

Diversity in unity? The public administration's personnel in matters of public architecture

Any imperial-royal Minister for Public Works (the office existed from 1908 to 1918) who opened a door in the wall panelling of his official bureau in Vienna, could get a quick overview of the ministry's departmental structure and its personnel.¹ The inside of this door contained a flexible organisation chart arranged according to the ministry's departments with insertable cards carrying the typewritten names of the (senior) civil servants. Next to them, someone had added the letters 'C' and 'Slo' or 'Slov' in pencil.



The photographic records of this object form a remarkable time capsule when the dual monarchy had already collapsed and its successor states been founded. They document that the staff, who had previously worked in a single building complex in Vienna and had been responsible for the whole of Cisleithania, now either had to remain civil servants in Austria or become civil servants in one of the newly founded states due to the individual "Heimatrecht". From now on, the paths of former office colleagues diverged.

Based on the personnel of the ministry's departments which were responsible for public architecture, my paper discusses how the state administration functioned in a coherent and at the same time very differentiated cultural area. To what extent did centralised unifying ideas shape state buildings or did local responsibilities at provincial level dominate? What understanding of this cultural space can we recognise in the professional and linguistic qualifications, the individual work processes and tasks as well as the individual careers of the civil servants involved?

¹ Unknown to the public and unrecognised by researchers until just before their destruction, this door, as well as all other wall-mounted fittings of the former minister's office, existed until the summer of 2023, when they became the irretrievable victims of a radical renovation by the current owners.

Title: The Politics of Electricity and Choreography: Electrification of the Vienna Court Opera and its Adaptation of the Irredentism Ballet "Excelsior"

Summary:

This study attempts to explore the relationship between the electrification of the Vienna Court Opera and changes in the social structure of late nineteenth-century Vienna.

Cultural history and media studies since the 1990s have revealed that electrical technology had an impact on the infrastructure of the modern society, as well as on the sociocultural relationships in their urban life. (Schivelbusch 1983, Beltran & Carré 1991 and others) Most notably is the gendering: the technology to extract profits from this "magical" phenomenon, while exclusively occupied by men (Marvin 1988), gained social recognition by advertisements featuring women (Otto 2015) and has developed the current industry (Otto 2021). Electrified theater performances across ballet and Variété encouraged the formation of modern subjects who internalize progressivism and capitalism, and promoted the gendering and polarization of labor, in front and back of the stage. (Burt 1998, Kogo 2022) Two of the representatives of these ballet pieces from Central Europe were such a success in the international entertainment network that reached as far as the Far East (Ueno 1996, Yamada 2021) and pushed the imperial powers towards the international race for electrification and modernization.

What happened during this process in the Habsburg Empire? In fact, the expectation for electrification grew socially, beginning with the International Electrotechnical Exhibition of 1883, and was directed to the court opera house. How did the empire respond to these public opinions as well as the pressure to the introduction and regulation of systems led by the advanced nations? And how were the social forces segmented and intertwined into ethnic groups, classes, and genders involved in this process? We can deduct some answers on survey of the electrification of theaters in Vienna, with a particular focus on the adaptation of the ballet "Excelsior" for the Court Opera.

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Short CV:

1996-2004 studied at the graduate School of Letters of Osaka University. (M.A.) 1999-2000 Scholarship of OeAD. 2002-2004 researching assistant of Osaka University. 2001 "theater arts" critic award (AICT/IATIC Japan) 2002 prize for encouragement, (Japanese Society for Dance Research) 2002- part-time lecturer at several universities, for German language, performing arts, dance history. 2014- assistant of Osaka University, 2016- promoted to assistant professor.

Related research:

- The Marriage of "Elektra and Dynamo": Ballet of the Electric Theater at the Vienna International Electric Exhibition 1883. In: *Kingendaiengeki*, Vol. 10, pp. 2-18, 2022/01
- Dolls and Electricity in Ballet at the Turn of the Century: Joseph Haßleiter's "Die Puppenfee". In: *Anthology of the Graduate School of Letters, Osaka University*. Vol. 61, p. 103-123, 2021/03
- Das Medium, das Träume und Begierde bündelt: Figuren von Puppen und Elektrizität im Ausstattungsballett "Columbia" (1893), In: *Machikaneyama ronso. Arts*. 2025.(coming)

Béla Rásky

Reactionary Politics, Cultural Modernism. An Austrofascist Paradox?

Baroque, down-to-earthness, and traditionalism were to represent the Austrian 'Ständestaat' 1934–1938. But a closer look reveals a more multifaceted picture, as Austrofascism was unable to secure a hegemony of its ideology despite repression. A moderate modernity remained possible in many areas. In some spheres, one can see acceptance, even promotion of modernist trends, in infrastructural or technical fields modernisation.

In architecture, this is represented by a 'clerical modernism' (Matthew Rampley) in new churches, in the ambitious residential buildings built after 1934 in Vienna, or in Oskar Haerdtl's transparent pavilion for the Paris World Exhibition 1937. However, tradition was still present in these churches, the 'Assanierungsprojekte' represented at best an unspectacular modernity unaccompanied by an overall urban planning, and the interior of the Paris pavilion was decorated with a gigantic Alpine panorama, in which fantasies of progress were mixed with the ones of an ideologised Austrian landscape.

Similar contradictions apply to the transport infrastructure: Impressive roads – such as the Großglockner alpine road or the Viennese *Höhenstraße* – were completed, but were of little importance in terms of actual transport needs or employment policy, only serving the regime's identity politics. Here, rather the professionalism of the propaganda regarding construction progress or staged openings, the use of audiovisual techniques such as posters, photographic montages or striking graphics, all point to a certain modernity.

The same applies to high culture, the regime's self-proclaimed domain: Max Reinhardt's production of *Faust* at the Austrofascist cultural flagship, the Salzburg Festival; the machinations surrounding the performance of Ernst Krenek's dodecaphonic opera *Karl V*; or the radio crisis. Tourism advertising also modernised in the wake of the 'Tausendmarksperré' imposed by Nazi Germany, and resulting in the need of orientation toward new markets: Customs and folklore now were advertised professionally and became compatible with modern marketing strategies and current graphics.

Technical innovation was marked e.g. with the development of a compact-car, hyped as a patriotic project, but whose mass production failed due to the financial means of large sections of the population, for whom the *Steyr Baby* was simply unaffordable.

Based on my contributions to the recently published book on Austrofascist cultural politics, the regime's 'reactionary modernism' (Jeffrey Herf), which has rarely been considered until now, is to be brought into focus, while at the same time working out, where the ideological and financial limits of this moderate modernism lay, pointing out contradictions and paradoxes.