

INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE PROTECTION AND INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY IN ROMANIA¹

- SHORT OVERVIEW -

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¹ This text refers to some paragraphs of the National Report for the TICCIH Congress of september 2006, and from the article Industrial Heritage – international issues and romanian contribution, published in Patrimoniul industrial al Banatului Montan – valoare europeană și potențial de integrare, UAUM, București, 2005, both signed by myself, in order to offer the readers a larger study.
2. The Moscow Charter for the industrial heritage, 2003
www.mnactec.com/TICCIH/3 Palmer, Marilyn, Neaverson, Peter, Industrial Archaeology, Principles and practice, Routledge, London, 2000, p. 15
4
http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/

The delegates assembled for the 2003 TICCIH Congress in Russia wish to assert that the buildings and structures built for industrial activities, the processes and tools used within them and the towns and landscapes in which they are located, along with all their other tangible and intangible manifestations, are of fundamental importance. They should be studied, their history should be taught, their meaning and significance should be probed and made clear for everyone, and the most significant and characteristic examples should be identified, protected and maintained, in accordance with the spirit of the Venice Charter, for the use and benefit of today and of the future

extract from the preamble of the Industrial Heritage Charter.

The Industrial Heritage Charter² TICCIH - adopted by TICCIH – The international committee for the conservation of the industrial heritage, at its Moscow/Nizhny Tagil Congress in 2003 represents a reference document in the relatively new field of the industrial archaeology, at the end of a continuous evolution during the second half of the 20th century, often combined with the struggle for its recognition.

The term “industrial archaeology” was first employed in England, in the early 1950’s and was then officially accepted by the “Council for British Archaeology”. Once TICCIH was founded in 1973 and the first Council of Europe Recommendation in the field was adopted (no. 872/1979) the legitimacy of the discipline is consolidated and the heritage protection politics is beginning to pay attention to the research and conservation of the industrial heritage.

Even if sometimes the term is still controversial and that, more than often, the field specialists were more concerned with the immediate heritage protection than with the conceptual definition of the field, industrial archaeology proved itself as a new and complex contemporary discipline. Its main research area comprises the

material or immaterial traces of the industrial society in its historical evolution and its research methods are including the interpretation of these traces from economical, technological or architectural point of view and are considering (by taking a step forward in the 21st century) their strong cultural significance³ as an element of the evolution of the human society.

International heritage protection strategies are now taking into account this significance. Through industrial heritage systematic inventory campaigns (as first indispensable steps in its protection) types of industrial heritage values as well as types of risks were identified. This helped in taking conservation decisions for significant and endangered sites. Inevitable losses were recorded, but also various sites were recovered, particularly in the 1990’s and, together with the international recognition of the field, several industrial heritage sites, having outstanding universal value, were included in the UNESCO’s World Heritage List⁴.

Romania still preserves industrial heritage objects of the past, from the 17th to the 20th century, quite remarkable for the south-eastern Europe. Besides singular sites of particular value (sometimes, still in

use), coherent samples of industrial development stages (pre-industrial, manufacture, industrial, fin de siècle, modern inter-bellum era) are still very present. After the war, the communist regime confiscated, but didn't destroy all these assets (unless for technological reasons), with the intention of using them for as long as possible, often with less than the minimum necessary maintenance works. Intensive industrial development, often artificially and politically encouraged, gave birth to huge new industrial sites (that sometimes swallowed the former and smaller ones). Some of them were, soon after 1989, closed, creating important social problems and leaving behind immense derelict areas.

After 1989, the bad economic situation of many industrial buildings owners made them either to abandon the heritage for being too expensive to maintain, or to "renovate" it by low-cost destructive methods, in order to make an immediate profit. Due to unawareness, inertia or lack of strategy, new buildings were preferred to old ones, which were in need of more delicate restoration works, old machines were scrapped in the name of the renewing of the production methods. This attitude was even more dangerous for the big industrial sites divided by the rushed privatization process from the beginning of the 90's – these sites initial coherence will be soon impossible to read. Representing important percentages in our cities and being now rather close to the city centres, these huge sites are seen as immense empty areas fit for new urban developing. The investors are attracted by the good location of the property, but are not willing to invest in reconverting

the old buildings, considering this a too complicated and uncomfortable process.

The public support in preserving these industrial objects is very difficult to obtain in Romania. Besides a somewhat general lack of civic reaction, people are still not receptive to this particular subject - they rather consider "the factory" as a place of exploitation and they could hardly accept it in postcards, for example, together with Romania's famous painted medieval churches.

However, on the other hand, some of them are slowly becoming interested and choose sometimes to plead for preserving their industrial memory (very recently a group of former workers and engineers organized themselves to fight for the Resita tall furnace that is facing an imminent demolition danger). Some of the industrial sites owners also started to see the potential of preserving the old buildings as being valuable for their brand image and even decided to do small factory museums.

The legal protection of the industrial heritage is now ensured through two main laws regarding the movable and immovable heritage (2000 and respectively 2001). The law sets both responsibilities and some (still "discreet") facilities for the heritage owners and for the ones willing to invest in restoration works. According to the second one, regarding the protection of historic monuments, an official list of historic monuments has been established. Out of a total of 29425 monuments ensembles and sites in the list, a number of 716 are industrial or related to industry. However the list has important

inaccuracies regarding the industrial heritage and the information is often limited to the denomination and address; so, for some lost objects, there is no inventory, no image, and no survey. The most endangered sites and objects are the ones that are not listed (as the listing process used, in the early 1990's, different experts, not always receptive to the subject), therefore unprotected by the law. Although the immediate listing of a building in case of danger is possible, even without the agreement of the owner, this process is slow and difficult and the demands for delisting industrial buildings are, due to different development pressures, quite numerous. A new project for a Romanian Law of industrial heritage was proposed by the Romanian Ministry of Culture – the Historic Monuments Department, and is now in public debate. Its purpose is to accommodate the inaccuracies and deal with aspects not taken into consideration by the actual law frame, regarding access in not protected sites, ways of privatization of industrial societies, specialized inventories and surveys.

Responding to the necessity of a national strategy in the field, the Ministry of Culture also initiated a program for the *Salvation of the national industrial archaeology heritage*, whose aims are to begin a specific inventory, to identify the most endangered sites, to find viable solutions and partners in saving them, to make a press campaign in order to get the people understand these values. In the first stage, which is now in process, taking into account the limited as well as imbalanced human and material resources in different areas of

the country, an experimental national survey was initiated in order to identify unprotected sites, to establish which sites are to be immediately listed, which sites are in immediate danger etc. Through the same program also human resources are to be identified.

Although first steps were taken in the 80's, especially in the Banat area, through the efforts of a few archaeologists and historians, industrial archaeology is still a rather new and not very well defined discipline in Romania. The research in the field is illustrated by a number of articles and studies mostly related to particular sites. No synthetic study was published although a first introductory book on Industrial Archaeology in Romania (*Arheologia Industrială pe teritoriul României* – Wollmann, Volker, 2003) gives information on the industrial heritage of Transylvania and Banat regions. A number of dedicated courses were organized at the University of Architecture and Urban Studies "Ion Mincu" in Bucharest, at the Universities of Reșița, Timișoara and Cluj and were as well included in the curricula of the Centre for Professional Training in Culture (the centre also established a database regarding Romanian specialists in the field). Quite a few architecture or geography diplomas and master thesis were dedicated to industrial heritage study and restoration.

In order to bring together these quite dispersed efforts, a series of four *international workshops on industrial archaeology* were organized in Romania, by the same Ministry, starting with 2001. Having TICCIH's support (reports of two of the workshops can be found in the TICCIH bulletin) and a

significant national and European participation, they essentially contributed to a better understanding of the industrial archaeology in Romania, through scientific exchanges between experts and enthusiasts from all over Europe. By constantly changing the location, they also made possible the direct contact with various industrial heritage sites in Romania – from traditional wood installations (numerous, quite well preserved and often still in use) to mines or heavy metallurgical sites. During these meetings the necessity of a national organization for industrial archaeology that should be affiliated to TICCIIH became clear and the formalities for the creation of such an entity are in process. Hopefully the future Romanian industrial archaeology association will be launched at the *5th international workshop on industrial archaeology* which is to be organized in October 10-15, 2006.

A number of national and international projects were initiated, also due to the exchanges facilitated by these meetings, among which: *Industrial heritage between land and sea – for a European network of ecomuseums* – a Culture 2000 project of several European partners, developed under the patronage of TICCIIH (www.amers.info); *Forcopar* – a Leonardo European project for a feasibility study regarding distance learning in industrial archaeology (www.forcopar.com); the association of Romania to the proposal of a new *Cultural Route of Europe regarding Industrial Heritage* (www.itineraire.sculpturels.com); *Industrial Heritage of the Mountaneous Banat – European value and integration potential* – a research project of the University of

Architecture and Urban Studies “Ion Mincu” in Bucharest dedicated to the region that contains the highest concentration of industrial heritage in Romania.

Although examples of industrial heritage recovery are still very few in Romania (one could mention the restoration of the *Timisoreana* brewery in Timisoara, or the reconversion of a former tram depot in Bucharest), all the conceptual experience brought by the quoted projects is expected to lead to more concrete results in short time.

Last but not least, on the occasion of the 18 of April - the international day of monuments and sites, dedicated in 2006 to the industrial heritage, a series of events were organized in Romania in order to raise public awareness on the subject. Besides exhibition openings, book launches and a forum on the *Industrial heritage in ex communist countries* that contributed to a better understanding of the common issues related to the protection of industrial heritage in the East-European context, a web site dedicated to the Industrial Heritage was launched (www.cimec.ro/patrimoniuiindustrial/) as a first needed working instrument in the protection of the industrial heritage of Romania.

Therefore one can say that Romania is beginning to face (even if later than it could have done it) the challenge represented by this rousing field and that some initiatives are, slowly, beginning to be put in practice in various directions as law improvement, inventories, training, industrial heritage restoration or raising public awareness for the valuable traces of an industrial evolution that essentially contributed to the construction of our identity.