

**Urban Planning in Cluj  
In the Age of Dualism (1867-1918)**

*Gheorghe VAIS  
Faculty of Architecture and Urban Planning  
Technical University, Cluj*

**Keywords:** Austro-Hungary, dualist regime, Cluj, architecture, urban planning, urban environment

**Abstract**

The instauration of the dualist regime in the Habsburg Empire beginning with 1867 modified the status of Transylvania by making it part of the Hungarian Kingdom. The process of modernization now imposed by Budapest aimed at politically and administratively homogenizing the province with the rest of the kingdom, and also modernizing Transylvania as one of the most backward regions of the Empire. The architecture promoted in the province by architects from Budapest and Vienna was an important visual barometer of these changes, imposing the innovation of both building types and decorative language. The most typical case for the evolution of architecture in the province was the city of Cluj, which has gradually lost its medieval image thanks to new constructions which mostly took place after 1880, turning it into a city dominated by eclectic architecture.

**E-mail:** gheorghe.vais@arch.utcluj.ro

\*

Ever since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Cluj has functioned as the capital of Transylvania due to the political influence of the Hungarians from Transylvania. This led to Cluj's perception as the most important city of the province as of the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Cluj was generally considered the "capital of Transylvanian Hungarians", just as Sibiu had the status of "capital of the Saxons", and the seat of the Government was permanently altering between the two places depending on the political situation. Even if the repression of the 1848 Revolution, and especially the advent of Neo-Absolutism in Transylvania (1849-1867) "punished" the city by moving the capital to Sibiu, Cluj still retained its quality of

unofficial capital, becoming the centre of the resistance of Transylvanian Hungarians against the political regime imposed by Vienna.

Following the proclamation of the dualist regime and the inclusion of Transylvania into the Hungarian Kingdom, the status of Cluj as “capital of Transylvania” was symbolically altered by losing all its political importance and role apart from that of a mere county capital. Still, this expression was preserved on a cultural level thanks to the traditions of the city in the first place, which was now becoming ever more important due to the cultural institutions founded in this period: the University and the National Theatre. The role of these has proven fundamental in defining the city as the most prominent cultural centre of Transylvania, with a functional specialization and status that has been preserved ever since.

The building activity in the city has always faithfully reflected the political situation of Transylvania; it was marked by the complete lack of significant investments in the period of the Revolution and the Neo-Absolutist regime following it. No significant public or private civil construction was erected between 1846, the inauguration of the new building of the Mayor’s Office, and 1870, the completion of the City’s Civil School for Boys on Malom (now Barițiu) street, except for the modernization and extension works in 1865 of the Old National Theatre on Farkas (now Kogălniceanu) street.

The situation radically changed after 1870, when the modernization policy of the Budapest government started to be felt in Cluj as well, as a requisite for Transylvania’s better integration into the Hungary of the time. The political stability and economic progress now perceived launched a real “boom” of significant buildings in the city, culminating at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries, when the city was turned into a permanent construction site. The impetus was primarily given by significant governmental investments in the field of transportation (the railway and the railway station), administration (seats of local administrative organs), education (the University with all its institutions and several schools), medicine (the complex of university clinics), etc. To these, local public investments were added (the central park, the theatres and museums) as well as private ones (banks, insurance companies, commerce companies, and apartment buildings).

On the level of urban planning no extensive operation of systematization was undertaken in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; the city was developed on the urban scheme inherited from the preceding century. The exponential growth of the number of edifices built in the

last decades of the century only caused a limited number of urban planning operations, which left the structure of the central area practically untouched. The representative buildings now built were mostly confined to certain spots, not requiring previous large studies; this explains the lack of urban plans. In their absence the construction activity was regulated by five successive Construction Regulations (*Építkezési Szabályrendelet*) published in 1879, 1882, 1899, 1911, and 1916, respectively.<sup>1</sup> The foreword of the 1879 regulation defined the zones of the city territory, divided into three classes (*osztály*): the *first* was the inner city (*Belváros*) and Sétatér (now Emil Isac) Street; the *second* comprised the area around the centre (described in lavish details in the original), with the streets and marketplaces limiting the inner city; and the *third* referred to the peripheries (*kívül eső városrészek*).<sup>2</sup>

“The construction regulations issued in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century eloquently illustrate the directing and ordering framework which stood at the basis of the urban development of Cluj in this period. In the lack of urban planning, it was these that created the city’s appearance. Dividing the city into three areas – central, middle, and marginal, construction regulations: established construction modalities for each area, both from the point of view of the buildings themselves, and also of their relation to the street; introduced compulsory alignment and height standards; regulated the primacy of general interest in opening new streets, markets, or lots as opposed to private interest; limited the excessive extension of the city, and attempted to change the quasi-rural appearance of peripheral areas by precise and severe regulations; created a legal framework for architecture projects, established precise rules for construction site organizations, and reception of buildings; closely watched the application of norms by introducing severe sanctions; regulated the quality of design and execution. The street is the representative urban space, standing at the basis of the scope of regulations.”<sup>3</sup>

One of the paramount urban planning operations in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the continuing demolition of the fortifications that had been started a century earlier. This was done so as to facilitate the city’s development, mainly by demolishing the towers which still

---

<sup>1</sup> Ioana Agachi, *Clujul modern, aspecte urbanistice* (Modern Cluj, urban planning aspects) (Cluj: UT Pres, 2004), 58.

<sup>2</sup> *Kolozsvár Sz. K. Város Építkezési Szabályrendelete*, 1879, 3. (Construction Regulations of the Free Royal City of Cluj)

<sup>3</sup> Agachi, *Clujul modern, aspecte urbanistice*, 71.

blocked the access of the main circulation arteries from within the walls to the middle and marginal areas. This resulted in the demolition, in 1841, of the Torda Gate Tower (*Torda-kapu bástyája*) on the southern part, opening access to the south, the Monostor Gate Tower (*Monostor-kapu bástyája*) in 1843, opening access to western peripheries, and the Bridge Gate Tower (*Hídkapu bástyája*) in 1868, opening access towards the railway station. On the eastern side the Hungarian Gate Tower (*Magyarkapu bástyája*) and the Middle Gate Tower (*Középkapu bástyája*) disappeared in 1872, making way to the eastward suburbs.<sup>1</sup> The towers were demolished in order to allow the expansion of the central area into the middle area, which became thus the most favoured placement for important buildings built at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The dismantling of the fortification ring and the remodelling of the urban space of the area was a method applied in most European cities where they hindered urban development; the case was not different for Cluj either.

One of the first enterprises of urban planning in Cluj was the creation of a city park in the vicinity of the centre, which would function as a *loisir* area. The land best suited for such purposes was the so-called *Hangásberek* area,<sup>2</sup> placed on the bank of Someş River, close to the western side of the fortifications. This area extended all along the river, as a moor land which was flooded for long periods of time in rainy seasons or when the snow melted. At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the majority of the willow and alder trees that grew there were cut down and the land was divided into gardening lots.<sup>3</sup> Around 1815 this area became the favourite walking place for less wealthy citizens, and in time it gave rise to the idea that the city park, the Promenade (*Sétatér*) could be designed there. With the resettling of the Government in Cluj (1838), a whole campaign started for this, with the formation of the Promenade Committee (*Sétahely Bizottság*), which employed a gardener to plant, cultivate, and clean the park.<sup>4</sup>

---

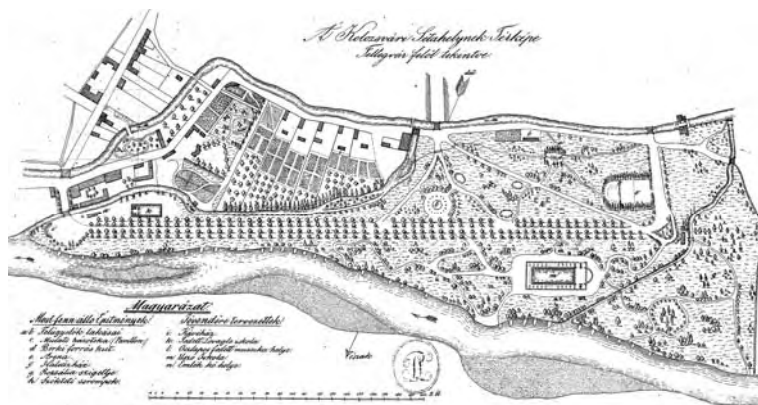
<sup>1</sup> *Kolozsvár*, (Budapest: Poligon, 1989), 137.

<sup>2</sup> The name came from the flora of this area (a grove of heather), and in time this name became in everyday language *Hangásberek* (a grove of ants – cf. the similar sounding of the words). [cf. Albert Fekete, *Kolozsvári kertek* (Gardens of Cluj) (Kolozsvár: Művelődés, 2004), 30].

<sup>3</sup> Fekete, *Kolozsvári kertek*, 30.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

The park as such was officially founded on 22 April 1838,<sup>1</sup> and two years later landscape architect Sámuel Hermann was requested to make a design for the park. He had already completed several significant landscape projects, among which most importantly the remodelling of the Baroque garden of the Bánffy Castle in Bonțida.<sup>2</sup>



1 – Cluj. Central Park, Sámuel Hermann's project from 1840.

Hermann's project made use of the irregular form the park by designing an approximately 1 km long triple longitudinal alley, as the main axis of the entire composition. One of the important dispositions of the project was the elevation of the general altitude of the land, which was achieved by a filling using the material of the demolished fortifications,<sup>3</sup> draining thus the whole area. For planting the trees along the alleys, large holes were dug, which were filled with organic material coming from the ploughing of Széchenyi (now Mihai Viteazu) Square and Trencsin Square (now Avram Iancu and Ștefan cel Mare Squares),<sup>4</sup> the traditional places of livestock markets.

This project also included already existing buildings into the structure of the park: the houses of the supervisors (*feliügyelők lakásai*), an entertainment pavilion (*mulato házotska*), the Berki fountain (*Berki forrás kut*), the sport arena (*Arena*), the fisherman's house (*halászház*),

<sup>1</sup> Agachi, *Clujul modern, aspecte urbanistice*, 124.

<sup>2</sup> Fekete, *Kolozsvári kertek*, 33.

<sup>3</sup> Agachi, *Clujul modern, aspecte urbanistice*, 124.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

the Rozália island (Rozsália szigettje), and jumping obstacles (*szöktető sorompók*); it also disposed the construction of new buildings for: a café (*kávéház*), a covered riding school (*fedett lovaglo iskola*), a covered pavilion for music (*oszlapos fedett muzsika helye*), swimming school (*uszo iskola*), and the place for a monument (*emlék kö helye*). With the exception of the café, the riding school, and one of the houses, the other buildings were grouped in the western part of the park, much wider in surface, and partially crossed by one of the secondary branches of the Mill Channel (*Malomárok*).

The Central Park Committee (*Sétatér Bizottság*) was founded in 1860 in order to secure the administration and development of the park, but it only functioned until 1866. The Committee's most important achievement was to organize a fundraising for the extension of the project, entrusting it to Antal Kagerbauer. However, it was only the lake of an area of approximately 1.2 ha which was completed from this project, placed in the south-western part of the park, close to the Mill Channel, from which it received the necessary water.<sup>1</sup>

A couple of years before the lake, in 1855, a swimming pool was constructed at the western end of the central alley, as a completion of Hermann's unfinished plan, who had perceived a swimming school. The swimming pool now constructed was the initiative of the local garrison, and was intended for soldiers' use. The city supported this initiative, but with the condition that the citizens may also use it. It was opened on 1 May 1855, and it was administered by the military, which had to hand in a financial balance to the Mayor's Office on a yearly basis.<sup>2</sup>

The buildings of the park were completed in 1874 with the construction of the Summer Theatre (*Nyári Színház*) on the spot of the café proposed by Hermann at the eastern end of the park. The building designed by Henrik Zimmerman<sup>3</sup> was in fact a wooden "hangar" with a seasonal use, as a summer refuge for the performances played at the unventilated theatre on Farkas street (now Kogălniceanu). At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the building was considered unacceptable both functionally and architecturally, and was replaced in 1909-1910 by a modern edifice, designed by Budapest architects Géza Márkus and Frigyes Spiegel.<sup>4</sup>

---

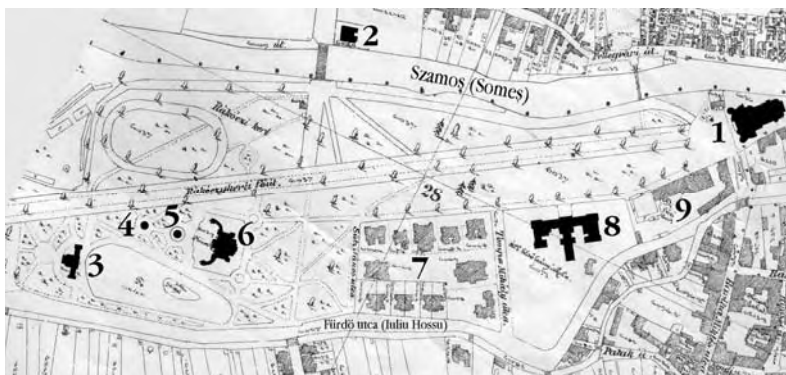
<sup>1</sup> Fekete, *Kolozsvári kertek*, 36, 37.

<sup>2</sup> Agachi, *Clujul modern, aspecte urbanistice*, 124, 125.

<sup>3</sup> György Gaal, *Kolozsvár. Millenniumi kalauz* (Cluj. A Millennium guide) (Kolozsvár: Polis, 2001), 69.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

The next important phase in the development of the park was due to the Millennium celebrations,<sup>1</sup> when, in 1896, a series of pavilions were built around the lake, as specific to the parks of that age: the Skating Pavilion (*Korcsolyapavilon*), the Kiosk, the Pavilion of the brass band (*Zenepavilon*), and the fountain in front of the Kiosk (*Kiosk előtti Szökőkút*), all designed by Lajos Pákei.



2 – Cluj. Central Park, topographic survey fragment, 1917:

1. Summer Theatre (1909-10), 2. Teleki Blanka Girls' Dormitory (1908), 3. Skating Pavilion (1896), 4. Pavilion of the brass band (1896), 5. Fountain (1896), 6. The Kiosk (1896), 7. Apartment buildings in the property of the Catholic Status ("Státusházak", cca. 1912), 8. De Gerando Superior Girls' School (1900), 9. Diana Bath.

In order to extend the green area of the park on the southern slope of the Citadel (*Cetățuia, Fellegvár*), a 420 m long, winding path was built in 1900, called the Elisabeth Promenade (*Erzsébet Sétaut*), with a belvedere platform placed at the middle of the path, displaying the bust of Empress Elisabeth (wife of Franz Joseph I), created by Alajos Stróbl, and inaugurated on August 20, 1902. The area was connected with the park by the Elisabeth bridge (*Erzsébet híd*), a metallic pedestrian bridge, 35 m long, built across Someș River also in 1902.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Millennium celebrations: one thousand years (896-1896) since the Hungarian conquest (*honfoglalás*), which brought about large-scale celebrations all over Hungary (translator's note).

<sup>2</sup> Péter Sas, *Mesélő Képeslapok, Kolozsvár 1867-1919* (Narrating postcards, Cluj 1867-1919) (Budapest: Noran, 2003), 208.

Most importantly for the modernization of the city centre's urban space, the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the demolition of the buildings surrounding St. Michael's Roman-Catholic Church in Matthias Corvinus (Mátyás Király, now Unirii) Square. The square began to be cleared as of 1865, and the only building which survived as late as 1889 was the Catholic Girls' School (*Katolikus Leányiskola*) on the south-eastern corner of the square. The idea of demolishing the ring of insignificant constructions around the church appeared already at the middle of the century,<sup>1</sup> as citizens influenced by Western models increasingly began to question the Central Square's (*Főtér*) function as a marketplace. They realized that the urban potential of the central square could only be exploited if the commercial stalls masking the Gothic church, the main architectural monument of the city, disappeared. Unfortunately, public interest contravened the interest of the Church, which made a commercial profit out of those buildings, and would not accept that the area surrounding the church building should become public space. Following lengthy and laborious negotiations, the Catholic Status accepted the demolition, but prepared at the same time a number of projects to re-use the area; these were not carried out, however, as they met with the very strong opposition of public opinion.



3 – Cluj. Mátyás Király (now Unirii) Square area, topographic survey fragment, 1917:

1. St. Michael's Roman Catholic Church, 2. Bánffy Palace, 3. Apartment buildings in the property of the Catholic Status ("Státus-paloták") (1910).

---

<sup>1</sup> György Gaál, *Magyarok utcája* (Hungarians' street) (Kolozsvár: Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület, 1995), 21.



These demolitions cleared the surroundings of the church, placing thus the monument directly into the urban space of the square. This was a real shock to the citizens, and seriously shattered the Church's will to build something else in their place. The image of the square was much more spectacular now due to the 80 m high Neo-Gothic tower completed in 1859.<sup>1</sup> The area was immediately arranged by forming a greenbelt on the spot of the church cemetery, protected by a cast iron fence designed by Lajos Pákei. In compensation, the Roman Catholic Status received some buildings on the eastern side of the square, which were demolished, and the so called *Status Palaces* (*Status Houses*) were constructed instead in 1898, planned by Budapest architect Ignác Alpár.<sup>2</sup> The two "twin" buildings comprised three luxury apartment buildings each, with shops at their ground floors. The palaces flanked a street which was formed at the same time as the prolonging of Szentegyház (now Iuliu Maniu) street to the central square.

The south-western corner of the square also witnessed important changes, where the city image was modified by the replacement of existing buildings with new ones, higher and more monumental. The first construction was the New York Hotel (*New York Szálloda*), completed in 1893-94 based on the plans of local architect Lajos Pákei.<sup>3</sup> This was for a long time the most luxurious hotel of the city, and the café on its ground floor the meeting place of the bohemian society of Cluj. Two further monumental apartment buildings were built again in the 1910s with shops at the ground floor: the Palace of the First General Hungarian Insurance Company (*Első Magyar Általános Biztosító Társaság*) in 1912-13, designed by Budapest architects Aladár Kármán and Gyula Ullmann,<sup>4</sup> and attached to it the building of the House of Economics and Credit Bank (*Kolozsvári Takarékpénztár és Hitelbank*) in 1912-1914, designed by architect Ede Dvorák.<sup>5</sup> These new buildings radically changed the scale of the area where the Egyetem (now Universităţii) Street ran into Mátyás Király Square, imposing a much higher cornice in the square than the existing one. The effect was even more spectacular on Egyetem Street, where another apartment building was also built on the

---

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>2</sup> Gábor Rosch, *Alpár Ignác építésze* (Ignác Alpár's architecture) (Budapest: Enciklopédia, 2005), 190.

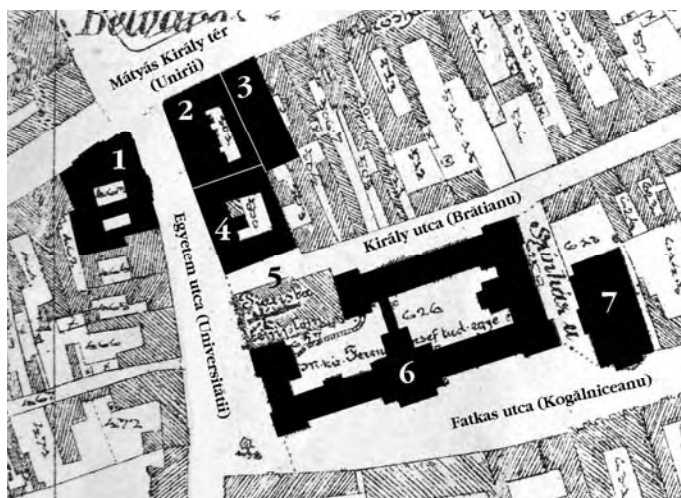
<sup>3</sup> Gaal, *Kolozsvár. Millenniumi kalauz*, 42.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>5</sup> A Takarékpénztár új palotája, *Ujság* 25 dec. (1914).

same scale with a cinema on the ground floor: the Sebestyén Palace (*Sebestyén Palota*).

The urban image of the central square was completed with the placement of the foundation stone in 1896, in honour of the Millennium celebrations, of the statue of Matthias Corvinus (*Mátyás-szoborcsoport*) created by sculptor János Fadrusz, and inaugurated in 1902.<sup>1</sup> Placed in the axis of the square south of the Gothic church, this impressive monument soon became one of the icons of the city. At that time there was also another obelisk-shaped monument in the square, known as the *Statua*, commemorating the visit of the Imperial couple Francis I, Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary and Karoline Auguste of Bavaria. In order to avoid the existence of two monuments within one space, the obelisk was moved to Carolina (now Museum) Square, where it still stands today.



4 – Cluj. University Street area, topographic survey fragment, 1917:  
1. New York Hotel (1893-94), 2. Prima Palace (1912-13), 3. House of Economics and Credit Bank (1912-1914), 4. Sebestyén Palace, 5. Jesuit church, 6. Franz Joseph University (1893-1902), 7. Old National Theatre (1821, 1865).

---

<sup>1</sup> Gaal, *Kolozsvár. Millenniumi kalauz*, 40.

The construction of the central building of Franz Joseph I University (*I. Ferenc József Tudományegyetem*) between 1893 and 1902, according to the plans of architects Károly Meixner and Ignác Alpár, was also a significant remodelling in the urban space of Cluj. The university building was erected at the crossing of Egyetem (now Universităţii) and Farkas (now Kogălniceanu) Streets, on the site of the former Jesuit Monastery and College, and it was quite significantly withdrawn from the alignment of the former buildings. A *largo* was thus formed here, as an urban preamble for the monumental university building as related to the medieval Farkas Street, considered today as a deviation from the original alignment of the lots. Today such a modification of historical urban space would be unacceptable; however, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century this was a current practice. The grand academic compositions of historicist architecture could only be introduced into historical urban spaces at the expense of sacrificing the context to a certain extent.

I have previously mentioned that cities were developed in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by employing the spaces just outside the rings of medieval fortifications, where most representative buildings and ensembles were then placed. The most significant example from this point of view in Cluj was the ensemble of the twin squares Bocskay (now Avram Iancu) and Hunyadi (now Ştefan cel Mare). Due to building restrictions imposed by military reasons, this area extended along the entire eastern fortification walls. However, its strategic role in defending the city considerably decreased from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, offering thus an ideal space for developing it eastwards once the fortifications had been demolished.



5 – Cluj. Bocskay (Avram Iancu) and Hunyadi (Ștefan cel Mare) Squares area, topographic survey fragment, 1917:

1. Chamber of Commerce and Industry (1910), 2. Reformed Theology Institute (1894-95), 3. EMKE-MÁV Palace (1890-91), 4. Palace of Forestry (1887), 5. Palace of Finance (1885-87), 6. Palace of Justice (1900-02), 7. National Theatre (1904-06), 8. St. George Barracks (1834-37), 9. Teachers' House (1902-03).

Its vocation to become a new city centre was enforced by the construction of some of the most important administrative and cultural buildings at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The first of these were built on the eastern side: the Palace of Finance (*Pénzügy Igazgatóság Palotája*) in 1885-87, by architect Frigyes Maetz; the Palace of Forestry (*Erdészeti Igazgatóság Palotája*) in 1887, by architect Balázs Debreczeni; the EMKE-MÁV Palace (*EMKE-MÁV Palota*) in 1890-91, by architect Benedek Endstrasser; and the Palace of Justice (*Igazságügyi Palota*) in 1900-02, by architect Gyula Wagner. These were completed on the northern side by the Reformed Theology Institute (*Református Teológia*) in 1894-95, by architect Gyula Feszty, and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (*Kereskedelmi és Iparkamara*) in 1910 by

architect József Hubert, on the northern corner of the western side.<sup>1</sup> On the central axis of the southern half (Hunyadi Square) the Teachers' House (*Tanítók Háza*) was raised in 1902-03 planned by architects Sándor Baumgartner and Zsigmond Herczegh, and the National Theatre (*Nemzeti Színház*) in 1904-06, by architects Ferdinand Fellner and Hermann Helmer.<sup>2</sup>

The relatively rectangular shape, extending in length on an approximately north-south direction, repeated the form of the previous space, only applying some corrections in alignment for regulating its perimeter, and the intersections with the streets which crossed or joined into the square. Although there were no significant changes on ground plan level, the dimensions of the space were radically modified due to the monumentality of the new buildings. The composition of this new urban space was evidently dominated by the size of the central architectural element, the Theatre, which had preserved its emphatic position until the interwar period, when the Orthodox Cathedral was built in the middle of Avram Iancu Square.

The other semi-central target area for urban development was the neighbourhood of Szt. György (now Lucian Blaga) Square, west of the historical centre, which comprised certain Government-financed buildings as a medical-academic functional pole. By the scope of its services aiming at the entire territory of Transylvania, this area surpassed the city level. The free lots of land permitted here the construction of the pavilion ensemble of the University Clinics (*Egyetemi Klinikák*) south of Mikó (now Clinicilor) Street in 1886-1900, planned by architects Alajos Hauszmann, Flóris Korb, and Kálmán Giergl,<sup>3</sup> and a few years later the Library of the University and the Transylvanian Museum (*Egyetemi és Erdélyi Múzeumi Könyvtár*) in 1906-09, by architects Flóris Korb and Kálmán Giergl.<sup>4</sup> The latter was placed in the western side of the square, and by its shape and position it "suggested" its future urban modelling. The importance of this area was also stressed by the construction of Cluj County Palace (*Kolozsvármegye Székház*) in 1895-97, based on the plans of Ignác Alpár.<sup>5</sup> This monumental building was raised at the intersection of Monostor (now Moșilor) and Arany János (now Petru Maior) Streets, and its high tower dominated the entire urban landscape of the area.

---

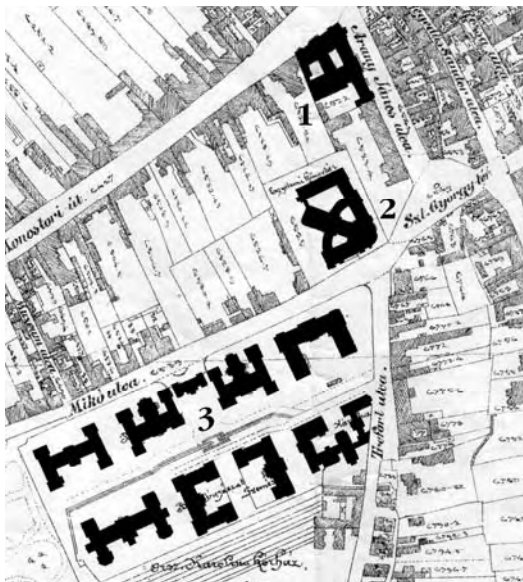
<sup>1</sup> Gaal, *Kolozsvár, Millenniumi kalauz*, 136-141.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 136, 137, 139, 140.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>5</sup> Rosch, *Alpár Ignác építészete*, 187.



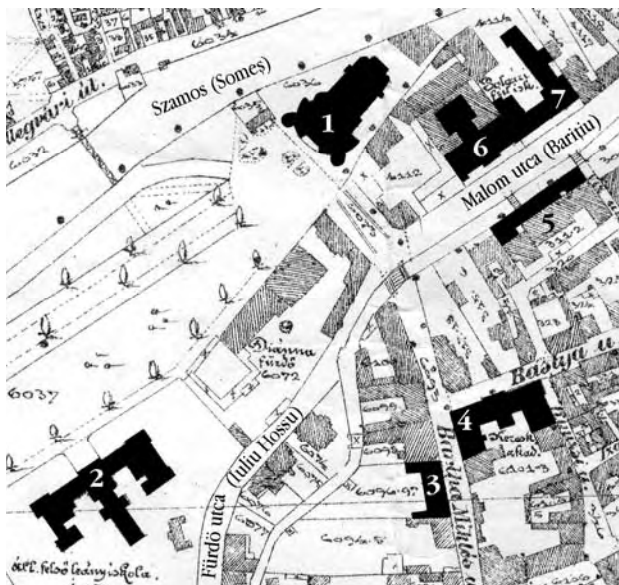
6 – Cluj. Szt. György (Lucian Blaga) Square area, topographic survey fragment, 1917:

1. County Palace (1896-97), 2. Library of the University and the Transylvanian Museum (1906-09), 3. University Clinics Complex (1886-1903).

Some buildings of university and pre-university education were also erected in the north-western corner of the historical centre, which have contributed to the functional definition of the city as the most important Transylvanian education centre. These buildings were raised on free lots; however, they did not eventually create a coherent urban ensemble. Of these, the Civil School for Boys (*Városi Polgári Fiúiskola*) was constructed in 1870 on the northern side of Malom (now Baritiu) Street, then the State Industrial Professional School (*Állami Ipari Szakiskola*) was attached to it in 1896-98, designed by Lajos Pákei. He was also responsible for the project of the Franz Joseph I Industrial Museum (*I. Ferenc József Iparmúzeum*), built in 1901-1903 just opposite the industrial school.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Szabolcs Guttman, *Pákei Lajos (1853-1921) kolozsvári hagyatéka* (Lajos Pákei's inheritance in Cluj) (Budapest: Pávilon, 8/1993), 49-52.



7 – Cluj. Central Park access area, topographic survey fragment, 1917:

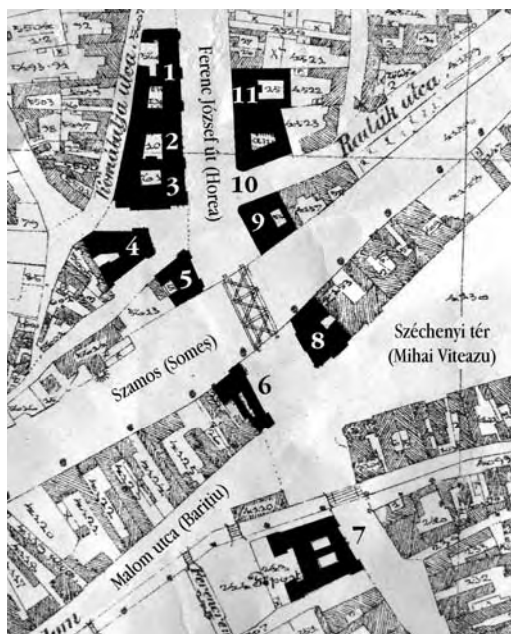
1. Summer Theatre (1909-10), 2. De Gerando Superior Girls' School (1898-1901), 3. Commercial Academy II (1893), 4. Commercial Academy I (1886-97), 5. Industrial Museum (1901-03), 6. Industrial Professional School (1896-98), 7. Civil School for Boys (1870).

University education was represented in the area by the two buildings of the Commercial Academy (*Kereskedelmi Akadémia*). The first one was built in 1886-87 at the intersection of Bástyá (now C. Daicoviciu) and Bartha Miklós (now Emil Isac) Streets, designed by Frigyes Maetz and Károly Reményik. The second was completed in 1893 on Bartha Miklós Street, almost opposite to the first, conceived as an extension designed by Lajos Pákei.<sup>1</sup>

An important characteristic of the area derived from the fact that it was situated between the historical centre and the Central Park, a neighbourhood perfectly suitable for the needs of an educational program. Therefore the construction of the monumental De Gerando State Superior Girls' School (*De Gerando Állami Felsőbb Leányiskola*) in this area between 1898 and 1901 by architect Ignác Alpár was not at

<sup>1</sup> Sas, *Mesélő Képeslapok, Kolozsvár*, 186, 187.

all accidental.<sup>1</sup> Due to its position neighbouring the Central Park, it more belonged to the park's ensemble, just like the Summer Theatre (*Nyári Színház*) built in 1909-10 at the eastern end of the park by architects Géza Márkus and Frigyes Spiegel.<sup>2</sup>



8 – Cluj. Great Bridge area, topographic survey fragment, 1917:

1. Ferenc József Hotel (cca. 1900), 2. Czakó Palace (cca. 1900), 3. EMAB Palace (cca. 1900), 4. Astoria Hotel (1910), 5. Elián Palace (cca. 1900), 6. Széký Palace (1893), 7. Palace of Post and Telegraph Office (1891-98), 8. Babos Palace (1893), 9. Bénig Palace (cca. 1900), 10. Urania Palace (1908-10), 11. Apartment building (cca. 1900).

<sup>1</sup> Rosch, *Alpár Ignác építészete*, 189.

<sup>2</sup> Gaal, *Kolozsvár. Millenniumi kalauz*, 69.



The inauguration of the railway on September 1, 1870, when the first train arrived in Cluj from Oradea,<sup>1</sup> radically changed the importance of the semi-central areas and peripheries north of the city. The city centre and the railway station were connected by Ferenc József (now Horea) Street, as the merging and modernization of Nagy (Big) and Zsidó (Jewish) Streets. The street, after passing by Széchenyi (now Mihai Viteazu) Square, continued until Mátyás Király (now Unirii) Square as Wesselényi (now Regele Ferdinand) Street; shortly after the inauguration of the railway station, this road became the most important circulation artery of the city. These conditions given, the semi-central area was becoming increasingly attractive for investors, and during Mayor Károly Haller's office, in 1884, a plan of urban arrangement (*Rendezési terv*) was conceived by architect Balázs Debreczeni. The core of this plan suggested a metallic bridge over Someş River, and its construction between 1884 and 1886 considerably increased the circulation flow on the centre–railway station axis.<sup>2</sup> The new bridge was framed at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries by four monumental apartment buildings with shops at the ground floor, built quite on the river's edge, forming one of the most remarkable urban ensembles of the city. The first ones built were those on the right bank of the river: the Neo-Gothic Széky Palace (*Széky Palota*) in 1893, designed by Budapest architect Samu Pecz, and the Neo-Baroque Babos Palace (*Babos Palota*), probably built prior to 1900. On the other riverbank the Elián Palace (Elián Palota) and Bénig Palace (Bénig Palota), two eclectic apartment buildings were built around 1900, named after their owners.<sup>3</sup>

These were completed on the left side of Ferenc József Street by: the Astoria Hotel (*Astoria Szálloda*) built in 1910 on the place of the old ill-famed White Lamb (*Fehér Bárány*) restaurant, the Palace of the First Hungarian General Insurance House (*Első Magyar Általános Biztosító Székháza Palota – EMAB*), cca. 1900, the Czakó Palace (*Czakó Palota*), the seat of the Transylvanian Agency of Forests, Timber, and Mines (*Erdélyi erdő-, faanyag- és bányaügynökség*), around 1900, and the Blau Palace (*Blau Palota*), which functioned as Ferenc József Hotel (*Ferenc József Szálloda*), built at about the same time.<sup>4</sup> The opposite front also received a different urban image by the construction of the Secession-style building of Uránia Palace (*Uránia Palota*) in 1910

---

<sup>1</sup> Ștefan Pascu, ed., *Istoria Clujului* (History of Cluj) (Cluj, 1974), 287.

<sup>2</sup> Sas, *Mesélő Képeslapok, Kolozsvár*, 37.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 35, 36.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 35, 36, 37.

designed by architect Géza Kappéter and the eclectic-style building of the Palace of the Transylvanian Agency of the National Accident Insurance Company (*Nemzeti Balesetbiztosító Társaság Erdélyrészi Vezérügynöksége*), built around that time as well. These two buildings were also important on account of the first cinema hall in Cluj, housed by their ground floors.<sup>1</sup>

The greatest qualitative asset that the architecture of Cluj gained at this time was the radical modernization of functional concepts, due in the first place to the import of *building types* (functional models) from Europe by way of Budapest or Vienna. For the first time in the history of the city, these led to the appearance of modern programs of administration, university and pre-university education, medicine, performance, trade, and habitation, transposed into elaborate conceptions reflecting the increasing complexity of the functions of these buildings. The monumental character of the constructions, due to their dimensions and eclectic decorative language, which meant to symbolize, mainly in case of public investments, the authority and prestige of the state, was one of their most important features. Private investment buildings also adopted this pattern, expressing by their image the power of private capital.

Stylistically, the architecture of Cluj in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was dominated by *historicism*, achieved by the various versions of *Neo-Gothic* (Széky Palace, Normal School for Boys, Gábor Áron Student Dormitory), *Neo-Renaissance* (the University and the Clinics Complex), and *Neo-Baroque* (County Palace, Palace of Justice, Status Palaces, New York Hotel) architecture. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the influence of Secessionism was also felt at Cluj, but less emphatically than at Târgu Mureș or Oradea. It might be possible that this rejection was due to the conservatism of central and local authorities, who did not consider Secessionism to be an appropriate style for public buildings. Therefore very few private buildings were designed in this style (Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Urania Palace), and only a few more contained significant Secession-style elements (House of Economies and Credit Bank, Prima Palace, Sebestyén Palace).

This increase in quality was somewhat diminished nonetheless by the provincial nature of many of the buildings erected at this time, manifested by the “negligence” in the treatment of secondary spaces, and

---

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 36, 37.

the discrepancy between the richly decorated main façades and the poverty of secondary or interior ones. This has not only happened in Cluj, but in all other provincial cities, where the budget of new constructions was always just above the necessary inferior limit. Under such circumstances the architects either neglected the secondary areas already in their projects, or, even if they detailed them, they were never accomplished because of financial reasons. Almost all buildings constructed in Cluj at this time suffered from this “province syndrome”, the notable exceptions being: the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the County Palace, the Status Palaces, the National Theatre, the central building of the University, and the Library of the University and the Transylvanian Museum.

The architecture of Cluj could not have been modernized with local architects alone, considering that the only architect with specialized studies was Lajos Pákei, while all the rest who carried out architectural projects in the city (Frigyes Maetz, Károly Reményik, Benedek Endstrasser, etc.) were constructors, who could at best be considered merely amateur architects. Their lack of adequate instruction and their isolation from European architectural trends made them unable to carry out the new building types required by the city’s development and modernization. For all these reasons, the most important commissions were entrusted to Budapest and Vienna architects. So it happened that representative figures of Hungarian historicist architecture, such as Ignác Alpár, Sándor Baumgarten, Kálmán Giergl, Alajos Hauszmann, Flóris Korb, Géza Márkus, Samu Pecz, etc. also completed projects for Cluj. Two of the most innovative Hungarian architects of the turn of the century, Ödön Lechner and Károly Kós, also gained fame due to their successful attempts to define a national Hungarian architectural style. Their activity in the city comprised two architecturally remarkable works (a villa and a small church), but they could not significantly influence local architecture. Two famous Viennese architects specialized in theatre design also worked for the city: Ferdinand Fellner and Hermann Helmer. With their project for the National Theatre they succeeded in introducing Cluj into the line of European cities with last generation theatres.

Thanks to the quality and scale of the architectural enterprise accomplished here during a time period of only 35 years (1880-1914), the image of Cluj was considerably transformed. This metamorphosis brought about a radical change of image, reflecting the city’s modernization on all levels, and implicitly its leap from the status of a medieval town to that of a modern eclectic city. This was the time of the

erection of the representative buildings which, together with previously constructed ones, lent the city centre's Central-European image that has been defining it ever since, to this day.

Translated by Emese G. Czintos