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# CONVERSION OF VACANT INDUSTRIAL LAND INTO YOUTH PLAY AREAS

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## ABSTRACT

In the limited volume of the article, we will only consider activities that can gain added value when implemented in a post-industrial environment, not activities for teenagers in general. Attention has been paid to activities that can benefit from elements specific to the specific environment - building stock, materials, etc.

The article examines the potential of these areas to create plots that better suit teenagers and the possibilities for adhoc transformations in play spaces that better meet the complex needs of teenagers for outdoor activities.

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## Introduction.

Generally, what teenagers are looking for is a place where they can get together and do something together. If the municipality provides decent open spaces that teenagers recognize as their own and where they can socialize without public pressure, they will be able to channel their energy in a constructive way and the public opinion of teenagers will improve.

Teenagers need to use up their energy. overstepping boundaries, being emotional, daydreaming, or overactive. They set themselves personal challenges, and boys in particular love physical challenges.

The vacant industrial lands left over from the time of socialism and the early years of transition, with some investment and targeted planning measures, could easily be transformed into grounds suitable for games and entertainment.

In the limited volume of the article, we will only consider activities that can gain added value when implemented in a post-industrial environment, not activities for teenagers in general. Attention has been paid to activities that can benefit from elements specific to the specific environment - building stock, materials, etc. For example, outdoor gyms, large and complex swings and climbing frames, obstacle courses - type Ninja warriors and Legion run, and many others are part of the facilities that are suitable for teenagers, but are equally adequate in a natural environment and therefore have not been given special attention.

## Discussion.

It should be borne in mind that despite the presence of access control (entrance fee, for example), these sites are still publicly accessible within the meaning of Ordinance No. 1 and all its requirements apply to them. A serious topic that is beyond the scope of this article is the apparent disconnect between teenagers' ability to take and control risk and the restrictive requirements for maximum free fall height, safety zones, shock absorption, material finishes, and more in Ordinance

#1. In short, the possible solutions are in two directions - a more precise definition of public accessibility or differentiation of the requirements for the playgrounds for individual age groups in the next editions of Ordinance No. 1.

Some of the activities can be:

• **Parkour areas**

Parkour (from the French *parcours du combattant* - "combatant's passage") is a technique for overcoming natural and urban obstacles only with the human body. Playground equipment manufacturers offer parkour areas, but they can be effectively combined with various elements and structures of industrial buildings of different heights - loading ramps, foundations, massive fences, scrap containers and tanks, etc.

The absence of conditions for parkour does not reduce the attractiveness of its practice. In the absence of adequate sites, freerunners find a number of dangerous places that often endanger their health and even their lives - for example, crossings, abandoned railway tracks and buildings, abandoned foundations of buildings, etc.



*Fig. 1. Russian parkour festival. Use of industrial elements © Tracers.ru*



*Fig. 2. Parkour platform made of concrete elements, Dnipro, Ukraine © Anton Pavlyukov*



Fig. 3. Parkour playground from the Finnish company LAPPSET © LAPPSET

• **Skate rinks**

Sites for extreme skating with various means, the most common of which are skateboards, rollerblades, scooters and bicycles, are places that traditionally attract teenagers, regardless of their level of mastery of the specific type of extreme sport. Even in the absence of conditions, the practitioners of these sports manage to separate the spaces they need with available means and materials.

Shorty Square in New York is a case in point. It was created by a group of extreme sports enthusiasts on the territory of an abandoned warehouse in the neighborhood of Newark. To form the ramps and baboons, mostly available on-site piles of garbage were used - industrial materials, car tires and even household waste, which were only covered with a fine leveling layer of concrete.

After its creation, the playground began to attract young people from the surrounding neighborhoods, who continued to develop it and gradually became a favorite place of some of the most famous skaters in New York. It is indicative of the role that this space plays in the community that when it was planned to be demolished in 2017, the people living nearby organized a protest and managed to protect its status. [6]



Fig. 4. Skate rink Shorty outside before the transformation © Ian Browning;



Fig. 5. Skate rink Shorty inside after the transformation © Justin White

- Places for creative expression

In abandoned industrial spaces, various creative impulses of young people find a field for expression. One of the most popular currents among them, which often moves on the edge of public unacceptability, is undoubtedly the drawings or inscriptions known as graffiti. In more and more countries, graffiti is perceived as an inevitable part of the urban landscape, and instead of being chased everywhere, special places are set aside, allowed for this street art.

Graffiti is an integral part of "skate culture" and therefore very often skateparks are dotted with diverse and often high quality street art. What's more, artists help each other, learn and get inspired by the higher quality works, and so in places with a concentration of graffiti, vandalized scribbles gradually disappear at the expense of much more creative drawings.

Disused and largely used industrial buildings offer many opportunities for such creative expression to be channeled into purpose-built graffiti parks, zones and spaces.



Fig. 6. Graffiti Park, Austin, Texas, USA © Silvana Di Ravenna

Another creative direction, for which industrial territories are extremely suitable, is the organization of creative workshops, recycling the on-site waste from various industries in a new way, for the creation of new products - applied or objects of art. These workshops should be in close contact with modern artists who are also located in the relevant industrial area.

- Shooting games, paintball

Shooting at an opponent has always been a part of children's games. Whether the weapon (the "marker") is a slingshot, a tube for cones or paper balls, a jelly ball gun or a laser, and while each generation uses increasingly safer markers, this does not change the fundamental nature of the activity.

The reason is that these games require a number of skills that teenagers love to compete in – intelligence, fine motor skills, accuracy, speed, etc.

In shooting games, paintball is most popular, with gelatin capsule markers often being replaced by safer optical or laser markers.

The game can be played both indoors and outdoors, especially with the mostly indoor game favoring abandoned industrial buildings and terrains offering different possibilities for strategies and game plans. As such, the game is essentially a true recreation of the aforementioned counter-strike arcade games.



*Fig. 7. Semi-outdoor paintball court © Kameraad Pjotr on Dutch Wikipedia*



*Fig. 8. Paintball area with straw shelters, Sofia © paintballsofia.com*

• **Climbing, via ferrata**

When abandoned, large industrial structures associated with mining or large-scale production offer many unexpected options for their integration into the natural environment. Such is the example of the transformation of the Thyssen ironworks in Duisburg. [7]



*Fig. 9. Element of the Via ferrata against the background of a preserved industrial building, Thyssen, Duisburg © Thomas Bern*



*Fig. 10. Climbing wall built on preserved elements of an industrial building, Thyssen, Duisburg © Michael Latz;*



*Fig. 11. A multi-age approach - playgrounds for all ages integrated into an industrial environment, Thyssen, Duisburg © Michael Latz*

One of the main attractions there is the created climbing and bouldering wall and the rope garden "via ferrata", which extreme but safely climbs visitors to the upper levels of the preserved parts of the buildings and thus reveals remarkable panoramas of the large-scale transformation of the Ruhr industrial area into an ecological park .

Since this plant was located in a part removed from the urban structure, the park takes this into account and creates attractions that are suitable for all ages. The place is used both by whole families, which have different activities for each member, and groups of different ages with different interests.

### **Conclusions.**

Very often, abandoned industrial areas are perceived as problematic places in the urban fabric. However, they have a specific character and preserving the spirit of the place is in many cases more valuable for the city than their complete mechanical destruction and the construction of new residential or public service areas in their place.

With small transformations, some of these places can be transformed into favorite places of adolescents, where they can be themselves - noisy, challenging and emotional, without incurring the disapproval of adults by "endangering" the play of the younger ones or disturbing the peace of the older ones.

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