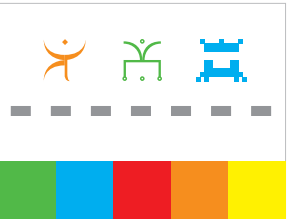# CROSSMEDIA ECOLOGIST PROJECT

In Conjunction With The Macro Cosmologist *And*
World Builder *Guilds Of Ludea*

PLANNING PROPOSAL PREPARED
FOR THE CITY OF MELBOURNE 2011

**Ludean Guild of
Urban Codemakers**

The Crossmedia Ecologist takes an ecological view on urban codemaking. Seeing urban spaces as networks of forces, some social, some economic, others material or information based in their nature. It is somewhat between a traditional 'village' based view – letting spaces grow of their own accord – and seeing urban designers as being responsible for nurturing, rather than controlling, spaces. Making them liveable and functional.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Game Designer Katie Salen is just one of the many theorists whose has argued of for the possibility of gameplay informing urban design. She argues "Games on one side, and interactive and mutable architecture on the other, share methodology share techniques, share possibilities to orient the practice of architecture toward understanding and shaping building as contexts for user interaction or "sandboxes" which create contexts for user creativity." [1] The Crossmedia Ecologist supports the idea of urban design informed by play of the possibility of "dynamically authored spaces borne from the collaboration between architects and users".

1. Salen, Katie (2006) 'They Must First be Imagined', Games Set and Match II. On Computer Games, Advanced Geometries and Digital Technologies. Kas Oosterhuis and Lukas Feireiss (ed) Episode Publishers.

1. Cross Media Ecologist Observational Study 01A.

# CONTENTS

1.0
PURPOSE & BACKGROUND

Our activities range from community consultation, advising councils on city planning policies, and research into the role of ubiquitous media in shaping urban space. We have developed a transdisciplinary approach to urban design called 'urban codemaking'. This is an experimental approach that draws upon game design, computational semiotics and generative systems for urban planning. We are currently testing this strategy on the streets of Melbourne – a city known for its unique urban character resulting from a blend of planned and unplanned urban spaces. The City of Melbourne commissioned the three guilds to develop urban planning proposals for the Melbourne 2020 vision. A new city based on data collected from you. The IDEOTAGs were not placed at random. They trace patterns and paths through the city. Player interaction with them collected data for the ecologist, the urbanist and the codemaker. Each of these three used that data to develop different proposals for the City of Melbourne. Although the outcomes are different, the proposal of each guild is based on the same data generated by the urban codemaking process.

Between Saturday 6th November 2010 and 9th February 2011 our operatives placed 768 IDEOTAGs within nine blocks of the City of Melbourne between La Trobe, Queen, Collins and Russell Streets. Each week was marked by a different layer of urban codemaking and hosted by an individual guild or by the collective itself. These IDEOTAGs were a way for us to remap and reimagine the city and then invite others to participate in the process. Players collected these IDEOTAGs to play the game. Halfway through the game, two of these players became operatives and began identifying and tagging sites on our behalf.

The design of the IDEOTAGs responded to specific themes in the game. Each week explored a different aspect of the city and urban play. These themes are identified here with a full comprehensive archive online at urbancodemakers.net

Week 1: Marking our territory
Week 2: Vectors
Week 3: Networks
Week 4: Portals
Week 5: Third Language
Week 6: Ecologies
Week 7: Eyes of the City
Week 8: Creatures
Week 9: Virus
Week 10: Grids
Week 11: Codes
Week 12: -/-/-/-/-

Although the process is the same across all of the guilds within the Urban Codemakers, the guild masters has used this system to undertake their fieldwork in different ways. They have used it for site analysis, data collection, gameplay, historical research, navigation, and documentation. The IDEOTAGs have been used as a language for exploring urban space – a language that draws upon urban planning codes, hobo signs and symbols, iconography of digital games and street art. This language in conjunction with play in the city is the core of urban codemaking.
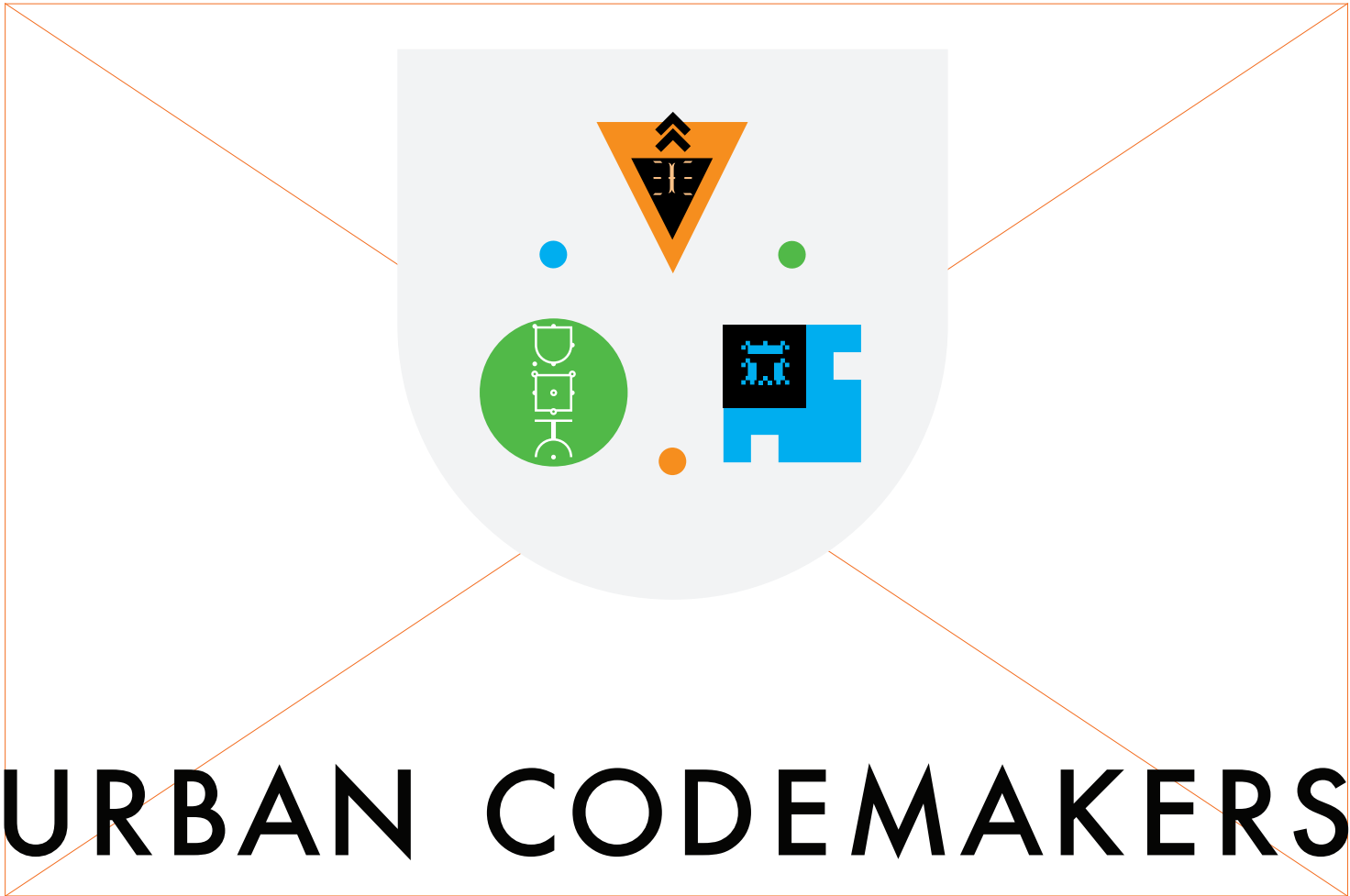
URBAN CODEMAKERS

Codemakers Coat of Arms
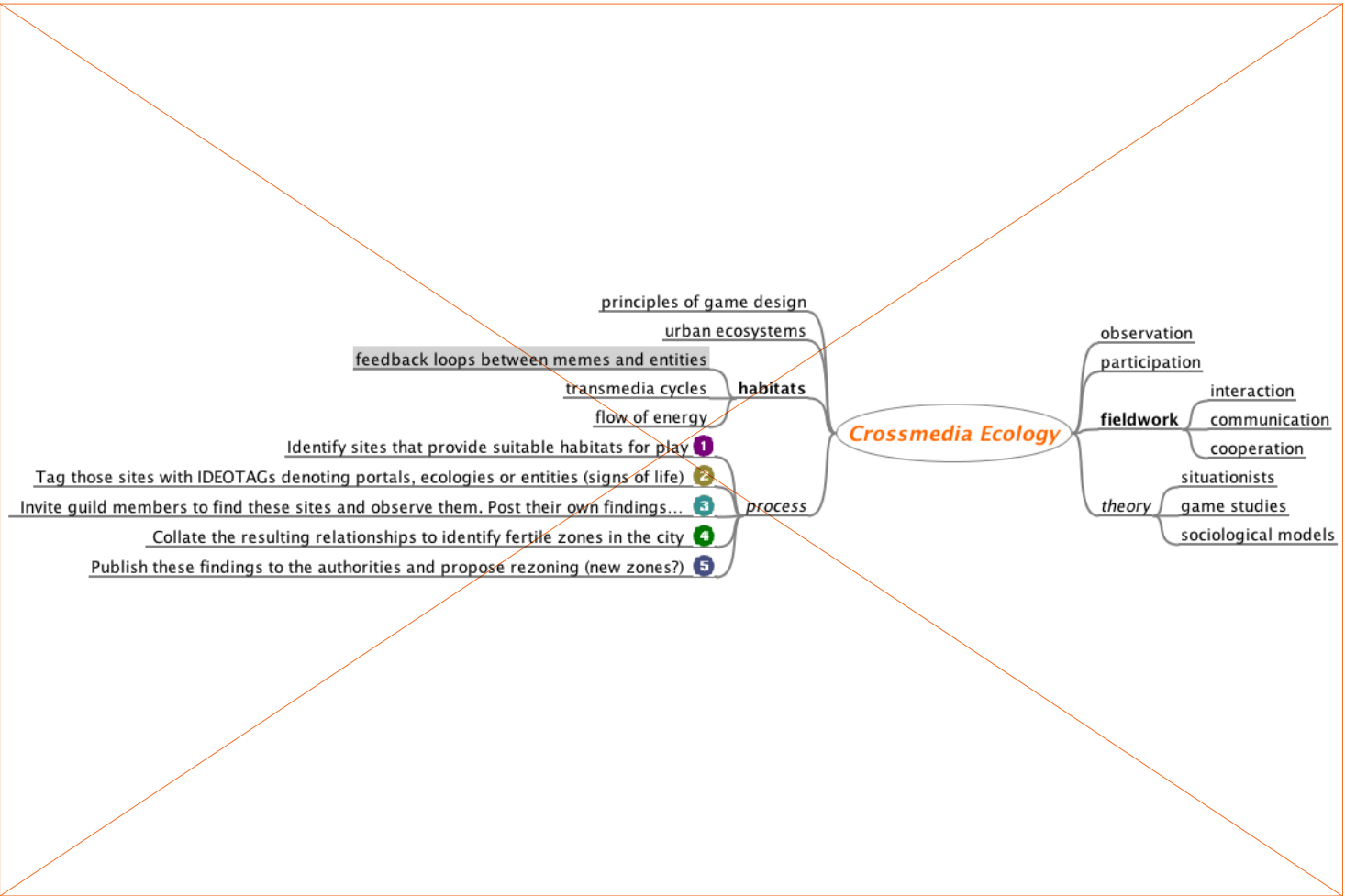
2.0
METHODOLOGY

2.1 Process

Imaging Modes Of Being : A Shared Space For Games And Architecture

Playful notions of urban design

The Situationists and others have long advocated the idea of playful interaction as means of reformulating social structures. The notion of game in relation to urban design argues Georg Vrachliotis is generally rooted in a design philosophy of "interaction, communication and cooperation" features he identifies as consistent for both planning and playing. The parallels in this sociological model offer constraints (rules) participants (who must generally work in a collaborative manner) and a defined goal (or reaction against a defined goal). [2]

2. Vrachliotis, Georg (2007) 'Game of Life: On architecture complexity and the concept of nature as a game' Space Time Play: Computer Games, Architecture and Urbanism: The Next Level. (ed) Friedrich von Borries, Steffen P. Walz and Matthais Böttger, Birkhäuser, Basel p.341

- principles of game design
- urban ecosystems
- feedback loops between memes and entities
- transmedia cycles — **habitats**
- flow of energy

Crossmedia Ecology

- observation
- participation
- interaction
- communication — **fieldwork**
- cooperation
- situationists
- game studies — *theory*
- sociological models

process
1. Identify sites that provide suitable habitats for play
2. Tag those sites with IDEOTAGs denoting portals, ecologies or entities (signs of life)
3. Invite guild members to find these sites and observe them. Post their own findings...
4. Collate the resulting relationships to identify fertile zones in the city
5. Publish these findings to the authorities and propose rezoning (new zones?)

1. Exploring the Territory

2. Deployment of IDEOTAG

2.0
METHODOLOGY

2.2 Site Analysis

For the Melbourne City grid location of Queens St–Russell St, and La Trobe St–Burke St.
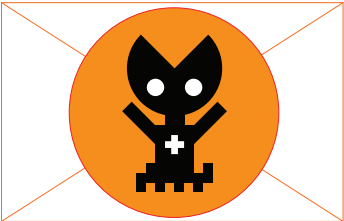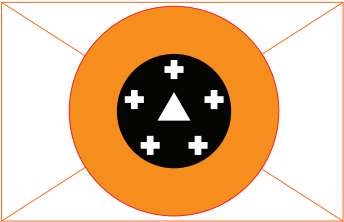
Tags 1–16 : Portals
D018, D042, D000, D023, D030, D063, D061, D050, D015, D055, D004, D053, D043, D024, D040, D046

Tags 17–33 : Ecologies
F017, F022, F023, F026, F016, F027, F029, F032, F033, F035, F038, F039, F040, F042, F043, F045, F044

Tags 34–49 : Creatures
H000, H001, H002, H003, H004, H005, H006, H020, H021, H022, H023, H019, H018, H030, H029, H031

3.0
DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The planning proposal is underwritten by the following design principles:

Play creates reality.

Games designers understand the importance of rules. Without rules there is no game. But they also understand the need to let players break those rules and when to hand over control to players so that they might contribute more fully to the game and its rules. The game designer is able to be reactive to the player and their needs they are able build in possibilities for personal expression, customization, reward and simple showing off. The game designer knows the pleasure of the game is a shared pleasure but sometimes playing-alone-together is all that is desired.

Patch city – imagine a city where designers and players can be in dialogue. Modding, hacking, skinning, patching, bug fixing together to create a responsive reflexive environment

Principle 1

Allow for play

Melbourne's liquor licensing laws have let a thousand flowers bloom. Curious bars turn up in hidden laneways, in strategically dumped containers, on rooftops, in caravans, in old factories…. anywhere the brave and imaginative may go.
Compare this to Sydney's horrific beer barns and you know that if the rules allow urban play will happen.

Principle 2

There are many games

Melbourne is a street art destination. Most of these artists are breaking the law.

Principle 3

The limits of architecture represent both prohibitions and opportunities for the player.

From the abseiling window cleaner whose play is their business to the interventionist skateboarder the city is place of opportunity and possibility - a stage and an arena.

4.0
PROPOSED
REDEVELOPMENT
PLAN

The Crossmedia Ecologist recommends an organic approach to the design of the city as informed by play. The Crossmedia Ecologist recommends that planning provide opportunities for alternative uses to be created by the differing groups and cultures that inhabit an area. The Crossmedia Ecologist argues that the city needs to support emergent play.

The Crossmedia Ecologist refers to the interventionists projects of Santiago Cirugeda whose work 'Public Domain Occupation with Skips' support the citizen to intervene into the built fabric of the city. Spanish Architect and artist Cirugeda hacks the legal code. When his home-town would not authorize him to build a playground Santiago Cirugeda [1] obtained a dumpster permit and installed a playground that looked like a dumpster.

The CE refers also to the ongoing exploration of this idea in the work of Goldsmith Student Oliver Bishop Young [2].

Ecological Benefits
Play creates a rich ecology based on complex relationship. The ability to foster an informed and empowered community of players within the city will support a diverse ecology of social and cultural life. Within this structure play can help operate as the immune system of the city just as parks can be the city lungs.

New Technologies
The possibilities of play created by technologies will continue to be explored by the Crossmedia Ecologist. Locative play will be supported by mobile phones and geocaching will open up the hidden treasures of the city. City screens will become enlisted as

sites for misinformation mischief and mayhem. Electronic signage will be co-opted to offer players further enlightenment.

Social Structures
This proposal will explore the existing social structures and overlay them with additional opportunities for engagement and critique through removing existing prohibitions through play and negotiation [3].

Play and Public Space
The Ban on Play was not merely a call to arms but a reminder of the possibilities of virtual space. It awakened us all to how play can exist in the rich data maps unregulated and unregulatable. How armed with a mobile phone the citizen can be lost in imaginary worlds, engaged in treasure hunts, have curious encounters, become major of coffeetown and engineer their own flash action without recourse to the rules of the built environment.

'Subversion' http://www.spatialagency.net/database/santiago.cirugeda
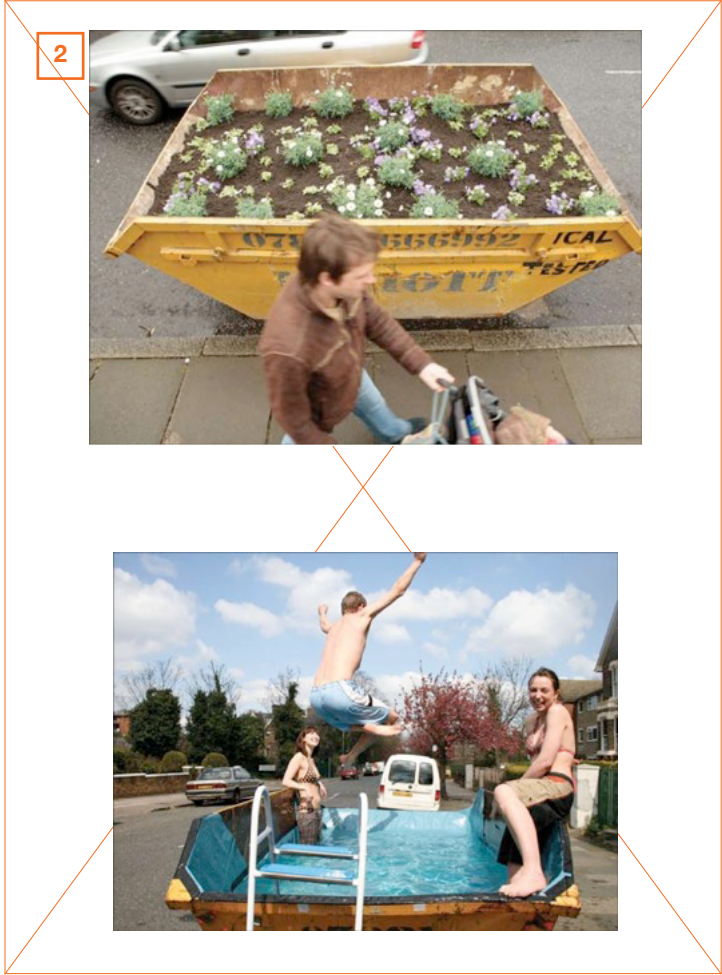
5.0 PLANNING PROVISIONS

No specific sites within the city have been identified. A network of micro-sites, favourites of the Urban Codemakers, are suggested as a starting point for further fieldwork. The city is a living organism and to nurture its urban ecologies more playtime is needed. These micro-sites will be drawn from those tagged with codes in week 11 of the game / experiment. Including, but not limited to:

Baptist Place
A partially enclosed laneway, world unto itself

Drewery Alley
A sanctuary in the city, connected to a network of other great laneways

Flanigan Lane
An emerging zone for street art, our home, place for play

Fleming Place
Dirty and blank, four or more security cameras, a hidden zone at the end

Kirks Lane
A network of laneways, like a maze

La Trobe Place
Inbetween zone, many hiding places for creatures

Niagara Lane
Beautiful laneway, well preserved history

Union Lane
Already a city zone for street art, a major pedestrian thoroughfare

Via an analysis of the results of the IDEOTAG survey these sites emerged as drawing the most interest across all of the guilds activities. We have included brief notes on each site to acknowledge their potential. Our strategy is to concentrate on these locations as the subject of further study. Small scale, temporary interventions into these locations such as:

1. Set of street signs advocating play: small street signs and large electronic programmable road signage.

2. Call out for flash mobs: to undertake fieldwork / games.

3. Establishment of a street games archive centre in the Guilford Lane complex.

4. The centre would coordinate closure days for street soccer, basketball, hopscotch tournaments and billycart races. The laneway could be flooded to host boat races Coliseum style.

5. Ongoing regular activities on the laneways listed above using analog and digital technologies and building on the IDEOTAG codes of the Urban Codemakers as a kind of street language for play.

REFERENCES

Architects

ARCHIGRAM (Walking City) etc

Archizoom

Santiago Crirugeda
'Subversion' http://www.spatialagency.net/database/santiago.cirugeda

Articles

Iacovoni, Alberto (2004) GameZone: Playgrounds between Virtual Scenarios and Reality, Birkhäuser, Basel

Salen, Katie (2006) 'They Must First be Imagined', Games Set and Match II. On Computer Games, Advanced Geometries and Digital Technologies. Kas Oosterhuis and Lukas Feireiss (ed) Episode Publishers. www.gamersmob.com/weblog/archives/salen_imagined.pdf

Vrachliotis, Georg (2007) 'Game of Life: On architecture complexity and the concept of nature as a game' Space Time Play: Computer Games, Architecture and Urbanism: The Next Level. (ed) Friedrich von Borries, Steffen P. Walz and Matthais Böttger, Birkhäuser, Basel

Artists

Oliver Bishop Young

Games

Minequest

Simcity

The Sims

The Situationist International

Pschogeography

Web

City mine(d) http://www.citymined.org/
area/code http://areacodeinc.com/

http://www.spatialagency.net/database/santiago.cirugeda

http://www.woostercollective.com/