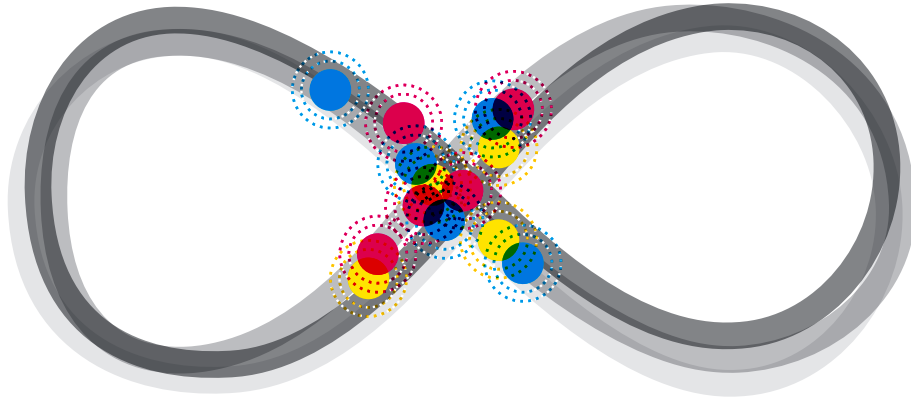


FUN CITY

This project is about making cities more democratic and dynamic by making them more urban. Democratisation aims to combat segregation and promote equality within the city, whereas dynamism creates the potential for self-organisation and entrepreneurship.

Fun City focuses on urbanising the city because the particular playful and political qualities of urban interaction give rise to the unknown and the new, thereby providing creative solutions for urban problems, but also making the city more magical.



Fun City imagines the design of a new urban commons as a process that involves three separate elements interacting to create a more urban city: Sensitivity of the city, Urban rhythm, and Layers of interactions. All three elements are considered in the context of the Boleyn Ground, an area to be developed in the near future, when West Ham United moves to the former Olympic Stadium.

URBAN INSENSITIVITY

Cities today face increasing cultural, social, economic, and political divisions. Segregation is commonly the expression of a desire to control a situation, to maintain or increase economic or political power.

The desire to divide and control also has its roots in modernist urban planning, which divided cities into functional zones and everyday life into work, sleep, and recreation. This way of thinking has long been discredited, yet it still exerts its influence on city planning.



Segregation and exclusion have, over time, become more subtle. It could be argued that they are unintentional and the result of a kind of tunnel vision symptomatic of professions related to urban development - seeing only what one wants to see or can see in one's own field of vision or work.

SENSITIVITY TOWARDS THE CITY

Developing a certain sensitivity towards the city involves being receptive towards its diversity, its chaos, ephemerality and confusion - the dreams, needs and interests in the city which are often invisible and overseen, yet are always present. This complexity is a key element in imagining a starting point in the urban food chain.

The most advanced sensory tool at our disposal in developing a “sensitivity of the city” is bodily presence. No other technology has thus far been able to combine the whole range of sensory tools that the body possesses, from the most basic senses like touch and hearing to the more conscious and rational vision.



While rational vision is important, it tends to overlook a number of invisible factors, such as the atmosphere of the Earth, which, while invisible, is part of a complex ecosystem that, among other things, produces the oxygen that keeps us alive.

COMPLEX

Developing a sensitivity towards the City is the starting point for slowly setting an Urban Rhythm in motion. The key method is to be present and to listen to the language of a neighbourhood in order to discover not only what is or should be talked about, but also how to talk about things.

The challenge is to document the stories in and about the city without reducing sensory and social experience to predefined topics. A 1:1 mapping tool using technology allows for topics and patterns to gradually emerge, establishing where and what is important in a community.

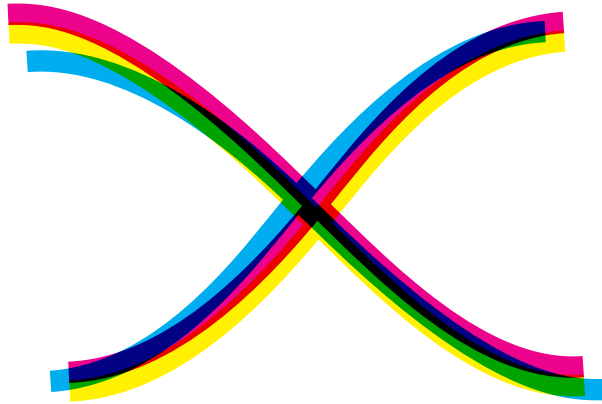


These chance encounters can also be used to inform people about future events, meetings, etc. that they can participate in. Repeating these mappings makes it possible to document urban change and determine whether certain goals have been reached.

COLLECTIVE

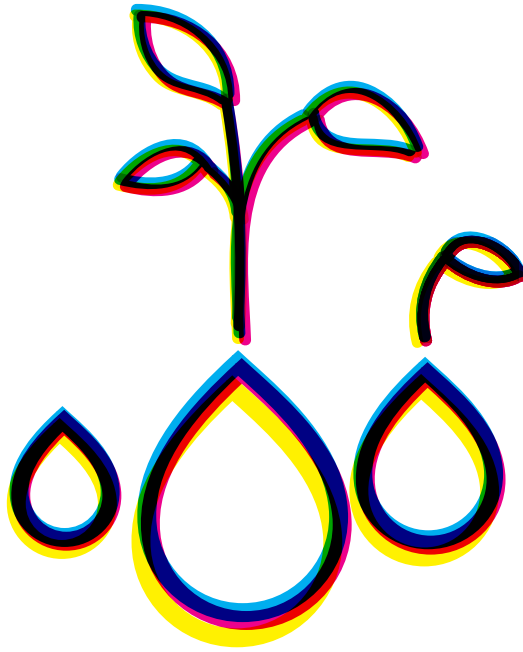
Fun City sees commoning as an everyday act—how we move around in the city and thus “vote with our feet” or the way we interact when we pass each other on the street and, for a brief moment, unconsciously engage in a dialogue about how to pass by each other.

In combination with other small-scale interactions, these basic elements of the urban food chain can evolve into changes to the (culture of the) city. Attention to these basic parts of the food chain demands that we be somewhat militant about both the direct and more subtle mechanisms of exclusion.



The stories in and about the city can facilitate dialogue and help determine what collective goals are most important. Constant experimentation in and with urban spaces, employing a combination of playground and parliament, can result in a collectively produced space that is the product of (and responds to) a specific time and location.

CHANGE



In order to establish a strong urban rhythm, it is important to acknowledge the two types of beauty present in the city - the beauty of the product and the beauty of the process. While the beauty of the product tends to be static, the process is at first daunting and chaotic, but it later acquires a kind of beauty that people prefer, because it has a soul.

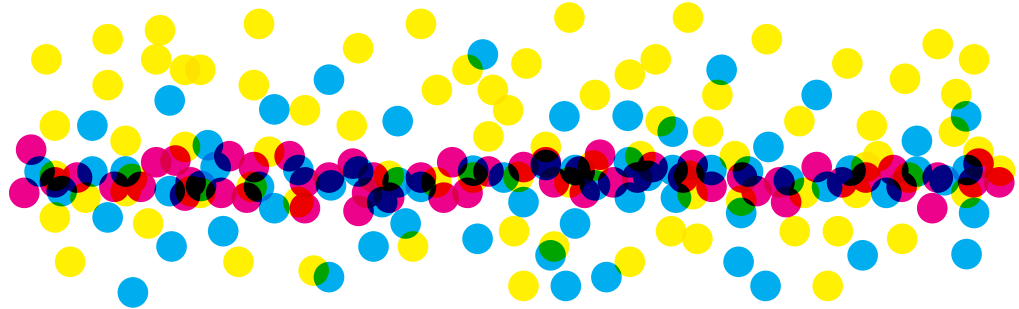
Driven by market forces, the economic dynamics of the city will always strive to create finished commodified products, real estate that can be bought and sold. These forces eventually slow down the dynamics of the urban rhythm by not allowing for the unknown and the new.

The Fun City is an iterative process, designed to engage with new ideas, networks, and initiatives. The city needs fallow lands, just as they serve an integral purpose in the rhythm of traditional farming. Comparable urban territories are abandoned factories with cheap rent that provide a fertile ground for new experiments and initiatives.

STUFF

What is the stuff that cities are built of? Shakespeare's the stuff that dreams are made on plays with the idea of solid reality vs. illusion and just play. The stuff that the city is built of could be described as both relational and situated: We are here now.

This is the stuff that is often absent from abstract representations, such as the models and drawings that we usually use in urban planning. To acknowledge the stuff in working with the city allows us to employ our intuition and correlative thinking, and to remain open to the unknown and new.



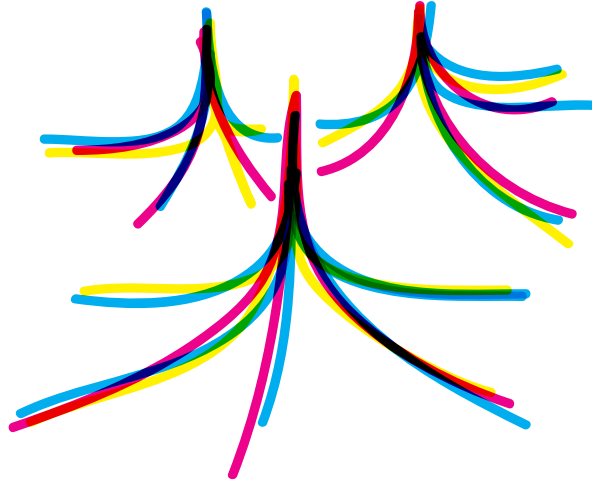
We need to combine the rational and abstract planning tools with working with the stuff by taking the work with the city to the streets, by making our engagement with the urban environment much more present and concrete, and fostering a level of openness that allows for spontaneous interaction and improvisations to produce the city.

FOUNDATION

A foundation of local capacity would have three elements: communication, knowledge and (self)organisation.

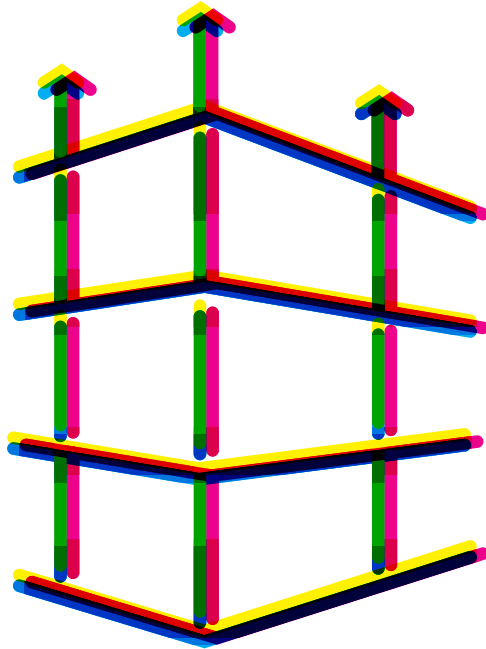
Local media hubs would promote local storytelling and identity, reduce conflict, and enhance local interaction. Taking it to the streets would mean using urban spaces for posting and distributing posters, flyers, banners, etc. The understanding and use of public space as a public (urban) service has the potential to produce a great deal of innovation.

Knowledge power in the service of a community is the process of accumulation of local knowledge and skills. Involving independent institutions such as universities and vocational schools would benefit the local community and provide students with the opportunity to put their knowledge into practice in everyday collaborative situations.



The third empowerment tool is the promotion of self-organisation through learning about collaboration, lobbying/political action, marketing/communication, economy, community engagement, etc. This could lead to urban entrepreneurship that creates local jobs and addresses local needs.

BUILDING

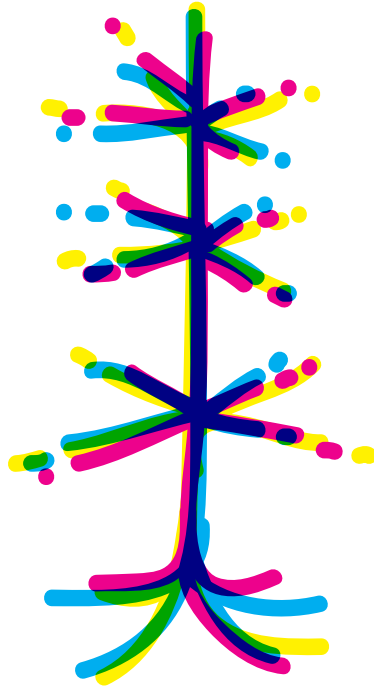


The Fun City aims to combine traditional infrastructure and public services, such as clean water, roads with skeletal building structures with collective ownership and people paying for the right of use in order to appropriate and inhabit the structure. Many variations of self-building could be imagined.

The building process would act as a counter-cyclical measure similar to the building of other types of infrastructure, and this could be done in local communities by employing groups of otherwise unemployed residents (especially youth).

Spatial compositions could be tested (and discussed) in 1:1 by placing a building crane in the centre of a future urban space. This would take collaborative design and co-production of space to a new, much more concrete and complex – but also potentially fun-level.

SPACE



Today the power of public space is evident in projects by large companies that organise around common spaces to facilitate unplanned collaboration. Fun City will bring that power of public spaces back to the city.

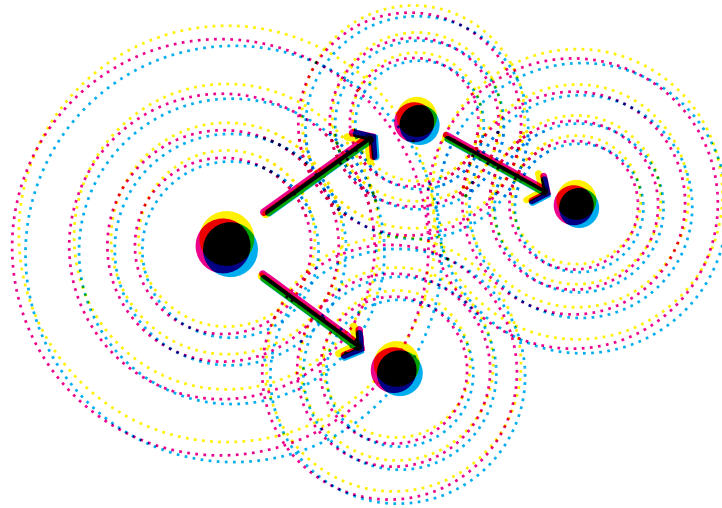
Urban spaces can be seen as a new public (or urban) service – such as (or a supplement to) the BBC – that facilitates urban life. This would involve creating an organisational backbone structure in a neighbourhood (similar to open source technologies) that nurtures collaboration and benefits both the individual and the common good.

Fun City sees Urban Spaces as a combination of playgrounds (for adults and kids), laboratories, arenas for decision-making, workshops – building or changing both physical and social spaces. These environments would nurture local culture – the urban food chain - from the smallest everyday interaction to large-scale events and festivals.

CITY

The right to the city in the Fun City is also the right to local decision-making according to local needs. Many people are interested in public services “that just work”, while others want to be involved in the process of deciding how to live and create their urban spaces.

The Fun City would grow in the form of offshoots from existing edges of the city, so as to include in its growth as much as possible of the existing atmospheres – the dreams, needs and interests – of local communities. A traditional urban plan is far too static to accommodate and stimulate the kind of change that this project proposes.



The offshoots will create a network of different urban spaces– a city made up of different neighborhoods with distinct atmospheres. People can wander around, meet, vote with their feet and experience the Fun City as a complex, collective and constantly changing “body of art”.