

# Not-So- Real-Estate

## Flexibility and rapid change in the rigid urban landscape

We've grown accustomed to the Internet as a platform built around behaviors of rapid adaptability and user responsiveness. Within this paradigm, businesses and individuals take action and capture large audiences at a pace that might have seemed impossible ten years ago. Now there is an increasing desire to enable that same flexibility and speed of responsiveness in the physical public space of our cities.

However, unlike the online world, there are rigid constraints in urban real estate with limitations from property laws, city ordinances, and the length of time, effort, and capital it takes to rent, purchase, or modify property. Despite this, many companies and individual initiatives are recognizing that the way to capture an audience "in real life" is to create constantly evolving and participatory spaces that do not yield to the limitations of the traditional built environment.

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### TAKE ACTION – *designing for Not-So-Real Estate*

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1.

#### *Get physical*

Make a powerful impression in a public city space by unveiling new campaigns or by simply reminding the public of your presence.

2.

#### *Think guerilla*

Find a creative way over the hurdles of property laws and bureaucracy. Some options may flirt with illegality, while others creatively weave a path through the obstacles.

3.

#### *Borrow from others*

Cannibalize existing infrastructures and leverage systems that are already in place, rather than compete with them.

4.

#### *Trust people*

The best online experiences allow freedom for users to create and share their own experiences. The real world is no different.

5.

#### *Go lightly*

Deploy solutions with a simple, rapid effort, and have the ability to adapt to changing conditions over time. The smallest effort with the biggest impact always wins.

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## Pop-up for the people

Pop-up retail has been a great way for major retailers to create a temporary presence in a new urban market or for new companies to gain public awareness. In 2007, before launching its first store in New York, Japanese apparel company UNIQLO deployed several shipping-container stores around town with merchandise tailored to each neighborhood.

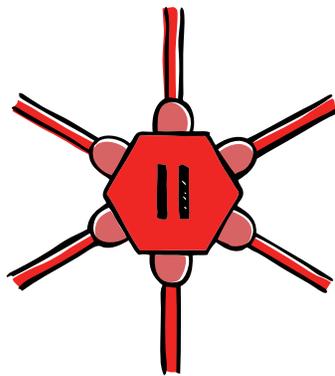
Now creative entrepreneurs are getting in on the action. Geraldine and Wayne Hemingway got their start as designer/retailers working out of “easy in/easy out” stalls in London’s Camden neighborhood in the early 1980s. Fed up with the challenges entrepreneurs face in creating a retail presence, they started KiosKiosk in 2009. The system of portable stalls, located in some of London’s busiest and trendy pedestrian shopping districts, has garnered support from even the mayor.

Like a physical version of Etsy.com, KiosKiosk gives individual entrepreneurs access to the same shoppers many larger retailers attract, without the large up-front investment or overhead of commercial real estate.

*How can campaigns and experiments gain access to large audiences via a physical presence?*



PATTERNS are a collection of shared thoughts, insights, and observations gathered through our work and the world around us. We invite you to join the conversation, so we can raise the bar and develop richer design thinking experiences collectively.



## Pay-to-play collaboration

Jonathan Robinson had worked on social ventures from London to Soweto to Barcelona. Thriving on interactions with like-minded people, he wanted to build a network where people could collaborate and share more frequently than the occasional conference or online forum allowed. So he created The Hub, a network of social innovation incubators located in London, Bristol, Johannesburg, Sao Paulo, and a growing number of other cities.

The Hub provides space-on-demand, giving members a place to work and connect with potential partners and clients. Tiered membership levels allow some startups to drop in for meeting space, while others become permanent fixtures for an extended period of time.

“We set out to create places that borrow from the best of a member’s club, an innovation agency, a serviced office, and a think tank to create a different kind of innovation environment,” Robinson says.

*How can real-estate-on-demand provide better access for individuals and small businesses while increasing the efficient use of the urban space?*

**Be a pattern spotter:** Now that you’ve been exposed to a few different examples, don’t be surprised if you start seeing *Not-So-Real Estate* patterns all around. Keep your eyes open and let us know what you find, especially if it’s the next new pattern.

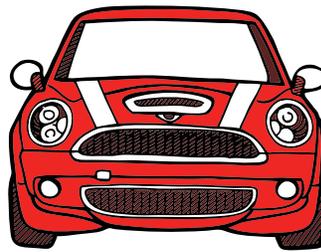
## One ’hood at a time

Adrian and Mark are Zipcar members living in New York’s Upper West Side, where the car-share company has an abundance of Mini Coopers, each with its own name. Many Friday nights during the summer, Mark surprised Adrian by saying, “Let’s take Bosco up to the Catskills.”

The little roadsters are perfect for the neighborhood’s mostly two-person households. But other areas have other needs. Mark often splits his time between his management consultancy’s Financial District and Midtown offices, where client-friendly BMW 328s through Zipcar are in ready supply. In Soho, Adrian notes a lot of Scion xBs and Honda Elements — again, through Zipcar. These cars are perfect for small business supply runs.

Zipcar’s decentralized car allocation lets the company put specific cars where demand requires. By taking advantage of underutilized parking lots and gas-station parking, Zipcar can quickly adapt to the demands of its clientele, neighborhood by neighborhood. And the company’s “Zipcars Live Here” signage helps market the message of convenience right in the backyard of potential new members.

*How can businesses make the most of physical resources? How might tweaks in the use of space and resources create massive impact for customers?*



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## One space, many programs

When Miucca Prada needed a unique temporary exhibition space for the Prada Foundation in Beijing, she teamed up with long-time collaborator and visionary architect Rem Koolhaas to create the Prada Transformer. For the first few months, the Transformer housed Miucca’s “Waist Down” exhibit, after which four cranes flipped the tetrahedron structure onto another side. The structure’s four facades (cross, hexagon, rectangle, and circle) each became the footprint for a cinema, fashion runway, and art exhibition. Presently located on the grounds of an ancient Palace in central Seoul, the whole structure will soon be packed up and resettled somewhere else on the planet.

## By any means necessary

San Francisco’s Proposition G limits the use of billboard advertising in the city. But that hasn’t stopped many companies from advertising. Intel convinced the landlord of a vacant Disney Store to clad the entire Market Street storefront with a blue advertisement for the processor company. Although the practice may challenge Proposition G, it shows that public space is still valuable for getting a message out to a wide audience.

## Restaurant on the move

For Pizzaiolle restaurant-chain-owner Daniel Noiseux, investment costs were getting in the way of a new venture. So he created Müvbox, a gourmet fast-food restaurant based out of a modified shipping container. It can go from big metal box to open restaurant in 1.5 minutes with a push of a button. Best of all, the restaurant’s portability allows it to be relocated wherever demand takes it. It weighs only 6 tons and fits on the back of truck (unlike most restaurants).

## Fuel to see cities as fluid

Underground restaurants such as Atlanta’s RogueApron keep the restaurant scene fresh by nomadically shifting locations. <http://rogueapron.wordpress.com/>

Enabled by T-Mobile, FlashMob advertising helped shape London’s busy Liverpool station on January 15, 2009.

New York’s ImprovEverywhere has created large-scale, viral performance art.

Guerilla knitters in Brooklyn tag public street furniture with their craft. <http://www.knittaplease.com/ABOUT.html>

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