

THE DYNAMICS OF ADAPTIVE REUSE OF THE ROMANIAN INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE IN THE CONTEXT OF URBAN PLANNING

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Abstract: *The Romanian industrial heritage experienced a variety of conversions in the post-socialist period in the context of deindustrialization as a result of advantages represented by the large size of the buildings and sites correlated with the flexibility of adaptive reuse, their location in the proximity of the central areas of the cities. At the same time, some industrial monuments were demolished, and office spaces or residential projects were built on their site. The aim of the paper is to analyze sites and buildings of industrial heritage, located in large cities (municipalities of Bucharest and Cluj-Napoca), which have registered conversions under the impact of urban development factors (accelerated dynamics of services, residential projects). The authors also selected examples of cultural reuse of industrial monuments analyzed from the perspective of integrated urban planning. The paper is significant because it is focused on the identification and discussion of best practice models related to the adaptive reuse of industrial heritage assets. The practical side of this paper is related to the presentation of the importance of sustainable reuse of industrial monuments that highlight their patrimonial values and contribute to meeting the needs of the local community.*

Keywords: deindustrialization, industrial monuments, collective memory, circular buildings, cultural reuse

1. Introduction

The deindustrialization process generated several economic, environmental and social problems [1,2,3]. This situation required the identification of solutions that reflect the particularly important role of the industrial heritage in the process of sustainable territorial development.

The first research actions in the field date back to the middle of the 20th century, initiated in Western European countries, being focused on the patrimonialization and conservation of old industrial buildings and sites, especially those with a monumental character [4,5,6].

The second stage followed, which involved the transformation of the industrial heritage assets focused on a specific management aimed at adaptive reuse that highlights the heritage values (historical, architectural, cultural, technological, symbolic) [4,5,6] and with a minimal impact on the interior structure of industrial buildings [4,6,7]. In addition, adaptive reuse has the potential to add value in other ways as well [6]. Adaptive reuses generate various social benefits (reuses in the form of new social activities for the benefit of the community, increased appreciation of local industrial culture, contribution to the preservation of

the cultural identity of former industrial areas (important action for local communities that share the heritage values of industrial monuments) [4,6]. The adaptive reuse of the industrial heritage requires an approach from the perspective of integrated planning, to keep the layers of community memory reactivated. Thus, industrial heritage is considered a precious resource of strategic territorial planning [4,5].

Seen not only as a set of values, which must be preserved, the industrial heritage has become a tool for the refunctionalization and reorganization of the urban space, which aims at the economic and physical revitalization of the cities. Old buildings and industrial sites have great potential for conversion because they generally have large surface areas and exhibit flexibility for adaptive reuse [6,7,8]. At the same time, numerous industrial heritage assets are located in the vicinity of the central areas of the cities, a fact that justifies their conversion as locations that can host tertiary and cultural activities [5]. In recent years, there is a tendency to highlight the values of abandoned industrial monuments, by organizing cultural activities (art exhibitions) or as offices of creative industries [2,7,9,10], facilitating their transformation into dynamic cultural and art spaces.

Beyond the theme of cultural heritage, the preservation and reuse of the industrial heritage is an issue of urban planning and development [4].

The current urban planning challenge lies in how to manage the industrial heritage assets. This action is represented by the identification of adaptive reuse solutions that ensure a balance between the conservation concerns and the development interests of industrial monuments [4,5,10]. At the same time, the adaptive reuse of the redundant industrial heritage assets must meet the requirements of the sustainable territorial development, i.e. to be compatible with the ecological, economic, social and cultural particularities of the

territory where they are located [5,6,8].

A new perspective in the context of a sustainable urban development in relation to the industrial heritage supposes the appropriate application of the concepts of circular buildings and circular architecture that can ensure a sustainable urban planning by reducing the waste generated by the demolition of abandoned buildings and adaptive reuse [11].

Considering the importance and complexity of the industrial heritage, this study aims to analyze the dynamics of the adaptive reuse of industrial heritage assets, located in two large cities of Romania, from the perspective of the integrated urban planning. The authors have selected examples of adaptive reuse of the Romanian industrial heritage that highlight functional conversions achieved in a sustainable way, while reflecting the impact of urban development factors.

2. Methodology

The methods that were the basis for the development of this work include the review of the international literature; field campaigns in industrial sites that have registered functional conversions in the post-industrial stage; the observation method focused on the analysis of the state of industrial monuments after reuse and the evaluation of the modality and reflection of their patrimonial values following the process of functional conversion.

3. Results

The case studies were selected from two large Romanian cities (Bucharest and Cluj-Napoca), cities that have valuable industrial monuments and were included in functional conversion processes.

As a result of the accelerated development of services and the need to build new residential areas, there is a pressure on historical industrial monuments located especially in large cities at the national level, as a result of the large area occupied by them and the favorable location in the urban central and pericentric areas [10].

Some old factories in the two cities were demolished, on their sites being carried out real estate development projects, office buildings and commercial complexes: in Bucharest: Solaris (oil), Lemaitre/Timpuri Noi factories (compressors, pumps and installation materials); in Cluj-Napoca: Mucart cardboard factory, Iris porcelain factory, brick factory, etc. [12].

To these are added adaptive reuses of industrial heritage assets that highlight their patrimonial values and correspond to the socio-cultural needs of the local community.

In Bucharest, a positive example of adaptive reuse of a heritage building is the former factory “Erhard Wolff” (1887) focused on mechanical and metallurgical industrial activities. Production is currently being carried out in modern buildings under the name “Hesper” (production of pumps and hydraulic motors) [2,13].

The old industrial building was arranged by preserving the original appearance and integrating the property in the long term into the urban fabric, hosting creative industries, and cultural events (e.g. concerts) (Figure 1 a,b).

The adaptive reuse project of the old industrial spaces was named “Carol Halls” (Carol Park is located nearby), integrated into a large project called “Creative Factories Bucharest” carried out by the representatives of the Zeppelin architecture magazine and the Eurodite organization (Netherlands) [13]. The concert hall is

known as “Expired Club”.

The conversion of the Universul Palace is an example of good practice of adaptive reuse of industrial heritage in the capital city of Romania. This industrial building is remarkable for its architectural value (neo-Romanian style) and size (Figure 2 a,b). This building was built at the initiative of the Italian journalist Luigi Cazzavillan, in 1884, as the headquarters of the oldest newspaper in Bucharest (Universul), in the premises of his house (body A), and behind the building was set up the Universul Typography (body B), in 1930, according to the plans of the architect Paul Smărăndescu and the engineer Emil Prager [14].

For the conversion of the Universul Palace, a restoration was necessary, after a structural expertise that ensured the safety of the industrial monument. The adaptive reuse was focused on the personalization of the building, adopting solutions that attracted tenants from the fields of creative industries, culture (Apollo 111 Theater, exhibition space: art gallery) (Figure 2 c,d), commercial spaces (cafe).

The solution chosen for the adaptive reuse involved configuring the spaces in an efficient way, taking into account the constraints imposed by the building (e.g. rectangular shape), but also some advantages: wide flexible openings for different functional conversions [14].



Figure 1: a) The former factory “E. Wolff” reused as a space for creative industries, culture and cultural events, b) poster promoting a concert of the band We Singing Colors hosted by the Expired Club (2023)

Source: first author.



Figure 2: a) Universul Palace - body A; b) Universul Typography - body B
c, d) posters promoting the cultural activities organized in Universul Palace (2023)

Source: first author.

One of the most significant examples of the conversion of former industrial buildings in Cluj-Napoca is the cultural reuse of the former Brush Factory (Figure 3 a,b). This is the first project of this kind in Romania, of this magnitude, and has become one of the most relevant examples of the conversion of an industrial building into an independent cultural space [15].

The conversion of the former industrial building was carried out with the support of the AltArt foundation [16], and the NGO Federația Fabrica de Pensule, active in the area of contemporary art, manages this space [15].



Figure 3 a,b) The building of the former Brush Factory arranged as a cultural hub

c) Promotional poster of a successful cultural event organized within the former factory

Source: first author.

The former factory was transformed into an urban culture hub, having several functions, such as space for exhibitions, conferences, creative workshops for various cultural organizations and for holding events (theatre and contemporary dance shows, concerts). The project started in 2009 [15,16]. One of the most popular and successful cultural events is the “Production Line” which is a season of contemporary

independent theater and dance performances (Figure 3 c) [16].

H33 is a cultural conversion project of a former industrial building in Cluj-Napoca, built at the beginning of the 20th century. The building was a cognac factory, located on Horia street no. 33, where the acronym of the conversion project comes from. During the communist period, the factory was nationalized, and in the 80s it was taken over by the Central Administration of Vineyards. In 2004, the factory was closed. The former cognac factory is located near the historical center of Cluj-Napoca [17]. In 2017, it was taken over by the NGO Urbannect, which launched the H33 Social Innovation Hub, a space intended for cultural events (dance, theater, concerts), exhibitions, book launches (Figure 4 a,b,c) [17].



Figure 4 a,b,c: Setting up the former cognac factory for the organization of cultural activities (2018)

Source: first author.

The arrangement of the former industrial building to be transformed into a cultural center required minimal interventions, the interior configuration (7 rooms) being preserved, a fact that contributed to the conservation of the original design of the building. The configuration of the building

and the absence of the industrial machinery were an advantage from the point of arranging the space to host cultural activities or other activities (conferences). Being a generous free space allowed inventive ideas for adaptive reuse, offering the possibility to host art installations, especially for light art.



Figure 5: The mural Omul Micro Macro Cosmos / The Mural Micro Macro Cosmos Man
Source: first author.

The location became well known to the general public in 2017, following the creation of the largest mural in Romania at that time, Omul Micro Macro Cosmos /

Micro Macro Cosmos Man (Figure 5), made by the artists Kero Zen and Raw Cocu [18].

In 2021, the H33 building was demolished, and a real estate project was built on its site.

4. Conclusions

The problem of abandoned industrial sites is of current importance in the context marked by the accelerated economic changes in the large cities, especially since there is a large number of abandoned industrial heritage buildings and sites.

Bucharest and Cluj-Napoca are two large cities that have registered a dynamic of reuse of industrial monuments under the impact of urban development factors (accelerated dynamics of services, new residential projects). The industrial monuments selected as case studies represent models of good practices of adaptive reuse becoming cultural landmarks for the local community.

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