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ORIGINAL RESEARCH
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Urban integration of an Oldtown district at-risk of segregation in Dombóvár

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ABSTRACT

The urban structure of Dombóvár has been transformed in recent centuries, and the protected buildings that once defined the town center, have been relegated to the periphery. Today, despite its rich architectural heritage, the Kakasdomb district is an area at risk of segregation. The key to the integration of the district into the existing urban tissue is the utilization of the protected buildings of the area including the former synagogue building. This paper examines the possibilities for the reuse of the synagogue based on the town development strategy and the perceptions of the remaining Jewish community, and the systematic modification of the settlement structure, together with the possibilities for the integration of the neighborhood.

KEYWORDS

utilization, urban integration, Jewish heritage, spatial design, building design

1. INTRODUCTION

The research focuses on the urban integration of the Kakasdomb district of Dombóvár, and the reuse of the synagogue located in the area. From the 17th century onwards, the Kakasdomb district was a significant part of the town center. It was connected to the main urban transport hubs, churches, and public squares. The Dombóvár dairy, the Korona Hotel and the synagogue were also built in this area, but despite their status as historical built heritage, they are in a poor condition and are no longer in use (Fig. 1).

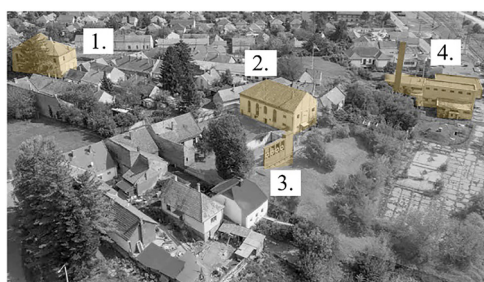
Over the last century, the transformation of the urban structure has weakened the link between the urban fabric and the Kakasdomb district (Figs 2 and 3). The neighborhood, with its valuable built heritage, has been relegated to the periphery of the town and is now considered as an area at risk of segregation [1]. The objective of this study is to establish an urbanistic and architectural link between the Kakasdomb neighborhood and the vital urban fabric of Dombóvár, in addition to define a diverse proposal for the reuse of the synagogue building by a functional program that meets the needs of wider groups of the society.

1.1. The main building historical stages of the synagogue and its narrow surroundings

The present synagogue is the second known synagogue in the history of Dombóvár, the construction of which was initiated in 1885 by the local Jewish. After the Second World War, the remaining Jewish community was among the first in Hungary to establish a memorial to the victims of the Holocaust [2]. The memorial was built a few meters from the synagogue,

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1: former Korona Hotel
2: former Synagogue
3: Holocaust memorial
4: former dairy

Fig. 1. Protected buildings of Kakas Hill district (source: Kata Varjú)

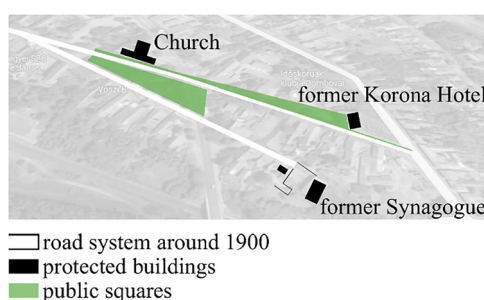


Fig. 2. Changes on urban structure, the urban system around 1900 (source: Kata Varjú)

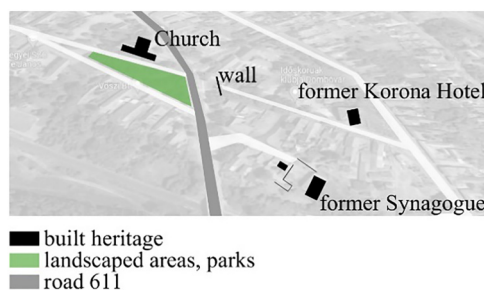


Fig. 3. Changes on urban structure, the urban system today (source: Kata Varjú)

facing west. The four large Stars of David on the memorial together with the rich ornamentation of the synagogue represented a significant architectural value. Historical records indicate that the building was used as a synagogue until 1963 (Fig. 4). The declining Jewish community became unable to maintain the building, which was initially privately owned and, as the paintings on the façade show today, was used as a furniture store and warehouse [3]. Presumably, the delated façade that gave the building its synagogue character were removed during this period: the lizenas that gave the main façade its vertical division are still visible, but the quatrefoils on them have been destroyed, as have the characteristic stepped gable wall, the arched entrance and window openings. At the same time as it was taken into private

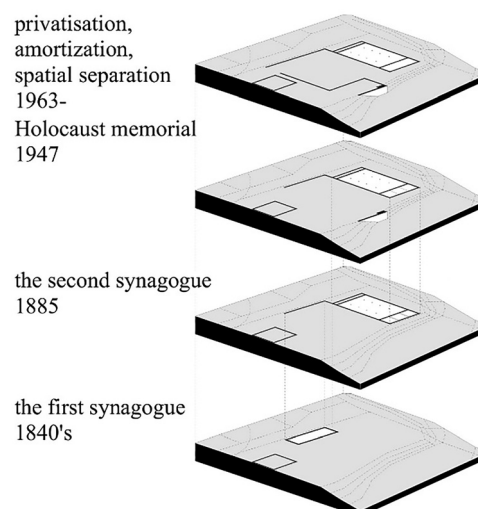


Fig. 4. Changes on urban structure, the urban system today (source: Kata Varjú)

ownership, a wall about 2 m high was built around the site, destroying the spatial link between the synagogue and the monument. In 2008, the building became the property of the Municipality of Dombóvár and was listed as the part of the national architectural heritage, and the reconstruction plan was completed in 2009 [4].

1.2. Historical, urbanistic, and religious significance of the synagogue

According to the heritage protection recommendation not only the former synagogue, but also the surrounding garden and the Holocaust Memorial are part of the built heritage [3]. This fact limits the reuse of the site but can reinforce the coexistence of the existing religious role and new cultural functions through appropriate spatial structuring.

Despite its degraded condition, the enclosed garden around the building and the hermetically sealed memorial still serves as the site for a nationwide Jewish Holocaust commemoration on the last Sunday in June each year, and is very popular among members of the Jewish community.

The building is currently of importance only to a narrow social group, which needs to be changed in order to promote urban integration and the widest possible use of the building. However, even in its current state, without any functional reorganization or spatial connections, the building is still a key urbanistic point of Dombóvár: coming from Pécs, arriving in the town via a viaduct, under which a railway passes. The building and the Holocaust memorial stand at the highest and most representative point of the hill, meaning that the building can be seen as the “town gate” of Dombóvár from an urbanistic point of view.

2. METHODOLOGISTS

The research is based on the analysis of the urban development strategies of the last decade and the integration of



the theoretical and historical background of the synagogue, thus creating an optimized proposal for its use, in line with the heritage protection recommendation. This paper proposes, as a first step in the cultural use of the Kakasdomb district, the reuse of the synagogue in Dombóvár and the creation of a link between the protected buildings of the district, according to the following criteria:

2.1. Reorganization of space walls and boundaries – creating a link between the segregated area and the urban structure of Dombóvár

Following the construction of road 611, the once coherent public space system split into two parts and the road separated the Kakasdomb district from the urban fabric. Urban changes have led to the disconnection between the two parts of the town. The present study proposes to reconnect the once coherent public spaces (Fig. 5) by removing the spatial elements that hindered the connection, creating pedestrian crossings, reorganizing the public spaces and installing public furniture with the same characteristics in both parts. The regularization of the area and the identical urban design has the potential to attract citizens to areas that are currently underused.

2.2. Recovery of underused urban spaces – creating circulation spaces to connect protected historical buildings

The redevelopment of the disused urban spaces and the creation of pedestrian paths in the Kakasdomb district will create links between the reused built heritage. Circulation spaces will encourage spending time in the district and provide opportunities for recreational activities. When redesigning public spaces, it is necessary to define the public space connections between buildings, the landscaped areas and the new circulation axes (Fig. 6).

2.3. Creating functional diversity – coherence of sacral and cultural functions

According to the urban development strategy of the Municipality of Dombóvár, published in 2008 [1], one of its main objectives is to promote social regeneration, for which the use of the protected buildings in the historic part of the

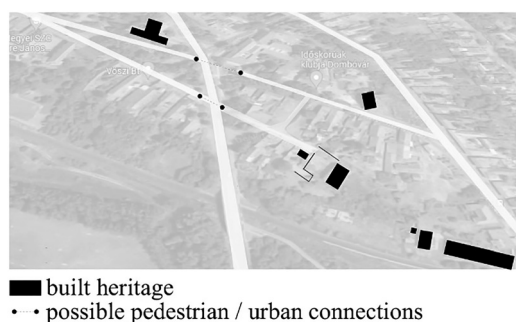


Fig. 5. Urban points of interconnection (source: Kata Varjú)

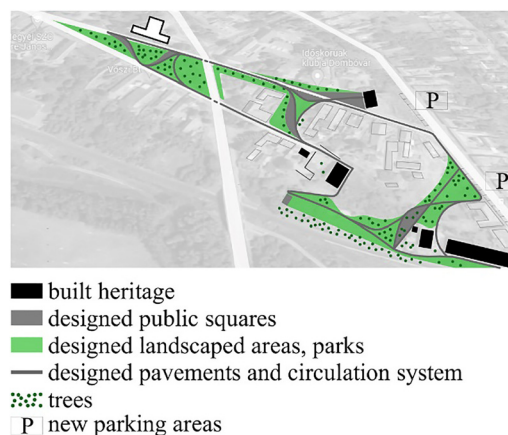


Fig. 6. Designed urban circulation system (source: Kata Varjú)

town is essential. As part of this target, the historic reconstruction of the former synagogue and the creation of an art gallery in its interior were formulated.

The Integrated Urban Development Strategy, published in July 2015 [5], takes a similar approach to the need to develop the district. The development strategy bases the need for development on three main deficiencies: underutilized heritage buildings, lack of functional compactness and integration of a neighborhood at risk of segregation, but the strategy does not define the methods and tools for achieving the development objectives. The development concept also includes a functional proposal for the former synagogue building: as the 'House of Reconciliation', which would showcase the massive destructions and persecutions in world history.

Both development strategies suggest the utilization of heritage buildings, but the functional proposals only allow for a certain activity, which makes the sustainability of the buildings questionable: the limited function programs leave the reused buildings with less cultural content than they could accommodate. A mono-functional program allows fewer events to be organized and therefore reaches a smaller group of the local population and society. It is also visible that the development strategies ignore the current sacral significance of the synagogue and do not address the issue of urban integration and the management of public spaces. A recent study [6] has shown that the reconstruction of the built heritage is relevant to social development on several levels: in addition to poverty alleviation and reducing segregation, reconstruction is particularly effective in helping society to come to terms with historical tragedies and war losses, as relevant in the case of the synagogue of Dombóvár and the remaining local Jewish community.

The present study provides an extended proposal for cultural use, in which the synagogue's internal flexible spaces are adapted to a range of community activities. Sensitive structural modifications in the exterior spaces create an intimate space in front of the Holocaust memorial, while the garden surrounding the synagogue allows for an extension of the cultural functions of the building's interior (Fig. 7).

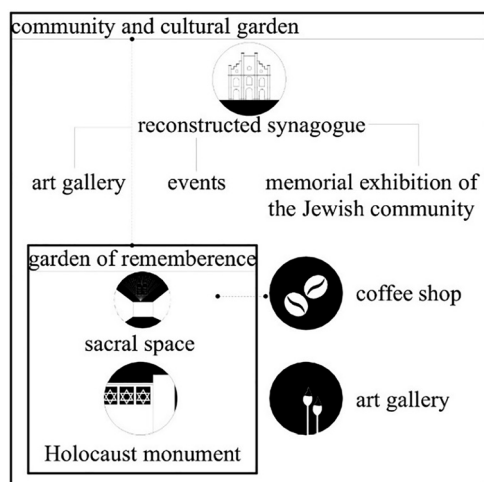
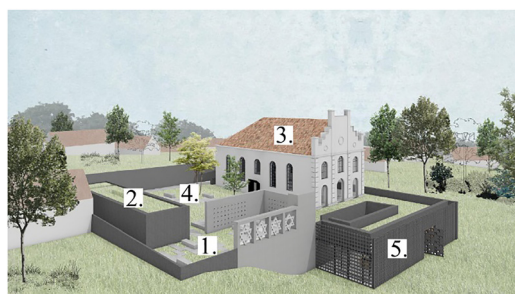


Fig. 7. Functional program (source: Kata Varjú)

The modification of the exterior space system will make the monument accessible, but the two differently dedicated exterior spaces will remain separate. The new building masses will serve the cultural functions and create space for additional activities and facilities (Fig. 8). The opening of the existing enclosed courtyard will create a connection to public spaces and pedestrian circulation.

When designing new buildings in historical context, efforts should be made to create harmony between old and new buildings, while ensuring that the new building does not detract the value of the historic building and site. New structures should be designed according to the technological and material requirements of the current age [7]. In the case of the synagogue in Dombóvár, the placement of the new building masses primarily solves the problems of the current spatial organization. The solid, clean forms contrast with the rich ornamentation on the façade, but the sensitive installation creates a harmonious composition. The café building blends into the existing built context, appearing as a “thickened wall”, while the top of the art workshop building creates a representative foreground in front of the synagogue. Overall, the new buildings respect the old built



1. garden of Martyrs
2. coffee shop
3. reconstructed, utilized synagogue
4. cultural garden
5. art workshop

Fig. 8. The new functional arrangement (source: Kata Varjú)

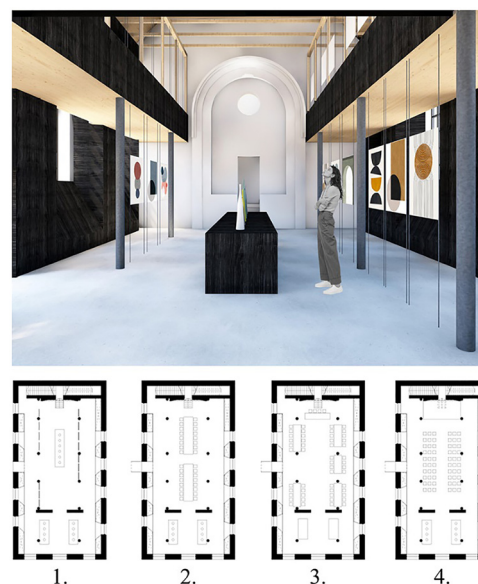
heritage, covertly tidying up the existing spatial anomalies and creating the infrastructural conditions for new functions.

The interior space structure of the redesigned synagogue using contemporary interior design tools, and the resulting free floor plan provides the opportunity to organize events of different scales and themes (Fig. 9). The various themed events will make the building more versatile, allowing it to be used for events organized not only by the municipality, but also by private individuals or companies. This generates an economic benefit, which helps to ensure the return on the investment and the maintenance of the buildings. In addition to the reorganization of the interior space structure, this study proposes the reconstruction of the destroyed façade ornamentation in accordance with the heritage protection recommendation [3].

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The general conclusion of the research is if the urban development strategy is aimed at reducing segregation and promoting social development, it is not sufficient to address the problems of the neighborhood in a selective way. The use of a particular building is creating an enclosure within a segregated area, so that the impact of the development in reducing segregation is not significant. On this basis, an extension of the point action areas for districts at-risk of segregation is necessary.

It is necessary to connect and integrate the at-risk urban area and the vital urban fabric by modifying existing



1. art gallery, exhibition
2. event hall for family events - 32 seats
3. event hall for weddings/company events - 60 seats
4. concerts/lectures/performance - up to 200 person

Fig. 9. Variations of use – multifunctional interior spaces (source: Kata Varjú)

urban links, transport axes or, where appropriate, creating new ones.

Secondly, the pedestrian and vehicular transport system in the area needs to be examined and underused public spaces to be defined, where it is possible to create quality recreational urban platforms that encourage the town's population to spend time in the area.

Thirdly, there is a need to map the building stock and define heritage buildings that can accommodate community/cultural functions. The formulation of a proposal for use should consider a combination of the following aspects:

1. economic return;
2. creation of functional diversity and functional compactness;
3. creation of quality architectural spaces;
4. increasing usability;
5. creating multifunctional interiors;
6. flexibility – possibility of holding events not specified in the use proposal.

Fourthly, it is necessary to create circulation spaces between the buildings used, to be designed in conjunction with the use of the remaining urban spaces.

It is important to note that these design aspects have an impact on each other, so that their implementation needs to be combined to mitigate and control the process of segregation.

The architectural design proposal for the systematic modifications summarizes the results of the research, which will make the Kakasdomb district attractive, livable, with usable public spaces for the citizens, contributing to social well-being and regeneration. The spaces, buildings and features in the plan will also add value to the overall urban fabric. The reconstruction and reuse of the historical buildings will also create tourism value, which will provide a source of revenue for the town. The spatial redevelopment and functional reuse of the synagogue will create a worthy and representative religious memorial and cultural hub that can meet the needs of the widest possible range of the inhabitants.

4. SUMMARY

The research defines the integration of an area at risk of segregation into the urban system at several levels. By opening up urban connections, a link is created between the two districts, making the Kakasdomb district easily accessible. The redevelopment and reorganization of disused spaces will create a suitable environment for recreational and cultural activities. The appropriate use of protected

buildings will create functional density in the area. The design of the functional program of the buildings should aim to increase their usability, and therefore create flexible and versatile interior and exterior spaces. In the case of the reuse of the synagogue building, it is essential to respect its past and present religious significance. Overall, the results of the research show that the creation of urban connections, public circulation between the buildings and the functional program proposals to ensure the versatility of cultural activities are all necessary for the urban integration both the district and the synagogue building.

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