

Strand 1: Art Nouveau Cities: between cosmopolitanism and local tradition

National endeavour or local identity? Art Nouveau Town Halls in Hungary

The Kingdom of Hungary, at the time of the second industrial revolution, was part of the Habsburg Empire up to 1867 when the compromise with Austria converted the Empire into a Dual Monarchy.¹ The gradual modernization of the Hungarian economy and culture got into its stride in 1867, when, as a result of the Austro–Hungarian Compromise, Hungary became one of the two political and administrative entities of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy. It is only within the legal and internationally recognized frame of the Dual Monarchy that Hungary gained relative degree of self–government. Apart from a few joint ministries, including external affairs, finances and military, Austria and Hungary were led by separate governments but joint under the same ruler: Kaiser Franz Joseph I. for Austrians, and the Apostolic King Franz Joseph for Hungarians. From the moment of the Austro–Hungarian Compromise one of the major aims of the Budapest centered new national administration was to present Hungary internationally as having its own economy and culture, clearly distinctive from the Austrian one. The question of the making of national culture did not end in the claiming for political independence. The historical political, economic and cultural heritage – same as elsewhere in Europe – served as the basis for the modernization of the country. For many Hungarian intellectuals and politicians, the virtual restoration of historic Hungary in politics, economics and culture. From a Hungarian historical and judiciary perspective Franz Joseph, represented the continuity with medieval national kings.²

¹ Bryan CARTLEDGE, *The Will to Survive. A history of Hungary*. C Hurst & Co, 2011.

² Daniel UNOWSKY, *Staging Habsburg Patriotism: Dynastic Loyalty and the 1898 Imperial Jubilee*, in: (Pieter Judson and Marsha Rozenblit, eds.) *Constructing Nationalities in East Central Europe*, 2004, Berghahn Press. see also: Daniel Unowsky,

During the period between the 1867 Compromise and the First World War, the terms *sovereign* and *Hungarian* remained the basic central ideas of the nation building process, reinforcing the country's image abroad. Always remaining between the constitutional borders set up by the compromise, the political elite were continuously trying to introduce and show the sovereign and Hungarian economy, culture on international level. Culture had become an important tool in the struggle for the recognition of the country as a historical great power. This political process had been embodied in public administrative buildings of national or local importance in the country and in ephemeral pavilion architecture in international exhibitions. The paper analyzes the appearance of national architectural tendencies in the service of a double, internal and external representation, and the consequences of Hungarian politics and identity issues.

In political terms, the new Hungarian art and architecture reflected the image of the new concept of Hungary as a modernized historical great power. This ambitious concept relied on the once existing political and economic power of medieval Hungary and on the results of the progress since the Austro-Hungarian Compromise. The political results of it and the de facto modernization of Hungary encouraged political and cultural concepts of a newly attainable greatness – this how the concept of the modernized historical great power had been created. Reinvention of traditions seemed historically, culturally and legally justified, a natural consequence of the country's modernization. The paradigm of the new modernized identity changed gradually and followed the common paradigm shift of other countries: from ethnography based new definition of the nation in the 1870s it moved to a historicizing approach in the 1890s and ended in vernacular modernism in the 1900s. As remnants of the mythical past peasant culture was interpreted as the basis of reinvented national myths and tales, and,

what is more important from the political point of view, encouraged attempts to revive national vocabulary in art and architecture.³

Hungary's cultural policy in the pre-WWI period mixed vernacular traditions with the latest achievements of modernism. The new image considered vernacular arts and architecture as a source of the new culture of modernized Hungary. For many artists, architects and passionate amateurs, peasant traditions preserved national roots and the fragmented memories from the pre-conquest period. At the turn-of-the-century peasant art patterns and motifs decorated architectural elements as a common characteristic in the lands of Austria-Hungary and far beyond to it. Architectural structures and peasant art objects were not considered as autonomous exhibits anymore. As interpreted sources they served as the basis for new structures and ornaments.

International Representation and Art Nouveau Architecture in Hungary after 1896

The festivities related to the commemoration of the 1000 years of existence of the Hungarian State, the so called Millennium was an event of great national enthusiasm. The Hungarian Millennium was a crucial turning point in the modernization of the country; it had a profound influence on national representation. Intellectuals, politicians, priests, noblemen and sometimes simple citizens promoted their ideas on how to commemorate this event. Even though organizational problems

³ Eric HOBBSBAWN, *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, 1983. Benedict Anderson: *Imagined Communities Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, 1983. see also: Gábor Gyáni, *Nemzetelméletek és a Történetírás (Theories of the Nation and Historiography)* In: *Nemzet és Művészet (Nation and Art, Image and Self-Image)* Budapest, Hungarian National Gallery, 2010. On the consequences of nation building in architecture, see: Katalin KESERÜ, „*The Transformation of Architectural Thinking in Central Europe at the turn of the 20th Century.*” In: *The Beginnings of Modernism in Central European Architecture*. Budapest, Ernst Múzeum, 2005, pp. 17-25. and Ákos MORAVÁNSZKY, *Competing Visions: Aesthetic Invention and Social Imagination in Central European Architecture, 1867–1918*. MIT Press, 1998.

issues played a crucial role in it, the date of the conquest could not be determined, not even approximately.⁴

The commemoration of the foundation of Hungary was in the center of public discussions in Hungary since the 1870s. Even if the exact date of the Magyar conquest could not have been précised, the idea of the Hungarian Millennium had inspired the society.⁵ In his program concept count Jenő Zichy, a wealthy aristocrat and the organizer of national industrial exhibitions since 1872, raised the idea of a national exhibition, to serve as frame for all kinds of commemorative festivities in the course of the millennium year. The final program followed his ideas in many aspects. The contemporary aspect, the representation of the current state of the economic and cultural development of Hungary which was represented as the so-called Main Contemporary Group, remained an important part of the exhibition. The retrospective part of the millennium exhibition, the Main Historical Group, focused on the historical development of Hungarian national industry and culture beginning with the time of St. Stephen's coronation. Thus it also served as a historic proof for the (self)image of contemporary Hungary as a modern nation.

Modern Hungary needed a national representation abroad as well as within its borders. A historic but also new state with modern aspirations had to face serious issues of legitimation, reconnaissance, and identity. The double challenge had been to settle the image of a new modern county on international level and to reorganize national administration within its multinational borders. New national language in art and architecture had to express ancient and modern aspect of Hungary. The two main fields of national representations have thus become international exhibitions and state administration public buildings across the country.

The stylistic diversity of the turn of the century international art and architecture tendencies had not only different aesthetic but also cultural and political background in each country: France, considering itself the pioneer of modernism, used the novelty of

⁴ Ferenc VADAS: „*Programtervezetek a Millennium megünneplésére (1893) (Plans to commemorate the Hungarian Millennium (1893))*”, *Ars Hungarica*. 1996. vol. 1. pp 23-30.

⁵ F. VADAS, *Plans to commemorate*, pp. 13-17.

the Art Nouveau to maintain its position while Italy, dealing with the questions of identity since the creation of political unity, was tossing between pan-national and regional solutions of historicism. At the universal exhibition of the turn of the century, Hungary reckoned to have found its own voice in the mixture of vernacular traditions and pre-modern tendencies. At the turn of the century the notion of culture has changed, it reflected a bounded nature of the Hungarian nation. All objects related to the inherited past were conceived to ensure the nation's historical ground while the ethnological interest began to focus to ethnic Hungarians as beholders of ancient heritage.⁶ But this was definitively not a new phenomenon; the nationalistic approach of the Hungarian political elite at the turn of the century has its first manifestations already at the time of the compromise of 1867.

At the turn of the century, Hungarian folk art tradition was used following the principles of the new modernized paradigm: it was promoted as featuring modern national art and architecture.⁷ This was an important factor in pavilion architecture and decorative art objects. Such use had not only a political but also an important economic motive: products decorated in the modern national style enhanced the country's international recognition as part of a more general trend of the vernacular revival in Central Europe. The promotion of vernacular modernism – through the interpretation of folk traditions – was based on a more organic way of conceiving national architecture and art.⁸ Between 1906 and 1911 vernacular modernism was an appropriated representational tool for the state for international exhibitions. Hungarian pavilions in Milan and Bucharest 1906); Turin and Dresden (1911) echoed this new concept. Modernized vernacularism seemed to become the par excellence national characteristics in the art and architecture in the land of the Austria-Hungary from 1902 onwards in

⁶ Zoltán FEJŐS, *Nemzeti diskurzus és néprajz (National Discourse and Ethnography)*. in: *Nemzet és Művészet. Kép és Önkép (Art and Nation: Image and Self-Image)*, Budapest, Hungarian National Gallery, 2010, pp. 83–111.

⁷ Tamás CSÁKI: “A finn építészet és az „architektúra magyar lelke.” *Kultúrpolitika, építészet, publicisztika a századelő Magyarországon*” (*The Finnish Architecture and the ‘Hungarian Spirit of Architecture’ Cultural Policy, architecture and journalism in Hungary at the turn of the century*), *Múltunk*, vol. 1. pp. 200–230.

⁸ Paul Stirton: “*Vernacular Modernism*”, *The Hungarian Quarterly*, Winter 2003. Vol. 44.

international exhibitions. The use of art and architecture for national representation became a major element of the official cultural politics after the Millennium exhibition, and during the subsequent two decades. Part of a new paradigm of international representation Hungarian pavilions reflected the image of a culturally sovereign country.

The aim of the architect Ödön Lechner and his pupils, the same as their whole generation politicians, intellectuals and artists, was to reset Hungary on international stage among the culturally great nations of Europe. There were different approaches to the issue of national architecture. Lechner, after having spent study years in France and made travels to Britain in the 1870s turned its attention to peasant ornamental decoration, his concept laid on the integration of folk art ornaments into modern architecture in Hungary. This followed the concept of the integration of the architectural language of the non-European lands, especially from the colonies, a method he has met in England and France during his study years. His generation, educated after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise (1867) in a newly established modern educational system was the first who could have been freely concerned by the idea of national peculiarities. They were pushed to create modern secular, bourgeois national culture in a country which has just regained the possibility for sovereign cultural life, education and the reorganization of its national administration.

At the roots of the quest for a new national style we find the striking evidence of the unknown origins of Hungarian. Thus the quest needed certainty, something which was not given by written historical sources. An important part of the Hungarian political and intellectual leading class felt involved in this issue, although not on a scientific basis. Count Jenő Zichy financed and also led expeditions in the Caucasus region to discover the ancient roots of Hungarians. Tivadar Csontváry Kosztka, the visionary Hungarian painter had been seeking for the lost Hungarian cradle in the middle-East, in the land of the Lebanon. Ödön Lechner, under the influence of his travels to London and Paris, considered Indian architecture as potential source for the recreation of Hungarian national language of architecture. The architect László Medgyaszay had been inspired by Chinese architecture while Dezső Jakab propagated again an expedition to

the Caucasus for 1915. Transylvania remained the intra-borders land for the quest of the lost origins of the nation. Inspired by the enthusiasm of the amateur ethnographer Dezső Malonyay, a group of artists and architects has returned regularly to Transylvania in the quest of the unchanged cradle of the Hungarian art and architecture. Among them we find Károly Kós and his followers, the so called Youth, the new generation of architects seeking the possibilities of national style.

In terms of the modern Hungarian art and architecture the interest in the oriental particularities differed from Orientalism (or Japonism), a cultural experience of colonizing countries. In the quest for modern Hungarian national identity the oriental (Asian) origins of the Hungarians raised at the turn-of-the century Hungarian culture. As the real territorial and cultural origin of Hungarians were still much debated and uncertain, personal beliefs, motifs from Chinese or Indian architecture or travelers' description from Russia offered different sources of inspiration to create elaborate new Hungarian art and architecture. The entire range the new Hungarian international cultural policy was displayed at the world exhibitions after 1902: interior design and applied art objects reinterpreted all those motifs which were considered truly Hungarian and reminiscent of the people and the nation's oriental origin.

Exhibitions at the end of the nineteenth century, the Millennium festivities, and the 1900 Paris World Exhibition ideas favored the emergence of national style in Hungary. Contrary to the time of the Millennium (1896) when historicism seems to ensure adequate frame to elaborate Hungarian national style, after 1902, following the paradigm of cultural modernization, the new national art had been based on the mixture of international art nouveau and vernacularism. The Millennium festivities opened the way to this new paradigm in national representation. Hungary officially returned to the line of universal exhibitions after Millennium celebrations, investing more financial, economic and intellectual sources than in the previous decades. The 1896 Millennium Exhibition's concept had been implanted to the Hungarian exhibition at the Paris *Exposition Universelle* of 1900, but with great modifications. The Hungarian installations of divers thematic groups in the great exhibition galleries followed the architectural visions of Ödön Lechner (1845–1914) whose quest for a Hungarian

national language in architecture was inspired by the German architect and architectural theoretician Gottfried Semper's *Bekleidungstheorie*: the use of folk patterns and motifs on facades.⁹ Four years later the Hungarian exhibition installations in Paris were designed by Lechner's followers, Zoltán Bálint and Lajos Jámor. The mostly distinctive, peasant art inspired floral decoration in the exhibition installations within the immense galleries was conceived to highlight the original culture and economic strength of Hungary, a common endeavor of many European country by that time. Beside economic and cultural sovereignty exhibited in the galleries the Hungarian historical pavilion in the *Rue des Nations* emphasized the country's officially appropriated historical narrative through a mixture of historic architectural elements – collected from half a dozen different historic monument of the country.

Internal representation: the case of town halls of Kecskemét, Szabadka, Marosvásárhely

Intra-border Hungarian national representation, namely town halls, had different political support from the ephemeral constructions aiming at representing Hungary at international exhibitions. Even though architects, artists and intellectuals passionately promoted new Hungarian architecture, its acceptance and promotion had not been obvious for the political elite. Even if the appearance of national architectural language had not been exclusively Hungarian phenomenon, but a common characteristic of many national awakening movements, the Lechner-like national architecture did not meet the taste of official policy makers. Ignác Alpár, Ödön Lechner's main competitor, the master of late historicism in turn-of-the-century Hungary and the winner of many competitions for public administrative buildings had an important lobbying activity. Alpár's main supporter, baron Gyula Wlassics minister of Religion and Public Education expressed in an open speech in the parliament in 1902 that the "Hungarian secession", the "Hungarian architecture-like" new modern, and partly art nouveau

⁹ József SISA: "The Beginnings of Art History and Museology in Hungary. Some Semper Connections." Centropa Vol. 2/2. 2002, pp. 128–135.

language was against the personal taste. Wlassics made clear in a famous speech in the parliament that he will continuously trying to prevent the spread of this style in all public buildings under the authority of his ministry.

In central and Southern Hungary fast urban development began in the 19th century and accelerated at the turn-of-the-century as a striking phenomenon comparing to the urban centers in the Northern Hungary – mainly of medieval and renaissance architecture. With the arrival of the art nouveau urban landscape has radically changed in this fast growing agricultural region of Hungary. Newly built town halls re-organized city plans and reshaped urban structures in terms of local identity and city infrastructure. Even though the quest for architectural modernism seemed to be a national endeavor, state visions and local self-government's aspirations differentiated. While historicism remained the unique inspiration source for buildings related to the notion of *étatique*, manifested mainly in schools, railway stations and post offices all around the country, local government related buildings, especially town halls represent a high variety of turn-of-the-century tendencies ranging from late-historicism to international art nouveau.¹⁰ Ödön Lechner was continuously working on the elaboration of a national architectural language since the 1890s. He and his followers created their valuable construction in vernacular art nouveau in major cities and towns out of the capital and especially in the central-Southern region of Hungary.

The buildings of Ödön Lechner were at the origins of a profoundly functionalist architecture.¹¹ Based on the necessities of modern urban life, new technical inventions and, as central issue, the possibilities of the new materials of the 19th century, Lechner and his followers transformed the town hall architecture in Hungary into a lovable and appreciable promoter of the national idea. While historicism had remained the flagship of modernization until 1896, town halls in the 1880s had been built in neo-classical style. The year of the millennium was a turning point in the competition of architectural styles. Great architects of his previous generations such as Mihály Pollack, József Hild

¹⁰ Ilona SÁRMÁNY: „Magyar Stílusban épült városházák a századelőn” (*Town Halls in Hungarian Style at the Turn-of-the-Century*), *Ars Hungarica*, 1994, 1: 148-154.

¹¹ Gordana P. VUJNOVIC, *Funkció és megformálás (Function and Forming)*, in Gordana P. VUJNOVIC, Olga K. NINKOV et al. (Ed.): *Városháza Szabadkán 1912-2012 (Town Hall in Szabadka 1912-2012)* Szabadka, 2012. pp. 32–40.

or Miklós Ybl debated the possibilities of a Hungarian national style they arguments were based on classical architecture planning. The rethinking of the building followed the necessities of modern (and especially urban) lifestyle, new urban functions and the highly variable modern materials.

Lechner's only town hall building in this period was the one in Kecskemet, a dynamically developing former agricultural town in the middle of the country. The Kecskemét town hall had been build up from 1893 to 1896, it had been conceived to merge Hungarian folk art traditions with historicist architecture. The town hall was built following historical architectural language with vernacular decorative ornamental system. As a memory of Lechner's study years in France the volume of this explicitly very Hungarian town hall building represented the heritage of French renaissance architecture. Architectural vernacularism appeared in the Hungarian folk art motifs placed as ornamental decoration on the facades. While structural vernacularism did not play any role in the 1890s, architectural modernism had been expressed in the use of faience decoration on the facades and the very colorful aspect of the building represented modern urban features. Modernism and national peculiarities coincided in technical terms, folk art patterns had been produced in the Zsolnay factory in Pécs, in the recently (re)invented pirogranit (faience) pieces. The commission in Kecskemét had been followed by other town hall competitions in the rapidly developing central and Southern part of Hungary: in Kiskunhalas (1905), in Kiskunfélegyháza or Szabadka (both in 1906). Contrary to the Kecskemét building, these new edifices were built up following the modern Hungarian architectural language. These buildings compose a clearly identifiable group of town halls belonging to the trend of the so-called Alföld (Great-Plain) Secession.

Marcell Komor and Dezső Jakab, as students of Lechner, followed but also refined Lechner's ideas. The millennium year was a common point for both the architect's career; they took part in the festivity year designing ephemeral buildings. The common motivation of the two architects made them probably the most adequate followers of Ödön Lechner's architectural language. Both of them were architects and designers at the same time. By that time they strongly believed that the architectural

language of Lechner – aiming at the elaboration of a Hungarian national architectural language – could be continued and developed. Their commitment to Lechner helped them to continue his ideas, but, a decade later on the basis of the new tendencies of international new art. Since the foundation of their common architectural studio in Budapest, they were linked to a few major cities as Marosvásárhely, Nagyvárád or Szabadka, where some of his most important buildings are standing, among them, the two splendid town halls.

In spite of Kecskemét, the Lechner pupils, Marcell Komor and Dezső Jakab have created a structurally and ornamentally distinctive town hall in Marosvásárhely. The new, lavish and excessive styled city hall building in Marosvásárhely had been initiated by György Bernády, the mayor of this tiny town of Hungarian identity from 1902 to 1913. In this period Marosvásárhely was one of the fastest growing Hungarian cities in the early twentieth century. Situated at a border region both in terms of internal and external frontiers, this town at the East-Transylvanian region of Hungary emerged as the capital of Szekler land during centuries. The region's internal cultural borders with Romanian and German speaking lands of Hungary and its external state borders with the Romanian Kingdom (1861-1918) made its capital a special cultural place. The region was, and still is inhabited by Hungarian speaking people, the Szeklers. They so-called descendants from the Huns of Attila played a crucial role in the regional identity. The city was conceived as the historical capital of the Szeklers, and, as such, the far eastern bastion of Hungarian nation within its multiethnic national borders. Under Bernády's mayoralty a number of institutions were established of mainly educational, cultural and administrative profile. They were meant to underline the culturally and administratively Hungarian aspect of the town: such as the children's shelters, five elementary schools, higher commercial school, senior high school for girl, an urban public school, a music school, a public library and an art gallery. Among the city's planned development of a variety of public institutions, the town hall played a significant role.¹²

¹² Réka VÁRALLYAY, *Komor Marcell, Jakab Dezső*, Budapest, Holnap, 2006.

Bernády's activity on the above mentioned buildings and on the Town Hall, concerned not only to restructure city of medieval urban structure and late baroque urban tissue, but he carried out a clearly thought out and consciously designed urban landscape design. The overall visual aim was to create a hub of key landmarks on the town's new modern main square. This is how historical structures and contemporary, art nouveau-like patterns gave birth to the new center of the city in modern Hungarian national architecture, including a town hall, a palace of arts and the headquarters of the department. The elegant tower of the town hall on the right wing intended to refer to the culturally distinctive and economically sovereign Italian city-states' town halls in Siena or Florence. Such political and cultural allusion to Italy's historic legacy differed profoundly from the classical references in historicizing architecture. The tower referred also to the rapid and spectacular development of the town restructured by that time by Renaissance town-planning ideas and urban planning. Bernády recognized the importance of the modern urban planning in gasping the regional leading role of his city. The social, cultural and economic modernization went hand in hand with the reshaping of the town cultural identity as the Hungarian speaking Szekler land. The city hall had to represent his ideas, serve the idea of modernization of the region, ensure the presence of the new Hungarian national administration and promote the idea of the Hungarian national ornaments in art and architecture.

The mayor, György Bernády announced a competition in 1905 for the town hall, its two architects' common studio had been open for eight years. The first plans for the competition had been made in neo-baroque style, which was often called Maria-Theresa style, referring to the 18th century Hungarian Queen and Austrian Empress whose commissions had contributed to the Habsburg dynastical representation in the mid-18th century. In the case of Szabadka, one year later, the debate on the issues of architectural language had been more complex, as the town was named after the former Austrian Empress, Maria-Theresa who, in 1732 ensured its liberties and largely contributed to its modernization. Its mixed ethnic composition included Hungarians, Croats and Germans. Its German name had still been *Mariatheresiopolis* even in the pre-WWI period. The political situation wasn't in favor of vernacular traditions based new Hungarian

architecture by that time. Minister Wlassics's outrageous words were still echoing in the public discourse. Planning in neo-baroque style did not mean the refusal of Lechner's ideas. The first prize winning plan followed a neo-baroque structure for the building in Marosvásárhely, which in most part has remained during the constructions. The town hall is originally composed of historicism and new art tendencies: neo-baroque in its structure, but art nouveau forms and ornamental decoration on the facades and in the internal decoration. This was thanks to the successful negotiations between the major of the city and the Hungarian authorities in Budapest.¹³

Once the permission granted, the new city hall building in Marosvásárhely also became important from modern urban-planning issues too: the old town hall in the old main square was located very far from the railway station, thus the utmost modern aspect of Marosvásárhely, its technical, administrative and economic modernization needed a new urban center. Mayor Bernády selected jointly the most appropriate place, at the Western boundaries of the baroque urban tissue. Here some houses had to be demolished to give place to a new city center, emphasized by the new town hall. It was more than a mere town hall; it symbolized the new Hungarian national administration and the – through its vernacular art inspired decorative (mostly floral) decoration – the new paradigm of national culture. The three different levels of the town hall referred all necessary function of urban and state administration. The building clearly made the new national Hungarian state and its administrative bodies available to the public in their native (cultural) language.

The jail was placed in the basement together with the fire department. On the ground floor offices of city and national administration had been placed jointly: police office, the court, the tax office, the engineer's office, city archives, and city library. On the first floor were placed the major's office, the central council hall, and the wedding room. The tower was placed on the right side, its shape referred to the town halls of Florence and Siena, archetypes of the rapidly growing city claiming for more autonomy

¹³ Olga K. Ninkov, *Adalék a szabadkai Városháza építési időszakának művészeti programja tanulmányozásához* (Remarks for the Study of the Artistic Concept of the Szabadka Town Hall), in Gordana P. VUJNOVIC, Olga K. NINKOV et al. (Ed.): *Városháza Szabadkán 1912-2012* (Town Hall in Szabadka 1912-2012) Szabadka, 2012. pp. 120–152.

and economic independence.¹⁴ It was first planned in neo-baroque style as a gesture for the conservative public opinion and only later they had been transformed to modern Hungarian style. In Marosvásárhely, following the ideas of the major, Bernády a new, modern main square had been created with the city hall in the center. Its glass decoration reflected again the heritage of the constitution and political sovereignty. The city halls reflects the intention to include the building into the international discourse on the new art and on local traditions too.

At the end of 1907 all new offices have moved into the building, the final inauguration happened in 1908. Apart a limited number of stylized and ornamental folk motifs, a high rank of universal forms and motifs from European art history had been displayed in the decoration. Due to the two different plans one can find important differences in each part of the building. The floor plan layout is, although is deriving from the baroque spatial structure, but in had been completely new form of games and humbles of art nouveau-like decoration.

Apart of the buildings' novelty in term of architectural language, functional solutions follow a more sustainable paradigm. To ensure a solid financial sustainability Komor and Jakab attached rentable shops to their buildings regardless their original function. In Szabadka in the floor of the town hall, series of shops ensured revenue for the city's most sumptuous building. In Déva, tiny Transylvanian city and the place of an important 19th century national poem, the new city theatre building was annexed by apartment-houses. In their own studio, build in 1909-1911 in Budapest, the architect couple added two great apartment-houses to their twin studio buildings to ensure the necessary income from renting.¹⁵ Komor accentuated the importance of a modern and functionalist form and space in the architecture. The inclusion of rentable units within the building in the basement of Szabadka town hall was a historical and contemporary solution, inspired from the old town halls of Leipzig or the new Munich city hall. They both were well known examples of how such a public and administrative building could include rentable shops and commercial units.

¹⁴ R. Várallyay, *Komor Marcell...*, p: 96–98

¹⁵ R. Várallyay, *Komor Marcell...*, p. 18–20.

Using Hungarian ornamental decoration has not been obvious for the commissionaires in general. Komor and Jakab persuaded many of them to renounce neo-baroque solutions in favor of the promotion of new Hungarian architecture. At the down of their common carrier they prepared a neo-baroque plan for their first public building, the Agricultural Saving Bank in Szolnok in 1898. It is only after 1902 that they shift to modern structural and ornamental solutions as the case of Déva and Szabadka are proof of that. In Szabadka, an important argument for getting support for the building to be built up in the language of modern Hungarian architecture was its restricted financial needs comparing to the needs of a neo-baroque decoration. In their plans made in 1898 for the Hungarian pavilion at the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1900 they already deliberately used architectural and ornamental solutions following the new architectural language.¹⁶

New functional solutions and the latest achievements in infrastructure went hand in hand in the case of the Szabadka town hall: it was equipped by central heating, both gas and electric lightning. Town hall buildings had been conceived for centuries to host the necessary administrative bodies of the urban administration. At the complex ethnic conditions of the turn-of-the century Hungary the presence of the new, modern national Hungarian state had also been ensured by and in such representative buildings. It hosted the police headquarters, a jail and fire-department. Town halls were considered for a long time as a representational and administrative building type.¹⁷ The first plans had been made in neo-baroque style, its redesigning to modern language was encouraged by the mayor and the chief architect.

Later, following negotiations between the architects and the representatives of the solutions of city new Hungarian architecture has won. In 1908, the plans had not been accepted by the ministry based on the opinion of the Central Public Architecture Council. It is due to the major and the chief architect Gyula Váli, and his good connections to the authorities in Budapest, that the plans could have been accepted after some minor corrections. It had been inaugurated on September the 12, 1912, critical

¹⁶ R. Várallyay, *Komor Marcell...*, p. 114.

¹⁷ O. K. NINKOV, *Remarques for...*, p. 85–100.

voices focused mainly on the excrescent Hungarian folk art inspired ornamental decoration of the interiors, an aspect once refused by minister Wlassics. The building reflects the neo-baroque structure of the first plan; the council hall is situated in the central body of the building. Its ornamental decoration reflects Hungarian folk motifs from Transylvania, namely the two mainly Hungarian region Kalotaszeg and Szekler land where Jakab travelled often to collect and copy motifs from peasant housing and artworks. The new town hall included administrative offices which were ranked by the level of casual connection by the inhabitants of Szabadka: on the ground floor publicly accessible spaces for shops had been rented out. On the first floor, the main administrative units of civil service; on the second floor the police department, the civic engineer's office, and the cadastral office –units which were only occasionally encountered by the inhabitants. On the third floor, the jail was fully separated part of the building.

The town halls of Marosvásárhely and Szabadka followed the path of the Kecskemét town hall in terms of the modernization of Hungary. The restructured national administration needed new, functional buildings which included a highly educated and linguistically Hungarian public administration, the inclusion of the newest infrastructural solutions in the building, and the modernization of the national architectural language. The representation of Hungary at international exhibitions focused at the issues of recognition of the country as a historical great power. This had been ensured by ephemeral buildings in new modern national architectural language with a mixed vocabulary of international art nouveau tendencies and vernacular ornamental decoration. The presence of the reorganized Hungarian State administration in-between national borders had to face problems of loyalty and reconnaissance in multi ethnic urban communities: the mixture of vernacular and art nouveau architectural language expressed a culturally innovative and modern aspect of the country.