Cities and Historic Textile Complexes
Typology, Good practice, and Global Perspectives for Conservation
International Workshop

Future of mills in Ghent

April 24, 2020

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The beginning of the 1st industrial revolution in Ghent.

- a cotton spinning mill in the former Carthusian monastery in 1800 by Lieven Bauwens,
- first textile factories were established in existing buildings such as monasteries, churches and even in the Castle of Counts, in centre of the city.
The beginning of the 1st industrial revolution in Ghent.

- rapid growth of the city between 1792 and 1814
- uncontrolled, speculative construction boom within the city walls until approx. 1850
- overcrowded inner city
Start of the horizontal expansion of the city
• abolition of patent law and the demolition of the city gates and city fortifications

Area north of Ghent
• swampy unhabited area
• cheap grounds
• nearby water
• between newly built canal Ghent-Terneuzen (direct connection to the Nortsea) and the canal to Bruges
• in 1863 the connection between those two canals is build: the Verbindingsvaart (2km)

= development from 1863 to new industrial area and working class-residential area
Textile industry versus the city

- Until the 1950s, the textile industry was interwoven throughout the city, from the centre to the periphery. Approx. 3/km² in 1940.
- After 1950, textiles moved away from the city centre.

- The increasing interest and recognition of the value of industrial heritage in Flanders started in Ghent from the 1970. It led to an awareness in Ghent to preserve this heritage as an important relic which shaped the history of our city.
First reconversion-projects

- First reconversions of textile mills in city centre (’90).
- Important role of the Industriemuseum.
Remaining fragments - the most representative, architecturally aesthetic or most practically reused buildings remained.
Textile Factory De Porre, redeveloped into a neighbourhood park, and community centre
Cotton sheds from 1880 at the former 19th century harbour, were 10 years ago reconverted into homes and offices.
Major infrastructure works between 1860-1880
1. Canal “Verbindingsvaart” - 1863
2. Connection to the railway and Rabotstation - 1872
3. Cotton harbour – 1880
4. Urban gasworks – 1880
5. Urban development plan for the Rabot district - 1874

Textile factory’s along the Canal Verbindingsvaart (still remaining)
A. Jute spinning and twine Mill Filature du Rabot -1899
B. Cotton Mill La Nouvelle Orléans - 1896
C. Textile Mill Union Cottonière (UCO) - 1948
D. Textile factory T. Vercoutere - 1880
E. Cotton Mill Pipyn - 1923
F. Textile mill Parmentier, Van Hoegaerden & Cie - 1860
G. Textile Mill “grasfabriek” - 1910
H. Spinning Mill S.A. Galveston - 1910

High industrial archaeological value:
• the offices building (1912) with an art-nouveau facade
• the warehouses for jute and yarn (1910),
• chimney (36m high) with boiler room (1910).

• 2009 - municipal spatial implementation plan: only office building should be maintained

• 2014 - the site was purchased by a property developer

• 2017 – 2019 – redevelopment into a mixed residential/retail office project. The offices were transformed into lofts and office or shops. The chimney was preserved and restored as a landmark.
La Nouvelle Orléans

- Founded in 1896 - in use until ‘80s – sold in 1990
- The site is quite intact and complete, but in a very neglected state.
- Protected as a monument in 1995.
Fire-proof self-acting spinning mill from 1899, extended in 1905 and 1908 (51 m long and 17200m² surface area).
- Square stair tower with two water reservoirs
- A transmission shaft on the north side approximately 3 m wide and originally open over the full height
- an automatic extinguisher
2004 - construction of a new fire station about 15 m from the fire-proof mill.

2009 - municipal spatial implementation plan

2013 - Study for the development of a spatial planning strategy covering the remaining industrial estates along the Nieuwevaart.
Site is very well documented:
- historical analysis
- inventory
- details and survey plans

Although no current redevelopment plans:
- a fire station next to the site has a major impact on the redevelopment possibilities.
- the spatial implementation plan did not offer any additional possibilities for the optimal redevelopment of this site.
Vynckier-site

- developed between 1830 and 1923 by several textile companies.
- 3 multi-storey fire-proof mills, each with its own stair and water tower. The surface area of these mills is more than 50,000 m².
- 1937 – Property of Vynckier - electrical switch equipment
- protected as a monument in 1996
Parmentier, Van Hoegaerden & Cie

- Spinning and weaving mill
- Four storey - spinning mill from 1860
- Combined cast iron columns and wooden beams
- Stair- and watertower (later addition)
- Dust tower
Parmentier, Van Hoegaerden & Cie

Engine and boiler room 1911
Five Lancashire type boilers Piedboeuf
Parmentier, Van Hoegaerden & Cie, later “Grasfabriek”

Spinning mill 1910
Spinning mill Pipyn – 1923
The future?

2013: study that develops a spatial vision for the existing industrial site on the corner of the Nieuwe Vaart-Wiedauwkaai.

Analysis:
- spatial
- heritage
- economy
- mobility
- environment and sustainability
The results:

- Two development scenarios
  - Creative economy (cfr. Le Blancs lafont (France))
  - Circular economy
  BUT area stays industrial area
- Spatial: 5 concepts

**Reactivation of the textile mills**

**The Lieve, small ancient river, as a blue-green axis**

**New connection and improved accessibility**

**Circularity and link with the city (circular economy)**

**Urban facade on the Nieuwevaart**
Study of possible functions in one of the fire-proof mills

Recent developments

• hybrid living-working area versus industrial area – optimal for project developer?
• 48,000m² manufacturing industry?
• adaptations to contemporain industry versus heritage values?
- 3 examples
- 3 textile factories
- 3 different urban approaches

=> Urban planning decisions have influenced and will influence the conservation and redevelopment possibilities of these valuable buildings in this area.

Still lots of opportunities and challenges for the future!
Filature Nouvelle Orleans – 50’s

Thank you!