

PEOPLE AND PLACES:

Industrial landscapes, liability or asset?

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Abstract. The impact of industrialization is widely accepted to have profound social, economic and environmental effects. Industrialisation, and the urbanisation that accompanies it, has been the largest single driver of change in the human habitat and continues to be so – notably in Brazil, India and China.

Today, the effects of *de-industrialisation* are arguably more significant. The social, economic and landscape implications of industrial change or decline offer some of the biggest challenges facing post-industrial societies as they contemplate a future without the drivers that for three or four generations formed the root of their prosperity. These areas are typified by low per-capita income, high levels of social deprivation and lack of investment.

Many of these landscapes have a rich physical and social heritage but, typically, lack the resources to invest in regeneration. External intervention is invariably needed, raising questions about the ownership of change.

Heritage-led regeneration can be a crucial element in restoring the fortunes of these areas. Its benefits can be widespread; in sustaining the personality of place, in crystallizing local identity, creating confidence, self-esteem and social cohesion, or in tourism. As societal value is increasingly recognized, translating what are often seen as liabilities into assets enables a wider recalibration of the benefits communities and developers see in the historic environment - from obstacle to opportunity.

Using a wide range of international examples this address will explore the way in which a new view of the built heritage is emerging, from urban liability to regeneration asset.

How we handle the future of once-thriving industrial regions is one of the great economic, social and conservation conundrums of the twenty-first century. In much of the old world of Europe and North America the heroic age of industry has come and gone. How we handle the detritus of this past – from the scars of dereliction to some of the world's most outstanding historic landscapes – is one of our greatest challenges.

What in Britain came to be called the Industrial Revolution, with its early stirrings in the eighteenth century, spread rapidly across Western Europe and the United States. And, of course, it is still spreading. Over a period of less than half a century, from the 1850s, Japan emerged from secluded isolation on to the world stage. The means of achieving that astonishing transformation was industrialisation. Today, Brazil, and India and China are pursuing similar trajectories. For some 300 years it has been the impetus of industrialisation that has exercised the most powerful of influences on people and places. Here lie the roots of our global economy - and an outstanding worldwide inheritance.

But if the rise of industrialisation was dramatic in its scale and impact we now realise that this was as nothing compared with the effects of *de-industrialisation*. The social, economic and environmental impact of the loss of industry, and the heritage issues that it raises, pose intractable questions for communities and governments. As new nations industrialise so older ones must contemplate their position in the changing world order. Where does their future lie? And, what do they do with their past?

These issues call for a reconfiguring of our heritage predilections and comfortable traditions; to see landscapes in the round as places to be re-ordered for people and where an understanding of the past can liberate a resource for the future and. And, even more important, to engage with those industrial and post-industrial communities whose heritage is at stake. Here lies the challenge. The ethos of conservation, its traditions, values and inspiration, derive from stylistic and architectural imperatives, and an interest in individual buildings rather than whole landscapes.

What might be seen as the exclusive rhetoric of a conservation ethic driven by aesthetic or archaeological considerations can sit uneasily with the needs of

post-industrial decay, of communities in decline, low per-capita income and social deprivation. And then there is the sheer scale of Liverpool's or Detroit's predicament, of coalfield renewal or areas of redundant workers' housing.

In the Ruhr valley or the cotton towns of Lancashire, across the rust belt of Michigan, in once-great seaports, or the mining districts of South Wales or West Virginia, communities are having to face a future in which the conditions that brought them three and sometimes four generations of work and prosperity have evaporated. What remains is a misunderstood heritage, at worst urban wasteland, dangerous, a toxic wilderness; at best, a resource to be re-used, regenerating communities, offering real richness and opportunity, reinforcing cultural identity and creating new commercial prospects. And, in nations like Japan, where industry remains the mainspring of the economy, industrial heritage provides a vivid reminder of how today's world came to be the way it is. But for these industrial and post-industrial communities

the philosophies and rhetoric of conservation and the ethical values of the profession that it has now become are meaningless. These are the people that we have neglected in the places we have forgotten. In our desire to conserve physical fabric we fail to appreciate or understand the views of communities who live day by day with their heritage and would like some say in its future. It would be wrong to assume that industrial communities do not value their heritage; on the contrary, attachment to places of work and to the community values and spirit of unity that often went with them is often strong and vibrant. What they are lacking is often an understanding of how to engage with authority and bureaucracy and to articulate views that may be alien to the very people and organisations responsible for the future of these challenging human landscapes.

Many of these post-industrial landscapes have an intrinsic value, in terms of their history and archaeology. This transcends any usefulness that adapting them for new



At the Kosuge ship repair dock in Nagasaki the local community expresses its enthusiasm for World Heritage nomination (© Neil Cossons)



The steam engine at the Kosuge slipway, Nagasaki. Built in Scotland, the engine is part of a wider international dimension that underscored Japan's spontaneous move to industrialise in the second half of the nineteenth century. The global inheritance is manifest throughout the industrial world. (© Neil Cossons)

purposes might afford, even supposing that to be possible. Here we need to preserve for history's sake, as a truly world heritage. This legacy of the origins and evolution of the industrial age, the first great global empire, stands with those of ancient Egypt, Athens or Rome. In this respect these historic industrial landscapes deserve our closest attention.

But despite such a rich physical and social heritage many of these places typically lack the resources to invest in regeneration. External intervention is invariably needed,

thus creating opportunity for private sector investment, has been a thread that runs through much of the heritage- and culturally-led industrial regeneration schemes across Europe.

A prime example has been Emscher Park, the regeneration of the vast brownfield landscape of the Ruhr valley in north-west Germany. Another has been in the revitalisation of Liverpool. In France the Nord-Pas de Calais offers an extraordinary diversity of coalmining remains; five generations of winding engines,



To precious to lose, too fragile to use. Ditherington Flax Mill, Shrewsbury, England, built in 1796-7, is the world's first iron-framed building. Its intrinsic value is beyond question but our general assumptions are that for a mill or warehouse building to be retained a new use must be found for it. (© Neil Cossons)

raising questions about the ownership of change. Heritage-led regeneration can be a crucial element in restoring the fortunes of these areas. Its benefits can be widespread; in sustaining the personality of place, in crystallizing local identity, creating confidence, self-esteem and social cohesion, or through tourism and economic renewal. As societal value is increasingly recognized, translating what are often seen as liabilities into assets enables a wider recalibration of the benefits communities and developers see in the historic environment - from obstacle to opportunity. The role of public sector stimulus as a means of mitigating environmental and social dislocation, and

some 200 waste tips, transport systems, and numerous areas of miners' housing. Outstanding too is the evidence of the astonishing transition, across Kyushu and Yamaguchi, that laid the foundations for Japan's industrial revolution. Here proposals are well advanced for World Heritage nomination embracing the coal, iron and steel and shipbuilding industries, what in aggregate represents the first-hand material evidence of the birth of a modern nation.

Through initiatives like these we have an opportunity to recalibrate our view of the past and the values we place on its heritage; these are whole places and they deserve to be

treated as such. They set new challenges; for national conservation agencies unused to the scale, technical and economic demands of designating and managing post-industrial landscapes; in the development of new conservation criteria suited to the peculiar needs of industrial heritage; in terms of the technical conservation of industrial ruins and the management of their decay; in public access, understanding and interpretation. For ICOMOS and UNESCO too the industrial past as world heritage demands new ways of thinking, for often these places lie beyond the boundaries of pre-existing convention. All over the world a new conservation ethic is evolving in response to these needs.

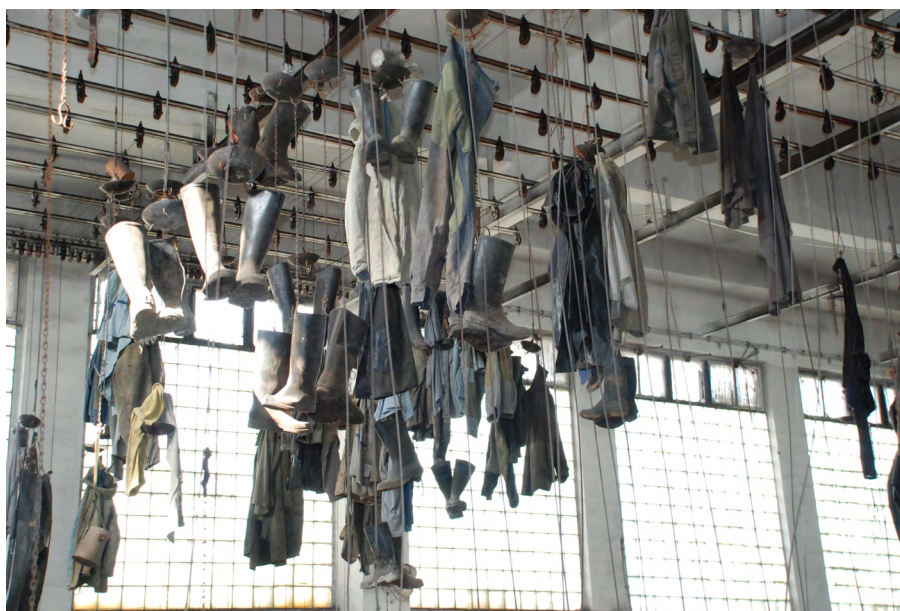
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Queen Street Mill, Burnley, Lancashire, England. There were 79,000 looms in Burnley in the 1890s. Queen Street Mill is all that remains, the last steam-powered weaving shed in the world. Built in 1894, its 308 looms today offer post-industrial audiences a vivid insight into the workings of a typical Victorian mill. Here is industrial-strength heritage at its most challenging – a site of world importance taking its chances in a climate of harsh economic forces. (© Neil Cossons)



Victoria Mill, Burnley in the Weavers' Triangle Conservation Area astride the Leeds & Liverpool Canal. This outstanding industrial landscape of spinning mills, weaving sheds and workers' housing is being regenerated by a partnership of Burnley Borough Council, the Northwest Development Agency, English Heritage, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Prince of Wales' charities. Public funding to make Victoria Mill structurally sound has attracted investment in its re-use. (© Neil Cossons)



The presence of absence. Miners clothing from the last shift at the Kladno colliery in the Czech Republic. Evocative evidence like this often affords a more vivid and certainly more authentic view of a working past than re-enactment. (© Neil Cossons)

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Gunkanjima Island, off Nagasaki, an abandoned coal mining community where dramatic decay presents a commanding expression of former importance. Unmanaged decomposition may offer the most authentic means of retaining character and originality. (© Neil Cossons)