



OCCUPYING THE POST INDUSTRIAL CITY
TEST UNIT 2017

Editorial:
dpr-barcelona

Ethel Baraona Pohl,
César Reyes Nájera

Dear Test Unit, what's the name of your neighbour?

How do we create change in cities? According to Test Unit's attitude, change comes from activism in public space – in doing, not just talking. Their actions, which started in 2016 in Bairds Brae in North Glasgow, have been continued this year with the “occupation” of Civic House; a space currently being developed to explore alternative approaches to city development.

The intense summer school week allowed five groups to test context-specific actions with the aim to start a process of site activation in a city with multiple vacant buildings as a result of industrial decline. No need to point to the experience of the facilitators, all young and heavily experienced in this kind of initiative. They explored less capital intensive processes, and their workshops were boosted with the energy of around fifty summer school attendees. But this energy can be also its main obstacle. Because, what will happen when all those enthusiastic participants leave the venue?

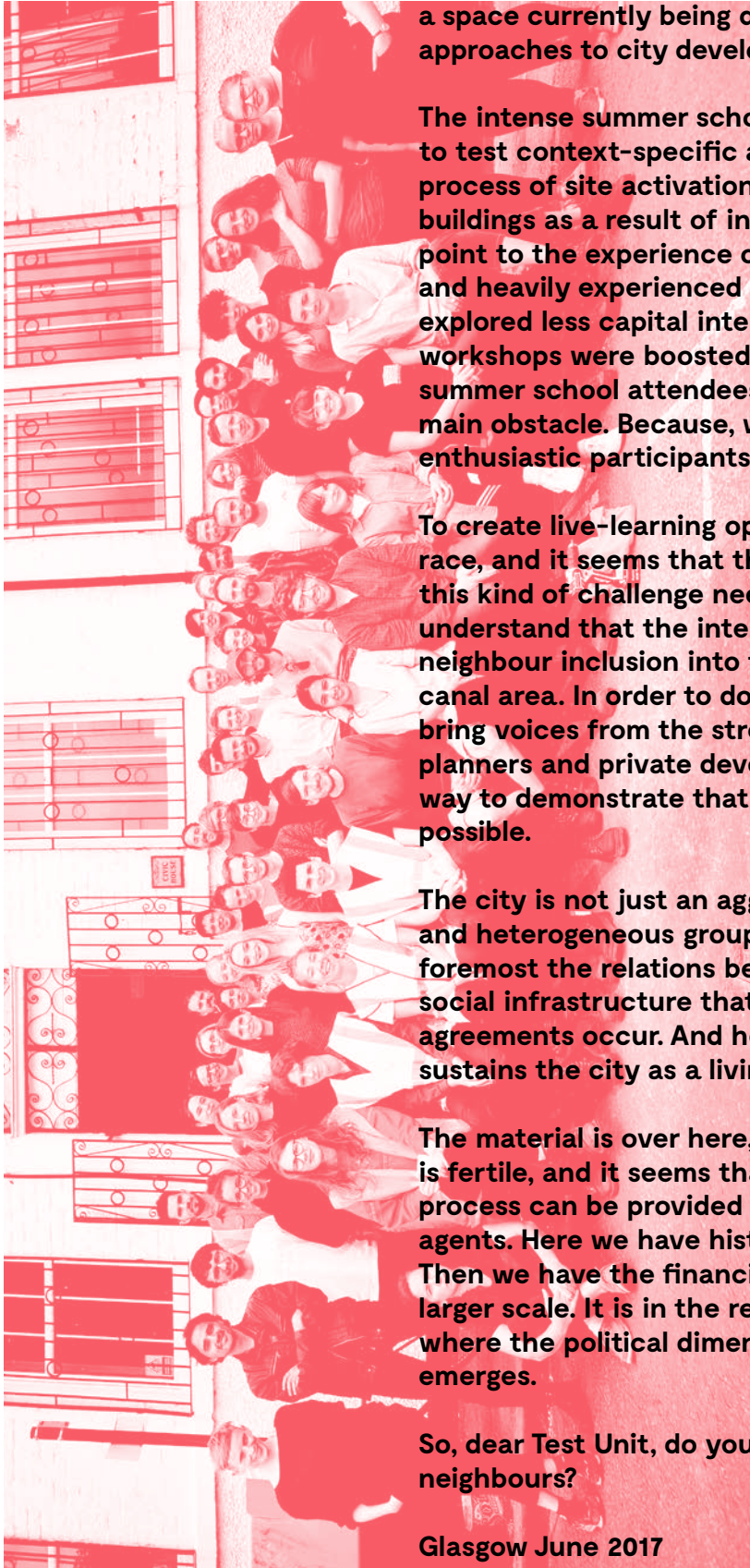
To create live-learning opportunities is a long walk race, and it seems that the Test Unit team is aware that this kind of challenge needs time and consistency. We understand that the intention is to create a process of neighbour inclusion into the development of the north canal area. In order to do so, it would be necessary to bring voices from the street into the offices of urban planners and private developers. This can be a possible way to demonstrate that other rights to the city are possible.

The city is not just an agglomeration of built spaces and heterogeneous group of people, it is first and foremost the relations between them. It's within this social infrastructure that frictions, negotiations, and agreements occur. And here lies the energy which sustains the city as a living social system.

The material is over here, the former industrial ground is fertile, and it seems that the energy to thrive in the process can be provided by a group of young creative agents. Here we have history, people, context, memories. Then we have the financial forces that shape the city in larger scale. It is in the relation within such neighbours, where the political dimension of Test Unit prototypes emerges.

So, dear Test Unit, do you know the name of your neighbours?

Glasgow June 2017



VOICES

PARTICIPANTS:

“One of the most important things is to know the history of the place. Then you can build your project as a communication tool for that history and sharing new ideas—we can learn a lot from each other by knowing the local context.”

— Alessandro, Façades unit

“We think it’s all about context. How to adapt the pre-existence and adjust them for new urban interventions to activate the site quickly.”

— Zeba and Molly, Urban Bothy unit

“We need to be aware of how much decision making is needed. How many negotiations we need to consider in order to make a project.”

— Ruudu and Heather, Responsive Lighting unit

“We’ve learnt the value of different kinds of ‘currencies’. To give value to other ways of exchange. With this we’re not trying to solve a problem immediately, to create different business structures takes time.”

— William, Collaborative Economies unit



“what is fantastic is that they own the building here, having then the opportunity to make something in a steadier way, to continue to research and experiment. To do something responsive to the conditions they have here.”

— Hannah Lambert, London Legacy Development Corporation

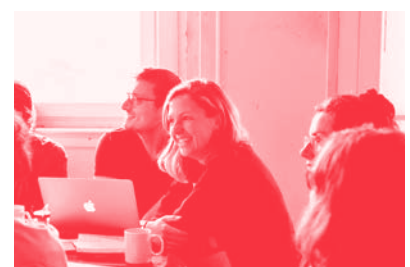
“I wonder what message they’re going to bring and to whom are they addressing. For me these are key questions.”

— Eva de Klerk, NDSM, Amsterdam

“It’s important to have a step by step process. It’s very reassuring to start with something, test it, try it, and sometimes maybe admit it was not exactly what you pretended to do.”

— Jean-Baptiste Roussat, Les Grands Voisins, Paris

SPEAKERS:



Group members:
William Aikman,
Heather Claridge, Ioana
Lupascu, Kyle Mcaslan,
Eve Mccann, Daniele
Sambo, Roy Shearer,
Ruudu Ulas, Vincent
Rebers

Welcome to the night-shift of Test Unit 2017.

We are the responsive lighting unit and our challenge during the summer school was to prototype a lighting scheme which could animate the area and bring a playful approach to alleviating issues of safety at night. This, unfortunately for us, coincided with the summer solstice.



Civic House is passed by many; cyclists, walkers, local residents, workers and dog walkers. The constant presence of the motorway, which dominates the soundscape, and the tranquil flow of water from the canal up the hill, makes this a place of transit and an interesting area to reimagine.

The concept of play, surprise and discovery was at the centre of our approach. We spent long hours trying to articulate how to find interactive ways to construct a dialogue between the past, present and future for the area. Could we create a platform for Civic House to speak to the City? An architectural oracle? Ask a question and the windows will get back to you: No, Yes, Maybe? Could we create a game to highlight the dialogue between the city and the building?

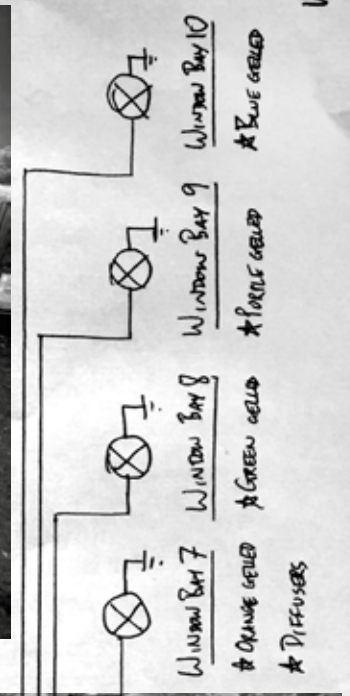
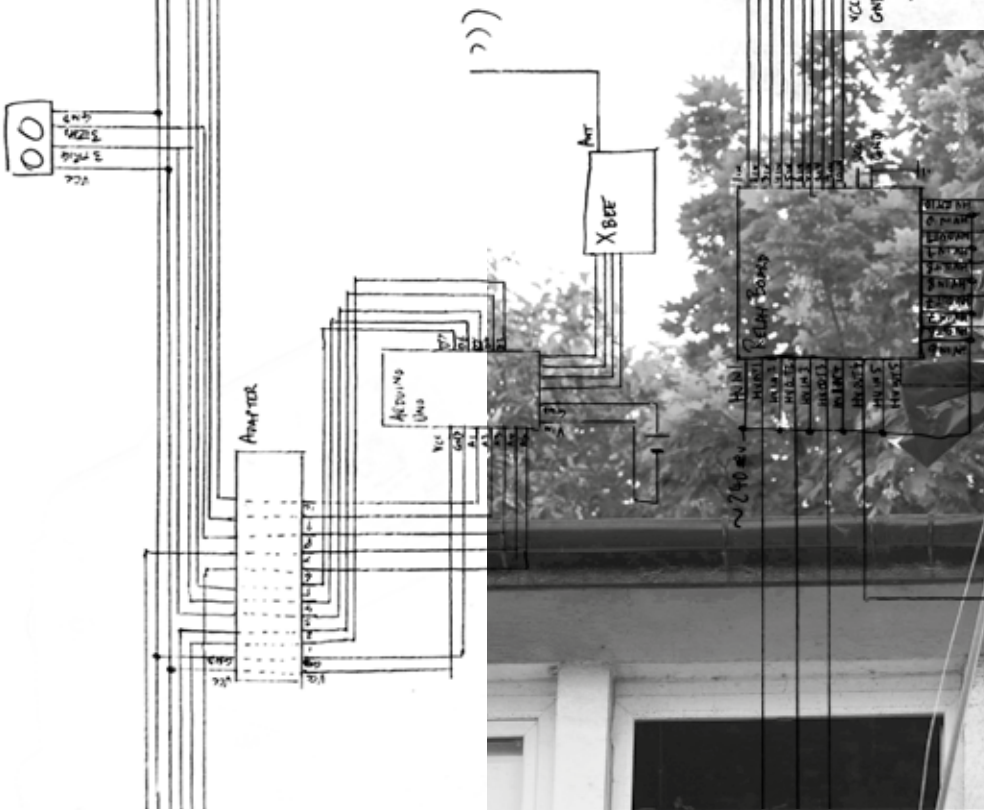
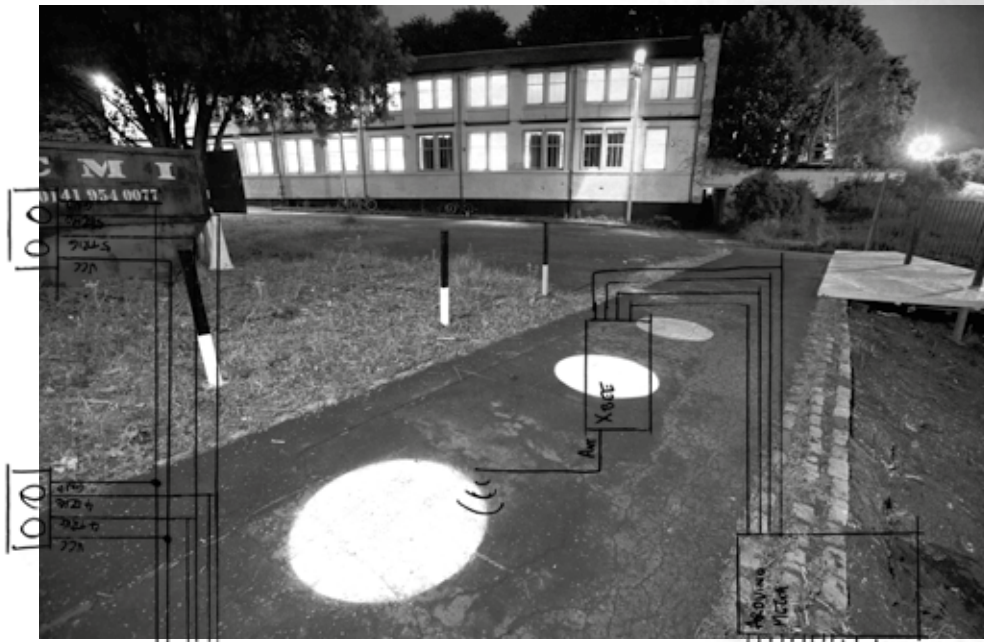
Our test-intervention wants to give you a focal point! Creating a dialogue with the passer-by and showing an energy and activity inside a place that otherwise may be mistaken for another piece of forgotten post-industrial architecture.



SENSOR 5

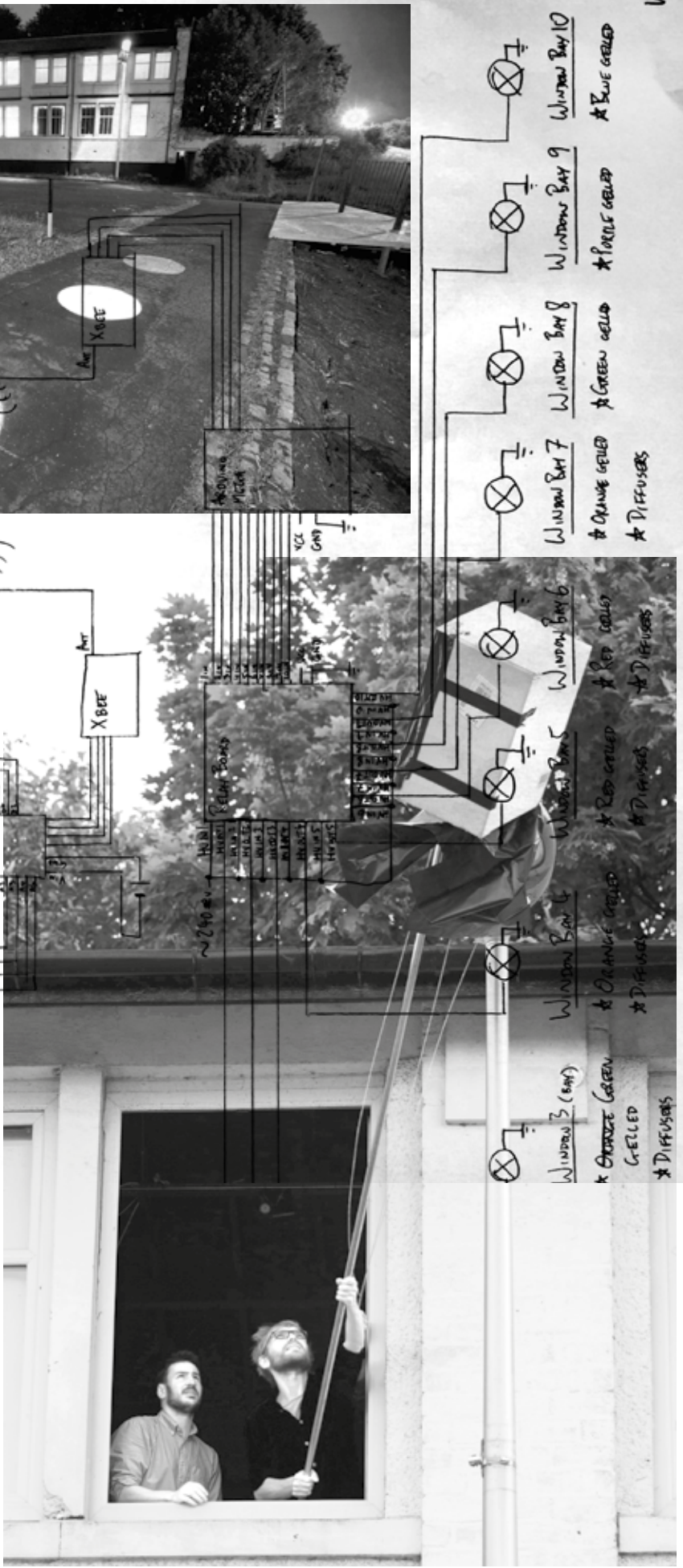
SENSOR 4

SENSOR 3



WA

Facilitator: Elie Lakin
Jason Bruges Studio
 Using light and technologies as a tool to change perceptions and engagement with public space.



Group members:

Rory King, Nils Aksnes,
Zeba Aziz, Rachel Millar,
Molly Gordon, Louise
Nolan, Paul Ede, Freya
Bruce, Aleksandra
Czekaj, Issy Arnold



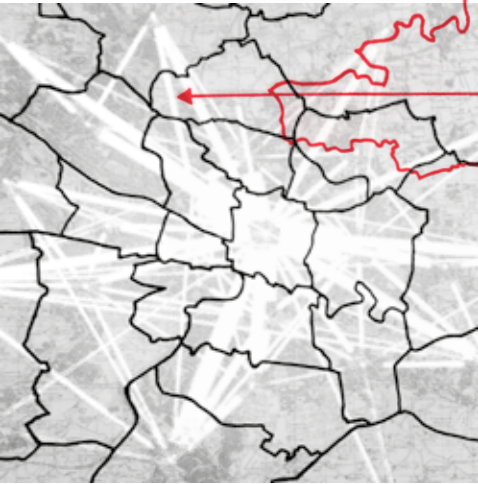
The urban bothy brought together a diverse range of participants representing community arts, local activism, landscape architecture, art, graphic design and architecture to conceive, develop and deliver a small place of reflection that could facilitate an overnight stay. The form, concept and purpose was not predetermined but evolved concurrently as the group commenced work. There was minimal formal discussion and drawing; instead a continual process of ideas, testing, making and negotiation.

The original brief to consider alternative forms of micro-tourism was evolved by the group into an intention that our structure should be used to educate the occupant on the history and impact of the adjacent M8 motorway, to act as a sensory register and to ultimately reconsider the motorway as an object worthy of worship. As with all objects of worship the motorway inspires both fear and devotion; an object simultaneously of connection and division. As architecture the urban bothy creates a small scale civic presence that acts as a landmark, a point of orientation and an invitation. It responds to its immediate site; being responsive to existing plants and features and responds the wider context framing views and responding to routes and threshold. The making of this project has taught the group basic construction skills but much more importantly an attitude to making that is rooted in the value of ideas and agency. As the week progressed the requirement for tuition, supervision and instruction incrementally reduced to the point that my own involvement as a facilitator became redundant; which should be the ultimate aim of anyone endowed with a level of power and responsibility.

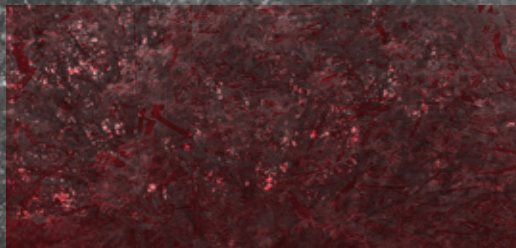


**Facilitator: Lee Ivett
Baxendale**

Exploring micro tourism, urban dwellings and occupation of urban space.



COMMUNICATIONS



Group members:
Grace Winteringham,
Vlad Bodogan, Rebecca
Sainsot-Reybolds,
Lotte Kravitz, Alice
Grant, Murray Marrant,
Julian Vassallo,
Matthieu Robin

Spatial Occupation Unit has been exploring the idea of the commons as a way of breaking down the false binary of public/private, and grappling with the possibility of growing more collective, self driven and co-owned models of occupying and developing urban space.

Over five days of collective interrogation, and some individual common sense, it is understood that the commons are...

...a communally shared resource

...how a group manage a resource collectively

...a shared resource which can satisfy independent needs

...no accident

...the shared resource available to the collective, determined by individual action

...an agreement or system that caters for common needs, agreed between units that strengthens and benefits all involved, visibly and tangibly as well as on less perceived levels; community, communication, social or economic

...a space or resource that is relevant to a particular group, often geographic

...a self enforced system of resource sharing - resulting in equal benefit for all



KIRSTY

I wish that



**Facilitators: Amica Dall
(Assemble), Rob Morrison
& Simon Worthington (TAKTAL)**

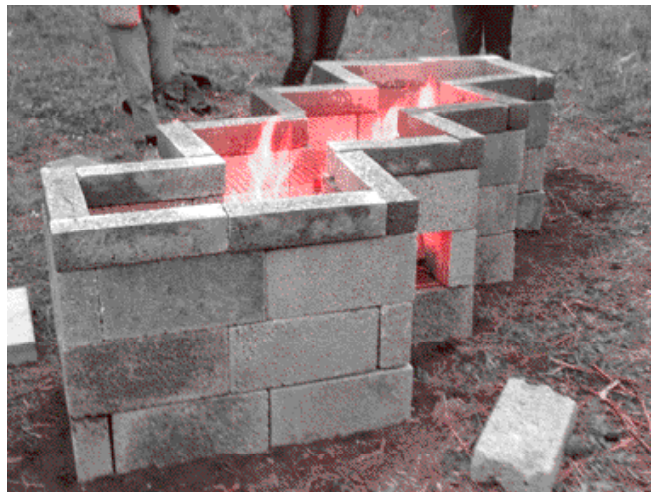
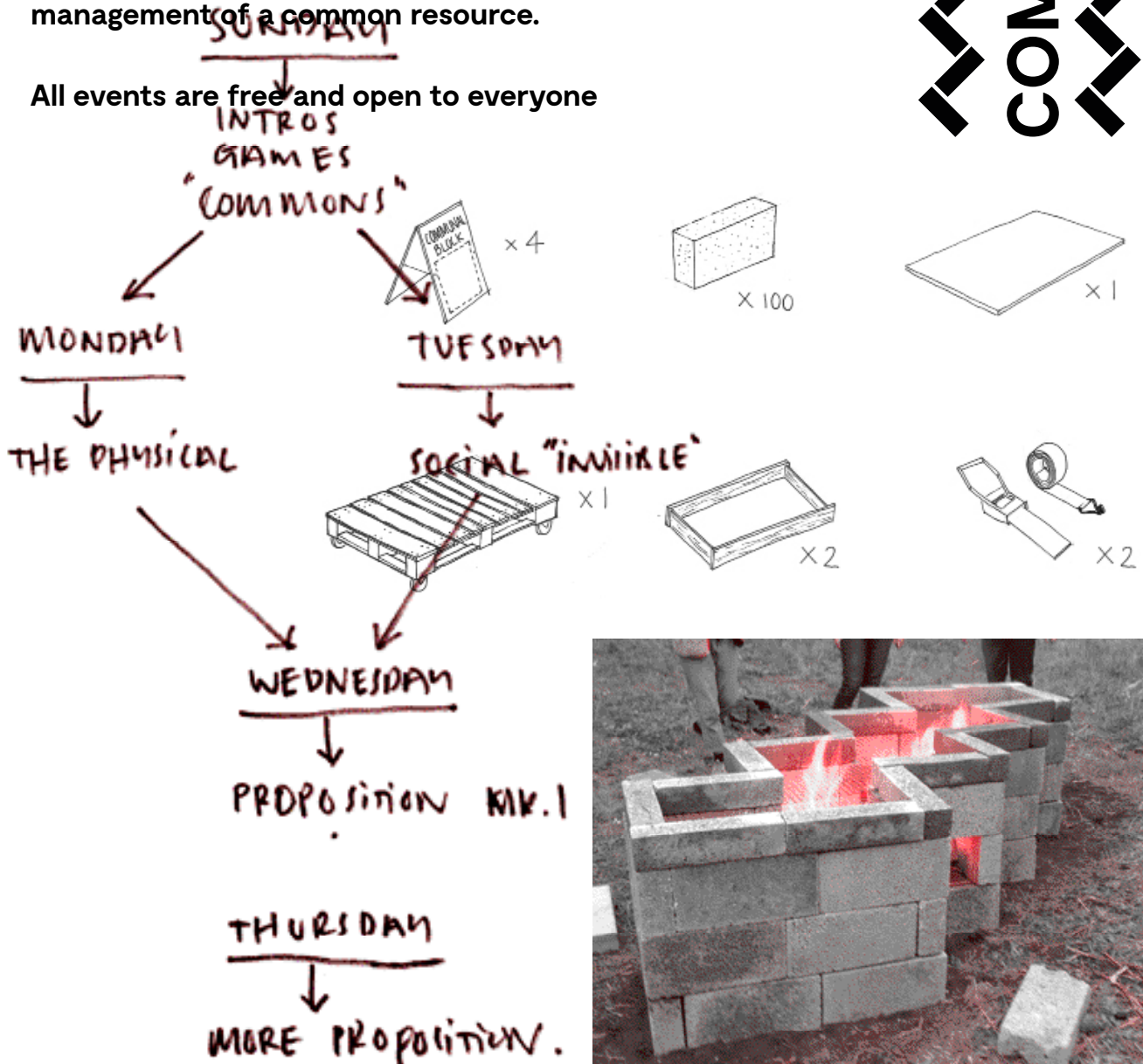
Common Block is a communal fire cooking kit.

It connects people who live and work around Speirs Locks through collective construction and sharing food in public space.

Many of the local businesses in this area can be linked through four strands – food, DIY, culture and outdoor activities.

Common Block aims to connect these through principles of cooperation, exchange and management of a common resource.

All events are free and open to everyone



Group members:
Kat Loudon, Andrew Beltran, Fiona Hunter, Sean Ardor, Oscar Park, Alessandro Marini, Fraser Yardley, David Grant



Facilitator: Neil McGuire
A Feral Studio (with support from Recoat)
Making buildings and sites more communicative through design.

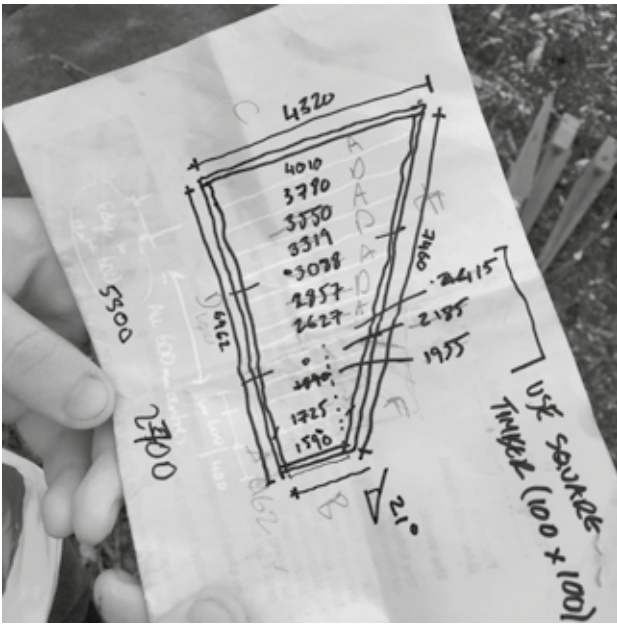
The Brief: 'How could we re-imagine the possibilities for Phoenix Nursery? How could design interventions communicate these possibilities?

How can a two dimensional objects inhabit a three dimensional space? What constitutes a boundary? How permeable can a barrier be? We created a series of façades to explore these questions as well as announce the occupation of Civic House.

After scoping the Phoenix Nursery site from a number of perspectives - micro, macro, historical - our first move involved removing parts of the perimeter fence. This simple direct action immediately made the space accessible from a number of directions and offered routes and pathways through the site. Working at a range of scales, a false-perspective sign is designed to catch the attention of passers by and encourage them to examine the site from a range of angles. At the front and rear of the site the sign (typographic shapes which are simple and modular - based on the educational toys of the nursery that once stood on site), is integrated into the patchwork of surrounding fences - the latest addition to what could possibly be Europe's most dense fence-type to square kilometre ratio.

A new elevated platform at the north-east corner of the site suggests multiple uses; a threshold, entry point, vantage point and possible performance area, referring back to Phoenix park and its bandstand which was once situated where the nearby M8 motorway now runs. Between the two, a series of vertical lines (wooden poles and pvc pipes) combine to suggest a line through the site and provide a framework upon which other things could be hung or built. Last but not least an improvised musical instrument made from a combination of re-purposed GSA MFA artwork from the nearby Glue Factory, and staves from cut pieces of the sites perimeter fence, a xylophone (or die-lo-phone to give it its proper health and safety defying name) sits at the corner of the site.





Discussions throughout the week were wide-ranging - from angle-grinding techniques to the contemporary and pressing philosophical question of what the opposite of a fence might be. Debates included the degree to which the site elements should be interactive, and to what extent activity there should be planned or not. We hope the interventions offer affordances to passers by - an invitation to interact should they wish, but without being didactic about how, when or where that should take place. All of these elements constitute surfaces of different types, either repurposed, removed, redesigned or added new. By thinking about façades, and expanding this to talk about thresholds and edges, a once rough patch of hardcore and weeds has been cleared and a new route across it suggested, inviting others into use and occupy the space.



Group members:
Lizzie Abernethy, Lewis Prosser, Brian Morgan, William McRoberts, Esme Armour, Naomi Rubbra, Anna Wachsmuth, Helen King, Chris Strachan

The Institute for Spontaneous Generation has been developed over the course of Test Unit to explore ways of building collaborative economies which question our current notion of wealth and value. Our name was taken from the ancient scientific theory that life (i.e. maggots) can spontaneously generate from sterile environments and non-living matter - we drew parallels between this and quantitative easing, and money itself. If money is only a form of exchange, we began to question what form a more meaningful exchange might take. Hence our Institute's manifesto: The Currency is Dialogue.

Our Institute's activities are split across three projects:

The Grub Economy: Our creative currency aims to bring people together for a spontaneous event: to create new bonds through communal activity. In groups, shareholders of paper bonds create immaterial bonds with each other, by searching for their piece of Grub and assembling the pieces collaboratively with other shareholders to form a giant maggot. The maggot will then be ceremonially floated down the canal: floating the shares on the fluid market, instantaneously going into liquidation.

Spontaneous Record: Through various forms of investment, whether financial, skill or time based, we developed a shareholder owned publication that aims to increase dialogue in the local community. We recognised that although there are multiple stakeholders, there is a lack of communication about local activity. Civic House used to be home to Civic Press, a left-wing printing press. We are building upon the site's history by proposing a new community owned publication.

The Paper Factory: We are recycling local domestic and commercial paper waste to create new paper. By seeing waste as an asset instead of burden we can consider innovative ways to build sustainable products, which can then be used to kickstart new projects that will continue to build collaborative economies.

1. Money is a fiction
2. Dialogue is real
3. Maggots





Facilitator: Valentina Karga
New forms of industry and
alternative models to devel-
op inclusive growth.



TURNCOATS DEBATE:

**Diarmaid Lawlor
Phin Harper
Penny Lewis
Amica Dall**

**Chaired by:
Ambrose Gillick**

**With thanks to Penny
Lewis for sharing her
notes, and Debbie Leane
for the transcription.**

PROS

**Dethrones the
profession, promoting
action not ideas,
pointing the way to
the future of the
profession.**

**Gives the opportunity
to prototype, build
from scratch and test
building technology
in 1:1 scale, not tiny
plastic models**

**Innovates by
creating bottom-up
architecture, curating
communities not
buildings.**

**Blurs the boundaries of
the profession.**

CONS

**Collides with erosion
of wages and working
conditions for young
architects, legitimising
and letting joblessness
happen.**

**Assumes that pop-
ups are radical and
innovative which was
historically true but
now it's not. Today
the temporary is
mainstream.**

**Insituates that pop=ups
are more meaningful
than mainstream
architecture.**

**Is the built
environment equivalent
of The X Factor.**

**POP-UP?
PISS OFF!**



FRESH FROM TEST UNIT KITCHEN

Eating together is one of the basic forms of commonality. During this week several side discussions and ideas were shared around Civic House tables. Here you might have a taste of them.



Roast Cauliflower and Almond Salad

1 handful of cauliflower
1 handful of green sultanas
1 handful of dried apricots
1 handful of almonds
2 handfuls of chopped parsley
½ handful of cranberries
1 Red Onion
Lemon
Salt
Pomegranate molasses
Olive Oil

Toss the cauliflower in a tablespoon of turmeric, then roast it in florets.

Chop the almonds and fry in olive oil.

Mix the red onion, sultanas, apricots, cranberries in 4 tablespoons of sherry vinegar. Leave them for 10 minutes.

Mix the cauliflowers, almonds, chopped parsley, with 1 tablespoon of lemon juice, and 1 tablespoon of pomegranate molasses.

Add salt and olive oil to taste.



Title: Test Unit
Civic House & Phoenix Nursery
Conceived and developed by Agile City

Edited by dpr-barcelona and RISOTTO
Editorial support: Lizzie Abernethy & Debbie Leane
Photography: Eoin Carey
Graphic design and printing: RISOTTO

Thanks to: Eva de Klerk, Hannah Lambert,
Jean-Baptiste Roussat, Penny Lewis.
Lewis Carroll, Starship, Wietske Maas and
Matteo Pasquinelli, John Hejduk, Regina Spektor,
MAIO for borrowing material without knowing it.

Published by Agile City and dpr-barcelona
Glasgow, June 2017
ISBN: 978-84-942414-6-8

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COLOPHON

Test United has been generously supported by Creative Scotland, Glasgow City Council's Stalled Spaces programme, igloo regeneration, Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow Life, Scottish Canals, Scottish Enterprise, RISOTTO, FLUX Laser & CNC Studio, Williams Bros. Brewing Company, Mike Stoane Lighting, Land Engineering, LITE and Edinburgh Tool Library.

THANKS

ISBN 978-84-942414-6-8



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