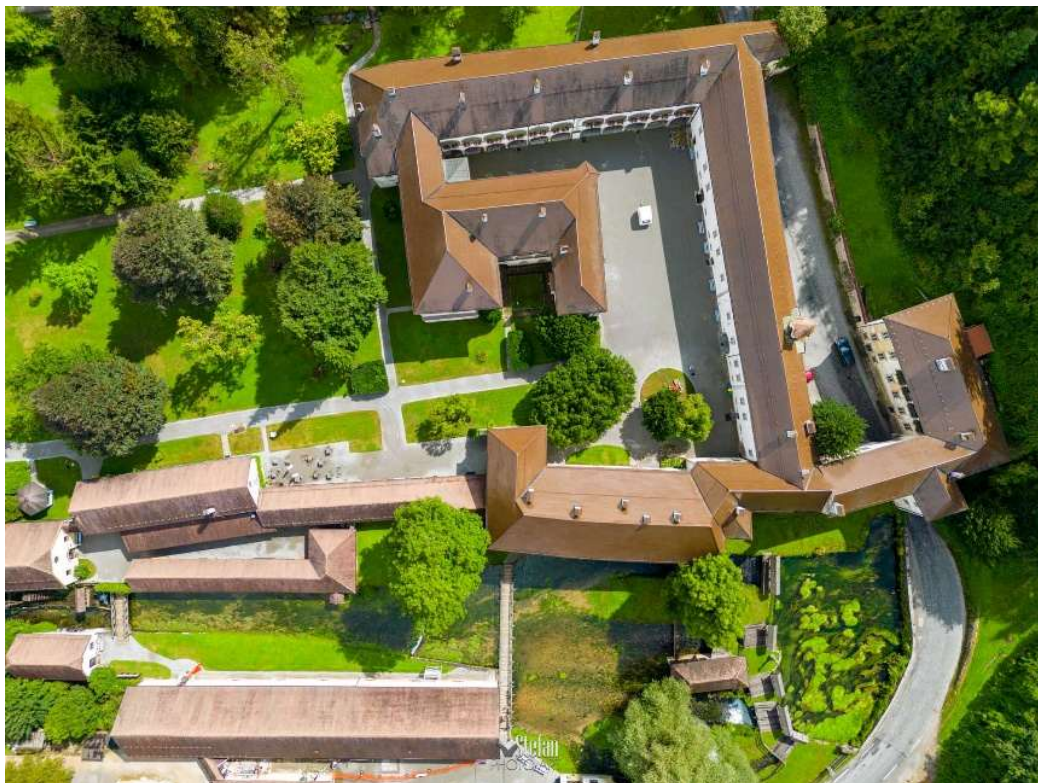


# WORKLAB 2026: General Conference

Ljubljana, Slovenija, 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> June 2026



**USE IT OR LOSE IT, Sustainable and Creative Use of Industrial and Labour Heritage - Sites and Buildings**



**Matevž Čelik Vidmar**, State Secretary at the Slovenian Ministry of Culture

### **Castles After Socialism: From Workers' Property to Public Responsibility**

This lecture examines how castles in Slovenia were transformed from aristocratic residences into social property under socialism, and how they were subsequently redefined in the post-socialist period. Following the Second World War, castles were expropriated and nationalised as part of a wider restructuring of property relations in socialist Yugoslavia. They were no longer private estates, but rather 'social property', intended for collective use. Their functions accordingly shifted: some were converted into housing, others into psychiatric institutions or public facilities, and several were restored as cultural monuments and opened to workers as part of the social tourism system. In this context, renovation was not merely a technical act, but a political project embedded in the reorganisation of labour, leisure and access.

However, this transformation was deeply ambivalent. While it enabled unprecedented public access, it often lacked the necessary long-term maintenance, which led to gradual degradation. Following the dissolution of Yugoslavia in 1991, the system that had sustained these buildings collapsed, leaving many of them in a state of legal and institutional uncertainty. The 1999 Act on the Ownership of Cultural Monuments in Social Property redistributed ownership between the state and municipalities, but did not fully resolve questions of governance, responsibility and use.

Building on recent initiatives to clarify legal status and facilitate investment in specific sites, such as Predjama, Bled, Turjak, Viltuš, Fužine, Otočec and others, the lecture asserts that the primary challenge today lies not in ownership itself, but in stewardship. It proposes shifting the perspective from viewing castles as static heritage assets to understanding them as active public infrastructures. In this sense, renovation becomes a tool for redefining the relationship between the state, heritage and society, pointing towards new models of long-term care, use and collective value.

**Matevž Čelik Vidmar** is an architect, researcher and cultural producer specialising in architecture and renovation. He is currently State Secretary at the Slovenian Ministry of Culture, where he is responsible for monuments, museums, cultural heritage, and investment in cultural premises. He is also Head of LINA (the European Architecture Platform) at the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Ljubljana. From 2010 to 2020, he was Director of MAO (the Museum of Architecture and Design) in Ljubljana, where he established the inaugural European architecture platform, Future Architecture.

**Konrad Gutkowski**, LWL-Museums of Industrial Heritage, Germany

### **Use It or Lose It: Archival Foundations for Preserving Industrial Heritage**

Industrial heritage sites are preserved through restoration, research and ongoing maintenance. When former workplaces were converted into listed monuments and museum sites, large collections of documents were transferred from the companies themselves. These included architectural plans, technical drawings, operational records, photographs and other materials related to the construction and use of the sites. They also included documentation of building-related machinery and large industrial structures such as headframes, blast furnaces and shaft halls. Today, new forms of documentation are being added, including digital building surveys and 3D-scans.

These materials form an essential knowledge base for both future conservation and restoration decisions as well as for research into the architectural and technical history of the sites. As time passed, many of these records were stored in different locations, only partially catalogued and managed across different departments.

This paper argues that archival structures are a basic requirement for the sustainable preservation of industrial heritage. Without systematic appraisal, organisation and central access, knowledge about past interventions and technical changes can easily be lost. As such, conservation and restoration practice, as well as historical interpretation, lack reliable foundations.

The paper presents the ongoing establishment of a Construction and Technology Archive within the LWL-Museums of Industrial Heritage in Germany. The current work focuses on surveying, evaluating and bringing together records that had been stored in different places, while developing a shared classification system and data structure. Digitisation is planned only after stable archival structures are in place.

This case study shows that sustainable use of industrial heritage does not begin with scanning technologies, but with safeguarding existing knowledge. Archiving is not an administrative task; it is the foundation for preservation, research and future reuse. The presentation also invites discussion regarding how other institutions organise and secure their documentation.

**Konrad Gutkowski** studied History and German Studies at Ruhr University Bochum and the Jagiellonian University in Krakow. He is a research associate at the LWL-Museums of Industrial Heritage in Germany. His expertise includes digitality, knowledge transfer and research projects in the field of industrial heritage. He also coordinates the museum knowledge archives. As a senior curator, he has led projects and exhibitions such as *Sounds of Changes*, *All Stolen?*, *Coding da Vinci*, *FUTUR21*, *Energiewende – Wendezeiten*, the podcast *FabrikFunk*, and *Digitizing Living Heritage*. He currently serves as curatorial lead for an exhibition on the cultural history of failure in an industrial heritage context. He also serves as a board member for WORKLAB.

**Tara Bursey**, Executive Director at Workers Arts & Heritage Centre

### **Workers' City: Towards an Equity-Driven Mapping of Labour and Workers' Heritage Sites in Hamilton, Ontario**

*Workers' City* is a digital project of the Workers Arts and Heritage Centre (WAHC) that maps the historic industries, workplaces, and stories of working people in Hamilton, Ontario, a post-industrial city in Canada's Great Lakes region known for steel manufacturing. In the 1990s, this project's beginnings centred on five self-guided tours aided by cassette recordings and interpretive booklets. The second iteration, developed in 2015, transformed these analog walking tours into a map-enabled app supplemented by archival materials, oral histories, and other primary sources.

While changes in form characterized the project's early evolution, institutional conversations about equity and the intentional broadening of our definition of *work* has helped shape *Workers' City* in recent years. In 2020—a year marked by civil rights, anti-racism, and anti-police brutality protests across North America—*Workers' City* was re-launched in an effort to be more representative of the multitudes of perspectives and stories of Hamilton's working people than it was previously. This dovetailed with wider institutional efforts to ensure that Black, Indigenous, and other workers of colour were represented across our programming, and that local heritage sites were honored and uplifted as an extension of their stories.

At its core, *Workers' City* serves as a map of 19th and 20th century workplaces in Hamilton that both highlights existing workers' heritage sites, while preserving the built heritage of Hamilton's working class lost to urban redevelopment and industrial change. This presentation will trace the evolution of this project, and how WAHC has retroactively inserted stories and sites of work of diverse workers into the existing architecture of the website, while fostering new programs, projects, and initiatives that map diverse workers' sites and stories. This presentation will highlight the challenges of retracing histories that have faced systemic exclusion from established labour and workers' histories, and the importance of intangible cultural heritage where built heritage associated with diverse workers' histories has not been preserved or protected.

**Tara Bursey** serves as Executive Director of the Workers Arts & Heritage Centre (WAHC), Canada's only labour history museum and multidisciplinary art centre. She is also an interdisciplinary artist, self publisher and arts worker and has worked in a curatorial capacity for galleries, museums and municipalities across Ontario. Her artwork has been exhibited across Canada as well as in Copenhagen, Berlin and Eye, Suffolk, UK, and she has presented her artistic research in the areas of textiles and contemporary art at Symposia in Los Angeles and Savannah (USA), Sackville (CAN) and Norrköping (SE). Before her appointment to the position of Director of WAHC, Bursey worked rigorously in the areas of programming and arts education. Recently, Bursey was appointed the 2022 Lassonde Artist-In-Residence at Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick, Canada. Last year, she served as Cultural

Consultant for the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE/SCFP), Canada's largest union, developing a live music program for their 2025 National Convention in Toronto.

View the web project Workers' City here: <https://www.workerscity.ca/>

---

**Lena Holbein**, LWL Museums of Industrial Heritage

### **Against the disappearance of implicit knowledge. A digital method for documenting historical working techniques**

From making bricks from clay and casting metal to operating a mechanical loom, museum demonstration sites impart valuable knowledge about historical working techniques. However, this knowledge is in danger of disappearing. Many cultural institutions with demonstration sites, particularly those with a voluntary structure, are currently facing significant challenges. Demographic changes and significant shifts in the world of work are causing a consistent decline in the understanding of historical working methods. At the same time, it is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit qualified staff for these workshops and pass on specific practical knowledge about machinery, tools, and processes. This means that the future of this form of education in cultural institutions is uncertain.

While material cultural assets are systematically collected, preserved and documented in museums, there are no comparable strategies for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, such as historical working techniques. A key difficulty lies in the nature of this knowledge: practising these techniques requires a high degree of implicit knowledge. Such knowledge cannot easily be recorded in writing or captured in traditional databases or manuals.

The *Digitising Living Heritage* project is a collaboration between the LWL Museums of Industrial Heritage and the LVR Institute for Regional Studies and Regional Histories. The project has developed a digital method for documenting intangible working techniques, thus preserving them for the long term. The aim is to enable presenters to independently create audiovisual documentation. This preserves the working technique and can also be used to train new presenters. Furthermore, the project plays a key role in teaching digital skills to older people and breaking down barriers. Following the publication of the guide in 2025 and its dissemination through ongoing workshops, the project's focus will shift towards publishing the resulting films on a publicly accessible platform. Alongside presenting the audiovisual method, this lecture will explore the current status of the project and the challenges it faces.

**Lena Holbein** studied art history and media studies in Braunschweig, Bochum and Toulouse. She holds a PhD in Art History and was a member of the DFG graduate school 'Das fotografische Dispositiv' at Braunschweig University of Arts from 2016 to 2019. From 2020 to 2023, she was the scientific coordinator of the LOEWE research group 'Architectures of Order' at Goethe University Frankfurt. Since 2025, she has been a research associate responsible for strategic

projects and grant management at the LWL Museums of Industrial Heritage. She is one of the project managers of *Digitizing Living Heritage*.

---

**Mojca Ramšak**, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

### **Smelling the Past: Olfactory Prompts and the Memory of Industrial Heritage**

The paper explores the potential of olfactory sensory prompts as methodological tools for eliciting memories of industrial labour environments, drawing on a case study developed at the Koroška Regional Museum in Ravne na Koroškem, Slovenia in 2025.

The ironworks in Ravne na Koroškem historically generated a distinctive olfactory landscape, shaped by tar-derived and other industrial substances that permeated the everyday working environment. Following the ironworks' renovation and partial decommissioning, residual waste materials carrying these characteristic smells have survived as traces of the site's industrial past. Rather than treating them merely as by-products of obsolescence, this paper proposes that such materials constitute a form of olfactory cultural heritage — a living, sensory connection to the working lives that shaped the region.

The methodology presented here was developed within the framework of the research project *Smell and Intangible Cultural Heritage* (ARIS J7-50233), which investigated how olfactory stimuli can serve as prompts for memory and identity in post-industrial communities. At the Koroška Regional Museum, these waste materials were introduced as sensory prompts in engagement sessions with former ironworkers and local community members. The olfactory stimuli proved remarkably effective in surfacing embodied, emotional memories of industrial labour — recollections of physical routines, workplace relationships, and the rhythms of factory life — that participants reported difficulty accessing through verbal questioning alone.

The paper argues that olfactory prompts offer a particularly direct and powerful route into working-class industrial memory, bypassing the limitations of language-based recall. It further proposes that the preservation and deliberate activation of industrial olfactory heritage should be recognised as a legitimate and sustainable strategy for engaging communities with their labour history, and for keeping endangered industrial sites meaningful and alive.

**Mojca Ramšak**, PhD, ethnologist and philosopher, specialises in the history of medicine, medical anthropology, and cultural heritage. She is affiliated with the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. She is the author of eleven scientific monographs with her three most recent books dedicated to culturally specific images of smell (*Antropologija vonja*, 2024; *The Anthropology of Smell*, 2024; *Olfaktorna muzeologija*, 2025) She is the head of the research project *Smell and Intangible Cultural Heritage* (ARIS J7-50233).

**Audhild Lindheim Kennedy**, PhD Culture Studies, researcher at the Norwegian Industrial Workers Museum, Norway

The paper is co-written with **Guro Nordby**, PhD Culture Studies, researcher at the Norwegian Industrial Workers Museum, Norway

**Artefacts from the ‘industrial tip’: Rethinking industrial heritage and preservation in Rjukan–Notodden World Heritage Site.**

Are there alternatives to preservation that can offer a more ethical, dynamic, and inclusive approach to industrial heritage – that embraces loss, material change and community memory in deindustrialised landscapes?

A reimagining of heritage that accommodates loss, change, ruins and multivocality; moving beyond rigid categories of value and decay in deindustrialised contexts can make a shift that invites to reflect deeper on memory, materiality and the fluid boundaries between past, present and future. This presentation explores the challenges and opportunities associated with preserving industrial objects as cultural heritage. We hope to provoke a broader rethinking of heritage – embracing transformation, inclusivity, acknowledging both human and more-than-human forces in shaping cultural memory.

We examine the complexities of preserving industrial heritage through a case study – a collection of large-scale industrial objects at the Norwegian Industrial Workers Museum, Norway. Formerly functional tools, they now challenge traditional museum practices due to scale, materiality and ambiguous cultural/heritage status. The case study reveals how preservation strategies adapt to changing attitudes; from industrial remains to heritage; from potential sculpture park to museum exhibits in flux. These objects, once discarded, occupy a liminal space between scrap and heritage, reflecting shifting societal values.

Industrial objects are not designed for longevity or aesthetic display, making interpretation and preservation difficult. Unlike curated artefacts, they demand frameworks that acknowledge functional origins and material transformation over time. Caitlin DeSilvey’s concept of curated decay challenge conventional preservation paradigms centred on permanence and authenticity and embraces temporality and material change, legitimising objects natural transformation.

Ruination is not loss, but holds the promise of a dynamic, relational process. We call for a rethinking of heritage practices that accommodate change, loss and interplay between the human and the-more-than-human, where emphasis shifts from static preservation to dynamic relationships between materials, environments and local community, provoking reflection on the fluid boundaries between value, decay and memory in deindustrialised societies.

From talk with Michelle: Do not forget about these industrial objects agency; by preserving we interfere with industrial objects agency.

Anthropological perspectives can give new meanings and pathways for sustainable, community-responsive heritage practices that advocate for experimental, process-oriented methods and recognise heritage as performative processes, as interactions between materials, environments and local community.

---

**Matevž Straus, Drejc Kokošar, Lucija Eniko, ID20 Institute, Slovenia**

### **The Giser House Project – Revitalizing Idrija’s Miners’ Heritage through Youth Engagement and Creative Narratives**

The town of Idrija, home to the former second-largest mercury mine in the world and a UNESCO World Heritage site, faces a critical challenge: the preservation of its traditional miners' houses. Many of these multi-family dwellings, built around 1800, have fallen into decay due to fragmented ownership and the high costs of specialized restoration. This presentation explores the "Giser House" project as a successful case study in reversing this trend through adaptive, creative, and community-driven reuse.

The Giser House (Hiša Giser) was saved from certain collapse after a complex process of consolidating ownership from 18 different heirs. Rather than pursuing a traditional "static museum" model, the project focuses on "vibrant heritage." This approach utilizes the building as a site for international youth volunteering through the European Solidarity Corps, where participants engage in hands-on restoration—from masonry to the delicate sanding of historic doors—fostering a sense of ownership among a new generation.

Crucially, the project emphasizes "creative use" by activating the space through storytelling and art. By leveraging the discovery of a 1922 handwritten cookbook in the house, the project developed the site-specific theatre and culinary performance "*O, sole mio*," merging industrial history with local gastronomy.

By presenting the Giser House model, this presentation will argue that the survival of labor heritage depends on transitioning from "preservation by isolation" to "preservation by participation." We demonstrate how small-scale, youth-led interventions can provide a sustainable blueprint for the creative revitalization of industrial housing, ensuring these sites remain relevant in the 21st century.

**Matevž Straus** is a cofounder and director of the ID20 Institute and a project leader in the field of Cultural Heritage at High Performance Computing company Arctur. Matevž holds a M.Sc. degree from Urban Studies, M.A. degree from Market Communication and a B.A. degree from Analytical Sociology. Matevž has been working at the crossroad of heritage and innovation for the last decade, has led several award-winning projects on innovating heritage.

**Drejc Kokošar** is a cofounder of ID20 Institute and a project manager, active in most of the projects managed in recent years. He has been active in the Erasmus+ projects, Creative Europe and Horizon projects developed or supported by ID20 Institute. He has been involved

in the organization of Idrija Žlikrofi Festival and Festival of Industrial Culture Betrib and contributed to toolkits and learning resources. He holds a M.A. degree from Slavic Culture Studies and studied in Ljubljana, Brno (CZ) and Prague (CZ). He has rich experience in the tourism (2004-2021), holds a national guiding license and was involved in the preparation of the sustainable guided tours within ID20 institute and for external partners.

**Lucija Eniko** is a project leader at ID20 Institute with experience in the hospitality industry, focused on sustainable gastronomy. Lucija has been at the core of gastronomic activities at Giser House. Lucija holds a B.A. in International Hotel Management (University AS Breda, Netherlands).

---

**R. Tuğba Kızılcıuşak, Figen Kıvılcım Çorakbaş, Elif Acar, Didem Akansu**, Bursa Uludag University Faculty of Architecture Department of Architecture, Bursa, Turkey

### **Industrial Heritage in Transition: Significance, Labour Memory, and Heritagization at the *Turgut Yılmazipek (Romangalle) Silk Factory in Bursa\****

This paper examines the significance of the *Turgut Yılmazipek (Romangalle)* Silk Factory in Bursa, Türkiye, and analyses its ongoing heritagization as a value-based, multi-scalar transformation from an abandoned production complex into a recognised labour and industrial heritage landscape. Established in the mid-nineteenth century and operating—with successive additions and alterations—until 1992, the factory constitutes a rare and relatively intact silk-production complex that documents Bursa’s transition from cocoon processing to mechanised silk manufacturing within a broader trajectory of urban-industrial modernisation.

Beyond its architectural fabric, the site embodies layered technological, environmental, urban, social, and memory values. As a filature-based production facility, it relied extensively on female labour from the nineteenth century onward, with women forming the core workforce in cocoon processing and silk reeling operations. The population exchange that took place in 1923 and 1924 caused an extensive change in the social context, which adds another layer to the interpretation and presentation of this unique heritage. Traces of various labour organisations, production routines, infrastructural systems, and everyday working life remain embedded in the spatial configuration of the complex and its surrounding neighbourhoods. Nevertheless, these labour-related dimensions remain only partially acknowledged within dominant conservation narratives that privilege architectural and aesthetic attributes.

The paper conceptualises heritagization not simply as a formal legal designation, but as a negotiated process of identifying, selecting, documenting, and interpreting cultural values. In the case of *Turgut Yılmazipek (Romangalle)*, tensions emerge between selective architectural recognition and a broader value-based conservation approach that treats the industrial campus as an integrated socio-spatial system. Particular attention is given to the risks posed

by urban transformation pressures, prolonged vacancy, and adaptive reuse strategies that may prioritise visual rehabilitation while marginalising working-class memory.

The study proposes a campus-scale, socially grounded conservation framework based on integrated value assessment and participatory engagement, advocating for a heritagization process that sustains both built form and collective memory.

\*This paper is an outcome of the scientific research project funded by the Bursa Uludağ University Scientific Research Project Unit under the Grant no FPDD-2025-2382.

**R. Tuğba Kızılkuşak**, who is currently pursuing her doctoral studies in the Subdiscipline of Restoration in the Department of Architecture, Faculty of Architecture at Bursa Uludağ University, received her undergraduate degree in Architecture from the Department of Architecture, Faculty of Architecture at Middle East Technical University in 2005, and her master's degree in 2019 from the Graduate Program in Conservation of Cultural Heritage within the same department. Her research areas are architectural conservation, construction techniques, water heritage, historical urban landscape and GIS applications, and she has academic studies in the fields of construction techniques and sustainability.

**Figen Kivılcım Çorakbaş** is a professor at Bursa Uludağ University, Faculty of Architecture, Department of Architecture. She holds a PhD from the University of Rome, Sapienza, and a Bachelor of Architecture and MSc in Restoration from Middle East Technical University, Ankara. Her academic studies are in the fields of architecture, restoration, and cultural heritage management. Prof. Kivılcım Çorakbaş has published on topics such as the conservation of intangible cultural qualities and the historical and architectural heritage of cultural landscapes. Her research interests the integration of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) with architectural and urban heritage studies.

**Elif Acar** is a research assistant at Bursa Uludağ University, Faculty of Architecture, Department of Architecture. Acar holds a PhD (2023) and MA in Restoration (2015) from Bursa Uludağ University and a BA in Architecture (2009) from Yıldız Technical University. Her master's thesis on a historical olive oil factory in Bursa-Tirilye, was awarded the 2016 Bursa Research First Prize by Nilüfer Municipality Libraries and published in 2018. Her research interests include architectural conservation and restoration, industrial heritage, cultural landscape and rural architecture. She has participated in national and international workshops on cultural landscapes, water heritage, and cultural heritage conservation.

**Didem Akansu** is currently pursuing her doctoral studies in the Restoration Subdiscipline within the Department of Architecture at Bursa Uludağ University. She earned her bachelor's degree in Architecture from İstanbul Fatih Sultan Mehmet Vakıf University, in 2017, and her master's degree in Restoration from Bursa Uludağ University in 2023. She has participated in various internships and summer schools in the field of conservation in Turkey and abroad. She has academic studies on the evaluation of historical cemeteries from the Ottoman Period

according to the principles of architectural conservation, and her areas of interest are architectural conservation, historical urban landscape.

---

**Kalle Kallio**, Finnish Labour Museum, Finland

### **Small museums, strong spirits**

In 1960, the first labour museum opened its doors in Finland. This open-air museum dedicated to paper mill workers was soon followed by other small museums. Initiatives to found museums of workers' housing, industrial culture and labour movement were characteristic for 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. The Finnish Labour Museum as a national and professionally run institute finally followed in 1993.

This group specialised in working-class heritage, history and culture with some local and thematic variations. Some of these museums were branches of city museums and some were founded by trade unions, political associations or heritage groups. Enthusiasm in labour history had developed into a vivid museum movement. However, the era of the labour museum initiatives virtually ended in 1990s when Finnish society started to change rapidly.

Those good old times have been over for more than thirty years now. Some of these museums have been closed during 21<sup>st</sup> century, there have been museum mergers, and many are simply endangered today. However, tens of these small museums keep struggling around the country. How they have managed and what could be their social role in 2020s?

The Finnish Labour Museum is trying to network and help these small institutions. Only in 2025, we visited 19 small labour museums to advice and learn from their experiences. Some of them have survived with minimal public funding thanks to their strong spirited volunteers. How can they take care of the old buildings and keep local labour heritage alive?

In my presentation, I will introduce this peculiar group of small labour museums. It will open an interesting perspective on museum activism, strategies of self-sufficient survival and perhaps a whole idea of the labour museum. Against the odds, these museums have managed to use and maintain labour heritage sites so far.

**Kalle Kallio** (48) holds a PhD degree in history and MA in education. More than twenty years, he has worked as a museum director in The Finnish Labour Museum. Kallio has been a board member of Worklab since 2008 and a long-standing chairman (2010–2021). Currently, he is a sitting social democratic member of the City Council at his hometown Tampere. Kallio has also been a trustee in many foundations and teaches museum studies at Tampere University. His research has been awarded as the best Finnish labour history book of the year 2024.

**Katariina Ruuska-Jauhijärvi**, Helsinki City Museums, Finland

## **Museum and Heritage Practices Beyond Museum Walls**

### **Memories of Minsku – The impact of an asbestos factory on the local community and environment**

The Helsinki City Museum carried out a research project related to a local asbestos factory in 2024-2025, with the aim of collecting communal and intergenerational memories, photographs and objects connected to the factory and its community. The research focused on the asbestos factory's history and its impact on the local community and built environment through interviews, literature, local press articles and the area's planning history.

During the research project, stories and memories related to the asbestos factory and its community were collected from different perspectives from the 1950s to the 2000s. The memories and stories provided a concrete understanding of what it was like to work in the asbestos factory and be a part of the local community. Based on the interviews, a podcast was published in cooperation with a local theater.

City museums have a role as collective interpreters and valuers of memory. Because cherishing certain memories over others can be a conscious way for the city to build its image, museums should examine history impartially and also study phenomena that are considered difficult or insignificant. The buildings of the closed asbestos factory were demolished in 2001 and a school was built on the old factory site. Although the factory buildings have disappeared from the area, the history of the asbestos factory and its community are still an important part of the cultural history of the area. In my presentation I will talk about these almost forgotten and lost memories of the old asbestos factory community. I will also talk about the phenomenon related to the asbestos industry and how it can be seen in the area as part of the built environment and local identity. In this case, even though we lost the actual buildings, we were still able to use them by preserving the memories of an almost forgotten community.

**Katariina Ruuska-Jauhijärvi** is a curator at the Helsinki City Museums cultural environment team in Finland. She has specialized in the history of the Finnish asbestos industry and cultural heritage related to the phenomena.

**Hend Zeidan**, Inspector - Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, Egypt

**Emil Henin**, Head of Coptic Paintings Conservation Department-Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, Egypt

**Sahar Ghidan**, Archaeological translator - Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, Egypt

### **Documentation and Sustainable Practices in Historic Cairo: A Framework for Reuse and Preservation**

Industrial and labor heritage sites in historic cities face mounting pressures from rapid urban transformation and economic shifts, leaving them vulnerable to neglect or functional obsolescence. In alignment with the conference theme "Use It or Lose It," this research explores the potential of adaptive reuse within Historic Cairo. It argues that sustainable preservation is predicated on an integrated documentation approach that bridges the gap between physical structures and the intangible values of labor. By analyzing the intersection of architecture, traditional craftsmanship, and social memory, this paper evaluates how reimagining these spaces can transform them from endangered urban relics into active cultural and economic assets.

The methodology employs a multi-disciplinary approach, combining architectural surveying and spatial analysis with the recording of living labor practices and oral histories, guided by UNESCO and ICOMOS heritage standards. The study presents three comparative case studies representing diverse patterns of labor heritage: the commercial-labor complex of Wekala al-Ghuri, the craft

specialized markets of Khan El-Khalili, and the traditional workshops of Al-Darb al-Ahmar. These cases illustrate the fragility of heritage when disconnected from its original function; while some sites persist as physical landmarks, their labor-related identity faces threats from "touristification" and shifting market dynamics.

The findings reveal that sites with high community engagement and intact labor practices possess the greatest potential for sustainability. However, a lack of comprehensive documentation often leads to the erosion of the vital link between the building and its original work identity. The study concludes that documentation must evolve to include social organization and artisanal memory to support successful adaptive reuse. By activating these sites through creative engagement and systematic documentation, Historic Cairo can preserve its working-class identity, ensuring that its physical and intangible traces are used effectively to avoid being lost to history.

**Hend Zeidan** is an archaeologist and museum professional with over a decade of experience in heritage conservation and site management. He holds an MA and is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Heritage Site Management at Helwan University, while also pursuing an ALM in Museum Studies at Harvard University. Professionally, he serves as an Inspector at the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and a Curator for the Egyptian Presidential Museums. Specializing

in the Historic Cairo World Heritage Site, his work focuses on curation and community engagement, supported by international conference contributions and peer-reviewed publications

**Emil Henin** is the Head of the Coptic Paintings Conservation Department at the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities. Holding a Ph.D. in Conservation Science, he specializes in Conserving icons within historic churches and monasteries. His global expertise is shaped by participating in international workshops across the USA, Canada, Cyprus, Italy, and beyond, focusing on modern techniques. As a published researcher, he contributes to Egyptian and international journals on Heritage protection and Coptic icon preservation, bridging field-based conservation with advanced scientific research.

**Sahar Ghidan** is a professional translator at the Supreme Council of Antiquities, offering extensive expertise in specialized writing and cultural management since 1996. His career includes pivotal roles within the Technical Office of Dr. Zahi Hawass at the Giza Pyramids and the Technical Office of the Secretary-General. Most recently, from 2017 through January 2026, he served as Office Manager to the Secretary General. He specializes in navigating complex institutional operations and managing high-level archaeological files, bridging the gap between technical scholarship and administrative excellence in Egypt's cultural heritage sector.

---

**Ines Beguš Bavcon**, Regional Museum Goriški muzej and University of Primorska, Faculty of Humanities, Slovenia

### **Industrial Heritage of Ajdovščina: Inspiration for a Scattered Open-air Exhibition**

Ajdovščina is a town in western Slovenia with a rich industrial heritage. The development of industrial activities can be traced from the 16th to the 21st century. Initially, favourable conditions for their operation were provided by natural resources, especially the torrential River Hubelj, which supplied water power to the facilities. In the area and close surroundings of the present-day town, through different centuries ironworks, a paper mill, a brewery, two modern flour mills, and a spinning mill operated, while food, construction, textile, furniture and other industries developed in the 20th century. Among local residents, memories of recent Ajdovščina's factories –renowned for their quality both at home and abroad– remain very vivid. Likewise, the industrial heritage from the pre-war period has been preserved in the collective memory of the population. An extensive and diverse history of Ajdovščina's industry and the encouragement of local community to present this significant part of their town's history, were the inspiration for the exhibition titled *The Industrial Heritage of Ajdovščina*.

The purpose of the paper is to present the concept of the exhibition and its final form. The exhibition is set within an urban environment. Its design is based on thirteen sites where industrial facilities once stood or still operate today. At each location, an information board provides basic details about the facility along with a QR code through which visitors can access

a website containing extended information, photographs of the facilities and objects, testimonies of former factory workers and related stories. The paper will also present the accompanying programme, comprising workshops, educational sessions and guided tours. Particular emphasis will be placed on the collaboration with the local community and companies that contributed valuable knowledge about factory work, as well as objects and photographs.

**Ines Beguš Bavcon** is a curator at the Regional Museum Goriški muzej and assistant professor at the University of Primorska, Faculty of Humanities in Koper. In 2013, she completed her PhD on the topic of autonomy and economy in Natisone valleys in the Venetian Republic. She participated in the realization of several exhibitions, both as a leader and as a collaborator. Her fields of interests are economic history and industrial heritage in the Vipava Valley and Gorizia region from the 16th to the 19th century.

---

**Arafat Ali**, Gallery Assistant, National Museum of Science and Technology, Bangladesh

### **Beyond Museum Walls: Engaging Labour Heritage in Contemporary Bangladesh**

The industrial and labour heritage in Bangladesh is under growing threat as a result of accelerated urbanization, changing modes of production and the poor appreciation of the working-class heritage in official institutions of heritage. Factories, workshops, housing of the workers and informal production areas are usually undocumented, untapped or they are not part of the preservation initiatives. The thesis of this paper is that to protect the labour heritage in the long run, one must be an active and practice-based user.

Based on the practice-based experiences related to the National Museum of Science & Technology (NMST), Bangladesh, the paper will be addressing the possibility of museums going beyond their physical buildings to access labour and industrial heritage in the public space. The community outreach programmes, mobile museums, and participatory interpretation are discussed as the methods of connecting industrial sites with modern social life. Such practices assist in converting abandoned or threatened spaces into learning, communicative, and memory spaces.

The paper discusses also the empirical issues that lie in capturing labour heritage in situations with limited resources. It emphasizes the importance of the combination of small digital equipment, oral histories, and community know-how in the sustainability-driven practice in museums. The study focuses more on the everyday and lived nature of labour heritage as opposed to making it a static, monumental form.

The paper illustrates how the use of cultural heritage can be both creative and sustainable to make certain that labour and industrial heritage is still visible, meaningful and socially relevant before it is lost altogether.

**Arafat Ali** is a Gallery Assistant at the National Museum of Science & Technology, Bangladesh, and an emerging voice in global museology. Ranked 5th on the Blooloo 50 Museum Influencers list in 2024, he is recognized for his leadership in inclusive and sustainable museum practice. His work focuses on community engagement, ethical museology, and youth empowerment from a Global South perspective. He has presented at major international forums, including the ICOM General Conference (CIMUSET Day), ICOM UK, ICOM ICFA Jaipur, AVICOM, ICOM MPR, ICOFOM-Doha, ICOFOM LAC, and CoCA. His research addresses regenerative development, transcultural curatorial approaches and digital inclusion.

---

**Barbara Rezar Grilc** and **Matevž Šlabnik**, Technical Museum of Slovenia, Slovenia

### **Reforging the Monastery – The Evolution of the Technical Museum of Slovenia**

Since the establishment of the Carthusian monastery in Bistra near Vrhnika in the 13th century, the complex that today houses the Technical Museum of Slovenia has continuously functioned as a place of labour. Over the centuries, the forms of work carried out within its walls have changed significantly — from monastic activities such as manuscript copying and self-sufficient agricultural production to industrial operations developed by the Galle family from the 18th century onwards. Building upon earlier monastic sawmill activities, the Galle family expanded wood-processing production by taking advantage of the surrounding forests and abundant water resources.

Following the Second World War, the complex was nationalized, and its preservation was secured through the establishment of the Technical Museum of Slovenia within the former monastery estate. Since then, the site has become a place of museum work dedicated to the preservation, interpretation, and presentation of technical and industrial heritage. While the walls have remained, the nature of labour within them has continuously evolved.

In 2026, the site enters another important phase of transformation. The museum has begun a comprehensive renovation of the complex, necessitated by inadequate conditions for the safe preservation and presentation of heritage collections as well as insufficient working conditions for museum staff. The restoration project presents significant challenges due to the monument's protected national heritage status and its location within the environmentally sensitive Ljubljansko Barje Landscape Park, part of the Natura 2000 network.

This paper presents the Bistra complex as a continuously evolving landscape of labour and examines the ongoing renovation as a process of sustainable heritage transformation. The project seeks not only to preserve the historic structure but also to improve working conditions and support the long-term coexistence of cultural heritage and the natural environment.

**Barbara Rezar Grilc** is a senior curator at the Technical Museum of Slovenia, where she specialises in the preservation and interpretation of cultural heritage. She is also actively

engaged in the museum's development and investment initiatives, with a particular focus on the ongoing renovation of the Bistra museum complex.

**Matevž Šlabnik** is a curator of the Transportation Department at the Technical Museum of Slovenia. He focuses on researching Slovenian technical heritage and developing programs for its popularisation. He is the author and co-author of exhibitions and articles on industrial heritage and its relation to society & built environment.

---

**Sonja Ifko**, Faculty of Architecture, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

### **Abandoned and underused heritage sites as a sustainable capital for green transformation**

The contribution aims to present the potentials and opportunities that the abandoned heritage sites offer for sustainable transformation of local communities which can contribute to the realisation of all four aspects of sustainability: cultural, social, environmental, and economic. Though it is crucial that these aspects are considered in equal measure, although they are in practice often prioritised unequally, mainly at the expense of the cultural as well as social aspect - this is at the expense of cultural heritage and the preservation of its authenticity and integrity. Therefore, revitalisation and adaptive reuse projects must be designed in an inclusive and interdisciplinary manner from the very first steps. The contribution presents the results of the experimental laboratory RevitLab Hrastnik, a pilot project of such an approach, carried out in the framework of the interdisciplinary basic research project titled *HEI-Transform*. The project involves 37 researchers from 14 different fields, who are developing a tool for ensuring the inclusive adaptive reuse of abandoned heritage. To encourage a broader reflection on the role of heritage in green transformation, we regarded it as a form of sustainable capital and moved beyond its narrow view as an artefact with specific values, which only experts can decide upon.

The focus will be on a critical analysis of the possibilities for preserving the authenticity and functional integrity of industrial heritage while facing the reality of the local interests and possibilities.

*I would like to thank the ARIS for supporting the research HEI-Transform, which is financed under the grant agreement J7-4641.*

**Dr. Sonja Ifko**, is an architect, professor at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Ljubljana. She is head of the University of Ljubljana's Institute for Sustainable Heritage. Her main research areas are architecture and urban heritage of the 19th and 20th century with focus on industrial heritage, urban regeneration and adaptive reuse of industrial heritage sites. She is author and co-author of several scientific papers and books including *Protection and Reuse of Industrial heritage Sites - Dilemmas, Problems and Examples* published by ICOMOS Slovenia in 2018. Currently she leads national basic research project *Heritage for Inclusive Sustainable*

Transformation HEI-Transform. She is president of ICOMOS Slovenia and Slovenian national representative in TICCH.

---

**Helena Törnqvist**, Arbetets museum, Sweden

**Museums and Industrial Heritage Sites in Historic Buildings:  
Arbetets museum -The Museum of Work and museums of working live in Sweden**

Arbetets museum - The Museum of Work in Norrköping, Sweden is a national museum with the assignment to cover the modern-day society in exhibitions but also to support Sweden's about 1500 museums showing work and life around the country.

Arbetets museum is located in the heart of the city and the Swedish industrial heritage. The building is a former cotton mill, closed in the recession of Swedish textile industry in the 1970. The whole industrial city center was more or less left empty and closed down for almost 20 years until reused in the form of museums, concert hall, university, and new companies filled the former factory building with life again.

Sweden has many independent museums called working life museums. They show and collect artefacts and stories from the industries formerly located in their area. It is a wide range of Industrial Heritage that is preserved by the people that very often worked in the factories and know the craft very well. They are the experts of their own heritage, a knowledge we in the museum profession and researcher will never be able to acquire. Arbetets museum very often work in networks; we have seven different networks in various topics from steam engines to lobbying for better regulations for preserving vehicles of transportation. The network's collected knowledge is a unique Intangible Cultural Heritage and a legacy to pass on to future generations. The working life museums are a very effective way to preserve as much knowledge as possible to as low cost as possible.

**Helena Törnqvist** is the former museum photographer mainly educated at Göteborg and Linköping University in Sweden in art, cultural heritage and behavior with a degree of Master of Arts. Helena has worked with industrial heritage since 2010 and the last ten years at Arbetets museum with the independent working life museums in Sweden.

---

**Marguerite Baradat**, Musée de l'Histoire vivante, Paris, France

**From a Bourgeois House to a Museum of Labour History: 150 Years of Social and Political History to Tell!**

Created in 1939, the Musée de l'Histoire vivante is housed in a bourgeois mansion built in the 1870s, formerly owned by a family that made its fortune in the patent leather industry. At the time, establishing a museum dedicated to people's history in the most beautiful residence of the industrial town of Montreuil (communist since 1935) was clearly a powerful symbol.

Today, the museum team is working to highlight the social history of the site since the 19th century: what types of industry existed there? What forms of work were practiced? What were the industrial and political relationships between employers and workers? The project also explores how the labour movement, through communist leaders, reclaimed this bourgeois space and transformed it into a place of popular history and education.

**Marguerite Baradat** works at the Musée de l'Histoire vivante in Paris, where she has been Administrative Manager since summer 2025. In this role, she contributes to the conception and production of exhibitions, including *Colours: A History of Labour and Struggles*, currently on view at the museum. Previously trained at the École du Louvre in 20th-century art history and cultural mediation, she has also worked with cultural institutions including the Philharmonie de Paris.

---

**Karla Oder**, Koroški pokrajinski muzej

## **THE OLD IRONWORKS at Ravne na Koroškem – the brilliance of thousands of hands**

### **An example of museum interpretation**

In recent years, a revitalisation project has been underway at the Old Ironworks area in Ravne na Koroškem, building on proven approaches from the area's ongoing development. The project was developed with the technical assistance of the European Commission's New European Bauhaus Local Initiatives and is an internationally recognised example of good practice in a project designed in accordance with the principles of the NEB.

Early industrialisation profoundly reshaped the cultural landscape of the Meža Valley, which was already the most industrially developed area in Slovenia in the 19th century, leaving a lasting mark on the region's cultural landscape.

The Old Ironworks, designated a cultural monument in 1994, is a rare, authentic industrial complex from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The preserved site includes a forge, former production facility, workers' multi-dwelling house, factory laboratory, and former communal laundry. Since 2022, a reconstructed forge has operated in the former oil warehouse.

Preserving and repurposing these buildings allows for the interpretation of both the iron and steel heritage and the everyday life of the workers. Permanent exhibitions present the history of ironworking in Koroška and the significance of the Ravne Ironworks as the "mother factory". In the preserved production hall, machines and devices enable visitors to learn about the development of ironworking technology over the centuries.

Original artefacts and the intangible cultural heritage of the collective memory of the working class are interpreted using modern digital tools such as 3D scanning, digital tables, and holograms.

The transformation of industrial sites into recognised heritage is crucial for preserving the history of work and the working class. The Old Ironworks is an exemplary case of creative and sustainable use of historic industrial buildings as museum spaces, offering profound insight into the region's industrial identity.

**Karla Oder** is employed at the Carinthian Regional Museum, and serves as the president of the Association of the Central European Iron Trail, headquartered in Ravne na Koroškem. She researches the lifestyle of industrial workers in their work, public, and home environments, as well as their relationship to work, home, and the community. Recently, she has been exploring industrial scents. The results of her research have been published in scientific monographs, including. She has been professionally leading the revitalization project of the Old Ironworks area, which builds on proven approaches to the development of this area to date.

---

### **Meta Štular, Center Rog, Slovenia**

#### **Rog Around the Clock: From Live Prototyping in a Shipping Container to an 8,000 sqm Contemporary Creative Hub**

This lecture examines the transformation of the former Rog factory in Ljubljana into Center Rog as a case of adaptive reuse of a listed industrial heritage building originally constructed in the early 20th century. Rather than approaching the renewal of this industrial monument as a purely architectural or conservation-led intervention, the Center Rog development process treated the building as a living cultural infrastructure whose future meaning, use, and governance were collectively shaped before its physical reconstruction was complete.

The presentation traces the development project from its conception to implementation. It began with RogLab, a 30 m<sup>2</sup> production space housed in a shipping container and operating between 2012 and 2021 as a temporary pilot of the future institution. It functioned as a testing ground for programs, technologies, and institutional models. It enabled future users—makers, artists, creative entrepreneurs, and local residents—to experiment with spatial concepts, fabrication tools, collaborative formats, and governance approaches prior to the comprehensive renovation of the heritage complex. In this way, the industrial legacy of the factory was not preserved as static memory, but reinterpreted through contemporary forms of making aligned with emerging creative economies.

Between 2021 and 2023, the 8,000 sqm factory building underwent extensive renovation, and in 2023 the new public institution, Center Rog, was officially launched with its production-oriented programmes.

The lecture argues that live prototyping can serve as a governance tool in the regeneration of complex heritage buildings. By embedding experimentation into the pre-operational phase, tensions between conservation requirements, public ownership, community expectations, and economic sustainability were surfaced early and addressed through iterative learning.

Center Rog case demonstrates that safeguarding heritage involves not only material conservation, but also programmatic and social continuity.

**Meta Šular** has over 25 years of experience in the cultural and creative sectors, specializing in social innovation, cultural heritage revitalisation, and the development of sustainable creative ecosystems. Her work focuses on stakeholder engagement, strategy development, participatory planning, and the implementation of transformative cultural programmes that connect policy with practice. As the Director of Strategic Development and Programmes at Ljubljana's Center Rog, she led the creation of one of Europe's largest sustainable design hubs, recognized with the Eurocities Innovation Award.

---

**Kosjenka Laszlo Klemar**, Technical Museum Nikola Tesla, Zagreb, Croatia

### **Evoking memories of the industrial past – cultural actions of Technical Museum Nikola Tesla**

The City of Zagreb was one of the important industrial centres of socialist Yugoslavia (SFRJ). After the break up of Yugoslavia in 1991, during the transition from socialism to capitalism in the 1990s and first decades of 2000s, it has faced two intense and partly parallel processes – deindustrialisation and gentrification. As a consequence, most of the factories that were situated on attractive locations within the city or on its outskirts were demolished and replaced by residential and commercial buildings or left to decay. Former industrial suburbs, such as Trešnjevka, known as “Red Trešnjevka” because of the role of its working class residents in the Labour movement during the period between the WWI and WWII (and also the suburb on whose outskirts Technical Museum Nikola Tesla is situated), have lost their industrial/working class identity. Replacement of the factories with residential buildings and the massive population influx that followed, besides the urbanistic chaos, caused the erasure of the memory of the neighbourhood industrial past. This was intensified with the political agenda (especially present during the 1990s) aimed at erasing Croatia's socialistic past of which the factories and the workers culture that were once perceived as the *bearers of social progress* were important part.

Being aware of the role of Museum in protecting the industrial heritage (tangible and intangible) Technical Museum Nikola Tesla has initiated series of cultural actions in Trešnjevka suburb and other former industrial city zones, with the aim to draw attention on neglecting and disappearing of industrial heritage, and to restore the faded collective memory. Actions included public installations and city walks that will be presented in the proposed presentation.

**Kosjenka Laszlo Klemar**, PhD, art historian and ethnologist, senior curator/museum educator. Since 2017, she has been employed at the Technical Museum Nikola Tesla (Zagreb, Croatia), where she has realized a number of exhibitions and educational programs. In her professional work, she focuses on industrial heritage and gender issues. She is a co-author of the ESF project "Tailored futures?" focused on Croatian textile industry heritage, which was selected by the

European Commission as one of the ESF success stories. She is responsible for the Textile Technology collection and the head of the Department for Programmes and Exhibitions.

**Raluca-Maria Trifa**, Teaching Assistant, “Ion Mincu” University of Architecture and Urbanism, Romania

### **When the Working Class Built the City: Union Houses and the Fragile Heritage of Labour in Central and Eastern Europe**

Emerging in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Union Houses<sup>1</sup> emerged at the turn of the twentieth century as key institutions of working-class life. While recognizing their wider European origins, this paper focuses on their development in the territories of the former Austr Hungarian Monarchy. From the imperial capitals of Vienna and Budapest to provincial centres and further into mining towns and rural-industrial settlements, Union Houses were embedded in workers’ neighbourhoods, forming a dense spatial infrastructure of associational life within industrial modernity.

The paper places Union Houses within the built heritage of labour and industrial history, considering them as material expressions of workers’ everyday experiences. Promoted by labour unions, socialist parties, mutual aid associations, and occasionally supported by reformoriented industrialists or municipal authorities, they embodied the institutionalization of class organization. Programmatically hybrid, combining assembly halls, libraries, theatres, educational facilities, and union offices, Union Houses functioned as infrastructures of socialization, education, cultural production, and political negotiation. Architecturally, many adopted the language of the “new style” (Art Nouveau and its regional variants), appropriating the aesthetic vocabulary of modernity while re-signifying it through iconographies of labour and solidarity. In doing so, they articulated a counter-public architectural presence within cities otherwise dominated by bourgeois representational forms.

The socio-political conditions that sustained these institutions changed fundamentally over the twentieth century. Ideological control and nationalization altered their function, and post-1989 deindustrialization and the decline of organized labour further weakened their original role. Today, these buildings remain important material testimonies of a period when architecture actively mediated processes of collective emancipation. However, they are often overlooked in heritage policies that prioritize factories and other industrial infrastructures. Recognizing Union Houses as part of labour’s-built heritage expands the understanding of industrial history beyond production sites and brings into focus the spaces where working-class life, organization, and emancipation were shaped.

<sup>1</sup> Known as *Arbeiterheim* or *Volkshaus* (German), *Munkásotthon* (Hungarian), *Dělnický dům* (Czech), *Delavski dom* (Slovenian), *Circolo Operaio* and later *Dopolavoro* (Italian), or *Casă/Cămin a/al Muncitorilor* (Romanian), these denominations correspond to the linguistic diversity of the regions that once formed the Habsburg Empire.

**Raluca-Maria Trifa** is an architect, researcher, and assistant professor at “Ion Mincu” University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest. Her work focuses on the study, documentation, and adaptive reuse of industrial sites, examining how post-industrial cities negotiate memory, identity, and urban transformation. She has presented widely, published numerous papers, and authored a recent book on Timișoara’s industrial development and transformation. She is a former Fellow at New Europe College, where she led the project *"Bridging Histories: Unveiling the Industrial Evolution Across the Habsburg Empire's Periphery"*, investigating interconnected industrial developments, regional particularities, and patterns of modernization across the former Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

---

**Bruno De Corte**, Independent Historia, Belgium

### **The Preservation of Built Heritage of Labour and Industrial History by Grassroots Movements: the Case of the Rupel Region in Belgium**

The Rupel Region is a post-industrial area in Belgium. This region is located next to the river Rupel and covers approximately 46 square kilometres. Next to the River is a large geographical feature called the “Boom Clay”. This layer was formed in the Oligocene. The Rupel clay is an ideal raw material for the making of bricks. The river Rupel, connected to the river Scheldt (which leads to Antwerp) was the transport factor.

The spreading of the brickmaking over other communities happened gradually in small scale local units, following the rich clay deposit at the right bank of the river. The landscape was dominated by these concentrations of kilns. Very typical was also the adjacent housing phenomenon, which added to the fragmentation of the landscape.

So not only the landscape was fragmented. Local brickworks created local communities with strong identities. This would have a strong impact on the rise of nature and heritage protection.

After brickmaking in the region reached its summit in 1957, a steady decline started, accelerated by the Oil Crisis of 1973-74: the fate of the smaller factories was sealed. The Rupel region became an economical depressed area. Moreover, the abandoned clay pits became quickly the trash cans of an international waste mafia.

This provoked a strong reaction of the local inhabitants, resulting in a grassroots ecological movement. Within this civic action developed the inspiration of preserving the industrial heritage. From the seventies on several heritage initiatives were created by local volunteers. In preserving original buildings and tools they were quite successful.

The author gives an overview of the preserved heritage, the actual challenges such as gentrification and an outlook for the future.

**Bruno De Corte** is an independent historian who is very familiar with the Rupel Region, close to his hometown the city of Antwerp. He is co-founder of the Ecomuseum and Archive of the Boom Brickworks (EMABB 1984) and the initiator of different heritage initiatives. He has contributed to the VDI and the Gesellschaft für Technikgeschichte, the Georg Agricola Gesellschaft in Germany. Other contributions were on the behalf of TICCIH 2015 Lille, ICOM Milan 2016, ICOHTEC 2016 Porto, ICMAH 2017 Baku, SSHMT 2018 St-Etienne. One of his publications deals with the history of engineers in Belgium.

---

**Christella Alihonou**, Student of the Erasmus Mundus Master's Degree

### **Industrial Heritage of The Colonial Era in Benin: Identifying and Recognizing Forgotten Heritage to Prevent its Loss**

Benin, a country rich in culture and heritage, is home to a lesser-known industrial heritage dating back to the colonial era. These remnants of a bygone era bear witness to a complex past where economic activities were closely tied to colonial interests. However, industrial heritage in Benin often remains overlooked or marginalized in favor of other forms of heritage deemed more representative of national identity, such as natural and cultural sites.

The identification and recognition of industrial heritage in Africa, and particularly in Benin, are critical challenges with historical, socio-economic, and cultural implications. Recognizing and identifying these sites are the first steps toward protecting and preserving the industrial legacy of a nation. Beyond their historical significance, these sites embody social values, traditional and modern technical know-how, and the ingenuity of our ancestors—compelling reasons to prioritize their recognition.

This presentation will explore the major challenges associated with identifying and recognizing Benin's colonial industrial heritage and propose actions for its preservation and valorization. How can we address the systemic neglect of industrial heritage in Africa, particularly in Benin? By shedding light on this undervalued patrimony, we aim to emphasize its importance as a cultural, historical, and economic resource. Our discussion will underline the urgency of conserving Benin's colonial industrial sites and integrating them into broader heritage protection frameworks.

**Mahmoud Amer Ahmed Mohamed**, Lecturer at the Faculty of Archaeology, Aswan University, Egypt

### **The Last Bale of Cotton “Tracing the fabric of Mina El-Bassal, Alexandria”**

The Cotton Bourse of Alexandria stands in Mina El-Bassal, once the city’s principal industrial hub, strategically located at the end of Al-Mahmoudia Canal near Qabbary Railway Station and the Alexandrian port. Built in 1872 by Italian architect Pietro Avoscani, the Bourse both witnessed and shaped the area’s transformation—from growth and centralization to nationalization and decline. Despite three decades of vacancy and partial demolition, it remains an architectural landmark and a powerful symbol of collective memory. Cotton became Egypt’s primary export under Muhammad Ali Pasha in the early nineteenth century, and with Alexandria emerging as the country’s main export gateway, Mina El-Bassal rapidly developed as warehouses and factories clustered near the canal and port. The surge in global demand during the American Civil War positioned Egyptian long-staple cotton at the center of international trade, creating the need for a specialized institution to regulate transactions and quality control, which led to the establishment of the Cotton Bourse (Marché au Coton) alongside the earlier Bourse at Muhammad Ali Square. The building evolved in response to market expansion; in 1889, architect Kevork Merametjian added porticos and reorganized circulation, while further expansions in the early twentieth century increased its capacity to more than eighty trading and testing offices. Although modern industrial warehouses eventually surrounded it and the cotton trade declined, leading to abandonment and the demolition of part of its eastern wing in 2000, the Bourse retained its architectural prominence. Designed in a European classicist style, its courtyard-centered plan reflected the social and commercial interactions it hosted, distinguishing it from the surrounding industrial structures. Beyond its architectural significance, the Bourse holds strong social and emotional value. Interviews with local shop owners and former workers reveal deep attachment, memories of prosperity, craftsmanship, and shared livelihoods, and a collective hope for restoration. Our vision proposes a flexible toolbox built on four pillars: social activation through improved walkability and reopening the courtyard as a public space; economic revitalization by adapting offices for local workshops and sustainable commercial use; environmental enhancement through canal improvement and added greenery; and heritage interpretation via exhibition and memory spaces that celebrate both tangible and intangible values.

**Mahmoud Amer** is an Egyptian archaeologist and heritage specialist, currently a lecturer at the Faculty of Archaeology, Aswan University. He earned his PhD from Sapienza University of Rome and previously worked as an antiquities inspector in Abydos. He served at the Scientific Office of the Egyptian Minister of Tourism and Antiquities and contributed to urban development projects in the Giza Pyramids area and the Grand Egyptian Museum. He received a grant from the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation to support the conservation of the Temple of Seti I in Abydos. His work focuses on heritage management and conservation.

**Roland Sawatzky** and **Elliot Walsh**, Manitoba Museum, Canada

### **Losing It: The Struggle to Preserve Labour Heritage in a Prairie City**

Winnipeg, located in central Canada, has an important history of factory, warehouse, rail, and construction labour, along with major engineering feats requiring huge labour forces (including the Winnipeg Aqueduct and the Red River Floodway). This activity spurred intense union activism, made legendary by the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919. Yet the city has done its best to forget its sites of labour. There is no significant heritage site about “workers’ everyday lives”, labour conditions, or industry. Currently, long term neglect of historic places, combined with homelessness, drug use, and vacancy in former working class neighbourhoods has resulted in hundreds of fires a year, including the destruction of the earliest hotels that housed temporary workers in the 1880s, and an iconic factory. At the same time, an extreme shortage in housing has created pressure to use former warehouses and factories as apartments, but with no attention paid to historical interpretation. In addition, the exodus of families from central Winnipeg to the suburbs over the last seven decades has resulted in generations of citizens with little connection to their own labour history.

In this environment, what can be done to preserve sites of labour heritage? We will provide three case studies, including their advantages and drawbacks: The James St. Pumping Station and Great West Metal building, redeveloped for housing by an innovative architectural firm; the 1919 General Strike Tour; and 795 Main St., former home of the Sleeping Car Porters’ Union building (an important site of Black labour history). Are there common themes in these efforts, and what can they teach us about labour heritage preservation in a hostile city?

**Dr. Roland Sawatzky** has been a museum curator since 2003, taught university courses in Anthropology, and co-directed archaeological excavations. As Curator of History at the Manitoba Museum in Winnipeg, Canada, he conducts research, develops exhibitions, and is responsible for acquisitions related to the settlement period and recent history in Manitoba. His current research is focussed on the military history of Churchill, Manitoba; fraternal/self-help societies in Winnipeg; and Mennonite history. He has curated numerous exhibits on labour history in the province.

**Elliott Walsh** is the guest co-curator of the Black Canadian Experience Centre for 2027. He has been an arts facilitator for 25 years, and is the founder and artistic director of Trinnipeg Live Mixtape; a multi-tiered music collaboration, mentorship, workshop and art exhibition workshop. His work explores ideas of identity, collaboration, disability, personal and Black Prairie histories. Recently he has worked with the Winnipeg Art Gallery-Qaumajuq, The Remail Modern in Saskatoon and The Graffiti Gallery in Winnipeg.