

Title/ID: Active Space Camp/hac1	
Time: Summer 2021	Site: W139, Amsterdam
Who:	
Tags:	1/hac1

Active Space Camp

A 48 hour workshop (camp) that tries to involve participants in ways that optimises the chance for new ideas, networks and initiatives to emerge. The main goal for the camp is to discuss and produce new scenarios for the topic "No city without art"

The artist run space, W 139, Amsterdam will be the base-camp for common meals, collaborations, discussions and game based explorations of the surrounding neighborhood.

The workshop is tightly structured in both time and space and involves the body in ways that nurtures a broad (and fun) range of interactions. The structure is in part like a game that mainly aims at creating a rhythm between a radical openness and a concrete and operational focus.



Goals

The scenarios we produce in the Active Space Camp can be both tactical (for example actions on the streets) or strategic (a policy paper to be presented to the municipality) and combinations in a greyzone between the tactical and strategic.

In all cases the scenarios for action will grow out of a local space - with links to global issues and actors - and turn the space into a transformative space that continues to produce new actions.

Friday

First evening meal ● ● ● ●

Saturday

Morning: Explorations —————

Afternoon: Agenda —————

Second evening meal ● ● ● ●

Sunday

Morning: Action —————

Afternoon - public workshop —————

Background

Too many workshops and discussions do not get the full potential out of the participants. Excluding mechanisms such as hidden power structures and language that only certain people understand prevent people from fully taking part. Workshops are often focused too early to allow for farflung ideas to be heard and/or they remain inconclusive and without a result that can be acted upon.

Active Space

Active Space has three components: Spaces, movements and situations. The movements drive a rhythm between an intuitively experienced body space and operational societal space - Socially produced spaces.

The goal is to go beyond the mechanisms that block something new to emerge: A state of tunnel vision that reduces the socially produced spaces - neighborhoods, street corners, villages etc - to technocratic and abstract spaces. The overview here will be described in more detail

Spaces

Active space works with more intuitive or emotional elements to motivate and connect a movement towards a higher degree of abstraction: a more focused, operational but also fragmented space.

Body Space: Non verbal, sensory and intuitive

Social Space: Language, social interaction

Societal Space: Technological, legal, economic

Movements

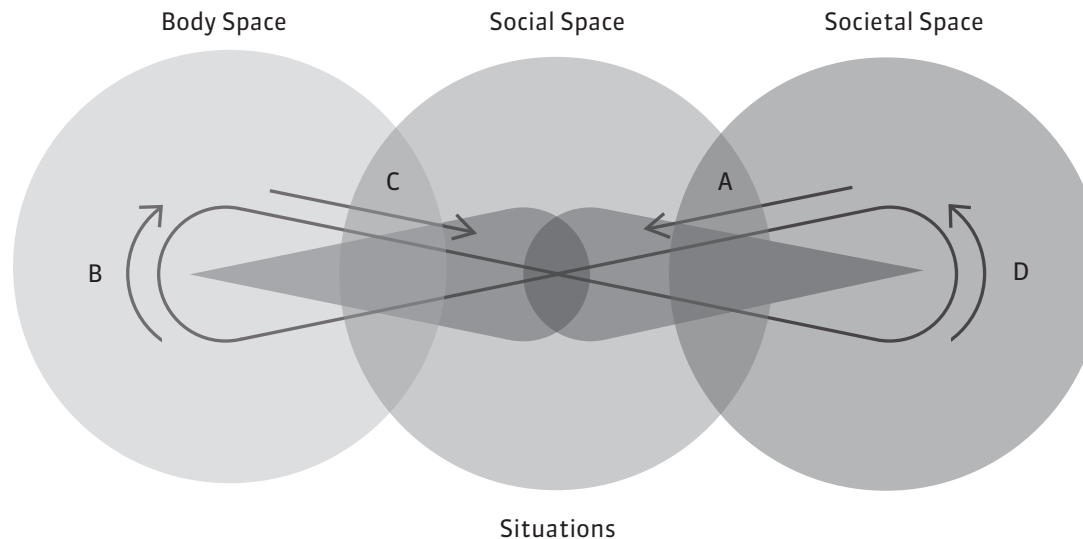
The movements drive the rhythm between exploring spaces of possibilities in bodyspace over developing a common vocabulary and agenda in social space and turn this into operational actions in societal space

A. Gameplay: Actions that unfold in time and space - exit the inertia of societal space

B. Exploring: Involving all senses to explore what is there and how does it feel

C. Agenda: Developing a common vocabulary and collaboration on an agenda.

D. Action: How to achieve the agenda involving the societal conditions for actions

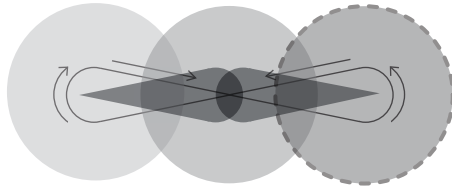


Situations

The rhythm between the (socially produced) spaces spark situations where new ideas, networks and initiatives can emerge.

These situations are both creations and simultaneously they create new movements and spaces that spark new situations and form a virtuous circle.

Societal Space



Platform BK

Platform BK is an active thinktank that researches the role of art in society and takes action for a better art policy. They represent artists, curators, designers, critics and other cultural producers in The Netherlands.

No city without art

The Active Space Camp works with the topic “No city without art” (Geen Stad Zonder Kunst), building on a national campaign for affordable living and working space for artists conducted by Platform BK and the Dutch Arts Union.

During this campaign, the organizations conducted policy research and talked to many artists, politicians, and managers of social real estate throughout the Netherlands. The general insights and practical tools developed in the process were published in the report ‘Geen Stad Zonder Kunst’

W 139

W139 is the oldest artist-run space in the city center of Amsterdam. It has provided artists time and space for free explorations in Amsterdam since 1979.

W139 aims to activate and stimulate artistic and intellectual freedom. To this end W139 offers a continuously renewing group of artists time, space and responsibility to initiate group exhibitions with their artistic practices and ambitions as starting point.



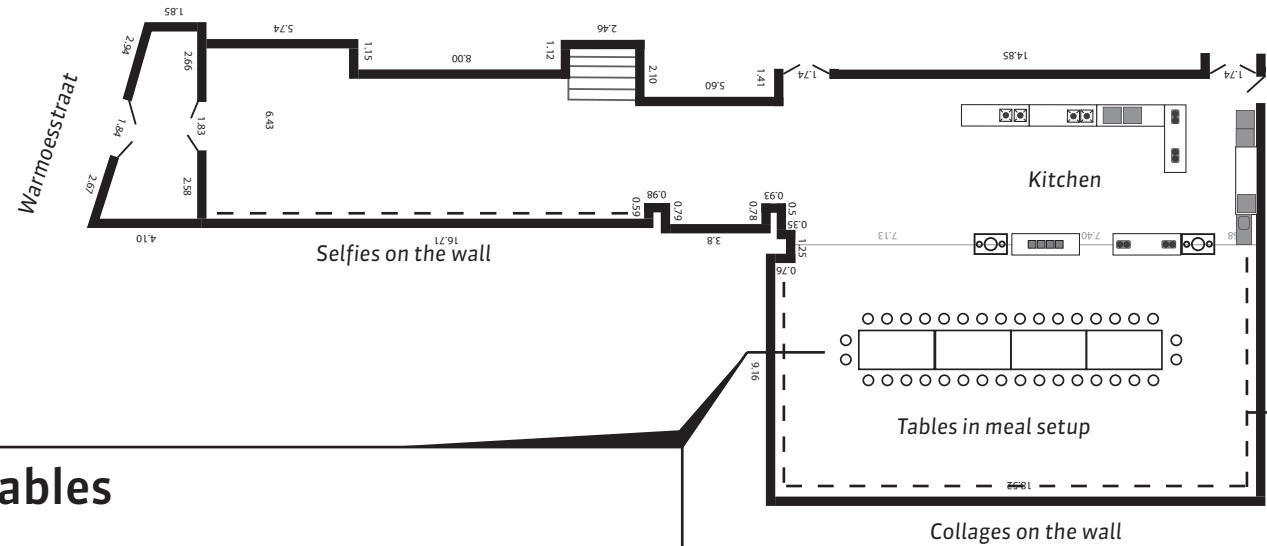
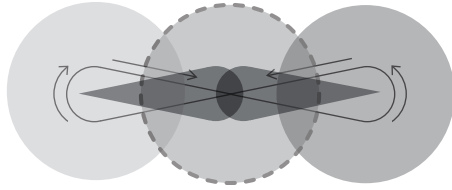
Map showing neighborhood of W139 in Amsterdam

Neighborhood

De Wallen (Red Light District) is the most central neighborhood of Amsterdam, known for historical gems like the Oude Kerk and Rembrandthuis, but also for its embrace of sex work as part of the public street image.

Over the past few decades, De Wallen has been overrun by tourists, cheap hostels, bad pizzerias, and Nutella shops.

Social Space



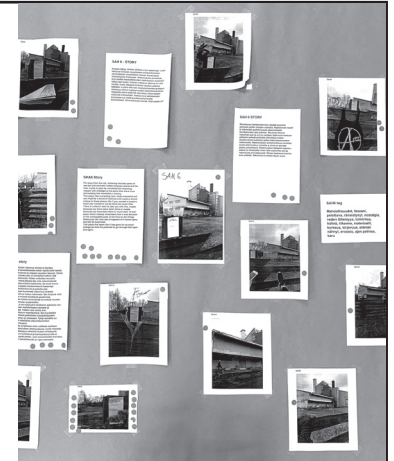
W 139 as Basecamp

The basecamp forms a hub for the explorations into a surrounding area. The basecamp is a large and comfortable workspace and kitchen to be transformed itself - especially with flexible furniture and collages: As a concrete example of a socially produced space

Collages

Collages made from the documentation of the explorations and discussions during the 48 hours will gradually appropriate the basecamp

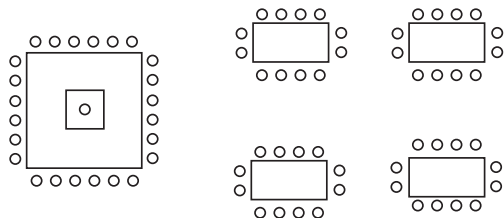
Dots/votes are added to create focus and move the discussion forward



Tables

The active space camp uses 4 tables where between 8 and 12 people can sit and work. They are designed so they can be moved around to form different (socio) spatial organisations.

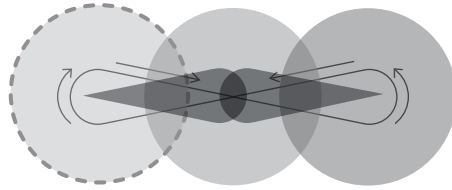
Tables organised in the group setup can quickly turn this into a plenum setup with a facilitator in the middle for the important oscillation between work in groups and discussions in plenum



Plenum setup

Group setup

Body Space



Peripheral Perception

Presence is linked to a Peripheral Perception and a broad sensory spectrum: Peripheral vision, sound, smell, touch etc. that enables us to navigate and focus (and prevent tunnel vision). It boosts communication/collaboration - including the non verbal - both between persons (gestures, sounds etc) but also perceiving the environment



Tunnelvision exercise with students in Berlin

Power of (body) presence

While social and societal spaces can be represented/described with various degrees of abstraction - quantitative (societal) or qualitative (social) - Body space is situated and exist only when "we are here now"

Presence is simultaneously active (changing space by simply being there) and passive (experiencing space with all senses) that interact and inform each other: Sensing the change being made by our presence and vice versa.

Spaces of Possibilities

The peripheral perception includes Spaces of Possibilities: A political sensation of (radical) openness. It supplements the other more physical senses: If certain spaces makes you feel free and motivates you to act

Transformative Space

This is a non verbal yet political - Transformative Space: A radical openness allows for both letting go of reductive (existing/old) concepts yet still be in a socially produced space. This allows for embracing complexity and creates situations for something new to emerge.

Main Elements

The active space camp has 6 elements of each approximately 4 hours. The 6 elements can be divided into two main elements that resemble a sandwich:

A beginning that warms up to the topic and gives a concrete introduction to the movements

Inside the sandwich are the movements of the workshop

An end that takes the outcomes of the workshop and connects it with concrete actions

Movements

The core of the active space camp has 3 movements that form a progression from explorations over setting an agenda to action. These 3 movements are linked to the concept of Active Space and will be described in more detail in the following pages.

A. Exploration: Individual sensory and intuitive explorations of Spaces of Possibilities - Body space

B. Agenda: Groups collaborate to develop a common vocabulary and set an agenda - Social Space

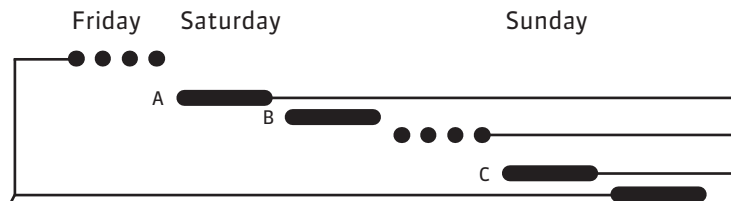
C. Action: Groups make the agenda operational in a economic, political (etc.) context - Societal space

Beginning and end

Prologue: Participants send a selfie, introducing the use of selfies and email based documentation. The selfies will hang in the entrance at W139

Beginning: A common meal that is the workshop - and the movements - in a nutshell. Preparing the meal will go through the movements of A. exploration (fruits and vegetables), B. agenda (the menu) and C. action (making food).

End: A public discussion of the results of the workshop - 4 scenarios that work with the topic, No city without art. Through a tightly structured format the goal is to refine the 4 scenarios based on input from the public



A common meal Saturday evening forms a moment to reflect half way through the camp. The groups present and/or perform the agendas and first ideas to each other and invited relevant actors.

The atmosphere that has been created (socially produced space) in the W139 strives to be open and informal to inspire and nurture new ideas, networks and initiatives.

The common meal and discussion is a working prototype of a “no city without art”

First Evening Meal

Friday Saturday Sunday

The first evening meal will be the whole 48 hour camp in a nutshell.

Time: Friday 18.00 - 22.00

Active Space Camp will turn the first common meal into an active part of the workshop and use this to introduce the 3 movements that form the core the workshop - explore, agenda and action

Arrival: Something is already cooking and smells good. While people are arriving: Check practicalities and add names to the selfies on the wall. People proceed to big room

Tables are arranged in plenum setup with food ingredients on. Veggies/fruit/bread cut to taste and a quick snack

Intro: Short introduction to the evening meal as the whole workshop in a nutshell - more details after the meal

Explore

Body space: Participants explore (taste, smell, touch) the fruit, vegetables etc. and choose one that they like most

Gesture: Participants perform a (non verbal) gesture to show how that carrot etc. makes them feel. Take a photo (a new selfie) of each gesture.

Photos are printed out and added to selfie wall during the making of food

Agenda

The agenda: Participants come with suggestions to use the ingredients - 2 side dishes + salad + soup. Notes/keywords are written down on signs on the table.

Vote: Participants use small dots on the signs to show

Enjoying the meal together

Summing up and clean

Action

Make 4 groups and move tables to group setup near the kitchen. Groups prepare and cook salat, side dishes and soup

Build the buffet and move the tables into meal setup

Explore

Friday Saturday Sunday

Explore - Body space - Individual.

Time: Saturday 9.00 - 13.00

The exploration of the Body Space is individual, sensory and non verbal

Arriving Saturday morning we begin softly:

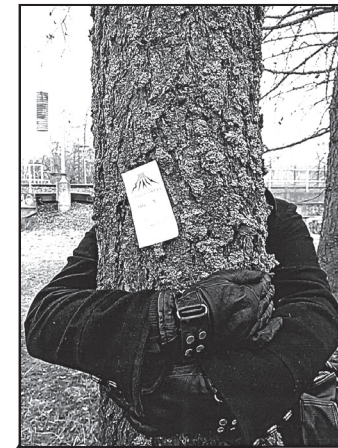
Half participants get blindfolded and form pairs with a guide that can see. Exploring the W139 space and tagging it using red and green post its for feel good/bad. Tables pushed to the wall.

Tunnel vision exercise - refreshing concepts of peripheral perception, spaces of possibilities and non verbal gestures.

Distribute maps and send people off for the first exploration of the neighborhood

Looking for spaces of possibilities (SOP) using a high degree of sensitivity - exploring a neighborhood that most likely is already well known. Possible SOPs are marked on paper map

Illustration: map example with SOPs and one marked as the most important



Use the exploration to choose a location that best feels like a Space of Possibilities.

Take a selfie doing a gesture that expresses that feeling in that space

Illustration: selfie with gesture

Discussion of the exploration

Back in the basecamp: Put a print of the selfie and the map on a big collage paper and hang these on the wall

Vote on the most interesting selfies and maps using small red dots

Agenda

Friday Saturday Sunday

Agenda - Social space - groups.

Time: Saturday 14.00 - 18.00

Participants will form groups and use the non verbal exploration to develop a common vocabulary and use this to agree on an agenda for the group collaboration.

Intro to social space - Naming the world together: participants write a word to describe how the W139 space feels. Use red/green tags from the morning. Discuss how to find common vocabulary. Move Tables in group setup

Create 4 groups that make a new map with the SOPs of group members.



Explore the neighborhood and rediscover the SOP of the group members. Discuss keywords for the SOP.

Take photos of SOPs with signs and keywords

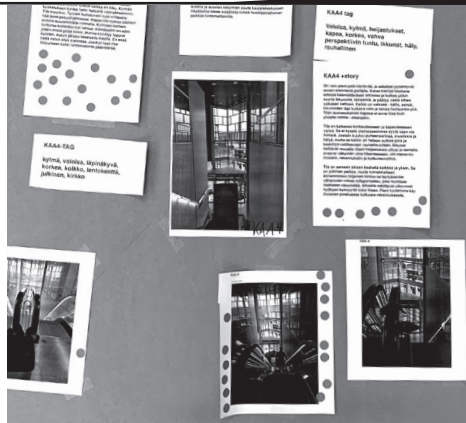
Illustration: Dylan style signs with background

Back in base: print out photos and attach to collage

Red dots are again used for a quick vote on the keywords.

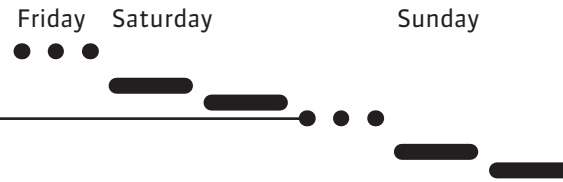
Discussion of the keywords/photos

Illustration: Collage with votes



The group chooses one SOP and creates a story/agenda to be presented in the evening.

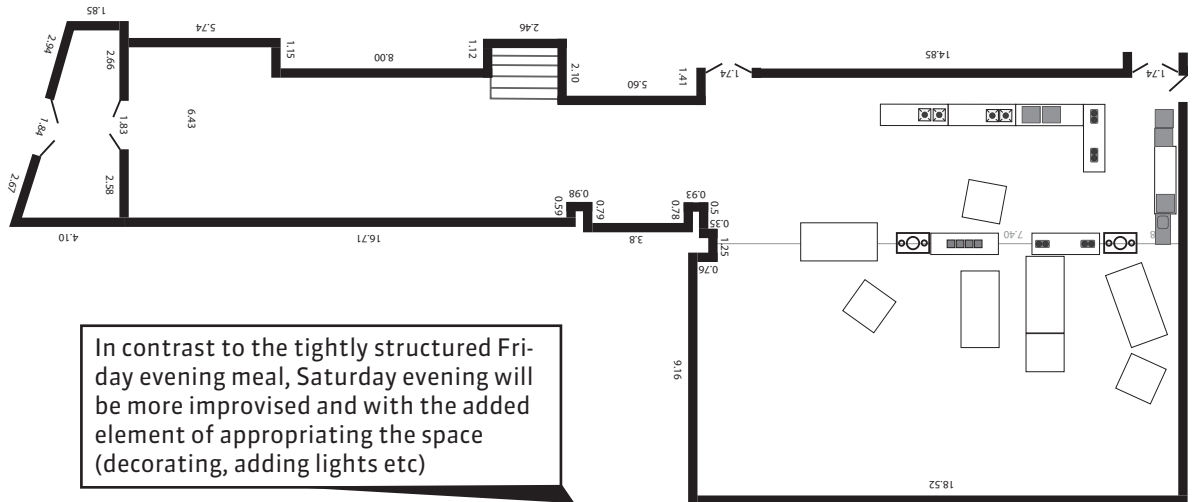
Second Evening Meal



The second evening meal

Time: Saturday 18.00 - 22.00

A less structured and more improvised evening will be used for presenting and discussing first agendas and ideas. Guests with relevant knowledge and background are invited to join this discussion



In contrast to the tightly structured Friday evening meal, Saturday evening will be more improvised and with the added element of appropriating the space (decorating, adding lights etc)



Enjoying common meal

The groups perform/present their SOP keywords and agenda for each other during and after the meal.

Comments from invited actors and general discussion and groups work on next steps - a tentative overall agenda

Action

Friday Saturday Sunday

Action - Societal / Public space

Time: Sunday 9.00 - 13.00

The groups do research into the societal aspects necessary to realise the agenda and produce a scenario that is presented and discussed in the afternoon public meeting.

Groups operationalise their ideas how to reach the agenda by doing research - onsite/online: Interviews w people on streets, shopkeepers etc. are supported by relevant info (political, economic, historic etc) found online

The groups make a first deeper analysis/ synthesis and develop rough scenarios.

Signs with keywords on collage - of the most important SOP.

The day begins with a “time machine” that uses the words (and the red and green stickers) that describes the W 139 from Saturday to look at the - societal - processes that led to how the space feels.

The aim is to make the discussion on change and transformative space more concrete. We will use signs that create a timeline on the wall to get the sense of the transformative dynamics of the urban - possibly including the landscape as the starting point for the city of Amsterdam.

This exercise will feed into the discussion on how to make this time machine go into the future and produce scenarios for how such a future could emerge.

Vote (dots) and discussion of the societal analysis and future scenarios

Groups work out a future scenario for their SOP

Text and illustrations on collages

Keywords/signs to be presented at the public event in the afternoon



Active space session - public presentation and discussion -

Time: 14.00 - 18.00

Presentation and refinement of the 4 scenarios using the active involvement and feedback from the public. A double or triple diamond structure that goes from focus to open and back

Scenarios

30 min - Tables in plenum setup

The 4 groups present their scenarios for “no city without art” in a condensed form (5 min each) using the signs made in the morning.

The signs with keywords are placed on the table and the public/participants vote after the 4 presentations

Welcome and introduction

3 topic sessions

Based on the vote the facilitator will find an overall topic for the first of 3 (or 2 if time is too tight) sessions.

Each session has the same rhythm going from a common topic decided in plenum to discussions in smaller groups and back to plenum where the groups present. After that a new vote is taken and the process begins a new round

Break

Lounge

1. Tables are pushed out to group setup - Groups form around each table

2. The groups discuss and pick one person to present the main points to the rest

3. Tables are pushed back into plenum and first topic discussion are summed up and presented

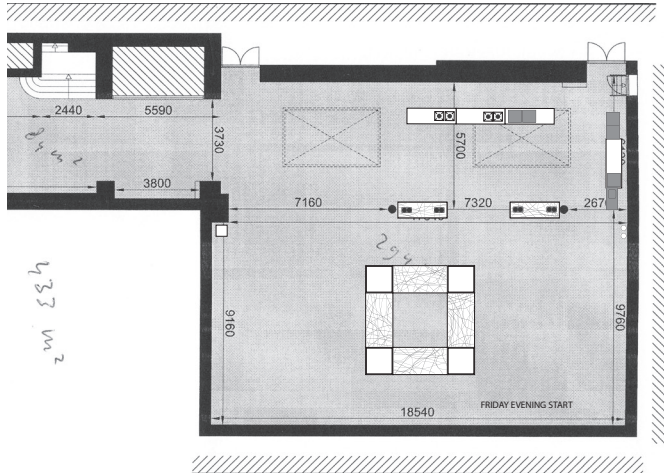
4. Short follow up questions and keywords are written down - votes with dots and new topic is decided

Plenum discussion. The facilitator writes down keywords in a more free manner.

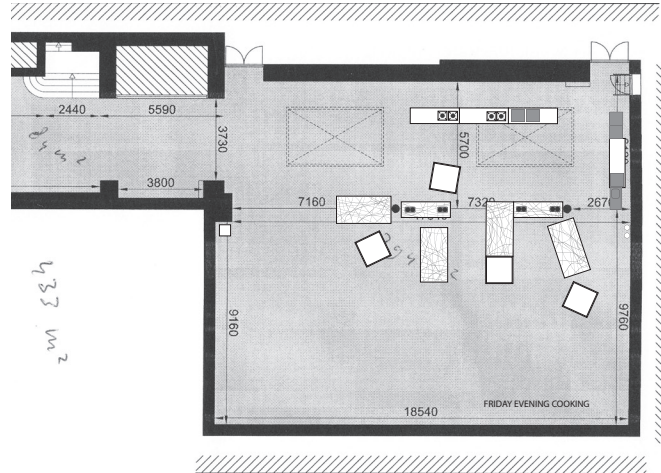
A final vote gives a general direction forward and the facilitator/organisers sums up the public meeting.

The Active Space Camp is a done in collaboration with the Amsterdam based artist, Bert Jacobs, who takes care of the scenography - the design of the tables and kitchen along with the cooking itself.

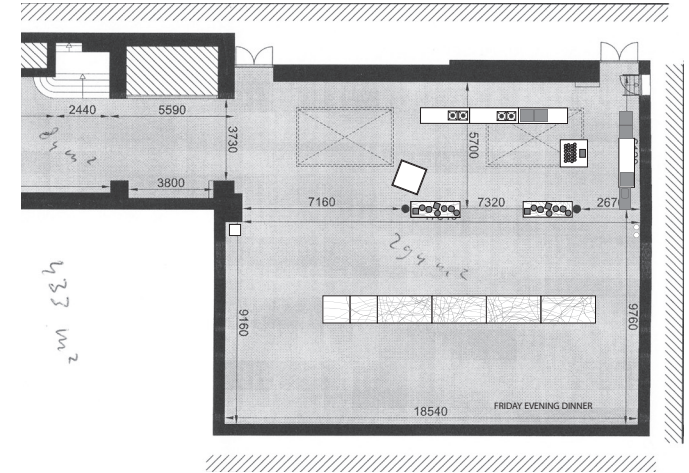
Below is the design for kitchen and tables in a number of setups.



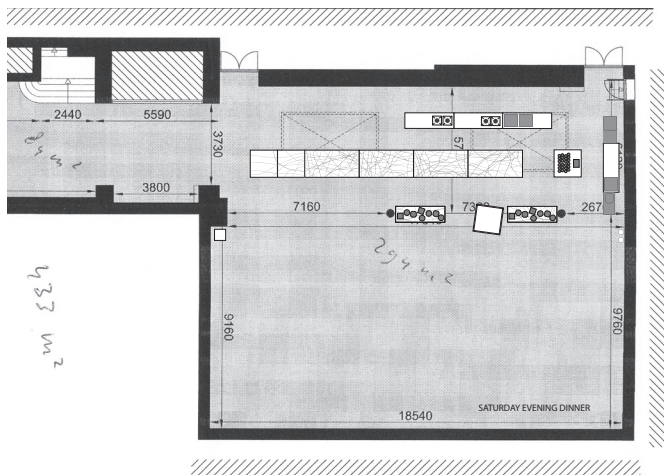
Friday evening arrival



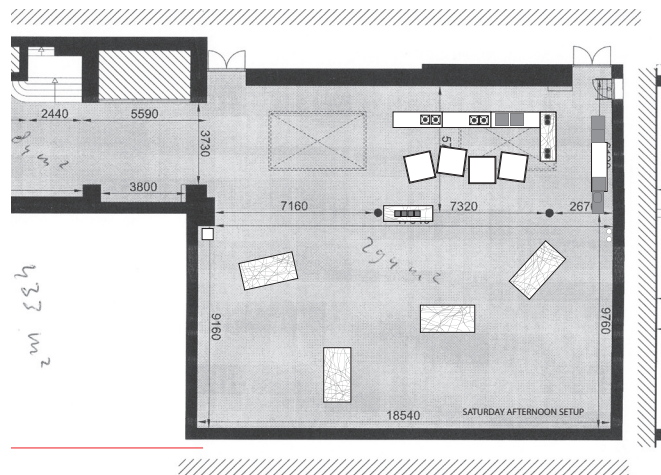
Friday evening cooking



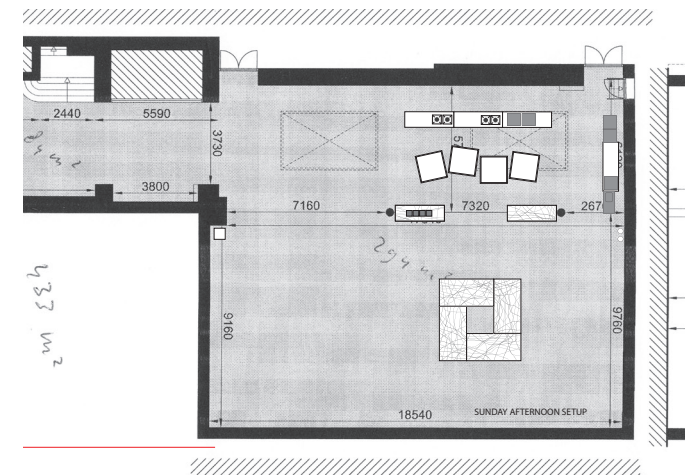
Friday evening common meal



Saturday evening common meal



Saturday and Sunday afternoons working in groups



Sunday public discussion