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Heritage-Led Urban Regeneration in the Context of WH Listing: Lessons and Opportunities for the Newly Inscribed City of As-Salt in Jordan

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Abstract: The nomination of a city on the UNESCO WHL is usually followed by urban regeneration with emphasis on tourism development and the OUV assigned to the city. In doing so, other heritage values are likely to be excluded, while new urban challenges are unintentionally triggered such as gentrification, touristification, social exclusion, amongst others. Following the recent inscription of As-Salt City in Jordan on the UNESCO WHL in July 2021, this paper traces the urban regeneration initiatives in the city from the first attempt of its nomination on the WHL in 2014 to its inscription in 2021. Based on a survey of the local community members' perceptions and priorities, conducted in November 2020, the paper highlights the opportunities and the challenges that have resulted from the urban transformations triggered by the WHL nomination processes of As-Salt. In addition, key lessons are drawn from the urban regeneration trajectories of world heritage cities in the MENA region that have been on the WHL for a number of decades. These lessons combined with the result of As-Salt community survey are used to develop a list of prioritized short, medium, and long-term recommendations for the city of As-Salt to address how the urban regeneration practices that have already started can be nudged to change to more sustainable trajectories.

Keywords: heritage-led urban regeneration; world heritage list (WHL); As-Salt City; the MENA region; tourism



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1. Introduction

Urban heritage refers to the city as heritage that goes beyond the built environment to incorporate social, economic, and environmental aspects [1]. It constitutes both tangible and intangible components that are key to enhancing the livability of urban areas and promoting economic development and social cohesion [2]. Heritage in this context is considered a significant resource for regeneration and a method to enable communities to consider culture as a central plan for wellbeing [3]. One of the most notable initiatives for cultural and natural heritage preservation that has reached universal recognition is the UNESCO 1972 World Heritage Convention (WHC) in France [4]. This convention is widely recognized as the foremost instrument for identifying and protecting the outstanding cultural and natural world heritage for present and future generations [5]. However, over the years, controversies have been raised around the World Heritage List (WHL), with growing concerns about its credibility due to the imbalance in the number of properties listed in both countries and continents [5–9]. By the year 2021, the MENA region had acquired 117 of a total 1154 Properties on the WHL including both natural and cultural sites [10]. Considering the scale of the MENA region, see Figure 1, the demand for a more balanced, representative, and credible WHL is still raised. This also questions how the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) is defined, assessed, and attributed [11–13].

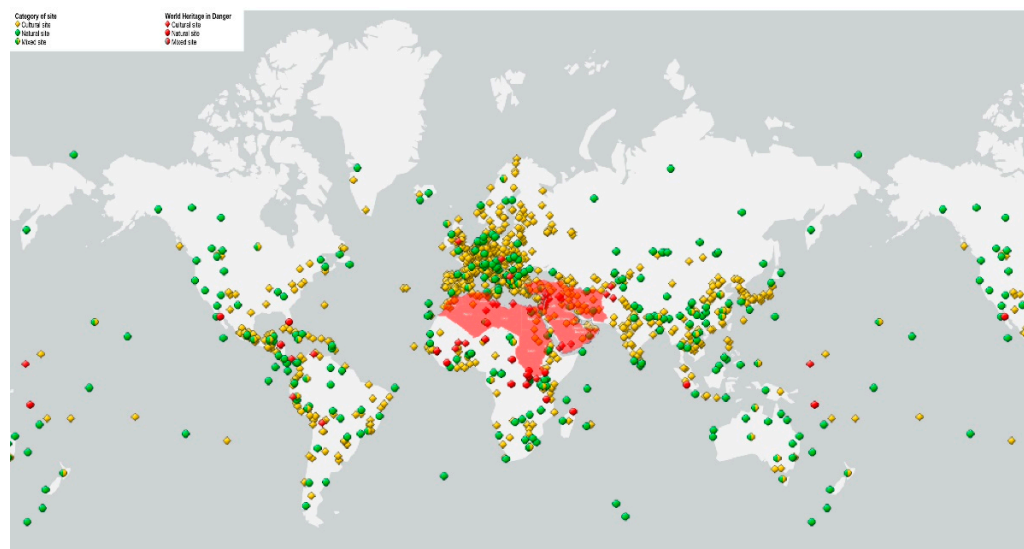


Figure 1. World Heritage Sites highlighting the MENA region in Red [10] modified by (El Faouri, 2021).

To be inscribed on the WHL, the nominated sites must meet the threshold of an Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) [10], which is identified by UNESCO operational guidelines as: ‘Cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity. As such, the permanent protection of this heritage is of the highest importance to the international community as a whole’ [14] (p. 20). Cameron [13] reveals that, with time, the interpretation in identifying World Heritage Sites has moved from the ‘best of the best’ towards ‘representative of the best’. In other words, the OUV is no longer limited to unique sites, but it stretches to representatives with the same type of property and level of value, see also [15–17]. This is one of many other controversies around the WHL, such as the international domination of a ‘western colonial project’, the noting of bias in the context of supposed ‘universal value’ [11], the lack of participation of the advisory bodies in revising and preparing the inventory of values in the tentative lists [5], the lack of understanding of mechanisms such as of ‘referral’ and ‘deferral’ [13], and many others.

Nevertheless, being inscribed, or even nominated, on the WHL has an important relationship to heritage-led urban regeneration; once a country signs the WH Convention, it expects the subsequent benefits and prestige that include raising the level of awareness among relevant parties and raising the level of protection and conservation given to heritage properties [18] including the protection under the Geneva Convention against destruction or misuse during wartime [19]. A country with a World Heritage Site (WHS) is also eligible to receive financial assistance and expert opinion from the World Heritage Committee [4], increased international attention and resources, improved tourism, national and local pride, and finally, it facilitates creating partnerships between all governmental Organizations, NGOs, the private sector, and the United Nations (UN) organizations. Yet, listing can be problematic; there is increasingly general opposition to handing over local or national heritage to all mankind, as well as the intervening of international bodies in local decisions [20]. Furthermore, the process of nominating a property itself has become complex and is shifting from being a scheme of international cooperation and assistance intended to support efforts to preserve cultural and natural heritage for next generations [14] to being a political competition of power. In fact, it can be seen as a time-consuming process, cost burdening, and resource exhaustive if undertaken without thoughtful consideration [21,22]. The most notable issue discussed in this paper in being inscribed or even nominated on the WHL is the tendency to dramatically increase the number of visitors, emphasizing the sudden development of the tourism industry and infrastructure without much consideration to other equally important sustainability dimensions. Listing can interfere with many regeneration scenarios about timing, location and/or the parties involved.

Within the WH platform, there are two categories of cities: those that have already acquired the status of a WH site, and those that are pursuing a process of inscription. In both cases, a pattern of urban regeneration geared towards increasing tourism is usually triggered and disrupts the logic of a continuously living narrative. This process attracts developers for financial profit, and sudden urban interventions triggered by the change or possible change of a city's status in relation to the WHL [11,12,23–25] and others. This often leads to losing sight of the connection between the tangible and intangible dimensions of heritage, hence, attracting many visitors at the expense of the wellbeing of the local communities. Urban regeneration that follows the nomination of a city on the WHL, will attempt to *celebrate and consume* the values assigned to the city (OUV) [13]. In doing so, other heritage values are excluded in the process [13], while new urban issues are unintentionally provoked such as gentrification, touristification, social exclusion amongst many others. These, in turn, lead to an increase in rental costs of properties as well as the value of homes and a reduction in the supply of affordable housing, resulting in a shift in the proportion of social classes within the urban population, all of which contradict and undermine the concept of urban sustainability.

As-Salt city in Jordan is a timely case study due to its recent inscription on the WHL. The city went through three attempts in the last thirty years before its successful inscription onto the UNESCO WHL in July 2021. The first attempt was initiated in 1990s by a local NGO and was deferred. This was followed by a second one in 2016 by the local authority, which was also deferred. After the third attempt in 2020 the city was finally inscribed on the WHL in 2021 [26]. This series of events has triggered an increasing interest from investors who have initiated a series of uncoordinated urban development projects, as well as the proliferation of touristic facilities on the expense of public livelihood and genuine experience. As-Salt city has already started following the footsteps of comparable WH cities in the World and, more specifically, in the MENA region. These issues include using the UNESCO nomination as a catalyst for urban regeneration such as the historic Jeddah in Saudi Arabia, the beautification and restoration of heritage buildings without adaptive reuse such as the historic Cairo in Egypt, and over tourism, gentrification and alteration of heritage such as the walled cities of Fez, Marrakesh in Morocco.

The overall aim of this paper is to develop recommendations for sustainable urban regeneration of the newly inscribed city of As-Salt (Jordan) while avoiding the repetition of the negative impacts identified in the WH cities of the MENA region. In doing so, it investigates how the urban regeneration practices that have already taken place in As-Salt can be nudged to change trajectories. This is illustrated in the following four objectives:

1. To examine the urban regeneration practices that have already started in the city of As-Salt since the first attempt to nominate it on the WHL initiated in 2014 to its inscription in 2021.
2. To present and assess the result of a field work conducted during the nomination process in 2020 on how these urban regeneration processes are perceived by the local community.
3. To draw key lessons from a selection of world heritage cities in the MENA region to understand the challenges and the patterns of urban regeneration in the medium and long-term.
4. To incorporate those lessons with the result of the local community survey in order to co-produce a list of prioritized recommendations for the city of As-Salt. These recommendations are geared towards the enhancement of all heritage values including the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV).

2. Materials and Methods

The paper examines the heritage-led urban regeneration practices that started in 2014 when the authorities of As-Salt decided to initiate nominating the city on the world heritage list. This is done by using both qualitative and quantitative data sources on the city's transformation during a period of 7 years (from 2014–2021). This is followed by an

interview survey with different members of the local community, which investigates local community's perception of ongoing urban regeneration practices and their aspiration for the future. The data collection consists of questionnaires, maps illustrating the transformation of the site as well as direct observation and photographic record of the site.

A sample of 50 participants from the local community were interviewed in November 2020. The criteria for selecting the sample were based on age and gender inclusivity and based on the location of this sample within the boundary of the As-Salt city heritage center. Therefore, the sample included 31% of the participants living in the city center, 49% working in the city center but living other where and, finally, 20% living and working in the city center. In terms of occupation, the sample represented 28% traders and merchants from the city center, 39% representatives from the local community residents both males and females, as well as 33% school and university students. Of the participants, 40% were female and 60% male, 88% were Muslims and 12% Christians. The age groups were less than 20 years old (6%), between 20 to 40 years old (58%), between 40 to 60 years old (22%), and more than 60 years old (14%). This means that the majority of the participants were relatively young to middle-aged professionals, which is the targeted sample that are most affected and will help co-producing future recommendations.

Within the unprecedented events brought about the COVID-19 pandemic, the survey was distributed to the local community of As-Salt via online platforms, a link to a self-administered questionnaire was circulated via (WhatsApp) as the most accessible online platform convenient to the participants. This sample was reached mainly through the most active NGO in As-Salt city center (Salt Development Corporation SDC), the Municipality licensing department for shop owners in the center, and Balqa Applied University students, also in the city center. The survey responses were anonymous and took approximately 10–15 min to complete.

Using thematic content analysis, the community perception was investigated to identify their position on the related themes and their aspirations for the future. To facilitate the process of extracting information, the research used qualitative data analysis tools using NVivo 12 software to code the responses. This was followed by an examination of urban regeneration practices in a selection of UNESCO world heritage cities in the MENA region to identify the common challenges of heritage-led urban regeneration in the region and contextualize the practices identified in As-Salt. These lessons, combined with the result of As-Salt community survey, were used to develop a list of prioritized short, medium, and long-term recommendations for the city of As-Salt to address how the urban regeneration practices, that have already started, can be nudged to change trajectories.

3. Mapping the Transformation of As-Salt City (2014–2021)

As-Salt city is located in Al-Balqa valley in Jordan. The location of the city on the crossroads between Amman and Jerusalem. Its proximity to the two Palestine-Jordan roads and Al Hijaz Railway station [27] means that the city occupies a historically strategic position in relation to trade routes and networks [28]; see Figure 2. As-Salt city is the first civilized urban settlement in Transjordan and was a regional Ottoman capital on the East Bank of the Jordan River [29] and a thriving urban southern Ottoman frontier [27–31].

The city of As-Salt has gained its importance from its *Golden era* (1865–1935) when an élite of merchants, mostly coming from Nablus/Palestine played a significant role in its development, they were interested in the region because of its safety and location of trade routes under the Ottoman administration [29]. These merchants collected a fortune based on trade, farming products, for markets in the Levant, the Ottoman Empire and Europe. This new middle class partly determined the improvement of As-Salt City planning and the renewal of its architecture, upgrading the village from rural area relying on agriculture to an urban settlement, a bourgeois town for merchants [32]. The new City was a cluster of ornamented yellow limestone buildings with local stone from As-Salt quarries that is known for its workability, see Figure 3. As-Salt has currently 657 buildings that were built in that era according to Royal Scientific Society (RSS) study in 1991 and is considered the

largest compared to that of all other cities in Jordan in terms of density per geographical site area [33].

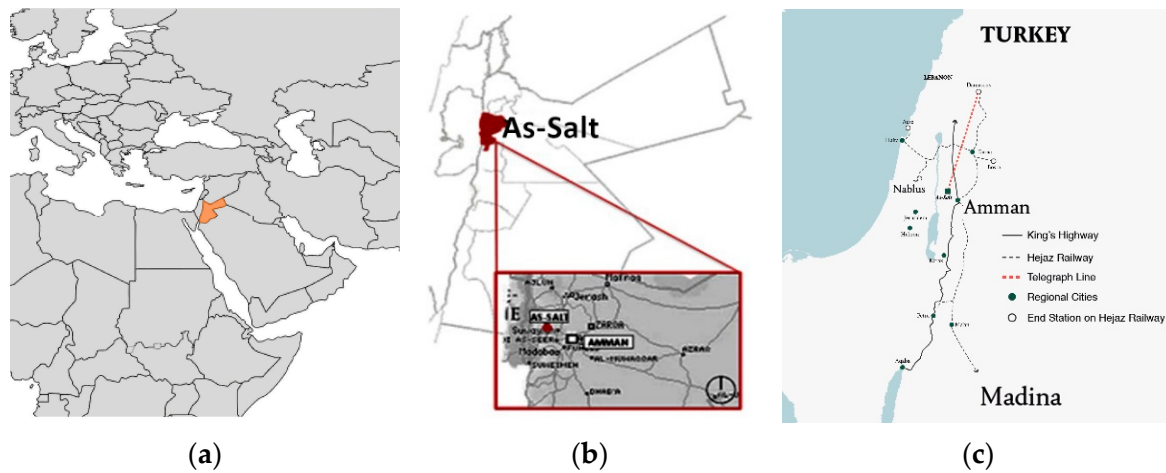


Figure 2. (a) Jordan location within the MENA region [33]. (b) As-Salt location [33]. (c) Mapping Security & Ottoman Reforms during the golden era (Communication, Road & Rail Networks) [27].

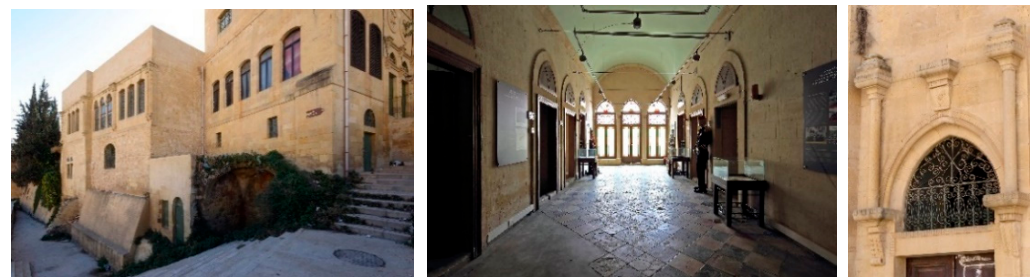


Figure 3. Different views from As-Salt City historic buildings from the Golden era [34].

As-Salt city is also exceptional because it still has a vibrant, living, tangible and intangible heritage which makes it different from any other Jordanian heritage city such as Jerash and Petra where heritage sites are outside the cities [32]. People of As-Salt continue to carry the hospitality spirit in their daily lives. For example, the continuation of “Madafa” tradition, which is the Arabic name for a hospitality space [27,32], traditional customs including behaviour with guests and generosity [27], and the traditional game of Manqala in Sahet Al-Ain; see Figure 4a. The urban townscape of As-Salt is living evidence of the harmonious co-existence of Muslims and Christians (Figure 4b) within a vivid commercial market (Figure 4c).

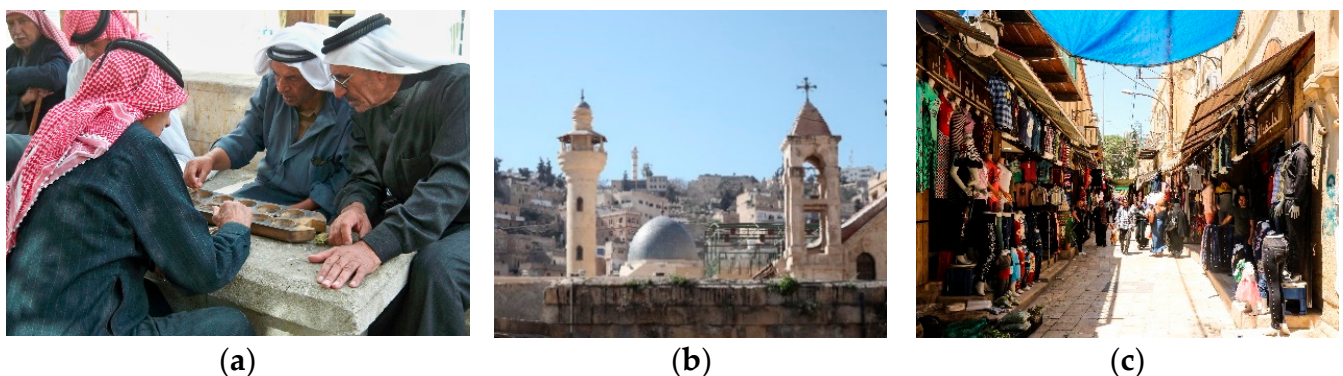


Figure 4. As-Salt intangible heritage. (a) Elderly playing Manqala game in Sahet Al-Ain (b) Harmony of Muslims and Christians. (c) Hammam Street market [34].

The city was put on the UNESCO WHL tentative list three times since the 1990s. The first attempt was initiated by the Royal Scientific Society (a local NGO) but was not done in collaboration with Governmental institutions, which at the time had not yet developed their heritage conservation legal system. Therefore, the focus of this paper is based on the last two nominations files submitted in 2016 and 2020. The first file submitted in 2016 was initiated and led by the municipality of As-Salt in collaboration with the Department of Antiquities. This file was mainly focused on the tangible heritage of As-Salt, consisting of the cluster of yellow limestone buildings of the *golden era* of the Ottoman rule of the city [29], see (Figure 5a). This file was deferred in 2017 as the tangible heritage submitted in the form of single buildings and not a coherent urban entity was not sufficient to be of outstanding universal value as it can also be found in other cities within the region [28]. The second file submitted in 2020 was also led by the Municipality but with different coordinators who shifted the focus from the tangible to the intangible heritage of As-Salt (tolerance and co-habitations among Muslim and Christian communities; urban hospitality; and socio-urban welfare system; Figure 5b) [27]. This attempt led to the successful inscription of the city on the WHL in 2021 [35].

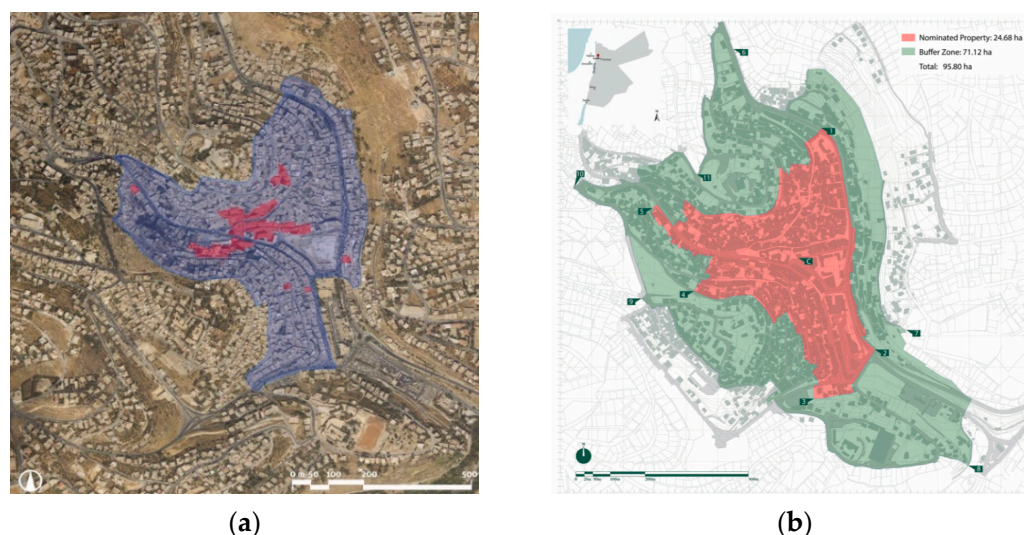


Figure 5. (a) Boundary of the nominated property in 2016 file [29]. (b) Boundary of the nominated property in 2020 file [27].

Through examining the secondary data and by visiting the site in November 2020; many issues followed the WH inscription:

3.1. Community Displacement and Tourism-Led Urban Regeneration Projects in the Centre of the City and Losing Connection between Tangible and Intangible Heritage

The start of the As-Salt WH nomination file in 2014 triggered an increasing interest in the city from national and international parties who saw opportunities for funding and investment. There has been a proliferation of a series of urban development projects that are scattered around the city center, and which were initiated without the development of a clear master plan [36]. These urban interventions include acquiring and demolishing existing mixed-use buildings in the city center, causing the displacement to the city's suburbs of two primary schools, apartment buildings, institutional and religious buildings, monasteries, and a local market, see Figure 6 [37]. This was followed by the implementation of tourism-oriented urban regeneration projects, out of scale and not sympathetic to the nature of the city [36]. Furthermore, the displacement of community functions and activities has not only alienated the local community from its historic center, but it also resulted in the removal, of the living, intangible heritage that is associated with the place, and which provides the site with its genuine and social and cultural liveliness. One of the

most notable projects, which was initiated by As-Salt Greater Municipality, consisted of acquiring by compulsory purchase in 2010 the site of the *Oqbe bin Nafe'* school and its surrounding buildings, and demolishing some of them in 2010. However, there had been a strong resistance from the locals to give up their buildings until 2014 when the nomination file started for the UNESCO World heritage status and the court of justice ruled in favor of the Municipality to acquire the whole site and start the implementation of the urban regeneration projects [37]. These were funded by the Municipality of As-Salt and designed by Dar Al Handassah, one of the largest and well-established architectural practice in Jordan [34]. The *Oqbe bin Nafe'* school was one of the most important buildings built in the 1950s and was demolished along with a group of commercial/residential mixed-use private buildings. This was phase 1 of the project that was later followed by two other phases (2 and 3; Figure 7). These two phases were not intended from the beginning, as the decision was then made to demolish a further number of buildings to increase the visibility of yellow limestone buildings, considered by the Municipality as the only heritage of the city. Phase 1 of the project was completed in 2020. Buildings in phase 2 were demolished, but the construction of new buildings did not start, and the empty urban space is now used as a car park and for informal retail stalls.



Figure 6. Examples of demolished buildings in phase 1, 2 and 3 [38].



Figure 7. Oqbe Bin Nafe' project phase 1 highlighted in green, phase 2 highlighted in red and phase 3 highlighted in yellow [34].

3.2. The Shifting of OUV and the WH Nomination Files Submitted in 2016 and 2020

The first UNESCO nomination file submitted in 2016, focused on promoting the universal value associated with the tangible heritage of the 22 Ottoman yellow limestone buildings located in different parts of the city, as identified by the coordinator of the nomination file. The municipality of As-Salt focused its attention on getting grants and funds in order to restore and renovate those specific buildings within a 5-year plan to renovate and rehabilitate those buildings [29]. The municipality had already started investing in buying these buildings and compensating their local residents, as illustrated by the two cases of Al-Jaghbeer and Falah Al-Hamad houses, which were purchased in 2015–2016, with the aim to be rehabilitate them as a renovation academy and a digital museum respectively. However, these buildings are still abandoned six years later, and the renovation work has not started yet [34]. In addition to the initiatives led by the Municipality, the private sector was also attracted to invest in the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of other yellow limestone building located in the proximity of the 22 buildings that were to be nominated. Most of the buildings acquired by the private sector have been rehabilitated for tourism purposes, as is the case of Gerbal restaurant, Eskandarane café, Beit Aziz bed and breakfast, and many others, see Figure 8. It is worth mentioning that internal tourism has also thrived in the last few years. This process has slowed down with the COVID-19 pandemic; however, it is still ongoing [39].

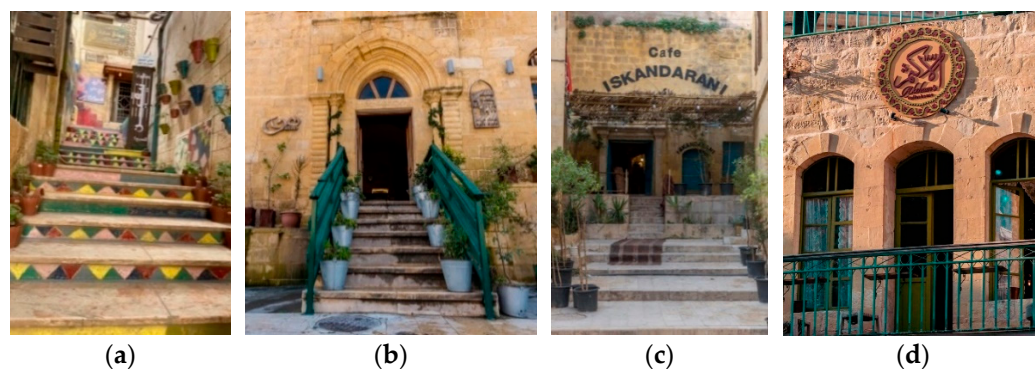


Figure 8. The opening of many cafes and restaurants, such as (a) Gerbal restaurant; (b) Beit Aziz bed and breakfast; (c) Eskandarane café; (d) Al-Aktham café [34].

Despite the initiatives taken by both the public and private sectors to rehabilitate the selected heritage buildings, remove existing buildings to increase the visibility of the heritage buildings and make way for large scale urban regeneration projects that improve the tourism infrastructure, the nomination file was deferred in 2017 [26]. The deferral was based on the fact that, first, the Universal value associated with the 22 buildings was not considered as exceptional as similar buildings in cities in the region which were part of the Ottoman empire. Second, the nominated properties are not part of a well-defined coherent whole [40]. One year following the deferral in 2018, instead of amendments, a second application was submitted in February 2019 with completely different heritage values, a different expert, and a different nomination file [28]. The state party, including mainly As-Salt Greater municipality (SGM), decided to hand the file over to a local expert, Dr Rami Daher. The 2020 file shifted the OUV from tangible heritage to intangible heritage and changed the boundaries from the separated buildings to cohort urban fabric. This file was titled ‘As-Salt: The Place of Tolerance and Urban Hospitality’ [27]. However, Urban transformation between the two nominations continued the agenda of the first nomination, which was to create a stage for the tangible-built heritage by the re-development of the *Oqba Nin Nafe* site, and continuing phase 2 and 3 of the project in order to provide tourism facilities while displacing the original functions of the site and its residents [34]. Displacement of the local community is a major cause of losing this intangible heritage and leads one to wonder why the agenda listed the intangible heritage only to aid its disappearance.

4. Investigating Local Community Perspectives Based on the Results of the Field Work of 2020

The views of the local As-Salt community were investigated through a questionnaire that was structured along six different themes. These themes were identified as crucial to the city’s urban regeneration. The results of the surveys for each theme are presented in the following sub-sections and will form the basis for the formulation of heritage-led urban regeneration recommendations.

4.1. Theme A. As-Salt Heritage: Local Community’s Definitions, Perceptions and Priorities

It is clear that in the perception of As-Salt community, heritage is strongly associated with the yellow limestone Ottoman buildings that were built during the golden era of the city, with emphasis of intangible heritage such as customs and clothing. The priorities of different heritage elements in As-Salt included the Antiquities period (i.e., before 1750 AD); As-Salt Ottoman yellow limestone buildings (1865–1925 AD); As-Salt intangible heritage; modern architecture (1950s onward) and As-Salt Natural Heritage (hills, valleys and ecosystem). It was concluded that the golden age yellow limestone architecture is the dominant element of heritage, identified as extremely important or very important (Table 1 and Figure 9). It was interesting that the local community gave antiquities a higher level of importance than intangible heritage, although it was not mentioned in the definition of As-Salt heritage above.

Table 1. Priorities of different heritage elements in As-Salt.

	1. Antiquities	2. Golden Age Yellow Lime	3. Intangible Living Heritage	4. Modern Architecture	5. Natural Heritage
Extremely important	18	32	18	14	14
Very important	14	16	10	11	14
Somewhat important	14	2	16	16	15
Not so important	3	0	5	8	6
Not at all important	1	1	0	1	1

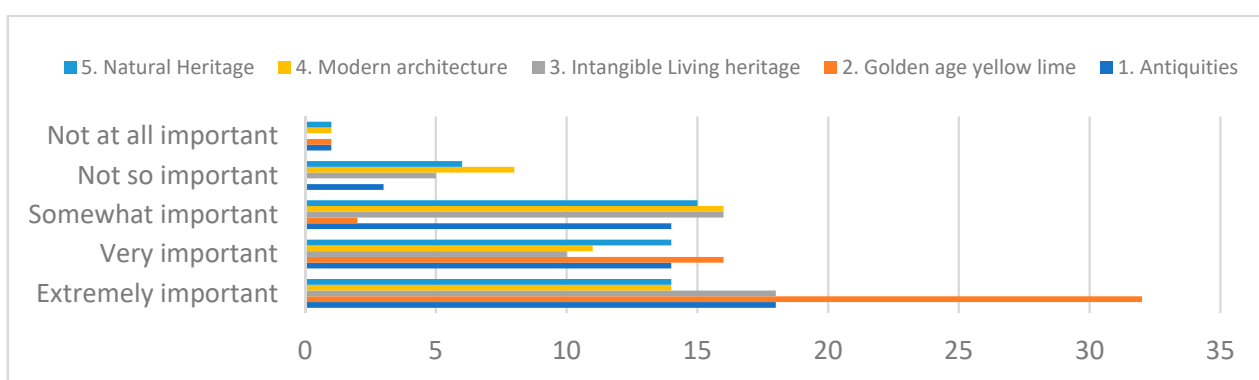


Figure 9. The priorities of different heritage elements in As-Salt from the local community perspective (N = 50) [34].

4.2. Theme B. Current Urban Regeneration Processes: Level of Awareness and Satisfaction

The results of the data analyses revealed that interviewees tended to be more aware of the large-scale urban regeneration projects such as *Oqbe Bin Nafe'* and *Al-Ain Plaza* projects than the small projects of rehabilitation of heritage buildings such as touristic facilities, and the beautification of urban spaces happening around the city centre. Figure 10 below, illustrates the level of satisfaction of the local community with these large-scale urban regeneration projects.



Figure 10. Responses from the local community on the level of satisfaction on the result of development projects in the historic city centre (N = 50) [38].

Slightly more than half the respondents (52%) of the sample were either satisfied or very satisfied with the urban regeneration projects. These respondents tend to mention the financial profit and the job opportunities that tourism would bring to the city. One respondent mentioned *“I want to work in the tourism industry”* another respondent states *“I agree with the urban regeneration projects because they develop the city’s infrastructure for tourism”*. The other reasons mentioned for being satisfied with the urban regeneration projects refer to the enhancement the city’s visual environment. For example, one respondent mentioned *“the urban regeneration has led to revealing the heritage buildings and the beauty of their formation with the natural topography of the site”*. Another respondent explained that *“these projects enhance the visual appearance of the city centre, increase the number of visitors, create job opportunities and contribute to the city’s nomination to be on the World Heritage List”*.

While the majority of the respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the current urban regeneration projects, more than a quarter of the respondents were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the regeneration projects, as expressed by 28% of the respondents. The following is a sample of responses when interviewees were asked why they are dissatisfied; the first type of respondents mentioned the prolonged timeframe for the implementation of the projects. One respondent elaborated by saying *“the urban regeneration projects lack a comprehensive study from the point of view of the time feasibility for implementing the projects”*. The delays were also mentioned as another respondent who stated, *“the projects take a very long time to be implemented, and eventually, the final project does not meet the community needs functionally, it is all about tourism”*.

The second type of reason for dissatisfaction focused on the lack of local investments and encouragement of local small businesses in the city centre, *“no one helps small businesses and enterprises, neither morally nor financially, we need various stakeholders’ participation by encouraging start-up businesses from the local community”*. Another respondent elaborated that *“the authorities in As-Salt are discouraging local investment and do not include the local community in the decisions of regeneration projects”*. Furthermore, it was stated that *“there is a lack of incentives or support for small businesses”*. The third type of reason for dissatisfaction was related the traffic problems that have resulted from the implementation of the mega-scale prolonged project in the dense urban fabric of As-Salt city centre. Some of the respondents stated that *“there is a lack of parking spaces in the city centre which is suffocating”*, another respondent stated that *“these projects only brought us harm instead of benefits, although it is always crowded in the city centre, the projects are still closing and pedestrianizing streets”*. The last type of mentioned reason for dissatisfaction was related to the Municipality’s compulsory purchase of properties and the forced eviction or demolition resulting in the closure of local shops and job losses; this was clear from the explanation provided by a student *“the projects caused our school to close, I had to move to another school behind the city centre which is far from my house”*. A trader who used to work in one of the mixed-use buildings was demolished stated that *“the acquisition and demolition caused the closure of the shops and we had to move out of the centre”*.

Only one fifth of the respondents (20%) kept a neutral position and avoided providing comments on the urban regeneration projects. However, despite the challenges facing the local community with the new urban regeneration projects, one of the main interesting

findings in As-Salt is that most of the interviewees mentioned they didn't want to leave the city centre or didn't think of it. This is because they have lived there all their lives. Individuals who expressed the desire to leave the city centre represent only 23% of the sample of interviewees. The reasons mentioned include “*all neighbours and acquaintances have left the city centre*” or are due to personal reasons such as getting married or finding a better job opportunity somewhere else. Other mentioned reasons for wanting to leave the city centre included “*the place seems to be always overcrowded*” or “*since the projects have started and the centre is always in a state of chaos and is very noisy*”. One respondent stated that “*the most important problem facing the heritage centre is the traffic congestion, the unfinished development projects, the lack of parking and services*”. There are also locals who had already moved out of the centre or intended to do so due to the compulsory purchase of buildings and their demolition by the Municipality. This was clearly stated by one of the respondents as follows “*the shop was acquired by the municipality; the owner was compensated, and the contract was cut*”. Another respondent said that “*since the transfer of the government departments and banks outside the city's commercial centre, the shops started following the relocation to the periphery of the city*”. Traders who want to move or thinking about moving, expressed the desire to move to the edge of the historic centre (Salalem bridge) or to the outskirts in the Sru area (which is on the highway road to Amman, the capital of Jordan, see Figure 11).

4.3. Theme C. Key Stakeholders' Participation in Decision Making Processes

The level of community participation in the heritage-led urban regeneration is problematic; half the respondents mentioned that they have rarely or never been consulted or invited to participate in decision making processes about the future of their city centre, see Figure 12. Only 16% of the respondents acknowledged some form of public consultation taking place such as public awareness events and announcements of projects through social media.



Figure 11. Traders who want to move out of the city centre (represented as 1) expressed the desire to move either to the edge of the historic center Salalem Bridge (represented as 2) or to the Amman/Sru highway area next to Amman Ahliya University (represented as 3) [34].

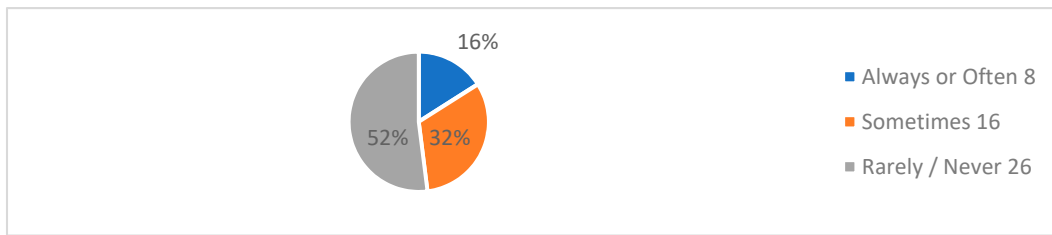


Figure 12. Responses from the local community on the existence of any community participation in the heritage-led urban regeneration in As-Salt (n = 50) [34].

4.4. Theme D: As-Salt World Heritage Nomination and the Associated OUV

The results of the questionnaire of the local community revealed that 40% of the respondents were not aware of the nomination file being submitted to inscribe the city on the WHL. However, the majority of the respondents (60%) were generally very eager for As-Salt city to be on the WHL. They predicted that the successful inscription would provide the following advantages, as in Figure 13.

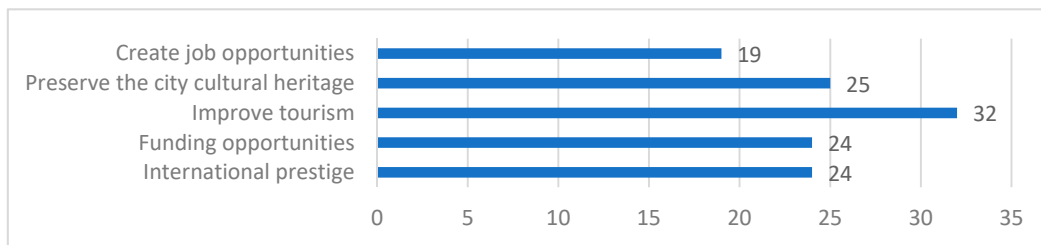


Figure 13. Community perspective on the advantages that follows the inscription of As-Salt on the WHL (n = 50). Note that the numbers at the end of the bars indicate how many individuals have selected this option [34].

When asked about the disadvantages of being a WH city, most responses were concerned with the increase in the prices of real estate, the implementation of more restrictive legislations, and the likelihood of displacement of the local population of the city through gentrification, see Figure 14. Interviewees were asked an open-ended question about what would happen if the city were listed. The word frequency analysis revealed that the increased tourism to the city was a main outcome. On the other hand, 5.7% of the respondents mentioned that nothing would change in the city. It was interesting that within the empty answer option; one respondent was cynical by stating that “the inscription of the city on the WHL would only just bring fame and money for the decision makers or authority figures involved in the submission”.

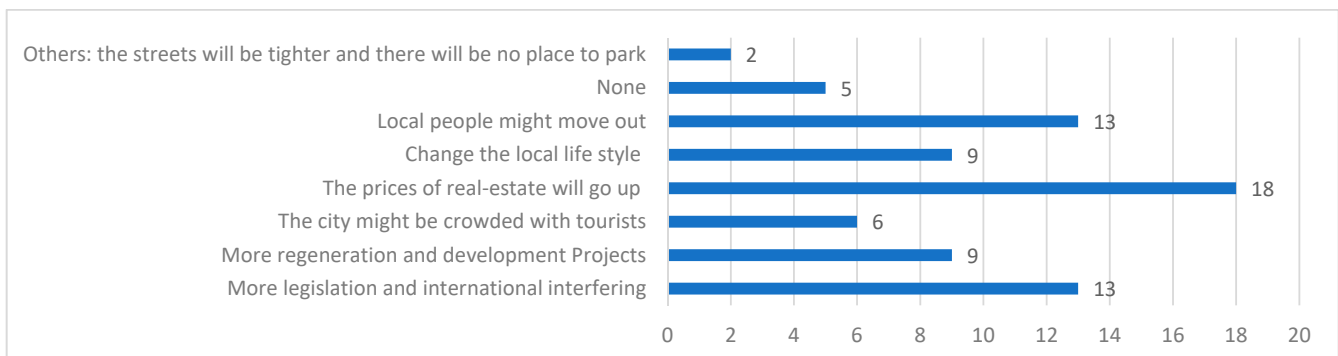


Figure 14. Community perspective on the disadvantages of inscribing the historic center of As-Salt on the WHL (n = 50). Note that the numbers at the end of the bars indicate how many individuals have selected this option [34].

4.5. Theme E: Legislation & Financial Situation

Legislation and funding are two particularly important aspects in any urban regeneration. The laws protecting As-Salt city centre include the urban heritage protection law no. 5 of 2005, Jordanian residency law, and towns and villages organizing law. There is also the City Core Special Regulation (CCSR) that was introduced 2008 specifically to preserve the city of As-Salt heritage and was declared by law in 2015 [36]. During the survey, it was found that the majority of 70% of the respondents were not aware of the CCSR and only 30% of them knew about it. When asked about whether they agree with the law, respondents who were aware of it mentioned *“these laws are an efficient way to provide the regulatory provisions to preserve the heritage buildings”*. Other respondents commented *“the laws regulate the removal, additions and demolition infringements, and put guidelines for the restoration method”*. However, the local community feels that their needs and economic or social constraints were not considered and met by these laws by stating *“no one helps financially, and we do not have the kind of money needed to renovate on such international standard”*. Others suggested that *“there should be incentives programs for owners and tenants as a kind of stakeholders’ cooperation”*. Another type of respondent felt that these laws are a tool for bureaucracy or influencing a level of control such as *“Authorities don’t help with the renovation, they just put the rules and expect us to follow, buying a new house outside the centre is cheaper than renovating our current building”* and *“regulatory provisions need to be disseminated and promoted, and it shouldn’t be a tool for the bureaucracy of official institutions in the face of traders and investors”*. The last types of comments were technical comments on the CCSR, such as *“there is no benefits for us within the laws, these laws were only built for the renovation guidelines”* or *“there is not enough control over the correct ways of restoration”*. Laws can be greatly beneficial in terms of preserving cultural heritage and enforcing standards for good restoration practices. However, these standards should not overwhelm the local community with high end restoration techniques that are expensive and require professional human power without supporting these communities financially and technically or implementing an incentive program. Furthermore, these laws should not be perceived as bureaucracy or controlling tools, but an aid to maintain the tangible and intangible heritage. There are currently no programs of local incentives or tax reduction for the community, grants and funds are being allocated to the local authorities for the implementing urban regeneration projects. International funds often come with conditions and strings attached to them for a targeted sector, or with their own human power or materials that do not necessarily meet the vision for the city or involve its community.

4.6. Theme F: Sustainability and Future Inspiration

The local community interviewees were asked about their expectations for the future of their city and their short, medium and long-term priorities in the future. For the next 5 years, most answers focused on *“enhancing network and reducing traffic congestion in the city centre”*. Others were interested in having more tourism facilities such as *“promoting and giving more facilities for the tourists and enhancing the visual appearance of the city centre”*. Other suggestions included *“creating end of day activities for tourists in order to extend the tourists spent time in the city”*. Some respondent highlighted the importance of increasing public awareness levels about what is happening in the city *“we need to know what is happening in the city centre, and specifically the nomination process”* and considering social and economic constraints in the laws protecting the city. When asked about their vision of the city in the next 10 or 50 years, most respondents left the question with no answer as they could not imagine the situation at that stage; however, some focused on *“building local capacities and creating more job opportunities as well as strengthening the stakeholders’ communication and coordination and empowering local and civic societies”*. One respondent highlighted the need for *“strengthening the relationship between the centre and the hinterland and developing agricultural tourism”* and *“turning the city into an international touristic destination”*.

The six themes investigated through As-Salt local community interviews indicate several issues that need to be addressed. Although opportunities for financial gain and

job creation from a growing tourism industry that follow the inscription of the site on the world heritage list are expected, the threats that face the city are already perceived by the community through the current urban regeneration projects. These threats include the displacement of the local community through gentrification, which has already started during the nomination processes. This would lead to losing the connection between the tangible and intangible heritage of the city. Yet, the local authorities' interpretations of what the city should have and look like for the tourism industry tend to repeat the same unsustainable scenarios that can be easily identified in the world heritage cities in the MENA region, which have acquired the status of world heritage in the recent or far past. The examination of urban regeneration trajectories at different timescales can help to predict the scenarios that need to be avoided in As-Salt as a newly inscribed world heritage city and establish recommendations for changing the direction of As-Salt urban regeneration trajectory. The following section highlights some of those trajectories and scenarios:

5. Heritage-Led Urban Regeneration Lessons from Medium- and Long-Term Trajectories of WH Cities in the MENA Region

5.1. Lesson 1: Selective Narratives for the Urban Regeneration of the Historic Core of Jeddah in Saudi Arabia

Historic Jeddah was inscribed on the WHL in 2014 and witnessed a radical shift in its built heritage conservation policies at both governmental and non-governmental levels with a strong focus on tourism development [25]. Unlike As-Salt city where the local population is still living in the heritage areas, Jeddah has been mostly occupied by low-income migrants. The first nomination attempt to be inscribed on the WHL was submitted in 2010 and was deferred because of the advanced deterioration of the historic fabric due to years of neglect. A second nomination file was resubmitted in 2013, focusing on a smaller urban area which led to inscribe the city on the WHL in 2014 [40]. That chain of events resulted in a radical shift in the purpose of conservation policies from preserving national identity to using built heritage sites for developing international tourism after the country's closure for tourism for many decades [25]. The UNESCO inscription on the WHL has acted as a powerful catalyst in changing and key stakeholders' decisions with regards to urban policies, revitalization, and regeneration projects, focusing on presenting historic Jeddah as a city that has been "sanitized" with improved aesthetic appearance "appropriate for a WH site" [41]. Furthermore, the municipality of Jeddah controlled all financial aspects of the conservation master plan. This latter focused on restoring separate buildings scattered in various parts of the city without involving the local community or its needs [42]. The nomination itself created aspirations and expectations of new horizons and new projects, stimulating major changes in the Saudi official and non-official discourse on heritage conservation by connecting it to tourism development [25]. In fact, the UNESCO rejection of the first nomination attempt in 2010 was due to the high level of negligence and the fact that there was a lack of resident's appreciation to the site's historical value. This was a key motivational force for authorities to take an alternative approach to ensure a successful outcome for the second nomination file. They adjusted the original file with a new understanding of the significance of the historic areas that would influence not only buildings but the city as whole [25]. This shift led to Historic Jeddah's inscription on the WHS list in June 2014. The municipality then acquired heritage buildings and forced evictions with the purpose of rehabilitating the buildings for adaptive reuse as restaurants, cafés, amongst others. Local authorities' priorities were geared up to give southern old Jeddah a massive revamp, with random neighborhoods and illegal slums being demolished and turned into privately owned attractive residential quarters with extensive infrastructure such as the *Ghulail* and *Petromin* neighborhoods. House owners were compensated for the acquisition and demolition of their buildings to be replaced by high end districts and infrastructure for a more affluent population.

Historic Jeddah has been transformed as a center for public celebrations, hosting many national and religious events [25]. Despite all the efforts and huge investments in developing the historic city as a tourist destination, the state of conservation of the

heritage buildings remains an issue. The report provided by UNESCO in 2021 illustrates those seven years after its inscription on WHL, Historic Jeddah continues to face many threats due to the lack of a detailed conservation strategy and management plan, a high rate of decay of the historic houses, increased housing demands and the need for a risk management and prevention plan due to the projects and development work that has the potential to impact the authenticity of the heritage properties [43].

Although in As-Salt the situation is different in a way that local families still inhabit the heritage houses, there are similarities between Jeddah and As-Salt in their nomination histories and the reactions of the local authorities in the way they dealt with the site before and after it was inscribed on the WHL. Learning from historic Jeddah's experience of the 7 years short-term period following its nomination, it is clear that the reliance on UNESCO inscription as catalyst for urban regeneration and real estate development is already jeopardizing the OUV of the site and its heritage value. The lack of local community involvement in the rehabilitation of the heritage areas, combined with gentrification processes and a decrease of affordable housing in the area, are likely to be the core of unsuccessful heritage conservation and management. There should be a level of inclusiveness of different stakeholders to build coordinated strategies to increase the resilience of the local tangible and intangible heritage.

5.2. Lesson 2: Overtourism, Gentrification and Alteration of Authentic Heritage in the Walled Cities of Marrakesh and Fez in Morocco. Long Term Regeneration Trajectories from WHL Inscription of the Sites in the 1980s

Morocco's geographical location as the closest country to Europe within the MENA region has helped the foreign capital for property investment to migrate into the country, mainly towards the world heritage cities of Marrakesh and Fez, inscribed in 1985 and 1981 respectively. Moroccan cities have also been on the WHL for a longer span of time compared to As-Salt city and Jeddah [44]. These cities are an important example of extreme gentrification and tourism that can help provide key lessons for the development of more sustainable short and long-term scenarios for the city of As-Salt. For example, since the inscription of 'Medina of Marrakesh' on the WHL in 1985, the city has been altered and transformed by tourism, that has had an influence on the tradesmen and craftsmen working there, removing part of their liveliness and authentic values [44]. Furthermore, in the recent decades of the 1990s and 2000s, the city has been receiving a high influx of European diasporas in search of better living conditions in the sunshine while remaining within a few hours of affordable flights from their homeland. The rate of the transformations of the houses, forming the majority of the heritage urban fabric, had seen an accelerated increase at the end of the 20th Century because of the rapid expansion of tourism projects. Overcrowded, neglected and/or vacant courtyard houses which formed most of the urban fabric of Marrakech and Fez were transformed into elite oriental holiday houses for an expatriate community [45].

The WH listing of Fez in 1981 also marked the start of three-decade long rehabilitation processes supported by international funds. Tourism has acted as a catalyst for consuming and commercializing the heritage courtyard houses, while funds for conservation have singularly been allocated to monuments to increase the appeal of the city exclusively for tourists' investments [45–49]. This has had a negative impact on maintaining the local population within the historic quarters of the world heritage cities. Middle class and low-income inhabitants of the medina moved out of the historic cities to live in contemporary housing in newly built suburban areas [49]. Therefore, commercializing, and consuming heritage that transformed the social composition of these heritage cities led to the hybridization of their heritage by European diasporas.

5.3. Lesson 3: Beautification of Urban Spaces and Conservation of Heritage Buildings without Adaptive Reuse of the Heritage Urban Area, Long-Term Regeneration Trajectory in Historic Cairo (Egypt) since Its Inscription of WHL in the 1970s

Historic Cairo holds a remarkable record of urban heritage sites, which led to its inscription on the WH list in 1979, followed by global expertise attention and financial support [23]. Cairo was listed in a different era than As-Salt city. Nevertheless, urban regeneration policies in the city have also faced similar challenges such as the lack of public participation, competition between different stakeholders' agenda, and centralized governmental decisions with limited coordination between various public institutions and ministries [50–52]. Urban policies have resulted in the forced eviction, gentrification, and demolition of existing buildings to make way for new beautification projects and mega-scale financial businesses and entertainment corporations [51]. Furthermore, an influx of Gulf investors, which started in the 1980s, has rapidly increased old properties' prices while historic buildings often with nostalgic associations have been converted into boutique hotels [50,52]. Regeneration policies were based on the centralized government top-down approaches, which left the existing lively markets in the area suffer from poverty and neglect of public services, very poor condition, dense population, threatening pollution, and physical deterioration (see the examples Wekalat Bazara'a within El-Gamaleya or the pedestrianization Muizz Street [23]). These interventions neglected the needs of the local community, hence jeopardizing social and cultural sustainability [23]. Another case in Cairo is the historic Hammams such as Al-Sinaniya and Inal public baths (hammams) that were also restored and closed without adaptive reuse in 2008 [53]. Hammams used to play a key role at socio-cultural, economic, and environmental levels, and form a part of both local tangible and intangible heritage. Responsible bodies of the restoration seemed to lack the vision for the adaptive re-use of historic buildings. They assumed that introducing water into a historic building would jeopardize the monument. In fact, hammam structures cannot survive without water and user clients, and lost their centuries old function of providing an affordable hygiene and wellbeing facility for the local community [53]. Therefore, the case of Cairo clearly shows that focusing on the tangible heritage buildings without revitalization and adaptive re-use will, in the long-term, cause decay to tangible heritage and loosen the link to its associated intangible heritage. The lack of public participation, top-down centralized government decisions, demolishing neighborhoods for infrastructure will cause irreversible gentrification and dissatisfaction of local communities.

6. Results

The fieldwork at the center of this study highlighted the many opportunities and threats that are facing the local community as a result of the processes of nomination of As-Salt onto the UNESCO world heritage list. The suggested recommendations build on the six main themes of the local community survey, and the lessons learned from MENA region WH cities, resulted in the following key findings of each theme:

- Theme A: There is a need to develop a comprehensive understanding of the tangible and intangible heritage of the city and the way these two are associated, as well as acknowledging the importance of intangible heritage, existing modern architecture, and the hinterland to provide the residents with accommodations, schools and other facilities that are also important for the continuation of living heritage.
- Theme B: Although the current regeneration within the boundaries of the city provides tourism infrastructure and enhances the city's visual appearance, which are highly appreciated by the local community, the long implementation period that follows forced eviction and demolition of buildings, and the acquisition of heritage buildings without adaptive reuse after rehabilitation, are already having a negative impact on the city's heritage. The displacement of the local community is likely to lead to losing the connection between the tangible and intangible heritage of the city. Furthermore, the shifting of the commercial center to the edge of the city, and the expressed dissatisfaction of a quarter of the local community interviewees, are indicators for the

urgency of changing the trajectory of the urban regeneration schemes to avoid irreversible consequences. The long-term extreme projection of these issues can be seen in Marrakech and Fez in Morocco where the heritage city has been gradually emptied from its original inhabitants and is becoming an investment site for foreigners who occupy the heritage buildings and benefit from the tourism industry.

- Theme C: The majority of the respondents expressed a level of exclusion of the local community from the decision making and processes of urban regeneration projects in the city center. The short and long-term trajectory of this can be seen in Cairo and Jeddah where the local residents have also been excluded, resulting in the decay of tangible heritage and the disappearance of intangible heritage.
- Theme D: As-Salt local community wanted the city to be inscribed on the WHL; however, there is a need for risk assessments to be done on regular basis. Advantages from sustainable tourism should be balanced with maintaining the local community in place and monitoring real estate prices. The example of Jeddah shows that the local community could not afford continuing living in the historic center, leaving the city to become a site for holiday houses for the elite and the expatriate community.
- Theme E: Restoration and renovation guidelines within the laws protecting the city centre should not overwhelm the local community with high-end restoration techniques that are very expensive and require professional human power without supporting these communities financially and technically or implementing an incentive program. There is a need for local incentives, tax reduction, grants, and funds to allocated to support the rehabilitation of heritage buildings. Guidelines should be put forward for international funding that do not necessarily meet the vision for the city or involve its community.
- Theme F: The local community was interested mainly in short-term challenges that have arisen from the new urban regeneration projects. These include finding a solution for the traffic congestion and providing adequate parking and public spaces for the local community. Local merchants also expressed the need for a finding a new convenient location for the commercial activities that had been dismantled in the downtown area in order to implement the new projects. The local community is the best carrier of the intangible heritage that was instrumental in the success of the nomination file of As-Salt.

Key lessons were learned from the newly inscribed city of As-Salt, as well as from other relevant cities in the region. These include:

- Lesson 1: Selective heritage narratives that focus only on the UNESCO outstanding universal value can lead to urban regeneration processes that lack of public participation. This leads to the centralized the top-down governmental decisions as well as the demolition of existing neighborhoods to prepare the city for real-estate investment in tourism, thereby causing gentrification and dissatisfaction among members of the local community in the short-term.
- Lesson 2: Commercializing and consuming heritage lead to the transformation of the social composition of these heritage cities and cause urban issues such as overtourism, gentrification and alteration of the heritage value of the site in the long-term.
- Lesson 3: Beautification of urban spaces and rehabilitation of buildings without adaptive reuse causes, in the long-term, decay to the tangible heritage and the loss of the link of communities' intangible heritage and their tangible heritage.

These scenarios should be avoided in the city of As-Salt by making sure that these trajectories are nudged towards development that encompasses all aspects of sustainability with a particular focus on social and cultural sustainability. A set of recommendations is presented in Table 2, according to themes investigated through community interviews and their priority in the short, medium, and long-term.

Table 2. List of prioritized recommendations for heritage-led Urban regeneration schemes derived from the local community survey conducted in November 2020.

Recommendation for Heritage-Led Urban Regeneration in the City of As-Salt (Jordan)	Level of Priorities
Theme A: Local community definition, perception, and prioritization of As-Salt Heritage	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a multi stakeholders' understanding the tangible and intangible heritage and encourage their documentation and protection 	Short, medium, and long-term priority.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider all heritage layers of the site including the '<i>golden era</i>' in the regeneration processes. 	Medium-term priority
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain integrity and authenticity by creating a sense of balance between local genuine experiences and intangible performances for tourism purposes. 	Medium-term priority
Theme B: Current regeneration processes in the city centre	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare a short, medium, and long-term risk assessment for the wellbeing of As-Salt local community especially in terms of the impact of tourism development and mega-scale projects. 	Short, medium, and long-term priority.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a masterplan for the city growth and avoid projects that do not fit the wider development vision with its strict implementation timeframes. 	Long term priority
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor heritage performativity, liveability, community diversity, intangible living heritage and its continuity and the quality of rehabilitation processes. 	Short, medium, and long-term priority.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reuse and rehabilitate buildings by encouraging the formation and growth of local micro-small- and medium-sized enterprises through the provision of funding and expertise for the rehabilitation and reuse abandoned buildings, therefore, avoiding losing sight of key priorities and wasting effort, money and labour put into this process. 	Medium, and long terms priority.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an alternative location for schools, accommodations, or commercial shops within the city centre in case a demolition is needed for Urban regeneration projects or infrastructure. 	Short- medium, and long-term priority.
Theme C: Key Stakeholders cooperation in the decision-making process	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boost Institutional co-ordination between different stakeholders including the community involvement to enhance internal partnership and avoid dual management of tourism assets which might lead to a conflict of interest. 	Short, medium, and long-term priority.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and regulate feasible qualitative indicators to measure local community engagement and satisfactions as well as the progress of heritage conservation and management. 	Medium-term priority
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity building: improve or develop mechanisms to support young actors and emerging professionals in the field of Cultural Heritage preservation to provide job opportunities not only in tourism but also in the renovation of heritage buildings. 	Long-term priority
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage and promote effective partnerships between the public, private, and civil societies by developing mechanisms for sharing knowledge, expertise, technology, and financial resources. 	Short, medium, and long-term priority.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity, and innovation from the local community. 	Medium, and long terms priority.

Table 2. Cont.

Recommendation for Heritage-Led Urban Regeneration in the City of As-Salt (Jordan)	Level of Priorities
Theme D: As-Salt World Heritage Nomination and the associated OUV	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set non-negotiable aspects/terms covering all pillars of sustainability including economic, environmental, social, and cultural dimensions. This includes maintaining As-Salt residents in their properties, allowing for the continuation of their intangible heritage of hospitality and harmonious of religions co-existence to be transmitted to future. 	Short, medium, and long-term priority.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid swinging in key actors' decisions, and do not rely only on UNESCO inscription to be a catalyst for Urban regeneration practices in the city. 	Short, medium, and long-term priority.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor real-estate prices and living costs before and after the World Heritage inscription to maintain affordability for the local community. 	Short, medium, and long-term priority.
Theme E: Legislation & Financial situation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include the intangible heritage protection within the City Core Special Regulations CCSR. 	Short, medium, and long-term priority.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create, and incentive programs and subsidies for maintaining local residents in their properties and enabling them to improve their properties by providing competitive renovation awards, financial loans, tax incentive programs and exemptions. 	Short, medium, and long-term priority.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce a certain level of flexibility with the CCSR laws considering the changing quality of heritage based on local community needs and aspiration. 	Short, medium, and long-term priority.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid receiving grants and loans that have restricting conditions that does not resonate within the overall vision of As-Salt heritage protection and sustainable urban regeneration. 	Medium-term priority.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organize a heritage fund that is collected internally and a long-term trust for the upkeep and maintenance of Urban heritage and support the incentive programs. 	Short, medium, and long-term priority.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage the local community to act as host to cultural tourists, providing genuine experience while creating an additional source of income for the local residents. 	Medium-term priority
Theme F: Sustainability and Future Inspiration	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set mechanisms to deal with the traffic congestions and improve public spaces as well as providing parking in or around the city centre. 	Short-term priority
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local products and crafts. 	Medium-term priority
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restore and protect the natural environment and ecosystems near the city centre and reduce the loss of agricultural land and local agricultural practices. 	Medium-term priority

By considering the above recommendations, the ongoing urban regeneration projects happening in As-Salt might have an alternative to a more sustainable trajectory that avoids negative outcomes identified earlier in the paper. The above recommendations provide a start for considering all heritage values in addition to the ones nominated as OUV on the WHL. Local authorities should integrate long-term visions for the city to avoid irreversible damage that could be caused by short-term decisions, hence increasing level of resilience of the city in the long-term.

7. Discussion

The literature has revealed that many heritage-led urban regeneration schemes that follow the nomination of a city on the WHL focus on tourism development and the OUV associated with their inscription, while neglecting other urban sustainability factors. The common issues that urban regeneration in a heritage environment often face is the proliferation of hotels, bed and breakfast accommodations, souvenir shops and many other tourist-oriented leisure and catering facilities, which take over the spontaneous genuine experience and replace it with '*consumerism*' leading to the disappearance of intangible heritage for financial profit and potentially puts at risk the wider context of the tangible heritage. This often leads to losing sight of the connection between the tangible and intangible dimensions of heritage, hence attracting a large number of visitors at the expense of the wellbeing of the local communities. There is no doubt that tourism plays an important role in advancing the Sustainable Development [54–57]. However, the recent COVID-19 crisis has also opened the discussion around the risks associated with the over-reliance on tourism to economically sustain communities and heritage sites. No nation has been unaffected economically and socially, impacting livelihoods, public services, and opportunities on all continents.

It is important to mention that the urban regeneration challenges that follow the nomination of a city on the WHL and identified in this paper are not exclusive to the MENA region. They are global problems that can be illustrated in cities such as Liverpool in the UK which was recently removed from the WHL due to the consequences of profit-led and uncoordinated urban development projects that undermined the character of the place [35]. There are many other examples such as the fish market in historic Venice that has been gentrified by excessive tourism [58], the Ellis Island Museum [59] Barcelona and Parte Vieja's in Spain [60], Honghe-China [61], and New Orleans' Vieux Carre French Quarter [62] amongst others.

Sustainable tourism and the consideration of local community needs are key in all heritage environments. It is important not to destroy the nature of the communities that led, in the first place, to the recognition of their outstanding cultural value. The adoption of UNESCO WH listing is supposed to be a tool for raising the level of awareness among relevant parties and raising the level of protection and conservation given to heritage properties [57]. However, examining the urban regeneration patterns happening in Cairo, Jeddah, Fez and Marrakech, and those that have started to be implemented in As-Salt, it is clear that there is a potential conflict that can arise with the aims promoted by the WHC and the WHL, and which can undermine many of the tangible and intangible values associated with the sites. UNESCO and other international bodies should also provide state parties more guidance and additional recommendations that are not exclusive to the protection of OUV of the site but also the protections of other values that are important to the locals, such as retaining intangible heritage that connects local communities to their heritage. The role of UNESCO after the inscription should be clear with all the stakeholders, including the local community.

8. Conclusions

Mapping the transformation of the city of As-Salt starting from the first attempt of its nomination on UNESCO WHL in 2014 to its inscription in 2021 after a second attempt, revealed that the city has initiated tourism-led urban regeneration projects. Authorities are

sterilizing the urban fabric from buildings that are not considered as heritage to replace them with mega-scale projects that are gentrifying local communities and disconnecting the intangible heritage they carry from the tangible one. This has led to a number of issues such as community displacement and tourism-led urban regeneration and beautification projects in the center of the city. The shift in the OUV from tangible heritage in 2016 to the intangible heritage in 2020 has, however, not altered the vision for the city's future, as the tourism focused projects initiated in the first nomination attempt continue without considering the fact that the local community is the ultimate carrier of the intangible heritage recognized as the outstanding heritage value of the city.

This has led many traders and residents to move towards an area at the edge of the city, moving the community commercial hub outside the historic center in order to regenerate it as a site with enhanced touristic facilities. Local communities were often unaware of the legislation or development projects around the city center and were not engaged in the decision-making processes. The City Core Special Regulations (CCSR) [62] which includes the protection of tangible heritage, should also include intangible heritage and allow some level of flexibility and incentives for the local community who should not be seen as a burden but as an integral part of the heritage value of the city.

It is important to indicate that the OUV of the file that led to As-Salt's successful inscription in 2021 was connected to the strong link between its intangible attributes (tolerance and co-habitations among Muslim and Christian communities; urban hospitality; and socio-urban welfare system), and tangible attributes (significant architecture and urban morphology) during the *golden era* ranging from the 1860s to the middle of the 1920s [27]. Those intangible attributes might be jeopardized by the ongoing projects, leading to the loss the OUV that led to the inscription in the first place, following in the footsteps of other relevant WH cities in the MENA region. The local community is the best carrier of the intangible heritage that has been instrumental in the success of the second nomination file of As-Salt. Local Community hospitality and harmonious coexistence between Christians and Muslims in the city are two key intangible heritage qualities that have been instrumental in the city being nominated on the world heritage site. Those qualities cannot continue without maintaining the local communities in the historic center of As-Salt. It is a key here to introduce the concept of resilience by retaining some of the intangible heritage and the character of the city, and by revealing the impact of neglecting other values though promoting one dominant value, which is usually the outstanding universal value (OUV).

Lessons must be learned from earlier WH case studies in the region in order to avoid recurrent patterns of heritage-led Urban regeneration that are likely to destroy and neglect other values of the site that are important to the local community. The paper presents a number of recommendations based on the results of a community survey that aims to avoid the repetition of the negative impacts identified in other WH cities of the MENA region. Further research is needed into which actions best support the retention of intangible heritage within WHSs. This should be initiated at the early stages of adding a site on the WH tentative list, while providing short, medium, and long-term visions for maintaining the connections between the tangible and the intangible dimensions of heritage when these are still in place. The role of UNESCO is important in terms of retaining the multi-dimensional heritage values associated with a site that are directly or indirectly connected to the outstanding Universal Value.

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Abbreviations

UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WHL	World Heritage List
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
OUV	Outstanding Universal Value
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
WHS	World Heritage Site
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
DDP	Distinctive Destination Program
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SDC	Salt Development Corporation
RSS	Royal Scientific Society
JICA	Japanese International Cooperation Study
CCSR	the City Core Special Regulation
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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