
Past mining areas as rural capital – Perspectives from Bucovina and Wallonia

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Abstract

Due to the economic and social trauma caused by the closure of the sites, the dangers of abandoned sites and the soil pollution, the youthfulness of the vestiges, the symbol of the failure of an industrial development model, on-field mining remains were not considered as valuable heritage, particularly in rural spaces. In the dominant imagery of rural idyll, industrial mining and countryside concepts do not fit together (Cloke *et al.*, 1996; Edelblutte & Legrand, 2012). Yet, such activities have a long history in some areas. The closure of mines results in wastelands with which stakeholders have nowadays various interests and concerns. Some of these wastelands could become places of heritage preservation and valorization (Fagnoni, 2003; Kitchen *et al.*, 2006; Roth, 2007; Mitchell & O’Neill, 2016), other are neglected. In this paper, we consider old mining sites in two very different contexts, a post-socialist Carpathians area and a Western European area that knew precocious industrialisation. How these past mining areas could develop and enhance rural development and heritage landscapes? The mining wastelands are defined as abandoned areas where old traces of past mining are still present. These areas are waiting for a new evaluation in order to create rural development strategies and local projects. We study how to preserve and protect these authentic high value landscapes and what can be proposed as type of rural strategy and rural landscape management. How to reallocate the space of wasteland according to the valorisation of cultural and natural heritage? Through qualitative document analysis and stakeholders interviews, with the help of groups of master students, we are conducting this discussion on the basis of six case studies in Bucovine and Wallonia. If different scenarios are possible to allow these sites to be recognized, saved, protected, enhanced, developed for tourists and inhabitants, they must confront the divergent heritage, cultural, biological, urban and socio-economic interests and issues of local and regional actors.

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