



# BEYOND THE SOCIAL MARGIN

analysis of the architectural-rehabilitational possibilities of temporary accommodation for the homeless

**Gabriella Öcsi**

Supervisor: László Vincze DLA

Masterwork:

White House office building - rehabilitation of the former existing part  
Budapest, Váci út 47.

Budapest University of Technology and Economics  
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Thesis 2023



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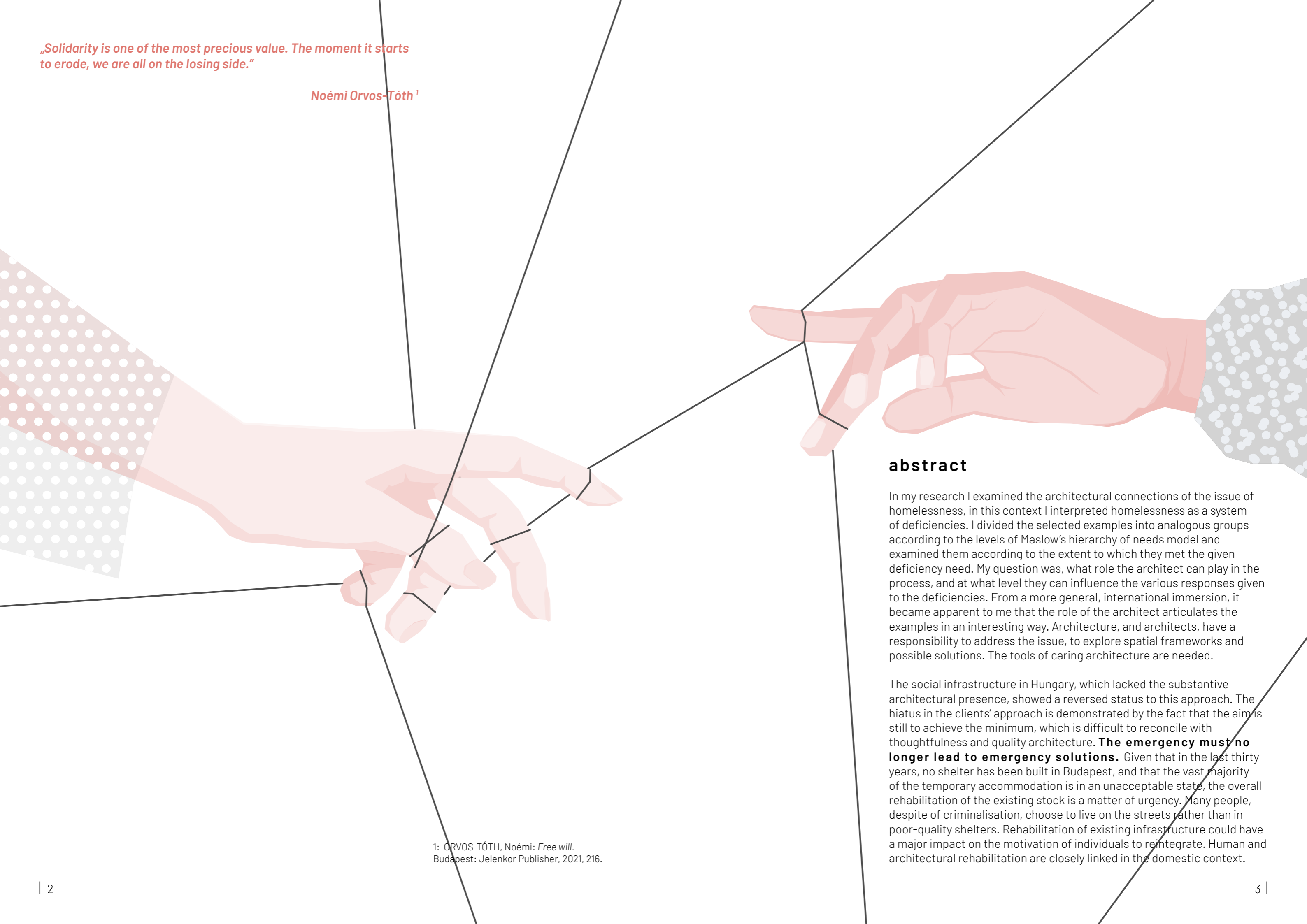
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„Solidarity is one of the most precious value. The moment it starts to erode, we are all on the losing side.”

Noémi Orvos-Tóth<sup>1</sup>

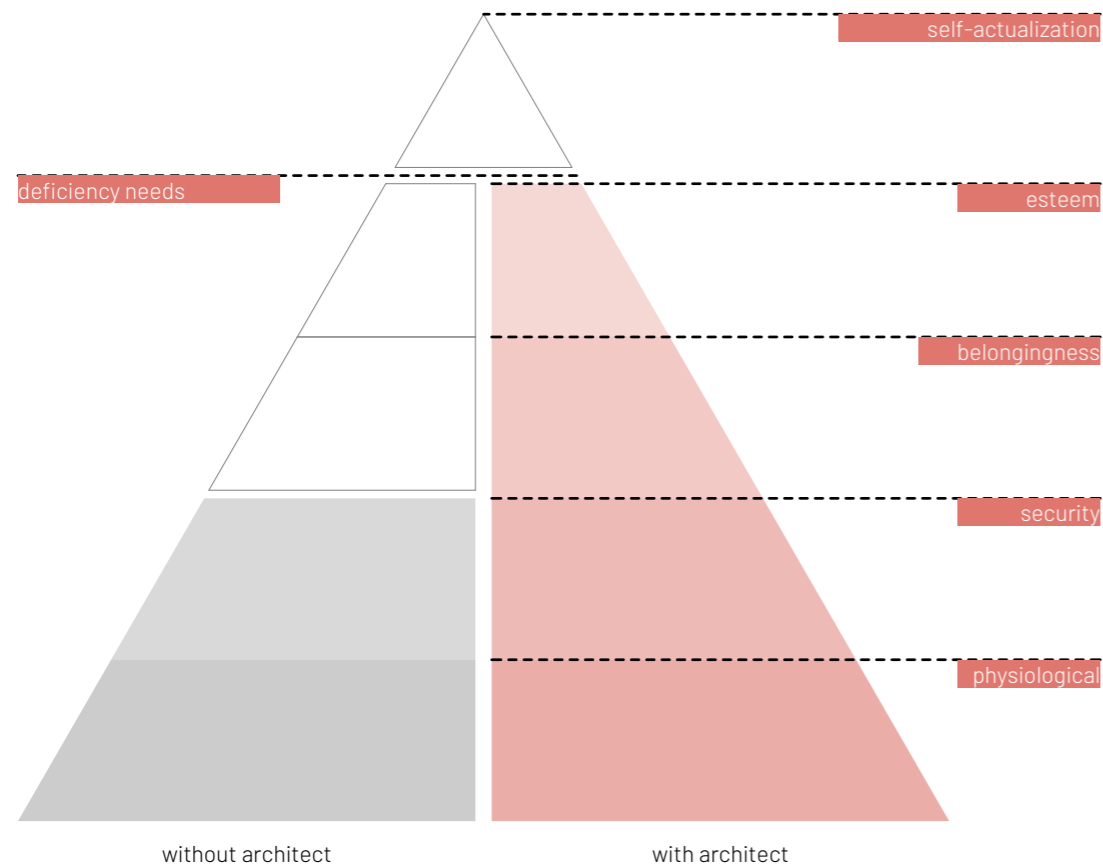


## abstract

In my research I examined the architectural connections of the issue of homelessness, in this context I interpreted homelessness as a system of deficiencies. I divided the selected examples into analogous groups according to the levels of Maslow's hierarchy of needs model and examined them according to the extent to which they met the given deficiency need. My question was, what role the architect can play in the process, and at what level they can influence the various responses given to the deficiencies. From a more general, international immersion, it became apparent to me that the role of the architect articulates the examples in an interesting way. Architecture, and architects, have a responsibility to address the issue, to explore spatial frameworks and possible solutions. The tools of caring architecture are needed.

The social infrastructure in Hungary, which lacked the substantive architectural presence, showed a reversed status to this approach. The hiatus in the clients' approach is demonstrated by the fact that the aim is still to achieve the minimum, which is difficult to reconcile with thoughtfulness and quality architecture. **The emergency must no longer lead to emergency solutions.** Given that in the last thirty years, no shelter has been built in Budapest, and that the vast majority of the temporary accommodation is in an unacceptable state, the overall rehabilitation of the existing stock is a matter of urgency. Many people, despite of criminalisation, choose to live on the streets rather than in poor-quality shelters. Rehabilitation of existing infrastructure could have a major impact on the motivation of individuals to reintegrate. Human and architectural rehabilitation are closely linked in the domestic context.

1: ORVOS-TÓTH, Noémi: *Free will*.  
Budapest: Jelenkor Publisher, 2021, 216.



**the analogy of the hierarchy of needs theory in architecture**

**I examined the architecture of temporary homeless shelters in the context of the hierarchy of needs theory. By grouping buildings that meet different levels of need according to the analogy of Maslow's pyramid, the research showed that the theoretical levels can be adapted to the use of architectural space, which thereby defines the system of relations, hierarchies and qualities of the private and communal spaces of the individual, the institution and the environment.**

In the course of the research, I stated the following levels, analogous to Maslow's theory, according to the use of space:

- 1/ level of physiological needs - the space of basic protection
- 2/ level of security needs - the space of private sphere
- 3/ level of belonging and affiliation - different types of community spaces
- 4/ level of esteem needs - employment and work spaces

↑01 levels of Maslow's pyramid

↓02 Reed Watts Architects  
Commonweal Pods  
sleeping pods



#### architectural engagement

**The analysis of international examples shows that a comprehensive approach to planning can be found even at levels that meet minimum needs.**

A good spatial layout and a simple, but high-quality built environment has a positive influence on its users. Thoughtful, planned solutions provide modern, more durable, and more economically favourable circumstances. The role of the architect lies in how they can improve a given spatial situation or create a supportive built environment to meet the different levels of need, and how they can articulate the relations, hierarchies and qualities of the private and communal spaces of the individual, the institution and the environment.



←03 temporary accomodation for the  
homeless in Dózsa György street  
Budapest  
single bedroom

thesis 03

**emergency situations do not need emergency solutions**

**In order to provide meaningful architectural solutions to social projects in Hungary, the client's approach must change.**

Ad hoc solutions to needs are not enough, and the pursuit of the minimum is not compatible with thoughtfulness and quality architecture. People in need do not simply need physical housing, but social and supportive housing - which implies spaces that can accommodate it. Thoughtful design provides modern, more durable and more economical housing.

FIRMITAS  
UTILITAS  
VENUSTAS

**the rehabilitation of humans and buildings**

**The rehabilitation of the existing infrastructure has a major impact on an individual's motivation to reintegrate.**

Human and architectural rehabilitation are closely linked regarding the Hungarian context. With no homeless shelters built in the last thirty years and a significant majority of the existing building stock in a deteriorated state, there is an urgent need for a comprehensive approach to their rehabilitation. This has both positive and negative effects: individuals appreciate decent conditions and thus feel esteemed. A shelter that is in an outdated, dilapidated state does not inspire growth and progress, quite the contrary. Residents have serious interest in living in an environment that is supportive to their own rehabilitation.

The environment has complex effects on users, proposing some actions and suppressing others. An architecturally renewed building can be a first step in rehabilitation, with a positive impact on people's re-integration into society.



←04 Peter Barber Architects Ltd.  
Mount Pleasant homeless shelter  
London  
fitting in to the built environment

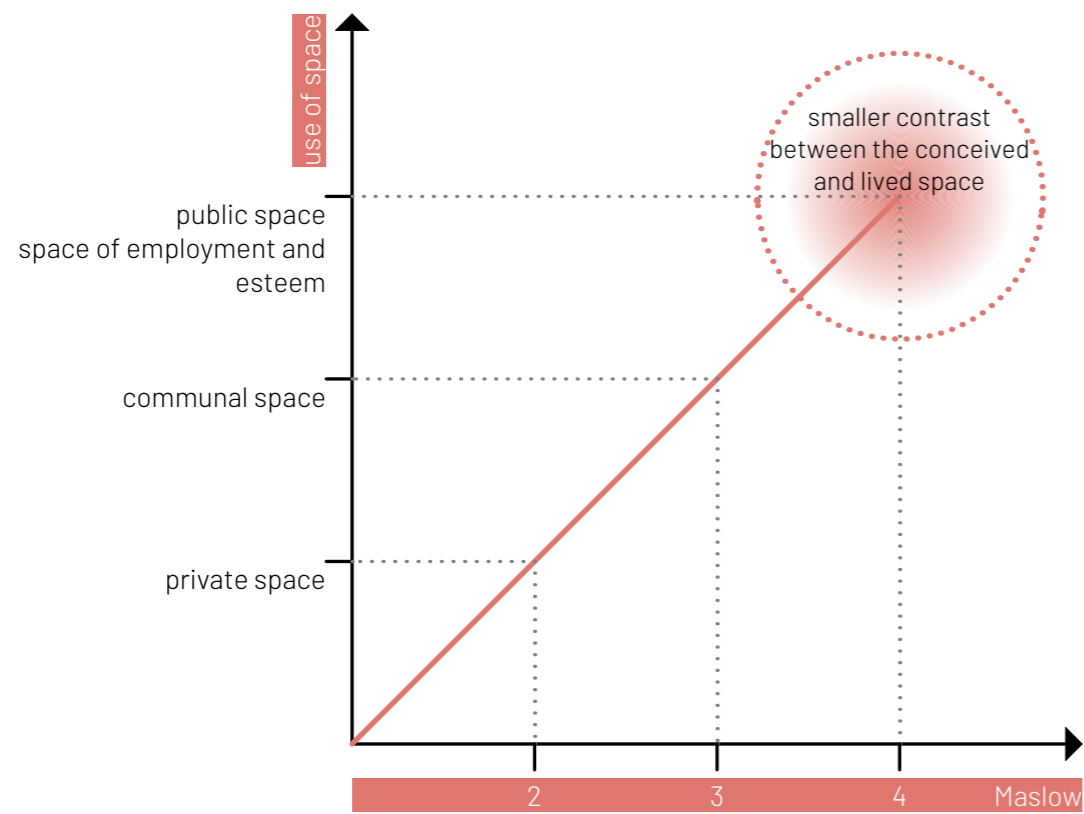
**the relation between the re-used building and the environment**

**A re-used building can convert the social attitude of society in a positive way.**

Perhaps the best indicator of the quality of the engagement of the state and society is the extent to which society is able to care for marginalised groups. Keeping and passing on old values represents an attitude to be followed in the eyes of the community. A new building tends to provoke stronger, more extreme opinions from the host environment.

While restoration significantly enhances the quality of the built environment, the rehabilitation of existing buildings also meets important sustainability and economic considerations.





↑05 the connection between the trialectics of spatiality and Maslow's pyramid

**the connection between the trialectics of spatiality and Maslow's pyramid**

**Social acceptance (the conceived space) affects the experience of the lived space. The role of the architect becomes very important in resolving the tension between the two - creating physical spaces can start a dialogue with society, which in turn has an impact on the individual experiencing homelessness.**

The analysed examples and the experience gained from the student competition have confirmed my assumption that the complexity of the problems of temporary homeless shelters goes beyond architecture, yet in most cases **we can use the concrete tools of architecture to contribute to the creation of spaces, which can help to break down the conflict between conceived and lived space.**

**As we move up on the steps of Maslow's pyramid, the link between the homeless individual and society is strengthened.**

**future desire**

**In Hungary, the rehabilitation of existing infrastructure seems to be a realistic objective.**

The solution may lie in conceptual transformations which, with due consideration, re-interpret the outdated use of space. In this context, human and architectural rehabilitation can be connected and can inspire the inhabitants of the renovated institution and also the host environment.

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