Supervised research project
As a prerequisite for obtaining a Master's in Urban Planning degree, McGill University

Applying a Seven Generation Cities ethos to urban design

Reflections and pathways towards creating radically inclusive, caring and regenerative public places

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Acknowledgements

Land acknowledgement

I acknowledge that the lands also known as Canada are composed of unceded homelands of the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Nations. Decolonization and a deconstruction of current practices are necessary to reconcile and to restore right relationships with lands, as well as with the diversity of Indigenous Peoples who have stewarded these lands for thousands of years, and who continue to be present from coast to coast, including in cities.

This guide has been developed and produced on Tiohtià:ke, also known as Montreal. These are unceded lands of the Kanien'kehà:ka Peoples, who have contributed to building a tradition of sharing and exchanges on this land, with nations such as the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the Anishinaabeg Nation.

Positionality

Coming from a settler background, I am a mix of French and Dutch heritage. While I grew up in the suburbs, I have considered Tiohtià:ke (Montreal) my home for the past 15 years, having worked, studied, and experienced life upon its grounds. My interest in cultures, peoples, and lands has been at the center of my curriculum since my undergraduate degree in international relations. More often than not, I have seen cities as safe spaces where I could thrive and experience life freely. I am increasingly realizing how this feeling is supported not only by the privilege I have from my genetics and life story, but also by the fact that I recognize myself in the urban spaces I frequent, nourishing my sense of belonging. I am aware that this is not everybody's truth and lived experience, and I want to contribute to changing that.

By completing a master's in urban planning and focusing my final work on improving city-building practices through the application of Seven Generations Cities teachings, I am committed to creating more just, safe, healthy, and regenerative spaces for all. I want to acknowledge that while I am very interested in Truth and Reconciliation, I am still early in my personal journey. I welcome any comments and suggestions concerning this work in the event that, even if unintentionally, I have made a mistake or put out something harmful.

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Participants & supervisors

This SRP is not the result of a single person's mind: it is a co-creation anchored in precious collaboration.

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Abstract

In 2022, UN-Habitat underscored the risks associated with the conventional "business-as-usual approach" to city-building, envisioning a dystopian urban future marred by systemic discrimination and the exclusion of the impoverished (UN-Habitat, 2022, p.2). This viewpoint recognizes cities as breeding grounds for unsustainable practices that hinder the well-being of vulnerable populations and intensify threats to biodiversity. The Seven Generation Cities ethos emerges as a transformative perspective, providing insights for advancing urban practices. With urban design playing a pivotal role in shaping public spaces—an imperative realm for intervention—the central inquiry arises: How can the Seven Generation Cities ethos be seamlessly integrated into urban design practices to foster the development of cities that are more equitable, regenerative, and inclusive? This supervised reseach project (SRP) aims for a substantial paradigm shift in urban design by identifying and communicating pertinent principles and strategies rooted in a Seven Generation Cities ethos, presented through a research paper and a professionally oriented guide. A review of literature and interviews with professionals were conducted, leading to key findings and proposed pathways forward.

Résumé

En 2022, ONU-Habitat a souligné les risques associés à l'approche conventionnelle de la construction des villes, envisageant un avenir urbain dystopique marqué par la discrimination systémique et l'exclusion des plus démunis (ONU-Habitat, 2022, p.2). Ce point de vue considère les villes comme des terrains propices aux pratiques non durables qui entravent le bien-être des populations vulnérables et intensifient les menaces qui pèsent sur la biodiversité. L'approche des villes sept générations (Seven Generation Cities) apparaît comme une perspective transformatrice, offrant des perspectives pour faire progresser les pratiques urbaines. L'aménagement urbain jouant un rôle essentiel dans le façonnement des espaces publics - un domaine d'intervention impératif - la question centrale qui se pose est la suivante : Comment la perspective des Seven Generation Cities peut-elle être intégrée dans les pratiques d'aménagement urbain afin de favoriser le développement de villes plus équitables, plus régénératrices et plus inclusives? Ce projet de recherche supervisé (SRP) vise à informer la réflexion quant à un changement de paradigme dans l'aménagement urbain en identifiant et en communiquant des principes et des stratégies pertinents ancrés dans l'éthique des Seven Generation Cities, présentés dans un document de recherche et un guide à vocation professionnelle. Une revue de la littérature et des entretiens avec des professionnels ont été menés, ce qui a permis de dégager les principales conclusions de ce rapport.

Key words / Mots-clés : Regenerative design and development; Care infrastructure and caring design; Placemaking; Indigenous placekeeping; Sacred civics; Seven Generation Cities; Urban design

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

With an ever-growing proportion of the planet's population living in cities, local governments and planners face pressing challenges such as climate change, rising inequalities, and public health. The UN-Habitat's World Cities Report 2022, *Envisaging the Future of Cities*, identifies cities of all size as opportunities to create a better future, from environmental, social, and economic perspectives (UN-Habitat, 2022). However, the report also states that a "business-as-usual approach [to city-building] will result in a pessimistic scenario of urban futures characterized by the systemic discrimination and exclusion of the poor in urban agendas" (UN-Habitat, 2022, p.2). This statement recognizes cities as spaces where unsustainable practices are perpetuated, ultimately hindering vulnerable populations from flourishing, and increasing threats to biodiversity and life as we know it.

This observation calls for a change in how governance and city-building are conducted, to allow for significant shifts towards more just and equitable living environments for peoples, natures, and lands. While legal and governance structures are often pointed out as main opportunities to instill lasting and significant change in urban environments (Burris and Lin, 2021), so are the physical structures that frame our cities. The long-term nature of built infrastructure and its influence in cities and society means that the impacts of city-building choices and practices have the power to not only affect current populations, but also future generations.

Urban planning decisions play a crucial role in shaping our cities, and it is important to reconsider our strategies. With rising sea levels affecting coastal areas, urbanization contributing to homelessness, and unaffordable living conditions causing social issues, it is clear that we need to rethink how we approach city-building (UN-Habitat, 2022). Making thoughtful and timely changes is necessary to address these challenges, protect communities, and create a more sustainable and fair future for everyone.

Public places and urban design

Cities are composed of a wide array of spaces, some public, some private, and others somewhere in between. This supervised research project (SRP) focuses on public spaces, as opposed to "private space", a distinction made from a legal perspective and anchored in the notion of property and its associated rights.

In this work, I use Sabogal's (2021) broad definition of public spaces as those that are openly accessible and where people congregate. Examples of public spaces are plazas, squares, streets, riverside, parks, and back alleys. While these spaces play a major role in the urban fabric of cities, and in the social fabric of their communities, I acknowledge the contested nature of the term "public space". Indeed, there are many ways public spaces can be exclusionary, particularly to certain groups, individuals, or even more-than-human beings. Policing, either using technology or law enforcement, is an example of how exclusion can be enforced in public places. Another way to create exclusionary spaces is through design, such as by using anti-homelessness benches or designing automobile-focused public streets.

Despite limitations on access, public spaces have an important role in addressing contemporary challenges. They are among the few spaces left where people can go without having to pay, thus helping to offset the financialization of urban life (Engle, Chung-Tiam-Fook and Agyeman, 2022). Also, in an era where internet and social media are main platforms for the exchange of information, public places are real life environments where information can be shared among groups such as certain marginalized populations and elders, who may be unfamiliar with or have limited access to new technologies (Loukaitou-Sideris, Levy-Storms and Brozen, 2014). Furthermore, public places, spaces of resistance, can spark interest about civic life within communities (Murphy and O'Driscoll, 2021), engaging residents in their present and future. Public spaces can take many forms and be developed in a number of ways and scales, and while people tend to be desensitized when it comes to larger scale issues, another phenomenon unfolds when it is about a small space in their neighbourhood: people tend to get easily involved in local matters.

Local public spaces can thus be understood and used as demonstration areas to experiment with a variety of configurations, processes, and methods to produce inclusive, equitable, and regenerative environments.

These spaces offer opportunities to challenge certain assumptions, such as traditional property and ownership models. Public-owned spaces can be collective and non-commodified, enabling experimentation with other forms of governance, such as the commons, and challenging who owns the city. Also, by putting thought, efforts, and investment in public spaces, there is an opportunity of valuing the common good.

A way to reflect about the opportunities of public spaces is through urban design. Often presented as a discipline that sits between architecture and urban planning, urban design focuses on everything that touches the public realm, mainly on its

improvement (Frey, 1999). The public realm is defined by the Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI) as “the publicly owned places and spaces that belong to and are accessible by everyone” (OPPI, 2016). It thus comprises more than public places, being made up of all spaces accessible by all, which can include digital spaces.

Carmona, Heath, Oc and Tiesdell (2010, p. 16) refer to urban design as “a process of joining up and of place-making as an inclusive activity”. They, and others, even argue that the urban design profession needs to exist as a way “to steward a set of public goods that would not adequately be produced by unconstrained markets” (Carmona et al., 2010, p. 16; referring to Friedson (1994) and Childs (2009)).

Design is an inherently political action (Bélanger, 2020). As such, it is crucial to understand the impacts of design on public spaces, for instance to how inclusive or regenerative these places became as a result of their design. As presented by Arturo Escobar, “design is an invitation for us to be mindful and effective weavers of the web of life” (2022, p. 119). How can this be applied to the practice of the urban design of public space?

Sacred civics and Seven generations cities: a pathway forward?

In their 2022 book *Sacred Civics: Building Seven Generation Cities*, Engle et al. argue for transformational change in how we build cities. They identify cities as “critical sites of societal transformation and civilizational change” (p. 7), with city building having a central role in bringing change in the world. They propose a Sacred Civics framework, which invites deconstructing and upending of some of our most basic societal assumptions, and grounding the sacred in cities in ways that “transcend current patterns and forge a culture of reciprocity” (p.4). In this work, they go beyond the religious meaning of the term sacred, instead defining sacred entities as being “unique, intrinsically worthy of respect and dignity, relational, lifegiving and sustaining, and defiant of commodification” (p. 3).

The book’s editors present three core arguments: cities are critical sites of transformation; holism is needed to transcend current city building patterns; and holding ourselves to higher order responsibilities and accountabilities is of key importance (p. 7). One opportunity they identify is the ‘awakening’ of Seven generation cities, a concept based on the Seventh Generation Principle. This principle, ”emblematic of Indigenous philosophy, ceremony, and natural law” (Engle et al., 2022, p. xvii), is a sacred philosophy and pillar of governance for many Indigenous Nations. It can be traced back to Indigenous origins stories, as it

is one of the pillars of the Great Law of Peace/ Great Binding Law, called *Gayanashagowa* (p. xvii).

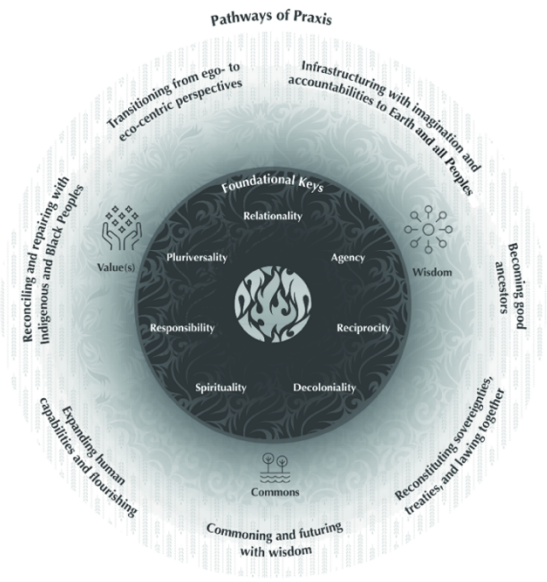

Figure 1.1 – Awakening seven generation cities: foundational keys and pathways of praxis (from Engle et al., 2022, p. 37)

In simple words, the Seventh Generation Principle can be defined as a way to "consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations" (p. xvii). Planning for seven generations is a future oriented approach that, rather than romanticizing the past, is about learning from Indigenous and other cultures' ways, wisdoms, knowledges, and world (such as new technologies) to create strong foundations for better futures for all. By understanding cities as multilayered and pluriversal urban worlds, the approach is focused on a core redefinition of the relationships among peoples, lands, and natures. According to Engle et al., at the basis of "pathways of praxis" to "awaken" Seven generation cities lay seven foundational sacred civics, namely relationality, agency, reciprocity, decoloniality, spirituality, responsibility, and pluriversality (see Figure 1.1)[1].

Through the book's chapters, 25 contributors explore ways of valuing and drawing on multiple forms of wisdom in city building practices. The book offers a wide array of case studies, concepts, and innovations to help advance the thinking needed to achieve the deep, meaningful change the editors propose and support. As a foundational document, it does not deeply address tangible ways to bridge the Seven Generation Cities ethos and the urban design profession. This SRP seeks to do just that, thereby making it easier for professionals and practitioners to apply the book's content to their work.

Objectives

A starting point of exploration for this SRP is the following question: How can we create more equitable, regenerative, and inclusive cities through urban design?

As previously noted, current urban design practices, along with emerging alternative approaches needed for the pressing challenges of today and tomorrow

[1] A table describing them in more detail can be found in the guidebook (Chapter 3).

fall short of the desired transformative outcomes. Although Engle et al.'s (2022) work on Seven Generation Cities identifies a potential framework that can enhance urban design, practice-oriented content that bridges the ethos of 7GenCities with the practical realities faced by urban designers is a next step in supporting professionals adopting a transformative approach.

The main research question of this SRP is: *How can the Seven Generation Cities ethos be applied to the practice of urban design to support the creation of more equitable, regenerative, and inclusive cities?*

While there is no “one-size fits all” situation in planning practice, each environment being inherently unique, this research recognizes the need to create new narratives in order to innovate and transform current systems and structures that replicate unsustainable social, economic, and environmental structures, and also to develop creative, alternative, and complementary design tools to better address these challenges.

To significantly change how urban design is practiced in cities, the aim is identifying, by communicating through a research paper and professionally oriented guide, some relevant principles and strategies anchored in the 7GenCities ethos. The focus is on the production of public spaces. The audience is local government staff, planners and architects, as well as residents and community organizations, so as to support them in designing and producing better (i.e., radically inclusive, equitable, regenerative) urban design projects.

Methodology

To develop the principles and strategies at the heart of the guide to rethinking urban design practice, a qualitative approach was privileged, with a three-step methodology comprised of interviews, a literature review, and analysis of illustrative cases.

A first step to bridge urban design practice and the 7GenCities ethos was through interviews with diverse city-building professionals across Canada. I conducted a total of five-semi structured interviews with city building professionals from Montréal, Laval, Toronto, Halifax, and Vancouver. Inspired by user-oriented research (Jensen, Alexander & Fronczed-Munter, 2011), the goal was to gain a deeper understanding of tangible experiences of planning professionals involved in the production of the built environment—a practice referred to as urban design in this context. Conducting interviews helped structure the research, allowing for a

nuanced exploration of the challenges and opportunities identified by the participants.

A second step was the review of literature. The review explores the field of urban design and some of the foundations of Sacred Civics, as well as concepts with potential to inform better practice, namely (a) regenerative design and development, (b) care infrastructure and caring design, and (c) placemaking and Indigenous placekeeping. A third step was the analysis of six illustrative cases to situate Seven Generation Cities principles in urban initiatives, highlight relevant insights for practice, and develop prompts to help urban designers go beyond the status quo.

This report comprises four distinct chapters. Following the introductory Chapter 1, Chapter 2 delves into existing literature to enhance understanding of the foundations of Seven Generation Cities and Sacred Civics, and to explore concepts that could contribute to the embodying of such an ethos in urban design practice. Chapter 3 serves as a guide to rethinking urban design practice, intended to enlighten planners, communities, and interested individuals on applying a Seven Generation Cities perspective in this field. It is a first version of an evolving document that will be later published. Lastly, Chapter 4 engages in a comprehensive discussion, presenting key findings, valuable lessons, and future steps.

CHAPTER 2 – BRIDGING SACRED CIVICS AND URBAN DESIGN PRACTICE

Urban design is recognized by theorists and design practitioners as critical to shaping the physical, social, and cultural fabric of cities. It plays a pivotal role in influencing the quality of life, fostering community engagement, and addressing the complex challenges that arise in contemporary urban environments. Despite attention to how design affects the human experience and the way people interact with each other and their environment, as well as efforts to design better, many public spaces still prove exclusionary to certain groups. Moreover, they often lack regenerative qualities necessary for ensuring sustainability, both socially and environmentally.

While Sacred Civics (Engle et al., 2022) offers a lens to imagine and develop just, inclusive, and restorative urbanism, the ways in which it complements, or departs from, urban design approaches merits review. This chapter explores urban design literature to identify bridges between sacred civics framework and urban design practice. Two main areas of complementarity are identified: concepts common to both (human geography, post-colonial literature, and Indigenous landscapes) and key concepts and practices that could act as links (regenerative design and development; care infrastructure and caring design; placemaking and indigenous placekeeping).

The key concepts explored for this SRP were established following the analysis of preliminary interviews, as well as discussions with project supervisors. We recognize that additional concepts could contribute to the awakening of Seven Generation Cities in terms of urban design practice.

This review is not intended as comprehensive for the field of urban design, but rather a sampling of relevant academic papers in the specific context of this project. These papers have been found through searches on Web of Science and Google Scholar, using the key concepts' names and "urban design" as search words. This SRP should be seen as a starting point and contribution to a nascent and growing field of practical research on Seven Generation Cities.

The literature review starts with a brief overview of urban design practice literature. Then, the Sacred Civics framework and Seven Generation Cities ethos is situated within larger traditions of human geography and urban design, post-colonial literature, and Indigenous landscapes, before the three key concepts and practices mentioned above are described.

A. State of practice: Urban design

Urban design is often presented as a discipline that sits between architecture and urban planning, focusing on everything that touches the public realm (Frey, 1999). While it is understood by some as process (Germain, 1991) and by others as product (Childs, 2010), many conceive of urban design as both (Carmona et al., 2010; Cuthbert, 2007). In all cases, urban design is seen as shaping and influencing the relationships between physical elements in the built environment, and also the relationships among the people, life (or more-than-human world), and place.

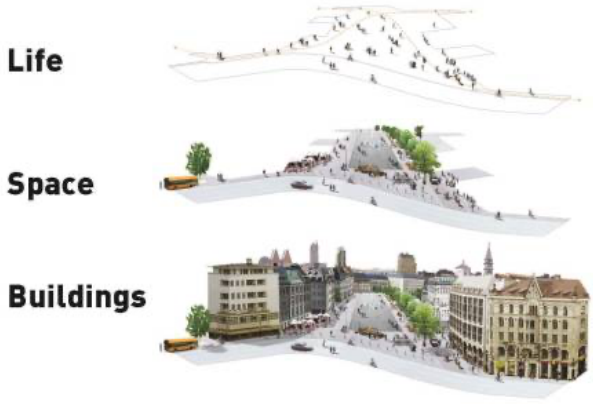

Figure 2.1 – Jan Gehl's life, space, buildings

In the past 50 years, multiple frameworks have been proposed to guide the urban design field, most of them focusing on public space. Examples are Gehl (1971; 6th ed. 2011) with the identification of essential elements for successful public spaces (see Figure 2.1); Lynch (1981) with his five performance dimensions to urban design (see Figure 2.2); Jacobs and Appleyard (1987) with their seven objectives that should achieve the designed spaces; and Bentley, Alcock, Murrain, McGlynn and Smith (1985) with their seven qualities for creating responsive environments. These urban design frameworks are, to various extents, prescriptive, which is telling of how the field is anchored in an expert paradigm. While they all focus on creating better lived environments, a danger is to treat them as dogma, thereby reducing them to clear pathways towards better places that are unlikely to work (Carmona et al., 2010). Urban design needs to be anchored in local context, cultural specificities as well as design movements.

A major limit of current practice, and of the frameworks identified earlier, is the focus on the human experience of space. Indeed, urban design is often said to be "art of making places for people" (DETR/CABE 2000a: 8, in Carmona et al., 2010). Not only do they overlook more-than-human life, they also are not always representative of the variety of experiences within the urban space, and of past and future

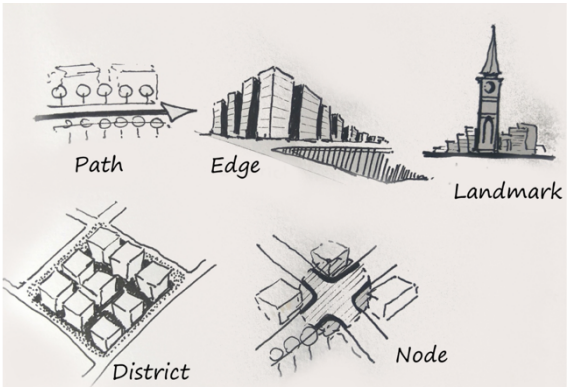

Figure 2.2 – Lynch's 5 elements of urban design.

generations' knowledge and needs. This is true not only of the final products, but also of the processes (Carmona et al., 2010, p. 11). In recent years, several approaches have been studied or proposed to rethink urban design, especially in how it defines the relationships among peoples, lands, and natures. Examples are nature-inspired solutions, such as biophilic[2] design (see Figure 2.3), which aims at improving health and quality of life through better connectedness with nature in our daily lives (Andreucci et al., 2021), and more inclusive processes, such as participatory design (Berglund, 2021).

Figure 2.3 – Singapore's Garden City, as an example of biophilic design.

However, many of these frameworks do not embody a holistic, comprehensive, and transformative approach to urban design. Considering the urgent need for action to make city-building more just, radically inclusive, and regenerative for all, new ways to frame how the built environment is produced, and thus how urban design is practiced in cities, are also required. A lens that holds great potential to address this gap is the Seven Generation Cities ethos.

[2] Biophilia is defined literally as the love of nature. This can be adapted to how our environments and cities are designed. Biophilic design is one of them, promoting "organic/naturalistic and place-based/vernacular" elements, such as green roofs, sinuous pathways, and wetland restoration (Andreucci, 2021, p. 24).

B. Situating Sacred Civics and Seven Generation Cities

A Sacred Civics framework invites an upending of basic societal assumptions and a grounding of the sacred in cities in ways that "transcend current patterns and forge a culture of reciprocity" (Engle et al., 2022, p.4). It also encourages reimagining what cities could be through a variety of lenses, one of them being future city-building. More than the built environment, Seven Generation Cities is about redefining the relationships among peoples, lands, and natures, as well as the meaning we ascribe to spaces and places. Although this particular framework was formulated in the past few years and extensively detailed in the 2022 book by Engle et al., its roots lie in past works advocating for transformative city development, with ideas drawn from: urban design and human geography; post-colonial studies; Indigenous planning and landscape studies.

In the fields of urban design and human geography, as highlighted by Sandercock and Senbel (2011, p. 94), "there has long been a search for the 'spirit of place', a quest for understanding of the magic and meaning in certain places (Eliade 1992; Norberg-Schulz 1980; Tuan 1974; Relph 1976; Seamon 1993; Hayden 1995)" (see Figure 2.4). This search aligns with Sacred Civics, which is about creating meaning and evoking values such as love and trust. When looking more specifically at the production of urban spaces, increasing the quality of spaces for people and bettering the production of places have also been a focus for a long time (Gehl 1971, 6th ed. 2011; Lynch 1981; Jacobs and Appleyard 1987; Bentley et al. 1985). In contrast to many past urban design frameworks, which were prescriptive and developed around a perceived notion of what is good (Lynch, 1981; Sandercock 2003), Sacred Civics proposes a broader definition of what better spaces should be.

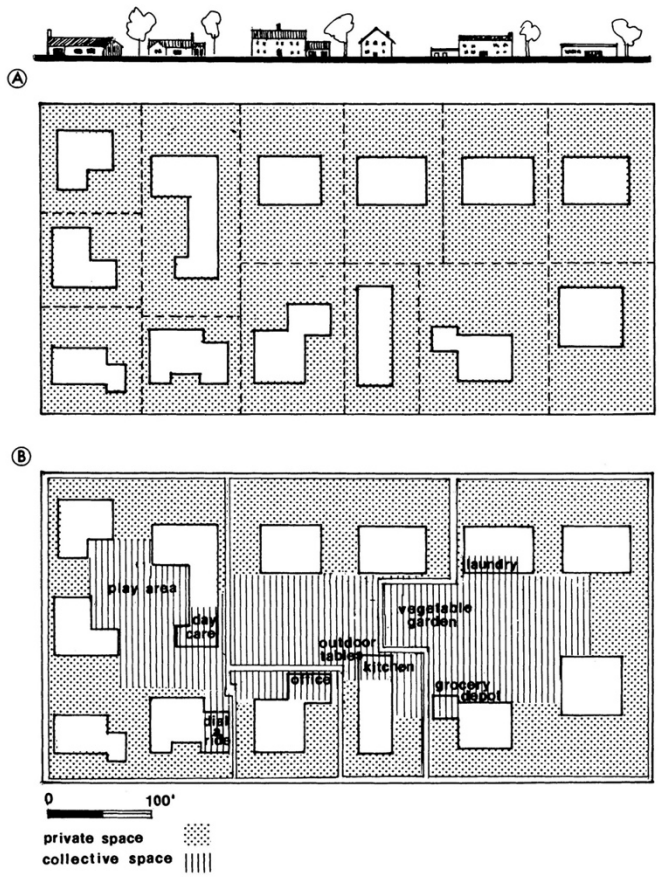

FIG. 5.—*A*, Suburban neighborhood, block plan. *B*, Proposed HOMES revitalization, same suburban block with new common space and facilities.

Figure 2.4 – D. Hayden's proposals for a non-sexist city, at the neighbourhood and home level (Hayden, 1995, p.S184)

Influenced by decolonial/anti-colonial literature, such as the works of Arturo Escobar (2018; 2020) and Vasudevan and Novoa (2021) on pluriversality, Sacred Civics supports practices that recognize and respect the multitude of lived experiences. This challenges the dominant paradigm of a "One World-World" (Escobar, 2018; 2020) to give "rise to a civics that make visible spirit of place and spirit of people" in the past, present, and future (Engle et al., 2022, p. 5). Sacred Civics also draws on traditions of "insurgent, radical, decolonial, and progressive planning" (Engle et al., 2022, p. 4), which often identify the dominant western ideology anchored in individualism, capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy, at the base of the many challenges we face, such as climate change. These lead to contestations of the dominant paradigm in a context where "[p]lanning systems institutionalize processes that seek to incorporate stakeholder interests in order to make decisions for a generalized 'public good'" (Porter, 2016), as well as go beyond traditional scientific and knowledge-based approaches to be anchored in "different ontological and epistemological understandings of place" (Porter, 2016).

A common theme coming out of the works of these authors is the need for new narratives and ways to tell stories (Escobar 2020; Eisenstein 2019), as well as a redefinition of how living beings interact with the ecosystem they are in. This includes evolving from a dichotomous conception of human and nature to one that regards them as continuous, where nature and humans are entangled and inseparable. Notions of relationality, at the core of the Sacred Civics approach, are further explored in Indigenous landscapes studies and Indigenous-led approaches (Bélisle, Wapachee and Asselin, 2021; Vogel, Yumagulova, McBean and Norris, 2022). They present stewardship[3] as a way to understand our role, rights, and responsibilities towards nature and landscapes. Urban-nature imaginaries for future cities, such as *Ecocities: Rebuilding cities in balance with nature* (Register 2006); *City Futures in the Age of a Changing Climate* (Fry 2015); and films, *Black Panther* and *2067*",

Figure 2.5 – In his book, Register (2006) illustrated San Francisco after its imagined transformation into an ecocity.

[3] "Stewardship" is a contested term, such as explored in Weber, 2015.

often explore worlds where nature has agency and human-nature collaborations are a core part of the co-production of civic life (Engle et al., 2022, p. 27) (see Figure 2.5).

A Sacred Civics perspective brings together multiple traditions within one approach. It encourages going beyond the general anomie, inviting bolder and coordinated reflections about core challenges such as Truth and Reconciliation, climate change, and rising inequalities. In the current context, this type of approach is not only important; it is necessary in order to dream and realize a better future for all living beings and Earth. Considering that the impacts of city-building actions often take significant time to be fully felt, the moment to act and be bold is now.

C. Concepts with relevant insights for a more equitable, radically inclusive, and regenerative practice of urban design

Following interviews with city-building professionals across Canada who had read at least several chapters of the book, three main concepts with potential to inform better practice were identified: regenerative design and development; care infrastructure and caring design; and placemaking and Indigenous placekeeping. These are defined and further explored below.

Regenerative design and development
Considering the built environment as a socio-ecological system

Regenerative design and development is anchored in the notion of regeneration, which "defines processes that restore, renew, or revitalize their own sources of energy and materials" (Or, 2021). In the context of planning, it evolved in recent decades from being understood as 'rebirth', or 'renewal' to being increasingly used as a "means of reframing green building practices" (Cole, 2012a, p. 1).

Cole and collaborators explore in depth the concept of regenerative design and development (Cole, 2012a; Cole, 2012b; Cole et al., 2013; Plaut et al., 2012). They define it as a set of approaches rooted in ecological sustainability "that supports co-evolution of human and natural systems in a partnered relationship" and that can be both applied to practice and process (Cole, 2012a, pp. 1; 4).

Regenerative design and development involves whole systems approaches that recognize the agency and value of both human and non-human stakeholders, and that aims to enhance all living forms through active and reflexive stewardship (Cole, 2012a; Cole, 2012b). Core notions are the following: (1) the recognition of

the interdependence between humans and nature, (2) reversing the negative impacts of development and striving for net-positive impact, and (3) the alignment of design, development, and operational processes to system-thinking (Plaut et al., 2012, p. 113). It can be understood in relation to concepts of “degenerative” and “sustainable” development, as illustrated on Figure 2.6.

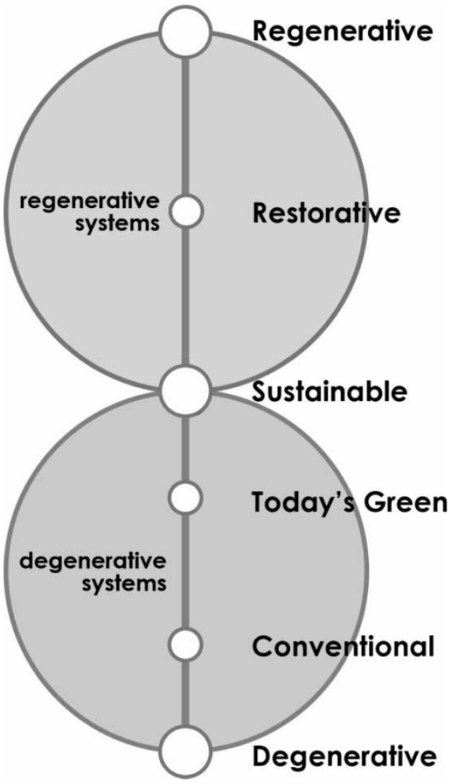

Figure 2.6 –Plaut et al. (2012) present the relationship between degenerative, sustainable, and regenerative, as illustrated on the diagram above. “Degenerative and regenerative activities fall into two spheres of activity on a gradient scale, with the concept of sustainability at a neutral point” (p. 114).

Zari’s work (2018) goes further; in addition to the three aspects above, he argues that “for a development to become truly regenerative, the relationship between ecosystems and human society needs to be understood, utilised and nurtured to ensure maximum wellbeing for both” (Zari, 2018, p. 5). This notion of wellbeing is also part of Or’s (2021) short paper, which focuses on the role of regenerative practice as a transformative design framework “that theorizes the interlinking of earth's natural ecosystem, social relations and individual well-being” (p. 1).

The concept of regenerative design and development presents a number of opportunities for transformative change. A core one is the way it challenges the status quo by proposing a change of paradigm in how we view, consider, and treat the living ecosystems, as well as the place and responsibility of human beings towards these ecosystems. Also, by aiming to better engage both buildings and inhabitants with their environment, regenerative design and development encourages a connection of people with the spirit of place (Cole, 2012a).

Or (2021) acknowledges how regenerative approaches are anchored in Indigenous “epistemologies, worldviews and practices” that have been around for thousands of years (p. 2), and recognizes their contribution to a necessary paradigm shift. Long-term success is dependent on “systems thinking, building capability, building natural and social capital“ (Cole, 2012b, p. 51), which need to be translated into practical frameworks. Cole (2012a, 2012b) presents regenerative design and development as an opportunity to overcome some of the limits of the current green and sustainable frameworks by including a focus on uniqueness at the neighbourhood scale.

Interestingly, the main strengths of regenerative design and development approaches are also some of its main challenges when it comes to implementation in practice and policy. Indeed, its focus on context means that no single solution can be proposed to be applied everywhere, which complexifies the implementation in real life settings. Also, the consideration of both human and more-than-human stakeholders can be a challenge, as does the fact that benefits will not be observable for a long time; neither fits well with dominant political and governance models, which are often political mandates and elections (Jacobs, 2016). To address such challenges, researchers in Australia are exploring ways to integrate biodiversity as a non-human stakeholder within urban development, as a way to ensure biodiversity was given 'active' rather than 'passive' or 'incidental' roles (Hernandez-Santin et al., 2023). They compared the three potential roles of biodiversity to Arnstein's participatory ladder (for human citizens), in addition to identifying existing and possible frameworks to help include biodiversity as "non-human users" of space (Hernandez-Santin et al., 2023, p. 11) (see Figure 2.7).

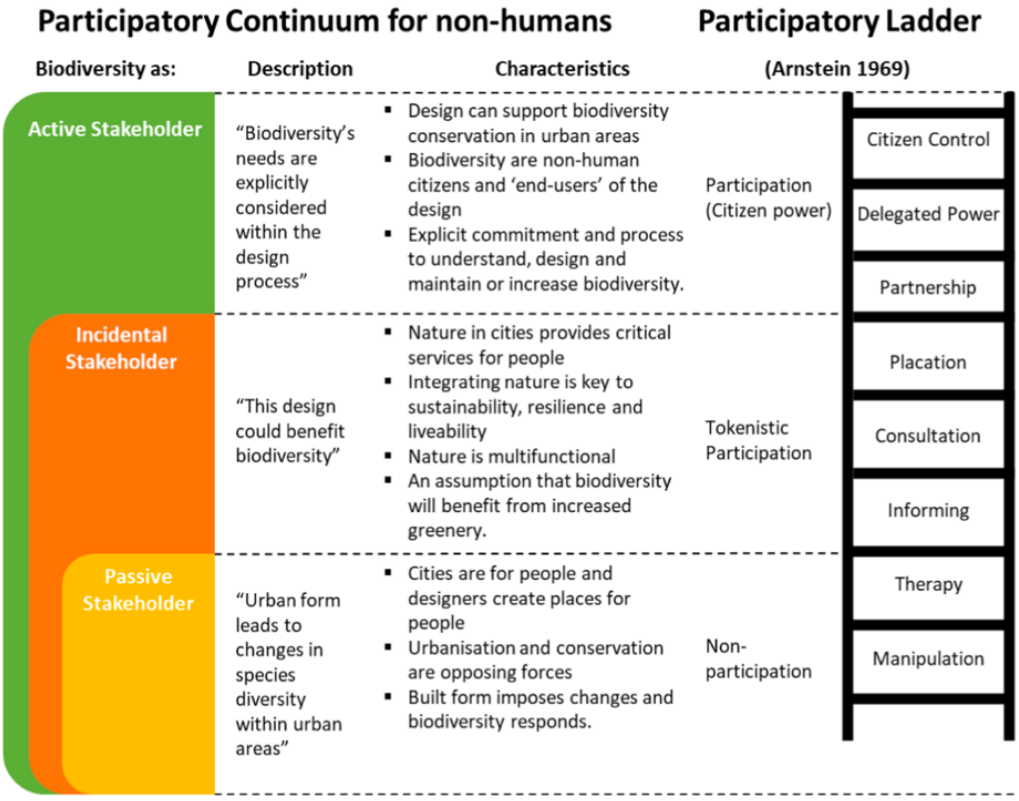

Fig. 2. Progression of the consideration and involvement of biodiversity within the development process. Three roles are identified from least (lower level) to highest (top-level) consideration and involvement of biodiversity as a non-human stakeholder. The right side of the image presents the participatory ladder drawing a direct parallel between the three potential roles identified and the 'steps' or 'rungs' within the participatory ladder.

Figure 2.7 – Comparison of participatory Continuum for non-humans and Arnstein's Participatory Ladder. Hernandez-Santin et al., 2023, p. 5

Care infrastructure and caring design
Supporting diverse relationalities

The concept of infrastructure of care was proposed by Power and Mee (2020), who considered housing as a care infrastructure. Defining infrastructure as “dynamic patterns that are the foundation of social organization (Star, 1999; in Power and Mee, 2020, p. 2), they highlight how in western liberal welfare states care and home are privatized, which renders invisible relational care practice done in those spaces. By contributing to and encouraging a wider discussion on the role of care in the production of housing, they promote an ethic of care that needs to be reflected through housing materialities, market, and governance.

Binet et al.’s work (2022) echoes this, where they define the concept of infrastructure of care as “a system of social and physical relationships that forms the background conditions for, and thus patterns, care work » (p. 2). An urban infrastructure of care implies “treating the urban environment as a social and material technology that shapes possibilities for giving and receiving care” (p. 9).

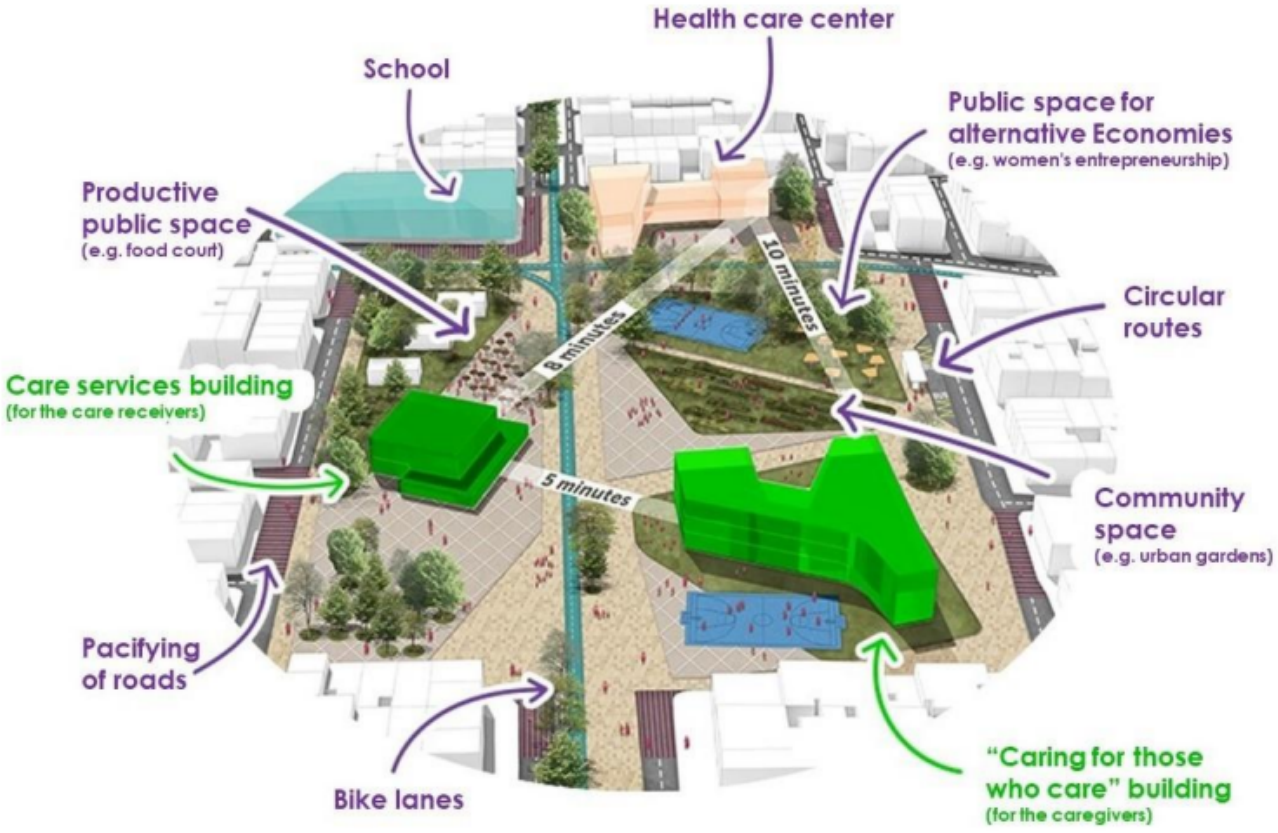

Figure 2.8 – Bogota Care Blocks are an example of care infrastructure. For more information, see https://oecd-opsi.org/blog/bogota-cares/.

This relationship between the built environment and well-being is further explored by Smyth and de Souza-Briggs (2021). Defining well-being as the sum of basic needs, such as a sense of belonging, safety, and access to food and shelter, they mention how “our environments provide or constrict our access to wellbeing in predictable yet profoundly unequal and unfair ways, particularly along lines of race and income”.

Citing the perspective of architects Bloomer and Moore, who assert the alignment of design and care, Bates et al. (2016, p. 2) examined the concept of a caring city through a design lens. Expanding on the notion that thriving places hinge on diverse forms of belonging and inhabitation, they proposed a thesis that conceptualizes care as dynamic relationships between spaces and people (p. 1). Their understanding of caring design, manifested through configurations of care, posits it as a means to both impart and sustain care (p. 2).

Attention to care aligns well with the ethos of Seven Generation Cities and offers possibilities for transformative practice of urban design. Urban design efforts focused on places where care is undertaken (homes, hospitals, schools, daycares, nursing homes, parks, promenades) could help make such places more visible, and more accessible. Likewise, the 'crisis of care', if treated seriously as a factor in urban plans and decisions on the built environment, social programming, and other budgeted municipal activities, could allow to better support caregivers, and people that are being cared for, by organizing the resources and relationships that caregiving depends on (Binet et al., 2022). Of course, dynamics of inequality (most care work is done by women and people of color) must be factored in (Binet et al., 2022).

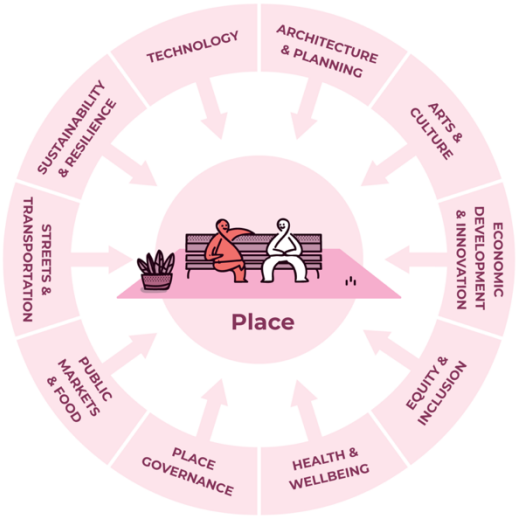

Figure 2.9 – Placemaking is putting place at the convergence of a number of causes (Placemaking X, n.d.)

Placemaking and Indigenous placekeeping[4]
going beyond the creation of well-designed places

In the previous section, some authors working on the concept of care mentioned the role of place to create a sense of belonging, and relationality (Bates et al., 2016; Smyth and De Souza Briggs, 2021). This same argument is at the basis of placemaking, a practice which, in the North American context, can be understood as a branch of urban design recognizing the central role of place in fostering more inclusive urban environments (Vey and Love, 2019) (see Figure 2.9).

Placemaking can be defined as "the process of creating quality places that people want to live, work, play and learn in" (Wyckoff, 2014, p. 2). Its aims are to develop quality spaces which engender a strong sense of place. This is echoed by Barry and Agyeman (2020), who situate placemaking "at the nexus of who belongs to/in a place and what that place could potentially become", making it an interesting lens through which processes of becoming and belonging can be analysed (p. 30).

Different variations of the concept have emerged in recent years, such as creative, tactical, and strategic placemaking (Wyckoff, 2014). Transformative placemaking, which focuses on creating economically thriving communities developed through a holistic approach at the neighbourhood level, has also been proposed as a framework by Vey and Love (2019). Actively promoting a decolonial agenda is also the concept of Indigenous placemaking, which is about the reinterpretation of placemaking in the context of design for Truth and Reconciliation, and socio-spatial justice" (Nejad et al., 2020, p. 434).

A closely related concept is the one of placekeeping[5], which is defined in the literature as "the long-term management which ensures that the social,

[4] While both placemaking and placekeeping can be framed as such or as Indigenous, the choice was made to utilize the terms *placemaking* and *Indigenous placekeeping* for the following reasons. Placemaking as a concept became a movement through the Project for Public Spaces (and continues as Placemaking X). It is well known and understood by municipal administrations, planners, and community organizations, in addition to being already included in some way or another in many plans and policies across North America and beyond. As for the term Indigenous Placekeeping, it has been framed by Tanya Chung-Tiam-Fook in her recent works (2022), which speak directly to urban contexts. Being an Indigenous person, scholar, and practitioner, she has the appropriate positionality to frame this concept.

[5] In the academic literature, placemaking and placekeeping are commonly framed as two distinct concepts. Placekeeping is often analysed in comparison to placemaking, particularly as a way to overcome some of its shortcomings (Salizzioni and Pérez-Campaña, 2019; Dempsey and Burton, 2012). In the current practice

environmental and economic quality and benefits the place brings can be enjoyed by future generations" (Dempsey and Burton, 2012, p. 13). Hickey (2022) defines it as an approach prioritizing "ecological, historical and cultural relationships in the care of 'place'" which understands place as an evolving entity that is not being made, but that already exist in and of itself. While placemaking is about the process of making places together, placekeeping is more of a form of engagement towards place.

As argued by Chung-Tiam-Fook (2022), Indigenous peoples were the first placekeepers. She thus refers to Civic-Indigenous placekeeping, which represents "all forms of relationship to and care-taking of place and land, and creative expression about place; learning from the ancestors and preparing for the future generations; and life, death and rebirth" (Chung-Tiam-Fook, 2022, p. 58).

Placemaking and Indigenous Placekeeping can support deeper social change, both through the design process and the resulting places. Indeed, as mentioned by Nejad et al. (2020), "[p]laces of the built environment shape a medium through which culture becomes real in the material world; the built form carries social ideas within its spatial forms" (p. 434). While it is true of all placemaking, it particularly sheds light on Indigenous placemaking as a means of transformative urban design, and as a pathway to realizing a decolonial agenda (Nejad et al., 2020). This further contributes to the recognition and celebration of past and present Indigenous experiences and contributions, but also to the creation of a space where they can imagine and design their own futurities.

However, transformative approaches can be a real challenge to implement. Nejad et al. (2020) mentioned how, "in an ideal transformative placemaking approach, Indigenous communities decide what should be presented, how it is designed, and where it is placed; it is not limited to design and programming by officials in city planning and administration offices, with Indigenous input" (p. 439). This can happen not only if the current policy frameworks are modified to be more flexible and adaptable, but also if local governments and administrations accept to recognize diverse sovereignties into governance process (Barry and Agyeman, 2020). This ability to step back and let go of some of their power at the hands of Indigenous Peoples is necessary for the co-production process to be successful, and not just tokenistic. Indeed, "it must be driven by the unmediated participation of Indigenous peoples in urban design processes according to their own knowledge, approaches, and methods" (Nejad et al., 2020, p. 435).

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however, the definition between both concepts is not as bold: the two terms can thus be quite easily interchanged.

Key takeaways

This literature review helped unravel some concepts in which Seven Generation Cities and Sacred Civics are anchored, as well as explore possible pathways for practical application to the practice of urban design. Below are some key takeaways that were identified.

1) Urban design strives to improve the quality of urban spaces. However, the frameworks developed are mostly prescriptive, and the concept of "public good" central to this field is narrowly defined, primarily focusing on human experiences and lacking inclusivity;

2) The focus of urban design on creating better spaces is pivotal in fostering a sense of belonging. Through thoughtful design, public spaces can become catalysts for long-term, intergenerational relationships, both with the city itself and its inhabitants – be they human or more-than-human.

3) The practice of urban design extends beyond the physical environment. While primarily oriented toward enhancing the human experience, it has the potential to influence the relationships among people, lands, and natures through inclusionary, regenerative and caring processes, as well as policies and plans.

4) Decolonial and (post)colonial perspectives in urban design enable the consideration of diverse forms of knowledge, including those that are 'orally constituted, refer to inter-generational sources, and are evidenced not through empirical inquiry but in relation to custodial responsibilities, narrative, or spiritual awareness' (Porter, 2016, p. 41). Embracing these alternative sources can foster a more inclusive and holistic approach to urban design practice, such as through a widening of the definition of what better places need to be;

5) Indigenous-led approaches and Indigenous landscape studies are grounded in the interconnectedness of the natural world. When applied in the context of planning and design, these comprehensive perspectives not only address symptomatic issues but also can lead to a deeper understanding and resolution of the underlying core problems. Stewardship acts as a main pathway towards better relationships among peoples, lands, and natures.

6) Regenerative design and development go beyond green infrastructure and initiatives. It involves implementing holistic, whole-system approaches rooted in the principles of regeneration, seeking net-positive outcomes rather than just impact mitigation. Prioritizing the well-being of both the entire ecosystem and each individual within it, it embodies a commitment to fostering thriving environments;

7) Fostering care for urban environments and other living beings requires the cultivation of a sense of responsibility and accountability. While the environment can pose challenges to the well-being of its inhabitants, it also holds the potential to support care through various avenues, including intergenerational healing and enhanced accessibility.

8) Design inherently carries political and colonial implications. Co-production and collaborative/participatory processes can contribute to Indigenous Peoples reclaiming and reshaping design as a way to promote healing and instill a sense of belonging. Embracing a Two-Eyed seeing perspective serves as a transformative pathway towards restorative practices in the field.

Applying a Seven Generation Cities ethos to urban design

Reflections and pathways towards creating radically inclusive, caring and regenerative public places

Sophie Coutu De Goede
This guidebook is part of a Supervised Research Project, MUP

January 2024
Preliminary version

CHAPTER 3 – GUIDE TO RETHINK URBAN DESIGN PRACTICE

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Land acknowledgement

I acknowledge that the lands also known as Canada are composed of unceded homelands of the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Nations. Decolonization and a deconstruction of current practices are necessary to reconcile and to restore right relationships with lands, as well as with the diversity of Indigenous Peoples who have stewarded these lands for thousands of years, and who continue to be present from coast to coast, including in cities.

This guide has been developed and produced on Tiohtià:ke, also known as Montreal. These are unceded lands of the Kanien'kehà:ka Peoples, who have contributed to building a tradition of sharing and exchanges on this land, with nations such as the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the Anishinaabeg Nation.

Positionality

Coming from a settler background, I am a mix of French and Dutch heritage. While I grew up in the suburbs, I have considered Tiohtià:ke (Montreal) my home for the past 15 years, having worked, studied, and experienced life upon its grounds. My interest in cultures, peoples, and lands has been at the center of my curriculum since my undergraduate degree in international relations. More often than not, I have seen cities as safe spaces where I could thrive and experience life freely. I am increasingly realizing how this feeling is supported not only by the privilege I have from my genetics and life story, but also by the fact that I recognize myself in the urban spaces I frequent, nourishing my sense of belonging. I am aware that this is not everybody's truth and lived experience, and I want to contribute to changing that.

By completing a master's in urban planning and focusing my final work on improving city-building practices through the application of Seven Generations Cities teachings, I am committed to creating more just, safe, healthy, and regenerative spaces for all. I want to acknowledge that while I am very interested in Truth and Reconciliation, I am still early in my personal journey. I welcome any comments and suggestions concerning this work in the event that, even if unintentionally, I have made a mistake or put out something harmful.

Funding

This guide to rethinking urban design practice has been made possible thanks to funding support provided by SSHRC (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council), and by the McGill University School of Urban Planning.

Participants & supervisors

This SRP is not the result of a single person's mind: it is a co-creation anchored in precious collaboration.

For this, I first want to thank the professionals who have agreed to meet with me in the course of this SRP : Marisa Espinosa, Pam Glode-Desrochers, Stéphane Guidoin, Selina Young, and Alexandre Warnet. The meaningful exchanges and discussions helped not only enrich my reflections, but they also contributed to expand my vision of what is possible. Your generosity profoundly touched me, and I feel blessed to have been able to cross paths and share around this important matter.

I am also forever grateful to my two supervisors, Lisa Bornstein and Jayne Engle, who have supported me in many ways throughout this journey. This work simply would not have been the same without your relevant input, your constructive criticism, and your words of encouragement. Thank you both for always believing in me; it means more than you could imagine.

INTRODUCTION

About the guide

Imagine a world where cities are understood as part of the natural world. Peoples with a variety of background and life experiences share space and time, learning and growing together. Through design and policy, public spaces support such exchanges, in addition to fostering a sense of belonging for peoples and more-than-human beings. In addition to supporting care, cities and their public spaces are celebrating the inherent value of communities and all living beings.

This guide to rethinking urban design practice is part of *wider transformative efforts* towards decolonization, inclusivity, and the development of better city building practices promoting equity and regeneration. Aimed at supporting reflection, discussion, and action towards creating better living environments, it is more specifically anchored in the ideas shared in a book published in 2022 co-edited by Jayne Engle, Julian Agyeman, and Tanya Chung-Tiam-Fook, ***Sacred Civics: Building Seven Generation Cities***. This compendium includes contributions from 25 authors, who present innovative reflections and pathways of praxis aimed at city and societal change. An important contribution of the book is that spirituality and sacred values are necessary to reimagine the world in which we evolve, including our relationship with others and nature.

The *main objectives* of this guide are two-fold:

(1) to provide guidance to enhance city-building practices, particularly in regards to the production of public spaces, through the application of a Seven Generation Cities ethos; and
(2) to act as a conversation starter both within and between organizations, whether they are municipalities, collectives, or community groups.

Notably, it presents *guiding principles and pathways* to transform practices in the production of public spaces, which are often referred to as urban design, as well as *prompts and questions* to guide reflection and spark dialogues as to how practice can be enhanced in meaningful ways.

While intended primarily for *municipalities, elected officials, and public servants*, this guide is more widely addressed to anyone who is curious about transformative pathways to create a better and brighter future for our cities. From collectives to community groups and active residents; inclusive and participatory processes can be highly beneficial, both in terms of community building and public space

outcomes, particularly when applied all the way from visioning stages to bringing spaces to life.

Just as the world cannot be understood in a binary way, this guide will not be following a problem/solution dichotomy. It will instead be anchored in the practice of imagination, which is about momentarily letting go of the limits of the status quo worlds that surround us to work on visions of *what should be*[6]. For example, relevant cases from cities across Canada and beyond, illustrating or embodying the guiding principles, are presented not to necessarily represent best practices, but to spark imagination as to how things could be done differently.

This work is meant to be complementary to other initiatives and resources[7], which offer insight and demonstrate the kind of transformative work this guide aims to support and inspire. It is intended to *provide first steps* for imagining better futures together, especially around how spaces in our cities are designed and thought about. Being a tool to *nurture curiosity* towards others and the world in which we evolve, it will raise many questions in addition to providing guidance and pathways. This is to be expected, given the transition era in which we live, when we are collectively working towards emergent futures – in other words, we are often building the canoe as we paddle it! Instead of being a source of discouragement, this emergent strategy[8] and practice is to be embraced, as this journey has the capacity to expand the realm of what is possible beyond limits that previously seemed completely stuck and unmovable.

Guide map

The guide is organized in four different sections, each acting as a building block to better understand how a Seven Generation Cities ethos, applied to the production of public spaces, can lead to more just, radically inclusive and regenerative urban environments.

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[6] The term *should*, in opposition to *could*, is used very intentionally. This choice is supported by the reflection of Phoebe Tickell (founder of Moral Imaginations) on the matter. Anchored in the movement of *Imagination Activism*, the idea is to envision not only a possible future, which could be dystopic, but to focus our imagination efforts towards a future that is desirable. Her explanation can be found in this video: https://www.theconduit.com/insights/climate-change-sustainability/how-to-unlock-the-future-through-imagination-activism/.

[7] Relevant resources are Chung-Tiam-Fook, T. (2022). *Civic-Indigenous Placekeeping and Partnership Building Toolkit* and Vancouver UNDRIP Strategy (2022).

[8] See the book *Emergent strategy : shaping change, changing worlds* by adrienne maree brown for insights and reflections on emergent strategy.

An introduction to Seven Generation Cities as a lens to transform urban design practice and create better public places

This first section provides background information for the propositions of this guide. It is an opportunity to get acquainted with the Seven Generation Cities ethos, and to get answers to some questions such as why there is a focus on public places and the practice of urban design.

Guiding principles

Based on interviews and research, five guiding principles are being proposed to inform better practice. While they are framed in a certain way, we encourage readers to see them as starting points for necessary reflections and discussions to bring change in the unique contexts they evolve in.

Illustrative cases

To help bridge theory and practice, illustrative cases that highlight and propose transformative opportunities in the different stages of the urban design process are presented. These are aimed to spark imagination as to possibilities for better practice.

Recommendations and ways forward

Building upon the content of the guide, pathways to go bolder are proposed as recommendations. These are supplemented with prompts meant to deepen the reflection surrounding transformative approaches to invite Seven Generation Cities into urban design practice. In lieu of a conclusion, ways forward are offered, focusing on the role of imagination into bringing to life change. Resources are also provided at the end of the guide.

SEVEN GENERATION CITIES AS A LENS TO TRANSFORM URBAN DESIGN PRACTICE AND CREATE BETTER PLACES

> *Imagine shaping cities as if people, land, and nature were sacred. What if each person were seen as inherently worthy of dignity, empathy, respect, and a life of flourishing? And what if the infrastructures of food, transport, housing, and other civic, cultural, and economic systems were conceived to be in relationships of reciprocity with underlying natural ecosystems, which are essential for all life?*
>
> – *Excerpt from Chapter 1 of* Sacred Civics: Building Seven Generation Cities (Engle et al., 2022, p. 3)

This invitation from the co-editors of the book *Sacred Civics: Building Seven Generation Cities* is evocative of what a sacred civics approach is about: transformation, imagination, and reinvention.

Developed in recent years[9], this holistic approach challenges the status quo by recognizing the inherent value of all living beings, and their agency for imagining and building spaces in which they can flourish. It invites a deconstruction of assumptions about the world we evolve in, such as property and ownership, to move beyond current city building practices towards a more inclusive, equitable, and regenerative future for all. In addition to fostering reflections, sacred civics encourages the use of imagination and innovation to explore various possibilities to enhance current practices and invites testing proofs of possibility to explore new avenues for change and potential scaling.

Sacred civics (see Figure 3.1) is a response to an urgent need to challenge city building practices at their core, including questioning, and unlearning the logics of colonization which are built into our systems and mindsets. Current practices are influenced by the extractive nature of our dominant economy with respect to relationships with Earth (especially in the West), contributing increasingly and rapidly to cascading environmental challenges across the globe.

[9] Even if this specific approach has only quite recently been proposed, it is anchored in long-standing academic and activistic traditions, as well as in Indigenous and multiple other knowledge systems. For more on this, you can consult the reference list, or the literature review chapter of the SRP.

UNPACKING THE TERM

SACRED CIVICS

Sacred

While the term *sacred* is often associated with religion, it is not the case in this work. *Sacred* relates to a sense of connection between peoples and nature, and to the idea of co-existence in shared space. It is associated with the inherent value of human and more-than-human beings, and accordingly to the respect and dignity these beings are worthy of.

Civic

The term *civics* means "of the city", and of the beings that live in place-based communities.

Figure 3.1 – Unpacking the term Sacred Civics

This mainstream paradigm of human beings in a position of dominion over earth, nature, and more-than-human beings has impacted ecosystems in ways that affect the Earth's ability to regenerate, as well as the existence of living beings. While Truth and Reconciliation efforts (see Figure 3.2) have multiplied in recent years[10], major decolonization actions are needed everywhere to go beyond existing structures, which are social constructs that (re)produce inequality, and inequity.

The importance moving towards a sacred civics paradigm is supported three core arguments.

1. *Cities are critical sites of societal transformation and civilizational change.* Cities are large systems, greatly shaped by humans. They represent a high concentration of opportunities, including innovation, education, creativity, and conviviality, but also of struggles such as social isolation, inequality, oppression, disease, and over-consumption[11]. With a growing proportion of the world's population living in urban areas, cities can be understood as a major scene where the present is experienced, and the future will unfold. They thus represent a major opportunity for transformation at various scales.

[10] An example of such efforts is Vancouver's UNDRIP Strategy, where you can learn more about here : https://council.vancouver.ca/20221025/documents/p1.pdf.
[11] Engle et al., 2022, p. 7

DECOLONIZATION, AND
TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

Decolonization is a term referring to the long-term process meant to dismantle an unjust system[1] that has put strain on Indigenous Peoples and other historically marginalized communities in settler colonial societies. It often includes the restoration of cultural, political, and economic autonomy to previously colonized peoples, and aims to address historical injustices, empower Indigenous communities, and promote self-determination.

Initiatives to support such work are varied, but an important number are rooted in Truth and Reconciliation, which refer to efforts made to address and heal the wounds of historical injustices. In places such as Canada, Truth and Reconciliation Commissions are established.

Their aim is to uncover and acknowledge past atrocities, fostering understanding and empathy between affected communities. The focus is on acknowledging the truth, promoting accountability, and facilitating a path towards healing and reconciliation.

Globally, these efforts have been supported by UNDRIP[2], which stands for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Adopted in 2007, it serves as a global framework for protecting and promoting the collective and individual rights of Indigenous Peoples. This comprehensive international instrument emphasizes their right to self-determination, cultural integrity, and participation in decision-making processes.

[1] Gosnell-Myers, 2022.
[2] See the UNDRIP document here : https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf

Figure 3.2 – Decolonization and Truth and Reconciliation

2. *Holism, including attention to the sacred, is needed to help upend dominant patterns that shape current city building.*

The current approach to city-building is of work done in silos, with different departments, jurisdictions, and professions working in isolation of each other. While this siloed approach allows specific complex problems to be tackled by suitable professionals, it ofter does so at the expense of the bigger picture. By combining a whole systems thinking to notions of sacred and spirituality, a holistic approach allows to account for the interconnectedness of all peoples, lands, and natures. By acknowledging that the natural systems provide gifts necessary to human flourishing and survival, it can support the creation of environments where all living beings can thrive.

3. *Enacting a sacred civics means honoring higher order responsibilities and accountabilities.*

Considering that decision-making processes and actions are highly dependent on the value systems embedded in our institutions, a sacred civics paradigm proposes an alternative and more expansive approach to valuing. This would include valuing and commoning with wisdom (see Figure 3.3), as well as having governments and institutions answer to an expanded set of accountabilities, namely to:

- all Peoples, and not only people in position of power or those in greater number;
- Future Generations, instead of being tied to election cycles and quarterly corporate logic;
- Earth, including rights of nature and more-than-human beings; and
- the Designed World, which is comprised of natures' limited gifts.

VALUING AND COMMONING WITH WISDOM

At its core, Sacred Civics is about valuing differently. More specifically, it entails to focus on the common good[1]. Through the development of a culture of commoning[2] and collective action, it supports a cultivation and a practice of wisdom, defined by a learning "to be rooted in place, in presence, and in relationships"[3].

[1] Here, the common good is meant "for all peoples" (Engle et al., 2022, p. 4)
[2] Commoning is meant to be more inclusive than the term "commons", which can be exclusionary to outsiders of specific groups (Chang & Johar, in Engle et al., 2022, p. 234-235)
[3] Engle et al., 2022, p. 17

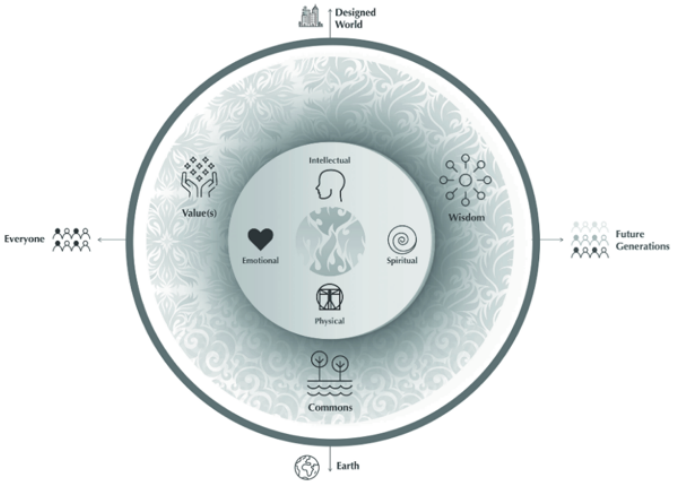


FIGURE 1.1 Cultivating sacred civics: Valuing and commoning with wisdom and related accountabilities

Figure 3.3 – Valuing and commoning with wisdom

But a main question remains: **how can a Sacred Civics ethos be translated into city building practices**?

Challenging the status quo by awakening Seven Generation Cities

One way to challenge the status quo and embody sacred civics is through the awakening of Seven Generation Cities. But how can those be defined? Seven Generation Cities can be defined as a way to "consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations"[12]. It requires us to "be more truthful about the world we are leaving behind; and more generous, intuitive and 'seven generations-minded' in our city building for current and subsequent generations"[13].

[12] Engle et al., 2022, p. xvii
[13] Chung-Tiam-Fook, 2022, p. 55

The Seventh Generation Principle, which is ”emblematic of Indigenous philosophy, ceremony, and natural law”[14], can be traced back to Indigenous origins stories, and is particularly important for the Haudenosaunee Confederacy as it is one of the pillars of *Gayanashagowa*, their Great Law of Peace/ Great Binding Law[15].

Seven Generation Cities are a culturally informed, future oriented approach that entails learning from Indigenous and multiple other cultural ways, wisdoms, knowledges, and world views, as well as using available tools such as new technologies, to create strong foundations to support a better world for all. This place-based approach to city-building promotes an understanding of cities as multilayered and pluriversal[16] urban worlds. A core redefinition of the relationships among peoples, lands, and natures is advocated for, through policies and design. A radically inclusive approach, Seven Generation Cities goes beyond inclusivity, aiming to create spaces where both human and more-than-human beings are welcomed, celebrated, and supported in their ability to thrive. An inherently decolonial approach, Seven Generation Cities embraces efforts in Truth and Reconciliation, working towards a “decolonization of systems in city-building, Earth stewardship, and transformation of communities”[17].

Manifesting Seven Generation Cities is about engaging in work towards deeper, transformative, and systemic change. This is crucial to overcome current and future challenges such as rising inequalities and climate change related events. It invites a deconstruction of the current ways to build and live in cities through practices of reflection, imagination, and futuring. It requires challenging the rules and the established paradigms, emphasizing the need for new ways of infrastructuring and assessing to reflect higher accountabilities and values.

At the core of applying the Seven Generation Cities approach to urban design are seven foundational keys (see Figure 3.4), forming the basis of what informs reflections, actions, and reimagination of a wide variety of city-building practices. The aim is to support new narratives and offer guidance towards co-creation of seven generation cities.

[14] Engle et al., 2022, p. xvii
[15] *Ibid.*
[16] “Pluriversality recognizes worlds within which many worlds are present. It invites us to reimagine cities as constellations of placeworlds where diverse peoples’ values, sacred foundations, relationships, creations, and innovations are the building materials for a plurality of futures.” (Engle et al., 2022, p. 35)
[17] Glode-Desrochers, Chung-Tiam-Fook and Engle, 2023.

Foundational keys	What it is about	What it can mean for practice
Relationality	Recognizing multiple social relationships to land, community, and place. Developing, nurturing, making visible "all our relations" in the urban environment.	Tailor authentic Land acknowledgments; Cultivate cities of reconciliation
Agency	Acknowledging the agency of individuals, communities, institutions, lands, and beings to think, dream, co-create, act, protest.	Enact and codify rights of nature and agency of nature; Plan civic assemblies
Reciprocity	Nurturing a sense of accountability and reconciliation with Earth through an ethical and equitable exchange of gifts. Learning the teachings and responsibilities associated with Earth's "free" gifts.	Harvest responsibly; Practice regenerative agriculture and land restoration; Modify urban planning practice
Decoloniality	Decentering and dismantling the dominance and damage of coloniality, something at the core of a social transition.	Celebrate expressions of creativity, placekeeping, and innovation; Adopt policies of truth and reconciliation; Deconstruct and reconstruct our knowledge on new bases
Spirituality	Reflecting on and questioning the purpose behind our actions, the systems, etc. It is about all our relationships and the values with which we evolve through life.	Provide sacred and ceremonial spaces; Valorize and support various forms of caretaking
Responsibility	Considering Earth's resources as gifts instead of commodities. Going from human-centric perspective of need, extraction, and consumption, to one of respect, kinship, and reciprocity. Living in balance and stewardship.	Reimagine roles of agents; Rethink institutional and financial support for innovation and boldness.
Pluriversality	Recognizing worlds within which many worlds, values, and life paths are present.	Imagine futurities through reworlding; Create positive images based on cultural values and narratives

Figure 3.4 – The seven foundational sacred keys

A focus on public spaces and urban design

While awakening a Seven Generation Cities ethos requires concerted action on many fronts (social, economic, environmental—to name a few), this guide focuses on the production of publics spaces[18].

Referring to the core arguments supporting a Sacred Civics approach (see pages 36-38), cities are critical sites of social transformation. This guide identifies public spaces as a core opportunity within cities to apply the Seven Generation Cities ethos, and to explore various pathways for transformative work and demonstration projects.

Public spaces are places of coexistence, where a variety of living beings cross paths and evolve together, either consciously or not (see Figure 3.5). Even if this implies that the notion of conflict is inherent to life in public spaces, such spaces represent opportunities to learn to work through conflict and develop ties within communities, such as empathy and openness towards others, essential to breaking down barriers, stereotypes, and preconceived ideas about who belongs.

Figure 3.5 – During the summer months, rue De Castelnau, in Montréal, becomes a true public space by being pedestrianized. More than ever, it becomes a space of coexistence (author, 2023).

Public spaces also represent great opportunities to challenge certain assumptions, such as traditional property and ownership models. The fact that they are owned by public entities, and as such collective and non-commodified, represents an opportunity to test other forms of governance, such as the commons, and to challenge who owns the city. By putting more thought, efforts, and investment in public spaces, there is an opportunity of valuing more the common good.

[18] We are aware of the contested nature of the term "public" space, which is a term that "holds the promise of democracy, freedom from control, and popular rights" (Murphy and O'Driscoll, 2021, p. 3). Indeed, there is an understanding that it is accessible to all citizens, which does not hold true in practice (*idem*, p. 5). Its use in the present guidebook is for clarity and communication purposes.

In addition to acting as extensions of the home, particularly in urban contexts where private spaces are much smaller, public spaces play a fundamental role in the participation of residents in public life[19]. Great places can also provide a wide array of benefits on health, sense of belonging, and comfort, which are core to create more regenerative, inclusive, and equitable futurities[20] (see Figure 3.6).

In recent decades, especially in Western contexts, observers have noted a trend toward privatizing public spaces. This is done through a variety of processes, such as physical boundaries, surveillance, and appropriation by dominant groups[21]. There is thus a need to restore some balance in who owns and who can access, both physically and socially, those spaces.

Figure 3.6 – The benefits of great places (Project for public spaces, n.d.)

[19] Murphy and O'Driscoll, 2021.
[20] Project for public places, n.d.
[21] Murphy and O'Driscoll, 2021.

"Urban design as an opportunity to increase that visibility to help us feel like we belong to better tell our stories" – Selina Young, preliminary interviews (2023)

One way to address such challenges is through design and the configuration of the built environment. More specifically, it can be addressed through the practice of urban design, which is often associated with the production of public places[22]. While it is defined in a number of ways in the academic literature, urban design is addressed here as the polices that guide production of public space, processes of designing them, and the places that are produced.

Urban design shapes and influences the relationships between physical elements in the built environment, and also between those who use the space, both in regard to each other and to the place they interact with. It thus represents a major opportunity to strengthen communities and redefine relationships with other living beings and our surroundings, which is at the core of what Seven Generation Cities is about.

New ways to approach production of the built environment, and of practicing urban design, are needed to make city-building more just, inclusive and regenerative. A more holistic and transformative ethos than that current dominant is needed, particularly when viewing the built environment as not only "a supporting framework for life but [as] an active agent in shaping human development, individual identity, and the society at large"[23].

A framework to bridge theory and practice

Design, with its unique ability to shape new environments, has the potential to generate positive outcomes (see Figure 3.7). However, it is important to recognize that it can also be linked to erasure and the imposition of a settler colonial spatial code[24]. With this in mind, two main questions arise:

- How can the practice of urban design be more radically inclusive, equitable, and regenerative?
- How can it limit harm and oppression, and open up imagination and creating common futurities?

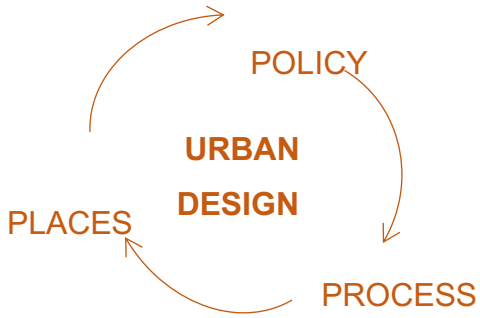


Figure 3.7 – Urban design steps

[22] Carmona et al., 2010.
[23] Nelli, 2021, p. 41.
[24] Bélanger, 2020.

A main goal of this guide is to reflect upon practical ways to embody the Seven Generation Cities ethos, with the objective of influencing significant change in practice surrounding the production of public spaces. Engle et al. (2022) identify pathways of praxis (see Figure 3.8).

How can these be bridged with, and translated into, urban design practice and the production of public spaces?

Three concepts have been identified as having the potential to provide answers, namely: *Regenerative design and development*; *Care infrastructure and caring design;* and *Placemaking and Indigenous placekeeping* (see Figures 3.9-3.11).

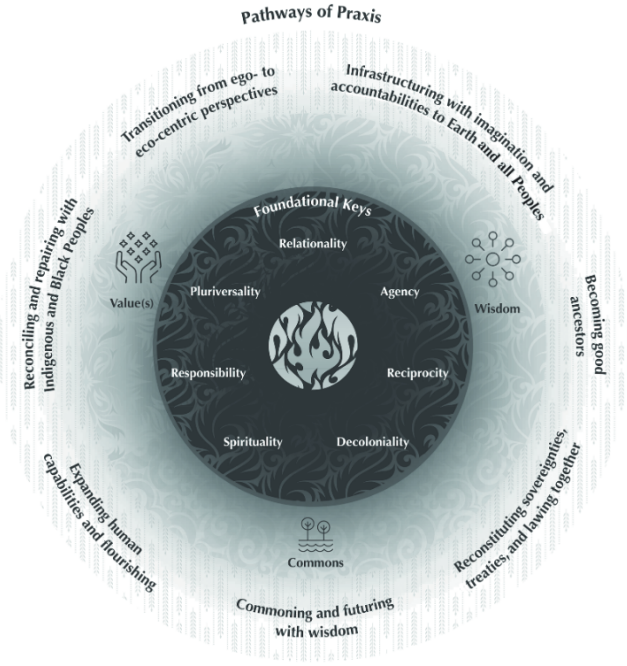


Figure 3.8 – Awakening seven generation cities foundational keys and pathways of praxis (Engle et al., 2022, p. 37)

Emerging from work on the three concepts and the sacred civics approach are a set of principles, described further below, that can inform radically inclusive, equitable and regenrative urban design practice:

1. Go beyond bricks and mortar;
2. Focus on relationships and (un)learning together;
3. Prioritize value creation to impact mitigation;
4. Integrate the sacred;
5. Make care visible.

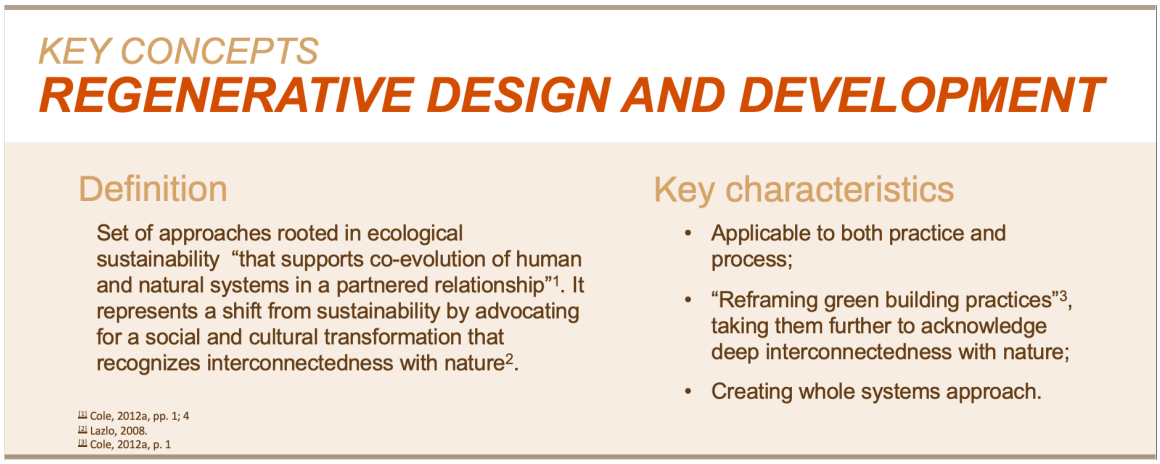


Figure 3.9 – Regenerative design and development

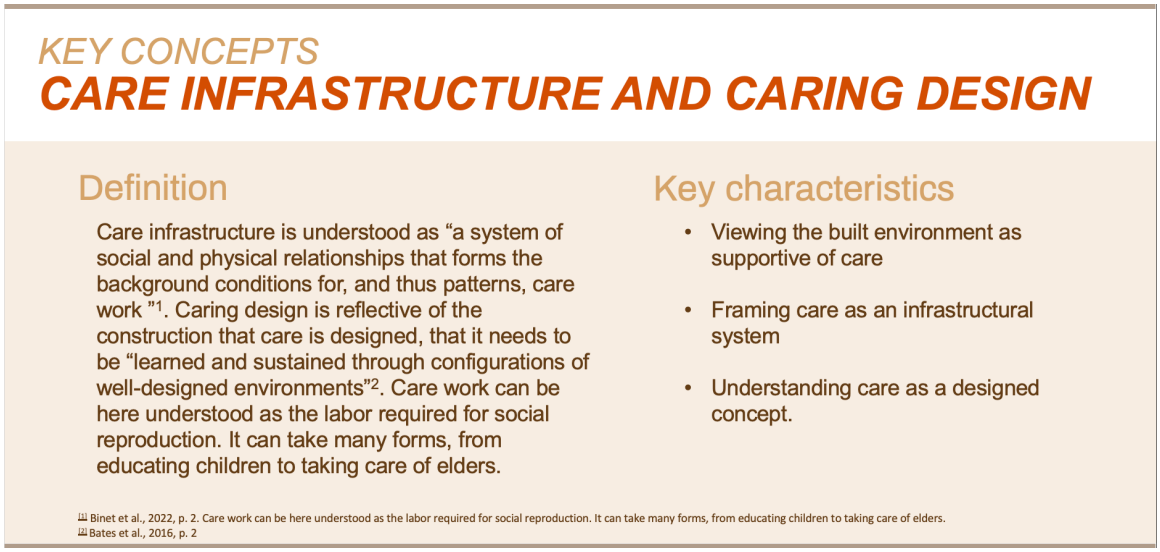


Figure 3.10 – Care infrastructure and caring design

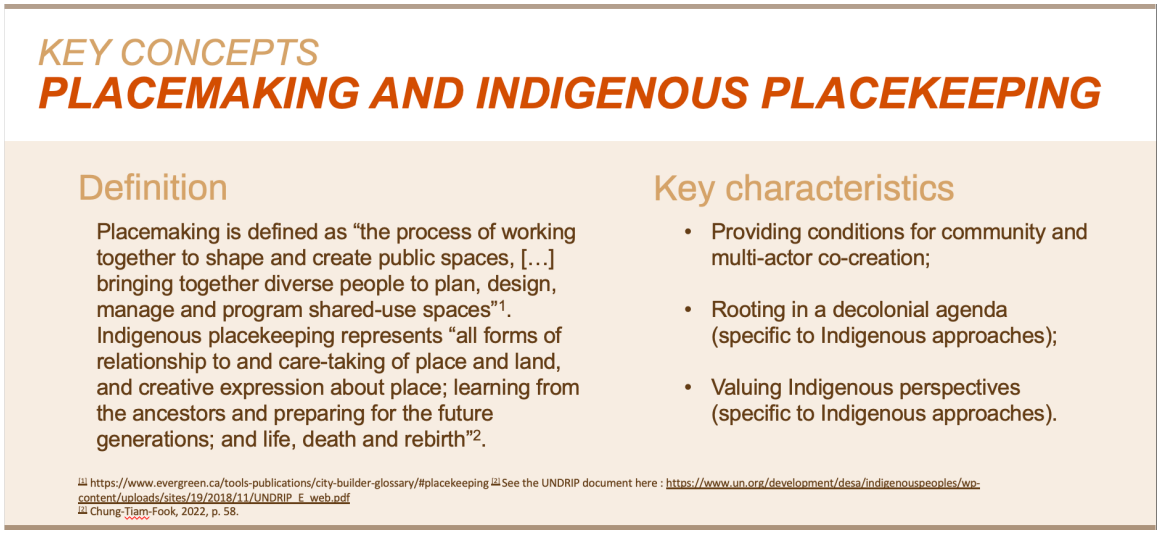


Figure 3.11 – Placemaking and Indigenous Placekeeping

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

To guide professionals and communities in imagining and developing better practice and outcomes of urban design, five principles are proposed as first steps towards transformative change. All interrelated, they are seen as being complementary, each focusing on specific aspects that invite imagination of desirable futurities. The principles are presented here, and are further explored in the coming pages in regard to illustrative examples of the production of public spaces.

1. Go beyond bricks and mortar: Recognize the important role of social infrastructure – not only physical spaces and buildings, but also intangible provisions, programs, activities, etc. that create conditions for strengthening social capital – in supporting long-term quality spaces that are celebrating the community and the natural world.

2. Focus on relationships and (un)learning together: Foster collective agency through a prioritization of long-term engagement with communities and a recognition of their distinct knowledge through cocreation practices.

3. Prioritize value creation to impact mitigation: Ensure that decision-making and design processes add value to the ecosystem, embodying the Indigenous notion of “all my relations” which implies evolving from a siloed perspective to a holistic approach.

4. Integrate the sacred: Acknowledge different ways of knowing and relating to nature and community in order to exchange and grow together.

5. Make care visible: Strengthen the idea of responsibility and accountability towards other human beings, and expand it to stewardship towards all living beings and land.

1. *GO BEYOND BRICKS AND MORTAR*

Recognize the important role of social infrastructure in supporting long-term quality spaces that are celebrating the community and the natural world.

"Social infrastructure is more than bricks and mortar; it is about community", Pam Glode-Desrochers, preliminary interview (2023)

From a Seven Generation Cities perspective, embracing public spaces as core social infrastructure could help support transformative change within cities and communities in many ways. It is about coming up with new narratives about what cities and public spaces can—and *need to*—be. This acknowledgement leads to a recognition of the importance of public spaces in supporting the social fabric and capital of communities. Indeed, public spaces are more than just built elements, these being merely a frame to empty spaces in which living beings evolve.

When thinking about designing public spaces, going beyond bricks and mortar means going beyond the beauty and utility of design elements and celebrating the communities and individuals that have, are, and will enliven the space. More than making visible things invisible to the naked eyes, it is about building in "culture, language, and celebration"[25]. The reflexive processes surrounding the production and the management of public spaces should not only be about the physical design, but also about the programming and capacity building. It thus invites an investment in the long-term health of communities, in addition to "infrastructuring with imagination and accountabilities to Earth and all Peoples"[26].

2. *FOCUS ON RELATIONSHIPS AND (UN)LEARNING TOGETHER*

Foster collective agency through a prioritization of long-term engagement with communities and a recognition of their distinct knowledge through cocreation practices.

"Relationships do not work on a prescriptive timeline" Selina Young, preliminary interview (2023)

At the heart of this principle is the need to transcend current participatory practices to focus on building relationships of trust and reciprocity with fellow humans and with the more-than-human world. In addition to going beyond the timeline of

[25] Selina Young, 2023 (preliminary interview)
[26] Engle et al., 2022, p. 39

projects, it means evolving from top-down approaches towards a more horizontal structure that prioritizes co-visioning, co-creation, and capability. Supporting both powershifting and power sharing, such approaches can lead to deepened, long-lasting relationships and mutual (un)learning. This can change relational dynamics with local actors to move toward shared decision-making, thus contributing to building collective agency.

Indeed, communities, including people from Indigenous and other diverse and marginalized backgrounds, hold precious knowledge that can contribute to improving processes, projects, and overall perspectives. From a Seven Generation point of view, plants, trees, animals, and other life are considered agents and stakeholders[27]. All living and more-than-living beings, as well as their knowledge and perspective, are sacred and should be valued consequently. This can be done by giving them agency in deliberations, decision making, and influence on outcomes, implying a reconfiguration and an expansion of who gets to participate as well as a reconsideration of the role, powers, and responsibilities of each agent involved.

3. *PRIORITIZE VALUE CREATION TO IMPACT MITIGATION*

Ensure that decision-making and design processes add value to the ecosystem, embodying the Indigenous notion of "all my relations" which implies evolving from a siloed perspective to a holistic approach.

"What are we doing to give back, not just take as purveyors of infrastructure and thinking deeply about the impacts and trade-offs for helping support public goods that are scarce, like clean air, things that are normally not monetized in this profession, clean water, access to nature, but also those intangible cultures around" Marisa Espinosa, preliminary interview (2023)

As human beings designing cities, including public spaces, it is important that we stay conscious of the interconnectedness of the world we evolve in. This implies recognizing the various impacts of our actions on Earth, nature, and other living beings. This third principle, instead of solely focusing on mitigating the negative externalities of projects and decisions, invites to embrace a change of perspective and focus on how projects and decisions can create value.

This new narrative of value creation requires switching to a holistic or whole systems approach. In addition to shifting our positionality as human beings to one

[27] Chung-Tiam-Fook, 2022.

that fully understands and embodies the fact that we are part of an ecosystem, it also implies showing a greater sense of responsibility and stewardship towards the environment we evolve in, based on a respect of the gifts the earth and its inhabitants are giving. This includes going beyond short-termism, and fully embracing the Seven Generations thinking.

In-depth reflections and transformations of what is valued, and how it is valued, are also primordial. Current practices focus on economic aspects, with environmental considerations increasingly being addressed, but what about biodiversity? What about communities, particularly Indigenous Peoples and marginalized communities? We need to do better and prioritize imagining and building public places where love, trust, and compassion are main values.

4. *INTEGRATE THE SACRED*

Acknowledge different ways of knowing and relating to nature and community in order to exchange and grow together.

"There is sacred in the territory" Stéphane Guidoin, preliminary interview (2023)

A pathway aligned with a Seven Generation Cities approach is to anchor ourselves in the world that surrounds us by finding and highlighting the sacred in our lived environment. From a Sacred Civics perspective, the notion of sacred can be understood as the recognition of the inherent value of all living beings and nature. This implies to show a renewed and updated respect towards Earth and its inhabitants, but also to recognize the distinct knowledge held by communities and Indigenous Peoples, which needs to be reflected in our surroundings.

It also means that places should be designed in a way that allows a collective appropriation of space and the provision of a home for all living being, with enough space for imagination, exploration, and celebration of all people, including Indigenous communities. A way towards this is to consider nature as sacred and ensure this is reflected through an approach which invites collaboration with nature instead of supporting an urban/nature dichotomy[28].

This fourth principle thus invites to understand places as more than objects of productivity, evolving from an approach of commodity to one of relationality. In this sense, places should allow for reconnection, with others and nature, but also with oneself. Contemplation, dreaming, observation, and reflection are only some of the passive actions that need to be promoted and supported by the way places are

[28] Inviting landscapes, J. Astbury, p. 12

designed in cities. This is important to strengthen communities and their attachment to place, creating a sense of belonging necessary to support transformative change at all levels, such as addressing climate change and growing social cleavages.

5. *MAKE CARE VISIBLE*

Strengthen the idea of responsibility and accountability towards other human beings, and expand it to stewardship towards all living beings and land.

"A community is as strong as its members, it is important to take care of individuals within the community, and the environment strongly contributes to that" Alexandre Warnet, preliminary interview (2023)

Health, both mental and physical, is a major problematic in cities. Considering a "community is as strong as its members"[29], caring for everyone is essential to communities thriving in the long-term. This is also true of nature and biodiversity, which are core components of the ecosystem in which we all evolve.

More than prioritizing care, this principle is about making care visible in the urban environment, shedding light on actions and decisions that are often rendered invisible by the social and environmental structures of cities. We need to value and celebrate various caretaking actions, focusing on planning, designing, building, and maintaining spaces that are welcoming to all human and more-than-human beings.

Care is also closely related to healing, which is a big component of Truth and Reconciliation work that needs to be done. From an Indigenous perspective, "healing involves the well-being of the entire system"[30], which is telling of the world of relations we evolve in. From an urban design perspective, this implies embracing our role as stewards of Earth and nature, such as promoted by Indigenous Nations around the world. In the current climate crisis, this is primordial to keep in mind: we need to have a more active and caring role regarding the world we are a part of. We have a responsibility to act better, and to become good ancestors for the generations to come.

[29] Alexandre Warnet, 2023, preliminary interview
[30] This quote was taken from the *Indigenous Voices of Today* permanent exhibition, at McCord Museum in Montreal (July 2023).

ILLUSTRATIVE CASES

While the guiding principles presented in the previous section are meant to inform practice, an important question remains: How can these principles be translated into action in the real world? The answer is far from being straightforward, varying depending on the situation. Flexibility is both the challenge and the beauty of the task at hand. To make these principles work, they need to be customized for the specific context where they will be applied.

To help spark innovative thinking, real-life examples that embody some or all the principles are presented in this section. They are meant to be catalysts for imagination, showing how professionals and communities across a variety of contexts find ways to innovate towards creating radically inclusive, caring and regenerative public places.

The cases are organized according by stage of the urban design process:

- Policies and plans;
- Processes and actors; and
- Places and design.

These cases are meant to inspire positive change in more ways than one. They are versatile tools and ideas that can be applied in various situations, going beyond the traditional urban design process. So, dive into these examples, and let your creativity run wild – they can make a difference at every step of the journey.

1. POLICIES & PLANS

Policies and plans play a crucial role in shaping the landscape of urban design, guiding the development of cities and communities. Plans, often at the city or regional level, outline the long-term vision and goals for urban development, providing a strategic framework for growth. Policies, on the other hand, are specific rules and guidelines that regulate aspects such as zoning, land use, building codes, and environmental considerations. Together, plans and policies act as tools to manage urban growth, promote efficient land use, ensure infrastructure resilience, and address social and environmental challenges. Successful urban design requires a thoughtful integration of these elements to foster vibrant, inclusive, and resilient urban spaces that meet the evolving needs of their residents.

1.1 Ravine Strategy, Toronto

Home to one of the largest ravine systems in the world, the City of Toronto adopted in 2017 its first ever Ravine Strategy. The purpose of such a document is to "help to support a ravine system that is a natural, connected sanctuary essential for the health and well-being of the city, where use and enjoyment support protection, education and stewardship"[31]. While the ravines are an ecosystem that act as a major public space in the city, they are so much more, as shown on Figure 10.

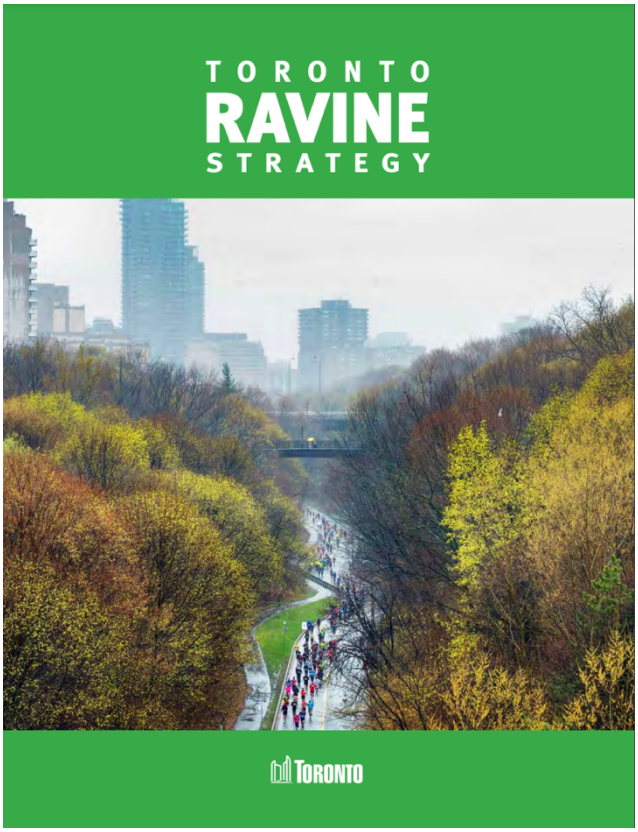


Figure 3.12 – The Toronto ravine strategy aims to ensure the long-term enjoyment of this unique natural infrastructure.

Figure 3.13 – The Toronto ravines represent major opportunities for the citizens, nature, and the city in general.

The Strategy proposes a vision anchored in five principles—*protect, invest, connect, partner, celebrate*—and 20 related actions, recognizing that a connection with nature can not only inspire stewardship, but also foster a desire to care for the environment that surrounds us. In the context of rising urban pressure due to an increase in population and in the frequency of climate change related events, the policy understands the ravine system as having a fundamental role to play in the resiliency of the ecosystem that is the city of Toronto.

[31] City of Toronto, 2017, p. i

The Strategy was followed in 2020 by the Ravine Strategy implementation plan, presenting key interventions and actions that aim to support both the protection and the use of this 300km natural infrastructure over the next ten years (see Figure 3.14). A follow-up on principles and actions was included, which informed on two actions having been completed, 16 being underway, and others to be commenced. A core initiative is the Ravine Campaign, with two main projects identified:

a. The 81km Loop-Trail, developed in partnership with Evergreen[32], and
b. The 'InTO Ravines: Nature at your doorstep' Community Engagement Program.

Figure 3.14 – Morningside Park bridges.

Even if the Strategy puts a lot of emphasis on human use, with interventions focusing on management, wayfinding improvements and strengthening leadership and coordination (see Figure 3.15), it still presents some innovative characteristics to embody the Seven Generation Cities ethos.

As shown in Figure 3.16, the Toronto Ravine Strategy case is illustrative of sacred civics' narrative change, holistic approach, and co-evolution between nature and humans.

Figure 3.15 – Lower Don Trail wayfinding signage.

[32] For more information, see https://www.evergreen.ca/stories/loop-trail-connecting-and-protecting-torontos-ravines/.

Ravine Strategy, Toronto

How is this case illustrative of some of the guiding principles ?

Proposes a change of narrative

Natural elements can often be seen as constraints to urban development. The Ravine Strategy embraces an alternative narrative by establishing the ravine system as a natural and cultural asset instead of simply seeing it as a challenge to the city's growth. More than nature in the city, it frames this system as a space for education, contemplation, and wellness, pushing to integrate culture and nature.

Takes a holistic approach

The Strategy do not only approach conservation and protection from an environmental standpoint. Through an intentional and coordinated vision, it clearly defines the ravine system as having an important role to play in supporting biodiversity and health of communities and individual, meeting important infrastructural needs, as well as celebrating and commemorating its historical significance for the city at large, but also for specific populations such as Indigenous Peoples.

Promotes co-evolution between nature and humans

The Strategy clearly presents the role of the City and its constituents as stewards and guardians of this natural resource and infrastructure. This prompts accountability and responsibility towards the ravines, to ensure its ecosystem is thriving and adequately cared for.

Figure 3.16 – Toronto's Ravine Strategy: Illustrating Guiding Principles in Action

1.2 Plaza Stewardship Strategy, Vancouver

In the *Vancouver Plan 2050*, a section dedicated to public spaces is included, highlighting the importance of public spaces for humans and the environment. Promoting safe and equitable access to these spaces, it identifies how the proposed policies advance reconciliation, equity, and resilience.

To complement its Plan's section on public spaces, the City of Vancouver adopted in 2022 a *Plaza Stewardship Strategy*. This city-wide policy is aimed at framing the use and maintenance of the plazas and public spaces after they are built. More specifically, through its three key sections—*Partnerships and management, Maintenance and operation, Programing and placemaking*—it addresses the vision and day-to-day operations of a space, its upkeep and regular maintenance, as well as its uses and activities. It proposes and identifies roles and responsibilities for different partnership models, either single plaza partner or multiple plaza partners.

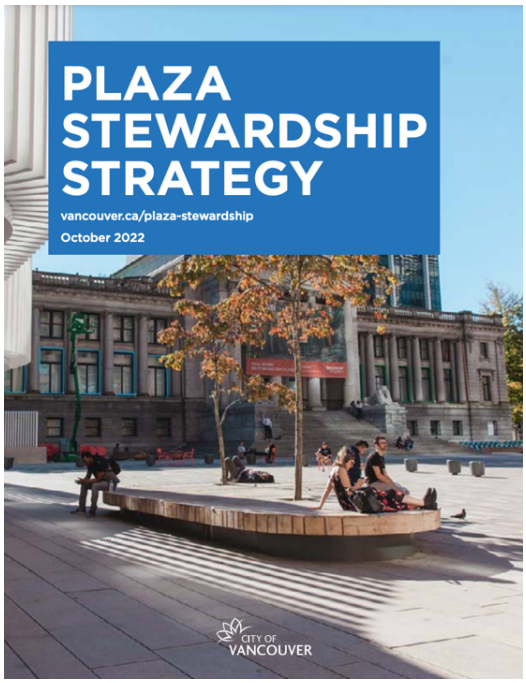
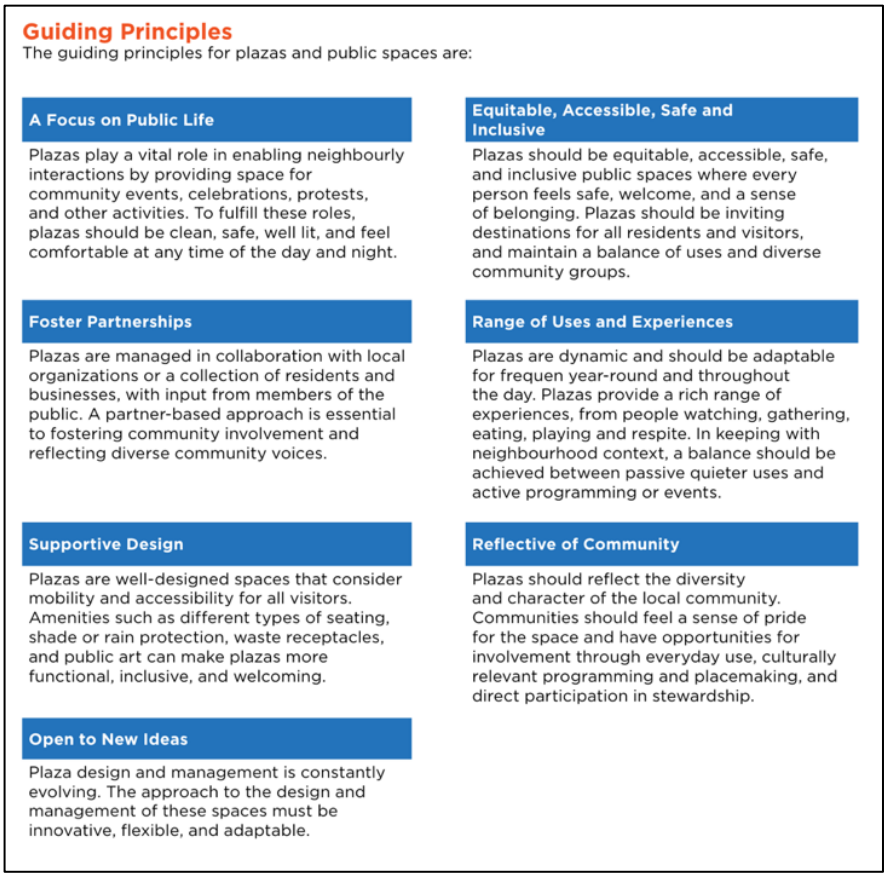


Figure 3.17 – Vancouver's Plaza Stewardship Strategy provides a framework for stewardship of City-owned plazas and public spaces.



Guiding Principles

The guiding principles for plazas and public spaces are:

A Focus on Public Life

Plazas play a vital role in enabling neighbourly interactions by providing space for community events, celebrations, protests, and other activities. To fulfill these roles, plazas should be clean, safe, well lit, and feel comfortable at any time of the day and night.

Equitable, Accessible, Safe and Inclusive

Plazas should be equitable, accessible, safe, and inclusive public spaces where every person feels safe, welcome, and a sense of belonging. Plazas should be inviting destinations for all residents and visitors, and maintain a balance of uses and diverse community groups.

Foster Partnerships

Plazas are managed in collaboration with local organizations or a collection of residents and businesses, with input from members of the public. A partner-based approach is essential to fostering community involvement and reflecting diverse community voices.

Range of Uses and Experiences

Plazas are dynamic and should be adaptable for frequen year-round and throughout the day. Plazas provide a rich range of experiences, from people watching, gathering, eating, playing and respite. In keeping with neighbourhood context, a balance should be achieved between passive quieter uses and active programming or events.

Supportive Design

Plazas are well-designed spaces that consider mobility and accessibility for all visitors. Amenities such as different types of seating, shade or rain protection, waste receptacles, and public art can make plazas more functional, inclusive, and welcoming.

Reflective of Community

Plazas should reflect the diversity and character of the local community. Communities should feel a sense of pride for the space and have opportunities for involvement through everyday use, culturally relevant programming and placemaking, and direct participation in stewardship.

Open to New Ideas

Plaza design and management is constantly evolving. The approach to the design and management of these spaces must be innovative, flexible, and adaptable.

Figure 3.18 – Plaza Stewardship Strategy's Guiding Principles

The Strategy focuses on four types of public spaces all under the responsibility of the Engineering Services, namely civic plaza (see Figure 3.19), neighbourhood plaza, parklets, and activated lanes, but it is made clear that this could inform other types of public or private spaces (p. 9). In addition to identifying seven guiding principles, it proposes a stewardship process in four steps (see Figures 3.18 and 3.20).

Figure 3.19 – Jim Deva Plaza, Vancouver's first pavement-to-plaza project.

Although the current version indicates that the perspective of Host Nations and Urban Indigenous communities was not integrated, the document is presented as a living work, and it is mentioned that they are actively working to look at how the Indigenous communities can be consulted for future iterations.

Figure 3.20 – Plaza Stewardship Strategy's four-step process

As shown in Figure 3.21, Vancouver's Plaza stewardship case is illustrative of how public spaces can be framed as more than designed spaces, as well as how stewardship supports care, accountability, and responsibility.

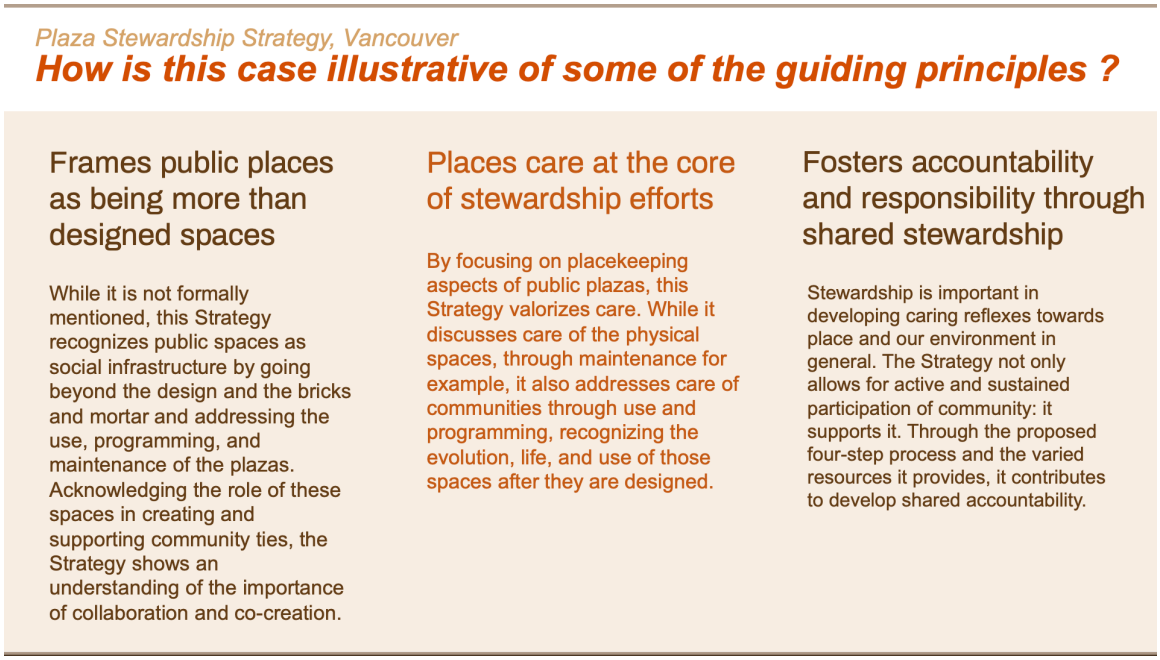


Figure 3.21 – Vancouver's Plaza Stewardsip Strategy: Illustrating Guiding Principles in Action

2. *PROCESSES & ACTORS*

In the realm of urban design, processes and actors are integral components that influence the creation and evolution of urban spaces. Processes refer to the series of steps and actions undertaken to plan, develop, and manage urban areas. This involves collaborative efforts in envisioning, designing, and implementing projects that shape the physical and social fabric of a city. Actors, on the other hand, encompass the diverse stakeholders involved in urban development, including government agencies, urban planners, architects, community members, developers, and businesses. Transformative urban design processes hinge on the collaboration and engagement of various actors, ensuring a multi-disciplinary and inclusive approach. The dynamic interplay between processes and actors is pivotal in creating caring, regenerative, and resilient urban spaces that cater to the well-being of the community.

2.1 Future Design councils, Japan

Future Design councils are a result of research interests in Japan about the future design movement, which aims at "overcoming short-termism in democratic decision-making"[33]. Drawing direct inspiration from the seventh-generation principle, the idea is to strengthen intergenerational justice by having representants of future generations participate in the decision-making process (see Figure 3.22).

Figure 3.22 – Future design council. Photo credit: Hara, Keishiro, et al. 2019. CC BY 4.0.

[33] https://www.fdsd.org/ideas/future-design-japan/

Such model was tried and tested in multiple towns in Japan, with the first Future Design council attempt was made in Yahaba Town, Iwate Prefecture. This town of about 28 000 inhabitants already had a history of community participation[34]. In 2015, a future design workshop was organized, where participants were separated in two categories: Imaginary Future Generation, and Present Generation. While the latter represented the interests and perspective of the present, the former were asked to time-travel so as to be the same age, but 45 years later, in 2060.

They had to deliberate separately on a vision for the next 45 years, as well as priority measures, before attending consensus building sessions where both groups were to participate in negotiations and decision-making towards a consensual vision and set of measures. While reproducibility may be a challenge considering the town's size as well as its previous experience and capability in participatory decision-making, the result of the experiment provides significant insights to translate a Seven Generation Cities ethos to practice.

As shown in Figure 3.23, Japan's Future Design councils is representative of sacred civics' ethos by supporting co-creation with future generations, valuing differently, and nurture relationship building in decision-making processes.

Future Design councils, Japan

How is this case illustrative of some of the guiding principles ?

Co-creation with future generations

Both the human nature and the market-based society contribute to influencing decision-making into a more present-day/present-generation focused exercise. The lack of consideration for future generations' needs is often associated to a desire to not affect the comfort of today's population. The Future Design council method aims to overcome such limit as well as challenges related to intergenerational justice. It is thus an opportunity to become good ancestors by strengthening accountability to future generations.

Valuing differently

The study in Japan has shown that the Future Design councils stimulated creativity in the future generation representants, both regarding how the future is envisioned and ways of achieving it. This can be explained by the fact that behind Future Design councils is the concept of futurability, which is understood as a way of changing our behaviour. Future design takes for granted that not only people's way of thinking is variable[1], but also that social institutions are variable. It thus offers a great opportunity to change the core values that dictate present-day decision-making.

[1] Saijo, 2022, p. 8

Relationship building

In Yahaba Town, a Future Strategy Office was implemented in 2019. It acts as a space that can foster relationship building in a way that goes beyond tokenism. Indeed, instead of proceeding with one-time consultation, this allows citizens to take part in the negotiation and decision-making process over several issues. Ultimately, it supports capacity building within the community as well as developing care for what happens not only now, but in the future.

Figure 3.23 – Japan's Future Design councils: Illustrating Guiding Principles in Action

[34] Since 2008, workshops and alternative participatory processes were implemented to involve local citizens in visioning and decision-making processes regarding waterworks. For more information, see Hara et al., 2019.

2.2 Camden Imagines, London

In late 2022, the borough of Camden in London, UK, in collaboration with Moral Imaginations[35], offered Imagination Activist training to 32 of its city staff, ranging from planners to social workers and repairs. The purpose of such an initiative was to allow for civic imagination to unfold within City staff, which implies challenging *how* we imagine, but also *what* we imagine and *who* gets to imagine[36]. This includes future generations, more-than-human world, as well as ancestors (see Figure 3.24).

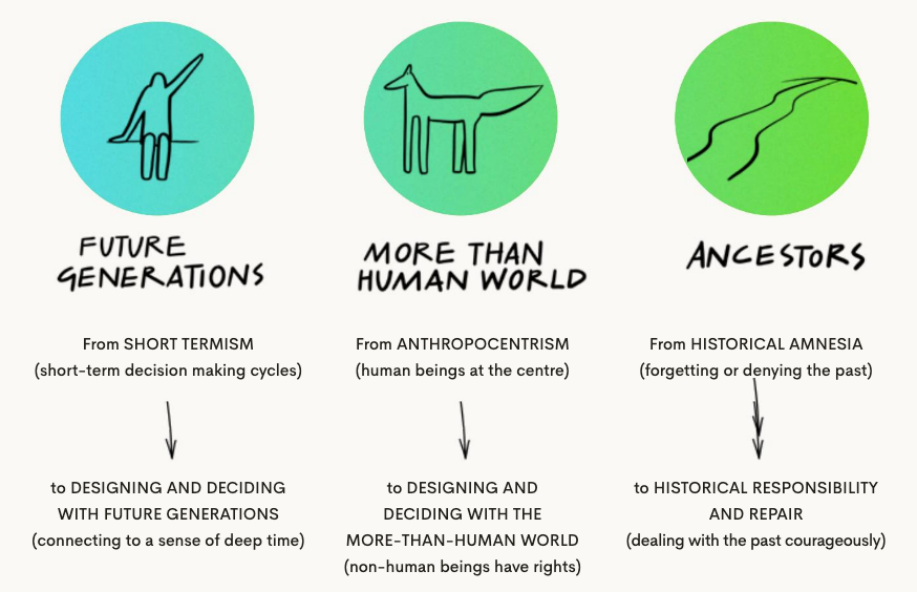


Figure 3.24 – The Moral Imagination Framework (Moral Imagination, 2023).

Designed as a bottom-up exercise, the aim was to train ambassadors and ultimately create a ripple effect: each trained employee would influence 10 people, who would then each influence 10 people, ultimately leading to a majority of Camden's population being aware of imagination activism and how it can be translated into action (see Figure 3.25). Indeed, the initiative recognizes how current city government processes are linear and output driven, focused on deliverables. It frames imagination activism as a way to overcome this by bringing unexplored pathways to light.

A potential pitfall is the election process, regarding not only reelection and change in council, but also the management of resources, particularly in the availability of funds to invite and support imagination activism from staff. While the first phase of the project was training given to staff, there were some limitations observed, such as the support of staffs' ideas and initiatives by team leaders, who had not been trained. Another phase will thus occur in the coming months to address this.

[35] For more information about Moral Imaginations, see https://www.moralimaginations.com/.
[36] Phoebe Tickell, 2023. https://www.theconduit.com/insights/climate-change-sustainability/how-to-unlock-the-future-through-imagination-activism/

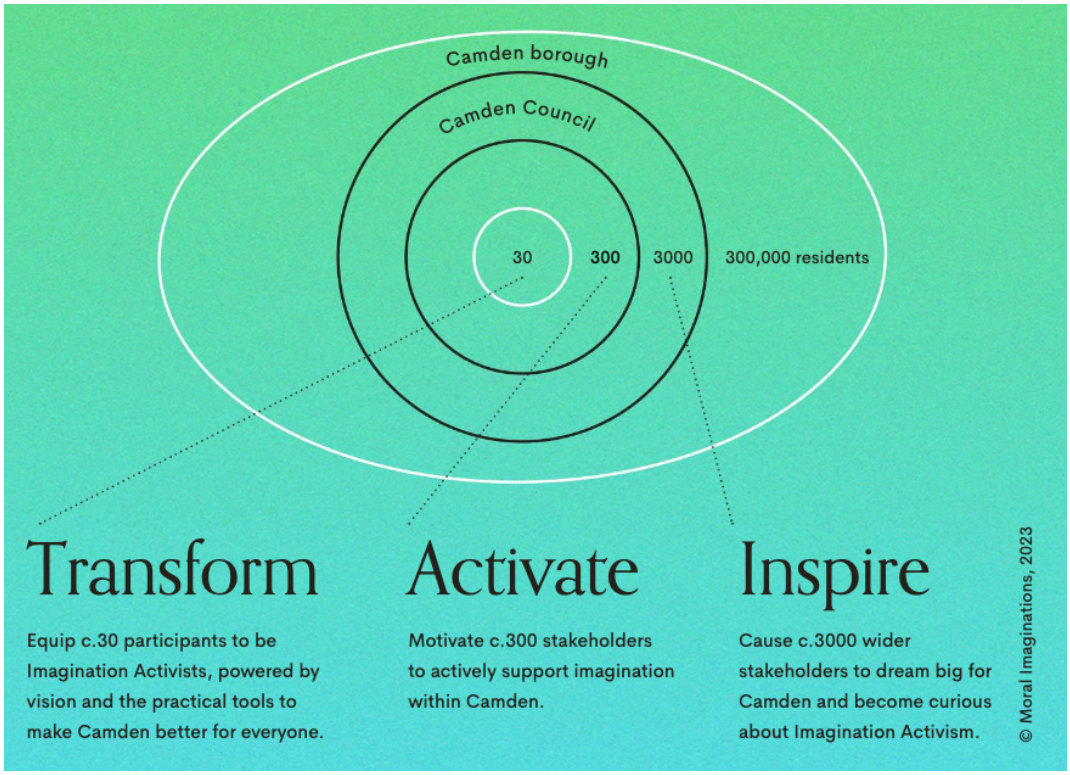


Figure 3.25 – Circles of influence of the Camden Imagines initiative. Moral Imaginations,

As shown in Figure 3.26, the Camden case is illustrative of Sacred civic's healing, agency, and cultural principles.

Camden Imagines, London

How is this case illustrative of some of the guiding principles ?

Creates opportunity for healing and building bridges

This case exemplifies key guiding principles by fostering healing and reconciliation. Establishing a space of philosophical safety, prioritizing care, and enabling access to imaginative solutions, it serves as a break from existing structures, steering towards restorative justice and the healing process. It emphasizes the development of new relationships and the establishment of fresh power dynamics. Creating an enabling environment is pivotal, as it involves letting go of some power while actively supporting and receiving initiatives coming from a variety of individuals and points of view.

Recognizes agency of all constituents and beyond

The Camden Imagines initiative embraces perspectives that encompass not only future generations, but also ancestors and more-than-human entities, fostering what can be termed as "imagination justice." This approach empowers individuals through the cultivation of imagination in their work and everyday life. Currently, the bulk of imaginative resources are held by large corporations, leaving local councils and non-profit organizations at a disadvantage due to limited resources to dedicate to imaginative endeavors. However, the concept of collective imagination and co-creation has led to heightened creativity among participants in this context.

Supports cultural shift

Imagination Activism encourages us to do things differently, having in mind what should be instead of what could be. Imagination is thus seen as an opportunity to ask difficult questions, and to approach them with hope and a sense of capability. Indeed, it considers that not only people, but also systems and structures are variable and can be changed. This opens up opportunities to break down current obstacles and rethink our goals and solutions to problems.

Figure 3.26 – London's Camden Imagines: Illustrating Guiding Principles in Action

3. *PLACES & DESIGN*

In the context of regenerative and inclusive urban design, the role of places and design becomes paramount in fostering resilient, sustainable, and equitable communities. Places are not merely physical spaces but are woven into the social and cultural fabric of urban life. Through intentional design, spaces can be transformed to serve multiple functions, supporting biodiversity, and providing inclusive amenities that cater to diverse needs.

3.1 Wije'winen Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Center, Halifax

In 2022, after eight years of work, an official project for a new Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre (MNFC) in Halifax was announced. Since then, millions in funding were secured from multiple sources, including the Nova Scotia government, the City of Halifax, and the federal government of Canada[37].

Figure 3.27 – Rendering of the new MNFC building, Wi'jewinen. Fathom Studio, 2023.

[37] Glass, 2023. https://atlantic.ctvnews.ca/funding-for-new-mi-kmaw-friendship-centre-in-halifax-close-to-50-million-1.6458249

This project's aim is to "replace its current facility which presents significant limitations in serving a growing and diverse Indigenous urban population"[38], thus contributing to supporting the larger mission of the MNFC. In the respect of Mi'kmaw traditions, the project was developed through sustained collaboration and consultation with elders, community members, and staff, including sweat sessions organized with the design team.

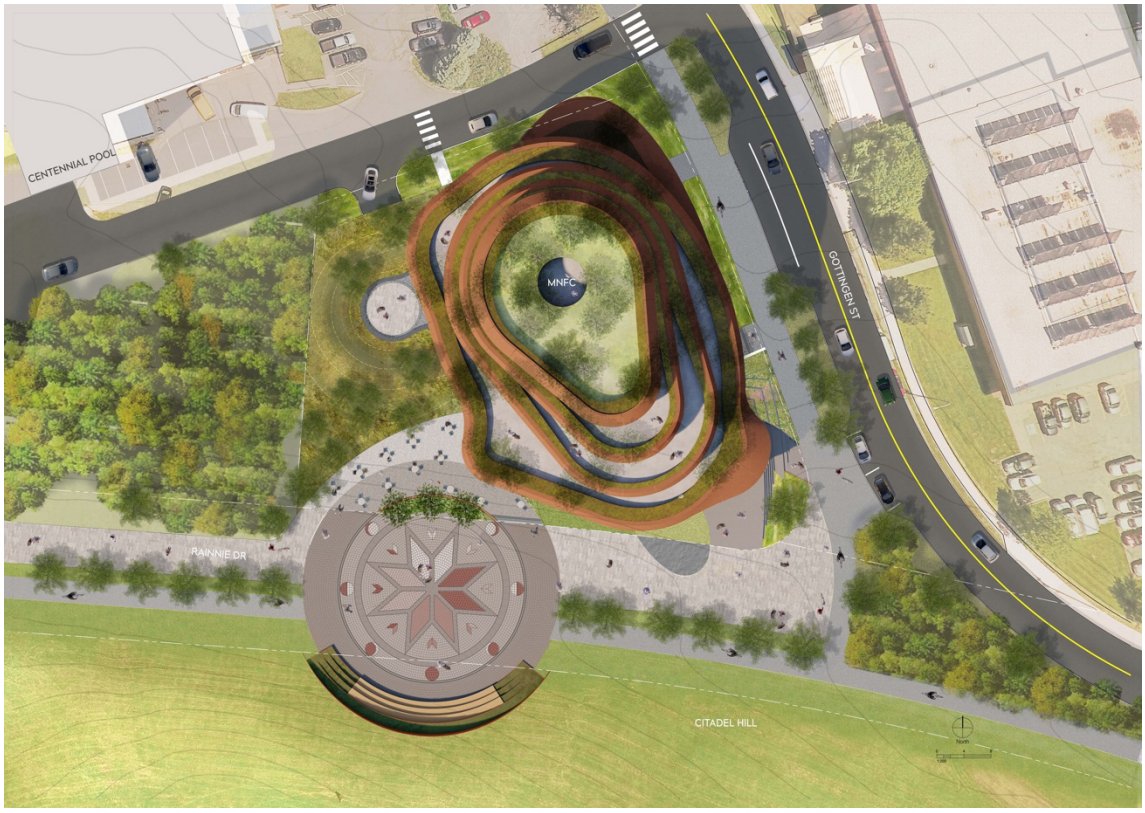


Figure 3.28 – Proposed plan for the new MNFC building, Wi'jewinen. Fathom Studio, 2023.

The building and site plans were prepared by Fathom Studio, a Dartmouth-based firm specialized in designing "innovative placemaking and community building solutions" through architecture, landscape, and planning[39] (see Figures 3.27 and 3.28). The design approach led to a very unique and meaningful proposition, where the physical design is embedded with symbolic significance. Features such as the building being shaped like a turtle, green spaces on every floor, and the construction being in mass timber reflect important aspects of Indigenous cultures and knowledge.

[38] https://wijewinen.ca
[39] https://fathomstudio.ca/about-us

But more than the design elements, a major aspect of this project is how the space is thought about as social infrastructure. Pam Glode-Desrochers, the executive director of the MNFC, referred to the building as something living and breathing[40]. Indeed, even if it does not fit the typical definition of public space, the space is all about community and the center is open to everyone, be they from Indigenous background or not.

As shown on Figure 3.29, Halifax's new MNFC is illustrative of the guiding principles by being a social infrastructure of care anchored in Truth and Reconciliation, where design is used as a mean of reappropriation.

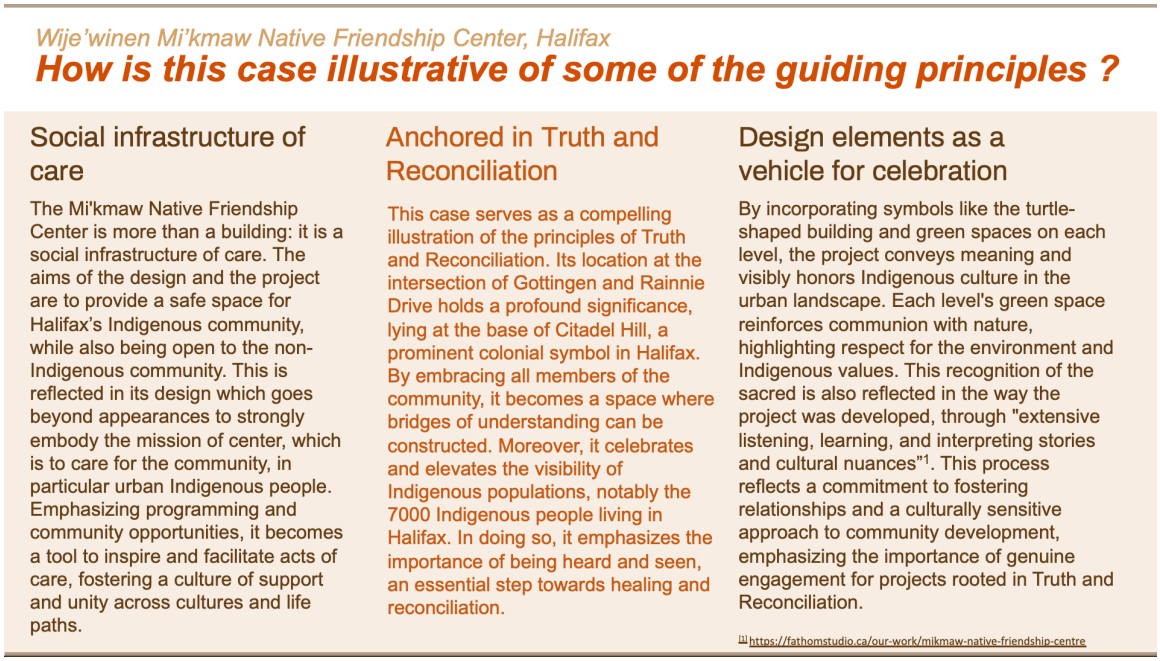


Figure 3.29 – Halifax's Wije'winen MNFC: Illustrating Guiding Principles in Action

[40] Pam Glode-Desrochers, 2023, preliminary interview.

3.2 Kapabamayak Achaak healing forest, Winnipeg

In 2018, Canada's second healing forest project under the Healing Forest initiative[41] was announced in St-John's Park, Winnipeg. This community-led project was developed with the support of institutional partners such as the City of Winnipeg and the University of Winnipeg, and with the collaboration of the Healing Forest Winnipeg Steering Committee and Community Elders. In 2019, it was gifted its name by an Anishnaabe Elder: Kapabamayak Achaak, which means *Wandering Spirit*.

Figure 3.30 – Plan of the Healing Forest at St-John's Park, 2018.
https://chvnradio.com/articles/second-healing-forest-in-canada-set-to-open-in-winnipeg-this-summer

The design of the space intentionally includes a number of symbolic elements to evoke the sacredness of nature and celebrate Indigenous cultures. As can be seen on Figure 3.30, both the healing garden and the sacred fire (see Figure 3.31) spaces are designed based on the medicine wheel, an important symbol for many

[41] "The National Healing Forests Initiative is an invitation to Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, institutions, and individuals to create green spaces throughout Canada to honour residential school victims, survivors, and their families, as well as murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls, and children who have been or were removed from their families (including during the Sixties Scoop)." For more information, visit https://www.nationalhealingforests.ca/about.

Indigenous Peoples. Other notable elements are stones where animals were uncovered by artists to mark the four cardinal directions, as well as new commemorative trees.

The Healing Forest welcomes the sacred, both through moments of quiet reflection and vibrant gatherings that nurture the soul. By aiming to bring together Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, but also as a living memorial for Indigenous children who experienced or were lost to the residential school system, this Healing Forest is a conscious effort towards Truth and Reconciliation. This is reflected in the five main objectives that were identified for the project, namely education, space for learning and healing, honouring the land, space for celebration, and guardianship.

Figure 3.31 – Sacred Fire pit of Kapabamayak Achaak Healing Forest. www.healingforestwpg.org.

As shown on Figure 3.32, Winnipeg's Healing Forest is representative of sacred civics by providing opportunities to come together in a sacred space redefines the frontier between nature and city.

Kapabamayak Achaak healing forest, Winnipeg

How is this case illustrative of some of the guiding principles ?

Provides opportunities to come together

This case serves as a powerful illustration of the potential for communities to unite, bridging the gap between diverse perspectives. Healing forests create opportunities for the intersection of not just two sometimes contrasting viewpoints, but an array of intentional and non-intentional encounters. By doing so, it encourages and sustains grassroots initiatives, directly involving the community in shaping its own destiny. Furthermore, this endeavor is profoundly rooted in Truth and Reconciliation efforts, demonstrating a commitment to healing, understanding, and moving forward together as one, acknowledging the past while striving for a brighter and more inclusive future

Blurs the definition between city and nature

Healing forests contributes to redefine the conventional boundaries between the urban and the natural world. It introduces a novel interpretation of "forest," one that extends beyond traditional notions limited to natural environments. This transcends the typical urban-nature dichotomy, demonstrating that the city can seamlessly integrate with elements of nature. It offers a profound opportunity to reconsider and potentially redefine the dividing line between these two concepts, allowing us to create urban spaces that are not just concrete jungles but also vibrant, healing ecosystems where city and nature harmoniously coexist.

Gives space to the sacred

The Healing forest creates a space that embraces and amplifies the sacred. It does so by fostering a connection to nature, allowing individuals to take in the earth's beauty and appreciating its healing qualities. Moreover, it encourages connections with one another, nurturing the sacred through shared experiences, empathy, and communal growth. It also offers a space for individuals to delve inward, promoting self-discovery and self-connection, which can be a profoundly sacred experience. The strategic use of art and design within this context elevates the sacredness further, as it harmonizes aesthetics and purpose, invoking a sense of reverence and awe that enhances the overall experience.

Figure 3.32 – Winnipeg's Kapabamayak Achaak healing forest: Illustrating Guiding Principles in Action

RECOMMENDATIONS AND WAYS FORWARD

Imagine we are learning how to build a canoe while we're already out on a river journey. In this scenario, we don't have a complete map of where the river will take us, and we're crafting our canoe as we go along. It may sound uncertain, but it's also an opportunity for us to be creative and bold, especially since we are fortunate enough to hold a compass that guides us in the right direction.

When it comes to creating public spaces that embody an ethos–which emphasizes regenerative design and development, respect for culture, and long-term thinking–some illustrative examples were explored in the previous section. While these cases provide very useful insights into transformative pathways, more ambitious, more daring approaches are explored.

Some pathways of practice to go bolder are thus presented here. While they might seem vague, they are meant to be flexible, adaptable to the unique characteristics of each place and the available resources within communities. This means we cannot just copy and paste solutions from one place to another, and instead must customize the approach to fit the specific needs and values of each community.

These pathways to go bolder (see Figure 3.33) are meant to spark imagination, discussions, and reflections, whether within yourself, your organization, or your community. You are encouraged to take inspiration across boundaries and categorization. They are supplemented with prompts to deepen possible reflection.

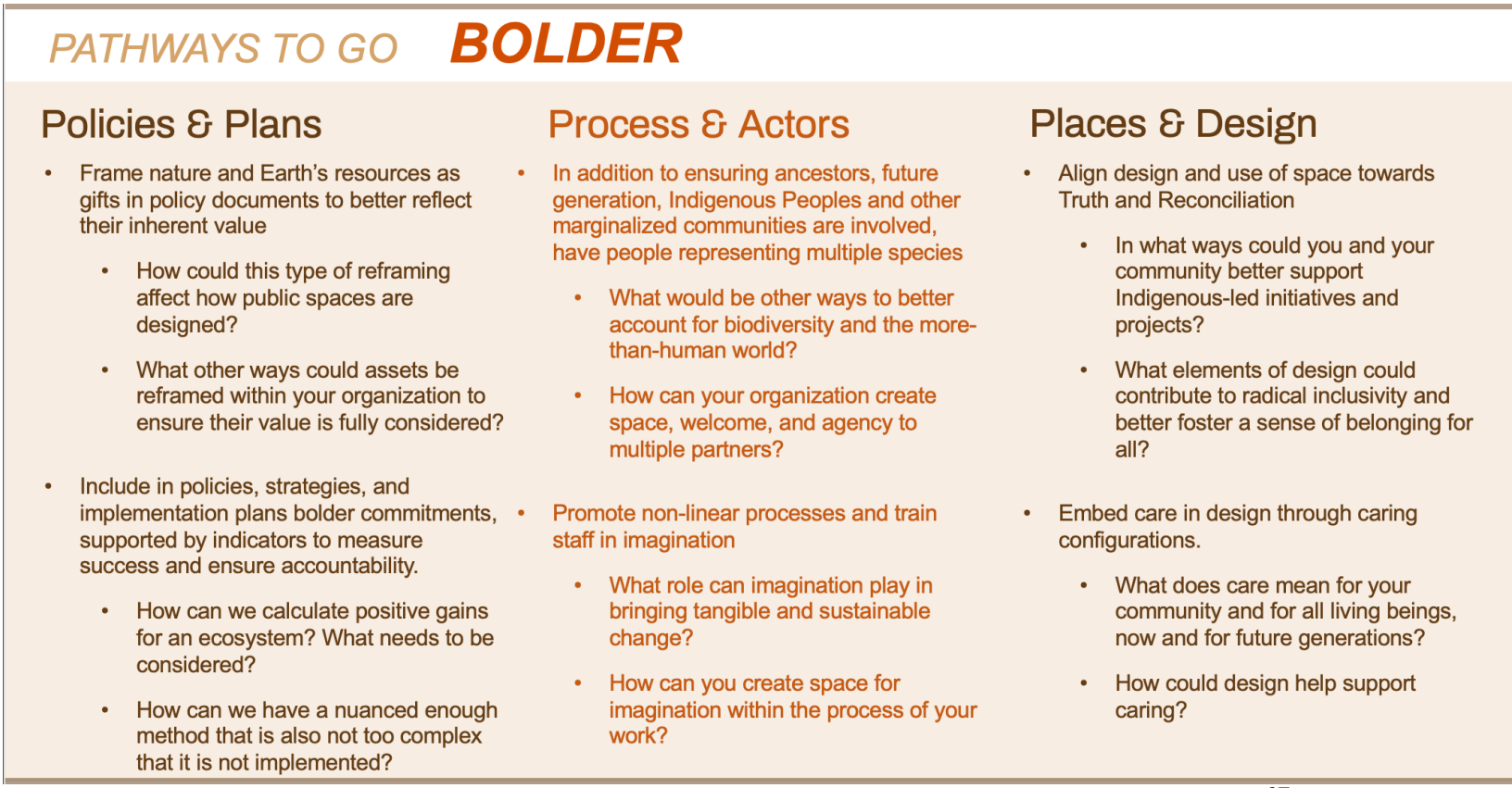


Figure 3.33 – Pathways to go bolder

Ways forward

Public spaces are essential in fostering radically inclusive, caring, and regenerative cities and communities. Serving as the beating heart of urban life, they offer a shared canvas where the aspirations and values of a society can take shape. In their design and use, they have the potential to reflect the very essence of our collective consciousness, offering opportunities for innovation, radical inclusivity, and sustainability. Urban design, as a field often associated with the production of public spaces, presents an unprecedented opportunity to reimagine and reshape the way we live and interact with one another across generations. It is within these spaces that we can harness the power of imagination and resourcefulness to build a brighter, more connected future, one where Truth and Reconciliation can act as a building block.

Imagination stands as one of our most promising assets in addressing the challenges we encounter. This creative force empowers us to envision new possibilities, rethink our approach to resources, and reimagine the sacred in every facet of our existence, be it in nature or within each living being, human or more-than-human. Urban design and public spaces, with their potential to foster community interaction and cohesion, represent fertile grounds for innovative solutions to transcend the confines of current limitations but also transform our cities into vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable environments.

To harness this power, it is essential to foster open discussions and reflections, both within organizations and within our close circles. This process goes beyond mere planning; it entails a shift in our collective belief systems about what is achievable. By encouraging this dialog, we invite you to step into the realm of unbridled imagination. We urge you to dedicate time and resources to envisioning without constraints, contemplating what would be the best course of action for urban design and public spaces, and then diligently working toward realizing these ambitious goals.

To truly break new ground, it is imperative to surpass the boundaries dictated by existing norms. By tapping into local, unique resources, such as individuals with distinct talents and insights, we can transcend the conventional approaches within the realm of urban design and public spaces. Embracing 'What if...' scenarios and challenging the status quo become catalysts for meaningful change in these urban environments. This journey of imagination and resourcefulness, both individual and collective, is the transformative path that beckons us toward a future where urban design and public spaces play a pivotal role in fostering innovation and creating vibrant, harmonious, and sustainable communities.

CHAPTER 4 – ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

ANALYSIS

At the heart of this research lays the profound question: *How can the Seven Generation Cities ethos be applied to the practice and outcomes of urban design to support the creation of more equitable, regenerative, and inclusive cities?* The inquiry has involved exploring urban design, sustainability, and intergenerational responsibility.

The effort to distill the essence of the Seven Generation Cities ethos and its application to urban design has led to certain findings emerging that were not included in the guide. The purpose of this analysis is to uncover and present these insights, offering a more comprehensive view of the capacity of urban design as a vessel for embodying the Seven Generation Cities ethos.

This analysis unfolds through three main sections:

1) Looking at urban design through a Seven Generation Cities lens: opportunities and challenges;

2) Potential of recent approaches to embody a Seven Generation Cities ethos, and to help overcome implementation challenges at the various stages of urban design; and

3) Important lessons regarding the research process and the importance of radical action now.

1. Looking at urban design through a Seven Generation Cities lens: opportunities and challenges

While most of the main findings are presented in the guide to rethinking urban design practice (chapter 3), some were not included as an editorial choice, for communication purposes. These are presented here. Key findings of this research have been about the extent to which urban design can be adapted to embody a Seven Generation Cities ethos, as well as its capacity as a field to bring significant and lasting change. The five guiding principles, as well as the lessons from illustrative cases and pathways to go bolder, are anchored in these realizations, aiming to amplify the transformative opportunities that urban design and the production of public places allow, while also addressing pitfalls and challenges.

Urban design, a field in constant evolution working towards improving city-building practices

Urban design is not static (Carmona et al., 2010): its dynamic nature and its willingness to reinvent itself provide a fertile ground for embracing new approaches that promote co-creation and diverse knowledge sources. By engaging with local communities, urban design can contribute to amplify the unique insights and values of the people who inhabit these spaces, ensuring that designs are better aligned with their needs and aspirations (Berglund, 2021).

Also, the focus of urban design on creating better spaces is pivotal in fostering a sense of belonging, which is a key element of the Seven Generation Cities ethos. When residents and visitors feel a strong connection to their environment, they are more likely to become stewards of their community, ensuring its sustainability and well-being for future generations (Astbury, 2014, p. 26). Indeed, public spaces are not only materially important to communities: they are symbolically important (Murphy and O'Driscoll, 2021, p. 3). By fostering a sense of belonging through thoughtful design, public spaces can become catalysts for long-term, intergenerational relationships with the city itself and its inhabitants, be they human or more-than-human.

Additionally, the practice of urban design extends beyond the physical environment. As mentioned by Murphy and O'Driscoll (2021, p. 3) "space is a construction, and it is also constructive: it is defined by social relations and defines social relations". While primarily oriented toward enhancing the human experience, emergent approaches to urban design such as biophilia, and regenerative design and development, have shown the field's potential to influence the relationships among people, lands, and natures by increasingly incorporate sustainability and regenerative principles into the practice (Cole et al., 2012, Plaut et al., 2013, Andreucci et al., 2021). This has the potential to not only promote ecological balance, but also strengthen the connection between urban dwellers and the natural world, aligning with the Seven Generation Cities ethos, which emphasizes preserving the environment for future generations.

Potential hardships in the alignment of urban design practice and the Seven Generation Cities lens

The built environment is just one facet of the larger picture, and design alone, while undeniably valuable, cannot serve as a panacea for all the complex issues our cities face. Achieving transformative change requires a holistic approach that extends beyond the design phase and permeates every aspect of our systems and

institutions, fostering a more integrated and interconnected society (UN-Habitat, 2022).

One significant hurdle is navigating the delicate balance between prescriptive and descriptive design approaches. While the former may lack adaptability, the latter may sometimes seem overly vague. Striking an equilibrium that truly enhances best practices can be a potential stumbling block. Many existing frameworks and guidelines (e.g. Bentley, Alcock, Murrain, McGlynn and Smith, 1985; Jacobs and Appleyard, 1987) aimed at improving the urban environment tend to be prescriptive, positioning urban designers as experts who know better.

Embracing a Seven Generation Cities ethos necessitates a shift towards co-creation and the recognition of a diverse array of knowledge sources, including Western and Indigenous perspectives. This calls for the exploration and development of a framework that embodies the concept of Two-Eyed seeing, a perspective which strives to explore “the integration of multiple perspectives (i.e., Indigenous and settler worldviews) to create a holistic understanding of multifaceted relationships, experiences, content, and processes” (Engle, Britton and Glode-Desrochers, in Engle et al., 2022, p. 165). Ultimately, this can contribute to forge a more comprehensive and inclusive path forward.

Integrating transformative approaches with prevailing policies and practices also poses a significant challenge, particularly in the face of bureaucratic rigidity. Current systems, particularly those driven by public entities, often adhere to well-defined guidelines, leaving limited space for innovative thinking beyond the established norms (OECD, 2017). This challenge is compounded by the prevalent focus on efficiency, performance, and productivity, which may seem at odds with the time and effort required to nurture meaningful relationships, a cornerstone of a Seven Generation Cities ethos.

Furthermore, settler colonial permeates both urban design as a practice and the systems within which it operates (Barry and Agyeman, 2016). Adapting a Seven Generation Cities ethos, deeply rooted in decoloniality and Truth and Reconciliation, to a field with colonial baggage requires understanding of historical traumas and transformative possibilities, as well as well-attuned sensibilities to navigate and engage with complexity and nuance.

2. *Potential of recent approaches to embody a Seven Generation Cities ethos, and to help overcome implementation challenges at the various stages of urban design*

The main findings relate to past practices and established knowledge that was reviewed in this SRP about: Seven Generation Cities; regenerative design and development; care infrastructure and caring design; and placemaking and Indigenous placekeeping.

Policies and plans

Policies and plans are core to implement significant change and shift the paradigm towards regenerative, radically inclusive and caring public spaces. They function as the foundation, guiding decision-makers in urban transformation. Interviews with professionals and insights from the literature highlight the pivotal role of these instruments in shaping urban spaces, while also presenting some of the challenges regarding their ability to support transformative practice.

Rethink and redefine the role of the urban designers

One key opportunity lies in the redefinition of the urban designer's roles and positionality. Interviews with experts, like Pam Glode-Desrochers, Executive Director of the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Society and Vice President of the National Association of Friendship Centres in Canada, emphasize the responsibility of urban designers as caretakers. Considering that the built environment influences how people act in the space, urban designers have a responsibility to provide opportunities for care. A way to do this is through stewardship policies, which delineate the roles and responsibilities of various actors in taking care of public spaces. These policies, such as the Plaza stewardship strategy in Vancouver, can be understood as examples of long-term placekeeping, a practice which can be viewed as the sustained management ensuring future generations' enjoyment (Dempsey and Burton, 2012). The stewardship policies thus become a cornerstone for reconnecting communities with their living environment, fostering a sense of belonging.

This shift towards stewardship policies instills care into urban design, placing environmental care at the forefront of planning efforts (Binet et al., 2022). However, it is crucial to acknowledge the limitations of some policies, among them Vancouver's Plaza Stewardship strategy, particularly regarding their inclusionary practices. In Vancouver, Indigenous Peoples were not included in the early phases

of the development of the policy, which is problematic. However, Vancouver's planners have recognized this limitation and plan to include Indigenous Peoples in the next steps of the strategy.

Accountability as a key component for implementing change

Lack of accountability and attention to value in design are also among the challenges of effective implementation of these policies in the practical realm (Papanek, 1971, in Bates et al., 2016). Despite policy innovations, many plans remain vague and general, leaving implementation to the discretion of professionals who often face competing pressures (Bates et al., 2016). The complexity of each context, from legal and political to financial and social perspectives, adds layers of difficulty in ensuring accountability.

Support necessary narrative shifts that go beyond current generations and the human experience

Policies and plans can provide powerful tools to reframe urban design processes and products. Initiatives like the Toronto Ravine Strategy challenge the dichotomy between nature and the city, which is a necessary step towards transformative work to reshape our relationship with the environment (Astbury, 2014). Yet, the temporal nature of policies necessitates innovation that extends beyond short-term gains and that truly challenges the current structure. For example, policies need to expand their scope, addressing a Seven Generation Cities ethos where care transcends preservation to encompass contributions that surpass consumption (Zari, 2018).

To overcome these challenges, a redefinition and expansion of the definition of "good" or "great" places are imperative. Urban design practices and frameworks often aim to produce better places, but the underlying question remains: What constitutes a good or better place? This question necessitates a closer examination of actors and processes involved in urban design.

Processes and Actors

Urban design is typically focused on human experience, and given the underlying urban economic logics within which it operates, it has often operated within a top-down framework developed by 'experts' and governed by bureaucracies. This approach influences who has decision-making powers and agency in the processes of urban design. More recently, there is a growing need and evolution toward embracing more community-driven and inclusive approaches.

Expand who gets to be involved throughout the process via radically inclusive practices

If core values and visions are to be redefined, there is a need for equitable representation of the diverse desires and needs of all living beings. Illustrative cases presented in the guide provide valuable insights in that regard. For example, in the Camden Borough of London, municipal employees are given new roles and opportunities to influence outcomes in innovative ways, fostering a sense of agency in the process that has the opportunity to influence their relationships to the community and to their environments.

In Japan, the Future Design Council sets a clear path for intergenerational justice that gives a tangible voice and agency to both present and future generations. Their work resonates well with the ethos of Seven Generation Cities, where the goal is to become "good ancestors" by leaving a positive legacy for the future generations (Engle et al., 2022).

Crucially, Seven Generation Cities advocate for the co-evolution of human and natural systems, recognizing the agency of both human and non-human entities. While frameworks like Camden Imagines acknowledge the more-than-human world, clear paths for their inclusion in processes are often lacking. To truly consider the non-human stakeholders, they should be recognized as full-on participants, perhaps through more-than-human representatives in a role-playing scenario, as demonstrated by Japan's Future Design Councils. Hernandez-Santin et al. (2023) offer through which biodiversity and regenerative perspectives can be integrated as active (rather than passive) stakeholders into urban design processes.

The interviews highlighted that the consideration of both human and more-than-human stakeholders poses challenges, especially regarding the inclusion of the most vulnerable. While it would be interesting to have representatives of more-than-human beings around the table, it could be problematic if not all human stakeholders are represented, which is not the case right now. The necessary changes to expand who gets involved require a shared vision, responsibility, and ownership, challenging dominant political and governance models.

Building capacity within the community

Camden Imagines serves as a noteworthy model for leveraging local assets in capacity building. By training local government staff in imagination, Camden Imagines not only fosters creativity but also empowers the community to actively

contribute to urban design. Co-production is emphasized, ensuring that community ideas are not just heard but also integrated into practice.

While co-production holds promise, challenges exist. It is crucial to ensure that individuals and communities have the space and recognition needed for their contributions to be reflected in practice. Camden's experience highlights the importance of training decision-makers to be open to community initiatives, facilitating a smoother implementation process.

Advocate for decolonization of urban design practices

When looking through a Seven Generation Cities lens, co-creation and co-production can be potent tools for decolonization, reshaping power dynamics and integrating Indigenous knowledge (preliminary interviews, 2023). Co-production proposes to go beyond collecting the input of Indigenous and other marginalized populations; it pushes the active involvement at all stages of the process, including decision-making (Barry and Agyeman, 2020). By allowing Indigenous Peoples to lead placemaking, the Wije'winen[42] case in Halifax illustrates challenges to power dynamics and the embedding of Indigenous knowledge in urban design. This approach challenges Western-centric norms and paves the way for a more inclusive and equitable practice, while also centering Indigenous knowledge. Indeed, "what our cities can become (sustainable, smart, sharing, and resilient) and who is allowed to belong in them (recognition of difference, diversity, and a right to the city) are fundamentally and inextricably linked" (Agyeman, n.d, para 2)" (Barry and Agyeman, 2020).

The Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre, an Indigenous-led organization, received the "land back" from the City government and the land is now in the pre-development phase. Through regenerative design processes currently underway with Evergreen, urban design is rooted in cultural wisdom, challenging historical imbalances that have dominated the field. Emphasizing a user-focused approach, Wije'winen signifies a departure from top-down decision-making. This shift ensures that the urban environment reflects community needs, fostering a sense of belonging and ownership. Decolonization, in this context, addresses historical injustices and reshapes the trajectory of future urban development.

[42] See https://wijewinen.ca.

Product and design

In applying a Seven Generation Cities ethos to urban design, the design and configuration of public spaces play a pivotal role in shaping the well-being, identity, and interconnectedness of communities.

Reducing barriers and nurturing a sense of belonging

The design of urban spaces can impact well-being, going beyond physical accessibility to address what Binet et al. (2022) identify as "the crisis of care." Urban design can foster caring configurations (Bates et al., 2016), as exemplified by the Kapabamayak Achaak healing forest in Winnipeg. The forest is a space that provides areas for contemplation and promotes intergenerational healing, particularly by commemorating victims of the residential school system. This approach is integral to decolonization efforts, Truth and Reconciliation, and the overall well-being of communities.

Another way to reduce barriers highlighted in the literature is through an infrastructural approach to care (Binet et al., 2022). In that perspective, Wije'winen in Halifax can be framed as a social infrastructure of care, one that is part of a more comprehensive infrastructural network. By providing a wide variety of services and public spaces for all to enjoy, it contributes to the community's health while also caring for the environment.

Uncover, create, and anchor the sacred

The potential of design to foster a sense of belonging between the territory and its inhabitants, emphasizing the interconnectedness of all elements also aligns with the idea of celebrating the sacredness of the land and its beings, contributing to the overall well-being of communities and reinforcing the principles of the Seven Generation Cities ethos.

Care, inclusivity, and regeneration extend to the stewardship of the land, as demonstrated by Indigenous placekeeping. Wije'winen and Kapabamayak Achaak healing forest stand as examples of designs that celebrate Indigenous cultures and peoples, embracing a holistic view of relations across time. Through these designs, a commitment to nurturing past, current, and future relations is embedded, reflecting a deep understanding of the sacredness of the land and its inhabitants.

Embracing design as an act of political and ethical nature

Designing spaces should be recognized as a deeply political and ethical act (Bates et al., 2016). Several of the cases approached placemaking and urban design practice through a settler-colonial lens, putting at the forefront a reversal of the "politics of replacement" that characterized (urban) development since the 1500s in Canada (Barry and Agyeman, 2020, p. 32). Acknowledging that planning and urban design have erased Indigenous stories and people from cities thus affecting their sense of belonging and the becoming of those places. This is particularly important in places like Canada, where "[a]bout 52% of the Indigenous population lives in Canada's cities" (Nejad et al., 2020, p. 433).

The power of design to create narratives can be harnessed for a decolonial agenda, as noted by Nejad et al. (2020). Indigenous placemaking and placekeeping, such as the ones observed both in Halifax and Winnipeg, is representative of transformative urban design, and as a pathway to realizing a decolonial agenda (Nejad et al., 2020). Recognition and celebration of past and present Indigenous experiences and contributions, and also to the creation of a space where they can imagine and design their own futurities, is core to not only drastic inclusivity, but also of wellbeing and reparations.

3. *Important lessons regarding the research process and the importance of radical action now*

This work led me to findings regarding the application of the Seven Generation Cities ethos to urban design and the production of public spaces. I also had important insights in relation to the research process, particularly to the challenges of this kind of transformative work and to academic research trying to bridge theory and practice.

Contrary to the linear perception often associated with research, this project emphasized the non-linear and iterative nature of the process. I found myself circling back repeatedly to core texts and documents, constantly revisiting and revising my understanding of the subject matter. This iterative approach allowed for a deeper exploration of the complexities and nuances involved in bridging theory and practice.

I also came to understand the importance of collaboration in the research process. Both the interviewees and I had our own positions, perspectives, and experiences, which shaped the results of this research. This collaboration was instrumental in

shedding light on the intricate relationship between theory and practice, allowing us to develop a richer and more nuanced understanding of the matter at hand.

One of the first and most significant lessons I learned is that the endeavor to bridge theory and practice is a dynamic process that is an ongoing creation. The critical insight here is that there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Every context is unique, and each presents its own set of challenges and opportunities. Recognizing this uniqueness is crucial, as it can serve as both a source of innovation and a potential pitfall when implementing research into practice.

Moreover, bridging theory and practice demands a unique understanding and presentation of information. The conventional methods of academic research and the language used in scholarly work may not effectively translate into practical applications. This realization was a driving force behind my desire to create a guide tailored for professionals, city staff, and community organizations. Such a resource can hopefully help bridge the gap between the academic world and the real-world challenges practitioners face.

CONCLUSION

The pursuit of Seven Generation Cities forces an acknowledgment of the limitations within the current built environment design paradigm concerning transformative opportunities. Despite these constraints, the built environment retains its significance as a crucial piece of the puzzle due to its obduracy and capacity for enduring, long-term interventions. The cityscape, characterized by its structures and systems, serves as a canvas on which a sustainable future for generations to come can be envisioned.

Seven Generation Cities constitutes a compelling vision to bring necessary changes for long-term transformative outcomes, but it represents a challenge not only in conceiving these spaces but also in executing them. The responsibility to cultivate change extends beyond individuals to cities as structural entities. With their intricate networks and resources, cities and administrations bear the duty of not only supporting change but also leading the way in innovation. They need to operate as laboratories where ideas can be tested, refined, and scaled for broader societal impact.

Yet, in this journey, we navigate uncharted waters, constructing the canoe while in motion and guiding it with the compass of a collective vision. The realization of Seven Generation Cities is a dynamic process, and the destination remains on the

horizon. It demands a shared commitment from all sectors of society, recognizing that every stakeholder has a role to play in steering the course toward a more sustainable and inclusive future.

The exploration prompts reflection on the inclusivity of the journey thus far. An imperative emerges to broaden the dialogue, welcoming the perspectives of more Indigenous Peoples and individuals from diverse organizations and cities. This expansion would not only broaden the conversation, but also enrich it with a tapestry of experiences and wisdom vital for creating genuinely inclusive and culturally sensitive urban spaces.

A critical element touched upon, but warranting deeper examination, is the question of valuing differently. This concept lies at the heart of the cultural mindset shift required for genuine transformation. What does it mean to value differently, and how can this be translated into practical frameworks within the built environment? These questions beckon a reevaluation of metrics of success and a recalibration of priorities, challenging the status quo to build a more holistic and sustainable future.

The question of financing looms large, a shadow on the path toward Seven Generation Cities. Collaborative efforts by 7GenCities and Dark Matter Labs are actively working to unveil solutions[43]. Further exploration is needed to develop innovative financing models that align with the vision for sustainable urban development. As these financial tools are unlocked, doors open to new possibilities and avenues for realizing the transformative potential of Seven Generation Cities.

In conclusion, the journey toward Seven Generation Cities is a collective endeavor. The built environment, cities, diverse voices, and innovative financial models all play integral roles in shaping the path forward. As this uncharted territory is navigated, let the approach remain open to collaboration, constantly reassessing and refining the course. The journey is ongoing, and the destination is not a fixed point but a collective vision to be brought to fruition—one that echoes through generations, resonating with the wisdom of the past and the promise of the future.

[43] See https://www.7gencities.org.

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