

Slag-Heaps: From Piles of Waste to Valued Topography

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Abstract : Some Western countries are abandoning coal and finding cleaner alternatives, such as solar, wind, hydroelectric, biomass, and geothermal, for the production of energy. As a consequence, industries have closed, and the toxic contaminated slag heaps formed essentially of discarded rock that did not contain coal are being colonized by spontaneously generated plant communities. In becoming green hiking territory, goat farms, viewing platforms, vineyards, great staging posts for species experiencing, and skiing slopes, many of the formerly abandoned hills of refuse have become delightful amenities to the surrounding communities. Together with the transformation of many industrial facilities into cultural venues, these changes to the slag hills have allowed the old coal districts to develop a new identity, but in the process, they have also literally buried the past. This essay reviews a few case studies to analyze the different ways slag heaps have contributed to the cultural landscape in the ex-coal county while arguing that it is important when deciding on their future, that we find ways to make the environmental damage that the extraction industry caused visibly and honor the lives of the people that worked under often appalling conditions in them.

Keywords : slag-heaps, mines, extraction, remediation, pollution

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