

# MIRJANA LOZANOVSKA

FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE,  
UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA

EARLY STAGE

## ABANDONED SPACE AND A POST-SOCIALIST CITY: TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL OF FORMER INDUSTRIAL SITES IN SKOPJE

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

*ABANDONED INDUSTRIAL SITES/SPACES,  
POST-SOCIALIST CITY, TRANSITION...*

### DDR STATEMENT

Abandoned industrial spaces are an important part of the built environment. They serve as tangible and intangible links to the past and have the potential to play an important role in the future development of the cities in transition. The thesis will explore the transformation of abandoned industrial space in Skopje in the post-socialist period. More precisely, the research intends to analyze the industrial space transformation, i.e. the outcomes of transformation of the locations of abandoned industry areas, due to the effect of the processes of deindustrialization. The research hypothesis refers to the transformation of industrial space as characterized by a combination of continuity and change of the existing, today abandoned industrial spaces that are part of the city urban area. The study puts an effort to assume that these abandoned industrial spaces are part of the contemporary urban environment, and this research will find a way to explain and define tools for assessment of the industrial abandoned spaces.. so they can be more easily, socially and economically reintegrated into the urban fabric of the city.

### ABSTRACT

Abandoned industrial sites should certainly be regarded as city spaces with big potential. In recent decades derelict industrial sites are becoming more and more interesting, not only because of the phenomenon of evaluation of industrial heritage, but also due to the lack of free land. Every time we are confronted with the reuse of an industrial area, a question arises: what to do with these areas? In case they are not protected as cultural heritage or otherwise culturally valued, a question arises: to preserve or to demolish?... This research will intend to define the main characteristics of the development of abandoned industrial zones in Skopje, and on the basis of this characteristics, to design a parameters of analysis and subsequently an assessment methodology that will be focused on the abandoned industrial zones.



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*The social and economical dynamics and a regenerative economy, these abandoned industrial areas offer a great potential, and can be thought as a space generators with an undefined function: an ideal platform to receive uncertain social dynamics(Bauman, 2000).*

### **Example of The City of Skopje**

Skopje's urban landscape is a kind of urban-architectural conglomerate, a system of overlapping historical and morphological layers which in their nature are contradictory among themselves. Most during the last century, the city of Skopje, following a series of different modernization templates confronts dramatic transformation from a traditional, Balkan and Ottoman city to a European, socialist, post-socialist and finally global – in transition.

According to the research of Architect Blaž Križnik and Anthropologist Goran Janev (Križnik, Janev, 2010), *“many important European cities have historically developed from monumental national capitals, constructed during the period of national emancipation in the nineteenth or early twentieth century, and have been recently transformed into globally integrated open cities, where transnational flows of people, goods, capital and cultures shape their present development. Skopje, on contrary, has a rather different history. It seems that in comparison to other European capitals, which have developed from grand national capitals into transnational open cities, Skopje has actually taken almost an opposite path.”* (Križnik, Janev, 2010)

*Figure 1. Current state – Kuprum Factory  
Author photography , 2020*

The post - socialist transition of Skopje created amazing challenges in planning and creating the urban landscape of the city, setting completely new frameworks for its spatial development. By changing the urban planning system, ie. the emergence of previously non-existent participants in this process (private land-owners, private investors, private planning companies, private construction industry, local government with responsibilities in the field of urban planning, etc.), completely new conditions for urban development of the city were created. As a result of these factors, in conjunction with economic and socio - political challenges related to the nation-building processes, the crucial decision of Skopje's transformation in the post-socialist period are the cruel forms of privatization of the abandoned industrial areas.

The period of transition, it was mostly spontaneous and without the existence of a general strategic framework for the development of the city. The city's transitional forms of densifying are chaotic and on lack of basic planning standards. The remains of the abandoned industrial areas are often subject of extinction and oblivion.

In the urban context of the City of Skopje, the abandoned industrial areas are being rudimentary, privatized and commercialized on a daily basis, it is crucial to find a way so they can be socially and economically reintegrated through different strategies. Also, very often these spaces are "occupied" or "appropriated" by local residents, communities and expand the notion social and economic integration to symbolic integration too. In some cases, the usage of abandoned industrial sites by the local people, can have a positive affect and improve the image of the neighborhood as well as the space itself, but in other cases, abandoned industrial sites in Skopje can bring negative value due to vandalism or uncontrolled appropriation by people.

The main purpose of this research is to develop a strategy, actually a tool for examining the characteristics of abandoned industrial spaces by examining the entire context. As a way to understand the potential of these places (and their complex contexts). Focusing on City of Skopje seen as an urban laboratory exploring the possibilities offered by abandoned industrial spaces - in social, programmatic and aesthetic terms.

Also, the research will put an effort to emphasize the transformative potential of existing abandoned industrial areas for future spatial and economic development of the city. From an urban-architectural perspective, this research should be paramount the future development of the city. Therefore, I believe that this research can effectively help to identify new strategies and tactics among which we can better design the future architectural form of the city.

To consider the re-functionalization of these abandoned industrial sites is above to be opposed to demolition, and to see the problem as a great opportunity for the re-use of abandoned industrial spaces in the urban network via a sustainable solution. The hypothesis states that

**"... Endangered abandoned industrial sites in Skopje, due to their societal, historical, architectural, and technological values, have important transformative potential for incorporating sustainability principles and can be seen as a catalyst for urban regeneration of this areas in the future..."**

This research will intend to define the main characteristics of the development of abandoned industrial zones in Skopje, and on the basis of this characteristics, to design a parameters of analysis and subsequently an assessment methodology that will be focused on the abandoned industrial zones.

Guided by the idea firstly to compile an archive of those characteristics, which most precisely define this spaces at all levels – the physical planning, micro urban and architectural level. So subsequently on that basis to develop a system for evaluation of the abandoned industrial sites.

The historical analysis of Former industrial sites in Skopje and (post-socialist) city context and the socio-economic changes will be focusing on three main periods of industrial development: Period of concentration, Period of transformation, Period of dispersion. This method will enable me to define the relation between industry and the city, which includes identity of the environment of abandoned industrial areas explained through their meaning, phases and characteristics of a phenomenon/process of abandon. The identity of the environment is shaped by those components of architecture which are tied to definable area ' geographically, culturally, economically, materially, even nationally and politically (Fister, 1993) – through various periods.<sup>3</sup> Industrialisation as an universal word phenmenon influensed interventions into the landscape and the shaping of enviromental, regional identity of the city of Skopje. New types of buildings appeared, as did new transport possibilities, so undoubtedly this historical period has a big influence on the shaping of the identity of the city of Skopje, which has continued to grow right up to the present day.

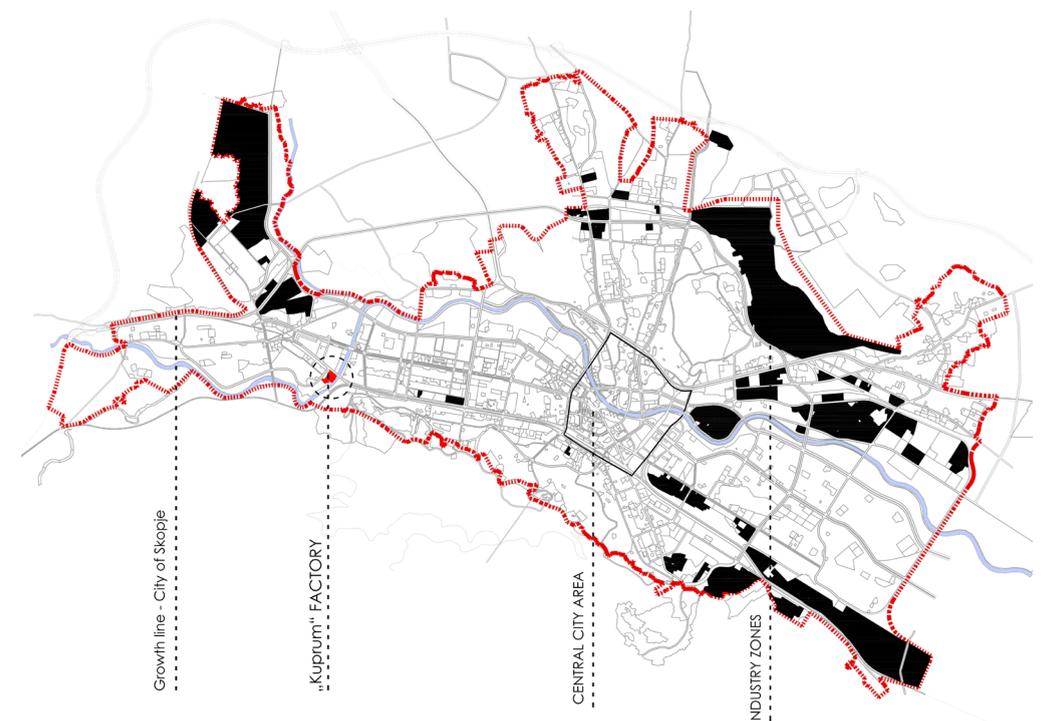


Figure 2. 2020 City of Skopje  
Position of the abandoned industrial zones / In context of the urban city area

Figure 3. outside space Ohis Factory Skopje  
Author photography, 2020



Figure 4. production hall 1 Ohis Factory Skopje  
Author photography, 2020



Interdisciplinary approach – Industrial abandoned sites are complex both in terms of its material legacy and its value. Its design was directly influenced by economic, political and social conditions. Industrialization itself further transformed these characteristics and established new social conditions. For this reason, my research into the abandoned industrial sites demands an integrated and interdisciplinary approach and cooperation through communication with large number of experts (industrial heritage, researchers of architectural structures, art historians, construction engineers, sociologists, urban planners, ecologists...) , since the good quality of research can be only developed through teamwork.

*The basis of protection of the industrial sites is evaluation. Evaluation is the category or procedure on which all subsequent conservation decisions depend, and from which all conservation measures derive (Pirkovic, 1993)*

Using the Evaluation as a Method will be helpful for evaluation of the “transformative potential” of former industrial sites. During this research, a strategy will be developed for examining the characteristics of abandoned industrial spaces by examining the entire context. Defining Principles and Guidelines – which can be a model in the future in context of actually developing Tools that can be applied in the Assessment of the abandoned industrial spaces. As well the other part of the research, after developing Tools for the Assessment of evaluation real locations will be examined and the tools of evaluation will be „tested,,... so than the tool can be applicable to post socialist cities. *In researching the influences of specific industrial sites on the identity of the environment, both negative and positive consequences must be analyzed and in the evaluation phase presented in an integrated way. (Ifko, 2016)*

Using Comparison as a method will help me to find/define assessment criteria for deprived industrial areas or to find strategies for their transformation, based on comparison of case studies. Comparison will be used as a tool of analysis on abandoned industry areas. This method will play a central role in concept-formation by bringing into focus suggestive similarities and contrasts among cases of abandoned industry areas in Skopje compared with other European cities.

Learning from the examples and strategies for the development of these spaces that exist in other European cities. The transformation of industrial space in Skopje is similar to the one in cities of Central and Eastern Europe, where it resulted from the processes of economic restructuring, deindustrialization, globalization and tertiarization of the economy. Nevertheless, specifics that derive from the transition process, the low level of economic development and the position of Skopje within the global economic flows create precise and clear distinctions in the transformation process.