Significant Textile Sites in Germany

Detlef STENDER

The Ravensberger Spinning Mill.
(Photo Detlef Stender 2001)
La filature de Ravensburg.

Dans la ligne de l'action de la Section "Textiles" de TICCIH, l'auteur, avec l'aide de trois autres collègues, a dressé une liste d'une soixantaine de monuments et paysages de l'industrie textile en Allemagne - une liste qui reste ouverte, mais à l'intérieur de laquelle il a sélectionné un certain nombre de sites selon la classification décrite dans l'article de Mark Watson et destinée à orienter les travaux du Comité du Patrimoine Mondial. Il en résulte une série de précieuses notices, accompagnées de remarques sur les difficultés que peut présenter la conservation des différents patrimoines présentés ici.

Following the decision – at the 1st meeting of the TICCIH Textile Section in Catalonia – to create a list of the most important textile monuments worldwide[1], this article will try to describe monuments of the German Textile industry in broad outline[2].

After the meeting in Catalonia, an appeal was made to suggestions for the German list in the *Industriekultur* Magazine. My first provisional list was extended and supplemented in co-operation with Michael Mende, Axel Föhl and Andreas Oehlke[3]. We developed a list of more than sixty historical monuments and textile landscapes, which can be found on the Internet under *www.freunde-rim-euskirchen.de/ downloads*. This list is only a beginning and some objects might be missing. On the other hand, sixty objects were quite a lot for a worldwide list. Thus, the effort was made of choosing some objects that appeared especially important to us and that meet international demands.

Hereafter are presented a few examples from that list of suggestions and, at the same time, are described the difficulties encountered in attempts to preserve these monuments. The monuments are introduced according to the categories that were suggested for the worldwide list - in spite of the fact that these categories appear to be somewhat problematic.

Pioneers

The worldwide list defines the "Pioneers" category very narrowly, as only sites "that had

Factory Facade of "Nordwolle".
(Photo Detlef Stender 1997)
Façade de l'usine "Nordwolle".
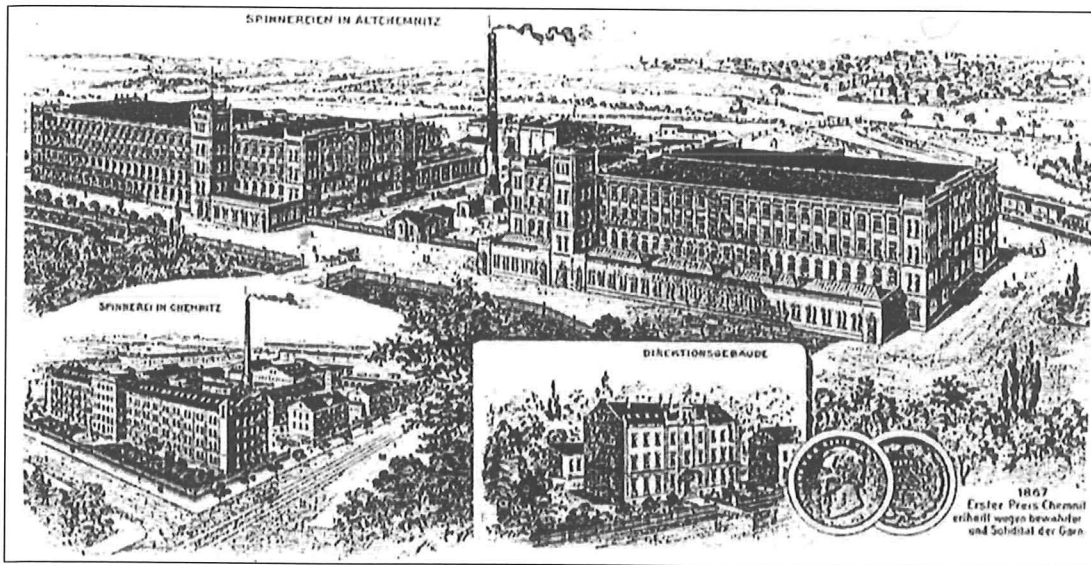
no real precedent" are eligible[4]. According to this definition, there are no pioneers in Germany, because the major technologies and means of production were almost exclusively imported from England. Consequently, the spinning mills that introduced cotton-machine spinning on the Continent (e.g. Ratingen, Chemnitz-Hartau) will be described under the heading of "technical transfer". Nevertheless, these sites *are* pioneers from a continental point of view.

Flagships

The first version of the worldwide list already included the Ravensberg spinning mill in Bielefeld (1857) in the "Flagship" category . It was definitely a flagship as this flax spinning mill with its twenty thousand spindles impressively showed the new age of machine spinning. The ambitious architecture owes to several stylistic influences such as English factory buildings and palace and castle architecture. The Ravensberg spinning mill is a flagship also in another respect: in the 70s, it was saved from demolition by a very active citizens' initiative after a heated political debate. Such a discussion about an industrial building was very unusual and ground-breaking in early 1970s Germany. The Ravensberg spinning mill is now being used by several municipal and cultural organisations. Some structural alterations had to be made, for example the opening of ceilings or skylights. As the whole mill was lead by Ferdinand Kaselowsky, who had learned his trade in England, Ireland and Belgium, the Ravensberg spinning mill could also be an example of "technical transfer"[5].

Another German flagship worth mentioning is the silk weaving mill in Krefeld , which was designed by Mies van der Rohe in the early 1930s, in the architectonic style of new functionalism. The offices building and the clock-tower were personally designed by van der Rohe. There are other buildings by van der Rohe on the grounds, for example the workshop, which was severely damaged by the addition of a third floor in the 1950s. The grounds are still being used by the same firm that built the factory in the first place *(Vereinigte Seidenwebereien AG)*. This continuity is rare in Germany but obviously helpful for the preservation of the buildings, as new kinds of usage often entail structural alterations. Mies van der Rohe also built the residential houses for the two mill owners in a high architectural quality. Both houses are very well preserved, and one of them, Lange House, is used as a museum and thus open to the public.

Giants

Of enormous size was the factory site of "Nordwolle" producer of combed yarn at Delmenhorst near Bremen (please refer to Michael Mende's contributions on Nordwolle in issue n° 10 of this Journal, and in the DVD-Rom *The "Dinosaurs of Industrial Heritage"*). Approximately 4,500 people worked on the huge site, which was a town within a town. Apart from the huge factory and storage buildings part of "Nordwolle" was a garden town with living quarters for workers, a hospital, a maternity asylum, a building with rooms for male workers, two buildings with rooms for young women, library, play-school, public bath, cafeteria and a

[1] *The actual version of the worldwide list is to be found under:* www.mnactec.com/TICCIH/txtsec. *There one can find the criteria for the incorporation in the list.*

[2] *An overview of the history of the German textile industry in:* Horst Blumberg, Die deutsche Textilindustrie in der industriellen Revolution, *Berlin 1965;* Karl Schürmann, Die Struktur der deutschen Textilindustrie und ihre Wandlungen in der Nachkriegszeit, *Bonn 1933;* Stephan H. Lindner, Den Faden verloren. Die westdeutsche und die französische Textilindustrie auf dem Rückzug. (1930/45-1990, *München 2001. Best overview regarding the development of production techniques, technique and monuments of the textile industry in European context:* Axel Föhl/Manfred Hamm, Die Industriegeschichte des Textils, *Düsseldorf 1988*

[3] *General literature about industrial monuments in Germany:* Volker Rödel, Reclams Führer zu den Denkmalen der Industrie und Technik, *2 Bände, Stuttgart 1992/1998;* Axel Föhl, Bauten der Industrie und Technik. *Bonn. o.J.; about the most important Textile-Regions:* Roland Günther, Besichtigung unseres Zeitalters. Industriekultur in Nordrhein-Westfalen, *Essen 2001;* Hubert Krins/Michael Goer/Leo Schmidt/Rose Hajdu, Brücke, Mühle und Fabrik: Technische Denkmale in Baden Württemberg, *Stuttgart 1991;* Michael Mende/Manfred Hamm, Niedersachsen und Bremen. Denkmale der Industrie und Technik, *Berlin 1990;* Landesamt für Denkmalpflege in Sachsen (Hg.), Bauten der Technik und Industrie in Sachsen, *Dresden 1996;* Westfälisches Industriemuseum (Hg.), Am Ende einer Zeit. Die Textilstädte Crimmitschau, Plauen, Forst. *Essen 1997*

[4] Mark Watson, The International Context for Textile Sites, www.mnactec.com/TICCIH/txtsec

[5] Dirk Ukena/Hans J. Röver (Hg.), Die Ravensberger Spinnerei, *Hagen 1989*
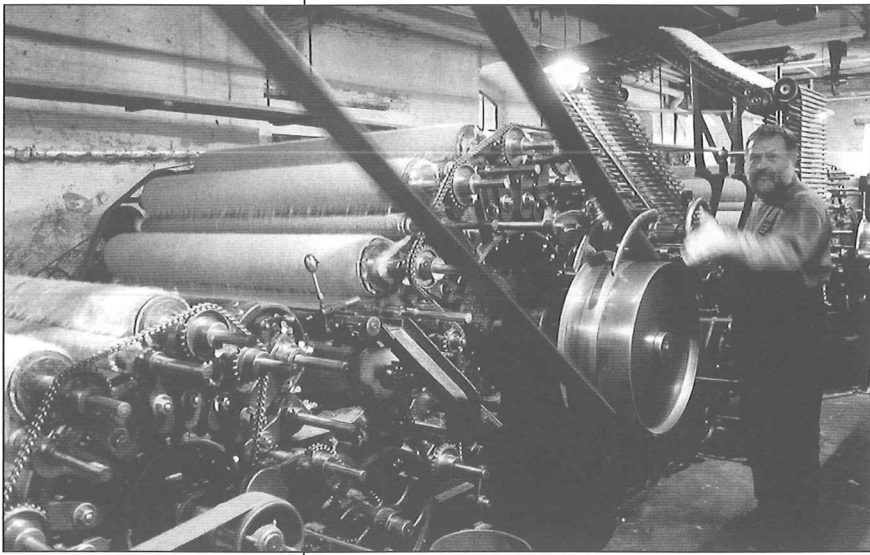
Spinning Mill in the Tuchfabrik Müller, Euskirchen.
(Photo Georg Helmes 2000)
Atelier de filature dans l'usine de tissage Müller, à Euskirchen.

[6] www.etn-net.org/routes/ *Geografic Routes-Germany-Northrhine-Westphalia -The Münsterland Cotton Route*
[7] *Rheinisches Industriemuseum Ratingen (Hg.):* Die öde Gegend wurde zum Lustgarten umgeschaffen ... Zur Industriearchitektur der Textilfabrik Cromford 1783-1977; *Eckard Bolenz, „Von Cromford nach Cromford - Ein Technologietransfer um 1780 wird ein Kulturtransfer um 1990", in:* Mitteilungen der Chemnitzer Geschichtsvereins 69, *Chemnitz 1999, S. 89-101;* www.etn-net.org/routes/ *Geografic Routes-Germany-Northrhine-Westphalia - „Bergisches Land" Textile Route*

View into the Linen Factory Winkel in Bielefeld.
(Photo Detlef Stender 2001)
Une vue de l'usine linière Winkel à Bielefeld.
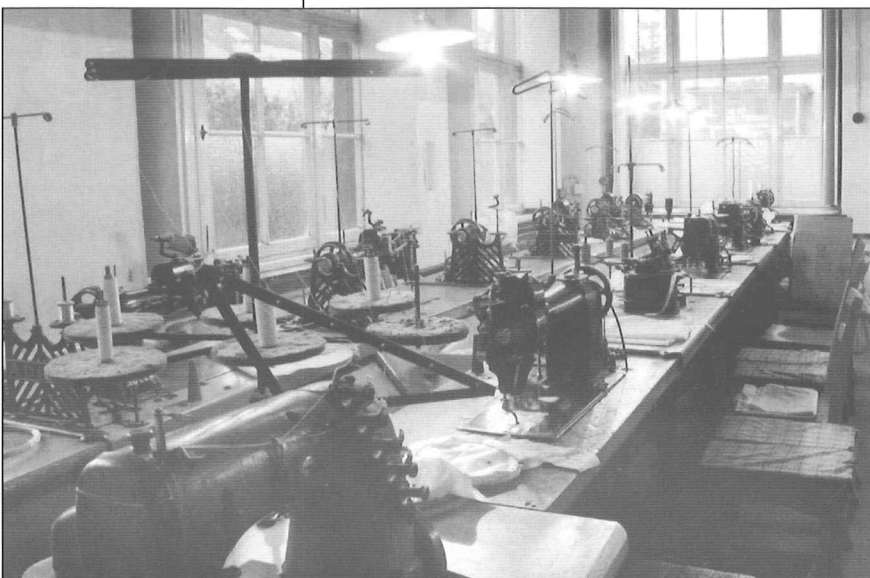
grocer's (Co-op). Outside there was a rest home and a children's home.

Next to the site was the factory owner's villa with a park. Unfortunately the shed buildings were demolished in the end of the 80s to make space for the construction of new flats. On the other hand a huge part of the industrial complex is well preserved and can be still seen today.

Very large buildings were also developed in the Münsterland, the best example being at Rheine, where *Kümpers* had huge cotton spinning mills erected by the English architect Sidney Stott, copying contemporary English mills. A spinning mill with 15,000 spindles was built in 1886, followed by a mill with 30,000 spindles in 1896 and another one with 50,000 spindles in 1911. In the western Münsterland, other giants can be found, e.g. the buildings of *van Delden* in Gronau, which where designed by the Dutch architect's office Beltmann[6].

Other large plants can be found in the South of Germany, e.g. in Augsburg. In Heidenheim several buildings, almost a small textile town, were built by the influential industrial architect Phillip Jacob Manz for the *Württembergian Kattun Fabrik.* Phillip Jacob Manz had a large office in Stuttgart with one hundred employees and was famous as an "Architectural Factory" that could construct buildings very quickly. Nevertheless, his buildings are almost always architecturally valuable. He was a specialist in textile industry buildings and also worked in Northern and Western Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Poland and Slovakia. In Heidenheim, Manz initially built in a historic style, and later added elements of Art Nouveau and modernist architecture.

Giants can also be found in Eastern Germany, where the textile industry was very important. A very impressive example is the Action Spinning Mill in Chemnitz with its 120,000 spindles, which was built by Sydney Stott as a double spinning mill with two symmetrical buildings.

Technical Transfer

There are numerous examples where know-how, technology and architecture were transferred to Germany. These transfers took place almost exclusively in the field of cotton spinning. Most of the time, technical and architectonic knowledge was imported from England. In Ratingen, technology was introduced from Cromford via industrial espionage. Part of the production ensemble is now a site of the Rheinisches Industriemuseum. For this museum machinery, based on the model of machinery of the textile museum at Helmshore near Manchester, was reconstructed. It is functional and running whilst the museum is open to the public[7]. So there is the unique opportunity to see running machinery, fully functional, in the state of 1800 technology.

Another example of very early adaptation of English technology is the Berhard spinning mill in Chemnitz-Hartau. The owner, Berhard, had been active in the machine spinning business in Manchester before. As the German engineers failed to install the new machinery properly, Berhard called in English mechanics: Watson, Moult and especially Evan Evans finally succeeded in establishing the new technology in Saxony. The mechanic Evan Evans later set up his own engineering business in Saxony and produced spinning machines

with a total of 42,000 spindles between 1807 and 1812. In 1812 he built the largest spinning mill in Saxony. The building was architecturally very sophisticated, with an extraordinary roof: a three storey attic with a bell tower. Today, many important parts of the building are missing and especially the roof was severely damaged. The building's historical importance in regard of technology transfer and knowledge is considerable, its condition however is very poor. In this case, a restoration of the historic status is highly desirable[8].

During industrialisation there had been always elements of knowledge transfer, especially what touches factory architecture. One example is the Ravensberger Spinning Mill. Another prominent example is the work of the English architect Sidney Stott, who planned numerous textile mills after English models in the West of Münsterland and Saxony. The Dutch architecture and engineering firm Beltmann also designed some mills in Münsterland, for example at Gronau and Dülmen.

Time Capsules

By a lucky chance a typical example for a "Time Capsule": the cloth mill *Tuchfabrik Müller* exists in Euskirchen near Cologne. The factory site with its inventory and machinery survived completely. Everything was carefully restored and is now a working museum open to the public. All important machines are working again and visitors can experience working conditions in a wool cloth mill as it probably had been a hundred years ago[9]. A time capsule with a similar, slightly more modern and bigger machinery can be found in Crimmitschau, Eastern Germany: in this wool-cloth mill almost most parts of the machinery had been also preserved, the machines are still intact and a museum is being set up at the moment[10].

Another very beautiful example of a time capsule is the small *Winkel's Linen Factory* in Bielefeld. It has also been turned into a museum and is preserved and presented by a small but nevertheless active society. It looks as if work had only just been finished and the whole machinery, the tools and the products have all been preserved *in situ*[11].

Paternalistic building

There are no examples of utopian buildings in Germany but many examples of paternalistic building schemes: the *Nordwolle* in Delmenhorst und *Wuerttembergian Kattun Factory* in Heidenheim were already mentioned. Two more industrial villages will be introduced in more detail:

In 1857, a large cotton spinning and weaving mill with 28,000 spindles, 535 looms and 800 workers was set up in Kuchen, a remote village in Southern Germany between Stuttgart und Ulm. The company simultaneously built a housing estate for the permanent workers. Situated around a central fairground, we find residential buildings, public baths, laundry building with a swimming pool, steam bath and bathrooms, a shop, pharmacy, pub, school, reading room and a hospital. The architecture adopts historical rural forms and is very creative

[8] *Andreas Oehlke,* Spinnmühlen in Sachsen - Technologietransfer und architektur; www.etn-net.org/routes/Geografic Routes-Germany-Northhine Westphalia - „Bergisches Land" Textile Route tonische Umsetzung einer neuen Bauaufgabe, *in:* Mitteilungen der Chemnitzer Geschichtsvereins 69, *Chemnitz 1999, S. 116-137*

[9] *Rheinisches Indstriemusem (Hg.):* Erinnerungstücke einer Fabrikwelt. Die Tuchfabrik Müller. *Katalog des Rheinisches Industriemuseums Euskirchen, Köln 2000; Detlef Stender,* Tuchfabrik Müller, Euskirchen, *in: Rheinisches Industriemuseum (Hg.),* Drei Standorte des Rheinschen Industriemuseums präsentieren sich, *Köln 2000; www.rim.lvr.de*

[10] *www.saechsisches-industriemuseum.de*

[11] *www.etn-net.org/routes/Geografic Routes-Germany-Northrhine-Westphalia - East Westphalia Route*

Kuchen nr. Göppingen: Worker's Flats in historic style.
(Photo Detlef Stender 2002)
Kuchen, près de Göppingen : appartements pour les ouvriers, en style traditionnel.

Gmindersdorf in Reutlingen,
(Photo Detlef Stender 2001)
Le "village Gminder" à Reutlingen.

and varied, which is rather unusual for Germany at that time. Even Swiss styles that did not belong to the local architectural tradition were cited. With its progressive social orientation and its varied and refined architecture, Kuchen is of major importance and precedes some ideas of later housing estate planning. The housing scheme has been faithfully and exemplarily restored in the last few years[12].

Another very beautiful example of paternalistic housing schemes is Gmindersdorf in Reutlingen: The *Gminder Textile Factory* with its 2,000 employees was one of the biggest in Germany. The factory building by Phillip Manz has features of traditional castle architecture, but also shows modernist elements in the design of the facades. Between 1903 and 1914, the *Gminder Company* established a housing scheme with a kindergarten, a shop, a market square and a gymnasium that also functioned as a festival hall. Highlight of this settlement is the round village green with trees surrounded by a crescent of workmen's cottages situated up a slope. On top of the slope is the "Altenhof", a mansion like a little building with a columned portal and a baroque gable. This was the home for retired couples.

The architect Theodor Fischer combined modernist, traditional and rural elements such as half-timbering and wooden shutters to a highly varied architectural style. Today, the estate is private property and in very good shape. The department for the protection of historical monuments has done a great job in preventing any disfiguring alterations of the facades thus far[13].

Textile Landscapes

In regard of textile landscapes, one can mention several regions and some of the main textile landscapes have already been mentioned: Bielefeld, Krefeld, the Western Münsterland, Chemnitz and Crimmitschau in Saxony.

Among the most important historic landscapes of the wool industry is Monschau. In the 18th century, the influential home-based woollen material industry was organised in Monschau. The entrepreneur Scheibler, who used the Rote Haus as a residential and manufacture building, employed over 4,000 home workers. A member of the Scheibler dynasty emigrated to Poland and founded there a large scale textile production1. Apart from the Scheibler Haus Monschau has many other buildings from the time of home-based industry and manufacture. As most of these were lived and worked in, many of these houses are still inhabited and consequently in quite a good shape. In the 19th

[12] Christel Köhle-Hezinger/Walter Ziegler, „Der glorreiche Lebenslauf unserer Fabrik" - zur Geschichte von Dorf und Baumwollspinnerei Kuchen, Weißenhorn 1991; www.kuchen.de/arbeitersiedllung.html
[13] www.wernerfrueh.de/gdorf

and 20th centuries the production of woollen materials was transferred from the rural Eifel region to the cities of Aachen and Euskirchen. Aachen became the new centre of the production of wool fabrics. Also there, many remarkable buildings from the time of wool industry have been preserved, although all of the companies closed. Today, the factories are used in many different ways: industry, commerce, culture and living. Their protection is secured, however. For the wool fabric region of Monschau, Aachen and Euskirchen, we have started a web site in co-operation with the European Textile Networks, where the most important monuments are presented[14]. There is a recent initiative of the towns and cities of Monschau, Aachen und Eupen, to sign-post and explain the important monuments of textile industry locally. Although a lot of tourists visit Monschau, hardly anybody knows the picturesque houses have their origin in the textile industry.

Another centre of the wool industry can be found close to Wuppertal in Radevormwald/Dahlerau with different imposing building complexes and a beautifully preserved steam engine. The city of Forst, close to the Polish border in Eastern Germany was also dominated by the wool industry. Many of the old factories are deserted today and lend the city an air of demise[15].

A city that was influenced by both the wool and the cotton industry is Augsburg. Although some buildings were knocked down over the years, many other large and interesting buildings and residential homes have been preserved. The complex of the "Augsburg Cotton Spinning and Weaving Mill" is called "Fabrikschloß" ("factory palace") by the locals. Another magnificent building is the so-called "Glaspalast", the "palace of glass". It was also built by Manz and beautifully shows in its architecture how vast glass window panes became possible through the employment of steel-girder frames. Augsburg also has interesting housing schemes and the 1760 drying tower, from which the lengths of material were hung to dry. Similar towers can be found in Switzerland and Austria[16].

Apart from cotton and wool, tree other kinds of textile production are worth mentioning. In and around Albstadt in Baden-Württemberg (between Stuttgart and Lake Konstanz), there is an impressive stock of small factories that produced tricot knitted fabrics for underwear. The *Haux Tricot Factory* in Albstadt-Ebingen by Philip Manz is particularly interesting: Traditional building elements (e.g. the roof) are
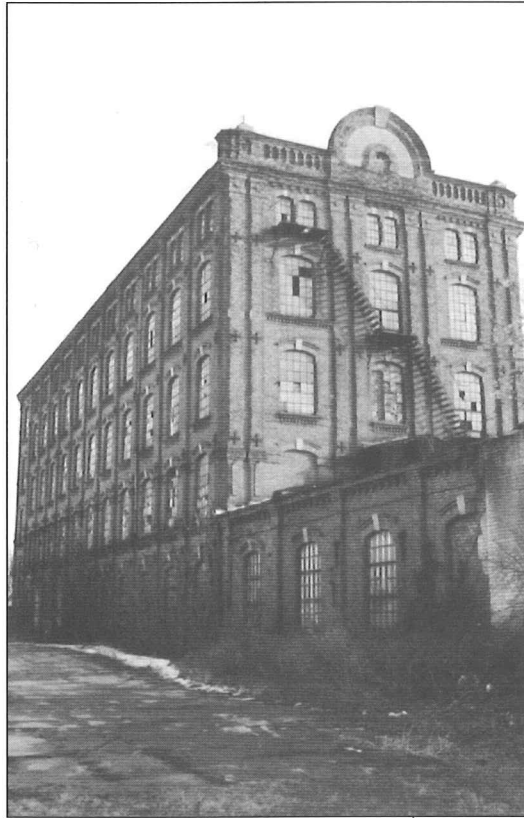
Cloth Mill in Forst, nr. the Polish Border.
(Photo Annett Kaiser 2001)
Usine de draps de laine à Forst, près de la frontière polonaise.

combined with the new building philosophy: "form follows function", which can be recognised in the beautifully structured window facade. Apart from that many smaller factories in the region and the villages are full of tricot factories. There is also a little "time capsule": the former *Tricot Factory Alber* in Albstadt-Tailfingen. In the meantime, a knitting museum has opened which traces the history of this industry branch. In Eastern Germany there are two more significant textile production arias. Plauen (Saxony) was a centre of lace production. Apart from embroidery factories there is worth mentioning the baroque manufactory building "Weisbachsches Haus" (1776-1778). Groß-schönau (Saxony, near Zittau at the Polish border), was a centre of damask- and picture weaving. Remarkable buildings of the golden age of textile production are persevered there too.

The state of Preservation

Up to now high-quality textile factories are knocked down. An example from Dettingen (Württemberg, near Reutlingen): until lately, a whole complex of factory buildings, planned and built by Philip Manz (1908-1928) were demolished. The only memento is the street sign "An der Weberei"(At the weaving Mill).

[14] www.etn-net.org/routes/ *Geografic Routes-Germany-Northrhine-Westphalia - The Eifel Wool Route*
[15] www.kunsttexte.de/ download/denk/knpv.PDF; www.dubtown.de/fabrik_textil_forst
[16] *Vgl. Detlef Stender (Hg.),* Industrie-kultur am Bodensee, *Konstanz 1992, z.B. S. 214 (Dornbirn in Vorarlberg)*

One of the many evidences of the early Cloth Production in Monschau: The Manufacture Building "Elbershof".
(Photo Detlef Stender 2000)
Un témoignage, parmi de nombreux autres, des premiers temps de la draperie à Monschau: le bâtiment de la manufacture "Elbershof".

At the moment one can notice different developments. In West-Germany, especially in cities, many textile factories have found new proprietors and new purposes. Most of them have been restored, some very well, some not so well, but at least most of them are no longer on the demolition list. People begin to realise the high quality of living and working the historic buildings have to offer. This development, originating in large cities like Hamburg or Berlin, very slowly reaches the rural regions as well.

In East Germany, the situation is completely different. Most textile factories were unchanged in use until the overthrow of the socialist government in 1989. The historic buildings were fairly often kept well because they still served the original purpose. Luckily there was also no money for extensive renewals. Afterwards, production stopped almost everywhere and many buildings did not find a new proprietor since then, maybe because the old buildings are regarded as symbols of demise and not as symbols of the fresh start. In addition to this the flood 2002 caused severe damage, as many textile factories are situated next to streams that turned into raging rivers. As a result, tendencies to simply demolish these old buildings and create space for new structures are becoming stronger. The risk is exceptionally high here and one is sometimes tempted to put one or the other building on the list in order to save it.

Categories

While working on the list and also while preparing this text, it became more and more clear that the categories of the worldwide list are sometimes unsuitable when it comes to picking out the most important buildings. Many monuments fit in different categories at the same time. So *Nordwolle* is a "Giant" but also an excellent example for "Paternalism" in Germany. The huge buildings of Sidney Stott are at the same time outstanding examples for a border crossing transfer and, at the same time, they are fitting the category of huge factory buildings. On the other hand many monuments do not fit in any of these categories but are very important. In Bramsche, Lower Saxony, for example, a

former cloth mill was preserved as a museum and faithfully refurbished with machinery - exactly as it once had looked. According to the strict rules of the worldwide list, this museum is not a time capsule, because it does not exhibit its original machinery. Nevertheless the complex and the museum are highly interesting, because it was not built by a single company but by a group of cloth makers, a cloth makers co-operative. The building is in good shape and the historic stock of machinery has been faithfully reconstructed. Consequently, Bramsche is one of Germany's most important historic monuments of the textile industry - although it fits into no category.

Similar problems occur where we encounter ensembles that document different stages of textile production in confined spaces. One example is the *Claus Cotton Spinning Mill* in Flöha, Eastern Germany, that vividly shows the development from the stage of an early spinning mill to buildings from around 1900 just like a textbook on industrial architecture. The Claus Cotton Spinning mill is neither a pioneer, nor a flagship, nor a giant, but nevertheless important and definitely worthy of the worldwide list. Maybe the suggestion made by British colleagues should be very interesting, list the monuments regionally and only then apply categories like 'flagship', pioneer or time capsule.

Detlef Stender is the curator of the Museum at Euskirchen (R.I.M.)