The Pursuit of Low Cost and Good Quality. The Changing Judgement of Pre-Designed Family Houses in Hungary

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"The primordial instinct of every human being is to assure himself of a shelter" – stated Le Corbusier in 1923, as he proposed to solve the problem with mass-produced houses to avoid revolution.[1] Although the master's prototype was a family house, he was thinking of multi-family housing buildings on an urban scale, and the majority of modern architects professed this view. However, family houses have not disappeared to this day, while especially after World War II they seemed outdated for the newly formed socialist-state countries in Eastern Europe. This paper will summarize the seventy years history of standard family house design in Hungary. I analyze the situation from the perspective of politicians, architects, and builders who were the main participants to this process. How did the communist (later socialist) party judge the topic? How did the architects' opinion change? Which were the arguments for standardization? How can the situation be followed through the changing name of pre-designed single-family houses: standard, recommended, model?

After the War

After World War II, a democratic government came to power in Hungary. Architects who gained leading positions were either social democrats or communists and followers of the Modern Movement, so they believed that adequate living conditions could be ensured via mass production and mainly in large housing estates. The first statements that were published on future housing reflected this approach. The Government Commissioner of Building published a thin book compiled by architects summarizing the housing reform and the housing concept for towns. Against the pre-war social buildings with small-sized flats and low comfort level, the author proposed another solution. He opted for "standard plans, meant to make blocks of flats more up-to-date, prepare suitable building regulations, and establish site-, material-, and credit requirements for a block of flats program."[2] The author rationalized the floor area of the flats while he proposed for each apartment electricity, running water and central heating. The collection covered flats for inhabitants between one to six. The program did not consider families larger than six persons. "We should take care of families with more than four children in family houses with a garden," the author stated.[3]

Modernist architects agreed that the housing shortage should be solved with blocks of flats. However, they also had to face the fact that plot parceling started right after the war in many

1 Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture* (New York: Dover Publications, 1986), 269.

2 Jenő Kismarty-Lechner, *Városi lakástípusok* [Urban housing types] (Budapest, Országos Építésügyi Kormánybiztosság, 1947), 9.

3 Ibid., 14.

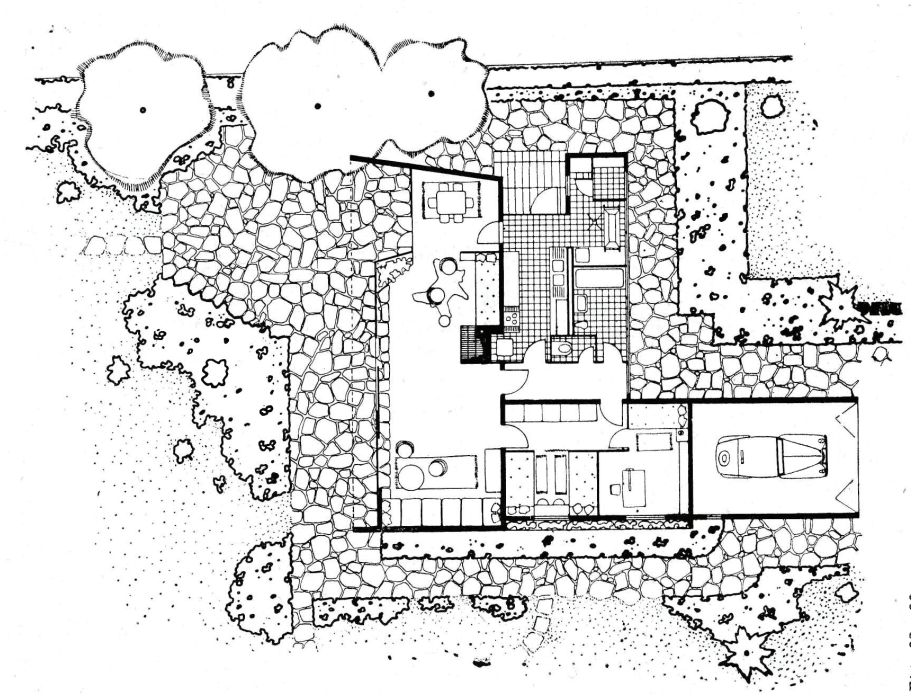


Fig. 1: Free-standing family house. A glass wall connects the living room to the garden.

settlements. It happened mainly in the villages but also in the towns. Architects reacted to this situation differently. Pál Granasztói did not exclude family houses as an element of the city but listed two disadvantages. Because of the large territory that family houses cover, they are not economical in matters of public utility and transport supply. For the same reason, "the family, the home is easily disconnected from the community, and they are left alone."[4] His colleague, Máté Major, expressed his reservation against family houses more clearly. Although he stressed the same practical and material problems — uneconomical use of territory and expensive public utility supply — he connected the family house owners to their ancestors building their house during capitalism. "This social layer was the most reliable base for the reactionary, semi- and wholly fascist governments of all time, just because of its negative, passive behavior."[5] From this time on, mentioning a family house as a petty-bourgeois left-over became a recurrent stigma.

Although the protagonists of modern architecture intended to solve the housing shortage in multi-family houses, they also realized that people should have shelter as soon as possible. In 1948 the newly founded Architectural Research Centre launched a book under the title *Family Houses*. The authors listed the disadvantages of family houses, such as needing "larger sites, longer roads, longer water mains and drains, involving bigger expenditures." They also mentioned the advantages of quick construction and the possibility of "gardening as a support for the family."[6] Against the limited material possibilities, the floor area of the presented 14 houses moved between 90 and 140 sqm, and they involved full public utilities. (Fig. 1)

4 Pál Granasztói, "A kislakásépítés városrendezési kérdései" [Urban planning issues of small apartment building], *Új Építészet* 1 (1946): 5.

5 Máté Major, "Egy családiház-telep tanulságai" [Lessons from a family house colony], *Tér és forma* 1-3 (1946): 26.

6 Lajos Gádoros et al., *Családi lakóházak* [Family Houses] (Budapest: Építéstudományi Központ, 1948).

The collection contained one- and two-story versions as well as freestanding and tract houses. The authors of the plans did not name them "standard designs," but the design offered standard parts, like the economic block (kitchen, storage, bath, laundry room), the living block and the bedrooms. The book presented a family house plan based on prefabricated, modular elements, reflecting on the expected technical development.

The expressed professional refusal of family houses seemed more idealistic than realistic. According to the 1949 census, 84.6% of the flats were in a one-dwelling house. This rate was 89.6% in villages.[7] The same census reported only 20,781 newly built apartments completed since the war. The statistics did not mention how many flats or houses were built in villages, where no central support was given to families except for the plot allocation.[8] The persistent housing shortage, parallel with the radical change in the political power resulted in a new approach to building industry and family houses.

Standard Design

In 1949 the communist party (Hungarian Workers' Party) seized power, resulting in the nationalization of the building industry and the architectural design offices. In the spirit of the new cost reduction campaign, the housing construction focused on dwellings, like earlier, but quality decreased, and the technology became more traditional. As an additional element of the trend, the standard plans became compulsory. The new official standard designs came out in the same year. Following political and architectural preferences, the collection concentrated on apartment buildings and included only five freestanding single-family houses, two for urban and three for rural use. To meet the requirements — to be cheap but to simultaneously offer good quality — the architects reduced the floor area with up to 40 sqm with a possibility of later expansion up to 55 sqm.[9] It should be mentioned that the application of standard design for family houses was compulsory only in the case of housing projects financed by the state or a state-owned company. In a strictly planned economy, the different housing types were also a matter of previous decision, at least theoretically. Participants at the conference of the Association of Hungarian Architects took this rule seriously. As one contributor expressed, architects should ask the government to decide on "how many family houses should be built and where, how many apartment houses should be built and where. A regional 5-year housing plan should be prepared."[10]

The situation changed when Imre Nagy, the new prime minister, formed a government in July 1953. His program also included the increase in housing construction. To fulfil the promise of building 40,000 flats within one year, he also took family houses into account.[11] Budapest offered large territories for groups of family houses for actions sponsored by ministries, public institutions, and state companies in the spirit of the changing trend.[12] Similar activities started

7 *1949.évi népszámlálás 4. Épület- és lakásstatisztikai eredmények*. [1949 Census 4. book: Building and housing statistics] (Budapest: Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 1950), Charts 14. and 15.

8 The 1949 census published data for two main settlement groups. The first, including the capital, the towns and the "town like villages" included 1,241,013 flats, and 20,781 of them were built after 1945. The other group, the villages, included 1,237,914 flats. While the census published detailed data concerning the quality of the houses and flats in villages, it did not publish data about the new flats built after 1945 (*1949 Census 4. book*, chart 40).

9 Imre Perényi, "Az 1949. évi típustervek" [The 1949 standard designs], *Új Építészet* 2 (1949): 81-88.

10 Zoltán László's comment. "A Magyar Építőművészek Szövetsége lakásépítési ankétja. 1952 július 25-26" [Association of Hungarian Architects' conference on housing. 25-26, July 1952], *Magyar Építőművészet* 4 (1952): 165.

11 "A legszélesebb nemzeti egység programja" [Programme of the widest national unity], *Szabad nép* (July 6, 1953): 1.

12 J.G., "Családiház építési mozgalom indul Budapesten" [Family house construction movement starts in Budapest], *Magyar Nemzet* (November 10, 1953): 3.

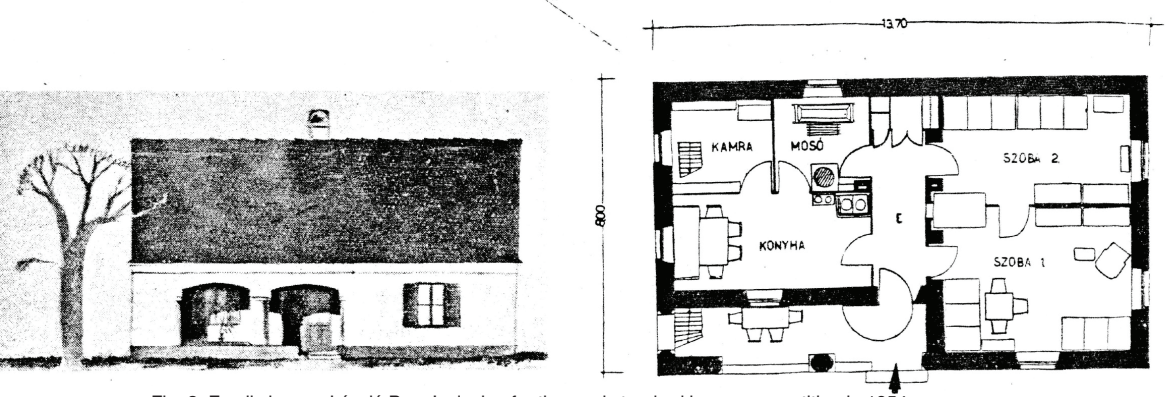


Fig. 2: Family house. László Bene's design for the rural standard house competition in 1954.

in the countryside, where the government planned or already started industrial development. The family houses built within the mentioned construction campaigns became private property, for which the builders received a long-term loan. The government soon extended the action for private builders.[13] The ministerial decree announced site allocations for potential house builders at a low price, offering a long-term loan with an obligation to construct.

The action offered a further discount: those applicants who intended to apply the standard design received the plans for free. The state planning office, MEZŐTERV (Agricultural Building Design Company), with the main profile to support the building in socialist agriculture, prepared eight standard family house designs in 1951. The houses had one or two rooms, but the design office also undertook the standard design of barns and sheds.[14] Self-building one's house, an action announced in 1953, also forced other state planning offices to prepare more standard designs. The LAKÓTERV (Residential Building Company) announced even an internal design competition. These plans were intended to be used in the new mining settlements, that is, in a former rural surrounding. "Four different standard houses won the jury's favor: these pretty little houses with porches, wide windows reflect our folk traditions on the colored drawings."[15] Parallel with the announcement of the government program, a competition was announced for the architects at all state planning offices to propose standard family houses for rural use. The employees were very active, so the jury received 330 plans. Among them, 23 received the award, and nine were reworked as official standard design.[16] The self-build house action coincided with the so-called socialist-realist style in architecture (1949-1954); consequently, the outlook of the standard rural family houses reflected the details of traditional rural buildings. (Fig. 2) The layout based on the restricted floor area – one or two rooms – did not allow too much freedom of design, so the deviations concentrated mainly on the façade. All the selected buildings had a pitched roof and a porch. The differences appeared in the position of the porch and the placing and decoration of its posts.[17]

The increase in family house building activity raised both technical and aesthetic problems. Builders suffered from the lack of materials that were mainly channeled to industrial and public buildings, as well as the lack of skilled workers. Consequently, local master builders built the majority of new private houses, based on their own design. Architects analyzed the

13 "A város- és községgazdálkodási miniszter és a pénzügyminiszter 1/1954 (II. 28.) V. K. G. M. számú együttes rendelete a magánerőből történő lakóházépítés, bővítés és helyreállítás előmozdításáról" [Decree of the Minister of Urban and Municipal Management and the Minister of Finance on the promotion of construction, extension, and renovation of private houses], *Magyar Közlöny* 14 (1954): 79-86.

14 n.t., "Ahol az új magyar falvakat tervezik" [Where new Hungarian villages are planned], *Kis Újság* (April 22, 1951): 3.

15 Rózsa Fehér, "Akiknek tervei nyomán lakások tízezrei épülnek" [Tens of thousands of homes are built based on their plans], *Magyar Nemzet* (December 29, 1953): 3.

16 "330 pályamű közül kiválasztották a falusi lakóházak típusterveit" [Standard designs for rural houses were selected from 330 proposals], *Esti Hírlap* (February 26, 1954): 3.

17 Kálmán Tóth, "A falusi lakóházak típusterveire kiírt tervpályázat eredményei" [Results of the competition announced for standard designs in rural settlements], *Magyar Építőipar* 1 (1954): 8-14.

results of the family house movement both in Budapest and in the country. The more extensive territories parceled for family houses and built upon with different designs resulted in an overall confused picture from an urban planning perspective.[18] However, the harsh criticism touched the buildings instead. A detailed survey delivered in a settlement near the capital city showed that only 15 per cent of the new houses were single tract, and 85 per cent were double tract. The author interpreted this fact by housebuilders trying to escape from the image of traditional peasant houses and opting instead for the double tract family houses of the petty bourgeois. "The choice between the two is guided by neighbors' example, the insistence for the customary layout or the demand of modernity and the master builder's advice."[19] In Budapest, the author of the survey accused the generally low quality of family houses and the master builders, who apply the same design regardless the site. "The buildings bear the marks of master-builder architecture, and their majority was built in the smaller town style of the 1920s and 1930s, they apply uneconomical, wood demanding construction and do not have any connection to the architectural ideals of our new society."[20]

To sum it up, the architectural profession was not happy with the growing number of new family houses built by local master builders and not based on type design. They evaluated them as obsolete, ugly and considered them of technically low quality. The architects suggested elaborating more standard family house designs and moving from separate single-family dwellings to actions on a significant scale and they developed technical solutions like prefabricated elements. The state planning offices soon worked out more standard designs for family houses.[21] Because there were only a few plans for town houses, the authorities announced an open competition just for this category.[22] As a further element improving architectural quality, the profession suggested narrowing the circle of designers. This proposal was realized in 1958 when the ministerial decree excluded master builders from the planning of family houses higher than ground level.[23]

The revolution in 1956 scaled the private housebuilding down, but state planning offices did not stop designing even more standard plans. In October 1959, a daily newspaper already reported about 44 new family house designs. The category "family house" covered single-family houses and semi-detached houses with two or four flats.[24] The expanding offer of the standard design was related to a change in politics. In 1960 the government announced a 15-year housing plan, in which – admitting to reality – they also calculated with private housing activity at 40 per cent.[25] The decision gave an exact schedule for every five years and expected a steadily growing number of built flats. The political acceptance of private housing, especially single-family houses, generated a yearlong discussion among the intellectuals as to their allegiance to the socialist society or not.[26]

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18 György Abai, "A fővárosi sajátház akcióról" [On the capital's private house action]. *Magyar Építőművészet* 9-10 (1955): 282-290.

19 József Ránki, "Sajátház építés Dabas községben" [Private house construction in Dabas], *Magyar Építőipar* 8 (1955): 371.

20 Abai, „A fővárosi sajátház akcióról," 283.

21 "Tájékoztató a családiház típustervekről" [Information on family house standard designs], *Magyar Nemzet* (May 15, 1955): 4.

22 "Tervpályázat fővárosi családi ház típustervekre" [Architectural competition for standard family houses at the capital], *Magyar Nemzet* (October 7, 1955): 4.

23 "Az Építésügyi Miniszter 3/1958 (X.29.) É. M. számú rendelete a nem közületi építkezések tervezéséről" [Decree of the Minister of Building Affairs on the design of not public constructions], *Magyar Közlöny* 100 (1958): 731-732.

24 "44 terv családiház építésére" [44 designs for family houses], *Magyar Nemzet* (October 3, 1959): 5.

25 "A Magyar Forradalmi Munkás-Paraszt Kormány 1.002/1960. (I. 10.) számú határozata a 15 éves lakásfejlesztési tervről" [Decision of Revolutionary Worker-Peasant Government on the 15-yearlong housing development plan], *Magyar Közlöny* 3 (1960): 17-20.

26 About these discussions see Mariann Simon, "Architecture in the Hungarian Cultural Media in the 1960s," *Studies in History & Theory of Architecture* 1 (2013): 30-44.

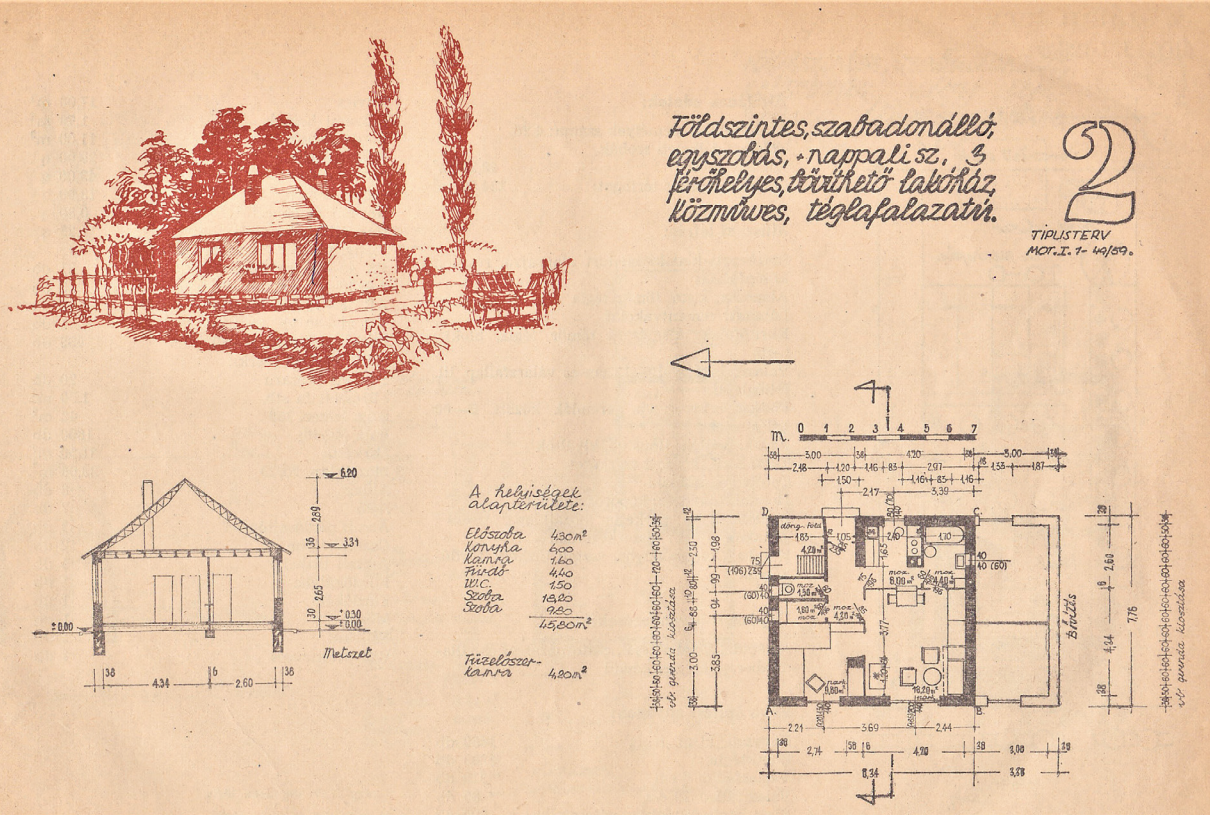


Fig. 3: No. 2 Standard house with tent roof.

Although the government intended to provide material support primarily to multi-family housing buildings, the family house remained the foremost opportunity to create a home for people, especially in the countryside. The Standard Design Institute, founded in the same year, soon increased the number of plans for standard family houses and the Ministry also invested in their official distribution and popularization. The 1961 catalogue presented 38 plans for freestanding family houses, though only 24 were labelled as standard design.[27] The houses shown in the catalogue had 1-3 rooms with a floor area ranging from 40 to 80 square meters. Most of them were planned for a plot endowed with public utility services including electricity, water and sewer network, while the latter two were not available, especially in villages. (Fig. 3, Fig. 4) Against this, there were only two designs that counted with the worst level of public supply. Standard design plans were cheap and made the building permit process easier. Still, the construction costs were high, and the acquisition of materials was even more time-consuming in economic times of shortage. It is not surprising that clients preferred the two-room design versions topped with a tent roof, the cheapest wooden roof structure. These 50-60 m^3 buildings looked like a cube, and the public later called them "Kádár-cubes" after the Hungarian prime minister between 1961 and 1965.

The rapid start of private house construction resulted in the Ministry of Building Affairs publishing a new extended official list of standard houses in 1962. By then, this new list offered 48 versions for single-family dwellings.[28] The authority believed that the broader supply of standard designs would push private builders to choose the cheaper solution, which at the same time ensures better architectural quality. They were disappointed: against the new plans, most

27 *Családiház tervgyűjtemény* [Single-family house design collection] (Budapest: Építésügyi Minisztérium, 1961).

28 "Az építésügyi miniszter 1/1962. (III. 22.) É M számú rendelete a 'Családiház tervgyűjtemény' közzétételéről és alkalmazásáról" [Decree of the Minister of Building Affairs on the publication and application of the "Single-family house design collection"], *Magyar Közlöny* 19 (1962): 196-200.

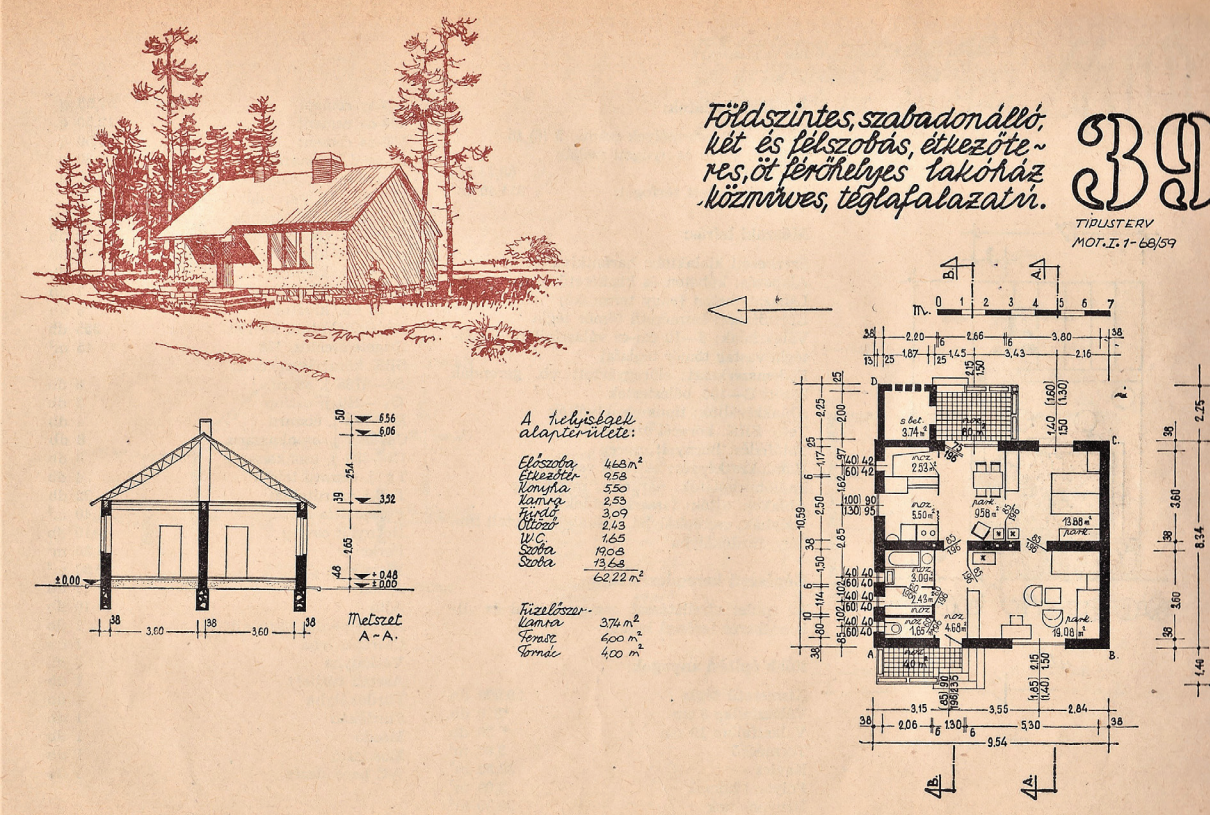


Fig. 4: No. 39 Standard house with pitched roof.

family houses were based on individual designs. The architects – again – were not happy with the built result. The professionals considered the family houses obsolete, ugly, adding that they were also expensive. So, an architect accused the family house builders: "What a waste of materials, what an unreasonable use of land; the man of the nuclear age does not even know his own needs and his well-conceived interests!"[29] While in the early 1950s, family houses were politically retrograde representing the petty bourgeoisie, in the 1960s professionals accused them of being technically outdated. It should be noted that the official standard family house designs of the 1960s also applied traditional building technology within the reach of private builders.

The profession's proposed reaction was almost the same as earlier. They suggested preparing more appealing standard plans and popularized them through several forums and exhibitions. They also appeared in publications – and financially derived – that multi-family housing buildings or even tract houses would be more economical and create a nicer settlement scape.[30] While the architects stressed the wasteful use of traditional building materials instead of contemporary prefabricated elements, it was clear for the majority that many family houses were built on sites without public utilities, which excluded concentrated housing projects. What proved to be an additional obstacle was that, for multi-family homes, the builders were forced to commission construction cooperatives. Still, a single-family house could be built with a master builder and with the help of friends and colleagues. By the end of 1965, the closing year of the five-year plan and the first phase of the 15-years housing program, the numbers showed success and disappointment alike. The housing development plan calculated with 250,000 flats, with 40 per cent of private housing. At the same time, the result reached the expected sum, but with 60 per cent of private construction. The majority of the 150,000 dwellings were single-family houses because this was the only type that was possible to build up without

29 Károly Ferenczy, "Életforma – lakáskérdés" [Lifestyle – housing issue], *Valóság* 2 (1963): 72.

30 László Ábrahám, "Társasház- és sorházépítés" [Multi-family housing and row house construction], *Állam és Igazgatás* 10 (1964): 936-944.



MOT I. 58-86/65a

TERVEZŐ: ÉM SZEGEDI TV
LAKÁSTERÜLET: 59,70 m^2
BEÉPÍTETT TÉRFOGAT: 300 m^3
TÁJÉKOZTATÓ IRÁNYÁR: 164 000,— Ft

Fig. 5: Standard house with two and a half room.
Fig. 6: Standard house with three and a half room.



MOT I. 58-90/65

TERVEZŐ: BUDAPESTI VÁROSÉPÍTÉSI TV
LAKÁSTERÜLET: 75,58 m^2
BEÉPÍTETT TÉRFOGAT: 322 m^3
TÁJÉKOZTATÓ IRÁNYÁR: 190 000,— Ft

a construction company.[31] Economic aspects coincided with the architectural opinion that the state should support multi-family housing building constructions, but it also discovered fundamental contradictions. Group housing construction needed larger plots with public works and well-equipped building companies, which were also in short supply.

In 1965 – at the beginning of the new five-year plan – the Ministry of Building Affairs established the Own House Construction Programme to give impetus to private housing and help builders. As a result, publications on housing increased in daily newspapers. The authors compared the differences between the family houses and multi-family housing buildings and stressed the advantages of the latter.[32] To transmit samples, the Ministry constructed even a row house group as part of a state-financed prefabricated housing estate in an outer district of Budapest.[33] This project was soon followed by another in Szentendre, a small city in the capital surroundings.[34] In the case of publications, single-family homes always appeared alongside other types of multi-family buildings.

In 1967 a new catalogue of standard family houses was edited, which intended to guide private housebuilders and "disseminate a modern approach to detached house design." The collection contained 22 designs and presented most of them in a semi-detached version.[35] Compared to the earlier, 1961 collection the average floor area had increased, so most houses covered 60-65 sqm meters, but items also appeared with 75-80 sqm. (Fig. 5, Fig. 6) While a few projects appeared already in the earlier collection with the characteristic tent roof, now the pitched top became dominant. Standard house designs intended to touch the average taste; however, the fashionable asymmetrical pitched roof also appeared in the catalogue: three houses applied it. Under the label of enhancing the quality of private houses, the Ministry of Building Affairs launched a new decree in the same year. It further limited the design permissions of master builders and technicians and it also founded in each county an architectural committee for checking the submitted designs.[36]

From 1949 on, state planning offices prepared the standard designs, including those needed for family houses. Concerning the first collections, the architects labelled the plans as intended for rural or urban use. However, these presented only slight differences that disappeared entirely from the 1961 and 1967 catalogues. Both publications offered designs for building sites with and without public utilities, but their layout hardly differed. The plans did not consider rural life, namely, that the builders also intend to use their site for production: they would grow plants and keep animals. By the turn of the decade, it became clear that most family houses were built in the countryside, which, together with the acceptance of backyard farming, forced the authorities to reflect on the situation.

The concerned organizations admitted this fact and in 1969 announced a national design competition for rural family houses.[37] It was the first in a row of subsequent similar open calls. The competition's aim was complex and intended to solve all the emerging problems of the

31 The analysis calculated with the way of financing and did not separate the results according to multi- or single-family houses. Károly Stefanovits, "Saját pénzből – lakás" [An apartment – from your own money], *Figyelő* (August 25, 1965): 1.

32 István Oroszi, "Lakásépítésünk ma: Társasházak és családi házak" [Housing construction today: Multi-family housing buildings and family houses], *Népszabadság* (May 6, 1966): 5.

33 I.O., „Családi ház, sorház, társasház: Új típustervek a magánlakás építőknek" [Family house, row house, multi-family housing buildings: New standard designs for private builders], *Népszabadság* (September 30, 1966): 4.

34 Dr. Loránd Tobiás, "Vágy, gond, öröm: A családi ház" [Desire, worry and pleasure: The family house], *Népszabadság* (August 29, 1967): 10.

35 *Családiház tervek* [Family house designs] (Budapest: ÉM Építésügyi Tájékoztatási Központ, 1967).

36 "Az Építésügyi Miniszter 2/1967 (IV.9.) É.M. számú rendelete a magántervezési tevékenységről" [Decree of the Ministry of Building Affairs on private planning activity], *Magyar Közlöny* 21 (1967): 195-198.

37 The competition was announced by the Ministry of Building Affairs and Urban Development, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, the National Association of Small Craft Cooperatives, and the National Association of Cooperatives.

rural way of life as well as of the expected modernity. According to the announcement, designs should take into consideration home functions, outbuildings, and potential extensions.[38] This material became the basis of the 18 new standard designs for rural family houses published a year later.[39] The organizers built one of the winning designs at the National Agricultural and Food Exhibition. The project's special feature was that behind the family house there were barns connected with the house through an open but roofed passage. The visitors of the exhibition appreciated the design, but most of them found the construction too expensive. The applied materials were of high quality, but the organizers reassured the anxious visitors that they could build the complex in several steps and with cheaper materials.[40]

The first proposal to change the name of the standard family house plans appeared in connection with the 1969 rural house competition. However, the paper appeared in a periodical for monument protection. The author suggested changing the name to "trend setting plan," which would not stress the rigid constraints of type designs disliked by builders.[41] However, the renaming and its acceptance still took a long time.

Recommended Design

In the last third of the 15-years housing plan, the government already realized that the state would not be able to build the planned 60 per cent of the 1 million flats, so the private housing construction should get more support. The political accusations of housebuilders as being anti-community had ceased for a long time. Instead of political aspects, the architects and journalists focused on the stylistic problems of family houses. The "cube house" expression appeared and became widespread in the early 1970s. It represented the low aesthetic standard, the ugly design of local master builders. The statement was false – local master builders were already excluded from house design according to the ministerial decrees of 1958 and 1967 – but the idea was appealing. It shifted the focus from the political sphere to the aesthetic one, which can be improved by education and good examples. Newspapers often published helpful information for potential builders in regular columns. In 1972, in line with the easing of political pressure, a new name appeared for pre-designed family houses: recommended houses. The expression appeared in a daily newspaper. The journalist reflected the architects' opinions. Instead of single-family houses, multi-family houses or tract houses should be built, and if the family house is unavoidable, it should have two stories and a smaller plot. As a problem, the author stressed that standard designs did not reflect the local surroundings, so they led to uniformity; consequently, the recommended plans should be prepared according to their different regions.[42]

By that time, the authorities had realized that only a low percentage of all family houses were built following a standard design[43] and that people needed larger homes than those proposed in the catalogues. For a greater variety of plans, the authorities announced national competitions. The line began with a (second) competition for the agricultural family house in 1973, which already considered the need for backyard farming. In the following years several counties announced – alone or in association with a neighboring county – architectural competitions

38 "Szép falu – szép lakóház: Tervpályázati felhívás" [Nice village – nice house], *OKISZ Értesítő* (September 13, 1969): 440-441.

39 "Új típustervek modern falusi lakóházakhoz" [New standard designs for modern rural family houses], *Magyar Hírlap* (December 22, 1970): 2.

40 Júlia Hajdú, "Szép falu – szép lakóház" [Nice village – nice house], *Szabad Föld* (September 20, 1970): 12.

41 Nándor Gilyén, "Néhány gondolat a falu építészetéről – egy pályázat tanulságai alapján" [Some thoughts on the architecture of the village – based on the lessons of a competition], *Műemlékvédelem* 4 (1970): 250-251.

42 Ernő Keserű, "Ne a kőműves ízlése szerint: A korszerű családiház építés gondjai" [Not according to the taste of the master builder: Problems of building a modern family house], *Magyar Nemzet* (June 22, 1972): 5.

43 The different sources estimated the rate of standard design between 2 and 14 % in this period.

with particular attention to their environmental conditions.[44] These competitions were also popular among architects, who had more time with the declining official workload meaning fewer state commissions. By the end of 1975, due to this rich collection of family house proposals, already 230 recommended designs were offered for potential builders. The new county collections of family houses were already officially named "recommended designs," but they still appeared as standard or standard-recommended designs in popular publications.

The Own House Construction Programme applied numerous means of promotion to enhance the quality of family house building. In 1972 the Hungarian Television announced a competition for family houses completed after 1965. The organizers calculated with the presentation and evaluation of the best 30 submitted buildings, and for the winners, they even offered a cash prize.[45] In 1974, one of the largest publishers edited an attractive book on family houses *Az én házam* [My own house]. The title itself expressed the changing political attitude towards private housebuilders.[46] The book selected its examples mainly from abroad but also included projects also from Hungary. Although the authors avoided presenting standard designs, they extended the list with attractive international examples of prefabricated family houses.

The 15-year housing plan ended in 1975, and the government immediately launched a second 15-year housing plan for the period 1976-1990. Once again, they calculated 1,500,000 dwellings, but based on the previous experiences this time – they intended to realize 850,000 units – 57 %, that is the majority, through private financing. (Fig. 7, Fig. 8) The Own House Construction Programme Committee dissolved at the end of 1975 and was reorganized in the same year as the Private Housing Development Program Committee. The change of name expressed the acceptance of private property either for a flat or a house. 550,000 of the 850,000 private dwellings were still planned to be realized as family houses, despite all the struggles and the demonstrated resentment of the architectural profession.[47] In the meantime, the architects' reservation was weakening. The professionals were more involved in the design of family houses, not only as participants in competitions but also as private designers, especially in Budapest and in larger towns. Consequently – while professionally they agreed that family housing in grouped form is more economical and up to date – they focused on shaping the public taste. In the following years, the shaping of public taste became a vital Ministry project by distributing good examples via exhibitions, radio, and television programs, and over the regular newspaper columns. Even the Association of Hungarian Architects announced two competitions for collecting proposals on the development of architectural taste.[48] After leaving behind their earlier political connotations, it seemed that by the end of the decade family houses turned from a practical theme to a more cultural issue. In the second part of the 1970s, several national competitions for family houses were announced. Based on the competition materials, the Construction Information Centre regularly published and distributed the plans of the recommended design for family houses. The valuable competition entries were processed in state planning offices. In 1979 potential builders could already select from 135 recommended family house designs.[49]

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44 Between 1972 and 1975 five regional family house design competitions were organized, with an average 80-90 entries. Gáborné Óbert, "A családiház tervpályázatok célja, eredményei" [Aim and results of family house competitions], *Magyar Nemzet* (May 30, 1975): 7.

45 "Kétszázhúszezer forint a családiház-pályázat legjobbjainak" [Twenty-two thousand forints for the best applicants of best entries of the family house competition], *Magyar Nemzet* (February 6, 1972): 3.

46 Ferenc Callmeyer and Ervin Rojkó, *Az én házam* [My own house] (Budapest: Műszaki Könyvkiadó, 1974).

47 K.D. "Sokirányú segítség 190.000 új családi házhoz" [Complex help for 190.000 new family houses], *Népszabadság* (June 2, 1976): 1. The 190,000 family houses mentioned in the title were intended to be achieved between 1976 and 1980.

48 *Építészeti tanulmány pályázat 1978* [Architectural study competition 1978] (Budapest: MÉSZ, 1979) and *Építészeti tanulmánypályázat 1980* [Architectural study competition 1980] (Budapest: MÉSZ, 1982).

49 Tamás L. Puskás, "Önerőből: A családiház-építők gondjai" [Self-financed: Problems of family house builders], *Magyar Nemzet* (October 7, 1979): 7.

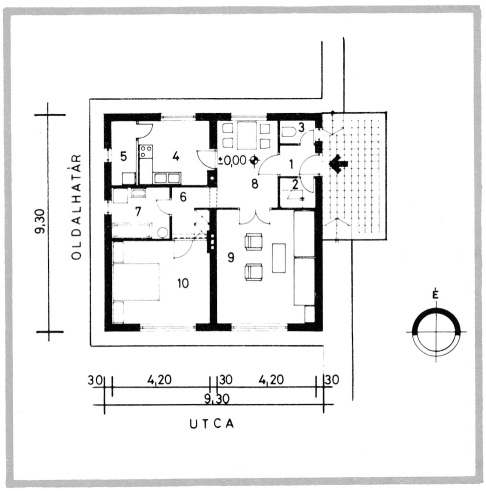
SOLT **CS 00 H 10 AV SPM**

Az épület megnevezése a tervjegyzékben

Hagyományos családi ház, sík terepen (II., III. és IV. építési övezetben), földszintes, oldalhatáron álló, 10. számú

Kétszobás
70,71 m² lakásterülettel (4 F)
(CS 00 H 10 A SPM jelű terv tükörképe)
Utólagos tetőtérbeépítés esetén a TASS CS 00 H 10 TV M v. a. HARTA CS OO H 10 TV P jelű tervet kell használni.

ÉPÍTMÉNY-FAJTA	HAGYOMÁNYOS CSALÁDI HÁZ	CS
TEREP ÉS SZINTSZÁM	SÍK TEREP FÖLDSZINTES	00
BEÉPÍTÉSI MÓD	OLDALHATÁRON ÁLLÓ	H
SORSZÁM	A TERV AZONOSÍTÁSI JELE	10
TERVFAJTA	ALAPTERV	AV
TETŐFORMA	UTCÁHOZ VISZONYÍTVA	SPM



1. Szélfogó	1,37×1,50=	2,05 m²
2. Kamra	1,24×1,50=	1,86 m²
3. W. C.	0,96×1,50=	1,44 m²
4. Konyha	2,60×3,00=	7,80 m²
5. Kamra	1,14×2,74=	2,86 m²
6. Gardrob	1,50×2,16=	3,30 m²
7. Fürdőszoba	2,16×2,52=	5,44 m²
8. Lakóelőtér	2,60×3,69=	9,59 m²
9. Nappali	4,20×4,96=	20,83 m²
10. Háló	3,70×4,20=	15,54 m²
Lakásterület:		**70,71 m²**



Sátortetős változat
CS 00 H 10 AV S



Utcával párhuzamos gerincű nyeregtetővel
CS 00 H 10 AV P



Utcára merőleges gerincű nyeregtetővel
CS 00 H 10 AV M

2/1978

In 1980 the Ministry introduced new regulations of private planning activity.[50] The decree excluded technicians from family house design but let them adapt recommended plans. In the case of architectural engineers with a BSc, the legislation prescribed five years of professional experience. While earlier these two groups prepared the bulk of the design for family houses, the new restrictions resulted in a radical increase in the use of recommended plans, especially in the countryside. Builders of recommended plans received a 10% higher construction loan, which was an additional benefit.[51] By the first part of the 1980s, the distribution of recommended designs had become a business. The state-owned *Construction Information Centre* started to advertise in daily newspapers the recommended plans as a product. This turn was understandable because against the 57 % – as planned according to the housing plan of

50 "Az építésügyi és városfejlesztési miniszter 21/1980. (IX. 13.) ÉVM számú rendelete a magántervezési tevékenységről" [Decree of the Minister for Building Affairs and Urban Development on private planning activity] *Magyar Közlöny* 66 (1980): 934-939.

51 Ernő Rozgonyi, "Hogyan változnak a lakásépítés pénzügyi feltételei?" [On the change of the financial conditions for housing], *Magyar Nemzet* (April 24, 1981): 8.

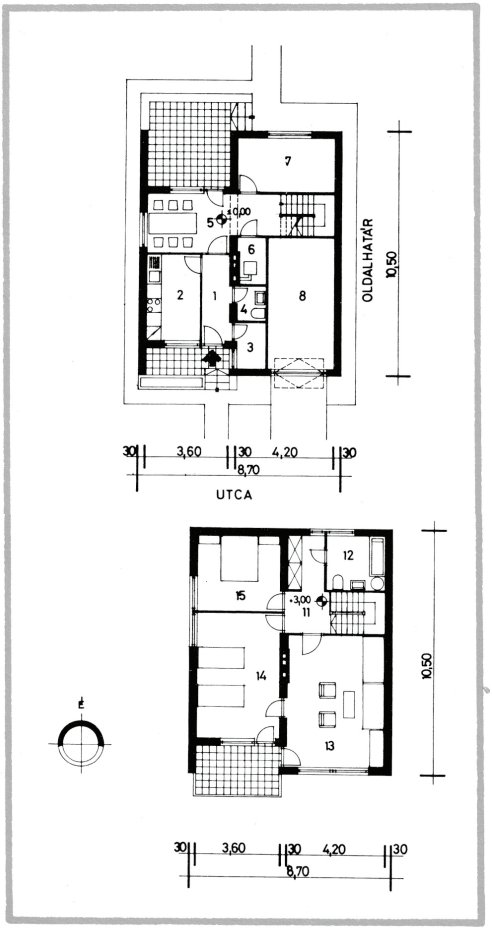
TOLNA **CS 01 H 2 A P**

Az épület megnevezése a tervjegyzékben

Hagyományos családi ház, sík terepen (II., III. vagy IV. építési övezetben), emeletes, oldalhatáron álló, tetőtér-beépítéssel, utcával párhuzamos gerincű nyeregtetővel, 2. számú

Háromszobás
100,96 m² lakásterülettel (6 F)
(Alapterv)

ÉPÍTMÉNY-FAJTA	HAGYOMÁNYOS CSALÁDI HÁZ	CS 01 H 2 A P
TEREP ÉS SZINTSZÁM	SÍK TEREP EMELETES	
BEÉPÍTÉSI MÓD	OLDALHATÁRON ÁLLÓ	
SORSZÁM	A TERV AZONOSÍTÁSI JELE	
TERVFAJTA	ALAPTERV	
TETŐFORMA	NYEREGTETŐ, UTCÁVAL PÁRHUZ. TETŐGERINCCEL	





Utcával párhuzamos gerincű nyeregtetővel
CS 0 H 2 A P

Földszint		
1. Előszoba	1,24×3,60	4,46 m²
2. Konyha	2,20×3,60	7,92 m²
3. Kamra	1,25×1,95	2,44 m²
4. W. C.	1,17×1,47	1,72 m²
5. Étkező	2,60×3,60	9,36 m²
6. Közlekedő, lépcső	1,80×4,20	7,56 m²
Földszint területe		**33,46 m²**
Emelet		
11. Előtér, beépített szekrény	1,60×4,20	6,72 m²
12. Fürdőszoba	2,30×2,30	5,29 m²
13. Nappali	5,60×4,20	23,31 m²
14. Háló	5,40×3,60	19,44 m²
15. Háló	3,60×3,54	12,74 m²
Emelet területe		**67,50 m²**
Lakásterület		**100,96 m²**
7. Kazán	1,17×1,96	2,29 m²
8. Tüzelőtároló	2,28×4,20	9,58 m²
9. Garázs	2,85×5,58	15,90 m²
10. Terasz	1,20×3,60	4,32 m²
16. Terasz	3,60×3,60	12,96 m²
17. Loggia	2,10×4,20	8,82 m²

59/1978

Fig. 7 (facing page): Recommended design SOLT with three roof types.
Fig. 8: Recommended design TOLNA with a garage.

1975-1990 – the rate of privately financed edifices increased year by year. In the early 1980s it reached 75 %, and family houses represented the majority.[52] The trend of decreasing state housing and increasing private construction went on. In the middle of the decade, it was already possible to publish that the state had withdrawn itself from the housing.[53] The almost yearly edited and refreshed catalogues of the recommended buildings still offered smaller houses, with about 70 sqm. But the bulk of the designs already had 2-3 stories. The built-in attic – under a pitched roof – became commonplace, and the floor area was around 100 -110 sqm. Garages and the storage spaces also appeared in some cases.

52 Katalin Bossányi, "Teljes szívvel ajánljuk az ajánlottat" [We recommend the recommended whole-heartedly], *Népszabadság* (February 28, 1982): 5.

53 Iván Tosics, "A magánkézbe adott lakásépítés nyugaton és Magyarországon" [Private housing construction in the West and Hungary], *Medvetánc* 2-3 (1986): 145-162.

In the 1980s, politicians no longer considered family houses the necessary evil, and architects also accepted it. Instead of expelling private design and especially family houses from construction, the authorities and the profession alike were looking for ways and methods of enhancing the level of architectural culture. Throughout the decade they organized several conferences and meetings to develop education and to improve architectural taste. As a stimulus for the involvement of graduate architects in family house design, the Ministry, architectural associations, and the Patriotic Folk Front announced a competition on "The best family house of the year" in 1983.[54] The project was successful and stayed alive also after 1990. In 1982, with the declining of public investments, the government made it possible to create small private architectural firms. These firms could accept smaller commissions, often housing design.

For the whole decade, the offer of recommended designs was relatively rich – including the many sub-versions of each type. A leading representative of the Construction Information Centre, the distributor of recommended plans, experiencing the changes on the market, introduced a new offer. The *Beautiful Home* system contained single-family houses designed by reputed architects and was offered for a restricted number of uses.[55] The project relied on the contribution of private architects so that the clients could name the architect of their house instead of a standard design code. The initiative quickly disengaged from the Construction Information Centre, and – although the *Beautiful Home* system collapsed – the new private company, the Home Inform, turned to distributing recommended plans. In the 1990s, a radical decrease in housing followed the change of the political system. However, both enterprises – the Construction Information Centre and the Home Inform – still offered the recommended family house plans. They quit the market in the early 2000s.

Model Design

In the new millennium, it seemed that the supply (architects) and the demand (family house builders) had been balanced not only in terms of capacity but also concerning style and quality expectations. However, the idea of standard family houses came up again in 2015. The government intended to facilitate family housing by abolishing the construction permit and with a cheap offer of pre-designed family house plans.[56] The official explanation was to support building activity and to enhance the quality of the built environment. The profession was shocked because the idea of standard design was tightly bound to socialism. What is more, such a cheap offer would decrease their commissions. As a leading architect summarized the challenge: "The government's directive reduces architects to construction foremen, pushes them into an executive position."[57] Although the attached photo presented a settlement full of symbolic cube-houses, the journalist also gave the floor another architectural position. The chair of the Chamber of Hungarian Architects was both optimistic and convinced that the new pre-designed houses made by architects would enhance the architectural quality. The journalist called the plans "standard design," but the Chamber chair already applied their new name: "model design collection." The governmental intention was not only practical but also ambitious. Practically the new collection intended to support young families in their homemaking. As a journalist summarized in the pro-government newspaper: "[In the long run,] the tender aims to shape the quality of Hungary's built environment and to define the image of the country and the settlements for fifty years."

54 György Attila Kovács, "Az év lakóháza" [The house of the year], *Népszabadság* (October 13, 1983): 1.

55 Kálmán Timon, "A 'szép otthon' tervrendszer" [The *Beautiful Home* design system], *Magyar Nemzet* (February 22, 1985): 12.

56 "A kormány 1567/2015 (IX.4.) kormányhatározata az építésügy átalakítását célzó intézkedési tervről és a hozzá kapcsolódó feladatokról" [Decision of the government on the action plan for the transformation of building affairs and on connected tasks], *Magyar Közlöny* 123 (2015): 19109-19121.

57 Anna Szalai, "Jönnek a Kádár-kockák" [The Kádár-cubes are coming], *Népszabadság* (November 6, 2015): 1+4.




Fig. 9: Model design NMKT-050. Expansion of a cube-house.
Fig. 10: Model design NMKT-025. New family house.

The architectural competition for model designs was announced only in June 2019. It defined three categories. The first reflected on the cube-houses and asked proposals for their modernization, including energetic aspects. The second sub-category focused on family houses built with traditional technology, taking into account the builders' workforce. The third one covered buildings of advanced construction technology. The competition concluded with 273 submissions, and the jury selected 93 of them for further development.[58]

The National Model Design Catalogue appeared on the internet in 2020.[59] The website was supported by the government and the EU Social Fund, and it offered 93 plans, but only for two different situations: the extension of a cube-house and a new design. (Fig. 9, Fig. 10) The website makes it easy to choose between the plans, but – as the site stresses – the selected model design still needs adaptation to the given building plot. The National Model Design Catalogue offers a general overview of family houses of the new century in the same way as any other printed magazine did earlier.

Conclusion

The changing name of pre-designed family houses – standard, recommended, model –reflected the change in the approach of politicians, architects, and builders alike. Socialist power forced standardization in the spirit of central regulation and economic concern. Following the principles of the Modern Movement, architects also supported **standard** design but not on the family house level. As the government realized that they couldn't solve the housing problem with state resources and they needed private housing, they increased the number of standard design plans. Later, parallel with this facilitation, when the political power and the architects realized that standardization had a bad connotation, they offered **recommended** housing plans. The use of recommended designs was on rise when the state radically restricted its investment in housing, and the architects slowly moved from state planning companies to private enterprises.

After the political changes the builder became a customer who commissioned the architect, and the relevance of pre-designed family houses disappeared by the end of the millennium. Recently the government developed the **model** design concept, which may help the potential family house builders in orientation and gathering information. Unfortunately – without a parallel settlement planning – it can hardly provide the good quality of the built environment.

58 Balázs Pintér, "Átlényegülő kockaházak, okosingatlanok és kalákázás" [Transformed cube-houses, smart houses and jointly built up houses], *Magyar Nemzet* (October 2, 2019): 16.

59 https://www.oeny.hu/oeny/nmtk/main, accessed May 28, 2021.

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Fig. 1: Lajos Gádoros et al., *Családi lakóházak* (Budapest: Építéstudományi Központ, 1948), 80.

Fig. 2: Kálmán Tóth, „A falusi lakóházak típusterveire kiírt tervpályázat eredményei," *Magyar Építőipar* 1 (1954): 10.

Fig. 3, 4: *Családiház tervgyűjtemény* (Budapest: Építésügyi Minisztérium, 1961).

Fig. 5, 6: *Családiház tervek* (Budapest: ÉM Építésügyi Tájékoztatási Központ, 1967).

Fig. 7, 8: *A magánlakásépítés ajánlott tervei. Lakóépületek. Hagyományos családi házak* (Budapest, ÉVM, 1978).

Fig. 9: *Nemzeti Mintaterv Katalógus 2021*, accessed May 28, 2021, https://www.oeny.hu/oeny/nmtk/tervreszletek/NMTK-050.

Fig. 10: *Nemzeti Mintaterv Katalógus 2021*, accessed May 28, 2021, https://www.oeny.hu/oeny/nmtk/tervreszletek/NMTK-025.