

Seeking production footprints on behalf of innovation, city of Gjirokastra.

Keywords / Industrial Heritage, Gjirokastra, Industrial Design

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Abstract

One of the main findings of my PhD dissertation¹ is the emergent awareness for protecting the Albanian Industrial Heritage. The Industrial Heritage in Albania is under-researched, and few actions have been taken to preserve it. Each day is costing a huge loss to the Albanian Heritage and the preservation of the historic sites. This paper identifies the industrial landscape of Gjirokastra during the years 1950 - 90. The main challenge has been the documentation and gathering evidence on this topic, since there is a lack of previous research about Industrial Heritage in Gjirokastra in particular and Albania in general. No previous studies have focused on the industrial infrastructure of this city. In this regard, this paper aims to foster a political, institutional, and civic awareness on preserving the industrial heritage. Through an active understanding of its production capacity, Gjirokastra will be the next destination of the investment on the preservation of industrial heritage. Gjirokastra's case study could be a good practice for the preservation of the industrial heritage of the other cities in Albania.

The Importance of Industrial Heritage

Industrial Heritage evinces the industrialization process of a country. Its impact is tangible and indisputable and continues to affect all cultural, social, technological, and economic dynamics of life. It explains not only the past but also the present and relates to the future (Alfrey and Putnam, 1992). Tiesdell et al. (1996), argue that the rational economic and commercial choice starts with the desire to conserve historic landscapes. Heritage industries may provide the basis for economic regeneration of historic urban landscapes by filling the gap left by vanished factories and warehouses and creating a new image that would make them more attractive to mobile capital (Hall, 1998). According to Rypkema (1992; 2008), conservation primarily involves buildings; historic buildings are real estate, and real estate is a commodity. Nizhny Tagil Charter for Industrial Heritage (TICCIH, 2003) posits that industrial heritage

consists of "universal values" as they evince activities with profound historical consequences; "social values" that provide sense of identity; "technological and scientific values" in the history of manufacturing, engineering, construction; "aesthetic values" for architectural quality, design or planning; "intrinsic values" contained in human memories and customs; and "scarcity", in terms of the survival of particular processes or landscapes.

The Industrial Heritage in Britain is a well-discussed topic internationally since 1973 (Falconer & Keith, 2006). Such discourse was instrumental in promoting industrial landscapes as World Heritage Sites and in the creation of TICCIH (The International Committee for the Conservation of Industrial Heritage). In addition, EU strategies as an important driver of change (European Parliament DG IP 2013) focus on the culture and values of the Industrial Heritage. European Union

² / Curraj,E. (2017) *Reinventing Furniture Design in the Post-communist Era in Albania: Towards the Mass-cus-tomization Paradigm*. PhD Dissertation Joint programme, Polis University and Ferrara University.

has funded projects with a wide objective in the regeneration of historic industrial sites in Europe. The significant part of present day heritage management and urban development strategies is reusing the industrial buildings and factories, especially in Western countries.

The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), the United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage (TICCIH) are the main institutions in charge of (industrial) heritage management and conservation. Their focus has been on institutions and experts professionally engaged with heritage, aiming to develop criteria that reinforce the industrial heritage preservation policies and practice. Hence, a list of principles for the preservation of industrial heritage - jointly developed by ICOMOS and TICCIH and adopted by the 17th ICOMOS General Assembly on 28 November 2011, and UNESCO in 1972 - adopted the implementation of international recommendations and instruments such as the World Heritage Convention.

During the years 2000, the UNESCO World Heritage started to have a special focus on Industrial Heritage (Falser, M. (2001). Though the UNESCO World Heritage Centre was set up in 1992 by the Director General, in 1994, several expert meetings on "Global Strategy" were held, and thematic studies for a representative World Heritage List were started. According to this report (Falser, M. (2001), in Global Strategy's 24th session,

in December 2000, several decisions were taken concerning the Harmonization of the World Heritage List. Hence, in the report it is highlighted that the category of "Industrial Heritage", as an under-represented category, has increased not nearly as rapidly. In this report, the division in cultural (including industrial), natural and mixed sites show a large majority of cultural sites in all regions.

The process of Industrial Heritage has two main steps that need to be fulfilled, first to increase the awareness of the importance of industrial history in understanding heritage in recent years, and second, to foster the tendency in using industrial heritage. Both steps are very important in emphasizing the importance of sustaining industrial buildings, its production culture, and any remaining industrial processes and uses, by attracting new investment. Shanghai M52 (warehouses), Beijing Shougang No. 3 Blast Furnace Museum, Moscow's Red Chocolate Gallery (chocolate factory), London Tate Modern Museum (electric plant) and so many worthy to be mentioned, are important examples throughout the world that build the awareness in restoring and reusing existing industrial heritage stock in order to stimulate cultural and economic regeneration. There is an invaluable economic value in the revitalization of the industrial sites and in the conservation of the industrial areas. According to English Heritage (2005), Birmingham has turned out to be one of the most important tourist nodes, creating 1500 businesses and 6000 jobs.

Another benefit is the environmental



Fig.1 / Existing situation of Metal Plant, Gjirokastra, . Source / the author.

sustainability. Reusing existing buildings is also a simple way of achieving sustainability by saving waste and reducing the need for new building materials (English Heritage, 2005).

According to the Dublin Principles (2011, p.2) the industrial heritage consists of sites, structures, complexes, areas and landscapes as well as the related machinery, objects or documents that provide evidence of past or ongoing industrial processes of production,

the extraction of raw materials, their transformation into goods, and the related energy and transport infrastructures. In identifying the importance of reusing the industrial areas and by defining the criteria of the industrial Heritage, we can start to evaluate Albanian Industrial Heritage.

Archiving Industrial Heritage, A Prompt Need in Albania

After the fall of communism in Albania in 1991, as in former communist countries,



Fig.2 / Leather and Footwear Factory, Gjirokastër. Source / the author

there were large demographic movements in both directions, from the rural to urban areas and from Albania to abroad. The production slowed down in all industries, and the latter soon became almost inexistent. Parangoni (2010) states that the industrial sector was beyond any competitive technological standard in a free market economy. Promptly, during 1992, economic reforms were undertaken, and the former state properties shifted to private properties, a process that is

still a problem, especially for the former industrial areas. Both ownerships (private and state owned) are still not successful. The industrial zones in Albania, normally covering a huge surface, are located in high-priced land (except for the petroleum wells or building material factories). After the 90-s, most of them are given back to the old owners, and some of them are still state properties. Both ownerships are not yet successful to start documenting and revitalizing the former industrial areas.

The former industrial sites in Albania are in very deteriorated conditions and sometimes even dangerous due to the lack of maintenance. Due to the interruption of the production process and demographic movement the conservation methods have mostly been limited to the surroundings of industrial heritage sites and have not considered the actual industrial sites. The latter are either abandoned, or have been assimilated by massive economic projects since they are located in favorable places of towns and possess vast spaces.

In Albania, it is still missing a mapping process of the Industrial Buildings, their capacities, and their production process. There are few studies with the main focus on engineering and planning but mostly focused on the main cities such as Durres, Tirane, Elbasan, and Industrial buildings such as the Wood Production Plant "Misto Mame", Tirane; the Wood Production Plant "Nako Spiro", Elbasan; the Metallurgical Plant of Elbasan, the Textile Factory "Mao Ce Dun", Berat, and a few others.

The Albanian Industrial Heritage has been outside the focus of much research in this field. The only research dedicated on this topic in Albania is the PhD dissertation of Luca, E (2017)² and the report of Albanian Heritage Foundation (2010). Luca's dissertation makes the case that the Albanian Industrial Heritage should be recognized and preserved "as part of social, architectural, cultural, and economic values." In her research Luca proclaimed that at least 30% of the Industrial buildings in Albania fulfilled the engineering requirements. According to three case studies, she concludes that a partial intervention in the building structure is needed in order to make them functional again. The second document found on this topic is the report of Albanian Heritage Foundation report (2010). The report attempts to better understand the signification of industrial heritage, but it includes just Durres, Tirana and Elbasan and not all the cities and industrial categories. Yet it remains one of the more in-depth studies on this topic.

Albania is in the focus of many international heritage organizations. Europa Nostra, the leading heritage organization in Europe, and the European Investment Bank Institute have identified the most threatened heritage sites in Europe for 2018, part of which are two Albanian Byzantine churches. According to it, "These gems of Europe's cultural heritage

are in grave danger, some due to neglect or inadequate development, others due to a lack of expertise or resources." (europanostra.org 2018)

The joint program of IRPP/SAAH (from 2003 to 2010), in South-Eastern European countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, and Serbia), aimed to sustain local communities through heritage conservation, by reinforcing local identity and practices, but also by bringing economic benefits through well-managed tourism.

Albanian industrial heritage is in a state of high emergency because of a lack of archiving and documentation of the industrial sites and structures in the period 1950-90. On the other hand, In Albania, there is still a lack of awareness on the part of the Government agencies, about the protection of the industrial areas. Despite such lack, worthy to be mention is the scheme of the Ministry of Infrastructure on the revitalization of the industrial building of the city of Elbasan, and how it can attract investments. Bylaws are designed and approved, and standards and criteria are already specified. In this regard, we encourage the Ministry of Infrastructure to enlarge this scheme for the other industrial sites in Albania. (Link MI, 2017)

Industrialization in Gjirokastra

Gjirokastra City has been under UNESCO's attention since 2000, but only on 2005 it became a UNESCO Site. Gjirokastra was declared a museum city in 1961 during the communist regime, with the special emphasis on maintaining and restoring its Museums, Castles, mosaics, Bazar and old houses. During the political and economic crisis of 1997, Gjirokastra was seriously damaged. The call to safeguard and protect this city was "crowned with the victory" in 2005.

As Ismail Kadare points out in his novel *Kronikë në Gur* (Chronical in stone), Gjirokastra's Castle and stone houses are some of the key words that every new visitor learns before visiting Gjirokastra. Indeed the first traces of its history date since the 14th century, in the Bizantine chronicals of 1336, accounting for the civic resilience of Argjilos (Argyropolihne) City (Encyclopedia Sh. 1985). Gjirokastra is mentioned again in the history in the Despotate of Epirus, and later became the

² / Luca, E (2017), *The reuse of Albanian Industrial Archeology as an approach to sustainability and conservation. Research on the new evidences of expression of the former industrial buildings with the implication of 3R; Retrofit, Re-Use, Revitalize. Joint International PhD Programme, Polis University and Ferrara University.*

center of what the Albanian feudal lords of the 14th century called Zenebisht. The characteristic stone houses date to the 1830-s. According to archeological studies, the Gjirokastra Castle was inhabited since the 4th-5th century, and there is evidence of a long history of very early productive traditions of stone working. Palorto e Manalat neighborhoods, located on a slope, create a monumental ensemble of stone construction. During the 19th century, Gjirokastra was an Administrative and Commercial Exchange center (E.SH 1985 pg. 343). The main production during this time was, dairy, silk, embroidery and Shajak (thick woolen cloth).

After the World War II, Gjirokastra became the a center of economic, cultural, and educational importance for the whole district. The main industries were the textiles (35%), food industry (42%), shoe industry, tobacco and cigarette industry, and metal working, among others. The National Folkloric Concert is organized every 5 years, since 1968, in Gjirokastra (E.SH 1985 pg 345).

After the World War II, Albania was an agrarian country and lacked industries. The Ottoman rule and the intervention of foreign capital in our country were the main factors that determined this situation. The history of the industry in Albania begins in 1870-1880. In 1912 there were 33 small production enterprises that had a small number of workers and very limited production skills. The main production enterprises were in Shkodra, Korça, Prishtina, Elbasan, Durrës, Vlora, and Gjirokastra. In 1928 there were 151 industrial enterprises with Albanian capital that processed mainly the raw agricultural material produced in the country. 10 mineral enterprises had foreign capital. The main factories were flour mills, mechanical saws, oil and soap factories, printing houses, tobacco factories, and power plants (E.SH 1985 pg 399 and 400).

Gjirokastra Metal Plant

It produced mainly household goods. It was built in 1955 and produced spoons, forks, scissors, umbrellas, knives, chains, kerosene stoves, washing machines, fittings, and faucets, some of which were exported. Cold stamping technology predominated the production processes. (E.SH., 1983 pg1146)

The Leather and Shoe Factory

It was a branch of light Industry that dealt with the processing of leather and the production of shoes, furs and other leather items. Leather processing in Albania is an

old tradition since the 14th century. Well-known leather workshops were those in Shkodra, Berat, Korça, Gjirokastra, Peja, and Prizren.

Gjirokastra's Shoes Factory was built since 1897, and it was formerly a steam engine factory. It produced mainly wool and leather which were exported semi-processed. After the liberation, it was concentrated in 4 factories - in Gjirokastra, Korça, Shkodra and Vlora. Between 1949 and 1963 new factories were built in Gjirokastra, Korça and Shkodra, producing footwears in natural and artificial leather (E.Sh 1985 pg404).

The Textile Industry

After the Liberation, this industry had spread to several cities like: Gjirokastra (Textile factory "Bule Naipi"), Shkoder, Vlora, Pogradec etc. This industry produced knitwear for underwear and outerwear, sportswear, socks, curtains, thread for embroidery and sewing, and synthetic artistic thread. (E.Sh 1985 pg409).

The Furniture Industry

In the 80-s, the Albanian Furniture Industry counted in total 500 models of furniture for the house, kitchen, living room, reception and sleeping rooms for social, cultural, health and sports institutions. During the years, the production of multi-functional furniture with the combination of wood tiles, metal parts, plastics and imitations increased, and some of the products, particularly chairs, were exported. Furniture Factory in Gjirokastra had a major role in a national level. The wood industry started from processing the raw material in the mills (Sharrat), which was then supplied the wood plant that prepared the furniture material such as mdf planks, plywood, wood slats. These were then ordered by the furniture factory as such the Gjirokastra one (E.Sh 1985 pg405-406).

The Beverage Industry

After the liberation, this industry occupied old and new buildings. One of them was in Gjirokastra, which was known for the wine industry. In the 70-s the production of liqueurs of different types, such as Brandy and Uzo began (E.Sh 1985 pg405).

Construction Materials Industry

It a branch of Heavy Industry, and the one in Gjirokastra supplied metal frames. However, the city was always important for stone supplies (E.Sh 1985 pg495). Most of the goods produced in Gjirokastra were very important for exports. Imports



Fig. 3 / Bazaar of Gjirokastra, Textile and Embroidery. Source / the author

in the Socialist Popular Republic of Albania were carried out by specialized enterprises under the conditions of the State monopoly in foreign trade. It was part of the general state plan for the development of the economy and culture in the Socialist Popular Republic of Albania and was in direct relation with the export. (E.Sh 1985 pg 399).

Recommendation

The preservation of the Industrial Heritage in Albania will not be an easy process, but of course it will not be impossible. To achieve it, two main steps need to be taken: first to increase the awareness of the importance of industrial history in understanding heritage, and second to harness the tendency to use industrial heritage. Generally, in Albania there is still a misunderstanding and a lack of communal and political awareness on the value of industrial heritage.

The latter may provide opportunity spaces to increase the competitive advantage of cities through the deployment of tourism investments and the branding of space. The paper has demonstrated that there were important investments during the first 4 decades in the industrialization of the city of Gjirokastra. A production culture was created, and craftsmanship was enriched. To prevent the loss of this knowledge it is important to highlight and preserve industrial heritage. There are several lessons to be learned from all over the world that highlight the importance of

preserving Industrial areas, sites, culture, and environment suitability. In this light, Albania should immediately initiate a conservation and preservation process of industrial heritage, which has been almost inexistent during the last two decades. Although the central government or the institutions responsible for the preservation of heritage may still hesitate on the new initiative in this direction, there are some hopes, through grants like Europe for Citizens, Europa Nostra, European Investment Bank Institute, which allow the citizens and institution to apply for projects that deal with the topic of "Heritage".

"Not all of Us can do great things, but we can do small things with Love"
Mother Theresa.

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Fig. 4 / Tobacco Factory and Beverage Warehouse, Gjirokastra. Source / the author

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