

Balancing Heritage Preservation and Regeneration in Riyadh: Objectives and Considerations

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1 ABSTRACT

Heritage regeneration and redevelopment of city centers are essential strategies for long-term sustainability and resilience. These processes aim to develop heritage assets by transforming them into sustainable cultural spaces to meet the city's environmental, social, and economic needs. These processes create vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable urban spaces while maintaining and enhancing the unique character and identity of the city by triggering city dynamics in response to its rich heritage as an economic development engine and as a tool to attract new investments and businesses. This paper explores the interaction between heritage preservation and regeneration, a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that requires thoughtful approaches. This interplay poses a variety of challenges and opportunities for cities' social, economic, and cultural dynamics. Using heritage regeneration to redevelop cities, this paper examines the ideas that make heritage centers a powerful force in developing methods including cultural heritage in urban planning. This paper limits its scope to Riyadh, a city with a rich cultural heritage and a rapidly evolving urban landscape. It explains how applying the strategies of heritage regeneration has intensified in many historically significant neighborhoods and central areas in Riyadh city and provides an insightful demonstration of how heritage preservation and regeneration are interconnected by offering a holistic representation of what has changed in Riyadh Heritage Center. This includes understanding heritage considerations and setting clear objectives for city center development. A balance between heritage regeneration and preservation is also stressed in the paper. The paper concludes with some results that indicate that establishing a cohesive urban identity requires a balance between traditional and modern images. In addition, it requires promoting cultural resources, such as cultural heritage.

Keywords: balancing, preservation, revitalisation, regeneration, heritage

2 INTRODUCTION

Heritage preservation is a critical tool to enhance the public's appreciation and understanding of valuable cultural resources that form part of their identity. In line with developmentalism, heritage regeneration has also picked up momentum globally through various attempts by governments throughout history to achieve overall development (Said et al., 2013). They also added that it is a strategy that implements the discourse of 'cultural improvement' and beautification, supported by many existing investments.

Redevelopment projects involve the development of an area that has already been occupied by structures, providing a way to reverse the area's physical, social, and economic decline. To stimulate economic growth and community development, it is imperative to emphasize the repurposing and revitalization of underutilized and vacant properties.

This study discusses the importance of balancing preservation with heritage regeneration, which is particularly difficult to maintain (Kong and Yeoh, 1994). Thus, the development concepts of heritage centers are based on modern, well-developed plans for revitalizing and reusing them.

As for the scope of this research, regeneration means revitalizing a region with social, physical, and economic activities. Previous work described it as a 'growth industry' since heritage assets can play a central role in successful regeneration – they represent an opportunity rather than a constraint (BPF, 2013). Heritage regeneration has significant economic benefits that extend beyond the individual building to the surrounding area and community. Heritage regeneration is a global phenomenon, often linked to both strategies seeking to develop so-called cultural industries and a process of 'place-making' (Pendlebury & Porfyriou, 2017).

This study examines the heritage regeneration project in Riyadh's central area as a method of urban development. Riyadh offers an urban setting that shapes the connection between heritage preservation and regeneration within the overall discourse on redevelopment practices. This is against Riyadh's ambition to become a cosmopolis and mega-destination. Under Vision 2030.

This paper discusses the importance of heritage regeneration as an instrument of urban redevelopment. The paper starts with a review of heritage and regeneration, with a focus on the Riyadh context. The second and

third sections examine the projects involved in heritage regeneration in Riyadh's central area and their associated impact.

It is worth mentioning that this study brings a theoretical and conceptual approach to the sustainable regeneration of heritage buildings.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

Built cultural heritage symbolizes the identity and history of people. It is an integral part of a nation's living memory and history. The built cultural heritage has been passed on from one generation to another. It is a fundamental element that constitutes a society's collective memory and cultural identity (Taha, 2023). It carries an identity and can be engraved with memories and meanings extending beyond its aesthetic or historic qualities and being part of a distinctive environment. In cosmopolitan cities, heritage resources play a significant role in addressing urban developments. Heritage preservation is a comprehensive review of the works available on heritage that reveals its importance. Nowadays, there are increasingly more heritage-led initiatives, preservation societies, and projects

Preservation practices emerged as a form of appreciation for heritage. Additionally, it is a means of preserving and conserving heritage that our forefathers have bequeathed to us in architectural works or products (Earl, 2003.)

The regeneration process is a major industry that has shaped today's complex urban planning system. (Kuutma, 2013). Regeneration is a planning scheme for rebuilding, improving, and introducing old heritage settings into a new, modern, and economically viable environment (Smith, 2007). Regeneration is defined as being synonymous with revitalization. However, urban regeneration is a collective picture that integrates economic, environmental, social, cultural, symbolic, and political features (Bianchini & Parkinson, 1993). It is a practice that utilizes the potential of that decline in the use of heritage buildings to improve the physical, economic, social, and cultural surroundings (Said et al., 2013). Urban redevelopment using heritage regeneration strategy as a concept and practice of revival in the historic urban environment appeared in the early 1990s. Since then, it has been a dominant practice in restoring historical cores.

Some of the more famous examples of the application of this model represent the reconstruction of the cities of Genoa and Barcelona (El Menchawy, 2008). This strategy has spread from Porto to Cairo and Bahia to Shanghai (De Cesari and Dimova 2018).

Urban redevelopment using heritage regeneration assumes a comprehensive and integrated approach to systematically rebuilding and revitalizing the urban environment. It considers all the dimensions of space and its material and immaterial data, which form the backbone of sustainable life, the identity, and the city's image. As a comprehensive process, this strategy relates to reconstructing an individual building and involves a wider urban area (Kostešić et al., 2019).

This demands a large degree of equilibrium between appropriate actions and improvements while considering the existing socio-economic networks and conservation methods and standards. When discussing the impacts and functions of heritage on urban redevelopment, we specifically focus on numerous manifestations of value concerning heritage. In the case of heritage-led regeneration, urban redevelopment involves negotiation and resistance, mainly from local communities (Skoll & Korsten, 2014; Scott, 2010).

Moreover, heritage regeneration is one of the best practices most used in redevelopment in alignment with theories and techniques for heritage preservation. Heritage preservation and regeneration can be balanced by understanding that the two concepts are not opposing but relatively supportive of each other.

In line with previous work, researchers demonstrated that preservation ensures the protection of heritage authenticity, while regeneration emphasizes making heritage assets available and useful to current or future generations. Though preservation and regeneration are two different fields, the ways of urban development that rely on regenerating heritage have met with success internationally; however, these methods and strategies have received very little scholarly attention in the Arab world in general and the KSA in particular.

Most of the existing works on urban redevelopment systems are about open space, while studies regarding heritage conservation often confine themselves only to architectural contexts and do not address its relationship to the wider framework of city revitalization or redevelopment. In addition, urban

redevelopment is a field dominated by studies on the governance and management of cities, but rarely about how it relates to heritage conservation (Song, 2017).

Based on the short preview above, this study claims that urban redevelopment in central heritage sites is a mix of heritage preservation and regeneration using this strategy, and striking a balance between both approaches in urban development projects may result in vibrant and sustainable culturally rich spaces that preserve heritage while meeting the needs of present and future generations.

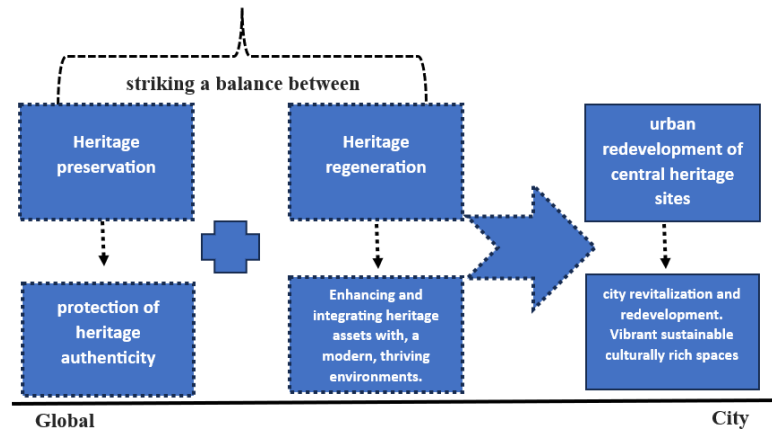


Fig. 1: The synergy between Preservation and Regeneration (Author)

4 RESEARCH METHODS

By reviewing the current literature, research, and experiences on urban heritage, including existing approaches, frameworks, case studies, and qualitative methods employed in this research, we provide a theoretical and conceptual approach to sustainable regeneration of heritage buildings and a comprehensive analysis of the correlation between heritage conservation and regeneration processes and their impact on urban redevelopment. The author uses a mixed-method approach involving built environment analysis, online searches of official websites for heritage and city development authorities in Riyadh, and thorough interviews with stakeholders.

To analyze urban redevelopment and heritage regeneration as a process, the research used multiple field trips to the selected sites and a collection of secondary sources, such as city maps, recent heritage and urban policy documents, and photos of the built environment to capture evidence of the presence of regeneration, beautification of urban spaces, and functional upgrades. The combination of these methods and the visual forms contributes to the aesthetic and value analysis of heritage sites and their relationship with urban redevelopment.

5 THE STUDY AREA: RATIONALE AND BACKGROUNDS

This research investigates urban redevelopment in Riyadh's heritage center through heritage regeneration and preservation. Very few studies of this central district have considered urban redevelopment related to heritage preservation. This research is important because it will develop an analytical framework for urban redevelopment and analyze the outcome of combining and balancing heritage preservation and regeneration as strategies to achieve urban redevelopment. The research will concentrate on the historical heart of Riyadh, especially its central district with a political capital, a major mosque, and a busy commercial zone catering to an entire province.

The Central Area is about 1,500 hectares, which was the core of Riyadh's past, and its current character does not reflect its importance to the city as it has undergone a lot of changes over time. Consequently, it has changed its physical condition as neglect and decay are observable in many parts (ATKINS, 2012).

5.1 The cultural significance of the center of Riyadh

The Old Riyadh is characterized by its unique architectural character that reflects architecture through several symbols (Taha, 2023). The Center of Riyadh represents its political and administrative center. It includes the Palace of Governance, various government headquarters, and several national cultural and heritage institutions. By the same token, the history of Riyadh's old center dates back to the 1800s, when it

stood as the center of the ancient Najd culture and still, to this day, continues to be the historic core of the modern city of Riyadh.

This region plays an important economic role at the city level. This center is also the historic center of Riyadh and is a cultural and historical treasure for Saudi Arabia, showcasing traditional architecture and landmarks comprising a string of distinct neighborhoods. The most prominent are Qasr al Hokum, Al-Masmak Palace, and Historic Square (Heritage Commission, 2021). Its narrow streets and markets offer insight into past daily life, reflecting Saudi folk culture. This center hosts events and activities. The area contributes to cultural enrichment and maintains inter-generational communication. Overall, conserving historic centers is crucial to preserving identity, promoting cultural awareness, and attracting tourism to Riyadh.

It is important to consider the historical role of the Central Area of Riyadh in the future. Historically, the Central Area performed multifaceted functions as a political, administrative, religious, and trading center. Despite fluctuations in the area's prosperity and a period of significant change, the Central Area today retains many of the fundamental strengths that underpinned the area's historical importance. These include government and other major public functions, including law courts and ministries, in addition to commercial, retail, and other activities (ATKINS, 2013). Throughout the last century, the region has been rich in historical and cultural assets that reflect the city's development and the Kingdom's formation. There is a risk of decline for these assets. A significant amount of effort will be required to preserve, protect, and enhance these assets as part of the renewal framework.

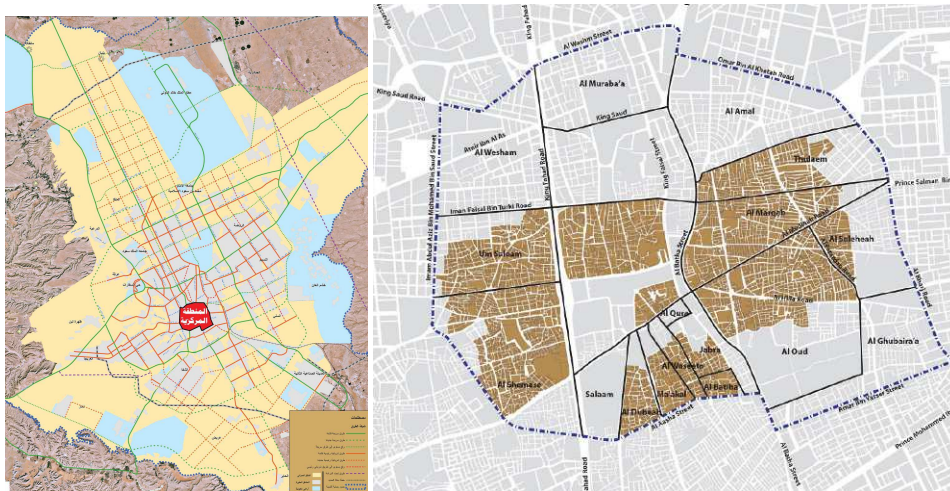


Fig. 2 (left): The Central Area with the Overall City Urban Growth. Source: (AL-Riyadh Development Authority: ADA). Fig. 3 (right): Heritage Structures within the Central Area (ATKINS, 2013).

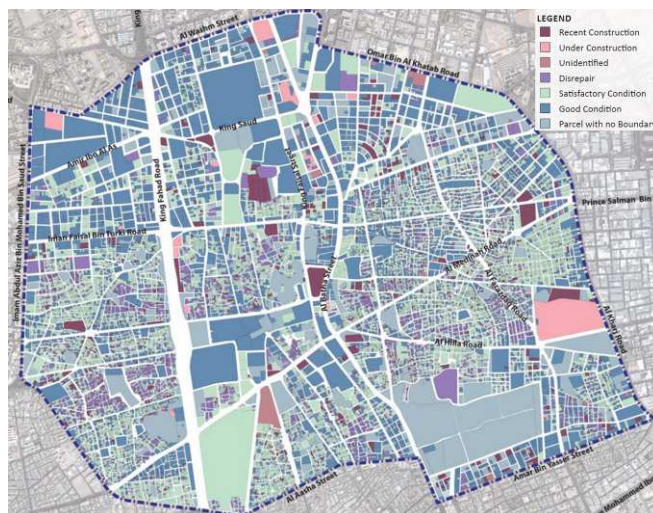


Fig.3: The physical condition of the buildings in Riyadh Center (ATKINS, 2013).

5.2 The physical condition of the center of Riyadh

The physical condition of the central area before the development project began was bad, and Saudi residents were forced to relocate. Their properties have become difficult and expensive to maintain because of their departure. In addition to the congestion, inadequate parking, poor public transportation provision, and equally poor infrastructure, large areas of the south-western sector, south and mid-central sector, and mid-eastern sector suffer from poorly built conditions and include Organic Mixed Use (High-Density Residential Dominant) Areas. Conversely, Northern areas are generally in better condition. The Central Area is a mixed-use (heritage dominant) area with many heritage structures and a mix of uses with vibrant shopping streets. This central area requires more intervention than areas limited to the public realm and facility upgrades.



Fig.4: The physical conditions of the buildings in the center of Riyadh. Source: author.

Over the past decades, rapid urban development in Riyadh has caused residents to move from downtown to other parts of the city, resulting in a decline in urban use. This attitude encouraged expatriates to settle in Riyadh downtown and replace residential uses with uses that support commercial activities like warehouses due to low rents that accompanied the deterioration of the area's urban situation. As a result, the downtown's role and main functions were negatively affected. The remaining heritage building assets must be protected since many have already been lost.

This regeneration project in Riyadh will enhance the quality of life in this central area. Additionally, this will make it a desirable residential area for native city residents (Saudis). By implementing such projects, foreign arrivals in the historic center will be reduced because of rising real estate prices after its development, which will allow the center's original demographic of Saudis, particularly those who own businesses within the historic center, to be restored. In the longer term, the focus would be to retain the share of legal non-Saudis employed locally. Saudi nationals' share will increase by providing employment opportunities and new housing areas served by community facilities and services.

Over the 20th and 21st centuries, Riyadh has experienced rapid growth. There are buildings from each of these decades in the city's center. As Riyadh experienced rapid urban expansion, the central area became neglected and disorganized. The city center's use and users changed as people moved to newly constructed suburban areas: more expatriates settled there. Due to affordable rents, low-income workers reoccupied many abandoned (and decaying) properties and used some as warehouses to store their supplies. Most historic center residents are foreigners who work in one of the souks or small businesses nearby (Klingman, 2021).

Riyadh Downtown is characterized by several historical landmarks, which resemble a central icon for most Saudis. It has many plazas and traditional markets, some mud residential buildings have been distorted, and many are in pristine physical condition (ATKINS,2013). The center has no contemporary projects or modern buildings. Moreover, most modern developments in Riyadh have occurred in the north, outside the buffer zone of the central area

6 HERITAGE REGENERATION AND PRESERVATION: A PATH TO RIYADH CENTER REDEVELOPMENT:

The following section provides an overview of the key developments and projects—existing, planned, or under implementation—that help set the general development context for the Central Area regeneration project, which included cultural heritage as a vital component of beautifying and shaping urban space creation. (AL-Riyadh Development Authority, 2015: ADA).

Because of the importance of this center, local authorities are planning to revive the area and make it fully part of the city. To this end, a regeneration plan has been implemented to build an attractive, lively, and eco-friendly city core. (ATKINS, 2013), (AL-Riyadh Development Authority, 2015: ADA)

The paper here will examine and discuss the close links between heritage regeneration and heritage preservation as a tool for urban redevelopment in more detail in the case of Riyadh by analyzing how these strategies will turn its center into a commercial mixed-use destination using specific heritage destinations and iconic architecture. It is one of the key goals that formulated the strategic framework of Saudi Vision 2030, which focuses on making this center and the whole of the city among the top 100 cities in the world due to its valuable cultural heritage. A renewed city center, internationally recognized and enjoyed by all as the living heart of Riyadh.

6.1 Developing Riyadh's Central Area: Preserving and Regenerating Heritage in Three Key Areas.

Three major areas of the Central Area have been identified. For preservation, rehabilitation, and regeneration, each of the three areas identified will undergo a comprehensive redevelopment based on a master plan for the area. These three areas are shown above in the figure below and are briefly described below:

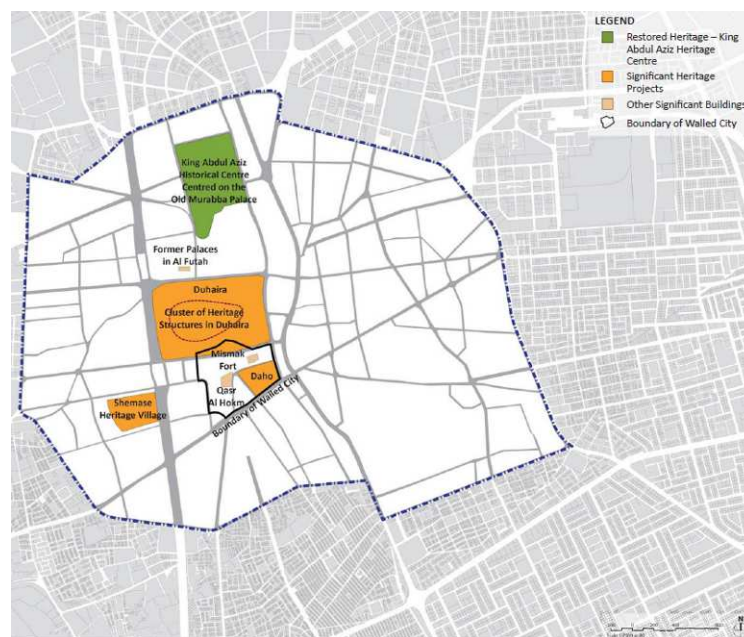


Fig.5: Heritage Led Regeneration Projects Source: (Atkins,2013)

Al Dhahira district project:

This is regarded as one of the most significant projects under consideration now and is designed to revive the Al Dhahira, which is within the central heart of Riyadh. Large sections of this area will be regenerated while keeping heritage buildings in many of the city's remaining original urban contexts. This project received preliminary approval from the AL-Riyadh Development Authority. The purpose of the "Dhahira district" development project is to reinforce the urban structure between the Palace of Government area and the King Abdulaziz Historical Center and to make the Dhahira area a large commercial center of high standard. It consists of commercial, office, and residential facilities, in addition to providing various service facilities.

The implementation of the Dhahira area development project is taking place. Through several governmental and private agencies, namely the Supreme Commission for Riyadh Development, Riyadh Municipality, and the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage, the plan aims at preserving it, bringing back activities proper to it' and rehabilitating, restoring, and preparing buildings of heritage for reuse that preserve their urban identity elements and components in it and attracting visitors.

The northwestern side of the place is the updated design of the area. The most significant landmark of this project is the hotel buildings, which are distinguished by their superstructures. Public transportation will be linked to the area by establishing a public transportation station.

Al Dhahira district project: This is considered one of the largest projects currently under consideration and aims to regenerate the Al Dhahira district located within the central spine. This area will be comprehensively redeveloped while maintaining and restoring many of the city's remaining heritage buildings within their original urban context.

The uses were varied in the new design of Al Dhahira. As an illustration, the distinctive texture of the mud buildings was taken advantage of and used as residential units, with the addition of modern residential buildings of multiple heights in the western part of the area, followed by a group of office buildings adjacent to King Fahd Road. Most of the commercial uses were concentrated on the main internal streets of the area, while the cultural and touristic uses were distributed in the central part of the area. This area is considered the strip linking the Palace of Governance area and the King Abdul Aziz Historical Center.



Fig.6: View of Al-Dhahira neighborhood and Alshmisi after development (ATKIN-2013)

Al Daho redevelopment project: Al Daho is one of the oldest parts of Ad Deirah and occupies a strategic location within the 200-year-old city walls of Riyadh. Its mud-brick structures lay in ruins for many years before being designated for conservation and rehabilitation by the Royal Commission for Riyadh City, RCRC (Ayes Saint Gross, 2015). In addition, the site should be developed into a mixed-use tourist attraction for national and international visitors. This second heritage-led regeneration project will reinvigorate a core commercial district of the Central Area, creating a significant landmark tourist attraction that builds on the success of the Qasr Al Hokum development (RCRC, 1989). The AL-Riyadh Development Authority leads this project, ADA, and is in the early stages of construction, with demolition works already underway at the site. The importance of this project comes from the location of the Al-Daho district. The houses of this district will contain galleries of indigenous arts and crafts and indoor marketplaces.



Fig.7: View of Al-Daho neighborhood the current situation and after development (Royal Commission for Riyadh City, RCRC)

Al Shimisi project: Al Shimisi district is a small zone of dilapidated modern and mud brick houses west of the Central Area and is amongst the first western expansion areas outside the original walled city. The municipality plans to restore this area of Al Shimisi as a traditional heritage neighborhood to be included in the Heritage Trail. However, the Historical Village project in Al Shimisi currently remains in the initial feasibility study and data collection stages (ATKIN, 2013).

The main concentration will be conservation, rehabilitation, and restoration in each of the three development projects. In addition, each undertaking will serve as another impetus for the re-development of adjacent areas that will push forward the comprehensive rejuvenation of the Central District.

Al-Daho project and Al-Shimisi's planned heritage district constitute two existing models of heritage neighborhood revitalization. Both include mud-brick structures that have been in ruins for many years and have residential buildings. However, Al Doho is in the walled center of Riyadh. It was developed to accommodate commercial functions, including governmental offices and ground-floor retail. AL Shmisi can be considered the first expansion of the center to the west direction, and it will be developed to accommodate as a heritage village, Both projects al Shimisi and Aldoho are on the edge of the heritage trail project which is proposed in the development plans. These two breakthrough models of heritage regeneration methods aim at urban redevelopment, some other good examples can be mentioned including the renovation of some mud-brick palaces in the Al Futah district.

6.2 The Proposed Central Area Heritage Trail Project

Riyadh Center's redevelopment plans also included a new tourist, cultural, and heritage route established from King Abdulaziz Historical Centre in the north to the Heritage Village, which will be constructed at Al-Shimisi District in the south. The route will cross all heritage, cultural, and entertainment landmarks at Al-Zuhairah, Al-Daho, Qasr Al-Hokum District, and Salam Park. (Royal Commission for Riyadh City, RCRC)

The development of a 'Central Area Heritage Trail' forms a key component of heritage preservation in Riyadh Center, which merges redevelopment, heritage preservation, and regeneration. This trail will be the heritage trail through the heart of Riyadh for residents and visitors, and it will describe the evolution of Riyadh from a traditional society to a modern state. The Heritage Trail will provide opportunities for active exploration, wandering, discovery, and experiencing historic places and traditional culture. (ATKIN,2013)

The Heritage Trail would lead visitors on a themed journey. Residents and visitors will catch many glimpses of Riyadh's evolution and buildings from all decades of the 20th and 21st centuries. Each one of these buildings will provide different but complementary heritage experiences. The proposed route of the Heritage Trail is identified in the figure below.

The Heritage Trail is hoped to become an important tourist attraction within the revitalized Central Area. When implemented, the route is anticipated to be carefully designed to be instantly recognizable. It will link the various cultural facilities located within the Central Sector—both historic buildings and new facilities—that will be introduced as part of the regeneration works.

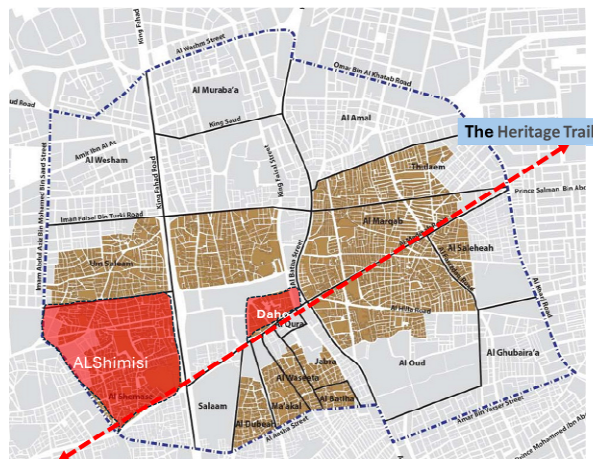


Fig.8: Central Area Heritage Trail (ATKIN,2013) edited by the author.

7 THE ONGOING KEY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS BY AL-RIYADH DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (ADA)

Aligned with the vision of central area development, the AL-Riyadh Development Authority (ADA) has already taken the lead in restoring several key heritage structures within the central area by identifying important structures and their forms to ensure their longer-term protection and their restoration of dilapidated traditional and mud brick buildings to preserve them for posterity.

Several significant projects have already been identified to upgrade and enhance the Central Area while preserving key historical assets, urban form, and the area's distinct urban fabric to reconstruct several heritage neighborhoods to revive the memory of traditional everyday Saudi society.

7.1 King Abdulaziz Historical Center Project

Many projects have already been implemented, such as the King Abdul Aziz Heritage Centre (KAAHC), which reflects Riyadh's heritage, culture, and history and blends with its architectural environs. The project is part of the Qasr Al-Hukm development program carried out by the Royal Commission for Riyadh City.

The center has modern and multipurpose facilities that transform it into a cultural oasis where visitors can find entertainment and benefit from its premises. The center hosts the Public Park, National Museum, Antiquities and Museums Headquarters, Al-Murabba' Palace, Traditional Mud Buildings, Darat Al-Malik Abdulaziz, King Abdulaziz Public Library, King Abdulaziz Mosque, King Abdulaziz Auditorium, and a modern road network, in addition to many public utilities like the mosque and walkways. (Royal Commission for Riyadh City, RCRC)

The design is exceptionally environment-friendly, with vast green spaces where various trees and shrubs were planted to alleviate pollution and high temperatures, filter the air, and serve the neighboring districts.

These are all significant regeneration projects that have been implemented successfully in the recent past and will continue to play a key role in future scenarios. Some of these projects could benefit from minor enhancements, such as improvements to the public realm around Qasr Al Hukum.



Fig.9: (KAAHC) Traditional and Mud Buildings (Royal Commission for Riyadh City, RCRC)

7.2 Qasr Al-Hukm District Development Project

The Royal Commission for Riyadh City also approved in 2015 an enormous integrated plan. According to the Royal Commission for Riyadh City(RCRC), this scheme's main point is "protection and conservation of cultural heritage; preserving current commercial activities." The plans reflect remarkable development in most aspects of Riyadh's historical heart, such as improving public transport services, walkability, parks, and public spaces.

Qasr Al-Hukum District, the city's heart, is one of the most important examples that reflect the balancing between heritage regeneration and preservation and the development aims. The RCRC implemented this project, and a comprehensive strategy was developed to cover all aspects of the Qasr Al-Hukum Development Project, depending on the conclusions of the relevant detailed studies. The strategy's key axes aimed to keep expropriation within the minimum limits to open the door before private sector investments, respond to market mechanisms and order/demand requirements, and support the general tendency towards regeneration and architectural improvement rather than reconstruction.



Fig.10: Al-Adl Plaza preserved its original location, and Qasr Al-Hukum after restoration to maintain its features. (RCRC)

7.3 Celebration of Open Spaces and Integrating Intangible Heritage in Regeneration Projects

The plans of the Riyadh Downtown Development Program initiative added more space to the local open areas and parks by providing public squares and open plains connected to the public transport stations via

safe pedestrian walkways. The area stretching from the south of the King Abdulaziz Historical Centre to the Qasr Al-Hukm District will add more open spaces using the cultural and heritage route, which will be a key part of the implementation plan (Royal Commission for Riyadh City, RCRC)The expansion of the KAAHC site to the south and east is the planned 'next phase' of this renowned undertaking. The territorial expansion of the site will involve redeveloping several existing poor-quality housing and commercial areas, allowing both existing facilities and attractions within KAAHC to expand. The historical buildings that have been revamped and reformulated are within the extended center, which will have new visitor attractions. (ATKIN, 2013).



Fig.11: Ariel view of King Abdulaziz Historical Center (Royal Commission for Riyadh City, RCRC)

The plan also included expanding Salam Park eastward, establishing public gardens and parks to serve the area and the city in general, and afforestation along the main roads and streets. This development contains large areas of passive and active recreational open space that are a key attraction for residents of the Central Area and the many visitors to the area. To help address the considerable latent demand for large open spaces and retreat areas in the city. (ATKIN, 2013).



Fig.12: View of AlSalam Park after extension (Royal Commission for Riyadh City, RCRC)

The King Abdul Aziz Historical Centre (KAAHC) and Salaam Park projects developed by the AL-Riyadh Development Authority (ADA) have established two of Riyadh's most significant landscapes, open spaces, recreational areas, and celebration spaces. Those projects represent a very important example of balancing heritage regeneration and preservation while considering urban redevelopment methods, in addition to the efforts that have been made to include intangible heritage during regeneration projects to create synergy between heritage and modernity. These initiatives are vital for bringing life and meaning to the physical transformations in the area. By incorporating intangible heritage, such as traditional practices, cultural expressions, and social rituals, into regeneration projects, a deeper connection to the historical and cultural significance of the area can be established. This approach not only preserves the tangible aspects of heritage but also ensures that the intangible elements that define the identity and character of the historical center are safeguarded and celebrated. Integrating intangible heritage adds richness and authenticity to the regeneration projects, creating a harmonious blend of tradition and modernity that enhances the overall experience for visitors and inhabitants.

8 DISCUSSION

This paper analyzes the development plan for downtown Riyadh, Saudi Arabia's capital. Rapid development and modernization have changed the central area and the rest of the city. However, a significant number of major heritage and cultural assets remain that have the potential to provide future generations with an insight into how life once was in the city.

Based on the strategies discussed in this paper, the physical environment in most of these centers can be developed through regeneration. The analysis indicates that the proposed regeneration framework implemented in Riyadh effectively dealt with the Central Area's heritage regeneration and preservation

needs. Urban projects seeking to promote Riyadh, which falls in the city's center, contributed to conservation and urban planning.

The Central Area will showcase Saudi Arabia's unique heritage. It will promote the Kingdom as a cultured, civilized, vibrant, beautiful, peaceful, and global city. Protection and enhancement of these key assets must remain a fundamental component of Central Area renewal.

The development project in Riyadh's central area represents a notable success in unveiling past traits in a modern way. The Royal Commission for Riyadh City was keen on highlighting the originality of the area, which represents the city's cultural heart, by transforming Riyadh's historic center into a national cultural center. This is given the city's pioneering role as Saudi Arabia's capital. Additionally, developing the historic districts of a city serves as the nucleus of urban and cultural development, ensuring sustainable development. (Royal Commission for Riyadh City, RCRC), in a grand move to transform the central downtown into a polished urban destination, which emphasizes the importance of synergy and integration between preservation and renewal approaches to achieve comprehensive urban renewal and development for city centers.

It is imperative to note that some urban redevelopment schemes used in Riyadh required the demolition of some neighborhood buildings and their replacement with a new urban structure. This approach highlights the importance of blending rehabilitation, adaptive reuse, and rebuilding deteriorated or dysfunctional structures. It also considers the significance and integration of the current heritage fabric. These urban redevelopment schemes are used in the southern zone of Al Shimise because of the existing poor quality residential areas and buildings, which permit the replacement of many of the neighborhood's buildings with a completely fresh urban structure as a tool to improve the southern Areas via proposing new residential development, which will replace the poor quality 'Arabic house' style. This development will take advantage of the existing street patterns and urban form reflective of this older city area (See Fig 6 above). This development will be done along with renovation and renewal of the public realm and community facilities and services.

It is important to note that, despite the significant improvement of souks and bazaars which have developed within the Central Area, particularly in the inner commercial core, and the enhancement of connectivity between the inhabitants and the heritage center, a low level of community participation appears to be evident in the planning process for development for several reasons. These reasons are the absence of participation, the unwillingness of individuals to participate, and the inability of urban authorities' media platforms to interact with local communities effectively (Aldegheishem, 2023).

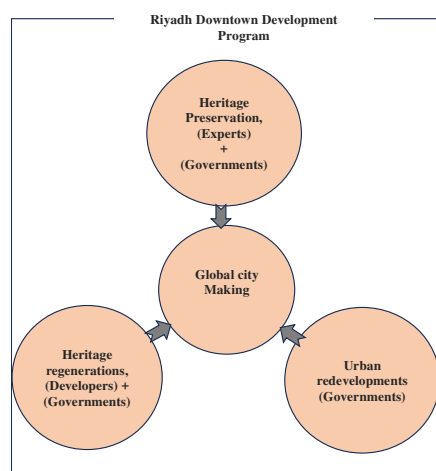


Fig.13: The relation between Heritage regeneration, Preservation, and Urban redevelopment. Source: author.

9 CONCLUSION

This article provides a better understanding of heritage's role in urban redevelopment and renovation.

Heritage preservation is a dynamic and evolving process fueled by tangible and intangible elements. Based on the local socio-cultural context, these practices draw on various methodologies. Even though preservation and development are two distinct issues, heritage regeneration can be used in the fight against urban decay. Furthermore, it can serve as a means of repurposing space and revitalizing historic areas. This increases the

population's opportunities and contributes to economic development in the cities' central areas of cultural importance. This is if heritage regeneration practices involve improving the environment and maintaining a desirable place to live. Moreover, it should mention the social aspects of development along with the economic and physical ones. Successful regeneration methods can also lead to the loss of unique townscape characteristics, so heritage preservation should be integrated into urban development.

This study illustrates how local governments and developers actively use heritage as a soft but powerful governance tool in urban redevelopment programs. By combining heritage renewal and preservation, integrated planning can be achieved, which integrates both tangible and intangible aspects of heritage.

Redevelopment strategies led by heritage regeneration have a significant impact on local communities. They are intended to enable meaningful and positive change in various city contexts. In addition, they are intended to enable heritage to fulfill its symbolic functions. Therefore, any heritage regeneration strategy should be comprehensive, interdisciplinary, and participatory. In addition to integrating heritage preservation with modern redevelopment, all urban actors and institutions must be involved in the urban planning process and regeneration projects in a way that resonates with local communities to ensure that their insights, perspectives, and aspirations are included in decision-making.

Considering the differences between each component of Riyadh's heritage center, the urban redevelopment of its center represents a dynamic and complicated process involving multiple levels of institutions and requiring long-term negotiations. Accordingly, the paper recommends focusing on policy and public involvement in historic area preservation and regeneration.

The need to involve the public in decision-making on the future of their cities is important, as the locals are the end-users of every regeneration scheme and, therefore, are responsible for ensuring the sustainability of their area, making them appreciate the place more.

Based on the methodology applied to the Riyadh Center, it is proven that heritage regeneration can be an effective tool for urban redevelopment in central areas as a contemporary placemaking program if a systematic approach is used to manage the interaction between the three main branches: heritage preservation, heritage regeneration, and urban redevelopment. Accordingly, in the context of Riyadh, the paper suggests that enforcement measures, sustainable planning measures, and heritage partnerships are needed to solve problems in heritage centers.

This study is a fundamental starting point for future research and practical projects. It underscores how critical it is to recognize a range of perspectives on heritage regeneration. This provides a basis for more inclusive and comprehensive approaches.

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