

Urban Regeneration Knowledge Base

A thematic review of
projects and resources

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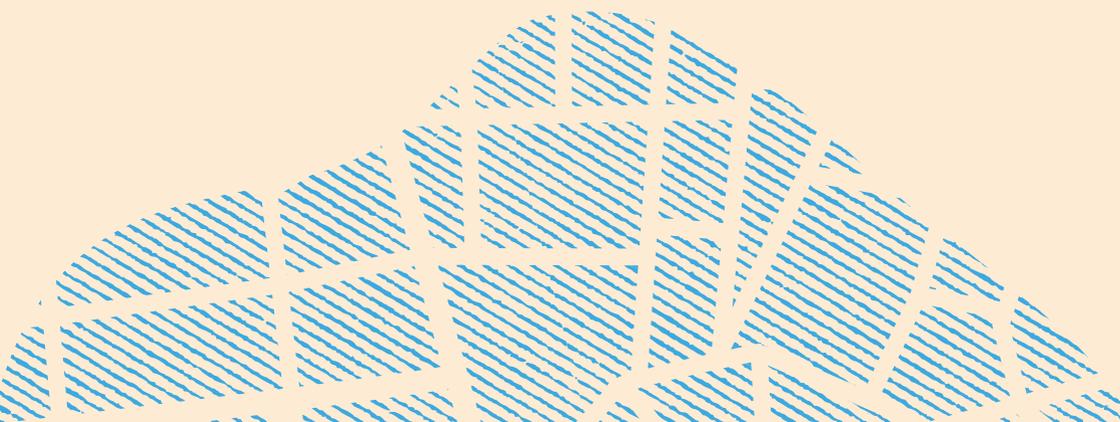


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1.

Introduction



Urban regeneration is a broad and multi-faceted issue; it brings together multiple stakeholders and actors across governance levels and professional disciplines of city making. It impacts on us all; the socio-economic changes it brings are never contained within a space, or set of spaces, nor with a specific time, but impact on the relationships of people to the places they live work and play.

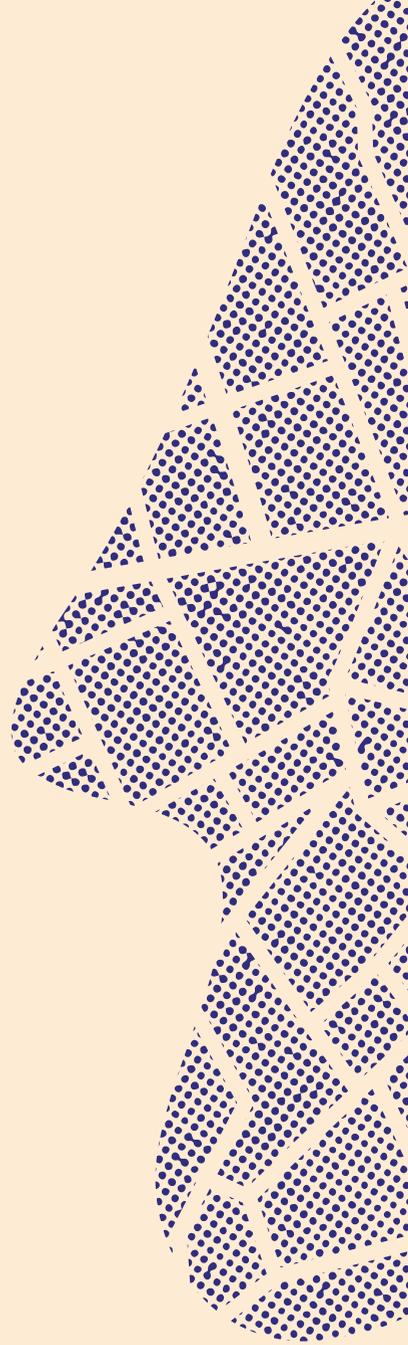
Within this context, a way to do regeneration with the community in mind and with culture at heart has been traced by Trans Europe Halles itself – the collective experience of a trans-European network repurposing former industrial spaces for arts and culture through community- and citizen-led initiatives since 1983 across Europe. It is through such a lens that the Urban Regeneration Knowledge Base (KB) was conceived. Developed as part of the Cultural Creative Spaces & Cities (CCSC) project it brings together projects and resources on urban regeneration, with a particular focus on: industrial heritage; culture and creative industries; public space; community building; participation.

Identifying the content of the KB was based on a systematic search and review of case study literature (see bibliography, section 9) that provided an initial set of sufficiently and critically documented case studies from which further research into key background resources and complementary material was undertaken.

Following a final selection and review of 55 projects and 45 resources in relation to urban regeneration across Europe, this report introduces a contextual and theoretical background for each of the key themes present and briefly reviews a number of related projects and resources. Sections of the report are by no means exhaustive of each theme; the intention is to introduce key concepts and related discourse in order to enable a critical understanding of the material present in the KB and highlight some of the questions to be further explored.

2.

**Industrial
heritage**



The economic transition of much of Europe's economies from the 1970s onwards away from manufacturing and towards services released a vast and diverse constellation of post-industrial spaces in and around cities across the continent. Sites that have since long been functioning as an integral component of their cities' operational and productive model, from small-scale manufacturing units and industries to large scale energy plants and their associated infrastructure, started to fall into disuse; globalisation, under the era's predominant neoliberal paradigm, dislocated much of low-skilled industrial production and manufacturing into developing economies and markets with lower labour costs. This fragmented post-industrial European territory constituted a challenge, on how to deal with the sudden loss of function of these urban areas, their ambiguity and openness to unpredictable and spontaneous use, and at the same presented an opportunity in the form of spatial assets with potential to improve cities and their citizens' quality of life.

It should be noted that such sites were not immediately or automatically considered 'industrial heritage' worthy of preservation and valorisation. In fact as Preite notes¹, there are two phases that define the approach towards post-industrial sites from the 1970s onwards:

an early one that considers them purely as land assets to be redeveloped, disregarding their memory as industrial spaces and their architectural presence, even purposefully aiming to erase them considering them a negative image for the city's decline, and a latter phase that assigns them historical and architectural value, perceiving them as heritage to be preserved, readapted, and valued.

Over the past decades a great number of projects, research work, international and interdisciplinary collaborations as well as local and community-led initiatives, has increased the appreciation and understanding of industrial heritage and its role in urban development amongst different stakeholders and professionals. At the same time a body of international references and guidelines have been developed. In 2003 the 'Nizhny Tagil Charter' for the Industrial Heritage², was adopted by The International Committee for Conservation of Industrial Heritage, TICCIH³, one of the first instances at international level to recognise and give guidance specifically on industrial heritage, its protection and conservation. ICOMOS, the international Council on Monuments and Sites⁴, jointly with TICCIH, have later adopted the 'Dublin Principles'⁵ for the conservation of sites, areas and landscapes, in 2011.

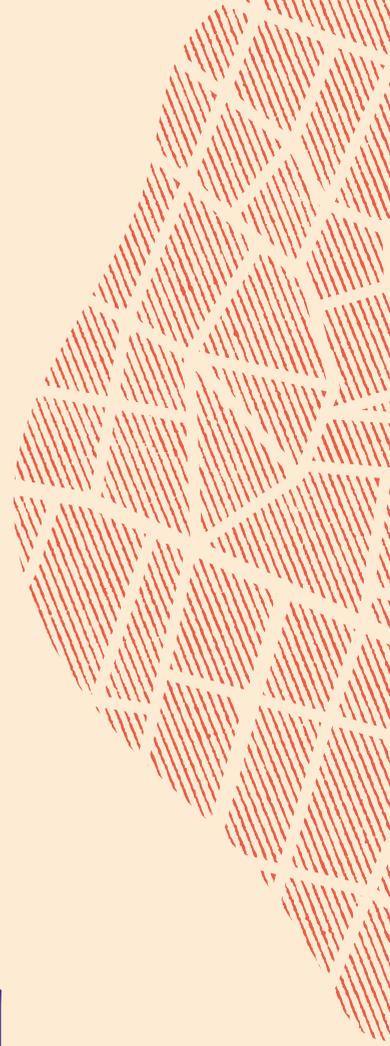
As industrial heritage becomes a resource and a tool in the regeneration of European cities, it interweaves discourses in heritage and planning, including notably with regards to a) gentrification and b) the value and nature of historical memory within a new architectural environment and new programmes of activities and uses.

The story of the Flon⁶ in Lausanne is illustrative of the development of many post-industrial sites repurposed through the arts and culture across Europe: a set of derelict warehouses originally revived by artists and citizen led initiatives start to gradually increase the value of their broader area until this becomes unaffordable to its own community; regeneration ultimately becoming gentrification. Caterham Barracks⁷ on the other hand demonstrates how a community planning approach has resulted in a mixed-used neighbourhood that become an example of socially sustainable regeneration. The involvement of the local community in its development but more importantly the formalisation of long-term community-led governance and ownership structures through the creation of a Community Development Trust were fundamental to its success.

Repurposing those former industrial sites for cultural activities and mixed-use housing development respectively demonstrates how industrial heritage can be reconciled with new uses and activities, as is the case with the rest of the projects, save a limited cases where buildings are preserved mainly as monuments with no other uses. In two such cases, Leopold Station⁸, in Brussels, and the Bežigrad Stadium, in the Fond houses⁹ area, in Ljubljana, it is worth noting how community and grassroots movements have embraced the preservation of cultural heritage in their campaigns to resist top-down development plans that put in danger the social and cultural character of their place – demonstrating in essence how informal bottom-up processes and community activism can indeed guard architectural and industrial heritage when this is under threat by official agents and formal city institutions.

3.

**Culture and
creative
industries**



While human creativity, art, and culture have flourished in cities since ancient times, many point to the post-industrial era as the period when creativity and cultural activities ‘had a critical impact’ on the development of cities and urban regeneration¹⁰. This is hardly a coincidence: the economic and spatial void following industrial decline in the West offered the opportunity for a new kind of industry, the creative industry. The discourses around “the creative city”¹¹ and “the creative class”¹² bring into focus the role of culture, arts, creativity, as key agents in urban development. At the same time the European political project embraces the idea of European Capital of Culture, conceived by the then Minister for Culture of Greece, Melina Mercouri, and initiated together with her French counterpart Jack Lang, as a year-long cultural event – a celebration of Europe’s diversity and cultural richness. Creativity and culture as a key sector of urban life is backed by an EU-wide political commitment, facilitated by the spatial voids of the post-industrial economy, and explored as means to the regeneration of cities and their citizens’ wellbeing. Last but not least, arts and culture are employed as a means to promote cities as a destination for tourism but also as a more long-term desirable location for an affluent class attracted by its ‘creative offer’.

If creativity and innovation—now in terms of culture and the arts, in the past as industry and manufacturing—goes hand in hand with urban development, it is worth unpacking the concept to more critically assess whose city and whose culture is being regenerated and promoted. For while major cultural events, arts, and creative clusters, have transformed the face of many cities and their experience, their impact has almost never been equitably distributed amongst urban populations neither can arts and culture as an economic industry ever contain the richness and diversity of culture and artistic creation.

The story of Berlin’s Tacheles¹³ is an emblematic example of how such citizen-led cultural and artistic creation has revitalised a former industrial space and its local community operating through a model of social solidarity that celebrated and encouraged a culture made from the bottom-up; more than culture as art and creation, Tacheles ‘produced’ culture as a new way of being in community with one another and an alternative social model. While this is in conflict with a concept of culture as an industry instrumentalised for urban economic growth it is culture which is the offspring of human creativity and artistic expression in and through community, culture as the creation of a way of life.

Several examples in the KB illustrate the potential of culture as exactly such an alternative system of social relations that reinvigorates community life and empowers citizen-led action at a local scale, including Les Ateliers du Vent¹⁴, in France, the Makasiinit warehouses¹⁵, in Helsinki, Embros Theatre¹⁶, in Athens, Agrocité¹⁷, in the outskirts of Paris. A very different process is observed in the case of the intense cultural rebranding of El Raval¹⁸ in Barcelona, with major institutions physically and financially ‘invading’ the former ‘Chinatown’ with the ambition to turn into a major cultural hub and gentrify it, a process which has radically altered the area’s social and economic character, criticised by many for its negative impact on the most vulnerable. Last, cases such as Wester Gasfabriek¹⁹ in Amsterdam or Haller 14²⁰ in Leipzig are demonstrations of how the complex deliberative processes between land owners, citizens, and municipalities, can create enabling conditions for local artists, community and citizen-led initiatives, as well as a more market-led cultural offer.

We can try to conceptualise approaches towards culture-led urban regeneration as a continuum between:

1. A top-down approach, oriented around culture and creative industry in the form of new arts and cultural facilities and events, instrumentalised within a broader logic of urban rebranding and economic competitiveness and revitalisation.

2. A bottom-up citizen-led approach, where culture refuses to fit within the logic of economic production and takes the form of a collective action of co-creation, exchange, and activism, guided by values and aspirations towards a more just urban development often in reaction to top-down development plans that disregard community needs.

4.

Public space



In the context of culture- and citizen-led urban regeneration public space occupies a pivotal role. And it does so by functioning not as a traditional square or park or pedestrian street and alley, but as a public programme of activities and possibilities that often go much beyond the provisions of open and green spaces. The qualities of public space in terms of providing the material support for individual wellbeing, community life, but also, notably, for the sharing of meaningful experiences with people who are not like us are widely praised. Seen through a political discourse, public space is where society can claim its rights and freedoms, confront, and challenge authority and fight injustice. So rather than looking at public space as a mere spatial typology to be included in the spatial design of urban development projects, a critical practice looks at how these very qualities of “publicness” are provided for in these projects throughout their spaces, programmes, and ways of operation. This is ever more important in a period where the public is under threat of rising privatisation and control.

Creative- and citizen-led regeneration offers an opportunity to reclaim ‘publicness’ in new and innovative ways. Many projects referenced in the KB are indeed

those spaces of co-creation, knowledge and skills exchange, civic action, community organisation, and inter-cultural communication, which are providing such a fundamental role in the city and its society.

As a spatial type, public space is always connected to and affected by the features of its particular location in terms of the network of spaces, private and public, of which it is a part. Uses and activities of surrounding spaces will be key in the success or the failure of such a space. It is therefore worth thinking of public space as an outcome of the spaces around it, i.e., how their mix of activities and uses, their interface and connection with the public realm, will enhance those qualities of “publicness”? For example, an open square within a mix of buildings for housing, day-time retail, and night-time cultural activities, will feel very different if those same buildings would mostly be used for 9-5 office spaces, or were converted to high-end residences. Context is important; the challenge for regeneration in creating successful public spaces is often to correctly identify those gaps in its urban context that will enable a greater and more inclusive mix of people to come together; these gaps may too often lie outside public space: by intervening outside and beyond it we can condition what happens inside it. To use another

example, a greater number of doors and windows opening onto a street will increase perceptions of safety with no actual intervention in the street space itself. Similarly, increasing connectivity and accessibility between public spaces that may be fragmented and hard to navigate can result can radically change a public space.

In its report summarising evidence on the importance of public space in successful regeneration policies, and for creating sustainable communities, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation²¹, highlights some of the main features of successful public spaces following a review of relevant case studies and research in England and Wales. These include:

- Accessibility, considered not only as a spatial feature but also equally in terms of time, e.g., ensuring spaces can be accessed and used, in a safe and welcoming way, for extended hours
- Exchange-based relationships – moving beyond consumerism to participation in the exchange of goods and services
- Discreet good management while also leaving room for self-organisation
- Moving beyond mono-cultures – encouraging diverse groups and activities to share common spaces
- Avoiding over-regulation of design and space – security and well-being are more likely to grow out of active use

The Project for Public Spaces, PPS²², as well as the European Prize for Urban Public Space²³, resources in the KB, document case studies as well as tools and best practice, regarding successful public spaces in Europe and internationally. PPS have also developed a 'good place' index, the dimensions and qualities of a successful place. A similar project is being developed by Gehl Institute²⁴, the public life data protocol. Both of these examples illustrate a way to 'measure', promote, and identify good practices in public space and place making.

Recognised as an important territorial development agent at policy level in France with state support towards their operation, it is worth mentioning the emerging

concept and discussion around the "tiers-lieux". As a term "tiers-lieux", third place, within urban sociology has been used to refer to those places beyond the home, first place, and the workplace, second place, that are claimed to play an important role for civic engagement, civil society and democracy. In France, the term has been more recently used to describe initiatives towards the creation of spaces aiming to revitalise local economies through participatory models of operation, focused on co-creation, knowledge exchange and network building, business development, cultural activities, and community cohesion. La Cooperative des Tiers-Lieux²⁵ provides a database in Nouvelle-Aquitaine, France, and further resources.

5.

Community building



There is hardly a moment in urbanism where building community doesn't occupy a central place in urban plans and projects. Building community can be seen as strengthening the social and community infrastructure of places, reducing social exclusion, enhancing participation and equal opportunity to all. The Right to the City discourse²⁶ is of particular relevance here and so are discourses on social justice and the city²⁷, as well as the capability discourse²⁸, justice as the full ability of one self to reach the goals they set for their life. Seen in their light, urban regeneration has a role to play in ensuring that the benefits of a new project are equitably distributed to all stakeholders, but also that these stakeholders are rightly recognised as equal partners, in and through a democratic and transparent process. Being part of city making is thus a fundamental aspect of citizenship; the mere act of participation in itself as a lived experience, doing things together, is one of the most effective ways to build community, before and beyond its outcomes at project level.

In practice then, looking at regeneration in the light of its impact on community building, we should be posing a number of questions:

- Beyond project delivery, what is the impact of a project in its

community? Who, which groups, which people, will be affected by project outcomes? Whose lives will be affected by the changes that such a project will bring? Rightly identifying and recognising those material stakeholders (those for which a project's impact matters), is a key step in a community building process. Identifying stakeholders in terms of how they will experience the impact of urban change is not a simple exercise of merely representing the local population, but a careful evaluation of how the specific outcomes of a project are impacting on specific groups that may well be a minority within the local community yet the ones most affected by its impact.

- To what extent then does the project respond to the needs and aspirations of those stakeholder groups? Community building can only happen when project priorities align with community priorities.
- How does the project create meaningful opportunities for co-creation? Community engagement throughout a project's timeline from inception to implementation can take different forms, from establishing shared visions and sets of principles, to participating in the design of spaces, to community-led project implementation, to the management and governance of spaces.

At a strategic policy level the SynAthina²⁹ platform in Athens and Crowdfund London³⁰, as well as Urban Innovative Actions³¹, EU programme, all function as platforms for supporting community-led projects. SynAthina, operates as a digital platform for citizens' initiatives, connecting them with one another and with institutions, in turn amplifying their voice and presence in the city and making it easier for them to access funding and support. The programme also incorporates project innovations in urban policy. Crowdfund London is a promotion and crowd-funding platform by the Mayor of London. The platform invites proposals from citizen initiatives for regeneration projects that if selected are then part-funded directly from the Mayor and receive further support and promotion for their own crowd funding campaign. Urban Innovative Actions provides urban areas throughout Europe with resources to test new and yet unproven solutions to address urban challenges.

It is interesting to note the example of Stockwell Urban II programme³² as a case where the local residents took an active part in the actual delivery of the programme's activities, becoming community researchers for the programme itself after having followed an accredited training course. In this way the programme has both upgraded the skills and the employment record and future prospects of the locals. The programme has sprung from local activists claiming a fairer share of regeneration funding for their neighbourhood. It has since developed into the formation of a charity organisation with a local mission as well as new governance structures.

6.

Participation



Participation in planning is certainly a much-discussed topic. Local authorities, planning bodies, developers, often strive to include an element of participation in their projects; communities themselves strive to have a meaningful say in urban development on issues that affect their lives. Participatory planning approaches sit within a broader paradigm shift from expert- to community-generated solutions, a shift of values from technical knowledge to lived experience, and a recognition that people are able to formulate their own solutions to the problems that affect them. Yet, and sometimes despite best intentions, formal and institutional urban development stakeholders engage in a tokenistic participatory approach that appears more as an attempt to legitimise predetermined decisions and plans rather than an effort to integrate the community into future plans and visions, even less so to delegate control through co-creation and community-led governance.

In evaluating participatory approaches it is worth asking:

- What is the impact of decisions that are made by citizens in relation to the overall impact of decision-making? I.e., how much agency does participation have over the project-attributed urban change?
- To what extent are citizen and citizen groups affected by a proposal and plan rightly recognised as equal partners in regeneration, including groups that may be vulnerable, misrepresented, and hard-to-reach? I.e., are the actors of the participatory process rightly representing those groups that are actually affected by the project?
- In what ways are citizens and community partners empowered and technically trained in order to effectively participate in decision-making? Not everyone has the confidence, time, capacity, and technical ability, to engage with a regeneration project. Participation is about understanding the enablers that will create the conditions for everyone to have an equal voice in a project in order to actively include them.

Reading Arnstein's 'Ladder of Citizen Participation'³³ in the light of the Right to the City and the broader social justice discourse, we have attempted in this project to define 5 modes of participation, ranging from 'information', which we considered as the least effective, to 'citizen control', which we consider as the most effective.:

- 1. Information:** Decisions are communicated with the aim to inform citizens. Citizens do not participate in or shape decision-making.
- 2. Consultation:** Citizens are consulted in order to provide evidence, alternatives, and feedback, with the aim to inform future decisions.
- 3. Collaboration:** Citizens are involved in the collaborative development of certain proposals and solutions.
- 4. Partnership:** Citizens are involved as equal partners through a formally recognised process in the development of proposals and solutions that impact their lives.
- 5. Citizen control:** Decision making and initiative in the hands of the citizens.

For each case study a participatory mode, or a combination of 2 modes, is indicated. Different phases of the same project may present a different approach to participation. Equally, different elements of the same programme may engage differently with citizens. Therefore a combination of modes appears in many cases most appropriate.

In the resources of the KB, the website of Involve³⁴ charity in the UK is particularly useful, including the many tools, ideas and resources in the website, regarding engagement and participatory engagement. Of particular interest is the work of the Participatory City³⁵ Foundation, in London, that aims to create the first of its kind large scale participatory eco-system in Barking and Dagenham through a network of 250 projects including knowledge sharing, common resources and spaces for work, play, food growing, trading and repairing, and growing community businesses.

Last but not least, participatory approaches do not necessarily result in greater social justice in the city and a truly transformative project that expands social justice may not include a participatory approach. Let us be critical about participation, the questions mentioned earlier in this section provide a first checklist, and mindful that a meaningful participatory process will be more like a long marathon than a short sprint.

7.

Learnings



In conclusion, some key points to be taken forward by urban regeneration policy and practice:

- Industrial heritage represents a significant resource in the city in terms of a space that can be repurposed in multiple ways and fill the gaps in existing land uses, services and activities, and social infrastructure, all while preserving its historical value.
- Active urban policy tools and mechanisms are needed to guard against the effects of gentrification and negative community impact, e.g., management, governance, and ownership structures that empower local stakeholders and ensure they can share the successes of regeneration.
- Urban regeneration is ought to be understood as much as a project and an action plan as the impacts, the changes of such projects and action; a careful consideration of 'what will change for which groups' as a result is essential in order to rightly identify stakeholders and social outcomes in the short and in the long term.
- Culture and creative industries can take different forms ranging from high-culture facilities and arts institutions, to creative clusters, to bottom-up emergence of alternative lifestyles and ways of exchange, learning, and making; it appears

essential to consider what is the form of culture and creativity that can have a positive social impact on communities in each specific context.

- The 'public' is not just a space; regeneration should offer citizens an opportunity to reclaim the qualities of 'publicness' – exchange, sharing, communicating, spontaneous use, unplanned activity, surprise, confrontation, dialogue, and activism.
- Spaces cannot be considered in isolation to one-another but as an interactive network where each one complements the other; a diverse and inclusive public space can only happen within the context of diverse land uses and activities, in day and night, and conditions (e.g., the level of rents, shop and food prices) that enable a diverse mix of users to come together.
- Participatory approaches in regeneration practice need to be critically approached in terms of a) the agency/role of participatory decision-making in relation to overall decision-making, b) the just recognition of those groups who are actually affected by the impact of a project as participating stakeholders, c) the empowerment of all stakeholders to participate as equals in a deliberative decision-making process.

8.

Endnotes



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2. "**The Nizhny Tagil Charter for the Industrial Heritage**", signed in 2003, is one of the international guidance documents for the definition, values, research, legal protection, conservation, presentation and interpretation of Industrial Heritage, available at: <<https://www.icomos.org/18thapril/2006/nizhny-tagil-charter-e.pdf>>.

3. **TICCIH**, The International Committee for the Conservation of Industrial Heritage, was founded after the First International Conference for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage in Ironbridge England in 1973. TICCIH has been ICOMOS's specialist adviser on industrial heritage since 2000 and assesses industrial sites for the World Heritage List. It has published a series of guideline documents including for canals, railways, bridges and coal mines, which can be downloaded from the TICCIH or ICOMOS websites. Website: <<http://www.ticcih.org>>.

4. **ICOMOS**, International Council on Monuments and Sites, works for the conservation and protection of cultural heritage places. It is the only global non-government organisation of this kind, which is dedicated to promoting the application of theory, methodology, and scientific techniques to the conservation of the architectural and archaeological heritage. Website: <<https://www.icomos.org/en>>.

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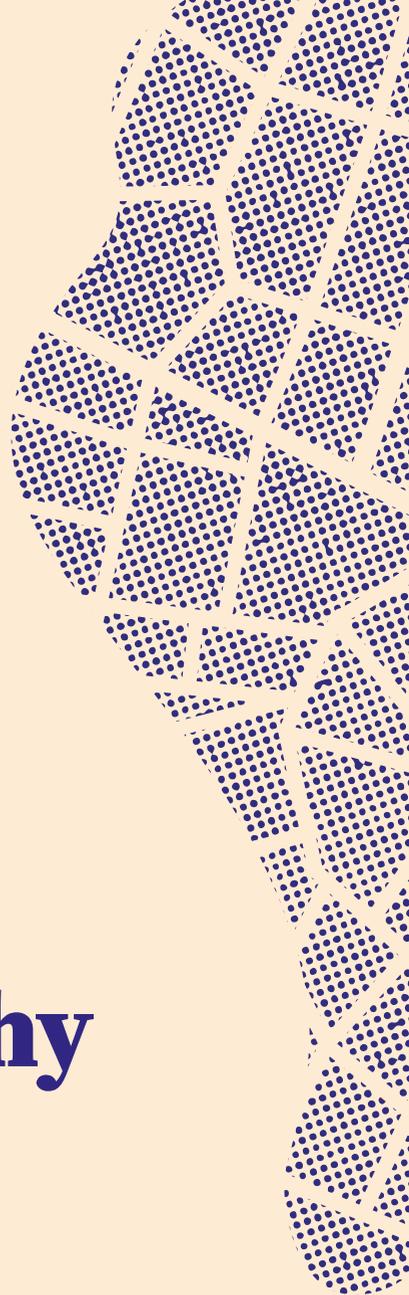
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