

itself, overcome the economic remaking of Manhattan for the world's leisure class. Yet this much is clear: the people who saved Washington Heights in the days of crime and crack deserve more for their pains than a stiff rent increase."

'To ignore natural processes is to be ignorant'

Nature and Cities: The Ecological Imperative in Urban Design and Planning (Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2017) is a systematic and sizeable elaboration on Ian McHarg's 1997 statement above. Editors Frederick R. Steiner (University of Pennsylvania), George F. Thompson, and Armando Carbonell, FAICP (Lincoln Institute of Land Policy) joined with 17 contributors (mostly planners and landscape architects) to advance recognition of the "vital relationship between cities and nature."

In the opening chapter, Richard Weller (University of Pennsylvania) makes clear just how deep landscape urbanism strikes at planning conventions. "Even as Central Park is iconic and successful, it is not the best of all possible worlds"—smaller connected spaces would have done better by Manhattan's ecological flows—"nor is the machine of Manhattan that surrounds it a model twenty-first century city just because it isn't sprawl," Weller writes. "It is unhelpful and even dangerous to continue to see the city set against nature's backdrop or as something that can be reductively categorized into exclusive types along a New Urbanist transect that fixes 'nature' at one end and 'culture' at the other ... The city is now everywhere."

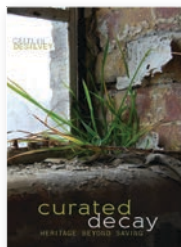
Contributors dig into the details. Ann Whiston Spirn (MIT) calls for more relevant literature reviews and clearinghouses for models of practice. Kate Orff (Columbia University) takes up the challenge of "gardening" the shallow-water bays around New York City with scientific methods, scalable implementation, and participatory frameworks. "Living breakwaters . . . do not keep the water out, but

they do absorb wave energy and create slow-moving water, which can save lives, reduce damage to structures," "reduce floodwater elevations," and encourage sedimentation, thereby strengthening breakwaters.

Nina-Marie E. Lister (Ryerson University) starts with Toronto's disastrous 2013 ice storm to examine resiliency. Beyond the conventional idea of getting back to a previous ideal steady state, resilience may involve being prepared for changes that alter the entire regime and make the previous state unattainable. In her view, there is no "balance of nature" to return to, and no "fail-safe" engineered solution. What's needed are "ecologically responsive approaches that are safe-to-fail."

"Even knowing one scale exhaustively and managing for it specifically and exclusively may compromise a system's overall function and resilience," Lister writes. "When design experiments fail, they should fail safely, at a scale small enough not to compromise long-term health."

Speaking of scale, this book deserves serious study, but it isn't portable. Readers will want a dedicated surface where it can be opened and perused—at length.



Curated Decay: Heritage Beyond Saving 2017; University of Minnesota Press; 233 pp.; \$108 cloth, \$27 paper

Curated Decay: Heritage Beyond Saving.

She asks whether this is the only way to proceed. And in doing so, she may have written the most deeply radical book on a planning-related subject published since

Let it rot?

"We live in a world dense with things left behind by those who came before us, but we only single out some of these things for our attention and care. We ask certain buildings, objects, and landscapes to function as mnemonic devices," writes Caitlin Di Silvey (University of Exeter) in *Curated*

1961. (This is not necessarily a compliment.) "What could be gained if we cared for the past without pickling it," she muses. What if we just let some things go?

The author is not writing a manifesto; she is thinking the question through, producing a book she describes as "one part provocation, one part intuition. I'm not sure that what I'm proposing is actually possible." She isn't drafting a new theory, though plenty of theorists are quoted. Instead, the book deals with several specific real-world situations:

- A derelict Montana homestead, where she finds an 1888 book, *An Encyclopaedia of Practical Information*, in a box filled with fragments of paper and fiber. Was this "residue of a system of human memory storage" worthy of preservation, or was it an ecofact? "It was difficult to hold both of these interpretations in my head at once."
- A deteriorating breakwater in Cornwall being pounded by rising tides and storms while locals advocated for its preservation—somehow.
- A weapons testing facility in decline on the Suffolk shore, and the complications of holding a "wake" for a doomed 1792 lighthouse nearby.
- A former ironworks in western Germany.

She concludes that "in moments of threat, it is extremely difficult to step back and allow destruction to continue unchecked," so "perhaps we need to develop modes of care that help us negotiate the transition between presence and absence."

Prescient, abhorrent, or some of both, this book should be read and pondered by everyone who ever thinks about historic preservation.

—Harold Henderson

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