Wallonia's Four Major Mining Sites. Serial Classification: an Obvious Choice?

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Since July 2012, the property that is now known as "Wallonia's four major mining sites" has been on the prestigious list of properties recognised and labelled as UNESCO World Heritage sites.

These four sites are:

- *Le Grand Hornu*[1], near Mons, located in a region called le Borinage;
- *Bois-du-Luc*[2], near La Louvière, in the region Centre;
- *Le Bois du Cazier*[3], near Charleroi, in the region formerly called le Pays Noir, today le Pays de Charleroi;
- *Blegny-Mine*[4], near Liège, in the Province of Liège.

These four sites are the most important vestiges of the Walloon coal-mining past, which spans eight centuries and was at the origin of an exceptional industrial development of world influence, as Wallonia was one of the crucibles of the spread of English industrial expertise and one of the cradles of the industrial revolution on the European continent in the 19th century.

Each site represents and retains the memory of a Walloon mining sub-basin, and each one also represents one of the facets of mining memory in general:

- architecture, in the case of Le Grand Hornu;
- social life, in the case of Bois-du-Luc;
- memory, including in particular immigration and disasters, at Bois du Cazier;
- expertise and technology at Blegny-Mine.

They have been recognised on the basis of criteria ii and iv[5].

- *(ii) to exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;*

- *(iv) to be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;*

First of all, allow me to present them to you in more detail.

- *The Grand-Hornu coal mine and workers' village* is a highly integrated industrial, urban and architectural ensemble, designed in the 1810s by the mine's founder, Henri De Gorge. The central industrial part was realised between 1816 and 1832, and the workers' dwellings that surround it were completed during the first half of the 19th century. Of neo-classical style, the ensemble represents one of the utopian projects at the dawn of the industrial era in Europe. The industrial buildings form the heart of the ensemble; they served historical mining exploitation, which has been closed since 1955. The internal buildings are organised around a central courtyard in the general shape of an elongated ring. The industrial ensemble is framed by the workers' village, in trapezoid form. The village consists of a total of 450 individual houses. They are in rows, originally built on the basis of plots street by street with model layouts comprising identical façades. Each house has a rear garden.

- *The coal mine and workers' village at Bois-du-Luc* represent a later period than Grand Hornu, but they are one of the oldest capitalist structures in Europe, dating back to the end of the 17th century. The site is composed of the pit itself, with its pithead frame and machinery (the extraction machine dates from 1842), of the director's house overlooking the village, of the yard of workshops, of the slag heap, and the workers' village, which was undertaken in 1838. The site's structure is clearly paternalist, comprising all the indispensable elements for the comfort and well-being of the workers and their families, and all the means of controlling their activities.

Fig. 1: The Grand-Hornu

Fig. 2:Bois-du-Luc

Fig. 3: Bois du Cazier

– *The coal mine at Bois du Cazier* is linked with a mining exploitation originally from the middle of the 19th century, but its present components are from the end of the 19th century and especially from the first half of the 20th century. The history of this coal mine is characterised by the last great mining disaster in Europe in 1956, which claimed 262 victims. The real estate ensemble has been transformed into a museographic and cultural ensemble devoted to industry in general and to glass in particular, also to the themes of safety, work, migrant movements, etc. The ensemble is completed by three slag heaps and the cemetery, important elements that are sometimes overlooked during classification processes.

Fig. 4: Bois du Cazier – the cemetery

– *The Blegny-Mine coal mine* was a coal-mining site from the 18th century onwards. However, it was rebuilt several times, in particular following the destruction caused during the Second World War. Coal exploitation was active until the start of the 1980s. The surface equipment has been preserved. The site was swiftly converted into a mining museum, including some shallow subterranean galleries that are open to the public.

Fig. 5: Blegny-Mine

The oldest elements date from the second half of the 19th century: they are organised around the Puits-Marie, its metallic pithead frame and an ensemble of technical buildings that surround it. Today, the Puits-Marie houses the Liège Country mining museum.

The site also comprises an ensemble of buildings illustrating mining during the period known as the "battle of the coal" (1945–1960). It consists of pit no. 1 with its concrete pithead frame, the landing, the sorting and washing rig, Evence-Coppée model (fully preserved), and a mechanism for placing waste on the slag heap. It was the last site to close its doors in the Liège basin. Its monumental technical elements have been preserved almost entirely intact, along with a significant portion of its galleries, because the site was swiftly converted. This ensemble forms a significant and explicatory whole of mining techniques, both on the surface and below.

Fig. 6: Blegny-Mine – one of the galleries

Fig. 7: Blegny-Mine – the Puits-Marie

Of course, these are not the only vestiges of the Walloon coal industry. There are other substantial traces in the basin, starting with numerous slag heaps, the majority of which are protected today, and with emblematic buildings, such as:

– *The Cheratte site*[6] between Liège and Blegny, which contains a Malakoff model tower (the unique Belgian example of a construction model that is well known in the Ruhr region, where a good dozen examples have been safeguarded) with a flat-cable extraction machine at its summit. Cheratte was the first site in Belgium where an extraction machine was installed at the summit of the tower of the same name. That was in 1907. The limited size of the premises, due to the fact that the colliery was bordered on one side by the Meuse River, a railway and a road (now a motorway) and on the other side by a steep hill, had obliged the engineers and architects of the period to design this type of construction. It also comprises a workers' village, built from 1925 onwards and still remarkably preserved today, a river port and a director's château of Meuse-region architecture, which is in poor condition but is expected to benefit from in-depth renovation soon. The Cheratte site would definitely merit inclusion in the classification of the four major mining sites, of which it forms the missing link in the historical time frame.

– *The sorting and washing rig at Péronnes-lez-Binche*[7], which is classified, along with the *Saint-Albert Tower* and the village adjoining it; the tower is under high risk of destruction today.

– Various parts of sites like *Wérister*[8] near Liège, the *Bas-Bois*[9] coal mine, also near Liège, the *Roton coal mine*[10] in Farciennes, near Charleroi, pithead frames, older railways designed for transporting the products, most of which have now been transformed into highways for slow users or cycle paths.

When the opportunity arose to nominate the vestiges of Wallonia's mining past for the UNESCO World Heritage list, the choice of a serial classification of a handful of sites very quickly suggested itself as an obvious choice. Only the matter of adding Blegny-Mine (or not) was the subject of some debates, the Blegny-Mine site not even enjoying basic protection as a monument at that time.

It has to be said that time was running out. The dossier was started in 2008 and it had to be submitted in 2009! Obviously, this does not allow much time for in-depth reflection and for mobilising the stakeholders of a territory, as was the case for our French neighbours from the Nord-Pas-de-Calais mining basin or as is now being done in the Ruhr basin or in the cross-border Erzgebirge/Krušnohoří region.

And not even the fact that acceptance of the candidature was postponed by two years enabled this reflection to take place, as the real time between the postponement decision taken in Brasilia in 2010 and the submission of a new candidature was no more than a few months. The choice of a serial classification was therefore not a true choice, but rather a necessity.

I therefore tried to conduct this in-depth reflection myself, based on elements of the candidature dossier, which referred to this strip, 170 km long and 3 to 15 km wide, that forms the Walloon mining basin, and based on my knowledge of the territory and its history. For practical reasons, I voluntarily limited the reflection to the Liège sub-basin, without however excluding references to the other sub-basins.

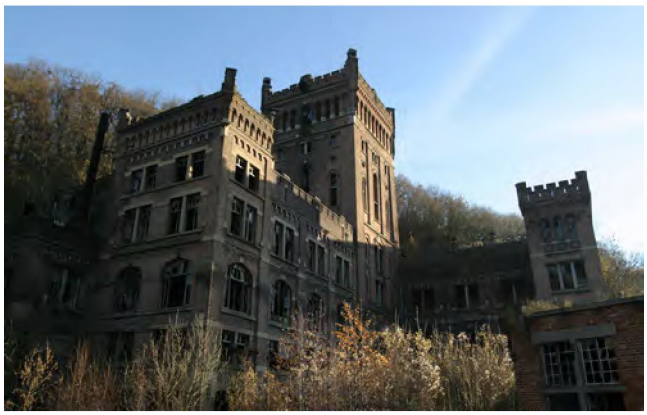

Fig. 8: The Cheratte colliery site

Fig. 9: Péronnes-lez-Binche – the sorting and washing rig

I asked myself a twofold question:

– Would classification as a cultural mining landscape make sense in a region where interdependence with other industries is so strong?

– Would not classification as a cultural industrial landscape be much more logical, but what should be included in that case?

This last point clearly brings us back to the heart of the reflection in this symposium: Does classification as a cultural mining landscape make sense?

The presence of coal in the Walloon sub-soil and its extraction from the 12th century onwards are clearly at the origin of the major industrial development that followed, particularly the development of heavy industry in the course of the 19th and 20th centuries. Some developments, although they are based on scientific and industrial discoveries such as the use of coke in high furnaces or the invention of converters for the manufacture of steel, find their location in Wallonia due to the presence of coal. In the Liège basin, the installation of modern steelworks, between Liège and Seraing, is clearly conditioned by the presence in the subsoil of cokable coal, a quality of coal that cannot be found, for example, to the east of the basin where Blegny-Mine is installed and where anthracite was found.

The development of the railway network and navigable routes is closely linked with the presence of these two basic activities: coal-mining and steelworks. The Albert Canal, for example, which links Liège to Antwerp and the North Sea, finds its origin in the search for a coal-mining solution: the progressive scarcity – as the mining operations became deeper – of cokable fatty coal in the Liège mining basis and the necessity to make sure of its supply, either through the Campine mines in the Flemish region, a region that the Albert Canal unavoidably crosses, or through importation via the Antwerp Port. The canal of course also enabled the progressive importation of ferrous ore, to the detriment of the fairly scarce local ore or of the Luxembourg ore, brought by railway, and easier exportation of the finished products, but its very existence is clearly linked with coal mining and it would logically find its place in the planning project for a cultural mining landscape.

It is the same case with the power stations, initially supplied by coal, sometimes created by the coal mines themselves, which were substantial users of electrical energy. One could also mention the pumping stations that are typical of the Liège region and still very useful today in managing what is called "après-mine". As coal mining was prohibited beneath the river, but not under the ground that borders it, progressive subsidence of this ground has been noted. Draining and sewerage are therefore performed beneath the river's level, creating a necessity to pump and to adapt collecting networks.

Obviously, we cannot forget the slag heaps and the workers' dwellings, although for the latter we can find in numerous places a conjoined influence by the coal-mining industry and the other industries that are not connected to it.

While the activities listed above are clearly the result of the presence and exploitation of coal, the presence of other industries such as, to a certain extent, armoury and glass-making, and even more obviously the non-ferrous metallurgical industry – especially zinc, very important in Liège –, the cement factories and textile industry are first of all connected with other factors such as the presence of ore or fresh water close by.

It therefore seems incongruous to talk of a cultural mining landscape in Wallonia. Except in the Borinage, we are not, unlike our neighbours from the Nord-Pas-de-Calais, Belgian Limburg or Dutch Limburg, in a region of mono industry. A measure for recognition as a cultural industrial landscape, as planned for the Ruhr basin, would thus be more appropriate if we had to go in that direction. But what to include in this?

Referring to the contributions made at the workshop *Industrial and Mining Landscapes within World Heritage Context* that was held in Freiberg on 25 October 2013, I will not return to the elements that have already been demonstrated as being constitutive of a cultural industrial landscape, that is to say

– geology, mineral resources;
– mining of raw materials;
– working of raw materials, production;
– infrastructure, public utilities;
– administration;
– transport – water transport – rail transport;
– industrial residential building, workers' dwellings;
– commemoration, tradition, culture.

However, it is my opinion that it is necessary to add some elements to this list and/or to make it more detailed so that we have an approach that is as holistic as possible and will clearly distinguish between serial classification (even though this series contains several dozens, if not hundreds of elements) and a request for recognition as a cultural industrial landscape. For my part I would add, but perhaps they are included in the proposed topics, some less formal elements such as legislation and archives, be they written, audio or audio-visual; oral memory; energy; schools and learning of knowledge; research; social structures, such as trade unions; the great men who forged the territory's history; botany and biology.

To my mind, the fact of introducing the notion of landscape also brings about the necessity to include in it a reflection and a true perspective on the evolution of this landscape and on its re-affectation, indeed the re-utilisation of the preserved heritage.

We must never lose sight of the basic objective that must subtend our reflections. It is not about preserving at all costs – in the name of nostalgia – the beautiful, or because of

an expertise, but about helping future generations to understand the world in which they arrive and to develop their life project by giving them the keys to read the past, and by calling to them through the traces of the past that inspire them to ask about the past.

In order to seek to know, it is first necessary to know or to realise that there is something to be sought! It is not necessary to preserve everything. A bit of wall can be enough for imagining the whole wall, a trace of railway for imagining the track and even the train! From this perspective, serial classifications entirely make sense.

Classification as a landscape is much more ambitious and to a certain extent also riskier; in my opinion, it is advisable to be extremely cautious and thorough in our approach.

Two elements, in my opinion, are important in order to avoid abuses:

– A cultural landscape classification project, either industrial or otherwise, must include prospects and possibilities for development. Obviously, one cannot foresee the future but preservation of the past must be a help to future generations, not a hindrance to their development. The reflection must be conducted in depth from the start and for a long duration, and mechanisms for periodical re-evaluation must be put in place. Among other things, the territorial planning must allow sufficient evolution in terms of both space and creativity.

– The notion of continuity must also be included in the reflection. How will the past that we are preserving be used today or tomorrow?

As an example is sometimes worth more than a long speech, I am recalling what happened recently in the town of Heerlen in the Netherlands[11], where former mine galleries were used as a base for an urban heating project.

In addition to the economic interest that is taken on by such a project, the *Cultuurcluster* served as a real catalyst for inter-generational dialogue in which the stakeholders of the past, that is to say the miners, suddenly felt useful in the present, and where the young people of the present wanted to find out about their past!

Carrying out projects of this type should be part of the requirements for inclusion in the compilation of dossiers or in the management plans associated with them.

Fig. 11: Cultuurcluster Heerlerheide, Heerlen

Abstracts

Wallonia's Four Major Mining Sites. Serial Classification: an Obvious Choice?

In July 2012 four former mining sites in Belgium were included in the World Heritage List as a serial nomination and on the basis of criteria ii and iv: Le Grand Hornu (near Mons), Bois-du-Luc (near La Louvière), Le Bois du Cazier (near Charleroi) und Blegny-Mine (near Liège). They exhibit the most important traces of eight centuries of mining in Wallonia and bear testimony to the beginning of industrialisation in Europe in the early 19th century. The author describes how each mining site stands for a particular facet of mining history: architecture, social life, technology, remembrance. When the opportunity of a nomination came up, very quickly the selection of a handful of sites suggested itself. Not least this had to do with the fact that there was not much time to submit the nomination dossier. However, in addition there were considerations if a region characterised in various ways by industry could be classified as "cultural mining landscape" or if "industrial cultural landscape" would be more appropriate. Obviously, the region does not only have a collective economy consisting of mining and steel-producing industries. On the one hand, part of this economy are also specific infrastructures (canals, railways, gas and electricity networks) and branches (hydraulic engineering and energy industry) as well as tips and workers' housing estates. On the other hand, Wallonia has become a site of quite different industries that also characterise the region. Therefore, in contrast to the neighbouring mining region of Nord-Pas-de-Calais and similar to the Ruhr area, it is no longer mono-structured. Consequently, the recognition as "industrial landscape", as is being pursued in the Ruhr area, should be based on an integral approach. This would have to distinguish between a serial classification of

dozens or even hundreds of individual elements and the concern to characterize an industrial cultural landscape. Beyond what was described as constitutive for an industrial cultural landscape at the conference in Freiberg in 2013, some informal elements should be taken into consideration, e.g. legislation, archives, research and educational institutions.

In connection with the choice of elements of a cultural landscape heritage worth protecting the author emphasises the necessary space for further development. That's why mechanisms for an evaluation and options for a readjustment need to be available. The preservation of the past ought to be a help for future generations, not an obstacle to their development. In this context it is also a matter of how the continuous use of preserved objects becomes possible. The author introduces a project in Heerlen in the southern Netherlands, where the tempered pit water of a closed-down stone coal mine is used for heating flats. Such projects could be part of the requested economic plan that needs to be compiled for World Heritage sites. (LM/JZ)

Walloniens vier große Welterbestätten des Bergbaus. Serielle Klassifizierung: eine sinnvolle Wahl?

Im Juli 2012 wurden vier ehemalige Zechenstandorte in Belgien in einem seriellen Antrag und auf der Grundlage der Kriterien ii und iv in die Liste des UNESCO-Welterbes aufgenommen: Le Grand Hornu (bei Mons), Bois-du-Luc (bei La Louvière), Le Bois du Cazier (bei Charleroi) und Blegny-Mine (bei Lüttich). Hier zeigen sich die bedeutendsten Spuren von acht Jahrhunderten Bergbau in Wallonien und die Anfänge der Industrialisierung im Europa des frühen 19. Jahrhunderts. Der Autor beschreibt, inwiefern jede einzelne Anlage zugleich eine besondere Facette der Bergbaugeschichte repräsentiert: Architektur, Sozialleben, Technologie, Gedenken. Als sich die Chance einer Nominierung ergeben hatte, drängte sich die Auswahl einer Handvoll Stätten sehr schnell von selbst auf. Dies lag nicht zuletzt daran, dass der Antrag innerhalb kurzer Zeit eingereicht werden musste. Hinzu kamen aber Überlegungen, ob eine industriell vielfältig geprägte Region überhaupt als „Bergbauliche Kulturlandschaft" klassifiziert werden könnte und ob eine „Industrielle Kulturlandschaft" nicht angemessener wäre. Denn offensichtlich verfügt die Region nicht nur über eine montanindustrielle Verbundwirtschaft. Es gehören zum einen auch spezifische Infrastrukturen (Kanäle, Eisenbahnen, Gas- und Stromnetze) und Branchen (Wasserbau- und Energiewirtschaft) dazu, sowie Halden und Arbeitersiedlungen. Zum anderen ist Wallonien zum Standort ganz anderer, die Region ebenfalls prägender Industrien geworden und ist damit, anders als die benachbarte Bergbauregion Nord-Pas-de-Calais, ähnlich wie das Ruhrgebiet nicht (mehr) monostrukturiert. Deshalb sollte eine Anerkennung als „Industrielle Kulturlandschaft", wie sie im Ruhrgebiet verfolgt wird, auf einer ganzheitlichen Betrachtung beruhen. Diese müsste unterscheiden zwischen einer seriellen Klassifizierung von Dutzenden oder gar Hunderten Einzelelementen und dem Anliegen, eine Industrielle Kulturlandschaft zu charakterisieren. Über das hinausgehend, was auf der Tagung in Freiberg 2013 als konstitutiv für eine Industrielle Kulturlandschaft beschrieben wurde, sollten einige informelle Elemente Beachtung finden, z. B. Gesetzgebung, Archive, Forschungs- und Bildungseinrichtungen.

Im Zusammenhang mit der Auswahl von Elementen eines zu schützenden kulturlandschaftlichen Erbes betont der Autor den notwendigen Raum zur weiteren Entwicklung, weshalb Mechanismen einer Evaluierung und Möglichkeiten einer Neujustierung gegeben sein müssen. Die Bewahrung der Vergangenheit muss eine Hilfe für zukünftige Generationen sein, keine Behinderung ihrer Entwicklung. Dabei geht es auch um die Frage, wie eine kontinuierliche Nutzung erhaltener Objekte möglich wird. Der Autor stellt in diesem Zusammenhang ein Projekt im südniederländischen Heerlen vor, wo das temperierte Grubenwasser einer stillgelegten Steinkohlenzeche zur Beheizung von Wohnungen genutzt wird. Derartige Projekte könnten Teil des geforderten Wirtschaftsplans sein, wie er für Welterbestätten erarbeitet werden muss. (LM)

Credits

Fig. 1: LeSoir/GrandHornu, Fig. 2, 3, 5: Guy Focant, Service public de Wallonie (S.P.W.), Fig. 4: Goffredo Palmerini, Fig. 6: Nicolas Elias, Blegny-Mine, Fig. 7: Lon Persich, www.usines.be, Fig. 8: Blegny-Mine, Fig. 9: Institut du patrimoine wallon, Fig. 10: Koninklijke Mosa bv

[1] www.grand-hornu.eu

[2] www.ecomuseeboisduluc.be

[3] www.leboisducazier.be

[4] www.blegnymine.be

[5] Criteria of selection for the World Heritage List see http://whc.unesco.org/en/criteria (visited 16 June 2015).

[6] Delrée, Henri : Le charbonnage de Cheratte, la cité ouvrière et le château de Saroléa. Carnets du patrimoine no. 2 (1994). On the web: www.usines.be/le-hasard-cheratte/ (visited 22 June 2015) or http://tchorski.morkitu.org/5/cheratte-01.htm (visited 22 June 2015).

[7] www.postindustriel.be/peronnes.html (visited 22 June 2015).

[8] www.exxplore.fr/pages/Charbonnages-Liege.php#Werister (visited 22 June 2015).

[9] www.exxplore.fr/pages/Charbonnages-Liege.php#Soumagne (visited 22 June 2015).

[10] www.exxplore.fr/pages/Charbonnages-Charleroi.php (visited 22 June 2015).

[11] www.mijnwater.com/ (visited 22 June 2015).