

**ROUTE INDUSTRIEKULTUR.
GEOGRAPHERS' PERSPECTIVES AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO AN
ITINERARY OF INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE**

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INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE AND TOURISM

Cultural Heritage is one of the most distinguishing factors for tourism. Besides the natural scenery and outdoor sports, the history of a given place or region very often is being appropriated for tourism development. Generally, the term heritage and culture are closely linked, as the remnants of a former epoch, may it be buildings or artefacts in a museum, are used to reconstruct and explain the everyday life of our ancestors. Thus, cultural heritage is regionally embedded. Even if artefacts from e.g. Egypt are being presented in Berlin, Paris or London, they form part of the construction of Egyptian culture, the image of Egypt as a region and - in the process - as a potential tourist destination. To understand the potential and spatial embeddedness of cultural heritage, it is necessary to define the term in a broader sense and then to allocate and localise different cultural aspects. Cultural aspects generally have their specific spaces, the arts are performed or presented in buildings dedicated specifically for that purpose. There may also be art taking to the streets as (sub-)cultures express and present themselves. The tagging of territory by gang sprayers is both, an artful expression as well as an appropriation of space.

Finally, the everyday life is by most scholars defined als culture in the broader sense. All the pieces of daily conduct, of work and leisure, daily routinized routes of traffic, media, transform this mainstream culture into spatial patterns. Those patterns may be very persistent, as cathedrals or factories show, others are of a transient character, such as the everyday walk to work or the shop. Cultural heritage therefore is not only art forms, but also artefacts and spatial inscriptions of everyday conduct. Not only the written word or buildings, but also tools, machinery, and other pieces represent culture and allow to reconstruct the life of by-gone eras. This for a long time has built the basis for tourism development and regional tourism promotion, such as the hillocks of the Rhine Valley speckled with castles or the rolling Tuscany landscape with its villas and quintessential cypressus trees. Valid also for city destinations, tourism seems to seek those specific vistas to ensure themselves of the 'original'. Definitely, these images are not irreversible. To the contrary, from a structurationist viewpoint, the images of regions never are a given, but they are perpetually reconstructed and redefined. On this base, concepts of regional tourism

life cycle can be understood as the reconstruction, consciously or unconsciously, of a tourism region.

In declining industrial regions the regional cultural heritage is dominated by the industrial production. Industrialised in the 19th century the cities' growth in many cases was unplanned, determined by the growing workforce, often determined by the company which in many cases organised all the lives of its workers and their families around the factory. The company built their houses, provided work, run the grocery shop and recreational facilities. In many such cases, that era has created a distinct industrial landscape, dominated by the factory, around which all other functions were ordered. It created a specific set of professions, of tools and machinery, and of daily social routines and networks.

Thus, those regions would have the potential for defining them individually, in fact, most of them already have a distinct image, albeit a very negative one. With images of economic decline and unemployment, of environmental problems and dirty roads and buildings, these regions are stigmatised as no-go areas, a nail in the coffin for any tourism development. Soyez (1993) lists a whole series of barriers to industrial tourism development (see Tab. 1), ranging from sheer physical to wholly psychological, affecting all of the actors, the potential tourists and the affected population as well as the decisionmakers and tourist industry. Without going into too much detail, it is obvious that not only industrialisation, but also the deindustrialisation process generates a whole set of intertwined issues, a structural resistance to change. One major chance of overcoming those barriers lies in the redefinition of old industries as part of regional heritage worthwhile to preserve.

THE RUHRGEBIET AND ITS TOURISTIC POTENTIAL

As the largest industrialised district in Central and Western Europe, the 'Ruhrgebiet' has grown into today's shape over some 150 years. Historically grown from South to North, the southernmost zone gives the whole region its name. The Ruhr Valley itself was one of the most heavily industrialised areas in the early 19th century. To the North, medieval towns founded along a trading route ('Hellweg') with the rise of the coal and steel industries evolved into industrial hubs and absorbed most of the population growth of the region. The next generation of industrial and urban growth developed in the Emscher Valley, based on coal and chemistry, with extremely fast development of industry, infrastructure, and housing, leaving an unstructured pattern of land use. Farther to the North (River Lippe) and to the West, only the coal industry moved on, following the resource base and creating smaller mining towns in the 20th century (Dege & Dege 1983).

Thus, the region's development is an excellent example for the industrialisation and its intermingled development of industry, technology, infrastructure, architecture and urbanisation as well as population growth, immigration and social structures. Administratively not a clearcut region, the Ruhrgebiet belongs to the province of Northrhein-Westfalen. Historically, it has witnessed an immense immigration. With some six million inhabitants today, it is not a single (mega-)city, but a multi-centered

agglomeration. Administratively, the Ruhrgebiet belongs to two regions and thus straddles an old historical boundary, namely between the Rhineland and Westphalia. Also, it is divided among three regional administrative bodies, Münster, Arnsberg and Düsseldorf. Even more, on lower administrative levels, it is divided into a set of independent cities and some counties. Those cities and counties have joined to found an agency to coordinate the planning and development for housing in 1920, which has grown into a planning administration with a much larger agenda, the Kommunalverband Ruhrgebiet (KVR). Most scholars agree today, that the Ruhrgebiet can be regionalized along the administrative borders of this agency (Goch 2001, p. 24).

As the Ruhrgebiet is losing its traditional industrial base rapidly, the related loss of workforce has led to some of the highest unemployment rates in Western Germany. The number of jobs in coal mining for example has decreased dramatically since mid-1950s. As well, the production sites have been concentrated, as they moved northward with the coal mining, and shifting towards the harbour at Duisburg for the steel industries. Nowadays, steel mills are even being dismantled and shipped to China for reconstruction. Nevertheless, the region still has a strong industrial base in chemistry and the power industries.

The restructuring process is being fostered by subsidies by the EU, and the federal and provincial governments. After an era of promoting fordist production, today the evolution of small and medium enterprises with a high innovation potential is being preferred. As well, starting in the 1960s, the first universities were founded in the industrial district, an indicator for a change toward the tertiary sector (Eckhard & Neuhoff, 2000).

As services gain in importance for the regional development, also tourism is seen to play an increasing role. As the region obviously is not a typical destination, the tourism development had to draw on and to develop other resources. Industrialisation distinguished the Ruhrgebiet from most other places in Western and Central Europe. Thus, the Ruhr Region first was defined as the powerhouse of German economy. Interestingly so, this perception as a region was implemented first from the outside. The internal identification not only of the steel and coal workers was not a regional one, but locally with the factory and the surrounding quarters (Goch 2001, p. 37-38). With the decline of traditional industries, the region's image suffered an unprecedented downturn. It was converted into a set of negative connotations: unemployment, economic decline, environmental degradation, social problems together with rather unesthetic labels such as greyness, dirt, smoke and smell. The constant structural change, however, gave rise to an internal regionalisation. New organisational structures emerged on regional level to dampen the decline and organise the change. Competing companies were merged to regional monopolists (e.g. Ruhrkohle AG) and the common experience of decline fostered a regional solidarity among the working population (Goch 2001, p. 30-33).

Also, the "Ruhrgebiet" was present in the media: on television some representative characters were being created and helped defining an image and gave the region personalities. As well, popular music discovered the Ruhrgebiet. This change was medium and outcome of a slow but steady development towards a regional image and identification. This image now is being expanded, as even more protagonists on TV such as stand-up comedians constantly redefine the image not only of the region itself, but also of its

inhabitants. Together with coordinating and promotional efforts of the KVR, it can be stated that the Ruhrgebiet was and still is going through a process of regionalisation, of the creation and re-definition of a region.

Not surprisingly, the Ruhrgebiet in former times was never defined as a tourist destination, except for some industrial tourism to producing industries, drawing on archaic fascination of fire, heat and the alchemy of steel and coal industries. On the other hand the region was a brand already, associated with a whole set of labels such as “das Revier” (the district) or “der Pott” (the pot) which gave the Ruhrgebiet an already high visibility and distinction. With basically two areas of touristic potential and competence, namely cities and industrial heritage, the latter evolves into the distinguishing factor from any other potentially competing destination (Projekt M 2000, p.23). The Ruhrgebiet has been endowed with an unique heritage for tourism development. This distinct image, however, has been a strongly undervalued resource: the task lies in redefining the brand ‘Ruhrgebiet’ and load it with positive connotations. As the industrial remnants may be changed into cultural heritage, a re-evaluation takes place. This transforms the distinctively - yet negative - regional image into a marketable brand, keeping the effective labels “der Pott” or “das Revier”. Thus, the Ruhrgebiet is being re-created as an innovative, cultural, recreational region - and as a tourist destination.

Nordrhein-Westfalen is being split into eleven tourism regions, each being promoted with a distinct image. For example, the Sauerland is being defined and perceived as a cultural landscape with a high recreation potential as outdoor sports and nature are at the core of its tourism resources. On the other hand, there are well-known cities such as Köln or Düsseldorf, which draw tourists by their attractive urban life and culture. The Ruhrgebiet possesses a very high visibility, and its distinctive features provide for an opportunity to widen the tourism potential of Nordrhein-Westfalen beyond city tourism and the outdoors. Industrial tourism may evolve as a third pillar for NRW tourism, as the distinctive factor in a competitive environment (Projekt M 2000). This potential is being promoted by quite a few agencies. Following the disparate administrative structure, there are several actors. Specialized travel agencies were created, and there is a multitude of foundations, administrative bodies and others with specialized offers like museums, and the like. The KVR promoted the Ruhrgebiet in special image campaigns (“der Pott kocht”). The “route industriekultur” is but one of those efforts. Its value lies mostly in its focus on the uniqueness of the Ruhrgebiet and its visibility. Therefore, many other actors refer to an promote the industrial heritage or even the “route industriekultur” itself.

ITINERARY OF INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE IN THE RUHRGEBIET: “ROUTE INDUSTRIEKULTUR”

The “route industriekultur” was designed as a network which linked extraordinary locations of industrial heritage in the Ruhrgebiet. With an extensive set of street signs and an integrated information policy the network is being made available to the public. Industrial heritage is at the very core of the system (IBA, 1999; KVR, 1999 a). The system links nearly 50 main sites. From 19 so-called anchor points additional routes spread out, guiding

visitors to some 600 secondary locations of interest. The anchor points are chosen as they already are well-known beyond the region. They are either old industrial sites, panoramic viewpoints, museums, parks or settlements, and thus they provide extraordinary meeting points and in some cases the locations for cultural events such as concerts, festivals and the like. As they were visible beyond the regional borders, they served as focal points creating a trade mark to potential visitors. The main addressees were the inhabitants and potential visitors from outside of the region. The objectives for both are related, but different. To the outside, the creation of an itinerary is part of an image, itineraries are generally part of a larger tourism promotion concept. To the inside, the itinerary can be part of an identification effort of changing and recharging the regional self-esteem. Thus tourism development is closely intertwined with regional development not only economically but in a broader sense of a self-definition as a region, a development (i.e. creation) of a region in its literal sense.

Beyond the locations and street signs, there are also more or less extensive information panels at most sites. A visitor centre at the Zeche Zollverein XII in Essen-Katernberg - a location under UNESCO world heritage status - provides more information. Available are a CD-Rom, a internet site (www.route-industriekultur.de, see Fig. 43), booklets, a special map, and information for bikers and hikers respectively as those groups are provided with their specific trails in the region (KVR, 1999a, b). The whole system follows a corporate design. Thus, the “route industriekultur” was first and foremost a coordinating effort.

The project was lead by the Kommunalverband Ruhrgebiet and funded mostly by the European Union and the Land Northrhein-Westfalen. It has also been a project of the Internationale Bauausstellung Emscher Park (IBA), a coordinated effort to promote structural change in the heavily industrialised area of the Emscher Valley. With the IBA, also the “route industriekultur” was completed in 1999. The CD-Rom and the internet presentation were upgraded continuously since.

By an interdisciplinary approach content, presentation and media technology can be optimized. Therefore, with the route industriekultur, there was a team of four different groups, each with a specialization and distinct field of competence (see Tab. 1). Within that context, a large part of the contents were provided by Geographers, as the competence of most other teams laid in technical areas. As an itinerary is being constructed as a network of points, it nevertheless represents a whole region. Therefore, comprehensive information on the region’s history, the economic and social development as well as the natural features of the region had to be made available. This was done on the internet and CD-Rom presentations, and a special feature for children was integrated (Hamhaber, J.; Chilla, T., Soyez, D. 1999; Hamhaber, J., Rottländer, M., Schyma, B., Soyez., D. 1999). Also the land use changes were analysed and mapped to illustrate the development and decline of the region to a larger public.

Tab. 1 - *Overview of working groups and tasks**

Kommunalverband Ruhrgebiet	project leader
Coordinators	conceptualization, site selection, overall coordination, content management, texts for special routes
Geographers	geographic and historical information, children's pages, text for main sites, atlas, bibliography, landuse mapping, (hi)story
Designers and Web Designers	communication concept, graphics, drawings, layout for all media, graphic coordination
Technicians	programming, video, photography, technical coordination and some texts

**the split of tasks was not as strict as the table may imply. As well, the volume of work and the participation for the respective media was differing to a large extent.*

(Hi)Story of the Ruhrgebiet: Regional History / Historical Geography

Even with the sites connected by the itinerary it appeared important to provide some general information about the region's development and current status. The industrialisation and deindustrialisation processes needed to be presented in an integrative way to allow the visitors to connect between single locations and to grasp the interconnectedness of technological innovation, the natural endowments of the region, the population development and migration, the cities' growth, land use and social and economic changes. Therefore a set of texts and illustrative graphics was developed and implemented covering those topics, including a short history of the region as well as some biographies of famous or important citizens of the Ruhrgebiet. Those text can either be read sequentially like a book, or by jumping through a hypertext which intertwines the topics covered and thus represents the interconnectedness of processes in the region's development and structure.

Land use change and history of anchor points

Another approach to an integrated view of regional development was the mapping of land use changes. By interpreting historical and recent topographic maps and aerial photography the land use was analysed. For each anchor point, the surroundings were scrutinised for three time slices, before industrialisation, at the peak of the industrial development and today. Thus, the time stamps were not identical for different sites, but the land use changes could be stressed and made visible to a general public. For the same reason, namely the readability for non-experts, the number of land-use categories was reduced deliberately, generalizing the contents accordingly (see Fig. 44). With short explanations the maps can be interpreted as indicators not only for land use, but also for some social changes. This feature was not included in the multimedia presentation but to be put on displays on site.

Childrens' Pages

Industrial tourism is typically an additional feature upgrading a destination. Visiting industrial heritage sites quite often supplements other activities such as shopping, some of which are done with the whole family. Therefore, information should not only be provided to the parents, but also to the children. For children aged between 10 and 14 years,

informative and funny pages were designed. On some 30 fullscale comic panels, typical scenes of the Ruhrgebiet are being displayed on which the children can seek information and find links to other related topics and displays. As the children are taken along by two personalized guides, they learn about the Ruhrgebiet today, its industrial heritage, but also about the living quarters and shopping malls, the universities, the lakes in the Ruhr valley as well as the reuse of buildings for research, arts, recreation or offices.

ON THE CREATION OF A TOURISM REGION

Securing industrial heritage for tourism may have a whole series of effects, some of which are typical for tourism development. It can be expected that tourism generates income during the given phases of structural change or that it helps preserving buildings and other artefacts. But many of the potential effects refer more or less directly to the image and self-image of the region affected (see for example Soyez, 1993). Besides securing the regionally typical working skills a new demand is being created for that knowledge. Also the re-evaluation of the old industries as heritage may have stabilizing effects for regional identity against a sense of loss. On the other hand, the musealisation of industries recently shut down, or even still producing, labeling the industry and the workers as doomed by expressing the expectation of further downsizing. Thus, the existing daily lives are increasingly being redefined externally. A striking example are visits to workers living quarters where the tourism interests may degrade everyday conduct into a showcase - even more so as many of the laid-off personnel might not take advantage of the tourism development themselves as new uses may be in conflict with the old neighborhoods. As well, the fully integrated regional system is being reduced to a few labels and landmarks and thus symbolised. Thus, in transition phases both images exists and the difference of declining and emerging culture may pose a problem for tourism development as well as for the region's inhabitants.

As perception of a downgrading industrial region changes, the remnants of a former or declining culture are being perceived differently. Their value rises as more and more cultural features are being lost and becoming rare and as the temporal and social distance to the industrial age increases. As these artefacts are necessary for the understanding of regions, its origins and its history, they may help to explain the regions identity not only to visitors but to future generations. Thus, they build a part of the internal regional identification and the external regional image and therefore may form a unique opportunity for regional tourism development - the re-creation of the Ruhrgebiet recreational region and tourist destination.

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