



Editorial**Editorial: re-city**Fabian Neuhaus,^{1,*} Natalie Robertson^{1,*} ¹ University of Calgary, School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape, Calgary, AB, Canada

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We ask a lot from a city: housing, trade, employment, arts, transportation, education, manufacturing and recreation. And then there are also more intangible demands like equity, opportunity, safety and health. These elements are organised, distributed and prioritised based on the cultural values of citizens. The word 'values' is interesting. As a noun in the singular, it refers to worth – but in its plural form, its meaning is tied to ethics and beliefs. The two words are inexorably linked, however, because our *values* influence what we *value*, and not only in monetary terms. Beyond exchange value there is use value, cultural value and productive value. But what does this have to do with cities? Values are fundamental to the built environment as a human artefact. This idea is reflected in the theoretical framework of *Baukultur* or building culture, which recognises that values are interwoven with physical form, and, more specifically, it speaks to the changing nature of shifting cultural processes. As built and designed spaces, cities displace or bury natural landscapes and systems, and the trade-off is increased exchange and productive value for the city and its residents – a bargain reflecting the values of the society involved. And though the subjugation of nature is a familiar historical trajectory for urban centres, this path dependence can be redirected or reimagined to reflect other values.

As a structure, the city artefact enables social constructions and community. In her keynote address delivered at the 2022 AMPS conference, *Cultures, Communities and Design* in Calgary, Canada, Alison Page examined the relationship between location, country and social gathering.¹ As an Indigenous designer from Australia, Page spoke about Aboriginal heritage and practices in her native land. She described the connection to the country and how architecture is interwoven with the land, thereby creating place. She also discussed Tubowgule, a traditionally resource-rich point of cultural significance

on a rocky ridge outside today's Sydney Harbour. She spoke about the role of design in terms of 'Knowledge, Truth, and Ceremony' as a system interdependent with the land, illustrating this with songlines, a narrative harbouring and guiding localised knowledge. Building on this strength today brings to fruition innovative designs addressing climate resilience to support local communities and inserts cultural identity into her work on objects, exhibitions and projects as part of a new wave of Australian design. Her approach injects and celebrates values tied to land that predate its current identity and value system into these initiatives.

The articles in this issue examine urban green spaces in four urban centres and, while not necessarily central to the research, each article demonstrates the ongoing tension between the nature of cities and nature *in* cities; a tension fuelled by differences in *values* and perceived *value*. For Rodgers et al., nature and urban greening reinsert Indigenous identity into post-colonial cities in New Zealand.² Because of the foundational ties between Maori peoples and nature, native-species planting not only infuses a built environment with Indigenous heritage and culture but also amplifies and celebrates ties between people, plants and place. For Maori, there is no distinction between their values and the value of nature; they are one and the same. Thomson and Franklin demonstrate how conflicts arise because the value of a green space at the heart of Bristol, England, is misaligned across stakeholders, being seen as either an amenity for residents (use value) or as undeveloped land (exchange value) with resale potential.³

The view that 'unused' open space offers potential for integrating natural processes into urban fabric is explored by Sanyal and Thün.⁴ Establishing a large-scale, collectively run, urban farm within inner-city Detroit on land with lost exchange value undermines the capitalist values used to establish the city in the first place. Much like for Rodgers et al., inserting nature in cities can be highly subversive to dominant values traditionally operating in urban environments.⁵ And while nature is valued differently in the three articles mentioned above, Gearin, Dunson and Hampton remind us that nature is also an exploitable commodity capable of generating private wealth (eco-gentrification) or acting as a valuable part of urban systems (green infrastructure).⁶

As a series, these articles invite us to reflect on the values underpinning our own urban environments and to see beyond *what is*, look back into *what was*, *what might have been* under different value systems and *what might be* if we valued different things.

Notes

¹Page, 'Build on country'.

²Rodgers et al., 'Plants of place'.

³Thomson and Franklin, 'Ardagh Community Trust'.

⁴Sanyal and Thün, 'What does it mean for urban life?'.

⁵Rodgers et al., 'Plants of place'.

⁶Gearin, Dunson and Hampton, 'Greened out'.

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