



Honors Thesis

Master of Science in Architecture Construction City

Abstract

Cities in the Post-Industrial Turn – Promoting a new centrality through the reuse of the former Tangshan Steel and Iron Plant

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July 2022

Since the Opening Up reform started by Deng Xiaoping in 1979, China underwent a period of rapid economic development. This shift transformed and brought one of the poorest country around the globe to be one of the main largest economies in the world in today's times. As imaginable, this innovative economic changeover caused innovations and adjustments within the society and the Chinese physical environment. Major Chinese cities, indeed, commenced their mutation and adaptation process to accommodate the new products of the recent Chinese economy and society. As a consequence, the former urban spaces designed to adhere the socialist ideology and the industrial production, started to be turned into spaces which could face the innovative standards and market mechanisms of the post-reform period (Bonino, Hamama, et al., 2021).

The rise of the service industry sector from only the 22% accounted by the end of the nineteen seventies to more than the half of the entire gross domestic product (GDP) of China in 2015 leaded expeditious development of infrastructure, urbanisation and the rising of per capita income. Hence, most of Chinese cities become tangible outputs of the national turnabout from "cities of production" to "cities of consumption" in the post-industrial period (Bonino, Hamama, et al., 2021).

As a consequence of this process, many industrial buildings in different cities throughout China are facing one main fate: abandonment - due to the relocation of production activities - and sometimes demolition (Ma, 2015). Former Chinese industrial buildings, indeed, are undergoing a severe and fast destruction taking advantage of the high land value within the city.

Deindustrialisation, therefore, is a raging process nowadays and, especially in Northeast China area, cities under transition face issues as pollution, abandonment and spaces awaiting for reactivation and reuse. As an urgent call for urban planners and designer, this thesis work focus on the so-considered cradle of modern Chinese industry and which is currently on its turning point in transforming into a post-industrial city: Tangshan.

Subsequently an historical and spacial analysis of the industrial development of the city, the aim of this work is to provide a possible design solution against industrial abandonment which is able to reuse the modern Chinese industry areas and buildings as major bearer of principals of contemporary civilisation. The theory bearing the planning action and design intervention pursues the discourse put forward by André Corboz in 1983 upon the territory as Palimpsest. The urban territory is interpreted as a parchment where the traces of previous marks introduces by several territorial actions do not disappear but rather come to light both in their materiality and on a symbolic level as memory and collective imagination (Governa, Memoli, 2011).

Harnessing the potentials of architectural design, this work will pursuit the improvement of the life quality within the East Dou He river area, emphasising its the sense of place and improving the environmental efficiency of Tangshan and promoting a new centrality within the periphery of the city.

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