Understanding the Impact of Cultural Design Aesthetics and Socioeconomic Shifts: *Approaches to Urban Resilience Empowers Place-Making*

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Abstract

The scope of study in this paper encompasses architectural and urban design approaches from three cultural systems: vernacular, Renaissance and modern urbanism. The main objective is to understand how cultural design aesthetics contribute to perspectives in visualizing and conceptualizing the construction of buildings and planning of urban settings such as residential and street layout designs in succeeding eras from pre-modern, Renaissance, Industrial Revolution, post-industrial and Postmodern centuries. A comparison of the paramount cultural design characteristics that distinguish each type of urban architectural form is undertaken. In examining the impact of social shifts and economic development on urban design planning of complex modern societies, scholarly perspectives of distinctive architectural styles of Western cultures will be critically discussed through the qualitative methodology of case studies. This examination is then framed into a comparative table

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in the aim of differentiating each approach. Findings from this research suggest the strategic importance of cultural design aesthetics as an emerging concept of urban design and architectural planning in order to produce resilient, adaptive communities. This is a key framework in understanding how urban design planning helps communities synchronize living habitats to shifting conditions such as climate changes, economic demands and social needs. This paper proposes for collaborative planning and decision making, as well as policymaking mechanisms centered on developing and sustaining urban resilience, while empowering stakeholders to overcome the growing scale of problems and issues that beset modern cities.

Keywords: *Vernacular, Renaissance, Urbanism, Cultural Design, Aesthetics, Urban Planning, Social Movement*

Introduction

Urban design has always been a challenge due to the complexity and diversity of issues. Cultural systems that determine communistic values and behaviors influence the landscape planning and architectural manifestations of societies (Vogeler, 2010). The administrative and political processes concerning land use, along with local climatic adaptations and resource availability for built infrastructures, affects social movement. Understanding cultural design approaches in urban planning guides the transformation of today's urban areas and cities, and ensures the use of architectural design strategies serves the needs of communities be it for economic, cultural or social needs.

However, the fundamentals of contemporary urban planning practices raise concurrent issues, are modern built structures to be viewed as reactionary, neo-narratives against the preservation of local environment, and how feasible is urban design adaptation of social strategy in tandem with existing economic development. In attempting to seek answers, several questions are raised through this research:

- What are the goals of urban design?
- How does urban design impacts of urban social shifts and economic development?
- How are these changes synchronized with urban design elements in increasingly fragmented global societies?
- How do climatic contexts affect urban constructed forms?
- How much does social development and community functions affect the design of architecture and planning of cities?
- Could modern urban design planning enhance or reconstruct traditional functionality without sacrificing design aesthetics or sustainability?

In comparing urban design strategies over the last century, architects have noted the indispensable relations between architectural features and the remarkable shifts in cultural values in different regions. Torre notes that where diversity and participation plays a decisive role in conceptualizing and constructing place-making characteristics, certain recurring cultural and nationalistic elements would be

featured within such communities.[1] While urbanism inevitably marginalizes certain social groups like indigenous peoples and squatters (Rappaport, 1988:51-77), culturally-constructed design elements help sustain mainstream identity, lending presence of modernity without sacrificing urban design functionality or existing vernacular traditions.

Studies by contemporary cultural historians such as Marichela Sepe of the Urban Design Group set out to show the extend of challenges faced by urban planners to document urban social renewal of existing cities, and to reconcile the ways in which cultural resources gives shape and meaning in building "creative cities," which develop as an integration of places, people, economic progress and traditions.[2]

Some town planners believe the processes of urban transformation cannot be satisfactorily delivered through the "virtual academic mode:" one that is forbidding, exclusive, rationalistic and ideological, if success means destruction of the essence of historical and vernacular roots merely to accommodate universal styles of built designs (Alonso et al., 1996:5-6). Instead, they propose integrative strategies using cultural awareness as a source of inspiration in designing modern buildings and their future modifications as this could preserve inherent aspects of architectural heritage and creativity, acknowledge the value of aesthetics in conceptualizing today's impressive structures (Pallagst et al., 2009).

The trajectory of three urban forms, namely vernacular, Renaissance and modernism in reflects what Frantzeskaki noted as urban resilience, societies' crucial collective abilities to "withstand shocks… recover their systems and communities, to anticipate for the future, create resistance to disturbances and to rebuild itself if necessary, upon exposure to hazards, or in the aftermath of [shocks] or stress regardless [of] its impact, frequency or magnitude."[3]

With greater need among researchers and architectural planners to map urban places in efforts to understand globalization within the evolving contexts of geography, locality and social histories of nations, it is crucial that the concept of urban design is broadly discussed from a scope of theories about built traditions, architectural resistance and the paradoxical questions of conservation and progress.

In the following section, a review of available literature which study the attributes and characteristics of the three architectural forms, namely vernacular, Renaissance and modern urbanism, will be presented.

A comparative analysis of these architectural forms, inherent traits, attributes and their rationality in design practice will be proposed in research methodology, to enable architectural designers to integrate various distinct contexts of cultural design aesthetics into urban design approaches for modern living.

Following which a discussion of findings will propose emerging patterns of new cultural thinking founded on the principles of architecture in expanding global

cities, and particularly, the focus is on whether urban design planning enhances resilience through providing traditional functionality without sacrificing design aesthetics or sustainability. Some recommended solutions on overcoming current problems will also be considered.

Review of the Literature

The main question posed of what is urban design and their roles in the development of societies will be expounded to initiate discussion of relevant literature. Literature offers rich scholarly works to distinguish the various mechanisms of built environments and landscapes. For deconstructionists like John Brinck (J. B.) Jackson, the term *built landscapes* is a composition of man-made or modified spaces and objects that serve to imprint our collective existence (Zelinsky, 2011:82).

An article about American folk builder Jacob W. Holt, Catherine Bishir (cited in Upton and Vlach, 1986:447), provided clear implications of individuality as symbolic reflections of then popular Italian-style architectural motifs into America's plantation communities of the Deep South, often incorporating prefabricated decorations and factory-manufactured frames into mid-19th-century planters' homes, thereby shifting building design and construction methods from "classicism to eclecticism" (cited in Upton and Vlach,1986:452), and aligning to the character of his prosperous, well-heeled, conservative clientele.

Landscapes are thus acknowledged for its impact in place-making and cultural significance, due to the profound research, studies and artifices coming from historians, conservationists, artists, photographers, folklore essayists, geographers and architectural enthusiasts all hewing, inventing and superimposing their narratives until a universal language is constructed to discuss the many cultural models of built environments, from railways to settlements, highways to homes.

Later 20th-century works of Henry Glassie,[4] Allen George Noble,[5] Dell Upton and John Michael Vlach[6] and Ingolf Vogeler[7] are of significant value as architectural, anthropological and cultural accounts of local communities use of available resources to present cultural typologies of a place, by identifying and expressing social class distinctions, blending cultural roots through ornamentation and taste traditions, and are yet instrumental for individual wellbeing, economic survival, social organization and communal rituals. In the practice of planning built environments, the central purpose and goal of architecture, as Wilbur Zelinsky[8] cites FAIA Emeritus architect and urban planning educator Doug S. Kelbaugh (Zelinsky, 2011:52), is:

> … [Architecture] is one of the few remaining items in modern life not mass-produced …, it can resist the commodification of culture [and standardization] … [and] architecture can still be rooted in local climate, topography, flora, building practices, cultures, history, and mythology.

While the utopian basis of this definition may ill-suit the transformation agendas of cityscapes, both Kelbaugh and Charles Perry (1929) has addressed the crux of what the complex issue of modern urbanism is about: How to promote economic

vitality and public wellbeing through creating valuable urban design characteristics that feature sustainable landscapes, functional and aesthetically-beautiful buildings, culturally-rich and environmentally-secure spaces, healthy neighborhoods and thriving communities (Hall, 2014:135-136).

More recently, the importance of visual factors has increased significantly, and urban design research applies visual assessment tools to articulate the relationship between physical features and walking behavior. Ewing and Handy (2009), for instance, argue for a more comprehensive urban street environment strategy deriving from perceptual quality ratings to measure and manage landscape changes and street systems proportionally, in regards imageability quality, enclosure, human scale, transparency and complexity of the physical characteristics.[9]

Such an approach calls for qualitative understanding of both "subtle and complex" (Ewing and Handy, 2009:66) perceptions about the design of street environment such as topographic uniqueness, enclosed settings using trees, fencing, fountains or walls; spatial complexities involving outdoor dining, noise levels and signage; and the presence of people mingling and conducting activities on the street, which suggest textural distinction and memorability. Ewing and Handy urge urban designers to seek abstract place identifiers as crucial operant variables which affect appeal and walkability.[10]

The next three sections of literature explore the principle elements of urban design in the forms that are presently available: vernacular, Renaissance and modern urbanism.

Characteristics of Vernacular Architecture

The origin urban traditions in architectural design is thought to have evolved organically, where people arranged their activities and interactions according to natural systems like land contour, socio-cultural orientations and local climates (Artibise, 2010). The extended family structure follows an essentially naturalistic, indigenous, cohesive, functional, and vernacular pattern.

Vernacular architecture relates to domestic, non-foreign constructions and local lifestyles and the use of local materials in traditional methods of living were based on available resources (Oliver, 2006).

Vernacular forms exemplify local character: affiliating material and building traditions with the identity and relations of inhabitants' social surroundings, both immersed in and deriving from, the history and culture that dictates survival patterns or needs within the given environment (Oliver, 2006). Domesticated structures like farm houses, outbuildings, barns and sacrificial hearths employ stone, clay, wood, skins, grass, leaves, sand and water (Oliver, 2006). These early forms evolved into structures that support small settlements, which grew into towns, municipalities and districts, and are the forerunners of today's urban cities (Upton and Vlach, 1986).

A study of vernacular movement does more than trace how changes are made to landscapes from the social and economic functions that are operant on design structures of buildings; it also shows how much of popular or contemporary trends are adopted, how they reflect elitist aesthetic ideologies, which Barbara Rubin (Upton and Vlach, 1986:482) derides, and whether doing so contributes to a loss in heritage identities, which ultimately reduces social recognition and place-making.

As a branch of academia, Glassie[11] and Oliver[12] contend that since vernacular architecture comprised of simple constructions built by unskilled architects who depended on local materials and raw construction methods, formal studies of historical designs cannot fully establish such "unskilled architecture," as their construction lacked intelligence from a range of documented perspectives. While the scholarly foundations of vernacular constructions and styles are not enforced by architectural traditions and are open to continued debates among researchers, many modern practitioners borrow vernacular architecture in urban place-making applications in order to produce the best fit of designs for specific geographical and social settings (Hall and Barrett, 2012).

"History from below," a field concept by post-colonialist researcher Peter Guillery, editor of the *Survey of London* topography series, holds that architecture is distinctly assumed to be vernacular if identified by "*… the inherited, consensual, subaltern forms of association and humble agency* [from communal sense-making of history and locality, rather than on] *externally imposed"* [architectural frameworks of what modernity means].[13]

However, the haphazard bases of inspiration for the humblest buildings are difficult to study and research due to lack of documentary records of pre-modern domestic settings and as such, it has been further argued that vernacular architecture is not a discipline qualified for professional scholarship, since at some point, interpretations of these methods would lead to confusion.

Guillery argues that instead of helping illuminate about aspects of history and the future of society, vernacular urbanism scholarship may be perceived as a measure of elitist patronage by the architectural fraternity presenting the discipline in various degrees of pretense and artifices, when in contrary, it needs to be founded in local, regional historicism and communal place-making.[14]

Further analysis by Guillery shows the concept does not always reflect native or traditionalist practices: for instance, the manner of European provincialization depicted in South Asian and Southeast Asian architecture seems to be a *merger* of what a place engenders, adapted to what it needs to develop, factoring in local elements, people, climatic parameters and technology resources.[15] Aesthetics aside, the question would be whether cities hewn of juxtaposed old and new forms could sustain themselves economically, environmentally and culturally through generations.

Figure 1. Shows top view of the street system in Bairro Alto, Lisbon.

Figure 2. Top view of street system at Old Medina, Casablanca.

Nevertheless, in applying a broad, integrative context, urban designers hope to find at its core the motivational forces that trigger the search for insights on human-environmental interactive behaviors and its consequences. A case examination by Hecker and Decker enlightens researchers on this point, through a comparison of several vernacular urbanism characteristics of Lisbon (Figure 1) and Casablanca (Figure 2).[16]

Top views show at least one district in both cities that is dense with activities. Casablanca faces developmental challenges in the construction of buildings that have increasingly interfered with street planning system (Figure 3).

On the other hand, urban design is compact in Lisbon (Figure 4), with most of the streets narrow enough to reach across an arm's span. Clearly each of these places was constructed for people on foot, and vehicles can barely navigate them. Today, however, Casablanca and Lisbon seem to have weaved urban images of vibrant physical, social and economic landscapes, without sacrificing vernacular, communal or local place identities (Hecker and Decker, 2008).

Courtyards as a vernacular archetype of urban design have also been a subject of interesting case studies by urban environmental design scholars such as Gupta[17] and Ratti et al.[18] Examining its conventional usage in hot-arid climates, Ratti et al found courtyards to reach its height of functionality by being built in orientation to solar exposure, which enables users to fully maximize the surface-to-volume ratio of lighting potential, and is thus a pragmatic "heat sink" design solution which allows heat to be redistributed indoors and externally during cool nights in arid regions such as Marrakesh (Ratti et al., 2003:56-57).

Figure 3. Shows the compactness of street layouts in Casablanca.

Resource limitations also affect the cultural landscapes of built environments, and are never far in discussions about the social conditions of cities (Rappaport, 1988:52). Tied to this, the class disparities produced through global and rural migration to urban metropolises have created resource strains for both wealthy and poor societies.

Figure 4. Shows streets in Lisbon purposed for pedestrians.

Rappaport observes squatter dwellings, shantytowns and slums to be spontaneous, culturally-rich, activity-centered vernacular settlements albeit forced out of economic circumstances, space constraints and the system of *abusivismo* or illegal construction due to insurgent sentiments against the mandated housing schemes.[19] Squatter settlements in poverty-entrenched cities around the world are critical problems to tackle, and planners must devote more resources to investigate causative problems and find solutions for access to basic amenities such as clean water, energy and electricity and transportation, even more urgently perhaps, as some researchers argue, than to figure the cultural aspects of ancient constructions (Sepe, 2013:38-39).

Characteristics of Renaissance Architecture

According to Taylor, the birth of new cultural approaches in the development of societies began in the Renaissance of the 15th to 16th centuries, when widespread European economic boom set the foundation of place-making urban identities.[20]

This was further fostered during the Enlightenment era's growth of urban prosperity, and, at least for Europe, has lingered tenaciously for centuries in impressing monuments and ideological perspectives. This is seen in classic features of idealist European urban architectural construction, town planning activities that allowed architecture and engineering disciplines to flourish, the design, planning and creation of appearance-centered, social environments, often presented in grandeur

forms of ostentatious settings, fittings and edifices (much of which deriving from imported materials) which reflect genteel classes, partisan tastes, and harmonized symmetry.

Peter Borsay in his study of English Urban Renaissance of the early 18th-century pointed out that the movement was partly a result of urban planning having a role to play in the process of cultural revival: "The development of the street and square contributed much to the emerging elegance and amenity of [a] town's built environment."[21]

Various aspects in Renaissance urbanism bears hallmarks of culture: baronial, classical architecture, fashionable façades and furnishings, reminders of prestigious social pastimes (Borsay, 2002:159), merged with the attraction of design quality systematically created to uphold place aesthetics. Democratization of urban planning processes during this period also ensured more provincial societies living in larger towns could enjoy structured provisions of modern amenities in the pre-Industrial Revolution era of Victorian England, and was the natural outcomes of Great Britain's economic prosperity.

Figure 5. Shows top view of urban planning street system in Birmingham city.

Corbett[22] and Carmona et al.[23] illustrate the example of Birmingham city that grew over post-war decades as the regional economic capital for England's West Midlands, with more than a million inhabitants within its central districts alone. Birmingham had suffered heavy World War II damage, causing its urban reconstruction to shift from a previous irregular grid designed in 1960 for vehicle ac-

cessibility, to the construction of an inner ring road acting as a "concrete collar" around its central districts (Corbett, 2004:132). The ring roads punctuated street blocks, resulting in space confusion, with car parks and buildings lacking proper frontages, giving rise to security issues (Carmona et al., 2003). The Birmingham City Centre Design Strategy initiated in 1988 (Figure 5) demonstrates how effective council leadership (Figure 6), public-private sector collaborations, international expertise and salient urban design practices attract investment and modernized the city's previous "squalid" image (Corbett, 2004:131).

With flyovers and underpasses dismantled to make way for ground-level boulevards (Corbett, 2004:143), residential and commercial development in Birmingham's suburban and city center gradually converted into nodes for living and urban activities, while the interconnection of street systems had pedestrianized squares and city streets, converted unused or isolated parking lots into café terraces (Carmona et al., 2003:239), turned main squares into centralized event hubs, boosting social interaction, investor faith and business interests simultaneously (Corbett, 2004:139).

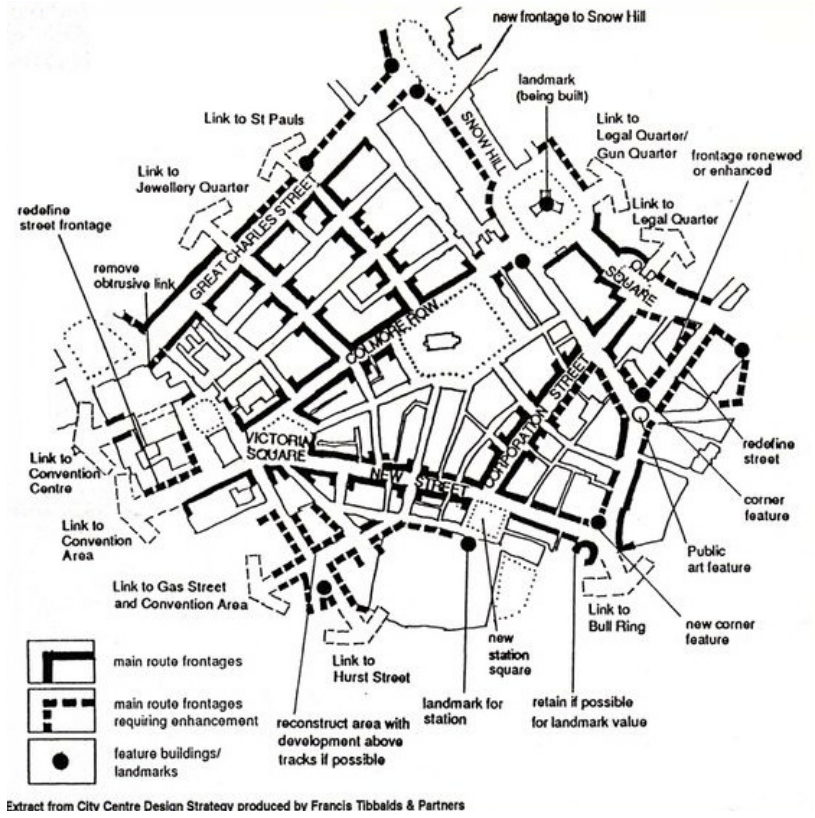

Figure 6. City center urban planning strategy and street system in Birmingham.

Economic analysts in local papers observed the implementation of city-wide urban design strategy had enabled Birmingham, in spite of erratic socioeconomic shifts over centuries, to take a place of prominence as a center of tourism, education, the arts, and social change (Transforming Cities, 2011).

The observation reveals that changes of the city's look had been of crucial symbolic importance in urban design. The uses of topographic elements for architectural planning like landmarks, roof profiles, building height, hues and textural characteristics provides a comprehensive, unified place-making identity to market the city (Corbett, 2004; Transforming Cities, 2011). However, urban design also creates the absolute necessity for continuous improvement in transportation, and street grid systems must be carefully planned not to cause barriers to pedestrian movement nor landscape views. The essence of Renaissance in cities' urban design should preserve aesthetics and space functionality for both inhabitants and visitors.

Characteristics of Modern Urbanism

The more urban a city shapes itself; the less tangible would rustic culture and vernacularism appear to be. The operational requirements of building designs under modernist approaches emphasize the design principle of *form follows function,* the same ideals that birthed mass production, the mass consumption of goods and capitalism. The new urbanism is defined as a complex framework but one that is fundamentally curated as a spatial articulation of the elements of order, unity, balance, proportion, scale, hierarchy, symmetry, rhythm, contrast, context, detail, texture, harmony and beauty (Urban Design Group, n.d.).

Le Corbusier and other modernist practitioners in architectural planning and design are aptly credited and discussed by Hubert-Jan Henket and Hilde Heynen in *Back from Utopia: The Challenge of the Modern Movement.*[24] Henket and Heynen also note that other eminent modernists like Tadao Ando, Oscar Niemeyer, Norman Foster and Herman Hertzberger had envisioned "hard-edged architecture" as the natural manifestation of architectural planners' wish to fill cities with iconic designs that symbolize progress. This desire to shift away from traditionalism reinforces globalization's purpose in the destinies of contemporary cities through embracing internationalism.[25] Through essays, photographs, poems, imageries and illustrations, Henket and Heynen defend modernism, explaining their importance as undergirded by the environmental and social conditions that are manifest in urban communities, and reflecting the wider socio-political conditions of evolving, transient cultural settings.[26]

Suburban expansion strategies affect the transformation of cities, based on aspects of land uses such as residential, commercial and industrial zoning. While political motives may drive housing development planning, this could interfere with existing landscapes and the changing nature of urban relationships (Hall, 2014:15).

Taylor, reviewing the principle features of modernist urbanism, including examples of Ebenezer Howard's Garden City and Le Corbusier *Ville Radieuse* or Radiant City (Figure 7), described it as the "Utopian ideal" expressing "modernist functional aesthetics" with regularly interspersed, geometrical upright buildings; transport grids that prioritize motorized movement, which appears "like great arteries connecting different districts."[27]

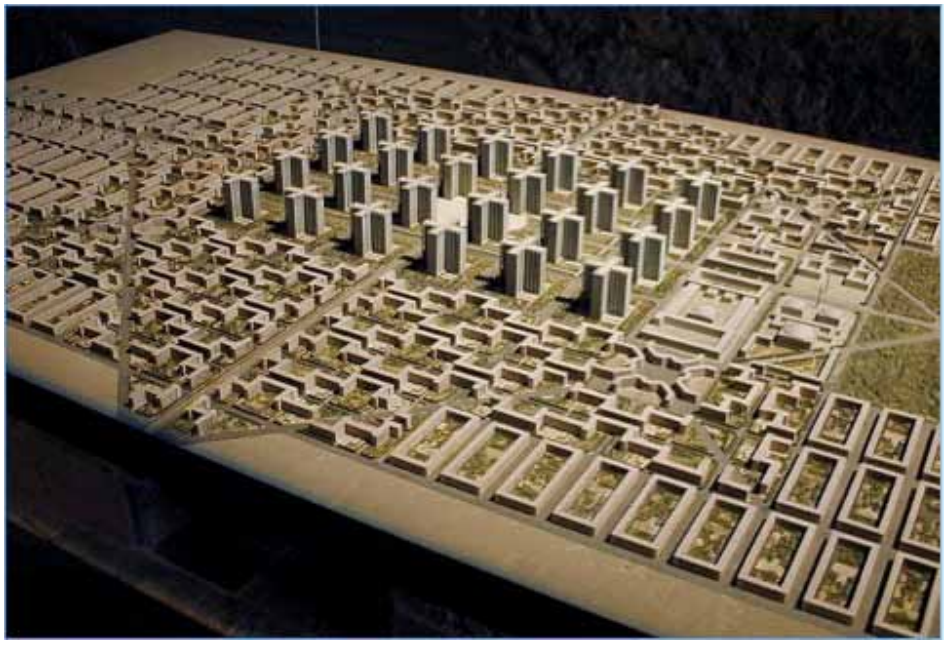

Figure 7. Shows modern urban planning strategy by Le Corbusier.

This visionary ideal conceptualized by Le Corbusier (Taylor, 1998:25-26) would be a reality if cities bearing hideous, haphazard, industrial pockmarks such as lack of proper street layouts and dingy structures could be cleared away in accordance to a master plan, one where "pure architectural [ingenuity is] postulated by a design in which the masses are of a primary geometry [which are] the square and the circle" (Frampton, 2007:151).

Other urbanism proponents include architects Martin Wagnar and Bruno Taut, who envisioned urbanism through housing design, which were single-purposed or self-contained. The 'one-size-fits-all' solution enabled diagrammatic architectural connections. Pedestrian pathways separated transit points, while the street grid system was aimed at improving traffic safety.

In the post-industrial context, the ownership of private buildings serves as important indices of economic transformation affecting the density of commercial buildings. Corporate-owned skyscrapers mark substantial urban economic shifts, but a balance that boils down to the government's urban policy strategy implementation is necessary.

Diane Ghirardo, architecture professor at University of Southern California illustrates the interplay of economic factors behind housing development in modern cities, detailing more than a century of political and cultural contexts in Italy's architectural identity in *Italy: Modern Architectures in History,* Ghirardo critiques modern urbanism in Western Europe for being liberally influenced through its symbolic and symbiotic role alongside corruptive and nepotistic aspects of its government systems and local agencies.[28]

She views modernism as essentially a culturally-shaped movement characterized by architecture's powerful role in capturing and presenting postwar leaders' vision of miraculous transformation, symbolized by the manner which architects and design fraternities engage with politicians and business capitalists, resulting in socioeconomic growth frequently and tumultuously clashing with city planning policies, causing environmental degradation at the same time.

Ghirardo warns that modern buildings should not become superficial concrete forms of elitist ideals, patronage and tastes and distant from social issues such as working-class housing or decaying inner city environment.[29] In sum, the main factor for the movement towards urban modernism is the tendency to conceptualize the city as a singular entity, where buildings are either repetitive units or one entire entity. The modernist employs rationalistic approaches to achieve the objectives of efficiency and continuity (Hall, 2014).

This 'grand theory' of the built environment, expressed in other branches of the arts and in intellectual culture, is supplanted by the alternative perspective of 'form follows emotion,' i.e. Postmodernism, where stylishness, experiential habits, eclecticism and symbolic discontinuity is embraced through the flexible design modes of cultural subjects.

Methodology and Research Approach

From the premise of arguments, it can be established that urban areas face 21st-Century complexities of planning for economic and structural innovations without eschewing cultural identification and place-making strategies such as sustainability, historicity and social adaptation.

After reviewing various approaches in the literature of urban design, it is fundamentally clear that a uniform set of principles run through the three distinctive forms, and thus, it was deemed interesting and instructive to compare these different approaches critically, in order to understand the complex notion of urbanism and its evolution, through effectively examining the four dominant perspectives of built environment architectural modes, namely the attribution of economic, social, the ideal operant conditions for cultural design, and the essential architectural characteristics. Due to the functional dissimilarities of architectural features and styles, it would not be viable to isolate or single out only one form of place design, as urban planning considers the social relationships of inhabitants to the place culture, its technological and economic advantages, material specificity in terms of costs and varieties, local climate, environmental resource alternatives, as well as the respectful incorporation of authentic building styles that need careful evaluation (Alonso et al., 1996:11).

While the comparative analysis is essentially a framework founded on the researcher's interpretation of urban design principles and ideas, it should be noted that careful empirical justification is needed to confirm the attribution of design principles' and their rationality in actual urban planning development and design

practices. This method is intended to supply stimulation for research possibilities in further understanding of urban design inspirations. As with other heuristic methods of learning, this analysis is intended to enable urban design planners and practitioners to gain insights for creating or co-creating design research contexts in order to share views and understanding of the role of cultural design aesthetics, and how urban socioeconomic shifts impact contemporary architecture and urban design approaches.

APPROACH	Economic Traits	Social Traits	Operating Ideals for Cultural Design	Characteristics in Architecture
Vernacular	Village, provincial or rural activities e.g. agriculture, farming, cottage-based industries	• Single family unit • Intimate neighborhood • Urban low-income classes	• Defined and structured • Concentrated, simple layouts for interaction spaces • Spontaneous and unstructured with intermediaries	• Hearth • Farm • Outhouses • Religious buildings • Community halls • Squatter homes • Activity centers
Renaissance	Small scale commerce and trading involving distribution of goods to other rural or larger towns and marketplaces	Small town with extended families and neighbors	• Insulated social interactions within townships • Intimate, connective transport networks to rural areas • Unpretentious settings & façades	• Piazza • Courtyards • Villas • Indoor markets • Street markets • Squares • Town halls • Community halls
Modern Urbanism	Large city manufacturing, distribution, business, retail	• Diverse cosmopolitan populace • Nuclear family units	• Centralized and planned complex spaces for open social interactions • Mass-scale landscaped spaces • Surveillance and access systems (e.g. CCTV, smartcard)	• Malls • Amphitheaters • International event and exhibition halls • Landscaped Parks • Mixed development (e.g. residential and commercial with leisure amenities and city hotel)

Figure 8. Comparison of urban design approaches and the impact of social and economic factors on the characteristics of architecture.

The table in figure 8 summarizes the key attributed differences, cultural design ideals and traits of the three approaches is provided below, along with the inherent characteristics that are found through architectural forms. In the section that follows, we revisit some of the key questions that underlie the scope of research presented in this paper in order to discuss the significance of each aspect of urban design planning, and an attempt to provide coherence for the analysis.

Discussion and Interpretation

Having compared different traits that shape the approaches of urban design, this section of the paper will synthesize the differences in approach to organization of urban life and how cultural spaces determine architectural space uses. Vernacular design implements traditional techniques, materials and styles, and functionality takes precedence over aesthetic appearances, with spatial arrangements mainly determined by the influence of social history of neighborhoods (Oliver, 2006).

The same fluidity of structure also engenders a disconnection of street systems, such as cobbled streets and densely-packed living quarters. The root idea of vernacular architecture is self-contained growth and permanence, associated with resistance to the compressed yet disorderly arrangement of cultural forms, ideals and social authorities.

Renaissance design concerns mostly with long-term effects of urban spatial planning, putting people (society) at the center of planning, from the humanistic principle that measures real social value, in terms of enhanced social interactions and environmental sustainability (Alvarez, n.d.). Renaissance urbanism accentuates design to demonstrate the crucial, yet redoubtable, urbanization force: economic regeneration.

This approach sets out to fulfill an area's economic potential by creating the need for buildings and street systems that serve the cause of commerce, with concentrated spaces for activities in the immediate vicinity of the town. The cultural implications of development on surrounding areas are essential. The Renaissance built design concept allows the community *to be part of* the interactive spaces of open courtyards and piazzas and town halls. The purpose of this design strategy is to create aesthetic facades to ensure public spaces are visually attractive to residents and visitors alike.

Modern urbanist design methods place greater value on uncluttered sophistication, spatial conveniences, and reconciliation of socioeconomic development and the environment, but this may result in 'blankness', in spite of construction ease, material cost-effectiveness and reduced risks.

Although the slick new homogeneity is an assured way to reap returns for developers, it is dependent on a centralized power-wielding structure and policy implementations would include mechanisms of authority given to conglomerate developers (Pallagst et al., 2009; Hall 2014; Ratti et al., 2003).

Leo Hollis illustrates this in his criticism of an East London elite housing regeneration which the 2009 London Housing Design Guide helped shaped, calling this kind of "new vernacular" a moral slack, with traces of traditional Georgian and Victorian elements like squares and terraces being incorporated into residences that suggest consumers presume the seemingly "infinite choices [of fancy designs are to their benefit, but they are, in fact, getting] acres of the same."[30]

In planning for a post-industrial economy, the natural environment is often left out. Instead, the architecture of Postmodernism reflects the emergence of technically-precise, engineered solutions related to integrating design systems with functionality.

Infrastructure design has become a powerful game-changer, being perceived as a new cultural investment which demonstrates economic sustainability. However, modern built environment challenges have caused many urban planners to feel pressured to align design concepts with entrepreneurialism within the context of creative city place-making (Jasmin Aber, cited in Pallagst et al., 2009:111).

The features of vernacular, Renaissance and modern urbanism approaches are thus inherent in the continuous interaction of cultural groups with each other, and in the social movements that push the currents of globalization and urban-

ization processes. Sometimes, it results in city's most memorable images or complex creative response.

However, this "creative city" concept touted by Western urban design scholars may birth dilemmatic issues for certain societies, for instance, local versus global tensions (residents and visitors), differing perspectives towards metropolization (the conversion of cities from population habitats to rapid-growth economic centers), leading to conflicts of interests between cultural consumption, cultural production and cultural funding priorities, and the eventual phenomenon of 'shrinking cities' (Pallagst et al., 2009:112), also known as *urban shrinkage*.

As the use of urban design is primarily to encourage and support economic activities such as boosting tourism, some architectural critics like Kazuko Goto (Yang et al., 2010:242) believe that instead of blindly abiding by the vision to build "creative cities", or allowing city skylines to become iconic "[backdrops] to a display of curious architectural objects" by publicity-seeking *starchitects* (ArchDaily, 2016) , synchronization can be achieved through a balance which sustains cultural and natural resources, and avoid destroying the cultural imperative.

The Importance of Resilience for Expanding Modern Cities

Niki Frantzeskaki[31] and Yuri Artibise[32] apply policymaking perspectives by advocating for resilience as the new frame of reference, founded on overlapping key tenets of sustainability based on social inclusivity, integrated use of land and infrastructures for economic development and transportation efficiency, and equipping city councils and municipalities to handle environmental management systems. As Frantzeskaki notes, beyond jurisdictional boundaries, understanding population vulnerabilities enable collaborative, multi-stakeholder decision-making between public and private sectors and citizens, empowering everyone through the transformation of structures and processes.[33]

In studies framing modern architectural development against nationalist and sociocultural contexts, Kenneth Frampton propose a 'new vernacular', where sustainability of habitation and the embrace of cultural design and style has become an increasingly new norm in less-developed countries, and cultural aesthetics attempt to reconcile traditions with (external) transgressions to produce the semblance of modernity.[34]

This study notes the current broad agglomeration of cultural and creative sectors had been responsible for producing such homogeneity of urban architectural design forms and lifestyle concepts that it may one day no longer provide sufficient inventive ideas for blending innovation in architectural practices, requiring instead on centralized nationalist intervention models to sustain the traditional built infrastructures of society and its culture. The transformation of stressed cities into resilient spaces require many different conditions, primarily social capital, technological capacities, sustainable natural resources and governance mechanisms (Frantzeskaki, 2016:13).

After analysis and research into the three urban design systems and living concepts, a pattern of new cultural thinking is emerging among developing societies, whereby *urban metropolitans with integrative facilities and amenities designed for optimal industrial, technological and economic outcomes, would in the long-term affect communities' preferences for vernacular designs.* Social development and urban space functions affect the design of architecture, and in planning for resilience, the trend shows less emphasis on revitalization of traditional functionality; instead, an integration of nationalistic cultural design aesthetics for social sustainability has gained momentum.

Recommendations and Conclusion

This final section proposes several key solutions to fortify communities. Urban resilience is a modern approach in public and social space planning. Instead of destroying existing towns and cities through revitalization projects, modernism's challenge is the interplay between form and natural environment that shows the influence of cultural design aesthetics. Strategic urban planning means that building designs must reflect more than practicality: The new urbanism must be independent of functionality per se; built designs must be shaped from the unique intersections of social needs, revealing the deeper structures of community and neighborhoods intact (Sepe, 2013:291).

Ensuring environmental adaptation, social interaction spaces, aesthetics and optimal functionality are necessary factors in urban design planning. Appropriate cultural design elements either as intervention or complementary strategies such as public art installations and cultural learning labs are ways to sustain cities, which balances the "top-down" focus of policy makers on economic development as growth strategy. Innovative forms of urban design represent the symbolic cultural ideals of discontinuity in the 21st-century, as Frantzeskaki notes, nevertheless, it would be a challenge for state urban authorities and strategists to throw their hats into the ring and work alongside design researchers to intervene or resolve place-making issues.[35]

Urban planner Peter Hall states in *Cities of Tomorrow* that local communities must resist the processes of urban renewal if progress connotes destruction of working class shops or razing still-livable housing blocks with bulldozers and endowing social changes through policies administered centrally.[36] Understanding cultural design implies the city's resourcefulness in preserving valuable social and historical contexts. This paper suggests that urban design integration involving mainstream and community cultural values is vital in enhancing place-making identifiers. By bringing together state planning authorities, infrastructure experts, private stakeholders, community representatives, environmental and conservation alliances as well as local residents, and allowing them to debate on urban design planning actions, it encourages agentic decision making, enhancing social interaction and the development of neighborhoods as a lever of social change, while representing stakeholders' "sweat equity" through localized, decentralized initiatives (Hall, 2014).

Balance and intuition are fundamental in achieving the end goals of built environments by ensuring public spaces give meaning to the lives of urban communities to reinforce stability amid social progress within sustainable, resilient environments (Alvarez, n.d.).

As Michael Dobbins states, urban planning needs resilience to strengthen people, processes and strategies to withstand economic, ecological and social shocks.[37] Design stakeholders must engage actively in community decisions about land use, spatial design and landscape planning; their observations about society, history, values of community and innovations can guide panel discussions in overcoming challenges. Clearly, the participation of designers in the development of modernist cityscapes steers its capacity in projecting social diversity in architectural heritage and urban design styles, while embracing inclusiveness. The case studies in this paper and analysis of the three architectural forms suggest a viable framework for future research to integrate urban planning scenarios with the need for cultural preservation and place-making identity construction.

Endnotes

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