

Transformation of the Senj Mine into the Eco-Museum – Security Reflexion

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ABSTRACT

Efforts aimed at transformation of the Senj Mine into the City-Museum, carried on with the EU Council support, counts among the rare instances bearing manifold positive connotations. Successful realization of the Project, being at the first place under consideration in the frame of preservation of cultural and historical heritage, would be reflected in the domain of improvement of environmental and human security as wider dimensions of the new security concept. The actual security paradigm emphasizes that the security concept has been for so long interpreted too restrictively, without the following numerous human security dimensions included: personal, economical, ecological, political, social, healthcare and food security. Numerous risks and threats connected to deterioration of quality of the environment, to railway accidents on coal transportation tracks, or to mine fires lasting many years and mine accidents, shadowed the quality of life problems in the past. Potentials this area abounds with are astonishingly unknown to both national and foreign public, unless they could find their good use in tourism and cultural heritage development. Some of them are the following: steam powered mine elevator with wooden bolts, still in operation; remains of narrow-gauge railroad slanting as sharply as those on Andes, important speleological objects, as well as numerous outstanding medieval monasteries. Therefore, revitalization of the area is a contribution, above the rest, to economic safety of the local population sinking into poverty after it had secured energetic security and prosperity to the state - the exclusive object of security considerations for centuries now.

Keywords: City–Museum, mining, security paradigm, human security, economic heritage

INTRODUCTION

The Senj Mine is a name of both settlement and a brown coal mine, perceived in Serbia as the „hometown” of its industrialization. It was established in 1853 as the oldest brown coal mine in Serbia. In the period of intensive exploitation, the Senj Mine, together with the entire Resava Mines complex, was the place of implicit state engagement because of the importance of raw material it supplied - to the Cannon-Foundry in neighboring Kragujevac firstly, before

extending these activities to the state as a whole after railways were made fully operational.

After intensive exploitation and exhaustion of resources, these mines do not work so intensively nowadays, which has extremely badly influenced a lifestyle of increasingly decreasing population of the area. Lifestyle of the population in this part of Central Serbia is lower than otherwise low Serbian average, being often on the verge of poverty.

According to the contemporary security agenda, a component of safety is security of

the person, of the individual, the individual economic security at the first place. In this way the economic situation is becoming an important indicator and dimension of security in a country. One of the tasks of all the United Nations agencies, in accordance to the General Assembly Millennium Declaration of 2000, is a struggle against poverty. In this context, efforts to be undertaken for the purpose of both evaluation and revitalization of cultural resources at the disposal of a certain area are reflected on its security status.

Predomination of one aspect of economic development only overshadowed, in the past, all the other possibilities that this area has, and which it has recently tried to get activated. Among many of such attempts is the Project of transformation of the Senj Mine into the City-Museum, being realized with the help of the Council of Europe and the European Commission, the executive body of the European Union. By joining their activities, local enthusiasts, the Ministry of Culture of Serbia, NGOs and the international bodies are trying to protect and revitalize the rich natural and cultural heritage of the area, as well as to initiate a mechanism of its economic revitalization.

History of both mining activity and mining settlement established around Majdan Aleksandrovac, as the mine was firstly named in honor of Prince Aleksandar Karađorđević, abounds in data interesting not only to experts specialized in geology and branches of industry tied to coal exploitation, but to the wider public interested in cultural and natural heritage of this area, so rich and yet not known enough.

The new approach to valuation of heritage, to which this Project makes an opportunity, provides for any tangible or intangible achievements within an area, accomplished by people living there, to be considered the cultural treasure, together with their so-called elite culture aspects. Knowledge, positive valuation and self-respect derived from awareness about the value which could be interesting and offered to the public, could turn even so-

called "dead" sites into important economic and developmental resources. Skillfully and cautiously offered actions within "the traces of culture" of the kind could, apart from protecting the heritage, became commercially efficient and could improve many quality of life dimensions for the receptive population.

TOURISM AS A FACTOR OF CHANGE

The Senj Mine area and its surroundings are among those that could be, without excessive epithets, evaluated as cultural attractions, unless it is neither sufficiently nor at all known to both national and foreign public.

Relatively new approach to tourism justifiably extends tourist offer to the sites considered in the times of mass tourism insufficient in their offer to a tourist yearning mostly for entertainment. Tourism consumers structure changes over time, and therefore nowadays all the affluent, more educated, more experienced, with more free time available, or more interested tourists are less and less happy with so-called "3S" destinations (sun, sea and sand) (Kushen, 2002, 12), in their expectance to gain new knowledge and personal improvements on their journeys instead.

Change of the structure of tourist expenditure is beneficial for sites like the Senj Mine that, with its rich history, important culture heritage and natural beauty undoubtedly deserves attention. From the standpoint of a receptive environment the new, so-called "soft" tourism, which we see in the literature under the names of the special interest tourism or the segmented tourism (Jelinčić, 2009, 19), is an opportunity to get the authentic, unique culture of this famous mining area presented, either as joined with the so-called elite culture offer or as the main destination.

The term *cultural tourism*, though awkward as it may induce wrong opposite

associations, comprises, as an umbrella term, a variety of tourist activities such as presentations of history, art, museums and the like (McKercher, Du Cros, 2002). The scope of the term depends mainly on the ways in which culture is defined, whether it has both tangible and intangible culture included or, as put by UNESCO, tangible and intangible aspects of heritage included. The range of places that can be visited, representing both people and their culture, is virtually unlimited thanks to the very nature of cultural resources. They include visits to archaeological sites, museums, castles, sacred objects, and festivals, folkloric events, the events of so-called "primitive culture", places of historical, vocational, commercial, gastronomic significance, and the like. Therefore, it may be more appropriate for this type of tourism to be named the cultural heritage tourism, as it fully and clearly covers all aspects of heritage which differ considerably between various environments, with no danger for scopes of various cultures to be unequally estimated, usually in favor of / Western / Europocentric attitudes.

The cultural heritage tourism will probably, in time, extend its share to tourism industry as a whole. More and more demanding, experienced and educated tourists, more inclined to active holidays and informal learning, are becoming increasingly saturated with all destinations around the World where they have found the same accommodation, the same food and performances of staged authenticity. The true authenticity is found at many sites in the forms of seemingly little things, in this case in the depths of the mine, by steam machine for transportation of coal, still operational and still one of the oldest ones in Europe - despite or, more precisely, due to the fact that its bolts are made of wood. The machine is situated on the remains of the railway, slanting to the extent that it could not be driven without a special kind of a clutch applied in the cases of encounters with ancient locomotives. It is situated in the environment shot as a

background in one of the best narratives of Yugoslav cinematography, in a silence surrounding the medieval monasteries situated in picturesque natural scenery.

Offer of the kind makes the opportunity to get emphasized, in the more and more globalized and uniform World, our own individuality in order to get various fragments of our own identity strengthened and restored by showing them to the others. This way the cultural heritage tourism makes richer, not only materially, communities that accept tourists, therefore gaining a wider social significance as well. This type of tourism initiates changes at the level of the overall organization and management that would have to grow more sophisticated and decidedly interdisciplinary ones.

The positive developments which could occur due to expansion of tourism industry in this area would undoubtedly bring great social and individual benefits through both protection of heritage sites and conservation of community heritage. This is important in the light of the more impartial perception of our own values and our identity that we are prone to underestimate due to the general present state of poverty, as well as in the light of the real possibilities of realization of significant revenues in the field of culture, which, by generating new jobs, becomes the economic category as well. This way the cultural heritage tourism extends, apart from economic to social, psychological, cultural, education and to the other aspects of life.

SENJ MINE POTENTIALS

Not all potentials are equally suitable for development of the cultural heritage tourism. Despite the needs and desires of some communities, certain potentials are of strait local interest only, being deprived from sufficient universal importance whatsoever. The Senj Mine ranks, in many ways, among those that should worry /just/ about the way to make their treasure known

not only to the general population, but sometimes to the local people as well, and how to present it and make it available to others. Developmental potential of the cultural heritage tourism in this area proves to be surprisingly remarkable one.

Hidden features of this site were firstly recognized by the local experts (Senj Mine Coal Mining Museum, Regional Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments in Kragujevac), and then by the scientists (University of Kragujevac, University of Belgrade), and civic associations and foundations (Balkankult Foundation), by the Ministry of Culture of Serbia officials, and by international agencies. Their cooperation resulted, in 2008, in the Project aimed at revitalization of both the Senj Mine area and the surrounding settlement, which is to be transformed into the City-Museum. The plan for the area is to get it developed into a sort of the Eco-Museum, the regional center for cultural and economic heritage of this part of Serbia, and of the Balkans as a whole. The Project is being implemented with the help and substantial financial support (€1.5 million) of the Council of Europe and the European Commission, within the framework of the Regional Programme for Cultural and Natural Heritage of South-Eastern Europe.

The scope and importance of this effort is usually perceived in the context of preservation of economic and industrial heritage and development of tourism industry, although its success would be of the wider social, and therefore scientific, importance. A more ambitious prospective could include areas that are seemingly only indirectly connected to the above mentioned Project. No matter how important, the economic and cultural dimension can be considered a part of altered social and political ethics, bringing the increased sensitivity to domains of both environmental protection and human security.

Potentials this area abounds with are astonishingly little known to both national and foreign public. The rich history of the

Mine itself starts in the year 1853. In the beginning it supplied ore to the Cannon-Foundry in Kragujevac, and after Ravna Reka-Senj Mine-Ćuprija railway line was completed, the Mine extended its activities to more distant areas throughout Serbia. In the beginning of XXth Century it was considered the biggest and the most prospective national brown coal mine. After the World War II the Senj Mine and few neighboring mines (Senj Mine with Ravna Reka, Resavica and Sisevac) merged to form the "Senj-Resava Brown Coal Mines".

Buildings that were gradually constructed around the mine formed, in time, the small miners' settlement with its own elementary school, administrative and residential buildings, *Sokolski Dom*, a railway station, a restaurant, *Bratinska blagajna* (the miners' hospital), St. Prokopije Orthodox Church, carpenter's, blacksmith's and mechanic's shops, the Coal Mining Museum, Engineers' and Workers' streets...¹ Most of these objects are out of order now.

The Revitalization Plan comprises the establishment of the Mining Museum (primarily presenting coal mining) firstly, which is to be situated inside the very Mine, starting from the Alexander Gallery, the oldest entrance to the Mine, and proceeding half a kilometer furthermore along the unique underground exhibition of mining development in the period from III Century up to date.

The symbol of this settlement is the mine elevator made in 1878 in Graz, Austria, brought to the Senj Mine from the Vrdnik Mine which was, at the time, at the territory of the former Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Unless it is one of the oldest in Europe, the elevator is still operational, since its wooden bolts are replaced after worn off. Nowadays it is the unique attraction. *Sokolski Dom*, which was for long renamed

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http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/cooperation/see/irppsaah/PTA/Serbia/SR_17-PTA-APPROVED_web.pdf

as the Home of the Culture, is to be rearranged and made the residential centre for artists, the restaurant is to be renovated, while *Bratinska blagajna* (used as the miners' hospital for a long time), which served as the accommodation for refugees in the period of the former SFRY wars, will be reconstructed into a hotel. According to the plan, new workshops and educational centers will be established for the purpose of training the local population in preservation of old arts and crafts, making souvenirs, healthy food production, in tourist activities and in outfitting the existing objects as to get them customized to be rented to tourists, as well as in the similar activities.

There are, both in the very settlement and in its surroundings, many more sites and objects that could be classified as "the first one, the biggest one, the oldest one...." There are remains of the narrow-gauge railway built in 1892, used for transportation of coal, firstly by using cattle tandems and afterwards by wagon-loads with the special "Senj type", as different from the "Bosnian type", clutches, which are appropriate for narrow-gauge railways. The unique, 45% sharp slope this railway follows, matches these in Switzerland and on Andes only. As compared to this one, there is the Zlatibor narrow-gauge railways track, a tourist attraction, named *Šarganska osmica* after the site name, adjusted as a passenger-train, which climbs the 18% inclination.

The Senj Mine is perpetuated by being filmed as the site for one of the best Yugoslav movies, *Petrijin venac* (Petrija's Wreath), according to the screenplay written by Dragoslav Mihailović, the Academician born in the nearby city of Ćuprija, and directed by Srđan Karanović. The air of the movie pictures the typical miner's struggle against everyday troubles, and as such it is a part of intangible heritage connected to the difficult trade miners do for their living.

History of trade union movements in the period of self-government in the former

socialist Yugoslavia, notes that the first workers' council in the state was also established in the Senj Mine. This environment brought some of the popular music hits on the national scene in the sixties².

Natural beauties of this area are well-known mainly to local public. In the immediate vicinity of the Mine there is the most famous Serbian speleological attraction, the Resavska Cave, 80 million years old, with cave jewelry age of which was estimated at 45 million years ago, partly arranged to be shown to visitors. There are also Pasuljanske Meadows, the military proving ground, a place well known to the male population that served military service in the Yugoslav Army. This site would probably be of the special interest of tourists, being attractive as an excellent ground for mountain bike riding or driving FWDs because its total altitude reaches over 1000 meters. Natural beauty of the Crnica River Canyon, Ravanica and Resava, the Prskalo Lisina Waterfalls (one of the largest in Serbia) alone would be sufficient to attract the attention of tourists. In the neighboring town of Sisevac there is a 30° thermal water spring, running at the place where, in Prince Lazar's times, was the hospital named Lazaret.

Few kilometers from the Mine there are well known XIV Century and XV Century medieval monasteries: Manasija, Ravanica and Sisojevac, to some extent already included in the tourist offer of Serbia. The architecture of these monasteries belongs to the "Morava School". They are rich with frescoes, and Manasija/Resava is internationally known as the largest school of medieval manuscript illumination of the time, being a valuable source of transcriptions and translation for centuries now.

² D. Kraljić, the autor of the cult *Zvižduk u osam* (Whistle at Eight) number, was the Manager of the Home of the Culture in the Senj Mine, where the dixilend number *Hej momci mlad** (Hey, Young Boys), very popular number with the senior audience, was composed.

There are, obviously, compelling reasons for the Senj Mine area and its surroundings to be made noteworthy as a destination suitable for development of the cultural heritage tourism. Since a culture is less recognized by its heritage than by the way it is evaluated, which involves both making of the serious project and a considerable public engagement, realization of the City-Museum idea would be a genuine, not to be missed, developmental opportunity for this area.

HUMAN SECURITY IN PRACTICE

On the occasion of the security conceptualization the recent security theorists have been more and more prone to emphasize the fact that the conception of security has not, for long ago, been concerned as the state security or security of state administration operations. The wide vocational and scientific society becomes more and more familiar with the human dimension of security through, partly controversial, concept of the new security paradigm, or the human security concept (Ker, 2006, 26).

Recent perceptions are much more thorough and wider in their scope than the traditional understanding of security as focused at protection of a state as its only object of interest (Volc, 2008). They comprise protection of the environment, as the necessary foundation of all human activities on one hand, and the protection of everyday life of both individuals and various collective, but yet not the state reference objects of security on the other. The rationale for these perceptions relies on various individual and social identities - such as professional, ethnic, gender, religious, class, race and the other - which can be relevant indicators of /non/security in otherwise internally and externally not endangered countries.

The actual national security concept in Serbia comprises some elements of the new security paradigm promoted about fifteen

years ago under auspices of international organizations. Key premises of this approach to human security are based on UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), and UN University Environment and Human Security Institute (UNU-EHS) activities. They are implemented through foreign policy of some states such as Canada and Japan, which are leaders in political agendas of both the Commission for Human Security (CHS) and the Human Security Network (HSN).

All of them have emphasized, in various ways, the fact that the security concept was for too long interpreted too straightly, by leaving the numerous following dimensions of human security out of it: personal, economic, ecology, political, social, health security and security of food (UNDP, 1994; 25). Security, referred to as the multifunctional notion, brings to the conceptual security focus, apart from traditional ones, many new risks and threats which were not always perceived as such in the past. "Three material blocks" the individual feeling of security relies on, as Kofi Annan put it, are the following: elimination of inhibition, elimination of fear and healthy environment (acc: Brauch, 2006:29).

In the light of any kind of perception of security, and, in accordance to that, of anything we can see as a threat, most of professional activities connected to exploitation of mineral resources have been full of danger ever since. Some of them were connected to deterioration of the environment in the course of initial period of the field coal extraction in the Senj Mine, which was followed by excessive deforestation of beech and oak forests. Very serious problem in the past was transportation of coal down the sharply slanting narrow-gauge railways, where the accidents were frequent. The miners' jobs in the past were frequently followed by pit fires. One of them, set on inside the Senj

Mine, lasted for six years continuously. One of the worst mine accidents, when the entire shift of miners were killed, happened in 1903 and resulted in the long lasting miners' turnout. The day it happened was proclaimed the Miners Day in the former Yugoslavia.

These, so brutal, developments of the kind shadowed all the other problems of human security, public health and quality of life. These problems became more obvious in the period of coal exploitation intensity decrease. The decrease of exploitation was beneficial to the environment, but not to the employment rate, professional opportunities and to standard of living among miners' families. The recent demographic and economic state is more than dreary, population is decreasing drastically³, their average age is on the rise (42 years), schools have been closed, and the entire Senj Mine area gets marginal.

The state of social services, education, health and economic potentials shows that individuals, the common people, are not among the priority interests of the state administration. The Project, jointly designed by the Ministry of Culture and the European Council, should prompt the other Government sectors to action in order to get the situation changed. The failure to do so would result in the lost chance, equal to a tragedy of the people living in this area - just as it was filmed in *Petrijin venac*, the above mentioned movie, in the scene when women put their suits of mourning on and cry on the day the last train leaves the Senj Mine because the non-efficient railway was abolished.

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³ Number of residents decreased to a third in forty years; in 1961 there were 1564 residents recorded, and in 2002 only 595. (*Stanovništvo, uporedni pregled broja stanovnika 1948, 1953, 1961, 1971, 1991, 2002, podaci po naseljima*, Knjiga 9, Republički zavod za statistiku, Beograd, 2004.)