

The Heritagisation of Industry between Entrepreneurial Making and Civic Repurposing: The Case of Plaine Commune (in the Suburbs of Paris)¹

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This paper analyses the new stage of heritagisation of industry based on the case study of Plaine Commune, an intercommunal structure in the northern suburbs of Paris. It suggests to move beyond the dichotomy between *heritagisation by designation* and *heritagisation by appropriation* by evidencing a ‘creative’ form of entrepreneurial appropriation, which is typical of the new phase of capitalism and co-produces gentrification. The discussion also considers alternatives to this type of heritagisation: the activist making of industrial heritage, local mobilisations and civic repurposing operations in the interstices of metropolisation.

Keywords: Capitalism, industry, mobilisations, heritagisation, Plaine Commune.

While industrial heritage is now recognised as one of several new forms of heritage (Daumas 1980, Woronoff 1989, Bergeron and Dorel-Ferré 1996), this recognition masks specificities and trends that call the very concept of heritage into question.

First of all, industrial heritage is not just one more type of heritage — it has emerged from a change in production methods that may be compared to the political regime change of the French Revolution, which gave rise to the concept of *patrimoine* (heritage) (Poulot 1997). In the same way that heritage itself came out of the break of the Ancien Régime’s three estates system in France, industrial heritage resulted from the shift from industrial production methods to post- or rather hyper-industrial production methods (Veltz 2008). In the countries of the industrial revolution, this was a manifestation of the global redeployment of capitalism, against the backdrop of the new international division of labour.

Additionally, despite the recent recognition of industrial heritage, up to the consecration of several UNESCO World Heritage Site designations,² sites are still frequently destroyed.

After a pioneering period of heritagisation of industry with activists and/or experts at the helm, during which capitalism preferred to avoid de-industrialised areas, the heritagisation of industry has entered a new stage. Having long remained fallow, industrial wastelands are being recycled by metropolises with destructive gestures that have ‘effects of symbolic exclusion’ for the working classes.³ The ‘best illustration’ of this is ‘the treatment of Seguin Island [a former site of a huge car factory near Paris], which tends to erase the very symbol of the French industry and working class: the Renault factory in Billancourt’ (Veschambre 2002: 69). Such gestures may also take the form of ‘creative’ repurposing efforts, subject to an intense, globalised circulation of models (Lusso 2013).

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² Such as the Ironbridge Gorge (1986), Völklingen (1994), Blaenavon (2000), the Zollverein in Essen (2001) and the Nord-Pas de Calais Mining Basin (2012).

³ This expression ‘World Heritage Site’ was initially used with reference to the Palace of the Republic in Berlin (Hocquet 2012).

This ambiguous context calls for reconsidering the political and social stakes involved in the heritagisation of industry. Whose heritage is industrial heritage? Does such heritage belong to the working class, the employers, or to all inhabitants of de-industrialised areas? What is the heritagisation of industry for? Is it a means to embrace a new stage of globalisation, to make things up to those left behind or to forge a metropolitan alternative?

To tackle these questions, this paper cross-examines two bodies of scholarship that are usually considered in isolation. On the one hand, I look at studies on heritagisation, defined as the process of collection and upgrading whereby a social collective decides to take objects — in the broader sense of the word — out of the ordinary scheme of things and grant them the status of emblematic objects of its identity in time (Micoud 1995). On the other hand, I consider studies on the new phase and the ‘new spirit’ of capitalism (Boltanski and Chiapello 1999).

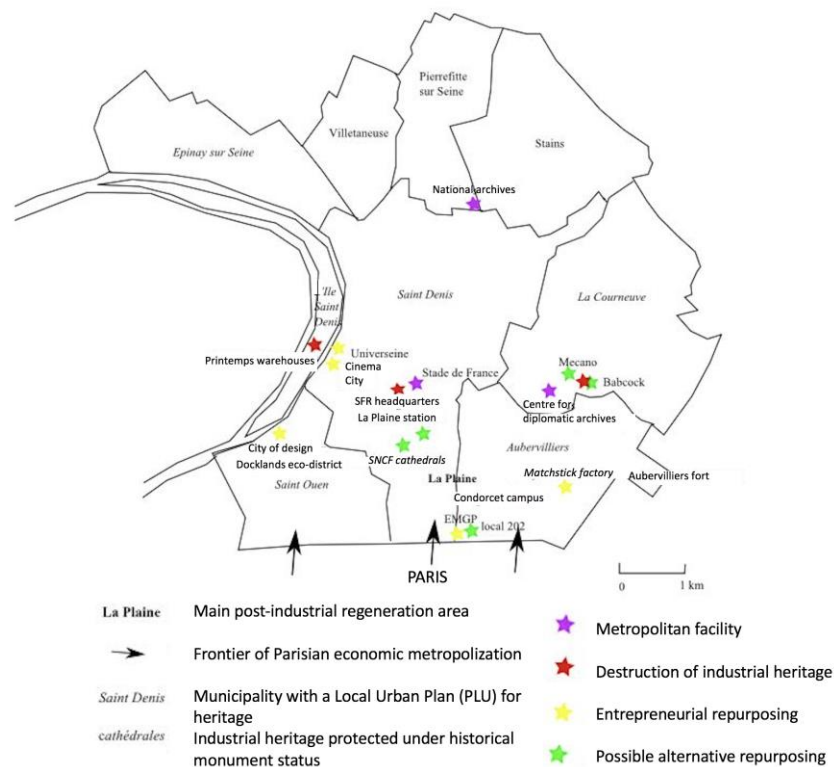
The main theoretical hypothesis tested here is that the dichotomy between *heritagisation by designation* and *heritagisation by appropriation* of inhabitants (Rautenberg 2003a) is no longer sufficient to account for today’s making of industrial heritage. Historically, an opposition developed between a monumental heritage, initially the property of dominant social categories and subsequently institutionalised by the State, and vernacular, ethnological ‘social heritages’ (Rautenberg 2003b). However, especially in suburban areas industrial heritage often falls within neither category. Few industrial heritage sites are listed as historical monuments, and the sociological transformations that come with de-industrialisation do little to facilitate bottom-up appropriation. Additionally, appropriation by and for the capitalist class is at work there, without the involvement of heritage institutions.

Rather than the opposition between heritagisation by designation and by appropriation, today’s heritagisation of industry arguably reflects a double opposition; on the one hand, heritage in the classical sense vs. heritage adapted to the standards of ‘creativity’ and, on the other hand, entrepreneurial vs. alternative heritage-making. In turn, these oppositions also need to be nuanced if not deconstructed — indeed, the heritagisation of industry results from hybrid processes, calling into question the traditional approach to heritage-making.

The present discussion offers an examination of the structuring tension between entrepreneurial heritage-making and resistance towards building ‘another metropolis’ at work in the heritagisation of industry. It is based on the study of the *intercommunalité* [intermunicipal structure] of Plaine Commune, in the northern suburbs of Paris, France. Since 1st January 2016, Plaine Commune has been one of the territories of the Grand Paris [Greater Paris].⁴ In the 1930s, it was home to the largest industrial park in Europe and has now become one of the main business hubs in the Paris area. Politically, it is one of the last remaining bastions of the Parisian

⁴ Plaine Commune brings together the municipalities of Aubervilliers, Épinay-sur-Seine, La Courneuve, L’Île-Saint-Denis, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, Saint-Denis, Saint-Ouen, Stains and Villetaneuse — a total of 414,000 residents.

‘red belt’. Field research was based on semi-structured interviews with local actors involved in the fields of culture, heritage, economy and urbanism.⁵



Map 1. Industrial heritage and metropolisation in Plaine Commune.

The Paradoxical Weakness of the Activist-making Industrial Heritage in Plaine Commune

In light of the dominance of Communism among Plaine Commune’s municipalities, one might have expected to find them to be a strong example of activist making of industrial heritage — intended as a shift from trade union and/or political activism (for instance against a factory closure) to heritage activism — a particular type of heritagisation by appropriation (of a place and of work tools).

Trade Union Activism and Heritage Activism

Heritage activism may have close ties with trade union activism. For instance, this is the case in Givors, where ‘memory and heritage-oriented initiatives’ pertaining especially to the factory chimney ‘are now essentially promoted by the association of former glassmakers’ and are ‘mobilised to have the professional origin of the diseases affecting them recognised’, and make

⁵ This material was used in the author’s *habilitation* thesis [accreditation to supervise research] titled *Patrimonialisation et métropolisation en banlieue. Le cas de Saint-Denis/Plaine Commune* [Heritagisation and metropolisation in the suburbs. The case of Saint-Denis/Plaine Commune], defended in November 2016 at the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne under the supervision of Maria Gravari-Barbas.

industrial heritage ‘a medium for the expression of a dominated social memory’ (Nicolas and Zanetti 2014: 10). Trade union activism can also be converted into heritage activism, as in the case of the steel-working area of Lorraine (Tornatore 2006).

In Plaine Commune, as the new international division of labour set in, the 1970s were characterised by a very dynamic trade union activism. Salient events include a strike and occupation by the steelworkers of the Rateau factory in la Courneuve (31 January-29 April 1974), the occupation of the Chaix printing works in Saint-Ouen (1975-80) (Fourcaut et al. 2007) and the struggle against the restructuring of the Babcock boiler factory in La Courneuve, where two thirds of jobs were cut between 1967 and 1978.

Against this backdrop, an effort to combine the defence of industrial labour and the defence of industrial heritage was made. In 1980, Maurice Soucheyre (1929-2006), the Communist deputy mayor for culture and/or urbanism of Saint-Denis, defined a municipal heritage policy that aimed both to defend the ‘living heritage’ of industrial employment and to begin safeguarding the industrial heritage through an inventory and conservation attempts.⁶

*Political and Sociological Causes of the Weakness
of Activist Industrial Heritage-making in Plaine Commune*

Ultimately, in Plaine Commune, the attempt to link trade union activism and heritage activism failed for political reasons but also for longer-term sociological reasons.

First, however dynamic they may have been, social movements were unable to contain de-industrialisation. In the early 1990s, the municipalities of Saint-Denis and Aubervilliers turned to a strategy of converting to an economy based on high-tech industries and services, favouring business development over heritage protection. Nearly all the factory chimneys that used to tower over the Plaine were destroyed and three gas storage tanks were razed to make way for the new Stade de France. Some twenty years later, the trend towards a shift from Communism to Socialism, further weakened the activist-making aspect of industrial heritage.

Lastly, over the longer term, sociological causes also explain the weakness of activist industrial heritage-making in Plaine Commune. While in some sectors — those best located and/or closest to Paris — gentrification has been flaring up; overall the territory has been largely affected by the shift from proletariat to precariat described by the sociologist Robert Castel (2007). Here, 10.5 percent of salaried workers work in industry, industrial facilities account for only 3.4 percent of firms, the poverty rate has reached 37.5 percent (INSEE, 2016, 2017) and the unemployment rate is at 22 percent (INSEE, 2018).⁷

⁶ Source : Archives municipales de Saint-Denis, fonds Soucheyre.

⁷ INSEE stands for Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques. On a nationwide scale, 12.01 percent of salaried workers are employed in industry, 5.2 percent in industrial firms; there is a poverty rate of 10.3 percent and an unemployment rate of 8.9 percent (INSEE 2017).

Replacing Heritage Activism by the Perpetuation of the Industrial Legacy

Against this background, activism takes place more in the field of memory than in that of industrial heritage. This is a fairly frequent phenomenon, exemplified in Billancourt by the Association des Anciens Travailleurs Renault de l'Île Seguin [Association of Former Seguin Island Renault Workers], which contributes to 'research on and preservation of the [workers'] collective memory' (Leyris 2005: 669).

In Plaine Commune, memory-related initiatives began to be launched in the late 1990s. In 1998, the Saint-Denis historical path, conceived on the occasion of the inauguration of the Stade de France, evoked the industrial heritage of the destroyed gas storage tanks.



Photograph 1. Interpretive sign for the 'Red Saint-Denis' on the Saint-Denis historical path. Source: G. Djament.

In Saint-Denis, the city's industrial memory is preserved mainly by the association *Mémoire vivante de la Plaine* [Living Memory of the Plain], created in 1996 in response to the

project of a Grand Stade [Great Stadium]. This sociologically mixed group aims to retrace the history of the Plaine Saint Denis in a bid to establish a connection between the area's industrial past and its future (Baconin et al. 2016). The association collects testimonies and organises urban walks.⁸

The *Mémoire vivante de la Plaine*, which has very close ties with Plaine Commune's elected representatives, seeks to promote the preservation of industrial heritage in urban projects, but generally does not go as far as to engage in open conflict. Tellingly, one of its representatives prefers to speak of 'infusion' rather than 'mobilisation', and says that the association is fighting 'micro-battles'. Indeed, it is part of the growth coalition (Logan and Molotch 1987), which since the early 1990s brings together local representatives and some local employers into a framework wherein the future of the local industrial heritage is discussed on a case-by-case basis.

Against this background, efforts for the preservation of industrial and working-class memory remain partly limited to the field of memory; the field of built heritage remains largely the preserve of the actors who have the available capitals to reuse it. Therefore, the area is often characterised by the replacement of the preservation of industrial heritage by the transmission of industrial memory, as is exemplified by the case of the warehouses of the Printemps department store on the Ile Saint Denis. The destruction of this heritage of concrete⁹ inventoried by the heritage service of the Departmental Council went hand in hand with the collection of workers' memories.¹⁰

Likewise, the mansion at the Landy gasworks, built in 1885 and abandoned since 1977 — this site was inventoried by the heritage service of the Departmental Council — was eventually destroyed despite the efforts of *Mémoire vivante de la Plaine*. Elected officials agreed to have it dismantled in exchange for the prospect of 5,000 new jobs to be created by telecommunications company SFR. The association had to content itself with printing a leaflet on local history.

The Entrepreneurial Making of Industrial Heritage

By 'entrepreneurial making of industrial heritage', I mean the recognition and promotion of the cultural heritage value of industrial remains through corporate appropriation, regardless of its institutional recognition and/or in addition to it. It involves repurposing (a practice which has always existed), but it is not limited to this; it is heritage-making in the sense that the conservation and transmission of past elements are held as emblems of the identity of a firm over time and are included in its storytelling. This goes far beyond the company museums, which have a long local history, dating back to 1966, when the Christofle silversmithery opened a museum and documentation centre on tableware (Furio 2008) — a new capitalist logic gave

⁸ Source: interview with a member of the association *Mémoire vivante de la Plaine*, March 2015.

⁹ The warehouses were built in the late 1950s and early 1960s and abandoned in the 1990s.

¹⁰ Source: April 2015 interview with the official in charge of the Ile Saint Denis eco-district at the Plaine Commune directorate for planning, western section.

way to a new form of heritagisation. It is a blurring of the boundaries between heritage in the economic sense and heritage in the cultural sense (which produces an iconic heritage), between heritage and ‘creativity’.

A New Capitalist Relationship to Industrial Heritage

This new stage of capitalism has two types of relationships to the remains of industry: a post-industrial one, advocating a *tabula rasa* approach, and a hyper-industrial one, typical of an ‘aesthetic’ capitalism (Lipovetsky and Serroy 2013). Some firms favour repurposing, others prefer rebuilding from the ground up. For instance, the architectural firm Reichen & Robert, a pioneering specialist in the repurposing of industrial heritage, conceives heritage both as a marketing feature, a producer of consensus on real estate projects and a producer of urbanity. They say, ‘thanks to old buildings, you produce an image right away, you have a positive discourse to convey to nearby residents and historical societies, they’re all for it; you restructure entire neighbourhoods; the industrial heritage constitutes structuring elements in the city, it allows to introduce landmarks rather than a neutral urbanism’.¹¹ However, the two forms of capitalism can also be mobilised by the same firm in turns — many tend to switch between repurposing and *tabula rasa*.

Those different relationships to the remains of industry are inseparable from a difference in economic and territorial strategy. The dominant strand of capitalism favours a post-industrial strategy in which industrial remains are considered as a constraint, since only the land on which they are built is considered valuable in a financialised urban economy, and focuses on short-term profitability. On the other hand, the rising hyper-industrial brand of capitalism turns the waste of the former mode of production into land resources, as well as in real estate and symbolic resources.

Two models of introduction to metropolisation coexist: the model of a global, financialised, service-oriented city, characterised by standardised, modern and verticalised urban forms, reflecting the ‘spatial motifs of the world (Lussault 2013), as opposed to the model of a world city, embracing globalisation through culture, and characterised by historical urban forms (Ghorra-Gobin 2007).

Whereas firms that refer to the first model place a premium on comparative advantage between places, firms that refer to the second one, such as luxury firms or so-called ‘creative’ industries (for example, specialising in design), favour differential advantages, bypassing cost as a basis for comparison. They therefore have a different relationship to territory in general and to industrial heritage in particular. While the former favours the *tabula rasa* and values only location in the metropolis and the cost of land, the latter seeks to distinguish some metropolitan sites, in particular by their history and their architecture.

The distinction between a standard form and a collection form of capitalism (Boltanski and Esquerre 2014, 2017) partially intersects this opposition, involving an opposition between two modes of valuation: mass-reproducing a prototype, which is the basis of industrial

¹¹ Source: Interview with an architect at Reichen & Robert, March 2015.

economy, as opposed to building a collection, which is typical of the contemporary ‘economy of enrichment’ in formerly industrialised countries. In the ‘collection form’ of capitalism, now ‘embraced by marketing’ (Boltanski and Esquerre 2017: 297), a new relation of capitalism to its past emerges. As the sociologists Boltanski and Esquerre point out, ‘things that come from the past and are often on a path of decline are [...], like collectors’ items, selected, restored and associated with historical narratives meant to steer their interpretation and boost their value’ (2017: 40). They also suggest applying this distinction, originally theorised for objects, to places: ‘The exemplary case of a place that is enhanced in the standard form is the mass produced detached house. In the collection form, places such as monuments, neighbourhoods, cities, villages or rural sites, or even entire regions, are enhanced through heritagisation processes’ (ibid.: 296). For industrial wastelands, the new stage of capitalism resorts either to standard enhancement, by destroying the remains of the industrial revolution and mass building offices, or to enhancement under the collection form, by selecting remnants of industrial production and turning them into company emblems.

A Profitable Heritage: Blurring the Boundaries

Between Heritage in the Cultural Sense and Heritage in the Economic Sense

This form of capitalism blurs the boundaries between heritage in the cultural sense and heritage in the economic sense. Historically, heritage in the cultural sense distinguished itself precisely from heritage in the economic sense, following Victor Hugo’s famous 1832 assertion that ‘a building has two things: its use and its beauty. Its use belongs to its owner, its beauty to everyone’ (Hugo 1829: 26). Instead, ‘aesthetic’ capitalism seeks to appropriate the aesthetic and historic values of heritage to make its use as profitable as possible. The shift from an economy of production to an ‘economy of enrichment’ leads to a ‘process of transformation of heritage into capital’ (Boltanski and Esquerre 2017: 96). The entrepreneurial view of made is that it should be profitable, part of an ‘urban strategy concerned with being doubly effective, commercially and aesthetically’ (Pierrot 2015: 17).

In the entrepreneurial making of heritage, only potentially profitable places can gain heritage status. The different forms of capitalism have different relationships to industrial heritage that hinge on what type of profit they expect from it in terms of spatial and temporal scales and of what type of clientele they seek to attract.

From my interviews, it emerges that the logic behind the entrepreneurial selection of industrial heritage is based on two main criteria that contrast with the criteria (historic, technical, artistic and so on) used by experts to determine the heritage potential of industrial sites: a pragmatic criterion, mutability,¹² and an aesthetic criterion, monumentality and/or ‘cachet’.

Developers concur. A representative of Vinci Immobilier explains, ‘Our first approach consists in distinguishing what brings cachet architecturally, what enriches the architectural

¹² Mutability depends both on the layout of the spaces and of the materials and techniques used in construction, which have to be updated to meet contemporary standards.

style. Then, we consider what is technically possible for us to keep.’¹³ Another, from Sirius explains, ‘If a building matches a very specific industrial process, like a gas storage tank, we are forced to destroy it. Sometimes parts of buildings are preserved for historical reasons. Sirius doesn’t subscribe to that logic; we don’t do museums or exhibit halls, we do business premises. [...] For buildings with a heritage value and a functionality that meets the expectations of today’s business, as is the case of the matchstick factory¹⁴ (in Aubervilliers), it makes sense to renovate’.¹⁵

The criterion of mutability was exemplified in Saint-Ouen with the transformation of the old docklands area into an eco-district. At the former Alstom site, purchased in 2004 by the developer Nexity, the company made the choice of keeping only one out of the three (fairly similar) industrial halls for pragmatic reasons rather than heritage-related reasons.¹⁶ The preserved hall was the one that had been least transformed by additions over time, though not necessarily the most interesting one architecturally. The decisive argument in favour of keeping it was that it was the easiest to reuse.¹⁷

Monumentality is frequently the second criterion for the entrepreneurial selection of industrial heritage. It allows to showcase the power and prestige of the company (like the high towers of the global city). For instance, in the *Cité du cinéma* [City of the Cinema], the film studios are new constructions, but the large Art Deco nave is used as a set for luxury perfume commercials and is highly in demand among organisers of prestige business events (an activity that generates significant profits); it also hosts fashion shows, job fairs held by the MEDEF [France’s largest employer federation], seminars and corporate parties.

While the logic of monumentality prevails in ‘aesthetic’ capitalism it clashes with a logic that gives value to a historical atmosphere on the grounds that ‘old buildings are interesting anchorage points even if their architectural quality isn’t great’.¹⁸

Selected for its mutability and/or its monumentality and/or its ‘cachet’ on good and accessible land, the industrial heritage produced by corporations answers to two main logics of profitability that contrast with the short-term logics of the companies that practice the *tabula rasa* approach; they are, a logic of long-term profitability through a policy focused on image

¹³ Source: Interview with the manager of the Universeine program at Vinci Immobilier, June 2015.

¹⁴ This 1904 site combines architectural value (its chimney has been protected under the historical monument status since 2005) and historical value (linked in particular to the memory of the famous worker and trade unionist Léon Jouhaux) (Smith 2015).

¹⁵ Source: Interview with the director of development at Sirius Immobilier, November 2015.

¹⁶ Even though a member of the architectural review board [Bâtiments de France] was involved in the decision-making process, in the area surrounding the Saint-Ouen castle.

¹⁷ Source: Interview with the official in charge of planning and urbanism for the municipality of Saint-Ouen, May 2015.

¹⁸ Source: Interview with an architect at Reichen & Robert, March 2015.

and social distinction and a logic of medium-term profitability consisting in destroying and rebuilding nearby.



Photograph 2. The Alstom hall being turned into the city of design (Saint-Ouen). Source: G. Djament, May 2015.

According to the developer Sirius, rehabilitating industrial heritage is more costly than destroying and rebuilding, due especially to the cost of upgrading to modern standards¹⁹ but, unlike metropolitan standardisation, it fits in a long-term and/or prestige strategy by bringing in distinguished and faithful customers. ‘Repurposing industrial heritage is more expensive and the rents aren’t more expensive, but you find top quality tenants, who are attached to the site, which is better in the long run’.²⁰ For instance, subcontractors for Chanel moved into the Aubervilliers matchstick factory in the summer of 2015.

The profitability of industrial heritage is also frequently part of global operations of conversion of industrial wastelands, in which the selection of an element to be kept and repurposed is combined with the destruction and reconstruction of part of the building or of neighbouring wastelands. For instance, at the *Cité du design* [City of Design] inaugurated in November 2016 in Saint Ouen for the design agency Saguez and Partners, the two hall entrances were destroyed to ensure that the rehabilitation would be profitable (this was a very costly prestige operation, in part due to the need to remove asbestos on the roof structure); they were replaced respectively by a parking garage and apartments. While heritage-related arguments were advanced to justify the demolition (the hall entrances were built after the hall itself), the underlying logic behind this move was mainly entrepreneurial.

¹⁹ Materials that are now banned, like lead and asbestos, have to be removed from 19th and early 20th century buildings, and technical networks and insulation have to be redone.

²⁰ Source: Interview with the director of development at Sirius Immobilier, November 2015.



Photograph 3. The selectivity of the entrepreneurial making of industrial heritage: the example of Saint-Ouen's *cit  du design*. Source: G. Djament, May 2015.

The entrepreneurial making of industrial heritage is thus characterised by its pragmatism — and sometimes by its randomness. Being dependent on economic criteria, it is sensitive to changes in context, as is illustrated by the trajectory of the old Landy gasworks, located opposite the Stade de France in Saint-Denis. In the initial project devised by Reichen & Robert, the site, which had been inventoried as heritage by the departmental council, was to be preserved and repurposed as a conference centre. However, due to the 2008 crisis, investors pulled out of all ‘risky projects’ and retreated to the Golden Triangle in Paris. Plaine Commune then responded favourably to a proposal by a new investor, SFR, which promised to create 5,000 jobs. The telecommunications giant chose to destroy the gasworks and have its headquarters, the largest in the Paris area, designed by Jean-Paul Viguier as a symbol of the ‘future twenty-first century metropolis’.²¹

An Iconic Heritage

In the new stage of capitalism, the repurposing of industrial wastelands is ‘both a prestige operation and a profitable operation’.²²

Both in its material and symbolic structures, the entrepreneurially produced industrial heritage reflects the icons of ‘aesthetic’ capitalism. Like iconic ‘starchitecture’, this heritage is defined by the following characteristics under the framework proposed by Guillaume Ethier (2015) in his PhD.

- It is decontextualised in space and time. Insulated from its urban setting due to neighbouring destructions, or in some cases to the destruction of part of the building itself, it operates in the networks of an archipelago economy (Veltz 2008). The

²¹ Source: Plaine Commune, <http://www.plainecommune.fr/actualites/actualites/actualite-detaillee/article/le-campus-sfr-inaugure-a-sai/#.Wzs2963pNBw>; accessed on 2 July 2018.

²² Source: Interview with the manager of the Universeine program at Vinci Immobilier, June 2015.

entrepreneurially produced heritage is also disconnected from the workers' memory.

- It displays a structural disconnection between the (old) building and its (repurposed) interior. Facadism frequently occurs.
- It is aestheticised and brought up to 'creative' standards, bringing a 'cachet', and 'atmosphere', following the canons of capitalism's exploitation of nostalgia (Appadurai 2001).
- Its promotion is supposed to trigger urban regeneration and boost the local identity.

The *Cité du cinéma* in Saint-Denis exemplifies this concept perfectly. This project, which encompasses the entire film production chain, was developed by a private actor, filmmaker Luc Besson, who shot scenes from his movie *Léon* (1993) there, and his company Europacorps. Closed for safety reasons, the site (which included a school and a restaurant) appears cut off from its immediate surroundings. The inter-communality has however been trying to make this metropolitan site a genuine part of its neighbourhood and the departmental tourism committee regularly organises visits. The Reichen & Robert firm acknowledges that the workers' memory has 'no place' in this repurposing, which is the whim of a 'creative' entrepreneur, but argues that it has 'preserved the quality of the building'.²³



Photograph 4. The *Cité du cinéma*. Source: G. Djament.

The entrepreneurially-produced heritage is therefore not heritage in the institutional and expert sense. As the official in charge of business real estate in Plaine Commune notes, in this case preserving heritage means retaining the essential structures but certainly not keeping everything as is.²⁴ This is why, faced with the repurposing of the *Cité du cinéma* by Reichen & Robert and Vinci, a case overruled by the Ministry in the name of a higher metropolitan

²³ Source: Interview with an architect at Reichen & Robert, March 2015.

²⁴ Source: Interview with the official in charge of business real estate in Plaine Commune, April 2014.

interest,²⁵ the government board architect expressed embarrassment and weighed the pros and the cons of the operation. Consequently, the original volumes of the old gasworks were preserved but the 1903 additions and the coal silos were destroyed. The original colours on the façades were retained, and the tiled floor rebuilt identically. Inside, traces of oxidation and the patina of the metal structure were stabilised and retained, and some features of the technical heritage were preserved. However, the only machine that was kept was subjected to what Samuel Périgois (2006) called ‘artefactualisation’ to refer to the preservation of the odd piece of heritage to make up for the destruction of the rest, and a ‘process of production of signs to replace heritage objects’ (Veschambre 2014: 63). Renamed the ‘dream machine’, it was covered by graffiti by some of Luc Besson’s artist friends.

A ‘Creative’ Heritage

In ideological and social terms, the entrepreneurial making of heritage is characterised by:

* ‘Creative’ narratives

In the case of places enhanced by capitalism in its collection form, ‘things that come from the past and are often on a path of decline are [...], like collectors’ items, selected, restored and associated with a narrative presentation, i.e. historical narratives design meant to steer their interpretation and boost their value’ (Boltanski and Esquerre 2017: 296). The *Cité du cinéma* illustrates this, with a discourse that invents a ‘kind of continuity’ ‘between a factory that produces light’ (the electric plant, in operation between 1933 and 1981) ‘and a factory that uses light’ (film).²⁶

* Implicit or explicit reference to an imagined community of ‘creatives’

The supposed ‘creative class’ (Florida 2000) is the intended recipient of aestheticizing repurposing operations in most converted industrial wastelands. The entrepreneurial making of industrial heritage comes with a social change; the majority of employees in the new companies are executives, and most of them reside outside Plaine Commune. There is a ratio of one local resident for three executive positions; only 31 percent of Plaine Commune residents in employment work locally (INSEE 2010).

* The co-production of metropolisation and gentrification

Perceived as a differential advantage in the globalised competition between local areas, the entrepreneurial making of industrial heritage is intended to boost — and it does boost — metropolitan gentrification in the inner suburbs of Paris. For instance, in the eco-district of the docklands area in Saint-Ouen, new homes are sold for 4,100 € per m², to help Nexity, which redeveloped the former Alstom hall, cover its costs. This, in a city where only 52.7 percent of households are subject to income taxes and where the median disposable income per consumption unit is only 1,376 € per month (INSEE 2017).

²⁵ The entrepreneurial and institutional makings of industrial heritage are often embedded, but the former is far more prevalent, as corporations have the capitals needed to ensure the repurposing — and by extension preservation — of industrial heritage.

²⁶ Source: Interview with an architect at Reichen & Robert, March 2015.

It so turns out that ‘aesthetic’ capitalism and postindustrial capitalism are additional strategies more than opposite strategies. While their territorial and architectural choices diverge, they share the same desire to be part of metropolisation conceived as the global promotion of an ‘exceptional city’ (Halbert 2010) to the detriment of the ordinary city. Their social effects, benefiting the most favoured social categories, are also very similar.

Attempted Alternatives to the Entrepreneurial Making of Industrial Heritage

The dominance of this entrepreneurial making of industrial heritage raises the question of whether it is possible to regulate it or alternatives exist.

The Public Regulation of the Entrepreneurial Making of Industrial Heritage

A degree of regulation of the metropolisation of the economy based on heritage happens through negotiations between local authorities and corporations on urban projects.

A prime example of this type of regulation through heritage can be found in the genesis of the *Universeine* project, which stands next to the *Cité du cinéma*. Local authorities negotiated with Vinci to preserve not only the Maxwell hall, as initially planned, but also the former engineers’ building, which connects to the hall and has historical value. The site is also expected to serve as the residential district of the Olympic village during the 2024 Games.

However, the public regulation of the entrepreneurial making of industrial heritage remains limited. In 2005, for instance, the chimney of the 1904 matchstick factory in Aubervilliers was listed on the supplementary inventory of historical monuments, and subsequently restored by the *Fondation du patrimoine* [a private heritage foundation]. But the renovation of the entire site, located within the chimney’s protection perimeter, is the outcome of a compromise between the architectural review board, the developer (Sirius) and the municipality of Aubervilliers.

‘Civic’ Repurposing

In addition to attempts at regulation, one may consider repurposing operations that may be called ‘civic’ alternatives. They meet the following criteria, informed by the research of Vincent Béal and Max Rousseau (2014) on the metropolitan alternative:

- Contrary to the entrepreneurial industrial heritage, they acknowledge the workers’ memory on the site.
- Where entrepreneurial repurposing operations tend to be disconnected from their surroundings, they are rooted in their local environment.
- Contrasting with the primarily financial rationales at work in entrepreneurial heritage-making, they require at least some extent of public or collective control over the land — the heritagisation of industry raises the key question of the regulation of real estate speculation.

For instance, in La Courneuve, the former Mecano factory was converted into an administrative centre and inter-communal multimedia library at the last minute.

At odds with the overarching concern for competitiveness in entrepreneurial repurposing

operations, they are aimed not at industries and/or at the ‘creative’ class, but at all residents — a distinct answer to the recurring question of who benefits from the heritagisation of industry. For instance, thanks to the mobilisation of the groups *Mémoire vivante de la Plaine* and *Plaine de femmes*, the old 1913 train station of the Plaine was converted into a *maison des associations* (centre for community groups) which hosts socio-cultural events, including exhibits on the history of the neighbourhood, since December 2015.

Limitations and Ambiguities of ‘Civic’ Repurposing Operations in the ‘Creative’ Making of Industrial Heritage

Even when public actors are involved in the repurposing of industrial heritage, entrepreneurial heritage-making still appears to play a crucial role, especially as the repertoire of the ‘creative city’, a variant of the conception of the metropolis as an ‘exceptional city’ (Halbert 2010), which keeps gaining clout within the framework of the Grand Paris metropolitan project (Lebeau 2014) and blurs the borders between alternative and ‘creative’ (Cousin et al. 2016).

Thus, the upcoming repurposing of the southern section of the Babcock site, the eight-hectare former home to a factory for a US boiler producer that came to La Courneuve in 1898 and closed permanently in 2012, is presented as a model project by Plaine Commune. It might claim the status of an alternative, in that it includes:

* Public control over the land

The successive interventions of the Banque de France and of the *Établissement public foncier d’Île-de-France*²⁷ have brought public control over land that belongs to a private owner with an interest in speculating. A contrasting example is the neighbouring private site of Eurocopter, where the history of the aircraft manufacturer Bernard dates back to 1917. Its older half was destroyed to make space for the construction of a data centre, even though repurposing options existed.²⁸

* An effort to preserve heritage and industrial memory

The halls in the southern section of the Babcock site will be retained. However, annex buildings could be demolished, and the halls will probably be opened to bring light in. There seems to be an effort to engage in reflection on the site’s industrial memory. In remembrance of the 1968 strikes, which began on 18 May and lasted three weeks, the factory workers renamed the path along the big halls *rue du 18 mai* (18 May Street) (Haus 2016). In the northern section of the site, the planned venue for the Banque de France, a 1923 building was restored. However, the halls were destroyed, despite the heritage service of the departmental council pointing out their value because they included late 19th century sheds. In this case, location constraints prevailed over heritage preservation (the cash centre was placed alongside the motorway for security reasons).²⁹

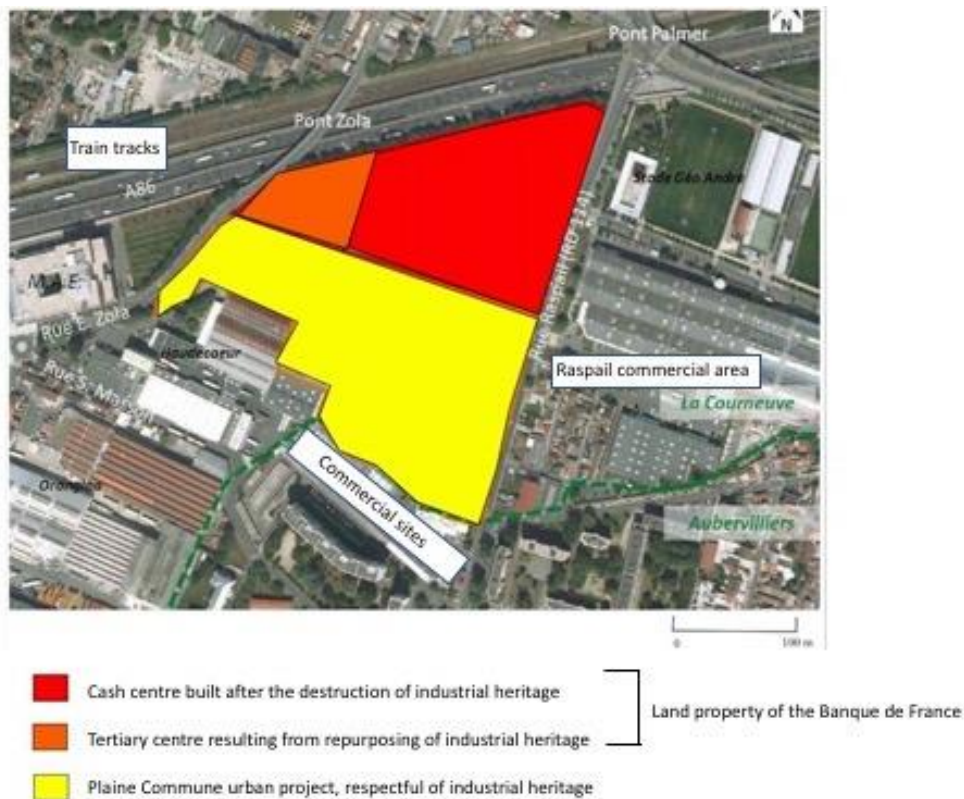
²⁷ This is a state-owned regional land management corporation.

²⁸ Source: interview with the official in charge of industrial heritage at the departmental council, May 2015.

²⁹ Source: interview with the official in charge for the La Courneuve planning sector in Plaine Commune, December 2015.

* An effort to build for all residents, with attention to common areas and, consistent with the idea of a ‘solidary’ metropolis, to creating an open site that would be easy to appropriate.³⁰ Still, the site is already an object of entrepreneurial appropriation; specifically, ‘The site is regularly used for movie shoots and fashion shows. In November 2008, the Renault-Nissan group presented the Nissan Qashqai, its new SUV’.³¹

In terms of programming, the planned creation of apartment buildings, recreational facilities, a cultural institution and businesses seems ambivalent. While the upcoming repurposing may present itself as ‘alternative’ by creating public services and potentially including an alter-economic dimension, it is also part of the international circulation of ‘creativity’ models. Its planning is directly inspired by the experiences of la Belle de Mai (Marseille) and of the Ile de Nantes, favouring a heritage-oriented planning and/or touristic facilities to the detriment of the workers’ memory (Barthel 2009).



Map 2. The repurposing of the Babcock site in La Courneuve. Source: G. Djament, background from the SEM Plaine Commune Développement.

³⁰ Source: interview with the official in charge for the La Courneuve planning sector in Plaine Commune, December 2015.

³¹ Source: Comité Départemental du Tourisme du 93 [Departmental Tourism Committee of Seine-Saint-Denis], http://www.tourisme93.com/document.php?pagendx=84&engine_zoom=PcuIDFC930001351; accessed on 25 June 2018.

*Recent Local Mobilisations Surrounding Heritage and their Struggles
to Curb the Entrepreneurial Making of Industrial Heritage*

Some local mobilisations surrounding industrial heritage have succeeded in sparing some sites from destruction, but not from an entrepreneurial takeover, in the sense that their conservation depended on an upcoming repurposing.

In the early 1970s, the Christofle's metallurgic branch was moved to Normandy; the production of large silver pieces and work on precious metals remained on site (Furio 2008). The historic silversmithing factory, with its monumental architecture, is included in the historical path created by the municipality in 1997. The departmental tourism committee organises visits there. In 2006, 'the company announced the transfer of the last remaining craftsmen from Saint-Denis to the Parisian and Norman sites as well as the sale of the factory' (Furio 2008). The local heritage preservation network then mobilised and managed to have Christofle's silverware moulds saved; in spite of the company's opposition, it got the factory listed on the historical monuments board's supplementary inventory. *Mémoire vivante de la Plaine* collected the testimonies of former Christofle workers. Yet, heritagisation remains unfinished, as the site's conversion is currently on standby.

Likewise, Saint-Denis's 'SNCF cathedrals' — the monumental railway repair workshops built in the 1870s and closed permanently in 1998 by Réseau Ferré de France [the national rail network] — were threatened with destruction. Having been abandoned for some twenty years, they were saved by the mobilisation of *Mémoire vivante de la Plaine*; the site was listed on the supplementary inventory of historical monuments in 2004. Yet, their repurposing, on which their preservation depends, remains pending. Subjected to a variety of temporary uses, the site appears to be due for a 'civic' repurposing scheduled for around 2020, following an agreement between the SNCF, which owns the land, and Plaine Commune. It is expected to host public facilities liable to be enjoyed by all residents: a health centre, a nursery and a centre for mother and child health. But, because of the high costs, the plans for the largest cathedral are split between public and/or private funding. Nike has proposed a showroom dedicated to urban sports, US and Chinese developers want to build luxury homes, and a company specialised in art logistics has also expressed interest. The feasibility study for the redevelopment of a 'cluster dedicated to the economy of reuse and production workshops for craftsmen' was issued in July 2016.³² At the time of writing, renovation was reportedly imminent.³³

Conclusion

In the new phase of heritagisation of industry, heritagisation is rarely the result of designation, as industrial heritage is generally only preserved in cases where a repurposing, and by extension an appropriation, is planned.

³² Source: Jean-Marie Mandon, Architect, <https://www.mandon-architecte.fr/2016/09/>; accessed on 29 June 2018.

³³ Source: Groupe Cayola, A Saint-Denis, la rénovation des cathédrales du rail est imminente, 11 October 2017, <https://www.constructioncayola.com/batiment/article/2017/10/11/115049/saintdenis-renovation-des-cathedrales-rail-est-imminente.php>; accessed on 29 June 2018.

The main form of heritagisation of industry observed in Plaine Commune is entrepreneurial. There is virtually no heritagisation resulting from the appropriation of former workers here, even though community and political initiatives perpetuate the local industrial memory. Attempts at heritagisation through alter-metropolitan appropriation have been made as alternatives to capitalistic appropriation but remain tentative due to the popularity of the repertoire of ‘creativity’, the growth coalition between elected representatives and local businesses and the lack of financial resources.

Thus, the heritagisation of industry has three competing yet embedded functions in a quickly evolving pericentral/suburban area (Albecker 2015): a dominant function of emblem of ‘creative’ capitalism, a challenging function of regulation of the frontier of metropolisation and an interstitial, alter-metropolitan function.

In conceptual terms, the entrepreneurial making of industrial heritage — characteristic of *heritaglobalisation* (Gravari-Barbas 2012), globalisation of heritage and through heritage — challenges the traditional notion of heritage. This concept, developed in France as part of national political constructs, increasingly pertains to the economic field. We see a shift from heritage as anchoring of identity to heritage as a differential advantage in the globalised competition between local areas, in the scenario of the hyper-spectacularisation of heritage (Gravari-Barbas 2014).

The narrative of entrepreneurial heritage is not a national one, but a ‘creative’ one. It refers to the imagined community of the so-called ‘creative class’ — not to the working class as in activist heritage-making, or to citizens/suburban residents as in alter-metropolitan repurposing operations. Far from removing sites from the ‘ordinary commerce of things’ (Micoud 1995 and 2011: 16), entrepreneurial heritagisation comes hand in hand with repurposing.

The entrepreneurial heritage is indissociably heritage in the cultural sense and in the real estate, financial sense. This brand of capitalism precisely exploits the fungibility between the cultural and financial values of heritage. So, heritage is both subjected to the imperative of profitability and produced in function of it. The entrepreneurial making of heritage produces not so much heritage in the classical sense of the term as hybrids between heritage and the globalised reference frame of ‘creativity’, thereby contributing to metropolitan gentrification.

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