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## Diverse Approaches to Negotiating and Transforming Industrial Architectural Heritage

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**Abstract.** The Industrial buildings of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century on the outskirts of Athens, Piraeus, Chalkida, Xanthi, Karditsa – architectural tokens of a violent, sweeping deindustrialization – claim a new life and a new identity. The tobacco warehouse in Xanthi, the soap and pomace oil plant in Chalkida, the old warehouses of the railway station in Karditsa, the fertilizer plant in Drapetsona (Piraeus), the Votrys spirits and alcohol factory in Sepolia (Athens) – they are all being transformed and rearranged, acquiring a new form and structure, aspiring to be reintegrated into the urban reality and play a brand new active role in the socio-political scene.

This paper presents, through a series of research proposals, distinct ways to approach, manage and negotiate this ready-made and readily available architectural “raw material.” It showcases ways to highlight and cross-pollinate past usage and historical memory with a process of reinterpretation, reframing and revitalization of industrial ruins. Understanding architecture as a complex and open activity allows for a degree of compromise and conciliation with the locus, the memory, the material imprints, the history of a city. When the anthropocentric focus takes precedence over practicality, commerciality, the ideology of pomposity and the culture of opulence and technocratic sensationalism; when synthetic gesture allows the integration of tangible and intangible traces of the past to produce new spaces that show care for the collective needs and sensibilities of the citizens and address demands and visions of the community; then the architectural conception is fulfilling its primary role: to be in the core of scientific processes that modify, revitalize and transform the existing urban matter.

**Keywords:** Industrial Architectural Heritage, Adaptive Reuse, Place Engagement, Urban Sites, Collective Memory.

## 1. Introduction

*“try to locate a kind of enjoyment of place ... is an aesthetics of  
revelation,  
a way of taking a piece of  
the world and saying: I am appropriating it and  
delivering it to the gaze in a different way.”*  
[1]

The reasoning developed by architect Jean Nouvel and philosopher Jean Baudrillard, during their dialectic encounter in the context of a series of discussions between philosophers and architects (an initiative of the Maison des écrivains and Paris–La Villette School of Architecture, entitled ‘Passerelles dans la ville’), contains the claim that architectural practice as an aesthetic approach and a social intervention may no longer – under the present circumstances – entail the conception of a world from scratch, but rather the processes of implementing intelligent interventions that transform and re-vitalize deprecated, deserted, discarded urban buildings [1]. Understanding architecture as a complex and open activity allows for a degree of compromise and conciliation with the locus, the memory, the material imprints, the history of a city. According to Elizabeth Grosz, the “*uncertain*” position of architecture somewhere between a scientific discipline, an art form and an aesthetic product, calls for openness to other scientific disciplines [2].

Lying at the heart of Baudrillard-Nouvel discourse, among other things, is the need for a successful adaptation of this readily available accumulated urban matter. Setting out from disparate starting points, both argue the position that architectural design as a subversive groundbreaking process in the context of a culture of economy and necessity will allow for the exploitation and exposition of the cultural building reserve, but will also lead to the production of new model ideas, studies and proposals. The Philosopher and the Architect both propose a radical management of this almost ready-made material through the interconnection of manual modes of conversion and intended uses, which will lead to envisioning new urban spaces with a social element that are distinct from both the public and the private sphere.

Hybrid, unexpected, fluid and uncharted spaces, which, in establishing alternative modes of integration and function in the contemporary postmodern metropolis, will constitute the nuclei of new creative encounters of resident collectives on urban territory, new practices of economic revitalization of a region, new forms of social life and habitation [3].

## 2 Material imprints on the body of the city and urban memory

The charming character of the multifocal, multifaceted and multivalent urbanscapes is due to the concentration of distinct elements, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to the admixture and condensation of infrastructure and buildings, monuments and landmarks, micro-narratives and collective accounts, actions and sensory inputs; a heterogeneous collective and cultural material that highlights the histor-

ic trajectory of cities and reveals their spatio-temporal depth [4]. The distinct idiosyncrasy of a city emerges from the confluence of reality and myth, present and past, memory and history [5]; of everything that reveals, not the “*literal technicality*” of form, syntactic structure and urban organization of a city, but the palimpsest of the lived experience; of everything that makes up, not the monologic linear narrative of constant progress and evolution of the urban condition and architectural practice as a functional machine, as a technological marvel, as representation of strength, progress and power, but the polyphonic non-linear narrative that traces discontinuities, discords and disruptions in the urban landscape, with the intention of highlighting contrasts and heterogeneities [6, 7]

The city is an encrypted text, a hermetic palimpsest of thoughts and acts that builds it, it is composed of all the streets, squares, houses, temples, ruins, public spaces and monuments, the “*emblematic scenes [that] are the sites of rhetorical meanings*” [8] that comprise it. Multiple layers of historical memory fragments and pieces of inactive and neglected topographies overlap, forming its unique collective and cultural physiognomy, its multimodal territorial and political reality, its syntactic structure and inscrutable social and material makeup [9].

Industrial buildings, once on the outer edges of the urban fabric, pulsating with activity and liveliness half a century ago, are now the dark spectral presences / absences in the life of the city. They are spatialized within the urban fabric in the form of attacks and agglomerates. Ghost-buildings of an era of rapid industrialization that is long gone, rendering obsolete production processes and products, stand idle and wounded by time and oblivion, currently suffocating surrounded by functions of habitation, entertainment, education. Industrial shelters of local, collective and cultural importance [10] are at the core of interventions for restoring their tangible and intangible values following diverse sets of adaptive reuse approaches [11].

The abandoned buildings disrupt the continuity of urban identity and enforces a feeling of placeness. Thus, the issue of integrating these decommissioned edifices by affording them new functions seems imperative. Alternation in the arrangement and multiplicity of spaces creates life [12], traces, history, revealing an alive, dynamic, inventive urbanscape, with its needs and luxuries, its realities and imaginations, its memories and cultural heritage [13]. Topological variety mobilizes vision, embodiment. The interaction between experiencing a place and the creation of meaning associated with that experience results towards place attachment [14].

Hence, architect Jean Nouvel and philosopher Jean Baudrillard [1] concur and describe architectural acts of redesigning and implementing innovative intelligent interventions in terms of multiplicity and enrichment of meaning on both the symbolic and actual level, in order to breathe new life into existing urban shells; so that what they once was, as form, structure and content, may be creatively and dynamically integrated into what they are going to be.

Memory is an active relationship with the past; a relationship in which the present is at stake, both as a field of action and as a field of bestowing meaning on the common references that characterize a group of people [15]. Thus, the shared identity is ascertained, confirmed or disputed, i.e. it “*occurs*” historically to the extent that a certain relationship with the past is ascertained, confirmed or disputed. Groups are formed to

the extent that they share a “*common*” memory and the social bond connecting them is based on such a form of acknowledgement. One way – perhaps the most definitive of ways – that societies use as a guarantee for capturing collective memory in repetitive rituals, in practices that consolidate a certain relationship with the past, is the dependence of this memory on the material environment [16]. Halbwachs states that every collective memory develops in a spatial context, and mental stability is based on the fact that the objects of our everyday life are barely changing [17]. Industrial shelters could have the power to cut up urban space to recompose a specific framework within which “*to enclose and retrieve its remembrances*” [17].

### 3 Approach Attempts: Interpretation, Appropriation, Adaptation

The country’s industrialization during the 18th and 19th century and its gradual de-industrialization that followed during the 20th century, devaluing prosperous productive industry sectors and extensive economic activities, left a series of massive buildings of distinct architectural morphology on the outskirts of the cities, which were incorporated into the urban fabric after successive urban planning extensions. Thus, a series of industrial ruins, inextricably linked to the memory of the city and the productive life of its inhabitants, since in their heyday they played an important role in economic development by employing the city’s workforce, are in search of a role and purpose [18].

Industrial architectural heritage is an integral part of cultural heritage, which in turn is the primary ingredient of society’s sustainable development [19]. According to the Nizhny Tagil Charter for the Industrial Heritage [20] the remnants of industrial culture have significant historical, technological, social, architectural and scientific value, and include buildings machinery, processing and refining sites, as well as sites of social activities related to each respective industry [3, 19].

A pivotal issue for local communities trying to adapt industrial shelters is in which ways to simply to preserve but to mutate the existed edifices towards to enhanced the intangible experiences [21]. The following cases employ various design processes with a view to adaptive reuse, aiming at organically reintegrating industrial buildings in the life of the city, either through the adaptation of an existing building shell or through a selective reframing and the resignification of its remaining material traces.

Jean Nouvel in the example of a factory in Marseille (SEITA, France’s largest tobacco factories) (Fig. 1) elaborates the terms of this modification. He explores the possibility of an intervention through “*an architecture of meaning and substance*”, as he calls it, which does not have the character of restoration, remodeling in the classical sense or the preservation of some elements of the past. Therefore, the industrial edifice following his philosophy and in accordance with the adaptive reuse strategy it could be considered as a highly qualified cultural heritage infrastructure “*there were large rooms 150 meters long and 40 meters wide. It would be impossible to create a cultural space like that from scratch today. It would cost too much. We chose to consider this ulterior—exterior urban ensemble as a piece of the city. ... we feel that the architectural*

*act revolves around settling into a repurposed architecture... this process of sedimentation is a form of creation and a complete qualification of the space. It's not only a modification; it's a mutation. The space is no longer experienced the same way, there are different things inside; we play with scale differently, change the meaning, and starting with what was a large, poorly defined, purely functional volume, we've gradually managed to produce a regenerative recreation that no one would have thought possible."* [1].



**Fig. 1.** SEITA tobacco factory.

### **3.1 Receptor-space for cultural and artistic activities: Preservation of the ruin and the architectural mnemonic traces**

Chalkida is a city with a rich industrial heritage since it is directly connected to the sea. Most of the city's facilities are located at the entrance to the city, in the southern port of the town of Agios Stefanos, an area that currently houses a plethora of industrial buildings, most of which remain unused.

One of these buildings is the 'V. Georgiadis Soap and Pomace Oil Factory', whose wings are built amphitheatrically in an area covering 16,000 square meters, a fact that renders it visible from many parts of the city. This industrial complex was built in 1921 to house a plant for the production of pomace oil and soap (Fig. 2). Vasilios Georgiadis from Kymi, Evia, was the founder of the company that, exploiting the vast square footage, housed a number of productive units, initially one of pomace oil production (1921), then soap production (new wing in 1927) and then an auxiliary unit of ice production (new wing in 1937-40). The plant could process 10,000 metric tons of pomace per year; the pomace oil produced was the primary raw material for the production of 30,000 okas (close to 40,000 kilograms) of green soap under the brand name 'Palirroia' (Tide). The firm grew exponentially, eventually also exporting its products; thus, it was one of the largest companies in Greece, supporting the country's economy at the time.

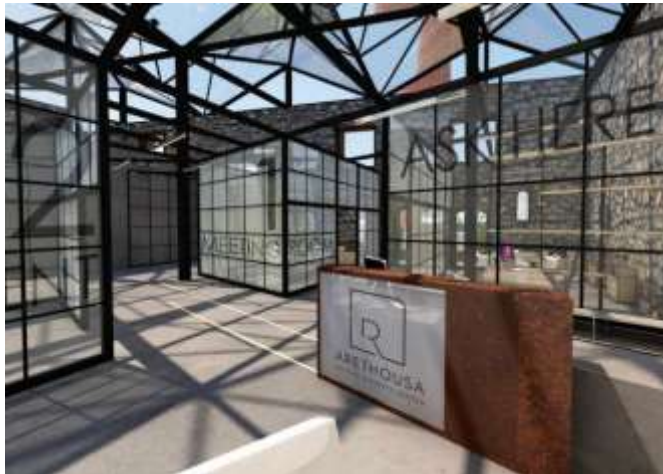


**Fig. 2.** Exterior views of the complex's current condition.

In the proposal [22], the site is not restored as a structure, except only selectively. It functions as an empty container that is ready to be filled, welcoming and incorporating various distinct activities – cultural events, trade expositions, art exhibitions and installations – in parallel with its permanently established functions (Fig. 3). Glass roofs and sides bring light into the space, reducing the sense of spatial boundaries, mitigating the additional material footprint, and leaving the gaze unobstructed to wander about the restored materiality of the ruins of the building, ultimately intensifying the impression of an intangible vacuum and effuse space (Fig. 4). In this architectural landscape, the same mission is fulfilled by the ramp traversing the space, guiding the routes and paths of workers and visitors alike, linking together the various different levels of the building's remains (Fig. 3). The ramp spirals around the emblematic chimney stack and the building which is being restored to house the permanent and auxiliary support functions, bestowing a quality of film direction to the human figures walking along it. In this way, the cost of repairs is reduced and the space is afforded a distinctly open, “antimuseum” form.



**Fig. 3.** Aerial night view of the center [22].



**Fig. 4.** Interior views with the solar protective glass [22].

### 3.2 Crossroads: Votrys winery and distillery building complex

The Votrys factory operated as a distillery from 1885 to 1986. It is one of the many wineries established in Greece after 1906 by the Hellenic Association of Wines and Spirits, which was engaged in trading all kinds of industrial products derived from grapes and raisins (currants). The deserted industrial complex (Fig. 5), consisting of eight buildings on a plot of 12,500 square meters. Sepolia, a district located northwest of the center of Athens, bordering with Thymarakia and the neighborhoods of Skouze Hill and Kolokyntou, traversed by the local road axes of Kifissos Avenue and the railway line, became an industrial center since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when secondary sector activities were concentrated around the end of Liosion and Lenorman Streets. The public Tobacco Factory, the Votrys and Atlas factories, the electric power plant on



Skouze Hill, the Lanaras textile factory in Kolokyntou – all employed a large number of workers, creating the conditions for the development of public housing.



**Fig. 5.** Exterior views of the complex's current condition.

The Votrys factory is one of many wineries founded since 1906 by the Hellenic Association of Wines and Spirits (E.E.O.O.) in various locations all over Greece: Athens Mills (modern-day Sepolia), Elefsina, Kalamata, Thessaloniki, Patra, Pyrgos, Achaia, Paros, Kymi, Velika, Gastouni, Vrachati, Lefkada, Samos, Aliveri. The 1905 “Currant Problem,” i.e. the overproduction of Corinthian raisins (currants) – then the mainstay Greek national product – which were stacked in warehouses as their demand had fallen sharply and the market was absorbing very small quantities at very low prices, fostered the conditions for the formation of the only possible solution through the creation of E.E.O.O., a collaboration among the leading winemakers and distillers of the time (E. Charilaos, L. Oikonomidis, N. Kanellopoulos, A. Zannos, E. Ros, D. Galanopoulos). The period of prosperity for the Votrys factory was followed by a period of adventures that led to its abandonment and desolation. In 2004, by Ministerial Decree, the buildings of the industrial complex and the chimney stack were listed as industrial heritage monuments. At the same time, a building permit was issued for the demolition of all existing metal canopies and for fencing off the area.

The industrial complex is being transformed into a center for the study and promotion of modern Greek winemaking practices [23]. The alcohol processing facilities are transformed into places of historical reference to the industrial cultural heritage of wine and alcohol, but also into modern facilities for the provision of information and the promotion of wine production units (Fig. 6). The venture is complemented by projects of public nature, aiming at the building's reintegration into the urban fabric, since an indisputably decisive element of our industrial heritage is its ability to be an active part of the city and a pole of attraction for wider social strata. The reuse study aims at functionally linking the building complex with the community (Fig. 7). The path chosen is to transform it into a multifunctional space and integrate it into the life of the school community as a living memory cell.



**Fig. 6.** Interior views [23].



**Fig. 7.** Interior views [23].

The location of the Votrys plant is quite central, since it is located between Kifissos Avenue and Liosion Street, near the “Three Bridges” site, while the region is rich in school activities since there are four schools (2 primary schools, 1 middle school, and 1 high school) within walking distance from the factory. Thus, coupled with the fact that the specific area of the Municipality of Athens features no other such space, it is proposed that the site be used as a cultural center, but also as a plot of green, giving visitors and residents the opportunity to discover creative activities in a space that encourages its appropriation by various different groups of users, allowing intermingling and human exchange.

### 3.3 Spaces of Absence, Spectral Residues of a Different Urban Identity: Indoor Tobacco Warehouses

Built on the slopes of the Rhodope Mountains and well-known for its stately stone houses, Xanthi is a Thracian city with an age-long history that begins in the Bronze Age and spans uninterrupted to the present day. Xanthi is also marked by a high degree of diversity in its identity, a special blend of ethnic/tribal cultural elements, styles and traditions as, over the course of its history, the city was colonized by populations from Northern Thrace, Epirus, Macedonia and Crete, refugees from eastern Thrace, Pontus and Asia Minor, as well as Greeks from the former USSR. The city prospered during the 18th and 19th centuries, winning itself the nickname ‘Little Paris’, thanks to the high quality of tobacco that was produced and processed there.

The Sidiropoulos tobacco warehouses are a site comprising three detached stone buildings of folk neoclassical architecture (Fig. 8), featuring elements of eclecticism or German neoclassicism, very thick outer walls, wood-case windows with iron grates, heavy metal doors, rectangular or arched transoms and roofs with Byzantine or Roman-type tiles. Inside the buildings (Fig. 8), the large spaces without partitions feature wooden floors, props, beams and stairs.



**Fig. 8.** Exterior and interior views of current condition.

The proposed adaptation of the industrial complex [24] aims to revitalize these buildings, which were deserted and abandoned to oblivion after the tobacco processing activities were shut down. The conversion plan for the existing building complex focuses on the design of an organically interconnected tripartite space (Fig. 9), dotted with points of reference to its past syntactic structure and use (visually undivided spaces, ramps and bridges, wooden props, distribution of functions), featuring easy circular horizontal connection and vertical communication on all levels, which will constitute a hub of culture, artistic creation and getting together for the social groups of the city. From desolation and inertia, the space, preserving the imprints of memory, is reactivated and reintegrated into the life of the city. From desolation and inertia, the space, preserving the imprints of memory, is reactivated and reintegrated into the life of the city.



**Fig. 9.** Interior views [24].



**Fig. 10.** Interior views [24].

The intent of the design marks a 180-degree turn, both literally as it proposes the radical change of the building's mission (Fig. 10), use and content, and metaphorically, as the syntactic structure of the interior is inspired by the geometric relation among the buildings from the outside.

### **3.4 Railway Station Buildings in Karditsa**

The presented case includes two buildings of the station complex, each with a dif-

ferent architectural morphology, as well as the surrounding space between them. The first building was constructed in parallel with the old building of the Karditsa railway station in 1885, by Italian engineer Evaristo de Chirico (Fig. 11). It was a commodities warehouse of the railway station and is now converted into a restaurant. The second building, constructed more recently, was a warehouse and is being reused as a covered municipal market for fresh produce. The idea of transforming part of the buildings of the Railway Station at Karditsa aims to activate some dormant building shells, so that the place acquires new uses of social content and distinct significations [25]. The design project (entitled Revival of the institution of the Municipal Market in a space of transitions: Reuse of the Karditsa Railway Station buildings) aims to create localized functions of high density and accessibility: a covered municipal market and a dining facility at a site of constant transitions.



**Fig. 11.** Exterior view of the building's current condition [25].

What prompted the idea of reusing the buildings was the fact that the southwestern part of Karditsa, where the buildings are located, began to expand enveloping the Station. Although Karditsa already has a covered municipal market in its city center, the proposal for a new one is based on the fact that the Municipal Market as an institution serves as a hub of socialization, highlighting and strengthening community culture, as a meeting place for the city's inhabitants and visitors from the surrounding areas, and a factor contributing to economic development as it supports local producers, giving them the opportunity to sell their products. Thus, the operation of a market next to the city's railway station will serve the residents of the surrounding areas, the passengers of the trains and visitors to the city, providing a powerful symbolism (Fig. 12).



**Fig. 12.** Interior views [25].



**Fig. 13.** Interior views [25].

The design is inspired by the fluidity of the masses of the Agrafa mountain range (Fig. 13). Hillsides and plateaus are captured in a three-dimensional model of the mountain range, which ties together the different buildings, affording the place a pulsating organic unity.

### **3.5 Drapetsona Glassworks building: open shell and lifting of interior-exterior boundaries**

The factory of the Hellenic Chemical Products and Fertilizers Societe Anonyme (AEEHPL) is located in a seaside area, between the breakwater ('Krakari') and the bay of the Slaughterhouses ('Sfageia'), in the industrial zone of Drapetsona in Piraeus (Fig. 14).



**Fig. 14.** Aerial view of the building's current condition [26].

The Glassworks [26] forms the epicenter of a comprehensive design, which unfolds beyond the boundaries of the building. The respect for the memory of the place leads to a reversible intervention, which does not affect the existing situation. Thus, a metal frame is added inside the building, around the old equipment and without coming into contact with the building shell, which forms a pathway that traverses the building and unifies its various different levels. The Glassworks, which preserves the memory of its previous function as an integral part of a larger industrial complex that included a series of interconnected production processes, constitutes a hub and a station along a course that runs parallel through time and space (Fig. 15). The building as a landscape of continuous, permanent or ephemeral cultural activities does not claim autonomy as a structure and is not completed as a construction.



**Fig. 15.** Interior views of the main area [26].



**Fig. 16.** View of the interior colonnades [26].

It preserves the plasticity of an architectural assembly in progress, which retains the remaining traces of past industrial activity, while receiving and hosting the twists and turns of artistic events, participating in the creation of a new cultural signification (Fig.16). This is a dynamic transformation that encapsulates, contains and highlights the legacies of the past.

#### **4 Epilogue**

In dialoging with the “*geological layers*” of cities, these consecutive strata of architectural matter of collective memory and meaning, Jean Baudrillard [1] asserts that “*architecture can no longer have as its goal the transformation, the modification, of this accumulated material.*” In his line of thinking, the city resembles the overlapping layers of the earth, and a cross-section suffices to reveal the archeology of human intervention in space. In his discussion with Jean Nouvel, Baudrillard wonders whether, through interventions in this available raw material; through modifications in spaces; through actions that differentiate, modify, transform; through targeted transformative actions, voluntary and involuntary movements, a place may emerge not from scientific rationalization, but from the thick darkness of the senses. Like a sudden awareness, like a flash, like an island emerging from the sea.

The perpetuation through a dynamic repurposing and mutation of urbanscapes industrial memory, place attachment, psychological stability and collective continuity [3] could enable the emergence of novel forms of urban social and economic functioning.

The sense of place emerges from both the immediate experience and from knowledge [14]. Place attachment is a complex, multifaceted, and dynamic experience that is based on a place’s complex processes [14]. Urban industrial sites are creators and carriers of conventional and unconventional cultural heritage chronotopes that have



been inscribed and can be traced in the city's tissue in the form of repurposed sites, edifices, squares, and streets. The bodily experience could define and construct directly spatiality as a result of motion and sensation [27, 28]. Tuan [29] argues that "*what begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value*" and that "*place is an organized world of meaning*".

With the phrase "*try to locate a kind of enjoyment of place*" [1] the aim of reasoning shifts from scientific rationalization to sensory apotheosis. It is the search of new tools to understand the complexity of the lived experience, aiming not only to draw an original architectural design or a new urban plan on paper, but to perform the convergence and fusion of the needs of various different groups of people, generations, races and social classes, collective and cultural memory [30]. Baudrillard points out: "*I think that through small movements we can achieve an ethics whereby the situation becomes slightly more positive every time we intervene.*" [1]. As architects and interior designers, we can try to design a kind of enjoyment of former industrial places by including tangible and intangible elements that weren't considered previously, industrial sites that often belong to the order of chance; to invent adaptation strategies, those of bestowing value, the poetics of situations; to appreciate elements that are utterly incalculable, "*This is an aesthetics of revelation, a way of taking a piece of the world and saying, 'I'm appropriating this, and I'm giving it back to you for your appreciation in a different way.'*" [1].

Industrial buildings exist idly as mutated trajectories within the fabric of cities, waiting for an architectural gesture that will breathe new life into them, afford them a new use and functionality. The simultaneous geography of trajectories activation with the aid of the perpetual mutation reflects de Certeau's model of place as a "*polyvalent unity of conflictual programs or contractual proximities*" [31]. The presented practices as multiple threads that layered one with and within the other could enable the emergence of alternative narratives that make livable the complexities and strangeness of our collective and aesthetic engagement with industrial architecture heritage in urbanscapes.

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