

WHICH INDUSTRIAL TOURISM IN TOURCOING? (AREA OF LILLE)

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ABSTRACT

Tourcoing is a city in the north of France. It is located in the urban area of Lille, along the Belgian border. Tourcoing was developed at the 19th century thanks to textile industry. It is a city marked by an important industrial heritage. This heritage is to be seen particularly in the landscape. The old factories, the mansions, the working houses occupy the whole of the territory. But Tourcoing underwent the consequences of the economic crisis and the decline of textile industry. The social, economic and on the landscape consequences are heavy. Today, Tourcoing tries to recover its attractiveness and its economic activities. This urban renewal goes through the valorization of this heritage to develop the industrial tourism. Many actors take part in the development of the tourist activity and the change of the image of the city. For example the city wants to dynamize this image. It created a slogan: « La Créative », to show this will. The city attracts, but it remains in the shade of its neighbors Lille and Roubaix. However, the infrastructures of reception and leisure are numerous, and the projects develop. Many associations take part in it. They are, for example those of former wage earners of textile industry. However, if the wills are real, Tourcoing has not yet reached the image of a great touristic city.

Keywords: attractiveness, communication, geographical imagination, industrial heritage, industrial tourism, textile, Tourcoing.

1 INTRODUCTION

Tourcoing is located in the north-eastern side of the urban area of Lille, in the North of France, on the Belgian border. Its territory presents an urbanization marked by the industrial history.

One finds mentions of manufacturing of fabrics from the 12th century in the archives, and already, one evokes ‘the immense spinning mill’. The 16th century marks the diversification of the productions with drapery, the combing of wool and spun wool. The city and the production grew and Tourcoing counted in 1693, nearly 500 weaving looms. The city benefits from the industrial revolutions and attracts more and more workers. Between the 19th and the 20th century, belongs to these industrial and commercial big cities which dominate the world. The population grows from 20,000 inhabitants in 1825 to 81,600 in 1906. The textile shaped the city. The first industrial revolution generated wealth and attractiveness which developed a whole urbanization, still visible today. But, from the florets of textile nothing remains but chimneys, buildings out of bricks...

In the second half of the 20th century, the city knows three decades of economic reconversion. The long crisis of the textile imposed socio-economic and space changes. The abandoned factories and the old unsanitary housings are the object of great operations of demolition and reconstruction. The most significant industrial heritage is maintained to accommodate other urban functions: residences, trade and tertiary real estates, culture and museums, universities...



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Urban policies took part in the revival of the districts and the reconquest of the downtown area. Strong of this textile and industrial history, Tourcoing wanted to develop its architectural and industrial heritage. But today, the city displays an unemployment rate close to 15% and a landscape, in some places, still devastated.

To undertake this research, as well as possible, we tried to join together to collect the most various sources. They were many, but mainly founded on talks. Field survey supplemented these analyses. The diagrams and photographs realized make it possible to have an idea of this territory on which we worked. In a city where the priority seems to be the unemployment, to what extent this heritage takes part in the development of tourism in a city like Tourcoing?

2 A RICH AND DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE

2.1 An old and diversified architectural heritage primarily related to the textile history

Of course, exists a very diversified heritage exists in Tourcoing. But, what characterizes this city, born from the textile industry, is its architectural richness related to this history, its owners' large families, but also its blue-collar workers. Many manufactures are still visible in the landscape. Tourcoing was named 'The city with the thousand chimneys'; which shows the importance of these factories which, still today, remains visible in the landscape and the memories. It is the case of the combing of 'Tossée', built in the early 1870s. It was a factory which produced up to 16% of French worsted wool [5]. But, after various mergers and reorganizations, it was closed in 2004.

This unit of bricks is the object of various projects around the idea of 'integrated city' with companies, residences, services and trades. The boiler room, which has a chimney of 53 m, is preserved and will become a place of memory. Moreover, the factory chimneys are as many testimonies of the working history. About 30 remain in Tourcoing [3]. They are the object of valorization plan initiated by the Town of Tourcoing via artistic interventions, with light settings.

Associated with this heritage of factories, the religious heritage which, if it existed well before the development of textile industry, was consolidated, even magnified by the industrial large families which took part in its maintenance and its development. Thus, the town of Tourcoing is known for some of its churches. Among them Saint-Christophe, high of 80 m



Figure 1: La Tossée, old industrial site [1].



Figure 2: The Town Hall, dating from the 19th century, sight from the square of Arts.

dominates the heart of the city. Saint-Christophe is one of the most beautiful neo-gothic buildings of the region. It was transformed in the 19th century.

Other buildings can be regarded as many 'landmarks' of the industrial ancient city. The first one is the Town Hall, an historic monument built between 1866 and 1885.

Nearby, the Chamber of Commerce was erected the glory of a trade and an industry flourishing at that time. Buildings are very numerous, exceeding the regular commercial or political practice. Inseparable from its environment, the habitat follows the economic evolution of the city. Over one century, the population growth and industrial rise exploded the old rural landscape in favor of a dense urban fabric mixing factories, middle-class and workers' dwelling. For example 'courées' multiplied in the heart of very small city blocks in the industrial districts. Small houses, on one floor, are coped along a private lane which one reaches by a narrow passage. Sometimes, they had a small garden. This kind of habitat creates a great promiscuity between the families, contributing to epidemics and neighborhood disputes. Another symbol of the industrial history of Tourcoing and especially of its population, were theatres. Thus, 'Le Fresnoy' was a complex of theatres (cinema, swimming pool transformed into horse-gear of horse riding, room of roller-skating, dance hall, breweries, game rooms) which could accommodate up to 6000 people.

Art questions the heritage, puts the city in scene and contributes to the production of new imaginary of the city. Lately, the artist Matthieu Husser took part in valorization of this heritage and of the industrial memory. He invested the site of the old Société Cotonnière du Touquet, in the district of Virolois, site which gives well an account of the current transformation of the city and the reconversion of its industrial past in progress. With 'M&F', Matthieu Husser created a logo resulting from the great names of textile industry tourquennoise: Motte & Frères, Masurel & Brothers, establishments François Masurel & Son..., while referring, by its typography, with a brand of clothes industry of clothing globalized, H&M. It thus acts to propose the evolutions of the textile branch of industry as well as the reconversions of old buildings of textile factories. Art, if it passes sometimes unperceived, makes it possible to engage a dialogue with the inhabitants of the concerned district, with the users of the places to question themselves on their direction and with those which do not dare to enter the museums to reach part of the heritage. Moreover, the city tries to communicate on this 'new' heritage which takes part in the development of public spaces, with for example on its website a plate taking again 'works of public space'.

2.2 An immaterial heritage which tells know-how and good manners

The immaterial heritage is quite as important in Tourcoing. City of the images and the music, Tourcoing has proposed the concept of creative city for more than 20 years. The creativity passes by its urban regeneration in which the culture is a major lever thanks to the structuring equipment and with the great events organized throughout the year. Tourcoing knows an important cultural life. It is well-known in the metropolis, but also through the area and on the other side of the border for its offer. Part of this offer is related to its industrial history and the tradition of leisure which existed in the families of textile industry, bourgeois or workers' ones. It always had a rich cultural activity, thanks to its many associations (committees of mutual aid, commercial unions...), the municipality facilitates the organization by subsidies and communication. For example the 'Franche Foire' commemorates the charter of 1491 granting this right and putting the city in the row of the largest fairs of France. Today it became 'les Rues Joyeuses' event that take place every 2 years with many Flemish games, a medieval market, a carnival... 'Les Nuits Détonantes' event also corresponds to the local folklore of the lighters. In the 19th century, with the arrival of the autumn and the shortening of the days, weavers needed the light of the oil lamps to complete their work. A festival was dedicated to this time. The day of the lighters, the factories closed at midday and the blue-collar workers found themselves in the cabarets. Thus Tourcoing invites in its streets the arts, under all their forms, on multiple occasions. These events answer the artistic will of the city which aims at changing the image of the commune. Public spaces are put on display with this creative opening. Besides, the parks and gardens play a significant role in the patrimonialization of part of the industrial heritage of the city.

2.3 The nature rehabilitated downtown

Tourcoing chooses to benefit from the urban operations to reintroduce nature downtown. Parks and gardens guarantee a pleasant living environment for all. For example, the botanical garden of Tourcoing is an island of greenery in the heart of the city. This space is anchored in the



Figure 3: Greenhouses inserted in old workers houses.

history and the heritage of Tourcoing. It is the legacy offered to the Town by one of the industrial owners' large families. Emile Leplat and his wife being impassioned of botany, the garden of their property located in the middle of Tourcoing tells their travels and discoveries. In 1906, the former wool spinner wrote his will and proposed to the town to acquire his property provided that it is converted into a park. This garden extends on close to 12,000 m² and consists in several distinct spaces: the historical garden, the garden 'Amérique du Nord', 'carrés' and the greenhouses partly inserted in old workers' houses.

Another bringing element of nature downtown is the channel of Tourcoing born from the connection of the former channel of Tourcoing with the channel of Roubaix (1885/1893). It allowed the routing of raw materials necessary to industries, in particular coal, but also the water for the transformation of wool. From 1977 to approximately 1982, important works of cleaning and development of the banks were undertaken; the towpaths became paths for walk. The project Blue Links, started in 2005, made it possible to navigate again on this connection and 'La Décidée', a boat which can accommodate 18 passengers is sailing from March to September.

3 THIS INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE IS PUT IN TOURISM

3.1 Methodology of the analysis

To study the potential of this kind of tourism in the town of Tourcoing, several tools were used. In the very first place there were discussions with representatives of the tourism office and of the city. These meetings help understanding the wills and especially the priorities of each one. They make it possible to seize the definition given to tourism in general; definition often distant from INSEE's one for which 'tourism understand the activities deployed by the people during their travel and stays in places located apart from their usual environment for one consecutive period which does not exceed a year, at ends of leisure, for business and other reasons nonrelated on the exercise of an activity remunerated in the visited place', and to industrial tourism in particular. It is also the opportunity to better grasp what one want to develop. The analysis of a certain number of websites like those of associations for the development of the industrial heritage, the city or of social networks, in particular of some pages on TripAdvisor, Twitter, Facebook, complete this approach. These data are enriched by a census of the tourist booklets which emphasize the industrial heritage and propose activities which depend on it, such as guided tours, courses, days of the heritage...

These tools put in prospect the domination for a certain number of places like the chimneys, the large boulevards, the factories, the public buildings... They are also a vector of the development of activities around an immaterial patrimony thanks to the organization of festivals, of know-how..., related to the industrial heritage of Tourcoing. Of course, to look further into this reflection around industrial tourism of Tourcoing and of its potential an investigation was made among the users about the activities proposed.

3.2 Which tourist images for Tourcoing?

This heritage is put in tourism by a certain number of public or private actors. Those take part in the creation of a tourist image which always does not correspond to the existing imaginary. The geographical imaginary [2] can be defined as the whole of mental images which create representations of unknown places, sometimes distant. It contributes to organize the space

designs, perceptions and practices. This imaginary is built from multiple and varied elements. The geographical imaginary can produce images relating to the tourist activities and the leisure. This touristic imaginary is carried by the images diffused by actors of tourism, by those of the local populations, but also by those of the tourists. Today, the use of new technologies (Internet, mobile telephony, objects connected) takes part in the communication of the city and the image which one wants to give of it. How the town of Tourcoing is represented by the numerical data produced by its various actors?

The analysis of a website which gives the opinion of the users enabled us to study these reception facilities. The TripAdvisor site, even if it can be criticized on certain points, makes it possible to seize the diversity of the offer as well for accommodation as for food service. Some of these offers are of high quality as the four bed and breakfast which make the reputation of the city through the agglomeration. Moreover, these bed and breakfast take part in the development of the heritage of the city, since some of these places are former textile manufacturers' houses.

These comments of occupants of bed and breakfast show that there exists a foreign population (a third of the people having left their comments) interested by the 'tourquennoise' offer. An offer which can be of very high quality as in the Villa Paula. The proximity of Lille is one of the elements explaining this geographical choice, and the localization of accommodation is central, taking part in the facility of the discovery of the metropolis thanks to its public

Table 1: Analysis of the comments concerning the four bed and breakfast between December 1, 2014 and November 30, 2015 (26 comments).

Name of the Accommodation	Une Chambre en Ville	Au Chat Perché	La Halte Bourgeoise	Villa Paula
Number of comments	3	4	8	11
Origin	Foreigner	1	1	5
	France	3	5	3
	Region		1	1
	Unknown	1	1	2
Visit of the metropolis	1	1		2
Visit of Roubaix	1 (La Piscine)	1		
Visit of Tourcoing		1		
Advantages	Public transportation Quality of the accommodation/ restoration	Situation and public transportation Quality of the accommodation/ restoration Architectural quality	Public transportation Quality of the accommodation/ restoration Architectural quality	Situation and public transportation Quality of the accommodation/ restoration Architectural quality Offer in shops and restaurants

transport. The study of this housing shows the importance of the actors, including the owners of these places.

3.3 Diversified actors and reception facilities generally welcomed by the users

By its communication campaigns, the town of Tourcoing seeks to increase its attractiveness, its notoriety and to be distinguished from the other cities of the ‘Eurométropole’. The iconography plays a significant role. The site of the city bets on this change of image and reflects the events which take place there. This communication is done via a dynamic website, accessible to all and where one finds many information and links: videos, newspapers of the municipality (also available in paper), and even digital postcards which can be sent. Those summarize this will of putting forward the heritage. But one of the regrets is the fact that this site is only in French language, even if one finds some English booklets there, whereas Tourcoing is located at a European crossroad.

These booklets bring to study another important actor of tourism activity in the city, the tourism office of Tourcoing. Regularly, it publishes booklets with destination of visitors and tourists. They are easily downloadable on the websites of the city and the tourist office, but too findable in multiple places on paper: in various tourist offices, town hall, media library... Some of these booklets (2 on the 13 downloadable documents on the site) are dedicated to the industrial heritage. That entitled *The Textile Industrial Heritage of Tourcoing* makes it possible in a A4 recto-back to know the history of this textile industry, to have a circuit presenting the main sites. There is a tourist map with 16 sites to be visited (and 10 others on the back of the map) and the practical information which are referred to it. For Nathalie Bohée [3], director of the tourist office, ‘it is a more professional booklet which was worked in collaboration with the city’s communication service’. This booklet is published in 4600 copies. The *Guide of Accommodation and Food Service* (4300 copies) presents the accommodation and the restoration which are divided in the same tourist offer. The idea is to develop the complete offer on Tourcoing. Lastly, it should be noted that the website of the Tourist office is accessible in French and English, what shows a certain will of opening for this structure which combines various modes of communication.

Other actors take part in the development of the tourist activity and the development of the industrial heritage. They are for example associations, like that of the Former employees of ‘La Tossée’. Their purpose is the development of this material and immaterial heritage and its

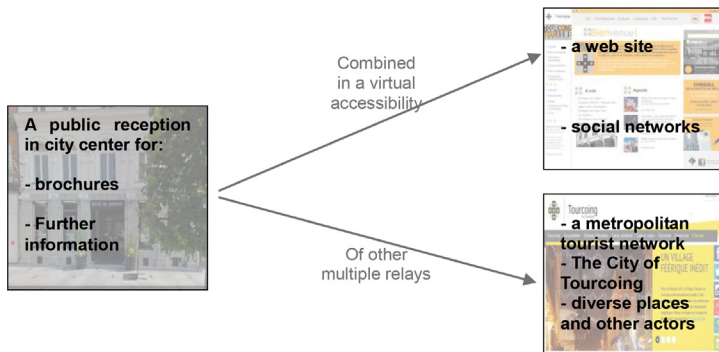


Figure 4: Change in the touristic communication practices for the tourist office of Tourcoing.

Table 2: Opinion concerning the places to visit in Tourcoing. (Website of TripAdvisor – 104 opinions – Study made in December 2015)

	Positive Points	Negative Points	Geographic Origin
Theatres and shows			
Grand Mix	Sonority, user-friendliness with a bar, programming		12 opinions 9: Urban area 2: foreigner
Fresnoy – National Studio of the Contemporary arts	Cultural place, exhibitions The cinema and the restaurant structure		(Belgium, Switzerland) 1: unknown
Museums			
MUba Eugène Leroy	Quality of the exhibitions (permanent and temporary) The place (architecture, coffee)		30 opinions 18: Urban area 4: Remain France (Nantes)
Museum of June 5, 1944 Verlaine's message	A bunker fully in downtown A side of the History held by a volunteers' association		5: Foreigner (Belgium, Morocco, the United Kingdom, Cambodia) 3: unknown
Remarkable monuments and sites			
Church Saint- Christophe	Restoration, stained glasses, the chime Situation and other places to visit around		23 opinion 15: Urban area 1: Remain France (Nantes)
Fresnoy – National Studio of the Contemporary arts	Cultural place, exhibitions The cinema and the restaurant Architecture		4: Foreigner (Belgium, Russia, Morocco, the United Kingdom)
Hospice d'Havré – Maison Folie	Restoration, framework, chapel Offers in exhibitions, animations, restoration		3: unknown
Gardens, open air			
Botanical garden of Tourcoing	Greenhouses, the park related to the mansion; the diversity of the exposed plants		5 opinions 4: Urban area 1: Foreigner (Russia)
Canal of Deûle in Escaut	Banks arranged for the walk Fishermen, the biodiversity		
Spas, Well to be			
Tourcoing les Bains	Diversity of the basins Space relaxation	High price public	39 opinions 21: Urban area 8: Remain France
Eauzone	Originality, quality of the service		10: unknown

diffusion at the time of key moments like: 'Les Journées du Patrimoine', street festivals, exhibitions; through books or websites for example. There are also certain private actors, as the owners of the Villa Paula who exploit this old mansion in bed and breakfast and open it at moments as Days of the Heritage to the general public.

Table 2 makes it possible to better understand the diversity of the 'tourquennoise' offer and to apprehend users' feelings, who are sometimes tourists. In red, the sites related to the industrial history of Tourcoing are presented. They emphasize it or are found in buildings having had an industrial use, as for example the center of wellness 'Eauzone' which was arranged in old derelict land. Nevertheless, one can consider it unfortunate that the duration of the stay is not required to be able to make the share between 'the simple' users and the tourists.

4 WHICH RESULTS TODAY, FOR WHICH ATTRACTIVITY?

4.1 A true will: an industrial heritage carrying future

Strong of this textile and industrial history, Tourcoing wanted to develop its industrial and architectural heritage. A Protection zone of the Urban Architectural Heritage and Landscape extends today on almost all the territory making it possible to preserve the traces of the history of the city. Then, at the beginning of the years 2010, 60 of the 79 ha of derelict lands counted in the city were reconverted [3]. Several tens of old textile mills and dye works gave way to places atypical and marked by history. Today, multiple projects show the will of the tourist actors to develop this activity by putting forward the industrial heritage. One of the first is the commitment of the elected officials of Tourcoing in 'Villes d'Art et d'Histoire' [4] certification procedure. The services concerned were mobilized to work out a diagnosis and an evaluation of all the actions conducted in favor of the various forms of material and immaterial heritage. This project of territory must consolidate the appropriation of architecture and the heritage by the public inhabitants and more broadly, the development of tourism of top quality and the support of the quality of architecture and living environment. Reach this label would be a true national recognition of the interest of the 'tourquennois' heritage and would allow to professionalize people developing this implementation.

Other projects aim at registering the textile industrial identity of Lille-Roubaix-Tourcoing to UNESCO. This is the crazy bet, for the moment of a former elected official of the city, J.-P. Balduyck. If this project does not seem to rally memberships today, it should be noted creation in the course of a place of memory of textile industry by the Association of the Former employees of 'La Tossée' on an old industrial site [5]. Thus, there exists a true request, as one can see it through the success of 'La Maison de Union' [6]. That's a place of resources and information on an urban project, open since September 2012. Project leaders organize visits, workshops for children and of the exhibitions in link always with the project and emphasizing the heritage related to the derelict lands. Even if a majority of the people concerned are inhabitants of the area, certain groups come from further, even from abroad for better understanding the rehabilitation of this industrial heritage. Moreover Tourcoing is also the Center European of the Innovating Textiles, established on the site of the Union. This is a research center and prototyping which makes it possible to the industrialists to go further in their research. During its unveiling in 2012, 'Futurotextiles' exposure made it possible the general public to discover the textiles of the future which will be used in many sectors.

4.2 Finally, can one truly speak about industrial tourism in Tourcoing?

For that, it is necessary to analyze the motivations of the people who come discover the city. The figures given by the tourist office make it possible to quantify the economic consequences: the number of nights passed with Tourcoing, the number of people in the family or the group, the number of meals taken in Tourcoing and what is the average budget... The assessment 2014 lets appear that 311 tourists agreed to answer the questionnaire: 64% from France (apart from Ile de France), 13% of Ile-de-France and 23% from abroad. A majority of these tourists finds an accommodation in Tourcoing: 34% in commercial accommodation and 18% not in commercial accommodation. But, the percentage of tourists who stays in Tourcoing decreases. In Tourcoing, the average duration of stay is of 2.5 nights: 1 in commercial accommodation and 1.5 in no commercial accommodation. Thirty-eight percent of the questioned tourists remain in Tourcoing for tourist reasons. As a whole, tourist motivations and family remain the essential reason of the stay of these visitors. When the stay is motivated by tourism of approval, the essential element is the discovery of the town of Lille; then of museums, exhibitions and events. In the topic 'others', one finds primarily as reason the fact that Tourcoing is a frontier city what makes it possible to visit easily Belgium [7].

4.3 The limits and difficulties in industrial tourism in Tourcoing

If there exists an important industrial heritage in Tourcoing, this one does not seem to be the object of developed tourist activities. An investigation conducted until spring 2015 [8], as well as the analyses of Internet pages (Tables 1 and 2) and of the statistics given by the Tourist office shows that when one speaks about heritage to the questioned people, for them, it is not a question of industrial heritage as such. The idea of industrial heritage does not come to mind for these people who are more visitors than tourists (only 311 identified with the Tourist office in 2014).

There; however, exists well the will to emphasize this heritage, we saw it previously. The program of 'Les Journées du Patrimoine 2015' [9] proposes multiple visits of industrial sites around the chimneys, workers' houses, vegetable gardens, water towers of industry, projects of lofts in old factories...even if this heritage is not classified in a category 'industrial heritage'. Moreover, the touristic map of 'Eurométropole', in French, Dutch and English, proposed by the European Metropolis of Lille for the discovery of the area through its heritage; its museums, sites UNESCO, its places of memory, cultural factories, parks, gardens and natural spaces...does not mention either this category of heritage.

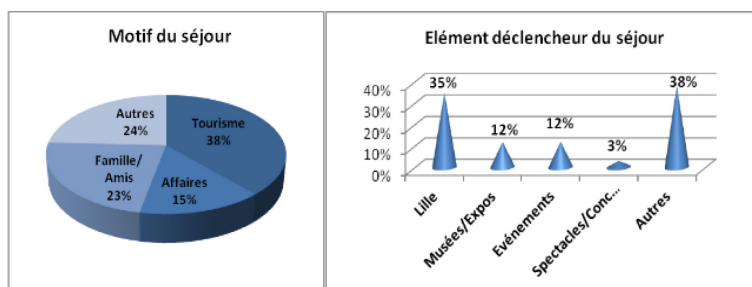


Figure 5: Which tourism in Tourcoing? (Source: OT to Tourcoing – 2014)

Therefore it is difficult to speak about industrial tourism with Tourcoing. This city, located in the shade of Lille, seems not to succeed in developing its specificities whereas its textile history in fact part.

So what industrial tourism in Tourcoing? Finally, we are far from tourism primarily based on the symbols of the textile industrial activity, that is the factories, manufacturing plants and other workshops or on the functional buildings related to this activity (workers' houses and middle-class residences; places of leisure...). It seems obvious that in an industrial region like the Nord-Pas-de-Calais-Picardie, and even more in a city like Tourcoing, associate the terms 'tourism' and 'industrial' are contradictory and that it is necessary to exceed blockings to make of it a true creative activity of employment and wealth.

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