

Repairing Housing, Rethinking Education: Experiential Pedagogies in the Lakni Kell Initiative

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Keywords

Housing precarity; Industrial heritage; Sustainable reuse; Design-build pedagogy; Solidarity architecture

This paper examines an experiential educational project that adopts renovation, reuse, and minimal intervention as pedagogical strategies underpinning the 8th iteration of Lakni Kell (“We All Need a Home”) initiative at the University of Pécs.

The intervention aims to address increasing housing precarity with ecological responsibility: demanding a shift in innovation towards transforming what’s already existing. The in-process transformation of a vacant 33 m² municipal apartment to house a family at risk of homelessness began with the design challenge of rehabilitating one of the more than 400 vacant municipality-owned houses, originally erected during the industrialization of the 19th century, vacated since the 20th century as a legacy of regime change and capitalism. The small-scale heritage site provided an opportunity for students to consider the connected processes from design to building through direct engagement with real-world limitations. This included technical issues (reconnecting to utilities) and social considerations supporting the needs of a real client (low-income family at risk of homelessness, transitioning from a shelter facility with a disabled child).

The approach foregrounded collective authorship and situated learning to repair, adapt, and reuse existing materials. Highlights include: university students worked along volunteers skilled labor, applying existing construction methods - collaborations that bridged design digital tool learning with techniques utilizing locally available material donations - design faculty mentored vocational students to apply contemporary building trade skills (such as heat insulating and plastering) to restore sensitive heritage conditions

Developed through a multi-stakeholder collaboration between municipality, NGOs, educational institutions, and industry partners, the paper introduces a discussion that considers opportunities of the small-scale and deliberate pace of a university pedagogical project in the civic context. Ongoing collaboration with civic actors considers how the reserve of vacant municipal plots could support regional housing demand while sustaining the ethical, social and material commitments of this small teaching pilot.