

Kuçova, the Existence of an Industrial Heritage

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ABSTRACT

As we know, in the recent decades in Albania, lots of industrial establishment have been abandoned or transformed from different reasons. We can mention cities like Kuçova, Ballsh, Polican, Memaliaj, ect...which have been created due to the constructions of a factory or industrial complex. In this paper i choose Kuçova city as one of the most significant industrial city of Albania. This city is known as well with the name of “Qyteti Stalin” (1953-1991) from the relations that Albania had in that period with Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Nowadays the industrial heritage of Kuçova is forgotten and risks extinction, even though this heritage is a worthy testifier of the history of our country. The aim of this paper is to understand and to evaluate the past industry of this city, which from a common village, after the year 1927, due to the existence of oil fields layers became an industrial town. Another discussion of my paper is that by understanding the nature of the past industry of this city we can present it to the present and make the right intervention for the future, which means reuse of these zones and regeneration of the city.

KEYWORDS: Industrial heritage, evaluation, adaption, regeneration, history.

1 INTRODUCTION

"What we need is continuity . . . historic preservation is not sentimentality but a psychological necessity. We must learn to cherish history and to preserve worthy old buildings . . . we must learn how to preserve them, not as pathetic museum pieces, but by giving them new uses."

Ada Louise Huxtable

TICCIH is the world organization representing industrial heritage and is a special adviser to ICOMOS on industrial heritage.

Industrial heritage consists of the remains of industrial culture which are of historical, technological, social, architectural or scientific value. These remains consist of buildings and machinery, workshops, mills and factories, mines and sites for processing and refining, warehouses and stores, places where energy is generated, transmitted and used, transport and all its infrastructure, as well as places used for social activities related to industry such as housing, religious worship or education.

For over 45 years (1945-1990), were built 4340 factories, mills, and industrial complexes, enterprising and manufacturing centres. As we know, in the recent decades in Albania, lots of industrial establishments have been abandoned or transformed from different reasons. Indeed, many cities have expanded due to industrial heritage

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2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF KUCOVA

Kuçova lies in the river valley of Devoll, near to the city of Berat. The Kuçova region has been inhabited since ancient times. This is confirmed by the evidence, material and documents found by archaeologists that belong the Iron Age (V-IV century BC). The presence of oil field layers and its early exploitation by foreign companies led Kuçova from an ordinary village transformed into a town and industrial workforce after the year 1927. Kuçova city is known as the city with many names. So according to legends the earlier was the name that is known today “Kuçove”, or in other words “Fertile Land”. Later, after the discovery of oil layers during the Italian occupation from 1939 to 1943, is recognized by the name “Petrolia”. In the framework of Albanian-Soviet friendship in July 10, 1952 Kuçova was set officially the name “Qyteti Stalin” ("Stalin City"). After 40 years (since 1990) as a consequence of the change of system in Albania, was called again Kuçove.

In the First World War, in the suburb of Kuçova was set an Austrian military unit. In 1916, a geologist engineer, member of the personnel noticed that the water of the stream that flowed from the Omuri hills came with diesel.

After he controlled the area concluded that Kucova was a country with assets of oil. He made public this fact in 1918. Since 1918 to 1924, in many societies came for research in Kuçova as AIPA oil (petroleum Albania Azienda Italiana), an Anglo-Persian Oil Company and American French society etc... In 1928 in “Dikater” was drilled the first oil hole in Albania. From this moment onwards the city has been on oil drilling maps. Since 1928 until 1943, the Italian company AIPA had an agreement with the Zog I government that if the oil extraction would surpass 50,000 tonnes per year, this company would build a refinery in Albania. Even though the oil extracted was more than 170,000 ton, the refinery was never built and the oil was transported to Italy.



Figure 1: Borgo Galeazzo Ciano
Source: Giornale Luce B1090 del 05/05/1937



Figure 2: First oil drilling made by the Italian Petrolia Albania.company AIPA, Petrolia
Source: Giornale Luce B1090 del 05/05/1937

Kuçova has recognized the biggest development after the World War II, especially during 1975-1990. The population of the district in the late 1980s reached 32,000 by 6,400 residents that was in 1938. During Communist Albania the city was renamed to Stalin City (Albanian: Qyteti Stalin) and was a closed military district. The city was extensively developed in the 1950s and is of interest to students of communist architecture, although following the collapse of communism there has been much unauthorised building and modification to the original buildings.



Figure 3: City Stalin

2 RESEARCH PROBLEMATIC AND OBJECTIVES.

- Why we have to evaluate industrial heritage in Kuçova?

- Why saving these structures? (Saving means reusing).
 - Giving possible solutions to intervene on Brownfield industrial areas.
- My research is focused on two main objectives (each of them has its sub objectives)

2.1 Protecting the architectonic resource and landscape through its re-fictionalization in contemporary terms.

2.2. Evaluation of these areas

Evaluation of these areas cannot but start from their knowledge because they represent authentic pages of history: not only because here were born products and inventions which have helped in the development of our country, but because many people have spent hard working days demonstrating their creativity and their sense of duty and sacrifice. It is inevitable to imagine and reinvent the future of these areas by transforming them into reusable areas integrated into a more contemporary city.

- **Evaluation of physical state. (typological classification of the brownfield areas)**

Many of the industrial constructions in Albania have been abandoned for almost 20 years. We have two main kinds of interventions on the physical state: Time degradation, because most of them have been abandoned for almost 20 years and human intervention, because nearby inhabitants have physically damaged these buildings. As a result, many industrial heritage properties are found in a deteriorated state, but some others still maintain all or a part of their cultural heritage value or interest.



Figure 4 Electric central degradation.



Figure 5: Electric central degradation.(physical state 7.4.2013)

Source: Photo of the author

- **Evaluation of social impact.**

For some properties, it is the association with certain people, events or aspects of the community that have value or interest, not the physical state. The industrial heritage is of social value as part of the record of the lives of ordinary men and women and as such it provides an important sense of identity. It is of technological and scientific value in the history of manufacturing, engineering, construction, and it may have considerable aesthetic value for the quality of its architecture, design or planning.



Figure 6: TEC workers have been on strike in 1942
Source: Photo of the author



Figure 7. Coexistence between industry and residents
Source: Photo from the archive

2.2 Protecting the architectonic resource and landscape through its re-fictionalization in contemporary terms.

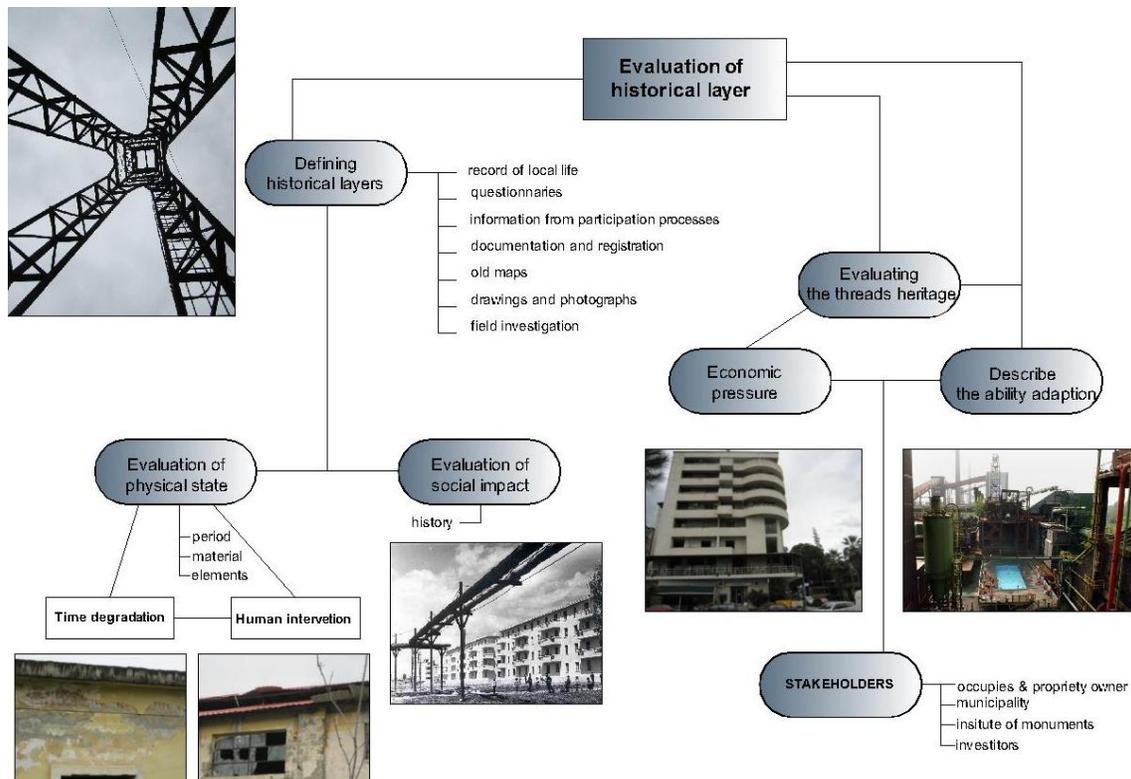
Protect the architectonic resource and landscape through its re-fictionalization in contemporary terms, achieving the economic, social and environmental aspects of land on which it stands, through:

- Realization of reuse intervention of the physical structure of the former-industrial complex. This has to be in consistence with the typological character of each building.
- Identification of the characteristics that give us accessibility and connectivity of the area with the other part of the city.
- Identification of a series of interventions that aim to clean up the areas outside and inside the perimeter of the former industrial complex in order to evaluate the surrounding landscape.
- Identification of some functional objectives which establish an equilibrium between public and private investment.
- The alternatives, from the aesthetic and functional point of view can offer us the best cases for the development and regeneration of the area.

Reusing these areas and regenerating the city. This can be done by locating services and improving the quality of the urban environment (new green spaces, places of cultural activities, meeting places, and services).

Preserving the use purpose of the area. Favoring from this point of view, other activities matching the original which are supported by advanced technology that are capable of offering a higher environmental quality.

Among these two alternatives, there are some intermediate positions, the most common of which proposes mixed functions between production activities and services in urban and territorial scale.



3 CONCLUSION

Evaluation of these areas must necessarily start from their knowledge because they represent authentic pages of history. Preserving these industrial icons is an important part of maintaining the historic industrial character of a community. Industrial heritage and adaptation do not go together, but there are some cases where it was possible to reconcile these two requirements, without compromising on a low level, but rather finding solutions that represent the best, most promising enhancement of the environment and heritage together. The research conducted is intended to provide a systematic organization of the different facets of the complex debate and an analysis of the situation and possible solutions related to the recovery of abandoned industrial complexes. The research work tends to give an evaluation which has been missing in this heritage and it also proposes different ways of adaptation of these structures. Adaptive reuse should be the preferred strategy for an industrial when no other industrial option is available. And should always be favored over demolition and redevelopment. There are countless reuse options available for industrial buildings. Some of the more popular conversions are of industrial building to museums, art studios, live-work units, offices, residential units, schools, retail, and increasingly more are combining several uses together.

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