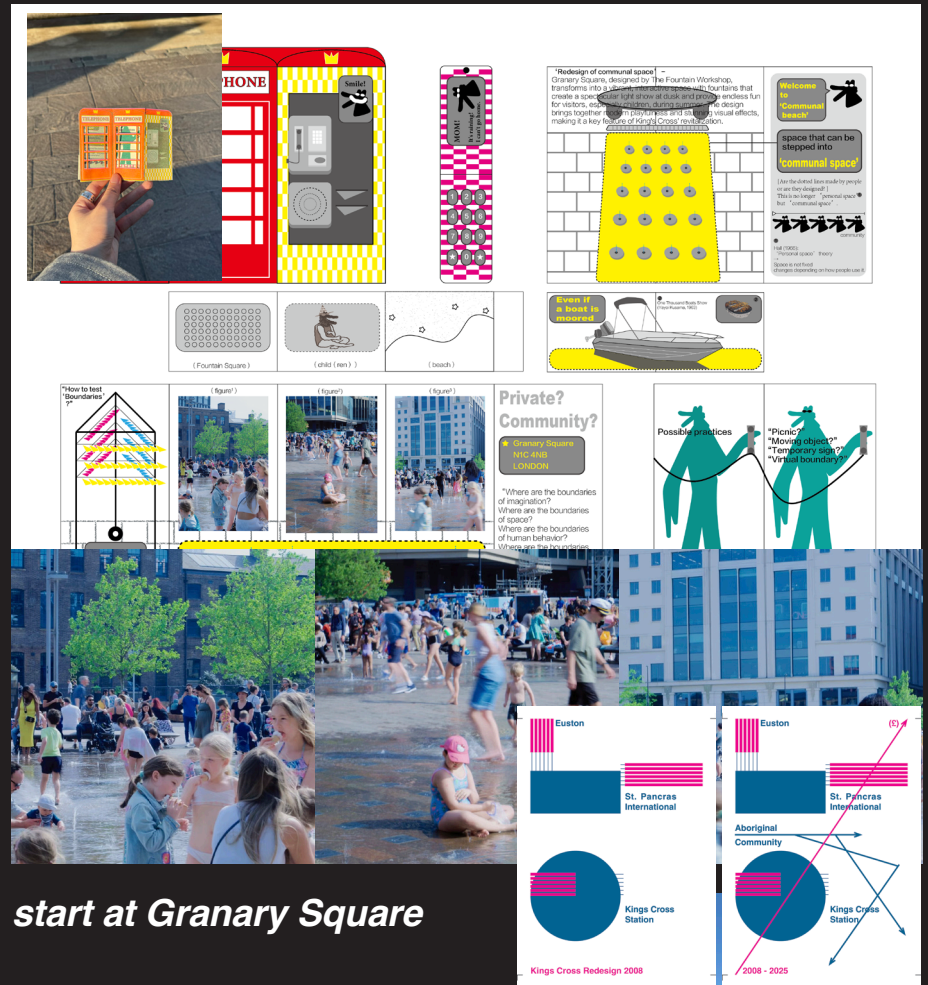
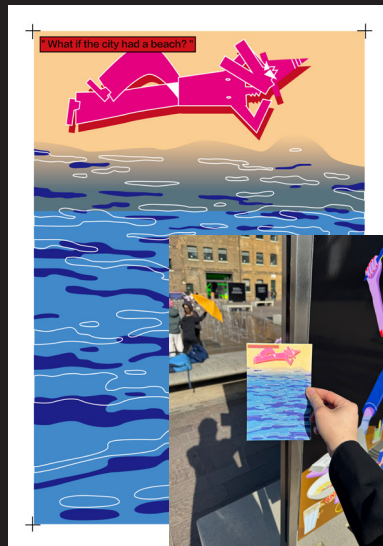
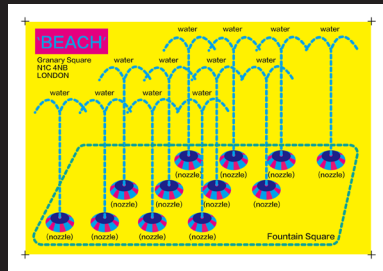


Calendar_time_map

The countdown calendar corresponds to the “temporary urban beach.”
 Why an “urban beach”?
 Swimsuits and beach toys that are normally found on a beach appear instead in the heart of the city.

Questions:

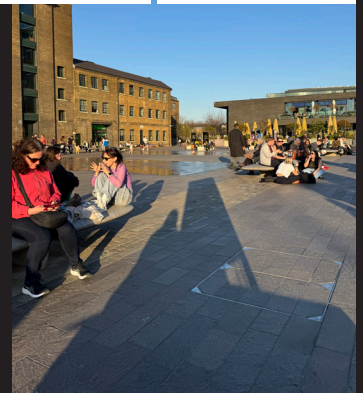
- What has created this kind of scene in the city center?
- What defines a successful redesign?
- What is being redesigned — the community or the city?
- What is a city?
- What is a community?



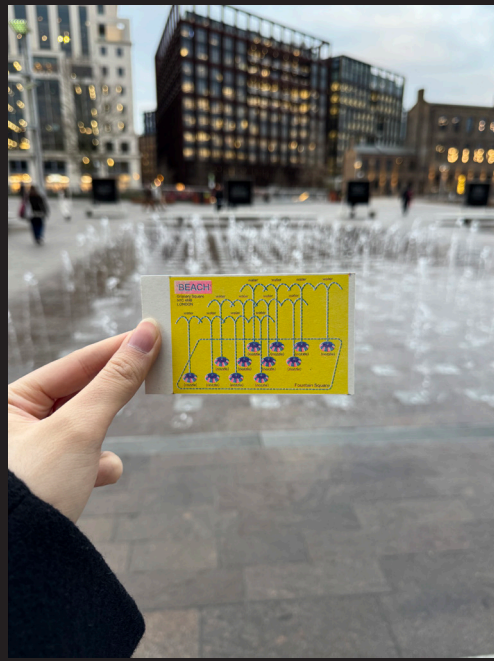
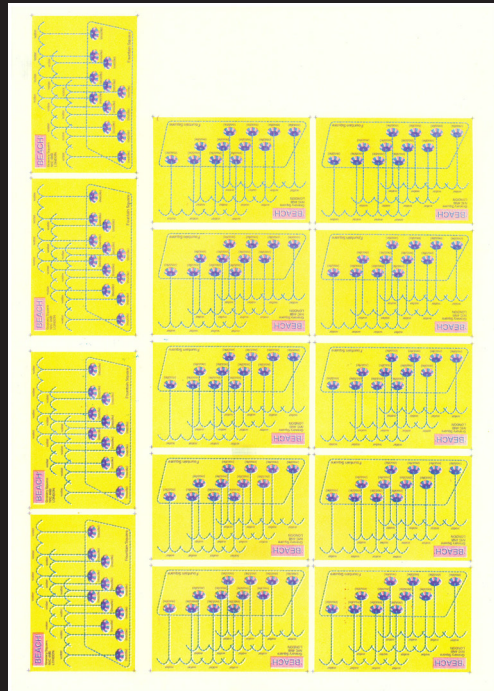
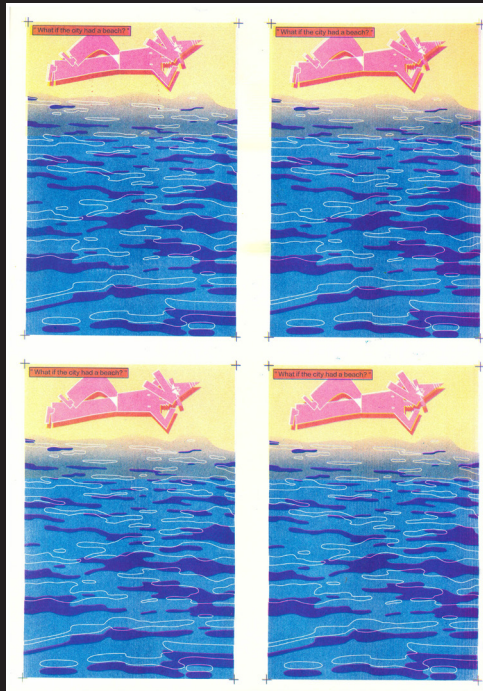
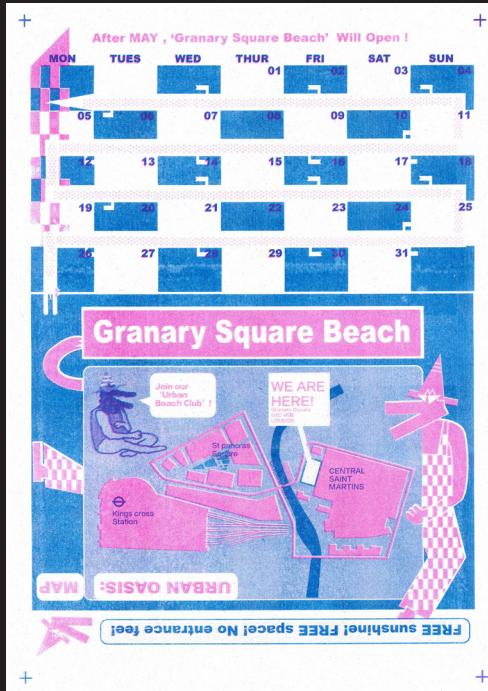
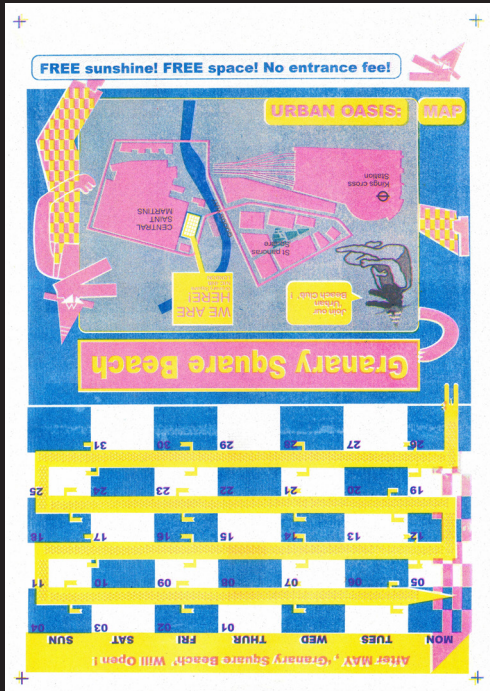
start at Granary Square

What defines the boundaries of the Granary Square community?

1. Benches without barriers
2. Tourists with suitcases
3. Children in swimsuits
4. During the afternoon, children in swimsuits are accompanied by their parents (some parents are also accompanied by childcare staff)
5. Staff members moving around the square
6. No presence of homeless individuals
7. A stable and peaceful order in the square
8. Campaigners and promoters are kept outside the square
9. Art school students and tech company employees



Calendar_time_map_scan_photograph





Chair_map

Exploring the concept of “public” through the structure of chairs.

What is “public”?

Does true “publicness” exist?

How do chairs control public space?

Sensing the idea of “public” through the facility of the chair in public space.

Public space—

I observed the design of chairs in public spaces:

Are they part of a shared, continuous surface? Or are they divided and separated?

In public transport, most chairs are separated;

On pedestrian streets, chairs often combine both separation and sharing attributes;

In squares, most chairs are designed for sharing.

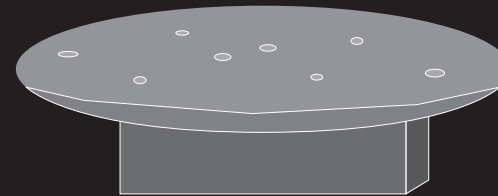
By analyzing the structural characteristics of chairs, I realized that the modes and processes of communication in public spaces are, in fact, pre-designed. The roles and functions of the public spaces people enter are the results of deliberate arrangement.

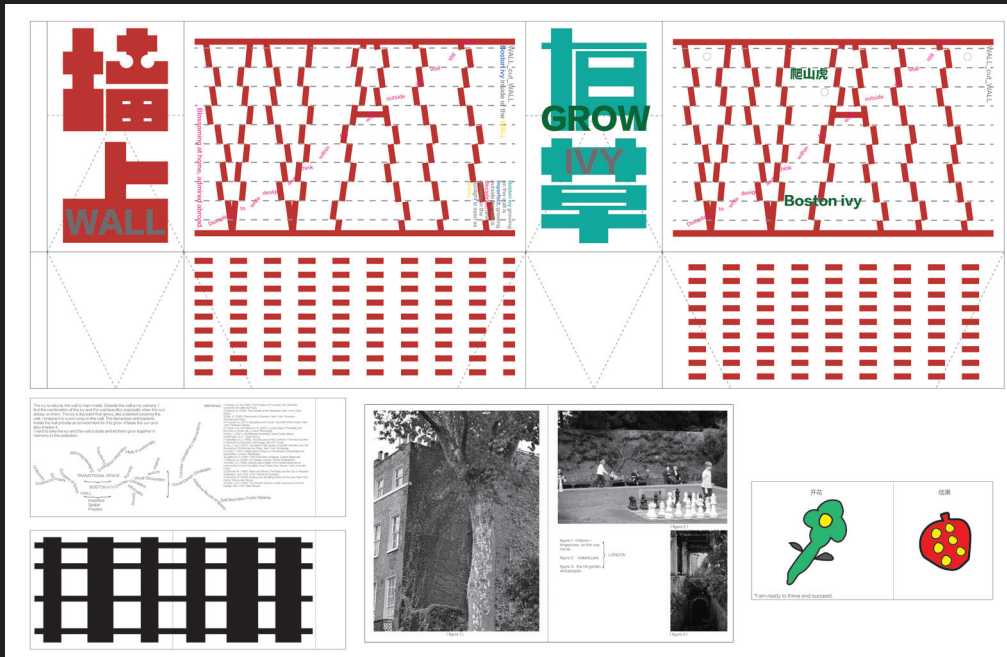
The word “public,” in reality, depends on who owns the space.

What we enter is not truly a public space, but a managed space owned by someone else.

investigation from Granary Square's Chair

What's the 'Public' ?





WALL_map

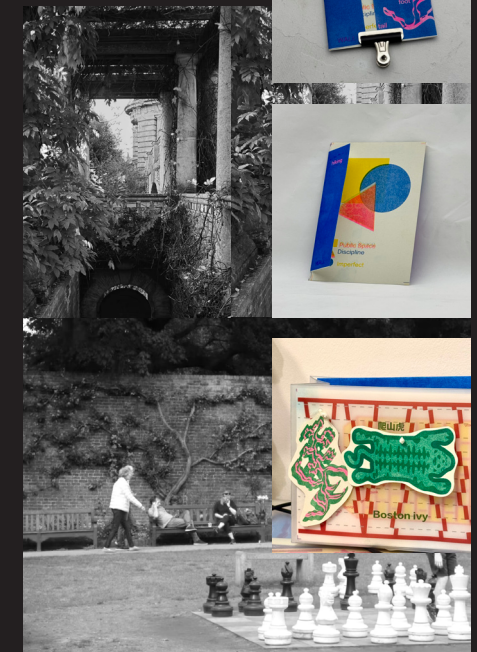
Walls are immovable straight lines on the city map.
 Where do walls come from?
 Why do they keep getting higher?
 What is a wall?

investigation from Chair to WALL

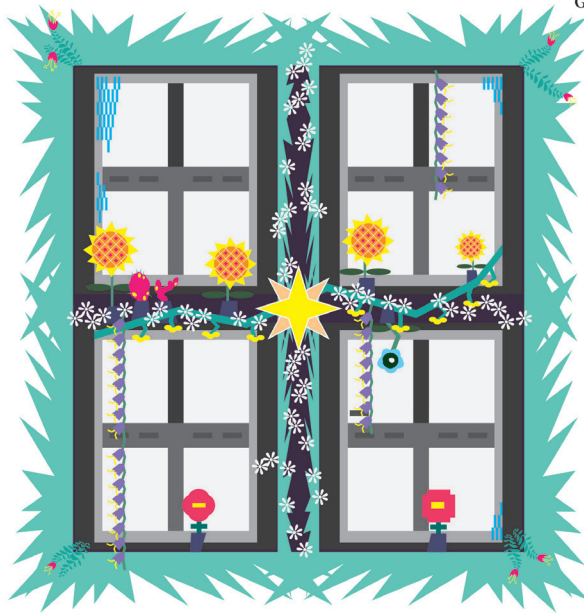
The "wall" is an unshakable symbol in the city.
 It represents power.
 It embodies power structures.
 The benches in public spaces are its miniature version — the wall is a larger bench, standing awkwardly and imposingly throughout the city.
 It separates functions, communities, classes, and people.
 It dictates how residents should live, move, communicate, and think.

I've seen walls covered in ivy.
 They grow from within, spilling over the structure, reaching for nutrients, air, soil, water, and sunlight.
 For them, this is not aggression or destruction — it is a natural act of survival.

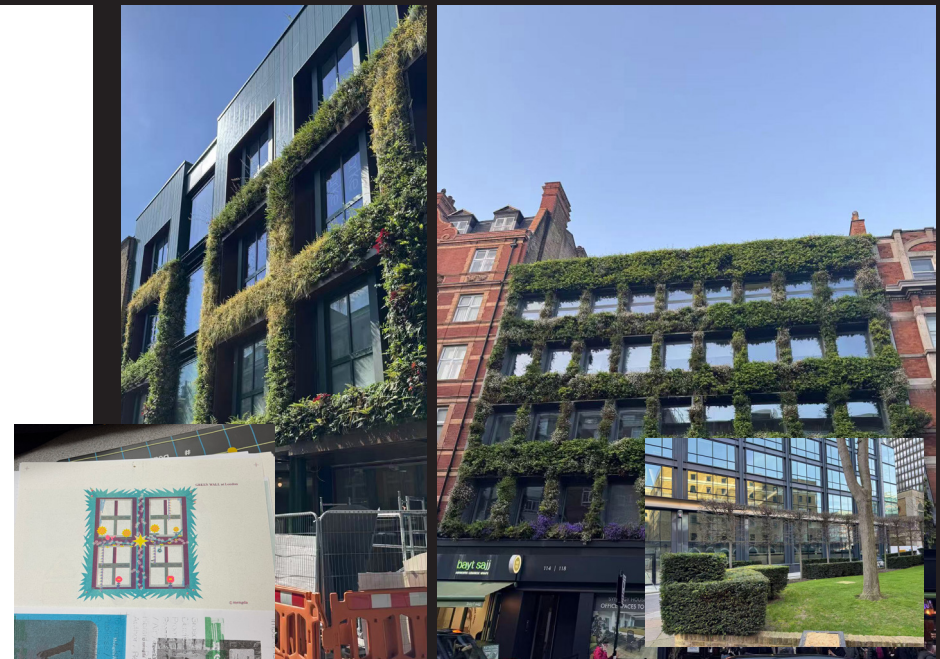
To me, society is a reflection of "walls and ivy," waiting for the day it begins to decay.



GREEN WALL at London



© mengda



green_WALL_map

investigation from green WALL

While citywalking through the city, I not only saw walls covered in ivy, but also came across walls softened artificially with “greenery.” This texture was fuzzy, contrasting with the hard, rigid surfaces around it — a natural and gentle texture, a soft presence.

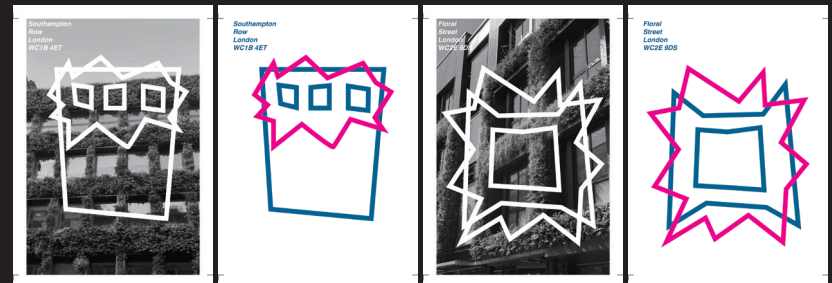
At the same time, I noticed different kinds of “green.” In the City of London’s financial district, I saw trees confined by wire cages, forced into neat, rectangular shapes. This reminded me of the tree clusters at Granary Square, which gave me a much more personal feeling.

Walking along equally bustling streets — all within the same city of London — I realized that the stories and growth maps of these trees are completely different. It’s hard to imagine that, in such a densely designed and privatized city, anything is left untouched by planning.

***The concept of “public space” is like a trap rooted in the residents’ sense of “democracy.”
“Public space” is more like a trap buried within the map.***

rules and disciplinary

The Rules of Trees in the Urban Steel Jungle





Urban_Facility_map

investigation from urban facility

During my citywalk, I observed many urban infrastructures and symbols. These elements together form an abstract yet concrete map that shaped my understanding of what “public” means. For example, CCTV — the modern embodiment of historical watchtowers — serves as a direct symbol of power and surveillance violence. The “panopticon” from history has now permeated all forms of modern urban infrastructure. “Discipline” and “surveillance” are embedded not only in the physical structures but also deeply within the minds of residents.

What is “discipline”?
 Do we need discipline?
 What is a utopian society under idealism?
 What is formalism?
 What are the gaps in structures?
 Should we fill these gaps or continue creating them?

Just like the separation between the king and the people,
 between political parties and politicians,
 between schools and teachers,
 between teachers and students—
 surveillance intervenes in these gaps.
 And surveillance, too, is being surveilled.

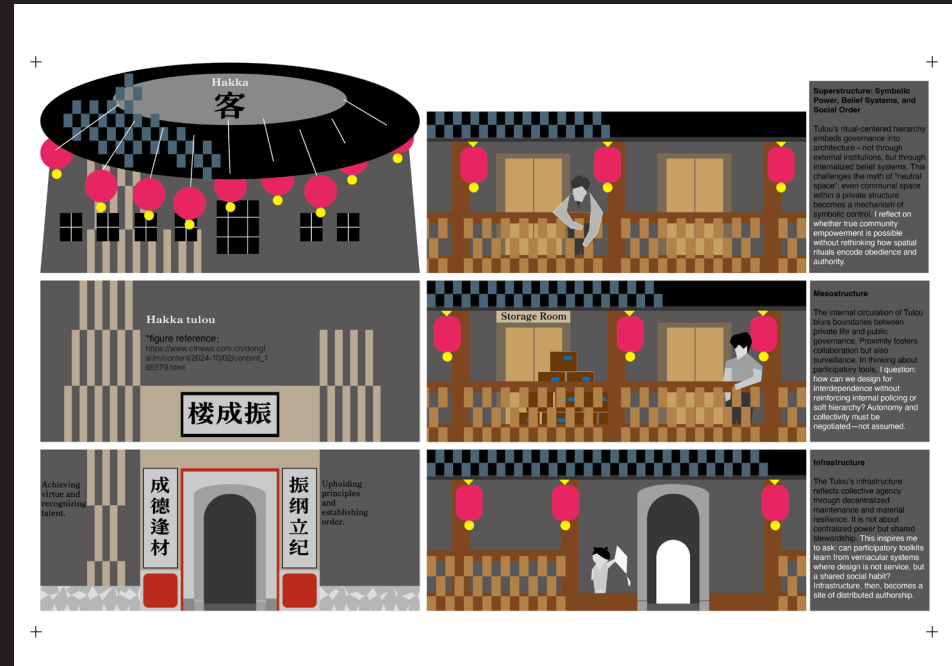
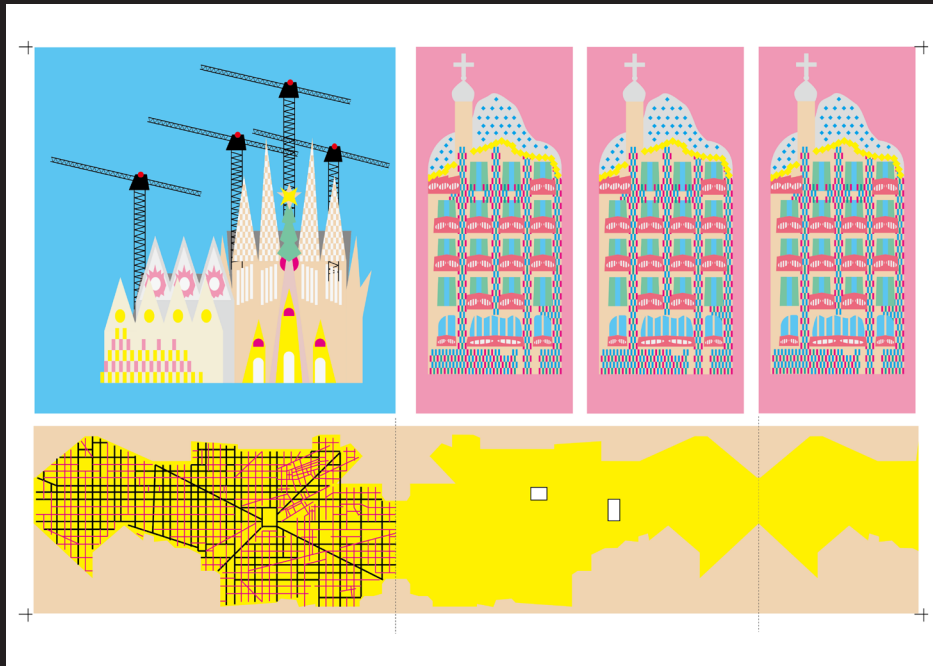
Whether active or passive, surveillance continues to spread. This is an assertion — and in my view, it is pathological.

Test Print & Misprint & Duplicate Print

I believe that the process of distinguishing and categorizing different color blocks in Riso printing serves as a method of documentation. By deconstructing the printed color layers of a map that is both abstract and specific, designers can gain a better understanding of the underlying information and potential embedded within the map.

The experimental printing process involved in Riso printing community maps is particularly engaging. I believe the imperfection inherent in such experiments is well-suited to reflect the conflicts embedded in designers' observations of social and community issues. By deliberately producing misprints and cataloguing them — creating a series of error-patterned prints accompanied by a visual language of mistakes — it becomes possible to construct a contextual printed response to social problems.





international_cases

Exploring the “public” map from a broader perspective.

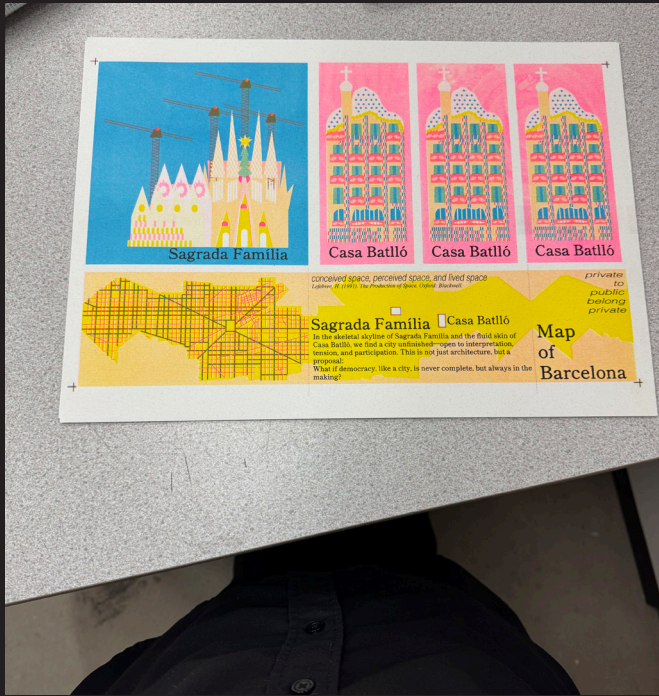
In my comparison between Casa Batlló and the Hakka Tulou, I came to realise that “public” is not a stable or neutral spatial concept. The Hakka Tulou, as a form of spontaneously organised collective housing and defence, embodies openness within enclosure—its sense of “publicness” is built upon kinship ties and communal ethics. It holds a strong internal cohesion, but inherently maintains boundaries, remaining largely inaccessible to outsiders. In contrast, Casa Batlló, while reflecting Gaudí’s free exploration of nature and art, today operates as a tourist site whose “publicness” is shaped and regulated by commercial logic and curated visitor experiences.

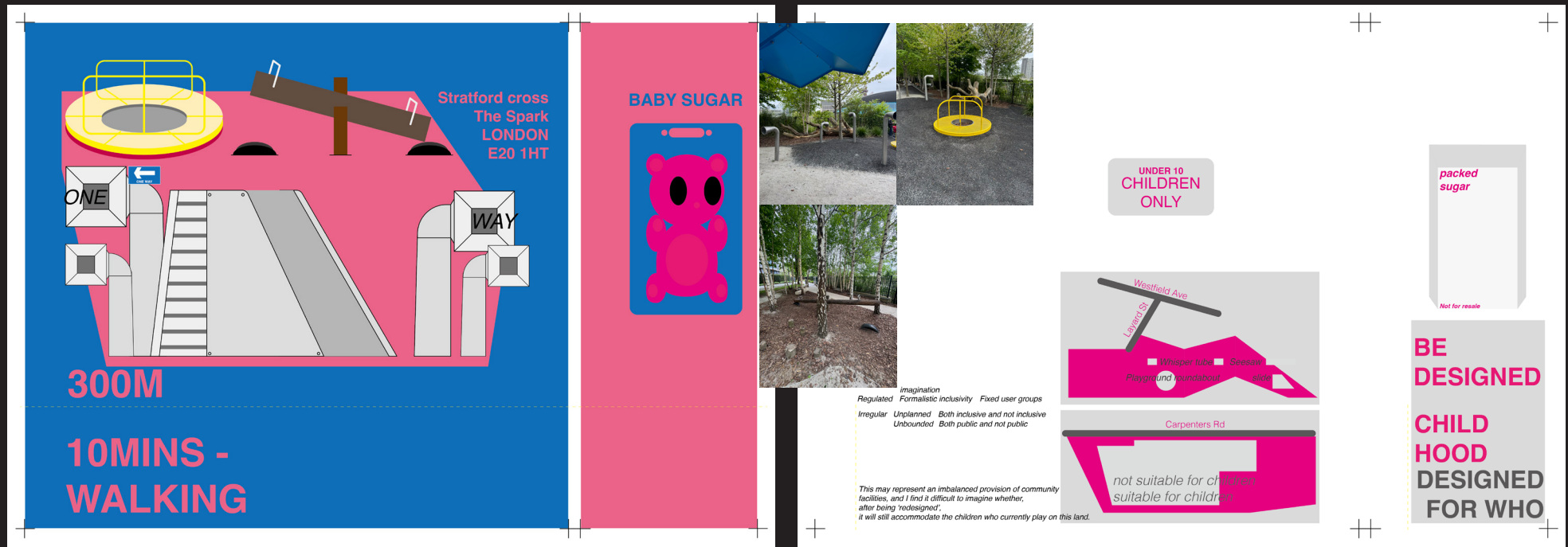
This comparison led me to question:

- Who is allowed into “public” space, and who is silently excluded?
- When architecture becomes a spectacle, does the publicness of space shift into a form of consumability?
- If the Tulou’s enclosure was a response to historical survival, and the openness of tourist spaces is driven by capital, does “authentic publicness” always oscillate between these two logics?
- Is it possible to design a model of public space today that is neither bound by kinship nor governed by commercial imperatives?
- How might we design a decentralised public spatial practice that accommodates diverse expressions without being overdefined by cultural, economic, or institutional powers?

investigation from international ‘public spaces’

Calendar_time_map_scan_photograph





children_park_cases_map

investigation from children public park at east london

Through my comparative observation of The Spark in East London and a nameless children's park located just 300 meters away, I came to realise that the concept of "public space" is neither equitable nor inherently inclusive. The Spark, with its engaging topography, vibrant colour palette, and socially inclusive atmosphere, naturally attracts children and families who gather and interact within it. In contrast, the so-called "children's park" lacks appropriate scale, a sense of safety, and comfort. Its spatial layout fails to reflect the actual needs of young users, rendering it largely unused.

Supported by mapped time–distance relationships and an ongoing process of documentation and spatial drawing, this comparison has led me to understand that "public" is not merely a physical designation but a living, dynamic status defined by those who inhabit and activate the space. A space that cannot be genuinely used becomes a hollow representation of publicness.

Yet this insight prompts further reflection:

How do we reconcile the top-down structures of planning with bottom-up experiences in designing for "children's parks"?

Or perhaps, do cities necessarily require the presence of imbalance and spatial contradiction?

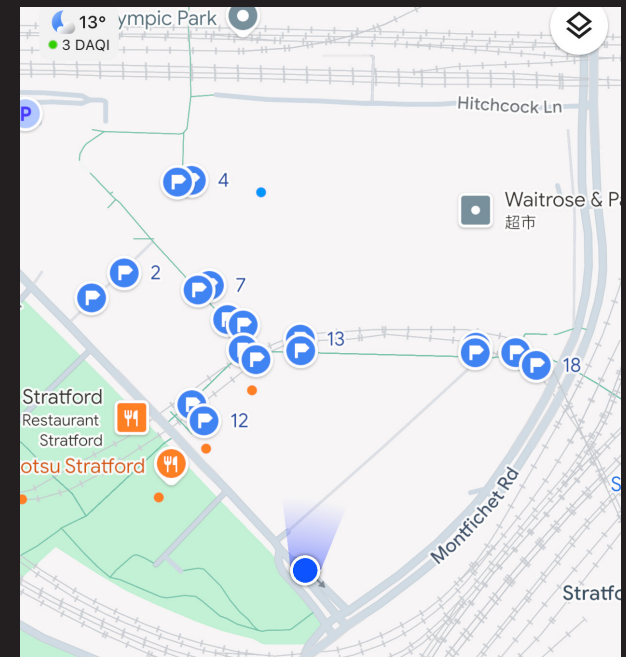
Must the maps we draw intentionally preserve imperfection and asymmetry?

When unregulated, "free" public spaces fall into disuse, they often invite "redesign" under the guise of public good and democratic renewal. But this process risks triggering a new cycle of spatial enclosure—one that may reproduce a different version of Granary Square under the logic of commercialised "publicness" and performative "democracy."

MAP_Stratford_westfield



account_signs



network with skaters at TikTok investigation at TikTok

Building a network with roller-skating teenagers in East London has been a fascinating experience. They are rebellious skaters gliding through the city — many people fear them, and I must admit that I, too, held some prejudice when I first approached them. However, the conversations went surprisingly smoothly, and they were all very friendly.

I interviewed six different groups of roller-skating teens, grouped according to their skating experience. My questions included:

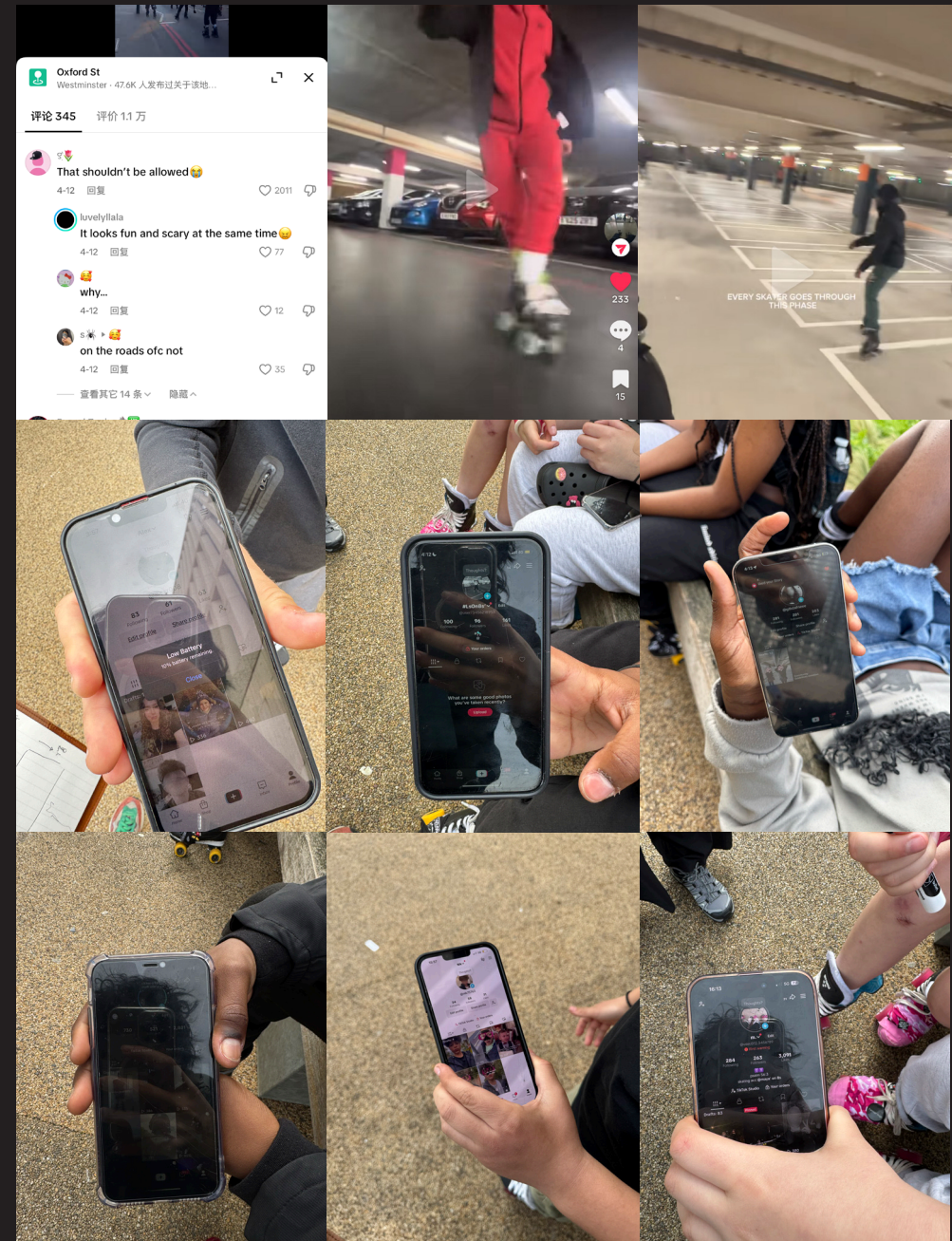
1. What got you into roller skating?
2. How long have you been roller skating?
3. Do you wear your skates outside of practice or skating sessions?
4. Where in London do you think is the most skate-friendly area?
5. How do you feel East London responds to roller skating as an activity? Why? What about roller skating as a mode of transport?
6. If there were a new skating space, what would it need to have?

(We usually ended by exchanging contact details.)

Through these conversations, I found that East London shows very low acceptance toward teenagers. They are frequently stopped — not only from engaging in skating as a recreational activity but also when using roller skates as a means of transport. They are often targeted by specific signage and treated with suspicion by passersby. Despite this, the skating community continues to grow. Many young people are joining in, influenced by friends and TikTok. They are drawn by the opportunity to share this activity with peers and to document their skating experiences on TikTok.

I believe TikTok plays a major role in shaping and expanding the roller-skating teen community in East London. Not only is it the most current short-form video platform, but the act of filming, along with the metrics of views, likes, and shares, contribute to the visibility and growth of the community.

From this, I concluded that there are complex social issues between East London's roller-skating youth and public spaces — particularly in areas like Stratford.



Tactical Urban Mapping

I believe that maps are a powerful way to understand social issues. By redesigning maps and removing unnecessary elements while retaining those related to the problem, we can create tactical maps that reveal deeper insights. Such maps not only illustrate the specific experiences of roller-skating youth in East London, but also allow us to observe the root causes of the issue and identify where change might begin. Of course, a map alone is not enough—and neither is any intervention meaningful without the genuine participation and design contributions of the roller-skating youth themselves.

I believe this issue is multifaceted—touching on space, communities, interests, transportation, youth voice, and even TikTok viewership. How can I resolve such a complex problem? The truth is, I can't—and no one can. I still experience the same "designs are restricted to responsibility based" perspective, as advocated in the "two-stage social design practice framework" on achieving concrete outcomes is difficult, but through sustained tracking and engage propose and advocates for a de-carried approach to participatory design. That I believe proving this approach is enough. Yet, the question of how to solve the problem shown courage. This is not a challenge that can be addressed by design alone, it will have become something more. And that balance, applied to different local contexts.

"EMPOWER TOOLKIT"

children_park_cases

MAP: REMOVING UNNECESSARY ELEMENTS

EAST LONDON STRATFORD

TIME	ACTIVITY 'X'	DAY
8:00	<input type="checkbox"/>	★
10:00	<input type="checkbox"/>	★
10:00	<input type="checkbox"/>	★
12:00	<input type="checkbox"/>	★
12:00	<input type="checkbox"/>	★
15:00	<input type="checkbox"/>	★
15:00	<input type="checkbox"/>	★
18:00	<input type="checkbox"/>	★
18:00	<input type="checkbox"/>	★
21:00	<input type="checkbox"/>	★
23:00	<input type="checkbox"/>	★

Relationship
TIME

investigation from children public park at east london to The exclusion of roller-skating adolescents from public spaces in East London (Stratford)

In my observations and interviews in the Stratford area of East London, I found that roller-skating adolescents are frequently excluded from public spaces. They are not only driven away by security guards but also face institutional restrictions from commercial areas like Westfield, which enforce “No Skating” signs and personnel monitoring. For these young people, roller-skating is not merely a recreational activity—it is a mode of daily transport, social bonding, and self-expression. As one teenager who had only just started skating told me: “We are not accepted by this city. We just want a smooth surface where we can skate.” This made me realise that they are not only claiming space for movement, but also asserting their right to visibility and presence.

I began mapping their skating routes, pause points, and the areas from which they were expelled. When comparing spatial management across different locations, I realised that maps are not just carriers of geographic information—they are traces of power. In these maps, empty zones are not “unused” but rather “deemed unfit for use”; boundaries are not drawn from neutral planning decisions, but from the disciplinary logic that governs bodies and behaviours.

This led me to ask several critical questions:

- When young people’s modes of movement, collectivity, and social behaviour diverge from dominant urban logics, who decides whether those behaviours are acceptable?
- Can tactical mapping be used to redraw a vision of the city shaped by adolescent spatial practices?
- Can the trajectories of roller-skating be seen as a form of spatial protest or urban authorship—and should they be recognised as such within planning discourse?



*printing: riso printed
binding: perfect binding
paper: crush corn
size: 140mm*190mm*



*photograph at granary square
data: 20/05/2025*

A Map Journey Book