

# **Valuing plants in devalued spaces: Caring for Baltimore's Street trees**

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## ***ABSTRACT ORIGINAL***

Baltimore City, MD is addressing its future with expansive sustainability initiatives. These include an aggressive tree planting campaign to double the city's tree canopy by 2037. While discourses of greening present tree plantings and related programs as a resolution for the legacies of racist housing market practices, these programs are themselves subject to the legacies of spatial inequalities in access to infrastructural care. Sustainability discourses present urban trees as inherently valuable economically and environmentally but these discourses are disconnected from trees' needs for ongoing care and maintenance. The daily material practices of caring for and maintaining trees are deprioritized in favor of planting more trees to gain these supposedly "inherent" benefits. In the spaces where trees were meant to bring economic and environmental vitality, their deaths reinforce the racist legacies they claim to correct. This paper examines these links and contradictions within the framework of relational urban political ecology. Through a lens of care, this paper shows how humans and non/humans actively co-construct urban space and how just spaces can come about through attention to the needs of humans and non/humans. © The Author(s) 2019.