

ADAPTIVE REUSE AS A CONSERVATION STRATEGY FOR HISTORIC BUILDINGS IN KYRENIA: THE ASSESSMENT OF EMINE HATUNI MANSION

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1. Introduction

Protecting cultural heritage in contemporary cities involves not only preserving historic structures but also revitalizing them through appropriate and sustainable strategies. Adaptive reuse is the attempt to reutilize the old buildings for new uses with the preservation of the old building fabric and its architectural heritage value. The study of adaptive reuse as a method of conservation can be understood under the headings of heritage protection concept, architectural values, socio-cultural values, economic values and compatibility of the new uses with historic buildings. Early conservation efforts focused almost exclusively on preserving exceptional examples of architecture palaces, cathedrals, and other notable monuments, and largely ignored vernacular architecture and the surrounding urban fabric in which those buildings existed (Jokilehto, 1999). As a consequence of widespread urban destruction after World War II, scholars including Feilden (2003) and Choay (2001) point to the limitations of the earlier monument-based approach to conservation, and argue that post war urban reconstruction demonstrated the inability of the previous conservation models to address the social, economic, and spatial complexity of historic cities. In response to this failure, conservation theory began to evolve to incorporate larger areas of historic cities and to recognize the interconnected nature of buildings, public spaces, and community life (Rodwell, 2007).

Urban Conservation, as described by Rodwell, represents a strategic process aimed at managing change in historic cities, while protecting the cultural significance of those cities. Unlike previous generations of conservationists, who sought to prevent

change, urban conservation recognizes that change will occur, and instead seeks to guide the change to ensure the historical continuity of the city (Rodwell, 2007).

Conservation as a part of urban planning emerged as a viable means of conserving historic cities in the latter half of the 20th Century, as many European cities experienced de-industrialization and inner-city decline. Studies by Roberts (2000) and Tallon (2013) have shown how heritage assets can serve as catalysts for regeneration, attracting investment, promoting tourism, and reviving social activity. However, the growing trend towards using heritage as an instrument of urban regeneration has created new challenges. Pendlebury (2013) warns that the application of conservation for the purposes of urban regeneration creates the risk of prioritizing economic benefits above cultural ones, potentially resulting in the commodification of heritage, and thus the selective preservation of aspects of heritage.

While urban conservation has broadened the role of heritage within urban development, it has also raised important concerns about authenticity, social equity, and long-term sustainability. Additionally, the concept of reversibility has been advocated since the 1960s, as a conservation principle where it is desired that future generations will be able to reinterpret interventions or otherwise make alterations without permanent degradation (ICOMOS, 1964).

The literature review component includes four strands: (1) a conceptual examination of adaptive reuse theory, in the broader discourse of Heritage Conservation and Urban Conservation including heritage protection concepts, architectural values, socio-cultural dynamics and economic frameworks (Orbaşlı, 2008; Avrami et al., 2000; Shipley et al., 2006); and (2) a theoretical overview and development of the subjects of adaptive reuse, heritage management and values-based approaches in heritage.

2. Aim, Objectives and Research Question

There are many historic buildings that are out of their original functions due to different factors. However, there is an increasing interest in conserving the cultural heritage through adaptive reuse. In the historic centre of Kyrenia and its surrounding,

there are challenges in heritage management and the lack of holistic conservation approach. This research seeks to question the capacity of adaptive reuse to function as an effective conservation strategy for Kyrenia's historic buildings. Through a case study approach, reused historic buildings are examined to investigate how adaptive reuse impacted on the building's authenticity, integrity, values and the physical character. As a result, the Master thesis has investigated new uses and their compatibility for heritage buildings. Furthermore, heritage management issues are discussed based on conservation framework. The main research question is 'to what extent do adaptive reuse interventions in Kyrenia conserve architectural authenticity, allow for functional flexibility, and contribute to urban vitality?'.

3. Methodology

The master thesis research carries out a qualitative case study approach (Sarah, 2013) to investigate the assessment of 6 adaptive reuse cases in historic core of Kyrenia. These historic buildings were selected according to the criteria; to be transformed into public or semi-public uses (such as café/restaurant, exhibition spaces and cultural hubs); they could be privately funded, municipality funded and/or UNDP funded reused projects. One of these cases is selected for the purpose of this paper to be presented as an example case.

The research has employed field survey, architectural documentation and archival research. An evaluative framework was developed to evaluate the physical, functional and socio-cultural effects of reuse to determine the continuity of values integrity and authenticity adopted from literature review (Orbasli, 2008; Randall, 2003; Menteş, 2023). A condition assessment, integrity and values assessment were carried out and reversibility of changes were recorded. Three important key analysis included:

- Architectural Fabric: Studying the authenticity of materials, as well as any remaining original parts and spots of aging.
- Requirements of the new functions
- The Use of Spaces: Transformation of the spaces from old into new functions and their compatibility

3.1. Emine Hatuni Mansion as an example for the Case studies

The Emine Hatuni Mansion is located in the historic context of Kyrenia. The building was recently converted into a café named Beige Café (Figure 1 and Figure 2). This is a crucial example to present how commercial adaptive reuse is able to facilitate or disrespect the existence of heritage values.



Figure 1. View of the building from the back entrance way. Photograph taken by D. Dogbre, November 2025.



Figure 2. Photo of the indoor hall area of the building. Photograph taken by D. Dogbre, November 2025.

Emine Hatun Mansion is a historical mansion that belongs to the end-of-the-Ottoman residential architecture with typical semi-open transitional zones and courtyard-based plan typology. The building is constructed by load-bearing stone walls. The original residential role of the building was no longer required by the shifting lifestyles, ownership issues and difficulties in maintenance, exposing it to gradual deterioration just like most historic mansions in Kyrenia. Feilden (2003) mentions that because of their size and maintenance expenses, such large domestic buildings are frequently subject to increased pressure to be put back into adaptive use.

The architectural integrity in Emine Hatuni Mansion is partly maintained by keeping the major spatial setting of the building. The field observations show that original room divisions, circulation paths and volumetric relationships are still continuing as original (Figure 3).

In terms of material authenticity, much of the original masonry walls, openings, and architecture were retained in the reuse intervention. Modern finishes, furniture lightning fixtures and decorative items have been added to aid branding and comfort of the users where these Interventions are reversible. However, the service infrastructure, such as kitchen installations and mechanical installations are, permanent additions that have been carried out as an extension from the courtyard.

The project has a significant strength in the socio-cultural impact of the reuse. By converting a private building into a public reuse domestic heritage becomes accessible to the community. As Avrami, Mason, and de la Torre (2000) point out, two crucial mechanisms of social value creation and maintenance are the public access and ongoing use. The cafe transition contributes to the active use of the building, and the users get to enjoy historic spaces in a non-institutional atmosphere.

However, the reuse is also commercial in nature, which restricts inclusivity. The consumption mediates access to the building by limiting usage to paying customers, and forms social value in participation on the market.

In terms of management, the project portrays the overall situation of heritage management in Kyrenia. Reuse was not planned as part of a conservation management

or through a formal values-based evaluation but was dependent on the initiative and sensitivity of individual stakeholders.

Ground floor Plan – Original Zoning

Ground floor Plan – New Function Zoning



Figure 3. Zoning sketch of the ground floor plan of the building shows original uses and new uses after adaptive reuse. Figure produced by D. Dogbre, 2025.

Beige Cafe (Emine Hatun Mansion) lies analytically between the two ends of the continuum of the adaptive reuse performance in Kyrenia. It is respectful to architectural integrity, material authenticity and compatibility. It does not, however, have the systematic conservation structure and disciplines of reversibility which accompany institutionally funded projects. Its effectiveness in maintaining the values of heritage is thus conditional. One of the core claims of this thesis made in the case is that commercial adaptive reuse can play an important role in conserving heritage in a situation where the amount of intervention is regulated, and where the new uses do not exceed the existing spatial and cultural potentials. Nevertheless, such outcomes are susceptible to change with time based on market pressure, without formal mechanisms of assessment and long term management strategies. Beige Cafe therefore offers a subtle case of the functionality of

adaptive reuse in the context of conservation sensitivity and commercial feasibility at the intersection of Kyrenia, which can be useful in the comparative discussion below.

4. Results

The results of the thesis indicate that adaptive reuse is a good strategy for conservation of historic buildings when it is applied with a good decision making and efforts to preserve the heritage values. These results indicate that adaptive reuse does not simply revitalize abandoned historic fabrics, but also regenerate collective memory and create a new sense of place for the youth, which are needed to support urban identity. Nonetheless, there is still a conflict between the authenticity of heritage and modernization that the absence of a holistic framework allows adaptive reuse to be driven by a touristic and profit-only goal endangering the city cultural landscape overall. hence allowing for a holistic understanding of reuse strategies for heritage conservation. This research contributes to the debate on sustainable heritage conservation in Mediterranean context especially in Kyrenia and emphasizes the need for holistic approach in heritage management in Kyrenia.

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