Abandoned Industrial Blocks in Borsod

The relevance of the industrial heritage context in
Borsod County via contemporary European examples

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Budapest University of Technology and Economics
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Theses

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The iron ore mine of Rudabánya in the 50's. Photo: Rudabánya archive.

Abstract

The conversion of abandoned heavy industry sites to meet new civilian needs is a widespread practice happening in front of our eyes. Examples in Europe's greatest industrial heritage locations prove that these sites can successfully be rejuvenated, woven back to the living fabric of the urban environment as patches of greenery, areas of recreation and places to acknowledge history, confirmed by numerous items in the UNESCO world heritage list. In the Borsod region of Hungary however this industrial past is not yet uncovered, even though there are quite a few sites of unique architectural value. The heavy industry locations of the past here are closed, forgotten and decaying places often interfering with the surrounding urban areas. Turning these places from landscape and mental wounds into areas of health, remembering and positivism should be the objective of well designed regional rehabilitation projects.

The Rudabánya mine in 2016. View from the Rudapithecus site to the lake. Photo: Author's own photograph.

Summary of thesis

The objective of this dissertation is to provide an overview on the current (2010s) state and further potentials of the transformation of abandoned heavy industrial locations to become heritage in Borsod. To this end I am explicitly pointing at the poignant lack of cohesive concepts and general neglect that threaten to dissolve physical marks of one of the most important cultural heritage of the region as well as critical and long chapters of the whole country's industrial history.

The landscape rehabilitation efforts of similar industrial heritage sites in Germany and France brought forward as positive examples demonstrate approaches and methods tested and proven for decades now. While obviously different in details, I am demonstrating an overarching commonality of these examples in their pronounced efforts to retain the industrial landscape's integrity, keeping the architectural legacy so these become part of the nation's cultural heritage curing the societal wounds caused by the fast decline of the heavy industry in the regions.

These projects used a holistic approach to solve the problems of recultivating the industrial landscape while also considering ecological sustainability concerns, social and economical requirements which is how the end results become rejuvenated areas of physical and mental recreation energizing the region.

Apart from one or two lucky exceptions our industrial heritage is not recultivated and certainly not honoured in Borsod. While the industrial history can be perceived, these locations are left in their abandoned state and are decaying pockets of landscape wounds closed off from their surroundings as alien space. There are precious and unique industrial architectural constructions undefended and left to their ultimate destruction.

The developmental plans of the affected townships and cities in the region lack cohesive and cooperative projects primarily becaue there is no single overarching regional strategy with scope, concept and resources to tie into, thus effectively freezing the status quo.

Most importantly, these mementos of the heavy industry legacy are surrounded by negative associations in the society's collective psyche. The uncoordinated, unreasonable and often unprofessional expansion of the heavy industry by the communist regime in the not so distant past - and its inevitable and shockingly complete downfall - casted a constant dark, uneasy stigma on the whole topic, unresolved to this day. Even though the industrial history stretches back a hundred years earlier, it is all buried in the Borsod people's culture under the memory of this painful period not the least because it also maintains a deep divide in society, dragging motivation on a psychological level.

Since no other ecological sector managed to replace the heavy and mining industry's void, these heritage locations with their unique locations and architectural qualities could be utilized as the source of financial stabilization if not recovery. I am arguing that the first step on the way is to properly rehabilitate and exhibit the physical places tied to this long history of industrial past so that people in the region and the whole society could start realizing and eventually accepting this heritage.

The conception of development of Rudabánya lake from 2012. (Narmer Architectural Studio)

Theses

Thesis I.

The remains of the abandoned industrial sites are integral parts of our civilization - these are parts of the price we pay for the ever advancing human wellfare and prosperity. Whether these remain barren, stigmatosed and decaying landscape-wounds of painful events in history or livable, positive areas of recreation and physical representation of memories to be proud of is entirely up to us.

Thesis II.

Compared to the landmarks and architectural style of the heavy industry of the recent past, this large scale production and consumption of goods of the 21st century - often labelled as the fourth industrial revolution - demands entirely new topologies with its global industrial-logistical networks.

Thesis III.

Despite the obvious heterogeneousity of the Borsod area and the ex-industrial region of northern Hungary in terms of the level of urban development and architectural volume and quality today, this greater landscape shaped by geological and geographical morphologies and technological needs of the successive time periods are forming a single region of shared industrial heritage and culture with all its intellectual and mental aspects.

Thesis IV.

As demonstrated by the examples detailed, the willingness of the local society to engage with the topic is the single most effective driver to fuel the heritage preservation efforts the success of which depended on the cooperation of the local governments, private companies, civil organizations and the local communities. It is also reasonable to assume that the level of motivation is going to decrease with time.

Thesis V.

The physical traces of the industrial past in Borsod are now reduced to fragmented blocks of abandoned and decaying sites, completely devoid of their identity forming intellectual context. These are the industrial inclusions. As demonstrated by the case studies, the scaling effect of renovating and properly displaying enough of these at strategical locations as part of a well prepared and coordinated regional effort, so that the sum of them would reveal a homogeneous network (Industrial Heritage Tour), then it would trigger tourist economies, recreational destinations and cultural and educational institutions all the while reigniting and reinforcing regional identity.

Masterwork

Rudapithecus Visitor Centre and Educational Trail, Rudabánya

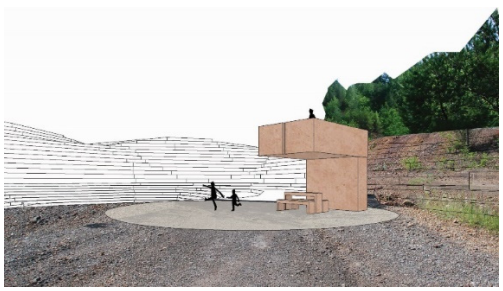
Client: Municipality of Rudabánya
Financial resource: ÉMOP-2.1.1/B-12-2012-0082
Planning period : 2013-2014
Construction period : 2015-2016

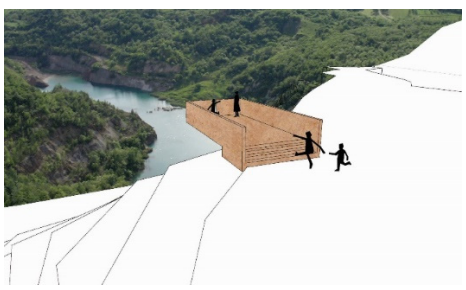
Chief designer: Dr habil Zsolt Vasáros DLA
Designers: Zsolt Megyesi, Nagy Gábor, Áron Sasvári, Anikó Somlai (Narmer Achitectural Studio), Gabriella Antal, Veronika Borzsák, Piroska Varga (BORSOD2050 project – BME Doctoral School of Architercture)
Collaborating architects: Emőke Bandur-Juhász, Ágnes Eiszrich, Anna Kőnig, Bence Török
Structural engineering: Norbert Blasius, Olivér Kovács, János Szendefy Dr.
Building engineering: Csaba Makáry, Tamás Mottl
Building electricity: Ilona Nyári, András Peták
Concrete technology: Péter István Varga DLA
Gastro technology: Piroska Kaszab
Fire protection: István Horváth, Orsolya Brindzik
Geodesy: Ferenc Miszlai
Soil mechanics: Roland Szántó
Paleontology expert: László Kordos Dr.
Accessibility specialist: Anna Kormányos
BIM manager: Balázs Szilágyi

The mining lake of Rudabánya with the building oft the 'D' view point. Photo: Tamás Bujnovszky (Octogon 2017/3).

Viewpoint ’A’ from the Rudapithecus site. Photo: Author's own photograph.

Viewpoint ’C’. Photo: Author's own photograph.





The first visual design.