

Reconstruction, adaptive reuse and preservation of industrial heritage in Shanghai

Li Fan, University of Kassel, Germany
Uwe Altrock, University of Kassel, Germany

Abstract

Since the 1990s, “withdrawing secondary industry and promoting tertiary industry” has become a main strategy of industrial restructuring in Shanghai. Correspondingly, industrial sites in inner city have undergone tremendous transformation. After the initial phase of mass demolition and mass new construction, brownfield regeneration in Shanghai has shifted towards a more cautious approach of treating existing structure since the 2010s. Large scale of industrial sites, even not listed as cultural monuments, have been renovated and reused instead of redevelopment for commercial and residential purposes, which was often the case in the 1980s and 1990s. The paper presents various approaches of dealing with industrial heritage and argued that in recent decade adaptive reuse has been given higher priority than other approaches of dealing with industrial heritage, such as demolition and relocation. In the waves of redevelopment in the early 2000s, only few extraordinary buildings were kept while the rest of the factory buildings was demolished. In other cases, historical buildings were relocated from the original site and reconstructed to give way for real estate high-rise buildings. Recently, more and more large scale industrial sites have been completely kept and reused for mixed use of business, commercial and cultural purposes, so-called creative parks. Besides creative parks, an ongoing project was launched to develop an industrial site along the Huangpu River to an industrial park.

Keywords

Shanghai, adaptive reuse, preservation, industrial heritage

1. Introduction

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, cultural heritage has undergone tremendous destruction in the construction boom in Shanghai. Little attention has been given to heritage conservation in urban regeneration process. As commented by Zheng Shiling “Shanghai did not experienced wars as Berlin, however economic and political reform left unmovable traces. From 1995-2001, 28.21 Mio m² buildings were dismantled. Almost 70% of historical buildings disappeared. When the Liberation Army set Shanghai free in May 1945, fires were not allowed to use in Shanghai to protect buildings, instead, which were destroyed by new construction” (Zheng, 2003: 29). The principle for urban regeneration was identified as “demolition, renovation and preservation” (*chai, gai* and *liu*), which left preservation as the last priority. In most cases, the targets of preservation are important historical buildings, particularly registered cultural heritage sites.

Since the 2000s, regeneration policies have been shifted towards a preservation-oriented approach Shanghai Municipal Government has taken a series of actions to reinforce heritage conservation. In October 2003, Mr. Han Zheng, the city mayor at that time, called to “establish the strictest conservation

institution” on the occasion of a government meeting. He required that “areas of conservation shall be extended; and laws and regulations shall be developed”. In the next year in August he interpreted a new concept of development logic, i.e., “new construction is development, conservation and renewal means development as well”.

The policy turn has a significant impact. One of the most important documents was the issue of the *Preservation statute of Historical and Cultural Areas and Historical Architecture in Shanghai* (Preservation Statute) in 2002 to provide a comprehensive guideline of heritage conservation. The Preservation Statute has widened the scope of a “historical architecture” to buildings that should be older than 30 years to replace the previous definition which required “the building was built 1840-1949”. It is also in this Preservation Statute which clearly stated that industrial heritage is also a type of heritage and should be listed for conservation. Further, other documents were promulgated to strengthen the political vision of heritage conservation such as *Notice on strengthening conservation of historical and cultural areas and historical architecture* in 2004.

Nevertheless, despite the change of micro political climate in practice it took years to shift urban regeneration approach towards a more preservation-oriented regeneration. This paper looks at industrial heritage as case studies because industrial heritage has been paid less attention in monument conservation by the state and the public, hence deserve more attention. Further, this paper studies heritage sites which are not always registered. Registered heritage sites are clearly under the protection of legal framework, however, only in small numbers. Monument registration often lags behind of regeneration projects. The treatment of non-registered buildings with historical and cultural values reflects the trend of heritage conservation. The political talks by top politicians and media coverage functioned as informal legal framework to guide the shift of urban regeneration. We select different cases in various historical periods to observe the changing trends towards heritage conservation.

2. Case studies

2.1. Case 1: Demolition and reconstruction

No.1 Yimin Food Factory (Xiangyanqiao Road 13, Hongkou District, Shanghai)

The No.1 Yimin Food Factory was founded as early as 1913 and moved to Shanghai’s suburb Fengxian District in 2004 due to the policy of “Three Wastes Control”¹. The plot of 43,754 m² was divided into three parts for three projects developed between 2004-2009. Each project has its own address, the residence cluster at the southern part of the plot, the office cluster at the northwestern part of the plot and the museum at the northeastern part of the plot. The office and residential parts were developed by Shanghai Aijia Investment Company, a private company. Compared with other projects of comprehensive new complexes, it is a relatively small project. The residential part occupies the largest size, 30850 m², followed by the commercial part with 10000 m² and the museum part with 2904 m².

¹ In 2004, a group of factories with large quantity of discharge of waste water, exhaust gas and solid waste, was selected by the Municipal Government to be closed or relocated from inner city of Shanghai.



Figure 1: the view of the factory in google earth on 20.05.2000



Figure 2: the view of the factory in google earth on 24.12.2018

The residential part, known as Aijia residence (Wuhua Road 246), consists of 4 high-rise buildings with 20-31 floors and an FAR of 3.36. The commercial project, known as Aijia International Mansion (Wuhua Road 288), includes four inter-connected high-rise buildings with 16 floors. Named after Aijia, both projects are developed by Shanghai Aijia Investment Company.



Figure 3: the relocation of buildings in the factory. Source: own drawing.

The museum part of No.1 Yimin Food Factory² (Xiangyanqiao Road 13) includes three buildings, the Spanish Villa, the Cooling Tower and the Exhibition Hall.

The Spanish Villa, built in 1937-1940, was the residence of former foreign employees with higher hierarchy. After 1949, it was used as the office of the factory. The building was demolished in 1985 due to the enlargement of the factory. In the 2000s it was rebuilt according to original design and in a smaller scale, but not on the original site.

The cooling tower was built in 1940, used as cooling system for ice production. The tower has a unique structure with wooden façade and concrete base, and it used to be one of the landmarks of the factory. The building was demolished in 1965 due to upgrading of cooling techniques and rebuilt in the 2000s according to original design in a smaller scale, but not on the original site. The Exhibition Hall is a two-story renovated old house, used as a museum to present the history of No. 1 Yimin Food Factory. It is the former canteen of the factory.

The Exhibition Hall was listed in the 5th the fifth group of “Outstanding Historical Architecture” in Shanghai on 17 August 2015. On site, neither information about the history of the buildings, nor about their original locations, is displayed.

2.2 Case 2: adaptive reuse for business parks

Shanghai International Fashion Center³ (Yangshupu Road 2866, Yangpu District, Shanghai)

² The information of the museum is available at <http://www.sh-aiguo.gov.cn/node2/node4/node7/userobject1ai499.html>, visited on 02.02.2021.

³ The information is based on the website of Shanghai Political Consultative Conference, <http://www.shszx.gov.cn/node2/node5368/node5380/node5396/u1ai106220.html>, visited on 13.01.2021.



Figure 4: Shanghai International Fashion Center. Photo: Ge Jie.

Originally a Japanese Cotton Factory, the industrial site was built in 1935, designed by Japanese architect. At its peak, it was used to have more than 10,000 employees, known as *wanrenchang*, literally meaning the factory of 10,000 people. It was later renamed as **Shanghai no.17 cotton textile factory**. In 1999, the site was enlisted by a cultural monument in Shanghai by Shanghai Municipal Government. The site is located along the Huangpu River, one of the Shanghai's industrial bases. As early as 1990s, the factory was intended to close down or restructure itself, however, happened until 2007 as in this year the large number of employees got retired, which made it easier to restructure the factory.

As one of the strategies to develop Shanghai as an international metropolis, the site has been identified as an international fashion center and enjoyed preferential policies from Yangpu District Government and financial support from the national, municipal and district governments. After the factory was moved to Jiangsu Province in 2007, the regeneration has started in 2009 to transform it to a creative park, which opened in 2011. In 143,000 m², the park is used for fashion show, luxury shops, entertainment and restaurants, office and design studios and so on. Through a bidding process, the famous French Architecture Office Arte Charpentier won the bidding from the nine candidates. Around 30,000 m² of buildings were demolished as they were regarded as not valuable to keep. The rest buildings were carefully renovated. Large open space has been increased through a terrace along the waterway and a central avenue for pedestrian. Further, new buildings in modern style with glass elements have been added. The park is divided into two districts. The southern part of the Yangshupu Road, in 134 hectares and ca. 70,000 m², is mainly used for the public activities including fashion show and so on, and the north of the Yangshupu Road, in 47 hectares, mainly used apartment, office and parking. A show place with the size of 9,500 m² has been created as the highlight of the park for cultural events, fashion show and product release. The high-end luxury events were aimed at enhancing international influence of Shanghai and only for the invited guests, for capacity reasons as well as security reasons. It is until 2020 that the last phase of apartment hotel of the whole park was finished.

In this case, the high quality of space has been created with strong public intervention. It has integrated the elements of public open space and heritage conservation.

2.3 Case 3: preservation as an industrial heritage park

Yangshupu Industrial Park (Yangshupu Road 2800, Yangpu District, Shanghai)



Figure: Shanghai Yangshupu Power Plant Industrial Park. Photo: Wang Pengtao.

Built in 1913, the former power plant was the largest thermal power plant in the Far East. It covered land area of 36,000 m². For decades it has contributed largely to Shanghai's urban development, however, caused air pollution due to coal-burning. It was closed in the 2010s on the occasion of project of developing public space along Huangpu River. The plan was to preserve the whole thermal power plant as an industrial park, including all the industrial buildings and structures. Besides industrial buildings there are two chimneys in 105 meters high, which became landmark of the site. Tongji Yuanzuo Design Studio, which is also responsible for the pilot project of public space along Yangpu River, was invited to design the industrial park in 2019⁴.

In a whole the original buildings and structure have been authentically preserved. Few new elements have been added to make the park more accessible for the visitors, which have been carefully integrated into the old structure. In 2020 the park was open to the public and since then became a place for relaxation and experience of industrial culture. One of the storage building was renovated and used as Huiku Art Center to host art events as well as commercial events. The latest event was on 15 July 2021 to host a product launch by YSL, a world famous cosmetics company. In 2016 the site was listed as historical protection district and in 2019 it is listed as "industrial heritage with national significance". It is the first in Shanghai's history to preserve the whole industrial plant as a park.

3. Summary

The three cases show different treatments towards heritage sites in various historical periods. In the first case, heritage buildings on the industrial sites were demolished in the 1980s to give way for new construction. Later in the 2000s, the buildings were reconstructed for two reasons. First, the macro political climate has shifted towards a more preservation-oriented approach in Shanghai since the early 2000s. Though it is up to the property owners to interpret and practice heritage conservation, the political slogan has a positive influence in heritage conservation. Second, the factory owner intended to find the lost memory and strengthen its identity. The reconstruction of the two buildings was on the occasion of opening the museum to present the history of the factory. This shows increasing awareness to the significance of cultural identity and heritage conservation, a shift from ignoring culture heritage to more respect to its cultural value.

⁴ Archdaily, https://www.archdaily.cn/cn/office/tong-ji-yuan-zuo-she-ji-gong-zuo-shi?ad_name=project-specs&ad_medium=single, visited on 10.09.2021.

Case 2 of adaptive reuse shows the economic value of heritage has been utilized in a way for a business park with unique industry-style buildings, which is a further step of actively revitalizing heritage sites. The motivation is to use it rather than protect it. In Case 3, the value of heritage sites has been given priority by clearly defining it as an industrial heritage park. The motivation is a museum-style protection in an authentic way and meanwhile can be visited by the public to appreciate its cultural and historical value.

4. Reference

Zheng, S. (2003) Shanghai and Berlin: International cities in changing forever. *Time and Architecture [shidai jianzhu]* 2003(3): 28-31.