

ROMANIA

Follow-up on Roşia Montana and the Preservation of its Cultural and Natural Heritage¹

Recently, on June 3, 2014, the Chamber of Representatives of the Romanian Parliament rejected the bill on the Roşia Montana mining project. The vote was quasi-unanimous (302 votes against the bill, one for and 3 abstentions). This follows a similar negative vote in the Senate on November 19, 2013. The rejection in both chambers of the Parliament is due to a political withdrawal after the Parliamentary Special Commission on Roşia Montana concluded its activity with a negative report. Not only the project was not sustained by the Special Commission Report, but the documents received by it were handed to the National Prosecutor's Office due to suspicions of fraud within the commercial procedures leading to the partnership between Gabriel Resources and the State-owned mining company that initially administrated the mine in Roşia Montana.

One might say that this is the end of the national debate on whether to dig for gold or enjoy the outstanding patrimony of the site. Our evaluations are not so optimistic. The Prime Minister publicly and repeatedly argued in favour of the mining project, even after the disastrous result for his bill in Parliament. The fact that the cultural reasons for the bill's rejection in the Special Commission Report were only marginally mentioned, the politicians not being able to understand the outstanding importance of the site from the historic and archaeological points of view, neither before the hearings in the Special Commission nor after, make us believe that it was only because of the electoral costs of approving the project that it has now been brought to a halt. We believe that after the presidential elections the project will be taken up again and pressure for its approval will be even stronger, especially if the elections will be won by the ruling party. On the other hand, civil society is prepared to take up street protest again if this will happen. Nevertheless, this is not much help for the state of conservation of the site's cultural heritage. Except for small but professionally led restoration workshops organised by the local conservation association with the support of the association ARA (Archaeology, Restoration, Architecture), the local, county and national authorities are in a prolonged standstill, as if waiting for the historic buildings to collapse and the galleries to be flooded.

In late June 2014 a mission of Europa Nostra and the Institute of the European Investment Bank visited the site and also paid visits to the Secretary of State for cultural heritage in the Ministry of Culture and to the President of the Romanian Academy. ICOMOS Romania and the Romanian Union of Architects

also met the delegates of Europa Nostra and the Institute of the European Investment Bank. The mission was not received by the President of the Alba County Council, although both institutions had asked for such a meeting in writing long before. ICOMOS Romania promised its full support in establishing a strategy for the sustainable development of the site, if such a strategy will be elaborated in a partnership with Europa Nostra, as part of "The 7 Most Endangered Programme" of this organisation.

Arch. Sergiu Nistor, Professor
President of ICOMOS Romania

First Results in Safeguarding the Transylvanian Saxon Architectural Heritage

In *Heritage at Risk 2008–2010* (pp. 145–147) the project "Attempts to Safeguard the Transylvanian Saxons' Architectural Heritage – The Project 'Fortresses, Rediscovered Treasures'" was presented. Developed in 2008 for 18 objects, all of them historic buildings and ensembles of national importance, the project was accepted and included in the Regional Operational Programme of Structural Funds from the European Union in 2010. The implementation started in 2011, with the plan to complete this project by the end of 2013. In the meantime, most of the works have been finished and the results are quite positive, as some selected pictures – in the villages of *Stejăriş/Propstorf*, *Apold/Trappold* or *Cloaşderf/Kloosdorf* – prove. As the projects were strictly limited to stopping the degradation and performing the maintenance and repair works necessary for their long-term preservation, the uncovering and conservation of the mural paintings, discovered by a mural painting restorer during the preliminary research tests inside most of the churches (e.g. *Apold/Trappold*), needed to be postponed until further funding is made possible.

Different is the actual state of conservation of the fortified ensemble in *Drăuşeni/Draas*, with one of the oldest and most important three-nave buttressed basilicas erected around 1280 in a transitional late Romanesque/early Gothic style. The village was mentioned as the north-eastern corner of the first German colonisation of Transylvania in the 13th century. Shortly before 1500 the church building was fortified itself by demolishing the aisles, raising the walls of the choir to the same level as the nave and adding to both a defence storey with half-timber parapets, erecting a defence gallery on the western tower and surrounding the churchyard with a circular defence wall with six towers. In the early 1970s the German population of the village left and the already bad condition of the church worsened due to a lack of maintenance. The recent conservation works started in 2010

¹ See *Heritage at Risk 2008–2010*, pp. 143–145.



Stejăriș/Propstorf, fortress after the completion of the measure

Apold/Trappold, fortress before and after the restoration





Apold/Trappold, fortress before and after the restoration

Cloaşderf/Kloosdorf fortress





Apold/Trappold, uncovered mural paintings

The fortified ensemble of Drăușeni/Draas





The fortified ensemble of Drăușeni/Draas

within the framework of a special funding programme provided by the European Union. However, at the end of 2011 the conservation work stopped and since then the fabric of the church once again has to be considered to be at risk: The plaster was completely removed from the church facades to “prepare” the naked masonry for a sort of reconstruction by making all the historic details of the building clearly visible and approachable. The plastering of the rubble masonry always has been and still is a very important protective layer not only for the masonry, but in the case of Drăușeni especially for the mural paintings inside the nave. There a cycle of scenes can be found illustrating the legend of Saint Catherine of Alexandria, the only one in Transylvania, painted around 1380. For the mural paintings no preventive conservation measures were taken, while on the south-western bay of the aisle a new defence gallery with timber-framed parapets has been built, which obviously never existed in the past. Meanwhile the towers of the ring wall are in danger of collapsing. Several – unsuccessful – attempts have already been made to convince the responsible authorities, i.e. the Romanian Ministry of Culture, to continue the conservation works for the entire ensemble. These works should start with the urgently needed plastering of the church facades, but should also include the conservation of the mural paintings and ensure at least a minimal protection for the fortification walls and towers, which are in danger of collapsing.

Christoph Machat

The Threats to and the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Manor Estates in Banat

In Romania, as probably in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the threats the built heritage faces are explainable by contemporary historic developments of society. Modernization, modernism, totalitarian regimes and, last but not least, the contemporary political lack of vision, administrative neglect and the scarcity of means for a comprehensive and effective preservation of the built heritage have recently led to an important social reaction on behalf of the young generation of professionals.

More and more civil society takes the initiative in the valorisation of the built heritage which is threatened by neglect, disrepair and dereliction. The report below is an example of the professional awareness of a young architect and energetic researcher aware of the values, importance and unhappy fate of an interesting architectural heritage which marked the 19th and early 20th century countryside: the Banat Manors. Behind the text one cannot only understand what that heritage is about, but also the author's commitment to its preservation.

(Introductory note by Sergiu Nistor, President of ICOMOS Romania)



The Csité-Csekonics Manor House (Jimbolia, Timiș County; left) from the late 19th century and the Zselensky Manor House (Neudorf, Arad County; right) from the early 20th century



Athanasievics Residence (Valeapai, Caraș-Severin County) was built around 1840 by brothers Marcel and Emil Athanasievics. During the Communist regime, the palace was used as a Birth House, then as C.A.P. headquarter (Agrarian State Cooperative) and accommodation for seasonal workers. After 1989, it was abandoned leading to its gradual decay, thus becoming one of today's most affected manor estates in Banat. Without a roof and brought to a state of collapse, the former manor is nowadays subject to brick thieves and iron collectors. A lack of protection and the postponement of emergency interventions to consolidate the still existing structure will have as an inevitable effect the disappearance of this historic monument in the near future.



Ronay Manor (Utvin, Timiș County) was built by Kovács Ákosé in 1896 and bought in 1904 by Rónay Mihály. After the nationalization, it hosted a series of inappropriate functions, and after 1989 despite its historic and architectural value the ensemble was never classified as a historic monument. What is more, it was quickly abandoned. The state of advanced decay is the result of the local community's carelessness and the ineffectiveness of public heritage safeguarding policies.



Teleki-Mocioni Mansion (Căpâlnaş, Arad County) was built between 1876 and 1879 most probably by Kallina Mór after plans made in 1867 by Viennese architect Otto Wagner, under the patronage of Ecaterina Mocioni and her husband, Mihai Mocioni. In 1947, the estate was nationalized and the palace was transformed into a children's tuberculosis preventorium and later into a psychiatric hospital, which it is until today. The building shows structural degradation, especially because of rainfall infiltration, negligence in repairing the rainwater drainage system, a superficial care of framing and of water installation systems, leading to capillarity by an inadequate use of concrete plasters.



Built in a first stage at the beginning of the 19th century, the Mocioni ensemble (Bulci, Arad County) was gradually extended under Antoiniu I Mocioni de Foen and his son, Zeno. After the nationalization it functioned as a neuro-psychiatry hospital and later as a tuberculosis preventorium, a function it kept until 2011. Due to a legal dispute since the beginning of the 2000s, the ensemble has intentionally been brought to an advanced state of degradation, which has led to the partial collapse of the roof because of humidity and rainfall infiltration.

The Architecture of the Manor Estates of Romania

Until the 1940s manor estates were a manifest of the well-being of the owner. These architectural ensembles were the symbolic centre of the estate – the main economic and administrative unit and also the most stable agrarian institution of that time – and their status was a guarantee of the responsible administration of wide land properties. Initially belonging to members of the privileged class (clerics or noblemen), the aristocratic residences of the past today have become, in an arbitrary way, the possessions of owners who have different cultures and perceptions.

In different periods of time, the estates comprised households and cultivated agricultural lands, villages, fairs, or even parts of towns, rivers, lakes, pastures and forests, small agricultural manufactures or huge industrial complexes, inns, road networks, hydraulic mechanisms and any other construction necessary for the good management of the property. The estates were different through both the economic and internal infrastructure capacity, as well as through the cultural environment and social structures developed within.

Placed at the heart or next to a rural settlement, the manor was coherently integrated into the surrounding anthropic and natural landscape, becoming both a dominant and a local landmark. According to their spatial model, these ensembles had the manor at the centre, with different annexes gravitating around it (barns, kitchens, servants' houses, glasshouses) and surrounded by a park or an arranged garden, a compulsory accessory of the nobility. Moreover, by creating a structured and fluent territorial system, the ensemble communicated visually and symbolically with a series of representative buildings in the vicinity (church and/or family funerary chapel).

The system of manor estates can be considered one of the key elements responsible for the development of the rural space and a characteristic part of the material and spiritual culture in certain areas of Europe. In the rural environment the development of this historical network of manor houses led to the creation of a particular cultural landscape and a specific social structure.

Socially, because of their significant economic and cultural role, there has always been a close connection between these estates and the neighbouring rural communities – both before the



The Nikolics ensemble (Rudna, Timiș County) was built at the end of the 18th century by Baron Ioan Nikolics. After the installation of the Communist regime, the family crypt was used as an observation point of the Serbian border, and the palace became the home of the border patrol troops. In 1964, it became a CAP headquarter. After 1989, the ensemble was privatized and an amateur restoration site was set up. However, its lack of sustainability led to the abandonment of the works and a profound alteration of the former manor estate's values.



Karátsonyi Palace (Banloc, Timiș County) received its final shape around 1793, during the time of Lazăr Karátsonyi, when the English park was laid out. It included a tea pavilion, a gloriette and a chapel. After the First World War, the Serbian occupation forces devastated the ensemble and in 1935, the last count, Karátsonyi-Keglevich Imre, sold what was left of the domain to Queen Elizabeth of Greece, sister of King Carl II of Romania. She renovated the entire complex, the ensemble reaching its final period of glory. In the course of its nationalization, the ensemble functioned as local GAS (Agricultural State Household), forestry, home for the elderly, orphanage and school. After 1989, it was abandoned, until 2009, when it was leased for 49 years to the Banat Orthodox Mitropoly. A large-scale restoration began, but due to a lack of funds, the works were interrupted and abandoned, the ensemble now being in a continuous process of degradation.

expropriation at the end of the 1940s as well as during the communist regime, when most of the ensembles were nationalized and forcibly transformed into mayoralties, police departments, social centres, schools, hospitals, but more often warehouses, households or state agrarian cooperatives. The result, in many cases, was the formal and aesthetical degradation of the buildings. Improperly kept in the second half of the 20th century and mostly abandoned after 1989, these ensembles of historical and architectural value began a rapid process of degradation and became for the “host” towns the inconvenient ruins of today.

Most of the residencies were transformed into public utility buildings. The main renovation endeavours contributed mostly to the mutilation and alteration of the historical and architectural value: foundations were consolidated, new ceilings and reinforced concrete beams were added, the plastering was remade with cement mortar, the rooftops were modified, going as far as

building a different framework from the original one. In the interiors, the big halls were repartitioned, other doors appeared, the original furniture was destroyed, and the rooms were repainted.

After 1990, the long procedures of retrocession led to the delay in the capitalisation of these edifices at their true potential. In general, the state of conservation of the noble residencies is critical, especially of those in a state of litigation or of those abandoned by the owners who recovered them. This period has led to a second wave of degradation.

Also, the state of the ensembles which are private property is alarming, because they are most often in a precarious preservation state, the owners being unable to preserve and manage them appropriately. Many of the ensembles were even abandoned by owners who lacked the motivation and the tools to capitalize the residencies. The lack of a coherent program to attract investors discouraged the initiatives of the owners. Because of lack of



A first Baroque mansion was built at the end of the 18th century at the site of the current residence by the Foeni branch of the Aromanian aristocratic family Mocioni, after settling on the Foeni estate in Timiș County. Considered a trademark for the entire Foeni aristocratic branch, the ensemble was then completed and extended, and at the end of the 19th century it became one of the most imposing manor estates in the region. Given to the local community by the last descendent of the family, the ensemble is used until today as school, kindergarten and local cultural centre. Following the rainy season in 2005, the level of the Timis River, running close to the village, rose, putting pressure on the upstream dyke. On April 20, the dyke collapsed, and the flood affected even Mocioni Palace. The lack of ulterior restoration interventions increased the building's state of decay.

funds and more often because of the ignorance of authorities and the passivity of civil society, legislation is rarely put into practice. In these circumstances, the estates decayed at an accelerated pace in the years following the fall of the Communist regime.

Manor Estates from the Late 19th to the Early 20th Century in Banat

The manor estates in Banat belong to the widespread category of ensembles built for the rural nobility of Central and Eastern Europe, similar to the manor estates of Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Serbia, Poland or Ukraine. Together with all the manor estates found nowadays on the Romanian territory, those in Banat represent the most Western examples of rural architecture, containing stylistic elements from Baroque, Neo-Classicism, Gothic Revival, Romanticism or Eclecticism. Designed in most cases by renowned architects trained at the big schools of architecture of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire, the manor estates of Banat were often interpreted in a local manner, which accounts for their uniqueness. The residences of the local aristocracy are more valuable, because they represent a primary source of the regional socio-cultural history, bearing witness to the way the aristocracy expressed its status, economic power, conceptions and aspirations.

The importance of the manor house system in the Romanian Banat region is justified by the historical and cultural specificity of the researched area: historical Banat, an administrative and political notion belonging to the modern era and a constant landmark of Central European history. Fragmented when new nation states began to appear after the end of the First World War, historical Banat encompassed regions included nowadays in Romania, Hungary and Serbia, and thus we can speak of Romanian Banat (Timis county, Caras-Severin county, Arad county's south of Mures river, the extreme West of Mehedinti county), Serbian Banat (Voivodina and a small part of the Belgrade metropolitan area), and Hungarian Banat (South-Eastern area of the Csongrád

county). Ignoring the actual territorial-administrative frontiers and following instead the impact of the main cultural models in the central focal points on the peripheral territories through different ways of communication – Banat needs to be understood as a frontier historical area and a true space of cultural interferences.

The research regarding manor estates, performed as part of the *Monumente Uitate* project (initiated by the Department of Architectural History and Theory and Heritage Preservation at the University of Architecture and Urbanism "Ion Mincu" Bucuresti and later developed by the ARCHÉ Association), estimated a number of approximately 120 manor estates in Banat until the Second World War. Little is known about most of them, but we do know that nowadays there are 40 partially (gardens, annexes, family funeral chapels, etc) or fully preserved ensembles, among which only 18 (two in Arad county, two in Caras-Severin county, 14 in Timis county) are on the List of Historical Monuments (published in 2010). In less than a century, most of the manor estates were systematically and gradually destroyed, vandalized, misused, wrongly maintained or renovated, intentionally brought to a state of ruin or effectively demolished. Moreover, taking into account the interdependency of the manor estates and the surrounding cultural landscape, the destruction of the manor estates has resulted in a loss of the specificity and values of the local cultural landscape.

While some of the manor estates were demolished by their owners towards the end of the interwar period due to the financial and social decline of the nobility throughout Europe (e.g. residence Csekronics/Csitó in Jimbolia, Timis) and others were severely affected during the Second World War (e.g. Zselensky Palace in Neudorf, Arad), the vast majority of the estates suffered in the post-war period. Very soon after the Second World War, during the new Communist regime, private property was forbidden and the old aristocratic families were anathematized, which led to the expropriation and nationalization of all their possessions. The 40 years of socialist economy, where everything belonged to everyone and no one actually assumed any responsibility, followed by the next 20 years dominated by a general

carelessness among civil society and real estate speculation, led to the loss of more than 60% of the heritage represented by the former manor estates, many of which of an exceptional artistic and historical value. The phenomenon continues until today, and the effects are disastrous: fallen rooftops, unstable structures and plasters, decorations and embellishments irreversibly lost.

As these buildings represent remarkable heritage assets the Direction for Historical Monuments during the 1960s and 70s decided to carry out preservation works at several manor estates (Căpâlnaş, Bulci, Banloc etc.). However, these measures ended in December 1977 when the Direction itself was disbanded. After December 1989 there were no more restoration works with public funding in Banat. Being state property (e.g. the Mayoralty of Sânnicolau Mare – the ex-residence Nákó from Jimbolia, Timiș county), in the administration of public institutions (e.g. the Psychiatry Clinic Hospital Arad – the former residence Teleki-Mocioni from Căpâlnaş, Arad county), or private property, the built heritage represented by the former manor estates in Banat has been badly managed. Also, along with the decline of these ensembles formerly belonging to the old nobility, a disintegration of their anthropic and natural context followed, thus resulting in a profound degradation of the entire surrounding cultural landscape. The estates were arbitrarily fragmented, according to local interests, and the ensembles lost their unity and specific coherent landscape.

Recent preservation or restoration measures carried out with private or non-reimbursable funds mostly had an adverse or even destructive effect. An indication of this situation is the status of the old Karátsonyi ensemble in Banloc, where the Orthodox Mitropoly of Banat, as concessionaire, opened a large restoration site in 2009 and later abandoned it – a fact which sustained and accelerated the process of degradation.

The use of materials incompatible with traditional techniques, for instance the use of concrete to restore plasters, the modification or replacement of original carpentry and framing have visible consequences both on the structural and the decorative level. Because the results of chaotic and unprofessional interventions can be seen to this day, a critical analysis of restoration works and chosen techniques needs to be encouraged.

Causes of Risk

As in many other Central and Eastern European countries where similar problems have appeared, the threats affecting the former manors in the rural areas of Romania, and particularly in Banat, are determined by a multitude of natural and anthropic factors and have irreversible effects. Though there are many different reasons for the degradation of the heritage elements, most of them can be linked directly to a lack of education in this field, to insufficient legislation, and to a failure of people and institutions involved in managing the existing cultural heritage.

Legislation issues

- Ineffectiveness of the specialized public authority to use a legislation adapted to the real needs of society;

- Lack of public policies and a lack of management on the central and regional authorities level regarding the preservation of cultural heritage;
- Incomplete inventories and false records in the List of Historic Monuments (names, significant historical data, current status, localization) regarding this heritage segment;
- Lack of monitoring and controlling the correct management of architectural heritage by the owners, and lack of fiscal initiatives regarding the recovery, restoration and reuse of monuments;
- Ineffectiveness of the selection and regulation system of authorized professionals to execute restoration projects;
- Non-existence of a selection filter for companies or authorized people responsible for the works of intervention on historic monuments.

Use and maintenance problems

- Lack of education, lack of civic initiatives from local communities to prevent vandalism;
- Lack of a proper current care determining, sustaining and accelerating the process of degradation;
- Repeated changes in the status or use of buildings and discrepancy between the initial program and different following functions;
- Poorly managed preservation or restoration sites (insufficient funding, use of inadequate techniques, negligence or lack of training, etc);
- Risk of natural disasters (floods, earthquakes) and of degradation due to aggressive climatic, chemical, physical and biological factors.

Research and education

- Insufficient knowledge of scientific, historic and artistic values of the cultural heritage and lack of their acknowledgment and understanding;
- Lack of education and public interest in the preservation and capitalization potential of built heritage;
- Lack of exhaustive inventories.

In order to pass their heritage to the next generations, it is the local communities' fundamental role to approach it. The local identity crisis and difficulties in reading the heritage message can find a solution in a better collaboration between communities, authorities and specialists, who together should decide to rescue these manor estates. Time works against many of them; that is why there is a need to implement a decisive and coherent development plan in order to preserve and protect the manor estates in Banat.