

Flow

Gavin MacGregor

Re-think, Re-imagine and Re-design Landscape Glasgow

The call to Re-think, Re-imagine and Re-design Glasgow, now still immersed in COVID-19 response and pre COP26, provides an important space to pause and converse. Perhaps space to dwell deeper in the aggregation of buildings, which appears to be the city, or perhaps rather a space to return to the people and their needs and rhythms?

But where do we draw our boundaries, and why should we, with the complex cities entanglements of provision, consumption and dissipation of food, water and energy?

Perhaps master planned urban utopianisms, through classifications of urban, suburban, periurban, rural, could be no more than classificatory fictions?

Perhaps the river, the Clyde Walkway and the system of related canals, reveal the permeability of the city. The porous paths of fox and deer, the migrations of house martin and swallows and rain drop spattered pavements remind us we are part of something bigger. Clutha, or the Clyde, is arguably why Glasgow emerged and thrived. The river catchment system connects the city, those who make it, to wider networks and relationships.

Perhaps Glasgow, our dear green place, should return to its roots, to the river and its source?

Perhaps to find new routes and connections among broader communities of interest we have to begin with a landscape perspective?

Exploring Glasgow Landscapes

So what happens, if we situate the re-thinking, re-imagining and re-design of Glasgow, not as the bounded limits of city designations but as the beating heart of its wider region?

From a perspective of flow and movement, hydrological systems, seasonalities, circular economies, and heritage values how does Glasgow (rather than a centre of extractive accumulation) give back to its wider landscape, its broader bioregion? Can the communities of interest which make Landscape Glasgow benefit from a bioregional perspective? How does it help grow, nurture and care for its wider landscape?

To look beyond the boundaries, and to re-imagine and cultivate positive places for people and environment alike, we need to understand and explore the heritage and environmental values which connect different communities.

We already recognise the importance of key green corridors and green-blue routes from Glasgow, along its canal and rivers, which offer a mosaic of habitats and places of people and wildlife alike. But there are also historical and cultural connections, people, places and stories, which relate Glasgow with its wider landscapes. Through shared and inter-related stories (for example of traditions of Medieval carving, 17th and 18th century merchant trade, industrial growth and decline, New Town initiatives) there are broader themes which relate to many communities of Landscape Glasgow, from the source of the Clyde to the Sea. The manifestation of social and cultural values in these places and stories, can be thought of as different forms of 'wealth': metaphorical gold. Communities of place and interest, are variously found along historical route ways with Glasgow, are now at times isolated and fragmented. Can we re-connect communities, re-activate a mosaic of sites, creating places of active environmental and heritage values, green-gold routes which help deliver on all four pillars of sustainability for people.

We need to ensure that when we Re-think, Re-imagine and Re-design Glasgow that we map, explore, and Re-Situate the city within its wider bioregional context. Now is a critical time to bring together communities of interest to explore how a Bioregioning Clyde approach can promote collaboration and support co-creation of long term solutions to climate crisis, biodiversity loss and social / economic challenges which we face. We have established a Clyde Bioregion inception group who are currently exploring the possible scope and approaches which could be relevant.

If you would like to discuss some of these ideas, or are interested in joining the Bioregioning Clyde inception group,

please contact Gavin by email:

gavin.macgregor@northlightheritage.org

