

POLITECNICO DI TORINO
SECOND SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE
Master of Science in Architecture
Honors theses

Emscher Park: „Landschaftskultur“ and project into the parks of Nordrhein-Westfalen

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From the very beginning, the idea was to work on a subject that would turn out useful in a future job. What theme could be more current than the restoration of dismantled industrial areas in our post-industrial era?

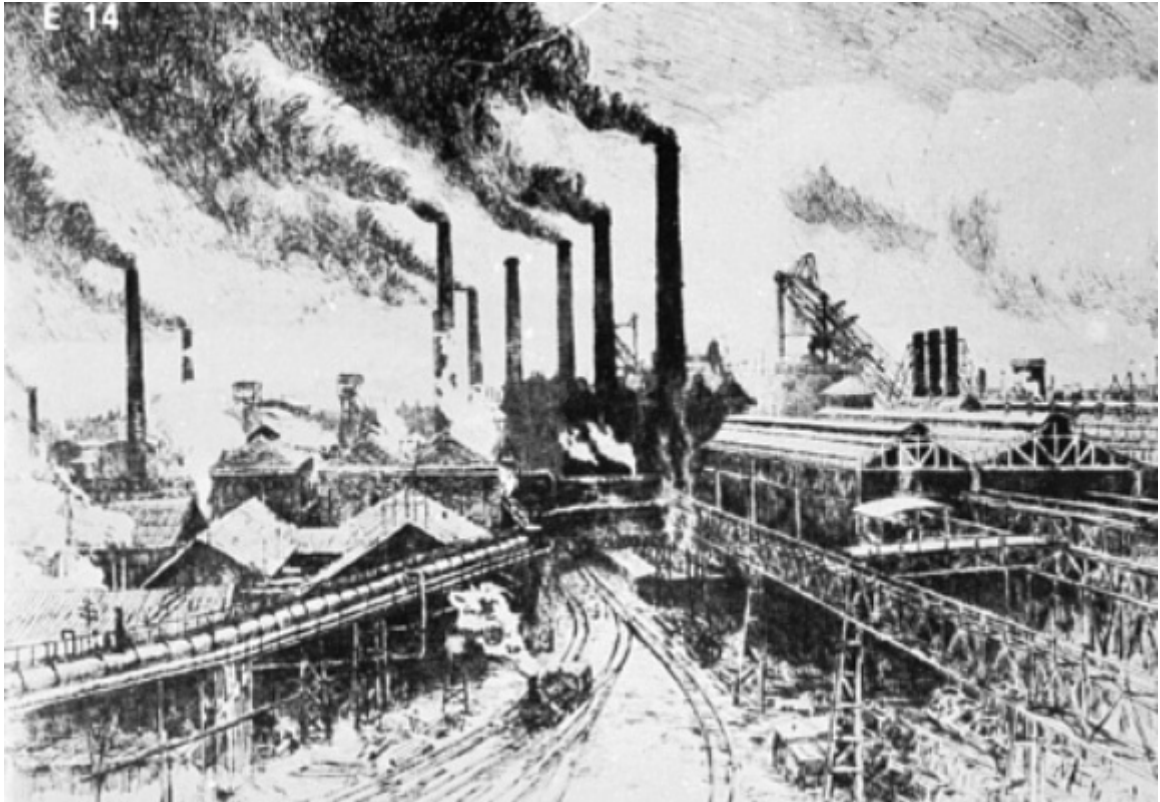
The big restoration of the dismantled industrial areas (steel-mills, carbon mixture plants, mines) along the Emscher channel, from Duisburg to Kamen, carried out by IBA (*Internationale Bauausstellung Architektur* [the International Architecture Exhibition]) was chosen as the theme.

At first, the German territory and, in particular, that of the Nordrhein-Westfalen Land, through which the Emscher Kanal runs, was studied, trying to understand the types of installations of this area in the past.

Then the transformation of the German industry, from the 18th century till the 1980s was studied, which is indispensable to understand the restoration works carried out by IBA afterwards.

The fundamental milestones of the German history as regards the social, political and economical points of view were also studied, starting from the customs union, *Zollverein* (1834), including the economical boom of the 1950s and 1960s, till the successive decline in the 1980s.

It was fundamental to understand the main guidelines of the current urban legislation, particularly that of the Nordrhein-Westfalen Land (the federal law on Nature protection, *Bundesnaturschutzgesetz*), what areas were considered protected natural areas (*Naturschutzgebiete*) and protected landscape elements (*Geschuetzte Landschaftsbestandteile*), among which are the big dismantled industrial complexes, such as the North Duisburg Landschaftspark.



Oberhausen 1874 (Communal Archives Oberhausen)

Later, the concept of landscape in German culture was studied from its “birth,” from the theoreticians of the landscape (Goethe and Schiller lead the list), till the “invention” of the German public parks (*Volkspark*) and the *Heimatschutz* movement (defending the fatherland) (1904).

Chapter 3 deals with the study of new landscape trends in Germany in the second half of the 20th century, from the creation of new post-industrial era parks, the *Volksparks* of the future, and the art which improves the perception of the landscape. Finally, the 19 interventions of the IBA Emscher Park were examined, which can be subdivided into 7 different types: the park on water, Land Art operations, the technology park, the industry park, new *Siedlungs*, city operations and landscape operations.



Landscape park Duisburg Nord, Duisburg



Industrial Park Erin, Castrop-Rauxel

Communal archives of the cities studied were of great help, which contained most of the design planimetries.

In his work *"The art of embellishing the city"*, Pier Luigi Cervellati writes:

*"Big metal sheds, the extraordinary and terrible cathedrals of work which are similar everywhere, are a moment of material culture. Here the dismantled areas regain their original conformation, without wasting what was created. What needs to be restored is not a historical memory, but it is once again that integrating and emerging part of the society. Ruhr became a region of culture and free time from a polluted industrial epicenter – in which work and productivity sacrifice the environment and the health of workers – by creating a new and different productivity, restoring the existing and making it survive by reviving the nature. You cannot destroy a century of your life. The park can return the qualifying part, an element that causes envy, that other territories shall imitate sooner or later."*¹

This is what we hope will happen, that we shall not delete our most recent past, in which many men and women suffered and toiled.

We have an opportunity and it is to create these new parks.

¹CERVELLATI, PIER LUIGI, *L'arte di curare la città*. [The art of embellishing the city] Il Mulino, Bologna, 2000, p.62.

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