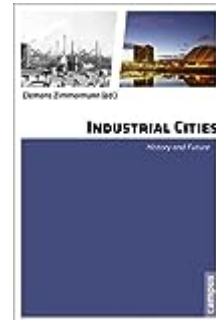


**Clemens Zimmermann.** *Industrial Cities: History and Future.* Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2013. 368 S., ca. 50 SW-Abb. ISBN 978-3-593-39914-0.



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## C. Zimmermann (Hrsg.): *Industrial Cities*

“Industrialism, the main creative force of the nineteenth century, produced the most degraded environment the world had yet seen”, wrote Lewis Mumford in 1961. According to him, “The new industrial city had many lessons to teach; but for the urbanist its chief lesson was what to avoid”. Lewis Mumford, *The City in History. Its Origins, Its Transformations and Its Prospects* [1961], London 1991, p. 508. Interestingly, this uncompromising verdict was delivered at the very time that industrial cities across the West were reaching a crossroads: Just as a balance appeared to have been struck between the needs of industry, on the one hand, and of the residents’ needs for a sanitary urban environment, on the other, the old “Victorian” staples as well as some “new” consumer industries were starting to enter into a circle of contraction and often terminal decline. Deindustrialisation brought in its wake challenges of its own, as this collection on the “history and future” of industrial cities makes clear.

The volume brings together 15 contributions from scholars working in several disciplines, ranging from Urban History, Social and Economic History to Urban

Planning and Human Geography. The collection comprises conceptual pieces, empirical case studies and broad overviews, and is divided into four parts. As is often the case with edited volumes, the erudition on display here is of variable quality. More generally, one would also have wished for a greater emphasis on readability. But this is a stimulating contribution nonetheless, whose main strength lies in providing a succinct overview of ongoing research in a lively interdisciplinary field.

Part one, “Research Perspectives and Historical Developments”, opens with a perceptive piece by urban historian Simon Gunn. The article provides a typology of industrial urbanism in the twentieth century, distinguishing between “classic” coke towns of the first and second industrial revolutions such as Manchester, Pittsburgh and Essen; “company towns” such as Wolfsburg; and industrial-cum-administrative centres such as Edinburgh, Berlin and Rome. Gunn also proposes to subdivide the history of the industrial city into four periods, stretching from 1800 to 1880, 1880 to 1920, 1920 to 1970, and finally, 1970 to 2010. Above all, the author demonstrates the long shadow that the nineteenth century cast

over the century that followed, both in the efforts of the municipal authorities to remedy the defects of the classic âcoking townâ and of the longevity of the images that it evoked. In 1968, for example, a correspondent writing for the *Financial Times* felt the need to point out to his readers that the steel town of Sheffield was âprobably one of the cleanest industrial cities in Europe, if not the cleanest. The old image of a smoky, grimy city is resurrected only by ignorant commentators and writers who are happy to fall back on any old simile or metaphorâ. See Sylvia Pybus (ed.), âDamned Bad Place, Sheffieldâ. An Anthology of Writing about Sheffield through the Ages, Sheffield 1994.

Pollution is also the topic of the contribution by Christoph Bernhardt, who examines the contrasting approaches taken by German and French authorities in their desire to mitigate the negative effects of industrial production on the urban environment between 1810 and 1930. While the French authorities relied on the legal framework put in place by Napoleon, their German counterparts eventually sought recourse to zoned town planning. In the same section, Richard Rodger identifies âfamiliesâ of towns defined by the same type of industrial activity and charts their trajectories through the twentieth century. As he makes clear, the âecho effectsâ of these early industrial structures were considerable, and only coalesced into different relationships with the onset of deindustrialisation in the second half of the century (p. 66). In the final contribution to part one, Robert Lewis looks at the Calumet district of Chicago in its industrial heyday of the 1920s to 1950s when a hundred thousand workers were employed in its steel, metal-working and adjacent industries. The subsequent rundown of the district can be seen as emblematic of the fate of the Industrial Midwest, which was transformed from the United Statesâ manufacturing heartland into a ârustbeltâ in less than one generation.

Section two, âCrisis and Recoveryâ, assembles some empirical case studies that chart the trajectory of classic industrial cities and company towns against the backdrop of industrial restructuring. Peter D  rrenb  cher looks at the development of the steel towns of Neunkirchen, V  lklingen and Saarbr  cken-Burbach after the closure of the steelworks in the late 1970s and early 1980s, while Christine Hannemann focuses on the automotive town of Flint, Michigan, whose fate was brought to international attention by Michael Moore in his 1989 documentary âRoger & Meâ. Pursuing a comparative approach, Martina He  ler examines two other examples of âmotor townsâ in transition, Wolfsburg and Detroit.

Finally, J  rg Pl  ger summarises the findings of a transnational research project on the crisis and recovery of the industrial cities of Bremen, Leipzig, Belfast, Sheffield, Bilbao, Torino and St. Etienne.

Reading the case studies side by side, some common trends become identifiable. There emerges, first of all, a strong sense of the challenges that the dismantling of basic industries created in all of these towns and cities, as indicated by the rise in unemployment, social deprivation, outward migration and the emergence, in some places, of âurban prairiesâ. Secondly, while there was a severe crisis, there followed also, in most places, a âturnaroundâ (Pl  ger, p. 196), at least for the city as a whole if not necessarily for those people and communities directly affected by plant closures. Often, recovery appears to have been premised on a recognition that the industrial and employment patterns of the past could not be kept and that some degree of shrinkage had to be accepted. Many cities sought to embrace heritage, tourism and the service sector as a route to recovery, rebranding themselves as âcities of cultureâ and erecting huge shopping malls on the sites of former steelworks and production plants. It remains yet to be seen how sustainable such a consumption-driven regeneration will prove in the context of the digital retail revolution of the early twenty-first century.

Section three, âCultural and Sociological Conceptsâ, is less cohesive, but generally focuses on the visions of social engineers and town planners in the first half of the twentieth century in building âutopian industrial [cities]â (p. 235). Adelheid von Saldern looks at the relationship between Fordism and city planning, and shows that functionalist approaches, often explicitly modelled on the assembly line of mass manufacturing, found more eager proponents in Germany than in the motherland of Fordism, the United States. Here, an âorganic modernityâ was preferred (p. 230). Martin Jemelka and Ond  j   vek examine the turning of the sleepy rural town of Zl  n in Moravia into a model âcompany townâ by the emergent Ba  a footwear concern in the 1920s and 1930s, while Timo Luks compares Bournville and R  sselsheim as two examples of âindustrial villagesâ that were designed, at the behest of the Cadbury and Opel companies respectively, with the explicit purpose of reconciling âpastoral life and industrial productionâ (p. 272). Finally, in an innovative case study, Rebecca Madgin explores the emotional dimensions of industrial restructuring, showing that in the town of Clydebank in western Scotland, destruction at the hands of the German *Luftwaffe* during World War II, and the tearing

down of industrial plant from the 1980s, left not so much a town without memory, but one in which planners were busy inserting symbolic markers of the industrial past into the post-industrial topography.

The final section, 'The Mediated Industrial City', deals with visual representations. As Judith Thissen makes clear in her case study of Rotterdam (1880 to 1970), such representations lagged behind socio-economic developments by one generation, but caught up from the 1920s onwards. Around that time, postcards and other visual media started to embrace a modernist aesthetic and no longer pretended that the major port city was still a tranquil mercantile town. Rolf Sachsse puts greater emphasis on the lifecycle of two media themselves: coffee-table books and promotional films were popular between the 1920s and 1970s, but went out of fashion at the very time that industrial cities were entering a period of protracted challenge. In the final contribution, Henry Keazor looks at the work of Austrian film maker Michael Glawogger. The documentaries 'Megacities' (1998) and 'Workingman's Death' (2005) serve as a salutary re-

minder that while 'coke town' may have largely disappeared from the countries of the West, heavy manual labour and unsanitary living conditions still form part of the lived experience of billions of people around the world.

Lewis Mumford, quoted at the beginning of this review, is referred to in several contributions to this collection. Unfortunately, however, few follow the great urbanist in his concern for the people who, in the 'palaeotechnic paradise' that was nineteenth century coke town, 'were crippled and killed almost as fast as they would have been on a battlefield'. Mumford, *The City in History*, p. 508. We learn much about cities as physical places and collective environments, but little about the people who inhabited them. This is a regrettable omission in an otherwise stimulating and valuable contribution to the field of urban history, which gives a concise overview of the multidisciplinary research on the history of old industrial cities across the West in a period of challenge and transition.

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