Research & Heritage^2

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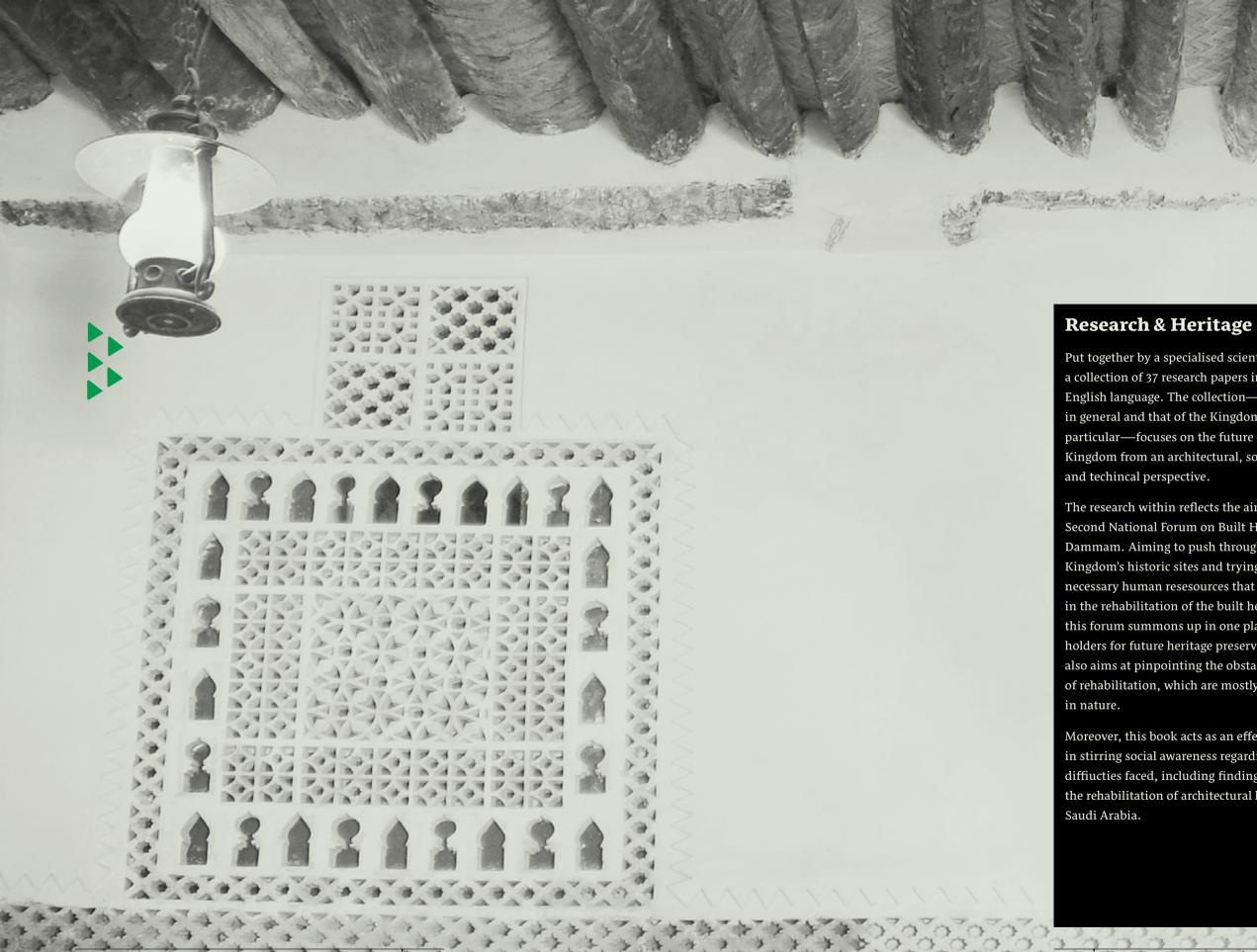
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Put together by a specialised scientific jury, this book is a collection of 37 research papers in both the Arabic and English language. The collection—on architectural heritage in general and that of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in particular—focuses on the future of historic sites in the Kingdom from an architectural, social, cultural, economic and techincal perspective.

The research within reflects the aims and objectives of the Second National Forum on Built Heritage being held in Dammam. Aiming to push through a new outlook on the Kingdom's historic sites and trying to pull together the necessary human resesources that might play a future role in the rehabilitation of the built heritage of the Kingdom, this forum summons up in one place all the key factors and holders for future heritage preservation projects. The forum also aims at pinpointing the obstacles that hinder the process of rehabilitation, which are mostly financial and technical in nature.

Moreover, this book acts as an effective documentation tool in stirring social awareness regarding all the obstacles and diffiucties faced, including finding appropriate solutions for the rehabilitation of architectural heritage in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Urban Heritage as a Brand

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Abstract:
This paper suggests that an approach branding 'Urban Heritage' can create new dimensions for improving the cultural and historical perception of cities, representing new aspects for their cultural landscape, civic identity, and be a strong focus for cultural tourism. It is argued that this approach can provide a significant contribution to the development of cities while positively responding to the promotional campaigns for attracting citizens and investments or encouraging tourism. The main objectives of this paper are to investigate the process in which the (re)creation of a successful image for Urban Heritage can make positive changes in the urban and cultural landscape and examine whether a balance between the presentation of the visual identity of heritage sites, economic, and the urban development in the city can be achieved through appropriate branding of urban heritage. The paper presents and critically analyzes a selected number of regional and international experiences of the current practice of developing and branding urban heritage. Also, the paper attempts to draw some important lessons learned out of these experiences and identifies some future directions.

1. Branding Urban Heritage:

The branding of cities, or cultural landscape in general, similar to branding of products, links urban images with the elements of urban forms, historical and cultural identity. It aims to develop new and creative ways of communicating the image of the city to the rest of the region, or to the world at large [Urban Marketing Collaborative, 2004].

Over the past two decades, many cities of rich history and intact heritage have made large efforts to achieve distinct images in their endeavor to be among the successful and distinctive world class cities, introducing new approaches to the representation of their urban heritage as a city branding strategy. Many cities all over the world have used branding heritage as one of their main strategies of branding the image of their cities. Cities who have acquired their unique reputation through branding their heritage include Rome: City of Seven Hills, Venice: Queen of the Adriatic, Thebes: Valley of the Kings, etc. According to Bonita (2006) and CEOs for Cities (2006), the main objectives for city branding strategies and plans for their heritage sites for building up or improving their image, can be summarized as:

- achieving competitive advantages regionally and internationally,

- strengthening the reputation of a city and its corporate identity in order to improve its economic role,

- improving the quality of cultural life for the inhabitants by providing of better public realm and a distinct sense of place in historical areas,

- preserving and restoring cultural diversity as an important characteristic of many cities' identity and urban life,

- improving the legibility of and accessibility to historical areas and heritage sites within cities.

2.————— Approaches of Branding Urban Heritage:

The successful branding strategy to promote cities and support competitiveness has grown out of the recent development boom in many cities. The Arab Gulf, such as Dubai and extended more and more to other cities in the region, represents new challenges for planning and development of the Gulf cities. The promotion of "Al Jumeirah" area in Dubai as a rich heritage center (although it was completely of fabricated historical elements and forms as shown in figure 1), the revitalization of Souq Waqf in Doha as the old and original heart of the city, the revival proposals of the Heart of Sharjah and the Ajman old Center, the Al Janaderiah heritage festival, the (re) construction of heritage villages and the revival of old historical towns and villages in Saudi Arabia are all illustrative examples of how planning and restoration/ revitalization/reconstruction/replication as well as celebration of built heritage ensamples became increasingly a dominant element in the contemporary urban landscape in the region. In this context, re-shaping the imaginary of urban heritage represents an increasing nostalgia and strongly emerging perceptions about a highly distinct visual history, reviving cultural identity, attractive new patterns of urban life, and creating a unique dimension to the contemporary cityscape.

Figure 1: Fabricated Heritage for tourism consumption, Jumeirah City, Dubai
Source: GEO Special: Die Welt Entdecken, Magazine, Nr.1 Feb./ March 2007

2.1
Re-making the image of urban heritage and its identity

Heritage sites and historical areas shaped the substance of the Gulf cities over time, providing a sense of cultural identity. This rich heritage has been largely demolished in order to facilitate the building new modern and international style-based building forms, wide boulevards and modern facilities, such as in Kuwait City [Helmy, 2008]. Some of the cities have lost their authentic identity and have become almost places of nowhere [Bott, 2006].

Currently, urban heritage in the Gulf cities is re-considered as an important element of the city image as a source of uniqueness. Since the late 1990's, heritage conservation has been considered as the conservation of the 'authentic' image of the past, and a way out to re-create a regional cultural identity in within a globalized world culture and order. However, it seems that the purpose of the current conservation activities is not limited to the preservation of urban heritage as an icon of identity, but also to create a new market for cultural tourism, cultural industries and commercialization of culture to serve the emerging economies.

Extensive projects to restore the remnants or restructure of historical sites, monuments and urban heritage ensembles, as well as revival of local cultural life are actively taking place in almost all the Gulf cities. This "fabrication" approach to heritage, or the re-making and replication of past architecture stereotypes, adds another dimension to the city, although they are not authentic and may seem inconsistent or often superficial. However, they are being done to satisfy the desire of international tourism in seeking and exploring new traditional atmosphere. In this approach using replicas of past or existing original heritage sites to brand heritage and evoke historical sense are being constructed for different purposes.

2.1.1 Branding Heritage through simulating main features of the heritage image and spirit. A good example of this trend is Heritage villages in many Arab Cities such as Dubai and Abu Dhabi. It provides short outdoor guided walking tours that present a brief history and overview of either existing or past Heritage sites.

2.1.2 Branding Heritage through replication of history. This resulted in artificial sites for consumption which is increasingly overwhelming many emerging developments and stimulating fake images and picturesque views. An example of this new trend is Madinat Al-Jumaira is a significant example for a constructed commercial complex in Dubai, which miniatures the historical quarters of Dubai

2.2
Representing local elements in the city image

Reproducing and remanufacturing non-authentic images (i.e. images such as fabricated environments or reconstructed heritage) cannot be the only way of expressing city image. Authenticity, innovation and originality are values which should be seen as a set of potentials for expressing individual image identity. Cities cannot be branded the entire same typical image, i.e. of international building style, as they should present also a local sense that distinguishes them from other cities. Within this view, acknowledging the preservation of natural setting or exploring new values in the historic architecture can be a tangible force in contemporary image.

Thus, the compromise between locality and globalized vision: borrowing from other cultures, traditions, or life styles is a global trend that has spread to the Arab city. Although many professionals and scholars consider the idea of borrowing to be some sort of eclectic interpretation, a different point of view, according to Said, believes that "transferred ideas and concepts should be as a new original in its new context" [Said, 1983]. Therefore, they can be seen as "other" originals. It seems in the age of globalization that the mechanism of borrowing and reproduction is an inevitable trend. Given the previous interpretation in the context of the Gulf city, it seems crucial to differentiate between the copied images, such as copied building styles for other contexts, versus the borrowed idea, like inspiring with certain concepts while being original, authentic and creative.

2.3
Urban Heritage Festivals

Branding heritage through activities is considered a very successful approach to revitalize heritage sites. Festivals, events, and other cultural activities are actively used to link people with their heritage sites. In addition, using heritage sites and not only seeing it would strength the local identity, place attachment, and civic pride.

Recent studies have proved that active use of cultural heritage is considered as one of the main strategies in cities urban transformation processes or place-making processes. Al Janaderiah annual festival in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, is a good example of appreciating, celebrating and branding the unique heritage of Saudi Arabia.

According to [Van Elderen 1997, p. 126], 'festivalization' involves the temporary transformation of the town into a specific symbolic space in which the utilization of the public domain.is under the spell of a particular cultural consumption pattern.

In this situation, events and event spaces come to dominate the public life of the city. [Frank and Roth, 2000], link this transformation with urban development, usually based on a coalition of business leaders and civic authorities with a consensus on stimulating investment and economic growth while limiting the re-distributional functions of the state. In German urban sociology, this process is referred to as 'festivalization' or 'politics through big events' [Ha¨ußermann & Siebel, 1993].

3. ──────── **Learning from best practice** Heritage sites and buildings have been transformed into symbols of national character. There is often a discussion about the issue of cultural identity from the perspective of social structure and historical realities. In Kuwait and Bahrain, the relationship between town planners as promoters of new social values and state authority was evident [Shiber, 1964]. A number of international cities have used urban heritage as a strategy to improve their future prospects. One of the key challenges of global urban development is to preserve structures and sites that promote identity and continuity of place. Preserving the cultural landscape can help generate civic pride and foster a sense of empowerment. From an economic perspective, heritage conservation offers opportunities for cultural tourism, which is among the fastest growing segments in the international tourism market and a motor for economic development.

3.1

Madinat Al Jumeirah in Dubai: Replication of built heritage

Preserving the historical traditions in Dubai has been a continuous effort, from restoring historic building, to the revitalization of traditional centers and inspiration of new development with a local architectural identity presenting "a sense of history" in the city. For example, the Madinat Al Jumeirah, like many similar developments, has been built in a superficially Dubaian 'traditional' style as shown in figure 2, with ranks of non-functioning wind towers framing the rooftop of air-conditioned bars. The rooms and outdoor terraces are also air-conditioned, and the towers are just for show. Decorative detail and patterns are confined to colorful floor rugs, intricate wooden latticework on windows and ornate wooden outer doors modeled on local traditional Islamic designs. Madinat Al-Jumaira is a significant example for a constructed commercial complex in Dubai, which reflects the historical quarters of Dubai, without any social or economic meaning and reproduced for tourist and elite consumption, feeding into frozen images of the past.

Figure 2: Madinat Al Jumeirah in Dubai
Source: Dubai Magazine, Nr.18/ Jan. / March 2008

3.2

Restoration of Dubian Urban Heritage:

In spite of all its modernization, Dubai has made efforts towards conserving its built heritage, which include the Shindagha Heritage Area at the mouth of Dubai Creek, the Bastakiya District - a former merchants' area now restored, the Al Fahidi Fort, built mid-19th century - now the Dubai Museum and the souks or bazaars. These buildings and sites have been well restored and are in use today. The various souks for gold, spice and textile have retained the old-age charm and stand out from the rest of the cityscape due to their distinct architecture - wind towers and double-height arch-shaped timber frame pergolas effectively shading the walkways. Since the 1990's, greater importance has been given to the promotion of the preservation of traditional culture and heritage sites, where renovated projects were initiated all over the city.

3.3

Souk Waqif in Doha: Revitalization of built heritage

Just like other cities in the Persian Gulf region, Doha is an intriguing mixture of old and new. Modern architecture is found next to traditional Arabian Souks (bazaars) and more than 260 mosques (the multiple-domed Grand Mosque is, in fact, the largest). The harbor is still a thriving international port, well equipped for modern commerce. The traditional Dhow harbor is a favored attraction.

Souk Waqif, recently revitalized, is one of the most important heritage sites in Doha (see figure 3). The origins of the Souk Waqif date from the time when Doha was a village and its inhabitants gathered on the banks of the wadi to buy and sell goods. The project aimed to reverse the degraded historic structures and remove inappropriate alterations and additions. The project was also aiming to revitalize the memory of the place. Accordingly, modern buildings were demolished; metal sheeting on roofs was replaced with traditionally built roofs materials as shown in figure 4. Sophisticated lighting system was added to the project. Nowadays, Souk Waqif is used by shoppers, tourists, merchants and residents alike.

Figure 3: The Site Plan of Souk Waqif
Source: Aga Khan Award for Architecture http://www.akdn.org/architecture/project.asp?id=3564

Figure 4: Street between Souk Waqif and Souk Al-Ahmad at night.
Source: Aga Khan Award for Architecture / Ziyad Shawkat. http://www.akdn.org/architecture/project.asp?id=3564

3.4
Old Jeddah: Restoration, preservation, and 'festivalization' of built heritage

In 1979, when the pace of expansion had slackened a little, the Saudi authorities appointed a leading British consulting firm to make a detailed study of Old Jeddah and draw up plans to preserve the area's unique architecture and, at the same time, ensure the continuation of its thriving community life. The decision was a particular pleasure to George Duncan, a partner in planning for Saudi Arabia's Western Province. As early as 1971, he had drawn attention to the outstanding urban heritage in Old Jeddah and urged measures to make its survival certain. The consultants' surveys showed that more than one thousand historic structures in Old Jeddah had survived the ravages of time, climate and, in many cases, sheer neglect. About half that number was designated "buildings of architectural and historical significance" and recommended for preservation and protection. Farsi established a special branch office of the municipality - called Al-Balad, or the City - charged with putting the preservation program into effect.

Currently there is a restoration project for some degraded houses in old Jeddah, aimed at revitalizing some of the old houses in Jeddah and make use of the city's built heritage. In addition, festivals, organized in Old Jeddah, link new and old generations with their traditions and history.

3.5
Al Janaderiah in Riydh: Festive/Replicated Heritage

Al-Janadriyah Festival is one of the largest festivals in Saudi Arabia. Though this festival takes place in Riyadh, the traditional dance and songs performed have a strong influence as it is performed in a replicated traditional atmosphere manifesting different essences of Saudi Arabia cultural regions, as shown in figure 5. [Figure 5 should be located here]

In many Arab cities, the rich heritage has been largely demolished for the sake of building new modern and international style-based building forms. Instead replicas of the demolished heritage sites were built.

In many cases, the success of branding heritage has been a strong motivation for cities to create artificial images for consumption.

The creation of replicas of historical environments, simulating heritage and elements, are increasingly overwhelming many emerging developments, stimulating artificial images and picturesque views.

There is an apparent lack of incorporating heritage areas with the urban and social life. Therefore, the image of heritage is mostly shaped by the form of museum environment, in segregation from the surrounding urban life.

There is a lack of using the urban heritage as one of the cities branding tools and a source of civic pride.

Figure 5: Al Janaderiah, Riyadh, KSA

5.————— Recommendations To formulate and use branding urban heritage strategies, considering that a careful balance between city image and heritage preservation needs to be achieved.

A clear separation between heritage conservation and heritage replicas produced for tourist consumption is needed to protect the value of the original urban heritage.

Appreciation of heritage needs to be extensively enhanced by a range of promotional and celebratory initiatives internationally, regionally and locally.

To incorporate the authentic city image coming from the heritage in the planning of the modern city image.

Remaking heritage is not desired as it reproduces historical quarters without any social or economic meaning.

To consider heritage as a living entity evolving with the rest of the city's image.

To promote and celebrate the value of heritage assets through forming partnerships with other relevant organizations, agencies and groups.

To encourage the responsive adaptation of heritage places and sites for new and innovative uses.

Clear policies for heritage conservation are needed to provide a holistic approach for different government departments to clarify their duties in relation to heritage preservation.

Recognized urban heritage and historical buildings should be reflected in the modern city image such as landmarks.

'Festivalaizing' the urban heritage sites is a very important tool for increasing the safety factor for some heritage sites. "It is argued that the rationalized nature of modern festivals offers safety and prevents any expected crime in isolated heritage sites". See [Gotham, 2005].

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