KEYNOTE PAPER: HOW INTANGIBLE HERITAGE IS REGENERATING THE POST-INDUSTRIAL ENVIRONMENT: A U.K.-U.S. COMPARISON

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Abstract:
The tangible heritage of the Industrial Revolution still exists and continues to impact our lives. In order to understand the remnants of our boarded up industrial past, conserve it, and better utilize it, we must understand the role of the “intangible” in regenerating this historic environment. Without understanding it, or at the very least, acknowledging it, we run the risk of losing the physical place’s inherent meaning and, with it, the artifact itself. In this paper, I will discuss the state of tangible and intangible heritage in the post-industrial urban quarter in both the U.K. and the U.S. I argue that, due to the rapid changes in technology and globalization, the physical change in the post-industrial district is quite fluid and that development, both within and outside the district, will continue to impact its heritage. In my conclusion, I propose that utilizing the intangible heritage of the place is the primary way to regenerate the post-industrial built patrimony.

Introduction

The tangible heritage of the Industrial Revolution still exists and continues to impact our lives. In order to understand the remnants of our boarded up industrial past, conserve it, and better utilize it, we must understand the role of the “intangible” in regenerating this historic environment. Without understanding it, or at the very least, acknowledging it, we run the risk of losing the physical place’s inherent meaning and, with it, the artifact itself. UNESCO (2003) defines intangible heritage as “the practices, representations, expressions, and skills transmitted from generation to generation, which provides people with a sense of identity and continuity.” Intangible Industrial Heritage is the traditional craftsmanship, knowledge, practices and skills relevant to the understanding of industrial processes and the material legacies of industrial production (Ironbridge Institute 2014). As more post-industrial historic districts and quarters are regenerated, we are beginning to see the need to retain the linkage between the tangible aspects of the patrimony and the intangible heritage that created it. In both the U.S. and the U.K., the awareness of the intangible originates not from policy-makers and urban planners but from the new occupants of the post-industrial district: the entrepreneur, artisan, artist, and maker. Whether it is a Pre-Fordist environment (predominant in the U.K.) or a Fordist environment (predominant in the U.S.), entrepreneurs and developers are maximizing opportunities to not only regenerate abandoned post-industrial heritage but also to transform it by utilizing twenty-first century digital technology. Essentially, they see what is obvious within these urban quarters: These are places that were originally created to produce products. Tourists also appreciate how the historic architecture relates to the intangible heritage. Sheffield’s beer making industry, which derived from the city’s steel industry, is now a cultural tourist...
industry and tourists also appreciate the city’s historic pubs, located near the River Sheff. Jewellery retail businesses now have a presence on Vyse Street in Birmingham’s Jewellery Quarter (Figure 1). These developments are the result of a merging of the manufacturing economy and the cultural tourism economy.

Figure 1: Sketch from the Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham
In this paper, I will discuss the state of tangible and intangible heritage in the post-industrial urban quarter in both the U.K. and the U.S. I argue that, due to the rapid changes in technology and globalization, the physical change in the post-industrial district is quite fluid and that development, both within and outside the district, will continue to impact its heritage. In my conclusion, I propose that utilizing the intangible heritage of the place is the primary way to regenerate the post-industrial built patrimony.

The Disconnect between Policy and Regeneration in the Post-industrial District

Throughout the U.K., Europe, and North America, the mass production of products, known as industrial production, has been in decline since the 1970s. Cheaper manufacturing economies, emerging from developing countries, brought about through a globalized economy that is based on free trade, and also technical advancement, specifically automation, brought about this over forty year trend. Daniel Bell in his landmark book, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (Bell 1973) predicted this paradigm shift in which the U.S. (and also the U.K.) economy would rely more on service-based economies (professional services, retail, and construction) and less so on the manufacturing-based economy. Mike Robinson, Director of the Ironbridge International Institute for Cultural Heritage at the University of Birmingham sums up the situation in saying that “within the context of this new era, the manufacture of things, as opposed to the delivering of services, is rare.” The 2009 Great Recession began a paradigm shift in economic practices that, even after seven years, we are still trying to comprehend. Because of globalization, and then the recent economic crisis, declining industries finally shuttered, and with them the loss of industrial jobs. This condition has exacerbated long-term unemployment among low-educated and
skilled adult workers (Smeeding, Thompson, Levanon, and Burak 2011:82-126). Wages have also stagnated in both the manufacturing and service sectors. Young workers (commonly referred to as “millennials” in the U.S.) found it difficult to secure employment, even after attending a university (Roggero 2011). Professionals, in fields such as, law, medicine, and finance, have also faced declining employment, caused by the same kind of outsourcing and automation encountered in manufacturing. In the U.K., younger workers are experiencing the same situation. Moreover, taxable revenue for municipalities, in both the U.S. and U.K., drastically declined, which prevented post-industrial cities to provide basic municipal services and to rebuild infrastructure.

The current economic situation has impacted the regeneration of cities, especially in post-industrial ones, differently than past economic calamities. Instead of governmental-led urban rebuilding programs, as what occurred during the Great Depression and then the post-World War II era, rebuilding schemes led by governments have been virtually non-existent in both the U.S. and the U.K. However, cities have experienced a period of reinvention within the past five years in their industrial quarters but in a more localized manner. Occupants of these industrial quarters and interested private developers redeveloped post-industrial districts in often less conventional ways. Furthermore, these entrepreneurs have rebuilt these environments with minimal capital investment and have
conformed it to the new technological industrial advances developed in the last thirty years.

The schism between grassroots regeneration and the urban planning profession was already happening prior to the Great Recession but it became more prevalent afterward. In his book, Cultural Planning: An Urban Renaissance? (2001), Graeme Evans pointed out that there are different types of planning within a city. Along with town or city planning, a profession, which is typically focused on physical planning and specific activities within the city (use zoning), should also consider other aspects for planning the future of a city. There is strategic planning, the public sector-economic resource and long-range planning for a city; and, arts planning, the allocation of resources and distribution of public subsidy for designated prescribed arts activities (theatres, galleries, museums, concert halls, etc.). But more importantly, there is cultural planning—the “wider integration of arts and cultural expression in urban society” (Evans 2001:9-12). Evans states that urban planning should embody more cultural planning, especially in light of the need to use urban identity as a
means of generating revenue through tourism. However, he also notes that urban planning, by its very nature, responds best to managing industrialization and not cultural identity. But what happens in a post-industrial district when the industrial use collapses? Does the municipality try to convert the district or quarter into service-based industry environment? Or what happens when a residential use merges into work use in the post-industrial district? Finally, what happens when culture is industry, both in industrial activity and through tourism? All of this is happening in the most successfully regenerated post-industrial districts, both in the U.S. and the U.K. Are urban planners best suited to manage such a dynamic and innovative built environment? After all, as Evans notes, bureaucrats rarely create; they regulate (Evans 2001:35-41). And the post-industrial quarter is once again becoming a place for creators.

Figure 3: Regeneration of Post-industrial quarters for creators
The Recession and accompanying austerity measures, implemented by central
governments for funding regeneration, inhibited central urban planning to proactively plan
for post-industrial regeneration. More often than not, these districts were being used for
industrial and cultural uses without planning agencies even knowing anything about it.
Cutlery businesses work next to rock music recording studios and “one-off” bicycle
production shops in Sheffield’s Portland Works, which is hardly in a pristine state;
production is occurring there as it had in the nineteenth century. More importantly, the
building complex is best suited for Post-Fordist production, due to the fact that it was built
before Fordism was developed. Localism, a scheme introduced by the UK central
government to promote localized determination of land planning, meant that city councils
would have to work with local occupants and developers in helping develop a plan more
conducive to the district or quarter. In theory, this could work if there is a political balance
between local occupants and regional developers. In the case of Birmingham’s Jewellery
Quarter (Figure 4), there is an imbalance between investors and local occupants with
developers taking the upper hand over the jewelers and the artisans in shaping planning policy in the district (Birmingham City Council Planning & Building Office 2014).

In the U.S., funding reductions in municipal planning offices and state historic preservation offices has resulted in a near abdication of planning services for post-industrial districts. More often than not, older industrial buildings are abandoned and with them a planning initiative to regenerate the older industrial district by the government. Either these buildings continue to decay, become prone to vandalism or arson, or are regenerated by city occupants. The Pearl District in Portland (Figure 5), Oregon is a typical example of how post-industrial heritage is regenerated in the U.S. Forty years ago, this section of Portland was not named the “Pearl District;” in fact, it was nothing more than an abandoned and contaminated railroad yard with shuttered warehouses scattered throughout it. But then an art gallery, named “the Pearl,” opened in one of the warehouses. Soon after, artists were attracted to the district because of the gallery and cheap rentable space, both for living and working. Other businesses followed; then the city government implemented
environmental remediation programs in the district, and finally a master plan to rebuild this former railroad and industrial zone into the Pearl District (Gillem 2012).

As was the case in the Pearl District, planning for regeneration was reactive not proactive; and with it, there was a lack of a designed regeneration plan, which took cultural planning into account, and with it, intangible heritage. U.S. planners continue to either not recognize or ignore a common trend noted by scholars for the past fifteen years in post-industrial regeneration: 1. The redevelopment occurs in an ad-hoc manner. 2. The development was done by and for young artisans/artists/entrepreneurs, who are seeking more affordable places to live and work. 3. Places for social interaction are either transformed or invented within the post-industrial district (Evans 2001, Lloyd 2006, Zukin 2009).

The last point, “places for social interaction,” proves the importance of the primary aspect of cultural planning in the post-industrial district—intangible heritage.
The Artisan and the Twenty-first Century City

Unemployment during the last recession and current recovery, especially with younger workers, has caused many to question conventional career paths in the service sector. In the U.K., the Royal Society of Artisans have taken a leading role in cultivating young entrepreneurial talent and supporting them with venture capital in order to establish innovative-based, one-off, manufacturing enterprises. These millennials have gravitated toward historic, post-industrial districts, such as the Jewellery Quarter (JQ), where small batch manufacturing still exists. There, they are embracing and utilizing the urban and architectural form of the JQ. They frequent the pubs and coffee houses; enjoy the green spaces, such as the church grounds at Saint Paul’s Church and the historic canals that run through the district. The buildings, streets, and public spaces remain the same as they have been since the nineteenth century and the way they are engaged by the younger workforce is no different than previous generation. What has changed in the JQ is that instead of bangles, rings, or other jewellery being fabricated; automobile components, popular music, or computer software is now produced. What binds the past, present and the future together is the intangible heritage of the JQ.
What the Jewellery Quarter offers young entrepreneurs is its urban character of small buildings (Figure 6), some of which were originally built as terrace villas that were built in the late eighteenth century, and some purpose-built jewellery factories; it also has narrow streets, and small pubs.

This condition was built to promote efficient manufacturing and social interaction and it is a uniquely British way of conurbation. Cultural geographer Rodney Tolley referred to it as “local industrial linkage”—the development of support networks that encourage idea exchange, sub-contracting, and specialized processing where spatial concentrations of small or medium-sized firms in the same industry exist (Tolley 1972, 351). And although jewellery making may now have been outsourced out of Birmingham to far away, cheaper markets, the social and urban way of making things in West Midlands remains and it is being rediscovered by a new generation of inventors and entrepreneurs. With its intangible
and traditional way of making—“small batch” and “one-off” making (see Shils 1981 for the definition of “tradition”)—and the social aspect of industry, the U.K. can grasp an opportunity to be a leader in the current post-industrial revolution, also known as the innovation economy. But in order to seize the initiative in a competitive globalized economy, the British must first take note and evolve their manufacturing tradition, which is the intangible heritage of their post-industrial landscape.

In the U.S., the challenges of post-industrial regeneration and economic renaissance in the American rustbelt are different. In America, the later eras of the Industrial Revolution were defined by Fordism, the economic and social systems of industrialized, standardized mass production and mass consumption. Architecturally and urbanistically, the North American post-industrial landscape is defined by the mammoth sized purposed-built assembly or fabrication factory. By the early twentieth century, the large factory defined the American city; railroads directly served them (instead of city occupants), waterways and harbors conformed to them; and central business district were subservient to them. When the factories closed, beginning in the 1970s, so did the cities. American cities such as, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Portland, Oregon, faced tremendous challenges and severe declines in their population and in their economic production. Millions of square feet of industrial heritage went fallow. Some cities, both large and small, never recovered. In regenerating these cities, American planners and heritage managers must ask themselves this simple question: What do we do with these huge buildings?

Unlike the UK, the scale and size of buildings is the primary challenge for post-industrial regeneration in the U.S. After globalization and automation, industry is not easily replaceable, especially if the Fordist production model is to be used. There are simply not
enough manufacturing enterprises to fill the large empty factory buildings. Moreover, American planners face other challenges; environmental remediation, and the propensity for Americans to develop green fields along interstate highways, which results in sprawl, instead of regenerating historic city centers (See Bruegman 2006 for definition of “Sprawl”). But similar to what is happening in the U.K., post-industrial regeneration is occurring at the grassroots level and the tradition of making is respected; however, it is not embraced and transformed in a way that is currently happening in the U.K. “Creative industries,” such as software developers, advertising firms, brewers and vinters, furniture makers, and artists to but a few, have emerged in post-industrial cites and they are utilizing sections of historic factory complexes (Kuschner 2013).

Post-industrial regeneration began long before Bell invented the term, “Post-industrial.” Soon after the end of the Second World War, “fringe” groups—artists, artisans, and first generation immigrants—began populating abandoned factories and warehouses, beginning in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, New York City, where they established shops, studios, and small factories. Why they chose these discarded quarters of the city was obvious: the abandoned factory space in New York was either very cheap or completely free. Noted urbanist Jane Jacobs took note of this trend and discussed it in her landmark book, The Death and Life of Great American Cities. She argued that there was a need to reuse and reinvent “unassuming existing buildings” in the city (Jacobs 1961). By the 1980s, Sharon Zukin, in Loft Living, chronicled how once the artists and the small business entrepreneurs regenerated the Lower East Side, they were soon displaced by wealthier New Yorkers. After this quarter of the city was “gentrified,” the artists moved to another abandoned quarter in New York, Tribeca. In other cities, throughout the U.S., artists and artisans and then wealthier urban inhabitants continued the trend (Zukin
By 2009, grassroots post-industrial regeneration was well underway but American millennials were not interested in regenerating the intangible heritage of American post-industrial patrimony; instead, they were more interested in experiencing the character these buildings possessed that was produced by the intangible heritage. Social scientist Richard Lloyd chronicled a typical case study in the River North and Wicker Park districts of Chicago (Figure 7).

Both areas of Chicago were abandoned and considered dangerous places to inhabit as recently as the 1980’s but by 2005, millennial entrepreneurs were regenerating the abandoned factories and warehouses into “live-work” units (Lloyd 2006). Today, one can experience artists’ studios, internet-based and social media advertisement firms, and small batch manufacturing (micro-breweries, custom skateboard fabrication shops); along with studio apartments, coffeehouses, and nightclubs. By inhabiting abandoned factory buildings, today’s young entrepreneurs are rejecting the suburban apartment living and
automobile driven industrial parks and research campuses that proliferated the suburbs of cities such as Boston, MA, Atlanta, GA, and Raleigh, NC. They are attracted to the walkable and social nature of the historic post-industrial district but they are necessarily inspired by the traditional practices that shaped it.

Conclusion

Post-industrial regeneration is happening throughout the UK, North America, and Europe. What is replacing the factory operations of the Industrial Revolution is a new industry, which values ideas over mass manufactured goods and is usually producing a “one-off” products and utilizing digital technology. The British industrial tradition, which produced cutlery in Sheffield, pottery in Stoke-on-Trent, and guns, jewellery, and precision equipment in Birmingham throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century, is well suited to be re-invented for the new twenty-first century. As manufacturing shifts from the Fordist era to the current Post-Fordist one, the British way of making things— “one-off”—will be more in demand. Automotive components, cutlery, computers, and appliances will become more unique and manufacturing sites will resemble the small converted terrace villas in the Jewellery Quarter than the mammoth sized Hercules Rubber plant in Canton, Ohio. But in order to maximize all the aspects that the British manufacturing traditions embody, the UK must understand the architectural and urban structures of its industrial landscape and how it was produced by and influenced its intangible heritage. Ultimately, industrial intangible heritage produced conurbation in the UK and when it is re-understood it can allow the traditional manufacturing practices to be retooled for the twenty-first century. In the dense industrial quarters in cities such as, Birmingham or Wolverhampton, or Sheffield, small manufacturing firms can work together
and benefit from “local industrial linkage,” which Tolley noted in the post-war period in the U.K.

In the U.S., the challenges and opportunities to utilize intangible industrial heritage are different than in the U.K. Enormous factories, built to accommodate assembly line Fordist ideas for manufacturing, are often too large to provide the intimate working environments typically found in the U.K. Moreover, entrepreneurs no longer employ Fordist production techniques in the historic industrial landscape; instead, they are combining working with living and creating cities within the cities that includes areas for socialization—parks, plazas, coffeehouses, and nightclubs. In these districts, what is appreciated is the craft and construction of the historic industrial buildings, which were often built for durability with exceptional materials and craftsmanship. The character of permanent buildings, placed in a walkable planned complex that is near the city center is the product of industrial intangible heritage and that aspect of the industrial patrimony should be identified and preserved in the U.S.

The intangible characteristics of a historically industrial place cannot be separated from the industrial artifact. More importantly, the primary premise for the creation of the industrial district should not be ignored. After all, these places were created to create something, industrially manufactured goods. As manufacturing practices, the intangible heritage can be re-introduced, either more directly, as can be the case in the U.K., or more tangentially, as a character defining element to the historic industrial environment, as is the case in the renovated post-industrial landscapes in the U.S. The intangible industrial heritage is an asset for urban regeneration. It should not be discarded. Planners, heritage managers, occupants, and users in urban regeneration should understand it and utilize it.
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