

**A TOWN BETWEEN WORLDS:
CLUJ BETWEEN THE END OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY
AND THE END OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY**

Phd. Roxana Dorina Pop

Babeş-Bolyai University,
Faculty of History and Philosophy, Romania
roxana_dorinapop@yahoo.com

Abstract

Cluj has been one of the most important centres of Transylvania, in all respects. Placed strategically at the crossroads of several trade routes, Cluj was able to expand along them, and the existence of numerous guilds in the medieval period boosted the development of commerce and craftsmanship. Consequently, the economy of Cluj experienced in time a positive upswing, which boosted the emergence of another important process: urbanisation. The culture and the society, the politics and the economy of this region are undeniably the elements that have influenced the good development of this important settlement.

The architectural image of Cluj today dates from the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, when the urban settlement changed its appearance, discarding its prevalently medieval aspect and being transformed into a modern city. The development of the local economy and governmental investments assisted with the modernisation of the city, and Cluj gradually lost its provincial flavour and witnessed an improvement in the quality of life, housing, access to services, the creation of new jobs and leisure areas, so much so that during the contemporary-communist period, the city turned into an industrial city, adopting a new type of concrete-based architecture.

Introduction

Cluj has been and will remain one of the most beautiful and impressive cities in Transylvania¹, as well as one of Romania's most important provinces. Its history has been long and it is marked by numerous events that have inevitably influenced its thriving evolution. Throughout time, the layout of the city has undergone numerous transformations, designed to organise the space according to the modern needs and means. The city, which was erected at a rapid pace, became better organised, more elegant and imposing in time, and its image has been preserved as an emblem of the society, as a sort of visiting card that can be explored not only through written, but also through visual documents (postcards, engravings or photographs).

This study aims to render the historical evolution and the transformations the city of Cluj underwent throughout the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, to identify the trajectory of its modernisation process at a local level in conjunction with the Transylvanian space and to capture the image of this urban settlement through the lens of urbanism and the cultural-artistic elements that largely define what today we call the urban society.

¹ The identity of the Transylvanian province has been defined over time not only by a "remarkable geographic and economic homogeneity, but also by a unique and specific multicultural profile" (Vais 2009: 7). Until WWI, it was part of the Habsburg Empire; after the year 1867, it belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and in 1918 it became united with the other Romanian provinces (Bessarabia, Bukovina, Wallachia and Moldova), forming what we call Romania today.

The beauty, artistry and importance of Cluj are emphasised by various writings left as a descriptive testimony over the centuries, charting the ideal setting of a city with a wide range of elements, which fostered and fuelled the evolution of urban, social and even economic modernity. Post-1990 historiographical research has attempted to outline several local histories by adapting the information at a regional level. Attempts have thus been made to relinquish mere descriptions and to compile in-depth studies on various topics (political, economic, cultural, and demographic), with a view to highlighting the importance of the Cluj settlement in relation to the entire Romanian space.

The image of Cluj in history: the city's foundation and development

Throughout time, Cluj has enjoyed a highly prestigious position, as attested not only by its political and economic characteristics, but also by its titlatures of *the main city* or *the treasure city*, acquired since the Middle Ages. One of the outstanding aspects that have contributed to the economic development of this region is related to the location of Cluj at the crossroads of specific communication channels (trade routes), which have connected it with the outside world: Hungary, Austria, Bohemia, Poland, the Balkan Peninsula or the Orient (Tamás 2002).

The founding of the urban settlement dates back to antiquity. Thus, from a mere “village” (*vicus*), *Napoca* was elevated to the rank of a “city” (*municipium*) in the years 118-119 AD and then, around the years 170-180 AD, it became a “colony” (*Colonia Aurelia Napoca*), being granted the privilege of “Ius Italicum” and having its residents placed, therefore, on an equal footing with that of the citizens of Rome (Lukács 2005).

Perhaps the most exciting period in the history of Cluj was the Medieval Age, when the city started to form on other bases and structures as well. After the Mongol invasion of 1241, Cluj was rebuilt on the site of the old Roman city of *Napoca*. In the thirteenth century, due to the German colonisation, Cluj became one of the seven Saxon cities of Transylvania,² and its population began to increase considerably. In terms of its location, there were two centres³ around which the medieval city of Cluj was built (Matei 2004).

² The seven fortified Saxon towns in Transylvania (“Sieben Burgen”) were: Bistrița, Sibiu, Cluj, Brașov, Mediaș, Sebeș, and Sighișoara. Each city built a fortified stone church in its centre, for defence purposes. As regards the city of Cluj, we may say that the Saxon colonists settled in this territory during the reign of King Stephen V of Hungary. It was decided on this occasion that walls should be erected, flanked by approximately 20 towers and gates, which were maintained and defended by the craft guilds (*Curierul Național* 2010).

³ More specifically, these were the *Old City*, which was destined for the merchants, farmers, and craftsmen, or, in other words, the civil settlement on the current site of the city, and the *City of the Ispán of Cluj*, located on the hill of Calvaria (Cluj-Mănăștur - a location transformed during communism into a district adjacent to Cluj), which was a more strategically positioned geographical region, where they were clerks, soldiers and government servants (Matei 2004).

Figure 1. Postcard – St. Michal Church (1925)⁴



The early development of the city and of its urbanistic planning occurred during the reign of King Charles Robert,⁵ who bestowed the rank of a “royal city” (*civitas regia*)⁶ to Cluj, by royal letter patent, on 19 August 1316 (Călian, Sălăgean, Miháli and Papp 2005). The privilege conferred thereby represented “the birth certificate of medieval Cluj” (Alicu and Cojocneanu 1995: 9) and, following this initiative, the city began to experience economic

⁴ *Cluj Illustrations*. Biblioteca Centrală Universitară „Lucian Blaga” (BCU).

⁵ The King of Hungary, Charles Robert of Anjou (1308-1342), levelled his policy at increasing the proceeds derived from the craftsmen’s work and the trade enterprises on the Transylvanian territory, with a view to fortifying the cities in the struggle for the consolidation of central power (Trif 2007).

⁶ Following this initiative, the citizens of Cluj obtained numerous privileges, such as the right to choose their own judge and priest; they received customs exemptions throughout the country, and all the properties of the city passed under the king’s lien (Lukács 2005). Economically, the privilege granted by King Charles Robert guaranteed the people of Cluj ownership of the land, forests and orchards that surrounded the town (Tamás 2002). As a token of their gratitude for these privileges, the citizens of the city were obliged to be faithful to the King.

progress, which was sustained mainly through the establishment of the guilds,⁷ defining the main crafts of the citizens. Besides fostering activities pertaining to craftsmanship, the city also encouraged agricultural activities, leading to the gradual formation of suburbs around the city walls.

The cultural and artistic aspects of the sixteenth century brought further fame to the city, which was enhanced during the following century through the stone pavement of the square and the streets from the city centre, or through the building of inns and public baths. This period also witnessed the birth of the first topography in Cluj, the establishment of a mint, a paper mill-factory, a brewery, a pharmacy, a city inn (hotel) (Trif 2007) and the building of stone bridges across the Someș.⁸

Figure 2. Postcard – Tailor’s Bastion (1915)⁹



⁷ The guilds were formed according to the major crafts of the citizens, and their members were considered “the most important founders of the city’s wealth” (Călian, Sălăgean, Mihăli and Papp 2005: 8-9). The first guild in Cluj was that of the skinners and furriers, which was founded in 1369, followed by those of the butchers, the blacksmiths, the carpenters, etc. The economic progress of Cluj can also be detected in the large number of guilds, which grew from one period to another. For instance, in the fifteenth century, there were 11 guilds; during the first half of the sixteenth century, there were 22, while in the second half of the sixteenth century, their number expanded to 30 (Miclea 1985).

⁸ The river that flows through the city.

⁹ *Cluj Illustrations*. Biblioteca Centrală Universitară „Lucian Blaga” (BCU).

In urbanistic terms, the medieval settlement was built like the cities in the Central Europe of the time. In the sixteenth century, Cluj was systematised into 5 districts, named after the main street of each division. The appearance of the city gained contour during this time: thus, inside the city walls, most houses were built of stone or wood, while houses on the periphery had a rural aspect, being made out of clay bricks (Kovács 2008). The city square was positioned in the centre, whence the alleys branched off; it was in this main area that private houses, designed in style of the Renaissance, began to be built. They were composed of ground and first floors, were built of brick, and only their window and door frames were carved in stone (Pascu and Marica 1969: 69), giving this civil architectural style a particular note.

Throughout the seventeenth century, Cluj maintained its image as a prosperous city and became the capital of Transylvania for a while.¹⁰ In St. Michael's Church,¹¹ thirty-six sessions of the Diet were held, and Cluj was the seat of the Gubernium between 1719 and 1732. The nobles who re-established their residences in the city during the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries contributed greatly to changing the life of Cluj, as "reflected in its urbanistic development and in the unfolding of its everyday life" (Călian, Sălăgean, Miháli and Papp 2005: 8-9). The growth of its population emphasised the authorities' concern for territorial extension at the expense of the contiguous estates and for the establishment of a rural domain (Edroiu 1978). Cluj expanded from a surface of 7 hectares in the twelfth century to 137 hectares in the sixteenth century, reaching a population of about 7,500 inhabitants, while in the eighteenth century it spread across 151 hectares, having about 10,000 inhabitants (Agachi 2009: 36-39).

Cluj during the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries: the beginning of the modernisation process

In the modern period and especially in the late nineteenth century, Cluj faced an intense process of modernisation, which automatically generated territorial development, a growing number of inhabitants, labour valorisation, and the adaptation of social life to

¹⁰ It earned this appellative by turning the settlement into a powerful political and economic centre. During the seventeenth century, almost all the Diets of the country met in Cluj, electing the princes who established here their centre of government (Trif 2007).

¹¹ The construction of St. Michael's Catholic Church (which was positioned in the centre of the medieval city) lasted about 130 years, because it was built in successive stages. It represents the foremost church-hall of Transylvania (Pascu and Marica 1969: 29), in the sense that the height of the lateral naves is equal to that of the main nave. This is the second Gothic building in Transylvania as regards its size, being surpassed only by the Black Church in Braşov. The history of the church began in 1316, when the citizens of Cluj wanted to erect a building that was worthy of its newly acquired status, but because of the lack of funds, its construction lasted a longer time. At the end of the nineteenth century, a statuary group was erected in front of the church, featuring Matthias Corvinus, the younger son of John Hunyadi (Lukács 2005). Corvinus' equestrian statue was inaugurated in 1902 and was sculpted by Ioan Fadrusz (Miclea 1985).

the conditions or the policy imposed by the state. Various legal, administrative, fiscal, economic and cultural reforms influenced positively the society in Cluj, while the progress of industry and commerce gave impetus to urban planning, constructions, landscaping, sewerage, transport and public lighting. This attests the emergence of a conscious desire to embellish and provide the city with various facilities, raising the standards of systematic urban development to a higher degree.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Cluj experienced a slower pace of expansion as regards the urbanisation process, on account of the less frantic development of the economic sector. What gradually emerged was the necessity to have a city engineer; the Constructions Direction (*Aedilis Directio*)¹² was formed in Transylvania, with its headquarters in Cluj, with a view to closely supervising the urbanistic problems of the cities in the surrounding province (Benkö 1967).

The growth of the population¹³ in Cluj, especially in the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, led to a new problem that the authorities were faced with: the shortage of residential space. The biggest obstacle to territorial expansion was the system of medieval walls and bulwarks that surrounded the city, which is why their demolition was seen an immediate solution. In order to preserve the city's historical past, the Constructions Direction decided to simply demolish the wall portions that, "because of their derelict condition, represented a threat" (Benkö 1967: 238). Unfortunately, the authorities' decision was not fully complied with, many walls being torn down, since the stone obtained thereby represented a key source of materials for the construction of new buildings. That is why today few parts of the medieval city of Cluj are preserved, the surviving buildings becoming important tourist attractions on the city map.

¹² Founded during the reign of Joseph II.

¹³ There was a growth of the population of Cluj by more than 10,000 inhabitants between 1787-1837, so from 13,928 inhabitants, a total of 24,000 inhabitants was reached (Pascu 1974: 201). Regarding the average population density in Cluj, we can say that there was a continuous increase, which explains why from 59 inhabitants/ ha in 1787, a density of 78 people/ ha was reached in 1870, while at the beginning of the twentieth century, there were 100 inhabitants/ ha. This evolution was endorsed primarily by the progress the city had made during this time (Susan 1972: 73).

Figure 3. Postcard - Continental Hotel (1913)¹⁴



The embellishment of Cluj started right in the city centre, with the construction of stone buildings.¹⁵ The construction works on the city's main street began to intensify and the Constructions Direction together with the Constructions Committee supervised the urbanistic plans of the buildings, not so much from an aesthetic standpoint, but as regards the location of the new edifices, because the straight line of the streets had to be respected (a provision that would have to be applied henceforth in the city's urbanistic regulations). "Where the new line of the street endangered the integrity of a private property estate, the city offered land in exchange or compensation, and in case additional portions of land were occupied by constructions, the city demanded that redemption should be paid for the incorporated land" (Benkő 1967: 241). In 1838, the alignment of the houses began, and a year later, the streets were numbered (Lazarovici, Alicu and Pop 1996); new squares were laid out and bridges across the Someş were built or rebuilt.

The landscaping of the Great Square (Union Square today) was decided and the stone paving and widening works began. A memorial monument was erected, dedicated to

¹⁴ *Cluj Illustrations*. Biblioteca Centrală Universitară „Lucian Blaga” (BCU).

¹⁵ In the nineteenth century, there was a provision that prohibited the erection of wooden buildings in the city centre, for fire prevention purposes. What was also prohibited now was the erection of stables or other buildings that might ruin the aspect of the city centre, and the number of steps that shops or entrance doors had to have was regulated. Railings at house entrances were forbidden and what was laid down was “the extent to which the window grates could exceed the wall plane” (Benkő 1967: 243).

the visit of Emperor Francis I and his wife Carolina to Cluj (the Obelix),¹⁶ which was subsequently relocated. To achieve this goal, the authorities began to realise the need for moving the market away and turning the square into a recreational space, so the stalls were removed, the access of animals was forbidden, and the cattle fair was disbanded.

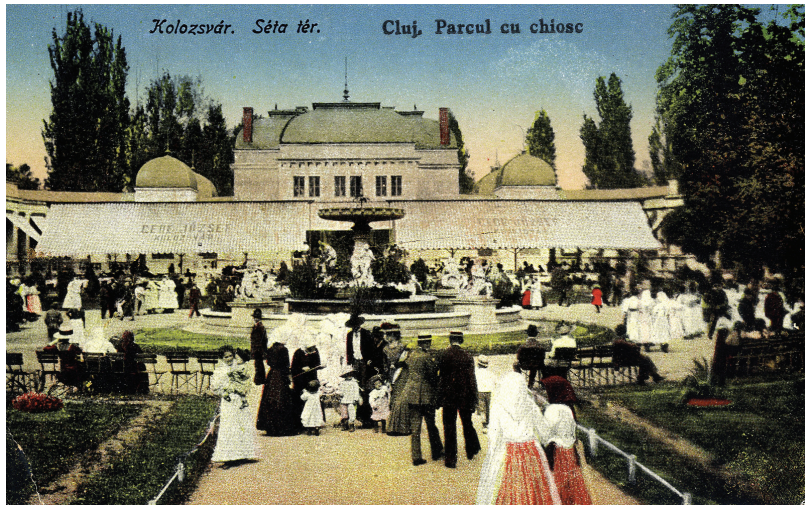
In 1827, the modernisation of Cluj progressed with the introduction of kerosene lighting. The permanent theatre in town received its own building in 1821 (Susan 1977). In 1933, the Casino opened, being, at that time, a “meeting place of scholars, a club and a public library” (Baconsky 1963: 17). In 1845, the foundations of the first Romanian Reading Society were laid (Aghachi 2009). The establishment of new cultural societies and institutions gradually transformed Cluj into one of the most important cultural centres in Transylvania, a status that would be consolidated over the following centuries.

The Central Park was established as a recreation area in 1812, serving as a space for strolling, peace and relaxation in Cluj. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Promenade Society took over control of its administration for 20 years. It was then that numerous modifications were made,¹⁷ turning this park into a European landmark of that time.

¹⁶ The monument has a well-appreciated artistic value, “including figurative reliefs made by the Viennese sculptor Josef Klieber, as well as contributions from local masters, such as the sculptor Anton Csürös and the professor of drawing Nagy Samuel” (Sabău 2002: 281).

¹⁷ The lake was built; on it, boating was organised in the summer and skating was practised in the winter. The summer theatre was built (1872) and a music pavilion was erected (in 1870) http://www.bjc.ro/wiki/index.php/Parcul_central (accessed on 04.16.2012).

Figure 4. Postcard – Central Park (1921)¹⁸



As regards the economic sector, the lack of an industrial area of the city was noticed in the early nineteenth century, these locations being situated in different directions, while the craft workshops and the traders' shops were positioned in the city centre (Mirel 1975). In 1835, the local residents formed the Merchants' Society of Cluj, which sought to have control over the trade in the city. In 1844, the Transylvanian Economic Association was founded, which contributed greatly to the development of agriculture "by promoting technical progress in farming" (Trif 2007: 33).

The remarkable development of the city occurred during the dualistic period (1867-1918), when the Austro-Hungarian policy envisaged the integration of the province of Transylvania into the Hungarian kingdom in the shortest time possible. The materialisation of this desideratum required an effort of modernising the entire province. Although Cluj lost its status as the capital of the Transylvanian space, given the abolishment of the Diet and the relocation of the Gubernium, the investments¹⁹ coming from the Hungarian government meant that the city benefited from remarkable support in raising the living standards of the population, by giving an impetus to construction works, the administrative organisation, and the educational and medical milieus. This resulted in "numerous

¹⁸ *Cluj Illustrations*. Biblioteca Centrală Universitară „Lucian Blaga” (BCU).

¹⁹ If by the beginning of the eighth decade of the nineteenth century, the German investments were directed mainly in the field of gold mining in Transylvania, after this period the foreign authorities directed their attention to other important sectors of the economy in the province: the construction of railways, steel production, gas or coal extraction, and the communications network (Pavel 2003).

administrative palaces,²⁰ school and university buildings [...] engendering a construction boom that definitively changed the city's image" (Vais 2009: 5).

Figure 5. Postcard – Train station (1915)²¹



To accomplish the image of a modern European city, an Administrative Committee was established in 1876, with political, organisational and administrative functions, dealing with public works, the building of roads, railways and bridges, and the direction of agriculture, the industry, public works, and education (Agachi 2009).

Reflected on an urbanistic level above all, the grandeur of the city meant that at the end of the nineteenth century, Cluj was undergoing a process of improving the daily life of the population. Thus, the Oradea-Cluj railway section was inaugurated in 1870, its construction having started two years before; in 1887, work on building the water supply and sewerage networks²² started, contributing to the establishment of the public baths; in 1908, 120 streets were paved, and on the eve of WWI, the asphalt surface reached 425,444 square metres; in 1893, a modern telephone network came into being and progress began

²⁰ From among the palaces of the city's new administrative institutions that were built in this new period, mention should be made of: the Palace of the Regional Railway Department, the Palace of Finances, the Palace of the Forestry Department, the Postal Department, the Prefecture and the Palace of the Commercial Academy (Lazarovici, Alicu and Pop 1996).

²¹ *Cluj Illustrations*. Biblioteca Centrală Universitară „Lucian Blaga” (BCU).

²² In 1908, Cluj had 35 kms of canals (Agachi 2009: 56).

to be made in public lighting (Gyarmati 2000: 29), so starting from 1871, oil lamp lanterns were replaced with kerosene lighting and only after 1907 did electric lighting begin to make an appearance, etc. However, it should be noted that modernisation targeted especially the centre, while the periphery maintained its rural aspect for a good while.

Figure 6. Postcard – Hotel Astoria (1930)²³



Transport to various points in the city was provided by carriages and coupés and the route from the centre to the station could be traversed by a train powered by a steam engine (Mitrea 1980). For those who visited Cluj or came on various kinds of business, hotels were built, which became true symbols of the city given their impressive architecture. For instance, one of the most impressive and prestigious buildings was the Continental,²⁴ which had been known as the New York Hotel or Cafe several decades before. In 1872,

²³ *Cluj Illustrations*. Biblioteca Centrală Universitară „Lucian Blaga” (BCU).

²⁴ In the nineteenth century, it was placed in the south-west part of the main square (now Union Square), built on the site of an inn; it was built in an eclectic style. At that time, New York Cafe was considered “the centre of literary and artistic life in Cluj”; after 1960, it was called the Continental (Lukács 2005). In the collective memory, the Continental Hotel was a luxurious place, with a fairly high standard, comprising three units: “a bar with a cafe, a brasserie overlooking the street of the university and the restaurant itself, with an entrance from Napoca Street” (Poantă 2007: 97). Perhaps the opulence and elegance that the Continental had enjoyed in the 1960s-70s could be seen in the variety of beverages and foods that delighted the refined patrons from Cluj. For example, in the 1970s, there were “two or three brands of whiskey, Camus Cognac, Russian and Polish vodka, Havana rum, as well as the famous Radeberger and Pils beers... at affordable prices” (Poantă 2007: 98). Regarding the cuisine, the restaurant did not benefit from variety, but respected the specific autochthonism of the region.

Hotel Pannonia was opened, which in 1891 was renamed as the Central Hotel,²⁵ while in 1910 Hotel Astoria²⁶ appeared. Therefore, the echoes of the late baroque combined with the neo-classical and the neo-Gothic created an exceptional combination as regards the architectural image of modern Cluj, contributing to the perpetuation of the ambient urban atmosphere that enveloped the new end-of-the-century buildings.

Figure 7. Postcard - University Library (1917)²⁷



Education also had a rather important role in the cultural milieu of Cluj. Thus, in the nineteenth century the school network expanded, as vocational, secondary and agricultural education appeared, and so did the higher school of commerce. In 1863, the Academy of Law was founded, and in 1869 the Agronomic Institute was established, while 1872 witnessed the birth of the “University” with four faculties (Vlăscianu and Ianoş 1998: 62): law, medicine, science and letters. The construction of new headquarters for the University of Cluj²⁸ was laid down by the final decision of 26 May 1892, and the city consequently

²⁵ Today it is known under the name of *Hotel Melody*. After 1960, it was known as the first night bar in Cluj (Lukács 2005).

²⁶ In the current period, the hotel building houses the Cluj Chamber of Commerce and Industry (an institution that was established here in 1851).

²⁷ *Cluj Illustrations*. Biblioteca Centrală Universitară „Lucian Blaga” (BCU).

²⁸ The building of the University was carried out between 1893-1902 according to the blueprints of the architects Meixner Károly and Alpár Ignác, and its implementation was entrusted to the local contractor Reményik Károly, a prolific constructor in Cluj (Vais 2009).

gained enormous prestige as a regional university centre. In other words, “the University was a centre around which revolved numerous prestigious institutions, the most important of which were Carolina Hospital and the University Library”²⁹ (Vais 2009: 31).

Chart 1³⁰

Year	Population (number of inhabitants)
1910	60,808
1921	83,541
1930	100,844
1938	114,000
1948	121,753
1956	154,723
1960	161,931
1970	202,715
1980	283,647
1985	309,843
1990	329,234
1992	328,606
1995	330,084
2000	332,617

The greatest impetus Cluj received at an administrative, political, economic, social or cultural level came from the accomplishment of the Great Union, an event that definitively changed the fate of entire Romania, as included within its borders today. This major event in the history of our country and of the Romanian people meant the fulfilment of a dream that had lasted for more than a century in the minds of the Transylvanians and had brought with itself the recognition of the state and the nationality of the Romanians from this territory.

²⁹ The University Library originates from the Transylvanian Museum Library, which was initially the most substantial section of the museum, and the original book fund was established by donations (the most important donation came from Count Kemény József, whose library contained 15,000 volumes and a collection of 1,000 manuscripts and diplomas. Following the establishment of the University, it was decided that a university library should be opened and the decisive contribution of the Transylvanian Museum led to a contract with the University, whereby the Museum Library, which comprised 20,483 volumes in 1863, was placed at its disposal. The signing of the contract on 29 August 1872 marked the moment when the Museum Library became an organic part of the University Library. The library construction was entrusted to the same contractor from Cluj who had built the University of Cluj and the completion of the project lasted for three years - 1906 to 1909 (Vais 2009: 341-361).

³⁰*The demographic evolution of the population according to the censuses* (Dragoş, Ciupea, Oprea, Bradea and Salvanu 2001: 18)

Cluj during the interwar period: a world of socio-cultural and architectural progress

After WWI, due to the increase in the surface and, hence, of the population³¹ (see Fig. 1), the question of ensuring an appropriate urban comfort was raised.³² The period immediately following 1918 was characterised by economic growth due to the valorisation of soil and subsoil riches, the development of the industry, the banking institutions and transport. In 1925, there also occurred an administrative-territorial organisation, which led to the unification and the more careful supervision of the central policy in all of Romania's regions.

The modernisation process was continued throughout the interwar period. Progress was propelled at the level of Cluj by the emergence of modern trade and industry, which contributed to a full process of urbanisation. Thus, after the urbanisation of the city centre, the need was felt to modernise the periphery too, which automatically led to the expansion of the area within the city walls by gradually integrating some of the surrounding villages within the city's planimetry, which were later converted into districts. This period also witnessed an improvement and expansion of the modernisation process, which focused on carrying out public works. The central squares were arranged, the Communal Slaughterhouse was put up and developed, and in 1922 the airport in Someșeni was built, thus linking the city to the lines of air transport.

The interwar period brought about novelty in the organisation of urban space. The alignment of the buildings and streets was chosen for a simple reason: what was desired was an outstanding urban aesthetic, which might contribute to granting the city a unified aspect. Thus, on 5 January 1931, the Cluj City Council approved in session the "Rules of constructions and alignments for the City of Cluj," which comprised 257 articles and 22 chapters. These regulations largely preserved the articles of the older urbanistic regulations and the major provisions included the following: the city's building areas were stipulated; the territories within and outside the city limits were delineated; the matter of the alignment and widening of the streets was regulated; an option was made for the

³¹ Therefore, ethnically, the number of the Romanians in the city began to redress itself, a situation noticed in the census of 1930: 54.3% Romanians, 34.5% Hungarians, 6.6% Jews and 2.7% Germans (Mureșan, 2009: 51). During the ensuing period, the situation was as follows: in 1948 - 40,1% Romanians, 57.7% Hungarians, 0.3% Germans and 1.4% Jews; in 1956 - 47.8% Romanians, 47.9% Hungarians, 0.6% Germans, 2.9% Jews and 0.3% Roma; in 1966 - 56.5% Romanians, 41.4% Hungarians, 0.7% Germans, 0.9% Jews and 0.1 % Roma; in 1977 - 75.86% Romanians, 22.8% Hungarians, 0.3% Germans, 0.1% Jews and 1% Roma; in 1992 - 47.8% Romanians, 47.9% Hungarians, 0.6% Germans, 2.9% Jews and 1% Roma (Boulder 2005: 222).

³² "Sewerage, water supply, fire safety, property protection, the discipline of good neighbourliness, respect for the authorities, the primacy of the public over the private interest, the safe operation of buildings, the creation of a brand image for the city, putting an end to the disorderly proliferation of the peripheries, so that the surface of communal property could be preserved as far as possible" (Agachi 2009: 73).

standardisation of estates and buildings by compliance with parcellation requirements, which had to observe both the existing alignment regime and the construction of new streets; the location and height of the buildings were discussed; recommendations were given for achieving the facades of the buildings erected on alignment, for fencing or ensuring the water supply, and so on (Agachi 2009: 74-82).

Figure 8. Postcard – Someș River (1915)³³



As regards the spatial division of the city, it had a concentric shape that was not very well defined, consisting mainly of two parts: the central area, which largely encompassed the historical centre of Cluj, and the periphery, which included mostly the industrial, agricultural or as-yet un-urbanised areas. In the central part of the city, economic power was greater because the social categories (merchants or intellectuals) that lived here had a prominent influence on the economic and cultural sectors of Cluj. Throughout the twentieth century, this central area represented an intense focal point, fuelling the expansion of the institutional, financial, administrative, medical and cultural systems. The small streets bordering on these areas saw an increase in the number of residential homes, depending on the occupational status and economic income of the population in Cluj.

³³ *Cluj Illustrations*. Biblioteca Centrală Universitară „Lucian Blaga” (BCU).

The greatest impact of the modernisation process in the first half of the twentieth century was on the cultural and artistic domains. Culture has been the cornerstone of all historical periods, attempting, together with society, to outline an exceptional artistic, educational and social framework with a view to demonstrating and emphasising the importance of a world in perpetual evolution and change. Thus, Cluj gained confidence, during this period, in its potential and its elevation to the rank of a European city served as an incentive for its association, in the public mind, with the syntagm of the metropolis of the Transylvanian region. Consequently, from a social perspective, “Cluj became a small metropolis, teeming with an assortment of beings of all kinds,” and the urban area was crammed with and illustrated by “both residential *palaces* and *caverns* dug into the hillsides of the fortress, both coffeehouses, which became important centres of social life, and imposing administrative and cultural edifices” (Agachi 2009: 86).

Most buildings constructed in Cluj during the interwar period adopted the form of modern architecture: a large proportion of the new buildings erected were mere family homes that were built on a single level and had an adjacent garden, but modern comfort requirements were increasingly taken into account for their construction. “In the neighbourhoods of villas, the two- or three-storey buildings became more and more numerous, a style of national inspiration prevailing in their architectural design. The characteristics of this Romanian style were: the organisation of the buildings in various spatial units, the avoidance of symmetry in terms of the layout and the façade, the introduction of elements inspired by the older Romanian architecture, such as semi-circular arches or [...] railings and column heads decorated with floral and geometric motifs, carved in stone, friezes with decorative bas-reliefs” (Pascu, Marica, Țoca and Wagner 1974: 193).

From an architectural standpoint, “villas remain perhaps the most valuable achievement of the *Romanian style*” and towers were fully valorised in smaller buildings, in the dwellings that increased significantly during this period. The so-called villas were considered to have “special charm, a moderate amount of stylishness, intimacy and harmony of proportions, which delight the eye and satisfy the spirit in the highest degree” (*Gazeta Ilustrată* 1933: 112-113). Public buildings also gained substantial importance, and the period under consideration introduced an architectural novelty, in the sense that the newly accomplished edifices “have facades that are symmetrically grouped around the central motif of the entrance” (Pascu, Marica, Țoca and Wagner 1974: 194). By way of exemplification, we could mention the buildings of the new clinics, the Academy for Advanced Agronomic Studies, Eminescu High School, the Sanatorium and the Park Baths (the Children’s Clinical Hospital today).

Figure 9. Postcard- National Theatre (1925)³⁴



After 1920, the Village Museum was arranged in one of the city's green spaces, as part of the Ethnographic Museum of Transylvania.³⁵ Another tourist landmark that was created in the interwar period was the Botanical Garden,³⁶ which, given its variety of plant species and its large surface, was and has remained an area for research in the field, a leisure space for the people of Cluj. In 1920, the Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts was officially inaugurated, and the National Theatre³⁷ and the Romanian Opera House³⁸ remain two of the chief emblems of both interwar and contemporary cultural life in Cluj.

³⁴ *Cluj Illustrations*. Biblioteca Centrală Universitară „Lucian Blaga” (BCU).

³⁵ The Ethnographic Museum was founded in 1922 and it now has over 40,000 items that express diverse occupations (crop and animal farming, various crafts), musical instruments and various artistic elements (Vlăsceanu and Ianoş 1998: 65).

³⁶ The garden was established on 13 hectares of land in 1920, by Professor Alexandru Borza, being accessible to the public five years later. The numerous plant species, both Romanian and foreign, brought over from other continents, are the attractions of this public garden. It has been dubbed “the Garden of the Five Continents” (Vlăsceanu and Ianoş 1998).

³⁷ The National Theatre was the creation of the great Austrian architects Helmer and Fellpep, and the building was inaugurated on 1 December 1919; on this occasion, the one-year anniversary of the Great Union was also celebrated. On this solemn day for the culture of the Cluj society, the performances of *Let There Be Light* and *The Poem of the Union* were staged, both being written by the theatre director, Zaharia Bârsan. The first verse that was uttered on the stage of the National Theatre was symbolic for those times: “The storm has abated.” This is a building in the Baroque style, combining other borrowed decorative elements. For example, the two triumphant chariots pulled by lions, which adorn the frontispiece of the theatre, are of Classicist design. The room, decorated in the Baroque style, like the eighteenth-century European theatre, has a capacity of 900 seats.

³⁸ The Romanian Opera House in Cluj has been considered, ever since its foundation, not just “a viable organism, but also a temple of first-class Romanian art and culture.” It opened a few months after the inauguration of the National Theatre and was managed by Constantine Pavel, the organiser, the brain and the heart of this establishment. The first representations were two symphonic concerts and the inaugural performance (25 May 1920) was dedicated to Giuseppe Verdi's opera *Aida*.

The visual arts also began to receive their due importance in the interwar period. In the early twentieth century, there appeared the manifestations of the cinema. Even though the first “films” were mere projections, after the introduction of electricity, two cinemas were opened (1906, 1907). In 1910, the first cinema was built in Cluj, “Urania.” The positive influence of the seventh art at the level of the Cluj society and not only was supported by a substantial increase in their numbers over a short period: in 1915, there were three cinemas in Cluj, namely the Theatre Circle, Apollo and Urania³⁹ (Glodariu 2003: 80).

The process of moulding urban symbols was in constant motion. For example, in 1937, there were 1,354 telephone lines with 1,905 subscribers in Cluj, 50 long-distance circuits, 6 post offices, and 8,041 radio subscribers. Urban transport benefited from 102 buses, 130 auto-taxis and hackney carriages (Lazarovici, Alicu and Pop 1996: 129). The lifestyle, the specific features of the geographical environment in Cluj, and the particular features of the local buildings highlighted the fact that the local identity of the city registered an upward trend during the interwar period. The bases of an ideal framework for the expansion and modernisation of the urban settlement were laid, taking into consideration the daily life necessities of the Cluj society. “Between the two world wars, Cluj became the most important spiritual centre of Transylvania, through its institutions of culture and education” (Pop and Danciu 2008: 15), maintaining its role as the region’s political and cultural capital.

Cluj during the communist period: concrete-based architecture

The communist period outlined a new image of Cluj, a city that embarked on an extension of the hinterland,⁴⁰ on building a habitat whose modern age constructions were delineated by the so-called blocks of flats, whose green areas disappeared one by one, being replaced with factories and dwelling places. In other words, the vivid colours of the modern city were shrouded in many shades of grey, reflected in the new concrete constructions, the smoke from the factory chimneys and the numerous halls or warehouses.

³⁹ The building of Urania Palace was constructed in 1910, in the style of the Austrian Secession (Ciorca, Horvath and Stanciu 2011).

⁴⁰ In 1946, the area of Cluj was 16,052 ha, and in the 1970s it reached 16,619 ha (Muresan, 2009: 58).

The Romanian society lived for nearly five decades under the communist regime, a political system that was not content only with political supremacy, but also wanted to have control over all the elements that underlay the existence of the state. Industry also represented an impetus in the development of the urbanistic system, which became an essential mechanism of the urban dynamics.⁴¹

In the 1950s, the State Committee for Architecture and Constructions took over all political and administrative projects pertaining to the artistic and architectural domains.⁴² This urbanistic control was triggered by Khrushchev's speech of 7 December 1954, which announced the beginning of de-Stalinisation in urban policy.⁴³ The new communist orientation aimed to destroy the so-called historical monuments, discarding all forms of embellishment and applying concepts that were simple, practical and utilitarian. What was interesting was also the opinion of Nicolae Ceaușescu⁴⁴ as regards the new architecture, which, in his opinion, had to symbolise the victory of socialism and generate the design of a "modern, socialist city, worthy of the era of the multilaterally-developed socialist society" (Ivan 2009: 182). Thus, functionality was adopted at the expense of aesthetics, the city panorama blatantly testifying to this even today.

⁴¹ "As a premise of urbanisation, industry was not only one of the genetic factors of the national urban system, but also the most important element in disrupting hierarchies and in establishing the hierarchy of cities" (Câdea, Cimpoeru and Bran 2006: 279).

⁴² This council was established in 1952 and was controlled by the Council of Ministers.

⁴³ The Soviet leader's outlook on architecture was based on the idea of functionality, standardisation, prefabrication, on the principle that an "ornament is a crime" and on the refusal of monumentality, all of these dogmas being applied in all the urban centres from Eastern Europe (Ivan 2009: 178), which Romania was a part of.

⁴⁴ Nicolae Ceaușescu was a member of the Communist Party and the leader of Romania from 1965 until 1989.

Figure 10. Postcard – Panorama (1962⁴⁵)



CLUJ – Vedere panoramică

For the architecture of Romania, communism meant the denial of already existing models and, implicitly, the forced relinquishment of modernism and of architecture's natural evolution. Architecture now became an overt political tool, an emblem of the style of socialist realism, which resulted in the return to the classical style and to monumentalism (Tulbure 2007). This new type was characterised by non-uniqueness, by structures built in a record time, producing numerous infills in the planimetry of the city. Thus, beginning in 1948, increasing pressure was put on architects, because a reorientation in this area was envisaged. The action was carried out under the slogan "The Fight for Socialism is the Fight

⁴⁵ *Cluj Illustrations*. Biblioteca Centrală Universitară „Lucian Blaga” (BCU).

for Saving Architecture” (Mureşan, 2009: 57), while the path that urban and architectural projects had to embark on was dictated by the state, at the Council of Ministers of the Romanian People’s Republic,⁴⁶ from 13 November 1952.⁴⁷

The central construction area also returned to the attention of the authorities. Institutions and edifices were built, fitting into the picture of Cluj not necessarily on account of their architectural beauty, but through their gigantism, which was one of the prominent symbols of communist politics. Quantitative rather than qualitative construction was the aim, and the positioning of buildings in key locations of the city sought the public expression of the content of socialist ideology. One thing is certain: the template after which the new buildings were erected was like “an endless game where you can design, from fragments of classical elements and in the manner of a kaleidoscope, numerous compositions, always different, yet always the same” (Tulbure 2007: 93).

Figure 11. Postcard - Hall of Culture (1960)⁴⁸



⁴⁶ The name which Romania received after the instalment of communism in power.

⁴⁷ It has been stated that: “The new architecture should fulfil the social needs and meet the living standards of the working people through the accomplishment of large constructions and building complexes, works of art that ought to reflect the consciousness of the new socialist society” (Mureşan, 2009: 57).

⁴⁸ http://greenstone.bjc.ro/greenstone/collect/clujulin/index/assoc/Jcpo_40.dir/bjc_cs_cpo_40.JPG.

The buildings that were now constructed included the Institute of Chemistry, the Oncological Institute, the Students' Hall of Culture,⁴⁹ the Youth House, the student complexes (the dormitories in Haşdeu), the State Archives, the Academy Library, the Republic Cinema,⁵⁰ the Napoca, Victoria, Sport and Transylvania hotels, several commercial complexes, etc. Inevitably, these buildings had an important impact on the city, not only because of their cultural and scientific significance, but also because of the massiveness and rigidity of the constructions against the eclectic background of the modern age.

Perhaps the greatest aesthetic sin of communism was the extensive destruction of houses and their replacement with a residential system materialised through blocks of flats, located and constructed so as to represent an alternative method of keeping the country's population under surveillance. These new types of dwellings were considered the image of the new socialist era. In other words, this was a specific phenomenon of the communist era, which consisted in the transition from the rural to the urban space. A massive displacement of the rural population took place during this period, in the sense that village inhabitants were relocated in cities where they were compelled to work in large industrial complexes and live in the blocks of flats constructed initially as shelters for the workers coming from various areas of the country.

The sixth and seventh decades were coeval, in Cluj, with an intense stage of constructions, which observed, in the beginning, the principle of free urbanism. The historical centre was surrounded by four- or five-storey buildings, while the peripheral area was strewn with new districts,⁵¹ where the density of the population was very high and where the average height was of eight or nine storeys. Another feature of the Transylvanian city was the location of the industrial area to the north, beyond the railway tracks, while the residential areas was located in the south, east and west, outside the historical centre of Cluj. Still, the factories belonging to the light industry⁵² were in azonal locations. Industrial architecture emerged on this occasion, being inevitably linked to production; the appearance of the

⁴⁹ Together with the Hall of Sports, the Students' Hall of Culture was the symbol of Communist propaganda in Cluj. The authorities claimed that "all the youth in Cluj will enthusiastically do patriotic work for the completion of the new buildings, knowing that through them great conditions would be ensured for their performing cultural and sports activities" (Poantă 2006: 41).

⁵⁰ Above the cinema was erected an arch-shaped 10-storey building, which was flanked at the front by an equestrian statue of the Romanian Voivode Michael the Brave, the monument representing a symbol of national history being exacerbated in favour of the "good leader (Nicolae Ceauşescu).

⁵¹ In a few decades, five new districts were built: Grigorescu (between 1952-1964), Gheorgheni (between 1965-1972), Mărăşti (in 1978), Zorilor (1980), and Mănăştur (whose construction started in 1971). In the 1980s, the city's population reached 360,000 inhabitants (Matei 2004).

⁵² Such as, for instance, factories that produced knitwear, textiles, clothing, dairy products, meat, and candy.

constructions was similar, but technologically they had to respect the principle of “the economic efficiency of investments” (Popescu 1974: 11).

The improvement of housing comfort through electric lighting, plumbing, gas pipe installation, central heating, bathrooms, etc., occurred mainly in the early 1960s. To provide support for internal transportation networks, the centre was crossed by public means of transport;⁵³ these were essential especially for new neighbourhoods, which lacked facilities, services or jobs, generating the necessity for the existence of connections with the important areas of the city (Matei 2004).

Throughout the seventh decade of the twentieth century, Cluj became in the collective memory a city of “coffeehouses and conversation,” these distinguished places being regarded as true spaces of “spontaneous sociability and conversation” (Poantă 2007: 9), of family meetings or outings among friends, and of leisure time, generally speaking. The scent of fresh coffee animated the ambience of the centre, and late in the evening, only the restaurants enlivened the atmosphere of the city’s dark and deserted streets. During this period, there were five major cafes in the city centre, they were “officially called bistros, almost all being famous and having conspiratorial names, such as Croco, Verde, Arizona” (Poantă 2007: 9). Today, the old historical traces of these places, which were intensely frequented by the citizens of Cluj in days of yore, can still be detected.

In the 1970s, there appeared “infill proposals, following the directives of streamlining the territorial occupancy percentage and increasing demographic density, as a result of forced urbanisation and of increasingly faster industrialisation” (Matei 2004: 148). The weakening of communist policies at the societal level and the economic crisis that hit the country in the eighth decade was due primarily to the nefarious effect of erecting the concrete-based architecture:⁵⁴ it impoverished the state because of the enormous cost of transforming all the country’s major localities into “city-factories.”

Regarding this intense process of remodelling the entire society, we ought to make recourse to the concept used by the writer Lucian Boia in stating that “we continually build the best of all possible worlds, at the risk of coming across the worst” (Boia 2005: 8), which, in this case, was the world forged by the communist ideology. After the fall of communism (1989), the Cluj architecture has not suffered major changes, and today any visitor has the opportunity of walking through two areas with different architectural styles: the traditional (the city centre) and the modern (the periphery).

⁵³ In 1959, urban electric transport was introduced in Cluj, with trolleybuses from the domestic production (Ciorca, Horvath and Stanciu 2011: 236).

⁵⁴ Concrete-based architecture and industrial architecture were the symbols of socialism and were implemented for the sheer reason of reduced building costs.

Conclusions

The urban settlement was, is and will remain an area that has contrasted with the other, peripheral territory, a location that has triumphed throughout the centuries through its consummate artistry and through the image of the society reflected on a political, economic or cultural level. Society has always undertaken construction projects, in an attempt to arrange its residential spaces, but the complexity of this urban system has fully contributed to achieving a higher level of comfort, through the appearance of water supply and sewerage systems, of sanitation, of public transport and green spaces, public lighting, of street design and pavement, bridge building, etc. What is certain is that the city is considered to be a symbol of modernisation, a meta-concept that defines the major characteristics of succeeding transformations, which took place in various historical periods or stages.

If by the early nineteenth century, the urbanistic municipal activity had been prevalently partial and applied, because what was intended was adapting the city to the needs arising at one moment or another, after the second half of the century in question, due to the economic growth and the expansion of the urban surface, there was an urbanistic improvement that led to the status of Cluj as a modern city being overcome. Unlike other centres in Europe (for instance, Vienna or Paris), Cluj experienced a more alert pace of progress during the nineteenth century, but its development occurred in small steps, depending on the possibilities that were available at the time. This initiative was the starting point for what the city was to become.

The twentieth century was essentially one of transformations. The layout of Cluj included new architectural trends, which changed the entire appearance of the city. This was a period of fusing stylistic stages and forming several components (function, spatial organisation and visual expression) that gave a specific note to the historical site of the settlement in question. In time, these functional components have been enriched with new urbanistic techniques, which have improved the spatial organisation of the urban settlement. However, during the twentieth century, two different stages could be identified, with a major impact on the development of Cluj: the interwar period, when Cluj continued the urbanistic constructions of the modern period, and the contemporary or, rather, the communist period, when amongst the old buildings, the constructions of concrete-based architecture were inserted, generating a distorted appearance in terms of both planimetry and style. In other words, Cluj is becoming today “a city in between worlds,” flanked on all sides by what was once... a medieval city, an eclectic-Baroque urban settlement and an industrial city.

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