

Protestant Space-Continuity. Architectural–Structural–Liturgical Coherences of the Hungarian Protestant Church Architecture in the 20th Century

La continuidad del espacio protestante. Coherencias litúrgico-arquitectónico-estructurales de la arquitectura religiosa protestante húngara del siglo XX

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ABSTRACT

Intensive efforts started in the last decades to get to know the Central and Eastern European and the Hungarian church architecture. In this historically depressed period (1920/1945/1989), church buildings were important identity forming potencies in the life of the Protestant communities newly emerged by the rearrangement of country's borders. The modern architectural principles, the structural and liturgical questions gave opportunity for continuous experimentations in the examined period, which resulted a centralizing tendency between the two world wars.

Analysing the Protestant space organization, it is verifiable that these centralizing tendencies with identification character did not pull out from the de-emphasizing church architecture in spite of the historical–political events of World War II. The primary importance of the study is the holistic examination of the Protestant church architecture of the 20th century. The study shows the Protestant Church activity of the period through the two most significant denominations —the Calvinist and the Lutheran church architecture—, thereby providing a typological approach.

KEYWORDS

Church Architecture, Protestant Typology, Modern Architecture, Centralised Plan, Hungary.

RESUMEN

En las últimas décadas se han comenzado a hacer intensos esfuerzos para conocer la arquitectura religiosa de la Europa central y oriental, y más en concreto, húngara. En un período históricamente depresivo como 1920/1945/1989, los edificios eclesiales fueron hitos importantes para la creación de una identidad en la vida de las comunidades protestantes, renacidas tras el reordenamiento de las fronteras del país. Los principios arquitectónicos modernos y las cuestiones estructurales y litúrgicas posibilitaron continuas experimentaciones en el período examinado, que generaron una tendencia centralizadora entre las dos guerras mundiales.

Analizando la organización del espacio protestante, se puede comprobar cómo estas tendencias centralizadoras con carácter identitario se mantuvieron en la arquitectura eclesial a pesar de los acontecimientos histórico-políticos de la Segunda Guerra Mundial. La importancia primordial del estudio es el examen holístico de la arquitectura eclesial protestante del siglo XX. El estudio muestra la actividad de las Iglesias protestantes del período a través de las dos denominaciones más significativas —la calvinista y la luterana—, proporcionando así un enfoque tipológico.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Arquitectura religiosa, tipología protestante, arquitectura moderna, planta central, Hungría.

THE HUNGARIAN PROTESTANT CHURCH ARCHITECTURE IN THE INTERNATIONAL REFERENCE SYSTEM

The examination of the 20th century protestant church architecture partly requires, for the sake of the complex discussion, the appointment of the period lines, which, in our case, necessarily overlap or adjust to the historical events (WWI/WWII/change of the regime). At the beginning of the century till the WWI essentially those church architectural tendencies were the dominant by the protestant churches in Middle East Europe, and also in Hungary, which were evolved in the 19th century. The liturgical and theoretical changes on the German speech areas, which areas can be consider as the crib of the Protestantism, made an impression on the space forming of the church types in the 20th century.

The demand for the creation of the central and centralised church space – which spread by the work of Leonhard Christoph Sturm, protestant church architectural theorist, architecture and mathematician at the beginning of the 18th century (Sturm 1712; Sturm 1718) – decreased in the 19th century by the newly emerging architectural principles, but between the two world wars it can be appraisable again as a source. Sturm collected and organized those church plans in his work published in 1712, which he considered more or less proper for the building of protestant churches (Krähling and Nagy 2009; Friedrich 1944). The adaptations of the plans presented by Sturm can be traceable in the 20th century Hungarian protestant church architecture (Vukoszávlyev 2012).

The introduction of the Eisenach Regulativ (1861) caused a caesura in the history of the centralised protestant churches, and that effected the rejection of the type of the hall churches with balcony, the so-called «Predigtkirche», which were in relation with the traditions of the centralised profane buildings like the theatre architecture (Krähling 2008). The architectural rules of the Eisenach Regulativ brought a change in the planning of the protestant churches by the appraisal of the medieval architecture instead of the former variously planned, centralised churches (Róka 1996). The weakening of the Eisenach Regulativ can be noticed during the last decades of the 19th

century, which led to the development of the newer principles, like the Wiesbaden program in 1891, and the church architectural congress in Berlin in 1894.

By contrast with it, Frigyes Schulek, and following him, Samu Pecz worked out an outstanding conception for the ideal Calvinist church form in Hungary in the 1880s: they started off from the design of the central core and by the attachment of the longitudinal space they practically rejected the laboured longitudinal nave forming of the churches (Róka 1996). The unity of the faithful and the priest reflected in the unified space could appear in these churches again. Liturgical movements, emerged during the turn of the century till the beginning of the WWI, beside the use of the styles of the historicism reached a new kind of plan arrangement, where the altar, the ambo and the benches had a different relation and the benches were arranged in a semicircle or in a hoof-shaped form (Baku 2013). The effect of the Western European examples appeared very quickly in Hungary, thanks to the truly intensive church relations, and the latter close cultural linking after the WWI: a lot of Greek cross planned churches were built in the German and Dutch areas, which represented their separation from the longitudinal nave arrangement of the roman catholic church space organization. The German catholic journals reported about protestant church architectural movement and improvements. These new conceptions matured during the wartime, and appeared in such works as the writing of Otto Barning, the «Vom neuen Kirchenbau» in 1919 (Schnell 1974). These German impressions were determining in the architecture of the Hungarian Lutheran and Calvinist Churches operating with separate canonical organizations. Both denominations used the foreign theoretical bases between the two world wars to conceive their own identities.

The church architectural waves correlate with the historical, economic and political events irrespectively of the denominations. This means projected on to our period that against the shock after the WWI and the loads of the world crisis, the number of the church constructions significantly rose in Hungary from the end of the 1920s till the beginning of the 1940s (Baku 2013). One of its reasons is that the number of the

protestant faithful is appreciably grew in the capital (Budapest) and in the bigger cities close to the borders – by means of the arriving people from the lost historical lands after the Treaty of Trianon (The Paris Peace Treaty, 1920) – and in a short time the recipience of the existing churches proved not enough. Serious settler building constructions started on the earlier urbanistically peripheral areas of the ever growing city, and almost in every case a church or a chapel was also built in the new quarter. Although many less protestant churches were built in the period than Roman Catholic ones, still we can recognise the style pluralism not just by the Roman Catholic church architecture. One of the possible reasons for the style pluralism is the experimentation for the renewal of the church art. In our case that means, that the historical styles—which already often enrich with the use of the modern materials and become a kind of coulisse-like speciality— can stand by each other.

The Hungarian church architects turned their attention on the modern engineering systems by the spreading usage of the reinforced concrete, which finally led to new space forming experiments (mainly by the cases of the long span requiring central spaces). The national identity-seeking has a great significance in Eastern Europe between the two world wars, and the protestant church architecture got its impulse from the folk designs, showing the connections through the ornament forming (Schulek 1942; Baku 2016). The need for the initiation of the modern roman catholic church architecture appeared in the 1930s, but the same process by the protestant churches developed only later against the quick adaptation of the usage of the reinforced concrete. One of the possible reasons of it is that the demands for the protestant identity expressions appeared at the beginning in the striving of the creations of the Transylvanian Calvinist church architecture and in the *Hungarian* national style. The various floor plans and the broadening adaptations of the central space organization are based on it.

In the years after the WWII till the mid50s yet new churches were built by the great modern master builders or the less known architects who owned the modern architectural doctrines. The decade following

1945 is a kind of a transition: the political change at the end of the 40s made a deep impact not just on the role of the churches, but generally on all of the other fields of the life. During the communist dictatorship, and after 1956, during the 25 years of the socialism—which in some ways changed the former political conditions— the Hungarian Calvinist and Lutheran Churches didn't constructed significant, architecturally valuable churches; only after the relief of the political oppression started again the active church building operations in the 1980s. It seems that in the period of the change of the regime in 1989, the structural-formal approach prevailed, the plan organization showed the centralising efforts, but the conscious correspondence between these two resolutions can be found only by the high quality churches built after the change of the regime. Against the overlapping of the first and second half of the 20th century architecture, a period is closed by the 1950s; after a forced pause, the need of the recomposition appeared in the 80s and led ahead in the phylogeny of the Hungarian protestant church architecture (Vukoszávlyev 2016).

THE THEORETICAL BASES OF THE SPACE FORMING BY THE HUNGARIAN PROTESTANT CHURCH INTERIORS

The protestant church is the meeting place with the God, but it is not the house of God. The church is an assembly hall, a closed shelter, which is built by near the members of the faithful, on a way that it is need to be encircled with free space (Ravasz 1942). The most important aspects of the protestant worship service is that the main liturgical momentums have to happened before the eyes of the faithful, in other words the cleric must be always well seeable and well hearable and the faithful must take place close to the ambo and the altar, or round to the table of the Lord for sharing in the liturgy (Mentzer 1999). The two liturgical centres were appointed by the sermon and the place of the Lord's Supper, that is to say the ambo and the altar by the Lutherans, and the Lord's Table by the Calvinists, are the points which have to be beset with the faithful (Medgyaszay 1942). The two focal points determined the inner arrangement,



Fig. 01. Samu Pecz. Reformed Church, Budapest (Hungary), 1893/95. Szilágyi Dezső square.

the positions of the benches, and it led to the evolving of the newer plan forms by the new churches. These requirements necessarily changed the spaces of the churches, as the main task from that was the solving of the space centralising questions (Foltin 1992).

The main tendencies essentially didn't change in the 20th century in that point, that partly the longitudinal nave structures inherited from the roman catholic church architecture remained in the practice, and beside this, the intensive centralising efforts—to initiate the independent protestant church type—were shown (Baku 2016). While the definition of the architectural style was not primary in a theological way, till then the initiation of the *particularity* on the field of the architectural theory became important. The intensifying identity-seeking appeared in the architectural form-definition of the Lutheran church. We meet at first in a programmatic way with the solutions of the identity formulations of the Lutheran church architecture in the lecture resume of Samu Pecz (1888).

The architectural form definition talks mainly about the style, and it declares for only in the coherence with the identification definition of the liturgical space forming, whereon an example is the Calvinist church of Frigyes Schulek in Szeged and the church of Samu Pecz at the Szilágyi Dezső square (Fig. 01). The longitudinally arranged space, which was dominantly determining till the 20th century in the church architecture of the Roman Catholic Church, could give the opportunity of the distinguishable separationism, but the progressive form making—comparing with the western and northern areas of Europe (Róka 2008)—didn't spread exclusively in Hungary. The claim to the identification turns up again between the two world wars. Gyula Sándy in the Lutheran church architecture and István Medgyaszay and Bálint Szeghalmy in the Calvinist church architecture experimented by the visualization of the ideal plan and style unity. The theory examined the question of the form symbolising the community, beside this it touched upon the necessity of the complex functions (congregational hall built together with the church, the school and the further community spaces) and its social role taking, finally already partly independently from this, it analysed the question of the style¹.



Fig. 02. József Borsos.
Reformed Church,
Hódmezővásárhely-Tabán
(Hungary), 1903/04.

Fig. 03. Bálint Szeghalmy.
Reformed Church, Kisbér
(Hungary), 1941.

Fig. 04. Imre Dolhay. Reformed
Church, Debrecen-Homokkert
(Hungary), 1934/35.

STRUCTURAL AND FORMAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROTESTANT SPACE FORMS

The Charenton-type church form with balcony used most of all during the baroque—which principally identify the protestant church architecture and was evolved from the early times—was generally rife in Hungary². Against this, we can say that basically the longitudinal nave system determine the 20th century church constructions because of the effect of the Eisenach Regulativ, and these buildings mean the bigger part of the records. The structure and detail forming of the gothic style—as the ideal style of the medieval age—appear mainly in its architectural forming. The ideological cause of it is that it looks back to the time of the evolvement of the Protestantism, when the renewal and the separation from the Catholicism were urged fundamentally on a liturgical and not on a formal base. The applied neo-Gothic style and space forming start off from the structural logic, and emphasize the hierarchy of the frame system. The use of the traditional axial space form is almost obligate in the first decades of the turn of the century.

A part of these shows the altar-space forming as it is specified in the Eisenach Regulativ, which is used for choice by the Lutheran churches (Budapest-Kispest 1924), but it is often found by the Calvinist churches as well (Magyarcsanád 1912/13), sometimes in a plan form without altar-space (Pécs 1907). However, the transversally turned interior space arrangement with balcony, which refers to the space system of the baroque, is more common in the neo-Gothic forming axial church form, where the Lord's Table and the ambo can be found in the middle of the nave (it is almost in every cases a Calvinist church: Döge 1905, Dombrád 1910/12, Ráckeve 1912/13; yet by smaller buildings too: Kesznyéten 1908, and by in individual cases after the WWII: Tiszabercel 1948/50).

The centralising plan system—which is shown by the presence of the T-shape—is an early discoverable pattern by the churches which were built till the WWI (Tápiószéle 1900, Győr 1906, Tiszabecs 1907/10) (Vukoszávlyev 2016). One solution toward this forming is when the nave is built with an appre-

ciable transept by the side of the altar, in which the chairs are got into it, turning them to the direction of the main axis (Hódmezővásárhely-Tabán 1902/05 [Fig. 02], Szentes-Felsőpárt 1914).

The longitudinal space forming is used for a long time (its neo-Gothic version is adopted still after 1945, also during the time of the boring communist state power: Balsa 1950) (Vukoszávlyev and Urbán 2016). Against the structural development (the usage of the reinforced concrete and the long-span engineering roof structures) it is necessary to wait for the sudden advance of the engineering aesthetic till the mid30s, because the popular styles of the period hide the modern structures: we can see the late appearance of the neo-Baroque (Csorna 1926, Szada 1928, Eger 1930) and the Secession (Fegyvernek 1928, Szolnok 1932) in the cases of some churches in the 1920s³. The necessity of the evolving of the own identity-carrier form emerge between the two world wars by the strengthening of the national theory's ideology.

Lutheran churches of Gyula Sándy are built with the using of the same axial space forming, where he combined the Highlander Renaissance architecture with the folk forming details (Budafok 1934/35, Rákospalota 1939/43), but some Calvinist churches also follow this ornamental method (Kuncsorba 1937). The use of the folk forms connecting to Transylvania—which is considered as the crib of the Calvinist line of the Hungarian Protestantism—led to the appearance of the so-called *Hungarian* style, which is likely applied by the Calvinists (Keszthely 1931/32, Mosonmagyaróvár 1940, Szödliget 1938). More experiments were born under the inspiration of the Scandinavian and Dutch architecture from the turn of the century to reach the renewal of the style (Kisbér 1942 [Fig. 03], Magyarbóly 1943, Tatabánya-Bánhida 1939/51), although the interior of these churches are not modern, but follow a folk ornamental.

The critical modulation of the longitudinal space organizing sample is that architectural solution, when the Lord's Table beset with the presbyter's benches is installed in the axis of the church space, at the farthest point from the entrance, making a centrum in this part of the space (Debrecen-Homokkert 1934/35 [Fig. 04], Budapest-Mátyásföld 1938).



It has to be noticed that we can meet with the appearance of the coherent modern style by only a few buildings, and the cause of it is that it was known as the style of the representatively reviving Catholic church in Hungary (Kunszentmárton 1937, Csongrád 1938, Nagykanizsa 1934, Szombathely 1938/39). We can see the altar-like enhancement of the liturgical space by these churches with longitudinal nave, which is also typified by the modernist churches after 1945 (Isaszeg 1948/49, Cegléd-Felszeg 1947). That tendency has appeared from the second half of the 1930s, which caused the more complex forming of the buildings (reachable with engineering structural solutions): it puts the Lord's Table into the centre of the community thanks to the almost quadratic spaces and the community-principle shows a bench-arrangement turning to this centre (Budapest-Kelenföld 1928/30, Sóstófalva 1938/39, Budapest-Budahegyvidék 1998/2002).

The further dwell on the structural logic of the neo-Gothic forming is the excursion to the usage of the central space forms. This process can be caught by the Calvinist churches at the turn of the millennium where the buildings have a more complex Greek cross form (Ózd 1904/05, Kaposvár 1908, Orosháza 1914/17), and its evolution appeared

with new styles in the 30s (Besenyőd 1928, Budapest-Rákospalota MÁV telepi 1939/41 [Fig. 05], and the Lutheran church of Diósgyőr-Vasgyár 1938)⁴. It has outstanding-class architectural examples from the turn of the century, which appeared in Hungary parallel with the Finnish and Dutch tendencies of the period's national ambitions (Budapest-Fasor 1913). The original, diagonally designed *corner churches* were built almost as ideal plans of the samples of Sturm (Hódmezővásárhely-Susán 1908/10 [Fig. 06], Földeák 1937/38).

The polygons, mainly the hexa- and octagon, both can be found between the two world wars and after the years of the change of the regime (Biatorbágy 1947, Halásztelek 1993/95, Martfű 1991/96). The church building invoke a kind of a symbolic tent between the years of the two world wars (Hévíz 1937/39, Sümeg 1936/98), which seems to a good base for the organic approach in the second half of the century (Köszeg 1993/96, Debrecen-Tégláskert 2005/07). In the case of the Calvinist church of Köszeg, the symbolic of the number eight obviously reflected in the floor plan, in the octagonal central space⁵.

We can look at the modernist transfers —designed with the principles of the Gothic— as special solutions by the cases of the uneven-numbered polygonal

planned churches (Szeged 1944), where the hierarchy of the structure optimise the space dimensions, while the plan arrangement do the same with the liturgical principals and these create together an organically symbolic space for the faithful. The special examples of the Lutheran church architecture from between the two world wars period are the circle planning (Borsodnádásd-Lemezgyár 1934 [Fig. 07], Ózd-Somsálybánya 1942) (Baku 2013) and the elliptically arranged forms (Budapest-Kőbánya 1924), which were mainly used again after the change of the regime, at the turn of the millennium, rarely by the Calvinist churches (Debrecen-Tócsokert 1994/97) and in greater number also by the Lutheran churches (Sopronnémeti 1994/97, Balatonboglár 1993/99) (Fig. 08).

We can find similarly isolated, but rather up-to-date examples for the development of the flabeliform, which come true with the borrowing of the German samples (Debrecen, Egyetemi templom 1939/42). This central-making arrangement can be identified in our Protestant church architecture after the change of the regime (Barcs 1994, Szigetszentmiklós 1987/88), and the versions of the semi-circle also appears (Mátészalka 1994).

The transversally arranged floor plans can be interpreted as the transfer of the T-plan form, which was popular during the Baroque, when the longitudinally axial space reveals itself in an averted way in proportion to the entrance, which is in the middle axis of the building, mainly by the Calvinist churches which used modern structural systems to visualize the severity (Debrecen-Nagyerdő 1974/75 [Fig. 09], Budapest-Külső-Kelenföld 1979/81, Dunaújváros 1982/85) or just by the anthropomorphically formed buildings of the special Hungarian organic architecture (Szamoskér 1972/75, Siófok 1986/88).

Fig. 05. Rezső Csaba. Reformed Church, Budapest–Rákospalota (Hungary), 1939/44 (on the previous page).

Fig. 06. József Borsos. Reformed Church, Hódmezővásárhely–Susán (Hungary), 1909/10 (on the previous page).

Fig. 07. Pál Szontágh. Lutheran Church, Borsodnádásd (Hungary), 1934.

CONTINUITY AND MODULATION

On the whole it can be said, that beside the dominancy of the longitudinal design, the presented centralising tendency proved itself to be suitable for the expression of the individual protestant identity, the differentiation from the space symbolism of the Catholic churches. Nevertheless, the central space types seem to be proper for the Calvinist churches also from the liturgical aspect, and they represent worthily the unity of the community. It remounts to the centralised churches from the period of the two world wars as a source of the newer church constructing wave in the 1980s, and it adopts them combining with up-to-date structures in great numbers, hereby reach the continuity of the 20th century protestant church space.





Fig. 08. Tamás Nagy. Lutheran Church, Balatonboglár (Hungary), 1993/99.



Fig. 09. Ernő Kálmán. Reformed Church, Debrecen-Nagyerdő (Hungary), 1974/75.

NOTES

(1) Our study doesn't examine in more details the questions of the different community functions built together with the church. Find out more about the Hungarian adaption of its method: Krähling 2008b.

(2) About the historical forms of the protestant church architecture, see Bibó 1985 and Krähling 2015.

(3) The special cases of the structure forming are the Oikos-vaultings, which determined the interior of the Calvinist churches of Eger and Pusztaszabolcs. About the new light weight vaulting form, see Krähling 2008.

(4) About the Greek cross form, as the mostly identifiable architectural form of the Hungarian protestant churches from the historical times, see Krähling-Nagy 2009, and especially referring to the interwar period, Baku 2013. The spread of the usage of the central space forms appears not just by the protestant churches, but also in the Catholic church architecture because of the liturgical renewal processes, see Vukoszávlyev 2012.

(5) Number eight is the symbol of the new beginning, the revival and the resurrection of Christ in the Holy Bible. After the seven days comes the eighth

one, in other words it is the beginning of the everliving through the resurrection of Christ, thus the number eight is the sign of the new genesis and the renewal in the Paleo-Christian symbolism (Lőrincz 2000).

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CREDITS

Fig. 01, 05, 09. Zorán Vukoszávlyev.

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Fig. 03. Erzsébet Urbán.

Fig. 08. József Hajdu.

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