

## INDUSTRIAL SPACES AND URBAN PRACTICES OF SPACE

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## - SUMMARY -

Modern industrial zones isolate industrial spaces from the rest of urban space and exclude the practices of space learnt in urban way of life. This situation creates tensions that could be lessened by re-integrating industrial complexes to urban space.

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The practice of work spaces forms a vast body whose nucleus is obviously work itself and where the crucial places are the worker's job and his place and the factory's inner space. The economic, psychological and ergonomic approaches concur on this point.

However, the environment of industrial spaces is not an unimportant matter, especially if we propose to study comprehensively the practices of space in their relationships with urban ways of life. The factory is the place where time and space are explicitly regimented, urban space is regulated and practised differently.

To what extent are these two spheres totally foreign to each other? Can we make the hypothesis that one of the problems of present industrial space is that they badly accept a practice of space learned and acquired outside factories? There are the questions discussed here in relation to the development of recent forms of industrial implantations.

1. The new industrial spaces.

The industrial implantations made in France since the fifties more and more frequently correspond to specialized and isolated industrial zones, with a clearly-defined single function and separated from the rest of the urban fabric. In this respect the

production of these spaces belongs to the more general tendency of developing urbanization with an increasingly sharp zoning of space. (1)

This movement breaks away from previous forms of association between factories and cities. It was so when factories were more or less completely integrated to neighbourhoods that also included housing and equipments. (2) It was the same case when the city had grown around the factory. (3)

On the contrary, the new factories are often removed from other urban elements and they are frequently located in large industrial zones. This is due in part to the factories' specific needs (need of large areas, removal of nuisances), but also to the more general tendencies of urbanization (price of land, enlargement of the area where labour is recruited). Consequently modern industrial architecture applied itself chiefly to the industrial building itself without paying much attention to its spatial context (4) and urbanism, after a few attempts in the first half of the century, (5) devotes itself more to designing industrial zones than to the connection between city and factory. (6) This orientation calls forth two critical remarks :

- the first concerns social life : the functional islets now formed by industrial zones speed up the breaking up of the social life of individuals and groups and provide no prospect other than a strict assignment to work.

- the second concerns architecture : the present conception of industrial zones ruins in part the development prospects of industrial architecture for it confines architects to designing isolated buildings. Apparently, the factories isolation provides architects with an interesting field : creation, in a virgin area, of a building that is meant to be both functional and expressive. In fact, the desolate aspect of the most elaborate industrial zones stresses the difficulty of wanting to set up a built space with a single building or with punctual constructions.

## 2. Industrial environment and urban experience

The preceding remarks are partly based on a research project carried out in 1973 by the Institut de Sociologie Urbaine, showing that work space accepted badly the practices of space acquired by workers in the whole of their way of life. (7) The experience of city-dwellers, in respect to their practice of space, indeed partly concerns the possibility of appropriating space. This possibility is based on legibility, marking, flexibility and integration to networks. This experience creates demands regarding space and these demands cannot be dropped at the workshop's entrance as casually as changing clothes.

This evidently provokes a number of conflicts and tensions within the factory each time the organization of work does not admit the experience of the way of life or when it does not re-integrate them.

But the same problems may arise in respect to the factory's environment, viewed in theory as a space outside work and thus belonging to general urban practice, when this environment may not be appropriated.

### 3. The practice of industrial environments.

The functional legibility of industrial zones is generally good : the allocations of space, the ways of access, the directions of traffic are clearly indicated, which is easily understood considering the single-functionality of these zones.

We know however that in the practice of urban space the outside's legibility reflects also the inside's contents and that the judgment on legibility refers to an aesthetic-moral point of view : a façade giving no information is illegible but the factory's façade, made of grey walls and of bars informs but too well of the life inside it.

In this respect, cleanliness, lighting, openness are seen as the signifiers of an inner order where the cultural norms related to cleanliness and hygiene are taken into account. Factories are well aware of this and pay a growing amount of attention to the external aspect of their buildings. In the 1973 survey, the workers were also sensitive to these improvements, though accurately perceiving besides that some exteriors were nothing but façades and that the legibility concerned only a stage-setting.

The marking of factory environment comes up against more deep-rooted incompatibilities in new industrial zones because in urban space marking is only possible if the user can establish his own system of frequentation and use. This demands a public road-system, public places, public or private equipments whose modalities of practice users agree upon (e.g. the café or restaurant).

In general, industrial zones admit of none of these practices. On the contrary they reject them by a privatization of the road-system, the absence of public spaces and the near-total absence of equipments. When equipments do exist they generally belong to a specific factory (particularly restaurants). They are used, of course, but they come into the statutory framework of the factory.

However a discernible innovation in some industrial zones consists of an attempt at developing a better relationship with nature, as an eventual substitute to urban culture. Greens become the symbol of this relationship.

The flexibility of space as potentiality for practice brings forth observations of a similar nature. Unlike a relatively continuous urban space, industrial zones have clear, rigid and transitionless limits. The functional plan, directly deriving from the functionalism of the factory itself, dominates space totally here.

Finally, isolation presents a last problem. Indeed, the users of industrial zones are outside the networks supporting urban practice (telephone, post-office, banks). Integration to transportation networks is usually insufficient, for industrial zones are only a segment added to the general network of public transportation and a private busing system often has to be established. This is an incentive to the use of cars. The low frequency of public transportation naturally compounds the mental load introduced in daily commuting by the necessity of being strictly on time in the morning and by the anxiety to go back home as soon as possible.

#### 4. Conclusion

As a whole, the new industrial zones appear as areas imperfectly adapted to the practices of space learnt in the urban way of life and accepting almost none of these practices.

The rejection is so strong that it is implicitly accepted and increased by planning practices : work spaces and their environment must be strictly limited to productive work and the other areas of social life, like housing, shopping or leisure must be organized in other specialized zones.

This point of view is doubly questionable. Firstly, because it is based on the idea that work spaces and procedures are so repulsive that they must be totally relegated and forgotten. Secondly, because the impossibility of appropriating the environment of work has already created such tensions that they overflow on the moments and spaces of life outside work. (8)

We may therefore ask whether, contrarily to zoning, the future of industrial work spaces will not be marked by their reintegration to the whole of urban space.

#### Notes.

(1) Y. Gueniot : Des zones industrielles aux parcs d'activités. Paris, 1974.

(2) Like the first generation of Renault factories, in Billancourt, in a Paris suburb :

J.P. Fridenson : Histoire des Usines Renault. Paris, 1973

like the textile workshops in Roubaix, in the North of France :

M. Vanderersch : Quand les sirènes se taisent. Paris, 1938

and also like the small workshops of plastics workers in the

French Jura :

- R. Vailland : Trois cent vingt-cinq mille francs. Paris, 1955
- (3) Le Creusot, in the center of France, around the Schneider foundries :
- C. Devillers et D. Druenne : Le creusot. Naissance et évolution de l'espace architectural aux XIX<sup>e</sup> et XX<sup>e</sup> siècles. Paris, 1975 ; the coal-mining cities in the North of France, etc...
- (4) N. Pevsner : Pionniers of Modern Design, from William Morris to Walter Gropius. London, 1936
- (5) Tony Garnier : La cité industrielle. Paris, 1918  
Le Corbusier : Manières de penser l'urbanisme. Paris, 1963
- (6) Cahiers de l'Institut d'Amenagement et d'Urbanisme de la Région Parisienne (I.A.U.R.P.) : Aménagement des zones industrielles. Paris, 1969
- (7) Institut de Sociologie Urbaine (I.S.U.) : L'espace du travail dans la ville. Paris, 1973
- (8) M. Chevallier et B. Voisin : Les nouvelles zones industrielles comme cadre de la vie de travail et déterminant de la vie hors-travail. Groupe de Sociologie Urbaine. Lyon, 1974

When the visitor gets out of his car, he would probably walk on the sidewalk, and not cut across several people's front lawns to get to his friend's front door, even though nearby children at play may be running across lawns and through gardens with seeming impunity. The visitor (and the children) recognize that the rules for behavior of visitors to the neighborhood are quite different from the rules governing behavior of people who live there. If the situation were reversed so that visitor and friend were each acting in the role previously taken by the other, then behavior patterns would also be reversed.

The group of people who live on a particular residential street are implicitly identified with that place. They behave accordingly, and expect the behavior of any visitor to acknowledge their special relationship to those particular streets, sidewalks and houses. One could say that they have a kind of possession or control of that territory, even of the public streets.

There are powerful implicit social rules about the kinds and degree of possession and control over territories that are accorded to specific people and groups. In any particular situation, the rules applying to any person are determined by his relationship to the territory he is in. The highway or freeway, which belongs to the general public, is general territory, where everyone follows the same rules. The street on a single residential block is group territory for all the members of the group of families who live on the block. The dining room of a single house on the block is group territory only for the members of the family that lives there; and persons who are not part of that family feel and behave as visitors. For the single family, their house is their primary group territory, and their block on the street is their secondary group territory. Places which are normally used as "home" by only one or two people, such as a bedroom, are much more private than the dining room. The bedroom is individual territory, and is the "home" or primary territory for its designated occupant. See Figures 1A and 1B.

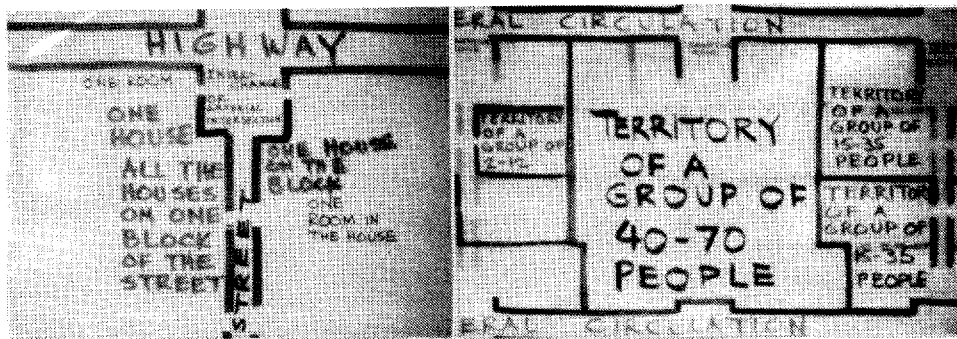


Figure 1A:  
Diagrams used when discussing these analogs with staff members.