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Review: Critical Care: Architecture and Urbanism for a Broken Planet

Edited by Fitz, A., Krasny, E., and Architekturzentrum Wien

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Fitz, Angelika, Krasny, Elke, and Architekturzentrum Wien, Eds. *Critical Care: Architecture and Urbanism for a Broken Planet*. Cambridge, MA, USA: MIT Press, 2019, 204pp. ISBN: 978-0-262-53683-7, paperback, US\$40.00.

Critical Care: Architecture and Urbanism for a Broken Planet edited by Angelika Fitz, Elke Krasny and Architekturzentrum Wien aims to use the theater of critical care in addressing many of the environmental, economical, and societal issues occurring in rural and urban areas. The editors argue that architecture and urbanism efforts should be framed with a more *caring* focus, especially for those individuals who are not traditionally given a voice in the process. Vulnerable populations tend to have limited access to affordable housing, safe drinking water, and clean air, which are examples of some critical care issues.

The book thoroughly explores the theater of critical care with 21 international case studies from a variety of authors. The case studies of care can be broken down into three categories: ecology of care, labor of care, and economy of care. These case studies cover diverse themes of *caring* issues and showed how everyone can be affected directly or indirectly. The authors highlight groups of individuals who have invested interests and what is needed to actually solve the problem. The best way to achieve effective care is to make individuals feel like they have ownership or power in the process.

Libraries are an example of labor of care. The authors argue that libraries are essential spaces of care because they provide people from all walks of life an opportunity for free access to knowledge. The major problem facing libraries today is threat of closure because of budget cuts. In the United Kingdom, there were approximately 500 libraries facing closures that were saved when the local residents agreed to work as volunteers. This example of care shows how communities can come together with effective collaboration and respect for their environment to protect their public spaces without having to rely on additional funding and resources.

The Tofu Factory in the Caizhai Village of Songyang, China is both an example of ecology of care and economy of care. The ecological benefits of the Tofu Factory are promoting more sustainable production standards and creating a better relationship with the environmental community. The economic benefits are increasing the local tourism industry and generating more jobs for the community. Developing more projects similar to the Tofu Factory can lead to more rural areas becoming more sustainable and revitalizing their economy.

There were only two areas the book could have improved on. First, the editors should have highlighted how the authors for every case study agreed or disagreed with each other on how to accomplish care. For instance, the different authors appeared to have individual definitions or slightly different perceptions on the concepts of care and repair. The book would have been better if it explored the benefits and shortcomings of the various definitions. The second area for improvement is that there needed to be a concluding chapter to summarize the case studies and concepts examined throughout the book. Therefore, this chapter could have brought everything full circle for the audience and the audience would have a better understanding of the best way of going about “caring” in architecture and urbanism projects.

To conclude, I would recommend this book to almost everyone especially architects, urban planners, scientists, politicians, and environmentalists; amongst others. The book touches on the key issues that have an adverse impact on people in urban and rural areas and ways to potentially solve them. I believe that most readers will become more empathic to vulnerable populations and will care more about projects that will occur within their communities.

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