Urban Assymetries

a critical reflection on how socio-political systems have "built" cities

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TU Delft | University of Technology

Architectural research paper of
Alexandra Vasiliki Sapounaki

to my sisters; supporting me unconditionally

Preface

"from matter of fact to matter of concern"

-Latour

(foot)notes/

1/ "Spatial Agency: About," n.d., https://www.spatialagency. net/#:~:text=In%20Bruno%20 Latour's%20terms%2C%20 critical,objects%20on%20their%20 own%20terms.

In Bruno Latour's terms, critical attention is shifted from architecture as a matter of fact to architecture as a matter of concern. Buildings ,when considered within the context of societal engagement, they become integral parts of interconnected networks, where the impact of architecture carry greater importance than the physical structures themselves. [1]

The graduation thesis aims to declare a manifesto on how architects and -urbanists - should approach their work more critically. On that note, it brings up concepts such as engaging with the temporality of the context, making decisions with ethical aftereffects and aiming for more socially engaging architecture. Through these concepts, the research aims to propose alternative suggestions for how we approach architecture and initiate a conversation on that matter.

Architecture is a discipline that reaches beyond technical knowledge and aesthetic skills. It is a practice that teaches architects social and environmental sensibility, cultural respectfulness, and multidisciplinary problem-solving skills. Therefore, architects should be more engaged and active in decision-making in the urban realm and society and use, most importantly, their criticality.

Especially nowadays, since artificial intelligence solves day-to-day questions, the way we approach architecture in the future decades will change. Proposing human-related and interdisciplinary ideas based on critical thinking will be crucial for architecture.

Abstract

and keywords

keywords/

**socio-spatial
segregation,
social engagement,
spatial agancies,
neoliberalism,
globalisation,
segragation,
marginalisation,
social architecture,
political
architecture,
social stratification,
gentrification,
urban loopholes,
social boundaries,
crossdisciplinary
research,
architect,
London,
global cities**

Understanding the societal construction and utilisation of space is paramount today, especially as urban centres face escalating space scarcity, intensifying societal disparities. The intertwining of architecture and politics is undeniable, given architecture's power to shape spaces and influence social dynamics, necessitating architects' acknowledgement of political implications.

This research delves into how sociopolitical factors impact urban spaces and in what ways architects could critically counteract them, using neoliberalism as a case study. Neoliberal policies in London, particularly under Thatcher's leadership, significantly affected social strata and urban landscapes.

Neoliberal ideologies created disparities, unfettered markets, commodified public spaces, and exacerbated social divides, leading to spatial segregation and gentrification waves. They emphasised on the need for alternative approaches focusing on fairness, sustainability, and community welfare. Examining evolving neighbourhoods highlighted spatial segregation patterns due to neoliberalism's aftereffects, manifesting as urban loopholes and boundaries.

This study recognises cities as arenas reflecting and challenging neoliberal ideologies. It identifies the root causes of urban disparities in social stratification, globalisation, and gentrification and calls for a shift towards long-term social sustainability in urban planning.

This research takes an approach by integrating social engagement into urban planning, acknowledging that city development is influenced by multifaceted factors beyond architectural planning. Drawing from diverse fields, it proposes strategies embedding social engagement within spatial contexts. These strategies aim to combat societal disconnection by promoting meaningful social interaction through spatial design.

At the heart of this exploration are eight spatial agencies or design principles aiming to revitalise social engagement within urban spaces. These principles advocate constructing situations over objects, fostering diverse social interactions, bridging social stratification, and restoring the existing character. The research strongly urges architects to adopt socially conscious approaches and open their spectrum to cross-disciplinarity. The main goal is to underline architecture's integral role in societal wellbeing and emphasise its potential to create inclusive and equitable spaces.

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source of photograph: own

Introduction

London and sociospatial fragmentation

London Bridge, Sept.16/2022

Clapton

Hackney

Dalston

Camden Town

King's Cross

Hoxton

Bow

Paddington

Spitafields

City of London

Mayfair

Poplar

Hide Park

Kensington

Westminister

Elephant
and Castle

Canary Wharf

Battersea

London   Scale 1: 90.000

(foot)**notes**/

2/ Qiujie Shi and Danny Dorling, "Growing socio-spatial inequality in neo-liberal times? Comparing Beijing and London," Applied Geography 115 (February 1, 2020): 102139, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apgeog.2019.102139.

3/ Peter Bishop and Lesley Williams, Design for London: Experiments in Urban Thinking (UCL Press, 2020).

4/ "Descriptive Map of London Poverty by Charles Booth (135CA) — Atlas of Places," n.d., https://www.atlasofplaces.com/cartography/descriptive-map-of-london-poverty/.

5/ K. Duff, Contemporary British literature and urban space: After Thatcher (Springer, 2014).

6/ Mohsen Mostafavi and Harvard University. Graduate School Of Design, Ethics of the Urban: The City and the Spaces of the Political (Lars Müller Publishers, 2017).

7/Chinmayee Mishra and Navaneeta Rath, "Social Solidarity during a Pandemic: Through and beyond Durkheimian Lens," Social Sciences & Humanities Open 2, no. 1 (January 1, 2020): 100079, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2020.100079.

When Friedrich Engels wrote the book "The Condition of the Working Class in England," in 1845, he revealed issues such as inequality, exploitation of workers, and capitalism. Over 178 years later, the book's themes continue to imprint on British society and resonate worldwide. The book's critique of capitalism is still relevant as it continues to be a widely debated and contested economic and political system.[2]

London, especially, has a complex history of socio-economic disparities. The historical context of class divisions and unequal access to resources has led to a heightened awareness of the need to address issues of segregation and promote social equity. The interrelations of such processes with the city's spatial configuration have preoccupied sociologists, urbanists, politicians, and citizens for centuries. Power has always been dispersed between public and private corporations and individuals, making it challenging to support shared interests and significantly shaping its social and spatial fragmentation. Since the 18th century, the "great estates" and the more significant expansions of the 19th century played an essential role in creating the city's hierarchical social class structure.[3] Mapping documentations such as Charles Booth's descriptive poverty map of London: "Life and Labour of the People," produced in 1889 (figure1 page 20), and Patrick Abercrombie's "Social and Functional Analysis" of London in 1943, have archived vital insights on the development of the societal stratification upon the spatial arrangements and vice versa.[4] The patterns have continued in recent history when post-war Britain incorporated neoliberal political strategies to optimise the economy regardless of the social impact with Margaret Thatcher later in the 1970s. The government deified financial turnovers regardless of the long-term repercussions on the socio-spatial inequality, social stratification, and segregation.[5]

Saskia Sassen, in her contributional text in the book "Ethics of the Urban", reminds us that cities have had the potential to unite people of different classes, ethnicities, and religions through commerce, politics, and civic practices. However, in recent years, forced urbanisation and internal displacement have discouraged diversity, leading to the "cleansing" certain groups, resulting in the homogenising of districts and social and economic segregation.[6]

With the pandemic of COVID-19 that caused a devastating humanitarian hit, people started valuing human solidarity again against economic turnovers.[7] Overall, there is a growing recognition

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8/Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore, "Cities and the Geographies of 'Actually Existing Neoliberalism,'" Antipode 34, no. 3 (June 1, 2002): 349–79, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8330.00246.

***/ *spatial agencies;* stand for spatial/architectural strategies that envision a broader spectrum of possibilities for architects and individuals outside the architectural profession. This architectural practice derives from the concept of Spatial Agency promoted by theorists and practitioners like Bruno Latour, Jeremy Till and Nishat Awan and supported on the ideas of Henri Lefebvre. It departs from the conventional emphasis on the appearance and construction of structures within the architecture realm and highlights the profession's ethical, political and social character.

Nishat Awan, Tatjana Schneider, and Jeremy Till, Spatial Agency: Other Ways of Doing Architecture, Routledge EBooks, 2013, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315881249.

of the need for social equity and inclusivity in London, and efforts are being made to address these issues through policy and activism. Still, the aftermath's political past is deeply rooted in London's culture. It remains to see how effective these efforts will address the city's deeply entrenched social and spatial inequalities.

The research uncovers how neoliberalism led to urban fragmentation with London as a case study and it will propose *spatial agencies** to reconstruct social and spatial engagement in the urban fabric.

In the first Chapter, the research explains the connections that sociopolitical emergences have with the spatial arrangement of the urban fabric. It uses London's post-war neoliberal political restructuring as a case study exploring a critical geographical perspective on the neoliberal spatial aftermath. It aims to highlight the interplay between sociopolitical reforms and urban ecology and help uncover the root causes of urban asymmetries in London.

It argues that neoliberal restructuring indirectly projects on the society from national to local context by shaping regulatory practices. Even though neoliberal regulations are in fact political strategies shaping primary institutional arrangements, their frameworks that develop over time leave their imprint on the spatial configuration of the urban space.[8]

The second Chapter focuses on how architecture/architects could counterbalance the fragmented urbanscape by striving for more equitable and socially engaging spatial strategies/agencies. By thoroughly investigating various perspectives on social engagement derived from broader fields of knowledge such as sociology, political science, urban planning, and architecture, this research distils essential insights to establish a repertoire of *spatial agencies*. These agencies provide frameworks for productively framing and situating social engagement within spatial contexts. The research will propose a critical range of spatial agencies that strive to contextualise the abstract ideas of social engagement in spatial strategies and promote dialogue and inclusivity instead of flat social landscapes.

The research does not critique the postwar era's social and spatial culture; instead, it is a critical reflection on how we can identify, learn from the past and refine any situation of the past to be productive in the future.

[Figure]: 1/

Poverty Map by Charles Booth:
"The poor East London versus the rich West pictured in 1889"

Social-spatial configuration:
The legend sites as followed:
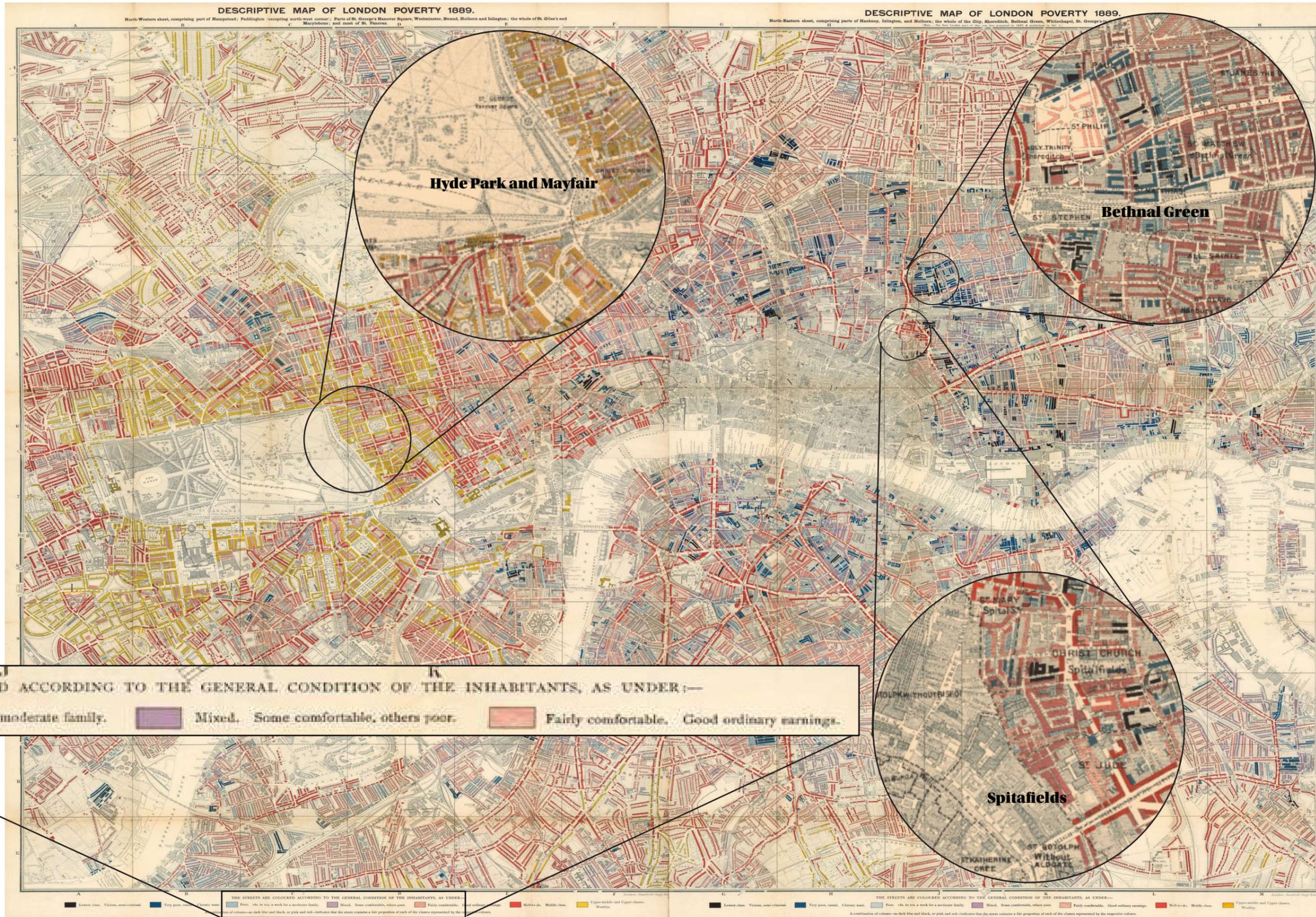The black stands for "lowest class, semi-criminal".
The blue marks stand for "very poor, casual".
The purple for "mixed, some comfortable, other poor".
Red for "mixed and middle class, well-to-do"
while
the yellow, for "upper-middle and upper classes, wealthy".

DESCRIPTIVE MAP OF LONDON POVERTY 1889.

DESCRIPTIVE MAP OF LONDON POVERTY 1889.

Hyde Park and Mayfair

Bethnal Green

Spitafields

THE STREETS ARE COLOURED ACCORDING TO THE GENERAL CONDITION OF THE INHABITANTS, AS UNDER:—

Poor, 18s. to 21s. a week for a moderate family.   Mixed. Some comfortable, others poor.   Fairly comfortable. Good ordinary earnings.

Poverty Map by Charles Booth:
The poor East London versus the rich West pictured in 1889.

While the specific circumstances may have changed since Booth's time, the persistent presence of poverty and inequality remains a pressing and ongoing concern. Today, while the exact geographical divisions have evolved, many urban areas still grapple with similar issues of poverty, inequality, and access to resources, underscoring the urgency of the situation.

In these two photographs, architecture takes on the role of luxury evidence, demonstrating how architectural features can serve as a mirror, reflecting economic status and privilege.

Photograph 1 was taken at the entrance of St. Pancras, located in Central-West London. Its architecture, characterized by grand Victorian design and intricate details, exudes luxury. The station's surroundings, including nearby hotels and upscale shops, further reinforce the perception of affluence associated with this city area.

On the opposite side, Photograph 2, taken in Hackney, East London, shows one of the derelict buildings in the area. The East Side is marking a more modest and often dilapidated architecture, reflecting the economic challenges.
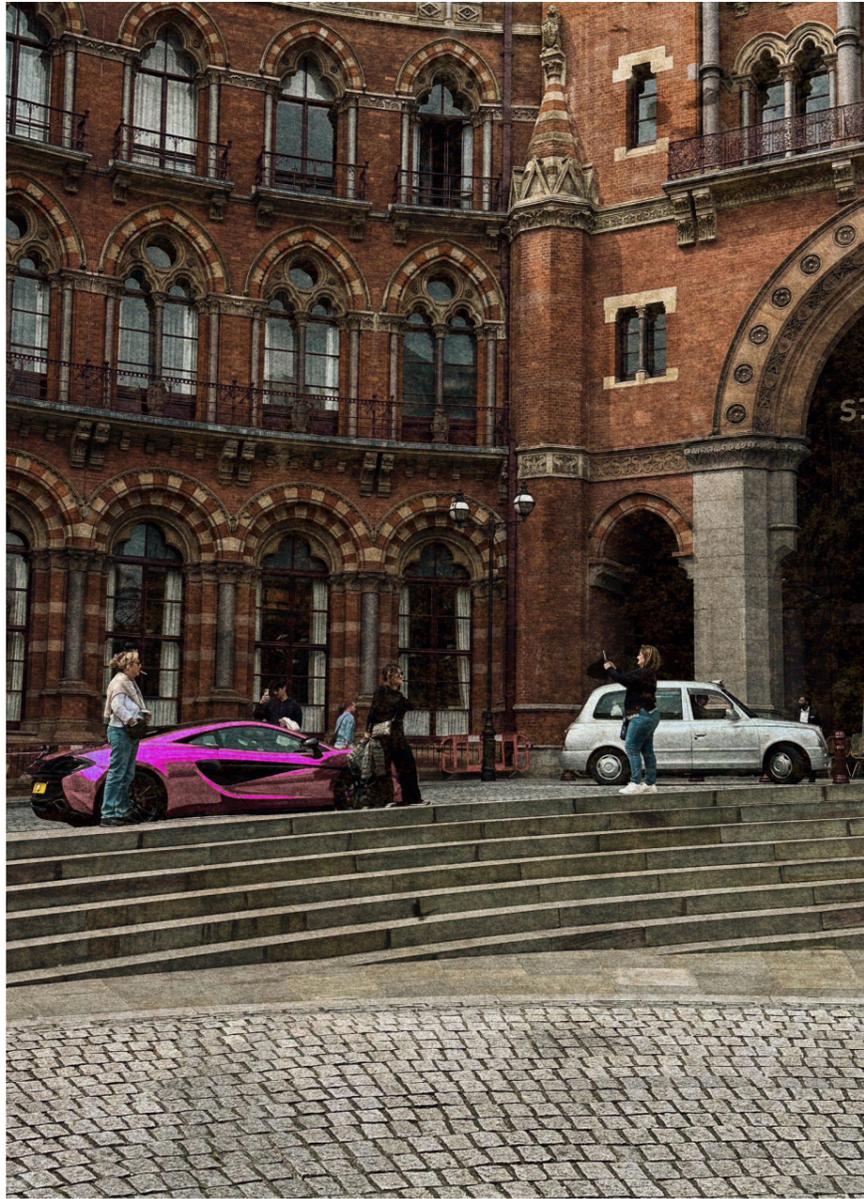
St. Pancras, 20 Apr. 2023

Hackney, 16 Nov. 2023

source of photographs: own

Chapter 1

geographies of neoliberalism

understanding the influence of the socio-political implications of neoliberal practices on the urban relief

source of photograph: own

(foot)notes/

8/ https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/american_english/space_2.

9/ Jeremy Till, Architecture Depends (MIT Press, 2013).

10/ Adrian Forty, Words and Buildings: A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture, 2004.

11/ Jeremy Till, Architecture Depends.

12/ Henri Lefebvre, The Production of Space (Wiley-Blackwell, 1992).

13/ David Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change (Wiley-Blackwell, 1992).

1.1 Socio-political equals spatial?

(Social) Space

What is space? When people think of space, they translate it into an empty, statical room with physical boundaries and cartesian proportions. The Oxford Dictionary defines it as "the dimensions of height, depth, and width within which all things exist and move" or "a continuous area or expanse which is unrestricted, available, or unoccupied".[8] Indeed, this is the generic accepted meaning, but it would be illusive for an architect to image space only as m2 when it comes to architecture. Metric space for architecture is like colours without any light. Architects shape space for it to be lived by users, provoke feelings, change in time and interact with the environment.[9] Keeping on the etymology of space, Adrian Forty, in his insightful exploration of the word "space" in architecture, points out two facets of space: firstly, space as a "tangible attribute related to size and scope," and secondly, space as a "conceptual framework by which the mind comprehends the world".[10] Architectural space may not possess physical attributes in the strict scientific sense. However, within the context of form, it will retain space-associated characteristics.[11]

Space exploration within social sciences has been approached from various angles, including postmodernism, urban theory, and critical geography. These diverse theoretical frameworks consider the profound impact of historical events such as colonialism and globalisation on our comprehension and experience of space and location.

This thematic inquiry gained significant momentum in the 1980s, primarily ignited by the publication of Henri Lefebvre's seminal work, "The Production of Space."[12] His focus delves into the intricate and interwoven social processes that contribute to creating space. In the book "The Condition of Postmodernity,"[13] David Harvey introduces the notion of "time-space compression." This concept delineates the transformative impact of technological advancements and capitalism on our perception of time, space, and distance. Shifts in the methods of capital production and consumption are both influenced by and influence developments in transportation and technology. These advancements forge connections that transcend temporal and spatial boundaries, spawning new markets and elite urban enclaves. Consequently,

(foot)notes/

14/ Henri Lefebvre, Everyday Life in the Modern World (Routledge, 2017).

15/ Stuart Elden, "There Is a Politics of Space Because Space Is Political," Radical Philosophy Review 10, no. 2 (January 1, 2007): 101–16, https://doi.org/10.5840/radphilrev20071022.

16/ David Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change.

17/ M. B. Sakellariou, Meletimata: The Polise-State Definition and Origin, 1989.

18/ Aristoteles, Politika, 2013.

these changes challenge our traditional notions of linear progression and spatial separation.

The notion of space transcends its physical boundaries, encompassing social, cultural, and economic dimensions. Unravelling how society constructs and employs space holds paramount importance, especially in the present era, where space assumes novel roles. The scarcity of space, especially in the cities, has magnified societal inequality. With the proliferation of resources, notably within developed regions, albeit with uneven distribution, space availability has become a precious and limited asset. The overcrowding issue has become particularly conspicuous in densely populated urban enclaves within highly industrialised nations.[14] The allotment of social space has become intricately woven with the fabric of class divisions, and urban planning practices inadvertently perpetuate these class hierarchies.[15] In "The Condition of Postmodernity," a critical book on human geography (1989), David Harvey articulates "the whole history of territorial organisation, colonialism and imperialism, of uneven development, of urban and rural contradictions, as well as of geopolitical conflict testifies to the importance of

such struggles within the history of capitalism."[16]

The Politics of Space

Politics or polit-ics or πολιτ-ική (polit-ikí) or πόλις (pólis)

The term "politics" originates in the Greek word "polis" [πόλις], which signifies in Ancient Greek "city-state". According to Greek philosophers, the city-state concept was all-encompassing, as they did not distinguish between the state and society, the personal life from social life.[17] Aristoteles believed that poli-tics constituted a comprehensive study of human beings, society, the state, morality, and territorial significance.[18] In modern Greek, polis still means "the city", directly connecting to the city as a spatial subject with physical boundaries, material entity and sociopolitical and ethical obligations.

The French philosopher and social theorist Foucault discussed architectural topics concerning his broader inquiries into the relationship between power, space, and governmentality. His theory of biopolitics is a concept that he developed to analyse how modern states and institutions exercise power over populations concerning

(foot)notes/

19/ Jakob Nilsson and Sven-Olov Wallenstein, Foucault, Biopolitics and Governmentality (Sodertorn University, 2013).

20/Stephen Legg, "Foucault's Population Geographies: Classifications, Biopolitics and Governmental Spaces," Population Space and Place 11, no. 3 (January 1, 2005): 137–56, https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.357.

21/Joseph M. Piro, "Foucault and the Architecture of Surveillance: Creating Regimes of Power in Schools, Shrines, and Society," Educational Studies 44, no. 1 (July 25, 2008): 30–46, https://doi.org/10.1080/00131940802225036.

22/Awan, Schneider, and Till, Spatial Agency: Other Ways of Doing Architecture (p.38).

23/Lefebvre, The Production of Space.

life itself.[19] Biopolitics is a term that combines "bio" (life) and "politics" (the exercise of power in society) and is central to Foucault's later work, particularly in his lectures from the late 1970s. His concept of governmentality is closely related to his theory of biopolitics. He argued that modern governments employed various techniques and rationalities to manage populations, not only through coercive means but also through disseminating knowledge and shaping individual and collective behaviours.[20] Architects and scholars have drawn from his concepts to analyse how architectural design and spatial organisation influence behaviour, control, and surveillance within built environments. While Foucault did not write extensively on architecture, his ideas on power, knowledge, space, and the body have resonated with architects, urban planners, and theorists. They have provided a framework for critically analysing how architectural design and spatial organisation intersect with broader societal and cultural dynamics.[21]

Stating that architecture is intertwined with politics is an obvious fact. However, asserting that architects often avoid political engagement is a broad observation. Architecture is inherently political because it plays a role in creating spaces, and these spaces profoundly influence social relationships.[22]

To conclude, space will always be the mirror of the political actions of the society. Lefebvre proposed that space constitutes the definitive arena and conduit for conflicts, thus rendering it an integral political concern. He says, "There is a politics of space because space is political."[23] Political in its original essence of shaping the experiences of individuals in society and not in the context of traditional party politics. Therefore, architects must acknowledge and stand by the political consequences of how they treat and shape space.

Iconic graffiti in Shoreditch, East London.

Graffiti is a visual manifestation of political communication within the urban landscape. It often serves as a form of expression for marginalized voices, challenging dominant narratives and asserting presence within public space. In this way, graffiti embodies the inherent political nature of space, as it reflects and responds to the socio-political realities of its context.

source of photograph: own

Shoreditch, 18 Sept. 2022

(foot)notes/

24/Foucault, M., Arnold I. Davidson, and Graham Burchell. The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979. Springer, 2008.

25/ Qiujie Shi and Danny Dorling, "Growing Socio-spatial Inequality in Neo-liberal Times? Comparing Beijing and London," Applied Geography 115 (February 1, 2020): 102139, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apgeog.2019.102139.

26/ Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change, 1992.

1.2 The birth of neoliberal politics in London

Historiographical Timeline

Neoliberalism represents a shift from a disciplinary society of control and confinement to a society of governmentality. In a neoliberal political context, the emphasis lies on the governance of individuals through economic rationality, market mechanisms, and the promotion of self-interest. According to Foucault, neoliberalism seeks to create an entrepreneurial subject that constantly seeks self-improvement, self-regulation, and maximising individual freedom within the economic sphere. Neoliberalism is not a retreat of the state, as the state should continue to play a crucial role in establishing and maintaining the conditions for market functioning.[24] The following research intends to assess neoliberalism partially and principally to contribute to a broader understanding of the socio-political implications of neoliberal practices and examine how power operates and transforms within neoliberal rationality.

London's policies of the postwar period, and more actively at the beginning of the 1960s, initiated the creation of a global economic empire for attracting workforce, companies, and capital from around the world. Neoliberal tactics -opposed by Thatcher's government in 1979- expeditiously changed London's socioeconomic landscape. The main impactful proposals were privatising state-owned industries and council houses and deregulating financial markets, which initiated a rapid capital flow for the government. These political turns intended to reduce the state's role in the economy and promote free-market principles instead, as well as the outsell of public property, giving more responsibility to companies and individuals while boosting the government's accounts.[25]

Neoliberalism's role is to transform the state's role while it seeks to limit the state's intervention in economic affairs, promote market forces, and reduce public services.[26] Indeed, in London's post-war example, neoliberalism favoured financial consolidation and 'rationalisation' represented by mergers, takeovers, and outsourcing. On the other hand, the conjuncture of the new political context and deindustrialisation generated an aggressive need for technological evolvement, which caused disintegration. The new measures hit the human workforce as the rationalisation and automatisation disassociated the industries

[Figures] (archived material): 2 &3/

British Gas Privatisation in the stock market

The privatisation of British Gas occurred in 1986 under the government of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Here it shows the Stock Exchange traders gathering to trade for the British Gas shares.

City of London dealers in 1987

The image of city dealers in 1987 captures a moment in time when the City of London was at the forefront of global finance, driven by the opportunities and challenges of financial deregulation.

(foot)**notes**/

27/Cupers, Kenny, Catharina Gabrielsson, and Helena Mattsson. Neoliberalism on the Ground: Architecture and Transformation from the 1960s to the Present. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020.

28/Alex Fenton et al., "Public Housing, Commodification, and Rights to the City: The US and England Compared," Cities 35 (December 1, 2013): 373–78, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2012.10.004.

29/Cupers, Kenny, Catharina Gabrielsson, and Helena Mattsson. Neoliberalism on the Ground: Architecture and Transformation from the 1960s to the Present, 2020.

30/Kathy Arthurson, Social Mix and the City: Challenging the Mixed Communities Consensus in Housing and Urban Planning Policies, 2012, http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BB10847201.

31/Sarah Glynn, Where the Other Half Lives: Lower Income Housing in a Neoliberal World, 2009.

from the human factor, affecting the working class of London without compensation.[27]

Privatising public industries and housing in London significantly impacted London's socioeconomic landscape. The sale of state-owned assets and industries to private companies led to changes in how these industries operated, resulting in changes in workers' employment terms and conditions.[28]
The impact of these policies on London's socioeconomic landscape was substantial, as they led to changes in the way many industries operated, as well as an increase in inequality and a shift in the balance of power between workers and employers. [29]
The privatisation of the housing sector changed how housing was provided and managed. Even though the decision to sell-out public housing (1979) momentarily gave the power of owning land to the citizens, in the long term, it exposed them to the coming fluctuations in the housing market. Cosigning the housing sector to the free market led to being hard to regulate, seeing the turnovers in the 21st century as London's housing market is driving to be a monopoly for the elite.[30]

Similarly, the deregulation of the industries reformed the companies' policies based on the new standards as they

unleashed new niches and spiked market competition. The previous regulation by the government kept the market stabilised. However, the free market created a sudden fluctuating economic landscape by seeking efficiency at any cost, giving the appropriate space for unethical working environments. Hence, the companies that could not compete would leave hundreds of unemployed workers out of business.[31] Consequently, the working class significantly lost vital labour positions, resulting in civil unrest.

[Figure] (archived material): 4/

 Hackney Town Hall, East London, 1988:
17782 People in Hackney Are Out of Work. One in every five

In 1988, Hackney, a borough in East London, faced significant challenges related to unemployment, as evidenced by the figure you provided: "17782 people in Hackney are out of work, one in every five."

The figure mentioned, indicating that one in every five people in Hackney was out of work, underscores the severity of the situation and the urgency of addressing it. It reflects not only economic hardship but also the broader social implications of unemployment, including poverty, inequality, and social exclusion.
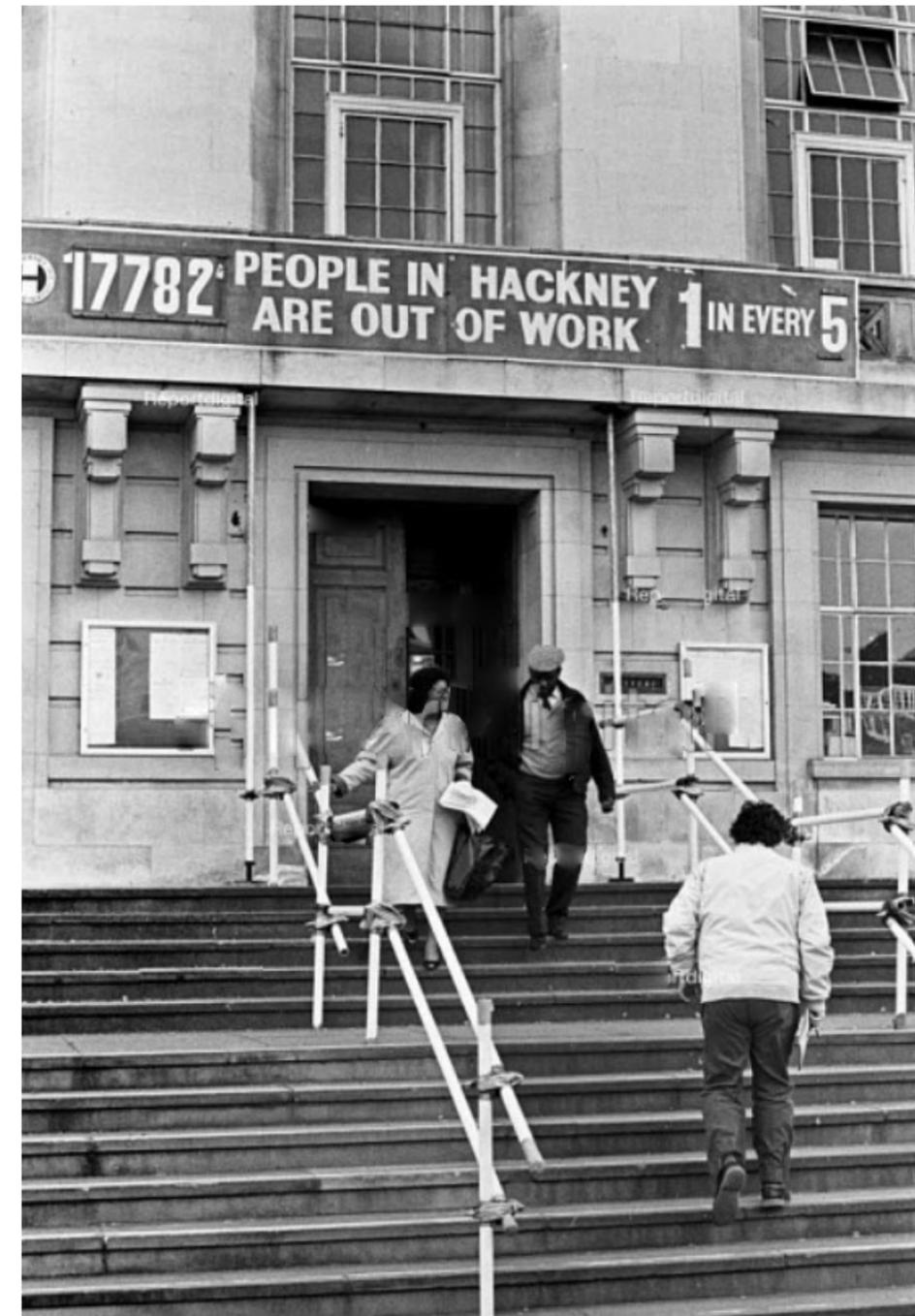
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32/Saskia Sassen, The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo (Princeton University Press, 2001).

33/University College London. Centre for Urban Studies and Ruth Glass, London; Aspects of Change, Edited by the Centre for Urban Studies: > Ruth Glass And Others, 1964.

34/Sarah Glynn, "Playing the Ethnic Card: Politics and Segregation in London's East End," Urban Studies 47, no. 5 (February 19, 2010): 991–1013, https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098009353630.

35/Bisshop, Peter, and Lesley Williams. Design for London: Experiments in Urban Thinking. London: UCL Press, 2020.

Sociopolitical Phenomena of Neoliberalism

London's new identity might hand over the official title of a "global city", making it a primary global node. Globalisation opens doors to new markets at the expense of normalising the commodification of the public and marginalising the unprivileged part of the community. Even though the global breakthrough had an international socio-economical scale, the spatial prospects of London's urban fabric were yet localised, talking of concentrated power and concurrency in specific London neighbourhoods. This process has contributed to the social and spatial segregation of the town, with some regions becoming more affluent and exclusive, where the service economy boomed. In contrast, others have become more deprived and marginalised.[32]

The political revolution led to urban rearrangement. The rise of the service economy and the growth of a "new middle class" have led to increased gentrification, exacerbating socio-spatial inequalities in London, inspiring Ruth Glass to be the first to coin the term "gentrification" in 1964.[33] When West and Central London shifted dramatically to a service-based economy, with a growing emphasis on finance, tourism, and creative industries, the

East End experienced high unemployment, poverty, and social imbalance. With the upcoming deindustrialisation, industrial heritage architecture was left derelict.[34]
Many working classes were unemployed, leading to the decline of traditional working-class culture, and many factories and workshops closed. The East, the industrial facilitator for London during industrialisation and home to the working class, was left undefined socially and structurally. It resembles a real estate treasure hunt nowadays; central London's need to expand is crucial. The Western side is saturated, meaning moving towards the East is the next closest strategic move.[35]

Even though the East has many yet uncovered potentials because of its contemporary history, making space for regeneration projects, at the same time, it has fostered many generations of minority immigrants, and mass redevelopment and gentrification can lead to the displacement of working-class communities as property values increase and living costs rise. While gentrification can bring economic growth and development to an area, it can also lead to social inequality and displacement of long-time residents.

[Figure] (archived material): 5/
The architectural impact:
Derelict industrial buildings, Dalston, East London, 1989

Dumped car, warehouses and workshops in Ashwin street, in 1989
The image of derelict industrial buildings in Dalston, London, along with a dumped car, warehouses, and workshops on Ashwin Street in 1989. The presence of derelict industrial buildings speaks to the decline of traditional industries in the area, leaving behind vacant structures and unused spaces. These abandoned buildings often became eyesores and magnets for illegal dumping, vandalism, and other forms of urban blight.
It highlights the ongoing challenges of urban regeneration and the importance of balancing economic development with social equity and community well-being..

Picture is retrieved from the digital archive "Report Digital": reportdigital.co.uk, "Welcome to Report Digital | Picture Library," Report Digital, n.d., https://www.reportdigital.co.uk/home.

(foot)notes/

36/Shi and Dorling, "Growing Socio-Spatial Inequality in Neo-Liberal Times? Comparing Beijing and London."

37/Sarah Glynn, "Playing the Ethnic Card: Politics and Segregation in London's East End.

38/Matthew Carmona and Filipa Matos Wunderlich, Capital Spaces: The Multiple Complex Public Spaces of a Global City (Routledge, 2013).

39/Matthew Carmona and Filipa Matos Wunderlich, Capital Spaces: The Multiple Complex Public Spaces of a Global City.

The spatial aftermath of Neoliberalism

Today, many inner-city areas in London undergo gentrification, shifting the sociopolitical and spatial dynamics. This shift has had significant sociospatial implications, with the growth of central business districts and the concentration of economic activity in some city regions.[36] An influx of wealthier residents and ex-pats displaces poorer and often minority communities, pushing them outside London or making sharp bordering zones. For example, The City's business district is gradually annexing Shoreditch and Spitalfields, creating the City-East. At the same time, Shoreditch and Bricklane, home to a Bangladeshi community that settled in 1976, is divided in half between a leisure alternative hub and Bangatown.[37]

The free market allowed business experimentation, but not all areas would benefit equally. Private companies would be interested in prioritising the management and maintenance of the 'public' if a motive lacked accountability, transparency, and a bias towards maximising profits rather than serving the community's needs. Urban spaces became exclusionary as they primarily served the interests of private developers and businesses in the form of developments of commercial spaces such as shopping malls, business parks, as well as gated residential communities. The movement sparked in the 80s and 90s, with Canary Wharf in the docklands of the Isle of Dogs and Broadgate in the City being the first examples, but even new public space nowadays is driven by private interest. Since then, commercial developments have used the formula of commodification on Spitalfields, More London, Paddington and King's Cross.[38]
Public functions like suburban, residential streets or parks should have been neglected, and underfunded, forming in-between spaces.
On the other hand, private investors commodified commercial boulevards and squares, leading to privatised public spaces. Privately owned public spaces, also known by the acronym POPS, eventually marginalise certain groups of people, such as low-income residents, setting boundaries and leading not only to socially but spatially segregated urban fabric lacking in inclusivity and equity. [39]

Consequently, London's spatial configuration saw oblique shifts at the end of the 20th century and the first years of the 21st. The politics of neoliberalism favoured the free market but increased income inequality since assets accrued primarily to private owners rather than being distributed more widely among the public. The unleashing of the free market created a massive cleavage between the working class and the beneficial individuals, initiating social polarisation stratification and marginalisation of less socially affluent groups, leading to spatial segregation and inevitable gentrification processes, drawing spatial borders. At the same time, public space has either become privately owned and exclusionary or neglected.

"**It would Feel like Venice and Work Like New York**"
Advertisement Canary Wharf in 1986

The phrase "It would feel like Venice and work like New York" encapsulates the ambitious vision behind the development of Canary Wharf in 1986. At the time, Canary Wharf was undergoing significant transformation, with new construction underway in the Docklands area of East London.

The juxtaposition of these two iconic cities in the advertisement reflects the multifaceted aspirations behind the Canary Wharf development: to combine the allure of historic and cultural richness with the dynamism and economic prowess of a modern metropolis.

"**Canary Wharf Jam For The Developers, Traffic Jams For Us.**"
Advertisement questioning the value of the development of the docklands area in East London.

The slogan "Canary Wharf jam for the developers, traffic jams for us" reflects the concerns and frustrations of local residents in the Isle of Dogs regarding the development of Canary Wharf and the broader Docklands area in East London.

For residents of the Isle of Dogs and surrounding areas, the consequences of rapid urbanisation included issues such as overcrowded public transportation, increased pollution, and changes to the character of their neighborhoods.
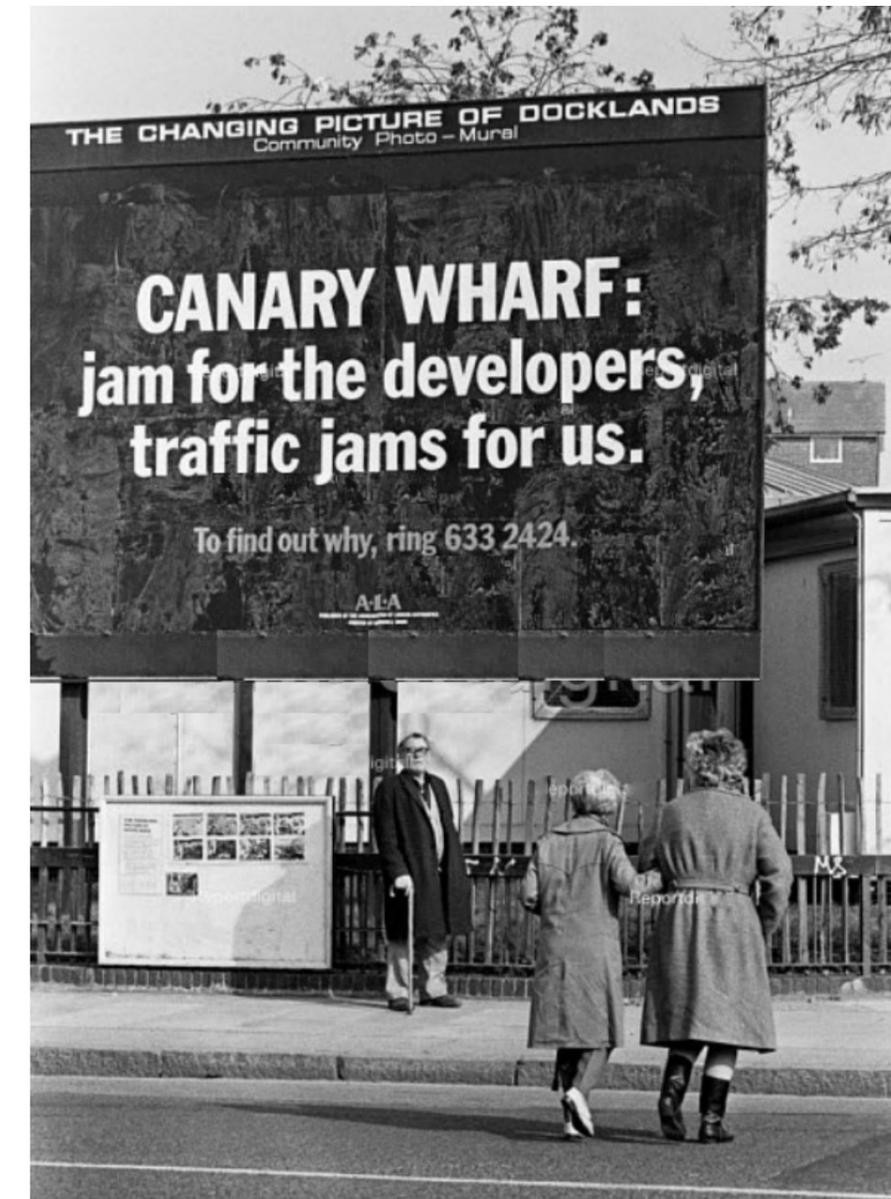
In essence, the slogans in figure 6&7 captures the tension between the aspirations of developers and the lived experiences of residents,. These contrasting perspectives underscore the complexity of urban development processes and the need to balance economic growth with social and environmental considerations.

Both pictures are retrieved from the digital archive "Report Digital": reportdigital.co.uk, "Welcome to Report Digital | Picture Library," Report Digital, n.d., https://www. reportdigital.co.uk/home.

(foot)notes/

*/ *East End;* The East End of London has historically been defined by various boundaries, both physical and social. Geographically, it is often considered to be the area to the east of the City of London, extending from the eastern boundary of the City to the River Lea or beyond. However, the boundaries of the East End are not strictly defined and can vary depending on historical, cultural, and socioeconomic factors.
Socially and culturally, the East End has been characterized by its working-class population, immigrant communities, and industrial landscapes. Boundaries within the East End have been shaped by factors such as ethnicity, class, and occupation.

40/Bisshop, Peter, and Lesley Williams. Design for London: Experiments in Urban Thinking. London.

41/Jane Martinson, "Canary Wharf: Life in the Shadow of the Towers," The Guardian, July 9, 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/apr/08/canary-wharf-life-in-the-shadow-of-the-towers.

1.3 Cartography of neoliberal after-effects and (ownership-of) space

Identifying the footprints of Neoliberal Phenomena on the Urban Relief

Zooming in on the East End*, the research on gentrification processes between the 1990s and today aims to map the spatial points of interest and investigate the sociospatial aftermath for the community and urban fabric. Here, the primary research is based on on-site research and photographic research, archival information from Tower Hamlets and Hackey archives, research in old newspapers and blogs, people's testimonies, and literature.

The attempt to spatially visualise the waves of gentrification shows that every area has a unique way of handling the phenomenon. The aftermath varies based on the intentions, time and stakeholders, as there are positive, negative and controversial paradigms.

The bottom-up urban regeneration strategies in Hoxton's 1990s and Dalston's 2010s were positively accepted. Both processes focused on reviving the area's identity and creatively embracing its existing character, working on the

incremental design and place-making, achieving a collective uprising of the deprivation levels and minimising displacement.[40]

On the other hand, the influx of new businesses and residents to Canary Wharf transformed it into a thriving business district, but this growth often occurred at the expense of the surrounding neighborhoods. The physical and symbolic separation between Canary Wharf and the rest of Tower Hamlets created a sense of division, with the business district appearing as a self-contained enclave that catered primarily to its own interests. The juxtaposition of Poplar and Bow with the towering skyscrapers of Canary Wharf highlights the stark socio-economic disparities that exist within East London. While Canary Wharf has become synonymous with wealth and prosperity, neighborhoods like Poplar and Bow continue to grapple with high levels of deprivation and inequality. [41]

Hackney Wick and Stratford's regeneration has also been controversial. In that case, the government used the Olympic Games 2012 as a gentrification motive. The area has undergone significant transformation recently, with new housing, businesses, and cultural institutions attracting investment and development. Even though the government integrated the local community

42/Phil Cohen, On the Wrong Side of the Track?: East London and the Post Olympics, 2013, http://muse.jhu.edu/chapter/1307527.
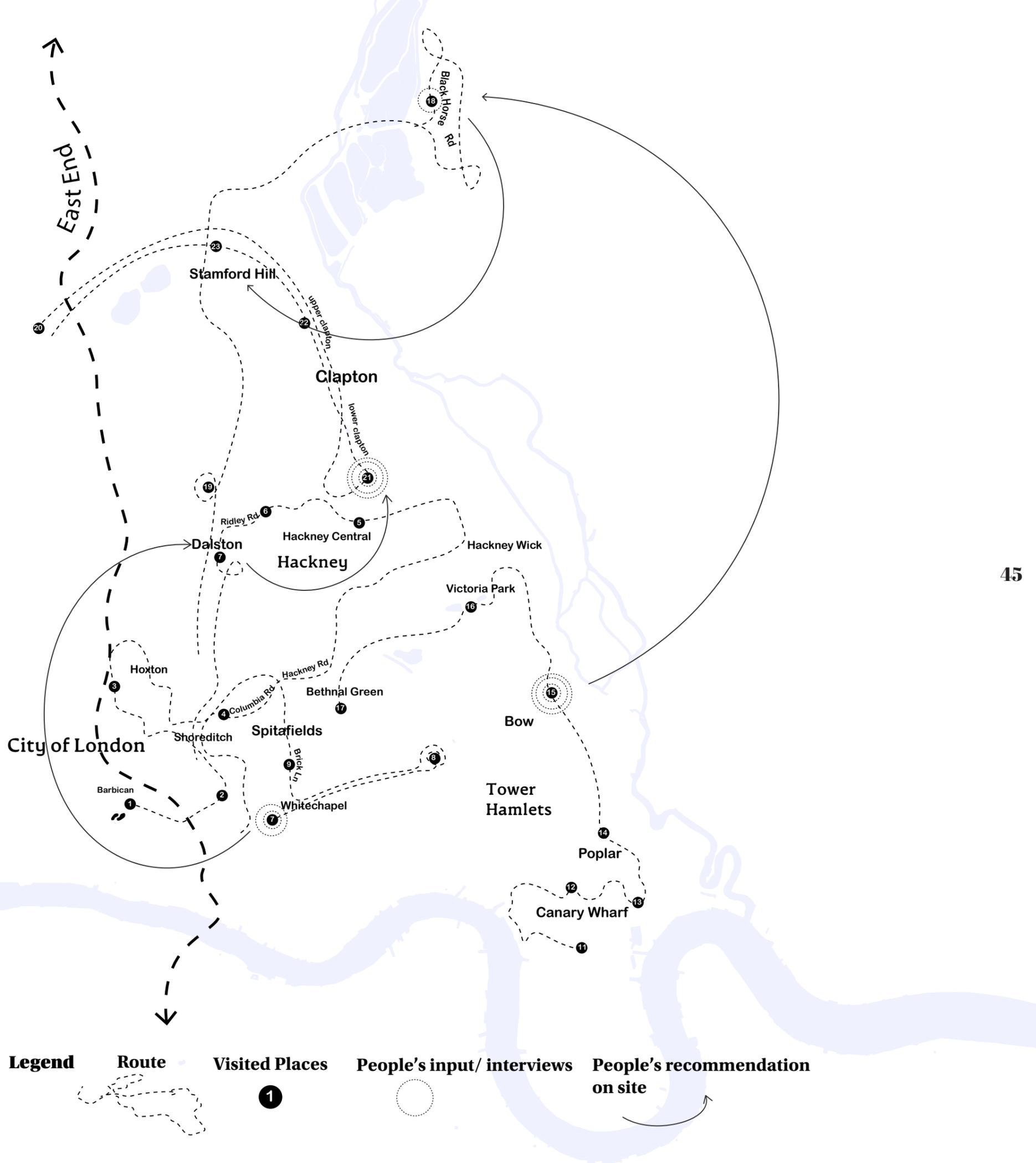
and creative class of Hackney Wick, many criticised the intentional cultural politics of staging the event.[42]

Mapping these footprints of footprints on the urban relief provides valuable insights into the complex dynamics of gentrification and its consequences for different neighborhoods in the East End.

Urban Asymmetries

[Map]: 1.1/

**Cartography of experiencing
the gradience of social change
through the lens of photo series.**

**By documenting an on-site journey
of walking without prearrangement
I tried to experience the urban
character , energy and cultural
richness. I took documentation
of photographs, talked to people
and traveled to places of their
recommentation.**

East End

West End

Black Horse Rd

18

Stamford Hill

23

20

upper clapton

22

Clapton

lower clapton

21

19

Ridley Rd 6

5

Hackney Central

Dalston

7

Hackney

Hackney Wick

Victoria Park

16

Hoxton

3

Hackney Rd

Bethnal Green

Columbia Rd

4

17

Bow

15

Shoreditch

Spitafields

Brick Ln

8

City of London

9

Tower
Hamlets

Barbican

1

2

Whitechapel

7

14

Poplar

12

13

Canary Wharf

11

Legend   **Route**   **Visited Places**   **People's input/ interviews**   **People's recommendation
on site**

1

[Diagram]: 1/

Cartography of experiencing
the gradience of social change
through the lens of photo series.

A photo series used as
documentation method of the places
I visited.
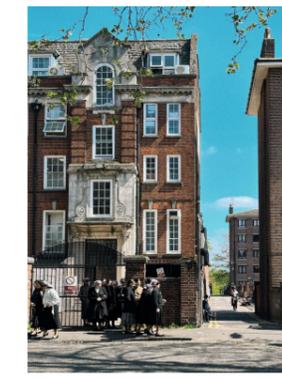
[Map]: 1.2/

Cartography of experiencing the gradience of social change through the lens of photo series.

The diagrammatical map provides a visual representation of my personal experience traversing from West to East through different neighborhoods in London. Here I sorted the photographs on the map aligned with the locations I visited. The goal was to document and overlay the spatial and social dynamics I observed during the journey.

The strong barrier walking from City East to Spitalfields, Canary Wharf to Poplar, and Hackney to Clapton, reflects the socio-economic divides and contrasts between different areas of the city. This bordering phenomenon highlights the stark disparities in wealth, infrastructure, and community resources that exist within urban environments.

From the bustling financial district of Canary Wharf to the more historically diverse neighborhoods of Poplar and Hackney, the map captures the diverse socio-economic landscapes of East London. The transition from West to East becomes not just a physical journey but also a socio-cultural exploration.

By documenting social bordering through the site visit and visual mapping, I contributed to a deeper understanding of the lived experiences and spatial inequalities present in urban settings. The personal perspective adds richness and nuance to our understanding of how cities are shaped by socio-economic factors and how these factors influence the lived experiences of residents and visitors alike.

48

49

North

South

West

East

Black Horse Rd

Dalston

Clapton

upper clapton

Snoreditch

Ridley

Hackney Central

Hackney Wick

East End

Brick

the City

the City – East

Columb

Bethnal Green

Victor

Bow

Barb

London Bridge

Whitechapel

Poplar

Canary Wharf

Millwall (southern side of Canary Warf), 19 Nov. 2022

Housing situation in Poplar.
Poplar has grappled with issues
such as homelessness, evictions,
and housing insecurity, particularly
among marginalized communities.

source of photographs: own

Poplar(Robinhoods gardens),19 Nov. 2022

Poplar(Robinhoods gardens),19 Nov. 2022

Urban Asymmetries

A view from Liverpool street

Liverpool Street is a major transportation hub and commercial district, home to corporate offices, financial institutions, and upscale shops. The area around Liverpool Street Station is bustling with commuters, tourists, and professionals

A view from Brick Lane

In contrast, Brick Lane, a street as well in Spitafields, is renowned for its diverse cultural scene, characterized by its historic significance as a center for immigration, particularly from South Asia.

source of photographs: own

Spitafields (Bricklane), 17 Nov.2022

Spitafields(Liverpool str.),17 Nov.2022

[Photograph]: 9/

A view from south Brick Lane
Brick Lane has a strong sense of community
and identity, with residents and businesses
contributing to its unique atmosphere showing
to the spatial configuration as ethnic objects and
landmarks.

Spitafields (Bricklane, Banglatown), 17 Nov. 2022

urban Asymmetries

[Diagram]: 2/
Gentrification Explained:
Visual representation of gentrification

1/ Epitome of influence

2/ Expansion to surroundings

3/ Transmission to neighbour areas

58

4/ Creation of borders or segregation/ minorities

West End

Blackhorse

Tottenham

7 Sisters

Woodberry Down

Stamford Hill

upper clapton

Clapton

lower clapton

Dalston

Homerton

Hackney Wick

Hackney Central

Benthal Green

Hoxton

Shoreditch

Spitafields

the City

Algate

Whitechapel

Canary Wharf

[Map]: 2/

Mapping of the gentrification processes and borders in the East End

By mapping these gentrification processes it provides a comprehensive overview of the spatial and temporal dimensions of urban change in the East End.
This is a product of on site reseach, archive visits, photographic research, interviews with locals, book reading and on-line research in blogs, social media and papers.

Gentrification projects in the East End between 1980-today.

Blackhorse
New family oriented, upcoming creative area with new apartment constructions.

Woodberry Down
Demolition of previous counsil houses to build " Skyline Apartments" while it is segregating a minority of Jewish community.

Hackney
After the 2000 Hackney has been in a big scale gentrified, attracking young professionals.

Hackney Wick
The government purposely placed the Olymbic Village in Hackney Wick and Old Ford achieving the area's gentrification.

Dalston
Dalston was one of the "100 public spaces" goal that the government setted for gentrification. With incrimental tactics Dalston seem to be gentrified without loosing its character.

Shoreditch
Hoxton and Shoreditch, close enough to the City functioned as an annex to its economical and commercial purposes. It accomodated mostly new tech companies and start-ups.

Canary Wharf
From the Docklands to the exclusive Canary Warf.
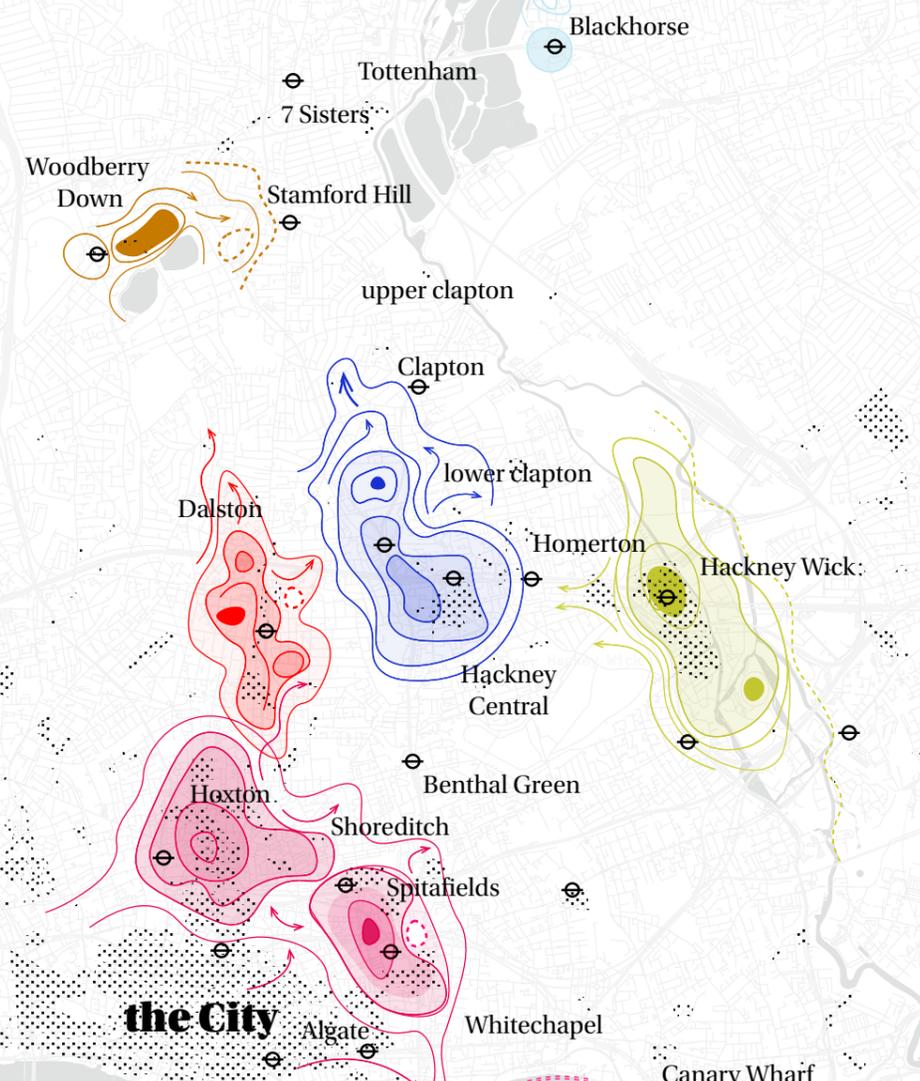
Legend

Commercial Hotspots

Stations

(foot)notes/

43/Ying Zhou, Urban Loopholes: Creative Alliances of Spatial Production in Shanghai's City Center (Birkhäuser, 2017).

44/Henk Van Houtum, "The Geopolitics of Borders and Boundaries," Geopolitics 10, no. 4 (December 1, 2005): 672–79, https://doi.org/10.1080/14650040500318522.

45/Ying Zhou, Urban Loopholes: Creative Alliances of Spatial Production in Shanghai's City.

46/ Benjamin N. Vis, Cities Made of Boundaries: Mapping Social Life in Urban Form (UCL Press, 2018).

47/Henk Van Houtum, "The Geopolitics of Borders and Boundaries"

48/Center Mounir Ayoub et al., Orae: Experiences on the Border: The Guide, 2021.

60

By researching and observing the organic revolution of the neighbourhoods, the expansion of gentrification and the displacement of communities revealed a pattern of interrelating sociospatial arrangements and political geographies in the form of urban loopholes[43] and borders [44].

An urban loophole is an urban "gap", a missing link, yet it creates an opportunity for regeneration and expansion, shaping ideal hubs for anchoring gentrification prospects. The East End, the industrial facilitator for London during industrialisation and home to the working class, was left undefined socially and structurally, creating urban loopholes.[45]

In that sense, borders are not primarily focused on the physical line but on the social and cultural meanings attached to borders. This reflects a critical approach to studying borders that emphasises their role in shaping identity and social constructions. It explores the relationships between territory, sovereignty, and identity through the lens of borders. [47] Contemporary scholars recognise that geography is not just a neutral backdrop but is actively shaped by political events, human actions, ideologies, and power dynamics. This critical perspective acknowledges that

borders, territories, and spatial relationships are not fixed or natural but are subject to interpretation and negotiation.[48]

Overall, the critical approach on contemporary political geography takes towards the study of borders. It suggests that contemporary scholarship in this field emphasises the socially constructed nature of borders and their role in shaping identity and difference.

The following maps are a study of identifying in the urban realm urban loopholes and borders based on existing spatial components.

[Photograph]: 10/

A view from south Brick Lane
An ethnic envelope in the edge of the City.

source of photographs: own

Bricklane, Banglatown ,17 Nov. 2022

Exploration of social borders and urban loopholes in **Spitafields**

To analize more in depth borders and urban loopholes I zoom in in one of the gentrified areas, the area of Spitafields where it has been indetified to undergone getrification.

Woodberry Down

Tottenham

7 Sisters

Stamford Hill

upper clapton

Clapton

lower clapton

Dalston

Homerton

Hackney Wick

Hackney Central

Hoxton

Benthal Green

Shoreditch

Spitafields

the City   Algate   Whitechapel

Canary Wharf

Hac

West End

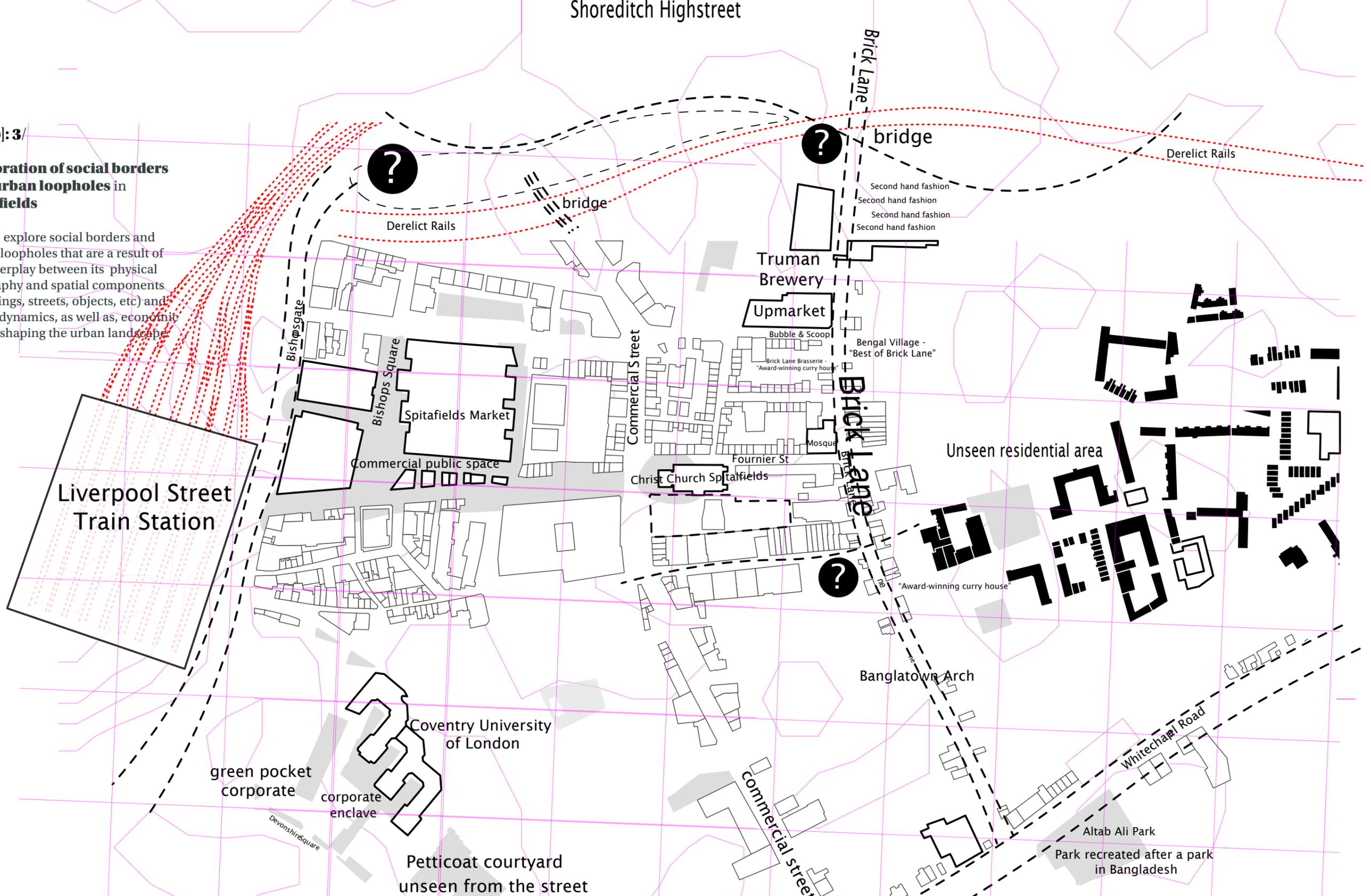Shoreditch Highstreet
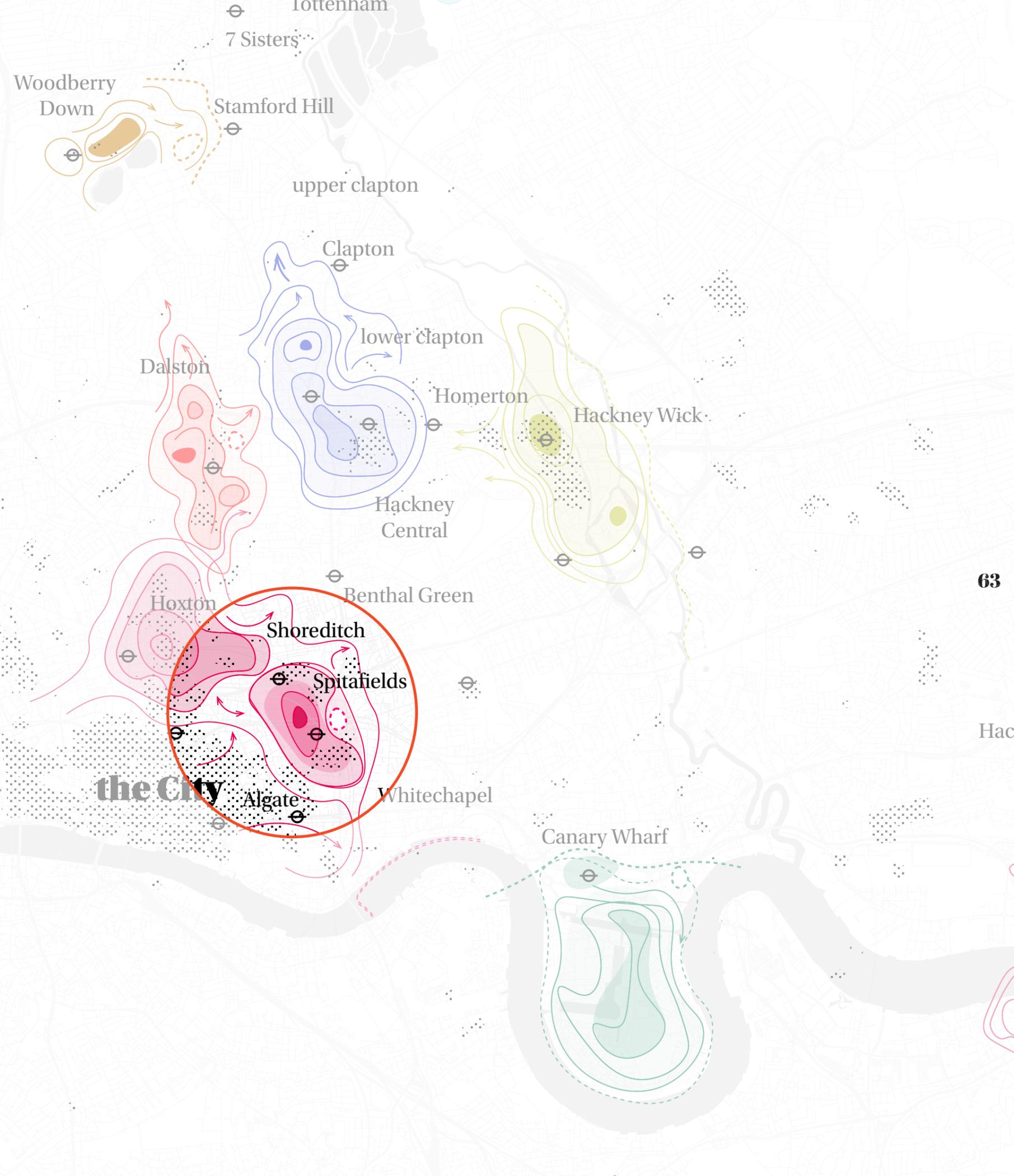
[Map]: 3/

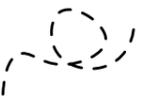**Exploration of social borders and urban loopholes** in **Spitafields**

Here I explore social borders and urban loopholes that are a result of the interplay between its physical geography and spatial components (buildings, streets, objects, etc) and social dynamics, as well as, economic forces shaping the urban landscape.

Brick Lane

?

bridge

Derelict Rails

Second hand fashion
Second hand fashion
Second hand fashion
Second hand fashion

Derelict Rails

bridge

?

Truman Brewery

Upmarket

Bubble & Scoop

Bengal Village - "Best of Brick Lane"

Brick Lane Brasserie - "Award-winning curry house"

Bishopsgate

Bishops Square

Spitafields Market

Commercial Street

Brick Lane

Unseen residential area

Commercial public space

Mosque

Fournier St

Christ Church Spitalfields

?

Brick Lane

"Award-winning curry house"

Banglatown Arch

Coventry University of London

green pocket corporate

corporate enclave

Devonshire Square

Commercial street

Whitechapel Road

Petticoat courtyard
unseen from the street

Altab Ali Park

Park recreated after a park in Bangladesh

Liverpool Street Train Station

Legend of spatial components

geographical relief

public space

noticable buildings

commercial buildings

unseen/ residential

trails/ spatial boundary

Legend of resulting components

spatial and social border

urban loophole

?

gentrification

Brick Lane

[Map]: 3/

Exploration of social borders and urban loopholes in Spitafields

Drawing conclusions of relations between borders, urban loopholes and gentrification waves. Contextualising gentrification in coordination with the commodification of public space versus segregated areas.

bridge

Derelict Rails

bridge

Derelict Rails

Second hand fashion
Second hand fashion
Second hand fashion
Second hand fashion

Truman Brewery

Upmarket

Bubble & Scoop

Bengal Village - "Best of Brick Lane"

Brick Lane Brasserie - "Award-winning curry house"

Bishopsgate

Bishops Square

Commercial Street

Spitafields Market

Commercial public space

Mosque

Fournier St

Christ Church Spitafields

Liverpool Street Train Station

66

67

Unseen residential area

"Award-winning curry house"

Banglatown Arch

Bangladeshi minority

Coventry University of London

City East

green pocket corporate

corporate enclave

Devonshire Square

commercial street

Whitechapel Road

Whitechapel Road

Petticoat courtyard unseen from the street

Altab Ali Park

Park recreated after a park in Bangladesh

Shrinking

Aldgate East

Legend of spatial components

Spatial components

geographical relief

public space

noticable buildings

commercial buildings

unseen/ residential

trails/ spatial boundary

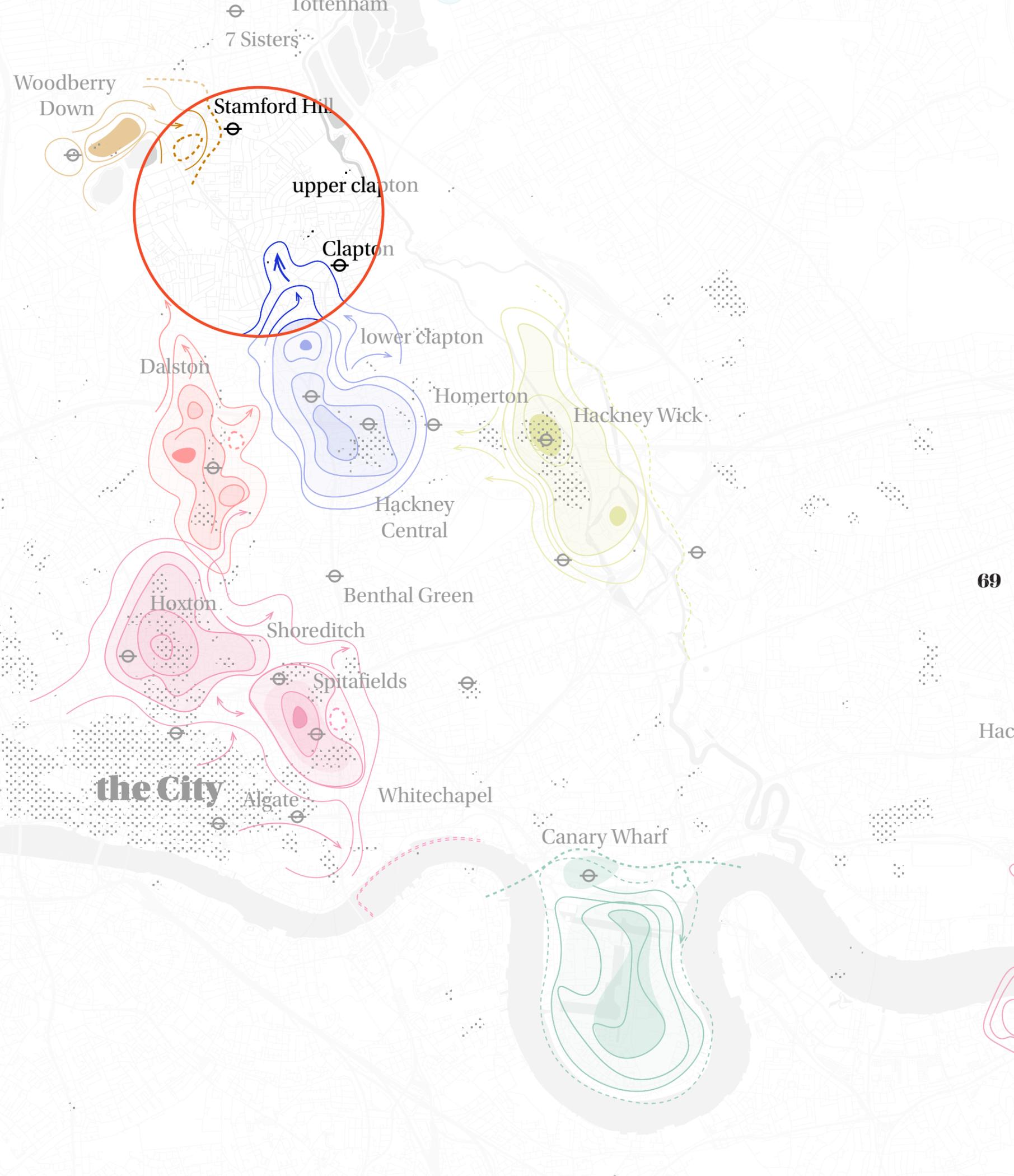**Legend of resulting components**

spatial and social border

urban loophole

Exploration of social borders and urban loopholes in **Clapton**

As a second example, to analize more in depth borders and urban loopholes I zoom in in one of the in-between gentrified areas, the area of Clapton where it has not been indetified to undergone getrification, it is squeezed between two different forms of gentrification waves: in Woodberry downs and Hackney.

Tottenham

7 Sisters

Woodberry Down

Stamford Hill

upper clapton

Clapton

lower clapton

Dalston

Homerton

Hackney Wick

Hackney Central

Hoxton

Benthal Green

Shoreditch

Spitafields

the City

Algate

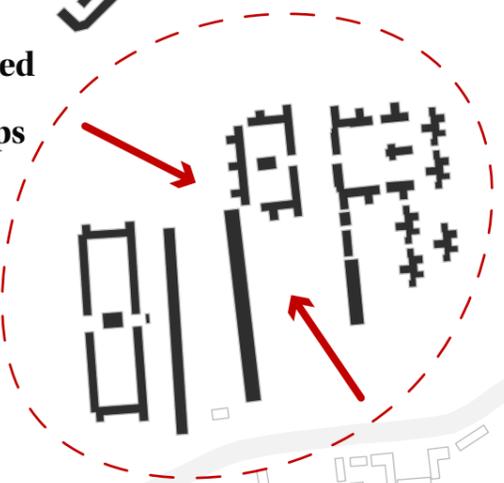Whitechapel

Canary Wharf

West End

Hac

[Map]: 4/

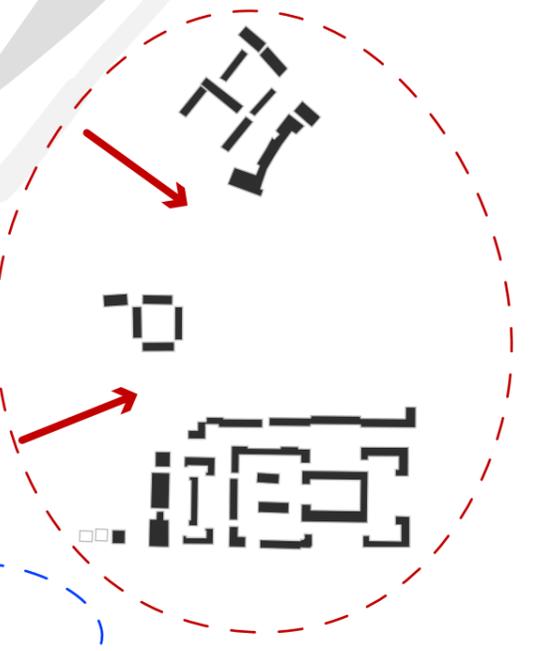**Exploration of social borders
and urban loopholes in
Clapton**

Here I explore the gentrification
waves and spatial components
(buildings, streets, objects, etc) in
relation with social dynamics, as well
as, economic forces shaping the urban
landscape.
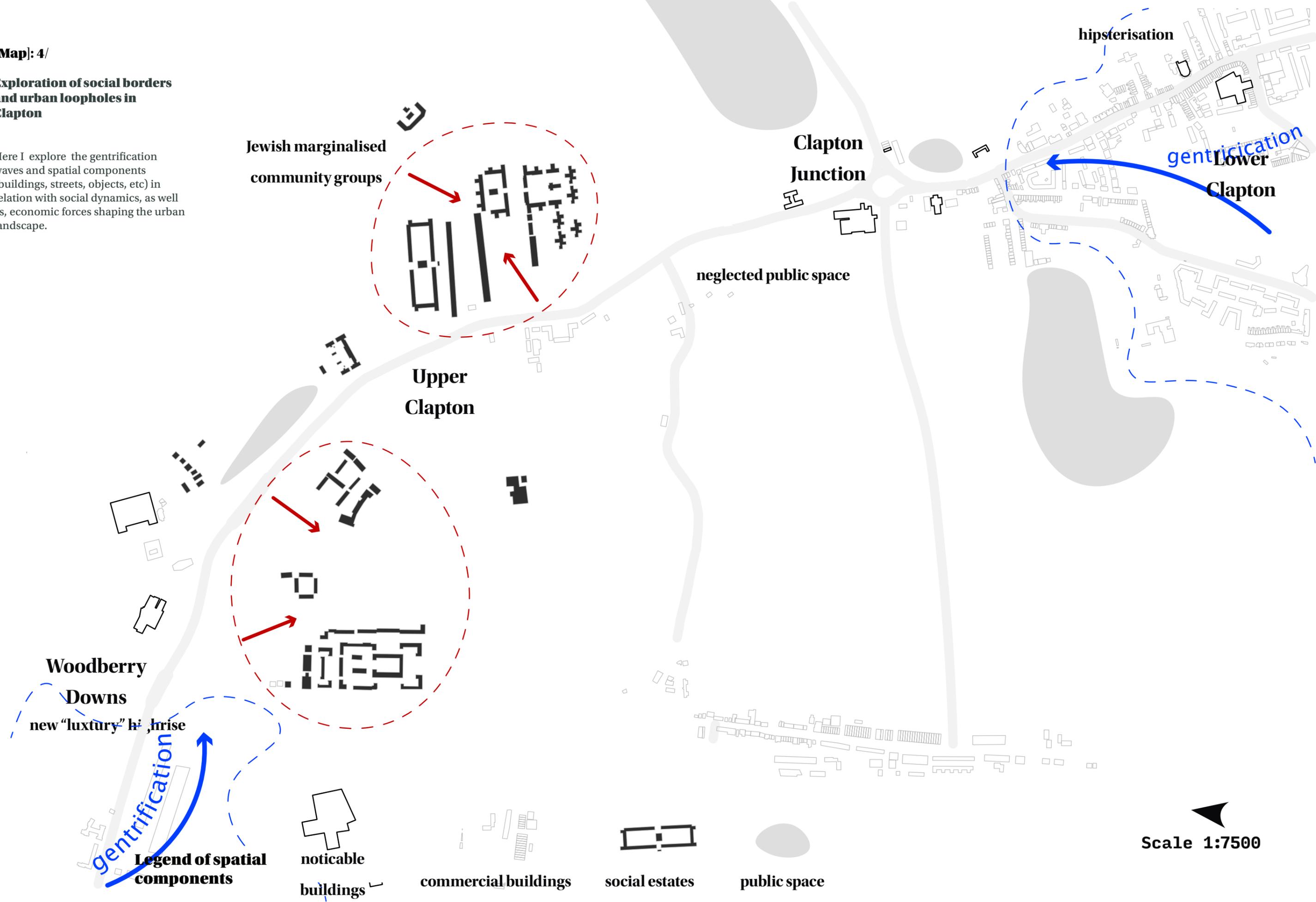
Jewish marginalised

community groups

**Clapton
Junction**

hipsterisation

**Lower
Clapton**

gentrification

neglected public space

**Upper
Clapton**

**Woodberry
Downs**

new "luxury" highrise

gentrification

gentrification

**Legend of spatial
components**

noticable
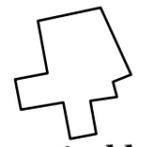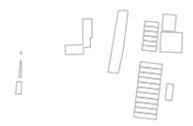
buildings

commercial buildings

social estates

public space

Scale 1:7500

Exploration of social borders and urban loopholes in **Clapton**

Drawing conclusions on borders and urban loopholes.

Jewish marginalised

community groups

neglected public space

disconnected neglected public

space

gentricication

neglected public space

72

gentrification

**Legend of spatial
components**

noticable

buildings

commercial buildings

social estates

public

space

urban

loopholes

borders
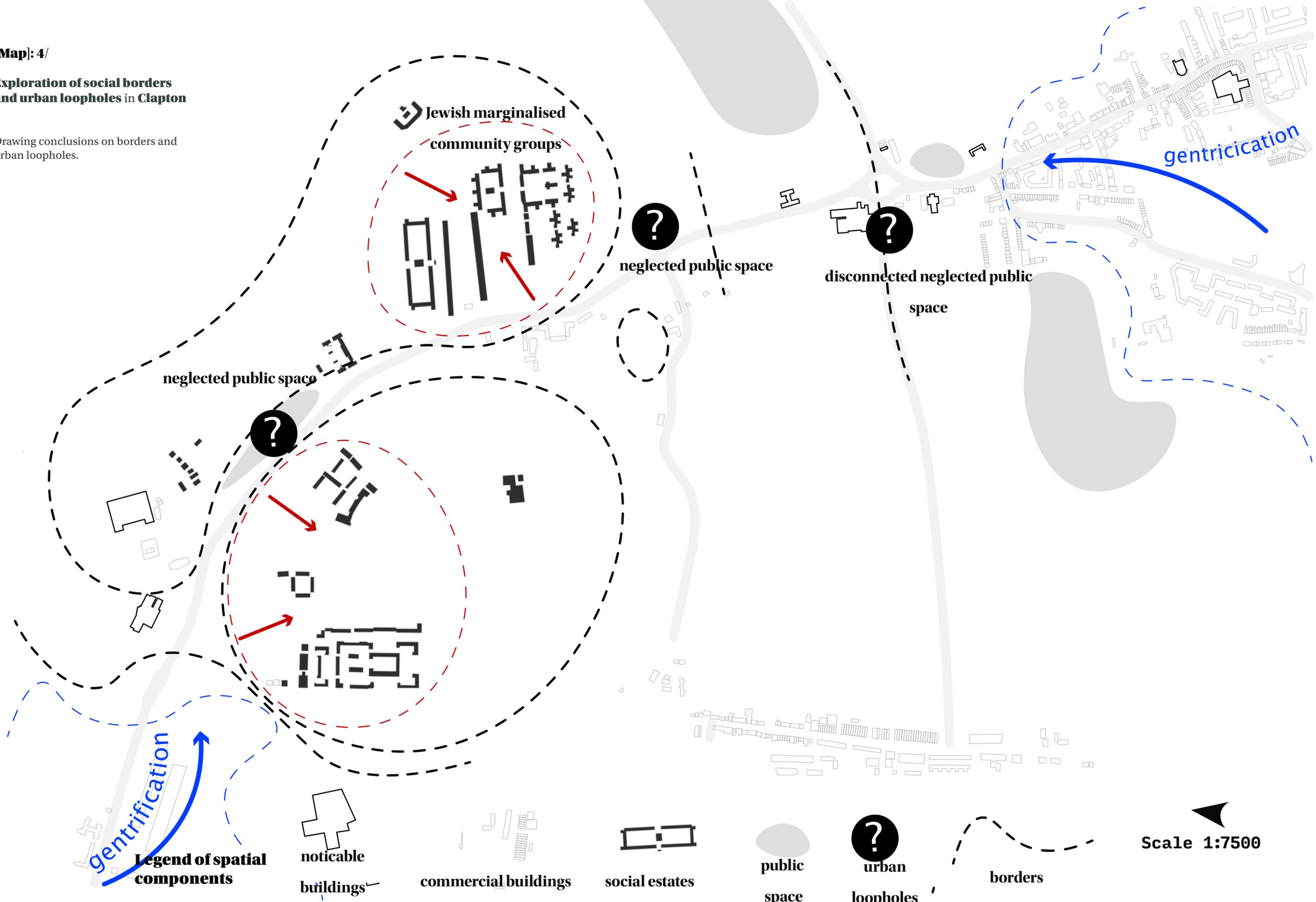
Scale 1:7500

Chapter 2

architect(ure) as an agent

spatial agencies for contextualising social engagement

source of photograph: own

2.1 In search for productive social engagement

Architect(ure) as the common nominator between social engagement and neoliberalism

From the previous chapter, shows that the root cause of urban asymmetries initially derives from more profound sociopolitical matters. In this case, social stratification, segregation and marginalisation, the deification of capital, unruled globalisation and gentrification are caused by the effects of neoliberal politics. Therefore, to counterbalance such matters in the urban realm, the focus should lie on long-term efficiency and social sustainability, which will eventually help influence society more broadly and steadily than focusing directly on solving one spatial situation at a time.

Chapter 2 is a crucial part of this research, as it delves into a comprehensive collection of social-spatial strategies, or spatial agencies. These strategies are key to understanding how social engagement can be effectively justified and contextualised in a spatial context. By drawing from a wide range of disciplines such as sociology, political

science, urban planning, and architecture, this chapter forms a robust collection of spatial agencies that shed light on the productive justification and contextualisation of social engagement in a spatial context.

It's important to note that the collection of spatial agencies in this research is not a static entity, but an ever-evolving, critically depicted collection. It is designed to operate at the intersection of architecture and social engagement, reflecting the dynamic nature of this research. This chapter is a personal endeavor to explore how architects, with their interdisciplinary approach, can draw valuable insights from broader fields and contribute to design. The argument is that such an approach can lead to more socially and spatially comprehensive and long-term goals than focusing solely on the design itself.

(Re)defining social engagement

Before delving into solutions, it's crucial to understand the type of social fragmentation London and many other global cities face. While London's cultural diversity is a strength, it can also contribute to social fragmentation.Different cultural groups may have their own social networks and activities, which can limit broader community interaction. This social distancing and

(foot)notes/

49/ Michael Keith, After the Cosmopolitan?: Multicultural Cities and the Future of Racism (Psychology Press, 2005).

50/ Klinenberg, Eric. Palaces for the People: How To Build a More Equal and United Society. Random House, 2018.

51/Rodenborg and Laura A. Boisen Pearson, Adam R., John F. Dovidio, and Samuel L. Gaertner. "The Nature of Contemporary Prejudice: Insights From Aversive Racism." Social and Personality Psychology Compass 3, no. 3 (May 1, 2009): 314–38. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9004.2009.00183.x.

52/Aversive Racism and Intergroup Contact Theories: Cultural Competence in a Segregated World Nancy A. Rodenborg and Laura A. Boisen

53/ Klinenberg, Palaces for the People: How To Build a More Equal and United Society.

54/Koutrolikou, Penny-Panagiota. "Spatialities of Ethnocultural Relations in Multicultural East London: Discourses of Interaction and Social Mix." Urban Studies 49, no. 10 (November 7, 2011): 2049–66. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098011422569.

*/The concept of "non-places," introduced by anthropologist Marc Augé, refers to transient spaces devoid of significant social or cultural meaning. These areas are characterized by their functionality and lack of identity, failing to foster connections or social interactions among users. Non-places are emphasizing efficiency over community and rootedness. Augé, Marc. Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity. Verso, 1995.

segregation within the city can lead to polarisation, a key aspect to address. [49]

Even though the social morphology is hyperdiverse, it is rich in embedded social inequalities. Nowadays, social engagement is very much overshadowed by social stratification. When, in the late 19th century, social stratification determined societal positions, separating the working class from the wealthy, over the centuries, and after many fights for the reclamation of human equity, the social boundaries started fading.[50] Today, social stratification veils more implicitly as aversive racism[51], elitism, and social supremacism that sets rigid societal barriers[52], which we meet in the contemporary urban realm.

Nowadays, neighbourhoods are more segregated by class in a more complicated way.[53] Aversive racism and nepotism are signs of social discrimination separating groups based on exclusionary social lifestyle activities.
Additionally, digital communication and social media have transformed how people connect. While these platforms offer new avenues for social engagement, they can also contribute to isolation when individuals actively participate in their immediate communities.

Any physical interaction between social groups is fleeting and unproductive as they

meet in nonplaces*, making it more difficult for them to form genuine connections. [53]

So, social fragmentation nowadays is multidimensional and rooted more in social than physical avoidance. To embrace social engagement through architecture, space should take a more social form*. Promoting social engagement and bridging requires building connections and relationships across lines of difference, in this case, social difference. This chapter searches to contectualise this valuable connection of social engagement and architecture.

[Photograph]: 11/
Engagement behind closed doors

This picture was taken while conversing with the manager of the community centre " Round Chapel" that accommodates itself in one of the wings of the 2nd Grade Listed chapel in Lower Clapton, Hackney. The building also accommodates a United Reformed Church, a nursery, and office space.

The community centre tries to involve all ages and social classes with its programs. It offers yoga classes, craft classes, cooking workshops, weekly community meals, dancing classes for kids and the elderly, theatre school, after-school occupational activities, customised seasonal events, and occasionally hosts music, fashion events and political meetings.
Concluding the conversation, the manager stated that there is plenty of demand, but the limited space and funding are always challenging.

Observing the situation as an outsider, I found the circulation of facilities brilliant. The nursery feeds the community centre activities and vice versa, the church involves itself with volunteering events or classes, the neighbourhood musicians book the space for events to take advantage of the church's acoustics, and the political parties in the area occasionally foster themselves for meetings. However, social engagement happens from within, as this picture showcases. The community centre is not prominent at the urban level and attracts a specific target group of people (of religion and social level). Lastly, it is overwhelming for such a small space to accommodate such a broad program.

source of photograph: own

Lower Clapton, 18 Nov. 2022

(foot)notes/

55/Jeremy Till, Architecture Depends (MIT Press, 2013).

56/ "Donna Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,'" in Routledge eBooks, 2016, 452–63, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315680675-68.

57/Donna Haraway, Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature (Routledge, 2013).

58/ Klinenberg, Palaces for the People: How To Build a More Equal and United Society.

*/The Division of Labor in Society by Émile Durkheim, originally published in 1893 and reissued by Simon and Schuster in 2014, explores how social order and solidarity are maintained in societies.

Emile Durkheim, The Division of Labor in Society (Simon and Schuster, 2014).

2.2 Situated Knowledge as an alternate source

Cities are shaped mainly through their political and social existence and economic and technological occurrences and less by architectural curation.[55]

Inspired by Donna Haraway and the concept introduced in her essay "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective",[56] architecture can enrich its practice by incorporating unbiased points of view.

More specifically, Situated knowledge is the idea that all knowledge is shaped and influenced by the specific social, cultural, political, historical, human sciences, and personal contexts from which it emerges. She advocates for recognising and embracing the situated nature of knowledge, highlighting that different positions and perspectives can offer unique insights and understandings of the world.[57]

This paragraph positions scholars who also focus on fields other than architecture with strong positions related to social engagement to broaden the horizon towards interdisciplinarity. Nevertheless, their approaches could be applicable at a spatial level. Three oblique positions are critically chosen for the sake of the research.

A common thread for interweaving social strata

Eric Klinenberg, American sociologist and a scholar of urban studies, culture, and media, writes a paragraph called "Common Ground" in his book "Palaces for People",[58] where he cites: "Social distance and segregation breed polarisation. Contact and conversation remind us of our common humanity, particularly [...] when they involve shared passions and interests. [...] We have lost the factories and industrial towns where different ethnic groups once formed blue-collar communities. We have made our neighbourhoods more segregated by class. [...] nowadays conditions facilitate social bonding within certain groups but make social bridging difficult." [58]

He highlights the detrimental effects of social distance and segregation on social cohesion and the importance of contact and conversation in promoting a sense of common humanity. When people from different backgrounds and communities come together to share their passions and interests, they can break down the barriers that divide them and find common ground. He points out, as Durheim did in his theory "division of labour"*, that traditional blue-collar communities in previous times

created a sense of engagement because it gave people time to collaborate and spend time so they could relate.

By prioritising the shared values and common ground that unite people, the barriers of division can be broken and more inclusive and equitable communities built.

[Photograph]: 12&13/
Two markets in the East End with different target group.

Spitalfields Market, on the left page, located in East London, is a mainstream market with a cultural touch. It attracts a diverse crowd of hipsters, tourists, food enthusiasts, art and craft artists and fashion seekers. The market is known for its vibrant and eclectic mix of offerings from street food to vintage shopping.

Ridley Road Market, on the right page, in the heart of Dalston, East London, is a vibrant and multicultural market that attracts a residents of Dalston and the surrounding areas come for their everyday shopping needs. The market is a hub for various immigrant communities, including those from Africa, the Caribbean, South Asia, and Eastern Europe where you find ingredients from these cultures.

Ridley Road, 19 Nov.2022

Spitafields (Bricklane), 17 Nov.2022

Despite both being vibrant and culturally rich markets in East London, the clientele of Spitalfields Market and Dalston Market do not typically socially mix, reflecting a form of social stratification that delineates distinct societal positions and separates social groups. This division underscores broader societal structures where economic status, cultural background, and lifestyle preferences create and maintain boundaries between different social groups, highlighting the persistent and visible stratification within urban settings.

source of photographs: own

Ridley Road, 19 Nov.2022

(foot)notes/

59/ Lefaivre, Liane, and Alexander Tzonis. Architecture of Regionalism in the Age of Globalization: Peaks and Valleys in the Flat World. New York, NY: Routledge, 2021.

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Rooted in the context by embracing unique resources and particular constraints

Liane Lefaivre, Architectural History and Theory researcher and Alexander Tzonis, architect, author, and researcher, elaborate on critical regionalism and how to avoid flattening our social landscape, quote: "The loss of diversity cannot be resolved by taking for granted boundaries between regions defined according to [...] sovereignty. Regions must be redefined regarding their unique resources and particular constraints."

Critical regionalism emphasises acknowledging and respecting local contexts and traditions in architecture and urban design.[59]

They point out that the spatial boundaries of regions flatten the social morphology. The research on London's fragmented space varifies this phenomenon with the gentrification boundaries and sociospatial borders. Their approach suggests that different regions have unique resources, constraints, and cultural identities, and it seeks to integrate these factors into the design process.
By redefining regions in this way, critical regionalism aims to avoid the homogenisation of the built environment when design practices are

imposed from outside without considering the local context. Instead, it encourages architects and designers to engage with a place's specific characteristics and develop solutions responsive to local needs and globally relevant solutions.

In this way, critical regionalism is not just a design philosophy but a way of thinking about the relationship between the built environment and the social and cultural contexts in which it exists. It emphasises balancing global trends and ideas with local knowledge and resources to create sustainable and meaningful places rooted in their context.

[Photograph]: 15/

Clapton Cinematograph lost in history

Clapton Cinematograph, once a prominent cinema in East London, has largely faded into obscurity, lost to the annals of history. Opened in the early 20th century, this cinema was a hub of community entertainment, offering locals a place to escape into the magic of the silver screen. Its story reflects a broader narrative of cultural and technological shifts, illustrating how once-vibrant social spaces can be forgotten as urban landscapes and leisure activities evolve.

source of photographs: own

(foot)notes/

60/Nancy H. Hensel, Exploring, Experiencing, and Envisioning Integration in US Arts Education (Springer, 2018).

The Arts as a initiator for communication

In the book titled "Exploring, Experiencing, and Envisioning Integration in US Arts Education," by academic Nancy H. Hensel, delves into the deliberate integration of students into civic engagement through the introduction of performing arts, literary, and visual arts programs in education. This combination uniquely equips students for career adaptability and engaging in citizenship rooted in creative, critical, and ethical thinking. Their proposition revolves around preparing a generation of "creators and empathisers, pattern recognisers, and meaning makers."[60] To achieve this, students and faculty must traverse disciplines, engaging with ideas, problems, and questions that transcend the boundaries of a single discourse. It involves borrowing techniques from one discipline and applying them to another, much like studying music to decode an academic text.

This technique echoes how architects cultivate their interdisciplinary nature, drawing inspiration from sources such as poetry, allegories, art, people, and various wellsprings of creativity.

The book gives many

examples of how performing arts, focusing more on music, theatre and visual art, prepares students for cultural adaptability in their careers and fosters engagement with larger communities. The ensemble does not isolate its members from diversity but creatively unites them in an ethnically diverse collective. It is vital for the ongoing transformation toward more interactive learning, collaboration, and teamwork. Thus, fostering creative arts is the cornerstone, enabling individuals to generate or recognise ideas, alternatives, and possibilities invaluable in problem-solving, communication, and entertainment for themselves and others.

To give a spatial dimension, research on immigrant artists suggests that visual art exhibit in the public space is a bridge for communication and integration between immigrant and local communities. Artists use artistic expression to share their culture, establish economic stability, and create educational opportunities. Public art projects, such as murals, have proven exceptionally effective in preserving public memory, allowing communities to capture their history for future generations.

Building on that argument, the research of Charles Landry, author and international city planning adviser, explores

[Photograph]: 16

Hackney Peace Mural

At first sight, the mural lightens the urban landscape- it gives warmth to the rainy day and offers a glimpse of joy to the people that pass by. It flows in colour and movement, and, if you look at it close enough, you can almost hear the sound of the trumpet from the parade.

The "Peace Mural" is a Dalston landmark with historical, cultural and political weight. In the 1980s, Hackney artist Ray Walker was commissioned to create the mural which aimed to symbolize unity amid the Cold War's ban-the-bomb protests echoing the sentiments of Hackney residents.

source of photographs: own

Dalston, 16 Sept. 2022

(foot)notes/

61/Charles Landry, The Creative City: A Toolkit for Urban Innovators (Earthscan, 2000).

the concept of creativity as a driving force behind urban development and innovation. He argues that creativity is crucial to urban development and success, as it drives innovation and attracts talented people and businesses. The author identifies several key elements contributing to a creative city, including cultural diversity, infrastructure, social networks, education, and the arts.[61]
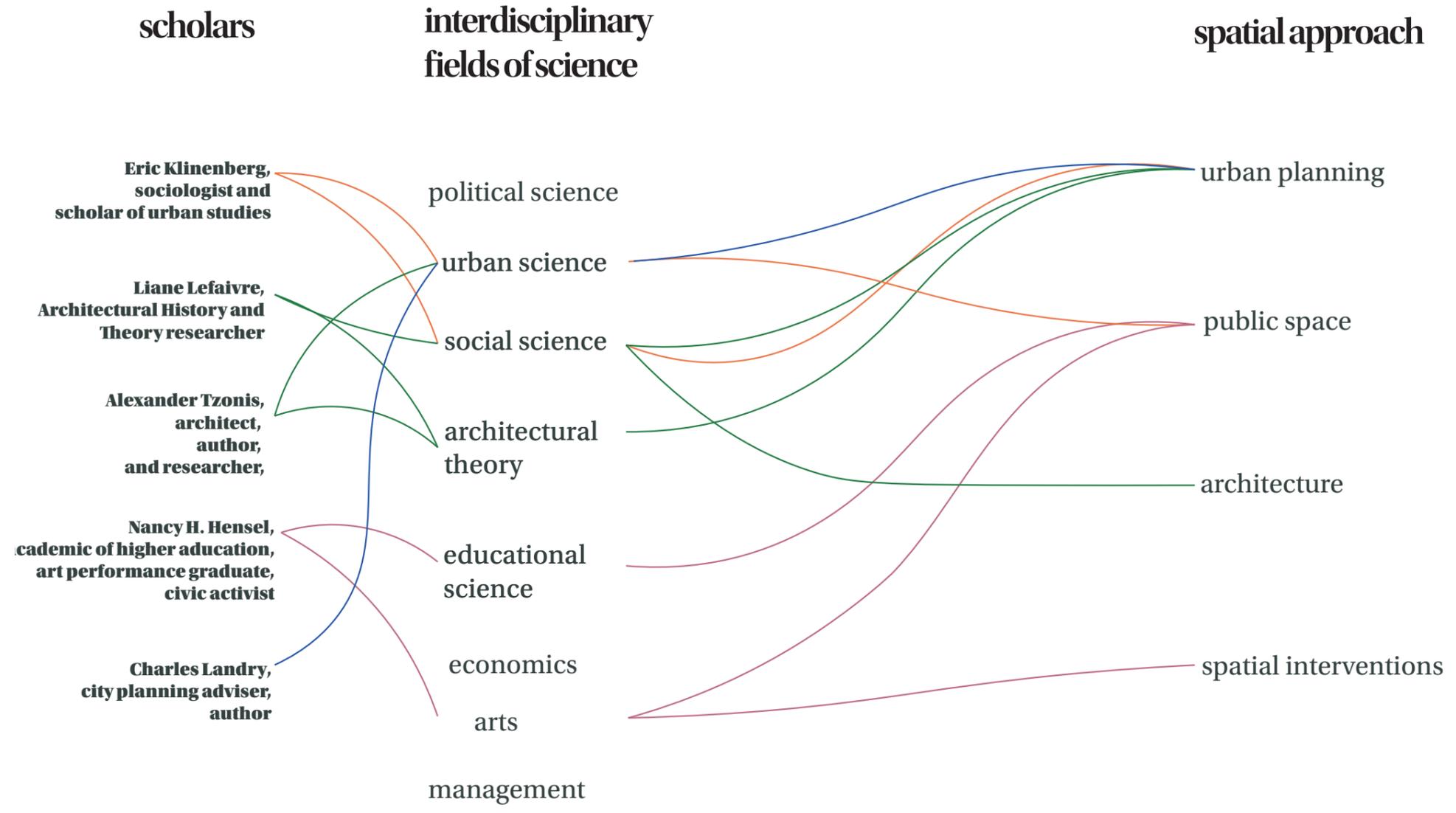
By translating this concept spatially, architecture could transcend the monofunctionality realm and imbue spaces with a deeper purpose. Creative ideas can take shape within these spaces, knowledge thrives, emotions find expression, and dreams find their footing. Public art emerges as a potent tool for education beyond the classroom, beautifying spaces and prompting community members to reflect on their neighbourhoods. Performing and liberal arts cater to a community of integration while fostering creativity, intelligence, critical and ethical thinking, collaboration, teamwork and social engagement. It is critical to remember that architecture shapes situations where these productive skills can blossom rather than making space in the Cartesian sense.

Conclusionary [Diagram]2.1:

**Situated knowledge as
a cross-disciplinary
methodological tool on
inclusive social engagement.**

The concept of situated
knowledge serves as a
powerful cross-disciplinary
methodological tool for fostering
inclusive social engagement
across various fields, as
illustrated by the works of Eric
Klinenberg, Liane Lefaivre,
Alexander Tzonis, Nancy H.
Hensel, and Charles Landry.

This conclusionary diagram
triangulates their fields of study
with the possible applications on
spatial approaches.

scholars

interdisciplinary
fields of science

spatial approach

Eric Klinenberg,
sociologist and
scholar of urban studies

Liane Lefaivre,
Architectural History and
Theory researcher

Alexander Tzonis,
architect,
author,
and researcher,

Nancy H. Hensel,
academic of higher education,
art performance graduate,
civic activist

Charles Landry,
city planning adviser,
author

political science

urban science

social science

architectural
theory

educational
science

economics

arts

management

urban planning

public space

architecture

spatial interventions

*/ *spatial agencies;* stand for spatial/ architectural strategies that envision a broader spectrum of possibilities for architects and individuals outside the architectural profession. Further explained in page 21.

61/ Kaijima, Momoyo, 貝島桃代, Junzo Kuroda, 黒田潤三, 塚本由晴, and Yoshiharu Tsukamoto. Made in Tokyo メイド　イン　トーキョー, 2001.

62/ Atorie Wan, Yoshiharu Tsukamoto, and Momoyo Kaijima, Atelier Bow-Wow - Commonalities of Architecture, 2016.

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2.3 Architects on social engagement

This paragraph showcases a critical collection of ways some examples of architects redefine their roles by acting alternatively to promote social engagement. Their efforts go beyond designing physical structures; they are shaping communities that encourage social interaction, foster inclusivity, and address the evolving needs of society. Architects employ spatial agencies* to purposefully and strategically transform physical space to attain particular aims and objectives. They use spatial tools and strategies to shape the physical environment to align with their goals and the needs of the users and communities they serve. These considerations go beyond aesthetics and involve a deep understanding of how space influences human behaviour, experiences, and well-being.

Atelier Bow Wow: constructing situations rather than objects

Founded in Tokyo in 1992 by Yoshiharu Tsukamoto and Momoyo Kaijima, Atelier Bow-wow engages in a multifaceted practice encompassing architecture, research, and art. Influenced by the aftermath of neoliberal politics and the socioeconomic landscape in Japan, they have a strong

philosophy on socio-spatialities that they partially base on Lefebvre's book "The Production of Space". Their publications unveil the urban landscape's serendipitous, ad-hoc nature.

Their research titled "Made in Tokyo" (see figure 8) showcased "da-me architecture", meaning no-good architecture, as they call it, where they do not prioritise the aesthetics but the function and program based on the sites making cross-programmed building types featuring unexpected juxtapositions. Atelier Bow-Wow's architectural approach endeavours to recreate some of the city's dynamic behaviours and chance encounters of humans and space within gallery installations and their architectural projects. This is achieved by strategically using custom-designed urban furniture, encouraging active user participation.

Atelier Bow-Wow's approach to architecture is inspired by its focus on constructing situations rather than static objects.[62] In other words, it prioritises shaping the interaction between site, space, and user over the aesthetics of architecture. Its design philosophy fosters unplanned interactions that can happen with various spatial interventions, from buildings to installations to items of urban furniture.

This is a picture taken from the book "Made in Tokyo". Here it is visible their research-driven methodology. It involves an in-depth analysis of the urban environment, seeking to uncover the underlying logic and patterns that shape Tokyo's architectural landscape.
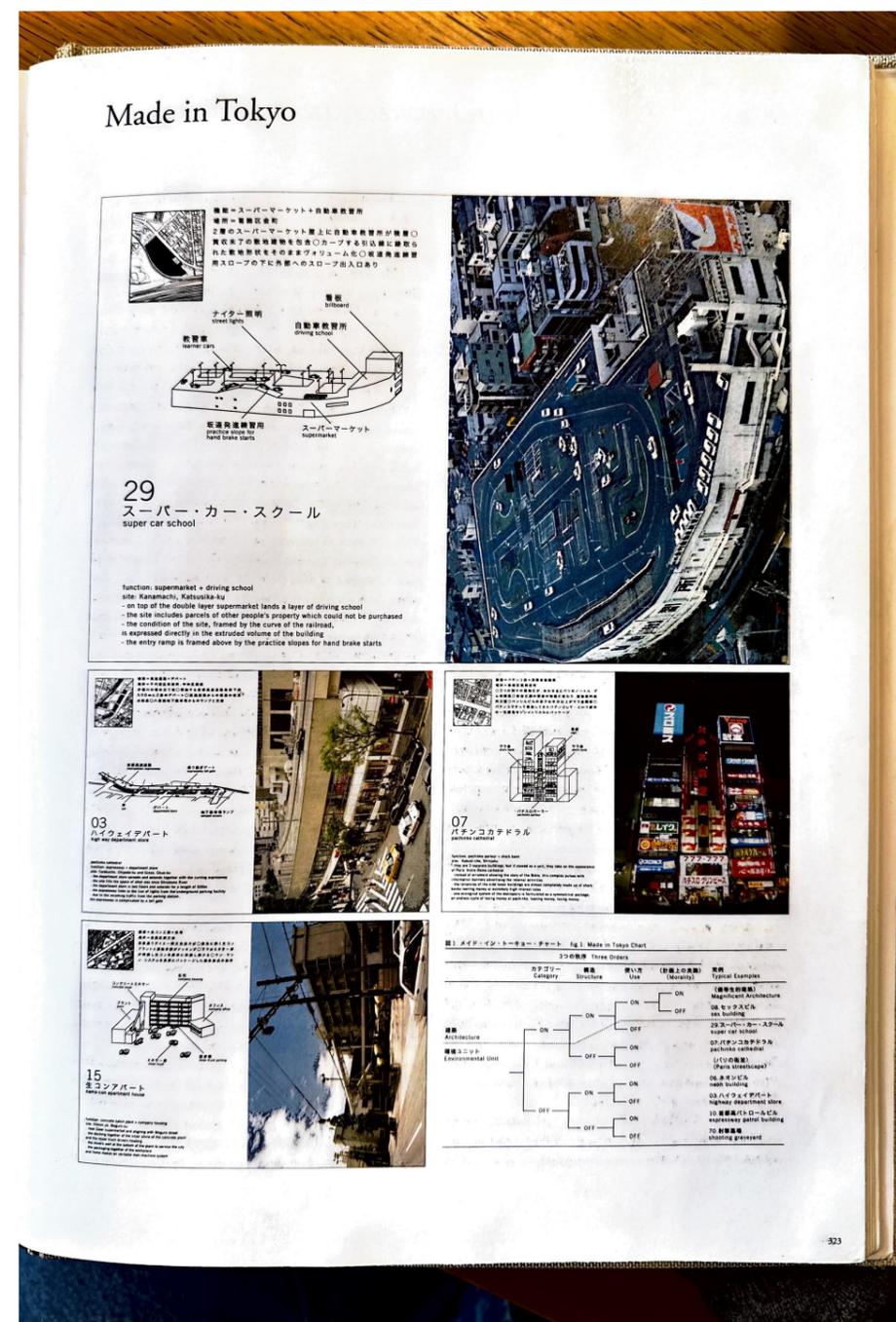
Picture is self taken from the book "Made in Tokyo" by Atelier Bow Wow: Kaijima, Momoyo, 貝島桃代, Junzo Kuroda, 黒田潤三, 塚本由晴, and Yoshiharu Tsukamoto. Made in Tokyo メイド　イン　トーキョー, 2001.

(foot)notes/

63/"Spatial Agency: Lina Bo Bardi,"
n.d., https://www.spatialagency.net/
database/why/political/lina.bo.bardi.

64/"Lina Bo Bardi: Public Plaza
and Museum of Art São Paolo," n.d.,
https://drawingmatter.org/lina-bo-
bardi-public-plaza-and-museum-of-
art-sao-paolo/.

65/Andreea Cutieru, "The Political
Dimension of Architecture: Activism
Through Design," ArchDaily, October
14, 2022, https://www.archdaily.
com/945659/the-political-dimension-
of-architecture-activism-through-
design.

Lina Bo Bardi: architect-advocate for the community, making public space of diverse intercourse

Lina Bo Bardi was an Italian architect whose remarkably diverse and significant work remains relatively unfamiliar beyond her adopted home of Brazil. Unlike her modernist peers, Bo Bardi was resolute in her commitment to addressing the socio-political context of her architectural endeavours and refrained from grandiose gestures. She believed that well-designed public spaces were essential for fostering social interaction and a sense of belonging, and spaces must be inclusive and accessible to all members of society. She strongly advocated breaking down social and economic barriers in design. Her projects often aimed to accommodate a diverse range of people and activities. She believed architects should work closely with those who inhabit and use their buildings; therefore, her designs are aspirations of the communities she worked with.[63]

Much of her work was dedicated to underserved communities and preserving historical heritage. Bo Bardi's hallmark was the celebration of the commonplace and the ordinary. For example, an architectural choice that she makes is to lift the Museum of Art of Sao Paulo (MASP), above the ground, creating a public square. Her drawings are complete of life, showing that the activities matter the most. She showcases space as a carnival of diverse activities, emphasising that cultural representation is transferred from the building to its users (showcasing in figure 8).[64]

Her work at the SESC leisure centre in São Paulo exemplified her vision of creating inclusive spaces. Converted from an old factory, Bo Bardi's design did not seek to conceal the building's industrial origins but embraced them, acknowledging its location in a working-class area of Brazil (showcasing in figure 9).[65]

Lina Bo Bardi's architectural philosophy transcends the boundaries of architecture. She advocated for participatory design, incorporated elements of Brazilian culture and history, and showed that simple low-budget architecture can act as a platform for inhabitants to engage in exchanges and interactions. What is inspiring is that with minimal spatial interventions, she achieved an open public space that is yet functional and fluid, allowing diverse people to coexist. Her commitment to addressing social issues through architecture and design has left a lasting legacy.

Museum of Art of Sao Paulo by Lina Bo Bardi

The elevated museum not only preserves the open space but also invites the community to engage with it, turning the area into a vibrant hub of cultural and social interaction.


Picture is retrieved from "Drawing Matter":
Lina Bo Bardi: Public Plaza and Museum of Art São Paolo," n.d., https://drawingmatter.org/lina-bo-bardi-public-plaza-and-museum-of-art-sao-paolo/.
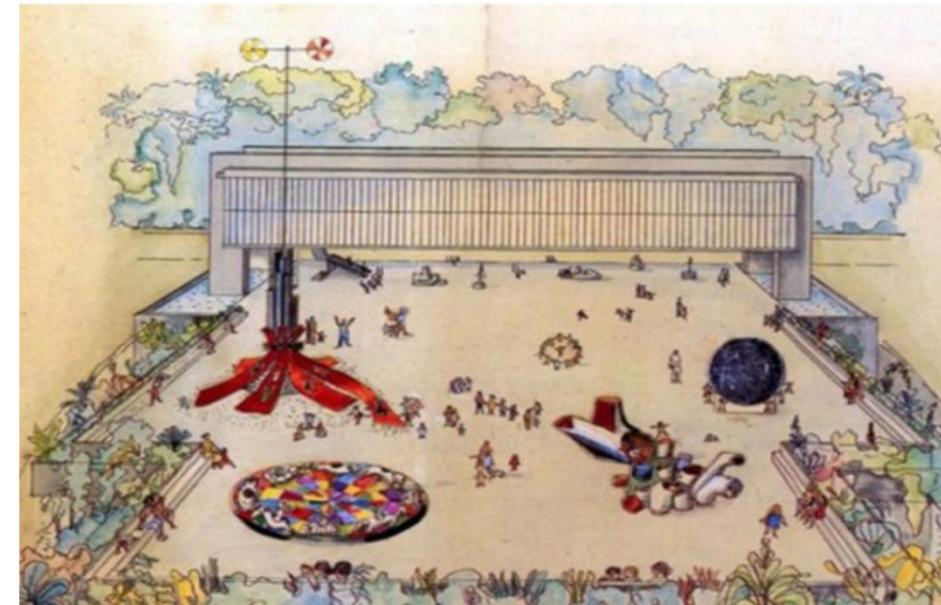
SESC by Lina Bo Bardi

Her projects show that simple, low-budget architecture can effectively create functional and fluid public spaces where diverse people can coexist and engage with each other. Through her innovative approach, Bo Bardi has left an enduring legacy in the field of architecture.

Picture is taken from a friend.
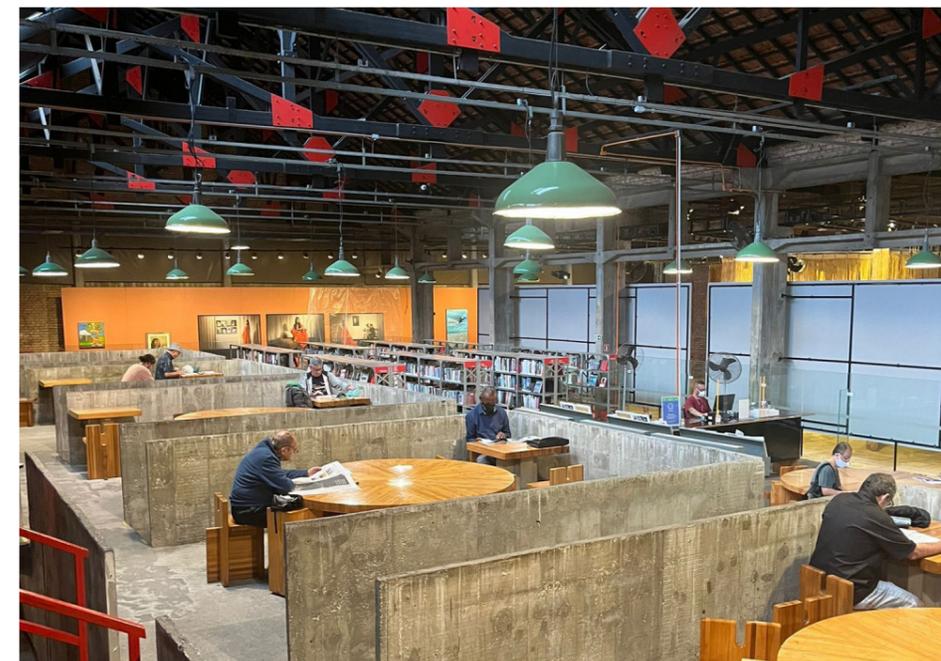
(foot)notes/

66/"Anne Lacaton and Jean-Philippe Vassal | the Pritzker Architecture Prize," n.d., https://www.pritzkerprize.com/laureates/anne-lacaton-and-jean-philippe-vassal#laureate-page-2276.

67/Cristian Aguilar, "FRAC Dunkerque / Lacaton & Vassal," ArchDaily, March 12, 2021, https://www.archdaily.com/475507/frac-of-the-north-region-lacaton-and-vassal?ad_medium=office_landing&ad_name=article.

68/"Anne Lacaton and Jean-Philippe Vassal | the Pritzker Architecture Prize,"

69/"Anne Lacaton and Jean-Philippe Vassal | the Pritzker Architecture Prize,"

Lacaton and Vassal: no flamboyant architecture instead "restore" what is there

Founded in Paris in 1987 by Anne Lacaton and Jean-Philippe Vassal, the firm has a diverse portfolio encompassing commercial, educational, cultural, and residential structures, while in 2021, they were nominated as laureates of the Prizer Prize.[66]

A common thread running through their work is the pursuit of uncovering the essence of each unique context and crafting an unpretentious architectural language founded on efficiency. In the eyes of Lacaton and Vassal, the initial duty of an architect is to engage in thoughtful consideration, including deciding whether construction is genuinely warranted. They view their role as extending well beyond the act of building, involving creative interactions with the legal and regulatory aspects of each project.

This philosophy emphasises the importance of not demolishing structures that can be saved but instead making existing buildings sustainable and functional by adding to them. They believe in extending through addition, respecting simplicity, and introducing new possibilities.[67]

This approach, particularly prioritising renovation over demolition, aims to give existing buildings, especially in social housing, a "second life."[68] Whether their renowned transformations or renovations, Lacaton & Vassal excels in the resourceful utilisation of existing elements, minimising the need for new construction through innovative design and a profound appreciation for the transformative potential inherent in each situation.

Lacaton and Vassal take a "restorative architecture"[69] approach. This approach highlights their practice of beginning every project with a thorough discovery process, valuing and preserving what already exists. This approach embodies humility by respecting the original designers' intentions and current occupants' aspirations. Furthermore, their modest approach to architecture has redefined the role of an architect. They do not focus on creating extravagant or flamboyant structures; instead, they observe, enhance, and serve the needs of individuals and the community cost-effectively and sustainably.

[Figure] : 10&11/

FRAC - NORD PAS-DE-CALAIS. DUNKERQUE, FRANCE

The FRAC (Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain) Nord-Pas de Calais in Dunkerque, France, exemplifies a thoughtful approach to architectural intervention where the new structure complements the old without overpowering it.

Minimal interventions are often more cost-effective and sustainable than large-scale construction projects.

Pictures are retrieved from "Arch Daily": Cristian Aguilar, "FRAC Dunkerque / Lacaton & Vassal," ArchDaily, March 12, 2021, https://www.archdaily.com/475507/frac-of-the-north-region-lacaton-and-vassal.
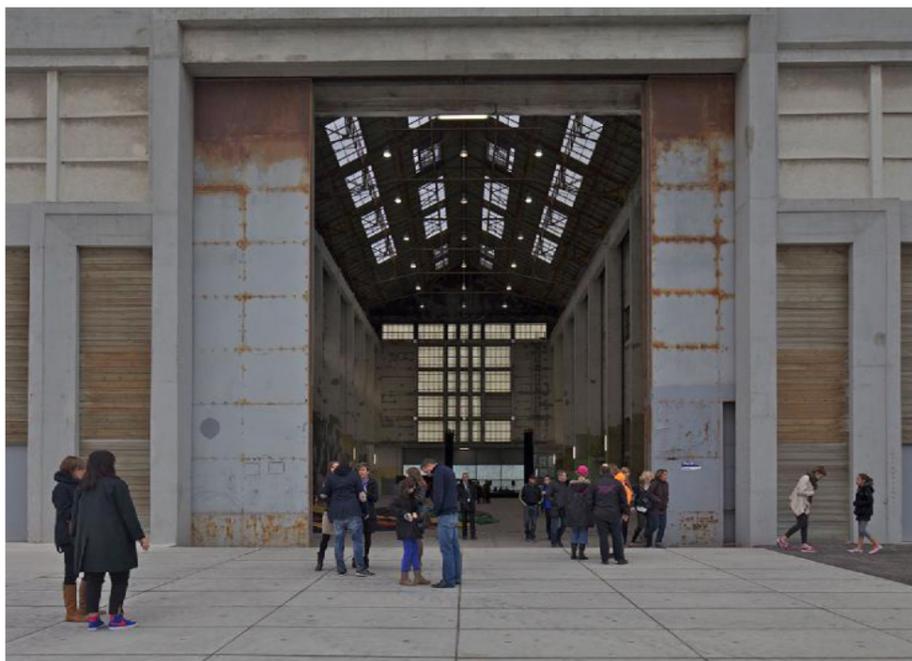
(foot)**notes**/

70/ Muf Architecture/Art. "Profile," July 11, 2023. http://muf.co.uk/ profile/.

71/ Nishat Awan, Tatjana Schneider, and Jeremy Till, Spatial Agency: Other Ways of Doing Architecture, Routledge eBooks, 2013, https://doi. org/10.4324/9781315881249.

*/ Mayor's 100 public spaces : "The 100 Public Spaces programme aims to create or upgrade one hundred public spaces in London. It aims to demonstrate the difference improved public space can make, and the ways in which the highest quality designs can be secured without excessive expenditure. The programme was launched in July 2002 with the announcement of 10 pilot projects and more have been identified in successive phases. To date the 100 Public Spaces Programme has identified 42 public spaces and the first six have been completed, bringing significant improvements to some of the more deprived areas of London."

- copied from: London City Hall. "Home Page," n.d. https://www. london.gov.uk/.

72/ Peter Bishop and Lesley Williams, Design for London: Experiments in Urban Thinking (UCL Press, 2020).

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muf: setting strategic, collaborative frameworks for social sustainability

Established in London in 1994, "muf" identifies itself as a "collaborative practice of art and architecture"[70] committed to projects involving the public realm. Their extensive portfolio encompasses urban design, architectural structures, and strategic documents, with a distinctive approach that keeps the planning processes open to incorporate the perspectives of various stakeholders, emphasising the voices of the community. muf views spatial arrangements and material solutions as outcomes of negotiations among diverse interests facilitated through consultations involving the public, private, communal, and individual sectors. Occasionally, they advise clients against pursuing construction, adopting an ethical stance that may lead to short-term job losses but fosters enduring relationships that can yield more substantial work opportunities in the long run. They openly recognise that an architect's research methods might omit crucial aspects, making a project's success contingent on serendipitous encounters.

An award-winning project

of theirs, the main square ass of Barking suburb (pictured in figures 12&13), is central to the ambitious Thames Gateway project and one of the "Mayor's 100 public spaces"* project. Having endured years of neglect and being on the periphery, this urban area has experienced significant construction pressures and recent social tensions between incoming residents and the established population. The primary objective of this intervention was to create a new civic space consisting of four interconnected components: a civic square, a greenhouse, a folly wall, and an arcade. muf envisioned recapturing the lost historical identity while serving as a forward-looking hub where the emerging community could unite. They created unconventional art that referenced the history of Barking, space for seating, and a square flexible for events.[72]

muf shifts the architect's role from complete authority to a more reflexive and intuitive endeavour. They research the community's needs and collaborate closely with more architects. They are proposing frameworks for action rather than prescribing specific outcomes. This approach enables muf to champion marginalised claims to space and often favours multiple small, unassuming proposals over grand, overarching solutions.

[**Figure**]: 12&13/

Barking Town Square Before and After

Before muf's intervention, the area might have been characterised by neglect and disconnection from its historical identity.

After muf's intervention, the space underwent a transformation, recapturing its lost historical identity while also serving as a forward-looking hub for the emerging community.
The folly wall was revitalised into a vibrant focal point, incorporating unconventional art that referenced the history of Barking. This artistic intervention not only brought visual interest to the area but also sparked curiosity and conversation among residents and visitors alike.

Picture are retrieved from "publicspace.org": "Works - PublicSpace," PublicSpace, n.d., https://www.publicspace.org/ works/-/project/e061-barking-town- square.

Conclusionary [Diagram]2.2:

**Situated knowledge as
a cross-disciplinary
methodological tool on
inclusive social engagement.**

**These architects exemplify how
cross-disciplinary studies inform
and enrich architectural practice,
leading to innovative approaches
that prioritise human interaction,
inclusivity, sustainability, and
social responsibility.
Their collective efforts redefine
the role of the architect as a
catalyst for positive change,
inspiring future generations to
create spaces that truly resonate
with the diverse needs and
aspirations of communities.**

interdisciplinary
fields of science

spatial approach

architects
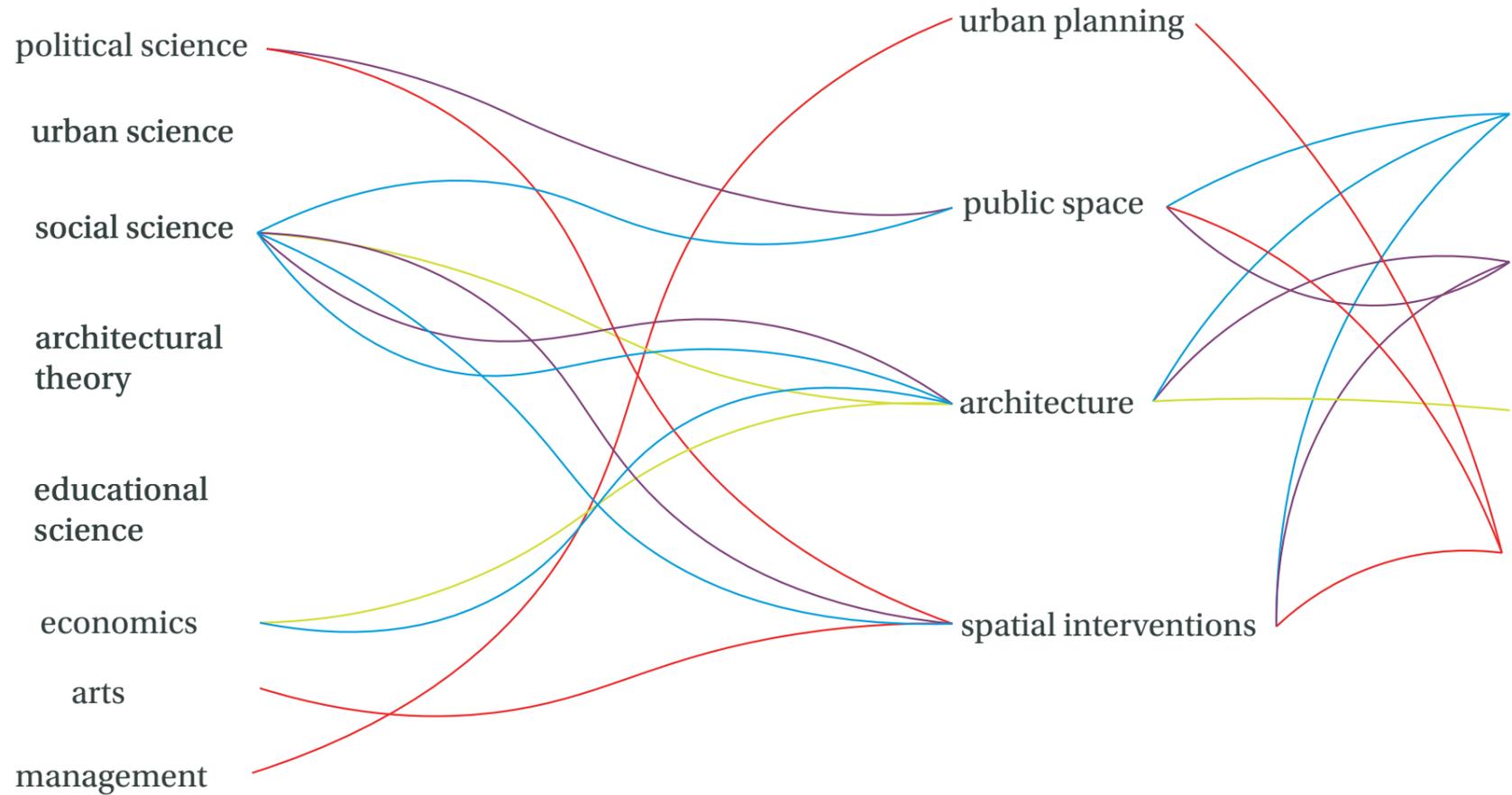
political science

urban science

social science

architectural
theory

educational
science

economics

arts

management

urban planning

public space

architecture

spatial interventions

Atelier Bow-Wow

Lina Bo Bardi

Lacaton and Vassal

muf

2.4 Discussing spatial agencies on social engagement

Architecture can enhance its practice by embracing unbiased perspectives. Scholars, particularly those in fields beyond architecture but with solid commitments to social engagement, play a crucial role in expanding the horizons towards interdisciplinary collaboration.

On the other hand, architects give out-of-the-box, unique spatial solutions. They transcend in more fields to target social engagement in the urban realm, such as research, community advocacy, project management, political mediation, framework setters, stakeholder arrangement, urban science and design. They work as spatial agents.

The Chapter gave a range of discoursive positions, yet it also shows many cross-disciplinary similarities.

By emphasising shared values and common humanity, as noted by Klinenberg, we can dismantle divisive barriers and foster more inclusive and equitable communities or by rethinking regional boundaries, considering their unique resources and specific constraints supported by Lefaivre and Tzonis. On another note, Hensel highlights the sense of integration that performing

and liberal arts contribute to within communities while nurturing creativity, intelligence, critical and ethical thinking, collaboration, teamwork, and social engagement. Architecture does not merely create physical spaces but also shapes environments where these valuable skills can flourish.

A common strategy in the architecture field prioritises solutions with sustainable social outcomes and strategic long-term outcomes. Their philosophy facilitates interactions between the site, space, and users, nurturing spontaneous social exchanges through various spatial interventions. Atelier Bow-wow's name is "dame architecture, "which is ironic because it emphasises function rather than architecture. Lina Bo Bardi's placemaking and cost-effective work exemplify that architecture can serve as a platform for fostering social exchanges and interactions. Lacaton and Vassal's "restorative architecture" approach underscores their commitment to valuing existing structures while optimally and functionally addressing community needs. At the same time, muf reimagines the architect's role by offering frameworks for action rather than relying on grand architectural gestures and overarching solutions, sometimes by even proposing no building.

[Conclusionary Diagram]3:

Situated knowledge as a cross-disciplinary methodological tool on inclusive social engagement.

This collaborative synergy between scholars and architects extends beyond theoretical discourse, manifesting in practical applications such as research, community advocacy, project management, and political mediation. Architects emerge not only as designers but as spatial agents, shaping environments that foster inclusivity and societal well-being.
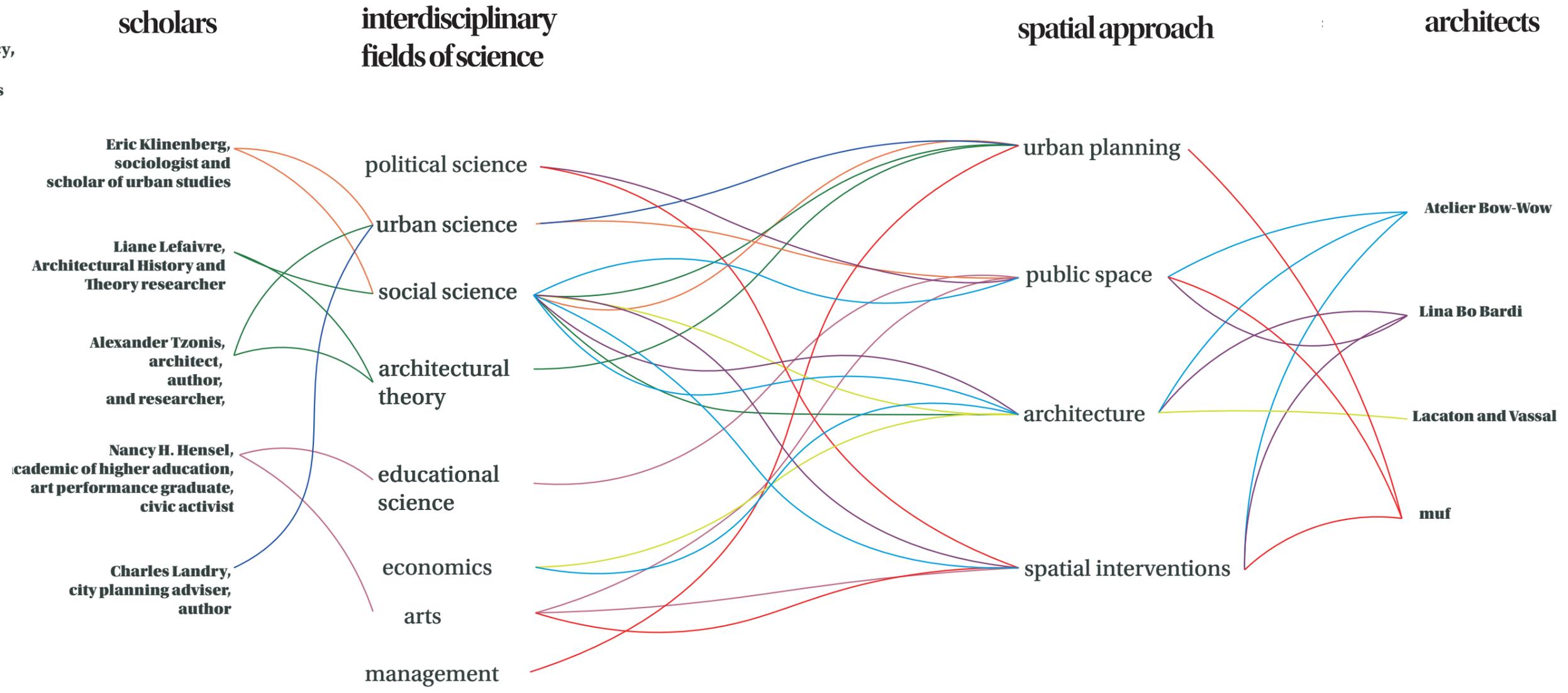
In essence, while the chapter presents a diverse range of discursive positions, it also highlights the remarkable convergence of cross-disciplinary similarities. By embracing this convergence, both scholars and architects can propel the discourse of inclusive social engagement forward, paving the way for transformative change in the built environment.

Situated knowledge as a cross-disciplinary methodological tool on:

inclusive social engagement

scholars

interdisciplinary fields of science

spatial approach

architects

Eric Klinenberg, sociologist and scholar of urban studies

Liane Lefaivre, Architectural History and Theory researcher

Alexander Tzonis, architect, author, and researcher,

Nancy H. Hensel, academic of higher education, art performance graduate, civic activist

Charles Landry, city planning adviser, author

political science

urban science

social science

architectural theory

educational science

economics

arts

management

urban planning

public space

architecture

spatial interventions

Atelier Bow-Wow

Lina Bo Bardi

Lacaton and Vassal

muf

Using these approaches, I have cultivated a discerning and comprehensive perspective on architectural recommendations to address the societal disparities triggered, in this case, by neoliberal policies in London. Here, I comprise a range of spatial strategies designed to situate social involvement as a countermeasure to social fragmentation. It translates abstract concepts into activities that foster environments conducive to social interaction and tangible spatial forms. The outcomes are tailored to London's landscape; nevertheless, it share many commonalities with global cities worldwide. By merging, extracting and highlighting the diverse positions of academics and practitioners, the Chapter concludes with a list of 8 spatial agencies, or potential design principles, to revive public social engagement in the urban fabric:

1) construct situations rather than objects: prioritising the function and intercourse over the design (Atelier Bow-Wow, Lacaton and Vassal, Hensel)

2) be an architect-advocate for the community: researching the community's needs and collaborating with them (muf, Lina Bo Bardi)

3) make public space for diverse intercourse: investing in spatial scenarios and trianglulation that justifies the creation of a common ground (Klinenberg, Lina Bo Bardi)

4) "restore" what is there: redefine unique resources, embrace particular constraints, reflect on the context and historical past (Lacaton and Vassal, Lefaivre and Tzonis, muf, Lina Bo Bardi)

5) be cost-effective: better having optimal design than no design (Lacaton and Vassal, muf, Lina Bo Bardi, Atelier Bow-Wow)

6) set strategic frameworks between actors (muf, Lina Bo Bardi)

7) accommodate functions that teach citizenship and collaboration: use space as a platform for education to cultivating people's ethical and critical minds (Hensel, Lina Bo Bardi)

8) adopt ephemerality, flexibility and embrace ad hoc architectural solutions: solve immediate needs and let them do their placemaking by being flexible and adaptable (Atelier Bow-Wow, Lacaton and Vassal)

Conclusion

**functional and creative,
critical and visionary**

**understanding, visualising and acting on the
socio-political fragmentation on the urban
relief**

The concept of space transcends its conventional physical confines, expanding to encompass broader social, cultural, and economic dimensions. Understanding how society constructs and utilises space assumes paramount significance in the contemporary landscape. One cannot overlook the escalating scarcity of space, most notably within urban centres, and its profound implications for societal inequalities. It is an indisputable truth that architecture and politics are inexorably intertwined. Architecture wields the power to shape physical spaces, which, in turn, exert a profound influence on social relationships. However, architects must acknowledge and accept the political implications embedded in their work. This research utilizes a methodology that extensively explores how different sociopolitical factors can influence the organization and behavior of urban spaces. Neoliberalism is used as a modern example to illustrate this perspective.

At its core, Neoliberalism is a political philosophy that aims to foster an entrepreneurial individual driven by self-enhancement and optimising personal liberty within the economic domain. It did not advocate for a withdrawal of the state, as it remains vital in creating and upholding the

prerequisites for the proper functioning of markets. However, the political breakthrough only worked one way. The historiographical timeline of London showed that the government, under Thatcher's leadership, wanted to rebuild England and oversaw long-term effects on the social strata and political future. Even though the initial intention was to increase economic growth and efficiency and restore the debacle after the war, its practical implementation showed counteracting aftereffects in the socio-political realm.

After World War II, London embraced neoliberal policies, which led to financial consolidation and 'rationalisation,' marked by mergers, takeovers, and outsourcing. It played a significant role in reshaping the function of the state, characterised by a deliberate limitation of state intervention in economic affairs, the promotion of market forces, and the curtailment of public services, which warranted a closer examination. Globalisation, despite opening doors to new markets, paradoxically normalised the commodification of public spaces, effectively marginalising disadvantaged segments of the community.

As the 20th century neared its end and the 21st century began, London's spatial configuration

underwent subtle yet profound shifts. London witnessed many inner-city areas grappling with gentrification, reconfiguring sociopolitical and spatial dynamics. The politics of neoliberalism, advocating for the unfettered free market, created a stark divide between the working class and the privileged elite. This divide exacerbated social polarisation, stratification, and the marginalisation of less socially affluent groups, ultimately leading to spatial segregation and the inevitable encroachment of gentrification processes, which demarcated spatial boundaries.

Simultaneously, the aftermath of public space showed a transition to private ownership and exclusivity or falling into neglect. A closer examination of the evolving neighbourhoods between 1980 and nowadays revealed discernible patterns of spatial segregation. The expansion of neoliberal aftereffects imprinted their complex interplay of sociospatial arrangements and political geographies, manifesting as urban loopholes and boundaries.

In essence, the urban is not only a site of experimentation and implementation for neoliberal ideologies but also a space where the contradictions and limitations of these ideologies are starkly evident. Drawing from those lessons, it became evident

that the root causes of urban asymmetries originated from profound sociopolitical issues, including social stratification, segregation, marginalisation, the deification of capital, unchecked globalisation, and the consequences of gentrification driven by neoliberal politics. As our cities change due to the impact of neoliberal policies, it's vital to critically assess their effects on urban areas' varied and dynamic geographies. Exploring alternative methods that emphasize fairness, sustainability, and the welfare of urban communities becomes ever more essential in this evolving urban landscape. For these urban imbalances, the focus needed to pivot this time towards long-term efficiency and social sustainability, exerting a broader and more enduring influence on society than isolated efforts to rectify individual spatial disparities.

After having visualised the sociopolitical effects, the research critically analysed various approaches to incorporating social engagement into a spatial context. Because city development is more influenced by political, social, economic, and technological factors rather than solely shaped by architectural planning, the research has pivoted its perspective toward understanding situated knowledge regarding social

engagement and urban planning. It examined existing perspectives from diverse fields like sociology, political science, urban planning, and architecture to compile a set of strategies or spatial agencies that effectively rationalise and place social engagement within a spatial context. The discussion revolves around a holistic approach to combat social fragmentation through the strategic use of spatial design. These carefully crafted strategies aim to position social involvement as a potent remedy for the challenges of disconnection in society. A noteworthy aspect is the translation of abstract ideas into actionable initiatives, fostering environments conducive to meaningful social interaction. At the heart of this exploration lies the synthesis of diverse perspectives, drawing from both academic expertise and practical experience. This collective effort results in the identification of eight key spatial agencies or design principles, that hold the potential to rejuvenate public social engagement within the urban fabric. The principles that aim to contextualise social engagement include constructing situations over objects, advocating for the community, fostering diverse social intercourse, bridging social stratification through shared values, restoring existing assets, prioritising cost-effectiveness, establishing

strategic frameworks, reflecting on context and history, accommodating functions that nurture citizenship and collaboration, embracing ephemerality with adaptable solutions, and using space as a platform for education to cultivate ethical and critical minds.

The research serves as a call to action for architects to embrace a socially conscious approach to the built environment, especially in capitalistic contexts such as London. Examining architecture in the context of societal engagement, it becomes evident that buildings are not isolated entities but integral components of interconnected networks. In this context, the consequences and influences of architecture extend far beyond the physical structures themselves, emphasising the broader importance of how architecture interacts with and affects society. It emphasises that architecture, at its core, is a discipline deeply intertwined with the betterment of society, and its potential to create meaningful, inclusive, and equitable spaces should not be underestimated.
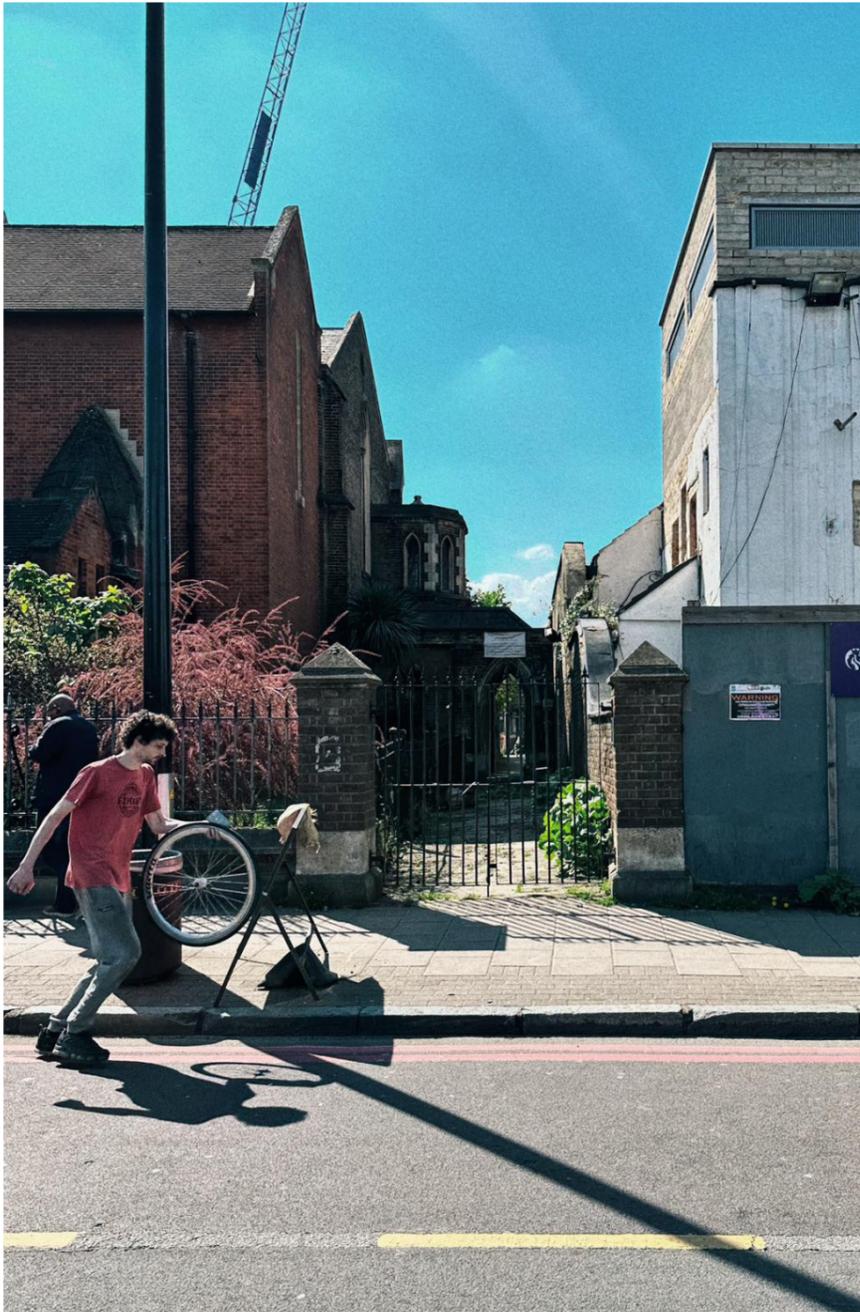
Reflection

letting go

**academic achievements,
personal introspection,
professional growth**

Having realised that architecture is a merging study of many more qualities, skills and fields of knowledge, I aimed to explore that further to discover what architect I aspire to be. Therefore, I chose for my Master's graduation project to push boundaries on an interdisciplinary way of thinking, explore themes such as social and political science, and immerse in issues beyond architecture.

Design Crossovers is a studio that demands multidisciplinary thinking and allows you to build a solid theoretical foundation while it doesn't restrict you to cumbersome frameworks. It exposes you to plenty of triggers of interdisciplinary knowledge. At the same time, it helps you to build a coherent line of thought and ultimately guides you to translate your narratives into a design. Knowing that Design Crossovers graduation studio was the most suitable context that could guide me towards meeting my goals and help me grow.

As a result of those "Urban asymmetries", graduation research falls off the intersection of social and spatial. It analyses how the post-war neoliberal politics of London affected the societal structure, whose aftermath is to be seen in the city's urban form and how architects could help balance the sociospatial fragmentation by aiming for social

sustainability.

To develop a research outcome, I experimented with interdisciplinarity to broaden my horizons to sociology and anthropology, political and economic science, urban studies, and architecture. Therefore, the theoretical framework consists of a broad social and urban sciences spectrum, while I mainly relied on extended and situated knowledge. I related myself to theories of Foulcalt's ideas on neoliberalism, Lefebvre's social and political space theory, Till's architectural approach, and Bow Wow's social design approach.

The research is a constant phase of adding new principals until the last weeks of graduation. It needed to involve a long-term critical and spherical view of things, which was my initial goal and what my research manifests from.

There is a mix of many by trial and error, reading and applying such as taking a critical historiographical approach, consulting on social and urban scholars, zooming in and out on the urban fabric, making maps and documenting in photo series. I tried to feel the pulse of London by doing on-site research multiple times. I visited London 3 times in total, where I discovered something different every time. I used photography as an architectural research tool to help me harmonise with

the sites and convey a sense of place. By zooming out, I formed maps and tried to find patterns. Thus, I talked to locals, researched Hackney's, Tower Hamlet's and Brixton's archives, looked at inspiring examples in London and abroad, and studied spatial agencies. Lastly, research by design and design by research went hand in hand since I saw research as a part of the architect's tasks and not a separate phase.

Based on those methods, I developed a critical and spherical viewpoint of architectural suggestions for narrowing the societal gap that the neoliberal politics in London initiated. I present the proposals in a list of potential design principles, to revive public social sustainability in the urban fabric, which I later apply further to architectural design. The "design toolset" is a set of spatial agencies that aim to contextualise social engagement to work against social fragmentation. It translates the abstract sense to spatial forms and actions that facilitate situations for social engagement to flourish.

The results are custom-made on London's landscape since I have tailored the toolset to London's lack of social engagement. Yet it has many similarities with all the global cities; therefore, the results are transferrable to similar situations such as New York,

Tokyo or Shanghai. To generalise it further, the research follows a methodology of deeply analysing how any sociopolitical issue could affect the urban fabric. Neoliberalism is a contemporary example, though a similar methodology can be generated in other sociopolitical topics such as governmentalities of regimes and their influence on the urban.

The research derives from a more profound need to find ways as an architect to fight against social inequality. As a person, I have come to realise I am susceptible to social inequality and discrimination; therefore, the concepts of architecture I approach address similar societal issues. On my journey to learn how to use my architecture as an activistic voice and social alleviation. The research, therefore, initiated from the question:

How can architecture influence social matters, and how can it disturb the vicious cycle of sociospatial inequality built up over the previous generations? After over a year of trying to answer this question, I would now point out:

Firstly, it is critical to understand the unbreakable interrelation between spatial and social. It is a concept more straightforward for architects to grasp and act on because both are subjects of their study.

Therefore, breaking such a firmly repeated sociospatial phenomenon depends not only on architecture but also on the architect. Solving such issues comes from something other than the design itself but from an interdisciplinary skillset and social and ethical criticality that an architect can combine.

Adopting a new approach that emphasises interdisciplinary and collaborative teams in academic, professional and grassroots settings is essential to navigating these complexities. At the same time, instead of speedily continuing to design solutions and project execution, it is vital to emphasise and deepen into uncovering rooted societal processes and investigating the theoretical background and social science connected to avoiding urban patterns.

A radical way to tackle sociospatial inequality is to target the root processes. As Engles once said, a slum gets clear only to reappear elsewhere, meaning that working around the problem and occasionally tackling it won't give any sustainable outcome. Innovative solutions can be discovered by approaching issues from various perspectives and encouraging serendipitous cross-pollination, which is critical to problem-solving.

"When", "where", and "for whom" are strongly connected with architecture as well as the factor of resilience and flexibility. Therefore, the concept of space and time should be core design priorities to relate the needs of society with the temporality of space. Modernism, for example, was an architectural period of disconnectivity from time, space and people. Its eclectic but stubborn aesthetical principles conclude a sorrowful ending, justifying the slogan "modernism failed". Architects working on social projects should spend more time finding productive ways to bring out social prosperity than designing trademark architecture.

I will leave the above question open-ended since I will keep evolving and restructuring my thoughts.

The past year, I developed academic skills, pushed personal boundaries and introspected myself. Every step I took opened a bigger pool of knowledge, which created a very productive and educative environment for architectural and spiritual growth that I want to take on in my future development.

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