

ICOA1065: INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE AS A RECONCILIATION MILIEU OF POST-CONFLICT AREAS

Subtheme 02: The Role of Cultural Heritage in Building Peace and Reconciliation

Session 1: Heritage as Peace Builder, Tying and Benefitting Community

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Cultural identity is a building block and a symbol of identity; thus, in armed conflict it is often, if not as a general rule, exposed to destruction, in contradiction with the provisions of The Hague Convention and other international documents. Following the establishment of peace in conflict areas, its protection is a sensitive subject, particularly when referring to specific heritage categories directly linked to religious, national, and ethnic identities. This is particularly evident in the case of Mostar, a city in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which saw many changes in the inter-ethnic war following the break-up of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s and then in its post-conflict transition. Unfortunately, the city is increasingly segregated based on ethnicity, while establishing a space for dialogue exceeding the existing continuity is necessary for the future of the city.

To overcome this situation, we must first find the common starting-points, particularly in the legacy that inhabitants perceive as common and positive, and build future development on this foundation. Industrial heritage that is not ethnically burdened, but testifies to the common success of a city, i.e. of all its inhabitants in the pre-conflict period, is thus the basis – a common starting point of urban regeneration. Industrial heritage is also what allows for, due to its design, various types of uses that can become the generators of urban regeneration not only in the spatial sense, but mostly by taking on the role of generators of social change. The important role of industrial heritage in providing social cohesion is demonstrated by the cases from Western Europe as well as the experience from the first workshop on this topic in Mostar. This paper will present in detail the evolving model, which summarises these experiences and draws attention to industrial heritage of the city as a vital channel through which communities can participate collectively to reconcile for a more successful future life of the city.

Key words: industrial heritage, identity, reconciliation, post conflict areas

Historical context

Since the hypothesis of our research is that industrial heritage sites are important starting points for reconciliation in the increasingly segregated city of Mostar in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), we should begin with an overview of the region's political, industrial and economic history.

Industrial development of BiH began with the arrival of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the late 19th century (1878). The first railway was constructed during the Ottoman Era in 1872, to connect Istanbul and Vienna (Juzbašić, 1974). It was followed by the establishment of a coal mine (1880) and an iron works factory (1892) in Zenica, a salt factory in Tuzla (1886), lignite mines in Kreka, a stone salt mine in Tušanj and a soda factory in Lukavac (1893)(Nurković, 2007).

The First World War and the period of the first Yugoslavian state (1918-1941) brought stagnation to the area. Development was mainly concentrated in the bigger Yugoslavian cities (Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana, Rijeka, Maribor) and the northern part of the country. The end of the Second World War brought a new state—the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) in 1946. It was modelled on the Soviet Union, and consisted of six socialist republics and two autonomous provinces. The federal capital was Belgrade. The period of SFRY saw significant development in the industrial sector. Industrial development came with greater electrification and industrialization in the first years after the war. The economy reached its peak during the 1960s (Seibel, H., Damachi, U. and Scheerder J., 1982). During this period numerous significant factories were set up, bringing development and work to much of the country. The iron factory in Zenica was restored, with increased production capacity, and in 1988 reached its maximum production level of 1.906.000 tons of rawsteel (Arcelormittal, 2015). Sarajevo prospered, with several factories, such as UNIS, Vranica, FAMOS, a tobacco factory. Industry developed also in other cities and provided employment and economic development of the Socialist Republic of BiH (Bibanović, 2015).

The 1980s brought economic and consequently political crisis to SFRY which finally led to the break-down of the state in 1991. After several wars, the last of which ended in 2001, seven new states were formed. Nationality and consequently ethnic issues continued to divide people across the region in the post-war period. Due to the country's great ethnic diversity these issues have been most present in BiH.

Bosnia and Herzegovina and the city of Mostar today

The political system of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) reflects its multi-ethnic texture and complex history. BiH is nowadays a federal republic with multi-level governance comprised of two entities: The Federation of BiH (FBiH) and Republika Srpska (RS). Each entity has its own distinctive ethnic composition, with its own political system along with legislative, administrative and judicial bodies. FBiH is a federation of Bosnians and Croats, split into ten relatively autonomous cantons. RS is a unitary federal entity with seven regions and 64 municipalities (Europarlament, 2015).

The ruination and abandonment of large industrial complexes, job loss, and a shift away from industrial production towards the service sector are, of course, not only symptoms of the post-socialist transition, but also of the global condition of the post-industrial era and 'the transition from industrial

manufacture to digital technologies’ (Petrović, 2013). In BiH this phenomenon was even more pronounced due to the destruction caused by war during the early 1990s.

The developmental strategy inherited from the socialist period, characterised by a ‘top-down’ planning approach, remained until the present day. It is manifestly outdated, and unable to deal with the ongoing issues in the field of protecting heritage in the especially sensitive context of post-conflict areas.

At present, there are no national or local policies that have established any strategic goals for the protection or further use of industrial heritage. Of the 821 registered national monuments in BiH there are only five examples of industrial heritage (Commission to Preserve National Monuments, 2017).

The city of Mostar is a representative example of the destruction war brought to the country and the ethnic crisis seen there during the 1990s. Physically, the city was irreversibly damaged, and still deeper mental scars were left among the population. During the war, the city of Mostar was divided into two conflicting parts – a mostly Bosnian/Muslim section on the left bank of the river Neretva and a mostly Croatian/Catholic population on the right bank. Since this division persisted after the war, in the years that followed each side received its own set of public institutions, a municipal act of duplication that



Fig.1. Mostar, Old Town panoramic view (Martinovic).

included universities, hospitals, prisons, governmental and other public services. Data from 2013 shows that the city has 113,169 inhabitants: 54,000 Croats, 49,000 Bosnians and 4000 Serbs. They declared themselves as ‘others’ (Yugoslavs, Roma, Macedonians, Albanians, Hungarians) (IDPI, 2013). During the war, the city experienced serious urban decay which has gone largely unrepaired up to the present day. With the exception of the Old Town, which has UNESCO protected status, the value and importance of all other heritage sites was not properly evaluated. Rebuilding the Old Bridge was only symbolic: the reconstruction work failed to bring a real sense of connection back to the city, disappointing the hopes of foreign agencies. The main reasons the Old Bridge reconstruction project achieved almost nothing in terms of community reconciliation was the complete failure to include the local community itself in decision-making processes; the rush to complete the building work as soon as possible without taking all factors into account; and the fact that the real physical dividing line between the city’s Bosnian and

Croatian communities was not actually the River Neretva, but a prominent street called the Bulevar Narodne Revolucije, the former front line, which runs approximately 200 meters from the river Neretva.

Abandoned industrial areas in the city of Mostar

Today the city's abandoned architectural heritage sites exceed 15 in number, of which 6 are classified as industrial architectural heritage. The coal mine (built in 1918), tobacco factory (built in 1880) and the grain silo and Bakery complex (built in 1968) are the city's most significant sites, but have no protected status. During the 1990s all major industrial sites were destroyed or shut down, and housing problems were prioritised in post-war regeneration processes.

The ethnically fragmented state of local government, driven by political motives rather than sound planning and development (Bollens, 2008) led to a failure in establishing heritage protection at both national and municipal levels. In the post-war period all the factors essential for successful urban functioning - social needs, spatial measures, architectural values, heritage preservation – were to a considerable extent ignored. In a situation where self-interest and privatized concerns have a monopoly over projects in the city, and at the same time ignore laws and professional regulations, the upkeep of Mostar's architectural heritage remains sorely neglected.

To turn abandoned sites into a core of new urban development, leading government policy-makers should work to implement a socially responsible programme to make these sites a means of reconciliation in the present post-conflict situation.

It is crucial to emphasize how important it is that local communities are involved in and accept any move to renovate these sites. When once-vital landmarks become sources of negative memories for communities (through job losses, social degradation, etc.), they become a form of blockage to constructive decision-making processes in those local communities. In many cases, demolishing the sites brings relief and hope for a better future (Ifko, Martinovic, 2016). However, reactivation of such abandoned spaces can bring manifold benefits: progress in sustainability, the creation of new workplaces, heritage preservation and social cohesion are just some of the possible positive outcomes.

The importance of an inclusive, participatory approach for local people for whom a heritage site has significant associations and meanings and who have social, spiritual or other cultural attachments to the place concerned, is emphasized in article 12 of the Burra Charter Principles (BURRA, 2013). Encouraging participatory methods in regeneration projects can enable a community to play an active role in a decision-making process which in the end, has a beneficial effect on their lives.



Fig.2-. Mostar, Žitopromet factory, situation and context (Martinovic).

Social cohesion and social sustainability are of particular importance in a place as multi-ethnic and wounded as Mostar. We have worked on the hypothesis that Mostar's industrial heritage can promote social cohesion, since the sites themselves were not contentious, or 'ethnically burdened,' in the past but rather testified to endeavours and successes shared by various communities: as such, this paper will report on a 'bottom-up' initiative conducted in one of the city's abandoned factories.

Žitopromet factory situation and context

The present case study focuses on the former industrial complex of the Žitopromet factory. The oldest part of the factory was built during the Austro-Hungarian Empire and served as a grain warehouse. Development of the factory reached its zenith in 1968 when new steel silos were added to the complex. The complex includes grain silos, mills and a bakery and is located in the residential area, approximately 2 km from the city centre. The river Neretva, which flows through the city, dividing it east and west, forms a natural barrier to the east of the complex. From the west and the south, the former industry complex is surrounded by residential buildings.

The factory was owned by the Žitopromet company, a major grain producer in the area of Herzegovina. The structure of the complex is still preserved and is a prominent part of the urban landscape. The complex consists of 24 steel silos where grain was stored and a central building with a grain tower on the northern side, which is connected to the group of silos. Due to its long-term presence and historical significance, the neglected site constitutes a serious void not only in the immediate neighbourhood, but in the entire city. The site is close to all the amenities of a residential area: elementary school, a supermarket, along with green and pedestrianized spaces.

The factory was damaged during the war in 1992, after which production all but ceased: the complex was partially reopened in 2007, but only until 2011, when it was officially closed.



Fig.3- Mostar, Žitopromet factory, view from the north (Martinovic).

Workshop

To open a discussion about how some of Mostar's abandoned sites could be reused as hubs for civil initiatives, an urban intervention in the former grain silo complex took place in October 2016. This initiative set out a common starting point for all those who might become involved in any regeneration process: municipal authorities, NGOs and private persons and citizens.

The on-site intervention consisted of three parts: preparatory activities, dissemination of information through local media and online sources, and implementation.

The preparatory activities included drawing up an explanation of the theory behind the project, and establishing contact between the legal owner of the property, the city administration and the organizer of the workshop.

This was followed by opening lines of communication with the local community in the form of flyers, posters and online publications, giving information about events to be held in the former factory. Besides disseminating information among the local community, contact was made with locally engaged artists and cultural organizations: a local association of art historians, the Architecture Dialog and Art Centre, the Academy of Fine Arts Mostar and freelance artists.

The staging of the intervention lasted 4 days, with each day conceived as a mix of different participatory activities aimed at raising interest in participants of all age groups and different ethnicities. The participatory activities included architecture workshops, lectures, a film programme, dance workshops and a programme of music during evening hours. These activities were accompanied by educational sessions on the importance and significance of industrial heritage in the local context. The aim was to awaken participants to the possibilities industrial heritage could have in their city.



Fig 4- Mostar, Žitopromet factory, workshop activities (Martinovic).

Results

The workshop's impact was gauged by means of surveys and on-site interviews with participants and visitors. Surveys were laid out in a comprehensive manner and divided into several groups of questions on a number of themes: personal information, neighbourhood, the former Žitopromet factory, social participation and community needs. The results yielded considerable data on the present state of the site. A survey on the site's strengths and weaknesses was particularly useful in helping to set the

parameters for any project to regenerate the factory. Location, accessibility, affordable accommodation, historical context, place identity, heritage tangible and intangible values were identified as strengths of the site. On the other hand safety, maintenance, cultural content, economic prospects and current levels of local interest and involvement emerged as weaknesses of the Žitopromet factory in its present state.

The approach used for the Mostar Urban Restart field experiment gained, overall, positive feedback regarding the benefits that regeneration would bring in the form of community participation, social cohesion and interpersonal relationships. By consulting local communities early on, and involving them in decision-making processes regarding the site, much was done to encourage social sustainability in the longer term. The surveys revealed that many stakeholders have little sense of the value of heritage preservation, and also lack information about it.

Conclusions

The results of this research project on the former Žitopromet factory complex and its neighbourhood indicate that a regeneration project would contribute a great deal in terms of local development. This contribution would be measurable through benefits to the local economy, the urban environment and the community's sense of well-being. Participatory on-field initiatives, such as the one held in the Žitopromet factory, offer a good form of intervention in the short term. The Žitopromet intervention also showed that industrial heritage sites can be a good starting point for the kind of 'bottom-up' suggested here in order to engage the community and present heritage values to a wider public. Because of architectural particularities, regeneration of industrial heritage sites present a challenge for architects, yet at the same time offer a wide range of possibilities for new uses. These new uses can stimulate positive social change as well as physical regeneration of the urban environment.

In order to achieve this goal NGOs, municipal authorities, professionals and citizens are encouraged to organize similar initiatives to set out the importance and wide-ranging potential of urban regeneration to the wider public. It is hoped that such activities will at the same time offer a reconciling link between ethnically diverse communities.

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