European Industrial Heritage Tourism: Best Practices and Future Perspectives
Wednesday 28 September 2016 from 13h00 to 15h00
Room JAN 6Q1 – European Parliament – Brussels

Industrial Heritage and European Identity
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Members of the European Parliament, distinguished guests:
It is a great honour for me to explore briefly the relation between "industrial heritage and European identity" in such a prestigious setting. Especially so soon, after the end of 2015, the year devoted to celebrate the industrial heritage as Europe's heritage.
The numerous events organized for this occasion highlighted how important the progressive recognition of the former industrial sites as heritage has been for the construction of Europe's identity.
As a proof of their implication, we can notice two similarities between them:
First of all, both the constructions, that of the industrial heritage discipline, and that of an integrated Europe, are processes, which began more or less at the same time. Indeed, the term "industrial archaeology" appeared for the first time in 1955 in a famous article by Michael Rix. While the Treaty of Rome, which established the Economic European Community, dates to 1957.
Second, in both cases we can note that, in the early phase, questions of identity remained in the background, while were more prominent other questions, which we might call questions of "physical survival":
In the 50s and 60s the senseless destruction of industrial features threatened to erase all trace of the Industrial Revolution: in response to this dramatic situation, Kenneth Hudson, one of the fathers of industrial archaeology, urged people to "save what can be saved", everywhere and by whatever means, and to postpone the task of defining the identity of this new heritage.
The same logic of survival can be seen in the first steps of the construction of Europe. With the creation of the "European Coal and Steel Community" in 1952, Jean Monnet urged people to set aside for a while the problem of common cultural foundations, and to focus instead on integrating coal and steel resources, so as to defuse the national antagonisms which were responsible for the military disasters of the 20th century.
In those years, marked by survival efforts, the idea of identity emerged more in opposition to the outside, than from the inner:
- Europe's identity was coming into being in opposition to what lay on the other side of the "Iron Curtain;
- By contrast, industrial archaeology defined itself in terms of its difference from all the systems of production that came before England's Industrial Revolution.

As a young discipline, Industrial heritage escaped the traditional mission assigned to the cultural heritage in the European history: putting itself in the service of the nation-building, and reinforcing the national identity sentiments.
Very soon, this close connection between heritage and nation appeared as a straitjacket for a proper comprehension of the industrial heritage. The famous exhibition on "The Landscape of Industry" (Brussels, 1975), proved that what emerged from the variety of cases on display, was

not a collection of national cases, but a common architectural language, able to unify the continent like other languages did in the past: the Gothic of cathedrals, the Baroque architecture, the international Art Nouveau.

The European approach of the industrial heritage was definitely confirmed ten years later, in 1985, by the international conference held in Lyons by the Council of Europe on the subject: "The Industrial heritage: what policies?". In this occasion the European cooperation was identified as the only possible solution for the dramatic problems of conserving industrial properties.

During the 90s industrial heritage gained more and more consideration in the field.

Industrial properties increased significantly, either on the UNESCO WHL, either on national lists of protected properties.

But to mention only the quantitative growth of the IH designated for protection would be highly reductive. Indeed, it is much more important to stress the role that Industrial heritage has had in pioneering a redefinition of the notion the cultural heritage. For convenience, we can sum up this shift in 4 aspects:
- the first involves **the widening of what a cultural heritage is:** no more only cathedrals, castles, aristocratic buildings, but even new categories of properties, which acquire cultural significance when they fall into disuse: for instance, Volklingen Steelworks in Germany and the four Lifts in Belgium (both inscribed on the WHL), are just two examples of the transformation of utilitarian buildings into new, unexpected cultural monuments;
- second aspect: if every utilitarian object can, potentially, become a cultural property, who decides on this transformation? This is another crucial aspect of the contemporary heritage because this decision doesn't concern ONLY professional experts (like historians, conservators, etc.). Cultural heritage is increasingly being re-invented by individuals and communities in bottom up initiatives;
- another aspect is **the growing scale of heritage properties** dictated by the need to expand the conservation from individual assets to their settings. The valorisation of industrial sites is a faithful mirror of this tendency: in a few years, the reuse of the industrial heritage has expanded from individual buildings, like the Bankside Power Station in London (now the home of the New Tate) or the Lingotto plant in Turin, to the regeneration of whole company towns, such as Saltaire and New Lanark, as well as the redevelopment of full-scale mining landscapes, such as the Cornwall Mining Landscape, the Nord Pas de Calais Mining Basin, and others as well;
- **the growing integration between the tangible and the intangible heritage**: Bois du Cazier, now on the WHL, is a mining site where physical installations cannot be separated from the memory of special events, as the epic battle over coal and the start of European reconstruction, or the rise of a multinational community sprung up from the tragedy of one of the biggest mining disasters of all times (Marcinelle, in 1956).

Of the four aspects mentioned, the one that seems most important to me is the second: **heritage as a social project**. It does mean that heritage cannot be resumed anymore to a stock of art testimonies inherited from the past; on the contrary it should be seen as a social practice involving people in a constant work of negotiation between different values.

It is not hard to see that a similar process should be pursued in the attempts to build a European identity.

As already said, at the beginning, a decision was made for the economic and monetary construction of an integrated Europe. Today the limits of this project are evident, and

everybody agrees with the need for a less economy-based vision, in response to the difficulties of promoting a greater political and social integration.

Now, the search of a European identity has no chance without a constant dialogue and mediation between the different traditions and cultures that make up contemporary European society.

The need of following this road appeared more and more obvious during the fifth phase of expansion to the east (2004 – 2007) which was the biggest ever expansion of the European Union. The project aimed to include central and eastern European countries in a single community was thereby brought to completion, but it also opened up new challenges for the future processes of integration.

The ERIH, which (I would like to point out) came into being in the same year as the introduction of the euro in 1999, expanded its network in total accordance with the philosophy of the expansion of the European Union: some of the former Eastern countries, which joined the EU after 2004, are now significantly represented in the ERIH network (Czech Republic with three APs, Poland with seven). Even Mediterranean countries, like Spain and Italy, which were practically absent until a few years ago, now also boast an important presence in the ERIH network.

For the future ERIH is committed to develop a further expansion of its network. But, in addition, ERIH is determined to improve the quality of the network in terms of more innovative services for its members.

In this sense I see an undeniable convergence with the measures recommended by the European Parliament resolution of 8 September 2015, towards an integrated approach to cultural heritage for Europe.

The following are just a few:
- setting up a single EU portal including examples of best practices (in preservation and promotion) (paragraph 7.a)
- supporting studies designed to analyse the impacts of cultural heritage promotion processes (paragraph 7.b)
- multifunding, namely the complementary use of different European funds within large-scale projects (paragraph 7.c)
- innovative heritage conservation, and low-impact energy solutions for historic buildings (paragraph 11).

All these measures coincide with the actions that ERIH has been doing up to now and wants to do better in the future.

In conclusion, I believe that the European Parliament Resolution represents the best framework for promoting the development of a common European industrial heritage, able to include and harmonize diversities.

Paragraph 48 expresses hopes for "developing a participative narrative for European heritage, which embeds different or contested pasts, and takes diversity of interpretations into account". This hope is definitely shared by our association which looks at the conservation of industrial monuments as a vital component for the future identity of Europe.