

From Metal to Paper From 2nd General Lyceum of Aigio to Paper-Making Factory

Our Cause

30 years... it has been thirty years since the 2nd General Lyceum of Aigio was transferred 'temporarily' to the containers in the mouth of a stream. It is ironic actually... The school was moved there because of an earthquake and it is assumed it could be relocated only after some flood hits the area. But Aigio does not suffer only from this. If one takes a walk at the heart of the city in every corner they will find an abandoned building being left to rot. But the most characteristic one is the old paper-making factory in the port. "A jewel protected by the Archaeological Services", said Mr Kalogeropoulos, the mayor of the municipality. So why not emigrate the school 'building' there?

This has led a small group of senior high school students to take this situation into their own hands and endeavour for their school to finally be moved to a suitable location. Interviews, the power of the media, and research on archives are only some of the tools they use. Not for them, of course, as such an initiative would take years to complete, but for the generations to come.



#1: Paper-making factory Aigio

History

So how did they get here? It is 1995 and a huge 6.1 Richter earthquake is about to hit Aigio. “Of course, the local authorities have taken note of this and are preparing for it”, said Mr Papageorgiou, a former teacher of the 2nd General Lyceum of Aigio. “The old building was unsuitable”, he continues, “so for the next year, even after the earthquake, we went from one building to another until the municipality prepared the prebuilt containers as a ‘temporary’ solution”. For the next few years, numerous attempts were made for a new school building but to no avail. In fact, the last official attempt for a relocation was made in 2011, when it had been the first priority of the region of Western Greece but due to lack of funding the request was abandoned, nowadays it is not even being discussed.

Some years earlier, in 1991, “the permanent ‘padlock’ is forced upon the factory”, said Ms Kounavi, a former secretary of the factory. The factory was built in 1927 and saw its prime until 1960, attracting numerous workers from all over Greece, and bolstering the local economy dramatically by “producing the best paper and exporting it almost everywhere”, according to Ms Kounavi. It is like a scene from a thriller today inside. There used to be tons of people on the port, you would get happy just by hearing laughter and shouting... but now it is all gone...”, she said sadly.

ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
ΝΟΜΑΡΧΙΑ ΑΧΑΪΑΣ.....
ΠΟΛΕΟΔΟΜΙΚΟ.....
ΓΡΑΦΕΙΟ ΑΙΓΙΟΥ.....
ΑΡΙΘΜΟΣ ΑΔΕΙΑΣ 185/97

6 97
ΠΟΛΗ... ΑΙΓΙΟ.....
ΣΥΝΟΙΚΙΑ Ηρακλίου (Λαγκάδα)στ.....
ΟΔΟΣ.....

ΔΗΜΟΣ ΑΙΓΙΟΥ

ΑΔΕΙΑ ΟΙΚΟΔΟΜΗΣ

..... Ανέχερση νέου ισόγειου διδακτηρίου για τη στέγαση του ..
..... 2ου ΓΥΜΝΑΣΙΟΥ - ΛΥΚΕΙΟΥ ΑΙΓΙΟΥ.....
..... από τον

ΕΠΕΙΤΑ ΑΠΟ

1. Την από 25.05.97 22-11-95..... αίτηση του κ. Ο.Σ.Κ.....
που συνοδεύεται από τις μελέτες και τα λοιπά δικαιολογητικά σύμφωνα με το Π.Δ.....
2. Τον έλεγχο των μελετών για την τήρηση των πολεοδομικών διατάξεων και όλων των κανονισμών δόμησης και έχοντας υπόψη:

- α) Τα άρθρα 55 και 56 του Ν.Δ 177/1923
- β) Το από 6.7.93..... Π. Δ. «Περί του τρόπου έκδοσης των οικοδομικών αδειών»

ΣΟΦΗΓΟΥΜΕ

Στο..... την άδεια που ζητήσε.

1. Τις μελέτες συνέταξαν οι μηχανικοί:

- α) Την αρχιτεκτονική μελέτη..... Ο.Σ.Κ.
- β) Τη μελέτη του φέροντος οργανισμού..... Ο.Σ.Κ.
- γ) Τη μελέτη..... θερμομονώσεως..... Ο.Σ.Κ.
- δ) Τις μελέτες..... πυροπροστασίας..... Ο.Σ.Κ.

ΔΗΜΟΣ ΑΙΓΙΟΥ
Αρ. Πρωτ. 2429
Ημερομηνία 6/5/97

2. Επιβλέποντες μηχανικοί ορίστηκαν:

- α) Για τη γενική επίβλεψη..... Ο.Σ.Κ.
- β) Για την επίβλεψη του φέροντος οργανισμού..... Ο.Σ.Κ.
- γ) Για την επίβλεψη..... θερμομόνωσης..... Ο.Σ.Κ.
- δ) Για την επίβλεψη..... πυροπροστασίας..... Ο.Σ.Κ.

Η άδεια αυτή ισχύει για 3 (3) χρόνια
24/97

Ημερομηνία 3/4/97

Εξουσιοδότηση
Αρχιτέκτονας

Αρχιτέκτονας
Αρχιτέκτονας

#2: Found in school archives: transfer to the containers signed by the municipality and Organization of School Buildings, 1995

Politics-Building

But why this building? “It is a very innovative idea”, said Mr Kalogeropoulos, showcasing the progressive nature of this initiative. “Although there have been numerous attempts throughout the years both for the revitalisation of the factory and the relocation of the 2nd General Lyceum of Aigio there was no luck”, he continues. At the end he pinpointed that despite being expensive the project is doable.

Apart from the politics, the building also has great value in its own right. “This building’s architectural significance is huge!”, said Panagiota Spiropoulou, an architect who graduated from the 2nd General Lyceum of Aigio and whose thesis was focused on the revitalisation of this building. She gave the team a lot of useful tips and ideas while also pinpointing that “I liked your idea a lot. It is very interesting. In fact I am jealous I did not think of it myself!”. To further ensure the suitability of the building the team got into contact with Mr Xristopoulos, a qualified civil engineer. “Everything is doable but will is needed”, he kept saying. “I like your idea a lot, in fact, I believe that it is the only possible location to transfer the high school. There are some minor problems with the location and the building but I believe that after careful research and some not-so-major transformation, it can definitely be used as a school.”. In the end, he advised the team to aim higher and endeavour to collect as many signatures as possible to present it to the Ministry of Education as a collective effort of all the concerned citizens.

Environment-Culture

Does this hold any environmental value though? “Of course it does!”, stated Evi Alexandropoulou, an environmentalist whose research is focused on sustainable cities. There are multiple opportunities for integrating renewable energy or sustainable materials into the design, not only concerning the school complex but the entire area, new materials in the field of construction and applied technologies that create bioclimatic buildings. On top of that, there is a chance of displaying the natural environment of the wider area within the premises. “A perfect environmental education opportunity for nature within a school complex”, she pointed out. Moreover, she proposed the double use of the building as an exhibition stage-art centre: “Education and culture. This could be the new identity of the flagship complex for Aigio.” Regarding the students point of view, Mr Papatheodorou, a geologist-professor in the University of Patras, added “The whole revitalisation should be an experiential experience for the students towards understanding sustainable development.”. Finally when it comes to the way of revitalising this building is connected with local regional development, Ms Alexandropoulou said “Buildings are connected to areas, people, social and economic life. They carry the ‘history’ of a region and are ultimately a legacy for future generations. They relate to the past, concern the present and advance the future.”

Dissemination

Does this concern only a selected few? No! The initiative has been disseminated around the city, through both the team's and the municipality's social media and radio broadcasts. Additionally, an online petition has been uploaded, raising more than 400 signatures (on the day of writing) but also receiving a lot of feedback through online surveys. In fact 100% of (ex) students - (ex) teachers-parents who were asked, agreed that the school unit bears deficiencies while 97.5% understand that such education conditions act negatively on the students' performance and psychology. Additionally, 75% agreed with the proposal of the paper-making factory.

To add to that, the team was invited to national radio (ERT Patras) where they got to adduce their idea and got a lot of positive reactions, their idea was also disseminated throughout a national press release (Macedonian/Athens News Agency). Moreover, the team took part in dissemination events within the framework of the ERASMUS+ program, which acted as motivation for the whole cause. Lastly, they participated in the *YRE: Climate Crisis in the Hood* panel where they discussed their cause and gained positive feedback from experts, specifically Ms Tzanakaki, an architect focused on revitalising old buildings.

Hope

Concluding, this initiative brings all types of growth to the local community while helping both the 2nd General Lyceum of Aigio and the old paper-making factory to take a step into the 21st century. Let's seize this opportunity to shape a brighter tomorrow for our children and community! And who knows... maybe someday we will escape these metal traps.



#3: 2nd General Lyceum of Aigio 2024 (in the back the dale is visible)

Resources

- Photos: Personal Archive
- Online Petition: <https://chnq.it/GwNNRbptJ5>
- “The industrial complex of Aigio’s paper making factory”, a book by Margarita Aleksiou and Eleni Emmanoulopoulou
(https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DnXbFLf7YJQYTdFJpjYOzyB1-Ct-b8B_/view)
- Interviews (All taken by the students):
 - Dimitris Kalogeropoulos, Mayor of Aigio
 - Evi Alexandropoulou, Environmentalist
 - Panagiota Spiropoulou, Architect (Thesis: <https://dspace.lib.ntua.gr/xmlui/handle/123456789/41337>)
 - Mr Christopoulos, Civil Engineer
 - Mr Papageorgiou, Former Teacher of 2nd GEL of Aigio
 - Mr Papatheodorou, Geologist-Professor in the University of Patras
 - Ms Kounavi, Former Secretary of Aigio Paper-Making Factory