Contemporary Architectural Design in Urban Historic Sites — Future Heritages

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Abstract: Design in the historic urban sites has been noticed since the 1980s with efforts to preserve the architectural heritage and urban space. The design in this area is a real challenge for architects in balancing of cultural, architectural and sustainable development features with functional, aesthetic and spatial changes. This paper focuses on the ideas and design solutions of leading contemporary architects in different historical contexts to make lessons learned for developing countries, including Vietnam, to create the future heritage which is protected by regulation, communities.

Key words: historic urban site, contemporary design, local identity, globalization

1. Introduction

In the 1980s, heritage conservation had emerged important issues with many reconstruction and redevelopment projects, especially in Europe. Its importance was associated with the loss of the European cultural heritages in general and urban architecture heritage in particular in the wartime as well as post-war period of World War II. It was worth mentioning that the huge loss also took place in the post-war period, when many major reconstruction projects even put the loss of historic structures more quickly. These losses caused the remaining historic areas or structures to be protected quickly and extensively with multi-level and international protection measures. Conservative concepts as well as approaches have been expanded and adapted to many different circumstances, towards the sustainable development of heritage, focus on the balance between conservation and sustainable development. Conservation subjects have also been expanded from single buildings to historic urban landscape spaces

around the buildings. The acceptance of new buildings intermingling within the historical buildings or areas also aimed to bring contemporary vitality to that buildings or areas. Some important concepts were defined in the conservation and development of the values of a building or an entire area:

Zeitgeist: "spirit of the age" or "spirit of the times". It refers to an invisible agent or force dominating the characteristics of a given epoch in world history [1]. Contemporary use of the term may, more pragmatically, refer to a schema of fashions or fads that prescribes what is considered to be acceptable or tasteful for an era, e.g., in the field of architecture [2].

Sense of place: buildings or areas are always closely linked to a location/place. The location itself gives the building or the landscape and the region the unique difference. Locations may become more important after time. In order to assess the location, it is necessary to analyze the stable components over a long period, the stable components includes and high stable components and low stable components that often change or change in a short time. Such components help buildings or areas tell us about the past, present and future.

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2. Heritage and New Buildings

Cultural heritage (tangible and intangible) has been an important part of the human living environment. Human are both cultural creators and owners of cultural assets, so cultural heritage must always be associated with human and meet the cultural needs of the community. However, human has been also the main agent that has transformed heritages which cannot be renewed. Modern conservative methods have also allowed forms of renovation and redevelopment, especially urban architectural heritage, to preserve and bring heritage to sustainable development through continued participation into the activities of contemporary life. In addition to preserving each individual project, UNESCO also introduced the concept of conservation of larger spaces: historical urban landscape (HUL). The conference on "*World Heritage and Contemporary Architecture — Historical Urban Landscape Management*" in Vienna (Austria) established declaration on the preservation of historic urban landscape in the Vienna Memorandum [3]. Preserving and promoting the urban landscape environmental values is composed of architectural heritage quantity, construction techniques, architectural design, building technology and conservation. This is a complex process with many contents such as defining the structural characteristics and specific urban spatial patterns and development trends for each region; classification of conservation structures and forms; architectural heritage fund; boundaries of heritage protection areas; oriented development and future functions of each region and the overall link; height, morphology, sites and landmarks on respect of historical urban structures. Many UNESCO guidelines have provided stakeholders with a way to integrate policies and practices of environmental conservation into a wider international goal of urban development while respecting different cultural values of the context.

Contemporary cities have been participating directly or indirectly in different scales in the globalization process. Globalization helps bring peoples, economies or nations closer together. Globalization stimulates the exchange of information, finance or people. However, globalization has also created consequences, the most important and most obvious of which is the loss of specific local cultural identities, including architecture. Modern globalization began to be popular since the 1950s, coinciding with the time when the international-style of modern architecture began to be criticized for its lack of identity or lack cultural soul. Many architectural subsequent experiments have shown that the cultural flows or sense of places always plays a very important role in architecture. There were some emerging trends, movements or styles such as Historicism, Post-Modernism as well as Regionalism. However, the legacy of modernism shows that there were many variations as well as new tests based on it (New Modernism, Local Modernism...) that showed the variety in this post-modern era. Such parallel styles/movements/trends reflects the social development at this time: global-local, historical-contemporary.

In historical urban areas, such parallel development also takes place, arguments have shown that there are two different streams of thought. On one side, with the point of view of the status quo preserving and all new buildings must be in line with the historical elements of styles, colors, building materials, decoration... to show the discretion and partly safer, easier to predict the result of that construction because the boundary between old and new is not entirely clear. This view is easily accepted from stakeholders such as policy makers, managers, community owners and users.... This view is also particularly suitable for areas with low and medium levels of development where technological or material breakthroughs are not common in society. The other side with a point of view that derives from the benefits of the contemporary generation in creating the imprints of the times, the change in the ability to adapt to the ever-changing and rapidly changing. The buildings that follow this point

of view are likely to cause intense debates, its results are not so predictable and sometimes it takes time to verify. Moreover, a mistake in design or problem of new buildings can also create disadvantages if the project is listed in the UNESCO world cultural heritage, which creates pressures for managers. However, with leading cities in global networks such as Tokyo, London, Paris, New York ... or emerging economic cities are eager to make their mark and redundancy, creating breakthroughs in design will bring the echo, attention and create a thrust for economic development for the city as well as the country as effectively as the works such as the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, Centre Georges Pompidou for Spain and France respectively.

For architects, their work will probably be easier when there are many legal barriers and constraints, their role may be enhanced due to design difficulties in the historical site. Strict management in the historical site is necessary to preserve for the next generations but developing is the responsibility of the contemporary and future generations. Cities in general and urban architectural heritage in particular will always change according to the transformation of the age, but how change is important in accordance with the development orientation, existing resources, community knowledge as well as talent of designers. The following examples may also give us lessons on this issue.

3. Typical Projects

The following typical buildings come from different countries. They were built in the same period that the important transformation of society as well as the heritage community showed the importance of these works. And at present, it has been sufficient to verify their success:

- Haas Haus, Architect Hans Hollein, Vienna, Austria, 1985-1990.
- Contemporary art center (Carré d'Art), Arch. Norman Foster, Nimes, France, 1984-1993.

- Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art, Architect Richard Meier, Barcelona, Spain, 1987-1995.
- Pyramid of Louvre Museum, Architect I. M. Pei, Paris, France, 1989.

The common point of the above buildings is located in the cities with high level of development in Europe, designed by world-class architects. The style chosen is Neo-modernism. However, at the time of design and construction, these projects encountered many difficulties due to the intense debate over the media as well as in the design sphere. There have even been widespread confrontations in the public opinion of both the city and the nation due to the importance of the historical site and the heritage surrounding the new buildings. The Haas Haus is located in Vienna's historic center, opposite St.Stephan Cathedral (1160); the Carré d'Art is opposite Maison Carrée (built in the 2nd century AD); the Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art is located in the typical Gothic Quarter of the city; the Pyramid of I. M. Pei is located in the middle of the Louvre Museum's Napoleon courtyard. These historical contexts show that architects' importance and suggestions need the highest discretion, although at this time, they were all famous architects with the Pritzker prestigious award: IMPei (1983), Richard Meier (1984) or Hans Hollein (1985). However, they have all succeeded with their proposals with decades of verification. The buildings have unique design solutions, very specific for the location (landscape, construction, space...).

3.1 Haas Haus, Hans Hollein, Vienna, Austria, 1985-1990

The multi-use complex of glass and stone is considered an extension of St. Stephen's church when architects use large curved glass in reflecting/ duplicating the church's silhoutte as well as the classic works around on it. The stone wall adjacent to old building is designed to resemble the horizontal units. The whole building is like being lifted up with pillars

according to the overlapping of construction works in the old period. The highlight of the building is the entrance with the skewed blocks supporting the protruding glass cylinder. The entire work shows that modern architecture can also stand out without disrupting the surrounding historical context.

Fig. 1   Haas Haus (left) and Carré d'Art (right).

3.2 Carré d'Art, Norman Foster, Nimes, France, 1984-1993

This center of visual arts and multimedia communication is a cultural institution of contemporary life, complementing the missing functions in this urban space. However, the location of the building has become a great challenge for Foster and colleagues for designing a new building that reflects its contemporarity but still maintain the integrity in the historical site with opposite Maison Carrée — the Roman temple built in the 2nd AD and is one of the best preserved Roman architecture — a heritage of world culture. However, architects do not rely on classical elements but use modern shapes, materials and technology to create a new work. The nine-storey building, half submerged in the ground, creates a moderate height that blends into the historical context. The interior with large floor spaces combined with glass roofs, steel columns and large louver panels not only brings visual effects and social interaction inside the building, but also opens dialogues between ancient-new blocks, between the internal-external space, between the old and modern materials.

3.3 Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona, Richard Meier, 1987-1995

Richard Meier created a work which is called "the pearl" by the local media among ancient architecture just a few blocks from Gothic Quarter of Barcelona. Meier's modern, white and grandiose building, extends the southern façade with large glass façade, opening to the Plaça dels Angels to create good view and natural lighting for the galleries. The contrast of shapes, materials, colors ... as well as the smoothness of the building and the surrounding landscape and architecture has created a gentle dialogue between the old and the new as well as surprising visitors in the ancient space area of Barcelona city.

3.4 Pyramid of Louvre museum, Paris, France, I. M. Pei, 1989

This can be the most turbulent project related to the special location and the values as well as the great significance of the museum with Paris in particular and with France as well as the world in general. The long controversies, the objections of the parties to the project have made the success of I. M. Pei's design solution. The underground entrance to exhibition wings reduces the maximum intervention into the historical landscape. In addition, the simple and long-lasting pyramid shape creates contrast special here. However, pyramid shapes are not simply placed here but are carefully calculated to harmonize between the old and the new which are hidden in the shape and material of the building. Once again, the special glass

works, which reflects the surrounding old building wings very successfully on the surface but does not reduce the transparency of the inner space, are the most important element for the success of the project. As Haas Haus, glass is the dominant material with the properties of reflecting/duplicating surrounding objects. The special glass here reflects the work very

successfully on the surface but does not reduce the transparency of the inner space. The inclination of the pyramid edges is perfectly proportional to the shape of the museum wings. Ten years after its completion, the museum pyramid became the new symbol of Paris, successfully convincing the most fastidious people.

Fig. 2   Museum of contemporary Barcelona.

Fig. 3   Pyramid of Louvre (left) & Hilton Opera Hotel, Hanoi, Vietnam, E. Chambure & P. Pascal, 1999 (right).

4. Future Heritage

The above works are successful with different contexts and tactics, however learning from them requires local analysis. With cultural heritage, Vietnam also has losses due to historical circumstance and this could be irreparable. The story of Vietnam is like many other countries, the heritage is lost during the war as

similar as in the period of reconstruction and economic development after that. Besides, Vietnam is in the development stage. Globalization has also spread to Vietnam, the pressure on cultural diversity and cultural characteristics also requires Vietnam to take drastic actions. Recent noisy stories in Ho Chi Minh City, Da Lat or Nam Dinh city about how to deal with heritage

have opened up international debates. Vietnam is lacking a lot of important foundations to preserve heritage or decide how to behave with heritage. The question is whether Hanoi or major cities of Vietnam dare to break through and participate deeply in the global city network in the future? If yes, how is the level determined? Only accurate planning is expected to have such breakthroughs.

Change is inevitable as is the process of globalization. But how to change? Buildings, landscapes, streets and urban areas are always evolving and changing according to people's needs. So what role does architecture play in that change towards preserving and honoring the historical environment that the community has recognized and desires to preserve for future generations. The most important issue in the construction of new buildings in historic urban areas is not the architectural style but the relationship between the old and new buildings. Issues such as location, scale, architectural style, construction materials, colors and details are important when assessing the impact of new buildings or projects in historical urban areas. Most of the new projects that were successful as analyzed above are based on a deep understanding of the location, space as well as social issues in both history and contemporary from which to propose contemporary solutions responding to special characteristics and qualities of that context.

Cities with a unified historical site of architectural forms, structures or construction materials may need a different approach to centers have various forms of architecture, scale or construction materials. Homogeneous cities such as Toulouse (France) or Marraketch (Marocco), which are known as cities of "brick" or "red" cities, can continue to maintain construction techniques or manual materials in new projects. As for areas that are developing diversely or need big breakthroughs to create advertising images and tourist attraction can choose solutions with special projects (landmark).

In Vietnam, Hanoi's historic urban areas tend to choose safer solutions with organic cohesion in style, color or material. These types of construction solutions are likely to be more acceptable when approaching inward from inside out, which goes into issues of supplementing functions, spatial stories or local culture rather than a new global technology or materials. Some buildings have also been successful such as the Hilton Opera Hotel next to the Opera House or many other buildings with a classic shape but modern materials, structures and spaces.

The starting point for new design projects in historic urban areas should begin with the assessment of the existing value of the context as well as the construction site. These values should be interpreted as subjects that need to be protected by law and the community in both present and future to continue to maintain meaning and enhance that value. The responsibility of architects is to ensure that their design results will contribute to enriching the construction environment here. Conservation regulations can be viewed as binding but can also be viewed as an opportunity for creativity. New buildings in the historical site need to be considered with the existing relationships and future relationships between the existing and new works after completion. This whole has a greater value than the sum of the components, and the new building must add new features, new functions on the basis of respecting the existing features of the region. New buildings need to create a legacy of the future and are worth being protected by future generations.

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