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ARCHITECTURE DESTROYS NATURE?

- rebuilding the human-nature connection



Metabolism of nature (Kraemer, 2020). All rights reserved.

BUILDING DESIGN FOR SUSTAINABILITY

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Does architecture destroy nature? According to the United Nations, about 60 percent of the world population is soon to be expected to reside in urban environments. This unprecedented development does not only drive forward the urbanization of rural areas but also the densification of cities. A progression that promises better housing, education, healthcare, productivity, and opportunities for the population, however, it is also a progression largely responsible for the disconnection between people and nature.

This thesis emphasizes the importance of the human-nature connection and explores an alternative approach to sustainability within the field of architecture. It explores ways to reconnect to nature or strengthen the connection between people and nature to foster pro-environmental behavior, rather than focusing on “sustainable” building performance or materials.

While nature connectedness has been identified as a central determinant for well-being and health, for pro-environmental behavior, and positive child development, there is a need for further investigations on how nature connectedness can be achieved

or how strategies for the reconnection with nature could be developed. Architects realized their responsibility and are using biophilic design elements to bring back nature experiences to the urban setting. However, the experience of nature alone does not lead to a strong human-nature connection. Research suggests that the relationship between human and nature is strongest when developed from an early age. Thus, introducing strategies for reconnection to the context of child development will be further investigated.

This thesis aims to transfer evidence and research on the human-nature connection from philosophical, psychological, socio-economical, ecological, and sustainable sciences into concrete design strategies relevant to the future discourse on sustainable architecture. Finally, these design strategies will be implemented in the context of an urban interpretation of a forest kindergarten, that has the potential to affect the whole area and society.

Keywords: human-nature connection, biophilia, kindergarten, sustainability