

A landscape approach to heritage: Implications for architectural pedagogy

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Perceptions of conservation as an evolving practice that is agile and adaptive to broader values and interpretations support the premise that architects work as part of a continuum. With diminishing resources globally, architects have a responsibility to value and care for the built heritage and connected urban ecosystems.

A training in conservation prepares an architect for a specialised engagement with historic buildings and sites, but in this time of radical urban change and uncertainty, such skills are increasingly relevant for practice as a 'generalist' architect. Shifting interpretations of cultural values raise challenges for the practitioner, with reinterpretation necessary as sites evolve and develop. The 2011 UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape formalised a 'systems-thinking' approach to the treatment of historic urban landscapes.

The definition of urban heritage is extended beyond the physical, to encompass intangible heritage and a layering of natural and cultural values. There is an inherent understanding that a meaningful design intervention can contribute to the significance of a place. This is only possible when time is given to interrogate the place and understand its broader significance. This paper forms part of a PhD study which examines creative ways in which architectural conservation values can be embedded within the early years of architectural education, to inform a more sensitive and sustainable practice in rapidly changing urban conditions. The work explores the implications of the Historic Urban Landscape approach for architectural pedagogy, through a series of heritage mapping workshops that formed part of Design Studio. The workshops focus particularly on observation, collaborative learning and reflective practice skills. The research is part of the Building Change project, a collaborative endeavour across the six schools of architecture in Ireland to rethink how we teach and practice in the context of a climate emergency.