

# **Crisis of Traditional Identity in the Built Environment of the Saudi Cities. A Case Study: The Old City of Tabuk 2015**

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## **Abstract**

Over the last four decades, the built environment in Saudi has lost its traditional identity, as a result of the economic boom. The characteristics of construction heritage in Saudi cities have been affected and exposed a lot of harm. Tabuk is one of the cities that faces a crisis with regards to its traditional identity in the built environment, due to the lack of maintenance by the owners and leaseholders, in addition to transformations made to the buildings, so as to meet personal needs. As a result of the extremely poor services provided in the old town and with no particular planning policies for the development of the old city most significant old buildings have damaged. The development is likely to negatively affect these places due to the change in the residents' economic conditions, and their rapid and collective move to developed areas surrounding the city. Most of the inhabitants of Tabuk associate the traditional buildings with bad looking and also believe that traditional buildings are not suitable for modern life. Therefore, many old buildings have been removed and new buildings constructed in the old city, although these new buildings do not represent the local identity. Additionally, the traditional way of life in the old city is usually accompanied by poor social. This makes it necessary to study the transformation of traditional identity in the old city of Tabuk, in order to find ways to preserve our heritage in the built environment. This research presents an investigative study to understand why the traditional identity of the built environment has been lost and why we need to preserve it. This study has adopted mixed method approach because it is necessary to understand the reasons behind this crisis, in addition to the relationship between people and their physical environment without having too much of an effect on their lives. The interaction between people and physical form required the researcher to study the traditional built environment in Tabuk, both prior to and after the changes. Moreover, not only the physical environment had to be investigated, but also how local people perceive the alterations, as well as the impact of these changes on their sense of place in the old city of Tabuk.