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## *Mining landscape, heritage or landscape inconvenience the case of the Bages region (Barcelona)*

The paper begins with a first section that focuses on conceptual aspects related to heritage and landscape. Thus, the first paragraph questions whether there is really a mining heritage in Spain that is widely accepted or if, on the contrary, a limited vision still prevails.

In the last decades the concept of heritage has been extended to cover elements that until recently were not recognized as heritage. However, in spite of the advances that have been made in terms of awareness and recognition of any element of the past, it is also possible to affirm that the concept of patrimony continues to drag a certain bias, being a clear example of this the mining heritage as well as the landscapes that generated the mining. The article analyses how the exploitation of the mining heritage of a territory (Bages region, Barcelona province) can go a little further than what has already been done in Spain (eg from a tourist point of view), and how other options in which the mining landscape would play a relevant role would not have to be discarded. However, as we shall see, the approach to these other options has various conceptual, environmental, economic and social disadvantages that may render them unfeasible.

From the outset, the mining heritage faces the following limits:

- Conceptual limit: there is still a traditional view of heritage (castle, museum, monastery, cathedral, church, convent, palace ... versus an old mining or industrial site).
- Temporary limit: the mining heritage is fairly recent to be considered heritage. It would be dif-

ferentiating what is old from that which is not so much.

- Market limit: in Spain the mining heritage still has doubts about its economic profitability and with exceptions most mining resorts do not receive many visitors. The paper compares the three main Spanish mining parks: Riotinto, El Entrego and Cardona.
- Economic limit: the regeneration of old mining centres can initially overcome an initial decline situation after a period of deindustrialization but its real impact on the economic structure is not generally very noticeable. Economic feasibility and sustainability are in doubt.
- Administrative limit: local administrations can not face the revaluation of their mining heritage alone. Moreover in Spain there is also no solid public support to invest in what is very different from a revaluation of “standard” heritage.
- Landscape limit: although it is necessary to take into account the “peculiarity” of a mining landscape, as a valid element in a process of reconversion and territorial recovery, there may be some obstacles (aesthetic and environmental) to include the mining landscape as a part of the heritage. Here the author discusses the difference between “cultural heritage” and “territorial heritage” (territory not only as a mere “container” of resources but also as a resource itself).

The article continues with a second section that analyses the question of why it is difficult for mining heritage

to acquire some prestige labels, such as World Heritage. The previous step is to raise awareness of the public administrations (nationals and European) that makes it worthy of aid and initiatives for inclusion in tourism plans. This increased awareness of the mining heritage is an example of how step by step it has managed to achieve a certain level of “formalization”. Thus, surely the most outstanding initiative is the presentation of some nominations of mining sites to be included in the prestigious list of World Heritage of the UNESCO. However, on the one hand that there is now a greater official recognition of mining heritage, but on the other hand the article includes three tables showing that the presence of mining heritage is still very scarce when compared to other categories of heritage. The same is true for the industrial heritage and the productive landscapes also (in this case there is a tendency to value landscapes related to the agricultural sector, even though they are highly transformed and humanized). The question arises as to whether there is a bias to the “bucolic” landscapes and would leave mining landscapes in the background because they deviate from the more usual standard image of what a landscape “must be”? There is the impression that a landscape is positively valued because it brings together certain colours, tonalities, forms, human elements, and in contrast, the negative would be associated with this other type of landscapes that have always a deserved negative image. Of course this also indicates a limited view of what heritage is: not only the strictly mining heritage would not be valued in the same way as other elements of the past, but we would also be extending this vision to its environment, with which the premise of making this heritage understandable and how has been reached over the time, would be incomplete.

The paper continues with a third section dedicated to the question of mining landscape as an “anti-landscape”. The main idea is that a vision of the extensive mining heritage is needed, this heritage is not only a mine and other elements (material or tangible) that have made mining possible. On the contrary, it must also incorporate the landscape with the aim of providing a reading of mining landscapes different from the usual: landscape as a social construction, the witness of human activity in a place, the collective memory of a community local. However, as mentioned before, the concept of landscape is very subjective and at the same time “discriminatory”, some types of landscapes are valued more than others, and it is often forgotten that the mining landscape is also a landscape with a lot of history but anonymous for many people. Any landscape is part of the heritage that receives the

community that lives in a territory and therefore has to be valued as an element of its cultural heritage. Therefore, we can speak of the mining landscape as a “cultural landscape”, at the same level as many rural landscapes with much more prestige and recognition. In a way, it would be a matter of claiming the singular aesthetic of declining landscapes or the beauty of ugliness.

After this first section, the article continues with a second block that begins with a brief description of the evolution of mining in the territory analyzed (Bages region, Barcelona province) and some of its most important impacts: from four mining centres to two centres in the last years, the demographic impact and the landscape and environmental impact with the appearance of the rubbish dumps.

The article continues with a specific section on the landscape inheritance of the mining waste, and if they are to be considered a resource or rather a landscape inconvenience. Mining has radically altered the environment after decades of accumulation of waste. In addition to the enormous visual impact, it is also necessary to take into account the environmental impacts, being the most significant the salinization of water resources. And although until recently the question of the environmental impacts of certain industrial activities was not taken into account (the most important was the prevalence of mining), now it can be affirmed that there is an environmental conflict whose main agents are collective ecologists, local associations, lobbies for mining, companies, municipalities and the regional government.

The paper does not discuss the issue of environmental impacts, rather it focuses on the possibility of conceiving this heritage landscape with a point of view that has received very little attention: why not reuse the rubbish dumps based on the idea that it that before was not of tourist interest now it can be? Since one of the factors that motivates the movement of people to a place is the curiosity towards the unknown, the unusual, then, why not to make known the rubbish dumps among the public? There are several aspects that could justify that idea: a) a mining site has to be seen as anything but something beautiful, beautiful, bucolic, orderly and pleasant; b) the “aesthetic of the ugly” is also interesting; and c) the region of the Bages has some rubbish dumps that by their dimensions are very spectacular visually.

However, at the moment this has not been possible even in the mining park of Cardona (in operation since 1997); that is one of the most visited in Spain but has never thought of the option of including in the tourist product its two rubbish dumps (one has been restored

while the other is used to extract salt). In this particular case it can be said that now the rubbish dumps are an economic resource (at least until they are exhausted), as they could also be for other purposes.

The article does not question the economic logic of reusing the waste dumps, nor does it discuss the controversy of the environmental impacts they generate; It is questioned the suitability of its restoration or integration in the landscape environment, the return to an “original” state prior to the mining supposes the loss of another possible input, from the moment in which an authentically mining landscape would have, at least, some elements of special relevance that other more “conventional” landscapes (the rubbish dumps are also part of its local heritage and mining past). In other words, the difference between what is simply the visit of a mine or the possibility of visiting a mine and contemplates at the same time an authentically mining landscape.

The article ends with conclusions that highlight the following aspects:

- There is a need for what to do with some mining territories when mining disappears. This leads to consider tourism as a sector to promote and to see the heritage with a wider vision: heritage is no longer just monumental.
- The mining heritage continues to be in a second level in Spain and therefore, the mining landscape is also in a second level and sometimes it is rather an inconvenience.
- The managers of the mining parks do not consider the possibility of including the variable of the landscape in their tourism product, which may imply a certain lack of potential. On the contrary, they want to return the mining environment to a state prior to the irruption of modern and industrial mining.
- It is also said that the last project of reindustrialization of mining in the Bages, the so-called “Phoenix Project” (which foresees the closure of one of its mines) does not include the possibility of taking advantage of the rubbish dumps from the tourist point of view.
- Finally, the paper concludes with a comment on the possibility of considering the rubbish dumps from the point of view of geotourism, the tourism based on geological sites that according to their rarity, singularity, scientific importance and observation conditions can be considered as a geological heritage. The Bages is betting on this tourist modality and has achieved that its “Geological Park and Mining of Central Catalonia is included in the European Network of Geoparks, endorsed by Unesco. However, this Geopark does not see the rubbish dumps as a geological heritage.