

## CHALLENGES IN DEVELOPING A MANAGEMENT APPROACH TO INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE SITES

### Unity of time, and the temptation to try to recapture the ‘Meiji moment’.

Unlike some other heritage places, the value of industrial sites may not be based on their representing any one point of time.

Many industrial sites reflect the evolution of industrial processes and operations over a period of time, with changes and alterations adding new components, or taking away old components.

Taking an industrial site back to one earlier point in time is generally not the objective of its conservation, and as the *Nizhny Tagil Charter for the Industrial Heritage* (TICCIH 2003) says, ‘reconstruction or returning to a previous known state should be considered an exceptional intervention’.

Trying to either reconstruct a site as it is thought to have been in the Meiji, or removing later components of a place, is not supported by international guidelines. The *Venice Charter* (Article 11) says:

**‘The valid contributions of all periods to the building of a monument [or site] must be respected, since unity of style is not the aim of a restoration.** When a building [or site] includes the superimposed work of different periods, the revealing of the underlying state can only be justified in exceptional circumstances and when what is removed is of little interest and the material brought to light is of great historical, archaeological or aesthetic values, and its state of preservation good enough to justify the action. Evaluation of the importance of the elements involved and the decision as to what may be destroyed cannot rest solely on the individual in charge of the work.’

An example in the Japanese nomination Mitsubishi Shipyards at Nagasaki, where the nominated components are part of an evolved operating shipyard. The dry dock, pattern shop (now the Museum) and the crane have all undergone modification over more than a hundred year period to enable them to fulfil their industrial and company purposes. Trying to revert to a Meiji era form would be ahistorical, would be conjectural to some degree, and would confuse the heritage values of the place.

### Reconstructing ruins

Ruins and incomplete structures can tell their own history. In industrial sites the reconstruction of incomplete remains very often involves conjecture about what the original site was really like, and the *Venice Charter* (Article 9) says very clearly that:

**restoration ‘must stop at the point where conjecture begins, and in this case moreover any extra work which is indispensable must be distinct from the architectural composition and must bear a contemporary stamp.’**

The interpretation of what constitutes the appropriate ‘contemporary stamp’ is controversial, but the main thrust of the charter is clear – don’t reconstruct on the basis of conjecture.

The *Nizhny Tagil Charter for the Industrial Heritage* says:

**5.VII. Reconstruction, or returning to a previous known state, should be considered an exceptional intervention and one which is only appropriate if it benefits the integrity of the whole site, or in the case of the destruction of a major site by violence.**

*Venice Charter* (Article 15) says that in the case of excavated ruins;

‘Ruins must be maintained and measures necessary for the permanent conservation and protection of architectural features and of objects discovered must be taken. ... **All reconstruction would should however be ruled out a priori. ...**’

Only anastylosis, the re-erection of complete collapsed elements, is allowed, and even this has become controversial since the Venice Charter was written.

An example in the Japanese nomination would be the reverberatory furnace at Shuseikan at Kagoshima. Only the foundations survive, and to attempt to reconstruct the furnace would be based very largely on conjecture, would probably destroy or bury the original fabric of the historical era, and would distort the heritage values of the place.

### **Aesthetic preservation vs industrial character and authentic setting**

Industrial sites are seldom beautiful. Some are imposing because of their scale or the sculptural nature of their elements, but they are very seldom built for aesthetic effect. Therefore aesthetic judgements should not guide their conservation.

Industrial sites however often have a character within their setting that reflects their industrial origins. This can include operational or abandoned equipment, rail lines, ash, coal or waste emplacements, and often a rather barren landscape. This setting is often not aesthetically pleasing, but it can be a powerful tool in understanding the industrial site, and often deserves to be conserved.

It is very often not appropriate to try to beautify industrial sites, and the replacement of traditional settings with manicured parklands and urban recreational landscapes is very seldom appropriate, and detracts from the appreciation of the heritage significance of the industrial site.

The *Venice Charter* (Article 7, in another context) states that:

**‘A monument is inseparable from the history to which it bears witness and from the setting in which it occurs.’**

And (Article 6), states in part that:

**‘...Wherever the traditional setting exists, it must be kept.’**

This is echoed in the *Nizhny Tagil Charter* (2 III):

These values are intrinsic to the site itself, its fabric, components, machinery **and setting, in the industrial landscape**, in written documentation, and also in the intangible records of industry contained in human memories and customs.

This concept is also echoed in the *Joint ICOMOS-TICCIH Principles for the conservation of industrial heritage, sites, structures, areas and landscapes*, draft of 8 October 2010, article 2.

Industrial sites are also often dirty buildings, and in some cases the accumulation of smoke and oil stains, abrasion marks and grime, tell as much about the industrial process as does the machinery itself. Cleaning up industrial buildings and machinery should be considered a very significant decision, and one not taken lightly, as irreplaceable evidence of the past might be lost.

Public safety might be a consideration in some rare cases, but there are many ways to make a site safe and avoid public contact with oil and grime without having to remove it all together.

An example in the Japanese nomination would be the Manda Pit of the Miike mines at Omuta. The mine headframe, winder building, fan house and other support buildings survive in an industrial setting that makes sense of the buildings and the spaces between them. To some extent the industrial landscape allows the experience of the workers at the site to be understood. To remove the railway remains, mining equipment, and bare open spaces, and introduce instead a modern municipal park landscape, would destroy the industrial context of the place, and reduce the buildings to being just exhibits in a sterile modern garden.

### **Levels of intervention**

The commonly adopted principle for conservation work is to do as much as is necessary to conserve the place, but as little as is possible. The *Venice Charter* indicates intervention must stop at the point where conjecture begins.

The *Nizhny Tagil Charter* (4 III) indicates that:

**The most important sites should be fully protected and no interventions allowed that compromise their historical integrity or the authenticity of their fabric.** Sympathetic adaptation and re-use may be an appropriate and a cost-effective way of ensuring the survival of industrial buildings, and should be encouraged by appropriate legal controls, technical advice, tax incentives and grants.

A key aim of the conservation of industrial sites is to retain as much of the evidence of the use of the place at the place. The *Nizhny Tagil Charter* (5.I) indicates that:

**Conservation of the industrial heritage depends on preserving functional integrity, and interventions to an industrial site should therefore aim to maintain this as far as possible. The value and authenticity of an industrial site may be greatly reduced if machinery or components are removed, or if subsidiary elements which form part of a whole site are destroyed.**

This also means that components of industrial places should not be moved to other places, as museum items or exhibits, or destroyed to ‘clean up’ a site. The *Nizhny Tagil Charter* (5.III):

**Preservation in situ should always be given priority consideration.** Dismantling and relocating a building or structure are only acceptable when the destruction of the site is required by overwhelming economic or social needs.

The *Joint ICOMOS-TICCIH Principles for the conservation of industrial heritage, sites, structures, areas and landscapes* also states (9):

Protection measures should apply to buildings and their contents since completeness or functional integrity is especially important to the significance of industrial heritage structures and sites. **Their heritage value may be greatly jeopardized or reduced if machinery or other significant components are removed, or if subsidiary elements which form part of a whole site are destroyed.**

An example in the Japanese nomination would be the Customs House at Miike Port. Much of the original fabric of the customs house survives intact, and other parts have been simply moved to new locations within the building. This building could be conserved without requiring its demolition and reconstruction, and in the process most of its original fabric could be retained to tell an authentic story of its history and use. Only as much intervention should take place as is required to ensure the stability of the structure, and its ability to withstand its new use.

### **Continued industrial use**

Some sites with industrial heritage significance are still in industrial use.

The *Venice Charter* (Article 5) states that:

**‘The conservation of monuments is always facilitated by making use of them for some socially useful purpose.’**

The *Nizhny Tagil Charter* (4 II) indicates that:

Programmes for the conservation of the industrial heritage should be integrated into policies for economic development and into regional and national planning.

And 5.V states:

Continuing to adapt and use industrial buildings avoids wasting energy and contributes to sustainable development. Industrial heritage can have an important role in the economic regeneration of decayed or declining areas. The continuity that re-use implies may provide psychological stability for communities facing the sudden end a long-standing sources of employment.

The *Joint ICOMOS-TICCIH Principles for the conservation of industrial heritage, sites, structures, areas and landscapes* also states (8):

**In the case of active industrial structures or sites of heritage significance, it must be recognized that their continued use and function might carry some of their heritage significance and provide adequate conditions for their physical and economic sustainability as a living production or extraction facilities.** Their specific technical characteristics and features need to be respected while implementing contemporary regulations such as building codes, environmental requirements or risk reduction strategies to address hazards of natural or human origin.

And (10):

**Appropriate original or alternative and adaptive use is the most frequent way and often the most sustainable way of ensuring the conservation of industrial heritage sites or structures.** ... Building codes, risk mitigation requirements, environmental or industrial regulations, and other standards should be implemented in an adapted way to take heritage dimensions into account when they are enforced through physical interventions.

An example from the Japanese nomination would be at Yawata Steelworks. The continued use of the repair workshop for industrial uses that do not endanger its historic fabric would maintain the historically traditional use of the building. Similarly, the continued use of the pumping station at Onga River is a much more appropriate continuing use than converting the place to a new use. In both cases the traditional use has precedence over tourist-oriented uses—World Heritage listing is first and foremost about conserving WH values, not providing tourist attractions.

## Proper documentation and discussion of conservation proposals

Current international best practice suggests that proposals for the conservation of places of heritage significance should be based on the inputs of relevant expert advice, and should be documented and widely discussed before action is taken.

The *Nizhny Tagil Charter* (3 VIII) indicates that:

The value of significant sites should be defined and guidelines for future interventions established. Any legal, administrative and financial measures that are necessary to maintain their value should be put in place.

Proper documentation and discussion reduces the chance of poor decision making, and a documented conservation plan should provide clear evidence of what exists at a place before works start, what evidence is used to establish the heritage values of the place, and what the proposed works are to conserve those values. The conservation plan also shows future managers what has been done to a place and why. The World Heritage Operational Guidelines require adequate documentation of conservation proposals and actions.

Heritage decisions based on un-documented verbal conversations is not a supportable basis for conservation planning.