the existing structure a wooden roof extension is formed with a restaurant and extra office space. Flows of people are generated by removing the existing tube station and implementing this entrance inside the building. This way it becomes beneficial for the public, as well as it is profitable for private investors. At the corners there is room for a local market and the existing postal office and laundry.

The now opened up facades of Belgrove House, which actually used to be open as a former bus station, creates an arcade forming an in-between space, providing shelter and a lively retail and studio street. Multiple views inside the building and a less closed off character are created. This way, the surrounding hotels keep an eye on the square and random passangers get to see a glimpse of what is happening at the square. Besides, the boundaries between inside and outside become more ambiguous. The public square forms an urban environment semi inside-outside, with elevated floors which form indications for different uses. The initial program is an open podium. Used as a platform for small scaled local artists: theather, dance, music, as well as writers and other creatives. This open podium does not have a designated place in the building: its users or participants are *invited* and *allowed* to transform the square into a place suitable for its desired use. Therefore, the open podium remains an urban square, as well as it represents an event space. During the year, the project became more about *temporality* and *adaptability*, as well as it has been about sketching different scenarios in how it might be used.

Along with the mediation between public and private, the project had to be well thought through in terms of accessibility during day and night. Certain parts of the building are therefore accessible all day - i.e. the public square, atrium and arcade -, opened up during the day and closed off during the night - i.e. the hall,

tube entrance, retail facilities and makerspace -, or private at all time - i.e. offices and storage -. All functions are connected to one another but can be closed off for larger events. The hall forms the core of the building which connects all these functions, as well as it is a buffer zone for climate purposes. It gives the building a secundair facade and brings the 'streets' inside the building. The skylight brings in daylight, adds height to the public space and functions as a way to bring in cool air during summer and heat up the space during winter. Most of the public hall is treated as semi-outside: in which the bufferzone creates a pleasant micro climate within the building.

As a response to the very solid, static and single-use elements seen in privately owned public spaces nowadays, the building balances between static and forms of temporality in its design. The exploration of affordances and to create the ability to appropriate is seen at the square, the arcade, as well as the rented studios. Elements are not necessarily defined too much, but remain open for own interpretation in which the user can add elements to it. Elements which form the square provide places to sit or can be transition zones. They form indications of podiums or divide the space into compartments. Temporary elements such as trusses used for the open podium can be moved up and down, and allow different events to happen: exhibitions, parties etc. As well as the way the new atrium is hung from the ceiling with tension elements. The atrium can be seen as part of the square and forms an extension of the event space: connecting the square to the rooftop facilities. While the square is experienced as a more static urban intervention because of the use of concrete. The atrium is not merely a transition space, but can be used for exhibitions and larger events. The height of the square and large atrium indicates publicness, compared to the lower studio spaces which have a more private character. The rooftop extension consists of a restaurant and terrace as an urban extension of Argyle park. On the top floor there is extra space for offices which are accessible through the brick tower with existing staircase. The wooden structure seen at the ground floor and urban square repeats itself at the rooftop and responds to the existing fabric. The extension makes the building more profitable for private interests and adds meaning to the building at such a significant location. Therefore, the introvert looking building becomes a landmark as well as it is cautious with its historical context. During the process of designing I have always considered the building as being modest instead of iconic. I personally think the spaces we call 'iconic' architecture often form places of exclusion, since the materiality and elements show eliteness and exclusivity.

Ethical considerations

Perhaps my building would not meet all standards of privately owned public spaces today. But I think it would meet many people their needs in terms of what is expected of public spaces if we think of public space as being democratic. The ongoing discussion about the current redevelopment has shown me how local people their voices were ignored and I wanted to look for an alternative way of designing privately owned public spaces.

I have been trying to mediate between private and public interests, but the question remains if really mediating is possible. I want to lay emphasis on the fact that I have been trying to make the relation between the two more balanced instead of equal. Perhaps equal is not possible, but I have tried to take responsibility and try to find out the influence architecture or the architect could have. In the end I try to show this is not merely a political issue, it is an issue in which the architect or architecture can position itself. I do not know if my project will result in a more representational space which creates a sense of ownership, it is an attempt to - and the way the building will be used by its inhabitants will be the proof of concept.