

CONSIDER

WEBINAR Report

Valorisation of industrial heritage, challenges and opportunities



Speaker:

Prof. Dr. Heike Oevermann
University of Bamberg



Moderator:

Prof. Dr. Stefan Berger
Ruhr University Bochum

Lecture:

**Valorisation of the
landscapes of production**

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Written by Constanze von Wrangel (RUB)



Sustainable Management of Industrial Heritage
as a Resource for Urban Development

CONSIDER Webinar Report

By Constanze von Wrangel (RUB)

The **CONSIDER** webinar "**Valorisation of industrial heritage, challenges and opportunities**" hosted by Prof. Dr. Stefan Berger (Ruhr University Bochum), took place online on the **19th of May 2022**.

The invited speaker was **Prof. Dr. Heike Oevermann**, Chair for Preservation Studies at the University Bamberg, who, through her various teaching activities and publications, has an international perspective on historic preservation and negotiations between actors in dealing with industrial heritage.

Her presentation was titled "**Valorisation of the Landscapes of Production**" and provided an overview of 1. landscapes of production, 2. analysis and good practice of valorisation.

Prof. Dr. Heike Oevermann first gave a lecture about landscapes of production and used the example of the textile industry in several cities in Europe (cf. Oevermann: Urban Textile Mills) to raise awareness of infrastructure, living conditions and the production sights, which are used or reused. She emphasized that textile mills have been and remain part of the city. The complexes include familiar elements of urban design and architectural representations, but also enrich the variety of spatial structures. She sensitized for the fact that former sheds and shelters, as well as newer layers, are more likely to be torn down during current conversion projects than are floor factories and 19th-century brick buildings. However, the conservation of these often-overlooked elements can trigger particularly inspiring approaches to conversion.

Using the city of Ghent (Belgium) as an example, she referred to the former factory site of the De Porre textile factory. A part of the former factory site was preserved and transformed into a park, senior facilities, school extension and industrial exhibits , which is intensively used by the



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Sustainable Management of Industrial Heritage
as a Resource for Urban Development

neighborhood and has developed into a social meeting point of the neighborhood. Attempts have also been made to preserve some aspects of the history and technological development at the site. Portraits of former employees of the factory give brief insights into their daily work and experiences at the site. Panels with quotations talk about the life of people who worked in the factory.

In part two of the presentation, she made clear that various disciplines are involved in the preservation and conversion of Industrial Heritage, not only within the countries, but also in Europe where a variety of planning traditions with an impact on industrial heritage is at work. As a result, sometimes very different understandings of conservation, reuse and urban planning come together. Thus, there would be no clear concept or term for industrial heritage. In this context, she also referred to the book she and Prof. Dr. Harald A. Mieg edited, "Industrial Heritage Sites in Transformation". Industrial heritage sites, she argued, should be seen as part of urban transformation and its planning practices. It would be important to integrate heritage conservation and urban development.

In a two-year transfer of knowledge project (2017-2018), funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, good practice criteria for dealing with industrial heritage were defined together with various stakeholders and in particular the Zollverein Foundation (Zollverein was a former coal mine in the Ruhr Area of Germany and was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2001). As a result of the project the "Good Practice Wheel" was developed, which represents the different interests and necessities in dealing with industrial heritage and promotes the equal consideration of all relevant aspects (a total of eight fields of action, e. g. protection and preservation of industrial monuments, sustainable and ecological development, involvement of the local population, urban development, reuse, management processes, ...). The explanatory video of the Good Practice Wheel can be watched at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8KlxzwdClc>



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as a Resource for Urban Development

The aim of the "Good Practice Wheel" is to implement a holistic approach and interaction between the stakeholders involved in dealing with industrial heritage. Complexity refers to changing local and global contexts, growing demands for sustainable development, responses to climate change, and community involvement. Approach and practice must incorporate and negotiate the diverse interests of stakeholders and actors, which is a proactive and interdisciplinary task, especially in urban settings. Zollverein, she declared, largely meets the requirements of the Good Practice Wheel and has also made great progress in community involvement in recent years.

Prof. Dr. Heike Oevermann concluded her presentation with the following key statements:

- *Our cities and regions are production landscapes.*
- *Conservation and reuse are possible and offer a number of opportunities.*
- *We can analyze and implement good practice for integrating conservation and urban development (Good Practice Wheel).*

In the following discussion, reference was first made to the example of de Porre in Ghent. The question was posed as to how social values of the industrial era and contemporary ways of life come together competing with one other at the site of industrial heritage. In this context, Prof. Dr. Heike Oevermann pointed out the necessity to raise awareness for the dark sides of history (e. g. working conditions, environmental problems) in the presentation of the history at the former industrial sites and not to ignore them. In a second step the social movements and engagements against these problems must be worked out. It would be important, she said, to bring this to the public. In addition, the needs of the local communities in change must be taken up and integrated into the overall process through participation. In Zollverein, one example mentioned was the institution "PACT" and, for example, low threshold offers at the Zollverein site. In this interaction, the heritage is used and shaped by locals and social values of the past, present and future might be interpreted. It was also objected that simply telling a negative story would discourage people from getting involved, while whitewashing history does a disservice to the participants of the past.



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Also discussed were the limitations of the Good Practice Wheel, which seemed too technical and scientific to some participants. The people concerned seemed to be rather absent from the Wheel. Critically, the absence of interest, power and conflict was pointed out. However Mrs Oevermann informed the audience that interests, power and conflict is involved in the Wheel but not focused in the presentation; she referred to her article. The whole landscape of production concept, it was said, refers to a history of industrialization and urbanization. But how is that history told? What do we emphasize? What do we leave out? What is being told and what not that is linked to power. There is often no talk about class conflicts or different interests, nor about the misery of many workers that have been working there. That must be made more central, when talking about landscapes of production. Prof. Dr. Heike Oevermann agreed with the problem and pointed out that the roles of women in industrial society are often underrepresented. The aim of the Good Practice Wheel, however, is to show the complex interplay of various fields of work and actors in dealing with industrial heritage. The Wheel, she argued, is a good tool to raise awareness and to initiate discussions on how we do projects today. Furthermore, the conflicts should not only be considered locally, but globally.

Another topic of discussion was the question of who is responsible for the integration of historic preservation and urban development and the various interests of the actors involved in the process. From Prof. Dr. Heike Oevermann's point of view, this is the task of all the players involved in the process: Everyone is responsible for integration. If you understand it as teamwork, everyone is responsible. We can't do it without dialogue. In addition, community engagement is a very important part of the process. This is also represented in the Wheel. The Wheel can be used as a support in these negotiations.

Noted in this context were the different perspectives of the local community - those people who grew up with industrial heritage, those who lived through the active period of industrial facilities, and now look at the time and new uses pacified or bitter and angry. The local community includes many different voices.



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There was critical discussion about whether it was possible to start from a cosmopolitan, tolerant approach, where all people come together and participate in the discussion. This might be a problem because some actors are more privileged. In this context, the process of transforming industrial culture into cultural industry was addressed, too, as were the associated dangers, such as making climate and labor problems invisible. The question was put forward of whether the movement towards cultural industry was a new neoliberal strategy in which important contents disappear behind the facade of industrial heritage. Prof. Dr. Heike Oevermann countered by arguing that of course there are power imbalances and that the Wheel is a way to evaluate things and try to improve them. Recognizing that there are unheard voices - we need to work on bringing them in. Furthermore the Wheel does not support better cultural industries as a reuse opportunity than other uses.

It also became clear once again that the way how and the extent to which industrial heritage is treated and repurposed varies considerably from country to country, which is why international comparisons and collaboration are important.

Prof. Dr. Yonca Erkan and Prof. Dr. Stefan Berger thanked Prof. Dr. Heike Oevermann for the interesting lecture and everyone for their participation and the good discussion.



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