

THE ROMANIAN NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC MONUMENTS: THE HERITAGE PHOBIA AND THE NEED OF AN OBJECTIVE ANALYSIS*

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Keywords: Romania, built heritage, National Register of Historic Monuments, development, heritage density.

Abstract: The paper emphasises on the need of proper documentation and information when intending to elaborate heritage and development strategies. With respect to recent allegations on the over-representation of buildings in the National Register of Historic Buildings, the author demonstrates not only that the number of historic monuments in Romania is not exaggerated, but also that with respect to other countries within the EU Romania is less “endowed” with monuments. In order to assess the relationship between the heritage constraints and the need for development the author analyses several connections between the heritage stock and the local budgets, and uses comparisons between the GDP per capita in EU countries and each country’s heritage. The increasing number of historic monuments in the national register in the last decades may lead to misunderstandings or even to subjective interpretations in favour of speculative pressures upon the built heritage. The paper emphasizes upon the objective processes that lead to an important increase in the built heritage stock after the 1989 Romanian anti-communist uprising (but not only in the case of Romania), calling for a scientific analysis of the cultural heritage geography and economic impact.

Rezumat: Articolul subliniază necesitatea unei documentări și informări științifice adecvate atunci când sunt enunțate ori elaborate strategii de dezvoltare. Urmare a unor afirmații recente asupra supra-reprezentării clădirilor în Lista Monumentelor Istorice, autorul demonstrează nu doar că România nu este supradotată în monumente, dar și că este în urma multor țări europene în această privință. În a respinge acuzația că numărul mare al monumentelor determină o rămânere în urmă din punct de vedere economic a României în raport cu alte state ale UE, articolul face comparații prin care pune alături statistica patrimoniului și cea economică și bugetară, inclusiv prin compararea PIB-ului României și al altor țări europene cu patrimoniu construit mai consistent decât cel al țării noastre. Evoluțiile Listei Monumentelor Istorice din ultimele două decenii pot însă stârni nedumerire sau chiar fi folosite, prin interpretări subiective, pentru servirea unor interese speculative. Articolul arată fenomenele obiective de creștere numerică a Listei Monumentelor Istorice, în diversele sale formule și aprobări, îndemnând către o analiză științifică și în profunzime a stocului patrimonial construit din România și a repartizării sale teritoriale.

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Some people say that the National Register of Historic Monuments is much too comprehensive, and that especially in Bucharest we have too many historic monuments. They say that it will be reasonable to delist some of these historic monuments to make room for the much more profitable urban redevelopment. It seems to us that after 24 years of rather modest achievements in improving our quality of life, finally we realize what has kept us lagging behind other countries which, exiting the “socialist compound” simultaneously with us, are far ahead of us in terms of well being. The explanation would be the over-representation of the built heritage, and especially the urban heritage, in the National Register, standing in the way of urbanistic and infrastructure projects. It seems for the preachers of this “development first” theory that the reviewing of the National Register and the change of the procedures for the issuing of the historic monument permit will be the solution for rebooting the economy. What they do not say is that Romania committed itself to several international conventions obliging us to reconcile development with the heritage preservation and, on the other hand, they do not explain how that all other countries in EU apply an exactly opposite trend in overcoming the setbacks of the economic recession.

Assessing from a scientific point of view the issue of the historic monuments stock we have first to underline that we lack a lot of information about the cultural heritage in Romania, and especially on built cultural heritage. Except the National Register of Historic Monuments which has been published in the Official Gazette, or the list of built heritage objectives of national importance approved as annex to the Law on Protected Areas of National Importance or the National Register of Archaeological Sites there is not much information, data or statistics with respect to the geography, the economy or the state of conservation of the historic building stock. Only partial and narrow analyses were performed, not providing relevant data for a comprehensive overlook upon the built heritage of Romania. An analysis of the built cultural heritage of the Dâmbovița County¹ provided us information that in that particular county the ratio between the public and private ownership in the domain of historic monuments is about 1 to 3 in favour of the private ownership, but there is no such data for the whole country. Except the number of historic monuments allocated to educational (605, of which 298 schools;² Table 1) or to

¹ Nistor 2011.

² Based on a statistical analysis drawn by ICOMOS Romania on the occasion of the 2013 International Day on Monuments and Sites, dedicated to the Heritage of Education.

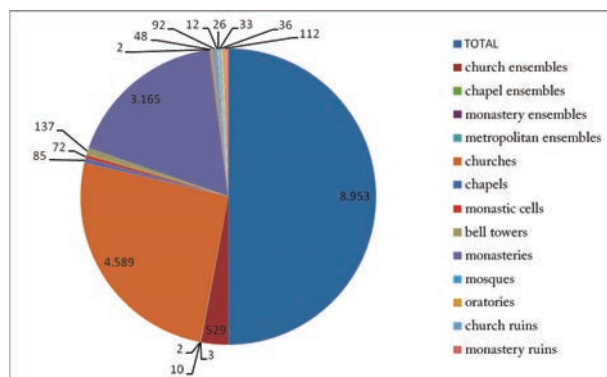


Fig. 1. Historic monument worship places.

religious purposes (some 5,300;³ Fig. 1), we do not know what functional contribution do the historic monuments have to their communities. A recent study⁴ commissioned by the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration finally makes a breakthrough in this unexplored domain, towards what might be considered as “a geography of built heritage” in Romania. To conclude on this topic, any strategy, program or even proposals for an action plan for decentralization or regionalization, because of this lack of information, will be nothing but hazardous. On the other hand, the statistics of the built cultural heritage of Romania should be interpreted with respect to what the other EU countries cultural heritage preservation policies show us.

In the last 10 years (and 5 of economic crisis) France, the country which inspired our cultural heritage preservation legislation, multiplied its number of historic monuments with 8.25%,⁵ England with 1.3%,⁶ Hungary with 8.3%,⁷ The Czech Republic with 7%,⁸ The Netherlands with 8.5%. Portugal multiplied its built heritage stock by 9% annually, between 1992 and 2008, especially through the listing of local heritage. The same has happened in Slovakia between 1992 and 2010. Turkey had a 10% annual increase in the number of historic monuments from 1995 to 2008. Between 1992 and 2007 Norway multiplied its historic building stock with 75%. In the case of Germany, between 3 to 10% of buildings are protected by the states (Lands). The number of conservation areas has increased in England with 8.9% in the last 10 years,⁹ as for other countries,

conservation areas have a 1.9% of Denmark’s territory and cover an area of 6,326 sq km in Finland (approximately the surface of a medium size county in Romania).

Romania has a rather stagnant 1% increase of the number of historic monuments in the period between 2004 and 2010,¹⁰ which, related to the number of historic properties (26,688) and with respect to its territory, does not make of our country an over-gifted one, no matter how hard one would try to give credit to the idea. The national hierarchy with respect to the number of historic monuments per local community places Bucharest first (with 2,585 HM – 9.9% of total) followed by Iași (552), Brașov (398), Cluj-Napoca (351), Craiova (310), Sibiu (250), Sighișoara (231), Târgoviște (207), Bistrița (205), Drobeta Turnu-Severin (173), Târgu Mureș (164), Constanța (149), Câmpulung (148), Arad (145), Ploiești (135), Focșani (124), Caracal (121), Botoșani (120), Timișoara (114), Brăila (113), Oradea (113), Slatina (110), Galați (105), Pitești (102), Alba-Iulia (100). The average number of historic monuments per local community (except Bucharest) is 8.4.

The wealthiest rural communities in terms of the number of historic monuments are Pietroasele and Merei (Buzău County) and Roșia Montană (Alba County) with 71, 60 and respectively 50 historic monuments in the National Register.

The counties hierarchy with respect to the number of historic monuments starts with the City of Bucharest (2,585 HM – 9.9% of total), followed by counties Iași (1,450 HM – 5.5% of total), Cluj (1,230 HM – 4.6% of total) and Dâmbovița (1,108 HM – 4.2% of total). The county with the lowest number of historic monuments is Brăila (164 HM – 0.6% of total). The average number of historic monuments per county is 588. In what regards the grade A HMs (monuments of national and universal value), the hierarchy is different, with the first place taken by county Argeș (456 HM), followed by counties Mureș (455 HM), Sibiu (327 HM), Cluj (294 HM), Brașov (289 HM), Prahova (259 HM) and Bucharest (254 HM). The county with the least grade A historic monuments is Brăila (4 HM).

With respect to the legal obligations, the important presence of historic monuments in a small rural community puts pressure on the local budget; it is understandable that in many cases the local authorities do not cope with their tasks related to historic preservation. Nevertheless, the solution doesn’t stand in the delisting of historic monuments in poor communities, nor in the even more numerous delistings in rich communities because of their interest of redeveloping the urban territory, but in building the capacity for their management. Considering the budgetary and administrative pressure

³ In 2012 CIMEC counted a number of 8,953 entries in the National Monuments Register, representing some 5,300 properties.

⁴ Popescu-Criveanu *et alii* 2013.

⁵ Between 2002 and 2012, *cf. Patrimoine et architecture*, in Chiffres clés 2013, p. 46.

⁶ Between 2002 and 2012, *cf. Heritage Counts 2013*, p. 30.

⁷ From 1995 to 2010 the increase was 12.5%.

⁸ Between 1993 and 2000, *cf. Essays on Culture 2009*.

⁹ Heritage Counts 2013, p. 31.

¹⁰ 29,542 entries in 2010 with respect to 29,426 in 2004, showing a mere 1% increase over 6 years.

Total HM assigned to education	Schools	High-schools	Colleges	Faculties	Universities	Adm./Lib.	Other
605	298	108	37	35	27	35	65
	50%	25%		10%		6%	9%

Table 1. Number of HM of education (schools, high-schools, colleges, faculty headquarters, universities, annex spaces to the didactic process) (Călinescu, Nistor 2013).

Pietroasele Com., Buzău Co.			Merei Com., Buzău Co.			City of Bucharest		
Budget 2013 (k RON)	No. HM	Specific ratio HM Incomes (RON)	Budget 2013 (k RON)	No. HM	Specific ratio HM Incomes (RON)	Budget 2013 (k RON)	No. HM	Specific ratio HM Incomes (RON)
1,676	71	23,605	4,221	60	70,350	3,837,057	2,585	1,484,354

Table 2. Budget pressure of built heritage in the cases of those municipalities (communes) richest in historic monuments and of the city of Bucharest.

of heritage as the specific ratio of local budget and number of historic monuments, and taking the cases of the City of Bucharest, the unit with the highest number of historic monuments, and those of Pietroasele and Meri municipalities (communes), in Buzău County, the first two most “populated” with monuments rural administrative units, the situation is presented in Table 2.

Not surprisingly, the pressure of the historic preservation upon the local budget is by far greater (20 to 60 times) in the rural local communities with respect to the Capital city. Which means that the Capital, nevertheless, has enough financial means to cope with its duties towards the local patrimony.

In what regards the impact of the presence of historic monuments upon the territorial development, the following issues should be considered: the surface of a buffer zone for a HM according to the default protection radius set by law is, according to setting – *i.e.* urban, rural, outside a settlement – a minimum of 1 ha, 4 ha or 25 ha; an average surface for a HM buffer zone can be appreciated to 2.5 ha. The average surface of a World Heritage Site buffer zone can be appreciated to 100 ha. With respect to the actual number of historic monuments of 26,688, of which 31 WHS, these historic monuments generate buffer zones with a total surface of ca. 70,000 ha, meaning 0.30% of the country’s surface. In reality this surface is far smaller and so is, implicitly, its relation to the overall surface of the country’s territory, since in historic centers and areas usually buffer zones overlap. We may estimate that only 70% of this surface is actually protected as buffer zone for historic monuments, with as low an impact as 0.2% of the national territory. An increase in number of historic monuments in the following years would probably lead to an insignificant increase of the overall surface of buffer zones. It should be noted that this surface does not include

the HMs themselves, these adding ca. 2,000 ha, which is insignificant in respect to the overall surface and to the country’s territory.

With respect to the natural protected areas (Table 3), which cover some 30% of the national territory, mainly rural, the constraints put to economic development by the built heritage – not exceeding 0.2% of the national territory, mainly in urban areas – is not comparable. What is specific to the difference between the natural and the cultural heritage constraints with respect to economic development is – due to the EU involvement in environmental protection – that there is more understanding for the obligation to a stepping back of investment due to the environmental duties than with respect to the cultural ones. A recent example of the preventive archaeological surveys on the building site of Transylvania freeway showed that there is at least one archaeological site of

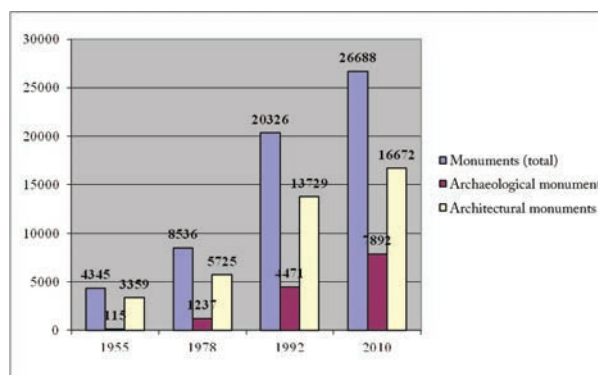


Fig. 2. Evolution of the number of historic monuments and their distribution in categories: archaeological monuments and architectural monuments, between 1955 and 2010.

Protected areas - Romania				
1a	Total national parks and natural parks (of national interest)	of which: - effectively protected at international level - protected only on national level	(NP10, NP12, NatP 7-10; 15)* (without NP10, NP12, NatP 7-10; 15)	1,086,470.60 345,042.80 741,427.00
2	Total protected areas of international interest GEO 57/2007 (including WII)	of which: - effectively protected at international level - without protection at international level of which: - without sector protection on national level of which: without protection on nat. level	(without GP 01 and part of Pnat09) (GP 01 Mehedinți Plateau) (WII 06-19) (WII 13-19, partly)	1,382,285.50 1,276,285.50 106,000.00 472,180.00 135,283.50
1a + 2	Total protected areas of national (NP and NatP) and international interest (including WII)	of which: - effectively protected at international level - protected on national level (A) - without national protection - protected only at national level (B)		2,017,712.50 1,276,285.50 1,141,002.00 135,283.50 741,427.00
1b	Total natural and scientific reserves and nature monuments	of which: - within NatP or NP of national interest - within international interest areas - outside those		298,033.20 65,139.80 63,721.70 169,171.70
1a + 1b	Total protected areas of national interest	of which: - National and nature parks protected nationally - Reserves and NM outside of NatP, NP and of international interest areas		910,598.70 741,427.00 169,171.70
1a + 1b + 2	Total protected areas of national and international interest (including WII)	of which: Protected areas of international interest Protected areas of national interest (excl.) Protected areas of international interest with no national protection Total areas effectively protected by national legislation	100% (9.7% of national territory) 55% (5.4% of national territory) 39.2% (3.8% of national territory) 5.8% (0.6% of national territory) 94.2% (9.2% of national territory)	2,322,167.70 1,276,285.50 910,598.70 135,283.50 2,186,884.20
3	Total protected areas of community interest (1)	of which: - ROSCI - ROSPA Total protected area ROSCI + ROSPA	17.4% of national territory 15.5% of national territory ca 25% of national territory	7,846,546.60 4,152,152.30 3,694,394.30 ca 6,000,000.00
4	Total protected areas in Romania	of which: Total surface ROSCI + ROSPA Total protected areas outside ROSCI/ROSPA	ca. 30% of national territory ca. 25% of national territory ca. 5% of national territory	ca 7,000,000.00 ca 6,000,000.00 ca 1,000,000.00

Table 3. Protected areas in Romania (Popescu-Criveanu *et alii* 2013, Table 12.5)

A, B – grades in the national inventory of historic monuments; A - national and international value; B - representative for local cultural heritage

GEO – Government Emergency Ordinance

GP – Geopark: GP 01 Mehedinți Plateau Geopark (NatP 14); GP 02 Țara Hațegului Dinosaurs Geopark (NatP 15, Member of European Geoparks Network, under the auspices of UNESCO)

HM – Historic Monument

NM – Nature Monument

NatP – Natural Park: NatP 01 Vânători-Neamț; NatP 02 Bucegi; NatP 03 Grădiștea Muncelului-Cioclovina; NatP 04 Putna-Vrancea; NatP 05 Maramureș Mountains; NatP 06 Apuseni; NatP 07 Comana (WII 06); NatP 08 Iron Gates (WII 07); NatP 09 Balta Mică a Brăilei (WII 02, partly); NatP 10 Mureș Floodplain (ZUII 05); NatP 11 Upper Mureș Canion; NatP 12 Inferior Prut Low Floodplain; NatP 13 Cefa; NatP 14 Mehedinți Plateau Geopark (GP 01); NatP 15 Țara Hațegului Dinosaurs Geopark (GP 02)

NP – National Park: NP 01 Buila-Vânturarița; NP 02 Călimani; NP 03 Cozia; NP 04 Ceahlău; NP 05 Bicaz-Hășmaș Gorges; NP

06 Nera-Beușnița Gorges; NP 07 Jiu Canion; NP 08 Domogled-Cerna Valley; NP 09 Măcin Mountains; NP 10 Rodna Mountains (biosphere reserve); NP 11 Piatra Craiului; NP 12 Retezat (biosphere reserve); NP 13 Semenic-Caraș Gorges

ROSCI – Sites of Community Importance, classified in accordance with the EC Directive on the Habitats, in the Nature 2000 network

ROSPA – Special Protection Areas, classified in accordance with the EC Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds, in the Nature 2000 network

WII – Wetlands of International Importance: WII 01 Danube Delta (World Heritage nature site); WII 02 Small Island of Brăila; WII 03 Dumbrăvița Fishpond Complex; WII 04 Techirghiol Lake; WII 05 Mureș Floodplain; WII 06 Comana Natural Park; WII 07 Iron Gates Natural Park; WII 08 Poiana Stampei Peat Bog; WII 09 Calafat-Ciuperceni-Dunăre; WII 10 Canaralele de la Hârșova; WII 11 Jiu-Danube Confluence; WII 12 Blahnița; WII 13 Lake Călărăși; WII 14 Bistret; WII 15 Borcea Arm; WII 16 Danube Islands Bugeac-Iortmac; WII 17 Old Danube - Măcin Arm; WII 18 Olt-Danube Confluence; WII 19 Suhaia

Average score	Country	Surface (thousand sq km)	Population (million inhabitants)	GDP / capita (thousand USD)	HM	HM / 1000 sq km	Ranking HM / 1000 sq km	HM/ 1000 pop.	Ranking HM / 1000 pop.
14	Romania	238.391	19.0	12.476	19,880	83.5	13	1.04	15
16	Norway	385.252	5.0	47.800	6,000	15.6	18	1.20	14
4.5	Denmark	43.094	5.6	46.600	29,000	672.9	5	5.17	4
18.5	Finland	338.432	5.4	38.000	2,982	8.8	19	0.55	18
2	Germany	357.121	82.0	35.539	747,970	2,094.4	2	9.12	2
2	England	130.395	53.1	35.300	396,347	3,039.6	1	7.46	3
16	France	674.843	65.3	33.334	43,720	64.8	15	0.66	17
6	Austria	83.879	8.5	32.962	41,000	488.8	7	4.82	5
5.5	Netherlands	41.543	16.7	29.412	50,048	1,204.7	3	2.99	8
6.5	Czech Rep.	78,866	10.3	24.229	38,700	490.7	6	3.75	7
18	Portugal	92.391	10.6	22.699	4,264	46.2	17	0.40	19
8.5	Slovakia	48.845	5.4	19.000	14,818	303.4	8	2.74	9
2.5	Slovenia	20.273	2.0	19.000	23,206	1,144.7	4	11.60	1
10	Lithuania	65.200	3.2	18.278	8,649	132.6	10	2.70	10
14	Latvia	64.589	2.2	18.090	3,396	52.6	16	1.54	12
15	Turkey	780.580	74.7	16.067	65,077	83.4	14	0.87	16
12	Hungary	93.030	10.0	15.542	12,000	129.0	11	1.20	13
9	Estonia	45.226	1.3	12.203	5,250	116.1	12	4.03	6
10	Bulgaria	110.994	7.4	12.076	19,364	174.4	9	2.61	11

1 st place	2 nd place	3 rd place	last
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Table 4. Heritage density in European countries, in respect of surface, population and GDP per capita.

national importance each 20-25 km and even so, the archaeologists didn't make any proposal for a scheduling and preservation on site.

It is also true that the number of items in the National Register for Historic Monuments increased up to 6 times (in 2010 there were 26,688 individual entries) in comparison with the number of entries in the 1955 List of monuments of culture of the Popular Republic of Romania (4,345 entries) or even compared to the 1978 List (Fig. 2).¹¹ This increase of the number of protected

¹¹ The categories of "monuments of public space" and "memorial monuments" have not been included in the graphic, since these categories have been subject to changes in their grading and even in their definition. It was considered here that their impact on the sense of the demonstration is not important. On the contrary, because of the reasons already mentioned, the figures of these categories would have created confusion. The list displays the number of inventory items comprising architectural structures, without considering the number of buildings within one ensemble or site, or within a protected area. Thus, the list counts the codes and not the buildings.

properties has several explanations. For the archaeological heritage, the explanation is given by the surveys and the preventive archaeology performed in the years of socialist industrialization of Romania (1948-1980), as by the changing system of inventorying the sites, which lead to an itemization of each epoch of a unique site. This leads, in the case Bucharest for example, to an average of 3.6 entries for 1 archaeological site. For the architectural heritage the explanation for such an important increase of entries in the National Register is motivated by a fundamental change in the society's values and cultural paradigm after 1989. For example in Bucharest in 1978 there were only 51 religious buildings listed whereas today there are 82. In 1978 the architectural-artistic heritage was represented in huge proportion by funeral monuments (91 out of 213) whereas memorial heritage had almost 50% of its stock (177 entries) represented by graves (83). The industrial heritage and the modern heritage were also almost absent. With respect to all these, the increasing number of monuments and the change of the structure of the National Register were explainable and objectively expected after the regime has changed in 1989.

But even in this condition, of a 400% increase in the number of historic monuments, Romania is far from being a country with an over-representation of historic buildings in the protection list. Considering the “heritage density” as the ratio between the number of entries in the national registers and the surface of the territory, Romania is overtaken 15, 25 and 35 times by Netherlands, Germany and England, respectively. Considering the “heritage density” with respect to the population, Romania is 7, 9 or even 11 times less rich in historic buildings than England, Germany and respectively Slovenia. Table 4 displays the relationship between the number of historic buildings, territory and population and GDP per capita. It demonstrates that not the heritage density, which places Romania ranking 14th among 19 EU countries is to be blamed for the economic lagging behind of our country and its quality of life, but the speculative and unsustainable development of the territory and cities.

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