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KOMBINAT

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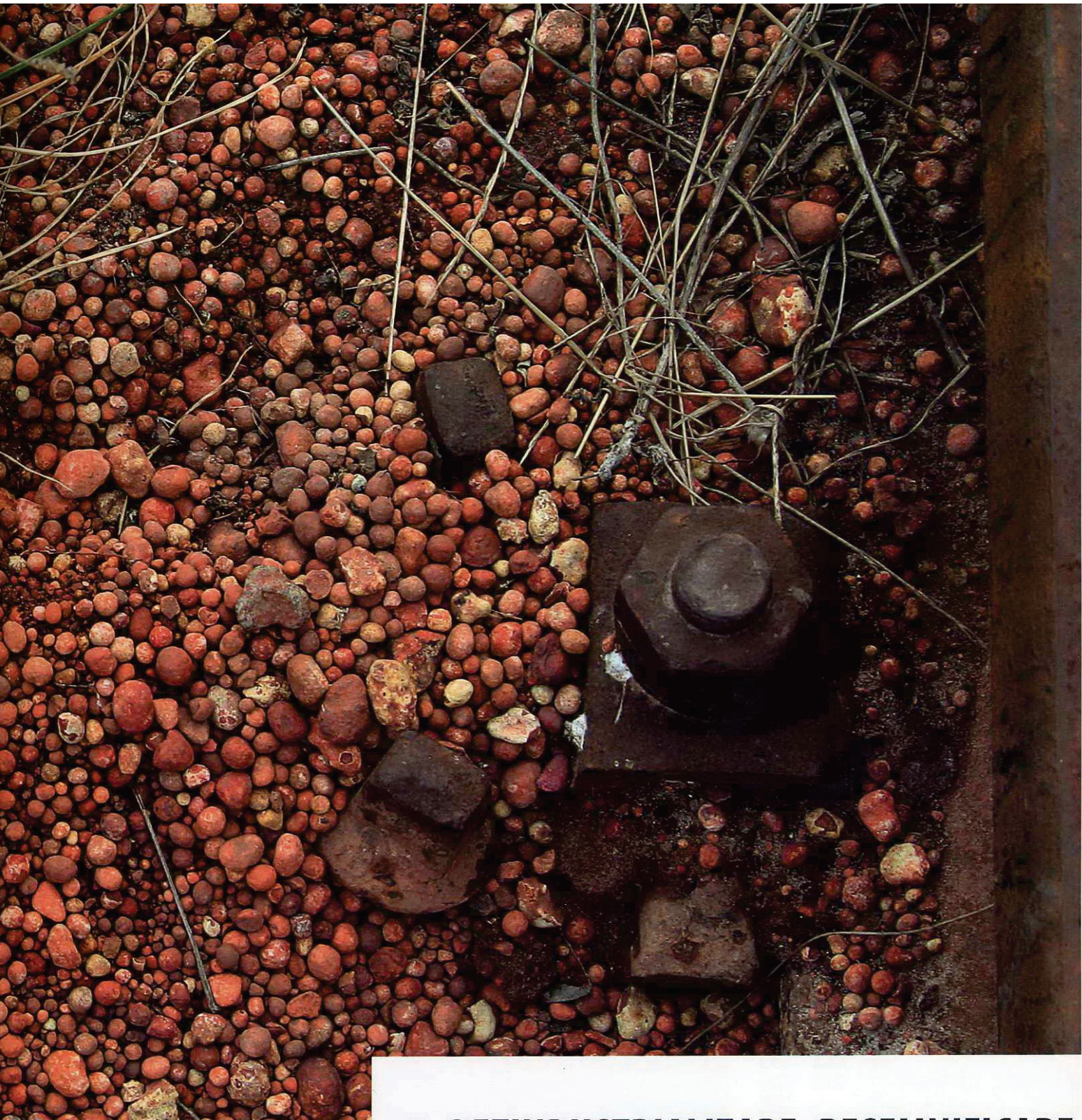
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liviu chelcea • gabriel simion

**DEZINDUSTRIALIZARE, RESEMNIFICARE
ȘI RECONVERSIE URBANĂ**
DESINDUSTRIALIZATION, ITS NEW
SIGNIFICANCE AND A NEW
TOWN CONVERSION

liviu chelcea • gabriel simion
DESINDUSTRIALIZATION, ITS NEW
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TOWN CONVERSION

| Having started in 60's and 70's, disindustrialization is the process typical of a country or region that changes its industry-based economic system to one based on services and information. During the several periods of world economy liberalization, some production oriented industries such as the textile, car manufacturing or the metallurgical industry had the tendency to transfer their production technology to other countries or regions with low labour costs. **| Once production** was abandoned, the post-industrial sites have been used for cultural purposes, social projects or for different services. Several Western European studies indicate the fact that the abandoned factories can still be used, this time for cultural or industrial tourism purposes. Such activities are sources of urban revitalization and regeneration, being, at the same time, a structural solution for the problems caused by disindustrialization. Other sites may be used for social purposes, being turned into low-cost apartments for the disadvantaged social groups. Yet other post-industrial sites may be used for economic activities other than industrial, namely the ones related to the field of services; in this respect, these abandoned sites may be used as warehouses, offices, commercial centers or shops. **| In the Western European** countries and other post-industrial economies as well, such abandoned sites are used for different alternative culture projects. In London (New York) for instance, district such as SoHo and Chelsea that, before 1950, were abundant in industrial units and ware-houses, now used these buildings for artists, art-galleries and art workshops. Pittsburgh, once

one of the most industrialized cities in the USA turned, after the metallurgical plants were shut down in the 1980's, into an important center for contemporary art museums, hospitals and other medical services, or IT companies. The fact that the share holders stopped investing in the metallurgical industry plants encouraged the city managers to present Pittsburgh as a city being in a period of transition from the "City of smoke" to the "City of the Renaissance".

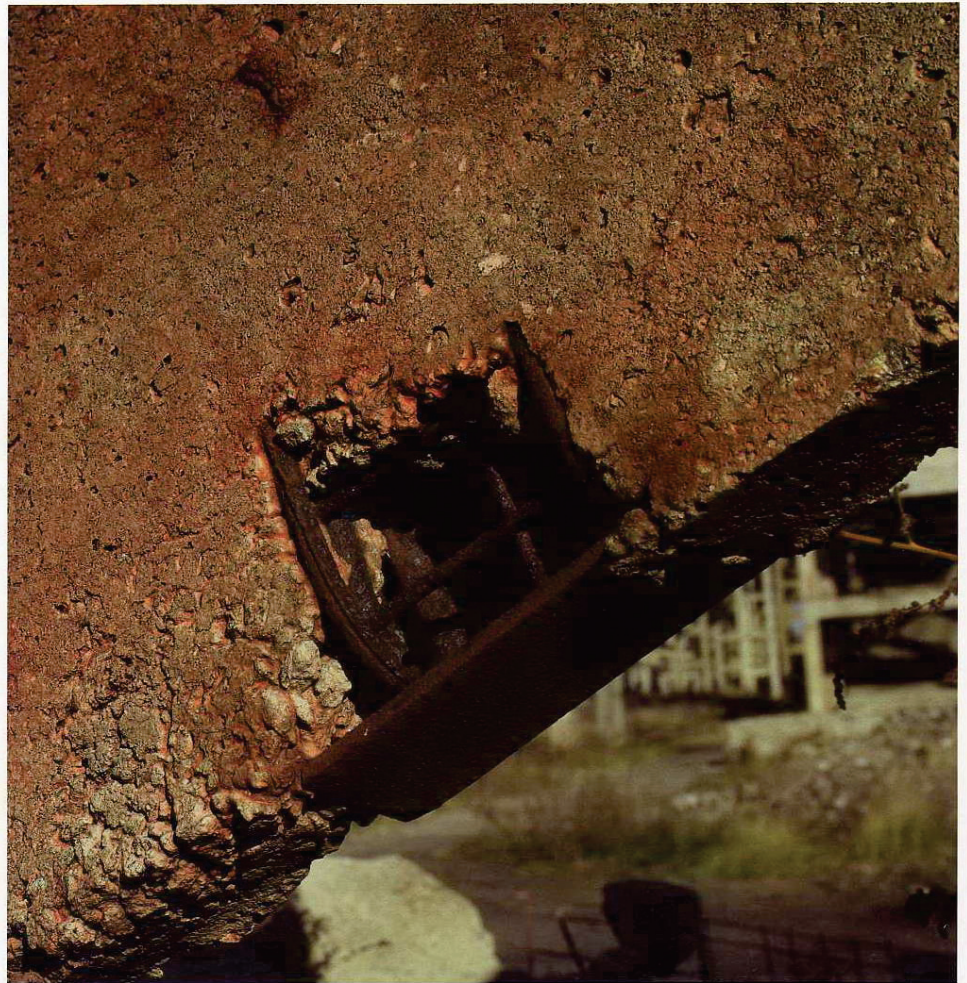
Similarly during M. Thatcher's government in the early 1980's, when subsidies for public property industries started to dwindle, cities such as London, Glasgow and Newcastle launched new cultural strategies, thus granting arts an important role within urban policies. All these cultural projects (launched under the umbrella of the creative industries) can only be carried out provided that the "coalitions for urban development" - to use a phrase for urban sociology - promote strategies in local marketing development, in finding new investments and in encouraging clean non-polluting industries. **| Many** city administrations initiated development projects aimed at opening art-centers, theatres and performance halls in urban areas that were once industrialized. Such an example is Gare D'Orsay in Paris that in 1978 was

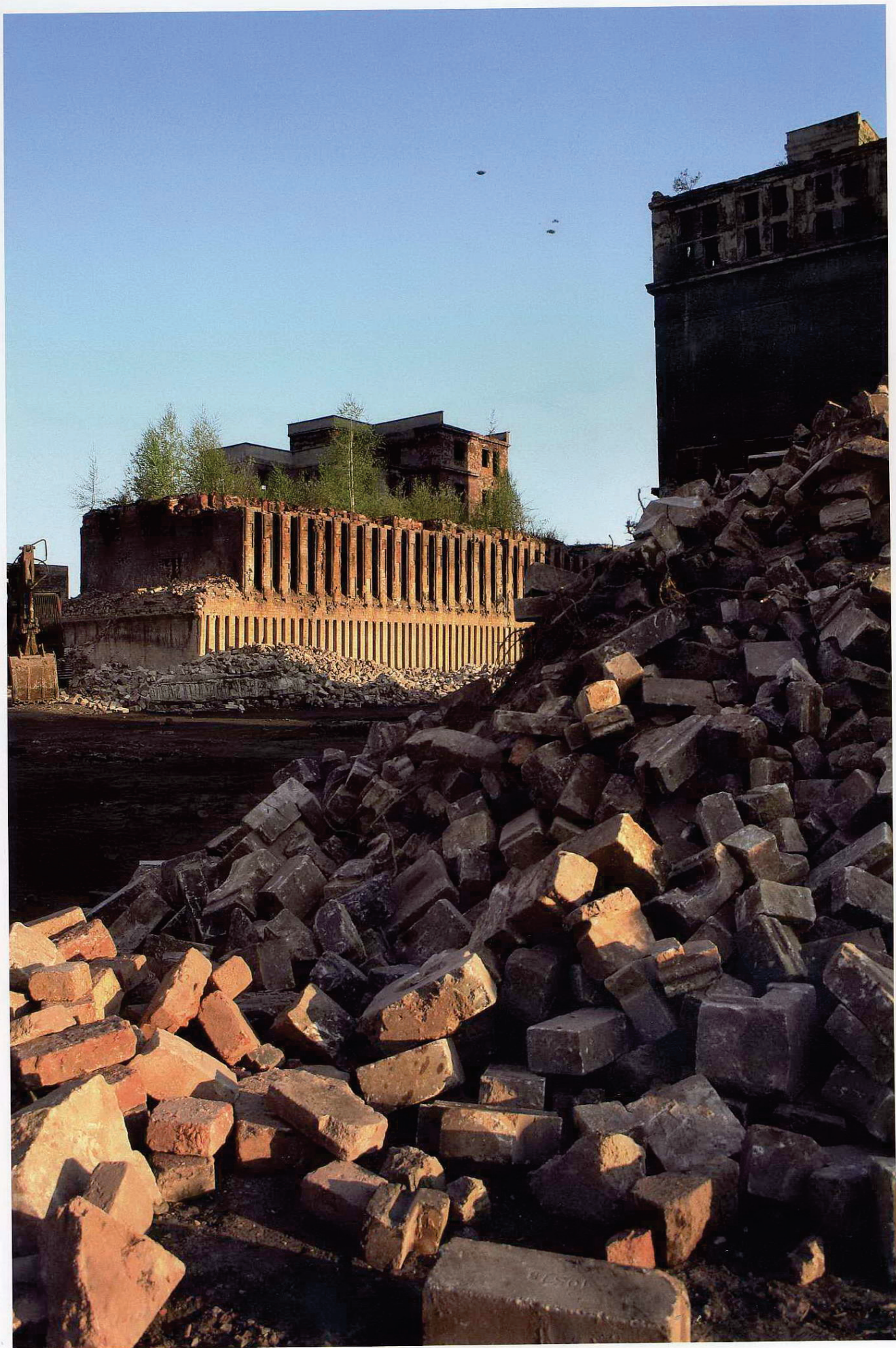
turned into an impressionist art museum, a project that soon attracted an average 2.5 million visitors a year. Thus, through a simple solution, the building was saved from being demolished under the pressure of several real-estate companies. Luckily the famous Grand – Central Railway Station of New York shared the same fate, but Penn Station wasn't so lucky, it having been demolished due to the value of the land under the building. The Tate Galleries for Modern and Contemporary Art in London are housed in 1982 in a former electric power station that had been built at the beginning of the 20th century. | **Following** the end of communism and the dismantling of CAER (The Commie Com) the desindustrialization was one of the most

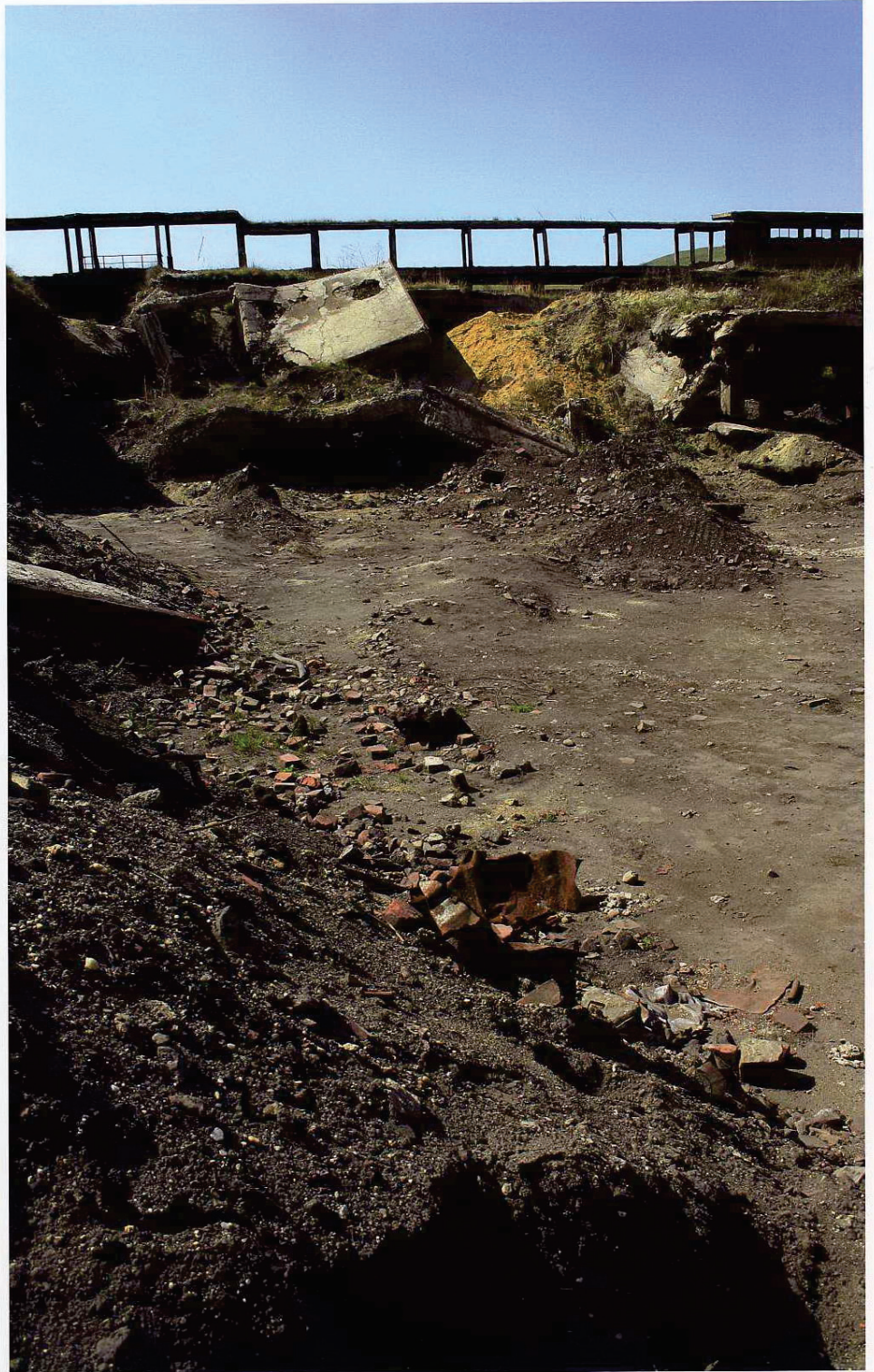
consistent and strongest phenomena having affected the Central and Eastern-European Countries. Many former industrial sites have been turned into shops, ware-houses and offices. Some of these sites are sometimes placed in central zones; other are in industrial zones, surrounded by large residential districts. Once the industrial units were shut down or were privatized (sold to private owner), another process was initiated and – encouraged by the desindustrialization – namely the relocation of



(transferring) the production units from the city to the suburbs or to metropolitan areas. Sometimes these buildings are dealt with in a professional responsible manner, namely they are renovated; however, many of them are used just as sources of waste materials: metal, bricks, pipes or for the land underneath, just good to build something else on it. | **As for Romania** the official data related to the distribution of the labor force in 1992, 2002 and 2005 show that the number of workers in the processing industry dwindled significantly. Save for the commercial sector, one may notice a general shrinking of the formal economy between 1992 and 2002. As for the period between 2002 and 2005 the data show a general increase in the economic field, perhaps not so high in the processing / manufacturing industry, but considerably higher in fields such as trade, real-estate transactions, transport, telecommunications and constructions. Also, as revealed by the table underneath listing data related to the distribution of the labor force between 1992 and 2002 in Romania, the industrial decline was stronger in some cities as compared to the rest of the country. | **Big cities** such as Bucharest have a strong influence on the surrounding areas as concerned economy and labor force

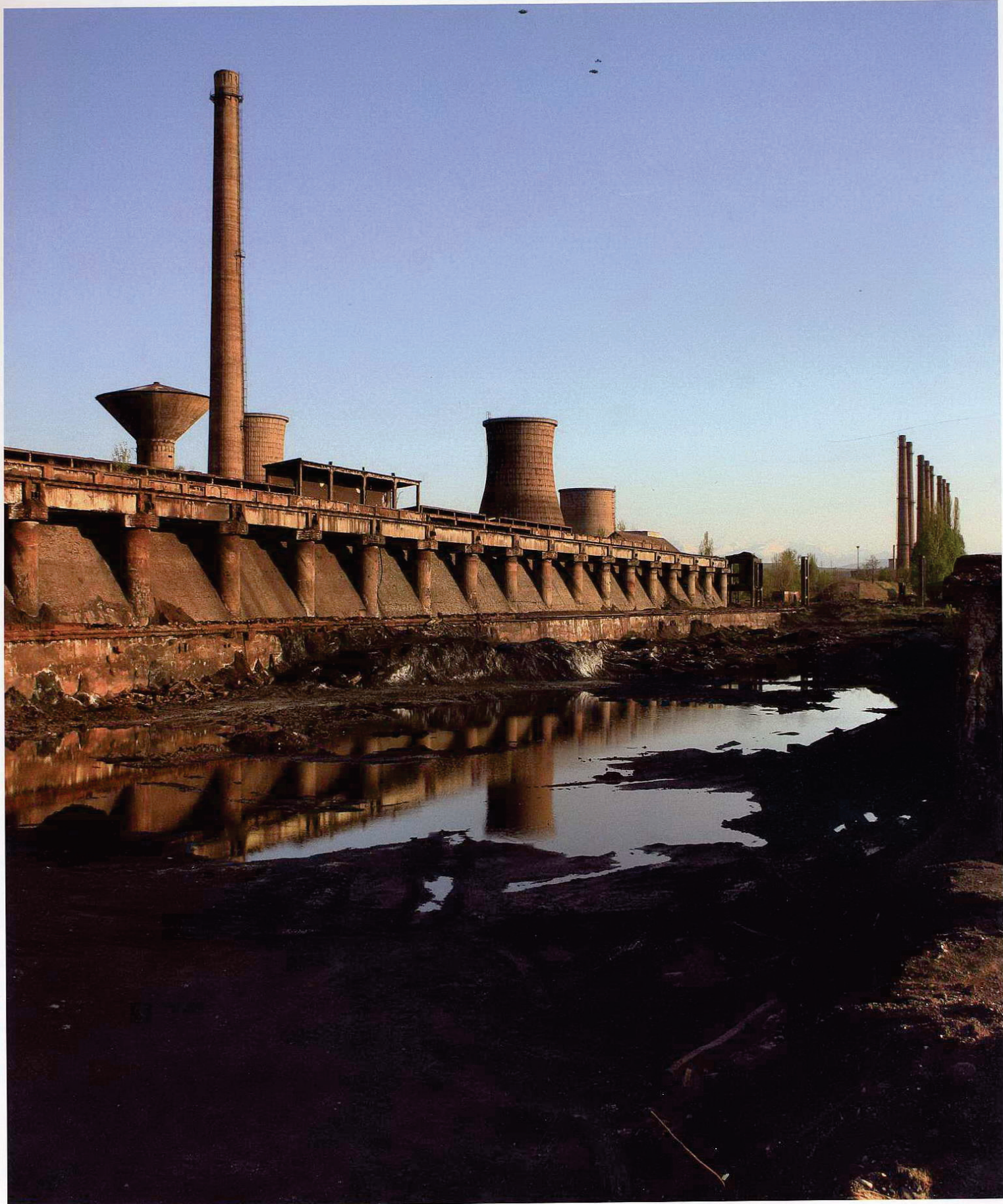




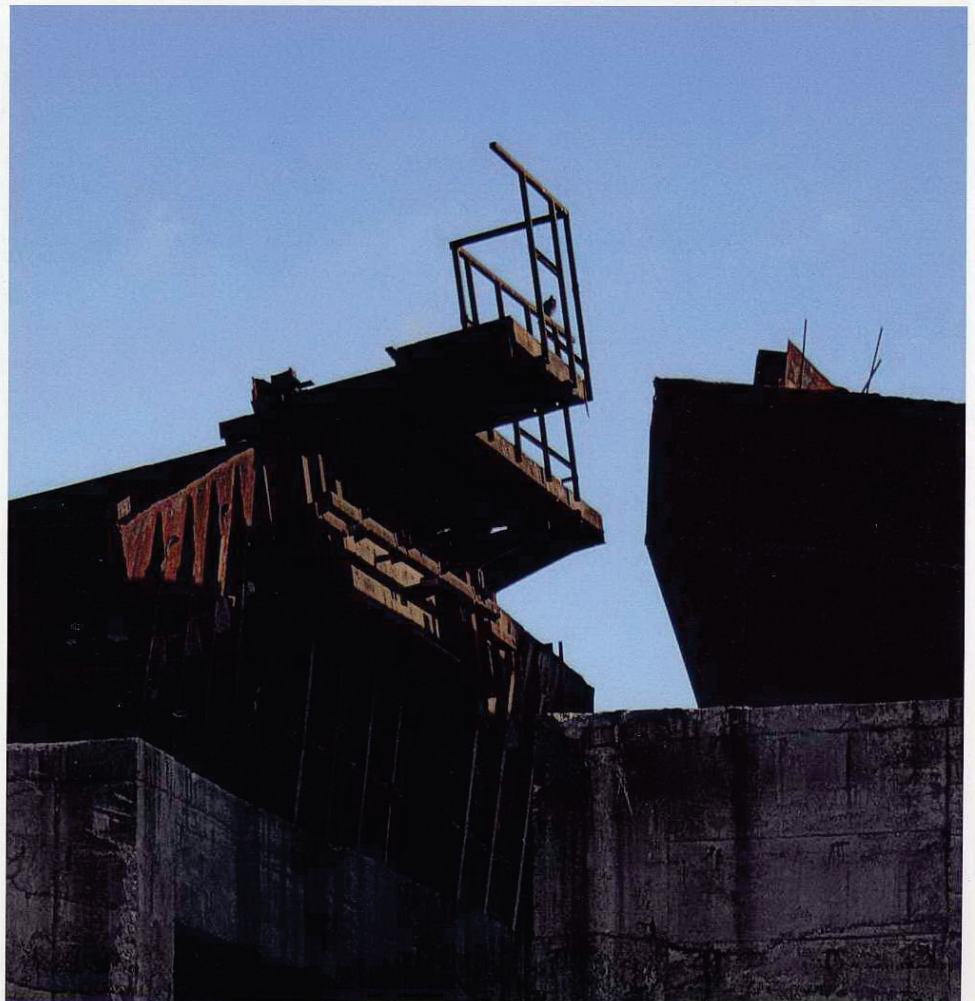


distribution, either by offering them services or by providing jobs to their population. One plausible hypothesis concerning the way Bucharest may evolve is the one predicting that part of its industry will move to the suburbs. This hypothesis is worthy to be taken into account through the perspective of the same labor force distribution. **| The most obvious** conclusion to be drawn after comparing the figures representing the distribution of the labor force in the

processing industry for the year 1992 and 2002 is that all cities, Bucharest included, “lost” industry. It is a severe loss, reflecting the image of a general involution in the manufacturing industry. Maybe the areas where this sector has a 75% labor force quota have benefited from a great dimension employer. This seems to be the case for the Tyre Factory in Jilava for example. **| CONTINGENCIES | At this time** no one seems to know exactly how the industrial buildings in Romania are used. How many of the existing post-industrial sites are used for cultural purposes and how many for social purposes. How many for the “new economy”, that is services, shops, IT companies. A soap factory in the Bucur – Obor area has been demolished to make room for a supermarket. A glucose-producing factory is partly renovated (and partly dismantled) to



house a multinational company selling cosmetics, detergents and industrially processed food products. Another one that was used to produce beer (in Rahova district in Bucharest) and that was shut down in 1986 to be demolished under Ceausescu is now partly renovated to be turned into a mall, a business center and a hotel. | **A group** of enthusiastically people with zero financial resources and zero managerial abilities have rented a brick made hall from a now zero activity stoking factory near Carol II park, in order to organize electronic music concerts or theatrical performances. | **A factory** producing special types of steel for the aircraft industry has reduced it's activity from 4 000 employees to 150 thus making room for a business park of 63 companies in the 8 out of the 10 renovated big halls. The domains of activity of these 63 companies are very different: finances and banking (a top ranking bank is going to provide offices for several hundred employees), IT companies, advertising and publishing companies. Other Bucharesters with ideas initiate urban "explorations" in some post-apocalyptic zones of industrial sites or try organizing electronic music concerts in Copşa Mică only to find out that soil there is too



contaminated or polluted to expect any sort of financing or subsidies. | **SIGNIFICANCE** | Desindustrialization is not just an economic transformation process. It would be superficial to understand it from the perspective of the “social problems”. Desindustrialization and post-industrial sites have different meaning for different social groups. For those directly affected desindustrialization is like a big sigh meaning “these fools have crippled the industry.” For the urban developers, desindustrialization means business



“opportunities,” even though some of the building they have in mind belong to the national patrimony. For the former employees or the fringe social groups that used to gravitate around these factories, desindustrialization is a source of immediate short-term income coming from selling “recuperated” materials (activity sometimes tacitly condoned by the factory managers.) The artists and the industrial relic collectors have found a new source to reinvent their visual message, giving new meanings to the history of technology as both art and separating landmarks. Finally, for the architects, archaeologists and patrimony specialists, the former factories, now free of their productive function, acquire an aesthetic dimension, the industrial sites thus getting a new cultural significance. |