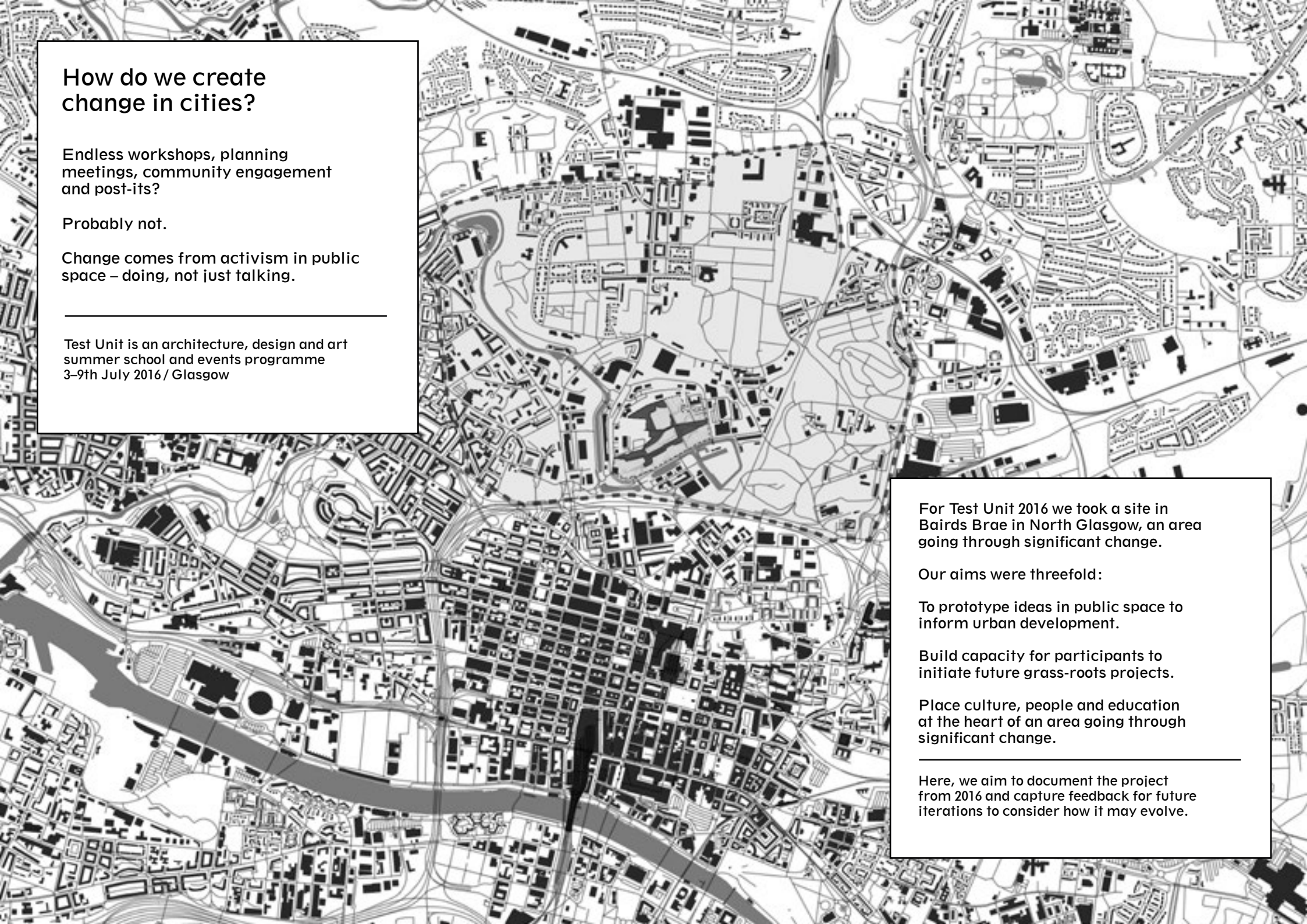


# TEST.

2016 Report

Bairds brce  
6th-9th July





## How do we create change in cities?

Endless workshops, planning meetings, community engagement and post-its?

Probably not.

Change comes from activism in public space – doing, not just talking.

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Test Unit is an architecture, design and art summer school and events programme  
3–9th July 2016 / Glasgow

For Test Unit 2016 we took a site in Bairds Brae in North Glasgow, an area going through significant change.

Our aims were threefold:

To prototype ideas in public space to inform urban development.

Build capacity for participants to initiate future grass-roots projects.

Place culture, people and education at the heart of an area going through significant change.

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Here, we aim to document the project from 2016 and capture feedback for future iterations to consider how it may evolve.





Test Unit Site Bairds Brae

POSSIL RD

M8

## Location

Speirs Locks is an area of North Glasgow, close to (but in many ways separate from) the city centre. A post-industrial area along the Forth and Clyde Canal with historic geographic, social and economic issues and going through change since the masterplan was developed in 2006.

The original plan included significant building work and capital investment, funds for which didn't materialise after the economic crash in 2008.

Since then an alternative approach has been developed, placing cultural activity, alternative use and temporary activation at the heart of the regeneration initiative.

This process is ongoing, and Test Unit comes at a unique point of potential influence for future use. The project built on the significant work already done, working closely with key partners and organisations in the area – including

The Glue Factory, The Whisky Bond, Igloo Regeneration, Scottish Canals, Glasgow Sculpture Studios, National Theatre of Scotland and Scottish Opera.

The Baird's Brae site



# Events Programme

## 6th-9th July

Participants divided into 4 groups, each group tackling a different aspect of the site and the city. We then worked in these groups to realise their designs and interventions.

In parallel to the week-long intensive summer school we had an evening events programme that questioned how our cities are designed and developed.

	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
AM		<div>Hub Building</div> <div>Collective 1-day build of temporary venue structure on site</div>	<div>From Monday afternoon to Friday evening each group worked independently to develop their ideas and projects to be showcased to the public on Saturday.</div>				
PM	<div>Welcome!</div> <div>Introduction and inductions.</div>						<div>Opening Party</div> <div>Site open to the public Workshops (2-5pm)</div> <div>Final review of projects and afterparty</div>
EVE			<div>Talk and Discussion at CCA</div> <div>ZUS (Rotterdam)</div>	<div>Pecha Kucha at The Whiskey Bond</div> <div>Art, Design, Artchitecture and the City</div>	<div>Turncoats Debate at The Glue Factory</div> <div>Topic: Rip it Up and Start Again at The Glue Factory</div>		





Location

- Glasgow
- Dundee
- London
- Germany
- France
- Palestine
- Korea

Participants  
4

Discipline

- Architect
- Artist
- Locals
- Urbanist
- Design
- Producer
- Joiner
- Ecologist
- Theatre Studies

Level

- CPD
- Recent
- Student
- Professional



# Hub Building: Barn Raising

The hub was an activation tool for the site and was erected on the first day of the summer school as a 'barn raise' activity - bringing people together and demonstrating what can be achieved in a short space of time.

Taking inspiration from the Amish tradition of barn raising, to create communal space through a collective endeavour, this activity provided an opportunity for all participants to engage in immediate collaboration and shared creative purpose. It acted as an introduction to each other, the site and the programme.

Budget: £4,100

Concept images:  
Moto, Slovenia



Venue @ Caravan Sari, Canning town, London



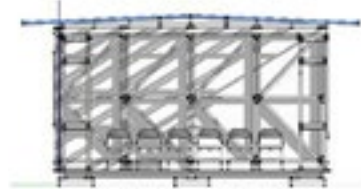
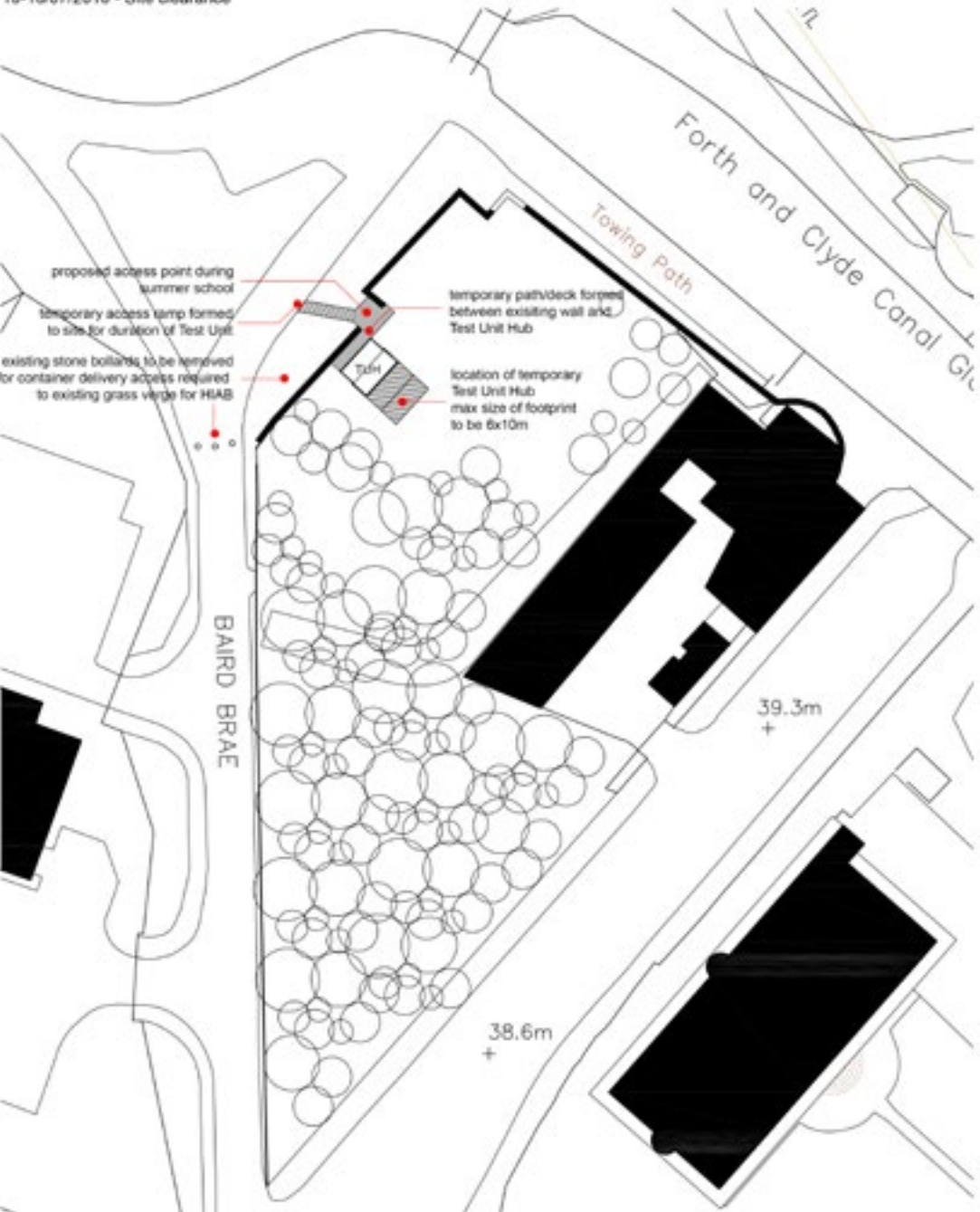
Amish Barn Raising





Site Access and Occupation Schedule

- 27/06/2016 - Installation of 'Coming Soon' Test Unit signage
- 29/06/2016 - Installation of temporary access ramps/paths
- 30-31/06/2016 - Preparation of ground for delivery of of Test Unit Hub
- 01/07/2016 - Delivery of Test Unit Hub
- 03-09/07/2016 - Test Unit Summer School
- 10-16/07/2016 - Site clearance













# Group Project Theme: Context

Regeneration so often  
results in total erasure.

Baird's Brae is a site that has undergone an amazing transformation from dense urban block to 're-wilded' woodland with barely a visible trace of its historic buildings. What is special and particular within this site and how can architecture simultaneously make this legible whilst enabling an entirely new occupation of this place? We will explore this question by 'constructing' our analysis to transform an aspect of the site into a spatial experience.



Facilitator

Kate  
Darby



Andrew  
Forbes



James  
Farlam



Mohammed  
Abualrob



William  
McRoberts



Gemma  
Holyoak



Janis  
Marsh



The original corner entrance of the 'Old Basin Tavern'





Outcome

The original corner entrance of the 'Old Basin Tavern' used to be a prominent building on this key canal gateway site. The concept of 'Ghost Wall' was to recreate the presence of this prominent corner, while adhering to the archaeological restrictions - without making any permanent fixings into the existing stone structure or digging into the ground. This structure then allowed members of the public to walk through the 'ghost' of the wall by creating a laddered pathway, and visual presence from the canal tow path and new entrance that invited people onto the site again.



Learnings for Bairds Brae

The construction of Ghost wall over the course of a week provoked some interesting conversations with locals walking along the canal. It even prompted one dog walker to go home and return with an old photograph of the wall we were 're-building' and another to share personal stories from his childhood. It highlighted the prominence of the Test Unit site, its potential for public engagement and the importance people invest in maintaining contact with the past.

Through the act of building and creating a story, but permeable corner.

Condition members of the public engaged with the site in new ways - bringing photos of how it used to look and they used it.

The simple process of removing rubbish and overgrowth revealed some unique quality about the site. Simple invention could be used to invite people in - to engage instead of feeling dangerous.

Learnings for Test Unit

Build more and talk less

Should what is being 'tested' be defined so everyone is tackling the same issue?

Can't remember but it involved a lot of mud and rain. And was bloody good fun

How might the projects have more of a legacy? By involving the local community more or the land owners?

The construction of Ghost wall over the course of a week provoked some interesting conversations with locals walking along the canal. It even prompted one dog walker to go home and return with an old photograph of the wall we were 're-building' and another to share personal stories from his childhood. It highlighted the prominence of the Test Unit site, its potential for public engagement and the importance people invest in maintaining contact with the past.







# Group Project Theme: Alternate Reality

Could the site be  
reimagined as a place  
where people can find these  
alternate realities?

On Bairds Brae there formerly stood  
a large cinema - a place where people  
would come and be transported,  
through film, to numerous other  
parallel worlds. Traces of this cinema  
are now almost completely erased  
and overgrown. Could the site be  
reimagined as a place where people  
can find these alternate realities?  
Could the site be reimagined as  
connector to a 'parallel world'?  
Can we create an intervention that  
encourages those that encounter it to  
think about and experience things in  
different ways?



The Astoria Cinema that occupied the  
site in the 1930s.



Facilitator

Neil  
McGuire



Abigale  
Neate-Wilson



Veronika  
Kruspanova



Malcom  
Murdoch



Neill  
Patton



Irina  
Glinski



Lily  
Asch





Outcome

As with any urban environment, there are layers of history about Bairds Brae, which may (or may not) help inform alternative futures. The group aimed to help people construct their own future of the site through providing a series of prompts or suggestive artefacts.

1. Postcard

A universal means of communicating ones experience of a place.



Learnings for Bairds Brae

The billboard worked as a simple, but effective tool to engage people with the site.

This started a discussion about a more perminant cinema on site, which could be developed relatively cheaply.

It's important to remind people of the value of these places.

Creating a trail through the site and inviting people to wander - opened up the possibilities of the site's use.

2. Signs

These signs refer to the language used in city signage / maps ('you are here') and connected with viewing windows on the outside of the site to create an experience or journey through the site



Learnings for Test Unit

I think its difficult to work in a group of people you don't necessarily know, but in this situation everyone entered in to the project with energy and enthusiasm.

I think learning happens at lots of different paces, and is often a layered experience (i.e you might inadvertently learn something completely unintended, or the reflection on what you've learned might not happen immediately).

The main thing that I'd try to do differently would be to give the project a life beyond the week in which we did it.

I think one of the benefits of projects such as this is that they enable learning to happen in many different ways on many different levels, through creating an environment that is both discursive and practical/applied where people can learn from their peers.

3. Memorial Bench

These markers led to the 'Muhammad Ali memorial bench' - dedicated to his visit to the Oakbank Hospital in 1965, which was opposite the site and is now vacant and hosts a burnt-out building. The bench offers a moment to view the site and consider the civic importance it once had, and what value it could hold in the future.



4. Billboard

Like the cinema screen that used to be on site, billboards often communicate alternative worlds. The images chosen refer to Muhammad Ali's visit to the area (as referenced above) and a still from the film 'Glasgow 1980' - a propaganda film made in 1970 that portrayed the optimistic future of Glasgow once the M8 had been fully installed (with increased mobility and transport was going to revolutionise the city) - a hypocrisy that destroyed communities and severed the north of Glasgow from the city .





to be continued...



# Group Project Theme: Connection

## Bairds Brae is an island

We will explore the concerns around connectivity in the area and how to mobilise action to communicate the island's potential as a social space.

A space to reclaim during Test Unit and demonstrate it's importance and value in (re)kindling and (re) discovering the bonds that once were made on the site when it was a pub, a social club and bingo hall.



Rebecca  
Davies



Alex  
Misick



Alistair  
Wyllie



Angus  
Stanley



Fredrik  
Frendin



Jennifer  
Argo



Zelier  
Boblier



Laura  
McLeod



Bingo @ Top Rank club c.1960's  
with the Oak Bank Hospital - now  
demolished and site vancant.

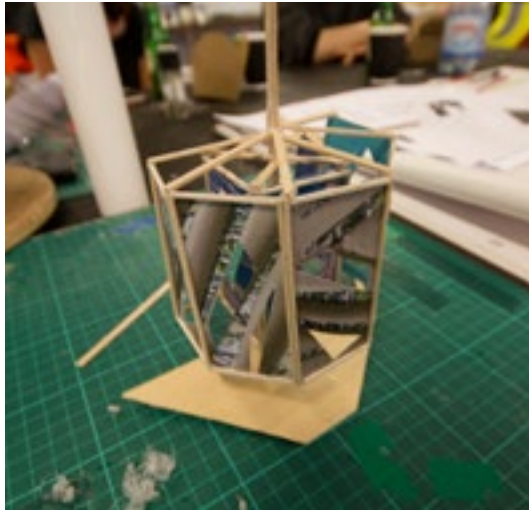




Outcome

The concept was the 'Bairds Brae Beacon' - an installation to connect with local community through the act of making and bringing people together.

The form was inspired by a combining the idea of a zoetrope (referencing the old cinema on site), a communal table for people to gather and a performance space. The zoetrope is turned by inserting wooden 'keys' into the poles that were distributed to local community groups with an invitation to join the opening party and participate in a workshop to create images for each of the 4 screens on the beacon structure.



Learnings for Bairds Brae

- Could create better connections with local community groups by starting this process earlier. Creating meaningful connections during Test Unit was ambitious due to time restrictions.
- We actively tried to engage with local communities and invite them to the opening. However, the site still feels isolated and it was hard to allow people to feel welcome.
- More time and active engagement would have helped. However, once people did engage with the site it offered great opportunities to explore.
- This could be developed further in future.

Learnings for Test Unit

- Start working on site at 1:1 from an earlier stage
- Strip back some of our ambitions, the outcome was a little too ambitious in terms of concept and use.
- Evening events were a key part of adding a theoretical component to the days practical work.
- Also a key way to improve social connections - giving it more context, food for thought and catalysing ideas that informed our daily processes. The two programmes running side by side was essential I think.
- I learnt a lot over the week - from the others. We all led the group according to the skills we had. And I think this was a really fruitful, organic process.







# Group Project Theme: Occupation

The very first act of creating community is settlement.

Bairds Brae creates a unique opportunity to revisit some of the fundamental contextual principles of human settlement as a means of creating community and ultimately public space. Our group will examine these conditions and design, develop and prototype an intervention that could support human occupation of the site at the scale of the individual but with the possibility of replication.



Lee Ivett



Lauren Coleman



Anna Rhodes



Yongwoo Lee



Rhea Martin



Emily Fribbance



Verity Hocking



Juliette Jago



The project responded to the old 'Basin House Tavern' that used to occupy the site during the 1800's.





## Outcome

The project developed was titled 'Nettle Inn' - responding to the old 'Basin House Tavern' that used to occupy the site in the 1800s, which also contained a brewery and acted as social hub for people working on the canal on this key intersection site. The concept of the groups design was a 'micro-inn' - incorporating all the components of a tavern: service 'bar' protruding through the wall to engage passers by on the canal path, preparation area for food and drinks (using foraged plants from the site) and a sleeping area above with views over the canal.



### Learnings for Bairds Brae

- This site is a key walk and cycle way linking city centre and area of North of canal especially when its flooded under bridge.
- This site offers of key opportunity to engage with the busy intersection.
- Due to nature of the area mixed use / night and day activity needs to be encouraged.
- During the day its busy but we experienced issue of night when no-one was on site.
- Future projects could look at how the site could be used as an 'urban campsite with mico-dwellings!'



### Learnings for Test Unit

- How to use immediate acts of making as a means of developing design and testing possibilities.
- On a more pragmatic and prosaic level participants learn about material properties, how to analyse a site, understand its condition and articulate an appropriate mode of intervention in a short timeframe
- How to use a variety of tools and simple wood work skills
- Tighten up the collaborative build element to a single day.
- Start working 1:1 on site sooner
- Create a situation where everyone was sleeping in the same place.
- Although the evening events were good, a more social aspect would have been a positive way of encouraging discussion between the groups - some quick fire cross-group crits every couple of days or in the middle of the week would also have been good.











# Events Programme

In parallel to the week-long summer school we had an evening events programme that questioned how our cities are designed and developed. These events aimed to give a broad and more theoretical context to the days time, building activity on site.



## KEYNOTE TALK:

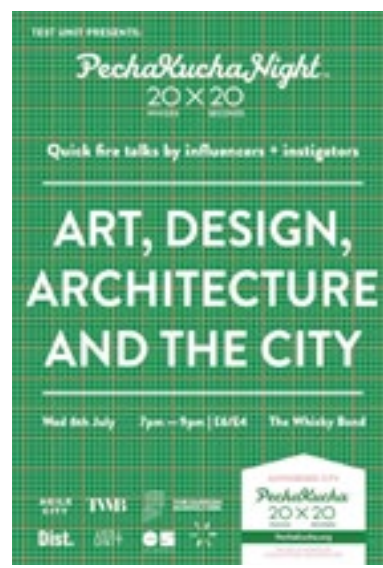
### PROTOTYPING PUBLIC SPACE with TIM PEETERS (ZUS)

Tues 5th July, 7pm  
CCA Glasgow

## BIO:

The duo Van Boxel and Koreman and their office ZUS are working on solicited and unsolicited design and research in the field of architecture, urbanism and landscape design. With a strong belief that an architect has to claim a strong position in the public debate on the future of our cities, van Boxel and Koreman see a large share of their pro-active work as urban politics.

Santiago Cirugeda, (from Recetas Urbanas, Spain) had been programmed to speak but he had to pull out due to unforeseen circumstances.



## PECHA KUCHA TALKS:

### Art, Design, Architecture & The City

Wednesday 6th July, 7pm  
The Whisky Bond, Glasgow

A fast-paced evening of talks from influencers and instigators on the theme of alternative approaches to city development.

We'll be hearing from those enriching our cities and experimenting with new techniques and partnerships that are pushing at the boundaries of urban development. From artists, developers, architects and designers we'll glean insight into new perspectives of how we can challenge and break the current process of how, and by whom, our cities are made.

## Speakers:

- Neil Butler, UZ Arts
- Chris Fremantle, Land Art Generator Initiative
- Here + Now
- Santini Basra, Andthen Studio
- Sarah Strang, Civic Room
- Andy Milligan, PARKing Day
- Frank Bölter, artist
- Gemma Holyoak, Canning Town Caravanserai
- Kate Darby, KDA & co-founder of Studio in the Woods
- Becca Davies, Oasis Social Club



## DEBATE:

### TURNCOATS: Rip It Up & Start Again

Thurs 7th July 7pm @ The Glue Factory

Hot-headed debate considering the positives and negatives of Glasgow's appetite for demolishing architecture in the name of regeneration.

Local authorities across Scotland wield wrecking ball and dynamite preferring social cleansing to mindful mending of our working class and marginal neighbourhoods.

Architects have become complicit in a one-size-fits-all strategy intrinsically weighted towards return-on-investment rather than acting as facilitators for a thoughtful process of social, cultural and economic self-generated development of community.

Pre-event warm up from Cat Hepburn - Writer & Spoken Word Artist

Chair: Lee Ivett

## The Panel:

- Rebecca Davies
- Paul Stallan
- Gerry Hassan
- Ambrose Gillick



## SITE OPENING PARTY

Sat 9th July, 1pm - late  
Bairds Brae, G4 9SW

## 2 - 5pm: WORKSHOPS:

Folded paper structure workshop with artist Frank Bölter

Soil City workshop with Open Jar Collective

Signage workshop with street artists Recoat

## 6pm: AFTERPARTY

Music from Night of the Jaguar  
Food from Chompsky





Public Workshop:

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Folded paper  
Submarine with  
artist Frank Bölter

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Frank is an artist based in Germany who attended Test Unit to create a piece of public work during the opening event on the Saturday. He spent time with the groups over the week to understand the context of the site.

Artist Frank Bölter and local resident Neil Forsyth







1



2



3

## Workshops

- 1 Kayaking with Glasgow Kayak Club Pinkston
- 2 Habitats for wildlife workshop with artist Kate V Robertson
- 3 Jewellery making workshop with FLUX laster studio
- 4 Den Building with Jennifer Argo
- 5 Linocut design & printing workshop with Mobile Print Studio
- 6 Signage workshop with street artists Recoat
- 7 Folded paper structure workshop with artist Frank Bölter

### Other workshops

Soil City Workshop with Open Jar Collective

Interactivity workshop with designer Elie Laking from Jason Bruges Studio

Mass Sculpture club with artist Florence Dwyer & Birthe Jorgensen

Design & Prototyping workshop with analogue social

Wood-based day course with Craig Thomson and Ben Whitney



4



5



6



7



8



9



10

## Events

- 8 Pecha Kucha Talks Art, Design, Architecture & The City
- 9 TURNCOATS: Rip It Up & Start Again
- 10 Site Opening Party



# Participants Feedback

Following the summer school we asked all participants the following questions. For this report we have picked certain responses that summarised the key points made.



Could you tell us three key things you have learnt during your experience?

Developing ideas as a team, problem solving and resourcing / recycling more local materials.

The positive effect small scale public and participatory interventions can have in cities, the incredible creativity achievable by people working together.

The importance of including different professions in a project.

Lecture series was very valuable and informative, especially Turn Coats. Learnt about other disciplines and emerging practices. Learnt that there are others with similar interests operating at grass roots - encouraging.

What would you like us to improve?

A week is a short time, but would have been nice to switch groups for a couple of hours, you could lower the budget for each team. -£500 is a lot, and in my group I know we ended up spending money on stuff we didn't necessarily need. Maybe the spirit of building more with less money is also what "agile-development" / tactical-urbanism is about.

Whilst the labour intensiveness felt productive with a tangible physical outcome the process was quite labour intensive. I felt there was limited time and/ or a facilitated means to effectively critically reflect or interrogate what we were doing, what the implications might be and if what was made was successful. Perhaps more thought is required on how 'space' is afforded to both. Perhaps to think critically about the psychological means of creating a space where the participants are not exhausted/ too tired to interrogate this.

Team size balancing and whilst ensuring any team members who need support receive it, also making sure the teams do not suffer from absentee members.

As a parent with young children I found it difficult to be able to take part in the evening events which meant that I missed a lot of the theoretical side of the project. It would have been useful to me to either be able to access videos of these events or timetable them differently so I could attend.

Any other feedback?

The night events were brilliant, and also did bring a lot of people from the outside!

In the same way the facilitators were used for each group perhaps there needs to be a facilitator dedicated to trying to help the group unpick what they are doing and to place what is done within it's relevant critical theory.

All in all a great experience. If you can keep getting people from as wide a range of professions as this year, I think you will be in a good place. That was the strength of this years Test Unit in my opinion. So many different approaches to the same site.

How has your participation in Test Unit contributed to your professional development?

Perhaps more than professionally, participating in Test Unit really helped my cultivate my personal belief and engagement with my own creativity and interest in design. It also really highlighted my awareness of the impact urban development and design has on communities.

I got to know people from several different creative professions in Glasgow. It made me aware of the potential of a city with a big arts-scene.

As a live build project I was able to put design and construction skills to the test. The programme for me came at the right time between jobs and allowed me to develop skills that in standard design practice there is little opportunity to explore.

What did you think about the price?

I was lucky enough to receive a bursary. However, I felt the facilities, catering and events that came along with the school were adequately sufficed by the cost of the summer school. In future I would look to find funding to do it again.

It would perhaps be beneficial to further establish additional 'bursary' schemes as a means to offer access to those not likely to be able to afford it. [for 2016 we offer a 8 bursary places, supported by Glasgow School of Art, but weren't able to secure funding to offer additional places.

What did you find were the most positive aspects of collaborative working?

Broaden the knowledge and perspectives.

Dialogue between people of different backgrounds, professions, energies and ages.

Having an equal voice with people with more professional experience than me. It was a very horizontal structure to the project.

Working collaboratively was really useful in learning new perspectives and approaches to working and creating, particularly because my background was quite different to other participants.

What was the best thing about the project for you?

Working with other enthusiastic people to see a creative project through. Sharing knowledge and ideas throughout the process. Responding to an issue in urban space that I believe can be successfully addressed by a collective, creative effort such as the summer school.

It opened up my eyes to what a city like Glasgow has to offer in terms of creative power. It was really inspiring to be around people from so many different creative professions.

I really liked the kinaesthetic, hands on approach of the week. I really enjoyed making things (power tools!) and seeing really tangible outputs from our ideations. It was also nice to meet some sound people.

The ambition and scale of what was achieved.



From 1-5 could you rate your experience of Test Unit?



Participants that would recommend Test Unit to others.



Supported by:



Project and Venue Partners:



**BAXENDALE**



**CCA:**



**TWB**

Conceived and delivered by:



**AGILE CITY**

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