Architectural Regeneration **(ISBN: 9781119340331)**

Architectural Regeneration: an introduction

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> *We must accept that all buildings, the standard and the fancy, are worthy of study and that buildings are only the visible tip of a complicated story that encompasses politics and economics, the philosophy of human institutions, and the identity that people at all social levels find in the built environment they inhabit.*
>
> (Kostof 1995: 761)

The combined processes of globalisation, urbanisation, environmental change, population growth and rapid technological development have resulted in an increasingly complex, dynamic and interrelated world in which concerns about the meaning of cultural heritage and identity, the depletion of natural resources, the increasing gap between rural and urban areas, and the impacts of climate change are increasingly prominent in the global consciousness. As the need for culturally and environmentally sustainable design grows, the challenge for professionals involved in the management of inherited built environments is to respond to this rapidly evolving context in a critical, dynamic and creative way. In addition to by now well-established historic conservation practices, the active regeneration, rehabilitation or revitalisation of existing buildings has emerged in recent years as an important field of architectural practice.

At a time when regeneration policy has shifted to the recognition that 'heritage matters' and that the historic environment and creative industries are a vital driver of regeneration, an increasing workload of architectural practices concerns the refurbishment, adaptive re-use or extension of existing buildings. Architectural regeneration, which we define as: the collective activities of reusing, adapting and evolving existing buildings within an urban or rural context in ways that recognise the impacts these decisions and interventions have on the regeneration of a place, and that are underpinned by the principles of environmental, social and cultural sustainability, has clearly claimed its place as a fertile and productive means to respond to the need for heritage management and sustainable built environments in a dynamic and creative way.

For many architectural practices working on existing buildings is a significant portion of their workload, averaging 50% across Europe, and reaching 70% in Italy (Van Clampoeel 2018). Maintaining and continuing to use already built buildings has become a component of policies focusing on meeting carbon emission reduction targets. Not only is work on existing buildings now an established component of architectural practice, it will also feature heavily in the future workload of many of today's architecture graduates. This is why it is profoundly significant that training in the necessary skill set is a component of architectural education. So far, however, the study of architectural regeneration has lagged behind practice and our knowledge and understanding of the principles, approaches, methods and impacts of architectural regeneration remain poorly articulated.

Literature on architectural regeneration remains limited and is mainly focused on the description and evaluation of process and elaboration through multiple case studies. The purpose of this book is to address this lacuna by presenting a balanced overview of what is happening at the present time, and establish a theoretical standpoint for architectural regeneration and explore its disciplinary interconnectedness and multi-disciplinary perspectives. Although the starting point of the book is the UK and Europe, it has a global reach. The chapters have been convened in a way that they can be read independently, but altogether they form a framework that defines what makes up architectural regeneration. Each chapter addresses different perspectives, scales and tools of architectural regeneration by means of detailed overviews of the current state of thinking and practice, and all are supported with case studies from around the world. The chapters focus on different scales and types of regeneration (urban, rural, suburban, temporary); discuss the economic, planning, policy and social contexts of regeneration processes; and investigate the design process and the role of the architect.

THEORY

Architectural regeneration is simultaneously an established and an emerging field. In theoretical terms it spans and absorbs the theories of heritage conservation, design, place, regeneration and the anthropology of architecture and recognises that architecture is a process of continuous transformations as well as a transformative tool affecting those who interact with it (Orbaşlı and Vellinga, chapter 1). The key principles that underpin architectural regeneration emerge from this theoretical context and the positioning of architectural regeneration on a continuum between conservation and design, and within a broader social and economic context.

The re-use and regeneration of the existing built environment is simultaneously shaped by architectural, spatial, environmental, economic and social contexts, while itself being part of a continuous cultural process. The tangible and intangible adaptive capacity of a building or place informs its capacity to change and be altered, whilst maintaining architectural and social value and meanings through the physical processes of addition and subtraction. Architectural regeneration is inter-scalar: not only does it take place at different scales ranging from the interior of buildings to city regions, but it does so in ways that mean that change at one scale inevitably impacts on and triggers change at other scales. Ultimately, the success of architectural regeneration is driven by innovation and creative approaches to design, functionality and finance.

It is regularly argued that re-use of buildings makes environmental sense in that an existing resource is recycled and a focus on centrally located areas already served by infrastructure reduces demand for expansion and transportation. The benefits of reuse can be expanded to include the intangible benefits of heritage to society and cultural identity, alongside measurable economic and environmental advantages (Orbaşlı, chapter 2). They also extend into the realm of personal and social wellbeing, as an involvement with the historic environment can contribute to feelings of personal self-esteem and health, and provide access to social networks that are more prevalent in established neighbourhoods.

Not all existing buildings are of great historic or indeed architectural value. Architectural regeneration encompasses a multitude of building types, periods and values, each being a resource in their own right. Nor is it possible, feasible or desirable to conserve and reuse all existing buildings, and part of the renewal process may involve the demolition of existing structures alongside the addition of new buildings. Sustainability can be achieved through the imaginative and efficient reuse of the existing building stock and taking a holistic view that achieves a balance between economic, environmental and social targets, rather than disproportionately favouring one over the other. The adaptive capacity and flexibility of a building can play an important role in its future re-use.

The practical realization of architectural regeneration and the broader regeneration initiatives in which it might take place are informed by various levels of governance and decision making structures (Carpenter, chapter 3). Governance practices and policy are shaped and dictated by the politics of place and time. Global forces of globalisation and neo-liberal political agendas

have seen a distinct shift of power and responsibility for regeneration from the public to the private sector, diminishing the role of the State in providing social support to disadvantaged groups. The role of the State in regeneration has thus shifted to one that provides incentives for the private sector, promoting entrepreneurialism.

Yet, regeneration involves diverse interests, not least those of local communities. While regeneration through collaborative interaction amongst local government, private sector and community players is promoted, interests can be very diverse, places highly contested and common goals serving the collective interest difficult to identify. With the increasing emergence of global investors purely interested in investing and developing land, regeneration schemes are becoming further removed from objectives of local social and economic development. Governance practices surrounding urban regeneration have become complex and contradictory, with community participation all too often being seen as tokenism rather than genuine engagement and citizens continuing to remain excluded from the decision-making apparatus.

In many countries during the last two or three decades, the emphasis of architectural regeneration projects has been on the enhancement of the competitiveness of cities. The attraction of newcomers whose imagination, inspiration and skills can lead to innovation in technology or the arts, or better still a combination of the two, has been high on the political and economic agendas and a main driver of the regeneration of neglected or deprived areas and buildings (Shaw, chapter 4). In many instances, such attempts to attract a 'creative class', frequently involving public and private partnerships, have resulted in the development of commercial enclaves associated with ethnic and cultural minorities that have become the focus of major regeneration initiatives. Although such initiatives may be seen to celebrate cultural diversity, creativity and innovation, it has been argued that they are in fact nothing more than places of entertainment that capitalise on ethnic stereotypes and the ingenuity of entrepreneurs and innovators to cater to high-spending visitors from elsewhere, whilst ignoring the needs of local communities. Nonetheless, alternative projects initiated at community-level by small groups of entrepreneurs and innovators do exist and show that regeneration projects can result in spaces that are creative in their own right, if public engagement and the involvement of a diverse range of local stakeholder is taken into account.

The conversion of a former prison in Oxford into a high-end hotel and reconnecting its precinct into the fabric of the city further exemplifies the value of public-private partnerships and the

importance of public engagement in major regeneration projects (Randell, Oxford case study). Oxford County Council, as landowner, demonstrated its leadership in bringing different players from the private and charitable sectors together to participate in developing the project, and making the process transparent to the local public. The project itself demonstrates how through creative thinking and informed partnerships new uses can be found to even some of the most inflexible of buildings. Moreover, considered design solutions and problem solving at every level from the insertion of new services to compliance with building regulations, and a holistic approach that saw the removal of some buildings and the introduction of new interventions in contemporary architectural styles contributed to the success of the project. As a stand-alone project, Oxford Castle is a success in terms of bringing an unused building and an entire urban area back into use, generating economic, social and environmental benefits.

CONTEXT

An architectural regeneration project is not isolated from its context; on the contrary, it is influenced by and exerts an influence on the context. Context can mean an urban, suburban peri-urban and rural environment, the scale of a cluster, block, district or neighbourhood, and the varying timeframes of permanence and temporality.

The study of regeneration is often focused on the urban environment, an emphasis that increases as the world rapidly urbanises. It is therefore unsurprising that a greater volume of literature can be identified on the practices of urban conservation and regeneration. The process of urban conservation and urban regeneration overlap, but are underpinned by the distinct philosophies of heritage conservation and regeneration with socio-economic goals (Orbaşlı, chapter 5). Today not only historic cores, but a wider spectrum of old neighbourhoods, former industrial areas or purpose designed twentieth century settlement areas are seen to be worthy of heritage-led regeneration. Most notably these historic urban districts are valued because they contribute to the character and identity of a city, root it in a past and in some cases also make it attractive to tourists. Urban sociologists have long argued that the scale and mixed sizes and tenures prevalent in older neighbourhoods have also been instrumental in creating social cohesion, supported innovation and improved urban resilience.

Urban conservation is a cultural, physical, social and economic concern that is played out at multiple scales. It is driven by multiple drivers, including State-supported heritage-led regeneration schemes, the appeal of older central quarters to new urban demographics, and

ultimately developers, tourists and leisure users who are attracted to the unique character of historic neighbourhoods. Successful regeneration projects are often copied as city authorities seek paths to economic growth, in some instances even re-building heritage. Such practices are a further confirmation that older buildings and neighbourhoods matter to cities not only for their economic benefits, but also as signifiers of identity and image. Nonetheless, safeguarding social fabric has proven to be one of the most challenging aspects of urban conservation, with the processes of physical intervention often directly and indirectly instigating social change and gentrification.

The need to become more responsive and agile in a rapidly changing social, economic and environmental context means adaptation of the existing environment is as important as ever. Maintaining diversity (old and new areas, building types, functions, tenures, demographics) and sustaining social networks are important components in building resilience.

Although the literature on conservation and regeneration is mainly focused on urban contexts, suburban and rural regeneration projects do exist. Suburbs, like historic neighbourhoods or town centres, evolve and transform in time and their change is due in large part to the effects of the populations that occupy them (Lawrence, chapter 6). Like other places, suburbs are subject to constant processes of making and remaking, of invention and reinvention, as their inhabitants, and the environmental, social and economic contexts they form part of, change over time. Different social classes or ethnic groups can inhabit a suburb over time, or simultaneously, resulting in multiple expressions of reuse and regeneration. Suburban practices of regeneration are not necessarily uniform and depend on the ethnicity and class of the inhabitants, as well as the age, character and quality of the buildings concerned. Different dynamics can be at play at the same time, involving local communities, governments and professionals. As in the case of urban areas, the future of suburbs remains flexible and ever-changing.

Like historic city centres and suburbs, and despite popular representations that continue to portray rural areas as 'timeless', 'slow' and 'unchanging' bucolic backwaters, rural places around the world are also varied, dynamic and complex in terms of their environmental, social, economic and architectural characteristics (Loncar and Vellinga, chapter 7). Rural areas everywhere are integral, productive and ever-changing parts of the modern world that face a complex myriad of demographic, environmental, social and economic challenges that are not dissimilar to those encountered by their urban and suburban counterparts. The exact challenges differ per country, region and period. Some rural regions are characterised by a lack of

development, remaining largely remote and agricultural, while others have seen a rapid growth in economy due to the influx of people, industries or tourism. Some areas suffer from a lack of population, infrastructure, housing and public facilities; others experience pressures in terms of conflict, climate change or rapid development and urbanisation. The architectural heritage in rural areas is often also more diverse than imagined. Agricultural buildings tend to be widespread (farms, barns, mills), but are frequently complemented by other, more unexpected forms of architecture, including housing estates, industrial plants, military bases and tourist resorts.

Although architectural regeneration projects that use new design or reuse and repurpose existing rural architectural heritage with the specific aim of revitalising local communities, economies and places remain rare, those projects that do exist show that a lack of people and economic possibilities, resulting from rapidly changing social, economic and environmental contexts, are complicating factors in rural contexts.

Rapid cycles of change and increasing levels of uncertainty are also reflected in growing practices of fluidity and temporality in the regeneration environment (Orbaşlı and Karmowska, chapter 8). Often initiated by grass roots movements and/or young entrepreneurs, temporary interventions or pop-ups generally involve the temporary use of a redundant space for a commercial, semi-commercial or charitable/community function. Temporary interventions contribute to the re-use and regeneration of buildings through prolonging their use and drawing attention to their values, character and potential, often introducing commercial as well as cultural alternatives that, if successful, become established as future new uses. Projects of a temporary nature also empower community actors to have a voice in the shaping of their own environment and generate opportunities for financially weaker players.

The useful interim or meanwhile use for an existing building plays a role in the architectural regeneration process and the continued use, occupation and re-purposing of an existing building. Short term and small packages of interventions can pave the way to longer-term revitalisation and for unlocking the potential of buildings and sites. They are thus increasingly being supported by building owners and developers who see them as a means to finance longer-term regeneration and draw attention and investment to their sites. Consequently, temporary uses and businesses face the prospect of being easily displaced by gentrification and the mainstreaming of 'pop-ups' as they are adopted as marketing strategies for established brands.

Temporary solutions are also seen as an opportunity to utilise and regenerate unfinished buildings for the social good (Troiani and Dawson, chapter 9). Often a result of untethered building booms, fuelled by neoliberal policy and/or the false conception of construction being an economic vehicle in its own right, unfinished buildings often represent a greater stigma of failure to their communities than do buildings that have fallen redundant. Semi-constructed and then abandoned buildings became a significant urban reality in countries like Greece, Spain and Italy in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, littering the urban environment with wasted materials. The typical concrete frame structures are opportune templates for a multitude of formal and informal additions, and form the basis for a type of architectural regeneration practice that is responding to immediate social needs. Unfinished buildings are further proof that architecture is never complete, but is a continuous process of production and experience for those who use or engage with it.

The city of Istanbul, a global megacity under constant pressure of population growth, embodies a wide range of approaches to regeneration and area based conservation (Ikiz-Kaya, Istanbul case study). Beyond its geo-political location and its established position competing on a global platform, Istanbul is an ancient city imbued with multiple layers of history and heritage assets of global and local significance. The historic monuments of the city have long been a draw for tourists, but buildings of a more recent industrial past and entire historic neighbourhoods have only recently become the focus of architectural and area-wide regeneration practices. Reflecting global economic trends, many of these projects are driven by economic rather than social goals. While on the one hand historic buildings have been safeguarded through new uses, displacement and gentrification are now an all too common experience in older neighbourhoods. Furthermore, developer-led initiatives, supported by recent legislation, are resulting in entire urban blocks being amalgamated and reconstructed behind historic facades in the name of regeneration.

DESIGN

The heritage conservation practitioner has come to be recognised as a specialist in the field, and the Conservation architect (with a capital 'C') a distinct accolade for a specialist, but also a way of maintaining a separation from the design architect. In practice, architectural regeneration draws on the skills of understanding existing buildings and construction methods from the field of conservation and architecture, creativity from design and processes of engagement from participatory planning and the social sciences.

Although the practice of architectural regeneration draws on an architect or design professional's design tool kit, working with an existing building presents new challenges and necessitates different approaches to the design process (Bassindale, chapter 10). The fundamental first step in an architectural regeneration project is for the team to thoroughly understand the building through a research-based approach. A combination of desktop research from multiple sources and site-based observation and recording will enable the team to develop an understanding of the building, its context and evolution over time, and to establish its significance and values, and subsequently its adaptive capacity. Each building and place will have multiple values assigned to it including tangible (evidential, historic and aesthetic) and intangible communal values, historic associations and the social meanings of a place.

Analytical drawings of an area, and 3D drawings and visualisations of the building are also useful tools to synthesise and analyse information, and improve understanding of structural systems and the various phases of alterations and development the building may already have undergone. These will contribute to establishing the adaptive capacity of a building and inform ways in which it can be changed, altered or added in ways that will not unduly harm its significance and character, and also generate a feasible outcome for the client. The design team may indeed become engaged in identifying suitable new uses for a building, unlike in a new build project where the client will have a pre-defined use. The more flexible the building, the easier it is to accommodate new uses and adapt it, but there are numerous examples of highly creative adaptations. The creative (design) process is not one that can be prescribed, though like any design exercise will require a fair amount of imagination, epiphany, innovation and creativity, alongside a good feeling for the building. Additional challenges in existing buildings involve incorporation of building services and upgrading the building's performance, all of which requires intuitive and imaginative design approaches that also align with the project brief and budget. The design expression realised in details, additions and indeed subtractions is often a matter of choice and appropriateness to the given place and location. It will inevitably be an expression of the time in which it is conceived, a new layer for a building that will also continue to evolve and be adapted in the future.

Sustainability is one of the drivers of architectural regeneration, and although the practice of enabling the continued use of a built asset is often heralded as a sustainability argument for architectural regeneration, this should be supported by interventions that ensure a much deeper

and meaningful contribution to sustainability is achieved (Sassi, chapter 11). Designing and planning for sustainability is designing for longevity. A sustainable built environment is one that is high quality and socially, culturally and economically viable in the long-term while having a minimal impact on the environment. In an era where the reduction of carbon emissions is a national and international policy concern, and buildings are a main source of emissions, finding technical solutions to improve building performance is becoming a priority.

Sustainability, however, is multi-dimensional with technical, socio-economic, environmental and ethical implications, some of which can be quantified and others not. In existing buildings technical solutions relating to retro-fitting are considerably more complex than in new-build scenarios, and can rarely be rolled out in a one-size-fits-all fashion. Furthermore, sustainability can only truly be achieved when a holistic view is taken considering the context, including the natural environment, and social wellbeing. Solutions to carbon emissions and the management of an ecological footprint rarely reside in a building alone, but are linked with political will and behavioural change. An architectural regeneration process can only deliver on sustainability when all dimensions, social and environmental, are considered holistically.

Because of the multidimensional nature of projects, the role of architects in architectural regeneration is extensive and varied and rarely limited to that of a design practitioner (Wedel, chapter 12). Discussions with five prominent architectural regeneration practitioners provide deeper insights into the various roles that they may be asked to undertake, and the various architectural, economic or social contexts they may find themselves in. The participants provide an abject portrayal of the range of work available to architectural regeneration practitioners and how they can make a difference working in public, private and third sectors. One crucial insight that emerges from all the discussions is the need to recognise the social value of a place and the importance of community engagement. Such recognition and engagement allow the practitioner to make balanced judgements on what to change, what to keep and how to go about implementing the decisions that have been made. Immersing oneself in the building through rigorous architectural and social research, knowing when to call on other experts, understanding the needs of the client and maintaining an ethical standpoint are equally crucial, as is respecting the fact that one has a duty to society at large and not just the client or local community. The discussion also show that politics are never far away, whichever sector a practitioner is working in.

In the context of architectural regeneration, design can be anything from small details to an entire new addition to an existing building (Gaskin, chapter 13). Design is often discussed as the outward appearance of a new component and in terms of an architectural language and choice of materials. There is more to design than appearance, however, such as the configuration of spaces, the hierarchy of spaces, and the resolution of junctions and spaces that may have become problematic in the context of a new use. It also concerns the narrative journey through spaces, old and new, and the way in which an architectural language is carried through from new additions to smaller adaptations in the existing fabric. Design is an integral component of architectural regeneration and one of its complex challenges that requires holistic approaches. The methodological approach to designing in a historic context must start with an informed understanding of the existing building and its urban/rural and social context, followed by a clearly defined strategy or rationale for the design. There are no right ways of designing in context or ready-made solutions, and the outcome will be a creative negotiation of the constraints (site, planning regulations, budget) to fulfil the ambitions of the clients. Each new design intervention is a new layer added to the evolving lifetime of a building or place; it will inevitably be a reflection of 'the time' and will also influence the design of future interventions.

The architectural regeneration of historic school buildings (*liceus*) in Portugal clearly illustrates how different architects may use the core principles of architectural regeneration to re-model historic buildings that are able to successfully meet twenty-first century educational requirements and challenges (Aleixo, Portuguese school buildings case study). The *liceus* are purpose-designed secondary schools, built from the late nineteenth century up until the 1950s, the significance of which is reflected in their monumental mass and detailed façade design. As educational philosophies and practices changed over time, so the buildings had to be adapted. As in the case of new architectural design, there was no single way to do this and various architects favoured different approaches. The case study shows that, despite this variety, the awareness of the existing building and conservation principles in each case generated a greater desire to act ethically and consider environmental, cultural and socio-cultural sustainability.

This case study further demonstrates that architectural regeneration is a complex multi-scalar and multi-layered process that draws on the expertise of a range of professionals and requires engagement with multiple stakeholders, often with differing political, economic, cultural and social agendas. Although architectural regeneration in practice revolves around the profession of architecture, the regeneration practitioner is not simply an architect who designs from scratch,

nor purely a specialist in heritage conservation, but has to combine both roles and the responsibilities they entail, and more.

The training of architectural regeneration practitioners therefore needs to consider how these variables can be most effectively conveyed in the time and resource-bound nature of architectural education (Orbaşlı *et al.*, chapter 14). While architectural regeneration is becoming an important component of architectural practice, it is not as yet mainstreamed into architectural education. A focus on research-led approaches that integrate theory with practice, a problem based learning environment based on real-life situations and experiences and a holistic attitude to resource sensitivity that recognises the value of human as well as environmental resources as an asset are the fundamental pillars of the approach we have adopted at Oxford Brookes University. It is our hope that this book will encourage others to also engage with the field of architectural regeneration and so further the knowledgebase and discourse of a dynamic, creative and increasingly important field of architectural practice.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the authors who have contributed to this volume and made a valuable contribution to the architectural regeneration debate. The volume has been a truly collaborative process and special thanks are due to Paul Sayer at Wiley-Blackwell who has patiently supported the processes through which the book was conceived and produced, and Timea Korda-Kovats at Oxford Brookes University who provided vital editorial assistance and coordination. We also take this opportunity to thank all our colleagues, practice partners and students, past and present, for the contributions they have made over the years through lectures, discussions, debates, field visits, projects and project reviews that has made this book possible. We hope that this work will bring the concept of architectural regeneration to a wider audience within and beyond the discipline of architecture.

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