

Non-compliant Commercial Spaces - Conversion of the Cigarette Factory in Timisoara

Gaiță Răzvan¹

Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism, Politehnica University of Timisoara, Romania¹
gaitarazvan@gmail.com¹

ABSTRACT

Starting from modern concepts that involve both the ideas of a productive city and the new methods of restoration, the study follows the conversion of the Cigarette Factory in Timisoara and the transformation of the ground floor of the building into a commercial space, presenting at the same time a series of principles that can be used as directives for future projects.

Keywords: non-compliant spaces, productive city, conversion, creative restoration, commercial spaces, online commerce.

I. INTRODUCTION

The wave of privatization more or less legal of the different companies and the cessation of production activities, a wave that was felt most strongly in Romania in the 2000s, the financial crisis of the last years and the development of the services sector, all led to the appearance of vacant spaces, both in and around the city centers. These spaces have great potential due to the location which, in most cases, is a privileged one, but also of the malleable configuration of the different programs and functions, and the surplus of unused built environment is a considerable one, especially in cities with an industrial tradition. But, today, the former industrial assemblies are left in dereliction, waiting for either the time to speak or an investor to realize their potential.

In recent years, a new trend has emerged. With the help of the architects, who expanded their sphere of activity, involving themselves in the reactivation and revitalization of these waiting spaces, by launching discussions, ideas, proposals and initiatives, an alarm signal was drawn, and the attention of citizens and developers has been concentrated in this direction, as is the case with neighborhoods in Belgrade or former industrial cities in Belgium, France and Germany. Basically, these initiatives were implemented in the form of areas with functions for the local community, which led to its conclusion and the participatory development of districts or even cities. These centers started to harmonize different interest groups, gradually involving local owners and authorities in collaborative processes with different local industries.



Fig. 1. Cigarette Factory around 1905 [1]

In the case of Timisoara, the optimal position of the Cigarette Factory (Fig. 1) in the city, the lo-

cation itself, the neighboring functions, the size, the configuration and the relatively good state of preservation are strong reasons for the factory's refunction and the transformation of the Iosefin district into a productive district, neighborhood, which, in turn, carries a vast history also influenced by the community in the area. Former strategic-military city throughout history, Timisoara changed its character with the industrial revolution, under the Austro-Habsburg administration becoming an important economic center, highly industrialized.

The transformation of the Bega river into a waterway, initially designed to clear the area and to mitigate the devastating effect of the floods, has led to the emergence of a large number of factories along the canal, especially in the Fabric and Iosefin neighborhoods. The subsequent appearance of the railway workshops and the construction of an infrastructure for this purpose, led to the development of the Iosefin district in the most important district of the city, to the detriment of Fabric.

The industrial assemblies were located in the north of the neighborhood, along the Bega canal, south of the railway, thus making their appearance the Paltim hat factory, Pasmatex textile factory, Cigarette factory, Solvent industrial platform and, later on, the factories Electrometal and Electrobanat, creating an industrial core in the city.

The privatization of the factories after the fall of communism, in 1989, without further investments being made on them, with the sole purpose of obtaining the lands well located within the city, led to the gradual decrease of production and then to its cessation. Nowadays, the abovementioned complexes are in a state of continuous degradation, with the spaces that belong to them often used as storage areas and without a long-term operating plan.

Another way of approaching the problem, often encountered in Timisoara and not only, is the complete demolition of the industrial assemblies and the construction of commercial areas, of office buildings or of collective houses, totally degrading the character of the areas of which they belong, without being oriented to the needs of the community.

Starting from the industrial architecture that sketches the image of these assemblies, the history of these complexes, the way in which these constructions have influenced the evolution of the urban planning, through a mapping and evaluation of the industrial units available to the city, a list of those representing resources which deserves to be capitalized can be made and re-functionalized to correspond to the requirements of new users and thus brought back to life.

II. THEORIES AND CONCEPTS

II.1. Productive city

Starting from the statements of the “European 14 Theme” [2], in most post-industrial urban development projects, one of the most common theme - program is housing, in addition to a number of spaces for offices and various other public functions such as restaurants and small shops, in order to transform the neighborhoods in something “more vibrant and lively” [1]. The way in which this wave of projects were conceived excludes an essential theme for an urban regeneration to function in time, namely the productive economy.

Cities, at present, offer great employment opportunities for people with high professional qualifications, but at the same time a large number of poorly qualified people are excluded and left without a job. This relationship between work and life in the city, has generated problems related to the economy, mobility and social. Based on this principle, the urban regenerations realized under the ideology of a mixed city are less mixed than they claim.

Production and maintenance are all part of a complete contemporary city. Without bringing steel factories or any of the heavy industries into the center of the city, it is desired to gradually introduce small-scale artisanal manufacturing. Another recent demand in large cities such as Germany, France, Holland, Sweden, Switzerland, Austria, is the recycling industry located right in the center. Thus, saving space from program themes and arranging them for small and medium-sized businesses would encourage production in the city. An approach in which the manufacturing process is left vis-

ible, would link production to everyday community life.

One of the possibilities of merging local economy with the global one is by mixing housing and working areas, giving the production more opportunities for recycling, social interaction and belonging to the city.

The productive city would be that space, which, without denying the acquired spatial qualities, would open new directions for organizations that would bring together the inhabitants, the work and any other productive activities, such as commercial, crafts and logistic, in an open urban space. Starting from this concept and its application in different urban contexts, a variety of themes were generated such as: “From monofunctional residential area to a productive district”, “From a business zone to a living area”, “Productive streets”, “Multifunctional buildings”, “Urban agriculture” and “Productive urban transitions” [2].

II.2. Productive urban transitions

Developing cities by “regenerating built fragments” for space saving is “a challenge “ and even a common trend in most major European cities, but this “mutation” of the outdated industrial areas, requires a certain period of time to become active. The period is strictly related to the image to be printed and to the “site scale”. Cultural and productive activities can collaborate under favorable economic conditions, also participating in “the evolution of the identity” [2].

This theme is intended to be implemented and developed throughout the Cigarette Factory, thus introducing in the district the concept of a productive city, which will undoubtedly have benefits for the city.

II.3. Restoration and conservation of historical monuments

The monumental works of all peoples remain a living testimony of tradition and a spiritual message of the past. As the day goes by, humanity is increasingly aware of the negative impact that the effect of globalization has on human values, as heritage is considered a way of salvation for future generations.

Prof. Petre Ghergu considers that the basic principles of conservation and restoration were presented, in first instance, through the Athens Charter (1931), which gave rise to vast international movements. Formulating these principles was an elementary step, but the application within one's own culture, according to one's own tradition, was an essential decision. The historical monument represents both the architectural work, taken as an individual object, as well as the urban or rural site in which it is located, a site that attracts significant events and developments from a historical point of view. The preservation and restoration of monuments is a discipline that appeals to all the sciences and technologies that can lead to the salvation of the heritage [3].

Starting from the Venice Charter (1964), the preservation mainly involves the continuous maintenance of the historical monument, but also of the natural setting in which it is located. Any new insertion and any new arrangement could destroy the composition from a volumetric point of view and automatically the use of color is strictly forbidden. Moving components or even the entire monument is not allowed, unless moving them is a solution in order to save it. Art objects, such as sculpture and painting, which are part of the atmosphere of the place, cannot be separated unless this is the only way of preserving them. In the case of restoration, it aims to preserve and bring to light the aesthetic and historical values specific to the monument, respecting the original documents and the vestiges of the past. Any completion will be understood as an architectural composition, which will correspond to our times. Only when traditional techniques are inadequate can one resort to modern means, the efficiency of which has already been tested and guaranteed. The elements that replace the missing parts, must be integrated in a pleasant and balanced way with the whole, different from the original parts, precisely not to distort the historical object. By observing all the interesting elements, the additions must be related to both the monument and the natural landscape.

Over time, due to changing different urban principles and contexts, the restoration has gener-

ated new approaches such as: "Architectural conversion", "Functional reconversion, packing industry", "Digital restoration / restoration", "Integrated Restoration " and "Creative Restoration" [4].

II.3.1. Architectural conversion

According to arch. Iolanda Balogh Szekeres, the conversion as a method of restoration, implies the modification of the original function with another function that can lead to the reintegration of the monument into the circuit of daily life. This change leads to major changes in the layout, the spatial organization, the materials and finishes or the color. At the end of the work it is important that the two faces, both the historical one and the new one inserted, are recognizable and co-present. In the last two decades, this kind of architecture has become a real trend. The phenomenon is also due to huge quantities of relic objects, inherited after the industrial revolution, in which the idea of using them appears. This wave of conversions started from both the United Kingdom and the United States, raising the issue of using spaces that, half a century ago, would have been replaced by new ones. Over time, the diversity of buildings that should be saved has increased, as today buildings such as factories, warehouses, have come to the attention of architects and cities management just to be restored and preserved. There are also cases when such a building is not of public interest, the construction being seen as a wreck, which does not belong to the everyday image. In many cases, industrial buildings are not classified as historical monuments, which would have led to the appearance of constraints, but as soon as they are removed, they offer multiple variants of arrangement. The industrial buildings attract advantages from the point of view of the location, most being located near the center, from the point of view of the large surfaces, but also of the interior spaces, well lit. Within each neighborhood, these are objects strongly anchored in context and properly structured in terms of traffic, landmarks and urban plots. The variety and scope of industrial spaces offers the possibility of activating the area, by sheltering the different activities that

meet the current requirements. The accelerated development of the big cities, states the peripheral industrial buildings, in areas with a great potential for the reevaluation of the city. Both morphological features and a rich architectural environment create valuable opportunities for functional conversion [4].

II.3.2. Creative restoration

Speaking from the statements of arch. Iolanda Balogh Szekeres, the restoration, as opposed to conservation as a scientific method of identifying a monument, is rather a process of modeling or even of transformation. Thus, creative restoration is the result of combining conservation with modern architecture, archeology, design, urbanism and other contemporary arts. The creative restoration process gives birth to a living organism, generating meeting and dialogue spaces, also offering the opportunity to look inside the architecture. Its dual intention, to create a new architecture for various other functions and at the same time preserving those present, presents a way to redefine the historical monument and introduce it into the current circuit. Within this theme the restoration is redefined by architectural concepts such as function, relations between interior and exterior, relationships between the built background and landscape, but also volumetry. Rediscovering the function through interventions at the level of the planimetry, reinventing and combining the volumetric forms that come to complete the ensemble, the stylistic characteristics specific to the chosen program, the highlighting of the main building material are just some of the ways in which the creative restoration makes its presence felt [4].

III. THEME PROGRAM

Gheorghe Vais statements claim that the spaces destined to market various products, the shops, did not evolve from Antiquity until the Renaissance. The interior and exterior areas were separated by a counter. With the increase of commercial spaces, the counter will have the role of separating the areas intended for the customer, from the areas used by the trader. According to the testimonies of Gheorghe

Vais, a first innovation, that of the showcases, appeared at the end of the seventeenth century in the Netherlands and was quickly adopted by the rest of the European countries. Initially composed of "small glass mesh fixed in wooden frames or lead reinforcements" [5], the windows will exceed the area of 1 sqm only by the 1840s. Due to the expansion and development of maritime and land exchanges, there is a need to build large stores or warehouses. With a metal structure without load-bearing walls, this kind of space offers traders large areas of operation and flexibility. With the diversification of the products, the cities, in the 17th-18th centuries, are committed to creating more specialized commercial spaces, properly wrapped and insured in case of fire. Through the years the Academy of Architecture of France proposed the organization of a competition in order to find an answer to the new requirements of this program. However, the new halls did not meet the needs of the traders, who "looked with nostalgia towards Istanbul and its 200,000 sqm Grand Bazaar" [5].

According to Gheorghe Vais, the big shops have now become essential components of the urban environment. They are considered to be intermediary spaces, areas for the transfer of the product from the trader to the consumer. Thus, the basic function of a store is the sale of the product and imposes a series of necessities: the supply of goods, the storage and preservation of the goods, the packaging and presentation of the goods and the delivery of the products. All these varieties of commercial spaces, are guided by certain principles regarding good operation and management. The spaces for sale also take on the role of storage areas, in order to attract the customers in the exhibition areas and at the same time to reduce the area distributed to the storage area.

Gheorghe Vais considers that small shops or boutiques are in many cases family businesses that practice a specialized trade. This category is ideally suited to the spaces on the ground floor of the buildings in the historical centers. Historically speaking, the shop is the heir to the commercial spaces of the medieval period. In the case of this category, the relationship between

the interior and the public space presented a series of changes that had an impact on the transparency of the facade. The most direct and aggressive presentation of the products was a determining factor in the success of the commercial activities.

According to Gheorghe Vais, large stores are commercial spaces with a staff of over 175 people and an area of 1,000 and 2,500 square meters. This category of stores consists of multiple shops, where the customer is not limited to a certain range of products and is invited to move freely through the space, without being pressured to buy. This will in most cases attract more customers than a shop and will not impose a barrier between the sidewalk and the inside of the store. In the case of large stores, the merchandise can be seen from very close and pinned, similar to the counters in the markets. From the point of view of the route, these categories of shops even become commercial streets, because the trader is free to organize according to his own taste the succession of the different areas.

Another category of commercial spaces, according to the statements of Gheorghe Vais, is the commercial centers. They are a group of shops arranged, created and organized according to a unitary commercial conception. This kind of space is an autonomous model, without relation to the context in which it is positioned, as it is in most cases usually located on the outskirts of cities or on the route of great roads. From a functional point of view, unlike the rest of the categories of commercial spaces, the commercial centers present a large reception space for the public and populated with leisure objects.

Commercial streets are another category mentioned by Gheorghe Vais and derive from the old stalls transformed into permanent structures. Basically, there are multiple shops with show-cases and accesses on the sidewalk, located on both sides of a traffic lane. With the advent of vehicles, the chance of stopping traffic begins to diminish, and the speed of movement becomes a barrier between the plane of the window and the opposite side of the street. Due to the speed of movement, there was also pressure from merchants for pedestrianization of the streets [5].

IV. CASE STUDIES (EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE)

IV.1. Code concep – Fogia

Natasha Levy argues that the studio, Code Concept, has managed to modify the old Stockholm steam engine workshop in a imponderable way, with the aim of creating a showroom for the Swedish furniture brand, Fogia. Located in the municipality of Nacka, near the Baltic Sea, the Fogia showroom (Fig. 2) offers a number of original features, which refer to the history of the brand. The former steam engine workshop, part of a shipyard, was established in 1878. Before the whole space became a notorious place for nightclubs in the 90s, the last ship launched from the complex was It was in 1981. In order to turn the whole workshop into a sales space, the people from Fogia called on a creative agency, Code Concept, headquartered in Stockholm, with the aim of generating a space as flexible as possible and with different displays, easily mounted and disassembled.



Fig. 2. Fogia showroom [6]

The Fogia brand operates in different styles in their furniture collection, each product having its own story. This fact later became the basic idea of the entire layout, an idea that Code Concept wanted to communicate to visitors in a clear and direct way. Without making changes to the major structure, preserving the existing trim and floor finish, a series of cubicles made of metal bars, arranged under the high ceiling of the workshop, were designed. The frames were made of steel to be in tune with the exposed

metal beams of the building. These cubicles allow the styling of an environment, such as the living room, without breaking down a permanent installation several times a year and helps to present as accurately as possible the product that is to be sold. It is precisely this flexibility of the exposure mode, which facilitates the process of selling the products that are in permanent change. Behind the shop there is also a café that serves drinks and snacks to those browsing the showroom [6].

IV.2. Cun Design - 751 Fashion Buyer Shop

According to Architonic, JiuXianQiao is an area of Beijing that bears the name of the “holy island” [7] of the old factories, because it is the first space chosen for carrying out various cultural and artistic activities, among the younger generation. This project is located right in the heart of Beijing’s 751 D-Park fashion design square, which is also the largest landmark in the area. The ten tin boilers with the initial role of desulfurization, remained only simple witnesses of the development process of the complex, and the presence of rust on these objects contributes to maintaining the impasse of the industrial era. In order to soften the oppressive atmosphere brought by the old industry, a series of pieces of furniture have been designed in a way to resemble daily life, in order to balance the spatial order (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. 751 Fashion Buyer Shop [7]

In this project, color has the role of a transmitter and helps to perceive the space. Pure white, found right in the core of the entire “show” [4], was chosen precisely to contrast with the dark

and stressful blue, chosen with the intention of being a visual attraction for customers. The main objective of this project was to respect the sign of time, the building being a symbolic entity of the urban environment, while solving the current requirements [7].

IV.3. Studio 34 South – Misterdesign

Yatzer claims that the new MisterDesign brand new retail space is located in a former car factory on the outskirts of Den Bosch, a city in the south of the Netherlands. Built in the 1930s, as a tribute to the New Objectives, an artistic movement that started from the heart of the Bauhaus and a precursor to the International Style, the building remained vacant from 2006 until a few years ago when the local government began seeking new measures to revitalize it. With an open plan and a considerable height of space, those at Studio 34 South have thought of a systematic way in which customers can intuitively browse the entire store. The new space structure features a 25-meter-long metal platform, which aims to fragment the pressing height of the factory and later become a showcase for MisterDesign brand products (Fig. 4).

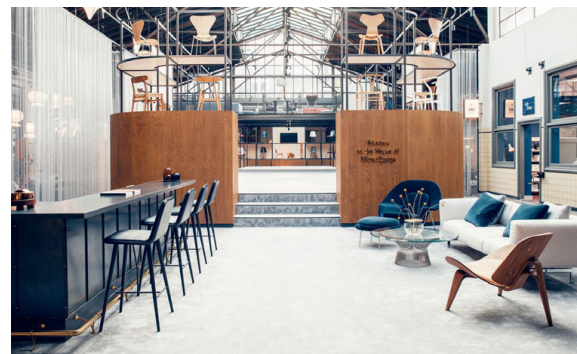


Fig. 4. MisterDesign showroom [8]

Climbing the platform, customers get to be informed about the craft behind the iconic furniture pieces that had a major impact on the design evolution. The spaces for sale are styled in different ways and follow the original grid of the building. Separated by 6-meter high curtains, the areas are arranged in a way that highlights the products that are to be sold. Thus, this configuration allows the store to have a public destination and at the same time to provide

moments of privacy. The main objective of this arrangement was to reconnect the consumers with the innovation and the value of the original parts, in a most laudable and elegant way executed [8].

V. SUBJECT DESCRIPTION

The most significant stage in the history and evolution of commerce is the emergence of electronic commerce. With its genesis, through the twentieth century, the image of traditional space has changed in a way that will completely change the ambience of a space intended for commerce. According to Susan Meyer, Amazon, one of the largest online trading companies, was born in 1995 as a simple online book distributor. By 2018, the respective platform registered a “net income of over 10 billion dollars” [9], and the product range has expanded exponentially, reaching also include electronics, clothing, furniture, etc.

The response of this mutation is elementary and refers, first and foremost, to convenience and efficiency. This way of shopping allows customers, to document, examine the product and compare it in terms of price, without having restrictions on the hours of operation of a real store. The development of the Internet has been closely linked to the spread and progress of this way of shopping. In short, the more people had access to the Internet, the more interested in e-commerce.

The breadth of consumerism and the chase for products have made various social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter become an environment through which various distributors can present their products. Within these platforms there are sections with “over 60 million active business pages” [9].

From the above, one can conclude that both current producers and those wishing to enter the labor market, cannot combat the speed and efficiency of e-commerce. The challenge of combining the virtual world of commerce, with the real one based on a more direct experience with the product and with the philosophy behind the brand, have become key elements in the current strategy of selling products. According to Juan Hildebrand [10], people who come into direct contact with the environment

of a store can be identified under two completely different categories. The first category refers to customers who in most cases know exactly what they want to buy and where to find the respective products, and the second is the category of hesitant customers who most often seek inspiration, whether it is their own purchases, whether they are gifts.

Considering the two categories of customers, the producers have come to invest in designing spaces that have a sensory and emotional impact on the buyers.

In the case of non-compliant spaces, the situation becomes a little delicate, because, in the first instance, the space does not correspond to the standard configuration of a commercial space. Elements such as stains, finishes, decorations, lighting are only part of the components that can influence the atmosphere and mood of customers in non-compliant spaces and not only. When it comes to developing a store, regardless of its configuration, it is important to identify the maximum space that can be allocated to the sale, presentation and testing of products. According to some studies, this fact is due to the simple conception that the customers have, such that a large space, brings with it a large range of products.

The placement of products in space is another essential factor in the arrangement of a commercial space. In addition to the role of visual attractor, sub-areas can be created that may have a different ambience than the general atmosphere (Fig. 5). In this way the customer is urged to further explore the store, thus making additional purchases.



Fig. 5. Schönbuch showroom [11]

How a commercial space is browsed is another factor that must be taken into account when designing a commercial space. In the opinion of many experts in the field, it is considered even the key component that underlies the proper functioning of a commercial space.

According to the statements of Gheorghe Vais, both the placement of the products in the space through the pieces of furniture, as well as the resulting route, contributes to the orientation of the clients in an undiscovered space. Regardless of the variants of organizing a commercial space, "the fluency of the entry-exposure-exit-route and the avoidance of dead spots" are important to give the customers a pleasant experience [5].

Signage is another element that contributes, in a quite large percentage, to the way a commercial space is designed (Fig. 6). A good design helps to present and market the respective product. The continuous appearance of new products, due to the needs that are in a permanent change, but also to the trends that come and go, make the way of presenting a product and the signage to keep up with all the reforms.

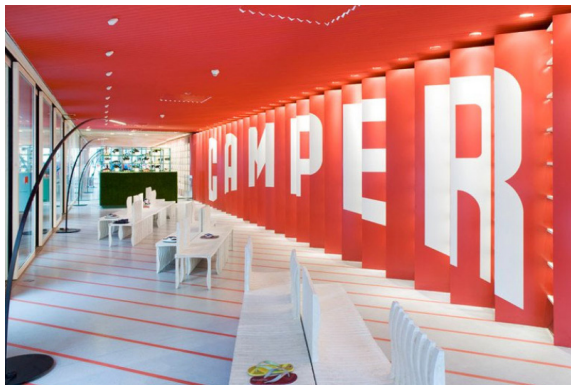


Fig. 6. Camper store, New York City [12]

Lighting is another essential element when thinking of a commercial space (Fig. 7). Proper lighting can provide the customer with a good state of mind throughout the space navigation. In addition to its ability to enhance products, lighting can also be used as a way to guide customers throughout the store.

According to the new trends, the use of color in the arrangement of commercial spaces, is beginning to make its presence felt (Fig. 8). In

addition to its ability to arouse moods and capture the attention of those who travel the space, color becomes an informant in relation to the type of products sold and to which categories of customers they are addressed.



Fig. 7. Costume National , Los Angeles, indirect lighting [13]



Fig. 8. Doctor Manzana, Valencia, smartphone repair store [14]

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Starting from the principles enunciated in the previous chapters and from the examples of good practice, the placement of the various commercial spaces on the ground floor of the Cigarette Factory was taken into consideration, in order to transform the social, cultural and economic environment both in the area and in the Josephine neighborhood.

One of the major problems encountered in the case of the Cigarette Factory and not only, was that of accessibility. By adding main and secondary accesses, the factory will be able to be

opened to a large number of visitors. These addition and subtraction processes will be solved in a way that does not disturb the overall image of the historical monument.

For many commercial spaces, the presence of a dense structure, as in the case of the Cigarette Factory, can be a disadvantage in the way the interior space can be thought. However, the regular and harmonious recurrence of these elements can give rise to an imposing spatial structure (Fig. 9). The symmetry with which the space is already incorporated, can help to have a balanced arrangement of the new proposal. Besides the resistance structure, the rhythm is also found through the presence of windows and doors that punctuate the surface of the building. The articulation of the windows inside through the niches, highlights the massiveness and grandeur of the entire building (Fig. 10). Another advantage of the windows, besides the significant number, is their size, as they can be used as a series of showcases that highlight the products within the commercial spaces.

Although the ratio between the dimensions of the interior space is not one corresponding to a commercial space, the long length of the factory allows a focus on the flow and routes that may occur as a result of the arrangement of product display areas or other service areas (Fig. 11). The presence of a large inner courtyard can bring a benefit in terms of the relationship between interior and exterior.

Designing a store, regardless of its spatial proportions and the products or services it sells, is a long process that should not be neglected, as it will reflect, in most cases, the brand and philosophy behind it. The clearer the message that a manufacturer wants to express to customers, the more the store will attract a large number of customers. Both the experience that customers have in direct relation to the commercial space, as well as the methods of user-generated content and the reviews encountered mainly in online commerce, are factors that will dictate the way a space intended for commerce will be thought.

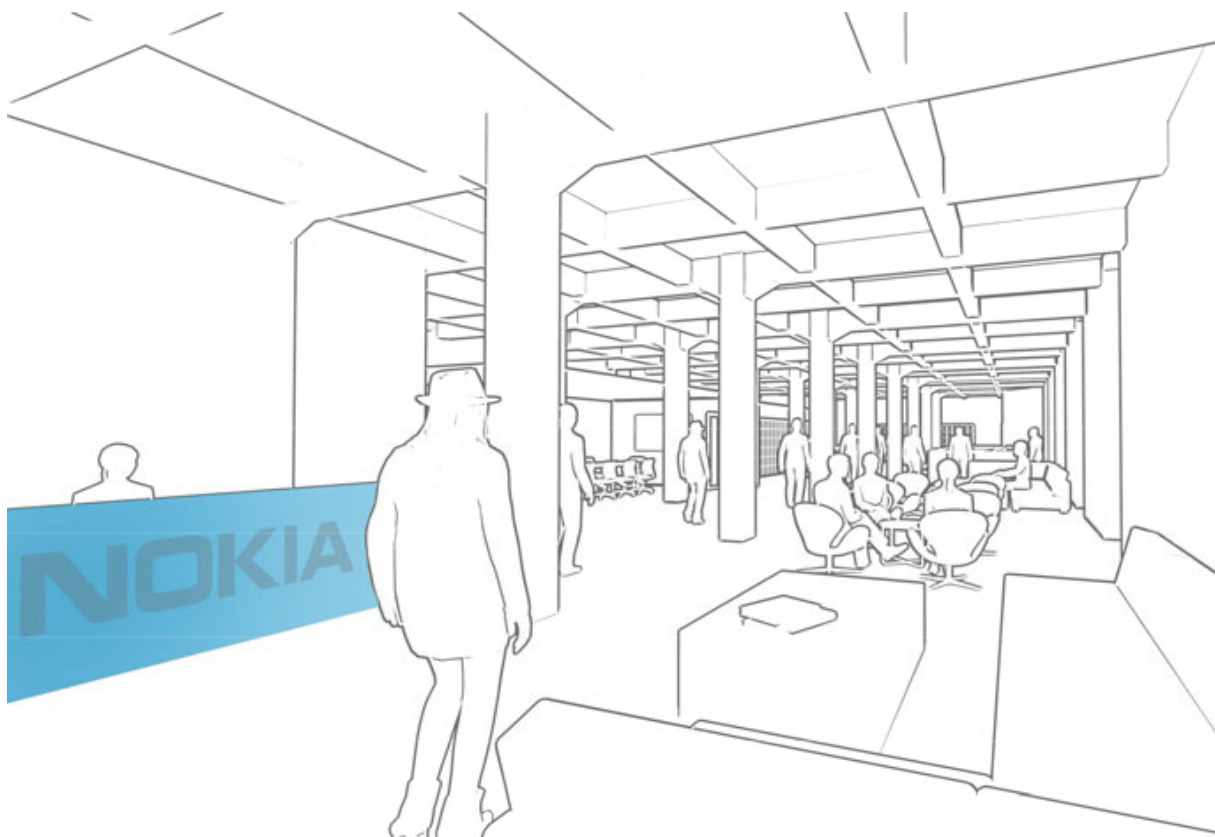


Fig. 9. Commercial space proposal, atmosphere image 1 [15]



Fig. 10. Commercial space proposal, atmosphere image 2 [15]

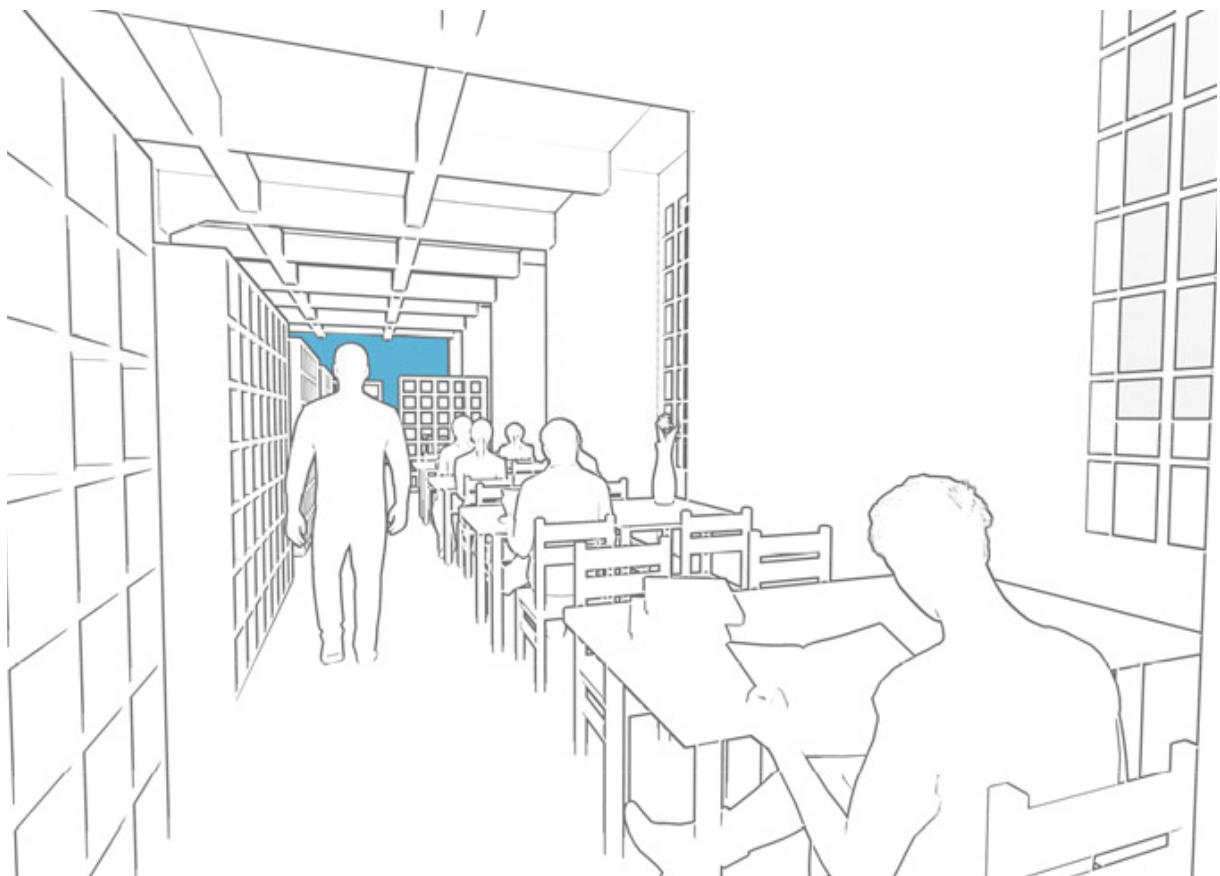


Fig. 11. Commercial space proposal, atmosphere image 3 [15]

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