



"Excuse me sir, before you interfere with this culturally significant component of the National Estate, may I see your Conservation Management Plan or your Intervention Policy Statement?"

Urban History summer seminar series - 'Questioning the Consensus? Urban Conservation in 1990s Sydney and Melbourne'

Over the next few months, this [UK urban history virtual summer seminar series](#) will showcase leading edge research in the field of urban history.

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About this Event

Our second speaker, Dr James Lesh from the University of Melbourne, will be talking about his work on heritage conservation in 1990s Melbourne and Sydney. In 1990, veteran Australian heritage planner Helen Proudfoot (1930–2012) was honoured with the prestigious Sidney Luker Award by the Royal Australian Planning Institute in Sydney. Upon receiving the award, Proudfoot delivered an unconventional acceptance speech. She did not praise the advances in urban heritage practice which had occurred during her career. There was no mention of the popular embrace of urban heritage, the growth of the heritage profession, or the creation of new governance regimes; the hallmarks of the late-twentieth-century conservation consensus (Pendlebury 2009). Instead, Proudfoot criticised the heritage consultants, those ‘environmental fundamentalists’ who were focussed on ‘telling us what we must not do’. On the one hand, Proudfoot’s appraisal of heritage practice might be dismissed as a spectacular provocation or even the harangue of a notable figure at the twilight of their career. Yet her stance was soon endorsed by leading Melbourne architectural conservationist Miles Lewis. Proudfoot had raised a fundamental issue at the heart of the question of urban conservation: how do we prevent heritage from ‘overtaking us’ (Koolhaas 2004)? This paper draws on archival research in Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne to question the 1990s conservation consensus and examine the ways urban heritage practice was seemingly making cities, places and people worse off.

This talk will be held on Google Meet, the link to which will be made available 48 hours before the talk. This seminar will be recorded and made available online at www.cambridge.org/urbanhistoryseminars.

This seminar series is jointly organised by *Urban History* and the *Urban History Group*. We are grateful to the journal’s New Initiatives Fund for initial funding

support.

Los Angeles: 3AM, Friday, July 13, 2020

New York: 6AM, Friday, July 13, 2020

London: 11AM, Friday, July 13, 2020

Singapore: 6PM, Friday, July 13, 2020

Melbourne: 8PM, Friday, July 13, 2020



Image: James Broadbent, ICOMOS Australia Newsletter, 1982.