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# İçindekiler

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# THE INDUSTRIAL-RURAL LANDSCAPE IN FRANCE: BETWEEN DISCREET LEGACIES, SMALL-SCALE HERITAGE AND TRIVIALISATION

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## Introduction

A search carried out in August 2023 using the expression "industrial landscape" in the "images" category of the Google internet search engine (Fig. 1) yielded a result dominated by images of tubular factories, i.e. factories with visible structures (pipes for example) and machine-buildings, such as blast furnaces. A few multi-storey block factories and larger landscapes with workers' houses do appear, but always in an urban setting.
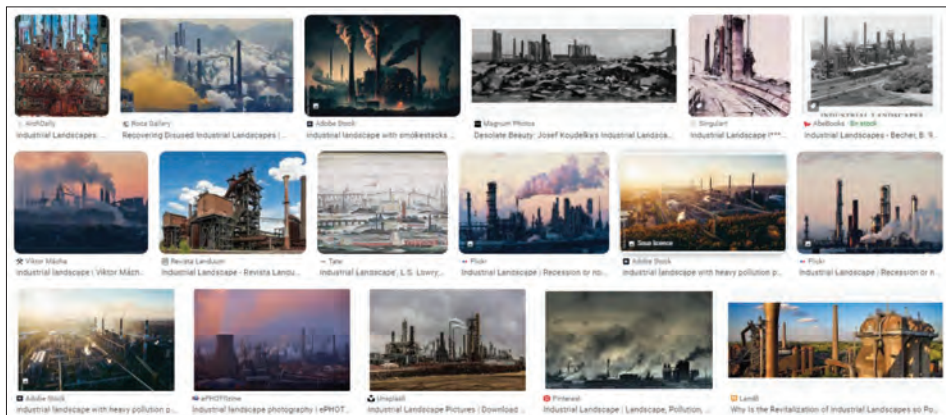


Figure 1. The industrial landscape as seen through a Google Images search in August 2023.

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This type of research makes it possible to identify the dominant representations associated with the term "industrial landscape", primarily encapsulated as a technoscape (Okada, 2005). This term refers to landscapes characterized by machines, tools and industrial buildings, all linked to the technology used in industrial processes. This dominance of technology in the contemporary conceptualization of the industrial landscape originates from the markedly quantitative (i.e. production-related) approaches to the study of industry during its economic heyday in the West. This technological dominance persisted through the industrial decline at the end of the 20th century and its integration into the domain of heritage. Notably, the initial focus of work in this domain was directed towards tools, machines and production sites (mainly factories and industrial sites) rather than encompassing the comprehensive industrial and paternalistic systems reflected in the landscapes (Besancenot *et al.*, 2008; Edelblutte, 2010).

Therefore, the industrial landscape extends beyond the confines of factories, particularly those characterized by tubular structures, and it is not exclusively tethered to the cities. Industrial landscapes are infinitely more varied than just urban technoscapes. While the latter are indeed emblematic, industrial activity over the last three centuries has not only built up a large number of elements ancillary to the industrial sites themselves, but has also dispersed its achievements in rural areas and, what's more, built territorial identities around an industrial culture.

Rural areas pose a challenge in terms of definition, a limitation acknowledged in this work and to be addressed in the final section. They are generally viewed as a counterpoint to urban areas, or as an antithesis urban space. The latter is characterised as an area of high density (in terms of people, buildings, jobs and activities) and diversity. Conversely, rural areas are less diverse in terms of activities (agriculture predominates) and less densely occupied. The difficulty lies in establishing specific quantitative thresholds and administrative boundaries to delineate the rural-urban divide while considering the tangible aspects of the territory and landscape. In simpler terms, these questions arise: can an area or landscape perceived as rural be accurately classified as such based on quantitative and administrative criteria? Doesn't the presence of factories in a rural landscape already constitute a form of urbanisation?

All too often, industry is perceived as inextricably linked to the city. As early as 1963, F. Carrière and Ph. Pinchemel wrote: *"The city appears to be the preferred location for industrial activity. In return, industry appears to be the essential factor in urban creation and growth"*[2] (p. 103). Industry is thus regarded as a population-intensive activity (Edelblutte, 2023a) which, through the concentration of population that it provokes around factories, generates urban bodies that are more or less imposing and which, in turn, conceals the rural aspect of industrialisation.

As a result, the development and study of these industrial-rural landscapes as legacies and potential heritage is lagging behind on three fronts:

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[2]  « La ville apparaît comme la localisation préférentielle de l'activité industrielle. En retour, l'industrie apparaît comme le facteur essentiel de la création et de la croissance urbaines ».

- The concept of landscape, initially a pictorial genre, remains intertwined with notions of beauty, a highly subjective criterion that rarely accommodates industrial activity, even in the 21st century. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, industrial landscapes were seen as *"non-landscapes"* or *"ransacked landscapes"*3 (Deshaies, 2005, p. 41) compared with the dominant agri-rural landscapes. Subsequently, in the second half of the twentieth century, the industrial crisis and the emergence of wastelands, initially perceived as warts to be cleaned, hindered the acceptance of the notion of industrial landscape. Consequently, the exploration of industrial landscapes as a subject of study in general encountered delays, and for an extended period, it was not even recognized as constituting a distinct category of landscape.

- The recognition of industry as a legacy worthy of heritage status has been slow to materialize. Although the notion of heritage has broadened considerably over the 20th and 21st centuries, it has long ignored whole swathes of the legacy of human activity, particularly that of industry. The reasons for this are well known, including the societal impact (challenging working conditions), environmental concerns (pollution, nuisance) and the sorrowful aftermath (Grossetti et al., 1998) accompanying the industrial collapse, which resulted in extensive destruction. This delayed acceptance that industry can constitute a heritage has undoubtedly had an impact on the treatment of industrial-rural legacies and, therefore, landscapes.

- Finally, as mentioned above, industry is more often studied in relation to the city. Conversely, the rural area is rarely linked to industry, so a significant portion of it is neglected in favour of the development and study of other activities, particularly agriculture and tourism. This threefold delay will be analysed in the following sections, following a review of the methods used for this research and the overview of the work already carried out on these subjects.

## Purpose and Method

This work is based on two questions:

- Has industrial activity given rise to specific territories and landscapes in rural areas compared to those established in urban areas?

- Are these industrial-rural landscapes duly acknowledged, enhanced and integrated into a heritage approach in the face of strong competition from factors such as the environment, agriculture, and villages?

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3    « *non-paysages* » ou « paysages saccagées ».

To address these questions, we will use a landscape-based and a geohistorical approach, integrating a study of territories through their landscapes over an extended period. In this paper, landscape therefore serves as both an object of study, particularly when it is industrial, and a method for approaching territories as societal products. Utilizing landscape for studying a territory offers several advantages, some of which can be seen in Figure 2.

- The landscape offers the advantage of allowing the observation and analysis of an entire industrial production system, encompassing a functional and coherent organisation. This is particularly crucial when examining industrial activities that gave rise to paternalistic systems, a characteristic feature prevalent until the mid-20th century. In other words, these systems comprise not only industrial sites, including the factory and its immediate annexes, but also productive annexes such as railways, dams, canals, slag heaps, etc. and non-productive annexes such as workers' houses, economic and social buildings, etc. All of these components can be easily identified as they are anchored in the territory and have modified the landscape.

- The landscape also serves as a palimpsest of history (Chevallier, 1976) or *"a kind of memory in which the history of man's successive aims on Earth is recorded and totalled"4* (Béguin, 1995, p. 50). A palimpsest refers to a document from antiquity where writings were scratched out, erased and subsequently covered with religious writings in the Middle Ages. However, the original writings can now be found beneath more recent ones. In a similar vein, the landscape can be likened to a palimpsest, because in today's landscape, the traces of the past (ranging from the oldest, with the relief, to the most recent) are evident underneath the existing, functional facilities and elements. For example, a factory can be demolished when it is no longer operational and something new can be constructed in its place, yet remnants of the industrial history will always persist (such as old workers' houses, access roads, perimeter walls, and various small elements incorporated into the new development, etc.). Above and beyond this palimpsest characteristic, the landscape also assumes a mosaic quality, because if the past element is preserved, whether voluntarily through heritage status or involuntarily through abandonment leading to it becoming wasteland, it continues to coexist visibly alongside more recent and functional elements. Thus, there is both juxtaposition and superimposition of past and present elements evident in the landscape. It becomes the geographer's responsibility to *"reconstruct the history of the slow and complex secretion that gave rise to this geographical personality that cannot be found anywhere else"5* (Humbert, 1996, p. 7).

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4   *« une sorte de mémoire où s'enregistre et se totalise l'histoire des visées successives de l'homme sur la terre »*
5   *« reconstituer l'histoire de la lente et complexe sécrétion qui a donné naissance à cette personnalité géographique que l'on ne saurait retrouver nulle part ailleurs ».*
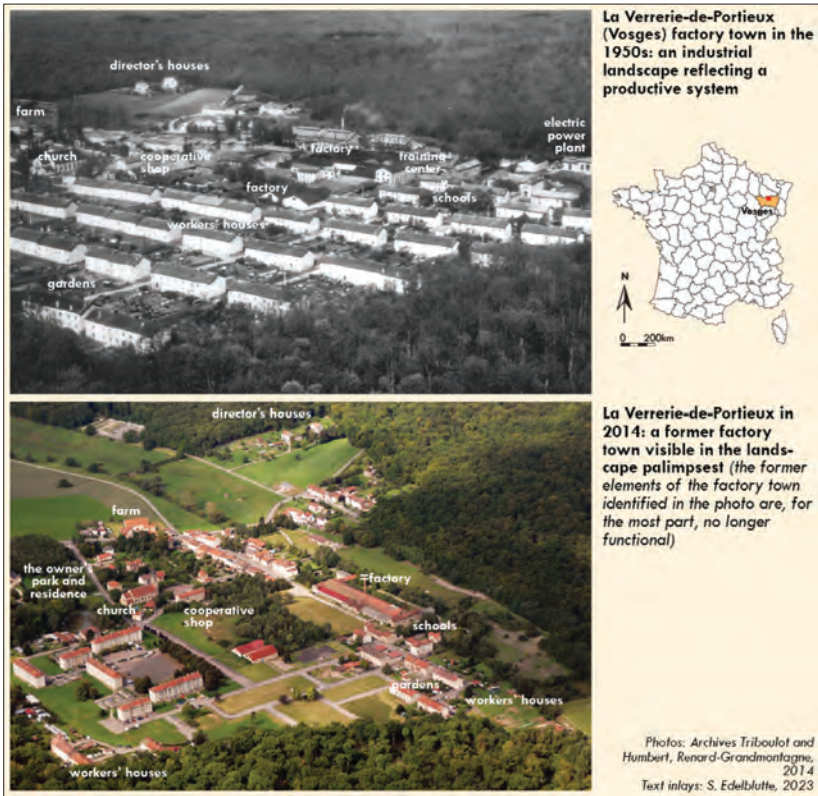
Figure 2. The landscape as a reflection of a system and as a palimpsest in La Verrerie-de-Portieux, Vosges.

- Lastly, using a landscape approach allows us to touch on the cultural domain through representations and identities. Indeed, *"Landscape is the expression observable to the senses, on the surface of the Earth, of the combination of nature, technology and human culture"6* (Pitte, 1983, re-edited 2001, p. 19). The landscape is therefore not only a combination of visible material elements (natural and man-made), but also a social and cultural construct. The way it is perceived by individuals, and by society as a whole, is constantly evolving. It bears symbols that are visible to all and to which we are attached. So, according to A. Berque (1995), landscape is both imprint and matrix. This signifies that it reflects a territory constructed by societies, yet it also influences these societies, which become attached to it and recognise themselves within its contours.

These methods will be used to study industrial-rural landscapes and their potential heritage in France.

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6   « Le paysage est l'expression observable par les sens, à la surface de la Terre, de la combinaison entre la nature, les techniques et la culture des Hommes ».

# Literature Review

This section addresses the connection between industry and three pivotal concepts in the field of geography: rural areas, landscape and heritage.

## Industry and Rural Areas

Geographers, along with urban planners, architects and territorial planners, specialize in the study of territory. As such, they manifested a very early interest in the evolution of industry, but mainly from an economic point of view and on a national scale. They associated industry with power in the geopolitical context of political and economic competition between the major powers during the Cold War. In 1978, P. George spoke of *"the importance of industrial development in geographically defining a given area (state or region)"7* (p. 92). Throughout the twentieth century, this led to a global hierarchy based on industrialisation. For example, the G7, established in 1975, initially united the seven so-called "most industrialised" countries in a world where power and wealth were intertwined with industrial development. From the Cold War until the 1990s, economic geography evolved *"in a context overdetermined by the dominant theories of economics"8* (Vandermotten & Marissal, 2004, p. 24).

From this perspective of power, studies on industrial territories have focused on large-scale industry, stemming from the second Industrial Revolution (late 19th / early 20th centuries) and associated with Fordism and paternalism. This large-scale industry is essentially urban in two ways. It was either connected to an existing town that supplied labour, thereby giving rise to an industrial suburb adjacent to the town at the time (Barbier, 2023). Alternatively, it gave rise to factory towns (Edelblutte, 2020) established near sources of raw materials or energy where, in a pragmatic and paternalistic logic, the factory was quickly surrounded by workers' houses and economic and social buildings to cater to the workforce (crèches, schools, bathhouses, cooperatives, various shops, etc.). Initially, this leads to the formation of a factory village and, with demographic growth, the proliferation of services and the increasing appeal of the industrial-urban agglomeration results in the establishment of a factory town. While the latter may lack some characteristics of a fully-fledged town, particularly in terms of polarisation and cultural, social and economic allure, it nonetheless marks a departure from the rural environment. Nevertheless, numerous factory villages (or workers' villages, according to G. Dorel-Ferré, 2016) maintain their rural character in terms of their population, their very incomplete nature and/ or their remoteness. Their landscape will be addressed in part 4. Factory towns, the industrial-urban concentrations emblematic of the industrial revolutions, represent the epitome of the modern world and, as such, have consequently been extensively studied. This, however, has overshadowed the concurrent existence of industry in rural areas and its contribution to their development.

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7    *« l'importance du développement industriel pour définir géographiquement un espace donné (État ou région) ».*
8    *« dans un contexte surdéterminé par les théories dominantes de l'économie ».*

Indeed, rural areas serve as the ideal breeding ground for proto-industry. Proto-industry is defined as activities that, for architectural reasons (specific types of buildings), technical factors (utilization of basic machines) or social considerations (a more hierarchical organisation of work), no longer fall under the domain of the craft industry, but have not yet fully transitioned into the realm of industry (involving rare machines, know-how that is still essential, rare large buildings, etc.). Although not entirely absent from the city (the *Canuts*, silk workers in Lyon, for example), proto-industry flourished mainly in rural areas, manifesting in three dominant forms:

- Home-based work was carried out by peasant-workers who, in the cold season, engaged in activities such as textile work. In response to lucrative demand, particularly in the off-season, a process of specialization ensued, transforming the peasant-worker into a worker-peasant, for whom industrial work eventually took precedence over agricultural work.

- The second form of proto-industrial settlement, prevalent in rural areas, is the mill—a small structure situated along the banks of a river, stabilised over time by a weir or dam, a gate and a water supply canal. The mill, being small-scale and employing a limited number of individuals, qualifies as proto-industrial due to its utilization of one or more machines. Flour mills, plaster mills, fulling mills, wood mills, forges, and similar establishments are ubiquitous in the rural landscape, serving as indications of an almost universal presence of proto-industrial activities.

- Simultaneously, since the 17th century, *manufactures* have emerged, large establishments set up by the royal power to produce high quality products (luxury or rare items) for export. While not yet factories due to their limited mechanisation and absence of mass production or assembly-line work, these manufactures employed a significant workforce (several dozen and sometimes more than 100 employees), placing them as intermediaries between crafts and industry. These establishments were predominantly situated in rural areas, for obvious reasons of space and access to raw materials and energy. For example, the Royal Saltworks of Arc-et-Senans (Doubs) was strategically located not far from the salt deposit at Salins-les-Bains but, more importantly, in close proximity to the vast Chaux Forest, which provided the wood essential for heating the stoves used in the salt harvesting process through evaporation.

Based on the proto-industrial background discussed earlier, industry evolved in the rural landscape in the form of factory villages and, on a broader scale, industrial districts. The demographic peak in the French countryside during the 18th and early 19th centuries prompted a quest for local activities to supplement agriculture before the industrial revolutions generated employment and absorbed the surplus rural population. As a result, industrial enterprises emerged and flourished, gradually transitioning from traditional craft methods to industrial techniques within a confined area (a part of a *département*, a mountain valley, etc.), within villages, and engaged in similar or even identical industries. These small and medium-sized

businesses were in perpetual competition with each other, fostering flexibility, innovation, and responsiveness. Embracing a form of light paternalism, these enterprises maintained their modest scale, situating themselves in villages and regions where the inhabitants, influenced by cultural reasons such as religious beliefs, were disinclined to migrate to urban centers or factory towns, especially in the second half of the 19th century when they flourished.

The configuration of industry known as the industrial district, characterized by its diffuse and rural nature, was articulated by the economist A. Marshall (1898) at the end of the 19th century. While it can develop in pre-existing urban centers, it predominantly thrives in rural areas, given that the French population remained largely rural until the 1930s. Noteworthy district examples in France include the Choletais (specializing in clothing and footwear) in Maine-et-Loire *département*, the Arve Valley (known for screw-cutting) in Haute-Savoie *département*, the Jura Mountain (renowned for watchmaking) and Vimeu in Somme *département* (recognized for its taps and locksmiths, and, more broadly, small-scale metallurgy). As of 2023, Vimeu still hosts 250 companies with 9,000 employees, operating in a rural area the size of a dozen communes.

This type of industrial-rural configuration has often withstood the transition from Fordism to the new economy better, at least initially. These enterprises, less burdened by paternalism compared to traditional industries, exhibit better integration into the local economy and territory that have fostered their existence over an extended period. Forming a network of innovative, dynamic, flexible and adaptable businesses, these districts specialize in branches that are less competitive than traditional industries. The "rediscovery" of such districts at the end of the Thirty Glorious Years is credited to the Italian economist G. Becattini (1992), who drew inspiration from success of districts in central Italy (Tuscany, Emilia Romagna, Umbria) amid the crisis of Fordism. This success enriched the concept, at least during the early stages of the crisis. The concepts of diffuse industry (Houssel, 1992) and industrial clusters (Torre & Zimmermann, 2015) in the late 20th and early 21st centuries were, in fact, based on these districts, in which the networking of businesses is integral.

Rural industry, though less studied and highlighted compared to the emblematic factory towns or urban industrial settlements (the caricature of which could be the city of Detroit in the United States), has persistently existed and continues to exist, in more discreet, less visible configurations, with a landscape that has taken a considerable amount of time to be associated with industry.

## Industry and Landscape

Valued during the second industrial revolution as a symbol of modernity and progress, the industrial landscape fascinated both the general public and the art world: the Impressionists painted factories and railway stations, while novels evoked the world of mining and industry, as seen in É. Zola's famous "Germinal". Despite the interest it garnered at the time, this type of landscape has not been thoroughly studied in France, unlike in neighbouring countries. M. Deshaies (2005) illustrates, for example, that German geography has never neglected mining landscapes. Similarly, Anglo-Saxon geography,

and British geography in particular, has also developed this theme. W.G. Hoskins, in his influential book "The Making of the English Landscape" (1955), devotes an entire chapter to the industrial landscapes of his country. In it, he analyses, albeit in a rather negative light, the genesis and evolution of the main types of industrial landscape, adopting an approach that encompasses a range of scales, from the individual factory to the industrial valley. The industrial landscape, often associated with the early heritage status of industry in the United Kingdom, is then addressed more specifically (Trinder, 1982). Finally, more recently, the work by F. Pryor (2011), on the British landscape and not just limited to the English, certainly gives more space to pre-industrial times than to industrial times. Nonetheless, the two final chapters of the book, comprising just over a hundred pages out of its 832, do not neglect the industrial era. In addition, the cover of the first edition features the Angel of the North in Gateshead (Northeast), a metallic monument representing the industrial history of this region of England. However, even among certain British precursors, such as W.G. Hoskins, the industrial landscape is still often maligned, perceived as *"a heritage in the negative, as opposed to a conception of the landscape that is merely pictorial and conventionally picturesque"9* (Borsi, 1975, p. 7).

These landscape approaches to industry, both abroad and in France, all faced challenges during the periods when quantitative and 'productivist' industrial geographies were in full development. Landscape, during this time, was generally considered subjective and unscientific, while industry, due to its measurable and quantifiable nature, readily lent itself to this quantitative approach. Consequently, the landscape was primarily portrayed as a result (most often deplored) of productivism, rather than being considered in relation to potential heritage. However, the extent and brutality of the alterations caused by industry to numerous landscapes, even entire landscapes that it has created, particularly *"from the end of the 19th century onwards, [when] the landscape of industry is constituted or consolidated on an unprecedented scale"10* (Woronoff, 2003, p. 90), could not be completely ignored because, *"the landscape had evolved since the Middle Ages with wise slowness. Suddenly it is transformed, and its entire scale expands [...]. [...]. Industrialisation is a jolt to the landscape, which suddenly becomes gigantic"11* (Pitte, 1983, republished 2001, p. 267). Industrial activity, persisting in various forms and now impacting every part of the world, has thus created a new type of landscape, characterized by rapid changes from genesis to decline within the scale of human history.

Industrial landscape can, therefore, be considered *"as a relevant marker of identity and territorial transformation"12* (Besancenot et al., 2008, p. 55) and as such is of interest to researchers specialising in territories (geographers, urban planners or architects), but its study is ultimately mainly developed by historians (Dorel-Ferré - ed., 2011; Fluck, 2020). In this context, it is often considered as a heritage element or is confused with the territory (Lefort-Prost, 2006).

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9  *"un patrimoine en négatif, par opposition à une conception du paysage arrêtée au simple pictural, au pittoresque conventionnel ».*

10  *« à partir de la fin du XIXème siècle, [où] le paysage d'industrie se constitue ou se consolide à une échelle inédite ».*

11  *« le paysage avait évolué depuis le Moyen Âge avec une sage lenteur. Il se transforme soudain, et c'est toute son échelle qui se dilate. [...]. L'industrialisation est une secousse pour le paysage qui, brusquement, est atteint de gigantisme ».*

12  *« comme un marqueur pertinent de transformation identitaire et territoriale ».*

## Industry and Heritage

For a considerable period, industrial traces and remains were not considered genuine heritage. As early as 1992, F. Choay described industrial sites as *"derisory"13* (p. 181), while J.M. Leniaud (1992), as quoted by V. Veschambre in 2005, asserted that industry is a *"field in which it appears [...] that heritage cannot be taken for granted"14* (p. 511). Moreover, in France, the industrial revolutions were often experienced as traumatic events that destroyed the monumental and urban diversity and richness of previous centuries: the heritage protection movement, officially initiated by the 1913 law on the protection of historic monuments, was specifically constructed in reaction to these destructions attributed to industrialisation.

When it comes to industrial heritage, France lags behind its northern neighbours, particularly the United Kingdom. In this country, industry is associated with the country's Victorian heyday, and industrial heritage has captivated many researchers since the 1950s (Edelblutte, 2009). Preserving industrial heritage *"celebrates the prosperity of the Victorian era, when Britain's lead in industrialisation made it the dominant world power"15* (Andrieux, 1992). The preservation of industrial heritage, therefore, began in the country where large-scale industry was born. It was also in this country that factories were the first to close, sometimes as early as the second industrial revolution, which proved fatal to some of the landlocked sites from the first. Although the Council for British Archaeology officially defined the notion of an "industrial monument" in 1959, there have been examples of conservation since the inter-war years, particularly through private or community initiatives (Andrieux, 1992; Falconer, 2006).

The first works on industrial heritage were often case studies carried out by a number of local societies and associations. This work, frequently linked to the remains of the first industrial revolution, or even proto-industry, was carried out mainly in rural areas, in the form of excavations uncovering the ruins of a building, such as an 18th century blast furnace. The accepted term for this period is industrial archaeology, first coined in the 1950s by M. Rix (Falconer, 2006). Shortly afterwards, K. Hudson, a historian at the University of Bath (Chassagne, 2002; Falconer, 2006), revived the term, publishing a reference work in 1963 titled "Industrial archaeology: an introduction".

More general publications and studies followed, such as those by K. Hudson (1971), R.A. Buchanan (1972), N. Cossons (1975) and K. Falconer (1980), as well as a great many of thematic or regional books and articles. In the 1980s, the inventory and protection movement gained momentum in response to the uncontrolled demolition of buildings (Falconer, 2006), coupled with the establishment of English Heritage in 1984 as part of the National Heritage Act of 1980. Its aim is to study and archive sites, manage certain sites and advise the government on heritage matters. At the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, the United Kingdom's lead in the field of industrial heritage was acknowledged

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[13]  « *dérisoires* ».

[14]  « *domaine dans lequel il apparaît [...] que le patrimoine ne va pas de soi* ».

[15]  « *de* célébrer la prospérité de l'ère victorienne où, grâce à son avance dans l'industrialisation, la Grande-Bretagne était devenue la puissance mondiale dominante ».

with the inclusion of several sites, some on a landscape scale, in the World Heritage List of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

In France, it wasn't until 1980, with the publication by historian M. Daumas of "L'archéologie industrielle en France"16, that the notion of industrial heritage acquired a certain visibility. Although a chapter is devoted to landscape at the beginning of the book, the concept is, in fact, very restrictive. Indeed, apart from a few paragraphs on the integration of the industrial site into the wider environment, the industrial landscape at the time was still limited to the industrial site itself, or even just the factories, and therefore neglected all the indirect elements of the industrial landscape.

Following this work, the main specialists in industrial heritage are primarily historians, and their initial approach focuses more on societies, buildings, and objects than on landscapes (L. Bergeron and G. Dorel-Ferré in 1996, D. Woronoff, P. Fluck already mentioned or N. Stoskopf in 1998 and 2007). More recently, however, M. Gasnier and P. Lamard edited a book in 2007 bringing together a number of papers focusing on case studies in a work entitled "Le patrimoine industriel comme vecteur de reconquête économique"17, which broadens the focus to territories and landscapes. This broadening of the very notion of industrial heritage is chronological (from proto-industrial legacies to contemporary achievements), thematic (from tangible to intangible elements), and spatial (from tools to buildings then to landscapes). It opens up the field to new disciplines, such as territorial studies, and thus enables studies linking landscape to industrial heritage (Preite, 2010; Edelblutte, 2023b and 2023c).

Lastly, some emblematic industrial landscapes are now inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List as living evolving cultural landscapes, such as the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape (United Kingdom, classified in 2000); Nord-Pas-de-Calais Mining Basin (France, 2012); Fray Bentos Industrial Landscape (Uruguay, 2015); the Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales (United Kingdom, 2021); the Roşia Montană Mining Landscape (Romania, 2021); etc. In this category, UNESCO can accept changes to the listed complex because the landscape cannot, unlike a building alone, be totally fixed in an otherwise inhabited and active territory.

Methods and approaches centered on the links between industry, landscape, heritage and the rural world lead to a characterisation of the specific features of industrial-rural landscapes and their enhancement. These are set out in the following section.

## Findings

The approaches and methods described above with regard to the industrial-rural landscape lead to 4 major observations, developed below.

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16    « Industrial Archaeology in France ».
17    ¨Industrial heritage as a vector for economic regeneration".

## The Industrial-Rural Landscape is Characterised by its Chronological Depth, Diversity and Relative Discretion

The three proto-industrial types mentioned above have a mainly discreet impact on the landscape, and more rarely, a spectacular one.

- Home-based work, at the crossroads between craft and industry, leaves very discreet traces. However, its enduring impact manifests in contemporary landscapes, particularly when the activity unfolds in a diminutive workshop adjacent to the primary residence (Fig. 3). This type of production, originating in the era of proto-industry but persisting through the 19th and even the first half of the 20th century, aligns technically and economically more with craftsmanship than industrialization. However, the fact that they are concentrated in specific regions and villages creates a distinctive landscape that identifies them in the rural world as a more distinctly industrial activity.



**Home-based work**
In Béthencourt-sur-Mer, within the modest metalwork (locksmiths and taps) industrial district of Vimeu (Somme), the *boutique*, formerly the locksmith's workroom, is situated in the courtyard just outside the house.

**The mills**
The mill at Rarécourt (Meuse), initially used to grind wheat, and later, shortly before 1870, utilized for crush *coquins*, i.e. phosphate nodules extracted locally to fertilise farmland, closed in 1947 and was converted into a residence.

Photo: S. Edelblutte, 2017, 2023 and 2009
Texts: S. Edelblutte, 2023

**The *manufactures***
The Royal Salt Works of Arc-et-Senans (Doubs) was built in 1779 not far from the salt springs at Salins-les-Bains, and more significantly, in close proximity to the immense Chaux forest, whose wood was essential for heating the salt evaporation stoves. The central building (right) houses the management and is surrounded by the two salt halls, one of which can be seen on the left. Ancillary structures (stables, warehouses, various dwellings, etc.) complete this *manufacture* with its distinctive monumental appearance. Designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1982, the Royal Salt Works stands as a testament to its historical significance.
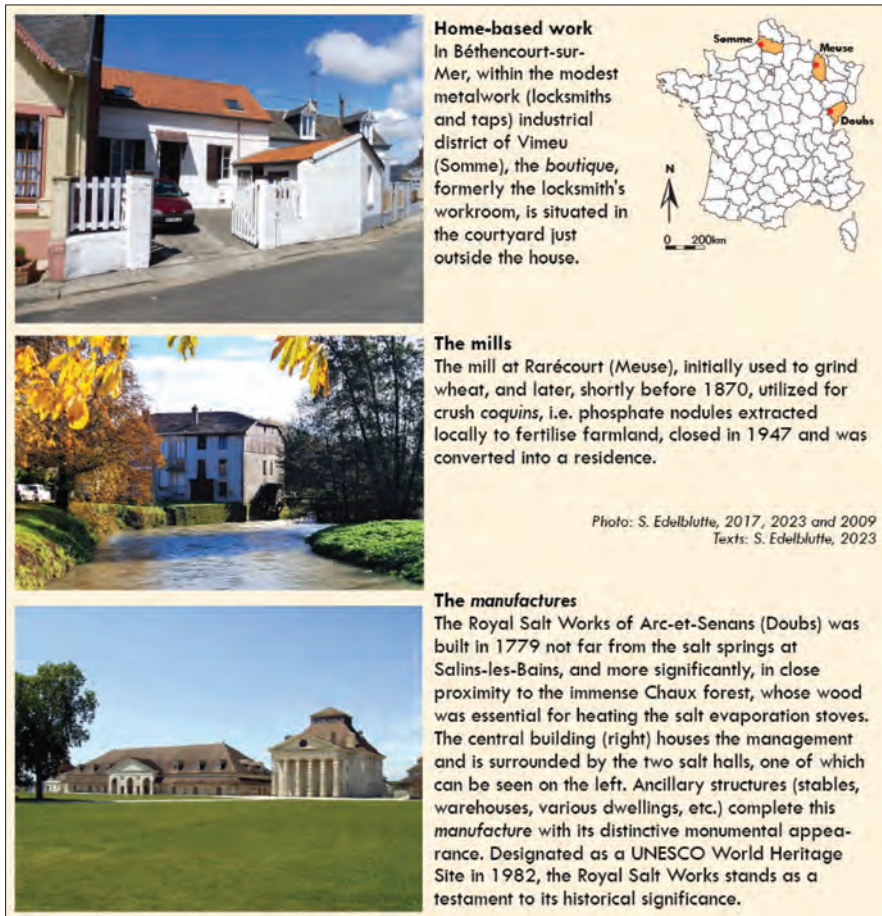
Figure 3. Landscape features of proto-industry: home-based work, mills and factories.

- The mill's landscape signature is similarly fairly discreet, but more distinctive than that of home-based work. Its ubiquitous nature, and association with the watercourse render it readily identifiable (Fig. 3). During the industrial revolutions, these proto-industrial mills may have served as the nuclei for forthcoming factories, enabling industrialists to reclaim their hydraulic facilities.

- The *manufactures* mark the landscape by their monumentality. This is attributed to the desire of the absolutist kings who built them to make their mark by magnifying their power. For example, the Royal Saltworks of Arc-et-Senans (Doubs) resembles more a castle than a factory (Fig. 3). The proto-industrial site was further characterised by the provision of housing for employees (the director, foremen and certain salt workers), marking the initial step towards a paternalistic industrial system that would characterise the following era.

The period of the industrial revolutions, commencing in the 18th century in the United Kingdom and becoming more prevalent in late 19th and early 20th century in France, was characterised by a large number of industrial and rural settlements. They were primarily associated with the accessibility of raw materials and energy, as well as the challenges of their transportation. At the time, it proved more feasible to transport workers and provide them with local residential, social and economic facilities. This marked the beginning of paternalism. In the 19th century, rural factories linked to deposits, energy sources, or strategically positioned to the modern transport routes of the time (canals, railways) attracted labour around them, leading to the development of workers' houses and various services. However, not all of these settlements reached the urban stage of the factory town. These small paternalistic systems, based on the model of the factory village or workers' village (Edelblutte, 2018), as depicted in Figure 4, retained their rural character. Despite their abundance, they have received limited scholarly attention compared to the emblematic and meticulously planned factory towns associated with mining, steel, textile, or chemical industries.

On a larger scale, the industrial districts mentioned earlier also form a specific landscape. As industrial development advances over time, an anarchic industrial-rural amalgamation emerges in the villages, towns and small cities within these districts. Tiny workshops appear in front of houses, larger factories combine various types of industrial architecture, modest rows of workers' houses materialize, disparate workers' housing estates spring up, employers' castles stand near the centre, and shops and services for all the workers in the village are established, financed by the industrialists. These elements coalesce into clusters of unregulated factory villages exhibiting uncontrolled urban development (Fig. 5). Commenting on Vimeu (Somme), G. Baron remarked in 1985: *"The factory fades into the greenery [...]. In Vimeu, the factory is discreet, integrated into the very heart of the villages. It seems to have gradually become part of an agricultural village structure"18* (p. 319). Similarly, in Ardèche, a rural *département* in the south of France, *"industrial activity is perfectly integrated into the rural economy, to the point of becoming diluted and losing its industrial character"19* (Nacé Ch., Nacé J-R., 2008, p. 283).

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18 « L›usine s›estompe dans l›écrin de verdure […]. En Vimeu, l›usine se fait discrète, intégrée au cœur même des bourgs ; elle semble s›être insérée peu à peu à une structure villageoise à vocation agricole ».
19 *« l'activité industrielle s'insère parfaitement dans l'économie rurale jusqu'à s'y diluer, à en perdre justement son caractère industriel ».*

The textile factory (comprising spinning and weaving facilities surrounded by a continuous line) was built in close proximity to the Vosges canal, within a distinctly rural setting. Built in 1903 with the classic sawtooth roof of the period, it was surrounded by a group of workers' houses (dashed lines), small twin houses situated amidst their garden, and larger houses for the managerial staff, on the right inside the dashed lines. The industrial system was further complemented by a substantial residence for the employer's family (star) and various services and shops (circles). This modest-sized settlement never exceeded 300 inhabitants and can be aptly characterized as a former factory village. Notably, the factory ceased operations in the 1990s, following a withdrawal from the social sphere in the 1970s. Today, the village exhibits suburban characteristics (recent housing development visible on the right), influenced by the city of Nancy, situated approximately twenty kilometres away.

photo: Humbert, Renard-Grandmontage,, 2007
Text: S. Edelblutte, 2023

Figure 4. A factory village for textile workers: Roville-devant-Bayon (Meurthe-et-Moselle).

Thus, industrial-rural landscapes are characterised by their chronological depth as well as their discretion, with a few exceptions such as *manufactures*. In general, they are under-recognized in this regard, as rural development policies are more frequently center around tourism or agriculture rather than industry. Furthermore, contemporary industry lacks the distinctiveness observed in the past.

## Industrial-Rural Landscapes Have Recently Become Trivial and Diluted

Industry persists in rural areas, featuring both still active old factories and newly established sites. However, since the last quarter of the 20th century, the landscapes engendered by industry, akin to those in urban areas, have become indistinct due to the

Tully (with its population of 570 inhabitants) stand as one of the unplanned workers' villages situated within the industrial district of Vimeu (Somme), where small factories (top left) and workshops coexist with employers' residences (top right), workers' houses (centre left), rows of workers' housing estates (centre right), public services financed by the industrialists (town hall bottom left) and shops for the workers (former cooperative shop bottom right), all juxtaposed in great anarchy.

photos: S. Edelblutte, 2017

Figure 5. Tully, a village in the Vimeu industrial district (Somme).

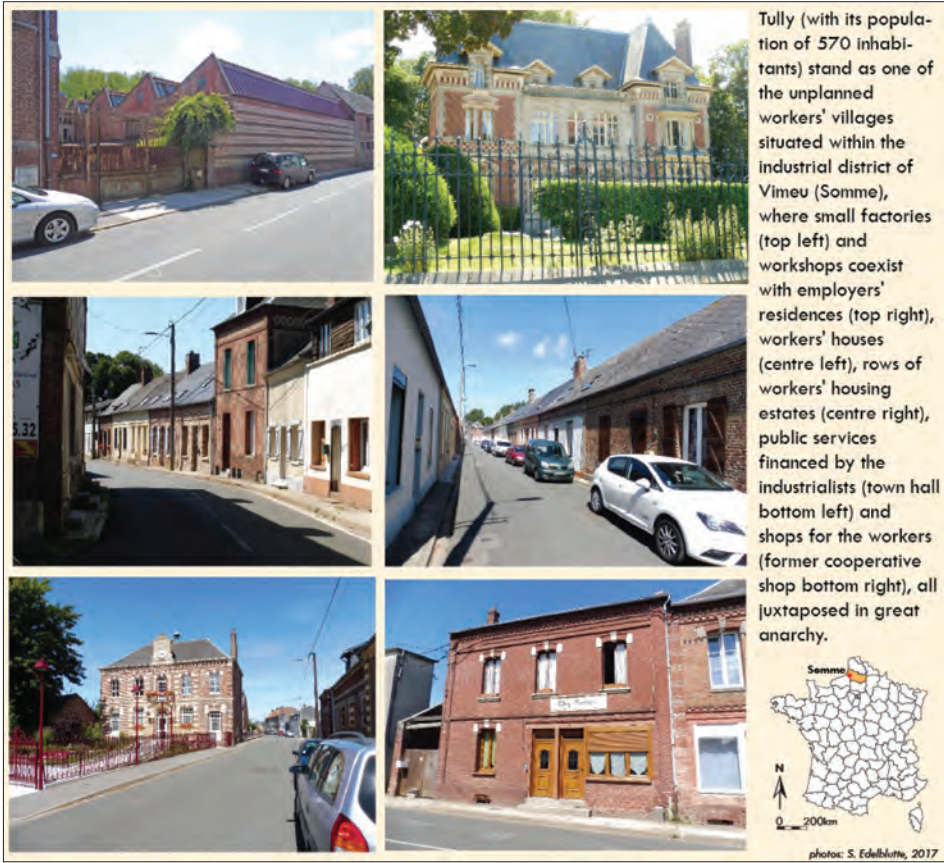trivialisation of the industrial estates or business park. These developments dilute the factory into the unique architectural form of the functionalist hangar. This modern, light, and modular building, made of metal and/or concrete, can be adapted to various functions, encompassing industry, services, logistics, retail, etc. Moreover, with the cessation of paternalism, ancillary elements such as the workers' houses previously associated with it are no longer present. Even in an active industrial district with deep historical roots, such as the previously mentioned Vimeu, recent shifts in the industrial localisation illustrate a transition from old factories from the heart of the villages to a purpose-built business park consolidating factories in the form of functionalist hangars (Fig. 6).

Furthermore, when new factories emerge in rural areas, they are invariably connected to the city. The advancement of transportation, particularly vehicles, has extended the direct influence of towns and cities over a significant portion of the French countryside. Consequently, rural areas close to towns and cities, referred to as peri-urban areas, have evolved into designated spaces within planned business parks, for industrial

Figure 6. The Decayeux locksmith and small metalwork factory, transferred from the Friville-Escarbotin centre to a functionalist hangar on the Vimeu Industrial Estate (Somme).

activities that were previously located in urban areas. These sites, initially located in close proximity to the existing urban areas, are progressively relocating further from them, facilitated by highways and interchanges, and are colonising areas clearly rural. Although these sites appear isolated in a rural environment, they are nonetheless emanations of the city (Renard-Grandmontagne, 2003).

Despite these recent trivialisations, the depth of the industrial-rural history is nonetheless leading to a genuine appreciation of certain legacies.

## Between Oblivion and Rediscovery, the Enhancement of A Small Industrial-Rural Heritage

Some exceptional elements of the industrial-rural legacies, such as former *manufactures* or certain large emblematic plants, have quickly obtained heritage status, sometimes at a very elevated level. This is exemplified by the case of the Royal Salt Works of Arc-et-Senans, included on UNESCO's World Heritage List as early as 1982. However, the majority of these legacies have either been abandoned or are insufficiently recognised and, at best, modestly promoted, revolved around a small heritage that is nonetheless becoming increasingly significant (Edelblutte, Legrand, 2012).

This is due to:

- the age of this heritage (sites from the first industrial revolution may have been abandoned as early as the second, for example), which makes it easy to overlook at a time when legislation does not require the treatment of brownfield sites;

- the low profile of this heritage, made up of small workshops or factories and a few workers' dwellings, often scattered around villages;

- the isolation of this heritage, situated far from a big town or a major road that could provide easy access for the conversion of this heritage;

- the lack of land and financial stakes for a potential renovation of this heritage;

- the competition from other types of heritage that are more widely accepted and more easily developed in rural areas (such as castles, old villages, religious, military, natural and even intangible heritage);

- or, finally, the belated recognition of industry as a field worthy of heritage protection.

Forgotten sites may have been utterly abandoned for an extended period. Abandoned sites are, therefore, generally not treated and evolve into discrete but nonetheless present wastelands: a partially collapsed chimney, a few buildings with collapsed roofs, polluted former slag heaps where the vegetation is recovering despite everything. Sometimes it's a whole small industrial or mining system that has been deteriorating for several decades in a rural landscape at the end of the world (Fig. 7).



The lead and zinc mine at Saint-Cierge-la-Serre (Ardèche) operated from 1888 to 1909. A small industrial and mining complex was built around three seams, incorporating an ore washing/sorting plant, a machine building, an office and accommodation for engineers (upper right), slag heaps (upper left) and a row of houses for the miners (lower left). Isolated 3km from the village of Saint-Cierge, at the end of an impassable road, this diminutive industrial and mining system, abandoned over a century ago, still marks the rural landscape.
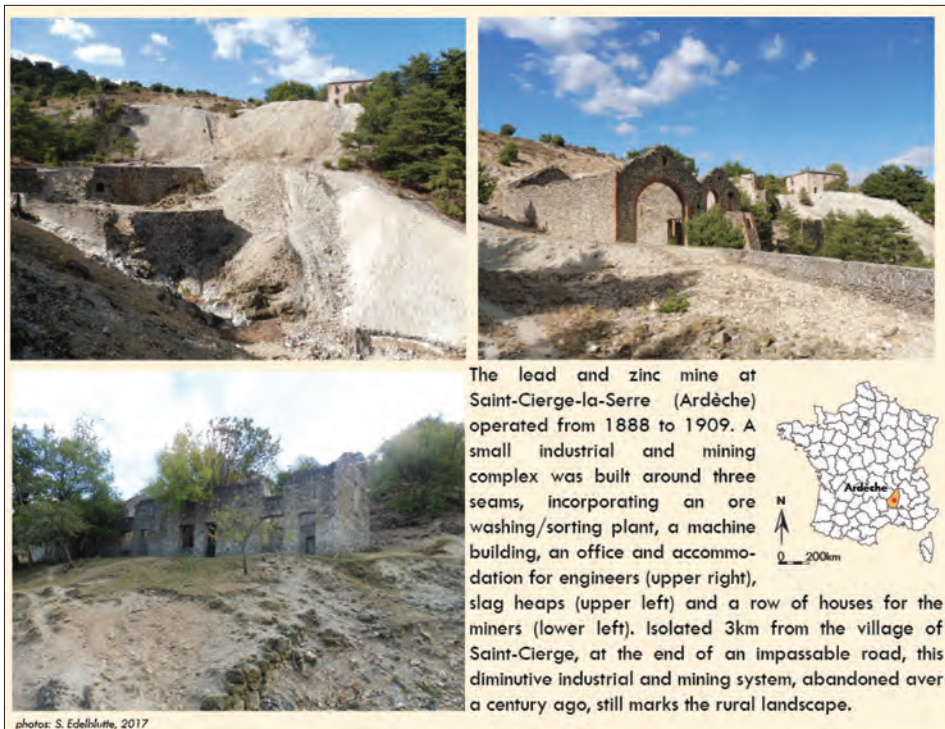
photos: S. Edelblutte, 2017

Figure 7. The former industrial and mining system at Saint-Cierge-la-Serre (Ardèche): an industrial and rural wasteland abandoned more than 100 years ago.

However, while this neglect has obviously resulted in serious damage, particularly to the oldest buildings, it has also saved them from rapid and irreparable destruction, as can happen in urban areas under pressure from land development. At the end of the 20th century, with the emergence of heritage protection movements, these remains were rediscovered and, at times, showcased. Local associations, increasingly supported by local authorities, are clearing up the remains, protecting buildings from water, and setting up small museums or other activities and functions (Fig. 8).



The former clouterie in Bainville-aux-Miroirs (Meurthe-et-Moselle), founded in 1855 and closed in 1990, was rehabilitated in 2006. However, as of 2023, it still awaits permanent occupation.

The old workers' houses surrounding a square in Villeneuvette (Hérault) remain inhabited. They are integral to a former fine cloth *manufacture* founded in the 17th century, which has been largely preserved and developed.

The *moulinage* (a factory where silk is reinforced before weaving) of Pont-de-Veyrières in Chirols (Ardèche) was founded in 1816 and expanded to include a weaving mill in 1914. Although it ceased operations in 2005, a part of it (visible on the photo) was repurposed into an eco-museum in 1988. Since 2006, the other part has been home to an alternative community dedicated to transforming the factory into a residence and cultural space.

photos: S. Edelblutte, 2012, 2019, 2017, 2023

The old blast furnace at Cons-la-Grandville (Meurthe-et-Moselle), built of stone in 1865, closed shortly after 1870 due to its inability to keep pace with the rapid expansion of the nearby giant ironworks. The blast furnace fell into oblivion before being designated a historic monument in 1974 and has since been restored several times (1977, 1992 and 2021).

Figure 8. Modest and occasional enhancement of a small industrial-rural heritage.

In the 21st century, this trend is spreading to indirect elements of the industrial heritage (workers' housing, employers' residences, transport routes, etc.) and even to the industrial-rural landscape. The result is modest, unobtrusive enhancement

projects, primarily targeting local communities rather than outsiders, in a bid to restore local pride. In the Vimeu region, for example, downloadable itineraries focusing on industrial heritage guide and elucidate visitors on key points - sometimes very discreet - encompassing both direct industrial heritage like factories and workshops, as well as indirect heritage such as workers' and employers' residences, services, and shops. These are intricately linked to the development of locksmithing and faucet industries, thus connecting all the elements of the former industrial systems. In La Bresse (Vosges), a textile trail was established in 2018, featuring signposts and panels highlighting the industrial landscape of the small town. This heritage and industrial landscape work was carried out by local stakeholders, and the trail (fig. 9) not only interconnects converted or inactive textile heritage sites, but also highlights the current functional factories, emphasizing the significance of the textile landscape.



Figure 9. The textile trail at La Bresse (Vosges), showcasing an industrial-rural landscape that is both inherited and active.

The preservation and enhancement of these sites, while modest, are nevertheless essential to strengthening local identities, underlining the cultural aspect of the industrial era.

## Protecting and Developing Industrial Heritage and Culture to Strengthen Local Attachment and Appeal

The development of an industrial culture is tied to the realisation, at a time of uniform economic and cultural globalisation, that industry has been pivotal in shaping the identity of numerous rural areas. As a result, these rural areas have managed to differentiate themselves from their more agricultural or tourist-oriented neighbours. This acknowledgment of an industrial culture (i.e. *"all the know-how and ethical and aesthetic values that are woven around the production process, the act of production and the product itself"20* within an industrial community bringing together *"those who share the same faith in the work and in the profession of those involved in industry"21* (Daviet, 2005, p. 84)) is, in turn, an essential element in safeguarding vernacular heritage i.e. small heritage of industry.

Indeed, the industrial-rural heritage, encompassing objects, buildings and landscapes, constitutes a component of local culture and the territorial identity of the respective populations. The protection, conservation, and even enhancement of this heritage can only serve to bolster people's attachment to their territory, an attachment deemed essential for two primary reasons:

- it aids in fostering territorial pride, instilling a sense of attachment to the area;

- it facilitates existing industries, whether rooted in old or new locations, to draw on know-how and, more broadly, on a tradition of industry that distinguishes the area from others.

Enhancing the region's industrial heritage is, therefore, a pivotal factor in its appeal. For example, jeans manufacturer 1083, originating in Romans-sur-Isère (Drôme), explains its recent investments (2018) in a textile factory in Rupt-sur-Moselle (Vosges) by citing the region's extensive textile tradition and the presence of this industrial culture. In another case, in Boutières (Ardèche), both private and public stakeholders in the local industrial district, focused on jewelry and textiles, have collaboratively established a network of industrial companies, services and local authorities in the area, based on the idea that the area's industrial culture itself constitutes a heritage (Edelblutte, Legrand 2012). The promotion of this culture and know-how, in this "industrial centre at the end of the world" (Maisonniac, 2000), is complemented by:

- communication initiatives aimed at promoting the region and its businesses, spearheaded by the Arche des Métiers (fig. 10), located in a renovated former tannery;

- training initiatives, such as the establishment of a secondary school in 1998, intended to train and retain a skilled local workforce.

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[20] *« l'ensemble des savoir-faire et des valeurs éthiques et esthétiques qui se tissent autour du processus de production, de l'acte productif et du produit lui-même ».*

[21] *« ceux qui partagent la même foi dans le travail et la profession d'acteurs de l'industrie ».*

All these initiatives aimed at promoting industrial heritage in rural areas contribute to strengthening local identities. Consequently, there is a heightened attachment to the respective areas, rendering them more appealing both economically and demographically. In France and the remainder of deindustrialised Western Europe, these efforts form part of a rapid improvement in the perception of industry since the dangers of deindustrialisation became apparent in the years 2000 and 2010, and have been further



Figure 10. The Arche des Métiers headquarters, in a renovated former tannery in le Cheylard (Ardèche).

underscored by recent crises including COVID 19 and conflicts. Re-industrialisation initiatives implemented since then, such as the creation of the "Territoires d'Industrie" label in France in 2018, primarily target industrial-rural areas, providing various forms of assistance and support.

## Discussion and Conclusion

If the examples and comments in this study indeed illustrate the specific nature of the industrial landscape and heritage in rural areas, the analysis must be considered in the light of two challenges:

- The first challenge arises from the impossibility of precisely defining and delimiting rural areas. The proliferation of vehicles and the resulting ability to reside in rural areas while working in urban ones have strengthened the connections between town and country, leading to the creation of peri-urban areas that are neither distinctly rural nor entirely urban. Each country then attempts to establish a statistical definition based on administrative boundaries to delineate territories and count populations. However, such definitions are invariably imperfect, often downplaying the qualification of an active or inherited industry that is specifically rural.

- The second challenge stems from the significant diversity and dispersal of industrial heritage in rural areas, as previously emphasized. In urban areas, the easily identifiable model of the factory town or the substantially concentrated presence of industry in specific urban districts (industrial suburbs, industrial estates) facilitates identification and study. In rural areas, the scattered and unassuming nature of these legacies, including still-active factories, sometimes embedded in rural landscapes with a tenuous industrial character, renders them less amenable to analysis.

Nevertheless, and as elucidated by numerous examples in this text, this industrial-rural heritage already plays an essential role in the revitalization of struggling areas. Beyond its implications for identity, anchorage and territorial pride, it serves as a catalyst for unity and collaboration among the states of Western Europe. All these states have undergone the industrial revolutions of preceding centuries and have previously undertaken actions related to industrial heritage in general, at times impacting the landscape itself. While these endeavors in the United Kingdom, Belgium, and Germany – three countries that have a certain lead in the field of industrial heritage – are not exclusively rural, they stand as experiments that hold the potential to inspire initiatives in France, across Europe, and globally.

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