

**Port Silos of Greece as Physical and Symbolic Bridges:
The Evangelistria Silo Case in Kalamata**



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Introduction

Over time the silos rose with ever greater assurance and created the landscape of the New World. In abandoning the problem of form, they rediscovered architecture.

(Rossi, as cited in Mahar-Keplinger, 1993, p.7)

A silo is defined as an:

Airtight structure for the storage and preservation of grains, grass, roots, and bulbs, equipped with additional mechanical installations for the fast loading and unloading of these products.¹

Silos can have different functions depending on the context. Typically, they refer to a cylindrical or rectangular structure used primarily for storage of grains, animal feed, or bulk materials (rural silo). However, when referring to silos in ports or industrial facilities the term encompasses the entire complex including storage facilities (silos themselves), processing infrastructure, and manufacturing facilities (urban silo).

The Port silo is positioned along the water's edge, whether by a river cutting through the city or along the sea to facilitate access to ships and barges, influencing the city's spatial dynamics. In many cases, including those examined in this study, silos act as catalysts for industrialization, shaping the development of waterfront areas

¹ Mpampiniotis, G. D. (2002). *Lexiko tis Neas Ellinikis Glossas: Me scholia gia ti sosti chrisi ton lexeon*. (2nd edition). Athens: Kentro Lexikologias E.P.E.

and reinforcing connections between maritime infrastructure and the urban fabric.

The silo possesses a hybrid character, positioned at the intersection of urban and rural realms. Its evolution reflects broader transitions in production trade and urban development. Beyond its utilitarian function, it is an architectural typology shaped by historical processes, embodying the shifting relationship between agriculture and industry. Situated at the threshold of land and sea, silos serve as both physical and symbolic connectors, integrating agricultural economies with maritime trade. Their architecture reflects a fusion of human intervention and rurality, while their presence in Greek port cities highlights their influence in shaping urban and economic landscapes.

This history thesis examines the significance of port silos in Greece's industrial and maritime development, particularly within the country's export-driven economy of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It frames port silos conceptually as objects that bridge terrestrial and marine functions within the port, while also investigating the causes of their decline and abandonment, as they lose their connection to the water due to shifts in the economy. The study explores the potential for their reintegration in the contemporary urban setting, reconnecting them with their maritime historical context. Additionally, the thesis provides a theoretical framework for understanding port cities as dynamic entities where historical layers intersect with modern transformations.

The following research questions will be examined: In what ways does the transformation of port silos reflect broader economic and socio-cultural shifts in Greece? What role do they, as interfaces, play in shaping the identity of port cities? How can their maritime past influence their transformation and potential reuse?

To answer these questions, this study methodologically employs archival research, analysis of historical photographs and architectural drawings, and oral history interviews as primary sources. The thesis is structured into four main chapters. The first chapter traces the historical evolution of silos in Greece within the context of the country's socio-economic and technological shifts. It examines the impact of industrialization as Greece transitioned from an agricultural economy to an industrial one. The chapter highlights how maritime trade influenced the development of port cities and concurrently the strategic position of port silos.

The second chapter explores the complex relationship between port silos and their surrounding urban and maritime environments, drawing on Carola Hein's concept of the "port cityscape", which examines how port cities and rural areas coexist within confined spaces (Hein, 2019). This theoretical framework helps to understand the duality of port cities, where industrial, maritime, and urban functions converge and overlap. Additionally, Beatrice Moretti's notion of "ambiguous space", where boundaries between city and port blur (Moretti, 2019), informs this thesis' analysis of the silo as a spatial connector,

facilitating interaction between land and water. The dual identity of the port city, defined by its relationship to water and urbanity, is explored through the role of port silos as objects that facilitate this complex interaction. Finally, the chapter examines the role of ports in Greece's industrialization.

The third chapter takes a case study approach to illustrate the challenges and transformations of Evangelistria Port Silo in Kalamata. It traces the silo's historical context, beginning with its role in connecting local agricultural production to national and global markets. A key moment discussed is the 1934 labor conflict, when a strike against automation led to fatal violence, revealing tensions between traditional labor practices and state authority. The chapter also critiques the idealized notion of port-city resilience, showing how local and national interests conflicted.

The fourth chapter explores the transformation of port silos as symbols of shifting economic models. It examines how these structures are being repurposed as tourism-driven spaces. The thesis also draws on the concept of "maritime mindset", a term developed by the PortCityFutures research group, emphasizing how centuries of trade and industry shaped the resilience of port cities (Sennema et al., 2021). However, the decline of agricultural shipping activities has led to a fading connection between port silos and their maritime function.

Chapter 1: Hybridity in a Historical Context

This chapter examines key industrial centers and the economic shifts that have shaped Greek industry, establishing a foundation for understanding the relationship between industrial architecture and maritime infrastructure, which is an essential framework for the discussions that follow.

The architectural and functional development of silos in Greece is deeply intertwined with the country's socio-economic and technological transformations. As a latecomer² to industrialization, Greece experienced its first significant industrial growth in the 19th century, a period when maritime trade began to reshape not only the national economy but also the physical landscapes of its port cities. Silos, originally modest rural storage units, evolved into infrastructural pillars of the new industrial networks, strategically positioned at the threshold between land and sea. These port silos were more than utilitarian containers; they symbolized the ambition of a nation turning outward, investing in infrastructure that could anchor it into international flows of grain, goods, and capital.

In summary, Greek industrial architecture was shaped by a complex interplay of external and internal forces, including economic shifts, political developments, and the influence of indus-

² The convergence of favorable conditions (demographic growth, agricultural development, infrastructure expansion, and a favorable international climate) for the first time made the industrial takeoff possible.

trialists themselves.³ Perhaps most crucially, the evolution of port silos reveals how deeply infrastructure can encrypt a collective outlook: one in which proximity to the sea was not just a matter of geography, but a generative condition shaping the city's identity, its architecture, and its place in broader networks of flows.

1.1 First Period: Late 19th Century - 1920s

During the second half of the 19th century, Greece was primarily an agricultural economy, focused on Mediterranean products such as currants, olive oil, wine, and dried figs. Agricultural production and exports relied heavily on international demand, particularly for currants.⁴ However, the 1893 currants crisis disrupted this economic model, forcing a transition towards alternative industries.⁵

As grain storage demands increased, industrial centers emerged in locations such as Syros, Piraeus, Thessaloniki, and Veria, strategically positioned near ports to facilitate trade and transportation. Initially integrated into small-scale

³ Demiri, K. (1991). Industrial Buildings: History, Reuse, Design. Athens, *Architectural Issues*, 25, pp. 57-65.

⁴ Petmezas, S. (2013). The modernization of agriculture in Greece (c. 1920-1970): variation of a European Mediterranean Model?. *University of Crete*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309323771_5_The_modernisation_of_agriculture_in_Greece_c_1920-1970_variation_of_a_European_Mediterranean_Model_The_politics_of_Agricultural_Modernisation_in_Industrial_Europe

⁵ Andréadès, A. (1906). The Currant Crisis in Greece. *The Economic Journal*, 16(61), 41-51. Oxford University Press on behalf of the Royal Economic Society. pp 41-51. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2221139>

factories, particularly flour mills, and food-processing facilities, these silos played a crucial role in supporting industrial production.⁶ Port silos served as key hubs for the transportation of grain in the supply chain, both domestic and international via water transportation. They received grain from rural silos, by truck or railroad and transferred it to storage or into other transportation equipment such as barges or other vessels.⁷

This type of industrial building displayed significant architectural variation depending on its location. Construction methods relied on traditional craftsmanship, utilizing materials such as stone, wood, and cast iron. The Allatini Port Silo (1854), one of the first in Greece, followed this approach, featuring a masonry structure with brick and stone, cast iron supports, and a trussed roof system (Figures 1,2).

Industrial buildings of the time echoed neoclassical principles such as absolute symmetry. As Pierre Lenain emphasizes:

“Neoclassical architecture, thanks to its rationality and monumentality, deeply penetrated industrial architecture, often blending with local influences, which sometimes took on an idiomatic character... it adapted to the point of appearing as a mere allusion...”⁸

⁶ Demiri, K. (1991). *Industrial Buildings: History, Reuse, Design*. Athens, *Architectural Issues*, 25, pp. 57-65.

⁷ Rosentrater, K. A. (2022). *Storage of cereal grains and their products* (5th ed.). Woodhead Publishing, pp. 46

⁸ Lenain, P. (1977). *Quand l'industrie laisse des paysages*. Lotus International, (14). Retrieved from <https://www.>



Figure 1. *Allatini Mills in Thessaloniki (building 24 on the right)*. Retrieved from https://vidarchives.gr/reports/2018_01_270

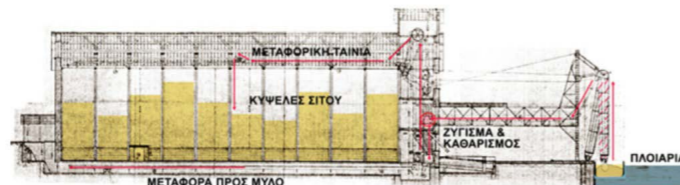


Figure 2. *Port Silo of Allatini Mills (building 24 built in 1900)*. Retrieved from <https://www.greekarchitects.gr/en/projects2013/redesigning-the-silo-at-the-historic-allatini-mills-id88662>

1.2. Second Period: 1920s - 1960s

The early 1920s brought dramatic changes to Greece's economic landscape, particularly due to the mass influx of Greek refugees from Asia Minor. This sudden population surge led to increased demand for essential goods, particularly cereals, which further developed the country's food production and consumer industries. The broader push toward industrial production during this period can also be attributed to the surplus labor force that emerged because of this demographic shift.⁹

The 1930s witnessed agricultural modernization through the widespread use of fertilizers and improved seed and livestock breeds.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the industrial sector experienced stagnation due to the global economic crisis (1929–31) and the disruptions of World War II.

Built in 1936 using reinforced concrete, the port silo in Piraeus emerged as a dominant presence on the waterfront. Characterized by its compact massing, the structure aimed to be both monumental in scale and restrained in form. In Volos and Thessaloniki, two other major commercial ports, identical or near-identical silos were constructed, reflecting a standardized approach to

editorialelotus.it/web/item.php?id=14

⁹ Demiri, K. (1991). *Industrial Buildings: History, Reuse, Design*. Athens, *Architectural Issues*, 25, pp. 57-65.

¹⁰ Petmezaz, S. (2013). The modernization of agriculture in Greece (c. 1920-1970): variation of a European Mediterranean Model?. *University of Crete*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309323771_5_The_modernisation_of_agriculture_in_Greece_c_1920-1970_variation_of_a_European_Mediterranean_Model_The_politics_of_Agricultural_Modernisation_in_Industrial_Europe

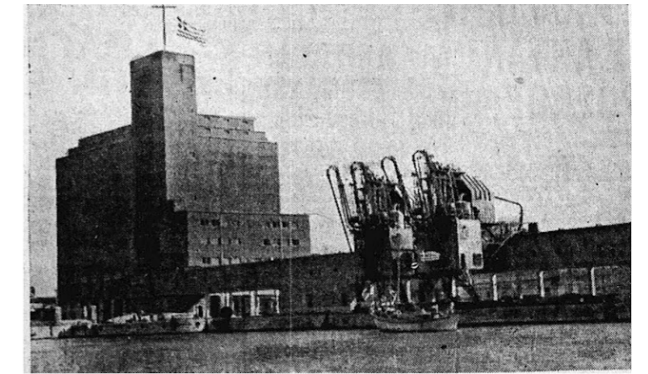


Figure 3. *The Silo in the port of Piraeus (1936)*. Retrieved from <https://pireorama.blogspot.com/2020/03/silos-peiraia.html>



Figure 4. *The silo in the port of Thessaloniki (1970)*. Retrieved from https://ikee.lib.auth.gr/record/360373/files/SIROPOULOS_ANASTASIOS-PAPANIKOLAOU_GEORGIOS_A3.pdf



Figure 5. *The silo in the port of Volos (1950)*. Retrieved from <https://www.thenewspaper.gr/2019/11/19/endaferon-gia-to-silo-toy-voloy-apo-etaireia-tis-thessalonikis/>

port infrastructure during that period (Figures 3,4,5).

The port of Piraeus became a hub for grain steamships, as it reduced costs for their companies. At the same time, it was decided that the railway lines from Larissa and the Peloponnese were extended to the silos so that wheat could be distributed via rail. The automation of wheat unloading freed up many piers (since grain ships no longer had to wait in line), and their place was taken by steamships carrying other goods, resulting in increased ship traffic in Piraeus.¹¹ This intermodal efficiency marked it as an advanced port for its time.

The post-war period, especially the 1950s, focused on reconstruction, with an emphasis on industrial recovery. This is a transitional period, as it marks the shift from the steam engine to oil and electricity. With the widespread use of small electric motors, the relationships between industrial equipment, production processes, and production space changed. These motors were capable of being adapted to each machine individually, making it possible to place machines anywhere within the production space. As a result, it became feasible to implement “deep floor plans”, allowing for a more flexible arrangement of machines.¹²

11 Unknown author. (2020, March). Silos Piraeus. Pireorama.

12 Demiri, K. (1991). Industrial Buildings: History, Reuse, Design. Athens, *Architectural Issues*, 25, pp. 57-65.

1.3. Third Period: 1960s - Present

The 1960s marked a period of rapid industrial growth driven by foreign capital. Most port silos in Greece were built after World War II and up until the 1970s, when port infrastructure and the agricultural product-handling industry experienced significant development.

The oil crises of the 1970s represented a major turning point in the post-war industrialization process of less developed and peripheral countries, including Greece. The weaknesses inherent in the country’s industrialization model became much more pronounced during this period and beyond, amid rising global competition.¹³

Greece’s entry into the European Economic Community in 1981 (a process that began in 1979) introduced new specifications and standards for the storage and distribution of agricultural products. As a result, many silos were adjusted or modernized to meet these new requirements.

During the 1980s and 1990s, further deindustrialization and a shift toward services, particularly in shipping, banking, and tourism, came to define the economic landscape. The role of silos mirrored these broader transformations, leading to their gradual abandonment.

13 Kourliouros, E. (1997) Planning industrial location in Greater Athens: The interaction between deindustrialization and anti-industrialism during the 1980s, *European Planning Studies*, 5:4, 435-460, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09654319708720411>



Figure 6. *The port of Kalamata and Evangelistria Silo on the left, 1940s–1950s.* From *Kalamata through the lens of Christos Aleiferis, 1937–1974* (p. 121), by A. Militsi-Nika & S. Verrarou, 2013, Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs – General State Archives (G.A.K.) – Archives of the Prefecture of Messinia.

Chapter 2: The Borderline Between Land and Sea

2.1. The Dual Nature of the Port City and the Port Silo

The location of port silos at the intersection of land and sea makes them unique infrastructural elements. As Carola Hein states in her article *The Port Cityscape*,

“Ports, cities, and rural areas coexist in limited territories; while they often have shared interests - for example, regarding economic development- they also compete for space and pursue divergent goals regarding environmental issues, notably around transport, energy, safety, and emissions.”¹⁴

14 Hein, C. (2019). The port cityscape: Spatial and institutional approaches to port city relationships. *PORTUS-*

In this context, the port silo can be seen as one such limited territory. The complex relationship described by Hein is both reflected in and facilitated by the port silo, which brings rurality (through the material nature of grain) into the cityscape, highlighting its dual role within these interdependent systems.

The port silo’s dual role is particularly evident in its interaction with the surrounding cityscape. On one hand, it brings the rural, deeply connected to the land and agricultural production, into the urban environment. Grain is inherently tied to the rural economy, and its transportation through the port silo physically and symbolically connects the countryside to the city. This ru-

plus, 8(Special Issue). <https://portusplus.org/index.php/article/view/190>, pp. 2

ral-urban dynamic is crucial to the silo's function, making it a key player in the larger economic system that links urban centers with agricultural production.

On the other hand, it also facilitates the exchange of resources and serves as a space integral to port functions. This connection to maritime trade adds another dimension to the already complex relationship between the city and the silo. Here, the silo becomes the point where goods are transferred from land-based agricultural production to sea-based trade routes. In other words, it blurs the boundaries between urbanity, rurality, and the maritime world, making the port silo a critical element in understanding how port cities operate.

Ports are "variable landscapes", dynamic environments where diverse functions such as production, operational activities, shipbuilding, and the storage of goods intersect, thus embodying complexity as infrastructures.¹⁵ In ancient times, ports often developed in parallel with urban settlements and played an important role in their socio-economic development. In many cases, settlements developed around natural harbors, or in certain instances, the port became the center of development, with new settlements forming around it. An example of this is the port of Miletus (Figure 7) in ancient Greece, which was formed around a natural bay that provided sheltered waters ideal for maritime trade. The earliest settlements were likely centered around

this harbor, giving Miletus a naval advantage.

The dipole of city and port, suggests a dynamic tension, where both constantly reshape each other. Within this already transformative context, silos are strategically positioned not only as bridges and connectors but also as key infrastructures that enable the coexistence of terrestrial and marine functions within the port. In this sense, the city possesses a dual identity, defined either by its relationship to water or by its urbanity, and the silo is oriented more toward the water. This interplay between land and sea forms a landscape that, as Carola Hein concludes, reflects a broader understanding:

"Literature on port cities often considers the port a clearly bounded entity. Such a perception tends to ignore the many ways in which ports use spaces on land and sea... The result is a port cityscape, a networked space that extends from land to sea..."¹⁶

Beatrice Moretti elaborates on this complex relationship by describing the interface between city and port as an "ambiguous space", characterized by its fluid and interstitial nature. She argues that this condition, where urbanity and portuality¹⁷ coexist, represents an "ancient di-

16 Hein, C. (2019). The port cityscape: Spatial and institutional approaches to port city relationships. *PORTUS-plus*, 8(Special Issue). <https://portusplus.org/index.php/pp/article/view/190>, pp. 4

17 Portuality is a concept that describes the intertwined nature of city and port systems, characterized by tension and mutual dependence. See Moretti (2020, p. 51) for a full explanation of how this condition reflects an emerging form of urbanity grounded in spatial and functional

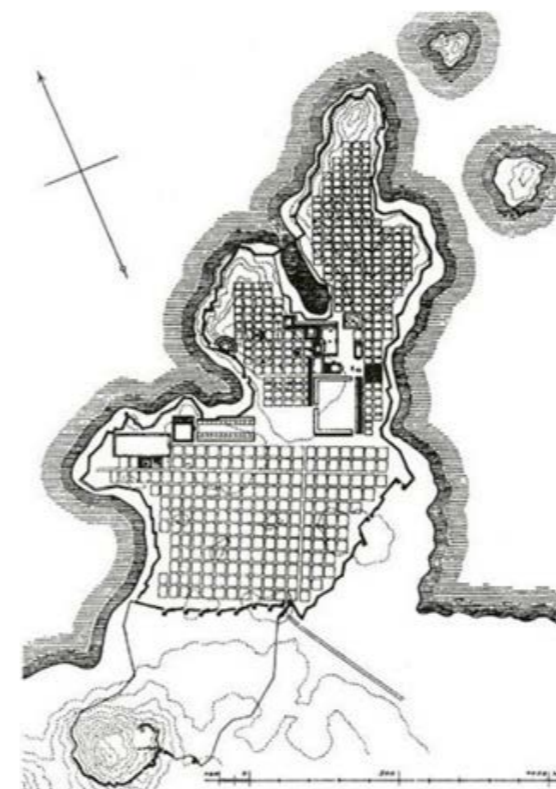


Figure 7. Waterfront configuration of Miletus Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Plan_of_Miletus_in_A_Gerkan%27s_Griechische_Stadteanlagen_Wellcome_M0009549.jpg

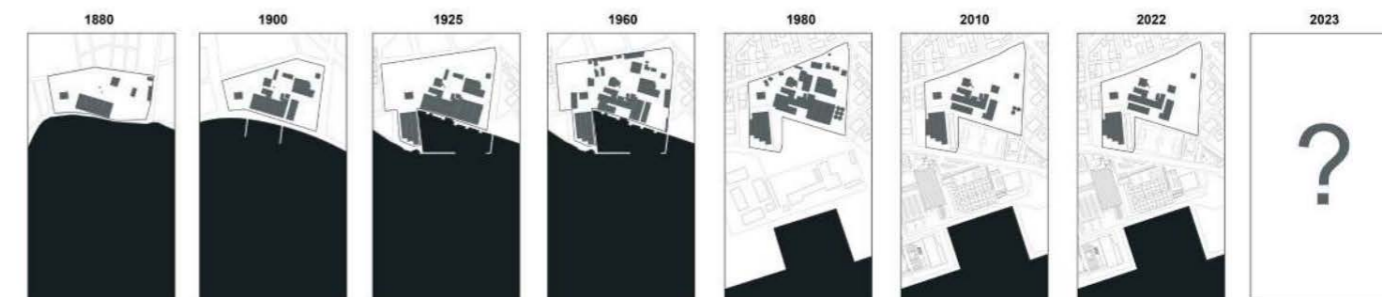


Figure 8. Changes of the waterfront based on the development and decline of the Allatini Silo in Thessaloniki. From Revitalisation of Allatini Mills (Master's thesis), by Chrysa Karanikola & Sileia Liatsi, supervised by Maria Dousi, July 2023, Department of Architecture, Faculty of Engineering, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Retrieved from https://ikee.lib.auth.gr/record/350754/files/Karanikola_Liatsi_A4.pdf

chotomy, two sides of the same coin". Furthermore, she suggests that such spaces, marked by unclear boundaries, exemplify the essence of the postmodern project, which embraces complexity, fragmentation, and the dissolution of rigid distinctions between urban and non-urban spaces.

In the image below (Figure 8), we observe how the waterfront adapted to the changing role of the Allatini Silo. Once the silo ceased functioning, the waterfront extended further south, reflecting a shift in its relationship with the port. No longer requiring direct interaction with the maritime activities, its position at the edge of the port became less significant, gradually fading into the cityscape.

2.2. Ports as Catalysts of Greek Industrialization and Agriculture

Maritime identity played a major role in the country's industrialization. It is a country where the sea is not a boundary but a passage, shaping its history as much as its terrain. With its intricate network of bays, inlets, and harbors, the country has long been defined by its connection to the waters that surround it. This articulation on the waterfront, this distinctive silhouette of the coast, was the turning point for industrialism.

Ports are not just points of arrival and departure, but fluid thresholds where goods, ideas, and ambitions converge. During industrialization, these coastal interfaces became engines of transformation, linking agricultural regions to urban centers and the global economy.

Until the final third of the 19th century, Greece relied on agriculture and shipping, without a truly developed industrial sector. The economy benefited from international trade and shipping companies that invested in industry and shipbuilding. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, ports played a crucial role in industrialization by facilitating trade, importing raw materials, and exporting manufactured goods. Ports such as Piraeus, Thessaloniki, and Volos (Figure 9) became hubs for importing industrial materials like coal, iron, and machinery, while also exporting agricultural products such as wheat, olives, and tobacco, thus strengthening the national economy. The proximity of factories to ports enabled efficient transportation, fostering the development of industrial zones.

Ports were also essential to transportation and infrastructure networks, as they were linked to railways and road systems that distributed goods domestically and connected industries to international markets. Investments in port modernization reinforced Greece's position in Mediterranean trade, while the shipbuilding industry contributed to maritime expansion, driving economic growth and urban development.¹⁸



Figure 9. Map of key Greek Ports. Created by the author.

¹⁸ Galani, K., & Papadopoulou, A. (Eds.). (2022). *Greek maritime history: From the periphery to the centre*. Brill.

Over the past 15 years, global changes have significantly impacted regional economies, particularly interregional trade. Modern trade is characterized by complexity, dynamic relationships, and advanced infrastructures, including widespread containerization, transportation innovation, and technological advancement.¹⁹

¹⁹ Polyzos, S., Niavis, S., & Minetos, D. (2019). *The ports of North Greece and their importance for the economic development of South-Eastern Europe*. University of Thessaly, School of Engineering, Department of Planning and Regional Development. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334696582>

Chapter 3: The Case of the Evangelistria Silo in Kalamata

3.1. Evolution of the Port and Industrial Sector

Kalamata, located along the waterfront, played a vital role in connecting local agricultural production to expanding markets. As trade intensified in the 19th century, the lack of structured port infrastructure became evident. The demand for such a facility was raised by local merchants in the 1850s. The entire planning and execution of the project were part of the broader effort for the economic development of the country's ports. By 1896, the port works (breakwater, quays, etc.) had not yet been completed and the project was finalized in 1901.

Commercial growth at the port progressed rapidly. Traditional agricultural products from the region, - figs, raisins, silkworm cocoons, among others- were exported either directly or via Patras to major trade centers of the time, such as Constantinople, Smyrna, Trieste, and Marseille (Figure 10). At the same time, imports of raw materials and industrial goods also developed. From the early 1900s to 1930, traffic increased further, partly because Kalamata served as a departure point for emigration to America, a phenomenon that especially affected the Peloponnese.²⁰

²⁰ *Glances at local history: The seafront of Kalamata and the port.* (2012, November 17). Eleftheria Online. <https://eleftheriaonline.gr/local/koinonia/item/21151-maties-stin-topiki-istoria-paraliaki-kalamatas-limani>

The 1920s marked a period of significant industrial development for Kalamata, aided by rail and sea connections to Athens and foreign ports. In 1926 Evangelistria Silo, Messinia's Flour Mill was constructed. Its development was influenced by two main factors: the region's longstanding flour milling tradition and a broader national push toward industrial production, driven by surplus labor. This labor surplus was partly due to the influx of Greek refugees, as discussed in the previous chapter.²¹

Despite infrastructure challenges, the port remained a major commercial gateway for the city products and the agricultural hinterland following the war (Figure 11).

During the Occupation (1941-44), the factory was seized by Italian forces and suffered significant damage. After the war, another warehouse was built. A lack of capital and serious trade and grain-processing issues slowed down operations. Between 1951 and 1952, the company received Marshall Plan funding, initiating a round of expansions that were completed many years later. The final addition, a warehouse expansion, was built in 1969. In the 1980s, additional silos were constructed west of Hydra Street.

The decline of the Evangelistria Silo began with the devastating 1986 earthquakes, which caused

²¹ Militsi-Nika, A., & Theofilopoulou-Stefanouri, C. (2002). *Cylindrical mills of Messinia Evangelistria S.A.: A summary record and historical development from the legal archive of Panagiotis Papadodouros.* Athens: General Archives of Greece – Archives of the Messinia Region.

severe damage to both the city and the industrial complex. Without state support for the industry, the abandoned site became a refuge for the homeless. Meanwhile, other milling industries in Kalamata took over the market, leading to the loss of the company's traditional clientele. In the years that followed, the silo changed ownership several times, but all attempts at revitalization failed. The last owner resumed operations. In 2023, Square One Studio was commissioned to convert the Evangelistria Silo into two hotels. Today, the port functions as a cruise ship destination, reflecting its evolving role.²²



Figure 10. *Export and collaboration routes of Evangelistria Silo, Kalamata.* Created by the author.

Figure 11. *Loading packaged figs on the eastern pier, 1960s. In the background the Evangelistria Port Silo is visible.* From *Kalamata through the lens of Christos Aleiferis, 1937–1974* (p. 140), by A. Militsi-Nika & S. Verrarou, 2013, Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs – General State Archives (G.A.K.) – Archives of the

²² Papanikolopoulos, N. (2015). *The Port of Kalamata: Significant moments in its history.* Kalamata Port Authority.

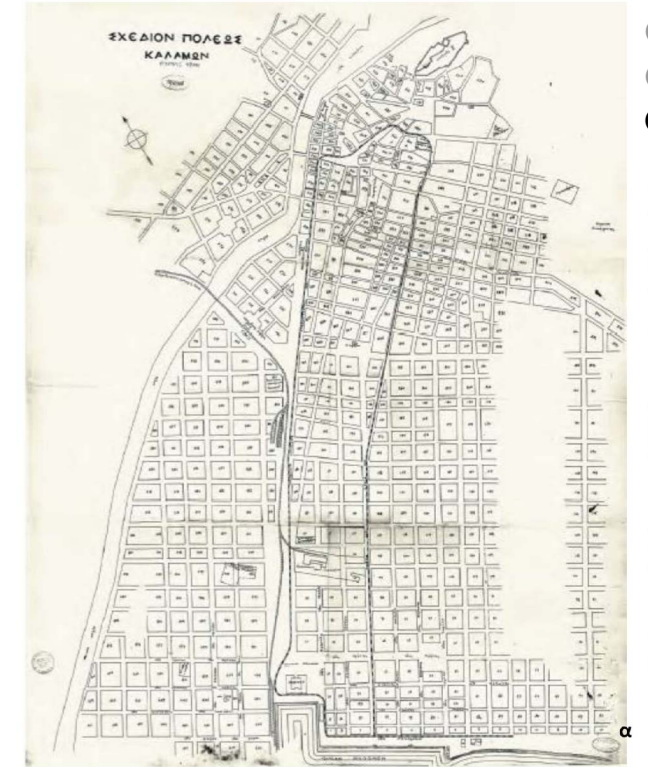
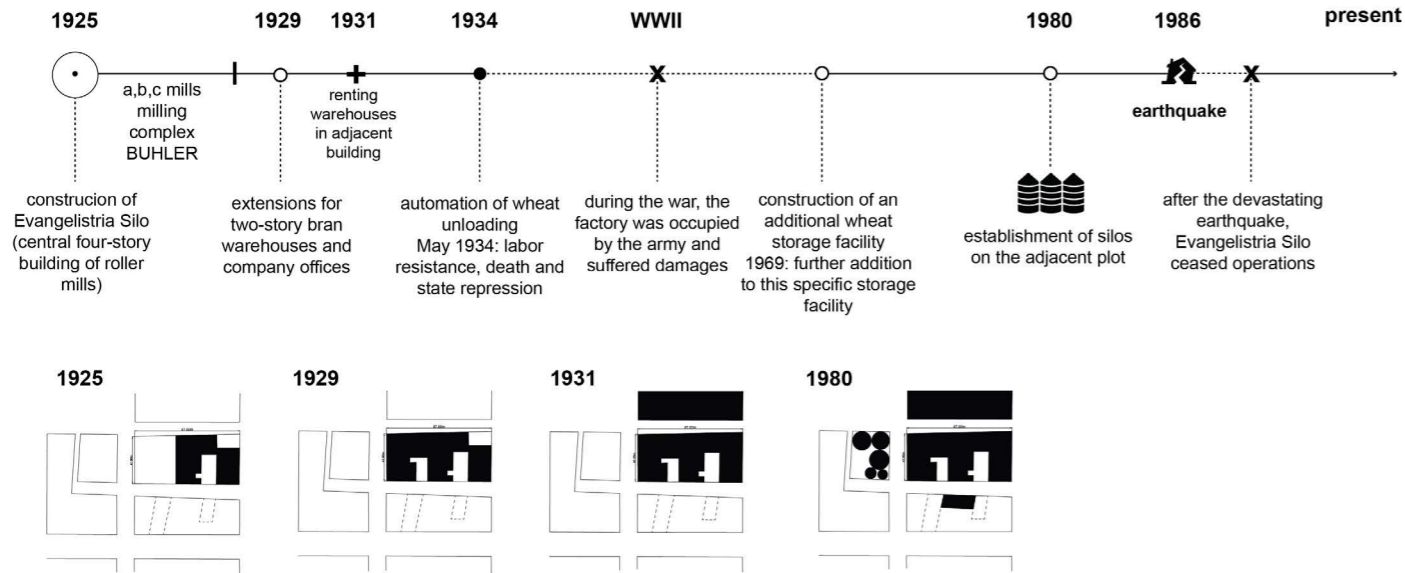


Figure 12. *City plan of Kalamata, 1905, with visible tram line.* From *The Customs House of Kalamata 1830–1930: From the sources of the GAK – Archives of the Prefecture of Messinia*, by A. Militsi-Nika & Ch. Theofilopoulou-Stefanouri, 2006, Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs, G.A.K. – Archives of the Prefecture of Messinia.



TIMELINE



Construction Sequence of the Complex

Figure 13. *Timeline of Evangelistria Silo construction sequence.* Created by the author, based on data from Militsi-Nika & Theofilopoulou-Stefanouri (2002).

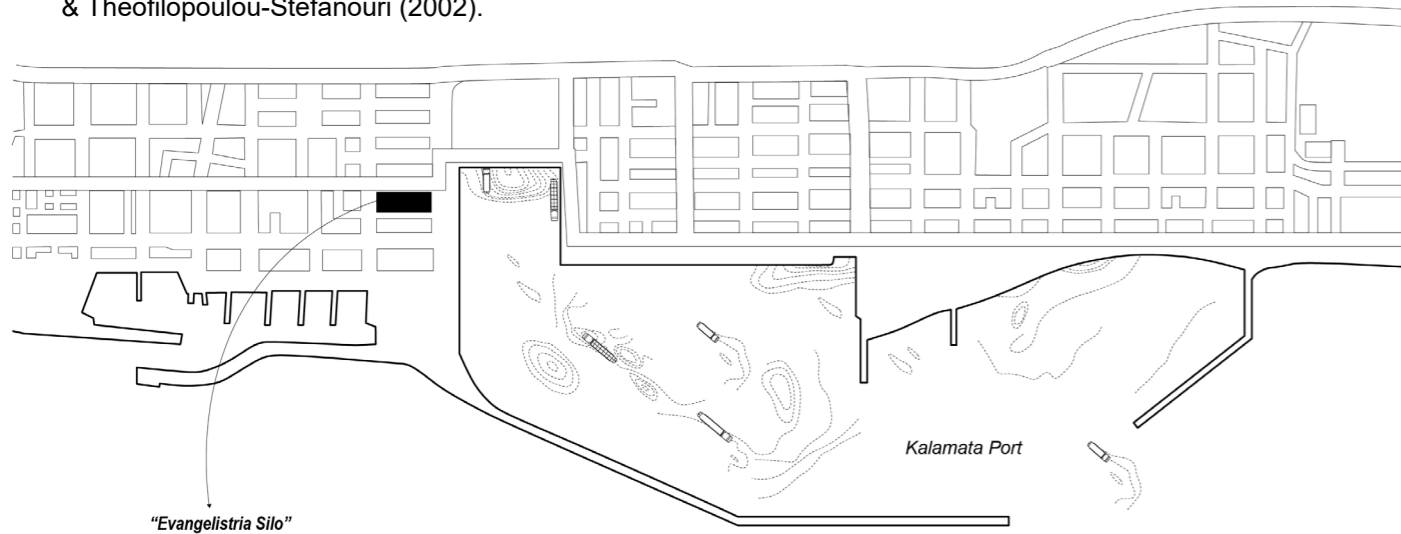


Figure 14. *Position of Evangelistria Silo in Kalamata port.* Created by the author, based on a topographic map from Municipality of Kalamata (retrieved from <https://kalamata.gr/images/arthra/2016/08/01-9998/odhgos-krouazieras-agglka.pdf>).

3.2. A Site of Conflict and Collective Memory

In 1934, a tragic event unfolded in Kalamata, marking a pivotal moment in the nation's labor movement. Just before the inauguration of a new machine designed to automate wheat unloading, a strike was declared, with mill workers and shopkeepers joining in. The Deputy Minister of Labor ordered the silo to remain operational at all costs. To enforce this, police, army, and employers were stationed around the mills. Dock workers attempted to block the unloading of the ship "Limni" by the new machinery. Soldiers opened fire, killing five individuals.

This act of fatal violence underscores how deeply the city's economic and cultural fabric was intertwined with port operations. This incident reveals a clash between labor-rooted maritime culture and emerging industrial efficiency, threatening not just employment but an entire maritime way of life. In this light, the port silo becomes a contested site of economic power, labor agency, and maritime identity.

Furthermore, it illustrates how a seemingly functional structure can be embedded in broader socio-political struggles. More than just a node of trade and industry, the Evangelistria Silo stands as a witness to labor, political shifts, and maritime commerce, shaped by the naval and terrestrial conditions. Beyond its utilitarian role, it is imbued with layers of symbolic meaning. In this way, the silo takes on an ideological dimension, becoming a monument of a faded era of collective labor and maritime resilience.



Figure 15. *Dock workers unloading wheat at the port.* Retrieved from <https://pireorama.blogspot.com/2020/03/silos-peiraia.html>



Figure 16. *The funeral of the victims, which was attended by the entire working community of Kalamata.* Retrieved from <https://eleftheriaonline.gr/stiles/kalimera-kyrie-dimarxe/item/270590-epi-tapitos-otan-i-poli-ksexnaei-ta-limenergatika>



Figure 17. *The seaside mill in 1988*. Retrieved from GAK/Messinia Archives, Alexandros Biorikas Collection.

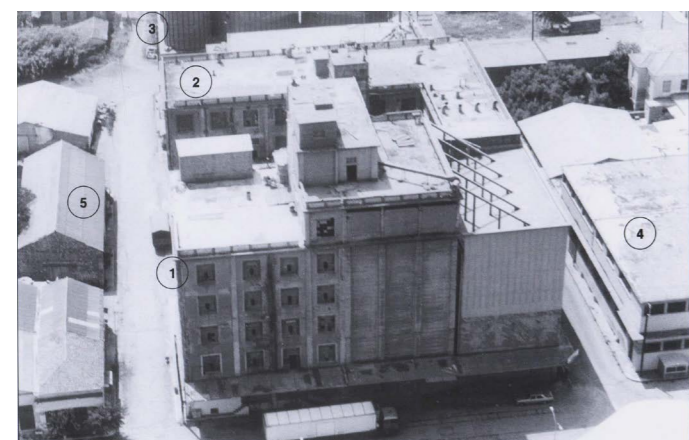


Figure 18. *Building complex Evangelistria Port Silo*: 1. Eastern milling complex BUHLER, 2. Western milling complex BUHLER, 3. Silos, 4. Warehouses K. Pastras, 5. Warehouses. Retrieved from GAK/Archives of Messinia, Alexandros Bourikas archive.

Port development is closely tied to national and regional policy frameworks, often allowing external authorities to override the priorities of local city governments. The differing timelines and rhythms between ports and urban life further complicate their coexistence. Nevertheless, port cities and their communities have historically demonstrated a distinct form of resilience, adapting to disruption and aligning political and economic interests, particularly when local leaders and maritime elites shared common goals.²³

However, this fatal event testifies that the narrative of harmonious port-city resilience and alignment between local and national interests is not always accurate. While port development is often shaped through top-down policymaking, with the assumption that local institutions and citizens will constructively adapt, the 1934 event at the Evangelistria Port Silo exposes a rupture in this dynamic.

3.3. Architecture and Functionality

The Evangelistria Silo is an E-shaped complex, developed in stages over time through successive additions. It includes single-story and multi-story buildings, that housed mills, a machine shop, a power plant, a warehouse, a silo, a carpentry workshop, a blacksmith shop, and offices. The total area of the industrial complex is approximately 3,750 square meters.

²³ Hein, C. (2019). The port cityscape: Spatial and institutional approaches to port city relationships. *PORTUS-plus*, 8(Special Issue). <https://portusplus.org/index.php/pp/article/view/190>,

Like most buildings of its time, the port silo follows a monumental architectural style, characterized by a monolithic presence and reinforced concrete construction (Figure 16). It occupies an entire city block. The adjacent plot once housed metal silos, which no longer exist. The flatness of its perimeter walls is interrupted only by a series of windows. The building's mass reads as a neutral shell, revealing little of the diverse industrial activity housed within.

In contrast to its austere exterior, the interior reflects a spatial character defined by functionalism and verticality. The complexity of the grain flow system imposes a specific choreography on both workers and materials, creating a world of continuous movement. Outwardly, the silo presents itself as a monument of modern industry, while internally it functions as a living mechanism (Figure 19).



Figure 19. *Rollers for wheat milling, Western Building, 1st floor*. Retrieved from GAK/Archives of Messinia, Alexandros Bourikas archive.

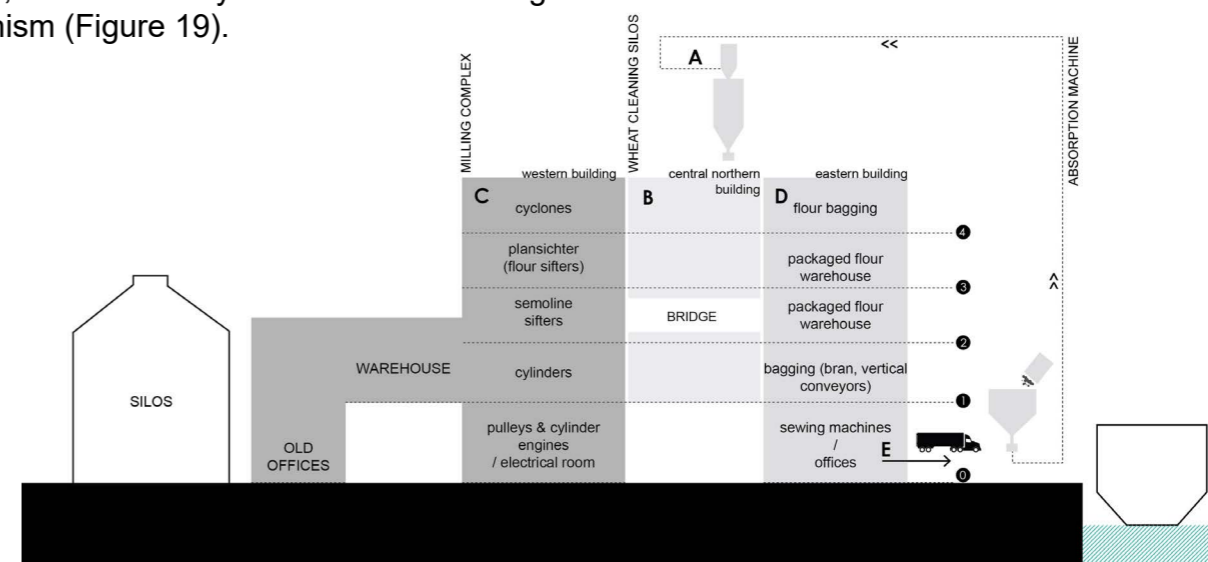


Figure 20. *Wheat milling process in Evangelistria Silo*. Created by the author, based on a hand-drawn diagram from Militsi-Nika, A., & Theofilopoulou-Stefanouri, C. (2002). *Cylindrical mills of Messinia Evangelistria S.A.: A summary record and historical development from the legal archive of Panagiotis Papadodouros*. Athens: General Archives of Greece – Archives of the Messinia Region.

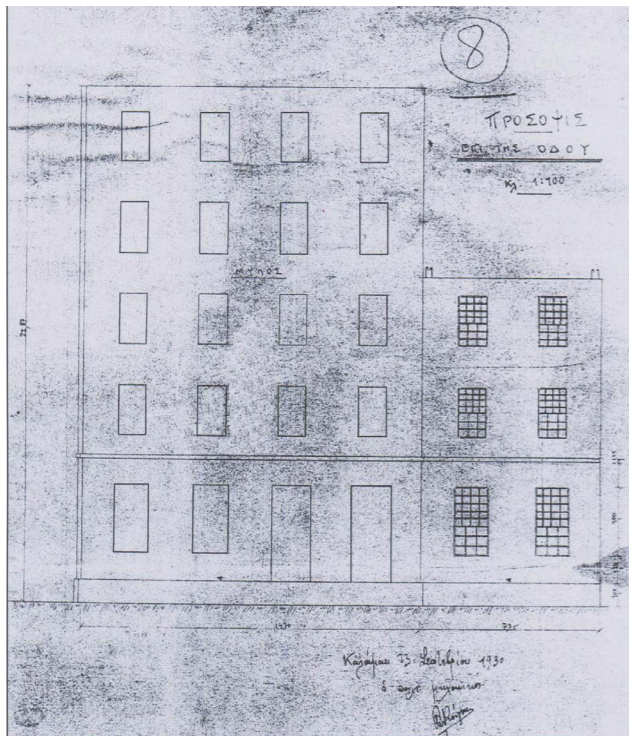


Figure 21. Façade of the Evangelistria roller mill around 1930. Retrieved from GAK/Archives of Messinia, Evangelistria Archive.

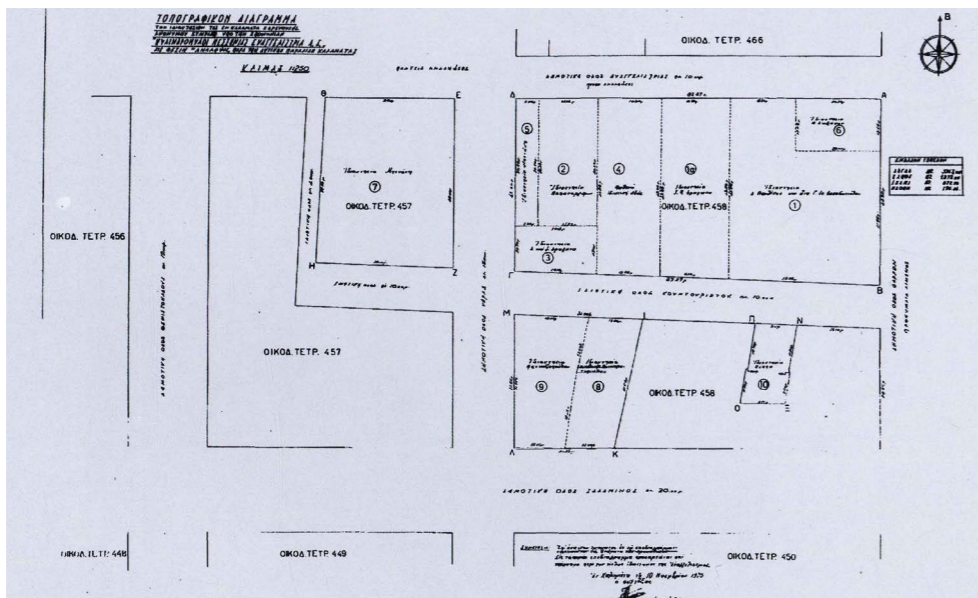


Figure 22. Topographic diagram from 1975 showing the properties of the Evangelistria company. Retrieved from GAK/Archives of Messinia, Evangelistria Archive.

Chapter 4: Reconfiguring Maritime Space and Identity

Centuries of maritime trade have shaped the culture and society of port cities, with silos standing as enduring symbols of this heritage. Port silos, by their very nature, function as interfaces, as previously discussed, not only between industry and agriculture but also between land and water. Their role is not merely logistical; it is spatial, material, and economic. However, as industrial economies decline or shift, these interfaces are being repurposed, often losing their original function in favor of new economic models.

The Evangelistria Port Silo, once an important point in the flow of agricultural production, embodies this duality, acting as both a storage node for grain and an infrastructural link between rural cultivation and global trade. Its planned transformation into a luxury hotel reflects this change, replacing its agricultural-industrial significance with one of leisure and high-end consumption. This transition mirrors a broader pattern seen in port cities, where waterfront industrial sites, once vital to production, are increasingly repurposed for consumption, absorbed by tourism and real estate economies.

The PortCityFutures research subgroup Mapping Maritime Mindsets has explored how the economic, social, and cultural dynamics of port cities leave lasting imprints on spatial structures. The group introduces the concept of the “maritime mindset”, a term that encapsulates the culture and mentality shaped by centuries of trade

and industry, which, in turn, have historically enabled port cities to be resilient. This mindset, embedded in spatial patterns, reflects the deep entanglement of maritime and urban interests. However, in the case of Evangelistria Silo, this connection has faded over time. As shipping activities diminished, so did the link between the structure and its maritime function. It now stands as an evolving urban element, reflecting broader economic forces and serving as a reminder of its ties to the maritime past and the threat of industrial obsolescence. As Vincent Baptist argues, the construction of a maritime mindset often acts as a “self-fulfilling prophecy”, an effort to reactivate the port city’s economic identity. Yet, concurrently this process can redefine structures like the silo within that narrative. In other words, he describes how the deliberate construction of a maritime mindset can serve as a renewed focus on the port city’s economic and cultural identity, actively shaping reality, and in turn, the port silos within it. Historically, this mindset informed the design of port infrastructures, shaping the way cities adapted to and relied on maritime trade. Silos were built with resilience in mind, representing both the fluidity of trade and the need for robust urban organization.²⁴

This loss of connection with the water, driven by economic shifts, marks more than just a functional transition. It reflects a spatial and symbolic

24 Sennema, H., Baptist, V., Dai, T., Gan, Y., Van Mil, Y., Van den Brink, T., & Hein, C. (2021). The maritime mindset: A conceptual and practical exploration of mapping port cities. *European Journal of Creative Practices in Cities and Landscapes*, 4(2), 152-163. <https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2612-0496/14141>

detachment that is visible in the case of Evangelistria Silo in Kalamata. As maritime trade declined and the port's role in agricultural exports diminished, the silo found itself alienated from the very environment it was designed to serve. Its presence embodies the disappearance of a maritime logic that once defined Kalamata's identity as a port city. Reconsidering this loss is not about restoring past functions, but rather about rethinking the silo's role within a new port-city narrative, one that is oriented towards the water again and proposes a more integrated future for coastal urbanism.

This type of transformation into a hotel aligns with the broader mechanisms of tourism, which structure experiences around curated, consumable narratives rather than complex, lived histories. Tourism prioritizes seamless mobility, familiar imagery, and pre-packaged discourses that reinforce sanitized versions of place and culture. In this context, the Evangelistria Silo's industrial past is rebranded into an aestheticized, marketable heritage that overlooks its layered history as a palimpsest structure with both agricultural and maritime significance. Port silos, much like the port cities themselves, possess a complex nature, evolving across spatial, social, and cultural layers. Therefore, their role in urban transformation demands a more nuanced understanding, one that integrates these multi-dimensional aspects.



Figure 23. *Current condition of Evangelistria Silo.* Retrieved from <https://www.archisearch.gr/architecture/silos-evangelistria-silo-building-in-kalamata-transformed-into-two-hotels-by-squareone-studio/>

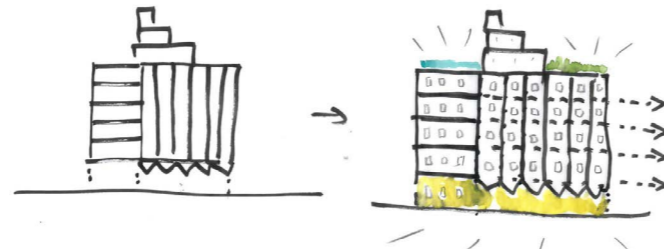


Figure 24. *Diagram of the vision of Evangelistria Silo Hotel.* Retrieved from SquareOne Architects, <https://www.archisearch.gr/architecture/silos-evangelistria-silo-building-in-kalamata-transformed-into-two-hotels-by-squareone-studio/>

Conclusion

Port silos in Greece are more than industrial relics; they are architectural witnesses to a nation's shifting identity. Emerging during a pivotal period when Greece sought to industrialize and integrate more fully into global markets, these structures bridged the rural and the urban, the agricultural and the industrial, the land and the sea. Their monumental presence along the waterfront was never just about storage. It mirrored an ambition: a reconfiguration of space and economy that linked local production to maritime flows and, by extension, to broader global networks.

Their evolution is inseparable from the wider transformation of the national economy. As agriculture gave way to industry, and later to a service-based model, the function and symbolism of these buildings changed. Once shaped by grain, labor, and logistics, these structures are now reimagined through the lens of tourism and curated heritage narratives. The silo has become a palimpsest: a structure bearing physical and ideological traces of different eras, economic systems, and urban values. Their rise and decline embody the country's evolving relationship with production, labor, and the sea.

The dual nature of the silo, as an intermediary object and point of transition, has made it a crucial, though often overlooked, actor in the shaping of port cities. Positioned at the threshold of city and port, silos reflect a broader connection: where urbanity and portuality not only coexist

but continuously reshape one another. Neither fully architectural nor purely infrastructural, the silo enables the coexistence of terrestrial and marine functions. Its spatial logic embeds the rural into the urban, the sea into the land, and the industry into daily life, making visible the otherwise invisible flows that sustain port cities. In this way, the silo does not merely stand between land and water; it operates in a condition of in-betweenness, where boundaries blur and urban identity is negotiated.

This complexity is particularly evident in the case of Evangelistria Silo in Kalamata. Built to support the regional milling economy and reinforce maritime trade, it later became the site of a tragic labor conflict, revealing it as a contested site of industrial power, resistance, and social transformation. Beyond its utilitarian function, it became a symbol of collective power and a reminder of the maritime resilience that once defined the city. Its later abandonment and its planned conversion into a tourist site echo broader shifts in the city's economic model and signal a growing spatial and symbolic detachment from the sea.

In their current state, port silos reflect the gradual disconnection of port cities from their maritime past. As maritime activities have diminished and waterfronts are reoriented toward consumption, the silo's position at the water's edge has lost its operational significance. In some cases, such as the Allatini Silo in Thessaloniki, this shift is both spatial and functional. The silo is no longer situated at the edge of the port, both due to the westward relocation of port operations, and

the expansion of the urban waterfront, which has absorbed the silo into the fabric of the city. Its detachment is therefore less about a loss of maritime proximity and more about the broader decline of the industrial economy that once sustained it. This reveals how infrastructures once shaped by movement, labor, and logistical flows now inhabit cities whose spatial priorities and economic rhythms have fundamentally changed.

To engage with silos today is to confront their layered significance and the loss of their original function and connection to the water. Their reuse should not be reduced to aesthetic or commercial reinvention. Rather, it invites reflection on what has been disconnected and on what aspects of their identity might still hold value. Silos are not static monuments but dynamic forms, capable of anchoring new narratives for the waterfront, ones that acknowledge complexity, hybridity, and the generative tension between memory and change.

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