

# Canal and Waterway Infrastructure: Fluid Citizenship

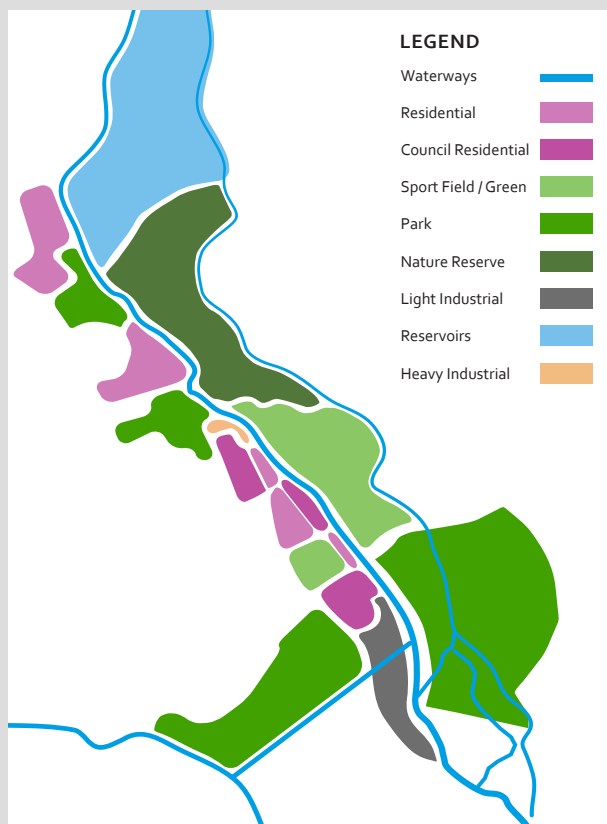
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## An Infrastructure in Transition

Today, civic agencies such as the London Assembly Environment Committee acknowledge that the capital's canals are comprised of many users: commercial craft operators, leisure cruisers, people living on boats, rowers, pedestrians, cyclists, and more. These users form associations, clubs, and other groups, thereby “creating a complex set of stakeholders”.<sup>2</sup> At the River Lea Navigation, which flows between Hackney Wick and Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, one encounters the aforementioned users and others, such as artists living and working in warehouses, residents, and concert-goers attending shows in warehouse yards. Moreover, built environment objects such as National Rail routes, Overground tracks, and new buildings crisscross and abut the canal.

This contemporary mixed-use nature of the canal is palpable, but relatively new. In the 1760s, entrepreneurs and the government built the canals as an industrial transit infrastructure, connecting the UK midlands to the coastal ports, linking areas of resources, production, and trade in a rapidly industrialising Britain. Historian Liz

1 | Varying Urban Typology: Diagrammatic derivation of areas surrounding the canal



2 | London Assembly Environment Committee (2013) *Moor or Less: Moorings on London's Waterways*. Available online at [https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/gla\\_migrate\\_files\\_destination/Moorings%20report%20agreement%20draft%20FINAL.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/gla_migrate_files_destination/Moorings%20report%20agreement%20draft%20FINAL.pdf) [accessed 8 February 2016], on p. 6.

McIvor describes the canals as a “network” enabling “communication between towns and cities which didn’t exist before”.<sup>3</sup> | The first popular gestations of the canals as mixed-use may derive from L.T.C. Rolt’s 1944 travelogue, *Narrow Boat*, which argued for the canals as sites of leisure. Since private companies owned and managed the canals for many years, like early railroads and roads, Rolt’s idea of the canals as spaces beyond industry could only gain salience after the Transport Act of 1947 nationalised the canals and the towpaths opened to the public in 1964. Thus, London’s canals are a historic transit infrastructure transitioning from heavily industrial uses to mixed-uses.

## Infrastructural Governance and Subjects

### Canal Governance

As an infrastructure in transition, the canals produce “[n]ew forms of social consciousness and modes of being... developed through individuals’ encounters with these new infrastructural systems”, which raises questions about the new “urban social and spatial ideals...[being articulated that] may be democratic or not”.<sup>4</sup> |

The decline of industrial activity along the canals coupled with London’s urban growth increases the visibility of canals as urban spaces. The London Assembly Environment Committee describes them as “becoming increasingly popular as a place for people to spend their leisure time and to live”.<sup>5</sup> | Concurrent new developments alter the historic industrial typology along canal adjacencies. As the canals transition to a mixed-use and multi-user infrastructure, similar to a street, complexities arise that make us question their current governance setup. For many years, the governance of the canals has diverged from other forms of urban governance, focusing on their connective rather than place-making capacity. London-based architect David Knight explains that the canals, originally “ruthlessly efficient arteries of the industrial revolution”, were “unconcerned with notions of place or community”.<sup>8</sup> | Since the late 1940s, the canals have been managed by a variety of special government

3 | McIvor, L. (2015) *Canals: The Making of a Nation*. London: BBC Books, on p. 7.

4 | Angelo, H. and Hentschel, C. (2015) ‘Interactions with Infrastructure as Windows into Social Worlds: A Method for Critical Urban Studies: Introduction’, *City* 19(2–3), pp. 306–312, on p. 307.

5 | London Assembly Environment Committee (2013) *Moor or Less: Moorings on London’s Waterways*. Available online at [https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/gla\\_migrate\\_files\\_destination/Moorings%20report%20agreement%20draft%20FINAL.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/gla_migrate_files_destination/Moorings%20report%20agreement%20draft%20FINAL.pdf) [accessed 8 February 2016], on p. 4.

6 | Place of Industry: As recently as 1982 the area was heavily industrial (Seaborne, M. (1982) *Bow Creek Looking Lorth from the A13 Canning Town Flyover*. Available online at <http://collections.museumoflondon.org.uk/online/object/776149.html> [accessed 11 February 2016].)



7 | Place of Leisure: During the evenings and weekend, many enjoy a beer along the canal at the White Building



8 | Knight, D. (2010) ‘Living on Infrastructure: Community & Conflict on the Canal Network’, in *Critical Cities: Ideas, Knowledge and Agitation from Emerging Urbanists, Vol. 2*, eds D. Naik and T. Oldfield, pp. 216–225. London: Myrdle Court Press, on p. 218.

9 | Recent Timeline of Canals in the United Kingdom: Seminal dates for our site within the larger scheme of canal transition in the UK

(Top Left: Seaborne, M. (2005) *View Looking East Across the City Mill River Towards the Site for the Main Olympic Stadium*. Available online at <http://collections.museumoflondon.org.uk/online/object/776186.html> [Accessed 11 February 2016].)

(Bottom Left: Seaborne, M. (2006) *Pura Foods Factory Shortly After Closure, Orchard Place, Leamouth*. Available online at <http://collections.museumoflondon.org.uk/online/object/776152.html> [accessed 11 February 2016].)



1929 - Grand Union Canal Co. forms through merger  
1944 - L. T. C. Rolt's travelogue, *Narrow Boat*  
1948 - Canal network nationalises via Transport Act 1947  
1959 - Horse drawn boats cease to operate

1998 - High revenues allow restoration of derelict canals  
2000's - Boating numbers overtake industrial revolution high  
2005 - London wins Olympic bid  
2009 - British Waterways starts looking for more secure funding



1960 - London docks begin to close due to containerization  
1962 - Transport Act 1962 breaks up British Transport Commission, establishes British Waterways Board  
1964 - Towpaths open to the public  
1970 - Last shipment of coal on the canals  
1974 - Locks made self operating  
1980 - Leisure boats reach 20,000

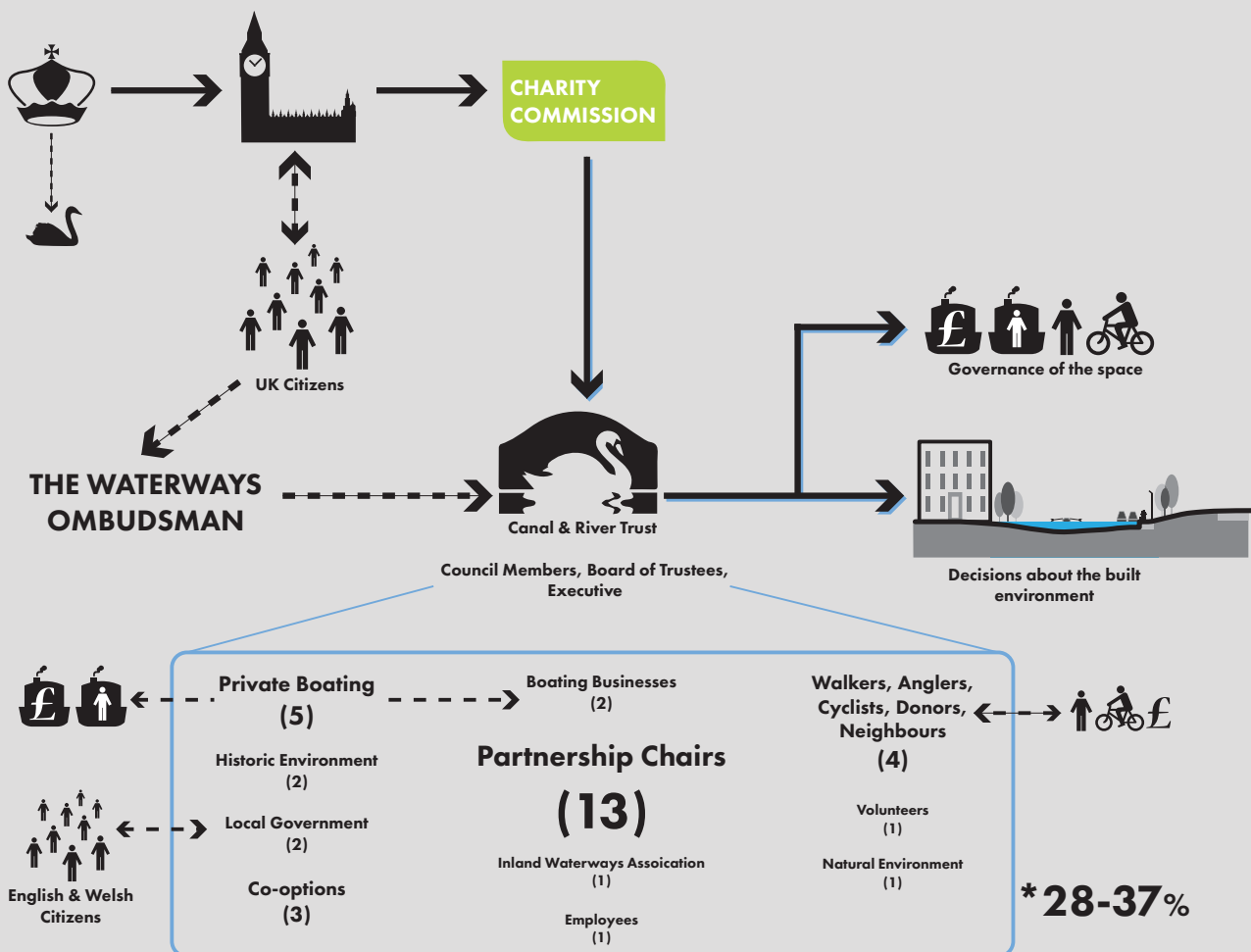
2012 - Canal & River Trust replaces British Waterways  
2013 - East Village has first residents  
2014 - Canal Park reopens  
2015 - Here East opening  
2020 - First Olympicopolis developments to open



entities, quangos, and charities, including the British Transport Commission, British Waterways, and now the Canal & River Trust (CRT).

Established in 2012 as a charitable organisation accountable to the Charity Commission, the CRT's objectives are to preserve, protect, operate, and manage inland waterways for public benefit, including navigation, walking, and recreation. Additionally, the CRT monitors movements of boaters and derives some of its income from issuing boat licenses. As the guardian of the canals, the CRT possesses substantial governance and decision making powers in the space, including the towpaths and other assets. Despite its wide powers, less than 40% of its council members are electorally accountable to the users or citizens of the canal. Furthermore, the CRT's existence as separate governance structure perpetuates a pre-

## 10 | CRT Organization

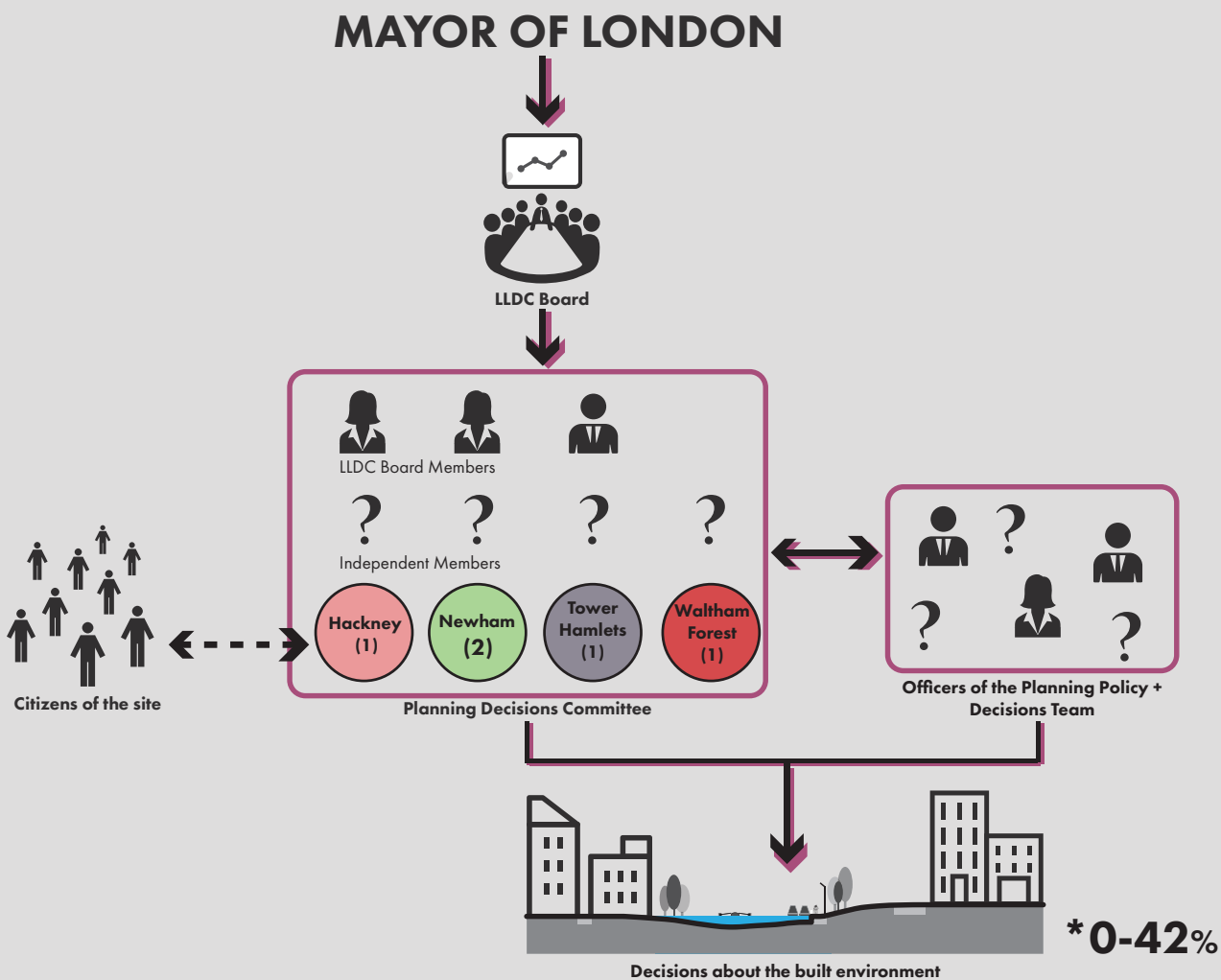


\* Amount of council members responsible (directly or indirectly through voting) to citizens of the site

1964 conceptualisation of canals as zones distinct from the rest of the city. Today, the canals’ abilities to provide connectivity and high-quality public realm are inextricably linked and need not be mutually exclusive.

In the site, the canal cuts through several London boroughs and the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC)’s jurisdiction. LLDC has planning authority over a large area of the site, and exemplifies the new form of urban governmentality resulting from the implementation of the Localism Act 2011. It was formed in 2012 to deliver the legacy of the Olympics and drive regeneration efforts in East London. Elected officials are underrepresented in LLDC’s Planning Decisions Committee, which is responsible for the long-term planning and development of the site. Only about 40% of the members are local councillors representing the four boroughs

11 | LLDC Organization



\* Amount of committee or team members responsible (directly or indirectly through voting) to citizens of the site

around the Olympic Park. A similar issue of inadequate elected representation arises in CRT's council. In more traditional set-ups like in the City of Westminster, citizens vote on councillors who serve on the planning committee, which means that 100% of the people making decisions about the built environment are accountable to local citizens. 12 |

### Canal Users/Citizens

If “the right to the city is not merely a right of access to what already exists, but a right to change it after our heart's desire”, then citizens must have a say in the processes shaping the built environment, including planning authorisation. 13 | As one of the densest clusters of creatives in Europe, the artists and residents of Hackney Wick Fish Island (HWFI) founded the HWFI Cultural Interest Group (CIG) in 2009 to amplify their voices in planning processes. They seek to ensure that proposed changes to the area will not obliterate its diverse ecology of self-subdivided warehouses providing affordable living and studio space for groups of artists. 14 | Despite the rhetoric of preserving affordable workspaces in HWFI in the LLDC's regeneration guide, the artists fear that they are omitted from this dialogue given the massive transformation on the site, including new residential developments along the canal.

One group of citizens on the site are ‘classical’ citizens, those who reside and are able to vote. While the notion of representation is often tied to the voting based on residence on land, living on a boat complicates that. Currently, in order to vote one must provide an address on land. Boaters live on water and must move every two weeks per CRT regulations and lack a fixed address. Boaters we interviewed typically utilise a friend's or family member's address to register to vote. While continual cruisers may vote in the borough where they declared a local connection pursuant to electoral laws, they may only be in the borough where they vote for a limited time during a year. Cyclists are another transient group of users that complicate the

15 | Recent Developments in the LLDC Area: Light red for pending applications, dashed red in pre-application phase, red with outline approved (as mapped by Hackney Wick Planning and Development group). Dark red are upcoming LLDC developments.



12 | Westminster Council (2013) *Westminster Community Information*. Available online at <http://www.westminstercommunityinfo.org/content/westminster-council-committees-and-sub-committees> [accessed 10 February 2016].

13 | Harvey, D. (2003) ‘The Right to the City’, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 27(4), pp. 939–941, on p. 939.

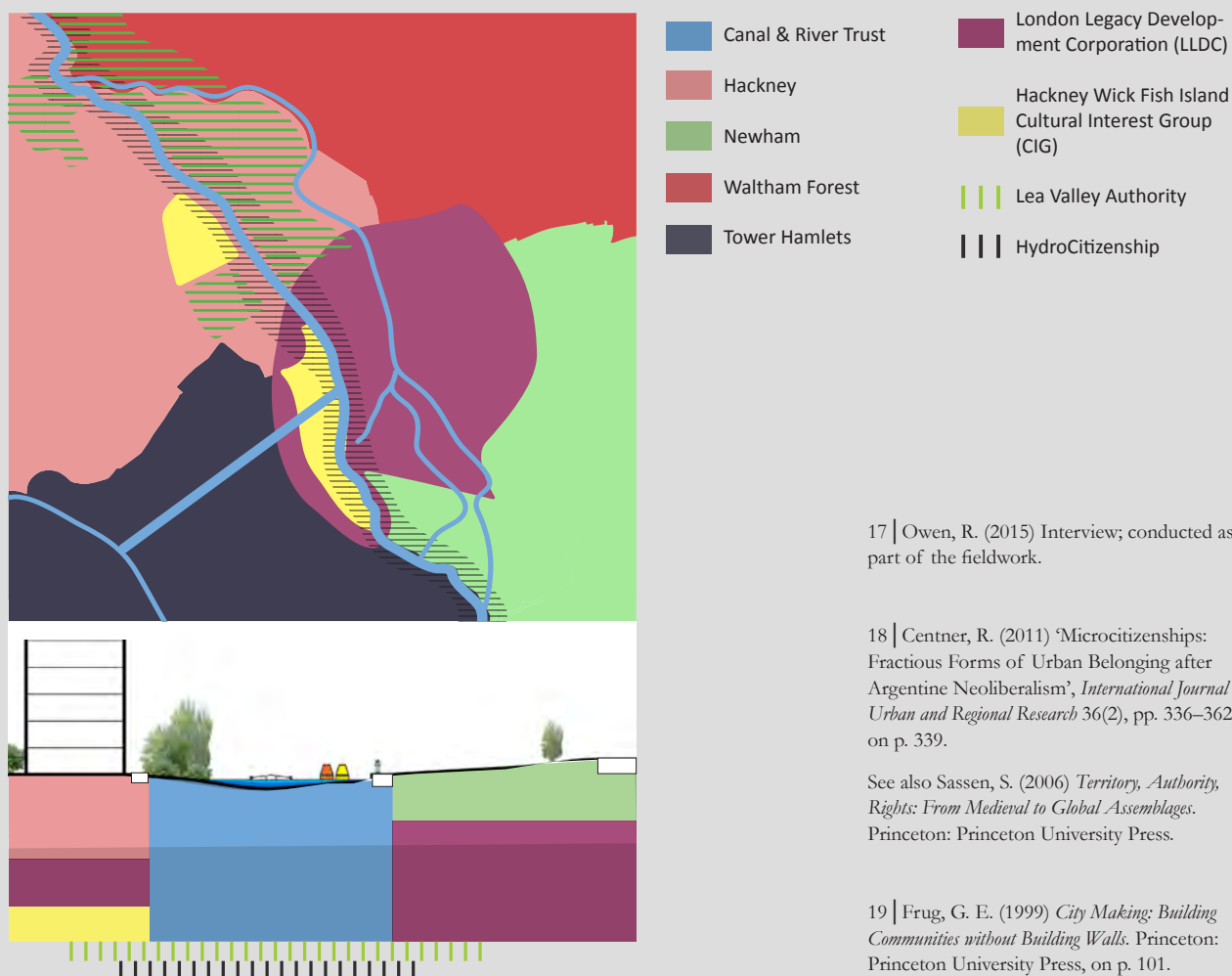
14 | Brown, R. (2014) ‘A Letter from London’, *Architectural Research Quarterly* 18(4), pp. 403–406.



understanding of citizenship. Currently, local authorities are only responsible for addressing crashes that occur within their boroughs. 17 | However, canal towpaths are considered ‘off the road’, which means that boroughs don’t take responsibility for crashes there.

Given the high amount of transient users, we need to understand citizenship more broadly. For us, any consistent user of the site or similar infrastructures constitutes a multi-scalar citizen of the site. Citizens are ‘multi-scalar’ with “fractious forms of belonging in urban space due to their production of distinct scales of political society, each with its own vision of territorialized social rights”. 18 | Gerald Frug’s assertion that “a person’s territorial identity should not be reduced to his or her address”, captures the problematics of the mobile urban citizen, like transient cyclists and boaters who frequently use the space. 19 | Ideally, by being able to vote for the politicians and board members who govern the site, both multi-scalar

16 | Political and Organisational Actors of the Site: The site is mixed-use in more than just users and urban typologies.



17 | Owen, R. (2015) Interview; conducted as part of the fieldwork.

18 | Centner, R. (2011) ‘Microcitizenships: Fractious Forms of Urban Belonging after Argentine Neoliberalism’, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 36(2), pp. 336–362, on p. 339.

See also Sassen, S. (2006) *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

19 | Frug, G. E. (1999) *City Making: Building Communities without Building Walls*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, on p. 101.

and classical canal citizens would have a tangible and traceable right to the city. Indeed, Frug suggests institutionalising “a person’s multiple identities by giving people multiple votes throughout the region so they could vote where they worked, where they shopped – indeed where they wanted to live”. 20 | While providing this Frugian suffrage to the multi-scalar canal citizens is not possible now, it is possible to increase their voice and participation through the policy and spatial interventions discussed later. In addition to enabling the right to the city for both classical and multi-scalar citizens through greater participation in the processes that shape the built environment, a broader recognition of citizenship is essential in negotiating claims to the canal and contestations over its mixed uses. Both multi-scalar and classical citizens need agency in the site because “[b]y connecting the dots between individuals’ encounters we examine how infrastructural systems lay out patterns of social integration or differentiation, create feelings of belonging or alienation, connection or isolation, and lead to political engagement or lack thereof”. 21 |

The London Assembly Environment Committee explains that “multiple uses of the water [in London’s canals] can lead to crowding and a degree of competition, particularly at specific mooring locations, and there are contested efforts to regulate or ration future users”. 22 | Divergent ideas of how the site should be utilised and visions for its future produce “fractious forms of [urban] belonging”. 23 | The contestation of use on the site emerges as a key issue through our interviews and analyses of planning documents, online forums and news articles. Though canal users can be grouped in a variety of ways, these categorisations are fluid and not homogenous. For instance, the London Boaters Facebook Group – an informal,

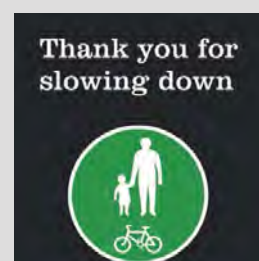
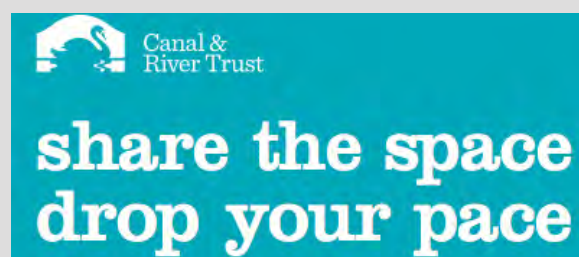
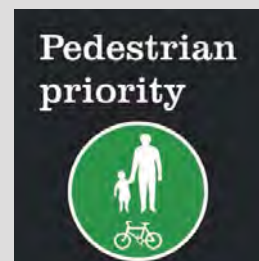
20 | Fishman, R. (2001) ‘City Making by Gerald E. Frug’, *Harvard Design Magazine* 13. Available online at <http://www.harvarddesignmagazine.org/issues/13/city-making-by-gerald-e-frug> [accessed 10 February 2016].

21 | Angelo, H. and Hentschel, C. (2015) ‘Interactions with Infrastructure as Windows into Social Worlds: A Method for Critical Urban Studies: Introduction’, *City* 19(2–3), pp. 306–312, on p. 310.

22 | London Assembly Environment Committee (2013) *Moor or Less: Moorings on London’s Waterways*. Available online at [https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/gla\\_migrate\\_files\\_destination/Moorings%20report%20agreement%20draft%20FINAL.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/gla_migrate_files_destination/Moorings%20report%20agreement%20draft%20FINAL.pdf) [accessed 8 February 2016], on p. 6.

23 | Centner, R. (2011) ‘Microcitizenships: Fractious Forms of Urban Belonging after Argentine Neoliberalism’, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 36(2), pp. 336–362, on p. 339

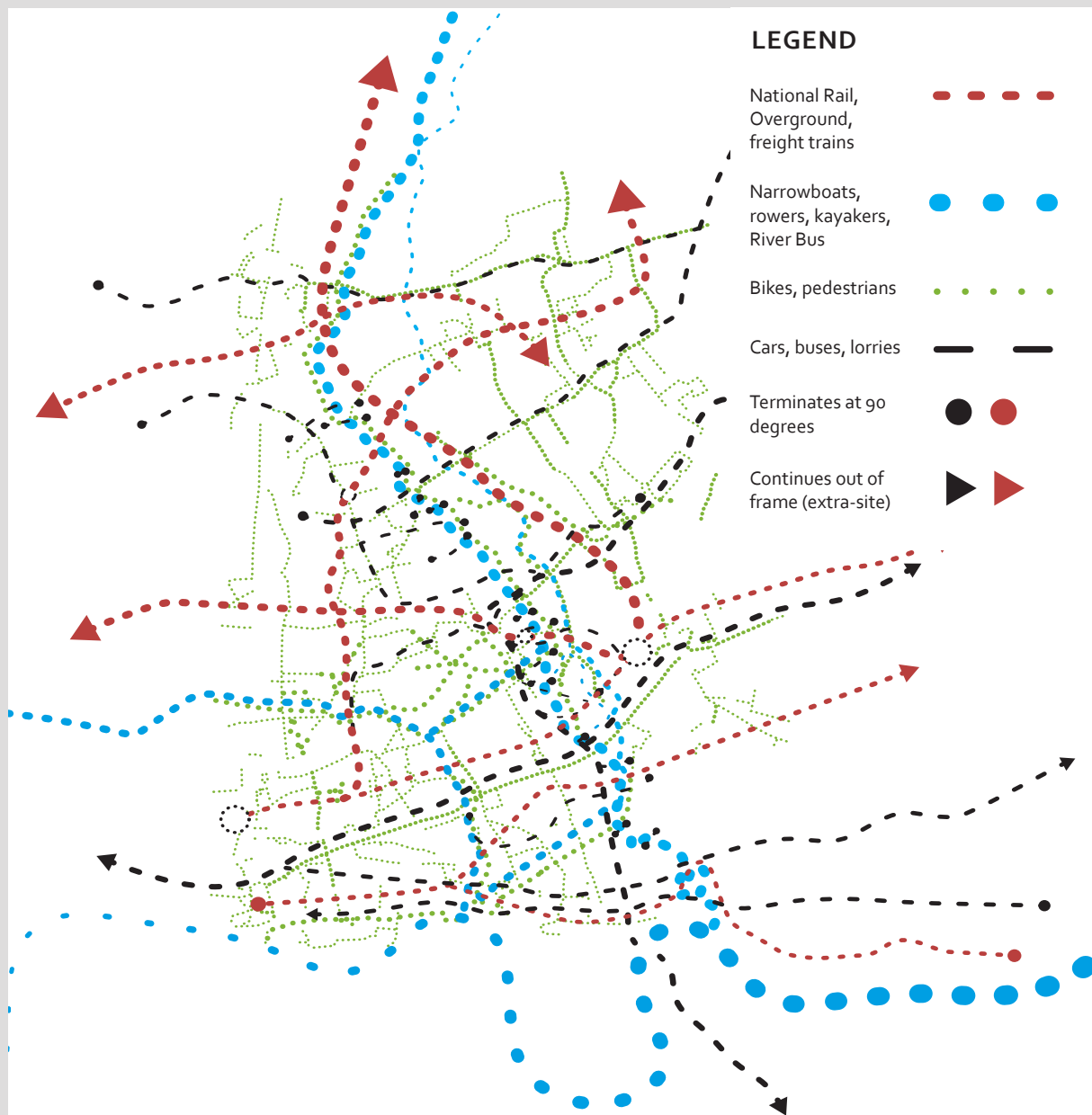
24 | Campaign Signs: Some promotional material from the CRT





active forum of around 4500 members – reveals the diverse range of the boaters: retirees who are recreational boaters, young professionals who romanticise living on a boat, and people who cannot afford to live on land. There is overlap between the user groups, too, particularly the transient users. We noticed that there are many boats with bikes on them. In interviews, boaters affirmed that having a bike as a mode of transportation on land grants them greater freedom and flexibility in where they moor, since they worry less about being close to public transit options.

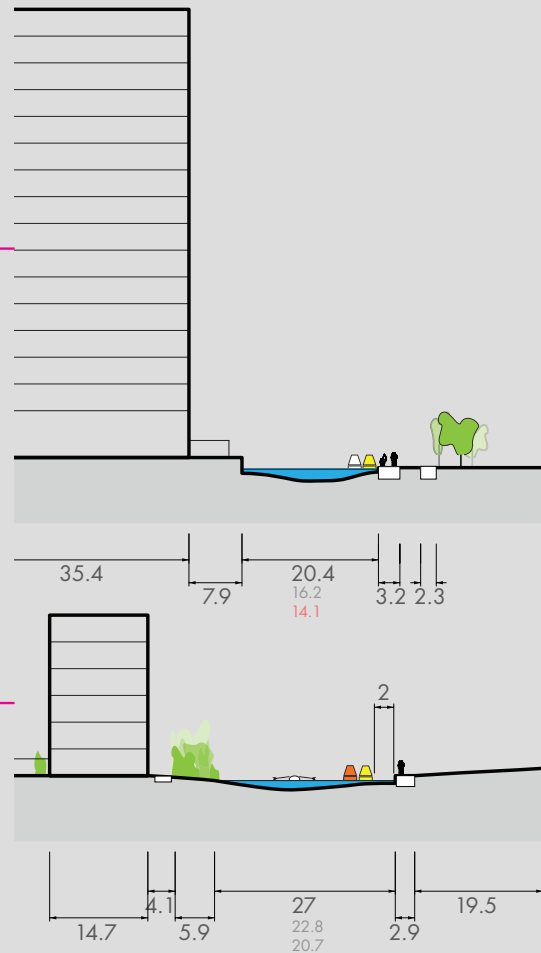
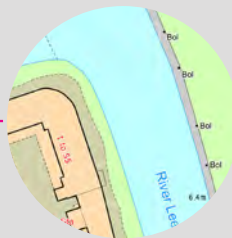
25 | Site in Motion: Map of the various mobile users in and around the site



## Towpath Contestations

The tensions between cyclists and pedestrians are immediately tangible on the towpath. A Guardian article highlights how cyclists can make the towpath unsafe for children and elderly people, two of the most vulnerable groups of users. CRT towpath ranger Kerena Fussell claims: “People with kids don’t come down here because they are worried their kids will get run over”.<sup>27</sup> Caroline Russell, Chair of Islington Living Streets, states that “for an elderly person if you have a trip or a fall that can be life changing. It is quite threatening for an older person if you have someone [cycling] behind you, even if they are being perfectly polite”.<sup>27</sup> If cities should be designed with the most vulnerable users in mind, as Peñalosa says, then the towpaths can certainly be improved to optimise both perceptions and realities of safety for all users.<sup>28</sup>

26 | Existing Conditions: Some parts of the canal are wide enough to accommodate many users (top section), while other sections are narrow and bounded (bottom section)



27 | Laker, L. (2012) *How Cyclists and Pedestrians Can Share Space on Canal Towpaths*. Available online at <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/bike-blog/2012/nov/01/cyclist-pedestrian-canal-towpath> [accessed 9 February 2016].

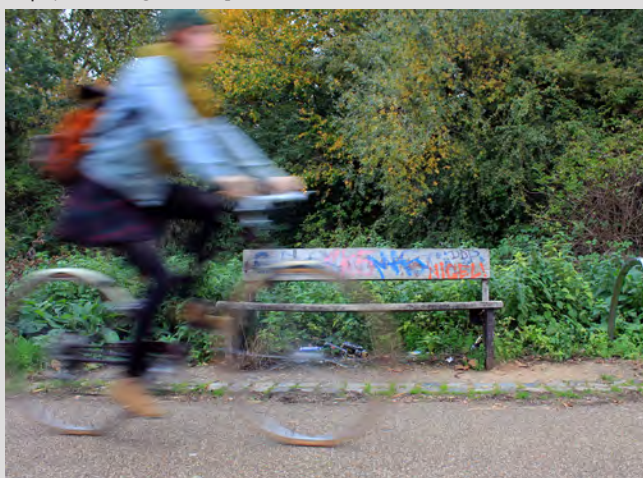
28 | Peñalosa, E. (2007) ‘Politics, Power, Cities’, in *The Endless City*, eds R. Burdett and D. Sudjic, pp. 307–319. London: Phaidon Press.

Sharing the towpath is an issue that the CRT has struggled to adequately address. It has received responses to its Sharing Towpath email consultations like, “Ban cyclists. They’re a menace”, “Penalise boats which heap their belongings on the towpath - dangerous, unsightly. Guidelines: Walkers/joggers - keep left. Single file. Cyclists: Bells compulsory. Dog walkers: Keep dogs on short leads”. Respondents also complain that “[t]here are some towpaths that are so narrow that it is questionable whether any shared use should take place at all”.<sup>30</sup> The CRT has introduced a Towpath Code of Conduct and launched various campaigns to encourage cyclists to slow down on the towpath.

Despite the contentiousness on the towpath, “the fact that cyclists are choosing a crowded, narrow path next to an open body of water in preference to the roads is an indictment of urban road conditions”.<sup>31</sup> Hackney Councillor Nick Sharman has described Hackney Wick as a ‘funnel’ for a lot of vehicular traffic, which endangers cyclists.<sup>32</sup> The Hackney Cycling Campaign has corroborated this, identifying how streets peripheral to the towpath privilege vehicular traffic. HWFI artists and cyclists we interviewed agree that the towpath is the quickest and most efficient route to Central London from the East and “a great way to get to work”.<sup>33</sup> This partially has to do with Hackney’s relatively poor public transportation connectivity to Central London. It is the only borough in inner London with no underground stations. While there are 14 bus routes and Overground stations, this overall uneven distribution of public transit in the borough compounds isolation and deprivation.

As an efficient and vehicle-free route to Central London, the towpath can be integrated as a cycling route. It traverses different boroughs and connects different kinds of people with varying levels of income and education. While most cyclists

29 | Cyclist Along the Towpath



30 | Canal & River Trust (2014) *Sharing Towpaths Consultation*. Available online at <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/media/library/7099-sharing-towpaths-emailed-comments.pdf> [accessed 10 February 2016].

31 | Laker, L. (2012) *How Cyclists and Pedestrians Can Share Space on Canal Towpaths*. Available online at <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/bike-blog/2012/nov/01/cyclist-pedestrian-canal-towpath> [accessed 9 February 2016].

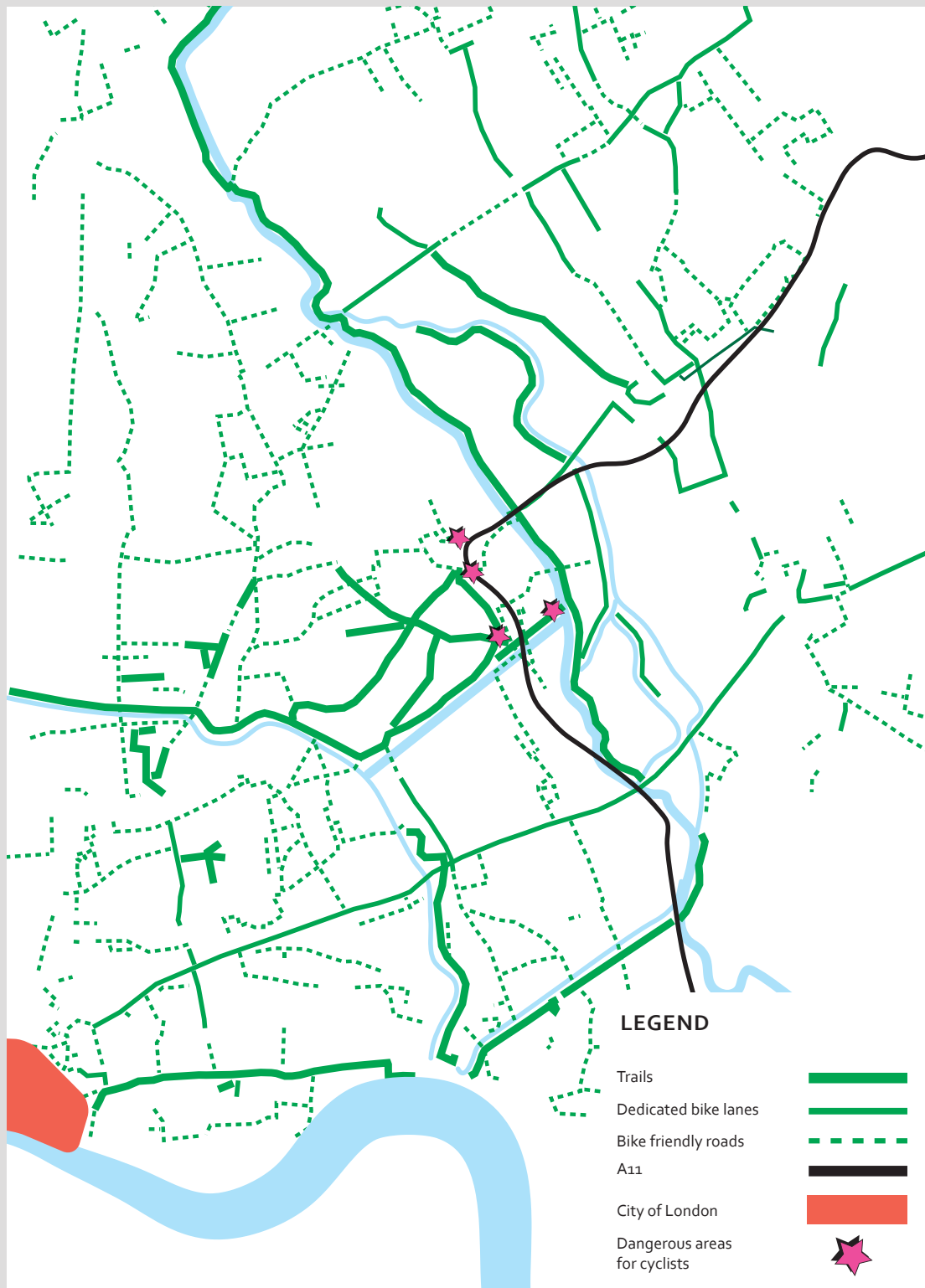
32 | Sharman, N. (2015) Interview, Towpath Condition and Sharing of Responsibilities; conducted as part of the fieldwork.

33 | Slawson, N. (2015) ‘Troubled Waterways: Canals Take the Strain of London’s Housing Crisis’, *The Guardian*. Available online at <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/may/04/troubled-waterways-canals-london-housing-crisis-property-boats> [accessed 31 January 2016].



## LEGEND

<span style="background-color: #00AEEF; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> Research and development of products or processes / light industry (B1)	<span style="background-color: #800000; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> Train station	<span style="background: repeating-linear-gradient(45deg, transparent, transparent 2px, black 2px, black 4px); border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> Cemetery churchyard	<span style="background: repeating-linear-gradient(-45deg, transparent, transparent 2px, black 2px, black 4px); border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> Park
<span style="background-color: #FF00FF; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> Car park	<span style="background-color: #FF00FF; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> Restaurants and cafes (A3)	<span style="background: repeating-linear-gradient(45deg, transparent, transparent 2px, black 2px, black 4px); border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> City farm and allotments	<span style="background: repeating-linear-gradient(-45deg, transparent, transparent 2px, black 2px, black 4px); border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> Playing field
<span style="background-color: #FFD700; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> Assembly and Leisure including sports facilities (D2)	<span style="background-color: #008000; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> Council residential (C3)	<span style="background: repeating-linear-gradient(45deg, transparent, transparent 2px, black 2px, black 4px); border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> Educational	<span style="background: repeating-linear-gradient(-45deg, transparent, transparent 2px, black 2px, black 4px); border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> Woodlands
<span style="background-color: #FF0000; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> Shops (A1)	<span style="background-color: #90EE90; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> Private residential (C3)	<span style="background: repeating-linear-gradient(45deg, transparent, transparent 2px, black 2px, black 4px); border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> Equestrian centre	<span style="background-color: #800080; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> Right of ways
<span style="background-color: #FFA500; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> Non - Residential Institutions (Including Education & training centres, Places of worship, and Community Centres) (D1)	<span style="background-color: #00AEEF; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> General industrial/storage and distribution/ Light industry (B1, B2, B8)	<span style="background: repeating-linear-gradient(45deg, transparent, transparent 2px, black 2px, black 4px); border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> Formal garden	<span style="background-color: #D3D3D3; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> Vacant land
	<span style="background-color: #FFD700; border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> Creative studio/work spaces	<span style="background: repeating-linear-gradient(45deg, transparent, transparent 2px, black 2px, black 4px); border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> Golf course	
	<span style="background: repeating-linear-gradient(45deg, transparent, transparent 2px, black 2px, black 4px); border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> Amenity Green Space	<span style="background: repeating-linear-gradient(45deg, transparent, transparent 2px, black 2px, black 4px); border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px;"></span> Nature reserve	





are affluent white men, studies show that there is a high demand for bike share among racial and ethnic minorities. 36 | Studies additionally reveal a transportation paradox: The lower your income, the more likely it is that you are going to walk or bike to work. 37 | The residential demographics of the 12 middle super output areas surrounding the site reflect high level of deprivations, a mixed ethnic composition and a mostly working-age population, which underscore the need to address barriers to cycling among low-income populations of colour. Moreover, 10% of the residents of those wards are bicycle commuters. The projected population growth in the areas in the next 10 years, plus the new developments in Hackney Wick and Newham suggest increasing utilisation of the towpath, again highlighting its the relevance as a mixed-use space. Diminishing barriers to towpath utilisation, including dispelling its actual and perceived inaccessibility, acknowledges the asymmetries in “our ability to convert resources into actual freedoms” and that “[v]ariations related to sex, age, genetic endowments, and many other features give us unequal powers to build freedom in our lives even when we have the same bundle of primary goods”. 38 |

### Intervention: Dual Strategy

The survival of London’s canals in an active and animated form is a testament to their flexibility, what Sennett might call ‘openness’. 39 | They can be considered an ‘open system’, in that their built form has sustained the “transforming work of time”. 40 | Moreover they provide the opportunity for the ‘mixture of difference’, which Sennett says “is more largely the very essence of an open system that difference should provoke...the ideal public realm has appeared one in which people react to, learn from, people who are unlike themselves”. 41 | The canal connects areas of deprivation with areas of relative privilege, as well as ethnically and racially diverse neighbourhoods.

Maintaining the canals for mixed-use enables them to continue being open systems adapting to a changing London, as well as spaces for negotiation that “allow for the possibility that conflict may appear and to provide an arena where differences can be confronted”. 42 | There must be both physical and political space for ‘agonistic pluralism’ so that all actors can exercise their “‘basic capabilities’: a person being able to do certain basic things. The ability to move about is the relevant one here”. 44 |

36 | Ogilvie, F. and Goodman, A. (2012) ‘Inequalities in London Cycle Hire Scheme’, *Prev Med* 55(1), pp. 40–45.

37 | Badger, E. (2016) *Why Bike Lanes Make People Mad*. Available online at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/01/14/why-bike-lanes-are-hugely-unpopular-in-some-neighborhoods/?tid=pm\\_business\\_pop\\_b](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/01/14/why-bike-lanes-are-hugely-unpopular-in-some-neighborhoods/?tid=pm_business_pop_b) [accessed 10 February 2016].

38 | Sen, A. (1990) ‘Justice: Means versus Freedoms’, *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 19(2), pp. 111–121.

39 | Sennett, R. (2008) *The Public Realm*. Available online at <http://www.richardsennett.com/site/senn/templates/general2.aspx?pageid=16&cc=gb> [accessed 5 February 2016].

40 | Sennett, R. (2008) *The Public Realm*. Available online at <http://www.richardsennett.com/site/senn/templates/general2.aspx?pageid=16&cc=gb> [accessed 5 February 2016], on p. 5

41 | Sennett, R. (2008) *The Public Realm*. Available online at <http://www.richardsennett.com/site/senn/templates/general2.aspx?pageid=16&cc=gb> [accessed 5 February 2016], on p. 10

42 | Mouffe, C. (2000) *Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism*. Available online at [https://www.ihs.ac.at/publications/pol/pw\\_72.pdf](https://www.ihs.ac.at/publications/pol/pw_72.pdf) [accessed 9 February 2016].

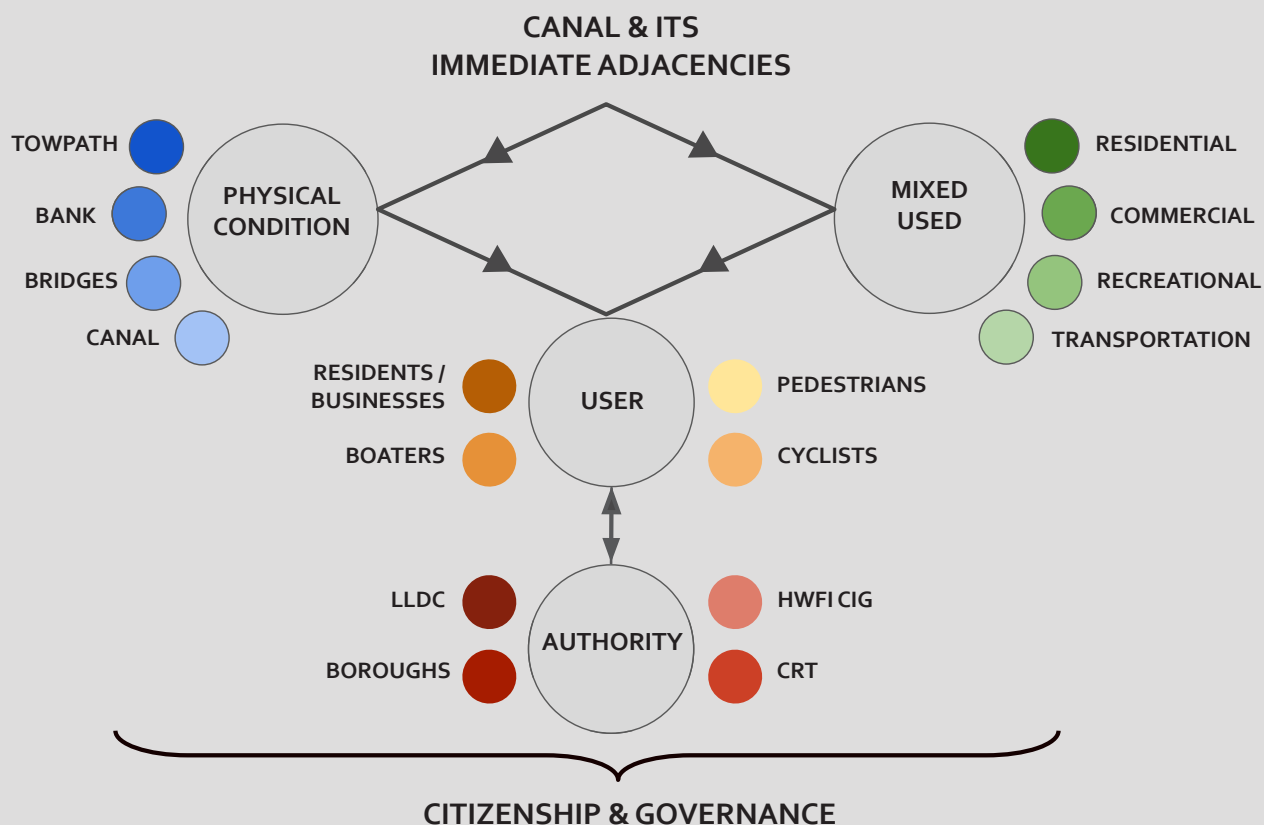


Given the nature of the contested space of the canal and the towpath, our strategy for intervention to provide spaces for negotiation is twofold: (i) a policy intervention to reassess the relationships between various actors and (ii) a spatial intervention on the towpath to better accommodate various users.

### Policy Intervention

We propose a packet of policy interventions to give presence and greater voice to different actors and local groups in the area, balance the power distribution in the area, and simultaneously increase boroughs' visibility and accountability.

43 | Diagram of Investigation



44 | Sen, A. (1980) 'Equality of What?', in *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, ed. S. M. MacMurrin. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, on p. 218.

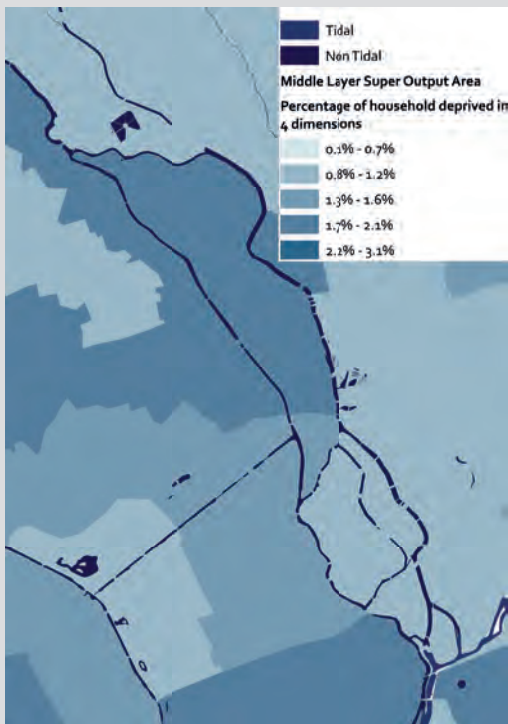
See also Mouffe, C. (2000) *Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism*. Available online at [https://www.ihs.ac.at/publications/pol/pw\\_72.pdf](https://www.ihs.ac.at/publications/pol/pw_72.pdf) [accessed 9 February 2016].

## Organising Multi-scalar Citizens

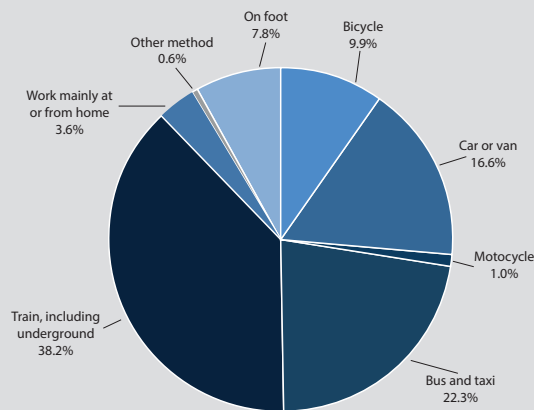
As the “waterways are now a focus for economic renewal in the towns and cities they helped to create”, the contestation of space among various users along the canal is likely to become more pronounced. 47| This is already evident in the site based on the wide array of issues the HWFI CIG covers and the existence of an informal group that proposes alternative development plans for the area. The growing population in the area and new developments underscore the urgency for a more inclusive political space for negotiation among the various users of the site.

45| Local Conditions (Authors based on ONS (2011). Available online at <http://infuse.mimas.ac.uk> [accessed 11 February 2016].)

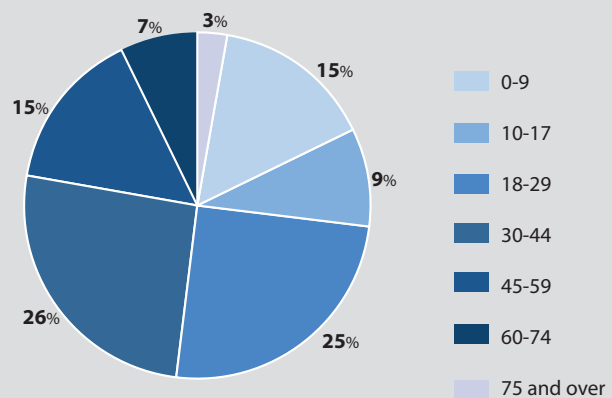
Multiple Deprivation: Site mapped according to Middle Layer Super Output Area, percentage of household deprived in 4 dimensions



Modes of Transit: Types of transit residents from the ten wards surrounding the site take to work



Age Breakdown of Site: Similar to ethnicity, the area has a diverse and broad range of age groups



Ethnicity Percentages of the Surrounding Area

33%	27%	
BLACK	WHITE	
24%	5%	12%
ASIAN	OTHERS	MIXED

Therefore, we propose the establishment of a ‘Community Interest Group’ for the Hackney Wick, Fish Island and the Olympic Park area that enable the site’s multi-scalar citizens to be involved in local neighbourhood governance and civic activities. The membership for the group should be open to anyone who works in or would like to participate by claiming an interest in the site. With at least 21 members, such a group can then apply to be designated as a ‘neighbourhood forum’ pursuant to the Town and Planning Act 1990. By prescribing the group as a ‘neighbourhood forum’, users who are not classical citizens would have a platform to participate in decision-making and development plans on the site. Additionally, the ‘Community Interest Group’ would have more political clout and bargaining power to engage the site’s various authorities, as evidenced by the Neighbourhood Forum established in Stratford called ‘the Greater Carpenters Neighbourhood Area’. The Stratford precedent suggests that this proposal could lead to more inclusive citizen participation, empower transient users, and provide a platform for political negotiation for the site’s various users. However its sustainability hinges upon sufficient interest and funding from its members, as well as getting the site’s transient users, such as cyclists and boaters, to actively participate in the Community Interest Group’s activities.

#### Duty to Cooperate

“Over half the UK population lives within five miles of a canal or river”, which means that developments on or adjacent to the canals impact a significant portion of the population. 48 | As the sole authority entrusted with governing and maintaining the canals, the CRT performs a crucial role and the ramifications for its actions (or inactions) extend beyond the canals. However, as a national-level charitable body

46 | Varying Conditions of the Towpath



47 | Canal & River Trust (CRT) (2012) *Introducing the Canal & River Trust A National Treasure*. Available online at <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/media/library/916.pdf> [accessed 10 February 2016].

48 | British Waterways London (2007) *London Quaterly Newsletter*. Available online at [https://web.archive.org/web/20080227185950/http://www.britishwaterways.net/images/BW\\_London\\_News\\_Letter\\_Summer\\_2007.pdf](https://web.archive.org/web/20080227185950/http://www.britishwaterways.net/images/BW_London_News_Letter_Summer_2007.pdf) [accessed 10 February 2016].

(with clear under representation of the different local-level stakeholders of the canal) there is dissonance in the CRT's relationships with various local-level actors. In the site, the fact that the LLDC and CRT primarily only collaborate in occasional public consultations for development plans in the area exposes their weak relationship.

To elevate the CRT's prominence as an important stakeholder in local development, we propose designating it as one of the "specific consultation bodies" under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. This will compel "neighbouring local authorities, or groups of authorities, to work together on planning issues in the interests of all their local residents".<sup>49</sup> This proposal places a 'duty to cooperate' on the planning authorities on the site, like LLDC and the London boroughs, to consult CRT about development plans. It recognises CRT as an important stakeholder in the site, consistent with one of its objectives in its memorandum of association: to "promote sustainable development in the vicinity of any Inland Waterway for the benefit of the public".<sup>50</sup> It will also hold CRT more accountable to its constituents and grant the site's multi-scalar citizens a wider platform to voice their views on development plans that affect them.

A positive precedent is the designation of other non-planning authorities with similar functions to the CRT, such as the English Heritage and Environment Agency, as specific consultation bodies. While the designation of the CRT will pave the way towards a stronger collaborative relationship with other planning authorities, the real challenge is to ensure that CRT is able to constructively fulfill its responsibilities which demand in-depth knowledge of certain site-specific conditions, such as the towpath's carrying capacity and the volume of users at the site during certain times of day. The CRT's already-stretched budget will exacerbate.<sup>51</sup>

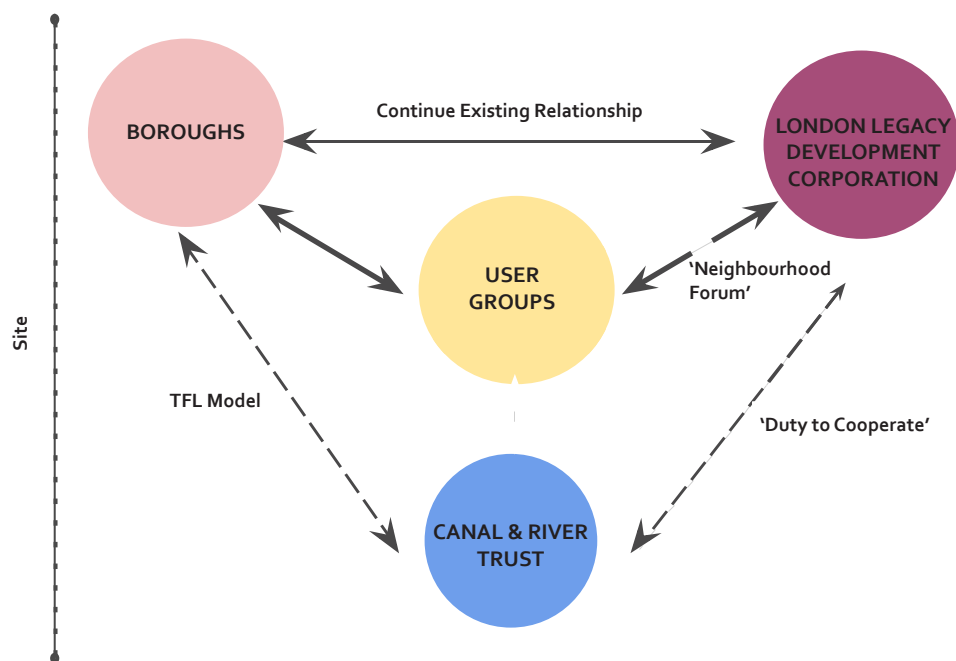
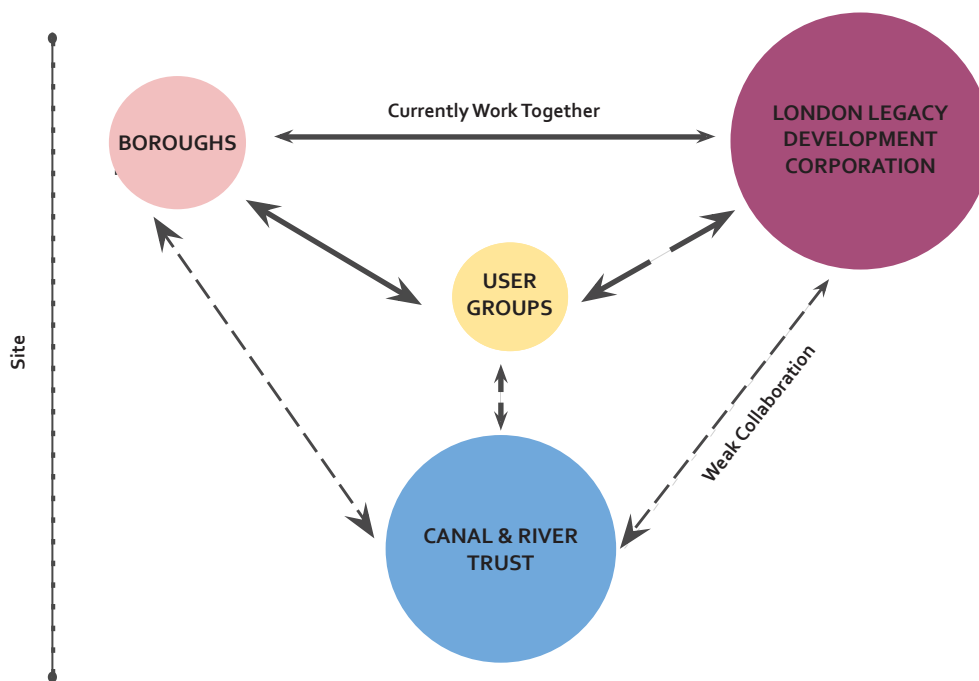
52 | HWFI Cultural Interest Group Meeting  
(Available online at <http://hackneywick.org/about/> [accessed 11 February 2016].)

49 | DCLG (2012) *A Plain English Guide to the Localism Bill*. Available online at [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/5959/1896534.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/5959/1896534.pdf) [accessed 10 February 2016].

50 | Canal & River Trust (2006) *Articles of Association of CRT*. Available online at <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/media/library/1338.pdf> [accessed 10 February 2016].

51 | Yearsley, J. (2014) *APPG Waterways inquiry into the Canal & River Trust - The All Party Parliamentary Group for Waterways Report from the inquiry into the progress and future of the canal and river trust*. Available online at [https://www.waterways.org.uk/pdf/appg\\_waterways\\_inquiry\\_into\\_crt](https://www.waterways.org.uk/pdf/appg_waterways_inquiry_into_crt) [accessed 10 February 2016], on p. 6.





# Cut Across: Green Infrastructure



Community Gardening, Elephant and Castle

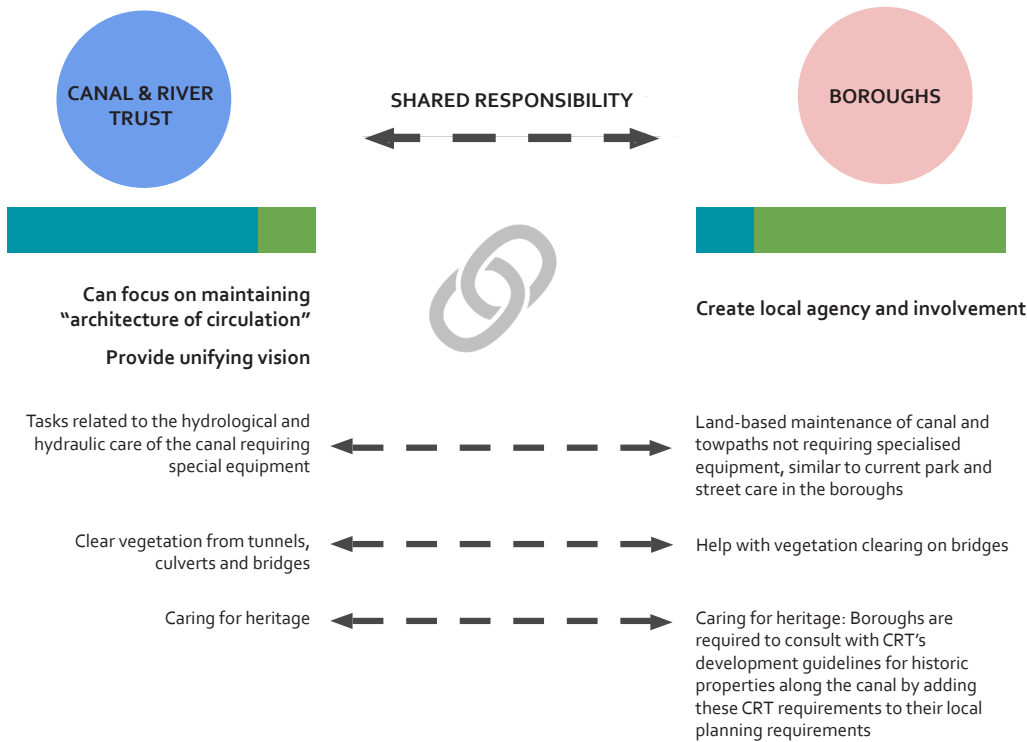
## Grassroot Networks in Elephant and Castle

Interview with Peter Wright, Chair of East Walworth Green Links, conducted by Alejandra de la Mora, Tarik Mufti and Heather Zaccaro at Longwave Bar + Cafe, The Artworks in Elephant & Castle, 2015:

“How did you get involved with Green Links?”

“I didn’t get involved with Green Links, I started Green Links, effectively. When I first moved here, our park was under threat of being built on. And I ran a campaign to stop that, which I did. That’s Salisbury Row park. You know it?

...And so we put in applications for funding pretty much every year, and so bit by bit we got a path put across one bit of the park and then we got another bit of path across the park



54 | Balancing Power: Diagram of proposed full and partial transfer of responsibilities from the CRT to the boroughs



and then we got a memorial put in and then we got flowerbeds put in, and a play area. And so we developed it into more of a park instead of the green urban space that the council had just left with trees and grass. And that became Salisbury Row Park, and it became well known for being a very pretty park to go and sort of sit among flowers.

Alongside that, the other local parks – so we've got just over here another park, Victory Community Park, which is run by Celia. And we knew her, and we always exchanged information and helped each other. Then just beyond that is Nursery Row Park, which is run by Luke and John, essentially. And we got to know them, and we sort of networked and just went to each others' functions, etc. etc. And then, just beyond there's Salisbury Row, and just beyond that there's Surrey Square Park, and Julian is very much involved with

that. We got chatting again and we sort of talked about parks, and then of course there's a short step to Burgess Park, and we know Friends of Burgess Park.

... Anyway so, one thing lead to another and Transport for London said, "No", "No", "No", and then one day they said "Yes" and gave us 2 million quid...

... And then basically we had workshops and 50 people turned up to workshops. And we sat down and people really said what they wanted, because I used my skill to run the workshop so that people weren't disenfranchised and weren't scared. Because basically working class people have been totally disenfranchised, and so they won't speak up in a meeting. So I devised meetings where people got to talk quietly in different groups and so on and so forth, used all the structures

and got everybody's opinion. And it was hard work, because when it came to cars versus parking versus people, you know it was a bloody nightmare. It was a shouting match. But in the end we got through, because we isolated the people who were just trying to bully for what they wanted. And that's why we've got a community now. Because actually the community fought with each other and understood each other for once, and then said this is what we want. And virtually that's what we got."

### Enhancing Collaboration

Today CRT and boroughs barely collaborate, except for some ad-hoc agreements for trash collection or towpath lighting. We propose that CRT share responsibility for maintenance of the towpath with the boroughs, analogous to the cooperation between Transport for London (TfL) and boroughs, a promising model for collaboration between an agency in charge of a connective infrastructure and agencies in charge of maintenance and local infrastructure. 55 | Currently, TfL and the boroughs support each other and share responsibilities for the same physical spaces, such as bridge reconstruction projects and the public spaces around Crossrail stations. The boroughs are not expected to 'do more with less' or assume all of TfL's responsibilities, and the financial flow between them enables action. TfL deals with the larger infrastructural systems: the underground, red roads, and Oyster system. While the boroughs also take care of some larger systemic issues, like traffic control and snow clearance, their largest role is the day-to-day maintenance of the street as an object (e.g. addressing potholes and complaints) and objects accompanying the street (e.g. signage and street furniture upkeep).

55 | Transport for London (2015) *Annual Report and Statement of Accounts 2014/15*. Available online at <http://content.tfl.gov.uk/annual-report-2014-15.pdf> [accessed 10 November 2015].

This intervention would address the ad-hoc and distracted governance along the canal that absolves both the boroughs and CRT of greater accountability to in-transit users. The boroughs would be responsible for the maintenance of the towpath and everything related to land use of that space (e.g. managing trees, hedges and grass, and clearing vegetation from bridges). Boroughs would become more responsive to the complaints of cyclists, boaters, and those who work and reside near or on the canal. Given the transience of many of these groups, it is not a perfect solution, but is a better one than the current ambiguous representation in the CRT. The CRT would be responsible for maintaining the canal as an “architecture for circulation”. 56 | This entails ensuring movement along the canal; upholding standards of maintenance and preventing boroughs from obstructing movement so that the junctions between political entities meet up properly; and finally dealing with locks, water levels, and other hydrological issues. This proposal institutionalizes shared responsibilities, allowing each agency to focus on what they do best and supporting the other. For instance, CRT has special hydrological equipment to deal with water-based issues. Meanwhile, boroughs have capacity and skill in caring for vegetation as they currently care for parks and street plantings. One example of shared and supporting task would be clearing vegetation from bridges. The boroughs would do this at street level while the CRT would deal with the underside.

### Spatial Intervention: Widening the Towpath

Our proposals attempt to help better integrate the canal into the urban fabric. As an integrated piece of city, the canal is a valid space for the “production of ‘presence’ by those without power and with a politics that claims rights to the city and to the country rather than protection of private property”. 57 |

Maintaining the canal as circulatory, mixed-use, and democratic, with a broader concept of citizens beyond the resident, expands how we think about “an active right to make the city different”, “to shape it”, and to “re-make ourselves”. 58 | This occurs through robust planning processes and the “creation of a new urban commons, a public sphere of active democratic participation” stretched throughout London on the towpaths, helping to “imagine a more inclusive, even if continuously fractious, city based not only upon a different ordering of rights but upon different political-economic practices”. 59 |

“Waterfronts are unique resources, which enhance the well-being of those who are able to enjoy them. If the public good is to prevail, access to all waterfronts must be open to all citizens”. 60 | “In urban areas waterfronts must have infrastructure to facilitate their enjoyment”, which justifies our intervention to widen the towpath as a shared space. 60 | One approach to widening the towpath might be to variably widen it for cyclists, taking advantage of expansion on land when possible and

56 | Larkin, B. (2013) ‘The Politics and Poetics of infrastructure’, *Annual Review of Anthropology* 42(1), pp. 327–343.

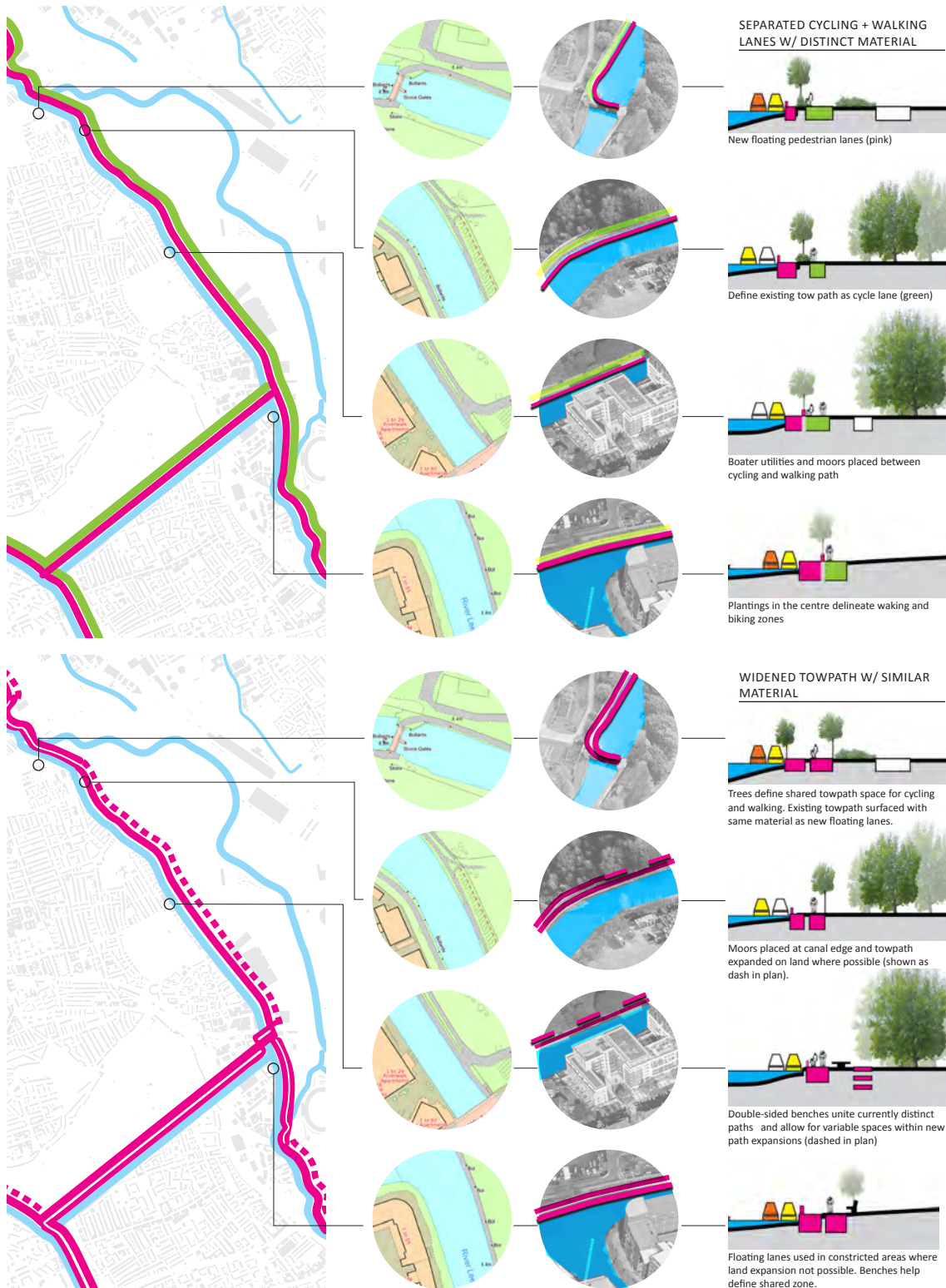
58 | Harvey, D. (2003) ‘The Right to the City’, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 27(4), pp. 939–941, on p. 939.

60 | Peñalosa, E. (2007) ‘Politics, Power, Cities’, in *The Endless City*, eds R. Burdett and D. Sudjic, pp. 307–319. London: Phaidon Press, on p. 313.

57 | Sassen, S. (2011) ‘The Global Street: Making the Political’, *Globalizations* 8(5), pp. 573–579, on p. 574.

59 | Harvey, D. (2003) ‘The Right to the City’, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 27(4), pp. 939–941, on p. 941.

61 | Peñalosa, E. (2007) ‘Politics, Power, Cities’, in *The Endless City*, eds R. Burdett and D. Sudjic, pp. 307–319. London: Phaidon Press.



otherwise, expanding into the water. Boat moors would be located near the water's edge, defining, along with trees, benches, and hedges, the new, widened shared space. Consistency in materials used would promote more equitable mixed-use of the space.

Safe mobility is a basic democratic right, and expanding the towpath would reduce the perceived endangerment that constrains different users' access to and mobility in the space. 61 | The FAQ 'Why is the towpath not wider?' on CRT's website illustrate the widespread perception that the towpath is too narrow. Ethnographic research shows that this diminishes feelings of safety, comfort, and enjoyment. Widening the towpath maintains the canal as an open system that can adapt and evolve as complexity comes into being instead of being prescribed. 63 | These everyday engagements with the complexities of sharing space enables people to "develop time- and place-specific understandings of the world through these moments - such as perceptions of the city they inhabit, the nation of which they are a part - and normative expectations about good cities, functional communities or battles worth fighting". 64 |

The CRT claims that the towpaths are narrow since they were built over 200 years ago for horses and that where possible, it has widened the towpath "so it can be shared more comfortably by everyone". 65 | However, there are many areas in the site where this is not the case, perhaps because the surrounding land is owned by the boroughs, or that CRT is stretched too thin governing 2,000 miles of waterways in England and Wales.

The fragmented governance and poor inter-borough communication can also complicate towpath improvement. For example, to install lights near Hertford Union Canal, first Hackney and Tower Hamlets needed CRT's approval since they own the towpath. Hackney then had to purchase and install the lights, and Tower Hamlets had

63 | Sennett, R. (1992) *The Conscience of the Eye: The Design and Social Life of Cities*. New York: Norton, W. W. & Company.

64 | Angelo, H. and Hentschel, C. (2015) 'Interactions with Infrastructure as Windows into Social Worlds: A Method for Critical Urban Studies: Introduction', *City* 19(2-3), pp. 306-312, on p. 306.

65 | Canal & River Trust (n. d.) *Towpath FAQs*. Available online at <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/our-towpath-code/towpath-faqs> [accessed 10 February 2016].

66 | Angelo, H. and Hentschel, C. (2015) 'Interactions with Infrastructure as Windows into Social Worlds: A Method for Critical Urban Studies: Introduction', *City* 19(2-3), pp. 306-312, on p. 308.

67 | View of the White Building in Hackney Wick





to maintain them. The difficulty in accomplishing a seemingly simple task such as lighting the towpath speaks to how opaqueness in infrastructural governance leaves people “quite literally groping in the dark,...try[ing] to grasp the whole from what is at hand”. 66 | Infrastructural governance (or lack thereof) materialises on the site. In tandem with our proposed policy interventions, our proposed spatial intervention on the towpath will optimise the capabilities of multi-scalar citizens to utilise the space.

## Conclusion

As industrialisation and deindustrialisation have shaped the history and current use of the canal, it is important to understand this site as an infrastructure in transition, struggling to be fully integrated in urbanism. Its transitional nature illustrates how users’ interactions with infrastructure are “opportunities to gather knowledge about the changing setting in which one finds oneself, or to develop a sense of self as a resident of a city, as a member of a nation or as a part of other larger social wholes. However, relations at the moment of encounter are also opaque—even when (and especially because) the infrastructural system itself is also quite difficult to understand”. 68 |

Micro-level contestations of use and movement on the towpath are linked to broader issues of how power relations, inequality, and governance impact participation, sociality, and mobility in urban spaces. These contestations simultaneously concretise how different users unevenly exercise their ‘right to the city’ in quotidian negotiations for space and movement, and illustrate the spatial manifestations of fragmented, asymmetric governance. More importantly, they demonstrate “how a local fight about infrastructure is a product of broader socioeconomic changes,...really a fight about who has the right to place”. 69 |

The dual pronged intervention aims to interweave the site into London’s urban fabric, which requires an acknowledgment of new infrastructural subjects and a more expansive conceptualisation of citizenship. The canal complicates notions of ‘place’ and ‘neighbourhood’ associated with classical citizenship premised on local residence. The current exclusion of the ubiquitous groups of in-transit, fluid users that frequently utilise the site (boaters, cyclists, pedestrians), along with the uneven power relations among different actors in the site result in a lack of transparency and accountability with severe implications on resource allocation, claims to space, and urban belonging.

If public space is a great “equalizer” and cities can generate equality, inclusion, and urban quality of life by allowing people “contact with nature...and waterfronts; being able to see and be with people; and feeling included and not inferior”, the canals must remain mixed-use architectures of circulation. 70 |

68 | Angelo, H. and Hentschel, C. (2015) ‘Interactions with Infrastructure as Windows into Social Worlds: A Method for Critical Urban Studies: Introduction’, *City* 19(2–3), pp. 306–312, on p. 308.

69 | Angelo, H. and Hentschel, C. (2015) ‘Interactions with Infrastructure as Windows into Social Worlds: A Method for Critical Urban Studies: Introduction’, *City* 19(2–3), pp. 306–312, on p. 310.

70 | Peñalosa, E. (2007) ‘Politics, Power, Cities’, in *The Endless City*, eds R. Burdett and D. Sudjic, pp. 307–319. London: Phaidon Press, on pp. 311 and 319.

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