



## **INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE AS A MEANS OF DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL AREAS: THE CASE OF THE JEAN-BAPTISTE SAY'S NEXUS**

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Today, the conversion of industrial sites is an undeniable factor of the development of urban areas. We can take the example of the city of Roubaix which has redefined its industrial heritage to make the city more attractive (the National Archives of Workplace that are in an old mill or a shopping center that was opened in old velvet factory).

For rural areas, the issues of redevelopment are more complex. These territories are not attractive and are hardly accessible by other means of transports than road. The conversion of industrial heritage represents a double challenge: revitalize the area and change the vision of rural areas that people have.

Similarly, the town of Auchy-lès-Hesdin in the Pas-de-Calais wants to requalify its former cotton mill founded by the economist Jean-Baptiste Say, in cultural, economic and environmental center.

The conversion of this French industrial heritage began a few years ago. Previously, the brownfields were seen as burdens that reminded plant closures and often the decline of the territory. Confronting the increasing numbers of industrial plant closures, some communities have started to redefine their industrial heritage in order to give a boost to their territory. For example, the Godin familistère, located in the town of Guise in Aisne, succeeded its requalification while following the ideology of its founder. Thus, under a project called "Utopia", the site has been requalified as a cultural and artistic monument. Opened in 2010, the site hosts more than 50 000 visitors a year.

But such requalification was not easy. Local economic development of rural areas cannot do without a social capital.

In the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region, most industrial sites requalification was carried out in urban areas. For example, most brownfields in the town of Roubaix have been converted into either a shopping center or a cultural monument.

The Jean-Baptiste Say Nexus is located in the town community of the 7 valleys, a rural territory. The nearest large town is the city of Amiens which is 69km away from the town. Lille is located at a distance of 109km of the cotton mill.

In this very rural area, the challenge is twofold: to make it an accessible and attractive territory. Partnerships with specialized players in the transport and marketing are assets for the redevelopment of such a site.



In rural areas, the closure of industrial sites had a negative impact more pronounced than in urban areas. The closure of these sites caused a significant rise in unemployment. The unemployment rate of the city of Auchy-lès-Hesdin was 22.6% in 2006 according to INSEE. The people of the town do not want to return to these places. In this case, the social embeddedness plays a major role in the redevelopment of the sites. The population should be included in the project to show their motivation to revitalize the area. For the Louvre-Lens, a petition has been carried out to show that the project was not only about the politicians but also the local population. This petition was in favor of the city to host the museum.

In 2008 the town of Auchy-lès-Hesdin decided to convert the cotton mill. The Etablissement Public Foncier has bought the property to allow the town to create a solid project to be implemented.

In 2012, the Research Network on Innovation contacted the town of Auch-lès-Hesdin to propose a partnership for the redevelopment of the site created by a world renowned economist Jean-Baptiste Say. The Jean-Baptiste Say International Society (SAYS) was inaugurated in 2013. SAYS' main objectives are:

- to develop and diffuse the scientific work of Jean-Baptiste Say;
- to organize seminars, conferences and symposiums on J.B. Say's work and on linked topics;
- to create and implement specific projects (cultural events, exhibitions, research programs and socio-economic studies, socio-economic models...)
- to write and diffuse books, journals, information letters related to J.B. Say's writings;
- to contribute to the renewal of the cotton mill of Auchy-les-Hesdin;
- to contribute to local development.

(Source: [says.univ-littoral.fr](http://says.univ-littoral.fr) )

The project is carried out jointly by the International Society SAYS, the Research Network on Innovation (<http://2ri.eu> ) and the township of Auchy-lès-Hesdin. The cotton mill is named the "Jean-Baptiste Say's Nexus".

The project consists of two components:

- The creation of a center for training and awareness around Jean-Baptiste Say but also the industrial revolutions, and the natural and environmental resources
- Creating an environment space the "Bioscop".

The objective of the project is to apply all theories of development of rural areas to make Jean-Baptiste's Nexus an example of successful conversion of industrial heritage in rural areas.

At the level of the 7 valleys territory, the project plans to create partnerships with the various touristic attractions. These partnerships enable the project to have a better social capital. An itinerary will be offered to tourists: for example, in one day, they will visit of Jean-Baptiste



Say's Nexus in the morning, eat on the site and then visit Azincourt which is less than 10 minutes by car of the Nexus. The offer will be more elaborated for tourists who want to spend several days in the territory to visit all the sites.

Similarly, a partnership with a big city like Amiens will help to reduce the negative image of rural areas that big cities have. School visits could be organized on various topics: the working conditions in factories in the twentieth century, the architecture or the environment. Children who have enjoyed the visit will encourage their parents to return to the site and possibly spend a few days in the area.

The opening of Jean-Baptiste Say's Nexus aims to revitalize the area through tourism. The Nexus would attract many visitors who will be interested in discovering this economist who is unfamiliar to them but is so famous that a museum is now dedicated to him, or enjoying the countryside with a visit on the theme of environment and the unusual accommodation. Many families would be attracted by the activities to raise awareness on the importance of the environment among youth that will be proposed.

The expected positive externalities are also numerous. The residents of Auchy-lès-Hesdin have the opportunity to open restaurants or hotels to allow visitors to stay longer on the territory or souvenir shops. The division will also allow the creation of jobs and thus reduce the unemployment rate of the town.

Concerning the villagers, it is expected that social embeddedness would be successful. Requalify the site is a way to give them a voice, a museum will be dedicated to the stories of former workers of the cotton mill that will teach visitors working conditions in a cotton mill and what their relationships with employers in the twentieth century.