

Urban Regeneration/Heritage Tourism Endeavours: The Case of Salt, Jordan 'Local Actors, International Donors, and the State'

Rami Farouk Daher

This paper focuses on several urban regeneration/heritage tourism projects in Jordan funded and orchestrated by international donor agencies in the 1990s. The research attempts to understand the mechanisms, rationales, internal and external forces, actors, experts, and power networks that privileged a particular discourse on urban generation based on a particular case study (Historic Old Salt Development Project). Discourse analysis and ethnographic encounters enabled the researcher to situate the Historic Old Salt Development Project as part of the overall strategy to upgrade the tourism sector and not out of a conscious motivation of urban regeneration and heritage management. The practice of urban regeneration/heritage management in Salt is tied to sporadic agents of power that generate shock treatments and very modest outcomes in the form of architectural cosmetics rather than an institutionalised practice.

Keywords: Urban Regeneration; Heritage Tourism; Heritage Conservation; International Donors; Actor Networks; Municipalities; Discourse Analysis; Jordan

Historic City Cores and Current Transformations

This research sheds light on current socio-economic and cultural transformations affecting historic city cores in Jordan. One particular trend on which the research focuses is the emergence of several urban regeneration/heritage tourism projects in Jordan and the region, funded and orchestrated by international donor agencies in the 1990s. Prior to understanding the different mechanisms, rationales, internal and

Rami Farouk Daher, Jordan University of Science & Technology. Correspondence to: radaher5@just.edu.jo

external forces, actors, experts, and power networks that privileged a particular discourse on urban generation to surface vis-à-vis such international donor agencies' urban projects, it would be useful to understand the historic context and transformations that such historic city cores, not only in Jordan but also in the surrounding region, underwent during the past century.

In the efforts of French and British Mandate and post-Mandate (nation-state) urban planning interventions to embrace modernity, the separation between the past and the present was intensified in many parts of the Arab world. At the scale of cities, several urban projects in places like Damascus, Aleppo, Amman, and Beirut led to complete socio-economic and spatial segregation between the old historic parts of town and the newly zoned parts to which the notables and upper middle-class residents moved. The rich, with their businesses, left the traditional neighbourhoods for the new zoned areas and were replaced by transient workers, migrants to the cities, the poor, and minorities.

In Damascus, Beirut, and several other cities, and during the French Mandate in the 1920s and 1930s, planners such as Echochard imposed schemes on the old organic pattern of the traditional city based on Haussmannian principles.¹ Several new modern plans introduced interventions like boulevards and avenues which sliced into traditional settings, causing destruction and demolition of whole neighbourhoods and a dichotomy of old traditional parts of town on one hand and newly zoned areas on the other. Everything was sacrificed to the great infrastructure of transport. Only fragments and isolated monuments were retained for future generations. In reality, such urban interventions, termed creative destruction by Harvey,² were viewed as the best means to embrace the Project of Modernity.

Such creative destruction continued into the post-Mandate period. The practice of modern urban planning continued to impose skeleton maps, zoning ordinances and planning schemes on historic city cores all over the region, embracing modernity and progress, grounded only in the laying out of road networks (superimposed on historic cores without any consideration of their nature or dynamics), and the demolition of traditional settings based on a position that defined such settings as obsolete and insignificant. The historic cores of several cities come to mind, such as Irbid in Jordan, Latikeyah in Syria, and numerous smaller towns and villages all over the Arab world.³

As many of these historic quarters became vacant, new residents moved in such as transient workers, migrants, minorities, and the poor. Furthermore, many facilities were used merely as storage areas for various goods, thereby leading to more deterioration and fragmentation of the historic fabric. Steinberg⁴ elaborates on how the destruction of historic city cores in many Third World countries was driven by a desire for modernisation:

At the same, the desire for 'modernization' by governments and top decision-makers in most developing countries often led them to believe that only new and 'modern' housing was worthwhile. Anything old or in a traditional style was considered of little value and was torn down or, at best, ignored. Older housing normally concentrated in the inner parts of the city, was often in a state of physical deterioration, overcrowded

and lacking in services. It was easy to label such areas as 'slums', to be removed at the earliest convenient opportunity.

More recently, and within the past twenty years or so, the emergence of several global trends can be noted within the different countries of the region. One very important trend is the appeal of heritage tourism to many governments in their attempts to achieve successful economic restructuring, signalling a shift to the service sector with consequences for the relationship between heritage and tourism and the dynamics of privatisation.⁵ Robinson⁶ elaborates how 'for developing economies whose natural resource base is depleted, tourism would appear to provide a rather rapid way of generating hard currency and creating employment. Indeed, utilizing the cultural and ethnic resources of a nation or region for tourism may be the only way out.' Swarbooke⁷ elaborates how in many communities 'tourism has been adopted as an urban regeneration tool, almost as a last resort' as part of a strategy of desperation when there seems to be little chance of other alternatives to help regenerate the local economy. Gray⁸ believes that 'the main link between the economic liberalization programme and tourism in Jordan is that tourism has been used to cushion some of the financial hardships caused by liberalization'. It is significant to notice how certain governments in the region are attracted to the 'labour-intensive nature of tourism, and the hard currency that foreign tourists provide for the economy. Further, tourism is not a complex sector to develop and does not usually rely on large injections of capital or expertise.'

A second important trend is the surfacing of different urban regeneration/heritage tourism developments in places like Amman, Salt, and Kerak in Jordan, or Tripoli, Sidon, and Ba'alback in Lebanon, for example, orchestrated and funded by international donor agencies (e.g. the World Bank, USAID, JICA,⁹ and GTZ). This paper will try to shed light on such urban regeneration projects in Salt, Jordan, in an attempt to understand their genealogies, nature and effect upon the historic urban fabric and urban regeneration, and to unravel power networks and relations between local actors (e.g. municipalities, local councils, NGOs), central governmental agencies (e.g. ministries), and international donors (such as JICA). Do such projects emerge from a conscious motivation and practice, or urban conservation/regeneration institutionalised in local and governmental policies, or do they simply emerge as shock treatments with negligible outcomes and low levels of sustainability?

The research is based mainly on discourse analysis, emphasising the researcher's own participation in the urban projects in Salt. The discourse analysis will address institutions such as the Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities of Jordan (MoTA), the World Bank, social processes (e.g. a certain practice of urban regeneration), stakeholders (e.g. Greater Salt Municipality, Salt local community), and texts (e.g. project documents, newspaper articles) in its attempt to understand the realities and networks of power prevailing, in addition to conceptualising such a newly emerging discourse on urban regeneration/tourism that emerged in the country during the past decade. In addition to discourse analysis, the research methodology and investigative process will take the form of ethnographic encounters from 1997 to 2002. The methods of inquiry comprised:

- (a) Participant observation and ethnographic encounters: these took place during the involvement of the researcher in various projects as a heritage expert such as in the Historic Old Salt Project between the years 1999 and 2000 during which the researcher worked in close contact with Municipality personnel and others who worked on the project. In addition, the researcher was involved in several other projects in Jordan (in Jerash, Amman, and Kerak) funded by other donor agencies such as the World Bank. In Salt, the researcher documented (through participant observation and extensive note taking) the various encounters between the local actors (Municipality personnel), the donor agency (JICA of Japan), local and foreign project designers, and individuals at various central governmental agencies (mainly MoTA). In addition, open-ended encounters with members of the larger community regarding people's reception of these various projects were sought.
- (b) Semi-structured interviews: semi-structured interviews that depended on an interview guide were conducted with, but were not limited to, the various stakeholders of the Salt Urban/Heritage Project. The interviews conducted took place with personnel at the Heritage Section of the Greater Salt Municipality (GSM), MoTA, JICA offices, and the architectural offices of the local designers of the project. In addition, several interviews and a major focus group meeting were conducted in Tripoli and Lebanon where similar World Bank projects (Cultural Heritage & Tourism Development in Four Lebanese Cities) are currently taking place in Tripoli, Ba'alback, Jbeil, and Sidon.
- (c) Review of the project's written documents and the popular press: the research included a review of various study reports, progress reports and terms of reference (TOR) in addition to final project documentation produced for the Historic Old Salt Development Project and for other projects in Kerak and Jerash. In addition, the study included the critical review of several Jordanian and regional newspaper articles on the various urban regeneration projects in Salt and elsewhere in Jordan.

The objective of the discourse analysis was to understand how such power relations and networks worked to formulate and initiate a certain discursive reality as in, for example, the discourse on urban heritage regeneration. Therefore, the objective was not to pinpoint a cause-effect type of relationship as much as it was to understand such networks of relations and how certain practices, and not others, emerge and achieve an authoritative status.

Tourism/Urban Conservation Juxtapositions in the 1990s: Tourism as a Preoccupation of Donor Agencies' Research

The previous decade in Jordan was typified by several significant global, national, and regional events characterising the transition from the 20th to the 21st centuries. One major event was the peace process with Israel, which affected the nature of developments proposed by international donor agencies and adopted by national policy

makers. One of the main tracks for development that was emphasised was for Jordan to invest in, develop, and promote its tourism sector, cultural heritage in general, and the urban heritage of Jordanian cities in particular, which for the first time was identified as one of the main assets for development. Joffe¹⁰ states that:

In the context of the 1994 peace treaty, tourism was seen as key to the promotion of open borders and economic cooperation that would both strengthen peace and produce prosperity. There was, indeed, a short-term boom that, in turn, led the Jordanian state to encourage major investment in the sector. However, the necessary management skills were lacking and the centralized direction of the expansion of tourist facilities undermined initiatives towards integration with regional and global tourism strategies.

Tourism and tourism development had been presented to the Jordanian public by the state as one of the main peace rewards expected to nourish the Jordanian economy. Michael Lynch¹¹ argues that economic rewards resulting from tourism developments and waiting to be reaped by investors were more of a public sphere justification strategy or an official justification tactic than a major cause of the peace process. In reality, and as more recent research has indicated, while it is true that tourism development in the wake of peace 'offered opportunities for some entrepreneurs in Jordan; tourism development has been difficult to sustain in the context of an increasingly complex global tourism economy without adequate public and private institutions for its promotion':¹²

Driven by unwarranted optimism and the political imperative of over-promoting tourism development as a means to capture the economic rewards of peace, state agencies and state plans lacked an accurate vision of what the tourism economy would look like from the vantage point of the individual private firms in the tourism sector.¹³

Immediately after the peace process, Jordan witnessed an unprecedented boom in hotel development; in fact, investment in the tourism sector concentrated mainly on building new 4/5 star hotels in cities like Amman, Petra, and Aqaba. Very little investment was directed to cultural site management, urban regeneration or the enhancement of the tourism experience in the country. Patin¹⁴ elaborates how in many economically struggling countries of the world, the revenue from heritage tourism sites seldom returns to the site itself. 'Worse, such revenues are usually spent on the building of tourist facilities, especially hotels, whose poor location, and mediocre design seriously harm the quality and authenticity of cultural landscapes.'¹⁵

In the first half of the 1990s the Japanese government, through its donor agency (JICA), conducted a study to enhance the tourism sector in Jordan. The Tourism Development Master Plan of Jordan was a major outcome of the study that promoted the enhancement of Gateway and Urban City Tourism in the country.¹⁶ Between the years 1994 and 1996 JICA carried out 'The Study on the Tourism Development Plan in Jordan', and, based on the results of this study, which depended on a careful assessment of the tourism sector in the country, several projects that deal with urban heritage tourism were identified. The main objective of the project was to improve the

tourism sector in Jordan by broadening the tourism product from an overemphasis on antiquities to incorporating cultural sites of everyday life and the urban heritage of Jordanian cities.¹⁷

These developments led to the surfacing of various urban regeneration/heritage tourism projects in cities like Amman, Jerash, Salt, Karak, and Madaba. These projects were seen by different critical observers in the frame of a 'wider plan aimed at developing international tourism in Jordan'.¹⁸ One MoTA official elaborated that this interest in the urban cultural heritage really started after the peace process in 1994, and was supported by international donor agencies taking into consideration the fact that the topic of cultural heritage is a preoccupation of the international community (e.g. UNESCO, UN, etc.).¹⁹ The historic urban heritage of several Jordanian cities was the focus of such tourism developments and activities.

One of these projects that was an outcome of the JICA study was the Urban Heritage/Tourism Development Projects in the cities of Salt²⁰ (Historic Old Salt Development—see Figure 1), Amman (Amman Downtown Tourist Zone), and Karak (Karak Tourism Development—see Figure 2). The Salt Project is the case study and focus of this paper. It focused on the following components: Historic Old Salt Museum (the Historic House Museum of Abu Jaber), Tourist Trails and Steps, Open Plazas, Panoramic Lookouts, and Training for Tourist Services.

This section of the paper has provided reasons why these urban heritage/tourism projects were a driving force for future development in Jordan. The author believes that



Figure 1 View of the City of Salt. (Rami Daher.)

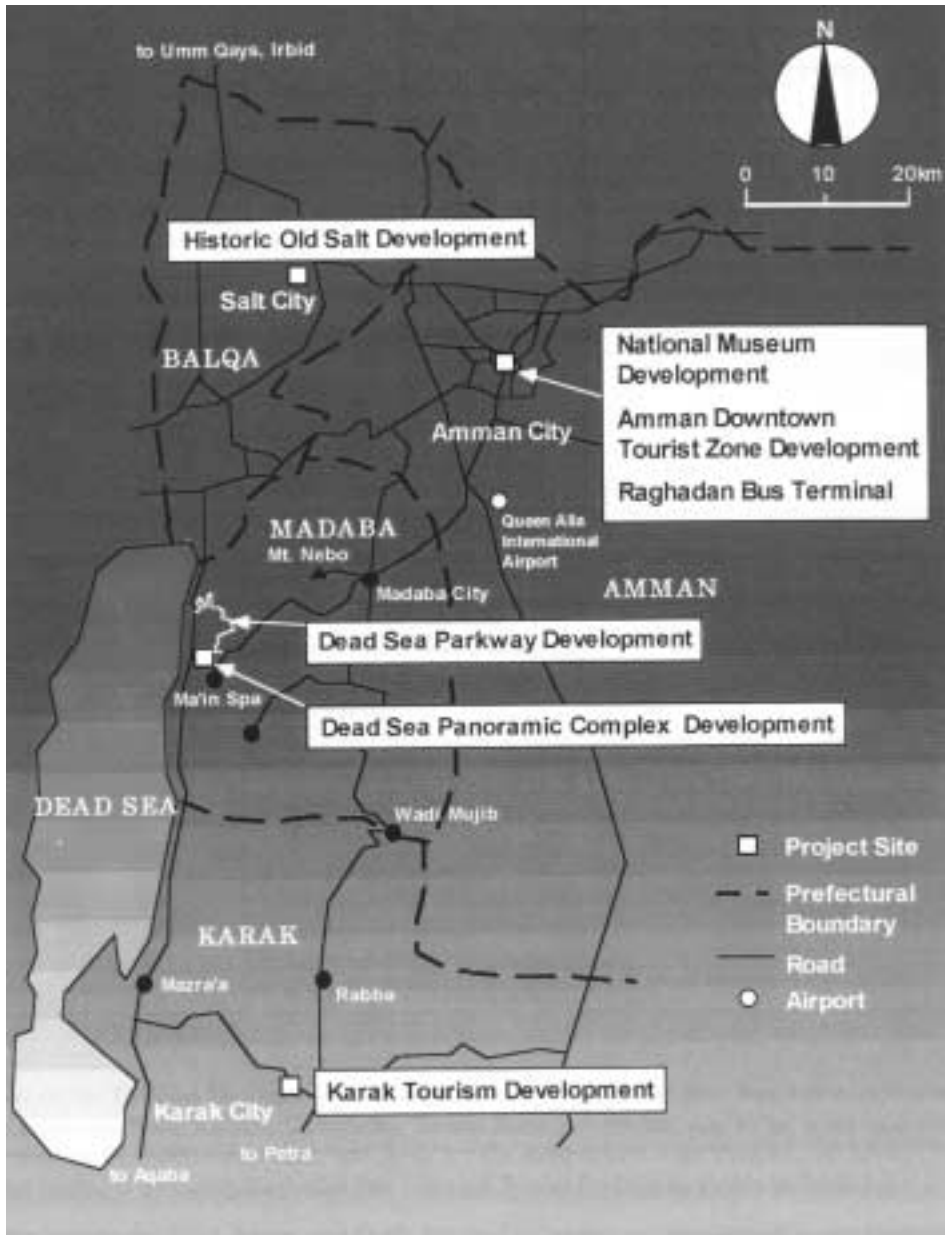


Figure 2 Project sites for the ‘Tourism Sector Development Project’ in Jordan funded by JICA. (Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2000.)

it is important to situate the various urban heritage/tourism endeavours as part of the overall strategies to upgrade the tourism sector in the country, and not out of a conscious motivation and practice of urban regeneration and heritage management institutionalised in central and local public policies.

Local Municipalities and the Patriarchal Structure of Central Governmental Agencies in Relation to Urban Heritage Tourism Developments

The research also investigated the relationship between the central governmental agencies and the Municipality of Salt regarding the setting up, channelling of funds, and implementation of the Salt Project. In general, the municipalities in Jordan are tied, within a patriarchal structural mechanism, to the different agencies of the central government. The municipalities are administratively, economically, and technically linked to the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs (MMRAE). Now, based on the ethnographic fieldwork and the several interviews conducted, it was very obvious from the beginning that these projects were initiated, progressed and will be implemented through the same patriarchal types of relationships between the Municipality and the central government; but this time, a different central governmental agency (MoTA) appears as the leading central governmental agency in such projects while the MMRAE retreats to a passive position of observer. What has been explained earlier in the previous section can answer some of the questions as to why MoTA is taking a leading role in these projects when considering the interrelatedness between the peace process, tourism, and urban conservation projects in the country.

In an extensive open-ended interview with one of GSM's personnel, it was stated that the fact that many municipalities suffer from financial problems and lack certain technical and administrative expertise does not really apply to all municipalities. Yet the central government agencies prefer not to make municipalities responsible for large projects such as the Historic Old Salt Development Project.

Even though MoTA, together with the Ministry of Planning (MoP), collaborated with JICA on the project from the beginning, the Municipality had only heard rumours about the project between 1994 and 1997. Then the Municipality was presented with the final study undertaken by the 'Japanese', with all project components already predetermined. They were not active participants in the setting up of the project and in deciding its various components, and were excluded from taking part in the project's TOR. In addition, and even though a Project Management Unit (PMU) was established for all of JICA's other projects in Jordan, this PMU was composed mainly of MoTA personnel and GSM was not represented at all.

In an interview with MoTA personnel, it was explained that the reason for the creation of the PMU was to facilitate mechanisms and contacts between the various agents of the project (MoTA, municipalities, JICA, etc.). All contacts and decisions are made through the PMU, which in turn is directly linked to the Secretary General and to the Minister of Tourism. If one looks at the Proposed Management and Coordination Structure for the several JICA-funded projects, one can easily understand the central role of the PMU positioned within the auspices of a central governmental agency (MoTA) which is also immediately linked to the Project Steering Committee²¹ (PSC) and the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF) of Japan.²² Together with JICA, the PMU is responsible for conducting all correspondence, TOR design, choosing local consultants, tendering procedures and all other important decisions regarding the various sub-projects.

In other countries of the world, where urban heritage tourism/regeneration strategies and practices have reached a mature stage of accountability, one witnesses two tiers of decision-making processes—local and central—with responsibilities and checks and balances shared between the two. Larkham mentions a similar system in the UK where the Local Planning Authorities, and central government, represented in England by the Department of the Environment, interrelate and share the responsibilities of strategy and implementation.²³ When dealing with urban regeneration and urban tourism initiatives based on integrated area conservation, this interplay between local and central agencies becomes crucial where even more leeway is granted to local planning authorities. Unfortunately, this is not happening in the case of Salt.

This paper argues that the various mechanisms of power (such as, but not restricted to, the establishment of a sub-central government agency like the PMU) shaped and reshaped the types and patterns of contact between central and local governments regarding the projects under research and emphasised a patriarchal structure of central governmental agencies (MoTA) regarding urban regeneration/heritage tourism developments that characterised the relationship between the centre and the Municipality. This patriarchal structure reflects embedded central government authoritarianism in the practice of tourism/urban conservation and management in Jordanian cities.

International Donors and the Rhetoric of Local Public Participation and Capacity Building

The Historic Old Salt Development is only one of several tourism/heritage-related endeavours funded by JICA. The fund is divided into a grant (for the research and design²⁴ of the various projects) and a loan (for the implementation and execution of the projects). The Jordanian government will pay back the loan. Based on the open-ended interviews, it is the Ministry of Planning that outlines the main components of the grant and loan with the Japanese government (mainly with OECF).

One of the objectives of this paper is to investigate the nature of the relationship between the donor agency JICA and GSM regarding the implementation of urban heritage projects in the City of Salt. In addition, the research is interested to investigate the role played by GSM in the different stages of the project and how JICA helped the Municipality to take on more responsibilities regarding the project in question.

One of the local designers involved extensively in the project added that JICA had insisted that the Salt Municipality form a Technical Committee to organise and oversee the Municipality's role in the project. Yet the role of the Municipality was reduced significantly by the dominance of the central government in Amman. Salt Municipality personnel explained that JICA wanted the Municipality to be involved in the different stages of the project (initiation, TOR design, concept design, detailed designs) but the complexity of the networks of power between the centre and the Municipality, together with the numbers of agents involved and the centrality of the decision-making process, hindered their involvement. Their role was reduced to approving designs, acquisition of property, devising transportation solutions and alternatives, and providing maps and base skeleton drawings for the Historic Old City, and finally, possible future

participation in the supervision of the project under construction. In many cases, the liberal agendas of public participation imposed by international donor agencies are not followed through and are sometimes implemented only out of concern about the donor agency's money and of a need to satisfy the requirements and conditions of certain donor agencies and not from a conviction in their relevance in community development.

Capacity building was a very important section of the overall project. GSM personnel explained that the TOR of the Historic Old Salt Project included a sub-project for capacity building in the form of training in the areas of cultural site management and museum curatorship and management. GSM was surprised that none of these projects was implemented. The training emphasis areas did not relate to concepts of urban regeneration and conservation, nor did they commit help to the Municipality for a system for urban regeneration. They are situated within a tourism-promotion discourse centring on issues of museum curatorship, tourist site management, and tourism promotion.

One MoTA employee added that it is only natural for each of the central governmental agencies to be interested in implementing the projects within the TOR that are relevant to their interest and scope of work. For example, in the Historic Old Salt Development Project, what really interests MoTA is mainly the Historic House Museum of Abu Jaber or the various Tourist Trails, Public Plazas, Panoramic Lookouts and other components relevant to the promotion of heritage tourism in this significant historic city (see Figure 3). Projects concerned with urban regeneration, urban community development, incorporation of urban heritage tools, or capacity building addressing the Municipality are not pursued by MoTA and are left for the corresponding agency (such as GSM, for example) to pursue, even if they existed in the initial project description. Usually, the various municipalities, for lack of expertise and authority, do not pursue these projects further (e.g. writing detailed TOR for them). Furthermore, the lack of transparency, the dominance of the Ministry of Planning in terms of for whom and for what purposes foreign aid money is channelled, poor communication about foreign aid and how local institutions can apply for it, all add to the complications.

Aid rhetoric and the dogma of 'capacity building' and 'public participation' render nothing but lip service to the local communities and to the local municipalities (like the case in Salt). Very few community development projects are initiated with local financing mechanisms. There is a gradual dependency on deterministic modes of development that kill local initiatives; also, there is a lack of sustainability once aid money is gone.

This cannot be explained by a simplified understanding of power relations and networks that might classify stakeholders in a certain project simply as empowered and marginalised. On the contrary, the explanation in this research stems from an understanding of the various discourses, the ideological and procedural limits and barriers to implementation, and the mechanisms of power that privilege a certain practice of urban regeneration, in a context such as Salt with multiple agents of power, to emerge in the country. In the next section, the paper will address the nature of this emerging discourse on urban regeneration.



Figure 3 Hammam Street, another tourist street in the project famous for its speciality shops and distinctive historic Salti houses. (Rami Daher.)

Shock Treatment and Urban Cosmetics: Too Much Money, Too Little Time, and Modest Outcomes

Once one understands the various components and the nature of the end product of such projects, it is very obvious that they concentrate mainly on physical aspects of urban regeneration (e.g. tourist trails, pedestrianisation of public plazas, adaptation of an old house into a heritage museum, tourist panoramic lookout, streetscape, and

signage). The intervention in the public urban space centres on stone pavements for plazas, streets (Figures 4a and 4b), or steps, outdoor furniture and lighting, and signage. This is a one-off limited intervention in the form of architectural cosmetics on the historic urban fabric of the city without serious attempts to address the establishment of heritage tools, systems, or practices that ensure the continuity of urban regeneration and community involvement on the long run. Inam²⁵ has elaborated how in several urban regeneration projects and heritage conservation endeavours in the city



Figure 4a One of the tourist trails: Iskafiyah Bazaar with a view of Abu Jaber House in the distance. (Rami Daher.)

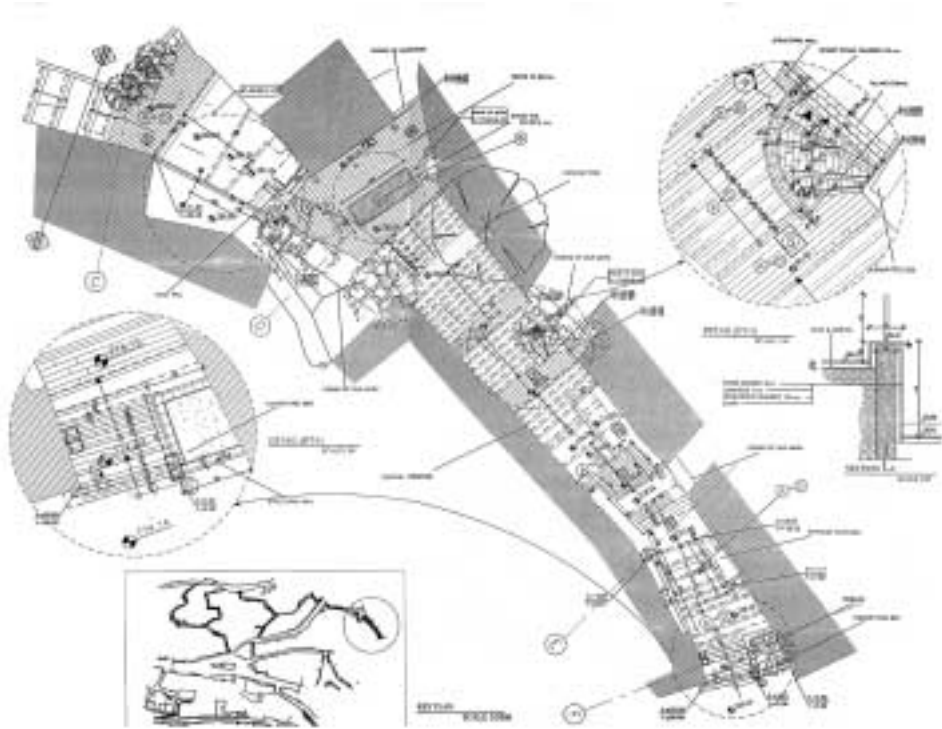


Figure 4b Sample of urban beautification projects in Salt ‘Rummanat Stairway’. (Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2000.)

the practice is manipulated by architects, engineers, and urban planners more than other experts (such as urban sociologists and anthropologists), and therefore such a practice is ‘obsessed with impressions and aesthetics of physical form; and it is practiced as an extension of architecture, which often implies an exaggerated emphasis on the end product’.

These projects in Jordan started with comprehensive planning at the scale of the whole historic city cores; in fact, they were seen by certain politicians as the optimum solution to the problems of historic city cores in Jordan. Gradually, they were reduced to very modest outcomes (action projects) focusing on open-space beautification and architectural cosmetics, which this paper labels as shock treatment. Even such action projects and urban cosmetic attempts, working within the donor agencies’ constraints and regulations, were very limited and did not target private properties or privately owned street façades.

In addition, and as explained above, the capacity-building programmes were concentrating on tourism promotion and did not attempt to put in place or even to initiate an urban regeneration system at the level of the Municipality. Such a system might address issues of building ownership, heritage conservation priorities, levels of intervention, designation, incorporation of heritage tools (such as incentives, transfer of investment

rights), awareness, and providing an infrastructure for urban heritage conservation. Furthermore, the Salt Project did not consider the provision of controlled urban growth mechanisms, which are badly needed in a fragile historic urban context.

Based on the study conducted by JICA, one major theme for the Salt Project was to enhance the urban character of the city to sustain urban heritage tourism where the townscape, people's lives, and the unique urban morphology will form an eco-museum (the concept of the City as Exhibit).²⁶ Having understood the main theme that guided the project, the components of the project (Heritage Museum, Visitor Centre, Tourist Trails, and Panoramic Lookouts) and the lack of a proper urban regeneration and area conservation approach do not come as a surprise. Swarbooke elaborates how 'in many towns and cities, tourism appears to have been thought of in isolation of urban regeneration schemes'.²⁷

The current project in Salt unfortunately did not make use of the newly approved Jordanian Heritage Law (the Architectural and Urban Heritage Protection Law) of 2003. This law addresses issues of area conservation, identification of heritage sites, listing, and also addresses the types of incentives that can be used to encourage the community to practise heritage conservation through restoration and rehabilitation of historic buildings and sites by offering different incentives such as exemption from income tax and sales tax. Even though the new Heritage Law has not yet been implemented in the country as it lacks implementation guidelines and mechanisms, the Salt Project could have been a perfect opportunity to investigate such implementation mechanisms and to research urban regeneration beyond urban space beautification and cosmetics. Tiesdell et al. emphasise the provision of local financing mechanisms that emerge from the local dynamics and contexts (e.g. philanthropists, tax incentives, revolving local funds, and trusts, and low-cost loans to entrepreneurs) in urban regeneration and area-based conservation endeavours.²⁸

This reality becomes an issue for public contestation when one attempts to take into consideration the nature of such projects (comprehensive planning at larger scales) and the huge amounts of funding (tens of millions of dollars, a large proportion of which ends as foreign debt). Such huge funds were channelled (over very short periods of time) through very complicated donor agencies' tendering procedures, complicated methodologies, numerous agents, government officials and central agencies, and experts involved in these urban regeneration/tourism projects, and yet resulted in very modest outcomes. Urban regeneration and heritage conservation demand diverse efforts and undertakings at different levels and they are usually very time consuming. The various urban regeneration projects in Jordan (including the one in Salt) had to be conceived, designed, and implemented over a very short period.

Gradually, and once these projects are implemented, a degree of reality tends to emerge in Jordanian historic city cores that the author labels 'swift urban heritage donor recipes'. These urban regeneration/tourism projects neither attempt to establish a sustainable practice of urban regeneration and heritage conservation in such communities, nor do they put in place urban management heritage tools that might engage the local authorities (e.g. municipalities). Yet such 'swift urban heritage donor recipes' put in place novel conceptions of power. In this particular case power is not top down or

repressive but circulates or flows between the various stakeholders facilitated by the formulation of a certain discourse and its various agents.

Local Voices of Resistance from Below: Re-legitimisation of Local Power

One of the main concerns that cannot be answered within the scope of this paper but still remains as an important question, is how urban regeneration, conservation and management can be institutionalised at the local level of GSM. And how GSM can become the future manager of the Historic Old Salt Development Project or, better still, become the initiator of other future projects in urban governance and regeneration/tourism that go beyond this particular project.

Of course, the relationship between the central state and the local Municipality is important and significantly affects the future of urban governance not only in Salt but also in the whole Kingdom. It is very important to understand moments of transformation that this relationship has gone through in the past. The geographic area known today as Jordan has gone through significant territorial and structural transformations in the past century. Two important transformations were the shifts from Ottoman to British Mandate (early 1920s) and from British Mandate to nation-state (late 1940s). During the Ottoman period, Salt, though linked to major urban provincial centres in the Provinces such as Damascus and Nablus, enjoyed considerable local autonomy.²⁹

With the inception of the nation-states, Salt witnessed, together with several other local and provincial towns in the region, a decline in self-autonomy and urban governance in favour of the newly emerging capital cities such as Amman, Damascus, and Beirut. Many of the urban management systems and tools that functioned as mediators between the state and public society in the 19th and early 20th centuries, such as the urban Waqf³⁰ for example, have been dismantled and have regressed to a state of paralysis. Currently, it is not difficult to conceive of a hidden antagonistic relationship between the centre in Amman and the peripheries in a town like Salt.

In general, the social and local history of the city, and other towns and villages in Jordan, had been marginalised through the dominance of official state history. Local regional realities of the recent past, in particular, have been subjugated and disguised throughout the unitary and dominant national discourses. Even in museums, for example, such local realities are not narrated and are disguised through a 'general folkloric tableau' of Jordanian official history.³¹

One very important group of agents in the Salt Project who played a major role in this very complicated mechanism of power networks was the local designers. During the design of the Salt Project, local consultants attempted to grant the Municipality and the city, through design, a prospect for different forms of local governance or an opportunity for re-legitimisation of local power.

One local designer added that at least in the Salt Project the designers attempted to change or alter the scope of the project to benefit the Municipality and the city. They negotiated with the donor agency and with MoTA to add certain items to the TOR (e.g. electrical-covered infrastructure, working on and addressing the elevations of buildings and steps, adding the adaptive reuse of certain selected buildings to the scope of

the work). In other instances, for example, negotiations were about the nature of the Museum of Abu Jaber (Historic House Museum of Abu Jaber). The adaptation of Abu Jaber House (see Figures 5a and 5b) into a heritage museum by one of the local consultants (the author of this paper) can be considered as one such attempt to credit the recent local social history of Salt and to re-legitimise local forms of realisation. The main ideas of the adaptation shunned the creation of the usual archaeological or even folkloric museum that would generally narrate the story of Jordan and opted instead to grant a voice to local Salti history (the social history of everyday life).



Figure 5a Historic House Museum of Abu Jaber, Salt, Jordan. (Rami Daher.)

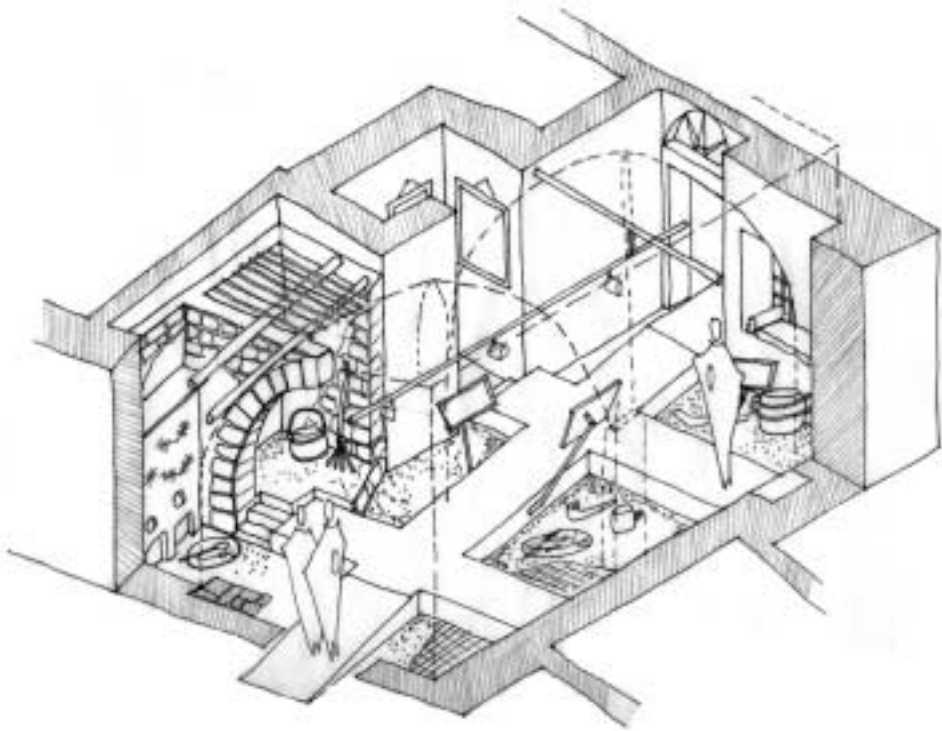


Figure 5b A sample of a designed space in the Historic House Museum of Abu Jaber (Historic Archaeology Room). (Rami Daher.)

Without going into the details of the design, the project concentrated mainly on the social urban history of Salt in the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, thus avoiding the eradication of difference that might occur through an official representation of local history imposed by the political centre which could act as a ‘unifying element ... [that] does not allow local voices to speak for themselves’.³²

Therefore, the new museum addressed an era that had been marginalised by the official discourse on history. This era (the 19th and early 20th centuries) is almost never represented in Jordanian museums. One of the objectives of the designer was not to transform the local urban and social history of Salt into a folkloric tableau in which the local political and historical distinctiveness disappears behind the integrative uniformity of official discourse.³³ Maffi³⁴ argues that the Historic House Museum of Abu Jaber in Salt represents ‘a new museographic, and perhaps even, ideological trend’ in the production of heritage in Jordan and in the region. In addition, the local consultants attempted to avoid gentrification in this adaptation by keeping the various shop tenants on the ground floor of the building (e.g. grocery stores, vegetable market, butcher) instead of forcibly shifting such functions to craft shops.

Conclusions

During the 1990s, conditional aid to Jordan concentrated on neo-liberalisation of different sectors of development that took the form of privatisation and the opening of Jordanian markets to global businesses. One of the main tracks for development emphasised for Jordan by the international donor agencies was to invest in, develop, and promote its tourism sector; cultural heritage in general and the urban heritage of Jordanian cities in particular were identified as one of the main assets for the generation of such development. This led to various urban regeneration/heritage tourism projects in cities like Amman, Jerash, Salt, Kerak, and Madaba that were funded by international donors (mainly the World Bank and JICA). These various projects were seen by different critical observers in the frame of a wider plan aimed at developing international tourism in Jordan and not leading to a local sustainable effort of urban regeneration and conservation of the urban heritage of the country.

This research is interested in understanding how a certain practice of urban heritage conservation appears in a city like Salt and whether or not this practice is institutionalised in public policy as part of the collective action of society. In addition, it is interested to understand the socio-economic and cultural rules and power relations that generated the current network of power and authority which eventually formed and represented an urban regeneration/tourism discourse that developed into a practice in the Kingdom.

These projects in Jordan started with comprehensive planning at the scale of the whole historic city cores; in fact, they were seen by certain politicians as the optimum solution to the various problems of historic city cores in Jordan. Gradually, they were reduced to very modest outcomes centring on open space beautification and architectural cosmetics. Even such urban heritage cosmetic attempts, within the donor agencies' constraints and regulations, were very limited and did not target private properties. Eventually, the research has been interested in understanding the nature of this outcome (end product) in urban regeneration endeavours and its impact on local, national, and regional interrelations with the urban and social heritage in the region. In general, there is an overemphasis on physical aspects of urban regeneration resulting in what can be termed an architectural cosmetic that freezes the cultural townscape and reflects only a banal appreciation of historic form and fabric without serious attempts to address the establishment of heritage tools, systems, or practices that ensure the continuity of urban regeneration and community involvement in the long term.

This reality becomes an issue for public contestation when one attempts to take into consideration the proclaimed nature of such projects (comprehensive planning at larger scales) and the huge amounts of funding involved. Such funds were channelled through very complicated donor agencies' tendering procedures, and yet ended up in very modest outcomes, while all the time foreign debt continued to accumulate.

The practice of urban regeneration/heritage management in Salt and elsewhere in Jordan, through the different international donor-funded projects, is tied up and linked to sporadic agents of power that generate shock treatments and modest outcomes rather than an institutionalised practice. These projects lead to the circulation of different

forms of urban and heritage projects within the region. By looking at such projects in Salt, but also at similar ones in other Jordanian cities such as Amman or Karak and even in other Lebanese locations such as Sidon and Tripoli, one can form a better understanding of current transformations in the production, manufacturing and consumption of heritage and of urban space, and the circulation of different forms of urban and heritage projects within the region. These transformations are leading to a very generic reality of both urban space and of heritage where not only local differences disintegrate but where a new system of visioning and acting on the city emerges.

Notes

- [1] DeGeorge, 'The Damascus Massacre', 70.
- [2] Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 16–18.
- [3] Daher, 'Heritage Conservation in Jordan: The Myth of Equitable and Sustainable Development', In CERMOC Document no. 10: *Patrimony and Heritage Conservation in Jordan*, Irene Maffi and Rami Daher. Beirut and Amman: CERMOC (Center for Studies and Researches on the Contemporary Middle East), 2002: 3.
- [4] Steinberg, 'Conservation and Rehabilitation of Urban Heritage in Developing Countries', 464.
- [5] Chang et al., 'Urban Heritage Tourism', 286, 299.
- [6] Robinson, 'Tourism Encounters', 40.
- [7] Swarbooke, 'Tourism, Economic Development and Urban Regeneration', 271.
- [8] Gray, 'Development Strategies and the Political Economy of Tourism in Contemporary Jordan', 325.
- [9] JICA stands for the Japanese International Cooperation Agency.
- [10] Joffe, 'Introduction', xvi.
- [11] Lynch, *State Interests and Public Spheres*.
- [12] Hazbun, 'Mapping the Landscape of the "New Middle East"', 331.
- [13] *Ibid.*, 340.
- [14] Patin, 'Will Market Forces Rule?', *The UNESCO Courier*, July/August 1999, 36.
- [15] *Ibid.*
- [16] JICA, *Detailed Design for the Tourism Sector Development Project in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan—Final Report—Executive Summary*. Pacific Consultants International, Tokyo: Yamashita Sekkei Inc., 2000.
- [17] JICA, *The Study of the Tourism Development Plan in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan—Study Report: Executive Summary*, 1996.
- [18] Maffi, 'New Museographic Trends in Jordan', 208.
- [19] The World Bank directed Jordan to invest in this sector and some of the early sites to be addressed were Jerash, Kerak, and Petra. UNESCO and MOTA worked together on the Petra Priority Action Plan in 1995. These very early projects were funded by the World Bank.
- [20] Salt is one of the most historically and architecturally significant cities in Jordan. Once the capital of Jordan (in the early 1920s), Salt enjoys unique architecture with its yellow stone façades, bazaars, historic mosques and churches, and different courtyard houses.
- [21] The Project Steering Committee is composed of representatives from the different ministries, but MoTA and MoP are strongly represented and influential in this committee.
- [22] SAPROF Team, 1997.
- [23] Larkham, *Conservation and the City*, 5.
- [24] Research and design (as elaborated by one MOTA individual) consume a huge amount of the total budget (about 35–45%). This is a very high percentage when taking into consideration the fact that only around 60% or even less of the total amount is left for the actual execution of the projects in general.

- [25] Inam, 'Meaningful Urban Design', 35.
- [26] JICA, *Detailed Design for the Tourism Sector Development Project in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan—Final Report—Historic Old Salt Development Sub-project*. Pacific Consultants International, Tokyo: Yamashita Sekkei Inc., 2000.
- [27] Swarbooke, 'Tourism, Economic Development and Urban Regeneration', 277.
- [28] Tiesdell et al., *Revitalizing Historic Urban Quarters*, 75.
- [29] Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire*.
- [30] A charitable foundation established by the public for the common good such as the cleaning of streets, building schools, renovating old deteriorated historic houses, opening up soup kitchens and shelters for the poor, and so on.
- [31] Maffi, 'New Museographic Trends in Jordan', 208–24.
- [32] *Ibid.*, 210.
- [33] *Ibid.*, 210–11.
- [34] *Ibid.*, 212.

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