Landscapes and territories of factory towns:
from planning to non-planning… or the opposite?

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Abstract:
This work aims to deal with the definition of the notion of factory town, trying to specify their different forms and finally proposes the use of a specific vocabulary for the various categories of workers’ villages and factory towns.

From a notion and a spatial model which seem to be simple (i.e. a town planned and built around a factory), many questions can be asked. The question of the creator (the State, a company, an industrialist?); the question of the place of birth (in the countryside, near a pre-existing city?); the question of the size (where is the limit between workers’ village and factory town); the question of the evolution of the model (with the growth of the factory-town outside the original model) to a fuzzier urban shape, so from planning to non-planning.

This leads to develop the question of a category of less familiar, less studied factory towns, because less visible, non- emblematic, non-symbolic of paternalistic times. This type of agglomeration gathers several small factories, workshops, some workers’ houses attached at each factory, some services, some other houses (for the industrialists, for other workers). The town is unplanned in a great spatial anarchy. Generally, these factory towns have proto-industrial origins and their evolution is slow from proto-industry to industry, with a very progressive genesis: no spectacular buildings in this type of factory town, no utopian social theories behind them. At last, this kind of factory towns is generally not alone and gathers as clusters. They need specific ways of regeneration, with more planning actions (build a place of urban centrality for example) and specific ways of heritagization, around a vernacular heritage, constituted by small buildings, small realizations, which could be highlighted by modest discovery trails for example.

So this paper leads to a proposal of a specified vocabulary based on the distinction between industrial city (a city born before industry but with the development of industrial districts closed to the urban tissue), planned factory town (the well-known comprehensive paternalistic model) and unplanned factory town, a complex field of studies to develop.

Keywords:
factory town, industrial landscape, planned and unplanned, industrial heritage, urban regeneration

Introduction: a landscape approach to study factory towns

Factory town is a city wholly created by one or several industrialists, around their factory- ies. This urban form is linked to the industrial Revolution and especially to the paternalism, when the industrialists had to assume the housing policies, the supplying of the population, face to the lack of this policies at the state level. Moreover, this was a way for the industrialists to control the workers. So they had to build, not only a factory and its facilities, but a whole town. This urban form spread all over Europe and North America (and more rarely on other continents) during the end of the 18th, the 19th and the first part of the 20th centuries.
Factory town is different from the wider “industrial city” which means a classic city having hosting factories during industrial revolutions. In Geography, the notion is used and developed for cases studies in several countries (mill town, company town, Fabrikstadt, ville-usine, etc.) during the eighties (Tiessen, 1982; Doyen, 1983; Jalabert & Grégoris, 1987), when this urban form was beginning to decline. Since the crises of the fordist economy, these factory towns don’t work anymore as a system. It’s possible that the factory is still working, but no more in a paternalistic system. So, with the crises, the landscapes of the factory towns are evolving, generally, to a kind of dilution in other landscapes, rural, suburban or urban.

However, the factory towns are now becoming a heritage and this inherited urban form is more broadly approached by Geographers (Green, 2010; Borges & Torres, 2012; Edelblutte, 2010a & 2010b; Luxembourg, 2014) because heritage studies and industrial heritage are now interesting the Geographers as elements for the development or re-development of the territories. After decades of deindustrialization, along with a growing lack of interest for an activity which seemed to be linked to a past economy, industry came back, in a Geography more cultural and social than economic, through social and cultural studies (Daviet, 2005) or through heritage studies. For example, in Germany, D. Soyez published several papers about industrial heritage, linked to tourism (Soyez, 1986, 1993, 2006) and emphasizing its specifically European nature (Soyez, 2009). So, during the early XXIst century, many geographers studied the industrial heritage through related topics such tourism (Fagnoni, 2001, 2002, 2004), urban renewal (Veschambre, 2005), or geohistory (Edelblutte, 2003).

The enlargement of the notion of industrial heritage drove the Geographers to study it, when the notion overtake the scale of the machine or the building to focus factory towns, large territories and, finally, landscapes. But, if we can find publications about related element to the industrial heritage, such as workers’ houses (Duchêne, 2005, 2010), whole towns (Hastaoglou-Martinidis, 2005) or industrial territories (Fagnoni, 2005), industrial landscape is then only studied by an Italian Geographer, M. Preite (2010), followed by L. Del Biondo and S. Edelblutte in 2016 about the landscape of factory towns, as the landscape approach particularly fits the study of factory towns, for two main reasons:

* The first reason is that the landscape approach allows to study the factory town as a system, a set of interactive elements directly or indirectly related to industrial production. This includes productive elements as non-productive elements of the system:

  - Productive elements (fig 1) are of course the factory itself, with all its diversity (tubular factory, north-face roof factory, red brick factory, functionalist sheds, etc.). It includes too all the buildings and facilities directly build for the production: settling ponds, chimneys, offices and headquarters, water supply channel, etc.

  - Non-productive elements (fig. 2), not directly linked to the process of production: workers’ houses, shops, social center, social building, gardens, farms, cinemas, stadiums, all these buildings and facilities that paternalistic industrialists build around their factories.
*the second reason* of the use of landscape approach in this work, is that many elements of the factory town are still visible even years after the failure of the system, when the system no longer works. In this approach, the landscape is seen as a palimpsest (Chevallier, 1976), like these old medieval manuscripts where, under the most recent writings, it’s possible to find what was written before. So the landscape is "A kind of memory which registers and adds up history of successive human activities on the Earth" (Béguin, 1995, p. 50).

This landscape approach allows to identify factory towns, even after the closure of the factory itself. Even if the factory is finally destroy, the former workers’ houses are still here, the former workers’ gardens, the former crèche, schools, shops are still visible in the current landscape. The landscape approach could help to identify and to categorize, to classify our object of studies, factory towns. That is the aim of this work, because we need to go further than cases studies and thematic studies about towns of textile industry or chemical industry or steel industry, as the former factory towns are visible everywhere and in all the different branches of industry. The first part questions the model of the factory town, around its foundation, around its definition. The second part tries to show the many limits of this definition. At last, the third part tries to show that, beside emblematic, symbolic and well-known planned

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1 "une sorte de mémoire où s’enregistre et se totalise l’histoire des visées successives de l’homme sur la terre."
factory town, there is a kind of a grey zone, an in-between category of factory towns, very different from planned factory towns, \textit{i.e.} unplanned factory town.

1. From the industrial geosystem to the factory town: a simple model?

The set of interactive industrial elements listed earlier (factory itself, workers’ houses, etc.) builds a landscape which is repeating around the world. It can be modeled on the figure 3. This organization can be called, in Geography, a geosystem. Based on the notion of ecosystem, a geosystem is a set of interactive elements which is visible in the landscape and which forms a clear territory. We can for example recognize in the landscape (and analyze), agricultural geosystems, pastoral geosystems, touristic geosystems, etc. and industrial geosystem such this paternalistic form. The \textbf{industrial geosystem is the basic unit of industrial paternalistic landscape}. In this example of Verrerie-de-Portieux (fig. 3), there is a perfect concordance between the industrial geosystem and the factory town: the two are the same. We can even question the necessity of distinguish industrial geosystem and factory town because it seems here to
be the same thing. Moreover, this model and the concordance between it and the factory town can be seen in all over the world and at all times from proto industry to second industrial revolution (Dorel-Ferré, 2016). The most comprehensive examples are well-known, such Arvida in Canada, Togliatti in Russia, or batavilles in all the continents.

The batavilles are an incredible network of factory towns built by Czechoslovakian shoemaker Tomas Bata, mainly during the interwar. The idea was to build a factory town in each country to avoid border taxes. The “mother” and the model of batavilles was Zlín, now in...
Czech Republic and then in Czechoslovakia. So the model had been repeated in many countries: Germany, Poland, Hungary, Switzerland, England, USA, Canada, India, France, The Netherlands, etc. all on the same model with common landscapes elements. So batavilles are archetypal and very well planned factory towns, built in the middle of nowhere, around the shoe factory. The whole city is clearly created by and for the industrialist. On the map of the Slovak bataville (which was then called Bat’ovany and now Partizánske), the model of industrial geosystem is clearly apparent and perfectly fits the idea of factory town (fig. 4).

Some of the most comprehensive, the most representative, the most planned and the less distorted of these factory towns are now protected by UNESCO as world heritage including the factory of course, but the workers’ houses too and much more: this is the case of Røros in Norway, Fray Bentos in Uruguay, Saltaire in England or Crepsi d’Adda in Italy (fig. 5). Moreover, some of the factory towns, or sometimes mining towns, are included in larger areas recognized by UNESCO as cultural landscapes and listed as world heritage. This is the case for example in the Derwent Valley in England or in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais former coal basin in France.
Crespi d’Adda was founded in 1877 around a textile factory. This is a very thorough example of paternalism, with exceptionally numerous and neat housing and services for the workers. The pictures presents the factory with one chimney in the background, and from left to right, the school (white building), the church, the social center (big yellow building) with the wash-house on the front. Back right, the tower of the owners’ house emerges from the forest. At last, in the foreground, workers’ houses are aligned, surrounded by gardens. The factory town also groups, outside the picture, a hostel, a cooperative shop, a cemetery, a farm, a small hospital, public baths, etc. This exceptional and remarkably preserved set is listed by UNESCO as World Heritage since 1995, even before the closure of the textile plant in 2003. Despite this closure, the houses of Crespi d’Adda are still occupied and well kept, because of the good location of the town just between Bergamo and Milan.

In all these cases, the factory towns perfectly fit the model. However, this simple notion, when look with attention, is far more complicated, because of many reasons linked to time, place of birth, creator, size… And finally it’s frequently quite easy to differentiate industrial geosystem (the basic unit) and factory town (the result).

2. Factory-towns: a reality far more complex than the model

The comparison of factory towns between them drives to several questions:

* A question of creator: The expression company town is frequently confused with factory town. In fact the creator of the factory town is not necessarily a company, a firm, as it’s usual in North America. It could be an industrialist alone. It could be the State (especially in former communist country). G. Dorel Ferré wrote about this question in 2016, and explained…
that factory town is more comprehensive than company town. To be clear, all company towns are factory towns but all factory towns are not company towns.

* A question of place of birth: The place where the factory is built could lead to the formation of a factory town, or not. Many factories are built in the countryside, near mines or near a river to use water as energy. There is no urban settlements nearby, so the industrialist is forced to build an industrial geosystem, which become a factory-town. However, some factories are attracted by pre-industrial cities because of the presence of a possible workforce. In this case, the industrialist do not need to build as many workers’ houses as in a remote place, because there is possibilities to find flats, houses in the nearby city. So these factories built an incomplete, unfinished, imperfect… industrial geosystem, with only few houses for only a small part of workers and no services managed by the company. So this form, just closer to the pre-industrial city, just behind the former walls, as a very close suburb, is only an industrial district\(^2\) with a mix of factories, warehouses, some workers’ houses, some shops and bars, etc. presenting a very chaotic landscape (fig. 6). Far from the model of factory town, the term of industrial city can be used to refer these pre-industrial cities that host factories, not whole industrial paternalistic geosystems, and to differentiate these cities from the factory towns.

However, some of these cities have been so transformed, so modified by factories and other industrial elements, that the preindustrial core nearly disappear between factories, warehouses, railways, etc. This is the case for many cities in the Ruhr region in Germany, for Mülhouse in France, or Birmingham or Manchester in England. So the limit between industrial city and factory town is not always clear.

* A question of size: Where is the limit between workers’ village and factory town? Is this only a matter of number of inhabitants? In France, the limit of 2,000 inhabitants is use to qualify a rural or an urban commune, a town in fact. But the number of inhabitants is not significant enough and inadequate to differentiate workers’ villages and factory towns, because a real city needs something other than a large amount of inhabitants. To be a city, an agglomeration needs to be attractive on the neighbouring territories with commercial, cultural, political, administrative services. So the limit between workers’ villages and factory town could not be only a question of number of inhabitants, a matter of size indeed, but a question of attractiveness with the quality, and the quantity of services built in the agglomeration. It’s possible to know that, to evaluate that, but it’s more intricate that only counting inhabitants.

* A question of time: In the beginning and in many cases, the industrial geosystem merges with the factory town, but after several years, the model is more and more blurred, more and more fuzzy, more and more unplanned.

In this landscape of Thaon-les-Vosges (fig. 7), former factory town in North-Eastern France, the initial industrial geosystem, which creates the factory-town at the end of 19\(^{th}\) century, is pointed out in red (factory, different groups of workers’ houses, etc.). But, 150 years after the creation of the factory, there is many other urban elements around the initial and former industrial geosystem in red:

\(^2\) Faubourg industriel in French.
Fig. 6 – An industrial district in an industrial city: Meurthe-Canal in Nancy, France

Former capital city of the Duchy of Lorraine, Nancy (France) is an old town developed from the Middle age near the river Meurthe. At the end of the 19th century, in a particular geopolitical context with the annexation of the neighboring province of Alsace-Moselle by Germany in 1871, the city host many factories came from the annexed province. The factories are settling between the river Meurthe (in the background) and the Canal de la Marne au Rhin (in the foreground), just near the old center (in the lower left corner). The landscape of this new industrial district, at its peak during the 1950’s, is particularly messy and complex: an unplanned mix of factories with chimney, warehouses, coal depots and oil tanks, slaughterhouse, stadium, collective and individual dwellings, shops ... all scarified by rail and railway brakes.

- First, very quickly, a part of the factory town escapes to the geosystem. Because it is uncommon, as Gracia Dorel-Ferré wrote in 2016, that all the workers had access to the houses built by the industrialist. So a part of them had to find a flat or a house in the nearby village (orange star) and this district, with the creation of bars, shops, escapes quickly to the planned industrial geosystem.

- Second, others small former industrial geosystems are still visible (in violet), each one with a factory, workers’ houses, school and services. Indeed, a few years after the first and main factory, two other factories have been built, creating two other geosystems and blurring the model of the initial and planned factory town.

- Third and moreover, the decline of the main factory during the second part of the 20th century and the growing influence, through highways (black) of the neighbouring towns, tends to more and more blur the model, with new buildings (yellow), and the
very well planned factory town evolves to another version of factory town, far less planned and somehow disorganised.

This trend, from planning to un-planning, is very common and it affects a large majority of the planned factory-towns and that leads to address, in a last part, another kind of factory-towns, less known, less studied…

3. Unplanned factory town: an un-identifying geo-industrial object?

In this case, from the beginning, the industrial geosystem does not match to the factory town. These towns are real factory towns, but their birth, their genesis, their landscapes, their landscapes are far different from their planned counterparts.

3.1. An unspecific landscape
Far from the very recognizable landscape of the planned factory towns, Fressenneville, 2,230 inhabitants, in Northern France, presents a typical landscape of an unplanned factory town (fig. 8). The same elements than in a planned factory town are visible, but with no plan: several small factories, some lines of workers’ houses, some beautiful houses for the owners of the factories, some services, but no clear organization. In fact, several small industrial geosystems, each incomplete, were coalescing, forming a city without organization, without a clear centre for example. It’s clearly a factory town because the town was born thanks to the industry, but, in this case of unplanned factory town, industrial geosystem do not merge with the factory town, because there is several industrial geosystem for one only factory town.

Fig. 8 – Fressenneville (France): elements of the industrial landscape of an unplanned factory town of the Vimeu cluster

This kind of landscape of unplanned factory towns is in fact very frequent, but less studied, less known for several reasons:
* First: the planned factory towns have captured the attention of the researchers and of the people in general with their spectacular development around heavy industries. It has eclipsed the unplanned factory towns.

* Second: the unplanned factory towns are less visible in the landscape than planned factory towns. About the cluster of Vimeu in Northern France, including several unplanned factory towns, such Fressenneville, around small metallurgy (mainly locks and taps), a geographer, Baron, wrote in 1985: “The factory disappears in the vegetation. In the Vimeu, the factory is discreet, included inside the small towns; it seems that the factory is slowly inserted in the agricultural village structure.” (p. 319). In Ardèche, rural department of South of France, where factories produced silk wire, Nacé & Nacé wrote in 2008: “The industrial activity is perfectly inserted in rural economy, until it becomes diluted, in fact losing its industrial specificity” (p. 283). So this lack of visibility, of specificity, in the landscape led to a lack of interest for these unplanned factory towns.

* Third: their genesis and development is usually ancient and slow, as the following part will show it.

3.2. Rurality, proto-industry, clusters…

This kind of factory towns is linked to the development, during proto-industrial times, of industrial clusters. It concerns rural regions, where farming was no more able to give enough work and enough earnings to a growing population. Before the industrial revolution, the inhabitants can’t migrate to industrial basin and to a planned factory town because they don’t yet exist. So they have to find alternative livelihoods. They use craft know-hows to develop new activities, in small workshops and, if these activities are successful, they slowly grow and the success is copied by other inhabitants. It creates an economic development and, with the industrial times, some workshops evolve to factories, sometimes quite big factories. The success is promoted by the competition between companies working in the same specialty. This leads to innovation, flexibility and adaptability. So the industrialists need more workers and sometimes build a few lines of workers’ houses, but the majority of the workers have already their own house in the city. The industrialists build beautiful houses for themselves too, usually just near their factory. As the companies are generally small, the industrialists build together a school, a town hall, some shops and services for all the workers of the city, etc. Beside these new factories, some workshops, and sometimes even outworks, remains active.

This evolution generates a very chaotic territory and landscape, with a mix of factories, small workshops, workers’ houses build by industrialist or not, some services, some “castles” for the owners, etc. The town is not planned but is a real factory town as it was born from the industry, but this time not from a single industrial geosystem, not from a single factory. These characteristics leads to specific policies when the time of crises and urban regeneration comes.

3 « L’usine s’estompe dans l’écrin de verdure […] En Vimeu, l’usine se fait discrète, intégrée au cœur même des bourgs ; elle semble s’être insérée peu à peu à une structure villageoise à vocation agricole ».

4 « L’activité industrielle s’insère parfaitement dans l’économie rurale jusqu’à s’y diluer, à en perdre justement son caractère industriel ». 


3.3. Which regeneration for the unplanned factory-towns?

The decline of the industry in this urban form is far different from the decline of a planned factory town. With only one factory in a planned factory town, the decline is abrupt and brutal when the factory closes. This is a real earthquake for the now former factory town, because the hearth of the city brutally stops. And that requires a prompt reaction in a town with a clear urbanism and with a strong and clear industrial heritage, sometimes spectacular. In an unplanned factory town, the decline is obviously slower because there is several factories and workshops and they don’t close at the same time.

During this slow decline, the unplanned factory town falls asleep and it doesn’t promote an awareness of the need of an urban renewal. So at the end of the process, a reaction is needed to build a real city and it’s then very difficult. However, two main actions of urban regeneration can be observed in these unplanned factory towns:

Unplanned factory town born form 5 industrial geosystems, Golbey, after a long decline of textile industry from the 1970’s to the end of the 1990’s, losts its factories and become a city without a clear center, only a crossroad between two main roads, near the church signalizing the old pre-industrial village. During the 2000’s, the municipality opens, by destroying several old buildings, a square between the church (right) and the town hall (back). Surrounded by small shops, the square, furnished with benches, trees and fountains, tries to create conviviality in a new center.

Fig. 9: A new center for a new identity in the former unplanned factory town of Golbey, France

- First, the authorities have to try to create a real center for the town; in fact, they have to plan the unplanned. For example, Golbey, North-Eastern France, was an unplanned factory
town, with around 8,000 inhabitants in the 1960’s and with 5 industrial geosystems for one only unplanned factory town. Four was textile industry, one manufactured turbines for textile industry. Each small geosystem groups a factory and workers’ houses and some services. They surrounded an old agricultural village, widely transform by bars, shops and some services and private housing for the workers. Each system has evolved differently and the closure of the plants extended from the end of the 1960’s to the end of the 1990’s. When the last plant closed down, the municipality had to plan a new city as the five “motors” of the life of the city was now stopped. They decided to create a city center, with enlarging a crossroad in the old village near the church and the town hall, by the destruction of two old farmhouses. They built a new square where they put fountains, benches, trees and surrounded by shops to create a friendly centrality that was missing in this city (fig. 9).

- The second kind of action in the unplanned factory town after the decline of industry, targets the heritage. It's not easy to preserve industrial heritage in this kind of factory town, because there is no spectacular element, no obvious landmark such a blast furnace or a very big factory or a wonderful set of workers’ houses (all elements that are present in planned factory towns). Here are only small heritage elements, a kind of vernacular heritage. So, what is possible to do is only modest actions, around discovery trails, some panels with explanation, some work with QR codes or smart phones applications (fig. 10). This work on vernacular heritage is very important for these territories. It’s more for the local inhabitants than for the tourists. The aim is to give a pride around this industrial identity, essential in the development of a new town.

Fig. 10: A discovery trail in the workers’ village of Béthencourt-sur-Mer in the Vimeu cluster, France
Conclusion

Based on landscape’s studies, this work leads to identify three models of relationships between industry and the city (fig. 11)

The factory towns are not fixed and they are constantly evolving, usually from planned to unplanned (fig. 12), with no clear limit between the two poles.

This reflexion about the different categories of factory town aims to precise elements of vocabulary which are essential when a scientific object, such factory towns, is studied by many disciplines… and especially in the 21th century, with the development of new ideas of towns linked to work and companies such Disney or Google (Piraino, 2016) in a new kind of revisited paternalism.
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