



THESES

*“may the architect (the Artist) always imagine
for a window someone on the windowsill,
for a door someone crossing it,
for a staircase someone climbing down it,
someone climbing up,
for a porch someone standing under it,
for a hall two people meeting there,
for a balcony someone resting on it,
for a room someone living in it”¹*

Gio Ponti (1957)

CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE

Co-operating architecture between the architect and the user
during the design process

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The focus of the dissertation is the co-operation process that can be established between the architect and the user during the phase of design. The dialogue that takes place between them is a broadly interpreted activity, my basic assumption is that involving the users in the process of design have many advantages. The active participation of the user can provide a more accurate and harmonious person-environment fit², and as another major benefit, the architect can create spaces that serve users' real needs. Besides the classic architectural principles of Vitruvian, stability, utility, and beauty³, I argue that architecture it should also be proportionate. By that I mean that the scale of the spatial design should be restricted to the real needs. Given the evident ecological problems of the 21st century, being proportionate is a particularly important moral question, a new expectation for architects.

The structure of the dissertation is based on a theoretical chapter, where the discussion of diverse notions related to the topic: the interpretation and systematization is needed as the concepts of collaborative designing, participatory design, solidarity architecture, inclusive design, community planning, community architecture, co-creation and co-creative architecture exist in parallelly. The meanings of these notions overlap from time to time, but they indicate different emphases, priorities, and approaches. Conceptual clarification has also served to contextualize my own concept of design, which I define as "*co-operating architecture*", that self-definition was born out of the clarification of theory. In my dissertation I further focus my interest, I have narrowed down the broad field of architecture-related processes to the first phase of the dialogue that develops between architects and users. I introduce the term "*constructive dialogue*" generally and examine that in my study during the planning period.

After the theoretical introduction chapter (1), the following chapters structure the dissertation: (2) the transformation of the role of the architect in the light of the change in the way of thinking; (3) discussion of the

relationship between the user and the use in the frame of environmental psychology; (4) trust, competence and responsibility issues in the process of decision-making based on my professional experience; (5) methods and a toolkit that help the creation of a shared, common language from built environment education to design thinking. As a general feature of the dissertation, the inner structure of chapters the relevant literature is illustrated by an international or Hungarian examples, and to close the structure, I introduce my own experience as a researcher, designer, and university instructor because I would like to emphasize the complexity, validity and usefulness of the proposal integrated into my creative approach. The theses placed at the end of the chapters summarize the thoughts of the individual chapters.

To sum up, my dissertation draws attention to the importance of the dialogue during the design process with purpose to bridge the cultural or knowledge distance between the architect and the user. I attach in the Appendix I. the tools that I have acquired and tested personally in the researches and also during my architectural works and therefore I cited them in the dissertation so as to help other architects can be applied them during the "*constructive dialogue*". This collection of methods and ideas may help facilitate not only the dialogue with the users but also used in the teaching process of university. This collection can be further expanded in the future.

1_ Ponti, Gio: *Amante d'architettura. L'architettura é un cristallo. Milano: CUSL, 2004, 110.*

In: Mucelli, Elena: *Houses in the wood to enjoy the sun and the stars.*

In: *Agathón - International Journal of Architecture, Art and Design. 02/2017, 163.*

2_ Düll, Andrea: *Helyek, tárgyak, viselkedés: Környezetpszichológiai tanulmányok. Budapest: L'Harmattan Kiadó, 2009.*

3_ Marcus Vitruvius Pollio was a Roman architect, known for his work entitled "*De architectura*". He originated the idea that all buildings should have three attributes: strength, utility, and beauty.



Válibor Inn and Guest house, Badacsonyörs, Major str. 42. – 2017 (own photo)



Válibor Guest house and staff accommodation, Badacsonyörs – 2019 (own photo)

Masterwork: In the selection of masterwork form my oeuvre, my aim was to make a connection between the dissertation and my architectural work. I have chosen first a client, than the building that we made together for a small winery in the Badacsony region during consecutive years: *“Constructive dialogue with winemaker Péter Váli”* is intertwined with the ideas formulated in the dissertation. In other words, my masterwork is not (only) a building, but rather a *“co-operation”* that started in 2009 and continues today. I designed three wine-related buildings: Válibor Inn and Guest house, Badacsonyörs – 2015-2016, Válibor Guest house and staff accommodation, Badacsonyörs – 2018-2019, and Válibor Wine shop and Apartment, Badacsontomaj – 2020-2021. All of them are small case interventions and conversions of existing buildings. We have recently got the permission to build a new guest house, that design is in progress. The entire process and its results are presented in Appendix II.



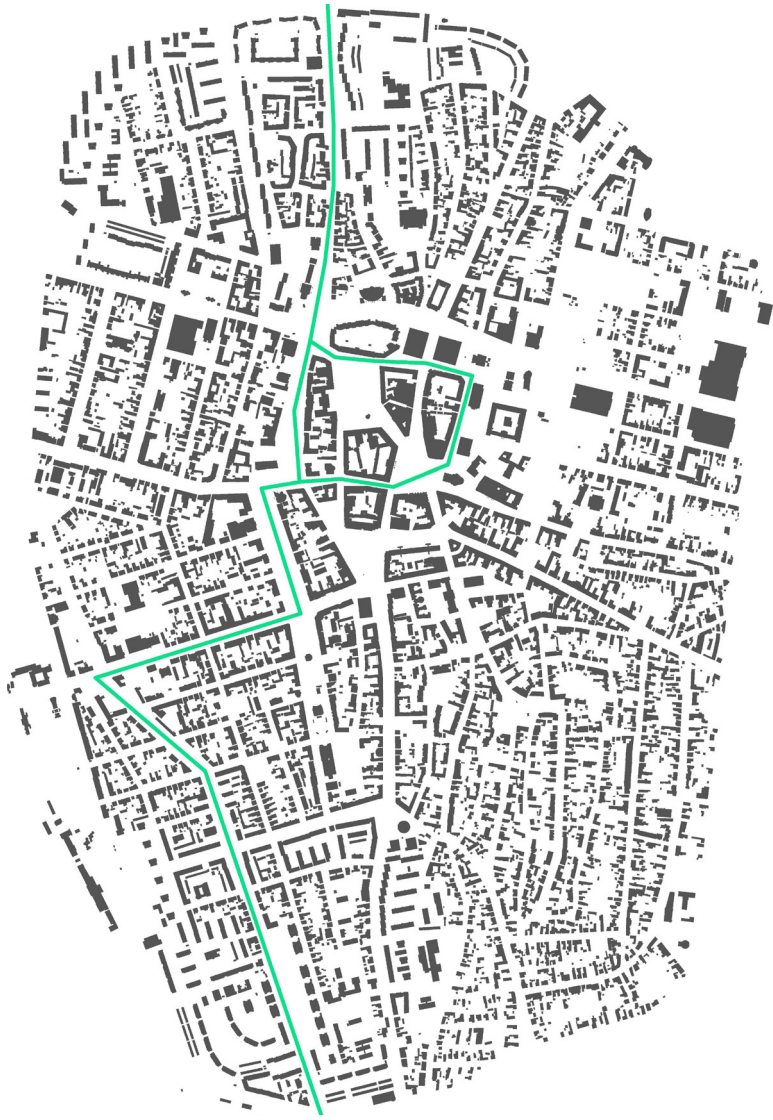
Válibor Wine shop and Apartment, Badacsontomaj, Hösök square 11. – 2021 (own photo)



1. CO-OPERATING ARCHITECTURE – CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE

CO-OPERATING ARCHITECTURE is an open planning process in which the participants i. e. architects, engineers, clients, users and experts, actively participate according to their own competence, with different weight, interests and knowledge, but in coordination with each other. As a result of their work, they create a joint work which – even though in a different sense – everyone can feel as their own.

I call **CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE** the “*co-operation*” between architects and users, the basis of which is the establishment of trust and a common language with the aim to understand the real needs of the user as accurately as possible, and to create an optimal context to support the planning and building process. Architectural planning starts from the realization that the user also has valid experience, knowledge, and thoughts about space, which are valuable information during the process. This approach emphasizes the importance of human dialogue.



„Green route” – Sóstó and Downtown, Nyíregyháza, architectural examinations and proposals, concept – 2018

2. THE CHANGE OF THINKING

The change in human thinking and culture also affects the role of the architect. Today, the architect is often not only a mentor, but also a mediator, who “*co-operates*” not only with the client but also with the future user of the built space from the start of the design process. In order to coordinate the tasks, a great deal of flexibility is required, and **critical thinking** is essential, which extends even to the reinterpretation of the design task. It happens more and more often that the architect has to reformulate or specify the basic questions about space and space use, to which he will look for answers during the design.



Usage monitoring, Heltai Gáspár Primary School, Zugló, Budapest – 2019. november
(own photo)

3. USE

In the case of conversion, reuse or expansion of existing buildings and spaces, the users have their own, relevant knowledge about the use of space, therefore their involvement is a particularly important source of information in the planning process. However, the information learned during the “*constructive dialogue*” with the user is often neither directly formulated nor precise, but needs to be deciphered from small signs, suggestive behaviour, instinctive movements, and utterances. In order to recognize and understand them, it is often necessary to involve human experts other than the architect.

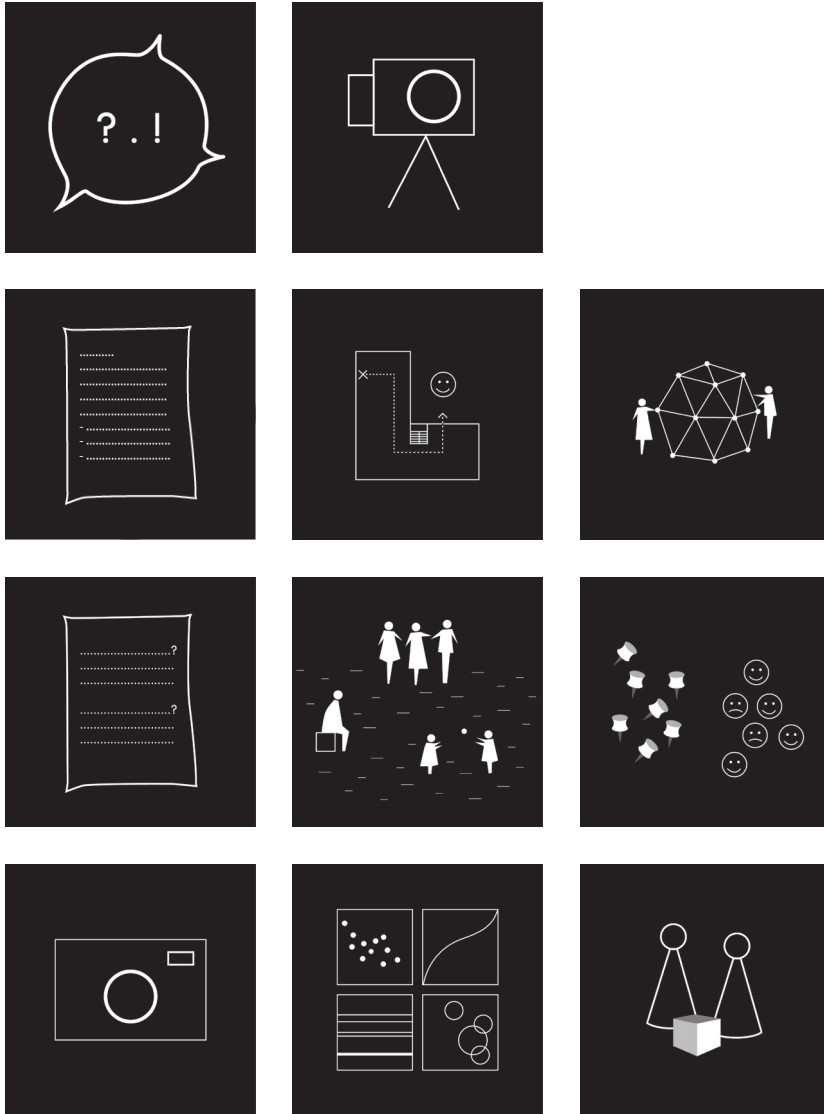


Conversion of a downtown apartment, Budapest, IX. – 2020 (own photo)

4. TRUST – DECISION – COMPETENCE

In “*co-operating architecture*”, the basic requirement for the architect is to continue to represent his/her profession authentically as an expert, while striving to gain the trust of his/her client. Trust in expertise is the sure foundation that is essential for the participants during the process of planning and realization.

The involvement of the user should not mean the transfer of architectural decisions and responsibility. Design decisions must be made by the architect(s) with specialist knowledge, which is not, however, the expression of superiority of one’s own will, but the result of “*constructive dialogue*”, in which all stakeholders participate according to their competence.



The tools of design thinking that I have learned and systematized so far
(own figure)

5. LANGUAGE AND TOOLKIT OF CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE

The strategy of creating a “*constructive dialogue*” is particularly important during the preparatory period of design, during the mapping of symbolic contents, spatial needs and problems. For the sake of a truly constructive dialogue between the architect and the user, the creation of a common language and the research of real usage needs can be effectively helped by the experimental tools of design thinking. When cooperating with groups with different knowledge, interests, ages and characteristics, openness and the concentration on the part of the architect is constant, but the methodology is varied: it is not worth working with a toolbox consisting of fixed elements, but always what is necessary for the nature, size and abilities of the participants shape the process.

