

Jakabfi-Kovács
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Rendszerszemléletű stratégiaépítés
városi harmadik helyek számára
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Doctor of Liberal Arts in Architecture – Doctoral Dissertation

Cauté.

A Systems-Oriented Strategy for Urban Third Places in the Context of Degrowth

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THESES

1. Degrowth urbanism is not an extreme branch of mainstream urban planning, but rather the only rational design-oriented response to the ecological and civilizational crisis.

Through the analysis of urban third places, this dissertation demonstrates that mainstream sustainability paradigms have failed to address contemporary crises: they provide no lasting solutions and, in fact, tend to deepen existing crises while generating new ones through the externalization of economic and social costs. The root cause of these failures lies in their inability to directly confront growth itself.

2. Systems thinking = degrowth.

The modern systems theory literature has conclusively shown that infinite growth is impossible—whether in physical, economic, or social terms. A systems-oriented perspective not only facilitates the recognition of hidden forms of growth, but also identifies high-leverage points where targeted interventions can transform the functioning of the system as a whole.

3.

Urban third places represent high-leverage intervention points.

Their significance derives from the fact that they influence not only their immediate surroundings but also larger urban districts, and in some cases the city as a whole. This impact is observable across multiple dimensions: socially (patterns of use, gentrification), individually (memory, perception), ecologically (neglect, biodiversity, contamination), and economically (investment potential, “value enhancement,” commodification).

4.

Given that mainstream sustainability paradigms absorb and ultimately corrupt elements of ecological design, there is a need for a dedicated

strategy—or compass—explicitly addressing urban third places within a systems-oriented design practice, even though the degrowth literature itself remains ambivalent towards standardized models. Global crises manifest as overwhelmingly complex, interrelated constellations of problems. Since complete understanding of such systems lies beyond human capacity, the only viable approach is to proceed with the utmost caution. This dissertation introduces the principle of *Cauté*—that is, precaution—as a design compass. The principle calls for a generous, patient use of time, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of the situation, consideration and inclusion of system components, careful intervention, the filtering or compensation of unintended consequences, and continuous follow-up. Rather than pointing to a linear path, the compass provides an orientation toward a goal, which may be reached through multiple possible trajectories.