Understanding industrial landscapes: A non-reductionist approach

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It is quite common to understand landscape as heritage as landscape reflects the way humans have cared for, built in and exploited the surroundings. We are interested in valuing a particular type of landscape, European industrial landscapes, as living landscapes and dynamic processes that are open to changes, a conceptualization against musealization of landscape as heritage and in favour of heritagescapes that value the construction and reproduction of memories and identities. We will exemplify some conceptual problems by drawing the attention to two types of industrial landscapes/cases: the industrial canals in the Brabant region in the Netherlands, and the industrial development in Rjukan-Notodden region in Norway. The Norwegian case consists of a large geographical area in the southern interior part of Norway that was the object for large-scale industrialization in the early twentieth century. After a short and rapid growth period, the area has experienced a prolonged period of de-industrialization. The Dutch case consists of a regional (canal) circuit that connects five cities and crosses small villages and unique landscapes. The construction started in 1820 and the canal circuit was used to distribute out the goods produced by the factories (textile, cigars, gasworks) located along the canal zones. The problems are one the one hand, there is a paradox between «living» landscape (change over time) and heritage (protection/preservation); on the other hand, thinking of the landscape as process is possible to «find» the interaction between the material aspects of the industrial landscape and the immaterial aspects attached to them. In order to better understand the possibilities for a sustainable use and re-use of the living, dynamic landscapes of industrial society, we think there is much to learn from the programme and vision for The European Landscape Convention of the Council of Europe.

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