

AJ111

AJKA

AJKA TRANSFORUM

### Auto-Development: Ajka's Do-It-Yourself Mentality

When visiting Ajka's growing areas, one notices that these low density-fringes with detached houses seem to be almost entirely developed and built out of self-initiative, in a handyman approach in neighbourly mutual help, - D.I.Y.-W.Y.N. (do-it-yourself-with-your neighbours).

Everyone seems to know something - neighbour Milo is a bricklayer, cousin Bela knows how to sew curtains, auntie Ilka how to weld, and your sister Ronja how to set up a glass house. Ajka's private construction sector, probably the fastest growing one, is based on local micro-economies of neighbourhood, friendship and family.

### Housing

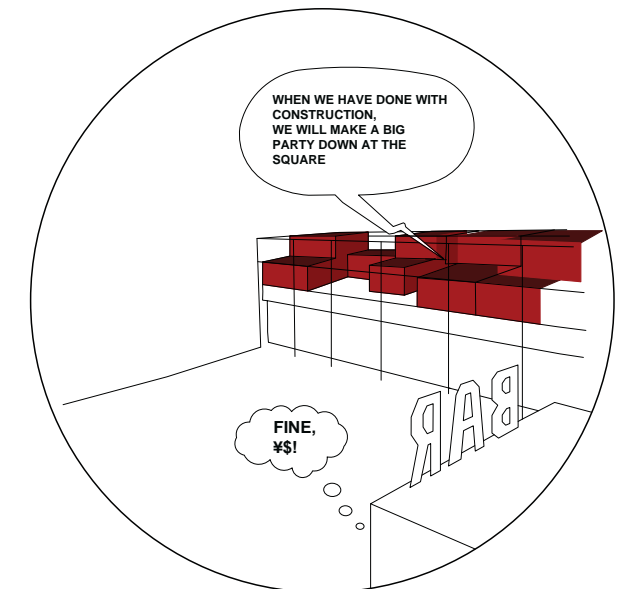
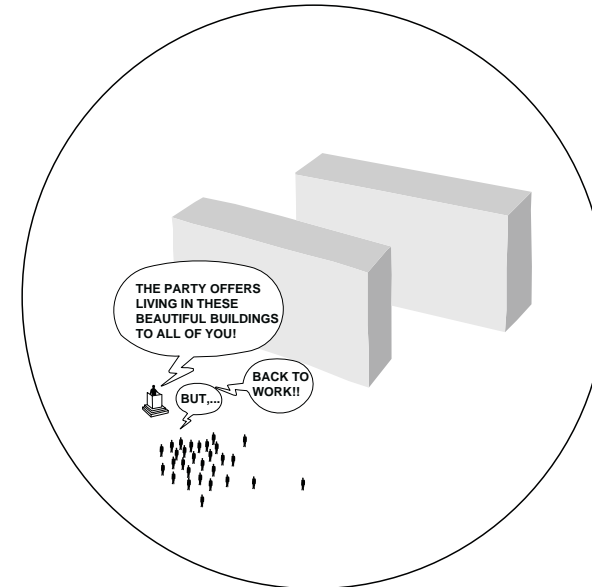
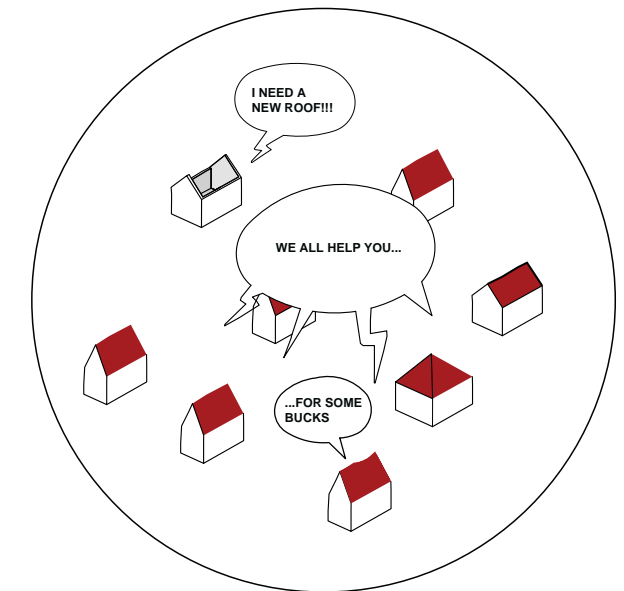
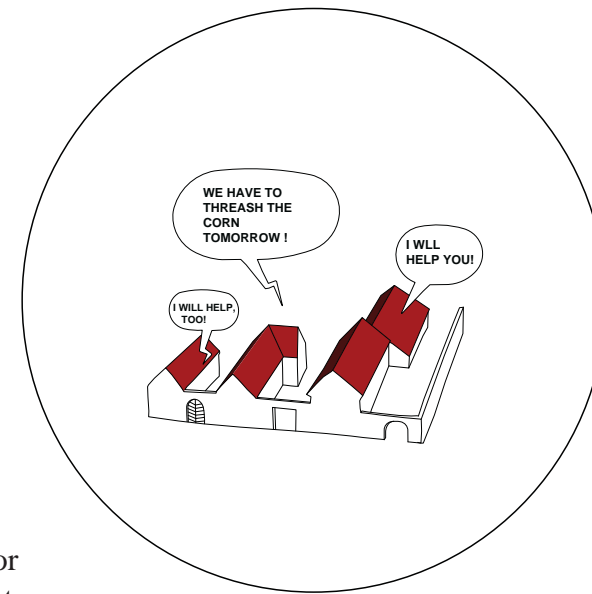
The reason for such a development in Ajka is the same as elsewhere: An increasingly individualising society paired up with a determining wish for property. Such phenomena are even amplified by the former housing policy that led to repetitive housing slabs, inherently undermining individual appropriation through the applied idea of collectivisation. The effect is that two typologies prevail: Inner-City Housing in blocks of flats and single-family houses on the outskirts. We opted for proposing flats of much more diversity in quantity and quality within the centre than the 50 to 65 squaremetres types that were asked for in the brief because it seems that this size can be covered by the existing central housing slabs that are not as low in reputation as in other parts of Europe. We wanted to come up with new typologies for the city centre with the possibility for self-engagement by leaving the possibility of future extensions.

### City-Life and Commerce

Thrust westwards into a European Community populated by generations grown up and trained in the economical and spatial mechanisms of capitalism, the city of Ajka is now experiencing the well-proven habits of "the market" – facing city-life sucking vampires that carry names like Tesco. The teenage community are the first to fall victim.

### Functional Separation

The current situation of the centre is one of an island amidst more or less heavy trafficed roads, itself following a strict separation of functions with the car being the predominant occupier of space. Pedestrianised streets that have an original flair are surrounded by supplementary spaces such as delivery or access roads. Other activities can hardly be imagined to take place there – the spaces are single-themed, appear dictated and determined. Space and use are predetermined and rigid, its inflexibility being the biggest threat to the future of the centre's liveability. By strategically stimulating improvisation and imagination, a gradual transformation is achieved.



## Multi-functionality above single-purposeness

### Translation into Transformation

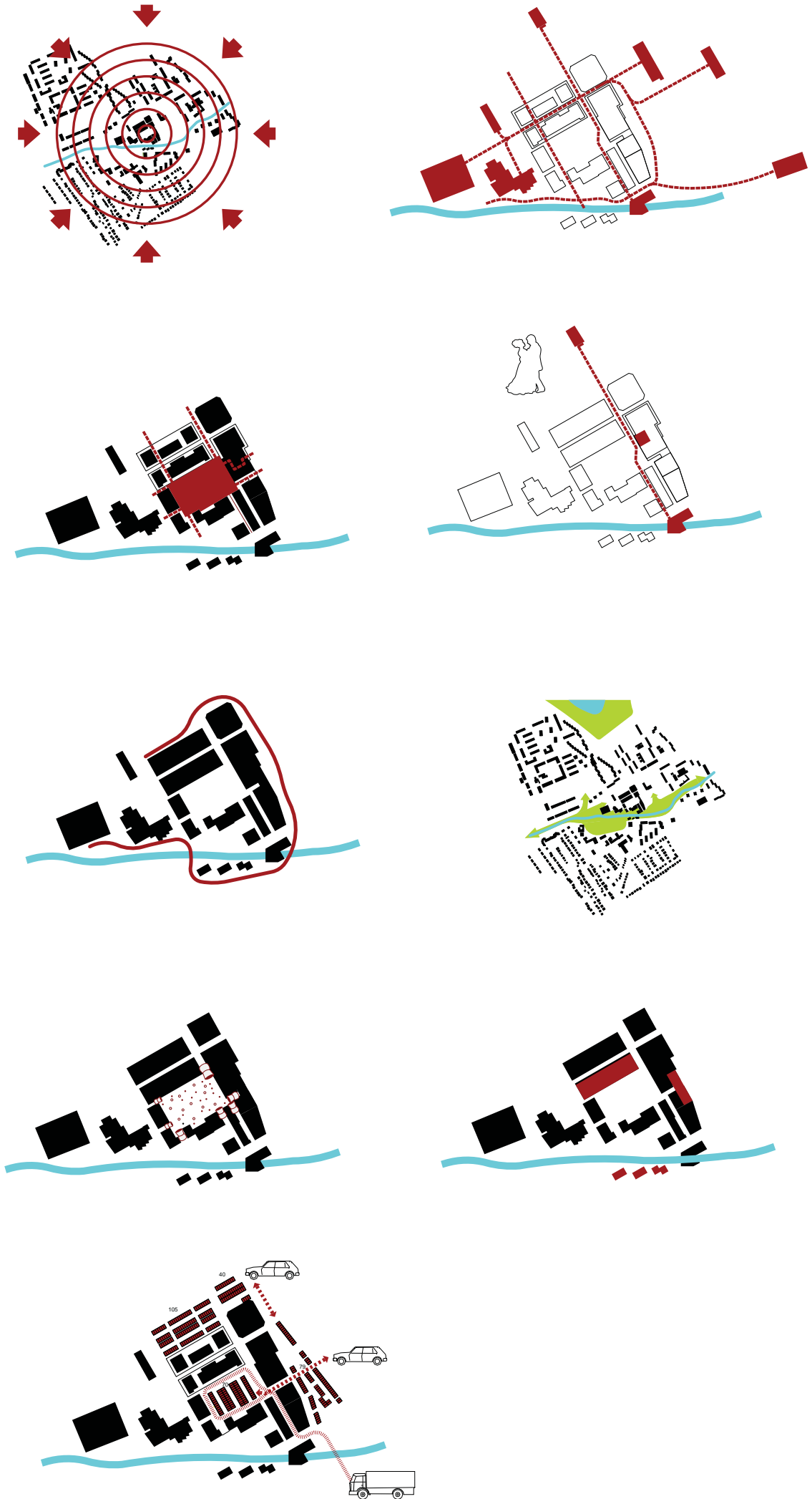
The term Transformum encompasses the central aspect of a forum as a place for public situations and negotiations (both cultural and commercial) as well as the act of appropriation that leads to a constant change of uses and appearances. In order to achieve this, all measurements taken are sensitive to the existing fabric for reasons of respect and an economical way of acting. Implementations are carried out in steps that start off with the smallest possible investments that have the biggest effect of attracting people of various age and interest groups. The following steps are built upon logically, drawing from the effects achieved beforehand. As the interest grows, the interest level rises equally and investment can be expected to happen easier.

#### A) FIRST ACT: THE MAIN ATTRACTION SQUARE

The central space now used as a generously thus inefficiently designed car park is to be re-interpreted as a stage for the eventful city life because of its potential in dimension (can hold up to 3.000 people), its topography (almost entirely flat), its enclosed quality and its connectedness (main roads passing and bus station nearby). The square is the starting point to stimulate liveliness within the centre, also because of the low-cost of the investment to be taken.

- a. Levelling and introduction of steps that serve as exercise-points for skaters, places to rest and watch future events. The direction of the steps also marks the continuation of the disconnected two main commercial roads.
- b. Emptying the square: Removing its single-purposeness as a car park by adding marks on the ground for future sports activities, by removing the sparse vegetation yet respecting the need to offer sufficient parking by maintaining at half of the parking spaces, distributing them more efficiently. Additional parking will be supplied in the northeast corner of the centre.
- c. Offering multifunctional street furniture that enables events such as street soccer (with up to four courts), ice-skating, BMX, skateboarding.
- d. Openings in the ground surface and outlets for water and electricity enable a wide range of public events to take place (flea market, fun-park, concert, etc...)
- e. Application of lighting: Low hanging to create an intimate atmosphere, high hanging for spectacles
- f. The zebra-crossing leading from the bus station is extended and a speed bump introduced to slow down vehicular traffic and gain attention towards the centre from automotive passer-bys.

These interventions set the base for regionwide spectacles that can be imagined to take place in the future of this newly articulated centre.



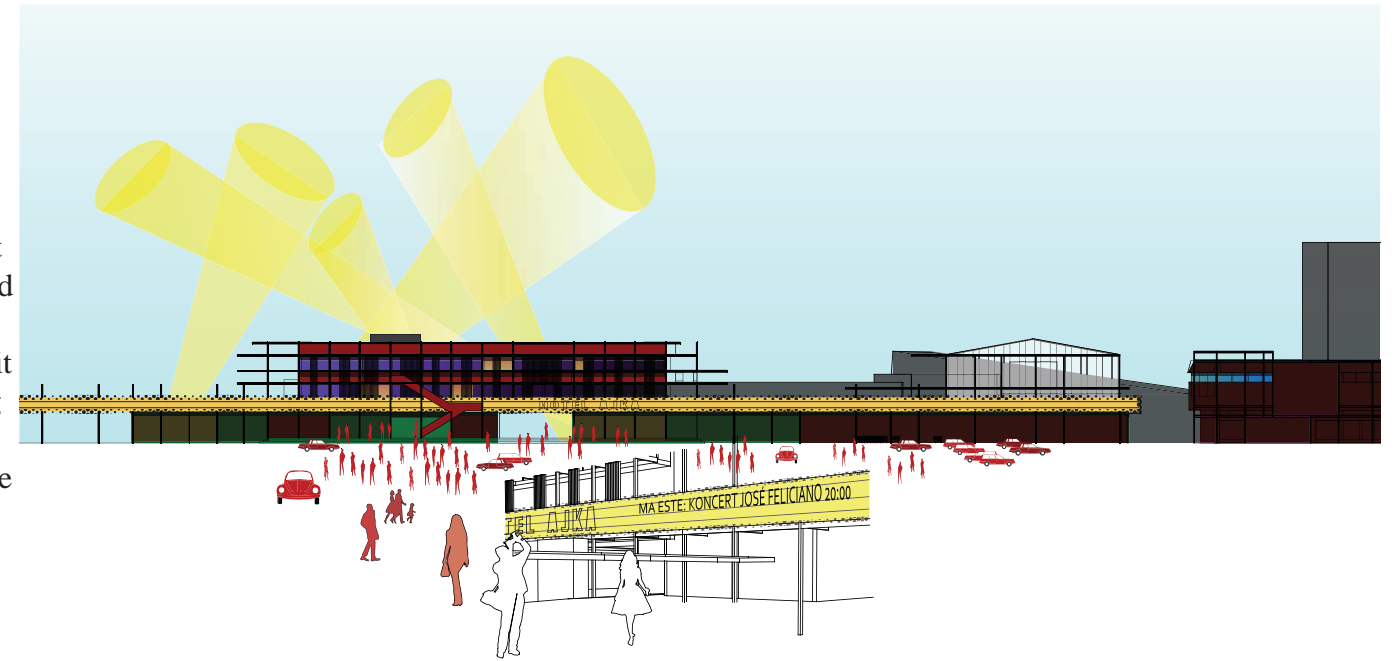


## B) A FRAME FOR THE FACE OF THE CITY

In an age of limitless urbanity, the question of the external representation of a space or area becomes tangled up with questions on identity and superficiality. How can spatial unity be expressed without becoming what is occupied by private commerce, without being perceived as an application of a corporate identity? The attempt to represent Ajka in one homogenous façade has to fail, since it seeks a single core identity that does not exist. Therefore the answer can be found in a structure that itself has no content but strongly encourages an interaction to take place within itself – within a frame. The frame is the image and incarnation of enabling. It becomes the image of the multi-personality of the city. It is the interstice that challenges negotiation, allows for the appropriation of territory and for urbanity to happen. Tectonically it can hold up wall or floor elements. It structures content into chronological sequence of elements, making it readable by laying it out and presenting it in a “before” or “outside” and an “after” or “inside”. It can become an element in itself, becoming a shelf, a thick wall, an arcade, a passage or an offset of the façade behind it. When set afront a commercial space it becomes an offer for the shop-owner to interpret it as a displaying structure, as a covered shelter for goods displayed on the outside, for advertising. And when left untouched it is space for the public disposition.

It is a call for ideas to build up something unpredictable based on difference, a hybrid blur that calls for constant cession between the private and the public.

Spatially the frame wraps the single, one to two story buildings of the centre and underlines their similarities in comparison to the domestic high-rise buildings. The wrap joins the already close buildings together and creates one flat object of the center.

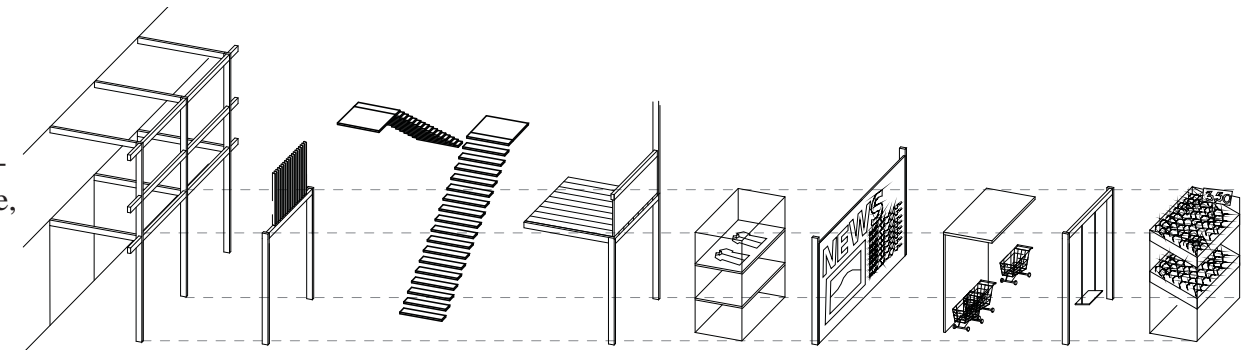


## C) ZENIT COMMERCIAL REDEVELOPMENT – STEPPING BACK TO MOVE FORWARD

The Zenit Commercial Complex will gain importance when rebuilt – as intended by the owner - on the same spot with small but far-reaching consequences: A bar facing the newly activated square will be situated in its ground floor and due to its central location, within the innermost circle of Ajka’s magnetic pole, will without a doubt become one of the main points where locals and visitors mix.

Built in line with the neighbouring building of the Horizont Complex the Zenit Complex helps to shape a continuous path along the north-south axis leading through the central square. This path will not only help to reconnect the two main shopping roads but more importantly by stepping back in line with its neighbours the view onto the church is revealed which will help establish a direct connection between the riverside where the marriage centre can be built.

In order to be prepared for future extension, its structure should be designed in a way that has the load-bearing capacity to hold up a two-storey housing extension in the future. This roof offers shelter by projecting outwards and joining up seamlessly with the Ajka Hotel’s first floor to create a continuous band that ties the elevation together. The overhang also serves as a permanent shelter when needed for small events housed by the bar such as open-air concerts (as technical equipment is sensitive to the elements). On the other ground spaces it incorporates a range of small-scale shops, a bar facing the square and its activities that will become a main attraction and a big commercial space of over 800 square metres. After its completion, the shops from the Ajka Hotel’s ground floor and the structure to the south of it can be preliminarily accomodated there and become the first tenants. Consecutively the commercial life of the centre is maintained and the next refurbishment along Csingeri Road can be taken up:



#### D) AJKA HOTEL REFURBISHMENT

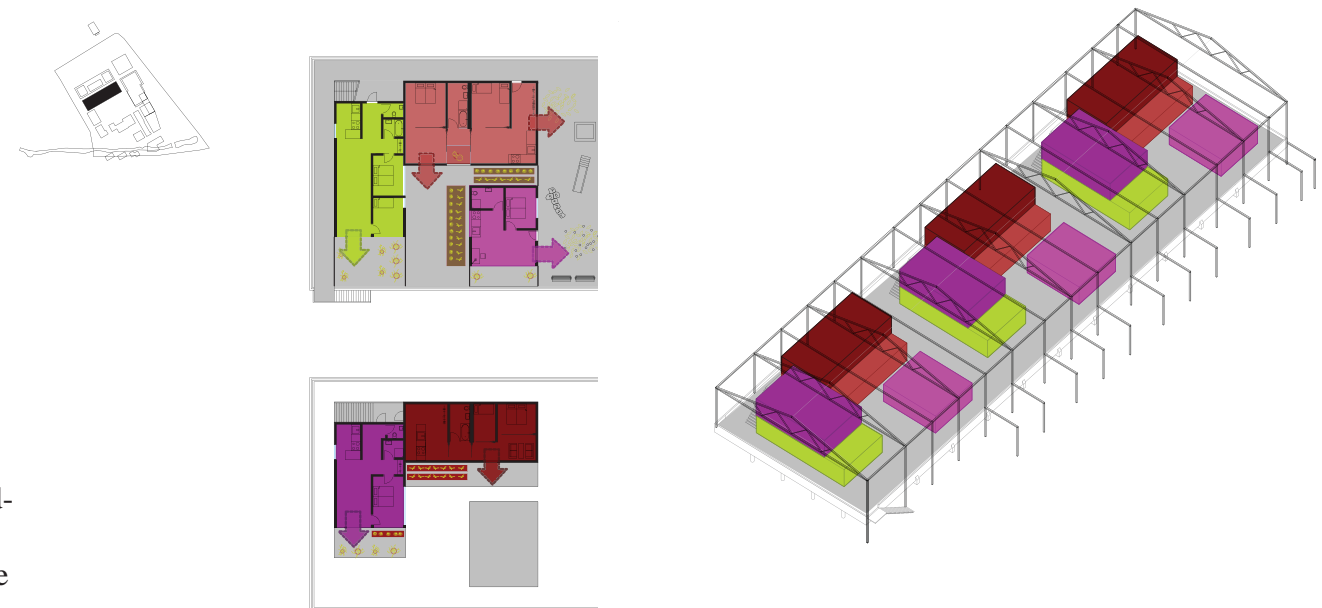
The structure and façade of the Ajka Hotel are being preserved. The inside is liberated from the central circulation axis by adding an external staircase within the common facade. Because this structure is symbolic and because it is already there and not well-used, it will be the first step taken towards establishing housing in the centre. The flats on both storeys are made accessible over the former balconies facing Csingeri Road through an external circulation. Inside, the floor plans are being re-distributed but generally kept in line with the existing walls and service lines. Clusters of negotiable dwellings are established through the alternating introduction of big and small units. These can be rented out - as a group or separately - or joined up with the adjacent flats when required by a change in size of a household. These flats reach from 33 to 120 squaremetres (one maisonette) in 15 flats.

On the ground floor the shops are being re-distributed. Backsides are paired up to close the disconnected commercial paths forming a commercial circle between the covered shopping street and the Shopfront of the Ajka Hotel and the Zenit back to the East-West shopping road. A sliding gate is introduced to hide delivery and to control access for the exceptional but important occasion of a high profile (expensive) special guest visiting the central square to give a performance. An entrance to the main square runs underneath Ajka Hotel and also holds a public toilet, essential equipment to ensure a vital public city life.



#### E) CELEBRATION SPACE AND PROCESSION PATH

The creekside is the calm area, designated for unexpected encounters, for dreaming, a space for yearning. The required multipurpose space for administration and celebrations takes advantage of the view along the river as it is positioned on top of it. Its position also has the effect of creating a celebrational or procession path that runs along the street through the centre in north-south direction, now (after the Zenit's refurbishment) with a viewing connection between the administrative and wedding space and the church.

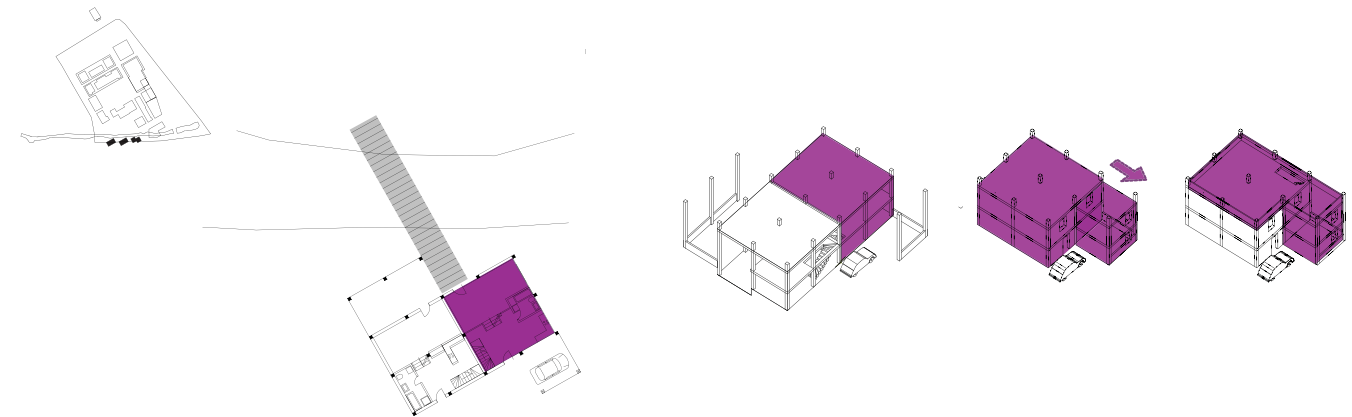


#### F) THE GREEN ACTIVITY STRIP - AJKA'S NEW SPINE

Through small interventions, the area along the creek is about to serve as a green link through the city of Ajka. Established as a continuous weaving band and equipped with a recurring spatial framework and changes in topography, it encompasses areas of movement and joyful activities zones and recess-spaces. Sealed ground surfaces close to the riverbed are being replaced with fallow land. The green strip's boundaries appear soft in highly differentiated transitories that offer open use for outdoor activities for all ages and open up areas of the centre to the public. It flows into pockets of the hard-surfaced areas of the centre in a gradual shift. Lengthwise, a cycling path connects the centre to the periphery and re-establishes the creek as an important urban artery, simultaneously serving as a link for wildlife which will enrich the everyday life and abets sudden encounters of different beings, programs and conditions.

The riverside housing is an analogy to the traditional section of the vernacular Hungarian village layout. It can still be found today, even in Ajka: Little bridges lead over an open water-leading canal that runs between the houses and the street to the entrances of the houses. This gesture is re-interpreted here in the houses along the creek. They are in line with the orthogonality of the centre's buildings and form a border on the south bank of the river thus preventing the centre from "spilling out" into the neighbouring housing areas. The houses' construction is based on the frame structure which makes each individual structure extendable and adaptable. The houses can be extended vertically and horizontally into the front-/back gardens.

These houses offer about 90 square metres in their initial stage and can be extended individually until up to 150 squaremetres. Over all this gives a starting floor area for these flats of 480 squaremetres.



#### G) ROOFTOP HOUSING

The rooftop housing sits on top of the tablet of the commercial building adjacent to the central square. The units are accessed over an external staircase and are enclosed by a glass-house structure built of an inexpensive material like polycarbonate which creates a moderate climate all-year round. The dwelling

blocks inside are units from 30 to 150 square metres in size that can be extended individually. Each unit has their own garden and there are designated shared spaces in between. The climatic advantages given by the transparent enclosure allow a mixture of enclosed and semi-enclosed spaces. Here, 15 flats in five different types are offered –ranging from 48 to 103 squaremetres, giving an overall of 1123.

