Positive Conservation of an Old Olive Oil Factory in Ayvalık (Turkey) — Adaptive Reuse and Experience Design

Nağme Ebru Karabağ Aydeniz, Sergio Taddonio
Yaşar University, Faculty of Architecture, Department of Interior Architecture and Environmental Design, Izmir, Turkey; ebru.aydeniz@yasar.edu.tr, sergio.taddonio@yasar.edu.tr

Abstract

The Culinary Art Centre project, developed in collaboration with students of the Department of Interior Architecture and Environmental Design of Yaşar University in İzmir, investigates the potentials of the local underused built heritage to be considered for new creative and social programmes as strategic constituent parts of the Experience City and offers to the public audience and local authorities a programmatic action based on the re-habilitation and adaptation of the 1800’s dismissed and vacant Olive Oil & Olive Oil Soap Factory located in the central and strategic district of the town of Ayvalık, to be converted into an experience-based Culinary Art Centre where local and international visitors experience the research-and-interaction-driven creative process of food art. Aim of the project was clearly defined as the transformation of an industrial heritage building – former place of production - into a new place or stage ‘for the production and consumption of experience services and goods’ [1] – in this case, knowledge-based services and the whole spectrum of food production and culinary art – while approaching the design task openly in accordance with the principles, notions and concepts of the Experience Economy method, as developed and described by Pine & Gilmore within their studies and publications. Experience through Design and Design through Experience. An academic investigation and design response aimed at promoting and experiencing the adaptive reuse approach for the already-built urban environment as a precious resource for sustainable urban development actions and targeting at the promotion of culinary culture and gastronomic tourism – known as food tourism, tasting tourism or culinary tourism. Tangible and intangible heritage positively conserved through adaptive reuse and experience design.

1. Urban Regeneration and Adaptive Reuse of Heritage Industrial Buildings

Over last four decades, as the regeneration process of several towns and city centers has gathered momentum in many different contexts of the world, the reuse and positive conservation of heritage buildings has played a key role as an integral component of successful heritage-based regeneration projects that had generated considerable beneficial outcomes for local economies and communities. Re-integrating heritage buildings and historic urban contexts by reusing and recycling these precious existing resources ‘as an asset, and giving them new life, has been one of the cornerstones of the economic and social revival of our towns and cities’ [2].

The English Heritage defines heritage asset as ‘any component of our historic environment. It is defined as a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest’ [2].

The Nizhny Tagil Charter for the Industrial Heritage states that ‘Industrial heritage consist of the remains of industrial culture which are of historical, technological, social, architectural or scientific value. The industrial heritage is of social value as part of the record of the lives of ordinary men and women, and as such it provides an important sense of identity. Continuing to adapt and use industrial buildings avoids wasting energy and contributes to sustainable development. Industrial heritage can have an important role in the economic regeneration of decayed or declining areas’ [3].

‘Concepts such as industrial culture, sense of identity, sustainable urban development and economic regeneration have been clearly highlighted and considered as essential factors and goals of regeneration and revitalization strategies that have driven relevant heritage-led urban regeneration schemes’ [4].
Old buildings offer a stable framework as the basis for durability, while on the other hand they provide an open stage for new elements. Moreover, in addition to their physical and material properties they also represent strong social and cultural values as the concept of intangible heritage is deeply connected with memory and identity of a place and its people [5].

Commonly considered as a landmark with regard to the development of architectural conservation theories, the Venice Charter states that the conservation of monuments is always facilitated by making use of these precious resources for socially useful purposes, by ensuring that the reuse does not considerably interfere with the original lay-out and decoration of the building. Only indispensable modifications required by the new functional programme can be implemented within this operational framework. [6] This approach have been restated in many national and international platforms up to now and discussed by many theorists. Today, the reuse of historic buildings is recognised as an essential part of modern conservation [7]. The (positive) reuse of historical buildings other than archaeological sites, monumental religious building and tombs, is a requirement of urban development according to the theory of modern restoration [8].

On the other hand, the development of commercial functions increasingly threatens the historical texture of cities, with the consequential effect of demanding consistent interventional applications to enable existing buildings and structures to meet the requirements of the new building programme, while losing their authenticity. Brooker and Stone elaborated three distinct categories of building reuse in relation with the degree of integration between the host building and new elements: intervention, insertion and installation. When the original building establishes a clear relationship with the new design and the two become one, the identified category is intervention. When the host building and the remodeling are intensely related and yet accommodates new elements and both of them remains strongly unchanged, then the category identified is insertion. If the old and the new exist together without compromising or touching each other, then the category is installation [9]. The reuse and transformative methods should be designated according to the analytical outcomes obtained through the assessment of the existing structure and in relation with the new building programme conceived for the adaptive reuse process.

2. Experience economy and experience design.
   The experience city

The notion of Experience Economy was firstly launched by business economist B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore in 1999 and since then it had been intensively discussed while gaining a prime role among urban planners and developers due to its relevant contribution in terms of staging new discourses upon urban development of XXI century's cities with regard to the urgent issue of competing on the global market.

Among several fundamental concepts of the Experience Economy's notion, Pine & Gilmore emphasize the one of staging experiences by stating that 'experiences are not the final economic offering' [10]. In this sense, the customization of an experience - the way of designing an experience for single individuals, users or guests - turns to generate a transformation. ‘A transformation is the revisiting of a recurring theme, experienced through distinct and yet unified events’ [10]. Therefore, the concept of transformation becomes crucial in designing experiences. And to activate transformation, the concept of place plays a pivotal role and the way experiences are bound to places that are considered not only as the container or the stage ‘for the production and consumption of experience services and goods’ [1].

In discussing the role of places in the experience economy, O’Dell suggests the notion of ‘experiencescape’ [11] meant as places where experiences are being staged and consumed. But places themselves are object of consumption by ‘people enjoying the atmosphere, the sociability and even the identity that can be created by being present’ [1]. In 2005, Gyimóthy re-works the concept of experiencescape by suggesting the notion of ‘nostalgiascapes’ [9] as places representing historic identity and lifestyle. ‘The power of experiencescapes in producing feelings of identity is sometimes very strong. Special buildings connected to experiences can develop’. [1] Culture becomes an essential factor and fundamental approach in re-designing our cities. ‘Particularly important in urban interventions is to make strategic use of cultural resources. Cultural planning, in the strategic sense, has been recorded since the mid-1970s in big cities. Its rationale has been to create attractive locations for individual and collective consumption. The important characteristic of an experience city is its attractive atmosphere, which comes from place-bound activities, events and services, attractive places and diverse social spaces, which make visitors and residents feel inspired, involved and connected to the place’ [1]. History, culture and legacy are essential factors in planning the experience city.
In relation with the above mentioned concepts of transformation and place, a question comes quite automatically: what if we extend the concept of transformation - merely linked to the experience of any ‘guest’ within a profit-oriented programme - by including the context or container of the staged experience? In other words, does the concept of transformation match the purpose of designing engaging and compelling experiences from a wider point of view by creating a double effect when applied not only to the programme but also to the venue or physical stage of the programme itself? In this sense, experience design and adaptive reuse of historical buildings may double the transformative effect of a regenerative process of functioning a valuable historical structure - a transformation by itself, perceived by users as the re-writing of a precious story - to accommodate a challenging and engaging experience-based programme. ‘Being in the historic building and environment is getting a more privileged status nowadays’ [12].

Transformation through experience design and transformation by the mean of interventional design. Inevitable steps toward the Experience City.

3. The Culinary Art Centre project.
An adaptive reuse proposal for an old oil and olive oil soap factory in Ayvalik

3.1. Ayvalik

Although Ayvalik’s history dates back to ancient times (Figure 1), it was referred for the first time with the naval battle in 1770 as an Ottoman achieve. Since 1789, it became an important metropolitan centre, emerging as an autonomous region inhabited by non-Muslims and as a district of the Ottoman Empire from 1840 onward. Within the last quarter of 19th century, the industrial production of olive oil started alongside traditional workshop and house production. Since then, industrial buildings erected specifically for the production of olive oil - an afterwards, for olive oil soap as complementary production - emerged as the most distinctive typology of structure along with the residential type in the city. These massive industrial buildings located alongside the sea became dominant and remarkable structures in the urban texture [13]. But as a result of the development of production technology in time, factories, workshops and warehouses moved out of the city and a consistent number of industrial buildings lost gradually their original function followed by the consequential initiation of the degradation process.

Today, these structures stand as an evidence of industrial development in Ayvalik memory. The Nizhny Tagil Charter for the Industrial Heritage states that industrial heritage consists of the remains of industrial culture, which are of historical, technological, social, architectural or scientific value [3]. The artistic value of these structures is recognized as ‘relative artistic value’ as suggested by Alois Riegsl today. Reyner Banham’s ‘aesthetic factory’ concept also refers to the artistic value of industrial monument [14].
3.2. Ayvalık cuisine.
Intangible culture heritage

Ayvalık’s favored geography, climate and history is noticeably reflected to its gastronomic culture. The atmospheric temperature range variations arising from north western and north eastern winter storms here affects the quality of olive and olive oil positively. On the other hand, the role of the sociological mosaic of the town contributed to the enrichment of the local cuisine culture. In fact, the population of Ayvalık consists of immigrants from Aegean islands, mainly Crete and Lesbos, and Bosnia. These cultures intertwined in time and generated a unique culinary tradition [15]. The Mediterranean Diet Pyramid, elaborated by the World Health Organization, is based largely on Crete’s gastronomic traditions where simplicity and purity are essential elements, consisting of natural ingredients such as grains, herbs, fruits, vegetables and meat [16].

In addition, UNESCO recognises Mediterranean Diet’s pattern as an Intangible Cultural Heritage. This concept refers to the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills transferred by communities from generation to generation. Traditional cuisine is one of the matters covered by this concept that is also known as ‘living heritage’ [17].

The cuisine and the gastronomic culture in Ayvalık is conspicuously based on the nutritional principles of the Mediterranean Diet. But, this culinary culture is threatened by increasing globalisation. It has to be protected from the threat of food globalisation and carefully transferred to the future generations.

3.3. The old olive oil factory

The Old Olive Oil Factory complex, originally constructed as a flour factory by a Greek producer, is located in the city centre of Ayvalık. It consists of four blocks built in different periods. (Figure 2) The four-storey building located in the middle was built first in 1800’s as a flour factory. This building was purchased in 1913 by a Turkish producer migrated from Lesbos Island. Two-storey and single-storey buildings on both sides were constructed in 1960’s. The building complex has been used for olive oil and olive oil soap production as a whole until 2010. Due to the relocation of the production process, this building lost its original interior equipment together
with its function [18]. The complex was definitively abandoned in 2010 and since then it has been waiting for a reuse proposal.

3.4. The Culinary Art Centre project.

Tangible and intangible heritage positively conserved through experience design

Cultures of communities vary in accordance with physical and non-physical factors such as geography, climatic conditions along with spiritual beliefs. One of the characteristic qualities of societies that unequivocally distinguish them is the culinary culture. Considering the importance of dining in human life, the impact of the food on a culture can be obviously acknowledged. The preparation of meals is as important as the consumption and both impact the formation of traditions and physical environment. The act of eating is crucial in the recognition of a specific culture and gastronomic tourism increases its percentage in relation with the general tourism’s figures every year.

Having considered the aforementioned aspects, the identification of the scenario for the Design Studio’s project task appeared to be quite automatic, that is framing the educational purpose of the project challenge by linking - in a chain-like sequence - the urgent regenerative programme of Ayvalık’s industrial heritage (olive oil factories) through positive conservation actions (urban scale), with the appropriate interventional design methods (architectural scale) or better adaptive reuse strategies aiming at converting those valuable historical traces of the past into vibrant spaces or places for new compelling programmes, by establishing a fundamental connection with the Experience Economy principles (and transformation through experience as the major) in order to identify the aim of the project in terms of programmatic decisions and experience-oriented spatial formulations.

A Culinary Art Centre. ‘Every experience has a theme. Discovering a suitable theme is central to experience design. Five principles are paramount in developing such a theme. First, an engaging theme must alter guest’s sense of reality. Creating a reality other than the everyday. Second, the richest venues possess themes that fully alter one’s sense of reality by affecting the experience of space, matter, and time. Third, engaging themes integrate space, matter, and time into a cohesive, realistic whole. Fourth, creating multiple spaces within a place strengthens themes. Finally, a theme should fit the character of the enterprise staging the experience ‘[10]. While dealing with the design process, students have been considering those essential guidelines and applied both interventional design principles and experience-based concepts, to accommodate within a former olive oil factory a compelling set of staged experiences.

The aim of this project, developed and finalised in collaboration with undergraduate students of an Interior Design Studio course, is to generate an experiential journey to promote Ayvalık’s cuisine. (Figures 3 and 4) Several sequential ‘sections’ drive visitors through the local gastronomy culture and the art of creating food-works. Guests are guided within the Earth Market, the Liqueur Section, the Culinary Art Library, the Glazed Kitchen Lab, the Edu-Kitchen for

Figure 3: The scheme of the experiential journey consist of several sequential ‘sections’.

Render – Section perspective [21]
cooking classes, the All-Senses Tasting Area and each of these spaces promotes different visitor’s interactions in full accordance with the Experience Economy principles indicated by Pine and Gilmore.

According to Pine & Gilmore’s theory, an experience may attract visitors’ attention in several different dimensions. Major dimensions are indicated in the main axis of the figure. (Figure 5) The horizontal axis is related to the participation and contribution of the visitors to the experience actively or passively. The vertical dimension of experience describes the kind of connection, or environmental relationship that unites visitors with the event or performance; guests may be absorbed – from a distance - or immersed by becoming physically (or virtually) a part of the experience itself. The intersection of these two dimensions reveal four areas of experience: entertainment, education, escaping, aesthetic. Producing uncommon experiences often intertwines these areas. While the experience economy improves, search for a new and different experiences increase [10].

In detail, the project proposal identifies three access points to the Culinary Art Centre. The original entrance to the first original factory block is protected and two more entrances are arranged in order to maximise the accessibility to the ground level of the complex, where the Earth Market is located. While moving through the market-like space setting - where local agricultural products are daily supplied, displayed and sold - by the mean of a central gallery space, visitors are visually connected with the very upper floor where the All-Senses Tasting Area is located. (Figures 6 and 7) This visual connection generates curiosity and this curiosity drives guests to undertake the journey upward.
Since all foods are accompanied by wine or infusions in the Mediterranean diet [19], the project allocates a Liqueur Section (Figure 7) in the first floor of the complex. Liqueurs and mainly wine play a fundamental role in Ayvalık’s cuisine. Visitors have a chance to taste and eventually purchase locally produced beverages.

The Culinary Art Library (Figure 8) is the following ‘station’ of this sequential journey, a place or better an archive where visitors receive all necessary information related with the local and regional gastronomic culture and the unique intersection of culinary ‘schools’ and traditions that characterise Ayvalık’s cuisine. At the same time, a visual connection with the All-Senses Tasting Area is provided by the mean of a large gallery space that divides only physically these two sections.

The Glazed Kitchen Lab (Figure 9) becomes the main stage of Food-Art, and as such is located in close proximity with an aerial passage that simply ‘touches’
the food production space while offering a large perception of chef’s food-works.

In the Edu-Kitchen (Figure 11) for cooking classes, guests are encouraged to actively experience the preparation and cooking process of the food. Pine & Gilmore state that education is a serious business, which can also be enjoyable. Unlike the entertainment experience, education requires the active participation of individuals. Of course, this does not mean education will not generate fun. The term of edutainment was put forward to explain the experience of combining entertainment and education.

The All-Senses Tasting Area (Figure 12) is the final ‘station’ of this engaging journey, a place that is visible and perceivable from several different internal perspectives but accessible only through the sequential stations organised as a ‘route’ within the newly designed building settings. Visitors, guests, chefs taste here the outcomes of cooking training sessions while socialising and sharing experiences and various cultural backgrounds as well. Communal meals are very important in social happenings and festive events in the Mediterranean Diet. Therefore, the All-Senses Tasting Area promotes social interaction through experience-based activities.

Beside this compelling experiential journey, the building programme includes a Restaurant located at the ground floor that is directly linked to the Earth Market (Figure 13) and a Panoramic Restaurant located at the very upper floor. At the ground floor, guests are surrounded by the basic ‘ingredients’ of their own meal as raw ‘products’ from the Earth Market and as ‘live installation’ in the greenhouse.
The Panoramic Restaurant represents the very upper section of the building program. Windows here frame impressive vistas over the Ayvalık’s coastline.

4. Conclusion

When positively conserved, re-functioned and properly operated as new stages of compelling programmes, heritage buildings continue their existence and the Experience Economy principles elaborated by Pine & Gilmore provide new visions and opportunities in this sense. The conversion of an old olive and olive oil soap factory into a Culinary Art Centre developed and finalised in collaboration with undergraduate students of an Interior Design Studio course - openly based on the principles of Pine & Gilmore - generates scientific, cultural, social, economic benefits at once. Firstly, an industrial heritage building will extend its life span through the adaptation of its valuable structure and architectural features to host a new strategic building programme. In addition, the sustainability of Ayvalık’s cuisine traditions, based on the Mediterranean Diet recognised as ‘intangible cultural heritage’ by UNESCO, will be secured through recording-and-promotional-based actions.

With regard to the authenticity of the old building and its original function, which is one of the adaptation principles, the proposed intervention appears highly respectful due to the usage of an old olive oil factory as a culinary art centre where olive oil still represents one of the main ingredients of food-works.

Several scientific researches prove that people who had adopted the coastal Mediterranean Diet are healthier and with a longer life expectancy when compared with other not having adopted similar nutritional regimen. Therefore, promoting Mediterranean nutritional principles and encouraging people to discover and experience first-hand the qualities of the Mediterranean diet generates positive effects in terms of public health.

The transformation of an old building will initiate the transformation of community by altering and adjusting their eating habits and social benefits will be enabled. Pine & Gilmore refer that human being are always looking for new and exciting experiences constantly in order to learn, grow, thrive, become perfect and these experiences transform people’s lives [10].

Old buildings, carefully re-designed in line with the principles of the experience economy model, enable the transformation of historical built environments into up-to-date attractive urban centres, while ensuring social and economical development.
References


