Steps of Amman
Urban Stair and Library, Amman, Jordan

Summary and appraisal of the project by the jury

Is it a building, an infrastructure, or a patch of landscape? As a matter of fact, “Steps of Amman” in Jordan is a proposal for a hybrid structure, one simultaneously taking on architectural and infrastructural traits at once, while restoring a piece of the city’s undulating terrain. The structure furthermore combines a range of public functions: an urban square in form of a stair and an urban library embedded within one of the city’s hills. More than just a project for a building, the design makes a plea for reinforcing the civic role of architecture in contemporary culture. Though monumental in its scale and mass, the building is hardly noticeable as a structure in its own right, for it seamlessly merges with the city’s topography. Below ground, users discover another world, one dedicated to the promotion of culture as public good.

Steps of Amman
Urban Stair and Library, Amman, Jordan

Project data

Project group: Architecture, building and civil engineering
Client: Greater Amman Municipality, Ministry of Education
Project background: Research project

Statements on the sustainability of the project by the author

Celebrating the Ammani stairs

Coming from the notion of public stairs as the original Ammani public spaces as well as the main connection between the upper and lower edges of the hilly downtown terrain. The project serves as a mediator between the edges, connecting them all together in one point despite their contrasting qualities. By using the same language as the city of Amman, the project is very sensitive to its surroundings and blends in seamlessly. The project provides a green lung for the area as well as public plazas and spaces for meeting and gathering. The indoors are brought outdoors through activities such as book fairs, sports, and outdoor classrooms. It creates a common ground and initiates dialogue between the edges, which can in turn become a positive starting point for change and reform.

Environmental sustainability

The project focuses on many factors for environmentally sustainable design. The site is an existing cut in the mountain, and the project fills that gap without digging any further into the slope. It is located near a public transportation hub to encourage the use of public transport. Main north glass facades as well as glass roofs are designed to fully optimize daylight and allow it to penetrate throughout the interior. Indoor courtyards provide cross ventilation as well as green indoor gathering areas. The architecture is integrated with the landscape by bringing the outdoors indoors and vice versa. The project aims to stitch the surrounding urban fabric, and that has a positive impact on the community and its context, as the locals would be able to consider it a part of their city.

Social sustainability

An important issue that was addressed was social sustainability. The project aims to encourage people to want to learn and explore through an interactive experience that would reshape the educational system and at the same time empower the youth and enrich this area, adding value to the existing cultural context. This translates both on the exterior as well as interior functions. The digital and traditional libraries, sports facilities as well as the learning center address the locals’ needs for proper educational facilities, as the existing ones are in a below average condition. Book fairs and other outdoor activities are held in plazas to invite the locals and visitors to come together. Indoor spaces are designed to ensure an open and welcoming atmosphere that encourages dialogue.

Main author

Noor Marji, architect, German Jordanian University, Amman, Jordan

Project data

Project group: Architecture, building and civil engineering
Client: Greater Amman Municipality, Ministry of Education
Project background: Research project

Middle East Africa

Next Generation 4th prize 2017

Steps of Amman
Urban Stair and Library, Amman, Jordan

Summary and appraisal of the project by the jury

Is it a building, an infrastructure, or a patch of landscape? As a matter of fact, “Steps of Amman” in Jordan is a proposal for a hybrid structure, one simultaneously taking on architectural and infrastructural traits at once, while restoring a piece of the city’s undulating terrain. The structure furthermore combines a range of public functions: an urban square in form of a stair and an urban library embedded within one of the city’s hills. More than just a project for a building, the design makes a plea for reinforcing the civic role of architecture in contemporary culture. Though monumental in its scale and mass, the building is hardly noticeable as a structure in its own right, for it seamlessly merges with the city’s topography. Below ground, users discover another world, one dedicated to the promotion of culture as public good.

Statements on the sustainability of the project by the author

Celebrating the Ammani stairs

Coming from the notion of public stairs as the original Ammani public spaces as well as the main connection between the upper and lower edges of the hilly downtown terrain. The project serves as a mediator between the edges, connecting them all together in one point despite their contrasting qualities. By using the same language as the city of Amman, the project is very sensitive to its surroundings and blends in seamlessly. The project provides a green lung for the area as well as public plazas and spaces for meeting and gathering. The indoors are brought outdoors through activities such as book fairs, sports, and outdoor classrooms. It creates a common ground and initiates dialogue between the edges, which can in turn become a positive starting point for change and reform.

Environmental sustainability

The project focuses on many factors for environmentally sustainable design. The site is an existing cut in the mountain, and the project fills that gap without digging any further into the slope. It is located near a public transportation hub to encourage the use of public transport. Main north glass facades as well as glass roofs are designed to fully optimize daylight and allow it to penetrate throughout the interior. Indoor courtyards provide cross ventilation as well as green indoor gathering areas. The architecture is integrated with the landscape by bringing the outdoors indoors and vice versa. The project aims to stitch the surrounding urban fabric, and that has a positive impact on the community and its context, as the locals would be able to consider it a part of their city.

Social sustainability

An important issue that was addressed was social sustainability. The project aims to encourage people to want to learn and explore through an interactive experience that would reshape the educational system and at the same time empower the youth and enrich this area, adding value to the existing cultural context. This translates both on the exterior as well as interior functions. The digital and traditional libraries, sports facilities as well as the learning center address the locals’ needs for proper educational facilities, as the existing ones are in a below average condition. Book fairs and other outdoor activities are held in plazas to invite the locals and visitors to come together. Indoor spaces are designed to ensure an open and welcoming atmosphere that encourages dialogue.