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Harmonious architecture and adaptive reuse: Urban gastro-lounge in Prishtina

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ABSTRACT

The city of Prishtina has constantly been changing in urban, architectural, and technological terms. This has political, ecological, economic, and cultural consequences, especially in the downtown area, where higher-density, taller office buildings and commercial spaces and even more congested residential areas are planned. In this study, the Urban Gastro-Lounge is taken as an example of an adaptive reuse strategy for a whole building or its interior. This example of adaptive reuse aims to revive urban and architectural areas as a way of promoting the sustainable development of the city in terms of its general formal architectural morphology. The Urban Gastro-Lounge is an excellent example of this approach and is worthy of being considered a particularly useful intervention.

KEYWORDS

adaptive reuse, formal-architectural morphology, harmony in styles, material symbiosis, interior design

1. OBJECTIVES

The main purpose of this paper is to emphasize the role of heritage and its implications in the city, built environment, and formal architectural morphology and to give an example of how to treat, revitalize, and add value to buildings/structures through adaptive reuse and renovation.

The underlying idea is to restore the identity of the city of Prishtina, which has been alienated and imposed upon for various reasons, by preserving the existing buildings/structures through adaptive reuse.

In terms of how to regenerate the city and make it sustainable, inspiration may be found in its landmark buildings and their identifying symbols. Their styles and dominant character within the city of Prishtina are key factors, as is the combination of certain materials and original inherited parts, harmoniously linking the old with the new.

2. INTRODUCTION

In urban, architectural, and construction terms, the city of Prishtina has constantly been changing. This has political, ecological, economic, and cultural consequences, especially in downtown areas, where higher-density, taller office buildings and commercial spaces and greater congestion of residential areas are planned. Urban locations have changed rapidly; often, their original functions have been abandoned and/or new uses have emerged.

One example is the *Urban Gastro-Lounge*, which is in a very centrally located area of the city (Fig. 1) that was previously used for trading automotive parts, which has been turned into a very interesting and attractive gastronomic establishment by following the strategy of adaptive reuse. The reason for choosing adaptive reuse, as opposed to demolishing and/or building new facilities from the foundations, is to rationalize the cost, effort, and time involved. Another reason is to try to keep the history alive and to give functions to specific

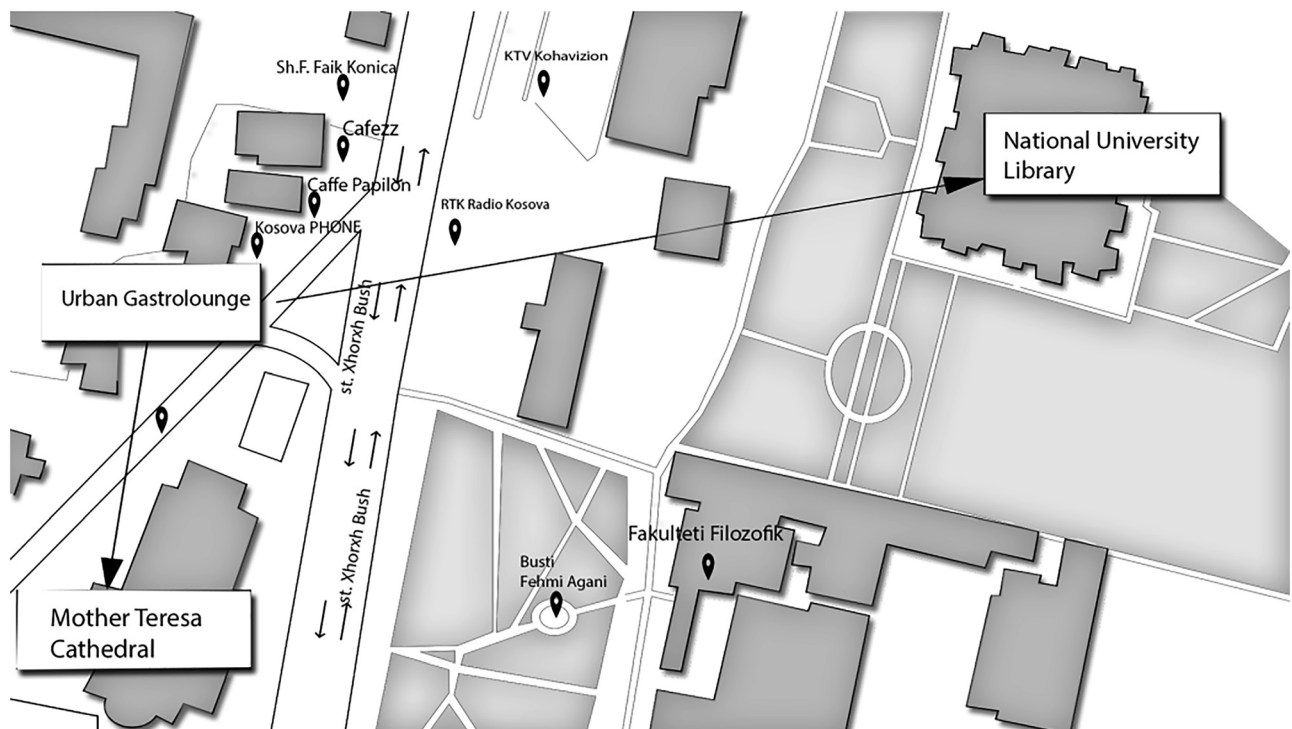


Fig. 1. The location of the Urban Gastro-Lounge and its relation to the surrounding area within the centrally located urban context (Source: Rinë Zogiani)

spaces/buildings before they are demolished or become sites of urban decay. Another contribution of adaptive reuse is being as efficient as possible in terms of materials, transportation, and additional construction costs and/or any side effects that might arise.

Because of the mounting demographic, economic, and ecological challenges that limit opportunities for new construction, adaptive reuse - the process of repairing and restoring an existing building for new or continued use - is recently becoming an essential part of architectural practice, by all accounts more noteworthy than any time in recent memory [1]. Through reuse, a special component of the existing environment can be placed in the foreground, to add value to all other new interventions [2]. Rehabilitation of buildings is an exercise with respect to recovery and new development. In this regard it is important that, adaptive reuse modifies a building or an interior so it meets current requirements, but respects the valuable [3, 4].

With a variety of design approaches, which include adaptive reuse, it can increase longevity, improve performance and sustainability in the environment, and facilitate future maintenance [5–7].

Nowadays, the architectural heritage that is part of our built cultural heritage is in a very dangerous and most vulnerable situation, as along with the normal processes of aging and decaying, buildings are also affected by environmental pollution and significant neglect of their protection and preservation. The structures of these monuments and their building materials suffer not only from the process of deterioration caused by physical destruction

but also from structural failures caused by inappropriate interventions [8].

In a timeline from the 1930s until now, the capital city of Kosovo, Prishtina, has changed rapidly and expanded in different ways, including urban, social, economic, and cultural, mostly in an uncontrolled and unplanned manner [9].

The most significant consequences were seen in urban areas in terms of the creation of misused spaces and inequality in social, economic, and cultural terms. As Prishtina has passed through historical political developments, transitions after the last war (1999), and construction overlays in different times and contexts (Fig. 2), it has started to lose its identity, and this situation has given rise to complex issues, including the inappropriate exploitation of space, misuse of urban spaces, and the demolition and destruction of the built historical, cultural, and industrial heritage.

Therefore, choosing an adaptive reuse strategy for the entire building or interior, aiming at the revitalization of urban and architectural areas for the sustainable development of the city in general, can be considered one of the most necessary and useful ways of intervening and contributing to the formal architectural morphology in particular. The variety of materials used, including glass, light, and intensive red colors used in specific areas, tends to create a harmony between Prishtina's past and present, always with a focus on the original identifying elements. This marks a return to landmark buildings and their importance: the concept of domes/lanterns, present at a number of very well-known buildings, e.g., the National University Library

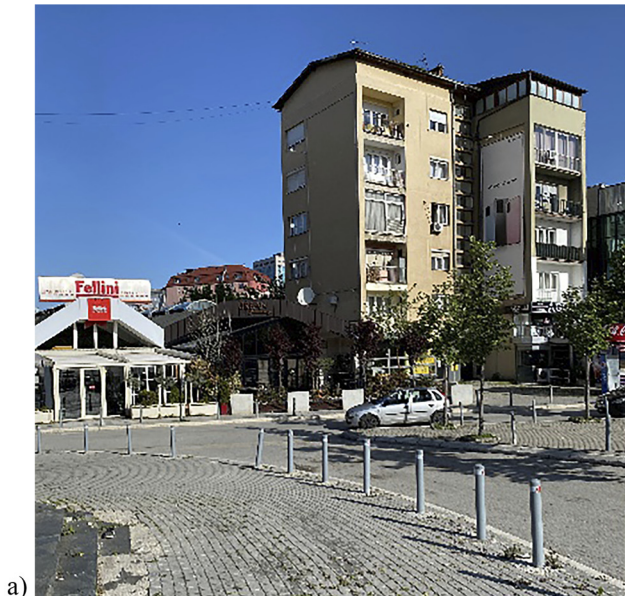


Fig. 2. Representation of the physical surroundings of the Urban Gastro-Lounge, including different times and context
(Source: Teuta Jashari Kajtazi)

in Prishtina and the Guggenheim Museum in New York, is taken as an inspiration (Fig. 3). All this leads toward an urban architectural concept characterized by the addition and presence of greenery, both outdoors and indoors. These are the main elements and strategies that were used when designing the interior and adapting it to the new function. The idea was to preserve the existing interior/exterior envelope through adaptive reuse and, thus, bring back the identity of the city of Prishtina, which has been alienated and imposed upon for various reasons. The use of identifying symbols of the old city of Prishtina, material symbiosis, and the combination of specific interior pieces and original inherited parts were used to achieve harmony in style and create a sense of the identity of the place by linking the old



Fig. 3. Part of the interior showing the concept of domes, using inspirational iconic buildings
(Source: Teuta Jashari Kajtazi)

with the new. The Urban Gastro-Lounge represents a harmonious symbiosis in the center of the city, a landmark that links different contexts, times, and functions, achieved through adaptive reuse.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

One of the positive aspects of adaptive reuse in buildings is that this approach automatically reduces resource costs, including time, materials, and the complexity of issues that may arise on-site. Moreover, using the literature review and case studies methods to understand adaptive reuse may contribute to actually solving the practical problems, in this case, designing, adapting, and implementing interventions at the Urban Gastro-Lounge. Some of the case studies that were considered and served as useful examples of adaptive reuse in different kinds of buildings (for example: historical, cultural, industrial, etc.) were the Tate Modern (London, UK), Gasometer City (Vienna, Austria), Rockets Landing (Richmond, Virginia, USA), and the Zollverein (Essen, Germany), [10] all of which are different types of industrial buildings, ruins, abandoned buildings, and “urban ruins” that have been turned into residential buildings, commercial buildings, multi-functional buildings, galleries and museums, tourist attractions, etc. By conducting a literature review and examining case studies from around the world, taking into account the different reasons, contexts, necessities, and approaches for adaptive reuse, one can achieve greater sustainability and make better use of scarce resources [11].

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As Aldo Rossi mentioned, specific urban components help individuals to consider the city as an entirety by showing how pieces are connected to the existing urban system,

whereas permanence does not have to do with either the form or function adopted through the years. A certain place that has changed its function may prove to be vital again. Achieving this makes a contribution to many other fields and aspects of the overall region by creating the opportunity to revitalize the collective memory of the city [12].

The concept, before starting the renovation and adaptation, was to save the main features people remembered about the place and add only the materials needed to make it functional and vivid. The Urban Gastro-Lounge is an open concept with lanterns and natural light in the front façade; it has a second floor that takes up one-third of its space, and the relevant technical alcoves for a gastronomic object.

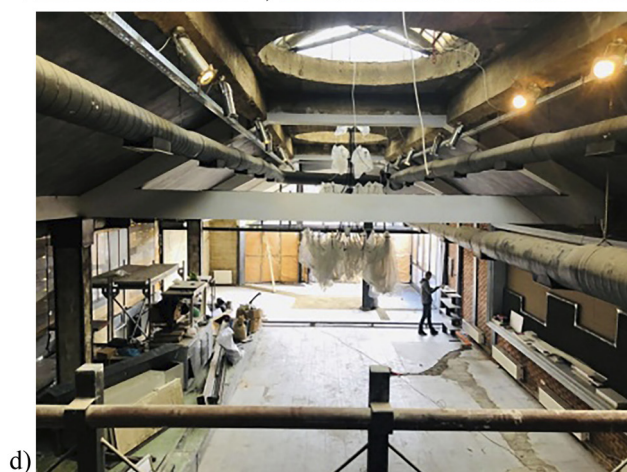
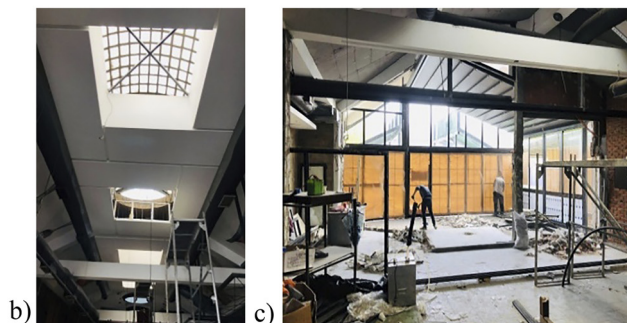


Fig. 4. Main views of the Urban Gastro-Lounge during the adaptive reuse works: a) outdoors before the renovation; b) the view of lanterns and lighting before the renovation/adaption; and c) the view during the renovation; and d) the view from the second floor (Source: Teuta Jashari Kajtazi)

The floors and walls have been changed, and the space has been treated as a continuation from the outside toward the inside and vice versa due to its connection with the location and surrounding objects. Custom-made furniture with motifs from the culture of Prishtina and pieces of art and decorations with historical and cultural significance for the city [13] help to create a harmonious interior design. Special attention was also given to the other details, which includes the surrounding sound system and acoustics, musical instruments, air conditioning and ventilation, lighting, and all the standards that a gastronomic object must meet.

In the following photos, taken during the renovation on-site (Fig. 4), some of the processes/results of adaptive reuse of the Gastro-Lounge's urban accessories can be seen, including architectural and construction elements that have been renovated, reconstructed, added, or adapted from different previous functions for gastronomic uses (Fig. 5). The total internal surface is 300 m², including the kitchen, service area, and other technical required spaces, which are envisaged to accommodate approximately 90–100 people in both the internal and external areas.

The result of the most recent restoration summarized above managed to extend the lifespan of the building with valuable architectural heritage components, attempting both

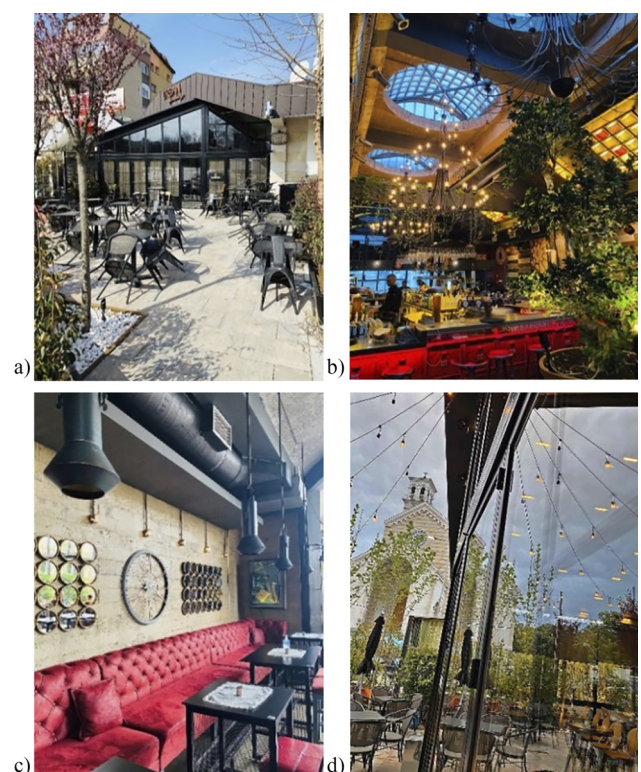


Fig. 5. Main views of the Urban Gastro-Lounge after the adaptive reuse work: a) outdoor view; b) a view of the lantern lighting and interior design after the final renovation/adaption; c) another interior view; and d) a reflection of the existing surroundings after the renovation

(Source: Teuta Jashari Kajtazi)

to preserve them and to allow for proper maintenance in the future [8].

5. CONCLUSION

This study and analysis were intended to introduce the concept of appropriate adaptive reuse methods and to show an example of the implementation of these methods to preserve an existing building to bring back the identity of the city of Prishtina, which has been alienated and imposed upon for various reasons. In this case, the adaptive reuse concepts and actions were used to identify symbols of the mid-20th century modern city of Prishtina. Material symbiosis was achieved by the combination of specific interior pieces and original inherited parts being used to achieve harmony in the style and identity of the place by linking the previous with the new, as well as following the formal architectural morphology of the landmark buildings within the downtown area of the city of Prishtina. The Urban Gastro-Lounge represents a harmonious symbiosis in the center of the city, a landmark that links different contexts, times, and functions, achieved through adaptive reuse by using a methodological approach and feasibility. This opens up paths for future examination of principles, methods, and materials, aiming to better serve the entire process of adaptive reuse and other techniques in the cases of cultural/historical/industrial architectural heritage.

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