Research Approaches for Identifying Images of the Past in the Built Environment

Authors : Ahmad Al-Zoabi

Abstract : Development of research approaches for identifying images of the past in the built environment is at a beginning stage, and a review of the current literature reveals a limited body of research in this area. This study seeks to make a contribution to fill this void. It investigates the theoretical and empirical studies that examine the built environment as a medium for communicating the past in order to understand how images of the past are operationalized in these studies. Findings revealed that image could be operationalized in several ways depending on the focus of the study. Three concerns were addressed in this study when defining the image of the past: (a) to investigate an 'everyday' popular image of the past; (b) to look at the building's image as an integrated part of a larger image for the city; and (c) to find patterns within residents' images of the past. This study concludes that a future study is needed to address the effects of different scales (size and depth of history) of cities and of different cultural backgrounds of images of the past.