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INTRODUCTION

The stretch of Regent's Canal in Hackney cuts through mostly residential neighbourhoods, interspersed with public and private development. The bicycle and pedestrian towpath runs along slowly flowing water, a vision of tranquility. Faced with this peacefulness, people are quick to dismiss the canal as a glorified cycle path, a serene yet largely irrelevant backyard. This fallacy oversimplifies the canal and underestimates its potential to benefit proximate populations. The canal is an urban system connecting diverse localities. Even within Hackney the canal links together a fragmented landscape. This geographic fragmentation is compounded by the disjointed power structure governing the canal. The Canal and River Trust, a private charity, manages the canal and towpath while The London Borough of Hackney regulates land development. This top-down, splintered power structure leaves little room for local voices. This lack of local power is particularly problematic given that, although the Canal is an urban-wide amenity, it has significant developmental influence on the spaces it passes through.

We see great potential to add local voices to canal governance in order to reap local benefits from a regional entity. Furthermore, the canal can be spatially re-envisioned as a defining feature of surrounding localities that joins, rather than divides, communities. A more democratic, locally empowered decision-making process can recast the canal as a more democratic space. The success of this new process requires, however, a vast democratic mobilisation within the canal community. To catalyse this reaction, we have designed a temporary spatial intervention that embodies a new type of canal development. This pilot project inspires greater engagement with the canal, challenges the boundaries that have fragmented this landscape and fosters new dialogue in this fractured social environment—all principles to which future development must aspire if Regent's Canal is to become a more democratic space.

REDEFINING 'THE LOCAL'

This project explores the concept of 'the local' by examining the actors responsible for the physical and social organisation of a space, in this case Regent's Canal. In this context, power is the ability to determine spatial organisation, both formally, such as a government planning office that controls space through legally defined planning processes, and informally, such as a boater who sets up a temporary and perhaps illegal mooring spot adjacent to undeveloped land. Through this power lens, we examine who exerts the most influence over the canal and ask who should have greater influence.

Although our proposals apply to all of Regent's Canal within Hackney, our analysis focused on the canal between Kingsland Road and Broadway Market. This stretch exhibits a range of conflicts resulting from active unchallenged development and represents the many dangers to other canal-adjacent areas. Examination of this space—through interviews, policy research, and reviews of current development processes—revealed that few actors currently hold the power to shape this system and their efforts are largely uncoordinated. The result has been a privatisation of the canal at the cost of public accessibility. The network of actors with the power and responsibility to guide the development of the Regent's Canal area must be broadened and relationships must be restructured to make Regent's Canal a universally accessible space where the power of determination resides with a representative network of actors rather than an isolated stratum of decision-makers.

The challenge, therefore, is determining whom that network should include and how it should be governed. To answer these questions, we must, first, diagnose the problem and understand how the canal area is governed today—who is involved and what are the problems with this arrangement. Second, we must consider who should be involved and how to mobilise them.

Finally, once we have a new, inclusive, and committed network of actors in place, we require a new mechanism to govern their relationships and ensure that they retain the power to determine the physical and social organisation of the canal. To begin, we return to the question of what is 'the local'. With a deeper understanding of the relationship between people and space, we can better diagnose current canal problems and more knowledgeably design a better future.

'The Local' as a System

We accept that space is socially constructed (Lefebvre, 1974) and believe that restructuring social and political relationships can produce a new physical reality. As Gerald Frug points out '[l]ike the physical construction of buildings and landscape, the design of the governance structure influences the way cities develop' (Frug, 2011: 1). Accepting the primacy of social relationships, we must then move to the question of which local actors should shape space.

Regent's Canal underscores the difficulty in limiting the concept of 'the local'. While this project focuses on the spatial development of Regent's Canal within Hackney, this area is inextricable from the greater Regent's Canal system and from the London Borough of Hackney or even metropolitan London. Examining Regent's Canal reveals the futility of conceiving 'the local' independently; rather

the local is one node within a complex arrangement of actors and relationships whose bonds are indissoluble and together form a system. The environmental, social and economic bonds between the waterway and surrounding landscape are undeniable, even if they are formally parts of two different government structures.

If 'the local' is actually part of a system, then we must consider actors within the whole system, not just the geographically proximate local. Our local space is no longer (if it ever was) a discrete, independent entity; rather, arrays of interpersonal networks connect 'the local' socially, politically and economically with other regions, peoples and cultures (Amin, 2004). In fact, 'the local' may no longer even be a 'space' at all, but rather a series of actor networks that defy 'spatial constitution' (Amin, 2002: 33).

The challenge, therefore, is comparing the needs of different stakeholders. How should the needs of a full-time canal-area resident be weighed against those of a transient boater? How should environmental concerns balance with development objectives? Our purpose is to design a democratic mechanism through which these questions can be answered, instead of tackling each question individually. To create a mechanism that respects the system's diversity, we must understand the system actors.



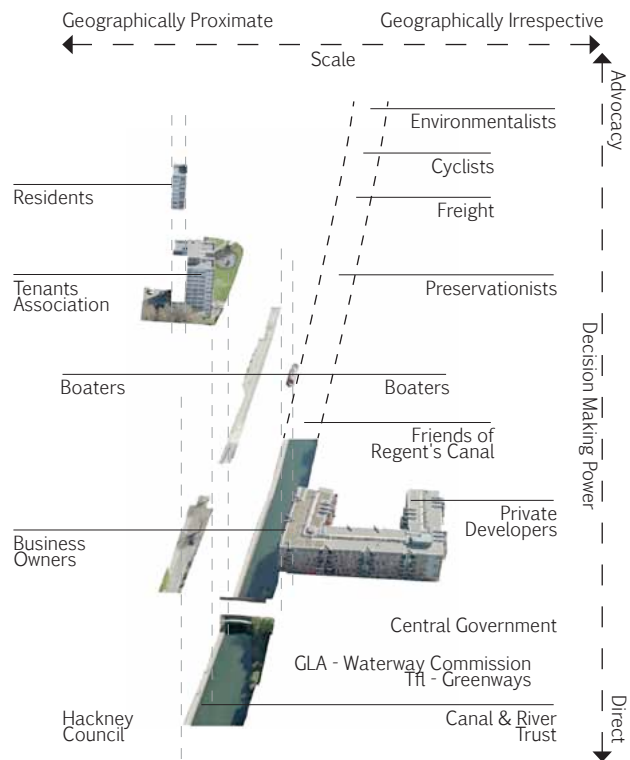
The Actors

The web of Regent's Canal within Hackney includes stakeholders situated across various geographic and political scales. The most geographically proximate include residents, business owners and employees living and working near the canal. Nevertheless, actors farther afield also hold significant interest in the Hackney canal area, including residents living along the canal in neighbouring boroughs and commuters who use the towpath to move through London. Other stakeholders' interest in the canal is irrespective of geography and depends instead on a common interest or other social network, such as preservationists interested in the canal's industrial heritage or environmentalists concerned with water quality and wildlife. Economic interests can motivate actors (e.g., developers and architects) and strengthen (or weaken) their other ties to the canal (e.g., as residents, environmentalists or preservationists).

Political oversight of the canal is split primarily between two bodies. The London Borough of Hackney (LBH) manages, via a politically elected Council and civil service office, planning and city services for the land surrounding the canal. The Canal and River Trust (CRT), a new charity under contract with the national government, manages the waterway and the towpath that runs on the northern canal-front. Additional political bodies, including the Greater London Authority, Transport for London and the national government may also exert political influence, but their power is normally channeled through the aforementioned bodies.

A stakeholder's tie to the canal depends on how much an actor engages with and values the canal. A local resident whose home faces away from the canal and rarely walks along it may value it less than a boater who is dependent on the canal as a home and place of employment. Actors may have multiple ties to the canal, but multiple ties do not necessarily translate to increased power. In fact, great concentrations of power may rest with actors most loosely tied to the Hackney portion of Regent's Canal. For instance, the CRT is responsible for over 2000 miles of inland waterways and, thus, the strength of its connection to just 2.5 miles is questionable.

Regardless, it still has the authority to alter the canal as it sees fit. In contrast, a boater with intimate knowledge of and connection to this area possesses limited formal power to permanently alter the canal. Understanding the web of stakeholders reveals the breadth of the system and diversity of interests that must ultimately be balanced but does not elucidate the types and magnitudes of power each actor possesses. Therefore, it is important to analyse the power structures currently governing the canal. To understand this present-day division of power, the history of Regent's Canal in Hackney must be considered to understand how evolving use (and eventual disuse) of the canal created the structure in place today.



△ 02 Fragmented power structure

Local vs. systemic scale. Actors possess different ties to the canal which are measured against geographical relevance and concentration of power.

DISSECTING REGENT'S CANAL

Regent's Canal originated as a private venture to link the River Thames and London to the Midlands. Opened in 1820, the canal snaked its way through farmland and other underdeveloped areas of North London to create a new path for trade. The canal developed as a transit route for coal, timber and other raw materials. The land surrounding the canal developed a heavily industrial use as factories and other coal-dependent enterprises clustered around the canal. The waterfront was sliced into thin wharves, inlets and turn-basins, maximising the amount of usable waterfront space and contributing to the high industrial value of the system.

Regent's Canal remained a private system until it was nationalised in 1948, when the need for water transport was in decline. The effects of mass privatisation are still felt today. The land on both sides of the canal, especially to the south where a towpath was not constructed to pull barges through the canal, remains primarily privatised and the right to public use and access is subservient to individual property and development rights.

In 1967, the canal was classified as an amenity waterway, but the area was not available for public use until the 1980s (LBH, 2007). Much of the canal was still 'isolated from private housing areas by high wire fencing and other obstacles; much of the towpath was crumbling and falling into the canal and it was considered unsafe to allow public access immediately after the 1968 Transport Act' (LBH, 2007: 6). The isolation of the land from the canal, and of parcels of land along the canal from each other, is the legacy of the industrial era.

The tradition of private ownership continues today— independent landowners remain free to develop the land without regard for public use and access. Furthermore, oversight of land and waterway development remains divorced, split between London Borough of Hackney (LBH) and Canal and River Trust. While this split guaranteed uninterrupted canal operations in the industrial era, regardless of who lived or worked on the banks, this decentralised control mechanism is out of touch with today's societal needs. The lack of a mechanism by which the canal's extensive web of stakeholders can unite to articulate a communal vision that would inspire democratic development risks the further degradation of the system.



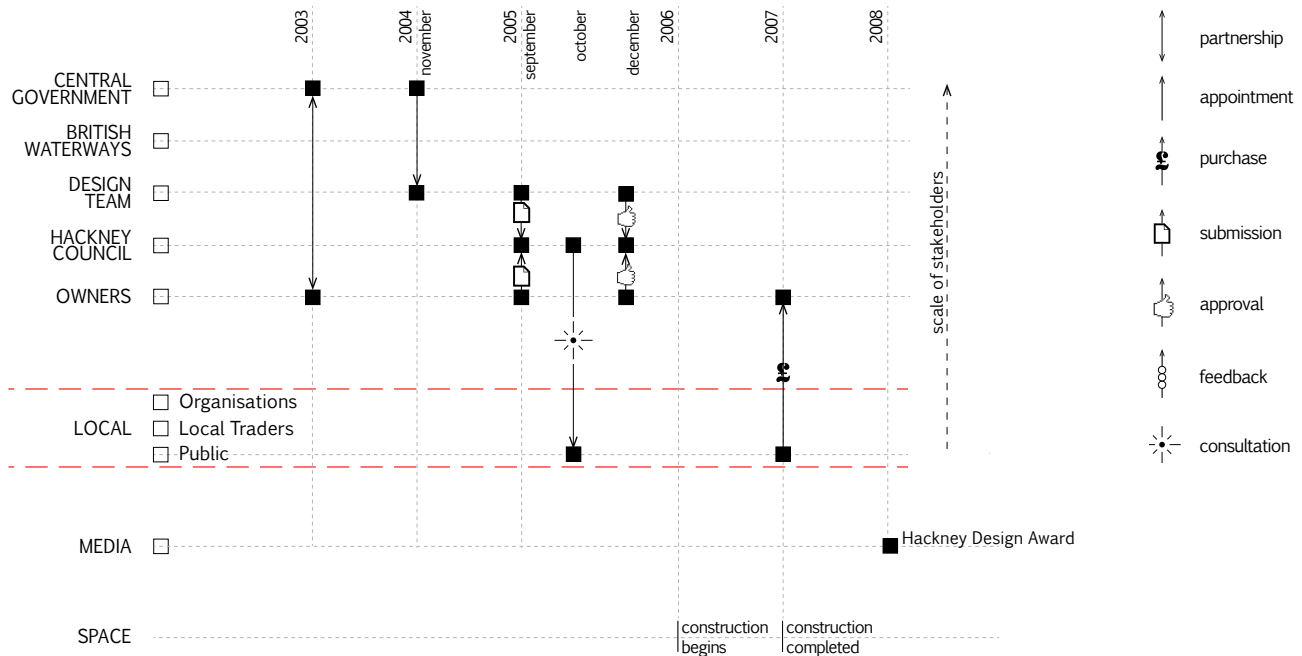
△ 03 **Land use map**
The study area bounded by Kingsland Road on the west and by Broadway Market on the east.

△ 04 **Access to the waterfront**
Diagram showing access to the waterfront, either public (unrestricted access) or blocked (restricted by fence or canal-adjacent building).

Current Development Process

As it stands today, canal-related development is an unaligned and individualised process. Taking the example of Adelaide Wharf, it is crucial to note the fractured network of power where the decision-making process is restricted to developers and London Borough of Hackney. Public input was solicited only two years after the inception of the project.

During the development process, British Waterways (Canal and River Trust's predecessor organisation) served only as a consultant rather than as a development authority despite the project's waterfront location (LBH, Planning Application 2005/2135). The lack of clear goals for waterfront development, documented as a set of design principles, precluded the development of a space that embraced the waterfront and guaranteed public use and access. Furthermore, the proposal for Adelaide Wharf as studied and permitted by LBH views the housing development as an entity independent from the rest of the canal. In ignoring the existing uses along the canal, the project failed to enhance the general built environment. Nevertheless, LBH granted planning permission.

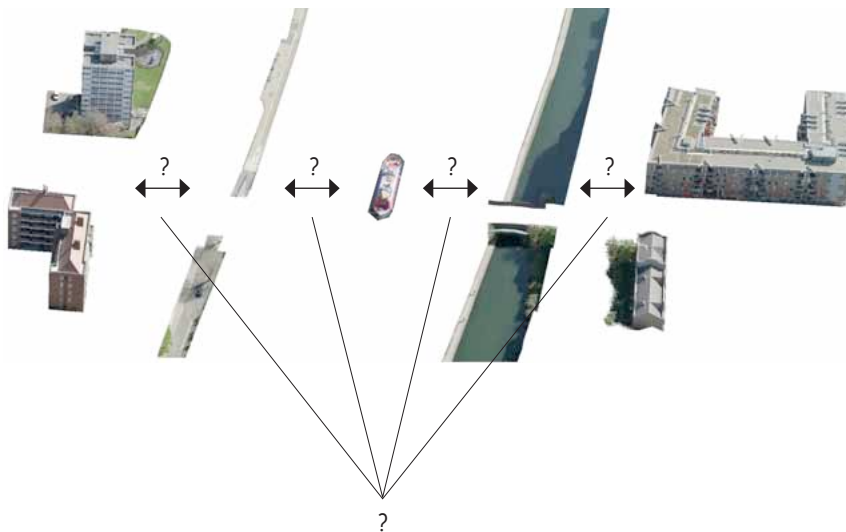


△ 05 Drawing power
Diagram showing processes of power exchange between different actors for the development of Adelaide Wharf

△ 06 Adelaide Wharf site from Regent's Canal
1974. Source: Hackney Archive
07 2013. Source: First Base

Problems with Current Power Distribution

The case of Adelaide Wharf represents the fragmented geographical development that results from 'intensified inequalities of[...] power' (Soja, 2003: 279). This challenge is familiar to cities struggling to adjust to new global political and economic structures, which prioritise privatisation and encourage the re-absorption of capital surplus into urbanisation processes (Harvey, in Sourely and Youn 2009: 46). This concentration of power in the hands of the few yields a decision-making process that provokes a variety of social and physical problems. First, the process fails to account for the pluralism of the 'public' and diversity of the system. Second, the stakeholders have no guarantee that their inputs effect change. Third, there is no mechanism to coordinate development across the canal; without a cohesive vision for the canal aesthetic, social and economic cohesion are missing. Finally, the inability to coordinate canal-area land development with canal and towpath enhancements inhibits the possibility of enhancing this area as a system. This divorced control of land and water reduces the incentive for new development to engage with the waterway. As the LBH noted in their report: "building developments which are mostly residential may lie adjacent to the canal but do not really engage with it" (LBH, 2007: 41). Consequently, potential public assets remain privatised and inaccessible.



△ 08 A cohesive system

What kind of mechanism is needed to coordinate a cohesive vision of the canal as a system?

△ 09 Fragmented landscape

An array of physical boundaries splinters the urban territory of the canal.



Key Conflicts

We have identified four key conflicts that must be addressed immediately to guarantee inclusive local development sensitive to systemic concerns. Unmitigated private claims to the waterfront and unchallenged barriers to access will continue to fracture the canal community and prevent them from coalescing around the canal to demand greater access and advocate for systemic improvements. Without a mechanism to unite stakeholders and allow them to collectively consider how to address these dangers, actors may embark on alternate and competing strategies that ultimately undermine themselves. Collaborative use of the canal will remain impossible if these issues are not addressed.

Conflict 1: Private claims to the waterfront

The danger of private development of the waterfront is not one of ownership but of access. Private developments may alter the canal-front to prohibit public access, which not only impedes recreational, transportation or other uses, but also inhibits visual access and community engagement with the waterfront. Additionally, private control presents the risk of underdevelopment; for instance, buildings may be set too far back from the canal and thus refuse to engage with it.



- △ **10 Private claims to the waterfront**
Development built to the waterfront prevents public access.

Conflict 2: Barriers to access

Along the canal, it is often difficult to access the waterway and towpath due to a road and a fence on the north side and private development on the south side. These barriers remove the waterway from public sight and mind and the isolation exacerbates social fractures.

Conflict 3: Contested use of public space

Actors compete for the use of public space along the canal. Cyclists, pedestrians and joggers use the towpath unrestricted by transit signals or other spatial demarcations. Actors compete for the use of public space along the canal. Hackney Council Cabinet Member for Regeneration Guy Nicholson attests to the difficulty of balancing the claims of cyclists, pedestrians and joggers to the towpath (Nicholson, 2013, pers. comm. 15 Feb). Unchecked competition risks that some users may lose rights to public space.

Conflict 4: Contested use of waterway

Actors vie for preferential access to the waterway. Housing developments compete with transportation needs and/or boaters' mooring needs (Knight, 2010; Bartholomew, 2012). Unmediated conflict risks the elimination of a user group rather than the development of a compromise that accommodates diverse uses.



- △ **11 Barriers to access**
The fence and road divide the public domain.

STRATEGY

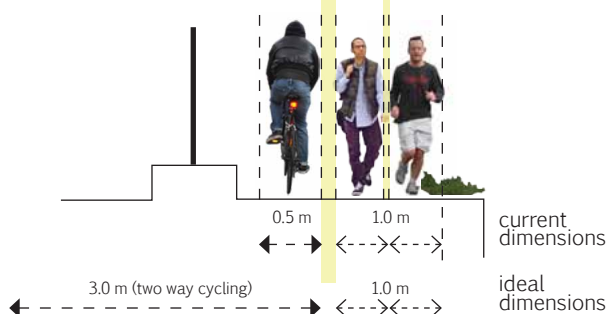
Accepting that space is socially produced, to address the physical deficiencies of the canal we must reform the current decision-making process. The canal requires democratic governance to balance competing views within the system. First, we must define democracy. Considering the canal's systemic complexities, our new democratic decision-making structure must respect the system's pluralism. We understand that consensus does not imply unanimity—democracy is not conflict-free and decisions are not necessarily win-win for all parties. Instead, it is of greater importance to create a forum where affected parties can debate and, upon reaching consensus, have the power to substantively alter the physical space. We draw from Markus Miessen's and Chantal Mouffe's idea of democracy as a space of 'agonism', where democracy is a mechanism allowing actors to debate conflicts openly before reaching a consensus, without requiring unanimity or suppressing individuality and dissent (Miessen and Mouffe, 2012).

This outlook appreciates the delicate interplay of people, neighbourhoods, cities, regions and nations. For Richard Sennett, democratic spaces emerge from an open system, where 'growth admits conflict and dissonance' (2007: 294). The need for openness and flexibility is tempered by the need for a constitution—a set of commonly agreed upon,

inviolable ground rules that ensure all actors work towards the greater good. In the case of democratic space, the constitution takes the form of a set of design principles.

These principles must be flexible enough to preserve the system's openness and allow it to absorb epochal shifts, but remain strong enough to resolve the canal's uneven geographical development. These design principles and the debate over how to create a space that conforms to them will become a new conflict-based form of engagement (Miessen and Mouffe, 2012) with 'conflictual consensus' (Mouffe, 2000) replacing complacent consensus. But how do we motivate actors to take part in this discussion? How do you inspire democracy?

After reviewing the proposed design principles, we introduce a pilot intervention emulating these principles to inspire local democratic spirit and advance a new Canal-centred neighbourhood vision. Then, we will recommend a new political system for the canal to reimagine the physical development process. This new process will organise and empower newly emboldened local residents and stakeholders to finally take part in the canal area development process and empower them to democratically design Regent's Canal.



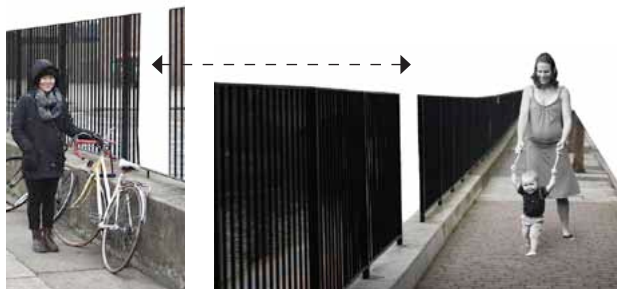
- 12 **Contested use of public space**
Problematic overlap between different towpath users.
- 13 **Contested use of waterway**
The canal cannot host all uses and users simultaneously

PHYSICAL REIMAGINATION

The design principles reflect the core values that development must advance to resolve the aforementioned social conflicts and uneven geographical development. Together, they constitute a rubric by which future interventions will be measured. These principles can be applied both locally and regionally, although local context must be favoured. Seen together, they will constitute the 'rules of the game' for physical development of the canal.

These principles should be understood as flexible frames for collecting and shaping imagination. They are fundamental to design but are not detailed to the point of specific prescription. This allows customisation of projects to complement the values of the local setting. Though the development process already produces design principles, none have been developed for the Regent's Canal. Our principles, therefore, fill a void in existing planning literature and will help rewrite the canal.

By nurturing existing built forms and current uses, these principles encourage the development of distinctive 'rooms' along the canal, creating a dynamic and engaging topography. Separation of our site into rooms will allow for specified interventions crafted to site particularities. Paying heed to these design principles is an exercise in identifying and properly remedying conflicts, ensuring a well-considered framework that forms the basis for our final design intervention.



△ 14 Create dialogue and encourage interaction

Design Principles

Principle 1: Relate to the canal

The intervention must relate to the canal with consideration to adjacent land uses and building typologies, turning what is currently a closed 'back' into a public, accessible 'front'. Temporary interventions must enhance existing built morphologies and flows of access. Permanent interventions must respect the existing use and users of the land parcels under redevelopment.

Principle 2: Challenge boundaries

The intervention must redefine barriers to enhance access to and along the canal. Interventions must challenge soft (e.g., private ownership) and hard boundaries (e.g., hedges, fences) on both sides of the canal. We do not seek to eliminate all distinction and create a homogenous space. Instead, our goal is to ensure uninterrupted access.

Principle 3: Create dialogue

The intervention must cultivate dialogue among actors. Beyond challenging boundaries it will encourage interaction and mutual understanding rather than antagonism or single-use. Interventions must remain accessible to a wide range of actors.

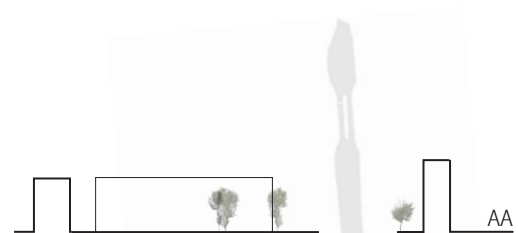
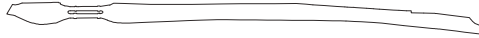
Principle 4: Temporary kick-start

The intervention must, whenever possible, be tested as a temporary project. Challenging current image or model-reliant consultation methods, test interventions allow for more informed public feedback and greater public engagement. Features of the temporary installation should be easily translatable to a more permanent character.

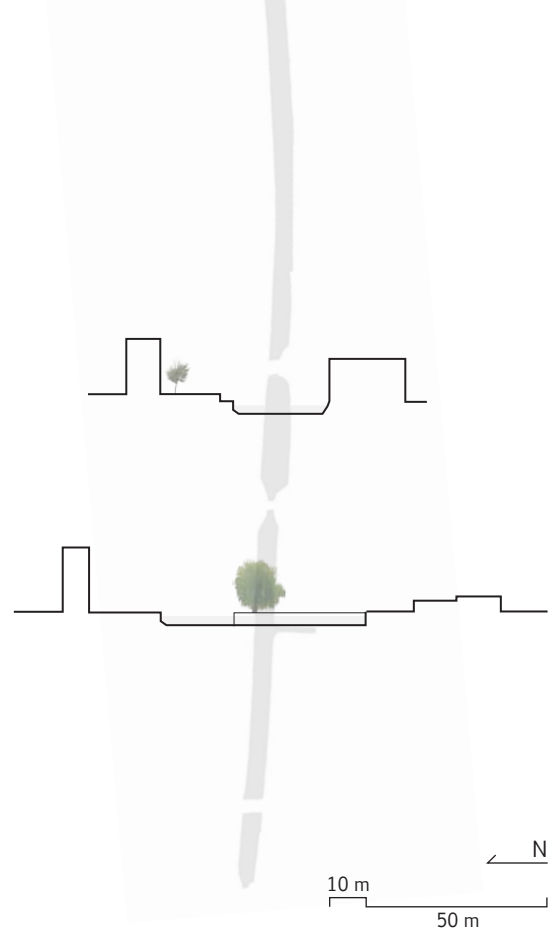


△ 15 Temporary kickstart and first-hand experience

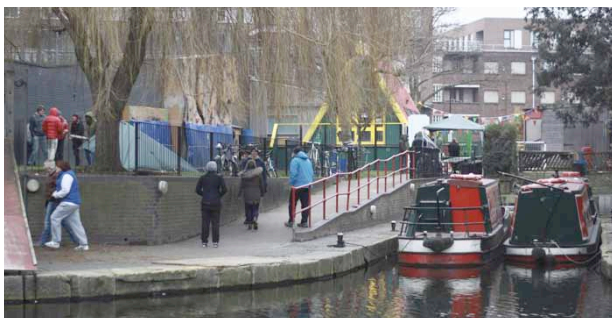
Room 1



Room 2



Room 3



△ 16 The canal as a set of rooms

Visualising the canal as a series of interconnected rooms encourages future intervention to enhance site particularities.

△ 17 Rooms as typologies

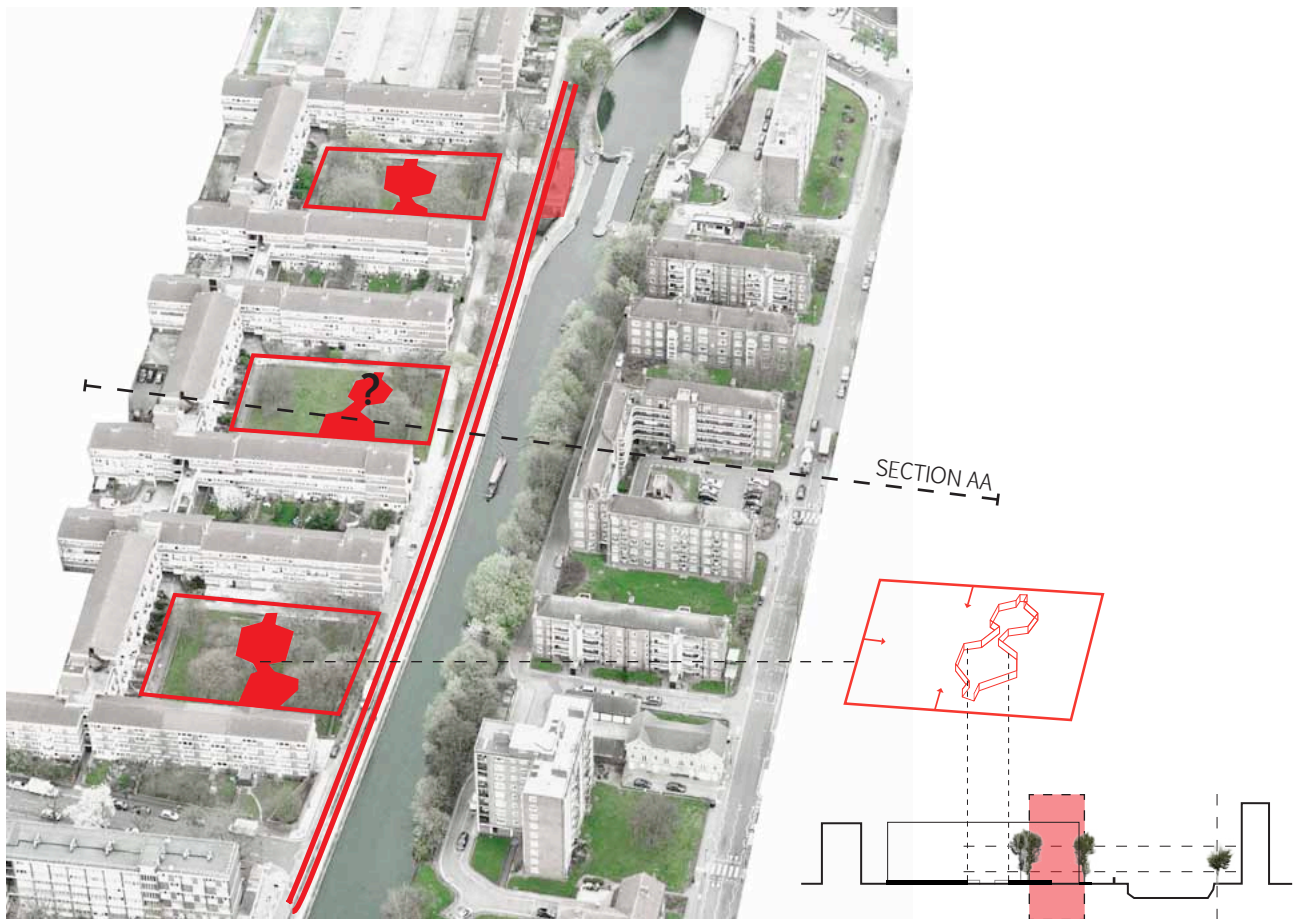
Each of the canal's rooms characterises a specific street typology: street sections show varying spatial relationships between the canal and the surrounding urban fabric.

Pilot Intervention

To position the canal as the physical and social focus of the surrounding landscape, the FolkHill design intervention introduces a series of terraced platforms to bridge existing barriers between land and water and creates a new programmable space along the canal to enhance local and systemic interest. Designed according to the new principles, this structure reimagines the architectural design process and aims to overcome local physical fractures to catalyse democratic engagement. This intervention should not be considered a mould for all future interventions but instead one possible design that these principles may produce. This pilot design is attuned to the space in which it is intervening and is, therefore, not intended for reproduction elsewhere. We explore this intervention by considering how it emulates the four design principles, highlighting how the principles function as both a design guide and evaluation rubric.

Step 1: Enhanced relation to the canal

The intervention is set in the partially enclosed courtyards of three horseshoe-shaped apartment blocks facing the canal's north bank, just west of Broadway Market. Separated from the canal by a road, a fence, and a row of trees, each courtyard contains two underused sunken paved spaces at their centre. By raising the public space onto platforms, FolkHill enhances the visual connection with the water to relate these isolated courtyards to the canal and invites residents and passers-by to linger in the spaces and engage with the canal system.



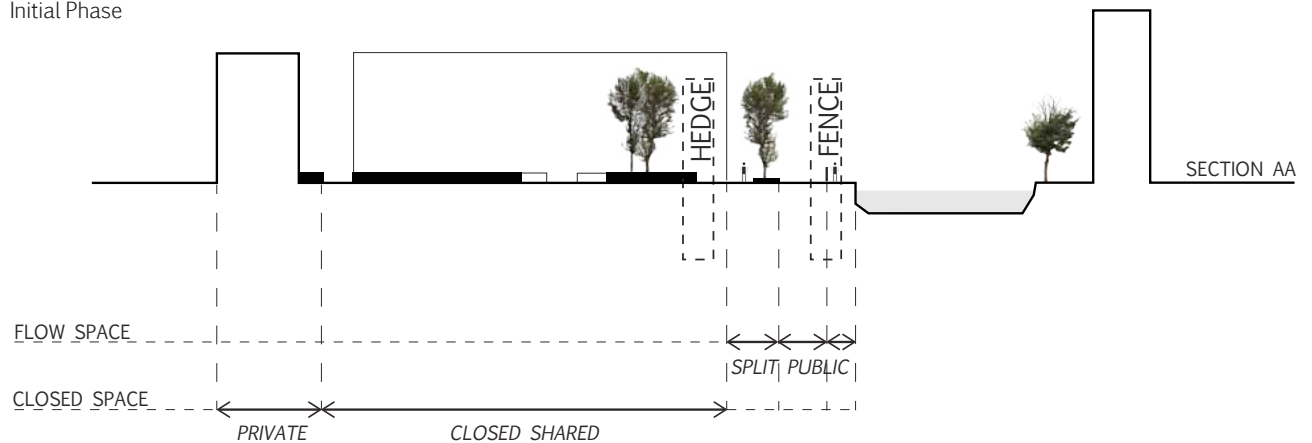
△ 18 Pilot Intervention location (view looking north)
Three council estates west of Broadway Market. Key features are courts within courtyards and fence as barrier to canal access.

Step 2: Challenged boundaries

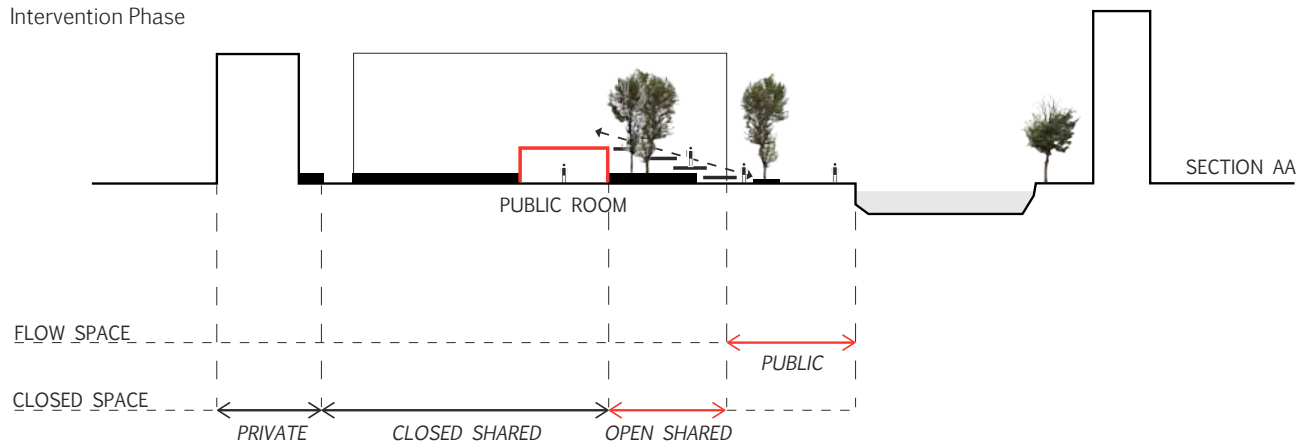
In order to turn a back into a public front, we analysed boundaries prohibiting the flow of movement between the courtyards and the canal. Flow spaces accommodate active directional movement, such as automotive, pedestrian and cyclist traffic. The head-height fence between the towpath and the street splinters the public realm. Moreover, the fence, coupled with the road and a hip-height brick hedge, creates isolated spaces that hinder public activities. These barriers close off the courtyard, but this division can be solved through the intervention.

Our intervention begins by removing the existing fence by unbolting each grill from the metal posts. Second, we temporarily close car access to the street, detouring the automotive flow to a parallel street to the north. Third, we surmount the brick hedge by installing a series of platforms that connect the courtyard space with the new carless street. Through these temporary modifications, new spatial arrangements emerge. The courtyard transforms from a closed space to an open shared space. Similarly, the public space splintered by the street and fences is united as an open public space.

Initial Phase



Intervention Phase



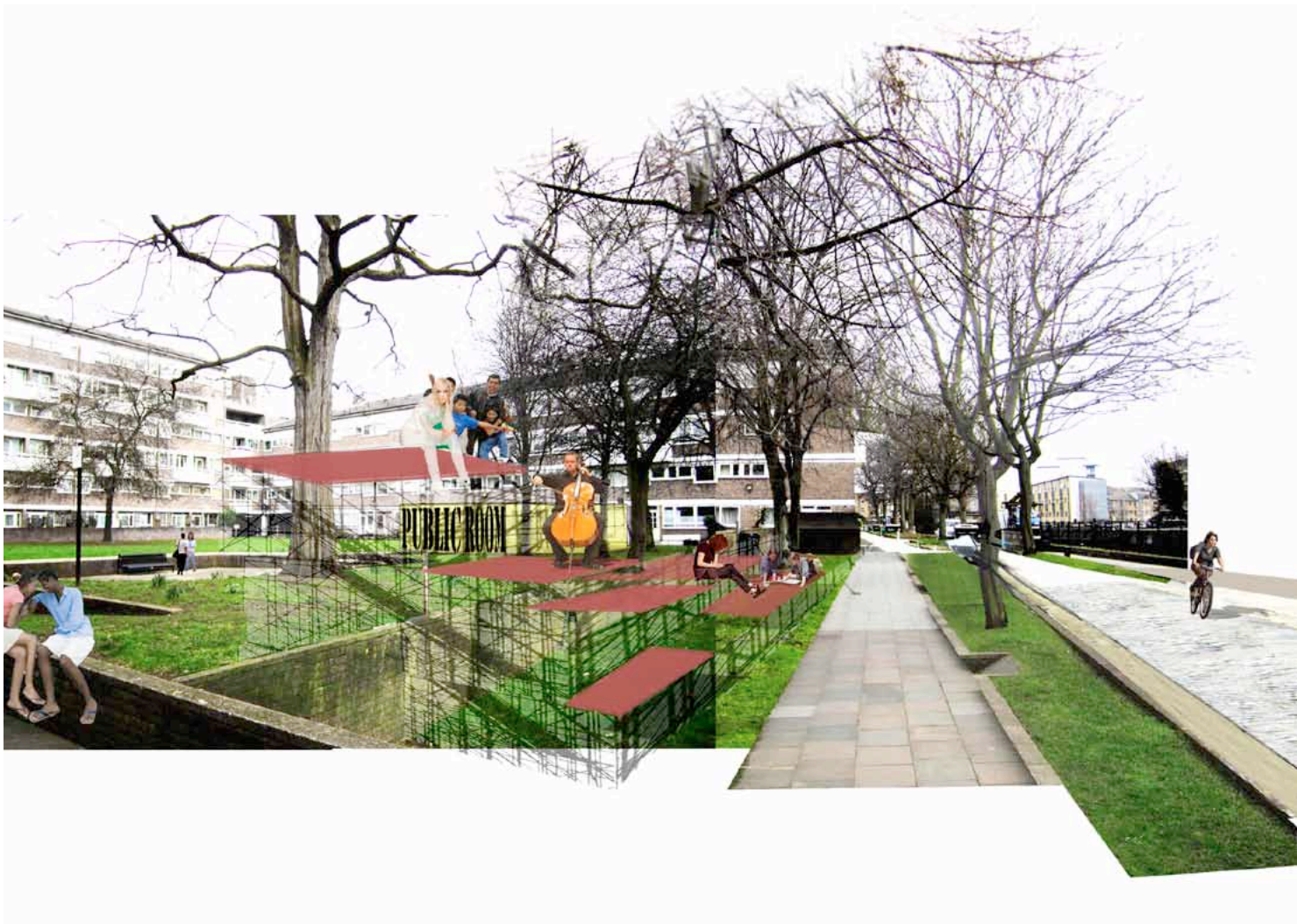
△ 19 Existing physical boundaries

Fence, road and hedge are reinterpreted to enhance social and physical access.

Step 3: Foster dialogue

Eliminating boundaries, such as the fence, the hedge and car traffic creates a more permeable public space with greater opportunity for interaction. The increased space better accommodates multiple users, such as pedestrians and cyclists, and reduces social frictions that discourage interactions. Furthermore, new passive pedestrian areas alongside cycling lanes encourage diverse users to stop, socialise and enjoy the canal environs, promoting inter- and intra-user group dialogue and enhancing positive public perception of the canal. Analysis of the site reveals a lack of sheltered public 'rooms' and multipurpose community spaces. Enclosing the two octagonal courts within the courtyards meets this need and activates the space. These alterations to the urban landscape create passive closed spaces where different actors and user groups can engage to complement these dedicated public flow spaces that are connected and sheltered.

Finally, special public programmes will encourage further conversation. FolkHill creates a large consolidated public space and literally sets the stage for floating cinemas, outdoor festivals, family activities and other events that can maximise potential uses and users of the canal. Over the life of the intervention, these successive programmes will help inspire involvement in the new democratic development processes and transform public opinion of the canal.



Step 4: Temporary kick-start

Temporary projects offer a unique opportunity for experimentation, but they must be malleable. FolkHill requires limited physical alterations, all of which are easily reversible. Roads can quickly be reopened and fence grills can be remounted. The platforms, inspired by temporary yet durable stage construction techniques can be quickly disassembled. The emphasis on programming augments the temporary and reversible nature of this pilot intervention.

We envision FolkHill as a summer-long installation complemented by special programmes that will spur public interest in Regent's Canal and enhance socialisation in the neighbourhood. As the public engages with the canal more actively, they will become more willing to defend it as a public asset. Come autumn, the energised local actors will be eager to support a new community-based mechanism to manage the development of Regent's Canal. This political reimagining of the development decision-making process is the second step of a two-part physical and political design solution scheduled for implementation over the course of several months. Together the successive cycle of physical and political interventions can address the conflicts laid out above and catapult the canal area into a new model for democratic development.



△ 20 FolkHill

Cross section of intervention showing key features of temporary spatial experience.

POLITICAL REIMAGINATION

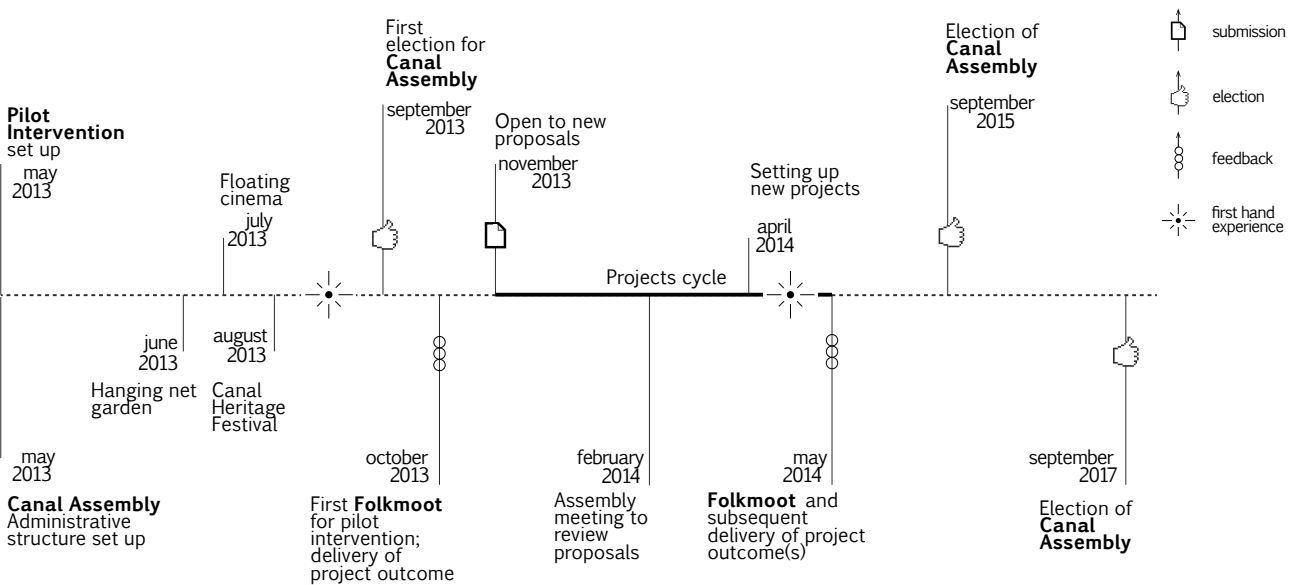
The canal community needs a Canal Assembly (CA), a new representative governing body that consolidates the disparate development authorities and has the power to manage development and programming on, along and around the Regent’s Canal within Hackney to ensure that the canal remains an accessible and valued public asset. The Assembly will commission and approve projects in this area with authority derived from agreements with the London Borough of Hackney (LBH) and Canal & River Trust (CRT). Changes to the towpath or canal will be authorised by an agreement between CA and CRT, while development on the land directly adjacent to the canal will be regulated by the agreement with LBH.

In both cases, the agreements decree that decision-making authority is delegated to CA, although the upper bodies retain the right to overrule. In order to give CA real decision-making authority, the power delegation agreements are such that Hackney Council (HC) or CRT promise to only overrule CA if absolutely necessary. For HC, such circumstances would include development that significantly impacts Hackney beyond just the canal. For CRT, a veto might be necessary if the proposed project disrupts the canal on a system-wide scale. Regardless, the main purpose of the agreements is to ensure that CA’s decisions are adopted the vast majority of the time.

Assembly Structure

Canal Assembly is composed of fifty-nine voting members. Members serve two-year terms, though no term limits exist. Forty-four of the members are directly elected from output areas around the canal in Hackney, with one person elected from each output area. We use the output area because it is a readily available census designation containing relatively equal number of households. These directly elected members will ensure that the CA is representative of the canal’s local population.

The remaining fifteen members are regional and systemic experts as well as representatives of local stakeholder groups. These members are included so that CA will be equipped to effectively consider both local and regional effects of proposed projects. The combination of local representation and specialised expertise ensures that CA will respect Regent’s Canal as a system and that development within Hackney enhances the value of the full system (or at least does not detract from the value of other areas of the system). These members are elected to constituent-specific seats through an at-large election.



21 Timeline
Timeline of pilot intervention implementation with sample programmes and first year of Canal Assembly.

22 Canal Assembly
Elected members from output areas and both regional and local experts.

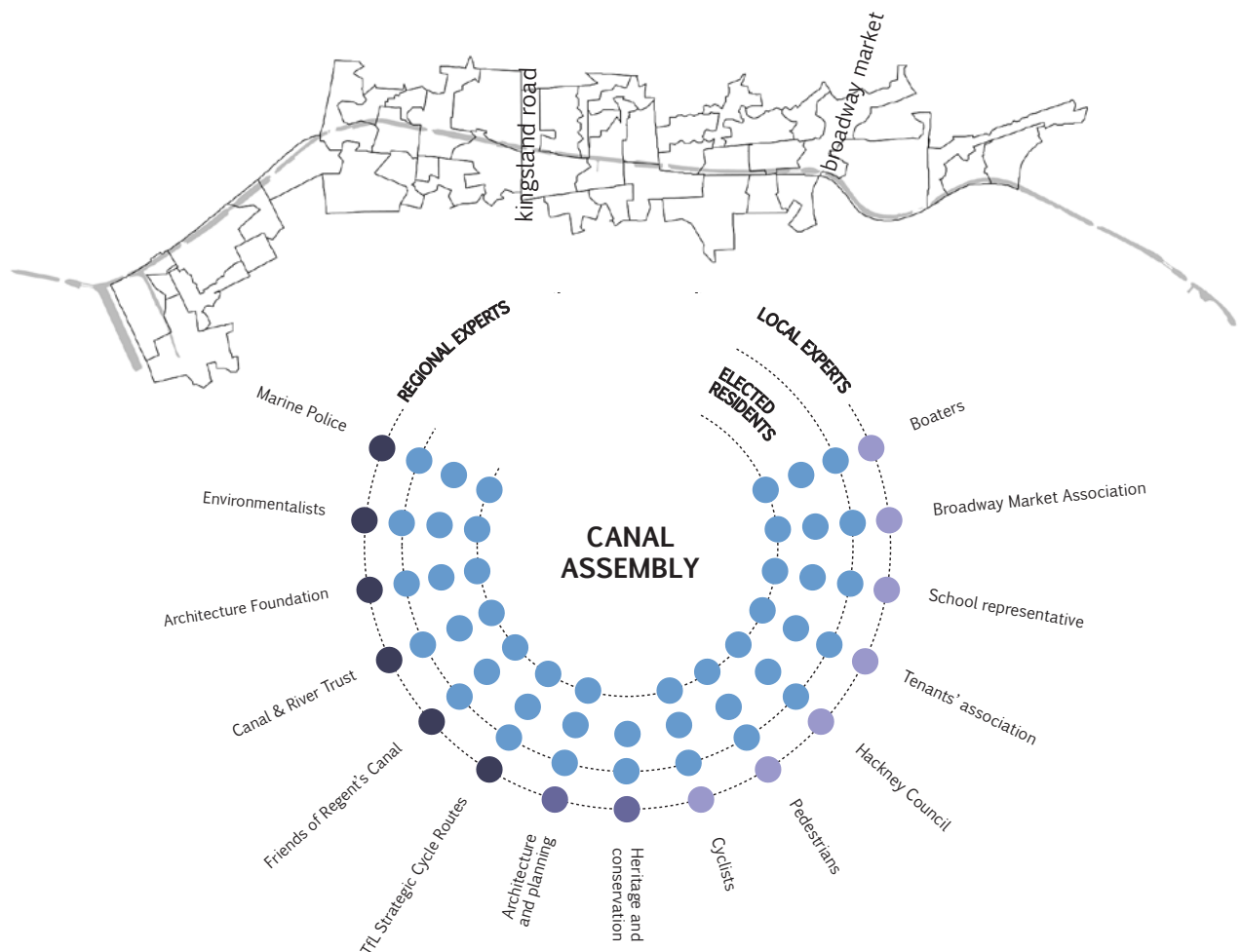
Assembly Process

Canal Assembly's process contrasts with the current top-down, token public consultation decision-making process. Anyone can generate canal-related projects, including developers, non-profit organisations or citizen groups. Permanent projects are first presented to HC to determine their feasibility within the local development framework. We expect that these projects will continue to come from traditional sources, such as private developers. Though it is difficult to generate holistic participation as it requires the most initiative, temporary projects will ideally come from a variety of actors. Proposals must include detailed project explanations, step-by-step implementation plans, economic impact analyses, detailed budget and financing plans, and public education and engagement plans.

CA considers all proposals submitted with these provisions and hears testimonies in support of and against the proposals at highly publicised, open town meetings. After deliberation, CA votes whether each project should be approved for development. This decision (majority) is then

presented to HC or CRT. The appropriate upper body considers implementation potential and decides whether to formally approve CA's decision. This vote is held in an open town meeting in the same forum as CA, thus exerting local democratic pressure on HC or CRT. Upon receiving a recommendation, HC or CRT will manage the day-to-day operations for permanent development projects. As a result of their scale and complexity, permanent and larger-scale development will require greater involvement. For temporary projects or programming, however, HC would play a lesser role.

For all projects, the first stage of implementation is a trial period during which the public and experts engage with and evaluate the project. These projects can be solely temporary or permanent projects that are first tested as temporary installations. During this period the project is heavily promoted and the public is encouraged to interact with the new space.

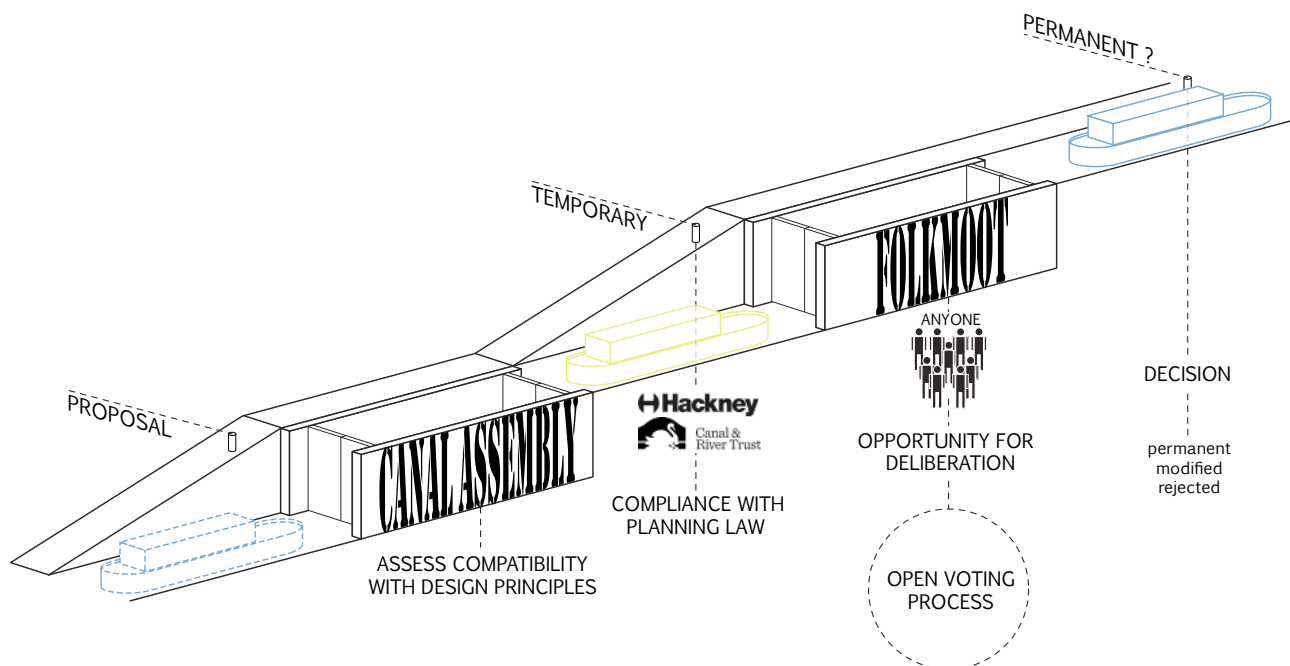


After the trial period (generally two to four weeks), a Folkmoot is held. The Folkmoot, derived from medieval terminology, is a town hall-style meeting. CA representatives must promote the Folkmoot and encourage their constituents to attend. At the Folkmoot, opinions are heard from people who have engaged with and analysed the project during its trial period. After significant debate, the Folkmoot votes (majority) on whether to make the project permanent, scrap it altogether, or alter it. Everyone at the meeting, even non-canal residents, gets a vote. CA then presents this decision to HC and plans are made to carry out the decision. It may not be feasible to test certain permanent project proposals as temporary interventions, in which case the initial CA vote to authorise a project will be the principle monitoring stage.

Given this opportunity to substantively engage with the project and determine its future, canal residents and users can engage with a higher level of democratic engagement. The Folkmoot allows discussion, slows down the process, gives residents first-hand experience with the project before it is made permanent, and, by testing the project before fully implementing it, saves money since economically unviable projects can be discontinued.

Assembly Administration

Canal Assembly's bureaucratic needs will be handled by a small nonprofit organisation with staff that will grow as needs and finances so dictate. The organisation will be a liaison to HC and CRT, manage finances, organise CA and Folkmoot meetings and oversee temporary project implementation. Buoyed by the heightened interest raised by our pilot intervention, this organisation, in coordination with HC, will organise the first CA election and secure the necessary start-up funds. This initial funding could come from grants and assistance from HC. Long-term, potential sources of revenue include grants, percentage of Section 106/Community Infrastructure Levy tax agreements, donations and tax increment financing. No matter the source, securing funding will be crucial for CA's long-term viability. Momentum, in terms of public engagement, is also critical; once this is lost, the independent pieces that constitute CA may dissipate. Community spirit requires constant feeding; thus, CA must continually engage its constituents.



△ 23 Process for temporary initiatives

Decision-making and implementation process for temporary projects.

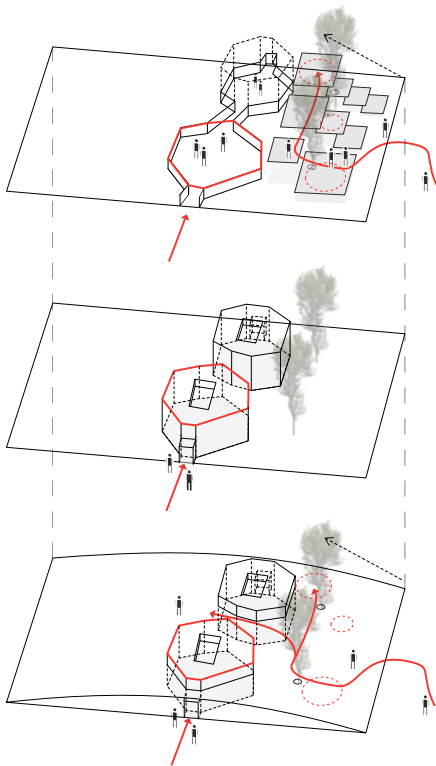
CONCLUSION

Localising planning control is not a new or radical idea. The 2011 Localism Act proposes neighbourhood forums similar to the Canal Assembly, but risks falling into Purcell's 'Local Trap' (2006). Where CA differs, however, is in acknowledging that 'the local' is composed of more than just geographically proximate residents and business owners. CA integrates local and systemic interests in the decision-making process and labours to maintain broad engagement. Despite concerns over localising power, regional bodies have failed to effect positive local-level change or implement canal-wide solutions to canal-wide problems. To challenge the undemocratic spatial status quo, this project empowers marginalised local actors to create a new democratic space.

A principle challenge for the new Assembly will be sustaining local interest and involvement. An ongoing cycle of programmes, design interventions and Folkmoots will be critical to maintaining high levels of public engagement, keeping people interested in democratic development.

Beyond generating democratic momentum, temporary programming and design interventions are also particularly effective democratic tools. As long as temporary interventions continue to be guided by our design principles, the interventions will continue to address pressing conflicts and augment the canal's physical and political democracy. If CA is to succeed long-term, it must evolve. Conflicts will need to be re-evaluated, design principles updated and Assembly composition adjusted to reflect changing systemic interests.

This project advocates a new way for extracting local value from an undervalued and mismanaged system. This combined physical and political process can serve as a model for other localities in need. A chain of local assemblies along Regent's Canal will emerge, resulting in a comprehensive but locally-directed improvement of the system. In this way, the waterway and surrounding areas may finally be transformed into a system of diverse democratic spaces.



△ 24 Evolution from temporary to permanent

An additional public room can be assembled. The subsequent construction of the permanent FolkHill preserves spatial qualities from the initial intervention.



△ 25 FolkHill project in the future

Further contested uses could be addressed such as freight by using reclaimed gravel to construct three hills, echoing the industrial heritage of the canal.

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△ 26 FolkHill in the future

The subsequent construction of the permanent FolkHill preserves spatial qualities from the initial intervention.