

# *Values in urban design: A design studio teaching approach*



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*Since 2000, research into the value of urban design has been utilised in consultancy and policy-making with regard to understanding the value of public investment. This research informs an emerging approach to teaching urban design appraisal within a MA urban design studio, in which variations of the residual method are deployed to assess developer value, private good and public good. Here, the relationship of the appraisal and design elements is articulated by an iterative model of design decision and design judgement making. By situating this approach in a broader theory of societal value, we reconceptualise from first principles, the concept of 'value in urban design'. This also suggests a corresponding definition of urban design in terms of value.*

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Questions around 'value added' by design have been at the forefront of urban design policy practice for the past decade and a half. This reflects a growing concern around accountability scrutiny, an interest in 'public value' within public policy discourse in the UK and elsewhere (Kelly, Mulgan, & Muers, 2001; Moore, 1995). Most of the studies of value of urban design, however, assume 'value' to be a single number to be arrived at, which is then usable as an input to decision-making. This common and 'mid-range' concept of 'value as instrument' is found in the real estate, performance measurement and accountancy spheres, and often results in the reductive dismissal of design considerations that are important, but difficult to couch in terms of numbers.

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This paper explores the implications of applying to urban design a high, rather than mid-range concept of value. A 'high' concept of value is closer to some foundational ideas of what value is, and allows us to link urban design to value

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in a way that serves ‘design’ as well as it does ‘value’. Such a concept sees value in urban design to be irreducibly made up of three components: urban design’s contribution to private property value, to value in use, and to the value of what economists call ‘externalities’. Externality is cost or benefit that affects a party who did not choose to incur that cost or benefit (Buchanan & Stubblebine, 1962). The paper explores the potential of such a high conceptualisation by reflecting on the teaching of development appraisal as an integral element in an MA urban design studio. In conclusion, apart from reconceptualising what value is in urban design, we are able to propose a new definition of urban design itself, in terms of value.

### *1.1 The research and practice contexts of value in urban design*

In the UK, a growing body of research has investigated the economic value of urban design. Building on the seminal work of Lichfield (1970; Lichfield, Kettle, & Whithbread, 1975; Lichfield, Barbanente, & Borri, 1998; Lichfield, 2005) which dealt with the economics of planned development, best known as the ‘Planning Balance Sheet’, and on the tradition of cost benefit analysis in land use transport models, these ‘value and design’ studies can be seen as the elaboration of ‘value’ within the design dimensions of urban planning (Punter & Carmona, 1997). In the period since 2000, a number of literature reviews on urban design value have been published (CABE, 2003; McIntyre, 2006; Ministry for the Environment, NZ, 2005), as have research on topics ranging from the impact of street public realm improvement on business rates, business rents and property values (CABE, 2007; Transport for London, 2011), to the social and environmental value of parks and public spaces (CABE Space, 2003), from the value of green space on property price (CABE Space, 2009; Dunse, White, White, & Dehring, 2007, pp. 1–8; GLA Economics, 2003, 2010; Jim & Chen, 2010; Rogers, Jaluzot, & Neilan, 2012) and the value of blue space (Fisher, 1999; Garrod & Willis, 1994; Goetgeluk, Kauko, & Priemus, 2005; Rouwendal, Van Marwijk, & Levkovich, 2014), to the value of station investment (Network Rail, 2011); the value of housing and urban layout (CABE, ODPM, & Design for Homes, 2003; Chiaradia, Hillier, Schwander, & Barnes, 2013; The Prince’s Foundation for the Built Environment, 2007) to the value of mixed use streets (Chiaradia, Hillier, Schwander, & Wedderburn, 2012; Jones, Roberts, & Morris, 2007) and the value of urban design more generally (British Council for Offices, 2006; CABE, UCL, & DETR, 2001). More recently there has been work on resilient urban form, governance and the creation of long term value (Grosvenor, 2013). All of these studies link design characteristics of the built environment to economic value, by calculating each characteristic’s contribution to ‘net benefit’ (i.e. benefit less cost, a classic definition of value) for a given locality or stakeholder. Most of the studies investigate the relationships between physical configuration or condition (e.g. layout, perceived street quality, etc.) and economic value. In some

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