Nature Needs Citizenship

Kiran Hitesh Patel
MSc City Design and Social Science,
Class of 2019,
London School of Economics
and Political Science

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ABSTRACT

Nature and society have been perceived and have progressed as a dualism for centuries. The result of this divide has led to nature experiencing inequality on a global scale, with this being most prevalent where the greatest concentrations of humans occur – cities. This paper explores the manifestations of nature’s durable inequality within the urban, drawing on literature and relevant examples to dissect the concept further. Once established, a proposal is put forward which suggests a method of addressing this inequality through providing citizenship – in a substantive and legal sense – to nature. It is hypothesized that this would create necessary protections by attributing inherent value to nature, bringing equal status to both nature and society. This will allow the dualism to be addressed in a more equitable way for both parties.
INTRODUCTION

The Anthropocene, the geological era where humans have been the dominant influence across the Earth’s climate and systems, began in the mid-18th century (Crutzen, 2006). This term defines an epoch where humanity developed a competitive advantage in its war with nature. This relational inequality – defined as the result of a perceived difference in power, rather than an objective inequality (Tilly, 2004) – has been exploited by humans to seemingly no end. Humans have set in motion significant alterations in the functioning of previously stable systems on a global basis (Crutzen, 2006). Climate change has become perhaps the most prevalent issue of the current century.

Urban areas—concentrated hubs of human activity dominated by built form and meticulous systems of control—must be on the frontier of the fight against climate change (UN Habitat, 2013). Increasing urban populations, along with the high levels of consumptions, pollution and power within cities, position them as both a source and potential solution of the mounting environmental crisis. United Nations Habitat reported that around 70% of the world’s emissions are produced by cities (2013). This figure not only highlights the damage urban areas are inflicting, but also demonstrates their global influence. Globalisation and capitalist consumerism has led to cities becoming centres of consumption, fed through mass-scale production with international supply chains. Accordingly, cities disseminate global trends along international channels of cultural and material connectivity. This notion draws on critical urban theory which sees the urban as a product of economic flows and anthropogenic (meaning man-made, of human origin) enterprise (Kaika, 2004a; Whitehead, 2013). Urban areas also possess significant potential for driving change, with the confluence of people, political power and wealth producing an environment capable of greatly influencing local, national and global
systems. The considerable influence of cities, combined with the concentrated harm generated by them, positions them as central pillars in attempting to limit climate change (UN Habitat, 2013).

Despite their potential for driving positive environmental change, urban areas are also where the human-nature dualism is most prevalent and expanding. This divergence is occurring alongside repeated failures to address climate change at an adequate speed (Zenghelis, 2006), indicating the need for a new approach to the issue. The lack of effective responses to climate change can be seen in the absence of laws that protect the natural world. Polly Higgins documented this legal failing which allows and arguably encourages “ecocide” across the globe (2012). This lack of legal capacity, along with deprivations of space and liberty, constitute the inequality imposed on nature in the urban realm. Perhaps it is unsurprising that legislation has failed to produce sufficient natural protection given the pursuit of dominance over nature that defines much of human enterprise during the Anthropocene, the start of which was relatively recent compared to the considerable age of global legal systems (Plucknett, 2001).

We are then left with two issues that need addressing. First, we need to build an understanding of the inequality which nature faces in cities. And second, there is the task of combatting this urban inequality in order to reduce the environmental harm generated within metropolises and utilise the significant capacity for positive change which they possess. Doing so will provide a novel approach to tackling the climate crisis that aims to produce and disseminate a more equitable relationship with nature. This solution avoids the issues of previous attempts at producing systemic action against climate change which typically focus on financial measures, categorised by Whitehead as “struggles for short-term help and financial assistance (from any available source)” (2013: 1364). Significant parallels between nature’s urban inequalities and those of other marginalised groups also emerge from this discussion. This similarity can be used to
expand the understanding of the impacts of these inequalities to observe a broader scope of implications, offering a new argument for the need to solve tackle these problems.

To achieve the aim of understanding and tackling the urban inequalities faced by nature, this paper begins by exploring the human-nature dualism observed in cities. Analysis of nature’s urban inequality is then conducted, beginning with the origins of ecocide before moving on to the absence of legal capacity. This discussion is furthered through applying a citizenship lens to nature’s inequality, employing first a formal and then a substantive citizenship perspective. These sections allow us to understand how the urban environment has produce severe relational inequalities on nature and the deprivations of expression, security and space that results from this. Having established an understanding, this paper goes on to layout a proposal that seeks to tackle the sources of the identified inequality. The proposal covers social movements, political actions and spatial changes that can help to improve the civic standing of nature in cities. This paper concludes by assessing the implications of the findings in terms of the climate crisis as well as in relation to other marginalised urban groups who experience similar inequalities, followed by the potential avenues for further research.

Throughout the paper, discussions take place at a theoretical level in order to be able to engage with a philosophical topic. These are grounded through case study examples and practical proposals to ensure the findings can be applied in a practical way.

For the purposes of this essay, it is useful to take a view of nature as it is perceived in the dualism we are dissecting. Although it would be interesting to explore the issue of nature’s urban inequality under the guise of David Harvey’s famous notion that “there is nothing unnatural about New York City” (1993:28), this definition leaves too much to be discussed beyond the inequality itself. Instead, we will employ a definition of nature as that which
the process of urbanisation seeks to expel: the collective identity which constitutes the physical world as a series of interdependent flows, entities and beings existing beyond human control.

EXPLORING THE HUMAN-NATURE DUALISM IN THE CONTEMPORARY URBAN

The contemporary urban has sought to alienate itself from nature (Kaika, 2004a). “Modernity’s Promethean project” has pursued the development of people’s autonomy and capabilities through the control and destruction of the natural world (Kaika, 2004a:5). This project is explicitly visible during the great acceleration of the 1950s to the 2000s, where the pursuit of economic expansion drove exponential growth in human production, consumption and influence over the natural world (Crutzen, 2006). Progress during this time was defined by the removal of the unpredictability and restraints of the natural world through the production of “space envelopes”, which operate with autonomy and independence, a concept adapted from Lefebvre (1991; Kaika, 2004a). Attempts to make space envelopes grew in number and success, seemingly removing themselves from external natural processes and elements (Kaika, 2004b). Homes became heated, pipes were hidden, lights installed, the world itself became smaller through technological advancements which made connectivity and mobility faster, more reliable and globally accessible. Nature was reduced to the turning on of a tap, entirely excluded from the individual’s home until summoned. This process of anthropogenic enablement and expansion through natural exploitation is most evident in cities, with vast swathes of the contemporary urban landscape being apparently devoid of nature. For this reason, cities are symbolic trophies of human triumph in its dualism with nature (Kaika, 2004a).
Although it is accepted that this dualism exists elsewhere in society, in rural landscapes with impeccably managed fields of crops adjacent to perfectly mown golf courses, for example, it is in cities where the war has reduced human-nature interactions to brief encounters with the weather on the five minute walk from the bus to the office. It is in cities where nature has been all but entirely removed, with any remaining presence existing in a carefully manicured state through heavy management and surveillance, providing just enough greenery to distinguish the area from the surrounding grey urban form whilst staying very much within rigid aesthetic guidelines. The urban exclusion of nature produces an “extinction of experience” (Soga & Gaston, 2016). This is where reduced human-nature interactions prevent people from feeling an instinctive affinity toward nature, resulting in the devaluation of natural entities (Soga & Gaston, 2016). Hence, it is in cities where nature’s inequality is most prevalent and must be addressed.

**NATURE’S URBAN INEQUALITY**

Having defined the term and explored the causes of the inequality, we will now examine how nature’s urban inequality is formally and substantively constituted.

**THE ORIGINS OF ECOCIDE**

Ecocide as a concept emerged in the 1970s (Gauger et al., 2012). In examining the term, Gauger et al. note the relevance of Raphael Lemkin’s original definition of genocide during the proposal to distinguish it as an international crime (2012). Lemkin finds the term to be composed of two parts: the killing of members of a group or tribe (physical genocide); and the undermining or destroying the way of life of a group or tribe (cultural genocide, also known as ethnocide). The latter notion
was dropped from the proposal due to lack of committee support, but it has important implications for the notion of ecocide. Ethnocide, more specifically the extermination of “the cultural pattern of a group, such as the language, the traditions, the monuments, archives, libraries, churches … the shrines of the soul of a nation” (Gauger et al., 2012: 8), can be considered to be the destruction of the unique variety that defines a particular group which is often carried out as a component of genocide. It implies that there is a distinct and precious value to this individuality which is too great to be denied protection. It recognises that the complexity and heritage of such things are irreplaceable, as without knowledge of the history, identity and collective memories of a group, their existence may be forgotten.

THE ABSENCE OF LEGAL CAPACITY

Applying this concept of cultural genocide, we can see that the inequality of nature goes beyond the physical ecocide it endures in cities. The disruption and destruction of natural processes and flows which occur across the globe are found in no greater concentrations than in urban areas. It is here where traces of nature and its processes are consistently expunged from the environment. Nature’s urban presence is treated as a nuisance that encroaches on the civility of people and must be removed or hidden so as to not cause a disturbance. This treatment constitutes natural genocide, or ecocide, as Higgins has sought to prove (2012). Despite its prevalence and harm, legal protections against ecocide remain largely unlegislated. This means that there is severely limited, often non-existent legal capacity to adequately defend nature (Higgins, 2012). The legal constitution of nature’s urban inequality is defined through this absence of legal capacity. This not only explains nature’s dire urban inequality, but also has worrying implications for the future. As a lack of preservation can result in the removal of a group through cultural genocide, the
same is true for nature. If nature becomes entirely removed from cities (as it already has been in some areas), then the extinction of experience will result in its intrinsic value being forgotten, losing its longstanding presence in certain cultures and traditions as new practices evolve which exclude nature (Soga and Gaston, 2016). Its absence will no longer be recognised as abnormal, but rather it will become the status quo meaning there may be fewer or no attempts to reverse this trend.

**CITIZENSHIP**

Utilising the theoretical stance of this paper, we are able to take a sociological approach to exploring this absent legal capacity. As Higgins notes, utilising law “creatively and constructively” in this way can be a useful tool in instigating positive change as it provides a means of testing and challenging current legal boundaries (2012: 11). The method to be taken analyses nature’s legal capacity through discussions of citizenship.

Citizenship is a broad term that extends across scales, from the local to the international. It relates to the ability to belong to, identify with and claim spaces and groups of people. Definitions of the term are varied, but can be categorised into two components: formal citizenship, referring to the capacity to be able to change society, imprinting aspects of the individual’s identity across the wider functions and appearance of the collective, such as being able to vote, access to the political order and other forms of meaningful engagement (Holsten, 1998; Tilly, 2004); and substantive citizenship, the ability to exist and express one’s self within society safely, including access to shelter, individuality and security (Delanty, 1997; Holsten, 1998). These components are complementary, and it is only when both these formal and substantive qualities are met that citizenship can be considered to be complete. As the law was largely developed in order to govern space, assessing and defining who does and does
not have the right to access, utilise and control it, the law can be considered a vehicle for the pursuit of citizenship. The two are intrinsically linked. Formal and substantive citizenship is therefore a valid tool to contextualise the analysis of the absent legal capacity of nature in the urban environment where space is a finite and valuable resource.

**Formal Citizenship**

Formal citizenship can be identified through a capacity to be meaningfully represented in the political sphere. In nature's case, political representation is, at best, tokenistic. Nature consistently loses out to human development, expansion and utility claims across the urban environment. As they are anthropocentric, it is unsurprising that political debates fail to recognise the significance of entities outside of humanity. Further, nature lacks a discernible voice or practical agency that we are able to distinguish, making it even more unlikely that it would be included in a process that involves negotiating situations through discussions of wants and needs.

However, there is evidence of a collective natural desire which can constitute a voice or will. Nature creeps in to all spaces, gradually or suddenly introducing itself through scuttling, flying and crawling until it reaches an area where it will grow to the point of flourishing. The formation occurs, although not always at great speed, with such determination and perseverance that there is no question of if nature will occupy a space, but rather when it will colonise it. Once it has achieved access to the space, it is no small task to remove it. Examples of this notion are numerous, from stubborn weeds in a flowerbed to an infiltration of mice in the home. Deep roots, rapid reproduction and hypersensitivity are to thank for this remarkable resilience. These phenomena evidence a discernible will possessed by the natural world: self-preservation. The unending pursuit of
expansion alongside a hardwired pursuit of survival across the entire natural world demonstrates that this will is not a unique or isolated occurrence. It is one that is common across the animalia and plantae kingdoms, which can be considered a collective desire demonstrating practical agency that could be recognised and defended through legislation. The failure to acknowledge this desire characterises the lack of formal citizenship nature endures in the urban as it is deprived of political representation and legal capacity.

Formal citizenship also brings notions of security (Holston, 1998). These are produced through a legislative system, maintained and enforced by the state, which typically prohibit behaviours deemed adverse to citizen’s safety (e.g. banning the sale of firearms and prosecuting those who cause harm to others). The absence of this protection for nature provides further evidence of its lack of formal citizenship. Higgins’ (2012) explored this subject at length, analysing how the absent formal citizenship of nature allows for atrocious acts of ecocide to go unprevented and unpunished. Although there are examples of protective measures which can penalise individuals who bring harm to particular natural sites or entities in cities (e.g. the protection of state-owned trees in Mumbai (Imam & Banerjee, 2016)), these are typically centred around defending those which provide ecosystem services to humans, rather than preserving nature for an inherent natural value. An example of this can be observed in the Old Tidemill Wildlife Garden. This southeast London pocket park opened in 2012 and provided a local stronghold for nature as well as a community hub where individuals and groups came together (Witton, 2018). Despite the significant natural benefits provided by the garden, the space was primarily valued by the community space it offered. Although this is not inherently wrong or unique, with the density of the contemporary urban combined with austerity policies producing a significant need for local mixed-use spaces, the natural capital was not attributed
sufficient value to protect it. The insatiable appetite for housing which defines so much of London today led to the approval of a development plan demolishing the Garden in order to produce residential units (Witton, 2018). The community value of the space is argued to be maintained by providing much-needed affordable housing and other facilities to the area, but the loss of natural capital is seemingly not deemed to be worth protecting or replacing. Hence, we see how the lack of formal citizenship and inherent value assigned to nature in the urban produces deprivations of security which result in its destruction. If nature were to be granted the securities which come with citizenship status, then there would be significantly greater protections in place to ensure that nature was adequately defended against threats its prosperity such as development.

The implications of this lack of formal citizenship can be drawn out using citizenship theory. This is the notion that the individual has a duty to actively engage and participate in their society in order to contribute, most notably towards the construction of justice in said society (Kymlicka, 2002). Through this method, the individual adds to a society that they want to be a part of, and that is governed in a way that they believe to be fair (Kymlicka, 2002). Thus, if an individual is denied the ability to participate in society through a lack of formal citizenship, they are denied access to shape the society they reside in and hence cannot contribute towards producing a system of justice that is fair in their eyes. Depriving Nature of formal citizenship results in the exacerbation of its inequality as it cannot put forward its perspective on what constitutes justice in society. Although it is difficult to imagine a practical means of addressing this issue due to the disjunction between political systems and natural entities, a solution could be to more effectively acknowledge and account for this incompatibility by attempting to incorporate the previously absent natural perspective into proceedings.
In terms of substantive citizenship (the right to safe existence and self-expression within society), too, nature is void of a place in the urban. Its presence is largely confined to highly managed and manicured areas which exist at the discretion of humans with existence only permitted under strict social norms. It could be argued that there are no means of knowing how nature would express itself if given the chance due to the lack of discernible agency addressed above. Hence, defining what constitutes substantive citizenship for nature could be difficult. However, examination of nature’s traits and systems highlights a commonality that evidences a component of nature’s identity: variation.

Jennifer Owen’s remarkable work investigating the seemingly mundane environment which resided in her back suburban English garden resulted in the identification of over 8,000 different species of animals, insects and plants (1991). This impressive diversity is but a shadow of that found elsewhere, with greater densities of natural capital resulting in incredibly complex networks of organisms and entities. It is the variation within these networks that enables natural systems to flourish. Every position in the food web is populated by a species that has been engineered by its environment over centuries to fulfil its role in the ecosystem. It is the variation of nature that allows it to thrive and become its most complex. Hence it is this variation that constitutes a discernible component of nature’s identity. From this notion, it becomes possible to see how the urban form rejects nature’s claims towards substantive citizenship with severely limited space under high management and often a desire for “functional” capabilities resulting in nature’s expression being confined to sanitised homogenous exhibitions.

The typical park in London, for example, will consist of well-mown grass lawns intersected by carefully placed trees which
shade a tarmac path. Although this may appear to be a stronghold of nature rebelling against the expanding urban, closer inspection unearths the space as an expression of human power over nature. The homogenous, manicured grassland is not a space for nature – if it were, heterogeneity would be encouraged with the space left to grow in density and biodiversity (Angold et al., 2006) – but rather a space installed for the enjoyment of people who may use it as a sports field or to reassert a sense of calm having become distressed by the surrounding metropolis. The horse chestnut trees tell a similar story: they are an introduced species, non-native to the UK but brought over from Turkey in the 16th century as a new and interesting addition to parks and gardens with little regard to the species’ influence in the native ecosystem (Woodland Trust, 2018). This is but one example of a consistent trend of anthropogenic pursuits of beauty and personal pleasure without regard for the wider consequences on natural ecosystems and beings. Finally, the presence of the path is not only detrimental to the limited ecological value of the space through ecosystem fragmentation effects (Angold et al., 2006), but it reiterates the purpose of the park as a space for humans to enjoy a highly-managed version of nature that is non-offensive and bespoke to human needs. These are not spaces where nature can flourish through highly complex and varied flows and entities which occur in areas with low human impacts. Indeed, nature’s presence is so controlled and restricted that it fails to qualify for our previous definition of substantive citizenship.

In areas where nature is able to grow relatively unchecked in cities, its presence is often conflated with that of degradation. Derelict sites offer excellent foundations for the creation of diverse ecosystems due to the varied substrates available, but individuals often complain about the ‘messy’ and ‘untidy’ contrast of the imperfectly formed vegetation that does not suit the clean-cut urban environment they wish to observe
The same stigma is attached to unsightly weeds in lawns, overgrown hedges and bushes, as well as almost any animal that dares to exist within the realms of the urban beyond human control, commonly labelled as “pests”. These terms propagate a negative perception of nature as an “other” to the city, something that needs to be controlled and excluded due to its threatening existence. Hence its unregulated and free expression is discouraged and stigmatised within cities. We can therefore see that strict management and stigmatisation in line with the laws of social norms cause the urban to reject nature’s claims to substantive citizenship.

The above discussion illustrates how nature’s formal and substantive citizenship claims are rejected in the urban, causing deprivations of political representation, the physical destruction of natural capital and the cultural cleansing of nature. These produce the extreme relational inequalities imposed on nature in cities which is constitutive of ecocide.

**PROPOSAL**

Having detailed the inequality imposed on nature in the urban, we are now able to discuss how to combat these issues. In doing so, this essay puts forward a new sociological approach towards addressing the imbalance in power in urban human-nature interactions so as to propagate future change. Nature’s lack of direct agency means that the solution needs to arise from social and legislative changes that can accommodate for this by advocating for the self-preservation and variation traits identified in this paper. Previous efforts to address environmental damage through economic solutions have demonstrated a lack of capacity by financially-orientated markets to accommodate concern for natural entities. Further, the efforts are well-documented and researched. Hence the focus of this proposal is put on political,
social and spatial efforts which can be employed to produce positive systemic change from within cities.

**Social Movements**

The social side of the proposal draws on Tilly’s (2004) discussion of social movements. These can be an active and direct form of politics with widespread engagement that can bring about real tangible change at all levels (Tilly, 2004). Urban areas provide excellent resources for launching and maintaining social movements due to their high concentrations of people, communications and influence. Emphasis should be placed on using education to change cultures which harm nature’s claims to citizenship, such as heavy management of green areas and the lack of value attributed to natural capital. Political and corporate entities need to be held accountable by the public they serve through acts of citizenship, voting, protesting and boycotting in support of nature’s citizenship (Tilly, 2004). Changing behaviours to alter demand patterns and supply chains can strongly encourage markets to accommodate natural value in a meaningful way. Hence, through adjusting their consumer habits to support companies and industries which propagate nature’s claims to citizenship and boycotting those who do not, the individual and broader public can bring about changes to urban economic flows. Social movements used in this way have been used to discourage corporate greenwashing, where companies who present inaccurate or misleading claims that subvert negative environmental impacts are boycotted or exposed through public awareness campaigns (Marquis et al, 2016). Such actions propagate nature’s citizenship claims by supporting its right to fair and accurate representation in the media, political debate and society. One example of a broader social movement would be the Extinction Rebellion protests which occurred internationally and repeatedly in 2019 (BBC News, 2019). These
are highly visible and call on individuals as well as governments and companies to address the gap in adequate action against climate change (BBC News, 2019).

Political Action

Political action is a necessary component of a holistic solution to address nature’s urban inequality as it can provide a masterplan approach for developing a cohesive response which is adequately monitored to ensure effective progress (Whitehead, 2013). The power held by city governments provides the capacity to accommodate for the diverse forms of inequalities nature experiences in the urban environment (UN Habitat, 2013; Whitehead, 2013). These may consist of the passing of meaningful and enforceable legislation to protect nature from ecocide and provide it with political representation to advocate on its behalf. This could be achieved through providing formal citizenship status to nature, as can be observed in New Zealand. The Whanganui River was granted legal personhood, a component of citizenship, by New Zealand’s government with the full ‘rights, duties and liabilities of a person’ (Roy, 2017; Gordon, 2018). This means that acts of ecocide against the river carry the same legal weight as harming a person, as well as providing the river with political representation through two advocates (Roy, 2017). Such representation allows nature to participate in the construction of society and justice, helping to combat its inequality on a structural level. It is relevant to note that in the case of the Whanganui River the local community already considered the river as a being, that is to say that it held a significant place in their culture (Roy, 2017). In the case of urban nature, however, this is not the case. Hence a call for citizenship is more appropriate for the arguments within this paper, as this
would allow nature to gain legal as well as substantive rights that help to integrates it into urban culture.

Although these actions may be beyond the capacities of cities themselves, urban political bodies and the inhabitants of the city can still be strong advocates for bringing positive change in line with these themes. Networks between cities can be an effective source of achieving this, collectively pushing their national governments to respond and holding each other to account. Evidence of these notions can be found in the group of mayors in the US who, in 2014, pledged to continue to work towards the environmental targets set out by the Paris Agreement following President Trump’s withdrawal from the convention (Climate Mayors, 2017). The 407 mayors formed the Climate Mayors network to support each other in this effort through sharing knowledge, skills and practices to achieve environmentally-equitable outcomes.

Spatial Changes

Nature’s substantive citizenship claim in the urban should be defended through significant delegations of space which have minimal management to allow nature to develop independently. These can take the form of reserves or wildlife parks but they must be protected by legislation as well as social movements to ensure that they remain stable and secure. This can be seen in the example of Sutcliffe Park, London. Heavy management of the River Quaggy was causing significant harm to the river system, so the decision was made to restore the river’s natural course and floodplain through the creation of Sutcliffe Park (Potter, 2012). Here, the river was returned to flow through its natural wetlands with minimal management, allowing nature to develop independently (Potter, 2012). The river and wetlands are now flourishing examples of how providing nature
with adequate space to operate can produce prosperous urban human-nature relationships.

**CONCLUSIONS**

This paper has presented a contemporary approach to the climate crisis, focusing on building an understanding of the inequalities faced by nature in the urban environment where the majority of global emissions are produced. Sociological literature and theories were drawn on to critically analyse the anthropogenic inequalities imposed on nature in urban areas as a result of absent political representation, deprivations of citizenship and the ecocide that it is subjected to. A proposal was presented to discuss how these urban issues could be addressed through social movements, political action and spatial changes by capitalising on urban capabilities for progressive governance and concentrated social power. In doing so, we hope to contribute to resolving nature's wider inequalities by providing a strong foundation for these principles to be disseminated beyond the urban by utilising cities' strong position at the centre of anthropogenic flows of resources, power and wealth. This approach applies critical urban theory to the UN Habitat's notion that cities must be where climate change is fought. Although the diversity and complexity of urban areas require bespoke solutions, this paper provides a framework for effectively addressing the negative relationship between urbanisation and nature which individual cities can tailor to their needs.

Addressing the issue of environmental protection in this way seeks to stimulate a more effective and rapid response on a global level than we have seen already through avoiding the dominance of monetary capital in the conversation by installing and protecting nature's value. By pursuing nature's citizenship on a basis of inherent rights rather than for anthropocentric gain, we may be able to address the human-nature dualism
and the associated inequalities by integrating nature into urban society. This would help to develop a more equitable existence between the two entities which could then be disseminated to wider society. However, granting nature citizenship in the urban realm will not solve the climate crisis on its own. Although it is hoped that citizenship can be a bridge to developing a new, more equitable approach to nature which accepts and accounts for the limits of nature rather than constantly attempting to exceed them, this change must be part of a wider adoption of climate-supporting policies. These policies need to be of appropriate scales and efficacies to be able to deal with a crisis of such a magnitude that climate change presents.

In raising the debate about nature’s rights to citizenship, the conversation can also lead on to the discussion of the treatment of other individuals who experience urban inequalities. The similarities are striking: both nature and many excluded urban groups face relational inequalities which are both spatialised and durable. If we are able to justify a citizenship claim for urban nature, then the logic can be extended to provide these other excluded groups with similar status. The dire treatment of nature is leading to extreme consequences which will impact everyone. There is surely a lesson to be learnt in this outcome regarding the effects of urban inequalities imposed upon any group of people. Just as the sources of climate change are centred around inequality, the impacts of it will also be unequal. Affects will be disproportionally distributed to the poorest parts of urban and global populations despite their lesser contributions to causes of the crisis (Thomas et al., 2018). If citizenship strives to provide safety and security from harm, then the economically-differentiated consequences of climate change raises serious questions over the citizenship status of those who will be worst hit.

The next phase of this research would be to build out the proposal, creating tailored action plans for individual cities to
tackle the historic and current inequalities imposed on nature. These should be developed by taking into account local culture, heritage and perceptions of nature in order to produce a solution that is palatable to the residents of the specific city. It is also crucial that effective dialogues take place on an ongoing basis between cities that are looking to combat nature’s inequality and climate change so as to share effective methods as well as creating the opportunity to build networks of accountability.
REFERENCES


