



Urban Place: Reconnecting with the Natural World (Urban and Industrial Environments)

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Amidst city concrete and suburban sprawl, Americans are discovering new ways to reconnect with the natural world. From community gardens in New York's Lower East Side to homeless shelters in California, the search for a more sustainable future has led grassroots groups to a profound reconnection to place and to the natural world. Studies of the health consequences of renewing a connection with nature support the urgency of providing green surroundings as cities expand and the majority of the earth's population lives in urban areas. Medical research results, from groups as diverse as healthy volunteers, surgery patients, and heart attack survivors, suggest that contact with nature may improve health and well-being. Engagement with nearby natural places also provides restoration from mental fatigue and support for more resilient and cooperative behavior. Aspects of stronger community life are fostered by access to nature, suggesting that there are significant social as well as physical and psychological benefits from connection with the natural world. This volume brings together research from anthropology, sociology, public health, psychology, and landscape architecture to highlight how awareness of locale and a meaningful renewal of attachment with the earth are connected to delight in learning about nature as well as to civic action and new forms of community. Community garden coalitions, organic market advocates, and greenspace preservationists resist the power of global forces, enacting visions of a different future. Their creative efforts tell a story of a constructive and dynamic middle ground between private plots and public action, between human health and ecosystem health, between individual attachment and urban sustainability.

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