

HISTORY

As the second industrial revolution was creeping across the area of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, heavy industry began to flourish. Both the railways appearing as a result of transport modernization as well as the energy demand and mines of factories such as the Rimamurány-Salgótarján iron mill required a myriad of labourers and hundreds of thousands of coal every year. The possession of fossil fuels and their quickest and most efficient mining could mean a situational advantage in the world market - as it can today as well. The issue of housing was resolved by building new mining towns. Such mining towns were founded all over the country, often based on simple schemes, complete with public facilities and houses for both engineers and labourers. These communities were either parts of larger towns or individual towns on their own.

Both World Wars, but the second one in particular, altered not only Europe's political map, but also its social structure. The industrial mass production generated by the wars absorbed a significant number of unskilled workers, which changed the life of the Roma, who lead a nomadic lifestyle and with whom vacancies in jobs with labour shortages were filled, for good. Traditional Roma communities were eradicated by the so-called Porajmos (the "Romani Holocaust") during the Second World War and the assimilation efforts of the Hungarian People's Republic, which was under the influence of the Soviet Union. Roma people, most of whom were unskilled, worked in socialist mass production in large numbers. For the government's aggressive assimilationist attitude they were compensated by secure jobs and bright, albeit limited prospects. As a result, the living standard of the masses working in mines and heavy industry started to improve.

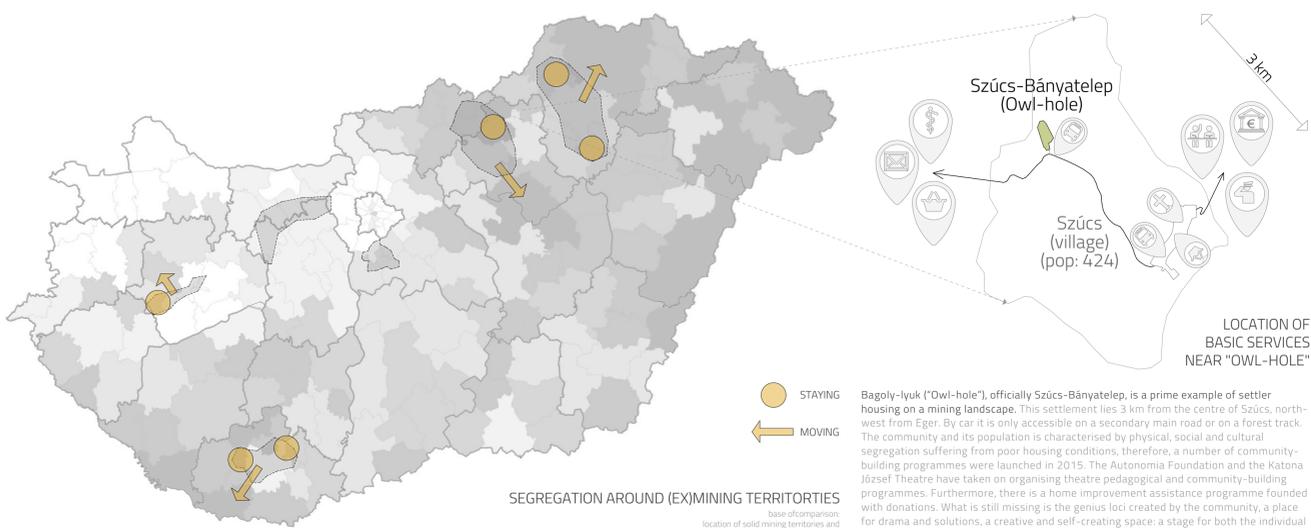
However, this loss-making industry was ejected by market economy and the Soviet Union could not keep up with its rivals. This led to the end of communism in Hungary with the Soviet troops leaving the country in 1990. There was a shift in power relations: big state-owned enterprises crumbled up in the blink of an eye during the privatization process of the wild capitalism. As a result, mines, mills and producers of the heavy industry shut down, and otherwise unskilled labourers, miners and industry workers found themselves out of a job. Members of the mining community were informed or retained in time, so many of them still suffer from the consequences of this rapid economic change. Feeling nostalgic and deeming the situation temporary, miners did not give up hope that the mines would one day reopen, which set back general social mobility.

The disappearance of the main employer and the sudden redundancy of the services connected to it lead to a stalemate: there were no alternative job opportunities left on arable land either in agriculture or in forest management. Thus, those who had lost their jobs had a good reason to feel tricked, but other than being appalled, there was nothing else for them to do. Those who could leave left the mining towns to find a job elsewhere. Their old homes were occupied by more and more prostrate people.

And so the process of segregating these towns began. In Hungary, as well as in all other countries of the Carpathian Basin, Roma people constitute a sizeable minority. Even though some of them have been living in the area since the 16th century, they have been often scapegoated by mainstream society in times of hardship. A large proportion of the Roma living near the mining communities have been stuck in their segregated lives under conditions unworthy of human beings. The government has not offered any viable solutions yet, nor has it taken the opinion of the communities into consideration. Roma policy has become theoretical and the social welfare system favours the upper-middle class. The activists of different foundations and civil society organisations have been trying to replace central coordination. Thus, efficiency has decreased and the holes of the social safety net have grown.

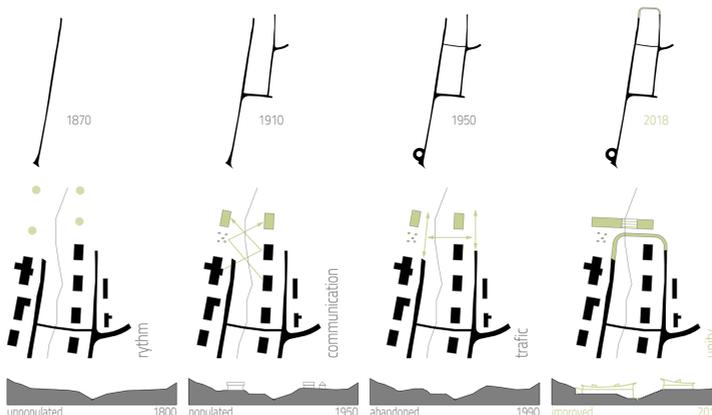


REGIONAL CONTEXT AND LOCATION

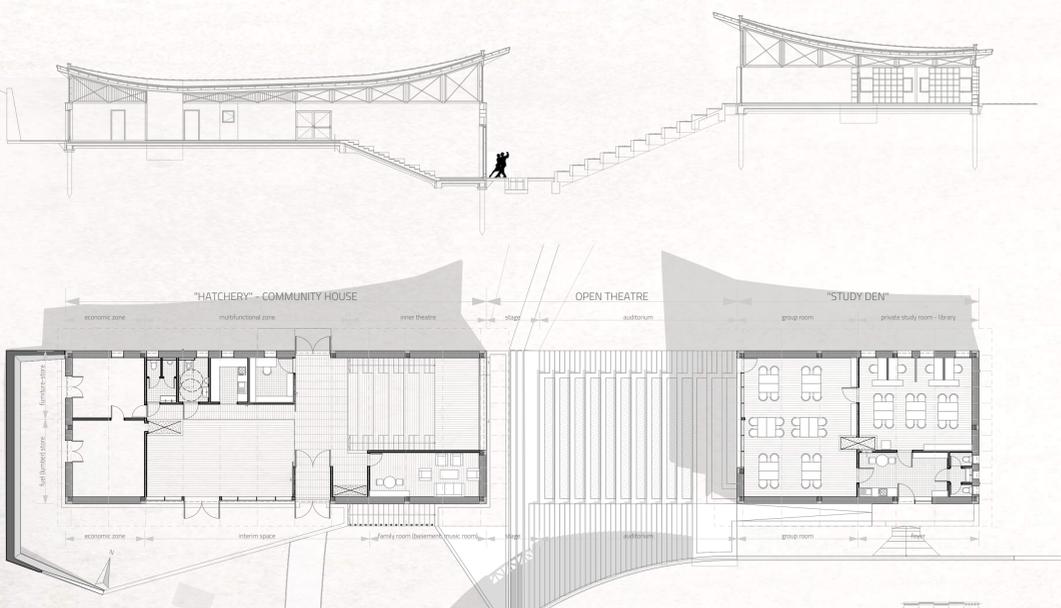


I have found the settling rhythm of the 1910s the most suitable to use, as, due to the demolished annexes here, the area to be built up covers the design area. Throughout the whole design process I gave communication of all kinds high priority. It is not only about communication occurring during the local soft intervention, but also about the desire to create buildings interacting with both each other and with natural assets. The expansion of the transport connection is missing, and thus, will be vital as soon as the construction has been completed. A passageway between the built and the natural environment is formed: the entrance to Bagolyvár ("Owl Castle"). There must be room for the demands of various areas, such as individual development, group activities, community development, drama pedagogy, community culture, microeconomy and the storage of goods.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES



KEY SOLUTIONS



ABOUT THE SETTLING

The east-west building axis stretching between Petőfi Sándor and Május 1 streets and the north-south axis by the Laskó creek create a simple situation. The streets now abut, the town has got a new scenic wall, and the police camera at the southern gate now has a "pleasant background". The new bridge follows the events of the public space and leads guests to the ultimate gate motif. The play sways along the span of village-accommodation-playground-hatchery-study den-forest. The former canteen, then accommodation, then school and community centre returns to one its earlier functions: it becomes a place of accommodation with a kitchen, serving as a source of income for the community as a retirement home and a tourist house. Western European experiments prove that the spaces of the young and the elderly, the accommodation and the playground/Hatchery can be physically connected. The Hatchery as a multifunctional public space will be wide open to the village. It can be used for economic purposes, for meeting basic demands, and for unlimited public needs: it can become everything from a crèche to a theatre, from a wedding venue to a cinema. It opens up to the stage. The creek can now be crossed and thus both buildings gain inner, yet open facades. The forum butts up against the slope of the valley as the bridge and the forest serve as a background to it from the south and the north, respectively. The Study Den is a bit more hidden, a bit more embedded, and a bit more quiet. It is the perfect place to brood and to do the constructive thinking one cannot do anywhere else. It is only the group study room that has a connection with the new community areas, as the library/individual study room turns to the forest for some peace and quiet. It turns to the forest where the Laskó creek springs and where building hiking trails and forest roads would be highly beneficial.

HATCHERY

It is a community house which hosts organised community programmes but also accommodates itself to various spontaneous needs. It can be used during school holidays, or by the elderly looking after children, by women opening a sewing workshop, by young people for their music lessons, for distributing new pieces of furniture or firewood...

THEATRE

It is a place connecting the "all-time opposite sides": rather than putting them in opposition to each other, it connects and unites individual and communal development. It provides a scene for the dramatic elements of a solution process: it is the "theatre of the underprivileged". It multiplies its own applicability and playfulness.

STUDY DEN

The Tanodú ("Study Den") is a place for individual development. It is perfect for study groups and thematic activities, but also for those who need a place to study alone and undisturbed, as it is separated and thus provides the peace and quiet of a library.



ARCHITECTURE OF THE ABANDONED

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