



Regionalism indicators and assessment approach of recent trends in Saudi Arabia's architecture: The Salmaniah architectural style and the King Salman Charter initiatives as a case study

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This study focuses on two main trends, the 'Salmaniah architectural style' and the impacts of the 'King Salman Charter for Architecture and Urbanism' initiative. The Salmaniah architectural style is a phenomenon that later expanded to formulate the King Salman Charter, which takes a comprehensive approach. While the Charter considers the Najdi architectural style, it goes beyond that one heritage style to include other traditional styles in the Kingdom found outside the Najd region.

As a result, this study views the two trends through a wider regionalism perspective to better understand regionalism architecture in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, these approaches provide insights on how to study and assess regionalism initiatives worldwide. Thus, this research discusses three main objectives:

- To identify the conceptual relationship between critical global regionalism and recent emerging local regionalism attempts.
- To formulate a methodological approach based on indicators and assessment tools to study and understand local, national, and regionalism initiatives and cases.
- To examine the case studies chosen in this study and interpret their outcomes against global regionalism concepts through two levels of analysis: regionalism indicators and assessment tools.

2.2.1. The rise of modernity

Identity struggles are not new in the Middle East; however, the lack of a strong contemporary Middle Eastern material culture practice has largely failed to shape a contemporary post-colonial identity in this complex era of open and infinitely networked globalization [60]. During the last half of the last century, Saudi Arabia underwent an oil boom and economic reform that created an urge for comfort and progress that echoed what was seen in Western societies, especially a culture built around motor vehicles, and attracted large numbers of the population to major cities [45]. These events allowed Saudi Arabia to undergo a considerable makeover and express an image of progress. During the oil boom era, the architecture of Saudi Arabia embraced a global modern architectural movement that signified technical and functional uses, which dramatically influenced the traditional and heritage-built settlements. The oil boom era contributed to the rise of newly-built, modern neighborhoods, buildings' design in which problems surfaced as issues of privacy and a sense of community was undermined, and a new agenda of aesthetics, construction cost, and modern technology were adopted [55]. Saleh [54] suggests that Saudi Arabia has undergone a massive transformation since the 1950s. Imported culture and technologies have resulted in new interactions and products that have introduced modern building materials, systems, and techniques, replacing traditional materials and methods. However, this process has not taken enough time to reflect a balanced product, for example, thermal suitability [54]. In addition, during the 1970s, changes to the Saudi societal norms and values occurred, and these changes influenced the Saudi-built environment that was based on those social norms and values [2].