Geoforum 167 (2025) 104467

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Geoforum

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/geoforum

Whatever floats your boat: practice, class and distinction on Britain's waterways

Agatha Herman [a], Richard Yarwood [b,*]

[a] School of Geography and Planning, Cardiff University, Glamorgan Building, Cardiff CF10 3WA, United Kingdom
[b] School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of Plymouth, Drake Circus, Plymouth PL4 8AA, United Kingdom

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Canals
Rivers
Practice
Class
Mobility
UK

ABSTRACT

Over recent years, increasing numbers of people in Britain have sought to live on inland waterways. In this paper we identify the different circumstances in which people come to live on the water; examine the differentiated ways in which boaters can access the waterway network and assess how different forms of regulation and practice impact on the social geographies of using canals. Drawing on interviews with people living on the water, we examine diverse groups of people compete to *practice* the waterscape in different ways. Based on this analysis, we identify new, emergent class structures of living on the water.

1. Introduction

Over recent years, increasing numbers of people in Britain have sought to live on waterways (Kaaristo et al., 2024, Bryant, 2021). In 2022, there were approximately 35,000 boat licences in England and Wales and, of these, around 40 % were held by people who lived aboard their boats permanently or semi-permanently (Canal and River Trust, 2023). This compares to 15 % of licences in 2011 (Bryant, 2021). Motivations for moving aboard are diverse, and include financial necessity, a desire for low-impact lifestyles, a change of circumstances or a long-held lifestyle aspiration. Nonetheless, while economic triggers, such as the ongoing housing and cost-of-living crises are significant, most choose 'for reasons more important and personal than economics' (Bowles, 2016: 101). Embracing the lifestyle is critical, as becoming a boater entails hard work to engage with the boat, learn how to be aboard it and to dwell within the waterways' 'community of practice' (Bowles, 2015).

In this paper we contribute to emerging work on canal and river living (Kaaristo, 2024, Bowles, 2024, Herman and Yarwood, 2024) by identifying the diverse range of people living on the water and, in doing so, analyse how mobility, power and practice shape their social geographies. While there may be a sense of shared lives within this linear village, 'being on the move is contingent, uneven and contested and depends upon different materialities, spatialities and temporalities that are involved in movement, meetings and access' (Malkogeorgou, 2019: 218). We recognise 'the social is situated in practice' (Shove et al., 2012: 6) and engage with the practice turn (de Souza Bispo, 2016) to unpack the unequal experiences and relations on Britain's waterways, reflecting on how hetrogenous relations, discourses and materialities result in different manifestations of *boating practices*. The waterway 'is really just like all society in miniature' (Boater 1, Mooring, 27/09/19), offering a unique lens into exploring the relationship between performances of mobility, practices and power.

This paper adds to our knowledge of these emerging social geographies and has three aims. First, it seeks to identify the diverse circumstances in which people come to live on the water. Second, and building upon this, we explore the differentiated ways in which boaters can access the waterway network and how different forms of regulation and practice impact on the social geographies of using canals and rivers. Finally, and emerging from this analysis, we identify new, emergent class structures of living on the water.

2. Contested canals: governing for diverse interests

Many people are undoubtedly drawn to live on canals and rivers by the prospect of slower, more idyllic lifestyles (Kaaristo et al., 2024). Living on the water offers the prospect of slow travel and an opportunity to engage with different watery spaces in ways that prompt new engagements with nature and landscape (Kaaristo, 2024, McGrath et al., 2023). Yet there is also evidence that some people are obliged to live on the water to access affordable accommodation. The financialization of housing has exacerbated housing inequalities (Christophers, 2021,

* Corresponding author.
E-mail addresses: HermanA@cardiff.ac.uk (A. Herman), r.yarwood@plymouth.ac.uk (R. Yarwood).

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2025.104467
Received 18 June 2025; Received in revised form 10 September 2025; Accepted 4 November 2025
Available online 17 November 2025

Crosby and Henneberry, 2016) with many, especially young, people priced out of buying or renting housing (Chng et al., 2024, Howard et al., 2023, Green et al., 2024). Yet living on the water can be driven by, and contribute to, precarity (Herman and Yarwood, 2024).

At the same time, canals and inland waterways in the UK have undergone considerable change. Although canals were originally constructed to transport materials, they became redundant as road and rail provided faster, more attractive forms of transport to industrial capital. Since the 1970s, canals have been re-imagined and restructured. Initially, volunteers renovated canals and returned many stretches to navigable status, leading to canals becoming popular places for leisure and tourism, both on and off the water. The Inland Waterways Association (2025) estimate that there are 5,000 miles of navigable inland waterways, with a further 2,000 miles that are derelict. Usage varies geographically: while some areas, including Bath or London, are highly pressured, more rural sections remain relatively isolated and undeveloped in terms of infrastructure (Bowles, 2024).

Many stretches of inland waterways are places of consumption that are valued for their heritage and watery nature (Wallace and Wright, 2022, Kaaristo, 2024, Visentin and Kaaristo, 2024). In these places, the physical and imaginative transformations of canals have driven their commodification andthey are now prized, yet contested, places for investment (Wincott et al., 2020). Thus, some canals have become enrolled into residential and commercial developments that have caused conflict between investors and liveaboard boaters who disrupt visions of canals as socially exclusive places to live (Sutton, 2021, Bowles 2024). Canals have also attracted investment in the forms of leisure, notably canal-boat holidays (Mertena and Kaaristo, 2024), but also recreation such as fishing, walking or cycling, that have led to contests between different waterway users (Kaaristo et al., 2020).

As waterways have been reimagined (Kaaristo and Visentin, 2023, Kaaristo, 2024, Visentin and Kaaristo, 2024), this has exposed tensions around their governance (Bowles, 2019, 2024). A range of agencies govern sections of the inland waterway network but the principal auhtority is the Canal and River Trust (CRT), which manages over 2,000 miles of navigable inland waters in England and Wales. The CRT is a charitable organisation that was established in 2012 to succeed the state-run British Waterways. CRT's work is wide-ranging but one of its principal roles is to licence boats.

How and where people live on waterways depends on their boat license, and there are two main categories.[1] First, 'home moorings' allow boats to be moored for extended periods of time in marinas, private moorings or 'on the cut' – towpaths managed by the navigational authorities. Second, 'Continuous Cruising Licences' (CCLs) negate the need for a home mooring but require the boater to be engaged in 'navigation… without remaining continuously in any one place for more than 14 days' (British Waterways Act, 1995: 17cii). The CRT have sought to enforce these regulations through more intensive surveillance and, at the same time, have attempted to dissuade boaters from using CCLs for residential use by highlighting the difficulties associated with the lifestyle (Bowles, 2024, Herman and Yarwood, 2024). This said, the 1995 British Waterways Act does not specify how far a CCL boater is required to move or what is meant by a place (Table 1).The requirement to move between neighbourhoods – however defined – creates difficulties in accessing work, education and services (Bowles, 2024, Herman and Yarwood, 2024) and is, given the vagaries of the CRT's terms, highly contested.

At the same time, the ability to access a permanent mooring – and with it the ability to live continually in a neighbourhood – is shaped by wealth and power. Mooring sites in popular areas are often prohibitively expensive and in short supply. These moorings, particularly those in private marinas, can be regulated in ways that offer little security of tenure (Herman and Yarwood, 2024). There are parallels here with ideas of housing classes (Shucksmith, 1990). Practices of consumption, as well as the power to intervene in the regulation of housing markets, determine who is able to access housing in particular places. Similarly, the ability to live on the water and, more crucially, *where* to live on the water is primarily fractured along lines of wealth and the power of regulatory gatekeepers (Cresswell, 2010, Kaaristo et al., 2020, Herman and Yarwood, 2024).

While people are, to varying degrees, constrained by broader social strategies, structures, histories and experiences (Loveday, 2016), they nevertheless retain the potential to resist their social positioning through the repeated, tactical performance of commonly accepted normative practices (Bourdieu, 1984). This is nuanced by the ways that the social practices of boating interconnect with mobility. As such, liveaboards practice a relational self-understanding of being a boater and compete to define what is of social value within a highly heterogeneous community. This might be reflected in consumption choices but, more widely, through a series of everyday actions that continuously negotiate how living on the water is made meaningful (Bowles, 2024). Consequently, a complex picture of waterway use emerges in which diverse groups of people compete to *practice* the waterscape in different ways.

3. The practices of boating

The idea of practice offers a way of understanding how places are interconnected, shaped and contested through mediated and recognised sets of performances (de Souza Bispo, 2016, Mertena and Kaaristo, 2024). Thus, people who travel on boats 'become boaters' (Bowles, 2024) by learning and engaging with series of practices, such as how to traverse and operate locks (Mertena et al., 2022). For liveaboards, the waterway is performed as both domestic and mobile space which is 'defined by what goes on within it' (Shove et al., 2012: 132). This relationship is inherently fluid, dynamic and active, emerging through the repeated and regular performance of a normative set of interconnected 'doings and sayings' (Røpke, 2009). Becoming a boater is a practice and, as Bowles (2015: 107) comments, 'learning one's own boat is a particularly personal journey'. The boat is the central material artifact through which their knowledge and the social order of the canal is carried and reproduced (Ingram et al., 2007). This emphasizes the hybrid nature of practices as both performances, which require individual everyday reproduction, and entities as what it means to be(come) a boater connects into long-term and enduring social structures (Røpke, 2009).

The wateriness of these spaces *matters* (Bissell, 2016, Steinberg and Peters, 2015, Visentin and Kaaristo, 2024) with their fluidity positioning the everyday lives of liveaboards as a challenge to hegemonic, terrestrially grounded ways of living and governance. The daily rhythms, or performances, of being a boater are different to those on land, with more consideration needing to be given to accessing, amongst other things, fuel';; water, food, sanitation, communications, health education, employment, welfare and friends (Bowles, 2024). These practices become stabilised, to a degree, in networks of practical, experiential knowledge that ensure particular things are used in a certain way, which is always embedded in the local context of the canal or river (Ingram et al., 2007, Røpke, 2009). While this does allow scope for adaptations, it establishes a normative social order, 'a meaningful, temporally and spatially bound nexus of know-how, social meanings and materials' (Jaeger-Erben and Offenberger, 2014: 168) that practice the water as a living space. This practice-as-entity is also governed by the navigational authorities, who enforce certain mobilities, and consequently everyday performances, depending on the type of boat licence held and the perceived needs of other waterway users, and the liminal nature of the waterways themselves, 'a private, concealed world, which is at the same time surprisingly public' (Malkogeorgou, 2019: 208). As such, the practices of becoming a *proper* boater (Bowles, 2015, 2024) pivot around a practitioner-in-place, who is:

[1] Other licences are available. For example, temporary 'winter lets' allow seasonal mooring.

Table 1
Movement and Place on the water.

'to remain in the same neighbourhood for more than 14 days is not permitted. The necessary movement from one neighbourhood to another can be done in one step or by short gradual steps. What the law requires is that, if 14 days ago the boat was in neighbourhood A, by day 15 it must be in neighbourhood B or further afield. Thereafter, the next movement must be at least to neighbourhood C, and not back to neighbourhood A (with obvious exceptions such as reaching the end of a terminal waterway or reversing the direction of travel in the course of a genuine cruise). What constitutes a 'neighbourhood' will vary from area to area – on a rural waterway a village or hamlet may be a neighbourhood and on an urban waterway a suburb or district within a town or city may be a neighbourhood. A sensible and pragmatic judgement needs to be made. It is not possible (nor appropriate) to specify distances that need to be travelled, since in densely populated areas different neighbourhoods will adjoin each other and in sparsely populated areas they CRT guidance for boaters without a home mooring May 2012: this is as published by British Waterways October 2011 with changes to organisation name only. may be far apart (in which case uninhabited areas between neighbourhoods will in themselves usually be a locality and also a "place"). Exact precision is not required or expected – what is required is that the boat is used for a genuine cruise' (CRT 2025b)

> *'…constituted through their mental and physical activities, their emotions, their knowledges and their relations with objects, which all dynamically shape what they do and what they consider possible. The practice itself is an interacting nexus of discourses, materials, skills and relations that shape its context, how the practice is understood and positioned in society and how it is performed. This is held together as relatively stable and coherent through power operations and relations of certain, vested interests, which normalise a particular practice nexus making it acceptable and enduring. Nevertheless, this is only ever provisional and the possibility for innovation and change can come from both within or outside of the stabilised accumulation that represents a particular practice' (*Herman, 2018*: 20, emphases added)*

As Bourdieu (2013: 298) comments, 'a social world is a universe of *presuppositions*…the ensemble of tacit conditions of membership, what is taken for granted by those who belong to it and what is invested with value in the eyes of those who want to be of it…'. Following Bourdieu (1998: 12), social classes exist 'not as something given but as *something to be done'*. Practices therefore function as signs of distinction, combining the material with the symbolic and relational, to express, signify and acquire value, which performs either social belonging or stigma (Bourdieu, 1984). This is referred to as habitus or the way that people and agencies are disposed to act according to unspecified but negotiated 'rules of the game' (Bourdieu, 1990). Groups are formed, dominate and falter through the 'legitimising theatricalization' – what we term 'performance' – 'which always accompanies the exercise of power [and] extends to all practices, and especially to consumptions which need not be inspired by the search for distinction to be distinctive' (Bourdieu, 2013: 300). As such, this is normative terrain and the practices that 'say and do' social class, and indeed boating, are always associated with complex and competitive forms of moral judgement (Halewood, 2023). Lifestyle is one key contemporary signifier that makes differences in capital, broadly understood, visible and allows an individual or community to express one's *rank,* even though this is a relational practice not an innate quality (Bourdieu, 2013).

Section 2 highlighted that there are diverse motivations for becoming a liveaboard boater ('practitioner'), but Bowles (2016) contends that the increase people living onboard for economic reason reflects that many boat-dwellers are less affluent. Waterways thus contain diverse communities in socio-economic, political, cultural and aesthetic terms, which is reflected in different, sometimes contested, ideas of what is deemed acceptable and possible. For Bowles (2015), this is about dwelling on the water; performing certain tasks, developing and demonstrating a skilled engagement with your boat. In these ways, people 'become' boaters although this means different things to different people. Bowles (2015) identifies divisions between those who engage in the community of practice, and so its norms, and those who do not. We suggest that for those with the financial means, there is no economic imperative to engage with some 'key' boating practices, as perceived by the broader community, such as fixing mechanical faults. This allows some to 'opt out' of certain boating practices, highlighting tensions within the community around identity, of both individual boaters and the canal itself, and the evolution of the *practice* of being a liveaboard. After all, people in different situations do the same activity differently (Warde, 2005) and, by focusing on liveaboard experiences, it encourages attention to the always present power relations operating within and through social practices.

The differentiations within boating communities are further highlighted through the contentious issue of moorings. The lack of moorings in general, and affordable moorings in particular, has long been a challenge.The London Assembly Environment Committee (2013) noted that supply has not kept up with demand and that rising prices and a lack of tenure contribute to equality issues around access. The CRT (2018) recognised the need to increase and improve on-side (towpath) and off-side long-term, as well as winter, moorings in London but argued that moorings needed to be restricted in high-traffic areas to ensure 'safe navigation and fair sharing of the waterway with other users' (*ibid*: 5), reminding us that the *residential* practice of canals and rivers as performed by liveaboard boaters is not guaranteed by navigational authorities.

These problems are exacerbated because there is a lack of basic data about the numbers and lifestyles of boaters. Although the CRT conducts an annual survey of boaters (CRT, 2025a), participation in this is voluntary and the government does not collect data on boat dwellers or moorings (RRR Consultancy Ltd, 2018). There is a need to know more about the diverse needs of boaters. Bath and North Somerset Council (B&NES) (2013) argued for standard terminology to ensure greater clarity about different types of boater and advocated for a five-type categorisation (Table 2).

While this demonstrates that differences within the waterway community are acknowledged within policy circles, this categorisation is grounded reductively in boater location, which offers no insights into their social geographies and precludes engagement with their experiences, relations, identities, challenges and aspirations. This serves too as a reminder that contemporary liveaboard boating is shaped by the socio-political and material contexts of neoliberal capitalism (Hansen, 2023), with infrastructure and policy combining with individual capabilities to shape the experiences of different boating classes. Strategies to claim the waterscape are performed by those with power, which include navigational authorities, to delimit acceptable practices, and so aesthetics, mobilities and behaviours, in these spaces (de Certeau, 1988, Herman and Yarwood, 2024). However, many boaters are more characterised by their absence of politico-economic power, and so draw on the tactics of *making do*, using the opportunities of the moment to adapt and resist the system (de Certeau, 1988).

4. Study background

Our research investigated the lifestyles of liveaboard boaters with a particular focus on experiences of accessing services, employment and welfare, setting these in the context of a changing regulatory environment and mobile boater community. Data were gathered between 2019 and 2021 and were therefore affected by various lockdowns during the Covid pandemic. There were two main stages to the research. First, we undertook an online survey to gain a broad understanding of the demographics, experiences and views of people living on the water. The survey was developed in partnership with a boater's organisation; was publicised through various boating forums and was accessible via a weblink. It achieved 154 responses that covered a wide range of boaters and circumstances. The survey used both closed questions, to allow quantitative analysis of different boating experiences, and open

Table 2
B&NES Residential Use Categories of Liveaboard Boaters. Source: Adapted from BANES Council (2013: 12-13).

RU1. Where someone lives aboard their vessel (capable of navigation) at a designated mooring base, basin or marina, who may periodically go cruising and return
RU2. Where someone lives aboard their vessel (not capable of navigation) at a designated mooring base, basin or marina
RU3. Where someone lives aboard their vessel and continuously cruises the network, with no designated mooring at a base, basin or marina
RU4. Where someone lives aboard their vessel at a designated mooring base, basin or marina in winter, but continuously cruises in summer (seasonal cruisers)
RU5. Where someone lives aboard a purpose-built floating structure (not capable of navigation) at a designated mooring base, basin or mooring

questions that allowed respondents an opportunity to develop their responses. Most (83 %) respondents lived on board all year, which reflected our distribution strategy and our aim of surveying 'liveaboards' rather than tourists. Nearly half (47 %) had mooring on a waterway, 19 % were moored in a marina and 14 % had a Continuous Cruising Licence (CCL). The remainder said they had other forms of mooring (including winter lets) or declined to reveal their tenure. In keeping with other surveys of boaters (CRT, 2025) boaters were more likely to be older (25 % over 60) and retired (30 %) when compared to the general population of the UK. Only a quarter were in full-time work and nearly half of respondents (48 %) lived on their boat alone. As Table 3 demonstrates, most respondents had lived for many years on the water. Our survey was answered by boaters in a wide range of locations and,given the transitory nature on canal living, their locations only represent a snapshot of places but the Grand Union Canal; Kennet and Avon Canal, Coventry Canal and Oxford Canal were popular locations.

The survey was also used to give people the opportunity to be interviewed in more depth about their experiences. Additional interviews were contacted via snowballing or by contacting various agencies associated with inland waterways. In total, we conducted 36 interviews, which included six representatives from boating organisations and agencies. Nearly half of the interviewees (17) had a home mooring, 16 had CCL or winter/temporary lets and the remaining three lived on land and worked for boating organisations. Twenty of our interviewees were male; twenty lived with partners on their boats and 16 were single (with four explicitly mentioning divorce). Only three respondents had children living aboard. As we were restricted by Covid lockdowns, these occurred remotely using online conferencing platforms or calls via mobile telephones. The interviews lasted between thirty and hundred minutes. The interviews provided detailed insights into the lives of people living on the water and included virtual tours of boats on some occasions. All the interviews were transcribed and coded thematically using NVivo 12.

In the following sections we argue that by analysing the social practices of be(com)ing a boater, we gain a more holistic understanding of the power and social relations, and so the differentiated expressions of class, within the community. First, we consider the circumstances by which people came to live on the water and, in doing so, note the structures that empower or constrain life on the water. Following this, we focus on the way that particular boating practices are performed and negotiated within these structural frameworks. In turn, this enables a better knowledge of the diverse and divergent experiences and needs of those living on the water.

Table 3
Survey respondents' length of time living on the water.

Less than one year	7
1–5 years	32
6–10	31
11–15	27
16–20	23
Over 20	14
Not Stated	20

5. Becoming a boater: diverse experiences and shared practices

Sixty-eight percent of survey respondents stated that they had moved to the water for 'lifestyle' reasons, although these were often prompted by significant changes in personal situations, including relationships ending, redundancy or retirement. These circumstances determined how people invested in their boats, what licences were available to them and the extent to which they travelled on the water. In this section we outline the different circumstances that drew people to live on the water. We identify four types of boaters, with the usual disclaimer that these are an analytical convenience rather an attempt to impose an identity on boaters.

5.1. Lifestyle boaters

Some boaters had high amounts of disposable capital that could be invested in a boat and mooring. These people were able to invest in bespoke craft, rent moorings in prime positions or take the opportunity to cruise inland waterways. One boater made the decision to live on the water after a successful career overseas. He paid '£52,000 for a shell of a boat' and £4,000 a year for an online mooring managed by the CRT:

> *'…the boat was what's called a sail-away … you buy an empty shell and you create your dream interior in it, really. So that's what I did. But it's immensely hard work and it's extremely time-consuming, extremely expensive…' (Boater 26, Mooring, 14/04/21)*

Buying a boat and fitting it to a personal deign reflected a series of consumption choices: he extolled the virtue of his boat, commenting on the choice of wood used in the interior and the features of his cabin, and frequently referred to it as 'beautiful'. He could also afford to moor his craft in a location that was popular with liveaboard boaters, which allowed him to access his employment while fulfilling his vision of a boating lifestyle. By securing a mooring, Boater 26 was spared some of the challenges of a CCL and so bought the right to access services and goods:

> *'…for continuous cruisers …. I think there are more challenges, but then you're saving £10,000 a year by continuous cruising, if you're happy to move every two weeks and…have the challenges of post and Wi-Fi and access to certain services then that's fine, but for me, that's why I'm happy to pay another ten, eleven grand a year, so I do pay mooring fees' (Boater 4, Mooring, 27/11/19)*

Retirement often provided the opportunity and means to live on the water. Some liveaboards were able to sell or downsize houses to invest in a boat; others were able to retain a property as well as buying/building a boat. Besides offering greater capability to invest in the materiality of their boat, wealthier retirees were able to choose an appropriate licence, with some preferring marinas but others favouring a CCL that allowed them to explore the waterways. Their financial capability also enabled them to change licences, with some using a CCL to travel before buying a home mooring in their desired location.

Many lifestyle boaters identified with concepts of slow living, 'stepping off the treadmill, seeking work–life balance or refusing the dominant logic of speed' (Fuller et al., 2012). Interviewees discussed the wellbeing benefits of living on the water, including interactions with animals, birds, habitats, light and the water that shaped their understandings of what it means to be a liveaboard:

'It's just such a lovely lifestyle and the whole swans coming to the window when you're washing up and we feed the swans every day, feed the ducks every day, we rate our favourite mooring spots according to which has got the most tawny owls around it…that's so much better in terms of lifestyle than I think I could have anywhere else.. It's a real joy, honestly (laughs), it's really special' (Boater 11, CCL, 26/03/20)

For these boaters, their praxis of being a liveaboard is enmeshed within their engagement with the environment around them; their connections to nature are important in defining their understanding of what it means to be a boater, with the slowness offering an everyday adventure for personal growth that 'enlivens and enriches who they are' (Fallon, 2012: 146). With more freedom to choose, whether through life-stage and/or financial means, this enabled 'lifestyle boaters' to embrace being at the 'right speed' (*ibid*: 147). Pertinently, this boater contrasted the slowness of life on his mooring with neighbouring traffic:

"…I felt today, crossing that road, the violence of the vehicles who've got no time for anybody. And then you step away from that and you're away from the rat race. It's so quiet…" (Boater 15, Mooring, 12/01/20)

5.2. Boaters of necessity

Although a change of lifestyle appealed to many, significant numbers came to live aboard as an alternative to high property prices, particularly in the South East:

'…we couldn't get a mortgage or anything like that and we thought we would save a bit of money. We were renting a flat in London … and we were just really struggling to afford it…we'd also always been quite into travelling, campervans and things like that, so we thought we'd do that, it'd be fun. We'll do that for a few years and we'll save some money and so it was for the lifestyle, partially, but as I say, probably mainly financially.' (Boater 1, Mooring, 27/09/19)

For some, a change in employment or personal circumstances, such as redundancy or a relationship ending, also prompted a move to the water:

'I bought a boat because, when I got divorced, I couldn't afford a house … well, if I were to rent a flat big enough for myself and the children to come and see me in northeast London, and I rented it for three years, that's the same price as buying a boat. But at the end of three years, I'll have a boat left, whereas I won't have a flat' (Boater 17, CCL, 27/01/21)

Boater 17 also held a CCL because it was cheaper than a mooring; while he was required to move to fulfil the licence conditions, he planned these to stay close to his children. Boater 3 (CCL, 19/11/19) also became a liveaboard following a divorce, with her lack of credit history rendering her ineligible for a mortgage. However, while the *choice* of a CCL was, we suggest, imposed on Boaters 3 and 17, for others this mobility was a benefit:

'I got made redundant after 26 years and I'd already decided I didn't want to work in central London anymore … and thought 'ah, if I get a boat, I can get a job up country somewhere and I don't have to immediately find a house or a flat or whatever' (Boater 2, CCL, 21/11/19)

This boater, like many, swapped between licences to suit his socio-economic circumstances. He noted:

'I've been living on my boat pretty much full-time for just over 11 years. I started out continuously cruising and then I had a mooring for 5 years which I was away from the boat for sort of half the year for about 3 years and then kept the mooring on for a couple of years and for the last 4 years I gave up the mooring and I've been continuously cruising again'

Living on the water not only provided more affordable accommodation but also allowed flexibility on how and where to live through the strategic purchasing of different licences, which was particularly valued when it resulted from a change in personal circumstances. While financial push factors were central, like the 'Lifestyle Boaters', many 'Boaters of Necessity' were also drawn to the perceived lifestyle benefits of living on the water:

'…wanting to get away from the rat race, wanting to enjoy life and take it at a slower pace. I think it's got a lot of medical benefits as well, yeah… So, you know being out in nature, and we both love the wildlife anyway, so we're captivated by the different types of birds that you get and such like.' (Boater 13, Mooring, 12/01/20)

This highlights a commonality in terms of perceptions of boater practices, with the slow praxis of living in and with nature serving as a core element for both groups of liveaboards. As such the practice of be (com)ing a boater goes beyond the day-to-day rhythms of everyday necessities and skills needed to maintain the materiality of the boat (Bowles, 2015), to encompass the intrinsic relations with slowness, Otherness and wateriness that living on the waterways entails.

5.3. Nomadic boaters

A further group of boaters are those who have always lived a nomadic lifestyle; including 'people who are second or third generation boaters…they may have been born on a boat, or their family might have been brought up on a boat, and their family before that' (Boater 19, CCL, 15/12/20). Boater 19 had herself previously worked as a truck driver that involved travel away from home; she had:

'…been travelling nearly all my life … I didn't come from a comfortable house. I came from a way of life that was much harder than this. So, it all depends on your perspective, doesn't it? I just swapped my truck for a canal boat … My whole life has been like that, so I wouldn't really know what it's like to just be normal and part of mainstream society.'

For her, living on a canal boat was an extension of this nomadic lifestyle. She retrained as a healthcare professional and planned her journeys around her part-time role, arguing that 'moving is just something that I have to do'. Despite a need to plan ahead diligently, she found a sense of freedom in this nomadic lifestyle:

'I take my ropes off and I set off, and I look behind me … and think, is it really that easy? Yeah, it really is that easy; I've just left that place now and I'm going to a new place. And I really like that. But that's partly because I'm from a traveller background …. I consider that to be a privilege because, for me, it represents a sense of freedom, of being able to move from place to place and live an interesting, healthy lifestyle'

The practices of slowness and alterity again emerge in this account. More importantly, for 'Nomadic Boaters', mobility was core to their identity and practice of being a boater; 'it seems to me there's no point having a boat if you're not going to go anywhere on it' (Boater 11, CCL, 26/03/20), which highlights a broader tension over perceptions of who 'counts' as an 'authentic' boater (see Section 6). However, this is something that can be 'rectified' through the enactment of the 'proper' practices of mobility, which can draw in even those with no previous experience of travelling:

'There's nothing better than being in the middle of nowhere and it's just a – it's a feeling you can't explain…it's very difficult to explain it if you don't know what it's like to be a traveller… A lot of people who come to the canals have no association with travelling before they get here, but they absolutely love it. They fall in love with it and that's that' (Boater 24, Mooring, 30/03/21)

Anyone can thus become 'part of a tradition of radical itinerant life on canals and rivers, a life that exists in contrast to the wider sedentary world' (Bowles, 2016: 108) but they need to perform the canal as a mobile space, practising movement as an everyday repetition to ensure the endurance and normality of this element of boater praxis.

5.4. Marginalised boaters

Although our sampling framework did not reach very marginalised people, it was clear that many respondents had encountered people living on the spatial and littoral margins of society, often in boats that were not safe or habitable:

> *'You've then got the sub-set who to be blunt, have found a boat which is marginally better than a cardboard box in a shop doorway. They've found somewhere that they can exist…they wouldn't get beaten up…they wouldn't get people setting fire to them…they could find somewhere where they could…be left alone.' (Committee Member of a Boating Association, 10/01/19)*

For some this represented an opportunity, for safety, transition or recovery, with Boater 9 (CCL, 15/01/20) commenting 'there are a number I see going from rough sleeping onto boats…You are not going to be going from a hostel, a night shelter…into a central London rented flat… At least the boat environment, it's definitely a potential for transition'. However, for others this had become a trap with Boater 26 (Mooring, 14/04/21) recounting two examples of people living in seemingly inescapable marginal situations:

> '*…one on a boat that was listing due to a hull breach that they could not afford to repair and another who was dependent on alcohol and, likewise, unable to fund essential repairs…. many boaters are really no more than one mechanical breakdown away from homelessness and poverty, and one breach of the hull…away from deep trouble in their life*'

Reflecting these issues, a number of third-sector organisations work to support people living on the water. These include the Waterways Chaplains, Christian volunteers who undertake to walk a mile each week along towpaths as part of a wider mission to minister to those living on the water. A Senior Waterways Chaplain reflected that their mission was 'pastorally proactive and spiritually reactive', responding to the trinity of short-term, long-term and eternal needs. One recalled some of the mental and physical health challenges that exacerbate marginalisation on the waterways:

> *'…we had a waterways chaplain who was literally just walking down the tow path, saw somebody on a boat and said how are you, and he just said terrible. I don't think I'm going to survive this winter. This was in autumn. It turned out he had alcohol, drug abuse, depression, and he'd just given up' (Waterways Chaplaincy, 20/01/21)*

The liminality of 'Marginalised Boaters' is arguably exacerbated by their financial, emotional, physical or skill-based constraints to engage in being a 'proper' boater or citizen, more broadly. These social and material exclusions are intertwined, with, for example, the economics and skills of ensuring a liveable and mobile boat impacting on their capability to alert and access wider welfare and support services.

From this brief and inexhaustive discussion, we have highlighted four key classes of boaters, who have become liveaboards for multiple reasons and continue to have diverse needs and interests through their differing circumstances, materialities, relations, skills and aspirations.

6. Contesting the cut: practices and boating classes

We now move to discuss some of these conflicts between different groups that structure experiences and relations on the waterway, highlighting the 'struggles over appropriate spatial conduct' (Flemsæter et al., 2015: 343) that compete to perform the canal in a certain way, laying claim to being legitimate subjects of the waterway and so having the authority to delineate appropriate socio-spatial practices (Flemsæter et al., 2015, Brown, 2014). To do so, we examine two key, contentious practices: cruising and polishing. Our fieldwork revealed that these activities could cause tensions that, in turn, revealed divisions between different boaters, as well as between boaters and people living on land.

6.1. Cruising

As Bowles (2015) reflected, becoming a boater is a journey and mobility is a core, yet contested, physical performance of this. For some, the praxis of cruising – travelling around the canal and river network – is fundamental to their life and identity on the water (Section 5), for others it is an imposed inconvenience that has to be negotiated to access work, education and services and for those with a home mooring. To cruise or not to cruise is a key point of tension within boating communities as to what 'counts' as an authentic boating lifestyle; as Boater 12 (Mooring, 30/03/20, emphases added) commented, her friends are 'saying that I'm not getting the *full benefit of the community* whilst I'm living on a permanent mooring'. While we briefly considered this in Section 5, here we unpack the politics and tensions around the *practice* of cruising since, whatever the boater circumstances, cruising has to be carefully planned:

> *'I make decisions based on where I'm working, how much time I've got to move and where facilities are for parking and getting to the shops. There's a huge gamut of criteria that come into making a decision about where I move. I might need water. I might need gas. I might need a pump out. I might need shopping. I might need to pick up a parcel. I might need to go to work. I might need to go to college. All these things have to jostle for priority on a weekly basis.' (Boater 19, CCL, 15/12/20)*

Given her nomadic history, Boater 19 was content to move when required and, given her experience, plan these moves accordingly. This performance allowed her to remain outside 'mainstream society' and follow a lifestyle that she found offered her freedom and contentment, and she expressed few views on governance. By contrast, another 'nomadic boater' felt that his lifestyle was being restricted and marginalised by the navigational authority's licensing changes. He had grown up in the Midlands, worked on 'hotel boats' and, after saving, bought a very basic hull 'and just fitted it out myself' (Boater 25, CCL, 13/04/21). His decision to renovate a boat reflected a form of 'sweat equity' that allowed him to access a life on the water[2] (Lees, 2000). He worked in haulage until Covid forced the sale of his van and so, at the time of interview, described himself as unemployed, which resulting in feelings of socio-economic marginalisation and little power to change his situation.

While boaters with CCLs we spoke to were generally compliant with movement requirements, CCLs remain contentious (NBTA, 2017) and some boaters resented the enforced mobilities. Sometimes this led to moorings in unsafe or isolated locations, which made it hard to leave the boat or access digital services that, in turn, hindered being able to work in-person or remotely, or apply for jobs. As Boater 25 (CCL, 13/04/21) argued:

> *'…we were told, "Move your boats to where it's not so busy." So, we have to move our boats to the middle of nowhere, away from the shops, away from main roads, away from everywhere, and we're the ones inconvenienced…' (Boater 25)*

While for some boaters the mobile lifestyle equates with freedom, this is not the case for all; mobility can be experienced in contradictory and contingent ways through how it is governed and the consequent inequalities (Malkogeorgou, 2019). Life on the water always *exceeds* the space of the river or canal, and so boaters' lives remain entwined with terrestrially-grounded services and institutions that seek to apply a logic of stasis and control to innately fluid places (Steinberg and Peters, 2015). To understand the politics of cruising practices, we therefore need to pay 'attention to the necessary spatial, infrastructural and institutional moorings that configure and enable mobilities' (Hannam et al., 2006) on the canal, and which highlight the complexities of living

[2] This contrast markedly with the account on page 9 of the boater who was able to invest £52,000 for a boat and then pay for craftspeople to fit it out in a bespoke manner.

on the water when you need access to specific educational, employment or health sites:

> *'… in terms of the 20 miles a year,[3] I understand that it's a real problem for some people and particularly if you've got kids or you're disabled, I don't see why it has to be so strict…when there's people are more vulnerable, it doesn't work for them, I think it's a terrible shame that people should not be able to opt into this lifestyle because they can't do that and because moorings are so expensive, that's the issue isn't it?' (Boater 20, Mooring, 16/12/20).*

For some, particularly 'boaters of necessity', this was an economic issue in terms of the lack of available, affordable and accessible moorings; our work highlighted the rising costs of securing home moorings with the new private equity owners of Boater 35′s marina (Mooring, 25/07/19) raising mooring fees, monthly payment surcharges and selling-on fees to the extent that some were paying £20,000p.a. Nevertheless, other boaters – usually with home moorings – framed this as an 'anti-authoritarian' stance, arguing that CCLs were unwilling, rather than unable, to pay for a home mooring:

> *'…so there are permanent moorings available for these people, but they all like to play the game and pretend to be continuous cruisers when in fact they've got ties to the area and don't really want to move at all … hearing all the heart strings about people that have got to get children to school and we need the local hospital, et cetera. Well, that's fine, but be in a legitimate permanent mooring.' (Boater 34, Mooring, 13/04/21)*

For this boater, the institutional moorings tethering CCLs to particular points were impacting on their capability to cruise:

> *'If you imagine you're going up the [name of locks] which is going to take you at least five hours, probably six, six and a half, and you get to the top and you find there is nowhere to moor because people have been there for three weeks or three months – I mean, there was one boat that was there for over two years, blocking a prime location close to the water point.'*

Similarly to 'nomadic boaters', Boater 34 considered that people living on boats without moving were not really boaters as 'they're not intending to move and they're not necessarily there to enjoy and maintain the environment.' By contrast, he felt that his legitimate cruising, to explore the waterways, was hindered by people who overstayed on time-limited visitor moorings and were inconsiderate to those attempting to navigate through. Such boaters were generally supportive of the CRT's governance of the water, and even actively policed their movement policies through volunteering for enforcement patrols. Through such governance practices – patrolling, recording, reporting – they promoted the regulation of the waterways as for leisure and navigation, rather than as domestic spaces.

Still, for many boaters – whether through choice or not – waterways are residential, and boaters with CCLs were highly aware both of their cruising obligations and the increasing surveillance. Two tactics emerged to engage with this. Firstly, some boaters moved to places that they knew were less likely to be watched, avoiding 'hotspots', which were closely monitored. Boater 2 (CCL, 21/11/19) admitted to a 'game playing', using his knowledge of the waterways to legitimise an extended mooring:

> *'…there was a particular set of works, which meant a very nice place a bit out of the country was basically gonna be shut off from the rest of the system completely for about 6 weeks…me and about half a dozen other people…moored up, went 'right, we're sorted* cos *we can't get out of here for 6 weeks, basically till Christmas'*

Secondly, some boaters wanted to be observed so that their movements, and thus CCL obligations, were officially recorded. Boater 6 (CCL, 27/11/19) specifically travelled to places where she knew her journey would be seen and reported by CCL officials. In doing so, she was reassured that her journey, and the requirement to move, had been recorded and, thus, the conditions of her CCL licence would not be challenged.

Tensions around cruising centred on questions of choice, governance and its 'proper' performance, which highlight the power relations and politics entailed as different groups seek to encode the waterways in particular ways. Institutional moorings emerged as key in anchoring the practice of cruising, demonstrating the contingency, inequalities and dependency of mobility (Malkogeorgou, 2019: 218). This begins to unpack some of the complexities of this heterogenous community; while socio-economics goes some way to explaining different class identities in this space, focusing on the bundle of practices that constitute experiences of cruising emphasizes that unequal access to the *resource* of mobility (Hannam et al., 2006) situates 'boating classes' as active, tactical, emotive and *fluid* performances. The materiality of the boat, as simultaneously static and mobile (Malkogeorgou, 2019), is an important carrier of liveaboard practices, offering a way to inscribe engagement with the normative skills, relations and discourses of a particular boating class identity.

6.2. *Polishing*

There is a long heritage of decorating boats to reflect a boater's identity and distinguish them from others (Wincott et al., 2020). At the same time, several intervieweess referred to 'brass polishers' or 'shiny boaters' (see also Bowles, 2024), who aimed to perform an arguably romanticised, traditional vision of the canal (Boater 19, CCL, 15/12/20) and liveaboard life through their maintenance of a certain boat aesthetic:

> *'…people who invariably they've boated for thirty years, what they don't tell you is their boat sits in the marina for fifty weeks of the year…their boat's a glistening thing. The first thing they do when they tie up at the end of the day is get the mop and the chamois leather out and mop their paintwork down and get the Brasso out and polish the brasses…' (Boater 23, CCL, 01/04/21)*

This is an aesthetic that appears to resonate with the wider public for whom the boats form part of the leisure-scape of the waterway – a 'linear theme park' (Committee member of a boating association23/08/19) in which the domestic space, usually rendered private and relatively invisible by bricks and mortar, is highly visible (Wincott et al., 2020). As Boater 19 (CCL, 15/12/20) commented, 'I can't say I spend that much time cleaning my boat and making sure all the paintwork is bright and clean. I just don't have the time. I'm too busy trying to pay my bills'. *Polishing* thus emerges as a highly material, symbolic and contested practice of status that offers a distinction between the lifestyle boaters, for whom this is a sign of distinction, and the boaters of necessity, traveller and marginalised boaters, who position this as a stigma, a sign of an inauthentic, fair-weather boater (Figs. 1 and 2).

These latter groups reflected on their domestic spaces as messy and lived in:

> *'So, by their nature, liveaboards are often a bit … their roof is quite often covered in bicycles and bits of wood and bags of coal and whatnot.' (Boater 19, CCL, 15/12/20)*

This was a normative valuation of an 'authentic' boat, with Boater 23 (CCL, 01/04/21) reflecting that 'we look on our boat as a mode of transport, as a home and as a business space. A lot of people look on their boat as a prized possession'. Polishing as a practice is imbued with moral judgement from both groups regarding what counts as appropriate boating praxis, and the visibility of its inscription on the materiality of the boat imposes a hierarchy on the canal. As Halewood (2023: 373) reflects, 'social class is often associated with complex forms of moral disapproval':

[3] CCL licenses do not specify a particular distance but here the interviewee is referring nominally for a boat to be 'genuinely be used for navigation'.

Fig. 1. Boats can reflect the complexity of domestic life.

Fig. 2. Boats moored neatly y in a marina.

'…the inverted snobbery of England's class system coming to bear on the canal with shiny new boats considered to be the subject of inverse snobbery from the older, tattier boats…I found the hostility of certain people who would look at my boat and think 'Look at that pretty thing', a lot of it is just envy by another name. When they got talking to me and they'd hear that I didn't speak plummy English… I'm a Scotsman…They go, "Oh, he's all right, after all. This guy, he's okay." But you actually find yourself having to plead, like 'I am one of you, I am not one of them', the snobs in Bath, you know?' (Boater 26, Mooring, 14/04/21)

This emphasizes the fluidity and complexity of social class, and the morality that surrounds judgements about class (Halewood, 2023), with certain cultures challenging the broader social orthodoxy that privileges cleanliness, tidiness and wealth. Here, the practices that have acquired relational value in the liveaboard communities on the cut are those that perform the waterway as an everyday, busy residential space: the bikes on the roof that get you from A to B; the signs of your trade; the coal that powers your boat; the plant pots of your roof garden; or the pallets kept 'just in case' as part of a lived tactic of making do. These were positioned as 'appropriate' aesthetics although boaters did express concerns that

the actions of some, arguably 'marginalised boaters', were bringing all into disrepute, resulting in abuse and stigmatisation from communities living near canals and rivers who assumed all boaters were 'dirty people [with] dirty lives' (Boater 25, CCL, 13/04/21):

> *'They for cheap accommodation have opted towards a £2-3,000 pile of junk called a narrowboat and they're trying to scratch out an existence. Some of them don't do themselves any favours, they take all their rubbish and strew it all around.'*

As other studies have reported (Kaaristo et al., 2020), there were also tensions with other towpath users, particularly cyclists and fishers, which were arguably exacerbated by the liveaboards' necessary performance of the waterway as a domestic space, needing access to both the waterway and towpath to perform their day-to-day practices. Living in such a public arena therefore impacted on the experience of home as a private sanctuary:

> *'…you can feel very like…you're an animal in a cage…joggers or cyclists and like people drinking and throwing up right outside your window… dogs weeing on your windows…coming home and finding like two random teenage girls sitting on the roof of my boat drinking coffee…' (Boater 1, Mooring, 27/09/19)*

Nevertheless, the public nature of their homes also offered the opportunity for our interviewees to challenge negative perceptions of boaters:

> *'…you always make a smile, you always say hello, because you want people to know that you're nice people. You're trying to bat off that kind of pre-judged prejudice all the time really…changes peoples' minds about people that live on boats, the reputation isn't good' (Boater 8, CCL, 12/02/19)*

For Boater 26 (Mooring, 14/01/21) the public visibility of their life and domestic practices meant that

> *'…there's something so much more staged and performed about living on a boat than your average house dweller. It is an act every day, and it's an act which is looked upon and watched by a passing audience… So, I often feel that I'm always self-consciously in the role of a boater'.*

While this may create an opportunity to perform the waterway as a residential space, challenge social stigmas and act as an advocate for liveaboard boaters more broadly, the relentlessness of living a 'staged' life can take its toll in terms of mental and physical health.

7. Conclusions: boating classes

Canals and rivers are politicised, contested spaces. They reflect ongoing competition between diverse groups to practice the waterways as variously residential, leisure, commercial, heritage, environmental or investment spaces.

In terms of living on the water, moorings – both institutional and physical – are the key determinant of where and how to live. Those with the capital are able to buy private, long-term moorings in marinas or, increasingly less, on towpaths that allow access to services and facilities. The high cost and low availability of such moorings serve to perform the water as exclusive, contributing to enforcing the materialities, relations, skills and discourses that practice this as an idyllic leisure space. For those unable or unwilling to buy home moorings, CCLs offer an opportunity to live on the water, albeit with the obligation to move. While this allows access to many waterway spaces, enforced mobility ensures that this is partial and contingent. For some, this helps fulfil the expectations of a slow lifestyle but for others this causes a disconnect with the people, services and places on which they rely to live and work. Furthermore, we propose that this disconnection is exacerbated by the fluidity of the canals and rivers themselves, with physical mobility serving to reify boating classes. While social mobility remains possible, the capability to move and so seek out like-minded, and avoid contrasting, individuals, allows the groups to become more embedded in an Us/Them binary. This highlights the broader implications of an increasingly disconnected society, whether socio-culturally, physically or digitally; class as an emotional and relational performance can be fluid but this requires regular and repeated interaction to build bridging capital.

Performance of routine but enduring social structures of what a waterway *should be* is critical to the (re)production of what being a boater is. While such norms may be stabilised in particular places or times, there is always scope for adaptation and innovation. Liveaboard boaters are just one stakeholder community within the complex network of waterways, but demonstrate the heterogeneity of 'in-group' practices. While all own a boat, their discourses of what is acceptable and possible; their relations with other stakeholders; the materiality of their boat; and their capabilities and valuation of certain skills are highly diverse. As we discussed in relation to the practices of cruising and polishing, what it means to (be)come a boater is a situated, relational, emotional and distinctive performance, entangled within competitive and conflictual normative judgements.

Norms of authenticity and acceptability are tied up in liveaboards' motivations for a life on the water, as well as broader community-structured norms and discourses of waterways as heritage spaces. While, for some, the latter contributes to a certain, romanticised performance of 'traditional' waterlife, for others their former industrial lineage establishes canals as 'working landscapes', which contributes to what is deemed acceptable praxis within those liveaboard communities who connect into radical, itinerant traditions or those who have been pushed onto the canals and rivers by economic necessity. Nonetheless, these conflict with the aspirations of governing bodies such as the CRT to perform the canals as recreational rather than working heritage spaces, and which are supported by other liveaboards, arguably our 'lifestyle boaters'. This contributes to the reproduction of social distinctions and tensions between different 'boating classes'.

Funding

The work in this paper was funded by a British Academy/Leverhulme Small Research Grant RG1819\190646 'The New Boat People? Power, Welfare and Mobile Citizenship on Britain's Canals'.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Agatha Herman: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Richard Yarwood:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization.

Data availability

The data that have been used are confidential.

References

Banes Council, 2013. Boat Dwellers and River Travellers Review [Online]. Bath: BANES Council. Available: https://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/documents/s31140/Report.pdf [Accessed 5 March 2025].
Bissell, L., 2016. Water matters: TUG onboard and TUG footpath. Stud. Theatr. Perform. 36, 177–190.
Bourdieu, P., 1984. Distinction. Routledge, London.
Bourdieu, P., 1990. The Logic of Practice. Polity Press, Cambridge.
Bourdieu, P., 1998. Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action. Cambridge, Polity Press.
Bourdieu, P., 2013. Symbolic Capital and Social Classes. J. Class. Sociol. 13, 292–302.
Bowles, B., 2015. Water ways: becoming an itinerant boat-dweller on the canals and rivers of of South East England. Brunel University.
Bowles, B., 2016. 'Time is like a Soup': boat time and the temporal experience of London's liveaboard boaters. Camb. J. Anthropol. 34, 100–112.

Bowles, B.O., 2019. “This squiggly wiggly, not quite democratic thing”: a Deleuzian frame for Boaters’ political (dis) organisation on the waterways of London. Anthropol. Noteb. 25.
Bowles, B. 2024. Boaters of London: alternative living on the water Oxford, Berghahn.
British Waterways Act, 1995. British Waterways Act. UK Government, UK.
Brown, K.M., 2014. Leave only footprints? How traces of movement shape the appropriation of space. Cult. Geogr. 22, 659–687.
Bryant, M. 2021. More boats on canals and rivers than in 18th Century as thousands opt for life afloat. The Guardian, 30/05/2021.
Canal and River Trust 2018. London Mooring Strategy - Summary Report. Canal & River Trust.
Canal and River Trust 2023. Boater Census Survey 2022 Results.
Canal and River Trust 2025a. 2025 Annual Boaters’ Survey., Ellesmere Port: Canal and River Trust., Canal and River Trust.
Canal and River Trust 2025b Guidance for Boaters without a Home Mooring https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/media/document/seTRsKcjvACQHfdwZAxvgQ/AZJpArmuQjdpU9Me1j_AQZKXSkpiTttn3ZcZGiPnrH4/aHR0cHM6Ly9jcnRwcm9kY21zdWtzMDEuYmxvYi5jb3JlLndpbmRvd3MubmV0L2RvY3VtZW50Lw/0189917c-e4ce-74af-898f-515085c6851b.pdf Accessed 04/09/25.
Chng, I., Reades, J., Hubbard, P., 2024. Planning deregulation as solution to the housing crisis: the affordability, amenity and adequacy of Permitted Development in London. Environ. Plann. A: Econ. Space 56, 961–978.
Christophers, B., 2021. A tale of two inequalities: Housing-wealth inequality and tenure inequality. Environ. Plann. A: Econ. Space 53, 573–594.
Cresswell, T., 2010. Towards a politics of mobility. Environ. Plann. D: Soc. Space 28, 17–31.
Crosby, N., Henneberry, J., 2016. Financialisation, the valuation of investment property and the urban built environment in the UK. Urban Stud. 53, 1424–1441.
De Certeau, M., 1988. The Practice of Everyday Life. University of California Press, Berkeley.
De Souza Bispo, M., 2016. Tourism as practice. Ann. Tour. Res. 61, 170–179.
Fallon, J. 2012. ’If You’re Making Waves Then You Have to Slow Down’: slow tourism and canals. In: Fullagar, S., Markwell, K. & Wilson, E. (eds.) Slow Tourism: experiences and mobilities. Bristol: Channel View Publications.
Flemsæter, F., Setten, G., Brown, K.M., 2015. Morality, Mobility and Citizenship: legitimising mobile subjectivites in a contested outdoors. Geoforum 64, 342–350.
Fuller, S., Markwell, K. & Wilson, E. (eds.) 2012. Slow Tourism: Experiences and Mobilities, Bristol: Channel View Publications.
Green, K., Holton, M., Yarwood, R., 2024. Homelessness and Sofa-Surfing: Everyday Belonging, Mobilities, Identities and Morals in Hidden Spaces of Welfare. Geogr. Compass 18, e70006.
Halewood, M., 2023. ’Class is always a matter of morals’: bourdieu and dewey on social class, morality, and habit(us). Cult. Sociol. 17, 373–389.
Hannam, K., Sheller, M., Urry, J., 2006. Editorial: mobilities, immobilities and moorings. Mobilities 1, 1–22.
Hansen, A. 2023. Capitalism, Consumption, and the Transformation of Everyday Life: the political economy of social practices. In: Hansen, A. & Bo Nielsen, K. (eds.) Consumption, Sustainability and Everyday Life. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
Herman, A., 2018. Practising Empowerment in Post-Apartheid South Africa: Wine, Ethics and Development. Routledge, Abingdon.
Herman, A., Yarwood, R., 2024. Locked out? Navigating the geographies of precarity on Britain’s waterways. Trans. Inst. Br. Geogr. 50, e12671.
Howard, A., Hochstenbach, C., Ronald, R., 2023. Rental sector liberalization and the housing outcomes for young urban adults. Urban Geogr. 1–22.
Inland Waterways Association, 2025, 7,000 miles of British waterways now identified. Available: https://waterways.org.uk/about-us/news/7000-miles-of-british-waterways-now-identified [Accessed 19th August 2025].
Ingram, J., Shove, E., Watson, M., 2007. Products and Practices: selected concepts from science and technology studies and from social theories of consumption and practice. Des. Issues 23, 3–16.
Jaeger-Erben, M., Offenberger, U., 2014. A practice theory approach to sustainable consumption. Gaia 23, 166–174.
Kaaristo, M., 2024. Pacemaking and placemaking on the UK canals. Geogr. J. 190, e12525.
Kaaristo, M., Medway, D., Burton, J., Rhoden, S., Bruce, H.L., 2020. Governing mobilities on the UK canal network. Mobilities 15, 844–861.
Kaaristo, M., Medway, D., Rhoden, S., Burton, J. & Bruce, H. 2024. Towards liminal balance: Unpacking the UK’s urban canal space. Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, n/a.
Kaaristo, M., Visentin, F., 2023. Absence as an affordance: thinking with(out) water on the inland waterways. Cult. Geogr. 30, 87–102.
Lees, L., 2000. A reappraisal of gentrification: towards a ‘geography of gentrification’. Prog. Hum. Geogr. 24, 389–408.
London Assembly Environment Committee, 2013. Moor or Less: Moorings on London’s Waterways. London Assembly, London.
Loveday, V., 2016. Embodying deficiency through ‘affective practice’: shame, relationality, and the lived experience of social class and gender in higher education. Sociology 50, 1140–1155.
Malkogeorgou, T. 2019. The Linear Village: experience of continuous cruising on the London waterways. In: TILLEY, C. (ed.) London’s Urban Landscape: another way of telling. London: UCL Press.
Mertena, I., Kaaristo, M., 2024. Understanding train tourism mobilities: a practice theories perspective. Mobilities 19, 704–720.
Mertena, I., Kaaristo, M., Edensor, T., 2022. Tourist skills. Ann. Tour. Res. 94, 103387.
Mcgrath, E., Yarwood, R. & Harmer, N. 2023. Crossing riverborderscapes and a view from in-between: Passenger ferries in South West England. Area, n/a.
NBTA. 2017. Written submission from the National Bargee Travellers Association [Online]. Available: https://www.bargee-traveller.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/2017-04-25-NBTA-Evidence-to-Women-and-Equalities-Committee.pdf [Accessed].
Røpke, I., 2009. Theories of Practice: new inspiration for ecological economic studies on consumption. Ecol. Econ. 68, 2490–2497.
RRR Consultancy Ltd, 2018. Oxford Boat Dwellers Accommodation Needs Assessment. Oxford City Council, Oxford.
Shove, E., Pantzar, M., Watson, M., 2012. The Dynamics of Social Practice: everyday life and how it changes. Sage Publications Ltd, London.
Shucksmith, M., 1990. A Theoretical Perspective on Rural Housing. Housing classes in Rural Britain. Sociol. Rural. 30, 210–229.
Steinberg, P., Peters, K., 2015. Wet Ontologies, Fluid Spaces: giving depth to volume through oceanic thinking. Environ. Plann. D: Soc. Space 33, 247–264.
Sutton, C. 2021. Re-imagining the Vernacular: Dwelling at the Thames Edge. PhD, University of Plymouth.
Visentin, F., Kaaristo, M., 2024. Geographies of inland waterscapes: Thinking with watery places. Geogr. J. 190, e12579.
Wallace, A., Wright, K., 2022. The post-industrial English canalscape: from enclosure to enlacement. Cult. Geogr. 29, 185–202.
Warde, A., 2005. Consumption and Theories of Practice. J. Consum. Cult. 5, 131–153.
Wincott, A., Ravenscroft, N., Gilchrist, P., 2020. Roses and castles: competing visions of canal heritage and the making of place. Int. J. Herit. Stud. 26, 737–752.