Abstract

Cities in developed countries are increasingly challenged by the advent of a global economy that mandates generating creative images of their cities. Meanwhile, it is argued in this study that globalisation, and its Arabic version of Dubaisation, is affecting the sustainability of cities as distinguished destinations because urban representation is influenced not only by ‘standardised global cliche’ but also by ‘standardised local images’ that transforms local cultures into contested heritage as it intensifies an official and civic nexus. The paradox is examined in Jordan, specifically the famously branded ‘city of mosaic’ – Madaba, where the state government is currently competing for attracting international investments and tourism development to achieve neoliberal urban restructuring. Urban heritage representation has been subject to passive dominant official discourse that rests upon orthodox mosaic practices of remote past – a praxis that is not necessarily endorsed by civic *Ahl elbalad*. The local mosaic heritage has hitherto been transformed into a competing culture that fosters heritage dualities and challenges the internal implications of heritage representation with its elevated feelings of alienation, disempowerment, gentrification and socio-cultural exclusion. A theoretical framework has been suggested for an alternative civic-orientated heritage revival that allows reconciliation between the official/civic nexus yet meanwhile stimulates creative urban images and identities. Other insights are also considered in the study.