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THE MISSING LINK
croydon

executive summary

The present report illustrates urban design interventions envisaged for Croydon Metropolitan Centre, that have been elaborated in response to the urban analysis led in a previous stage. During this second phase of the project we never left our research attitude, believing in the importance of perpetuating a strong dialogue between the context analysis and the relative critical response.

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introduction

The history of over-determination of function in terms of planning and architecture regimes, that have affected Croydon in the last 70 years, can be considered as the main cause for its actual decaying condition, but also as the main reason for the lack of places that could invigorate its public realm. The history of Croydon is characterised by the erosion of socio-spatial-temporal linkages within the urban fabric. Our main mission aspires to re-create these currently crumbling linkages, through acupuncture urbanism.

More specifically, we're aiming to approach acupuncture urbanism from the concept of liminal urbanism, conceived as a way to intervene temporarily, but within a space-time multiplicity conceptualisation, therefore attempting to perpetuate effects tangibly and intangibly in Croydon 2.1, absorbing the important past history of Croydon 1.0 and 2.0. Our approach aims at deconstructing mainstream discourse on temporary urbanism, often conceived as something confined to a limited and predetermined meanwhile period within the broader urban development process. Focusing on the importance of reinforcing the sense of belonging and the community life, we envisioned spatial-temporal interventions aspiring to increase the diversity of functions within key local places (Whitgift Centre, Matthews Yard and a vacant office building), and therefore their use by different social groups.



Figure 1: Old Town Croydon, Croydon.

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context

The present section aims to re-collect the multiple analytical perspectives that emerged in the previous stage of the project, enabling a deeper critical understanding on how forms of **'otherness', socio-spatial fragmentation and the maturing of the related urban fabric** together produce specific patterns of urban development.

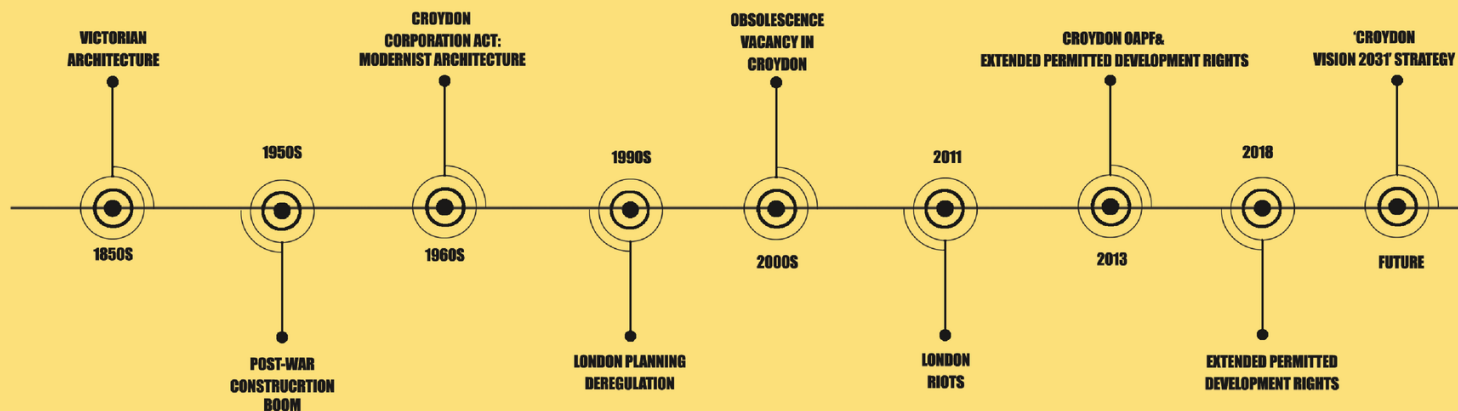
Located in the South of London, the borough of Croydon in the last 200 years has been marked by a unique historical process, which today is visible in its spatial conformation and material structure. As a red thread throughout the research, Croydon has been conceptualised through the idea of 'periodicity', which appears divided in three different time-space layers: Croydon 1.0, 2.0 and 2.1.

What has been crucial in defining this temporal-spatial dissection are planning systems and architectural regimes that occurred over time and powerfully accelerated the process of urban development.

This happened when Croydon 1.0 was disrupted by an invasion of modernist architecture in the 1960s, reinforcing the radical transition to Croydon 2.0. Such glory did not last long, when in the 1990s neoliberal dynamics of deregulation induced Croydon to become obsolete as the main London's business area and vacancy began to characterise its space, affecting different functions (retail, residential, office buildings, wastelands).

In 2013, a new national planning regulation, namely 'Permitted Development Right', affected the unused or underused spaces of Croydon, allowing private developers to change uses of buildings, resulting in the conversion of office buildings into residential premises. PDR marked a new pattern of the ageing dynamic and a new cycle of vacancy occurring in Croydon.

Today Croydon is again object of a big-scale development system known as Croydon Vision 2031 - a strategy sustained by the central government, the GLA and Croydon Council - which entails five different master plans included in an 'Opportunity Area Planning Framework' that will shape Croydon 2.1.



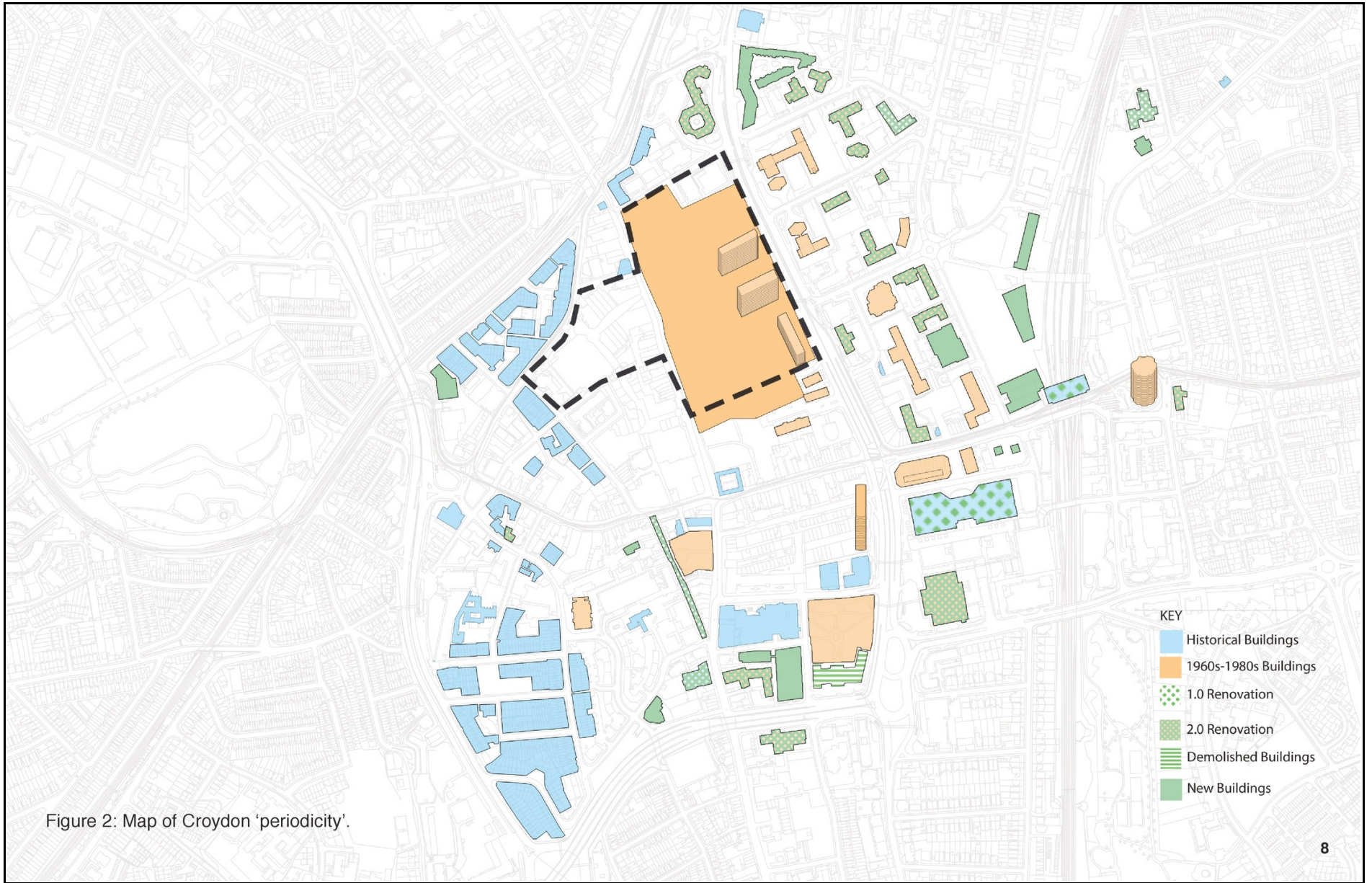


Figure 2: Map of Croydon 'periodicity'.

urban analysis

The story of Croydon helps to grasp its morphology today: past development trends and spatial compartmentalisation within the area, along with future projects now mostly at a construction stage, have created different forms of both **physical boundaries** (vacant buildings, wastelands, highways) and **interstitial spaces** (empty car parks, hidden corners, neglected sections of the train station), that are perceived either as sites of transgression, either as mental constraints, reducing accessibility. In certain cases, "leftovers" are **appropriated and inhabited by manifestations of 'otherness'**, like homeless people, highlighting their exclusion from the wider city. In other situations, boundaries, or interstices appropriated by those who are marginalised, produce **geographies of fear** for certain 'other' groups - i.e. women with children - who are spatially confined to small islands of safety.

Spatial fragmentation and deregulatory planning systems had and still have a wide impact on the **disappearance of social infrastructure** and informal places for encounter. As a result, space contributed to public life shrank, enhancing the erosion of social fabric of Croydon. That process of erosion was aggravated by the fact that today **Croydon configures itself as a space in flux**, lingering between Croydon 2.0 and 2.1: there is a vision for the future (2.1), scattered elements of the faraway or near past (1.0 and 2.0), but the

current Croydon seems to be in a state of limbo of being merely in-between. The continuous transformational process makes it hard for dwellers to recognise the surrounding and weakens the sense of belonging and attachment that people should usually feel towards their inhabited area.

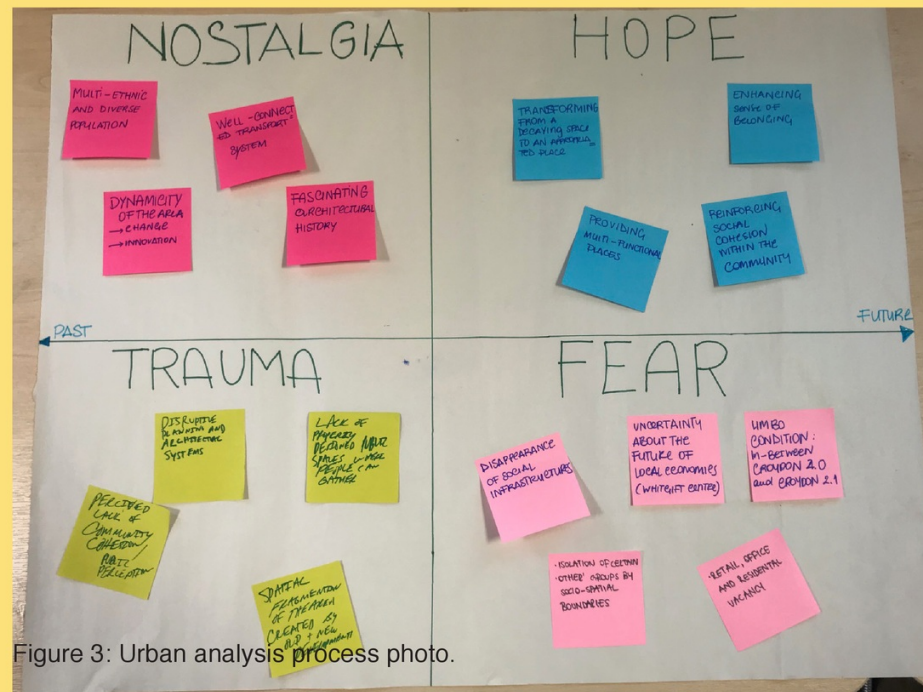


Figure 3: Urban analysis process photo.

urban analysis

Time - intended both as future evolution and memorial archive of the past - is a fundamental narrative to read Croydon's actual morphology, therefore we dissected our Croydon's socio-spatial understanding into:

Nostalgia: positive memory of the past to be perpetuated in the present

Trauma: painful past experiences that are limiting present or future actions

Hope: desires driven by concrete possibilities not realised yet

Fear: concerns about the future driven by past or present conditions

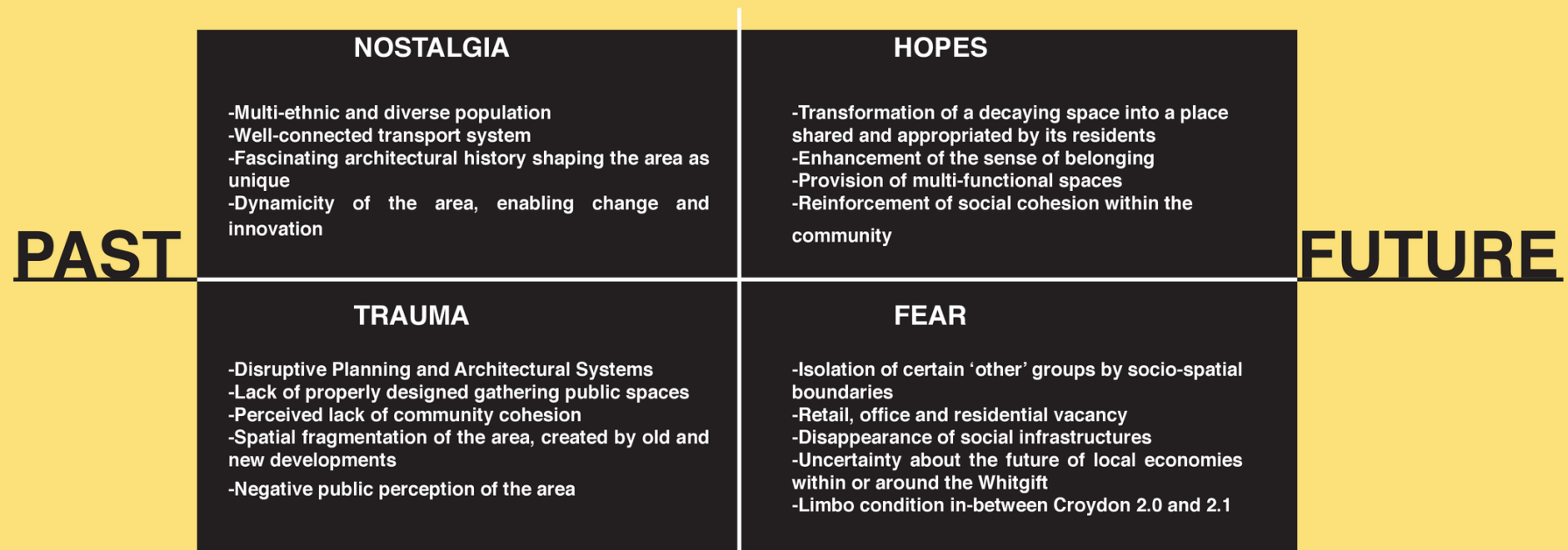
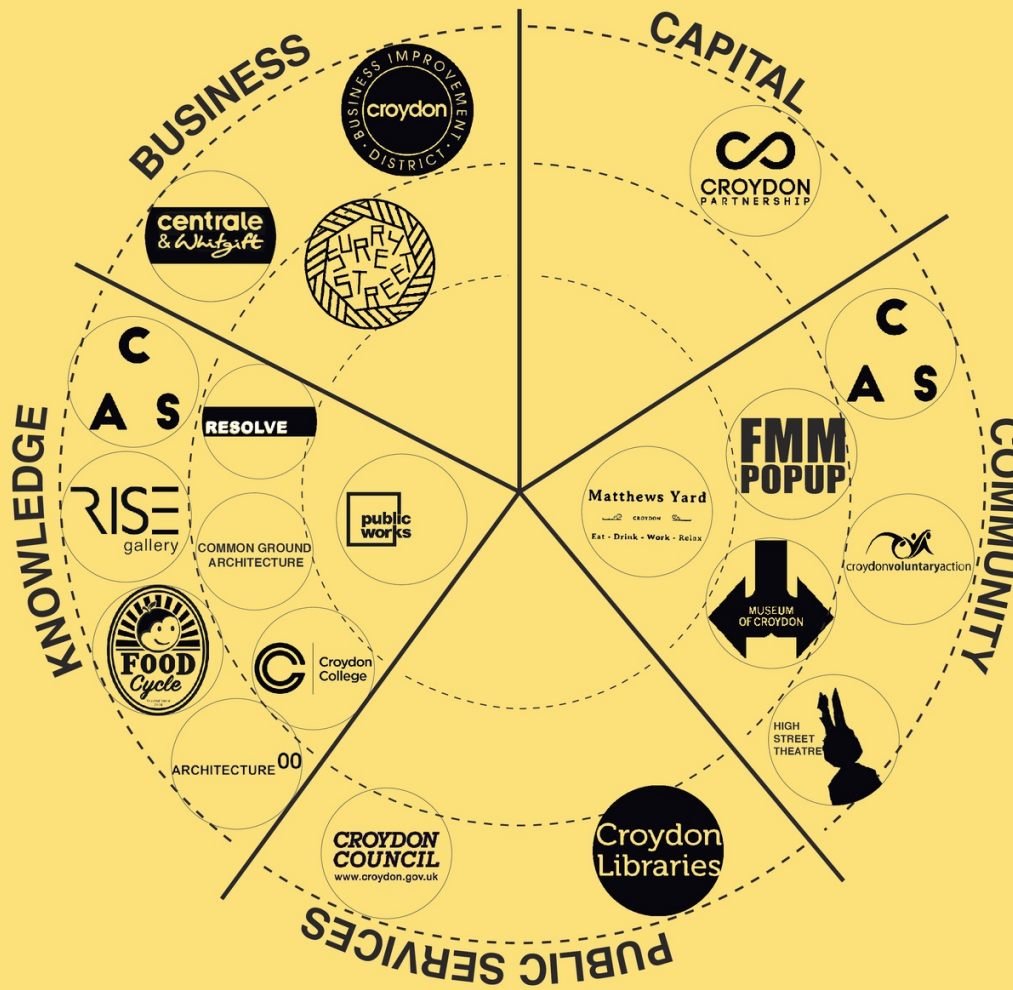





















Figure 4: Matrix. Adapted from Osmos.

actors map



-  Centrale & Whitgift Shop Owners
-  Croydon Business Improvement District
-  Croydon Libraries
-  Croydon Council
-  Croydon Volunteer Action
-  Croydon Partnership
-  Croydon Art Shop
-  Museum of Croydon
-  Surrey Street Market
-  Matthews Yard cultural hub
-  High Street Theatre
-  Public Works
-  Architecture 00
-  Food Cycle
-  Fashion Meets Music Pop Up
-  Rise Gallery
-  Resolve
-  Common Ground Architecture
-  Croydon College School of Arts

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vision

Meanwhile projects are often initiated as low-budget and quick-fix solutions in times of austerity to transform a failed or stalled development project in order to 'unlock the potential of the site' (Ferreri 2015:183-5), aiming to attract future investment and redevelopment. As such, meanwhile practices are temporarily enclosed in neoliberal patterns of urban development and economic revitalisation, filling the voids created within the linear temporal trajectory of private growth processes occurring in urban space.

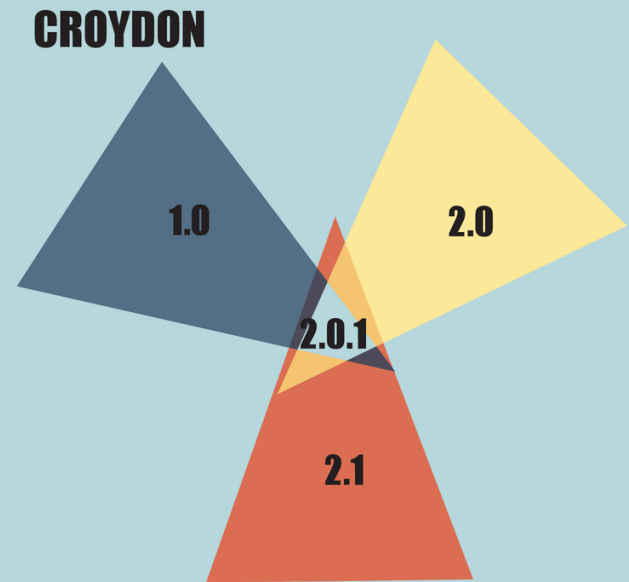
Our vision is inspired by the objective of deconstructing and transgressing this rationale of urban development-driven meanwhile use of space and recovering the original pioneering aspiration of temporary urbanism, overcoming the idea of meanwhile as a mere parenthesis between a stalled past and anticipated future plans. In order to achieve this, there is a need to rethink the dichotomous relation between time and space feeding into the logics of the linear trajectory of urban development.

Rather, our design strategy is animated by the re-imagination of time-space as a relation of multiplicity: spaces not necessarily evolve in merely one temporal direction (Ferreri 2015:187). Doreen Massey describes this multiple time-space relation as follows:

'The sphere of the existence of multiplicity, of the possibility of the existence of difference. Such a space is the sphere in which distinct stories coexist, meet up, affect each other, come into conflict or cooperate' (Massey, 1999: 272).

The spatial interventions we propose, are played out in the liminal time-space, representing the transgression of the temporal boundaries to which the meantime is confined. The interventions aim to address the idea of a pastless present and a foreign future, by drawing from the stories and artefacts from the past (Croydon 1.0 and Croydon 2.0), building a new narrative in the present (Croydon 2.0.1) as the missing link, and preserving the tangible and intangible outcomes to occupy the future (Croydon 2.1).

Our aspiration is to let the outcomes created by temporal spatial interventions in the present, operating outside the masterplans produced by Croydon Council, resonate through tangible and intangible effects in the long-term future.



principles

01 STARTING FROM THE ASSETS

BELIEVING THAT ALL OUR WORK MUST DEPART FROM WHAT CROYDON HAS AND NOT ITS DEFICITS.

02 MISSION ORIENTED

RELYING ON OUR MISSION AS OUR LEITMOTIV IN ALL THE INTERVENTIONS, USING A GRANULAR APPROACH.

03 ITERATIVE AND EXPERIMENTAL

WE WANT TO OPERATE AS AN 'OPEN SYSTEM' ; LEAVING SPACE FOR THE UNPREDICATBLE TO DISRUPT OUR IDEAS AND RESHAPE OUR EXPERIMENTAL PATTERNS

04 SHARING- BASED

OUR APPROACH IS 'UITWISSELING-BASED' - A CONTINUOUS CO-PRODUCTION AND SHARING OF KNOWLEDGE BETWEEN EXPERTISE AND EVERYDAY LIFE EXPERIENCE.

guidelines

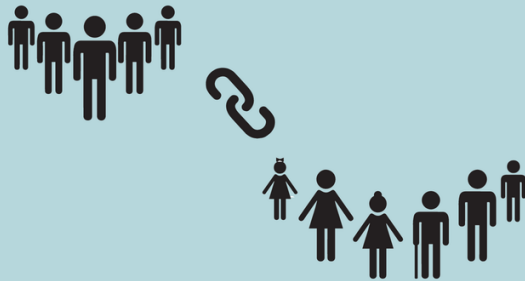
Between time and space

Commitment to sense-making of the complexities and multiplicities of the past and the future in the spaces of the present.



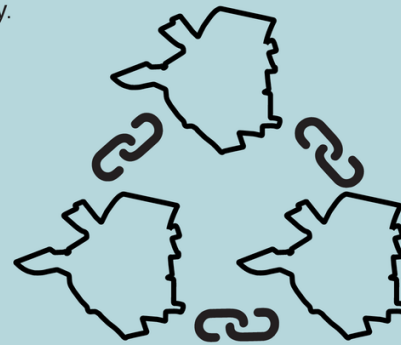
Between and within different communities and age groups

Commitment to diversity, representation and promotion of difference.



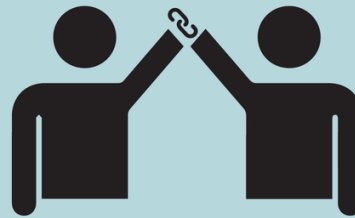
Between Croydon 1.0, 2.0 and 2.1

Commitment to the maintenance and repair of Croydon 1.0 and 2.0, to the rearticulation and renarration of Croydon 1.0 and 2.0 in the present, and to the enhancement of communal memory.



Between our interventions and existing initiatives

Commitment to contextualisation, participation, collaboration, co-production and reciprocity



Between people and space

Commitment to turn space into place and to create a sense of belonging.



Between the temporary and the permanent

Commitment to stretch the temporary into the permanent, through tangible and intangible forms of urban design.



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strategies

Playful, flexible and well-designed place is central to human flourishing. This project seeks to highlight and create these places within Croydon by focusing on qualitative tangible ephemerality, which allows for its intangible durability into Croydon 2.1.

4. PLACE CREATION

1. TIME-SPACE INTERVENTIONS

TIME
CAN BE
HISTORICAL

History can be demarcated in multiple ways and we selected this due to its alignment with both the physical and social structure of Croydon today.

TIME
CAN BE
EXPERIMENTAL

Croydon changes throughout the day and day-by-day. Croydon at 6pm on a Sunday is different than Croydon at 3pm on a Tuesday.

TIME
CAN BE
DURATIONAL

Croydon is in a state of limbo. Change is coming, but many do not know when and to what extent these changes will happen.

2. MAINTENANCE AND CARE

We approach the high levels of urban decay in Croydon as an opportunity, rather than as a deficit. By tackling the physical and social infrastructure through a lens of maintenance and care, each intervention will sustain and co-create Croydon 2.0, rather than invoking tabula rasa change.

3. NARRATIVE CREATION

Narrative is the expression of memories, understandings of the present and visions of the future. This project focuses on creating new and recognizing current narratives about Croydon 2.0.1, integrating Croydon 2.0 and 2.1, by engaging in forms of storytelling.

design interventions

Site Selection



Figure 5: Whitgift Centre, Croydon.

The Whitgift Centre and Centrale Shopping Centre form the core of our design intervention strategy, it is here that Croydon 1.0, 2.0 and 2.1 meet each other. Also, a larger part of the current urban dynamics in the surroundings of the shopping centres are aligned with the awaited future redevelopment of these two sites. The insecurities generated by the failing to consolidate the Westfield Plan so far contribute to the immobilisation of other urban actors, curtailing them to a seemingly permanent state of waiting for something to happen.



Figure 6: Matthews Yard, Croydon.

Matthews Yard is a square centrally located in Croydon, adjacent to Surrey Street Market, in the radius of the Whitgift. It is an underused space due to the history of over-determination of use in Croydon, as well as due to its specific (lack of) design. Currently, two premises located on Surrey Street Market block the access to Matthews Yard. As a result, the square is only accessible from the eastern side through two narrow and poorly illuminated alleyways. Moreover, the space right behind the two premises can be considered as unused wasted land. The electricity box forms an obstruction in the square, creating an unwatched and abandoned space in the corner behind. The historical Water Tower bordering the square has been vacant for several years.



Figure 7: HSBC and Meridian House building, Croydon.

Meridian House and the HSBC building are two vacant office buildings located next to the Whitgift Centre on Wellesley Road. Next to a generally high rate of (office) vacancy in Croydon due to over-determination, there are a lot of vacant office buildings in the perimeter of the Whitgift in particular. One of the reasons for this is the insecure future of the Whitgift. As long as the plans for the new Westfield stay up in the air and are not materialised, property owners are generally not prepared to take action, to rent the buildings out or to renovate or renovate them. As such, these buildings represent the meantime in Croydon.

design interventions

Site Selection

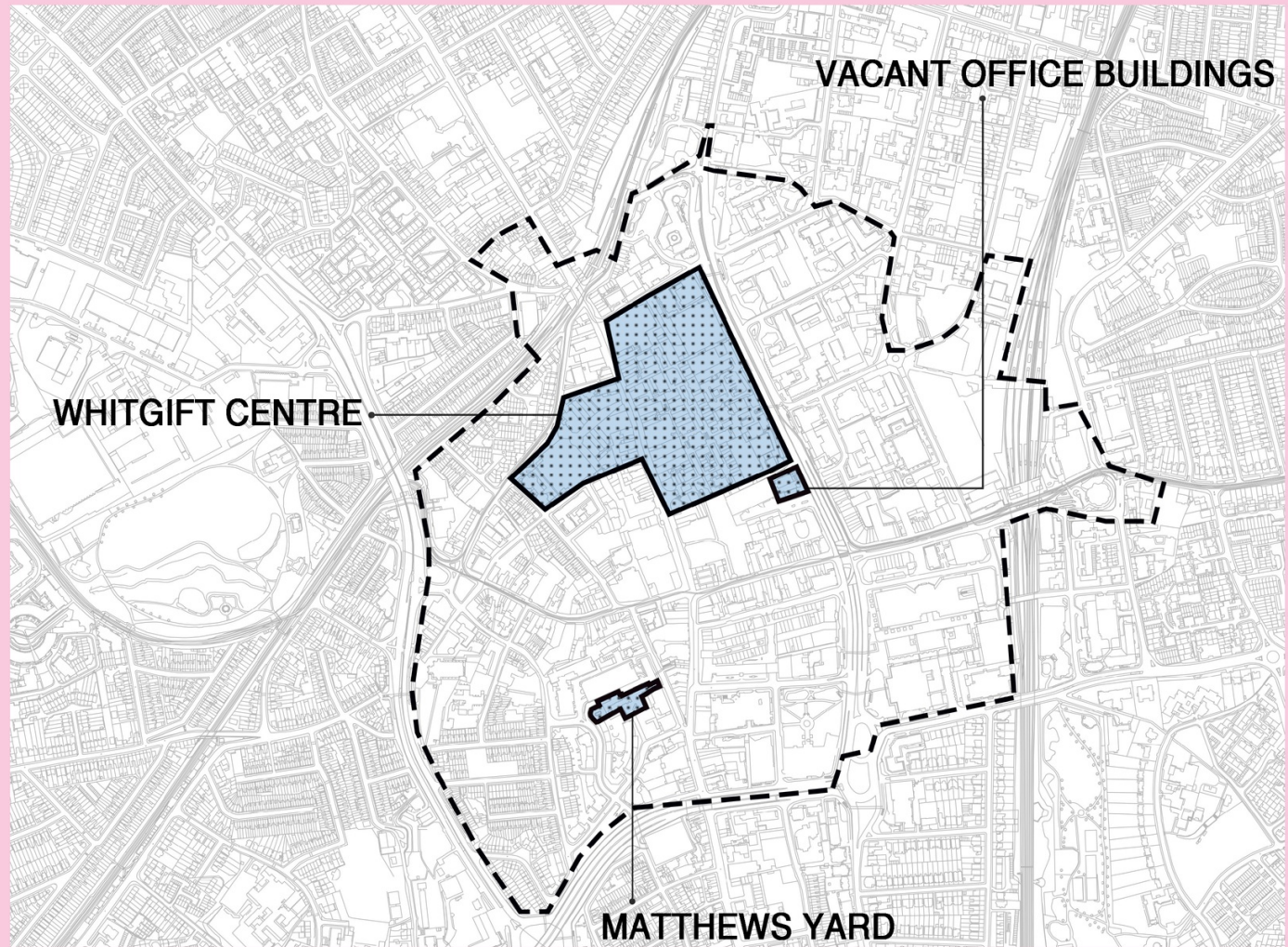


Figure 8: Masterplan of the interventions, Croydon

Whitgift centre & centrale memory shop

What and why?

The 'memory shop' will be an archive of memories, perceptions, tastes that local people feel about Croydon and will be located into a vacant shop of the Whitgift. The idea concerns not only a structural container, but also a living laboratory where the sense of belonging will be crafted by people themselves, building a shared knowledge of past histories and developing new memories related to a place in flux. In contrast to conventional shops, goods will not be sold, but shared.

The intervention consists of: a spatial temporary action: the re-use of a neglected space and its revival into a communal place

An iterative and interactive process, creating intergenerational linkages between young people and elderly people

the creation of intangible and tangible outputs, which will have permanent life, as:

the creation of new community ties
the creation of a physical 'mobile' archive of the locality

the creation of an online platform where the archive would perpetuate

its accessibility when the shop will be not there anymore.

How?

Inspired by the 'Curiosity shop' designed in Hackney Wick by public works, we envisage as an initial stage a six month-activity through which narratives about the area will be collected. Protagonist will be a team of young people (12-18 years old) guided by the Museum of Croydon in their fieldwork and supported by a mobile truck, that will make the project visible to local residents and might attract further collaborations. Crucial will be the role of elderly people as participants of the activity through interviews and workshops, because knowledgeable of the wider picture of the context. The shop will be not only the location to secure the archive, but it will also consist in a lab where the insights generated during the fieldwork will be translated into various story-telling formats (collective mapping, audio/video productions, visual material) with the support of the CAS and artists in residence.



Figure 9: Memory Shop concept.

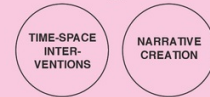
Potential Partners:



Guidelines:



Strategies:



Whitgift Centre & Centrale

'Place for Non-Consumption'

What and why?

The Whitgift gradually loses its primary function as a shopping destination, due to the increasing numbers of vacant retail spaces. As such, it becomes a place for dwelling and spending time collectively, rather than for shopping. For the moment, (inviting) public hangout spots and areas for seating, especially for adolescents and elderly people, are lacking.

Therefore, we propose as an intervention, symbolically within the boundaries of the physical leftovers of the previous Starbucks booth in Whitgift Square, a seating area for non-consumption, aiming to further enable a different use of the Whitgift, making it at the same time accessible for all.

The intervention consists of the re-design of the space, which would allow for the creation of a temporary spatial intervention: a flexible and adaptable place for multi-temporal multi-use. an iterative an interactive process
On regular days, during the opening hours of the shops, the place can be

used as a seating area.

The place can be freely used by organisations and initiatives as a publicly accessible indoor event place.

Through the intervention in the liminal space, we strive for the integration of a 'Place for Non-Consumption' in the plan for the new Westfield, that is Croydon 2.1.

How?

The design of the former booth will be inspired by the project 'Cadogan Café' by Architecture 00. This will allow the place to transform from a regular seating area into an auditorium, stage, atelier... Organisations can make use of the place to organise public (and free) events, but also for internal meetings and workshops, making them open and visible to the public. The booking and maintenance of the place will be managed by a new partnership created between the Croydon Arts Store and the Croydon Voluntary Action (PFNC).

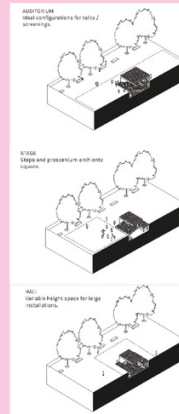


Figure 10: "Cadogan Cafe" model. Chelsea, London. Architecture 00

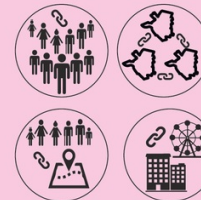


Figure 11: Non-consumption Space concept.

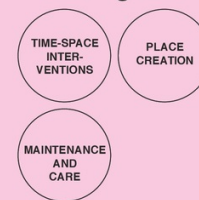
Potential Partners:



Guidelines:



Strategies:



whitgift centre & centrale

'what is going on?!': re-imagining the new westfield

What and why?

'What is going on?!' is an umbrella-name for a series of events, all addressing the difficulty of sense-making generated by the insecure plans for a new Westfield. The series of events will be organised by CAS and Theatre on the High Street, in collaboration with public works.

How?

'What is going on?!' consists of 'Panels', a moveable and adaptable art installation curated by RISE gallery. 'Panels' wants to overcome the invisibility and unreadability of the official panels provided by Croydon Partnership on the third floor, in order to make the information that is available about the Westfield Plans more accessible to all. The art installation will travel around Croydon and can be adapted when new information will be published.

As part of 'What is going on?!', the performative community mapping 'Coming Through' will find place in the 'Place for Non-Consumption'. During this open workshop, attending residents of Croydon will be asked

to collectively create a map of the Whitgift and Centrale, drawing upon their memory and own perceptions of the space. Next, attendants will be asked to transform this map so that the pattern of roads and passages in the Whitgift and Centrale becomes more walkable and usable. The final map will be transferred to Croydon Partnership, in order for them to take this citizen-led outcome of co-production into account in the Westfield Project.



Figure 12: Moveable Panel concept.

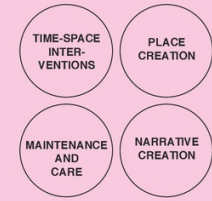
Potential Partners:



Guidelines:



Strategies:



whitgift centre & centrale

whitgift late

What and why?

In interaction with the 'Place for Non-Consumption', every month a cultural evening called Whitgift Late will be organised in the Whitgift and Centrale, during which shops will be open until late (in agreement with the shop owners) and cultural activities will take place centred around the 'Place for Non-Consumption'.

The intervention consists of: an iterative evening-long spatial intervention, transforming the Whitgift and Centrale from a mono-functional space for retail consumption, to a multi-temporal multi-functional place. Activation of the 'Place for Non-Consumption': the first Whitgift Late will serve as an opening event Stimulation of (cultural) nightlife in Croydon

Promotion of local and new economies, artists and creatives the creation of a temporary intervention that will contribute to shape Croydon 2.1 intangibly.

one of the long-term objectives of the intervention is the integration of multi-temporal multi-functional places, as well as the accommodation of local economies, within the new Westfield.

How?

Whitgift Late will be coordinated by a partnership between PFNC, the ambassadors of Croydon Business Improvement District (BID) responsible for the Whitgift Centre, Theatre on the High Street, Fashion Meets Music Pop Up, and other venue partners. Croydon BID will coordinate the participation of local shops in Whitgift Late, whereas PFNC and other existing meanwhile initiatives will provide the cultural programme for the evening, drawing upon local creativity.



Figure 13: Whitgift Late concept.

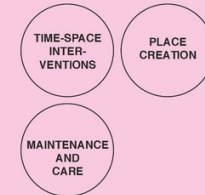
Potential Partners:



Guidelines:



Strategies:



matthews yard

re-design of the square

What and why?

The large amount of empty space begets a lack of functions, making the square an unwelcoming space. As such, by providing the square with more specific functions and by enabling also the liminal use of the square, Matthews Yard can become a more accessible, inviting and used place.

How?

We propose the following design interventions:

- clean up and open up the wasted space behind the two premises on Surrey Street Market; remove the wall that separates the two alleyways behind the two premises; remove the height barrier between the two alleyways by flattening the space
- avert 'hostile architecture': skater- and homeless-friendly urban design
- no anti-homeless and anti-skate spikes
- skate-friendly surface textures and materials
- picnic tables in stone to provide seating area (skate-friendly)
- playground consisting of minimal objects

community garden in the corner behind the electricity box, making use of the walls for a vertical garden

The redesign of the square would be carried out by Common Ground Architecture, a public sector Croydon-based design studio.

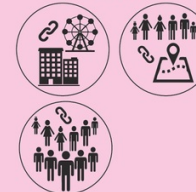


Figure 14: Architectural rendering of Matthews Yard.

Potential Partners:



Guidelines:



Strategies:



matthews yard

re-design of the square



Figure 15: Redesign of Matthews Yard Square.

matthews yard

food cycle in croydon

What and why?

The empty historical Water Tower currently enhances the site's potential as a space of alterity: inviting for homeless people to roam around - unwelcoming for most people to make extensive use of it. We aim to provide a more comfortable space to marginalised groups, through the offer of voluntary social services, fading 'otherness' through a wider interaction with Croydon's population. Also, the nearby Surrey Street Market can be considered an incredible resource; leftovers can be collected at the end of Saturday afternoon and redistributed to those in need.

that will cook and serve free meals to those in need, encouraging new forms of social interaction and cohesion. Moreover, we imagine that in the spring-summer period (May-September) the lunches would be served in the open space of the square.

How?

Food cycle is a London based project which provides free meals to homeless or lonely people in different neighbourhoods, so far it has not yet landed in Croydon. We imagine the opportunity to build a partnership between Food Cycle and local actors: every Sunday, Matthews Yard Cultural Hub will host Food Cycle volunteers - coordinated by the Croydon Volunteer Action -



Figure 16: Food Cycle concept.

Potential Partners:



Guidelines:



Strategies:



matthews yard nightlife

What and why?

In order to address the general lack of nightlife that Croydon faces, we believe that Matthews Yard could be an attractive place to gather the local community on spring/summer evenings. Therefore, as the structural re-design of the place will enhance social and cultural activities, the events that will take place will motivate the landowner of the Water Tower to re-evaluate the gains and losses of vacancy. This aims to encourage the renovation and re-activation of the Tower in order to become a cultural centre in the long-run.

How?

the wall adjacent to the apartment block will become a screen for open air cinema sessions in week days we imagine the use of a flexible stage for theatre performances and live music sessions that would take place during weekends. This infrastructure would be stored and managed by Matthews Yard Cultural Hub, which will become the coordinator of cultural activities on site. This intervention also aspires to enhance the economy of the cultural

enterprise which would benefit from the increased use of the square.

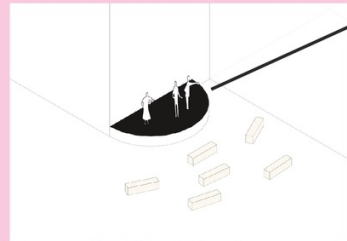
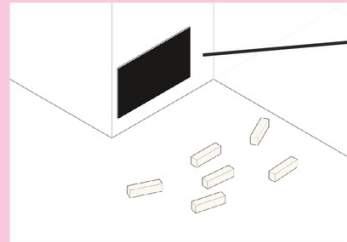


Figure 17: Flexible stage model.



Figure 18: Nightlife concept.

Potential Partners:



Guidelines:



Strategies:



matthews yard community clean up

What and Why?

Litter and waste were identified during the many site visits. A community clean up project will bring people together under a common purpose. This community clean-up program will engage volunteers in the maintenance and care of Matthews Yard, fostering the sense of belonging and responsibility towards their neighbourhood.

How?

The community clean-up will be led in partnership with Croydon Voluntary Action and other local organizations to create day long clean-up, followed by celebrations with music, food and activities. Reciprocity is central to this intervention. The volunteers should not be viewed as workers, rather as equal participants maintaining their community. These events are not meant to take the place of government-led waste management, rather they are subsidiary citizen-led contribution.



Figure 19: Community Clean-up concept.

Potential Partners:



Guidelines:



Strategies:



meridian & hsbc vacant office buildings co-creative studios

What and why?

We propose to re-occupy the vacant Meredian House and the HSBC building with different users: creative startups, design studios, artist collectives and cultural organisations. Through this intervention we not only address the vacancy of the two office buildings in the meantime between Croydon 2.0 and 2.1, preventing them from dereliction. Also, we commit to the preservation of their function as office buildings and prevent them from being refurbished into residential buildings in the future. In that way we aspire to rearticulate Croydon's past as a business node, with a local and present twist. That is, we aim to transform mono-functional traditional office culture into a more creative space, where social, cultural and productive functions come together, in the present, but even more as a model for the future, emphasising as well the provision of affordable office space within future office renting schemes.

How?

Drawing from previous examples by Osmos (Studio C, Brussels) and

Lab North (Platform North in WTC 1, Brussels), several Croydon-based creative actors (RESOLVE, Croydon School of Art, Common Ground Architecture, CAS, ...) will be offered free office space on two floors in Meredian House and one floor in the adjacent HSBC building. In the long-term, this allows for other businesses to move in. The creative actors will manage and co-create the place together.



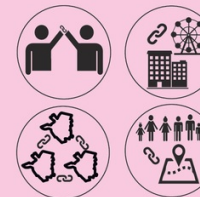
Figure 20: Co-Creative Studio concept. Adapted from Lab North.

Figure 21: Co-Creative Studio concept.

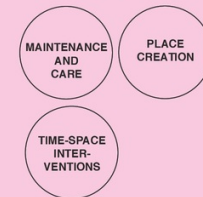
Potential Partners:



Guidelines:



Strategies:



conclusion

All the interventions are tools and ideas for the Croydon community to adopt or adapt based on their identified needs. Approaching a community and proposing intervention ideas is like approaching a giant-- it must be done with humbleness and respect. Cities are places to challenge existing notions, create and understand change, and build community. Jane Jacobs, urbanist and community organizer, said:

'Cities are an immense laboratory of trial and error, failure and success, in city building and city design'
(Jacobs, 1961:6).

Some of these interventions, if adopted, may succeed to help Croydon and its different communities and users overcome the perception and state of being in limbo, waiting for Croydon 2.1 to arrive. Through the proposed urban interventions we tried to approach the time-space of the present as liminal rather than meanwhile. This implies converting the meanwhile space of the present into a place with implications for the future, by building upon Croydon's history.

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