

How the level of social awareness distinguish the historic preservation movement ...

[History](#), [Middle East](#)



Introduction

Saudi Arabia underwent major challenges during the past decades due to a decline in the social and economic stability in its historical cities.

Urbanization in Saudi Arabia has been ongoing for several decades, and no one paid attention to the value of historical buildings. This led to deterioration of urban centers due to high influx of people from rural areas. No one had paid attention to the destruction of historic sites, until recently, when people began to voice their concerns over the destruction of most of the historical sites in the country. This led to the formation of the Supreme Commission of Tourism and Antiquities that seeks to preserve the Saudi Arabian heritage in various urban centers faced with the threat of demolition and destruction of their historic sites. This body aims at preserving important historic sites that give the urban centers its heritage and pride. It was the knowledge that current policies and formulations shape the future that changed the perception of Saudi Arabians towards taking preservation measures. Supreme Commission of Tourism and Antiquities has a duty of registering, preserving and ensuring that historical sites are brought back to life. This is quite different from the social awareness and the call for historical preservation in the United States.

Goals

Saudi Arabia focused on development and urbanization with the key areas of development being on modern structures. Industrialization also took the center stage in development of urban centers. This happened with no one taking a keen look at the issue of the country's traditional culture and

historic sites. Urban centers in this country are developing at a high rate, and this means that the rates of destruction of historic sites are as high as the rates of urbanization (UNESCO, 2010).

Saudi Arabia is a country that has so much historic significance based on its heritage. The rate at which the destruction of historic sites was going on was alarming, hence the government took initiatives to ensure that the stop the destruction of these historic sites. The goals of the government vary with each urban center. The first goal of the government was to develop a list of antiques regulations in different urban areas. This was aimed at setting a new trend in the direction of development of urban areas within the country. The regulations provided that development would aim at preserving the national heritage hence the need to align development with historic preservation. The government identified the link between attracting investors and historic preservation. The Saudi Arabian government came up with sufficient reasons that linked development and investments to historic values.

The other goal of the government in historic preservation was settlement preservation. This mainly focused on the preservation of abandoned cities that had historic value to the communities living around the area. This was done through open museums in towns like al-tearaif located in Al Diriyah. The government decided to preserve this city as a model museum. The need to have cities like these preserved arises from the rich heritage with which they are constructed (Binzagr, 2008).

The other goal of historic preservation in Saudi Arabia was to maintain tradition that exists in the settlements and historic sites that were fast

disappearing as focus was paid on developing new structures. However, over the last decade, the government has identified the value of old structures to the country's history hence they have worked on preservation measures to safeguard and maintain them before they completely disappear (Asharq, 2006).

Historic preservation in the country also aimed at developing and adapting various historic sites without them losing its authenticity, symbolism and historic identity. It was all about recognizing that these were not dead artifacts, but living ones that could still be present in the future, only if action was taken to ensure they will be in existence in the future (Jeddah, 1980).

In recent years, the Saudi Arabian government has worked hard towards ensuring that traditions and cultural preservation are put in place. This is different from the focus on physical preservation that was evident during the initial years of the historic preservation initiatives. This entailed revitalization of its historical and cultural aspects that contribute to their diverse heritage (Arab News, 2009).

The other goal of the historic preservation in Saudi Arabia was to make documents on the evolution of historic settlements in the urban region. This also involved recording different architectural styles in different villages and surroundings. The other important goal was to prepare in depth plans of what it had to do in future to avoid a repeat of the rapid development changes that can destroy the country's historical sites. There was also a need for this body to collect and recycle different tools that had significant historic value. There was also a need to raise awareness on the importance

of historic preservation in different parts of the kingdom (Ministry of Municipality & Rural Affairs, 2005).

Groups involved

In the historic preservation in the United States of America, several groups were involved in the issue of historic preservation. These groups took the initiative even before the government joined them in the preservation efforts. This is not the case in Saudi Arabia, the government is the only group involved in historic preservation initiatives. The government is the only body that funds and oversees an activity aimed at preserving historic sites. They do this with the help of the Supreme Commission for Tourism & Antiquities (SCTA). This body plays various roles in order to ensure historic places and artifacts are preserved for future generations. The body was formed based on the following aspects: the safe and secure environment that exists in Saudi Arabia, the generous and hospitable people from the country, its geographical location and its vastness. It also focused on its vast archeological sites, historic places and a deeply rooted national heritage. Initially, the Ministry of Antiquities and Museums worked separately with the Supreme Commission for Tourism. The two bodies had different roles in preserving and attracting tourists to the country. However, in 2003, the two bodies came together to form one body, which is the Supreme Commission for Tourism & Antiquities (SCTA). The two bodies now function as one body that aims at preserving antiques and attracting people from different parts of the world to see the countries historic sites and artifacts (Farahat, 1985). Social awareness is about embracing ones environment and doing

everything to ensure that everyone around you is self-conscious of the key aspects of the society they live in. social awareness entails doing what one can to help keep the memories of the past in the present. This is according to definitions 2000. The different actions that people do in the society about different ways of life and their past also fall under this category of social awareness (Al-Amri, 2011). In Saudi Arabia, people have a different way of associating social awareness with historic preservation. Unlike the United States where people fight to preserve historic sites as they are, those in Saudi Arabia want to create things that will preserve these memories. It is common to find people painting major places and famous people. These are then kept safe to remind others in future about their existence. Others make self-designed houses of famous old houses indifferent parts of the country. This is to help people identify with these buildings and appreciate their significance in the kingdoms' history (Al-Hathloul, 1981).

The level of social awareness in the United States is high, and this is why people take more action towards ensuring that historic sites are preserved as compared to Saudi Arabians whose not socially aware as the Americans. The initiatives by local and popular groups in the United States also show that social awareness in the country is another level. The country associates historical buildings with social class and provides a measure of different social classes. In Saudi Arabia, historic sites are mainly about the heritage of the country and tourism. The groups involved in historic preservation also different between the two countries. In the United States, different groups, individuals and local communities come together to demand for preservation of historic sites (Saudi Commission for Tourism & Antiquities, 2008). The

efforts are well coordinated and all the policies and regulations have been implemented. On the other hand, the government is in charge of historic preservation in Saudi Arabia. It finances and overlooks the procedures of historic preservation in different parts of the kingdom (Ishteeaque, 1981).

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