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Circular Architecture of Degrowth

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Publication date

2022

Document Version

Final published version

Citation (APA)

Medici, P., & Cavallo, R. (2022). *Circular Architecture of Degrowth*. Abstract from Radicality, RAPS Bristol 2021, Bristol, United Kingdom.

Important note

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50: Circular Architecture of Degrowth

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Abstract

This research focuses on the architecture of degrowth with regard to the Circular Economy (CE) in the built environment and the role of the architect. Today, to achieve a sound CE, the challenge related to the global decoupling of economic growth from environmental degradation has to be addressed. The impossibility of pursuing economic growth in a planet with limited physical resources forces us to face the necessity of limiting growth, especially in wealthy regions. Furthermore, to incentivise sustainable growth in more deprived areas is key, particularly in places providing shelters and better health conditions is mandatory.

Several high-density newly built neighbourhoods, even if positioned as sustainable and circular, often have a negative socio-economic and environmental impact on local communities and less developed world regions from where materials and energy are extracted (Nelson & Schneider, 2018) (Lehtinen, 2018). Economic growth and national GDPs are considered among the essential values in a world with limited energy and material resources, where the population and production of goods are constantly growing. The only possibility to reverse this trend is introducing a global shift in knowledge and culture (Calisto Friant et al., 2020) (Nelson & Schneider, 2018). Both the 1970s and recent years saw architects taking different roles in practice, for instance, increasing social cooperation and decreasing energy and material consumption, contributing thus to degrowth. Against this background, this research aims to elaborate an architectural perspective on the question of growth, exploring emerging practices and reflecting upon the limits and the potentials of their approaches. The outcome will provide insights into how best practices in architecture regarding CE and degrowth can generate alternative roles for architects. This research will analyze and elaborate upon relevant case studies such as De Ceutel, Amsterdam by Space&Matter; R-Urban, Paris by Atelier Architecture Autogérée (Calisto Friant et al., 2020); the Heckenbeck village, Germany (Grewer & Keck, 2019) and other examples from the 2019 Oslo Architecture Triennale entitled 'Enough: The Architecture of Degrowth (OAT, 2019).'
