

Values and Re-purposing Cultural Heritage

AR2A011 Architectural History Thesis

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Abstract

The re-purposing of cultural heritage is becoming more and more prominent. Often, cultural heritage objects hold (great) value, making working with them a difficult task. Therefore, in order to complete these types of projects successfully, a clear overview over what is important has to be present. A way to do this is to document the most important values about the heritage and architecture in general, allowing decisions to be soundly backed. This thesis aims to create a model for this based on a model originating from previous research by answering the following question: to what degree is the model presented by Mazumdar & Mazumdar (1994) applicable to the re-purposing of cultural heritage? First, the connection between societal values and architecture is established, showing clear signs of a relationship between the two. Next, carefully formulated heritage values and legislative documents will be discussed, where the importance of considering the “cultural significance” is explained. Cultural significance can be defined as everything that makes the cultural heritage object in question valuable, ideally defined by both experts and the public. To answer the research question, the original model is tested against the re-purposing and refurbishment of State Library Victoria in Melbourne, revealing that while technically applicable, the original model needs to be expanded for the important values at play when re-purposing cultural heritage to be clearly documented. The term “societal values” is too broad to both describe the cultural significance and general values about architecture. Therefore, cultural significance is introduced in the model, comprised of expert assessment and communal heritage values. This changed model is presented, and allows anyone working on such projects to create a map with a clear overview of the important values.

Keywords values, heritage, cultural significance, charter

1 Introduction

There is an increasing trend of adaptive reuse of heritage buildings. This is likely to stem from the fact that demolishing them has a more negative impact on the environment than reusing them (Reuter, 2013). Another possible reason that could be considered is the cultural significance these buildings hold, making demolishing them an undesirable option. Heritage can form an important part of a city's identity, and can therefore carry a lot of value. These values and attributes have been documented in so-called "value typologies" (Fredheim & Khalaf, 2016). The lists contain values such as: historic, aesthetic, social, cultural, economical and many more. It's clear to see how these values can play a role when re-purposing heritage. How much do people value the aesthetics of the building and what does that mean for the freedom of changing aspects of the building? How much respect should one pay to the historical function of a vacant (part of a) building? These questions are hard to answer and are a unique part of re-purposing cultural heritage. An attempt at answering them comes in the form of charters, documents created by institutions such as ICOMOS or UNESCO describing legislation around dealing with cultural heritage objects (ICOMOS n.d. b, UNESCO, 2007). Values are different for everybody, so complete objectivity is hard to attain. However, common ideas and values are often shared and can approach something akin to objectivity, as seen in the charters.

In previous research by Mazumdar & Mazumdar (1994), the connection between societal values and architectural artifacts has been researched. According to the researchers, an architectural artifact is any given expression of architecture; size of windows, placement of doors and spaces; size of spaces, etc. This connection was displayed in a model containing four steps: societal values, societal norms, architectural values, architectural artifacts. This model is very broad, and shows a possible general connection between societal values and architectural artifacts. In order to possibly improve or specify this model, this thesis will aim to answer the following question: to what degree is the model presented by Mazumdar & Mazumdar (1994) applicable to the re-purposing of cultural heritage? To do this, a literature study will be conducted which creates the foundation for reference in the following paragraphs. Literature that will be explored contains ideas about values and architecture and aforementioned heritage values. To see in which way to change the model, the refurbishment and adaptations to State Library Victoria in Melbourne, Australia, will be analysed. Australia is chosen since it has very detailed descriptions of the treatment of cultural heritage and a very rich history. After analysis, a conclusion can be drawn about the applicability of the model. If it doesn't apply, an attempt at changing it will be made. A changed model will provide architects tasked to carry out such a refurbishment or re-purposing with a clearer overview on what matters and how best to approach the project.

2 Norms, values and architecture

Architecture is defined as the art and technique of designing a building (Britannica, n.d.). These buildings are most often made to be used by people, meaning they have to take into account the way people behave. This behaviour is at least partly a result of norms and values, meaning there is a connection with architecture to be found. The following section gives a clear example of the way this connection can manifest itself, by looking at examples from old Islamic houses.

2.1 Islamic houses

In order to explain the relationship between values and architecture, first some general terms will be explained. Mazumdar & Mazumdar (1994) define values as "...sets of convictions and ideas that influence preferences and choices", that are often deep-seated into society, those forming the societal values. Societal norms are more specific and give limits to what is accepted. Architectural values are described as "...more definitive preferences that enable and support the more intangible and abstract societal norms and societal values through ideas about physical forms". They are seen as the preferences within architecture that influence the eventual choice of the architectural artifacts. The definition of architectural artifacts can be derived from the case studies. Interesting to note is the transition from intangible to tangible when transitioning from values to artifacts.

Below the resulting model can be seen, visualizing the steps mentioned above and in the introduction:

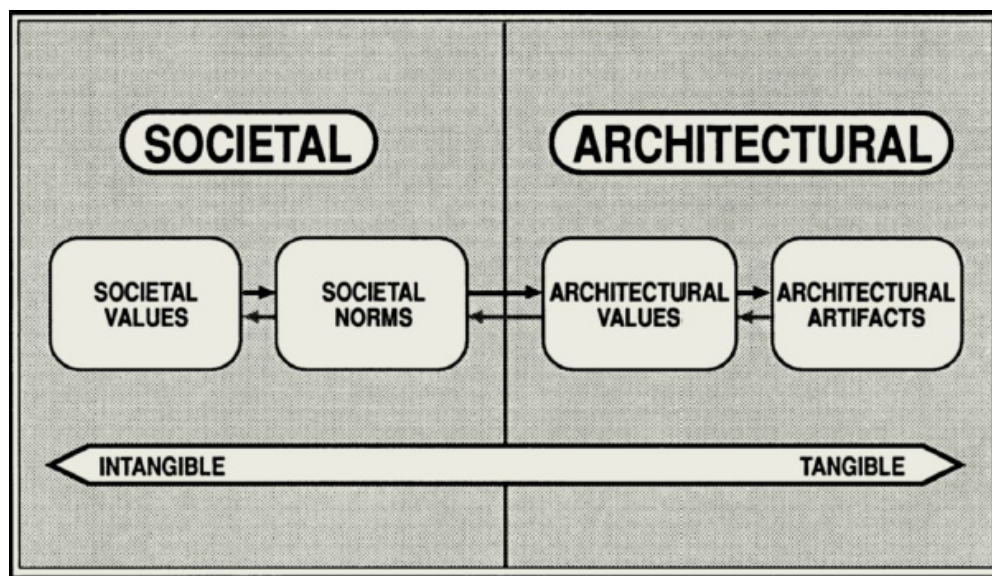


Figure 1: Model created by Mazumdar & Mazumdar (1994)

To strengthen their point, they present a case study of a pre-pahlavi period Islamic house in Iran, in which the influence of values is clearly visible in the architectural artifacts. The Pahlavi dynasty lasted from 1925 to 1979, and was founded by Reza Shah Pahlavi (Aghaie et al., 2004). The model resulting from the case study was constructed as follows:

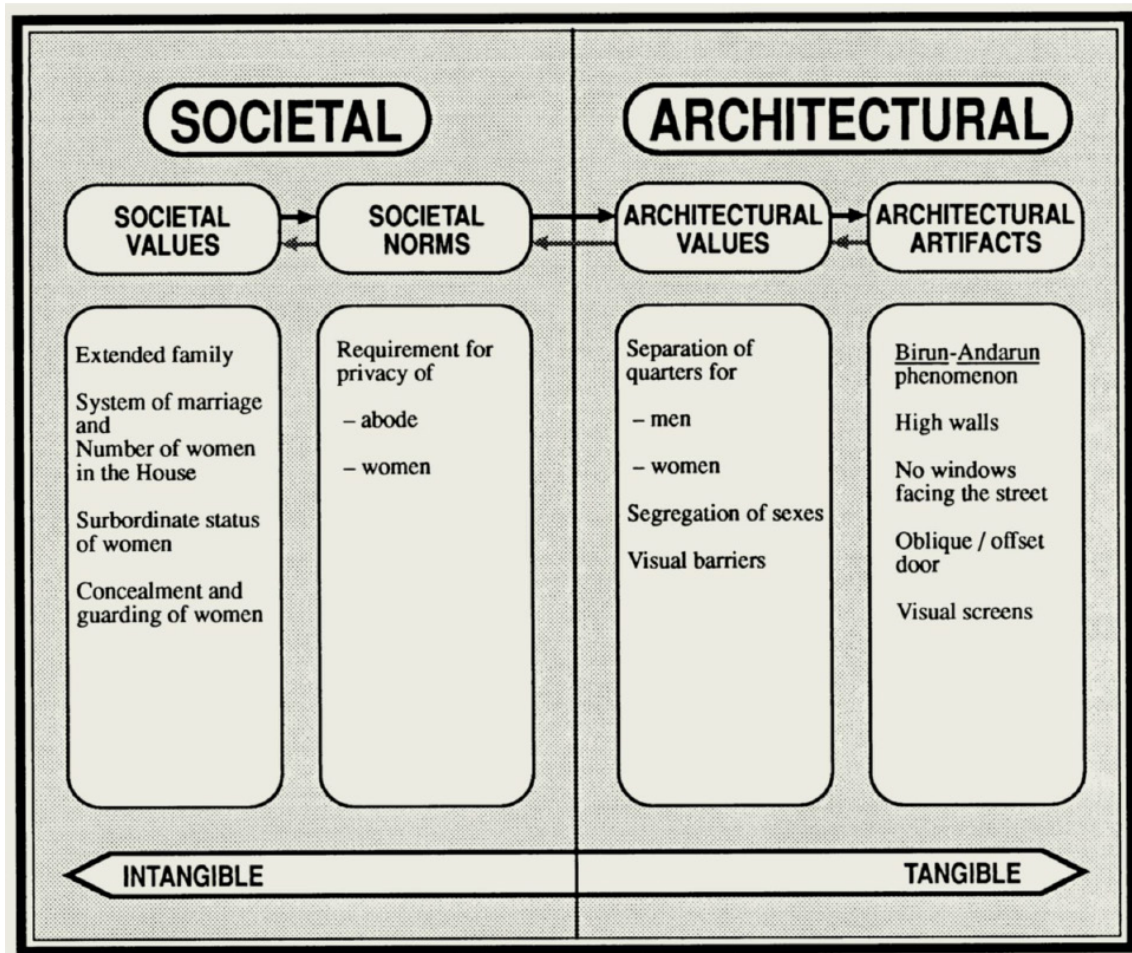


Figure 2: Local values in Iran (partly) dictating the way the architecture looks (Mazumdar & Mazumdar (1994)).

Looking at the model, architectural artifacts can be defined as any expression of architecture deciding the way the building looks.

The most important values that dictated the architecture are the extended family, the lower status of women and the concealment of women. The importance of extended family meant that often, multiple families with people of all ages would live together. The number of people only increased because men were allowed to have four permanent wives and any number of temporary wives. This structure of being able to have multiple wives added to the pre-existing patriarchal status of men, caused by values at the time, treating a man as equivalent to two women. This marked women as having a lower status than men. The last deciding value in the eventual architecture was the concealment of women. Islamic principles stated that women should only be visible to a select few men, (almost) always part of the extended family. When in public, women had to wear a chador, a type of dress concealing most of the body. These values resulted in architecture that placed great importance on privacy and separation of women. Houses were built with high walls and minimal windows. Where windows were placed, they were placed above eye level. Doors were placed in less visible places, somewhat away from the street. On the inside, the house was divided in two, with the part of the house more towards the outside being reserved for men, while the part towards the inside was occupied by women. It is important to note that the architecture that is shown is a result of very outdated values.



Figure 2: High walls and no windows facing the street (Mazumdar & Mazumdar 1994)).

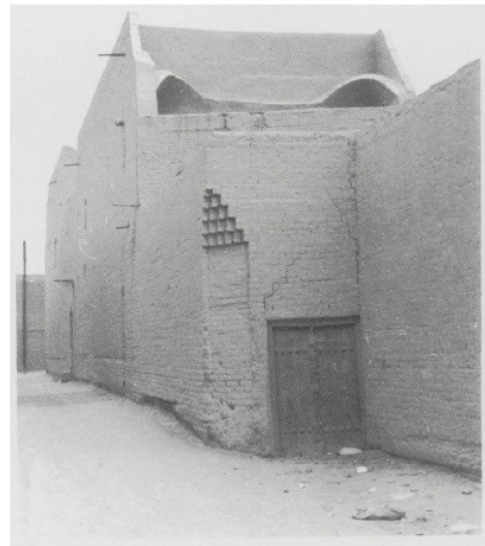


Figure 3: Door placed so it is hidden when approached from certain directions (Mazumdar & Mazumdar (1994)).

As time went on, starting during the Pahlavi period, the strictness and severity of the restrictions the values posed reduced. Families became more nuclear, a new wife had to be accepted by the women and the invisibility of women to other men was no longer valued as much either. As a result, the architecture became less focused on privacy, and no longer separated the sexes. This, in turn, allowed for more freedom when organizing the space, resulting in more windows for example.



Figure 5: House constructed during the Pahlavi Period, showing considerably more windows (Lotus Abniehmana, n.d.).

It is clear to see that values present in society can lead to very deliberate architectural choices that allow for these values to be respected. It is especially clear when comparing the same type of home after changes in societal values.

2.2 Restoration and preservation

Norms and values also play a role when talking about the restoration and preservation of buildings. In the nineteenth century, the accepted doctrine of always restoring heritage buildings was questioned. This divided people into two groups: restoration and anti-restoration. A prominent figure on the restoration side was Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, William Morris argued for the anti-restoration side.

Viollet-le-Duc states: "Restoration... Both the word and the thing are modern. To restore an edifice means neither to maintain it, nor to repair it, nor to rebuild it. It means to reestablish it in a finished state, which may in fact have never actually existed at any given time" (Viollet-le-Duc, n.d. p.314). According to Viollet-le-Duc, this would have to be looked at in a case-by-case basis. The architect tasked to carry out the restoration was to analyze the building thoroughly, after which he would be able to complete the building, sometimes even estimating what the original architect might have done.

William Morris on the other hand states that: "...strange idea of the restoration of ancient buildings; and a strange and most fatal idea, which by its very name implies that it is possible to strip from a building this, that and the other part of its history...then to stay the hand at some arbitrary point, and leave it still historical, living, and even as it once was. In early times this forgery was impossible..." (Morris, n.d., p.320). Morris believed that buildings are worth protecting, but restoring them and thereby remaking ancient artwork was not desirable. The lifespan of buildings should instead be prolonged as long as possible by maintenance. This kept the history of the building alive.

This discussion between restoration and anti-restoration shows a clear existence of values connected to the treatment of cultural heritage. A lot of these values are influenced by the history of the building. For example in the case of Morris, the original craftsmanship - part of the buildings history - was to be conserved. It can be assumed that these same questions play a role in the adaptive reuse of cultural heritage today, where significant changes to the building are considered.

3 Heritage values

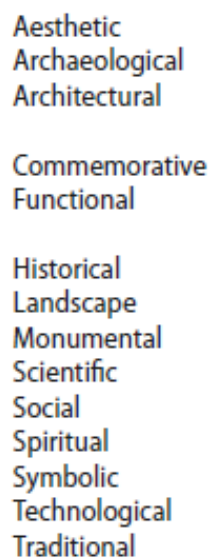
The re-purposing of cultural heritage poses an interesting problem. The architect not only has to deal with societal values when designing, heritage values also play an important role. Often, cultural heritage buildings have a rich history and a certain societal or political meaning, causing them to be valued in some way. These values have been documented and discussed heavily with opinions varying about the way this documentation should be approached. One approach is the value assessment.

3.1 Value assessment

Over the last few decades, a new paradigm on heritage conservation has gained popularity, namely the value-based approach. This can be seen as an extension of the already existing paradigm, the mostly preservative approach towards material. This approach comes from values concerning the aesthetic quality of the building, whereas the new paradigm includes more values, that are not always tangible; economic value for example (Havinga, Colenbrander & Schellen, 2019). The newly emerged paradigm showcases a shift from a purely physical-fabric based approach to an approach that concerns itself with significance, this being all the values assigned to an object.

These values are always connected to attributes, aspects of the building that showcase them. As mentioned, over the years these values have expanded in number, which is not always seen as positive. While trying to preserve or reuse the heritage in an as inclusive way as possible is desirable, it is a very difficult task to create an over compassing value typology: "If the language of heritage values is incapable of capturing the full range of ways in which heritage is valued, values-based approaches cannot be expected to result in appropriate conservation decisions" (Fredheim & Khalaf, 2016, pp. 469). A possible reason for this expansion in attributed values, tangible and intangible, is the broader interpretation of the word heritage and the broader consideration of what constitutes heritage. This broader interpretation emerged around the 1960's, when people started considering heritage not just as isolated objects, but as being embedded in the context around them. This context in turn becomes part of the heritage.

Value typologies have been made by various different organizations and people, a prominent one among them is ICOMOS, the International Council on Monuments and Sites, founded in 1965. It concerns itself with the protection of cultural heritage sites using these values (ICOMOS, n.d. a). In the case of Australia, ICOMOS makes institutionalized value typologies, that have a legislative function in making choices for heritage conservation. This somewhat combats the arbitrariness of these value typologies (Fredheim & Khalaf, 2016). Below a value typology made by ICOMOS New Zealand can be seen.



Aesthetic
Archaeological
Architectural

Commemorative
Functional

Historical
Landscape
Monumental
Scientific
Social
Spiritual
Symbolic
Technological
Traditional

Figure 6: Value typology made by ICOMOS New Zealand in 2010 (Fredheim & Khalaf, 2016).

Elaborated versions with legislative rules exist in the form of charters, created by ICOMOS or other organizations like UNESCO. In the following paragraph, three of these charters will be mentioned: the Venice Charter (Italy), the Nara Charter (Japan), officially called the Nara Document on Authenticity, and the Burra Charter (Australia).

3.2 Charters and the Faro-agreement

The Venice Charter (1964)

This charter considers not only singular objects to be historic monuments, urban or rural areas as a whole can be considered as such. This can only be the case when the area holds value as a whole, by for example it being the place an important event happened. The

monument needs to be permanently conserved, while being used for a socially useful purpose (ICOMOS, n.d b). This can however not influence the building or areas' layout or decorations and excuse any moving of part of it, except when this is important for preservation. Where preservation takes place in the form of replacing missing elements, they should form a harmonious whole with the rest of the building while being identifiable as a replacement to prevent falsification of the historic evidence. Additions are allowed when they do not interfere with any culturally important parts of the building.

Nara Charter (2007)

The Nara Charter, officially called the Nara Document on Authenticity (UNESCO, 2007), is a document that aims to challenge conventional thinking in the conservation field and build upon the Venice Charter, expanding it to the (then) current scope of heritage concerns. Moreso here than in the Venice Charter, the importance of the diversity of values across cultures is emphasized.

Authenticity is the essential qualifying factor when it comes to values. This can also be seen in the Venice Charter, where authenticity is paramount. The value of cultural heritage cannot be assessed with fixed criteria due to the difference in judgement about values related to cultural properties. This difference can be created by culture. This makes identifying the values for each culture very important. Without a clear overview of them, making a well-balanced decision is difficult.

Burra Charter (2013)

The Burra Charter is a periodically updated document written by the Australian ICOMOS. It was first made in 1979, in Burra, the last revision dating back to 2013 (Australia ICOMOS, n.d). Cultural significance is the over compassing value that dictates the conservation principles. It is defined as aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations. All the other principles are based on making sure cultural significance is respected and kept. Any other values are equal and shouldn't be stated above others. While the Burra Charter focuses their policy mostly on the preservation of cultural heritage, their policy contains a few articles about changing the cultural heritage.

Article 17 states: "Preservation is appropriate where the existing fabric or its condition constitutes evidence of cultural significance" (pp. 6), describing the reason for choosing to keep part of the building for example. Article 21 on adaptation states: "Adaptation is acceptable only where the adaptation had minimal impact on the cultural significance of the place", and "adaptation should involve minimal change to significant fabric,..." (pp. 7). While this principle seems very restrictive in terms of changing buildings, the importance put on the retaining of cultural significance would justify making larger changes if that means giving an old building in the city new life. By making the building part of daily life again, it increases in cultural significance. The degree of adaptation can be more than minor in this case. This is partially supported by article 22: "New work such as additions or other changes to the place may be acceptable where it respects and does not distort or obscure the cultural significance of the place, or detract from its interpretation and appreciation" (pp. 7). It is important to note that these principles are guidelines, and that they need to be interpreted on a case-by-case basis. This could result in more leniency with making changes if it concerns a vacant building that could be effectively repurposed in the busy city center for example.

The three charters provide expert opinions on the topic of cultural heritage, where great importance is laid on cultural significance. These assessments can however clash with

what society as a whole actually values. It could be the case that something is deemed “not valuable“, while the people using the heritage object in question value it the most. Therefore, the Faro-agreement was created. It is a European agreement that means to create a different perspective on cultural heritage, from the eyes of society, the user (Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed, n.d.). The agreement states that heritage is becoming more and more important, and argues that thinking about why and for whom we preserve heritage is important. This can lead to more participation of an everyday person in the process of deciding what are important values held by the heritage object in question, possibly making the transformation more effective as a whole.

To see the influence of values on re-purposing and refurbishing cultural heritage, a case study from Australia was chosen. Along with the Burra Charter, the changes to the State Library Victoria in Melbourne will be analysed, revealing careful considerations based on expert and public opinion. This analysis will show the influence of the values placed on the buildings history and cultural value on the choices made, therefore allowing a conclusion to be drawn about the effectiveness of the model presented in the first chapter when applied to repurposing cultural heritage.

3.3 State Library Victoria

Opened in 1856 and located in Melbourne, State Library Victoria is the oldest public library in Australia and one of the first free libraries ever made. It was designed by Joseph Reed, winner of the competition that was launched for the design of the library (Vicotrian Heritage Database, n.d.).



Figure 7: An old drawing of State Library Victoria, then named Melbourne Public Library (State Library Victoria, n.d. a)

The building has been refurbished a couple of times during its lifetime. Recently a major refurbishment, changing interior and exterior, was completed. It reopened several rooms that had been closed from the public for 16 years, including the Ian Potter Queen’s Hall. The refurbishment, especially from this hall, show a clear correspondence with the principles in Burra Charter.

The goal of the refurbishment was to: “reveal, not replicate” and to: “make a design that celebrates rather than overpowers” (State Library Victoria, 2020). The most notable refurbishments will be discussed along with their justifications along with the principles found in the Burra Charter.



Figure 8: The Ian Potters Queen's Hall in c. 1910 (State Library Victoria, n.d. b).

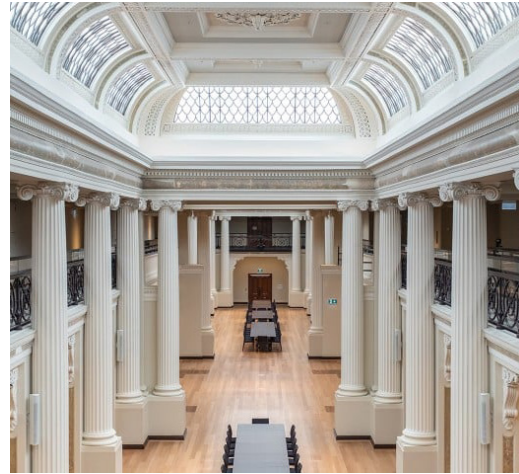


Figure 9: The Ian Potter Queen's Hall after reopening (State Library Victoria, n.d. b).

When the library first opened, the necessary light in the Queen's Hall came from skylights. These skylights were destroyed in a thunderstorm in 1901, and later covered with an iron roof (State Library Victoria, 2020). During the recent refurbishments, a translucent roof was installed over the skylights, re-introducing the natural light, while protecting the original structures. This roof also made discreetly installing climate systems possible. To accommodate for climate design, the single glass panes in the scale-framing (see figure 11) were replaced with a thicker pane behind the framing, keeping the original look. The adding of a new roof changed the look of the building, but it allowed for the original experience of the skylight to be revived (State Library Victoria, 2020). This change is therefore justified according to article 22: New Work. This article states that any new work should easily be identifiable as such and not disturb the cultural significance of the building (Australia ICOMOS, 2013). Considering the revival of the skylights, it can be stated that the cultural significance has increased. The hall has also been made available for weddings and other receptions or conferences, hereby giving it new uses.



Figure 10: Inside the translucent roof (State Library Victoria, 2020).



Figure 11: The refurbished skylight an the soft light that passes through them (State Library Victoruaia, 2020)



Figure 12: The new translucent roof atop the library (State Library Victoria, 2020)

Another interesting change in the Queens's Hall is the uncovering of the original wall decorations. These were covered in several layers of paint and thus are preserved rather well. This removing of the paint could be seen as violating article 15 of the Burra Charter; "Change", which states that change reducing cultural significance is not permitted, but instead of decreasing cultural significance, it increases it by showing part of history.



Figure 13: The original wall decoration uncovered after removing the multiple layers of paint (State Library Victoria, 2020).

Other changes to the hall consist of hidden ventilation shafts, sound reducing panels installed flush with the ceiling and smoke detectors tucked away in the space originally used for the chandelier (State Library Victoria, 2020).



Figure 14: The hidden smoke detector in the middle of the ornamentation (State Library Victoria, 2020).



Figure 15: The hidden ventilation shafts, seen on the right hand side of the image and the sound absorbing panels, seen on the left hand side outlined by the light (State Library Victoria, 2020).

A possible reason this refurbishment and repurposing is considered to be so successful is the extensive consultation of library users. Many different types of users were considered, to make sure the experience of the hall was pleasant. The original balustrade of the balcony for example was too low and climbable by children, creating an unsafe environment. They solved this by discreetly placing a glass balustrade behind it, instead of removing it. This shows a clear consideration for the aesthetic value of the building. In addition to that, the sound absorbing panels accommodated the users wish for a quiet space, showing the consideration of communal values while maintaining cultural significance. While the Faro-agreement is strictly European, its principles are clearly represented in this project.

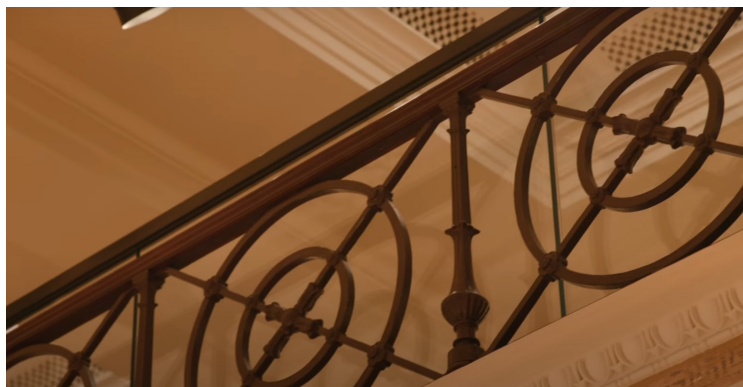


Figure 16: The discreetly placed glass balustrade (State Library Victoria, 2020).

In conclusion, this case study shows how careful consideration of expertly crafted and communal heritage values can create a successful refurbishment. Considering this, it can be stated that when looking at refurbishing cultural heritage, the original model by Mazumdar & Mazumdar (1994) is too general. In this case “societal values“ is no longer

sufficient to describe the wide range of types of values: expert value assessments of the cultural heritage object, communal values about the cultural heritage object and the communal values about the architecture of the transformation in general. Therefore, the next chapter will present an updated version of the model, for it to be usable in refurbishing cultural heritage.

4 Heritage model

After researching value assessment and analyzing a case study, the updated model came out as follows:

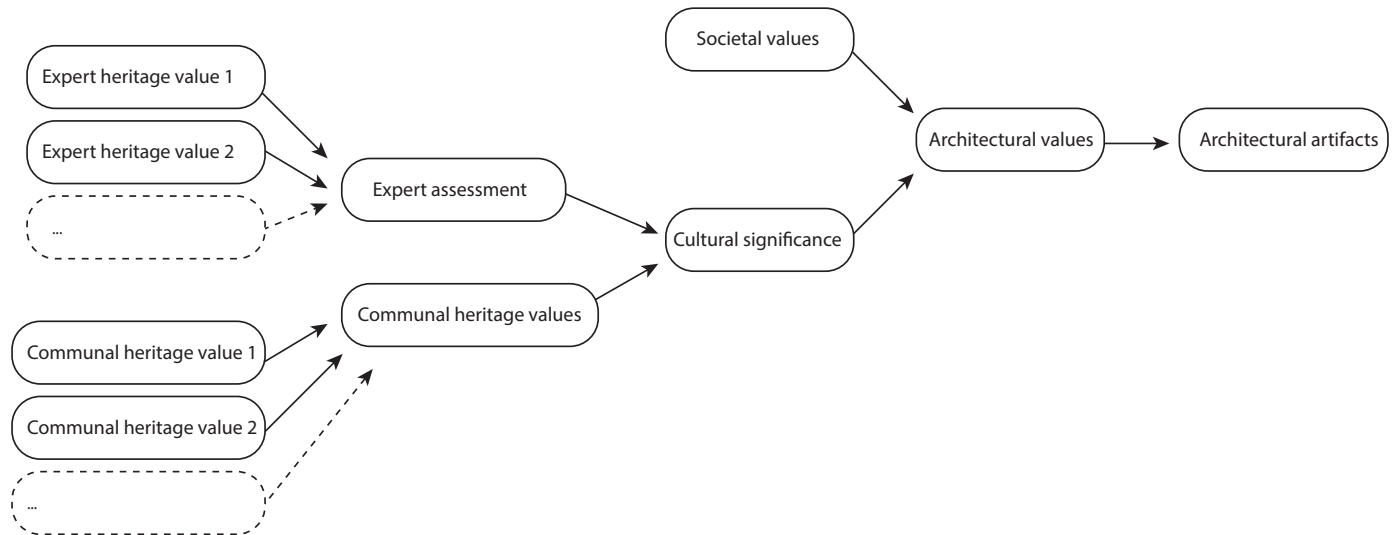


Figure 17: The updated model.

As can be seen above, the most notable change is the addition of cultural significance. The research has shown that this significance is ideally made up of expert and communal opinion on what is valuable about the cultural heritage object. This cultural significance is important because in the case of refurbishment or adaptive reuse, not only the values people attach to the way the space is made matter, also the way in which the heritage is valued matters. The values leading to an assessment of cultural significance could be put under societal values, but the distinction between the two value sets needs to be made to clearly determine the cultural significance. Another change is the removal of the societal norms step. The relation between societal values, meaning what people want the architecture to do and how it should accommodate them, has a direct relationship to the architectural values. This makes the addition of societal norms not necessary.

To prove the model, it will be filled in according to the refurbishment of the Ian Potter Queen's Hall in the State Library Victoria. This results in the following model presented on the next page:

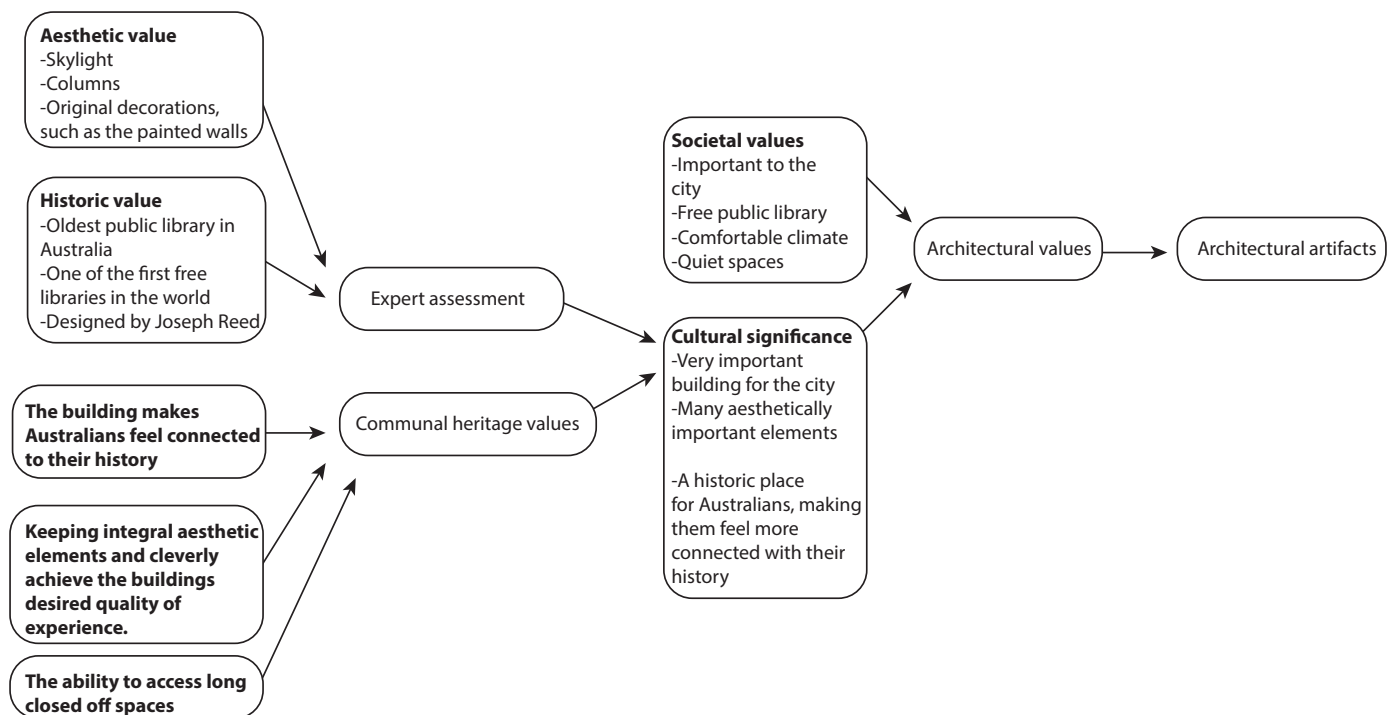


Figure 18: The updated model filled in according to the refurbishment of the Ian Potter Queen's Hall.

It is important to mention that not all values or aspects influencing cultural significance can be named. The most prominent ones having the most effect on the eventual outcome are mentioned in the model.

5 Conclusion

This thesis has aimed to answer the question: to what degree is the model presented by Mazumdar & Mazumdar (1994) applicable to the re-purposing of cultural heritage?

The model explains the connection between societal values and architectural artifacts, meaning any expression of architecture. While the model can theoretically be applied to the re-purposing of cultural heritage, the term “societal values” is too general to both contain values about architecture and the heritage object in question, causing a separation to be called for. Heritage values are documented in value assessments and charters. Value assessments are individual values such as “historical value”, “aesthetic value”, “economic value”, etc. The charters are documents created by organizations such as ICOMOS or UNESCO, documenting procedures of handling cultural heritage objects. The interesting conclusion is that while the charters are never exactly the same, their global ideas are. The most notable are the preservation of the buildings image at all costs by for example only removing elements when absolutely necessary for preservation or other greater purposes. These ideas all stem from the cultural significance of the heritage object, as this decides what part(s) of the object are valuable and should be kept. The one caveat with these charters is that they are created by experts, whose opinions can clash with the public. To mitigate this, the Faro-agreement was set up which introduces the perspective of the public, the future user, in the discussion about the cultural significance.

When projecting the aforementioned model on the refurbishments and reuse of the State Library Victoria in Melbourne, the importance of separating heritage values becomes evident. The repurposing contains a great deal of consideration for the original qualities

of the building and the public's desires for the eventual experience. Many of the choices made, like keeping the original balustrade, the original scale-shaped window frames, hiding sound absorbing panels and smoke detectors are based upon values regarding the cultural heritage. While the values influencing these decisions could simply be put in the "societal value" category, the cluttered model this creates calls for a separation of the two. Another justification for the separation is "cultural significance" being an important summarizing element partly leading to architectural values.

In short, when projecting the model created by Mauzmdar & Mauzmdar (1994) on a case study of re-purposed and refurbished cultural heritage, it can be stated that the model is applicable to an insufficient degree at clearly documenting the values that accompany such a transformation. An updated model is presented where "societal values" are split into cultural significance and values regarding architecture in general, for which the name "societal values" is kept. The way people see and value cultural heritage determines the cultural significance and what can be done with the object in question. What needs to be kept at all costs and what can be done away with? This opinion ideally consists of wishes of the experts and public, creating a well balanced assessment of the cultural significance. With this, the most appropriate and well-argued choices can be made.

6 Discussion

This thesis has aimed to give an as objective as possible answer to the research question. Due to the almost infinite ways something can be valued, the most optimal way of dealing with issues regarding re-purposing and possibly refurbishing is hard to achieve. Despite this, when considering the somewhat-existing objectivity within the legislation of the charters, a model could still be created to help architects or anyone dealing with such transformations or refurbishments to make well-argued decisions. It is however very important for the projects to be looked at on a case-by-case basis. While some objectivity is achieved, it is not nearly enough to describe a fitting approach for all cases. This is why the model is not intended to be seen or used as an "absolute truth", rather a tool to document the values surrounding the object.

Regarding the chosen terminology in the model, it is at times difficult to separate communal values from the values making up the expert assessment and societal values. This is because these values sometimes don't have clear boundaries within their domains. However, the communal values are more about the eventual experience of the space, while the expert assessment also considers aesthetic value of past construction for example. The societal values are more about the general wishes for the architecture, one of which could be the accessibility of a space for example.

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