

Chapter 3

Industrial Heritage as an Operative Territorial Resource: Cultural Landscape of Alentejo Pyrite

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ABSTRACT

This chapter addresses the main existing issues concerning industrial heritage as a territorial resource for the revitalization or valorization of functional landscapes (former or existing). It addresses the conceptual framework of cultural landscape and its possibility as a “horizon concept,” as well as an object of intervention according to a territorial dimension. The proposal of “Cultural Landscape of Alentejo Pyrite” based on three mining sites—Lousal, Aljustrel, and São Domingos within the Iberian Pyrite—was designed to be a territorial project for mining landscapes. This is a previous response to an existing demand for operative methodologies that can convey a new paradigm of territorial planning, with emphasis on interdisciplinary and prospect views. It provides a voice to an architectural and urban planning point of view to these particular landscapes.

INTRODUCTION

Discontinuities, obsolete, fragmented and interstitial spaces are inherent aspects and components of what has been defined by Sabaté (2008) as “post-modern landscapes”; these are features of de-characterization that in sum, for most of the cases, convey a character longing for the contemporary territories.

Furthermore, and consequently, the Cartesian comprehension – intrinsic in dichotomies such as country/city –, has given way to the need of a broader territorial understanding – rhizomes (reminiscent of Gilles Deleuze’s definition (Deleuze & Guatarri, 1980) – that enclose the correlation of different elements that provide for the intervention’s scope and design.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-8054-6.ch003

In this sense, the “post-productive” landscapes, especially industrial – mostly defined by remnant and anachronistic marks according to Choay (2006) – epitomize this question. Not only, due to the demands of interdisciplinary analysis but also, to the need of projects that can revitalize these territories.

Other relevant aspect and in the particular case of built heritage, is that its comprehension has evolved from the focus on a singular object to the consideration of the surroundings or environment and its importance within the territory. Also, the concept of “landscape” has been currently presented as well, in documents concerning planning (Council of Europe [CoE], 2000; European Commission [EC], 1999, 2011). Both concepts convey the aim of everyday living with quality while addressing the territory as a whole, the past, present, and future. Not only, the theory scopes of cultural heritage and landscape converge; but also, they are intertwined as territorial resources through an intervention binomial. This represents the opportunity for trans-disciplinary debate and input, with a holistic and common agenda regarding the planning and management of the territory.

Prior to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] category or even the definition of “cultural landscapes” with operative intents from the National Park Service in the USA (Birnbaum, 1994; Melnick, Spohn, & Exe, 1984), it was underlined on European and North American contexts, the advent of revitalization projects regarding cultural landscapes, specially industrial, by Sabaté and Schuster (2001) and by Bustamante (2002, 2008) – heritage parks – applying the nature/culture binomial within the ever-changing territory, while representing narratives related to heritage, mainly industrial, despite its expectant valorization.

In Portugal, from an environmental point of view and of the territory planning, there is the definition of protected landscapes and areas, such as national parks (whose specific legislation backs to the 1970s), natural parks and reserves. From a heritage point of view, the existing categories determined by law are monuments, ensembles, and sites: “...the State, the Autonomous Regions and local municipalities will promote, on the scope of respective duties, the adoption of appropriate measures to the recuperation and valorization of areas, historical centers and other urban ensembles, historical villages, landscapes, parks, gardens and other urban, natural, architectural or industrial ensembles within the landscape” (Assembleia da República [AR], 2001; Ministério da Cultura [MC], 2009). Despite a somewhat territorial implication, regarding practical intervention, its interpretation means that landscape is the framed under the classified building; therefore, the defensive procedures, in the end, are restricted. In the specific case of industrial and mining heritage and the relative novelty of the procedures to its classification as ensembles (see Issues, Controversies, Problems) it is even more relevant to address concepts such as “cultural landscape” that enclose cultural/built heritage and the respective landscape. The following topics will provide the framework too, therefore, establish the potential of cultural landscape as a horizon concept.

BACKGROUND

The origin of “cultural landscape” as a concept and object can be placed between the late 19th century and the early 20th century and conveyed a sense of Culture’s spatial expression and memory. At that time, its innovation as a concept is due to a context of industrial crisis and by an increasing demand for cultural tourism that enticed the relationship with a broader understanding of heritage in close proximity to the encountered local identity, an assessment that is still pertinent in the territories of today.

Sauer (1925, p. 45) defined cultural landscape as the result of actions from a social group (agent) on a natural landscape (media), over time: “Under the influence of a given culture, itself changing through

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