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ROMANIA CHAPTER

Over the last decade or so as the Romanian economy has become stronger (prior to the financial crisis Romania had an 8% annual growth), the vast majority of developments were private and non-traditional, which is to say either modernist steel & glass office premises or residential blocks of flats similar to the “communist model”. There were very few public commissions. At the same time traditional landmark buildings were under threat of demolition, particularly in the capital, Bucharest, to clear the ground for new “modern” developments (in the Romanian context modern = modernist). There were many media reports about dubious fires which destroyed some traditional buildings.

Within this context, the civil society has become more organised and coherent in advocating better protection of traditional settlements but very rarely the discourse has gone towards building new traditional places. In some cases, such as the Rosia Montana example, the public pressure was extremely successful in preserving local architecture and traditions. *Rosia Montana is a two thousand year old village in Transylvania with major gold and silver resources. The local heritage includes intact Roman gold mining galleries and remarkable examples of traditional architecture. A Canadian company wanted to extract the remaining gold and silver which would have involved destroying the village and its local heritage.*

Over the last 5 years in particular, the public opinion seemed to have shifted towards traditional architecture and urban design projects partly due to the poor quality of the new “modern” developments and partly due to successful regeneration projects of old places which became once again very popular. Prior to the global financial crisis, there were two major traditional residential projects near Bucharest; one to be developed by Andres Duany’s firm and the other by Leon Krier and Samier Younnes. My understanding is that both projects are on hold. The city of Sibiu, in Transylvania, has become a success story of restoration and regeneration of traditional places. Sibiu became the Cultural Capital of Europe in 2007. Among the new developments, Alireza Sagharchi’s project in the Danube Delta is significant. The project was awarded a Europa Nostra prize.

Last but not least, the schools of architecture in Romania remain focused on modernist architecture at the undergraduate level. There are a few MA programmes in restoration and heritage – such as those offered by the Ion Mincu Institute in Bucharest and the Faculty of Architecture in Cluj.