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INDUSTRIAL CITIES

History and Future

campus

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Introduction: 'Industrial Cities—History and Future'¹

Clemens Zimmermann

Preliminary remarks

In 2012 Frankfurt am Main celebrated the jubilee of its Eastern harbor, which—a hundred years ago—secured the metropolis' ascendancy as industrial city that it remains until today despite the importance of financial services. What was built then were not just port facilities; big plants and workshops settled around it and Riederwald estate, too, is a 'child of the Eastern harbor'. Even today, 8,000 people work there, although the real estate sector "is eager to grab the area" (Riebsamen 2012). Currently, the production of Opel's Astra model in the near-by Rüsselsheim (Zimmermann 2014) looses out and in the long run, the existence of the traditional automobile production is in jeopardy. Yet today, the car city Rüsselsheim is already more dependent on the jobs provided by Frankfurt Airport than on those provided by Opel. Both the Eastern harbor in Frankfurt and Opel as well as the airport imply the dangerous potential of industrial jobs and their situation in cities and regions. Frankfurt itself and its metropolitan region stand par excellence for contemporary urban spaces that feature mixed economic functions. Jobs are not just provided by the financial sector and logistics companies, but also by both traditional and knowledge sector industries. At the same time, the area features individual classic, previously mono-structural industrial cities, such as Rüsselsheim that is drudgingly asserting its position and has to deal with the general structural transition and constant sales slumps of Opel in a globalized automobile market. In the meantime, the structural transition equally progresses for example in the Saar region. Whilst the once determin-

¹ This introduction is based on Heßler and Zimmermann (2012) and Heßler and Zimmermann (2011), in which the newer literature has been thoroughly revisited and reconsidered in the light of international perspectives. In addition, significant publications are listed individually. For the older research on industrial cities see amongst others: Agulhon (1983), Engeli and Matzerath (1989), Waller (1983) and Reif (1993).

ing coal extraction came to a halt last year, steel production continues and the Saar region has developed into a location of the automotive industry (Freitag 2012).

The number of scientific publications on the industry city is great. In the southwestern German library catalogue, there are 422 publications to be found under the entry ‘industry city’, in the National Union catalogue, the key word ‘industrial town’ comes up with 526 entries and ‘industrial city’ with 3,456.² And these are only monographs that are categorized under history, social and spatial sciences, to a somewhat lesser degree under literary studies and urban studies and even more rarely under architecture. The fact that there is a certain consensus in all these disciplines over what characterizes ‘industry city’ is due to three circumstances: Firstly, the development of the industry city was in general tightly related to industrialization and social modernization in general, which presented decisive paradigms of the historical and social sciences disciplines. Secondly, throughout the period of urban boom, the growth of industry cities was a strong focus: ‘urban and urbanization history’ in Germany, urban history and urban studies in Anglophone contexts. Admittedly we know today that cities such as Brighton and London did not primarily grow from an industrial basis, equally Vienna and Berlin were characterized by a rather mixed structure and strong central and cultural functions. Industrialization and urbanization were tightly inter-related, yet not as tightly as it was conceptualized until recently. Contemporary mega cities such as Lagos, Bangkok and Mexico City are a point in case (Osterhammel 2010, 366–464).

Furthermore, research into industry cities was strongly tied to migration and protest research. Thirdly, common imaginations of industry cities were based upon—and are still based on—contemporary discourses, on works of painters and writers. They passed on to us external and internal imaginations: of dynamic, chaos, apocalyptic insecurity, dirt, dark living conditions, strong and intense protest and desperation of the individual. These highly charged, negative images—especially of cities with heavy industry and regions of coal extraction—had strong impacts and reached deep into the 20th century. The 19th century left us with ‘coke town’ where ‘dangerous classes’ seemed to question the *bourgeois* order (Reif 2012). Over the course of the 20th century, new images were created: of disciplined workers at the furnaces, of heroic construction efforts in the socialist industry cities that can also be

² Viewed July 22, 2012.

considered as company towns, of social and council estates of the post war era and the model kindergartens there. The industry cities of the 20th century were in every respect the places of modernity, of rationalization with an abundance of certainty about the future and even utopian optimism, as in Magnitogorsk, Zlín and Wolfsburg. Not much later, however, this posed the questions whether work remains in the cities, what demands it made to people and what new spatial regimes would emerge.³ Furthermore, it was questioned how a future of industry cities could be envisioned in an increasingly European and globalized economy and in the face of the growing importance of the tertiary sector: is their perspective to develop knowledge industries or should they, albeit as late-comers, subordinate themselves under the trend of a tertiary economy?

Existing research

Until the 1990s, this field of research explained the demographic dynamic of the mutually reinforcing and asynchronous processes of industrialization and urbanization, the emergence of particular industrial types of cities (cities of the textile industry such as Manchester or Mühlhausen) and of a new type of industrial agglomeration. It was also concerned with hygienic and social living conditions, with economic cycles as well as housing construction and housing reform (Reulecke 1997), with processes of class formation, actors of urban reform and with the image and the discourses of 'coke town', Sheffield the 'Steel City' and the major industrial cities. Since the 1990s, the still expanding urban and urbanization research turned to a plethora of themes on the basis of changing methodological approaches. This category is comprised of different non-industrial types of cities such as the rural towns, questions regarding perceptions of the urban, the formation of boroughs and quarters, relationships between formations of citizenship and urban publics and the question concerning the character of the city of the 20th century shaped by mediatization, urbanization and the emergence of a third sector on the one hand and by peripheralization and de-concentration on the other. In particular, the question of planning processes and the characteristics of the 'European city' emerged (Lenger and Tenfelde 2006; Bohn 2008). Social historical

³ See the early publication: Stadtbauwelt (1993).

approaches, however, always remained crucial grounds for research into the Western European city and urbanization (Zimmermann 2011).

Classic research on industrial cities that has contributed to the emergence of the discipline urban history and historical urbanization research in countries such as the Federal Republic of Germany, France and Great Britain has begun to recede in recent years. Only in the last ten years has the relevance of an explicitly as such formulated research into industrial cities grown again significantly. The reasons for this development are relatively clear:

1. Urban and urbanization research has undergone processes of Europeanization and internationalization so that increasingly, comparative approaches are found that specifically interrogate the 'delay' of industrial cities in the European urban agglomerations and question the chances and strategies of their realignment (Clark 2009; Power et al. 2010; Gilman 1997),
2. The dramatic processes of shrinking in old industrial agglomerations in the East and West are not only of interest to geographers, sociologists, urban planners and urban developers, but also to historians who are integrated in a new interdisciplinary field (Heßler and Zimmermann 2011, 683–691). "The great manufacturing crisis of the 1970s and 1980s, poorly recognized at the time, badly affected the urban economy, West European cities suffered most of all, and numerous specialist industrial towns found it difficult to adapt and move in new directions" (Clark 2009, 277). Hence we need to bear in mind that the conditions for urban renewal in industry cities include education and the qualification for the work force, the active support of individual motivation for learning and achievement as well as the writing off of communal debt. The competition amongst cities and the bidding for model projects was a flawed practice. State and society together need to build the capacity and bundle their powers in order to support cities with international competitive advantage. We cannot develop places everywhere at the same time, albeit painful for some.
3. Research has also studied the shrinking processes in industrialized small towns and the planned industrial establishments of the GDR and the concept of the 'socialist' industrial city (Bernhardt 2012) as well as capitalist forms of industrial cities, i.e. planning processes, actors and concepts of utopian character.
4. The relationship between industry and city has been newly conceptualized. Specifically, existing research until now has addressed the question