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**CALL FOR PAPERS: special issue**  
**Social Value of the Built Environment**

**Guest Editors:**

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**Deadline for abstracts: 1 November 2022**

**The UN Sustainable Development Goals define many values and actions for environmental, social, economic and climatic issues. Social value can be a driver to radically change built environment practices and outcomes. However, the questions surrounding the social value of the built environment – definitions, inclusion processes, delivery, evaluation and benefits – remain unclear and require further development by governments, industry, researchers and civil society. This special issue explores social value in relation to both placemaking (urban design, architecture and real estate) and construction (procurement and labour) processes.**

The emergence of the social value agenda has real potential for the promotion of justice, equality and social cohesion in our built environment. Social value is often defined in different ways by sector, industry and context. A useful working definition is “the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the relevant area” (Public Services (Social Value) Act, 2012). This demonstrates an interrelationship with triple bottom line sustainability, as well as the importance of prioritising impact within a defined spatial area, which could be local, regional, national or wider. Other definitions emphasise the importance of stakeholders and beneficiaries recognising and placing a value on the changes they experience in their lives (Social Value UK, n.d.; Pearce, 2003; Johnston, 1992), as well as the quantification and measurement of positive impacts.

#### **Aims**

This special issue will explore current and potential approaches to defining, delivering, monitoring and evaluating social value in the built environment, its benefits and consequences and its relation to other existing policy mechanisms. How can planners, clients, designers create and evaluate social value at different scales? How can local stakeholders (communities) be involved and empowered? How can the intended outcomes be assured? Submissions are welcomed that examine these phenomena in the different social and economic contexts. Contributions that explore social value from various viewpoints and multiple perspectives are particularly welcome.

#### **Context**

That best value, or lowest cost, is an inadequate lens for describing success in policy terms is widely recognised (Raworth, 2017; Mazzucato, 2018). Economic, environmental and social value as triple bottom line accounting recognises the fallacy of financial and technical decision-making in isolation. While measures of economic value are widely agreed and environmental value is increasingly being mainstreamed through sophisticated tools and metrics relating to natural capital broadly, or more specific agendas of carbon and biodiversity, there is a need for consensus on how to ascribe, deliver and assess social value.

For the construction industry, social value has sometimes led to a focus on the delivery and procurement phases of development projects (e.g. Public Services (Social Value) Act (2012) imposing demands on public procurement). However, the long term opportunities are becoming recognised for maximising and localising socio-economic impact across the project lifecycle (Useful Projects, 2020), as well as embedding place-making, quality of life, wellbeing and lived experience evidence into planning, design and operational decision-making (Raiden & King, (2021).

Social value is growing in prominence. Approaches for the inclusion of social value in urban design and placemaking, cities, infrastructure and major operations are increasingly being prioritised. A recent industry initiative (UKGBC, 2021) for defining and delivering social value emphasises its context- and experience-specific nature as a mutable term co-created by

stakeholders and local communities. There has been considerable work into the development of social value based cost benefit analyses (Watson and Whitley, 2016), with new emphasis on infrastructure and the historic environment (see for example Fujiwara *et al.*, 2021). The adoption of social value could also change real estate practices, in particular around land valuation (Lorenz, Dent and Kauko, 2017).

Innovations in digital methods, participatory map-making with communities and other spatial analysis are beginning to enable a scaled up approach to bespoke social value creation and measurement, in a way that could disrupt previously unspatial assessment through approaches such as Social Return on Investment (SROI) (Stantec, forthcoming). This evolution can also be recognised in more recent procurement thinking, and the development of the Value Tool by the UK Construction Innovation Hub, a platform to facilitate the advance of outcomes- (or value-) based procurement.

Social value research often takes a siloed approach. Raiden *et al.* (2018) successfully drew together the work of a disparate group of social value researchers in construction procurement and management. Work on the social value of architecture and design was tackled by Samuel and Hatleskog (2020). There is now a strong need to bring together the fields of construction processes, physical artefacts and their ongoing use / management.

## Suggested topics

The suggested topics for this special issue include, but are not limited to:

### Planning for and delivering social value

- What approaches or processes can be used to establish what social value means in a particular context?
- How is social value of the built environment created from different types of projects, or by different organisations?
- How can top-down approaches to social value can be validated by bottom-up evidence?
- How different stakeholders perceive social value: differences between those responsible for delivering social value compared to those those lives it impacts upon.

### Differences of perspective and lived experience relating to social value

- How do different cultures and demographics define and evaluate 'social value'?
- Understanding the variation of how social value is defined, measured, achieved or valued in different countries.
- Case studies from less economically developed regions.
- What processes can ascertain the distribution of social value within a given community, *i.e.* to those most vulnerable?

### Opportunities, drivers, challenge and barriers for social value practice

- The relationship of social value to economic and environmental values
- The implications for operationalising social value within the planning system
- The potential opportunities and/or risks to investors and developers of embedding social value into their business models.

### Holistic assessment of social value outcomes

- Encompassing a wide range of issues, *e.g.* employment, skills and local economy, quality of life and lived experience measures.
- How is this holistic view of value impacting on land use decision making, design, procurement and operation and management in the long term?
- What are the potential unintended consequences of trying to capture and evidence social value, in different sectors?

### Systems for the measurement and evaluation of social value and quality of life

- The adaptation of post occupancy evaluation or other means.
- Ways in which social value in the built environment might align with the growing research agenda around capabilities.

### Innovation in the use of digital technology

- The use of BIM or GIS for capturing social value value and quality of life.
- If social value is to be built into digital twin models of cities and places how can we ensure that the community voice is heard?

### Policy mobilities

- The policy and industry backdrop to the terminology of value and quality of life.
- The different ways in which industry and academia treat topics like social value, *i.e.* middle range theory.

## Briefing note for contributors

You are invited to submit an abstract for this special issue. Please send a **500 word (maximum) abstract** to editor **Richard Lorch** [richard@rlorch.net](mailto:richard@rlorch.net) by **1 November 2022**. Your submission must also include these 3 items:

- the author's and all co-author's names, institutional & departmental affiliations and contact details
- the question(s) in this Call for Papers that the abstract and intended paper address
- the abstract (300 - 500 words maximum) defining the research question(s), scope, methods and results

Abstracts will be reviewed by the editors to ensure a varied, yet integrated selection of papers around the topic. Authors of accepted abstracts will be invited to submit a full paper (6000-7500 words), which undergoes a double-blind review process.

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*Buildings & Cities* is an open access journal and has an article processing charge (APC) of £1200. If you do not have institutional support, please contact the editor when submitting your abstract. We endeavour to assist those without funding.

## Questions?

If you have a question, please contact:

**Richard Lorch** [richard@rlorch.net](mailto:richard@rlorch.net), **Flora Samuel** [f.b.samuel@reading.ac.uk](mailto:f.b.samuel@reading.ac.uk) or **Kelly Watson** [kelly.watson@hatch.com](mailto:kelly.watson@hatch.com)

## Timeline

<b>Abstracts due</b>	<b>1 November 2022</b>
Full papers due	06 March 2023 (NB: authors can submit sooner if they wish)
Referees' comments	31 May 2023
Final version due	July 2023
Publication	October 2023 (NB: papers are published as soon as they are accepted)

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