Using Senses of Place to Help Communities Navigate Place Disruption and Uncertainty

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ABSTRACT Uncertainty and change are the hallmarks of contemporary life. Global climate change, ecological regime shifts, and urban transformations catalyze new levels of socio-spatial precarity. Exacerbated by political and economic conditions, accelerating change and uncertainty have disrupted people-place relationships and created anxiety around real and perceived place loss and threat. In this article, we outline the potential of senses of place—both pluralized and politicized—to generate new possibilities for thinking, acting, and designing in response to disruption. Three different case studies demonstrate how senses of place can guide us through disruption. For each case, we examine the nature of the disruption/place change, describe how senses of place are involved in the disruption, and consider the role of landscape architecture in helping communities respond. Together, these cases demonstrate that a deeper understanding of senses of place offers a way to respond to disruptions that enables new beginnings to unfold, facilitates the coproduction of knowledge, and supports socio-spatial justice.

KEYWORDS Senses of place, place disruptions, socio-spatial precarity

INTRODUCTION If the past two years of the pandemic have taught us anything, it is that we live in a world of uncertainty. While many worldwide are already acutely aware of uncertainty and live under conditions of precarity, those who have been more shielded and privileged (e.g., those from the global North and white, Western, or economically advantaged individuals) are beginning to realize how universal that precarity truly is. Indeed, uncertainty and change have become the hallmarks of contemporary life as we bear witness to the impacts of global climate change, ecological regime shifts, migration and refugee crises, and all manner of urban and technological transformations (Raymond et al., 2021; de Reuver et al., 2020). This change and uncertainty have led to deepening disruptions in people-place relationships and have created a sense of socio-spatial precarity—that is, a state of uncertainty about the stability of our social worlds and the places where we live. As our habitats and lifestyles become more unsettled, we experience anxiety around the real and perceived loss, threat, and change brought about by disruptive processes (Manzo et al., 2021). Because of this, longstanding notions of a singular sense of place based on fixity, centeredness, stability, and rootedness have become problematic (Di Masso et al., 2019).

In this article, we advocate for a more complex understanding of senses of place—one that is pluralized and problematized—as a way to navigate disruptions to people-place relationships. Here, we define senses of place as the constellations of place interpretations, meanings, and values continually formulated and negotiated among collectives of people in an uneven landscape of power (Raymond et al., 2021; Manzo & Desanto, 2021). These senses of place are developed in relation to the physical
This article describes the potential of a pluralized and politicized understanding of senses of place to offer new possibilities for being, thinking, acting, and designing in response to disruption. Critically reflecting on the uncertainty that disruptions create, and understanding the psycho-social implications of disruptions, is vital to navigating them. As Rebecca Solnit (2016) notes, “in the spaciousness of uncertainty there is room to act” (p. xiv). We explore that spaciousness of uncertainty as a way to adapt landscape architecture scholarship and practice in response to disruptive phenomena. We propose that design, and codesign processes in particular, have an important role to play in the articulation of senses of place and thus how we respond to the socio-spatial ruptures we encounter with change.

We compare three existing cases, drawn from the different authors’ independent studies of senses of place in different geographical and political-economic contexts, to demonstrate how a pluralized and politicized understanding of senses of place can provide a purposeful direction through disruption. This comparative multi-case approach represents the very spirit of plurality for which we advocate. The cases reflect the authors’ different studies of disruptive phenomena from urban greening projects, to rural climate change planning, to the impacts of commercially driven urban gentrification. Each case illustrates, in its own way, how people navigate and negotiate place change in distinct contexts. At the same time, each of the three cases highlights a common focus on the importance of senses of place, inclusivity, and the potential of relational thinking in the design and planning process (see Table 1). Together, the cases illustrate the variety of ways in which understanding senses of place can help us respond to different forms of disruption. For each case we examine the nature of the disruption/place change and describe how senses of place are involved in the disruption. We then consider the lessons for landscape architecture in addressing disruption. In particular, we examine recovery from disruptions through reciprocity and relational care. This makes room for new collective understandings of space to be produced in association with the practices of living in that space (LeFebvre, 1991). This, in turn, supports the coproduction of knowledge and socio-spatial justice.

The cases presented here also illustrate how relational care between people and places is a way to respond constructively to disruptions. In landscape design, care work has largely been understood as human stewardship of the landscape (Li & Nassauer, 2020; West et al., 2018; Nassauer, 1995), which is critical in times of landscape transformation. Yet, disruptions to people-place relationships remind us that care work is mutually constituted between people and place. The case studies presented here show the potential for explorations of senses of place to help designers and planners appreciate that reciprocity and develop responses to disruption that can lead to reciprocal healing (Varanasi, 2020). This is not to say that reciprocal care, or multiple senses of place, for that matter, enables designers to avoid or negate disruption. Rather, understanding the nuances of multiple senses of place is a way to embrace relational thinking as a way toward mutual healing even while attending to discord. Through this process, reciprocal care can open up new possibilities for emplacement, new forms of value creation (Tronto, 2018), and new ways of being together in a community (Williams, 2020).

PLACE CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATIONAL ANXIETIES

Disruptions to people-place relationships, whether on a global, regional, or local scale, challenge our sense of security and our expectation that the world around us is somewhat knowable and predictable. This is because our relationships to place are critical for self-regulation, a sense of self-coherence (Korpela, 1989), self-recognition, and self-continuity (Proshansky et al., 1983; Lewicka & Dobosh, 2021). Consequently, disruptions to place create “transformational anxieties”—feelings of instability and unease derived from sudden or ongoing changes in the landscapes and life-spaces that we inhabit (Giddens, 1991; Farbotko, 2019; Manzo et al., 2021). This has negative psychological consequences (Cheng & Chou, 2015, Clarke et al., 2018; Devine-Wright, 2013). In its more intense manifestation, unwanted or unexpected ruptures of people-place relationships can be felt as a form of grief (Fried, 1963), a traumatic “root shock” (Fullilove, 2016), or
an environmental stressor with clinical consequences (Albrecht et al., 2007).

As the cases in this article illustrate, such anxieties are triggered by both physical changes in the landscape and shifts in the symbolic meanings and/or social aspects of place. In the latter form of change, symbolic displacement (Atkinson, 2015) occurs when shifts in the landscape herald new norms and lifestyles that create a sense of cultural exclusion (Davidson, 2008) and political displacement (Hyra, 2015). These symbolic changes also create a sense of incongruence between the self and the environment (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). This is well illustrated in Case 3 in particular. Such incongruence can be disempowering if people cannot find the resources and connections they need in their community spaces, or if they feel they have lost their ability to participate in community decision-making processes (Di Masso et al., 2022).

However, place disruptions may also catalyze forms of resistance (Di Masso et al., 2011). They can even provide an opportunity to “disrupt a damaging normal” by disrupting oppressive systems. For example, in her study of post-earthquake recovery in
Christchurch, New Zealand, Durgerian (2019) found that Maori participants felt the disaster provided an opportunity to disrupt the city’s colonial legacy in the process of rebuilding the city. In this way, place disruptions can provide outlets for thoughtful navigation and a questioning of our current ways of being in the world (Manzo et al., 2021). Disruptions also remind us that people-place relationships are much more “variable, contested and fluid than is often recognised” (Raymond et al., 2021, p. 4).

In this article, we posit that design and planning interventions that foster a balance between place change and place continuity can prevent or help address transformational anxieties. In particular, participatory design processes that intentionally engage a diversity of people and make room for multiple senses of place can help stakeholders respond to disruptions and maintain place-self congruity and continuity (Droseltis & Vignoles, 2010). This can foster collective recovery strategies and promote resilience when new places symbolize strength or hope (Scannell et al., 2017).

UNPACKING SENSE OF PLACE

As a subject of inquiry, sense of place (in the singular) made its modern debut in the writings of human geographers and designers in the late 1970s (Buttimer, 1976; Meinig, 1979; Norberg-Schulz, 1979; Relph, 1976), who were critical of technocratic approaches to design and environmental management that dominated the early post–World War II period. They argued that such approaches paid scant attention to important emotional geographies of everyday life (Appleyard, 1979; Fried, 1963). Consequently, sense of place resonated with designers and planners as a means to identify, protect, and/or restore the presumably “authentic” or essential character of places threatened by the disruptive forces of globalization and commercialization (Rafat & Mirhadi, 2017; Sepe, 2013).

Much of this literature draws upon Norberg-Shultz’s (1979) concept of genius loci to suggest some authentic spirit or character of a place. J. B. Jackson’s (1995) seminal text “A Sense of Place, A Sense of Time” considered sense of place an awkward and ambiguous modern translation of the Latin term genius loci, which, in “classical times means not so much the place itself as the guardian divinity of that place” (p. 24). He notes that modern culture rejected the notion of a divine presence in place, so the phrase became “translated as the genius of the place, meaning its influence” (p. 24). In this way, Jackson also treated sense of place as a singular phenomenon, a master narrative that describes the unique characteristics and identity of a particular locale.

The focus on a unique character and identity of a place was also evident in early work on therapeutic landscapes, which drew upon essentialized notions of sense of place to identify what makes some places “intrinsically therapeutic.” These are places “where the physical and built environments, social conditions, and human perceptions combine to produce an atmosphere which is conducive to healing” (Gesler, 1996, p. 96). Though subsequent work has embraced a more relational perspective (Conradson, 2005), essentialized notions of place and a singular sense of place continue to attract scholars and practitioners (Fanfani & Ruiz, 2020; Hensley, 2013; Mendly, 2022). In contrast, we argue, following Massey (1993, 1994), that design and planning would benefit from an understanding of multiple senses of place, particularly when considering how to ameliorate place disruption. Others have called this a “progressive sense of place” that examines “power geometries” or the uneven distributions of economic, cultural, and political power across space (Maturana and Varela, 1987; Lakoff et al, 1999). From this perspective, places are relational, fluid, networked, politically contested, and continuously evolving (Cresswell, 2015). This is evident in all three cases. These cases illustrate how a dynamic perspective on senses of place shifts the designer’s task from capturing and showcasing an essential character of a place to understanding and responding to the complex dynamics of people-place relationships. In the context of place disruptions, then, design becomes more about how to help people navigate through ruptures in people-place relationships to enhance connection, inclusivity, and well-being.

CASE 1: GREEN SPACE PLANNING AND SENSES OF PLACE IN URBANPLANEN, COPENHAGEN

Context and Nature of the Disruption

The case of Urbanplanen, Copenhagen (Denmark) demonstrates some of the limitations of crafting a
manufactured “sense of place” in green space planning, as well as the possibilities for engaging with pluralized senses of place in the design and planning process. Urbanplanen is one of Copenhagen’s largest social housing residential areas, with 450 hectares of mostly multi-layered apartments for 6,000 residents and 50 hectares of public urban green space. It is undergoing significant renovation in response to national and local political goals (a planned disruption) to implement nature-based solutions (NBS)—actions to protect, conserve, restore, and manage ecosystems (UNEP, 2022) like native gardens and stormwater wetlands—while supporting climate adaptation and addressing negative perceptions of the neighborhood (El Kot, 2019).

NBS are being implemented in two phases. Phase 1 entailed the renovation of Remiseparken, a centrally located park in the neighborhood. The project was praised by the design and planning community for opening the park to the rest of Copenhagen and modernizing the design for climate adaptation, biodiversity, and social inclusion (Boligen, 2020). Yet, the design transformation created real and perceived loss among local residents because they did not see their senses of place reflected in new designs. Rather, park planners and designers focused on calls from politicians to rebrand the neighborhood, altering it physically to improve safety and manage stormwater. Specific hangout spots such as a local soccer field and vegetated spaces frequented by local youth to meet up with friends, play ball, and hide from adults were cleared under the guise of “opening up the park” and “making the park safer.” Thus, a place that was used as an “outside living room” by the residents was drastically altered to meet design plans for outward-facing strategies.

How Multiple Senses of Place are Involved
The ongoing Phase 2 of the Urbanplanen project presents an opportunity to rethink how plural senses of place could be used to create new spaces of exchange. In this phase, emphasis has been on relational practices of care, whereby two housing association staff members now work on resident engagement and act as facilitators between residents, the residents’ association, researchers, designers, and the City of Copenhagen. Thus, the state and housing association have invested financial and human resources toward institutional practices of care (Tronto, 2013) to better support diverse visions of residents and share information among partners. Facilitators employed by the local housing association obtained approval for “community shaping areas,” which enabled local residents to codesign green spaces in ways that align with the meanings, values, roles and interpretations residents have of the park. The facilitators coordinated a number of in-person community engagement programs over the past three years, reaching 75% of residents across all age groups (approximately 1200 out of 1600), to identify the diverse meanings and desired uses of these areas among residents.

In parallel, researchers from the University of Copenhagen conducted an online participatory mapping survey to improve environmental justice outcomes in Urbanplanen. The study aimed to map residents’ place values associated with the transitioning landscape before it was torn up for new sewer systems and stormwater management. A well-known local youth was employed to implement the survey and assist in overcoming the digital divide faced by elders and those uncomfortable with digital mapping. As a result, survey respondents varied across age, gender, employment, and ethnicity, and the participants included those who typically did not participate in meetings (Social Respons, 2020). The research helped identify important areas of cultural heritage and multiple layers of place meaning. It also helped identify possibilities for reshaping green spaces to accommodate diverse cultural needs, including food sources, resulting in a mosaic of green space designs that support different senses of place.

Landscape Design’s Role in Addressing the Disruption
Landscape architecture plays a central role in addressing disruption in Urbanplanen. In partnership with the city and residents’ board, designers, facilitators, and planners are seeking to honor the senses of place of local residents within the community. At the same time, they have license to plan new areas, including the proposed glass house and “living stage” located in existing green space. Further, while the city also set some limits on the design proposals through certain requirements related to building design, the residents’ board has an important role in approving
Facilitators are also helping to translate the senses of place of residents in ways that meet the design regulations.

The more inclusive design process that considered multiple senses of place among residents helped facilitate a healing process by opening up spaces for new narratives about place to be heard by all involved in the redevelopment process (see Figure 1). Through careful design and knowledge cocreation, researchers, in partnership with designers and local social workers, engaged residents’ preferences for biodiversity and multiple senses of place. This provided residents an opportunity to reauthor their relationship to nature, to each other, and to the municipality, in turn opening up new spaces for exchange and trust building. However, some local youth still feel marginalized in the process as they perceive their suggestions for green meeting spots as being rejected and/or ignored by decision makers. Thus, the limits of relational care are illuminated when practiced from an institutional perspective.

Hence, it is important to consider the interplay between care and justice by maintaining relationships and responding to people’s needs while maintaining equity and fairness. The project is ongoing and involves a long-term process wherein the landscape architects, planners, and researchers need to remain committed to working together to support transformations that are resilient and just. Community tensions may never be fully resolved, but through careful dialogue, new pathways of landscape design that identify and respond to plural relational values are being identified and considered.

CASE 2: CLIMATE ADAPTATION IN THE BIG HOLE VALLEY, MONTANA

Context and Nature of the Disruption

In contrast to the more acute urban place change described in Case 1, the case of Big Hole Valley, Montana, addresses the slowly unfolding disruption of climate change on a rural landscape. Current climate modeling provides only a rough guide on how
the climate in any particular landscape may change and impact the lives, landscape meanings, and livelihoods at a local scale. However, in rural agricultural landscapes, climate change is likely to fundamentally alter water availability for crops; shift the timing of agricultural practices; and impact the complex web of social, economic, and ecological relationships among community residents. Local landscape planning and design can play an important role in navigating the possibilities for adapting to such landscape change. Adaptation in this context involves identifying and sustaining an assemblage of local meanings and practices that can carry current senses of place into the future. This case demonstrates that planning and design that explore various adaptation possibilities going forward are a vital way to respond to slowly evolving disruptive phenomena. The task is to plan and design in a way that is robust and responds to the uncertainties of unfolding climate change while taking the dynamics of evolving senses of place into account.

How Multiple Senses of Place are Involved
The case of Big Hole Valley, Montana, examines potential impacts of climate change on the collective precarity of a small, isolated rural community. It offers an example of how different senses of place are implicated in climate change as a slowly unfolding process (Murphy et al., 2016; Wyborn et al., 2015). Analysis of this case builds from work reported by Murphy and colleagues (see Murphy & Williams, 2021; Murphy et al., 2017). Here, local citizens—drawn from different economic sectors reflecting different relationships with the local landscape—were engaged in the coauthorship of multiple climate change scenarios. These scenarios were explored through an iterative process that illustrates possible future adaptation pathways and shows how climate change adaptation transforms landscapes at a local scale. This process elicited different senses of place that were considered further in focus groups where participants were asked to reconcile their different responses to anticipated climate change and grapple with their collective interdependencies. Engaging local stakeholders in coconstructing future senses of place revealed the role of place-making in understanding community vulnerability and adaptation to climate change.

The initial climate change scenarios were developed by a team of climate scientists based on downscaled climate modeling (Murphy et al., 2016). Local stakeholders were presented with three alternative scenarios (in the form of short narratives of 350–400 words) depicting a range of possible climate changes 20 years into the future:

1. “Some like it hot,” referring to widespread drought;
2. “The seasons, they are a’ changing,” referring to warmer but wetter winters and deep summer droughts; and
3. “Feast or famine,” referring to high inter-annual climate variability.

These scenarios allowed locally situated stakeholders to consider a range of potential climate change adaptation strategies and how local landscapes could change in response to each. In addition, the multiple iterations of scenario building provided more opportunities for multiple voices to be heard.

Most scenario-building exercises in the literature involve a single meeting with diverse representations (for a notable exception, see Nassauer & Corry, 2004). However, in this case, the investigators approached scenario building as an iterative process that operates at multiple scales. The investigators engaged community residents in three rounds of scenario construction. First, individual interviews with stakeholders were conducted to elicit adaptations to each of the three initial scenarios. Second, these responses were re-presented to multiple focus groups organized by livelihood categories (e.g., ranchers, fishing guides, etc.) to coproduce a shared scenario response. Third, a community-scale focus group was convened across livelihood categories to refine the scenarios even further and reveal potential interdependencies among stakeholders.

At each stage, researchers gathered data on perceptions of risk and uncertainty, impacts, potential responses, the networks that residents engage in, and the resources they need to formulate possible actions. They asked people to imagine the lived experience of these scenarios and talk about how these different possible futures might impact them individually and as a community. They considered who might be affected in that scenario and why as well as how they
anticipated responding and what they would need to respond effectively in terms of resources, information, and networks. Between each round, the research team reconvened and rewrote each of the initial scenarios to reflect the participants’ input and the resulting ecological impacts. This iterative coproduction of scenarios was intended to reveal conflicts, disputes, and other tensions that impact collective action. It also provided participants an opportunity to find synergies from group creativity.

The scenario-building process surfaced important place meanings that defined a “resilient place” for residents of the community (see Table 1). For example, respondents expressed pride in their settler past, working the land, and scratching out a living in a remote, harsh winter environment. The Big Hole River served as a potent symbol of the lifeblood of the community. Due to the prominent role of ranching, residents were conversant in the role that annual climate variation played in challenging that livelihood and how it affected economic prospects for ranching and the well-being of the community more generally. Recognizing these commonalities creates the potential to cultivate relational care in the adaptation process.

When imagining a climate-changed future, residents expressed transformational anxieties strongly linked to their identity as a resilient community making a living in an already challenging climate. One was the loss of small family ranches in which the current pastoral character of the area, dominated by haystacks (see Figure 2), would be replaced by industrial-looking agriculture such as center pivot irrigation—effectively fragmenting the community’s sense of identity and belonging. A related fear was that the shift to an amenity-based economic system in some scenarios might replace the local pastoral character with high-end residential development, symbolically displacing them through a process of rural gentrification (Nelson et al., 2010; Phillips, 1993).

**Landscape Design’s Role in the Addressing the Disruption**

The dynamics surrounding competing senses of place emerged as a particularly important aspect of understanding climate adaptation trajectories. The scenario process illuminated the complex linkages between place, identity, and politics of different adaptive trajectories. Each scenario had different implications for transforming the Big Hole Valley in ways that reveal conflicting capacities to realize desired future senses of place. In particular, by exceeding the adaptive capacity of small-scale ranching, the hot and dry scenario would transform the Big Hole Valley in ways that go beyond material design adaptations and reveal an unrelenting challenge of confronting social-spatial precarity. Though specific design and
planning solutions remain elusive, this case offers insights into how landscape architects can help residents respond to climate change by inviting them to cocreate narratives of possible futures and build upon their relationality. This gives important legitimacy to local knowledge and experiences while empowering residents to engage in collaborative social learning about potential impacts of climate change, with senses of place serving as points of shared concern (Wyborn et al., 2015). Knowing the importance of key landscape elements can help guide designers and planners making decisions that would change land use or rezone agricultural parcels.

**CASE 3: GENTRIFICATION IN BARCELONA**

**Context and Nature of the Disruption**

This case examines the impacts of top-down, ongoing urban place change in Barcelona, Spain, where gentrification patterns have expanded to the neighborhoods of Poblenou and Gràcia. These two neighborhoods, which simultaneously attract tourists, young adults, international students, and real-estate investors, are undergoing an intense streetscape transformation via commercial gentrification. Poblenou, an old, industrial working-class neighborhood, was redeveloped during the 2000s into a “technological district”—a hub of economic activity with mixed uses. It is now undergoing massive urban changes driven by the Metropolitan General Plan (MpPGM), an urban regeneration strategy that “aims to consolidate existing fabrics and uses with social, identity and business value,” and to transform some areas to achieve “a mixed city of environmental quality” (https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/ecologiaurbana/mpgm22@/en/). This change is mapped onto the everyday landscape of Poblenou in the form of cultural industry, concept stores, renewed arts and crafts ateliers, and trendy cocktail bars. In Gràcia, a historically old village with a rich community life and squares with a vibrant nightlife, gentrification is unfolding in a less formally planned manner via tourism and massive real-estate operations that are raising the cost of housing.

In both neighborhoods, place change has evolved gradually, not within a pre-established period of time (as in the Urbanplanen case), but rather insidiously (similar to the Big Hole Valley case), following a pattern of “slow violence” (Kern, 2016). What is notable about this case, in contrast to the previous two, is that there has been no collective process to discuss ongoing environmental changes among residents and stakeholders to mobilize plural senses of place. Aside from one neighborhood meeting in 2018 organized by the local administration in Gràcia to discuss the future of the district in the face of gentrification, no partnerships nor collaborative scenario building took place. Thus, this case is an example of what happens when pluralism and local senses of place are ignored and when discourse over contested meanings does not evolve in ways that lead to new visions and strategies for change. It is a warning about exclusionary urban transformations and how the deliberate use of senses of place as a lens to understand place change can unveil the spatial dynamics of social injustice.

**How Multiple Senses of Place are Involved**

Gentrification in Gràcia and Poblenou has significantly altered residents’ senses of place and problematized institutional place narratives. Multiple and competing senses of place emerge as a response to homogeneous, commodifying, top-down representations of what the neighborhood should be—that is, a manufactured spatial identity. A visual-semiotic discourse analysis of the commercial façades in Gràcia and Poblenou allowed researchers to explore the patterns of material and linguistic signs shaping overarching experiential narratives given to passersby (see Figure 3). These narratives connote a sense of authenticity, exclusiveness, alternative lifestyles, cosmopolitanism, happiness, and home.

In sharp contrast to the manufactured landscape narrative of gentrification, qualitative data from walking interviews with long-time residents and former residents of both neighborhoods identified a series of transformational anxieties derived from the symbolic disruption of their pre-existing senses of place, problematizing the new place’s atmosphere (for more details, see Di Masso et al., 2022). These anxieties and experiences of place change involved:

- Feelings of spatial disorientation (e.g., having a building that was a point of reference demolished);
- Place-self-class-incongruence (e.g., lack of identification with new trendy stores that replaced the old working-class establishments);
- Loss of social insideness (e.g., not recognizing or being recognized by others in the neighborhood);
- Longing for autobiographical place-continuity (e.g., a disruption of the place-related life narrative manifested through “showing” absent places in the neighborhood).

These experiences clearly contrast with the sense of urban authenticity symbolically cast by the new commercial façades, expressed through aesthetic codes and design strategies (e.g., shiny neon lights, wooden signs with local names, trendy products).

This new urban atmosphere led to disruptions that made it difficult for long-term residents to see their identities and social connections mirrored in the place (Madden & Marcuse, 2016). It also created contradictory and ambivalent feelings toward the new, commodified sense of place. For example, while some were aesthetically attracted by the design of the place (e.g., colorful, shiny signs and showcasing a new “look and feel”), they also rejected its ideological connotations (e.g., “a pearl and a bait for cool people”). Others who were drawn to the alternative way of life represented in trendy stores (e.g., eco-healthy food) also critiqued their unaffordable prices. Sometimes, the general dislike of the changes was accompanied by the acceptance of trendy stores that seemed to preserve the local (old) character of the neighborhood. However, the display of the old stores’ original names or signs, old architectural façades, or photographs recalling the identity of the place in the past (e.g., the picture of an old factory chimney in the sign of a new boutique) was also interpreted as a form of cultural co-optation. Some residents of both neighborhoods called for resistance (e.g., squatting, building self-managed community gardens, painting graffiti on the new commercial façades). However, most reacted with “intimate resistance” (Esquirol, 2022) by tightening their neighborhood bonds and intensifying traditional cultural activities and gatherings in neighborhood public spaces. These efforts represent cultural survival strategies that spatialize the community’s abilities to cope with place change.

**Landscape Design’s Role in Addressing the Disruption**

Given that landscape design involves reimagining and remaking places, its role in gentrification is a sensitive one. Design strategies that prioritize external interpretations of local senses of place may be felt as a simulated commodification and appropriation of
local identity. Thus, this case serves as a cautionary tale for designers and planners. Manufacturing an “authentic” sense of place through an externally imposed master narrative paves the way for symbolic displacement by reusing local symbols in ways that alienate local residents. Landscape architecture scholarship and practice need to balance contradictory and uneven senses of place, navigating place ambivalence as a way to support social justice. At an applied level, socially responsive public space design that attends to senses of place can be instrumental against place dispossession by promoting community self-expression in ways that can help manage harmful urban changes (see Goetz et al., 2019; Vollmer, 2019). Ultimately, contested senses of place stress the politically controversial role of urban landscape design and planning in regulating the tension between place continuity and place change and in articulating senses of place, place-cultures, and the politics of urban design.

DISCUSSION
The cases presented here demonstrate that a pluralized and politicized understanding of senses of place sheds light on the constellation of place interpretations, meanings, and values that swirl around community places. The cases also demonstrate how these senses of place unfold in response to various disruptions within different social, economic and political contexts. A pluralized and problematized approach to senses of place admittedly complicates the positionality and responsibilities of landscape architects—just as it complicates the notion of an authentic, singular sense of place that has been more prominent in the discourse. Yet, however reassuring those master narratives may be, they form a legitimizing discourse that does not reflect how senses of place tend, in practice, to be dynamic and complex. Further, it does not respond to the conditions of uncertainty in which communities increasingly find themselves.

This article challenges landscape architects to take into account multiple contested and controversial senses of place. Understanding complexities in senses of place affords landscape architects new opportunities to attend and respond to communities’ transformational anxieties resulting from uncertainty and disruption. Multiple senses of place also provide different entry points (scholarship, practice, grassroots involvement) for understanding place, defining and assessing disruption, and collectively negotiating a way forward. As the Urbanplanen and Big Hole Valley cases show, an iterative design process that reflects multiple senses of place affords designers an opportunity to respond sensitively to such anxieties and expand the possibilities for new outcomes and adaptation. As the Barcelona case demonstrates, ignoring or distorting local senses of place for external gains leaves community members with a sense of loss and alienation.

While landscape designers increasingly call for an ethics of environmental and social justice (Gulsrud & Steiner, 2020; Gandy, 2022), the ethic of care and relational responsibility can also inform designers’ efforts to respond to place disruptions and engage multiple senses of place in a just and equitable manner (Tronto, 2013; Williams, 2017; Bond & Barth, 2020). Relational care requires a reconsideration of conventional design and planning processes by foregrounding the reciprocal nature of people-place relationships. In the Urbanplanen case, relational care emerged through the cocreation of green spaces that align with local place meanings, values, and interpretations as residents worked together to adapt to disruption and develop new forms of community governance (see also Raymond et al., 2022). The Big Hole Valley case also showed the value of a relational approach in the scenario-building process around climate change. This iterative process invited community members to try to reconcile their different responses to anticipated climate change and in doing so, grapple with their collective interdependencies.

Yet, relational care is not without its complications. Misguided interpretations of care can be patronizing and lead to unjust outcomes. Designers and planners must reflect on their own positionality as well as their interpretations of care to maximize just outcomes in their work with communities. In this way, there is a greater opportunity that relational care from mutually invested parties can truly be empowering rather than oppressive or corrosive.

Disruption as New Beginnings
The cases presented in this article also remind us that disruptions herald new beginnings. Each case
revealed that landscape design is situated within a set of contested senses of place, with actors pursuing different spatial futures while others resist change. In the Urbanplanen case, three years of community engagement efforts have been devoted to navigating this tension. Facilitators, in partnership with researchers, identified multiple place meanings and goals, some of which were associated with deeply embedded place histories, while others were associated with re-imagining nature-based solutions. The Big Hole Valley case used scenario planning as a way for designers, communities, and local leaders to co-construct new visions of the future (see also Nassauer & Corry, 2004). The case in Barcelona reveals important tensions and conflicts inherent in top-down manufactured senses of place and the sense of alienation that can result when community-driven and long-term place visions and histories are ignored or distorted. All three cases remind us that designers fundamentally engage in imagining new spatial futures, and that disruptions can be opportunities to shape more promising ways forward.

The three cases presented here also remind us that there is no ultimate “end state” to design. This was certainly true in the Big Hole Valley case, which highlighted the fundamental uncertainties in planning for a climate-changed future and underscores the need to design responses as provisional and continuously unfolding pathways. In Urbanplanen, the ongoing, reflexive process of understanding and embedding senses of place into landscape design required continued vigilance to be inclusive. In Barcelona, the top-down changes that commodified a normative form of local identity triggered locals’ resistance and made an inclusive future all the more uncertain. Thus, engaging senses of place recognizes that disruptions are not instantly fixable and places are never fully “made.”

**Facilitating Coproduction of Knowledge**

Engaging multiple senses of place in the context of disruption also facilitates the coproduction of knowledge. Codesign processes challenge “solutionist” thinking whereby designers provide a single, definitive design solution. Instead, they aim to make social agency more effective and create shared aims with “greater humility and reflexivity over complexities, uncertainties and other loci of agency” (Stirling, 2019, p. 221). In Urbanplanen, such processes enabled residents to reauthor senses of place to reflect their identities and values. This, in turn, opened up avenues for healing in situations where nature-based solutions have disrupted local place belonging. Responding to multiple senses of place resulted in a mosaic of nature-based solutions that were diverse in aesthetics and character. Similarly, the Big Hole Valley case illustrates how inviting participants to respond to recognizable and relevant narratives of local change legitimized their knowledge and experience. Engaging local stakeholders in collaborative scenario building exercises helped focus on collaborative social learning about the potential impacts of climate change, with senses of place serving as points of shared concern (Murphy et al., 2016; 2017). In contrast, the Barcelona case serves as a counterpoint to inclusive cocreation processes and offers a cautionary tale for what is at risk when the cocreation of knowledge and place is ignored.

**Disruption in an Uneven Landscape of Power**

The impacts of landscape disruptions are unevenly distributed in society, raising questions about whose voice is heard in the design process in response to disruptions. Understanding multiple contested senses of place is essential for a more socially just manner of engaging design in response to change. Adjusting to plural and socially stratified senses of place requires landscape designers to be aware of historical injustices and the potential for plural and conflicting place meanings to articulate different social tensions. These include tensions between grassroots initiatives and institutionally led spatial changes and between place-related trauma and recovery and healing. Together, the cases presented in this article demonstrate that landscapes are in a constant dance with disruption, power, meaning and representation. Places require continual revisiting in design theory and practice, both in terms of whose interests and values are being promoted and whether and how they address transformational anxieties in the context of change.

In this article, we have posited that a deeper understanding of multiple, contested senses of place can help us respond to disruption and find a way to reanchor ourselves and come together in community and in place. Landscape architecture scholarship and practice has a vital role to play in responding to
disruptions by embracing plural and politicized senses of place, not as a way to find solutions per se, but to work more effectively with the complexities and contestations that transitions inevitably bring. Leaning into a pluralized and politicized sense of place provides new opportunities for empowerment and engagement, and for new possibilities of regrounding. If, as Solnit (2016) argues, uncertainty provides a spaciousness in which to act, then the socio-spatial precarity we face might even create opportunities to address long-term power imbalances in society.

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