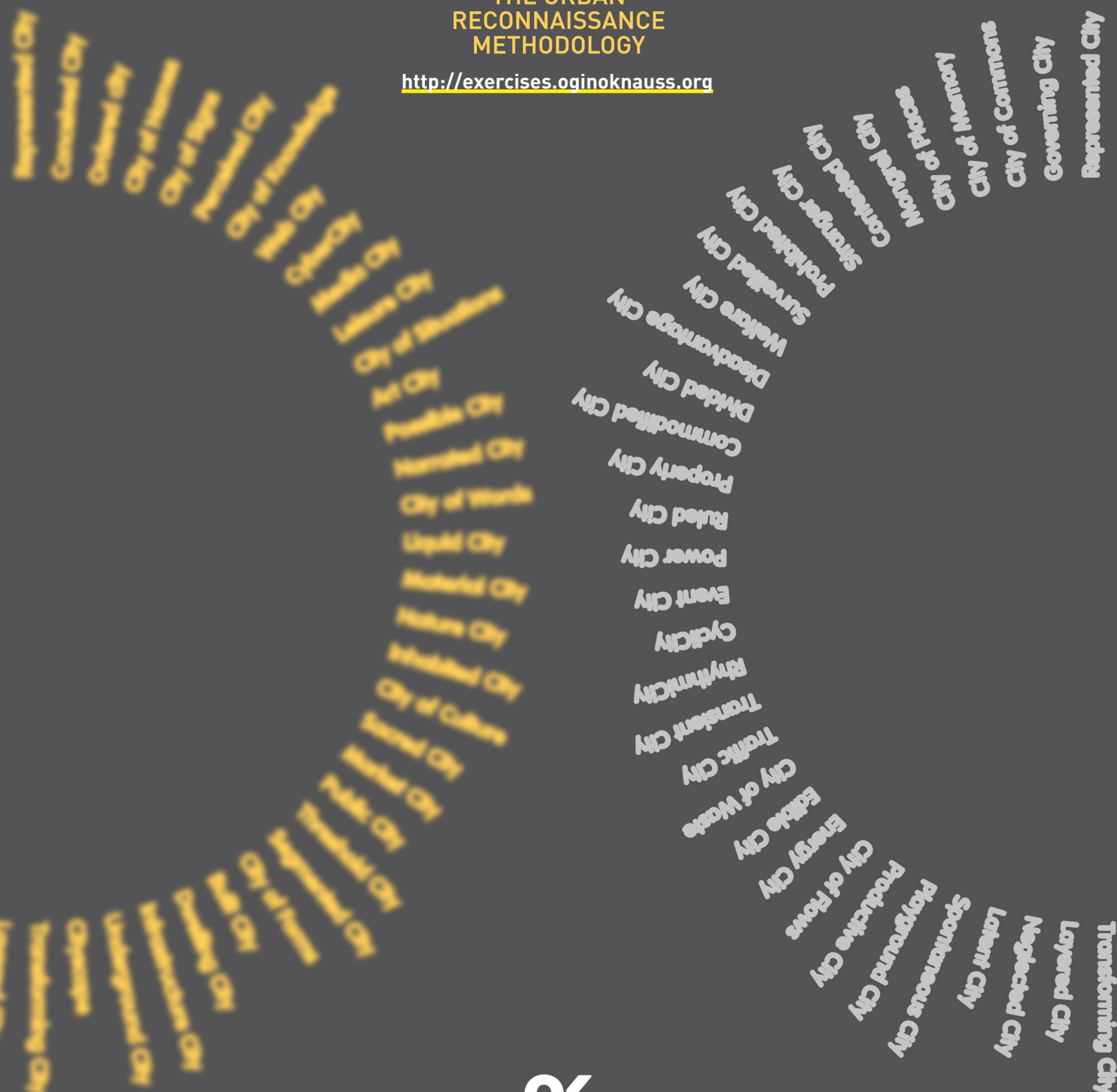




THE URBAN
RECONNAISSANCE
METHODOLOGY

<http://exercises.oginoknauss.org>



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Transforming City

Layered City

Neglected City

Latent City

Spontaneous City

Playground City

Productive City

City of Flows

Edible City

City of Waste

Traffic City

Transient City

Rhythmic City

Cyclic City

Event City

Power City

Ruled City

Property City

Commodified City

Divided City

Disadvantage City

Wake City

Survived City

Represented City

Governing City

City of Commons

City of Memory

City of Places

Contested City

Stronger City

Prohibited City

Monogel City

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Exercises in Urban Reconnaissance is developed by the **ogino:knauss** collective and produced by **Tesseractae - Urban Social Research**.

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Tesseractae and **ogino:knauss** are available to provide support and clarifications about the project and to support the publication of reports of laboratories and explorations.

Register here to receive the **Exercises in Urban Reconnaissance** newsletter.



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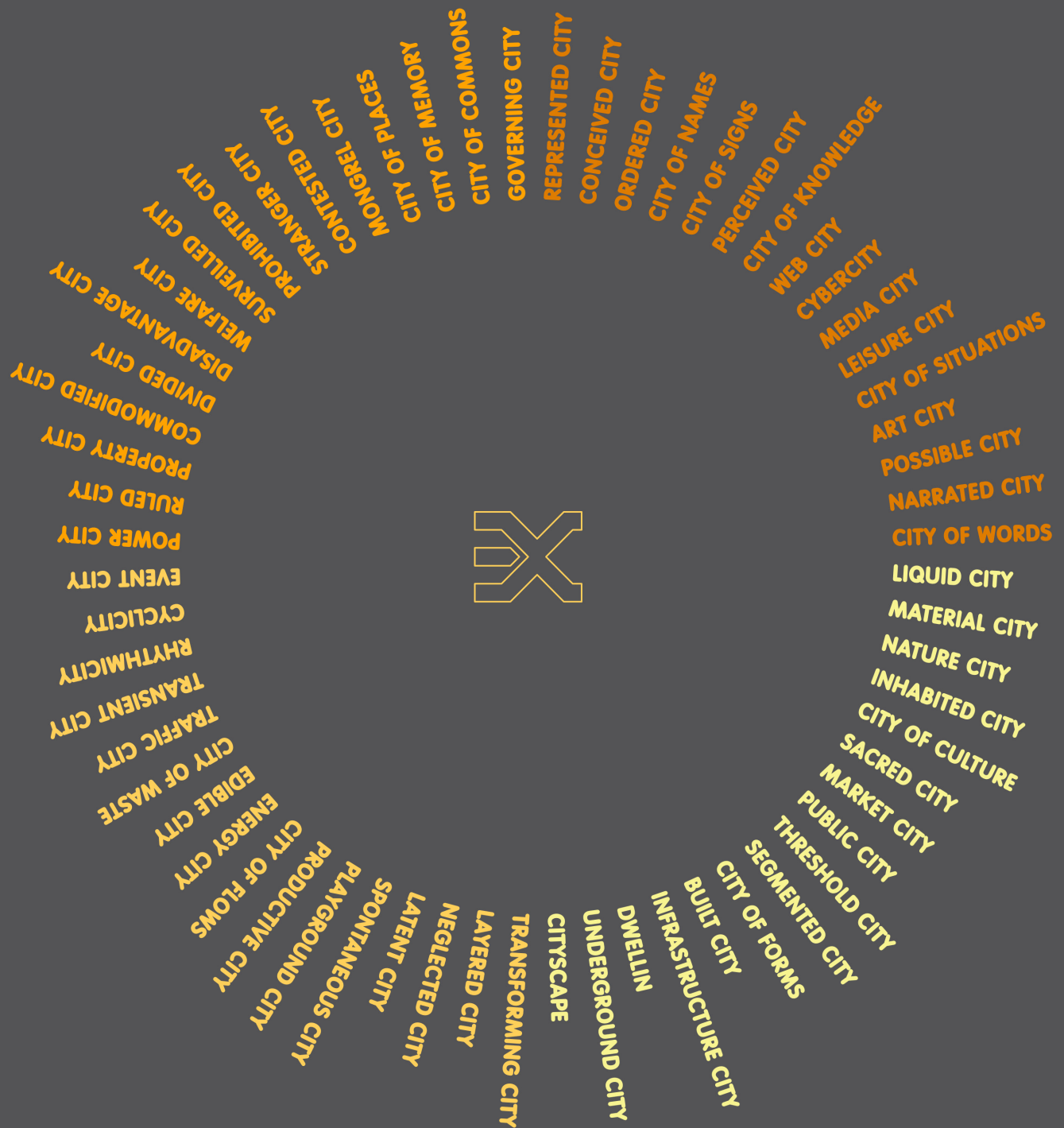
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Urban Reconnaissance is a methodology developed by the Oginoknaus collective and Tesserae Urban Social Research as a toolset for understanding and entangling urban complexities. The [UR Online device](#) displays a collection of sixty-four different definitions of the word “city”, each accompanied by a related exercise for a spatial / conceptual exploration. Altogether, the 64 definitions compose a matrix of constitutive elements of urbanity aimed at the interdisciplinary examination of its multiple interrelations and dependencies. Sixty-four keywords are displayed and arranged in a circle that encompasses the urban field. The circumference of words delineates a cognitive territory open to exploration and discussion. The definitions are linked to each other in a hypertext, relating the diverse factors that coincide together in determining urban identity, form and discourse.

The wheel is divided in four quadrants: The first including exercises 1-16 is entitled **formation** and gathers basic foundational elements of the urban ontology like water, matter, nature, population, market, infrastructure, dwelling, form, architecture, public space, etc. The second (17-32) - **transformation** – is dedicated to the urban as a process, approaching phenomena from their dynamic transformative capacity, i.e. production, stratification, neglect, transport, flows, education, rhythm, cycles, food, waste, etc. The third quadrant named **appropriation** (33-48) is the more exquisitely political domain including such elements as power, rules, property, commodities, segregation, contestation, surveillance, memory, places, estrangement, governance, commons, etc. The final set of sixteen key elements (49-64) tackles the aspect of **representation**, examining names, classifications, signs, perception, knowledge, data, communication, art, narrative, language, etc.

The sixty-four definitions serve as the starting point for as many exercises challenging the reader/explorer to observe, assess and represent the urban context according to one specific perspective. Each exercise suggests the adoption of a single vantage point to bring depth and contrast to vision, singling out particular elements, rhythms or systems concurring in the production of the overall urban identity. Each exercise includes instructions on how to generate an explorative itinerary, magnifying that specific perspective or disciplinary approach and a list of key questions suggested to investigate it. Finally, each exercise is accompanied by an example with notes, images and graphic suggestions from the authors’ travelogues. These examples are not meant to provide a complete elaboration, rather to slightly suggest possible interpretations of the exercise.

- FORMATION
- TRANSFORMATION
- APPROPRIATION
- REPRESENTATION



. Liquid City . Material City . Nature City .
Inhabited City . City of Culture . Sacred City
. Market City . Public City . Threshold City .
Segmented City . City of Forms . Built City
. Dwelling City . Infrastructure City . Un-
derground City . Cityscape . Transforming
City . Layered City . Neglected City . Latent
City . Spontaneous City . Playground City
. Productive City . City of Flows . Energy
City . Edible City . City of Waste . Traffic
City . Transient City . RhythmiCity . Cycli-
City . Event City . Power City . Ruled City
. Property City . Commodified City . Divi-
ded City . Disadvantage City . Welfare City .
Surveilled City . Prohibited City . Stranger
City . Contested City . Mongrel City . City
of Places . City of Memory . City of Com-
mons . Governing City . Represented City
. Conceived City . Ordered city . City of Na-
mes . City of Signs . Perceived City . City of
Knowledge . Web City . CyberCity . Media
City . Leisure City . City of Situations . Art
City . Possible City . Narrated City . City of
Words .



A METHODOLOGY FOR EXPLORING THE URBAN

Since its first publication on the web, the interactive device has been used as a tool for conducting workshops, seminars and specific spatial investigations, many of which have been documented in the related Urban Reconnaissance blog. Employed in different contexts, ranging from Northern European metropolises to sprawling territories of Southern Mediterranean coasts or small towns in the Caribbean islands, the Exercises in Urban Reconnaissance have demonstrated a great flexibility in encompassing both the common denominators of urbanization processes at a global scale and the specificities emerging in each given local territory.

The seminar activity provided the opportunity to check against concrete situations of the methodological device, and to steadily improve formulations and classificatory grid. The set of definitions and exercises has revealed substantial capacity to stimulate discussion among groups with diverse profiles, overcoming primarily scholarly/ academic publics. It has served as a conversational basis for users of different ages, culture and educational background intent on discussing diverse socio-spatial contexts. This seminar practice has resulted in a variety of ways to employ the set of exercises according to different learning and design purposes.

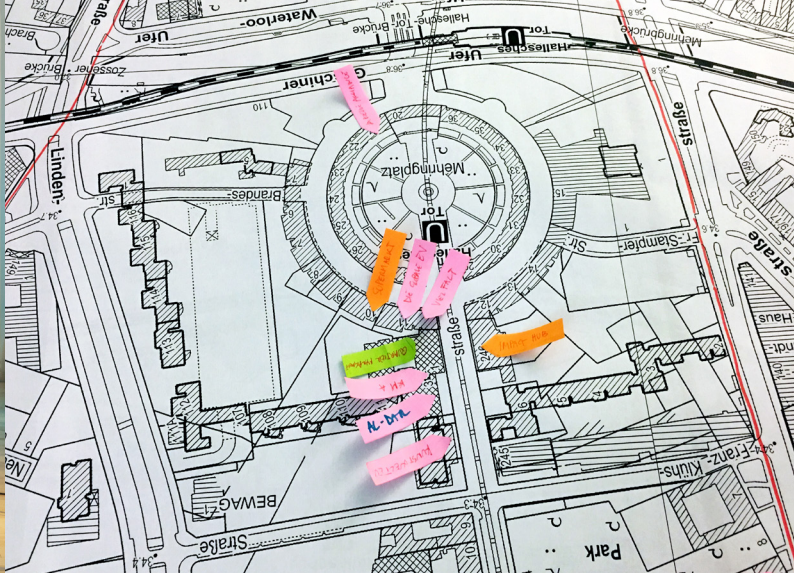
SETTING THE SCOPE AND STRUCTURING THE WORKSHOP

The UR methodology can be used to explore a bounded context like a neighbourhood, an area interested by a plan or the surroundings of a specific project. It can be applied to an entire city or metropolitan area, as well as a single street. The UR methodology can also be employed to assess or develop an itinerary or tour. A workshop can be developed with a participatory and political approach to spatial development, for practical design purposes or as a tool for artistic practice or documentary projects. The Urban Reconnaissance methodology can be applied to the purpose of investigating the history of a territory, to analyse its existing conditions and current transformations, and as a preparatory step for project interventions or local policy making. Different types of workshops can be arranged starting from a basic structure adapted to different situations and purposes.

The main steps and requirements to structure the workshop are detailed subsequently:

SET UP

The meeting space should easily accommodate the participants for an interactive and horizontal discussion. The venue for the workshop should be possibly inside or next to the area subject to exploration. Basic equipment required for the workshop consists of a computer or tablet able to navigate the website connected to a screen or projector. Billboards and flipcharts may be used to facilitate collective elaboration and note taking. Groups should not exceed 15 or 20 participants, otherwise they should be divided in subgroups.



SESSIONS

The workshop activities are structured in three-to-five sessions, happening partly indoor and partly as an outdoor spatial exploration. According to the focus of the workshop, the on-field exploration may constitute the main part of the activity and also be subdivided in multiple sessions. Programs that are developed over multiple days are recommended in order to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the territory.

The sequence of the activities can be adapted and divided in session according to scope and goals and mode. Typically the sequence of the activities is as follows:

INTRODUCING THE METHODOLOGICAL DEVICE

The initial session is dedicated to introducing the UR methodology, the online device, the goal of the workshop and the selected spatial context. It is recommended to provide the link to the EX website in advance to the participants so that they can get familiar with its contents before the first meeting.

First the online device is illustrated in all its components. Starting from the 64 titles / keywords we go quickly through the sequence of keywords. Accordingly, the four quadrants entitled *formation*, *transformation*, *appropriation*, *representation* are identified and explained.

FORMATION

LIQUID CITY
MATERIAL CITY
NATURE CITY
INHABITED CITY
CITY OF CULTURE
SACRED CITY
MARKET CITY
PUBLIC CITY
THRESHOLD CITY
SEGMENTED CITY
CITY OF FORMS
BUILT CITY
INFRASTRUCTURE CITY
DWELLIN
UNDERGROUND CITY
CITYSCAPE

TRANSFORMATION

TRANSFORMING CITY
LAYERED CITY
NEGLECTED CITY
LATENT CITY
SPONTANEOUS CITY
PLAYGROUND CITY
PRODUCTIVE CITY
CITY OF FLOWS
ENERGY CITY
EDIBLE CITY
CITY OF WASTE
TRAFFIC CITY
TRANSIENT CITY
RHYTHMICITY
CYCLICITY
EVENT CITY

APPROPRIATION

POWER CITY
RULED CITY
PROPERTY CITY
COMMODIFIED CITY
DIVIDED CITY
DISADVANTAGE CITY
WELFARE CITY
SURVEILLED CITY
PROHIBITED CITY
STRANGER CITY
CONTESTED CITY
MONGREL CITY
CITY OF PLACES
CITY OF MEMORY
CITY OF COMMONS
GOVERNING CITY

REPRESENTATION

REPRESENTED CITY
CONCEIVED CITY
ORDERED CITY
CITY OF NAMES
CITY OF SIGNS
PERCEIVED CITY
CITY OF KNOWLEDGE
WEB CITY
CYBERCITY
MEDIA CITY
LEISURE CITY
CITY OF SITUATIONS
ART CITY
POSSIBLE CITY
MARRIED CITY
CITY OF MORDS

Disadvantaged City
Welfare City
Surveilled City
Prohibited City
Stranger City
Contested City 43
Mongrel City
City of Places
City of Memory
City of Commons
Governing City



The city is a political construct, simultaneously the effect and cause of tensions and oppositions, disputation and dissent, the negotiated and the overwhelming. The city concentrates power and control [33] [34] [35] [36] [37] [38] [40] [41] [48] while stimulating criticism, insubordination and transformative action [17] [21] [50] [62]. It is the agora where differences confront one another and come together, the contested terrain where protest, insurgency and conflict are necessary steps towards dialogue, tolerance and integration [5] [8] [42] [44] [47].



Contested City ●●● X

Contested City

Start your exploration at City Hall or another significant administrative centre. Walk through the city visiting business districts and representative streets, passing through residential areas, suburbs, marginal settlements, until you reach the most neglected, marginalised and deprived sites. Try to identify signs of conflict, discontent, antagonism or insurgency. Does the city show signs of division, spatial segregation, and conflict between zones? How and where do manifestations of dissension and social critique emerge? Are they expressed through official channels, mainstream media or by anonymous and clandestine voices? Are these expressions manifested by social groups and organisations or are they instead individual claims and demands? Are they tolerated or repressed, elusive or direct? Do they appear as the marginal discontent of minority fringes or do they express a sentiment of widespread social unrest and dissatisfaction? Can expressions of social critique and antagonism be consolidated into more stable forms like radical projects and initiatives, self-management of spaces and alternative geographies, or do they remain episodic, ephemeral or underground? Ask yourself how and why would you map such an insurgent geography, what phenomena would it make sense to expose and which would be best protected and concealed.



Contested City ●●● X



Some exemplar definitions may be read here to show the basic structure of the text. Note that each definition is introduced by a sentence outlined in bold. This logline formulates succinctly the basic concept through a synonym of the term city (the city is a collective institution, an historical heritage, a lexicon). The text is completed by few sentences specifying the main implications of each interpretation including links to related definitions. Browsing from a definition to another we illustrate the connections among the different definitions and how each definition is complemented with an exercise and examples of previous explorations.

DISCUSSION OF OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

The specific focus or entry point for the workshop is presented and a related exercise is read and examined. Through a round of questions and open discussion the session is finalized to get to a common agreement on key objectives and outcomes of the workshop. Four main elements need to be defined here:

1. Entry point – the starting definition, thematic approach or spatial object calling for the common exploration.
2. Perspective – the direction, character, aim of the exploration process informing the common learning process.
3. Problematisation- issues, conflicts, problems to be exposed through the collective work.
4. Output- the forms and format of the outcome to be produced individually and / or collectively within the workshop.

PARTICIPANTS PRESENTATIONS

This session is dedicated to the participant presenting themselves, their background and their interest, and discussing goals of the workshop and the common knowledge about the investigated territory. In this phase the participants can be asked to indicate from the wheel the specific keywords / exercises that better respond to their inclinations and interests. The discussion of the individual point of views and interests of the participants should be guided by the facilitator towards defining the collective procedure for the exploration phase. (The self-presentation can be also happen at the very beginning of the workshop, but it is important to have a further moment in which the participants link their background and interest to the choice of a specific definition / exercise for their contribution to the workshop. This requires that they have practiced some time to understand the logic and content of the methodological hypertext)

DEFINING THE SPATIAL EXPLORATION.

The rules for the spatial survey are introduced and discussed collectively. The territory object of exploration must be discussed, defining its geographical extension and coordinates, boundaries, trans -scalar relations and connections with other territories.

FIELD SURVEY

The successive phase is the actual spatial exploration. The territory / itinerary investigated is surveyed according to the above defined modalities. It can be done moving together in a group, splitting in sub groups or through individual trajectories. Nevertheless, it is important to define rules, boundaries for the exploration, and a specific time frame common to the participants.



Spatial exploration can also be distributed in more days or sessions according to the extension and complexity of the investigated territory. Participants are asked to produce notes and recordings according to their preferences and capacities. Pictures, video, writing, drawing, audio recordings, technical measurements and any form of data capture is allowed. Nevertheless, it is worth underlining the importance of experiencing the space in immediate and instinctive way, and not being misled by excessive attention to technical note taking. In the final session the participants report their findings, possibly briefly presenting the observations, pictures and any form of recording produced during the exploration. The facilitator helps to focus on the production of a common understanding of the explored context through the multiplicity of perspectives and perceptions. Notes should be taken to draft a collective report, and the group should agree on successive steps to produce individual contributions, to refine the collective document and complete the publication of the results of the workshop in edited form.

FOLLOW UP AND DISSEMINATION

More likely than not, it will be difficult to fully express the results of the work shop given the dense and compact timing in which the seminar activity takes place. It is important to discuss with the participants which further step can be sustained in the follow-up to consolidate the produced knowledge, edit and publish materials and set up channels to disseminate the results of the workshop for successive use. The Urban Reconnaissance blog collects examples from several workshops, and it can be used as a resource to publish the results of workshops or link to new explorations and activities.

WORKSHOP TYPES

In the following we suggest some types of activities and games that can be developed with the support of the exercise platform.

SAME PATH DIFFERENT CITY

Each participant is asked to select one different definition of the city among the 64 and adopt the related exercise for the exploratory phase. The group should in principle move together, or according to defined itineraries including common key spots. The leading idea is that of exploring together the same spatial context but analysing different aspects, or looking for “different cities within the same city”. The final discussion will be focused on understanding the complexity of aspects that are entangled in the urban landscape and the interrelation of cultural, political, structural, psychological, legal aspects, etc. concurring to produce the overall urban identity.

VANTAGE POINT

This workshop starts from a specific focus or keywords, identifying a principal exercise that must be carried out collectively. This is particularly effective when the chosen definition is strongly connected with the local identity to be explored (Liquid City in Venice, Leisure City in Las Vegas) or when the workshop aims at discussing specific topics / issues. Once the main exercise is discussed collectively, the participants are suggested to explore the connected definitions, discussing the implications and correlations composing that specific interpretation of the urban context.



Therefore each of the participants is suggested to select their perspective or vantage point to look at that specific topic selecting one of the linked exercises. For instance, in a workshop dedicated to the urban commons, some participants can choose the exercises Liquid City or Nature City to assess water and nature as essential common resources, one on Ruled city to consider the set of rules necessary to the management of a commons, one on Cyber City to examine the relation with digital commons, etc. The exploratory phase in this workshop can be left to the individual initiative. The participants are required to survey the selected territory looking for emblematic expressions of the phenomena / element they are investigating in relation with the main theme. Typically the final outcome of this workshop can be a tour composed by connecting all the spots identified by the participants that will be asked to provide in each location the explanation of its significance within the theme.

THE MISSING DEFINITION

It is a variant of the previous workshop, but based on creating a missing definition or a variant of the existing 64 definitions. This can be the case of specifications of existing exercises like in the case of Perceived City that can be further defined as City of Smell, City of Taste , Haptic City, Sonicity; or in the case of Text City or Type City narrowing the exploration of the City of Signs to only texts and fonts. This can be a combination of existing exercises, as experimented in the case of a workshop on "Platform City", merging the exercises Market City and Cybercity to investigate how ICT are transforming and virtualizing urban commerce and production. In such mode of workshop a relevant part of the initial session is dedicated to discuss / formulate a new definition of city in addition to the 64 provided by the online wheel, including links to related concepts, and to list a set of questions to be answered during the exercise.

TOUR DESIGN

This type of workshop is dedicated to designing tours able to shine light on the complexity of factors engendering urban form and identity or to focus on one specific element. The list of definitions is extensively discussed with the participants in order to identify main elements of the questioned landscape to be included in the site visit. Like in the vantage point exercise, each of the participants selects a definition and proposes a location exemplar of the related concept or discipline to be included in the tour. This mode may be also restricted only to one quadrant in order to create thematic tours, i.e. using the first sixteen definitions to design a historic tour, the second for a tour of contemporary transformations, the third for an itinerary into the political city and its conflicts, the last one for exploring the city through representations and narratives.

