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A guide to the emergence of alternative urban cultures in the wake of Detroit’s economic decline

**The Unreal Estate Guide to Detroit**

By **Andrew Herscher**

**Paper:** 978-0-472-03521-2 / $29.95

Publication Date: **November 2012**

Intense attention has been paid to Detroit as a site of urban crisis. This crisis, however, has not only yielded the massive devaluation of real estate that has so often been noted; it has also yielded an explosive production of seemingly valueless urban property that has facilitated the imagination and practice of alternative urbanisms. The first sustained study of Detroit’s alternative urban cultures, *The Unreal Estate Guide to Detroit* initiates a new focus on Detroit as a site not only of urban crisis but also of urban possibility.

The *Guide* documents art and curatorial practices, community and guerilla gardens, urban farming and forestry, cultural platforms, living archives, evangelical missions, temporary public spaces, intentional communities, furtive monuments, outsider architecture, and other work made possible by the ready availability of urban space in Detroit. The *Guide* poses these spaces as “unreal estate”: urban territory that has slipped through the free- market economy and entered other regimes of value, other contexts of meaning, and other systems of use. The appropriation of this territory in Detroit, the *Guide* suggests, offers new perspectives on what a city is and can be, especially in a time of urban crisis.

**Andrew Herscher** is Associate Professor of Architecture at the University of Michigan. He also co-founded the Detroit Unreal Estate Agency, an open-access platform for research on urban crisis using Detroit as a focal point.

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