Place-based heritage regeneration in Madaba, Jordan

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Abstract

While image-based heritage regeneration, emphasizing the preservation of the immediately visible environment, has dominated efforts in most Islamic and developing countries, this article uses a case study of Madaba, Jordan to highlight the advantages of place-based regeneration approaches that focus on the preservation local users and uses built environments and spaces. As Jordan continues to face economic challenges, officials have focused on image-based regeneration projects refurbishing high-profile sites with more potential earners while giving little consideration to less well-known sites such as the town of Madaba. This study traces the spatial, functional, and symbolic values of outdoor courtyards (ahwash), as a common feature of vernacular architecture of dwellings in the town known for its Byzantine-era churches. The article analyses forces threatening their sustainability and suggests that policy-makers reorient the county’s heritage regeneration policies away from image-based practices towards place-based ones. The article offers a theoretical framework for place-based heritage regeneration and argues such approaches would promise to uncover the human face of cities and their particular social and cultural features. These could better help enhance urban liveability, increases tourist satisfaction, and augments local economic viability.