The Effects of Urban Conflict and the Role of Community-Based Initiatives in Baghdad

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Abstract

The invasion of Iraq by America and its allies in 2003 represented a transformation for the country’s capital city, Baghdad. This conflict was particularly urban, maintained a neo-liberal agenda to change the political and economic structures, and resulted in strong divisive security measures being implemented throughout the city, thus altering the urban environment. The changes to the city created significant challenges for Baghdad’s residents - they became isolated, segregated, and often immobile. Consequently, many of their social and economic networks have been severed. While governmental plans for redevelopment have been mired in corruption and stalled implementation, several community-based initiatives have emerged which seem to transcend and/or address the urban challenges that Baghdadis face. These initiatives will be explored through case studies in terms of their network structures, successes, limitations, and potential to contribute to the redevelopment of Baghdad. It is evident, furthermore, that planners have an important role in identifying these initiatives, analyzing them to illuminate successful paths for both sustainability and growth, and understanding the stakeholders who are part of the universe the initiatives operate in for beneficial partnerships and stronger networks.