

Transformation of Island Iconography under the Influence of Industrial Architecture – Impact of Oil Industry on Adriatic island of Krk

*By Ivana Podnar**

On the island of Krk, the oil processing industry played a transformative role, not only in the transformation of the island's landscape, but also its symbolic capital. Due to the development of industry, the urban landscape changed significantly, and industrial architecture suddenly became an important element of the symbolic representation of the entire island. The analysis of Omišalj on the island of Krk reveals the complexity inherent in the construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction of urban iconography. For centuries, the Adriatic islands have cultivated a distinctive harmony between vernacular architecture and the natural landscape, shaped by traditional livelihoods with which local communities closely identified. This longstanding equilibrium is now challenged—and redefined—through the evolving dynamics of urban and industrial transformation. Cultural heritage—from Antiquity, through the Middle Ages, to the Renaissance—has long served as a vital component of symbolic capital, persisting in the architectural language of Omišalj through both form and material. However, the introduction of modern industry brought significant changes to the physical environment, altering its visual identity, functionality, and traditional economic activities. It also led to the emergence of new residential zones designed to accommodate an industrial workforce. This research examines these transformations not only as a localized case study, but also within a broader context—considering how contemporary industries, particularly tourism, often exert an even more invasive and radical influence on the island's iconography and cultural landscape.

Keywords: *industrial architecture, island, iconography, Adriatic, Krk*

Introduction

This study examines the urban transformation of the Adriatic island of Krk as a result of the development of industrial architecture. While industrialization on the islands traditionally evolved in close relation to established practices such as fish farming, processing, and shipbuilding, Krk also witnessed the emergence of typologically distinct forms of industry, including oil production. These new industrial facilities introduced not only unfamiliar architectural and visual forms into the island's landscape but also initiated prolonged and complex processes of identity negotiation within the local community. The research explores how these developments have reshaped both the physical space and the socio-cultural dynamics of the island, offering insights into the broader implications of industrialization in insular contexts. The primary aim of this research is to explore the long-term effects of the

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oil industry on the island of Krk, an area previously characterized by limited industrial development. Particular attention is given to changes in the built environment—namely, the construction of industrial facilities and residential settlements for workers—as well as to the challenges posed to the preservation of cultural and natural heritage, both of which represent vital economic and identity-bearing resources for the island. This study seeks to understand how the introduction of a high-risk industrial activity, such as oil processing, reshaped the symbolic image of the island and influenced the self-perception of its inhabitants. Furthermore, the research questions whether the presence of such an industry may have paradoxically acted as a catalyst for systematic spatial planning and critical reflection—an approach often sidelined by the dominant pressures of tourism development. To grasp the complexity of the topic, the paper will first provide a concise historical overview of Omišalj, with particular emphasis on its more recent industrial transformation. The analysis of the phenomenon is grounded in the interpretation of various types of imagery that construct and communicate spatial identity. These include postcards and tourist promotional materials, which are deliberately crafted to project an idealized image of the place tailored to external expectations; media representations—both textual and visual—that reflect the socio-political context and discursive frameworks surrounding industrialization; and finally, artworks, particularly paintings, which offer a poetic and highly subjective perspective on the landscape, town, and its inhabitants. By juxtaposing these different image types, the research aims to reveal the tensions between imposed identities, lived experiences, and imagined geographies.

The analysis also incorporates *verbal images*—vision statements, planning documents, and strategic development texts—produced by various levels of government (both state and local). These narratives, while not visual in the traditional sense, play a crucial role in shaping spatial transformations by articulating frameworks for development in both planning and financial terms. Each type of image examined—whether visual, textual, or symbolic—was constructed for a distinct audience and serves a particular strategic purpose. To uncover the complex and often contradictory meanings embedded within these materials, the study employs a comparative iconographic analysis, both diachronically and synchronically. Special focus is given to the meanings that emerge at points of overlap or tension between different image types. Through this approach, the research identifies recurring iconographic motifs that remain resilient across shifts in political and economic paradigms—such as images of monuments and natural landmarks. Simultaneously, it highlights patterns that, while visually similar, are accompanied by contradictory verbal framings (e.g., newspaper imagery), reflecting changes in governance, ideology, and economic focus. By applying this iconographic lens across a diverse set of image typologies and juxtaposing them with embodied, lived experiences of space, the research reveals discontinuities—gaps where conflicting mental images of the same location coexist. Within these gaps, new visual and conceptual patterns emerge, pointing to the potential development of new symbolic representations of contemporary Omišalj.

Review of Literature

Previous research has addressed various individual aspects of island iconography and development, often within disciplinary silos. Art historians have systematically studied the island's artistic and architectural legacy, focusing on ancient¹, medieval² and renaissance monuments. Architectural historians have examined the island's modern built heritage, particularly its formal and stylistic qualities³. Sociologists have explored demographic challenges and patterns of population change⁴, while economists and political scientists have proposed development strategies, primarily from the perspective of tourism as the dominant economic driver⁵. Additionally, local and regional newspapers have documented the public discourse surrounding the rise, transformation, and eventual decline of industrial activity on the island. The local gallery organized the exhibition *Omišalj on old postcards, photographs, watercolors and drawings*⁶. While these contributions provide valuable insights into specific facets of the island's transformation, they often treat them in isolation. This research aims to bridge these disciplinary gaps by offering a synthetic, image-based analysis that captures the interplay between visual culture, spatial transformation, and socio-political narratives. In doing so, it seeks to develop a more comprehensive understanding of how industrialization—particularly in the form of the oil industry—has shaped not only the physical but also the symbolic landscape of the island. All of these sources—academic studies, media narratives, policy documents, artistic representations, and the curatorial work of the local gallery—provided a valuable foundation for developing a comprehensive overview of the urban iconography of this island setting. They serve as a basis for a critical reflection on how the shifts brought about by industrial development, particularly the introduction of the oil industry, have prompted a reevaluation of both cultural heritage and the natural landscape. These landscapes and monuments have long served as anchors of identity for the inhabitants of Omišalj, contributing to a deeply rooted sense of place and belonging. The research investigates how this evolving spatial and symbolic environment has challenged, reshaped, or reinforced the collective image of local identity and, more broadly, the identity of the island as a cultural and geographic homeland.

¹M. Čaušević-Bully, 'Municipium Flavium Fulfinum – dijakorinijska studija gradske strukture s posebnim osvrtom na forumski prosto,' *Prilozi Instituta za arheologiju u Zagrebu* 32 (2015): 111-145.

²A. Faber, 'Osvrt na neka utvrđenja otoka Krka od vremena prehistorije do antike i srednjeg vijeka,' *Prilozi Instituta za arheologiju u Zagrebu* 3/4, (1986): 113-140.

³A. Mutnjaković, ed. *Arhitekt Julije De Luca* (Zagreb: Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, Hrvatski muzej arhitekture, 2013), 6.

⁴M. Jovanić, I. Turk, 'Promjene u dinamičkim obilježjima naseljenosti otoka Krka,' *Društvena istraživanja* 22, no. 1 (2013): 167-193.

⁵Ministarstvo razvitka i obnove, *Nacionalni program razvitka otoka* (Ministarstvo razvitka i obnove, 1997.)

⁶Exhibition took place in Loža Gallery in August 2020.

Historical and Industrial Omišalj

The town of Omišalj, located on the island of Krk in the northern Adriatic, traces its origins to a prehistoric hillfort established by the Illyrian tribe of the Liburni. Situated on the elevated site of the present-day town, this early settlement demonstrates a remarkable continuity of habitation that extends from prehistoric times through to the modern era. In the 1st century CE, the nearby bay of Sepen became the site of ancient Fulfinum, a Roman town built adjacent to the former Liburnian stronghold. Fulfinum was constructed as a planned Roman urban settlement, complete with the essential infrastructural and civic components of Roman life—temples, thermal baths, a water supply system, and sewage infrastructure—and was primarily inhabited by retired Roman soldiers. The town also featured a fortified harbor with a 70-meter-long pier and two defensive towers, underscoring its strategic and economic importance in the region. Nearly 1,900 years later, the very site of ancient Fulfinum became the location of a major petrochemical industrial complex, marking a radical shift in the use and meaning of the landscape. Paradoxically, the construction of industrial facilities at the Sepen site played a pivotal role in the modern reawakening of this ancient Roman city. The scale and impact of the industrial project prompted systematic archaeological excavations, which ultimately confirmed that the long-speculated location of Fulfinum—previously known only through scattered historical references—was indeed situated here. Thus, industrial development, while often viewed as a force of disruption, inadvertently contributed to the unveiling and preservation of a buried chapter of the island's past.⁷ At the same time, however, the very industrial development that led to the rediscovery of Fulfinum has also contributed to its ongoing destruction. The construction of new port infrastructure—particularly the expansion of the dock—has resulted in the devastation of some parts of the archaeological site, including the remains of the ancient Roman harbor and the southern tower that once guarded it.⁸ The evolving coexistence of ancient heritage and modern industry at the site of Omišalj mirrors the shifting needs, values, and priorities of the society to which it belongs. This layered relationship reveals itself not only through policy and planning but through the very fabric of the landscape and the architecture inscribed within it. Over time, these spatial transformations become visual and material records of broader cultural change—images through which we can read the long-term dynamics of continuity and rupture, preservation and progress. The resulting landscape is not simply a backdrop, but a palimpsest of collective memory, identity, and contested development.

The uninterrupted continuity of life in the area surrounding Omišalj reflects a long-standing negotiation of space among successive cultures and civilizations. Even in antiquity, the site bore witness to competing interests—first between the indigenous Illyrian tribe of the Liburni and the Roman colonizers, and later, in the 6th century, with the arrival of the Croats, who brought with them new conceptions of settlement and architectural expression. Before the Croats' arrival, an early

⁷A. Faber, 'Osvrt na neka utvrđenja otoka Krka od vremena prehistorije do antike i srednjeg vijeka', *Prilozi Instituta za arheologiju u Zagrebu* 34 (1986): 116.

⁸M. Čaušević-Bully, 'Municipium Flavium Fulfinum – dijakronijska studija gradske strukture s posebnim osvrtom na forumski prostor', *Prilozi Instituta za arheologiju u Zagrebu* 32 (2015): 121.

Christian basilica was constructed in the 5th century on the ruins of the Roman town of Fulfinum. This basilica not only arose physically on the footprint of the Roman city but also materially incorporated its remnants—repurposing architectural elements from the ancient structures to serve new spiritual and cultural needs. In the 7th century, the population abandoned Fulfinum and relocated to the elevated site of the former Liburnian hillfort, laying the foundation for what would become the present-day town of Omišalj. Despite the shift in settlement, the area of Fulfinum remained a meaningful landscape. During the medieval period, evidence of continued religious construction at the site reveals its lasting significance. Today, these remains are known collectively as *Mirine*, symbolizing both the physical and symbolic layering of civilizations—each building upon the other, each leaving an imprint on the landscape that speaks to changing worldviews and societal structures.⁹ The first mention of the name of the town of Omišalj, in Latin *Ad Musculum*, was recorded in 1153, and in Croatian in a document from 1453.

The historical sequence unfolding within this relatively small locality—spanning from the Iron Age to the present day—reveals a continuous process of spatial shaping and reshaping. With each transformation, the place not only adopts new functions but often new names, while older layers remain hidden beneath the surface, occasionally reemerging centuries later to capture the interest of scholars and the broader public alike. The dynamics of these changes are driven by a complex interplay of migration, shifting political and religious structures, evolving social norms, technological and industrial advancement, and economic redefinitions of resources and modes of exploitation. This ongoing transformation is also reflected in the evolving iconography of the place—the images, symbols, and narratives through which its identity is constructed and communicated. Since the 1970s, the onset of industrialization has introduced a new and disruptive phase in this continuum, both directly and indirectly altering the identity patterns of this small Adriatic island. In doing so, it has redefined not only the physical landscape, but also the cultural memory and symbolic meaning of Omišalj, prompting a reconsideration of what is preserved, what is erased, and what emerges anew.

Yugoslav Oil Pipeline

In 1974, an oil transport company was founded, the then Yugoslav Oil Pipeline (JUNA), or today's JANAF, and in 1979, the first crude oil tanker was unloaded at the Omišalj Terminal.¹⁰ The Omišalj Terminal, part of the JANAF system, is situated near the ancient Roman city of Fulfinum, founded in the 1st century AD, and the early Christian basilica complex of *Mirine*, dating from around the 5th century. The land in that area was primarily used for agriculture and cattle grazing, until the construction of the oil terminal. (Figure 1).

⁹Ibid., 116.

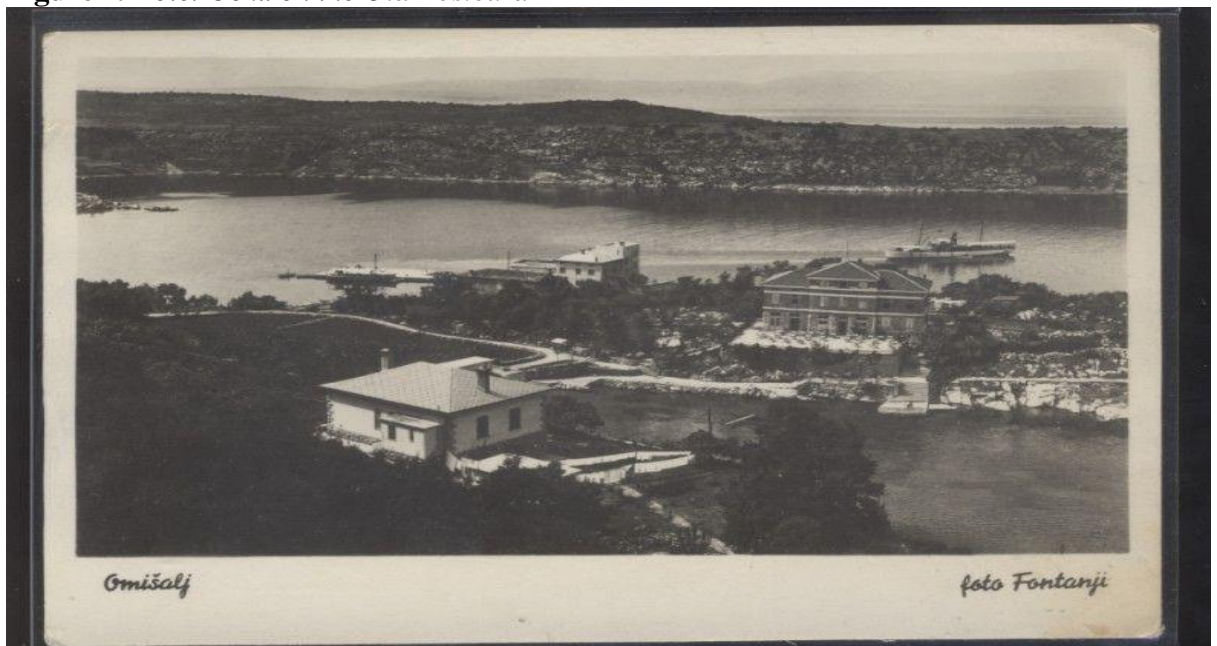
¹⁰See <https://janaf.hr/o-nama/povijest-janaf-a> [accessed February 16, 2024]

Figure 1. Aerial View on Omišalj



Source: Geoportal (<https://geoportal.dgu.hr/>).

Figure 2. Hotel Učka on the Old Postcard



Source: <https://kolekcionar.hr/proizvod/krk-omisalj-stara-razglednica-4/> [[accessed January 16, 2025]]

Two weeks before the company was established, the daily newspaper *Novi list* published an article entitled *There is no danger for Krk tourism (Nema opasnosti za krčki turizam)*¹¹, aimed at dispelling concerns about the risks associated with constructing an oil pipeline, particularly in relation to the development of another economic sector — tourism. The article explicitly references owners of weekend cottages who raised objections to the completed project, primarily out of self-interest tied to tourism rentals. Although their initiative did not delay the construction, it did bring to light a broader conflict over competing visions for the area — namely, what its primary function should be and, consequently, how the space ought to be shaped. During the period of the second modernization, which lasted from 1945 to 1990, the dominant characteristic was the rapid and intensive industrialization of the entire country. This process aimed to create a self-sufficient society capable of meeting its own needs while reducing dependence on imported goods. Industrialization also had a significant impact on communities traditionally tied to agriculture, shaped by the specific climatic conditions of their environment. The northern Adriatic islands were traditionally known for viticulture, olive growing, fishing, and cattle breeding¹², — activities that not only provided the primary source of income but also shaped a centuries-old relationship with the natural and built environment, forming a key part of the local population's identity. Even during the first modernization, from the late 19th century until 1945, these practices were recognized as valuable tourist assets, highlighting the potentially conflicting functions assigned to the same geographic space. The first hotels on the northern Adriatic islands were built in the 1920s, with Hotel Učka, completed in 1928, shown in Figure 2. The incompatibility of spatial functions is evident not only in occasional newspaper articles that questioned the selection of Omišalj Bay as the site for an oil terminal, but also in the visual communication of the area presented to both local and foreign tourists. Figure 3 illustrates this contrast: the abandoned Hotel Učka appears in the foreground, while the industrial facilities of today's JANAF terminal dominate the background.

¹¹I. Kirigin, 'Nema opasnosti za krčki turizam', *Novi list* (August 10 and 11 1974): 11.

¹²I. Rubić, *Naši otoci na Jadranu* (Zadar: Ogranak Matice Hrvatske Zadar, 2017), 75-79.

Figure 3. *A View on Hotel Učka in the Foreground and JANAF in the Background*



Source: Author's Archive

However, postcards and tourist brochures carefully curate their imagery, skillfully avoiding any visual trace of industrial facilities. (Figure 4).

Figure 4. *Recent postcard of Omišalj*



Source: https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10159625918179383&set=p.10159625918179383&locale=hr_HR [accessed January 16, 2025]

In the period from 1974 to 1990, *Novi list* and *Krčke novine* published articles with the following titles: *Omišalj - the first tanker in a month (Omišalj-prvi tanker za mjesec dana)*¹³, *The first tanker arrived in Omišalj (Prvi tanker stigao u Omišalj)*¹⁴, *Omišalj: Guide pole for guiding tankers (Omišalj: Orijentir za navođenje tankera)*¹⁵, *The first oil arrives in Omišalj (Prva nafta stiže u Omišalj)*¹⁶, *The Yugoslav oil pipeline starts (Kreće Jugoslavenski naftovod)*¹⁷, *Yu-pipeline on finish line (Yu-naftovod na cilju)*¹⁸, *The oil came from Omišalj (Nafta potekla iz Omišlja)*¹⁹, *Two years of operation of the Yugoslav oil pipeline (Dvije godine rada Jugoslavenskog naftovoda)*²⁰, *Double direction of oil import from the USSR (Dvostruki pravac uvoza nafte iz SSSR-a)*²¹, *Five years of work in JUNA (Pet godina rada JUNE)*²², *Establishing the Yugoslav oil pipeline - a step towards the goal (Konstituiranje Jugoslavenskog naftovoda - korak do cilja)*²³, *Yugoslav oil pipeline - foreigners increase utilization (Jugoslavenski naftovod - stranci povećavaju iskoristivost)*²⁴. Given the importance of industrialization as a foundational economic sector and labor as the core legitimizing principle of socialist society, the referenced headlines and accompanying texts can be interpreted as a means of sensitizing the public to emerging forms of the island's economy, while simultaneously glorifying industrial success as a symbol of broader social progress.

This duality of functions is mirrored by a parallelism in identity: industry versus traditional agriculture, factory infrastructure versus natural landscapes, and modern weekend cottages and hotels versus historical rural settlements. In 1979, *Novi List* published an article *Tourism - the largest industry in this century (Turizam - najveća industrijska grana u ovom stoljeću)*²⁵ that critically questioned tourism as the optimal developmental resource for island communities: *Finally, the economic growth of a country too dependent on tourism is unstable. Although tourism is increasing everywhere in the world, this increase does not follow any constant trend. New places and new directions are rapidly changing the tourist picture and new centers are destroying old ones. Although tourism is counted among pure industrial branches, its negative impacts on the environment are often large. Too many tourists visiting wild areas soon destroy that pristine beauty. (...) The best parts of nature are occupied by tourists and suppress the local population. (...) Countless hotels, roads, destroy the beauty of a country's nature and disturb the peace of the*

¹³'Omišalj-prvi tanker za mjesec dana', *Novi list* (September 24 1979): 6

¹⁴F. Matejčić, 'Prvi tanker stigao u Omišalj', *Novi list* (October 26 1979): 7

¹⁵'Omišalj: Orijentir za navođenje tankera', *Novi list* (October 4 1979): 6.

¹⁶F. Matejčić, 'Prva nafta stiže u Omišalj', *Novi list* (October 24 1979): 7.

¹⁷M. Pilepić, 'Kreće Jugoslavenski naftovod', *Novi list* (August 10 and 11 1974): 3

¹⁸'Yu-naftovod na cilju', *Novi list* (December 15 and 16 1979): 3.

¹⁹M. Barak and F. Matejčić, 'Nafta potekla iz Omišlja', *Novi list* (December 24 1979): 3.

²⁰T. Oreb, 'Dvije godine rada Jugoslavenskog naftovoda', *Krčke novine* 2 (3) (January 1982): 7.

²¹T. Oreb, 'Dvostruki pravac uvoza nafte iz SSSR-a', *Krčke novine* 3 (13) (October, 1984): 4.

²²T. Oreb, 'Pet godina rada JUNE', *Krčke novine* 3 (13) (October 1984): 4.

²³T. Oreb, 'Konstituiranje Jugoslavenskog naftovoda - korak do cilja', *Krčke novine* 7 (50) (February 1988): 8.

²⁴M. Dragun, 'Jugoslavenski naftovod - stranci povećavaju iskoristivost', *Krčke novine* 8 (81) (December 1990): 3.

²⁵'Turizam - najveća industrijska grana u ovom stoljeću', *Novi list* (October 2 1979): 17.

country and its hosts. Thus, tourism, destroying natural beauty and the environment, becomes self-destructive.

When considering the idea of development through various lenses—such as the growth of material wealth for both the community and individuals, the enrichment of social and cultural life, and the increase in population—it's evident that during the period of the second modernization, there was a deliberate move away from the previous monocultural dependence on agriculture and fishing. At the same time, tourism, emerging as a modern monocultural alternative, was not uncritically embraced. Instead, a balance between multiple economic sectors was advocated, with the coexistence of diverse activities not viewed as inherently contradictory. *First, the tourists and then the industrial boom opened all the possibilities, almost unfathomable, for the sudden and versatile development of Omišalj. When the construction of large and significant industrial facilities began, about 650 inhabitants of Omišalj realized that their living conditions were fundamentally changing. True, the first reactions were very reserved, people were most seriously concerned about the unadulterated purity of the air and the sea, about the health and beauty that nature gave them with a generous hand. (...) Over time, however, reserves disappeared, giving way to knowledge about the advantages and progress brought by the industry.*²⁶

Just ten years later, with the political transition and Croatia's declaration of independence, a significant shift occurred in how space was evaluated and its optimal functions perceived—both economically and in terms of identity. Across the country, large industrial enterprises underwent privatization, a process that, in most cases, ended unsuccessfully. At the same time, the coastal region increasingly began to be viewed primarily through a touristic lens. However, this turn toward tourism lacked strategic planning, let alone critical reflection, and instead positioned tourism in both real and symbolic opposition to the era of industrialization that had preceded it. In 1991, the Krk newspaper published an article entitled *Krk - the industrial center of the northern Adriatic?*, in which it was stated: *...if one takes into account the damage caused to the island by the arrival of industry, and especially to Omišalj, whose further touristic development is completely blocked, the justification for the existence of industrial facilities on the northern part of the island of Krk loses all basis. On the contrary, if by some chance the funds that were irreversibly placed in industrial plants were invested in the already well-developed tourist activity of the island of Krk, the results, as history has already shown, would be positive.*²⁷

The Management Plan for the Archaeological Park of Mirine–Fulfinum, adopted within the framework of the INTERREG V-B Adriatic-Ionian ADRION Programme 2014–2020, presents the Fulfinum site primarily as a tourist resource. The presence of today's JANAF (formerly JUNA) is mentioned solely in the context of its role as a financial partner and as an entity whose operations must not pose a threat to the preservation of the site.²⁸

Despite the shift in media portrayals of Omišalj—from an industrial hub to a tourist destination—accompanied by a symbolic transformation from the glorification

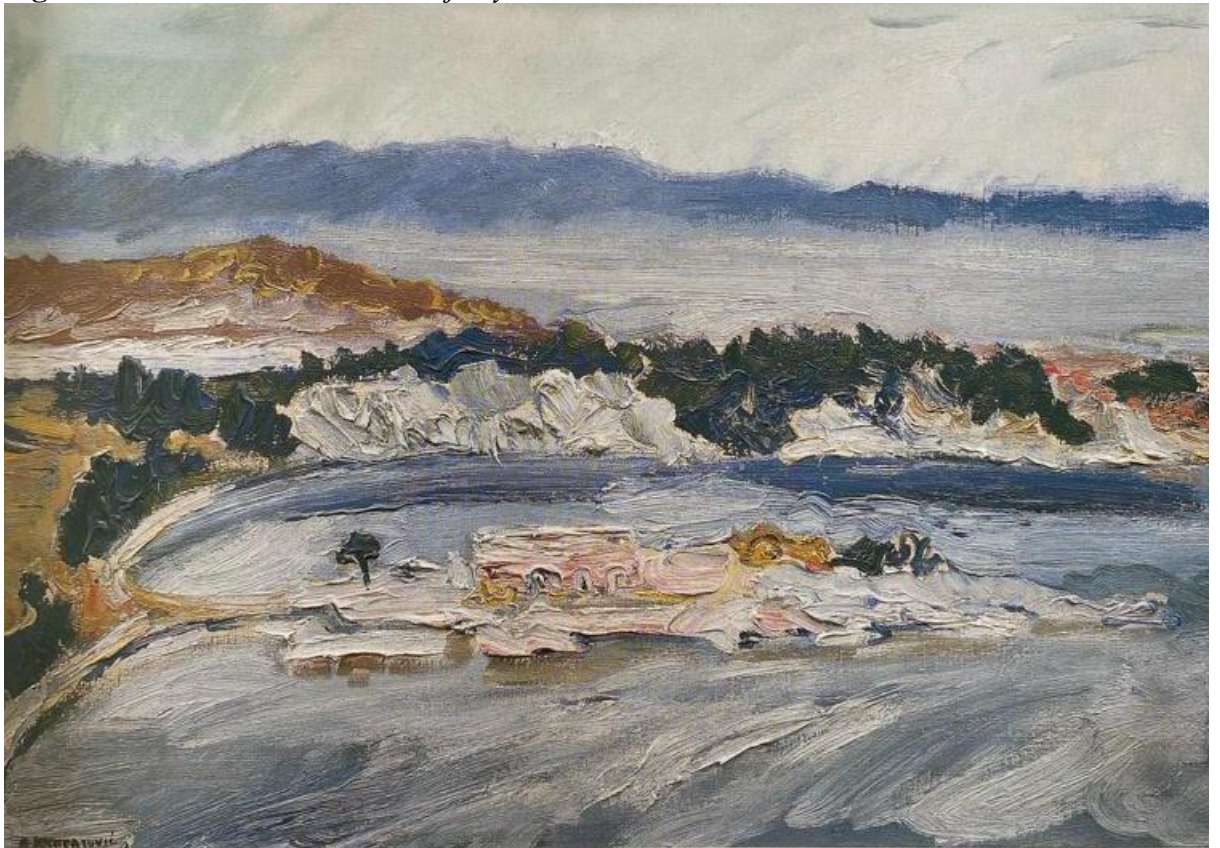
²⁶‘Omišalj - iskustva za primjer’, *Krčke novine* 1 (2) (October 1981): 10.

²⁷N. Pinezić, ‘Krk - industrijsko središte sjevernog Jadrana?’, *Krčke novine* 9 (82) (January 1991): 4.

²⁸M. Karzen and M. Hranilović, *Plan upravljanja Arheološkim parkom Mirine - Fulfinum* (Omišalj: Općina Omišalj 2022), 99.

to the anathematization of industrial facilities, the visual representation of Omišalj in tourist materials remained largely unchanged. Postcards, monographs, and tourist brochures continued to rely on familiar iconographic formulas of the island paradise: sunlit beaches, crystal-clear seas, untouched landscapes, and well-preserved cultural heritage. The renowned painter Mila Kumbatović, born in Omišalj, frequently used her hometown and its surroundings as themes in her work, yet consistently adhered to this idealized image of an unspoiled paradise (Figure 5). Notably, in her 1989 painting of Omišalj, she omits the residential area designed by Darko Turato (Figure 6), suggesting a selective visual narrative aligned with the dominant touristic imagination.

Figure 5. *Mila Kumbatović, Omišalj bay in Winter, 1978*



Source: I. Reberski, *Mila Kumbatović i njezino razabiranje svijeta*, 2003

Figure 6. Omišalj, Left: Residential Area by Darko Turato, Right: Painting by M. Kumbatović



Source: I. Reberski, *Mila Kumbatović i njezino razabiranje svijeta*, 2003

Although the oil terminal is physically separated from the town, located in the bay of Sepen, it is positioned directly next to the ancient and early Christian site of Fulfinum/Mirine. Through careful visual selection and manipulation, representations of industrial facilities can easily be excluded, yet in lived experience, their presence remains undeniable.

In addition to the construction of the oil terminal, which significantly altered the appearance of the former bay and the view of the town from both land and sea, it remains indisputable that JUNA, together with DINA, served as the principal financier of the archaeological research that ultimately positioned Omišalj as one of the most important archaeological sites in Croatia²⁹.

Dina Petrochemicals

In 1976, a contract was signed between DOW Chemicals and INA on joint investment in the construction of a petrochemical complex in Omišalj³⁰, which was put into operation in 1981. An article entitled *All roads lead to Omišalj (Svi putevi vode u Omišalj)*, published in *Novi list* in 1975, provides answers to the criticism: *The first benefits for the people of Omišalj - by the New Year, everything will be paid to the owners of plots on the future petrochemical field. They will receive a total of slightly less than three billion old dinars. For the protection of Omišalj from pollution from petrochemical plants, funds equal to the value of the mainland - Krk bridge will be set aside as appropriate*³¹. The petrochemical plant is located in the immediate vicinity of the oil pipeline, directly adjacent to ancient and early Christian ruins—an arrangement that understandably raises serious concerns about the nature of their coexistence. Daily newspapers often feature reports that inform the public about newly uncovered segments of cultural heritage. These reports are frequently accompanied by appeals for their preservation, reflecting widespread awareness and

²⁹D. Nišler, 'Fulfinum - rimski grad kraj Omišlja', *Krčke novine* 7 (51) (March 1988): 14.

³⁰'Dinalen utazuje žed', *Novi list* (April 2 1984): 3.

³¹J. Žgaljić, 'Svi putevi vode u Omišalj', *Novi list* (December 27 and 28 1975): 3.

concern within society. Radmila Matejčić is one of the key archaeologists at the Fulfinum site, who appeals: *Now we have come to the question of how to reconcile the historical and archaeological significance of the Sepen bay as Krk's "Salonae" and its future purpose? Lucije Sestije Dexter built an aqueduct back in 85, INA will certainly build an 'oleiduct' in Sepen in 1985. Are 'Mira' and historical ruins allowed to suffer destruction, or is this an opportunity to explore them and bring them into the context of the general development of culture and tourism on the island of Krk?!*³² Despite this, industrial construction has already taken a toll on the historical landscape. A portion of the ancient harbor, along with the southern defense tower, have been irreversibly destroyed.³³ Another significant reason for concern is ecological pollution, which further complicates the already delicate balance between industrial activity and heritage preservation. Numerous articles and headlines have been devoted to this pressing issue: *About the pollution of the bay in Omišalj (O zagađenju zaljeva u Omišlju)*³⁴, *Full attention to environmental protection (Puna pozornost zaštiti okoline)*³⁵, *New investments and environmental protection (Nove investicije i zaštita okoliša)*³⁶, *Favorable results of research into the impact of INA-Petrokemija on the environment (Povoljni rezultati istraživanja utjecaja INA-Petrokemije na okolinu)*³⁷, *Program for monitoring the impact of facilities of the INA-petrochemical industry Omišalj on the environment (Program praćenja utjecaja objekata INA-petrokemijske industrije Omišalj na okolinu)*³⁸, *Petrochemistry does not endanger the environment (Petrokemija ne ugrožava okolinu)*³⁹, *Ecology is not just news (Ekologija nije samo vijest)*⁴⁰. Despite the concerns raised by skeptics, DINA Petrochemicals is being constructed on land that has already been shaped by the presence of earlier industrial facilities associated with the oil pipeline. Media coverage has closely followed the construction of the new petrochemical plants, with images that illustrate the ongoing development and the transformation of the landscape (Figure 7).

³²R. Matejčić, 'Rimski Fulfinij je zaista bio kod Omišlja', *Novi list* (August 1 1974): 18.

³³D. Nišler, 'Fulfinum - rimski grad kraj Omišlja', *Krčke novine* 7 (51) (March 1988): 14.

³⁴I. Balzer, 'O zagađenju zaljeva u Omišlju', *Krčke novine* 5 (37) (December 1986): 9.

³⁵J. Četković, 'Puna pozornost zaštiti okoline', *Krčke novine* 3 (13) (October 1984): 4.

³⁶M. Host, 'Nove investicije i zaštita okoliša', *Krčke novine* 5 (36) (November 1986): 5.

³⁷M. Nišler, 'Povoljni rezultati istraživanja utjecaja INA-Petrokemije na okolinu', *Krčke novine* 5 (36) (November 1986): 5.

³⁸M. Host, 'Program praćenja utjecaja objekata INA-petrokemijske industrije Omišalj na okolinu', *Krčke novine* 6 (38) (January 1987): 5.

³⁹N. Matković and V. Hinić, 'Petrokemija ne ugrožava okolinu', *Krčke novine* 6 (47) (November 1987): 9.

⁴⁰Lj. Četković, 'Ekologija nije samo vijest', *Krčke novine* 7 (70) (December 1989): 8.

Figure 7. 1st Number of Local Newspapers *Krčke Novine* Presents Article titled 'A Giant Grows in Omišalj'



Source: *Krčke novine* 1, May, 1981, p.8

Significant changes are also taking place within the city itself. In response to the growing number of workers arriving from across the country to support DINA Petrochemicals⁴¹ new residential areas are being developed in Omišalj and Kijac in Njivice. Between 1979 and 1981, architect Darko Turato designed a residential complex in Omišalj (Figures 8 and 9), situated in close proximity to the historical center of the town (Figure 10). The design of the residential rows is notably harmonious with the surrounding landscape, as the buildings follow the natural contours of the hill, incorporating differences in height and the strategic indentation and penetration of individual structures within the row. The façades of the buildings themselves make use of stone, a material that resonates with the local architectural tradition and establishes a visual and tactile dialogue with the environment. This choice of material helps to integrate the modern development with its historical and cultural context, offering a sense of continuity between the past and present. However, given that the settlement is positioned on a hill next to the historical core of Omišalj, it has inevitably become an integral part of the town's iconography. The presence of the residential complex reflects the broader industrial transformation in the region, preserving the integrity of historical landscapes while accommodating modern needs.

⁴¹From 1910 to 1971, Omišalj recorded a population decline of 45.9%, and in the period 1971-2011, the population tripled, see M. Jovanić et al. 'Promjene u dinamičkim obilježjima naseljenosti otoka Krka', *Društvena istraživanja* 22 (1) (2013): 167-193, doi: 10.5559/di.22.1.09.

Figure 8. *View on Omišalj with Residential Complex by Darko Turato*



Source: De Canziani T (2018) *Darko Turato - skica za monografiju*. Omišalj: Općina Omišalj, p.57.

Figure 9. *One of the Residential Buildings by Darko Turato*



Source: Author's archive

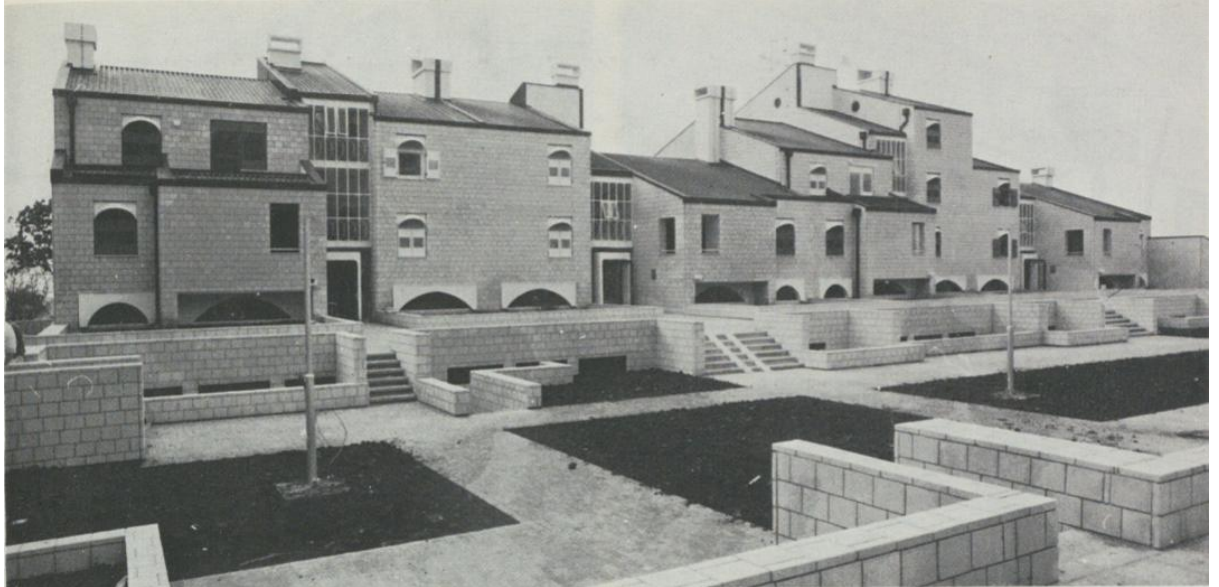
Figure 10. *View on Omišalj with Turato's Settlement on the Top*



Source: <https://www.turizmoteka.hr/destinacije/okrugli-stol-o-izradi-integralne-strategije-odrzivog-razvoja-otoka-krka/> [accessed January 16, 2025]

However, housing construction for DINA employees has expanded beyond Omišalj itself. In the neighboring town of Njivice, the Kijac residential complex, designed by architect Julije De Luca, was developed between 1980 and 1990 (Figure 11).

Figure 11. *Worker's Settlement in Kijac, Njivice by Julije de Luca*



Source: Čovjek i prostor 368, 1983, p.15

Julije De Luca's architectural approach in the Kijac residential complex is best understood through the lens of new regionalism⁴² a movement in which the architect reinterprets traditional spatial concepts such as the house and garden, the terrace, and the square. His design emphasizes a vibrant openness between private and public space, fostering the emergence of a micro-community—a hallmark of island settlements. Through the gradation of building heights, the variation in the shape and placement of window openings, and the interweaving and recessing of individual volumes, De Luca creates a dynamic architectural language. This stringing together and soft rounding of structures gives rise to intimate squares and shared spaces, which in turn nurture a distinctive form of local sociality. These architectural gestures are not purely aesthetic; they function as vital identity-forming elements, echoing the communal spirit of traditional island towns.

Kijac also introduced a new residential typology to the island: the villa, a form quite distinct from the worker-oriented housing complexes of Omišalj and the broader Kijac settlement. These villas were originally constructed to accommodate 80 employees of the American company DOW Chemicals, who were partners in the DINA Petrochemicals project at the time. A total of 22 buildings were completed. However, in 1983, DOW Chemicals withdrew from the joint venture and they were soon transferred into private ownership (Figures 12, 13).

⁴²A. Mutnjaković, ed. *Arhitekt Julije De Luca* (Zagreb: Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, Hrvatski muzej arhitekture, 2013), 6.

Figure 12. Villas in Kijac for Employees of the American Company DOW Chemicals who were Partners in the Construction of DINA



Source: Author's archive

Figure 13. Villas in Kijac for Employees of the American Company DOW Chemicals who were Partners in the Construction of DINA



Source: Author's archive

The production of polyethylene, which was one of the core goals of the DINA Petrochemicals project, was never realized as initially envisioned. Instead, the company soon found itself facing significant financial losses, due in part to persistent issues with the supply of raw materials. This decline in fortunes had a direct impact on public perception, as DINA struggled with the stigma of being a "loser" enterprise. The media landscape mirrored this shift. Contradictory headlines alternated between moments of revived hope and announcements of financial distress, clearly reflecting the instability and inconsistency of the company's trajectory: *Records in Petrochemicals Omišalj (Rekordi u Petrokemiji Omišalj)*⁴³, and two numbers after *Internal problems of INA-Petrochemicals (Unutrašnji problemi INA-Petrokemije)*⁴⁴, then *And now as much production as possible (A sada što veća proizvodnja)*⁴⁵, *Dynalen on the world market (Dinalen na svjetskom tržištu)*⁴⁶, *September - the most successful month so far (Rujan - dosad najuspješniji mjesec)*⁴⁷, and after 1990 *Changes in management and business strategy (Promjene u rukovodstvu i poslovnoj strategiji)*⁴⁸, *DINA leaves INA (DINA napušta INU)*⁴⁹, *The war stopped DINA (Rat zaustavio DINU)*⁵⁰. In 2015, DINA Petrochemicals officially declared bankruptcy, and in 2022, the continuation of the bankruptcy proceedings was ordered, revealing the enduring complexity of DINA's legacy—particularly in regard to unresolved issues concerning approximately 85,000 square meters of land (in total, DINA owned more than one million square meters of land)⁵¹.

In 1991, a new chapter in the industrial development of Sepen Bay began with the initiative to construct a gas terminal within the framework of the existing oil terminal. In 2021, a floating LNG terminal was officially launched. The inauguration of the LNG terminal represents the latest and perhaps final stage in Omišalj's ongoing industrial transformation—a process that, from the 1970s to 2021, unfolded as a delicate balancing act between tradition and modernity, agriculture and industry, nature and the built environment. Despite the many doubts that accompanied it, the industrialization of Omišalj did not erase its historical identity. On the contrary, it may have preserved it—especially when viewed against the backdrop of invasive tourism that has reshaped much of the island of Krk. While other towns succumbed to unchecked development driven by seasonal demands, Omišalj retained a certain continuity of place and purpose. At the same time, industrialization stimulated the construction of new residential zones, which today stand as some of the most successful examples of modern architecture and spatial planning on the island. These neighborhoods were conceived not merely as housing but as comprehensive urban solutions, reflecting a forward-thinking approach to community, infrastructure,

⁴³ 'Rekordi u Petrokemiji Omišalj', *Krčke novine* 3(11) (July 1984): 4.

⁴⁴ B. Vještica, 'Unutrašnji problemi INA-Petrokemije', *Krčke novine* 3 (13) (October 1984): 2.

⁴⁵ 'A sada što veća proizvodnja', *Krčke novine* 4 (19) (April 1985): 6.

⁴⁶ 'Dinalen na svjetskom tržištu', *Krčke novine* 4 (23) (September 1985): 3.

⁴⁷ 'Rujan - dosad najuspješniji mjesec', *Krčke novine* 6 (57) (October 1988): 4.

⁴⁸ Lj. Četković, 'Promjene u rukovodstvu i poslovnoj strategiji', *Krčke novine* 8 (74) (April 1990): 5.

⁴⁹ 'DINA napušta INU', *Krčke novine* 8 (81) (December 1990): 3.

⁵⁰ 'Rat zaustavio DINU', *Krčke novine* 9 (88) (October 1991): 5.

⁵¹ 'Opet aktiviran stečajni postupak Dine, u pitanju je oko 85.000 četvornih metara zemljišta', *Jutarnji list*, (February 22 2022) <https://novac.jutarnji.hr/novac/aktualno/opet-aktiviran-stecajni-postupak-di-ne-u-pitanju-je-oko-85-000-cetvornih-metara-zemljista-15160894> [accessed January 16, 2025]

and environment. They carry within them an openness to new forms and functions, in tune with the evolving rhythms of urban life. In stark contrast to the unregulated, metastasizing construction that continues to consume some of the island's most valuable spaces, the industrial path Omišalj followed can, from today's perspective, be seen as a guardian of spatial and cultural values. It not only provided locals with employment and housing, but also helped to sustain a culture of life rooted in dignity, structure, and a meaningful relationship with place.

Dynamics of Urban Iconography

As a result of industrialization, the spatial and formal image of Omišalj is undergoing a sudden and profound transformation, one that significantly influences the ongoing construction of its identity. This transformation appears to be driven less by the town's intrinsic social and cultural logic, and more by external expectations—particularly those linked to the tourism industry. The fear of tourists encountering an experience that clashes with their idealized image of the destination leads to a curated, sanitized version of the town's identity. This raises a critical tension between inherent concepts—rooted in Omišalj's historical, cultural, and social fabric—and imposed narratives that cater to external consumption. The result is a widening gap between the authentic lived experience of the local community and the performative identity presented to outsiders. The construction of the image of Omišalj is increasingly organized through a gaze from the outside. Visual representations are carefully selected, fragmented, framed, and composed to respond as persuasively as possible to the expectations of outsiders—primarily tourists, who are regarded as an economic resource (Figure 14). These curated images tend to highlight sunlit beaches, unspoiled nature, and historical monuments that appear frozen in time. They trace a linear, romanticized narrative from prehistory to the present, showcasing the layered achievements of the various peoples who have inhabited the same space: from ancient and early Christian relics, medieval fortifications and inscriptions, to a Gothic church, Renaissance houses, and—most notably—a 1925 water tower, the only example of industrial architecture regularly featured in promotional materials. This selective framing omits architectural and industrial heritage of the more recent past. These elements are not seen as particularly valuable, either aesthetically or symbolically, as they visually and functionally diverge from the nostalgic, idealized image of the town.

Figure 14. *Recent Postcard of Omišalj*

Source: Author's archive

A comparison of postcards from the 1930s and those from the 21st century reveals surprisingly little iconographic change (Figure 15, Figure 16). This visual consistency reflects the image's resistance to the town's real and ongoing transformations, despite Omišalj's continuous habitation from prehistoric times to the present. The town remains visually framed as a picturesque silhouette: a wooded hill rising above a tranquil bay, with a compact settlement that preserves its recognizable historical outline. While this image suggests completeness and harmony in its elevated, spatially constrained setting, the true locus of the town's economic and social development lies below the hill—in the bay area that once hosted Roman and early Christian settlements. Today, that same space is dominated by oil and gas infrastructure (Figure 17), yet this transformation is carefully omitted from visual narratives of the town. Despite the physical proximity of oil tanks and the LNG terminal, skillful photographic framing consistently excludes them, avoiding not just visual intrusion but also symbolic association (Figure 18). In this way, the image of Omišalj remains "frozen," strategically isolated from the realities of industrialization that have reshaped its broader landscape.

Figure 15. *Postcard of Omišalj, 1931*



Source: <https://museu.ms/collection/object/259186/omisalj> [[accessed April 11, 2025]]

Figure 16. *Recent Postcard of Omišalj*



Source: <https://visit-omisalj-njivice.hr/beaches/plaza-jadran-omisalj> [[accessed April 11, 2025]]

Figure 17. *View on Oil Tanks seen from Ancient Fulfinum/Mirine*



Source: Author's archive

Figure 18. *Aerial View on Fulfinum/Mirine*



Source: <https://visit-omisalj-njivice.hr/history/fulfinum-mirine> [[accessed April 11, 2025]]

The *National Island Development Program*, adopted by the Ministry of Development and Reconstruction in 1997, nominally discourages monofunctional spatial segregation, it simultaneously introduces a principle of spatial predetermination, explicitly designating the Adriatic coast as primarily a tourist zone, rather than an industrial one. This declarative positioning reinforces the logic behind the visual and symbolic erasure of industrial development from representations of coastal towns like Omišalj.⁵² In the same document, Ivo Kunst emphasizes: *Despite the significant negative characteristics inherited from past systems (industrial organization, large capital investments, medium and large-scale economy, large labor surpluses, etc.), we are still talking about a sector with a specific product that has a market, which is permanent and to some extent already affirmed and which does not need to be completely changed, but only improved.*⁵³ The *National Island Development Program* frames tourism not merely as a core economic activity, but as a transformative force in the shaping of space and, by extension, the construction of sociocultural identity. In this context, identity itself becomes part of a broader marketing strategy—crafted and promoted as a means of attracting tourists, and thus capital. This approach is echoed in the *Tourism Development Strategy of the Island of Krk until 2020*, adopted in 2016. The strategy provides a more nuanced analysis of Omišalj, acknowledging industry—not only tourism—as a valuable resource at both the local and national level⁵⁴. Future development is envisioned through the enhancement of nautical and recreational facilities⁵⁵ and a continued strengthening of the touristification process⁵⁶. Forms of identity are increasingly promoted with the explicit goal of selling the image of the place. These promotional efforts take shape through official tourism campaigns, city branding strategies implemented by local governments, and a growing number of individual advertisements shared across social media platforms. However, the attractive power of these images is not unidirectional. It produces a rebound effect on the local population, who begin to internalize and identify with the tourist-oriented version of their town. The town's self-perception is shaped by external expectations, gradually aligning everyday life, traditions, and even aspirations with the logic of marketable appeal⁵⁷.

The physical reality of Omišalj diverges significantly from its constructed image. Yet, under the pervasive influence of media representations, the local population increasingly perceives their own environment as inappropriate, foreign, or even unnatural. Urban iconography is shaped through collective memory, where the interplay between images and texts plays a crucial role. During the period of the second modernization, a marked inconsistency emerges between these two modes

⁵²Ministarstvo razvitka i obnove, *Nacionalni program razvitka otoka* (Ministarstvo razvitka i obnove, 1997), 58.

⁵³I. Kunst, 'Turizam-sektorska studija', in *Nacionalni program razvitka otoka*, ed. Nenad Starc et al. (Ministarstvo razvitka i obnove, 1997), 127.

⁵⁴N. Telišman Košuta and N. Ivandić, *Strategija razvoja turizma otoka Krka* (Zagreb: Institut za turizam, 2016), 5-6.

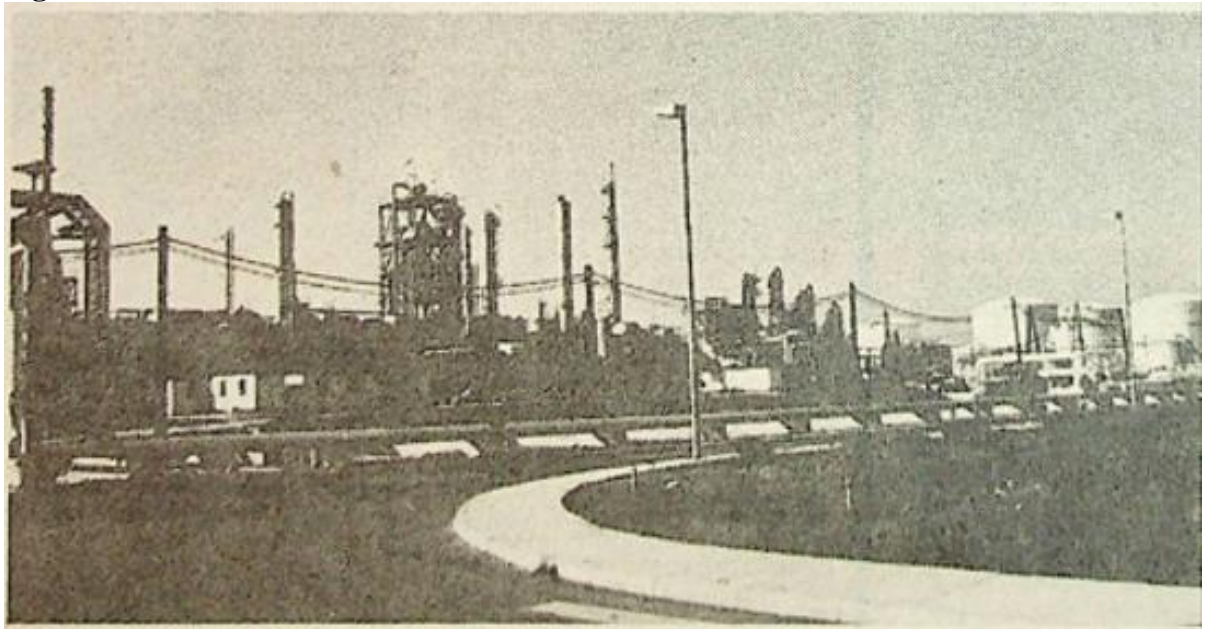
⁵⁵Ibid. 43.

⁵⁶Ibid. 47.

⁵⁷B. Božetka, 'Wolin Island, tourism and conception of identity', *Journal of Marine and Island Culture* 2 (1) (2013): 1-12, doi: 10.1016/j.imic.2013.03.001.

of representation. Visual imagery remains largely fixed, adhering to stable, repetitive motifs that emphasize continuity: the fortified medieval town, church bell towers, ancient and early Christian monuments, sun-drenched beaches, and the ever-present sea. These elements are consistently presented as timeless and unchanging. In contrast, textual narratives increasingly reflect the transformations occurring within the landscape, particularly those driven by industrialization. Depending on the prevailing political and social context, industrial elements are either framed as symbols of progress and national development, or, conversely, as threats to heritage and the tourism-based economy (Figure 19). An analysis of visual materials—postcards, tourist brochures, online images, and artistic representations—alongside the textual landscapes constructed by newspapers (Figure 20), reveals the layered and sometimes conflicting mental images that shape Omišalj's identity. These competing narratives underscore both the complexity of the town's ongoing identity transformation and the inherent fluidity of urban identity over time.

Figure 19. *Dina Petrochemicals*



Source: *Krčke novine* 66, July, 1989, p.11

Figure 20. Article from the Local Newspaper: To Preserve Island's Identity

Source: *Krčke novine*, 46, October, 1987, p.4.

Conclusion

The analysis of Omišalj reveals the intricate and layered process of constructing, deconstructing, and reconstructing urban iconography. The town's long history and uninterrupted continuity of habitation underscore the evolving meaning of architecture—structures that once served functional purposes are now recontextualized as monuments, imbued with symbolic significance. In times of rapid change and uncertainty, such as those of the present, societies seek identity anchors rooted in cultural memory and tradition. Yet, the contemporary transformation of this small island town represents a rupture—a moment of discontinuity that demands negotiation between the inherited urban fabric and the realities of modern industrial development. The visual field today juxtaposes oil tanks and factory infrastructure with ancient and early Christian ruins, once surrounded by grazing cattle, now encroached upon by pipelines and economic logistics. This confrontation may appear stark, even unprecedented, but it echoes deeper historical patterns. One can imagine that similar symbolic tensions were felt when the first Christians arrived in Fulfinum and encountered the temples and monuments of pagan antiquity. Just as we today perceive the remnants of Roman and early Christian architecture layered over prehistoric foundations, the Romans of the 1st century likely regarded the prehistoric hillforts in a similar way—traces of a past civilization that once occupied the same land. These memories, accumulated and sedimented in space, create a landscape where time collapses into a synchronous experience. We walk through Omišalj encountering what was once diachronically constructed, now existing side by side in stone. From this broader temporal perspective, the industrialization of the island need not be seen as a rupture with tradition, but rather as a continuation of a long-standing practice: the adaptation of the island's unique spatial and geographic characteristics to meet the needs of each historical moment. The factory plants and oil infrastructure, often perceived as intrusions, can instead be understood as the most recent layer in a continuum of

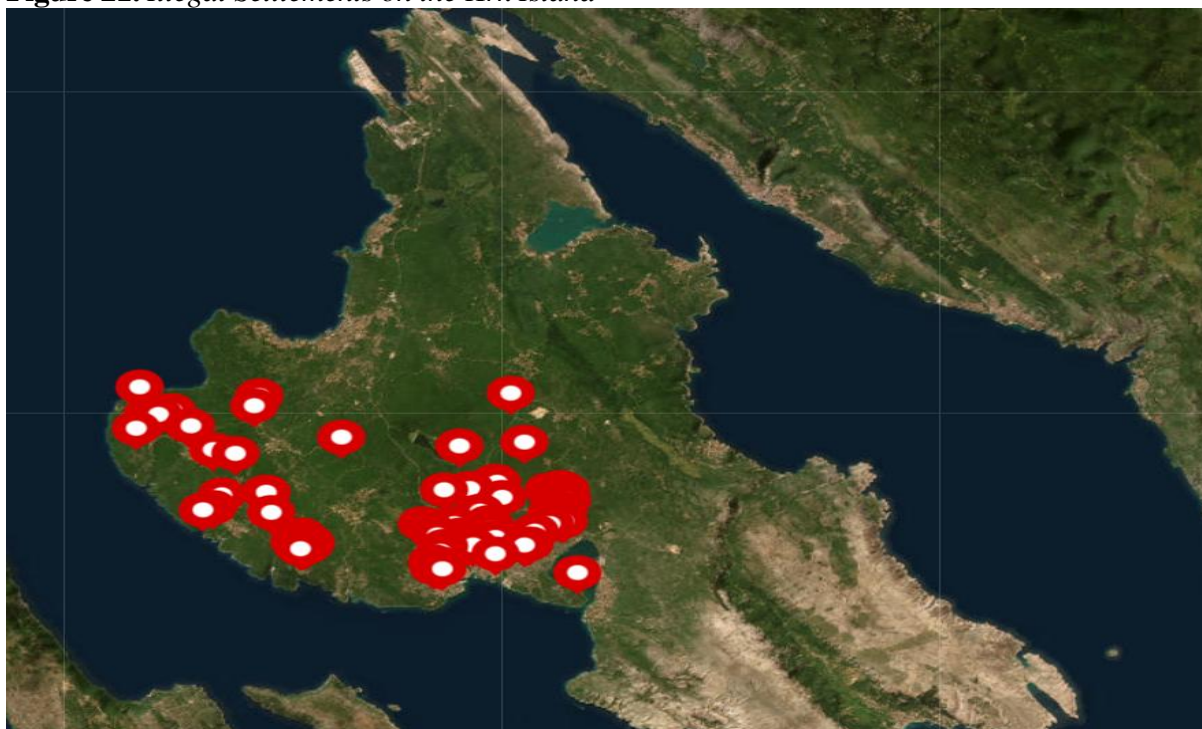
technical and technological innovation—a testament to the ingenuity of the island’s inhabitants who, throughout history, have used the land and its resources in the ways most appropriate to their time.

Omišalj has managed to preserve its distinctive appearance—a stone town perched on a hilltop, enveloped by dense forests. The coastal strip remains largely undeveloped, and while oil and gas facilities are situated just beyond immediate view, they are close enough to be inseparable from the town’s spatial and symbolic landscape. This delicate coexistence has played a crucial role in preventing depopulation, diversifying the local economy, and attracting a varied population from across the country who have, over time, become islanders themselves. It has also initiated the development of new, carefully planned settlements that contrast sharply with the unregulated expansion seen elsewhere.

A comparison with other towns on the island of Krk reveals stark differences: high concentrations of illegal construction geared toward seasonal tourism (Figure 21), coastlines built right up to the sea’s edge (Figure 22), and settlements that are densely populated for only three months of the year, lying empty the rest of the time. Many former fishing villages have been transformed into mono-functional tourist destinations, where hotels and private apartments have overtaken coastal land, replacing traditional maritime culture with seasonal flows of consumption.

Yet it is precisely the ubiquity of media imagery—postcards, brochures, social media—that normalizes and softens resistance to this transformation. These images habituate both outsiders and locals to a new urban iconography, one that ultimately becomes internalized. Over time, even the islanders themselves begin to identify with the constructed identity promoted for tourist consumption.

Figure 21. *Illegal Settlements on the Krk Island*



Source: <https://bespravnogradnja.hr/lokacije-bespravnih-objekata> [accessed April 11, 2025]

Figure 22. *Town Baška, Krk Island*

Source: <https://www.info-krk.com/baska> [accessed April 11, 2025]

In the case of Omišalj, industrial facilities developed during the period of second modernization occupy substantial portions of the coastal landscape. Yet, iconographically, they remain invisible—excluded from the curated visual constructions meant to represent the town to outsiders. Factory halls, chimneys, and oil tanks are systematically left out of promotional imagery, positioned just beyond the frame. While these elements do appear in media representations—particularly in news and technical documentation—they are shown in isolation, disconnected from the image of the town, as if they were peripheral accessories rather than formative components of Omišalj’s identity.

However, the rootedness of industry in Omišalj is not limited to its infrastructural presence. Its influence extends secondarily into the residential fabric of both Omišalj and nearby Njivice, where workers’ settlements—ranging from collective housing blocks to freestanding villas—have shaped new forms of everyday life and identity. These residential zones bear significant social, architectural, and urban value, representing a vital but overlooked layer in the island’s development. Despite their contributions, these neighborhoods remain virtually invisible in the public image of the town. Their spatial narratives are omitted from tourist materials and broader cultural representations, and their architectural capital remains undervalued and poorly recognized in both policy and heritage discourse.

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