

Preserving the Memory of Work and Associated Techniques Through Industrial Heritage in Spain

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Technological and cultural advances have meant that many once commonplace modes of production and trades have lost their usefulness and raison d'être, giving way to new, more efficiency and productivity. In numerous cases, these trades and their associated knowledge, techniques and ways of life possess high intangible ethnographic values. The aim of this study was to determine and analyze some of the key strategies for keeping these techniques alive so that they do not fall into oblivion and to transmit knowledge of them to future generations. The study method was based on dialogical fieldwork conducted with the aim of learning about the human experience of protagonists in various industrial activities. Our results show that it is vital to maintain industrial heritage as a witness to these forms of production and to disseminate knowledge of different work cultures through the voices of their protagonists. This can be achieved by recording former workers' narratives, which may provide valuable information concerning these individuals' work identities. The results also suggest the route to industrial heritage conservation often involves the museumization of these spaces or their conversion into cultural centers. As part of this process, it is essential to give a voice to the protagonists and ensure the participation of former, mostly retired workers in any associated heritage dissemination activities. We conclude that contextualizing industrial heritage is an important means to comprehend and appreciate its symbolic component and to understand the underlying technological, social, and cultural changes.

Keywords: industrial heritage, memory, anthropology of work, cultural change, occupational identity

INTRODUCTION

The study of industrial heritage takes us back to forms of production and ways of life that, to a certain extent, have already been superseded. The unstoppable advance of technology makes this type of heritage very vulnerable. Likewise, this is affected by globalization and corporate greed for the lowest-cost workers in developing countries that send jobs abroad to cheap-labor countries. This is the case in Spain and EU and is what in America has been de-industrialized urban landscapes described as “Rust Belts.” Frequently,

the guarantors of memory are the people and workers, who are already retired and who dedicate part of their free time, as volunteers, to maintaining this technology and proudly displaying much of this knowledge in which they have been protagonists.

This contribution is part of a broader project that attempts, from an anthropological perspective, to survey, inventory and value industrial heritage, its work cultures and its tangible and intangible aspects, defined as the entire set of elements of industrial exploitation generated by economic activities, with certain productive processes that may have been developed under artisanal or industrial forms. These forms, properly speaking, have generated, without a doubt, a cultural landscape of enormous anthropological value. Their analysis is part of this research because they are the result of the activity over a territory, obeying a process of anthropization from the environmental point of view, and it should be added that they are articulators of the architecture and technologies of the memories of work (Sobrino-Simal 2009).

Under these parameters, we are here to show the theoretical framework, in which we specify the study objectives, the methodology used and the results, which we structure in three sections. First, anthropology and industrial heritage are linked; then, the work identity and collective memory are related and finally are linked with aspects such as age, volunteering and resilience in the treatment of this industrial heritage. We end with the discussion and conclusion.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In Spain, anthropologists only really began to study work in industrial societies in the 1970s, while before that they had mainly analyzed work patterns and processes in pre-industrial, rural and peasant societies. The study of the industrial world in Spain was pioneered by the late Claudio Esteva Fabregat (1984:11), who contended that cultural anthropology was a cutting-edge discipline because it was the first to produce scientific knowledge about a part of contemporary humanity — the so-called primitive peoples— whose material evolution had ended. He also argued that the methods of cultural anthropology should be extended to a close analysis of complex industrial societies since this would facilitate ethnographic investigations, no matter how complicated. In his work, *Antropología Industrial*, published in 1973, he (1984: 19) stated “The organisation of modern industrial work entails dynamic relationships between machine technology on the one hand, and human behaviour on the other”. The importance of such relationships resides not only in the location where they occur (the factory) but also in their effect on social forces and the associated milieu, such as the family or the social group. We are thus immersed in a world of relations where work acts as a marker of identity and profoundly influences the future of a society. Even so, it should be noted that the anthropological gaze has primarily focused on matters related to the technology of production and social issues associated with given occupational activities, sometimes leaving aside such important questions as workers’ identity, memory, representations and discourses. We contend that it is precisely in this association between work and identity that we find the relationship between industrial heritage conservation and the maintenance of work identity, as we shall discuss below. We define industrial heritage as established in the Spanish National Plan for Industrial Heritage (act. 2016) not only as movable or immovable goods generated by the economic system via the activities of extraction, transformation, transport or distribution, but also as systems of sociability associated with the culture of work, which are the ones that interest us most in this particular study.

Under this general approach the theoretical framework of this paper is based on two complementary paradigms for new heritage conservation strategies (Álvarez 2011). On the one hand, it is based on the paradigm of cultural landscapes, in which the construction of an industrial environment that has been fossilized, due to the lack of transformation, fully conforms to the concept of "inherited landscape" defended by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS 1965), as evidence of productive techniques and past activities that reach the value of civilization. That is, it refers to creations, large or small, that over time have acquired cultural significance (Moreno 2012). For his part, Leniaud (1992) stated that when an asset has lost its use value it can be considered as a heritage asset, which is fully consistent with the type of elements that we are considering in this work. Spain is a territory rich in fossilized industrial heritage, both from coal mining and from the transforming industry and steel industry.

Meanwhile, since 2000, the documents that support the National Plan of Industrial Heritage of Spain (Ministry of Culture 2015) have contributed to the consideration of the "industrial era" as a substantial part of the history of Spain of the last two centuries. In this way, the industrial landscape, previously little valued and relegated to abandonment, perhaps due to a lack of historical perspective, has begun to acquire cultural and social relevance. Plans have been proposed for the conservation of its material and immaterial testimonies linked to the memory of work and of the place.

The other great paradigm is that of the necessary reuse of heritage as an effective strategy for its recovery. Generally, the post-industrial heritage has been little or no valued at all until now, since it has been abandoned due to obsolescence, marginalized citizen perception and quite inadequate protection. For this reason, it is a very vulnerable heritage, nowadays exposed to the debate of its musealization or reuse (Mora, Rueda and Cruz 2013). The first is the option most valued by citizens and politicians, although it is limited by a lack of budgets and, on occasions, by the excessive real estate package affected. Less enthusiasm is aroused by the reuse strategy, and especially for those in which there is a commitment to private management of public or privately owned heritage (Marrodán 2011).

Although we are talking about material culture, we have to take into account the importance of archaeological explanations of both ancient and contemporary sites, as they can be very timely. For them, the work of Rathje (1982), Rathje and Murphy (1992) and Rathje, Shanks *et al* (2013) can be very useful, but we will try to leave this type of explanation to the margins.

In this respect, the aim of this article is to elucidate and analyze trades and their associated techniques and ways of life that have now become part of intangible ethnographic heritage, and to identify some of the key strategies for keeping these techniques alive so that knowledge of them can be transmitted to future generations.

METHODS

Through the ethnographic method, we carried out field work (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007), in order to learn about the human experience of so many years of work in industrial activities. For brevity's sake, the present article does not report the field work per se, but instead discusses the reflections it prompted. The kind of study was based on dialogical fieldwork conducted with the aim of learning about the human experience of protagonists in various industrial activities. The techniques used come from dialogical research, according to the proposal of Bajtin (2003), in which the informants participate in the field work, know it and can assess the elaborations and results that the anthropologist can make and gain, that is, the informant has the right to reply and can make their own perception. Thus, the methodology used is generated by relating three associated concepts: dialogue, interaction and critical communication in which the people involved in the processes in the field of industrial heritage participate by revealing the facts, negotiating understandings, expanding explanations, and proposing practices capable of transformation.

Another conceptual reference in this dialogical approach to Bubnova's (1996) rereading of this technique: first is the experience, recognized as the social process of internalizing everyday experiences with the "other", with our informants, i.e. the people who have collaborated in the work of field, which are assimilated in their awareness. Then the assessment is presented, corresponding to the endowment of meaning of an experience by the individual. This process produces a redefinition of the lived experience (Medvedev and Bakhtin 1994).

Another important concept is that of surplus vision. It is the portion of the "I" that the "other" possesses from the subject since identity depends on the relationship with the "other". This is built to an infinitesimal power, and it is unfinished. There will always be "others" to meet and they will participate in the construction of the "I" (Alejos 2006). It is in this dialogue, or in this dialogical context, that the fieldwork has been built. Here it is important to highlight the fact that the main criteria for the construction of the fieldwork have been the elements, experiences, and significant processes that through this dialogue have been significant for the participants. This step is carried out in an exercise of extra position, with the ability to change the threshold in different circumstances, "to momentarily abandon their own axiological axis and

move to the place of the other" (Alejos 2006). In this way we speak of a dialogical process, or we speak of a dialogue. This dialogical methodological construction offers multiple applications for studying cultural heritage, since it has several faces: when speaking of an in-depth reading, reference is made to identifying how time, space and the framework of relationships are related in the experience of the subjects studied, since in-depth reading allows us to answer the whys and wherefores of social facts. In our case, the references that our informants make to industrial heritage are fundamental, as lived heritage and of which they have the capacity to disseminate and from which both the public and anthropologists can learn and practice, investigate or inventory. This practice of dialogic anthropology is very timely in this work because it leads to studying the dialogue processes "Me-other" in the construction of identities, essential in our case to talk about work identities.

In this way, the inter-subjective and dialectical relationship that arises from this type of "doubly reflexive ethnography" (Dietz 2011) between the researcher and the actor- investigated subject, maintained from dialogical ethnography, in interviews and discussion groups employees (Bertely 2007; Dietz 2012), for better feedback and debate between informants and ethnographer, generates a continuous and reciprocal process of criticism and self-criticism between both parties. Dialogic research then requires a methodological refinding of questioning, describing, relating, listening, giving opinions, interpreting and understanding. The dialogical orientation seeks knowledge in the interaction (conflictive and stressful) of the subjects, recognizing that the processes of interpreting and giving meaning to reality require recognition and dialogue between cultural intelligences and praxical consciences. It is through inter-subjectivity, interaction with the environment and the capacity for reflection and self-reflection that the most reflexive and critical analysis of reality is fostered. In this way, it is a process of building knowledge based on communication and dialogue and it is a process of social research that, as a social practice of resistance, does not operate from the spontaneous; rather, it is an intentional and formative practice that builds environments for reflection and self-reflection (critical), and inter-subjectivity (communicative). It is therefore based on a conception that starts from the contextualized actions of the different social actors and the interactions that occur, understood as generators of knowledge.

The field work was developed with 28 people from three associations related to industrial heritage, its dissemination and conservation: Cultural Volunteering for the Elderly, Association of Friends of the Telegraph and Association of Friends of Industrial Museums and Cultural Volunteering. In this regard, the work previously carried out by these people, age and gender (19 males and 9 females) have been considered markers of identity, and as such are fundamental in the construction of work identities in their connection with industrial heritage.

RESULTS

This section is structured in three parts. First, anthropology and industrial heritage are linked; then, the work identity and collective memory are related and finally this is linked with aspects such as age, volunteering and resilience in the treatment of this industrial heritage.

Anthropology and Industrial Heritage

The UNESCO has defined a cultural heritage in a broad sense as being both a product and a process that provides a society with a wealth of resources that are inherited from the past, created in the present and passed on to future generations for their survival. Heritage is very important for culture because it constitutes the "cultural capital" of contemporary societies, as reflected in the document Culture for Development Indicators (UNESCO 2014). Heritage enables the transmission of experiences, skills and knowledge between generations. In this respect, cultural practices strengthen individual and collective identity and encompass the cultural practices of enthusiasts and participants in cultural associations as active members.

From an anthropological point of view, there is general consensus that a heritage is a "social construction" in the sense that it does not exist in nature and does not occur in all human societies or in all historical periods. However, according to Llorenç Prats (2004:22), the determining factor of a heritage is

“its symbolic nature, its capacity to symbolically represent an identity”. According to the same author, this symbolic effectiveness depends on many factors, including the contextualization of symbols with the capacity to express a relationship synthetically and emotionally between ideas and values. Heritage is therefore understood as a social practice, a process by which some elements of cultural life come to be understood within this new category. Furthermore, heritage has become an object of consumption in recent times, and the processes of heritage production offer economic benefits through its use to attract tourism (Vicente and del Mármol 2017). The results of the fieldwork show that, physically represented by old factories, mines, or railways, for example, industrial heritage is viewed from an anthropological perspective as a scenario where contexts can be recreated and where one can “breathe in” past ways of life, modes of production and the human relationships that had developed over decades within a space shared by innumerable workers. This is what makes some of the retired industrial workers proud of their work past. And that, considering that the working conditions were not good compared to the current situation, says Raul Pérez.

For us, according to Luis Martínez, another retired worker, it is important to know that those places that are visited, which are now museums, were our workplaces. Álvarez-Areces (2009) has indicated that without people, industrial heritage buildings and machines would be devoid of meaning, and that it is not possible to preserve, interpret or showcase such heritage without including a strategy for protecting its context. Cultural heritage needs to be vibrant and dynamic, as part of collective memory and contextualized in space and time. However, in order to showcase industrial heritage, it is essential to study work cultures, defined as a lived experience of work processes, and an experience which, as Palenzuela (1995) has noted, generates technical and professional knowledge as well as a worldview that is embodied in specific social practices both within and beyond the workplace. In this respect, ethnology is not concerned solely with the past or lost pre-industrial ways of life; industrial heritage also forms part of an urban, industrial way of life and contemporary reality, and has the same anthropological value, since it is an integral part of recent memory and human experience. As our informants point out, it is not just about the work carried out there, it is also the accumulated experiences, the experiences among colleagues and teaching apprentices, a lifetime at work that marks the era of development in this country. Therefore, its ethnological facet should not be circumscribed to the pre-modern or industrial activities associated with modernity, because this would be to exclude activities and lifestyles associated with the world of work in factories and working-class neighborhoods from anthropological study (Hernández 2011). In our opinion, such reductionism would generate an incomplete historicist vision of ethnological heritage, since it is precisely the preservation of industrial heritage that endows a sense of historical continuity and identity to communities with an industrial tradition.

On Work Identity and Collective Memory

There are many definitions of work in the literature. For example, Rieznik (2001:1) defines work as the means by which people can adapt the environment to their needs, as a condition for their very survival. In his 19th century essay, “The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man” (1876), Engels (2011) states that labor is the basic and fundamental condition of all human life, and that labor created humankind itself. The origin and spread of food production systems led to the formation of increasingly complex political and social systems, so that food production ultimately wrought major changes in human life.

The material cultural object of study is a product of culture and is linked to technological progress, referring to artifacts as adaptive means to the environmental or physical environment, whose transformation is due to the changes suffered by the non-material culture: values, norms, morals, customs, purposes, and ideology (Sarmiento Ramírez 2007)

To showcase industrial heritage, it is essential to study work cultures, defined as a lived experience of work processes, an experience which generates technical and professional knowledge as well as a worldview that is embodied in specific social practices both within and beyond the workplace. This is what the discussion group during the field work argues regarding work in the industrial and manufacturing sector, “it is not only the work carried out, it is not only the position held, it is a life linked to your co-workers, by

profession, in which you are promoting, you are teaching other younger people, you are gaining affection for what you do and for others to learn what you teach, you see that there is a continuity. When that continuity was broken, we retired, and this museum gave us the possibility of a new life, in a form of continuity, although different”, these workers concurred.

Work identity can be viewed as that part of the personality which refers to the individual but operates in relation to others; the elements of a socio-professional identity can be seen as a body of knowledge about work techniques as well as a series of ideas, opinions and perceptions about work that workers construct, develop and share during the work process in concert with other subjects. In fact, they refer to their work identity, to what it means to "be a coal miner", "to be a telegraph operator", "to be a miller". There is something that differentiates them from the rest of the workers, and that is given by the working conditions, situation, and knowledge to be applied.

Hence, industrial heritage informs us not only about material objects, tools, factories and buildings, but also about working techniques and the human experience, motivations and expectations of the workers who carried out that work. It even tells us about the industrial actions represented in various displays of solidarity, and the occupational accidents they had, which will surely persist in their collective memory, to be recounted from generation to generation through the process of acculturation, and in many cases will become part of a workforce's epic. Examples include a mining accident at the Santa Eulalia mine in Langreo (Asturias) in January 1963, which cost the lives of 21 people, and a railway accident at Torre del Bierzo (León) in 1944. Official figures at the time recorded 78 deaths, but the true number was clearly silenced by the Franco regime because later studies have calculated a death toll of between 500 and 800. These unfortunate incidents undoubtedly reinforce work identity and a collective memory that often manages to survive despite the censorship of those in power and the silence of historians. Some of our informants remember that event, which lives on in the memory of those who lost a family member, and this is what arises in the field work: "life is made up of things that are worth living, such as the devotion to developing a trade, which we had before, but also because of these tragic things", as Rosalia points out. As Eco (2002) has observed, "it is the memory of the past that tells us why we are what we are and gives us our identity".

Age, Volunteering and Resilience

There are many stereotypes associated with age in relation to the world of work. Typically, these stereotypes tend to be positive about young people and negative about older people. The main negative ones associated with older people relate to memory, learning ability, fear of technological and physical change, changes in productivity and performance, and wage and health costs; the few positive stereotypes concern loyalty, reliability and experience. Age is very important for individual identity and can have a major impact on an individual's behavior and life. This is something that, according to our informants, was seen in some people in recent times: "young people who thought they knew everything, had no interest in a trade and just wanted to hang out. They have not been able to develop values linked to the job they perform because they did not have the attitude to do so. They are people who do not have the capacity to value the experience and the perfection and care that it entails. These later will not know how to teach their trade to others", says Raul Pérez. It was the American gerontologist, Robert N. Butler (2009), who first coined the term "ageism", back in the 1960s. Ageism refers to age discrimination based on stereotypes that do not reflect reality and mainly concern people over 60. According to the WHO, it is one of the most ubiquitous social prejudices and is sometimes referred to as the third "ism" in terms of discrimination, behind racism and sexism. Age discrimination directly affects older adults' health and self-esteem by dismissing their individuality, life experience and active potentials. It also leaves a mark on society's collective unconscious, creating a negative image of what it means to grow old.

With the arrival of retirement, it becomes necessary to promote healthy ageing and positive attitudes towards age, because the perception of being pushed aside or displaced in our daily lives can prompt a crisis of identity and self-realization. Indeed, one of the rites of passage in the contemporary world is that of retirement. Thus, we reproduce initiation rituals not only at early ages, in relation to education, school or military service, for example, but also in adulthood, and this can be an intense, stressful experience or even a dramatic rupture (Lagunas 2009). In this respect, resilience is fundamental, and has to do with how we

interpret, handle, and overcome adversity. One of the challenges noted in the report on older adults in Spain in 2016 (IMSERSO 2017) is the need for the public authorities to design and implement active ageing policies, because increasing longevity offers new opportunities associated with the active participation of older people. In the course of the field work, we were able to verify that our informants knew these programs well, but they preferred to choose what to do. In this respect, voluntary work offers an opportunity to overcome adversity and foster resilience among retired workers.

Retired people's involvement in industrial museums could help promote resilience, and one avenue for this is voluntary work. Two essential aspects of voluntary work are volunteer training and social recognition. Many volunteers in such museums seek to "feel useful" and enjoy developing their skills in retirement. As may be supposed, there can be no better informed people in this field than the retirees themselves, who have decades of experience in their jobs. Furthermore, they are usually highly motivated, provided that their work is appreciated. Volunteers are more often than not truly proud to excel at a job they are passionate about. It is the small gestures of appreciation that reward them, such as an interesting question, a smile or a show of interest.

Initiatives such as those launched by a Spanish organization for third age education (CEATE, Confederación Española de Aula de Tercera Edad) are based on the idea that a role suitable for older adults to play in this field is fundamental. Their voluntary and altruistic contribution benefits society in general, by providing access to cultural, historical, and artistic riches, to young students in particular, by sharing their extensive experience and knowledge, and also with or between older or retired people themselves, by improving their well-being, participation and quality of life and by promoting active ageing as opposed to the passivity, boredom or isolation that afflict many of today's older adults and, our informants, as has already been said, are proud of it.

Closely linked to the term identity that we have been talking about, and especially to professional identity is people's participation in activities that are in some way related to it. The primary avenue for this is voluntary work, for example, where retired workers work alongside active workers, participate in the production of publications related to the trade or work carried out over the years or collaborate with industrial museums not only as advisers or voluntary guides contributing their knowledge and experience, but also on many occasions repairing or maintaining material objects that also form part of intangible heritage, given that in addition to their use value and formal value, material objects also have a symbolic, communicative value. As Raul says, collaboration is always open. Such objects convey messages from the past or the present, and it is through them that societies express their ideas. Traditional knowledge about production activities and manufacturing processes and techniques is particularly important in this field of study.

In this regard, we would like to highlight the work of three retired members of the "Asociación de Amigos del Telégrafo" [Association of Friends of the Telegraph], who restore and maintain the apparatus used in years gone by to send telegraph messages, which are on display in the Postal and Telegraph Museum in Madrid. Their work is essential to keep the parts in working order. Such is their commitment to this task that the money for maintenance often comes out of their own pockets, but they are pleased to do so. As one of them says, when you get a device working you feel proud of the work you have done.

There are many stories, and occasionally criticisms, that we could include in relation to this subject. Juan López, a retired telegraph worker and volunteer for the Association of Friends of the Telegraph relates with some nostalgia his opinion of the current Postal and Telegraph Museum in Madrid:

It is with nostalgia that I am reminded of the chapel inside the Cybele Palace [formerly the Palace of Communications] in Madrid, with its long windows, paintings and ribbed vault, where the Apostle St. James, Patron Saint of Spain and of telegraph operators, was venerated. (...) I don't like the area where the Postal and Telegraph Museum is currently located, it doesn't make any sense. I believe that by virtue of its history, it should be returned to the Cybele Palace in Madrid, a workplace that holds so many memories for all of us. When I see this building, I feel as if the accelerated hustle and bustle and noise of the heart of the Post and Telegraph Corps still beats within its silence.

Juan López's story reflects a longing for times past that will almost certainly never return, but which remain internalized in many individuals and communities as part of their identity. The former Palace of

Communications is currently home to Madrid City Council, so it is unlikely that it could also house the museum, which is currently located in a perhaps rather nondescript building beyond the city center. But there is no doubt that for Juan López, his museum deserves to be housed in the Cybele Palace, which underscores the extent to which work becomes a mark of identity when a person is proud of it.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The analysis of work cultures is crucial because the material culture is intimately related to the economic and social history of a territory, within a social environment. In this sense, anthropology has become a binding factor in this social history, because the study of daily life in work contexts encompasses the culture of a territory as an appropriate and socially constructed space for different uses (Paz 2019). It enables the analysis of the centrality of work in social life, not only because of the production of goods, but also because of its effects on social reproduction, cultures, and economic spaces, at the same time generating cultures of the territory due to economic specialization and its associated life forms (Palenzuela 1995). Industrial anthropology, under this global perspective, and articulated to ethnography, gives us the possibility to enter the world of work, and allows us to make visible the material and immaterial culture of those who gave life to the artifacts and technologies that subjectified the human work, establishing in daily life and being articulated to the laborer world, production cultures that gave our area a unique identity (Paz 2019).

As Narotzky (2004:57) has observed, social relations of production derive from the way in which cooperation—whether voluntary or enforced—and coordination take place between those who contribute to the productive process. Thus, analyses of the labor process can shed light on the everyday experience of work. Palenzuela and Lozano (2016) have defined work as any action that has the main economic goal of producing goods or providing services, and contend that work is a marker of identity, and is linked to the construction of behaviors and ideas and occupies a central place in people's lives. Consequently, it could be argued that in this productive activity, which is fundamental for human subsistence, work is a major factor in forging identity. Work identity can be viewed as that part of the personality that refers to the individual but operates in relation to others; the elements of a socio-professional identity can be seen as a body of knowledge about work techniques as well as a series of ideas, opinions and perceptions about work that workers construct, develop and share during the work process in concert with other subjects (Télliez 2002). As noted by Esteva Fabregat (1957), there is also a series of intertwined factors that affect worker productivity, such as job satisfaction, aptitudes, a sense of cooperation or resistance to sociability, trust in work relations, and agreement or disagreement with management.

These inter-relate with the production of ideas linked to the value system and personality ethic of each individual in his or her specific social environment. Usually originating in the family or group, this value system is transferred to the factory environment, where it drives a significant proportion of human behavior and triggers different emotions in each individual in relation to the work he or she performs. Within the world of work that concerns us here, and continuing with the concept of work culture, Isidoro Moreno (1997:21) has contended that a structural system of collective identities is generated within each social relation, including productive (class and socio-professional), sex-gender and ethnic identities. The individual does not behave in everyday life as if he or she had a sole identity; rather, he or she has a series of intertwined identities. In addition to the personal identity that distinguishes us through our physical, biological and psychological features, there is a social identity based on the set of beliefs, feelings and customs that we share with other members of our social group (Álvarez Munárriz 2009: 310). Furthermore, we should not forget that memory is linked to both individual and collective identity, and it is from this perspective that collective memories are constructed.

It is also worth noting the educational nature of the visits, many of which are attended by groups of schoolchildren and often involve thematic workshops run by volunteer guides. Such cases bring together children's curiosity and former workers' years of experience and desire to teach, resulting in valuable intergenerational feedback for both parties. In turn, this intergenerational dialogue produces a cultural rapprochement between different age groups that contributes to the exchange of traditions, facilitates

learning and knowledge of our accumulated cultural baggage and, most importantly, promotes respect for the work of our elders. Our study reveals the older volunteers' motivation on the one hand and the schoolchildren's desire to learn on the other, enabling the latter see in situ what they have so far only seen in books and to hear first-hand explanations.

Collaboration between the public authorities and voluntary associations is fundamental. In many cases, the contextualization of a museum or factory is far more important than the simple exhibition of objects. The main way to promote industrial heritage is to explain it, raising people's awareness of their past and of where they come from, and enabling them to learn about modes of production that have disappeared or become obsolete due to inefficiency. Industrial heritage is fundamental in imparting knowledge and gaining an understanding of technological change and, more importantly in our view, of social changes. Above and beyond its economic value, it has a symbolic value, because normally, behind each machine there was an operator who ran it. The innumerable human stories behind each machine and each factory can only be transmitted and in some way recreated by the bearers of memory. This is why the work of interpreting industrial heritage carried out by active and retired workers is so important.

Meanwhile, we remain astounded by the ongoing destruction of our industrial heritage. As we were writing this article, a report appeared in the *Diario de León* newspaper that a political party had condemned the demolition of the only mine in León which was going to be declared a Cultural Heritage Site, i.e. the mine of Ciñera, of which today only the head frame remains standing. We say astounded because by destroying our industrial heritage they are effectively destroying or rendering invisible our most recent history. Once this heritage has gone, how will we explain to future generations what our ways of life were like?

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