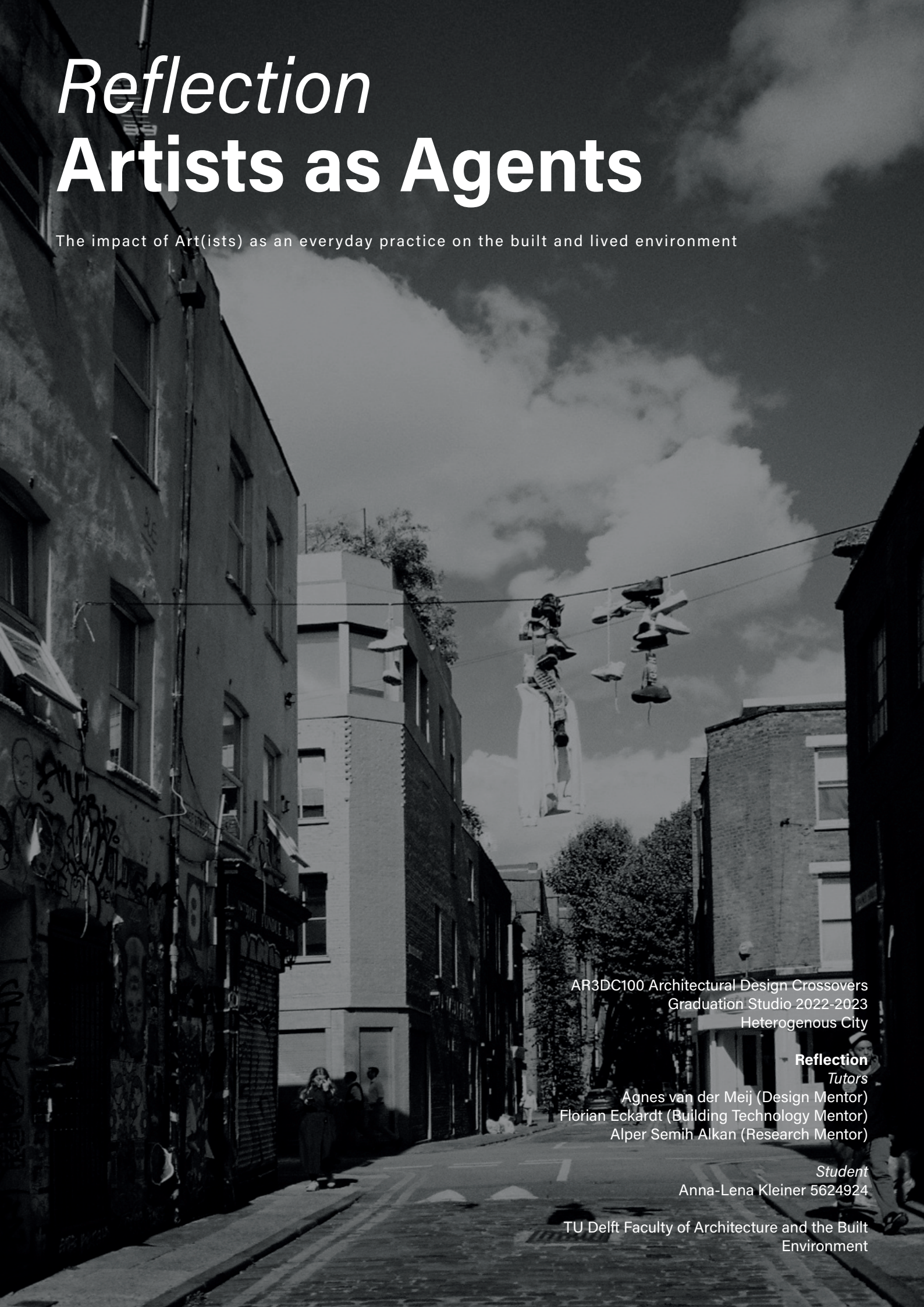

Reflection
Artists as Agents

The impact of Art(ists) as an everyday practice on the built and lived environment

AR3DC100 Architectural Design Crossovers
Graduation Studio 2022-2023
Heterogenous City

Reflection

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Reflection

1. What is the relation between your graduation (project) topic, the studio topic (if applicable), your master track (A,U,BT,LA,MBE), and your master programme (MSc AUBS)?

Based on the studios discourse, which focuses on the interdisciplinarity of a multi-modal design research, the graduation project ‚Art as an Agency' investigates on the relevance as well as the impact of Art in the city. Therefore the definiton of what art is and can be goes beyond the traditional understanding of art as a commodity but also draws light on art as a tool for expression, a voice giver, a political statement or a platform for social commentary.
Eventually the research aims to uncover social, urban and environmental inequalities within the art world that have emerged throughout time and are clearly visible in the built and lived environment. Questioning the existing, unequally distributed 'system' that prevails and steers the art world by uncovering the underlying relations and dependencies among the actors (human and non-human) the research aims to find potential, alternative 'ways' that will counteract these inequalities and eventually empower the artists and their role within society. Looking at heterogeneous city London not only through the lens of an architect or an urban planner, but also the one of an artist, I was able to reveal the the multi-sided role of art in and for the city. I used a variety of methods to understand and untangle the Actor-Network of the art world. This allowed me to identify one main issue that predominates on site, naming the lack of awareness among society of the relevance of the everyday art and artists for the built and lived environment. This lead the to main research question which is 'What spatial intervention is needed to maintain, enhance and sustain the proliferation of the everyday artists in the built and lived environment?'. The aim of the research is to point out and illustrate prevailing inequalities and unequal distributions within the art world and to eventually find a way, how architecture could counteract against it. It is not about solving the problem but rather about empowering and simplifying certain procedures such as the accessibility, visability and the distribution of the everyday artists.

2. How do you assess the academic and societal value, scope and implication of your graduation project, including ethical aspects?

Art intertwines with almost every aspect of our daily lives. Art is not just an object such as paintings, sculptures or installations. It goes far beyond these definitions all the way to being used for therapeutical, educational or scientific matters. Art therefore serves as an agent for social, economic and political matters. However the profession of an artist until today still isn‘t fully taken ‚seriously‘, leading to the majority of the artists (everyday artists) not being able to maintain a regular and sufficient income and needing at least one side job. Additionally art is often seen as an ‚add on/accessory‘ rather than autonomous in the professional field. The reason for this underestimation and lack of appreciation is the fact that the impact of art and artists in the city, its thriving economy, the social relations and qualities it creates is often overseen or not seen at all.
Knowing this I wanted to further investigate on potential ways (architectural as well as porgrammatic) on how to empower the artists. How can architecture serve as a facilitator for art?

3. How did your research influence your design/recommendations and how did the design/recommendations influence your research?

I used my research as a foundation and a guideline for the design. It provided me with multiple main 'ingredients' that I gathered throughout the research process and therefore needed to be addressed within the design to guarantee success. Eventually the research uncovered one issue that prevails among the art world that I decided to tackle through an architectural design solution. Therefore the research, especially the ethnographic research infused the design with a programmatic framework and fundamental neccessities (Figure 57, p. 89). It also lead me to the location that now will host my design project. The questionnaires as well as the interviews with the artists provided me with information concerning vital spatial qualities that artists need. They also helped to clarify and further define the main study group - ‚everyday artists'.

4. How do you assess the value of your way of working (your approach, your used methods, used methodology)?

All in all I am content with the topic and the approach that has been developed throughout the past couple of months. The research reflects my interest and tackles a past, contemporary as well as future 'problem' not only in the researched city London, but all around the world. However, I had some initial difficulties finding an equal balance between the written part of the thesis and the practical part, the the fieldwork and the design project. Especially regarding the research I struggled at first in finding an appropriate way how to incorporate all the information gathered through my theoretical reading analysis, the right methods and methodolgies and eventually translating everything from research into a design approach. However, looking back, I believe the methods and the methodology I chose were the right ones for the research topic 'Artists as Agents' and the design approach meets the requirements of the study group ‚everyday artists'. (see also Figure 74, p. 151)

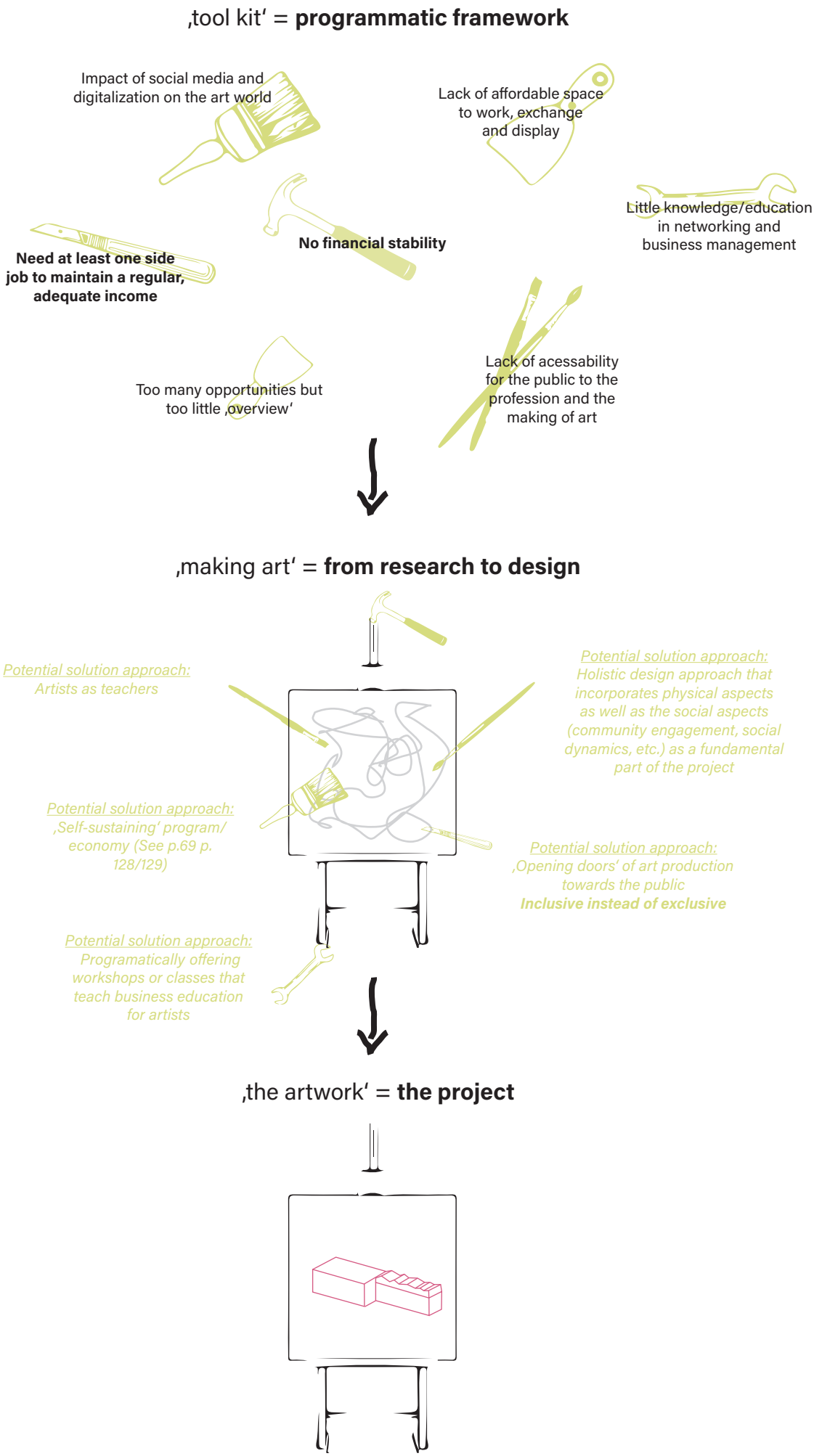

Figure 01 Cooking - from research to design

5. How do you assess the value of the transferability of your project results?

The project aims to showcase through a combination of existing spatial and social models (open studio, self-sustaining communal environments, etc.) a new approach on how to tackle a contemporary problem that the art world is facing. Whilst the physical, build component of the project is viable in terms of transferability into reality the success of the social component is dependent on more than just the concept itself. It will need the support of a variety of other actors (such as local authorities, the government, art institutions, financial investors, etc.) as well as the willpower of the artists themselves to open up towards the public to guarantee success. However, overall the project has the potential to initiate a 'new way' towards empowering the artists and making art more relatable and understandable for everyone.

6. How did you gurantee that the existing buildings condition meets todays building standards?

The building is an old brick building from the 30s. Since it is a former factory the building's technology (insulation, ventilation, heating, etc.) doesn't meet today's building standards. Therefore it had to be subsequently retrofitted. An interior insulation and wall heating/cooling was added as well as a mechanical ventilation system. In summer the adjacent canal can be used to cool the building through a water heat exchanger. All windows have been replaced through triple-glazed wooden windows that also allow natural ventilation. In total 36 PVT collectors are mounted on the roof to provide the building with energy for electricity and heat.

7. What is the main aim of the architectural design?

The project consists of a social and a build component. Both are equally valuable for a successful execution and both aim to create a more inclusive and vibrant creative ecosystem that allows an exchange (in form of a relationship, a trade, a sale, knowledge exchange, etc.) between everyday artists and the public. Comparable with an agency, the project serves as an intermediate or a springboard for everyday artists.
The build component is designed in such a way, that the architecture becomes a literal ‚bridge' or connection between artists and public. The spaces reflect openness, transparency and connectivitiy and substantiate the idea of making art more accessible. The social component is reflected in the program which sees and needs the human actors (artists, students, kids, collaborators, visitors, etc.) as a vital and indispensable part of it.

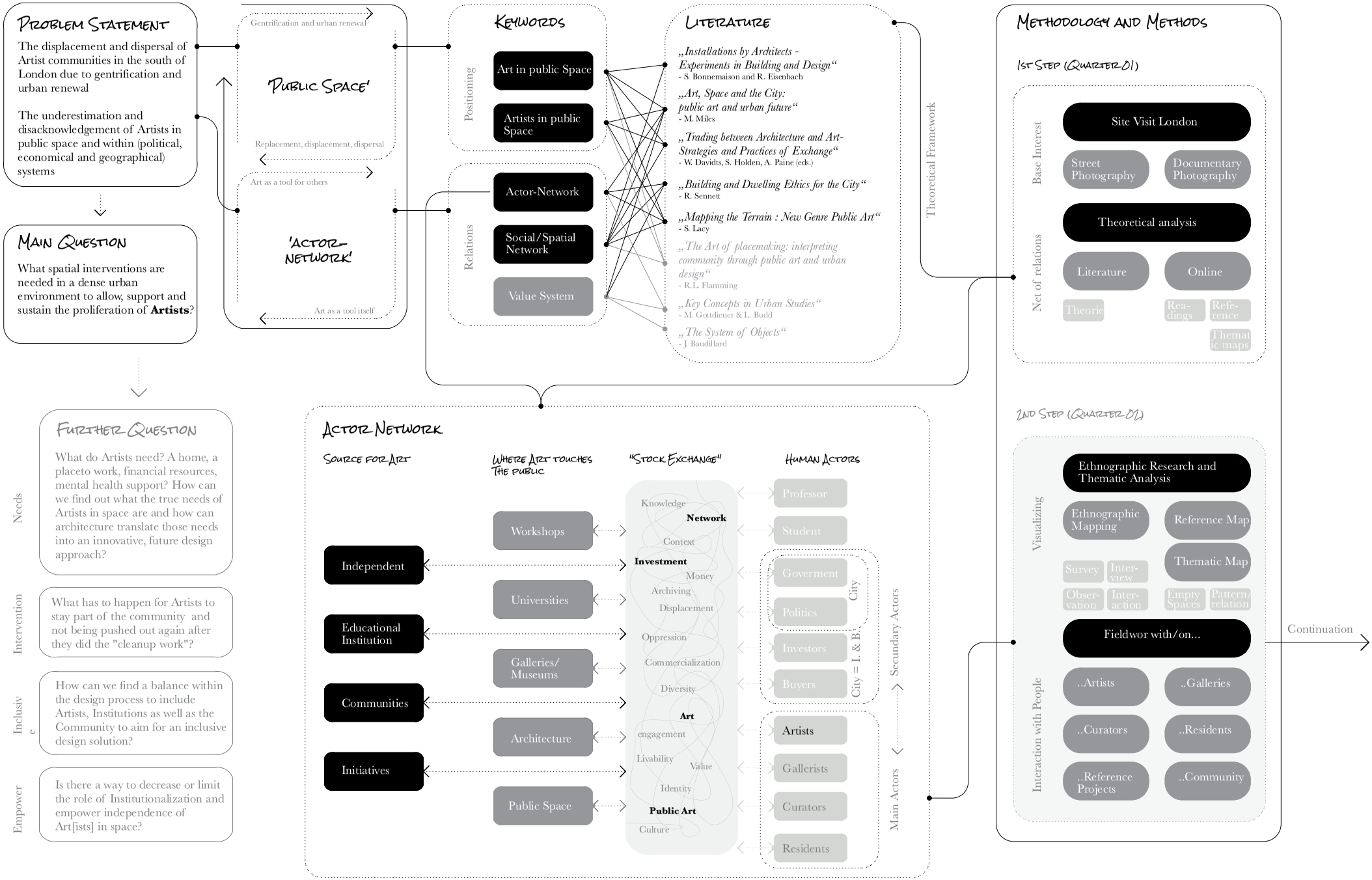

Figure 74 Research Plan