

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR “ARTS FACTORIES” IN FRANCE?

PHILLIPE HENRY - 2010

A new series of cultural and arts venues

The re-appropriation of derelict industrial premises – often located on the periphery of city centres – by groups of artists and leaders of arts projects is a relatively recent phenomenon, but it now dates from more than thirty years ago. It first started in Northern Europe in the 1970s and, in France, it mainly started in the middle of the 1980s. Beyond the singularity of the history of each of these adventures and the local contexts where they started and developed, there are many similarities and concordances between them. These concern their fundamental orientations as well as their forms of operation, their development through the years and their present perspectives.

Particularly on the basis of cases in France in the 1990s, therefore, this studyⁱ aims to present the features that are largely common to these conversions of disused former industrial spaces [*friches industrielles* in French] into “arts factories” [*friches culturelles*]ⁱⁱ, that is, real spaces for artistic and cultural projects. It points out the ideological positions from which social players led these project spaces. It indicates how they position themselves among the plurality of cultural and arts centres or institutions that are now present in geographical areas. The French context particularly illustrates all this multiplicity of initiatives and systems, which have been initiated and partly institutionalised in artistic and cultural fields since the 1980s.

The comparative long-term study of concrete cases identifies a general theory. It results in considering arts factories as related to a dynamic of accompaniment of internal upheavals within the worlds of art at the end of the last century (Becker, 1982) and in which, in response, the arts factories play an active part in their own way. This dialectic implication also echoes the transformations of the relationships between the worlds of art with society in general and the different social worlds that make it up. The net movement of professionalization and organisation in constituted sectors of the worlds of the arts thus

coincides with very large-scale societal and socio-economic changes and developments. Through the globalisation of a new mode of development (Boltanski & Chiapello, 1999), we are witnessing the rise of a new interaction, an entirely new hybridization between cultural and artistic development on the one hand and between economic and organisational development on the other. Whether one speaks of cognitive capitalism (Moulier Boutang, 2007) or aesthetic capitalism (Assouly, 2008), we are faced with a complete redefinition of the place, role and function of culture in our societies – and, at its core, fine art – as a provider of sensitive works and aesthetic experiences. As a result, the hierarchies of the value and position of artistic fields (Bourdieu, 1992) inherited from the 20th century are at least profoundly questioned.



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A history going back more than thirty years

After firstly inheriting forms of social and political protest from the 1970s and being influenced by counter-culture movements associated with them, the first “arts factories” are exemplary of an aim to base oneself on a cultural conception of artistic practices, distinct from that which is predominant in the instituted arts amenities and worlds of art of the period. An approach very strongly centred on the originality of the work of art and the autonomy of the professional artist is therefore opposed by a

more assertive and mutual desire for movement and interaction between artistic processes and other dimensions of social and community life. According to the various pragmatic choices from the opening of the Melweg in Amsterdam (in 1970), the first installations by artistic and cultural practitioners in the ufaFabrik in Berlin (from 1979), the Confort Moderne centre in Poitiers (from 1985) or the Usine in Geneva (1988) clearly illustrate this phenomenon (Raffin, 2007). More generally, the development of the arts factories coincides with the switch of our societies towards a new general system of development, in which arts productions play a more and more determining role (Warnier, 1999; Mattelart, 2007). Faced with the power of the arts industries in the globalisation of exchanges and economic globalisation, the arts factories represent, on their level and from their opening, a demand for “cultural diversity” which was also to become a general concern of our societies as the years progressed. In any case, in these first places, there was always a question of experimenting with new relationships between artistic approaches and other social activities, opening new ways for art to take its place in society, and also exploring new aesthetics.



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Throughout the 1980s and especially the 1990s, these initiatives developed – internally and in their relationships with their environment (geographically close or within networks that were often internationalised) – what I call an aesthetic of artistic and cultural cooperation. Here, the term cooperation refers to the objective of a relationship which is intended to be more symmetrical between social actors who promote alternatives (particularly cultural and social

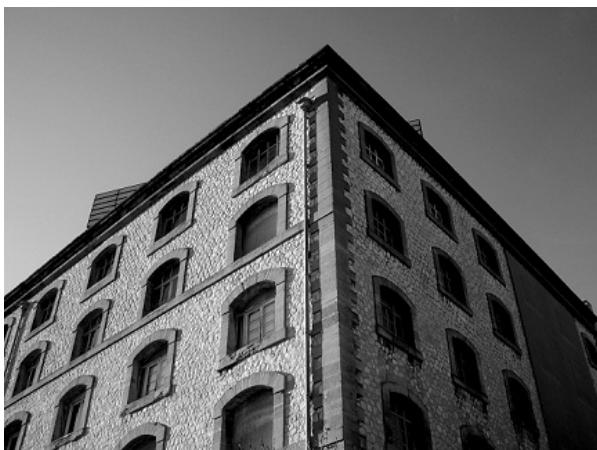
alternatives). In France, in practice, there is a triple movement. The more active members of arts factories are becoming professional, assimilating in their own way – which is always a little off-beat – the conventions and the ways of operating of the worlds of art (particularly the performing arts and more especially so-called “amplified” music, or the visual arts), worlds which develop, become structured and hierarchically organised at the same time (Abirached, 2005; Henry, 2009b). In an uninterrupted succession of projects, mostly limited in their duration and the intended production, a multiplicity and a diversity of actions, of systems and of connections between artists and non-artists are experimented. In so doing, this type of projects – which may be superimposed on each other in time, in one single geographical area – continues to maintain a real place and real attention for the practices of amateurs or non-professionals, particularly when their respective cultural motivations coincide with more precisely artistic goals or desires.



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From Culture Commune, which was put in place on a former mining site in Loos-en-Gohelle (1990), to Système Friche Théâtre based in the site of the former La Seita tobacco processing factory in the Belle de Mai neighbourhood of Marseille (1992), to the TNT centre which opened in a former shoe factory in Bordeaux (1998), or Mains d'œuvres in the former premises of Valeo, the car equipment manufacturer, in Saint-Ouen (1999), there are abundant examples of this second period. However, one must distinguish between many different situations, ranging from the opportunity given to the team that lead an artistic project, allowing them to move into a place

that especially had the advantage of being available (TNT), to saving a property which was condemned to be demolished and which became the base and medium for an artistic and cultural development project for an entire region (Culture Commune). Similarly, there may be a building which is not included in an urban redevelopment area (Mains d'œuvres) or which, on the contrary, is directly involved in a large-scale urban upgrading plan (Friche la Belle de Mai).



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However, one may say that, from their beginning or throughout their first development, all these arts factories still take great inspiration from the historic, founding conception of another way of creating art. They are particularly imbued with the idea of a more interactive and symmetrical way of envisaging the relationships between art, local communities and their living areas, even if this aim is partly an ideal for which we must assess the real conditions of feasibility. On the other hand, the concrete perspectives of each and every one, the new generations that try firstly to construct a professional career and personal life path by means of artistic and cultural practices, and the major changes in the context (both in the worlds of art and in society as a whole) result in very marked changes of attitude, behaviour and operation. Thus the necessities of economic survival or institutional existence and the needs for social recognition are now central, in addition to more ideological stances. In France, this observable change of course is marked by the aim to move into disused premises as a place firstly for artistic work. However, this choice does

not exclude the possibility that, in return, the form of the premises and their spatial and social environment may inspire the initial project and thereby lead to unique aesthetic proposals.



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In a constant struggle for a first and better recognition of their specific contributions to artistic and cultural development – on the local level, as well as on a wider level – the arts factories remain marked by very great socio-economic instability. This results mainly from the difficulty that these organizations have in finding a more recognized place in the overall architecture of the artistic and cultural centres or institutions and the public arts policies that already exist. From this point of view, the French context, in which public policies for art are still greatly dominated by the double theme of artistic excellence and accessibility of a very wide audience to works of art produced by professionals, signals the very narrow margin of symbolic and economic viability for the various arts factory experiments. Grants for the arts factories from the Ministry of Culture are identifiable, sometimes from the beginning, but especially for particular projects that have an affirmed dimension of artistic creation. It is very often through urban development policy and assistance for deprived neighbourhoods, or also through policies for social assistance and employment assistance, and also by support provided firstly by local powers (which are more sensitive to the inter-related stakes involved in localised development) that the arts factories will obtain minimum public grants and subsidies as complements to their own resources, enabling them to survive from month to month.



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In the first decade of the 21st century, the double movement of assistance and participation by arts factories in transformations that occur on all levels will lead to perceptible new change of course in their orientation and their means of operation. Some founders of arts factories have already left and gone elsewhere or will soon retire, while the artistic, cultural and managerial responsibility for these places is transferred to younger generations, who never knew the years before or at the beginning of the economic crisis in the 1970s. We are now in a context where widened artistic and cultural consumption are fully playing their part, after being remodelled firstly throughout the 20th century by the arts industries, and then for two decades by the industrial and financial economy based on new technology. We are in a world where the value of an object or a service is measured more and more according to its symbolic and functional usefulness, perceived by users that one tries to make as numerous as possible. We are undergoing a disruption – which is still not really regulated – of the relationships between capital and work, economic development and employment, and also between the need to distinguish oneself and the need for social integration or sufficient remuneration for following one's course in life. We are in a society where the artistic and cultural dimensions are once again fundamental and founding, but within the renewed framework of a creative economy (Viala, 2009)

which always has to be better supplied and made more dynamic. Very conflicting reconfigurations take place. On the one hand, new needs arise for (at least relative) autonomy and specificity of artistic and cultural practices. On the other hand, there is an affirmed equally insurmountable integration – both intensive and extensive – of the artistic and cultural dimensions in a new mode of development that we would like to be “sustainable” (according to recent terminology which requires further examination). At the same time, the renewal and extension of the commercial exploitation of artistic output – and, more generally, semeiotic production – is leading to the rise of a cultural economy (Scott & Leriche, 2004) which is located in geographical areas and reconfigures their industrial geography and geography of exchange (Leriche *et al.*, 2008). From this point of view, artistic circles and worlds now form structured socio-economic sectors that are continually undergoing transformation (Henry, 2009a). Each one is now to be comprehended simultaneously (Béra & Lamy, 2003) as a world of art where a diverse range of interdependent players interact, an artistic field constantly affected and permeated by struggles for symbolic and institutional definition and hierarchical organisation, a culture/arts market structurally marked by the uncertainty of values attributable to the goods and services proposed (Pilmis, 2008). At the very least, the conditions of positioning, and strategy and operation of the arts factories have again changed and will continue to do so.



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In a generally implicit and more or less advanced manner, we can find the mark of these modifications of situations and of perspectives in concrete cases. They already appear in the arts factories which have focussed more directly, from their beginning, on a role of “arts workshop” like

Workshop 231 in Sotteville-lès-Rouen (1990) or Tou Scene in Stavanger (2001), even if, in these places, one may also find a trace of the two former strata that we have identified. They are identified more clearly in the new directions taken by older arts factories such as Les Halles de Schaerbeek in Brussels (as of 2002) or Confort Moderne (as of 2001), which base themselves more resolutely and, for some, almost exclusively on the usual tripod of artistic amenities and facilities for (a) production, (b) dissemination and public performance, and (c) arts facilitation, education and interpretive outreach programmes and activities. Without even going as far as the case of Docks café (1998) or Docks océane (2000) in Le Havre, which give more priority to dissemination and public performance, we can observe that all the other places mentioned are affected by these generational and contextual transformations. One may also identify new compromises and institutional supervisory measures that are more marked in recent structural redevelopments of former premises, of which exemplary cases are Maison des Métallos in the 11th *arrondissement* of Paris (2007) and, on another scale, 104 in the 19th *arrondissement* of (2008). In any case, there is an omnipresent question of intensified interaction between contemporary artistic proposals on the one hand and, on the other, new cultural behaviour of our fellow citizens and the new “utilities” that they expect from these amenities in terms of sensible experience, contribution to their personal identity, or social network.



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Arts centres in complex situations of Intermediation

Nowadays, the specific feature of arts factories seems rather that they are organised around their function of localised arts centres, whose development entails major interdependence with several social partners. As a result, and much more than other arts amenities, they have a complex position of intermediary systems or facilities.



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Here, I deliberately use this term which was used in the first official report on the arts factories in France (Lextrait, 2001) by referring to them as “intermediary places”, before the term “*nouveaux territoires de l’art*” [“new areas/arenas for the arts”] was used, particularly concerning and following the first (and, until now, the only) international conference on these new spaces, which took place in the Friche la Belle de Mai centre in Marseille in February 2002 (Lextrait & Kahn, 2005). In the specified sense of an active body which links two distinct situations or actors and which (precisely because it is between two realities) provides transition and communication between two phenomena, I find that the term “intermediary” is still appropriate. Indeed, above and beyond a function of mediation between two worlds, the arts factories do exist by themselves and as such, as spaces for identified artistic and cultural projects that are at the junction of various issues at stake. As spaces of multiple transactions between heterogeneous social players, these “go-betweens” achieve – or, at least, they aim to achieve – deeper real reconfiguration of the terms

of the interaction between the players concerned. We will stress seven dimensions that presently appear to be structurally determining for arts factories and by means of which one can better assess the nature and degree of the specificity of these institutions in the sphere of the contemporary arts and culture.



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The arts factories are intermediaries in the process of recognition, which is firstly symbolic and social, that young (or not so young) amateurs search for their artistic practices. Whatever the detailed ways and means, it is always a matter of integrating an artistic proposition in a mode or a sociable network, and therefore in a widened cultural whole of relations and know-how. By this means, some of these amateurs obtain social recognition and economic development – even if it is minimum – of their activities, which enables them to envisage or consolidate a more professionalised integration into such or such a world of art or culture. The simultaneous presence or the interaction of projects initiated and led by amateurs (beginners or longer-standing enthusiasts) and professional artists (young people or some who are already quite experienced), as well as the forms of assistance of these projects by the permanent team of arts factories are indications of this dimension.

More generally, arts factories host many projects which start initially from a personal and private or even intimate concern, while trying to obtain

recognition by other peoples in a first public space. Faced with social mechanisms of exclusion, rejection or sometimes contempt, the arts factories are seen by some people as pace for meeting and sharing which provide the opportunity for building, rebuilding or developing self-esteem. There is also a hope that this opportunity, which may be the first or one of the first opportunities for many people, may act as a springboard for other possibilities of recognition and access to larger or wider public spaces.

We can see that these places fulfil therefore a wider function than simply providing a space of transition towards more institutional or recognised places, for young people who have just recently finished professionally-aimed artistic training. But it is true that the present structure of the arts sectors leads to the reinforcement of this limiting dynamic. The available range and the desire or the official demand for vocational training have increased in the last thirty years, while the labour market has also grown, but not at the same place. If the conception and organisation of the arts sectors remain unchanged, there is a real risk of arts factories by themselves being unable to face the double pressure of ever-increasing demands: firstly, the demand for residencies of young artists, and secondly, the demand for tangible results by certain public powers in terms of occupational integration.



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The arts factories are also intermediaries in creating interaction between, on the one hand, devices, systems or works proposed by artists who are becoming integrated or who are already well integrated into professional networks, and, on the other hand, local communities in their own living areas. The importance and the place given to projects that are aimed to be built jointly by

artists and local players make it particularly possible to observe and assess this dimension. Perhaps it is on this point that one must have even more understanding of a tension that is practically formative for these processes. Faced with the aim to multiply artistic and cultural cooperation between professionals and non-professionals of the arts, there are many real difficulties in making this ideal a concrete reality. A whole series of conditions is to be considered so that this type of encounter may be possible and beneficial for the different parties. Fundamentally, indeed, any artistic project of this order is faced with the differences in understanding and mobilisation of the process by each of the social players concerned, according to their own priorities, values and modes of action – in brief, according to their own cultural frame of reference. This phenomenon is identified empirically (Colin, 1998), but it has still not often been the subject – beyond the multiplicity and the diversity of projects implemented during the last twenty years – of sufficient, systematic methodological and theoretical analyses and evaluations. This real omission is perceptible in the French context. The apparent paradox is that the artists' values and forms of action (creativity, singularity, personal and flexible commitment, the rationale of successive projects, horizontal cooperation more than hierarchical cooperation, etc.) have never been as compatible as they are today with major themes of the present mode of development of our societies (Menger, 2009).

At the very least, the proposals made by artists are part of a pragmatic, axiological whole, a culture which is also an intensification of its constituent elements. The fact that there is always a question of an empirical and sensible approach to a reality that touches upon the human dimension, a reconfiguration of our perceptions and thereby of the basis of our ways of acting (Rancière, 2000) contributes greatly to the proactiveness and appeal of artistic projects. Therefore wishing to jointly build artistic processes between professional artists and other local players amounts to simultaneously creating resonance, encounter and interaction between the culture conveyed by the former and that of the people, groups and communities with whom these

artists engage an exchange that is intended to be more symmetrical. Moreover, the sections of the population located near the arts factories often belong largely to underprivileged social categories, and, in any case, they come up against many problems of recognition (among other things, precisely, recognition of the culture that they live and of the inequalities of situations or of treatment from which they suffer). Therefore it is a whole socio-political issue of the unequal situations and exchanges between humans that is also (re)activated in the processes of joint construction of artistic projects. They are then seen all the more as projects that are necessarily political, because they are profoundly cultural (Hurstel, 2009). In any case, this is a truly nodal point in the history and the future destiny of arts factories.



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Another dimension should be stressed, even if it only arises rarely in France and if it poses everywhere real problems of compatibility and coordination between activities. In the founding cultural conception of artistic practices that are more open to the other dimensions of social and community life, the arts factories may wish to bring together several types of organisation, each of which has specific objectives, but also particularised institutional and regulatory competencies and environments. One of the historical examples remains ufaFabrik with the various organisations focussed on the arts proper (especially the performing arts and the visual arts, but also films), its local, social and family centre (including a farm for children), its bakery, its café, its natural foods shop and its ho4sting/reception organisation, and its activities to promote ecology

and sustainable development, etc. This aim of creating interaction – and at least coexistence – of diverse activities and organisations on one single site is never simple, because each of them brings with it its own history and its own form of development. Nevertheless, one finds traces of this dimension in most arts factories, for example, in the form of hosting, of events or residencies – whether temporary or longer-term – of organisations involved in the fields of training, social/community action, the non-profit/community economy, etc. The quite strong ideological and institutional segmentation of fields of activity in France makes this perspective all the more problematic. However, it is indeed in the core of the more heteronomous and comprehensive conception of the notion of culture that these places historically claim. In any case, this is a feature that is always interesting to explore, including in its original or partial local layouts and/or designs that are always unique in every case, as in the internal and contextual difficulties that may be faced by its actual realisations.

Two other aspects may be pointed out, even if they are also found in other types of arts amenities. The difference would be especially in the particular forms as implemented by the arts factories and their links with the three first dimensions.

In fact, the double aim of interaction between amateurs and professionals and between artists and local communities is on two levels. The scale is firstly that of relations of geographical proximity, of the neighbourhood, of the city or the region (both geographical and cultural) where the arts factory is physically placed. But this aim is also inspired by a whole dynamic of exchange with projects, teams or organisations that have comparable perspectives but are located in other geographical, political and cultural contexts. The strength of this dynamic and the detailed ways and means by which the local constantly feeds on experiences that are carried out in more distant places (including other countries, and not only European countries) complement the signature marks of the specific operation of each arts factory. Beyond the reality of the possible development of working practices by the

comparison and partial hybridization of experiences, this dimension again raises the question of the difficulties in grasping and understanding ways of acting in distinct cultural contexts. Furthermore, one might say that the fundamental specificity of the arts factories is that they are continually involved – more than other arts centres or institutions – in all the issues of interculturality (Costa-Lascoux *et al.*, 2000). These constitute a major stake involved in the current redefinition of the relationships between art, culture and society and, by induction, in the need to structurally reorient policies for the arts and culture, particularly in our country.



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It is also in this questioning of interculturality that, for arts factories, one must probably place the recurrent theme of the cross-over between artistic disciplines and interartistic hybridization. It is not that there are not specific stakes to each of the artistic fields and to the experiences of encounter and interaction of artistic genres, of decompartmentalization between inherited forms, and of internal movement within the very modalities of art. On this point, note that most arts factories are very largely focussed on a triplet made up in variable proportions. This consists of: amplified music, notably with the staging of concerts and the provision of studios for rehearsals or recording; other performing arts (theatrical arts, street arts, and dance), with public performances, but also spaces for rehearsals or training workshops, and administration areas; the visual arts (nowadays extended to include digital arts), with workshops and exhibitions. Therefore the question of the physical confrontation of audiences with artistic proposals is constant, and

one might say a founding factor, even if it is not exclusive as shown precisely by the place now given to digital arts in the arts factories. The coexistence of several artistic practices – and therefore also of various audiences – is organised in them, in the maintained, fragile hope of greater mixing between them. Therefore very special attention is paid to places of social mixing (reception areas, eating places or bars, etc.). The introduction, to varying degrees according to cases, of a fourth aspect around new technologies and multimedia may also allow processes of cross-cutting connection and of renewed exchange and interaction. In any case, this orientation concurs with the structural modification of the cultural behaviour of younger generations. In other words, what is at stake in interartistic cross-overs is again strongly associated with diversified sociability and extended interculturality, but, in practice, this link is not necessarily self-evident. Besides, this double stake concurs with the concerns of certain local or regional government authorities, which aim at decompartmentalization between artistic practices and spheres and a more cross-cutting approach for the benefit of their populations. But the public policies still depend very much on the sectional organisation inherited from the past, including within the very departments in charge of the arts and culture. Thus it is rather as part of the urban development policy aimed at underprivileged neighbourhoods that we find, here and there, people in charge of projects who try to establish a form of cross-cutting action, both artistic and cultural. But their own means and resources often have no similarity whatsoever with those of long-established departments (for culture, youth, social/community action, planning, etc.). Their mission and their power of intervention often remain difficult to specify and, in concrete practice, to establish. Getting different municipal departments to work together in a less compartmentalised way always requires a strong arts project, carried from beginning to end by an artistic team and continuously supported by elected representatives who have real power in determining the decisions and direction of their administration. On this subject, one cannot say that the Ministry of Culture has ever been aware

of the importance of this stake, which has however been perceptible from the 1970s, for example, through the notion of “cultural development” that has been put forward from that time. Therefore the past weakness of inter-Ministry systems and departments, related to the stakes involved in real cultural democratisation, is patently obvious, up to the new reorganisation of the Ministry of Culture put in place in January 2010.



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One may point out a sixth dimension by which the arts factories represent an intermediate reality between micro-organisations for production, dissemination and public performance (such as most theatre companies or music groups, for the performing arts) and the more established artistic or cultural amenities (again for the performing arts, whether the institutional national theatres or the municipal theatres which, basically, would most resemble arts factories, according to the description presented above). Often already integrated into ordinary systems of public grants and subsidies (grants for specific projects or for the organisation as a whole, and a multi-year agreement with certain public powers), the arts factories nevertheless remain unrecognized for their specificity in the present sphere of artistic and cultural development. For the moment, private sponsorship grants which are often very meagre and non-lasting, for original specific projects or a unique overall approach, do not fundamentally change things. Historically located at the junction of many different stakes, the arts factories have gradually been formed in a precarious situation which led them all the more to use non-standard modes of organisation. The

constant tension between the rationale of successive projects and the need for structural durability went hand-in-hand with governance that aimed to reconcile everyone's initiative with collective reflection – if not decision-making – at least on the major orientations, and with a limited “leader” team that regulates and guides the whole.



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All these elements make every arts factory an “adhocratic” organisation, i.e., organised according to the singularity of every situation and which cannot be related to a form of management that is easily identifiable according to stabilised management standards and conventions. The personal background of the members of permanent teams is most often atypical, even if this becomes less pronounced with the new generations who are now reaching positions of responsibility. However, all this leads to a strongly marked general atmosphere in every arts factory. In addition, this adds to the charm and attraction that these localised arts centres continue to exert on amateurs and audiences who are looking for spaces for reception, performance and presentation that are more on their own scale, and who also want more symmetrical exchange between professional artists and

members of the social community. Moreover, the actual economy proper of the arts factories is firstly based on the combination of a rationale of mutual exchange (voluntary work, non-monetary exchanges, and unpaid “invisible work”) and a rationale of redistribution (public or civil monetary

grants and subsidies). This combination is fundamental and it provides the arts factories with most of their human, technical and financial resources. The share of commercial self-funding (by doing paid work and selling services to users, both individual and collective) is the third indispensable rationale for ensuring the still extremely fragile balance of a specific model of plural economy. The funding provided by direct receipts from activities remains generally a minor share of the overall budget, as for most other arts centres or institutions in our country (for example, the national institutional theatres provided 23% of their budget by their own direct receipts in 2006). But this share varies greatly between different arts factories (from 10 to 40%).



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In the end, in a seventh dimension, the arts factories are presented like real “civil arenas”, where a plurality of players actively involved in every project meet, interact and negotiate. Generally, and in a way that is concretely defined to various degrees, the arts factories thereby form places for the public discussion of artistic projects which, as we have seen, are deeply rooted in social, cultural, territorial and political issues. In the arts factories, these issues particularly concern questions of mutual permeability between the private and the public spheres and the now permanent reconfiguration of relationships between them. Moreover, and because they are rather more on the side of those who are less recognized and have less social voice than others, the arts factories – which are basically really artistic and cultural – historically pursue an aim of emancipation. This is also shown in various ways in their search for autonomy that is both

material and economic as well as social and political. Their aim of decision-making independence and their associated form of governance are symptomatic of this, even if they know that the force of their civil initiatives is only viable in the context of the resolute support of public powers (but it is not a matter of leaving civil society to do things “instead of them”). Through all these aspects, the arts factories contribute to the contemporary profusion of local public spaces which reject too strict separation between the economic, the political and the cultural (Dacheux & Laville, 2003). This does not prevent these adventures being seen as singular, because the composition and the interaction between the seven dimensions highlighted above related to a unique history.



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An issue to be further examined and validated

The above summary presentation of the issues involved forms the basis of a possible model of analysis of the factors that distinguish (or not) the arts factories from other arts and cultural centres or institutions that are now active in our geographical areas. This first approach may be specified through a comparative study of the history and the present development of other examples of arts factories. The necessity to not remain limited to a superficial approach firstly led us to focus on the French example. As is often the case in the Humanities, deeper analysis of a particular context is expressly required so that

comparisons with other national contexts will gradually allow an appropriate, credible increase in generality. In the cases already studied during this researchⁱⁱⁱ, the recurrence of constantly-raised questions, even if they are always from a unique viewpoint in every case, leads one to consider that the information gathered on essential aspects is starting to be saturated (a new case will hardly provide any useful additional information), despite the quantitative limitation of the observed situations.



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In any case, the sample examined allows more thorough characterisation of experiences which, nowadays, continue to identify with another way of comprehending art and culture, or, more precisely, the relationship that is to be continually built between the arts, local communities, and their usual environments, and society as a whole. today There are still very numerous difficulties. Moreover, the artistic worlds and the overall context have greatly changed since the 1970s. Therefore the specific nature of these experiences must be questioned again. But the gathered data

is sufficiently in agreement to make it possible to determine elements for cross-cutting comprehension and therefore analysis of the problems and issues involved, on a more general scope, beyond the real particularity of every history and every particular case. Nevertheless, we must continue to refine this approach to arts factories in our country, while not forgetting to place them again within the movement of firstly European experiments with which they may be usefully compared.

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ⁱ This text is the first part of the summary report of research conducted as part of the CPER 2008-2009 Haute-Normandie project concerning *La friche, cadre d'une aventure culturelle et espace urbain polyvalent et durable* [The “*friche*” disused premises, a setting for an arts adventure and a lasting, multipurpose urban space].

In charge of Task 1 (*Identification des spécificités des bâtiments en friche recyclés en espaces de projets artistiques et culturels* [Identification of specific features of disused buildings recycled as spaces for artistic and cultural projects]), I monitored ten case studies of projects that started firstly in France (including Atelier 231 and Confort Moderne), but also in Northern Europe (Halles de Schaerbeek, Tou Scene, and UfaFabrik). More particularly, I conducted three in-depth case studies in the French context (Culture Commune, System Friche Théâtre, and Mains d'œuvre) on the basis of the collection and analysis of existing documents, plus additional focussed interviews. This summary report and the three detailed in-depth case studies can be downloaded from the website of ARTfactories / Autre(s)pARTs <artfactories.net>.

ⁱⁱ The Anglo-Saxon expression “arts factory” does not exactly translate the French expression “friches culturelles”. The word “factory” underlines too much one of the aspects of what takes place in these places, whereas many other dimensions are to be considered (experimentation, circulation, mediation...). The word “culture” implies broader realities than the word “art”. Yet, for this translation, the choice has been made to keep the Anglo-Saxon phrase “arts factories”.

ⁱⁱⁱ Following the three in-depth case studies, I carried out further interviews by telephone in late 2009 with four other French central project leaders or people in charge of arts factories (Le Lieu X / Friche RVI, Les Pas Perdus / Comptoir de la Victorine, Compagnie Black Blanc Beur, and TNT – Manufacture de Chaussures).