

## SENJSKI RUDNIK TOWN OF MINERS AND INDUSTRIAL LANDSCAPE<sup>1</sup>

### *Abstract*

A project for the regeneration of the industrial landscape of Senjski Rudnik through the establishment of a Regional Heritage Centre is ongoing since May 2012, supported by the European Commission and implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Culture and Information of Serbia, with a second beneficiary being the Municipality of Despotovac. Senjski Rudnik (located approximately 170 km southeast of Belgrade) is a small mining settlement established in 1853 and historically connected with the early industrialization in the city of Kragujevac, an important industrial centre of Serbia. For the first time an industrial landscape is the object of a similar project in Serbia, aiming to foster sustainable management of the mining landscape through planning the conversion of the mono-company economy into a regenerated cultural-driven local development, with small businesses and cultural industries compatible with the conservation of the outstanding values and authenticity of the site.

The project, which is characterized by an integrated and multisectoral approach, focuses on the establishment of a Regional Heritage Centre (which may potentially host a Laboratory on the implementation of the European Landscape Convention) as a catalyser of site revitalization. This project seeks to use the European Landscape Convention, ratified by Serbia in 2011, as a fundamental tool for the promotion of a community-based approach to local development lead by the valorization of cultural and territorial resources, including the rich human and community capital.

### **Brief presentation of *Senjski Rudnik Town of Miners***

Established in 1853, Senjski Rudnik is Serbia's oldest coal mine and mining town located in the southern part of the Municipality of Despotovac in Central Serbia, at approximately 150 km southeast of Belgrade, 20 km from Cuprija and 70 km from the city of Kragujevac.

Five distinctive stages can be distinguished in the **historical development** of Senjski Rudnik:<sup>2</sup>

- the establishment of the mine and settlement 1853-1892;
- building of a railway connecting the coal mine with central Serbia (1892);
- period of highest economic growth, a zenith of urban and social development (1903-1941);
- further development in socialist era (1945-1968) and the period of decline starting in 1970.

The **mine complex** with the management buildings and mining infrastructure is part of an urban ensemble which also includes residential houses, school, cultural centre, church, museum and a hospital. The historical development of the site represents a typical industrial community which appeared in the 19<sup>th</sup> and profited through the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today it is experiencing economic and physical decline and seeking for rehabilitation modalities that would bring new sources of income and employment.

The mine of Senjski Rudnik is located in the Resava-Morava brown coal basin. The pits along the Mlava coal basin stretch northward to Danube and Kostolac. Senjski Rudnik is one of the three underground pits of **public company** Rembas/Resavica (Despotovac), which operates in the fields related to production, transport, coal refining and processing, maintenance of equipment, construction and investment in Resavica and eight additional mines.

Due to the combination of active coal production with the historic mining artefacts, machinery and infrastructure but also buildings and facilities for site management and workers' housing, Senjski Rudnik must be considered within a **wider territorial context** of mining activities and exceptional natural landscape covering Strmosten, Makviste, Resavica, Ravna Reka and Sisevac.

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<sup>2</sup> IRPP/SAAH, Feasibility Study – Aleksandar's Shaft; Senjski Rudnik, Serbia (CoE 2008).

There is also an important historical connection between Senjski Rudnik and the Zastava Arms Factory in Kragujevac, to which the coal was transported to Kragujevac to fire the furnaces in which iron cannons were forged.

Senjski Rudnik is located within an area with a wide range of **tourist attractions** based on cultural heritage, natural heritage and intangible heritage such as monasteries of Manasija, Ravanica, St. Petka and Sisevac as well as Resava Cave nature reserve. Currently, Senjski Rudnik has no accommodation capacity and the closest places of accommodation are located in Resavica and in Sisevac.

Generally speaking, the **conditions of settlement and of the majority of buildings** are relatively good, in spite of the fact that a number of them are in state of abandonment. The major conservation problems are indeed linked to ageing and deterioration phenomena caused by lack of maintenance due to economic decline and population decrease, although there are a few examples of good practice in keeping buildings, especially some houses.

The census of 2011 has numbered the **population of Senjski Rudnik** in 438 inhabitants. Mining industry is a dominant source of income in the municipality with more than a third of the population in registered employed work for the sector. Unemployment has been increasing significantly in the last decade.

In spite of the small number of inhabitants, Senjski Rudnik features an outstanding human capital especially in terms of young people, who have proved to be very active and eager to enthusiastically support the site regeneration process. Through the Project's support, a **local NGO named "Bratinska"** (which means "brotherhood") was established and has taken first steps to initiate a programme of activity after registration in May 2013.

### **Values and significance of Senjski Rudnik and its mining/industrial landscape**

The settlement of Senjski Rudnik and its associated industrial landscape provide a remarkable testimony to the process of industrialisation through coal production and the associated emergence and development of industrial society. The first values assessment (reflecting the situation in September 2013) has identified seven groups of **values** which contribute to the area's international significance and rarity:

1. **architectural and urban values:** the processes of industrialisation and development of early industrial society can be clearly traced in the buildings and the present urban form and mining landscape, which preserve sense of place as well as authenticity and integrity to a large extent.
2. **historic values:** the site played a key role in the history of regional industrialisation; Aleksander's Shaft opened in 1853 and was the first coal mine in Serbia, as such it signified the commencement of industrialisation in Serbia.
3. **aesthetic values:** there is a clear visual and an aesthetically impressive expression of early industrialisation, where the aesthetic quality is enhanced by the closed valley situation with beautiful woodland surrounding the site and the mining landscape.
4. **environmental values:** the entire coal mining activity has taken place because of the local geological structure and the presence of coal, which resulted in Senjski Rudnik becoming a significant industrial site featuring a special relationship between cultural and natural heritage.
5. **social and associative values:** there is a linkage between the industrial landscape and the living community and coal mining, which has been continuous since 1853; Senjski Rudnik retains a strong community spirit, expressed by pride and willingness to live in the village.
6. **educational values:** broad didactic and research opportunities are offered, including growth of industrial society, economics of industry, science and technology of coal mining, geology and landscape and its recovery, forest flora and fauna, and the development of railways.
7. **economic values:** the site has great potentials for culture- and tourism-driven development, using creative and innovative approaches based on the enhancement of local resources and the rehabilitation and reuse of the several empty buildings.

The **authenticity** and **integrity** of the buildings and structures and natural setting in Senjski Rudnik strongly reinforce the values. Senjski Rudnik landscape is powerfully evocative of an important stage in human development. This is a substantially undisturbed coal mining community in which all the main historic features are intact and contribute to a very rare example of 19<sup>th</sup> century coal mining community in original form. The settlement and its surrounds together form a relict industrial landscape exhibiting the "combined works of nature and man" which meets the definition of cultural landscape.

The **significance** of Senjski Rudnik lies in the completeness of the coal mining village located in an unspoilt natural setting and the evidence of its systematic and continual growth as a community dependant on coal production for more than 160 years. Here can be seen the mines and associated workshops, the transportation system of early railways, the links to the national electricity grid, the religious, educational, social, leisure and

commercial buildings of a coal community together with examples of traditional workers' homes, managers' homes and associated infrastructure even including the historic cemetery.

Apart from the demonstrating the technical aspects of a developing industrial coal mining area, the site demonstrates the development of an early industrial society and a rich intangible heritage. Senjski Rudnik has all the qualities to justify recognition as a **cultural landscape of international significance**. Furthermore there are no really comparable industrial sites elsewhere in the world.

### **PROJECT "TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE REGIONAL HERITAGE CENTRE SENJSKI RUDNIK OLD MINE"**

The *Technical Assistance for the Establishment of the Regional Heritage Centre in Senjski Rudnik Old Mine* is a three-component Project aiming to support the site regeneration process and economic requalification:

It has three components:

- Site Action Planning
- Capacity Building
- Communication and Promotion

#### ***Site Action Planning***

The Comprehensive Site Action Plan for the regeneration of Senjski Rudnik builds on previous documents produced within the frame of the "**Ljubljana's process**". It aims to accompany Senjski Rudnik's community in the transition from a mono-company small town living mainly on the mining related economy to a culture/tourism-driven centre of industrial heritage and landscape, able to create new opportunities and to attract visitors.

Produced by a multidisciplinary team of experts in close cooperation with the stakeholders, it is **conceived similarly to site management plans for heritage sites**, in a bid to support and facilitate the parallel process for site protection as a "spatial cultural-historical unit" and its potential inclusion in a serial nomination to UNESCO as industrial landscape in connection with Kragujevac Zastava Arm Factory.

Site action planning was conducted throughout over one year and according to a participatory approach with the local community and experts. A **Working Group on Territorial Analysis** and a **Local Action Group** for stakeholder consultation were created and their results have fed into the site action planning process. After the initial period, the Local Action Group has been formalized in a permanent **NGO named "Bratinska"**.

The Site Action Plan for the regeneration of Senjski Rudnik has been drafted for discussion with a group of stakeholder's representatives with heterogeneous professional background and belonging to different institutions and organisations, while the layout of the premises of the future Regional Heritage Centre has been finalised in close consultation with the designers of the building rehabilitation.

Besides the Ministry of Culture and Information – main beneficiary of the project together with the Municipality of Despotovac – the Plan is addressed principally to the **key stakeholders who are involved in the agreement for the future management**. However, it is supposed to be circulated to the stakeholders representing the local community and civil society, who are the owners and custodians of Senjski Rudnik.

An important result obtained is the connection of the site action planning with the working group for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention (2000) ratified by Serbia in June 2011. The Convention was presented in Senjski Rudnik by the national coordinator on occasion of the Cultural Platform *Towards Branding Senjski Rudnik* and follow up activities are being discussed and planned.

As a well preserved historic living mining settlement with great potentials, Senjski Rudnik requires that the plan for its conversion be based on the relevant **international standards** in order to pave the way for a potential future nominations to international lists, networks and awards and to meet the requirements of the most holistic and modern approaches, which are now centered on the concept of landscape, in line with the philosophy behind the holistic *European Landscape Convention* (2000).

#### ***Capacity Building***

Significant progress was made in training and **five training modules** of one week were held for local young people and prospective staff in the rehabilitated museum / visitor centre and in the future site regeneration process. Throughout these, the group of trainees has not only built technical capacities in museum and visitor management but has also become more self-confident and has proactively participated in all activities. Practical exercises were conducted in event organisation, among which an educational tour with the primary school of Despotovac (6 June 2013). These were highly successful and there was media coverage by local media.

Training includes **study visits** to sites and museums both in Serbia and abroad. The destinations proposed tailor the different needs of two target groups: future operators of the visitor centre and the site regeneration process and decision makers. The first group will visit Blaenavon Industrial Landscape (UK) to experience a site which is comparable to Senjski Rudnik and has undergone a similar regeneration process, while the second group will visit site management organisations in the Netherlands and will have meetings with heritage management professionals.

Steps have been taken for the design of the **website and a concept for the visual identity/logo** of the heritage centre with the briefing and identification of designers and web programmers. In the Cultural Platform Towards Branding Senjski Rudnik the community and a group of local experts discussed on the name and came up with the decision to brand it as *Senjski Rudnik Grad Rudara* (Town of Miners), based on which the visual identity will be designed. Meanwhile, the temporary website has been functioning for project information and promotion.

### ***Communication and Promotion***

The Project organised **various promotional activities and events**:

- A *students' camp*, was organized between 19 and 23 February 2013. A total of 16 students of the University of Belgrade from different disciplines related to cultural heritage preservation mixed with the local population and worked during one week in Senjski Rudnik, with the aim of developing ideas for the promotion and regeneration of the cultural and natural heritage of the area. The ideas resulting from the students' camp have been used as inputs for the working groups, local community and experts engaged in the regeneration process of Senjski Rudnik. The activity has generated new synergies between the local population and the students, some of which have been involved in project activities after the camp.
- The project was presented in the event *Open Days*, organised by the EU in Brussels on 4 May 2013.
- A project presentation and roundtable titled *Economic Development and Business Potentials of Industrial Heritage Site Senjski Rudnik* was held in Kragujevac on 30 May 2013.
- An educational tour (involving the primary school of Despotovac) was organised by the trainees on 6 June 2013.
- A Cultural Platform titled *Towards branding Senjski Rudnik* was held on 11 June 2013 in the rehabilitated workshop building as an opportunity to decide on the site name and to address the branding strategy.
- A *Senjski Rudnik Art Colony* was held from 27 to 30 June 2013. The event was closed on 3 July 2013 with the exhibition of the works produced during the visit by the EU Ambassador, Mr. Vincent Degert.
- The first *Senjski Rudnik Fest* (summer heritage festival) was held from 21 July to 6 August 2013, organised by NGO Bratinsko with the project support. In particular, the opening day (21 July 2013) was highly successful and mediatised thanks to the participation of the well-known actress Ms. Mirjana Karanović, who played an important role in the movie *Petria's Wreath (Petrijin venac)*, shot in Senjski Rudnik at the end of the 1970s.

### **Strategy for Site Regeneration**

The **vision** defined by community and other stakeholders for the regeneration of *Senjski Rudnik Town of Miners* (brand name adopted in consultation with the local and the scientific community) is:

*"Senjski Rudnik is an attractive historic town revitalised, using cultural and eco-tourism as a catalyst for change. It is also a leading regional heritage centre, providing an excellent tourist service, educational and recreational facilities and a desirable quality of life, and well preserved environment, including heritage".*

A holistic approach to community regeneration is thus envisaged, where cultural tourism must play a key role and provide the catalyst for positive change, although supported by other complimentary initiatives to secure a sustainable future for Senjski Rudnik. The concept of creating a Regional Heritage Centre is at the core of this project. Protection, conservation and promotion of the tangible and intangible heritage of Senjski Rudnik are meant to safeguard the site significance and to improve environment and quality of life, thereby contributing to social and economic revival and job generation.

The goal for Senjski Rudnik is that a symbiotic approach ensures that heritage conservation and new developments complement each other in such a way as to ensure the essential qualities of Senjski Rudnik are protected and positive change is realised. This complimentary approach can ensure holistic regeneration and provide the basis for of a sustainable future for Senjski Rudnik.

A set of six final **strategic aims** have determined throughout the planning process:

1. To establish a comprehensive and sustainable management framework for the Regional Heritage Centre and the regeneration of Senjski Rudnik Town of Miners, as a vehicle for achieving effective property conservation, management, and the development of new business ventures.
2. To ensure that the site is protected, conserved, presented and promoted to the highest standards as a cultural landscape of exceptional authenticity, to enable its nomination to the UNESCO World Heritage List. The associated industrial connection with the Zastava Arms Factory at Kragujevac should be explored with the potential for a serial nomination.
3. To secure Senjski Rudnik as an internationally significant industrial heritage landscape within strategies for national and regional tourism promotion. The site should be integrated with other tourism attractions at the “Heart of Serbia” and become an Anchor Point within the European Route of Industrial Heritage (ERIH) and focus for a Regional Route.
4. To identify projects for environmental, economic and social improvement, including sustainable enterprises for local employment with an emphasis on the tourism sector, to achieve community regeneration and secure a sustainable future for Senjski Rudnik. This schedule should include projects for the short, medium and longer term.
5. To secure community participation in the regeneration of Senjski Rudnik including the protection, conservation and promotion of the area’s cultural and natural heritage, by fostering the initiative of the civil society and the private sector.
6. To establish clear guidelines for the full integration of all future conservation and development activities within the frame of spatial and urban regulation plans for Senjski Rudnik’s area, in line with the approach of the European Landscape Convention.

The strategy articulates each strategic aim into a set of **action lines**, further developed in concrete **activities and projects**, identifying potential partners, phasing and cost estimates, illustrated in the Implementation Plan.

After various consultations and a presentation to the local community, the Site Action Plan is considered to be an excellent opportunity to experiment the implementation of the European Landscape Convention (ratified by Serbia in 2011) for an industrial landscape in Serbia, as a central and cross-cutting strategic goal.

A **four-phase approach** is envisaged for physical interventions and as a guiding framework for all the activities included in the strategy.

A phasing system has been adopted to guide also the definition and experimentation of the **management framework**. This latter will be articulated in two stages: a “project management structure” and a “permanent management structure”.

### **Proposed activities in the framework of the European Landscape Convention**

- a. Developing the first focal point in Senjski Rudnik for raising public awareness on the ELC and its implementation in local municipalities and in Pomoravlje region, to promote and ensure the integration of landscape into regional and municipal planning policies and other socio-economic policies.
- b. Developing and implementing training programmes for promoting concepts and principles of the ELC at the local level and with local communities and associations.
- c. Developing curricula for educational trainings (training for local trainers from Pomoravlje region) for the ELC and developing skills of representatives of local municipalities and local community members, to ensure that the ELC is properly implemented in public policies and that the local communities are able to monitor its implementation and may influence and participate in local decision-making processes.
- d. Developing a model for the implementation of the ELC according to a community-based approach, through the case study of Senjski Rudnik and the Municipality of Despotovac, and promoting this pilot project as a model for other municipalities.
- e. Promoting Senjski Rudnik as the first industrial landscape in Serbia, the development of which is based on the ELC principles.
- f. Creating guidelines for the integration of ELC principles into local public policies and promoting the implementation of an integrative approach (landscape protection, management, and planning), based on Senjski Rudnik case study.
- g. Preparing a study with analysis of characteristics of Senjski Rudnik and its values for landscape identification and envisage the possibility to nominate Senjski Rudnik for the Landscape Award of Council of Europe.

## **Conclusions on opportunities and challenges**

Senjski Rudnik is an outstanding example of industrial heritage and landscape in the Balkans and could become an exceptional case study for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention in Serbia. The inter-ministerial and inter-sectorial working group for such implementation has shown great interest and eagerness to support the site regeneration process.

According to experts on industrial heritage, the site features all qualities and authenticity to become a World Heritage Site and part of the European Route of Industrial Heritage, in terms of physical witness of industrial-related heritage, among which some unique pieces of machinery (in particular the steam engine). Moreover, it features a close interconnection between natural and cultural as well as tangible and intangible heritage.

The last element of uniqueness is the human capital, represented in particular by a number of different community groups, among which a wide number of young people, who embody sense of pride and belonging to the village and its landscape and throughout project implementation have expressed a great interest to support the site regeneration process based on the preservation and enhancement of cultural and natural resources.