

LOCAL COMMUNITY'S INVOLVEMENT IN MANAGING AND PRESERVING INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE

Fjolla IBRAIMI ^{1*}, Enis JAKUPI ¹, Aleksandar RADEVSKI ²

^{1*}Department of Architecture, Faculty of Applied Sciences, University of Tetova, North Macedonia

^{2*} Faculty of Architecture, University "Ss. Cyril and Methodius", Skopje, North Macedonia

*Corresponding Author: e-mail: fjolla.ibraimi@unite.edu.mk

Abstract

The decline of industry led to the closure of many industrial factories. These structures that were once associated with glory, pride and source of income, now appear as vacant, soulless buildings, intended for demolition.

Due to a movement that originated in Britain, and later expanded to other countries, awareness of the values and potential of industrial facilities began to increase. These values were often discovered in the memories of the citizens and the emotional ties they had formed with these locations and buildings, rather than in their history or architecture. Therefore, community awareness and engagement appear to be crucial factors that can aid in preserving and preventing demolition of these industrial landmarks within the city's framework.

Since the development and impact of the industry has not been the same in all countries, this paper examines two distinct sites and towns as study areas (the first case study is an industrial site in Oberschöneweide, Berlin, while the second site is situated in Tetovo, North Macedonia). The purpose of the study, using the survey as a research tool, is to understand historical significance and industrial value of these areas based on citizens' views, to uncover the connection of the residents with these locations, and to assist in making decisions for their management that would benefit the local community.

Keywords: industrial buildings, heritage, values, transformation, community.

1. Introduction

The protection and transformation of industrial heritage is a complicated process that includes many steps (analysis of the area's character, work processes and past technologies, the relation between the building and spatial structure, etc.) and many parties, especially in the first phase when heritage values and preservation methods are determined. (Ibraimi, 2022) Heritage specialists highlight the importance of community participation in the transformation processes of industrial heritage, because the memories and experiences of people that are attached with this place help define the meaning and value of heritage. (Rodwell, 2007)

Landorf (2009) in his research about industrial heritage sites, highlights that these buildings and locations, in addition to being a witness to the technological developments, or the architecture of that time, are also a witness to the work and effort of the employees, who, have a really strong attachment with the heritage that most of all belongs to them. Unfortunately, only recently has this fact become known and the level and the strategy of community involvement is a topic that still requires research. According to Landorf, in addition to the low level of involvement, it usually takes place within the context of information but not implementation of their requests and aspirations. (Landorf, 2009) (Landorf, 2011)

Through the use of questionnaires, this study aims to analyze the level of information, involvement, interests and suggestions of the community in Oberschöneweide and Tetovo regarding the reuse of industrial sites. The research begins with the historical description of the two selected locations and their industrial development, continuing with the results of the

questionnaires developed with both communities, and finally comparing the similarities and differences between them.

2. Historical description of sites

2.1 Oberschöneweide: Oberschöneweide is an industrial area located in the Treptow-Köpenick district, in southeast Berlin. By the end of the 1800s, Oberschöneweide was known for its industrial development, especially in the electrical sector. AEG, with Emil Rathenau in charge, had an exceptional role for the development of the area in the 20th century, which we can briefly follow below. (Oevermann, et al., 2016)



Figure 1. Historical interpretation of NAG's industrial development in Oberschöneweide, *author's illustration of the information gathered from Oberschöneweide experts and citizens stories, 2023*

Undoubtedly, the most important object in this region is the one named after the architect who designed it, Peter Behrens, where the architect combined various components such as multi-level halls and factories into one magnificent building. He managed to carefully incorporate an industrial structure into the urban landscape while linking industrial production to community life in Oberschöneweide. The tower within the building remains one of the most prominent architectural landmarks in Oberschöneweide. (NAG-building, n.d.)

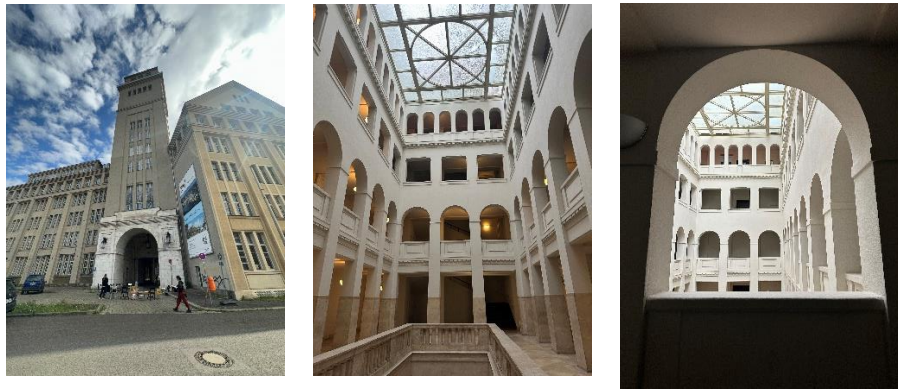


Figure 2. Peter Behrens Bau (photos by the author)

Today, in this area, it is planned a mixed-use complex, with restaurants, offices, production spaces and many spaces for the community. The project is executed by ZÜBLIN for DIE Deutsche Immobilien Entwicklungs AG (DIEAG). The new project will be developed in three phases, just as the complex was built in the beginning. At the moment, construction has started in the North block, where the most important building in this area is located, that of Peter Behrens. (Behrens-Ufer, n.d.)



Figure 3. Actual and planned view of the site (source: <https://be-u.berlin/en/>)

According to the architects: the project tends to preserve most of the original structure, fulfilling the conditions for the protection of cultural heritage and constantly consulting with experts in this field. Furthermore, they claim that the community is at the center of the project, but according to survey answers, the local community is very little informed about this project and has not been included in the decision-making processes.

2.2 *Tetovo* : Tetovo is a city in the north-western part of the Republic of North Macedonia, in which the industry developed late compared to other countries, but had great importance in the lives of the citizens. (Nikolov, et al., 2012) In terms of industry and agriculture, in the period after the Second World War, Tetovo had become an important industrial center, with many important industrial capacities, among which Teteks had the most prominent place. It employed almost a third of the total number of employees from Tetovo. (Pavlovski & Serafimovski, 1986) Based on the data obtained from the research in the Teteks archive, the chronological development of Teteks from the beginning to 1991 has been analyzed. (Gogovski, 1996)

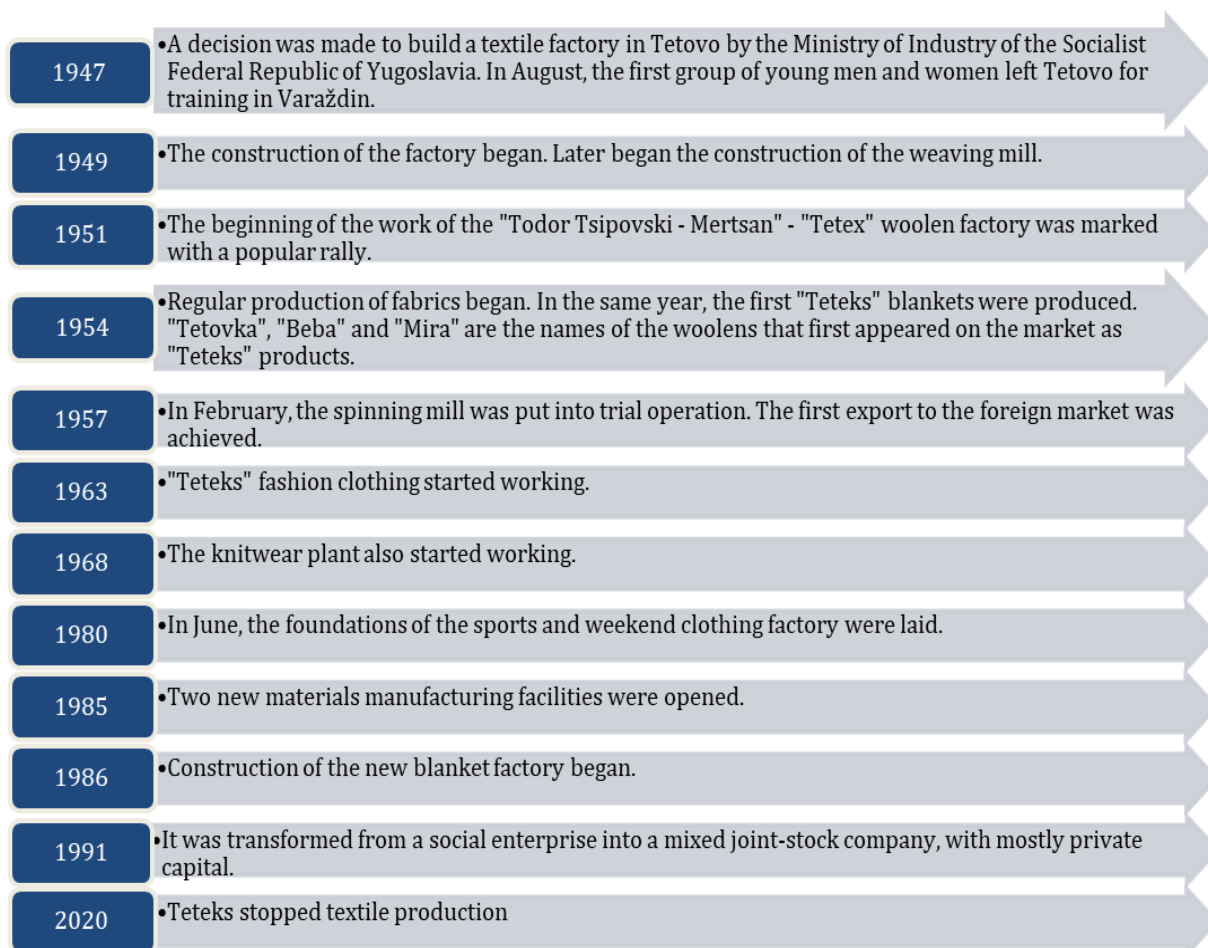


Figure 4. Historical interpretation of Teteks' industrial development in Tetovo, *author's illustration of the information gathered from Teteks archives, 2024*

With the interruption of production, other businesses can use Teteks company's industrial space totaling 250,000 m² with a complete infrastructure, of which 50% is without outdated technological equipment, whether for storage or manufacturing. The company offers electricity, technological steam, technological water and the space can be rented in different sizes. (TETEKS, 2009)

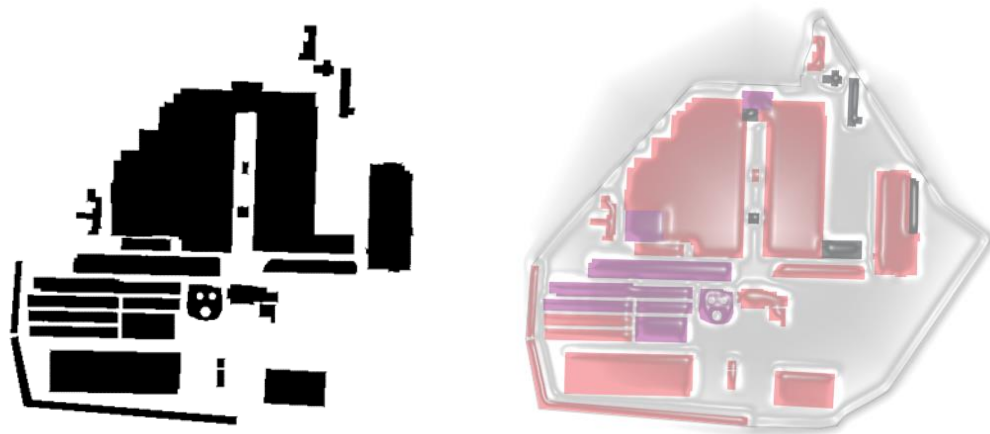


Figure 5. Actual state of the buildings in Teteks (source: Ibraimi, et al., 2023)

■ active, ■ rented, ■ for rent

Of the total built-up area of 140,000 m², 22,000 m² are rented, 4,000-5,000 m² have preserved their primary function, while the rest of over 113,000 m² is ready for rent, for industrial or other functions. (Ibraimi, et al., 2023) In the historical description of Teteks, it is noted that it had an important role in the lives of citizens, however, in the decision-making processes for Teteks facilities, citizens are not included at all. For this reason, it was considered reasonable to include citizens in the questionnaire to learn more about the location and its potential for the future.

3. Methods

The methods used in this research include historical research, field research and questionnaire survey. Historical research has provided information about the industrial sites that are subject of this study, field research has made it possible to analyze the current situation, and questionnaires have gathered information on the involvement of the community in the protection and transformation of these locations.

For the research conducted in Oberschoneweide, a survey consisting of 21 questions was implemented. The target groups for this questionnaire were: HTW (University of Applied Sciences) staff, Industrie salon and local community of Oberschöneweide. Due to constrained duration of the research, the number of participants was 45. The research in Tetovo took longer, so the number of responses is higher, 230. The number of questions is 28, and target groups of this questionnaire were: University of Tetovo staff, Industrial workers and local community of Tetovo.

4. Results

4.1 Oberschöneweide: The questions in this questionnaire are divided into 4 main topics, starting with the questions about demographic characteristics, according to which the general overview of the research participants is as follows: 60% are male, 35% female and 5% chose not to declare their gender. In terms of age distribution, the majority, 40% are in the 18-29 age group, 26.7% fall in the 30-45 category, 20% are over 60, and 13-3% are 45-60 years old. In terms of education, 33.3% of the respondents hold master's degrees, 20% have bachelor's degrees, 13.3% have only finished high school, 6.7 % pursuing a PhD and the rest chose not to answer. The responses related to the years that the respondents have lived or worked in Schoneweide, indicate that: the majority, 33.3% have lived/worked in Oberschöneweide for less than 5 years, 27% 5-10 years, and only 2% have always lived here.

The response rate to the questions of the survey, in the first part of the questionnaire is good, but in the last questions it falls below 50%.

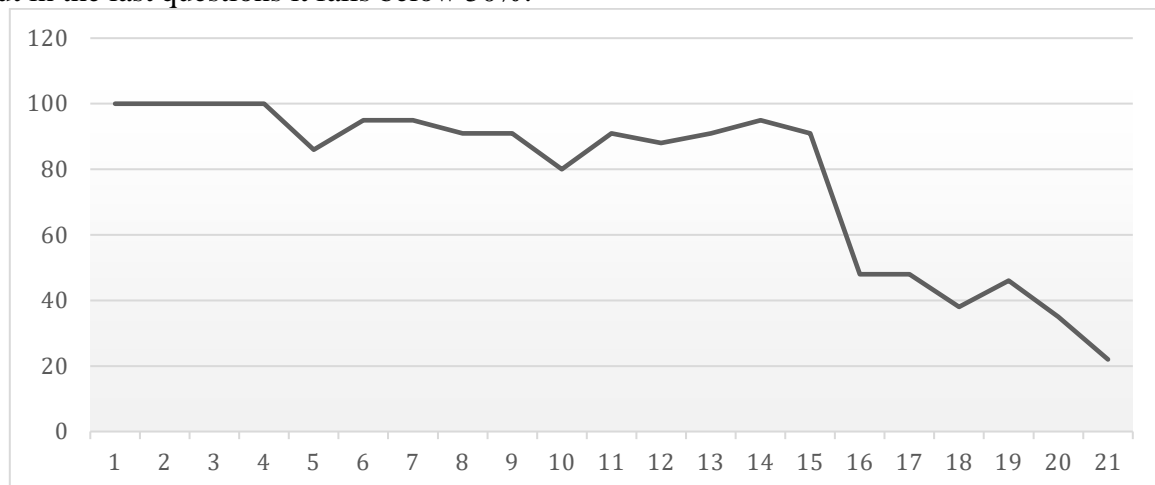


Diagram 1. Response rate (by the author)

The second topic is related to Schoneweide and Peter Behrens site; regarding the most impressive elements of Oberschöneweide, citizens mention industrial facilities, the river, nature, art and culture, as well as HTW-Faculty of Applied Sciences, which is a symbol of the transformation of industrial facilities with new programs. The majority of the respondents, about 69%, state that they are familiar with industrial locations, especially Peter Behrens site, and 57% consider it a historical characteristic of the city. About 70% of the respondents consider the existence of the Peter Behrens building as very important or important and say that they would be very disappointed if the building was damaged or destroyed. 47% of citizens express a very high interest in joining the process of protecting the industrial heritage, which shows that the industrial heritage is an important element for the residents of Oberschöneweide. The majority are in favor of the reuse of industrial facilities for new modern functions, where 75% value the preservation of the character of the facility as very important. However, in cases where these locations would be transformed and given other function, the citizens choose as follows:

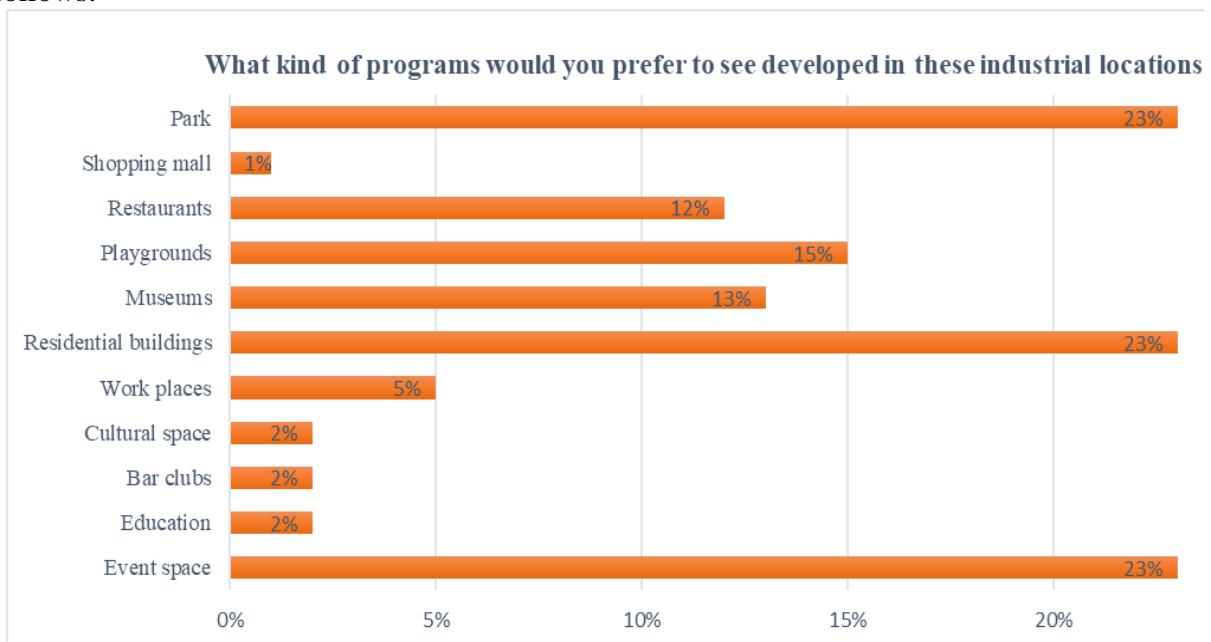


Diagram 2. Answer on new programs for abandoned industrial locations in Oberschöneweide (by the author)

In the third part, citizens were asked on their awareness about the new projects being developed in this location and most answered that they have no knowledge about the new Be-U project. As most of the objects are intended for demolition, the residents were consulted for their agreement. It was interesting the fact that the citizens agree with the demolition of these buildings as they think that they are constructively unfit to accept new functions. They observe many benefits from the new project, such as: neighborhood development (abandoned area), attraction for tourists, new working spaces, new public spaces, and sustainable approach. But they are also aware of the problems that may arise, such as demolition of historical buildings, increase in cost-of-living spaces, inadequate public transport, missing infrastructure, etc.

In the last part, where the questions were related to sustainability and community needs, residents had many suggestions for a more sustainable approach, through the use of greenery and photovoltaic panels, reuse of old buildings and/or materials, use of sustainable materials, and so on. They also propose an info board that shares the history of the site, public discussions for the project, access to the water front, family friendly spaces, and accessibility for everyone.

4.2 Tetovo: Based on the demographic questions, the general overview of the research participants is as follows: 50.5% are male, 49% female and 0.5% chose not to declare their gender. In terms of age distribution, the majority, 35.4% are in the 30-45 age group, 31.4% fall in the 18-29 category, 26.2% are aged 45-60, and 7% are over 60 years old. In terms of education, 40.6% of the respondents hold bachelor's degrees, 24% have master's degrees, 18.8% are pursuing doctoral studies, 12.2% have completed professional education, and 4.4% have solely finished high school. The responses related to the years that the respondents have lived or worked in Tetovo, indicate that: 55.3% have always lived here, 20.6% have been living/working in Tetovo for over 20 years, 10.6% reported living/working here for 10-20 years, 9.6% said for 5-10 years, and 4.4% for less than 5 years.

The response rate to the questions of the survey is generally good. The majority of the questions, about 79% have an answer rate of above 90%, 14% have an answer rate of 50-90%, while an answer rate of less than 50% appears only in 7% of the questions.

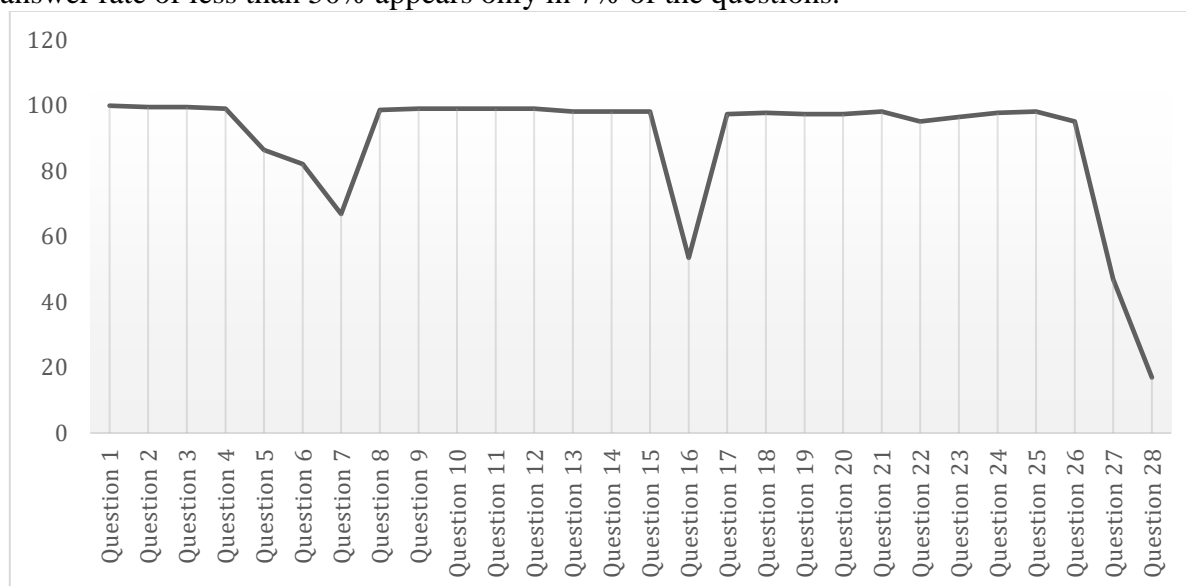


Diagram 3. Response rate (by the author)

According to the responses, regarding Tetovo and its industrial heritage, people who have lived longer in Tetovo have more knowledge about industrial buildings, 50% of the women who answered are aware of industrial facilities and are able to mention at least one industrial company, while among men we see that there is greater knowledge around this subject, about

75%. Regarding the issue of identifying of industrial buildings, it has been observed that a significant portion of the population cannot distinguish precisely which objects fall into this category. 5-10% of responses mention amenities from other categories, such as shopping facilities, sports facilities, etc, which confirms the fact that industrial heritage in Macedonia is often underappreciated because of the difficulties in defining the objects that belong to this category. Over 45% of the responses claim that industrial facilities represent important historical elements of the city, while 2.5% say maybe not in the current one condition, because the facilities are currently very damaged, but with correct measures they can be recovered. As the most significant industrial facility in Tetovo, about 45% evaluate Teteks. We asked the citizens to share with us, stories related to these industrial buildings and sites and we managed to find out some interesting details. For example, the elderly age groups emphasized that as students they were on practical work in Teteks and other factories, once a week. Others, spoke lovingly about the former glory of these buildings in the time of the former Yugoslavia.

The next group of questions had more to do with the involvement of citizens in the transformation process. At the beginning, citizens were asked whether they want to participate in the transformation process and if so, in what role. The majority of citizens wanted to join, but only as observers, to be informed of what was happening, while the smallest part, 8 percent, wanted to be involved in decision-making. If we analyze these responses according to gender, we notice that the largest percentage of decision-makers is men (55%), while women prefer giving comments, around 53%. On the other hand, the 18–29-year-olds make up the highest percentage who want to be involved by giving comments, 53%, while the 30-45 age group lead as decision-makers with 55.5%. Public discussions and polls were evaluated by the citizens as the best methods for their involvement and information.

48.5% of citizens vote for reuse of industrial location in Tetovo for modern purposes, while preserving the character. However, the majority of citizens believe that there are some elements that deserve higher recognition during transformation processes and among them the architectural concept stands out the most. When asked to choose which new programs they would like to see developed in these locations and citizens choose as follows:

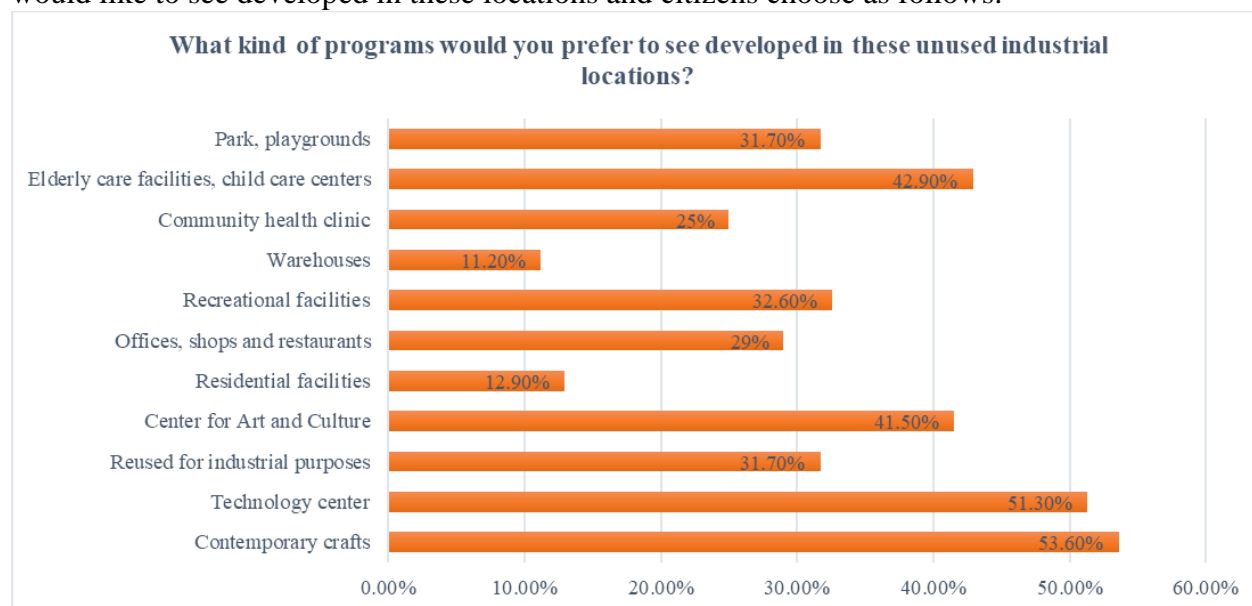


Diagram 4. Answer on new programs for abandoned industrial locations in Tetovo (by the author)

Since some of the industrial buildings are currently being demolished or are being planned for the construction of new projects, citizens were asked what they thought about this issue, around 70% of the population declare that they have no knowledge about the new projects occurring, which shows a high lack of information. At first, citizens appear to agree with the demolition

of industrial facilities for new projects, but after learning about all possible options to preserve these objects, citizens prefer reuse instead their destruction. About 41.5% answered that these facilities have spaces that can be useful for the community, and there are several benefits that could result from the reuse of these places, but also about the challenges that follow this process. Increasing job opportunities (71%) and attracting new businesses (59%) were rated as the biggest benefits that can come out of these transformations. As for the challenges, legal ownership issues were considered the most problematic, as well as finances, the current physical condition of the buildings and the preservation of heritage values. To overcome these challenges, the community proposed several measures - using external and internal donations and different funds, hiring experts, determining the objects that must be preserved and destroyed, evaluating the historical and cultural potential, cooperation with the community, adapting the use of buildings to modern needs, education and sensitization of the public, preservation of cultural values by meeting current needs, appropriate laws, public debates and using experience from Western countries.

In the last part, where the questions were related to sustainability and design suggestions, citizens emphasize the importance of the environment in these transformations, suggesting that transformed projects implement green building standards and provide as much green urban space as possible. In terms of infrastructure, residents feel there is enough room for improvement, whether it's transport links, or services like water, electricity, etc. Although they are in favor of using these facilities, the public notice that there may be certain challenges in terms of safety, especially the structural stability, as well as managing hazardous waste that can often appear in the grounds of industrial facilities. Locals assess that technology ought to be incorporated, in reused industrial facilities, whether for energy management or even security issues.

5. Discussions

By analyzing the answers to these questionnaires, we can identify the similarities and differences between two populations, and their approach to industrial heritage.

Industrialism in Oberschöneide has had a great impact on the lives of the citizens, which they take pride in and for this reason they also consider the industrial buildings as historical symbols of the city. On the other hand, in Tetovo, industrialism did not have the same impact, which is why the residents have a weaker connection with the industrial facilities, although the people who worked in these places, or lived in the times when these facilities reached the peak of their success, know a lot about the history and values of these sites and tend to have a strong emotional bond.

People of Oberschöneide have encountered many successful transformations of industrial locations with new programs, for this reason they are more open to these processes, while in Tetovo there is a skepticism about the manner and professionalism with which such projects would be managed. However, both groups express interest in the decision-making process for these locations. Information on new projects turns out to be low in both countries, although citizens manage to distinguish that these projects have their own advantages and disadvantages. Both groups show interest in the sustainability of new projects, however, what is observed is that the residents of Oberschöneide consider it very important to preserve the character of the buildings and pass on the history of these locations to future generations, a concern which is not noticed in the responses of the people of Tetovo. The demands for new programs in these locations are different, not only based on the city, but also based on gender, age group, and so on. However, the commonality is that citizens consider it reasonable to give life to these places and to benefit the community, instead of leave them abandoned.

6. Conclusions

According to many researches, although currently the level of community involvement is low, it is a key element to have the most sustainable transformations. The involvement of the community allows us to learn more about the history of these locations, helps us determine the values and make decisions for new programs that will benefit the citizens.

During the research in two different countries, we managed to notice similarities and differences regarding the community's approach to industrial heritage. However, the final result is that citizens want to join and contribute to the protection and reuse of industrial facilities, as they see potential in them that unfortunately can be lost if we continue to neglect these sites.

We can recognize that Oberschöneweide's industrial heritage is important to the local community (residents) and their sense of belonging. This is shown by the community's need and desire to participate in the development and reuse of industrial heritage sites. It is unfortunate that even in projects that claim to focus on the community, there is no prior research into the community's needs or discussions where the locals can be included in the decision-making processes.

In Tetovo, although at first impression there is not a very strong connection with industrial facilities, the citizens should be more involved in research on industrial heritage, as from their experience can be learned a lot of information about the history of this country but also about the needs of the city. Their desire to be involved was present, but they were skeptical that their suggestions would be taken into account and such projects would be treated with reasonable care.

References

- [1]. Behrens-Ufer, n.d.. *Industrial site in Berlin transformed into innovative commercial district-factsheet*, Berlin: Strabag.
- [2]. Gogovski, G., 1996. *Teteks-Vistinska prikazna*, Tetovo: Teteks AD.
- [3]. Ibraimi, F., 2022. Industrial heritage buildings in Tetovo: between demolition and reuse. *KNOWLEDGE – International Journal*, 55(3), pp. 455-460.
- [4]. Ibraimi, F., Radevski, A. & Jakupi, E., 2023. Assessment of the reuse potential of industrial buildings in Tetovo case study: "Todor Tsipovski — Merjan" TETEKs. *KNOWLEDGE – International Journal*, 61(3), pp. 481-486.
- [5]. Landorf, C., 2009. A Framework for Sustainable Heritage Management: A Study of UK Industrial Heritage Sites. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, pp. 494-510.
- [6]. Landorf, C., 2011. A future for the Past: A new theoretical Model for Sustainable Historic Urban Environments. *Planning Practice & Research*, pp. 147-165.
- [7]. NAG-building, n.d.. *Visit Berlin*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.visitberlin.de/en/nag-building> [Accessed 30 May 2025].
- [8]. Nikolov, M., Risteski, H. & Dimovska, G., 2012. Political economy of Tetovo and Kumanovo: Legacies from the command economy. *CEA Journal of Economics*, 7(2), pp. 53-69.
- [9]. Oevermann, H. et al., 2016. Participation in the Reuse of Industrial Heritage Sites: The Case of Oberschöneweide, Berlin. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, pp. 43-58.
- [10]. Pavlovski, J. & Serafimovski, T., 1986. *Teteks 1951-1986*, Tetovo: NIP Nova Makedonija.
- [11]. Rodwell, D., 2007. *Conservation and Sustainability in Historic Cities*. Oxford: Blackwell.