Reconciling competing values of urban open space in two national capitals

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Abstract

Protecting the heritage values of urban open space in the face of significant change to the surrounding urban structure highlights a particular tension between two apparently conflicting goals of sustainable development. On one hand the imagined city of the future is more compact as urban designers, planners and urban researchers advocate to increase the density of cities. On the other hand, large tracts of urban open space, left undeveloped for its scenic quality, conservation, heritage or recreation values, provide innumerable ecosystem services.

This paper explores the history of the development of policies for open space systems gazetted by national governments in Ottawa and Canberra, the respective capitals of Canada and Australia. It examines how these cities have approached their metropolitan planning strategies and comments on the way urban landscapes have been accommodated in future growth through strategic plans and policies. In doing so it identifies the challenges faced when urban open spaces, deemed to be of national heritage significance, compete for increasingly scarce government resources and face increasing pressures from urban consolidation.

Figure 1: View across the National Capital Greenbelt overlooking Wakefield (Michael Haynes 2009)
**Introduction**

The last thirty years has seen a shift in attitude toward the environmental heritage value of urban landscapes as citizens become increasingly literate concerning environmental challenges brought about by urban growth and climate change. The increasing interest in the environmental quality of cities has focused on a variety of landscapes ranging from single trees to urban forests and national parks. Such a change in attitude has brought about a greater awareness and political acceptance of the need for a coordinated approach to planning and management of urban landscapes (Goode 1998; Antrop 2004a; Baycan-Levent et al. 2009).

Developing policy to retain and manage the heritage values of these landscapes requires planning practices and systems to interrogate and balance the social, economic and environmental values implicitly contained in those landscapes. At a metropolitan scale, urban landscapes provide ecosystem services important for human well being. However, certain types of urban landscapes also separate urban centres and it can be argued that they contribute to urban sprawl (Erickson 2004). Therefore, defining and identifying these multiple values provides a better understanding of the contribution the landscape plays in the urban structure. More importantly, how the built form and open spaces can be appropriately modified to achieve sustainable cities. The challenge remains, how then the heritage values of urban landscapes are incorporated into the compact city agenda.

From a governance perspective, questions are also being asked about how to distribute the cost of managing urban open spaces (Pearson et al. 2013). The attribution, and at what level communities (municipal, state or national) bear the real and opportunity costs of urban landscape management gives an increasingly urgent impetus to determine an objective, empirically sound approach to valuing urban landscapes.

This paper reviews historical and contemporary strategic plans, policy documents and reports pertaining to planning renewal and the creation and management of urban open spaces with a particular focus on the formally gazetted open space systems for Ottawa and Canberra. As capital cities, these case studies share similar governance structures based on the Westminster system. Similarly the protection, planning and management of urban landscapes are shared between the national and municipal governments. Both cities are also undergoing reviews of the planning systems at federal and municipal level in order to establish urban growth strategies for the next half century. Around these discussions, the notion of national significance is an important heritage value factored into planning for these cities. This paper draws out lessons for all cities faced with the challenge of balancing landscape values and urban identity in the face of urban growth.

The Ottawa and Canberra urban landscape structures were protected in formal open space systems gazetted by their national governments in 1958 and 1984 respectively. Spatially, they remain substantially intact – avoiding encroachment by development. This is largely due the national governments exerting authority through national heritage regulations over local municipal authorities in relation to metropolitan planning. Similarly both the National Capital Greenbelt (Greenbelt) in Ottawa and the National Capital Open Space System (NCOSS) in Canberra were conceived as critical spatial elements in determining the long-term urban boundary of both cities.

**Values underpinning different approaches to conserving urban landscapes**

The challenge for planners and decision makers when considering the heritage values contained in landscapes is how to reconcile the apparently conflicting goals of conservation and development. Too often the heritage values contained in the landscape are defined using intangible and tacit language. In the case of the national capitals this language is framed around the equally intangible concept of national significance. For example in Canberra the open space system is defined as having national significance in legislation. As a result the protection of certain landscape features are protected through both restrictions on permissible developments in NCOSS areas as well as restrictions on building heights within the central national area. In
order to begin to reconcile how the heritage values of landscapes can be incorporated into a city’s growth agenda, the concept of landscape conservation should be interrogated.

Conserving urban landscapes can be thought of from two approaches. The first is to conserve certain landscape types and, by implication, practices and rituals that shape that landscape. The second identifies the landscape as a tool for implementing sustainability objectives (Antrop 2006). The first approach recognises customary rituals that shape the landscape (Olwig 2002). Change to urban landscapes thought of in this way are characterised by loss of identity, diversity, and coherence of existing landscape values. It threatens stability which is often associated with loss of ecological integrity, community tranquility and authenticity (Lowenthal 1985; Lowenthal 2007). From a planning policy perspective, changes to the spatial structure of urban landscapes are often met with often vigorous resistance by community groups who view development in or near urban open space as a threat to the landscape, particularly the natural heritage values. This approach to sustaining landscapes sees human intervention in social or ecological systems as a disturbance. It resists the opportunity for changes that may also provide positive outcomes in the context of contemporary planning goals such as consolidation and containment.

The second approach focuses on the performance of the landscape, where the value is measured by indicators and performance measures (MacKenzie and Sumartojo 2012; MacKenzie and McKenize 2013). This approach uses the capacity of the urban landscape to provide measurable benefits that drive policy settings for planning and management. For example in December 2009 the ACT Planning and Land Authority commissioned a Territory Plan Urban Principles Review. It reinforced the symbolic and aesthetic values of the landscape by identifying the significant features of the Canberra fabric. The thrust of the report identified that the most significant challenges facing the city included the retention of the NCOSS as an integral part of the city’s setting. In attempting to reconcile between measurable costs and global environmental benefits, the report listed the landscape values in terms of it contribution to the city’s sustainable performance.

Canberra has a significant advantage and opportunities compared to other cities; urban landscape[s] support biodiversity, sequestration of carbon; organic waste disposal, food production, regulating local and micro climate, purifying urban water and air, wildlife habitat, alleviating flood and managing water retention. There are significant ecological services that can be performed by Canberra’s urban environment while contributing to sense of place and character. Quantification and assessment of the effectiveness of these aspects of the landscape needs to be integrated into the overall planning framework to inform decisions about the extent, species selection and character of the landscape desired. (SGS. Economics and Planning 2009)

The benefits provided by urban landscapes are well documented. Measurable ecosystem services produced by urban landscapes contribute positive benefits through a variety of functions including; human health (Tzoulas, Korpela et al. 2007) and quality of life (Bolund and Hunhammar 1999; Chiesura 2004), spaces for working and living (Rottle 2006) and creation of ‘new standards’ for aesthetics and landscape management (Cranz and Boland 2004). Other environmental benefits include maintenance of biodiversity (Bryant 2006), wind protection (Kongjian Yu et al. 2006), microclimate regulation (Gomez, et al. 2001) and recreational activities like walking, nature viewing and education (Hamilton & Quayle 1999).

Notwithstanding the benefits provided by the urban landscape, changes to planning and management instruments often result from a set of narrowly defined outcomes loosely connected to a vague definition of sustainability (MacKenzie and Sumartojo 2012). This metrics approach to determining landscape value in the context of achieving sustainable outcomes treats landscape values as form of ‘natural capital’ (Antrop 2006). The concept of natural capital does not measure the values embodied in the landscape as a physical space with multiple and changing tacit and tangible values, but a single measurable outcome determined by indicators that are negotiated. In short, urban landscape values are determined by what indicators are included and what are left out (MacKenzie & McKenzie 2013).
The formulation of guidelines supported by metropolitan plans may provide a vision for sustainable urban landscapes at a holistic scale; however development projects are specific to sites and rarely coordinated. By adopting this performance approach to urban landscape planning, the heritage values of urban landscapes, measured as a form of natural capital can be and are often severely reduced through incremental development (Antrop 2006). By examining the history of the development of metropolitan planning of Ottawa and Canberra through the lens of landscape values we can develop a better understanding of the heritage values of urban landscapes in metropolitan planning.

**Canberra’s Strategic Planning**

The place of the landscape in Canberra’s urban structure was assured from its inception because of the city’s particular planning history. It was a product of a vision resulting from Australia’s Federation, and through them the Australian people who embodied the idea of a national capital that expressed the symbolic union of the states to form the Commonwealth in 1900 (Freestone 2010). Key to the vision of a new centre of government was an aspiration to locate a capital in the Australian landscape, most visibly expressed in the site selection (Headon 2003) and the winning design for the city by Walter and Marion Griffin. Similarly the government planning framework secured the landscape vernacular of the city during the inter-war years, and yet the majority of urban development in Canberra occurred after World War II (Freestone 1989).

During this post-war period and prior to self-government, the Australian Capital Territory’s strategic planning, design and construction of public infrastructure were all under the direction of the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC) from 1958 to 1988. The bestowing of city planning and building to the NCDC allowed this organisation, on behalf of the federal government, to implement progressive and contemporary planning theories for the time. The legacy of the NCDC continues to have a profound effect on Canberra’s urban structure and reflects the community’s strong association with ‘landscape’ and ‘place’ manifest in the phrase known for Canberra, and understood across Australia, ‘the bush capital’. This planning legacy is most visibly recognised by the hills free from development and interwoven with low density suburbs nestled into the landscape (see Figure 1).

**Figure 2:** View looking north-east across the Molonglo valley to Black Mountain and Mount Majura; part of the ‘Inner Hills’ of the NC OSS (MacKenzie 2008)
From its inception to demise the NCDC was concerned to ensure Canberra would be an enviable city nationally and internationally (Lloyd & Troy 1981). This focus was driven by a sense of national pride and to ensure that the public servants, transferred from Melbourne and Sydney, enjoyed every amenity and convenience of a city strongly influenced by the Garden City Movement. This included the provision of natural open spaces for recreation but also to build strong sense of community and belonging in the new Capital. The planners set out Canberra’s polycentric urban structure with districts separated by open spaces surrounding the suburbs that contained local centres and schools no more than a 5 to 10 minute walk from the majority of homes.

This polycentric structure set up multiple landscape values for Canberra’s urban open space system. In 1977 George Seddon’s work recognised the significance of this and the need to reconcile these multiple landscape values if Canberra’s urban open spaces were to be retained and not inadvertently compromised by future growth of the city. Seddon emphasised the national importance of the natural and cultural heritage landscape values of the system established by the NCDC and this is reflected in the name, the National Capital Open Space System (See Figure 2).

Seddon’s investigation into the proposal to formalise an open space structure into the metropolitan plan raised a number of questions about urban landscape values and the purpose of an identified open space system. He emphasised the importance of understanding the NC OSS as more than a land use category. Seddon argued that ‘land by its very nature, is a non-homogenous commodity, and sites differ greatly in their attractiveness’ (Seddon 1977). He was most concerned about how the different urban landscapes would be valued for recreation and visual amenity. However, managing the visual impact of development remained an integral principle of the NC OSS objectives, in particular, how the visual setting or view from certain points around the ACT would represent the lineage to the original Griffin design. Seddon captured all these issues under the umbrella consideration about the heritage values of the landscape setting and how it may invoke meanings of national significance (NCA 2014).

As a direct result of Seddon’s work, the NCDC formalised the landscape centric structure of the Canberra metropolitan plan by recognising the NC OSS. The NCDC emphasised the national importance of Canberra’s urban open spaces by the formal adoption of the NC OSS in the metropolitan Y plan for Canberra (NCDC 1984). In keeping with the Griffin landscape aspiration, the hills and ridges within and around the urban area of Canberra were to be kept free of development, to act as a backdrop and setting for the city, while providing a means of separating and defining the towns. In response to the adoption of the NC OSS into the Y plan, Seddon argued that a future territory government should adopt a ‘honey pot’ approach to land management and identify a few areas to be intensively used and managed. He believed largely dispersed medium intensity use of the NC OSS would be damaging both ecologically and economically (Seddon 1984).
Further to this, recognising the heritage values of the urban landscapes was further complicated by the emerging concerns about reconciling the multiple goals of municipal land management and expressing national significance through the NCOSS. The major concerns were pragmatic issues to do with future land ownership between a territory administration and the federal government, access for recreation, environmental management and division of planning responsibility. As the city has grown in the past century, the division between the urban and non-urban spaces has become more prominent and pressure on the landscape from users has increased.

**Self-government and its implications for NCOSS**

In 1988, the Australian Government granted self-rule to the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) as a ‘gift’ to the Australian people to recognise the bicentenary of white settlement. Being the territory of Australia’s National Capital, the Commonwealth reserved the right to ensure Canberra was planned and managed according to its national significance. This was an inspired act of cost shifting as it passed the financial responsibility of managing Canberra’s open space system along with providing state and municipal services to the people of the ACT, through its own territory government, while ensuring the Commonwealth had control over strategic development, effectively retaining planning control over three quarters of the ACT.

By the early 1990s, the ACT, as a self-governing territory, was the focus of both the National Capital Planning Authority (NCPA) and the newly constituted ACT government. The major debates between the different levels of government revolved around division and transfer of land management responsibilities (Reid 2002). At the time, the community was concerned about the apparent mismatch between growth in infrastructure planning at the expense of open space areas, containing high value ecological and scenic assets. The community cited poor communication between different agencies at Federal and Territory level. Central to this debate was the role of the NCOSS in sustaining both explicit and tacit landscape values held to be important to the community and as part of the city’s planning legacy. The NCPA also continued to investigate how to promote and make meaningful the NCOSS to the Australian people. This included an investigation how NCOSS areas could be managed and classified to reflect heritage conservation values as well as examining development potential for recreation and tourism.

At this time, the geographical spread of the city and the generous, but now ageing urban infrastructure posed significant tangible and opportunity costs to Canberra’s social, economic and environmental sustainability. Of note were persistent tensions regarding the spreading housing estates on greenfield sites and the challenges faced by land managers responsible for the NCOSS. Partly in response to these pressures, the Canberra Spatial Plan was developed. It prioritised the planning for and adoptions of a more compact city form (Canberra Spatial Plan 2004). In doing so it applied a ‘city limits’ planning approach, similar to the growth strategy developed for Melbourne at the time.

In the decade after self-government many Canberrans considered the planning system to be at the mercy of market forces with inadequate protections for the landscape values and threatening the city’s open spaces and suburban quality. In 2002 the ACT Labour Party was elected on a planning platform to address this decline. Once elected the government undertook a number of actions. The first was to introduce the Garden City Territory Plan (Variation No. 200) which essentially restricted subdivision to ‘core’ areas around shops and centres. Simultaneously it commenced the first comprehensive strategic planning review and introduced a consultative Neighbourhood Planning Program. Despite this, community resistance to redevelopment continued, along with growing concerns for a loss of heritage values, accessibility and environmental amenity of urban open spaces.

For the ACT Government, the costs of maintaining, let alone further investing in Canberra’s extensive urban infrastructure, including the urban landscapes open spaces and streetscapes, was becoming more critical given its limited sources of revenue. In a bid to canvas these issues and the community’s concern for Canberra’s environmental amenity, the ACT Government,
before reviewing its strategic policies undertook two key community consultation projects. The Sustainable Future project (2009) brought together key stakeholders to consider the issues and potential responses to managing Canberra’s urban landscape values. From this project, the consultation project, ‘Time to Talk: Canberra 2030’ canvassed the wider community. This consultation delivered back to ACT Government key messages. Central among them was the notion that the city should increase in density but not at the expense of the quality of the urban landscape or threaten the integrity, including the heritage values of the NCOSS.

Partly in response to these emerging pressures, the ACT Government replaced the 2004 Spatial Plan with the ACT Planning Strategy in 2012 as the key reference for guiding development. The goal of the new strategy was to retain the metropolitan spatial structure while changing the built form and retaining the quality of the urban landscape at a local and district level. This Strategy reinforced the intention to create a more compact and efficient city and it adopted a more integrated, systemic approach to addressing the issues associated with balancing development and conservation objectives. The outcomes and actions, in response to Time to Talk: Canberra 2030 reinforced the principles behind the metropolitan structure set out by the NCDC in 1984. In keeping with the new town principles adopted by the NCDC, the new ACT Planning Strategy reinforced the identifiable town centres and directly linked land use and transport planning while advocating residential intensification in the town centres and along the major public transport routes. This strategy was the means by which the essential elements of the urban landscape structure could be preserved.

History shows that through conscious incorporation of the landscape in metropolitan planning since the city’s inception, the landscape has been sustained as a land use classification, largely unchanged and strongly linked to the original Griffin vision. However, the landscape has, more recently, been co-opted to perform essential functions contributing to the City’s sustainable development agenda.

In preparing the ACT Planning Strategy, the ACT Government undertook an assessment of the vulnerability of the metropolitan structure to climate change (AECOM 2012). This work established the importance and the value of the urban open space with regard to ameliorating extreme weather conditions. Further analysis also identified the importance of these urban landscapes for the migration of species, as well as for psychological and physical human health. This work established the performative value of the landscapes in the urban structure and the impact it has on the urban form such as on the design and construction of buildings and infrastructure. The lesson here has been to ensure the value of these landscapes is fully accounted in a decision framework and this is likely to reveal that not all the landscapes are of equal value.

This, of course goes to the issue that Seddon raised in his review of the NCOSS; treating all landscapes in the system as homogenous poses a threat to its integrity and overall management for two reasons. Firstly, the extent of these landscapes presents a financial burden for the municipal authorities charged with their management. Maintaining basic pest and weed control is logistically impossible and the consequence is that much of the system declines. Secondly, the opportunity cost for these authorities in development forgone is so great that, if the contribution that the landscape makes is not well understood, then the heritage values of the open space system may be compromised by incremental loss.

**Ottawa’s Greenbelt**

Ottawa is an intimate, human-scaled city that emerged organically like many other North American forestry towns. Unlike Canberra, Ottawa’s urban structure and form is less geometric. Whereas Canberra was designed around the ornamental Lake Burley Griffin, urban growth in Canada’s capital fanned out from the Ottawa River in a more organic fashion (Erickson 2004). The City Beautiful urban design approach has been considered and debated for nearly a century in Ottawa, and yet the city has rejected such grandiose schemes, reflecting its origins as a mill town. Despite humble origins, Ottawa grew rapidly after the Second World War, compelling the Prime Minister Mackenzie King to develop the city’s first metropolitan plan in the late
1940s. Like Canberra, the urban landscape was consciously incorporated into the plan. Despite this, the pressure associated with low density urban expansion has been the dominant shaping force of Ottawa for most of the second half of the 20th century.

The National Capital Greenbelt (Greenbelt) (See Figure 3) covers an area of 20,000 hectares, with an average width of four kilometres and over forty kilometres in length. The landscape is a mixture of introduced species and native forests, agricultural land and large infrastructure sites such as the Macdonald-Cartier international airport (National Capital Commission 2002). The Greenbelt was gazetted as part of the then Prime Minister Mackenzie King’s commitment to formalise a metropolitan plan for Ottawa. The French architect and planner Jacques Greber, along with professional staff from the Federal District Commission completed the city’s first plan for the capital in 1950. Consistent with new town – garden city principles, popular since the turn of the century, the inclusion of the Greenbelt was a significant spatial element of the plan (Taylor et al. 1995). The planning of the Greenbelt was based on containing the national capital region’s projected population and associated infrastructure. The size and shape of the Greenbelt was primarily to provide access to nature for recreation for the urban population – rather than the protection of natural systems or ecological resources (Taylor et al. 1995).

However the primary function of the Greenbelt was to prevent urban expansion into the productive agricultural land surrounding the city. The boundary of the Greenbelt and, by definition, the extent of the urban footprint was determined as the most efficient economic and practical area that could be serviced by a municipal agency at reasonable cost (National Capital Commission 1992). Within eight years of the Greenbelt gazetted, urban expansion was placing pressure on the urban edge. In order to protect these landscapes, the federal government bought 15,000 hectares to add to the 20,000 hectares already in Federal ownership between 1958 and 1966. In order to retain agricultural production close the city, the Federal Government leased back land to farmers. However they were short-term leases and the perceived lack of lease certainty has resulted in a lack of investment in infrastructure and a resulting retreat of farming from the area (Fung & Conway 2007).

Since then, the Greenbelt has been successful in providing a land reserve for government and institutional buildings, containing the city within the reserve boundary, and providing a range of landscape types from natural forests to pastoral open space accessible to residents (See Figure 4). However, the Greenbelt has had limited success in containing urban growth or

Figure 4: The Greenbelt (in white) creates an urban boundary to Ottawa city (NCC 2012)
affecting urban densities. Satellite communities have expanded adjacent to the outer limits of the Greenbelt (Fung & Conway 2007). The main contribution of the Greenbelt has been to separate these newer satellite communities from the old urban area. While the Greenbelt has not contained Ottawa’s growth, it has significantly shaped the urban structure of the city. This was reflected in the Federal Government’s 2001 decision to retain the Greenbelt in the amalgamation of the former Ottawa urban area, the regional government and ten other local municipalities to create the greatly expanded City of Ottawa.

Ottawa’s contemporary strategic planning

In 2011 the national and municipal agencies in the City of Ottawa partnered to prepare a long-term plan for the National Capital Region. Choosing our Future set a goal of developing a sustainable, resilient and liveable region. The National Capital Commission (NCC) and the City of Ottawa have now commenced separate, complementary strategic planning reviews. The NCC’s ‘Horizon 2067’ is a review of the metropolitan structure that commenced in August 2011 and this is due for completion in 2017. The City of Ottawa embarked on Building a Liveable Ottawa 2031 in January 2013.

The NCC, similar to the NCA, has a statutory duty to prepare plans to assist in the development, conservation and improvement of the National Capital Region. It is also required to ensure that the heritage values and urban landscape character of the seat of the government of Canada is managed in accordance with its national significance. However, the NCC has taken a more forthright role in the strategic planning of the capital than the NCA. The NCC review addresses, at the very broadest level, land use, public transport, employment, economic viability and quality of living – issues critical to urban growth – as well as national issues pertaining to heritage values, symbolism and promotion of the capital region.

In its draft form, Horizon 2067 contains three objectives that specifically relate to the management of landscapes in the Greenbelt. These include; better integration of natural areas into the urban fabric, pilot projects focused on ecological and sustainable agriculture and new tools for evaluating and protecting valued ecosystems. In a similar vein to the ACT Government’s strategic planning exercise, Horizon 2067 has repositioned the landscape values of these urban open spaces to incorporate metrics to measure the performance of the landscape as part of its sustainable development agenda.

Despite very little conscious collaboration between the respective planning agencies concerned with the review of metropolitan plans in Canberra and Ottawa, both capital cities are undergoing similar processes of renewing approaches to metropolitan planning at both state and federal levels. The evidence from both case studies show that the heritage values contained in the urban landscape continues to provide the symbolic role, underpinned by planning legacies and landscape values implicit in the urban open spaces. In addition, each city is looking for ways to incorporate more contemporary methods and understandings of landscape values underpinned by ecological function and ecosystem services.

Incorporating landscape values into metropolitan planning

The spatial structure of cities are a product of the geo-physical constraints of the land and the path dependencies generated by the decisions of city founders (Troy 2004). The strategic planning exercises and the issues of dealing with dual planning system in the national capitals of Ottawa and Canberra can provide some insight as to how cities might reconcile their changing urban structure and retain these urban landscape values while meeting the challenges of a establishing a more sustainable compact city.

Canberra and Ottawa, like all cities, emerged around specific geographic patterns such as rivers, hills and forests; however, from their inception, the competition for land uses has necessitated the protection of landscape values through formal incorporation into metropolitan plans. The challenge for cities remains that modern planning separates and is continuing to break the nexus between landscape and the urban structure. In the cases presented in this paper, the
notion of national significance unites the concept of the urban and the landscape, making separation of these planning functions impossible. Therefore the urban landscape is central to the identity of these cities which implicates urban open space planning and management into metropolitan planning.

The logic and attraction of a compact urban form presents a spatial structure to deal with demographic, economic and environmental change. However such an approach creates ongoing challenges for how we manage urban landscapes and the associated heritage values that are held to be important to the community and in the case of Canberra and Ottawa, the nation.

If planning policies are to be effectively administered for these urban landscapes, a value must be ascribed, as well as objectives and/or controls for its management. Whether the underpinning values focus on conservation or performance, attempting to make what is often subjective, more objective in a planning system is what could be instructive for the management and allocation of urban landscapes and the associated heritage values that come with being a national capital.

The 2012 ACT Planning Strategy has attempted to achieve this. It differed from the previous strategic plans, by taking the approach to set out principles and actions to guide change in Canberra’s urban form, not just its spatial structure. The 2012 Strategy reinforced the value of the metropolitan open spatial structure but also reinforced the need for the urban open space to be of a higher quality, working harder to provide ecosystem services and the landscape values to the community. Ottawa on the other hand has focused on a stronger relationship between the different levels of government to ensure the heritage significance of the urban open space is recognised, while at the same time allowing for development to occur adjacent to and inside the Greenbelt.

The capital city status of these case studies set out what is important about urban landscapes in the context of the urban structure at a national level. In other words, the landscape provides a setting for the national institutions, expresses a national civic identity and contains tacit heritage values as well as defining the urban edge. In the case of Ottawa the landscape contains the city, whereas in Canberra it separates the self-contained towns. However, this only partially ascribes a value; for while the respective federal and municipal plans attempt to articulate what is important about their urban open spaces, they do not go on to define the relative value of these spaces to the city. In order to achieve the goals of sustainable urban development, both cities need to comprehend the value of compact urban form while conserving the relative value of the urban landscapes. These concepts are not mutually exclusive, but rather, combine to deliver a better outcome than what currently exists.

**Conclusion**

This paper has established that the structure of the city and hence the structure of the urban landscape are a legacy of conscious incorporation of urban open spaces into metropolitan planning. Similarly, conserving heritage landscape values requires a more thorough assessment of the goals of retaining essential landscape characteristics while allowing cities to grow. Canberra and Ottawa demonstrate the advantages of addressing the spatial structure (delivered through the urban open spaces) and built form at the same time to achieve a more sustainable city.

A more rigorous establishment of the multiple values of the urban landscape will make setting out objectives for its management and the development of a compact city agenda clearer. For both national capitals, it is necessary for the federal planning administrations to define what is significant about these landscapes, particularly from a heritage perspective. Determining the relative value of these landscapes will make decision-making more transparent in the endeavour to achieve the goals of compact city planning.
References

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**Endnotes**

1 Canberra and Ottawa are members of Capital Alliance an informal association of planned capital cities around the world. http://capitalsalliance.org/default1.aspx accessed 5th December 2013.