

Integrating heritage into new urban developments

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Abstract

Cultural sustainability raises numerous issues for architects, who are challenged to find solutions for preserving and enhancing architectural heritage, the natural setting, and cultural identity. An important issue in maintaining cultural identity is the relationship between new developments and architectural heritage, which should preserve meanings transmitted over time, by generations. On the one hand, this requires respect for the traditions and the existing built environment. On the other hand, new developments should address the needs and values of modern society and find ways to connect the heritage to modern life. Architectural heritage has an as-yet untapped potential for integrating the cultural and social dimensions of sustainability. Based on case studies, this article analyses three ways in which the cultural and social values of historical heritage can be preserved, enhanced, and enriched by new architectural developments.

Keywords: Architecture, Collaboration, Trust, Convergence, Heritage, Respect, Cultural sustainability, Cultural identity

Introduction

Cultural sustainability, now recognized as the fourth dimension of sustainable development, is an important issue in preserving and enhancing architectural heritage, the natural environment, and cultural identity. Cultural identity is an attribute of a society or a group of people, which has its own goals, values, and meanings that distinguish it from others and which are manifested in customs, language, institutions, and arts. Cultural identity is created and transmitted through tradition, as an uninterrupted repetition of gestures of our predecessors, and construction is a cosmogonic ritual that "is equivalent to the founding of a world" (Eliade, 1957).

A challenge in preserving cultural identity is the relationship between new developments and the architectural heritage, which preserves the meanings transmitted over time. New developments are potential threats when they bear the imprint of a global culture that alters the cultural identity of a place (Frampton, 2016). The challenge is related to urban development, which must find solutions to ensure a balance when new architecture is placed next to or inserted between buildings of particular architectural value.

This interplay between tradition and current events, between collective values and the built reality, transforms architecture into a space of convergence, in which cultural identity is reaffirmed and transmitted. In other words, not only the place itself, but also the activities and practices related to it must be the object of concern. For those who live in that place, cultural identity is given by the activities carried out, the repetition of which, according to rules and customs transmitted through tradition, has the value of rituals.

The built environment is not just an ensemble of buildings. Architectural heritage has cultural and social value, being a space in which cultural values, significance, and identity are preserved and

transmitted. The purpose of this article is to analyze, based on examples, three ways in which the cultural and social values of heritage can be preserved, enhanced, and enriched by new urban developments.

Literature Review

Interest in cultural sustainability has grown in recent decades, fueled by several factors: openness to diversity, reconsideration of local values in the context of globalization, reconsideration of the role of culture in society, and academic interest in this issue (Soini & Birkeland, 2014).

Sustainable development was defined by the WCED report (1987) as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Initially, sustainability was considered to have three pillars: ecological, social, and economic. Hawkes looked at sustainability from a broader perspective, arguing for a fourth pillar: cultural sustainability, which he associated with belonging, identity, creativity, and recognition (Hawkes, 2001).

Openness to diversity and local values is linked to the concept of local identity, in whose development, cultural continuity plays an important role. Identity is linked to place, people (community and societal values), and culture (traditions, customs, practices). For Norberg-Schulz (1996), cultural identity is what gives meaning to space and must be taken into account when creating a place. The meaning of a place is given by a multitude of factors, being socially constructed in a certain context (Carmona *et al.*, 2003).

Heritage confers a transcendental value on a place, which refers to general principles such as respect for tradition and the relationship

with nature, and a contextual value, which refers to the monument in question and the built environment in which it is located (Azzopardi et al., 2023). Beyond the intrinsic value of a heritage object that must be conserved and whose performative character must be preserved, it also has an instrumental value, as an active factor in the continuity of social and cultural life.

Methodology

This study employs qualitative analysis to discuss three modalities in which the relationship between the old and the new, respectively between heritage and new developments, contributes to cultural sustainability.

Based on examples for each modality, the added value of the interaction between old and new is analyzed through the lens of heritage values.

Extension by underground developments

By placing new functions in the underground, the external surface remains unchanged, not altering the cultural landscape and the spirit of the place, shaped by the architectural heritage. This solution is more than culturally sustainable, as it saves urban space, which is a precious resource.

An example is the Metropolitan Museum in Iași that was built in 2016, as part of a project to capitalize on the Iași Metropolitan Ensemble, authored by architect Dragoș Ciolacu (Ciolacu & Ivanciu, 2024).



Fig. 1 Metropolitan Museum of Iași: Rotonda
(<https://www.uar-bna.ro/2016/proiecte/30/>)

Located in the basement of the Metropolitan Cathedral, the museum is thematically organized and has a perimeter gallery. The rooms are multifunctional, serving as both an exhibition space and a liturgical space. An example is the Rotonda room, which also serves for baptismal services, with a baptistery in the middle. The order of space emerges as both structural and symbolic: the centralized space in the rotunda is placed under the Hodocin's Fountain.

The distinction between the vertical tectonic pillars and the enclosing roof of the Rotonda is articulated with clarity; yet the covering with the painted dome with an oculus, despite its material density, is apprehended as a light, shell-like membrane, seemingly freed from the burden of earth. The synthesis of clarity, restraint, and light of the intervention creates a special spatial experience.

The museum is enhancing the extrinsic value of the cathedral by creating a special space for an important religious service: the baptism. The relocation of this religious service is attracting members of the community to come to visit both the cathedral and the museum.

Another example, in a completely different architectural language, is the Constantin Brâncuși Center in Craiova, an underground extension located in the courtyard of the Craiova Art Museum. The project was carried out by the D.S.B.A firm, architect Dorin Stefan, and was

*Fig. 2 International
Center Constantin
Brâncuși
([https://archello.com/pr
oject/constantin-
brancusi-center](https://archello.com/project/constantin-brancusi-center))*



inaugurated in 2022. Above the center, an egg made of glass slats is placed, a tribute to the sculptor.

Not only is this egg unique in the world, having by itself an intrinsic value, but it also enhances the extrinsic value of both the Art Museum and Brancuși Center since its novelty is drawing attention and raising the curiosity of visitors.

Extension by exterior developments

Another way to expand functionality is to extend the building externally, a solution that raises issues regarding the architectural language, which should be harmoniously integrated with both the historical heritage and the cultural landscape.

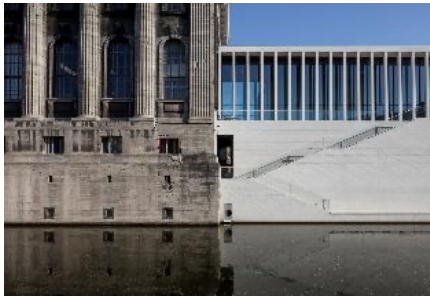
The Royal Collection Gallery in Madrid, located next to the Royal Palace of Madrid, was completed in 2015 based on the design of architects Luis M. Mansilla and Emilio Tuñón. The museum is a building that stands out for its sobriety and simplicity.

Using construction materials similar to those of the Royal Palace, it integrates harmoniously with the historical heritage. By hosting the royal art collection, which has intrinsic value, the museum also has an extrinsic value for the community.

The James Simon Gallery is an intervention by David Chipperfield Architects (D.C.A) that completes the ensemble on Museum Island in Berlin. The project integrates the gallery as an entrance gate to the island and the starting point of an Archaeological Promenade, thus featuring an extrinsic value.



*Fig. 3 Royal Collections Museum
(<https://www.archdaily.com/793984/royal-collections-museum-mansilla-plus-tunon-arquitectos>, Photo Luis Asin)*



*Fig. 4 James Simon Gallery in Berlin
(<https://davidchipperfield.com/projects/james-simon-galerie>)*

From the point of view of resolving access, the route of the archaeological promenade provides a scene of architecture in uninterrupted dialogue with its past. From the water level, a high stone plinth serves as a reinforcing element, and from street level, the thin columns, placed on the base, continue the colonnade of the ground floor. The colonnades strengthen the unity of the island and the vision of an acropolis rising from the water.

Integration by urban developments

Buildings from the historical heritage leave their mark on the spirit of a place, so subsequent developments should ensure a harmonious integration that preserves the sense of place.

La Porte Romaine was a project by Foster & Partners in Nîmes, France, in 2015. The development is located between three historic structures: the Porte d'Auguste (the Roman gate to the city), the Church of St Baudile, and the University of Nîmes.

The challenge was to sensitively insert a new block of apartments into the old center of the city, while providing an appropriate setting for the old Porte d'Auguste. The robust façade echoes the nearby Roman Arenas, with its geometric openings and deep shadows, and also draws inspiration from the traditional facades of the old city - their balconies, louvered shutters, and celebrated entrances - reinterpreting them in a contemporary manner.

*Fig. 5 La Porte Romaine
(<https://divisare.com/projects/319450-foster-partners-nigel-young-la-porte-romaine>)*



Another example to consider is the STOA residential complex in Maastricht, designed by Luigi Snozzi, located in a neighborhood with high potential, given its position towards the Meuse river, which brought the theme of recovering a space isolated from the historic



*Fig. 6 STOA Residential Complex
(<https://www.archiweb.cz/en/b/bytovy-soubor-stoa>)*

center of the city. The name given to the complex gives an immediate reference to tradition: stoa, a promenade space, created by a portico.

In the historic center of Maastricht, the street is not just a simple corridor developed in an amorphous construction. Still, it is a social space, entered through a built portal or one created by vegetation. Snozzi identified this principle characteristic of the development of the inherited urban fabric, and without superimposing the classical reference, immediately made the connection with it. The significance of the repeated portal along the closed, traditional fronts was transposed through a portico-type base covered with a pergola of vegetation.

The vegetal corridor of the bank represents a line of force, which accentuates the silhouette of the built front. The linear movement along the vegetal corridor, at pedestrian level, connects to the pergola on the ground floor, as a continuation of the recreation area towards the private space. The pergola works as an anchor that transcends temporality, expressing continuity. Thus, the project responds to the cultural landscape in a key of continuity: the natural (riverside) frame, the cultural-historical frame, and the social frame of the street.

Conclusion

Tradition continuously influences contemporary practice as a dynamic phenomenon, able to interact with different cultural contexts and underly models that focus on the continuation of significant relationships between spatial form, material form, and cultural identities.

Under the conditions of preserving and respecting the historical heritage, it is possible to expand the traditional activities of a given place with new cultural activities, fulfilling the needs of current and future generations, through readaptation and reuse.

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Integrarea patrimoniului în noile dezvoltări urbane

(rezumat)

Sustenabilitatea culturală ridică numeroase provocări pentru arhitecți, care sunt solicitați să găsească soluții pentru conservarea și valorificarea patrimoniului arhitectural, a cadrului natural și a identității culturale. O problemă importantă în menținerea identității culturale este relația dintre noile dezvoltări și patrimoniul arhitectural, care ar trebui să păstreze semnificațiile transmise de-a lungul timpului, de generații. Pe de o parte, aceasta presupune respectul pentru tradiții și mediul construit existent. Pe de altă parte, noile dezvoltări ar trebui să răspundă nevoilor și valorilor societății moderne și să găsească modalități de a conecta patrimoniul la viața contemporană. Patrimoniul arhitectural are un potențial încă neexploatat pentru integrarea dimensiunilor culturale și sociale ale sustenabilității. Bazat pe studii de caz, acest articol analizează trei modalități prin care valorile culturale și sociale ale patrimoniului istoric pot fi conservate, valorificate și îmbogățite prin noile dezvoltări arhitecturale.