

# **CODES OF STREET ART IN URBAN SPACE**

## **Informal Manifestations Of Creativity Co-Shaping Public Spaces**

### Research Plan

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2020/2021

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#### **ABSTRACT**

In London street art is still formally perceived as an act of anti-social behaviour while it gains more and more acceptance and admiration by people. The fact that it remains illegal means a great wasted potential of inhabitants' creativity and will to participate in creating public spaces. While street art may mark places that are neglected or struggling with some socio-spatial issues, it points also those where locally there is a lack of space for individuals' self-expression. Being informal and spontaneous rearrangement of urban scape, it is a manifestation of tension between public and private in the street. It might be perceived as an argument in claiming for more democratic public spaces.

The goal of the research is to learn how the socio-philosophical space is being produced and what position in the process of creating and rearranging urban places street art takes. To achieve that there were analysis conducted to gained knowledge about street art – to find places where it appears, to determine crucial material and immaterial parts of public spaces that are essential for the phenomenon, to establish relations between artworks and with other elements of the street, and finally, to recognise what are the features and individual characteristics of street art.

The conclusions made during the research would be a backbone for the process of designing the architectural space in the spirit of street art. Having developed transposition of the gained knowledge into the code of architecture, there would be a proper site chosen and an architectural programme developed to fully exploit social potential represented by street art. The design might initiate re-defining the term of gentrification and make a contribution in the process of democratisation public space.

#### **KEYWORDS**

Street art, creativity, space production, democratisation, street materiality

## PERSONAL MOTIVATION

The motivation driving to start this research was the will to explore more world of visual arts and the role of medium and materiality. To look for a branch or movement where the way and place of exposition are not only relevant for perceiving the artwork but also integrated and inseparable elements of it. The research was a challenge to explore and understand the world close to my personal interests and which I have contact with almost every day in the city but, at the same time, strange and uncharted. Finally it demanded move beyond aesthetic likes and dislikes to formulate conclusions and use gained knowledge for the purpose of architectural design.

## THE CHOICE OF LONDON

London is one of the most known places in Europe to find street art. As Oswald Ungers wrote: „Large cities are characterised by an overlapping of many opposite and divergent conceptions” (Ungers, 2013). London is home for many belonging to different communities, using the same public spaces and conceptions for their arrangement.

Furthermore, street art reacts to what is happening in the world (Paulsson, 2009, p. 7) and participates in production of Pop-culture sharing visual codes (Visconti, Sherry Jr., Borghini, & Anderson, 2010). City of London suits the research on the topic as a one of the world’s financial centres where different global ideas and tendencies merge.

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

In London street art is still illegal and formally remains being perceived as an act of anti-social behaviour while it gains more acceptance and admiration by people. Having admitted its input in shaping urban scape, on one hand this situation states enormous undirected energy and wasted potential to reinforce people’s intentional bottom-up participation in creating and democratising urban spaces. On the other, the street could be a place to liberate people’s creativity finding appreciation in locally formulated communities.

In her text *“Design vs Non-design”* Diana Agrest elaborated opposition of those two title concepts, that build urban scape. Due to her definition street art can be classified as the non-design – the result of cultural, non-institutionalized practises (Agrest, 1998). Willing to transpose it on architecture there has to be developed code of design that would condense and crystalize the essence of street art. The code would be a filter of metaphors and metonymies to remain in the limits of architecture and design (Agrest, 1998).

As street art appears in place struggling with socio-spatial issues (Paulsson, 2009, p. 6) (Visconti, Sherry Jr., Borghini, & Anderson, 2010), it is unreasonable implementing this code into different places. Thus, it is supposed to avoid common tendencies of aggressive and wrongly understood gentrification that harms the genius loci of informal spaces (de Solà-Morales Rubió, 1995).

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. **What is the code of design based on street art that encourage people to participate in creating public space, allows free creative expression and keeps genius loci in the process of gentrification?**
2. What are the characteristics of street art beyond aesthetic values and content?
3. What is the position of street art in the city functioning and what makes it shaping urban scape?
4. What are the material and immaterial features of places where street art occurs?
5. Who are the actors experiencing street art and shaping urban scape?
6. How to maintain balance between the right to public space and claim for private property?



## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To formulate transposition of street art on the language of design – which is developing the code and using it in the process of shaping architecture and urban scape – there are two essential subjects that have to be defined theoretically at the beginning.

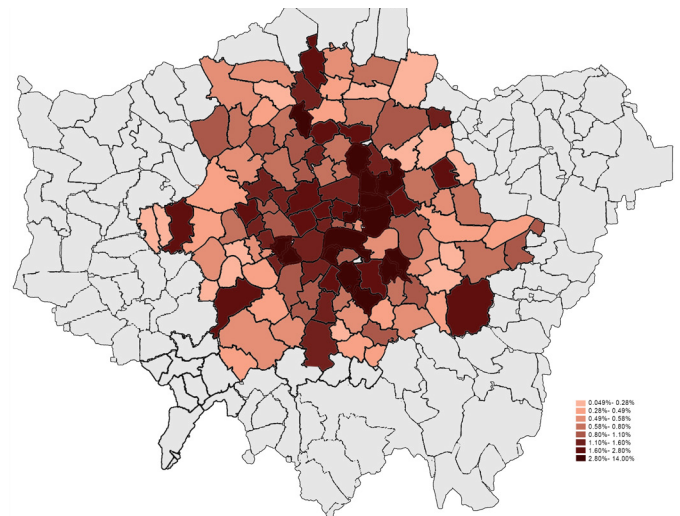
First, as mentioned before, the process of transposition non-design into design implies sort of actions including substitutions, symbolisation, reductions and condensation of meaning. To remain attached to the main theme – street art – there has to be defined the essence of it. That is why, this step is in fact defining street art mainly according to two texts:

- T.Chackal's "*Of Materiality and Meaning: The Illegality Condition in Street Art*" (2016) is a base telling what requirements (material and immaterial) have to be met to classified street art and what distinguishes it from the other artworks in public spaces. Also it provides answer for the question if street art must be illegal, which is 'no' – it does not.
- "*Street Art, Sweet Art? Reclaiming the "Public" in Public Place*" (Visconti, Sherry Jr., Borghini, & Anderson, 2010) is a backbone for the personal definition of the phenomenon, which for the case of this research was extended – from active place marking and aesthetic rearrangement of urban contest to all manifestations of creativity in public spaces that meet requirements from the first position. The text already situates street art in context of urban/ architectural divagation, indicates actors involved in the phenomenon (the artist, the spectator, the owner) and outlines their motivations and conflicts between them in public space.

Second subject that has to be defined is the theme of space and how it is created. Henri Lefebvre's book "*The Production of Space*" (firstly published in 1974) provides general socio-philosophical view on space as an outcome of occurrences, includes things and objects and occurs to be precondition for new actions. There is also discussion about the body – any individual that participate in creating space and that is an active part of it. Henri Lefebvre's book covers many other important issues around creating and perceiving space. It often happens to be a theoretical starter for practical analysis in this research.

## METHODOLOGY AND METHODS (Diagrams 1.1&1.2)

The first approach to practical researching, the TOP-DOWN method, was based on the assumptions that locations of street art is marked with certain level of deprivation and it is being practised in formed communities. The data<sup>1</sup> were collected to localise the potential areas to analyse. However, as it occurred, practising street art is too local phenomenon (Map 1.1). There was missing the middle step that would lead to detailed research after general overview on London in scale of boroughs. This conclusion brought reversed approach, the BOTTOM-UP method, which is building knowledge on found local cases in narrowed area (Map 1.2). Then there would be created general overview that would summarise the phenomenon.



Map 1.1: **Proportion of 'art' images on Flickr in London, 2004-2013**  
(Seresinhe, Preis, & Moot, 2016)



Map 1.2: **Area of interest** based on map 1.1  
with marked water, brownfields, greenery, railway and underground tracks

1. Source of data:

- numerical amount of ethnic group from <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/ethnic-groups-borough> [access: 27th Sept 2020]
- numerical amount of population by religion from <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/percentage-population-religion-borough> [access: 27th Sept 2020]
- numerical amount of population by qualification of working age from <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/qualification-of-working-age-population-nvq-boroughs> [access: 27th Sept 2020]
- crime damage rate (2017) from [https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/recorded\\_crime\\_rates](https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/recorded_crime_rates) [access: 27th Sept 2020]
- crime rate per thousand people (2017) from [https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/recorded\\_crime\\_rates](https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/recorded_crime_rates) [access: 27th Sept 2020]
- income data of tax payers from <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/average-income-tax-payers-borough> [access: 27th Sept 2020]

The succeeding research was conducted on analysing three different cases from the-looking-for-the-position-of-street-art point of view. The sites were chosen in way that the analysed cases would extend gained knowledge rather than cover the same issues (*Map1.3*).

The first case is Southbank Centre, which was chosen in view of the Undercroft – space occupied by skateboarders and graffiti writers, and surrounded by formal facilities of culture- like the Queen Elizabeth Hall or the National Theatre. The background for practical analysis and the source of phenomena to locate were Lefebvre's "The Production of Space" and Moore's "You Have to Pay for the Public Life" confronted with the A. Jones' "On South Bank : the production of public space" (2014) as an evident record of found situation. With tools of representation (*thematic mapping, re-/de- assembling collages, 3D-model, the "Naked City" plan, the "Manhattan Transcript"*) the followings were analysed:

- characteristics of urban context, position of street art and its relations with other spaces,
- presence of "the Stage" and "Street wisdom" concepts,
- matter of materiality in the use of space,

events, behaviours and movements happening around. By the criteria established on the first case – spatial difficulties and significant boundaries of location – the second case Shoreditch Nomadic Community Garden was picked to discuss directly features of street art found in texts of Chackal, Visconti and co-workers, and Paulsson's "Public space: Open to everybody - but how? Street art as a threat or a prospect" (2009). The garden, a grass-roots initiative, was situated in-between railway infrastructure in the neighbourhood of Shoreditch where street art is already present. With similar tools of representation there was examined position of artworks among each other in urban scape and according to materiality of the street, also due to the "temporality" concept. To analyse space there had to be analysed elements creating this space (Lefebvre & Harvey, 1991, p. 179) what led to creating the *catalogue of objects* found in the garden<sup>1</sup>.

In the compiled catalogue there were signs of being formulated bottom-up organisation, having almost form of institution, which was controlling activities in the garden and addressing it to visiting people from outside. That finding was determining in the choice of the third location – the "Oval Space", the area around the gasholders at the Regent's Canal. The site is seen as the one where street art was supposed to occur and by creating "Time lapse" map it was shown what processes having shaped the area. The tools of *mapping and re-/de- assembling collages* were used here to analyse position of street art according to the street and to other cultural amenities around.

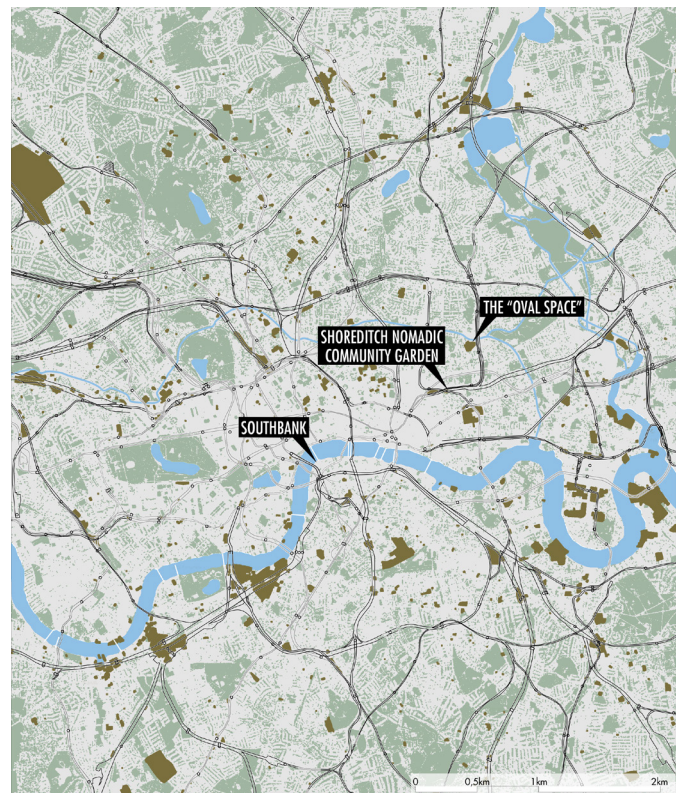
Described analytical part of research was not a linear process (what represent following diagrams 1&2) and mentioned tools of representation were not used one by one. Ideas appeared after certain analysis where confronted with former or/and next case(s).

## RELEVANCE

As it occurs street art can be not only form of expression but also a way to revitalise detached from the city, neglected spaces. It behaves and is driven by the same rules as other amenities and in the same way it takes position according to materiality and immateriality of the street. Thus, it has to merge with the city life.

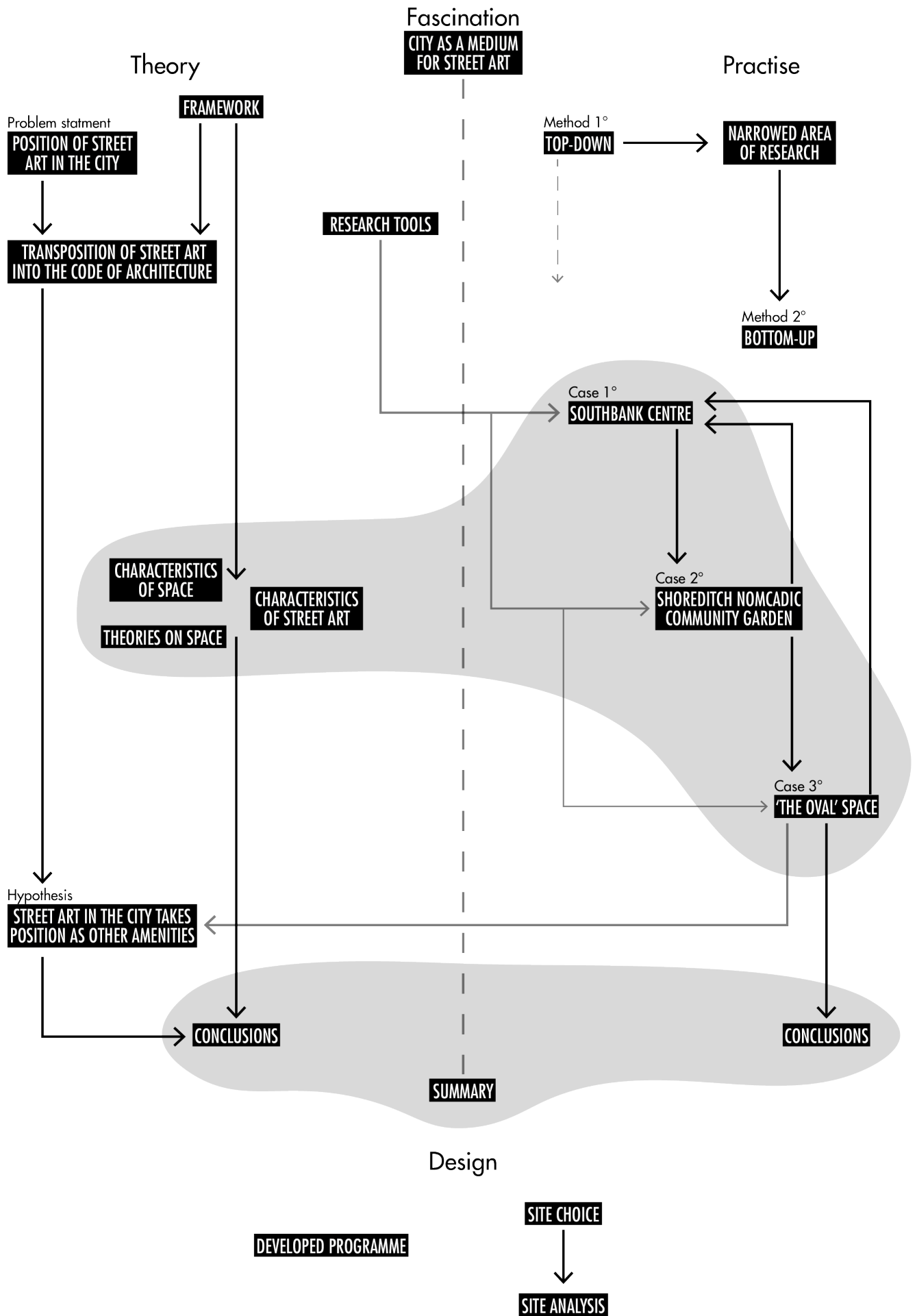
As any other amenity, this developed on the idea of street art has to possess readable boundaries, being subspace of public space. To make a step in the process of democratisation the city, people must have control being responsible for it and they should have right to rearrange the space and freely express themselves, thus street art might initiate re-defining the term "gentrification".

Focusing on street art and exploring this matter, it was admitted that the phenomenon actively takes part in shaping cities, as well as architecture or urban design. Still, it happens to be in the opposition due to grass-roots nature and missing formerly institutionalised process of materialisation. However, if the city and architecture are perceived in terms of heterogeneity, rather than arbitrary imposed order, it seems that there is not only a room for synthesis with street art but also ignoring or fighting it would be improper and unreasonable.



Map1.3: **Chosen cases for analysis**

1. Photo documentation of the site: Carr-Smith, D. (2018-2019). *Improvised Open-Site: („The Nomadic Community Garden“)*. Retrieved from *Improvisation / Design / Art / Kitsch / Chance*: [http://www.davidcarrsmith.co.uk/\\_D-WW\\_IMPR-SITE-N-COM-GDN.htm](http://www.davidcarrsmith.co.uk/_D-WW_IMPR-SITE-N-COM-GDN.htm) [access: 25th Nov 2020]



Designing process

Diagram 1.1: *The research process* from personal motivation till beginning of the design process

Whole London  
**GENERAL DATA**

"Homogeneity of boroughs" maps  
"Boroughs to whole London" comparative maps

"Where is „Art“?" map  
"Site of interest" map

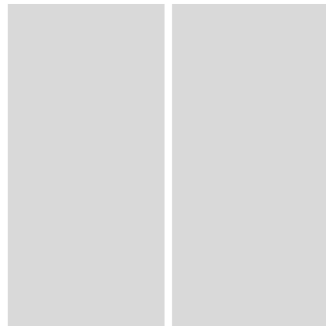


Case 1°  
**SOUTHBANK CENTRE**

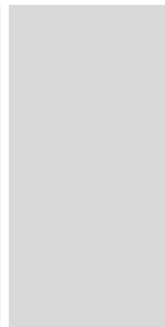


"When building where built" map  
"Formal/ informal facilities" maps  
"Exterior/ interior" functional section

"Usage of materiality in the Undercroft" collage  
"Spatial complexity" collages  
"Spatial boundaries" map



Case 2°  
**SHOREDITCH NOMCADIC COMMUNITY GARDEN**

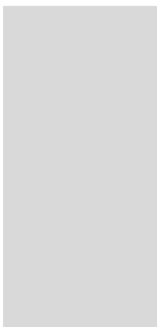
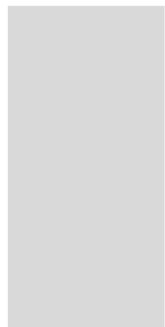
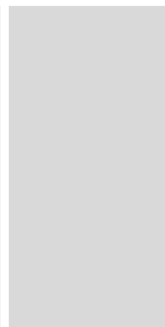


Site map  
"When building where built" map

"Naked City" plan  
Street art: "Temporality" collages



Case 3°  
**'THE OVAL' SPACE**



Theory  
**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Chackal, T.: *Of Materiality and Meaning: The Illegality Condition in Street Art.*  
Visconti, L. M., Sherry Jr., J. F., Borghini, S., & Anderson, L.: *Street Art, Sweet Art? Reclaiming the "Public" in Public Place.*  
Paulsson, E.: *Public space: Open to everybody - but how? Street art as a threat or a prospect.*

Seresinhe, C. I., Preis, T., & Moot, H. S.: *Quantifying the link between art and property prices in urban neighbourhoods.*  
Ungers, O. M.: *Cities Within the City.*

Lefebvre, H.: *The production of space.*

Lefebvre, H.: *The production of space.*  
Jones, A.: *On South Bank: the production of public space.*

Moore, C. W.: *You Have to Pay for the Public Life.*  
Ulmer, J. B.: *Writing urban space: Street art, democracy, and photographic cartography.*

Chackal, T.: *Of Materiality and Meaning: The Illegality Condition in Street Art.*

Visconti, L. M., Sherry Jr., J. F., Borghini, S., & Anderson, L.: *Street Art, Sweet Art? Reclaiming the "Public" in Public Place.*

Ulmer, J. B.: *Writing urban space: Street art, democracy, and photographic cartography.*

McDonough, T.: *Situationist Space.*

Visconti, L. M., Sherry Jr., J. F., Borghini, S., & Anderson, L.: *Street Art, Sweet Art? Reclaiming the "Public" in Public Place.*

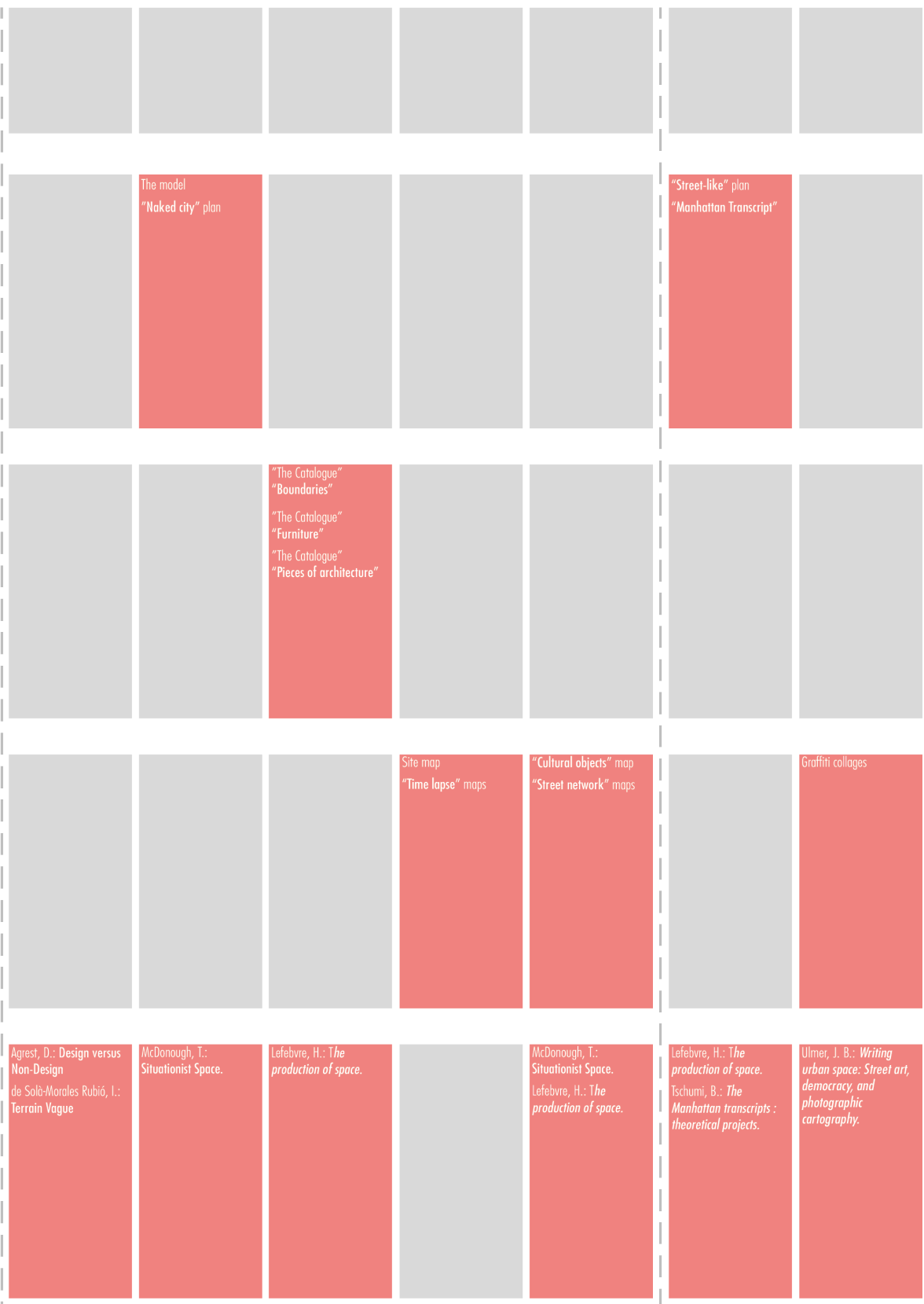
Paulsson, E.: *Public space: Open to everybody - but how? Street art as a threat or a prospect.*

**Fascination CITY AS A MEDIUM FOR STREET ART**

Method 1°  
**TOP-DOWN**

Method 2°  
**BOTTOM-UP**

Problem statement  
**POSITION OF STREET ART IN THE CITY**



Design

Hypothesis

**STREET ART IN THE CITY TAKES POSITION AS OTHER AMENITIES**

**TRANSPPOSITION OF STREET ART INTO THE CODE OF ARCHITECTURE**

Diagram 1.2: *The research timeline*



## PERSONAL GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

- **The space** – socio-philosophical locus for any relations of objects inside, an outcome of occurrences and objects and preconditions for new actions (Lefebvre & Harvey, 1991)
- **The body** – any individual inside the space, an co-creator and active part of it, a subject being in relations with other bodies inside the space (Lefebvre & Harvey, 1991)
- **The street** – a public space in urban scape that is an element of urban infrastructure, a place for socio-cultural relations and conflict between public and private properties (Ulmer, 2017)
- **Street art** – an intentional activity, a branch of art in public space, any manifestation of creative expression in urban scape that meets the material and immaterial requirements (Chackal, 2016) (Visconti, Sherry Jr., Borghini, & Anderson, 2010)
- **The material requirement** – a requirement for street art: materiality of the street is an unavoidable part of artwork (Chackal, 2016)
- **The immaterial requirement** – a requirement for street art: socio-cultural phenomena in the street are unavoidable part of creating and a lens for perceiving the artwork (Chackal, 2016)
- **Genius loci** – Latin “spirit of the place”, the essence/ individual character of the place
- **Democratisation** – process of increasing role of people in creating and using public spaces, admitting equal rights for everyone to be and use the space (Ulmer, 2017)
- **“The stage” concept** – a philosophic concept of place for the self-expression within the space, a room for an individual to see and to be seen (Lefebvre & Harvey, 1991) (Jones, 2014)
- **“Temporality” concept** – the characteristic of street art that artwork lasts for short amount of time and might be replaced by another; it is a part of democratisation (Paulsson, 2009) (Visconti, Sherry Jr., Borghini, & Anderson, 2010)
- **“Street wisdom” concept** – unofficial rules and knowledge how to behave in space gained while using it, they state the role of the body within the space (Jones, 2014)
- **The “Naked City” plan** – a tool of visual representation to psychologically map and capture relations between specific spaces, while moving around some space are significant and others might be omitted (McDonough, 2013)
- **The “Manhattan Transcript”** – a tool of visual representation used in research to extend description of space beyond physicality, include three aspects: the event, the movement and the object (Tschumi, 1994)
- **Re-/De- assembling collages** – a tool of visual representation, photomontages made to highlight specific subject or subjects in the argumentation
- **Thematic mapping** – a tool of visual representation; maps, plans and sections made to highlight specific subject or subjects in the argumentation

# **CODES OF STREET ART IN URBAN SPACE**

## **Informal Manifestations Of Creativity Co-Shaping Public Spaces**

### The Essay

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In London street art is still formally perceived as an act of anti-social behaviour while it gains more and more acceptance and admiration by people. The fact that it remains illegal means a great wasted potential of inhabitants' creativity and will to participate in creating public spaces. While street art may mark places that are neglected or struggling with some socio-spatial issues, it points also those where locally there is a lack of space for individuals' self-expression. Being informal and spontaneous rearrangement of urban scape, it is a manifestation of tension between public and private in the street. It might be perceived as an argument in claiming for more democratic public spaces.

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The conclusions made during the research would be a backbone for the process of designing the architectural space in the spirit of street art. Having developed transposition of the gained knowledge into the code of architecture, there would be a proper site chosen and an architectural programme developed to fully exploit social potential represented by street art. The design might initiate re-defining the term of gentrification and make a contribution in the process of democratisation public space.

#### **KEYWORDS**

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## PERSONAL MOTIVATION

As a person who is actively interested in visual art and who have been trying one's hand at it, usually I have contact with conventional forms of expression, especially drawing and painting, and I am concerned with themes in the spectrum between literal representation and full abstraction. Although, at the moment of being occupied with the most conventional ones, figurative still-lives and landscapes, in equally conventional techniques, oil-paints and watercolours, I was driven by the conviction about closure of the outcome. The closure in terms of medium and relation to place and form of exposure, rather than relation of the content with the spectator. The canvas appeared as a window cut out from the reality, unrelated with materiality of the wall it is hung on and the room of exhibition (*Image 2.1*).

This issue of unity has led me to the interest of street art and its place in the cityscape. As Tony Chackal stated *"Whatever meaning the artwork has, the street is essential to it."* (2016). Street art is a vivid and hard to classified movement, often related to subcultures and occurs with other activities in the street. That is why this research takes into consideration a broader spectrum of similar, informal forms of creativity which change urban space and are strongly related to it at the same time.

The research was a challenge to explore and understand the world close to my personal interests and which I have contact with almost every day in the city but also strange and yet uncharted by myself. Finally it demanded move beyond aesthetic likes and dislikes to formulate conclusions and use gained knowledge for the purpose of architectural design.

## WHY LONDON

London is one of the most known places in Europe to find street art, including work of world-famous artists as Banksy or Stik. As a large city, it is a home for many people belonging to different communities but sharing the same public spaces though. Oswald Ungers wrote: *"Large cities are characterised by an overlapping of many opposite and divergent conceptions"* (2013) – the conceptions for arrangement and usage of public space (*Image 2.1*).

Furthermore, as in a one of the world's financial centres and globalisation focal points, there come different global ideas and tendencies together. As street art reacts not only to local situations, but also to what is happening in the world (Paulsson, 2009, p. 7) and participates in production of Pop-culture codes (Visconti, Sherry Jr., Borghini, & Anderson, 2010) city of London suits the research on the subject.

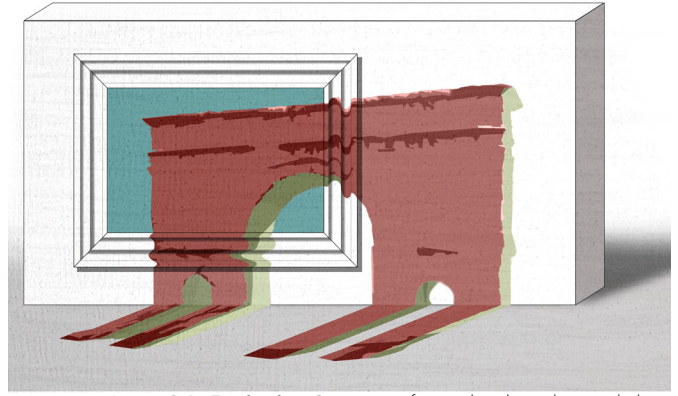


Image 2.1: **Fascination:** Conjunction of artwork with medium and place

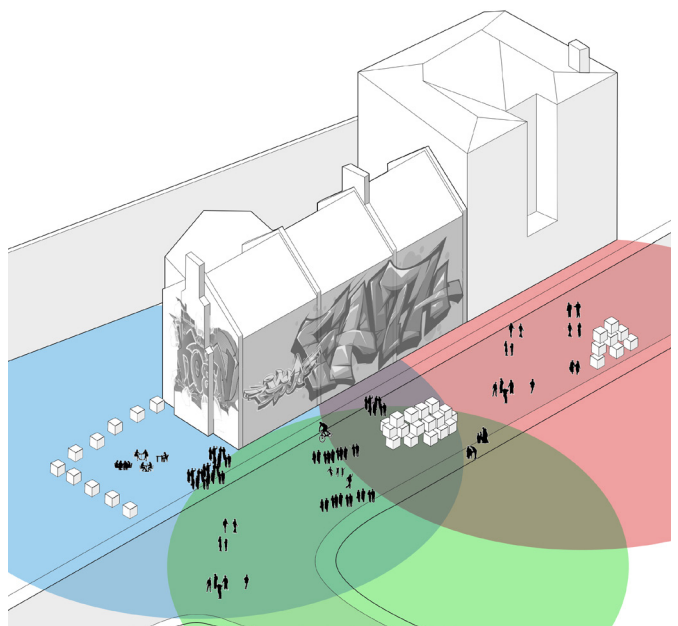


Image 2.2: **Overlapping conceptions in the city**



## PERSONAL "STREET ART" DEFINITION

To begin working on the theme of street art and its position in the city, it is essential to clarify what is supposed to be understood by this concept because of different meanings and usages of the term. First of all, the roots of the phenomenon are in deep underground world and formulating terminology have been happening in spontaneous and informal way in specific social groups. Obviously, by the time, progressing common awareness and acceptance of this movement established terminology known also by people outside those groups. Meanwhile, there have been written academic researches on the topic and some of them are included in this text. Although, my scope is from urban and architectural point of view, thus the set of literature was chosen to situate position of street art in urban scape, rather than argue on the content, its messages, aesthetic values and styles.

In common contemporary understanding, the term "street art" is being used to distinguish sort of forms of creative activities in the city and there are parallel distinctions on different levels. One of them, on the general level, points the difference between "street art" and "public art". The shared feature is location, that it is a public, widely accessible place for exhibiting the artwork (what does not have to mean physical accessibility but viewing from a distance can be enough here). Such physicality, when material elements of street are part of the artwork, constitute a material requirement for street art (Chackal, 2016) that is also met by public art. However, dissimilarity between those two can be almost immediately recognised – there can be felt informality in street art, spontaneity and often being at least slightly underground. In Chackal's text there can be seen some valuations of street art over public art: *"The physical street must be included to retain street art's distinctive form and to prevent it from collapsing into public art or mainstream art. Public art includes work that may be in the street, but lacks the immateriality requirement and the ephemerality commitment."* (2016) The "immaterial requirement" is essential for street art because phenomenon of the street is far-reaching than just physical infrastructure – it includes all movements, sociocultural relations and often outcomes of random occurrences. Thus, those must be integrated part of artwork creation and its duration. Although, analysing processes in the street, its complexity and interrelations, it might be overwhelming and seem to be chaotic. That is why, Chackal also mentioned necessary condition for street art to meet, or maybe even generally for art, the process of creation must be intentional (2016).

Going deeply into the world of individuals practising this kind of activities the term of "street art" may appear again but to describe specific forms of creativity, such as murals or stencil paintings on walls, distinguished from other aesthetic practises in urban scape (Ulmer, 2017). It is already related with specific communities established around artists associated with specific forms and styles for whom the city becomes their place of co-existence and struggles, for example between King Robbo and Banksy who represent two different movements: graffiti and stencil painting (Preston, 2011). For me graffiti's opposition to street art was surprising but I have become more aware after having talks with my friend Julien who actively practises skateboarding and admires graffiti but disrespect street art. In his words street art presents content

too appealing for everyone so illegal placing street artwork is unsophisticated trick to gain more admiration and popularity. Contrary graffiti, which is more focused on lettering in varied visual styles and aesthetics which identify authors. Thus graffiti remains being exclusive, addressed for people from inside. The opposition can be seen even in terminology. A person practising street art happens to be called street artist, while there are graffiti writers. However in case of street art and graffiti these rules may be not so stiff because there have been found some texts where there was used expression "graffiti artist" or in Preston's film with King Robbo and Banksy – a stencil painter – was called *"Graffiti Wars"*.

Thus, if this distinction has blurred boundaries and appears already in argumentation on artistic values and contest of the artwork, in following paragraphs the term "street art" is used for description of former, general phenomenon that includes graffiti as well and meets material and immaterial requirements of the street. In the text *"Street Art, Sweet Art? Reclaiming the "Public" in Public Place"*, which will be used to elaborate more on characteristics, there is an argument on street art as on active place marking and there were excluded street performances like street theatres or parkour movement because the authors focused on aesthetic rearrangement of urban contest (Visconti, Sherry Jr., Borghini, & Anderson, 2010). But in this research those are also included due their significant impact on perceiving the city by people. Moreover, not only materiality of the street is relevant but also, or even more, what is happening in the street. It seems reasonable then to take a broader look on others activities occurring with street art but may not be considered solitarily as creative or being, for example skateboarding or urban gardening.

## STREET ART'S UNDERGROUND NATURE AND THE ROLE IN PRODUCTION OF PUBLIC SPACE

For now street art in various forms remains being illegal in many cities around the world including London. Illegality have an influence on form and the act of placing the artwork so it may provide authenticity and spontaneity. Even though, Chackal pointed it is not a necessary condition for street art to meet (2016). As it was mentioned, it has underground roots but by the time it gains more and more public acceptance tough and more often it is not perceived as an act of vandalism and anti-social behaviour. In Chackal's text there is even distinction when street art is illegal, due to local laws and regulation, and when it is illicit – when the content rather than form is not accepted by people (2016). Objection and validation of rules can be one of the reasons driving street artists, some may be more selfish – looking for self-affirmation by placing artist's name (or much more often nickname) around the city, or using city to exhibit one's work (for example marking metro trains to use them as a canvas moving around the city). Other artist may want to express their thoughts on social, cultural or political issues, and some may perceive their artwork as the contribution to the urban scape and image of public spaces (Visconti, Sherry Jr., Borghini, & Anderson, 2010).

Even though there is no illegality obligation, from both, material and immaterial requirements of street art come some interrelations and conflicts because of the positions and claiming of parties experiencing street art. First party are artists as individuals reacting on situation found in the street. Their reaction is creating the artwork which is an active participation in rearranging public space. Also dual is the role of the spectator, people passing by and interacting with street art. First, they had built the material and immaterial aspects of street and socio-cultural frames in which street artist acts. Then they experience the artwork and position themselves according to it. The third party is the owner of the material elements in the street - one administrates the buildings on which the street art can be placed (Visconti, Sherry Jr., Borghini, & Anderson, 2010). The owners have to be included according to the material requirement described before. Consequently there is a question raised about publicity in public spaces if the street is built from elements privately owned. In such case the work of street artists can be perceived as active promoting street democracy which, as it was said, demands conscious participation in creating and using the city (Visconti, Sherry Jr., Borghini, & Anderson, 2010).

The role of street art in creating contemporary city can be expressed in following words (Visconti, Sherry Jr., Borghini, & Anderson): *“Place marking is thus an evocative form of place making, ranging from pure resistance and contestation to public place beautification.”* (2010). For better understanding these words and to extend the idea of place making beyond material features of urban infrastructure, it seems necessary to analyse theoretical concept of the space and the process of its creation. In the book *“The Production of Space”* (published for the first time in 1974) Henri Lefebvre focused on socio-philosophical space as a medium for social relations. It is a superstructure – an outcome of sequences and sets of occurrences. It includes things and objects and occurs to be precondition that permits new actions to happen (Lefebvre & Harvey, 1991, pp. 73, 77). That is why, there is the body - a concept of being which is subject and object of those actions and interactions. It perceives, reacts to space and is involved in active production of space. Each inherent body has to position itself to the space and other bodies within, and always has influence on them in the same way as they have influence on the body (Lefebvre & Harvey, 1991, pp. 170, 182, 184). Lefebvre’s statement is very determined: the individual cannot be passive perceiver of the space, each one takes an active role what makes each space unique (1991, pp. 294, 170). Bringing those ideas to the consideration of street art, not only its content and message have influence on persons. Street artist, having been determined by found situation, is participating in further defining the street. One gives a unique character to it and contributes in creating public space by changing the atmosphere and partly bringing privately owned materiality to interact with society in urban environment

## PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In London street art remains illegal and perceived as an act of anti-social behaviour while it gains more acceptance and admiration by people. Having admitted the input of street art movement in shaping urban scape, on one hand there is enormous undirected energy and unconsumed potential to reinforce people’s intentional participation in creating and democratising urban spaces. On the other, the street could be a place to liberate people’s creativity and to find appreciation in locally formulated communities.

While investigating position and role of street art, there has to be awareness that this phenomenon happens to be on two levels. As it was mentioned before the purpose of this text is not to discuss the content and forms. However, it is important that street art is an element of culture – a hierarchical system of codes, languages of signs introducing ideology and information to public domain (Agest, 1998). Being one of those codes appealing for specific communities and groups of people, street art works on rules as other cultural products.

Meanwhile, according to previous arguments, it may be a one of the elements creating space – a fragment of urban environment overlapping with other fragments. In her text *“Design vs Non-design”* Diana Agrest elaborated opposition of those two title concepts that build urban scape. Due to her definition street art can be classified as the non-design – the result of cultural, non-institutionalized practises (1998). Valuing contribution of street art in the process of creating public space and willing to transpose it on architecture, there has to be developed code that would condense and crystalize ideas behind street art. The code that would be a filter of metaphors and metonymies to remain in the limits of architecture and design (Agest, 1998).

Any potentially developed code of design based on analysing street art is supposed to be used where street art usually occurs. Those are places of low level of maintenance, unfamiliar, neglected and struggling with socio-spatial issues (Paulsson, 2009, p. 6), either where there is revitalisation or reclaiming the public part in space needed (Visconti, Sherry Jr., Borghini, & Anderson, 2010) (Ulmer, 2017). Those places de Solà-Morales Rubió called *“Terrain Vague”* and claimed to be usually violently transformed by architecture and urban design loosing genius loci - their individual character and values (1995). The developed code then should maintain those and make a space truly public due to democratic ideology that is behind street art. **Thus, the goal here is not to admit position of street art in general consideration of art or to give it deserved appreciation, rather to help creating truly public, democratic space in the spirit of street art.**

## FIRST APPROACH

The beginning of the process of looking for spots where street art could be found was established by two basic characteristics commonly associated with such places. The first one was that they are characterised by a certain level of deprivation. This means they are at the same time neglected in a way and with visibly higher crime indicator as street art is still officially illegal<sup>1</sup> (*map 2.1-2.2*).

The second characteristic adopted, due to previously presented literature, was socialising feature of street art. Around this phenomenon there are formulated communities, groups or even gangs representing specific movements, styles or identities. That led to collecting data which were supposed to help establish society profile in London to see strength and unity of communities in the city<sup>2</sup> (*map 2.3-2.5*).

## ADOPTED METHODOLOGY

Even though overview taken from collected data suggests specific boroughs to take into consideration, the result was not putting forward any further steps to take that would bring closer specific locations of street art. The research called "*Quantifying the link between art and property prices in urban neighbourhoods*" (Seresinhe, Preis, & Moat, 2016), shows where people could find the art (*map 2.6*) and it acknowledged there is a direct positive influence of art in public spaces on perception of the area what effects increase of property prices. The data are presented in closer scale of wards and it already can be seen that two adjacent ones may be characterised by totally different frequency indicator of art commonly found. That led to the change for a new method with bottom-up approach: to build knowledge on examination specific precedents and conclude with general overview on the phenomenon. Obviously it is more likely to encounter art as it is closer to the city centre that is why the site of interest, from which the cases would be chosen from, was narrowed down due to the found research (*map 2.7*). The process of analysing was not conducted in a linear way – an outline, or any idea coming from examining the precedent or theoretical text was confronted with other cases and that resulted with a sequence of thoughts and themes allowing to extend general overview and furtherly conduct the analysis.

## CASES

After all, for the purpose of the research there were three precedents chosen (*map 2.8*). The characteristics justifying the choices were adopted individually for each case

according to the will to select three different spots and to gain objective, universal outlines and all of three precedents in the following elaboration contains not only conventional examples of wall marking but, according to previously given definition of street art, much more complex phenomena.

The first case is the Undercroft at the Southbank Centre, a skateboarding spot widely known not only in London but even across Europe. The choice of the case was justified by interesting situation – a skate park together with other informal facilities are physically compiled with cultural complex (built in 1950s-1970s) of very formal institutions such as the Royal Festival Hall, the National Theatre and Queen Elizabeth Hall. The site of research is mainly along the Queen's Walk by the Thames River, especially between Hungerford Bridge and Waterloo Bridge (*image 2.3, map 2.9-2.11*). It is an eagerly visited place by Londoners and tourists not only in time of cultural events but to casually spend their spare time<sup>3</sup>.

Being in-between linear elements of infrastructure is also a motive present in the next precedent – the Shoreditch Nomadic Community Garden – in this case between crossing two rail-lines. It was a grass-roots initiative, prospering since 2014 till the autumn of 2020, focused not only on neighbourhood gardening but also containing hand-built structures and two-/three-dimensional pieces of street art<sup>4</sup>. The Garden was located in Shoreditch, a district widely known for its variety of street art especially along the Brick Lane, which is not far away from the chosen location (*photography 2.1-2.2, map 2.12-2.13*). In the research the surrounding area as much as the Garden is thought giving and deserves to be analysed.

The third case is the "Oval Space", the area around the gasholders at the Regent's Canal. The site has been experiencing many transformations since nineteenth century. Through the years rearrangements concerned the residential area as much as industrial facilities. Looking at the urban tissue, there can be spotted conducted process of gentrification in recent decades. Although, still the silhouette of Victorian gasholders is what defines the image of the area. The presence of infrastructure in use since XIX century – the Regent's Canal and railway-line – concerned with the processes driving the site suggest that very interesting, with spontaneous character and reflection to the context, pieces of street art might be found in this location (*photography 2.3, map 2.14-2.15*).

1. For the purpose of mapping there have been collected data on crime rate and on local income compared with general image of London  
Source of data:

- crime damage rate (2017) from [https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/recorded\\_crime\\_rates](https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/recorded_crime_rates) [access: 27th Sept 2020]
- crime rate per thousand people (2017) from [https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/recorded\\_crime\\_rates](https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/recorded_crime_rates) [access: 27th Sept 2020]
- income data of tax payers from <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/average-income-tax-payers-borough> [access: 27th Sept 2020]

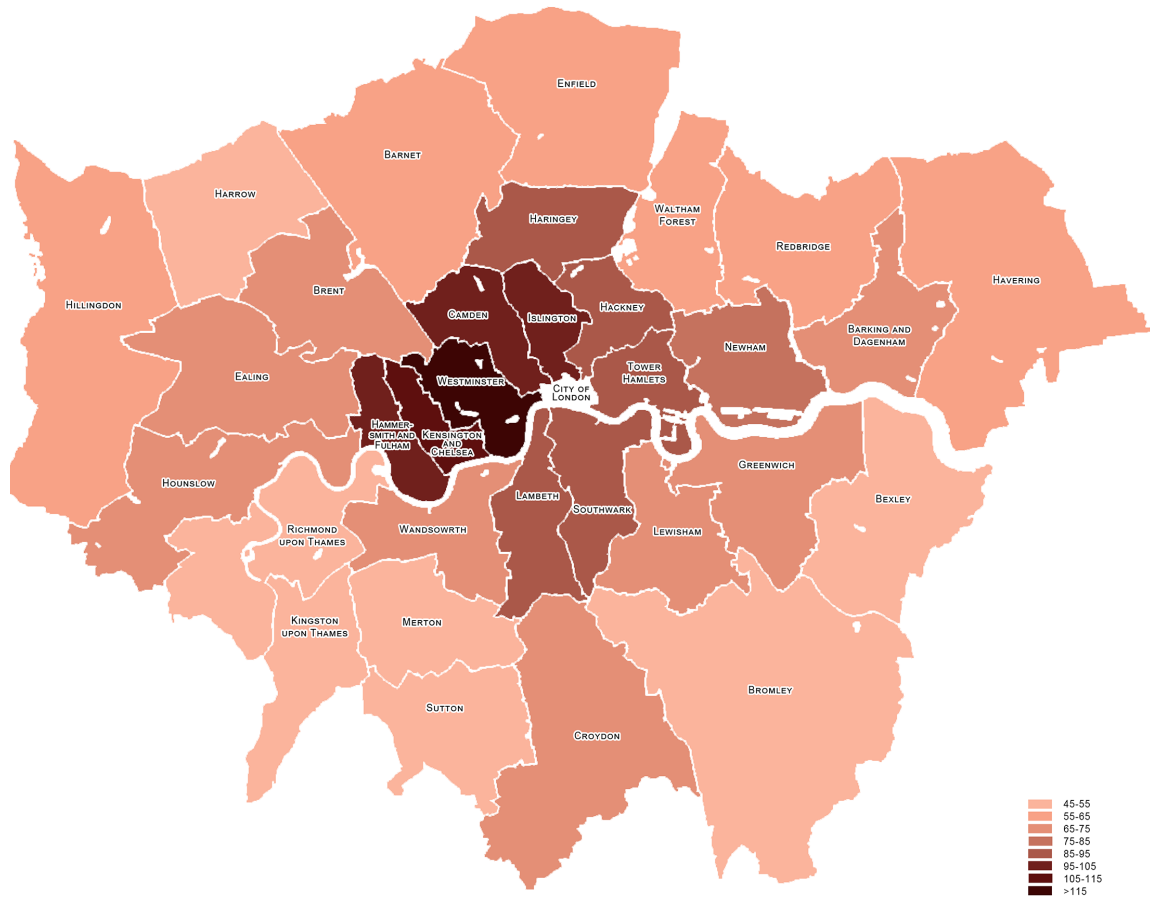
2. Found data of inhabitants' ethnicity, religion and qualification were used for calculating Simpson's reciprocal index to learn statistical diversity. They were mapped in three different moments of time (2012, 2015, 2018).

Source of numerical amount of:

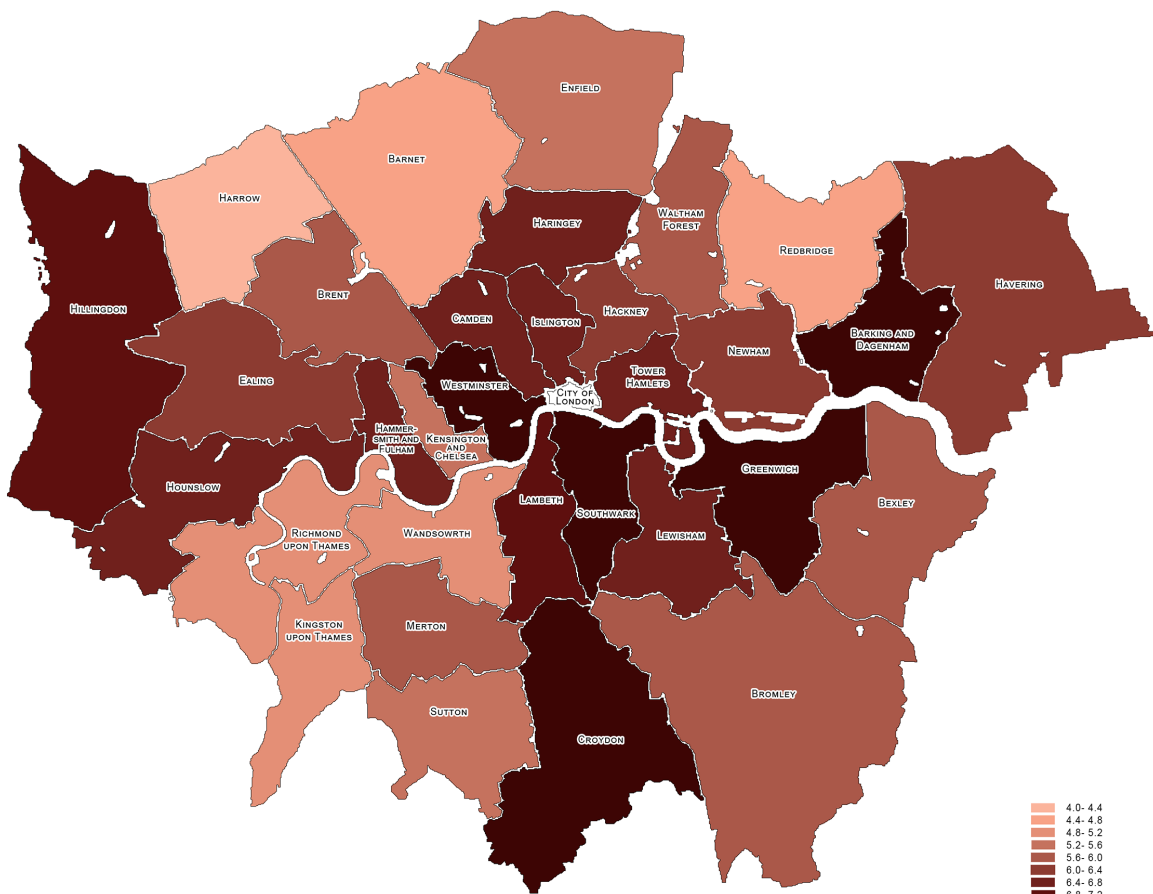
- ethnic group from <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/ethnic-groups-borough> [access: 27th Sept 2020]
- population by religion from <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/percentage-population-religion-borough> [access: 27th Sept 2020]
- population by qualification of working age from <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/qualification-of-working-age-population-nvq-boroughs> [access: 27th Sept 2020]

3. The book that recorded the activities and interpersonal relations is "*On South Bank: the production of public space*" (2014) by A.Jones, which occurred to be a very handful position in this research linking compiled theory on street art and creation of space with practical mapping and analysis of the area.

4. Photo documentation of the site: Carr-Smith, D. (2018-2019). *Improvised Open-Site: („The Nomadic Community Garden“)*. Retrieved from *Improvisation / Design / Art / Kitsch / Chance*: [http://www.davidcarrsmith.co.uk/\\_D-WW\\_IMPR-SITE-N-COM-GDN.html](http://www.davidcarrsmith.co.uk/_D-WW_IMPR-SITE-N-COM-GDN.html) [access: 25th Nov 2020]. The source is not only photo documentation of what can be found in the Garden but also there is a try to segregate and systematize the activities happening there and their locations.



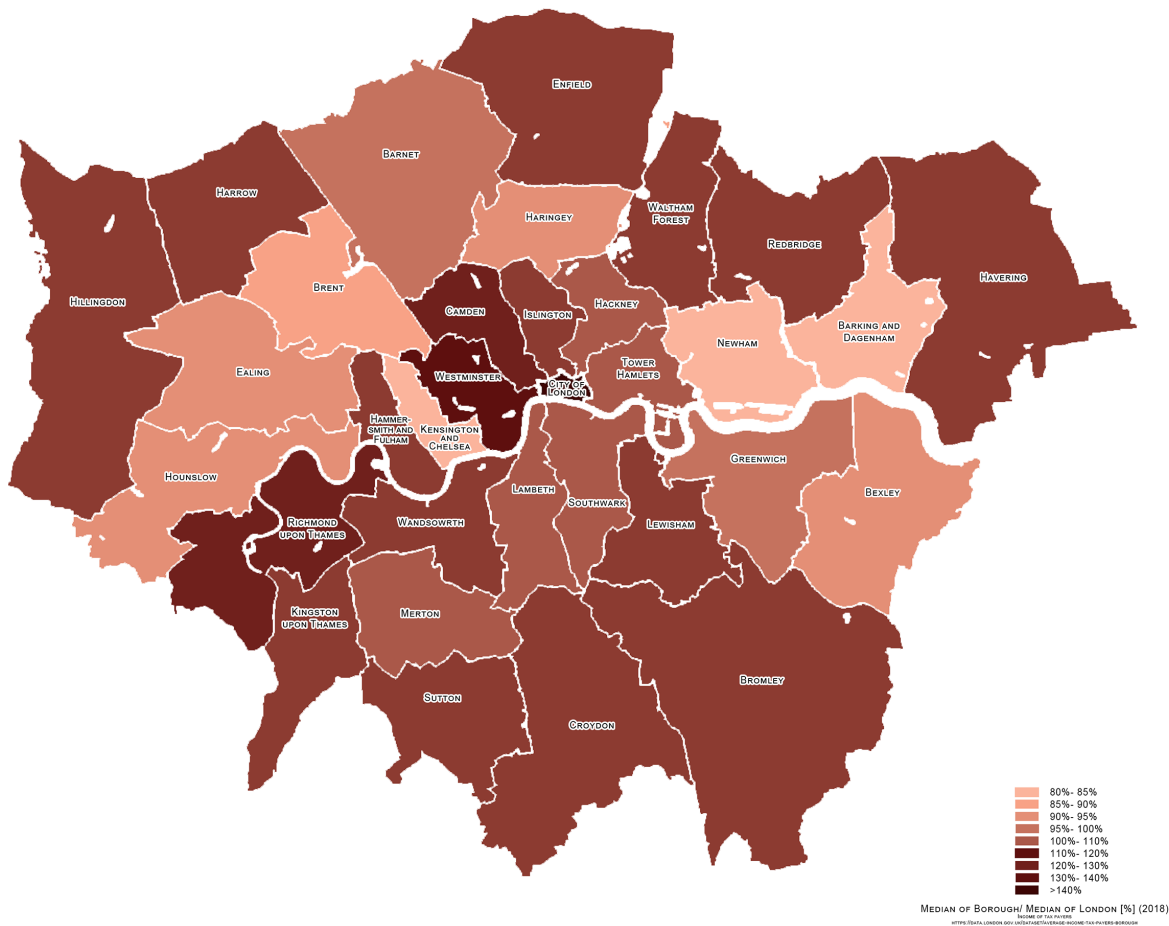
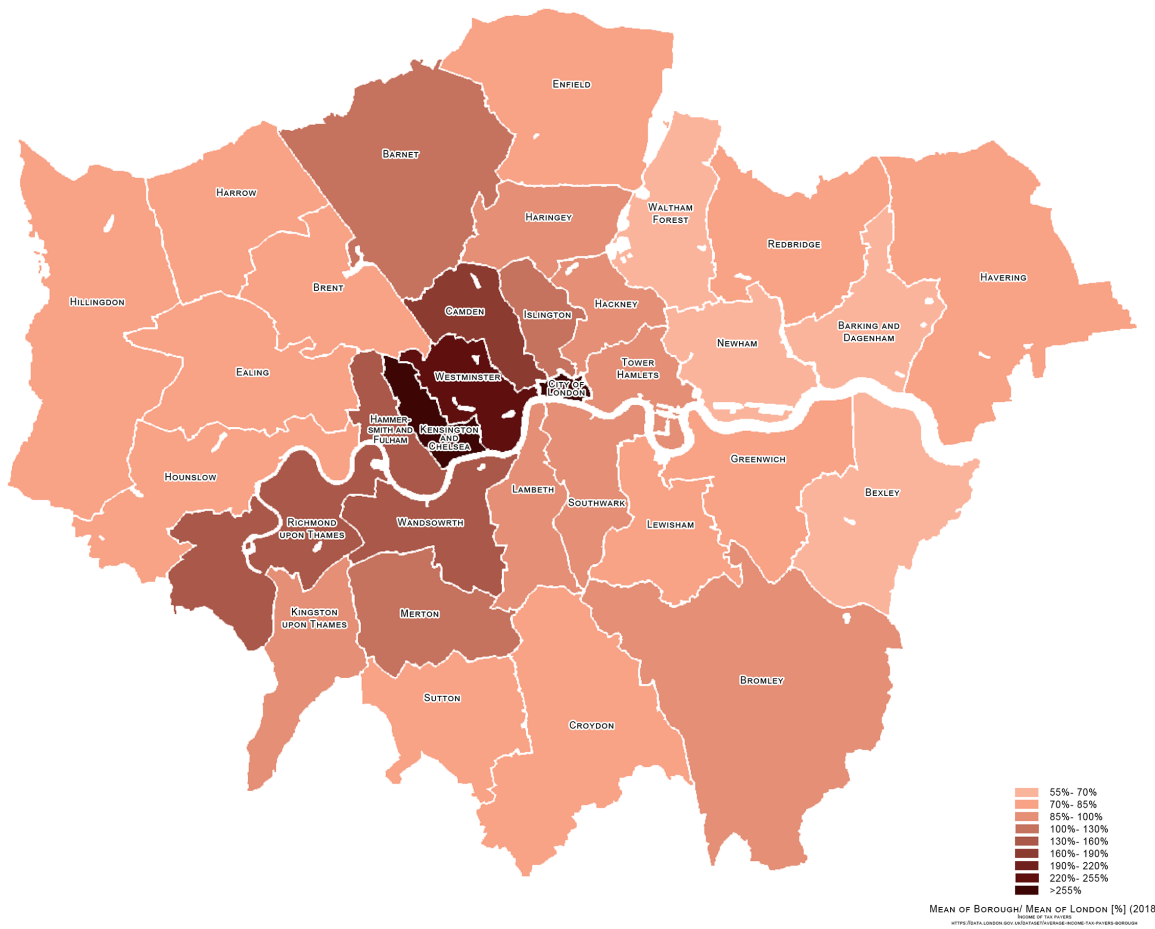
CRIME RATE PER THOUSAND PEOPLE (2017)  
[https://data.london.gov.uk/datasets/recorded\\_crime\\_rates](https://data.london.gov.uk/datasets/recorded_crime_rates)



CRIME DAMAGE (2017)  
[https://data.london.gov.uk/datasets/recorded\\_crime\\_rates](https://data.london.gov.uk/datasets/recorded_crime_rates)

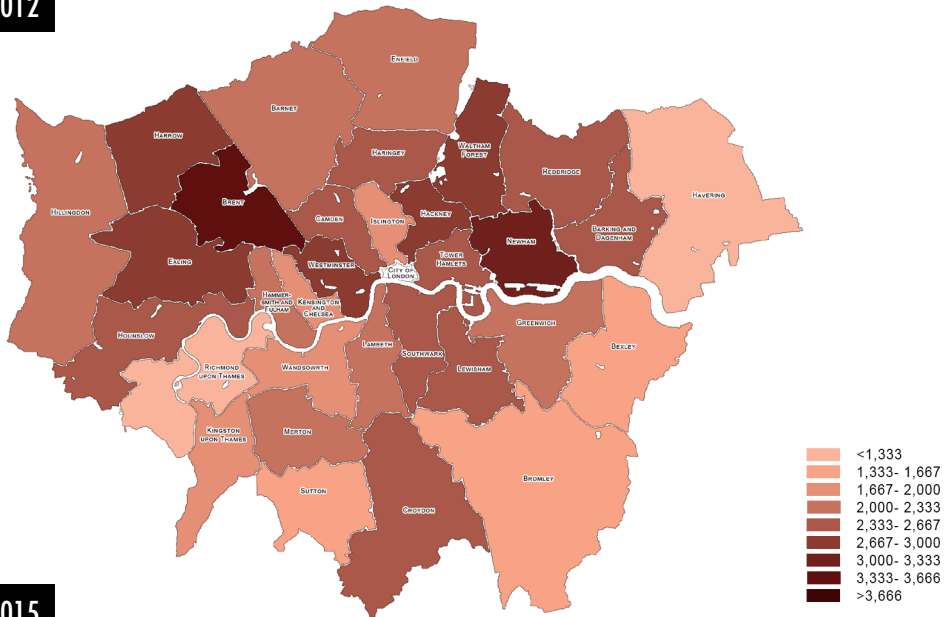
Map 2.1: Crime rate & crime damage by boroughs



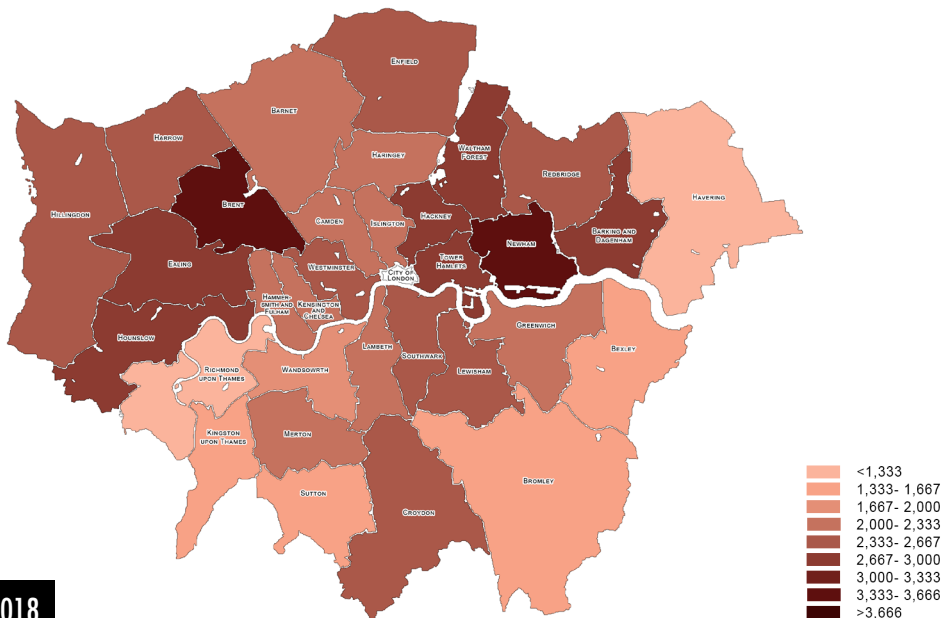


Map 2.2: **Average income by boroughs:** Compared mean and median of boroughs to general status of London

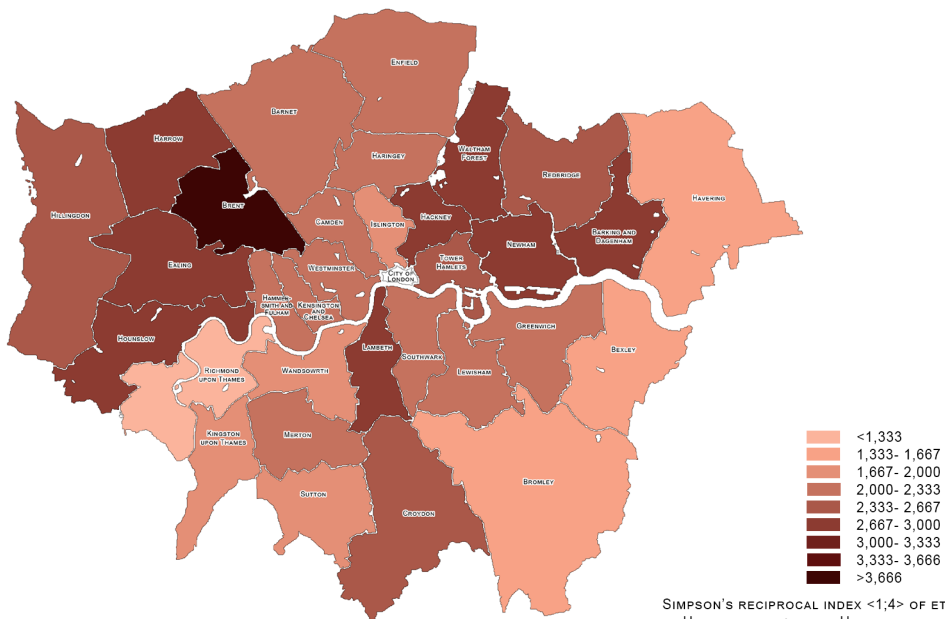
2012



2015

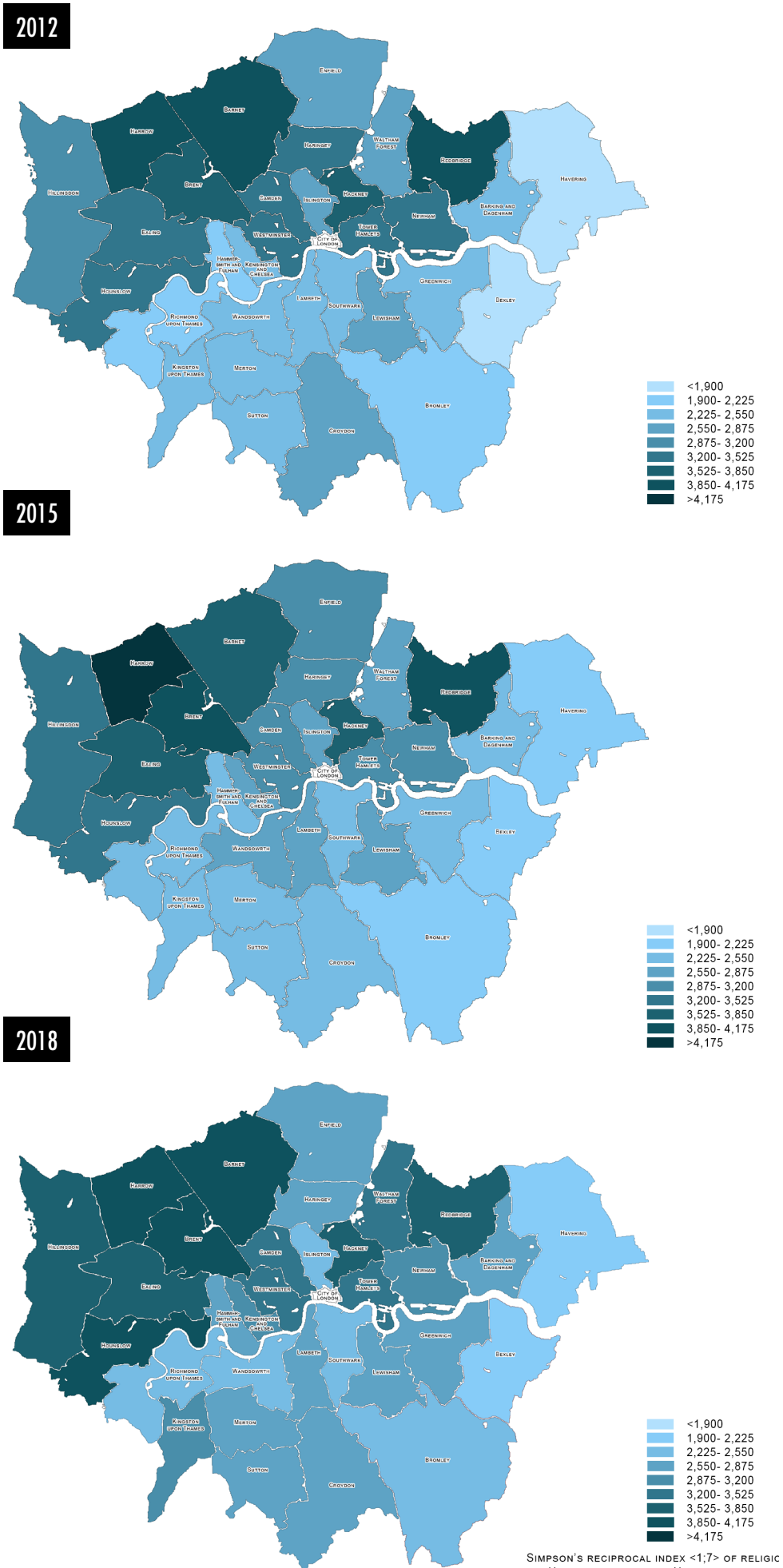


2018

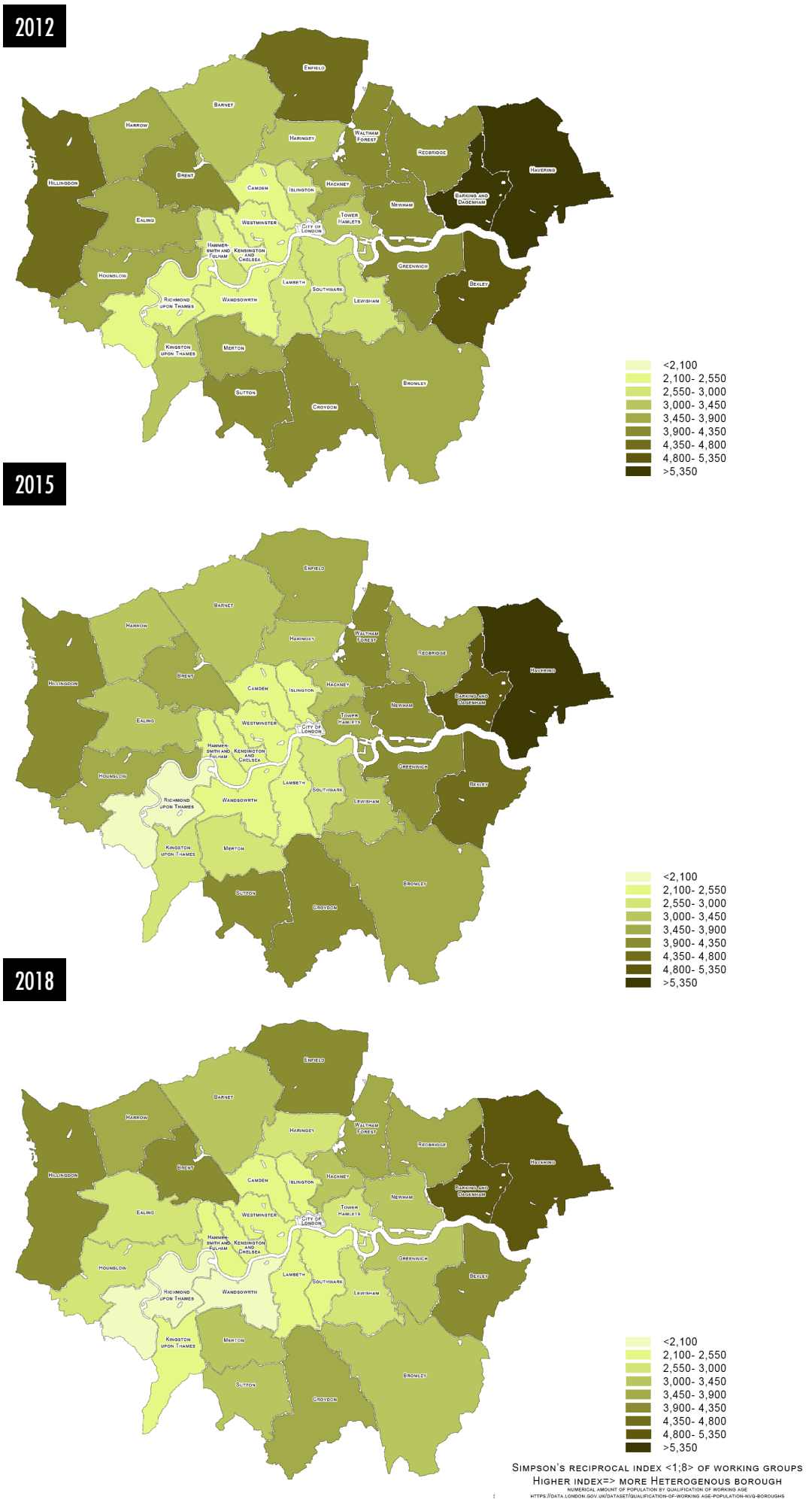


SIMPSON'S RECIPROCAL INDEX <1,4> OF ETHNIC GROUPS  
 HIGHER INDEX=> MORE HETEROGENOUS BOROUGH  
NUMERICAL AMOUNT OF ETHNIC GROUP FROM  
[HTTPS://DATA.LONDON.GOV.UK/DATASETS/ETHNIC-GROUPS-BOROUGH](https://data.london.gov.uk/datasets/ethnic-groups-borough)

Map 2.3: *Diversity by ethnicity*: Change of statistical status of ethnic groups in time

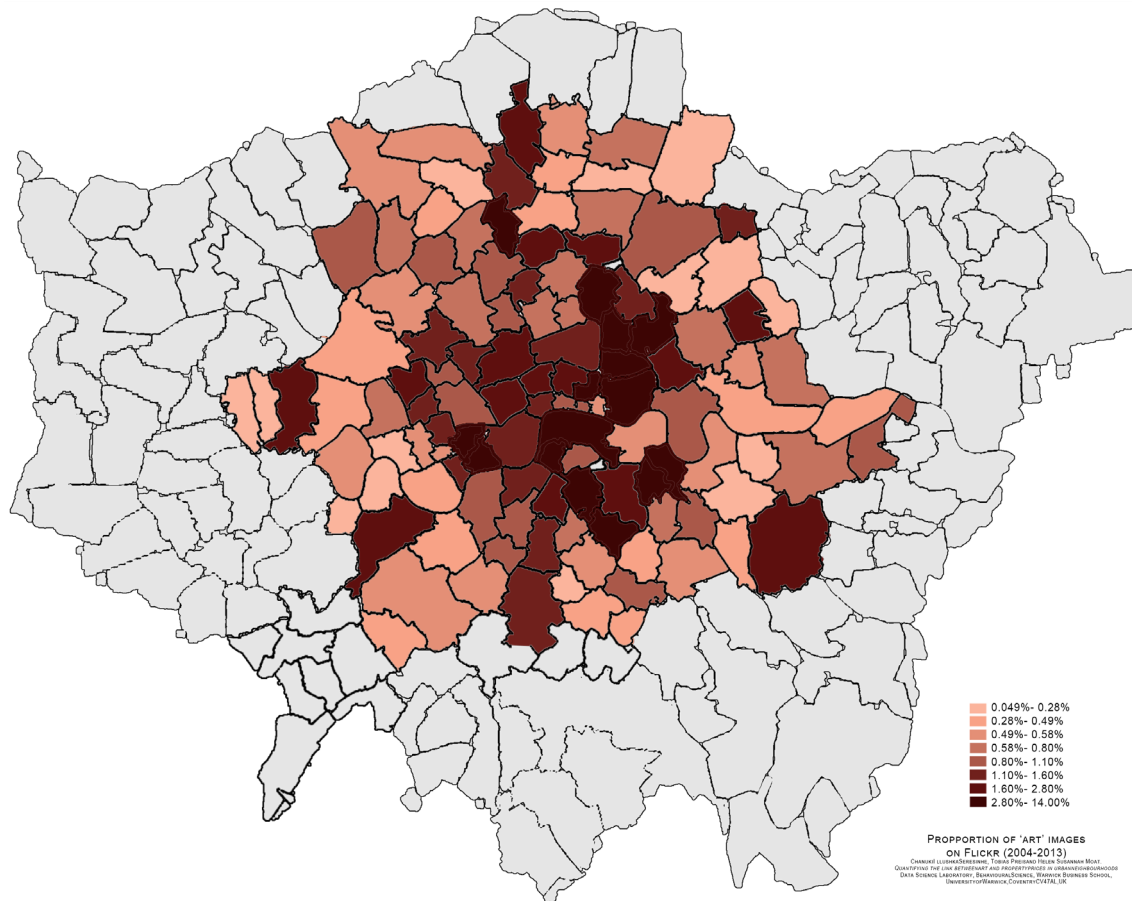


Map 2.4: *Diversity by religion*: Change of statistical status of religious groups in time



Map 2.5: *Diversity by qualification*: Change of statistical status of working groups in time

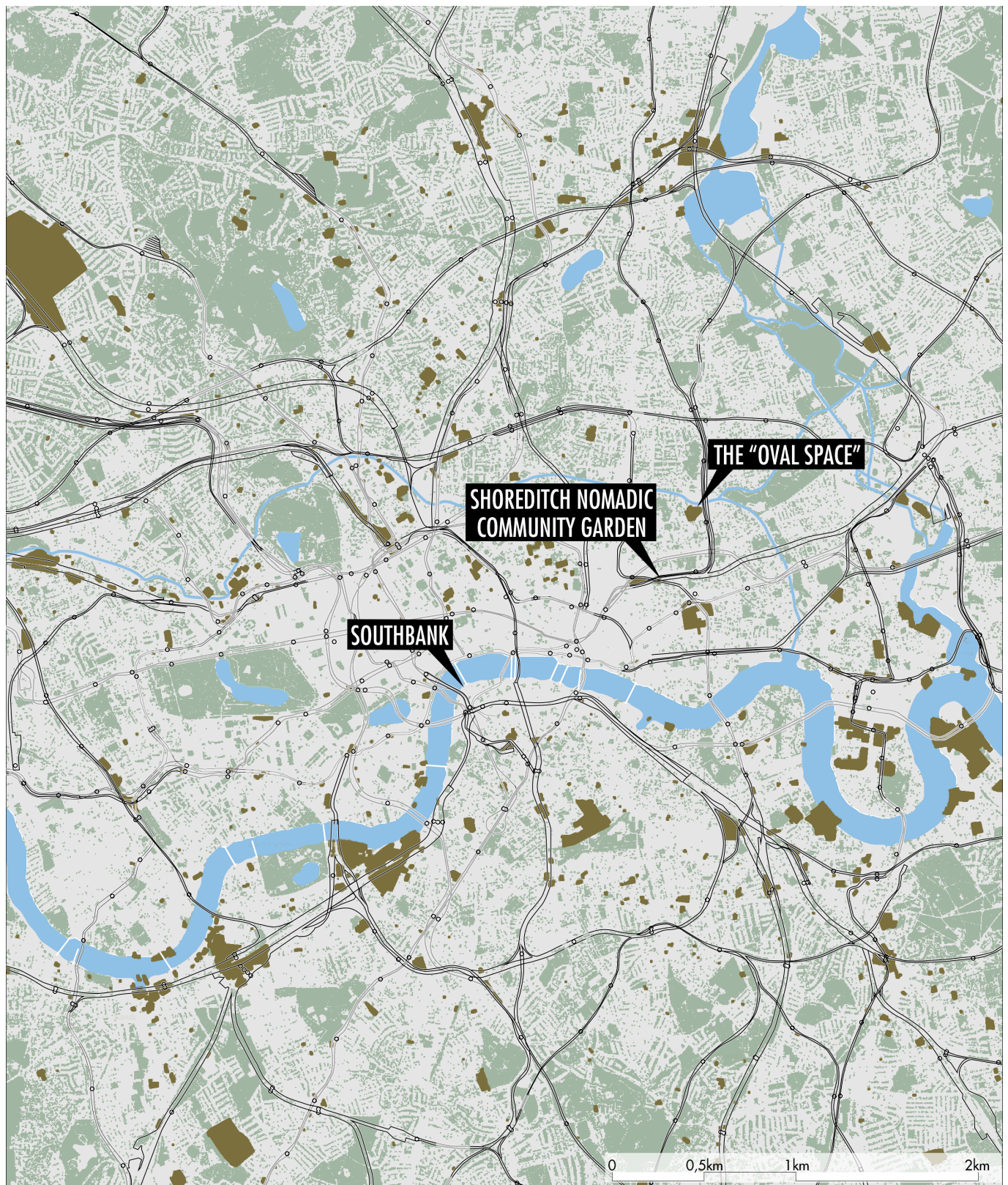




Map 2.6: *Where art could be found in London*



Map 2.7: *Area of interest*  
 based on map 2.6 with marked water, brownfields, greenery, railway and underground tracks



Map 2.8: *Chosen precedents for analysis*



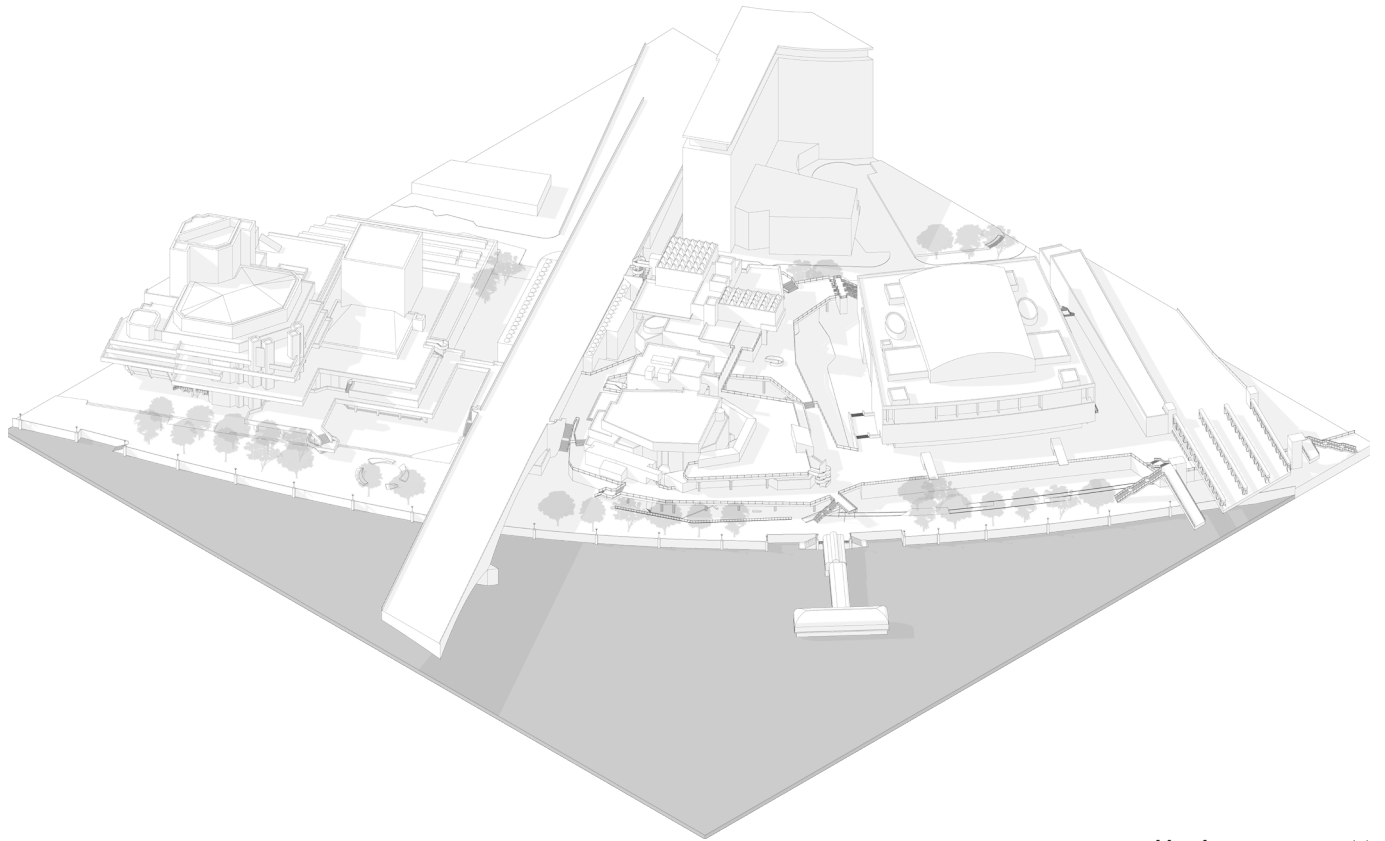
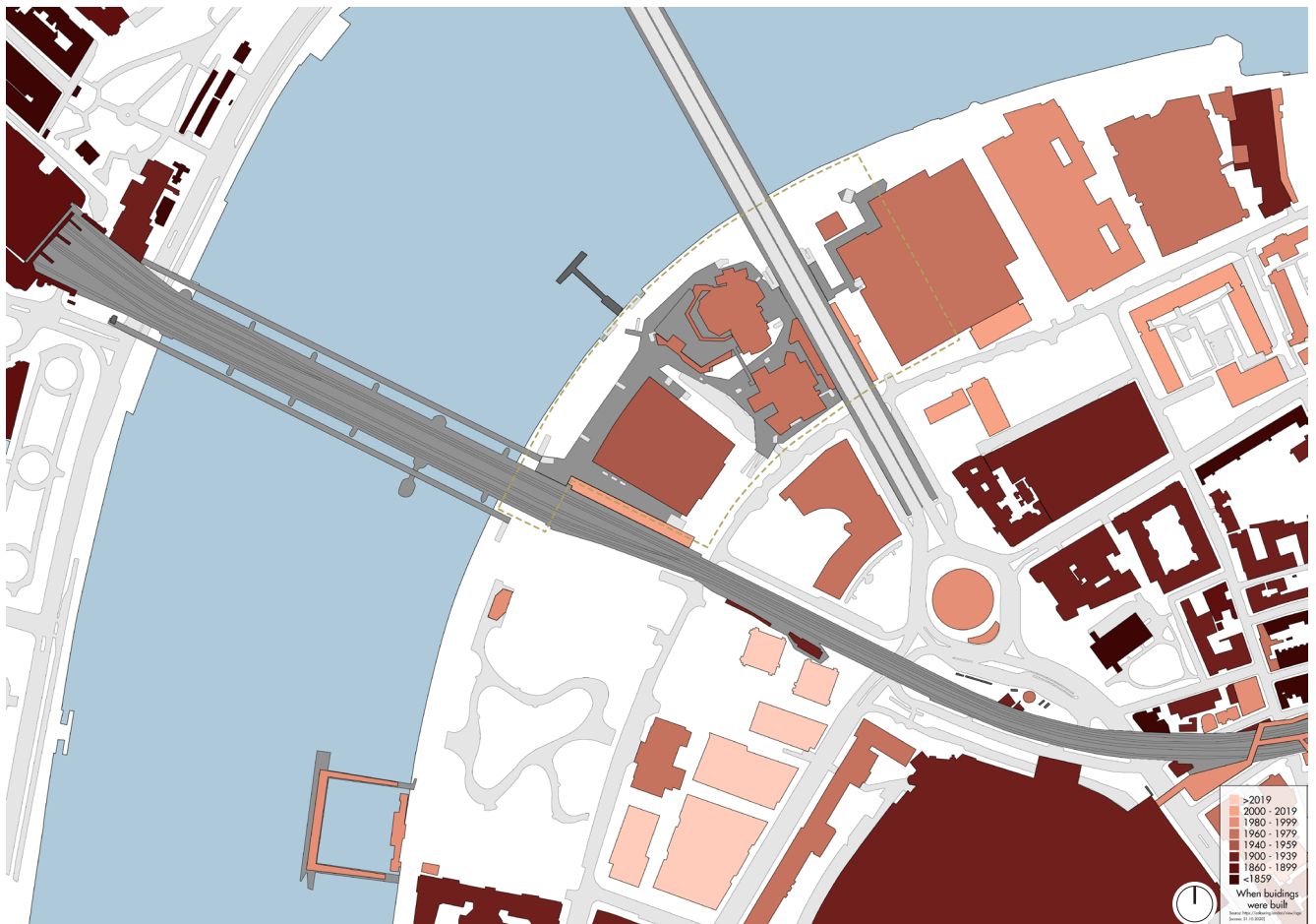
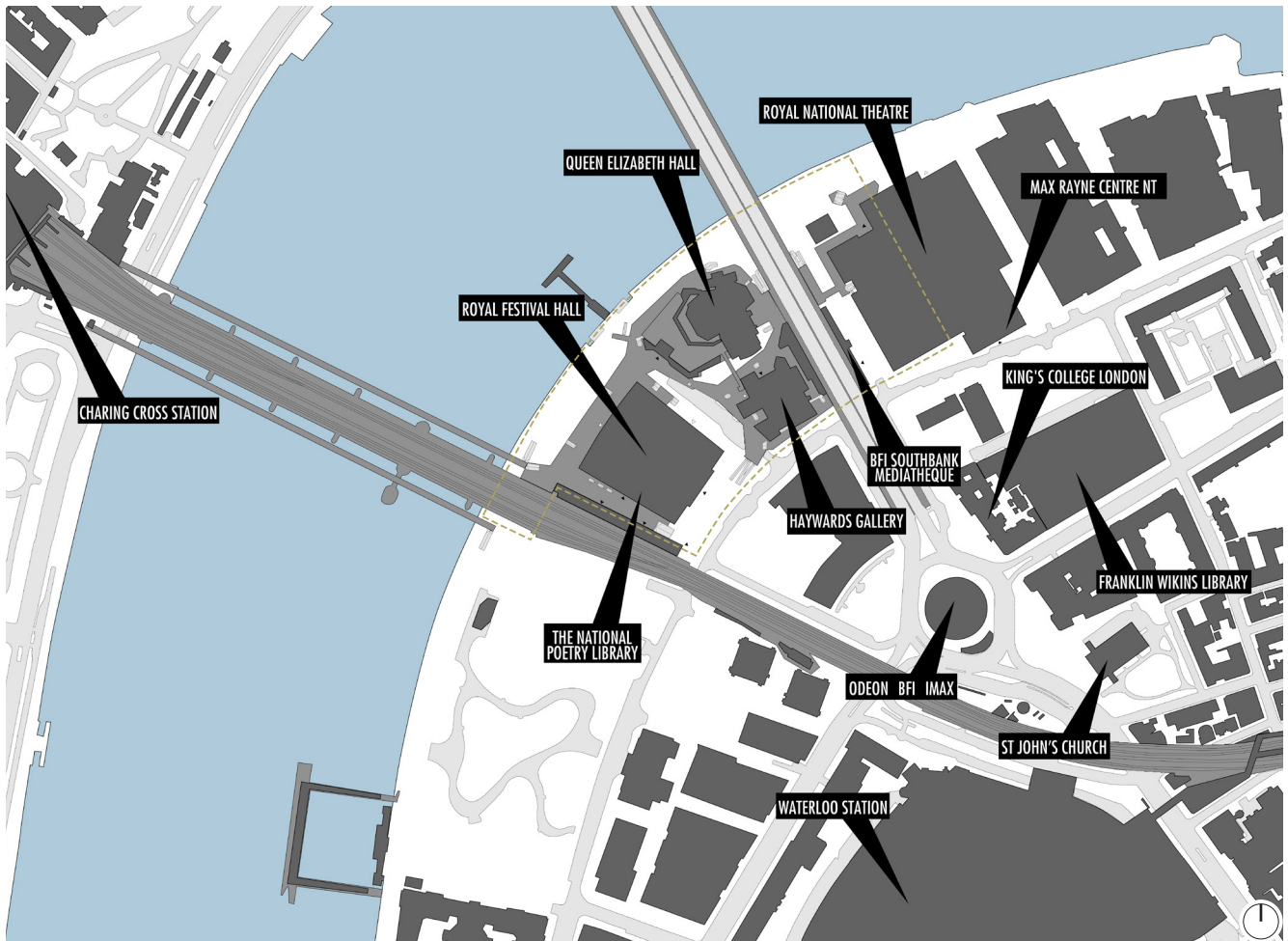


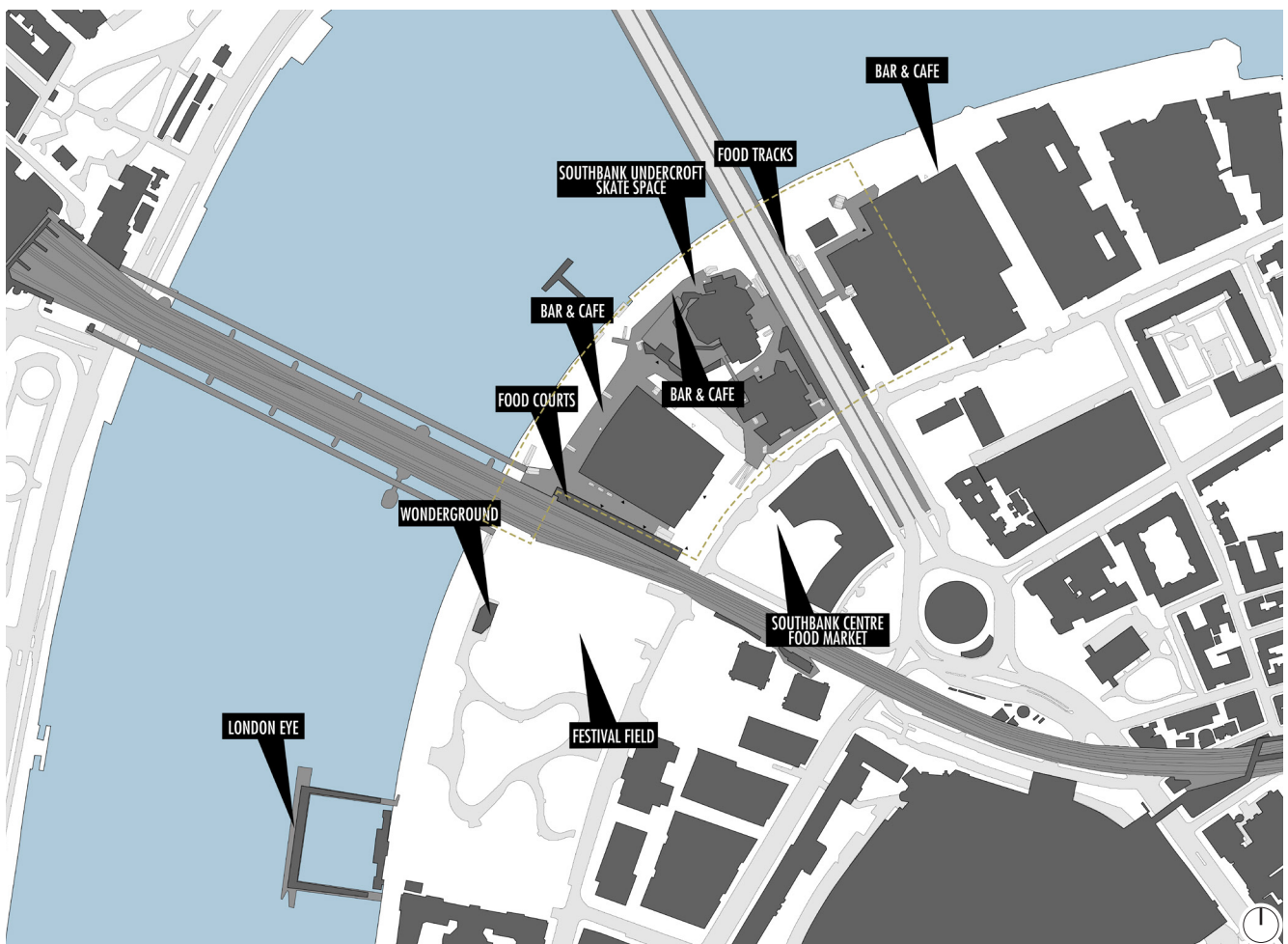
Image 2.3: **Southbank Centre**: 3D model



Map 2.9: **Southbank Centre**: Age of buildings



Map 2.10: *Southbank Centre*: Formal objects



Map 2.11: *Southbank Centre*: Informal objects





Photography 2.1: **Shoreditch Nomadic Community Garden:** View from pedley street bridge over the ne corner of the site

Source: Carr-Smith, D. (2018).

Retrieved from Improvisation / Design / Art / Kitsch / Chance: [http://www.davidcarrsmith.co.uk/\\_D-WWW\\_IMPR-SITE~N-COM-GDN.htm](http://www.davidcarrsmith.co.uk/_D-WWW_IMPR-SITE~N-COM-GDN.htm)

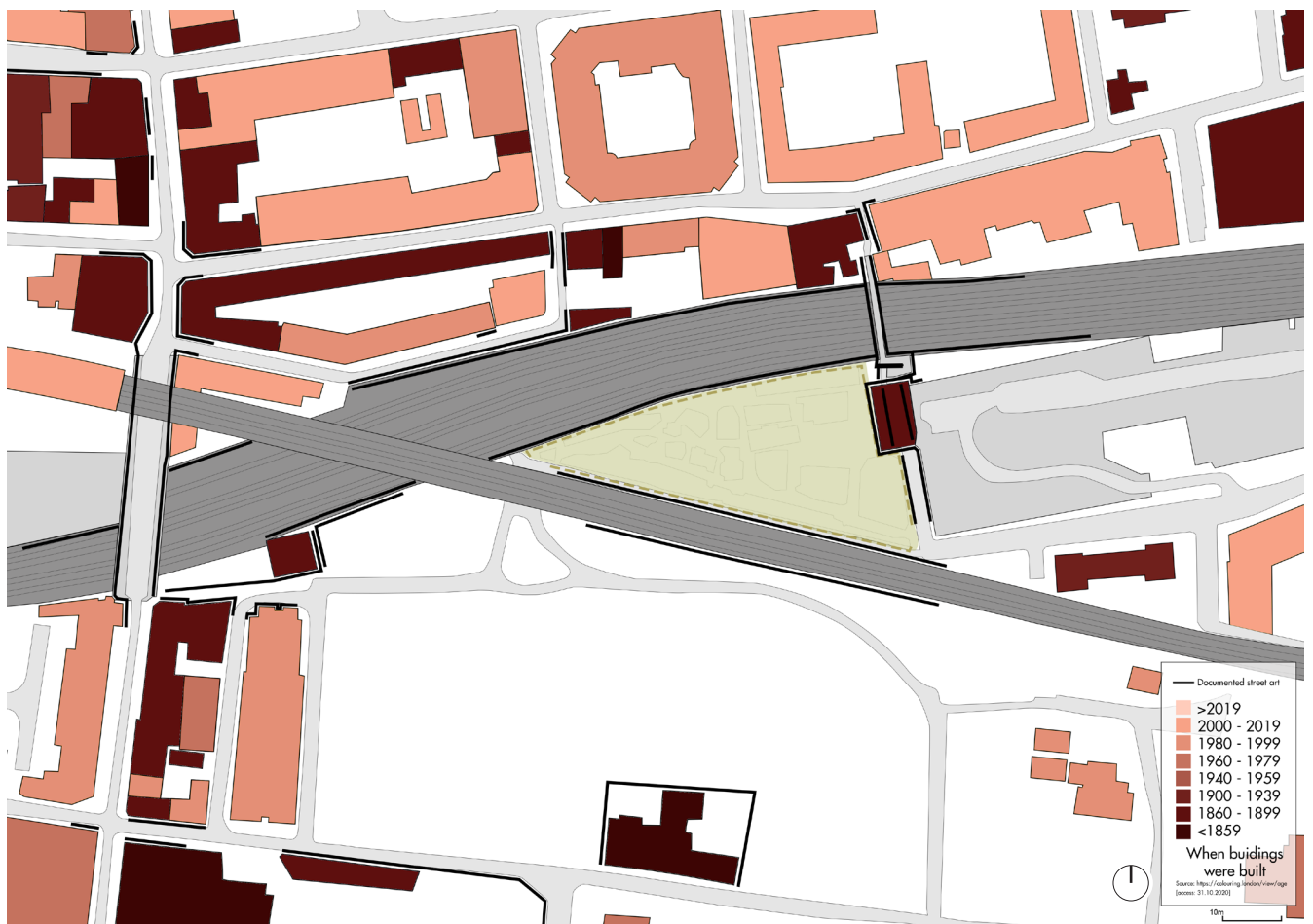
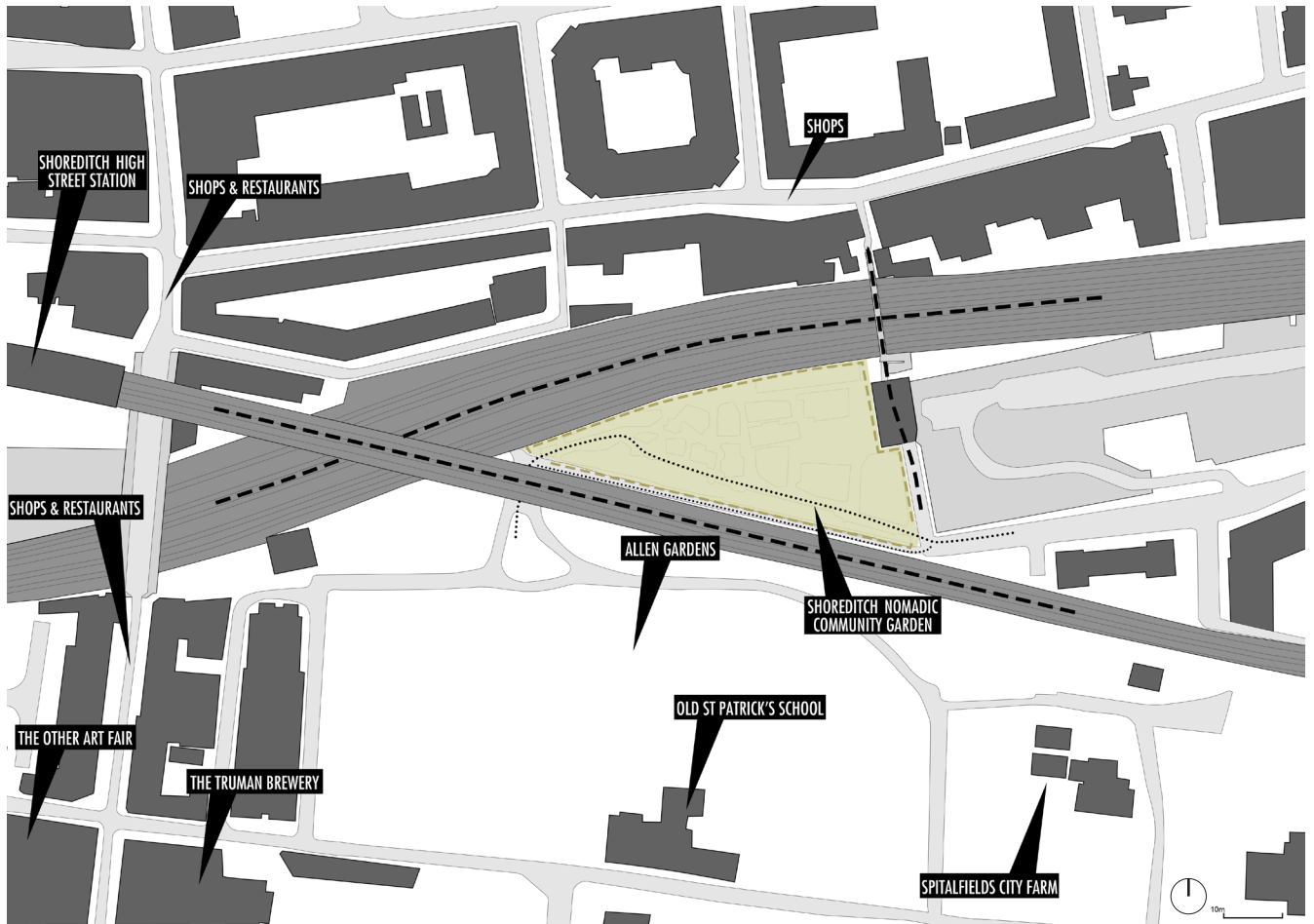


Photography 2.2: **Shoreditch Nomadic Community Garden:** View from overground train near the sw corner of the site.

Source: Carr-Smith, D. (2018).

Retrieved from Improvisation / Design / Art / Kitsch / Chance: [http://www.davidcarrsmith.co.uk/\\_D-WWW\\_IMPR-SITE~N-COM-GDN.htm](http://www.davidcarrsmith.co.uk/_D-WWW_IMPR-SITE~N-COM-GDN.htm)



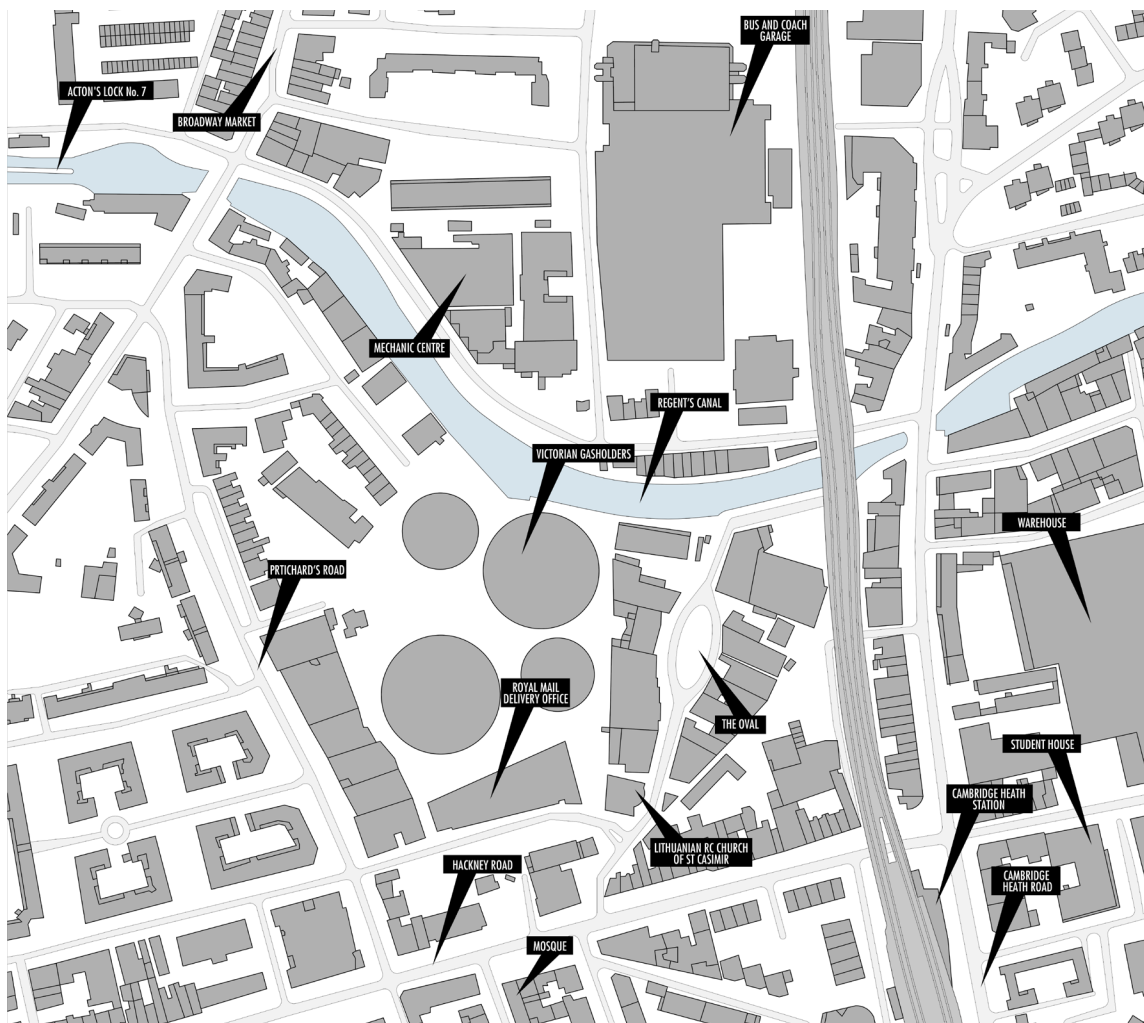




Photography 2.3: **The "Oval Space":** View at the gasholder from Regent's Canal

Source: Lawrence-Jones, C. (2020).

Retrieved from The fascinating story behind Regent Canal's iconic gas holders: <https://www.myLondon.news/news/east-london-news/fascinating-story-behind-regent-canals-18474559>

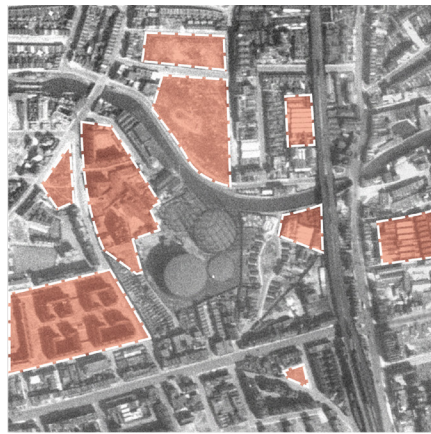


Map 2.14: **The "Oval Space":** Functional site plan

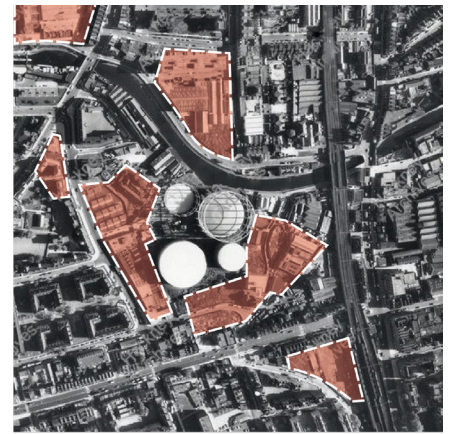




1895



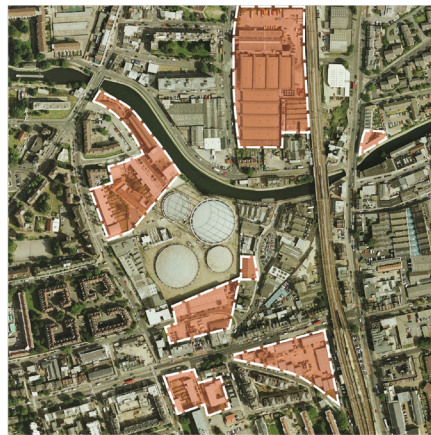
1945



1971



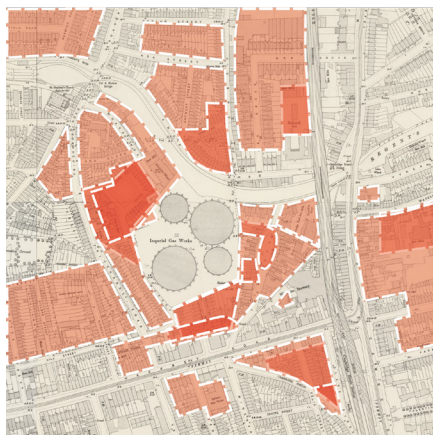
1971



1999



2020



1895



2020

Map 2.15: *The "Oval Space":* Time laps of changes in urban tissue



## INTEGRITY OF SUBSPACES

It is usually in a way that anomalies and strange occurrences catch the eye and our interest. Definitely the situation found at Southbank Centre – the compilation of very formal and informal spaces (*map 2.10-2.11, image 2.4*) – for many might be extraordinary at least. Even if the old fashion division on high and low culture is rejected now, there can be felt dichotomies potentially causing conflicts of interests. However, it is in the nature of space to be driven by not always compatible tendencies and ideas (Lefebvre & Harvey, 1991, pp. 86-87), so such dichotomies in places which are the locus for so many interpersonal relations, like the Southbank, might be perceived as typical and natural. That is why any group of people characterised by the same needs and visions how the space should function define physically or mentally their own locus within the space (Lefebvre & Harvey, 1991, p. 170), a subspace.

The Undercroft is one of those subspaces within the Queen's Walk and the whole Southbank (*image 2.5*). It is widely known that this is a space occupied and adopted by skateboarders and graffiti writers. However, as A. Jones reported a significant feature characterising the Undercroft is *"the lack of a material threshold between 'skating' and 'normal life'"* (2014, p. 68). In his observations skaters come there even more often to socialize rather than only for skateboarding. They participate in the social life of the Southbank, using its facilities, drinking coffee or sitting on benches. Instead of revealing anti-social behaviours, they just want to be with other people casually passing by (Jones, 2014, pp. 63, 65, 66). Visual openness to the Queen's Walk and presence of the Queen Elizabeth Hall literally above actually constitute the attractiveness of the Undercroft for skaters – after all any intentionally designed skate park would be much more proper for the purpose of skateboarding. As Jones (2014, p. 66) stated being free is also very relevant, what questions Moore's (2009) prediction of progressing disneyfication of public spaces. Unless, paying would not be as a business transaction – money in exchange for fun – but in the term of subspaces merging. Then it would be intentionally becoming engaged in prosperity of the social space and not always it has to be done by spending money.

Apparently, the locus of street art is merging within the space as other subspaces. These are mostly generated around the formal units of the Southbank. Though, the informal facilities are those located along the Thames River and they make the Queen's Walk vivid and more like-the-street (*map 2.16*) than the Belvedere Road is in the socio-psychological understanding. Visually mapping of interfering subspaces (*image 2.5-2.10*) gives the idea how developed and complex the Southbank is as the space. However, even though boundaries between the fragments are blurred (*map 2.17*), each subspace is recognisable and characterised as a *"one 'unity of atmosphere'"* (McDonough, 2013). Still existing separation despite merging can be spotted in the case of the neighbourhood around the Shoreditch Nomadic Community Garden. Having put the street art (mostly wall marking) on the two-dimensional plan there appeared the question why the series of graffiti go along the facade in one direction, not in the other one even if it would be possible. The answer have come immediately when the third dimension was included. In

each case there is a visible threshold – a bridge going above, local narrowing between buildings or a change in urban fabric – that would psychologically separate the subspace where the street art occurs (*image 2.14*). As the prepared collages (*image 2.15-2.19*) presenting development of local graffiti in time show, it would spread within one space (or subspace) and more likely replace each other rather than cross the threshold. It might be concluded with the statement that the locus of street art takes its own position in urban scape and resonates with other subspaces but the unity of this locus has to be maintained.

## STREET IDENTITY

While material objects usually defines the subspace, for example in case of the "Oval Space" the silhouette of Victorian gasholders does it (*photography 2.3*), the identity of the place is more related with the specific atmosphere and psychological perception. As Lefebvre (1991, p. 182) claimed everybody situates oneself in the centre of the space and perceives it through one's own lens. In urban environment, where there is constant tensions caused by claims of specific social groups and users of spaces, there happens to be developed set of unwritten rules that regulates behaviours of people within the specific space. Jones (2014, pp. 78-79) called this phenomenon the "Street Wisdom" and observed it in the Southbank watching two individuals trying to ride in front of the National Theatre. Even though nobody berated them, they felt obligation to move to the Undercroft – a place in the Southbank unofficially dedicated for such activities. Thus, when someone is perceived to own the space or subspace, no matter if it is officially or not, one develops the rules and takes responsibility for the space. In the case of the Undercroft it is owned by a specific group of people – the skaters, and for example the manifestation of their responsibility was drawing a line on the pavement (*photography 2.4*) that marked the zone where it was safe to watch skateboarding for casual people passing by (Jones, 2014, p. 80). Also, street artists and graffiti writers perceive other people not only as passive viewers to whom their work is addressed to. The awareness of being a part of the community reflects in them, it happens to auto-censure their work and to give up too provocative content which the society would not accept (Visconti, Sherry Jr., Borghini, & Anderson, 2010).

In the Shoreditch Nomadic Community Garden case who was in charge was clear since the beginning – the founders of the garden. The place was always meant to be a belonging of the community, the neighbourhood have been taking part in shaping and rearranging it. As analysing the social space helps to portrait the society (Lefebvre & Harvey, 1991, p. 34) and doing that without consideration of objects within is pointless (Lefebvre & Harvey, 1991, p. 12), I have compiled the catalogue of material items in the garden (*image 2.20-2.22*). Any form of architecture, furniture, garden pots and pieces of street art were either built or assembled from elements found or brought by the users. All of them, no matter in what condition, share the same visual aesthetic of patchwork or assemblage. It can be said that a specific style was developed in this place which characterises either a bench made from euro pallets or the decent structure of 'opera' building with hand-constructed dome and integrated

sophisticated wooden ornaments that had been brought. This aesthetic style constitutes unique identity of the place and it is a result of active shaping the space by the community. Also, it confirms Lefebvre's theory (1991, p. 170) that each body participate in space creating what makes it unrepeatable.

### THE "STAGE" CONCEPT

Also, Chackal (2016) suggested perceiving street art in terms of an act and a process in urban environment due to whole procedures of putting it into the city – it happens in places which are difficult to access and often at night where it is illegal giving street art performative character. Obviously, most of the motivations driving street artists can be generalised as a will to express oneself and to relate to others. Acts of vandalism are intentional validation of rules, tagging one's nickname is looking for affirmation in others' eyes and provocative images may criticise hypocrisy and corruption around (Visconti, Sherry Jr., Borghini, & Anderson, 2010). Then, the city and its elements become a medium for the expression, for example train carriages covered with graffiti are canvases moving around from one station to the other. But the definition of street art presented in this research is much more extensive than just paintings and surface marking. And indeed, as Jones (2014, p. 69) reported, even though skaters did not mean to make a show, skateboarding gained performative character because practising it might be dangerous and spectacular. It has transformed the Undercroft into a stage for people passing by and for many video clips shared in the Internet (*image 2.11*).

When Lefebvre (1991) described position of human being to social space he used theatrical words: *"They know that they have a space and that they are in this space. They do not merely enjoy a vision, a contemplation, a spectacle - for they act and situate themselves in space as active participants. They are accordingly situated in a series of enveloping levels each of which implies the others, and the sequence of which accounts for social practice."* (p. 294). Thus the city, considered as the space in Lefebvre's understating, is the place not only for self-expression, but also to take position on others' expressions. It is the "Stage" where everyone can be an actor seen by others and a spectator at the same time.

### ADJUST(ED/ABLE) MATERIALITY

While those outcomes are related with socio-cultural characteristics of the space, as it was mentioned also the material aspect of street art is crucial (Chackal, 2016). It is clear in the case of the Shoreditch Nomadic Community Garden because the site had been just a void space between two railway-lines before it was arranged as the Garden. It was an unfamiliar area, also for conducting a garden so any plant were been growing in handmade sheds or garden pots. Actually any object, furniture, piece of architecture or art was constructed with a thought to improve functioning of the space.

Slightly different situation happened at the Southbank – the space of the Undercroft was not designed with skateboarding and graffiti in mind. Although, being covered by the terrace above reduces impact of variable British weather and apparently brutalist architecture favours these types of activities, thus it contains uninterrupted surfaces and slopes being a result of

concrete frameworks. To see how crucial materiality is, I asked my friend Julien this time to prepare a mental map of the Undercroft by drawing a quick sketch from his mind (*image 2.12*). The effect was astonishing – Julien precisely reflected visual spirits of the Undercroft and pointed every useful element for skateboarding, even mentioning the amount of stairs. Of course, the Undercroft was not fully suited for this activity at the very beginning – for example there were ledges brought to do some trick and graffiti put around gave clear identity to the place. As Jones (2014, p. 83) argues supported by Kevin Lynch's theories, the possibility to perform actively and physically participating in building the space is even more important than common acknowledgement of owning it.

Obviously, the materiality plays even more significant role in street art. In the prepared collage of graffiti in the Undercroft it can be spotted that graffiti writers covered every surface they could literally reached. In the place where the floor is lowered and the height is plainly bigger than a man, the ceiling remains there unmarked (*image 2.13*). In the "Oval Space" this phenomenon can be spotted in more general, urban scale. In the introduction of the case it was mentioned that the area around the gasholders, due to all transformations and industrial past, is very likely to poses many examples of street art. Surprisingly, there is just a few of them, mostly on blind façades (*image 2.23*). However, there is a one string of graffiti going for over 300 meters along the Regent's Canal (*image 2.24*). Including the canal into the concept of the Street (it is a piece of infrastructure in the urban scape that behaves as the street), those 300 meters of façade had used not to correspond with the canal before the graffiti appeared. Acknowledging that the ground floor is the most vibrant floor in urban environment (de Solà-Morales, 2008), the same can be observed in the Undercroft case – the space used to be a void leftover underneath the modernist design. Being on the ground floor allowed the Undercroft to merge with the Queen's Walk as it was previously elaborated. Although it also has to be noticed, in both cases, the architecture of the Queen Elizabeth Hall as well as the position of the Regent's Canal were a decent impulse provoking the phenomenon of street art to occur. In fact, a such material impulse is generally valuable, it becomes easier to start the process of the production of space rather than in total emptiness (Jones, 2014, p. 183).

### TEMPORALITY

For researches trying to catalogue street art a problem related with materiality might be the temporality of the artwork. After all the paint can fade out, it can be removed especially when the owner of the wall did not appreciated what had been painted, or even the whole building might be demolished. Looking at the constructed objects from the Shoreditch Nomadic Community Garden none of them can be described as permanent and any might have form or function changed. Though, temporality is an important feature of street art. If marking is considered as claiming the space, the mark cannot last for ever – otherwise marked space, that used to be public and democratic, becomes claimed and owned by an individual (Paulsson, 2009). Thus, "Temporality" is not supposed to be understood as endurance of materials but rather in being prepared to be

transformed or replaced. It can be seen in the collages showing graffiti in Shoreditch through years.

### THE DEVELOPMENT AND THE PROCESS OF BECOMING AN INSTITUTION

Those collages of graffiti in Shoreditch (*image 2.15-2.19*) prove temporality on one hand, on the other they show that in places when one piece of street art appeared there would join another and in most cases street art is being expanded in time. Also, it is hard to tell when the process is completed, even considering street art as only covering surfaces with paint. When there is no empty space left, former pieces of street art are being replaced by new ones. Thus, the development process might be over only when the spot is totally dismissed from common perception of social space. Otherwise, the development continues and when it is already on advanced level there can be spotted the direction in which it is conducted. Looking at the Shoreditch Nomadic Community Garden at its prime time, when it was known beyond local community, it already had official opening hours. It might seem strange thinking about grass-roots initiatives. Furthermore, there were organised system of signs (*image 2.22*) showing directions to specific spots in the garden or exhibited boards informing what is happening around. Clearly, such codes and messages were addressed to people from "external world" that were not familiar with the garden. The Shoreditch Nomadic Community Garden started to be an institution.

In the assumption that street art becomes a facility and acts as any other local amenity in the city, the already elaborated fact that the ground floor is the most attractive one is fitting perfectly. Then, the Undercroft at the Southbank is not something extraordinary but with cultural institutions, restaurants and cafeterias it builds a sequence of facilities along the Queen's Walk transforming it into the Street in socio-philosophical understanding (*map 2.16*). This idea also continues the thought about situation in the "Oval Space" presented previously in "Adjust(ed/able) Materiality" part and summarises it with a metaphor: street art is an amenity along the Regent's Canal and graffiti there is like a storefront in the street. As it was mentioned, astonishing was that this graffiti is a one example from only a few in the area around the gasholders. However, putting those few on a map completes the pattern of amenities and cultural facilities in the "Oval Space" and it gives a coherent network of the Streets (*map 2.18-2.19*). It seems that street art remained in spots which were unfamiliar for conventional amenities. What is more, those are competing with street art for the space and one can replace other.

### RELEVANCE FOR ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

Potential architecture designed on the presented outlines would create an opportunity for self-expression and to see other people expressing themselves in urban scape. It would be a defined space with its own specific identity but open to merge with other spaces and actively participating in the city's life. As in street art, material and immaterial aspects of the street must play crucial role in the proposal. It has to be engaging and stimulate people not only to respond, but to actively perform because street art is a process and it is never finished. That is why, the design would only create an impulse for the action.

Having in mind the temporality requirement and words of Oswald Mathias Ungers (2013): "*A design concept with an orientation toward adaptable systems of order searches for a minimal design in which the organisation of elements in space will be minimised to allow or even to provoke a maximum participation of those who are using the space.*", the designer has to be aware that one's design would be gone one day. Though, one's legacy would be furtherly continued process which would be resonating with the neighbourhood and local community. The result of properly done design would be a claim for democratic public space, as street art is (Ulmer, 2017). It would direct creative potential, which already is inside the people, to improve and bring abandoned and neglected third space back to the city.

According to Agrest's essay "*Design versus Non-Design*" (1998), this research and its outlines might be already a major step in the process of transposing non-deign – street art – into architecture. It is a try to condense and take the essence of the phenomenon that would be used in the designing process. Now, it is the designer's duty to find adequate code of architecture that would be formulated by metaphors reflecting elaborated outlines.



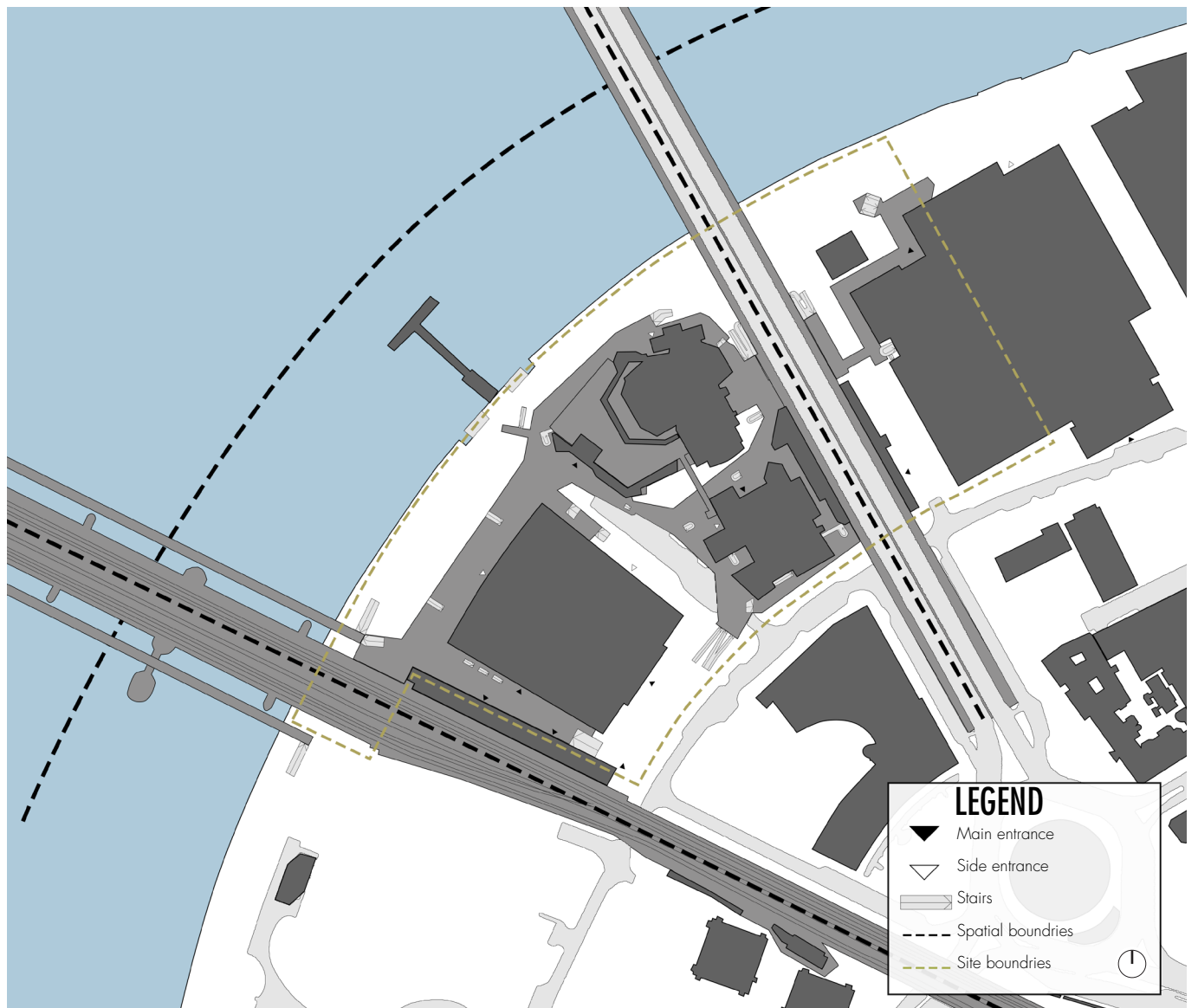


Image 2.4: **Southbank Centre:** Collage showing "Exterior/interior" functional section









Map 2.17: **Southbank Centre:** Boundaries

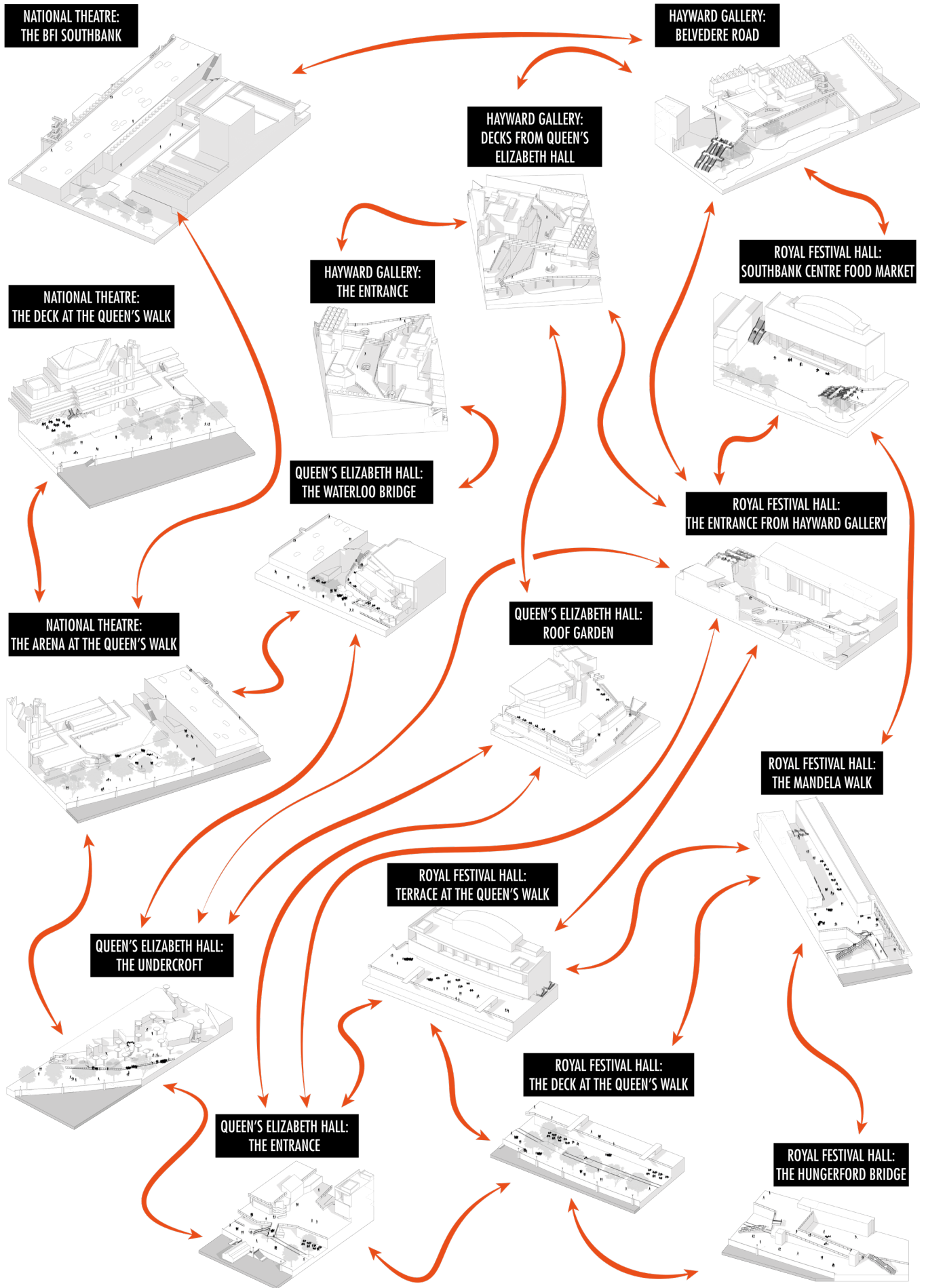


Image 2.6: **Southbank Centre:** The Naked City plan showing relations between subspaces in Southbank Centre

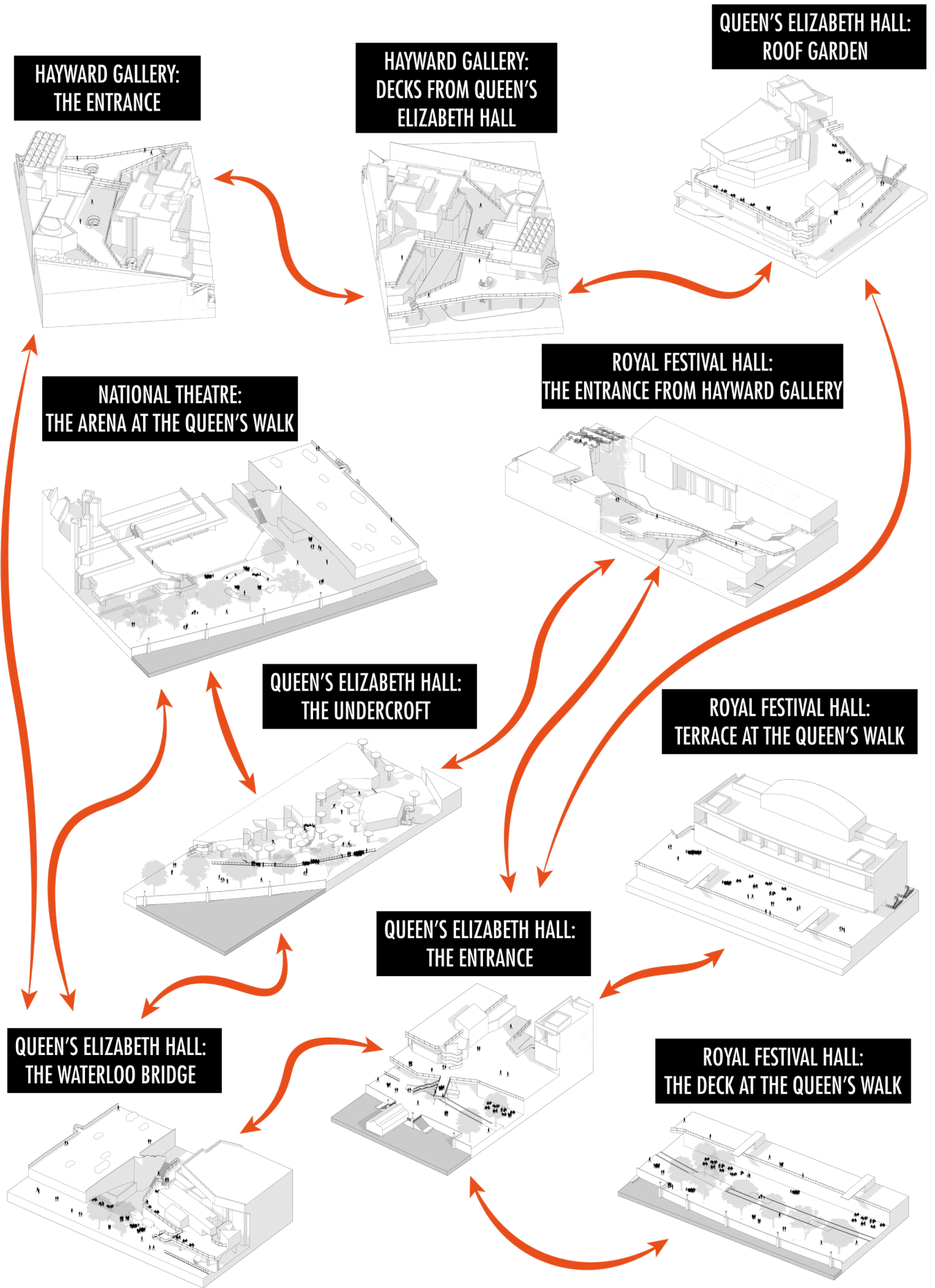


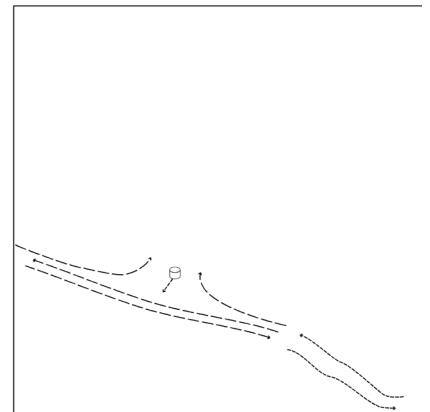
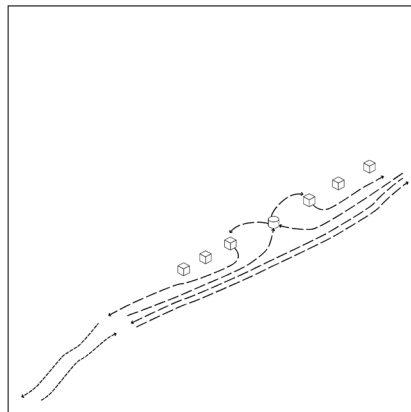
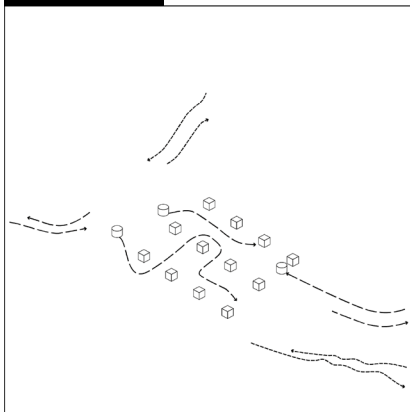
Image 2.7: **Southbank Centre:** The Naked City plan showing relations between subspaces around the Undercroft



THE EVENT



THE MOVEMENT



THE OBJECT

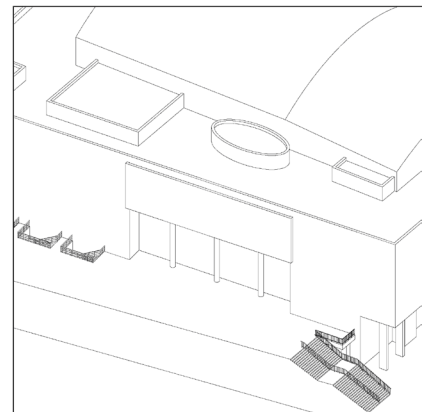
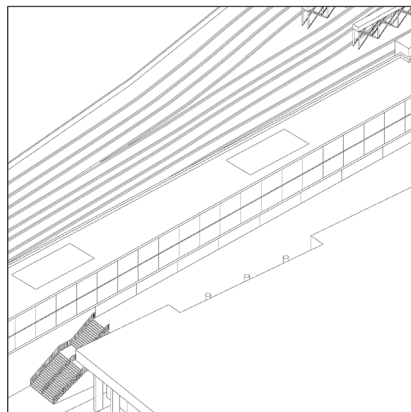
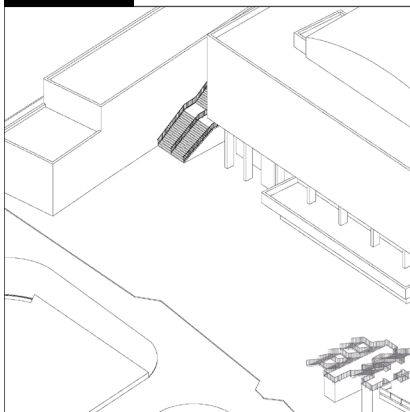
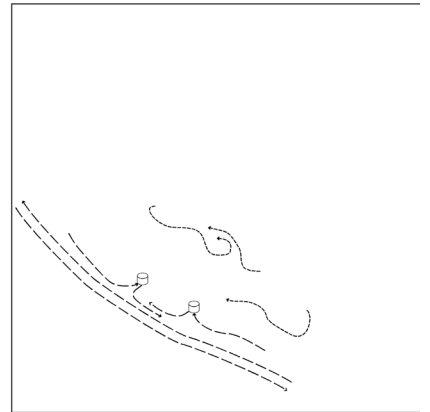
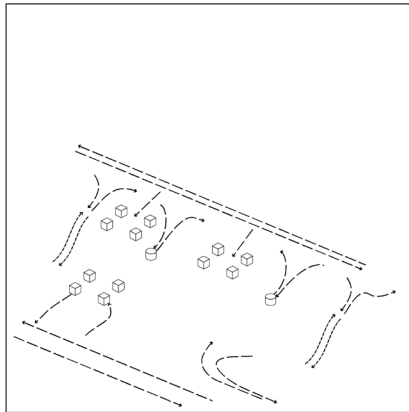
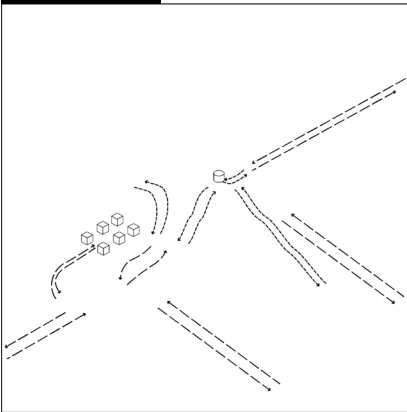


Image 2.8: **Southbank Centre**: "Manhattan Transcript": transcription of events, movements and objects in front of Royal Festival Hall

**THE EVENT**



**THE MOVEMENT**



**THE OBJECT**

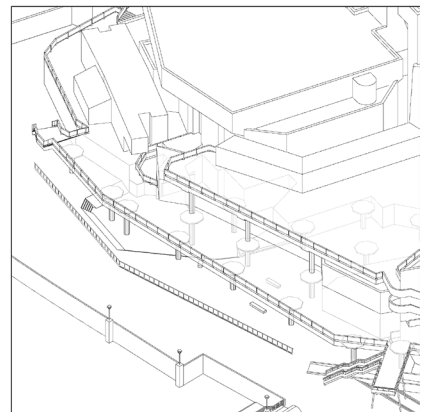
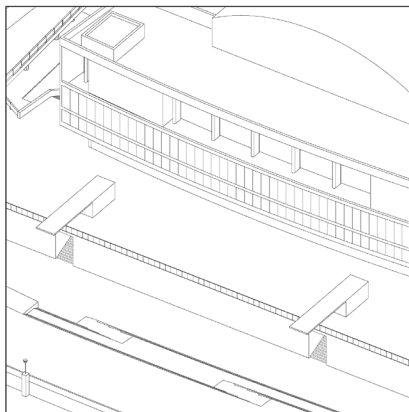
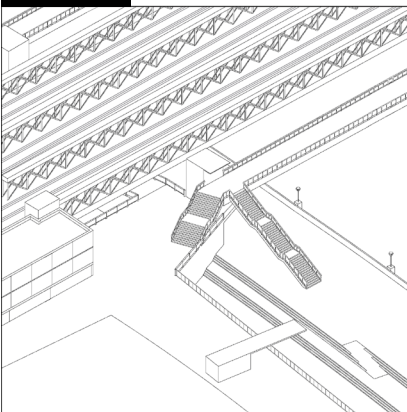
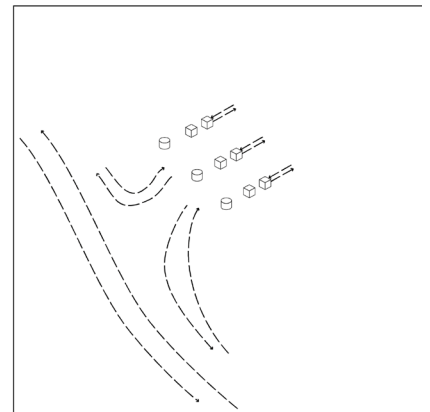
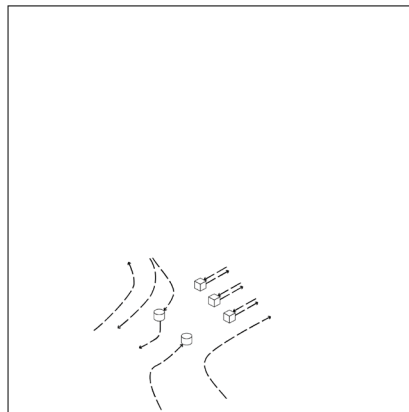
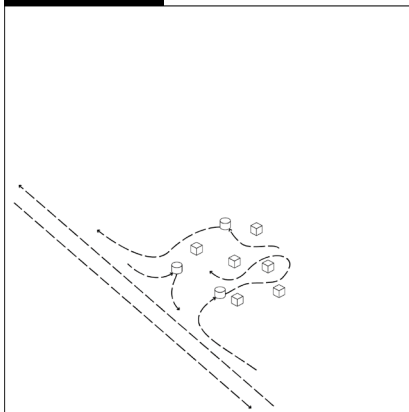


Image 2.9: **Southbank Centre**: "Manhattan Transcript": transcription of events, movements and objects along the Queen's Walk

**THE EVENT**



**THE MOVEMENT**



**THE OBJECT**

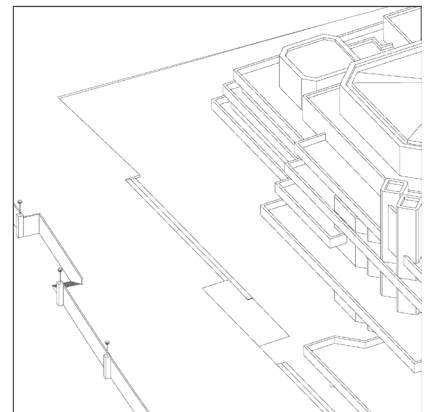
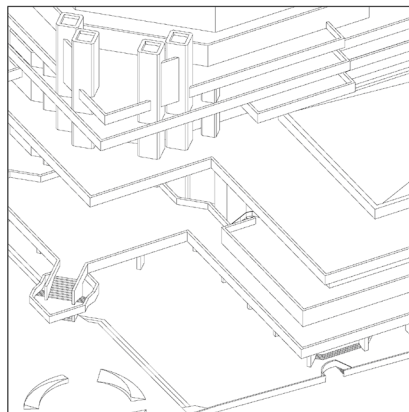
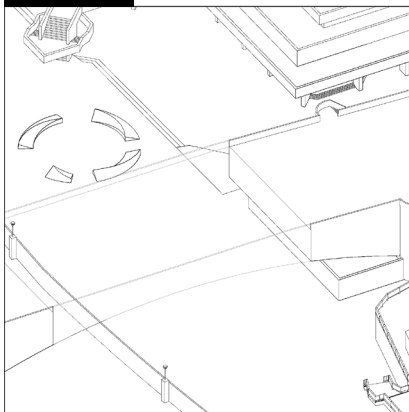


Image 2.10: **Southbank Centre:** "Manhattan Transcript": transcription of events, movements and objects by the National Theatre





Photography 2.4: **Southbank Centre:** Yellow line marking zone to watch skateboarding safely

Source:

Jones, A. (2014). *On South Bank : the production of public space*. Surrey, UK: Ashgate (Re-materialising Cultural Geography).

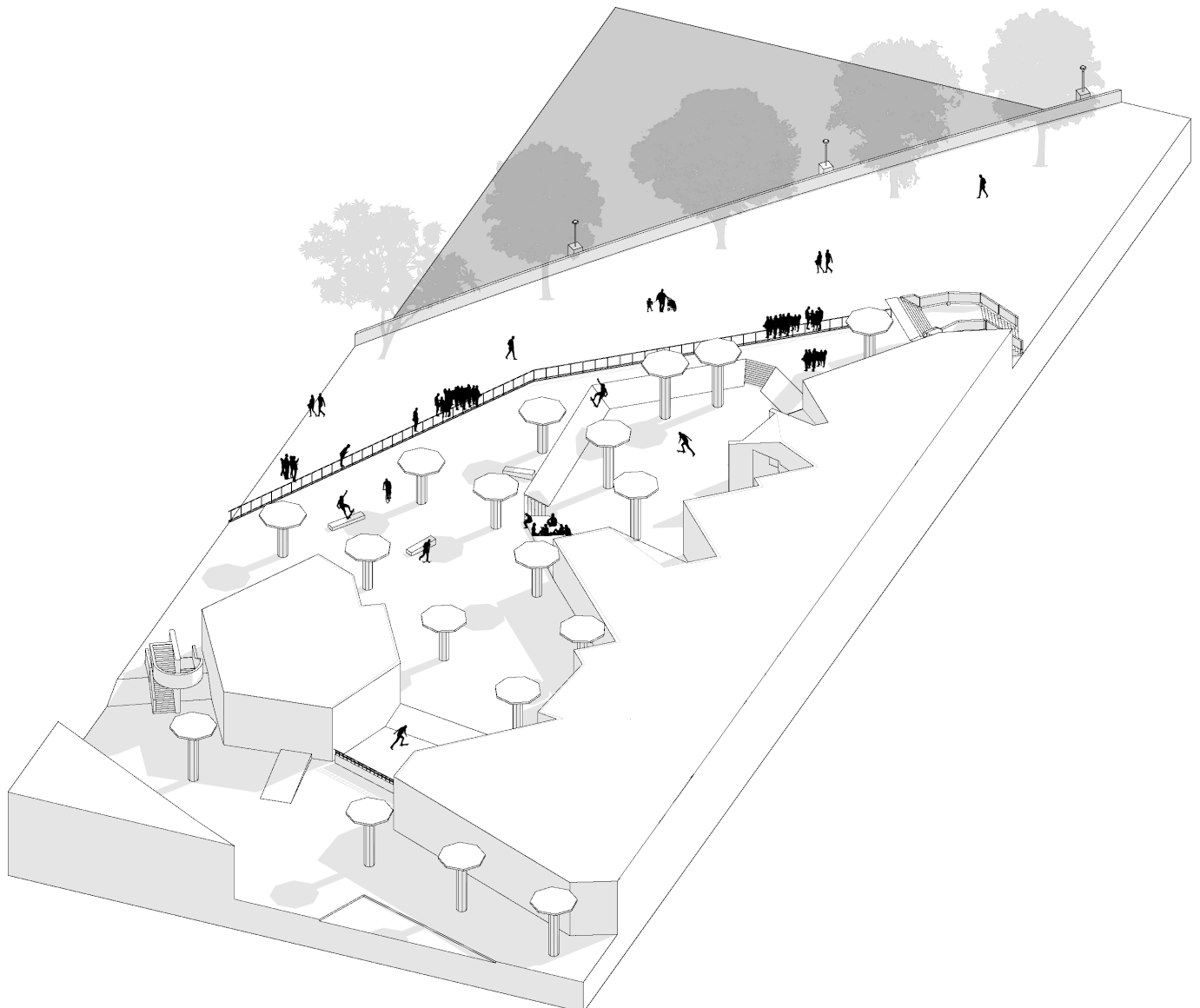


Image 2.11: **Southbank Centre:** 3D model of the "Stage" at the Undercroft

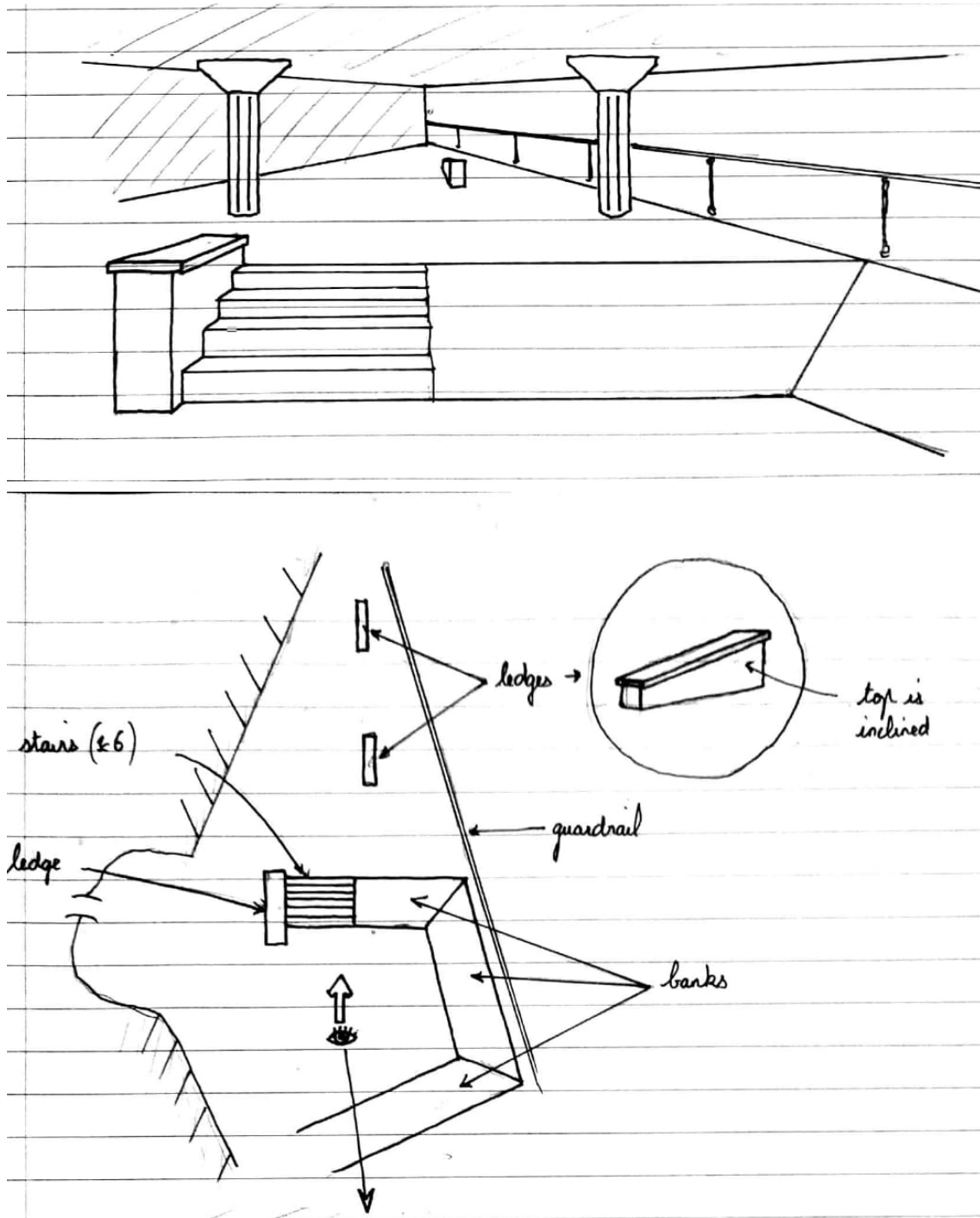


Image 2.12: **Southbank Centre**: Mental map of Undercroft made by Julien, a skateboarder from Paris

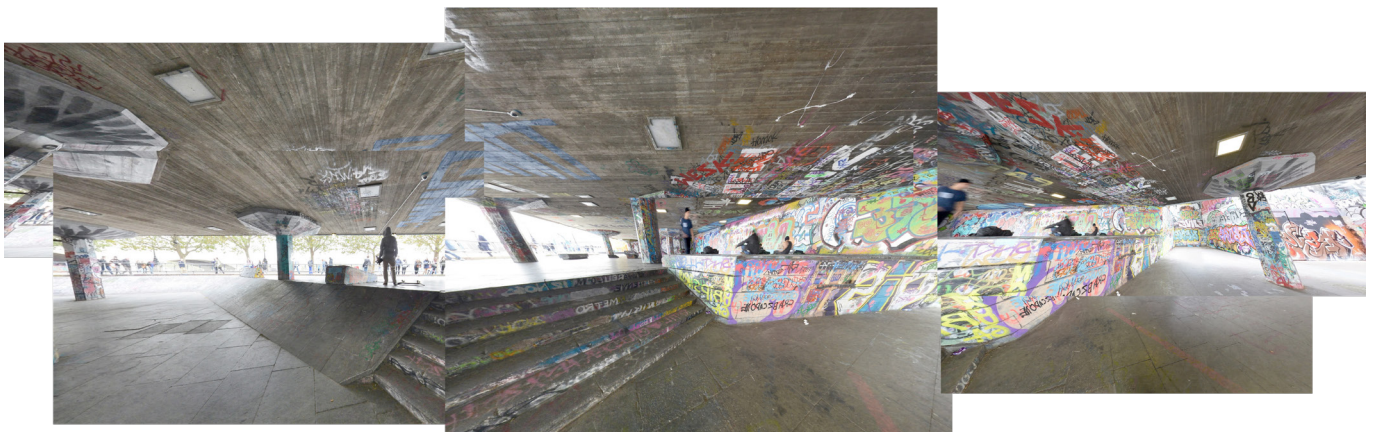


Image 2.13: **Southbank Centre**: Collage showing how materiality determines street art

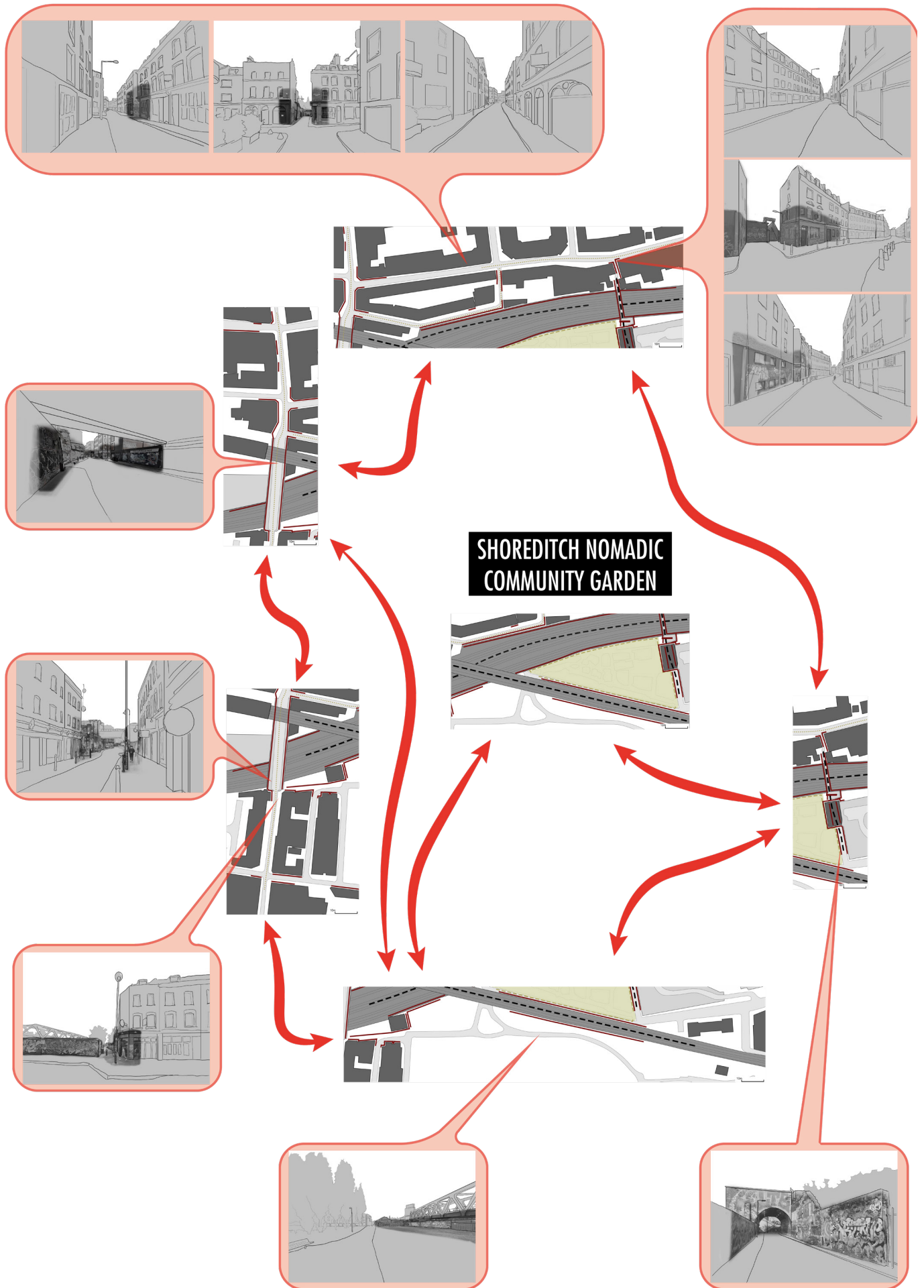


Image 2.14: *Shoreditch Nomadic Community Garden*: the Naked City plan showing relations between subspaces, where street art appears there are visible thresholds





Image 2.15: *Shoreditch Nomadic Community Garden*: Collages showing how street art is developing in time, Hanbury St

2012



2015



2017



2019



Image 2.16: **Shoreditch Nomadic Community Garden:** Collages showing how street art is developing in time, Grimsby Street





Image 2.17: **Shoreditch Nomadic Community Garden:** Collages showing how street art is developing in time, Grimsby Street



2012



2015



2017



2019

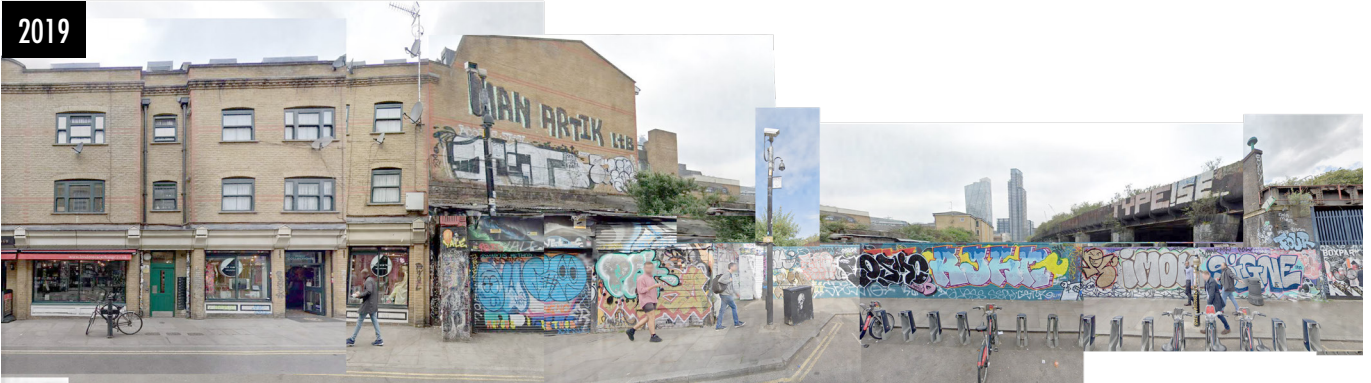


Image 2.18: *Shoreditch Nomadic Community Garden*: Collages showing how street art is developing in time, Brick Lane



2012



2015



2017



2019



Image 2.19: **Shoreditch Nomadic Community Garden:** Collages showing how street art is developing in time, Brick Lane

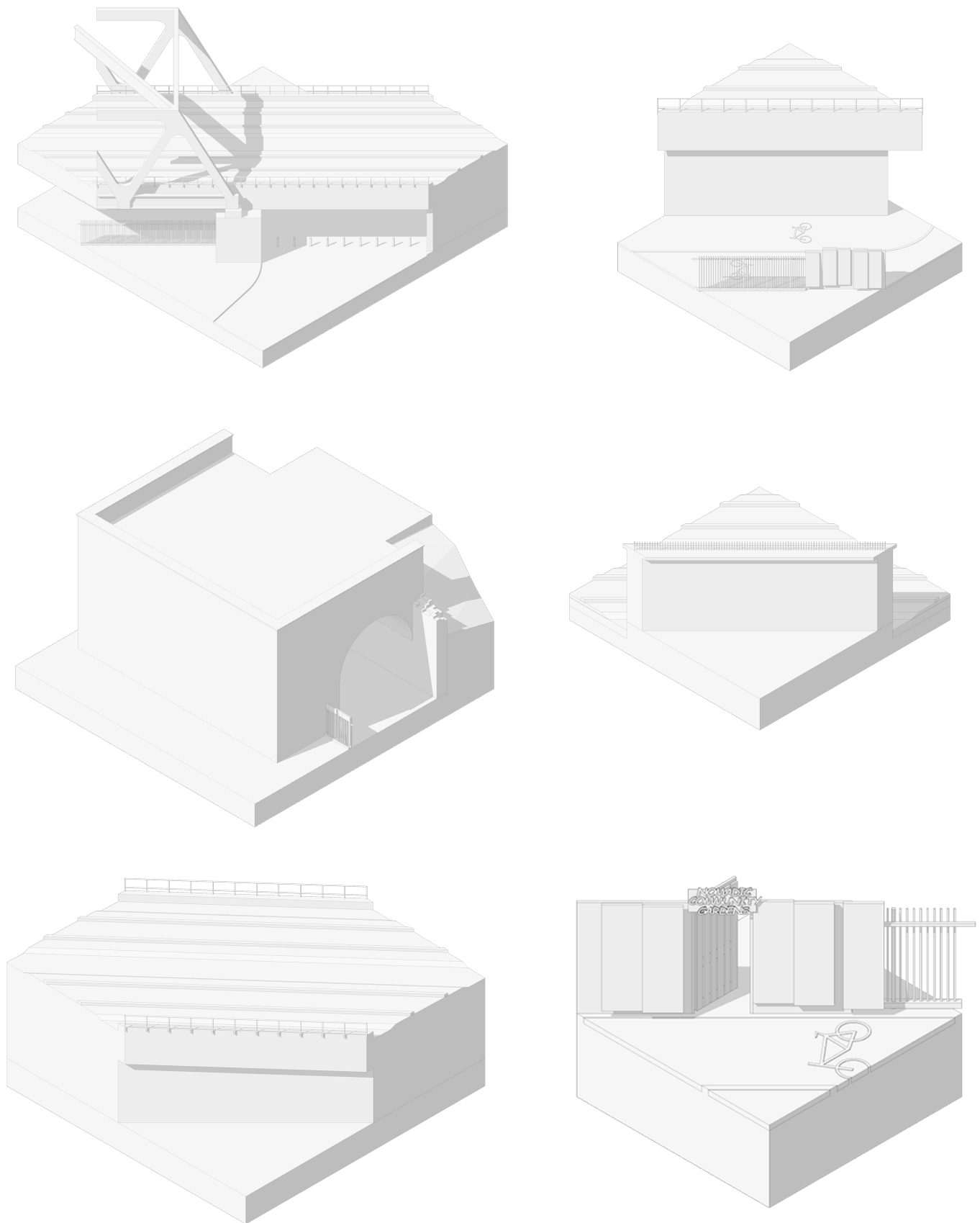


Image 2.20: **Shoreditch Nomadic Community Garden:** The Catalogue of boundaries, set of found and added boundaries determining the space



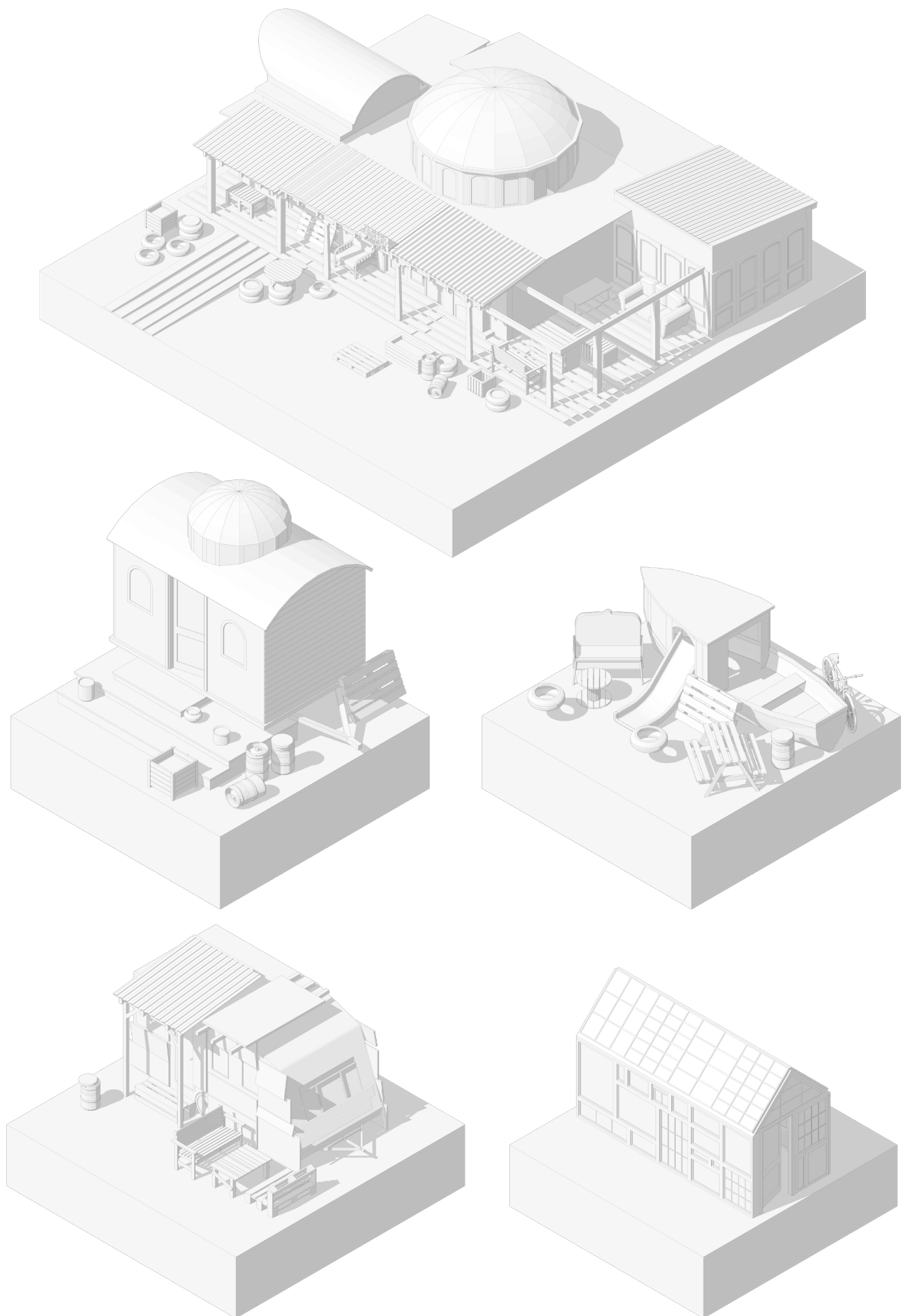


Image 2.21: **Shoreditch Nomadic Community Garden:** The Catalogue of architectural objects built by users have their own specific aesthetic style

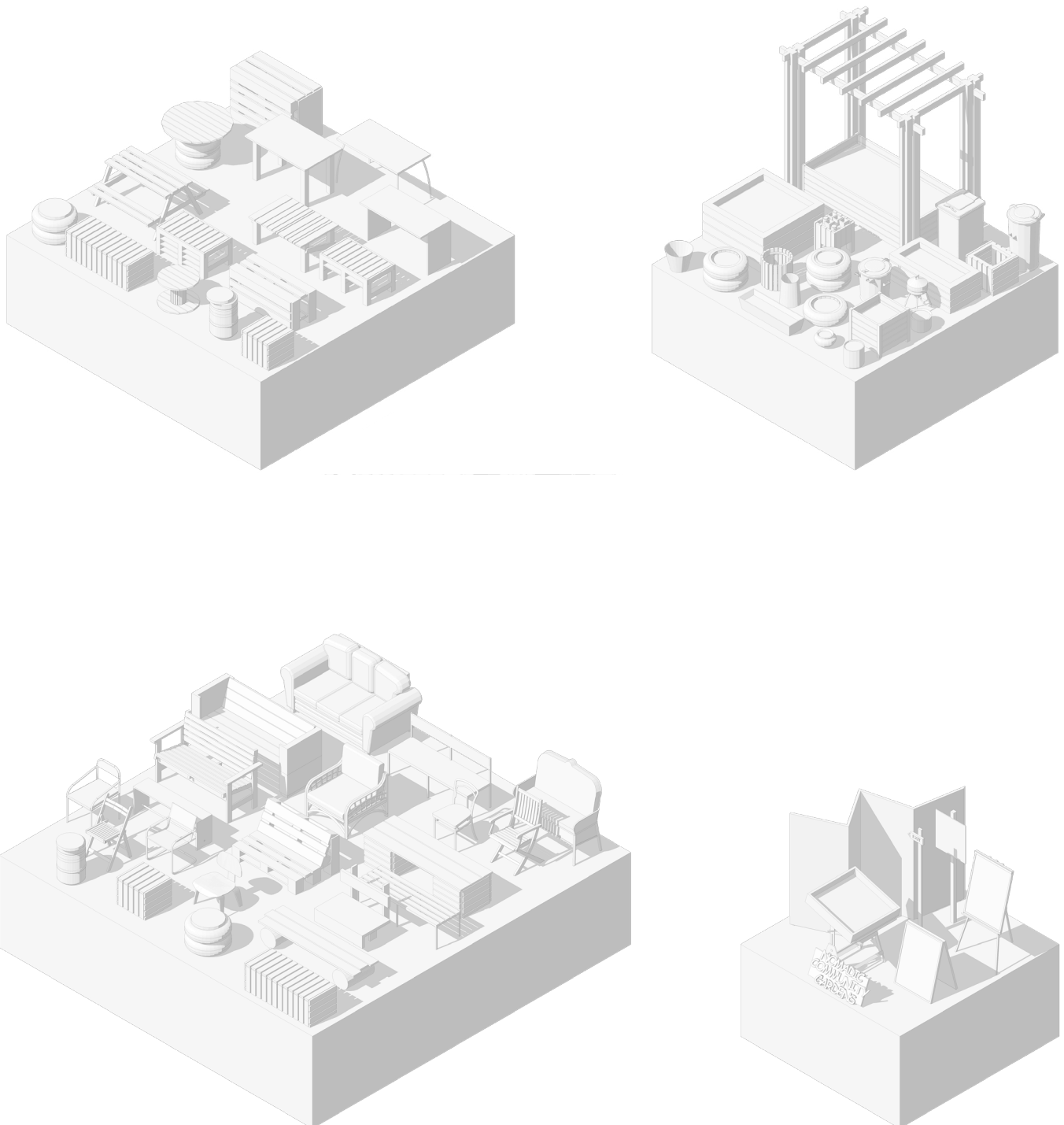
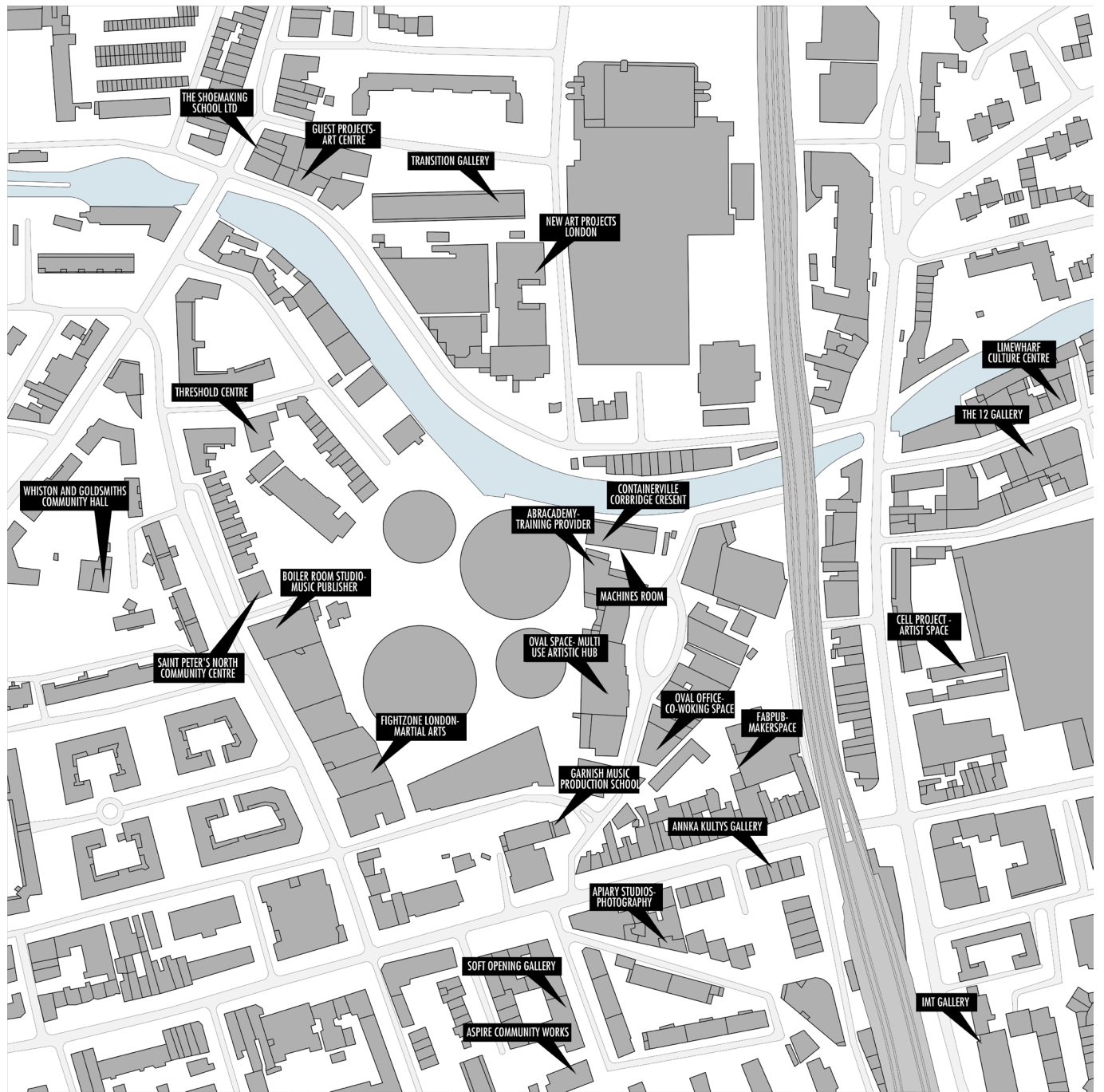


Image 2.22: **Shoreditch Nomadic Community Garden:** The Catalogue of objects and furnitures:  
 (1) tables, (2) pots for gardening,  
 (3) objects to sit on, (4) Signs and objects for exhibition



Map 2.18: *The "Oval Space":* Site plan with cultural facilities





Map 2.19: *The "Oval Space": Cultural objects and street art build one network*



Image 2.23: *The "Oval Space"*: Collages showing street art at Clare Street



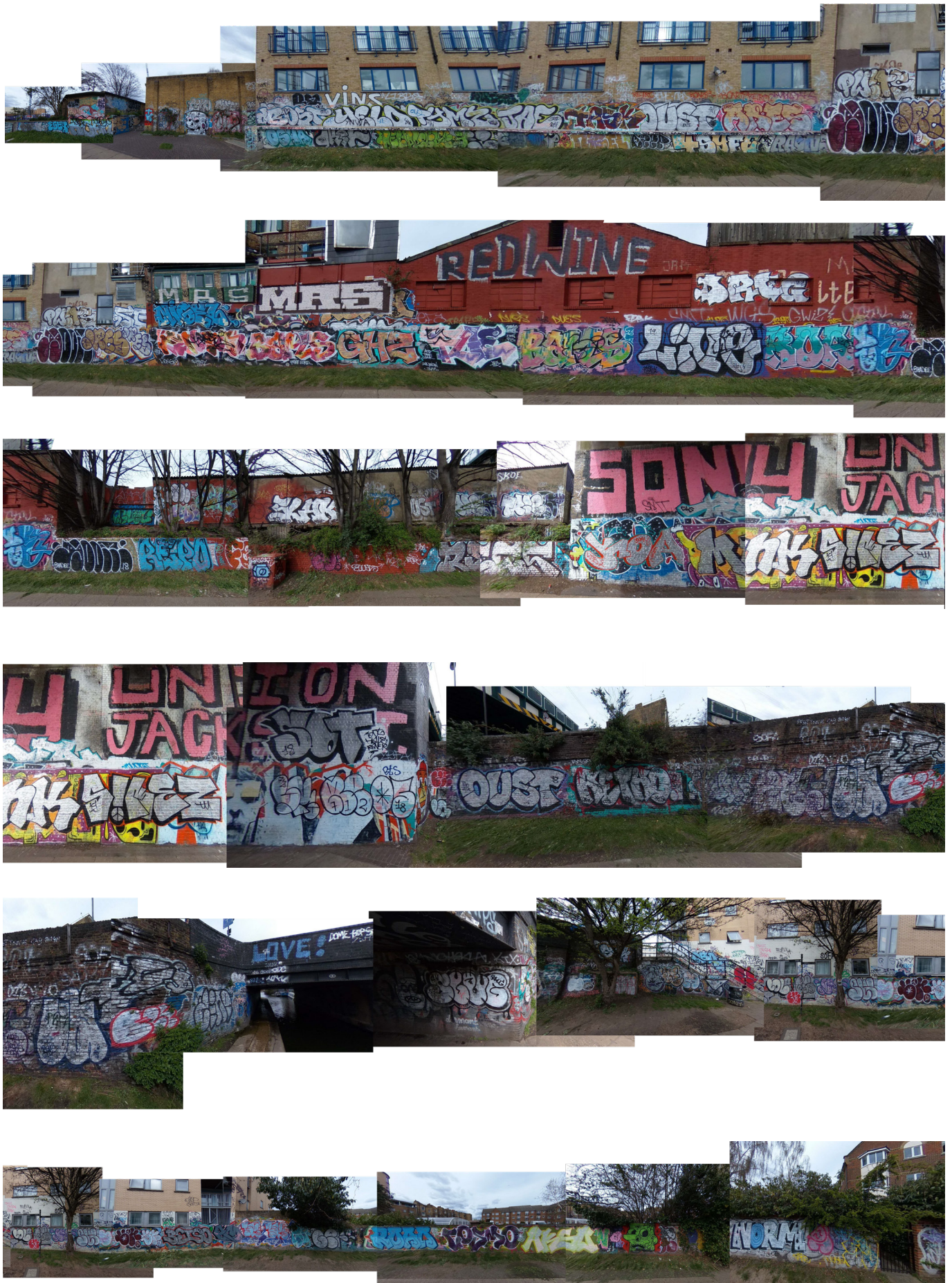


Image 2.24: *The "Oval Space"*: Collages showing street art at Regent's Canal



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**CODES OF STREET ART IN URBAN SPACE**  
**Informal Manifestations Of Creativity Co-Shaping Public Spaces**  
The Research Report

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ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN CROSSOVER  
2020/2021

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**TU DELFT**

## REFLECTION AT THE RESEARCH

Starting the research on street art with a goal to transpose the outlines later on the architecture required some statements made in advance. First of all, I had to specify what was the purpose – focusing solely on street art would probably lead to a descriptive paper on its content and what does each artwork represent. Surely, there would be aesthetic tendencies that would be reflected in street art as well as in architecture. However, acknowledging the difference between durations of the creating acts of both and for how long “final products” would last, direct transposing outcomes might be unreasonable. Thus, the focal point of the research had to be moved from this narrow scope to the consideration of street art as a manifestation of processes occurring in the urban scape. After admitting this, naturally it has been clarified in which direction any potential architectural intervention would be formulated. The design, rather than conserving the manifestation of creativity, should fill into those processes and take position on them. Being a locus for specific socio-cultural phenomena that has outcome from the research, it would release creativity and reinforce relations of local people with the space they identify themselves with.

The choice of the space was crucial and in this case speaking about the site of the project is not synonymous with the plot. The inequality comes again from the consideration of processes due to the heterogeneous character of the city, especially as complex as London is. Hardly any process starts and ends within one location in urban scape and does not affect nor is not affected by others. I particularly avoided such extraordinary situation due to the concept of the street, thus except physical infrastructure it requires occurring movements, exchanges and frictions of different tendencies and ideas.

The chosen site in Brixton at Nursery Road has potential to become a locus for those relations – it is located at the threshold between the hustle and bustle of Brixton Road and conventional neighbourhood starting just behind the facades of the high street (*map 3.1*). Though, what physically defines the site are two railway lines going side by side on brick Victorian arches. This arrangement meets the research outcome on integrity of subspaces – on one hand, with other subspaces that are penetrating each other, it participates in building multi-layered urban context. On the other hand, it can be distinguished due to arches because those are not only a mark in space but they implement very specific tectonic conditions that may cause perhaps as much opportunities as difficulties.

Although, in spite of the potential, the site remains for now outside the city perception. The three cases elaborated in the research are examples where street art in many forms helped bringing forgotten in-between spaces back to life by spending affords and creativity on improving the space. For now this phenomenon has not been started at the site yet and that might be a situation where architecture is needed. It would not conserve fruits of street art because they are not present there yet, rather it would be an impulse making them occur as the architecture of the Queen’s Elisabeth Hall brought skateboarders to the Undercroft. Thus, there was an object in space needed that due to its material characteristics would attract

street artists to act with its provocative, even aggressive position marking the area in minds of locals rather than with official permission of authorities to act in the area.

The phrase “process” implies also dynamism and constantly occurring changes. Willing to incorporate architecture into a process it requires including ongoing transformation of the space into the concept, though the transformation cannot be read explicitly. First understanding might be conducted in terms of tectonics and materiality. In the research there were cases elaborated when the site was adjusted for current usage. People were interpreting the space by intervening with any physical object in the surrounding. Thus, the design should have allowed such interpretations to happen in a way, what brings another outcome of the research on temporality. Here might be direct translations made from the idea of street art to the building. As new paintings are added to old ones taking more and more available surface, there would be new parts of the building supplemented. In the same way, some artworks cover former and some parts of the building might be totally rearranged for new function. This implements at least partial usage of materials suitable for addition and deconstruction, timber for example, and also it leads to certain understanding of the structure – not as a permanent and finished unity, but rather as elements assembled together.

Changes of function in the building are another aspect of ongoing transformation. Successful and willingly used design starts to take position in common perception and it is located in shared mental map of the city. Then it is being developed, it attracts new people and has to fulfil completely new needs. What is more, architecture usually plays so significant role – it builds urban environment after all – that there will be totally new needs to meet that would not ever appear without it. Architecture, fitting into the process, changes it and addresses the transformation to totally new direction. Those conclusions situate the research and the design, as the reflection of the research, in the theme of the studio which is heterogeneity of cities.



Map 3.1: **Location of the site**, Brixton, Nursery Road



## PROGRAMME OF THE PROJECT

In this project there was strong qualification to build programme on distinguished but interpolating layers that would be related to specific outcomes of the research. The first one, as the design should have been transforming found surrounding, is the layer of urban and landscape design. Entering the site should be an urban experience where metaphysical values of the space are reachable but do not reveal themselves immediately. The linearity of the plot imposes specific narration built by sequence of events to be discovered one by one (*scheme 3.1*). Thus, the spaces underneath the railway arches might be considered separately but they create coherent context and it might be compared to conventional shopping streets in the city. Therefore, to keep this value, that was actually already there, I considered the whole ground floor as a public space built from specific subspaces. Any object designed between those two lines of subspaces should not be working against them by breaking the coherency. The design should rather use them and reinforce flows happening there – that is why the crucial decision to make was leaving the ground floor as free as possible. Of course specific condition had to be implement in different parts of the site – the main route along the arches could be literally open while the building, in spite of function, has to provide safety and hierarchy in accessibility to certain zones. But how it has outcome from the research, distinction is actually desired – variety is a value as long as those subspaces are penetrating each other and are not totally isolated.

Another point in the landscape consideration was introducing The Stage, an idea of forum to express yourself and to observe others and which was brought also from the research. The characteristics of The Stage might be associated again with conventional urban environment – if the line along the railway arches might be considered as a street, The Stage is an equivalent of urban square. It is linked to the street but it breaks the linear flow – it does not implement any movement and gathers people. Designing it I have payed extra attention to the form – on one hand giving appearance associated with figurative stage and audience, on the other it is focal point of the composition. The Stage as the square is created by ambient form of the building what gives, in my opinion, uniqueness and intimacy to the spot (*scheme 3.2*).

The programme of the building itself might be considered on two other layers. One is the function, the programme that makes the building matter and allows to take position in urban context, what literally concerns levels above the ground floor. As I mentioned before, pointless would be proposing solutions conserving street art and regulating access to people. I focused then on the process of creating street art, coming with proposition that in my opinion reflects described in the research requirements to meet by artwork to be treated as street art. On one hand there is a workshop, the space to make art and fulfil material requirement. On the other hand I proposed a facility with temporary resident to build social environment around the process of art making and to meet immaterial aspect of street art. Finally, the location of those two facilities is relevant and worth noting because it reflects general situation of the site previously described – the workshop is at the high street side, the facility of temporary

resident represents the neighbourhood. Between those, on the figurative threshold, there is The Stage (*scheme 3.3*).

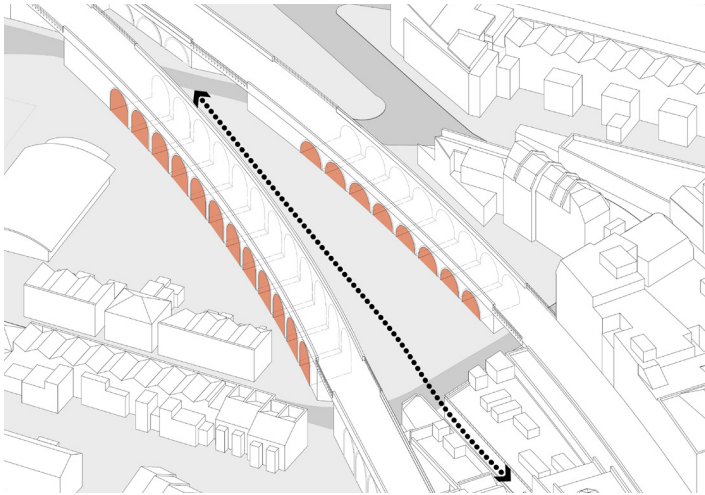
The last considered layer of the programme was materiality which I have already slightly elaborated. There were two ideas I should have follow. One was that the building should be an environment for the phenomenon of street art, reinforce it, to be a canvas that would provoke to act. For this purpose I have chosen the concept of the wall – a physical and mental barrier with load-bearing structural function that is a container for building's infrastructure and protects against external conditions. Also, what is remarkable, mostly it is a target and medium for street artists. Exaggerated form of the wall supposed provoke and bring interest to the site, also being an impulse starting the process of the architecture, however it caused some difficulties to overcome as well. I was struggling how to design it in a way to keep it at the top of visual hierarchy after it happened to be covered by next layers of the build, how to maintain open ground floor I was valuing so much while introducing great physical barrier and finally how to meet technological requirements for built structures but keeping the surface of the actual wall accessible, which is so important in terms of street art (*scheme 3.4*).

As the wall was the provocative impulse on focal point of the design, it could remain for longer time despite processes conducted on the site. Contrary, the rest of the construction, that would come next in steps preferably, should be more easily adoptable to changes. That is why I proposed timber structure, which on one hand is more sustainable and less permanent than concrete or brick. On the other hand it might be a more familiar technology for people visiting the building what might encourage them to interact even with the building's structure.

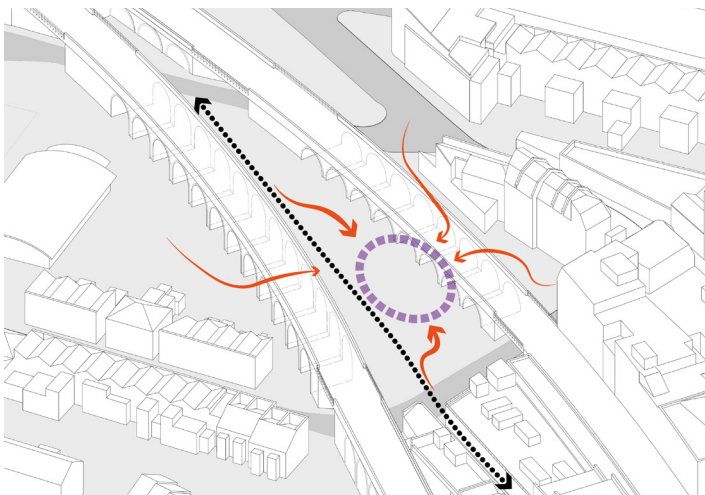
## CONCLUSION

The journey conducted from the research to the design was very instructive for me. First of all it has visualised me how complex are contemporary cities, such as London. Decision to investigate only one theme led to discover many phenomena and relations happening in urban environment. Also having in mind the obligation to design architecture based on the research made me rethink the theme of street art from totally new for me point of view. What I perceive as a value of my work was rejecting entirely aesthetic aspects and focusing on it as on a process which has specific preconditions behind. After all, fascination on street art has become just an excuse to analyse the processes happening in micro scale in the city.

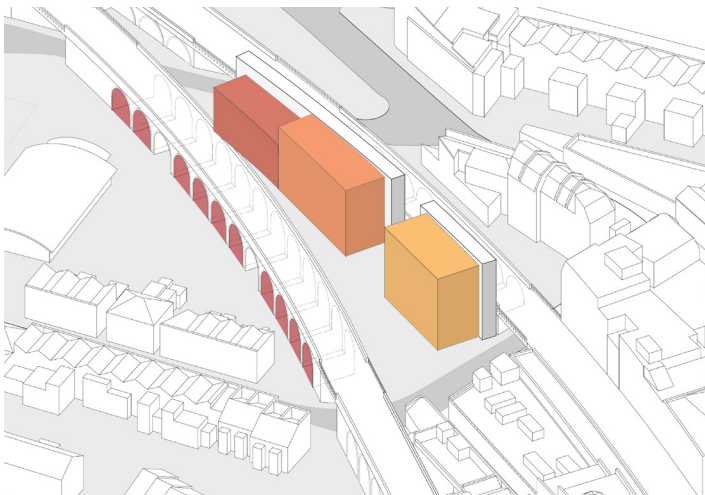
Another turning point was the moment when the research was supposed to be translated on the design principles. Reconsideration of street art destabilised my perception, so developing the programme started from the very beginning and it gave feeling of uncertainty what would be the final outcome. During the entire process of designing I was struggling to keep the essence of the theme that I would like to emphasis. It required creating the hierarchy of elements rejecting specific ideas what was often problematic for me. However, I think my project reflects my strong position after all and it is satisfying as much as the whole process I have conducted to reach this point.



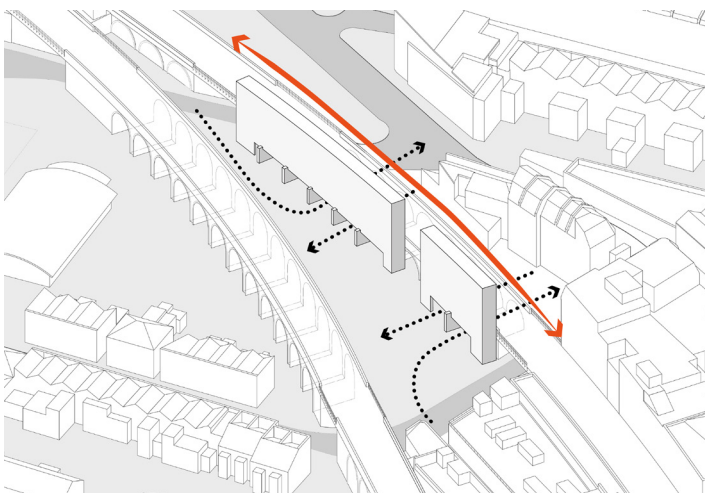
Scheme 3.1: **Sequence of subspaces along linear motion**



Scheme 3.2: **The "Stage"**, like a square breaks linearity of motion



Scheme 3.3: **Functional programme**,  
 -Yellow- the workshop  
 -Orange- temporary resident, first step  
 -Red- temporary resident, further step



Scheme 3.4: **The concept of the Wall**