

ÁGNES JÓSZAI • TRANS/FORMATION
Adaptive reuse

THESES



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ABSTRACT

Revitalizing existing spaces, endowing them with new content, and thus protecting them from natural obsolescence, total extinction or possibly demolition is a practical process which has been present in architecture since ancient times. However, the compulsion to manage an ageing building stock is not always a rewarding task. The pressure to retain individual or group, privileged or fabric-like elements of a dense urban space can nevertheless be seen as an opportunity, a chance to develop surprising, innovative approaches and novel design skills.

'Adaptive reuse', as a contemporary architectural design method, is getting to be necessarily increasingly in the spotlight, while it is becoming a stand-alone design toolkit distinctive from the „ex novo" planning disciplines. My dissertation explores this comprehensive topic by highlighting a small section, examining interventions which bring new exhibition spaces to life in existing environments.

The gesture of remodeling, redrawing, the design principle of adaptive reuse (I personally call *transformation*) is as theoretical as it is practical. In order to be able to create a comprehensive picture, I review its conceptual fundamentals and other architectural procedures and methodologies which use the existing structures. I would like to show that even if not in all cases but reuse can be a valid strategy on its own, which because of its adaptability rises to a higher rank than simple changes of function do.

The value oriented approach going hand in hand with the method and the need for authenticity stem from the fact that the theory of adaptive reuse is nourished by the discussion of heritage protection conducted in the recent centuries and today. At the same time, it also has an impact on it: the theory of adaptive reuse promises a changing/changable approach to values in heritage protection issues. It foreshadows the need to reform the traditional value categories of monument protection and the necessity of searching for new types of value categories. Its consequence is that the practicing architect's point of view extends to a constant "treasure hunting vigilance," a commitment to heritage protection.

Focusing on a narrower range of art museums, exhibition and cultural spaces, it is inevitable to examine what museums mean and what they convey today. As a result of the changes in their role and their cultural transfer challenge, it becomes clear that this type of institution, and any exhibition space regardless of its institution, and similarly, adaptive architecture must testify to continuous adaptability.

The rich repertoire of redesigned architectural examples, including reused exhibition spaces, their variability in scale, their unique and general characteristics, and the toolbox of the working method of adaptive reuse can be demonstrated along different typologies.

The method alone is not yet the only key success factor of quality architecture. Nevertheless, by examining outstanding case studies the dissertation highlights seven concepts (stratification, materiality and objectivity, tension/balance, memory space, ruin appreciation and finally the relationship between artefact and display) the consideration of which can increase the added value of the exhibition space to be planned, the space to be renewed, and alloys of old and new can be created with inspiringly rich results.

These distilled aspects and the experiments of classification will provide me and perhaps also other practicing architects with useful points of reference for practical experience and for further mapping of the possibilities inherent in adaptive reuse.

I. THESIS

TRANS/FORMATION = EMERGING PRINCIPLE

Adaptive reuse is an increasingly widespread, self-contained design principle which stands out from the range of different “re-” procedures, separate from the design method of new constructions. It has a deeper meaning than a simple change of function, its cornerstone is always the existing place/building/infrastructure, but its focus is not on causing the change in function, but on restoring and healing usability after its preliminary interruption or loss.

The process always involves functional and physical components as well: the evolution of the constructed form and the adaptation of the function are parallel processes which are beneficial for both. The depth of interventions can range from minimal to radical, their scope can be classified from negligible to comprehensive.

2. THESIS

TRANS/FORMATION = LIVING HERITAGE

Adaptive reuse seeks, constitutes, and manages a living heritage: instead of being an alternative to the decision between old and new, it believes in the added value of the symbiotic union of old and new, in their valuable, mutually authenticating entanglement.

The contemporary theories and practices of adaptive reuse can marry the assessment of listed monuments and unprotected buildings. It may combine the treatment of any existing valuable element almost on a heritage basis with an authentic and more flexible practice of using officially protected monuments. Its process of finding value and meaning consists of a layered examination of the imprints of the past, the mapping of the components of authenticity, which can become the anchor and reference of the new use.

3. THESIS

TRANS/FORMATION = MIRROR

Adaptive reuse is reflective, inseparable from the temporal and spatial changes which surround it. The challenges of this architectural approach and contemporary museology, and their basic position shifting to an ethical level can be paralleled. Their service is the same: cultural mirroring.

Exhibition spaces designed with adaptability create versatile, unique spaces with individual atmosphere and spirituality. They can also influence the exhibition concepts, the number and nature of the works of art appearing there, initiating a new kind of dialogue with them, whether they display place-specific works of art or serve as backgrounds for changing exhibition materials. The hosting space, its contemporary architectural rewriting, and the work of art itself can witness a triple-fold, profound reflection.

4. THESIS

TRANS/FORMATION = VALUE PRESERVING CONTINUITY

The range of architectural interventions implemented in the spirit of adaptive reuse is extremely diverse. However, they have a common focus: saving values, transmitting continuity and stability in identity, stretching the thread of connection between the past and the future.

A given architectural intervention is emphatically characterized by the degree of transformation: according to where function, physical intervention, material and structural change are tuned on an imaginary scale from total preservation to complete replacement. The essence of the method is adaptability and flexible adaptation: to equip spaces with the ability to meet the everchanging demands of the improvement process flexibly and with definite openness to the future.

5. THESIS

TRANS/FORMATION = DIALOGUE

Adaptive reuse is a continuous, personal dialogue between the architect and the host space.

In the research among the layers of time and space, in finding the balance of the host space and the guest elements, we can see both components in a new light. The existing space as 'objet trouvé' as a 'found object' controls the transformation, so it is not primarily characterized by a comprehensive, pre-planned concept, but by a step-by-step decision-making process magnetized by the host space.

The architectural artefact as end result is nourished by the past, yet always has a contemporary feel. Even host spaces which are supposed to be ruins or dead monuments act as sources of new vitality thanks to their materiality. It is supported by the memory-recalling and renewing ability of the material considered to be living and the novel treatment of it.

6. THESIS

TRANS/FORMATION = OBSERVATION

Adaptive reuse unfolds with the observation of place and situation, filtering, highlighting and evaluating the rich existing content, and the newborn sensitive addition, thus becoming not only the evolution of architecture in a material sense but also its spiritual genome.

The possibility of an unexpected finding in the method can be the fruit of care and attention.

MASTERWORK

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