



## Factors of Identity Loss in Buraydah City Saudi Arabia

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**Abstract:** Buraydah, a small Saudi Arabian city, has transformed rapidly in the last few decades. This transformation has occurred due to economic growth, population growth, infrastructural development, and environmental factors. The urban identity is shaped by cultural patterns and the regional diversity within its fabric. Historical sites that retain architectural traits from their respective eras play a significant role in transmitting urban identity to future generations. However, when individuals disregard traditional identities in search of modernism and urbanization, dramatic changes occur in the physical structure, social-spatial pattern, socio-economic structure, and socio-cultural structure of the city. All of these have dramatically altered the city's identity, which historically took a long time to develop. While the historic sites in the city that have been demolished for expansion and development, also cause the city to lose its identity. This study's objective is to investigate the cause of the changes in identity in Buraydah city. For this purpose, relevant literature was reviewed to identify and address the research objectives and examine the urban and architectural identity concepts, while the comparative study of archival materials with site investigation and survey was conducted in the practical aspect. The result of the study identifies certain factors that contributed to the loss of identity of the city.

**Keywords:** Urbanization; Factors of identity loss; Buraydah city

### 1. Introduction

From the perspective of cities and urban identity, the term identity encompasses a broad definition covering natural and artificial elements, economic and cultural aspects, and social norms [1]. While the architectural identity and the urban perceptions about them are occasionally formed over time by various factors within the urban fabric, it is necessary to draw focus on urban identities with distinct physical architectural features. It must be accepted by society, and blend in with its surroundings as it has a significant impact on the urban context [2]. However, the factor that affects the identity of a city, changes over time, giving distinct city characteristics in each period [3]. While these social culture-related factors change, the city continues to exist, carrying traces of each period as well as being a representation of historical accumulation [4].

Rapid urbanization frequently causes cities and architecture to experience a new urban and changing architectural form, causing them to lose their authentic identities. As a result, during periods of rapid urbanization, people's sentiments of disconnection or alienation from the city grow more profound. Thus, maintaining local authenticity and urban architectural identities becomes more challenging [5]. The most significant aspect of these debates is that alterations or demolitions threaten traditional architectural buildings that are not deemed worthy of preservation. Also, city administrations and people in charge of these sites lack sufficient awareness or knowledge of heritage value, resulting in demolition and reconstruction being considered less costly than conservation. Therefore, serious interventions are required due to urban development needs or the inability to find appropriate solutions for existing challenges [6]. The city of Buraydah has gone through rapid urbanization in the last few decades, resulting in infrastructural development and expansion of the city. Within the process of development, the historic part of the city which expressed traditional Najdi architecture was demolished, causing the loss of identity. The new expansion and development process initiated by the authority also altered the physical and socio-spatial pattern of the city creating a crisis of identity in the city. The purpose of the study is to identify the factors of this crisis of identity of Buraydah.

To understand identity loss in Buraydah, it is necessary to analyze the formation of the context that gave the city its identity, which was formed through the interplay of natural, social, and built aspects. At the same time, the factors that lead to the city's loss of character should be also analyzed. The critical challenge in this research is to, identify the most effective elements for constructing a city's identity and determine which factors have a more significant impact on the city's changing identity. Rapid urbanization prevents cities from adapting to vernacular areas, and cities begin to lose their identity and sense of connection to the environment [7]. A comprehensive review of recent literature addressing modernization and rapid urbanization, city identity concepts related to its urban characters, city's physical identity, and sociocultural structures, revealing their effects on the formation of a city's physical identity, is discussed below:

#### I. Definition of identity

Identity is a set of distinct features (physical traits or behavioral) by which a person or a thing can be identified or recognized. On the other hand, individuals' participation in changing historical situations through cultural identity, is a social process such as historical reservoirs [8]. In other words, identity is a person's or thing's distinctive characteristic or state concerning a place within historically defined discourses [9].

#### II. Physical identity of the city

A variety of factors particular to each city define the original identity of different cities, which appear in many categories such as architectural, social, cultural, political, psychological, emotional, and so on. According to Maqsoodi's study, there are two aspects of city identity: one is concerned with the mental, intangible, and normative conception, while the other is concerned with the physical identity of the city (urban fabric) [6]. Lynch, a well-known American urban planner, and author confirmed in many of his studies that the city form is made by the physical appearance and visible symbols of the city [10]. The physical identity of the city is the visual elements, such as unique architecture that shape the city's identity. A strong relationship between these physical identities and people's activities makes up a city's urban fabric. In other words, the physical identity of the city is defined as one of the urban identity aspects. The urban fabric is a natural and tangible concept linked to dependency conformity. It creates a sense of place and helps people in connecting with different places and distinguishes between the urban fabrics of different cities. As a result, urban identity can be thought of as a dynamic concept and diagnostic tool that provides a unique feeling of a place to the urban character [11].

#### III. The city's urban identity concept

Some previous studies indicated that urban identity could also be defined as the physical identity of the city, which is linked to dependency conformity and provides a feeling of place, allowing people to connect with different places [12]. A city's physical identity reveals similarities between the structure of the city and itself. Kropf [13] believes that the urban character distinguishes cities through their differences, the physical identity of the city recognizes cities based on similarities. The characteristics, irrespective of style, enable the city's urban fabric to evolve and may eventually lead to the formation of the city's urban identity. In turn, the physical identity of the city contributes to the formation of the urban tissue structure. As a result, the urban character as a city feature appears to be synonymous with the physical identity of the city. It reflects one of the city's characteristics that focuses more on city form.

#### IV. Modernization, rapid urbanization, and the city's lost identity

The process of modernization and rapid urbanization are the key factors that influence the identity of a city. As a result, cities have grown and expanded, and the context of cities' urban areas has endured major transformations in recent decades [14]. Apart from impacting social and cultural lives, the loss of a city's identity is a natural consequence of increasing urbanization. This is because any slight changes made to the parameters constituting urban identity might result in different patterns and identities in different city regions. Due to rapid development, the construction of urban forms is almost identical, reproducing a utilitarian identity from one city to another. As a result, similar construction styles have transformed the city's historical landmarks, influencing city identity within the socio-cultural and physical changes in the context of the city and people's lifestyles.

#### V. The relationship between society-culture and physical shape towards a city identity

Culture is human made by their reliance on nature and human resources. Through culture, human expresses his way of life according to particular criteria and sources. One of the products of culture is the physical environment, i.e., the settlement that grows in a city. Therefore, city is the artefact of human expression from his way of thinking. Thus, traditional cities will change to adapt to the modern way of thinking, which in turn leads to a transformation in the physical form. Moreover, several research on environmental social psychology has explored how the social, cultural and place related bonds contribute to build place identity among residents of a given area. Since the city is for people and their communication, it should then be seen as a framework for collective identity, and be readable and decipherable through the symbols relevant to local lifestyles and through meanings as documentation of

history. Also, there is culture in nature, and the image of nature is a product of society, of culture. As highlighted by Berglund, “old trees, old houses, and old places – urban places as well as parks – are all symbols of survival. All these developed from the response to the environment and relationships with nature, providing people with a sense of identity.

## 2. Methodology

This study aims to investigate the primary causes of identity loss in Buraydah city. This study focuses on two aspects, namely the theoretical and practical aspects. Firstly, the theoretical aspect was reviewed through a study of relevant literature on the definition of identity, city identity, and urban characters, such as the physical identity of the city, urban identity concept, and rapid urbanization which resulted in the loss of city identity. Following that, the effective factors for establishing Buraydah’s identity are determined concerning the following topics: Physical structure, Social-spatial pattern, Socioeconomic structure, and Socio-cultural structure. Secondly, the practical aspect involves the extensive fieldwork conducted across multiple site visits, and field surveys to assess the present condition of the study area. A random sampling procedure was used for the survey. 220 residents (permanent residents 35 years of age and over) participated in the survey. For the study, it was essential to have participants who have observed the major transformation within the city during the last few decades. Because of this, participants aged 35 years or more were chosen. Participants were also from varied neighborhoods, that is, the city center through the outskirts, covering a socio-economic characteristic of the population. 187 interviews were accomplished with an 85 percent response rate. The face-to-face interviews were carried out in the summer of 2021 by the authors of this paper. The survey form consisted of questions that tap into people’s perception of urban identity and their perception of change regarding the city’s identity over time. This article posits that one method to regain Buraydah’s urban identity is to trace and analyze its beginnings in light of emerging urban development conditions. The study’s primary resources were area surveys in Buraydah’s city center and archival investigations. The research area is explored by comparing archived images to current architectural development.

## 3. Results

This section presents and examines the empirical investigation’s findings. It summarises the city’s origin and formation, the causes that shape its identity, the physical structure of the city, the social-spatial patterns, the socio-cultural structure, and the socio-economic structure of the city.

### 3.1 Buraydah Origin and Formation (The Walled City)

Al Qassim is one of the thirteen provinces in Saudi Arabia. The largest city in the Al Qassim region is Buraydah which has been mentioned in many references as one of the historic cities. The city is unique to the Abbasid era, the Ottoman period, and the Saudi kingdom. It carries Najd architectural characteristics contributing to the city’s distinctive identity [15] (see Figure 1).

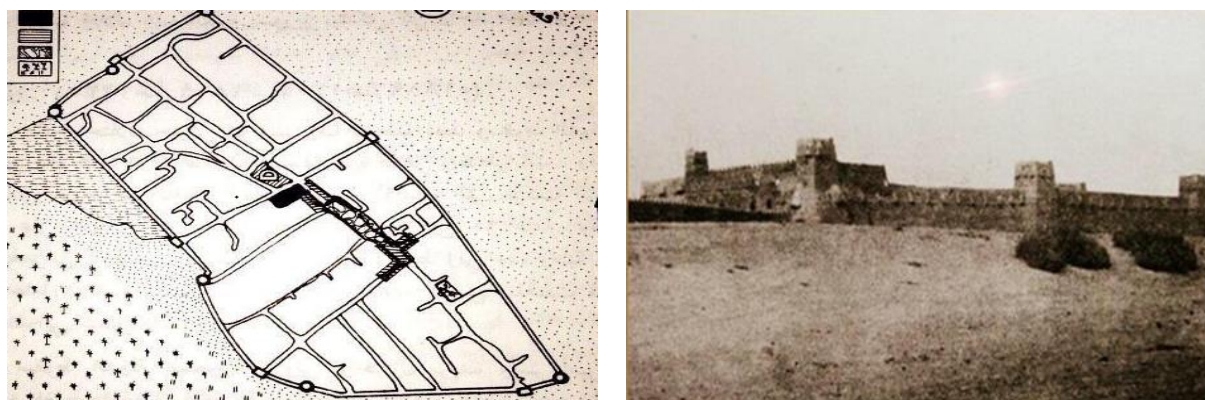


**Figure 1.** Najd architectural characteristics, Grand Mosque, Aljurdah, Buraydah

Unlike many Arab cities, Buraydah is a small city distinguished because its emergence was gradual, spontaneous, and natural. In only about four decades, it has gone from a small village surrounded by walls to a metropolitan region. The historical city was surrounded by defensive walls, constructed as a protective shield for its residents from foreign invaders. These walls were built from raw materials available on the city’s land, from stones and mud

brought from quarries, mountains, and valleys near the town. The city prioritizes city planning and wall construction as a fortress to the dwellings, facilities, and castles. The mud wall was constructed with large stones poured into a foundation over three meters deep [16] (see Figure 2). Buraydah city walls' significances are as follows [17]:

- Al-Duraibi Wall was the first wall built around the old town, with an area of 8000 square meters or more, and its surrounding area reached more than 360 square meters.
- The famous Hajilan wall, known for its durability and strength, repelled two war campaigns, the first of the Iraqi campaign and the second of Ibrahim Pasha's campaign from Egypt, where it stood in front of artillery and military vehicles, and the campaigns were unable to penetrate the town.
- The Al-Muhanna Wall, completed in 1889 (1307 AH), is a restoration of the two earlier walls, with its addition to the city's expansion and extension.
- The wall of Saleh Al-Hassan, the last wall of Buraydah's old city. It was built in 1903 (1321 AH) and supported by towers.



**Figure 2.** Buraydah, the walled city

Note: This figure was prepared by Qassim Municipality Archival

### 3.2 Case Study the Identity Loss in Buraydah City (Interview)

This part presents and discusses the result of the analysis of the data derived from the face-to-face interview with a random sampling of 220 residents (permanent residents 35 years of age and over) who participated in the survey. The questions posed to the participants consisted of two sections. The first section included questions that tap into people's perception of urban identity and their rating of importance among various determinants of identity. In contrast, the second section consists of the most important whether the image of the city has changed, and about on what grounds this change has occurred.

In response to the first section's questions that tap into people's perception of urban identity, the Participants indicated that historical places and landmarks play the most critical role in the identity of the city. However, natural elements are also seen as important with a higher emphasizing the role of historic elements. Therefore, in order to identify the most significant elements of the natural, the city's unique location, and the locally characteristic vegetation, such as Palm trees, seem to make some contribution to the urban identity. In the second section of questions, participants cited several problems with the existing image of the city whether the image of the town has changed respondents expressed mixed feelings, on the fact the majority of participants opined that the unique traditional urban texture almost changed and they believe that the city loses its identity.

### 3.3 Analyzing the Identity of Buraydah Old City

Most of the Arab regions were governed by Egypt's Mamluks and Turkey's Ottomans, and after a struggle for years, the majority of the Arab regions fell to the Ottomans. A lot of Arab cities were formed in that period and influenced by the Ottoman style [18]. On the other hand, most of Najd's regions have preserved their urban identity and local specificity, far from the influence of the Ottoman's urban style, which is seen in the western region of Saudi Arabia [19]. Therefore, the structure of the city of Buraydah follows the style of Najd cities, indicative of the previous description of the city of Buraydah in its origin and formation [15]. Buraydah, as seen in Figure 3 and Figure 4, has preserved its distinct urban architectural identity in the Najdi style. Nonetheless, preserving a community's identity through time is a critical challenge for all cultures, particularly in the face of rapid economic and technological advancement. Like all cities undergoing new urban and architectural formation due to urban changes, Saudi Arabia rapidly lost its distinct identity, particularly in the early 1960s [20]. Buraydah is no exception to this trend. Buraydah due to its economic development has gone through rapid urbanization resulting



in the urban sprawl that led to various building types constructed with little reference to the old city's urban fabric. As presented in Figure 5 and Figure 6, Figure 7, below, these types of free-standing cubic forms of three or four-story buildings do not have any relationship with their surroundings in terms of shape or architectural character.



**Figure 3.** Najd style architecture, Buraydah



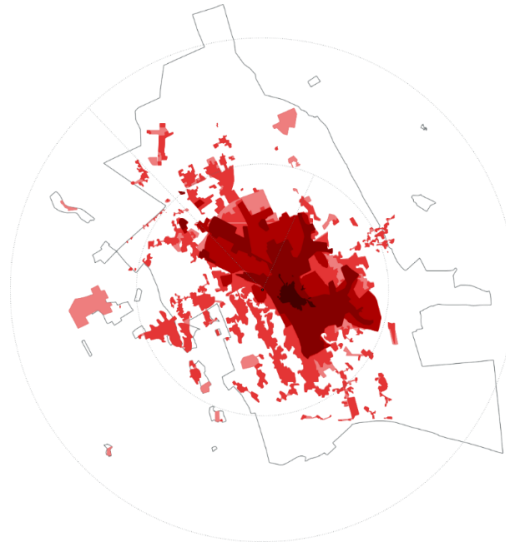
**Figure 4.** Najd style architecture, Buraydah



**Figure 5.** Najd style architecture, Buraydah



**Figure 6.** Najd style architecture, Buraydah

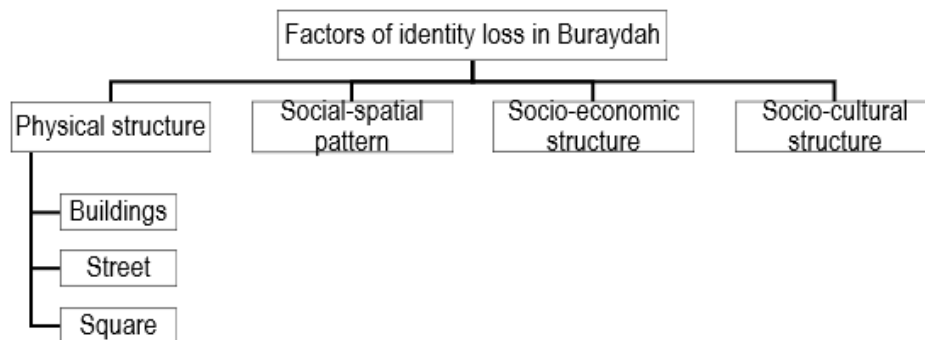


**Figure 7.** Urban growth of Buraydah city

Note: This figure was prepared by Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs

### 3.4 Factors Influencing the Identity Loss of Buraydah

Cities are typically defined by their characteristics. However, as cities have rapidly urbanized and cultural, and historical sites have been demolished, some cities ended up losing their unique urban and architectural features, resulting in a loss of place identity [14]. When it comes to Buraydah, characteristics related to the physical structure, social-spatial pattern, socio-economic structure, and socio-cultural structure have significantly influenced the transformation of the city's urban fabric. Because of these transformations, the city's distinct place identity has deteriorated alongside the demolished old walled city as shown in Figure 8.

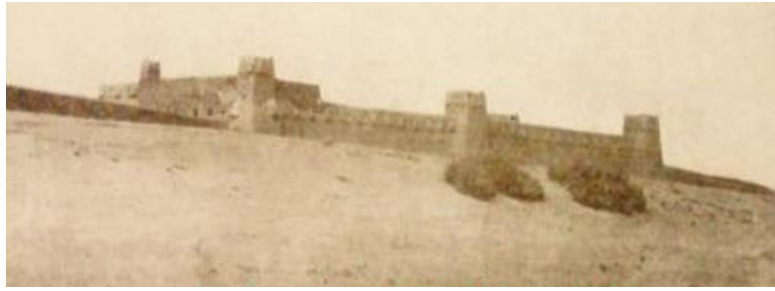


**Figure 8.** Factors of identity loss in Buraydah

#### 3.4.1 Physical structure of the city

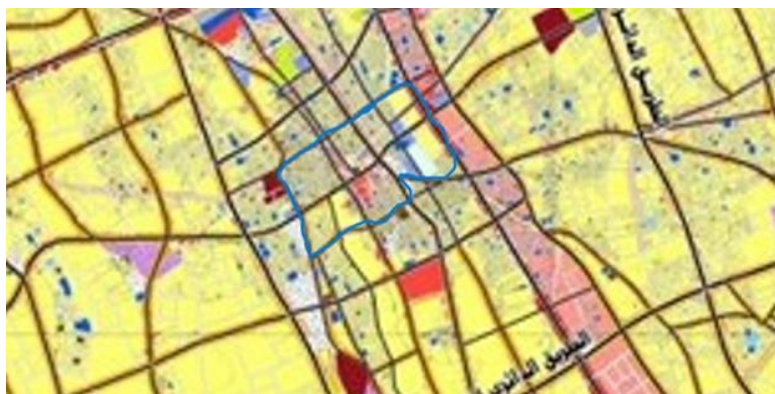
Due to their incredible architecture, historical cities have a considerable influence on the formation of city identity, which is generated through the interaction of natural, and socio-cultural characteristics, religious roles, and local construction materials and systems. Therefore, the urban morphology of these historic cities is influenced by the social features of private life rather than their geometric forms. The urban fabric of historical Saudi cities is a solid-built mass on which courtyards and narrow passageways are engraved [21]. This compact urban fabric, narrow shaded street networks, and buildings' protected openings were environmental design strategies developed from social responses. It should be noted that historic urban areas have two types of public spaces, the first is open public space, which can be found in open plazas in front of important structures such as mosques, markets, and schools. The second category is traffic streets, which are symbolized by a system of narrow-structured pedestrian-oriented alleys [22]. The narrow roads reflect a traffic management strategy that efficiently organizes many urban operations; for example, the "Friday prayer" courtyard acts as a gathering space [23]. Like other Saudi Arabia's historical cities, the urban fabric of the Buraydah walled city is a solid-built mass with courtyards and narrow streets bordered by several blind facades of one or two-story houses with courtyards in the back. The prevailing horizontal lines that dominate the facades of traditional Qassim houses give a unique character to the house and the street along which they are located. Compared to the historic walled city demolished in the late 1950 (see Figure 9 and Figure 10) and the modern area close to the old city center (Al Khubayb) built in the early 1960s,

today's housing in Buraydah city shows the entire absence of Najd architectural style. The traditional dwelling's particular character (see Figure 11) such as a wide variety of open and semi-open spaces, and courtyards at the rear-end of the housing, all with access to open public places, is the architectural language scarcely visible today.



**Figure 9.** The demolished walled city

Note: This photo was prepared by Qassim Municipality Archival



**Figure 10.** Boundary shows the demolished area of the historic city

Note: This photo was prepared by Qassim Municipality Archival



**Figure 11.** The two-story buildings with courtyards in the historical city of Buraydah

Note: This photo was prepared by Qassim Municipality Archival

#### (1) Buildings in the formation of urban architectural identity

Cities have distinct characters and identities shaped by the urban areas and building groupings that have become ingrained in the thoughts of city dwellers as both reminders of urban elements and key determinants of urban architectural identity. In addition, building facades fulfill representation-related functions in cities as unique responsibilities to assign meaning to cities' societal identities, as well as the presence of a shared past (see Figure 12). Buildings can be thought of as goods that represent a city's lifestyles, socioeconomic status, and cultures over time, which reflect the knowledge, and skills of society, providing information about the materials and procedures used in construction [14]. The identities of cities and urban architectural buildings developed in response to historical, socio-cultural, and economic variables change with time and in response to significant urban expansion. Urban transformation becomes acceptable when it occurs concurrently with the city's existing identity and without eroding the city identity that has been gained over time [2], which did not occur in Buraydah city. As a result of rapid urbanization, the preservation of urban and spatial identities has become more challenging, and the city has lost its distinct values and cultural identities.



A majority of historical cities and heritage sites are threatened by new development, which has resulted in many cities losing their urban identities and becoming more alike as a result. With the change-based influence of authorities and society, urban spaces and buildings transform, and decisions made about these places and buildings have an immediate impact not only at present but also in the future in terms of transmitting past values to the future.

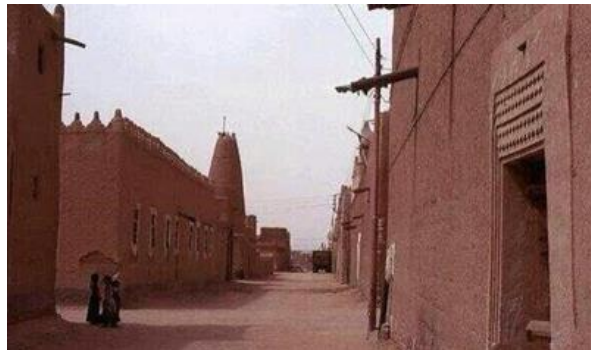


**Figure 12.** Architectural buildings that have representation-related functions, Buraydah

Note: This photo was prepared by Qassim Municipality Archival

## (2) Streets in urban context

Small streets in the Najd region's old cities function on a human scale that is well-suited to their surroundings; streets are merged into one another to preserve the city's environment (see Figure 13). However, as a result of modern city construction and the entry of vehicles into the constituent context of these cities, the identity that marked historic cities has changed. Moreover, because of the reliance on motorized vehicles, the streets are no longer helpful in linking people to the urban environment. As a result, modern street planning jeopardizes the character identity of the old city.



**Figure 13.** Narrow street, the old Historical walled city

Note: This photo was prepared by Qassim Municipality Archival



**Figure 14.** Aljurdah square with its Great Mosque in the historic city

Note: This photo was prepared by Qassim Municipality Archival



### (3) Square in urban context

The public squares are the most distinctive elements of the urban structure in most historic cities determined by the same formal factors as the street. Urban areas have mixed functionality to attract more people [24]. However, when the walled city of Buraydah was demolished to make way for new development, many public squares were destroyed. Certain public squares in the city's older districts, such as Aljurdah Square with its Grand Mosque, were maintained. However, because the urban plan is exclusively oriented toward vehicles, squares (see Figure 14) are mixed with vehicular and pedestrian traffic. A majority portion of the open space has been transformed into a parking lot. Whereas in the newly expanded part of the city open spaces are dedicated solely to parking.

#### 3.4.2 Social-Spatial Patterns



**Figure 15.** The urban fabric of the historical city of Buraydah

Note: This photo was prepared by Qassim Municipality Archival



**Figure 16.** Aljurdah neighborhood and its square that has a social and economic function in the historic city

Note: This photo was prepared by Qassim Municipality Archival



**Figure 17.** The old and new squares in the historic city and new part of the city

Note: This photo was prepared by Qassim Municipality Archival

Designers require neighborhood context to create a memorable setting. The traditional urban fabric in Buraydah was constructed inward, containing every level of its constituents, from city walls to quarters and local residential clusters (see Figure 15). Even central public spaces were restricted in space. The main streets frequently lead to small, highly narrow cul-de-sacs, which lead to private patios via tight passageways [25]. These details create a distinguished sense of place identity. In the neighborhood context, “urban space should be conceived as an outdoor room, somewhere to relax and enjoy the urban experience” Jacobs’ study [26]. Jurddah neighborhood is an essential zone in the historic area of Buraydah city. the community neighborhoods are more than simply physical connections; they also serve as social and economic collaboration (see Figure 16). Comparing the Jurddah neighborhood with the new neighborhoods of Buraydah, the traditional meaning of the concept of neighborhood has transformed. These new neighborhoods do not have any place to relax and enjoy as depicted in Figure 17. Also, they lack mixed-use functionality, with almost 90% of the buildings being for commercial or residential purposes. These new places do not integrate effectively, and there is no place for social activity. These urban components are vital as they influence the city’s identity, where people shape the neighborhood settings.

#### 3.4.3 Socio-economic structure of the city

Urban settlements evolve and change to meet the demands of their inhabitants. It is worth noting that historic cities have fought to maintain a balance between their symbolic value as cultural assets with a particular place identity and numerous political and economic development schemes over the past century. The demands of ordinary living, combined with economic growth, have harmed the old city's urban history in Middle Eastern cities [27]. The new economic structure of Buraydah city caused changes in the physical entity of the spaces, which in turn affected the social structure and changed the physical spaces (see Figure 18). These changing processes effectively transformed the city’s urban identity [28], due to the rapid modernization of urban form, architecture, and housing. In implementing Western city methodologies that impose specific practices, spaces, and forms on their traditional urban fabric, local characteristics of the city were overlooked. As a result, modern urban shapes are frequently similar and monotonous because they do not respond to context.

Based on the socioeconomic analysis and economic growth, the new development in Buraydah city had a devastating and destructive influence on the urban heritage of the historic city. The physical characteristics of the urban fabric transformed to reflect the modern grid pattern. This transition eventually transformed the built environment from a harmonized pedestrian-oriented environment to a fragmented vehicular-oriented environment. The modern grid is a typical characteristic adopted in Saudi urban patterns with residences ranging from row houses (see Figure 5 and Figure 6) to semi-detached and detached villas. However, historical design elements and urban language that reflect the natural surroundings are not visible in these types of design schemes.



**Figure 18.** The changes in the physical entity of the spaces

Note: This photo was prepared by Qassim Municipality Archival

#### 3.4.4 Socio-Cultural Structure

Historic urban areas are regarded as an important aspect of the community's culture and prosperity. It is an important element of the local communities' communal memory [29]. The urban characteristics of the place are formed from socio-cultural aspects such as traditions and values; environmental circumstances such as climate and geographic location; and technological elements such as materials, economics, and building technique all of which influence the physical shape and architectural features [24]. Figure 19 depicts the city of Buraydah, where the identity covers the socio-cultural aspects and environmental conditions. Buraydah, like many historic cities, has a compact urban fabric, narrow street networks, and buildings with protected openings. Its design emphasizes environmental and social considerations for the scale and importance of its cultural, historical, and religious sites and optimizes citizens’ quality of life [21]. However, due to the oil boom and urbanization, this urban fabric began to change with the appearance of multi-story apartments sprouting in most Saudi cities, including Buraydah. Figure



20 shows this type of vertical housing in the new parts of Buraydah city. While traditional houses were built horizontally in the Najed architecture style, modern housing is multi-story. A different culture resulted from this type of development and is usually opposed by the local people. The housing is therefore typically reserved for expatriate employees and foreigners. Nonetheless, modern architecture contributed to the changes in sociocultural identity with the eradication of cultural symbols now a fundamental aspect of the city's loss of identity. As a result, people sense estrangement from the local surrounding, while most experience cultural inertia. Even so, many people moved into apartments as living standards improved and modern living trends were marketed during the urban change with historical towns being left to low-income families. Therefore, socio-cultural factors in the new parts of the city have a transformational change due to rapid urbanization, as observed in most Saudi cities. This was also established in the survey findings (Figure 20 and Figure 21).



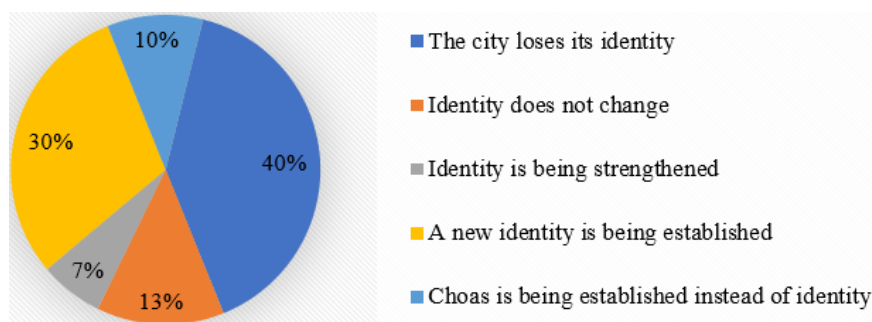
**Figure 19.** The social-cultural aspects and environmental conditions

Note: This photo was prepared by Qassim Municipality Archival



**Figure 20.** Multi-storey apartments in the new parts of Buraydah

Note: This photo was prepared by Qassim Municipality Archival



**Figure 21.** Residents' perception of identity in Buraydah

#### 4. Conclusions

The study's comparison of archival photos between existing characters and their historical lineage found that the primary threat to the city's identity is rapid urbanization and its impact on the physical structure, social-spatial pattern, socio-economic structure, and socio-cultural factors along with disregard for the fundamental principles that built the historical city of Buraydah with its distinct urban fabric and unique traditional architecture. In addition,

unplanned development has destroyed the natural and historical fabric away from urban planning standards for such cities. Moreover, the inadequacy of regulations and organizational structure, separate planning and implementation of such historical cities, leads to the development of the city in an unhealthy way with a negative identity. The study concludes that the historic city of Buraydah consists of tangible and intangible heritage and identity. The development and demolitions performed on the tangible heritage sites are irreversible and have resulted in the significant loss of identity of the city. The complete demolition of some of the important historic sites such as the walled city impacted the study and survey because very few documents were found, which lack detailed information. This was the limitation of the research. The findings of the research open the opportunity for future research focusing on the preservation and renovation of historic sites of the city.

## 5. Recommendation

Based on the conclusions the study proposes a set of urban guidelines to address the development process of preserving a place's identity and character, emphasizing the importance of historical sites and their potential for reinforcing a city's urban identity.

- Firstly, in terms of Governmental regulations, city authorities must be aware of the historical significance of the urban shape and traditional architectural features to avoid further deterioration of the city's identity.

- Secondly, in terms of the factors and causes, which have led to the loss of identity, the study recommends the following:

- (a) In terms of the urban identity in the changing context of the city; heritage conservators and designers must work together to create urban development guidelines that do not encroach on historically significant sites or culturally significant areas.

- (b) Historic and significant buildings must be gazette as having heritage and cultural value.

- (c) Preserving and reviving historical sites require that the characteristics of Saudi cities be reinterpreted in a way that does not negatively affect the historical area of a city.

- (d) For the upcoming urban extension, the district should be identified as a symbol and it is also fundamental for development, considering the identity theme as a means for participation and building bonds between citizens and their surroundings. Thus, the area is expected to be a cultural hub for its residents as well as a means of preserving the city's identity.

## Data Availability

The data used to support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon request.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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