

BOTOND ZSOLT DOBOS



CITY WITHIN THE HOUSE

The historical city structure, as a model for contemporary space-forming

THESES OF DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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Budapest, 2013

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RATIONALE

In the last couple of years, or even a decade, urban architecture went through a profound change of perspectives. Developments in the social, cultural and economic environment also had an impact on the way of thinking in urbanism. As a counterweight to globalization in general, emphasis has been put to the strengthening of local values. Rather than the buildings themselves, the focus of urbanism became the space between those buildings, and the urban life that those spaces are giving rise to. The main questions of today's urbanism are not aiming the city itself, but rather the life in the city. The change in the way of thinking is shown by the fact that the most recent „deeds“ in urban architecture were operations that did not involve significant construction, but rather inspired positive transformation regarding the use of the city. As opposed to urbanism, no such developments happened in general architecture, especially not of such magnitude, although one can feel the presence of a socially more responsible, community-focused approach.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF DOCTORAL RESEARCH

In my doctoral dissertation, I aim to analyse how the above presented community-focused thinking is able to speak the language of architecture.

The fundamental thesis of the dissertation is that such a perspective is undoubtedly present in contemporary architecture, which perspective goes beyond the traditional architectural design approach and prefers to capitalize on the force of building, shaping and sustaining communities within the building, sometimes even trading off functional requirements.

My fundamental hypothesis was that architectural thinking, while intending to shape communities, directly or indirectly evokes the traditional city structure, even in an unwanted and latent manner, as the latter is the only well explored structure that has a proven record regarding the force to shape society and communities.

STRUCTURE OF THE DISCUSSION

In the theoretical research part of my dissertation I aim to provide an overview and analysis of the above phenomenon from several aspects. As a first step, I explore and characterize the analogy discovered. In what follows, I describe the phenomenon of how contemporary urbanism tries to get back to its basics, to the original notion of the 'urbs', and thereby to recreate what has been lost, as an inevitable consequence of human progress; I do this by providing a brief historical overview on the relationship between architecture, urban architecture and the city itself, to the extent it is necessary for an understanding of the phenomenon and a clear vision of the common features. The historical overview already reflects the intent to intertwine the thinking of urbanism and architecture. Then, in order to provide further justification for these issues, I continue to explain the above phenomenon by presenting and briefly analysing several examples from all around the world, including both plans and actual buildings, whilst also tentatively categorize those cases based on the motivation behind their creation.

As a conclusion of my dissertation, I show how my own personal way of thinking was affected by these thoughts and theories, by presenting the doctoral masterpiece and some of my other designs and buildings.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE MASTERPIECE

My masterpiece was the design and building of Colorfront Post-production Film Studio (1036 Budapest, Perc u. 6.), extending on the top floors of one of the industrial buildings of the former Goldberger textile factory. My concept was to keep as much as possible form the existing industrial structures, what I reached by installing each functional

component of movie post-production work as distinct 'boxes' within the large main hall, kept in its entirety. The central space that gets natural light from above, imitates a certain city structure, city 'tissue', through the boxes and the space between the boxes, those latter being sometimes narrow, sometimes more generous. The analysis of the relations existing within the space, and those necessary to unfold the remaining premises led to the division and structuring of that space, thereby also unambiguously defining the functions of the joints.

FINDINGS

- 1. In the last couple of years, or even a decade, urban architecture went through a profound change of perspectives:** rather than the buildings themselves, the focus of urban architecture became the space between those buildings, and the urban life that those spaces are giving rise to.
- 2. A certain perspective, a way of thinking is undoubtedly present in contemporary architecture,** which perspective goes beyond the traditional architectural design approach and **prefers to capitalize on the force of building, shaping and sustaining communities within the building, sometimes even trading off functional requirements.**
- 3. Architectural thinking, meeting the intent to shape communities, directly or indirectly evokes the traditional city structure, even in an unwanted and latent manner,** as the latter is the only well known structure that has a proven record regarding the force to shape society and communities.
- 4. The first example of consciously using the city analogy is most probably a prototype for a shopping mall** (Northland Mall, Detroit, 1954). The subsequent spreading of shopping malls worldwide, and the consequent dwindling effect on the historical city structure provided both a proof and a warning on how strong the potential in this analogy can be.
- 5. Conducting historical research, there is a parallel between the work of Team10 and the above way of thinking in contemporary architecture.** Although both the goal of the buildings and the means used are similar, there is a blatant difference between the social and intellectual background of the two periods.
- 6. Using contemporary examples one can state that there are several architectural approaches where the historical city acts as a model for the building regarding both the forms and space formation.** Of course, these are not closed categories, hence most of the buildings used as example can be categorized in more categories.
- 7. While reviewing the different approaches a thought stands out which, from the direction of formal and structural analogy, approaches towards a state where the basic function has a role that is almost secondary to the intent of serving the community function generated by the building.**
- 8. The shift in emphasis** – in particular, the effect of variable extent that conscious incorporation of social objectives have on the planning of premises serving primary functions – **represents a change in the way of thinking in architecture, in which in my opinion there is a tendency that is likely to change the understanding of architecture in general.**