

Designing with Children

Bunker Super Suite

A great number of abandoned and derelict bunkers still exist in Hamburg from World War II. This project was an attempt to show that they can be used in a different, more creative and youth-friendly way. It was supported by the experimental research program Housing and Urban Development of the Ministry for Transport, Building and Urban Affairs and the Federal Institute for Construction, Urban and Spatial Development. The Bunker Super Suite was a youth project aiming to promote young people's creativity and engagement by means of exploring the history of bunkers and identifying opportunities for transformation and re-use.

Children's involvement

This original project involved four different strands of activity:

- students from two schools in Hamburg-Altona (Gymnasium Allee and Gymnasium Altona) as well as youth from two youth centres (JUBA and Juno 23) conducted a video survey (Bunker Video Vehicle) of young people about how bunkers could be used;
- an art class from Gymnasium Allee (ca. 15 students aged 17-19), two film- and media-classes from Gymnasium Altona (aged 15-16) and a youth music band from JUNO 23 (named Neuland, aged 17-23) were engaged in Bunker Tours. This involved a visit to one bunker at Hamburg-Altona and brainstorming and testing ideas for its re-use;
- during the Bunker Ideas phase, ideas were developed for the re-use of bunkers; and
- finally, on the Bunker Day the young people involved transformed and used the bunker based on the agreed plan.

The young participants were initially involved in a tour guide led by an expert in order to find out about the history and uses of bunkers. Educational visits called 'BunkerTOUREN' were run by an expert, Klaus Pinker, with the aim to brief the students on the building, its interior,

What

Youth centre in a WWII bunker

Where

Hamburg, Germany

Age

15-23 years old

Group Size

Approximately 30

Project Stage

Brief, Concept, Construction, Design Development, In Use, Technical Design

Children's Roles

Placemakers, Trailblazers

Timescale

September 2011 - December 2011

Partners

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Klaus Pinker (Tour Guide)
Young people from Hamburg (Participants)

construction details, and the history behind it. An exploration into the acoustic attributes of the 1-2m thick walled structure was tested in cooperation with the youth music band, which allowed the students to explore the possibilities of transforming the bunker into a functional recording studio. Groups of 3-4 students used simple materials, like cloth and tape, to make some first temporary interventions in the bunker and 'appropriate' the space, while the band 'Neuland' did sound checks of the acoustics.

The students also conducted a video survey to get the views of young people about ways to reuse the space. An interviewing tool named 'BunkerMOBIL' was developed through use of an old Volkswagen van and recording equipment. The van made stops in front of local schools and youth clubs and students offered their views about how to re-use the bunker space. Anonymity was achieved by offering students funky sunglasses and hats to wear in front of the camera, and the youth were invited to discuss their views of bunkers, how they spent their free time, and how they thought these two could be connected.

During the ideas development stage, young people used mood boards, the design software Sketch Up and Flyer (media classes) and engaged in model making and drawing.

On the Bunker Day, temporary installations were put in place (a bar, relaxation room, paintball area, music stage for the live music show, gallery and cinema).

Eventually, the event was documented and disseminated through print information, the internet and a documentary about young people's creative interventions.

Outputs and outcomes

Through this series of activities, the young people contributed to a lively and fascinating change process of the bunker. They actively engaged in the creative development and appropriation of the space: initially identified as dark, depressing, 'heavy' and 'closed', they transformed it into a place of their own, where they pursued their interests.

On the part of the organisers, it is hoped that this project enabled young people to develop insights about their own potential to transform the city, simultaneously thus awakening the community to youngsters' needs and use of public space in the city.

The young people made many further suggestions for uses of the bunker, for example: Bunker Bar, Bunker Dance space, historical museum, relaxation space, public kitchen, music stage and rehearsal rooms, jump centre and so on...

Resources

Bunker Super Suite <http://bunkersupersuite.de/> (accessed 1 April 2013).





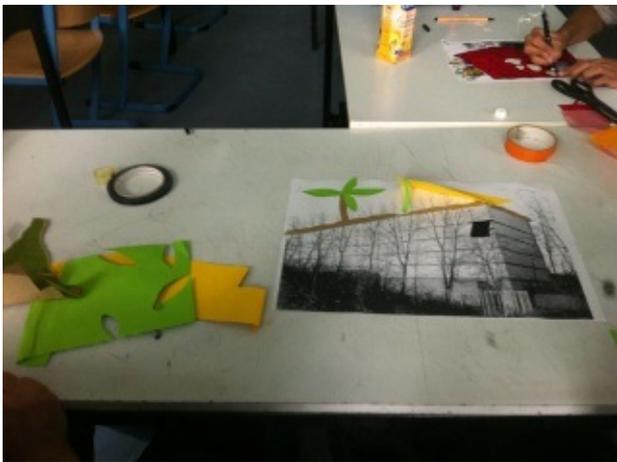
The band Neuland performing on a staircase at the Bunker Super Suite. Courtesy: JAS Werk Hamburg



The BunkerMOBIL van in action at the Gymnasium Allee. Courtesy: JAS Werk Hamburg



Inside the Bunker Super Suite. Courtesy: JAS Werk Hamburg



Collage activities at the Gymnasium Allee. Courtesy: JAS Werk Hamburg