EDGELANDS

A POP-UP PLAYBOOK:

ENGAGING COMMUNITIES TO RETHINK HOW WE LIVE TOGETHER IN THE DIGITAL AGE

AN EDGELANDS INSTITUTE APPROACH

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INTRODUCTION

Founded in 2021, the Edgelands Institute was a multidisciplinary pop-up organization dedicated to exploring how the urban social contract around the digitization of security is being redefined in cities around the world.

The pop-up nature of Edgelands had two key aspects.

First, it reflected the institute's limited lifespan. From the very beginning, Edgelands was designed to be a temporary organization that would exist for only four to five years. This pop-up concept—and the dynamic energy it brings—was central to our work. The temporary nature of pop-ups generates excitement and raises awareness of complex issues in a relatively short period of time, while bringing together a wide range of stakeholders through active participation. This pop-up approach helped us break down barriers to accessibility and diversify the experiences of those involved, addressing challenges often found in traditional academic and policymaking circles.

Second, it referred to the way we worked on cities and engage with diverse communities and stakeholders to reflect on issues at the intersection of security, digital technologies, and the urban social contract. Our "pop-up methodology" involved entering a city for a short period of time, typically about a year, during which we hosted temporary, interactive events and installations. The aim of these initiatives was to stimulate conversation, raise awareness, share knowledge, and encourage collaboration around key themes. After this period, we leave the city—but with the possibility of returning later to revisit the

discussions and reflect on the outcomes that emerged from our initial engagement.

As a pop-up, we did not aim for a long-term process, but rather to engage the public around issues that are often the province of experts. Our approach was adaptable to the cultural and urban context of each city, and allowed us to continuously tested, adjusted, and redesigned our spaces with the aim of creating an open and inclusive dialogue.

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

This document is written as the Edgelands Institute pop down, with the aim of sharing the methodology and activities we have curated and hosted over the past five years.

This document is intended for anyone interested in the Edgelands Institute's pop-up methodology. It offers different levels of detail to suit different levels of curiosity. Whether you are interested in exploring the Edgelands experience over the past five years or want to delve deeper into the details, this text has something for you.

The text is divided into three main parts:

Part I. Overview of the Edgelands Pop-Up Nature and Activities

This first part provides a broad overview of the Edgelands pop-up nature and methodology. Rather than providing a step-by-step guide, it shares ideas designed to stimulate civic dialogue about complex urban issues.

We begin by explaining the principles behind our pop-up nature and methodology, which informs our approach to spaces for conversations. We also outline our key objectives, activities, and initiatives, with a particular focus on the tools we have developed over time.

Part II. How Edgelands Curated Events and Reflections

The second part takes a closer look at how we curated and created the various spaces and activities, and reflects on the cultural and contextual challenges we encountered along the way.

Part III. Detailed Activity Guide

For those seeking a more in-depth understanding, the final part provides a more detailed guide to some of the core activities we have hosted over the past four years. This section is ideal for those interested in replicating or adapting these activities in their own contexts.

No matter what your level of curiosity is, we hope that you will enjoy this document and that you will find something of interest and value in it for you and your community.

PART I. OVERVIEW OF THE EDGELANDS POP-UP NATURE AND ACTIVITIES

This first part is for those looking for a broad overview of Edgelands pop-up nature and methodology.

It begins by explaining how the pop-up nature of the Edgelands Institute allowed it to operate as a flexible, temporary organization, and how the pop-up methodology allowed it to curate and host responsive, impactful engagement in different urban contexts. It then explores the different activities we hosted in the different Edgelands cities, outlining the objectives of each initiative and sharing testimonials from participants to capture their experiences and insights. Finally, it provides an overview of the different stakeholders Edgelands worked with, including their roles and contributions to the different activities.

This structure is designed to give readers a comprehensive understanding of Edgelands' mission and approach to fostering meaningful dialogue about security, digital technology, and the urban social contract.

A POP-UP INSTITUTE TO RETHINK THE URBAN SOCIAL CONTRACT ON SECURITY AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

The pop-up concept is not new. Since the 2010s, temporary pop-ups—such as stores, restaurants, and art installations—have become prominent worldwide, often occupying vacant lots or neglected urban spaces. This phenomenon gained momentum after the 2008 financial crisis, when many vacant properties were transformed through flexible, short-term initiatives. The temporary nature of pop-ups allows them to quickly fill urban gaps, activate underutilized spaces, and bring vibrancy and novelty to cities.

Pop-ups have thus emerged as dynamic tools capable of reshaping urban spaces, fostering innovation, community engagement, and alternative uses of public space.

Inspired by these characteristics, the Edgelands Institute was founded as a pop-up organization, using a pop-up methodology to explore how the urban social contract around digital security is evolving in different cities around the world.

Two key concepts underpin the transformative potential of pop-ups: interstitiality and immersion (see Kaufmann, 2021).

Interstitiality emphasizes the importance of occupying unconventional, transitional spaces between established structures or systems. For the Edgelands Institute,

this meant addressing underrepresented issues and populations related to security and digital technology in urban environments. By focusing on these gaps, the Institute sought to illuminate how digital technologies are redefining security in cities and reshaping relationships between individuals, communities, and institutions.

Immersion, on the other hand, reflects the ability of pop-ups to create powerful, immersive experiences that encourage people to view their environment through a new lens. Edgelands leveraged this by designing engaging workshops and discussions that aimed to demystify complex, technical, and often politically charged issues. Through interactive sessions, it encouraged communities to critically explore and shape the evolving dynamics between digital technologies and urban society.

A POP-UP ORGANIZATION

The Edgelands Institute's pop-up structure was central to its mission of addressing critical issues related to security and digital technologies in diverse urban landscapes. This adaptable organizational model fostered active participation and thoughtful discourse among a wide range of stakeholders, including citizens, policymakers, academics, and technologists.

Organizationally, Edgelands was set up on a temporary basis, for a period of four years, with the possibility of a single one-year extension. This impermanence was reflected in its streamlined administrative and staffing structure. A core team provided continuity, while local teams were established for each city-based pop-up, typically consisting of a curator, a senior researcher, and one to four research assistants. This flexible model allowed the institute to adapt to the unique context of each city while maintaining a light, responsive framework.

This approach shaped Edgelands' interactions in each city and helped the Institute to archive several key objectives:

Raise awareness

The limited duration of each pop-up created a sense of urgency and anticipation among residents. This heightened interest increased visibility and spread awareness of key security and technology issues.

Adaptability and Responsiveness

The pop-up format allowed Edgelands to quickly respond to emerging trends and concerns around security and digital technologies in each city. With flexibility as a core principle, the Institute was able to remain relevant and responsive to changing societal needs and technological advances.

Community engagement

The temporary presence of each pop-up encouraged locals to engage in meaningful discussions about the impact of digital technologies and security on their specific urban context. This facilitated authentic, community-driven dialogues.

Accessibility and inclusivity

The flexibility of temporary installations made it easy for Edgelands to host events in different parts of each city, reducing the need for substantial, long-term investments. This increased accessibility and inclusivity, allowing a broader range of people to participate.

Focus on the moment

The pop-up model emphasizes focusing on specific and timely issues, rather than trying to focus on everything at once. This approach recognizes that urban challenges are complex and evolving, that citizen engagement often comes from small, incremental conversations, and that there is no need to solve everything.

→ POPPING DOWN AS AN INSTITUTE

As a pop-up institute, it was always the plan to be temporary. Our philosophy of temporary existence allowed us to scale and replicate our methodology and projects in each city, making connections, curating dialogues, and producing key learnings and calls to action.

The final phase of Edgelands lasted one year, which was both a **"popping down"** and a **"popping beyond"** process. This approach ensured that the Institute concluded as intended, following the proposed methodology, while creating opportunities to enable initiatives to continue beyond the Institute's closure.

The Pop Down and Beyond process brought together partners, fellows, and the Edgelands team to reflect on the work of Edgelands and explore ways forward. The process was guided by six groups or New Territories that were

collectively defined through a series of conversations involving the global Edgelands team, local partners, fellows, and board members.

As part of this process, we needed to consider what would happen to all the reports, blog posts, videos, podcasts, and pictures that we had produced over the last five years, and how we could maintain the network that we had established during this time. After much consideration, we decided to create a public archive of our work and that of our network, as well as an interactive visualization of the Edgelands community to serve as a directory of its members.

THE ARCHIVE

The decision to create a public archive, and its final structure, were the result of a series of reflections on the nature of an archive and what this means for an ephemeral institution.

What purpose would the archive serve? Who would benefit from it? Should we keep every document, or should we make a selection to showcase the Institute's various projects? Should the archive be temporary, reflecting the pop-up nature of the Edgelands Institute, or should it be permanent?

These questions led to the development of an archive concept based on a hybrid approach. It is classical in that it systematically documents all items within the Edgelands collection, providing essential descriptions and information. At the same time, it aims to inspire new action and serve as a model for future structures based on the pop-up.

Learn more

The links to the various documents provided here will direct you to the archive. You can also explore the archive yourself here: https://edgelands.institute/archive__home.html

You can also explore some of the reflections about the process and nature of the archive: https://edgelands.institute/Series5/contents/archive-process.html

THE NETWORK

At its heart, Edgelands was a collective of individuals who came together to form a vibrant community. Our work exists solely thanks to the diverse network of artists, researchers, policymakers, community organizers, and many others that join us in our journey. This network extended beyond the Institute's boundaries, continuing to grow, adapt, and connect.

To keep these connections visible, we created a network representation that not only aims to show the connections between people with similar interests and aspirations, but also functions as a directory, allowing people to search for individuals in a particular location or with a specific area of expertise.

Learn more

You can explore an interactive visualization of this community here: https://edgelands.institute/network.html

You can also explore some of the reflections about the creation of this interactive visualization here: https://edgelands.institute/Series5/contents/pop-ups-en.html

A POP-UP METHODOLOGY

The Edgelands methodology can be defined as a combination of academic research, citizen participation, and art, within a defined timeframe. The transdisciplinarity of the methodology, going from science to art, helps to open traditional silos of knowledge.

This methodology works in cycles. This means that we set up **temporary residence** in different cities across a range of varied urban social contracts. During each temporary residence, an Edgelands team on site was in charge of curating and hosting different spaces for conversations with local stakeholders about security, digital surveillance and its impact on the urban social contract.

We popped up in five different cities: Medellín, Cúcuta, Geneva, Nairobi, and Houston. Each city brought its own unique context and approach to safety.

We selected these cities based on a combination of strategic and practical considerations. On the one hand, it was important to study cities with different social contracts and attitudes towards digital security in order to add a comparative element to our research. For this reason, we chose cities from different regions of the world. On the other hand, we also considered practical factors, including our existing knowledge of each location, our local connections, and the accessibility of each location.

In each city, our approach focused on facilitating dialogue between everyday people and experts to

support education efforts, identify solutions, and use the arts to embrace the complexity of the issue and envision alternatives.

To achieve this, our methodology was designed to curate structured yet flexible spaces for constructive conversations, allowing local stakeholders to shape both the terms and outcomes of these discussions and their proposals.

By valuing the unique insights of personal experience, we sought to bridge the gap between experts and citizens, acknowledging their shared worries, concerns and aspirations. Our ultimate goal was to foster a collaborative and dialogue-driven environment that would serve as a platform for reimagining the urban social contract.

Alongside these spaces, we produce and publish a collection of reports based on our research and the insights generated through the various conversation spaces we facilitate. These reports play a vital role not only in documenting the Edgelands pop-up but also sustaining the dialogue beyond our physical presence.

The structure of each pop-up can be described as a spiral, where each activity informs and shapes the themes and discussions of the next. In each city where we pop up, we follow a similar cycle that can be divided into three phases: framing the discussion in the city, popping-up, and popping out.

→ PHASE 1. FRAMING THE DISCUSSION IN THE CITY

The first phase, which typically lasted about three months, aimed to **understand from the perspective of the city residents the key issues in the city around security and digital technology**.

This meant that while our entry point—the urban social contract around security and digitalization—remained consistent, the specific focus in each city varied slightly.

For example, in Medellín, the focus was on the use of digital technologies as tools for security problems and the impact of this use on public policy and perceptions of security, while in Geneva, the focus was on the ubiquity of digital technologies and the vast amount of data they collect and the different (in)securities they create in the lives of individuals as they are used by public and private organizations.

This phase was divided into two main components: a comprehensive review of policies and reports on local security practices, and a study of literature on key social issues in the city; and a series of one hour, semi-structured interviews with a diverse group of individuals. These individuals were selected based on their expertise or direct experience with issues such as security, digitization, cybersecurity, migration, and youth.

The semi-structured format allowed interviewees to elaborate on the topics most relevant to them, guided by open-ended questions. We used a snowball sampling technique, with informants referring to additional relevant contacts. This approach allowed us to connect with key gatekeepers and build trust within the community.

The findings from these two components were then compiled into a Diagnostic Report. This report served as a foundation for our ongoing work in the city, and a starting point for further conversations.

→ PHASE 2. POPPING-UP

The second phase, which typically lasted five to seven months, focused on curating and hosting spaces that facilitated conversations among local stakeholders.

The primary goal of this phase was to **spark informed discussions about security and digital technologies in the city.** Topics that are often perceived as overly technical, complex, or politically charged. As detailed below, each space was curated not only to spark conversation, but also to achieve specific goals: raise awareness, share knowledge, build community, advocate for policy, or develop skills.

In each city, we hosted a series of core spaces, including research sprints, participatory data workshops, Edgelands Maps workshops, and Magnum collaborations and workshops. These core elements were adapted to the unique context of each location, including the theme and our partnerships with local collaborators.

The selection of partners to host the research sprints, for example, was guided by factors such as local social dynamics and existing relationships between the partner organizations and the Edgelands team. For instance, in Medellín and Cúcuta we partnered with undergraduate programs at local universities, while in Nairobi we worked with a digital law and policy organization.

Besides these core spaces, each city also had specific spaces curated to address the particular context of that city and the specific issues being explored, such as roundtables and participatory surveys.

→ PHASE 3. POPPING-DOWN

After completing the planned series of activities in each city, the Institute would "pop down" from that location. This third phase typically included a public closing event that summarized the various hosted spaces and highlighted key lessons learned.

The purpose of "popping down" from the city was to encourage residents—in their various roles as community members, professionals, academics, policymakers, etc.—to continue to explore and build on the themes and conversations introduced during the Institute's presence.

As part of this process, we also reflected on all the lessons we learned in the city and incorporated them into our next city pop-up. **This allowed us to ensure that there was a connection between the cities and a certain continuity between each pop-up.**

ACTORS

The pop-up in each city began by identifying a network of local actors around issues of security, digital technologies, civic engagement, youth and the urban social contract. This first step allowed us to gain a more nuanced understanding of the city's context from multiple perspectives. Given the three core components of our pop-up methodology—research, dialogue and art—we sought to engage actors from diverse backgrounds to enrich the conversations and represent a range of viewpoints.

As a neutral facilitator of dialogue, our approach in each new city was to engage as wide a range of stakeholders as possible. However, the unique context of each city shaped both the extent and nature of this engagement. Elements such as the presence (or absence) of open government initiatives, active community associations or a strong culture of civic participation all influenced who turned up, how they engage in the conversations, and how well different groups were represented in our spaces.

Below are some of the most representative stakeholders involved through the different phases of the pop-up, and the conversation spaces in which they participated:

ACTOR	DESCRIPTION	ACTIVITIES IN WHICH THEY WERE INVOLVED
Academia and Local Researches	Academia plays a crucial role in our pop-ups, offering significant and relevant contributions throughout each program stage. They provide a scientific perspective on complex topics such as security, surveillance, and social contract, delivering rigorous analysis and contrasting theories. The Institute encourages research that democratizes knowledge and focuses on real-world city problems. Academics are expected to engage in dialogues with experts, non-experts, and citizens alike.	• Interviews for diagnostic report • Research sprints as mentors and experts • Data workshops as mentors and experts • Fellowships
Government Institutions	State security agencies offer valuable insights into how security operates within the city, including existing structures, hierarchies, and the interaction between local and state governments. These agencies provide practical perspectives on the implementation and efficacy of security policies and firsthand information on surveillance technologies. Engaging these actors enhances the understanding of security and surveillance from an institutional viewpoint, allowing for discussions on solutions, challenges, and limitations faced by government agencies in implementing security measures.	• Interviews for diagnostic report • Research sprints as experts and allies • Data workshops as experts and allies • Fellowships provide data for research
Residents	Residents of the city offer firsthand insights into security issues as security policies directly impact them. Their perceptions of these problems and proposed solutions serve as helpful indicators for government and policymakers, reflecting satisfaction levels with implemented policies. Furthermore, the citizens can share their perspectives with decision-makers and experts, fostering security and surveillance policy accountability.	• Interviews for diagnostic report • Researchers and participants at: Research sprints, Participatory data Interventions, Roundtables, Social Labs

ACTOR	DESCRIPTION	ACTIVITIES IN WHICH THEY WERE INVOLVED
Policymakers	Policymakers are responsible for designing and executing security policies, reflecting the local government's approach to security. They also determine the allocation of the security and surveillance budget and must address the needs expressed by citizens as well as the government plan.	• Interviews for diagnostic report • Research sprints (experts) • Data workshops (experts) • Roundtables • Social Labs
Artists	At Edgelands, we strive to ensure that discussions about security and surveillance extend beyond expert circles. By incorporating art into the Institute's programs and projects, we capture ideas, opinions, and perspectives on security in formats that spark diverse conversations with and among citizens. These conversations, grounded in emotions, realities, and personal viewpoints, foster a richer, more inclusive dialogue.	• Interviews for diagnostic report • Fellowships • Social Labs
Social organizations	We understand social organizations to be all those initiatives that arise from citizen collectives and have a positive social impact on communities and territories. The Institute finds them as allies to create joint projects and gather information on the points of view of the communities on issues addressed by the Institute that would be key to the dialogues.	• Interviews for diagnostic report • Fellowships • Roundtable Discussions • Social Lab

SPACES OF CONVERSATION

Across the various "spaces of conversation" curated and facilitated by Edgelands, five core objectives guided the initiative: raising awareness, sharing knowledge, building community, advocating for policy change and developing skills. This section unpacks each of these objectives, the main types of "spaces of conversation" that were hosted, and the objectives they sought to achieve.

OBJECTIVES:

Awareness raising

The primary aim of these pop-ups is to raise public awareness of the importance of digital integrity and its relevance to urban life. Through engaging visuals, immersive experiences and accessible language, we aim to demystify complex digital concepts and empower individuals to make informed decisions about their online presence.

Knowledge sharing

These events serve as platforms for the exchange of ideas, research and best practices among experts, practitioners, and community members. By bringing together diverse perspectives, we encourage cross-fertilization of ideas and facilitate collaborative problem solving.

Community building

Pop-ups often include participatory elements that motivate participants to share personal stories, concerns and aspirations around digital integrity. This fosters a sense of community and shared responsibility, breaking down barriers between different groups and encouraging collective action.

Policy advocacy

Using the insights gained from our pop-ups, we advocate for policies and regulations that uphold the right to digital integrity in city governance. We work closely with policymakers, law enforcement and other relevant bodies to ensure that digital security considerations are integrated into city planning and management processes.

Skills development

Many pop-ups include workshops or training sessions aimed at improving participants' digital literacy skills. Whether it's learning how to protect your privacy online, understanding the risks associated with certain types of technology, or learning the basics of coding, these hands-on learning opportunities equip citizens with the tools they need to navigate the digital landscape safely and confidently.

SPACES OF CONVERSATION

→ RESEARCH SPRINT

Awareness raising | Knowledge sharing | Policy advocacy | Community building | Skills development

The Research Sprints were flagship activities that took place over an intensive eight-week period in each of our target cities. They raised awareness by engaging participants from diverse backgrounds in an in-depth exploration of complex urban issues.

The Sprints were structured around two key components. The first component focused on knowledge sharing and drew on the expertise of local and international specialists who provided insights into urban dynamics, with a particular focus on security and digitalization. This allowed for a rich exchange of ideas and strengthened the community's understanding of complex issues.

The second component focused on developing research skills and policy advocacy. Here, program participants, mentors, and Edgelanders were actively involved in co-creating solutions or expanding understanding of the problem. By fostering interdisciplinary dialogue, these research sprints empowered participants to meaningfully contribute to public policy conversations in their cities.

Learn more

You can read more about the results and methodology of the research sprints we hosted in Medellín, Cúcuta, Geneva, and Nairobi here: https://edgelands.institute/Series3/research-sprints.html

You can read more about the results and methodology of the research sprint on Safe Digital Spaces in the following links:

- **Towards and Urban-Digital Social Contract: Insights from a Research Sprint on Digital Safe Spaces:** https://edgelands.institute/Series2/contents/safe-spaces/urban-digital-social-contract-en.html
- **(404) Safety Not Found:** https://edgelands.institute/Series2/contents/safe-spaces/404-safety-not-found.html

→ ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS

Awareness raising | Knowledge sharing | Policy advocacy

Roundtable Discussions were an engaging series of conversations between residents and local experts. These sessions featured insights from industry experts, policymakers, and community leaders who analyzed the key findings from Edgelands' diagnostic reports in each city where our initiatives took place.

By engaging with these experts, we fostered an interdisciplinary dialogue that not only highlighted urban challenges—such as security and surveillance—but also explored innovative and strategic urban planning solutions. These discussions provided a platform for knowledge sharing, where participants gained a deeper understanding of the unique characteristics and complexities of their cities and the underlying factors influencing their growth and development, acting as a catalyst for policy advocacy. Experts shed light on emerging trends in surveillance, urban planning strategies for security, and innovative solutions.

Overall, the roundtables inspired collaboration among city stakeholders and equipped them with the knowledge and strategies needed to drive collective progress.

Learn more

You can read some of the results of the Roundtable Discussions in the following links:

- **Nairobi Twitter Space:** https://edgelands.institute/Series1/contents/public-surveys/twitter-en.html
- **Photographing the Invisible with Magnum Agency:** https://edgelands.institute/Series3/contents/magnum/photographing-the-invisible.html

→ PARTICIPATORY DATA INTERVENTIONS

Knowledge sharing | Skills development | Policy advocacy

This initiative actively engaged both citizens and experts throughout the life-cycle of security and surveillance data in their cities.

By organizing a series of research-based, dialogue-focused activities, the program fostered the understanding and use of data to address issues of public interest. Participants worked with the data in a hands-on manner, fostering skills development while enhancing knowledge about issues related to security and surveillance. The process also emphasized policy advocacy, fostering conversation with local governments and building on results found through data analysis.

Learn more

You can read more about the results and methodology of the Participatory Data Interventions we hosted in Medellín and Geneva in the following link: https://edgelands.institute/Series3/participatory-data-interventions.html

→ EDGELANDS MAP WORKSHOPS

Community building | Awareness raising | Knowledge sharing

The main goal of the Edgelands Map Workshop was to create a space where citizens could explore and deepen their understanding of the key concepts of security, surveillance, and the urban social contract through the lens of their everyday experiences.

Through interactive sessions, these workshops blended theoretical discussions with real-world contexts, allowing participants to reflect on how these concepts manifest in the physical and digital spaces they inhabit. In doing so, the workshops aimed to foster a community-centred dialogue around security and surveillance.

Learn more

If you want to replicate this workshop in your community, you can access a detailed step-by-step guide of this workshop in this link: https://edgelands.institute/Series1/contents/map%20project/experience%20guides.html

You can read some of the results of the Edgelands Map Workshops here: https://edgelands.institute/Series1/edgelands-map-project.html

→ MATZA X EDGELANDS

Awareness raising | Community building | Knowledge sharing

MATZA x Edgelands was one of two partnerships designed to integrate art as a core element of Edgelands' work in the various cities where we hosted pop-ups.

MATZA x Edgelands addressed the margins of cities and informal spaces through art and scientific rigour, placing community creation and security at the heart of collective reflection and experimentation.

Artistic residencies and exhibitions were thoughtfully curated in host cities, featuring a collaboration between international and local artists, and researchers with specialized expertise. These collaborative efforts resulted in works designed to stimulate civic engagement and dialogue, providing external viewpoints that challenge, enrich, and expand the community's own perceptions and established narratives.

By intertwining art with research, MATZA x Edgelands raised awareness of the evolving social contract and the ways in which concepts of security are reshaping urban issues. This initiative also served as a catalyst for community building, fostering connections among residents and inspiring collective action through the artistic projects.

Learn more

You can read about the MATZA x Edgelands partnership in Medellín, Cúcuta, Nairobi, and Geneva here:

- **Common Grounds: MATZA x Edgelands Medellín:** https://edgelands.institute/Series3/contents/matza/matza-edgelands-medellin.html
- **Blurred Lines: MATZA x Edgelands Cúcuta:** https://www.edgelands.institute/portfolio/matza-edgelands-cucuta
- **Digital Informalities: MATZA x Edgelands Nairobi:** https://edgelands.institute/Series3/contents/matza/matza-edgelands-nairobi.html
- **Under the Radar:** MATZA x Edgelands Geneva: https://edgelands.institute/Series3/contents/matza/matza-edgelands-geneva.html

You can also see some of the results of the MATZA x Edgelands partnership in Medellín and Cúcuta, here: https://edgelands.institute/Series3/matza.html

→ MAGNUM X EDGELANDS

Awareness raising | Skills development | Knowledge sharing

Magnum x Edgelands was the second partnership designed to integrate art as a core element of Edgelands' work in the various cities where we hosted pop-ups.

The project aimed to explore the visualization of surveillance and security through the powerful medium of narrative photography. Magnum photographers collaborated intimately with Edgelands researchers, local grassroots organizations, and cultural institutions to conduct extensive fieldwork, translating Edgelands' research findings into compelling visual narratives. These efforts culminate in dynamic pop-up exhibitions, visual literacy workshops, thought-provoking talks, and engaging online publications, designed to foster meaningful dialogue and engage both local and global audiences on pressing issues of surveillance, technological impact, and evolving social contracts.

This initiative served as a vital platform for awareness raising, leveraging the evocative nature of photography to unveil stories and insights that traditional research methods may not capture. By blending rigorous research with artistic interpretation, we facilitated skills development through workshops and educational sessions, empowering participants to critically analyze and discuss the intersection of technology and society.

Learn more

You can see some of the results of the Magnum x Edgelands partnership here:

- **Magnum x Edgelands Medellín:** https://edgelands.institute/Series3/contents/magnum/mxe-medellin.html
- **Magnum x Edgelands Geneva:** https://edgelands.institute/Series3/contents/magnum/mxe-geneva.html
- **Magnum x Edgelands Nairobi:** https://edgelands.institute/Series3/contents/magnum/mxe-nairobi.html

→ SOCIAL LABS: FUNDACIÓN MI SANGRE X EDGELANDS

Community building | Awareness raising | Knowledge sharing

The Social Lab was hosted and curated in partnership with Fundación Mi Sangre, a Colombian NGO. The program followed Mi Sangre's methodology. It brought together diverse groups to discuss the interplay of technology and security, fostering community building and collaborative problem solving.

This event provided a supportive and trusting environment for open dialogue. Participants engaged with social and institutional actors, adopting a comprehensive,

ecosystem-based methodology to co-create solutions. The lab emphasized the collective capacity to rethink power dynamics and enhance civic safety.

Some of the outcomes included practical recommendations and intersectoral action plans, designed to be integrated into municipal strategies to strengthen coexistence and urban security.

Learn more

You can read some of the results of the Fundacion Mi Sangre x Edgelands partnership here:

- **Social Lab Mi Sange x Edgelands Medellín:** https://www.edgelands.institute/portfolio/social-lab-mi-sangre
- **Social Lab Mi Sange x Edgelands Cúcuta:** https://www.edgelands.institute/portfolio/social-lab-cucuta

→ FELLOWSHIPS

Knowledge sharing | Policy advocacy | Community building

The Fellowship Program offered an enriching opportunity for scholars, artists, and researchers at all stages of their careers to contribute meaningfully to our research agenda. Fellows conducted independent projects that

resonated with our focus on digitalization, urban security, and societal impacts. These projects supported knowledge sharing and were structured to produce valuable insights, feeding into policy discussions and advancing policy advocacy by addressing the intersection of technology, security, and social dynamics.

Learn more

You can read some of the work of the Edgelands Fellows here:

- **Global Fellowship Program:** https://edgelands.institute/Series2/global-fellows.html
- **No Data About Us Without Us:** https://edgelands.institute/Series1/contents/surveillance-sj/ndauwu-fellowship.html

→ EDGELANDS SYMPOSIUM

Knowledge sharing | Community building

The symposium provided an opportunity for Edgelands Fellows and Edgelanders to come together in person. Designed to foster a sense of community and collective learning, the symposium fostered a rich exchange of knowledge, bringing together diverse perspectives to discuss and synthesize lessons learned. The goal of this gathering was not only to showcase the results of

Edgelands initiatives, but also to strengthen connections between community members and global guests, and to foster an ongoing dialogue about transforming the urban social contract.

The first edition was held in Medellín and also served as the culmination of Edgelands' activities in the city, bringing together both local and international participants. The event provided a platform to share insights and reflections from the Fellows' work and created an opportunity to learn from local actors in Medellín, observing first-hand some of the key lessons emerging from the city's pop-up.

The second edition, which served as a heartfelt conclusion to the Institute, was held in Geneva and brought together a vibrant part of the Edgelands international community. The two-day event provided an opportunity to reflect on the insights gathered over the past five years from the communities in the cities where Edgelands popped up, as well as from collaborators, Fellows, and artists who joined the Edgelands journey. It was also an opportunity to celebrate the connections forged and to envision the future as Edgelands transitions beyond its time as an institute.

Learn more

You can read more about the results of the Edgelands Symposiums here:

- **La Virgen Maria is Watching you: Edgelands Symposium Wrap-up:** https://edgelands.institute/Series2/contents/intercity-popup/medellin-symposium-wrap-up.html
- **On Edgelanding:** https://edgelands.institute/Series2/contents/sparking-dialogue/edgelanding.html

→ PARTICIPATORY SURVEY

Policy advocacy | Awareness raising

Participatory Surveys served as a dialogue platform capturing individuals' perceptions and thoughts on security, specifically focusing on the intersection of security and digital technologies. The initiative sparked broader citizen conversations and acts as a tool for policy advocacy.

These surveys, conducted in collaboration with partners, aimed to promote community-led research by taking an inclusive approach to understanding public concerns and designing responsive security policies.

In Geneva, we partnered with OPPI, an AI-powered engagement tool based on the principles of social seismography and state-of-the-art wiki surveys. This

collaboration fostered a collaborative environment where participants actively contributed to the co-creation of survey questions. The survey aimed to hear from all Geneva residents about their perceptions and thoughts on (in)security in the city. The results provided a basis for political, academic and participatory discussions hosted by Edgelands in Geneva.

In Medellín, we partnered with "Hablemos Medellín" to design a survey that facilitated conversations that included new citizen perspectives on these issues. The survey revolved around one key question: What do you think needs to be changed, improved and preserved in Medellín? Participants were encouraged not only to discuss challenges, but also to imagine solutions. They explored how these changes could be achieved and identified key actors in driving social change.

Learn more

You can read more about the results of the Participatory Surveys here:

- **OPPI: What are the Dangers that Threaten you Safety in Geneva:** https://edgelands.institute/Series1/contents/public-surveys/results-en.html
- **Hablemos Medellín:** https://edgelands.institute/Series1/contents/public-surveys/citizen-en.html

→ INTERCITY DIGITAL POP-UP

Knowledge sharing | Community building

After hosting pop-ups in five cities, we wanted to build on our efforts to create spaces where people could share different perspectives and experiences by bringing the Edgelands network together for an intercity digital pop-up.

The Intercity Dialogue was organized into six virtual sessions and brought together different stakeholders from across the Edgelands cities. It provided a platform to explore key aspects of the right to digital integrity, examine its implications in the Edgelands cities, and deepen our collective reflections on the digitalization of security and our ability to live together in urban environments. The discussions and reflections were guided by four central themes: transparency, AI and public services, the role of organizations, and the experiences and expectations of young people.

Learn more

You can read more about the results of the Intercity Digital Pop Up here: https://edgelands.institute/Series2/intercity-popup.html

PART II. HOW EDGELANDS CURATED EVENTS AND REFLECTIONS

This second part is for those who want a closer look at how we curated and created our various spaces and activities, and some of our reflections on the core initiatives we hosted over the years, and the cultural and contextual challenges we navigated along the way.

CURATING EVENTS

As a multidisciplinary institution, our aim was to create spaces where participants could reflect on, express, and develop ideas about security, surveillance, and associated social issues in their cities. These spaces were co-created with local partners to ensure contextual insight, build on existing local structures, and encourage collaboration.

Here are some key elements that we used to create or curate these spaces:

→ DEFINING CLEAR OBJECTIVES

Establishing a concrete objective was essential to identify the expected outcomes and design activities that were coherent with these purposes.

→ IDENTIFYING PARTICIPANTS

Our spaces brought together a diverse range of stakeholders, including police officers, citizens, academics, policymakers and artists, whose perspectives and interests often differed significantly. Before executing an

activity, it was crucial to recognize who the participants were, the institutions they represented and how their unique backgrounds would enrich the discussion. This preparation ensured a participatory and inclusive environment with a variety of viewpoints.

→ LOCATION AND DURATION

We selected venues that were functional and aligned with the objective of the activity, considering the specific format (e.g., expert panel, inaugural event or workshop). We also tailored the location and duration to the local context and the attendees, asking: Is the location central for participants? Are the facilities adequate? How accessible is the site via public transport?

In terms of duration, we opted for activities lasting between one and three hours, featuring a varied agenda of icebreakers, presentations, Q&A sessions and networking breaks.

→ DETAILED AGENDAS

Prior to every event, we created a minute-by-minute agenda, specifying the person in charge, the activity and the required resources. The standard structure included an icebreaker, the main activity, an active break and a concluding session for reflections.

→ FEEDBACK AND EVALUATION

Gathering feedback from participants and team members at the end of an activity was invaluable for future planning. We asked participants for their reflections, suggestions and opinions on the space, and we also conducted internal debriefs to analyze what had happened and identify solutions for the future.

→ ICEBREAKER ACTIVITIES

To cultivate a space of trust and open conversation, we used icebreakers that enabled participants to share ideas and experiences or simply have fun, temporarily stepping beyond their societal roles (e.g., student, expert, policymaker). These activities incorporated a pedagogical element, encouraging active participation and enhancing soft skills such as assertive communication, teamwork, and problem solving.

REFLECTIONS ON CULTURAL AND CONTEXTUAL CHALLENGES

Hosting events in different countries presented a range of unique cultural and contextual challenges, from balancing political agendas and social realities to adapting to new virtual and hybrid formats. **Here is a look at some of these key challenges:**

SPACES OF CONVERSATION

In order to create events that would resonate with local audiences, we had to understand the unique priorities of each city. We have found that two factors are particularly important:

- **Finding a Focus:** While our foundational starting point remained consistent—the interplay between security, digital technologies, and the social contract—local priorities varied. In some cities, the focus was heavily on security, while in others it was on technology. It was essential to identify a focus that fit the local context to attract and engage participants.
- **Language and inclusivity:** Language diversity posed a significant challenge, particularly in cities with multilingual populations. Inclusive event planning required thoughtful translation services and/or activity designs that allowed everyone to communicate comfortably in their preferred language.

VIRTUAL EVENTS: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

In the post-pandemic landscape, virtual events became commonplace. They played a vital role in facilitating dialogue between Edgelands cities and inviting global experts. However, "Zoom fatigue" has gradually reduced their appeal.

To ensure success, here are some factors we have learned to consider when running a virtual event:

- **Internet connectivity:** Varying levels of internet access across cities impacted the participant experience, with some only being able to join via audio.
- **Digital etiquette:** Local customs and online behaviours can vary significantly.
- **Access to equipment:** Not everyone has access to the same technology.

IN PERSON EVENTS: LOGISTICS AND CULTURE

Face-to-face events come with their own set of logistical hurdles, such as finding the right venue or adapting the event to the available space, as well as integrating virtual speakers with in-person attendees. The diverse cultures and contexts of each city mean that an event design that is successful in one location may need to be adapted for another. Logistics must be tailored to the local culture, and it is essential to understand how the city's transport infrastructure influences event timing.

HYBRID EVENTS: BRIDGING THE GAP

Hybrid events combine the strengths of both formats, allowing for active participation from virtual and in-person audiences alike. However, this format presents unique challenges.

- **Maintaining engagement:** Keeping both audiences engaged and ensuring everyone has a positive experience.
- **Connecting virtual and in-person participants:** Creating seamless interactions between virtual and in-person attendees.
- **Parallel agendas:** Designing two agendas that are specifically tailored to each environment and linked to each other.

These reflections and methodologies continue to inform our work as we envision what comes next for the Edgelands community. Although the Institute may evolve beyond its current form, the collaborative, inclusive, and contextually aware practices we developed remain a testament to what can be achieved when diverse voices come together to reimagine the urban social contract.

PART III. DETAILED ACTIVITY GUIDE

This last part is for those who want more details about some of the core activities we have run over the past few years, and for those who are interested in replicating or adapting these activities in their own contexts.

RESEARCH SPRINTS

Research Sprints were a fundamental element of Edgelands, running for eight weeks in each of our cities. **The program was typically divided into two parallel components, each serving a different purpose:**

1. **Conversation with Experts:** Working with local and international specialists who have expertise in various aspects of the city, as well as the themes of security and digitalization.
2. **Research Sessions:** Collaborative research involving the active participation of the program participants, mentors, and Edgelanders.

→ CONVERSATION WITH EXPERTS

Every week, participants engage with different experts, delving into crucial topics surrounding security, coexistence, and digital surveillance. These sessions were designed to be dynamic and interactive, ensuring an engaging experience for everyone involved.

Conducted entirely in a virtual setting, this formal allowed for a dynamic methodology that encouraged the participation of a diverse range of international and national experts. Moreover, these sessions were open to the general public, fostering a broader conversation and promoting a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

The general structure of the first six sessions followed this format:

First Part

Guest experts delivered insightful 7–10 minute presentations. Although participants could not ask questions during this segment, the organizing team provided each speaker with personalized questions, as well as one thought-provoking question applicable to all. This set the stage for the upcoming discussions.

Second Part

This phase encouraged direct conversation between participants and guest experts. Depending on the number of speakers, participants were divided into two or three groups. Each group then engaged with every guest expert for around 15 minutes. The aim was to explore the topics in more depth, facilitating fruitful and detailed discussions.

The final session had a unique structure designed to encourage reflection. We created a safe space in which participants could share what they had learnt and express what had surprised them throughout the previous six sessions. The aim of this session was to distill the key insights and reflections gained from the collective experience.

→ RESEARCH SESSIONS

Participants were divided into interdisciplinary teams. Over the course of eight weeks, each team explored complex issues and potential solutions relating to technology and surveillance in the city. Each team was paired with a knowledgeable mentor who played a crucial role in guiding the team and ensuring that they adhered to the established timeline.

The teams were given the freedom to select a specific research question, enabling them to pursue their own interests and perspectives. As a final outcome, each group produced a podcast episode to share the results of their research with a wider audience.

The research sessions took place once a week for three hours. Participants also devoted an additional hour to asynchronous work, complementing the collaborative efforts. The three-hour sessions were structured to facilitate group work and meaningful interaction among all researchers.

Plenary Session

The initial 20–30 minutes were dedicated to a plenary session led by the Edgelands team. Various activities were organized to bridge the topics discussed in the "Conversation with Experts" sessions that week, while also honing the skills required for podcast production.

Group work

The remainder of the time was dedicated to independent work within each research group, including tasks such as refining research questions, conducting fieldwork and creating the podcast episode.

PARTICIPATORY DATA INTERVENTIONS

These programs aimed to engage citizens and experts in the life cycle of security and surveillance data in their cities. Through a series of research and dialogue activities, the programs encouraged a collaborative approach to understanding and shaping the management and use of such data. We invited citizens to interact with the data first-hand.

The programs sought to bridge the gap between citizens, experts and policymakers by facilitating dialogue, data analysis and visualization activities. By providing insights into the data collected, how it was collected, and how it was used, the programs addressed the need for transparency and the dissemination of information surrounding digital technologies used for security purposes.

→ STRUCTURE

Similar to the Research Sprint, these programs last a maximum of eight weeks. However, considering the ease of access to different data and the context in each city, **we designed two structures:**

DECODING SECURITY, COEXISTENCE AND VIGILANCE IN MEDELLÍN

"Decoding Security, Coexistence and Vigilance in Medellín" was a research-focused project aimed at analyzing and visualizing open data on security and surveillance in Medellín. The project brought together 20 young researchers from various fields (Political Science, Mathematical Engineering, Economics, Psychology and Marketing, among others) and divided them into six groups, each led by a mentor.

Over the course of eight weeks, the participants worked collaboratively on research questions, such as:

- Gender-based violence in Medellín,
- Identification of criminal "ghettos,"
- Sentiment analysis on Twitter related to security perception,
- Spatiotemporal characterization of motorbike theft,
- Creating efficient alerts to prevent homicides using machine learning, and
- Exploration of visualization methods for communicating homicide rates.

The issues were raised by governmental and non-governmental Medellín institutions. Throughout this period, the participants worked to provide insights and solutions to the challenges presented by the institutions.

Similarly to the Research Sprints structure, the program was divided into two parts: practical conversations with experts and research sessions.

The conversations with experts fostered an environment for meaningful dialogue, encouraging active engagement among key stakeholders, invited guests, and experts in the field. During the research sessions, participants worked with the guidance and mentorship of experienced mentors, who brought their research and data science knowledge from the public sector. The mentors provided support and expertise throughout the process, helping the participants refine their research methodologies and develop effective data-driven solutions.

By utilizing data gathered through surveillance efforts, the project aimed to develop participants' skill sets to address security questions that could potentially influence policies or public initiatives. The interdisciplinary nature of the project emphasized the importance of integrating quantitative and qualitative methodologies to analyze public problems effectively. The project also highlighted the significance of rigorous data analysis and clear communication of findings to support interpretation and understanding.

DROPPING THE PIN ON SURVEILLANCE

"Dropping the Pin" was a seven-week project in which we tested a participatory process involving residents in identifying and recording surveillance technologies. We invited people to photograph, geolocate and record the security cameras they encountered in their daily lives in the city. The aim was to initiate a conversation about transparency and surveillance technologies in Geneva.

The outcome of this process was an initial map of security cameras in Geneva—a map that was inherently collaborative and encouraged people to view the urban spaces they moved through daily in a new light.

Learn more

You can read more about our civic methodology to account for surveillance technologies here: https://edgelands.institute/Series3/contents/pdi/dropping-the-pin-on-surveillance-methodology.html

EDGELANDS MAP WORKSHOPS

Edgelands Maps was a workshop series in which we explored the complexities of the modern social contract, as well as the changing nature of security and surveillance in our physical and digital spaces. Through interactive discussions and activities, we connected theory with real-life experiences, fostering a deeper understanding of these complex issues.

During the engaging sessions, participants explored diverse perceptions and understandings of security based on their experiences. We collectively identified spaces and situations that evoke feelings of security or insecurity, critically examining the role of digital technologies in enhancing or exacerbating security concerns within our communities.

These workshops were designed for young individuals and equipped participants with the tools to critically analyze the agreements that shape their lives and freedoms. By creating a safe and inclusive environment, we encouraged participants to openly discuss and share their insights, fostering a deeper understanding of these complex issues.

→ STRUCTURE

The workshop was divided into two sessions:

- **Social Agreements:** We explored the concept of social agreements and their role in governing behaviour within the physical and digital spaces inhabited by the participants. We also examined the differences between security and surveillance based on practical experiences within communities.
- **Purpose and Actors:** The second session sought to identify the purpose and usefulness of surveillance and security, as well as the network of actors involved.

Learn more

If you want to replicate this workshop in your community, you can access a detailed step-by-step guide of this workshop here: https://edgelands.institute/Series1/contents/map-project/experience-guides.html

EDGELANDS

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