

# INDUSTRIAL REVIVAL

An incremental re-affectation strategy  
for Sappi Maastricht.

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At the beginning of this graduation year, there is a theme: Glaneurs, Glaneuse.

*'We are concerned with the city as a man-made landscape. The studio intends to reap and sow pieces of the city, to work with the existing and make use of its resources and potentials.'*

In this case, gleaning is interpreted as an attitude to valorize residues, leftovers, what people would consider as non-space. By looking more deeply, diving into the site, and progressively identifying different layers of value (political, economic, architectural, etc), this research aims to discuss the image of industries in urban districts. Sometimes discrete, sometimes prominent, we often only remark their existence once they are gone.

*'There is a need to invent new processes and business models, more gradual and cooperative transformations working with existing building stock {...}.'* Markus Schaefer<sup>1</sup>

What Markus Schaefer suggests in his book "Industrious city" is to better consider the value existing buildings instead of too simply decide to tear them down. He suggests elaborating new reconversion strategies, especially in urban environments which consider social, cultural, and societal parameters, more than only looking for financial

profitability. Looking at former industrial campuses anchored in urban tissues, too often their reconversion has been oriented towards a tertiarization of city districts, somehow replacing a monofunctional industrial campus by another one. In that respect, the case of Maastricht is particularly interesting to investigate. Considered for a long time as the first industrial city in the Netherlands, such slogan as become more a marketing strategy to develop tourism than a real representation of what the job market looks like. In December 2021, one of the biggest employers of the city, Sappi, a South-African paper company, announced leaving its historical situation in North Maastricht<sup>2</sup>. The departure of the paper mill, beyond the social disaster the loss of more than 600 jobs represents, also brings back on the table the status of industrial spaces in urban environments. It also offers an opportunity to draw a more inclusive strategy, as suggested by Markus Schaefer, for the redevelopment of this testimony of the industrial prosperity of Maastricht.

In that respect, this research aims to evaluate the potential interest in redeveloping productive activities in the Sappi campus and to elaborate a strategy for the reprogramming of the industrial site into a more inclusive productive urban environment.

<sup>1</sup> Hosoya, Hiromi, Markus Schaefer, and Philipp Aerni. The Industrious City Urban Industry in the Digital Age. Lars Müller Publishers, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> "Papierfabriek Sappi Maastricht in de Verkoop." 1Limburg, 2021, [www.1limburg.nl/papierfabriek-sappi-maastricht-de-verkoop](http://www.1limburg.nl/papierfabriek-sappi-maastricht-de-verkoop).

## Method

The proposed method follows the establishment of a theoretical basis exploring notions of economic geography, more particularly morphological dynamics of networks of companies and streams to which they are dependent. A second theoretical support defined concerns the morphological impact of urban environments on productive spaces and the development of vertical factories. Finally, industrial redevelopment strategies will complete the theoretical foundation of this research.

A second step in this research is the contextualization of theoretical inputs through the exploration and analysis of concrete situations and projects able to confirm, infirm or bring new parameters to reinforce and offer a more tangible support.

Finally, the method is applied to Maastricht situation with the evaluation of the pertinence of a return of productive spaces in the urban tissues taking into considerations the socio-economic situation of the city. The strategy is then formulated as a list of points of attention and recommendations for a potential reconversion of the site into a contemporary productive environment.

## Results

First, the socio-economic situation in Maastricht shows a tendency to orientate urban economy towards service-oriented companies, retails, horeca and cultural functions in a global strategy of developing tourism considering the history and the border territory on which the city is implanted. However, at the scale of the region, the Limburg preserves an important industrial economy on which important investments linked to research are proposed. The industrial development is then concentrated in economic clusters – brightlands. The city of Maastricht is also the home of an important foyer of one-person-company (ZZP) which represent 13% of the number of registered companies<sup>3</sup>. In contrast to that, no collective facilities are proposed for them to establish and develop their business. The city is also confronted to the aging of its population, which contrasts

with its academic presence, due to an exodus of young workers towards the Randstad for better job opportunities. All in all, Maastricht appears to be a promising start-up incubator due to the presence of the University of Maastricht but also for the number of independent entrepreneurs. The development of a more productive environment could also contribute to the maintain of young people around the city.

Once the interest in investing in productive spaces confirmed, the definition of a strategy for the reconversion of Sappi Maastricht resulted in the elaboration of three-phase plan regrouping 10 recommendations likely to influence the development of a more inclusive productive environment.

<sup>3</sup> Gemeente Maastricht. (2019). Made in Maastricht - Economische visie 2020. <https://www.gemeentemaastricht.nl/sites/default/files/2019-10/economische%20visie%202020.pdf>

## PHASE 1: REAPPROPRIATION

### DIVIDE AND RULE

Fragmenting the former industrial campus to propose a series of smaller working spaces better corresponding to neo-cottage urban production<sup>4</sup>. The fragmentation is also meant to establish synergies between entrepreneurs similarly to dynamics evolving in economic clusters.

### CLEAN BEFORE THE PARTY

Establishing an order of priorities aiming to make the site functional, safe, and welcoming. Creating public spaces has an important interest in stimulating the encounter of thinkers and makers in a more solidary city<sup>5</sup>. Minimizing investments is also meant to maintain rental fees attractive for young entrepreneurs and start-ups. The optimization money investments compared to spaces activated is also meant to refurbish the site more resiliently, following the progressive departure of the previous owner, Sappi in the case of Maastricht.

### SHARE THE RISKS

Exploiting available tools and optimizing their use by centralizing and sharing logistics equipment, heat, and electricity production sources.

### ON-SITE MANAGEMENT

Offering an on-site management organized by the architect underlining the reconsideration of its role as part of an office that takes care of facilitating collaborations, of developing broader transformative processes and, in the meantime ensuring the pertinence of interventions on site through the definition of a framework in which actors are evolving<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Rappaport, N. (2020). Vertical Urban Factory (2nd ed.). Actar.

<sup>5</sup> Hosoya, Hiromi, Markus Schaefer, and Philipp Aerni. The Industrious City Urban Industry in the Digital Age. Lars Müller Publishers, 2021.

<sup>6</sup> Romieri, V. (2022). The Not Ordinary Factory.

## **PHASE 2: TRANSFORMATION**

### **INDUSTRY HAS CHANGED**

The return of industry into the city is possible due to the cleanliness of contemporary production tools. Innovations in materials reducing acoustic, air and light pollution is also responsible of the changing conditions of urban production.

### **POLITICAL SUPPORT**

The necessity to establish a dialog with politics to convince them of the relevance of productive spaces in urban environments. The political support is the only solution to develop and experiment mix-use typologies and preserve land value attractive for young entrepreneurs and small companies. In contrary, the reallocation of former productive into residential functions is permanent.

## PHASE 3: EXTENSION

### ANTICIPATE TOMORROW'S ECONOMY

Increasing the number of productive spaces in the city can stimulate the development of circular and more sustainable consumption circuits. Relocalizing production of certain goods can also reduce the dependence of our economy regarding the global market and its fluctuations.

### THE NEXT BIG THING, A LOT OF SMALL THINGS

Focusing on increasing the number of small and cheap productive environments to host starters and independent workers (ZZP) and offer them an environment meant to support them in their entrepreneurial journey<sup>7</sup>.

### HYBRIDIZATION OF PRODUCTIVE TYPOLOGIES

The reintegration of productive spaces in cities is also a question of image. Implementing blind shoebox warehouses won't be positively accepted. The cleanliness of contemporary and digital companies also implies more transparent architecture more likely to interact with public space. Architecture is also a powerful asset to philosophically transmit an image: a symbol of openness, of transparency, of innovativeness.

### INDUSTRIAL TOURISM

Exploiting the curiosity of citizens/tourists regarding their interests for backstage atmospheres as an economic tool. Giving access to productive spaces is also important as an active education able to influence children's work orientation<sup>8</sup> and, potentially, aiming to maintain young workers within Maastricht.

### UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Looking at new productive space typologies, it is important to not repeat mistakes of the past. Industrial buildings sheds have reached such a degree of genericity that they are easier to dismantle than to reprogram. In urban environments, proximity generates frictions. In that respect, it has to be integrated in the design of a productive space the potential reconversion of it into a more social or cultural function. In other words: designing a flexible, yet specific building.

<sup>7</sup> TNO. (2017). Compositie analyse van de Limburgse economie. CBS. <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/maatwerk/2017/40/compositie-analyse-van-de-limburgse-economie>

<sup>8</sup> Rappaport, N. (2020). Vertical Urban Factory (2nd ed.). Actar.

This strategy is meant to serve as a guideline to accompany reflections regarding the redevelopment of other industrial sites. Considering the uncertain future surrounding Sappi Maastricht reconversion, such strategy could be used as leverage to establish a dialog with the municipality of Maastricht. The idea would be to discuss the relevance of this urban proposal compared to the one already published, also meant to defend the preservation of one of the last pieces of productive land in Maastricht.

The graduation project is deeply anchored and accompanied the elaboration of the reconversion strategy, first at the urban scale, looking at materials flows, on-site coordination,

and the revalorization of what seemed to be pieces of land, left in standstill status waiting for deciders to define their destiny. Then, the focus on a specific part of this campus was the opportunity to question and discuss the morphological and organizational impacts of forcing the cohabitation of what appears today as antagonist functions: living and making. Through design proposals, different scenarios have been tested, specifically regarding organization of flows and their potential of being shared as well as the morphology given to the building. In the end, the choice has been made to propose a visually attracting volumetry, a materialization of the symbolic return of the factory in the city ready to interact, embedded in the urban fabric.