

Heritage Architecture in Amman: Adaptive Reuse of a Heritage Building (Farouq Yaghmour Office)

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العمارة التراثية في عمان: إعادة استخدام مبنى تراثي، مكتب فاروق يغمور

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Abstract

Adaptive reuse of heritage buildings is one of the heritage conservation processes. Heritage conservation is one approach to preserve heritage buildings to enhance their use and highlight their importance, authenticity and historic significance, which leads to urban development. The aim of this paper is to highlight one of the adaptive reuse attempts of a heritage building in Jabal Al-Wiebdah in Amman, which is considered a heritage area since it has many heritage buildings and represents the architectural identity of Amman. The paper attempts to achieve its aim through deep analysis of the architectural elements of the building under consideration, involving the approach used formerly to transform the building and the contemporary interventions that were added and their impact on architectural, social, economic, and urban development. The methodology used in the paper was based on a field survey of the building .

Keywords: adaptive reuse, heritage, conservation, Amman, culture. tones in Byzantine music.

الملخص

إعادة استخدام المباني التراثية تمثل أحد أساليب الحفاظ على المباني التراثية وهو عملية للحفاظ على المباني لتعزيز استخدامها، التأكيد على أهميتها وأصالتها والأهمية التاريخية التي تؤدي إلى إنعاش التنمية الحضرية. يهدف هذا البحث إلى تسليط الضوء على إحدى محاولات إعادة الاستخدام لمبنى تراثي في جبل اللويبة في عمان والذي يعتبر منطقة تراثية تحتوي على العديد من المباني التراثية ويمثل الهوية المعمارية لعمان. سيشمل ذلك تحليلاً عميقاً للعناصر المعمارية للمبنى قيد النظر، والنهج المستخدم لتحويل المبنى، والتدخلات المعاصرة التي تمت إضافتها وتأثيرها على التنمية المعمارية والاجتماعية والاقتصادية والحضرية. اعتمدت الطريقة المستخدمة على مسح ميداني للمبنى.

الكلمات المفتاحية: إعادة الاستخدام، التراث، الحفاظ، عمان، الثقافة.

Introduction:

Driven by rapid increase of land prices and, as a result, similar increase in real estate prices and rental cost of both commercial and residential buildings, many people in countries in the Middle East are seeking ways to cope with the current situation and the emerging economic conditions of the construction industry. One such way, introduced in many Western societies and in developing countries, is to maximize the benefits from existing buildings (Astrong 2013; Marshal and Beatly; 2014). While such buildings are sometimes considered out of date, suffering degradation or in poor conditions, designers in many countries have been introducing various innovative methods to up-grade such buildings and inject new life into them. One approach that has proven to be successful in many places is adaptive reuse (Po Well, 2012; Tweed and Sutherland, 2007). Improvement of the quality of old buildings through modifications, rehabilitation, repair and the introduction of necessary electro-mechanical systems has resulted in the presentation of old buildings to successfully serve contemporary functions.

Amman is a unique city due to its distinct architectural identity which reflects the past culture through time which is readable through buildings that form the image of the city. Heritage architecture in general is very important because it reflects the identity of the place (Abu Ghanimeh, 2002; 2007). It needs special attention in order to preserve heritage buildings for future generations. Heritage conservation methods vary from restoration, reconstruction, rehabilitation and preservation and adaptive reuse. A heritage place needs to be well served, and there is a need to revive the heritage buildings to maintain their durability. Adapting heritage buildings can take the form of transforming a building into a new function to serve the modern demands through adaptive reuse and adding modern interventions as needed. If done well, such adapting can have a remarkable impact on reviving the place in question.

Development plans of cities rich with heritage buildings include reviving heritage buildings and regenerating life into them through adapting them into new functions which enhance their architectural, historic and symbolic values, (Tiesdell,etal.,1996). Jabal Al-Wiebdeh has witnessed many conservation practices due to its richness with heritage buildings which need to be conserved. These practices lead to revival of the social, economic and cultural life there, (see for example, Bernard and Russell, 1988; Matrouk, 2003; Abu-Dayyeh, 2006).

Literature Review:

There is a growing body of literature that emphasizes the important role of adaptive reuse of heritage buildings for contemporary use (see, for example, Bose, 2012; Burton, 2014; Misirlisoya and Gunc, 2016). Advocates of adaptive reuse of heritage buildings maintain that this process is one of the heritage conservation methods. They explain that heritage conservation is expected to provide societies with valuable and beneficial socio-economic, cultural and sustainable development (Tiesdell and Heath, 1996; Tweed and Sutherband, 2007; Powell, 2012). A number of issues need to be taken into consideration prior to the selection of buildings for adaptive reuse. These include location, architectural characteristics, and economic, i.e. market, considerations. As a result, designers involved in the process of adaptive reuse have paid special attention to adaptive reuse of heritage buildings as an important component of urban regeneration projects. They argue that this contributes significantly to comprehensive sustainable urban development.

According to Latham (2000), and Wilkinson et al. (2009), adaptive reuse refers to the development and modifications that are occasionally introduced to heritage buildings in order to serve specific functions and needs of the building users. Obviously, this may include refurbishment, renovation, internal space re-arrangement and the introduction of the necessary electro-mechanical services. Such changes and modifications are expected to retain, protect, upgrade and conserve the heritage building under consideration.

As a result, the efforts, skills, and dedications of the early builders are protected and enhanced (Bullen and Love, 2009).

In addition, a number of authors, including Bromley et al.(2005), Hamer (2002), and cooper (2001), have noted that adaptive reuse is one approach of heritage conservation. They observe that the functional benefits of adaptive reuse and the values of conserving heritage buildings support the objectives of promoting sustainable strategies. This is expected to achieve environmental sustainability through the improvement of material efficiency, economic sustainability through cost reduction of buildings allocated for the emerging needs of people. It also helps social sustainability through fostering human activities.

Aim of the study:

This paper aims to highlight one of the architectural attempts of adaptive reuse of a residential building into an office facility (Yaghmour Office) by the architect Farouq Yaghmour, who selected a heritage building, renovated it, transformed it into an office, and used it to meet his office needs.

Efforts were made in this study to document and analyze the original architectural elements of the building, which were later employed in the adaptation process. The contemporary interventions that were added and their impact on the architectural quality, social, economic, and urban development are also explained in the course of the study.

Methodology:

This study is qualitative (descriptive and analytical). It follows a multi-method (triangulation method) due to the scanning work, observation of the building, and a personal interview with the architect Farouq Yaghmour, for a comprehensive understanding of the approach he used in the adaptive reuse process. The methodology is based on deep analysis of the building, documenting its architectural elements in plans and elevations, assessing the rehabilitation method used in transforming the building from a residential to an office building and the level of achieved results. Also, the paper attempts to assess the accomplished significance of the building in reference to the social, economic, historic, and architectural/urban value.

Case study:

Jabal Al-Wiebdeh is one of the heritage residential neighborhoods in Amman. It is rich with memories and with different types of buildings that represent the history of the place. It has been inhabited since the early 20th century. Al-Wiebdeh is a very attractive place for both tourists and the local community. It is located in the south west of Amman, and it has two parts: the eastern and western. The criteria for the selection of the case study included the following:

1. The adapted reused building should be not more than 10 years in operation.
2. The project should address the concept of heritage conservation as stated in National trust.
3. The building should be occupied by the local community such as residential houses which were adapted into a commercial building.

The selected building fulfilled the mentioned criteria. Shinanah Family Residence, located in Mohammad Iqbal Street, plot number 142, building number14, now it is adapted by the architect Farouq Yaghmour into an office building for his work since 2010.

Discussion:

1. Description and General Data

a) A. General description and Data:

The building was constructed in 1944 as a residential building. Two types of stones were used (tobze and ajami). The house consisted of three floors, with simple facades and window openings and veranda space (balcony). Another concrete mass expansion was added to the house in the 1960s. In 2010 architect Farouqe Yagmour completed the adaptive reuse of the building.

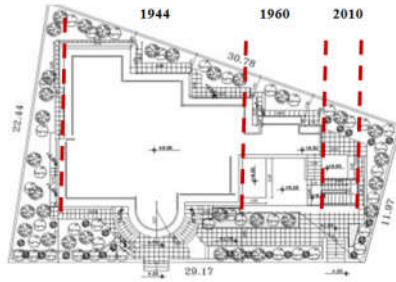


Figure 1: Site plan. source: Yagmour Office, all figures included in this study were obtained from Arch.Yagmour office and they were appropriated for the purpose of this research by the researchers.

b. Review of architectural drawings of the building:

As shown in (Figures 1-6), the building is a three-floor building with an asymmetrical plan, designed in three bays type which divides the whole space into three parts with a centralized part. It has simple rectangular openings and curved verandas. The height of the house is about (11) meters, and the building material used most is handmade cut stone with tobze and mfajar surface texture. There is a front and back yard that are located next to the building, and such yards were essential elements of the house outdoor spaces.



Figure 1: Shnana's residence (Yagmour office).

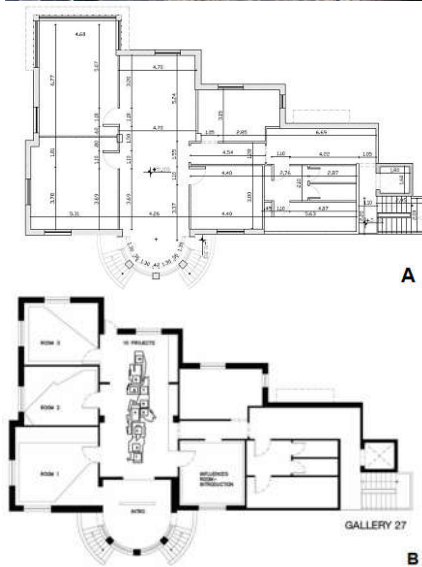


Figure 3 (a,b): before and after of ground floor plan, currently is a galley for the exhibition of arch. Yagmour's projects

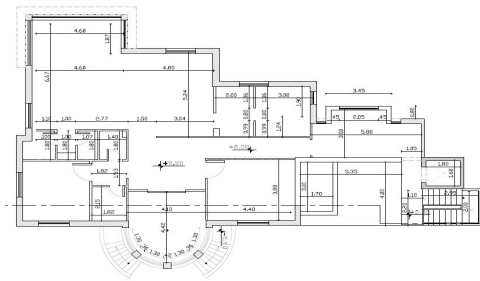


Figure 2: First Floor Plan, currently offices

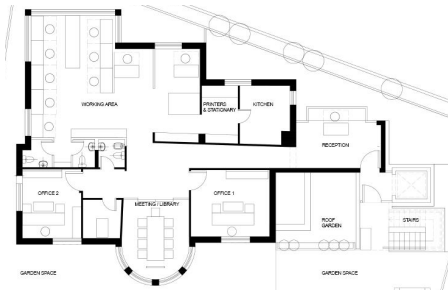


Figure 5: Second Floor Plan, currently it is used as office spaces.

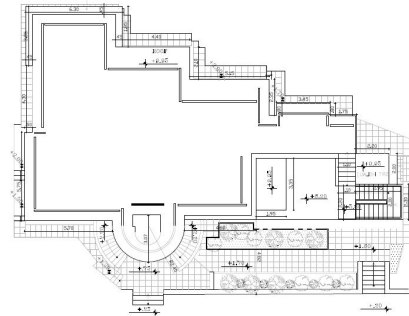


Figure 6: Roof Plan, source: Yaghmour Office, appropriated by the researcher 2019



Figure 3: Main Elevation, source: Yaghmour Office, appropriated by the researcher 2019 (the used material defines each constructed period)

This paper is extracted from a master thesis that was completed by Maysoleen Al-Aldayleh and supervised by prof. Ali Abu Ghanimeh. It was further developed by the authors (1, 2, 3)

2. The nature of the relationship between the old and the new:

Modern materials, including cast-in-place concrete and steel, were used to build the new added mass (the external staircase) and add a distinctive, unique design. Interior space was remodeled and organized in a way that suits the new function of the building. White and black color scheme was used in the interior finishing and in the furniture to reflect a contrast with old elements (wall paintings, ceiling, furniture). The contrast between the old and new was notable and used appropriately in a way that shows respect to the authenticity of the old (see, for example, Al-Asad, 1997, 2008) and Al-Faqih, 1993).

In reference to facades, the architect preserved the original image of the old building, the old tilling, openings, and stone. These building elements and materials were preserved with limited intervention. At the same time the architect identified the new additions using materials such as (steel, glass, concrete) in a modern design.



Figure 8, 9: before and after image of the main elevation of the building.



Figure (10, 11): before and after of the central area was remodeled into a library and meeting room.



Figure 12, 13: before and after image new added mass.

Figure 14: Office entry



Figure 15: The Roof, currently is an outdoor space for lectures, a new parapet was added.

Figures 16 and 17: The interior space of Yaghmour's gallery.

3. Assessment of the adaptive reuse works: architectural, urban, historic, and socio-economic values of the project:

Architectural and urban values: The present condition of the building reflects the modernity and special methods of construction and detailing of the local architecture of Amman, specially the three bays type house, asymmetrical plan and simple façades.

Historic value: The house is considered as a successful specimen of the development of adaptive reuse architecture in Amman and acts as a source of information for researchers, especially with its methods of construction and details.

Socio-economic value: This project contributes to the socio-cultural function of the building by providing indoor space for social contact between employees gathering to meet and discuss work projects in multiple places. By converting the building into a modern work space, the project also serves its socio-educational function as it provides space for activities like lectures and seminars.

According to Mr. Yaghmour, the effort and money that was used in the adaptive reuse of this residential building to be used as an office building makes a valuable contribution to the field of sustainable design. First, it has prevented the demolition and replacement of a heritage building. Secondly, money saving was achieved as a result of using an existing building instead of building a new one. Thirdly, this has made a contribution to the protection and up-keep of the surrounding image of the residential context. Although the roof of the present building is now used for lecture and seminar purposes that are, sometimes, held outdoors, it is possible that solar panels will be provided in the future in order to make use of the solar energy. Moreover, adding green elements to outdoor areas and the building elevations is now under construction. This is expected to benefit from the concept of green architecture.

Conclusion:

About 10 years after the completion of the adaptive reuse of the building and its occupation as an office facility, many benefits and objectives have been satisfied. These include the preservation of one of the good heritage buildings in Jabal Al-Wiebdah residential area, enhancement of the urban setting by bringing new life to the site of the adopted building, and adding one more example of successful adaptive reuse to the building stock in the heart of Amman city. This will hopefully encourage other heritage building owners to follow Mr. Yaghmour's example and approach in up-grading the structures of their old buildings. Furthermore, it would enhance the awareness of the general public about the value and potential use of heritage buildings and contribute to supporting the economic base of older neighborhoods and Amman city at large. In addition, one can add the following conclusions:

1. The adapted project (Yaghmour Office) contributed to the urban contexts and had a positive social impact through offering new job opportunities and creating social spaces for socializing. Also, it had an economic impact through endowing an old heritage building with a new function to fit modern demands and revive the economic situation in the neighborhood. So the re-use approach makes heritage buildings act not only as heritage monuments that address the heritage and cultural identity of the place or demonstrate a historical or symbolic value, but also as investment projects that serve the local residential community.
2. The selected project reflected a successful approach toward the heritage building that includes a high level of balance between the authenticity of the place and the modernity of the new interventions; by their nature, the new facilities (gallery, offices, showrooms, library,...) reflect respect for the sensitivity and privacy of the place and for the authenticity of the heritage building. Architect Farouq Yaghmour used the same architectural materials and elements that were traditionally used in Jabal Al Wiebdah buildings. He respected the authenticity of the building and its originality.

Recommendations:

Heritage conservation projects should be considered at the local and urban level and at the level of single buildings in order to achieve a high level of agreement between the old and the new.

Any contemporary interventions in Jabal Al Wiebdeh, should keep away from the concept of cut and paste. They should be harmonious with the common scale, material, and style of its context. Such interventions should be effected in such a way as to complete the general image of the city and reflect the connection between heritage and modernity as well. They need to be guided by well-studied strategies for dealing with such heritage buildings and choosing the appropriate methods of conservation that preserve the beauty and values of such heritage buildings. This needs to be based on a cultural base more than commercial or investment approach.

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