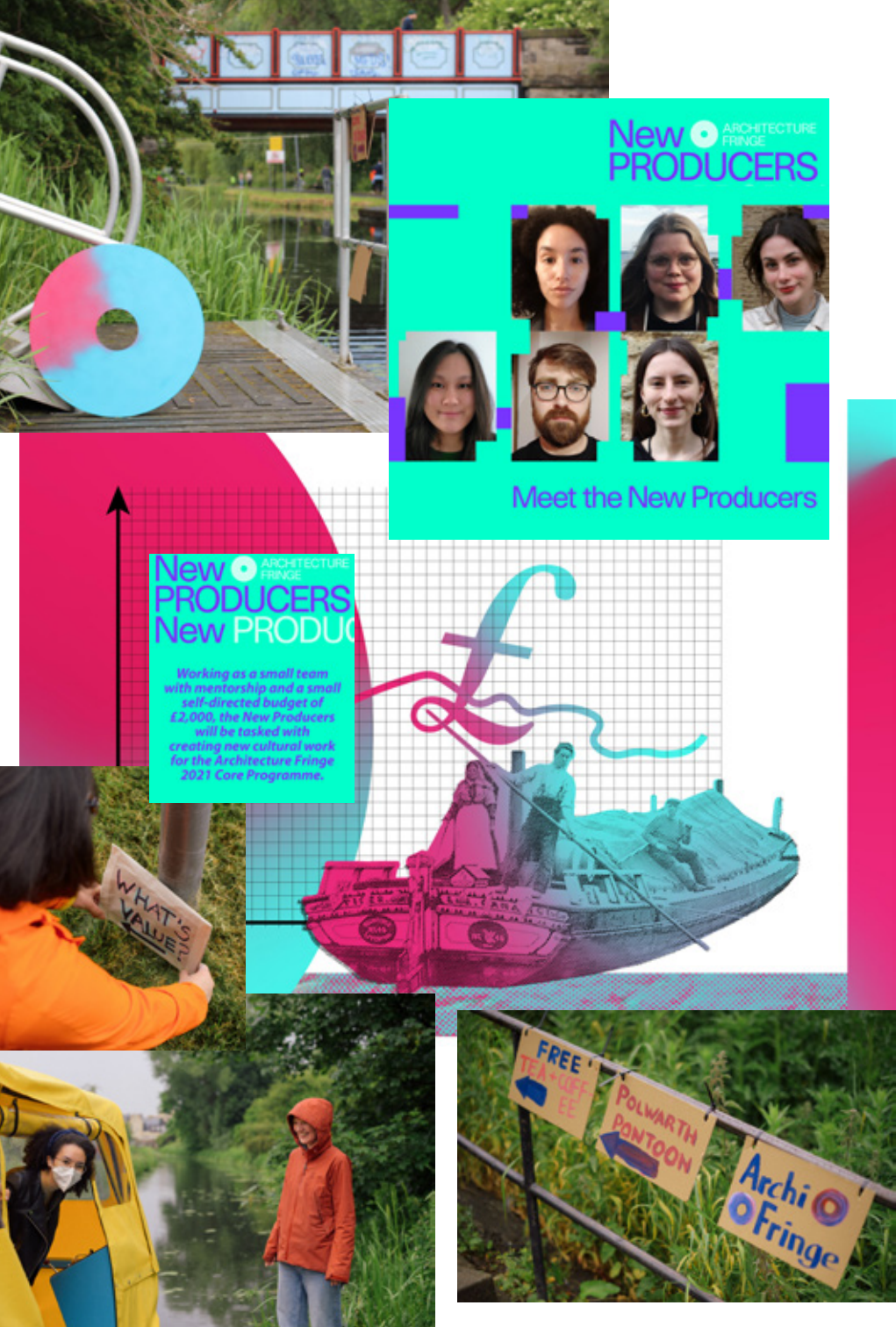


(UN) Learn —ing

ARCHITECTURE
FRINGE
2021



Provocation: (Un)Learning

The majority of systems and structures that we have built to bring order to our lives are destroying us and life on Earth.

Architecture is uncritically complicit in its reliance on these systems and structures for its very creation, with little resistance or defiance in its making or deployment. We have arrived at the intersection of a climate emergency, global pandemic and racialised capitalist economy and the ground on which we stand is shifting at speed. We are in transition, from one world to another. Things are changing, and in order to make that change positive and transformative we need to engage in a process of unlearning and learning anew. To (un)learn. There is hope.

‘Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.’ **Arundhati Roy**

In a complex and interconnected world, with systems large and small, fast and slow, how can architecture as a process, as a way of thinking, help us (un)learn in order to firstly navigate this complexity to then reimagine a much better way of doing things? How can we radically rethink architecture's environmental impact on the Earth? How can we refocus architectural education away from a whitewashed Western lens? How can we redefine our relationship to the land, from ownership to stewardship? How can our neighbourhoods and cities achieve greater equality for those who live there, realigning architecture as a progressive force for a wider common good? The Architecture Fringe 2021 invites you to (un)learn with us, to interrogate your own behaviours, beliefs and biases in order to acknowledge how the world really is, to reimagine how it could be.

The Architecture Fringe is a non-profit, volunteer-led organisation based in Scotland which explores architecture and its impact within our social, political, cultural, and environmental contexts.

We seek to critically pluralise and expand architectural culture. It is a platform that encourages and supports both ideas and agency. We believe in thinking, testing, prototyping and taking risks. We believe that is our actions in response to our discourse that ultimately sets the tone for the culture that we create.

Since the inaugural Architecture Fringe Festival in 2016 we have inspired, commissioned or platformed over 300 projects, exhibitions events and happenings across Scotland and further afield.

Our aims are:

- to support emerging practice in architecture by commissioning new voices, new ideas, and new work
- to offer platforms and opportunities which encourage a wider conversation about architecture and design in our contemporary social, political, cultural, and environmental contexts
- to develop a friendly but critical community of voices to connect, support, and challenge each other
- to engage internationally with other people and organisations for the wider common good

Join others in helping us reach our ongoing aims by supporting us on Patreon; patreon.com/ArchitectureFringe – Thank you!

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New Producers

About the New Producers Programme Andy Summers

The New Producers programme aimed to encourage and develop new voices in cultural production and cultural leadership in Scotland, helping expand the practice of architecture. Bringing together six individuals from across the country to work as a small team, the New Producers were tasked with creating new cultural work for the Architecture Fringe 2021 Core Programme responding to the thematic provocation of (Un)Learning, with mentorship and a self-directed budget of £2,000. The new producers for the inaugural programme were Kam Chan, Alex Collins, Ellen Clayton, Ruby Eleftheriotis, Julie Næss Karlsen, and Evie Spiridon.

This was the very first time that we'd run the programme, and the application process was open to anyone based in Scotland with an interest in a progressive future for architecture and the built environment. Applicants needn't have gone to university or be professionally qualified, and applications were encouraged from people of all genders, backgrounds and abilities.

The open call for the inaugural programme received 18 applications from across Scotland, with the standard, range and depth of applications very high. Following submission and download, CVs and application responses were separated, with personal information within the applications redacted for initial blind assessment and scoring by the programme mentors. The mentors then came together to collectively blind-score each application based on the responses given in order to draw up a shortlist. For the third and final round of assessment CVs were included for the mentors to reach a final decision.

Through discussion, workshopping, and bouncing ideas around with the mentors the New Producers co-developed their response to the (Un)Learning provocation. Conceptualising, developing, and producing cultural work within the context of a worldwide pandemic was a challenge, specifically with regards to how, and where, we presented work and how to safely engage an audience for it. The dynamics of the Architecture Fringe, too, also required navigation where in common with the main production team the New Producers are volunteers undertaking the work in their spare time and were physically located in different parts of Scotland.

This first iteration of the New Producers programme has been a pilot of sorts, and the commitment from the Architecture Fringe to help develop new voices supports our vision for a buoyant, plural culture of architecture in this particular part of the planet, and it's been a real joy to work alongside and learn so much from the wonderful inaugural team.

The mentors for the programme were:

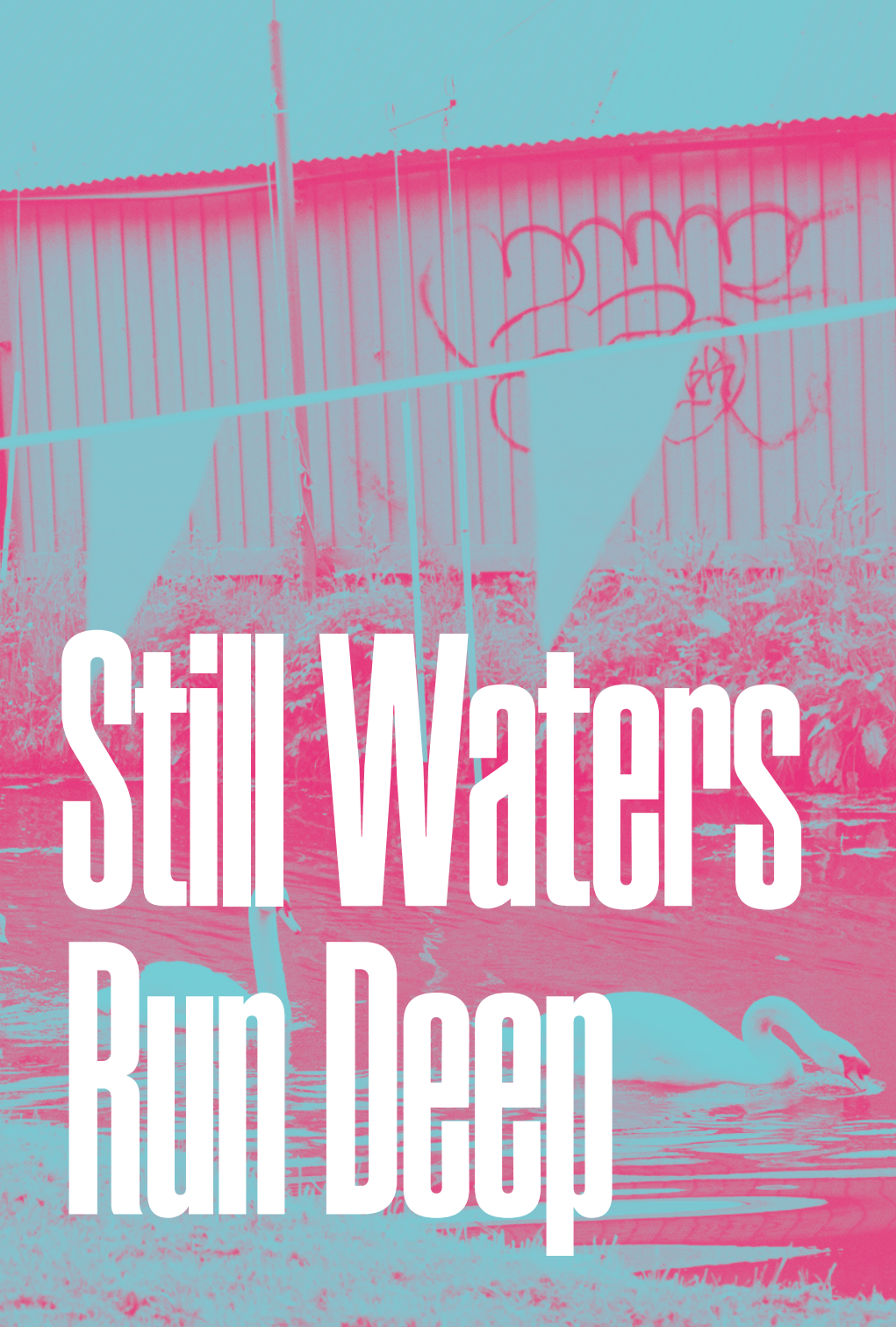
Crystal Bennes – Artist, writer and researcher with experience in architecture, writing, curation and press.

Natasha Huq – Architect and co-programmer of Talks At The Lane with experience in architecture, education, programming and events.

Akiko Kobayashi – Architect and co-founder of the Architecture Fringe with experience in architecture, education, facilitation, volunteering and organising.

Andy Summers – Architect and co-founder of the Architecture Fringe with experience in architecture, education, cultural production, programming, events, volunteering and organising.





Still Waters Run Deep

Introduction

This publication exists as a response, a continuation, a reflection, an opening and as a bookmark in an ongoing enquiry. Built upon the Architecture Fringe's 2021 provocation - '(Un)Learning', the **New Producers** embarked upon a meandering journey of (Un)Learning, re-learning and exploration.

Our professional lives span across disciplines of architecture, history, curation, activism and visual artists. After an initial meeting we pinpointed mapping, a-synchronicity, polyphonic narratives and hidden histories as some of the threads that connect our interests and practices. We each had questions about what stories are told, who tells them, who listens and how we tell them.

We have taken the Forth & Clyde and Union canals as an anchor in our (Un)Learning process, and as a means to explore the connective threads and questions we each have. A contained, man-made body of water tethering together Edinburgh and Glasgow – the two main resting points for the New Producers. We all had stories and questions about 'our' areas of the canal, parts that we knew from day trips, commutes, had heard about in urban planning discussions or otherwise. We talked about the money that was spent on the canal, specifically the money that was generated through the sugar and tobacco trade, and tried to dredge up more information on these murky undercurrents.

At some point, we arrived at the question of value. What is the canal worth? Initially it was financially focused – how much did various aspects of the canal cost? Quickly we asked, at what cost? The notion of value itself runs deeper than monetary cost – what value is it to us and our lives? Does it

hold value aesthetically? Industrially? For leisure or work? Does it hold value as a heritage site? Is it valuable beyond human lives – for the more-than-human beings that have set up homes there? Prompted by imagination, we began to ask how we could imagine a radically different future for the canal, one that existed for the common good. Within this, we looked at what would have to change structurally for this to happen.

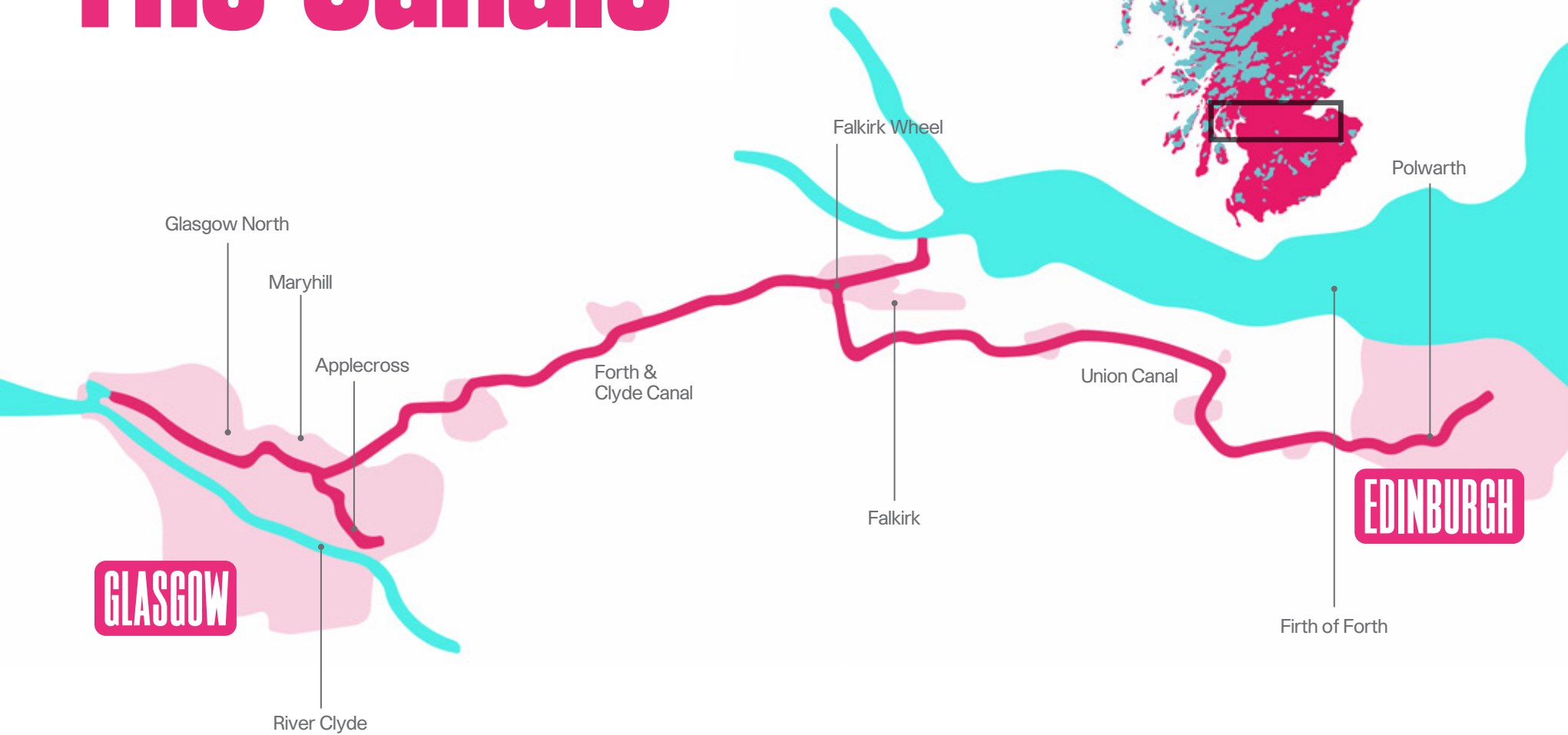
After stirring up these questions, we embarked on audit walks, interviews and conversations with organisations and individuals rooted along the canal. We began to gather and accumulate valuable insights and lived experiences of the canal. In June we hosted community engagement events at Polwarth Pontoon. Armed with chalk, postcards, stickers and tea, we asked what the canal meant to people up and down its banks.

Rather than become distributors of fact or authoritarian voices in matters concerning the canal, we present in this publication a plethora of voices, opinions and musings around value. These gathered encounters do not in any means represent all possible views, but exist as a largely unedited accumulation of our research thus far.

(Un)Learning is a process - an ongoing journey. It requires time, energy and good intentions. It requires imagination – the ability to look beyond existing systems and ways of being. It resists stasis. Much like the canal, meandering through cities, countryside, reservoirs and basins and seas – our publication navigates multiple landscapes and opinions. Sit with us for a moment as we pull together strands of our research, and join us as we continue onwards in our journey of (Un)Learning.



The Canals





Minty Donald

Then/Now— Here/There

Based in Glasgow and Madrid, **Minty Donald** is an artist, researcher and Professor of Contemporary Performance Practice at the University of Glasgow. In her practice, she approaches other-than-human* matter as collaborators – acknowledging both its agency and the limits of human/other-than-human collaboration.

Minty's recent practice focuses on interrelationships between humans and water. In this specially commissioned piece, she celebrates the 'throwntogetherness' of the canal and its range of values, meanings and uses in the past, present and imagined future of the canal. She suggests that the canal's shape-shifting identities are not to be contained into a neat package, but rather allowed to ebb and flow.

“What is special about place is not some romance of a pre-given collective identity or of the eternity of the hills. Rather, what is special about place is precisely that throwntogetherness, the unavoidable challenge of negotiating a here-and-now (itself drawing on a history and geography of thens and theres); and a negotiation which must take place within and between both human and nonhuman.”
— (Massey: 2005)¹

The Forth and Clyde Canal, for me, is a nexus of personal 'heres', 'nows', 'theres', and 'thens'; a 'throwntogether' place animated by human and other-than-human players.



THEN, I first encountered the canal in Glasgow as a student in the 1980s when it was an irreputable and unnavigable backwater. THEN, I was fascinated by the functional but seemingly improvised architecture of the doocots that dotted the canal banks, and slightly intimidated by the culture of the pigeon-men who built and used them.

THEN, I lived on a barge at Applecross Street Basin in the mid-1990s, while a £84.5 million scheme to re-open the canal between Glasgow and Edinburgh was being planned. THEN, I often woke to the sound of tapping, as ducks nibbled the weed that grew along the barge's waterline. THEN, I watched, from a safe distance, fires that destroyed Rockvilla Primary School, charred the interior of the Whisky Bond building, and burnt out several (stolen?) cars. THEN, the canal froze in winter and bloomed with water lilies and irises in the summer. THEN, in 2015, I was commissioned by Scottish Canals, along with human collaborators Neil McGuire and Nick Millar, to make a public artwork with and for the canal. Called THEN/NOW (www.then-now-org), the work included two public, participatory events: a barge pull and an iron-founding. NOW, I remember those events but NOW they are also memorialised as a series of rusting, cast-iron ingots set into the copestones that edge the canal.

NOW, I often run along the towpath between Spiers Wharf and Ruchill Street, contemplating the changes to the canal that I've witnessed over the past four decades, and what has endured. THEN, brick-built warehouses and workshops stood where NOW are residential developments. NOW, doocots occupy exactly the same spots as they did THEN. THEN, the canal banks were inhabited mostly by small groups of drinkers. NOW, the towpath bustles with cyclists, dog-walkers, and joggers. NOW, the canal freezes in winter and blooms with water lilies and irises in the summer.

HERE, I am very familiar with this stretch of the canal but

I have also travelled across central Scotland and experienced THERE the extensive network of reservoirs and channels that supply water to the canal and the centuries' old system of sluices and mechanisms that allow the canal's water levels to be regulated.

THEN and THERE, I have cycled and walked the length of the towpath from Edinburgh to Bowling (though not in one go).

NOW, I realise that the construction of the canal was funded, to a considerable degree, THEN in the 1760s by tobacco merchants whose wealth came from slave-run plantations in Virginia and Maryland. NOW, HERE in this realisation, I recognise my own blindness to Glasgow's involvement HERE in the Atlantic slave trade THERE. I recognise my complicity THEN and NOW with the city's disavowal of this source of wealth.

The place that I know as the Forth and Clyde Canal will doubtless continue to evolve as a nexus of multiple, contradictory, competing, and coalescing human and other-than-human THENs, NOWs, HEREs and THEREs. Perhaps our response-ability to this place, or indeed any place, is to attend to the interconnections: how the 'THERE' is linked to the 'HERE', how the 'THEN' shapes the 'NOW'. Rather than planning interventions, of following a 'place-making' agenda, we might do better just to face up to the complexity and contradictions – the 'throwntogetherness' – of place.

*Here, 'other-than-human' is employed in opposition to non-human (plants, animals, bacteria, micro-organisms...), in order to defeat a sense of hierarchy or binary thinking.



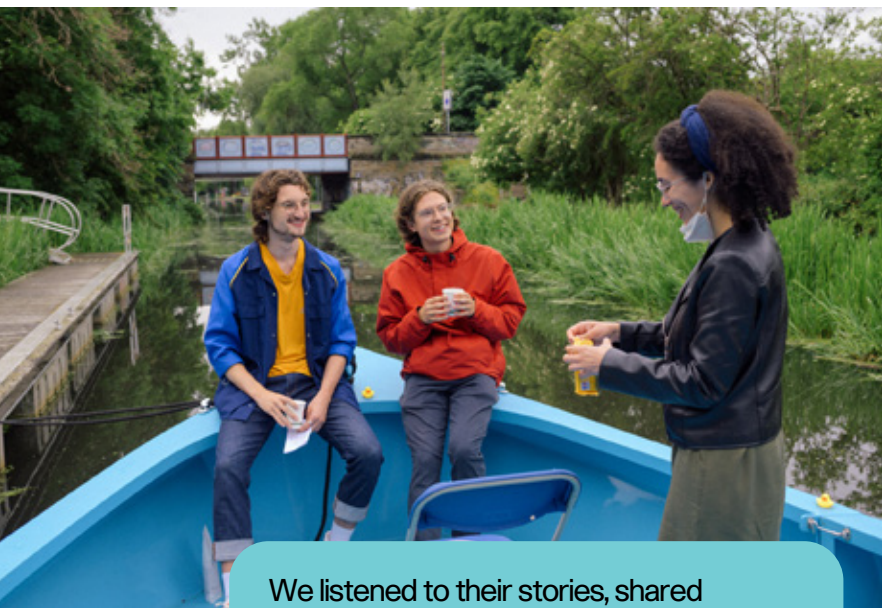
19th June 2021

Polwarth Pontoon

The **New Producers** spent a day at the Polwarth Pontoon in June 2021, which is a joint venture with the charity People Know How and the Polwarth Parish Church. We invited passer-bys along the towpath for informal chats on what the value of the canal means to them as everyday users.



Image: The New Producers at Polwarth c/o Cro+Kow

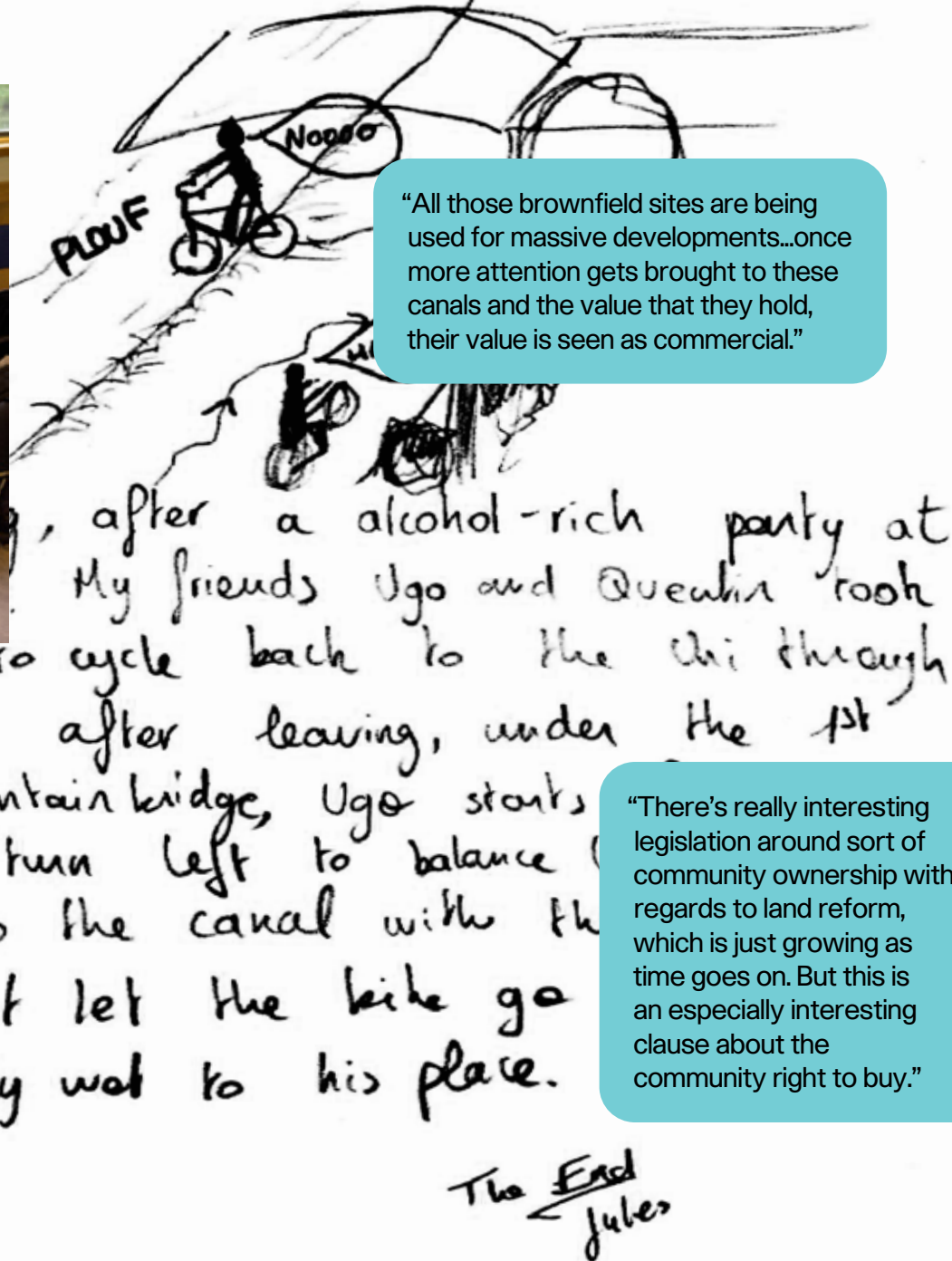


We listened to their stories, shared concerns and drew sketches of the landscape. We were joined by Cro+Kow Studio who documented the event and Imagine.If and their chalk walk questions. The following are highlights from that day.

“To see this incredibly wild and natural space that people are enjoying within the middle of a bustling city is something that I find really compelling about it.”



“The canal has sort of become a kind of vital part of my Edinburgh experience [and] my kind of way of navigating and understanding the city. Especially at its points of connection with other bodies of water.”



“The canal is a really interesting [place to] look at how these old industrial spaces can be repurposed for community benefit without focusing on commercial incentives.”

“There’s really interesting legislation around sort of community ownership with regards to land reform, which is just growing as time goes on. But this is an especially interesting clause about the community right to buy.”



"It's a transition between different spaces and different areas outside, from urban to more rural."

Walking down the canal a
 a secluded moment that
 and propels the traveler along
 series of changing landsc
 While the scenes around
 canal evolve, so does the
 traveler, transformed by the
 perspective
 of the world.

"You kind of just experience the landscape as you walk along this path. It's a nice kind of hypnotic experience."



Image: The New Producers at Polwarth
 c/o New Producers



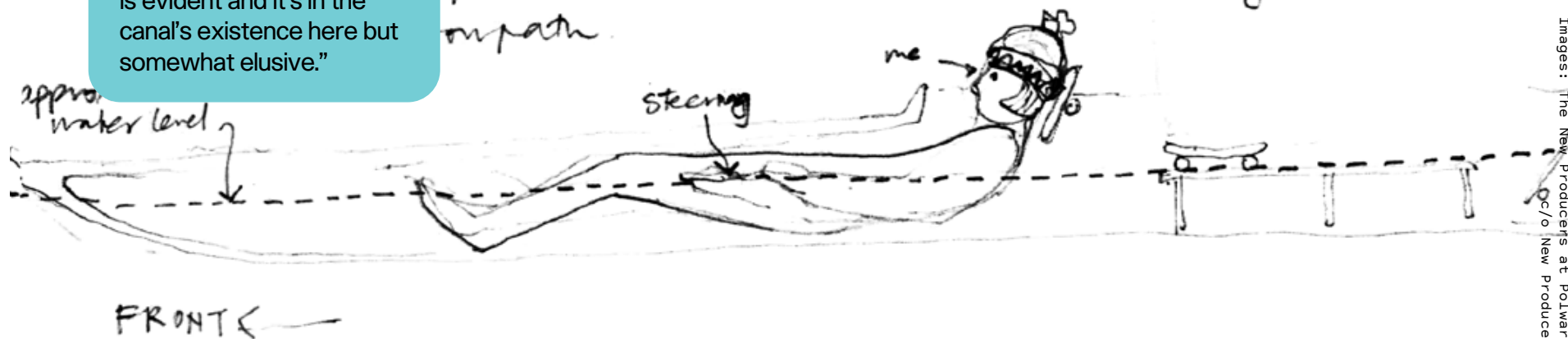
"I love that it connects the centre of the city to more far reaching areas. It's also really intriguing that there's this kind of history that is evident and it's in the canal's existence here but somewhat elusive."

water. When
the narrow boat
you think!
loaded cox is a



"There's lots of therapeutic aspects to the canal, as a place for leisure. And I think that's the main value for me."

- Then your head's real
water and it's quite a different pers
of the canal in comparison to being
on path.



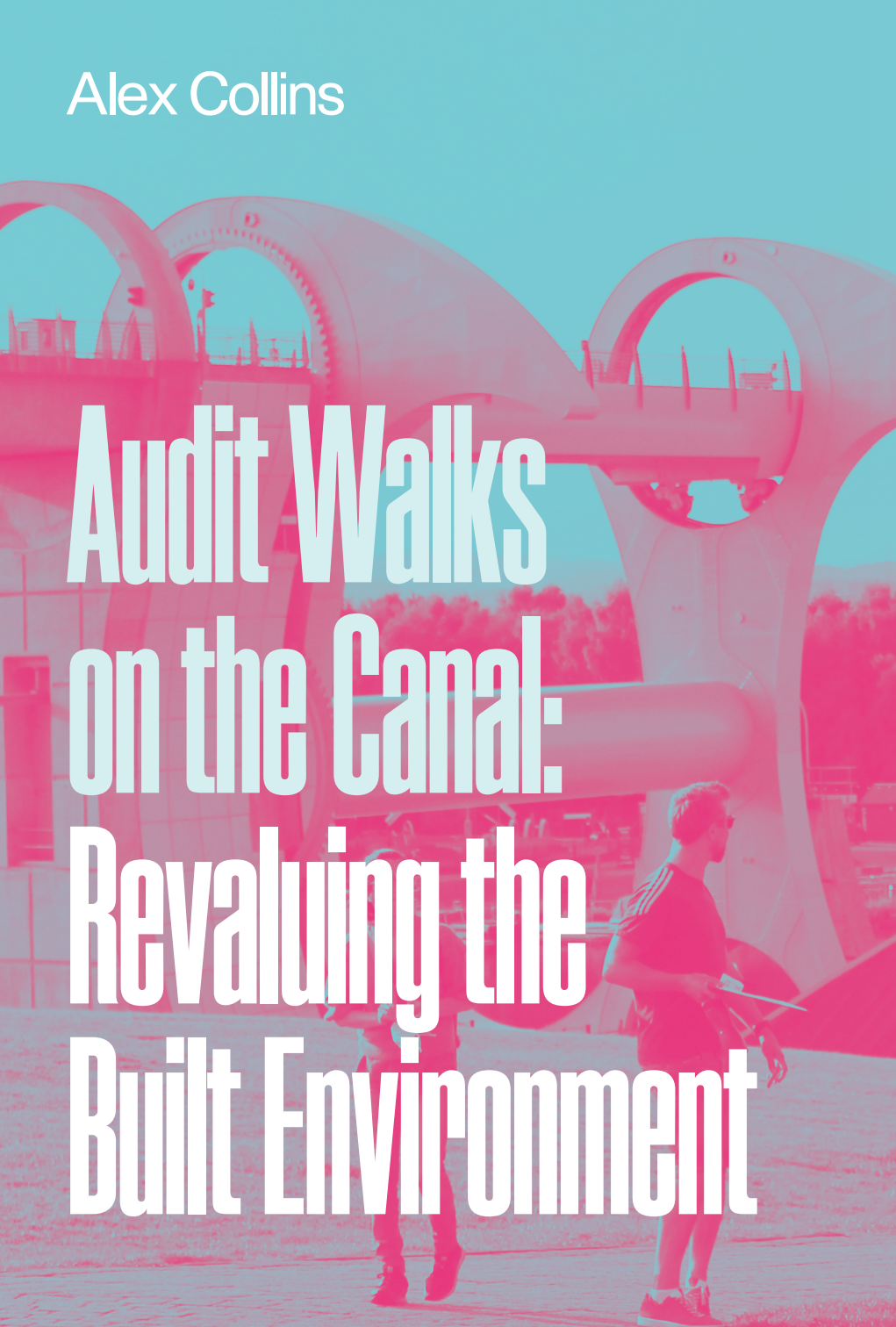
Images: The New Producers at Polwarth
PC/O New Producers



"There's maybe only four feet of water. But it's probably about another three feet of silt. So you're only scraping the surface every time you go in."



"We approached the boat and could hear sounds of merriment coming from inside. And somebody said 'come away in' and the most wonderful thing is there were lovely people inside. 'Would you like tea, coffee, cakes?' And we sat down. Could we [the church] develop the banking on this side rather than that side? 'No reason why not' were the famous words. And then the words were added: 'Do you think we could ever have our own boat?' 'No reason why not.'"



Alex Collins

Audit Walks on the Canal: Revaluing the Built Environment

The **New Producers** reached out and met with an innovative community engagement project in Falkirk, aimed at both improving the accessibility of the canal to disadvantaged communities and to improve the lived experiences of those communities. The following is an account of our time with them, practicing what they term as “Audit Walks”.

We looked at the stairs; “you can’t get a pushchair up here” - Kevin, our leader, noted. Before us was a roughly 12 step stairway going off the side of the Forth & Union Canal Towpath into Falkirk’s Easter Carmuir estate. If you had a pram “you have the option of going that way which closes at 8pm, or this way – which would save a lot of time and it would mean you weren’t on that really horrible busy street, and there are some really busy streets down there.” Dan Rous, a community organiser with Our Place Camelon and

Tamfourhill, agreed: “absolutely, and there’s a toddler in that house. If they want to come up here, they’ve got to negotiate this.”

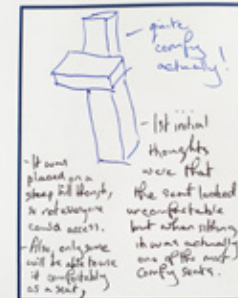
We were taking part in an Audit Walk, a methodology developed by Kevin Harrison of Art Link Central and Dr Martin Quirke of University of Stirling to improve the experience of disadvantaged users of the Built Environment (BE). Audit walks were developed to test and improve public spaces for people with age-related challenges, especially dementia, with their work resulting in impactful changes in Stirling.

The two are now working with partners in Falkirk, including Dan, to improve the accessibility and equity of the built environment in Carmuir and Camelon north of the Canal, and Tamfourhill and Bantaskin south of it. On the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, these areas are



Audit Journey - Sketch and Scribble

Places to sit



Doesn't have enough support for some people; no real back rest.



predominantly in the lowest three categorisations of deprivation.

Audit walks are almost 'slow walking'. this involves taking a group who are generally not considered in the use of the BE on a walk, with all members of the group observing as they go, evaluating, recollecting and collecting – in whatever way they prefer.

In an audit walk, the organiser commences and ends with a short discussion to summarise the walk. The walkers are given an audit form, with one model that we especially liked being the 'Out Connected Neighbourhoods Audit Journey Sketch & Scribble' Form (see p.37).

The participant is given 8 boxes with simple titles in which to write, draw or record in whatever way their responses. The topics are 'Meeting place', 'Finding your way', 'Surfaces (windows, pavement, materials)', 'Places to visit', '[Things to do], Things to see', 'Stories or memories', 'Worries', 'Best bits'. During the walk, the participants walk together in small groupings, and are encouraged to record thoughts on the form, their phone, or make other notations. Over coffee at the end of the walk, these records are gathered and discussed, before being studied and brought to BE partners to aid a better understanding of a given community's encounters with and indeed the way they value – and do not value – the environments they walked through.

By auditing the canal in this way, it truly is possible to detect, identify or question multiple levels of value.

The audit walk is therefore a form of mapping, wayfinding, and of developing an understanding of the associative networks of any users of a space. It needs built environment organisations to directly involve those users, and it may produce contradicting needs, but focusing on the needs of the most vulnerable (for example, dementia

sufferers) you also cater towards a much wider user base (the elderly, the infirm, the young, etc).

Needless to say, the audit walk is an excellent methodology we recommend to anyone wanting to make the built environment more valuable for use by a much more diverse audience. It also opens out design to multiple experiences, narratives and associations - introducing a more people-centered, pluralistic approach to the built environment.

It is important to note that during an audit walk Kevin, Martin and their colleagues don't just recognise flaws, they also think of ways to improve the environment.

When considering a dementia-focused audit walk along the Canal in Falkirk, we noted the lack of benches along the towpath – making the pathway very inaccessible for people needing to sit. While the team could bring portable seats for the walk, doing the audit prompts us to consider applying to change this.

We were put in touch with Kevin and Martin by Scottish Canals themselves – showing SC recognise the value of the methodology and the necessity of its conclusions. Kevin and Martin plan to run audit walks for the communities of the areas bordering the canals; in this way, hopefully they will cause innovative changes which – however mundane or small these changes may seem – re-value the canal (in all its associations) for the communities neighbouring it.

This is the value of the audit walk, which uses conversation, observation and collection based on short targeted walks through areas to provide not just data, but experience the area through the eyes of a given community.



Image: Audit walk at Falkirk
c/o New Producers

Recorded on
29th August 2021, 11am

Growing Community Along the Canal

During one of our own walks along the Canal, the **New Producers** encountered an inspiring brownfield regeneration project, the Braeside Community Garden.

Claire McEachran and Sandra Hinds are two staff members of Dunard Primary School, in North Kelvinside in Maryhill. Following an attempt to renovate a derelict space adjoining the canal on Maryhill Road five years ago, from February 2021, they have led the transformation of the same patch into a new Community Garden. The garden is situated on the site of tenements and shop spaces that were demolished in the 1970s. The following are excerpts from an interview with them:

Claire: When I grew up, I was on the canal with my dad and my dog every day. I use it as a form of mental health and I want that for my classes and for them to use this space [Braeside Garden] as a way to clear your head, and know why structures are there and why things are there.

For the past 8 years, every year I've done a classroom project, which connects our Primary Three to the canal, how and why it was built, its closure through to today, and I take children along the canal.

Sandra: The land we are sitting on at the Braeside Community Garden is where I was born and raised, as well as my parents and my grandparents. I can still remember barges when I was very young going up and down. Always been a hotspot for children. Lots of fishing years ago. Then it was just left and abandoned, and it became very dirty, very polluted.

It was left to be very derelict. In late 60s, early 70s, a lot of tenements in the area were closed down and knocked down on the canal side, with some renovated. At that point, the

motorway was supposed to come up Maryhill Road and a lot of tenements were demolished or left empty. Years later, they decided to renovate what was left of them. Sadly by that point a lot of them were gone. There were also a lot of factories here on Garscube Road up to Ruchill Street – it was all awash with factories. Different companies. All closed down – especially in the 70s. The canal was basically left, it wasn't used at all for anything.

Claire: We did an interview with one of our teachers in the Maryhill Canal Classrooms, it was about first experiences of canal - she was telling us she had her first kiss up there!

Sandra: It's been so much a part of people's lives for so long; this was our play area; [she looks at the area of the garden] if you think of that wall there – we only had this triangle to play on. There were families with 9 and 11 children. I said to Claire at one point, this wall here used to be very high, and my big cousins used to climb up on top of wash house onto the canal, and one would push me from the bottom and the other two would drag me up. I would have been four years old playing on that canal.

NP: Was that after it was closed?

Sandra: Yeah – that was our playground.

NP: Would this area have been really impoverished?

Sandra: I think impoverished is a bit strong. I think there's far poorer areas of this city. But it certainly wasn't a rich area. Certainly, a lot of unemployment, that never recovered for people from the 70s. Most of the houses had families of 11 in them in a room and kitchen. We thought we were well off because our biggest family group had 4 sons and a room and kitchen. Whereas my gran brought up 8 of them.

And then the reason that it (was) cleared – partly was also the opening of Easterhouse, Castlemilk, Drumchapel, Milton, etc. All the families that were here were moved right out of the city. They were sent away from the centre.

I think when my mum's cousin who stayed here went to Milton there was no bus or that up there. Nothing ran from here up there. And people didn't have money anyway.

Sandra: Thankfully due to all the regeneration of the area, like the Claypits, all the canoeing and things going on I think it's becoming a lot busier again. Since the area was cleared up and the pathways done again. I use it for dog walking. With Claypits and the new bridge at Stockingfield, that's going to make a massive difference to people walking along it. People are going to feel more confident.

Claire: It's getting busier every night. Every night I walk the dogs, and it's always got someone on it. And it's not – it isn't... well people often assume it's people untoward, but most of the time it's genuinely not. It's families, sitting with their dogs, and kids walking them up and down and getting them tired before their bed.



Image: Braeside Community Garden
c/o New Producers

NP: Claire, when you started five years ago, why was it this piece of land that you wished to make a community space with?

Claire: We as a school used Children's Woods, but the kids from my school that came from the majority of our catchment weren't using it. Then because this was closer I thought we would use this space.

(But) this land was a dump with tyres. Even before the tyres were here; five years ago the weeds were higher than us and it was dangerous. The needles and the paraphernalia and the glass.

Sandra: It's probably been like that since the 70s, at least since my eldest was born. Like then, it was overgrown and derelict.

Claire: Even when we came back, we had an open day where Clean Up Scotland gave us little bibs and we got people from the community. We had to do enough so that the public could come. We did ask for a needle sweep, but again, these things – they just don't happen. The original clearing – we just had to do it ourselves.

—
NP: And now as a garden, what have you noticed about the communities using the garden?

Sandra: There are children coming over in the evenings with their parents, that say 'I want to go to my garden'.

NP: They actually say 'my garden'?

Sandra: This is the children that have taken that up on themselves, (and) because they have been coming weekly during summer, it's their garden ...

Claire: That's partly because of who we are and because we are in school. They can come over and say 'I'm gonna see Mrs Hinds or Mrs McEachran'.

NP: The volunteers who were helping you to do this – were they fellow staff, or others?

Claire: A mixture – which is a brilliant thing. Gives us a wee community and allows them to say to their classes I'm gonna go on Saturday and see us. Also, I'm quite an unconfident person myself and I've had to learn how to speak to lots of different people. I think I've had to speak to loads of generations and different people about loads of things. For me, that's one of the biggest changes – all the different kinds of people.

Sandra: And how many people stop and ask us what's going on.

NP: It's a very impressive sight when you go past. You have the raised bed, the seating, the children's garden; you've added the fence.

NP: What you are describing ties into those bigger strategies the council puts up, or the government wants, but you don't see it coming from that. It is autonomous.

Claire: For us that's going to be very important. These are our decisions based on what training we've had and our vision.

Sandra: And we can read what's going on in the community.

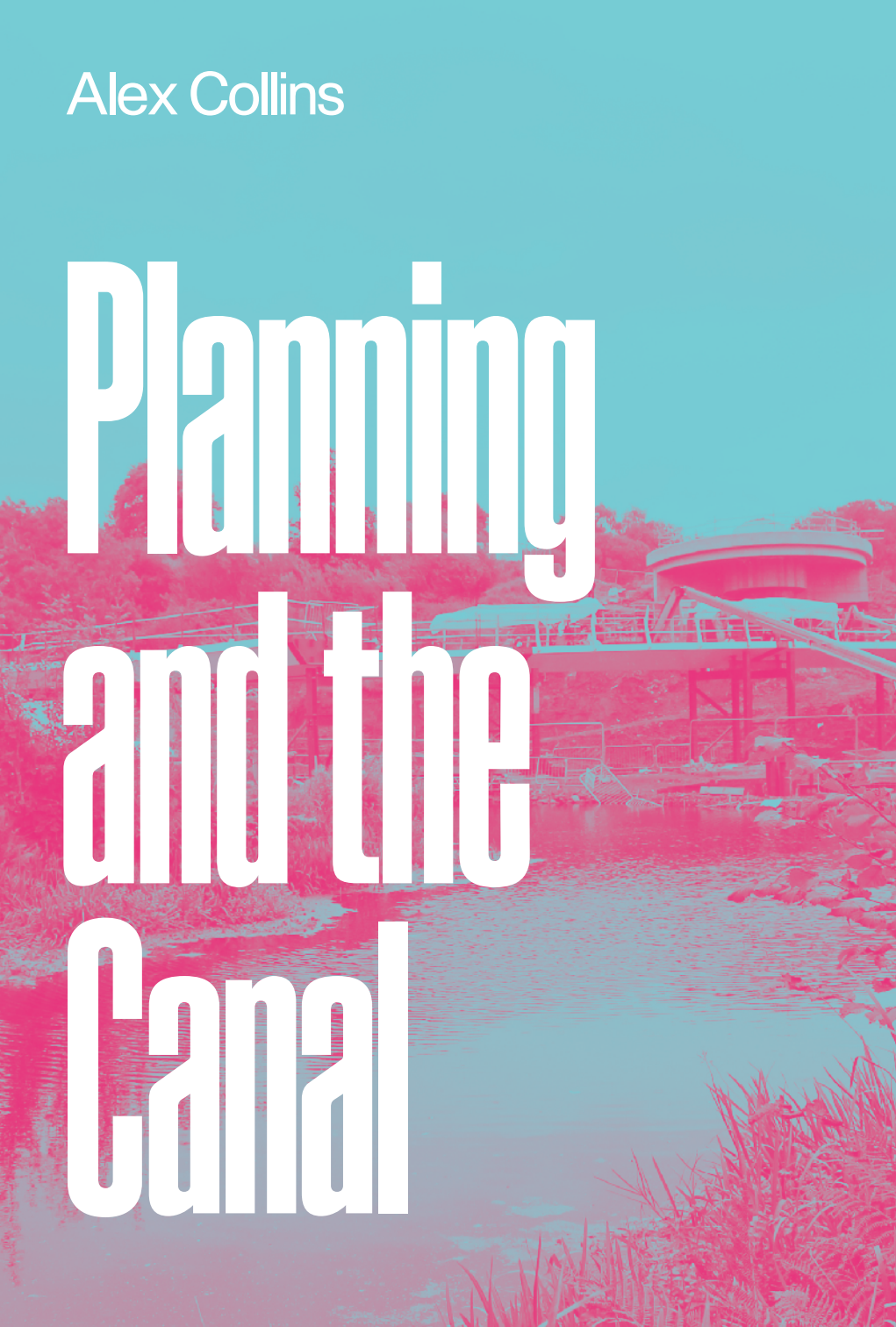
Claire: We do need a childminding group in here – for people to come and for kids to just play. We have kids in these buildings watching us, they've got a right to play, they've got a right to be outside.

NP: Finally, what value do you think this garden can add to the area?

Sandra: I'm gonna say what my son said to me. My youngest son had been on jury duty, had come up the road and come in for dinner, and said 'Mum, I was just looking at the garden and how great it's become, and you've left a legacy.' I really did well up - 'I'll be walking up here forty years from now and I'll say, 'You did that'. I think that's what it is for the people in the area, it's going to be a big thing, so many people are getting involved, and so many local people want to use it for local things. And when we are gone it will carry on and it will become more and more connected to the canal.



Image: Breeside Community Garden
c/o New Producers



Alex Collins

Planning and the Canal

Through further talks, walks and research, a larger plan for the Forth and Clyde becomes evident. These continuing developments shape not only the canal, but the people who interact with it.

In Glasgow, the Forth and Clyde Canal streams through the north of the city, with a tributary that travels south very close to the city centre and M8 route coming out of the city centre. It passes through the city's Glasgow North and North-West areas, descending from East Dumbartonshire through Cadder and Milton towards Maryhill. There, the canal splits at Maryhill locks, with one tributary proceeding South-East towards Dundas Lock. The main line of the canal proceeds west, through the city's western expanse out towards West Dunbartonshire. Within Glasgow, the canal passes between areas of substantial socio-economic difference – many of which have undergone radical changes in the past century of deindustrialisation.

In the Strategic Development Framework (SDF) for Glasgow North, Glasgow City Council (GCC) Planners introduce the area as having “a resident population of around 67,800 people.” Despite the great size of the area, it features a disproportionate smaller fraction of the city's total population. Its housing stock is also varied – a mix of tenements, post-war social housing and newer private developments. It is, as mentioned above, socio-economically mixed.

In 2003, the Forth and Clyde and Union Canals were ‘reopened’, with substantial attempts to repair and then maintain the edifice. Over time, this has transitioned from a necessarily institutional, top-down relationship to one ensconced on community relationships. In Glasgow this is especially visible through the formation of the Canal Cooperative, as well as other leisure clubs who make use of

the area. More recently, major investment in the canal area – through a Heritage Lottery Fund grant of £340,100, with match funding from the council of an additional c. £180000 (co-administered by Scottish Canals, the Council and the Cooperative) - has led to substantial physical developments. This includes a connective urban garden space, the Claypits, as well as the building of a three-way bridge at Stockingfield Junction, and a green “Smart Canal” development to ease water run-off issues in the north. The grant, in the Council’s own words, “was given in 2018 to allow organisations along Glasgow’s Canal to work together to ensure that local heritage contributes more to meeting local social, environmental and economic objectives.” Complementing this investment in Glasgow in its canal infrastructure (and elsewhere along it) was the assignment in 2021 of Scheduled Ancient Monument status by HES to the whole canal network.

In conversations with GCC and reviewing the SDF, it was clear the focus was on improving value for communities and residents – the framework, developments and increasing normality of canalside sensitive vernacular are part of the plan. The success of this depends on other stakeholders – the construction and architectural design industry, Historic Environment Scotland (HES), Scottish Canals, communities and the wider public sphere – alongside GCC.

Yet conversations with GCC also emphasise that the canal is more than just the infrastructure. It is indeed the communities either side of it – or rather communities on both sides. This has been reflected in major alterations to the fabric of the Glasgow canal – the Claypits project, the Stockingfield Bridge.

Systemising the spatial management of the canal from an institutional perspective, the new SDF creates a plan that frames future years’ planning guidance towards the area - guidance steeped in the social as much as design concerns.

While at first the SDF seems to focus purely on the canal



Image: Alasdair Gray Archive installation at Claypits Nature Reserve c/o New Producers



from a ‘green’ (environmental and leisure) perspective, the role of the canal as a barrier, as a transport route and as a significant spatial feature of living communities emerges through the document. Yet stressed within the document, are the goals of overcoming the barriers the canal presents to communities cut-off from the more prosperous south-west West End, and improving the value of the life of communities throughout the North Region.

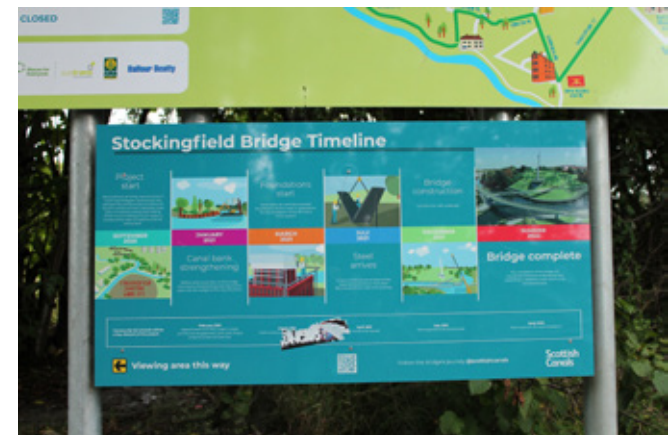
It identifies areas currently in development – Sighthill, for example, involving sustainable design partner Collective Architecture; the Stockingfield Bridge at Maryhill Locks; and the connective Claypits Garden leading from Possilpark to the Maryhill Road area south – as well as promising areas on the canal, such as Port Dundas – which will substantially improve people’s lives.

The Stockingfield Bridge especially plays a role in socially changing the city. Its imposition arguably is an (Un)Learning of socio-economic prioritisation – hopefully enabling access to the canal towpath – and all the aforementioned benefits – for residents of the areas it adjoins.

Perhaps a problem of the canal is that it requires substantial investment – something our investigations have found from other stakeholders – which community-led activities will not be able to guarantee. Instead, as the SDF suggests, cooperation between stakeholders – the Cooperative, Scottish Canals and GCC – needs to more clearly engage residents. If the canals are important in meeting 21st century challenges, as Scottish Canals Executive Catherine Topley has said, “whether it is helping tackle climate change and health inequalities or delivering against the Government’s agenda for new homes, jobs and tourist spend” – this requires working directly and positively with residents as part of wider strategic engagement – not just the canal, but the surrounding lattice of areas, people and associations that surround each canal.

The remaining question is how do we ensure that frameworks, strategies and indeed consultations have a meaningful engagement, are presented in ways that explain or open up technical knowledge to lay readers, and truly involve those outwith this – perhaps through some of the means and methods other stakeholders encountered in this project have done.

Methods such as the audit walk encountered with partners in Falkirk and Stirling may be of use to this, as are continuing to construct meaningful conversations with those users who are often not considered in planning and design. Just as we can audit spaces, so too we can audit even a document like the SDF, and thus open up and unlearn the built environment’s own ways of being communicated.



Julie Næss Karlsen

Bridging the Canals and COP26

The canals are both vulnerable to climate change and important infrastructure with the potential to tackle our wet and wild new climate. The **New Producers** reflect upon how the value of the canal be examined in light of the COP26.

The 26th United Nations Conference of the Parties (COP26) is a climate summit gathering world leaders and experts in Glasgow in November 2021 to agree on the implementation guidelines of the Paris Agreement. The COP26 negotiations bring a ceremonial urgency and reimagines Glasgow and Scotland as a global stage for collaboration and climate action.

Glasgow is conceptualised as a host city, creating a space for the talks while also showing off green projects in the city. Scottish Canals states that COP26 is “presenting significant opportunity to showcase the work and potential contribution of Scottish Canals.” The Glasgow Smart Canal reframes the industrial canal system as a blue-green infrastructure mitigating flood risks. It is exactly the type of project that can be showcased to reflect upon the value of existing infrastructure in a world with significant climate change.

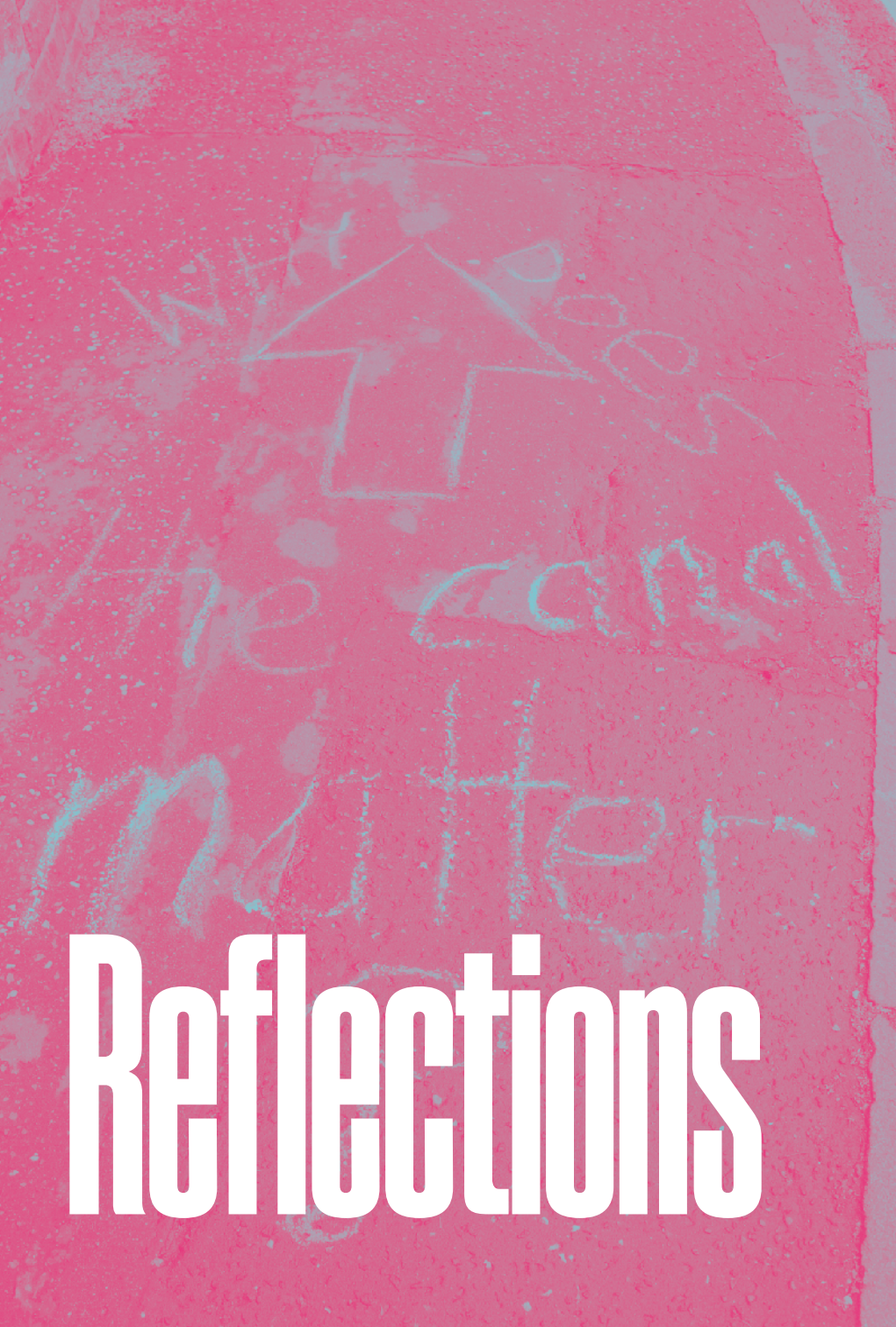
The canals have been a part of the Scottish Central Belt landscape for centuries, and their function, local meaning and value have changed several times. Today, the canal system is both vulnerable to climate change and a potential solution to local climate change impacts. The breach of the Union Canal in 2020 reminds us that the canals, as heritage structures, are not built with climate resiliency in mind.

Seeing the Scottish canals in a narrative of global climate action and local resilience gives the canals a new significance in the urban and rural landscape. The physical characteristics of a canal are recontextualised. Its locality is suddenly a strategic placement for collecting rainwater from the urban paved

surfaces, its rural-urban axis holds value as a biodiversity corridor from the city to the countryside, and its spatial dimensions become its capacity to hold and transport water.

The canal system is far removed from the fateful words in brackets in the COP26 negotiations documents. Still, surveying the value of the existing heritage structures can help us understand how climate change manifests itself in the physical landscape. Although emissions can be reduced to minimise further devastation, we have reached a point where climate change is inevitable (and already happening), therefore we need to understand how the existing landscape fabric is and will be impacted by a changing climate.





Reflections

Thinking back to **Minty Donald's** opening words, this publication – with its multiple voices and experiences – has come to reflect the 'throwntogetherness' of the canal.

In our resistance to put a full-stop or singular voice to this project, the New Producers have come together to round-off our explorations thus far – each reflecting on what the New Producers programme has given to us, how we have approached (Un) Learning, and what direction the canal is pulling us towards now.

Ruby Eleftheriotis

There is something in the physical infrastructure of the canal, of its simultaneous fluidity and transience, and its industrial determination as it cuts through dense cities, that summarises my process of (Un)Learning. In allowing myself, our team and our research to be pulled and pushed by different voices and opinions - gathering with a refusal to prioritise - we have challenged our own lived experiences and presumptions of the canal and its value. Pairing this with a genuine desire to dig deeper and find out more, I feel our (Un)Learning process has expanded beyond the canal, as we move forward questioning how we work together, look at spaces, talk to people and use our platform to uproot staid ways of thinking.

Alex Collins

When I was a child I walked along the canal with my grandfather - it was a bit of a family tradition, for my mum and her siblings to walk along it with him. They grew up in the 60s and the 70s after the canal closed, south of the canal in Knightswood. In coming to this project, focused on unlearning, it's been inspiring to look anew at this infrastructure which I had enjoyed but lost meaningful

association with - and learn how it is both so valuable for many, and also how much needs to be done to improve equity around the canal, unlearning what is accessible or public or safe, and how to improve this.

Kam Chan

Gongoozler: noun. A person who enjoys watching activities on the canal. An interviewee who was cleaning out debris from the canal said that they were only scraping the surface which summarises what this project is to me. Instead of dredging up dark histories, it has become about the potential resource within and what the canal has today in promoting wellbeing and belonging to the communities that have formed along its banks. An invitation to rewilding and to amplify those who make these shared environments a benefit to all who use it.

Evie Spiridon

Living five minutes away by foot to the canal, I hadn't often walked along it. This changed when it was one of the few places myself and many others could go during the start of lockdown. It's easy to take for granted what seems to be a hidden oasis right in the centre of Glasgow. I don't know why it seemed so hidden before; it spans the width of the country.

Having the opportunity to discuss this valuable asset with a variety of people has shown me how vast the value of the canal stretches. Its value extends across the breadth of Scotland with ever changing uses all along. Still I think for myself, the biggest value has been for my own mental health. There is a reason that so many stay and continue to return once they discover the Forth & Clyde, and Union canals.

Julie Naess Karlsen

Through lockdown, I was incredibly fascinated by the idea that I could walk along the canal in Edinburgh, follow the rational line of water through the landscape, and arrive in Glasgow after a day or three. The canal would be a continuous structure to follow, a recalcitrant man-made body of water cutting through the landscape. The canal is so many things at once, making it an appropriately complex and chaotic architectural structure to (un)learn the value of through the meandering research of the New Producers. The project has allowed us to intuitively follow threads from conversations and research, leading to a collection of perceptions of the canal rather than a definitive truth.

Ellen Clayton

During our day on the pontoon, I spent an hour or so drawing along the canal towpath with Ellie from Imagine If. We chalked the objects we wanted to see- what if a bench were placed along the towpath or a flower bed or a cycle lane? My imagination started to wander. I envisaged the banks of the canal as allotments, exhibition spaces, beer gardens, lidos... the possibilities seemed endless.

The process of researching, collecting and amplifying canal stories for Still Waters Run Deep made me realise that these ideas are not outlandish, because projects like these already exist. Communities and organisations for decades have worked hard to reclaim and transform the canal from a long history of neglect. Perhaps this rich past will inspire others to continue reimagining and questioning the role of this infrastructure?

A photograph of two young women with long hair, wearing dark clothing, crouching on a concrete surface. They are using chalk to draw and write on the ground. One woman is writing 'space' and the other is writing 'architect'. There are other faint drawings and words on the concrete, including 'space' and 'architect'. The image has a strong magenta/pink color cast.

Outro

Outro The New Producers

Departing from our day on Polwarth Pontoon, we were introduced to the values – beyond financial – that the canal held to local residents, community organisations and newcomers to the city. We heard about the value of the canal in providing a scenic option in connecting A to B: from departure point to arrival point. We saw the value in the Polwarth Pontoon's wild and winding nature, in providing respite from the city's constant forward-propelling way of being. In our audit walks, we began to map a complex web of networks of value – one of which being accessibility. Whereas the canal-side can pose as a place of leisure, relaxing and an opportunity to be closer to nature, the canal at points can be a jungle to navigate, with no suitable benches, ramps and lighting where needed.

Through the eyes of local gardeners, we saw the value of the canal as a place of learning, of bringing people together from beyond the banks of the canal and circulating it back into the city centres. Through the eyes of planners, we learnt of the historical value of the canal, and the possibility it yields to improve people's lives through its abundant other-than-human residents. It is through the willingness of trusting local communities in sharing their place with us and through the openness of planning officials and stakeholders that we were able to bring these aspects of value to the surface. In doing so, we arrive at an arrival point where we can begin to question how to bridge the gap between the motivations of the local government in promoting green infrastructure and the lack of financial support for the local communities based around the canal.

It is through the local community members' trust and willingness to share their place with us and through the openness of stakeholders and official governing bodies that we are able to be at this point – and we can begin to move towards another arrival point in our (un)learning journey.

Some closing questions for ourselves and the reader:

- In what way do developers, communities and users of the canal value it today?
- How do we measure value?
- What is value?
- How can the canal be of value for the common good?
- How will the canal be valued in the future?



Image: The canal at Polwarth c/o New Producers



Contributors

The following people have contributed to the work at hand and to this publication. A big thank you to everyone for their energies, ideas and collaboration.

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Minty Donald

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Evie Spiridon is a Masters graduate based in Glasgow, interested in how architecture manifests in situations beyond practice.

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Crystal Bennes is an American artist and architecture & design writer based in Scotland. Her mixed-media practice is grounded in long-term projects that foreground archival research, durational fieldwork and material experimentation.

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Natasha Huq is an architect working between design studio GRAS and her own practice. Her work focusses on the sustainable, creative re-use of existing buildings and their representation of a cultural identity.

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Akiko Kobayashi is an architect and educator based in Edinburgh who supports a number of third-sector clients such as womens groups, family charities, skills development organisations and artists studios.

Andy Summers

Andy Summers is an architect, educator, photographer and cultural producer based in Glasgow where his work explores architecture in its social, politcial, and cultural contexts.

Glossary

Not a complete glossary, but some of the words and terms we encountered along the way.

BAD ROAD

Stretch of canal where many or all the locks are turned round against you and need to be either filled or emptied before entering, making for a slower passage (as opposed to good road).

BANKING

Body of land beside the water.

CONTOUR CANAL

An artificial, navigable channel that follows the same land contour throughout or for much of its course.

COUNTER CURRENT

Water current that flows alongside hull of boat that is making way, even if waterway itself has no flow. Caused by water flowing 'downhill' from the bow, where the boat's forward momentum pushes the water up into a bow-wave, to the stern where the propeller action lessens the depth of the water. The greater the speed of the boat, the bigger the difference in water levels and the faster the counter current. Causes interaction which markedly affects behaviour of narrowboats in shallow and narrow waters.

GOOD ROAD

Stretch of canal ahead where all or most of the locks have not been turned round i.e. they are set favourably (not needing to be filled or emptied before entering), making for an easier and speedier passage (as opposed to bad road).

HOARDING

A large billboard/area for putting up posters by the side of a road, river or path.

LOCK

Locks are used to make the canal easier to navigate by making the water level more even where it was previously not.

POUND

The stretch of water on a canal between two locks – no matter how far apart.

SILT

A granular material roughly between the size of sand and clay. It forms a sediment in water, or sits at the bottom of a river bed.

SLACK WATER

- (1) A period when no tidal movement occurs.
- (2) The relatively still water outside the main current in a river e.g. on the inside of bends.

SLIPWAY

Paved or concrete incline from land into water used for launching or recovering boats on trailers or trolleys. On the canals these are often set at very acute angles to the cut as many boats are longer than the width of the canal.

TRIBUTARY

A river or stream flowing into a larger river or lake.

WAKE

The disturbed water astern of a moving boat, caused by propeller action and the fast moving counter current meeting the stationary or slower moving water immediately aft of the hull.

WATER RUN-OFF

Overflowing water from a contained body of water, usually from excess rain.

Endnotes

¹ Doreen Massey (2005) *For Space*, London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: AGE, p. 140.

Credits

New Producers:
Still Waters Run Deep

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