

Adaptive Reuse of Heritage Buildings in Jordan: The Case of Jasmine House-Jabal Al Wiebdeh

Maysoleen Al-Adayleh

Department of Architecture, Faculty of Engineering, University of Jordan, Amman 11942, Jordan

Abstract: Building conservation's significance has changed from preservation to being part of a broader strategy for urban regeneration and sustainability. Adaptive reuse of heritage building is a useful method to bring new meaning into a culture, revive heritage sites, which achieve its sustainability. Many of heritage conservation projects were applied due to the historical and symbolic significance they have. The aim of this paper is to investigate how the conservation of heritage buildings contributes to sustainable urban environment in Amman-Jordan. Through Shed the light on experiences of architects, they have been involved with the adaptive reuse of one of the heritage buildings (Jasmine House) in Jabal (Al-Wiebdeh) neighborhood, which was adapted into a cultural center. A qualitative methodology used depends on a field survey of the selected building, documenting its architectural features, furthermore, analyzing the used method of adaptation, as well as evaluating the impact of reutilizing heritage buildings on the level of urban development, socio-economic level. Semi-structured interview was drawn from the architect who managed the adaptation process too.

Key words: Adaptive reuse, architecture, conservation, heritage, urban.

1. Introduction

Heritage buildings are considered major elements of city's identity; they reflect the history and culture of the city, which require to be preserved for future generations in order to keep communities attached with their history. Accordingly, conserving heritage buildings is prime need for better urban development plan. However, preserving the historic values of such heritage buildings is not enough, especially with the current economic situation the world is going through. A number of authors explained that the functional benefits of adaptive reuse and the values of conserving heritage buildings supports the objectives of promoting sustainable strategies [1-3]. It becomes a need to revive the heritage buildings using of conservation methods (adaptive-reuse), by transforming the origin building function into modern function for new users. Bullen and Love [4]

mentioned that "there is a growing acceptance worldwide that conserving historic buildings provides significant economic, cultural and social benefits". Towards revitalizing and generating sustainable values of these buildings, many historic buildings of cultural and historic significance are being adapted and reused rather than being demolished [5-9]. The tradition of changing use and adapting buildings to a new function or an older one was very common throughout history [10] adaptive reuse is listed in the nation [11] as a method that helps generating sustainable social, environmental and economic values.

Many historical buildings in the world have been adapted into new functions to meet modern needs while remaining of significant value to younger generations. Jordan is one of the countries that have many of heritage sites which should be conserved in line with the urban development process. Urban development process includes reviving heritage buildings and regenerating life into them through adapting them into new functions which enhance their

Corresponding author: Maysoleen Al-Adayleh, master degree in architecture, research fields: architecture/heritage architecture.

architectural, historic and symbolic values [12]. Re-utilizing heritage buildings leads to extending their life cycle by performing a new function. Currently, this concept is practiced worldwide, in particular when the building has a unique architectural character and still in stable condition [13, 14].

Amman in general has special identity that represent the past culture through time and contributed to forming the city image where is clearly readable through buildings. Abu Ghanimeh [15, 16] mentioned in his writings “heritage architecture is very important because it reflects the identity of the place”, which indicated the huge need to preserve heritage buildings to sustain their historic value. The nation ICOMOS [11] listed the methods of heritage conservation (restoration, reconstruction, rehabilitation and preservation and adaptive reuse). Through these approaches, a better treatment for heritage buildings can be added to get maximum benefit from them. Adaptive reuse is defined in The Burra Charter as “modifying a place to suit the existing or proposed use (ref).” Also Douglas [17] defined adaptive reuse as “any building work and intervention aimed at changing its capacity, function or performance to adjust, reuse or upgrade a building to suit new conditions or requirements”. Adapting heritage buildings has a remarkable impact on reviving a place; for example, transforming a building into a new function to serve the modern demands through adaptive reuse and adding modern interventions as needed.

Jabal Al-Wiebdeh has recently highlighted considering that it is a heritage neighborhood that represents a major phase of Amman history. Many of its buildings were treated by conservation method which leads to reviving the social, economic and cultural life there.

2. Aim of the Study

This paper aims to investigate how the conservation of heritage buildings contributes to sustainable urban environment in Amman-Jordan. Through studying one

of heritage conservation methods (adaptive reuse) to a residential building in Jabal Al-Wiebdeh in Amman that were transformed into a cultural center in terms of reviving heritage places. The effort was made to:

- Describe the functional architectural element of heritage buildings in Jabal Al Wiebdeh.
- Identify the used methods toward these heritage buildings, assessing the level of design relations used by the Jordanian architects to achieve communication with the heritage architecture of Amman.
- Assess the social and economic impact of re-utilizing the heritage into new functions.

3. Method

There are many factors affect the level of successful or failure of any heritage conservation project. The study is qualitative due to the survey works [18], deep scanning work of the selected heritage building, as well interview with architect who are involved with heritage conservation process, and adapted the building into a cultural center. The collected data were documented, analyzed into three parts: architectural/analysis, methods of adaptation/benefits in terms of social, cultural, urban development, and evaluated impact of re-utilizing heritage building on urban fabric and socio-economic levels.

In order to get better understanding and analyzing the proposed case study is organized into three phases [19] as shown in Fig. 1:

The selection process of the heritage building was based on that the building should be more than 50 years old, and listed as a heritage building in Amman Municipality records. In addition, the building should be transformed into a different function from its origins.

4. Study Area

As mentioned before, this study focused on one of the oldest neighborhoods in Amman that is considered as a heritage site and its buildings recently had undergone adaptive heritage reuse, Jabal Al-Wiebdeh,

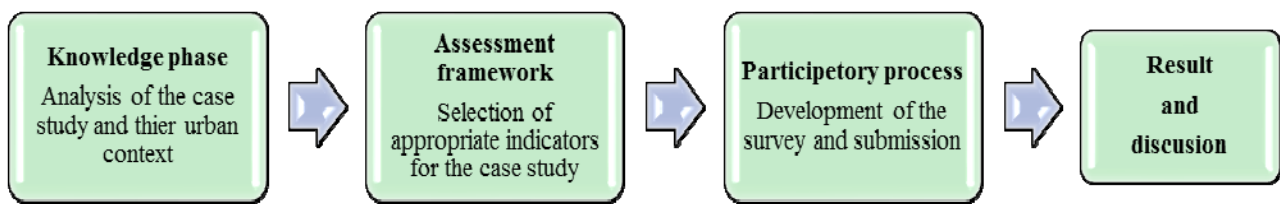


Fig. 1 Methodology.

Source: De Medici, Toro, and Nocca [19].

located in the south-west of Amman, surrounded by Jabal Al Hussein from the north and Jabal Amman to the south, Shmeisani from the west and down town from the east.

Al-Weibdeh was gradually developed in two phases: the old part which reflects the identity of Amman, then it was expanded and forms the modern part which represents the modernity of Amman. Al-Wiebdeh (the old) has variety of heritage buildings which produced a distinctive urban fabric due to the mix of cultures that passed through and formed the identity of the Amman. The neighborhood was settled in the 1930 [20], from all social levels Princes, and supervisors of the Hashemite family, writers, poets, artists, and many political, military, intellectual and partisan figures. All that made it an attractive place for local people as well as tourist.

Al-Wiebdeh had a symbolic and historic significance because it witnessed the scenes of establishing the kingdom process especially the capital Amman [21].

According to the mentioned criteria before, the chosen building full filed the mentioned criteria. The building was approved and listed by great Amman Municipality as a heritage building.

Al Yousef family residence is located at Al Bauineye St. Plot No. 797, building No. 28. The residence was built in the late of 1950s, currently is adapted into an Italian restaurant (Jasmine House) by the architect Salwa Niemeh in 2014.

5. Discussion

Re-utilizing any heritage building into new

functions for new types of users requires a deep understanding of the historic background and its origin use, moreover; clear identification of architectural elements including exterior and interior is needed in order to be able to define the building's identity to assess the impact of the new changes that are reflected on a social-economic urban level.

The selected building is Jasmine House; it was a residence for Al Yousef family, then a British military man lived in and after that, the house was left abandoned until 2014. The building is an English-Italian style; it is a one-floor plan with a horizontal shape layout. In 2014 the building was taken by photographer Sami Heaven and his Italian companions as a showroom for their works. After that Sami died while he was working and his mom architect Salwa Niemeh took completed his son's vision and transformed the house into a cultural, art center as well restaurant.

5.1 Building Description: Architectural Analysis of the Building

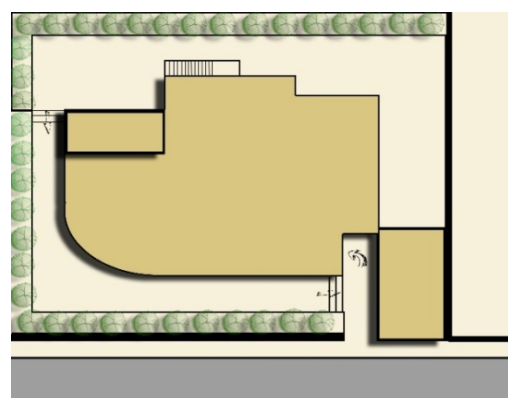


Fig. 2 Top view of Jasmine House.

Source: the researcher 2021.



Fig. 3 Image of Jasmine House.

Source: the researchers 2018.



Fig. 4 Back yard view of Jasmine House.

Source: facebook/Jasmine House art and food (2014).



Fig. 5 Back view of Jasmine House.

Source: facebook/Jasmine House art and food (2014).

Figs. 2 and 3 below introduce the layout shape of the building with its special organizing. The house includes two bedrooms, a kitchen, a setting area, a dining room, and a courtyard and curved terrace storage room that was transformed into a staircase later. The building is a one-floor plan with a height of 4 m. Two types of stone were used in construction (msamsam in the front and side elevation and mfajar in the back elevation). The building has a front and

back yard that surrounds the building with greenery on the side of the fencing wall. Horizontal main elevation with rectangular openings, the house has one main entrance (sided) and one back entrance.



Fig. 6 Image shows the maintenance works in the interior space of the building because of the damages the house suffered.

Source: facebook/Jasmine House art and food (2014).

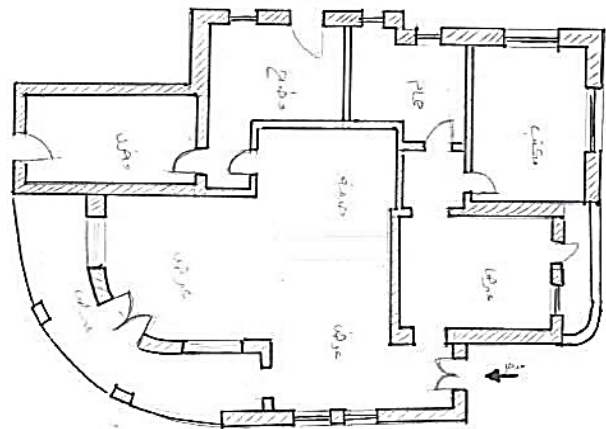


Fig. 7 A sketch plan of the house before adaptations.

Source: the researcher 2018.



Fig. 8 Image shows the back yard of the house after the adaptations.

Source: facebook/Jasmine House art and food (2014).



Fig. 9 Image shows the entrance of the house after the adaptations. New wooden element was added to enhance the entry.

Source: the researchers 2020.



Fig. 12 Image shows in interior space of the house.

Source: facebook/Jasmine House art and food (2015).



Fig. 10 Image shows in interior space of the house as it transformed into a gallery.

Source: facebook/Jasmine House art and food (2015).



Fig. 13 Image of one of bedrooms that were transformed into a showroom.

Source: facebook/Jasmine House art and food (2015).

5.2 Condition Assessment

Before: Figs. 4-7 show the situations of the building and damages it suffered:

From the shown figures, we can conclude the following:

(1) As seen in the figures before the building was abandoned for almost 15 years and was in a bad condition. Structurally, the building was in a good state of preservation. But, there are some elements of the building suffered from serious damage such as tiling, wooden and steel works.

(2) The external stone and interior walls had cracks; the stone walls were covered with dirt and plants.

(3) Inside the building, the walls were in a bad condition, covered with paint, filled with dirt and debris.

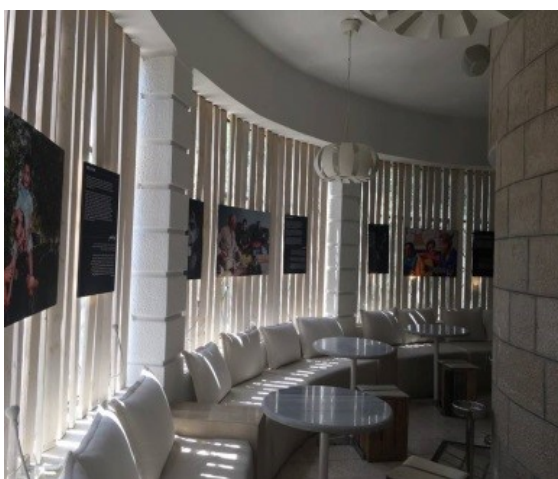


Fig. 11 The curved balcony after covering it with wooden strips and merged it with inner space.

Source: facebook/Jasmine House art and food (2015).

(4) The ceilings were in a bad condition too; the original plaster was removed down due to humidity. The floor tiling was also in a very bad condition with many lost and broken pieces as well the outside yard.

After: Figs. 8~16 show the building situation after applying adaptation methods on the building.

From the shown figures, we can conclude the following:

Many of maintenance works were applied to the building beside the modern interventions that were added by the architect Salwa Neimeh.

(1) Cleaning works of all the exterior and interior elements especially the stone as a first step.

(2) Maintaining works for windows, doors, tilling, and stone moreover, the plumbing works.

(3) New elements were added especially to the entrance to enhance the beauty of the entrance of the house using modern material (as shown in Fig. 9). New materials were used especially in the interior decorations such as lighting ventilation system, as well the wooden works.

(4) Little changing on the interior space to serve the new function of the building, converting the rooms into an manager office and the guest room was converted into a show room and socializing space.

(5) The curved balcony was covered with wooden stripes and merged it within the interior space.



Fig. 14 Image shows the main hall which was adopted into eating hall.

Source: Jasmine House art and food (2015)



Fig. 15 Image shows in interior space of the house.

Source: facebook/Jasmine House art and food (2015)

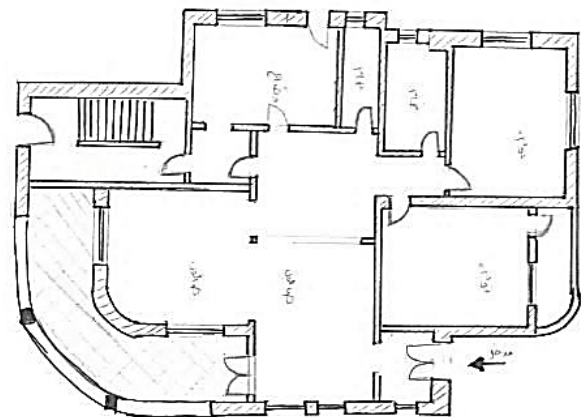


Fig. 16 A sketch plan of the house after adaptation, where we can see the difference of special organization of the interior space to meet the new function of the buildings.

Source: taken from master thesis of Maysleen Al Adayleh (2018).

From the previous comparison, we can conclude that the approach used by the architect was successfully used because all added efforts respected the authenticity of the place, enhanced the beauty of the building and highlighted on the social value of adapting a heritage building. All modern interventions were added in a way that serves both the new function and the originality of the place, so we can notice the linking between the old and new. In other words; The contrast between the old and new was notable and used in appropriate method in a way that respect the

authenticity of the old (see, for example, [22, 23]).

5.3 Significance Assessment: Values for the Projects (Architectural/Urban, Historic, Socio-Economic)

Architectural/urban: special architecture design reflects modernity, dynamic of Ammani architecture. Beside, special methods of constructions and detailing were applied to the building. It harmonizes with urban context in design, materials, and scale.

Historic: the house is considered as an example of the development of architecture in Amman and acts as a source of information to research, through methods of constructions and details. In addition, and the building reflected the historical period that went through, which enable the new user to read the history through it.

Socio-economic: adapting such a heritage building revived the economic situation of the building and the area in general; through offering new job opportunities, as well new places to do modern activities.

5.4 Interview

Unstructured, face-to-face interviews conducted with individuals concerned with the heritage architecture in Amman, with different types of experience and knowledge. The interviews were conducted in February 2018, with about 30 min for each, with Arch. Salwa Niemeh (the manager of Jasmine House) and Arch Firas Al Rabadi (head of architecture heritage department in Amman Municipality. Recording and notes taking were used for documentation and analyzing the key points. The aim of the interview was to provide clarifications about the context of the study. The questions were oriented about the impact of adapting heritage buildings on urban development and reviving the place.

6. Conclusion

The paper investigates the impacts of adaptive reuse

of heritage buildings, in terms of preserving the identity of cultural heritage, protecting its values, and enhancing the development dynamics of the urban area in which the reuse project is implemented. The study applied the proposed methodology to one of adaptive reuse projects in Jabal Al-Wiebdeh that was re-utilized new function as cultural center by the Arch. Salwa Niemeh, assessing the success of adaptation and used methods, and the socio-economic and urban impact of adapting heritage buildings.

“The potential and value of the existing building has to be recognized as part of sustainable development. Sustainable development concerns not only environmental targets but also economic, social and cultural ones” [24].

In addition, one can add the following conclusions.

Adapting heritage buildings has a major effect on the urban context through offering new space for new users, which contributes to reviving the context and linking the community with the city’s identity, which considered as a good opportunity for achieving livable and healthier cities through the regeneration of inner city areas.

Heritage conservation project can improve the sense of belonging and identity of a community.

On a level of single building, the architect succeeded preserving the authenticity of the place and respected the origins of the buildings through the adapting process she used, the architectural interventions were done to the interior space to meet the modern function of the building, however; the exterior facades mainly focused on cleaning and maintaining works for the stones, steelworks and tilling of the courts and terraces.

The selected project Jasmine House, represents an successful example of adaptive reuse project which encourages people to follow the same process, due to the urban, social, economic values, Moreover; offering new function helps to strengthen the artistic and cultural life in Amman by providing galleries, restaurants and work spaces for them, which enhance

the cultural elites of community towards the importance of historic context, as well as improve socio-economic situation of the context.

We can conclude that architecture plays an important role in documenting, preserving the history and sustaining it. But the challenging issue, it is not only enough to preserve the building to perform a new function but also analysis of the existing fabric in contact with the heritage building is needed in order to make sure its originality is preserved.

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