

*Research Article*

## The Impact of Social Sustainability on Culture Buildings Located In Historical Context

Mozayan Dehbashisharif\*

Department of Architecture, Central Tehran Branch Islamic Azad University, Iran

Accepted 28 Feb 2017, Available online 02 March 2017, Vol.7, No.2 (April 2017)

### Abstract

*The paper explores the impact of social sustainability on culture buildings located in historical context. Cultural sustainability investigates different ways to enhancing human lives while preserving cultural heritage. Cultural sustainability is key to avoiding exploitation of the available limited resources. In this research study, the author use intensive and extensive review of the available relevant literatures related to sustainability, culture, and the built environment. The paper acknowledges the growing acknowledgement of cultural heritage as a tool vital in promoting social, economic, an environmental sustainability. The research thus provides an in-depth analysis of culture (historical buildings) and sustainability. The paper implies that cultural preservation promotes social, economic, and environmental sustainability.*

**Keywords:** Architecture, Social Sustainability, Culture Buildings

### Introduction

The impact of social sustainability on culture buildings located in historical context cannot be refuted. Research shows that sustainability plays an incredible role in the preservation of historic buildings, helping in the perpetuation of cultural heritage. In the context of culture, sustainability explores techniques of enhancing human lives and leaving behind a solid legacy for the coming generations (Gallant & Blickle, 2005).

Preservation of cultural heritage is extremely vital for cultural perpetuation. These cultures also play a significant role in boosting economic growth and development of a nation since it promotes both external and internal tourism. In this respect, effort must be made to promote environmental sustainability, to ensure the preservation of cultural heritage (Balaras, Dascalaki, Kontoyiannidis, 2004).

Irrefutably, the ability of the present society to preserve cultural heritage and avoid exploitation of the available limited resources rests on the effectiveness of the government and the relevant agencies involved promoting environmental sustainability. It is prudent that sustainability is promoted to ensure that resource exploitation done in a humane and sustainable manner to enable the future generation to meet their needs.

Al-Jamea (2014) posits that cultural values significantly shape the societal way of life, and the

capacity of the present generation fulfill their current needs without compromising the future. Hawkes (2001) highlight that sustainable society depends heavily on the ability of the communities to promote environmental sustainability coupled with the strength of the sustainable culture.

Duxbury (2012) defines cultural sustainability as effort geared towards preserving the intangible and the tangible cultural, societal elements in a manner that foster economic, and social sustainability. Besides the social, economic, and environmental challenges facing cultural preservation in the present generation, issues of diversity, knowledge, and beauty, further constitute prime factors that impacting the ability to effectively preserve the cultural environment (Myers & Wyatt, 2004). Strategies and mechanisms must be incorporated to address the above-documented factors in an attempt to address the issues negatively affecting the environment directly.

Scammon (2012) asserted that the integration of cultural heritage into environmental, social, and economic dimensions of sustainability critical in nurturing a holistic approach to environmental sustainability. Irrefutably, culture not only supports but also connects with the economic, social, and environmental factors, which are renowned three pillars of environmental sustainability. Scammon posits that achieving economic viability entails operational and maintenance costs of buildings in certain cultures, with the sole objective of supporting sustainable use of buildings (Taylor, 2009; Ying &

\*Corresponding author: **Mozayan Dehbashisharif** is working as Assistant Professor

Zhou, 2007). Sustainability efforts, such as avoiding demolition of the historical building coupled with the continuous use of these buildings fosters environmental sustainability due to the elimination of waste materials to the landfills.

Ijla and Broström (2015) contend that conservation and re-use of historical buildings plays an invaluable role in the process of regeneration, as well as attaining the much-psyched need for newer buildings. Often, historic buildings are used as cultural heritages for purposes of promoting tourism. Therefore, since tourism is a way of promoting economic growth and development, preserving historical buildings boosts economic growth and development of a country (Casagrande, & Vasquez, 2010).

Many vacant buildings that have lost their original use are increasingly being converted to vibrant and useful space, a move that significantly helps in the process of revitalization of old cities and the neighborhoods, further driving their sustainability (UCLG, 2010). Against this backdrop, the study explores the impact of impact of social sustainability on cultural heritage buildings located in historical context.

### Research Objectives

- 1) The objective of this study is to examine the impact of social sustainability on cultural buildings located in historical context.
- 2) To explore the economic significance of social sustainability.

### Materials and Methods

Methodological component is an incredible part of any research process and must be addressed with the seriousness it deserves. The reliability and validity of the research findings are highly dependent on the appropriateness of the research methodology used. This implies that researchers must conduct extensive analysis to ensure appositeness of the research methodology. According to Mackenzie and Knipe (2006), methodology refers to the entire approach to a proposed research linked to either theoretical or research paradigm that is to be employed.

The literature review offers comprehensive, critical and extensive analysis of the impact of social sustainability on culture buildings located in historical context. In this study, the methodology used to guide the collection of data was the analysis of relevant literatures to draw pertinent information, vital in fostering validity and reliability of the study findings. The choice of literature review rested on Fellows and Liu (2003) assertion that literature review allows objective evaluation of the problem under investigation (Fellows & Liu, 2003).

Concerning this study, the literature review explored various literatures on social sustainability and cultural buildings positioned in historical context (Galal, 2011; Taleb, & Sharples, 2010). The fundamental role of conducting extensive literature

review was to ascertain the knowledge gap and the existing information on the impact of social sustainability on cultural buildings. Critical and comprehensive analysis of the relevant literature was vital to comprehending the subject matter of the research while answering the pertinent research questions documented initially.

Besides, literature analysis enabled the investigator to ascertain what is known about the subject matter from the unknown while at the same time unearthing the importance of the study problem, determining variables key to the issue at hand, and seeking for the new inquiry lines. Therefore, it is apparent from the above analysis that systematic review of literature is the prime method used to collect data.

### Results and Discussions

This research study was interested in finding out the impact of social sustainability on culture buildings. Ijla and Broström (2015) assert that benefits of escalating the numbers of reused historical buildings in deep-rooted centers and old neighborhood is deemed critical in attaining sustainability. The study shows that embracing and comprehending potential cultural and socio-economic opportunities, the physical, historic buildings, social, and the physical fabrics play an incredible role in attaining the sustainability goals.

There is no doubt that a huge number of conserved historical buildings, including the Fort Jesus in, Kenya, Mombasa country are increasingly being used to promote tourism. Myers and Wyatt (2004) argued that debates regarding sustainable development unearth the pertinent issue of building or maintaining the existing architectures as opposed to constructing new ones as a way of fostering social, economic, and cultural sustainability.

The change to the adaptation of building and reuse has been extensively been acknowledged by different scholars, including Gallant and Blickle (2005) and Bullen (2007). In various corners of the world, various organizations are promoting awareness about the demolition of historical buildings. Efforts ought to be directed towards preserving the traditional buildings as opposed to building new ones as a methodology for promoting environmental sustainability. Gregory, 2004 argue that extension of the life of the building reduces transport, energy, and material consumption, hence significantly fostering sustainability.

Ijla and Broström (2015) documented a broader spectrum of benefits that one is likely to gain by practicing adaptive reuse where historic buildings are maintained or repaired as opposed to constructing new ones. Nonetheless, there exist pertinent obstacles presently hindering effective implementation of adaptive reuse strategies where economic constraints compel the development of sub-quality constructions that do not meet the sustainability needs of the 21st century. This implies that economic constraints, such as lack of adequate capital can force one to develop a substandard building.



**Figure 1:** Historic Building (Source: <http://s06.cgpublisher.com/themes.html>)

Therefore, improvements are part and parcel of promoting sustainability of the historic buildings, deemed an important strategy for sustainability. The following figure represents a historic building.

When the above building is demolished and replaced by another one, it is likely to interfere with social sustainability because it might lead to temporary displacement of people. In this regard, it is imperative to promote preserve the buildings to promote social sustainability. According to Choi (2010), the adaptive reuse of the historical buildings also encourages the generation of many intangible and tangible benefits that are not only limited to the developer but stimulates a ripple effect to the local government and the community. Through sustenance of the historic buildings, developers are capable of saving a huge cost while initiating reuse projects. Sustaining the historic buildings enables to minimize the building and demolition cost, hence economic sustainability.

Through adaptive reuse strategy, the local governments may be in a position to protect their respective environment or promote environmental sustainability since adaptive re-use strategy leads to the generation of less waste in the neighborhood than the new construction projects as highlighted by (Choi, 2010; Conway, 2010; Lutzkendorf, & Lorenz, 2005). Bullen (2007) asserted that adaptive re-use could significantly reduce construction costs, land acquisition, revitalize existing neighborhoods, and for the above all, help in controlling sprawl, all of which constitutes appropriate techniques for promoting environmental sustainability.

Adaptive reuse of the abandoned buildings may be used as strategies to revitalize the urban areas through tax revenues, job creation, and historic preservation. The growing need to preserve and maintain older buildings rests on the fact that it is relatively cheaper

to convert a historic building to new uses rather than build and demolish new ones. Reusing the historic building, more so for purposes of performance upgrading significantly impacts the sustainability of built environment. Other pertinent advantages linked to reusing or re-developing the existing historical buildings include lower land acquisition, the cost of construction, and a lesser construction time based on the degree of the work conducted. Bullen (2007) argue that adaptive reuse is further gaining prominence as a strong strategy for energy conservation, which further enhances economic sustainability.

In addition to doing away with area problems that come as a result of the demolition, buildings re-use encourages upgrading of the surrounding structures in the neighborhood. Therefore, upgrading the existing historical buildings is a move in the right direction because of its role in fostering environmental sustainability. Wessels in his book documented three pertinent laws of sustainability, including the law of thermodynamics, law of limit to growth, and law of self-organization. These laws play a major role in fostering environmental sustainability.

Hawkes (2001) argued that cultural sustainability plays a significant role in social, economic, and ecological dimensions of sustainability. As already argued, demolitions of historical buildings negatively impact the environment. The study has demonstrated that sustainability and culture are closely linked and that preserving historical buildings is part of the process of fostering environmental sustainability. It is apparent from this study that historical buildings act as a source of social capital, employment, cultural diversity, and energy savings, all of which are vital to foster economic, environmental, and social sustainability.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, cultural dimension ought to be incorporated in developing developmental policies owing to its role in fostering social, economic, and environmental sustainability. The study has informed the need to integrate culture into sustainable development strategies and plans. There are different ways through which cultural sustainability is beneficial to the environment, including preservation of the so-called cultural capital, such as the buildings retaining community's heritage. Therefore, cultural heritage plays an incredible role preservation of historical buildings, hence fostering social, environmental, and economic sustainability.

## References

- Al-Jamea M (2014) Towards social and cultural sustainability in the designs of contemporary Saudi houses. *Int J Sustain Hum Dev* 2(1), 35-43.
- Balaras CA, Dascalaki E, Kontoyiannidis S (2004). Decision support software for sustainable building refurbishment, ASHRAE Transactions, Vol. 110, pp. 592 - 601, Part 1.
- Bullen PA (2007). Adaptive reuse and sustainability of commercial buildings, *Facilities*: Vol. 25, p20-31.
- Casagrande, D. G., & Vasquez, M. (2010). 18 Restoring for Cultural-Ecological Sustainability in Arizona and Connecticut.
- Conway, P. (2010). Preservation in the Age of Google: Digitization, Digital Preservation, and Dilemmas 1. *The Library Quarterly*, 80(1), 61-79.
- Duxbury N (2012) Cities, culture and sustainable development, Summer Lab'12: art, climate change and community development. Torres Vedras, Portugal, 5 Sept 2012. [http://www.ces.uc.pt/myces/UserFiles/encontros/1097\\_DUXBURY\\_Torres\\_Vedras\\_05.09.2012.pdf](http://www.ces.uc.pt/myces/UserFiles/encontros/1097_DUXBURY_Torres_Vedras_05.09.2012.pdf). Accessed 24 Nov 2013.
- Fellows R, Liu A (2003) Research methods for construction students, 2nd edn. Blackwell publishing, Oxford.
- Galal, K. (2011). Evaluation of social and cultural sustainability in typical public house models. In Al Ain, UAE. *Int. J. Sus. Dev. Plann*, 6(1), 49 - 80.
- Gallant BT, & Blickle FW (2005). Managing redevelopment of brownfields with major structures, *Environmental Practice*, 7(2), 97 - 107.
- Gregory J (2004). Rehabilitation-new ways for older housing, New South Wales Department of Housing, available at: [www.housing.nsw.gov.au/rehab.htm](http://www.housing.nsw.gov.au/rehab.htm).
- Hawkes J (2001). The fourth pillar of sustainability: culture's essential role in public planning. Common Ground Press, Melbourne.
- Ijla, A., & Broström, T. (2015). The Sustainable Viability of Adaptive Reuse of Historic Buildings: the experiences of Two World Heritage Old Cities; Bethlehem in Palestine and Visby in Sweden. *International Invention Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, 2(4), 52-66.
- Lutzkendorf T, & Lorenz D (2005). Sustainable property investment: valuing sustainable buildings through property performance assessment, *Building Research and Information*, 33(3), 212 - 34.
- Mackenzie N, Knipe S (2006) Research dilemmas: paradigms, methods and methodology. *Issues Educ Res* 16(2), 193-205.
- Myers D, & Wyatt P (2004). Rethinking urban capacity: identifying and appraising vacant buildings, *Building Research and Information*, Vol. 32 No. 4, pp. 285 - 92.
- Scammon D (2012) Sustainability and culture: how do they work together? LCC 480 senior seminars, 30 April 2012. Available at: [http://www.academia.edu/1817961/Sustainability\\_and\\_Culture\\_How\\_do\\_they\\_work\\_together](http://www.academia.edu/1817961/Sustainability_and_Culture_How_do_they_work_together). Accessed 25 Sept 2014.
- Taleb, M., & Sharples, S., (2010). Developing Sustainable Residential Buildings in Saudi Arabia: A Case Study. School of Architecture, University of Sheffield, UK.
- Taylor C (2009) Building cultures for sustainability. *Oxford Leadership J* 1(1):1-3.
- UCLG (2010) Culture: fourth pillar of sustainable. UCLG policy statement, UCLG Committee on culture and world secretariat policy statement for Mexico City, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), Barcelona, 16 Sept 2010.
- Ying T, Zhou Y (2007). Community, governments and external capitals in China's rural cultural tourism: A comparative study of two adjacent villages. *Tourism Management ESEVIER*, 28(1), 96 - 107.