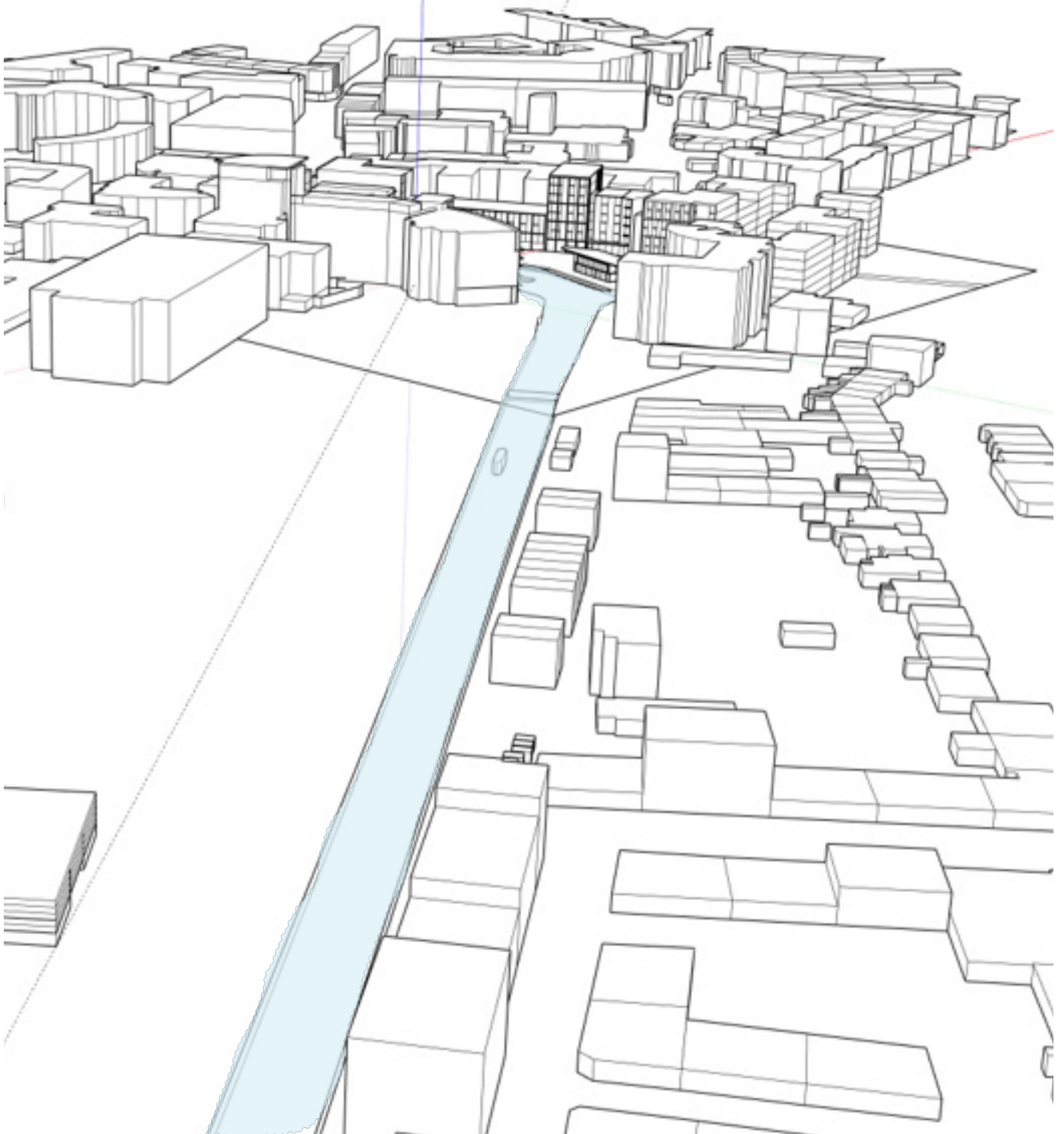


# Illustrated Essay

## Regenerating Place



# Community-Led Resilience and Productivity

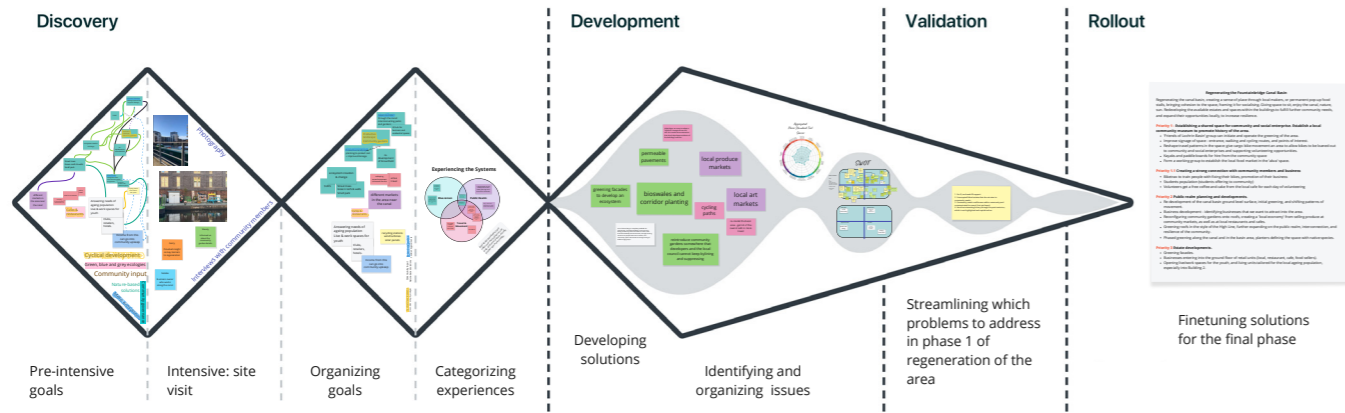


Fig. 1a.

## Analysis

While the collective pre-intensive goals covered broadly applicable concepts of blue-green infrastructure, active travel, mesosystems, building use change, and so on – these goals were narrowed down and shaped during the intensive through Hamdi’s strategy of site experience, community observation, and community interviews. Although Hamdi’s case studies have focused on areas considerably less advantaged<sup>11</sup> than Fountainbridge, finding community needs first and foremost was agreed upon by group members as a universal requirement, and so that example was followed.

As seen in Fig. 1a, record of experience and interviews were noted, and categorized into different cornerstones that make up a site. The ones the group was particularly concerned with were: availability of infrastructure, ease of motion/travel, and state of the public realm. The Place Standard Tool encouraged further thought and attentiveness through related questions.

Solutions began developing through brainstorming. In the interest of streamlining the solutions, a timed Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats exercise was set up, where the most impactful aspects of the area were written down by each member anonymously. These were voted on, and the winning strength, weakness, opportunity and threat to the Canal Basin were combined to create a thorough, detailed, multi-pronged approach that set out to regenerate the area through multiple interventions, with a community-led and community-focused agenda, at the end of Fig. 1a.

These interventions were then broken down into phases – which interventions would come first, second, third; the time frame for each phase; how these phased interventions would layer and accumulate for resilience and sustainability, seen in Fig. 1b.

Group 1’s approach can be said to embrace aspects from 2 out of 3<sup>2</sup> of Evans’ understanding<sup>3</sup> on culture’s contribution to regeneration: ‘culture-led regeneration,’ and ‘culture and regeneration.’ The adaptation of these will be elaborated further on in the essay.

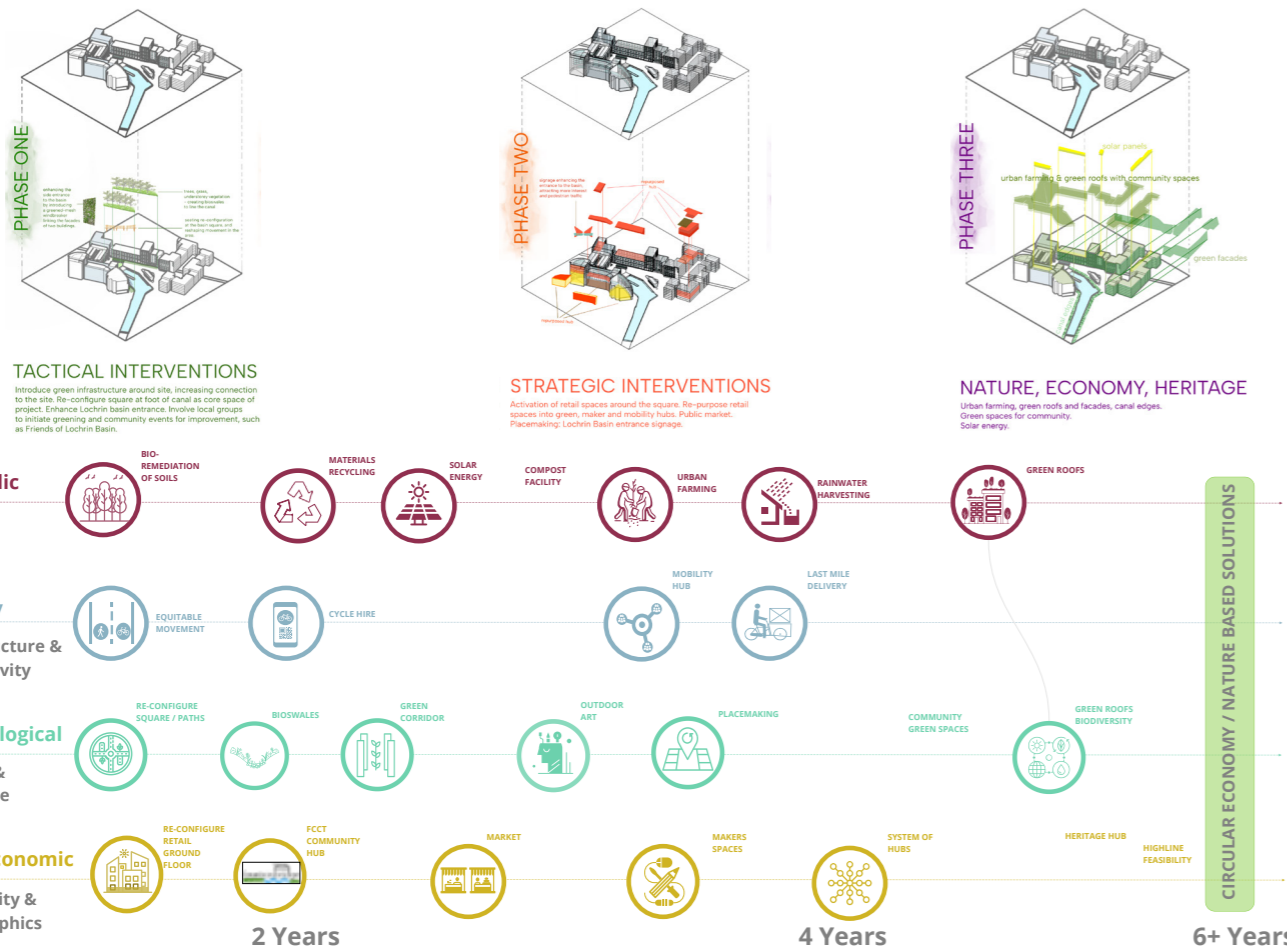


Fig. 1b.

## Artefact 1.

Fig. 1a. The triple diamond diagram above shows the evolution of approach towards the regeneration of the Fountainbridge site, through the group’s experiences and evaluation of the area.

Fig. 1b. The isometric models are able to showcase the different foci of intervention across the building volumes and public realm of the site, over the course of 3 phases.

As these diagrams are in vector form, feel free to zoom in to be able to read the specifics of each stage.





Fig. 2a.

### Ecosystem creation

The microbiology Rewilding Theory<sup>4</sup> states that the introduction of humans to an environment with a higher rate of *microbial* diversity, will lead to higher immunity levels. This microbial diversity will stem from the more general term we know of as *biodiversity* - which ecosystem creation supports tremendously.

There are other positive factors as well; creation of an ecosystem where there is currently none would lead to enormous amount of opportunity. In the long run, the green infrastructure could mature and develop with the blue infrastructure to form a system that would not only provide secondary water supply through filtration (roof gardens and bioswales), but also offset the UHI of the area, while balancing the air quality levels, providing increased biodiversity, and having a positive impact on the aesthetics, physicality and mentality for residents of and visitors to the area.<sup>5</sup> The creation of this ecosystem will also increase the number of jobs opportunities available for planting, maintenance, etc., in Fountainbridge.

In the greater interest of the community, 'understorey' planting, or vegetation that grows on the groundlevel, until the height of the lower branches of trees, should be greatly encouraged. It is understorey planting that studies have proven to be most enriching for ecosystems<sup>6</sup>, as it houses habitats for multiple species of wildlife.

In phase 3 of the project, in the interest of increasing biodiversity and enhancing the levels at which green infrastructure can operate, a mesh facade may be applied as a windbreaker between Buildings 4 & 5. In the style of Buro Happold and Cookfox Architects' living façade, as shown in Fig. 3b., it will help birds by growing selective moss that is useful for their nests. Adaption can be employed here by ensuring specific vegetation choices that reintroduce Edinburgh's native bird populations into the Basin.

### CREATING AN ECOSYSTEM

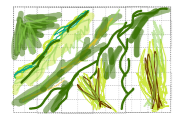
different heights and scales of greening

introducing biodiversity



Buro Happold and Cookfox Architects develop living facade for birds and insects.<sup>1</sup>

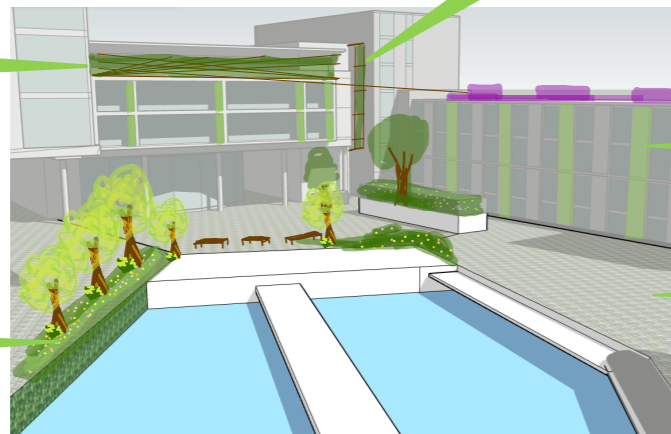
windbreaking green mesh with different species of plants that will be welcoming to different birds



introducing a meshed facade that will welcome birds and other species of plants



cutting through pavement to replace with softer materials and introduce bioswales



productive vertical greening

permeable pavement

Fig. 2b.

### Artefact 2.

Fig. 2a. Different points along the canal banks. Blue infrastructure is visually accessible everywhere, but there is next to no GI either directly adjacent to the canal, or incorporated into the facades. No significant land-based ecosystem identifiable.

Fig. 2b. The introduction of different heights and scales of greening in the ways illustrated above would create an ecosystem that would welcome local wildlife into the area and increase biodiversity along the canal basin. Another vision of greening can be found in Fig. 3b

1. Buro Happold and Cookfox Architects develop living facade for birds and insects. (2022, September 16). *Dezeen*. <https://www.dezeen.com/2022/09/16/architectural-ceramic-assemblies-workshop-buro-happold-cookfox-architects-facade-design/>





Fig. 3a.

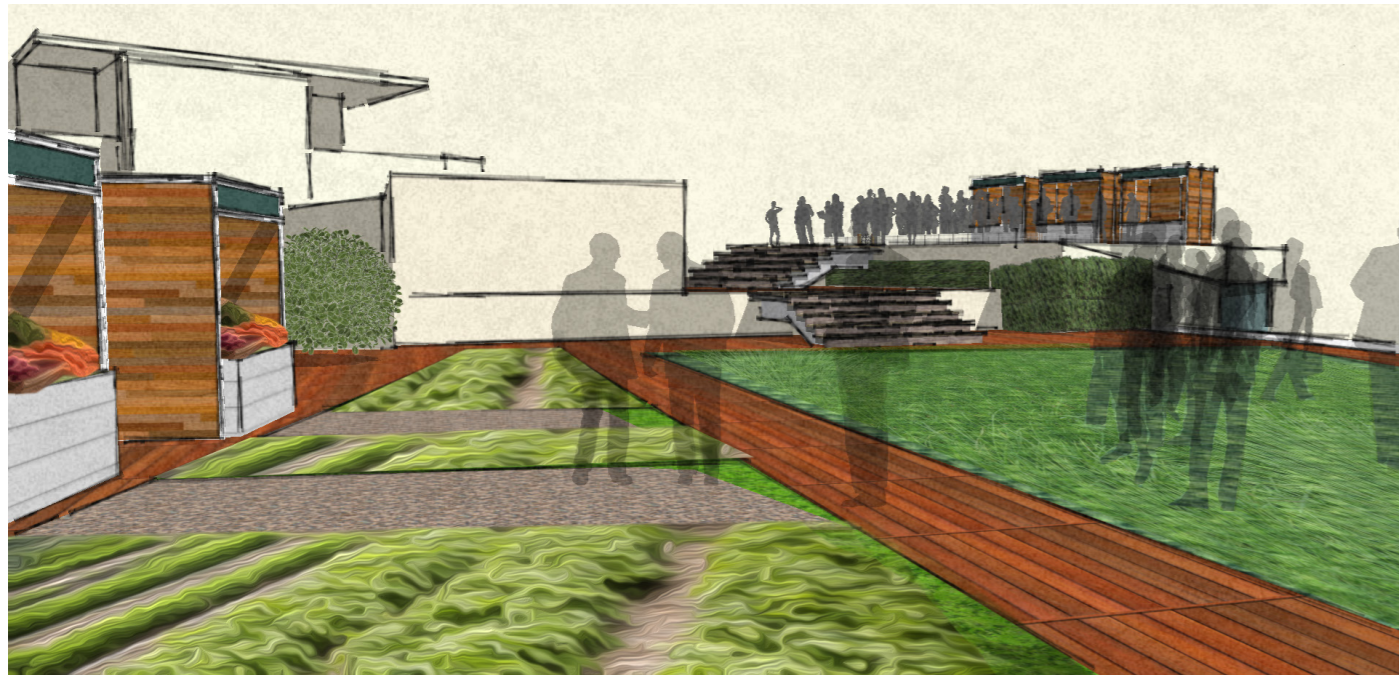


Fig. 3b.

**Artefact 3.**

**Fig. 3a.** The community garden, located offsite, is located in an abandoned plot, and residents are only allowed a fraction of the land for allotments. This community garden is the current iteration, much reduced in size for residents and in priority for the local council, from its original condition.

**Fig. 3b.** Examples of community gardens, relocated to a better maintained and more accessible location - the rooftops of Buildings 1 & 2. Overlooking the public realm of the basin, its greenery, busy activity, and viewpoint to the weekly local art market on the opposite building and the green facades nearby, this can definitely be a point of interest for locals and visitors alike.

**Community-led productive landscape**

The community of Fountainbridge has displayed a longstanding vested interest in community gardening - despite community members sharing through interviews that the local council has shifted, shunted and reduced the size of their allotments (currently offsite from the project) and that selling it off to developers in the future is not too farfetched an idea, they are still tending their gardens resolutely.

It was decided that the best way to move forward would be to ensure that community gardeners have a larger area than they are currently provided, to use with freedom, and be able to access with ease. To help provide a solution to the needs of the community by solving another problem - that of the disused buildings all across the site - would be an efficient step.

Precedents set by Glasgow's 'community of care'<sup>7</sup>, and Turin's rooftop farming<sup>8</sup>, prove that keeping focus on community gardens and shifting them to building rooftops (as suggested in Fig. 3b) will be a move in Phase 3 that resolves multiple issues simultaneously - allocating a fixed, stable location to the community, with which they will be able to adapt and generate as they see fit (thereby ensuring success, as opposed to enforcing a certain plan in a specific way), as well as the regeneration of the basin, not only through the activity of gardening itself, but introducing avenues of heightened local economy, through selling of produce. By introducing both protective landscapes to the roofs (as mentioned in the previous section), as well as productive landscapes, the green space will bolster the connectivity within the community<sup>9</sup> present at the multiple functions that may begin to be hosted in the same space, which will also positively impact its resilience.<sup>10</sup>

It is in this community-led productive landscape that one of Evans' models of regeneration comes into play: the community already has its own culture of community gardening, and so letting this culture lead into a shift in the site - a shift that welcomes, encourages and thrives on activities of community that birth regeneration - this is an example of *culture-led regeneration*, where the community reclaims its open space (in this case, the roofs of the buildings), and introduces an activity that will be inherent to the identity of the area.<sup>11</sup>

This is also an example of *culture and regeneration*, which will be detailed in the next section.





Fig. 4a.



Fig. 4b.



Fig. 4c.

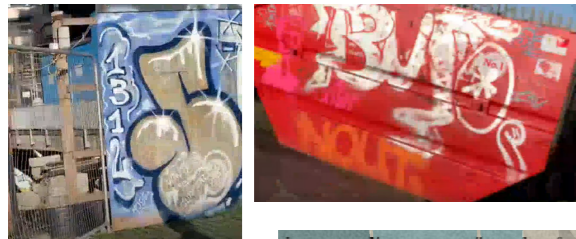


Fig. 4e.

Fig. 4d.

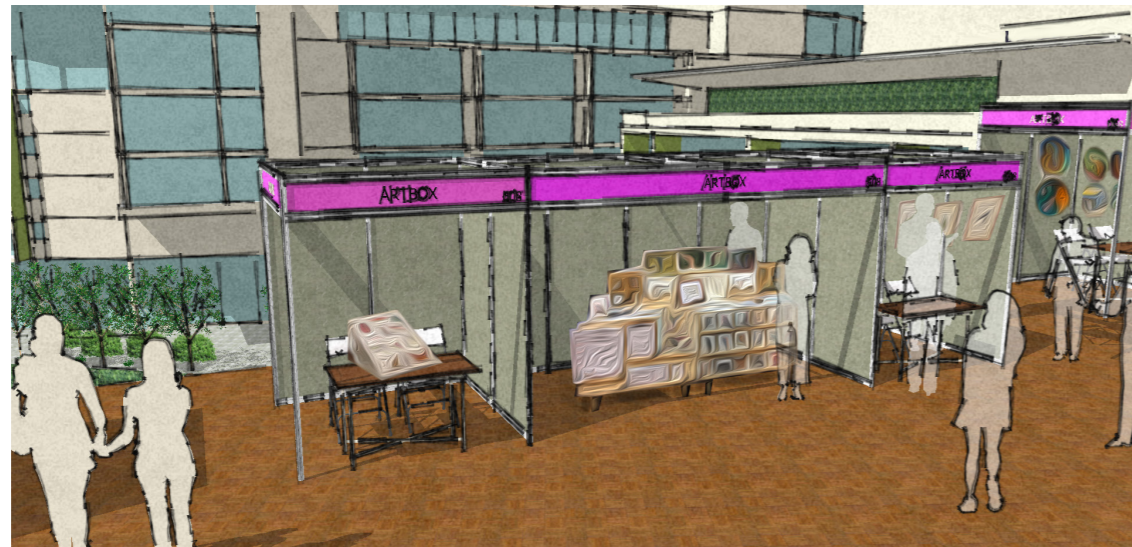


Fig. 4f.

**Artefact 4.**

Fig. 4a. Different points along the canal banks. Blue infr4a. A view of the graffiti that stretches across the extents of the wall on this street. A bold, ambitious and colorful local identity can be perceived.

Fig, 4b. 4c. Both belong to organizations established in the proximity of the community garden, and show community passion not only for vegetative growth, but also for art, as seen on their respective containers.

Fig. 4d. Another example of graffiti along a street, this time on one facing the canal.

Fig. 4e. The local art scene is clearly dedicated to creating variety and interest within the area, spray painting over even trash cans.

Fig. 4f. A weekly local art market on the roof of Building 6. Overlooking the public realm of the basin, its greenery, and busy activity, as well with a viewpoint to the community gardens on the opposite buildings, and the green facades nearby, this can definitely be a point of interest for locals and visitors alike.

**Community-led artscape**

Overlapping between Phases 2 and 3, the second Evans' model adapted into Fountainbridge's regeneration is that of *culture and regeneration*. This intervention was considered apt due to the very visible creative leaning of the Canal basin neighbourhood - street art greets visitors and residents almost everywhere they go, from walls lining the roads, to delivery trucks and garbage bins. It is even formally accepted as an 'identity' of the neighbourhood, through use on official establishment containers that operate as offices in the community - all as seen through Figs. 4a to 4e. Apart from street art, Edinburgh's *Printmakers* is also located within walking distance of the site.

In the *culture and regeneration* model, the community themselves become personally involved in what has been decided upon as the 'communal activity' that brings in attention and interest from residents and visitors alike.<sup>12</sup> Fig. 4f. illustrates such a scene. More often than not, this activity generates an increase in the local economy. Similar to, and carrying on from, the previous intervention, this one does not require the construction of a specific space geared towards this activity. An aspect of the 'multifunctional' roof space may be attributed to local weekly art markets - not unlike the local weekly food market, which also used to be hosted on the roof until a few years prior - that allow residents to channel their interests and creativity into local personal businesses, adding a layer of nuance to the identity of the Canal basin.

This is also an example of *culture-led regeneration*, which was detailed in the previous section.



### Further exploration

If more time were allowed during the charrette/intensive, further interventions may be explored regarding the details of *building change*, regarding affordable housing for community members of a range of ages - this would increase cohesion of the community, which in turn would be able to create stronger connections to the community-led regeneration interventions mentioned in this essay.

Additionally, in terms of ecosystem creation, further research could be undertaken to be able to identify migration patterns of local birds, find at what times of the year which species frequent the Fountainbridge area, and, in order to give the increase of biodiversity a well-concerted effort, choose which moss and vegetation to incorporate into the green facades on the site in order to help encourage them into this new habitat.

### Conclusion

The discussion and practise of 'regenerating place' in this instance was able to further drive in the importance of not only the *social* dimension of *sustainability* (as all the interventions presented here have significant impact on the residents of the area) and how focusing on that factor (ie, community needs and priorities) can help expand towards the other dimensions (instead of vice versa), but of *cultural sustainability* as well - a tenet of sustainability that has been debated by some to be as worthy of consideration as the current 4.<sup>13</sup> This can be seen particularly in the interventions illustrated in this essay - the social aspect of sustainability, where we focused on the priorities of the residents, was intertwined with the culture of the residents.

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