



**The influence of Scandinavian Romantic Modernism on  
the Relation of Architecture and Landscape  
in Hungarian Architecture (1945-1980)**

Abstract of the thesis

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## 01 Background of the work and its aims

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A vast majority of sources on the architecture of the North depart from a description of the Nordic landscape. In the case of Finnish architecture, this statement can be extended to basically all the sources: each text starts with a lyrical introduction of the local landscape. The most powerful notion on Finnish architecture is that it is in a unique harmony with its landscape. The idea is generally also evoked in the context of Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish architecture as well.

The interaction between architecture and landscape is one of the most important issues of our times. Ecological consciousness and an elevated climate anxiety is a definitive attitude of the decades following the millennium. Protection and preservation of our environment, including nature, landscapes, and cityscapes, the sparing of natural resources and the utilization of renewable energy sources are the key issues of the present. This is especially true in Europe, which is poor in energy sources. Our welfare and our economic independence also depends on the enforcement of environmental consciousness.

Ecological consciousness can mean a stout layer of insulation for lower energy consumption and innovative solutions for higher efficiency. in terms of energetics, these means can produce buildings with a small ecological footprint. However, achieving a spatial harmony with the landscape and its architectural content may and should lead beyond the technical questions of energy supply.

Studying Hungarian and international literature on Scandinavian Romantic Modernism and researching the resulting architectural practice could help understand what can connect landscape with architecture. Or in other words, how can architecture develop the landscape, how can it express the spatial values of a landscape. To reach a conclusion there are other questions needed to be answered. Finnish landscape and Finnish architecture can both be pleasing to the eye, but is there any correlation between the two? What can link architecture to its landscape, what could promote a certain *landscape sensitivity*? Is there a possible connection

between architecture and landscape that has been developed by Nordic architects or the theoreticians? If we accept that Nordic landscape is perfectly unique, with all of its characteristics, and the architecture closely related to it is also unmatched, then what is the relevance of this relationship outside Scandinavia and for contemporary architecture? What can architects and landscape architects learn from this special type of modern architecture across the world and in Hungary?

My questions stated are the following:

- I. Is there a specific scientific achievement related to the influence of Scandinavian Romantic Modernism in Hungary?
- II. Was the international literature of Scandinavian Romantic Modernism known to architectural theory?
- III. Does the influence of Scandinavian Romantic Modernism appear in the theories of Hungarian landscape architects?
- IV. Did the perspective of Western and Hungarian theoreticians differ from each other when describing Scandinavian Romantic Modernism?
- V. What can create connection between landscape and architecture in the given period according to foreign and Hungarian sources?
- VI. How did Scandinavian Romantic Modernism and interpretive Hungarian theory influence Hungarian architectural practice?
- VII. Can any differences be traced between the original buildings of Scandinavian Romantic Modernism and those Hungarian examples that show their influence?
- VIII. Did Scandinavian Romantic Modernism affect the relationship between landscape and architecture in Hungary?

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## 02     Material and method

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I have developed my assessment criteria based on the researched theoretical literature. My aim was to identify all the thoughts and formal elements that can show the influence of Scandinavian Modernism on the scale of a building.

02. 01.     table: Assessment criteria

| topic      |                                     |
|------------|-------------------------------------|
| landscape  | disposition and geomorphology       |
|            | connection to terrain and gardening |
|            | open air elements                   |
|            | vegetation                          |
| volumes    | additive volumes                    |
|            | cell-like multiplication of forms   |
|            | organic and crystal forms           |
|            | ruins and fragments                 |
| surfaces   | materiality                         |
|            | detailing                           |
| references | symbolic references                 |
|            | cultural references                 |

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### **03 Result and discussion**

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A peculiar relationship to the landscape can be traced in Hungarian buildings built between 1945 and 1980. Although architectural theory would suggest a strong connection to the landscape, earlier examples showing the cultural influence of Scandinavian Romantic Modernism rarely handle the issue. On the other hand, later examples create a specific relationship with landscape showing the possibilities described by theorists. The historical horizon expands in theory and practice. The best examples of the 1950's apply a formal language of the past; Nordic Classicism of the 1920's offered a viable alternative of the strict doctrines of Socialist Realism (György Jánossy: Water Tower of MATE). Examples of the 1970's already include the culture of each region and folk traditions (Holiday home of Elemér Nagy), similar to Western examples.

03. 02. table: Landscape context in Hungarian examples

|                          | landscape                     |                                     |                   |            | volumes          |                                   |                           |                     | surfaces     |              | references          |                     |              |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------|
|                          | disposition and geomorphology | connection to terrain and gardening | open air elements | vegetation | additive volumes | cell-like multiplication of forms | organic and crystal forms | ruins and fragments | materiality  | detailing    | symbolic references | cultural references |              |
| Jánossy, Víztorony, 1955 | ■                             |                                     | ■                 | ■          |                  |                                   |                           |                     |              | ■            | ■                   | ■                   | 6            |
| Gulyás, Rózsakert, 1969  |                               |                                     | ■                 | ■          | ■                |                                   |                           |                     | ■            | ■            |                     |                     | 5            |
| Farkasdy, Olimpia, 1972  | ■                             | ■                                   |                   | ■          | ■                | ■                                 |                           |                     | ■            |              |                     |                     | 6            |
| Kaszás, Ravatalozó, 1978 | ■                             | ■                                   | ■                 |            |                  |                                   | ■                         | ■                   | ■            | ■            |                     | ■                   | 8<br>66<br>% |
| Nagy, Nyaraló, 1979      | ■                             | ■                                   |                   |            |                  |                                   |                           |                     | ■            | ■            | ■                   | ■                   | 6            |
|                          | 4<br>80<br>%                  | 3                                   | 3                 | 3          | 2                | 1                                 | 1                         | 1                   | 4<br>80<br>% | 4<br>80<br>% | 2                   | 3                   |              |

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## 04 Conclusion

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Scandinavian romantic modernism had enriched the history of modern architecture with the idea of interaction between architecture and landscape. Modern architecture of the North consciously developed its own identity and myth based on this notion. I have presented that Hungarian architectural theory has also highlighted the special relationship towards landscape. I recalled the fact that there was an elevated interest towards the architecture of the North and especially Finland since the beginning of the 20th century and the question of connecting to the landscape was always prevalent.

In my theoretical research I have proven that foreign and Hungarian theorist present the architecture of the North using similar aspects. Both group of sources highlight the importance of landscape but there are certain differences. The first departure is that while Western sources discuss the oeuvre of Alvar Aalto as part of the Modern Movement and emit architects applying a more tradition formal language (like Erik Gunnar Asplund), Elemér Nagy, an architectural theorist had already outlined another trend in 1962, later to be named the other tradition of modern architecture. Nagy formulated his description of the other tradition while analysing the architecture of Finland, highlighting the role of natural analogies and the application of geological and landscape forms. Another important difference between theorist is the role of folk heritage and the historical and ethnographical traditions connecting Hungary and Finland. László Vargha, an ethnographer by training, researched the relations between Hungary and Finland. The idea of cultural community unique liaison with Finnish culture and Vargha personally cultivated this tradition personally. Vargha makes a surprising point when using the terminology of socialist realism in 1965 to describe and promote contemporary Finnish architecture in Hungary. Progressive and anachronistic thoughts also occur in Hungarian texts compared to Western theorists.

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## 05 New scientific results

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- I. Is there a specific scientific achievement related to the influence of Scandinavian Romantic Modernism in Hungary?

T.01. I have shown that due to a different cultural history and historical background compared to the West, Hungarian architectural theory has developed independent and autochthonic results during the research of Scandinavian Romantic Modernism, namely

(1) theoretical discussions resulted in an early description of the other tradition of modern architecture and

(2) it strives to revive the cultural cooperation with Finnish architects using historical parallels and evoking the inspiration of folk architecture.

- II. Was the international literature of Scandinavian Romantic Modernism known to architectural theory?

T.02. I have proven that the contemporary literature on Scandinavian Romantic Modernism was accessible and known to Hungarian theoreticians in the examined period and was also present in university education from the 1950's.

- III. Does the influence of Scandinavian Romantic Modernism appear in the theories of Hungarian landscape architects?

T.03. Scandinavian Romantic Modernism has no demonstrable influence on Hungarian landscape architecture literature in the given period.

- IV. Did the perspective of Western and Hungarian theoreticians differ from each other when describing Scandinavian Romantic Modernism?

T.04. Hungarian literature deals primarily with the issue of the landscape and the adaption to it, the role of national-regional characteristics and folk traditions is emphasized, as well as historical references. Western sources describe

Scandinavian architecture from several further points of view, in which building technology, affection for the antique tradition and the role of university training are also included and regional forms of expression are also highlighted.

- V. What can create connection between landscape and architecture in the given period according to foreign and Hungarian sources?

T.05. Based on my assessment criteria developed on Hungarian and foreign analyses I have presented that an attitude towards landscape can be constructed by disposition respecting the topographical conditions, carefully planned terrain connection and garden design, applying open air structures as compositional elements and the conscious use of plans; in volumetry it can prevail via additive masses, suggesting and also enabling organic growth at the same time, cell-like formations and a multiplication of forms; the use of organic and crystal forms, ruins and fragments that exude historical atmosphere; buildings can create a connection with their environment by the use of materials and a detailed design of the surface, while symbolic content – historical and cultural references – can include the noospheric elements of the landscape.

- VI. How did Scandinavian Romantic Modernism and interpretive Hungarian theory influence Hungarian architectural practice?

T.06. Earlier Hungarians examples show that Nordic patterns largely remained empirical and theoretically unfounded; stylistic elements of Scandinavian Romantic Modernism do occur but adaptation to the landscape is limited. With the development of Hungarian theories, the spirit of Scandinavian Romantic Modernism also influenced the relationship between architecture and landscape. And in the examples of the 1970's, regionalist tendencies also appear that apply the culture of the regions. Later foreign and Hungarian sources also refer to this trend using the term regionalist.

VII. Can any differences be traced between the original buildings of Scandinavian Romantic Modernism and those Hungarian examples that show their influence?

T.07. Hungarian buildings presented in the case studies use a similar toolset to original examples in creating disposition and surfaces. Hungarian examples use the specific volumetrics of Scandinavian examples less often but tend to be richer in symbolic content.

VIII. Did Scandinavian Romantic Modernism affect the relationship between landscape and architecture in Hungary?

T.08. The sensitive attitude towards landscape of Scandinavian Romantic Modernism can be traced in Hungarian theory and practice, but architects related to landscape in only a small number of examples and therefore it could only have a marginal impact on the general relationship of Hungarian architecture to its surrounding landscape.

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## 06 Publications by the author related to the topic of the dissertation

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### Publication in an edited book

Laczó, Dániel: Adaption to Context. in: Zachi, Árpád (ed.): *Drifting Architecture. East and Central European Architecture*. Editura Fundației Arhitext Design, Bukarest, 2016, pp. 34-43. ISBN 978-606-8645-05-6

### Articles in periodicals

Simon Mariann, Laczó Dániel: Promise of a New Golden Age. *Periodica Polytechnica Architecture* 46(1), pp. 17-28, 2015

Laczó, Dániel: Egy modern finnugor építészet felé. *Építés-Építészettudomány*, 50 (2022) 1-2. 153-168

Laczó, Dániel: Egy másik modern felfedezése. *Utóirat: Supplement to régi-új Magyar Építőművészet*, 18 (2021) 8. 31-34.

Simon Mariann, Laczó Dániel: Időutazás. Az újra-modern építészet hazai története. *régi-új Magyar Építőművészet* 18 (2014) 8. 31-34.

Laczó Dániel: Modernista reflexiók az angol romantikus építészetelmélet alapértékeire. *Architectura Hungariae*, 12 (2013) 2. 37-60.

### Proceedings

Laczó Dániel: Modernist Survival during Early Socialism in Hungary. in: Tostoes, Ana, and Koselj, Nataša, eds. *Metamorphosis. The Continuity of Change*. Ljubljana: Docomomo Slovenia, 2018. 571-577. ISBN: 978-989-99645-3-2

Simon Mariann, Laczó Dániel: Deeply Embedded in Tradition. Interpretations of regional roots for modern Hungarian architecture in the 1960s. In: *Regionalism, Nationalism & Modern Architecture Conference Proceedings*. Porto, 2018