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Abstract

Reuse of industrial spaces in the South bank of river Tagus' estuary

The industrialisation of the south bank shore of River Tagus' estuary was facilitated by the proximity to the capital, the readily available fluvial transport of raw materials and the construction of the southbound railroad system. During the 19th century, significant industrial developments were undertaken. These created a vast migratory flux, largely from the southern part of the country, of people hoping to find better life conditions. Some of the industries played a paternal role by creating social infra-structures to assist the workers' families, with the intent of maintaining the working population near the factories. As a consequence, housing, nurseries, schools, hospitals, canteens, social shops, etc. were built nearby these plants. At the turn of the century, CUF - "Companhia União Fabril" - created the largest Portuguese chemical industrial complex, where one can still find many of these social infra-structures.

By the 21st century the old industry has ceased its functions. The closure of the plants gave way to their abandonment, ruin and consequent dismantlement. However, encouraging changes took place in some of the old structures. In the area under scrutiny there are some interesting cases, especially in the County of Barreiro, where industrial and social structures have been adapted and given new use. The paper will present these factory plants and show how these infra-structures due to their grandeur and architectural character leverage new usages resulting in the safeguard of these historical buildings.

The sources for this paper were mainly supplied by the industries themselves, by the municipalities and by precious testimonials given by local people who knew the structures well having worked there. However, many documents have been lost. In addition, frequently industries were not registered, which makes it difficult to obtain any information regarding their initial purpose and facilities.

In Portugal the concern with Industrial Archeology is recent. The Portuguese Association for Industrial Heritage, having as its main objective the promotion of the safeguard of this heritage, was founded only in 1997; much work of documentation and analysis remains to be done.