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**Preservation History of Art Nouveau Heritage
in Hungary, Czech Lands and France**

Master Thesis

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Abstract

This master thesis discusses the preservation history of the most relevant architectural monuments of Art Nouveau from the perspective of different ideological and political systems of Hungary, the Czech Lands and France in the 20th century. The main objective of the thesis is to examine the influences of Art Nouveau in the society and vice versa through different heritage protection procedures and successful monument restorations, which took place in significant “Art Nouveau cities” of Europe: Budapest, Prague, Nancy and Strasbourg.

The Art Nouveau style (1890—1914) was born as a reaction to the academic schools at the end of the nineteenth century and spread quickly by advertising a new architectural program, thanks to its special aesthetical, social and political contents. In order to satisfy the needs of the "modern" age and to create a better environment for the people, Art Nouveau broke with the previous dominant historical tendencies, not only in a mental way, but also in employing a new design and decorative elements. Thus the international practice-based, but locally unique and unprecedented works of the Art Nouveau were totally differing from the dominant eclectic townscapes, which is just one of the facts why they were criticized by both the contemporaries and the posterity. In Central Europe the new “style” had yet another aspect. It was often representing the national goals through creation of a so called “national style”, like in Hungary or the Czech Lands. One of the research questions of the thesis is the connection between the nation-building politics and the preservation history of Art Nouveau Heritage.

In Alsace and Lorraine (two traumatized regions of France) Art Nouveau also played a very strong identical and political role. Especially, in Nancy (the second Art Nouveau centre after Paris) and in Strasbourg (the city annexed by the German Empire) the new modern style became on one hand the engine of strengthening the regional, on the other hand the imperial identity.

The reception of the style during the last century changed from approval to rejection and to admiration again. For a long time, the style had remained the main example of bad taste for modern and conservative critics alike. For almost half a century, no serious attempts have been made to re-evaluate it. Hence with rare exceptions – until the 1950s/1960s – the memories of Art Nouveau had no relevant social value in contrast to the building of historical styles. In the following period up to the 1980s the perception of Art Nouveau had changed and its architectural memories started to be protected as historic monuments all around Europe. Thanks to the re-evaluation of the style and the growing interest in the

‘patrimonialization’ processes, its preservation procedures were able to start, which significantly contributed to the re-consideration of Art Nouveau’s built heritage as collective historical and cultural values not only on national levels, but also on a worldwide scale.

This study provides a better understanding of this social phenomenon by examining its hidden causes, which led us to successful heritage preservation.

Résumé

Mon mémoire concerne l'histoire de la préservation du patrimoine architectural Art Nouveau dans la perspective des différents systèmes idéologiques et politiques de Hongrie, République tchèque et France au 20ème siècle. Les influences de l'Art Nouveau sur la société et inversement, les réactions de la société sur ce style, ont été également analysé à travers les différentes procédures de la protection du patrimoine à Budapest, Prague, Strasbourg et Nancy chacune occupant une place majeure pour l'Art Nouveau.

Le style Art Nouveau (1890-1914) est né en réaction à l'académisme à la fin du 19ème siècle. Il se répandit rapidement en annonçant un nouveau programme architectural grâce à son aspect esthétique, ses idées sociales et politiques. L'objectif était de créer un meilleur environnement plus moderne avec de nouveaux matériaux et des éléments décoratifs en essayant de répondre aux exigences de l'époque moderne. Ainsi l'Art Nouveau rompt avec les tendances dominantes historiques et les imitations académiques. Ainsi, les uniques œuvres de l'Art Nouveau (basées sur une pratique internationale possédant un nouveau langage national ou régional) ont été totalement différentes, face au tissu urbain éclectique généralisé durant le siècle. Ici se trouve d'ailleurs la principale critique qui a été adressée par les contemporains, ainsi que la postérité.

En Europe centrale, en particulier dans la monarchie des Habsbourg, le style qui était lié aux mouvements indépendantistes et nationalistes était lourd de sens. Il a été le représentant des objectifs nationaux avec la création d'un « style national » hongrois et tchèque. L'une des problématiques du mémoire concerne la relation entre les politiques de la construction de la nation et l'histoire de la préservation du patrimoine de l' Art Nouveau. Cependant, en Alsace et Lorraine ("les régions traumatisées" de France), l'Art Nouveau a joué un rôle identique et politique intense. A Nancy (le deuxième centre d'Art Nouveau après Paris) et à Strasbourg (la ville annexée par l'Empire allemand après 1870) le style 'moderne' est devenu le moyen de renforcer et d'exprimer une identité régionale et impériale.

La perception du style a beaucoup changé au cours du siècle dernier passant d'approbation au à rejection et enfin admiration. Longtemps, l'Art Nouveau était l'exemple principal de mauvais goût selon la critique 'moderne' et conservatrice. En conséquence aucune tentative sérieuse n'a été tentée pour sa revalorisation. Sauf rares exceptions, l'Art Nouveau n'était pas suffisamment valorisé par la société jusqu'aux années 1950/1960 dès que la protection des monuments a débutée.

Dans la période qui suivie, la perception du patrimoine de l'Art Nouveau a définitivement changé l'Europe. Pendant les années 1980, grâce à la revalorisation du style et l'intérêt croissant qui lui était porté, les procédures de 'patrimonialisation' et de sauvegarde ont ainsi démarré, ce qui a contribué notablement à la considération collective du patrimoine architecturale de l'Art Nouveau, comme une valeur historique et culturelle, non seulement au niveau national, mais à l'échelle globale.

Mon mémoire donne une meilleure compréhension de ce phénomène social en expliquant les causes, ce qui pourrait aider à repenser la préservation du patrimoine.

Introduction

This master thesis is a result of a two-year-long study and research program, namely European Master Course TEMA European Territories (Civilisation, Nation, Region, City): Identity and Development. Since the beginning of my BA studies my research has been focused on the question of Art Nouveau heritage. This master program enabled to broaden the horizon of my analysis, setting it within a wider context and it also allowed developing my previous research topic that revolved around the Hungarian case.

Thanks to the special mobility program offered by the TEMA Consortium, I had the opportunity to study at Eötvös Loránd University of Budapest, Charles University of Prague and École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, of Paris. As a result of this scholarly experience, my thesis discusses the preservation history of the Art Nouveau's architectural heritage in Hungary, Czech Lands and France.¹ The considerably problematic segment of our built heritage is approached from the socio-historical point of view through different heritage protection procedures and successful monument conservations and restorations, which took place in significant 'Art Nouveau cities' of Europe: Budapest, Prague, Nancy and Strasbourg.²

We are witnessing the blooming of Art Nouveau heritage, which could be understood as the crowning of many decades' attempts and struggles (dedicated to re-evaluate it). At the time of the accomplishment of this paper we will be celebrating the new international initiation: the Art Nouveau World Day, on 10th June.³ The date is the anniversary of both the Catalan Antonio Gaudí and the Hungarian Ödön Lechner – two celebrated architects of Art Nouveau. The previous artist's work is already part of the World Heritage since 1984;⁴ the

¹ I use the definition, Czech lands (*České země* in Czech), as the geographic frame of my analysis concerning the Czech Art Nouveau as I focus on it since its birth (from the 1890s) through the 20th century. Due to the fact that the Czech lands have a very complex history, as these lands have changed hands many times, and have been known by various names (Lands of the Bohemian Crown during the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy; Czech Lands or Bohemia after the fall of the Empire and during the Czecho-Slovak Republic; now they form the boundaries

² Réseau Art Nouveau Network. Consulted on: <http://www.artnouveau-net.eu>. Accessed on [10 March 2013]

³ The Art Nouveau World Day with many performances, exhibitions, tours and publications is celebrated on the closest weekend to June 10 every year. In 2013, The Museum of Applied Arts in Budapest (IMM) is the organiser of the World Day in cooperation with Szecessziós Magazin (Art Nouveau Magazine), and the European Partage Plus project, (their aim is to digitizing and publishing Art Nouveau objects). See the website of the IMM and the magazine: <http://www.szecessziomagazin.com/artnouveauworldday-szecessziოსvilágnap.php> and <http://www.imm.hu/hu/programs/view/233,Szecessziós+Világnap>. Accessed on [5 May 2013].

⁴ Works of Antoni Gaudí on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Consulted on: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/320>. Accessed on [10 March 2013]

latter has been on the Tentative List for 5 years.⁵ Apart from these, many organizations, publications, travelling exhibitions and city walks advocate Art Nouveau as being part of our cultural heritage.⁶ Notwithstanding the growing awareness of Art Nouveau, there are still many undiscovered or endangered buildings. For this reason the preservation of this unique heritage (conservation or reconstruction) bears an undeniable importance, since this is not just a monument protection, but also an issue of global heritage.

Art Nouveau is the commonly accepted name of the historical style, which was born as a reaction to the academic schools at the end of the nineteenth century and spread quickly by advertising a new architectural program, thank to its special aesthetical, social and political contents.⁷ Despite its ephemeral lifetime (1890—1914), it is not easy to define the style as its local variants and different names suggest: “ses formes fluides ne sont pas toujours faciles à saisir, et ses frontières manquent de précision (...) un phénomène complexe, mais réfléchi, qui, puisant sa sève dans des territoires de qualité, illumine l’époque – celle qu’on nomme avec un attendrissement railleur: ‘la Belle époque’ – comme un feu d’artifice”.⁸ In addition, the Art Nouveau style – or movement as several scholars have been considering it – is probably the most complex one among the historical styles due to its numerous contradictory elements.⁹ They have led to many misunderstandings and animosities towards Art Nouveau. For this reason, the most interesting aspect of the style is the way in which it was perceived and treated during the last century.¹⁰

In order to satisfy the needs of the ‘modern’ age and to create a better environment for the people, Art Nouveau broke with the previous dominant historical tendencies. This rupture was taking shape not only in a theoretical way, but also in using new design and decorative

⁵ Ödön Lechner’s independent pre-modern architecture on the World Heritage Tentative List. Consulted on: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5366/>. Accessed on [16 April 2011].

⁶ Organizations for example the Réseau Art Nouveau Network (supported by the European Commission) or the Art Nouveau European Route (non-profit association of local governments and non-governmental institutions); publication like *Coup de fouet* magazine, travelling exhibition as the Masters of the European Art Nouveau, Barcelona - Budapest – Brussels, Sagrada Família, Hungarian National Museum, Parc de Bruxelles, spring 2011.

⁷ As the French Bernard Champigneulle highlighted “malgré son passage éphémère dans la vie des arts, aucune style n’a jamais reçu d’appellations aussi nombreuses, ni aussi variées.” in: B. Champigneulle, *L’Art Nouveau*, Paris, 1972. p.9.

⁸ Champigneulle, *L’Art Nouveau* cit., p.9.

⁹ I present this still ongoing debate considering the Art Nouveau was whether a style or a movement in the first chapter.

¹⁰ Paul Greenhalgh stressed the same opinion. See. P. Greenhalgh, *Life and afterlife: observations on the decline and resurrection of Art Nouveau*, in: The Perception of Art Nouveau, International Symposium of Réseau Art Nouveau Network in the framework of the “Art Nouveau & Ecology” project, 4-5 december 2010, Musées Roxaux d’Art et d’Histoire, Brussels, 2010. Consulted on: <http://www.artnouveau-net.eu/ArtNouveauEcology/Actions/Internationalsymposium2010/tabid/820/language/en-GB/Default.aspx> Accessed on [10 May 2013].

elements. At the same time Art Nouveau was based on the international innovations and local traditions. The creative use, redefinition and integration of all these components on art works are the uniqueness of Art Nouveau. Therefore international practice based, but locally unique and unprecedented works of the Art Nouveau had started to characterize the cities of Europe. However, they were totally differing from the dominant eclectic townscapes. As a consequence of the widespread presence of Art Nouveau I could only focus on the cases, where the style had unusual aspects. I believe that these aspects can be found in the unique identity-building power of Art Nouveau architecture, just like in the case of built heritage. Françoise Choay proved the identity-forming function of our built heritage.¹¹ “Our diverse monuments do not have value in themselves any longer but because we have built them. They are fragments of a generic representation of ourselves.”¹² Consequently, they could be understood as representations of wider categories, like the nation.¹³

In Central Europe (under the political and cultural pressure of the Habsburg Monarchy)¹⁴ the Art Nouveau was often representing the national goals through the creation of a so-called 'national style', especially in the case of Hungary or Czech Lands. Meanwhile in Alsace and Lorraine (two traumatized regions of France) Art Nouveau became a relevant tool to express regional identity and politics. In Nancy and in Strasbourg the new modern style the engine of strengthening the special regional and the imperial identity after the Franco-Prussian War (1870—1871).

The short-lived style reached its popularity on the turn of the century. Soon, however the Art Nouveau started to be criticized by the contemporaries, sometimes in an inexplicable and rude manner. Consequently, these judgments drastically influenced the afterlife of Art Nouveau. The reception of the style through the last century changed from approval to rejection and to admiration again. “For a long time the style was remained the main example

¹¹ F. Choay, *L'Allégorie du patrimoine*, Paris, 1992.

¹² Françoise Choay cited by K. Kovács, *Criteria for the Evaluation of Historical Monuments*, in: K. Kovács, *Monument Preservation in Central Europe*, Prague 1999. p.16. Consulted on: <http://rss.archives.ceu.hu/archive/00001063/01/63.pdf>. Accessed on [26 January 2013].

¹³ See. E. Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge 1983; B.Anderson, *Imagined Communities Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso 1983; G.Gyáni, *Nemzetelméletek és a Történetírás (Theories of the Nation and Historiography)* in: *Nemzet és Művészet (Nation and Art, Image and Self-Image)*, Budapest 2010; On the relations between Art and nation building in Central European architecture, See. K. Keserü, *The Transformation of Architectural Thinking in Central Europe at the Turn of the 20th Century*, in: K. Keserü, *The Beginning of Modernism in Central European Architecture: Polish, Czech, Slovak and Hungarian Architectural Writings at the Turn of the 20th Century*, Budapest 2005. pp. 17—25.; Á. Moravánszky, *Competing Visions : Aesthetic Invention and Social Imagination in Central European Architecture 1867—1918*., London-Cambridge 1998.;

¹⁴ From 1867 Austro-Hungarian Monarchy

of bad taste for modern and conservative critics alike; for almost half century, no serious attempts have been made to re-evaluate it.”¹⁵

Once more, it has to be emphasized that these negative attitudes towards Art Nouveau often led to the misunderstandings and to the dramatic loss of its memories. Hence - with rare exceptions, until the 1950s/1960s - the Art Nouveau buildings had no great value for the society in contrast to historical styles. More surprisingly, in several cases certain memories of Modernist Architecture had had already protected monument status, when Art Nouveau buildings were still endangered by demolition.¹⁶

In the following period up to the 1980s the perception of Art Nouveau had changed and its architectural memories started to be protected as historic monuments by each nation.

Thank to re-evaluation of the style and growing awareness of Art Nouveau, the preservation procedures were able to start, which significantly contributed to the Art Nouveau's built heritage as collective historical and cultural values not only on national levels, but also on a global scale.

One must question why it took so long to recognize and appreciate these works as part of our cultural heritage. This thesis aims to answer that question. Unconventionally, we are not able to talk about an absolute success. The practices of monuments' preservation (reconstruction or conservation) are showing significant differences on national and regional levels as well, despite the commonly accepted suggestions of the Venice Charter of ICOMOS (1964),¹⁷ and series of documents, which it is followed by. The decisions are often made in an irresponsible manner (or sometimes the monuments are missing care) as a result of the large areas of shadow remaining in these recommendations.¹⁸ Based on the arguments of Françoise Choay,¹⁹ Kázmér Kovács – who is studying the monument preservation in Central Europe – admitted a problematic segment of the policy of monument preservation that „instead of a

¹⁵ Á.Moravánszky, *Competing Visions: Aesthetic Invention and Social Imagination in Central European Architecture 1867–1918.*, Cambridge-London, 1998, p.105.

¹⁶ Some works of Le Corbusier and Adolf Loos were protected earlier than Art Nouveau buildings in France and in Czechoslovakia.

¹⁷ *International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites* (The Venice Charter 1964), IInd International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, Venice 1964. It as adapted by ICOMOS in 1965. Consulted on: http://www.icomos.org/charters/venice_e.pdf. Accessed on [February 2013].

¹⁸ K. Kovács, *Evaluation of the Idea of Historical Monument*, in: K. Kovács, *Monument Preservation in Central Europe*, Prague 1999. p.12. Consulted on: <http://rss.archives.ceu.hu/archive/00001063/01/63.pdf>. Accessed on [26 January 2013].

¹⁹ F. Choay, *L'Allégorie du patrimoine*, Paris 1992.

comprehensive, general theory of heritage conservation we have to cope with disparate texts“.²⁰

The limitations of the Venice Charta are often mentioned concerning the preservation of Art Nouveau heritage as well.²¹ Otherwise, the disregard, more precisely a certain non-observance of the Venice Charter could also lead to successful solutions in the case of several Art Nouveau monument reconstructions as Gábor Kruppa had pointed out. For these reasons „it is not easy to foresee an evolution of theoretical and practical issues related to the conservation of built heritage [to the preservation of Art Nouveau built heritage], soon we shall need a re-evaluation of these attitudes, otherwise there is a risk that they degenerate due to the contradictions they have been carrying with them from the very beginning“.²² These contradictions in case of preservation and reconstruction of Art Nouveau heritage are going to be mentioned in this paper. The aim of my thesis is to give an understanding of this social phenomenon by examining its hidden causes. In this sense I have two tasks in my work. The first is to present the history and the perception of the most relevant Art Nouveau monument from each cities, which are demonstrated in the first chapter. The second is to illustrate the aspects of ‘patrimonialization’ of this unique architectural style. For this reason, the second chapter consists the analysis of the evolving period of this phenomenon, while the new perspectives will be presented in the third chapter.

Concerning the methodology of my thesis I use a comparative historical approach. The comparative analysis of the Central European case studies – Budapest, Prague – are followed by a Western case – two cities of the often debated territory of Alsace-Lorraine: Strasbourg and Nancy. The best way to examine the preservation of Art Nouveau architectural heritage is to choose relevant public buildings²³ from each city, since they represent the public sentiment of their own age.²⁴ Through the analysis of their history from the constructions till the preservation processes we are able to reconstruct the changing of the public sentiment towards the building and the style.

The selected buildings had almost the same importance and function as simple public buildings (some examples), or protected and reconstructed monuments. They were

²⁰ K. Kovács, *Evaluation* cit., p.12.

²¹ Interview with the Hungarian architect Gábor Kruppa about the reconstruction of the Gresham Palace in Budapest, Budapest 04 april 2011.

²² K. Kovács, *Evaluation* cit., p.12.

²³ By public buildings I mean those buildings, which are functioning as public spaces or they were commissioned by the State.

²⁴ K. Keserü, *Nemzeti gondolat a 19. század magyar építészetében. Az egyetemestől a regionális stílusig*, in K. Keserü, *Magyar művészet az osztrák önkényuralom és a dualizmus időszakában*, Budapest 2006.

constructed and decorated with the aim to express and strengthen the national or regional identity. Therefore the primary sources of my research are the following four monuments, which I present in details in the first chapter:

- Budapest: *Museum of Applied Arts* (1893—1896) by Ödön Lechner and Gyula Pártos
- Prague: *Municipal House* (1903—1905) by Antonín Balšánek and Osvald Polívka
- Strasbourg: *École des Art Décoratifs* (1892) by Johann Karl Ott and Edouard Roederer
- Nancy: *Brasserie Excelsior* (1910) by Lucien Weissenburger and Alexandre Mienville

In this paper the primary sources – apart from the buildings themselves – are different archive sources of the National Heritage Offices, and contemporary professional press articles. The most relevant exhibition-catalogues and conference materials dedicated to Art Nouveau Heritage are also used in this thesis. Furthermore, the officially organised interview-reports helped to develop my research.

In order to highlight properly the change of thinking about Art Nouveau heritage I use the following periodization, which is based on Stephan Tschudi-Madsen’s (he was the former director-general of the directorate of cultural heritage in Norway), who used the same three periods by examining the historiography of Art Nouveau:²⁵

- Contemporary perception of Art Nouveau and the “Prehistory” of Monument Protection (*1890s-1940s*)
- Evolving Monument Protection (*1950s-1970s*)
- New perspectives: European organizations and the World Heritage (*from 1980s*)

Since we have talked about institutionalized heritage – monuments – protection, there has been a continually raised question: from what age can we consider a building a historical monument? In Europe the practice has differed according to each country.²⁶ One of the aims

²⁵ S.Tchudi Madsen, *The perception of Art Nouveau: historiography*, in : International Symposium of Réseau Art Nouveau Network in the framework of ‘Art Nouveau in Progress’ project, 24-25 October 2002, Wien. pp. 9—12. Consulted on: <http://www.artnouveau-net.eu> Accessed on [20 January 2013]

²⁶ András Ferkai highlighted that as a result of the monument protection campaign, which was taking place during the 1960s the commonly accepted practice contains two main rules: first, the works of living architect cannot be listed (since “they are protected by author’s royalties”), second, they maintained the age-limit of 1950. In: A. Ferkai, *Recording and Preserving the modern heritage in Hungary*, In: A. Cunningham (ed.), *Modern Movement Heritage*, London, 1998. p. 44.

of my thesis is to compare the Western and Central European practices of monuments 'protection (Budapest, Prague, Nancy and Strasbourg) by highlighting its differences.

When we are discussing the preservation history of Art Nouveau architectural heritage, it must be assumed as Françoise Bercé wrote in case of the French gothic monuments. She is referring to the "contemporary life" of monuments. The notion invented by Alois Riegl in the beginning of the 20th century could be understood like: "the old architecture is only as much admired and protected as the present-day society recognize their own reference point in it".²⁷ Therefore the contemporary life is the fructification of affections felt by a generation towards the records of the past – she admitted. Lack of these subconscious affections could trail the neglects of monuments along. The theory of Bercé can be perfectly used in the case of my research, since I would like to reconstruct also the above mentioned "contemporary life" of Art Nouveau monuments. I am sure it can be reconstructed by the analysis of how the Hungarian, Czech and French people perceive and think about Art Nouveau heritage and wherein they could assimilate with it.

For a better understanding of this connection between Art Nouveau architecture and the society some urban space theories are also worthy of note. David Harvey highlighted the three basic categories of spatial experience.²⁸ The third space experience category, the 'symbolic space' – experiencing through the interpretation of symbolic representation – can be perfectly used in our situation. According to David Harvey "the shaping of space which goes on in architecture and, therefore, in the city is symbolic of our culture, symbolic of the existing social order, symbolic of our aspirations, our needs, and our fears".²⁹ Moreover, one of the most interesting aspects in art and architecture – as he noted– is the fact that spatial form can be manipulated in different ways to yield various symbolic meanings. Based on his theories, spatial symbolism plays a significant role in affecting individual and collective human behaviour. In the first period of my analysis – from the 1890s to the first realization of the monument protection – I inquire the symbolic qualities of Art Nouveau architecture, especially the Hungarian, Czech and French variants. I also present those elements of Art Nouveau, which became the reference points of its protection.

The questions would be answered not just with the revealed national-regional identity carrier elements of the movement but also with the further goals of the heritage preservation.

²⁷ F. Bercé, *Műemlékek és „kortársi létük*, in P. Erdősi, G. Sonkoly (eds.), *A kulturális örökség társadalomtörténete*. Budapest 2004, p. 347.

²⁸ D. Harvey, *Social Processes and Spatial Forms*, in D. Harvey, *Social Justice and the City*, John Hopkins University Press, 1973, p. 28.

²⁹ Harvey, *Social cit.*, p. 31.

Réseau Art Nouveau Network provides an explanation of its mission to attract people's attention on European and universal value of Art Nouveau heritage. Despite of the enormous efforts there are still large numbers of creations that remain unknown, do not enjoy sight protection or they are being left in a miserable condition (or they are even being demolished).³⁰

I finish my study with a summary of the questions on discourse by pondering on the essential hypothesis of the thesis:

- How long—and why—has Art Nouveau had cultural and historical value in Europe?
- How did the regional-national identity building factors of Art Nouveau influence the perception of the movement throughout the 20th century in Hungary, Czech Lands and France?
- How could they influence the preservation of Art Nouveau architectural heritage in Central Europe (Budapest, Prague) and Western Europe (Strasbourg, Nancy)? Did they contribute or hinder the different heritage protection procedures and successful monument restorations in Budapest, Prague, Strasbourg and Nancy?
- What were the additional reasons of the (re-) discovery of this unique heritage?

I am convinced that my research gives a better understanding of the changing of mentality towards Art Nouveau through the 20th century by referring to Bercé: „the necessary condition of the art work's subsistence is the right and vivid reading of the past“.³¹

³⁰ Published on the website of Réseau Art Nouveau Network. Consulted on: <http://www.artnouveau-net.eu>. Accessed on [10 December 2011].

³¹ Bercé, *Műemlékek* cit., 347.

I. Contemporary perception of Art Nouveau and the “Prehistory” of Monument Protection (1890s-1940s)

In the first part of my thesis I would like to elaborate on the ‘prehistory’ of the preservation of Art Nouveau architectural heritage. The aim of the chapter is to discuss the changing perception of Art Nouveau from its birth through its rejection to the first attempts to re-evaluate it, by focusing on its most outstanding architectural examples in Budapest, Prague, Nancy and Strasbourg.

The historical analysis of this complex subject requires presenting not only the style itself, but also the social, cultural and political contexts within which the Art Nouveau was embedded and the protection of monuments was taking shape. Taking into consideration this pretension and the limitations of the thesis I suggest to focus on four case studies (two from the Central European region and two from Western Europe) and to compare them by highlighting the common tendencies and specialities. Therefore, I divided the first chapter into three subchapters. Firstly, I present briefly the Art Nouveau, especially the new architectural program of the style in accordance with the most recent and acknowledged scientific results and publications.³² Secondly, I discuss in details the Hungarian, Czech and French case studies, which will lead to the crystallization of the national and regional (local) variations of Art Nouveau architecture and its identity building factors. Throughout the critical analysis of the contradictory perception and afterlife of Art Nouveau my main task is to reveal those ultimate elements of the style, based on which it is preserved. (I mean the points of reference of its protection).

Hence, the first chapter covers a clarification of the following questions: How long—and why— has Art Nouveau had cultural and historical value in general, and especially in Hungary, the Czech Lands and France? How did the Hungarian, Czech and French people perceive the new message of the style? Furthermore, how did the national and regional identity building factors of Art Nouveau influence its perception and contribute to (or hinder) the start of heritage (monument) protection?

³² See P. Greenhalgh (ed.), *Art nouveau 1890—1914*, Bruxelles 2006. (Original edition: P. Greenhalgh (ed.), *Art nouveau 1890—1914*, New York 2000.); J-M.Leniaud, *L'Art Nouveau*, Paris, 2009.; K.Tahara, *Art Nouveau architecture*, London-New York 2000.; G. Fahr-Becker, *L'Art nouveau*, Cologne 2005.; Á. Moraványszky, *Competing Visions: Aesthetic Invention and Social Imagination in Central European Architecture 1867—1918*, Cambridge-London 1998.; F. Russel, *L'Architecture de l'Art nouveau*, New York 1979.; K.J. Sembach, *Art Nouveau*, Cologne 2002.

1.1. Art Nouveau (1890—1914)

“Le style de l’amour et de la colère”
Paul Greenhalgh³³

STYLE OR MOVEMENT. Art Nouveau is the commonly accepted name of the first self-conscious modern style,³⁴ in fine and decorative arts, design and architecture, which was born as a reaction to the academic schools at the end of the nineteenth century.³⁵ The style was blooming at the turn of the century, especially in Europe, and spread quickly before the World War I, by advertising a new artistic and architectural program, thanks to its special aesthetical, social and political contents.³⁶

First, we have to admit that it is hard to define Art Nouveau, as it is probably the most complex one among historical styles due to its numerous contradictory elements. Hence, for a long time there was not a real consensus in several questions related to Art Nouveau (like its nature, lifetime or principles). After a hundred years there is a still decisive debate among scholars: whether Art Nouveau has to be considered as a style or a movement? For instance, Alastair Duncan and Jean-Michel Leniaud are standing next to the movement by stressing the presence of different (local) variants of Art Nouveau, which made impossible to define it as a style. In this sense, they regarded it as a common esthétique of the turn of the century: Duncan asserted that “c’était un mouvement, pas un style”,³⁷ similarly to Leniaud, who stated that:

“vu la multiplicité des productions, de l’art du rinceau bruxellois à la géométrie viennoise, du naturalisme de l’École de Nancy et de nombre d’artistes italiens à l’abstraction de Glasgow, du baroque des uns au vernaculaire de autres, de l’industrialisation des Arts and Crafts et de Liberty à la production limitée d’Hermann Obrist, pour ne prendre que ces exemples, il est impossible de

³³ P. Greenhalgh, *Le style de l’amour et de la colère: l’Art nouveau hier et aujourd’hui*, in: M. Restellini (ed.), *L’Art nouveau: La Révolution décorative*, Exhibition catalogue, 18 april – 8 september 2013, Pinacothèque de Paris, Paris 2013. p.9.

³⁴ P. Greenhalgh, *Art Nouveau: The first International Modern Style*, in: Advanced keynote speech of coupDefouet International Congress, 19 November 2012, La Pedrera, Barcelona. Consulted on: http://www.artnouveau.eu/en/congress_videos.php#news_37. Accessed on [10 March 2013]

³⁵ As the French version of the style’s name is generally accepted by the art historians and historians, I use also „Art Nouveau“ in this paper.

³⁶ The style disappeared equally quickly as Keirich Tahara pointed out. in: K. Tahara, *Art Nouveau architecture*, London-New York 2000. p.8.

³⁷ Duncan, *Art Nouveau* cit., p. 7.

définir les oeuvre de l'Art nouveau comme un style. En revanche, c'est une esthétique commune qui inspire au tournant des 19^{ème} et 20^{ème} siècles une partie des créateurs".³⁸

On the other hand, others are claiming that Art Nouveau was incontestably a style. I mention here the statements of two significant scholars who substantially contributed to the rediscovery of Art Nouveau. Firstly, Jean Cassou (who was the organiser of the first widely celebrated exhibiton of Art Nouveau held in Paris between 1960-1961): „ce style fin-de-siècle, qu'il faut bien appeler un style, puisqu'à sa nécessité technique il joint une volonté esthétique, apparaît dans les divers pays de l'Europe avec des caractères propres à chacun d'eux".³⁹ Secondly, Paul Greenhalgh (organiser of the biggest and most significant Art Nouveau exhibition at the Victoria and Alber Museum)⁴⁰, who declared on the occasion of the exhibition in April of 2000:

“Art Nouveau was a style, not a movement. A style, among other things, is a collection of movements. We determined that we would make use of the 19th century concept of style, as elucidated by such thinkers as Semper, Ruskin, Viollet-le-Duc, Redgrave, Riegl and Worringer. That is, style would be treated as a social phenomenon that was reflective and resultant of the unfolding of cultures".⁴¹

In this thesis, I would like to define Art Nouveau as a style – which gathering of movements – based on the mentioned declaration of Paul Greenhalgh.

One should also state that Art Nouveau was an international and principally urban (cosmopolitan) phenomenon, but it also had its local variants in each country and city.⁴² For this reason, Art Nouveau bears a strong identity-forming (national, regional, ethnic) character from city to city and from region to region, as it could adapt – apart from the international principles – to the local traditions and decorative elements of art and cultures.⁴³

³⁸ Leniaud, *L'Art Nouveau*, cit. p.31.

³⁹ Jean Cassou, *Les Sources du XXe siècle, les Arts en Europe de 1884 à 1914* (translated in English 'Origines of the 20 Century'), Paris, 1960, p.18. (Exhibition catalogue of *Les Sources du XXe siècle, les Arts en Europe de 1884 à 1914*, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris, 4 November – 23 January 1961.

⁴⁰ *Art nouveau 1890—1914* was held between 6 April – 30 July 2000 at Victoria and Albert Museum London, and 8 Octobre 2000 - 28 January 2001 at National Gallery of Art Washington. (Exhibition catalogue: Greenhalgh P.(ed.), *Art nouveau 1890—1914*, New York 2000.)

⁴¹ Greenhalgh P., *Inventing the Ideal City, the Narratives and Symbolism of Art Nouveau*, in: International Symposium of Réseau Art Nouveau Network in the framework of 'Art Nouveau in Progress' project, 24-25 October 2002, Wien. Consulted on: <http://www.artnouveau-net.eu/portals/0/data/COLLOQUIA/colloquium-proceedings.pdf>. Accessed on [10 March 2013]

⁴² Greenhalgh, *Art Nouveau: The first cit.* 19 November 2012, Barcelona.

⁴³ See. Greenhalgh, *Art Nouveau: The first cit.* 19 November 2012, Barcelona; and J. Howard, *Art Nouveau, International and national styles in Europe*, Manchester-New York 1996. p.7.

APPELLATIONS. The different names of the style already suggest this diverse character – there is no other style in the history of art, which has as many names as Art Nouveau does—⁴⁴, and by taking a look at them one can realize that the artistic program of the style was consciously based on the idea of ‘modern’, ‘new’ and ‘youth’.⁴⁵ The most important principle of the style lies in this attempt. In order to satisfy the needs of the society of the modern age Art Nouveau rejected the academist tendencies and the imitation of historical styles. (This rupture was taking shape not only in a theoretical way, but also in using new design and decorative elements.)

The internationally accepted name of the style ‘Art Nouveau’ was provided by the gallery of Siegfried Bing (1838—1905) named *Maison de l’Art Nouveau* – also known as – La Maison Bing – which opened in December 1885 at 22 rue de Provence, Paris. He was a German (naturalized French in 1876) art collector, dealer and probably the most well known meceanas of the new artistic tendencies, such as Art Nouveau was.⁴⁶ He began as a Japanese (and also Asian) art works collector, and then he aimed at helping and diffusing initially contemporary art works. Nevertheless, his biggest contribution was definitely representing the emerging, modern Art Nouveau style.⁴⁷ On the other hand, some Belgian people claim that the expression *art nouveau*, had apperead first appeared in Brussels in press (1884) describing the Belgian artists’ group *Les Vingt*.⁴⁸ At the time of the turn of the century, especially in France and England, the style was also known as *modern style*.⁴⁹ In Spain they also referred to the modernity with the name, *modernismo*.⁵⁰ From the 1890s the success and the diffusion of the new style was attributable to the enourmous presence of professional art magazines and revues that were promoting the style. In several cases the style was named after them, like in

⁴⁴ B. Champigneulle, *L’Art Nouveau*, Paris 1972. p. 9.

⁴⁵ P. Greenhalgh, *Introduction: Le style et l’époque*, in: P. Greenhalgh (ed.), *L’Art Nouveau en Europe 1890—1914*, Tournai 2002. p. 18.

⁴⁶ He was known as Samuel Bing, since his naturalisation. This lead to several misunderstandings, such as we Samuel Bing was his brother, who also lived in Paris, as we can read on the English wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siegfried_Bing). Unfortunately, this is not the only misunderstanding, which surrounded of the turn of the century and Art Nouveau.

⁴⁷ See. G.P. Weisberg, E. Bedwin, É. Possémé, *Les origines de l’Art nouveau: la maison Bing*, Exhibition catalogue 26 November 2004 - 27 February 2005, Van Gogh Museum Amsterdam, 17 March - 31 July 2005, Museum Villa Stuck München, September 2005 - January 2006 Caixa Forum Barcelona, March - July 2006, Musée des Arts Décoratifs Paris, Paris 2004.

⁴⁸ It appeared in a journal dedicated to the establishment of the Museum of Applied Arts in: B. Champigneulle, *L’art nouveau*, Paris 1972. p. 99.

⁴⁹ Bernard Champigneulle noted ironically that preference of the expression of Modern Style by French people was thanked to their „angol-saxoon snobism” in: Champigneulle, *L’art cit.*, p.9. Obviously, this is a sweeping statement, as we can find many names for Art Nouveau even in Paris at that time.

⁵⁰ *Rute del Modernisme (Barcelona Modernism Route)*. Consulted on: <http://www.rutadelmodernisme.com>. Accessed on [10 March 2013]

the case of the *Jugend* magazine (München), which resulted in the German name: *Jugendstil* (Young style).⁵¹ The artists of Vienna in order to express their independence from Germans used the name *Secession* (Exodus), which spread in Central Europe (*Szecesszió* in Hungarian, *Secese* in Czech, *Secesja* in Polish).⁵² In Italy, the *stile liberty* alluded to the shop of the merchant Sir Arthur Lasenby Liberty (1843—1917) in 1875, where they sold oriental goods and art works.⁵³ There were several other cases, when the artists' name influenced the appellation of Art Nouveau like style Guimard (after the French Hector Guimard 1867—1942), style Gaudí (after the Catalan Antoni Gaudí 1852—1926), and style Mucha (after Czech Alfons Mucha 1860—1939), style Tiffany (after the American Louis Comfort Tiffany 1848—1933). In addition, we know numerous nicknames, which had often ironic and uncompassionate connotations, as *style métro*, *nouille*, *coup de fouet*, *stile vermicelli*, and *yachting style*.⁵⁴ These nicknames were used both by the contemporary critiques, and the posterity, but they definitiely became popular by after the World War I. By the 1920s and 1930s more repulsive appellations appeared on the European scene: *style juif* (Jewish style).⁵⁵ As Jeremy Howard highlighted, the contradictory nature and interpretations of Art Nouveau led, in several cases, to misapplication of the term. According to him it has to be emphasized that “Supposed synonyms most frequently refer to stylistic branches with the wider movement, e.g. the Secession Style, Modern Style, New Style, National Romanticism, Jugendstil, Free Style, Arts and Crafts. They overlap.”⁵⁶

⁵¹ Some Magazines engaged in promotion of the new art: *L'Art moderne* (1881, Bruxelles), *La Plume* (1888, Paris), *Hobby Horse* (1884, London), *The Studio*, (London 1889), *Pan* (1895,), *Ver Sacrum* (1898, Vienne); Some periodicals, which supported Art Nouveau for a long term: *L'art décoratif* (1898, Paris), *Art et décoration* (1897, Paris), *Kunst und Handwerk* (1898, Munich), *Der Moderne Stil* (1899, Stuttgart), *Das Interieur* (1900, Vienne)

⁵² A. Sanna, *Art nouveau, Secesja, Secese, Szecesszió*, Prague - Budapest 2011.

⁵³ Liberty was originally “Floreal” referring to the floral ornaments of the new style. In my opinion, the Italian Art Nouveau heritage should deserve further research, as it is often forgotten in the extremely reach architectural heritage of Italy. Consulted on: http://www.artelibrary.it/storia_ing.html. Accessed on [10 May 2013]

⁵⁴ The design of the parisien metro by Guimard, the yacht-like outfit of Bing's pavillon (1900), and the unusual redutant, tendril forms (like macaroni) and ornaments gave the basis of this ciritques. in: Champigneulle, *L'art nouveau*, cit., pp. 9—10.; Duncan, *Art Nouveau* cit., pp. 23—25.

⁵⁵ The relation between the Jewish population and Art Nouveau architecture will be revealed in the next subchapter. See. R.Klein, *A szecesszió: un gou't juif?: A szecessziós építészet és a zsidóság kapcsolata a Monarchiában*, in: „Múlt és jövő ” 2008, 19, 4, pp. 5—33.; and R.Klein, *The Hungarian Jews and Architectural Style* in: Szalai A. (ed.), *In the Land of Hagar – Jews of Hungary: History, Society and Culture*, Tel Aviv 2002. pp. 165–72.

⁵⁶ J. Howard, *Art Nouveau, International and national styles in Europe*, Manchester-New York, 1996. p.2.

ART NOUVEAU AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY. Therefore, a brilliant and energetic generation of artists sought to create a new conception of art – a style – that is appropriate to the modern age and society (their innovative manner is analysed on the following pages).⁵⁷ The unique solution was given by Art Nouveau, which appeared by the 1890s in Europe, and sparkled until the turn of the century.⁵⁸ (Besides, there are many scholars, who position the presence of Art Nouveau in a wider period;⁵⁹ meanwhile others allowed a shorter lifetime to the style.)⁶⁰ In any case, one can admit as Katalin Keserü has already pointed out: “Art Nouveau, as an artistic style, formulated Europe’s first sweeping, collective experience of the throbbing, vital, constantly changing world, and the new style was the change itself, its bearer and herald”.⁶¹

However, it would be misleading to consider Art Nouveau simply as a European phenomenon,⁶² as it was also adapted to a wider non-European context according to the most recent researches dedicated to the topic, like the UNESCO’s Joint Study and Action Project on Art Nouveau heritage.⁶³ Indeed, there was a significant presence of Art Nouveau in the United States, Canada, Argentina, Cuba, Tunisia and Japan as well. In this paper I focus only on the cradle of Art Nouveau: Europe.

It would also be a mistake to regard Art Nouveau as the exclusive style of the period from 1890s to 1914, (unlike it was also known as *style 1900*),⁶⁴ as there was a significant coexistence with the previous – officially approved – historic styles (often on the same buildings).⁶⁵ Once again, it has to be emphasized, that despite the undeniable success of Art Nouveau, there was a pluralism of styles (e.g. academism, naturalism, Art Nouveau and the first precursor of avant-garde) not only in the great European centres, but also in the peripheral regions.⁶⁶

⁵⁷ P. Greenhalgh, *A new style for a new age*, in: P. Greenhalgh (ed.), *Art Nouveau 1890–1914*, Exhibition catalogue october 2000, Victoria and Albert Museum London, National Gallery of Art Washington, New York 2000.

⁵⁸ Dempsey, *A modern cit.*, pp. 33–35.

⁵⁹ They originated the style approximetly from 1870 to 1914 in: J.P.Bouillon, *Art Nouveau 1870-1914*, Geneva 1985. p. 226.

⁶⁰ Richard Kempton, the athor of the first annotated bibliography dedicated to Art Nouveau positioned the style between 1893 and 1903. in: R. Kempton, *Art nouveau: an annotated bibliography*, Los Angeles 1977.

⁶¹ K. Keserü (ed.), *Barcelona, Brussels, Budapest „Great Masters of European Art Nouveau”*, Budapest 2011, p. 45.

⁶² Even Stephan Tschudi Madsen, who had a substantial role in the discovery and re-evaluation of Art Nouveau heritage considered it as a European phenomenon in his pioneering work. S.T. Madsen, *Sources of Art Nouveau*, New York 1980. p.430. (First edition Sources of Art Nouveau, Oslo 1956.)

⁶³ F.Mayor (Director-General of UNESCO), *Preface*, in: H.D. Dyroff, *Architectural Heritage of Art Nouveau./Jugendstil: History and Conservation*, Germany National Commission for UNESCO, Bonn 1991, p.7.

⁶⁴ The style 1900 is reffering to the success of the style on the Paris World’s Fair 1900.

⁶⁵ This ‘eclectic Art Nouveau’, which was more frequent in Central Europe is presented in the next subchapter.

⁶⁶ K. Gellér, *A magyar szecesszió cit.* p.18.

I do not intend to present here the complex history of Art Nouveau, but I feel the necessity to underline the main characteristics and some important aspects of the style, which will lead to the detailed analysis on the Hungarian, Czech and French case studies. First of all, I give the definition of Art Nouveau by presenting its origins and main principles. Secondly, I discuss the sources and the possible periodization of the style by highlighting the reasons of its success and its decline.

ORIGINS. During the *Belle Époque* – the period characterised by unprecedented economic, technical, and social progress – Europe faced significant changes, which affected clearly the cultural milieu, the urban life and space as well.⁶⁷ Accordingly, this new phenomenon emphasized by the high level of industrialisation and urbanisation required artistic reactions. We should state that the 19th century was dominantly marked by historicist and eclecticist approaches combined with an architectural perspective. Their legitimacy was based on the traditions of historic styles and forms. By the end of the 19th century, historicism and eclecticism was deeply criticized, because the works designed in this spirit (according to the rigid and fix formal rules concerning the design of the layout and the façade) could not satisfy any longer the requirements of the modern life. Accordingly they meant the barrier of the further development and the evolving new style.⁶⁸ As Philippe Thiébaud observed that: “all over Europe there was a need for a liberating change of direction, a desire to break away from set formulas based on a pastiche of historical styles and a search for original ideas, all of which resulted at the beginning of the 1890s in the birth of Art Nouveau”.⁶⁹ In fact, during this period there was an increasing claim for change in order to have a healthier, more natural environment and living conditions, where aesthetics and beauty had to accompany functionality. On the other hand, there were some antecedents of this phenomenon, which were dwelling on the same questions, although in a different extent. On the following pages I present those artistic, intellectuals movements and tendencies – which were carrying this innovative philosophy – which inspired Art Nouveau.

⁶⁷ The period of the *Belle Époque* (named retrospectively) is regarded as the golden age of Europe thanks to the nostalgic sentiment for the relative peace and prosperity (in different parts of life) in contrast to the wars and horror of the 20th century. There are also other appellations, like Edwardian England, the Good Years in America, Wilhelmian Germany, which reflect a sense a well-being. As Richard Wires highlighted „For some writers the term is virtually synonyms with the last decade of the nineteenth century, the *fin-de-siècle* years, and they feel a sense of bittersweet melancholy at the passing of an age and society”. in: R. Wires, *Paris: la belle époque*, Paris 1977. in: D.W.Hoover, J.T.A.Koumoulides, *Conspectus of history: Cities in history*, 1977, 1, 4, p.63.

⁶⁸ G. Preisich, *Budapest városépítésének története Buda visszavételétől a II. világháború végéig*, Budapest 2004, p. 251.

⁶⁹ Ph.Thiébaud, *Introduction*, in: K.Tahara, *Art Nouveau architecture*, London-New York 2000. p. 10.

Most of the scholars agree that the English Design Reform, the Arts and Crafts Movement, the Pre-Raphaelites, the Gothic revival, orientalism can inspire Art Nouveau. Although there is still an ongoing debate concerning the questions to what extent can we talk about their presence, and where does Art Nouveau really come from?

Therefore, we should state first that the role of England is undeniable, where throughout the nineteenth century artists were engaged in a great debate on the relation of design and industry and on the quality of products in the bush of industrialization. The Government Schools of Design were founded in 1837, where the designers had three basic principles:

“first, that decoration is secondary to form; second, that form is dictated by function and the materials used; and third, that design should derive from historical English and non-Western ornament as well as plant and animal sources, distilled into simple, linear motifs (...) ornament, therefore, ought always to be secondary to Utility.”⁷⁰

However, their ideas were influential, others rejected the future, which lied in such modernity, which was provided by the industry. There were several thinkers and writers, like August Welby Northmore Pugin (1812—1852), John Ruskin (1819—1900) and William Morris (1834—1896) who had started to focus on the problems of the modern city and society by criticising the effects of industrialisation and mass production. Meanwhile, they were advocating to return to the preindustrial spirit and nature (in use of forms and materials), they stood for the (hand) craftsmanship based on the old medieval and local traditions. Bernard Champigneulle emphasized that “l’horreur de Ruskin pour la civilisation industrielle le possait vers l’exaltation de la nature”, but both of them considered the Industrial Revolution’s machine-production as the enemy of mankind, where the individuality and the quality could be easily lost: „[William Morris] considère que la machine et la production de l’industrie sont des calamités pour le monde moderne aussi bien sur le plan esthétique que sur le plan social”.⁷¹

Several design movements and artistic groups, who intended to reform art, were related or even nourished on their theories, like the *Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood* (it was

⁷⁰ Among the members we can find the designer and educator Henry Cole (1808–1882), the artist Richard Redgrave (1804–1888), and the ornamentalist and theorist Owen Jones (1809–1874). in: S.J.Oshinsky, *Design Reform*, in: „Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History“, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000.

Consulted on: http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/dsrf/hd_dsrf.htm.

Accessed on [10 May 2013].

⁷¹ B. Champigneulle, *L’Art Nouveau*, Paris 1972. p. 34 and p. 36.

founded in 1848)⁷², and the *Arts and Crafts movement* (which developed between 1860 and 1910).⁷³ Within their art and ideology they stressed the equal importance of decorative arts with fine arts by emphasizing the quality of materials and using original, organic forms and (often stylized) motifs originated in the nature and vernacular, domestic traditions.⁷⁴ Ruskin and the Arts and Crafts considered the division of arts similar to the division of society, which gave unto them a political connotation as well.⁷⁵ (According to Greenhalgh this concept led to probably the most important postulate of Art Nouveau further on, which was to create a form of art in the spirit of the *Gesamkunstwerk* – total work of Art –, which is discussed later on in this chapter.)⁷⁶

The artistic, economic and social concepts – concerning the relation between the social and moral health of a nation to the qualities of its art works (design and architecture) – advocated by them, became the basis for the European Art Nouveau.⁷⁷ (They affected in the long run not only the art and architecture, but also the urbanism regarding the ‘garden city movement’.)⁷⁸ It is important to highlight, that although the Arts and Crafts became the clear references for Art Nouveau all around Europe, many members of the movement considered it as a “distortion of the original idea”.⁷⁹ Elizabeth Cumming pointed out that from London “European Art Nouveau was seen as dangerously foreign and a style, and ‘style’ as such was rejected by Arts and Crafts purists who valued free expression”, and the Art Nouveau creations were not warmly welcomed.⁸⁰ Some furniture designed by famous French artists—among them artists from Nancy: Luis Majorelle (1859—1926) and Émile Gallé (1846—1904) – “elicited howls of protest”, when they were purchased and presented to the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1900. Likewise the work of the Scottish Charles Rennie Mackintosh

⁷² ‘Pre-Raphaelites’ were formulated by English painters, poets and critics. The group was founded by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais.

⁷³ The main characters of the movement – who also had a significant role in the development of Art Nouveau – were Charles Francis Annesley Volsey, Arthur Heygate Mackmurdo and Charles Robert Ashbee apart from the founding father William Morris. See. K. Gellér, *A magyar szecesszió*, Budapest 2004. p.7.

⁷⁴ Gellér, *A magyar* cit. p.7. According to Greenhalgh this concept lead to probably the most important postulate of Art Nouveau further on, which was to creat in the spirit of the *Gesamkunstwerk* in: Greenhalgh, *Art Nouveau* cit., p.17.

⁷⁵ Greenhalgh, *Art Nouveau* cit., p.19.

⁷⁶ Greenhalgh, *Art Nouveau* cit., p.19.

⁷⁷ A. Dempsey, *A modern művészet története*, Budapest 2003. pp. 33-35.

⁷⁸ G. Csanádi, A. Czizmady, J.B. Kocsi, L. Kőszeghy, K. Tomay, *Város, tervező, társadalom*, Budapest 2010. p. 332.

⁷⁹ As Anna Babics explains the modest success of Art Nouveau by emphasizing the large-scale popularity of Arts and Crafts movement in Britain: “We might consider their new ideas as a reason for the lack of mature art nouveau style in Britain: after their reforms there was no growing requirement for another new movement.” in: A. Babics, *Parallels between Hungarian and Scottish Art Nouveau: The Museum of Applied Arts in Budapest and the Glasgow School of Art*, Final Thesis, Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem, Budapest 2011. p.13.

⁸⁰ E. Cumming, *Arts and Crafts and the ‘New Art’*, in: Lluís Bosch (ed.), “coupDefouet” 2008, 11, pp. 33.

(1868—1928), and the celebrated ‘whiplash’ (*coup de fouet*) embroidered panel of the German Hermann Obrist (1862—1942) confounded some critics, even shocked visitors to London’s Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society in 1896, as Cumming noted.⁸¹ In contrast she added: “to the north, Scots were more interested in [Art Nouveau’s] ideas (...), here the concept of ‘modernity’ was important, invoking a new relationship with tradition”.⁸²

The interest in medieval themes and craftsmanship – originated mostly from the English precedents – was supplemented by the medieval logic taught by Eugène Viollet-le-Duc (1814—1879): “lines should be free to grow, and structure and decoration should be perfectly integrated, so that the prime purpose of ornament was to highlight structure”.⁸³ Based on the fact that England was familiar with the work of Viollet-le-Duc and made significant use of his *Dictionnaire raisonné de l’architecture française*, Thiébault highlighted that many people originated the idea of the modern style from France. The French magazine *Art et Décoration*’s⁸⁴ first issue began with a categorical statement:

“The movement that we are setting out to record did not begin, as is generally assumed, across the Channel. It may have spread quickly there, through the pronouncements of Ruskin and the creative impetus of William Morris (...) and may have become established with remarkable efficiency, but it really began here in France (...) these two French artichets advocated both the study of Gothic art and return to our traditional national strengths in the decorative arts (...) scorned at home, their beliefs were taken to England by Morris; it was only after those ideas had borne fruit across the Channel that they were appreciated in France.”⁸⁵

Thiébault added that despite criticism and public opinion, which were dwelling on the English influence, artists expressed their respect and interest in works of Viollet-le-Duc, as in the United States, like Louis Sullivan (1856—1914) and Frank Lloyd Wright (1869-1959) did so.⁸⁶ He added that Gaudí and other Art Nouveau masters were also defined by him, namely Belgian Victor Horta (1861—1947), and the French Hector Guimard (1867—1942) as “[Viollet-le-Duc] wanted to promote an architecture based on an understanding of the specific qualities of materials, and the combination of very different techniques, such as stonework

⁸¹ Obrist’s whiplash motif became one of the most popular ornament among the Art Nouveau artists. in: Cumming, *Art and Crafts* cit., p. 33.

⁸² Cumming, *Art and Crafts* cit., p. 33.

⁸³ Thiébault, *Introduction* cit., p.13.

⁸⁴ Published first in 1897, the revue was devoted exclusively to architecture and the ‘modern’ decorative arts, and became the promoter of Art Nouveau. (See. footnote 21)

⁸⁵ Thiébault, *Introduction* cit., p.13.

⁸⁶ Thiébault refers to Wright’s autobiography, where “he stated that he had believed the *Dictionnaire raisonné* to be the only rational book on architecture in the world, and that this book alone had enabled him and his contemporaries to retain their faith in architecture” in: Thiébault, *Introduction* cit., p.14.

On the popularity of Viollet-le-Duc See. also J-M.Leniaud, *L’Art Nouveau*, Paris 2009. p.13.

and metalwork”.⁸⁷ For this reason, why Thiébauld claimed that despite the fact that “England played only a minor role in Art Nouveau itself, the theories of William Morris’s Arts and Crafts movement did have a significant impact on the creation and development of the new style”.⁸⁸ This seemed to be confirmed by the personal experience of Henry Van de Velde (1863—1957), because he reported his ‘meeting’ with the English theories and design (Ruskin and Mackintosh) in the following way: “during the conversation the existence of Ruskin as the prophet of a return to Beauty was revealed to me (...) that day was probably one of the turning points in my life”⁸⁹ On the other hand Paul Greenhalgh and other scholars⁹⁰ accorded a more significant role to England, while they were describing the origins of the style by highlighting the role of English publications on design and ornaments.⁹¹

Finally, we have to mention orientalism, and especially the role of Japanese art in the birth of Art Nouveau design. Until the middle of the nineteenth century the East and Oriental meant “the unknown, exotic, and mysterious, hidden behind veils or carpet-like walls”, and like Klein noted it was a construct of the West denoting ‘otherness’.⁹² By the 1860s as a result of the opening of Japan to the World, Japanese culture was becoming popular and its art works were started to be exploited – thanks to the art collectors and merchants as Bing or Liberty – into Europe (until this time the West did not do any separation between Chinese or Japanese art). The effects of the Japanese and also Islamic art works’s are evident by taking into consideration the role of the line in Art Nouveau design and ornament (for example the use *arabesque* by Obrist in 1895).⁹³ As Walter Crane stated that – in *Ligne and Form*, published in 1900 – the energetic, meandering line is the component of Art Nouveau, even the most important one.⁹⁴ Others had also confirmed this, like Van de Velde, but it is more apparent if we glance at tendril forms and lines of the metro station’s entrance in Paris designed by Guimard. In addition to these, the application of Moorish, Ottoman, Turkish, Indian, Assyrian, Egyptian, Byzantine and Jewish decorative elements is documented. (In

⁸⁷ Thiébauld, *Introduction* cit., pp. 14—15.

⁸⁸ Thiébauld, *Introduction* cit., p. 15.

⁸⁹ Thiébauld, *Introduction*, cit. p.15.

⁹⁰ For example the French Grodeczki See. L.Grodeczki, *Introduction: Architecture et décoration autour 1900 à Strasbourg*, in: *Autour de 1900*, Travaux de l’Institut d’Histoire de l’Art in Bulletin de la Faculté des Lettres de Strasbourg, May-Juin 1968, p. 750.

⁹¹ Greenhalgh, *Art Nouveau: The first cit.* 19 november 2012, Barcelona

⁹² R.Klein, *Synagogues in Hungary*, English summary in: R. Klein, *Zsinagógák Magyarországon 1782-1918*, Budapest, 2011, pp. 554—597. <http://klein.rudolf.ymmf.hu/anyag/pdf/newbook/summary.pdf>

⁹³ On the origins of the line in Art Nouveau, and on the typical ‘Art Nouveau line’ See. J.P.Bouillon, *La ligne Art nouveau*, in: International Symposium of Réseau Art Nouveau Network in the framework of ‘Art Nouveau in Progress’ project, 24-25 October 2002, Wien. pp. 27—35. and M. Speidel, *Le triomphe de la courbe*, in: „Museum”167, 3, 1990. (Art Nouveau edition) pp. 13—17. Consulted on: <http://www.artnouveau-net.eu/portals/0/data/COLLOQUIA/colloquium-proceedings.pdf>. Accessed on: [10 March 2013].

⁹⁴ Moravánszky, *Competing* cit., p. 100.

several cases, they served a significant role in the Art Nouveau architecture, especially in Hungary, where Indian architecture and decorative motifs provided the basis of the Hungarian National Style.)⁹⁵

PRINCIPLES. Before the discussion of the sources of Art Nouveau design I would like to emphasize the main principles of the new style. First of all, we should state that the main principle of Art Nouveau was to be modern in every sense (in physical and visual sense and in an emotional and ideological sense), which meant the rupture with previous academic historicist tendencies “in the name of historical evolution toward more perfect – and the same time more economical – solutions”.⁹⁶ (The more economical aspect could be disproved by the fact that in several cases the precise design, the quality of the decorative elements required more financial investment. One of the critiques of Art nouveau was laid in this fact.)

Ákos Moravánszky explained that according to them the historicism was an error and “the long period of recollection had to be overcome by outburst of creative emotion that could break through the ideological boundaries of positivism and materialism, as well as the obstacles posed by the material itself”.⁹⁷ He emphasized that this “creative personality’s intuition, able to draw from nature itself rather than relying on historical memory, was the driving force behind the art nouveau revolution”.⁹⁸ (On the other hand, in several cases, like the eclectic – hybrid – Art Nouveau architecture, the use of historical memory and association affected by the historical themes and decorative forms was still elemental.)⁹⁹ For this reason the idea of *Kunstwollen* (free artistic willpower) invented by Alois Riegl became the most relevant difference between the new style and the historicism, which meant the rupture with any reflection of antecedent historical prefigurations.¹⁰⁰ Moravánszky also revealed that the critics on historicism in architecture did not mean the rejection of the traditional space organisation (symmetry or hierarchy), but the repudiation of the traditional architectural

⁹⁵ It is presented in the next subchapter.

⁹⁶ Moravánszky, *Competing cit.*, p.106. The more economical aspect could be denied by the fact that in several cases the precise design, the quality of the decorative elements required more financial investment. One of the critiques of Art nouveau was laid in this fact.

⁹⁷ Moravánszky, *Competing cit.*, p. 107.

⁹⁸ Moravánszky, *Competing cit.*, p. 107.

⁹⁹ I discuss it in details on the following pages (Sources of Art Nouveau).

¹⁰⁰ Á. Moravánszky, *Versengő látomások, Esztétikai újítás és társadalmi program az Osztrák-Magyar Monarchia építészetében 1867-1918*, Budapest 1998. pp. 96—97.

ornament. As a result they began to look for an alternative with the renewal of the ornament.¹⁰¹

The basis of the new style was this new ornament. Later, this was supported by the idea of Heinrich Puder – based on Riegl’s work – similarly to the concept of *horror vacui* considering that human instinct, which leads us to decorating the vacant surfaces.¹⁰² According to him these decorations were always originated in nature. We must see the contradictory element in this argument. Despite the fact that the idea of Art Nouveau’s oeuvre is based on non-mimetic conception, we could find a sort of it in conjunction with the representation of the nature.¹⁰³ In my opinion, it rather meant an alternative use that I discuss in details later in this chapter by examining the sources of Art Nouveau.

Furthermore, the most obvious representation of modernity in Art Nouveau architecture was taking shape not only in a theoretical way, but also in using new design and decorative elements; new techniques and building materials (cast iron, reinforced concrete, glass, ceramics).¹⁰⁴ On the other hand, there were designers, who did not embrace the technological progress by refusing the mass-produced goods and (referred to Ruskin and Morris) and they applied rather the highest standards of craftsmanship.

The quintessence of these ideas could have been realized by the elevation of the decorative arts to the level of fine arts (what we have already seen in case of Arts and Crafts movement).¹⁰⁵ The suggested harmony between all the arts should have created the *Gesamtkunstwerk* (“Total work of art”), which meant the unity of artistic process and products. While all the designers, architects and craftsmen were working together, the buildings, interiors and decorations (furniture, textiles, and jewelry) should conform to the principles of Art Nouveau.¹⁰⁶

The idea of unity also appeared in the programme of different unions of artists like the *Wiener Secession* – the Union of Austrian Artists – formed in 1897; and *L’École de Nancy*

¹⁰¹ Moravánszky, *Versengő* cit., p. 97. Original quote: „Mivel a historizmus kritikája az építészetben nem a hagyományos térszervezés (szimmetria, axialitás, hierarchia), hanem sokkal inkább a hagyományos építészeti ornamentika elutasítását jelentette, ezért az alternatívák keresése is az ornamentika megújításával kezdődött. Az új stílus, a szecesszió alapja az ornamens volt”.

¹⁰² The work of Heinrich Puder intitled as *Zur Entstehung des Ornamentschmuckes* cited by Moravánszky in: Moravánszky, *Versengő* cit., p. 97.

¹⁰³ Moravánszky, *Versengő* cit., p. 98.

¹⁰⁴ For example the Hungarian Zsolnay ceramics and pyrogranite invented by Vilmos Zsolnay. See. L.Vízy, *Káprázatos Pártázatok. A Zsolnay építészeti kerámia mesterei*, Budapest 2009.

¹⁰⁵ This idea was expansively adapted by the artists of Art Nouveau. According to Moravánszky the concept was formulated by art historian Alois Riegl in his book intitled *Stilfragen. Grundlegung zu einer Geschichte der Ornamentik* (1893). See. Moravánszky, *Versengő* cit., pp. 95—96.

¹⁰⁶ P. Greenhalgh, *Introduction: A new style for a new age*, in: P. Greenhalgh (ed.), *Art nouveau 1890—1914*, New York 2000. Consulted on: http://www.nga.gov/feature/nouveau/exhibit_intro.shtm. Accessed on [10 March 2013]

(the Art Nouveau School of Nancy) established in 1901. As the founder and president of the École de Nancy,¹⁰⁷ Émile Gallé stated “ne nous lasson jamais de dire encore et encore, qu’il n’y a pas de castes parmi les artisans de l’art, qu’il n’y a pas d’arts mineurs et plébiens”.¹⁰⁸ These ideas lead to a change in the way of organizing exhibitions (especially exhibition of applied arts) as well. For the World’s Fairs (Paris 1900, Turin 1904) the artist were aiming to design the whole room in the spirit of the arts’unity. Moreover, the Art Nouveau period was not only marked by the alliances of artists, but it was also the period of great individuals, whose works has to be considered separately from any artistic groups of the turn of the century, like the oeuvre of Hector Guimard, Victor Horta, Antonio Gaudí, Alfons Mucha and the Hungarian Ödön Lechner (1868—1914).

SOURCES. As we noted before Art Nouveau architecture was an international, modern style based on decoration by using the latest innovations. Although, the style was equally determined by the local traditions and needs, especially in those regions, where the style was gaining ideological functions (like in Hungary, Czech Lands and Alsace-Lorraine). I do not intend to present here these local (national and regional) themes – as they will be analysed through the case studies – but I feel the importance to draw the three main categories of the sources based on Paul Greenhalgh’s work.¹⁰⁹ According to him we can emphasize three core sources, three areas of human experience that the essence of Art Nouveau emerged from: History, Nature, Symbolism.

History occupies a central position in our understanding of Art Nouveau. Unfortunately, during the last century the use of historical sources came to suggest that the style could not be modern, because its use of the past. For this reason, as Greenhalgh pointed out the: “The past was associated with regressive values. Ornament was understood to illustrate past themes, therefore it was thought to be regressive. As an ornamental style, Art Nouveau was therefore portrayed as regressive.” This phenomenon could explain why Art Nouveau was neglected as something modern by the posterity and the world art history. Obviously, the use of history meant a different thing: “it was to do with the seeking out of alternative approaches to culture”, and for this reason “distinct historical models existed within the style”.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ In English, the ‘School of Nancy’, and the ‘Provincial Alliance of Industries of Art’. In this thesis I use the original French name of the establishment.

¹⁰⁸ Cited by Paul Greenhalgh, in: Greenhalgh, *Art Nouveau* cit., p.20.

¹⁰⁹ On the occasion of organisation the Art Nouveau exhibition in London (2000), a group of specialist has settled these categories. In: Greenhalgh, *Inventing* cit., pp. 51—54. See also. Greenhalgh, *Art Nouveau* cit., p. 21.

¹¹⁰ Greenhalgh, *Inventing* cit., p. 51.

On the other hand, these classical canons were manipulated and subverted, thus they were reused in a creative manner. One might identify a certain use of classicism in a more decadent, mystical, erotical often ironical way (Vienna, London, Darmstadt, Munich)¹¹¹; application of Rococo and Baroque idioms (Nancy, Brussels, Milan, Turin).¹¹² The Neo-Baroque and often Neo-Renaissance paradigm was more obvious in Central Europe.¹¹³ These inspirations had very strong hidden messages for the people in the city. For example, in Nancy the Baroque and Rococo inspiration called forth the golden age, the glorious independent past of the city, under the rule of Duke of Lorraine Stanislas I (1737—1766).¹¹⁴ On the other hand, Rococo had an other perception, as Greenhalgh pointed out; it occupied an interesting space between the respectable and the decadent: “condemned by many as being a shallow and immoral approach to art, the last gasp of a corrupt society before the Revolution”, thus “it had the ability to simultaneously attract and disturb the middle classes of Europe”.¹¹⁵ (The stressing on the importance of middle class in perception of Art Nouveau is essential, as one can find among them the most enthusiastic promoters and opposers of the new style.)

Apart from these, we are able to identify two other ways of ‘using’ history. The first was more related to the own historical memory of the people. Art Nouveau designers were seeking after the ancient; often forgotten history and tradition of their culture. From one hand, this could mean the search for the national origins and myths, on the other hand the quest for certain regional or local traditions. For example, vernacular art and the national past played a major role in the Hungarian and Czech Art Nouveau architecture.¹¹⁶ In addition, the Art Nouveau artists rehabilitated peripheral and marginalised historical cultures as Greenhalgh noted, “the Celts, the Vikings, gaelic and folk forms underpinned many schools of thought.”¹¹⁷ The second has already been mentioned at the origins of Art Nouveau and laid in the increasing interest towards the “other” forms from non-Western cultures. Once more, the

¹¹¹ “Il ne faut voir en cela ni les restes d’une apparence historicisante ni le dessein d’une forme quelconque d’éclectisme: les temps ont changé et les artistes ne portent pas les mêmes aspirations qu’en 1850. En cette fin-de-siècle, il n’est question ni de copier ni de citer, mais utiliser des formes plastiques qui répondent à un projet, celui de créer du nouveau, de faire sécession.” in: Leniaud, *L’Art Nouveau* cit., p.16.

¹¹² Leniaud also confirmed this creative use of rococo and baroque elements: “Et si le 19^{ème} siècle s’est maintes fois souvenu de la manière michelangelesque et du style rocaille sans pour autant employer le mot „baroque”, les créateurs de l’art nouveau (...) savent qu’en introduisant dans leurs oeuvre la souple arabesque, les formes cambrées, les bossages puissants, les atlantes et cariatides convulsés sous l’effort, ce ne sont pas des formes qu’ils reproduisent, mais des effets qu’ils suscitent: sensualité érotique, pathos funèbre, théâtralité (...) ils ne sont pas moins sensibles à ce qui, au sens étymologique, caractérise le baroque, c’est-à-dire l’irrégularité des lignes. L’irrégularité sous-entend l’abandon des conventions dans le domaine de la forme, exprime la liberté, la vitalité puissante et sans frein.” in: Leniaud, *L’Art Nouveau* cit., p.15.

¹¹³ Moravánszky, *Competing* cit., p. 100.

¹¹⁴ See. Leniaud, *L’Art Nouveau* cit., pp. 241—279. ; and Greenhalgh, *Art Nouveau* cit., pp. 43—43.

¹¹⁵ Greenhalgh, *Inventing* cit., p. 52.

¹¹⁶ Leniaud, *L’Art nouveau* cit., pp. 19—20.

¹¹⁷ It was primarily thanked to the recent archeological discoveries. Greenhalgh, *Inventing* cit., p. 52.

Japanese, Chinese, Indian and also African forms played also a dominant role in Art Nouveau ornament.¹¹⁸ As we have already mentioned the Eastern origins of Hungarians considerably influenced the work of Ödön Lechner.¹¹⁹ Thus, such use of history – popular among Art Nouveau artists – did not mean the copy of precedent forms, but the ‘alternative’ incorporation of them, which allowed designers “to break with normative values in order to assert the modern” as Greenhalgh summarized.¹²⁰

According to Greenhalgh the most important inspiration of Art Nouveau – which contributed also to the international character of the style – was gained from Nature itself: „ [La Nature] elle inspira la création des produits les plus archétypaux du style, et fut l’élément clé garantissant que le style était lui-même un phénomène réellement international”.¹²¹ This character was given by the obvious universality of the nature, as it is “ubiquitous and belonging to all cultures”.¹²² This exaltation of nature was both the result of the rapid urbanisation process of the second half of the century and the growing numbers of scientific publications dedicated to nature and human life. Greenhalgh highlighted the influence of the idea of evolution (formulated by Charles Darwin), which “underpinned most aspects of modernity as formulated by the fin de siècle generation (...) as nature evolves it grows, changes, brings itself to perfection”.¹²³ On the other hand, numerous other scientific books influenced Art Nouveau artists on the turn of the century as the German Ernst Haeckel’s work did in case of Gaudí and Horta.¹²⁴ In addition, the Art Nouveau artists made some research on the nature by using the latest techniques. In Nancy, which was a center of horticultural research Émile Gallé (who was also an accomplished botanist) used photography to study plants, flowers, insects for his glass’ design.¹²⁵ The representation of nature and its flora and fauna was elemental in Art Nouveau architecture ornament, but also in structural forms (like in the case of the aforementioned two architects). Apart from its universal character, the

¹¹⁸ According to Leniaud the designers could be inspired by the same thing in Japanese art, as in case of Baroque: from the unusual line, as and ornament: “Mais plus que tout, les artistes de l’Art Nouveau trouvent dans l’art japonais ce qu’ils reconnaissent en même temps dans le baroque: cette ligne asymétrique, ondulante, et dynamique qui marque une grande partie de leurs graphismes, la ligne en coup de fouet [mais], ils la retrouvent aussi dans l’arabesque, dans l’orientalisme islamique” in: Leniaud, *L’Art Nouveau* cit., p. 15.

¹¹⁹ This fact is discussed in the next subchapter. The most well-accomplished publication on Ödön Lechner: See. J. Gerle, *Lechner Ödön*, Budapest 2003.

¹²⁰ Greenhalgh, *Inventing* cit., p. 52.

¹²¹ Greenhalgh, *Art Nouveau* cit., p. 21.

¹²² Greenhalgh, *Inventing* cit., p. 52.

¹²³ Greenhalgh, *Inventing* cit., p. 52.

¹²⁴ Greenhalgh, *Art Nouveau* cit., 19 November 2012, Barcelona.

¹²⁵ V. Thomas, *Introduction*, in: *L’École de Nancy: fleurs et ornements - ma racine est au fond des bois*, Exhibition catalogue, 24 Avril-26 Juillet 1999, Musée de l’École de Nancy, Paris 1999. pp. 13–14.

representation of nature could express a sort of geographical identity.¹²⁶ Probably, the most representative appearance of the regional characteristics could be found in the works of the École de Nancy.¹²⁷ Their own region and its nature inspired the artists, thus we can identify typical Lotharingian plants and flowers on the Art Nouveau artworks of Nancy, like the Lotharingien *chardon* (thistle).¹²⁸

From an architectural point of view, one of the aims of Art Nouveau architects was to bring back the nature to the city, to the urban life. For this reason: „Art Nouveau cities ideally were to be artificial forests”.¹²⁹ This goal could be related to the strong social factor of Art Nouveau architecture, which wanted to serve primarily the human in the modern age. The idea was based on the fact, that thanks to the rapid urbanization – among other transformations of the second half of the 19th century – many people were streaming from the country side into the towns in order to acquire better living conditions (and employment). The Art Nouveau artists tended to recover them from their loss (the roots and environment were left behind).¹³⁰ This idea was blooming in the English garden city movement, but there were some estates, which were built in this spirit at the turn of the century, not only for the middle class.¹³¹

Finally, the rise of Symbolism in literature and art had an evident effect on the decorative and ornamental arts, thus on Art Nouveau as well. According to Greenhalgh symbolism focused on subjectivity, spirituality and religion and also sexuality.¹³² In Art Nouveau architecture, we should focus on the symbolic meaning, which is transferred by the ornaments of the buildings in the respect that:

“Art Nouveau designs recognised the central truth that decoration and ornament are essentially symbolic. Ornament represents a society through its pattern forms; it gives identity to the belief systems, the desires and the aspirations of a culture. Especially architectural ornament and public art forms tell stories about the communities that create them.”¹³³

¹²⁶ Leniaud, *L'Art Nouveau*, cit., p.20.

¹²⁷ On the importance of the nature and vegetal symbols in Art Nouveau of Nancy. See. Leniaud, *L'Art Nouveau* cit., pp. 241—279 ; and also *L'École de Nancy: fleurs et ornements - ma racine est au fond des bois*, Exhibition catalogue, 24 Avril-26 Juillet 1999, Musée de l'École de Nancy, Paris 1999.

¹²⁸ The *chardon* is a typical Lotharingien symbol, which is also found on the blazon of Nancy. See. H. Doucet, *L'École de Nancy, entre lotharingisme et Art nouveau européen*, Symposium of Réseau Art Nouveau Network entitled 'Identité nationale et tendances internationales', Ljubljana 2006. p.2. Consulted on: www.artnouveau-net.com. Accessed on [10 March 2013].

¹²⁹ Greenhalgh, *Inventing* cit., p. 53.

¹³⁰ Gerle, *Feedback* cit., p. 13.9

¹³¹ For example the Wekerle Estate (colony of workers and town-officers) was built between 1908—1926 in Budapest.

¹³² Greenhalgh, *Inventing* cit., p. 52.

¹³³ Greenhalgh, *Inventing* cit., p. 53.

Before the discussion of the desires and aspiration of the society of Budapest, Prague, Nancy and Strasbourg I would like to present a possible periodization of the history of Art Nouveau on the turn of the century by highlighting its crowning point and the reason of its decline.

PERIODIZATION. As a possible periodization of Art Nouveau development I propose to use the method formulated by Greenhalgh. According to him we can distinguish three phases.¹³⁴ The first would be the initial period from 1893 to 1895, when the first Art Nouveau artworks were accomplished; London, Paris and Brussels playing the major roles. Most art historians agreed that there were four main events considering the birth of the new style. From our perspective these moments are also essential. In 1893, The Studio published Aubrey Breadsley's illustration for Oscar Wilde's *Salome* (the first Art Nouveau illustration); in the same year in Brussels Victor Horta designed The Tassel House (the first Art Nouveau building); after two years, but in the same city Henry van de Velde's pamphlet entitled *Déblaiement d'art* was published (the first manifesto for the new generation of artists); and finally the opening of Siegfried Bing's gallery in Paris (the most active centre of the distribution of the new style). Their contribution was undeniable in the development of Art Nouveau. As Greenhalgh noted, this is a phase, when Art Nouveau was stylistically marked by the use of lines (curved, assymetrical, ondulent and arabesque line), organic forms and spectacular colores.

During the second phase (1895—1900) the Art Nouveau emerged throughout Europe and North America, while the style was changing its face according to the local needs (by using historical and natural forms). He noted that this is the period, when more geometrical dimension of the new style appeared – mainly in Glasgow, Vienna and Munich – by preferring straight lines and classical historical sources. He argued that in this phase the new style was the fruit of the activity of individuals (artists, editors, collectors), movements, institutions (like art schools), industrials, entrepreneurs, and in special cases: the state.¹³⁵ We need to mention here the role of the press (journals and artistic revues), the posters (like Sarah Bernhardt's posters designed by Mucha) and the exhibitions, which were advocating Art Nouveau.

¹³⁴ Greenhalgh, *Introduction* cit., pp. 24—28.

¹³⁵ The commissions ordered by the state were more frequent in Central Europe. in Greenhalgh, *Introduction* cit., p.18.

Among them the most significant was the Paris World's Fair in 1900, which can be considered as the culmination of the new style.¹³⁶ The World Exposition offered an unusual possibility to the artists (and nations) to promote their cultural and artistic significance on an international scale.¹³⁷ Despite the domination of the historical styles, Art Nouveau could come to the front by the Pavillon of Bing, and Loïe Fuller's designed by Henri Sauvage (1873-1932).¹³⁸ For Hungarians and Czechs the World's Fair was also remarkable: Mucha designed the pavilion for the newly annexed territories of Bosnia and Herzegovina,¹³⁹ while Hungarian industrial artists won awards.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, the World's Fair had an impact on the urban space of Paris: the visitors could face with the new metro entrances designed by Hector Guimard.

Apart from the Exposition held in 1900, there were other international exhibitions, which could help the diffusion of the new style. Greenhalgh reported the nine most important ones, which were visited by 170 million people (approximately 19 million per exhibitions),¹⁴¹ from which I feel the necessity to point out two: the Turn World's Fair 1902 and the Saint Louis World Exposition in 1904, because they were essentially engaged in Art Nouveau.¹⁴²

During the third phase (1900—1914) the new style became not only wellknown, but extremely criticized. Above all, Greenhalgh stressed that in the third phase the Art Nouveau was used in order to promote different national identities, among which he differentiated bigger and smaller nations, but without any laid parameters:

“Les grandes nations utilisèrent l'art et le design pour consolider leur propre image et promouvoir leur cohésion interne, les petits nations l'utilisèrent comme arme politique dans leur effort pour se différencier et s'éloigner de leur rivaux et de leurs maitres. Il est un fait que pour les Finnois, les Norvégiens, les Hongrois, les Irlandais et d'autres encore, la réalisation d'une identité culturelle distincte était synonyme de l'adhésion à la modernité.”¹⁴³

¹³⁶ They style was often named style 1900 after the Word Exposition. See. *1900*, Exhibition catalogue, 14 March—26 June, Grand Palais Paris, Paris 2000.

¹³⁷ I discuss the World Expositions' significance in nation building process in the next subchapter.

¹³⁸ The Exposition's site was mostly ruled by néorococo, néobaroque styles, but there was a noticable presence of Art Nouveau as Greenhalgh reported. in: Greenhalgh, *Introduction* cit., p.32.

¹³⁹ E.M. Dusza, *Epic Significance: Placing Alphonse Mucha's Czech Art in the Context of Pan-Slavism and Czech Nationalism*, Georgia State University, Art and Design Theses, Paper 103. 2012. p. 33.

¹⁴⁰ É. Csenkey, *In Budapest: Museum or gypsy palace?* in: „Museum”167, 3, 1990. (Art Nouveau edition) pp. 160—163.

¹⁴¹ Datas of Paul Greenhalgh in: Greenhalgh, *Introduction* cit., p.32.

¹⁴² The contribution of the chief architecture – Italian architect Raimondo d'Aronco (1857–1932) to the *Prima Esposizione d'Arte decorativa moderna* held in Turin and to the diffusion of Art Nouveau was enourmous. In Saint Louis, the Germans provided an entirely view of the style. Moreover, the Czech master of modern architecture, Jan Kotera (1871—1923) could present his work in the Czech section.

¹⁴³ Greenhalgh, *Introduction* cit., p.32.

I would like to note first that the division used by Greenhalgh suggests that he meant by the term '*grand nations*', those nations who were not under any foreign political or cultural oppression at the turn of the century. Secondly, it has to be highlighted that, indeed the Art Nouveau architecture was used by different nations as a tool to express their modernity and cultural independence. On the following pages my aim is to discuss this aspect of the style.

DECLINE AND CRITIQUES. It is a commonly accepted fact, that the World War I washed Art Nouveau away. On the other hand, there were already some signs of its decline. As Leniaud highlights in parallel with the spread and triumph of Art Nouveau, the critiques of the style proliferated as well. He stressed that the style received many of them during the World's Fair 1900.¹⁴⁴ Besides this, one might find different types of critiques from its earliest appearance, if one is thinking about the ironic nicknames of the style for example the 'noodle style' or 'eel style'; and as Thiébaut emphasized they were existing till the discovery of the style in 1950s.¹⁴⁵ For example, the English J.H. Elder Duncan noted the following: "le chaos régnant dans le design a essaimé dans toute la France, l'Allemagne, l'Autriche et l'Italie."¹⁴⁶ Or one can mention here the writer Octave Mirbeau, who criticized the style in *La 628-E8* (1907) by declaring that "it all turns, twists, twirls and entwines; it unfolds, unwinds, unravels, and suddenly comes unstuck, and for no good or obvious reason."¹⁴⁷

The critiques were mainly produced by conservative, academic circles, which were attacking not just the new unusual aesthetic and visual appearance of the style. Sometimes they were carrying deeper political diatribes as well. After the opening of Bing's gallery the public could read on the columns of *Le Figaro* (28 December 1895) Arsène Alexandre's critique who attacked the new style for having "the whiff of the depraved Englishman, the morphine-addicted Jew, or the conniving Belgian, or a jolly mixture of all three poisonous ingredients".¹⁴⁸ It is important to underline, that this is the period, when the *L'affaire Dreyfus* (Dreyfus Affair) was formulating in France, which urged anti-Semitic manifestations all over Europe. The Jewish origins of the promoters (like Bing) and artists of the new style became the target of the hostile critiques, but mainly after the World War I especially in Central Europe.

¹⁴⁴ Leniaud, *L'Art Nouveau* cit., p. 207.

¹⁴⁵ Thiébaut, *Introduction* cit., p. 382.

¹⁴⁶ Greenhalgh, *Introduction* cit., p. 20.

¹⁴⁷ Original quotation: Tout tourne, se bistourne, se chantourne, se maltourne; tout roule, s'enroule, se déroule, et brusquement s'écroule, on ne sait pourquoi ni comment' cited by Thiébaut, *Introduction* cit., p. 382.

¹⁴⁸ Cited by Thiébaut, *Introduction* cit., p. 382.

Rudolf Klein examined the relation between Art Nouveau architecture and the Jewish population – although he mainly focused on the case of the Habsburg Monarchy – but his observations could be used generally. He argued that at the turn of the century Art Nouveau (combined with orientalism) architecture provided a good tool for Jewish people in the process of cultural assimilation.¹⁴⁹ In case of Hungary this was more apparent, as the Art Nouveau architecture tended to be the national style.¹⁵⁰ In addition, there were numerous artists, who started to protest against this xenophobe critique like Émile Gallé and the École de Nancy, who supported Alfred Dreyfus (1859—1935).¹⁵¹ He was advocating through the creation of art works, from where he transmitted meaningful messages by using inscriptions and motifs. Gallé presented at the Paris World Exposition a vase intitled *Le figuier* (The fig), where he noted the following citation from Victor Hugo “Car tous les homes sont les fils d’un meme père, ils sont la même larme et sortent du même œil”.¹⁵² This vase was not the last work from Nancy, which was supposed to transmit political messages. Other types of critique were against this kind of association of artists, who separated themselves from the academic world. As we can see, several critiques were against the new style, because they related it to a certain social class, or group.¹⁵³ Thanks to its cosmopolitan character it was most often associated with the bourgeoisie lifestyle, which returned as a swear-word in the posterity’s discourse (firstly in the Modernist canon of the 1920s).¹⁵⁴

Moreover, there were other reasons of the decline of the style. As Greenhalgh implied the rejection of the style was not just the consequence of the changing taste, as it was also generated by a mixture of economic and political reasons.¹⁵⁵ First, he stressed that from an

¹⁴⁹ See. R.Klein, *A szecesszió: un gou't juij?: A szecessziós építészet és a zsidóság kapcsolata a Monarchiában*, in: „Múlt és jövő ” 2008, 19, 4, pp. 5—33.; and R.Klein, *The Hungarian Jews and Architectural Style* in: Szalai A. (ed.), *In the Land of Hagar – Jews of Hungary: History, Society and Culture*, Tel Aviv 2002. pp.165–72.

¹⁵⁰ R.Klein, *Synagogues in Hungary*, in: R. Klein, *Zsinagógák Magyarországon 1782-1918*, Budapest 2011, pp. 554—597. Consulted on: <http://klein.rudolf.yymm.f.hu/anyag/pdf/newbook/summary.pdf>. Accessed on: [10 May 2013].

¹⁵¹ Ch. Prochasson, *Affaire Dreyfus, ligue des droits de l’homme et art social: l’École de Nancy entre esthétique et politique*. in: Fr. Loyer (ed.), *L’École de Nancy, 1889—1909. Art nouveau et industries d’art*, Exhibition catalogue, 24 April—26 July 1999, Musée des beaux-arts, Nancy, Paris 1999. pp. 203—207.

¹⁵² V. Thomas, *L’École de Nancy ou Alliance Provinciale des Industries d’Art*, in: „Dossier de l’Art“, 1999, 56, pp. 4—20.

¹⁵³ V. Arvas, *L’Art nouveau*, in: Restellini M. (ed.), *L’Art nouveau: La Révolution décorative*, Exhibition catalogue, 18 April – 8 September 2013, Pinacothèque de Paris, Paris 2013. pp. 39—40.

¹⁵⁴ F. Russel, Frank (ed.), *Art nouveau Architecture*, London, 1979. p.17.

¹⁵⁵ Greenhalgh P., *Life and afterlife: observations on the decline and resurrection of Art Nouveau*, in: The Perception of Art Nouveau, Internationally Symposium of Réseau Art Nouveau Network in the framework of the “Art Nouveau & Ecology” project, 4-5 December 2010, Musées Roxaux d’Art et d’Histoire, Brussels, 2010. Consulted on:<http://www.artnouveau-net.eu/ArtNouveauEcology/Actions/Internationalsymposium2010/tabid/820/language/en-GB/Default.aspx>. Accessed [10 May 2013].

economic point of view the production and also the trade of Art Nouveau design objects was unflattering. In France among the traders and art collectors there was an increasing call for a return to the previous period's product designed in the "style of the Louis", because they were more popular on the market. "Art Nouveau has been consistently portrayed as an inefficient, economically disastrous, expensive, irresponsible and non-functional exuberance."¹⁵⁶ From an architectural point of view the Art Nouveau building's constructions needed more financial investments (most of the Art Nouveau private buildings and villas were commissioned by the wealthy bourgeoisie inhabitants or entrepreneurs, like in Nancy in case of Parc Saurupt designed by Émile André and Henri Gutton from 1901).¹⁵⁷ Secondly, he argued that the political situation in Europe was slowly changing and the growth of nationalism resulted in the rejection of any foreign elements, which in Art Nouveau style were not difficult to find.¹⁵⁸ Finally, we should mention here that many prominent artists of Art Nouveau deserted the style and turned to different directions, like Horta or Van de Velde and the next decades were bringing other architectural solutions. After this general presentation of Art Nouveau style I continue my work with the presentation of the four case studies. Through their examples we can get a deeper view on the local variants of the style.

¹⁵⁶ Greenhalgh, *Inventing* cit., p. 54.

¹⁵⁷ H. Doucet, *Émile André, artiste de l'École de Nancy*, Exhibition catalogue, 8 October 2003 – 12 January 2004, Musée de l'École de Nancy and Musée des Beaux-Arts de Nancy, Nancy 2003.

¹⁵⁸ Greenhalgh, *Life and afterlife* cit., Brussels 2010. and V. Arvas, *L'Art nouveau* cit., pp. 39—40.

1.2. Art Nouveau architecture and its identity building factors through examples from Budapest, Prague, Nancy and Strasbourg

1.2.1. Central Europe: Art Nouveau as National style

Before the detailed analysis of my case studies I feel the necessity to underline the main characteristics of Art Nouveau in Central Europe, as it showed a remarkable difference comparing to the Western European examples thank to its different political situation. The new style became a tool to create the eagerly awaited national style, which aspect requires further elaboration. At the turn of the century, along with the reception of the new art in Central Europe, the following ideas came to the front: the protection of national identity, searching for the national art and the roles of local traditions in it.¹⁵⁹

Art Nouveau – as willpower of style¹⁶⁰ – was characterized by these questions in accordance with social and political issues, because the new style was ideally suited to the political programmes of the emerging nations and towns politically belonging to the Habsburg Monarchy, which wanted to free themselves from centralized Austrian politics.¹⁶¹

Obviously, the states of the Monarchy wished to express their national feelings and their cultural separation. Consequently art and architecture were regarded as forms of struggle for the national independence and democratic reforms, as they became the tools for expression national identity.¹⁶² In case of Art Nouveau architecture it was especially relevant, as it could express not just the sovereignty of nations by using the peculiar forms and traditions of the culture, but the modernity itself. For this reason the new Hungarian and Czech art and architecture reflected to these new concepts by aiming at presenting the historical greatness and power of the nation.

Therefore, we can admit that the claim of the political independence was just the first step of shaping the national culture. The heritage – being either it historical, political, cultural – was crucial in modernizing the nation. The aim of the political elite of the countries was to present them not only in a local context (representative public buildings with administrative and cultural functions), but also on an international level by emphasizing their national and

¹⁵⁹ Gellér, *A magyar szecesszió* cit., p. 20.

¹⁶⁰ Ákos Moravánszky used the expression *willpower of style* in his book to refer to the consciousness of the artists of Art Nouveau and to the idea of *Kunstwollen*, in: Moravánszky, *Competing* cit., p.95.

¹⁶¹ B. Girveau, *Central Europe, Art Nouveau and nationalism*, in: K.Tahara, *Art Nouveau architecture*, London-New York 2000. p. 318.

¹⁶² The importance and use of art and architecture in nation building process has already proved. See. E. Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge 1983.; B.Anderson, *Imagined Communities Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso 1983.; G.Gyáni, *Nemzetelméletek és a Történetírás* (Theories of the Nation and Historiography) in: *Nemzet és Művészet* (Nation and Art, Image and Self-Image), Budapest 2010.

independent characteristics. Hence, there was a significant internal and external self-representation. In this wider context, the international exhibitions served as perfect examples, while public buildings represented the local importance. Orvar Löfgren confirmed this in his essay entitled *The Nationalization of Culture* (1989):

„The construction of national identity is a task which calls for international and external communication. In order to create symbolic community, identity markers have to be created within the national arena in order to achieve a sense of belonging and loyalty to the national project, but this identity also has to be marketed to the outside world as a national otherness.”¹⁶³

Löfgren pointed out also that there were such projects of self-presentation and self-definition in many cultural arenas during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He also gave the world exhibitions – from 1851 and onwards – as an outstanding example for them „where nations have peddled their self-images”.¹⁶⁴ For this reason, we can understand the success of the World’s Fairs during the ephemeral lifetime of the style. Furthermore, the UNESCO World Heritage List (and Tentative List) can be considered a twentieth century example of the self-representation platform as Gábor Sonkoly emphasized it.¹⁶⁵

Furthermore, Székely’s statement concerning Hungary should be also applied for the whole region: “the paradigm of the new modernized identity changed gradually and followed the common paradigm shift of other countries: from ethnography based new definition of the nation in the 1870s it moved to a historicizing approach in the 1890s and ended in vernacular modernist in the 1900s.”¹⁶⁶ In this respect, the invention of traditions has to be regarded legally justified and as consequence of the state’s modernization in Central Europe, which accelerated by the turn of the century.¹⁶⁷ Thus it explained the phenomenon, in which the mythical past of nation, the little known traditions and the peasant culture could be interpreted as the basis of national myths, and resulted the revival of national language in art and architecture.¹⁶⁸ In the following pages I present this phenomenon in relation to national

¹⁶³ O. Löfgren, *The Nationalization of Culture*, in: „Ethnologia Europaea“, 1989, 19, p. 12.

¹⁶⁴ Löfgren, *The Nationalization cit.*, p. 12.

¹⁶⁵ For this reason the UNESCO World Heritage and Tentative List could serve as suitable sources in the analysis of the preservation of Art Nouveau heritage. I use this sources in the third chapter of my thesis. See. G. Sonkoly, *The social history of cultural heritage protection in Hungary*, in: J. Purchla (ed.), *Protecting and Safeguarding Cultural Heritage. The Systems of management of the cultural heritage in the Visegrad centres*, Cracow 2010. pp. 11—30.

¹⁶⁶ M. Székely, *National endeavor or loval identity? Art Nouveau Town Halls in Hungary*, paper for the International congress organized by coupDefouet, Barcelona 2013.

¹⁶⁷ Székely, *National cit.*, p. 2.

¹⁶⁸ On the consequences of nation building in Central European architecture, See. K. Keserü, *The Transformation of Architectural Thinking in Central Europe at the Turn of the 20th Century*, in: K. Keserü, *The Beginning of Modernism in Central European Architecture: Polish, Czech, Slovak and Hungarian Architectural*

identity building factors of Art Nouveau architecture by discussing its origins. During the 19th century, intellectuals had tried to consolidate national identity through language and literature (national revival), but later on every artistic means was used to promote local identities. Komlós proved, that in the style pluralism of Central European art at the turn of the century (reflecting the heterogeneous social and cultural life of the Monarchy), the opposition of ‘official’-‘national’, ‘tradition’-‘modern’ were formulated in diverse forms.¹⁶⁹ However, Art Nouveau architecture became the most effective tool of emancipation and to expression of different national identity. (Art Nouveau architecture played an extraordinary role in the Jewish emancipation, as we have seen in the earlier chapter.)¹⁷⁰ This fact could be considered as a result of the special nature of Art Nouveau.

Tradition and modernity are seemingly contradictory notions. Through the Hungarian and Czech variants of the style, I would like to present the contrary. Furthermore, I reveal also the differences between them, which are probably the most obvious in the reception and success of the styles, as the expressions of national goals.

Generally, we can note that Art Nouveau spread quickly in Central Europe. Parallel to the adaptation of the international principles of the style, Art Nouveau had local variants in each country. The influence of the Belgian, French, Austrian architectural forms are clear, but the Scottish and Finnish relations are also visible (the Central European artists were related to the West by educational or personal relations).¹⁷¹ Perhaps, for the first time the Art Nouveau artists could find the way out from the peripheral position by creating modern, outstanding works and by making use of the local endowments (like the rich folk art or the mythical tradition of nations).¹⁷² For these reasons, their oeuvre could reach the European standards.

Writings at the Turn of the 20th Century, Budapest 2005. pp. 17—25. ; Á. Moravánszky, *Competing Visions: Aesthetic Invention and Social Imagination in Central European Architecture 1867—1918*, London-Cambridge 1998.

¹⁶⁹ Gellér, *A magyar szecesszió* cit., p. 21.

¹⁷⁰ R.Klein, *A szecesszió: un gou't juif?: A szecessziós építészet és a zsidóság kapcsolata a Monarchiában*. in „Múlt és jövő ” 2008, 19, 4, pp. 5—33 .

¹⁷¹ See. N. G. Bowe, *Art and the national dream: the search for vernacular expression in turn of the century design*, Dublin 1993; J.Y. Andrieux, F. Chevallier, A. K. Nevanlinna, *Idée nationale et architecture en Europe, 1860-1919: Finlande, Hongrie, Roumanie, Catalogne*, Paris 2006; K.Keserü, *A századforduló*, Budapest 2007; Moraványszky Á., *Építészet Az Osztrák-Magyar Monarchiában 1867-1918.*, Corvina, Budapest 1988; B. Girveau, *Central Europe, Art Nouveau and nationalism*, in: K.Tahara, *Art Nouveau architecture*, London-New York 2000; A. Babics, *Parallels between Hungarian and Scottish Art Nouveau: The Museum of Applied Arts in Budapest and the Glasgow School of Art*, Final Thesis, Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem, Budapest 2011; Gellér K., *A magyar szecesszió*, Budapest 2004; Gerle J., Kovács A., Makovecz I., *A századforduló magyar építésze*, Budapest 1990; Girveau B., *Central Europe, Art Nouveau and nationalism*, in: K.Tahara, *Art Nouveau architecture*, London-New York 2000. pp. 318—324.

¹⁷² See. P. Krakowski, J. Purchla, *Art Around 1900 in Central Europe. Art Centres and Peripheries*, Cracow 1999.

Gellér claimed that in East Central European regions – unlike the Western (rather French) style-oriented art life¹⁷³ – the perception of ‘the new’ was characterized and modified by ideological requirements.¹⁷⁴ (In this paper, I would like to maintain that the French Art Nouveau, more precisely in Nancy and Strasbourg, was either free from a sort of ideology concerning regional identity.) Therefore, in this region, art and architecture had not only an aesthetical, but also national and historical functions for self-justification. For this reason, under the cover of stylistic debates on art, at this time, we must see historic and philosophical questions.

The Polish Stanislaw Eljasz Radzikowski in his book entitled *Styl Zakopianski (1901)*¹⁷⁵ defined clearly the architectural program of the whole Central European region (more precisely the program of the Polish, Czech, Slovenian and Hungarian lands of the Habsburg Monarchy): “the main goal of our intellectual life at present is the creation of the national style itself”.¹⁷⁶ Katalin Keserü noted “this was not the only example regarded as a model to be followed in the region for the purposes of purification, which also referred to the disposal of historical styles, but meant a release from the foreign (German, Austrian) influences too”.¹⁷⁷ Hence, in the territory of the Habsburg Monarchy the specified program of the Art Nouveau (named ‘*Secession*’ after Vienna, ‘*szecesszió*’ in Hungarian, ‘*secese*’ in Czech), “the Exodus” was not only the purification from historical styles, but it meant the liberation from the foreign German and Austrian influences.¹⁷⁸ One should see a paradox in the fact, that despite the political complications, and the rejection of German and Austrian features, the name of the style was adapted after Vienna in the whole region. In addition, there was still an undeniable influence of Vienna on the Central European Art Nouveau, on one hand the *Wiener Secession*, itself, on the other hand Austrian artists – namely Otto Wagner (1841—1918) at Vienna Academy was crucial to a whole generation.¹⁷⁹ Several architects studied Vienna (as the pupils of Wagner)¹⁸⁰, or other cultural relations related them to the

¹⁷³ Gellér meant here the abstract search of pure forms and pure style, the *l’art pour l’art* ideal had less echo.

¹⁷⁴ Gellér, *A magyar szecesszió* cit., p. 21.

¹⁷⁵ The Zakopane Style, 2nd edition 1901.

¹⁷⁶ K. Keserü, *The Transformation of Architectural Thinking in Central Europe at the Turn of the 20th Century*, in: K. Keserü, *The Beginning of Modernism in Central European Architecture: Polish, Czech, Slovak and Hungarian Architectural Writings at the Turn of the 20th Century*, Budapest 2005. p. 19.

¹⁷⁷ Keserü, *The Transformation* cit., p. 19.

¹⁷⁸ K. Keserü, *A századforduló*, cit. p. 193.

¹⁷⁹ See. Á. Moravánszky, *Competing Visions : Aesthetic Invention and Social Imagination in Central European Architecture 1867—1918.*, London-Cambridge 1998. pp. 131—183.

¹⁸⁰ Among them we can find the Czech Jan Kotěra (1871—1923), the Slovene Jozef Plečnic (1871—1957) and the Hungarian István Medgyaszay (1877—1959) See. B. Girveau, *Central Europe, Art Nouveau and nationalism*, in: K. Tahara, *Art Nouveau architecture*, London-New York, 2000. p. 319.

city.¹⁸¹ Keserü also highlighted that the concept of national styles (appeared in the periphery of Europe as well in parallel to national revival from Scotland through Catalonia to Russia) does not fit easily in the logic of the period of styles regarded universal. Thus she admitted we should consider it “no more a style of the period, but its spirit (*Zeitgeist* in German) that permeated the cultural movements of the so-called peripheral nations all over Europe”.¹⁸²

Like János Gerle stated the central question in the conscious creation of a new style is the source of its particular forms.¹⁸³ Gerle’s statement is worth considering in depth in our case. In this respect, I would like to present the principal sources of the ‘national styles’, which show similar tendencies in case of Hungary and Czech lands. They can be found in the ideology of national romanticism and later in vernacularism.

First, we should state that the idea of the national style had appeared earlier in the 19th century, and not only in architecture, but also in other parts of art, namely painting. By the national romanticism some significant topics were already taking shape in art, like national myths, heroes and customs (like traditional dance). At this time, as Keserü pointed out, they were accompanied and manifested by the means of general European academism. Thus, we can regard the beginning of the 19th-century story also as part of European historicism, “which in architecture is marked by the application of characteristic, yet secondary (non-structural) elements or ones borrowed from elsewhere (not form architecture), whilst its continuation is present in vernacularism”.¹⁸⁴ Before the discussion of vernacularism, it has to be emphasized again, that the symbols and themes of national romanticism lived on and facilitated the acceptance of the new style at the turn of the century.¹⁸⁵ In other words, the unclosed questions of the 19th century emerged in Art Nouveau. Gellér claimed that from the perspective of ideas (romanticism, symbolism, art nouveau) this period could be hardly divided, which seemed to be confirmed by the fact that the Finnish and Swedish people call their Art Nouveau architecture as ‘National Romanticism’.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸¹ Mihelic B., *Ljubljana – Vienna – Prague : Cultural Relations during the Art Nouveau Period*, in: International Symposium of Réseau Art Nouveau Network in the framework of Art Nouveau in Progress‘ project, 24-25 October 2002, Wien.. pp. 23—26.

Consulted on: <http://www.artnouveau-net.eu/portals/0/data/COLLOQUIA/colloquium-proceedings.pdf>
Accessed on [10 March 2013]

¹⁸² Keserü, *The Transformation cit.*, p. 19.

¹⁸³ J.Gerle, *Feedback from Tradition: The Return of Folk Art to Architecture*, in: „coupDEFouet” 2009, 13, p. 11.

¹⁸⁴ Keserü, *The Transformation cit.*, p. 19.

¹⁸⁵ Gellér, *A magyar szecesszió*, p. 20.

¹⁸⁶ Gellér, *A magyar szecesszió*, p. 21., See also. B. Miller Lane, *National Romanticism and Modern Architecture in Germany and the Scandinavian Countries*, New York 2000, p.10.

Vernacularism is to be considered as a movement by art historians, which “finds the language of architecture in local architectural traditions and generalises its applicability, resulting in regional styles related to one other, which by the end of the century evolved as a basis of reference everywhere, just like the Arts and Crafts movement of English origins”.¹⁸⁷ According to Keserü, we should consider vernacularism as a movement of modernism, which may have been foreseen by the modernist Czech architect Antonín Balšánek (1865—1921) who was one of the architects of the Municipal of Prague.¹⁸⁸ Furthermore, she argued that at this time the criteria of modernism in architecture was in the cognition of the vernacular language of architecture, thus we can say that modern architecture at the turn of the century was a regional and an international trend.¹⁸⁹ This could serve as an explanation, why we can find both regional (national) and international variants of Art Nouveau architecture in the region.

In most of the Central European cases these local (national) traditions were found in folk art (popular art). Artists of the region did not have to travel far away – unlike John Ruskin who needed to visit Island – to discover their own folk art and traditions, as there was still alive traditional craftsmanship in the region. The well-known Austrian art historian Alois Riegl (1858– 1905)¹⁹⁰ declared directly that the search for the folk art and its systematization should be the official task of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy: “We could only meet here with such a complex culture, which contains everything that left from folk traditions of Europe. East and West meet here”.¹⁹¹ Probably, this phenomenon was more relevant in case of Hungary, where this search for the national traditions and application of the folk art motifs resulted in virulent debates.¹⁹² Besides, they were discovered gradually thanks to the growing interest aroused by

¹⁸⁷ In case of Hungarian architects – followers of the master (Ödön Lechner) of Hungarian Art Nouveau, like Béla Lajta, or the group of “the Youth Ones” – this basis was more than evident. They were inspired by the English cottage-architecture and mixing it with idea of vernacularism, especially after 1905. in: Keserü, *The Transformation cit.*, p. 19. and See also: J.Gerle, L.L. Lugosi, *A szecesszió Budapesten*, Budapest 1999. p. 11.; Keserü, *A századforduló cit.*, p. 86.

¹⁸⁸ His article was entitled *Moderna ci smer národní?* (Modernism or National Trend?), and which was published in the periodical of the *Mánes* association of artists: „*Volné Sméry*“(Free Trends) See. Keserü, *The Transformation cit.*, p. 19; J. Vybíral, *Modernism or the National Movement in Prague*, in: P. Krakowski, J. Purchla, *Art Around 1900 in Central Europe. Art Centres and Peripheries*, Cracow 1999. pp. 203—209.

¹⁸⁹ Based on this theory, it has to be emphasized that at this time these concepts were closely related to each other – they all meant to be modern and satisfy the new age– despite the fact that they were contrasted in later writings on art history. In this respect, the presence of these concepts in Art Nouveau architecture is understandable.

¹⁹⁰ He was the member of the Vienna School of Art History.

¹⁹¹ A. Riegl, *Népművészet, házsorgalom, és háziipar*, in: „*Művészettörténeti tanulmányok*”, Budapest 1998 p. 117. cited by Gellér, *A magyar szecesszió cit.*, p. 32.

¹⁹² There were several people, who had doubted that the art, which derives from the culture of a ‘lower’ social class can serve as the basis of the modern Hungarian Art. Indeed, folk arts and architecture were not well known even in the mid-19th century, which could be a justification for these critiques. On the debates considering the

numerous collections, publications and exhibitions related to the topic. The Hungarian József Huszka's research was pioneer on folk art and its identity by proclaiming the Eastern origin of Hungarian ornaments (Indian, Persian and Sassanian cultures).¹⁹³ He has a profound effect on architecture and artists, namely Ödön Lechner who was tending "to create a new national style since his youth, to consider the monumental architecture of the ancient Asian cultures as an archetype for his own works, given the lack of similar archetypes in the Hungarian past".¹⁹⁴

Exhibition dedicated to ethnography helped make the public familiar with the folk culture as well, for example the national exhibitions in Budapest in 1885 and 1896. On the other hand, there were many examples in Czech Lands as well. According to Petr Wittlich, they were considering the Czech Art Nouveau "the first imagination of inspiration from Czech folklore", which emerged in the work of Alfons Mucha.¹⁹⁵ The realisation of the use of folk art – as an influence of these exhibitions – appeared on the Art Nouveau facades of historicist buildings (concerning their structural planning). In addition, Moravánszky claimed that in several cases the application of ornamental Art Nouveau of the Monarchy stayed on this level.¹⁹⁶ In fact, in the architecture and applied arts they often replaced the vegetal and animal motifs of Art Nouveau with folk ornaments.

This application and re-use of the motifs of folk art can be related to a kind of democratization of art (which noticeable all over Europe)¹⁹⁷, and it can be understood also as an idea of protection of traditional values in accordance with the *Zeitgeist*. Unfortunately, as Gerle noted, this attempt was not powerful enough to stop dissolution of folk culture, which accelerated after World War I and was completed after 1945 in the area.¹⁹⁸ The discovery of

national art, folk art and orientalism See. Gellér, „*Avult hagyomány*” vagy megújító forrás: viták a nemzeti művészetről. *Népművészet és orientalizmus* in: Gellér, *A magyar szecesszió*, cit. pp. 27–42.

¹⁹³ The Hungarian teacher (honorary ethnographer) published his essay intitled *Magyar ornamentika* (Hungarian ornamentation) in 1898 in: Á.K. Süle, *On the Functions of Floral Decorations in the Houses of Budapest Art Nouveau* in: Historical Lab 1, The Art Nouveau Herbarium, organised by Réseau Art Nouveau Network in the framework of „Art Nouveau and Ecology“ project, Terrassa, 3 June 2010. p. 11. Consulted on: <http://www.artnouveau.net.eu/ArtNouveauEcology/Publications/HistoricalLabsProceedings/tabid/879/language/en-GB/Default.aspx?hlab=Historical%20Lab%203> Accessed on [10 May 2013]

¹⁹⁴ Gerle, *Feedback cit.*, p. 11.

¹⁹⁵ The Czecho-Slovak Ethnographic Exhibition held in 1895 in Prague, evidently influenced the discovery of folk culture, and it left explicit traces in architecture and in applied arts. in: P. Wittlich, *Prague: fin de siècle*, Cologne 1999. p. 13. See also. P. Wittlich, *Art Nouveau in Czechoslovakia*, in: Dyroff H-D., *Art Nouveau/Jugendstil Architecture in Europe*, German Commission for Unesco, Bonn 1988. p. 38.

¹⁹⁶ Moravánszky, *Competing cit.*, pp. 110-111.

¹⁹⁷ The notion of democratic architecture is also appeared at the turn of the century „in the context of general tendency of democratisation of the arts experienced in the 19th century, with the new and large-scale demands for architecture, fine arts and applied arts ensuing as a result of great social changes”. in: Keserü, *The Transformation cit.*, p.17.

¹⁹⁸ Gerle, *Feedback cit.*, p.15.

the peasant culture and folk art at this time is clearly connected to the nation-building processes by adapting them into the nation and into the national culture as Orvar Löfgren highlighted.¹⁹⁹ As a consequence, the styles and ideas' pluralism and simultaneity in Central Europe is often regarded as a symptom of the belated cultural development and the 'in-between' nature of the region, which is evident also by examining the level of the nation-building.²⁰⁰ Moreover, Moravánszky argued that there is a link between this late and the success of Art Nouveau, which was received with so much enthusiasm and celebrated as freedom achieved at last. Despite this fact suggested by Moravánszky, in this paper I would like to highlight that the reception of Art Nouveau was more complex and was not totally appreciative, which influenced the whole afterlife of its heritage. As an example of the hostile critics – which can be related to this mentioned turbulence of notions and ideas – there was a tendency in Hungary – which can be understood as a reaction of rejecting Art Nouveau.²⁰¹

From architecture perspective Moravánszky stressed also another important aspects of the Central European Art Nouveau in comparison with the West:

“Art Nouveau architecture in France, Belgium, or Spain meant not only new ornamentation but also new sculptural composition of volumes and new organization of materials and space. But in Central Europe, architects were more concerned with the decoration of surfaces. The first attempts at non-historicist, floral ornamentation were still static in comparison with the dynamism of Art Nouveau in the West, even if the artistic treatment of the facade served a spatial illusionism.”²⁰²

According to Moravánszky, in general, Central European Art Nouveau made almost no attempt to a formal autonomy, thus it developed inside the baroque paradigm – thus it had much stronger ties to historicism than to its parallel movements in France, England or Belgium.²⁰³ As opposition, I would like to add here, that work of Ödön Lechner – the Hungarian ornamental decoration based Art Nouveau, which became the National Style – can be separated from this viewpoint. On the other hand, Bruno Girveau confirmed Moravánszky by asserting that the references of neo-baroque styles were expressing a clear respect for the past and historical heritage of the cities, like Prague.²⁰⁴ He added that this combination of Art

¹⁹⁹ O. Löfgren, *The Nationalization of Culture*, in: „Ethnologia Europaea“, 1989, 19, pp. 5—23.

²⁰⁰ J. Szűcs, *The Three Historical Regions of Europe. An outline*, in: „Acta Historica Academiae S. H.”, 1983, pp. 131—184.

²⁰¹ They consciously related every significant artists – from the painter Tivadar Csontváry Kosztka (1853—1919) to the famous composer and pianist Béla Bartók (1881—1945) – to the style in order to degrading them. See. A. Komlós, *A “szecesszió” körül*, in: “Valóság”, 1969, 12, pp. 73—76.

²⁰² Moravánszky, *Competing cit.*, p.110.

²⁰³ Moravánszky, *Competing cit.*, p.112.

²⁰⁴ Girveau, *Central Europe cit.*, pp. 318—319.

Nouveau and Baroque ideas were used with great success by Friedrich Ohmann (1858—1927) and Osvald Polívka (1859—1931) there, which we can prove by analysing the Municipal House of Prague. Hence, this stronger tie to historicism (concerning the compositions, elements of constructions and ground plans) was more obvious in the case of Czech Art Nouveau, but some Hungarian artists – who were also trained on the classical, historicist traditions – applied classical principles as well. Finally, he admitted that in a wider context this synthetic version of Art Nouveau became the 'international style' of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.²⁰⁵ The elaboration of these ideas is not the aim of the thesis, but they were necessary to be mentioned in order to understand the critique of Art Nouveau in Central Europe, and especially in Hungary and Czech Lands. Later on (during the following decades) every art works, which had the connotation 'Art Nouveau', even the more autonomous, independent – ornamental and geometric – versions, were related by critiques to the Monarchy. The national and independent aspect of Central European Art nouveau was misunderstood, unrevealed or totally forgotten for a long time.

In the next part of the chapter I present these aspects through the examples of two public buildings: the Museum of Applied Arts in Budapest and the Municipal House of Prague. We should add here that the political situation in the Habsbourg Empire – the growing independence of city's authority – provided Art Nouveau architects with the opportunity to design public buildings²⁰⁶ as Girveau highlighted.²⁰⁷ Therefore, I would like to highlight through the cases of two capitals Budapest and Prague, that, by the end of the 19th century, became not just great modern cities by an unprecedented cultural and social developments, but played a major role in shaping national image.

In the first period of my analysis – from the 1890s to the first realization of the monument protection – I enquire into these symbolic qualities of the Hungarian and Czech Art Nouveau architecture. According to the changes of ideological and political systems of the region I organize the analysis in three phases (First period: from 1890s to the World War I; Interwar period; from the World War II to the first monument protection.)

²⁰⁵ Moravánszky, *Competing cit.*, p.118.

²⁰⁶ By public buildings I mean those buildings, which were commissioned by the state or which were having public functions. We can find museums, townhalls, theatres, cabares, music halls, hotels, baths, restaurants, brasseries, and cafes among them. See e.g. Székely, *National endeavour cit.* Barcelona 2013. Although we can find similar phenomenon to that of Finland's efforts to resist tsarist Russia as Girveau highlighted.

²⁰⁷ It has to be highlighted here that „such opportunities were much less common in more powerful countries, such as France, where official commissions were still controlled by academic institutions” in: Girveau, *Central Europe cit.*, pp. 318—319.

1.2.1.1. BUDAPEST: MUSEUM OF APPLIED ARTS (1893—1896)

FROM 1890S TO THE WORLD WAR I. The subchapter presents the characteristics and the changing perception of Hungarian Art Nouveau by focusing on its most outstanding example: the Museum of Applied Arts in Budapest constructed by Ödön Lechner and Gyula Pártos.²⁰⁸ The building fulfilled the need of a proper building for the School of Applied Arts and the exhibition place for the most remarkable decorative artworks. The major role of Lechner and his Art Nouveau building (among other works like the Geological Institute and the Royal Hungarian Postal Savings Bank in Budapest) is obvious in the history of Hungarian national style, as they provided its basis and showed direction for the followers.²⁰⁹ For this reason, my analysis is focusing primarily on the Museum of Applied Arts and on the changing perception of its architect, Ödön Lechner, as the founder figure. As we have seen this additional dimension of the Hungarian (and also Czech) Art Nouveau was clearly connected to the national movements and national identity-building process, where the artists made a huge effort to express their national and cultural independency. Thus, the main task of this part of my research is to present the contradictory opinions about the Hungarian Art Nouveau, which could influence its whole afterlife and the evolution of heritage protection.

During the second industrial revolution Hungary was part of Habsburg Empire, up to the Austro-Hungarian Compromise (1867), which converted the Empire into a Dual Monarchy under the reign of Kaiser Franz Joseph I. As a result, Hungary became one of the two political and administrative entities of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The turn of the century (1890—1914) can be easily considered as the golden age of Budapest, where the face of the city underwent a radical change.²¹⁰ These years – coincide with the Art Nouveau period – were the crowning points of the huge development and cultural boom, which followed the birth of the second capital of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1873.²¹¹ During this period the city leaders desired to turn Budapest into a modern metropolis, which could be the political and cultural centre of the emerging Hungarian Nation State.²¹² For this reason, there

²⁰⁸ Magyar Iparművészeti Múzeum, Budapest

²⁰⁹ According to Keserü Katalin, some scholars do not even regard the building as a manifestation of Hungarian Art Nouveau. They alluded to the classical (historicist) feature of the building by emphasizing that this is rather a well-accomplished example of orientalism.

²¹⁰ Gy. Éri, Zs. Jobbágyi (eds.), *A Golden Age. Art and Society in Hungary 1896—1914*, Budapest, London, Miami 1991.

²¹¹ Unification of Pest, Buda and Óbuda in: L. Siklóssy, *Hogyan épült Budapest (1870—1930). A Fővárosi Közmunkák Tanácsa Története*, Budapest 1931.

²¹² V. Bácskai, G.Gyáni, A.Kubinyi, *Budapest története. A kezdetektől 1945-ig*, Budapest 2000, p.131.

was a substantial need for public buildings, which could serve properly the administrative and cultural functions of the capital by transferring the greatness of the city and its habitants. Until the 1890s they were built in the spirit of eclecticism, but simultaneously with Europe, we are witnessing here the transformation of architectural thinking.²¹³ The critique of historicism and eclecticism appeared with the need for the new modern style.²¹⁴ This requirement met the increasing claim for Hungarian national art, which had been proposed earlier by Count István Széchenyi – who is often considered as the greatest statesmen of Hungary – in 1838. There is also a beautiful rhyme between the famous statements of Ödön Lechner formulated in his manifesto considering his art program “Hungarian Formal Language has not Been, but Will Be”,²¹⁵ and the prophecy of Széchenyi “Many think Hungary has been, I like to believe: she will be!”.²¹⁶ Hence, it is clear that the period named as the Age of Reform (1790—1848) was already marked by the search for national identity and the idea of creating national style. Among other examples designed in historicist manners, the building of *Vigadó* (Place for Merriment) by architect Feszli Frigyes (1859—1864) was inspired in this spirit.²¹⁷ Additionally, Feszli referred firstly to the peasant culture (houses and traditional clothes)²¹⁸, as a possible source of a new style as Gerle pointed out.²¹⁹ In the 1890s, the answer for these claims was given by Art Nouveau Architecture, which soon became the National Style called *Szecesszió*.²²⁰ In Hungary, we are able to find the different versions of Art Nouveau architecture: first the significant eclectic Art Nouveau – which is considered typical Central European Art Nouveau by Moravánszky, second a unique ornamental Art Nouveau – which served as the National Style invented by Ödön Lechner, finally the more geometric version – thank to the Viennese influence on artists, like Béla Lajta. At this point, we should highlight as Moravánszky did so, that in Hungary the eclectic Art Nouveau (among the neo-styles) were seen as ‘Viennese’, thus foreign, compared to the more colorful, ornamental National Style created by Ödön Lechner and his followers. Otherwise, this fact could not prevent the

²¹³ This phenomenon is discussed by Katalin Keserü in her essay with the same title: „The Transformation of Architectural Thinking in Central Europe at the Turn of the 20th Century”, in: K. Keserü, *The Beginning cit.*, pp. 17—25.

²¹⁴ G. Preisich, *Budapest városépítésének története Buda visszavételétől a II. világháború végéig*, Budapest 2004, p. 251.

²¹⁵ „Magyar formanyelv nem volt, hanem lesz” (1906) in: Keserü, *The Beginnings cit.*, pp. 146—154.

²¹⁶ Babics, *Parallels cit.*, p.40. and Moravánszky, *Competing cit.*, p. 223.

²¹⁷ Moravánszky, *Competing cit.*, p. 218.

²¹⁸ Feszli also used the traditional *cifraszűr* (floral patterned folk costum) symbol, which was regarded by József Huszka as „the most unadulterated expression of Hungarian soul, embodying the „ten dommandements” of Hungarian taste”. in: Moravánszky, *Competing cit.*, pp. 221-222.

²¹⁹ Gerle, *The Feedback cit.*, p. 11.

²²⁰ „Szecesszió” means „Exodus” story was written by Livy (Titus Livius) in: F. Vámos, *A szecesszió értékeléséről*, in „Magyar Építőipar”, 1960, 6, p.51.

hostile attitude towards the new style. Consequently, the uniqueness of the pursuit of the Hungarian Art Nouveau could not be found only in the adaptation of the international practice – leaving the trappings of historical styles behind – but in the turn to the national character and traditions. By creating the typical ‘Hungarian National Style’ their biggest significance was “to lift the feeling of belonging to a nation to the level of the architecture” – as Attila Déry pointed out.²²¹ In this spirit the outstanding masters of Hungarian Art Nouveau inspired mostly by Hungarian folk art. The other remarkable inspiration was coming from the growing interest in the eastern past of Hungarians, what we can also relate to the results of the ongoing researches (József Huszka) on the origins of Hungarian peasant art and traditional folk ornaments. This eastern orientation came to the front with the Millennium Celebrations (of the Settlement in Hungary) in 1896.²²² Taking the eastern origins of the Hungarians into account, Ödön Lechner, the most significant figure of Hungarian Art Nouveau, was initially inspired by Eastern (Indian, Sasanian) architecture and also by Hungarian decorative elements.²²³ For this reason, he was the first who attempted to create a national style based on this renewed ornamental language.²²⁴ In this way, he created an original synthesis of architectural styles, what is evident by observing his main work: the Museum of Applied Arts in Budapest. Moreover, the Millennium Celebrations ended with the official keystone ceremony of the Museum in 1896, which is another exciting correspondence.

Lechner’s extensive knowledge and experience was coming from the fact that he graduated in Berlin, practiced in France (between 1874 and 1877), as well as completing tours in England in 1889 with his friend Vilmos Zsolnay – the ceramicist and owner of the Zsolnay Pottery Factory of Pécs Vilmos Zsolnay – who contributed to the application of the latest techniques and materials on the plastic arrangement of his special buildings by creating the new *pyrogranite* and glazed ceramic tiles.²²⁵ Their visit in London was crucial in case the Museum of Applied Arts, as Lechner was inspired by the South Kensington Museum by taking into consideration its function. The building was built not only for museum functions, but also as the School of Applied of Arts, thus the architects had to count with the construction of the ateliers and offices.²²⁶ During this trip he was also impressed by the

²²¹ A. Déry, *Nemzeti kísérletek építészetünk történetében*, Budapest 1995, p.5.

²²² Keserü, *A századforduló cit.*, p.91.

²²³ *Budapest* in „Réseau Art Nouveau Network”

Consulted on: <http://www.artnouveau-net.eu>

Accessed on [10 December 2011]

²²⁴ Moravánszky, *Competing cit.*, p. 223.

²²⁵ See. L.Vízy, *Káprázatos cit.* pp.7—15. and T. Mattyasovszky Zsolnay, *Lechner Ödön és a Zsolnay épületkerámia*, in „Magyar Építőipar”, 1995, p. 45.

²²⁶ Csenkey, *In Budapest cit.*, pp. 160—163.

English colonial architecture and the “Indian style”, that could also be considered as an influential aspect at the planning of the Museum. On the other hand, Moravánszky highlighted the entrance hall of the museum (the loggia-like octagonal space, which is both covered and opened) recalls József Huszka’s description of Persian entrance gates, while the great exhibition hall reminds us the ‘durbar courts’ of the Indian Mughal palaces.²²⁷ Furthermore, the French Renaissance style also played an initial role in the design of the internal vestibule, which is illuminated by a star-shaped skylight of colored glasses. Lechner’s belief in the authority of a typical national trend was proclaimed in an article – “Hungarian Form Language has not Been but Will Be” – written in 1906,²²⁸ where he expressed idea, which was laid in the concept of *Gesamkunstwerk*. In this respect, Lechner was focusing on the entire building as a single entity, meaning that he united it with sculpture, industrial and ornamental arts, along with the above-mentioned crafts and the practices of peasant culture. In order to create a better and more colorful environment he used iron, glass and *pyrogranite* as construction materials and a special type of ceramic (*majolica*) as plasterworks and decorative elements. Thus, he was one of the first architects who were taking not just their aesthetic into consideration, but also their effectiveness. Ödön Lechner wrote:

“I chose majolica (...) and it came from my observation that is valid in every modern metropolis and for every modern building. The soot and dust of urban smog settle into the pores of house fronts and give them a dingy appearance, whereby the entire city seems gray and dismal.”²²⁹

As I have mentioned before Lechner preferred to use the ceramics produced by the Zsolnay Porcelain Factory, which were also suitable for the unification of architecture with arts and crafts.²³⁰ The building of the Museum of Applied Arts is the best example of this experiment and according to Keserü “this lively union of sculpture, architecture, and ceramics (the visual arts) is the building’s *ars poetica*, and the cupola signals its lofty mission (both nationally and as a museum).”²³¹

Ödön Lechner and Gyula Pártos won the public competition for the construction of the Museum and School of Applied Arts in 1891 with the motto ‘Keletre Magyar!’ [Eastward

²²⁷ Moravánszky, *Competing cit.* p. 227.

²²⁸ Ö. Lechner, *Hungarian Form Language has not Been but Will Be* in Keserü, *The Beginnings cit.*, pp. 146—155.

²²⁹ Moravánszky, *Compteting cit.*, p. 227.

(Original quote: Ö. Lechner, *Önéletrejzi vázlat*, in J. Gerle, *Lechner Ödön*, Budapest 2003, p.19)

²³⁰ T. Mattyasovszky Zsolnay, *Lechner Ödön és a Zsolnay épületkerámia*, in „Magyar Építőipar” 45, 9, 1995, p. 281.

²³¹ Keserü, *Barcelona cit.*, p. 52.

Hungarian!].²³²The contradictory opinions about the building appeared immediately with the competition's results. A professional scandal was exploded right after the public presentation and evaluation of the winner works.²³³ After all, the minister of culture confirmed the official decision of the jury (though some modification of the plan was required), but the construction could only start in 1893. The initiation ceremony of the Museum on 25 October 1896 was more than a simple celebration of a public building, since it was the first experiment to create a significantly Hungarian – National – style. Furthermore, the ceremony was honoured by the presence of the Emperor Franz-Joseph I and the minister of culture, Gyula Wlassich, held the official public opening on 20 November 1897.²³⁴

CRITIQUES. To sum up the different perceptions of Ödön Lechner and the Hungarian Art Nouveau from the 1890s to the First World War, we can say that the reason of his admiration and his critique was the same. His contemporaries recognized the first national artist in him, who established the Hungarian National Style by using its own symbolism, which had a typical 'Hungarian Form Language'.²³⁵ The contemporary perception of Art Nouveau until the World War I was based on how much the Hungarians could assimilate with the idea of the National Style, and how much they could find its symbols of their own. In general we can admit that the message of Hungarian Art Nouveau was successfully transmitted by the construction of Ödön Lechner's Museum of Applied Arts, thus the building became the synthesis of Lechner's hopes, thus it can be understood as a symbol itself. The new-born style was perceived differently by the society of Budapest. From the city's leaders, professionals to the laymen adopted it in various ways. From the first moment Art Nouveau has had several followers. There was a numerous group of people who recognized it as a tool of the city's modern development, whilst others stayed neutral or were even shocked by observing it. The reaction of the official and professional circles was dualistic. On one hand, they appreciated the national adaptation of Art Nouveau style. On the other hand, Hungarian Art Nouveau received a lot of critiques from conservative circles and after 1900 from the government. After the hostile speech of the minister of culture – Gyula Wlassich – the reduced number and

²³² J. Gerle, L. Lugosi Lugo, *A szecesszió Budapesten*, Budapest 1999, p.11.

²³³ P. Ács,, *"Keletre magyar": az Iparművészeti Múzeum palotájának építéstörténete a kordokumentumok tükrében*, Budapest 1996, p. 19.

²³⁴ At this time the minister seemed to be a faithful supporter of the new establishment and its style. Later on he had a huge role in the revocation of all the official commissions from Ödön Lechner. See. Ács, *"Keletre"* cit. p. 19.

²³⁵ A. Déry, *Nemzeti kísérletek építészetünk történetében*, Budapest, 1995.p.92.

the lack of commissions presented perfectly this fact. He attacked heavily the new style in the Parliament (on 17 April 1902):

“I do not like the Art Nouveau style, since we meet often the Art Nouveau style under the name of the ‘Hungarian style’. This Art Nouveau style does not meet my taste – because I do have the right to have a certain taste (...) if someone applies a Hungarian cock to decorate, it does not make the style Hungarian (...) Several constructions impress that those who want to create in ‘Hungarian style’ are working in an Art Nouveau way (...) therefore I will struggle to prevent my portfolio from this Art Nouveau style”.²³⁶

Due to Gyula Wlassich’s attitude the Ministry of Culture revoked the confidence and the fund from Ödön Lechner and his followers, like Béla Lajta. For this reason, most of the commissions for Art Nouveau buildings were coming from the open-minded liberal bourgeoisie and in several cases from Jewish people.²³⁷ (Later on this fact gave the basis of the xenophobic and anti-semitic critics, which appeared in the interwar period, especially in the 1930s.) Many promoters of the new style suspected the influence of the Austrian power in the background of this event – which can be probably confirmed by the fact that Lechner was a member of an anti-Habsburg group and he clearly rejected the Austrian influences in architecture – among them we can find Károly Lyka, who were stressing faithfully in his articles on the importance and modernity of the new style.²³⁸ For example Otto Wagner (the well-known Austrian Art Nouveau architect) named the Museum of Applied art as the “Palace of the Gypsy Emperor” and he could not see the legitimacy of a Hungarian National Style.²³⁹ (Surprisingly, this connotation was living until the 1990s in Budapest according to the self-experience of the Hungarian architect Gábor Kruppa).²⁴⁰

On the other hand Ödön Lechner was not only criticized for personal or political reasons. The motifs, the ornaments of his buildings and the new “Hungarian Form Language’ proposed by him were also heavily questioned. The followers of the historicism opposed the use of

²³⁶ *Parliament speech of Gyula Wlassich* in „Budapesti Közlöny” 18 April 1902. in Gerle, *Lechner Ödön*, Budapest, 2003, p.29.

²³⁷ Klein highlighted that a huge percentage of the Hungarian architects had Jewish origins, like Béla Lajta or Marcell Komor (from the followers of Lechner). The art patronage was important for them in order to the assimilation, to find an own Hungarian (and also European) identity in the architecture as well. See Klein R., *A szecesszió: un gou't juif* cit., pp. 5–33. and Klein, *The Hungarian Jews* cit., pp. 165–72.

²³⁸ K. Lyka, *A magyar építőművészetért*, in „Új Idők” 1902, 22 June, p. 570.

²³⁹ Klein highlighted that the Gypsy connotation was, however, in this time of the consequence of the late Romanticism of Johann Strauss’ Zigeunerbaron. (Hungarian and Gypsy music were synonyms until Béla Bartók’s research). It gained the racist overtone only in the later Nazi era. Klein, *Synagogues* cit., p. 596.

²⁴⁰ Interview with Gábor Kruppa 04 April 2011

Hungarian folk and ‘foreign’, Eastern traditions.²⁴¹ While the younger generation of architects (his own pupils as well) – who were more engaged in the proper use of folk-art (vernacularism) – also criticized him. They stated, that he did not insist on them consistently as he preferred to use the eastern decorative elements.²⁴² For certain people even the name of the style became a swearword: “The word ‘Szecessió’ is the explanation for all this ugliness of the city”.²⁴³

On the other hand, he had numerous significant followers and promoters. A social movement was also born in 1903 dedicated to establish a ‘Master School’ under the leadership of Lechner. However, due to the current political settings he could not get the chair position.²⁴⁴ The public debates,²⁴⁵ journal articles and published caricatures showed that the laymen were also involved in the changes of the urban textures, especially as the new, representative public buildings were constructed primarily for them.²⁴⁶ The decorations, forms, and motifs that people could meet on the Museum of Applied Arts brought their national traditions closer to the people. On contrary, during the following ideological and political systems often misread Art Nouveau and Lechner. For a long time the critics of posterity considered it as one of the artistic styles of the great, repressive Monarchy.

INTERWAR PERIOD. After the World War I in Hungary not just the political situation changed, but the architectural thinking was reformulated as well. The perception of the style was substantially influenced by the new ideology of Hungary. The Interwar period was marked by the windup of the circumstances laid by the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. From architecture point of view new modernist tendencies could appear, but they could not find sufficient appreciation in the conservative Horthy-regime²⁴⁷ (named after the regent of the Kingdom of Hungary). The official standpoint of the period was opposed at the same time to the architectural tendencies of the previous and the emerging modernist attempts (it was suitable

²⁴¹ Later on Lechner himself considered the Museum of Applied Arts ‘too Indian’. in: Keserü, *A századforduló cit.*, p. 205.

²⁴² According to them, the real Hungarian style should be based on rather the traditional peasant culture of Hungary, than the mysterious eastern past. in: Keserü, *A századforduló cit.*, p. 206.

²⁴³ Several caricatures were published about Lechner and his new style in the most popular bantering political paper of the bourgeoisie, in ‘Borsszem Jankó’. The subject of badinage was not typically Lechner, rather the parody of the official circles, which were attacking him. Thus these caricatures have to be understood as the parodies of the conservative’s fears about the new style. Moreover, we are able to find cartoons about Franz Joseph I too. They represented him in Art Nouveau style to give signals of his personal dislike towards the style. See. B. Kovács, *Lechner Ödön a karikatúrák tükrében*, in „Artmagazin” 5, 4, 2007, pp. 54—62.

²⁴⁴ F. Vámos, *A szecesszió értékeléséről*, in “Magyar Építőipar”, 6, 9, 1960, pp. 52.

²⁴⁵ The quarrels led to the establishment of the ‘Magyar Építőművészek Szövetsége’ [Association of Hungarian Architects] and Ödön Lechner was elected as its president, which also showed the trust in him.

²⁴⁶ On the caricatures dedicated to Ödön Lechner and Art Nouveau See. Kovács, *Lechner cit.*,

²⁴⁷ Miklós Horthy (1868—1957)

from political and ideological point of view).²⁴⁸ In general, as Déry highlighted the new political system turned away from the previous ‘liberal’ and ‘cosmopolite’ architecture, thus from Art Nouveau.²⁴⁹ Thus the official architectural program was dominated by eclecticism, especially by Neo-Baroque, which should have transferred the ‘national character’ of Hungarians.²⁵⁰

In the changed ideological circumstances the ever variants of Art Nouveau was misunderstood and attacked for its foreign, cosmopolite, liberal elements. As Moravánszky confirmed that the arguments and discourse on the national style in the 1920s and 1930s were increasingly marked by conservatisms and they were radically motivated.²⁵¹ He also reported that the difference between the style of Lechner and the Young Ones – his followers, who turned to a more vernacular direction – became substantially politicized thank to growing anti-Semitic milieu. The orientalism of Lechner and the origins of many Art Nouveau artists (like Béla Lajta) gave the basis of hostile and xenophobic critiques.²⁵² The minister of culture Kuno Klebelsberg wrote the following in 1928:

“I am willing to acknowledge the genius of the old Lechner; his works are individual and will occupy because of their unique congeniality a lasting place in Hungarian art history. But his less successful imitators attempted to create a pseudo-Hungarian style in the spirit of Viennese Secession that the aesthetic sense of the Hungarian people could not accept. I think that the young generation of the masters took the right path when they abandoned the Hungarian art nouveau, and they use traditional forms of architecture in a modern spirit.”²⁵³

We have to point out two statements. First, the perception of Art Nouveau during these years was marked by the fact, that it was generally regarded as Austrian, thus foreign style. This general perception influenced the major part of the society’s opinion about the style. Second, the National Style of Lechner had started to gain a more positive reputation in the circles of intelligentsia, who began the promotion of Lechner’s achievement. The Ödön Lechner

²⁴⁸ Thank to its social and leftist contents.

²⁴⁹ Déry, *Nemzeti* cit., p. 95.

²⁵⁰ The historian Gyula Szekfű’s book entitled as the *A három nemzedék* [The Three Generations] (1920) served as the ideological base for the new regime, which interpreted the society of the age, as a ‘neobaroque’ one. See. Gy., *A három nemzedék*, Budapest 1920.

²⁵¹ Moravánszky, *Competing* cit., p. 276.

²⁵² The architect Károly Kós reported the following in the revue “Nemzeti művészet” [National Art] in 1910: “Around the 1890s, Ödön Lechner, our great teacher of architecture, began to cultivate the ‘Hungarian architectural style’. His receptive pupils have improved it to its present perfection of form. Quite a number of our modern young architects are Jews or ex-Jews, thus in 1908 at a meeting of architects and engineers architect Jenő Lechner [nephew of Ödön Lechner] defined the modern style as zsidós [Jewish-like]. This is how the Jewish question arose in Hungarian architecture [...]” cited by Klein, *Synagoges* cit., p. 597.

²⁵³ Cited by Moravánszky, *Competing* cit., p. 276.

Society was founded in 1928 and it had a very diverse, but significant membership, like the wellknown composer Béla Bartók.²⁵⁴ On the other hand, it had a small impact on the protection of the work of Lechner Ödön. As Márta Nemes emphasized after the World War many renovation and reconstruction project should have taken place in the Museum of Applied Arts. Nevertheless, we can only report some disastrous changes.²⁵⁵ Nowadays, we could hardly imagine, that the interior of the Museum was freshly painted (by Reissmann Károly). This statement is the result of an alteration, which took place during the 1920s. Apart from two rooms the whole interior of the building was painted to white. Consequently, during the Interwar period we cannot speak about any monument protection due to the lack of the suitable time distance. Although in the first official monument register from 1924 entitled as *Budapest Műemlékei* [Monuments of Budapest] Jenő Lechner commemorated the attempt of Lechner to create the National Style.²⁵⁶ On the contrary, we are witnessing a hostile critique of the architectural achievements from 1873 to 1914 formulated by Tibor Gerevich in the next register of Budapest's Monument, although he implied that by the further extension of the category of historical monuments, these buildings would probably be able to achieve the protected status in the future.²⁵⁷

In the history of the School and Museum of Applied Arts the period 1934—1948 was also remarkable, as it lost their institutional independence. As a consequence of financial and organizational issues the Museum was incorporated by the Hungarian National Museum, and the Museum became its store of applied arts.²⁵⁸ Other changes affected the building itself. In 1934 the belvedere of the Museum (on the cupola) was changed for security reasons. As a result of the long neglect of the building the next replacement of the belvedere could take place again in 2011.²⁵⁹ Despite the mental and physical alterations, the memory of Lechner, as the father of the National style survived and manifested in a sculpture (designed by Farkas

²⁵⁴ Among the members, we can find József Huszka, Károly Lyka, Marcell Komor, Aladár Árkay who contributed to the first exhibition about the „Hungarian architectural achievements” in 1930, although the exhibited art works were created before the World War. See. Déry, *Nemzeti* cit., p. 95.

²⁵⁵ M.Nemes, *Budapest, Museum of Applied Arts: history of the building*, Budapest 1988 and M.Nemes, Lechner Ödön Iparművészeti Múzeuma, in: „Tanulmányok Budapest múltjából”, 1991, 24, pp. 65—86.

²⁵⁶ We should not forget in this case the family relation between Ödön Lechner and Jenő Lechner. See. J. Lechner (ed.), *Budapest műemlékei*, Budapest 1924.

²⁵⁷ Gerevich commemorated about some eclectic buildings, one of them the Dreschler Palace is the creation of Ödön Lechner. See. H. Horváth, *Budapest művészeti emlékei*, Budapest 1938.

²⁵⁸ For this reason the director of the establishment Gyula Végh resigned.

²⁵⁹ Consulted on: <http://www.imm.hu/hu/contents/164,Veszélyeljár%C3%ADtás,+2011>
Accessed on [20 April 2013]

Béla), which was inaugurated in 1936 by signing his great merit with the following inscription: “The master of the National Architecture / Lechner Ödön 1936”.²⁶⁰

YEARS AFTER WORLD WAR II: TOWARDS THE MONUMENT PROTECTION. In the history of the Art Nouveau heritage in Hungary the period, which followed the World War II were substantial, which is analysed in detail in the second chapter. On the other hand some steps were taken right after the War in order to preserve the work of Ödön Lechner. Thus, I would like to present briefly these events. First, the building of the Museum of Applied Arts was considerably damaged during the War. Due to the bombardment the main entrance’s opened hall, the cupola and its battlements, like the big exhibition hall’s ceiling had many damages. Although, the exhibition hall underwent certain renovation, but it was not in accordance with the original state: the coloured glass ornaments, the mosaic floor with folk ornaments were removed, which signed the lack of the monument protection of the building. In my opinion, the protection of the building was occurred on one hand thank to this false renovation, on the other hand the growing awareness about the heritage of the past in a period, which was incomparable to the previous systems’ political, cultural and ideological milieu.

The first remarkable memory of the Hungarian Art Nouveau designed by Ödön Lechner – among nine others²⁶¹ – was protected in 1951 as monument, although the full status (with the protection of the environment of the monument)²⁶² was given by the ministerial ordinance in 1958.²⁶³ (In the comparison of the Hungarian and Czech monument protection phases, this date bears a significant importance, as the Municipal House of Prague became protected in the same year.) In the monument register the authors highlighted that the works of Ödön Lechner had outstanding cultural, historical and national value.

It has to be emphasized that during these years the Museum’s collection was broaden with a remarkable ceramic collection of Vilmos Zsolnay’s collaborator: Vince Wartha, who invented the special *eosin* lustre, which resulted the unprecedented quality of Zsolnay ceramicis. The first exhibition, which propagated the Art Nouveau was organised by the

²⁶⁰ Nemes, *Budapest*, cit. 82.

²⁶¹ Apart from the Museum we can find the following Art Nouveau buildings in the register: the Postal Savings Bank, the Thonet palace, the The Szent László Church in Kőbánya, The State Geological Institute, and The Kecskemét City Hall. in: I.Genthon, *Magyarország műemlékei*, Akadémia Kiadó, Budapest 1951.

²⁶² The differen categories (as monument, monumental environment, monumental character) of monument protection in Hungarian legislation existed until 1997.

²⁶³ Datas of the Cultural National Office of Cultural Heritage in Budapest (KÖH)
Consutled personally on [10 April 2011]

Museum in 1959 and they were displaying more than four hundred items, which lead us to another phase of the Hungarian Art Nouveau heritage protection.²⁶⁴

During the 1950s the effort to gain aesthetical and historical recognition to Art Nouveau heritage was crystallizing all around Europe. In Hungary the years after the World War II up to the 1950s bore significant importance in the re-evaluation of the architectural works of Ödön Lechner – as outstanding achievements of the Hungarian National Style – but the protection of other Art Nouveau buildings was not possible in the era, when:

“the proletarian dictatorship, which took power in 1948, following the Soviet pattern, sought to wipe out everything that was associated with what it stigmatized as bourgeois traditions”.²⁶⁵

²⁶⁴ *A szecesszió Magyarországon*, Exhibition catalogue Iparművészeti Múzeum Budapest, Budapest 1959.

²⁶⁵ Csenkey, *In Budapest*, cit. p. 163.

1.2.1.2. PRAGUE: MUNICIPAL HOUSE (1903—1912)²⁶⁶

Before the discussion of the Czech case study I have to mention that due to the language barrier my sources were limited regarding the Czech part of my thesis. Thus my argumentation is mostly based on secondary sources in English, French and Hungarian languages, and on a collection of contemporary Czech architectural writings published in English.²⁶⁷ The perception and protection of the Czech Art Nouveau architecture bear some significant characteristics, so their presentation – even in less detailed manner – highlight the complexity of the appreciation of Art Nouveau heritage in Central Europe. The aim of this subchapter is to compare the Czech perception and protection of Art Nouveau architecture with the Hungarian case. In the first period of the analysis (from 1890 until the World War I) the similarities were dominant due to the same aesthetical and political aims of Hungarian and Czech artists, meanwhile in the second phase – the interwar period – we are witnessing radical differences due to the birth of the independent Czechoslovak state in 1918.

By the analysis of the remarkable landmark of Prague – the Municipal House – I would like to highlight that Art Nouveau architecture was perceived and interpreted by many artists as the national style at the turn of the century. Although, due to the political and ideological changes of the next decades Art Nouveau architecture's status was replaced by an other style, which fulfilled seemingly the status of the national style with a considerable success, namely Rondocubism.²⁶⁸

HISTORICIST ART NOUVEAU AND THE NATIONAL STYLE (1890s-1918). We have seen in the introduction of this subchapter the main tendencies, which were characterising the artistic aims – charged by political contents – of the nations under the political and cultural suppression of the Habsburg Monarchy. As a reaction to the germanization the question of the national identity became more essential in Czech lands during the 19th century, which was marked by the revival of national language, literature, history and the search for the national

²⁶⁶ *Obecní dům*

Consulted on: <http://www.obecnidum.cz>

Accessed on [10 March 2012]

²⁶⁷ K. Keserü, *The Beginning of Modernism in Central European Architecture: Polish, Czech, Slovak and Hungarian Architectural Writings at the Turn of the 20th Century*, Budapest 2005. On the other hand, the monument protection sources were consulted on original Czech language at the National Heritage Institute in Prague (NPU) with the immense help of Jiri Janac.

Consulted on [20 March 2012]

²⁶⁸ R. Svácha, *The architecture of new Prague, 1895-1945*, Cambridge 1995. p.187.

myths and vernacular traditions.²⁶⁹ The claim for the national independence and nationalistic emotions were rising elementally after Hungary gained its semi-independent status by the Austro-Hungarian Compromise (1867), as the Czech lands saved its Habsburg hereditary province status. Prague, as the geographically and cultural carrefour for the Czech nation became the centre stage of the nationalist battles during this period. According to Jindřich Vybíral the capital as the scene of the war against the German influence was the main source of the Czech patriots' hope.²⁷⁰

As a consequence of the Czech domination in the city administration from 1860s the architectural manifestations of the national revival appeared by the construction of the National Theatre, the National Museum and the Rudolfinum (music auditorium). At the turn of the century – similarly to other parts of Europe – the change in the architectural thinking became visible on the streets of Prague by the appearance of Art Nouveau architecture. As Jindřich Vybíral noted: “One of the greatest revolutions took place in the modern history of Czech architecture. Many decades during which historicism and eclecticism predominated, a new style, characterised by supple lines and stylised plant ornamentation, became current.” Soon after, another concept of modernity was formulated a new style, which was more rationalized and advertising the qualities of moderation and simplicity. Therefore, the capital of the Czech lands became a carrefour not only from geographical or cultural point of view, but also from architectural perspective. On the other hand, there was one common point in them: the claim for the national style. As Vybíral highlighted at the turn of the century the national character became ‘the common denominator’ among the different generations and groups of Czech artists concerning the new style:

“The need to distance oneself from Austrian culture and to demonstrate one’s own identity in the ‘Czech national style’ was so strong that even architects of early modernism in Prague considered it necessary to proclaim that their work had a local character, free of Viennese influence. Veneration of ‘national distinctiveness’ reconciled the conservative and radical wings of the Czech architectural scene, although for one group this distinctiveness was the very essence of historicism, while for the other group it was a pure source of natural creative power.”²⁷¹

²⁶⁹ The ideology of the Czech national revival was formulated by the following prominent characters: Johann Gottfried Herder, Frantisek Palacky, and Jan Kollár, who promoted the concept of Czechs struggling against German oppressors.

²⁷⁰ J.Vybíral, *Modernism or the National Movement in Prague*, in: P. Krakowsk, J.Purchla, *Art Around 1900 in Central Europe. Art Centres and Peripheries*, Cracow 1999. p.203.

²⁷¹ J.Vybíral, *The Common Denominator: the National Character On the Beginning of Czech Modernist Architecture*, in K. Keserü, *The Beginning of Modernism in Central European Architecture. Polish, Czech, Slovak and Hungarian Architectural Writings at the Turn of the 20th Century*, Budapest 2005. pp. 68—72.

Art Nouveau architecture seemed a suitable tool for Czech artists – thank to its formal liberalism – to visualize their modernity and local identity, thus to create a national style. On the other hand they had two different approaches for the basis of the national style: the conservative older generation believed in the superiority of neo-styles, and the role of the traditional forms, meanwhile the progressive young artists (who formed the Mánes Art Society in 1900) stressed that only the pure modern style could be effective.²⁷² Their debate was formulating on the columns of the journal of the Mánes Art Society named *Volné směry* (Free trends), where they were arguing on the relationship between the new art and the tradition.²⁷³ The architect Antonín Balšánek (1865–1921) joined also to the debate entitled ‘Modernism, or the National Trend?’ where he stressed that the ‘national character’ could be formulated by the consensus between the architectural traditions (like the Czech Baroque or Renaissance) – and the modern style:

“Only one thing is certain – it will not emerge as a new style, but develop on an historical base (...) what does not grown from Czech soil can never be close to our hearts (...) we want, however, this revival to come from within us, to be the result of our labours, to have our blood pulsing through it. We want it to be more than just a fashionable experiment for Czech art. We want to stand on our own feet, to extricate ourselves from foreign influences, especially German, whether they come from Vienna or elsewhere. Modernism in architecture!”²⁷⁴

The Municipal House of Prague (Community House) was built in this spirit between (1903—1912) designed as a status symbol of the Czech majority by Antonín Balšánek and Osvald Polívka.²⁷⁵ Therefore, it became on one hand one of the most remarkable historicist Art Nouveau buildings in Prague, on the other the most widely discussed and most controversial building, which facts affected the afterlife of the building.

The historicist Art Nouveau architecture in Prague could be originated from Friedrich Ohmann, who was the professor of architecture of the School of Applied Arts (the main centres of efforts for the new artistic expressions founded in 1885).²⁷⁶ He had designed buildings in a wide repertory of styles, from Neo-Baroque till Neo-Romantic, which styles were also influential on his first works in Art Nouveau style (like the Corsó café, which was demolished in the 1920s). Ohmann’s concepts about the combination of historical styles with

²⁷² P. Wittlich, *Prague: fin de siècle*, Cologne 1999. pp. 7—25.

²⁷³ *Volné směry* (published from 1896) reported on European events and promoted the new decorative style.

²⁷⁴ A. Balšánek, *Modernism, or the National Trend?* in: Keserü, *The Beginnings* cit., pp. 82—83.

²⁷⁵ P. Wittlich, *Art-Nouveau Prague : forms of the style*, Prague 2007. p.19.

²⁷⁶ P. Wittlich, *Art Nouveau in Czechoslovakia*, in : H.D.Dyroff, *Art Nouveau/Jugendstil Architecture in Europe*, German Commission for Unesco, Bonn 1988. p. 38.

the Art Nouveau's vegetal and floral ornaments on the surface of the buildings became fashionable among many architects, like Alois Dryák and Bedrich Bendlemayer.

There is a need to add here another prominent artist, who contributed not only to the development of the ornamentation through his posters' design, but also to the creation of the Czech national style: Alfons Mucha. The public and the artists became familiar with his new design (Art Nouveau ornament) by two exhibitions. The first held in 1897, was dedicated entirely to his works, the second was the Exhibition of Architecture and engineering, for Mucha designed a poster, which presented the allegory of Czech architecture, holding as its attributes: a vernacular cottage and a Baroque church.²⁷⁷ These two components expressed Mucha's concept about the basis of the national style: the vernacular (folk) traditions and the past, which he incorporated with the idea of pan Slavism later in his work. Mucha confirmed the legitimacy of his standpoint: "I am convinced that the development of every nation can only be successful if it grows organically and uninterruptedly from its own roots, and that the knowledge of its past is indispensable for the preservation of that continuity."²⁷⁸

Alfon Mucha is probably one of the most well known Art Nouveau artists for his posters of the actress Sarah Bernhardt designed in Paris. On the other hand, it has to be highlighted as Erin M. Dusza did that Mucha's art after his final return to Prague (1910) had a fundamental role in the creation of the Czech (Art Nouveau) national style by advocating the idea of Pan-Slavism.²⁷⁹ Mucha's first contribution to the creation of the Czech national style was his mural paintings for the Mayor's Hall of the Municipal House of Prague. For this reason, in case of the analysis of the Municipal House I focus mostly on the work of Mucha. Since the changing perception of Mucha's art has been coinciding with the re-evaluation of the Czech Art Nouveau some cross-references should be made during the further phases of my analysis.

Therefore, taking into the consideration the manifesto of Antonín Balšánek (one of the architects of the project) and Mucha's contribution to the decoration, we can state the Municipal House of Prague – built in a historicist Art Nouveau style – has been a real national land mark from architectural and from symbolical point of views.

In 1901, the Czech Burghers' Club asked for permission from the township of Prague – which they received in 1903 – to construct a new building with the suitable functional gathering

²⁷⁷ Several young artists did not agree with the application of the Baroque style as source of the national style, due to the Baroque architecture was related to the catholique Habsburgh regime as its official style. in: Balšánek, *Modernism* cit., p. 84. and Wittlich, *Art Nouveau* cit., p. 19.

²⁷⁸ E.M.Dusza, *Epic Significance: Placing Alphonse Mucha's Czech Art in the Context of Pan-Slavism and Czech Nationalism*, Georgia State University, Art and Design Thesis, Paper 103. 2012. p.21.

²⁷⁹ Dusza, *Epic* cit. 2012.

rooms for its members in the place of the former Royal Court. As Wittlich highlighted even the location of the Municipal House bore a symbolical message.²⁸⁰ In the Middle Ages, the Royal Court – the seat of the Czech kings until the Habsburgs purchased the Czech crown — was situated in the same place. Moreover, the Powder Tower, which has been standing next to the Court since 15th served as the ceremonial entrance to Prague during the coronation and funeral of the Czech kings. The competition for the project was announced in 1903, but the quality of the applications could not reach the acceptable quality for such a symbolical place. Thus, the work was directly given to the architects (Antonín Bašánek and Osvald Polívka), which resulted many outcries – they were not the last one in the history of the building. Moreover, as a result of these arguments considering not just the direct order of the building, but also the future design of the Municipal House.²⁸¹ Finally, the design of the project became a historical Neo-Baroque layout with Art Nouveau ornament and interior design in 1904. The art historians mostly highlighted the value of the layout, which expressed a universal harmony, not just with the unity of the composition and the decoration (motifs designed in Neo-Baroque spirit in essence, but completed by the floral and vegetal ornamentations inspired by Art Nouveau), but also with the previous public buildings of Prague. The domed central pavilion and the side wings – which were connected to the Powder Tower with a bridge – also expressed the symmetrical harmony.²⁸² Thanks to its exterior ornamentation and the interiors, the Municipal House can be considered as the most representative building of the *seces*, which has (despite is a municipal building) close relation to the Czech nationalism. As Wittlich pointed out the building demonstrates that for Czech nation its capital is crucial.²⁸³

Apart from the two architects, many Czech artists contributed to the lavish decoration of the building's interior and exterior as well, namely the painter Karel Špillar (with his mosaic decoration on the main entrance and the ornament of the Smetana Hall's ceiling and walls), Jan Preisler (with his large decorative paintings in Palacký Hall), František Ženíšek (with his romantic composition in the Grégr Hall), the sculptor Ladislav Šaloun and the decorator Karel Novák. Moreover, in 1909 Alfons Mucha was commissioned by Osvald Polívka to design the building's most representative hall, the Mayor's Hall. The artist who was already known in Paris and in America snatched at the commission of the Czech capital,

²⁸⁰ Wittlich, *Art Nouveau Prague* cit., p. 19.

²⁸¹ The project resulted many arguments in the *Volné směry*. See. Bašánek,

²⁸² Wittlich, *Art Nouveau Prague* cit., p. 19., Moravánszky, *Cometing* cit, p. 110 and Sácha, *Architecture* cit., p. 35.

²⁸³ Wittlich, *Art Nouveau Prague* cit., p. 19.

because at this time he formulated the main goal of his work: to create for his nation and for his home country by establishing a proper national style.²⁸⁴ According to Dusza, Mucha's decoration of the Mayor's Hall was based not only on the concept of the unity of the Slavs,²⁸⁵ but also on the unity of arts – based on the Art Nouveau's idea of *Gesamkunstwerk* – thus he designed in this spirit the entire room, from the doors and through the stained glass windows to the furniture decoration.²⁸⁶

Even before his final return to Prague, the artistic community of Prague had divided by the assignment of this work (an also the whole building), and a serious campaign of press and professionals from the part of the progressive Mánes Society as well) begun against Mucha, as he was considered as a foreign designer (who has been living on abroad for twenty years at this time). As the letter of Mucha's wife reported the situation:

“You just can't imagine the shameless attacks being made on you. Not only Mánes, but also the Union of Artists have joined in... They have all the newspapers on their side... Nothing is too low for them to stoop to... This is your reward for all you've done for Bohemia. Now you're being stoned by the very ones you have given yourself for. And they laugh at your patriotism.”²⁸⁷

Indeed, the artist's response expressed also his strong nationalist feelings:

“How sad that there are so many petty people in Bohemia... I don't let it worry me. My life has been clear as crystal, filled with high ideals, sacrifices and striving for a worthy goal... Their accusations matter no more to me than their praise... They don't exist in themselves, they live only in the reflections of others. Everything they do is imitation, copied... I am not their servant, I am the servant of my country.”²⁸⁸

Thus the main goal of Mucha was clear, and in this spirit the Mayor's Hall's fresco emphasizes the greatness of the Czechs and the Slavs. On the dome one can see the apotheosis of the Slavs: standing in ring eight peasants who representing the eight Slavic nations; in centre the heaven is just opening up and an eagle bum out of it. There is also quotation oby Svatopluk Cech – adorned with a golden sign – “Hail to you Prague! Brave the

²⁸⁴ He was formulating the concept of his main work at this time as well: the Slav Epic. See. Dusza, *Epic* cit.

²⁸⁵ He was following the nationalis concept of Herder, Palacky and Kollár. call for a collection of Slavic legends and history.

²⁸⁶ Dusza, *Epic* cit., p. 39.

²⁸⁷ Cited by Dusza, in: Dusza, *Epic* cit., p. 39.

²⁸⁸ Cited by Dusza, in: Dusza, *Epic* cit., pp.39—40.

time and malice as you have resisted all the storms throughout the ages”.²⁸⁹ Under the dome there are the great figures of the Czech history beside the virtues of the nation (Jan Hus for justice, Jan Zizka, a leader of the Hussite movement, for military power, the religious figure Jan Amos Komensky for trust/loyalty, and the Chodové (medieval Bohemian border guards) to represent vigilance.²⁹⁰

In the Mayor’s Hall there is one more composition: the symbolic and idealized triptych of the Czech history organized in three wall frescos (the table of the glorious future between the glorious and humiliating past’s table). They were inspired by the texts: ‘Saint Mother of Nation, accept the love and enthusiasm of your sons!’ then ‘Humiliated and tortured you are but you shall be revived, my country!’, finally ‘With strength towards freedom, with love towards concord!’.²⁹¹ The colours of the hall are also meaningful. The blue refers to the mythological time, the red to the glory of the medieval ages, while the dark tones denote to the vicissitudes.²⁹²

By analysing the Municipal House’s design we can state that it is entirely an architectural *Gesamtkunstwerk*, because next to the central hall (with the mural paintings of Mucha) there are several other halls, which are richly decorated in patriotic manner. The facade and almost every angle of the building announce the official ideology: the nationalism and the official artistic claim: the national style. The facade mosaic under the dome of the Municipal House shows also the close relation between the nation and its capital. The piece of art by Karel Špillar (despite the competition which called for Jiří z Poděbrad) depicts Prague as an enthroned young woman situated in a bucolic environment. Next to her there is the flag of the city and in the distance one can see the Prague Castle but she holds the Czech crown in her hands.²⁹³ Around the mosaic there is a text, which hails the strong city for its successful struggles in the past. Next to the composition the statue pair answer to each other as the past and the present. ‘The Humiliation of the Nation and The Resurrection of the Nation’ depicts the same adolescent but robust pair. In the past (the left side) the man helplessly looks out under a ‘lethal mantle’, which covers a dead woman who grasps the Czech crown.²⁹⁴ At the other side (the Resurrection) the pair is recovering their consciousness and the woman is

²⁸⁹ Consulted on: <http://www.obecnidum.cz/en/municipal-house-exterior-1404042398.html>
Accessed on [10 May 2013]

²⁹⁰ A. Anthony, *When Buildings Speak: Architecture as Language in the Habsburg Empire and Its Aftermath, 1867–1993*, Chicago 2006. pp.78—82.

²⁹¹ Consulted on: <http://www.obecnidum.cz/en/municipal-house-exterior-1404042398.html>
Accessed on [10 May 2013]

²⁹² P. Wittlich, *Alfons Mucha in the Municipal House*, Prague 2000. p.34.

²⁹³ Wittlich, *Alfons Mucha* cit., p. 34.

²⁹⁴ Wittlich, *Alfons Mucha* cit., pp.34—35.

struggling against an eagle (here not the symbol of militancy but the Habsburgs).²⁹⁵ The whole facade is richly decorated. Among the masks and the allegories of the sciences and industrial fields (e.g. mechanics and aeronautics) on the top of every pilaster there are medals with peasants wearing vernacular dresses and municipal burgers.²⁹⁶ Therefore, almost in every hall of the building one can find pieces of (applied) art designed under the influence of national idea. In the so called 'French restaurant' the mural painting by Josef Wenig shows Prague as a goddess dressed in golden medieval robe: she welcomes diplomats from different regions of Europe and the world. The so-called 'Vernacular restaurant' was named after its stylistic floral ornamentation and the rural-like chairs. There is also a mural picture: a mosaic with title of 'Czech harvest' by Jakub Obrovský.

In the first floor there are twin halls named after two-patriot politician of the previous generation: Julius Grégr (founder of the 'National Liberal Party') and František Ladislav Riegr (leader of the conservative 'National Party').²⁹⁷ In the Saloon Riegr there is painting by Max Švabianský: the 'Czech Spring' with poets and novelists (e.g. Svatopluk Čech, Jan Neruda), artists (Josef Václav Myslbek, Josef Mánes) and composers (Bedřich Smetana, Antonín Dvořák). The most impressive space in the Municipal House is the Smetana Hall. It is decorated with the allegories of the artistic genres by Špillar and the statues about patriotic themes by Šaloun: the 'Slavic dances' and the 'Vyšehrad'.²⁹⁸

To conclude, the entire layout, the decoration with the mural paintings and plastic works of the Municipal building claim that it wasn't raised only for the city but for the whole nation, which is underlined by the fact that the new autonomous Czechoslovakia was proclaimed on the 28 October in 1918 here, in the Smetana Hall. For this reason, we can state, that the Czech Art Nouveau was regarded as a tool to create the national style at the turn of the century. On the other hand, as I highlighted at the beginning of this chapter, in parallel with Art Nouveau, a new concept of modern style appeared in Prague, which was developed by the young artists, mainly Jan Kotěra (studied in Vienna in Otto Wagner's school), who is considered by most of the Czech art historians as the founder of the modern Czech architecture.²⁹⁹ Unlike the earlier organic and floral forms, the new style tended to be more geometric and strongly stylised.³⁰⁰ Right before the World War I, the Pyramidal Cubism was

²⁹⁵ Wittlich, *Alfons Mucha* cit., pp.34—35.

²⁹⁶ V. Mikule, *The Municipal House of the City of Prague*, Praha 2001. pp. 12–14.

²⁹⁷ Wittlich, *Alfons Mucha* cit., p.35.

²⁹⁸ Mikule, *The Municipal cit.*, p.,170, 120, 244, 256, 284.

²⁹⁹ Svácha, *The architecture of new Prague*, cit., p.187.

³⁰⁰ V. Šlapeta, (ed.), *Jan Kotěra : 1871—1923: the founder of modern Czech architecture*, Exhibition catalogue 19 December - 24 March 2001, Municipal House Prague, Prague 2001.

taking shape in Prague around 1909 and 1910. In Prague, the Cubism was developed and promoted by the Group of Visual Arts (seceded from the Mánes Society) and it was lead by Emil Filla and Otto Gutfreund.³⁰¹ The idea was applied in architecture by Josef Gocár and Josef Chochol, which influenced the latter Rondocubism, which became the official Czech national style after the World War I.³⁰²

CRITIQUES. Petr Wittlich, noted that the Municipal House of Prague became the most widely discussed and most controversial building of Art Nouveau architecture in Prague. He stressed that for almost sixty years there were a sharp rejection of building's historicist Art Nouveau structure and decoration by the conservatives and the later modern avant-garde movements, who both considered the building as a fashion-oriented, bourgeoisie work, which lacking any substance.³⁰³ We have seen that as the project of the construction was announced there were already hostile critiques considering the design of the building and the direct charge of the architects and artists. Thus the Municipal House, despite its successful combination of historical traditions, the Art Nouveau and the technological requirements of the age (e.g. building materials, like metal work and technological innovations, as the elevators) became the symbol of the will of consistent modernists to break off with historicism and tradition by expressing their negative evaluation of the building.³⁰⁴

As Ákos Moravánszky highlighted that this trend of Art Nouveau architecture, which unified the historical traditions with the Art Nouveau forms and decorative elements spread not only Prague, but in the Central European region, and for this reason it was often considered as the 'international' style of the Monarchy.³⁰⁵ As we have already seen in case of Hungary, this association between Art Nouveau architecture and the Monarchy disastrously contributed to the perception of the style in the following decades. By hearing the word 'Art Nouveau' the critiques associated it immediately with Vienna, thus the foreign, oppressive power of the Monarchy. By analysing the manifesto of Balšánek and other Czech artists it is clear that their goal was the opposite, thus in the Czech case of our analysis it is also clear that the original aim of the architects of Art Nouveau was totally misread and misinterpreted. On one hand the conservative circles and the contemporary press criticised the Municipal house for its unusual, cosmopolite, international forms, thus for the rupture with the classical and

³⁰¹ J.Švestka, T.Vlček, P.Liška (eds.), *Czech cubism 1909—1925: art, architecture, design*, Prague 2006.

³⁰² Svácha, *The architecture of new Prague*, cit., p.187.

³⁰³ Wittlich, *Art Nouveau in Czechoslovakia* cit., p. 40.

³⁰⁴ Wittlich, *Art Nouveau in Czechoslovakia* cit., p. 40.

³⁰⁵ Moravánszky, *Competing* cit. p. 110.

proper historical taste.³⁰⁶ The misinterpretation became also clear in case of the modernist critiques, which associated immediately the entire building with the unfashionable, despised historicism, which neglected every innovative idea.³⁰⁷ These critiques and point of views influenced the perception of Czech Art Nouveau for almost half a century.

THE NEXT FORTY YEARS. Taking into consideration the lack of significant changes in the perception of Art Nouveau and the artistic values of the Municipal House the time frame of this subchapter consists the period from 1918 to 1958, when the first complex heritage protection law in Czechoslovakia was passed, and it included a list with historic monuments designed in Historical, Art Nouveau and more surprisingly Modernist spirit.³⁰⁸

The national character of the Municipal House was also forgotten after the birth of the independent Czechoslovakia in 1918, when the new concept of nationalism turned away from the historicist approach and started to advocate the modernity of the country and its nations. As Dusza highlighted the hostile attitude against historicism was shared also by Tomáš G. Masaryk (the first president of Czechoslovakia), who stressed on the importance to look forward the new, modern future of the Czech people. Although, the Municipal House was functioning constantly according to its original function and Mucha was commissioned to contribute to the establishment of the new state – he was chosen to design the new currency and stamp for Czechoslovakia – his historicist approach as the national style was considered old-fashioned.³⁰⁹

From an architectural point of view – similarly to Hungary – we can speak about the revival of Neo-Classicism, although as Svácha pointed out that in the new independent state the Rondocubism – the geometrical modern style – seriously competed this trend, as it became popular by the 1920s with his “crest-shaped, circular, and rectangular ornaments (which) evoked Czech folk art”.³¹⁰ Therefore, the Rondocubism is considered to be the national style of the modern Czech nation. As Ákos Moravánszky highlighted “the

³⁰⁶ J. Vybíral, *Modernism or the National Movement in Prague*, in: P. Krakowsk, J.Purchla, *Art Around 1900 in Central Europe. Art Centres and Peripheries*, Cracow 1999. pp. 203—209.

³⁰⁷ P.Wittlich, *Art Nouveau in Czechoslovakia*, in: H.D.Dyroff, *Art Nouveau/Jugendstil Architecture in Europe*, German Commission for Unesco, Bonn 1988. pp.

³⁰⁸ As I highlighted in the introduction of the second chapter, the life time of historic monuments is one of the most questioned point in monument protection. It is unusual that on the first list – which was prepared – in 1958 we can find buildings built only thirty years earlier. e.g. Adolf Loos’s Müllet villa in Brno.

³⁰⁹ His patriotism became clear, when he declared that he accept the commision without any financial reimbursement – except the fee of the used materials. in: Dusza, *Epic cit.*, p. 62.

³¹⁰ Svácha, *The architecture of new Prague, cit.*, p.187.

nationalism that had been a relatively unimportant element of the ideological background of architectural [pyramidal] Cubism before World War I, now became paramount.”³¹¹

On 1 September 1928, the most significant work of Mucha: *The Slav Epic* (designed in the same spirit as the Municipal House’s decoration, between 1912 and 1928, which consists of twenty large-scale canvases representing the ideas of Pan-Slavism, patriotism and national identity) was officially given to the city of Prague. According to the original will of Mucha, the paintings are belonging to Prague, but the city had to build a sufficient exhibition hall for the works. This request has not been satisfying until nowadays.³¹² The fate of this work can be perfectly represented the attitude toward the previous concepts of national identity as Dusza noted that the *Slav Epic* (similarly to the Municipal House’s mural paintings) “intended to inform and define the Slavic people in the hopes of uniting them to the common cause of freedom”. Unfortunately, this message was unheard for a long time, which affected not only this work of Mucha as we have witnessed the neglect of the condition of his mural painting in the Municipal House during the 1930s.³¹³ By the invasion of the Nazis (they marched into Prague on 15 March 1939) Mucha was arrested among the firsts, who were considered as ‘problematic nationalist’. Although he was released, he died month later of pneumonia. After his death as Dusza pointed out the *Slav Epic* was literally buried as well in drums to save them and they could only be exhibited again in 1949, when they were brought to Moravsky Krumlov in 1963 – thanks to the efforts of his relatives.³¹⁴

Due to the several damages the idea of the renovation of Municipal House was formulated from the part of several architects (who were designing a comprehensive reconstruction plan between 1939 and 1942), but the project could not be realised due to the war and the lack of financial investment of the city. In my opinion this fact could be obviously related to the hostile attitude towards a building (which was designed for the Czech Nation) during the German occupation of Czechoslovakia (1938—1945). As Cynthia Paces highlighted the World War II and the Communist Party did not really interfere in the architectural heritage of the city.³¹⁵ On the other hand, the Soviet ideology – as we have seen in case of Hungary – which entirely neglected the cultural and historical values of the

³¹¹ Moravánszky, *Competing* cit., p. 277.

³¹² The paintings have been exhibited in the Great Hall of Veletržní Palace in Prague since 2012, but they are not able to stay for a long term. There is still an ongoing debate between the successors of Mucha and the city of Prague on the display of the works.

³¹³ Monument documentation of the Municipal House of National Heritage Institute in Prague (NPU) Consulted on [20 March 2012]

³¹⁴ Dusza, *Epic* cit., p. 66.

³¹⁵ C. Paces, *Prague Panoramas. National Memory and Sacred Space in the twentieth Century*, Pittsburg 2009. p.4.

previous era influenced the practice of the monument protection.³¹⁶ From the perspective of the Municipal House, according to the monument protection documentation of the Municipal House, there was not any intervention considering the save of the Municipal House's values (which resulted the serious degradation of the building) until its protected monument status gained in 1958.³¹⁷

1.2.2. *Art Nouveau between France and Germany: Nancy and Strasbourg*

I have discussed in details Art Nouveau in France in the first subchapter, thus I would like to underline in this brief introduction of the subchapter only the main characteristics.

Taking into consideration that the history of the two cities was related in several common points I feel the necessity to discuss them in common chapters. The aim of this subchapter is to present that Art Nouveau architecture had unusual and contradictory identity-building factors in the two cities, which influenced the perception and the preservation of the style.

In Nancy, Art Nouveau became inseparable from the idea of regionalism, as the style served as a tool to express the city and his residents cultural and political separation from Paris by advocating their region's industrial and artistic prosperity.³¹⁸ Furthermore, it became emblem in other political questions, mainly in the spirit of the return of Alsace, but also in the contemporary French politics (e.g. the Dreyfus Affair – as we have seen in the previous chapter). Meanwhile, in Strasbourg Art Nouveau architecture could be connected on one hand to the German Empire building process, on the other hand to the resistance to Germanization in Alsace-Lorraine.³¹⁹ On the following pages, I would like to present this complexity of Art Nouveau through my case studies.

³¹⁶ General information and history of National Heritage Institute in Prague (NPU)
Consulted on: www.npu.cz Accessed on [10 March 2012]

³¹⁷ Monument documentation of the Municipal House of National Heritage Institute in Prague (NPU)
1988. Consulted on [20 March 2012]

³¹⁸ See. H. Doucet, *Searching for a new image. An idealized regionalism in Lorraine*, in L. Van Santvoort, De Maeyer J., Verschaffel T. (eds.), *Regionalism and Modernity in the interwar period 1919–1940*, Actes du colloque de Gand, 8 - 9 Novembre 2007, Louvain 2013, pp. 38–47. ;

³¹⁸ P. Clericuzio, *Modernity, Regionalism, and Art Nouveau at the Exposition Internationale de l'Est de la France, 1909*, in "Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide", 10, 1, 2011. ; Fr. Loyer (ed.), *Nancy, architecture 1900: de l'Art nouveau au regionalism*, Exhibition catalogue 1977–1978 Hôtel de Sully, Paris, Paris 1977.

³¹⁹ See. P. Clericuzio, *Art Nouveau and the Resistance to Germanization in Alsace-Lorraine, ca. 1898–1914*, in "University of Toronto Art Journal" 4, 2011, pp. 1–17.; Sh. Hornstein, *Résistance, Nation, Identité: architecture Art Nouveau – Jugendstil à Strasbourg*, In: *Strasbourg 1900 naissance d'une capitale*, Actes du colloque, 1- 4 December 1999, Musée d'art moderne et contemporain de Strasbourg, Paris 2000, pp. 225–231.

1.2.2.1. NANCY: BRASSERIE EXCELSIOR (1910—1911)

ART NOUVEAU UNTIL THE WORLD WAR I. At the turn of the century Art Nouveau was blooming not only in Paris, but also in the city of Nancy, where the style served not only artistic, but also political and cultural purposes. The new style became strongly related to the concept of regionalism, which had deep roots in the history of Lorraine. The definition of regionalism has to be explained here – as Francois Loyer did – that when regionalism was developed in Nancy, in the middle of the nineteenth century, it was opposed to the capital, and to the Ancient Régime.³²⁰ Soon after, the nature of regionalism was changed by the loss of Alsace, and it turned into a nationalist spirit. Finally, after ten years – when Gallé’s first works were designed – the aesthetics and politics were coinciding to a level, when the notion of regionalism was used as the synonym of modernity.³²¹

As a result of France annexing the independent duchy after the death of Stanisław Leszczyński (1677—1766), the former king of Poland, the question of the cultural and political independency of the region had raised for many times. The concept of the regionalism (*lotharingisme*) was formulated firstly by baron Prosper Guerrier de Dumas in 1835 in an article entitled: “*Le Pour et le contre sur la resurrection des provinces*”.³²² Later his concept was adapted by the political program of the decentralisation (1865), from where the tradition of protection of the local artisans and industry can be originated.³²³

In the 1860s the city of Nancy counted approximately 50.000 residents, and it did not have a significant cultural dominance in the region. Soon after, the situation was changed completely by the Franco-Prussian War (1870—1871), when the French lost the entire region of Alsace and the northern third of Lorraine according to the Treaty of Frankfurt (1871). The loss of Alsace and the part of Lorraine shocked France. This also had a fundamental impact on the political, cultural and artistic life of Nancy, as it became the major city of the region (*la capitale de l’Est de la France*), only thirty kilometres from the border. Consequently, Nancy

³²⁰ Loyer F. (ed.), *L’École de Nancy, 1889—1909. Art nouveau et industries d’art*, Exhibition catalogue, 24 April—26 July 1999, Musée des beaux-arts, Nancy, Paris 1999. pp. 281., See. F.Loyer, B.Touler (eds.), *Le régionalisme, architecture et identité*, Paris, 2001. p.280.

³²¹ I would like to recall here Katalin Keserü’s statements considering the modern nature of the Central European regionalism.

³²² M. Mathias, *La tradition interrogée: la Lorraine entre lotharingisme et régionalisme*, in: F. Loyer (ed.), *L’École de Nancy, 1889—1909. Art nouveau et industries d’art*, Exhibition catalogue, 24 April—26 July 1999, Musée des beaux-arts, Nancy, Paris 1999.

³²³ O.Voilliard, *Autour du Programme de Nancy* in Ch.Gras, G.Livet, *Régions et régionalisme en France du XVIIIe siècle à nos jours*, Acte du colloque de Faculté des Sciences Historiques de l’Université du Strasbourg, 11—13 October 1974, Paris 1975.

underwent a series of fundamental changes and developments due to the extreme population growth, which was a result of the people deciding to immigrate to France, instead of becoming German citizens (Nancy population boomed, and by 1911 it reached 120.000 residents).³²⁴ Among them we can find many businessmen and industrialists, who significantly contributed to the economic and artistic prosperity of Lorraine.³²⁵ The milestone in the artistic life of the city was the establishment of the *École de Nancy* [Nancy School] by the glass worker, furniture maker and botanist Émile Gallé, in 1901, with many artists, architects and industrialists who tended to work on one hand for the artistic and industrial revival of Lorraine (by promoting the role of the traditional craftsmanship and local industries), on the other hand as Peter Clericuzio highlighted:

“politically, the group hoped that the French nation would exact revenge upon the Germans for the disaster of 1870 and find a way to recapture Alsace-Lorraine, but it grew ever-more dismayed with the refusal of the national government to take action on the issue during the 1870s and 1880s. They knew that as time passed, both the memory of the war and the opportunities to regain the lost provinces faded.”³²⁶

For this reason, we are able to identify many artworks designed by the members of the *École de Nancy*, transferring political messages. Probably the most remarkable one was the Rhine table designed by Gallé with the contribution of Victor Prouvé (1858—1943) in 1889 for the Paris World’s Fair with the following citation from Tacite: “le Rhin sépare des Gaules toute la Germaine”.³²⁷ Furthermore, the table’s design consisted many symbols of the region, like the Cross of Lorraine and the thistle (*chardon*) and the signature of Emile Gallé: “Fait par Emile Gallé, de Nancy/ en bon espoir – 1889”, which obviously recalled the events followed by the Treaty of Frankfurt.³²⁸ Compared to their progressive political concept, their brand of Art Nouveau was rather a conservative one – according to Clericuzio – as the artists applied the region’s own rich Rococo heritage (as the style of the golden age under Stanislas I) with the ‘fashionable’ Art Nouveau forms, moreover we can note the influences of the philosophy of the Gothic Revival and the Arts and Crafts.³²⁹ In general, this conservative brand of Art

³²⁴ E.Thévenin, *Un Age d’Or et le Grand Nancy d’hier*, Choné P., J.L. Fray, Thévenin E., *Le Grand Nancy : histoire d’un espace urbain*, Nancy 1993. pp. 121—164.

³²⁵ Like the Daum family Jean Daum (1825–1885) and his sons, Auguste Daum (1853–1909) and Antonin Daum (1864–1931) and their crystal manufactory founded in 1878.

³²⁶ Clericuzio, *Art Nouveau and* cit., p.3.

³²⁷ Thomas, *L’École de Nancy* cit., p.8.

³²⁸ Thomas, *L’École de Nancy* cit., p.8.

³²⁹ Clericuzio, *Art Nouveau and* cit., p. 4.

Nouveau was based on the use of symbolic motifs – the Cross of Lorraine (the symbol of the duchy dynasty), the images of Joan of Arc (the protector of the region) and typical floral and vegetal motifs of the region – which had a significant success and was supported by the union of the local artists and industries. For this reason, many Art Nouveau buildings were commissioned in Nancy, although mostly by the wealthier bourgeois circles as Francois Roth pointed out.³³⁰

As a result of the general success, the artists of the École de Nancy saw themselves as the most prominent representatives of the new modern art, which can only be based on local traditions, and in this respect, should reject everything, which cannot be originated from Lorraine. As Hervé Doucet said: “Dans leur majorité, ils estimaient que le renouvellement de l’inspiration et les progrès technique n’étaient possibles que par la connaissance approfondie et la relecture d’une culture et d’une tradition locales.”³³¹ For this reason, Émile Gallé urged the union of not only the arts (Gesamkunstwerk), but also the local industries in order to protect the local artists, artisans and products against the hegemony of Germany and the centralism of Paris. His idea was accepted by the École de Nancy, and became remarkably popular in the whole region as the revue entitled “*L’immeuble et la construction dans l’Est*” reported:

“Nous nous sommes toujours élevés ici en faveur de la protection locale d’abord, régionale ensuite et nationale enfin, contre la concurrence du dehors, aussi bien contre celle de l’étranger que contre celle de Paris, ou même celle d’ailleurs que chez nous, quand nous trouvons autour de nous des matériaux, des produits, des travaux, des hommes qui valent autant sinon plus que tout ce qui nous arrive de loin.”³³²

The success of the École de Nancy culminated in the 1909 World’s Fair, *the Exposition Internationale de l’Est de la France* held in Nancy, where “the alliance that the city’s artists and architects forged with the region’s industrialists came to fruition”.³³³ As Clericuzio

³³⁰ F.Roth, *La bourgeoisie nancéienne autour de 1900: ses différentes strates, ses activités, ses modes de relation à la culture*, in “Annales de l’Est”, n° spécial, 2005, pp. 31—40.

³³⁰ Consulted on: <http://www.academie-stanislas.org/Galle/04-Roth.pdf>

³³⁰ Accessed: 26 January 2013

³³¹ H.Doucet, *L’École de Nancy, entre lotharingisme et Art nouveau européen*, Symposium of Réseau Art Nouveau Network entitled ‘Identité nationale et tendances internationales’, Ljubjana 2006.

³³¹ Consulted on: www.artnouveau-net.com

³³¹ Accessed on [10 March 2013]

³³² „Paris contre la Province“ in: „L’immeuble et la construction dans l’Est“ 10e année, n°11, 14 juillet 1895. cited by Hervé Doucet in: Doucet, *L’École* cit., p.1.

³³³ Clericuzio, *Art Nouveau and cit.*, p. 7 and See. Clericuzio *Modernity, Regionalism cit.*

highlighted “for many Lorraine residents, the École’s work represented the embodiment of modernity and proved that Nancy was at the forefront of cutting-edge European art”.³³⁴

Furthermore, the popularity of the World’s Fair of 1909 proved the importance of Nancy not only to the inhabitants of Lorraine, but also to a wider public (according to the data of Caffier there were more than 2 million visitors in Nancy).³³⁵ In order to serve the needs of the visitors, many hotels and restaurants opened during these years in the heart of the city: the Place Thiers. As Francis Roussel highlighted: the Brasserie Excelsior is one of the immediate consequences of this phenomenon, when the railway station and its neighbourhood (Place Thiers) underwent a huge transformation.³³⁶ By analysing the history of the building we can note that it coincided with the history of the railway station at several points. The question of the extension of the railway station (and several other alterations related to it) influenced the afterlife of the Brasserie Excelsior, as it is situated in front of the station.

According to the monument protection documentation of the Excelsior, the building, which was built in 1910, is the witness to the local economic dynamism of the twentieth century: “le témoin du dynamisme économique local et de l’effervescence du début du XXème siècle à Nancy, à l’époque du développement industriel et de l’École de Nancy”.³³⁷ After an agreement between Louis Moreau (the owner of the Vézélise brasseries)³³⁸ and Charles Maujean (the owner of the Hotel d’Angleterre) they commissioned the two architects: Lucien Weissenburger (1860—1929) and Alexandre Mienville (1876—1959) – who were working in the spirit of the École de Nancy – to design the extension of the former Hotel d’Angleterre to a modern hotel with almost fifty rooms and the café-restaurant Brasserie Excelsior (1910) on its ground floor. According to Pierre-Yves Caillaut, the commercial development and the establishments – like the hotels and especially the brasseries – contributed to the renewal of the city of Nancy at this time.³³⁹ Moreover, the design of the building was also remarkable in Nancy, as the architects combined the façade’s sober, geometrical and rhythmical composition with the traditional ‘École de Nancy’ lavish interior decoration, which resulted in an unusual association to the *Wiener Sezession* as the art historian’s descriptions of the building have made it clear:

³³⁴ Clericuzio, *Art Nouveau and cit.*, p. 8.

³³⁵ M.Caffier, *L’Excelsior: un siècle d’art de vivre à Nancy*, Nancy 2007. p.25.

³³⁶ F. Roussel, *Nancy Architecture 1900*, Nancy 1998. p. 20.

³³⁷ P.Y.Caillaut, *Dossier préalable aux travaux de restauration des façades de l’Excelsior*, NANCY – 54, February 2010. p. 3.

³³⁸ As a consequence of the industrial activity of the region there were many brasseries in the region: among other the Champigneulle, Charmes and the Vézélise.

³³⁹ Caillaut, *Dossier préalable cit.*, p. 3.

“avec ses verrières aux motifs végétaux, son mobiliers en bois, son décor de fougères, les façades en appellent plutôt à la verticalité et aux ornements de la Sécession viennoise, s'éloignant des courbes et déliés, des audaces asymétriques et décoratives propres à l'architecture Art Nouveau de Nancy”³⁴⁰.

Furthermore, another analysis stressed the direct association to Otto Wagner's main works in Vienna:

“se développe au dernier niveau une série de corbeaux fleuris soutenant des colonnes jumelles aux chapiteaux jadis dorés, portant elle-même une poutre ornée. En couronnement, les quatre piliers d'une pergola-restaurant d'été cernent le regard sur l'unique travée du pan coupé, laquelle accueille l'entrée et une succession de lourds balcons. Cette vigueur de la trame et du marquage allié une écriture décorative raffinée rompt avec les modèles connus en ville et renvoie à l'esprit des grandes réalisations viennoise, plus particulièrement à celles d'Otto Wagner.”³⁴¹

This unusual geometric composition of the façade compared to the conservative Art Nouveau buildings' design in Nancy influenced the first critiques against the building, which resulted some general critiques concerning the 'foreign' connotation of the Art Nouveau in Nancy.

First, the journalist of the *L'immeuble et la construction dans l'Est* (19 January 1911) raised the fundamental question:

“Est-ce du style modern, du style carolingien, avec ces lourds balcons du pan coupé, avec ces 'corbeaux' fleuris supportant des colonnes jumelles, en pierre blanche aux chapiteaux dorés, soutenant elles-mêmes une poutre aux riches dorures, alors que les façades sont si sévères, si sobres d'ornements, alors que les pilastres sont à peine accusés par une légère grimpée de liserons et de feuillages?”³⁴²

Moreover, Maurice Storez's art critic presented that the Art Nouveau of Nancy was often misread – mostly in the artistic circles of Paris – and the original goal of the artists were entirely forgotten. He wrote on the columns of *Grande Revue*: „le mouvement d'art créé à Nancy est une des dernières manifestations de l'art munichois en France”³⁴³ Emile Nicolas

³⁴⁰ Caillaut, *Dossier préalable cit.*, p. 10.

³⁴¹ Ch. Debize, *Guide de L'École de Nancy*, Nancy 1993. p.139.

³⁴² Caillaut, *Dossier préalable cit.*, p. 10.

³⁴³ Cited by Doucet in: Doucet, *L'École de Nancy cit.*, p. 3.

(one of the supporters of the style) immediately answered to this critique by defending the Art Nouveau of Lorraine: “L’art de l’École de Nancy est d’inspiration française et c’est commettre une erreur ou plutôt commettre une injustice qui peut lui porter un préjudice considérable, surtout au moment où tout ce qui paraît suspect d’inspiration allemande sera rejeté, que de le rapprocher de l’art munichois.”³⁴⁴ If one would entrance to the Brasserie Excelsior any German connotations suggested by these critiques will disappear. The whole interior of the Excelsior was built according to the *l’oeuvre d’art totale* philosophy of the artists of the École de Nancy: the glass worker Jacques Gruber (1870—1936) with his large stained glass windows (decorated by the typical regional plants – pine tree, ginko biloba³⁴⁵ and tree-fen); furniture and metal designer Louis Majorelle (1859—1926) with his mahogany furniture and metal lustres; the Daum manufactory with the lamps; and the sculptors Léopolde and Guillaume Wolf with their ceiling stuccos and gilded details contributed to the remarkable main hall of the Brasserie. In addition, the building served the clients with the maximum comfort and modern technology, like separated bathrooms, elevators, electricity and a private garage. Moreover, a terrace was installed on the top floor of the building under wooden pergola. Thus, Francis Roussel precise this crown of the Excelsior: “un restaurant d’été, un café du soleil avec tout autour une galerie où des bacs remplis d’eau seront garnis de vases à plantes grimpantes qui déborderont au-dessus de la galerie d’or et donneront une vague idée de jardins suspendus, de féerie des Mille et Une Nuit”.³⁴⁶

FROM 1920S TO 1960S.³⁴⁷ World War I brought the change in the history of the École de Nancy. After the World War, the critiques towards it became more hostile, and it soon became the example of the decadent, bad taste – as we have seen in the previous chapter. The long-awaited return of Alsace-Lorraine meant the end of the major position of Nancy and also its nationalist regionalism (as Francois Loyer highlighted).³⁴⁸

As Francois Roth pointed out the short lifetime of the style and its belated discovery: “Nancy fut un foyer créateur quelques années seulement. Ce moment, éphémère et rare dans la vie d’une ville, passa inaperçu des contemporains. Les Nancéiens n’en prient conscience

³⁴⁴ Cited by Doucet in: Doucet, *L’École de Nancy cit.*, p. 3.

³⁴⁵ Ancient Chinese plant, which is also known from the Japanese artworks.

³⁴⁶ Caffier, *L’Excelsior cit.*, p. 35.

³⁴⁶ F. Roussel, *Nancy Architecture 1900*, Nancy 1998. p. 20.

³⁴⁷ Due to there was not any remarkable differences in the protection of Art Nouveau in Nancy during the interwar period this period, I have decided to examine it without any division.

³⁴⁸ Loyer F. (ed.), *L’École de Nancy, 1889—1909. Art nouveau et industries d’art*, Exhibition catalogue, 24 April—26 July 1999, Musée des beaux-arts, Nancy, Paris 1999. pp. 281., See. F.Loyer, B.Touler (eds.), *Le régionalisme, architecture et identité*, Paris, 2001. p.280.

que plus tard, alors que tout ou presque était terminé“.³⁴⁹ Meanwhile, the memories of the École de Nancy were gradually disappearing in the 1930s – the factory of Gallé finally closed, many artists of Art Nouveau left the style for an other or left the city itself (like Jacques Gruber, who moved to Paris in 1916). Although the sons of the École de Nancy’s artists (the André brothers, and Jean Prouvé) tended to establish a new alliance entitled the *comité Nancy-Paris* it could not be realized, although the name of the group already suggested that the local-focused program of the previous alliance would have changed.³⁵⁰

On the other hand, the Brasserie Excelsior lived his ‘golden age’ according to Cassier in the 1930s as it became the headquarters of the students and artists, and the building underwent its first alteration project, which did not break the harmony of the composition.³⁵¹ After the significant transformation of the Place Thiers (with the reconstruction of the Magasins Réunis in 1926), the idea of certain modifications appeared in the case of the Brasserie as well. The well-known painter of the École de Nancy Victor Prouvé’s son, Jean Prouvé was commissioned for the design of a new entrance and the stairway with its handrail, which was executed in Art Deco style – according to Caillaut, the design recalled the interior of the prestigious ocean liners.³⁵²

The building was completely saved during World War II and the German occupation, due to the fact that the location of the Brasserie (next to railway station – the main military interchange point) was especially popular among the German soldiers.³⁵³ In addition, Caillaut stressed the Excelsior has been served as a ‘cultural institution’ for residents of Nancy, since the opening. For this reason the protection of the building’s value was ensured without any official legislation. The situation changed for the first time in the 1970s, when the idea of the city centre’s development appeared with the extension of the railway station, and the construction of the ‘monster of Nancy’(the ninety metres Thiers tower).³⁵⁴

³⁴⁹ Cited by Thévenin in : Thévenin, *Un Age d’Or cit.*, p. 142.

³⁵⁰ Thévenin, *Un Age d’Or cit.*, p. 150.

³⁵¹ Caffier, *L’Excelsior cit.*, p. 43.

³⁵² Caillaut, *Dossier préalable cit.*, p. 10.

³⁵³ Caffier, *L’Excelsior cit.*, pp. 46—48.

³⁵⁴ Caffier, *L’Excelsior cit.*, p.55.

1.2.2.2. STRASBOURG: ÉCOLE DES ARTS DÉCORATIFS

Strasbourg can be considered as the third centre of Art Nouveau in France after Paris and Nancy, although, the style was forgotten and discredited for a long time due to its especially complex character, and to probably the more complex political, cultural and geographical milieu, where it was rooted.³⁵⁵ The aim of this subchapter is to present the several contradictory facts, which surrounded and influenced the perception of the style through the example of the first Art Nouveau public building of Strasbourg.

After the Treaty of Frankfurt (1871) Strasbourg became the capital of the imperial territory of *Reichsland Elsaß-Lothringen* under the direct rule of the Empire, which resulted an unprecedented development in the city's life from social, economical but also from urban landscape perspectives. Strasbourg started to be rebuilt soon after the war according to the representative requirements of the Empire. In 1880, the development plan of the *Neustadt* designed by Jean-Geoffroy Conrath – the chief architect of Strasbourg – and Gustav Orth was approved, which lead to the construction of the Empire's official buildings, like the *Palais du Rhin* (Palace of the Rhine), the Library and the University. In a respect of the traditions most of the buildings of the 'German district' were built in the spirit of the eclectism (Wilhelminian architecture), on the other hand at the turn of the century the new style was also a suitable tool to be used in order to express at the same time the modernity and the tradition.³⁵⁶ Thus, the new rulers began to physically and culturally rebuild the region of Alsace-Lorraine.

The idea of the establishment of the School of Applied Arts of Strasbourg (École des Arts Décoratifs)³⁵⁷ in 1890 was one of the manifestations of the city rulers, who tended to foster the artistic revival of Alsace-Lorraine. Anton Seder (1850—1916) the young German Art Nouveau architect and painter from Munich – who became the first director of the school – had urged the foundation of a School of Applied Arts since 1890, but the city decided only in April 1892 to build the first public place – among the two, which left in Strasbourg – which

³⁵⁵ Although there has been a generally increasing interests towards the Art Nouveau architecture of Strasbourg since 1980s, there is still a huge need for further scientific researches dedicated to the style. On the latest comprehensive works on Strasbourg and Art Nouveau. See. P.A.Befort, L.Daul, Ch.Kontzler(et.al), *Strasbourg 1900, carrefour des arts nouveaux*, Nancy 2000. ; and *Strasbourg 1900 naissance d'une capitale*, Actes du colloque, 1- 4 December 1999, Musée d'art moderne et contemporain de Strasbourg, Paris 2000.

³⁵⁶ K.Nohlen, *Introduction: La politique derrière les bâtiments*, in *Strasbourg 1900 naissance d'une capitale*, Actes du colloque, 1- 4 december 1999, Musée d'art moderne et contemporain de Strasbourg, Paris 2000, pp.148—153.

³⁵⁷ 1, rue de l'académie, Strasbourg

brake on one hand on a philosophical level with the previous education of applied arts, on the other hand on a physical (architectural level) with the previous dominant styles.³⁵⁸ Anton Seder tended to follow English and French examples: “il se réclamait de l’enseignement d’Owen Jones et de Viollet-le-Duc et se revendiquait d’un style nouveau basé sur l’exploitation systématique des formes de la nature, mouvement international avec Meurer en Allemagne, Grasset en France, Crane en Grande-Bretagne”.³⁵⁹ From an educational perspective, Seder believed in a three-year long training (the first year is about drawing, the second focuses on decorative, stylistic painting with geometric and perspective drawing by teaching the history of art, and the third consists of the special atelier of the student: e.g. ceramics, filigree, locksmithing, carpentry).³⁶⁰

“Son enseignement se voulait en rupture avec l’académisme alors encore hégémonique dans les écoles d’art comme dans les écoles décoratives. Il préférait à l’éternelle imitation des styles anciens, d’usage jusqu’alors, l’étude de la nature à laquelle elle emprunte des motifs pour décorer les objets d’art.”³⁶¹

Furthermore, Seder also believed in the unity of art, which can be the engine of the rehabilitation of the decorative (applied) arts in every region. In addition, the revolutionist programme of the School could be also found in its building’s architectural expression. Although the building – designed by the city’s chief architect Johann Ott (1846—1917), and his assistant Edouard Roederer (1838—1899) – was rather a modest experiment of Art Nouveau architecture with its primarily sober and functionalist layout, ground plan and the setting of plain façade, which was achieved in 1892, in the same location of the former botanical garden of the city. On the other hand, the principles of Art Nouveau became obvious on the facades’ decoration (yellow brick divided by large windows and tile panels), which expressed through its iconography the artistic program of the school: we can find the ceramic tiles of the allegories of: architecture, painting, sculptor, and also the science, the archaeology and the geometry.³⁶² Furthermore, on the central forepart we can find the allegories of Alsace and the city of Strasbourg, meanwhile on the two-wings vegetal and floral ornaments

³⁵⁸ Ch. Peltre, *Arts et artistes à Strasbourg au tournant du siècle : particularismes et ouvertures*, in : *Strasbourg 1900 naissance d’une capitale*, Actes du colloque, 1- 4 décembre 1999, Musée d’art moderne et contemporain de Strasbourg, Paris 2000, pp. 56—62.

³⁵⁹ J.C. Richez, *Aux origines de l’école des arts décoratifs. Les malentendus de la modernité*, in *Strasbourg 1900 naissance d’une capitale*, Actes du colloque, 1- 4 décembre 1999, Musée d’art moderne et contemporain de Strasbourg, Paris 2000, p. 99.

³⁶⁰ Richez, *Aux origines* cit., p. 99.

³⁶¹ Richez, *Aux origines* cit., p. 100,

³⁶² Richez, *Aux origines* cit., p. 101.

are advertising the Art Nouveau. The decoration was designed by Léon Elchinger (1871—1942) – namely the Soufflenheim ceramics³⁶³ – and by other students of the School after the plans of Seder. Due to the demolition of the interior’s decoration, only a few details remained: an iron hand-rail with a floral decor, the sunflower patterned ceiling panels and an unusual door on the top floor with an impressive frame made of polychromatic majolica which suggested the influence of orientalism, more precisely the ancient Egypt.³⁶⁴ The students contributed also to these interior decorations, but they almost entirely disappeared during the Nazi period as Frank Derville pointed out.³⁶⁵ Thank to support of Ott (as the chief architect of city) the construction of the school had a centre importance in the development of the *Neustadt*, thus it has to be highlighted that the project of the school was clearly incorporated in the German urban project. Although, the school was financed by the city (1889—1890) and then by the department – Bezirk – and the state – Land – (1892—1893), the School was suffered from financial problems as Maria-Carina Cassir highlighted due to the increasing number of the critiques.³⁶⁶ Although, it was not the only negative effect caused by them.

As Seder noted in 1908 the School was constantly the target of the critiques: “L’École des Arts Décoratifs de Strasbourg a depuis sa creation fait l’objet de violentes critiques”.³⁶⁷ As Jean-Claude Richez highlighted these critiques have had aesthetical, economic and political reasons.³⁶⁸ (As the nature of the aesthetical reasons of the critiques – which were mostly expressed by the academic, conservative circles – has been discussed in the first subchapter I present here only the economic and political reasons). He explained the economic reasons with the fact that the School and the new approach of education required immense financial investments; meanwhile he found another explanation concerning the lack of the commissions of the School, which lead to think that its costly maintenance was unnecessary. For their self-defences the artists of the school declared as Charles Spindler (1865—1938)³⁶⁹ noted: “Ceux-ci n’ont pas trouvé de travail ici parce qu’il n’existait pas

³⁶³ Named after the hometown of Elchinger. in: E. Decker, O.Haegel, J.P. Legendre, J. Maire (et.al.), *La céramique de Soufflenheim : Cent cinquante ans de production en Alsace 1800-1950*, Lyon 2003. p.84.

³⁶⁴ Due to the archeological discoveries the Oriental themes and motifs appeared in the Art Nouveau architecture of Strasbourg, especially the ancient Egypt. See.: C.Traunecker, *Égyptomanie et égyptologie à Strasbourg en 1900*, in: *Strasbourg 1900 naissance d’une capitale*, Actes du colloque, 1- 4 December 1999, Musée d’art moderne et contemporain de Strasbourg, Paris 2000. pp. 70—78.

³⁶⁵ Art Nouveau World Wide Server

Consulted on: <http://www.art-nouveau-around-the-world.org/en/villes/strasbourg/Strasbourg.htm>

Accessed on [10 May 2013]

³⁶⁶ M.C.Cassir, *L’École des arts décoratifs de Strasbourg de 1890 à 1914: l’institution sous l’égide du professeur Anton Seder*, Thèse à Université de Strasbourg 1990.

³⁶⁷ Cited by Richez, *Aux origines* cit., p. 100,

³⁶⁸ Richez, *Aux origines* cit., p. 102.

³⁶⁹ Charles Spindler (1865—1938), who was one of the artists of Saint-Léonard circle.

d'artisan s'art dans la région”, while Seder was stressing that they are related in an other way: “c’était la société alsacienne qui déterminait la faiblesse structurelle du secteur: il n’y avait pas d’artisanat d’art parce qu’il n’y avait pas de demande ». ³⁷⁰

According to Jean-Claude Richez the political reasons were more complex, and they were originated from the problematic geographical, political and social circumstances of Alsace-Lorraine. ³⁷¹ The further statements should be elaborated in more detail. First, Charles Spindler noted the following: “Bon nombre de gens traitent de boche toute tentative nouvelle en art décorative, même quand elle émane d’artistes qui n’ont jamais cherché leur inspiration de l’autre cote du Rhin“. ³⁷² Second, Émile Schneider wrote: ”la modernité dont a été porteuse l’école se confondait avec l’étranger d’une réorganisation modern, la fêrulle nécessaire à la germanisation de notre art régional.“ ³⁷³ He continued “la modernité était condamné au nom de lute contre la germanisation et on se coupait de la scène internationale. La primauté devait être donnée au local. L’école avait été critiquée, parce qu’elle n’avait jamais pu satisfaire les besoins de notre cause artistique régionale” furthermore he added (after 1918) “L’enseignement de l’école a trop pâti de cette influence étrangère pour que nous ne reconnaissons pas la nécessité d’une épuraton.“ ³⁷⁴

First of all, we have to note that – similarly – to the previous case studies the representatives of the new ideas, like Art Nouveau were often misunderstood and criticized for those elements, what they originally tended to avoid. In case of the School of Applied Arts its aim to be modern, was often understood and misinterpreted by one’s as to be foreign and international, thus it could not originated from Alsace-Lorraine. Another possible reason of this interpretation could be found in the fact that at this time Art Nouveau architecture was used also as a resistance against the germanization in the region – as Peter Clericuzio emphasized – that Alsace-Lorraine and the question of its identity became the focus of the complex cultural debates (which can be seen today as well). ³⁷⁵ Clericuzio argued “the debate over the identity of Alsace-Lorraine and its ties to both France and Germany intensified with the appearance of the style”. ³⁷⁶

³⁷⁰ Cited by Richez in: Richez, *Aux origines* cit., pp. 104—105.

³⁷¹ Cited by Richez in: Richez, *Aux origines* cit., p. 105.

³⁷² Cited by Richez in: Richez, *Aux origines* cit., p. 105.

³⁷³ Cited by Richez in: Richez, *Aux origines* cit., p. 106.

³⁷⁴ Cited by Richez in: Richez, *Aux origines* cit., p. 106.

³⁷⁵ P.Clericuzio, *Art Nouveau and the Resistance to Germanization in Alsace-Lorraine*, ca. 1898–1914, in “University of Toronto Art Journal” 4, 2011, pp. 1–17. See also. J Ch.Fisher, *Alsace to the Alsatians? Visions and Divisions of Alsatian Regionalism 1870—1939*, New York 2010.

³⁷⁶ Clericuzio, *Art Nouveau* cit., p. 1.

Clericuzio implied also that in Alsace-Lorraine in Strasbourg (and in Metz) there were a clear adaptation of French Art Nouveau in order “to preserve both areas ‘traditional links to France’”, although it is clearer in case of Strasbourg with some direct inspirations from Nancy.³⁷⁷ He gave Auguste Mossler) and Auguste Müller’s design as an example for the French, Belgian and also for Nancy Art Nouveau application. Moreover, Jules Berninger and Henri Gustave Kraff, who designed the Knopf department store in Strasbourg (1898—1899), which showed similarities to Lucien Weissenburger’s Magasins Réunis in Nancy with:

“the iron-framed store rose four storeys, used repetitive rows of large shop windows, and its entrance was placed at the foot of the ovoid-domed corner tower” [moreover they used a direct symbol of France] at the foot of the staircase stands a bizarre rooster sculpture — perhaps a reference to the French Gallic cock”.³⁷⁸

On the other hand, there were many German architects in Strasbourg, who used Art nouveau features, floral, vegetal motifs of the surfaces of their buildings (like Ott and Roederer did in case of the School of Applied Arts), although after 1900 as Clericuzio pointed out “German architects quickly discarded the style”.³⁷⁹

Besides, Shelley Hornstein emphasized that the complicated relations and meanings in Art Nouveau architecture of Strasbourg do not permit to do easily the distinction between French or German orientation:

“reste un ensemble de relations complexes qui ne permet pas de discerner clairement une orientation proprement ‘française’ ou ‘allemande’, ce qui rend toute distinction ‘nationale’ quelque peu absurde. Pourtant, ce qui est clairement mis en évidence est une volonté de faire jouer ses influences, de les mettre en concurrence pour mieux les dépasser tout en soulignant, de façon à faire émerger une association, une association ‘nationaliste’, qui permettrait d’identifier les penchants politiques de chacun des architectes.”³⁸⁰

Furthermore, the Saint-Léonarde circle’s members also expressed in their first revue that the Alsatian culture and identity had to be regarded separately from the simplified ‘French’ or ‘German’ categories:

³⁷⁷ Clericuzio, *Art Nouveau* cit., p.7.

³⁷⁸ Clericuzio, *Art Nouveau* cit., p.14.

³⁷⁹ Clericuzio, *Art Nouveau* cit., p.14.

³⁸⁰ Sh.Hornstein, *Résistance, Nation, Identité: architecture Art Nouveau – Jugendstil à Strasbourg*, In: *Strasbourg 1900 naissance d’une capitale*, Actes du colloque, 1- 4 December 1999, Musée d’art moderne et contemporain de Strasbourg, Paris 2000, p. 227. ; See also Sh. Hornstein-Rabinovitch, *Tendances d’Architecture Art Nouveau à Strasbourg*, thèse de 3e cycle, Université des Sciences Humaines de Strasbourg, 1981.

„Nous croyons à l’existence et à la vitalité d’une culture alsacienne. Les géographes ont reconnu une individualité propre à notre terre d’Alsace et à son climat, c’est-à-dire au support de notre tempérament et de notre caractère [...] Notre culture est distincte des cultures allemande et française, bien que fécondées par elles.”³⁸¹

In addition, Clericuzio stressed the importance of the regional character as well, when he stated that: “the use of Art Nouveau architecture in Alsace-Lorraine came to be seen as a means of expressing the region’s unique heritage, especially the ways in which the area had long been a crossroads for the exchange and mixing of ideas and cultures”.³⁸² For this reason, it is hard to define the categories of Art Nouveau architecture in Strasbourg. On the other hand, we can state that in the exalted political milieu of Alsace-Lorraine Art Nouveau architecture was used to express imperial, national, and also regional identity, which fact influenced the afterlife of Strasbourg’s Art Nouveau architectural heritage.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the international relations also influenced the artistic and intellectual life of Strasbourg during the turn of the century. Due to its special character Art Nouveau architecture can be regarded as an international phenomenon, which related the parts of a divided nation through the borders, as we have witnessed here in case of Nancy and Strasbourg. Soon after, however, this aspect of the style became overlooked.

³⁸¹ Ch. Peltre, *Introduction – Arts et artistes à Strasbourg au tournant du siècle: particularismes et ouvertures*, in: *Strasbourg 1900 naissance d’une capitale*, Actes du colloque, 1- 4 December 1999, Musée d’art moderne et contemporain de Strasbourg, Paris 2000, pp. 60—61.

³⁸² Clericuzio, *Art Nouveau* cit., p.17.

II. Evolving Monument Protection (1950s—1970s)

MONUMENT PROTECTION ON THE NATIONAL LEVEL. The general discovery and re-evaluation of Art Nouveau and its architectural heritage was taking shape from 1950s to 1970s. This is also the period, when the monument protection of Art Nouveau buildings started on national scale all around Europe. On the other hand, this phenomenon was taking shape in different way in every country, due to the changes of the political and ideological circumstances, which followed the World War II. It is important to emphasize that in parallel with the constantly improving positive attitude toward the style, there were many examples for the negligence of the Art Nouveau buildings' conditions. Furthermore, we can also report the loss of some remarkable architectural memories, which became often the victims of urban development projects or autotelic alterations by the owners.³⁸³ The aim of this chapter is to present the perception of Art Nouveau architecture during this period in the four cities by emphasizing the main purpose of the monument protection status of each building. Before the analysis of the case studies, I feel the necessity to present briefly some general tendencies (the start of scientific researches, exhibitions, national monument protection and the role of art movements in the re-evaluation of the style), which were slowly formulating the basis of an international care about Art Nouveau heritage.

First of all, we need to state that re-evaluation of Art Nouveau derived from the growing numbers of scientific researches and publications from the 1950s and 1960s. On the other hand, Stephan Tschudi Madsen highlighted that there were some previous German researches dedicated especially to *Jugendstil* architecture during 1930s.³⁸⁴ Comprehensive publications on Art Nouveau became published during the 1960s, and among them the French scholars' works were pioneering, as they observed the style in a wider, European context.³⁸⁵

³⁸³ According to Gerle, there were three main reasons for demolition : the first was the case of temporary buildings (like exhibition pavillons), the second was of the demolition was Wolrd War II, the third was the neglect and misuse. in : J.Gerle, *Some Hungarian Examples of Unaccomplished, Demolished, and Reconverted Art Nouveau Buildings*, in: International Symposium of Réseau Art Nouveau Network in the framework of 'Art Nouveau in Progress' project, 24-25 October 2002, Wien. pp. 66—68.

Consulted on: <http://www.artnouveau-net.eu/portals/0/data/COLLOQUIA/colloquium-proceedings.pdf>
Accessed on [10 March 2013]

³⁸⁴ Madsen pointed out the work of Nicolaus Pevsner entitled *The Pioneers of Modern Design* in : Madsen, *The perception* cit., p.9.

³⁸⁵ For example the book of Maurice Rheims (*L'Art 1900*, Paris 1965) and Roger-Henri Guerrand (*L'art nouveau en Europe*, Paris 1965.)In addition, Guerrand's preface was written by Louis Aragon, who implied that the plan of the publication was born earlier, but due to the general attitude and unpopularity of the style the editors did not find it worth to publish.

In parallel with the researches, there were several fundamental exhibitions, which helped to draw people's attention to the artistic values of Art Nouveau. From this perspective, we can note that 1952 was a significant date: the first exhibition took place in London at Victoria and Albert Museum, and the second – in the same year – was organised in Zurich at the Kunstgewerbemuseum.³⁸⁶ Furthermore, it is necessary to highlight the importance of the exhibition entitled *Les Sources du XXème siècle*, which was held at the Musée National d'Art Moderne in Paris (1960) and which was directed by Jean Cassou and supported by the Council of Europe.³⁸⁷ Cassou was stressing on the importance of the exhibition:

„In the past we have enjoyed gently mocking the most outdated aspects of *fin-de-siècle* design. It was undeniably decadent and heavily influenced by literature, and bad literature at that. The architecture is heavily disguised, and the materials dare not show themselves. It was an unshamed triumph of bad taste. True, it had a certain spice, but often seems now to have had little more than fashion in its favour. Its ornamental elements are especially dominant, overwhelming both form and structure, and becoming parasitic, overbearing and superficial... Nonetheless, the time has now come to re-evaluate this style and to consider it objectively, explaining its underlying essential motivations, and ultimately to recognize it as a significant period in the history of art.”³⁸⁸

Indeed, the time had come for the re-evaluation of Art Nouveau, which was confirmed by the evolving awareness of the monument protection towards the style. Thus as a result of the growing number of the exhibitions, publications and the intense work of the promoters of the modern architecture – like André Malraux (1901-1976)³⁸⁹ – the category of the historic monument was broadened in France for the first time.³⁹⁰ It was also Malraux, who initiated the inscription of the first Art Nouveau building of Guimard (the Castel Béranger in Paris) for the historical monument status in 1965, although the general protection of the Art Nouveau buildings in France occurred later in the 1980s and 1990s.³⁹¹ Shortly after other countries

³⁸⁶ Exhibition catalogue: *Jugendstil: Kunst und Kunstgewerbe aus Europa und Amerika zur Zeit der Stilwende*, Zurich 1952.

³⁸⁷ A few exhibitions places and dates dedicated to Art Nouveau: Baden, Baden in 1958, Berlin 1970, Berlin, 1972, Bremen, 1965, Frankfurt am Main 1955, London 1965, München 1964, New London, 1963, London 1964, See. Thiébaud, *Introduction* cit., p.10.

³⁸⁸ Jean Cassou, „*Les Sources du XXe siècle, les Arts en Europe de 1884 à 1914*“, Paris, 1960, p. 19-20. Cited by Ph.Thiébaud in *Introduction*, in: K.Tahara, *Art Nouveau architecture*, London-New York, 2000. p. 10.

³⁸⁹ He was the Minister of Cultural Affairs of France between 1958—1969.

³⁹⁰ Many buildings of Le Corbusier (1887—1965) became classed as historic monument thanks to the campaign of Malraux: the Villa Savoye in (1965); The chapel of Ronchamp (1967), and the ‘Cité radieuse de Marseille’ (1995) In: B.Touler, F.Loyer, *Architecture et patrimoine du XXe siècle en France*, Paris 1999. pp. 6—23.

³⁹¹ Although Pierre Lavedan and the *Commission du Vieux Paris* had already proposed the protection of the building as historic monument in 1938 – among other memories of the turn of the century – but the general

(like Belgium) started to follow the example of France.³⁹² In case of Central Europe from monument protection perspective we can talk about relative early successes. In case of Hungary, András Ferkai highlighted “the idea of preserving our recent heritage was pioneered very early in Hungary compared with other European countries.”³⁹³ Besides, it has to be emphasized that the early protection of Ödön Lechner’s work did not mean the general appreciation of Art Nouveau, as it was rather about his unprecedented national architectural achievement.³⁹⁴ On the other hand, Ferkai’s statement can be applied for Czechoslovakia. In Prague, by the first complex monument protection law (enacted in 1958) every Art Nouveau buildings and many modernist architectural memories gained historic monument status, even the Müller Villa in Brno, which was designed by Adolf Loos in 1930.³⁹⁵ This unusual short life-distance derived from the fact that the main rules concerning the lifetime of historic monuments were redefined during this period. There were two main principles: first, the works of living architect cannot be listed since “they are protected by author’s royalties”, second, they maintained the age-limit of 1950.³⁹⁶ According to Ferkai the set this precise age-limit – which was almost the same in Western Europe – was stemmed from the will that the decision-makers “did not want to get entangled in the evaluation of the Stalinist period, which would have been awkward at that time, in every respect”.³⁹⁷

On the other hand, in case of the lack of the sufficient protection the resistance-against the official will was less successful, like in case of the opposition of the city authorities and a group of professionals in order to decide the fate of Victor Hora’s extraordinary work.³⁹⁸ The

hostile attitude did not let it to be realized.) Finally, the building became listed in 1975 and classed in 1992, which proves that the protection one of the most well-known Art Nouveau architect’s work was not obvious for a long time. Référence Mérimée : PA00086687 © Monuments historiques, 1992.

³⁹² B.Touler, F.Loyer, *Architecture et patrimoine du XXe siècle en France*, Paris 1999.

³⁹³ Formulated within the Hungarian Academy of Sciences

³⁹⁴ He reported also that we could already find some buildings from the turn of the century and from the inter-war period in 1960 on the first nation-wide Hungarian historic monuments’ list. in: A. Ferkai, *Recording and Preserving the modern heritage in Hungary*, In : A. Cunningham (ed.), *Modern Movement Heritage*, London 1998. p. 44.

³⁹⁵ The possible explanation of this phenomenon will be presented later in this chapter. Reference 152617 © 2003-13 Národní památkový ústav

³⁹⁶ Ferkai, *Recording cit.*, p. 44.

³⁹⁷ Ferkai, *Recording cit.*, p. 44. and General Information and History on the website of the National Heritage Institute, Central Department – Prague. Consulted on: <http://www.npu.cz/en/pro-odborniky/pracoviste-npu/ustredni-pracoviste/souhrnne-informace-a-historie/> Accessed on [10 May 2013]

³⁹⁸ Z. Erő, *Műemlékvédelem, városfejlesztés*.

Consulted:<http://www.varosrehabilitacio.net/media/files/Varosrehabilitacio/varosrehabestarsadalomcikkek/12ErQcikk.pdf> Accessed on [22 April 2011]

Maison de Peuple (1896—1898) was demolished in spite of the protest of many architects – and also the international committee of the Venice Charter in 1965.³⁹⁹

Finally, the role of the emerging art groups and artistic tendencies in the rediscovery of Art Nouveau has to be emphasized. Philippe Thiébault had the same purpose with the organisation of the exhibition entitled *Art Nouveau Revival 1900, 1933, 1966, 1974*. (held at Musée d'Orsay in Paris in 2010).⁴⁰⁰ Preceded by the slight attempt of Surrealists artists⁴⁰¹ during the 1960s, the graphic designers of the pop art, the hippie movement, and also the representatives of the post-modern idea contributed to the return of the popularity of Art Nouveau through the application of its tendril-like, redundant curves and lines and flagrant colours (e.g. Beatles posters).⁴⁰² Ferkai explained the success of the phenomenon and the discovery of Art Nouveau by people's rejection of the modernist architecture of the 1970s in the following way: “the common people prefer Postmodernism, organic, or regional style, or anything which is decorated, to the purist modern, and they hold in high esteem nineteenth century historicism and Art Nouveau from the turn of the century”.⁴⁰³

By taking into consideration the above-mentioned tendencies of the rediscovery of the style, we focus on their local manifestations in case of the four cities. For this reason, the exhibition catalogues and the documentations of the monuments' protection are serving as the sources of our analysis.

³⁹⁹ *The Venice Charter (1964): International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites and International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments*, Venice 1964.

⁴⁰⁰ Ph. Thiébaut (ed.), *Art Nouveau Revival: 1900,1933,1966,1974*, Exhibition catalogue, October 2009 - 4 February 2010, Musée d'Orsay Paris, Paris 2009.

⁴⁰¹ Minotaure, 1933, 3-4, pp. 69—70. cited by Madsen in : Madsen, *The perception* cit., p.9.

⁴⁰² Thiébaut (ed.), *Art Nouveau Revival* cit., 2009.

⁴⁰³ Ferkai, *Recording* cit., p. 5.

2.1. Budapest: Museum of Applied Arts

The monument protection of the first achievement of the Hungarian Art Nouveau architecture was just the first step towards the entire discovery of the style, and its well-accomplished examples produced by the students of Ödön Lechner. It is important to emphasize that the perception of the ‘Master of Hungarian National Style’ was still ambivalent, which is proved by the virulent debates of the 1960s. We have seen in the previous chapter, Hungary as part of the Soviet Bloc (just like Czechoslovakia) was oppressed not just by an outer political power, but a soviet ideology, which principally rejected the bourgeois traditions. As we have concluded in the first chapter Art Nouveau architecture could be easily regarded as bourgeois and decadent style due to the epoch and the social layer, wherein it was born. The fact that Art Nouveau architecture could bear with some socialist, ‘leftish’ ideas (like the social estate housing programs, or the ‘houses of the people’)⁴⁰⁴ – which were proved by Ágnes Süle and János Gerle – was completely overlooked.⁴⁰⁵

Besides, thank to the faithful promoters of Lechner’s Art Nouveau architecture his major works became all protected as historic monuments (in the 1950s). On the other hand, it has to be underlined that the monument protection status did not mean automatically the proper preservation of this heritage, as the general attitude and the financial circumstances hindered the conservation or the reconstruction for a long time.⁴⁰⁶ As János Gerle pointed out that in the period, which followed the World War II until the 1960s: “there were neither the technical and material conditions, nor the cultural need to protect valuable items dating from the Art Nouveau era [for this reason] buildings, which could have been rescued, were demolished, and the decorations effaced and simplified”.⁴⁰⁷

In case of the Museum of Applied Arts we had to admit that despite the several damages —which were caused by the World War II and the battles of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 – there were no attempts to reconstruct the building properly until nowadays.⁴⁰⁸ Since, the preservation and the reconstruction of the building have been formulating for three years I analyze it in the next chapter.

⁴⁰⁴ A Western example for the houses of the people was the *Maison du Peuple* designed by Victor Horta (1895 – 1899) for the Belgian Workers’ Party.

⁴⁰⁵ Gerle, Feedback cit., pp. 11-12. and Süle, *On the fuctions* cit., pp.11—17.

⁴⁰⁶ The first complete and faithful reconstructions were carried out from the nineties in Budapest. See. Gerle, *Some* cit., p. 68.

⁴⁰⁷ Gerle, *Some* cit., p. 67.

⁴⁰⁸ Not just the decorative, but also the structural elements of the building have constantly been damaged for almost fifty years.

Report about the state of the building, 3 szeptember 2012

I shall present here some general characteristics of the re-evaluation process of Art Nouveau, through the perception of Lechner and his architecture as the National Style. Similarly to Europe, the 1960s was marked by scientific debates and exhibitions tended to define Art Nouveau and reveal the values of the turn of the century.⁴⁰⁹ From mental point of view, Lechner and his perception was not as unified as we would expect it after the protection of his works. From 1960 to 1961 a fundamental debate was formulating between young architects – on the columns of the architectural revue *Magyar Építőipar* and *Építőművészet* – on the relation between the Hungarian Art Nouveau and vernacular tradition. On one hand, the debate had a major role in the crystallization of the nature and real principles of Hungarian Art Nouveau, on the other hand, the discourse brought back the spirit of critiques of the 1930s by confronting the excessive orientalism of Lechner with his former pupils (the ‘Youth Ones’), who devoted themselves for the search of the vernacular – mostly Transylvanian – traditions.⁴¹⁰ As a consequence of these debates many researchers joined under the aegis the entire rehabilitation of Ödön Lechner by emphasizing that apart from its sources – which only contributed to the uniqueness of the style – the Hungarian Art Nouveau reached the European standards.⁴¹¹ But there were still many hostile critiques, which considered the style as a ‘tradition-denier’ phenomenon.⁴¹²

After the first exhibition of the Art Nouveau in 1951, the next significant step was the start of series of exhibitions and lectures (between 1965 and 1968) organized by *István Király Múzeum* of Székesfehérvár, which implied the wide-range spread of the attempt of the re-evaluation of the style.⁴¹³ For the first time we can read about the merits of Lechner’s followers, like Béla Lajta and István Medgyaszay who synthesized Lechner’s ideas.⁴¹⁴ Later on

Consulted on : <http://www.imm.hu/hu/contents/164,Veszélyeljár%C3%ADt%C3%A1s%2C+2011>

Accessed on [10 May 2013]

⁴⁰⁹ Stephan Tschudi Madshen asserted that the rediscovery of Art Nouveau coincide with the reappraisal of the turn of the century, which was renamed in this period as the *Belle Époque*. See. Madsen, *The perception* cit., p. 9.

⁴¹⁰ F. Vámos, *A szecesszió értékeléséről*, in “*Magyar Építőipar*”, 1960, 9, 6, pp.49—53., F.Vámos, *Szecessziótól szecesszióig*, in “*Magyar Építőipar*”, 1960,6. pp.12—16., I. Kathy, *Korszerűség, szecesszió, hagyomány*, in „*Magyar Építőművészet*”,1960, 9, 3 pp.34—39., I. Kathy, *Népi és hagyomány*, in „*Magyar Építőipar*” 1961, 10,1,1961, pp. 47—49., M. Kubinszky, *A szecesszió értékeléséhez*, in „*Magyar Építőipar*”, 1961,2,10.pp.51—52., M.Kubinszky, *Gondolatok a századeleji magyar építészetéről*, in „*Magyar Építőipar*” 1961, 10,1 pp.42—54. M. Kubinszky, *Szecesszió és a századforduló építészete* in „*Építés- és közlekedéstudományi közlemények*, 1962, 4, 6, pp. 487—523.

⁴¹¹ M.Bernáth, *A szecesszió fogalma és helye a tudománytörténetben*, in „*Művészettörténet, tudománytörténet*”, Budapest 1973., A. Komlós, *A “szecesszió” körül*, in: “*Valóság*”, 1969, 12., pp. 73—76.

⁴¹² T.Bakonyi, *A Lechner Ödön munkásságával foglalkozó szakirodalom kritikai áttekintése*, in: „*Építés-Építészettudomány*”, 1979, 11, 3-4, pp. 461—473.

⁴¹³ I. Solymár, *Preface*, In: M. K. Kovalovszky (ed.), *A századforduló művészete*, Székesfehérvár, 1965.p.5.

⁴¹⁴ Ezrey (M. Komor), *Lajta Béla*, in „*Vállalkozók Lapja*” 20 October 1920.

Consulted on: <http://lajtaarchiv.hu/eletrajz/irasok-lajta-belarol/>

Accessed on [25 April 2011]

the two architects were reconverting his floral and folk motifs to a more geometrical versions and they stepped on the way towards the modernist paradigm of the 1920s and 1930s.⁴¹⁵

In general, we should state that we are not able to find any monument protection procedures dedicated to Art Nouveau, but the emerging arguments foretold the changes of the next decades. As János Gerle highlighted the reason could be found in the official ideology (dictated by Moscow) of the era, when the ‘national’ connotation of the style settled up obstacles for its appreciation. But not only the Art Nouveau architectural memories suffered from the spirit of the period, as the socialists drastically reduced the numbers of the historic monuments.⁴¹⁶ During the period of the ‘soft-dictatorship’ – under the regime marked by the name of János Kádár – thank to the National Board for the Protection of Historic Monuments some of Lechner’s followers buildings became protected during the 1970s with the following justification „as the noticable memories of our national past”.⁴¹⁷ To conclude, we can state that despite the successes of the envolving monument protection period in Hungary, we are not able to reveal any practices of the monument protection considering the preservation of Art Nouveau buildings of Budapest. By the 1980s not just the national, but the European values of Hungarian Art Nouveau architecture crystallized.

⁴¹⁵ Solymár, *A századforduló* cit., p. 10.

⁴¹⁶ Until the 1960s we could count approximately 10.000 monuments, while after the revision of their politics up to 1984 there were still less than before the 9.247. in: F.Mendele, *Lechner Ödön épületeinek műemléki védelme*, in: L.Pusztai, A. Hadik, *Lechner Ödön emlékkiállítás katalógusa*, Budapest, 1985, pp. 61—63 .

⁴¹⁷ For example the Academy of Music, the Paris Department Store, and the Gresham Palace in: A.P. Czétényi , *A Főváros legújabbkori emlékeinek védelme*, in „Műemlékvédelem” 1977, 4, 21.

2.2. Prague: Municipal House

As we have stated in the previous chapter because of the political and ideological circumstances the architectural memories of the previous regimes were not appreciated at all, thus they could not enjoy any protection. We witness the change only in the late 1950s.

The State Institute for Monument Care and Environmental Protection (SUPPOP) was established by a law of 1958, in order to institutionalize the monument protection, thus the heritage care.⁴¹⁸ The Institute inherited the exercises of the National Photo Survey Institute (1919) and National Heritage Offices (in Prague and Brno), whose works were precursor for the State Authorities in the 1950s. Thus, the SUPPOP had to unified and fulfil the mission and the function of the previous institutions regarding the scientific-research and the establishment the methodology of monument protection. As we can read in the history of the SUPPOP:

“The totalitarian communist regime (1948—89) influenced and often deformed the endeavours to protect and care for the national cultural heritage (...) despite this, specialists and research professionals at the Institute took pains to have objective and qualified approach to understanding the heritage fund, suggesting a methodological approach to protection and care of individual types of historic items.”⁴¹⁹

The first result of the professionals of the Institute was realized in the creation of the first Czech monument list in 1958. By examining this list we can find many surprising datas.⁴²⁰ First of all, all of the Art Nouveau buildings of Prague became protected as cultural monument (*kulturní památka*). Second, the architectural memories of later modern styles gained the monument status too. I would like to highlight that we can find the most remarkable modern buildings of Jan Kotera (who has been considered as the father of the modern Czech architecture), pyramidal and rondocubist works of Josef Gočár, Josef Chochol, and Pavel Janák. Furthermore, the modernist work of Adolf Loos – which was completed in 1930 – was put on the list as well.

⁴¹⁸ General information and history of National Heritage Institute in Prague (NPU)

Consulted on: www.npu.cz

Accessed on [10 March 2012]

⁴¹⁹ General information and history of National Heritage Institute in Prague (NPU)

Consulted on: www.npu.cz

Accessed on [10 March 2012]

⁴²⁰ The list of Czech monuments

Consulted on: <http://monumnet.npu.cz/monumnet.php>

Accessed on [13 March 2012]

I would like to recall here – as we have seen in the introduction of this chapter – that the general protection of modern architecture has started in the middle of the 1960s (thank to André Malraux). By evoking also the example of the early protection of the Hungarian Ödön Lechner (which was a unique example of the protection of the Hungarian Art Nouveau), we can state that the Czech protection of the modern architecture (included the examples of Art Nouveau and Rondocubism) was pioneering compared to other cases in Europe. In my opinion, the protection of Art Nouveau and Rondocubism architecture could be related to the endeavour to saving the cultural values of the nation (as the bearers of the national identity) in a period, when their subsistence was not obviously trustworthy. On the other hand, as we have witnessed in case of Hungary the monument protection status did not mean automatically the preservation of the building and the collective appreciation of the style.

This fact seems to be proved by analysing the second level of the Czech monument protection, namely national cultural monuments (*národní kulturní památka*), which was based on the first legislation (1958) and it was accepted in 1962, then it was significantly updated in 1987.⁴²¹ This unusual category raises questions considering the differences between the definition and the protection level of the cultural monument and the national cultural monument categories. (Due to the limitation of the thesis, these questions require further researches.) By analysing the national cultural monument list the first Art Nouveau (20th century) building, which gained the national level of protection was the Municipal House in 1989. Meanwhile, the Cubist House of the Black Madonna (designed by Josef Gočár) was put on the list only in 2010. Furthermore, we are not able to find any Rondocubist building listed as national cultural monument, despite the fact that the style is considered as the Czech national style. In my opinion these facts prove that although a certain level of monument protection was required in case of Art Nouveau architecture during the Soviet regime, it did not mean the real re-evaluation of Art Nouveau in people minds. The late protection of the Municipal House as a national cultural monument suggested that the proper protection and preservation of the Art Nouveau has only began in the end of the 1980s. After the protection of 1958 there was just a few smaller alterations in the Municipal House, like the transformation of the bathrooms, the storage rooms. According to the monument protection

⁴²¹ Among the first sites we can find the representative memories of the medieval and modern age, e.g. the Prague Castle, the Tyn Church, the Old Town Hall, the Charles Bridge, the Karolinum, the National Theatre. Only one memory of the 20th century was put on the list – due to the official ideology of the period – the National Monument in Vitkov, which was built in the years 1928–1938, originally in honour of the Czechoslovak legionaries. On the other hand after 1948, it was used to promote national ideology and the Soviet regime (the Mausoleum of Klement Gottwald – prominent representatives of the Communist Party – was also built here in 1953).

documentation of the building the authorities noticed the bad condition of the Municipal House (like falling tiles from the surface and broken windows in the Smetana Hall) and they turned to the city for the support in order to start the renovation.⁴²² Finally, they did not get any support until 1994, when the long awaited reconstruction of the building could begin.

On the other hand, there was an increasingly positive tendency in the discovery of Art Nouveau heritage from the turn of the 1950s and 1960s, when the Art Nouveau's heritage was found valuable again, and as Jan Sedlák highlighted it was thanks to the memorable exhibition of 1966 entitled Czech Art Nouveau – Art 1900. According to him since then, the scholars' interest in Art Nouveau has been constantly increasing.⁴²³

From the 1960s there were a growing numbers of exhibitions dedicated to Mucha as well, who had enjoyed more interests in abroad until this period, than in his own country: fundamental exhibitions were held on Mucha in London (1963),⁴²⁴ and in Paris (1966).⁴²⁵

According to Petr Wittlich an important milestone in Czechoslovakia in the evaluation of Art Nouveau architecture was the International Symposium on the protection of historical monuments entitled 'Prague 1860—1960' held in Prague in October 1971.⁴²⁶ However, the reconstruction projects could not begin until the 1990s.

⁴²² Monument documentation of the Municipal House of National Heritage Institute in Prague (NPU) 1988. Consulted on [10 March 2012] pp. 60—67.

⁴²³ J.Kotalík, J.Masín, E.Poche (eds.), *Ceská secese. Umení 190. Alsova jihoceska galerie v Hluboké nad Vltavou- Moravská galerie v Brně 1966-1967.* (In English: Czech Art Nouveau - Art 1900) p.198. The first pioneering work on Czech Art Nouveau artists See. P.Wittlich, *Art nouveau 1900 : Alfons Mucha, Aubrey Beardsley, Odilon Redon, Edvard Munch, Jan Preisler, František Bílek, Alfred Kubin, František Kupka, Auguste Rodin, Gustav Klimt, Egon Schiele*, Paris 1975.

⁴²⁴ B. Reade, *Art Nouveau and Alfonse Mucha*, Exhibition catalogue, Victoria and Albert Museum, London 1963.

⁴²⁵ A.David., R.H.Guerrand (eds.), *Un maître de l'art nouveau, Alphonse Mucha*, Exhibition catalogue, 3 March — 23 April 1966, Société des amis de la Bibliothèque Forney, Paris 1966.

⁴²⁶ Wittlich, *Art Nouveau in Czechoslovakia* cit., p. 40.

2.3. Nancy: Brasserie Excelsior

Similarly to the European tendencies, Art Nouveau heritage of Nancy was ignored until the 1960s/1970s, which is clear in case of the following example. In 1952, the city of Nancy inherited the villa and the extraordinary donation of Art Nouveau art works of Jean-Baptiste Eugène Corbin (1867—1952) who was a faithful art collector and the maecenas of Art Nouveau in Nancy. The general attitude towards the Art Nouveau heritage was shown by the fact that ten years had to pass until the display and opening of the Museum of École de Nancy (1963).⁴²⁷ On the other hand, the Museum has not yet included Art Nouveau architecture. Vincent Bradel highlighted as reasons the following:

“Lack of space is certainly the main reason, but it must also be recognized that there are certain historical reasons, such as the secondary role played by Nancy architects in the emergence of the Nancy School and – above all the failure of the history of architecture to keep pace with the history of art.”⁴²⁸

François Roth also confirmed the lack of interests, and he positioned the discovery of Art Nouveau in the same period.

“il faut attendre le début des années soixante avec l'intérêt des collectionneurs anglo-saxons et japonais et de solides travaux universitaires pour ce que l'on redécouvre l'importance de l'École de Nancy (...) il faut attendre le milieu des années soixante-dix pour que l'on s'occupe de préserver le patrimoine bâti de l'École de Nancy”.⁴²⁹

Indeed, the 1970s changed the mentality towards the built heritage of Art Nouveau architecture in Nancy due to the intervention project considering the development of the railway station and its neighbourhood, which declared the demolition of Excelsior.

The project urged serious transformation in the urban tissue, which raised for the first time the residents' awareness about Art Nouveau heritage (the debate had begun in 1970). On the other hand, the protests against the plan could not prevent the removal of the statue of Adolphe Thiers (1974)⁴³⁰ in order to construct the parking of the railway station, the

⁴²⁷ *L'École de Nancy: fleurs et ornements - ma racine est au fond des bois*, Exhibition catalogue, 24 Avril-26 Juillet 1999, Musée de l'École de Nancy, Paris 1999. pp. 10—11.

⁴²⁸ V. Bradel, *Nancy 1900 – The beginnings of an archive*, in „Museum”, 1990, 3, p.172.

⁴²⁹ Cited by Thévenin in : Thévenin, *Un Age d'Or cit.*, p. 142.

⁴³⁰ The statue of Thiers showed the lack of awareness about the heritage of the city: „Une association propose de mettre Thiers au fort de Vилley-le-Sec et que le Musée Lorraine souhaite les bronzes du socle pour ses salles du XIXe siècle..”, in : Caffier, *L'Excelsior cit.*, p.55.

destructions of many remarkable buildings and the erection of the Thiers tower. Art critic Rolf Lemoine published his article in *Le Figaro* (27 February 1975) entitled as *Et voice 'le monstre' de Nancy*:

“Depuis dix ans, on massacre à Nancy des secteurs soi-disant inhabitables, on remodèle la ville sans se soucier de son patrimoine historique, sous prétexte de créer un écrin pour l’avenir pour des trésors de pierre (...) or, dans le perimeter à raser s’élève l’hotel d’Angleterre construit au siècle dernier. Sa brasserie a conserve un séduisant décor de la Belle Époque”.⁴³¹

Finally, in 1974 a group of residents and professionals formulated – thank to Françoise Hervé – to safeguard the Brasserie Excelsior and other neighbouring buildings. According to Hervé (*Madame de Patrimoine*) this project meant the destruction of the historic centre of Nancy, thus the identity of Nancy, but thank to their struggles the area became protected by the title of *secteur sauvegardé*.⁴³² “Quatre ans de combats intenses, clandestins ou publics, furent nécessaires pour stopper cette fureur et obtenir à l’arraché le secteur sauvegardé de 150 hectares que nous connaissons aujourd’hui”.⁴³³ While they were protesting through different instruments: projecting movies (*La Tour infernale*), displaying exhibitions (*Vie et mort de Nancy*) they draw people’s attention to their Art Nouveau heritage. As a result of their aim, in 1976 the Brasserie Excelsior was classed as historic monument ‘*monument historique*’ for its façade, roof, main hall and decoration.⁴³⁴ Therefore, the protection of the Excelsior was the first step in the re-evaluation of Art Nouveau heritage of Nancy, which was followed by an increasing interest towards the Art Nouveau architecture. As a result the first exhibition was held in 1976 dedicated to it entitled as ‘Nancy Architecture 1900—The Architects and Their Patrons’ organized by the Inventaire de Lorraine with the Nancy School of Architecture and school of Fine Arts.⁴³⁵ According to Vincent Bradel, the exhibition’s catalogue was the first work, which focused on Nancy’s Art Nouveau architecture.⁴³⁶ Therefore, Bradel pointed out that although the Museum of École de Nancy had opened in 1963, it had no impact on the protection of Art Nouveau heritage – as a series of demolitions were taking place in the city

⁴³¹ Caffier, *L’Excelsior cit.*, p.55.

⁴³² Category of monument protection established by the law (4 August 1962), called the ‘Law Malraux’ (loi Malraux).

⁴³³ *Françoise Hervé: Madame Patrimoine*, in: ‘My lorraine’ 2010, 09, 17.

Consulted on: <http://www.mylorraine.fr/article/francoise-herve-madame-patrimoine/4357/>

Accessed on [10 May 2013]

⁴³⁴ Reference Mérimée: A54000064, © Région Lorraine - Inventaire général, 1974.

⁴³⁵ Bradel, Nancy cit., p. 172.

⁴³⁶ Fr. Loyer (ed.), *Nancy, architecture 1900: de l’Art nouveau au regionalism*, Exhibition catalogue 1977—1978 Hôtel de Sully, Paris, Paris 1977.

until 1968 – and on the scientific research on Nancy’s Art Nouveau heritage, which could only begun after 1976. He also argued that the preservation (restoration) campaign started too late compared to the loss of Art Nouveau architectural heritage of Nancy, which was not the singular case in history of France: “In Nancy, as elsewhere in France, the history of the modern architecture and of the people associated with it was in its infancy”.⁴³⁷ Bradel highlighted that “it therefore took some ten years for the idea to mature and gain acceptance as a result of the course events”.⁴³⁸ The other important step in the discovery and re-evaluation of the style was the establishment of the Modern Archives of Lorrain Architecture in 1987 in order to help the work of the Archives de France and the Direction de l’Architecture and the French Institute of Architecture: “tracking down, preserving and presenting are the aims the association has set itself.”⁴³⁹ The date 1987 was also remarkable in the life of the Excelsior as its reconstruction works began.

⁴³⁷ Bradel, *Nancy* cit., p. 173.

⁴³⁸ Bradel, *Nancy* cit., pp. 173—174.

⁴³⁹ Bradel, *Nancy* cit., p. 175.

2.3. Strasbourg: Écoles des Arts Décoratifs

The first pioneer research on Strasbourg's Art Nouveau architecture was made by the Institut d'Histoire de l'Art de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines de Strasbourg in 1968 entitled *Autour de 1900*.⁴⁴⁰ In the Introduction of the work Louis Grodeczki highlighted that despite the fact that Art Nouveau architecture has had a significant presence in Strasbourg, its memories were undiscovered and demolished for almost half century. However, this was not an incomparable phenomenon in France, as we have seen in the previous subchapter.

On the other hand, compared to Nancy the discovery of the style could begin later. According to Rodolphe Rapetti⁴⁴¹ after the World War I, Art Nouveau was completely assimilated with German Empire in people's minds.⁴⁴² Although, the School of Applied Arts was so far saved by the direction of the School, other architectural memories, which were built under the German period suffered from several alterations (e.g. The imperial symbols and decorative elements were removed from the Palace of the Rhine). Grodeczki highlighted in his work that due to the 'mediocrity' of the Wilhelmiens edifices, other architectural achievements – built in the same period – were neglected and forgotten by the professionals and by the public as well. For this reason, in case of Strasbourg the re-evaluation of Art Nouveau heritage can be clearly connected to the discovery of the values of the period, when Alsace was incorporated into the German Empire. Peter Clericuzio added that this neglect was often completed by a conscious hostile attitude towards the style as: “none of the historical styles drew comparable political associations with nationalist or regionalist concerns as Art Nouveau”.⁴⁴³ Serge Brentrop (the chief architecture of Strasbourg, STAP) confirmed this fact by emphasizing that even in the late 1960s the authorities were planning to demolish the Palace of the Rhine.⁴⁴⁴

During the 1920s and 1930s the building of the School of Applied Arts was slowly degrading as a result of the change in the management. As Frank Derville highlighted most of

⁴⁴⁰ *Autour de 1900*. Travaux de l'Institut d'Histoire de l'Art in *Bulletion de la Faculté des Lettres de Strasbourg*, May-Juin 1968.

⁴⁴¹ R.Rapetti (Directeur des Musées de Strasbourg): Préface in: *Autour de 1900*. Travaux de l'Institut d'Histoire de l'Art in *Bulletion de la Faculté des Lettres de Strasbourg*, May-Juin 1968. p.8.

⁴⁴² L.Grodeczki, *Introduction: Architecture et décoration autour 1900 à Strasbourg*, in: *Autour de 1900*. Travaux de l'Institut d'Histoire de l'Art in *Bulletion de la Faculté des Lettres de Strasbourg*, May-Juin 1968, pp. 747—755.

⁴⁴³ Clericuzio, *Art Nouveau cit.* p. 17.

⁴⁴⁴ Meeting on: [8 March 2013]

the decorations of the School were damaged during the German occupation.⁴⁴⁵ These years were probably the most tragical ones in the history of Art Nouveau heritage of Strasbourg due to the demolitions. As Grodeczki highlighted that there has not been any commercial architectural memories of Art Nouveau since 1940s, which could remain: the magazine Erlenbach was demolished, the buildings of the Place de Broglie were transformed many times, except the restaurant Bauzin, which was although underwent a reconstruction project, but the architects did not respect the Art Nouveau decorations and changed entirely. Grodeczki and the other scholars were tending to draw people's attention to the disappearance of the Art Nouveau heritage by highlighting that if the residents of Nancy would not wake up in time, most of the Art Nouveau monuments and works will be demolished or sold out to American museums.⁴⁴⁶

Indeed, there were no serious attempts to be made until the 1980s in order to protect the heritage of Strasbourg, as it was connected to the German Empire. Therefore, the protection and preservation of Art Nouveau architecture of Strasbourg as historical and cultural value has began in the 1980s.

⁴⁴⁵ Consulted on: <http://www.art-nouveau-around-the-world.org/en/villes/strasbourg/Strasbourg.htm>
Accessed on [10 May 2013]

⁴⁴⁶ Grodeczki, *Introduction* cit., p., 751.

III. The New Perspectives: towards the World Heritage European organizations and Networks engaged in Art Nouveau (1980s—)

REVIVAL OF ART NOUVEAU: THE REAL PRESERVATION OF ART NOUVEAU HERITAGE. From the 1980s we can talk about the revival of Art Nouveau – the real preservation of Art Nouveau heritage in Europe. First of all, I feel the necessity to define what I mean by the ‘real preservation’ of Art Nouveau heritage. Through the first two chapters of the thesis we have seen how and for what reasons the perception of Art Nouveau has changed in Budapest, Prague, Nancy and Strasbourg. As a result of many struggles, we can state that almost one hundred years after – the first manifestations of – Art Nouveau architecture has been regarded as part of our cultural heritage and the protection of its monument has been taking shape on the national level. On the other hand, we have also seen that due to certain political, ideological or economical aspects, the preservation (conservation or reconstruction) of the monuments could not be realized – until this period of our analysis – like in Budapest and Prague. Despite, Hungary and Czechoslovakia joined to and adopted the principles of the international organisations engaged in monument protection – like the Venice Charter (1964) or the ICOMOS (International Council of Monuments and Sites, 1965) – from the beginning.⁴⁴⁷ One of the principles of the Venice Charter (International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites) was formulated by the following way:

“Imbued with a message from the past, the historic monuments of generations of people remain to the present day as living witnesses of their age-old traditions. People are becoming more and more conscious of the unity of human values and regard ancient monuments as a common heritage. The common responsibility to safeguard them for future generations is recognized. It is our duty to hand them on in the full richness of their authenticity.”⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁷Czechoslovakia took part in the work of the Committee for drafting the International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments in 1964, while Hungary joined in 1965. See. *International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites* (The Venice Charter 1964), IInd International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, Venice 1964.

Consulted on: http://www.icomos.org/charters/venice_e.pdf.

Accessed on [10 February 2013].

See. A. Ferkai, *Recording and Preserving the modern heritage in Hungary*, In: A.Cunningham (ed.), *Modern Movement Heritage*, London 1998. pp. 44—49., and Fekete I., *Műemlékvédelem és örökség Magyarországon: intézménytörténet, perspektívák, vélemények* (Monument protection and heritage in Hungary: institution history, perspectives and opinions”) in: „Világosság” 2005, 6, pp. 101—116.

⁴⁴⁸ *Venice Charter* p.1.

Consulted on: http://www.icomos.org/charters/venice_e.pdf.

Accessed on [10 February 2013].

I would like to add here the idea of ‘Preservation’ for what *The Nara Document on Authenticity*,⁴⁴⁹ (conceived in the spirit of the Venice Charter) used the notion of ‘Conservation’ as a synonym:

“All efforts designed to understand cultural heritage, know its history and meaning, ensure its material safeguard and, as required, its presentation, restoration and enhancement. (Cultural heritage is understood to include monuments, groups of buildings and sites of cultural value as defined in article one of the World Heritage Convention)”⁴⁵⁰

For this reason, the lack of consciousness towards the style and the neglect of the preservation of the heritage – even in case of the presence of the national monument protection – could still sign the problematic relationship towards the past, which has been unravelled during this third phase of our analyses. Thus, by the real preservation of Art Nouveau I mean the realization of the preservation processes. Furthermore, in this newest phase another category of the cultural heritage protection has emerged by the UNESCO’s Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972).⁴⁵¹ The lift of the National Art Nouveau heritage to the International level can be considered as the fulfilment of the preservation of Art Nouveau.

In this chapter, I present first an international initiative – which incorporated many professionals in order to re-evaluate entirely Art Nouveau architecture – *the UNESCO’s Joint Study and Action Project on Art Nouveau Heritage* as the first attempt of the 1980s, which gave the basis of nowadays’ perception and preservation methods of Art Nouveau heritage: the European organizations and networks. I finish my work with the presentation of these newest perspectives in the preservation of Art Nouveau heritage through the case studies.⁴⁵²

⁴⁴⁹ *The Nara Document on Authenticity (1994)* is conceived in the spirit of the Charter of Venice (1964) and it was drafted by the 45 participants at the Nara Conference on Authenticity in Relation to the World Heritage Convention, held at Nara, Japan, from 1-6 November 1994.

⁴⁵⁰ *The Nara Document on Authenticity (1994)*

Consulted on : <http://www.icomos.org/en/component/content/article/179-articles-en-francais/ressources/charters-and-standards/386-the-nara-document-on-authenticity-1994>

Accessed on [10 May 2013]

⁴⁵¹ *UNESCO’s Convention Concerning the Protection of the World cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)*

Consulted on : <http://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/>

Accessed on : [10 May 2013]

⁴⁵² H.D. Dyroff, *Architectural Heritage of Art Nouveau, Jugendstil: History and Conservation*, Germany National Commission for UNESCO, Bonn 1991.

UNESCO'S JOINT STUDY AND ACTION PROJECT ON ART NOUVEAU HERITAGE (1985). The idea of organizing the International Study and Action Project on Art Nouveau Heritage originated from the Hungarian town of Kecskemét in 1985. Thus, the role of Hungary was undeniable in shaping of the international recognition of Art Nouveau Heritage. The date of 1985 bore another fundamental significance in Hungary, therefore the country joined to the UNESCO World Heritage Convention in same year. The fact that Hungary proposed the Art Nouveau architectural heritage into the attention of the UNESCO and the international scientific milieu – right after the joining to the Convention – proves that the Art Nouveau style and architecture has had a significant role in Hungary, which has to be expressed on an international stage as well. As Hans Dieter Dyroff reported the project was included by UNESCO's programme and budget for 1988-89 thank to the fact that "it was considered to be a pioneering project for the conservation of twentieth century architecture".⁴⁵³ Indeed, the project established the network of professionals in order to irrevocably re-evaluate the Art Nouveau heritage and position it on the right place on people's mental map. In my opinion, there was an additional importance of the UNESCO's Joint Study Programme, namely for the first time, the attention was paid not only on the local, regional or national variants of the Art Nouveau architecture, but also on the universal values of the style. According to the project the re-evaluation of the Art Nouveau heritage should be laid on them. Thus, the incorporation of Art Nouveau Heritage into the UNESCO program could mean that – apart from its role in national, regional and local identity – Art Nouveau is a bearer of a common European identity; moreover it has a universal value. Dyroff confirmed the rhyme of the project to the Art Nouveau: "a cultural dialogue between people, cultural interdependence, and changing identities, which are today called for in UNESCO's programme, were already a reality in the creative developments of that time, as reflected in the art nouveau movement".⁴⁵⁴

The aim of the project was to research, document and promote the worldwide spread Art Nouveau architecture as "lot of the building of this period are still endangered today – some are ignored, even being demolished".⁴⁵⁵ The results of the project were published in two publications: the first, which was focusing on the definition and on the different national variants of the style; the second concentrated on the recent situation of the Art Nouveau

⁴⁵³ Hans-Dieter Dyroff was the Chief of the Culture Section of the German Commission for UNESCO and the coordinator of the project. in: Dyroff, *Architecture* cit., p. 183.

⁴⁵⁴ H.Dyroff, *Architecture with a smile – an international study and action project*, in "Museum" 1990, 167, 3. p. 182.

⁴⁵⁵ Dyroff, *Architecture* cit., p. 182.

heritage (reconstructions).⁴⁵⁶ Furthermore, in the next year several travelling exhibitions and regular Plenary Experts Meetings were organised in order to promote the project and share the new scientific results among the member states, where we can find: Czechoslovakia and France as well.⁴⁵⁷ In addition, two of the UNESCO's revues of 1990 were completely dedicated to the topic of Art Nouveau architecture (the *Museum* and the *UNESCO Courier*).⁴⁵⁸

The significant achievement of the project took place during the action-oriented phase after 1989, when the Study Project was named 'Architecture with a smile'.⁴⁵⁹ The members of the project prepared a manual for the preservation of Art Nouveau buildings by highlighting the parameters of a suitable documentation. They distinguished three types of Art Nouveau buildings, which require different treatment during the documentation and the preservation processes by taking into consideration its material and decoration.⁴⁶⁰

"The first category contains buildings with only few parts in Art Nouveau, but with materials and surface treatments characteristic of the period, such as tiles, or types of plasterworks, where this surface should be analysed in details. The second consists buildings with mixed ornamental styles, but containing much Art Nouveau, where the composition and decorative elements should be analysed. The last group includes the buildings of "complete" Art Nouveau and obviously high quality design, when a detailed research is required of their history, builders."⁴⁶¹

Unfortunately, during the analysis of my case studies I did not find any sources, which would prove that the architects of the reconstruction processes would make their decisions in accordance with this manual. On the other hand, there were some common points by comparing the documentations of the Heritage Institutes and the Joint Study Project's one. To compare these common points the architects and the professional's highlighted that there are two remarkable problems in case of the reconstruction of Art Nouveau buildings. The first is to find qualified and suitable workmen and craftsmen for the reconstruction works, second is to recover the original materials in order to save the authenticity the building. In case of the reconstruction of several Hungarian Art Nouveau buildings these questions have been also

⁴⁵⁶ H.Dyroff., *Art Nouveau/Jugendstil Architecture in Europe*, German Commission for Unesco, Bonn 1988 in: "Architecture and protection of monuments and sites of historical interest" vol. 30, German Commission for UNESCO, Bonn 1991.

⁴⁵⁷ Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Brasil, Bulgaria, Byelorussia, China, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, France, Luxemburg, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Soviet Union, Tunesia, Turkey, Ukraine, Uruguay, Yugoslavia. See.

⁴⁵⁸ "Museum" 1990, 167, 3 and *Le Courier de l'UNESCO* August 1990.

⁴⁵⁹ Many publications appeared like cartographic works. See. A. Gillette, *Architecture with a smile: Parisian Art Nouveau*, Paris 2000.

⁴⁶⁰ U.Gräf, *Architectural Research and Documentation of art Nouveau Buildings as a Basic Requirement of the Preservation of Cultural Monuments* in : Dyroff, *Art Nouveau* cit., pp. 12—15.

⁴⁶¹ Gräf, *Architectural* cit. p. 13.

appeared and they were completed by a third one, which laid in the respect of the Venice Charter's articles.⁴⁶²

By analysing the reconstruction works of Art Nouveau works, we are able to understand the complexity of Art Nouveau architecture from an additional perspective. The limitation of this thesis did not let the detailed analysis of the reconstruction plans of each building, therefore only the main principles are discussed here in case of the cities.

EUROPEAN ORGANIZATIONS AND NETWORKS.

It has to be emphasized once more that the lift of the National Art Nouveau heritage to the International level can be considered as the fulfilment of the preservation of Art Nouveau. As a result of the UNESCO Joint Study Project, the basis of further organizations and networks has been laid, which are engaged in the perfection of the preservation of Art Nouveau heritage on the international level. In 1999, the *Réseau Art Nouveau Network* as an initial European co-operation was established by a large group of institutions from European cities.⁴⁶³ Their key objectives are the research, conservation and management of Art Nouveau heritage. They tend to keep the professionals informed and to draw the general public attention to its European dimension by organising travelling exhibitions, international symposiums and many publications. In the next year, several non-profit association of local governments and non-governmental institutions have joined in the *Art Nouveau European Route* with the aim to develop useful mechanisms and to share experiences for the international promotion and protection of Art Nouveau heritage by focusing on the development of sustainable tourism as well, which is a key aspects regarding nowadays mass tourism.⁴⁶⁴ The first members gathered in 2000 and the number of participants has been growing consistently since then. Budapest and Nancy are the members of these organisations, while Prague and Strasbourg are lacking the institutional background, which would ensure their membership.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶² *The Venice Charter (1964): International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites*, IInd International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, Venice 1964. Consulted on: http://www.icomos.org/charters/venice_e.pdf Accessed on [10 February 2013]

⁴⁶³ *Réseau Art Nouveau Network* Consulted on: <http://www.artnouveau-net.eu> Accessed on [10 May 2013]

⁴⁶⁴ *Art Nouveau European Route* Consulted on: <http://www.coupdefouet.eu/en/index.php> Accessed on [10 April 2013]

⁴⁶⁵ Thank to Katalin Kiss from capital of Budapest and the Musée de l'École de Nancy

3.1. Budapest: Museum of Applied Arts

From the 1980s we can talk about the real revival of Art Nouveau in Budapest. After the establishment the monument protection on the national level, we are witnessing here – as in case of the other case studies – the realization of the preservation of Art Nouveau heritage, although compared to the reconstruction of the buildings in Prague, Nancy and Strasbourg the rehabilitation of the Museum of Applied Arts has begun late.

In January 1980 the Hungarian television started to broadcast the programme of Mihály Rháday, which tended to draw public attention to the endangered architectural memories of Budapest, thus to Art Nouveau as well. As a result of the programme several groups and associations were established dedicated themselves for the protection of the urban space and heritage. Another remarkable contribution was the collection of information and lost details about the building of the Cabaret Parisiana (1907—1909) designed by Béla Lajta, which due to – the large transformations of the Soviet era – had completely changed. Thus the task of the architects was unusually difficult.⁴⁶⁶ As Gerle highlighted “this was practical work with every imaginable problem relating to reconstruction: how to get information about tiny details or colours not known from contemporary photographs, how to obtain materials identical to the original, e.g. stones for facing etc.”⁴⁶⁷ The result became the first successful and complete Art Nouveau monument reconstruction in Budapest (1987—1900) by the Atelier of Tamás Kónig and Péter Wagner, although the architects opposed each other in certain points of the Venice Charter (1964), which is the internationally accepted Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites adopted by ICOMOS in 1965.⁴⁶⁸ They did not entirely reconstruct the building according to the original state, because they believed by using the latest technics they are able to produce the same quality, which can contribute to the save of the original value.⁴⁶⁹ According to Gábor Kruppa, who was the architect of the reconstruction

⁴⁶⁶ The archives dedicated to Lajta's works.

Consulted on : <http://lajtaarchiv.hu/muvek/1908-1909-parisiana-mulato/>
Accessed on: [128 April 2012]

⁴⁶⁷ Gerle, *Feedback* cit., p. 68.

⁴⁶⁸ *The Venice Charter (1964): International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites*, IInd International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, Venice 1964. Consulted on: http://www.icomos.org/charters/venice_e.pdf Accessed [10 February 2013]

⁴⁶⁹ E. P. Szabó, *Ékszerdoboz a Terézvárosban. A Parisiana-mulató újjáépítéséről* in „Szalon” 2001, March pp. 16—20.

of the Gresham Palace,⁴⁷⁰ which is a remarkable example for a successful reconstruction by function changing.⁴⁷¹ “The interpretation of the Venice Charter’s articles is probably the most questionable point in the reconstruction of Art Nouveau heritage”.⁴⁷² Kruppa claimed that the most problematic point in the Charter was the Article 9.:

“The process of restoration is a highly specialized operation. Its aim is to preserve and reveal the aesthetic and historic value of the monument and is based on respect for original material and authentic documents. It must stop at the point where conjecture begins, and in this case moreover any extra work, which is indispensable must be distinct from the architectural composition and must bear a contemporary stamp. The restoration in any case must be preceded and followed by an archaeological and historical study of the monument.”⁴⁷³

In this respect, if the architects would replace decorative elements in the building, he is obliged to distinct it from the composition. Kruppa confirmed that there were many cases, when they argued with the Cultural Heritage Office concerning the disregard of this article, but finally, by taking into consideration the successful results of the Cabaret Parisiana, the authorities accepted the changes in order to get a better quality. As we have seen in the previous subchapter, preservation of this heritage could be extremely difficult due to the richness of the decoration and the precise, sensitive details. Furthermore, the question of the use authentic – preferably the original – material is also substantial in order to save the original value of the monument. In many cases, the original (manu-)factory, which produced the original material for the buildings, does not exist anymore, which also question the legitimacy of the Article.

Kruppa was also the jury member of the recent European Union Competition of the ‘Reconstruction and value-added design of the building of the Museum of Applied Arts’ announced in 11 May 2012. The building of Ödön Lechner has been eagerly waiting for an entire reconstruction since 1950s. Due to the hostile, then uninterested attitude of the last decades there were no chance for the any financial support from the governments neither for slight renovations, nor the complete rehabilitation of the first example of the Hungarian Art

⁴⁷⁰ The Gresham Palace designed by Zsigmond Quittner and the Vágo Brothers in 1907

⁴⁷¹ The original palace was turned into the Four Seasons Hotel of Budapest. See. F. Bor, *Historizmus & Szecesszió. A Gresham-palota a Rossevelt-téren*, in „Szalon” 2000, 4, 2. pp. 43—47.

⁴⁷² Interview with Gábor Kruppa on [04 April 2011]

⁴⁷³ *The Venice Charter (1964): International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites*, IInd International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, Venice 1964.

Consulted on: http://www.icomos.org/charters/venice_e.pdf
Accessed [10 February 2013]

Nouveau.⁴⁷⁴ Since November 2010 the building and its environment has been considered life threatening due to falling pieces of the decorative plasters, ceramics and structural elements from the façade of the Museum. For this reason, the Ministry ordered the encirclement of the building. The belvedere of the cupola was removed in order to make secure the main route (Üllői út) when Hungary took on the presidency of the Council of the European Union for the first time from Spain and Belgium on 1 January 2011.⁴⁷⁵ Another remarkable event took place during the EU presidency to glorify the cooperation of the three countries: the organisation of the travelling exhibition – exhibited on the fences of the Hungarian National Museum – dedicated to the three Art Nouveau artists (Ödön Lechner, António Gaudí, and Victor Horta) entitled as *Barcelona, Brussels, Budapest „Great Masters of European Art Nouveau*.⁴⁷⁶

By taking into consideration the mentioned circumstances – with the support of the Government – the Museum of Applied Arts could announce the competition for the reconstruction of the historic monument. It was won recently by Vikár és Lukács Építész Stúdió. The architects had to satisfy the following the purposes:

“to design the complex reconstruction and value-added development of the historic main building of the Museum of Applied Arts, proposal for the renovation of the built environment of the building, and the design must find solutions to the architectural, technical and historic reconstruction of the significantly deteriorated building, reformation of the entire exhibition system, taking into consideration the reorganization of the functions of the building, constructing a building on the site of the unimplemented wing in Högyes Endre Street, architectural ‘completion’ of the building, creating a unity of the old and new building parts, meeting the highest functional and aesthetic standards, connection between the building and its environment, urbanistic embedding, reconsideration of operation (building management issues).”⁴⁷⁷

The reconstructions will start soon, therefore the elaboration of the architectural solutions of Vikár and Lukács, which can be the topic of a future research.

⁴⁷⁴ Interview with Dr. Imre Takács, the director of the Museum of Applied Arts [13 April 2011]

⁴⁷⁵ <http://www.imm.hu/hu/contents/164,Veszélyelhár%C3%ADtás%2C+2011> [10 February 2013]

⁴⁷⁶ K. Keserü (ed.), *Barcelona, Brussels, Budapest „Great Masters of European Art Nouveau”*, Exhibition Catalogue spring 2011, Sagrada Família, Hungarian National Museum, Parc de Bruxelles, Budapest 2011.

⁴⁷⁷ Reconstruction and value-added design of the main building of the Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest - Design Contest Documentation, May 2012.

Consulted on: <http://www.imm.hu/hu/contents/141,Tervpályázat> Accessed on [28 January 2013]

3.2. Prague: Municipal House

The Municipal House was protected as national cultural heritage in 1989, with the following justification: “the building is the most important Art Nouveau monument in Prague, which has a unique function and high quality of design, therefore it bears with a cultural and historical value”.⁴⁷⁸ According to the monument protection documentation of the building (created in 1988) the Municipal House has required an urgent reconstruction as a consequence of the long negligence, which lead to the degradation of the building.⁴⁷⁹

The date 1989 was fundamental in the history of the building from another perspective as well as the building gave the site for the meeting of the Civil Forum – under the leadership of Vaclav Havel – who lead out the country from the previous leadership during the Velvet Revolution (from 17 November to 29 December 1989). Therefore, the building became the symbol of the national revival again. During the economic crisis, which followed the change of the political system, President Vaclav Havel decided to initiate a financial fund for the reconstruction of the building, considering its symbolical role, which action was criticized by many people. The critiques concerning the building were seemingly returned at the time of the reconstruction project.

The ultimate mental rehabilitation of the building was followed by the entire reconstruction work from 1994 to 1997. By respecting the principles of the proper preservation of historic monuments (the Venice Charter and other recommendations) the architects stressed that they tend to reconstruct the exterior and the interior of the building according to the original state, thus they get rid of the additional objects, which ruin the lavish design of the Municipal House.⁴⁸⁰ During the documentation phase of the project, the professionals revealed that many decorative elements, mural painting and metal works were completely demolished due to the reckless management of the building, which let the tenants of the building (the owner of the restaurants and cafés) to carrying out certain alterations. Ross Crockford the reporter of the Prague Post reported on 24 August 1994 that the tenants of the building had to vacate their businesses for a few months, while “controversy surrounding

⁴⁷⁸ Monument documentation of the Municipal House of National Heritage Institute in Prague (NPU) 1988. Consulted on [10 March 2012] p.223.

⁴⁷⁹ Monument documentation of the Municipal House of National Heritage Institute in Prague (NPU) 1988. Consulted on [10 March 2012] p.224.

⁴⁸⁰ Monument documentation of the Municipal House of National Heritage Institute in Prague (NPU) 1988. Consulted on [10 March 2012] pp. 221—224.

the building's reconstruction goes on".⁴⁸¹ The cause of this controversy was not originated only from the tenants' problems, but also from the debates, which surrounded the competition for the reconstruction. Seemingly, the good old questions concerning the 'irregularity' of the competition returned. The rival company was complaining about the unfair competition, and the city had to review the decision of the building's management, thus the reconstruction works were prolonged. In the following years they revealed other – more serious – problems. In January 1996 the Prague Post's article reported the new management's update about the reconstruction of the building:

"The problems are the most recent to arise from years of mismanagement and chronic neglect of the showplace (...) contracting company (...) was hired to restore the building's façade, but long before it reopened in 1993, local professionals knew something was wrong (...) the historians were saying it did not look good."

Indeed, due to the mismanagement and the lack of the professional firms and craftsmen the waste and the damage were unchangeable. Their careless and historically inaccurate work was paid by the building, among the construction errors: „Contractors repainted the building bright white instead of its original sandstone; improper materials were used to repair metal ornaments, the work historically incorrect, and shortcuts were taken in replastering.“⁴⁸² In addition, they noted that the tourists, and also the foreign tenants caused many damages, as they did not appreciate the national landmark: “A gilded stage and the large room surrounding it are defaced, marked by cigarette burns and filth. Artful details such as door handles, finials and melding appear to have suffered damage that compounded the effect of aging.”⁴⁸³

Finally, the professionals could overcome these problems and rehabilitated the Municipal House in his old glamour. They replaced the missing and demolished elements by replicas made according to old photographs (or the after the rests), they renovated the refurbishment according to historical documentation, and they completed the building with the newest technologies, which are in harmony with the old. The mural paintings of the Mayor's Hall was renovated according to Mucha's original design, the curtains and the furniture have been preserved, furthermore the indirect lighting of the hall was arranged to

⁴⁸¹ R. Crockford, *Rebuilding Stalled as Obecni Dum Shuts*, in: „Prague Post“ 1994, August 14. Consulted on: <http://www.praguepost.com/archivescontent/15929-rebuilding-stalled-as-obecni-dum-shuts.html> Accessed on [18 March 2012]

⁴⁸² M. Blackburn, *Poor Obecni dum repair costs city millions*, in: „Prague Post“ 1996, January 3

⁴⁸³ Blackburn, *Poor* cit.

meet the proposal of Mucha.⁴⁸⁴ The reconstruction of the Municipal House was followed by the preservation of other remarkable Art Nouveau buildings, like the Grand Hotel Europe on the Wenceslav Square. Thank to the remarkable national and historical value of Municipal House, the building and also Czech Art Nouveau has been put not only on the mental map of the inhabitants, but also on the UNESCO World Heritage List as part of the Historic Centre of Prague (after its extension in 2011), which proves its universal value as well.⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸⁴ Consulted on: <http://www.obecnidum.cz/en/mayor-hall-1404042389.html>
Accessed on: [18 March 2012]

⁴⁸⁵Historic Centre of Prague
Consuted on: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/616/>
Accessed on: [10 March 2012]

3.3. Nancy: Brasserie Excelsior

We have seen in the previous chapter how one of the most remarkable memories of Art Nouveau architecture of Nancy was saved in 1976 thank to the immense activity of the residents and professionals of the city. According to its monument protection documentation the Excelsior's façade, roof, main hall and decoration became protected.⁴⁸⁶ On the other hand, the question of the Hotel d'Angleterre, which was situated on the upper floors of the building – and closed in 1975 due to the lack of clients – was still unsolved. In the same year, when Excelsior's inscription for historic monument status passed the authorities proposed the reutilisation, more precisely, the transformation of the ancient hotel rooms into accommodations.⁴⁸⁷ Moreover, the first recommendations were made concerning the future restoration of the façade, the masonry, and the carpentry according to the original state, although – as we have stated before – both the interior and the exterior of the building was in a relative good conditions.⁴⁸⁸

In 1981, the permission for the demolition of certain parts of Hotel d'Angleterre was given. Furthermore, smaller works were taking place in the same year considering the infrastructure.⁴⁸⁹ In 1982, the construction of the accommodations started, and some of the neighbouring buildings were demolished with the permission of the authorities regarding their bad conditions. In this year the idea of the reconstruction of the whole block appeared but it could not be realized until 1986, when the director (Jean Paul Bucher) of the FLO group discovered the Excelsior.

Finally, the Excelsior was incorporated in the FLO and it could keep its original function. The reconstruction of the building, therefore, the real preservation of the memories of École de Nancy began in the same year. In accordance to the historic monument status of the building the architects tended to respect in every case the original version of the decoration. The whole interior of the Brasserie was reconstructed after the original plans (which were collected by the Archives of Lorraine), like the stuccos of the ceiling, the lustres. Some restoration works were required in case of Gruber's windows and Majorelle's furniture. Some problematic questions appeared in case of the façade. After the cleaning of the surface, it became clear that the façade's decorative elements were injured in several places. Moreover, the pergola of the top floor was seriously demolished by the weather. Some

⁴⁸⁶ Reference Mérimée: A54000064, © Région Lorraine - Inventaire général, 1974.

⁴⁸⁷ Caillaut, *Dossier préalable cit.*, p. 10.

⁴⁸⁸ Caillaut, *Dossier préalable cit.*, p. 10.

⁴⁸⁹ Caillaut, *Dossier préalable cit.*, p. 17,

elements had to be replaced by PVC, instead of the original one.⁴⁹⁰ In 2010, documentation was made by Pierre-Yves Caillault for the further reconstruction of the Excelsior, but also the whole block as they tended to create a harmonized street view in the urban landscape of the historic centre, which was scratched by the inappropriate extension works of the railway station.

In total we can state that the reconstruction works of the Brasserie Excelsior were successful and appropriate as the building could keep its original function and original design in the spirit of École de Nancy. As Thomas Schwartz (American art history professor) stated, while he was spending a dinner in the Excelsior: “Vous avez quelque chose d’unique. Nancy, le coeur culturel de l’Art Nouveau, c’est wonderful! C’est un rêve qui deviant réalité. Rien n’es semblable à cela.”⁴⁹¹ Or Gilles Pudlowski wrote in the *Républicain lorraine*:

“La plus belle brasserie de France? L’Excelsior à Nancy. Ce monument Art Nouveau, repris par le group Flo qui lui a redonné son lustre, fait bel effet, avec son haut plafond , ses stucs, ses patères, ses boiseries Majorelle, sa verrière de Gruber, ses banquettes de velours jaunes, ses beaux luminaires. On ajoute que le service a du nerf et que la cuisine fait des efforts dans le sens de la séduction générale, mais aussi du régionalisme bien compris.”⁴⁹²

France was celebrating the Year of the Nancy School (L’Année de l’École de Nancy), with many programs and exhibitions.⁴⁹³ André Rossinot the mayor of Nancy highlighted the importance of the year as the real revival of the heritage of the École de Nancy. Moreover, he stressed that it came from the fact that the École de Nancy has been bearing meaningful contents to them:

“l’École de Nancy est, à mes yeux, bien plus qu’un mouvement artistique, bien plus qu’un moment heureux dans l’histoire de la cité. Elle est porteuse de valeurs dont on ne soulignera jamais assez l’extraordinaire modernité, à l’aube du troisième millénaire ; le rôle de l’art et de la culture dans la vie quotidienne, le rapport avec la nature, l’art vécu dans son rapport subtil et complice avec l’économie et le développement (...) mais la leçon que nous pouvons tirer de l’histoire de l’École de Nancy demeure, elle, d’une singularité actualité.”

⁴⁹⁰ In case of the Excelsior we can also highlight that in order to the maintenance of the building new materials were required to be used.

⁴⁹¹ Caffier, *L’Excelsior cit.*, p.68.

⁴⁹² Caffier, *L’Excelsior cit.*, p.79.

⁴⁹³ *L’Ecole de Nancy: fleurs et ornements - ma racine est au fond des bois*, Exhibition catalogue, 24 Avril-26 Juillet 1999, Musée de l’École de Nancy, Paris 1999. ; F.Loyer (ed.), *L’École de Nancy, 1889—1909. Art nouveau et industries d’art*, Exhibition catalogue, 24 April—26 July 1999, Musée des beaux-arts, Nancy, Paris 1999.

3.4. Strasbourg: Écoles des Arts Décoratifs

First of all, I have to admit here the limitation of my research in case of the School of Applied Arts in Strasbourg. I made my research at the Inventaire du patrimoine en Alsace and at the Service Territoriaux de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine (STAP) in Strasbourg in March 2013.

As a consequence that the building has been waiting for further reconstructions, some of the documentations considering the School's first reconstruction works were unavailable at that time. Therefore, my aim is to present here the results of my limited research and the further perspectives of the preservation of Art Nouveau Heritage in Strasbourg based on the information, what M. Serge Brentrup,⁴⁹⁴ Mme Marie Pottecher⁴⁹⁵, Mme Clémentine Albertoni⁴⁹⁶ and Hervé Doucet⁴⁹⁷ shared with me.

The School of Applied Arts became listed as historic monument in 1981,⁴⁹⁸ after a series of professionals' work dedicated to the preservation of the degrading Art Nouveau heritage of the city. According to the monument protection documentation the building's main façade with the ceramics, the top-floor's floral patterned ceiling with the Art Nouveau door, and the handrail decoration of the stairway became protected by emphasizing its pioneer 'Jugendstil' artistic value in Strasbourg:⁴⁹⁹

“ Le décor céramique de cette façade et les restes de décoration intérieure constituent un témoignage très intéressant d'un mouvement artistique; il est ici employé a grande échelle. Ce style a fait école encore en Alsace au-delà de la période de l'annexion. Avis favorable par l'inscription à l'Inventaire Supplémentaire de la facade antérieure et du plafond agoré au dernier niveau du corps central aussi que les encadrement en céramique de la porte donnant sur le palier”.⁵⁰⁰

In the same year some reconstruction works began concerning the façade's ceramic tiles cleaning and renovation. Surprisingly, the monument documentation of the School is stressing on the importance that the example of the School of Applied Arts was given by École de

⁴⁹⁴ Serge Brentrup (l'architecte des bâtiments de France du bas Rhin, chef de service de STAP)
Meeting on [8 March 2013]

⁴⁹⁵ Marie Pottecher (conservatrice du Patrimoine, chef du Service de l'Inventaire du Patrimoine de la Région Alsace)
Meeting on [8 March 2013]

⁴⁹⁶ Cémentine Albertoni (qui est chargée de la protection des monuments historiques DRAC Alsace)
Meeting on [8 March 2013]

⁴⁹⁷ Hervé Doucet (maître de conférence à l'Université de Strasbourg)
Meeting on [7 March 2013]

⁴⁹⁸ Référence Mérimée PA00085023 © Monuments historiques, 1992.

⁴⁹⁹ Monument Documentation of École des Art Décoratifs © DRAC Alsace 1981.

⁵⁰⁰ Avis de l'architecte en chef des Monument historique Strasbourg, 6 Novemner 1980. in: Monument Documentation of École des Art Décoratifs © DRAC Alsace 1981.

Nancy, thus it was originated from France.⁵⁰¹ Although Anton Seder – the promoter and the first director of the School – confirmed and appreciated the artistic achievement of Émile Gallé and the École de Nancy, he originated his interests mostly from Britain.⁵⁰² In 2005, the restoration of the ceramics’ painting were taking place.⁵⁰³ In 2006, the School finally received the permission for the entire reconstruction and the extension of the building, which was required as the Écoles des Arts Décoratifs incorporated other artistic school of the city.⁵⁰⁴ The reconstruction works took place for four years and the new building of the school was built in the back yard of the original building.⁵⁰⁵ The new and the modern facades contrast received many critiques, but regarding the functional and technical development of the School they finally accepted it.⁵⁰⁶ Due to the circumstances of the weather and some damages caused by the art students some new reconstruction works are required (the School has been waiting for the permission since 2012).

As it happened on the turn of the century the new perspectives for the Art Nouveau were given by the development project of the *Neustadt*.⁵⁰⁷ The aim of the city has been to extend the *Secteur Sauvegardé* protection status of the historic centre of the city to the Neustadt, which would mean the preservation of all the buildings, which situate in zone of the protection. By analysing of the extension plans at the DRAC of Alsace (on the meeting with the chief architect of Strasbourg) it was revealed that the building of the School of Applied Arts was left out from the extension zone. The revision of the plan would be required as there has been the newest possible plan for the higher level of the protection of *Neustadt*. By the extension of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Strasbourg (The Big Island) the Art Nouveau heritage would get its proper qualification.

⁵⁰¹ Annex in: Monument Documentation of École des Art Décoratifs © DRAC Alsace 1981.

⁵⁰² Cited by Richez in: Richez, *Aux origines* cit., pp. 104—105.

⁵⁰³ *Archi-Strasbourg*.

Consulted on: http://www.archistrasbourg.org/adresse1_rue_de_l_acad%E3%A9mie_krutenau_strasbourg-508.html?check=1&archiIdAdresse=508&archiAffichage=adresseDetail&archiIdEvenementGroupeAdresse=1782&debut= Accessed on [10 May 2013]

⁵⁰⁴ The School of Applied Arts was renamed as École Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs, and since 2011 Haute École des Arts du Rhin (HEAR)

⁵⁰⁵ *Archi-Strasbourg*

Consulted on: http://www.archi-strasbourg.org/adresse1_rue_de_l_acad%E3%A9mie_krutenau_strasbourg-508.html?check=1&archiIdAdresse=508&archiAffichage=adresseDetail&archiIdEvenementGroupeAdresse=1782&debut= Accessed on [10 May 2013]

⁵⁰⁶ Gaudin Architect Cabinet on Archi-Strasbourg

Consulted on: http://www.archi-strasbourg.org/adresse-1_rue_de_l_acad%E3%A9mie_krutenau_strasbourg-508.html?check=1&archiIdAdresse=508&archiAffichage=adresseDetail&archiIdEvenementGroupeAdresse=1782&debut= Accessed on [10 May 2013]

⁵⁰⁷ Serge Brentrup (l’architecte des bâtiments de France du bas Rhin, chef de service de STAP) Meeting on [8 March 2013]

Conclusion

By analysing the preservation history of Art Nouveau architectural heritage of Budapest, Prague, Nancy and Strasbourg I would like to summarize the results of my research.

After more than fifty years of struggles – which were characterized by losses rather than successes – the monument protection of Art Nouveau architecture have started from the 1950s and was taking shape in different phases in Hungary, the Czech lands and France. The real preservation of Art Nouveau heritage has been rising since the 1980s and it is still in process. As one could have seen, Art Nouveau architecture was not only the imprint of its own age society's needs and dreams, it is more than that. While the style was consciously seeking for answers to the questions of the new, modern age and life, it gave the basis for the twentieth century – and also for our century – thanks to its special aesthetical, social and political contents. In fact, the uniqueness, the vitality and also the unusual fate of the style, all derive from this diverse and complex character.

Apart from the common – international – concept, Art Nouveau had its own variants, shapes and responses from city to city, from region to region with seemingly many contradictory internal elements, which were perceived in different manner by the diverse political and ideological systems, and also the society of the last century. Art Nouveau at the same time, can be considered international (cosmopolitan), national, but also regional, moreover as Jeremy Howard argued in his book *Art Nouveau, International and National Styles in Europe*:

“It can be both decadent and progressive, national and liberal, eastern and western, vernacular and international, urban and rural, imperial and social, natural and artificial, material and spiritual. It can be seen as the commercialisation of art, a debasement of symbolist aestheticism into realms of mass culture and popular appeal (...) Or as elitist and aristocratic, clinging to vanishing values. It is at once anti-rationalist, expressing the wildest of fantasies, and functionalist, giving material form to socialist aspirations and technological advances.”⁵⁰⁸

It has been emphasized that the history of Art Nouveau heritage have been marked by an essential identity building process, and its preservation⁵⁰⁹ transfers self-images from us.⁵¹⁰ This

⁵⁰⁸ J. Howard, *Art Nouveau, International and national styles in Europe*, Manchester-New York 1996. p.2.

⁵⁰⁹ The phenomenon interestingly coincides with the institutionalization of cultural heritage. See. P. Erdősi, G. Sonkoly (eds), *A kulturális örökség társadalomtörténete* (The social history of cultural heritage) Budapest 2004; F. Bercé, *Des Monuments historiques au Patrimoine du XVIIIe siècle à nos jours ou „Les égarement du coeur et*

fact proves my hypothesis: Art nouveau architecture – according to the earlier historical styles – bears an extraordinary identity-making power, which is mainly characterized by its nation-building role. This fact influences the assessing of the Art Nouveau heritage and preservation to a great extent, in many cases negatively. Through my analysis one could have seen that in Hungary, Art Nouveau architecture founded by Ödön Lechner was regarded as the National Style. Although in Czech lands, Art Nouveau was replaced by another form of national style (namely Rondocubism after 1918), Art Nouveau could still have nationalist connotations. In Western Europe, despite the fact that the nation building has been in another state,⁵¹¹ Art Nouveau architecture and heritage was also impregnated by the question of identity. In the case of Nancy, I have concluded that the Art Nouveau architecture was a platform of regional identity, while in case of Strasbourg it was filled by national feelings, which - bearing political messages - affected the heritage preservation as well. Based on the concept of Gábor Sonkoly by analysing the heritage preservation (protection) processes of each nation – especially the site nominations for the World Heritage and also for the Tentative List – we are able to reconstruct our relationship to the past and heritage.⁵¹²

In conclusion, we can state that the announcement of the Art Nouveau as a part of our heritage had begun relatively late, and appeared in different phases and to different extents in Europe. Comparing to Western Europe, Central Europe shows differences – a certain late – in the preservation of Art Nouveau heritage. On the other hand, the often-cited ‘belated’ development of these countries is probably the less evident here, thanks to the intense work of professionals, who have constantly been fighting for the preservation of our architectural assets (what meant a silent resistance against the political systems). In Central Europe the major architectural memories of Art Nouveau had been protected earlier as monuments in contrast to the West, although this phenomenon would suggest that the political and ideological milieu was less favourable for subsistence of cultural values. For this reason, the heritage preservation (reconstruction and also management) of these buildings was not as obvious as it should have been. The lack of modern heritage sites from the Central European

de l'esprit”, Paris 2000; I. Fekete, *Műemlékvédelem és örökség Magyarországon: intézménytörténet, perspektívák, vélemények*, in: „Világosság” 2005, 6, pp. 101–116.

⁵¹⁰ G. Sonkoly, *The social history of cultural heritage protection in Hungary*, in: J. Purchla (ed.), *Protecting and Safeguarding Cultural Heritage. The Systems of management of the cultural heritage in the Visegrad centres*, Cracow 2010. pp. 11–30.

⁵¹¹ As the researchers of nationalism highlighted the rise of nationalism and the national identity building took place earlier in Western Europe (like in France or in England) comparing to Central and Eastern Europe, what is marked by a general late development. See. i.e. B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso 1983; E. Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge 1983.

⁵¹² G. Sonkoly, *The social cit.*, p. 26.

region on the World Heritage and Tentative List indicate this troubled relationship to the near past, as Sonkoly highlighted.⁵¹³ Apart from a Polish and a Czech example the nearest site in time is the work of Ödön Lechner on the Tentative list since 2008 – as ‘Ödön Lechner’s independent pre-modern architecture’ – which is also an example for the different readings of Art Nouveau artists’ modernity.⁵¹⁴ In contrast, the ‘Works of Antoni Gaudí’ has been on the World Heritage since 1985, and the ‘Mayor Town Houses of the architect Victor Horta (Brussels)’ has been listed since 2000.⁵¹⁵

There is a last aspect, which can be mentioned about the preservation of Art Nouveau heritage: the spread of a complex urban design thinking nowadays which is – based on modern foundation – stressing the improvement of the Art Nouveau values. Thus, the apotheosis of Art Nouveau’s idea is the presence of the ‘total work of art’ (*Gesamkunstwerk*) incorporated in the technological development of architectural achievements of today.⁵¹⁶ There is a need for the spiritual content, which Art Nouveau had, in order to let the people bind to their built environment and realize its values. Thus, there is a spiritual arc between Art Nouveau era and some of today's most valuable architectural works. I believe, this can also be considered as the actual realization of the preservation of Art Nouveau heritage.

⁵¹³ G. Sonkoly, *The social cit.*, p. 27.

⁵¹⁴ Consulted on: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5366/>. Accessed on [10 May 2013]

⁵¹⁵ Consulted on: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/320> and <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1005>. Accessed on [10 May 2013].

⁵¹⁶ We can find some adaptation of Art Nouveau’s concept in Post-Modernist works also. Several examples of the adaptation of Art Nouveau’s principles: Frank O. Gehry: Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao (1997), Miralles: Santa Caterina Market in Barcelona (1997-2001), Peter Zumthor : Kolumba Museum in Cologne (2010), Erick van Egeraat Associated Architects: ING Headquarters in Budapest (2004), and also Baló Dániel, Eke Dániel, Kalászi Zoltán: Concerthall Installation in Pannonhalma (2012)

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Marie Pottecher (conservatrice du Patrimoine, chef du Service de l'Inventaire du Patrimoine de la Région Alsace)
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I hereby declare that I researched and wrote this thesis independently, using only the listed resources and literature.

Paris, 10 June 2013

Lilla Zámbó