

Introduction: **Industrial Heritage in Late Modern Industrial Societies – Britain and Germany in a comparative perspective**

Peter Itzen and Christian Müller

What is 'industrial heritage'? There is no coherent answer to this question so far. 'Industrial heritage' includes a diverse variety of phenomena which are all rallied under the same nominal flag: Museums for the history of industrial societies like Britain and Germany in the 19th and 20th century; the preservation of old industrial buildings and their re-use for cultural purposes like concerts, art exhibitions, and permanent galleries; the scientific discussions on industrial remnants and their interpretations as witnesses of the past (often referred to as 'industrial archaeology'); the various representations of an imagined industrial age in film, music, and popular culture; the attempts of companies to foster their corporate identity with the cultivation of their past; the hope of former industrial regions to capitalise on their industrial past. When all of these features are gathered, one can see the diverse nature of these phenomena which sail under the flag of 'industrial heritage'. Thus, 'industrial heritage' includes many forms, objects, narratives and questions about the place of industrialisation in late industrial societies without a clear-cut definition of its nature in the general heritage discourse.

Yet there is a common denominator for all of these phenomena. Every approach takes the physical, remembered and imagined remains of past industrial societies to interpret its cultural and social meanings over time, even if the interpretations differ in scope, aim and purpose. It is thus the purpose of this volume to collect many approaches to the topic of 'industrial heritage' and present the diverse varieties of its interpretations. As a consequence, this volume follows this broad understanding of 'industrial heritage' in order to gather up its various meanings for further research. Our authors discuss scientific research upon industrial remains, their past and present interpretations, and the practices which are concerned with the preservation of these remains for the present and future. They also inquire into the political, social and economic foundations that have framed the discussions and debates on industry and industrial remnants. Some of the important questions to grasp the concept of 'industrial heritage' arising from the contributions are: When did industrial heritage become important, and for which purposes? What were and are the main elements that explain the growing interest in industrial heritage? What different forms of industrial heritage can be traced, and what do these differences tell us about social and political circumstances of specific forms of industrial heritage across national, ideological and perceptual borders? How do the scientific community, the media and the public discuss the use of industrial remnants as a source for social and

cultural history? These are the questions with which our authors are – and the scope of our volume is – concerned.

Systematic comparison – both synchronic and diachronic – is one of the popular methods used to make assessments and source-based experiments about modern societies. British and German histories have been traditionally at hand for comparative assessment ever since the controversies between culture and civilisation in the aftermath of the World War I. In social, economic and political history, Anglo-German comparisons about the connections between the paradigm of a bourgeois political revolution, industrial revolution and the development of democratic societies are common, yet they often prove to be fruitless, stumbling despite many efforts to explain a German 'Sonderweg' in contrast to a British way towards a normative concept of modernity. Against this background, one has to ask whether it makes sense to compare anew the histories of de- and re-industrialisation and of industrial heritage in a balanced way of contrasts and similarities over the late 19th and 20th centuries. By adopting a descriptive, phenomenological approach to the research perspectives on industrial heritage, we believe that such comparisons, newly appraised and embedded in (at least partially) experiential ontologies allow for the illustration of some important differences and similarities between how both societies deal with and have dealt with their respective industrial pasts, shaped their pasts for future purposes, and built up new legacies and imagined traditions. The contributions to this volume illustrate in detailed studies how Britain and Germany developed different forms of industrial heritage and discussed their industrial past, and how different economic cultures and political structures can highlight similar as well as divergent developments in remembering the industrial past.

Germany and Britain, as two of the foremost industrialised nations, do closely resemble each other in their phases of high industrialisation, and yet they were quite different in their phases of early and late industrialisation. This mixture of similar and connected industrialised and political rivalry between the 1880s and World War I, and the differences in their early and late stages of industrialisation and de-industrialisation, are an enlightening factor for defining common denominators of industrial heritage. When looking at industrial heritage, it is necessary to decipher distinct features in the use of the concept for national or regional identity formation. Furthermore, the use of industrial heritage as an overarching concept which can be combined with other international definitions of heritage requires investigation. This rather peculiar mixture of similarities and differences in the history of industrialisation, de-industrialisation and re-industrialisation of Britain and Germany offers an interesting background for the understanding and description of industrial heritage in both countries. Germany and Britain are both early industrial nations, but their respective economic histories differ enormously. In particular, we

want to stress three aspects that strike us as of special importance for the understanding of industrial heritage in these two countries.

Firstly, the beginning and early phase of industrialisation are more prominently reflected upon and remembered in industrial heritage than other phases. The structural side of the story shows important differences, beginning with the leading sector of the early industrial phase. Britain was the first industrial nation, and the cotton industry triggered off industrial development. In Germany, industrialisation was primarily caused and accelerated by heavy industry almost a century later and led to the establishment of very large and successful companies like Thyssen and Krupp. These developments were accompanied by a rapidly growing chemical and electric industry. Despite these differences, in both countries the supply of coal was one of the most important preconditions for industrial development. Hence the regions with a large coal deposits became important centres of industrial production, e.g. in Germany the Ruhr basin and in Britain, Northern England and Wales. In Britain, a couple of large coastal towns not only produced coal but also developed into centres of steel production and/or ship building.

Secondly, the pioneer Britain and the follower Germany in high industrialisation levelled out well before World War I. Both countries developed similar industrial core regions in their phases of early and high industrialisation. Yet their history of *late* industrialisation and economic development since the 1970s and 1980s has differed quite strongly. Whereas in Britain the economic policy of the Thatcher era focused on the service and banking sectors, in Germany industrial businesses continued to play an important role. In particular, highly specialised factories that produced technical products of a very complex nature boomed in Germany because they were often either a part of the capital goods industry or the car industry. This continued to be an important (if not the most important) pillar of wealth and economic growth in Germany. The old heavy industries remained a significant economic element in West Germany (and after 1990 in the unified German federal state) for a very long time. German heavy industry declined over a longer period of time, and its decline was heavily moderated and controlled with the help of substantial financial subsidies. In Britain, on the contrary, factories and pits were closed down almost from one day to the next. In Germany, therefore, the aforementioned state interventions helped to make the social and political costs of the economic transformation more acceptable to the workers, their families and the regions where industry was situated.

Thirdly, the recent history of industry of Germany is not only a story of managed and moderated decline, but also a story of success, innovation and renewal. Not only large and successful companies like Daimler-Benz, BMW, Siemens, Volkswagen or Thyssen and Krupp managed to transform their businesses so that they stayed competitive. Medium and small companies often succeeded in doing so, too. These businesses became the

backbone of economic success in West Germany in the second half of the 20th century. The same cannot be said for the industrial sector in Britain. Although it did not fully evaporate, it became increasingly marginalised as British politics focused on the thriving service and banking sectors of the economy. These changes relate directly to the specific forms of industrial heritage that are present in both countries: Britain was among the first countries in which industrial heritage was (re)discovered as a tool to foster the brand and the corporate identity of a company, thereby promoting its economic success (whiskey distilleries are one of early examples for this kind of heritage). The same is true for the car industry which produced its most impressive museums, heritage objects and industrial tourist sites in Germany. The results can be seen in museums that depict the history of companies like Porsche, Mercedes-Benz or Volkswagen. These museums do not intend to describe a 'lost past', but instead celebrate a story of success as a sign of strength for the future. Although the British car industry at large cannot be remembered in the same way, remaining parts of it like Aston Martin, Jaguar, and Rolls Royce are now being celebrated as icons of British engineering.

There are many more differences between both nations regarding industrial heritage – the role of the state in the economy, the distribution of industry in the country and the differing involvement of banks and trade unions in the economy, to name but a few examples. These differences certainly also trigger the way in which industrial history and culture is remembered and represented.

While the history of industrialisation and industrial crises in the second half of the 20th century form the distinctive background for the development of industrial heritage the reasons and contexts for the emergence of an industrial heritage culture are difficult to discern. Indeed, it seems as if a combination of only loosely connected factors produced an environment in which interest in industrial artefacts could develop and an industrial heritage movement could emerge. An important element was the changing popular conception of art and culture afoot since the late 1960s which can be traced in many spheres in society and the scientific community.

This opening-up of the concept of art led to the consideration of popular and industrial culture seriously as part of a constructivist concept of "culture" in which the individual creates her own sense of the world by representing it in her very own parameters. More attention was paid to aspects and elements of everyday life. Anthropologists became increasingly interested in concepts, cultural meanings, and intellectual and constructive processes of 'culture' that went beyond their former concentration on a pre-set idea of 'high culture' as it had been inspired by various thinkers, for example Winckelmann's observations on art and beauty. In addition, social and cultural historians wanted to articulate the voice of the working class and launched inquiries which looked more

deeply at the lower classes and topics which were traditionally seen as trivial in order to decipher the meanings of daily practices. These different developments sprang up independently to some degree but certainly influenced one another. They profited from and contributed to the abovementioned new concepts of art and culture concurrently. It was this very combination of merging trends which led to an increasing interest in the remains of the industrial culture of the 19th and 20th centuries. This specific focus on past industrial monuments and movements and their cultural surroundings furthermore coincided with the crisis of European industry in the 1970s and 1980s which led to a great reduction of jobs in the former heavy industries both in Germany and in Britain.

In these contexts, industrial heritage was able to offer new perspectives to the 'rustbelts' that had suffered from economic decline since the 1970s. Industrial heritage offered new economic perspectives and helped employment structures catch up with economic structural changes by establishing additional environments for a growing service sector. Funding by the European Union significantly assisted this development. Paradoxically, those regions which had constituted the industrial core of Britain and Germany and which were now becoming areas with declining industrial sectors and rising unemployment could make use of their decline by being at the forefront of 'industrial tourism' of fading industrial remnants. What had been a disadvantage for the development of tourism (namely large industrial buildings and compounds) was now touted as a unique and marketable feature. Although it is difficult to estimate the economic achievements of 'industrial tourism', these efforts could, in many cases, turn out to be fairly successful enterprises,¹ even though the immediate effects were and are often limited.² The development of industrial heritage (and of industrial tourism as well) could rely upon the basic structures of early industrial heritage institutions, but it was only in the late 20th century that museums, exhibitions and heritage trails along old industrial sites developed and attracted considerably more visitors.³ In the Ruhr basin, to name but one example, the International Architecture

¹ The public interest in the events around the Ruhr 2010 speaks volumes to this. An earlier example of a successful capitalization upon "industrial tourism" was and is the "Autostadt" in Wolfsburg. Jeremy Barnes, "Industrial tourism: An introduction", <http://www.insights.org/articleitem.aspx?title=Industrial+Tourism%3a+An+Introduction>, [27.11.2012].

² Gert-Jan Hospers, "Industrial Heritage Tourism and Regional Restructuring in the European Union," *European Planning Studies* 10 (2002), 397-403; A. Otgaar, "Towards a common agenda for the development of industrial tourism," *Tourism Management Perspectives* 4 (2012), 86-91.

³ The Deutsche Bergbau Museum in Bochum even dates back to the 1860s, but it was in the 1980s and 1990s that it began to be part of a structure of industrial heritage institutions that became popular with visitors.

Exhibition IBA Emscher Park from 1989 to 1999 created an environment and opportunity for the further development of industrial heritage.⁴

It is difficult to describe exactly how these developments and trends interact. Yet it seems clear that besides the structural elements of economic and industrial change, the agency of a generation of architects, curators, historians, museum directors and politicians has played an important role. These groups and individuals were the major agents in the phase of transition, and they tried to find ways to preserve old industrial buildings and to tell stories and deliver cohesive narratives of the industrial past in which they were interested. The contributions to this volume offer specific explanations for the growing interests of particular social, professional, and political groups in specific areas of industrial heritage and its narratives. Some of these interests were of a more professional nature, for example in the case of architects, conservationists, curators and historians. Large companies and industrial enterprises forged another important group that fostered interest in the industrial past and culture, and they began to use their own histories and on-going stories of success as tools to mould a distinct corporate identity. This strategy was meant to both include skilled engineers and regular workers in a joint company image, and to stand out against foreign competition from Japan for example. Museums for the history of Porsche and Mercedes-Benz are excellent examples of this development which became increasingly prominent in the 1990s and 2000s. In recent years, a professional network of experts on industrial heritage has emerged and established structures in which the debate on industrial heritage could persist and flourish.

In how far these various ambitions, interests and origins of industrial heritage were also connected to feelings of loss for a bygone industrial age is difficult to decide. In contrast to this interpretation, one of our authors argues that affluence was one of the essential pre-conditions for the success of the heritage movement.⁵ This assumption does not fit easily with the notion that industrial heritage is linked to the widely held assumption that Western industrial societies are in decline and that there exists a crisis of identity in late- and post-industrial societies. It is true that parts of the old industrial sector have struggled severely since the late 1970s, and that many large industrial compounds have stood idle and deserted in the vicinity. Yet do we have sufficient data and research which support the thesis that these developments brought about with the people at large or certain social groups an increasing search for new forms of identification which were attached to these buildings and compounds? Perhaps the emergence of industrial heritage owed equally to the mass of

⁴ For the various private initiatives in the Ruhr basin and also on the importance of the IBA Emscher Park: Anne Brownley Raines, "Wandel durch (Industrie) Kultur: conservation and renewal in the Ruhrgebiet", *Planning Perspectives* 26 (2011), 183-207.

⁵ See Peter Mandler in this volume.

impressive old industrial buildings that a couple of enthusiasts wanted to preserve than to a general feeling of lost industrial greatness.

However, if enthusiasts and experts are important to explain the emergence of industrial heritage they have undoubtedly also struck a chord with the feelings and interests of the wider public: As cultural events, industrial heritage in its various forms certainly was and continues to be very successful. In the mid-1990s, the exhibition on the history of the Ruhr basin 'Fire and Flame' (Feuer und Flamme) attracted 460,000 visitors. When industrial cities and core regions like Liverpool or the Ruhr basin became European Capitals of Culture in 2008 and 2010 respectively this led to a huge rise in the general interest in industrial heritage and to a remarkable response by the public. Industrial heritage has been perceived of and marketed as part of the economic future of former industrial regions – tourists are not only to flock to beaches and mountains in the summer, but are also encouraged to travel to industrial heritage sites. In the Ruhr basin, for example, the 'Industrial Heritage Trail' (Route der Industriekultur) leads the visitor from one site to another. In Britain, towns like Liverpool and Glasgow also market their industrial heritage as part of a newly garnered tourism with the potential to attract visitors from in- and outside of Britain.

The contributions in this collected volume follow these and other paths that led to the establishment of industrial heritage and the accompanying debates which these developments have engendered. They choose at times very different routes – depending on the subject of their research focus and on the historical approach which they follow. Our authors come from different historiographical backgrounds – while some are political and cultural historians, others are trained in economic and social history. Yet most of the contributions bridge these gaps to present inclusive interpretations of specific aspects of industrial heritage, a blended approach which incorporates both academic and practical knowledge and experience. Thus they do not offer a uniform interpretation of industrial heritage but instead represent exemplary explanations and contextualisations that – taken together – provide a framework which aids further understanding of the complex nature of industrial heritage in a late industrial age. Indeed, one of the intentions of this collective volume is to reflect upon the different traditions and interpretations of industrial heritage which accumulate toward an understanding of industrial heritage. Although there are numerous publications on this topic, summarising accounts and overviews from a historical point of view are rare.⁶

⁶ One of the notable exceptions is Rebecca Madgin's important study *Heritage, Culture and Conservation. Managing the Urban Renaissance* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag, 2009) - with a focus on Manchester.

Clearly, this collected volume cannot – nor does it aspire to – replace a more substantial monograph, but will hopefully serve as a synopsis of some of the different themes and perspectives on industrial heritage and perhaps stimulate further research in historical perspectives. Thus our authors show how industrial heritage has been discussed within the scientific community; how different forms of industrial heritage have been practised; how specific political and legal environments produced different circumstances for industrial development and the development of industrial heritage; how the experience of loss of an industrial culture and of conflicts around the economic and social future have formed various narrative communities and new points of identity and reference (something which is mainly true of the miners' strike in 1984-5); and how political discussions and social concepts have evolved around industrial development and policy.

Industrial heritage is a reflection of a specific industrial culture. *Stefan Berger* skilfully shows how both industrial heritage and industrial culture operate on various levels and emphasises the particular strength of a regional layer of identity. Yet he also questions the perspective industrial heritage can offer a former industrial region. Can industrial heritage turn out to be a 'dead end' for regions like Wales or the Ruhr basin? To avoid this Berger pleads for a consequent 'demythologisation' of the industrial past. *Richard Stinshoff* focuses on the processes within the scientific community and concentrates on 'industrial archaeology' as a discipline that tries to explain and describe the processes of the Industrial Revolution by interpreting its physical remnants. Stinshoff looks rather sceptically towards the future and questions how industrial archaeology can find ways to deal with current movements for a popular history and attempts to monetise industrial heritage. There are, however, not only challenges, but also new chances in the form of a less centralised British state and a new consciousness of local identity. They can, as Stinshoff argues, possibly offer new perspectives on the future work of industrial archaeology and industrial heritage.

Industrial heritage is a specific strand of a wider heritage debate that reached a climax during the 'heritage panic' in the 1970s and 1980s. At the time, the heritage debate was also a reflection of the feeling of national decline that sought consolation in the pride of a grand national past, as *Peter Mandler* in his contribution to this volume shows. Yet he also makes clear that one of the most important conditions for the emergence of a heritage culture is not necessarily a feeling of decline, but quite the opposite: growing affluence. As Mandler elegantly argues, it is precisely the increasing wealth in the supposedly declining Britain, and especially growing motorisation that brought about a boom in discovering and discussing heritage. This feature is as important for the interest in English 'stately homes' as it is for the rise of industrial heritage, as we noted before. As much as the lower middle and lower classes also shared in the

increase of wages and wealth, their expectations for their leisure time eventually led to a transformation of the heritage culture. People began to focus not only on remnants of the old bygone aristocratic tradition, but also began to embrace popular culture as part of the national heritage. A similar argument can be made for the German case.

Industrial heritage not only happens within the wider context of a general heritage debate, but is also shaped by the political and social environment. *Jörg Roesler* and *Peter Itzen* both examine this aspect and turn to the political dimension of industrial culture and heritage. Roesler adds a new and enlightening perspective to the volume by looking at developments in the GDR. Industrial development was a central element in the political system of the GDR. Partly, this was a case of sheer necessity: Eastern Germany struggled for its economic consolidation from the very beginning. Since the late 1970s this struggle has turned into an increasingly desperate fight for economic survival. Yet industry and industrial culture also mattered because they were part of the founding myth of the socialist state – a state that was supposed to be based on modern industrial development and that allegedly centred on the interests of industrial workers. The state and the Socialist Unionist Party cherished an imagined ‘working class culture’ that was a core element of the legitimisation of the regime. Roesler focuses on the broader economic debates and concepts circulated within clusters of economic experts. Industrialisation remained at the heart of their ambitions, not least in order to heighten living standards in the GDR. It was only in 1989/90, Roesler argues, when industrialisation was suddenly considered a negative feature of the GDR, a misguided appraisal that soon became hotly debated by economic experts.

While Roesler concentrates on the question as to why industry and industrialisation loomed so large in the economic debates in the GDR, Itzen is interested in the different political and legal environments that influenced the process of de-industrialisation in Germany and Britain. Economic policy and decision making was always dependent upon various factors. It appears as if the more moderate policy of de-industrialisation in Germany and the more radical approach during the Thatcher years has a lot to do with the different constitutional and legal frameworks in both countries that enabled different policy styles.

Emily Robinson's contribution focuses on the reception of the miners' strike of 1984-5 by the labour movement, and how coming to terms with its outcome shaped the perception and forms of industrial heritage in local communities. According to Robinson, the British labour movement could only depart slowly from older ideas about heritage and long kept to the obligation of remembering fellow (working) class men until it underwent a shift and began to use industrial heritage as an inspiration for the present. In doing so, popular forms of industrial heritage like the trade union banner movement often follow very closely defined current aims. They

seem beset by present feelings, objectives and experiences rather than functioning as a prospective concept with the aim of forming future communities. Nowadays, Robinson argues, it is neither the past nor the future that promoters and consumers of industrial heritage are interested in, but the very present.

Katy Layton-Jones in her article takes a look at an underestimated area of industrial heritage. Traditionally, exhibitions and parks in the 19th century are not seen as being part of an industrial culture. Sometimes, they were regarded as a form of escapism from an industrial world, as a possibility to immerse oneself in an aristocratic or a pre-industrial atmosphere. As Layton-Jones makes clear, these notions do not fit the history of these leisure parks and buildings. In the 19th century they were not viewed as an escape, but instead were conceived and constructed to be an integral part of the modern commercial and industrial world in order to open up new spaces and experiences for an urban and mobile society. Since the second half of the 20th century, however, the image and function of leisure parks has changed considerably and they have come to be seen as reservoirs of the past whose elements should be preserved, in stark contrast to the dynamic change which had been a core element of these facilities before.

Most of the contributions in our volume look at industrial heritage from the outside and from a more scientific perspective. *Walter Buschmann* has been tremendously influential in the development of industrial heritage in Germany. In his article he reflects upon his experiences as curator and conservationist, thus adding a practical viewpoint to the discussion. He highlights what kinds of strategies curators needed to employ to preserve industrial buildings in recent decades. In the end industrial heritage, it seems, owed very much to the commitment of such curators, but also to the willingness of companies and local authorities to cooperate with them and to find appropriate ways for the subsequent and future use of buildings and places that were of no immediate industrial or economic function anymore.

The history of industrialisation and the crisis of the industrial economy since the late 1970s differed very much in Britain and Germany. The decline of the industrial sector in Britain was riddled with social and political conflicts that were far less pronounced in Germany. While this history has to some extent had its repercussions on industrial heritage in both countries, there appears to be a common element that is very different from the history of political and social conflict. A story of regional pride, self-confidence and optimism rather than nostalgia and feelings of loss seems to characterise many heritage projects: Affluent citizens looking back at the history of their ancestors, their hard work and often miserable living conditions; curators trying to rescue impressive architectural achievements; former industrial workers in Britain using their history of industrial employment for very pragmatic and forward-looking purposes; and last not least successful industrial enterprises

cherishing their own history for very earthly interests. Our close view on some of the practices of industrial heritage shows that it offers many new and important chances for these groups to appropriate their own history in diverse ways, thus contributing to public debates and interpretations of their regional, professional, and economic histories. All these groups do not seem to be overly concerned about the loss of their history, but instead try to find constructive ways to make use of their history and the industrial past for the future.

This book follows a conference on industrial heritage that took place in May 2010. It took us some time to complete this volume because we needed to acquire contributions on new topics which proved fertile during the conference and round table discussions. We would like to thank the many people who made this volume possible. First of all our thanks go to the contributors of this volume for their interesting and inspiring articles, and for their co-operation and patience. We also want to thank several generations of students who worked as research assistants in Freiburg and Münster for us and took care of many technical, editorial and general problems that we might have otherwise overlooked. Eva Maria Bündgens, Kilian Flaig, Mariette Franz, Raphael Fritz, Marc Hellmig, Felix Ledinger, Christoph Strelau, Tania Strützel, Julia Wilm, and Max Zesch all helped at different stages to complete this work. Our thanks also go to Vicki Tafferfer for improving the readability of some contributions, and to Paulina Alférez for tuning the quality of the illustrations at the last minute. We are also very grateful to Ursula Lehmkuhl, the editor of the book series of the German Association for the study of British History and Politics in which this collected volume is published, and to Michael Friedrichs who steered the book with great diligence and foresight through the different stages of its production. Last but certainly not least we would like to thank Christiane Eisenberg, Klaus Stolz, Franz-Josef Brüggemeier and Willi Oberkrome who substantially helped us in many ways during the evolution and maturation of this volume. We hope that it will provide an introduction into some of the fields of critical inquiry concerning industrial heritage that will in turn engender further research, and that it will add to our understanding of late modern industrial societies.