

# Nightsniffing

Reimagining bat detection as a field ecology of urban change and contestation

roost inspection  
routine roost survey

bat  
roost



exploration by bats  
urban  
environment

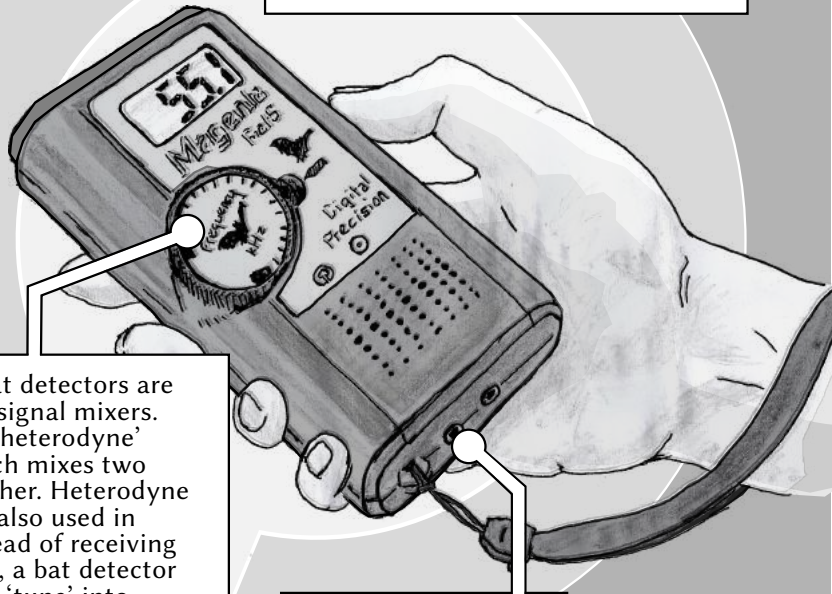


speculative private development  
housing  
as asset  
and investment

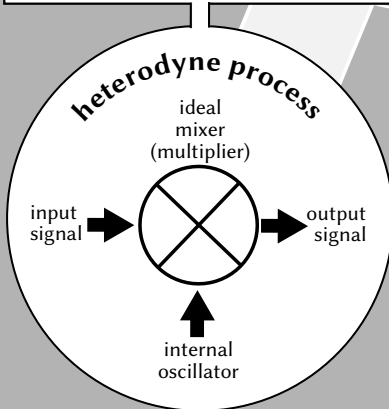


# nightsniffing

**Nightsniffing** is a project about mixing signals. Starting from urban bat walking - the practice of wandering at night looking for bats - it asks what other cares and concerns can be mixed into this activity. Can bat walking help us explore how our cities are changing, who is affected and how to imagine them differently?



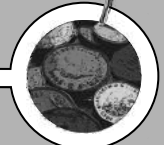
Common bat detectors are themselves signal mixers. They use a 'heterodyne' circuit, which mixes two waves together. Heterodyne circuits are also used in radios. Instead of receiving radio waves, a bat detector allows us to 'tune' into sounds beyond our hearing.



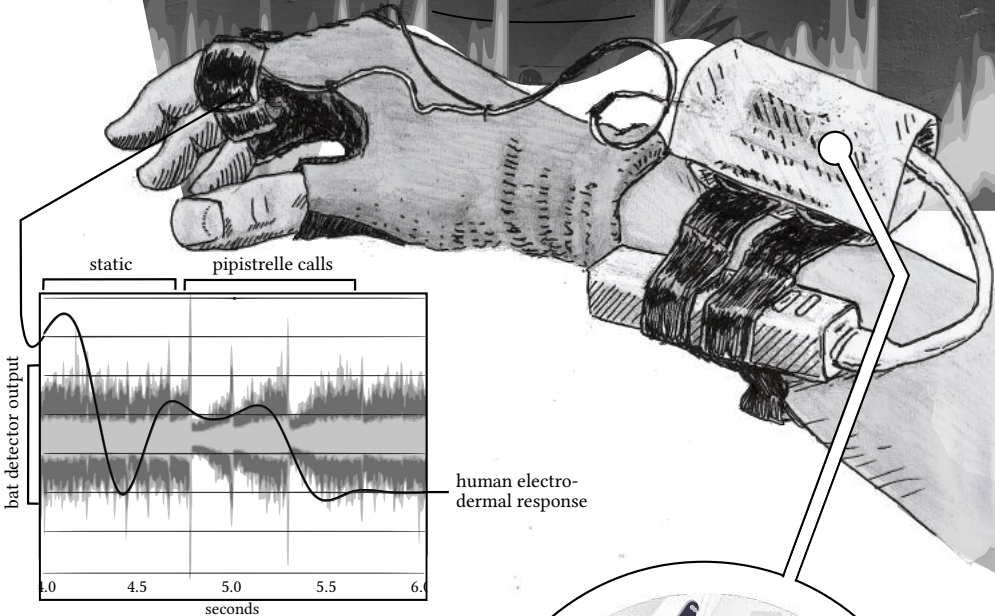
## Beyond our ears

Bat detectors let us tune in to an array of high frequency noises

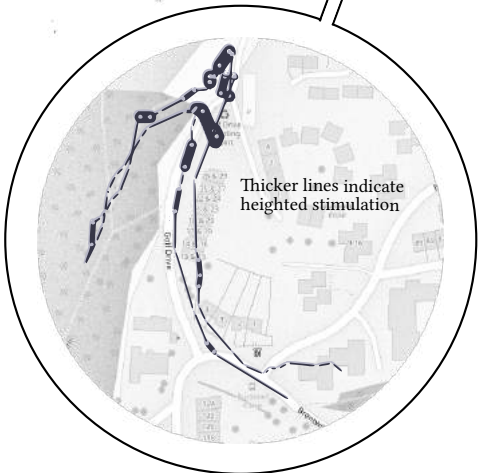
- chirping bats
- rattling bicycles
- rustling leaves
- jangling coins and keys
- buzzing communication boxes
- mysterious hums of building sites



How can the discovery of hidden sonic ecologies affect us and change our perceptions? By passing current through our fingers, we can create waveforms from our bodies as well.

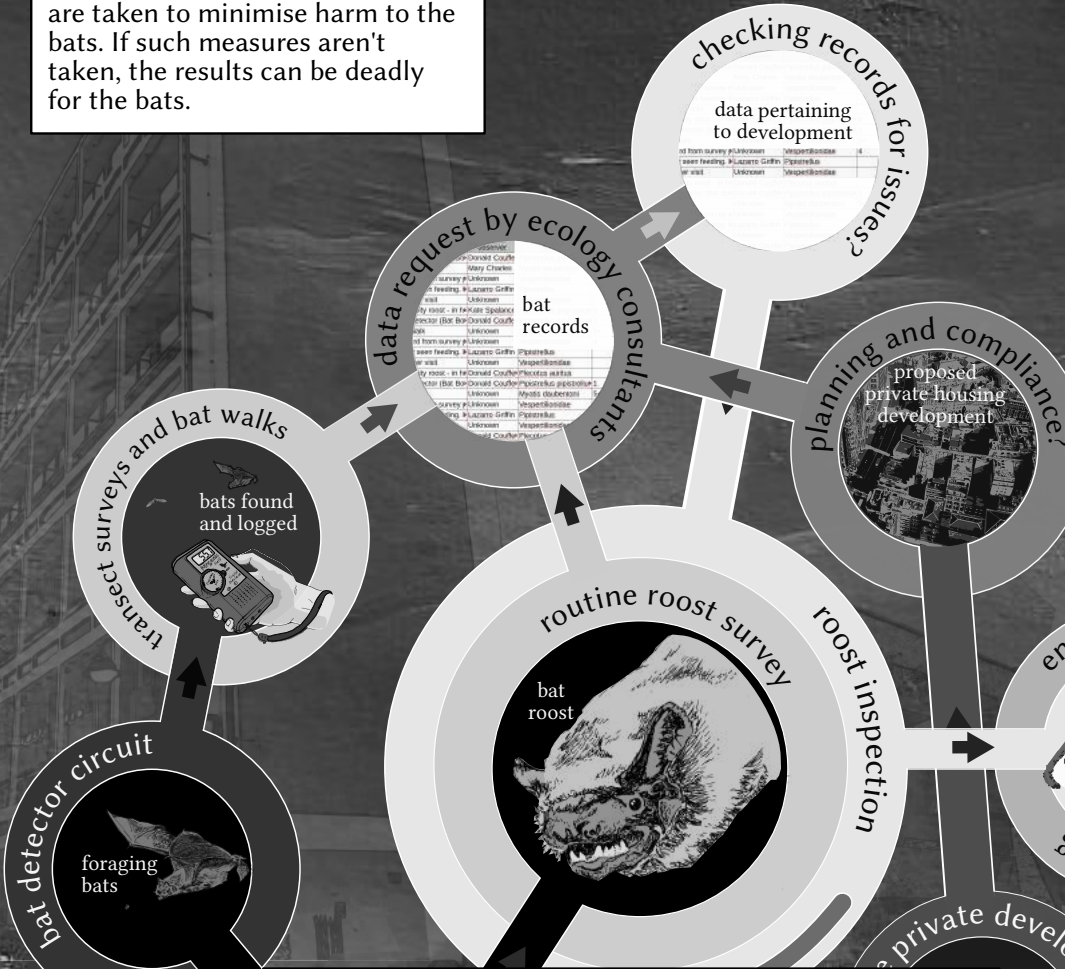


The graph shows the output of a bat detector alongside the output of a human's sweaty fingers. The bat detector brings the perceptual mode of the bat in the perceptual world of a human, with the human's bodily response recorded by the data logger. The map on the left shows possible points of heightened stimulation during a bat walk.



Understanding how bats are entangled in the shaping of urban space is challenging. Their agency, which depends on the legal protections they are given, is grey and soft. Bats rarely scupper whole developments, so long as measures are taken to minimise harm to the bats. If such measures aren't taken, the results can be deadly for the bats.

Opening up these questions to public exploration is valuable not only in itself, but as a means to generate a wider conversation about what we care for and about in our cities, how we go about this and why.



Nightsniffing will combine insights from the experience of bat walking, the work of housing and data activists and the interconnections between bats and the built environment to create new devices that can be taken on bat walks.



# a possible prototype...

## What are they planning?

The device queries the London Development Database, retrieving planning applications related to the space being explored. It scans the data for terms such as 'demolition', or for records indicating loss of public space or social housing.

## Data clicks

Data is articulated as gentle percussive ultrasound that can be picked up by bat detectors. How is our relationship with bats and bat walking changed by having this data relayed through the bat detector?

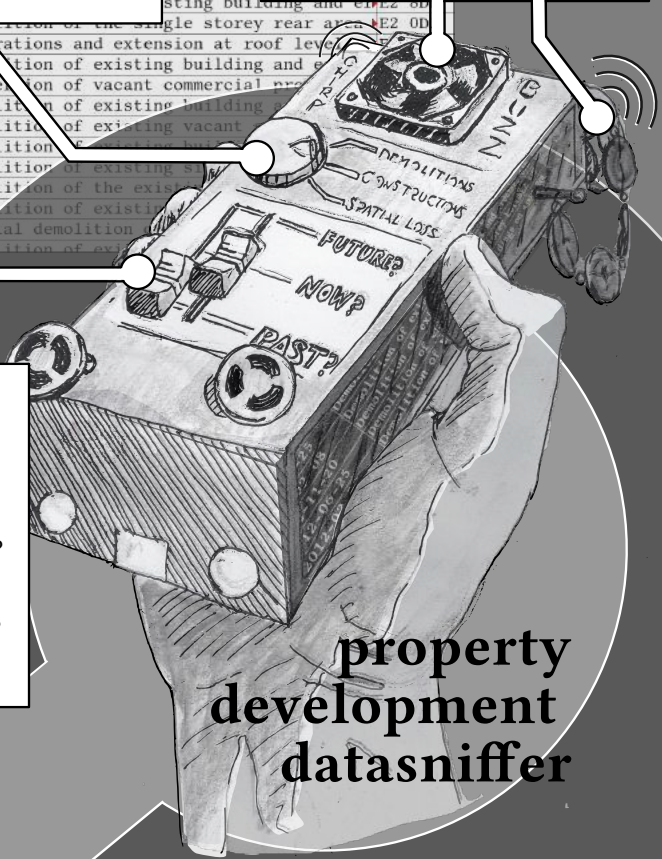
2014-01-20	Alterations and extension at roof level
2013-12-06	Demolition of existing building and
2013-10-15	Conversion of vacant commercial pro
2013-07-25	Demolition of existing building
2013-02-08	Demolition of existing vacant
2012-11-20	Demolition of existing building
2012-06-25	Demolition of existing building
2012-03-30	Demolition of the exist
2012-03-16	Demolition of existing building
2011-12-12	Partial demolition of existing
2010-10-20	Demolition of existing building

## Temporal tuning

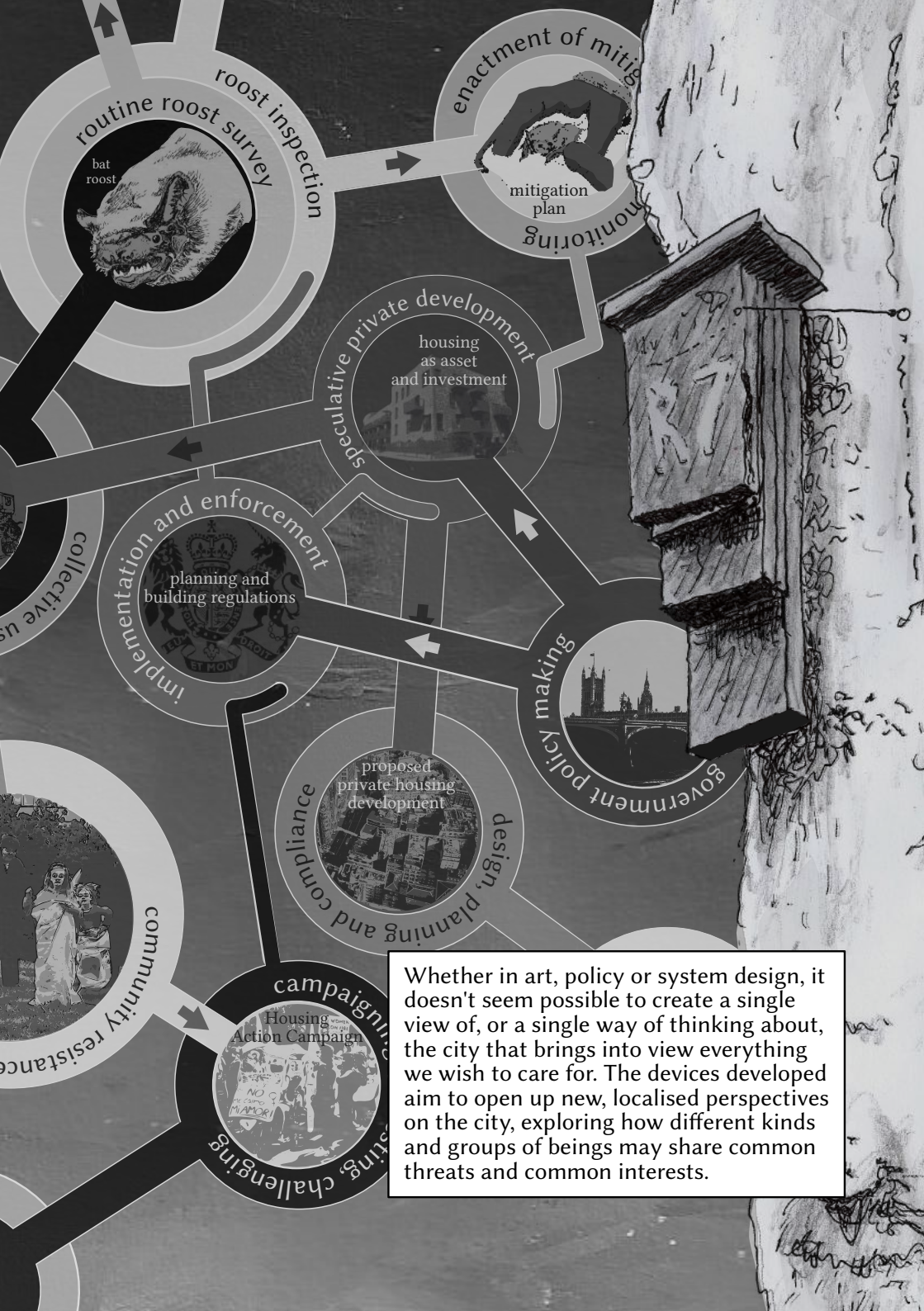
What does the dataset say has happened before?

What does it say will happen in the future?

How does this affect our thoughts, desires, our experience of the space?



property  
development  
datasniffer



Whether in art, policy or system design, it doesn't seem possible to create a single view of, or a single way of thinking about, the city that brings into view everything we wish to care for. The devices developed aim to open up new, localised perspectives on the city, exploring how different kinds and groups of beings may share common threats and common interests.

**Nightsniffing** is a project by **Cliff Hammett**, a Doctoral Researcher in Creative and Critical Practice at the **University of Sussex**. His work is supported by the **Arts and Humanities Research Council** through the **CHASE Doctoral Training Partnership**.

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# Battalion

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