From eco-museum to new challenges of the industrial cultural landscape in covid-19 aftermath.

Humberto Morales Moreno*
Instituto de Ciencias de Gobierno y Desarrollo Estratégico
ICGDE/Universidad Autónoma de Puebla
México
Member of TICCIH
CMCPI AC
Mayo 2020
- Head of the mobility program:
  Master
  TPTI/Sorbonne/Padue/Evora/BUAP
  NETWORK: INCUNA

FOREWORD.

The eco-museum was introduced in France in 1971, when the Minister of the Environment asked Hughes Varine, his adviser, and of course with the help of G. H. de la Riviere, to build an appropriate concept during the 9th ICOM assembly on what was being done in France. Emphasis was placed on the new wave around a new museum project, which was inaugurated in Burgundy (eastern France). A group of people worked with radical and innovative ideas around the cities of Le Creusot and Montceau-les-Mines, places affected by coal mines and the steel industry crisis. The local population of the mining villages, with the support of museum professionals, recovered several abandoned industrial spaces. The Eco-museum of Creusot-Montceau-les-Mines had the rather innovative idea of using the landscape as a living museum, in the context of Europe. At the same time, in the Americas, we find in the last two decades extraordinary ecomuseums of the twentieth century, such as the Historical National Park of Lowell, United States, which provides a museum of a cotton textile city.

EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE.

The first generation of industrial museums outside the object/visitor tradition began in northern Europe, Scandinavian countries with territorial museums "outdoors" (Skasen in Sweden) and in France, where so-called ecomuseums constituted the
second generation, they made part of recession museums, combining industry, culture and nature with territory management programs, including the active participation of people as guardians of their local identity. In Germany, in the Ruhr region, in connection with the environment and the recovery of industrial historical heritage, there is the Zollverein, Duisburg and Gelsenkirchen mines, which are icons of the conservation of the industrial heritage and transformation of a cultural landscape. In Spain, a very recent foundation carried out works for the management of the rehabilitation and recovery of the heritage resources and mining industrial park in Huelva, in Rio Tinto, undoubtedly an essential example of the heritage history of mining, but also an instructive example of the new concepts of industrial museums. Parks, museums and natural ecomuseums have evolved from isolated witnesses, which only preserved chimneys, to functional containers partially treated as industrial heritage of nature, a true political mediation of cultural heritage. The trend has led to the recent concept of heritage parks. Heritage park is a complex entity that proposes to cross the will for economic development, social interests and areas of conservation and deterioration of the environment clearly. These projects are developed in areas, regions or large geographical corridors.

The heritage park (Schuster, Sabaté, Alvarez) can be considered as a "project that tries to unite the cultural resources for the management of the territories with the correct management of these resources."

**THE MEXICAN EXPERIENCE.**

The history of industrial heritage museums in Mexico has begun from the project of the Autonomous University of Puebla, under the direction of Professor Samuel Malpica, in 1982-1984, with the creation of the eco-museum of Metepec in southwestern Puebla state (central plateau of Mexico). A real project of the development of a worker’s village that, due to the Mexican recession (1976-1984), was in too precarious conditions after the failure of the worker’s union administration which closed definitively in 1967.
Metepec was one of the largest textile industrial sites of the Porfirio period, (1880-1910), that is, of the first wave of Mexican industrialization. Today the site is a popular public tourist center with a spa and family recreation areas around the old factory buildings, employees' homes and a small workers' museum where the historical documentation and archive center of the Atlixco SA Industrial Company, which operated the plant during the years 1902-1940 approximately, and the Metepec working community remains today, from the 1940s until the closure in 1967, but without any interpretation center. It was the first model of eco-museum, but the inhabitants of the hamlet were modifying their homes without public supports and the original idea never managed to fully consolidate. At least we have but the small worker’s museum and this is a key testimony of regional identity.

The second project is the mining museum of Real del Monte y Pachuca, which manages four museums: the mining museum with the historical archives of the Real del Monte Company and Pachuca; the Acosta mine as the first mining museum with a documentation center project; La Dificultad is a mining landscape that shows very well the transition between steam and electricity, with a small interpretation center; the Cultural Center "Nicolás Zavala" remains the first museum of labor medicine for mining workers since 1907. All the mining sites of Real del Monte are a transition between the traditional eco-museum and the heritage park. It is a traditional mix of objects/visitors with village participation and an ongoing dialogue with nature.

The third case is the old textile museum in Bellavista, located not far from the city of Tepic, Nayarit, on the west coast of the country. The textile factory was declared a historical monument by the INAH in 1984 (it was founded in 1841 with a very strong Belgian influence in its construction) and with a site museum and a small historical archive and documental center that preserved the memory of the intangible world of work (Mexico's first workers' union and first record of a women's factory strike in 1905). Unfortunately, like many local projects in Mexico, the lack of support and management of industrial zones, over time trivialized heritage spaces for trade or
the development of tourism without any museology as reference. Today, there is a project, led by the State of Nayarit, to build a Cultural and Arts Center in order to preserve it as a heritage, but apparently more than a thematic park.

The fourth case is la Constancia Mexicana heritage park project. A memory landscape of the first mechanized textile mill in Latin America founded in 1835 with a small factory village under the influence of the utopian projects of Catalan, French and Belgian origins of the first half of the nineteenth century. All this by the hand of a farmer with a strong pragmatic and utilitarian affiliation, Mr. Esteban de Antuñano, who proposed a style of Republic of Industry under the strong influence of the Sansimonian society. Since that date, the industrial zone of La Constancia Mexicana has developed as a textile industrial city between 1835-1991. The workers' union that has run it since 1972 has decided to close its doors, and the property experienced a process of neglect and deterioration. After 20 years of abandonment, thanks to coordinated work between academia, civil society, business and government, the former textile factory has regained historical splendor through an ambitious execution project, whose common denominator is music, art and history. The new utopia with the industrial remains of the old factory led to the birth of a pioneering cultural complex in Mexico with four museums. The Vienna House of Music in Puebla. The second wave of museums is formed with the opening of the Casa de Títeres de México, and the Children's Museum, towards the end of 2015. As of 2016, the reuse was complemented by the creation of the Mexican Music House and the launch of an unprecedented rescue operation of the green areas surrounding the magnificent cultural center. However, the creation of the textile industry museum was not achieved. An interpretation centre is urgent to value human, technical and machinery procedures.

In this sense, in addition to the meticulous process of architectural and archaeological recovery, the inspection in situ has mainly targeted four areas that together define the historically industrial site and guarantee the preservation of their testimony in the perspective of a heritage park with the participation of the
community of former workers and their families in a permanent dialogue with the new proposal, where management seems assured by the cultural impact and tourism generated without trivializing the four axes of identity:

a) Areas of productive activities
b) Areas of the reconstruction of social life
c) Furniture
d) Footprints of the world of work

But these stages will be threatened if, in today's times, a project to bring the community of former workers and their families closer together with heritage icons inside the site, regardless of current uses, is not reinforced. The current pandemic covid-19 forces us to prepare audiovisual and digital media in 3D format to bring the iconic spaces of the industrial past closer to potential consumers inside and outside this cultural landscape. Seminars and comments by digital networks on the history and current affairs of the world of labor and what it meant the deindustrialization of the traditional manufacturing sector in Mexico is a must in the current contingency that forces us to look again at the importance of the production of local wealth in the labor hands.

Betting on the creation of Documentation Centers in heritage interventions in the cultural landscape of the industry will allow the dissemination of knowledge of industrial heritage as a set of cultural assets whose conservation is not only reduced to machines and tools. It should include the social and economic history of an era. The anthropology of the landscape and the architecture that reflects the outside language of the reference site. In times of covid-19 the industrial heritage must be intelligible in the eyes of the population and it is necessary to express it in all its technical and social dimension.
The fifth case deals with the cultural landscape of the old *Necaxa* hydroelectric plant, a town of indigenous origin nestled in the northern mountains of the State of Puebla. Considered the largest hydroelectric plant in Latin America, in 1907, *Necaxa* left a legacy that is not only recognized by the industrial landscape partially in operation to this day. *Necaxa* left a cultural landscape of a faithful and proud population actually as a guardian with her Electrician Labor Union (founded in 1915) of Indomestiza traditions linked to the electricity industry with a melting pot of American, European and local influences that coexist in living names, architectures and traditions. In times of contingency *Necaxa* is a good example of a combination of advanced museum strategies to bring the community closer to the global world not only as industrial tourism but as a permanent source of identity in a unique cultural landscape in America.

**COMMUNAL MUSEUMS TRADITION FACING COVID-19.**

In Mexico, community museums are a particular form of eco-museums. Since 1994, several projects have been made to create such identity museums:

« The community museum is an instrument of the organized action of communities, indigenous peoples and mestiza people in villages, seeking to manage their cultural heritage by themselves to value the past and build their own future. A community museum is a space where community members build a collective self-knowledge, fostering reflection, criticism and creativity. It strengthens identity, because it legitimizes one's own history and values, projecting the community's way of life inwards and outwards. It strengthens the memory that fuels their aims for the future. 

»¹

In America, Mexico is the country with the largest number of community museums, with more than 200 communities supporting a stronger cultural identity heritage than that of the state (patrimonial) museum landscape. The anthropologist Raúl Méndez

Lugo is a pioneer responsible for this type of museums starting in Nayarit: Eco-museum, Territory and Community.

This community tradition in search of a territorial identity can influence the debate of industrial heritage sites facing the disjunction between preserving an identity landscape or betting on a government-driven heritage project.

Until now, industrial museums remain traditional as the object/visitor relationship remains rigid without obvious dialogue between inhabitants/activity. Trends of amorphous tourism and thematic parks predominate without reference frameworks on site. The Fundidora de Monterrey project shows very well these kinds of trends that can be reversible in the future with a good management project in order to bring communities and visitors closer thanks to the support of the digital records that covid-19 forces to use at our disposal. Together at distance becomes the key slogan to relaunch the cultural landscapes of the industry and its sustainable reuse.

CONCLUSIONS.
The Mexican experience of eco-museums and the new heritage parks of industrial sites must improve their tasks in the near future to spread their influence in four key areas of resilience and integration:

Conservation/reuse
Disclosure/learning
Research / Documentation
Digital communication/propagation of knowledge and identities.
References.


García López, Isaura Cecilia y Humberto Morales Moreno (coordinadores), Miradas antropológicas, históricas, arquitectónicas y museográficas del Patrimonio Industrial y Cultural de México y América Latina, FFLY/BUAP, México, 2017, 154 págs


Morales Moreno, Luis Gerardo, Orígenes de la museología mexicana, México, Universidad Iberoamericana. 1994.


Términos de referencia para elaborar el proyecto ejecutivo museológico y museográfico del Museo Histórico de la Industria Textil La Constancia Mexicana. Consejo Estatal para la Cultura y Las Artes. Gobierno del Estado de Puebla. 2009.