

DLA Theses booklet

The responsibility of an architect

The empathy based architecture and architectural education

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Introduction

*'People are the basis every piece of work...'*¹ (Diébédo Francis Kéré)

Architects pursue to achieve with their ability tangible results. At the same time these objects, which provide the protection against the vicissitudes of the outside world in the classic sense. But these objects have a more complex role than just the mechanical protection because its users have diverse personalities.

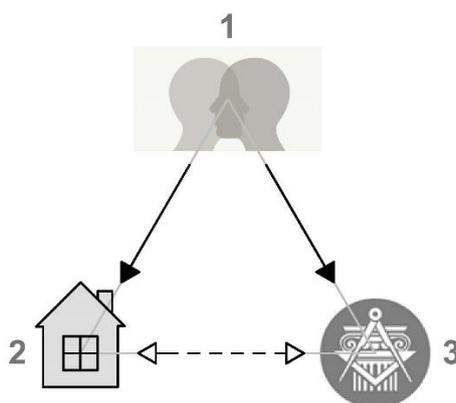
The feelings and senses of living and vivid people cannot be limited, they are strongly influenced by the built environment in which they are living. Architects real responsibility is rooted in this interaction which is difficult to identify. It cannot be quantified, it has no metrics. Nevertheless, it is an essential part of architecture. The basis of this dynamic relationship between architects and society is the empathy.

The empathy is the image of a personality transforming in social relationship, the system of interdependence of individuals which has come to the front of the egocentric, individualistic view at the turn of the millenium. It is gaining prominence in daily life, in architectural practice and in architectural education among Hungarian and international students as well. This gives topicality to the theme.

Empathy starts at the point where the individuum ends or at least the human relations come to the front in architecture. Therefore, in architecture houses should not be about their designers rather about their users, the community of people. To make it happen, the science of empathy helps, which can provide tools and methods to increase efficiency. Independently of the different architects' personalities and architectural approach the empathy based way of thought can be enforced.

I think developing empathy skill as a fun, enjoyable process. It's opportunity is given all around in everyday. It is useable, utilizable and consciously developing skill at the same time. It is all a matter of intention and creativity.

The main purpose of my research was to find and justify empathy in architecture and to draw attention to its importance in architectural education as a developable skill. This responsibility of architects is inevitable.



The structure of the dissertation and the relation among its parts
(1. Empathy; 2. Empathy in architecture; 3. Empathy in architectural education)

¹ <http://www.kere-architecture.com/> (05.10.2017)

Theses

1. Thesis

Empathic architecture is a collection of buildings that respond to people's physical and mental needs, which in the designer's approach, whether they have direct or indirect connection to the people, realize the empathic attitude or ultimately realize in the results.

This definition of empathic architecture is based the general knowledge of empathy.

Empathy is a complex psychological phenomenon, an experience in which we increasingly focus our attention to others while attempting to understand and dissolve the other without the whole process being conscious. That is, happening automatically. It follows that empathy is practicable and developable skill. Empathy is an important and determining component of our personality but it is not permanent. It depends on certain situations, persons who involved in it, or rather our relationship with them, our individual psychological conditions, our (life) experiences and our individual life situations. Empathy requires rich human relationships that enable empathy to be applied through the recognition and awareness of identity and difference.

2. Thesis

Empathy is part of the creative process of applied arts, such as architecture, because the designer is not the only participant in it. The piece of work as an object can improve users' empathy skill.

Architecture has not an end in itself, it serves people at all era. Its peculiar character stems from the balance of engineering rationality and artistic freedom. Engineering attitude and empathy seem to contradict each other but in architecture empathy might not be rooted in the relationship of these two. Architecture's artistic side is rather suitable for expressing and reacting to human emotions.

Works of art are needed basically because those are able to activate empathetic imagination. Arts are able to take the viewer on an imaginary journey, gaining an insight into a world completely different from theirs which may make them to act empathically. Although arts provide indirect experiences, they are still able to revive empathic skill.

Béla Buda,² related to stage and film directing which take the future viewer perspective into consideration, states: '*Empathy take part primarily in arts that require the involvement of many people or when behavioral achievement stands in the focus, that is required by direction.*'³ Even if the director finally brings to light their own experiences and thoughts. (In this context the director is the architect.)

Arts serve the most enjoyable and amusing way to acquire empathy skill. The viewer can feel and understand '*the difficulties, the pains and the pleasures of creation and expression*'.⁴ The different arts use different communication channels, thus, we are impressed in different ways by arts.

² Béla Buda: doctor, psychologist, psychiatrist, addictologist.

³ Béla, BUDA, *Empátia*, (Budapest: Urbis Könyvkiadó, 2006), pp. 273-274.

⁴ Béla, BUDA, *Empátia*, (Budapest: Urbis Könyvkiadó, 2006), p. 276.

3. Thesis

Based on my research, it can be stated that the students of architecture have an average level of empathy skill. Despite the fact that they will have a huge impact on people's quality of life through their later professional work for designing people's environment.

At the beginning of my research, I was eager to know how students of architecture are changed their empathy skills as their professional knowledge grows. I initially thought of an architecture specific test for measuring this. Later I discarded this idea. As empathy has a much comprehensive general meaning. In this way, students' general empathy quotient is measurable. For that it is available several standardized tests on this specialization in Hungarian as well. I chose a self-filled test due to their ease of use, even in a case of large number of participants. The chosen test was Empathy Quotient test by Simon Baron-Cohen.⁵ I did the fill of the test with the students of architecture on I-IV. year at the Faculty of Architecture at the Budapest University of Technology and Economics in the 10th and 11th weeks of the spring semester in the 2017-2018 school year (between 16.04.2018-26.04.2018). During this period, I found that students, apart from a few exceptions, were very enthusiastic and interested in filling the test.

4. Thesis

Empathy is a subtle means for arousing interest, formulating criticism or comments and persuading because communication which is not emphasized by words accomplishes its purpose more effectively than direct communication. Therefore, empathic skill is at least as important as professional competence in architectural education practice.

Verbal communication has a leading role in architectural education but at the same time the importance of non-verbal communication is also great. Thus, this latter channel through empathy the conscious application of signals, opens up new opportunities and educational methods. Furthermore, empathy contributes a finer, more sophisticated, humane communication between student and their instructor. As an instructor has not just an explanatory and interpretive role, but also they can understand from student's behavior where and how they can assist.

Good communication is based on a sense of personality, naturalness, credibility and perceptible consistency of verbal and non-verbal signals. Their impact on students is similar to the impact of architects on built environment. Therefore, the proper atmosphere has a great importance in architectural education where all of these can be realized all at once.

⁵ EQ (Empathy Quotient) test by Simon Baron-Cohen was translated to Hungarian by Rozália Eszter Ivády. Test can be found: Simon, BARON-COHEN, *Elemi különbség. Férfiak, nők és a szélsőséges férfiagy*, (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2006), pp. 256-259.

5. Thesis

Non-verbal communication, as a part of empathy, plays an increasing role in coping with cultural differences and the loss of motivation stemming from language difficulties in international training by facilitating communication and helping students achieve better results.

The instructor, who has the proper openness, has the opportunity to understand their student, practically through changing their perspective. This identification process provides the experience of joint work for the student. (Which is expressed in acceptance and togetherness, creating a peculiar communication. This method is widely spread in Eastern cultures.)⁶

Abstract

The thesis intends to deal with the human side of architecture. The basis empathy dates back to the 18th century, but it really began to flourish in the second half of the 20th century and spread widely by the turn of the millennium.

The dissertation is about the novel approach to the duality of empathy and architecture and the examination of the dynamic relationship between designers and building users. Based on the basics of empathy, I attempt to define the empathic architecture in a definitive way. Then, I demonstrate the practical applicability of empathy in architecture through the analysis of contemporary architectural examples and their designers. Apart from the different architects' personalities the empathy can be enforced by them. Which can be manifested in their final works and during the creative process as well, while the architects own characteristics can be recognized.

In terms of empathy I examine the position of architecture as an applied art in arts. While the arts themselves are able to develop the empathic ability as well.

Empathy is an innate ability of human which in the verbal communication based Western societies is strongly pushed into the background and its development is hindered by numerous factors. However, empathy as an ability can be developed, thus its application is a recommended method in architectural education. As part of the research at the Faculty of Architecture at Budapest University of Technology and Economics I measured the Empathy Quotient of I-IV year students' who will be the designers of our later built environment.

The most important aim of my research was to find and prove the *raison d'être* of empathy in architecture and to draw attention to empathy's importance as a development ability in architectural education. This responsibility of architects is inevitable.

⁶ Béla, BUDA, *Empátia*, (Budapest: Urbis Könyvkiadó, 2006), pp. 50-51.

Description of the masterpiece

Dénes Kemény Sports Swimming Pool in Miskolc, Interior Design

Interior design partners: Balázs Balogh (1/3), Bence Balogh (1/3)

Architectural design: Keletterv Kft. (Kováts András)

Designed in 2007-2008.

Constructed in 2008-2009.

The building lies on the side of the road which leads to Miskolctapolca, on the campus of University of Miskolc, not so far from the city center.

The swimming pool was built for the inhabitants in Miskolc and its suburb. The building is well-equipped, it is suitable for organising international and national competitions in it. The swimming pool was built for athletes both amateurs and racers, and for both swimmers and water-polo players.

The two masses of the building contain 7,000 sqm used area. The 50x25 m large race pool and the 10x25 m warm-up/training pool (its depth between 0.7 – 1.4 m) are in the bigger mass. The connecting smaller mass contains the grandstand (for 500 persons) and below that the changing rooms, lavatories and shops. On its upper floors can be found further lavatories, press and vip grandstand, meeting room, offices, fitness and multifunctional rooms.

Public spaces, which were sited on three levels, was the object of the interior design. The interior design concept was inspired by the architectural concept. According to it the main hall is bounded by an artificial lake as a natural fence. The terrain staircase on the north side of the building is a highlighted place for community life. The oblique bigger mass, which sinks into nature, tilts to the longitudinal mass, which rises up from the nature.

The visual effect of the external landscape was a key aspect of the design idea. Therefore the building was sited on a former sportsground, keeping the existing plants. It is always great value if a building is surrounded by not only sprouts but also mature vegetation. This is the harmony of nature and architecture.

The opposite of the outside natural environment is the artificial inside world in where the external wood panelling almost bump into the inner swimming pools and surrounds them, then finally it rises to the vertical surfaces of the service zone. This continuity establish the unity between inside and outside visually.

The use of the wooden imitated panel covering in a rather dark shade of colour is less common in swimming halls. In this case it was made possible by the high degree of natural light of the interior. Through the large transparent surfaces the outside sight was framed and it is transformed into an experience itself. In addition to this, the lightness inside has a positive psychological effect on doing sports people. Thanks to the lack of the natural light in changing rooms, there the light-coloured dominates but on its mass outer vertical surface is covered by the above mentioned wooden imitated panel. This covering gives the sense of naturalness and radiates warmth into the rigid 'bluish' world of swimming pools.

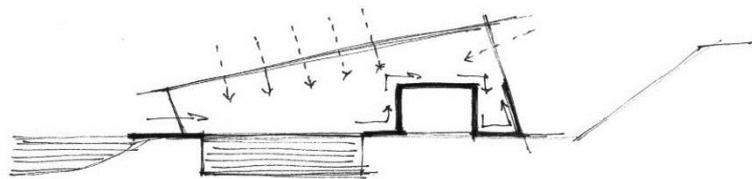
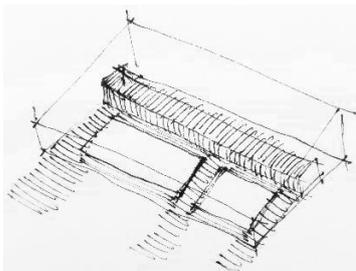
The grandstand is a characteristic part of the building which design is absolute neutral. Showing the pools priority inside the building. During the design process we kept in mind its maintainability and the resistant against fans activities. Therefore, both the floor and the walls are made of polished concrete. The seats neutral colour is changed by vivid fans diversity.

We basically stroved to embrace the architectural idea into our interior design idea and to create a more humane enviroment for the building's users. For this reason we concentrated on some psychological aspects that can positively influence people's well-being and unnoticeably make them happier and satisfied.

Our interior design intent was guided by principles such as avoiding the feeling of overcrowding, creating bright spaces using natural light which gives spacious effect. That is why we dared to choose darker shade in the main hall for covering that provides the feeling of warmth. From inside, through the large glass surfaces the exterior's picturesque natural sight is framed. So we had not to create anything that could disturb or distract one's attetion from these feelings. The easy view controll over the main hall provides sense of securtity for visitors, whether they come for doing sports or they are fans. In this way they can dissolve quickly in the atmosphere of the swimming pool.

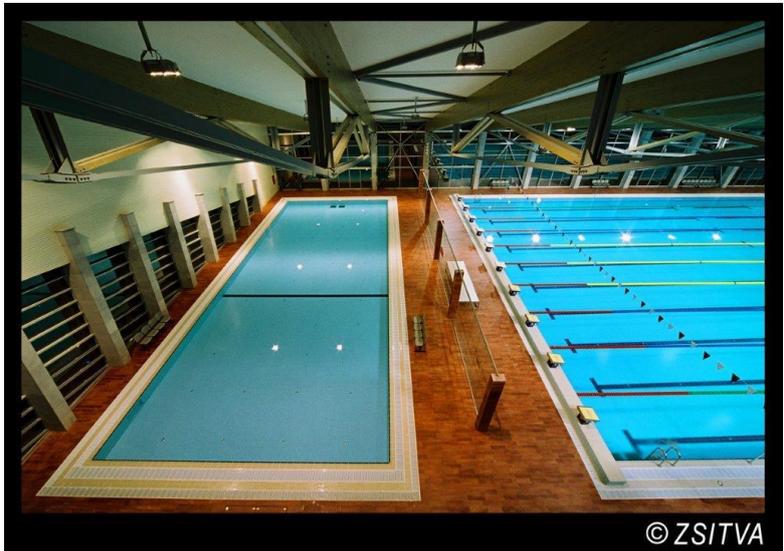
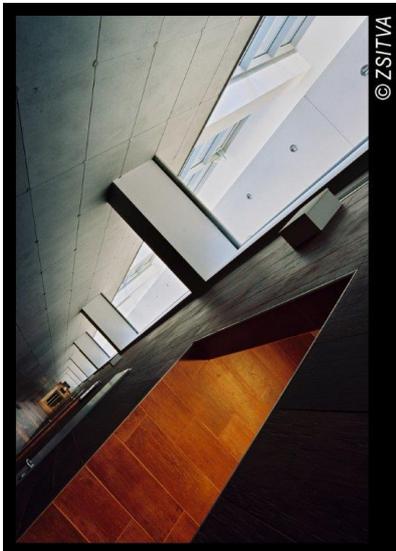
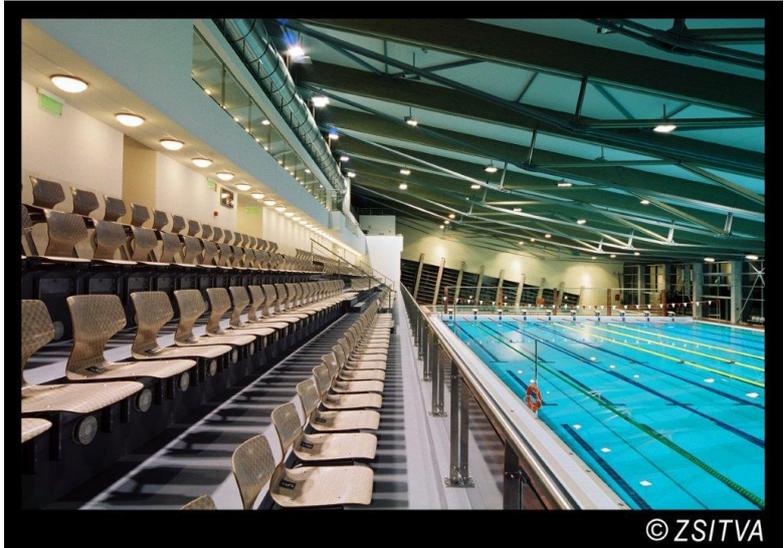
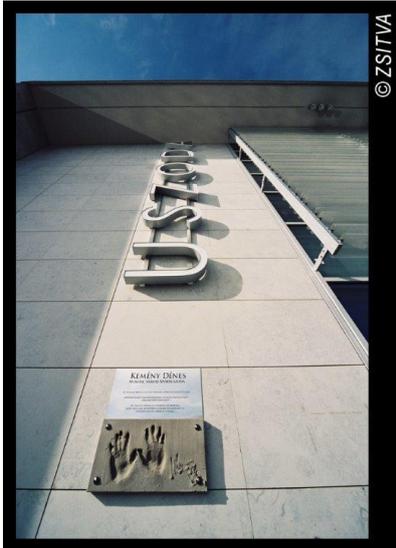
We wanted to ensure people's well-being through the consideration of these psíchological aspects in the interior design of the swimming pool. Aware of this we dared to design an unusual atmosphere instead of the usual blue, white or ocasionaly sand or beige. Thanks to the trust, the appropriate architectural designer and client approvals, the planned design could be realized.

The building, which had long been named City Sports Swimming Pool project, was named after Dénes Kemény who was the federal captain of the Hungarian men's water-polo team which won their third Olimpik gold medal in 2008. Once the legendary captain had a declaration, which reflected well the new kind of empathetic approach of the 21st century: *'The most important 'secret' is that only the leader can count on followers, who approaches with love to their team members, pays attetion to them, take care of them and able to understand them.'*⁷ (Dénes Kemény)



Interior design sketches, Balogh Balázs Építésziroda.

⁷ Judit, ENDREI, *Kemény üzenetek*, (Endrei Könyvek Kiadó, 2011), p. 179.



The use of the pictures with the consent of executive architect András Kovács.