

Cultural Ecosystems Mapping Pilot

Hackney Wick & Fish Island



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***hydro*citizenship**

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CULTURAL ECOSYSTEM MAPPING: HACKNEY WICK & FISH ISLAND PILOT STUDY

Introduction

The following report is based on a pilot workshop held in Hackney Wick, east London in June 2014. This formed part of Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Connected Communities projects *Cultural Planning for Sustainable Communities* (2013-14) and *Hydrocitizenship* (2014-17), both funded under the *Communities, Cultures, Environments and Sustainability* programme theme (see Appendix II for outline of the *Hydrocitizenship* project). The former project has extended the cultural mapping method and technique drawing on commissioned Living Places and Cultural Asset Mapping resources which had been developed by the PI (Graeme Evans) and others for online cultural planning toolkits targeted at housing growth and regeneration areas. The opportunity to further test the cultural planning approach in wider environmental and ecosystems spheres has been undertaken in one of the new case study areas which are the subject of the Hydrocitizenship project. The Hackney Wick neighbourhood forms part of the wider Olympic Park regeneration ‘legacy’ area, and this participatory mapping exercise has thus been conducted with local residents, bringing together cultural planning with cultural ecosystems mapping for the first time, i.e. as a pilot from which further exercises will be refined and replicated. The approach also draws on the GIS-Participation method which was also refined in the earlier AHRC-funded ICE-SAV project (www.sei-international.org/ice-sav/Introduction.html) led by Steve Cinderby, University of York, who is also Co-Investigator on the Cultural Planning project.

Cultural Ecosystems Assessment

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MEA) was carried out between 2001 and 2005 to assess the results of ecosystem change for human well-being, and to establish the scientific basis for actions needed to enhance the sustainable use of ecosystems and their contribution to human well-being (Plieninger et al., 2013). Ecosystem services are the benefits that people obtain from natural ecosystems. The MEA identifies four ecosystem services: *provisioning, supporting, regulating, and cultural services*. In order to evaluate how the changes in ecosystems affect well-being, the following dimensions of human well-being have been determined as *security, basic material for good life, health, good social relations and freedom of choice and action*.

As noted, this study focuses on Cultural Ecosystem Services and their relation to well-being (see Figure 1) by taking Hackney Wick & Fish Island pilot as a case study. ‘Cultural services’ in this respect are “contributions that ‘ecosystems’ are deemed to make to the non-material benefits (e.g. capabilities and experiences) that arise from human-ecosystems relationships” (Chan, 2012: 9).

CULTURAL ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

1. Diversity
2. Spiritual & religious values
3. Knowledge systems
4. Educational values
5. Inspiration
6. Aesthetic values
8. Social relations
9. Sense of place
10. Cultural heritage values
11. Recreation and ecotourism



CONSTITUENTS OF WELL-BEING

<p>Security</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ PERSONAL SAFETY ▫ SECURE RESOURCE ACCESS ▫ SECURITY FROM DISASTERS 	<p>Freedom of choice and action</p> <p>OPPORTUNITY TO BE ABLE TO ACHIEVE WHAT AN INDIVIDUAL VALUES DOING AND BEING</p>
<p>Basic material for good life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ ADEQUATE LIVELIHOODS ▫ SUFFICIENT NUTRITIOUS FOOD ▫ SHELTER ▫ ACCESS TO GOODS 	
<p>Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ STRENGTH ▫ FEELING WELL ▫ ACCESS TO CLEAN AIR AND WATER 	
<p>Good social relations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ SOCIAL COHESION ▫ MUTUAL RESPECT ▫ ABILITY TO HELP OTHERS 	

Figure 1: Cultural Ecosystem Services (derived from Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005)

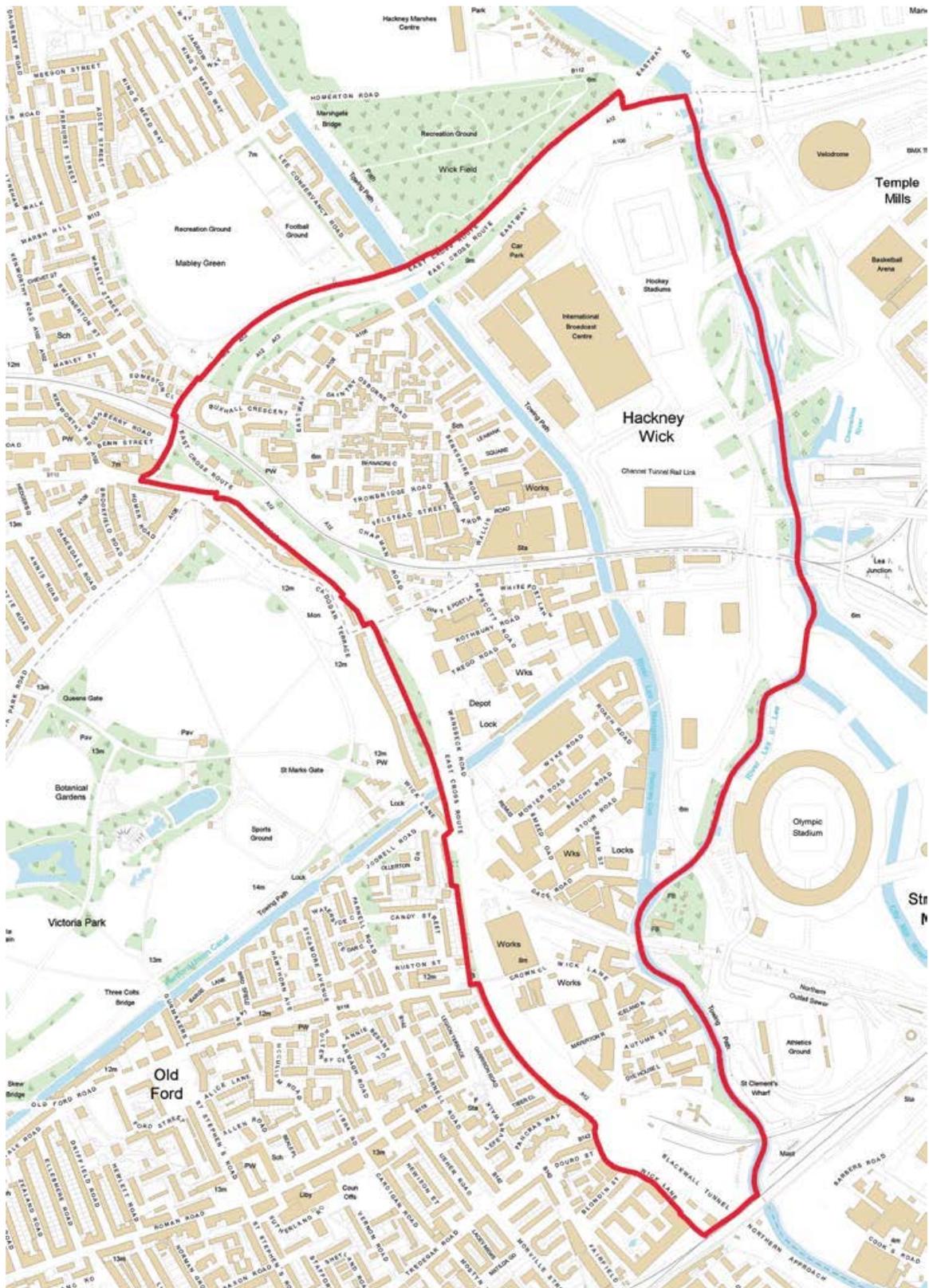
Cultural services differ in various aspects from other ecosystem services since they are difficult to quantify and their economic evaluation is usually controversial. Therefore, (cultural) mapping exercises can be considered as useful tools for grasping the socio-cultural realities of communities, regions, landscapes, and ecosystems (Ryan, 2011).

The most recent UK National Ecosystem Assessment also lacked an arts & humanities dimension - or input from arts and cultural organisations and practitioners: Ecosystem Cultural Services (NEA 2011, Chap.16) have been largely rationalised in terms of externalities - health, recreation, tourism - and as cultural "goods" ('human benefits from nature') arising from "environmental settings" - and these are dominated by natural settings such as countryside, recreation and tourism, rather than urban settlements. Little recognition is given for example to the established work in environmental art (Lacy, 1995), art and regeneration, or the role of community arts groups (e.g. Parish Maps, Commonground) in ecosystem, urban and sustainable development. This national ecosystem review drew mainly on environmental and ecosystem studies in the treatment of cultural services, and did acknowledge that 'this approach to cultural services struggled to find a consistent theoretical and methodological framework to match that underpinning other areas of the NEA' (p.639). The NEA also highlighted knowledge gaps related to ecosystem cultural services, specifically in 'data collection and the uneven monitoring of change in different environmental settings' (p.638) - and cultural data generated through cultural asset mapping and planning toolkit methods will hopefully contribute to meeting this gap.

Case Study Area: Hackney Wick & Fish Island

Hackney Wick & Fish Island was an innovative industrial area in the late nineteenth century and today retains significant light industrial uses alongside a high density of artist studios/workspaces and galleries, and both private, but primarily social housing. The area is located around a network of rivers and canals, traditionally the transport route of east London's industrial and commercial goods, and today is home to a mix of canal boats and a network of towpaths for pedestrians and cyclists (Map 1), and an important source of biodiversity in this densely populated sub-region of London. In terms of flood risk, the majority of Hackney Wick is covered by either Flood Zones 2 or 3, with significant areas of Fish Island also covered by Flood Zones 2 and 3 (LLDC, 2013).

As *Stitching the Fringe: Working around the Olympic Park* noted (LDDC, 2013), Hackney Wick & Fish Island is sited between the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and the newly upgraded Victoria Park. Bordered by the canal to the east and the hostile infrastructural barrier of the A12 to the west, it is essentially an island site, somewhat 'cut off' from its surroundings and local centres such as Roman Road and Homerton. With its historic grain of large scale workshops and industrial spaces - as well as a distinct feeling of autonomy - the area has become an alternative cultural hub, home to a high concentration of artists and creative entrepreneurs. However, this is a fragile human ecology, all too easily steamrollered when development inevitably arrives. Work has focused on preserving and enhancing the character of the area, giving it a robustness and resilience to survive the forces of gentrification. Strengthening links between local artists, businesses and community groups and providing places of exchange, projects try to make visible what is hidden beneath the skin of the place



Map 1: Hackney Wick & Fish Island Boundary Map

Hackney Wick overground rail station is located towards the centre of the area. There are plans to upgrade the station to improve access and facilitate the wider regeneration of the area which includes new housing, schools (e.g. Eastwick and Sweetwater 'urban villages') and other amenities. HereEast (recently renamed from iCITY) - formerly the Press & Broadcasting Centre built for the London 2012 Olympics - is planned to provide a regionally important focus for tech-focused business and higher education (including BT Sport and Loughborough University), alongside the support and expansion of the existing creative and bespoke manufacturing industries to the east of the Lee Navigation Canal. The Copper Box Arena is also situated here - a multi-use arena which serves as a venue for a variety of indoor sports, with highly flexible design offering use for all levels of sports participation. A number of buildings are locally listed or have been identified as 'Buildings of Townscape Merit' due to their contribution to local character and heritage. There are two statutory Listed Buildings within this area: St Mary of Eton Church and Gainsborough Primary School, and two adjoining designated Conservation Areas: Hackney Wick and Fish Island. A number of residential/live-work developments have also been completed alongside the canal in recent years. A mapping audit exercise undertaken by the London Development Agency identified 610 studios (including live/work) across the Hackney Wick & Fish Island area in 2009 (LLDC, 2013).

Methodology

Perspectives on local cultural ecosystems were collected from a focus group meeting held in Hackney Wick and analysed collectively to derive local community values. Several techniques can be used in order to represent landscape values and special places when creating a map, for example:

- (a) Defining sites and routes on the map through use of pencils or markers
- (b) Using color-coded sticker dots for locating sites on the map
- (c) Identifying and numbering special sites on the map and annotating them on the map

This exercise to assess cultural services adopted 11 categories established in the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2005) with indicators developed accordingly in order to address each category (see Appendix I):

- **Use:** sense of place, activities, recreation
- **Aesthetics:** aesthetic values, spiritual values, inspiration
- **Cultural Use:** recreation, social relations, cultural heritage values, knowledge/educational systems
- **Problems:** accessibility, safety, unpleasant
- **Community Cohesion:** diversity, involvement

A pilot study was undertaken on 13 June at the Cre8 Lifestyle Centre (formerly the Hackney Wick Community Centre) following the Hackney Wick & Fish Island Cultural Interest Group (CIG) monthly meeting. The CIG was founded in 2009 to facilitate a permanent, sustainable, creative community in Hackney Wick and Fish Island and particularly to advance the arts and culture. The group meets every 2nd Friday of the month at a rotating venue in Hackney Wick or Fish Island. The meetings are normally attended by 20-30+ people, including representatives of arts and cultural and community organisations, schools and other residents (including local ward councillors). The research team introduced the Cultural Ecosystem Mapping study at the May CIG meeting and invited participants to stay after the 13 June meeting for the mapping study. In total, 7 participants joined the Cultural Ecosystem Mapping pilot study with the two facilitators, and the meeting lasted around an hour (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Cultural Ecosystem Mapping pilot study at the Cre8 Lifestyle Centre

Participants were asked to identify recreational uses, cultural uses and problem areas. A set of socio-demographic questions was also asked regarding gender, age, home postcode and familiarity with the study area. Two different types of maps were used (both A0 size) - one aerial and the other 'street view'. The participants were given the freedom to use the map they preferred, and some used/worked across both of the two maps. Each participant was given a number on their questionnaire and this number was also represented on the stickers and post-its they used. After the workshop the data on the maps and questionnaires were transferred to an Excel database and entered onto QGIS. The findings of the pilot study are summarised below.

Findings

All participants in the first pilot study were members of the CIG and were engaged in different occupations which varied from local artist, event organisers, designer, to local politician. Participants either lived and/or worked in Hackney and their length of residence varied from less than a year to more than 10 years, but the majority had lived/worked in their current neighbourhood for more than 5 years (see Map 2). The majority of participants were male - there was only one female participant. The ages of participants were diverse, varying between 25 and over 64.

As noted, two maps were provided for the participants and the majority preferred to use the aerial view map which gives a 'birds eye' image of the area. Although the street map provides more detailed information on public spaces/buildings and road/street names, it might be more challenging to identify locations if they are not familiar with reading maps. On the other hand, the aerial view map provides a 'real life' image of the area which makes it easier for some people to find their orientation on the map.



Map 2: Mapping of Home/Work Postcode of the Participants (where provided)

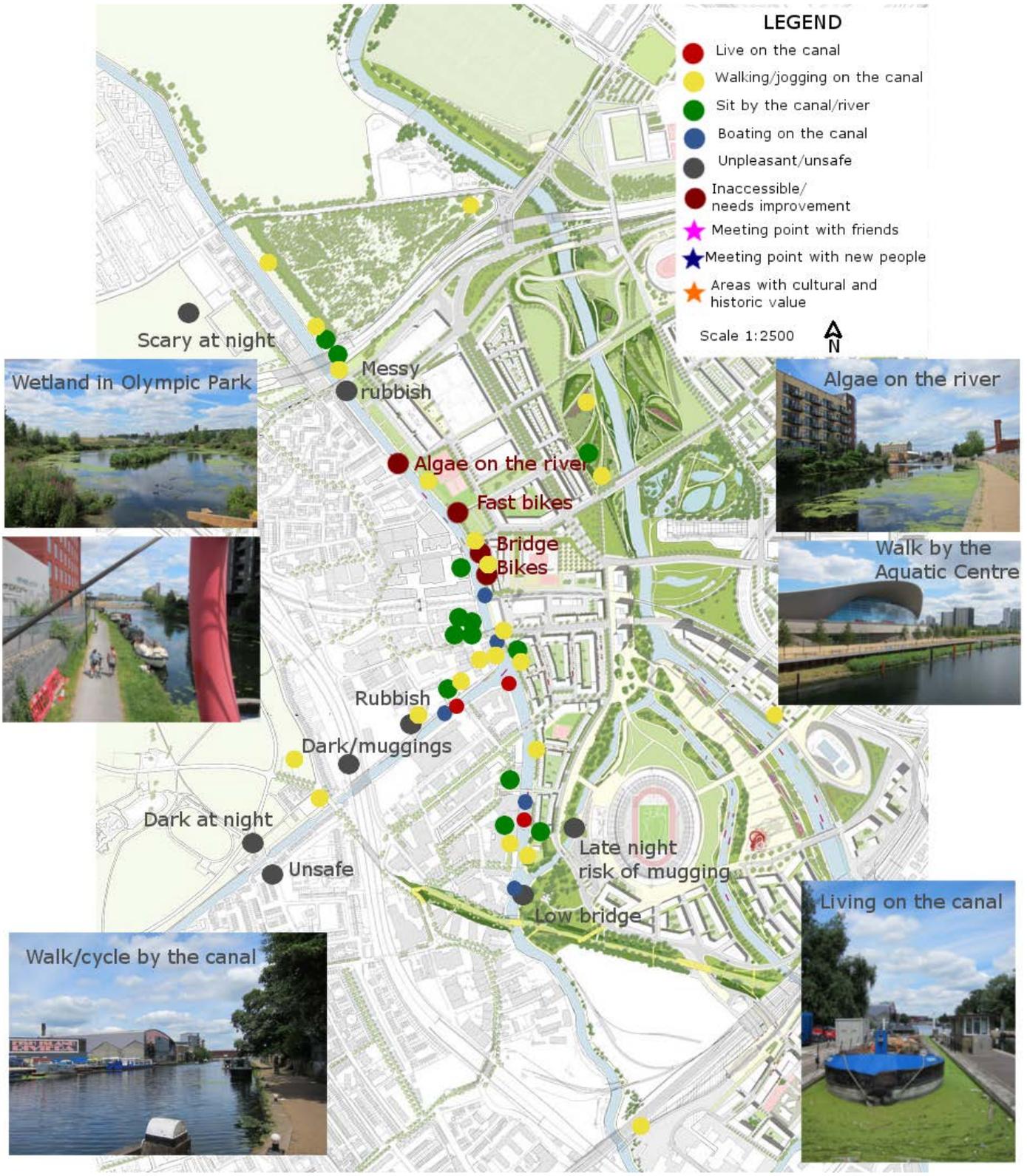
Services and Problems

The respondents were asked which parts of the river/canal they use and for what purpose. These findings have been evaluated along with the problems which they associated with the area (Map 3). There was one participant living and boating on the canal, however the most common use of the canal/river was walking along and sitting by it. Walking around the Wetland Area, Victoria Park and Wick Field was also mentioned as one of the specific activities that participants enjoy doing. However, participants hardly mentioned activities along the river as a 'cultural ecosystem service'. The Queen Elizabeth Park has been completely opened since 8 April 2014 and there have been several changes and new landscaping around the River Lee and various tributaries that pass through the Olympic Park. However, these Hackney Wick & Fish Island locals do not tend to "connect" to the east of the canal (towards Stratford in LB.Newham) and consequently do not use the facilities there very much. As we have also found anecdotally from other residents, there is a

marked (and historic) spatial divide between the west and east neighbourhoods adjoining the Lee river/canal (and new Park), despite newly created bridges and walkways. This is both territorial and a reflection of safety issues, which also surfaced regarding the waterway areas (and as was also raised in our feedback/follow up meeting at the Hackney Wick CIG in July, with questions around special lighting, use of CCTV, and security/policing).

Aesthetic values were most commonly mentioned with the places the participants enjoy most, such as watching the lock; walking/sitting at Woodland Wick, since it is quite and green; and cycling along the marshes. The main problems that were mentioned around the canal/river were rubbish and safety ('fear of crime'). As a result of scarce lighting, participants felt unsafe along the canal at night. Moreover, there have been several mugging incidents in this area. Scariness was also ascribed to other local park areas (Victoria Park and Mabley Green). These incidents and threats also overlap with the places that people enjoy during the daytime (walking/cycling/sitting).

Participants also highlighted some accessibility issues for the bridges on the canal, and algae on the canal during the summer has been emphasised by participants. Some of the spiritual and inspirational values mentioned by the participants are effected by the changes in the area, for instance relaxing the by canal was stressed as a spiritual value - until the bikes pass by quickly disturbing this experience. Other spiritual and inspirational values mentioned were "watching sunsets during the summer" over the canal and "walking under the open skies over the Olympic Park".



Map 3: Use of the canal/river and problems

Spatial Distribution of Cultural Services

The participants were asked 3 questions to explore their use of cultural services which includes locations that they socialise with their own community; meet new people; and value as historically and culturally important for Hackney Wick & Fish Island (Map 4).



Map 4: Spatial Distribution of Cultural Services

Participants flagged up socialising locations where they meet their friends which were mainly local cafés on the west of the canal along the water such as Stour Space, Cygnet/Swan Wharf, and White Building/Crate Brewery. These are community venues which engage with local artist projects and residents as well. These venues were also mentioned as places where people can meet new people outside their community. Hackney Pearl and Cre8 Lifestyle Centre were also mentioned as socialising locations. Along with venues, some participants also marked Victoria Park, the Wetlands and Aquatic Centre as places where they meet friends and also places of local cultural and historical value.

There are several heritage assets in Hackney Wick & Fish Island that mainly arise from the industrial background of the area. Old Ford Locks dating from c. 1865 with walls of Kentish ragstone along the west bank of the River Lee (LLDC, 2013) was stated by the participants as the “ghost of industrial past”. St Mary of Eton Church was also highlighted by a participant as a part of the local heritage. Queens Yard was stressed by the participants which is a cluster of buildings from different periods and provides a public access to the canal frontage. Crate Brewery was a local company and produced in the area. The Crate Café in the Queens Yard was mentioned as the most popular destination for the participants both to socialise with their friends and meet new people.

The Olympic Aquatic Centre and Stadium were also stated as locations of cultural value, along with Victoria Park. Moreover, graffiti along the canal has been highlighted by a participant as a place to take people to show the local area’s history and culture.

Community Cohesion

The Hackney Wick & Fish Island area has a diverse population, including artists and a traveller community. Levels of diversity and transience amongst the resident population are reflected in the higher proportion of ‘non-white’ residents in Hackney Wick & Fish Island than London as a whole. The migration patterns show that Fish Island has a particularly transient population, while Hackney Wick has an above average level of residents with ‘no usual address’ (GLA/LLDC, 2013).

When the participants were asked about whether people from different backgrounds get on well in their area or not, the positive and negative approaches seem to be equal. Although there were some negative answers about cohesion, the participants believed that the strengths of their community lies in art, creativity, diversity, free spirit and strong community of diverse cultures/ artists and open meetings. Also, the majority of the participants felt included in the decisions taken about the development of their area.

The main cohesion factor was related to culture in the community which was seen as bringing diverse communities together and engaging everyone in the community. Increasing prices with regeneration and lack of funding were also mentioned as challenges in the area.

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APPENDIX I: HYDROCITIZENSHIP PROJECT- CULTURAL ECOSYSTEMS MAPPING PILOT

Middlesex University is part of a multi-institute team that has won a grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Council's (AHRC) Connected Communities programme (Environments and Sustainability sub-theme). One of four case studies is being led by Middlesex University in/around Lea Valley. Local partners include London Legacy Development Corporation and Lea Valley Regional Park Authority. For further details, see the website (<http://www.hydrocitizenship.com/>) or contact o.edizel@mdx.ac.uk

The project will run for 3 years starting in May 2014. As the title suggests, the focus is researching within, and working with, a range of communities to address intersecting social and environmental challenges through application of arts and humanities approaches including performance and film making, visual art, design for social innovation, history and heritage, interactive and cultural mapping, etc. The environmental focus is on interconnected water issues, which include such issues as flood risk, drought, supply and waste system security, access to water as an amenity and social (health) benefit, waterside planning issues, and water-based biodiversity/landscape assets. Given recent, extreme storm surge and flooding incidents in the UK, as well as other pressing water issues, this research is particularly timely. The social focus will consider how communities are formed, and interconnected by, both environmental assets and risks, and consequent questions of social and ecological justice.

The following are a series of questions relating to your experience and perspectives on the local environment. This information will be visualised through large-scale maps.

PARTICIPANT NUMBER:.....

Introduction

Male

Female

1. Gender

2. Age

16-24

45-64

25-44

64 and upwards

3. Do you live or work in Hackney Wick & Fish Island area?

Yes

No

4. How long have you been living in your current neighborhood?

Less than a year

1-5 years

6-10 years

More than 10 years

5. What is your postcode?

Use

- 6. Which parts of the river/canal do you use? How? (stickers)
 - Live on the canal
 - Walking/jogging along the river/canal
 - Sit by the canal/river
 - Boating on the canal
 - Fishing on the canal/river
 - Use the water for energy
 - Other

Aesthetics

- 7. Which parts of the river/canal do you enjoy most? Explain? (post-it)
.....
- 8. Where do you value as beautiful or aesthetically appealing? Explain? (post-it)
.....
- 9. Are there any areas you value for their spiritual quality? Explain? (post-it)
.....

Problems

- 10. Are there any sites that are neglected and unpleasant? Explain? (post-it)
.....
- 11. Are there any sites that you feel unsafe in/around? Explain? (post-it)
.....
- 12. Are there any accessibility issues in your area? Explain? (post-it)
.....
- 13. Are there any parts of the river you feel are inaccessible and need improvement? Explain?
(post-it)
What kind of improvements?

Cultural Uses

- 14. Where do you meet your friends and other community members? (stickers)
.....
- 15. Where do you meet people outside of your social group/new people? (stickers)
.....
- 16. Which places would you take people to if you wanted to show the local areas history and culture? (stickers)
.....

Community Cohesion

- 17. Do you feel included in the decisions taken about the development of your area? Yes No

- 18. Do you think people from different backgrounds get on well in your local area? Yes No

- 19. What are the key strengths of your community's cultural activities/services?

APPENDIX II - Towards hydrocitizenship - Connecting communities with and through responses to interdependent, multiple water issues www.hydrocitizenship.com

Project Summary

This 3 year project (May 2014-17) will investigate, and make creative contributions to, the ways in which citizens and communities live with each other and their environment in relation to water in a range of UK neighbourhoods. The research asks a series of questions about what communities are, how they function, and the role of environmental (water) assets and issues in the coming together of communities, conflicts within and between communities, and progress to interconnected community and environmental resilience.

Towards hydrocitizenship will generate initiatives and outputs including practical interventions in local landscapes, new community-environment orientated art works, and critical reflection on the nature of citizenship and community when they are re-imagined from ecological perspectives.

The term **hydrocitizenship** has been adopted in reference to the more established notion of “ecological citizenship” which sees transformations in how society works at individual and collective levels as essential if we are to generate more meaningful, ecologically sustainable forms of society. In our project, we put this idea to work within the contemporary contexts of individual and community engagements with water.

Water is a fundamental resource for society, and at present a range of challenging water issues face communities in the UK and internationally. These include concerns over flooding, sea level rise, climate change, drought and supply security, water quality, biodiversity and landscape quality, access for recreation, water and energy (e.g. fracking), effective urban drainage, and waste management. *Towards Hydrocitizenship* joins a growing body of academic and policy initiatives which seek to address local hydrospheres (interconnected water flows and exchanges) holistically, in ways which address these interdependent issues on catchment and systems based scales.

Community, although a now much challenged and questioned term, remains a key way in thinking about how society can function effectively in social, cultural and economic terms. This is reflected in the range of recent research that has been supported by the UK Research Council’s [Connected](#)

[Communities](#)¹ initiative (project funders). In relation to communities we ask, what does it do to the ways in which we imagine communities, and to the ways in which they imagine themselves, if local water-related environmental issues (both assets and conflicts) are brought more fully into local public consciousness? Can addressing environmental issues through local groups help develop relations *within* communities and *between* communities? Can narratives of past and current relationships between people, and people and water, help generate new narratives – new relationships?

The **core approaches** within the project are arts and humanities disciplines and practices, (history, theatre studies, film making, visual art, narrative studies, cultural geography, landscape studies, architectural design) which are intergraded with a range of social science disciplines (planning, environmental geography, community studies) and methods (ethnography and participatory action research). The research process will see arts and social enterprise consultants, community partners, and other water/community stakeholders taking full part in the project in four case study areas in Wales and England (Borth; Bristol; **Lower Lee Valley/Olympic Park**, London; and Shipley/Bradford).

The case study teams will also exchange and integrate skills, methods, experiences and findings into an overarching synthesis. This synthesis will address the questions set out above and provide a reflexive analysis of how creative and participatory arts and humanities centred interdisciplinary research can be done effectively and with legacy.

During the project's three-year timeframe, the overall academic team of 15 researchers from 9 universities will work with the arts practitioners and community groups to refine and advance participatory research practices and outputs. The exact form and direction of these activities will be the outcome of local, collaborative working (or 'co-design'). The interdisciplinary team will work across all case study sites in order to magnify impacts and ensure that the research is relevant in a range of disciplines and policy arenas.

¹ www.ahrc.ac.uk/Funding-Opportunities/Research-funding/Connected-Communities/Pages/Connected-Communities.aspx