



SZENT ISTVÁN UNIVERSITY

**OPEN SPACES OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTES IN HUNGARY  
1868–1945**

Main findings of the PhD thesis

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## **STUDY OBJECTIVES**

School open spaces are special examples for how complex approach and the involvement of several relevant disciplines are needed for landscape architecture of today to carry out open space planning. The research aimed to deepen this issue by examining the history of school open spaces, the beginning of the recognition of their significance and their evolution between two milestones, 1868 and 1945.

The main aim of the research was to give an overall knowledge of the situation of school open spaces in the era. In addition, I examined the evolution of the establishment of school open spaces and also of their functions, types and inner layout. I aimed to find out whether general rules, samples, norms existed or not and also what kind of plants were used in the schools. A further objective was to compare the institutes that functioned only as schools with those that also included residences for children, moreover, to compare schools in different locations. I also tried to find out when and how school open spaces became a subject for garden designers.

## **SOURCES OF RESEARCH, METHODOLOGY**

The complexity of the theme requires a research method with multi perspectives, therefore I approached the topic with a methodology defined by Kozlovsky who suggests both design-centred and child-centred approach in the research of children's architecture. I examined school open spaces equally as products of (garden) design and from the point of view of social history, educational history and educational policy. As a result, the values of school open spaces can be defined not only as architectural ones, but as the relics of social and educational development of the era and also of political effects. As a historical research, my work was based on the period documents. The backbone of the research were the periodicals in different related topics, printed books and other publications of the period on the one side, and design plans of schools and archive photographs, postcards on the other side.

Based on these, I revealed the factors determining open spaces in national and international context, and I determined the characteristic features and changes of school locations and the layout of school open spaces in three

groups (schools in cities, schools in villages and schools with residential function). The historic topography of military schools of the period, which were institutes with the most complex open spaces at this time, was made as a case study, which gave additional results in connection with schools with residential function.

## **RESULTS**

During the research I identified several types of school open spaces of the era. Open spaces including only a minimal green space were school yards, school playgrounds and roof terraces, while the more significant green areas consisted of the different forms of school gardens (ornamental gardens, educational gardens, practitioners' gardens, nurseries, orchards) in the first half of the period. I also realized that these types were not always separated in space.

The oldest type of school open space was the school garden which had appeared at schools already before the period. I managed to find out that the question of school yards became more important in the 1890's owing to the development of public health. The establishment of school playgrounds appeared in the end of 1880's in theory and at the turn of the century in practice. School playgrounds were also linked to the development of social pedagogy, and the establishment of school areas with social aims lead to the appearance of public playgrounds in the 1910's and as thus, school open space design and the design of public parks connected with each other. Béla Rerrich played a prominent part in this and raised school playgrounds among the subjects of garden design.

To sum up, while school gardens had been subjects to garden designers already before the period in question, school playgrounds became garden design tasks only from the 1910's and schoolyards even only from the 1930's. It can also be defined that the different types of school open spaces appeared wholly integrated in garden design in military schools already from their beginning.

## **THESES**

### **I.**

**The appearance, separation, functional clarity and changes of the different school open spaces were the result of the development and change of educational views and public health, and partly as their consequence, the building regulations. Moreover, the mutual interference of school open spaces and the urban fabric can also be observed.**

School gardens had been existing since the beginning of school history as a tool for education, while school yards were the result of the evolvement of school hygiene in all types of schools. The playgrounds were established, owing to the development of physical education, as an effect on health, human personality and morality, and their role was increasing with social pedagogy. The roof terraces were also created for health reasons. Nevertheless, the evolvement, size and layout of school open spaces were affected by the location of schools and the possibility of their appearance in the existing urban fabric. Furthermore, new schools could change the earlier urban building conditions, because the demand for a free disposition of the school building did not fit into the originally dense neighbourhood.

### **II.**

**The boarding school types, that had been existing since the times even before compulsory education, had possessed large open spaces already at that time. Besides, the gradual development of the public educational schools established after 1868 can also be observed both in theory and practice.**

Most of the boarding schools before 1868 were ecclesiastical institutes, but military schools also existed at this time. All of them had large gardens, having already a centuries-old tradition in some school types, like in the case of the institutions of religious orders. In public schools, the theoretical background of the gradual development of school open spaces is proved by the standards existing already from the 1890's for school open spaces, which

determined the built up areas of the school plots and the minimal open space per capita, and also by the publications of the period advertising the rationale and importance. The concrete examples and the analysis of statistics proved the slow but continuous sprawl and growth of public school open spaces and their alignment to the standards. This can be observed mainly in the case of new schools, but there are many examples for the enlargement of open spaces of already existing schools, too.

### **III.**

#### **Ornamental gardens and vegetable gardens in schools followed the trends of garden art and garden practice of the era.**

The constant change in the trends of garden art between 1868 and 1945 can also be detected in the gardens of schools. Changes of garden art from the late English landscape style, the characteristics of Historism, Art Nouveau, Arts and Crafts till the features of Modern garden art can be traced in the transformation of older gardens or creation of new ones alike. The boarding schools had elaborately designed and maintained gardens, usually a gardener was also in employment at the institute. School gardens were designed for instance by the prominent garden designer Károly Ráde. Béla Rerrich was the one who made playgrounds subject to garden designers, thus, the garden design of school playgrounds between the two world wars was connected with the design of public parks which included public playgrounds, and also with questions of urbanism.

### **IV.**

#### **School playgrounds and sport fields appeared first in military schools in Hungary.**

Discourse of public and school playgrounds began in the 1880's in Hungary, and the realization of playgrounds happened in the beginning of the 1910's in schools and between the two world wars in public. However, due to the special type of education, sport fields and playgrounds already appeared in the end of

the 19<sup>th</sup> century in military schools. Thus military schools already used these, when, in other fields, they still appeared only in theory. Therefore, military schools can be regarded as pioneers in the spread of these open spaces.

## V.

**Béla Rerrich's work is crucial for school playgrounds in becoming the subjects of garden art. This happened in the beginning of the 1910's.**

Rerrich planned 12 school playgrounds in 1912. Not only did he settle the carefully selected functions by taking advantage of the characteristics, location and morphology of the plot, but he composed the already existing plants into the spatial organization, and he endeavoured to create artistic, aesthetic designs of the playgrounds as well. Raising the design of school playgrounds into a task of garden art and architecture illustrates the appearance of this modernist view, which includes not only the design of public spaces, but also of institutional open spaces that have different functions and are formed not necessarily as ornamental gardens. My research has enriched the knowledge about Rerrich's lifework.

## VI.

**School playgrounds can be considered the direct predecessor of public playgrounds from the perspective of garden design and social pedagogy alike.**

The question of creating new spaces originally for satisfying the new trends of physical education moved early towards social problems, which was partly the reason for establishing play afternoons. Therefore, the evolution of school and public playgrounds in theory can be traced back partly to the same roots: the social approach to the children of poor people and aspects of child protection. However, play afternoons could manage the daycare of only those children who attended the schools that belonged to the actual playground, but did not solve the problems of other school children and youths for whom education was no longer compulsory. Therefore, a public playground was

urged already in 1913 in Budapest. The failure of the initiative led to another solution: the larger school playgrounds were permitted to be used by other children, youths and sport clubs during the evening hours and on Sundays. Thus, school playgrounds of the 1910's became the forerunners of the public playgrounds installed in public parks and other places after the first world war.

## VII.

**Open spaces of boarding schools were products of garden design even before the period covered by this research. The complex garden design of public school yards which satisfied their multifunctional requirements and specified the places, forming and plants for functions and the green spaces connected to them appeared in the first years of the 1930's.**

This was partly the result of the changing garden design views, which regarded not only ornamental gardens as its subject, but reflected a much more compound way of thinking. On the other hand, the initiation for afforestation throughout Hungary, started in 1932, and also the 'Act of Education Under Free Air' brought back green spaces and plants to yards from where partly expelled earlier.

## VIII.

**Apart from other institutional gardens, school open spaces were highly sensitive to different educational, conceptional, social and political effects, and thus worked as their transfer medium.**

Schools were entirely in the service of education, therefore, also their open spaces took part in the propagation of diverse concepts and programs. The different themes manifested themselves primarily not on the whole of the open spaces, but on elements of the garden like sculptures for instance: sculptures of religious themes could be found in institutes of the Church, while the sculptures representing the king and queen were placed in military schools during the dualist system in Hungary.

Owing to Kunó Klebelsberg's, Gyula Korniss's and Bálint Hóman's educational policy, the role of practical training and thus school gardens



increased. Moreover, nationalism pervaded every segment of education. The effect of nationalism and irredentism can be traced upon the use and built and planted elements of the open spaces, just like improving sport fields which served for the training of citizens to be able to fight heroically for their home, and these were the reasons for afforestation and garden schools as well. Moreover, nationalist views can be traced upon built elements in the forms of national flags set in school yards and sculptures and monuments of war heroes or heroic ancient Hungarians. These occurred mainly in military schools, but there are many examples in general public schools as well.

**I consider it as a practical result that I started the historic topography of the many thousands of school open spaces of Hungary with the presentation of military school gardens.** Although this is only a small fragment of a future topography, it provides guidance for future research as well.

## THE AUTHOR'S PUBLICATIONS RELATED TO THE TOPIC

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## **Research reports**

Klagyivik-Szabó M., Németh Z., Szabadics A. 2014. *Biatorbágy, Sándor–Metternich kastély kertje. Kerttörténeti tudományos dokumentáció*. Budapest.

Fatsar K., Klagyivik M., 2013. *Nemzeti Közszolgálati Egyetem „Ludovika Campus” kialakításához kapcsolódó parkrekonstrukció. Konceptióterv II. ütem – NKE park. A pesti Orczy-kert. Kerttörténeti tudományos dokumentáció*. Készült a Nemzeti Közszolgálati Egyetem megbízásából a „Ludovika Campus” kialakításához kapcsolódó parkrekonstrukció megalapozó háttér tanulmányaként. Budapest.

