

## **FACTORY AND ARTIFICIAL ISLAND FOR TORPEDOES ON LONDE LES MAURES: AN ALIVE DEMONSTRATION OF THE STATE OF THE INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE OF BETWEEN LAND AND SEA ON THE “FRENCH RIVIERA”**

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### *Abstract*

*A major episode of the great industrial national history had been completely occulted by an unilateral vision of a exclusive balneal and touristic “Côte d’Azur”. Since the summer 2000, our association engaged a cultural reconquest of the torpedo industry’s history to make of it the emblème of an specific conception of the patrimonial valorisation where it is advisable to be based on the history to redefine a new vocation with the site. The objective is to show that several glances coexist on this heritage; the demolition of the torpedoes island for reason of “beautiful landscape” that happened four years ago, considered as a wart in the landscape, prived the society of one of the major witnesses of this scientific and technical progress and thus of a key of reading of the history of the territory’s construction. The history of the torpedes island is used here to develop a more collective and plural approach of the landscape culture.*

*From 1904, the company Schneider, principal national supplier of the armament settles in a privileged site in the bay of Hyères called “Bormettes”, near the great naval port of Toulon. Its first objective is to test the torpedes in the sea as shows it a launching island. Then, since 1912, Schneider built a important fabrick of 10.000 m<sup>2</sup> to manufacture them on the spot. This history of torpedes belongs to one of the episodes of the great industrialization of armament to the turning of the war. The factory becomes the sanctuary of the torpedo in France, since it is there that the first French torpedes were tested. Its development will make of it a true industrial complex, of which one owes certainly the metal parts with the Eiffel company, and who will manufacture 234 torpedes the day before the First World War. Parallel to the factory, will be built a working city model, the only one of this type in the Mediterranean with the one of Saline of Giraud on the delta of the Rhone, with a food co-operative replaced later by food trade, a post office, a village hall, a hairstyle workshop, a bar, a nursery, a school, where will be held many animations, thanks to the dynamism of an association created by the workmen. One of the characteristics of La Londe les Maures, and not one of the least, is to show one of the rare examples of an industrial urbanisation in a geographical area exclusively devoted to agriculture or tourism.*

*This industrial economic rationalization fell under a project exceeding largely the regional area. More than 20 sites in France were urbanized by the Schneider firm. The urban reinforcement around the industry of the torpedo thus seems a witness of the first strategy of regional planning on the scale of the very whole nation, thirty years before the concept of national planning is born.*

*Well on, the understanding is on only if we connect by the sea the site of Bormettes with the port of Toulon, to show that the bay of Hyères has always been a sea territory occupied by the activities of secondary annexed port as for naval school and experimentation. Beyond its atypical and remarkable character, this island represents a technological performance, first application of an artificial small island, built with concrete according to processes' Hennebique. Then it has published like an technological experimentation in all the scientific magazines of the time.*

*At the beginning of the years 1990, the prospects to close the factory of Bormettes in La Londeles-Maures, as well as the stop of salt exploitation in the Saline of Hyères, made reacting local and civil population: numbers associations, trade unions, local committees of interest and defense on the two cities of Hyères and La Londe started to point at the collective memory around the life and of the local, economic and industrial activities since the XIX<sup>th</sup> century in this area.*

*Today, the area of Bormettes, its factory of 10.000 m<sup>2</sup> in front of sea, like a door on Méditerranée sea, and its working city are going to be the place of a project of territory with teaching vocation, to learn how to read the landscape like the resulting of the human activity. It is the direction of the work of the Pole of Economy of the Heritage "Landscape of between land and sea in the Var seaside", which DATAR ( french national delegation for management of territory and regional action) set up in 2001. In the context of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millenium and renewal of the actual environmental stakes, the reconversion of an military factory located between the land and sea appears as an ideal site for a project which is not only a project about formation to the environment subject but about formation for helping inhabitants and tourists to become planetary citizens.*

*A manifest chart has been sent in 2001 to invite civil society for a mobilization to inverse the glance between the land and the sea. It was like an invitation to consider the industrial heritage not as a constraint but as a way of development.*