(H)ACTIVATE

Basurama THE
Pop-Up City
Urban Foxes

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Credits

A PROJECT BY

Basurama (<u>basurama.org</u>), Pop-Up City (<u>popupcity.net</u>), Urban Foxes (<u>urbanfoxes.org</u>), 2023—2025.

basurama En E URBAN

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ey, do you know that feeling? You're walking through your neighbourhood and you think, "This could be so much better..." That boring bench nobody ever sits on. That wall that could really use some colour. That small square where you always have to watch out for cars. Well, quess what? You don't have to wait for anyone to fix it. The city is yours. You can make it, change it and improve it. But how do you make sure your voice is heard? That's the question we started with for the (H)Activate the City project.

We're a team of three: Urban Foxes from Brussels, Pop-Up City from Amsterdam and Basurama from Madrid. For years, we've been working on small-scale projects to improve the city, together with local residents. But getting young people involved is a different kettle of fish. You're not always up for long-winded chats, you might be a bit shy, you've got other things on your mind, and you don't have the patience for endless talking. But you know exactly what you want. You have ideas about where you and your mates can hang out, which spot needs to be safer, or where you can finally practice that sick trick. That's what this booklet is all about.

It's your manual for hacking the city, your way. No boring meetings, just doing. With this booklet, we're giving you the tools you need to:

Kick off cool, small projects that make a real difference.

- 2 Come up with actions that get people thinking.
- 3 Use humour and games to spark new ideas.

We're building on a huge urban hacking tradition that we've all been a part of in our own way. So, get inspired, get out there and make your own city better.



Jeroen Beekmans, Joop de Boer, Laura Fernández de Moya, Mónica Gutierrez Herrero, Bram Dewolfs October 2025



The city is yours. Hack it! (H) ACTIVISM LVIESTORY

ave you ever stopped to think about who actually makes the city you live in? The streets, the squares, the parks — they might all seem self-evident. But the truth is that cities are constantly changing. And you, yes you, can make a difference.

Urban hacking is a superpower that helps you shape the city to your liking. Whether you want to turn an awkward kerb into a cool skate spot, transform a dull wall into a colourful artwork, or fill a neglected corner with greenery — urban hacking is all about small, clever actions through which you share big ideas and improve your surroundings. It's your chance to show what matters to you and how you see the city.

THE START OF A MOVEMENT

Urban hacking is as old as the city itself. For centuries, people have been working to improve their surroundings. But in the past hundred years, cities have become busier and more crowded. What is and isn't allowed is decided at town hall, and so the city has grown increasingly formal. More and more people want to contribute something themselves. Take graffiti artists, for example, who use dull parts of the city to display their work. This scene first emerged in the 1970s, when many cities were in poor shape and rundown. You might also know the artist Banksy. He uses the street to deliver sharp social commentary with witty, small-scale artworks. His street art has become hugely popular, but is still officially illegal. Many others followed his example, sparking a lively street art scene of



FRENCH URBAN ADVENTURER
FLORIAN RIVIÈRE HAS A FUN
WAY TO HELP YOU GET AROUND
TOWN. Whenever you spot a
street without a proper
crossing, you can simply
roll out your very own
pop-up crosswalk! Made
from a recycled carpet, it
lets you safely cross
almost any street you like
- all for just €10. Photo
Florian Rivière

It's easier to get forgiveness than permission

BANKSY

sticker artists, stencil makers and people brightening up the city with small interventions. But it didn't stop at stickers, mosaics and tiny acts.

At the start of this century, two major economic crises broke out in quick succession, leaving many empty spaces and buildings in their wake. These gaps opened up opportunities for new ideas about how cities could be used. A movement of urban hackers emerged. Ordinary people began experimenting with small-scale projects in the city. Their ideas and solutions helped to improve buildings, squares and streets. This DIY mentality spread like wildfire through the internet and social media, and became the foundation of a global movement. From London to Tokyo and from New York to Sydney, streets were turned into

IN THE GERMAN TOWN OF HANAU, LEGO GRANDMA IS TACKLING BAD WHEELCHATE ACCESS IN A BRILLIANT WAY. Rita Ebel, who has used a wheelchair for over twentu years, builds awesome, colourful ramps for local buildings entirely out of donated LEGO bricks! Her ace creations are a creative way to flag up the everudau obstacles people often overlook, making her town's streets way more inclusive and playful. Photo Rita Ebel and family



pocket parks, parking spots filled with pop-up swimming pools, and swings hung from scaffolding poles — even inside the underground.

The authors of this booklet are part of that movement, too. In Madrid, Basurama became a creative studio designing impressive urban interventions often with recycled materials; in Brussels, Urban Foxes focused especially on engaging young people in the city; and in Amsterdam, Pop-Up City brought together initiatives from across the globe on a blog. This movement showed that you don't need to wait for politicians or the council. You can just start! Whether it's cleaning your street, creating a temporary park, or painting a pop-up zebra crossing with tape and paint.



THIS IS MORE THAN JUST A GAME. The Block by Block foundation uses Minecraft to empower communities worldwide to design their own public spaces. It's a simple tool that gives everyone a voice, letting residents and professionals collaborate as equals. Locals have used it to build real-world projects from a child-friendly market in Accra to a community hub in Beirut proving that game-changing ideas can start with a simple block. Photo Block



STREET ARTIST CLET ABRAHAM
GOT FAMOUS FOR STICKING HIS
ART ON CITY STREET SIGNS,
TURNING THEM INTO FUNNY
LITTLE SCENES. He left this
piece behind in the Italian
city of Florence. Photo
Julia Tulke



FROM SMALL IDEAS TO BIG INFLUENCE

Urban (H)acktivism is a mash-up of the words hacking and activism. On one hand, you're tweaking the existing situation without official permission (hacking). On the other, activism means standing up for what you care about in your own city. Urban (H)activism has a few key traits and ingredients:

Pop-up: you don't have to build something permanent straight away. Start small and see what happens. Maker culture: it's about doing. Getting your hands dirty, gathering materials and unleashing your creativity. Involvement: you're not alone! Urban hacking brings people together. Activism: you take a stand for something you care about, whether that's more greenery, safer streets or a great

hangout spot.

The rise of social media meant that all these small, funny projects could be shared across the world in no time. And that inspired others to start improving their own neighbourhoods and streets. Meanwhile, official city planners noticed that this approach worked. People could actually do quite a lot themselves, and sometimes even knew better what their surroundings needed. What began as a handful of 'crazy' ideas slowly started to be taken seriously. This DIY approach worked!

At the same time, larger sites were also being tackled with a DIY mentality. Think of <u>De Ceuvel</u> in Amsterdam, <u>Les Grands</u>
<u>Voisins</u> in Paris and <u>Prinzessinnengarten</u> in Berlin, where entrepreneurs, artists and





CITIES ARE USUALLY BUILT
FOR ADULTS, OFTEN
FORGETTING WHAT YOUNG
PEOPLE NEED. In Nashville,
the Youth Design Team is
flipping the script. They're
tackling real problems,
like using simple paint
designs to force cars to
slow down at junctions,
making them safer for
everyone. Youth-led design
in action. Photo Civic
Design Center Nashville

local residents collaborated, proving that a temporary, pop-up approach can grow into a successful, long-term project that sets the tone for the rest of the city.

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN!

Today the situation is different. Many of the temporary sites of the past have disappeared. Cities are busy and built up. And activism nowadays often focuses on major international problems, rather than the manageable issues in your own neighbourhood. And we get it — you probably don't feel like spending hours talking with adults about politics and government. Yet your voice — the voice of young people and children — is super important. You see things adults don't. You know what matters to you and your friends, and you are the future users of

the city. It's time to wake up that dormant energy.

We believe that the toolkit of urban hacking suits you perfectly. It's not about endless meetings or writing complicated reports, but about making, truing and acting. Launching an idea through a small intervention is far more powerful than just talking about it: it immediately shows what you mean, and you develop the real skills to change things, because you instantly find out what works and what doesn't. You'll see that some things can't withstand the weather, that some places barely have anyone around to see or try your idea, and sometimes things get damaged. Bu doing, you learn. That's how you also learn to shape the city. We, the authors of this booklet, have experienced that

IN FRANCE, A CREW CALLED THE WA HACKED A STREET SIGN AND TURNED IT INTO A BASKETBALL HOOP BIN.

Instead of just dropping your rubbish, you can now slam dunk your litter or shoot a three-pointer with a crisp packet. It's a cheeky and awesome hack that turns cleaning the pavements into a fun game. Photo Antoine Rivière



the hard way, and we want to pass that on to a new generation.

The city of the future won't be built with words, but with hands, creativity and action. This booklet is packed with inspiration and tools to get you started. Grab your toolkit and hit the streets. The city is waiting for you!

hink of your city as an unfinished artwork you can add to. We've got nine tools to get you started. Some offer new ways to see the city; others are concrete interventions to change it. Mix and match, or just pick one. Don't follow the instructions rigidly. If you find a better way, trust your gut and do your thing. It's OK if an idea fails. The real win is taking action. Most people don't know they can make a difference. You do. That's your power to make an impact and inspire others. Above all: have fun. Go make your mark.

T00L #1

City expedition

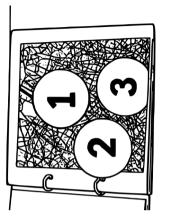
Look at your city from a different angle.
Organise your very own youth city
expedition, combining teambuilding and
urban reflection.



WHAT YOU'LL NEED

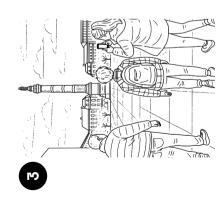
Get your mission folders prepped. You'll need: chalk, blindfolds, playing cards, a camera/smartphone, €5-10 per group, and any other items you want to bring along.





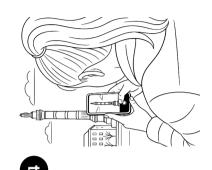
ASSIGN CITY SECTIONS

Each group should explore a different part of the city. This is key. It means you'll all gather unique insights and can build a much bigger, more complete picture when you regroup.



TEAM UP (AND STAY SAFE)

Break into small groups. Safety is the top priority: every group must have an emergency phone number and/or be accompanied by an adult (who's just there to observe).



START THE EXPEDITION

Head out to your assigned zone and tackle the collective challenges. You'll be photographing good and bad spots, using blindfolds to experience a place with your other senses, or buying local food to share.



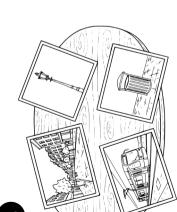
MEET AND SHARE

Arrange a time and place to regroup. This is where you share your experiences, the food you bought, and discuss what you've all discovered. It's time to compare notes and reflect on your findings.

T00L #2

Place evaluation

You can run this place evaluation activity right alongside your other city expedition tasks. It's a unique way for your group to analyse parts of the city on your own terms, rather than someone else's.



WHAT YOU'LL NEED

Your group uses the photos you took often use — this is purely about your complex, top-down criteria experts two places to focus on. Forget the

Instead of using a predefined checklist,

ASK THE 'HACK' QUESTION

just ask the key question: "How would

you evaluate this place, using your own chosen criteria?" This gets straight to

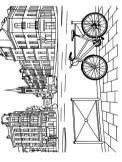
what you and other young people

actually value.

during the expedition to select one or

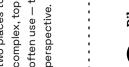
Ribaucourt Report

Environment 2/10 Accessibility 10/10 Activities 0/10 Safety 0/10 Space 7/10



DISCUSS AND NEGOTIATE

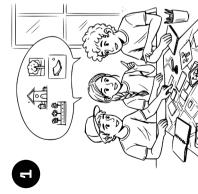
to discuss, debate, and try to land on a This is a group effort. Your team needs collaborative process that often leads common evaluation for the spot. It's a to surprising insights.



T00L #3

Heaven or hell

Get creative and redesign a spot in your city. No experience needed — sometimes the worst ideas are the most useful!



PICK YOUR PLACE

Choose the spot you want to transform. You can decide to tackle this solo or team up with your group to brainstorm your ideas together.



Decide your direction. Heaven: show us your perfect version of the place. Hell: show us how you'd make it even worse. (Designing a disaster can be fun!)

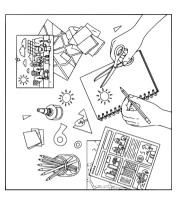
HEAVEN OR HELL?



GET INSPIRED

Check out some 'before and after' photos of other city redesigns. See what's possible and get your own creative ideas flowing.





CHOOSE YOUR TOOLS

How will you show your idea? Go oldschool with pencils, paper, and collage, or go digital using Photoshop or other apps. It's completely your call.



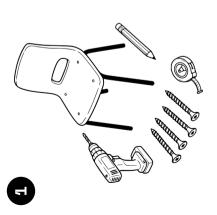
MEET AND SHARE

Get ready to present your 'heaven' or 'hell' proposal. Show your redesign to the rest of the group and even to local policy makers.

TOOL #4

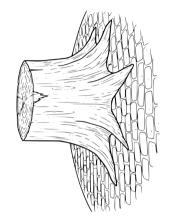
Make your own tree stump seat

Gutted when you see a chopped-down tree? Don't be. That stump is your chance to create a cool, one-of-a-kind chair right on that spot.



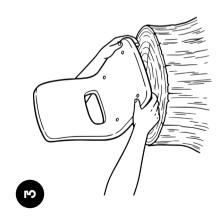
WHAT YOU'LL NEED

An old chair seat (maybe from a knackered kitchen chair or stool). Make sure it's solid and not broken. You'll also need a pencil, a drill, four screws, and a tape measure.



FIND YOUR SPOT

Scout out a good tree stump in a public space. You're looking for one that's sturdy and in a spot where people might actually want to sit down.



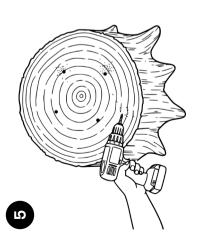
GET IT IN POSITION

Remove the chair legs. Plonk the seat on top of the stump. Shuffle it about until it sits flat and is nicely centred. Check there's enough of the stump under the seat to get your screws in.



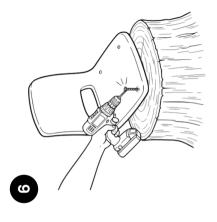
MARK THE SPOTS

Use your pencil to mark the stump through the holes already in the seat (where the legs used to be). If there are no holes, just mark four spots in a square shape.



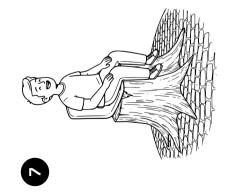
DRILL PILOT HOLES

Grab your drill and carefully make small holes where you made your marks. Make sure the drill bit is a little bit thinner than your screws. Don't drill too deep — just enough for the screws to get a good grip.



ATTACH THE SEAT

Place the seat back over the holes you just drilled. Now, get your screws and fix the seat securely to the stump. Use your drill or a screwdriver. Do it nice and tight so the seat doesn't wobble.



TEST AND ENJOY!

Check one last time that it's stable and the seat is ready to use. Is everything OK? Great! Then give yourself a little pat on the back for completing this fun urban hack.

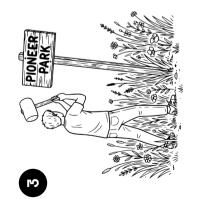
T00L #5

Create a park for the neighbourhood

Got a boring, empty patch of land in your area? Turn it into your own mini-park! With a bit of imagination (and a little help from nature), you can get it done in no time.



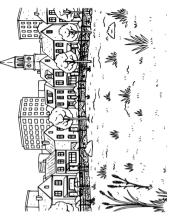
A lawnmower, a plank or wooden panel, a post (not needed if there's a fence), paint and a paintbrush, pencil and paper.



MAKE A SIGN

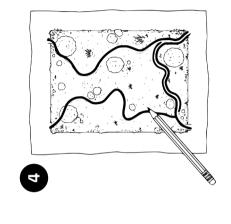
On a sturdy piece of wood or plywood, paint 'PIONEER PARK', the park rules, and maybe some local wildlife. Attach the sign to a post or a fence. Place it somewhere clearly visible to let the people know what's happening and that nature is being allowed to grow.





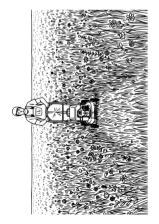
FIND YOUR SPOT

Go and look for an unused, overgrown plot of land in your neighbourhood. Make sure it's a place where you can work safely and where nature can be left to do its thing.



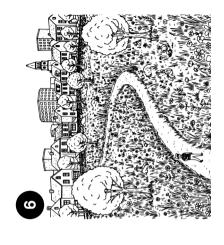
DESIGN YOUR PATHS

Think about how you want to walk through your park. A winding path is often more interesting than a straight one. Make a drawing or map of the area with the paths you want to create.



MOW THE PATHS

Take a lawnmower and carefully mow the paths you've designed. Leave the rest of the area alone. The contrast between the mown path and the wild nature next to it is what makes your park unique.



LOOK AFTER YOUR PARK

In spring and summer, come back every two weeks to mow the paths again. This will keep your Pioneer Park accessible all season, while nature gets all the space it needs. Enjoy its beauty!

Make a seat out of two old car tyres

Car tyres are perfect material for an urban hack. Basurama shows you how to turn two worn-out ones into an awesome seat.

6x40 mm screws, two 13 mm nuts, four Two old car tyres of a similar size, two wide flat washers, soap and a sponge mm wood bit, and a 13 mm spanner to for cleaning, a cutter, a drill with a 10 fasten everything together.

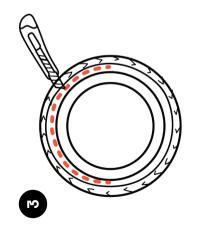


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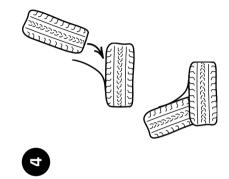
CLEAN THE TYRES

essential, particularly if you plan to use with soap and a sponge to remove the entire layer of dust. A clean surface is First, give the tyres a thorough wash paint or spray on the seat later.



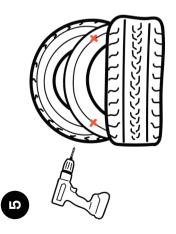
MAKE A CUT

blade length of 20 mm, firmly cut along careful! Using a cutter with a minimum Select one of the tyres, which will be requires a sharp blade, so please be the inner red line as shown in the used as the backrest. This step drawing.



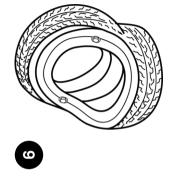
ASSEMBLE

manoeuvre it into the opening of the first tyre (the one you just cut) until it's snugly fitted inside and resting Take the second, intact tyre and firmly.



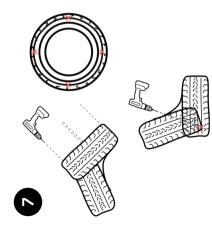
DRILL HOLES

Locate the two points marked with an 'X' on the drawing where the tyres overlap. Use your drill to make two holes. Each hole should go completely through both layers of rubber — the side of the backrest tyre and the tread of the seat tyre.



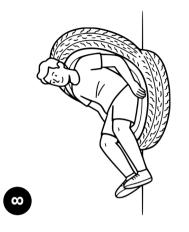
Ĭ

Take the two screws and four wide, flat washers. For each hole, place a washer on a screw and push the screw from the outside through both layers of the tyre. On the inside, place another washer over the screw and then thread on a 13 mm nut. Use a 13 mm spanner to tighten the nut.



DRILL DRAINAGE HOLES

Drill another 3-4 holes in the lowest part of both tyres to function as a drain for rainwater. Tip: to know where to make the drainage holes, pour a little water in and see where it accumulates.



WELL DONE!

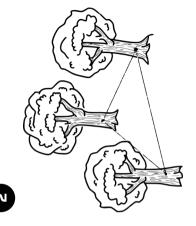
Your tyre seat is ready. Time to go outside! Find a sunny spot, sit back, and enjoy your self-made, sustainable chair. And now you know how, you can make as many as you want.

Weave your own urban hammock

Want to daydream in your own DIY hammock? You can get pretty far with just some rope. Weave a web between three trees, or five, or eight... go wild!

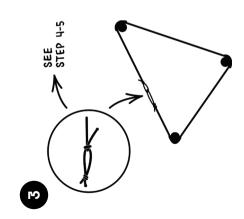


Plenty of sturdy rope (about 10-20 mm thick), a sharp cutter (with at least a 20 mm blade), some duct tape, a lighter, and three or more bits of an old garden hose.



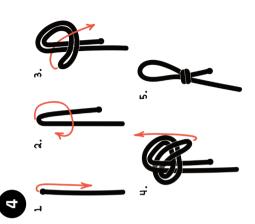
FIND YOUR PERFECT SPOT

Look for a place with at least three strong anchor points, like trees or posts. This will be the base for your net. Make sure to protect the trees from chafing with bits of garden hose.



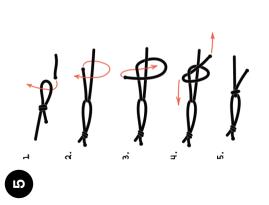
CREATE THE OUTLINE

Stretch a rope tightly between your anchor points to form the outer edge of your net. Make sure the net will hang about a metre off the ground.



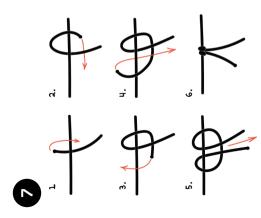
KNOT TO MAKE A LOOP

First, make a loop. This is how you tie the knot.



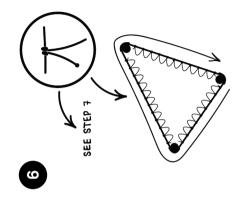
KNOT TO CONNECT

Tie the loop to the other end of the rope with a secure knot.



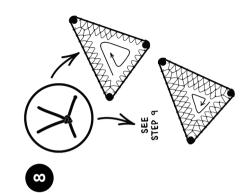
CREATE ATTACHMENT POINTS

This is how you tie this simple but super strong knot.



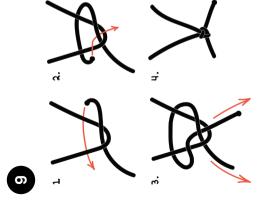
KNOT THE EDGE

Along the entire outline, make knots that are spaced 20 centimetres apart. These will be the attachment points for the rest of your net.



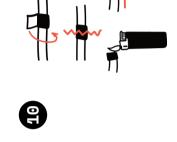
MEAVE YOUR NET

It's time to create the net! Start knotting from the outer edge and work inwards in a spiral. See step 9 for knotting instructions.



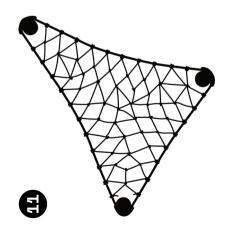
KNOT THE NET
This is how you make the knots to

create the net.



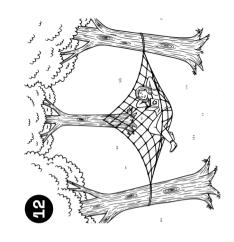
SEALING THE ENDS OF ROPES

To neatly seal the ends of your rope, first wrap duct tape around the spot where you plan to cut. Then, use a cutter to slice through the middle of the tape. Finally, carefully burn the tip with a lighter and press the melted end against a hard surface to seal it permanently. Be careful, it will be hot!



FINISH THE NET

Check your work. Make sure the holes in the net aren't bigger than 20 centimetres. This ensures it's safe and sturdy enough for you to relax in comfortably.

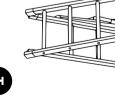


AMESOME WORK, HACKER!

You've done it! Your net is complete and ready for action. Now all that's left to do is climb in, kick back, and enjoy the view from your awesome new chillout space.

Make a wildlife crossing in your city park

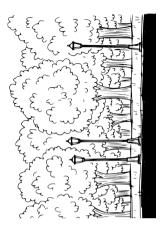
Ever thought about how animals like foxes and hedgehogs avoid bright lights at night? A lit path is basically a wall they can't cross. Let's help them out by making a safe crossing for them — just by changing the lights on a few lampposts to red.





from a supermarket or other shop, a roll of tape (or a piece of rope), a pair of A red (this is important!) plastic bag scissors and a ladder tall enough to reach the top of a lamppost.

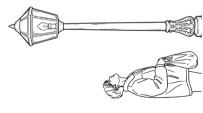




FIND A GOOD SPOT

lamps have a casing around them. That way, you can be sure your plastic bag Go and find a path in a park or nature reserve with lampposts. Check if the won't touch the hot bulb and burn.

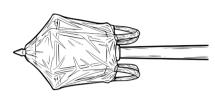




MAKE THE BAG FIT

lamp. If it doesn't, use your scissors to cut the bag open so you can unfold it out if the red plastic bag fits over the Pick one or two lampposts. Try to find and wrap it around.





TAKE ACTION

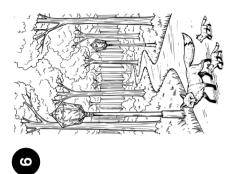
Is your bag big enough? Lovely! Climb up your ladder (be careful!) and slide the plastic over the top of the lamppost.



WEATHER-PROOF WITH TAPE

Make sure the bags are secure and won't rip in the wind and rain.

Therefore, use duct tape to seal the bottom of the plastic bag.



WELL DONE!

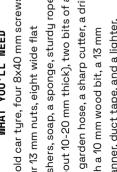
Small job, big result. By turning a few streetlights red, you've extended the habitat of the city's wild animals. They'll thank you for it!

Time to swing!

Did we mention we love old car tyres? We'll show you how to turn one into a proper guerrilla swing, ready to make city parks, bus stops, and streets a bit more playful. Let's get cracking and (H)activate the city!



(about 10-20 mm thick), two bits of an An old car tyre, four 8x40 mm screws, old garden hose, a sharp cutter, a drill washers, soap, a sponge, sturdy rope spanner, duct tape, and a lighter. four 13 mm nuts, eight wide flat with a 10 mm wood bit, a 13 mm





CUT THE TYRE

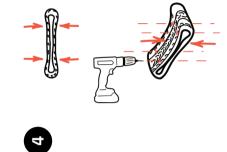
Instead of sawing, hold the tyre steady blade around with the other to remove with one hand and smoothly slide the Now for the tricky bit. Carefully poke your cutter into the side of the tyre. the side walls.





CLEAN THE TYRE

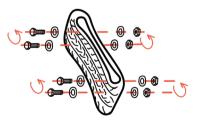
water and give it a proper scrub to get completely before you move on to the rid of all the dust and grime. Let it dry clean. Grab a sponge and some soapy First things first, let's get that tyre next step.



DRILL THE HOLES

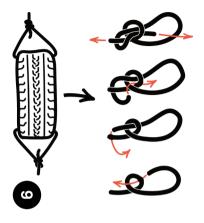
Time to make four holes for the ropes. Then, drill your holes into the flat part It's easier if you flatten the tyre first. evenly spaced for a balanced seat. of the tread, making sure they're





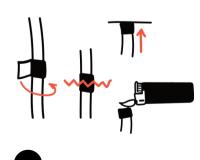
SECURE THE HOLES

Here's a top tip for you. The rubber holes can close up again after drilling. To stop this from happening, we recommend popping the screws in straight after you've drilled each hole. It'll save you a lot of hassle!



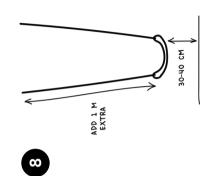
KNOT THE SEAT

Get your rope and thread it through the holes you've made. When you tie the knots to attach the seat, make sure to leave them a bit loose. This means you can easily adjust them later to get it perfect.



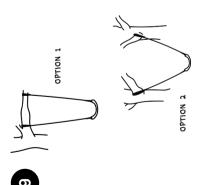
SEAL YOUR ROPES

Before you hang your swing, you need to stop the rope ends from fraying. Tightly wrap some duct tape where you plan to cut, then slice through it with a cutter. Carefully burn the tip with a lighter to seal it.



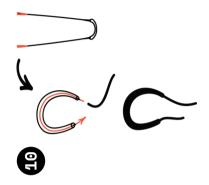
PRE-INSTALLATION CHECKLIST

Right, a few key things before you install. Remember to add an extra metre of rope for tying the knots. The finished seat should hang about 30-40 cm from the ground. A little bit of planning goes a long way!



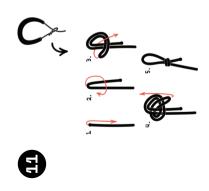
PICK YOUR SPOT

If you're using one tree, pick a branch that's as parallel to the ground as possible. If you're using two trees, try to find two branches that are more or less at the same height to keep your swing level.



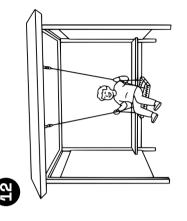
PROTECT THE TREE

Let's look after the trees. Before you throw your rope over the branch, slide a piece of hose onto the rope. This creates a protective sleeve that stops the rope from rubbing against the bark and causing damage.



TIE A SECURE KNOT

Time to fix it in place. Loop the rope over the branch and follow the knot instructions to make a solid fixing point. Give it a good, strong tug to test that it's completely secure before you start swinging.



GET CREATIVE WITH IT

Don't just limit yourself to trees! You can hang your swing from other solid structures like scaffolding or a marquee frame. Just make sure whatever you choose is super strong, safe, and that you're allowed to use it.

Find your neighbourhood lacking? Don't just wait for change. (H)Activate the City is your guide to urban hacking. Take control and improve your city through clever, direct interventions. This booklet offers nine concrete tools for immediate action — no endless meetings, just doing. The city is yours to shape.

Created by urban design collectives
Basurama (Madrid), Pop-Up City
(Amsterdam), and Urban Foxes (Brussels),
this guide is designed for young people,
youth workers, and anyone passionate
about shaping the urban future.