Architecturepedagogy

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Book of Theses

ARCHITECTURE-PEDAGOGY

Built Environmental Education with an Architectural Approach

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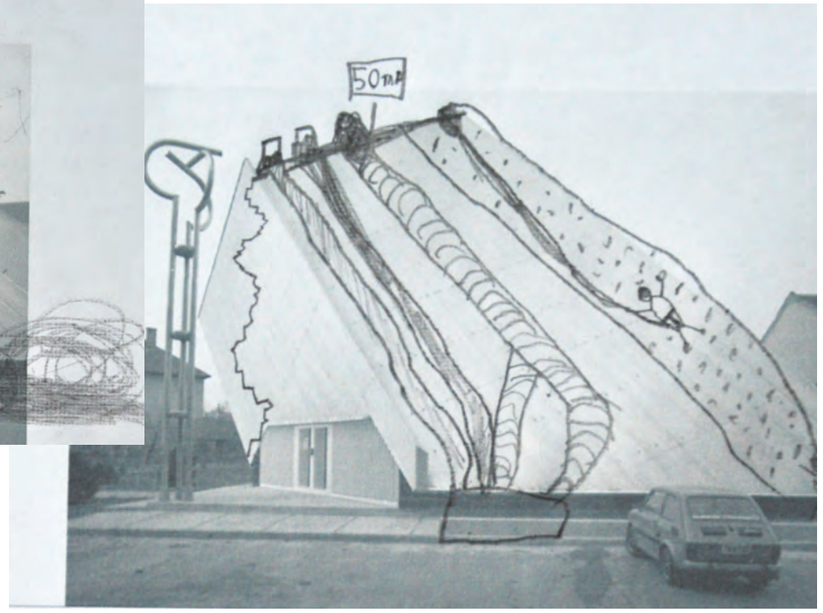
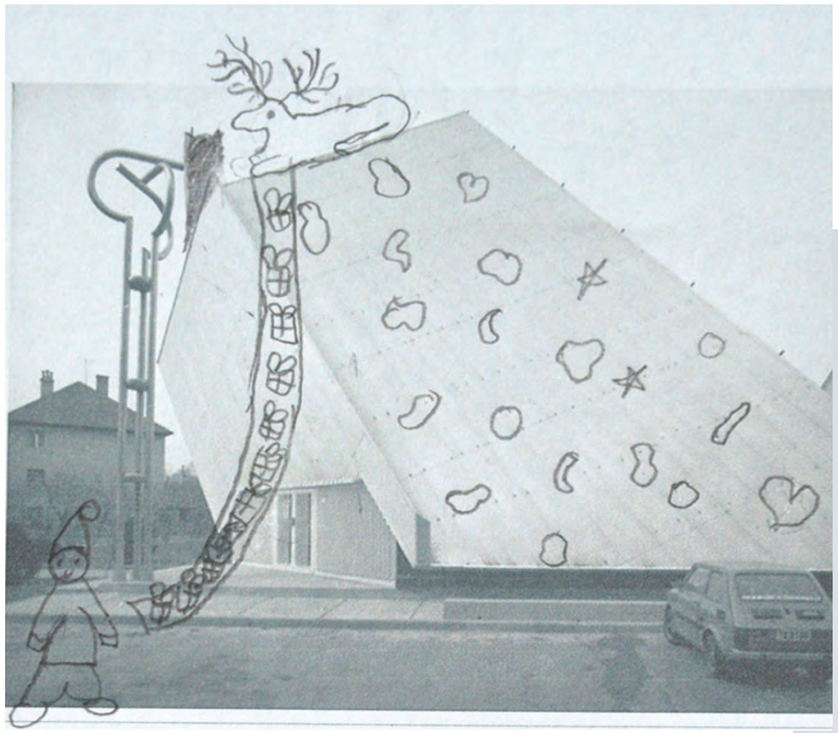
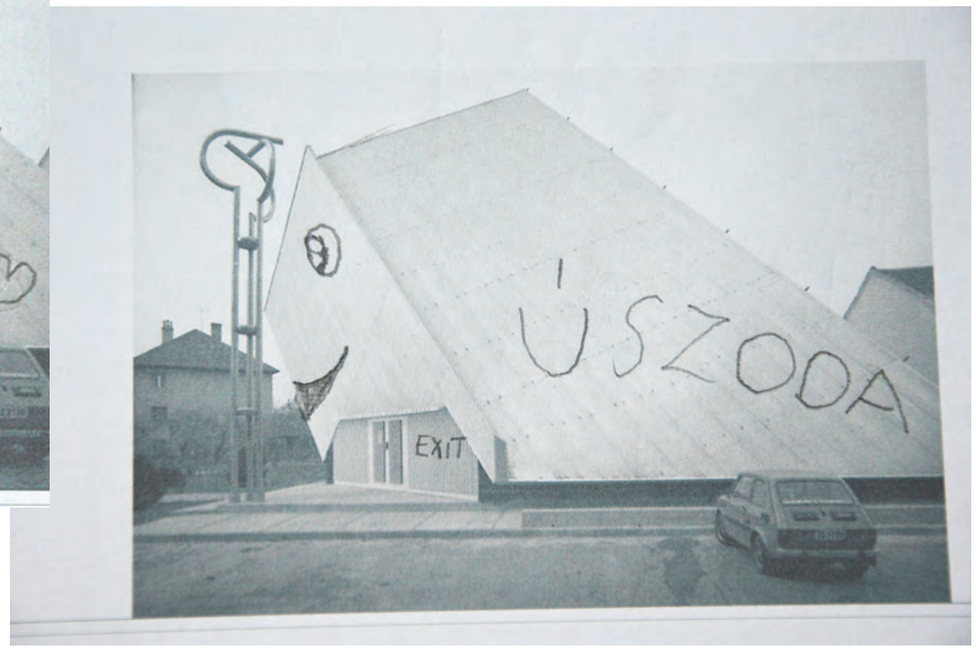


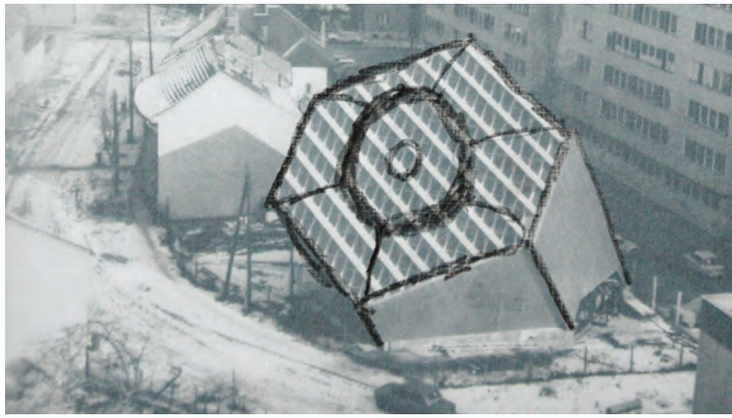
Építőtábor - Summer camp 2021 – Reformed Church of Külső-Kelenföldi[1] – Photos: Ágnes Czirják

„If we want the next generation to approach the future wholeheartedly, with great confidence, we must educate them to be both competent and original at the same time."

Mihály Csíkszentmihályi, 2008







[1] In our 2021 Summer Building Camp (Czirják-Skaliczki) in connection with the hungarian exhibition at the Venice Arcihtectural Biennale called Othernity: Reconditioning our Modern Heritage - we explored the Reformed Church of Külső-Kelenföld. We asked the children: What else could this building be besides its original function? Here's a selection of the ideas that emerged: ski slope, giant slide, honey factory, swimming pool, climbing wall, Santa's landing spot, rocket launcher...

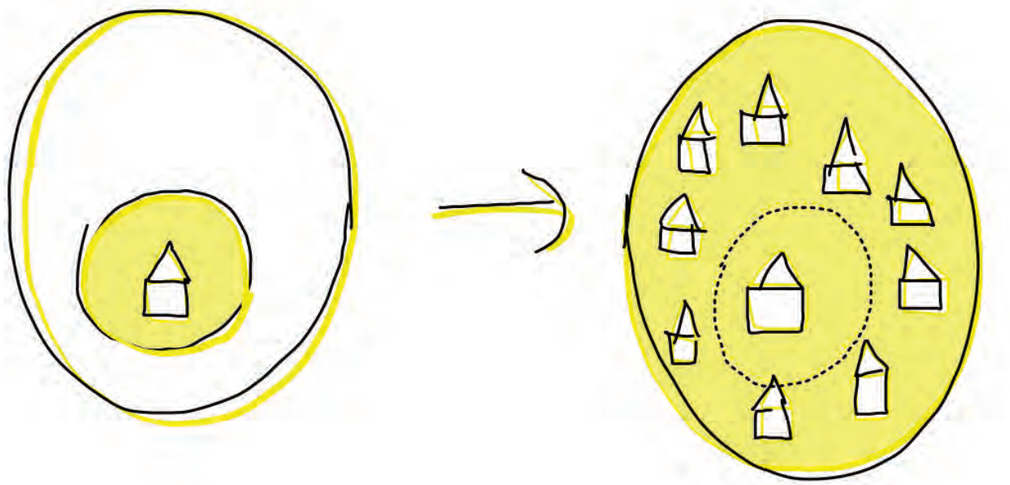
ABSTRACT

Built environmental education is a specialized field of education that focuses on both the theoretical and practical aspects of understanding the built environment. Its primary goal is to strengthen the relationship between people and their living environments (Sebestyén, Tóth, 2013) As articulated in the Charter of the UIA Architecture and Children Work Programme, the task of built environmental education is to support children and young adults in understanding the essence of architectural intentions that shape their environment (UIA - BEE Charter, 2019. The Charter also asserts that the alliance between architects and educators can ensure the attainment of this knowledge. The most pressing issue identified by both the global organization and the member countries is the lack of competent educators hindering the integration of built environmental education into public education. As a solution, there should be a more prominent presence of architectural contents and the methodology of built environmental education in teacher training programs. Another difficulty is the the reserved attitude toward architecture from educators and society. Architects can play an active role in overcoming these difficulties. With the involvement of architects, the preparation of educators can be realized within teacher training or through the further education of practicing educators. A crucial task for architects in this process is summarizing and continously developing the knowledge base that can constitute the 'curriculum' of built environmental education. The goal is for educators to skillfully adopt the materials prepared by architects, and being able to develop their own activity ideas based on the existing exercise collections to suit the specific needs of their institutions and group of children.

As an illustration of this, the dissertation includes the structure of the curriculum of built environmental education as an independent competency area, which has already been tested in the largest hungarian teacher training institution. Its aim is to make the conceptual framework and practice of architecture accessible to educators, while fostering a conscious and critical perspective on our built environment. These chapters also outline what everyday life competencies can be effectively developed through built environmental education, introducing important socio-cultural trends revealing that issues related to the built environment are not only crucial for individuals but also for society as a whole. Building a competent, proactive society in community matters can begin with educating children. By highlighting the characteristics of spatial creation and spatial learning, goals extend beyond built environmental education, advocating for the enhancement of early childhood development prestige.

THESES

THESIS no.1.



The current and the desired state of the relationship between architects and society. (figure by the author)

The aim of built environmental education is to establish a consciously designed and sustainable relationship between the built environment and its users, based on mutual cooperation and social responsibility. This collaboration presupposes that the space-users understand and competently shape the operation and the appearance of their environment. Architects alone are not enough to achieve this, it requires an overall change in the attitude of space-users, and the development of societal awareness and needs.

The basic elements of the implementation are the sensitization of the society towards its built environment: the operation, physical characteristics, history, aesthetics and sustainable development of it.

Dome project – Photo: Tamás Fenes

THESIS no.2.

In built environmental education the role of knowledge transfer should not be primarily taken by architects. The transmission of knowledge is the domain of educators. The most important task of architects lies in compiling and updating the content to be transferred. Educators are the multipliers who can convey their knowledge to the widest audience of children. No extracurricular activity can compete with their knowledge-spreading role, therefore, from the point of view of built environmental education the most important is their involvement.

Public education is the democtratic location of knowledge transfer, which can make the substance of built environmental education available to all members of society. To achieve this, teachers do not have to become architects, but with the help of architects, they can develop their own creative activities in specific architectural topics according to the needs of the given student group.

Minimal Space Experiments – Photo: Judit Skaliczki

THESIS no.3.

One of the typical difficulties in relation to the involvement of educators in built environmental education is the fear of the complexity of architecture. Although educators are typically open to the topic, their motivation is hindered by the lack of knowledge and practical experience.

It can help destroy the resistence experienced among educators, if they can access the theoretical and practical elements of built environmental education, and the existing educational materials and exercises already translated into the language of pedagogy. The goals, tools and development techniques of built environmental education must be made understandable to them.

Paper Structures – Photo: Judit Skaliczki

THESIS no.4.

In built environmental education, the experience-based approach can attract people's attention and interest most effectively. Exercises built on active cognition and creation are based on this, which must be kept in mind in the case of children, as well as in the preparation of educators. They should be supported in gaining as much personal experience as possible in relation to the built environment. In long term, this method promotes, that educators can be more confident and open to planning, incorporating and realizing architectural projects.

In case of students in teacher training programmes and active educators, we cannot count on generally existing architectural knowledge, since nowadays architecture is not an essential part of general literacy. Therefore as a foundation for spatial awareness, it is worth starting the approach towards architecture predominantly with experience-based activities. The experienced situations either in connection with spatial learning or creating can bring them closer to the facilitator-role, which they have to apply later with children.

Additive building activities – Photo: Skaliczki Judit

THESIS no.5.

The process-based creative approach must play an important role in the methodology of built environmental education. This highlights the importance of the creative process, strengthens the formation of an acting attitude, and reduces the pressure on the creator participating in the process and the facilitator supporting it, by reducing the need to create the perfect product. During process-based creative activities, the intentional use of the Trial-and-Error Method (TEM) can ensure that experimental attitude, which is similar and necessary for the innovative perspective of architectural design, and it supports the definition of our constantly changing demands on the built environment.

Built environmental workshops and activities - organized in the spirit of the above-mentioned – have no predefined solutions, nor good or bad end results. Arising design questions are answered individually. It is part of the planning process, that every participant goes through their own solution strategy, which may include multiple restarts. The task of the facilitator is to provide individual support to everyone.

Urban walks – Photo: Ágnes Czirják

THESIS no.6.

In the cognitive processes related to space, spatial perception through the senses is of key importance. Emphasizing this, designates that triple activity categorization (urban scale - human scale - manual scale) which also structures the practical elements of built environmental education.

In order to develop spatial abilities and spatial reasoning, spatial design and creativity, constructing and planning as efficiently as possible, it is worth striving for the complexity of these three scales. As a result, each activity and spatial situation can be interpreted at community-level, on the human level and also scaled down to manual scale as well. In case of children, this multi-level experience has a reciprocal effect, and can best support the overall development of spatial abilities.

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