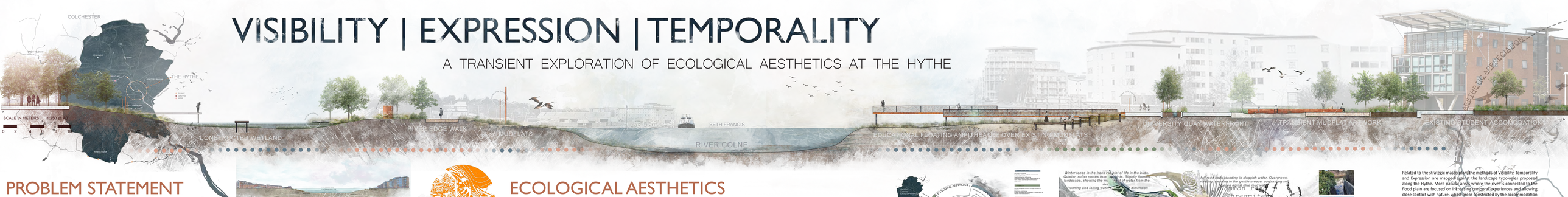
VISIBILITY | EXPRESSION | TEMPORALITY

A TRANSIENT EXPLORATION OF ECOLOGICAL AESTHETICS AT THE HYTHE

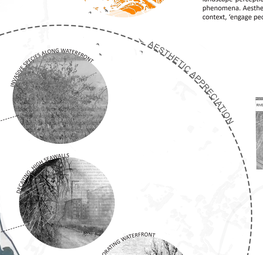


PROBLEM STATEMENT

UK rivers are currently failing environmentally, existing in a state of degradation and deterritorialization; only a 1/3rd of the world rivers are free flowing (Carrington 2021), whilst 84% of the UK rivers have poor ecological standards (Laville 2020). Urban rivers are facing challenges from channelisation, increasing pollutant run off, and lack of care. The river Colne running through the urban centre of Colchester is undermined and forgotten, suffering poor ecological status, and failing chemical levels, particularly at the Hythe. In the context of climate change and urban population growth, it is imperative to intervene in the design of urban river's ecological functions, to restore their status and condition.

This design proposes to use ecological aesthetic design methods to address the imbalanced relationship between ecology, aesthetics, and landscape preferences, by testing and applying the different aesthetic design strategies of Visibility, Expression and Temporality, in relation to increasing the ecological functions of the River Colne. Using a system of intertidal terraces, constructed wetlands, and river platforms, this design exploration aims to transform the Hythe into a vibrant maritime water-front, producing a culturally sustainable landscape which is responsive to the transient tidal nature of the Colne; a new ecological urban river aesthetic is proposed. This is key to the new awareness and perception of the river Colne within its urban and suburban context.

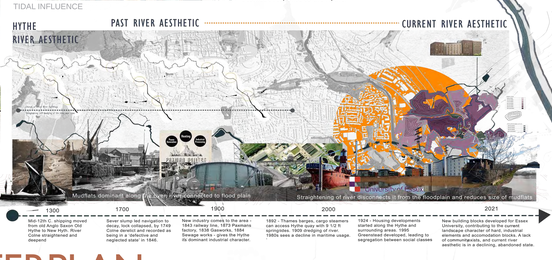
A NEW URBAN ECOLOGICAL RIVER AESTHETIC:



THE HYTHE

The Hythe is a historic industrial maritime wharf, located along the River Colne, Colchester. Despite the Hythe's rich historic character and proximity to Essex University, it has experienced several periods of slump, and is currently being eroded by heavy industrial use and increasing student accommodation.

Intertidal in nature, the river Colne at the Hythe is dominated by an existing ecology of mudflats and dense stands of reed beds. High surface polluted water flow, and historic straightening and dredging of the river channel, is increasing tidal locking and flooding in the urban environment. It's declining and unfavourable status as a waterfront has created a negative perception towards it from the local public, hard industrial elements, rusting seawall, and poor river ecology, impede on the public's 'sensory perception', producing a negative aesthetic response to the Hythe.


HYTHE RIVER AESTHETIC
PAST RIVER AESTHETIC
CURRENT RIVER AESTHETIC
Mudflats dominate landscape
Straightening of river channel
Straightening of river channel to flood plain
Straightening of river channel
Straightening of river channel
Straightening of river channel