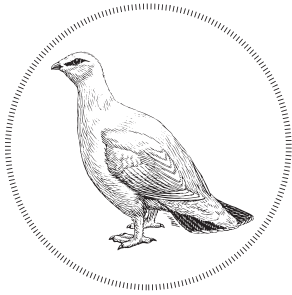


WHO IS AN URBANIST?



WHO IS AN URBANIST? AM I AN URBANIST?

JOHN W. FAIL, *Ptarmigan*

Sure, I can be an urbanist. I live and work in an urban space, and that **urbanity is central** to what we do at **Ptarmigan** - is that enough? To me, “urban” doesn’t mean concrete jungles, public transportation or fast-paced office workers shuffling through crowded public space. It’s instead the **connections between these elements**, woven together like a blanket, that I consider to be “urban”. Perhaps a better term is diversity - a plurality of perspectives, united by some shared negotiated space.

Urbanism is politics, on an every-person level. It’s inherently shape-shifting, dynamic, and resistant to model-making or formulas. All of these aspects add up to something wonderful, a life always **invigorating**, which one can never be completely on top of.

My interpretation of urbanism — which comes without even the slightest bit of theory, so knives out, carve away — is not bound specifically to city-forms. I have no doubt that rural or village environments spin the same webs, probably with a density even more complex and difficult to unravel. The city or village is **just a layer**, Cartesian coordinates we can plot points on, but in multiple dimensions beyond time and space.

For Ptarmigan, itself a shape-shifting project that is sometimes art, sometimes educational, sometimes activist — being situated in a **network of intersecting lines and viewpoints** is essential. We’re not interested in reinforcing existing subcultural structures, but in widening the space between them. If this leads to confusion, so be it. What’s central to everything we do is **living** - living is the central conundrum in urbanism, art, labour and all forms of culture. Urbanism is a **language**, with an infinite number of dialects. It is not a solution, but it provides the questions through which we can re-imagine our world.