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Los Angeles

**Nation Building in Kuwait 1961–1991**

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in Architecture

by

Anas Alomaim

2016

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# ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Nation Building in Kuwait 1961–1991

by

Anas Alomaim

Doctor of Philosophy in Architecture

University of California, Los Angeles, 2016

Professor Sylvia Lavin, Chair

Kuwait started the process of its nation building just few years prior to signing the independence agreement from the British mandate in 1961. Establishing Kuwait's as modern, democratic, and independent nation, paradoxically, depended on a network of international organizations, foreign consultants, and world-renowned architects to build a series of architectural projects with a hybrid of local and foreign forms and functions to produce a convincing image of Kuwait national autonomy. Kuwait nationalism relied on architecture's ability, as an art medium, to produce a seamless image of Kuwait as a modern country and led to citing it as one of the most democratic states in the Middle East.

The construction of all major projects of Kuwait's nation building followed a similar path; for example, all *mashare'e kubra* [major projects] of the state that started early 1960s included particular geometries, monumental forms, and symbolic elements inspired by the vernacular life of Kuwait to establish its legitimacy. The construction of

specific building types with different functions such as museums, stadiums, and parliaments is significant to modern nation building and public assimilation. Those building types and/or institutions share the same origin, and all were (re)established during the early Western modern period and inspired by Ancient Greece as source of Western civilization. Such Western perspective of modernization as an evolutionary concept, dominated the view of international organization led by the new postwar powers. Kuwait was instructed by international consultants to follow a similar model of modernization to build its postcolonial nationalism.

This dissertation critically analyzes the architecture of nation building in Kuwait City, with a focus on investigating key architectural projects such as Kuwait National Museum, Kuwait National Assembly, and Kuwait Sports Center in terms of their historical development, their formal language, their impact on the socio-cultural milieu, and their roles in Kuwait's nation building.

The importance of my research lies in the formal and critical analysis of postcolonial architectural modernization in Kuwait through various Arabic and Western literature, local newspapers and other periodicals, over 10 related archives around the world, and a number of personal interviews with local as well as international experts in related areas to this research.

The dissertation of Anas Alomaim is approved.

Dana Cuff

Aamir R. Mufti

Sylvia Lavin, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2016

## **Dedication**

To my late father, Abdullah, for teaching me how to be humble

To my mother, Nawal, for teaching me how to be strong

To my sisters, Shrouq, Shayooma, and Shahad; for bending the rules of their sisterhood

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## Biographical Sketch

Anas Alomaim, the author, earned his primary, secondary and high school education in Kuwait's public school system. After graduating from high school, he joined the then Department of Architecture under the College of Engineering and Petroleum at Kuwait University, where he graduated with a Bachelors of Science in Architecture.

Soon after graduation, he joined a one-year extensive training program offered by one of Kuwait most prestigious institutions – Kuwait Fund For Arab Economic Development. As part of his training program the author moved to London in 2005 to work at Mouchel Parkman as an architect intern. While finishing his training program the author was awarded the Kuwait University financial scholarship to do his Masters and Ph.D. so he could eventually join the College of Architecture faculty. In 2006 he joined the Master of Science program in architecture and urban design at Columbia University Graduate School of *Architecture, Planning and Preservation*.

After earning his Master degree, the author worked in several architectural and other creative studios including Voorsanger Architects, Beyer Blinder Belle, and Diane Von Furstenberg. He also worked in the academic field as a teacher assistant at Kuwait University and University of California Los Angeles while participating and curating several art and architectural exhibitions.

## **Chapter I: The Foundation of Nation Building**

## Research Introduction and Background

### Introduction

The process of nation building in Kuwait started in the late 1950s, just a few years prior to the signing of the agreement establishing its independence from the British mandate in 1961. In order to assert itself as an independent, modern, and democratic nation, Kuwait was instructed to follow specific guidelines that included the construction of certain model institutions. Building Kuwait's independence as a modern nation-state paradoxically depended on a network of international organizations, foreign consultants, and world-renowned architects selected to build key architectural projects designed to create Kuwait national image as autonomous, democratic, and modern while masking any contradicting realities. These national projects were all based on established models of institutions that would promote the standardized knowledge of Western modernity in order to reform the Kuwaiti public. Kuwait's nationalist architecture was designed with iconic forms inspired by Kuwait's indigenous culture to legitimize its imported framework, and strategically located to control the development of Kuwait's urban fabric.

A number of architectural competitions were held as mutual endeavors between representatives of the United Nations, the Kuwaiti elite, and European architects to promote a "progressive" and poetic image of Kuwait's nationalism. Those projects were initiated during the 1960s by the newly restructured government of Kuwait and its advisory committee under the title *al-Mashare'e al-Kubrah* (major projects); accordingly, they share an interconnected historical development. Each building and institution has a



nationalist role that is complementary to the others. Together, they build Kuwait's postcolonial national identity, culture, and aspirations.

This dissertation discusses the historical development of crucial architectural projects – the National Museum, the National Assembly, the Sports Center – as well as the Future Development of Old Kuwait City, and other related projects, to demonstrate their role in building Kuwait's nationalism, and investigates the complex network of international agents and organizations responsible for their construction. This research also compares the above-mentioned projects with related examples and formally analyzes how their symbolic, iconic, and monumental shapes are responsible for painting Kuwait's national identity.

Through focused critical analysis of these architectural projects and their programs, rather than the urban fabric or infrastructure, the development of Kuwait's nation building can be elucidated. It is only through the mediation of architecture that it becomes possible to produce a convincing and seamless image of Kuwait's national identity as an autonomous, modern, and democratic country in the minds of the Kuwaiti public. All other aspects of Kuwait's nation building, such as its infrastructure, geographical borders, political structure, and economic system, are connected to the rest of the world. The impossibility of visualizing nationalism comprehensibly, materially, and realistically gives architecture its importance in the process of nation building.

Kuwait's independence from the British mandate went hand in hand with the restructuring of its local government and development plans under the supervision of interconnected agents (international organizations, foreign consultants, local government,

and an assortment of professionals). One of the most urgent priorities globally in the postwar period was the establishment of the United Nations (UN), which mandated decolonization, a process essential to ensuring world peace. International agencies, such as the World Bank Group (including the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)), the UN (including the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)), and the International Council of Museums (ICOM), worked together on conducting missions aimed at educating, modernizing, and restructuring the culture of the Third World nations in order to achieve decolonization. The liberation of colonized nations depended on achieving explicit requirements set by the UN which included constructing specific governing, educational, cultural, and recreational structures. It was impossible for colonies to gain independence without hiring international consultants and other professionals to provide the apparatus of nation building that would modernize postcolonial nations. Modernization had to accord with specific norms that were open to globalization and the global economy. Such Eurocentric modernity would naturally leave Kuwait (and other postcolonial nations) perpetually stunted in the path of progress.

To ensure their effect and legitimacy, the postwar development missions focused first on changing the structure of Kuwait's planning institutions in order to change the status of the colonizer from an authoritative figure to an experienced consultant. Furthermore, the aim was to construct monumental structures inspired by Kuwait's indigenous life to house institutions representative of democracy, able to modernize the public, and designed by world-renowned architects – all in an effort to intensify the public's national pride. The focus on constructing a national museum, a national

assembly, and a national stadium was no arbitrary selection but a deliberate plan aimed to integrate, to organize, and to shape the Kuwaiti public and construct a new set of national beliefs and aspirations.

### **Architecture as Nation Builder: Fabricating Nationalism**

Nation building could be understood as the creation of a national identity by producing national symbols (physical, visual, or verbal representations of a nation which include flags, local currency, national anthems, and national monuments), constructing public buildings and other infrastructures (educational, cultural, recreational, defense, among other facilities), and/or distributing propaganda through various media to assimilate, condition, and ensure the stability of the population within its governing entity. Postcolonial nation building is usually understood as the imperial powers' imposing themselves to shape the way previously colonized states modernize and create their contemporary image.

One of the main reasons that Kuwait was granted its independence from the British mandate was the growing power of Arab nationalism which arose as a threat during the 1950s by popularizing pan-Arabism (the unification of Arabs under a single nation) among Kuwaitis. Arab nationalism stirred the emotions of the local people by instigating their Arab identity and thus motivated uprisings against the British mandate. The ruling family and British officials realized that granting Kuwait its independence would be a better solution.<sup>1</sup> The construction of a strong and convincing national identity for Kuwait as a modern and democratic nation-state in the eyes and minds of the

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<sup>1</sup> Reem Alissa, *Building for Oil: Corporate Colonialism, Nationalism and Urban Modernity in*

Kuwaitis was equally important. Granting Kuwait its political independence and constructing its national identity was an urgent mission aimed at securing Kuwait's independence, especially from integrating with pan-Arabism, which adopted socialist principles against Western powers.

Granting Kuwait its sovereignty was also part of the larger international decolonization movement of the postwar period. New development plans were established to achieve political, social, cultural, and economic reforms, and those plans depended heavily on building a new national image to gain the public's approval and loyalty. Kuwaiti nation building started with the restructuring of the government, drafting a constitution, and defining the national borders, a phase that could be better described as state building.

Architecture has an important role in constructing national identity, in public assimilation, and in social conditioning through the use of certain architectural elements and symbolic forms, as well as the use of a monumental scale, both of which are related to visibility, perception, and psychology. Architecture, not only through its ability to symbolize and instigate certain emotions, but also to guide and control movement within the urban fabric, and to hold certain utilities, amplifies its importance to nationalism. For instance, a museum is both a sign of civility and a means to construct culture; parliament buildings are symbols of democracy; and palaces are icons demanding loyalty. Certain architectural geometries, proportions, and forms allow architecture to be an apparatus of nation building. Examples of this include the arrangement within panopticonic models aimed at enforcing public control, the use of a monumental scale to establish loyalty, and





the West detached in some way from its geographical origin and locus.”<sup>5</sup> Modern nationalism was first defined by Western intellectuals and it is associated with concepts such as independence, democracy, and modernization (defined from a Western perspective). Therefore analysis of nation building through the postcolonial approach is, in a way, expected and required. Nonetheless, the process of nation building in the oil-rich Arab states is much more intricate and complex than it is usually portrayed. Kuwait’s modernization is part of overlapping events, including Kuwait’s declaration of independence occurring during a rapid transformation of the country’s architectural/urban fabric, which was accelerated due to the sudden economic boom after the discovery of oil in Kuwait. All of these local events occurred during the postwar period in which decolonization policies were popularized, which themselves caused immediate uprisings in numerous Arab states (more generally, the Middle East region and Third World countries) instigated by the paranoia of the Cold War. Modernization is seen from a Western point of view as a defense mechanism to prevent repeating past colonial mistakes; on the other hand, importing Western structures could potentially expose postcolonial nations to similar degrees of exploitation as during the colonial era.

Iraq was the first postcolonial state in the Arabian Peninsula to start its modernization and the construction of its nationalist architecture, during the early 1950s. Less than a decade later, Kuwait took a similar path of progress.<sup>6</sup> While Iraq’s

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<sup>5</sup> Edward Shils quoted in Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future*, 1.

<sup>6</sup> A number of scholars refer to this period as *nahdha*, which translates to “renaissance.” Authors such as Asseel Al-Ragam, Udo Kultermann, and Haya Al-Mughni see this period as an awakening or a rebirth of past local values more than a modernization period that adapted the qualities of the European Renaissance and Western Modern era that followed. For more information, see Udo Kultermann, *Contemporary Architecture in the Arab State: Renaissance of a Region* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1999); Asseel al-Ragam, “Towards a Critique of an

architectural modernization was suspended after the 1958 coup d'état, Kuwait's transformation from "traditional" to "modern" society continued steadily except for some obstacles during the early 1970s.<sup>7</sup>

The oil wealth assisted, at various levels, the modernization of architecture in the Arab Gulf states that went hand in hand with the establishment of imported educational, governmental, and recreational institutions supporting the construction of a specific (Western) definition of modernity. Not only were new schools and clinics built but also higher education institutions, larger hospitals, and other significant organizations such as museums (during the 1960s Kuwait was advised by UNESCO and ICOM to construct ten museums),<sup>8</sup> sports facilities (the Kuwait Olympic Committee was established and the Kuwait Sports Center was proposed to host the Olympics), and in the case of Kuwait a national assembly. All of these institutions were significant in building a specific model of education, modernization, and democratization that was imposed on the Kuwaiti population.

The world powers leading intergovernmental organizations such as UNESCO claim that the entire world population has to conform to the same definitions of modernity, the same principles of democracy, and the same view of independence in order to achieve world peace. Indeed the first declaration of the UNESCO Constitution states, "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses

Architectural *Nahdha*: A Kuwaiti Example," (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2008) (Ann Arbor, MI: ProQuest LLC, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> More details on the historical events are discussed under Chapter I, Part Two: The Historical Development of Kuwait's Nation Building.

<sup>8</sup> George Henri Rivière, *Kuwait Museums: General Report*. December 10, 1971 (Franco Albini Archives, Milan).





consciousness,<sup>12</sup> which is able to unify populations; similarly, religious missions were established to assimilate distant people.<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, postwar nationalism depended on architecture, rather than poetry and painting, to provide the symbolic images necessary to build a nation.<sup>14</sup> Architecture has long been used not only as an image but also as an apparatus of power, defense, and control through its ability to guide movement within the urban fabric and organize the expansion of cities, as well as provide protective utilities.

The construction of monuments designed by European architects and inspired by Kuwaiti vernacular forms is intended to establish local roots, legitimacy, and authenticity as symbols of Kuwait's modernization and independence. The design of the National Museum, the National Assembly, the Sports Center, and other major projects that were designed after Kuwait's independence provided symbolic images of Kuwait's vernacular life, which assisted in the organic development of nationalism in Kuwait. Such vernacular references are seminal to nation building, as they are able to instigate basic human emotions towards family and a familiar connection to one's culture and social life.<sup>15</sup>

In this dissertation, I argue that postcolonial nation building in Kuwait depended on a number of local and foreign agents to construct a set of individual architectural



<sup>12</sup> The forms and functions of religion mentioned here could be best understood through the work of Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. Joseph Ward Swain (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2008).

<sup>13</sup> For more information about nationalism's connection to religion see Carlton Hayes. *Nationalism: A Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1960).

<sup>14</sup> Jarzombek, "Metaphysics of Permanence," 128-129.

<sup>15</sup> The etymology of the word nationalism, which comes from the Latin word *natio*, meaning "birth, breed, or race," is perhaps another way to demonstrate the importance of vernacular imagery to nation building.

projects. When seen together, these nationalist structures become a single hybrid form that is symbolic of Kuwait's new national identity, independence, democracy, and modernization, while at the same time they mask any contradictory realities. Together, they impose new disciplinary forms, authorities, and belief systems.

Today, this architecture acts as an apparatus of self-discipline and control that maintains the image of the autonomy of the nation-state and imposes a cultural identity, along with a set of obligations, for the sake of social conditioning. Kuwait's nationalist architecture utilizes nostalgic and "spectacular" forms with the precise aim that they will be adored, obeyed, and protected by the public. The construction of a Kuwaiti national identity is also an imperial strategy used as an alternative to colonialism that aims to keep the nation-state under the political and economic "sphere of influence" of the world superpowers. Consequently, Kuwait's nationalistic architecture is the product of an international power network of architects, engineers, and political consultants that cooperated to fabricate architecture with layered tendencies and strategic urban locations.

## **Literature Review**

### **Kuwait's Architectural Development**

Due to their relatively short history, studies on the architecture of the Arab Gulf states are limited, and research carried out on Middle Eastern architecture in Western institutions has mostly focused on North Africa and the Levant. Only since around 2008 have there been in-depth investigations into the development of Kuwait's architectural nationalism and modernization. Saba Shiber's *The Kuwait Urbanization* (1964) is a







*subordination* of the individual for the communal good.<sup>24</sup> Renan's definition of nationalism expresses it as an apparatus of power and therefore one can see the paradoxes inherent within nationalism. This definition of nationalism is a modern construct, and the evolution of primordial nationalism, as explained by Carlton Hayes in his book, *The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism* (1931), is as a tool of unification and empowerment. Primordial nationalism is sometimes seen as primitive, irrational, or emotional, but also rational since it stems from human social and self-preservation instincts. Modern nationalism was developed to provide a contemporary doctrine that protects basic human rights such as equality and preservation motivated by similar sentiments. At the same time it is criticized, in similar ways to the critique of modernity, for its inclination to be abused by powerful elites to impose excessive control and to realize their obsessive desire to organize people to the extent of discrimination. Carlton Hayes's *Nationalism: A Religion* (1960) explains how nationalism acts in similar ways to religion that once came to assimilate, organize, control, and modernize society from its primitive behavior and culture. But unlike religion, Hayes asserts, modern nationalism does not focus on tolerance, human bonds, or even peace.<sup>25</sup> Anthony Smith, who belongs to a different generation of authors, also highlighted the connection of modern nationalism to earlier forms as he explains first in *The Ethnic Revival in the Modern World* (1981) and later in *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (1987), where he discusses the



<sup>24</sup> Ernest Renan. "What is a Nation?" in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), 8-22. The text is translated by Martin Thom and it was first published in French in 1882.

<sup>25</sup> Hayes, *Nationalism: A Religion*.

historical development of nationalism, demonstrating the recurring emergence of ethnic nationalism up to recent times.<sup>26</sup>

In his book, *Nation and Nationalism* (1983), Ernest Gellner provides a different view, suggesting that modern nationalism represents a rupture in history and rejecting its connection to ethnic nationalism.<sup>27</sup> Most importantly for my research is Gellner's analysis of nationalism in relation to modernity, explaining that nationalism produces nations, while its ideology is a product of modernity. Another is his analysis of the important role in nationalism of the centralized policing state, standardized educational system, and other institutions created by modernity. Benedict Anderson is another author highlighting the role of education for anticolonial nationalism which was grounded in indigenous intellectuals who are fluent in the language of the dominant imperial power and have access to their published literature and educational system.

Various international institutions, mostly under the UN, acted as consultants and monitoring agencies to ensure the construction of educational, cultural, and recreational programs in ex-colonies as a requirement of their recognition as sovereign nation-states. In one sense, the term "nation building" refers to the importance of building governing and educational institutions in order to construct a modernized culture of the postcolonial nation. John Breuilly explains:

Anticolonial nationalism was understood in one of two ways. If imperialists were prepared to leave, nationalism might be treated as a new form of civic nationalism, rather like American independence movements. If imperial states opposed demands for independence, nationalism was

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<sup>26</sup> Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Revival in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1981); Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986).

<sup>27</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983).



labeled a tool of communist powers. Such was the view taken in the early 1950s of Korea and later, when the USA replaced France in Indochina, of Vietnam.<sup>28</sup>

Similar thoughts were discussed earlier in Elie Kedourie's *Nationalism* (1960) where he expresses bold critical views of nationalism as an irrational and mythical tool invented in the West during the nineteenth century and used by the European imperial powers to secure their interest and power over their colonies in the following century. In his book, *Nationalism and the State* (1982), John Breuilly presents a historical analysis of Arab nationalism under the Ottoman Empire that was constructed by Arab intellectual elites educated under or influenced by European academic systems.<sup>29</sup> The importance of his work to my research is the numerous approaches he provides to view and analyze anti-colonial nationalism.<sup>30</sup>

In their book, *The Invention of Tradition* (1983), Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger explain that "invented traditions" are symbolic practices that have lost their original function or are only connected to a mythical history for the sake of ensuring continuity, to establish precedents, or to legitimize new functions.<sup>31</sup> Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1982) highlights the imagined nature of nationalism and focuses on how the modern concept of nationalism gained its powerful role through print media.<sup>32</sup> His argument is, in many ways, an extension of Edward Said's "imagined geographies"



<sup>28</sup> John Breuilly, "Introduction", in Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. xix.

<sup>29</sup> John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1994). First published in 1982.

<sup>30</sup> The nation and the state come hand in hand in Breuilly's work, which explains the importance of nationalism as a modern method of control.

<sup>31</sup> Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>32</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1982).

discussed in *Orientalism*.<sup>33</sup> Edward Said's foundational work in *Orientalism* (1978), further developed in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), provided a postcolonial analysis of the Western (mis)representations, depictions, and views of the Orient as a group of inferior nations through literature and other forms of representation.<sup>34</sup>

Following Said and Anderson, Bhabha explained that nationalism, as a constructed narrative, "links together diverse acts and actors on the national stage who are entirely unaware of each other."<sup>35</sup> In *Nations and Narration* (1990) and *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha attempts to deconstruct nationalism and explains it as ambivalent and Janus-faced. Anthony Smith's *Ethno-symbolism and Nationalism: A Cultural Approach* (2009) is a study of cultural symbols, including architecture and museums along with their artifacts, defining and sustaining ethnic nationalism.

Architecture, as an art medium able to construct material symbols of a nation, produce poetic imagery to instigate national emotions, to organize geometries of control such as the panopticon, and to house civic institutions (parliaments, schools, museums, stadiums) has been the focus of few publications on nationalism. *Nationalism and Architecture* (2012) edited by Raymond Quek, Darren Deane, and Sarah Butler is one of the first publications that has tried to analyze architecture's close connection to nationalism in the wider sense.<sup>36</sup> Earlier publications on architecture and nationalism,

focused on their role as apparatuses of power, include Lawrence Vale's *Architecture,*

<sup>33</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979).

<sup>34</sup> In the case of Said, as is widely known, the focus is on how Western literature (and other art forms) misrepresented the "Orient." Said explains how certain works romanticize the East and so it was embraced by national elitists, and in other cases it defames the Orient to construct its inferior image: *ibid.*, and Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993).

<sup>35</sup> Homi K. Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), 308.

<sup>36</sup> Raymond Quek, Darren Deane, and Sarah Butler, eds., *Nationalism and Architecture* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2012).



discuss later in this chapter, nationalism allowed Kuwait to gain independence, albeit other pan-nationalism movements, such as Arabism or Islamism (or unification under particular sects within Islam), could potentially comprise its local solidarity. Rather than analyzing nationalism as an ideology, my aim is to study Kuwait's nation building through its postcolonial architectural production in order to elucidate the undemocratic procedures that construct its symbols of democracy, the hybridity of local symbols as forms inspired by ancient civilizations of various regions, and the reliance of independent structures on larger international and powerful networks. To demonstrate Kuwait's nation building as paradoxical, and its architectural forms as mimicked, hybrid, and ambivalent, is to make reference to the work of a number of postcolonial and poststructuralist authors who also provide the framework for my research.

### **Postcolonialism and Other Epistemological Frameworks**

It is by now widely accepted that earlier Western scholarship promoted a specific definition of modernity (along with other concepts within it, such as independence, culture, progress, independence, science, and even objectivity), which is the cause of many of the postcolonial nations' struggles to establish themselves as modern societies. Postcolonial scholars argue against the validity of applying specific Western definitions of modernity to the rest of the world's social, cultural, intellectual, and political structures. The problem of representations, symbols, and signs as visual objects with arbitrary connections to their meaning that could also be interpreted as other meanings (semiotics)



*Imperialism* elucidated the inherent opposition between postcolonial nationalism and liberation. Aside from the argument regarding American neocolonialism, Said acknowledged that, after World War I, the imperial powers by propagating the new nationalism divided the Arab peninsula into a number of smaller nation-states precisely in order to weaken their alliances and exploit their resources.<sup>40</sup> The politics of “divide and rule” uses nationalism as a modern organizing tool and a control mechanism.

Since its birth during the eighteenth century and throughout its development, modern nationalism has been argued to be a construct that relies on various media (such as printing, painting, and architecture) to produce symbolic representations able to assimilate the public. Although produced to support the liberation and modernization of oppressed populations, nationalism – particularly under postcolonial discourse – has been shown to another side in its role in establishing renewed modes of imperialism.

It is of crucial importance to navigate the materials related to Kuwait’s nation building through a post-structuralist view in order to understand the complexity, interconnectedness, and layered meanings, as well as the utilities, of nationalist architecture in Kuwait. The elements that make up its complexity are complementary, as well as contradictory, to one another. The forms used in these projects include signs that have arbitrary connections to their meanings (in a Saussurean way), but signal their allegiances to specific doctrines and have a psychological power that is able to construct a collective consciousness. Their physical structures, geometrical organization, and strategic locations within the urban fabric of Kuwait establish their national defensive function and powerful utility as tools of public control. The institutions that this

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<sup>40</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*.

architecture was constructed to house are themselves representations of progress, independence, and democracy, yet ironically they function in a way that promotes specific attachments to the dominant global political and economic structures (namely capitalism, in the case of Kuwait). Therefore, Kuwait's nationalist architecture amplify Kuwait's dependence and allegiance to (specific) global great powers even after its independence. Postcolonial nation building is analyzed in this dissertation through similar frameworks in order to examine how Kuwaiti architecture has assisted in establishing its nationalist poststructuralism.<sup>41</sup>

Architecture, as an art medium and through its geometrical organization, provided both the power and the tools to construct Kuwait's postcolonial nation building. Architecture's ability to create pictorial qualities and poetic images obscures nationalism's contradicting realities and produces convincing sentiments to achieve its goals.

## **Methodology**

The distribution of archival information that is related to key architectural projects in Kuwait throughout dispersed archives around the world has caused various studies on nation building to discount the larger system and network that is responsible for building Kuwait's postcolonial national identity. Kuwait's municipal archives lack various important documents, which were lost after the Iraqi invasion. Also, the architects and agents who worked in Kuwait during the period studied in this dissertation were of diverse nationalities, which caused the documents relevant to this dissertation to be

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<sup>41</sup> Said, *Orientalism*; Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. (London: Routledge, 1994); Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

preserved in scattered locations around the globe. Therefore, it was crucial to conduct expansive archival research to gain a better understanding of the construction of Kuwaiti nationalism. I visited more than ten archives to produce this dissertation; the materials were selected and analyzed in order to present and add new knowledge and findings to the existing discourse. Because of the complex network of agents and the interconnected organizations that constructed Kuwaiti nationalism, this study would have been impossible without a close investigation of the fragments, as well as an analysis of the larger system and its connecting elements, which comprised the entire process of nation building in Kuwait. As mentioned above, the development of Kuwaiti nationalism relied on key buildings designed by significant architects in vital locations that guided the expansion of Kuwait's master plan for its cities after its independence.

The materials retrieved from the various archives include correspondence between the Kuwaiti government and its international consultants, as well as drawings, photographs, competition briefs, and studies prepared by the commissioned architects and other specialists from international organizations, such as ICOM, the IBDR, and the UN and its various branches. Some of the materials found during this archival research include earlier master plan studies for Kuwait, correspondence between the architects and international advisors, previous design proposals for the various projects studied here, and initial drafts of letters and project briefs, all of which have never been published before and helped to provide new findings, which are presented for the first time in this dissertation.





There are various studies that discuss the network of relationships that connect Michel Écochard, the architect of the Kuwait National Museum, to a powerful colonial organization (the French colonial empire), and there are a few published studies on his work as an expert for the UN. My visits to various related archives, such as the archives of Écochard, of UNESCO, and of the Aga Khan, elucidated the role of the Kuwait National Museum as a renewed form of control through postcolonial nation building that depended on a complex entanglement of international organizations, along with their lesser known branches.

The sources of information in my research can be divided into three categories:

1. Archival research:

- a. The archives of Franco Albini, a member of the Advisory Planning Committee (APC) for the Kuwaiti Government. The materials obtained from this archive include: reports of ICOM's study on Kuwaiti museums; architectural competition briefs for the Kuwait National Assembly and the Kuwait Sports Center, George Candilis' proposal for residential areas as part of the future development of Old Kuwait City, BBPR's proposal for a commercial area as part of the future development of Old Kuwait City; Reima and Raili Pietilä's design proposal for the Kuwait Ministry of Foreign Affairs; correspondence between a number of architects and various consultants working in Kuwait; and a number of reports drafted by the APC suggesting a number of modifications to the first master plan of Kuwait which also include

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Safran. (Philadelphia: Aga Khan Award for Architecture, 1980): 81-6, and for more information on Jeddah Sport Complex consult the Jørn Utzon Archives at Aalborg University, Denmark.

maps demonstrating the locations of crucial future projects, such as the National Assembly, the International Airport, and the Sports Center.

- b. The archives of Pier Luigi Nervi (Rome), who participated in two competitions in Kuwait: the National Assembly and the Sports Center. The correspondence and letters preserved in Nervi's archives expose the monopoly that took place during the selection process of the international architects.
- c. The archives of Kenzo Tange at the Frances Loeb Library, Harvard University.
- d. The archives of Alison and Peter Smithson at the Frances Loeb Library, Harvard University. All these materials related to their projects in Kuwait (Solution to Future Development of Old Kuwait City and Governmental Complex) including correspondence, drawings, publications, photographs of their models, and survey reports including geographical maps and aerial photographs of Kuwait.
- e. The archives of Félix Candela at the Avery Library, Columbia University. Candela was one of the architects invited to design the Kuwait Sports Center. His archives include the brief of the competition to design the sports center, and correspondence with Kuwait's APC and other participating architects.
- f. The archives of Michel Écochard at Centre d'archives d'architecture du XXe siècle in Paris hold all of the drawings for Écochard's proposals for the Kuwait National Museum. The project's folders contain his earliest proposal, as well as later ones. No previously published work has analyzed the development of his design, particularly the formal aspects of the design and the geometry of the elements that make up the building.

- g. The archives of UNESCO in Paris, which include extensive reports, studies, recommendations, guidelines, and future procedures to draw specific rules regarding how to develop and preserve Kuwait's architectural heritage. These demonstrate the hegemonic nature of the intergovernmental organization on postcolonial nations.
  - h. The archives of Jørn Utzon at Aalborg University, Denmark. Utzon's archives include the complete materials related to his work in Kuwait. It also includes materials for other related projects, such as the Bagsværd Church, which in many ways is related to his proposal for the mosque of the Kuwait National Assembly. The correspondence between Utzon and Sir Leslie Martin confirms the close relationship between the two during their global professional careers.
  - i. The archives of local Kuwaiti newspapers and magazines. The archives include numerous articles published between 1961 and 1991 on the projects studied in this dissertation. The (relatively) free press law that Kuwait has enjoyed since its independence makes these archives important resources to understand the cultural, political, social, and economic milieu of Kuwait during the period studied in this research.
  - j. The archives of the Kuwait National Library. The newly established library provides important studies on Kuwait's history, both in Arabic and in English.
2. Preceding scholarly research and related literature as explained above.
  3. Personal interviews with:

- a. Abdulaziz al-Mezidi, a Kuwaiti architect working at the *National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters* in Kuwait and one of the supervising architects for the current renovations of the Kuwait National Museum.
- b. Ricardo Camacho, Portuguese architect working in Kuwait and one of the principal architects for the al-Shaheed Park project.
- c. Rifat Chadirji, Iraqi architect and the other finalist in the competition for the Kuwait National Assembly building with Jørn Utzon.
- d. Roberto Fabbri, United Nations Development Program (UNDP) consultant, and project manager at Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah – Kuwait
- e. Alia Farid, a Kuwaiti curator/artist. Farid was the lead curator of Kuwait's pavilion at the 14th Venice International Architecture Biennale (2012).
- f. Abdullah Qabazard, Kuwaiti architect who worked on the most recent renovation of Seif Palace, he also served as a competition jury member to select the architect of the Kuwait Grand (State) Mosque in 1977.
- g. Tariq Shuaib, a Kuwaiti architect and a member of the APC.

The archival materials include correspondence, meeting minutes, studies, and drawings related to the key architectural projects in my research. The local press and the interviews are sources for the Kuwaiti political milieu and its connection to local architectural development. In addition to a literary and historical investigation, the dissertation includes a formal analysis of the architectural projects in question, which permitted me to produce a multi-faceted study that is an important addition to the existing body of literature.

The dissertation is divided into five chapters; following the introduction, the first chapter provides the literature review, the methodology, and the epistemological frameworks of the dissertation. The first chapter also includes a historical overview of the development of various instances of nationalism, architecture, and urban planning in Kuwait between 1899 and 1991, with a focus on Kuwait's nation building following its independence in 1961. The second chapter focuses on the historical development and formal analysis of the National Museum and its role in constructing Kuwait's history and national identity. The third chapter demonstrates the history behind the construction of the National Assembly, its role as a symbol of democracy, and an analysis of the architect's choices of layout and architectural detail that constitute the forms needed for the structure to act as a national monument. The fourth chapter discusses the initiation of the Sports Center project, its importance as a recreational facility for the public, and its role in solidifying Kuwaiti identity. The final chapter focuses on a project with a larger scale, the competition for the development of Old Kuwait City, as well as how Kuwait's nation building during the 1960s and 1970s was focused on the development of parts of the city with specific forms as a way of producing a controlled image of Kuwait's identity.

## **Historical Development of Kuwait's Nation Building**

### **Kuwait Between Arab and Islamic Nationalisms: 1899–1945**

Under the Ottoman Empire, the Bedouin tribes of the Arabian Peninsula went through one of the most difficult periods due to their weakening political power and the arrival of the Western colonial powers. Starting in the fifteenth century, European



Arabs were a sub-nation within the Ottoman Empire, and it was Islam that assisted in public assimilation. During the nineteenth century it was Arab nationalism that motivated the desire for Arabs under the Ottoman Empire to acquire independence. Arab nationalism, as a secular ideology, avoided supporting the concept of the Islamic *ummah* in order to disassociate itself from Ottoman rule (although it did not conflict with major Islamic principles) and thus it highlighted a return to Arab culture as presented in art, literature, and scientific progress to oppose the superiority of the Turks.<sup>46</sup> Supported by the British Empire, revolutionary Bedouin tribes were able to separate themselves from the Ottoman Empire and to gain independence by the end of World War I. Unexpectedly, the fall of the Ottoman Empire caused Arab nationalist ideologies to establish an affiliation with the Soviet socialist agenda, therefore creating a new threat to other world powers by the mid twentieth century under the leadership of Gamal Abdel Nasser. During the early twentieth century, advocates of Islamic nationalism emerged through the dissemination of a variety of modern Islamic literature such as the writing of Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani and, later, with Sayyid Qutub and Abul Ala Maududi. In a way, pan-Islamism tries to revive the concept of the Islamic *ummah* and therefore challenges Arab nationalism.

All those nationalisms were inspired by European modern nationalism in the sense that they focused on instigating popular emotions and nostalgia to establish allegiances, albeit they did not always support the masses but were focused on larger global politics. Unifications, nationalisms, and confederations may create peace among

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<sup>46</sup> Some authors claim that one of the ideologies of Arab nationalism is that an Islamic Caliphate or Empire must be under the leadership of Arabs, because the Qur'an was revealed to an Arab prophet in an Arabic tongue. For more information about Arab nationalism see Rashid Khalidi, *The Origins of Arab Nationalism* (New York: Columbia UP, 1991).



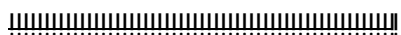




For example, in 1911, the American Mission Hospital opened as the first hospital in Kuwait, and the first school in Kuwait was built in the same year; most importantly, the British postal office and telegraph lines began operation in 1914.<sup>52</sup> Deyan Sudjic counters this argument by explaining that most of those facilities existed to support British domination, and were constructed mainly to service the rise of Western powers.<sup>53</sup>

Much as in the Greek war of independence, Arab nationalism gained powerful support from the French; to the extent that in 1913 Arab nationalist parties were established and maintained a center in Paris.<sup>54</sup> Since Kuwait was within the British sphere of influence, the support of Kuwaiti nationalism and securing Kuwait's autonomy worked well for the British Empire's interests. Many steps were taken to achieve a sense of nationalism, such as modifying Kuwait's flag, and the construction of the sheikh's Seif Palace and its watchtower.<sup>55</sup>

The end of World War II once again changed national sentiments, while Kuwaiti locals showed support for the Ottoman Empire upon its fall. The British mandate over Kuwait imposed a trade blockade to control the local uprisings until 1920, when the *Al Shura* (consultative) assembly was established, which gave local Kuwaiti citizens the



<sup>52</sup> It was in 1904 when Halford Mackinder formulated the Heartland Theory in a paper presented to the British Royal Geographical Society, which explains that geographical location controls the world, initiating the study of geopolitics, and confirms imperial intentions. See appendix for a timeline of important events.

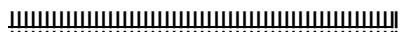
<sup>53</sup> Deyan Sudjic, *The Edifice Complex: The Architecture of Power* (London: Penguin Books, 2011), 70-71.

<sup>54</sup> Al-Fatat (Young Arab Society) hosted the Arab Congress of 1913 in Paris.

<sup>55</sup> The Kuwaiti flag was modified around the beginning of World War I and the decline of the Ottoman Empire by removing the crescent and the star, the symbol of the Ottoman Empire, so that the new design only included the word "Kuwait" inscribed in Arabic on a red flag.

opportunity to be part of the state’s governing body, and a political alternative to complete independence.

It was around 1937, when oil was discovered in Kuwait, that another major Arab nationalist uprising threatened Kuwaiti local nationalism, which led to the creation of the first Legislative Council as a way to prove Kuwaiti’s privileges of democracy and Kuwaiti nationalism.<sup>56</sup> The evolution of old Kuwait City remained organic but did not change dramatically until 1950. The city was compact with narrow streets, and its natural evolution divided it into three parts: a coastal, a commercial, and a residential sector. Like most ancient towns, a wall surrounded Kuwait City that protected it from attack. “All of its residential structures—single story houses with courtyards—were closely knit together along narrow lanes.”<sup>57</sup> For over five decades during the British mandate, British and foreign culture managed to introduce new and hybrid forms within the urban fabric of Kuwait.<sup>58</sup>



<sup>56</sup> The discovery of oil changed the politics of involving Kuwait from minor exploitation to a full relationship best exemplified as “colonized and colonizer” during the 1940s, until independence in 1961. After its independence, the Kuwaiti government developed a new understanding of its relationship with the world powers.

<sup>57</sup> Rashid al-Rashid. *Planning and Urban Development in Kuwait* (Kuwait: Kuwait Government, 1977), 12.

<sup>58</sup> The house of Lieutenant Colonel Harold Richard Patrick Dickson, the British colonial administrator in Kuwait, was a typical Kuwaiti courtyard house infused with some Western elements, such as a fireplace and balcony. Dickson’s house remains one of the few preserved historical houses in Kuwait. For more information on H. R. P. Dickson’s house, see Violet Dickson, *Forty Years in Kuwait* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1971).

## **Oil and Modernization 1945–1960**<sup>59</sup>

Only after the oil boom – and especially after the first oil shipment from the country in 1948 – did Kuwait City see a major and radical physical change towards modernization that also reflected the country’s inferiority by adapting the European (Western) International Style.

During the 1950s Kuwait’s built environment went through an extreme change, away from vernacular architecture and towards an abstract and minimal style that was popular during the first half of the twentieth century. The development plans of this period focused on broad urban planning and social welfare.<sup>60</sup>

In 1952, while still a British protectorate, the government of Kuwait hired the British firm Minoprio, Spencely and Macfarlane to prepare a master plan for its new city. The country was obliged by the British government to invite a British firm to modernize it. In *Kuwait Journey*, John Daniels relates that “[i]n 1952, a British official headed ‘Development Planning’ in Kuwait, and all major government contracts for roads, schools, and hospitals went to British companies. The contracts were awarded on a cost-plus basis and no preliminary survey was made of the cost involved.”<sup>61</sup> The architectural and urban imposition that occurred after the oil boom highlighted the hierarchical

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<sup>59</sup> Depending on one’s definition of modernization, Kuwait first experienced a change away from vernacular thinking under the British protectorate, as it began construction of the first school, hospital, and post office, and witnessed the arrival of the first automobile. Another change came through the discovery of oil in Kuwait and particularly when the entire population had access to its own wealth. A third change toward modernization came after Kuwait’s independence, as explained in the following section.

<sup>60</sup> Social welfare in Kuwait includes free healthcare and education, numerous eligibilities to obtain no interest loans (most importantly related to housing), and other subsidized services such as water and electricity.

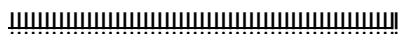
<sup>61</sup> John Daniels, *Kuwait Journey* (Luton: White Crescent, 1971), 36.

relationship between Kuwait and Britain, and also addressed the physical transformation of the city as a result of its abundant oil wealth.

In their plan, Minoprio, Spencely and Macfarlane suggested a complete urban renewal for the first master plan of Kuwait, one that required the demolition of all the mud courtyard houses and the city's protective wall so that new and larger motorways could be constructed and expansion beyond the old town limits achieved (fig. 1, 2, and 3). This phase of development included the construction of a modern infrastructure that included everything from highways to a sewer system. The new master plan comprised building new residential neighborhoods outside the old city walls (fig. 4), which mandated relocating Kuwaitis from the city center to the new suburbs while preserving the old town as the new commercial center.<sup>62</sup> This required the establishment of a land acquisition policy whereby owners of land within the old city were compensated and relocated in the new residential suburbs. Farah Al-Nakib explains:

The state purchased both inside and outside the town wall at deliberately and artificially inflated prices. This strategy was meant to serve a dual purpose. On the one hand, official government publications claim that the policy was implemented as a means of quickly and easily distributing the state's newfound oil wealth among its citizens. On the other hand, the plan also provided an incentive for the townspeople to vacate the city center and move out to the new suburbs.<sup>63</sup>

The master plan erased the uniqueness of Kuwait's urban fabric and produced an international image of modernity rather than asserting a local national identity. The



<sup>62</sup> For more information about the plans and process to preserve the old city as the financial center and relocating the residential area outside of the old city limits, see Al-Ragam, "Towards a Critique of an Architectural *Nahdha*," and Al-Nakib, *Kuwait Transformed*.

<sup>63</sup> Al-Nakib, *Kuwait Transformed*, 103.

proposal took the form of a semi-radial grid, with the British Colonial House and the sheikh's palace at its center. Although similar in plan to that of Georges-Eugène Haussmann of Paris, it was not envisioned as a set of radial networks with different centers, but with one center, similar to Sir Ebenezer Howard's Garden City, explicitly to highlight the center of political power (fig. 5). The 1952 Master Plan thus promoted hierarchy in both political and socio-economic terms.

Minoprio, Spencely and Macfarlane aspired to a utopian plan that began with a clean slate, and the Kuwaiti government merely requested that the mosques be preserved. This, however, undermined the definition of "clean slate." Although the preservation of the mosques appears to have been based on religious reasons, one could argue that their preservation salvaged some degree of *authenticity* from colonization. Whether for the sake of identity or religion, the preserved mosques were not fully considered, which caused the old city (or the new financial center) to develop unevenly. As the capital of Kuwait, the poorly developed financial center of Kuwait City soon required new solutions to its eradicated local identity.

During the late 1950s, several local uprisings supported pan-Arabism and rebelled against the British mandate. These uprising were perhaps instigated by groups such as the Ba'ath Party, a pan-Arabism socialist movement supported by the Soviet Union to create a pan-Arab socialist country as an ally, and other events such the Suez Crisis of 1957. Such events became a threat to the British control over the region and would have assimilated Kuwaiti's under the larger Arab nationalism.





The first step after independence was the restructuring of the government, which occurred under the consultation of a large team of international experts.<sup>65</sup> Saba Shiber explained that in 1961 restructuring the government became crucial due to the realization that vast expenditure by the Kuwaiti government had benefited “certain private remittances ... far more than the general economy of Kuwait” during the time between 1957 and 1960.<sup>66</sup>

The new structure for Kuwait’s government also took a more complex shape, both horizontally and vertically, and a web of relationships (fig. 6). The sheikh of Kuwait was the head of the new structure followed by the members of the National Assembly, and under that comes the Prime Minister. A Planning Board was established as a separate entity to initiate and oversee the development of major projects. The PB was given equivalent authority to the Prime Minister, and therefor able to directly command any ministry including Ministries of Finance and Industry, Public Works, Commerce, Social Affairs and Labor, and Education. The establishment of the Planning Board also included the establishment of an Advisory Planning Committee (APC), constituted mainly of foreign consultants. Shiber explained that the efforts to restructure the state of Kuwait would not have been possible without the direction of international institutions such as the UN and the IBRD.<sup>67</sup> Sir Leslie Martin observed

There was to be a panel of four advisers, the Chairman of which was the Kuwaiti Prime Minister Shaikh Jaber Al-Ahmed...Beside Albini and myself, there were Dr Azzam and Hamids Shuaib, and he was then the Assistant Director of Technical Affairs in Kuwait. Of course, having the Prime Minister as Chairman was a crucial factor in the operation.

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<sup>65</sup> Shiber, *The Kuwait Urbanization*, 274.

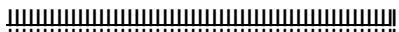
<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., and Al-Ragam, “Towards a Critique of an Architectural *Nahdha*.”



described as a supra-local agent rather than transnational; a concept that is crucial to understanding the modernization of Third World countries during the postwar era.<sup>71</sup>

The need was for a physical model that simultaneously confirmed the sovereign status and changed the old regime, thereby initiating a new order that only superficially seemed to be liberating. It was the APC, a consulting group dominated by three foreign experts hired upon the suggestion of the UN and IBDR, that played the major role in selecting world-renowned architects to uplift Kuwait's image, resolve problematic issues of previous development plans, and restore the city's lost historical identity to construct its modernized nationalism.<sup>72</sup> The APC, including Dr Omar Azzam, a UN planning expert, was to oversee the development of Kuwait after its independence. It was Azzam who recruited Sir Leslie Martin, at that time Professor of Architecture at the University of Cambridge, UK, who had worked as chief assistant architect of the London, Midland and Scottish Railway and chief deputy architect to London County Council during the 1950s, and was an important member of the Modern Architectural Research Group (MARS).<sup>73</sup>



<sup>71</sup> Saba Shiber was a unique character who presented himself as the perfect man for the job: he was a Palestinian/Arab expert with a Western education. I argue that this mix allowed him to present himself as an expert with knowledge of Arab (Islamic) culture along with Western (“progressive”) tools of urban development. He was connected to many diverse international circles, represented Kuwait at a UN conference, and declined to represent the UN because of his preoccupation with his job in Kuwait. Shiber had two Bachelor's degrees: one in civil engineering from the American School of Beirut, and another in architecture from Cairo University. He also earned two Master's degrees: one in architecture and another in city planning from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Shiber also received a PhD in city and regional planning from Cornell University. For more information about Saba Shiber, see Joe Nasr, “Saba Shiber, ‘Mr. Arab Planner’. Parcours professionnel d'un urbaniste au Moyen-Orient,” *Géocarrefour* (2005): 197-206. For more information about the term “supra-local” see Joe Nasr and Mercedes Volait, *Urbanism: Imported or Exported?* (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Academy, 2003).

<sup>72</sup> Al-Ragam, “Towards a Critique of an Architectural *Nahdha*,” 170.

<sup>73</sup> The London County Council was a powerful municipal authority that took charge of important matters such as city planning, public transportation, social housing, and even education, which reflects the importance and power of Sir Leslie Martin. For more information about the LCC see



the *Congrès internationaux d'architecture moderne* (CIAM).<sup>75</sup> Not only the winners but also almost all the other architects invited to enter Kuwait's architectural competitions during the 1960s were connected to this global network. Therefore, an overview on the role of architectural competitions is worth discussing in the following section before moving to the next historical development.

### **The Use of Architectural Competitions in Kuwait's Nation Building**

As mentioned earlier, the restructuring of planning institutions in Kuwait included the use of architectural competitions as a legitimate selection method. The Planning Board and its APC utilized competitions to control the quality and legality of the commissioning of architects to design Kuwait's major projects after its independence.

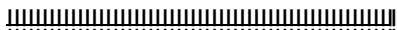
Using architectural competitions is usually promoted as a method of ensuring equal opportunity and the fair selection of winners, and is a motivational device for architects to push the boundaries of architectural design. Competition cannot be detached from rivalry and "endless savagery," however, as Adrian Lahoud explains in his curatorial statement for *The Competitive Hypothesis* (2013), an exhibition examining the politics behind the architecture competition.<sup>76</sup> Carmelo Rodríguez Cedillo and Daniel



<sup>75</sup> The architects selected to design these crucial buildings mainly belonged to the "third generation" of modern architects who were born between the two world wars, and therefore constitute a network of professionals that continued the work of earlier modernists. This generation of architects connected in various ways such as their interests in other cultures, the vernacular architecture of other nations, and mystic forms, and they were all considered global architects as they designed major projects in several countries. For more information about the third-generation architects, see Philip Drew, *Third Generation: The Changing Meaning of Architecture* (New York: Praeger, 1972).

<sup>76</sup> Adrian Lahoud et al., *The Competitive Hypothesis* (New York City: Storefront for Art and Architecture, 2013). The curatorial statement can be found on the exhibition's webpage, accessed October 20, 2015: <http://www.storefrontnews.org/programming/events?preview=true&e=514>

Fernández Pascual, other curators of the same exhibition, focused their curatorial essay on past competitions from the 1970s and 1980s that serve as examples of the deception, hypocrisy, and bureaucracy of architectural competitions. They concluded their essay by attaching a survey conducted by the Royal Institution of British Architects (RIBA) in 1872 to investigate the corruption of architectural competitions, which demonstrates the age of the problem. In her essay, “Architectural Competitions as Discursive Events,” Magali Sarfatti Larson explains that “the method of architect selection by contest rests on the bourgeois ideology of art. This specific ideology also supports the market for architectural services and the calculated use of competitions for business support.”<sup>77</sup> Larsen continues to explain how architectural competitions are a method to promote particular architects and provide them with legitimacy in the eyes of the public. Generally speaking, architectural contests usually understood as a mean to provide equal opportunity of participation to objectively select the most suitable proposal objectively. In a way it is similar to direct democracy that depends on the “public sphere”, yet Jürgen Habermas explains that is never the case because public opinion is susceptible to elite manipulation, or as Alison Smithson explained, “the problematic detail can be brain-washed.”<sup>78</sup>



<sup>77</sup> Magali Sarfatti Larson. “Architectural Competitions as Discursive Events,” *Theory and Society* 23, 4 (1994): 472.

<sup>78</sup> Alison Smithson was explaining a particular architectural issue with mat-buildings and not issues pertaining to competitions, but during the 1960s and 1970s “brainwashing” was a term in common and architects of the postwar period used it to their advantage or at least were aware mastering the art of influence and manipulation. See Alison Smithson, “How to Recognise and Read Mat-Building: Mainstream Architecture as It Has Developed Towards the Mat-Building,” *Architectural Design* (September 1974).

## **Kuwait's Second Master Plan 1968–1973**

The development of these major projects during the 1960s went hand in hand with the development of Kuwait's second master plan (fig. 7) that was proposed by Colin Buchanan in 1968 under the supervision of the members of the APC. The Kuwaiti municipality declared that a new solution was urgent. Thanks to “the economic upheaval, the population of Kuwait was rapidly increasing due to natural growth and immigration.”<sup>79</sup> The population grew from 206,473 in 1957 to 321,621 in 1961, and to 467,339 in 1965.<sup>80</sup> This meant that the previous plan had reached a point of saturation, and therefore a new one was needed. Furthermore, the demolition of the old vernacular fabric and the erasure of the local character compelled the Planning Board to rebuild the local identity of old Kuwait City. Reconstruction of the demolished area was one of the main tasks of Buchanan's master plan. This caused the government of Kuwait to seek assistance in finding a solution that would allow the city, and especially the old town of Kuwait, to grow back naturally.

The importance of this post-independence master plan is the focus on finding architectural solutions by looking at the city as fragments connected to produce a whole.<sup>81</sup> The second master plan also defined strategic locations within the old city as well as others outside the old city wall in order to guide the expansion of the urban fabric



<sup>79</sup> Colin Buchanan and Partners, *Planning and Urban Development in Kuwait* (Kuwait: Kuwait Government, 1977), 34.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Gardiner, *Kuwait: The Making of a City*; Shiber, *Kuwait Urbanization*.

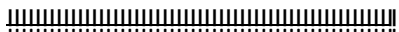






Makiyah. More information on the competition and its relationship to other centers of power can be found in Chapter III of this dissertation. One of the most important projects was Kuwait Towers, a monumental version of the water towers constructed during the 1970s that overlook the Persian Gulf.<sup>87</sup> Both those projects are part of a cluster of other projects that could be called the nationalist architecture of Kuwait including the National Museum, the National Assembly building, the Sports Center and other urban projects that all have contributed in various and complimentary ways to Kuwait nation building. For example some have defense (security) functions while others ensure public control and assimilation as they radiate a nationalist effect through their monumental forms and geometry.

During the 1980s, most of those nationalist architectural projects were completed, and the era witnessed other projects which welcomed American and British corporate architectural offices.<sup>88</sup> The arrival of such firms in Kuwait had begun earlier with The Architects Collaborative (TAC), followed by Skidmore Owings & Merrill (SOM), the John S. Bonnington Partnership (JSBP), and more recently Gensler, all of whom received commissions to design major projects within the center of Kuwait City. This corporate



<sup>87</sup> In 1979, the construction of Kuwait Towers monument was completed, which coincided with the establishment of the Kuwait Amateur Radio Club (KARS). This elucidates architecture's multifaceted role in nation building.

<sup>88</sup> During the early 1980s, Kuwaiti citizens witnessed a wave of religious fervor along with a major stock market crash, but soon enough the Islamic Republic of Iran slowly fell out of favor and was depicted in the Kuwaiti media as a regressive and oppressive system, which allowed Kuwaiti nationalism to rise again.



## **Chapter II. Kuwait National Museum**

## **Introduction**

The Kuwait National Museum (KNM) was one of the first projects undertaken and one that particularly assisted in the re-writing of Kuwait's history and the construction of Kuwait's image as a modern sovereign state. The symbolic representation of vernacular elements in modern form, the use of advanced technologies, and the intricate curatorial work and exhibition themes are some of the main aspects that allowed the KNM to achieve its role. Constructing the KNM involved intensive research, a number of archeological investigations, and an international architectural competition conducted by interconnected institutions and professional agents.

The museum in its contemporary form appeared in the eighteenth century and was inspired by the ancient Greek *mouseion*, "place devoted to the Muses, a place for the study of special arts and sciences" and a place to keep and display artifacts of eternal value.<sup>90</sup> The establishment of the modern museum belongs to the Western discourse that regards ancient Greece as the root of Western civilization.

This chapter discusses how the KNM was established under the recommendations and strict supervision of UNESCO and ICOM as part of the decolonization and modernization missions prompted by the UN. Under a Western discourse, the museum established itself as an institution of knowledge and modernity, and with its ability to curate and therefore construct and edit historical narratives the museum became the perfect tool for postcolonial nation building. The efforts to establish a national museum

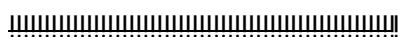
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<sup>90</sup> As defined in *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary*. Accessed April 29, 2016:  
<http://www.wordcentral.com/cgi-bin/student?museum>

for Kuwait started few years before independence; this chapter demonstrates how the construction of KNM formed part of efforts to modernize, educate, and assimilate the Kuwaiti public.

In her essay, “Displaying the Orient”, Zeynep Çelik analyzes the nineteenth-century fashion for the French *exposition* as a stage that displayed cultures, knowledge, and education but also colonial behaviors that constantly misrepresented the orient.<sup>91</sup> Universal exhibitions with national pavilions are similar in a way to national museums; they propagate a progressive image of a nation, display its cultural history, and claim educational purposes, but since they depend on curated representation (produced usually under the supervision of international organizations) they impose a constructed image able to condition and assimilate the public as well as guiding the future development of nations.

This chapter discusses the historical development of the KNM and compares it with other museums in the region; it critically analyzes the crucial role of international organizations and scientific institutions in the establishment of the KNM, and the architectural competition that led to selecting Michel Écochard’s proposal, and examines the form and geometry of the KNM that assisted in making it a symbol of Kuwait’s national modernity. The chapter also discusses Écochard’s previous related projects, the educational role of the museum, how it curates the history of Kuwait, and the opportunities the KNM provided for national and international art collectors.



<sup>91</sup> Zeynep Çelik, *Displaying the Orient: Architecture of Islam at Nineteenth-century World's Fairs*, (Berkeley: University of California, 1992).

## **The Role of International Organizations in the Construction of KNM**

As soon as Kuwait became an independent nation it entered into various contractual agreements with international institutions to construct its independence; those institutions included the UN, UNESCO, and ICOM. Almost all reports referenced in this chapter suggest that UNESCO was involved at the request of Kuwait, but this was not through freedom of choice, as its independent status would suggest, but rather that Kuwait's independence would be conditional upon the approval by the other UN members. The complexity of the UN and its branches, along with other institutions such as ICOM, produced specific definitions of modernity, progress, and development. These missions of postwar modernization aimed to guide postcolonial nation-states towards an established model of Western progress.

Postcolonial "missions" did not differ greatly from their colonial counterparts. For example, one of UNESCO's first missions was to develop Kuwait as a modern nation. To this end, archeologists, architects, and various experts in numerous scientific fields were commissioned to survey the "Land of Kuwait," to create precise maps, to study the "Man of Kuwait," and to preserve the cultural and historical artifacts of the newly established country.<sup>92</sup> Along with ICOM, UNESCO provided specialists who assisted in the creation and maintenance of the newly established museum, importing security, telecommunications, photography, and X-ray experts and engineers. Such experts are the contemporary figures who resemble, for example, the artists and the scientists of

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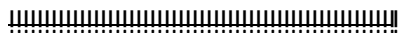
<sup>92</sup> Land of Kuwait and the Man of Kuwait are also the official labels of two exhibition halls in the Kuwait National Museum.

Napoléon Bonaparte’s artistic and scientific missions of the late eighteenth century in Egypt.<sup>93</sup>

ICOM and UNESCO provided all the guidelines and instructions needed to build a national museum in Kuwait; including organizing an architectural competition to design the building, curating the collections, and establishing the museum’s future development guidelines, as well as producing long-term instructions on how to preserve and safeguard the museum’s artifacts. The representatives of these institutions were themselves carefully selected to ensure proficiency of communication with locals. Those institutions also played a crucial part in selecting local employees to run the Kuwaiti museums according to their international standards, as well as training them to maintain the modern procedures needed to develop Kuwait as an independent progressive nation.<sup>94</sup>

UNESCO stresses the importance of the museum as an agent of nation building as well as a functional place to safeguard national relics. According to the UNESCO website:

UNESCO supports developing countries using museums’ potential to foster social cohesion, notably among local communities and disadvantaged groups. During times of



<sup>93</sup> Many authors assert that the French campaigns in Egypt and Syria were mainly to ensure trade interests and to challenge British colonial expansion. The artists and scientists may or may not have understood the negative impact of their presence in other territories, but the matter of concern is that the campaign was full of political agenda. See, for example, Sylvia Lavin, “In the Name of History: Quatremère de Quincy and the Literature of Egyptian Architecture,” *Journal of Architectural Education* 44, 3 (1991), 131-137. Furthermore, Liliane Lefaivre observed that “regionalism,” at least since the Renaissance, has been “critical of an outside power wishing to impose an international, globalizing, universalizing architecture against the particular local identity”: Liane Lefaivre, “Critical Regionalism A Facet of Modern Architecture since 1945,” in *Critical Regionalism: Architecture and Identity in a Globalized World*. Liane Lefaivre and Alexander Tzonis, eds. (London: Prestel, 2003), 35.

<sup>94</sup> Rivière, *Kuwait Museums: General Report*.





Jarzombek highlights the importance of architecture in building nationalism, and explains that UNESCO's mission to preserve the heritage of nations around the world through architecture is "about architecture's pictorial and ethnographic imaginary. This is what is being 'preserved.'" Jarzombek also explain that such missions are always part of a layered political agenda.<sup>98</sup>

In *United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO): Creating Norms for a Complex World* (2011), J. P. Singh discusses the events that led to the establishment of UNESCO, the reasons for its foundation and the organization's aims. Singh analyzes the importance of education, science, and culture for UNESCO as the tools the institution uses to normalize the diversity of nations around the world.<sup>99</sup> Singh clarifies that the organization also includes another major sector – communication – which he explains as the equivalent of propaganda to achieve peace. Power rivalry between the allied members to control each sector of UNESCO is another critical observation Singh makes in this book. The aim to standardize the existing diverse set of cultures in the world poses some obstacles for UNESCO to achieve its goals, as Singh asserts that:

Norm formation standards generally carry a sense of the just, the good, and the ethical. UNESCO is explicit in its mission to shape ethical and just norms. Herein perhaps lies the first tension. Actors might agree to the broad philosophical principles that guide the shape of the norm but subsequently disagree on the exact ways to implement it. Different cultural understandings among groups may also lead to contested norms.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Jarzombek, "Metaphysics of Permanence," 129.

<sup>99</sup> J. P. Singh. *United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO): Creating Norms for a Complex World* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

Singh notes that the aim for “human perfection” in the philosophy and purpose of UNESCO as drafted by Julian Huxley, an evolutionary biologist, the executive secretary of UNESCO’s Preparatory Commission and its first Director General, is “rooted in natural selection, evolution, and one dangerously close to eugenics.”<sup>101</sup> The boldest critical stance against modernization theory (as in modernizing Third World countries through nation building) is that it is based on evolutionary biology to explain that “traditional” societies are developing on the same path as “modern” societies and therefore they are inherently backward and inferior.

### **The Educational and Symbolic Role of National Museums**

The booming era of post-World War II national museum (re)construction began as part of the UN’s strategies to “preserve” and protect the world’s heritage, with a special focus on assisting the least developed, soon-to-be independent, states in their mission to progress. Spreading a set of cultural norms through standardized educational methods is one of UNESCO’s major missions. Many scholars of nationalism argue that postcolonial nation building depends on the ex-colonizer’s model of education.<sup>102</sup>

Museums have strong educational and cultural objectives, and curators are sometimes seen as artists; they often occupy the higher position of a “spiritual guide.” National museums, and their curators, abstract, edit, and construct histories and therefore the objective of a museum is not simply education, although education is crucial to its role. UNESCO and ICOM reports highlight the importance of the disciplinary and non-

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>102</sup> See Chapter I for a literature review of publications discussing the importance of education to nation building.

disciplinary function of museums, and as a cultural center the museum acts as a regional apparatus that disseminates knowledge not only locally but also regionally through UNESCO as the international consultant for nation building through the establishment of such buildings.<sup>103</sup> The role of the museum is not restricted to curating past national glories, storytelling, editing histories, and amplifying nostalgia through the objects, but also the mere existence of a museum in a city act today acts as a symbol of its possession of the cultural modernity that international organizations such as UNESCO aim to establish in each postcolonial state.

The competition to design Kuwait's national museum (KNM) was primarily intended to produce a structure that would reflect Kuwait's identity. KNM narrates and distills Kuwait's heritage and history and is part of its new national education system. From its independence in 1961 until the Iraqi invasion in the Gulf War of 1990, Kuwait was meant to be a model modern city for neighboring Arab nation-states.<sup>104</sup>

Before 1990, school visits to the museum were essential for primary school children.<sup>105</sup> The museum was designed to be a source of pride, a store of knowledge, a place of discipline, a modern institution with vernacular roots; and a well designed architectural and a technologically advanced structure for its time. For this reason



<sup>103</sup> Rivière, *Kuwait Museums: General Report*.

<sup>104</sup> Iraq was held up as a progressive Arab model until the Iraqi revolution of July 1958. After the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, Dubai became the contemporary model. Kuwait took the lead in the period between these events.

<sup>105</sup> The KNM was severely damaged by Iraqi forces during the invasion (see Asseel Al-Ragam, "The Politics of Representation: the Kuwait National Museum and Processes of Cultural Production," *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 20 (2014), 663-674.), and as a consequence the public education system imposed an hour of "National Education" for all educational levels below high school.

UNESCO drafted educational curricula and ways of teaching for the development of Kuwait's educational system and to create a new and modern nation.

In addition to being an educational institution, museums have a disciplinary function that displays history from a particular angle for the sake of public assimilation and nation building. Museums, and the collections they hold as well as their architecture, are skillful masters of illusion, deception, and mimesis. While every object or structure has more than a single side or meaning, a museum's job is to display a specific point of view. National museums normalize certain behaviors and actions and present them as victorious and heroic, while condemning other acts, in order to organize and build a nation.

### **The First Kuwait National Museum and a Similar Example in the Region**

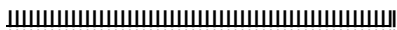
A national museum for the Kuwaiti public was the first step towards modernity, and it was in the late 1950s – a period of political instability under the pressure of Pan-Arab nationalism that swept the states of the Middle East – that the desire and need to construct a national museum first began. In 1957, the Kuwait Department of Education, with the assistance of Moesgard Museum, Denmark, and UNESCO experts initiated plans to conduct the first archeological expedition in Kuwait, establish the first national museum in the region, and draft laws on antiquities.

Sheikh Abdullah Al-Jabir Al-Sabah's palace was chosen to house the national museum. Sheikh Abdullah purchased the palace from Sheikh Khazal Bin Mirdaw, ruler of Muhammarah (in present-day Iran) and a friend of Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah who had



Amir's palace (a two-story structure built in 1918 with three courtyards and various reception halls), and the construction of the new museum structure as an extension of the old palace. The second phase was mainly the landscaping, comprised of a large lagoon and a Marine Museum and Aquarium. Designed by Michael Rice and Company in collaboration with the Design Construction Group (led by Anthony Irving), the overall scheme was designed according to a 7.5 x 7.5 m grid and was adopted at an early stage of the project.<sup>108</sup>

The Amir's palace was abandoned in 1923, and as part of the restoration process various archeological researches were conducted in order to faithfully bring the palace back to its original state.<sup>109</sup> As it turned out later, however, the original palace was completely demolished and the new one is a reconstruction of the same building with reinforced concrete. Perhaps less concerned with the importance of preservation, or even of authentic representation, the reconstruction of the building used stronger materials, with its main purpose as a defensive structure to safeguard national valuables. Second, since the museum is an educational institution, its construction accompanied larger ethnographical, geomorphological, and archeological studies in order to enrich the content of the museum. No doubt the museum is a tool of nation building, housed in a culturally sensitive structure. Renata Holod and Darl Rastorfer explain about the national museum that "Qataris (and foreign visitors) of all ages can use the museum to learn about



<sup>108</sup> Aga Khan Report on the National Museum: Doha, Qatar, 1980 (Aga Khan Award for Architecture). Accessed August 25, 2015: <http://archnet.org/sites/6345/publications/91>

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.







museum, which was to form the new nation of Kuwait. A common element in all these views is the importance of the museum as an educational edifice with an instructive nature that imposes a point of view fostered by the museum experts and planned from the beginning.

The increase of archeological expeditions including the UNESCO mission in the region, and the precious remains found in Kuwait, mandated a new fortified structure that would keep its treasures safe for future generations as well as inaugurating a new modern era for Kuwait.

The government of Kuwait and the Ministry of Education represented by Abdul Aziz Hussein were advised by UNESCO consultants to organize an international architectural competition to design a modern national museum for Kuwait. Six architects were invited to submit design proposals: Hans Asplund (Sweden), Zdravko Bregovac (Croatia), Michel Écochard (France), Ignazio Gardella (Italy), Sayyid Karim (Egypt), and Affonso Reidy (Brazil).<sup>117</sup> The brief asked for the following:

- (a) A cultural section: auditorium, temporary exhibition room, recording room, record library and book libraries.
- (b) Land of Kuwait, illustrating its geology, geography, flora and fauna.
- (c) Man of Kuwait, with emphasis on paleontology, history, archeology, folkloric clothing, indigenous architecture, and especially shipbuilding.

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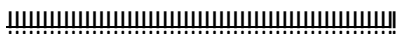
<sup>117</sup> The architects invited were also connected to the members of APC. For example, Hans Asplund was employed by the UN prior to this competition, Ignazio Gardella was a CIAM member, and Affonso Reidy designed the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro.



courtyard that also symbolize a secure space helps see the importance of the KNM as a protective structure that safeguards valuable artifacts.<sup>120</sup>

### **Michel Écochard**

Michel Écochard, the architect of the winning design, was a French architect and urban designer who worked extensively in the Middle East from the 1930s until the 1980s, first under French colonial rule and later during the postcolonial era with the UN. He graduated from the École des Beaux Arts in Paris in 1925, and became known for his international work and strong connections with the colonial governments during the French mandate in Syria, Lebanon, and North Africa.<sup>121</sup> Soon after graduating, he focused on restoration, preservation, and archeology, which won him political and global recognition. His postwar work included strong participation in ATBAT-Afrique, an extension of *Congrès internationaux d'architecture moderne* (CIAM), with a focus on modernizing North African colonies, which exposed him to various developing countries. The various UN commissions that favored Écochard as a postcolonial designer, as well as his involvement in other major projects such as the Tennessee Valley Authority, highlight his international importance as a colonial architect who could assist in the creation of independent postcolonial nation-states.<sup>122</sup> Écochard's global career oscillated between



<sup>120</sup> The atrium, as the central courtyard of the ancient Roman *domus* (house), is the place where the family kept the *arca* (chest or a heavy box containing valuables, essentially as a safebox).

<sup>121</sup> Eric Verdeil, "Michel Ecochard in Lebanon and Syria (1956–1968). The Spread of Modernism, the Building of the Independent States and the Rise of Local Professionals of Planning," *Planning Perspectives*, 27 (2) (2012), 243-260. Accessed August 17, 2015: <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-00424544v2>

<sup>122</sup> Colonialism and the postcolonial agenda are connected on various levels; both act at a global level to control the international economy. Similarly to structuralism and post-structuralism in literary texts, where the former has a more fixed visible relationship to the form of the text, colonialism makes clear its dominance over the colonized, whereas post-structuralism is less

architecture and urbanism reflecting the way nationalism operates on various scales. Examples of his work include the museums in Antioch (1931) and Damascus (1936), as well as large-scale urban planning projects such as a master plan for Damascus (1938), and the development of a design for Beirut's future urban fabric (1940).

What fueled Écochard's work politically, apart from his major role in the French colonial expeditions, were the restoration projects and survey works that included strategic locations over important networks of waterways in the Middle East.<sup>123</sup> Écochard was also part of the Mission d'Architecture et d'Urbanisme along with other architects and politicians who visited the United States and witnessed the realization of the Tennessee Valley scheme.<sup>124</sup> Navigation, waterways, dams, and moats were all part of security systems that became crucial parts of geopolitics from the late nineteenth century, and gained importance during the early twentieth century and the postwar period. The architect's experiments in architectural preservation and waterways provided him with the experience required to design highly secure and powerful national architecture. Écochard's winning design in the KNM competition reveals that the main objective of

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fixed and constantly changes meaning in the same way that post-colonialism acknowledges that domination over subjects still exists but is less visible. Constructivism is subjected to the same critique of free will; previous experiences discreetly impact (predict, shape, or control) our readings, perspectives and actions. "Openwork" and "the death of the author" are examples that can be read as freeing the text from the author, but not having a visible authority does not mean the absence of a dominating force of control, as the readers now believe they are in control of the text without acknowledging the thoughts residing in their subconscious. What I am trying to suggest here is that nationalist architecture offers superficial flexibility and independence for the public, but its subtle geometry and symbolic forms during the postcolonial era hide its ability to control, particularly from the untrained eye.

<sup>123</sup> Avermaete et al., *Casablanca Chandigarh*.

<sup>124</sup> Others include Le Corbusier, Eugène Claudius-Petit, and André Sive. For more information about Tennessee Valley and the French Mission d'Architecture et d'Urbanisme, see Mark Swenarton, Tom Avermaete, and Dirk Van Den Heuvel, eds., *Architecture and the Welfare State* (London: Routledge, 2014).

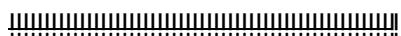
such architecture is primarily to “educate locals about their own culture” and only secondarily to introduce Kuwaiti culture to foreigners.<sup>125</sup>

### **Organization, Structure, and Symbols**

The earlier proposal of Écochard for the KNM included four separate rectangular structures connected by bridges (fig.13): the focus seemed to be on two of these insular structures along with their connecting walkway, an elaborate joint with two protrusions on one side and three on the other; the overall diagram for this section of the complex resembles the door bolt symbol in hieroglyphs (usually corresponding to the letter S), which further emphasizes that the courtyard here represents a secure place just as explained above (fig. 14). The two buildings are always placed together in various axonometric drawings, and they have a strong resemblance to a section of the Bahrain National Museum on which I expand in the following section.

In a number of sectional drawings Écochard’s first proposal illustrates the visual connection between the different levels; it is easy to reveal all the activities in the lower level simply by traversing the walkways connecting the exhibition halls within the museum. The orthogonal planning of the KNM assisted in controlling every movement within the museum site.

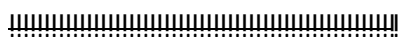
The KNM design includes four separate buildings (one attached to a fifth sub-structure – a planetarium, (fig. 15, 16, 30, and 31) – connected by “streets in the sky” (fig. 13, 16, 18, 20, 27, and 125) that assist in maximizing visual control, and arranged around



<sup>125</sup> Al-Ragam, “The Politics of Representation”.

a central courtyard and covered with a space frame. Supported by a separate structure, the space frame is carried by four columns, each with four legs that are said to represent a camel (fig. 19).<sup>126</sup> As the national animal, the symbol of a camel has important meaning for Bedouins and therefore Kuwaitis. Camels are symbols of endurance, strength, mobility in the desert, and they carry mystical and spiritual meanings in Islam. *Manakh* is an Arabic word that may translate as “climate,” but it refers to the place where a camel sits.<sup>127</sup> The silhouette of camels was also used in Raili and Reima Pietilä’s design of the façade for the Kuwait Ministry of Exterior Affairs (fig. 21 and 22).

Écochard’s idea of “freeing” the museum from linear narrative divides the history of Kuwait into smaller fragments; they do not actually avoid the issues of story-telling, but separate themes that allow for more facts to be edited out. Each structure allows the curators to create shorter, less encompassing, and more manageably constructed narrative to appear as realistic information about Kuwaiti nationalism. By dividing the museum Écochard was able to give Kuwaitis “a view of the *theatrical, literary and pictorial arts* of the modern age all under *one roof*.”<sup>128</sup> One of the earlier sections of the KNM demonstrates this as a literal translation, where the space-frame, along with the stretched fabric in between, shades and covers the entire complex (fig. 20). Écochard’s choice of



<sup>126</sup> Interview with Alia Farid.

<sup>127</sup> A camel’s instinct drives it to sit in a position where its eyes and nostrils are protected from direct sunrays and dusty winds, and for this reason ancient knowledge dictates to build structures accordingly, to avoid, for example, having entryways or windows facing direct sunlight or strong winds. The Oxford English Dictionary defines an almanac as, “An annual calendar containing important dates and statistical information such as astronomical data and tide tables.” See <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/almanac>, accessed November 29, 2015. *Almanakh* is also the title of a book with a collection of essays and images discussing the architectural boom in the oil-rich Arab states: Ole Bouman, Mitra Khoubrou, and Rem Koolhaas, *Al Manakh* (Netherlands: Stichting Archis, 2007).

<sup>128</sup> Michel Écochard, “The National Museum of Kuwait,” in *Places of Public Gathering in Islam*, ed. Linda Safran (Philadelphia: Aga Khan Award for Architecture, 1980), 100.







instigated that give people a sense of freedom of choice in terms of becoming attached to their constructed history.

Although the KNM was meant to solidify a Kuwaiti national identity, upon its completion in the 1980s a private collection of Islamic art owned by an elite couple came to occupy one of the main exhibition spaces permanently. Islamist sentiment was at its height during the 1980s, which is one way to explain how Islamic art took center stage.<sup>135</sup> Kuwait's modern, and unique, development away from secular modernity was perhaps crucial to solidifying its independence from the secular pan-Arabism sentiments growing during the 1950s and 1960s.

UNESCO's representative recommended that all historical references to the British colonial phase be eliminated from the KNM's exhibitions. A postcolonial view would see such a recommendation as tendentiously orientalist in order to hide an imperialist past rather than a sincere reflection of history. But UNESCO's wish to present only the nation's glorious past can be viewed as a sincere intention to empower local solidarity.

### **Bahrain National Museum as a Comparable Example**

In 1967 the Bahraini government signed an agreement with UNESCO which resulted in the appointment of Dr A. Gosh as the UNESCO consultant for the Bahraini government. Gosh advised the government to start negotiations with the Danish Archeological Expedition to return artifacts found on Bahraini soil during their

<sup>135</sup> It is common knowledge for Kuwaitis that the 1980s is when Islamic sentiments reached a peak. For example many women started to wear the head scarf during the 1980s, while during 1950s and 1960s the situation was the reverse.

excavation on the Arab island. Only five years later the Bahraini government, with the help of UNESCO, was able to accumulate such a large collection that it needed a new building to safeguard and display its ancient artifacts. Although UNESCO and ICOM helped to construct Bahrain's national image they did not give it the freedom to structure and manage its own identity. UNESCO, along with ICOM, produced various reports, consultations, and specific guidelines on how to organize, exhibit, and maintain the Bahraini national collection. Both international institutions conducted missions to study the archeology, geology, and ethnology of Bahrain and its inhabitants before any proposal was submitted to construct its national museum.

Similarly to KNM, the design and construction of the Bahrain National Museum (BNM) started with a competition directed by Michel Écochard, this time as a UNESCO consultant appointed in 1972. Écochard was eager not only to be involved in constructing a museum but had an ambitious plan to establish a fully equipped cultural center and a national library.<sup>136</sup> Meanwhile it became necessary in 1973 to move the large collection to empty structures which had been used as restaurants for British officers in the city of Muharraq.<sup>137</sup> The competition lasted until the early 1980s and the winning design was that of the Danish architects Krohn & Hartvig Rasmussen, perhaps because of their close



<sup>136</sup> Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities webpage.

<http://culture.gov.bh/ar/visitingbahrain/destinations/s,3949/s,3953/> , accessed October 7, 2015.

There is a similar situation in Kuwait. The National Library of Kuwait (NLK) was recently constructed just beside the KNM; both buildings are located just in front of the Seif Palace and fall under the umbrella of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL).

According to a report produced in 1981 by ICOM on behalf of UNESCO, the construction of a national library within the overall complex of KNM was suggested in 1977, but it was not until 1994 that an Amiri decree was issued to construct the NLK building. *Kuwait National Museum*, UNESCO Archives, box CLT/CH /160 and 285, Paris.

<sup>137</sup> Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities webpage.

<http://culture.gov.bh/ar/visitingbahrain/destinations/s,3949/s,3953/> , accessed October 7, 2015.

relationship and familiarity with the Danish Archeological Expedition during the colonial period. Their proposal holds numerous formal resemblances to its Kuwaiti counterpart, particularly the early design of KNM (see fig. 10, 25, and 26). The building has a central courtyard and four buildings connected by skywalks, a lagoon, and a cylindrical structure instead of the sky dome in Kuwait. The building is also anti-monumental with various defensive elements, starting with its configuration as a peninsula; built on land surround by a moat (water) on three sides, while the structures of the museum are protected with a peripheral concrete wall.<sup>138</sup> The new complex has an area of around 27,000 m<sup>2</sup> and one of the most important roles of Bahrain National Museum as described by the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities is to preserve and “safeguard” the ancient knowledge accumulated in various antique scrolls and archeological remains found on the island.

The role of the museum, the types of exhibitions, and the artifacts stored and exhibited in the museum, as well as the geometrical forms of the entire complex of Bahrain National Museum, correspond closely to its Kuwaiti counterpart. The similarities between the two are due to various reasons; first, the identical missions of UNESCO and ICOM to modernize and normalize the postcolonial nations of the Arabian Peninsula, second, the role of Écochard, as explained above, the architect of KNM who also acted as the main consultant for the Bahraini government in establishing the brief for the BNM competition.<sup>139</sup>

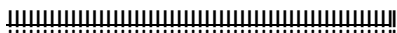


<sup>138</sup> Knud Holscher, “The National Museum of Bahrain,” *Mimar 35: Architecture in Development*, Hasan-Uddin Khan, ed. (London: Concept Media, 1990), 24-29.

<sup>139</sup> Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities webpage. <http://culture.gov.bh/ar/visitingbahrain/destinations/s,3949/s,3953/>, accessed October 7, 2015.

## KNM in Kuwaiti Press, 1977–1991

In 1977 a local newspaper confirmed to the Kuwaiti people the budget for the construction of the KNM as 6 million KWD and that a local contractor was employed to construct the building. The same article also included an overview of the four architectural insular buildings and their role. In September 1977 *Al-Qabas* published a short interview with the American architect Henry Miller, consultant for the local Kuwaiti construction company. Miller highlighted several aspects not necessarily directly related to the project, such as the Kuwaiti government's role in the development of sewerage and drinking water network systems, road planning, the expansion of imports and exports, as well as shipping and navigational systems.<sup>140</sup> Towards the end of the 1970s various articles described the KNM as a recreational project, and many highlighted its educational, social and national role.<sup>141</sup> On February 23, 1979, two days before Kuwait's 17th Independence Day celebration, *Al-Qabas* published a conversation with Selim Abdul Hak who spoke in detail about the big role that the KNM would play in Kuwait's nation building.<sup>142</sup> In July of the same year another article in the same newspaper explained that 50 percent of the work was accomplished and the museum's



<sup>140</sup> Anon., “al-Amal fi Almat’haf Yabda’a fi Awal Oktober wa Yastaghreq A’again wa Yukalef 25 Malyoon Dolar” [The Museum’s Construction Begins in the Beginning of October, Takes Two Years, and Costs 25 Million Dollars.] *Al-Qabas*, September 5, 1977.

<sup>141</sup> See, for example, the interview with Ibrahim Taher, Director of the Kuwait National Museum. “Modeer Idarat Mathaf al-Kuwayt al-Wattani: Nata’awan ma’a al-Mataif al-Arabeya wa Natamana Insha’a Siwaq Sha’abeyah” [Director of the Kuwait National Museum: We Cooperate with Arab Museums and We Hope to Construct Traditional Souks], *Al-ra’ai Al-Aam*, August 2, 1978; Ibrahim Aalwan, “Al-Mat’haf wa Daoraho fi Tathqeef al-Fard wa al-Mojtama’a” [The Museum and Its Role in Educating Individuals and Society]. *Molhaq Al-Qabas*, 3349 (September 7, 1981): 3.

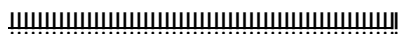
<sup>142</sup> Selim Abdul Hak, “Mat’haf al-Kwayt al-Jadid [Kuwait’s New Museum].” *Al-Qabas*, February 23, 1979.



great play of this. The planetarium was important because it was the “future” part of the museum and, as the article explained, its construction had been part of the original project of the 1960s. A planetarium is casually understood to be an educational, intellectual and recreational structure meant to teach the public about the universe they live in. Nonetheless it is also a navigational device known to ancient people and assisted in building ancient civilizations from before 1500 BCE in numerous geographical locations including Egypt, China, India, and Latin America.<sup>147</sup> Elis Stromgren wrote the following about the planetarium.

Never before was an instrument created which is so instructive as this; never before one so bewitching; and never before did an instrument speak so directly to the beholder. The machine itself is precious and aristocratic ... The planetarium is school, theater, and cinema in one classroom under the eternal dome of the sky.<sup>148</sup>

It is therefore both science and art, and able to convey a particular truth in an artistic way, and for this reason able to deceive in the way it provides a single view of scientific knowledge. Kuwait’s planetarium was at the time (perhaps even today, as it is currently under extensive renovations) one of the most advanced in the region. Maha al-Muneer explains that several planetariums were constructed in the same way in other postcolonial nations such as Libya, Iraq, Egypt, and Canada, but the Kuwaiti dome was technically better than any of the others. A similar assertion was made recently by Laura Kurgan in *Close Up at a Distance*, where she provides a general view of the advanced



<sup>147</sup> There are various sources for the history of the planetarium; for a brief history, see Mark Chartrand, “A Fifty Year Anniversary of a Two Thousand Year Dream,” *Planetarian*, September 1973. [http://www.ips-planetarium.org/?page=a\\_chartrand1973](http://www.ips-planetarium.org/?page=a_chartrand1973), accessed June 29, 2015.

<sup>148</sup> Cited in *ibid*.







obsession with navigation, axes, waterways, maps, etc. For Écochard, to relate his design of four structures surrounding a central courtyard to the indigenous architecture of Kuwait is simply to propagate his proposal as genuinely local. Quadrant structures existed long before and in various places around the world; it could be represented as a cross, in its oblique or right-angled form, as a swastika, a T-shape, triangle, or ankh. Such forms respect the movement of the sun, wind, water and earth. They also assist in our understanding of the climate, weather, and seasons, including predicting catastrophes and rain. Cross-related symbols are important for navigation, travel, way-finding and therefore security protection and nation building. The organization includes a planetarium where the public can learn about other planets, the role of the sun and moon, but most importantly about constellations and their importance from ancient times to today. Astronomical tabulations used for weather prediction, cartography, and navigation are also used for determining the geometrical forms needed to produce architecture with climate-control ability. In other words, such knowledge is able to weave various architectural functions within a single complex. The planetarium is therefore a complementary utility to the KNM; it is meant to introduce the public to the scientific aspect of the entire complex.

These astronomical, navigational, and defensive qualities of Écochard's design find connections to the mat-building typology introduced by Alison and Peter Smithson in Team X's meetings; a typology that represented a new form of liberation by weaving various layers of subtle control.<sup>153</sup> As discussed above, Écochard had a deep knowledge of the history of the vernacular architecture of the Middle East; his quadrangular design

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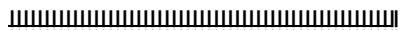
<sup>153</sup> For more information on the mat-building see Chapter V.

including the central void and connecting bridges belongs to a postwar intelligent development of ancient knowledge during the postcolonial era. The anti-monumental square conceals the museum's collection of precious artifacts and what they hold of ancient knowledge.

The KNM is not simply an educational facility with free access for all, it also has a protective utility; before its doors were opened to the public the construction of the complex was eventually augmented to include a protective wall to control access (fig. 32). The recent renovations demolished the fence to allow more public access, although the fence was replaced by new structures that seal access between the four structures to protect the central courtyard (fig. 33).<sup>154</sup>

### **KNM's Connection with Dar al-Athar al-Islameyah**

Sheikh Nasser Sabah al-Ahmed al-Sabah spent about seven years (from 1975 to 1982) accumulating an amazing collection of Islamic art that includes a thousand pieces comprising precious coins, gold rings, 30-foot long carpets, manuscripts, and Quranic inscriptions from early Islamic periods. Marilyn Jenkins elaborated on the importance of Sheikh Nasser's collection, explaining that the Sheikh was inspired to establish his collection when he visited the Islamic collection of the Metropolitan Museum in New York.<sup>155</sup> In 1982 *Al-Resalah Al-arabeya* published an article about the KNM with a focus on the role and story behind the grandiose Islamic art collection of *Dar al-Athar al-Islameyah* (DAI) owned by Sheikh Nasser and his wife Sheikha Husa Sabah al-Salem



<sup>154</sup> Interview with Abdualziz Al-Mezidi.

<sup>155</sup> Anon., "Al-Mat'haf al-Wattani [The National Museum]" *Al-Resalah Al-Arabeya*, issue 2, June 1, 1982. 14-15.



In a conversation with Abdualziz Al-Mezidi, he explained the grandiose reconstruction and refurbishing of the KNM. Al-Mezidi explained that there were five phases:

- 1- The construction of the plant room
- 2- Construction of DAI's storage room and other related buildings.
- 3- Underground services, construction, reconstruction, and infrastructure
- 4- Renovation and reconstruction of four main buildings, façades and all other related exterior details
- 5- Showcases, the design and construction of the interior display areas.

It was clear that the first phase is about the mechanical system, the reestablishment of the energy generators of the project. Immediately after come the storage rooms, which is about securing the important art pieces but it also reiterates and reestablishes a new securely controlled democracy. Al-Mezidi explained that one of the goals of the new additions is to break down the fences of the old KNM and open it to the public. Looking at the master plan, however, one finds a new type of fence, and buffer zones such as car parks, a gated reception and other structures replacing two bridges and sealing the entrances to the courtyard, while the other two connecting bridges retain their function as observation points for those who come in and out.

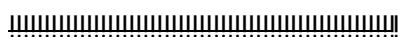
### **Conclusion: Capitalism and Dominant Postcolonial Missions**

The UNESCO missions focus on assisting the least developed countries (LDC), and their

strategy is implemented through: training activities involving simple and efficient techniques for safeguarding objects, with a special emphasis on the creation of pedagogical tools; museum development by strengthening professional networks and partnerships; improving educational content and access to knowledge through awareness-raising and educational activities; promoting the return, restitution and improved access to cultural objects by means of awareness-raising and advisory activities and innovative partnerships; and finally, through the joint implementation of normative and operational activities, particularly in regard to the fight against illicit trafficking and the protection of underwater heritage.<sup>160</sup>

UNESCO's statement makes clear its protective role regarding global artifacts; nonetheless a protective role in itself provides the international organization to control national matters of the least developed and postcolonial countries. Claiming itself to be an expert of heritage and culture, UNESCO consequently acts as a regulator of the market value of artifacts around the globe.

The development of museology in Kuwait, the establishment of KNM, and the construction of Kuwait's cultural image as a modern nation-state could not have been achieved without the guidance, instruction, and monitoring of international organizations such as UNESCO and ICOM. Decolonization and liberation of nations to establish themselves as modern societies during the postwar period was essential to ensure peace, but it was not possible without the imposition of intergovernmental agents to build local cultural institutions that construct a seamless image of cultural autonomy and modernization.



<sup>160</sup> Quoted from UNESCO's museum strategy published online. Accessed October 7, 2015  
<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/museums/>

The KNM's design carries a few elements that connect it to the local vernacular culture of Kuwait, namely the central courtyard configuration and the four major columns, which represent a camel's body. The construction of a national museum with a form that ties it to the local culture establishes the KNM as an important symbol of Kuwait's cultural modernity. The construction of national museums increased drastically during the postwar period, particularly as part of the decolonization process, which confirms their role in nation building. Since the early twentieth centuries, museums had started claiming another role – a symbol of civility, intellectuality, and modernization.

Although it was through a competition with five other architects, the choice of Michel Écochard to design the KNM remains questionable due to his strong previous professional connections with organizations such as UNESCO and the UN. An architect such as Écochard, with no reservations about working in a colony, would always work in a competitive universe with a belief in the survival of the fittest, a world of free trade that functioned by recreating history as a way to market a nation. Écochard worked in various postcolonial nations before and after their liberation and played a crucial role in establishing policies of the UN.

Tom Avermaete described Écochard as a new type of expert:

This new figure no longer plays the role of the local designer working in the field of well-known cultural, social and political forces. Rather he is an international development expert that operates in a variety of geographical and cultural contexts and engages relentlessly with new fields of actors and energies.

Avermaete also described Écochard as a global architect:

A first occasion in which Ecochard could bring into action his urban design approach was in 1953, when he took a position as a consultant with the United Nations to design, together with Constantine Doxiadis, refugee housing near Karachi – the first federal capital of the newly established government of Pakistan in 1947. This project was funded by both the Pakistani government and a host of international development agencies, including the UN, the Ford Foundation and the International Cooperation Agency – all concerned with promoting a stable allied government in a critical region of the Cold War.<sup>161</sup>

Various publications explain how Écochard was given “virtually dictatorial powers,” and a “generous budget”<sup>162</sup> only to demonstrate the political dominance of postcolonial architects operating in Less-Developed Countries as well as their important role in the global economy.



<sup>161</sup> Tom Avermaete, “Framing the Afropolis: Michel Ecochard and the African City for the Greatest Number,” *Architecture and Planning in Africa: 1950–1970*, OASE: No. 822010, 77-100.

<sup>162</sup> Janet Abu-Lughod, *Rabat, Urban Apartheid in Morocco* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 223.



## **Chapter III. Kuwait National Assembly**

## **Introduction**

The uniqueness of Kuwait's democracy in the region is primarily due to the establishment of its parliament and constitution, which makes a constitutional monarchy. The development of Kuwait's democracy relied heavily on the construction of its monumental national assembly building, designed to represent symbols of democracy as understood in Western discourse (the columniation inspired by the Greek Pantheon) mixed with local vernacular elements (the tent) that allows the building to produce a legitimate image of a Kuwaiti national sovereignty.

This chapter discusses the historical development of the Kuwait National Assembly (KNA) building with a focus on its architectural competition and various designs submitted by the invited architects. I will also provide a formal analysis of Jørn Utzon's winning design, and critically examine its role in the development of democracy and independence that depended on a complex network of consultants who impose a specific definition of modernity which benefits a select group politically or financially.

The initial plan for the development of a national assembly building included a mosque that would have been part of the assembly complex. The mosque building was later replaced by a prayer hall inside the KNA building, and at the same time a decision to build a state mosque in a different location within the old city of Kuwait was confirmed. The separation of the two structures is an important symbolic action that expresses the concept of the separation of church and state.

The competition to design a new building for Kuwait's national assembly was part of a larger plan to construct various centers of power. This chapter includes the

historical development of some of these key projects and clarifies how their formal symbolism produced a seamless picture of Kuwait's national power.

### **Competition and Analysis of the Submitted Proposals**

In 1964, the Advisory Planning Committee (APC) organized an architectural competition to design a building for Kuwait's National Assembly. The competition was open only to selected architects:

- 1- Balkrishna Vithaldas Doshi, India
- 2- Rifat Chadirji, Abdulla Ihsan Kamil and Ihsan Sherzad (IQC), Iraq
- 3- Spence, Bonnington & Collins, UK
- 4- Mohamed Ramzy Omar, Egypt
- 5- Pier Luigi Nervi, Italy
- 6- Jørn Utzon, Denmark.
- 7- A joint local Kuwaiti consortium comprising:
  - a. Kuwaiti Engineers' Office.
  - b. National Engineering Bureau.
  - c. Kuwait Architectural Consulting
  - d. Gulf Engineering Office.<sup>163</sup>

Nervi declined the invitation without giving an explicit reason. On March 13, 1972 a letter from Antonio Nervi was sent to Hamad Hamdan, Director-General of the Planning Board, explaining that Studio Nervi was not able to participate in the

<sup>163</sup> Letter, "The National Assembly Complex," sent from Hamad Hamdan, director general of the Planning Board, to Studio Nervi on June 28, 1971. Pier Luigi Nervi Archive in the Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo (MAXXI), Rome.

competition for the KNA. The letter was dated after Nervi's unsuccessful participation in the Kuwait Sports Center (KSC) competition and it is likely that this affected his decision regarding the KNA competition.

The APC produced a document analyzing each submitted proposal according to the brief provided. The following is a summary of this analysis. Doshi's proposal highlighted three separate buildings within the whole edifice: the assembly building, the conference building and parliamentary members' offices. His proposal made use of the entire proposed site (surrounding empty grounds were proposed to be left empty for future expansion) and studied the building's relationships with the nearby Seif Palace, the waterfront, and surrounding sites of the old city. The three buildings would have been enveloped by a single structure to reduce the "climatic effects" and would have sat on a "rampart of garages." Doshi's interior spaces provide a monumental effect (fig. 34 and 35). According to the APC report, the height of the building, which extended to six levels, was one of the disadvantages of the design.

Ramzy Omar stated that he wanted to create a solid and monumental building, and his proposal included fixed geometries such as a hexagonal area for the main chamber crowned with a dome. The national assembly and conference hall were also connected to the main chamber and contained within smaller hexagons and their respective domes. The overall design was symmetrical and fixed and allowed for expansion only through the construction of new structures.

Spence, Bonnington & Collins intended to create an anti-monumental design as they wanted to create a building that the public could enjoy externally and internally.



Utzon and commended his design for the way “it continues (without imitation) certain Arabic traditions: for instance the covered street, the succession of structural arches, the *mat* forms with its courts and the walled enclosure” (my emphasis).<sup>167</sup> This chapter describes his design.

Ricardo Camacho, a consultant for the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, argued that Chadirji’s proposal was the most suitable design but the long-standing disagreements between Kuwait and Iraq played an important part in the appointment of Utzon.<sup>168</sup> Camacho was perhaps referring to the border dispute between Kuwait and Iraq in March 1973, because Chadirji was commissioned to design a number of Kuwaiti residential buildings in the 1960s until at least 1972.<sup>169</sup> It was on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1972 when the Planning Board issued a letter informing the two architects that they were selected as the finalist and asked each architect to develop specific aspects of each design for the jury to make their final decision. Utzon received both letters, the one directed to him and one addressed to Chadirji, for this reason it is not clear if Chadirji received his letter on time or ever. In any case, whether intentionally or not, Utzon had the upper hand since he had access to both letters.<sup>170</sup>

In an email conversation Chadirji explained:

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a member of the APC (Chadirji to meet Omar Azzam in Beirut and Utzon to meet Sir Leslie Martin in London). See appendix II and appendix III.

<sup>167</sup> “Report on the Designs Submitted for the National Assembly Buildings,” March 27, 1972. Jørn Utzon Archive, Aalborg. In this document, the IQC and Utzon’s schemes were marked as the two finalists.

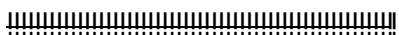
<sup>168</sup> Interview with Roberto Fabbri and Ricardo Camacho conducted in Kuwait on June 21, 2015.

<sup>169</sup> Udo Kultermann, “The Architects of Iraq”, in *Mimar 5: Architecture in Development*, ed. Hasan-Uddin Khan (Singapore: Concept Media, 1982), 60.

<sup>170</sup> Utzon received both letters (appendix II and appendix III) and made an effort to return the Chadirji’s letter to the sender (Planning Board) after copying it. copies of all mentioned letters are preserved at Jørn Utzon archive, Aalborg.

After few months from awarding Utzon, it was summer when I had a cocktail party in my garden in Baghdad. One of the people who was invited was a representative of the Finance Ministry of the committee that awarded the design to Utzon. I don't remember his name. He told me that he did not know me then, and that he was instrumented into awarding the design to Utzon. I don't remember whether we discussed his reasons or not. But in few words he told me that we could not be convinced that an Iraqi architect is better than Danish (sic).<sup>171</sup>

Chadirji highlights an attitude that still exists to this day, that European culture is more capable and developed than any Arab or Middle Eastern culture. Another point of view is reflected in an article by Mark Wigley, "The Myth of the Local", which explains that the choice of Utzon (coupled with Arup as the engineering office) to design and build the Sydney Opera House was tendentious.<sup>172</sup> Wigley also demonstrated how Eero Saarinen supported Utzon to win the competition but it was perhaps the support of Sir Leslie Martin that clinched it.<sup>173</sup> Martin was one of the judging committee that chose Utzon for the Sydney project (and the KNA competition, as explained above), and perhaps the one who convinced the other jury members to choose Utzon in Kuwait. As



<sup>171</sup> Email from Rifat Chadirji on August 27, 2015. The meeting minutes between Utzon's firm and the Kuwaiti government clarify that there was indeed a general understanding that Utzon's firm was preferred despite its higher fees. See appendix for a copy of the meeting minutes of Jørn Utzon's "Fee Negotiation".

<sup>172</sup> Wigley also explains how Utzon was instrumental in hiring Arup as the engineering and construction company. See Mark Wigley, "The Myth of the Local," in *Architects' Journeys: Building, Traveling, Thinking*. Craig Buckley, Pollyanna Rhee, Rubén A. Alcolea, Jorge Tárrago Mingo, Beatriz Colomina, Kenneth Frampton, et al. (New York: GSAPP, 2011), 208-253.

<sup>173</sup> The jury members who selected the winning design for the Sydney Opera House included two foreign members (Leslie Martin and Eero Saarinen) and two locals (Henry Ashford and Cobden Parks). Wigley, "The Myth of the Local," 225-230. The political method of assembling the jury members was repeated in the case of the KNA competition.





competition of the KNA, were the members of the APC and other figures in the Ministry of Public Works.<sup>177</sup>

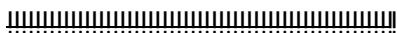
This makes clear that the use of architectural competition with a list of invited architects from different backgrounds as a method of selecting the architect and design of the KNA is only symbolic of a legitimate and democratic process that concealed a contradicting reality.

### **Jørn Utzon**

Jørn Utzon, born in 1918, attended the Danish Royal Academy of Fine Arts, and upon his graduation in 1942 he was awarded a gold medal for his project, which focused on the preservation of the local architecture of Copenhagen. Utzon had to move to Stockholm after the Nazi invasion of Copenhagen where he joined Gunnar Asplund and had the chance to be in contact with Alvar Aalto and Arne Jacobsen, the latter is another Danish architect with an important project in Kuwait – the Central Bank of Kuwait (fig. 40).

Philip Drew wrote that Utzon: !

... was especially attracted to primitive organic manifestations of architecture, and travelled extensively in Morocco, Mexico, China, Nepal, India, and Japan. Utzon's involvement in competitions provided an opportunity to experiment with a variety of themes and integrate them into mature philosophy ... Jørn Utzon's work prefigured the third generation's conversation to an organic conception of



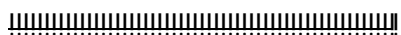
<sup>177</sup> Apart from writing the initial requirements and competition brief for the KNA, APC members sent various letters to the architect with precise revisions. See appendix for a copy of the letters.

environmental order which displaced the first generation's rational bias.<sup>178</sup>

Jørn's father was Aage Utzon, a naval engineer and designer of sailboats. It has been said that Jørn's famous cloudy forms were inspired by his father's work, but the connection between reinforced concrete shell structures and boat hulls has an earlier engineering origin with Vladimir Shukhov, and even earlier connections with mathematical forms and spherical geometry. Most importantly, the geometries of concrete shell structures are strong fortresses and landmarks of great visibility. Utzon travelled extensively around the world and had been intrigued by vernacular cultures and architecture. He had also developed an interest in the Islamic world and the Middle East ever since his student days, and absorbed a great deal of influence from the Orient before and after his design of the Kuwaiti parliament building.

### **KNA's Additive Architecture and the Grid**

Arab and Islamic architecture were the sources of inspiration for Utzon's design. Hans Munk Hansen explains, "Among the sources on which Jørn Utzon draws is the culture of the Islamic world. Not only did it give him inspiration for his own projects in the Middle East; it was also of great importance to his other works."<sup>179</sup> Utzon explains that the plan was organized in a way reminiscent of old bazaars such as the ones he visited in Isfahan.<sup>180</sup> It seems that the courtyard, however, which bears within it the



<sup>178</sup> Drew, *Third Generation*, 44.

<sup>179</sup> Hans Munk Hansen, "Utzon and The Orient," in *Jørn Utzon: The Architect's Universe*, eds. Michael Juul Holm, Kjeld Kjeldsen, and Mette Marcus (Humblebaek: Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, 2008), 66-71.

<sup>180</sup> Utzon's relationship with Isfahan started in 1951 through the "Bank Melli" project. See Hans Munk Hansen, "The Place Is the Partner," in *Kuwait National Assembly: Prefab* (Hellerup: Edition Bløndal, 2008), 18-31.

tendency of an organized grid, is more international than specific to Islamic architecture.

In this regard Richard Weston and Martin Schwartz note:

Utzon knew the traditional Danish farm courtyard arrangement and became familiar with its Chinese and Islamic versions from his travels and books. Almost every one of Utzon's built works originates with a courtyard, from the earlier private houses such as the Villa Banck with its two courts (Helsingborg, Sweden; 1958) to the Paustian Furniture Showroom (Copenhagen, 1987).<sup>181</sup>

Kenneth Frampton notes that “the additive principle [would] be applied to the orthogonal compound of the ministerial offices, enclosed as a city-in-miniature by a high perimeter wall.”<sup>182</sup> This city-in-miniature was created by a series of structures cut in the middle by a bazaar-like street.<sup>183</sup> Jaime Ferrer Forés points out that the additive composition of the KNA building allows its components to aggregate infinitely. Offices, meeting rooms, reception rooms, library, the assembly hall, and other functions all consist of modules of various sizes (fig. 41 and 42), built around small patios or courtyards, and connected to the central corridor (that represents the Arab bazaar) via a smaller alley to create a controlled grid on various scales.<sup>184</sup> The concept of additive architecture focuses on set modules, but it could branch out to include similar concepts of interlocking modules such as Lego-like blocks, adobe bricks, and precast concrete structures. The Danish architect must have been interested in Lego toys (from Danish *leg*



<sup>181</sup> Richard Weston and Martin Schwartz, “Inhabiting Light: Daylight in the Architecture of Jørn Utzon,” *NYT Magazine*, no. 582 (2006), 22.

<sup>182</sup> Kenneth Frampton, “Jørn Utzon 2003 Laureate,” The Pritzker Architecture Prize (November 23, 2003), 3, [http://www.pritzkerprize.com/laureates/2003/\\_downloads/2003\\_essay.pdf](http://www.pritzkerprize.com/laureates/2003/_downloads/2003_essay.pdf), accessed November 2012.

<sup>183</sup> See Philip Drew, *The Masterpiece: Jørn Utzon, A Secret Life* (South Yarra, Victoria: Hardie Grant Books, 1999), 452.

<sup>184</sup> Jaime J. Ferrer Forés, *Jørn Utzon. Obras y proyectos/Works and Projects* (Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 2008).

*godt*, “good play”), as his additive architecture theory depended on his experimentations and playing with little wooden blocks to study the physical configurations in order for Utzon to achieve a meaningful (powerful) form (or whole). The concept of the basic elements, or elementary modules, creating a unified whole of a different independent nature exists in chemistry (chemical elements such as H<sub>2</sub>O; hydrogen and oxygen that come together to create water), mathematical equations, in biology (such as DNA), anthropology (such as clans: groups of people united by kinship), geology (aggregates of minerals creating stone), astrology (constellations), and art (collages and *Gesamtkunstwerk*; “total work of art”). In architecture the concept of repetitive modules can also be seen in the work of many twentieth-century architects, most recently in Rem Koolhaas’s Elements exhibition at the Venice Biennale 2014; Kenzo Tange’s Tokyo Bay and his Metabolist approach in general; Alison and Peter Smithson’s mat-building and the work of other Team X members; and earlier works such as Le Corbusier’s Dom-ino House in 1915 (inspired by another game – dominoes). Additive architecture follows specific rules to construct a new whole, yet its parts are not always visible to the casual observer. Nation building operates in a similar way, it constructs a particular image but it does not necessarily reflect the reality of its parts.

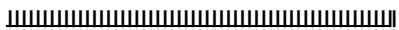
There are three modules organized on two levels, and they impose both spatial and structural rules that the entire complex of the KNA follows, but also give flexibility for the plan to aggregate infinitely (fig. 41). The courtyard configuration used in Utzon’s units of the KNA goes beyond the climatic conditioning role derived from the vernacular architecture of arid climates. Utzon explained that the most significant change in the past few decades “has been the rediscovery of open space between buildings such as squares,

courtyards, streets and gardens.”<sup>185</sup> The association between those three elements is important as they demonstrate and preserve their connection with the Islamic gardens of paradise and vernacular Arab towns. One can understand this when one looks at the Arab courtyard house and how central spaces and open plazas draw people together, in other words, open spaces act as a secure (collective) social space. Those concepts hold similar arguments to that discussed in the previous chapter, with Michel Écochard’s design for the Kuwait National Museum, the “oasis” idea of Kenzo Tange and Frei Otto in their winning proposal for the Kuwait Sports Center discussed in the next chapter, as well as the mat-building of Kuwait designed by Alison and Peter Smithson analyzed in the last chapter. Most importantly, I argue that having the offices of the Assembly members arranged around a planted courtyard with glazed windows provides another function; the windows of each office allow visual axes to the other members seated on the other three sides of the courtyard. The visual exposure acts as a monitoring apparatus, where each Assembly member overlooks another.<sup>186</sup>

### **Monumental Elements: Hybrid of Universal and Local Symbols**

Utzon’s design is a national monument and a landmark that made a clear rupture between the era of nationalism and the first decade of modernization; all the architecture prior to Kuwaiti independence was anti-monumental and tried to reflect the esthetics of International Style .

Utzon’s KNA building is encased with repetitive arches on two levels, not too



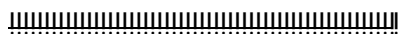
<sup>185</sup> Utzon et al., eds. *Logbook Vol. IV: Kuwait National Assembly – Prefab*.

<sup>186</sup> The configuration follows Michel Foucault’s Panopticonism. See Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*

dissimilar from the Roman Coliseum. In this case Utzon's additive architecture was not meant to provide flexibility but to endow a majestic presence and a monumental character on the national complex. Arches have been used in many eras to highlight a nation's technological advances: Roman aqueducts; strict order, as in Islamic architecture; and religious power, as in Gothic cathedrals. One of the most important similarities between Chadirji's design and that of Utzon is the main axis or "spine" that pierces the entire plan of the building and connects the various important parts of the buildings, and the other is the exterior façades that are flooded with arches; a feature of Chadirji's esthetics, as it is present in many of his earlier and later designs (see comparisons of elevations in fig. 43, 44, and 45).

A plan published in al-Sultani's book, which seems to be one of Utzon's plans for the KNA, demonstrates how the front plaza of the KNA was meant to resemble an Islamic garden, in its quadrant arrangement formed by water channels similar to the Taj Mahal's landscape (fig. 38).<sup>187</sup> The same plaza would later be replaced by a highly secured drop-off and reception area for the Assembly members. The plaza is also covered with a tent-like precast concrete structure. David Langdon explains:

[the] most astounding aspect of the plaza is its innovative and somewhat deceptive material deployment. Much has been made of Utzon's ability to make the concrete roof appear to "billow" in the wind, conveying the delicacy of fabric despite its inert rigidity. Its texture is enriched by a



<sup>187</sup> For more information about the concepts and formal design of Islamic gardens and paradise see John D. Hoag, *Islamic Architecture* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1977) 9; Charles W. Moore, William J. Mitchell, and William Turnbull, Jr., *The Poetics of Gardens* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1988), 148-149.

dual-parabolic geometry, in which individual sections curve upward perpendicularly to the curve of the whole.<sup>188</sup>

The white monumental “billowing” roof can be seen in several of Utzon’s projects, sometimes described as billowing clouds, sunrays, or light.<sup>189</sup> In science, art, religion, and architecture clouds are theorized to have a range of meanings. In Utzon’s design they are best understood when one looks at his Sydney Opera House, and his waves of clouds and light movement above the plateau of the building.<sup>190</sup> Looking at them through the history of art and architecture, we see clouds as obscuring some sort of holy power, or signs that confirm the existence of invisible authority. In various religious texts, light and clouds are symbols and signs for the constant presence of a higher power, God.<sup>191</sup> The concept of lightness and tentativeness appears in Utzon’s design through the KNA’s canopy and the ceiling of the KNA mosque. Although a permanent structure and a well-protected edifice, the KNA building is symbolic of structures that do not own the land they are built on; they are meant to be nomadic structures stepping lightly on the soil. Graham Stevens’s “Desert Cloud” was an experimental art project in Kuwait to test lightweight structures. The form created was surprisingly similar to Utzon’s cloud canopy of the KNA (see fig. 46 and 47).<sup>192</sup>



<sup>188</sup> David Langdon, “AD Classics: Kuwait National Assembly Building /Jørn Utzon,” *ArchDaily*. 20 November 2014. <http://www.archdaily.com/?p=568821>. Accessed June 16, 2015.

<sup>189</sup> For example, his design for the Sydney Opera House and Bagsværd Church. See for example Weston and Schwartz, “Inhabiting Light”.

<sup>190</sup> Wigley, “The Myth of the Local,” 216-220.

<sup>191</sup> “Allahu nour al-samawat wa al-ardh” [God is the light of the skies and Earth] is one example from the Holy Qur’an. Surat An-Nour, *Quran* 24:35.

<sup>192</sup> Interestingly enough in regards to clouds, authority, and security, Steven explained in lecture at the University of Westminster that he was monitored by MI5 (the United Kingdom’s domestic counter-intelligence and security agency). He explained that the reason behind their interest is due to research on optical properties and membrane as well as inflatable structures, such his work on the Desert Cloud. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4-hGmd-j34I>

As described by Børge Nissen, the canopy is supported by tubal columns, cut to allow light to enter the building in a dramatic and grandiose way (fig. 48).<sup>193</sup> The columns have the “majestic” feeling of ancient Egyptian temples but more acutely in the KNA’s case it was modeled to follow the Parthenon as a symbol of democracy (fig. 48 and 49).<sup>194</sup> The geometry allows for light to enter under the canopy in certain areas, and cast shadows in other spots, creating a magnetic feeling that draws the flows of the public in and out under the grandiose entrance. Utzon created cuts in the tubular columns in a way only understood if those cylinders were unfolded as a flat sheet (fig. 50), similar in concept to Buckminster Fuller’s Dymaxion map (fig. 51).<sup>195</sup> The concepts of a column of light and a pier of clouds, along with the sweeping tent canopy, establishes a religious concept found in the Old Testament and closely related to the architecture of the tabernacle (fig. 52). The ratios of the KNA plan follow the ratios and proportions of Utzon’s Bagsværd Church, which in its turn corresponds to the guidelines given in Exodus on the design and form of tabernacle and temple.<sup>196</sup> Clouds, light, and fire are manifestations of the presence of God both day and night.<sup>197</sup> Richard Weston elaborates on the use of light in Utzon’s work, particularly in his Sydney Opera House and his use of “ceramic tiles in a combined pattern of glazed and unglazed tiles, intended to produce a shimmer rather than a mirror effect”, which references shimmering snow over a



<sup>193</sup> Utzon et al., *Logbook Vol. IV: Kuwait National Assembly – Prefab*, 122.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>195</sup> For more information on this geometry, see “R. Buckminster Fuller’s Dymaxion World,” *Life* magazine, March 1, 1943, 41-55.

<sup>196</sup> Michael Asgaard Andersen, “Revisiting Utzon’s Bagsværd Church,” *Nordisk Arkitekturforskning* (2005), 98.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*



mountain.<sup>198</sup>

Similarly, the design of the KNA was meant to establish a majestic feeling and produce a powerful feeling of unity, which is the case in any monumental architecture. The column and canopy are the main elements in the KNA building that provide a sense of loyalty, national assimilation, security, and control. Their connection to light and sea waves goes beyond the figurative, because they act together as an index, expressing their local position, the canopy open to the sea, providing a welcoming vista. Langdon stated: “Rising up toward the Kuwait Bay in front of it, the architecture is both inviting and forward-looking, casting its lofty gaze outward toward the sea and beyond.”<sup>199</sup>

The tent may represent an inviting element for all the public, but the building has advanced security systems and is therefore hardly inviting.<sup>200</sup> Perhaps two perspectives on the formal role of the complex could be described; both views relate to the formal language of religious structures. The first is that Utzon’s building imposes order and discipline by reminding the public that all-seeing authority exists, and the second is to see it as device that draws the inner human desire to be “good” to one’s self and others, therefore promoting compassion and tenderness.



<sup>198</sup> For more information, see Richard Weston. *Utzon: Inspiration, Vision, Architecture* (Hellerup: Blondal, 2002). The shimmering and illuminating effect instead of a mirror is related to another religious reference – halo – surrounding an iconic holy person and therefore gives sublime effect of guidance, protection, and power, inter alia.

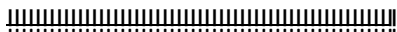
<sup>199</sup> Langdon, “AD Classics: Kuwait National Assembly Building /Jørn Utzon”.

<sup>200</sup> Aisha Al-Rushaid, *Al-amn fi Majlis al-Ummah* [National Assembly Security], *Al-Qabas*, issue 5051, June 2, 1986, 4. Furthermore, on a visit to photograph the KNA, I was immediately interrupted by one of the security guards who explained that photography, even of the exterior, is forbidden without a special permit.



lavishness; one only needs to look at the archives of *Vogue* magazine in the 1970s.<sup>203</sup> This perhaps explains why the tent worked perfectly at the time when the newly rich Arab state was established.

In mimicking the tent, the KNA, as a national symbol, becomes a monument that adds the tent-form to the list of objects representative of Kuwaiti culture. Lawrence Vale asserts that these “post-colonial capitals and capitol, intended as visual evidence of the rightful existence of a new state, are designed with multiple simultaneous frames of reference.”<sup>204</sup> As a symbolic form for a new nation, the draped canopy designed by Utzon disconnects Kuwaitis from the colonizer and other colonies. Nonetheless Vale criticizes the tent as a form relevant only to Kuwaitis of Bedouin background, and explains that the forms created by Utzon were inspired by images of Arab vernacular architecture available to him at the time.<sup>205</sup> For example, Vale argues that the interior of the assembly hall is a reinterpretation of a Marsh Arab *mudhif* (tribal guesthouse, a vernacular structure to the inhabitants of area surrounding the Tigris and Euphrates rivers) that is part of the vernacular architecture of Kuwait (fig. 54 and 55).<sup>206</sup> Others try to connect Utzon’s form to a sail, which is an inclusive symbol shared by all Kuwaitis, but, to a certain extent, tents can be seen as a universal symbol of all cultures; tents are found in the ancient vernacular as well as “civilized” cultures. Woven fabrics are part of ancient Egyptian,



<sup>203</sup> In 1974 *Vogue* published a spread of interiors shots replete with textiles and fabric covering the walls and ceilings, thus reflecting images of tents. Cited by Wagner, “Ultrasuede,” 93.

<sup>204</sup> Vale, *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*, 211.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 221-227. Mark Wigley also asserts that Utzon never actually visited Sydney before submitting his design of the Opera House and his design process depended only on seeing photographs of the site and other ancient monuments. See Wigley, “The Myth of the Local,” 224-225.

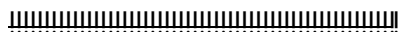
<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*

Greek, Roman and monotheist religious architecture and culture, but they also represent demonstration camps, celebratory tented affairs, and military campaigns.<sup>207</sup>

Michael Asgaard Andersen explains how Utzon's design for Bagsværd Church has a strong association with the ratios of the tabernacle:

Social, cultural, and architectural impulses have been mediated and interpreted during the design process, which make the building appear with its own consummate expression. In formal terms basic Euclidian shapes are used throughout, for example in the triangulated altarpiece screening, the circular ceiling, and the squared plan. The forms are known from most ancient civilizations and take on different connotations in each one of them.<sup>208</sup>

Similarly Utzon designed the KNA using the most intricate ratios based on ancient knowledge, which he acquired during his various travels to study indigenous cultures around the world.<sup>209</sup> Pythagoras' theorem, Al-Khwarizmi's algorithms, Euclidian geometry, and other scientific theories found in the ingenious ancient civilizations and cultures are implemented in the Utzon's design for the KNA building. The mathematical precision is particularly architectural and less structural.<sup>210</sup> Mathematics is thus used to create landmarks, monumental character, and recognizable sociocultural symbols. Modernity is achieved through the deployment of science, yet remains part of long-standing methods of nation building that existed in ancient times.<sup>211</sup>



<sup>207</sup> For more information on the tent's "colonial image," and its mobility and light structure, see Philip Drew, *New Tent Architecture* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2008), 11-21.

<sup>208</sup> Andersen, "Revisiting Utzon's Bagsværd Church," 101.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

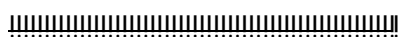
<sup>210</sup> In this regard I mean that those ratios are "esthetical" measurements able to produce a particular psychological effect of authority and therefore belong to arguments about the architecture of power and nation building. See, for example, Sudjic, *The Edifice Complex*.

<sup>211</sup> Such is the case with the monumental architectural of ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome.

The editors of *Jørn Utzon Logbook Vol. IV: Kuwait National Assembly – Prefab* included an image of the Parthenon to compare it with Utzon’s columns on the main entrance of the KNA. Credited with the origins of Western civilization, ancient Greece is known for the advancement of philosophy, Athenian democracy, and artistic mastery. The Parthenon is the symbol of such progress. The KNA was initially planned as a complex of various buildings, and so the tendency to design capitols in postcolonial nations is an idea inspired by the Acropolis as a complex system of connected structures representing the center of democratic authority.

### **Organization and Branching: Controlled Freedom**

Richard Weston explains how the branching system in Utzon’s design for the KNA provides advanced organization, control, and accessibility in relation to circulation, structural units, and mechanical layout.<sup>212</sup> Beside the concept of additive architecture explained earlier, Utzon’s proposal for the KNA complex includes an important connecting method, particularly in his earlier proposal. A network of corridors attached elevated passageways (streets in the sky) to the parking area at the rear entrance of the KNA, and would have connected the proposed mosque to the front entrance and the central cross-axis of the building’s hallways. Khalid al-Sultani explains that the main axis that permeates the whole building has significance comparable to that of the tent canopy, which gives the entire complex its iconic image. The major axis, al-Sultani explains, is an important element that creates the overall “fabric” of the plan. The half-cylindrical units that make up the roof of the major corridor are constructed over two rows of half-




<sup>212</sup> For more information see Utzon et al., eds., *Logbook Vol. IV: Kuwait National Assembly – Prefab*.

cylindrical columns “planted” on both sides. Seeing those columns as a protective hedge of trees emphasizes this corridor as an important element reminiscent of Islamic gardens.<sup>213</sup> As a national monument, the KNA building is based on a grid branching out to create its hallways; the arrangement produces consistency and order, and consolidates the flow of movement into one main passage, thereby allowing for a restricted freedom of movement. Similar to the stems of plants, blood vessels, and other forms of networks, all organize, secure, protect, and assimilate disciplined flows of things. Although theoretically, some network organization or grid types are argued to diminish hierarchy and reflect a democratic society working in a collaborative and equal manner, Utzon’s KNA plan does not reflect this type of organization. For example, the arrangement of seating in the assembly hall is hierarchical, or in the case of the entire plan where the front plaza under the main tent canopy, if one views Utzon’s plan as inspired by cathedral plans, is located in the apse area.

### **The KNA Mosque**

Earlier drawings of Utzon’s design for the KNA show a mosque located in a bold position within the KNA complex (fig. 56). In later stages, around the early 1970s, the mosque was replaced with a smaller prayer hall inside the KNA building. This alteration also coincided with a decision to construct a grandiose state mosque for Kuwait on a nearby site, opposite the Seif Palace with its famous clock tower (watchtower).

The events surrounding the history of the KNA’s mosque/ prayer hall have layered meanings and various explanations. Constructing a religious structure connected

<sup>213</sup> Khalid Al-Sultani, *Tanas Memari* [Architectural Intertextuality] (Demasuc: Almada, 2007), 159.

to a national assembly contradicts the foundation of Western nationalist concepts that developed in the eighteenth century. Replacing the KNA's mosque with a prayer hall inside the building suggests that the intention is to publicize the understanding of religion as a personal choice rather than a political tool and therefore in a way to follow the Western and secular concept behind the separation of state and church. Lawrence Vale, however, explains that the mosque was moved inside the KNA building for security reasons. In the Islamic tradition the mosque is open to everyone, so having a mosque close to the entrance of the KNA would have jeopardized security. This also makes clear the irony in constructing a national assembly that restricts public access. Vale also explained that the elimination of the mosque is related to another political component. "Though Kuwait had always been an officially Islamic state, the rising tide of fundamentalism had made the degree of government involvement with Islam a volatile subject."<sup>214</sup> That is to say, since nationalism in a modern Western construct is secular it would naturally, at least from a Western view, produce tension with any religious structure.

Since the plans to construct a grand mosque in Kuwait coincided with canceling the construction of a mosque within the KNA, another argument could be formulated. The construction of the Kuwait State Mosque could be seen as a result of the rising power of Islamism during the 1970s but in a different way from Vale's view; the Islamic revolution counter-attacked the secular sentiments of pan-Arabism which followed the socialist ideals promoted by the Soviet Union as one of the Cold War's superpowers. Solidifying the local nationalism of Kuwait through various sentiments presented in the

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<sup>214</sup> Vale, *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*, 233.

KNA building as a symbol of democracy, Seif Palace as tradition, and religion with Kuwait Grand Mosque, all contributed to preventing the Kuwaitis from being fully assimilated by an external supra-national power, whether secular pan-Arabism or Islamism with its ideology of a unified Islamic *Ummah*.<sup>215</sup> It also suited the Western bloc to have Kuwait, and other oil-rich nation-states, independent instead of unified under a larger nationalism.<sup>216</sup> Finally, the reason behind canceling the mosque within the KNA could have simply been a budget issue, as its abandonment coincides with the cancellation of other components of the KNA complex.<sup>217</sup>

There are two branches to analyzing the history of the KNA's mosque; the first analyzes the formal qualities of the mosque's design and its relationship to Utzon's "critical regionalism," and therefore sees the mosque as reflecting the cultural character of Kuwait, while the second follows the argument that the plans to construct the State Mosque meant it to replace the cancelled KNA mosque and therefore leads one to investigate the development of the Kuwait Grand Mosque as another architectural component of Kuwait's nation building.

### **Critical Regionalism and the Interior of Utzon's KNA Mosque**

The mosque would have been placed under the canopy just beside the public square in front of the KNA building, and was meant to be symbolic of the presence and

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<sup>215</sup> For more information see Chapter I under the section discussing the historical development of Kuwait's nationalism.

<sup>216</sup> See, for example, Nazih Ayubi, *Over-stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995).

<sup>217</sup> For more information see the section titled "Budgets and Other Centers of Power" below in this chapter.



protection of Allah over the Kuwaiti national gathering under the “covered square.”<sup>218</sup> Beside its religious function in public conditioning, the mosque is seen as a cultural symbol of Kuwait’s nationalism, and since postcolonial nationalism tries to forge connections to the indigenous culture, the mosque is seen as another symbol of Kuwait’s culture as a poetic image, in similar to the way tents, camels, desert sand-dunes, or oases that are all connected to the region.

Looking at the Bagsværd Church in Frampton’s “Towards Critical Regionalism”, one immediately realizes its formal similarity to architectural sections of Utzon’s mosque (Fig. 57 and 58). For this reason it is important to analyze Utzon’s initial design for the mosque in comparison with his church in the light of critical regionalism. Kenneth Frampton explains:

The scope for achieving a self-conscious synthesis between universal civilization and world culture may be specifically illustrated by who Jørn Utzon’s Bagsværd Church, built near Copenhagen in 1976. A work whose complex meaning stems directly from a revealed conjunction between, on the one hand, the *rationality* of normative technique and, on the other, the *arationality* of idiosyncratic form.<sup>219</sup>

Expanding on the term coined by Alex Tzonis and Liliane Lefavre in “The Grid and the Pathway”,<sup>220</sup> Frampton explains that it is important

to distinguish between Critical Regionalism and simple-minded attempts to revive the hypothetical forms of a lost



<sup>218</sup> Vale elaborates to a certain extent on the KNA’s covered square: Vale, *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*, 231-234.

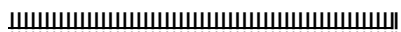
<sup>219</sup> Kenneth Frampton, “Towards Critical Regionalism: Six Points of an Architecture of Resistance,” *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press, 1983), 22.

<sup>220</sup> Alex Tzonis and Liliane Lefavre, “The Grid and the Pathway. An Introduction to the Work of Dimitris and Suzana Antonakakis,” *Architecture in Greece* (1981).

vernacular. In contradistinction to Critical Regionalism, the primary vehicle of Populism is the *communicative* or *instrumental* sign. Such a sign seeks to evoke not a critical perception of reality, but rather the sublimation of a desire for direct experience through the provision of information.<sup>221</sup>

The KNA was given a tent shape in order for the local public to accept it easily as a sign that both references and satisfies their nostalgic emotion for a “lost vernacular.” Regionalism was a fashionable style to follow during the postwar era for several reasons. The first reason for its popularity could be seen through the popular desire at that time to return home after years of violence; a second view is from those nations who wanted to highlight their postcolonial independence; and a third argument could be seen through the political view of world powers acting to restructure nations as future allies. Lefaivre explains that regionalism was once a local resistance to an outside power wishing to internationalize their locality, but the postwar period witnessed a shift and a birth of the global architect who started to design structures in postcolonial nations using local surface images.<sup>222</sup> Lewis Mumford proposes another approach to critical regionalism, which is to create architecture in constant negotiation between the local and the global and explains that:

the drama of human development centers in part on this tension between the regional and the universal. As with a human being, every culture must both be itself and transcend itself: it must make the most of its limitations and must pass beyond them: it must be open to fresh experience and yet it must maintain its integrity. In no other art is that



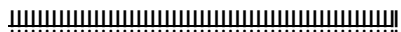
<sup>221</sup> Frampton, “Towards Critical Regionalism,” 21.

<sup>222</sup> Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre, *Architecture of Regionalism in the Age of Globalization: Peaks and Valleys in the Flat World* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2012).

process more sharply focused than in architecture.<sup>223</sup>

The disconnection between the interior and exterior in both Utzon's church and also in his schematic proposal for the KNA mosque reflect similar intentions; a negotiation between two opposites within a single structure rather than architecture that parades its purity. Utzon's proposals for the church as well as the mosque suggest a negotiation between the inside and outside, reconciled in the oneness of the entire structure. In his article, "Revisiting Utzon's Bagsværd Church", Michael Asgaard Andersen, after inspecting earlier drawings of Utzon's design, suggests that the church's floor "has an autonomous character that frees itself from the surrounding terrain, achieved predominantly by the expansive grid and prefabricated expression."<sup>224</sup> The KNA mosque celebrates interiority as a separate form from its exterior shape in the same way that the Bagsværd Church forces a celebration between inside and outside, but the mosque within the KNA would have had a third layer – the canopy of the main structure that encompasses the totality of the complex's elements. As a symbol of faith, the mosque of the KNA was meant to have a soft curvilinear interior, while the exterior, in contrast was a predominantly cubic form, which was to highlight the interiority of belief (spirituality) contained in a physical exteriority. Faith guides the public in various directions and it is only with a critical mind, enlightened eyes and a compassionate heart that one can make the best out of faith.

The angles and finishing materials of the KNA's public plaza under the canopy are designed in the utmost intricate detail, the manipulation of light and shade cast over



<sup>223</sup> Vincent B. Canizaro, ed. *Architectural Regionalism: Collected Writings on Place, Identity, Modernity, and Tradition* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2007), 101.

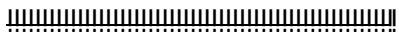
<sup>224</sup> Andersen, "Revisiting Utzon's Bagsværd Church," 98.

the mosque would have created an “ethereal quality.”<sup>225</sup> The layered physicality of the KNA building and its mosque have a symbolic meaning as much as physical qualities. The design creates a sacred feeling as well as connections to surrounding centers of powers (the Grand Mosque and the Ministries complex).<sup>226</sup>

### **Kuwait Grand (State) Mosque**<sup>227</sup>

Mosques, particularly during the height of Islamic civilization, acted as symbols of Islam and tools of nation building able to assimilate and condition the public. The argument is not exclusive to Islam or mosques; since the beginning of civilization spirituality and religious buildings have acted as mechanisms of control, discipline, and power.

The abandonment of the KNA mosque coincides with the establishment of a competition to design a new grand state mosque for Kuwait. Designed by the Iraqi architect Mohamed Makiya,<sup>228</sup> the construction of Kuwait State Mosque began in 1979 as



<sup>225</sup> The phrase is used by Michael Asgaard Andersen, in his article “Revisiting Utzon’s Bagsværd Church,” 97. “Ethereal” comes from the Greek *aither* “upper air; bright, purer air; the sky” (as opposed to *aer* “the lower air”), from *aithein* “to burn, shine...” The word is also related to ancient mythologies and the word “edifice.” See the Online Etymology Dictionary, [http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=ether&allowed\\_in\\_frame=0](http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=ether&allowed_in_frame=0), accessed July 24, 2015.

<sup>226</sup> The KNA is part of a network of buildings that includes the Ministries Complex and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that were also initiated by the Planning Board of Kuwait. For more information see Chapter V.

<sup>227</sup> The mosque is called *Al-Masjid al-Kabir* (the Grand Mosque), but it is also known as the State Mosque.

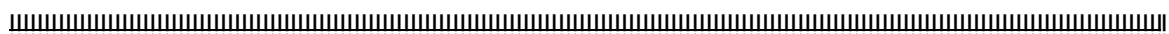
<sup>228</sup> Udo Kultermann described other works by Makiya in the following passage: “Besides his major religious buildings, Makiya has also worked on the design and construction of educational complexes. His architecture follows the lines of Iraqi tradition, but his 1967 design for the Foreign Ministry in Baghdad unfortunately shows elements of foreign influences, especially from Boston City Hall. Since 1971 Makiya has expanded his work predominantly to Bahrain and the Sultanate of Oman, and now operating out of his main office established in London in 1975. In 1972 he opened a new office in Oman where he is presently occupied with the preservation of the old character of the city of Muscat. Makiya’s goals as a city planner follow those he developed as

a separate structure from the KNA building. The design was chosen from thirteen proposals submitted by various architects as part of a competition. Abdullah Qabazard, one of the jury members, had a major role in swaying the jury's decision to choose Makiya's design instead of the favored one by Fredrick Gibbered. Before officially choosing Makiya, Gibbered was given another chance to modify his proposal.<sup>229</sup> Gibbered designed the London Central Mosque, and the similarities between the Kuwait Grand Mosque and its London counterpart are undeniable (fig. 59 and 60). Nebahat Avcioglu also observed that:

The modernist believes that Islamic cultures and traditions can be represented by recognizable simple shapes, in effect facilitated by decisive links between archetypes and identity politics. Gibbered's design was later embraced as a prototype for the Grand Mosque of Kuwait City in 1984.<sup>230</sup>

Avcioglu goes on to explain that “[s]uch a sharing of visual language with the former colonial power is indicative of global sharing of the language of power through the desire of immediate access to an originary identity or tradition through representation (sic).”<sup>231</sup>

The main structure has three courtyards, one near the sheikh's special entrance, a larger central courtyard with a fountain for the public, and a third southern courtyard near the religious library and conference hall entrances. In other words, courtyards here work perfectly as transitory spaces, exposing entrances that lead to the main prayer hall or to



historian and architect to respect the historic environment and transform it only insofar as it continues to identify the human endeavours of the people for which it is used. The old and narrow streets of Muscat were kept as often as possible and integrated into the requirements of the contemporary automobile traffic [sic]”. Udo Kultermann, “The Architects of Iraq,” in *Mimar 5: Architecture in Development*, ed. Hasan-Uddin Khan, 55.

<sup>229</sup> Interview with Abdullah Qabazard.

<sup>230</sup> Nebahat Avcioglu, “Identity-as-Form: The Mosque in the West,” *Cultural Analysis* 6 (2007): 100.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

the library in the mosque.<sup>232</sup> Makiya used the Arabic word *sahan* instead of “courtyard” in the description of his design for the mosque. The word usually refers to a round object or space, and can also refer to a dinner plate, a satellite dish, or the helix (or cochlea) of the human ear. *Sahan al-Ka’abah* is the circular space around the *Ka’aba* (Mecca) where Muslim pilgrims stand uniformly in concentric lines to face the holy structure while praying. For this reason, calling the praying halls *sahan*, although they are rectilinear in the Kuwaiti Grand mosque, means that they are small segments of an imaginary circle with the *Ka’aba* as its center.<sup>233</sup> Creating harmony under one nation is essentially what nation building means, and in Kuwait religion is another element of harmony. Makiya’s mosque blends the old religious tradition with the modern means to construct the Kuwaiti nation. Udo Kultermann explains:

The same concern for harmonising local traditions and contemporary needs can be found in the buildings by Makiya in the years after 1958. His 1963 Khulafa Mosque in Baghdad relates new and contemporary parts of existing older forms, such as the old minaret which was made the centre of the total complex. Kufic writings have become part of the new structure and a unity has been reached which never would have been achieved by the employment of exclusively “modern” forms. In Makiya’s State Mosque in Kuwait on a site of 45,000 square metres near the Sief Palace, these earlier developments are taken a step further. Makiya sees this building as the culmination of his work as an architect. Here again the dominant concept of open and enclosed spaces follows the aim to articulate the core of the task: religious architecture for contemporary needs.<sup>234</sup>



<sup>232</sup> Kultermann, “The Architects of Iraq”, 54-61.

<sup>233</sup> In an article titled “The Big Ear” published in *Ling*, Antonio Dyaz wrote about the London Ear, one of the newest tourist attractions (the author explained that one of the other related projects is the London Eye) that has become a national symbol of Great Britain. The article is an interesting read that could produce new arguments against Makiya’s Kuwaiti *sahan*. Antonio Dyaz, “The Big Ear,” *Ling*. Issue 61 (July, 2015), 78-81.

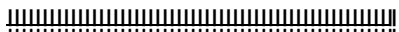
<sup>234</sup> Kultermann, “The Architects of Iraq”, 54-5.



Pakistan, in 1976, and in 1979 a competition took place under the presidency of Saddam Hussein to design Baghdad's state mosque.<sup>237</sup> The timing of this global attention to building grand, central, and majestic mosques has to relate, in one way or another, to the Cold War period. The similarity of the process makes clear the existence of a greater organizing power that focused on creating similar paths by which postcolonial nations could build themselves.

### **Budgets and Other Centers of Power**

Examining the Kuwaiti press and daily newspapers from 1976 through 1992 I found a number of articles focusing on the progress of KNA's construction controversies. *Al-Qabas* published an article in 1976 discussing the Ministry of Public Works' approval of Utzon's design and acknowledging his use of the Islamic pointed arch and the Arab tent as the roots of the modern image he created, which would also become a monumental edifice representative of a powerful and independent nation. In the same article, Thaneyan al-Thaneyan explained the organic and important relationship between the KNA building and other major projects, particularly the Grand Mosque and the Ministries Complex.<sup>238</sup>



<sup>237</sup> Seven architects were invited to participate in the competition: (1) Maath Alousi (Iraq); (2) Kahtan Al-Madfai (Iraq); (3) Makiya Associates (Iraq); (4) Venturi, Rauch and Scott-Brown (USA); (5) Minoru Takeyama (Japan); (6) Rasem Badran (Jordan); (7) Ricardo Bofill (Spain) and Iraq Consult. See Sudjic, *The Edifice Complex*.

<sup>238</sup> Abdullah Qabazard explained in an interview with the author that the Ministries Complex was initially awarded to Alison and Peter Smithson but a disagreement over fees meant it was given to him. See also Anon., "Qararat al-Hokomah Ilgha'a Mojama'a al-Wazarat wa Mabna Majles al-Omah [The Government Decides to Cancel the Construction of Ministries Complex and the National Assembly Building]," *Al-Wattan* (September 10, 1977). Al-Qabas Archives, Kuwait National Assembly folder, Kuwait City.



In the early 1970s Alison and Peter Smithson were commissioned by the APC to design the Ministries Complex. Their design focused on creating a structure that followed mat-building typology. The typology was inspired by old Arab towns that include aggregates of courtyard houses in similar ways to Utzon’s solution for the KNA, as I explain in Chapter V. Unfortunately their commission did not proceed because of disagreements over the construction cost and architect fees. Instead of the Smithsons, Abdulla Qabazard was commissioned as the lead architect for the Ministries Complex. Qabazard, a Kuwaiti architect who qualified at the University of Arizona, encountered this project (and others) through his job as the Head of the Design Division in the Ministry of Public Works.<sup>239</sup> Qabazard’s design was inspired by the Smithsons’ proposal; but as he explains he produced a design that achieved what the Smithsons wanted to do in a more efficient and less expensive way. His design amplified the function of the courtyard as a “charged void,” included a climate control element, and provided better access for future maintenance.

In late 1976 an article was published in *Al-Wattan* expressing public concern about the high cost of two construction projects; the KNA, with a construction cost of 25.8 million KWD (about 70 Million USD, which was surprisingly very close to the construction cost of the Sydney Opera House); and the Smithsons’ Ministries Complex in Kuwait (50 million KWD, which is about 150 million USD), and this led to the cancellation of the projects. In 1977 *Al-Wattan* published an article explaining that the budget of the KNA was lowered to 16 million KWD after various negotiations with the architect, where he revised the design, and the cancelation of various halls and one of the

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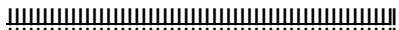
<sup>239</sup> The website of the architect: <http://www.qqsons.com/about.html> accessed on August 16, 2015.



9.5% to 8%. The chairman of the assembly clarified in a meeting that Utzon's competitor, Chadirji, charged a fee of 7%. The subsequent conversation in the same meeting, which included representatives of Utzon's firm, the Ministry of Public Works, and a number of Assembly members, suggest that Utzon was seen as a more qualified architect than Chadirji, as the Danish architectural firm offered thorough research and a better understanding of the nature of the project.<sup>243</sup> To meet the 8.5 KWD ceiling, the conference hall had to be canceled and transferred to a different site with its own budget. The meeting minutes demonstrate the strong position and negotiation skills of the Kuwaitis, witnessing their evolving capitalist mentality and democratic beliefs. Although Khalid al-Sultani explained that the reason behind the delay between the announcement of the winner of the competition and the building's completion date (over ten years) was reflective of the architect's attention to details of his design, as demonstrated here and in Chapter IV, the negotiation over budgets and the political situation in the area during the 1970s is a better explanation for the delays in construction.<sup>244</sup>

### **KNA and the Iraqi Invasion: 1990s**

Only few years after the inauguration of the KNA building in the mid 1980s, Kuwait witnessed the unfortunate events of the Iraqi invasion on August 2, 1990. The building suffered severe damage both inside and out. To solidify their power over Kuwait, the Iraqi troops made sure to weaken the pride of independence by scarring the building.



<sup>243</sup> Minutes of meeting between Utzon's firm and Kuwait Government. "Fee Negotiation," Jørn Utzon Archives, Aalborg. See appendix.

<sup>244</sup> Al-Sultani, *Tanas Memari* [Architectural Intertextuality], 155.

The cost of renovation and the reconstruction of the KNA after the war reached a total of 60 million USD.<sup>245</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The KNA building is inspired by elements of regional architecture such as tents and courtyards to establish an organic connection to the local population. On the other hand, Jørn Utzon's design also follows the proportions and geometry of forms found in ancient civilization that are symbolic of power and democracy, imposing a particular image for Kuwait's national modernity that is not entirely local. Nonetheless, the KNA building is to this day accepted as a national emblem of democracy in Kuwait despite the sometimes opposing realities of the daily life of Kuwaitis.

Although it was the result of a competition, a method that symbolizes a democratic selection, the process of selecting the winner of the KNA competition demonstrated tendentious decisions and undemocratic procedures. Jørn Utzon seems to have enjoyed various privileges and connections when postcolonial Kuwait relied on international consultants to design its nationalist architecture. Such a process of modernization, imposing a Western perspective of progress and development, constructed Kuwait as a land of financial opportunities available only to foreign expertise and some local elites. The view of nationalism as an imposed modern and democratic concept produced contradictory results as its modernization presented obstacles in achieving a universal meaning of equality and progress.

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<sup>245</sup> Anon., "60 Malyoon Doolar li'islah Majlis al-Ummah [60 Million Dollars to fix the National Assembly]," *Al-Anba'a*, No. 5841(August 12, 1991), 16.



KNA failed to achieve its national purpose. To argue that it failed to symbolize the entire Kuwaiti culture, such as expressed in Vale's analysis of the building, is to assume that a pure *physical* form of a culture truly exists. To see the KNA building through Bhabha's theory of hybridity, the in-betweenness, liminality, and interstitiality of culture, is to understand the design's mixed symbols as both a weakness and strength. Analyzing the historical development of KNA through postcolonial framework allows me to be critical of the APC and Utzon's role in the construction of the KNA building, specifically for failing to produce a symbolic building of Kuwaiti culture as unique but equivalent in value to any other culture. The design and construction process of the KNA was seen through specific perspective that elevates modern Western ideals as the purer form to be followed and imitated.<sup>250</sup>



<sup>250</sup> My point here is not to dive into the vast knowledge of mimeses that started with Plato but simply to refer to the concept as discussed by postcolonial theorists that allows me to argue that the production of Kuwait's nationalism imitates modern Western ideals (itself an imitation of ancient Greek ideals that are based on mythical ideals) and therefore is rendered inferior.

## **Chapter IV. Kuwait Sports Center**

## **Introduction**

Proposals to build national stadiums were increasing in the postwar period, particularly in postcolonial nations, as an effective agent of modernization and nation building. The stadium as a modern nationalist structure provides a nurturing environment for national sentiments. Stadiums usually include a gymnasium for training and exercising and a playing area surrounded by viewing seats that gives the structure a disciplining role similar to those discussed by Michel Foucault. Stadiums also have a recreational function necessary for modern life, as seen from a Western perspective. Postcolonial nations such as Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia were all advised to build national stadiums to Olympic Games standards as part of their modernization.

As part of the research on the role of architecture in Kuwait's nation building, this chapter discusses the competition held in 1968 to design and build the Kuwait Sports Center (KSC). The role of the stadium in building healthy and modern nations as well as public assimilation is discussed as the background for the competition. This chapter also elucidates the role of powerful organizations such as the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in controlling anti-colonial nationalism that, ironically, advocates the freedom of those nations. This chapter discusses the history of the competition and provides formal analyses of the proposals submitted with a focus on the winning scheme by Kenzo Tange and Frei Otto.

Although Tange and Otto's proposal was never constructed, another stadium, Jabir Al-Ahmed stadium, to a different design but similar in capacity and size, was completed in 2007. Jabir Al-Ahmed stadium opened to the public on December 18, 2015.



The inauguration ceremony was a national event attended by the Amir of Kuwait, the Prime Minister, and the President of the National Assembly. The ceremony affected the public's feelings as it included national songs, fireworks in the colors of the Kuwaiti flag, and folk choreography. As a recreational facility, stadiums provide a healthy place for the population to be distracted from the reality of their modern lives and the daily political agenda while amplifying unquestionable patriotic emotions. Stadiums are indeed nationalist structures crucial to constructing a seamless image of a sovereign and powerful country and assist in the development of the public's national sentiments.

Providing the public with recreational projects assists in the dissemination of peace and solidarity in a country, which makes it a part of nation building. This chapter ends by exploring Kuwait's waterfront development project, another major project with a recreational and national role that was initiated during the same time period as the KSC. The Kuwait waterfront development project took place in two phases; the first started in the early 1960s as an infrastructure project which assisted in defining the outline of Kuwait's national borders, and the second phase involved the architectural and landscape development of Kuwait's coastline which provided public access to beaches and established the project as a matter of national defense in the hands of the entire Kuwaiti population.

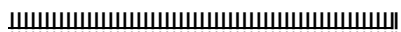
### **Competitive Spirits and Olympic Stadiums**

For at least 3000 years, stadiums have played an important role in public assimilation, state formation, and the empowerment of empires. Although their importance has oscillated throughout history, they once again gained undeniable attention

during the nineteenth century as an apparatus of nationalism. Robert Ivy, Chief Executive Officer for the American Institute of Architecture (AIA), who previously served as the editor-in-chief of the *Architectural Record*, describes the 2004 Athens Olympic stadium thus:

Only the Parthenon, iconic temple on a hill, surpassed the newer additions; Olympic architecture had assumed the contemporary symbolism for a reinvigorated nation. By now, the world can visually identify the individual structures, if not name them—Velodrome, Agora, Olympic Stadium, Plaza of Nations, Entrance Plazas, Olympic Fountain, and Cauldron.<sup>251</sup>

The establishment of the modern Olympic Games in 1896 was inspired by the ancient Greek series of sports competitions known in English by this name. The Olympic Games are known to be symbolic of peace and national pride. It was Pierre de Coubertin who founded the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 1894 as the organizing institution responsible of the modern Olympic Games. Coubertin asserted that “organized sport can create moral and social strength, and thereby play a direct part in a nation’s destinies[sic].” The Olympic Games fits the modern Western concept that Greek civilization is the source of Western modernity. For an international organization such as the UN to endorse the Olympic Games is perhaps due to its symbolic association with peace since an Olympic Truce was held during the games festivities in ancient Greece. The association is symbolic because not only was re-establishing the Olympic Games not conditioned by any truce law but most importantly because competition depends on



<sup>251</sup> Robert Ivy, “New Kind of Hero.” *Architectural Record* (September 2004)  
<http://archrecord.construction.com/opinions/editorials/archives/0409.asp> accessed December 3, 2015.







- 3- Tennis and hockey areas for training
- 4- Cafeteria

The committee announced the joint design of Kenzo Tange and Frei Otto as the winning proposal as it gained the highest evaluation according to the criteria. The committee met with the designers and discussed each proposal before reaching their unanimous conclusion and recommendation.

As an urban planning project, Tange and Otto's proposal would have created a sports city able to connect the urban fabric of the old city with its future expansion through two major roads extending south to the new neighborhoods along the waterfront of Kuwait. This plan was part of Buchanan's master plan for Kuwait in 1972 (fig. 62). The stadium and its surrounding landscape would have acted as a link between the Kuwait University campus, the zoo, and other recreational areas. The site of the KSC was proposed after careful consideration of its relationship with Kuwait International Airport (awarded to Tange) and to the proposed location for the Kuwait National Assembly (KNA) and Kuwait National Museum (KNM). As shown on a map produced by Franco Albini and other APC members, those projects were meant to connect in one way or another, forming an imaginary triangle over all Kuwait City (fig. 61).

### **Analysis of Submitted Proposals**

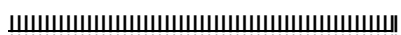
The APC report states that all submitted designs could potentially work successfully, and for this reason the committee used the brief requirements as criteria for evaluation.

Nervi designed a geodesic dome to cover the stadium along with some of the surrounding landscape. It would have been the largest dome constructed and therefore gave his proposal an experimental function.<sup>258</sup> Both Nervi's and Candela's design demonstrated a deep knowledge of reinforced concrete. Candela proposed a covering of a concrete (shell) dome structure, but since light tensile structures provided a less expensive solution, Tange and Otto's structure satisfied the budget constraints imposed by the competition

Nervi's proposal had two sections; one for shows and sports events, and the other for a gymnasium and training center with a barycentric parking area in relation to the two parts. A large freestanding dome, about 300 meters in diameter, would have covered the main stadium, which assisted weather control with special glazing and mechanical air-conditioning all year round (fig. 63 and 64). Nervi's interest in the geometry of barycenters is similar to Utzon's axial design and Écochard's design in the quadrant form (fig. 31, 56, 66, and 133). Every movement including cars and pedestrians within and around the stadium complex was well calculated in Nervi's proposal. For example, his proposal guides the public from the car park area through pedestrian walkways to the stadium,

...the public comes into a large area that leads on to both the bar-restaurant and the passages that permit an orderly flow to the ramp that leads to the vomitories.

In fact, these passages are located at those points of the stadium where visibility is poor, in order to avoid



<sup>258</sup> Avermaete and Casciato explain the experimental role of European architects working in postcolonial states. See Avermaete et al., *Casablanca Chandigarh*.

dangerous crowding [sic].<sup>259</sup>

Nervi's gigantic hemispherical glass dome would have been the largest in the world at that time. Marisela Mendoza and Manuel Cresciani explained that "the transparent dome for the Kuwait Sports Centre ... still strikes for the audacity of the solution: a 256 meters large hemispherical dome."<sup>260</sup> It would have been the largest dome ever constructed and was therefore experimental, to say the least.<sup>261</sup> Although the dome proposed by Nervi may seem a daring and rigid design, his proposal also allowed for great flexibility; almost every element of his design was independent of others. For example, the scheme included mobile stands, foldable bleachers for the "Sports Palace," and the self-supporting dome. The flexibility of the design would have mitigated any financial restrictions.<sup>262</sup>

Félix Candela's proposal demonstrated the architect's mastery of the thin concrete structure. The overall layout of the sports complex followed the "stems and webs" system,<sup>263</sup> and the entire complex was surrounded by a rampart of parking spaces (fig. 68 and 70). Candela's proposal was an organic yet controlled layout to meet the



<sup>259</sup> Studio Nervi's Kuwait Sports Centre: Architectural Report, February 1969. 4. Pier Luigi Nervi's archive in the Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo (MAXXI), Rome.

<sup>260</sup> Marisela Mendoza and Manuel Cresciani, "Pier Luigi Nervi, Félix Candela and the Kuwait Sports Centre Competition in 1968," *Journal of the International Association for Shell and Spatial Structures*. 54, Nos 2 & 3 (2013), n. 176 & 176. 205.

<sup>261</sup> For more information on European architects working in the Middle East and the experimental role their architecture played, see Avermaete et al., *Casablanca Chandigarh*.

<sup>262</sup> Since the architectural elements are independent of one another within the entire complex, the project could have been constructed in stages and which would have helped with budget constraints.

<sup>263</sup> For more information on the stems and webs method, see Tom Avermaete. "A Different Way of Analysing, Understanding and Conceiving the City in the Work of Candilis-Josic-Woods,". An essay presented in the conference "Team 10 - between Modernity and the Everyday" organized by the Faculty of Architecture TU Delft, June 5-6, 2003. Paper accessed online: [http://www.team10online.org/research/studies\\_and\\_papers.html#delft2](http://www.team10online.org/research/studies_and_papers.html#delft2). See also Christopher Alexander, "A City is not a Tree," reprinted in *Design* (London, Council of Industrial Design, 1966). No. 206.



requirements of the competition brief. According to Mendoza and Cresciani, “the project failed to respond holistically to the larger urban context and the city’s future development. Indeed Tange and Otto’s proposal responded far more successfully in this respect.”<sup>264</sup> Morgan, Lloyd, and Jones’ proposal has similar urban configuration to Candela approach, while their shading solution replicated their earlier dome design for the Houston Astrodome (fig. 67).<sup>265</sup>

The connections between geodesic domes, concrete shell structures, triodetics, and tensile structures go beyond a mere coincidence in this competition. During the two world wars, the technological engineering of these structures received explosive attention, and during the postwar period many of those “light” structures became popular through their implementation in various postcolonial nations. All the architects and/or engineers who worked on these structures had experienced war in one way or another; Candela, Otto, Nervi, and even Tange developed the science behind these structures during wartime, and allowed their knowledge to be part of postwar modernism.

Apart from Tange and Otto’s proposal, all other participants in the competition provided schemes to cover one or two arenas with a dome. What makes this an important aspect is that Otto, along with Tange and Arup, provided proposals for a monolithic dome for the Arctic City, a proposal that Otto had been working on since the early 1950s (fig. 65).

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<sup>264</sup> Mendoza and Cresciani, “Pier Luigi Nervi, Félix Candela and the Kuwait Sports Centre Competition in 1968,” 204.

<sup>265</sup> Mendoza and Cresciani, “Pier Luigi Nervi, Félix Candela and the Kuwait Sports Centre Competition in 1968”. It is said that Roy Hofheinz conceived the idea for the dome from the *velarium* of the Roman Coliseum. I expand on this idea and its relevance on page 144.



helped governments to construct their nations. These buildings include Kurashiki City Hall (1960), the Supreme Court of Pakistan (1965), and the monumental center of the Federal Capital of Nigeria (1982). Tange had a strong connection with the government of Kuwait, as well as other Middle Eastern states, as he had been commissioned to design the Kuwaiti Embassy in Tokyo (1970) and Kuwait International Airport (1979).

Kenzo Tange was a member of CIAM, produced many influential projects and was an important figure in the establishment of structuralism and metabolism, most clearly through his Tokyo Bay plan. Prior to his participation in KSC, Tange designed the Yoyogi National Gymnasium (1964), a project that qualified him for the competition. Postwar reconstruction shaped Tange as a hero; he had global connections and close ties with international associations such as the UN, which helped to spread his fame. Tange is listed, according to Philip Drew, as one of the second generation of modern architects, while Otto is one of the core members of the third generation.<sup>267</sup> Both Tange and Leslie Martin were CIAM members the 1950s,<sup>268</sup> and it is probable that it was Martin introduced/ recommended Tange to the Kuwaiti government and the one behind the many commissions Tange received in the oil-rich Arab states.

Frei Otto worked on more diverse projects, and is better known for his collaboration with other architects as a structural engineer with architectural mastery that complemented the work of his partners, who excelled in planning organization and space configuration. Born in 1925 to a family of sculptors, he was therefore “at first apprenticed

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<sup>267</sup> Drew, *Third Generation*, 32.

<sup>268</sup> Eric Mumford. *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928-1960*. (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2000), 257.

as a stonemason.”<sup>269</sup> After serving as a pilot in World War II he began his architectural training at the Berlin Technical University in 1948. Some of his early works include the bandstand shelter, Kassel (1955), open-air Dance Pavilion at the Federal Garden Exhibition, Cologne (1957), and a group of tent pavilions at the International Horticultural Exhibition, Hamburg (1963).

In his book *Occupying and Connecting*, Otto explains relationships, connections, nets, and the shortest distances between physical points and nodes, as well as creating borders and occupation areas inspired by examples found in nature. His book demonstrates Otto’s interest in and knowledge of urban networks, transportation, communication, and navigation among other elements that are part of creating modern urban fabrics. Otto’s great contribution to the development of lightweight and tensile structures follows the work of the earlier Russian engineer, Vladimir Shukhov. Although Otto’s structures are usually known for their lightness and environmentalist techniques, they require heavy foundational work as a firm basis, in various ground layers.

### **Tent, Climatic Control, and Axis**

Kenzo Tange and Frei Otto opened their project report by explaining:

From a historical point of view, a sports stadium has been and will be an important monument that symbolizes the vital force and spiritual energy of a nation. We deeply feel that it is our honor and pleasure to be able to participate in such a significant project as Kuwait Sports Center.<sup>270</sup>

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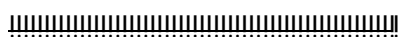
<sup>269</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>270</sup> Kenzo Tange and Urtec and Frei Otto, “Report on Sport Center Project: Kuwait, February 1969.” Félix Candela Archive, Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York City, 1.

According to the APC, Tange and Otto won the competition because of their smart solution for the entire site, surrounding landscape, and a creative form as monument for Kuwait, all within a reasonable budget. The other invited architects, particularly Nervi and Candela, were extremely discontent with the way the competition unfolded, and accused the judges of lacking courtesy and professionalism.<sup>271</sup>

Both Tange and Otto are known to this day for their ability to combine mastery of urban design and light structural innovation. Tange was a leader in architectural and urban aspects, while Otto offered engineering knowledge and architectural sensitivity in creating tensile coverings.

Tange and Otto reported that the new Sports Center included various important aspects of urban planning; the stadium would have created a major axis that highlights an important location at its intersection and guided the branching-out of new networks, including neighborhoods, roads, and connections between the old center of Kuwait and new industrial areas. The sports center, as the “oasis”, had four sides, each connected to new up-and-coming major architectural and landscape works such as the Botanical Gardens, the zoo, the university, and the international fairground (exhibition halls). The axis was also a support and a form of defense for the city, it “would become the civic spine supporting the urban life in Kuwait developing along the sea coast.”<sup>272</sup> In their report, Tange and Otto focused on the oasis, the axis, and the tree as three configurational concepts guiding their design to “shelter” sporting competitions. The three elements are



<sup>271</sup> For more information see Mendoza and Cresciani, 2013.

<sup>272</sup> Tange et al., “Report on Sport Center Project.” 4.





gargantuan size demands visibility as much as it puts athletes or players under the spotlight and therefore the expectations of the cheering crowds. When the field is empty the panoptic round seating exposes the spectators to each other, and such visibility is sometimes demanding of social interaction, unification, and normalization.<sup>278</sup> Tange and Otto explained that “[i]n considering the climatic factors we have two goals. Firstly to create satisfactory conditions for playing and viewing sport, and secondly to create satisfactory conditions conducive to social intercourse and personal recreation [sic].”<sup>279</sup> Recreational facilities, particularly those involving competitive sports, are a major factor in nation building and the solidification of social relationships between the individuals of a nation. Stadiums and the games they house allow the public to see themselves as part of one team.

Exposure is also about clarity and security apparatus, but as stadiums grew bigger, denser and more extravagantly complex, technology allowed for a lighter tensile fabric with a protective coating layer of Teflon. Polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE), or Teflon, acts as an insulating coat and a diffuser that reflects heat radiation and assists in spreading electromagnetic waves. Teflon could be applied to any material, giving it new qualities. Teflon is a polymer discovered by accident during the first half of the twentieth century and was first used for military purposes, but then found other uses as a coating material for non-stick pans, inter alia. The invention assisted in the development of the use of fabric as a durable building material and tensile structures, which accelerated Otto’s fame. Teflon, as coating element, endows materials such as fabric with heat insulating abilities,

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<sup>278</sup> Michel Foucault explained how the circular configuration of spectator seats in stadiums produces a modern form of public control. For more information see Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.

<sup>279</sup> Tange et al., “Report on Sport Center Project,” 14.





off its structure, and is therefore able to expand through its global capitalist objectives. It is important, however, to remind the reader of an important observation in Eisenman's article:

There is paranoia among white fundamentalists in the United States that the "world" is trying to take over their government, while the paranoia in the rest of the world is just the reverse. This double paranoia creates difference that is not between West and East, but a difference over the discourse of the international.<sup>281</sup>

### **Cancelation of the Project**

Unfortunately the KSC project did not pass the schematic stage; it was put on hold for several years and eventually cancelled. No reason was officially published, but a letter sent from Antonio Nervi, on behalf of Studio Nervi, informed Ahmed Duaij, a Planning Board member, that Studio Nervi were still interested in continuing their work on the stadium, since they had been informed about the hold placed on Tange's winning proposal, and assumed it was Tange's own decision. Duaij replied that the entire project was suspended until further notice. I argue that the suspension of the project was due to political unrest in the Middle East during the 1970s: the animosity between the potential participating nations in the Olympics, which in a way anticipated the Munich massacre in 1972, was the main reason for its suspension. The increase in violence in the Middle East during the 1970s, and the oil crisis of 1973, explain why not only the stadium project was suspended, but every other large project in Kuwait. Records show that Félix Candela, Pier Luigi Nervi, Kenzo Tange, Jørn Utzon, Alison and Peter Smithson and other foreign architects participating in the competitions and the construction of postcolonial Kuwait

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<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

architecture had no communication with the Kuwaiti government until around 1976. The archives of those architects also all included books and articles published during the 1970s that discussed the political situation in the Middle East. For example, Nervi's archive includes books titled *The Arab-Israeli Dispute* and *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: Cause and Effect*. The archive of Félix Candela included an article by Paul Erdman titled "The Oil War of 1976: How the Shah Won the World," and Jørn Utzon's archive had an issue of *The Middle East* with the headline "Can the Arabs Go to War?".

### **Other Stadiums**

The cancelation of the project did not stop the construction of alternative stadiums in Kuwait. Three stadiums were constructed between 1970 and 1977 under the supervision of the Ministry of Public Works and designed by Iraq Consult (IQC). Iraq Consult, introduced in the previous chapter, is an Iraqi architectural firm founded by Rifat Chadirji. In the case of these three stadiums it was Maath Alousi, a partner in the firm who graduated from the Architectural Association, (Department of Tropical Architecture), who was appointed as the lead architect for the project. The three stadiums are smaller in size, but have many facilities that would qualify them as multipurpose stadiums. Constructed as prototypes, these stadiums include concrete seating stands with similar configuration to those proposed by Pier Luigi Nervi for the KSC (fig. 78). Not a lot of secondary literature exists on these stadiums and for this reason in the following section I include an analysis of Tange's Yoyogi National Gymnasium and Otto's Munich Olympic Stadium (in association with Gunther Behnisch) to better understand the KSC project.

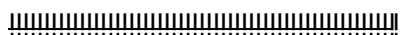
Andrew Kroll explains that Tange’s design is a hybrid of “western modernist aesthetics and traditional Japanese architecture.” The KSC merits a similar description, albeit discussed as resembling an Arab tent. Kroll’s article has an orientalist view.

Tange’s Yoyogi National Gymnasium was constructed to host the summer Olympics Games in 1964 (fig. 77).<sup>282</sup> The structure was designed in the same way the Kuwaiti stadium was supposed to have been, as a light tensile structure that resembles a tent, but in the case of the Japanese sports hall it was argued that it resembled a pagoda. A pagoda is important not only because it alludes to the importance of nationalism as a religion but because it is essentially a place to preserve valuable things. Tange and Otto proposed a design inspired by an “oasis” as they understood it to be a symbol of safety, refuge, and survival to Bedouin culture.

It is also useful to look at the structure designed by Otto for the Munich Olympic stadium. One reason for this is because of the similar technology he used to design its Kuwaiti counterpart, and a second is because of its politics, that in many ways reflect the issues that the KSC would have faced had it been constructed. The technology Otto implemented in the tensile roofs of Munich is best described by Kroll:

The acrylic panels shimmer in the sunlight, reflecting the light, the color of the sky, and the surrounding landscape. When illuminated, the suspended membrane appears as a cloud formation swarming over the site.<sup>283</sup>

The analysis is connected to Utzon’s design for the KNA in the previous chapter. The *lightness* of the structure does not always refer to weight, as it also means shiny



<sup>282</sup> This year is also the date of its completion.

<sup>283</sup> Kroll, “AD Classics: Munich Olympic Stadium”.

surfaces of undulating waves with a strong connection to the landscape.<sup>284</sup> The transient concept is still evident in the proposed site; instead of a stadium, the urban intersection is today occupied by the Kuwait International Fairground that houses temporary exhibitions; usually with international themes. It is beside the National Guard Building, and the Armed Forces Hospital.

The only stadium with the grandiose scale proposed for the KSC in Kuwait is the Sheikh Jabir al-Ahmed Al-Sabah Stadium, which failed to pass major structural evaluation. Because of this the stadium stood idle for years as a national icon void of physical utility (fig. 79 and 80).<sup>285</sup> The structure reminded me of the grandiose statue of Sheikh Abdullah al-Salim, the sheikh who signed the independence treaty with the British Empire (fig. 81), as sculpted by the Kuwaiti artist Sami Mohammed, one of Kuwait's most active sculptors during the latter half of the twentieth century. The sheikh's statue was sculpted in the early 1970s, but was never revealed to the public.<sup>286</sup> In the same year as the sculpture's construction, *AD* magazine published an article with a cover page showing a drawing inspired by Tange and Otto's Kuwaiti stadium (fig. 82). The image is of a seductive belly dancer, another suggestion of what the Middle East has to offer to the world. The *AD* cover image is reminiscent of Édouard Manet's *Olympia*, and its historical relationship to Titian's *Venus of Urbino* depicting the urban goddess of desire and a dog as the symbol of fidelity (fig. 83). The belly dancer on the *AD* cover is



<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> In June 2015 Motez Bishara published an online article on [cnn.com](http://edition.cnn.com/2015/06/09/football/kuwait-stadium-story/). The article describes and elucidates various aspects of the state, security, and integrity of the stadium. Motez Bishara, "Kuwait's Ghost Stadium Prepares to Breathe New Life." *CNN*. June 9, 2015. <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/06/09/football/kuwait-stadium-story/> accessed December 9, 2015.

<sup>286</sup> Zahra Ahmed Ali, *Sami Mohammad and the Semiotics of Abstraction: Kuwaiti Folk Art As Muse* (al-Mansouria, Kuwait: Centre for Research and Studies on Kuwait, 2004).

certainly a sexually independent woman, the tensile net of Otto's design protects her body and her waist and her forehead is crowned by what seems to be a sun-disk. A solar deity indeed; the stadium's tensile roofs would have reflected the sunrays, glowing as a cloud shading the greenery and the oasis underneath.

### **Games as *Tarweeh*: Recreation of the Soul**

*Tarweeh*, which translates as recreation or entertainment, is a word that was often used during the 1970s in local Kuwaiti and regional newspapers. *Al-rohaneya*, which means spirituality, shares the same root *Roh* (spirit or soul). This explains how piety is another form of recreation. In the 1970s 'marafeq at'tarweh' (recreational facilities) became the focus of the Kuwaiti government and therefore recreational architecture became part of the development plans during this period in order to assist with public assimilation. Recreation and entertainment are important for nation building; albeit a form of distraction, they remain important elements that contribute to the support of the public throughout the course of their hectic lives. Entertainment is an important aspect of the education and training of malleable youngsters. Along with the control, conditioning, and integration of a nation, it can be seen in two ways; a gentle way to unite the public or a harsh way to train youth in the techniques of defensive pride.

The recreational role of architecture became part of modernity and increased, particularly during the twentieth century with the outbreak of two world wars. Living, working, recreation, and circulation were the four bases of Le Corbusier's Athens Charter, and therefore the postwar period, including modernization of the postcolonial nations, was highly influenced by recreation as a major part of urban planning and architecture;

entertainment occupied a strategic position in modern cities as it was inspired by ancient civilizations such as Rome and Greece with their amphitheatres, stadiums, geometries and seating arrangements.<sup>287</sup>

The sport city would have provided leisure activities for youngsters in a healthy environment. The discovery of oil in Kuwait allowed for a sudden increase of wealth and provided the population with high income, which also introduced local citizens to the shortcomings of modernity. A number of articles published during the 1960s and 1970s discussed the negative impact of free time; boredom is a void that could produce obstacles in the efforts to construct a nation.<sup>288</sup> Those articles discussed such issues, as well as recommending and promoting activities to assist people to take advantage of their spare time. Recreational activities are vital to modern life, and in the case of Kuwait they became part of the its nationalist agenda that started in the 1960s, along with constructing solid defensive systems, security, educational facilities, and a governing system that allows the public to be part of it. Another and earlier major project with a similar agenda to that of the KSC, is the development of Kuwait's waterfront in 1961.

### **Waterfront Development Competition: a Recreational Project**

As discussed above, one of the important features of the KSC is how it strongly connects various projects together and assists in weaving the urban fabric and its expansion. In addition to the knitting of the urban fabric and its security, the KSC also acts as an important element in constructing a healthy nation through recreational utilities.

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<sup>287</sup> As explained in the previous chapter, the hemicycle seating arrangement promotes agreement.

<sup>288</sup> During my archival research into local Kuwaiti newspapers and magazines I noticed the large number of articles talking about *tarfeeh* (entertainment), *tarweeh* (recreation), and *seyaha* (tourism). Most of those articles were published during the 1970s. Al-Qabas Newspaper Archives.

It thus has a similar function to one of the first competitions in Kuwait during its nation-building period – the Waterfront Development competition. The development of the coastline of Kuwait had two parts: the first occurred between 1961 and 1977 (fig. 84, 86, and 87) and included the engineering and architectural work needed to improve the coastal defensive border, which also assists in connecting it to rest of the city; the second occurred between 1978 and 1990 (fig. 85 and 88), and included the construction of its surface to include public access to the waterfront along with recreational utilities and the development of its landscape architecture.

Five architectural firms were invited to participate in the closed competition of the early 1960s, four British firms and one Canadian firm, which was the winner of the competition. The Department of Public Works clarified the importance of five points:

1. The long-range integration and unification of the waterfront development with the rest of the city.
2. The integration of the proposed waterfront circulation with the existing green belt and ring road system of the city.
3. The possibility of blending the new with the old, with the aim of perpetuating a link with the traditional and historical characteristics of the city.
4. The unity of the project and the dispositional integration of its separate parts.



5. The imagination, creativity, flair, and originality displayed in the submitted design to be commensurate with the resources, amenities, and civic pride of the city.<sup>289</sup>

The weaving of the old and new was a crucial part of developing a modern nation attached to its own roots. The waterfront development project strived to establish an effective protective border as foundational structure furnished with recreational facilities in order to complete its role as a nationalist project.

The competition brief produced through the Ministry asked the participating firms to provide their waterfront development scheme with:

1. Construction of the essential sea walls. [Defense]
2. Reconstruction in a new location of the existing small craft harbor. [Preservation]
3. Construction of new boat basin. [Updated construction technology]
4. Reclamation of land to allow for future construction of waterfront facilities such as cafés, restaurants, bathing space and possibly a hotel. [Recreational facilities /public access]
5. Construction of a divided dual-carriageway boulevard. [Flow]
6. Inclusion of any other improvements and amenities suggested as desirable. [Creative input]

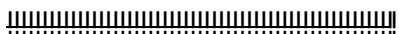
Not only for its recreational importance but also for its defensive role as a nation-building project, the Waterfront Development project was initiated, as Saba Shiber

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<sup>289</sup> Shiber, *The Kuwait Urbanization*, 206.

explained, “by the gradual removal of visual obstructions to the water.”<sup>290</sup> In 1973 Cedric Price experimented with what he called an inflatable waterwall in Abu Dhabi; a breakwater structure.<sup>291</sup> The project shares the history Such structures are usually defensive, protective structures that can be used for anchorage, ports, and marinas along with cafés, restaurants, hotels, promenades, and other entertainment facilities.

Shiber’s review of the five proposals for Kuwait demonstrates his interest in a grand and expansive scheme that went beyond the original proposal and sought to control the whole waterfront and weave it into the city’s ring roads. Shiber suggested that the waterfront should contain two roads, a vehicular road and a promenade, to connect with the ring road of the city and create a full (protective) circle around the old city of Kuwait.<sup>292</sup> A few years later the APC invited four architectural firms to propose a solution to develop the old city, and the proposals all involved an intelligent labyrinth form or a democratic closed knitted fabric. Chapter V starts with those proposals. The old coastal town today is a modernized, controlled, quasi-democratic urban layout that provides public access to beaches and remains defended and preserved.



<sup>290</sup> Ibid, 205. Inter-visibility was one of the main reasons behind Alison and Peter Smithson’s focus on creating a grid with a particular angle between the existing mosques to construct their mat-building in old Kuwait City. See Chapter V for more information.

<sup>291</sup> The project must have been somehow connected to Graham Steven’s Desert Cloud in Kuwait since both were experiments of inflatable structures, conducted in the same region, and around the same time (early 1970s during a peak of political unrest in the Middle East). Overview of Cedric Price Archive at the Canadian Center for Architecture (CCA) <http://www.cca.qc.ca/en/collection/907-cedric-price-designs-for-inflatable-architecture-and-air>, accessed July 22, 2015.

<sup>292</sup> Shiber, *The Kuwait Urbanization*, 203-218.

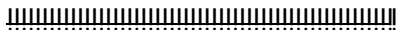
## Beach Clubs, Green Islands, and Residential Areas

After the cancelation of the KSC competition, and throughout the 1970s, the Kuwaiti government's focus on recreational facilities increased, and one of the main related projects was the waterfront development. In late 1977, Sasaki Associates, an American landscape firm, and Ghazi Sultan, a Kuwaiti architect, formed a team with the Kuwait Engineers Office (KEO) to participate in the second development phase of the waterfront development project, and their scheme was different from all previous ones.

Brian Taylor commented that the 1978 design

insisted upon recreational and cultural functions, rather than housing or commerce, as the means for giving the coastline beyond the highway back to the people. While acknowledging the primacy of the car as the preferred means of transportation, and hence providing adequate, easily accessible parking, the planners were also concerned that arrival on foot, on bicycle, by public transport and even boat should be possible. Moreover, the final version of the site plan incorporated twelve shoreline zones for development as a response to the needs of adjacent inland neighbourhoods and physical potential of each of the sites.<sup>293</sup>

The design encompassed a number of sports and beach clubs constructed along the Grand Corniche. Sultan explains that they had to create their own brief for the entire 12 km of waterfront; in other words they had to create the “user” by creating the function. The aim was to “to draw up a detailed brief for non-existent users; we had to imagine, forecast, and predict what Kuwait would be like in the 1990s.”<sup>294</sup> One of the most famous reclaimed lands is the Green Island, the most striking of all projects along Kuwait's



<sup>293</sup> Brian Brace Taylor, “Kuwait City Waterfront Development,” In *Mimar 34: Architecture in Development*, ed. Hasan-Uddin Khan (London: Concept Media, 1990), 14.

<sup>294</sup> Ghazi Sultan quoted *ibid.*, 16.





and power over every aspect of the Olympic Games from selecting the host country to banning the participation of others.

Although never constructed due to the political unrest in the Middle East during the 1970s, the winning design of Kenzo Tange and Frei Otto demonstrates the importance of the project and its aim to construct a national icon with facilities that build national sentiments, produce self-disciplined citizens, and provided Kuwaitis with a recreational outlet. The advanced tent-like structure with its up-to-date materials would have been a symbolic edifice of a progressive nation and would have provided a connection to the local culture of Kuwait. The KSC goes beyond an architectural function as it was meant to provide an urban connection that would guide the future expansion of Kuwait city.

All the submitted proposals for the KSC included an experimental structure, and as argued above, the organizers of the competition, along with the participating architects, saw the oil-rich land of Kuwait as a testing ground for their inventions. Since the 1970s the Arab emirates have provided an opportunity for foreign architects to see the construction of their creative designs.

Beside assisting in the building a symbolic image of an independent nation, stadiums along with other recreational projects such as the waterfront development provide the public with the services needed to disseminate a feeling of content that increases their dependency and loyalty to the state. Nation builders aim to provide citizens with the welfare needed to attain a secure community.

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## **Chapter V. The Future of the Old City**

## Introduction

After independence, local Kuwaitis (along with nationalists in other postcolonial states in a wider sense) were motivated to embrace their identity, culture, and other elements that made them visible internationally, as the only way to be legitimized after the decolonization missions mandated by the UN. The consultant of Kuwait's planning institutions during the 1960s shifted the focus from an overall planning strategy to fragments of the city with specific architectural projects with an urban scale. The aim is to produce a network of fragmented projects as nodes able to construct a seamless image of Kuwait's unique identity and mask any contradicting or blurry realities that may exist in the middle.

Four architectural groups were retained by the government of Kuwait to propose solutions for old Kuwait City by designing various architectural projects and the areas immediately surrounding them within the old Kuwait City. All of those architectural firms were members of Team X, and although each proposed a different design they shared similar concepts in trying to modernize a postcolonial state by weaving the vernacular so as to establish national sentiments. During the postwar era, the Team X concepts took an ethnographic turn that focused on cultural and social elements in architecture and urban design that made its members perfect for the job.<sup>299</sup> The proposals involved various local issues in Kuwait, but they also dismissed, misrepresented, or misunderstood others. They expressed many sides of orientalist thinking, and although

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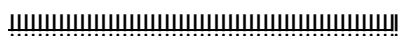
<sup>299</sup> Team X started with Aldo van Eyck, and Alison and Peter Smithson, among other architects, who were all born in the period between the two world wars and therefore belonged to what Philip Drew called the "Third Generation" of modernist architects.



they also demonstrated a benevolent attitude, some aspects of their designs suggested opposing intentions.

The plans to develop old Kuwait City did not include a solid list of requirements, and it was not clearly presented as a competition. Furthermore, none of those proposals was fully realized. Following the organization of the previous chapters, I will focus in this chapter on one proposal, namely the one submitted by Alison and Peter Smithson to design a mat-building since it encompasses most of the ideas in the other proposals.

As an urban building, the mat-building typology also provides a connection to the architecture discussed in the previous chapters. For example, the Smithsons' mat-building includes open plazas that are also found in Jørn Utzon's plan for the Kuwait National Assembly (KNA), Michel Écochard's Kuwait National Museum (KNM) complex, and Kenzo Tange and Frei Otto's "oasis" in their proposal for the Kuwait Sports Center (KSC). The Smithsons argued that mat-building plazas reflect political freedom, however, they did not mention that the plazas are designed so that they can be bounded, controlled, and monitored through a surrounding structure lifted up on *pilotis*, which is reminiscent of Bentham's Panopticon. The Smithsons also proposed color-coded towers that are reminiscent of London's White Tower – a symbol of royalty but also of oppression. The White Tower meets the Ivory (watch) Tower in Alison Smithson's "How to Recognize and Read Mat-buildings", as her text requires that readers must wear "protective eye-clothing" in order to understand its intellectual meaning.<sup>300</sup> A watchtower is important for



<sup>300</sup> Alison Smithson explained that she liked what Aldo van Eyck did not like, which is the "impenetrability of the white skin" expressed in the Free University as a sign of the mat-building. Alison Smithson, "How to Recognize and Read Mat-buildings: Mainstream Architecture as It Has Developed Towards the Mat-building," *Architectural Design* (September 1974), 574.

security but it also occupies a privileged position. Even when the Smithsons tried to engage with humble everyday objects in their mat-building for Kuwait, they misrepresented the local meaning of such objects. There are aspects of every culture that foreigners cannot easily comprehend unless they have lived the entire life of this culture.<sup>301</sup> Although the Smithsons explain the importance of a form as being relevant to its culture, they nonetheless tried to achieve a more neutral anti-monumental building that could easily be connected to a universal model at a time when nationalism was key to modernization in Kuwait. Finally, the transformation that Kuwait went through – from an indigenous (some may even say primitive) society to one of the wealthiest countries in the world, per capita – created new aspirations, problems, and a new culture, resulting in a new self-consciousness (and subconscious) that was not anticipated or addressed in their scheme.

## **Background**

After Kuwait’s independence, the firm of Colin Buchanan and Partners was hired to create a second master plan for Kuwait (1968). The plan followed the earlier plan of Minoprio, Spencely and Macfarlane, but it suggested an alternative growth pattern.<sup>302</sup> Buchanan, a British planner who worked extensively in the Middle East and spoke fluent Arabic, proposed a defensive growth plan that focused on the coastal borders of Kuwait, working with the APC under the supervision of the Planning Board to select satellite sites

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<sup>301</sup> Edward Said believed that one could not depend on any media or scholarship to understand Arab, Islamic, or any culture unless one had lived the life of that culture. This idea belongs to his Orientalism theories. Said, *Orientalism*.

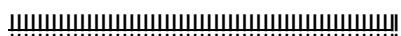
<sup>302</sup> See Al-Ragam, “Towards a Critique of an Architectural *Nahdha*”, and Buchanan and Partners. *Kuwait: Studies for National Physical Plan*.

(Kuwait International Airport and KSC) that would help tighten control over the entire city (fig. 61 and 62).

Hamad Hamdan, a member of the Planning Board, explained that a number of “architects of international reputation” had been retained by the government of Kuwait to design various projects. Amongst them were:

- Kenzo Tange
- George Candilis
- Arne Jacobsen
- Alison and Peter Smithson
- Banfi, Belgiojoso, Peressutti, and Rogers
- Reima and Raili Pietilä.<sup>303</sup>

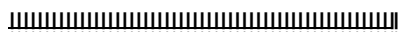
Those reputable architects had all worked on architectural projects that promoted modernity and freedom through geometrical forms, albeit well structured networks organized to act as self-disciplining architectural apparatuses, such as the Tange Tokyo Bay proposal, that implements main branches with temporary attached units encompassed by the bay. Similar techniques were provided by George Candilis, along with Shadrach Woods and Alexis Josic in their Free University (fig. 113) and the University of Toulouse-Le Mirail with the stems and web configurations that provided enclosed plazas or courtyards to secure a sort of freedom. Arne Jacobsen is best known for Bellevue Beach (Copenhagen) and its watchtowers; the architect also designed the



<sup>303</sup> Hamad Hamdan, letter sent to Studio Nervi to invite them to participate in the competition for the KNA building, dated March 31, 1971. Pier Luigi Nervi Archive at the Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo (MAXXI), Rome. A similar letter was sent to Franco Albini by Hamid Shuaib, received July 13, 1970. Franco Albini Archive, Milan.

Central Bank of Kuwait, along with fortified structures (fig. 40).<sup>304</sup> Alison and Peter Smithson's famous mat-building is inspired by *walled* cities, Persian carpets (essentially ornamented mats as maps – see fig. 93 and 132) that represented their secured gardens and their water systems. Gian Luigi Banfi, Ludovico Belgiojoso, Enrico Peressutti, and Ernesto Nathan Rogers (BBPR) were known for their *Torre Velasca* (Velasca Tower), which could easily be described as a citadel. Finally, Reima and Raili Pietilä, the Finnish architects who designed the important Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Seif Palace area in Kuwait, are known for their design of the Kaleva Church in Tampere, the tall concrete church that forces its omnipresence on the site. Écochard, who was also involved in the modernization of Kuwait as discussed in Chapter II, has contributed to the progression of various Least Developed Countries (LDC) since the 1930s, using grids as his planning instrument. Écochard focused on the integration of existing city plans and future expansion, with new neighborhoods and strategic locations for major projects, and created a “regular grid that functions as an underlying basis for the planning of large parts of the city.”<sup>305</sup>

The three projects investigated in the previous chapters are all classified as “major projects” and therefore they all hold important functions and are in strategic locations. By the end of the 1960s the government of Kuwait and its consultants realized that the need to focus on the reconstruction of several sites in the demolished area of old Kuwait city, along with the major projects, necessitated an overall plan to reknit the disappearing vernacular sections with the postcolonial architecture (fig. 1, 2, and 3). This caused the government of Kuwait to seek assistance in finding a solution that would allow the city,



<sup>304</sup> Dana Aljouder, “Monologues with Bureaucracy,” in *Acquiring Modernity*. ed. Noura Alsager (Kuwait: National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, 2014), 10-12.

<sup>305</sup> Avermaete, “Framing the Afropolis,” 97.



together to hire capable architects to design structures, and a new urban plan inspired by the vernacular architecture and urban fabric that both reflected the new status of Kuwait as an independent state, and empowered the unification of the Kuwaiti public as one nation. In other words, nostalgia was not a natural reaction at this point, but an intentionally triggered emotion that authors such as Shiber encouraged within the Kuwaiti public in order to “modernize” the locals according to a specific modernizing ideology popular among postwar architects in general, and Team X members in particular, who focused on the importance of vernacular architecture.<sup>309</sup> The following is an overview of the various proposed projects.

### **1 - BBPR (Souk)**

BBPR’s idea was demonstrated through what they called the “connecting framework,” which was designed specifically to bring the old town back together and to “reconstruct an equilibrium between spaces and volumes of the city” by “re-dimensioning the empty spaces [and] focusing on connecting the pieces.” Although the connecting framework as demonstrated in their plan (fig. 96) was to occupy the area that connects the streets that converge at the Seif Palace and the colonial Harold Dickson’s house, it rarely referenced them as important nodes. A diagram can be created using their site plan that shows how the connecting framework, while stitching the city back together, diffuses the direct link to the palace, while creating many new roads that lead to places other than the center of power.

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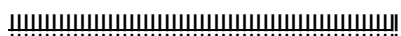
<sup>309</sup> See for example Drew, *Third Generation*.

Although BBPR referenced Kevin Lynch<sup>310</sup> in their design of the city, the only element they took from him was the concept of landmarks. BBPR suggested that a monument (fig. 97) should be an essential part of their concept of the new city. This monument was to have a symmetrical shape that took the circle and square as its main elements. This recalls the Enlightenment and Humanist movements, which took symmetry, circles and squares as their primary elements. Monumental symmetry creates a powerful authority, architecture that has followed grandiose symmetrical forms has existed since ancient times and all reflects a dominating power over the public.<sup>311</sup>

BBPR's architectural proposal focused on the *souk* area, and tried to mimic the language of old bazaars found in vernacular Arab and Islamic cities. The vernacular elements are conserved while the development is connected through staircases, ramps and elevators. Parking structures are used as buffers to allow for a more pedestrian friendly environment (fig. 98 and 99).

## 2 - Candilis, Josic, and Woods (Housing)

A desire to bring coherence to the city “and to ‘propose treatment’ for each ‘sick’ aspect of the city, including the existing circulation system, the distribution of urban functions, and their relation to one another”<sup>312</sup> Josic, Candilis, and Woods wanted to decentralize the cultural activities and spread them along a central spine that runs parallel



<sup>310</sup> Kevin Lynch, *Image of the City* (Cambridge: Technology Press, 1960).

<sup>311</sup> Rudolf Wittkower, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism* (London: Academy Editions, 1988): 16-22.

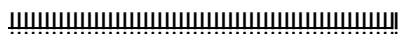
<sup>312</sup> Al-Ragam, *Towards a Critique of an Architectural Nahdha*, 186.

to the coastal line (east-west. The architects proposed residential units to be organized along stems extending perpendicularly from the main spine (north-south).<sup>313</sup>

George Candilis provided Kuwait with a proposal focused on a housing study in the area within old Kuwait City. The study describes “the permanent and valuable elements of the social and climatic conditions of KUWAIT in relationship to the evolving and transforming modern world, in an attempt to create housing which is more comfortable and conforming to the real conditions of today [sic].” Similar to his work in Morocco under French rule, through ATBAT-Afrique, the housing proposal was inspired by Arab courtyard houses, and therefore the housing proposals for Morocco have various functional and formal similarities to the Kuwaiti housing proposal (fig. 100, 101, and 102). Candilis and Woods worked together in Morocco and therefore had a close relationship with the work of Michel Écochard and Le Corbusier.<sup>314</sup>

### **3 - Reima and Raili Pietilä (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)**

Like the other three firms, Reima and Raili Pietilä argued for a new form that included design elements that were visually comprehensible. This was another way to understand foreign culture and to look at it as an alien model. Reima and Raili Pietilä’s proposal was to change the older radial grid drastically and to undo the 1952 plan, thereby creating two major veins defined mainly by clusters of aligned buildings.



<sup>313</sup> Al-Ragam, “Towards a Critique of an Architectural *Nahdha*,”

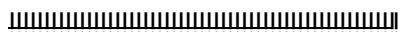
<sup>314</sup> For more information see Tom Avermaete, ed. *Another Modern: The Post-war Architecture and Urbanism of Candilis-Josic-Woods* (Rotterdam: NAI, 2005.); Zeynep Çelik, “Le Corbusier, Orientalism, Colonialism,” *Assemblage* 17 (April, 1992): 58-76.



In their proposal, the architectural unit, rather than the roads or any other infrastructural element, was the defining object of the urban pattern. Pietilä made sure to draw each unit next to the other intact, in order to create a new pattern based on architectural scale. The Finnish couple drew the whole city as the architectural plan of a building; they reproduced *poché* illustrations of the city marked the “pedestrian movement fields” and “pedestrian movement channels,” marking buildings as boundaries. This too was a return to the human subject and human anatomy: Reima and Raili Pietilä’s drawings illustrate arteries attached to the human lungs (fig 103). The concept was popular amongst Team X members and the third-generation architects.<sup>315</sup>

The couple was commissioned by the APC to design the Ministry of Exterior Affairs, Council of Ministries, and the extension to the existing Seif Palace. Their design followed the style and materiality of the palace and unified the entire complex. The project consisted of three blocks connected through courtyards and bridges. The Pietiläs used water features, covered with tiles in selected colors in their design for the courtyards for the sake of climate control; those tiles were also used in many connecting corridors (fig 22).<sup>316</sup> Janice Randal analyzes the forms and functions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ façade by explaining that the:

[r]ecesses in the staggered exterior walls shield the windows from the hot sun and it is significant to note the contemporary design approach of certain T-shaped window openings. Also functional in climatic sun protection are the arcades and galleries of the sand-lime brick elevations. The shapes and shadows of these elements suggest a poetic



<sup>315</sup> Drew, *Third Generation*.

<sup>316</sup> Janice Randall, “Sief Palace Area Buildings,” in *Mimar 16: Architecture in Development*, ed. Hasan-Uddin Khan (Singapore: Concept Media, 1985), 28-35.



distinctly Arabic and “not a mere modification of what is fashionable in America, Europe, or Europeanized North Africa.”<sup>320</sup> This statement clearly shows how the Smithsons viewed this as a phase of postcolonial Kuwait, and saw Kuwait City as a new sovereign city. The mat-building typology is a low-rise structure that spreads out infinitely and grants a view of the city with no hierarchy between the government and the other districts of the city. The Smithsons focused on designing the Ministries Complex (fig. 105 and 110) as a mat-building and this will be discussed in length through their proposal for the Kuwaiti mat-building later in this chapter.

Although all four projects created models that championed equality, liberation, and a return to the human subject, they also led to a new form of domination and colonization. Even after its independence, Kuwait was still *dependent* on European expertise. The government asked and paid for it in order to find a solution for its own culture, in the manner of master and disciple, and as outlined by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*, who noted that the teacher holds power and domination over their students.<sup>321</sup> Furthermore, in each of the four projects there were aspects of domination and a pure orientalist discourse. For instance, while trying their best to achieve a unique form that celebrated Kuwait’s independence, the Smithsons succumbed to clichés about what constitutes *Arabness*. The first of these is their proposal for revitalizing the green

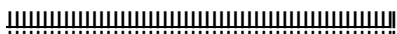


<sup>320</sup> Alison and Peter Smithson, “Kuwait: the Smithson’s Scheme,” *Architectural Review* 931 (1974): 183.

<sup>321</sup> In “Docile Bodies” Foucault explained the relationship between the master and his student in the Gobelins manufacture as a “relationship of dependence on the master that is both individual and total ... it is an overall exchange between the master who must give his knowledge and the apprentice who must offer his service, his assistance and often some payment.” Michel Foucault. “Docile Bodies,” in *Discipline and Punish*, 156.

belt (fig. 106 and 107), which was derived mainly from Persian gardens and motifs,<sup>322</sup> and bore no relation to the Arab or Bedouin culture to which Kuwait belongs. Their other misconception was the Orangerie Maidan (fig. 108), which was intended as an open plaza for national celebration and illustrated with Mamluk<sup>323</sup> figures, which also have no history in Kuwait.<sup>324</sup>

Reima and Raili Pietilä proposed a series of hotels on the coastline in order to encourage tourism. Their sculptural form marked a new era, unconnected to the past. From their sketch one can see a form alien to the local character yet attractive for global tourism. Reima and Raili Pietilä viewed Kuwait as the exotic culture of the Other, either by over-romanticizing with their extensive use of camel figures, as seen in Chapter III (fig. 21 and 22), or by creating grandiose (mushroom) structures for the coastline of Kuwait (fig. 109). In their report on Kuwait, BBPR describe their idea of a connecting framework that would “reconnect those structures (souk, commercial areas, etc.) already existent that were to be preserved. Efforts were made to establish landmarks (mosques and their *bell-towers*) to avoid rectilinear ways that are too long, to give a sequence of importance to the different parts, road widening and sheltered squares have been



<sup>322</sup> Peter Christensen, “Seven Projects by Peter and Alison Smithson,” April 8, 2010 <http://www.moma.org/explore/multimedia/audios/11/2117>, accessed March 20, 2014.

<sup>323</sup> Mamluks were slave soldiers and were at one point the most powerful military force in the world. They existed from the ninth through nineteenth centuries in various Muslim societies, mainly in Egypt, Iraq, and India, but were never present in Kuwait. For more information, see James Waterson, *The Knights of Islam: The Wars of the Mamluks* (London: Greenhill Books, 2007).

<sup>324</sup> Peter Hewitt Christensen, “The ‘Inventive Jump’: Curiosity, Culture and Islamicate Form in the Works of Peter and Alison Smithson.” *International Journal of Islamic Architecture*, 3, No. 1 (January, 2014).

introduced.”<sup>325</sup> Even on the level of well known religious typology, it seems the Italian firm failed to recognize that mosques do not have bell-towers.

On the other hand, it is more probable that those mistakes were intentional; because they signal another function for the forms the architects created. For example, minarets and bell-towers indeed have the same control function in reminding the public of the presence of higher authority; they remind the believing public of the all-hearing and all-watching God. The Smithsons’ interest in Persian gardens and orangeries reflects the functions of conservation, fortification, precise planning, and weather control using advanced knowledge, which also allows authorities to control public access.

Several documents and drawings found in the Fondazione Franco Albini clarify the APC’s focus on an architectural scale positioned between city planning and architecture. The planning of Kuwait’s ring road could not have been optimized without the architecture positioned in selected sites.<sup>326</sup> Those sites or, as many documents referred to them, “action areas”, are the location of the most nationally secure buildings such as the KNM, KNA, and KSC, and various other important buildings such as Kuwait Central Bank, the Kuwait Ministries Complex, and Kuwait Towers, which all connect through the Waterfront Development project. A map preserved in Franco Albini’s archive demonstrates a strategic selection of sites for each national project (fig. 61, 62, 94, and 95). Only by looking at them as a “cluster” could the importance be understood, of not only the various sites and the architecture built on them, but the important trigonometry



<sup>325</sup> Gian Banfi, Ludovico Belgiojoso, Enrico Peressutti, and Ernesto Rogers (BBPR), *Architectural Report for the Future Development of Old Kuwait City project*, The Archives of Franco Albini, Milan (1969): 4.1.

<sup>326</sup> See the waterfront development section in Chapter IV.

that is created by connecting that which produces controlled spaces created in-between, or as Alison and Peter Smithson called it, “charged voids.” Charged voids (plazas, courtyards, and other open/public places) are apparatuses of control represented in vacuums with lower pressure than walled or fenced spaces. Such concepts existed in ancient Egypt, China, Greece, India, Rome, Latin America, Babylonia, Persia and Arabia. Nonetheless the Smithsons and other Team X members realized their inspiration from North Africa, as they constantly reference the forms of ancient walled Arab cities, and Persian carpets with illustrations of Islamic gardens. Many members of Team X were commissioned to design a number of nationally important buildings in Kuwait, perhaps through Sir Leslie Martin, and for this reason the connections between their proposals can be easily seen. The projects designed for Kuwait all aimed to create a new form of independence, liberation, and freedom, albeit control of those buildings created a new definition of democracy through advanced geometry and architectural technology.

In the following I will focus on analyzing the mat-building proposed by Alison and Peter Smithson as the typology that subsumes all the urban architecture proposed by the other three firms invited to propose a solution for the development of Old Kuwait City. The architects all focused on weaving new structures into the old existing buildings to create a modern nationalist form that respected the particular history of the place while constructing a new nationalist architecture for an old nation. The mat-building typology connects to Candilis, Josic, and Woods through their concept of groundscrapers or stems and webs, BBPR in their proposal for a connecting framework, and to Reima and Raili Pietilä’s organic system of branching and arteries. Almost all those proposals included towers, plazas, elevated connecting structures on “pilotis,” and a protective boundary.

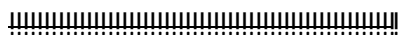


paradise on Earth.<sup>331</sup> Aside from being a plateau for observation, the tiles would have been painted in particular colors:

...turquoise blue, viridian, indigo: of especial significance in parched landscapes ... rose madder, white, ochre: traditional dye colours ... to give further point to the colour distinction of areas, the floral motives composing the decoration would be taken from historic periods. The tile surfaces would reflect the worst of the sun during the day and would continue to rapidly give-off stored heat as the sun set, which rising currents of air would further cool the surfaces: imparting a sense of air movement to people using the garden.<sup>332</sup>

Different treatments were given to walking paths, Smithson explained: “In all lights these surfaces would be *mat*, light absorbent; suitable to move around throughout the day” (my emphasis).<sup>333</sup> The Smithsons’ proposal for the Kuwait’s green belt development is one of the major proposals making clear the attention paid by postwar modernists to the importance of sustaining and protecting the environment through the management of natural resources such as water, land, and the sun, and their role in maintaining life, visibility and weather conditioning.

More recently, the Green Belt has been revitalized through the construction of Al Shaheed Park, which was opened April 2015 (fig. 129). The new design follows the



<sup>331</sup> Paradise, or al-Ferdaws, is the Islamic concept of heaven. It is usually described as a garden with rivers flowing beneath it. It is an enclosed and safe place for righteous believers.

<sup>332</sup> Smithson, “Kuwait Green Belt Pleasure Garden,” 502-503.

<sup>333</sup> ‘Mat’ could refer to an unreflective surface (matte); in this quote Alison Smithson refers to unreflective material for paving walkways that would act as a background to the reflective tiles. In the mat materials that absorb sunlight (and heat), along with Smithson’s constant referencing of ancient cultures in this article, I was immediately reminded of the ancient Egyptian goddess Maat, particularly the belief in her power to control the stars, and therefore the solar systems in general, along with seasons and climate. In this way, the word ‘mat’ as in a dull material, could have been a modification of *maot*, the Arabic word for death. Mat-building could also refer to the woven quality of carpet or cloth. The black Bedouin tent reflects both meanings; a woven mat and the matte-black (light-absorbent) wool.



initial purpose of its creation through the urban planning of the 1950s. The official webpage of the park explains that:

Al Shaheed Park aims to promote environmental awareness and its protection. By visiting the Habitat – a museum dedicated to the environment and bird migration in Kuwait, the visitors learn more about the different ecosystems, migratory birds and the effects of pollution through interactive learning stations.<sup>334</sup>

Whether the architects of the park have complete knowledge of how to manage the ecosystem to protect the small city of Kuwait is certainly not clear in any published resources about the park. Nonetheless the elements and forms of various structures within the park certainly reflect a protective utility.<sup>335</sup>

### **Mat-Building in Kuwait**

The typology of mat-buildings celebrates social cohesion and equality, and its anti-monumental quality was inspired by the architecture of vernacular Arab towns. Alison and Peter Smithson proposed a building with a similar typology for Kuwait in the late 1960s, at a time when the Kuwaiti government was focused on constructing progressive architecture, and were convinced that this architecture needed to assert bold national identity.<sup>336</sup> The mat-building of Kuwait belongs to a mid-century architectural theory that was inspired by vernacular forms. In Europe and America during the mid-

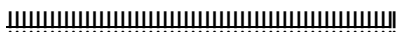
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<sup>334</sup> <http://alshaheedpark.com/about/>, accessed October 15, 2015.

<sup>335</sup> The infrastructure of the park contains tunnels and other earthwork similar to that of Manhattan's Central Park, New York City.

<sup>336</sup> According to Alison Smithson, mat-buildings offer a form that provides the public with equality and independence. See Smithson's article, "How to Recognize and Read Mat-buildings," 573. Reprinted in Hashim Sarkis, Pablo Allard, and Timothy Hyde, eds., *Case: Le Corbusier's Venice Hospital and the Mat Building Revival* (New York: Prestel, 2001), 91.

twentieth century, a thought was developing that “primitive” architecture can be a source of modernization, and the concepts and intellectual depth of mat-building belong to this development. Many Kuwaitis at that time saw their native architecture as part of their recent past, which represented forms of their backwardness during a time of poverty and regression.<sup>337</sup> While some authors argue that Kuwaitis were nostalgic about their previous vernacular architecture, numerous private houses during the late 1960s and 1970s were designed in more dramatic alien forms.<sup>338</sup> One can clearly see that the Kuwaiti image of modernity resided specifically in forms that could not have been made with their local materials, such as the concrete houses with dramatic forms and curves that were built in the 1960s and 1970s. The major commissioned projects in Kuwait during that time were also of monumental scale and bold character. Examples include Jørn Utzon’s design for the Kuwait National Assembly discussed in Chapter III, which made a tent or flying sail out of concrete; Kuwait Towers (fig. 90), which utilized suspended concrete spheres; and the Kuwait Water Towers’ concrete blooming flowers (fig. 92). I therefore argue instead that the return to vernacular forms was imposed as part of the Kuwait government’s plans to highlight independence, promote progress, and nationalism.



<sup>337</sup> For more information on a similar topic see Adrian Forty, “Primitive: The Word and Concept,” in *Primitive: Original Matters in Architecture*, eds. Jo Odgers, Flora Samuel, and Adam Sharr (London: Routledge, 2006), 3-14. As one of the leading figures in modern anthropology and structuralism, Claude Lévi-Strauss’ arguments, and his studies of primitive cultures, provided a new perspective on the subject, in which his argument equates the primitive and civil mind through structuralist thought. For further information on the topic, see Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1966). Bernard Rudofsky provides compelling arguments about indigenous architecture and its connection to modernization. His *Architecture without Architects* challenged Western audiences to draw their attention to the importance of primitive architecture, yet local Kuwaitis did not develop this appreciation at that time. See Bernard Rudofsky, *Architecture without Architects: A Short Introduction to Non-pedigreed Architecture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1965).

<sup>338</sup> John E. Frazer, “Aladdin’s Lamp of the Middle East: Kuwait,” *National Geographic*, 135, No. 5 (May 1969), 636-667. The article provides an overview of the development of Kuwait particularly after its independence; the images and the text both demonstrate Kuwait’s aim to blend the old and the new.

Given Alison and Peter Smithson's veneration for earlier architectural typologies, it is not surprising that their proposal for employing mat-building typology included a city plan that used the mosques as guiding nodes and “fixes”<sup>339</sup> for the grid underlying their proposal.<sup>340</sup> Helena Webster claimed that the name came from the Smithsons’ investigation of ancient Arab cities, where they had identified certain “mat” qualities. Arab cities are constituted of cells of different functions; multiple cells form clusters, which can be multiplied infinitely to form a city. Through such “mat” qualities, the Smithsons drew their design for a new connecting frame for old Kuwait city.<sup>341</sup> In addition to an urban solution, the Smithsons were also commissioned to design the Ministries Complex in the Mirqab area, and they used similar typology to create the governmental complex. As explained in Chapter III, the commission did not proceed and a local architect, Abdullah Qabazard, was appointed to produce a new design instead. Qabazard used many elements inspired by the Smithsons’ mat building (fig. 110 and 111).<sup>342</sup> The following is an analysis of the Smithson’s mat-building in Kuwait, which will help map the architectural elements of Kuwait’s nationalist architecture and their role in public assimilation, conditioning, and nation building.

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<sup>339</sup> The Smithsons called the mosques “fixes” since they were the elements on which the mat-building depended. See Alison and Peter Smithson, *Charged Void: Urbanism* (New York: Monacelli, 2005).

<sup>340</sup> The plan for the mat-building of Kuwait was first published in Alison and Peter Smithson, “Kuwait: The Smithson’s Scheme,” *Architectural Review* 931 (1974).

<sup>341</sup> Mat-building in Kuwait connects to the vernacular architecture in more ways than one; a Bedouin tent is made out of goat hair while the postwar modernism discourse (including mat-building) developed an interest in biology and natural sciences. Terms such as “cell,” “skin,” and “aggregation” were used heavily in the work of many Team X members to the extent that such interests developed into movements, such as metabolism architecture, to demonstrate their attention to human life. Helena Webster, ed., *Modernism without Rhetoric: Essays on the Work of Alison and Peter Smithson* (London: Academy Editions, 1997), 85-86.

<sup>342</sup> Asseel Al-Ragam explains the importance of the Mirqab area in her essay, “Critical Nostalgia: Kuwait Urban Modernity and Alison and Peter Smithson's Kuwait Urban Study and Mat-Building,” *The Journal of Architecture*, 20, Issue 1 (2015), 1-20.

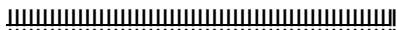
## Mat-Building Typology<sup>343</sup>

The mat concept was first articulated by Alison Smithson in her article, “How to Recognize and Read a Mat-Building”, in which she explains that mat-buildings:

[e]pitomize the anonymous collective; where the function comes to enrich the fabric, and the individual gains freedom of action through a new and shuffled order, based on interconnection, close knit pattern of association, and possibilities for growth, diminution and change.<sup>344</sup>

Mat-building typology expands horizontally; it is of even height and has the ability to weave social activities together. The name was derived from the flatness and interwoven structure of rugs, which reflects the mat-building’s social ability to weave people together, along with their culture and architecture.<sup>345</sup> In her essay, Alison Smithson urged the reader to wear a “protective visual-clothing” in order to really see and understand the mat-building, which explains how the mat-building hides some layered meaning, and lacks clarity to the naked eye of the layperson.

The concept began developing in the last CIAM meetings, and reached its maturity as Team X was splitting up. The mat-building typology was inspired by the Kasbah (Arab vernacular town), and was Westernized through the Team X



<sup>343</sup> “Mat” here is understood according to its meaning as “carpet” or a “piece of fabric made of plaited or woven rushes, straw, hemp, or similar fiber, or of some other pliant material, such as rubber, used as a protective covering on a floor or other surface.” Mats are strongly associated with Arab and Islamic cultures; Muslims always pray on a small piece of carpet to ensure the cleanliness of the surface they pray on, and usually the prayer mat is folded and kept in a clean place between prayers.

<sup>344</sup> Smithson, “How to Recognize and Read Mat-buildings,” 91. Alison Smithson’s essay not only provides a theory for mat-buildings, but also explains the place of the typology in history.

<sup>345</sup> Hashim Sarkis, “Introduction,” in *Case: Le Corbusier’s Venice Hospital and the Mat Building Revival*, eds. Hashim Sarkis, Pablo Allard and Timothy Hyde (New York: Prestel, 2001). 13.

discussions.<sup>346</sup> At the final CIAM meeting, Aldo van Eyck presented a project by one of his students entitled “The Cities Will Be Inhabited Like Villages.” The explanatory caption next to the model read: “Towards an Organized Kasbah.”<sup>347</sup> The introduction of the model at a CIAM meeting, particularly the use of the word “organized” is important to better understand the mat-building typology (in a way also the larger dynamics between postwar European/Western architects and their global commissions in postcolonial nations). For the European architects, the vernacular Arab cities were seen as disorganized and chaotic, while in fact Kasbahs are simply incomprehensible from the point of view of an outsider such as the European architects simply because the indigenous people knew exactly how to navigate their cities. CIAM members needed to *reorganize* the fabric of indigenous populations towards a model they understood and knew how to navigate. The case is not new; foreign things are usually perceived as dangerous specifically because they are incomprehensible.

The second meaning can be seen through the mat-building’s association with popular structuralist concepts of the time. Perhaps when Van Eyck mentioned “organizing” the kasbah, he was demonstrating, as Eric Mumford claims, the “pervasiveness of ‘structuralist’ ideas during this period.”<sup>348</sup> For this reason Mumford explains: “the exact relationship between the ideas of anthropologist Lévi-Strauss and the specific architectural strategies is not always clear.” Some of Claude Lévi-Strauss’s work would affect Van Eyck strongly in his effort to pay attention to the relationship between



<sup>346</sup> The kasbah is not always clearly accredited as the archetype of the mat-building typology, and for the Smithsons to re-inject the model into Kuwait after it was augmented by Western theory is reminiscent of Orientalist behavior.

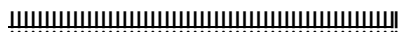
<sup>347</sup> Eric Mumford, “The Emergence of Mat or Field Buildings,” in *Case: Le Corbusier’s Venice Hospital*, 57.

<sup>348</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

architecture and culture, and most importantly his “insistence that reality must now be understood in terms of relations rather than functions.”<sup>349</sup> Van Eyck, and other Team X members, saw the structuralism of mat building as a system or organization that is somewhat flexible to change according to the culture where it is constructed, but rigid enough to preserve the relationship between its own elements that would allow it to be constituted as a typology. In other words, as this chapter will demonstrate, wherever a mat building is constructed it aims to organize certain aspects of the culture and allows itself to be changed in other aspects according to the culture.

In 2001, Hashim Sarkis, Pablo Allard, and Timothy Hyde edited *Case: Le Corbusier’s Venice Hospital and the Mat Building Revival*, which includes essays by Le Corbusier, Eric Mumford, and Stan Allen, among others. The book discusses the history and theory of mat-buildings; it also demonstrates how contemporary examples that follow the mat-building typology can solve new emerging problems. The book ultimately tries to demonstrate the timelessness of mat-building by placing it in history and foretelling its usefulness in the future.

The woven character of mat-buildings reintroduces an older discourse. For example, in *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings*, Gottfried Semper explains how architectural space originated in the act of weaving fabrics.<sup>350</sup> On the other



<sup>349</sup> Ibid., 63-64.

<sup>350</sup> Although Semper maintains that walls made of woven fabric were the origin of space and everyday life, the mat-building is related to the idea of weaving social spaces, and thus the element from which cities originate. See Gottfried Semper, *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings* (Cambridge, UK, and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989). In his essay “Ultrasuede,” George Wagner elaborates on Semper’s theory of carpets and architecture. Wagner asserts that, for Semper, “the building’s perceived reality and essential spatial unit are defined by the carpet.”



to see, as if the only view possible is from an “Ivory Tower.” In Alison Smithson’s essay, she claims that the “individual gains freedom of action” through the mat-building typology.<sup>355</sup> Alison and Peter Smithson’s main idea was to take the one surviving building type of the old coherent town – the mosque – and treat it as a “found object.”<sup>356</sup> In an attempt to reorganize the city in one coherent form, the mosques were used as a guideline for creating a new grid. One could argue that the Smithsons’ (and more generally, Team X’s) interest in grids was part of their association with structuralism at that time.<sup>357</sup> One can also read the new grid between the mosques as an imposition that defeats the dictatorial radial grid of the city, which was constructed in 1952 by Minoprio, Spencely and Macfarlane, to create its own brutal imposition.<sup>358</sup> The form the Smithsons proposed celebrated the abolition of hierarchy between citizens and the government. While the Smithsons’ idea was to grant public equality, the same act can be seen as abolishing any individuality, and instead giving the locals a false sense of liberation. In conveying this, I am making a connection with the postcolonial era, wherein the country was transformed from a physical colonization to a virtual one; or more accurately, a transformation to neocolonialist methods. The mat-building of Kuwait was designed as a

governmental domain, which includes the open public plaza – the symbol of

<sup>355</sup> Smithson, “How to Recognize and Read Mat-buildings,” 91.

<sup>356</sup> Alison and Peter Smithson, *Charged Void*, 141-143.

<sup>357</sup> Mumford, “The Emergence of Mat or Field Buildings,” 57. For more information about structuralism and the use of grid and layering, see Tom Avermaete, Tomás Valena, and Georg Vrachliotis, *Structuralism Reloaded: Rule-based Design in Architecture and Urbanism* (Stuttgart: Edition A. Menges, 2011). Although he never mentioned his direct relationship with structuralism, Aldo van Eyck’s Orphanage in Amsterdam (1960) is one of the key projects developing structuralism in architecture; he demonstrated it through a discussion of mat-buildings during Team X meetings.

<sup>358</sup> The urban plan proposed by the Smithsons recalls the architectural plan of the Great Mosque of Córdoba, in which all the columns and capitals making up the coherent whole of the column grid are “found” pieces drawn from the Roman temple that had previously occupied the site. The Roman columns in the mosque of Córdoba are thus analogous to the grid of mosques in the Smithsons’ mat-building.



revolutionary freedom, although the plazas are under the control of the government, which is exactly the opposite idea, and a whole model reminiscent of a Panopticon. This is clear when Alison explains her interest in the Ford Foundation building in New York and Boston City Hall as examples of the mat-building typology. Both buildings belong to the type of architecture that gives a false impression of liberation and the equality of the public, while in actuality holding the opposite meaning but in a “shuffled order.” The open plazas of the mat-building are always surrounded by a governmental body, or a management team that is also always one level higher than the general public.<sup>359</sup>

This is, in one way, related to a Western situation, and reminds me of George Wagner’s essay “Ultrasuede,” in which he makes a compelling argument about “the dynamic relations between architecture and textiles.” George Wagner connects this to the situation in North America during the Second World War, and he argues that the new wealth, spatial expansion, government programs, and “entrenched social divisions” of the postwar period in North America “had a clear impact on the built environment.” In this light George Wagner argues:

What catalyzed these phenomena most completely was unprecedented experimentation in the arena of human freedom. This emergence and fetishization of the free self must be understood against the burgeoning markets of the postwar capitalist economy and the deliberate consolidation

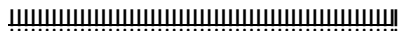
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<sup>359</sup> The Ford Foundation is a typical model of a central open atrium, which exposes every employee and creates a feeling that employees are monitored, if not by senior staff then by fellow employees, which ensures the quality control of work produced while keeping cost at a minimum. This idea is what originally inspired Jeremy Bentham’s concept for his Panopticon. On the other hand, the architecture of Boston City Hall is so brutally honest that even its exterior allows the public is to see the hierarchy of governmental positions. Boston City Hall incorporates an open plaza, so the public feels part of the governmental body.



which instead somewhat alludes to a form of neocolonialism in Kuwait.<sup>364</sup> When the Smithsons stated that they wanted to give Kuwait “a quality all her own,” they assert that *they* can give this quality to Kuwait, but it cannot grant that quality to itself – a declaration of *dependency*.<sup>365</sup>

When one looks at the plan of Kuwait’s mat-building, one immediately sees its low-rise structure with the potential to spread out infinitely, which grants a view of the city with no hierarchical relationship between the government and residential areas. The Smithsons’ mat structure is lifted up on *pilotis*, granting the ground level entirely to pedestrians.<sup>366</sup> While not explicitly stated by the Smithsons, one could argue that this promotes individual freedom and value in the new city. The locals saw eliminating the automobile as an act that reduced progress, however, because Kuwaitis saw cars as



<sup>364</sup> Simon Smith, in his article “The Making of a Neo-Colony? Anglo-Kuwaiti Relations in the Era of Decolonization,” in *Middle Eastern Studies* (London: Taylor & Francis, Ltd., 2001), argues that, politically speaking, the “Anglo-Kuwaiti relations in the era of decolonization does not support the theory of neo-colonialism.” I argue, however, that Kuwait entered the phase of neocolonialism even before its independence from being a British protectorate in 1961. Its maneuvering between creating allies – Great Britain, the United States, Japan, or Germany – in order to protect its territories from neighboring threats must be seen as supporting the “theory of neocolonialism.” Apart from politics, Kuwait has depended until today on progressive Western technologies to keep up with Western modernity. Furthermore, the contracts with British and American companies to search for oil in Kuwait can be seen as the first phase of neocolonialism. I agree with Smith that when Sheikh Abdulla Alsalem AlSabah became the Amir of Kuwait in the late 1940s, and it subsequently acquired full independence from Great Britain, Kuwait did so only to establish new allies, neocolonialists such as the US, Japan, Germany, and even other Arab countries. For more information on this, see Simon Smith, “The Making of a Neo-Colony? Anglo-Kuwaiti Relations in the Era of Decolonization,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, 37, No. 1 (January, 2001), 159-172.

<sup>365</sup> I argue that it is necessary to be critical of the meaning of regionalism, as it is to allow local architects to propose solutions as an alternative.

<sup>366</sup> Alison and Peter Smithson, *Charged Void*, 152.

elements of modernity (Europe experienced the same phase in the early twentieth century, starting with Le Corbusier).<sup>367</sup>

### **Kasbah as a Poetic Image**

Aldo Van Eyck asserts that the concept of the mat-building was a natural outgrowth of the interest held by Team X members in the Arab cities of North Africa, and particularly their kasbahs.<sup>368</sup> As he notes:

We just used that one word “casbah” as an image, as a poetic image. We were referring to any kaleidoscopic society where all the functions are more or less mixed, and always said the “casbah” was the final limit. We don’t have to literally make a casbah, imitating a period of human history when things were mixed and close-knit, but we need to be a little more “casbahistic”, by putting things

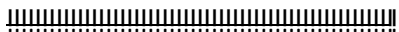
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<sup>367</sup> In the late 1960s, Kuwait did not yet see any of the negative aspects of the automobile (pollution, traffic, oil consumption, etc.). Cars were seen as the backbone of modernity; it is only recently that an awareness of environmental issues has abolished the car as “modern.” Le Corbusier made clear the connection between modern architecture and cars in his “Maison Citrohan” in 1922. Much later, the automobile was revealed as anti-environmental, and linked to architecture as a commodity through advertisement. Many scholars have discussed Le Corbusier’s relationship with the automobile, such as Beatriz Colomina, Hashim Sarkis, and most recently, Antonio Amado Lorenzo in his book *Voiture Minimum: Le Corbusier and the Automobile*, trans. Penelope Hierons and Barbara E. Duffus (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011). For more information about modern architecture appearing as a commodity through advertisements, see Stanislaus Von Moos, *Le Corbusier: Elements of a Synthesis* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1979), and Elizabeth Hornbeck, “Architecture and Advertising,” *Journal of Architectural Education* (1999): 52-57.

<sup>368</sup> The mat-building has long been seen as a European construct that stemmed primarily from the final meetings of the Congrès internationaux d’architecture modern (CIAM), and which reached its maturity with Team X. It has rarely been discussed as originating in a North African Arab city. This is mainly because parts of North Africa, and specifically Algeria, were colonies of France. Since the mat-building was rooted in a European colony, it was immediately conceived as stemming from European ideology, or at least it was accepted as a less foreign concept. The dominant versus submissive view goes beyond the conversation on Orientalism during the 1968 competition between the four European firms mentioned above in Kuwait.

together: and letting things penetrate into each other again.  
That is what we meant by casbah.<sup>369</sup>

Van Eyck's "poetic image" needs some dismantling in order to be understood. Since Aristotle's *Poetics*, many scholars and intellectuals have understood that for an art piece to be poetic it has to adhere to certain principles, such as harmony, imitation, rhythm, various meanings, and much more.<sup>370</sup> For that reason, one can assert that Van Eyck is aware of those principles. In architecture, "poetic" would have to include similar qualities. North African cities have always been known for their colorful souks, exotic forms, and the various scents of spices filling the streets, and thus Team X wanted to create an architecture of Romantic Nationalism; a nostalgic image of vernacular culture able to stir emotions the same way paintings of the Romantic era affected the senses. Team X also recognized layered functions of the kasbah, particularly as a sign of a "mixed and close-knit" society. This meaning also includes mixed functions; for example, the central courtyard in a typical mud house in the kasbah is a space where all family members are together doing various activities. The vernacular image of an old Arab town in North Africa inspired them to find a contemporary typology.<sup>371</sup>



<sup>369</sup> Clelia Tuscano, "Everybody Has His Own Story: Interview with Aldo van Eyck in Risselada," in *Team 10, 1953-81: In Search of a Utopia of the Present*, eds. Max Risselada and Dirk Den Heuvel (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2005), 330.

<sup>370</sup> These are some of the qualities given by Aristotle in the *Poetics*. Many other historians and theorists, such as Quatremère de Quincy, wrote about the poetic qualities in architecture.

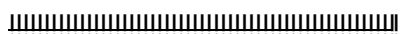
<sup>371</sup> It is clear that the "kaleidoscopic society" intended to create harmony between people of different backgrounds, race, or tribes. Tribal differences are still a central issue in oil-rich Arab cities, not only in the Middle East, but also throughout the rest of the world. The 1950s and 1960s were the peak of racial discrimination and awareness in Europe and America. The Race Relations Act of 1965 in the United Kingdom, for instance, aimed to prevent the racial discrimination that came as a reaction to growing problems in the country at this time. For more information about the act, see <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/cabinetpapers/themes/discrimination-race-relations-policy.htm>, accessed June 15, 2015.



culture they were built to serve, looked like the Algerian Kasbah (or any vernacular Arab town with courtyard houses), especially from a bird's-eye view, though less so from the ground level (fig. 100, 101, 102, 110, 112, and 113). When one enters traditional Arabian cities, especially those of North Africa, one immediately notices the hierarchy of the buildings, while their courtyards remain invisible. Flying over the kasbah, one may perceive it as flatness and clearly see the courtyard openings of the houses. All the buildings designed by Team X members that followed the mat-building typology were characteristically flat, but included voids that looked exactly like the courtyard openings of an Arab city. The Team X members did not explain the presence of the voids in their mat-buildings. One could argue that the voids were evidence of a subconscious desire to mimic kasbahs, as Team X members saw them from airplanes as they flew over them during their visits to North African cities. One could continue by commenting on the aptness of the fact that the perspective of the Team X members was based on viewing the buildings from above; from a position of dominance.<sup>376</sup> To equate a mat-building with a carpet immediately brings to mind a submissive form. Kasbahs are also fortified cities, and their numbers increased in North Africa during French colonization. Inspired by the kasbah, the mat-building typology is impregnated with concepts of Western colonization.

### **The “As Found” and the Everyday Mosque**

Alison and Peter Smithson used historical mosques as tools to guide them through their design, and regarded them “as found objects” that displayed part of history. The Smithsons had participated in developing the concept of “found objects” by joining in the

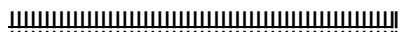


<sup>376</sup> Interestingly enough, Mumford argues that Le Corbusier's Venice Hospital is “the mature example of many earlier projects that challenges the view of many scholars on Le Corbusier to be an ‘authoritarian technocrat’.” See Mumford, “The Emergence of Mat or Field Buildings,” 48-65.

1953 Independent Group exhibition “Parallels of Life and Art” at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London, which focused on American mass culture and helped refine the idea of the “as found.”<sup>377</sup> In defining the principles of the “as found”, the Smithsons stated:

Setting ourselves the task of rethinking architecture in the early 1950s we meant by the “as found” not only adjacent buildings but all those marks that constitute remembrances in a place and that are to be read through finding out how the existing built fabric of the place had come to be as it was. ... Thus the “as found” was a new seeing of the ordinary, an openness as to how prosaic “things” could re-energize our inventive activity.<sup>378</sup>

This comment might suggest that in their proposal for the mat-building, the Smithsons were creating opportunities for Kuwaitis to look at and treat their own context in a different way. This idea in itself could have effected a strong change in local citizens’ perspective of their own culture.<sup>379</sup> As Dirk van den Heuvel explains, “the everyday is not an innocent, idyllic position. On the contrary, it acts as the field for an often unexpressed political (and cultural) struggle.”<sup>380</sup> Mosques are indeed part of everyday life; they are unquestioned structures that exist within the context of the city, and places in which locals worship. In some way religion and its architecture are



<sup>377</sup> On “found objects,” see Claude Lichtenstein and Thomas Schregenberger, eds., *As Found: The Discovery of the Ordinary* (Baden, Switzerland: Lars Müller, 2001).

<sup>378</sup> Alison and Peter Smithson, quoted in Dirk van den Heuvel, “As Found: The Metamorphosis of the Everyday,” *OASE Autumn* (2002): 60.

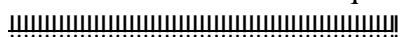
<sup>379</sup> It is worth mentioning here that the Smithsons assumed the mosque to be an “adjacent building” but Islamic cities have been known to have the mosque as the central structure, to which all other structures are “adjacent buildings.” A good example of this is Medina, located in the Hejaz region of western Saudi Arabia, and the city where Muhammad fled when he was driven out of Mecca. The first structure built in Medina, which is the first Islamic city to be built on virgin land, was Muhammad’s mosque and house. For more information, see Richard Francis Burton, *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah and Meccah* (New York: Dover Publications, 1964).

<sup>380</sup> Van den Heuvel, “As Found,” 54.



accepted only because they are part of inherited daily life. The Smithsons' intervention and transformation of the architecture into an "as found" object could have helped Kuwaiti society question its values, as well as certain cultural, often political, dogmas related to the mosque. Heuvel realized that there were different definitions of "as found." The one used by Alison and Peter Smithson is based on the idea that "the art is in the picking up, turning over and putting with."<sup>381</sup> According to this definition, the mosque in itself can neither be elevated nor produce meaning without its new context. The mosque becomes an object that must be picked up, turned over, and put in a new architectural context. This new architectural context includes the mosque as an *objet trouvé*, and eventually creates a new whole. The other definition is borrowed from Reyner Banham, who sees the "as found" not as the process but the object itself, and as a "concept of image" that is "anti-art" and "anti-beauty."<sup>382</sup> This suggests that the "as found" – or in this case, the mosque.– is an object worthy in itself of being pursued in an architectural or art project.

Minarets are not simply an elevated position for the call to prayer, but also act as a symbolic reminder of a higher power, and an element of control in a similar way to clock towers. Although minarets today do not physically assist the *mu'athen* (prayer caller) to climb up their structure in order for his voice to be heard, they remain important for the electronic speakers hung high for the vibration of sound to reach greater distances notifying the public of time, and they could also potentially act as watchtowers, a place for CCTV (closed-circuit television), cameras and other technologically advanced surveillance devices. Mosques and their architectural elements are apparatuses of control



<sup>381</sup> Alison and Peter Smithson, quoted in van den Heuvel, "As Found," 60.

<sup>382</sup> Reyner Banham, as quoted in van den Heuvel, "As Found," 60.

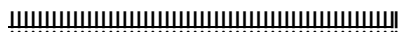
within the preserved heritage of Kuwaiti architecture. The Smithsons produced a drawing demonstrating a section through their mat-building where those towers mimic the minarets of the found mosques (fig. 114, 116, and 117), and together they establish a modernity that follows earlier modernists, specifically El Lissitzky. His *Wolkenbügel* (*cloud-hangers*) were meant to be color-coded horizontal skyscrapers placed at important intersections and plazas leading to the Kremlin in order to establish control and security over the entire city (see fig. 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, and 122 for formal comparison between El Lissitzky's *Wolkenbügel*s within the city of Moscow and the mosques' minarets within the Smithsons' Kuwait Mat-Building proposal)The Smithsons, along with other postwar modern architects, formed a network of third-generation architects who continued the modern tradition of earlier architects such as Le Corbusier and El Lissitzky.

Any discussion of “found objects” is, of course, a continuation of the conversation Marcel Duchamp began with his “readymades” in 1915. The preservation of mosques during the demolition of the old city in 1951 was a manifestation of the great value placed on them as religious symbols by the government of Kuwait. The mosques were seen as objects of authenticity, and the only genuine elements left of the old city. For the Kuwaitis, the minarets of the mosques were authentic representatives of their culture and religion. Through the European lens, however, the mosques were archeological relics and their preservation would have a symbolic watchtower utility; in this case believers are reminded, as discussed earlier, of the presence of a higher authority. The Smithsons' European perspective fetishized the mosque and gave it an exotic value. Despite this, the mosques must have been regarded as obstacles to modernization, particularly in the

1950s, not only in the sense that they opposed the definition of modernity, but also literally as structures that could not be demolished because of their religious value. There are two ways in which one could have seen those mosques within the Smithsons' mat-building in Kuwait. The first is in the contrast they would have created within the new context, as an eyesore worth questioning. The alternative argument is similar to that created by Duchamp's "Fountain", whereby the perception and value of an object changes in alternative contexts and loses or gains different, and perhaps unrealistic, values.<sup>383</sup>

### **Re-reading the Void: the Void as an Apparatus of Public Control**

In his book *Le Corbusier's Venice Hospital*,<sup>384</sup> Hashim Sarkis argues that the mat-building emerges in architectural consciousness around the late 1950s and early 1960s as part of the profession's response to the challenge of urbanism, as well as in terms of Team X's specific concern with generating greater social interaction across segregated city functions. The mat-building typology actually emerges in consciousness, however, only to take up residence in the subconscious. The flatness of the mat-building and its anti-monumentality create a neutral building. Alison and Peter Smithson included the mat-building of Kuwait under the heading "Neutrality" in their book *Charged Void: Urbanism*.<sup>385</sup> In addition, Alison Smithson's use of the title "How to Read and Recognize the Mat-Building" suggests the need for a special manual to be able to read, recognize, and see the structure. In a more recent reading, Stan Allen sees that "the promise of the



<sup>383</sup> Although Duchamp's urinal underwent some sort of physical transformation (when he wrote on it), placing it in a different context makes it perfectly comparable to the mosques in the Smithson's mat-building.

<sup>384</sup> Sarkis et al., *Case: Le Corbusier Venice Hospital*.

<sup>385</sup> See Alison and Peter Smithson, *Charged Void*, 136.

mat-building is of things happening in the voids outside of architecture's explicit envelope of control."<sup>386</sup>

Voids for the Smithsons are intentional, measured, and above all a space for potential activities. They even established a principle they called "holes in cities." To them, holes in cities meant abandoned industrial sites in places such as Berlin, London, and Glasgow. These holes left voids in sites and city centers, cutting through the homogeneity of the urban fabric. Since such holes have hidden qualities, the Smithsons invented an attitude and a language to revitalize them and reconnect them with the urban fabric.<sup>387</sup>

Although they did not define those holes further, the Smithsons used them in restructuring Kuwait City. In their proposal for the mat-building, they decided to restore some of the old mud houses at the site, and reconstructed some of the destroyed structures, perhaps in order to recreate the old town and its spirit. For them, this strategy was to help future generations understand what the city had looked like in the past. Another kind of "hole" in Kuwait City consisted of two large cemeteries. Since by law it was forbidden to build on them, a discontinuity existed at the site.<sup>388</sup> Using their principle of mending "holes in cities" the Smithsons looked at the cemeteries as potential design



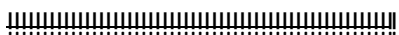
<sup>386</sup> Stan Allen, "Mat Urbanism: The Thick 2D," in *Case: Le Corbusier's Venice Hospital*, 118-126.

<sup>387</sup> Alison and Peter Smithson, *Charged Void*, 172. The Smithsons use their concept of "holes in cities" to describe post-industrial cities. Kuwait City, however, was never a post-industrial town; this explains why the vacant lands left in old Kuwait City do not have the same meaning as "voids" in other post-industrial sites. "Voids" and abandoned structures in post-industrial cities mean social inequality and labor struggles. On the other hand, I argue, leftover spaces in Kuwait reflect the sudden increase in wealth and the desire for rapid modernization.

<sup>388</sup> According to Kuwaiti municipal law, it is not permitted to build on cemeteries for 50 lunar years. After that, they can be transformed into parks or open spaces, but it is forever forbidden to construct a building on top of them.

elements rather than as breaks in the site. They proposed that the cemeteries be turned into one giant open plaza for sports, festivals, and cultural and social activities, calling it “Orangerie Maidan.”<sup>389</sup> By doing this, they hoped to stitch the old town with the new and thus weave the entire city together.<sup>390</sup> Utilizing plazas for recreational facilities assisted in creating a controlled public void constantly exposed by the adjacent buildings that create its boundaries.

For the Smithsons, voids are not the consequence of a designed mass; voids and masses actually hold the same value as buildings (solids). This becomes clear when one looks at how they drew the roof plans for Kuwait’s mat-building (fig. 120). The building itself is darkened to appear as a void, while the actual open spaces consist of a black grid over a white background, recalling Superstudio’s collages in which architecture is embodied in an endless voided grid (fig. 121) produced to control the population. The Smithsons also chose a grid rotated 22.5° (rather than 40°) counter-clockwise to the east-west axis, arguing that it was best suited for the site (fig. 123).<sup>391</sup> The angled black squares in the roof plan of the mat-building have some formal resemblance to François Morellet’s *Papier 2,5°-92,5°, trou (carré) 0°-90°* of 1981.<sup>392</sup> The black square of Morellet is also meant to be a void or a hole in the wall (fig. 122). It is the angled paper



<sup>389</sup> Alison and Peter Smithson, *Charged Void*, 161-162.

<sup>390</sup> After ten years of mat-building proposals, the Smithsons had a similar attitude towards a similar project, which they named “Mending Worcester.” In this project, they explicitly refer to the decay of the historical town as “holes.” Unlike the mat-building in Kuwait, wherein they used the mosques as their guide, they used the direction of the historic grid as their guide for the proposed new buildings. “This system could be extended across the open spaces of old Worcester on the riverbank, and laced through new building and urban spaces” (ibid., 209).

<sup>391</sup> Ibid., 158. The 40° would have respected the angle toward Mecca, while the 22.5° would have allowed the streets to be aligned with respect to the angle of the sunrise in Kuwait City around May; perhaps the Smithson wanted to celebrate the events of May 1968.

<sup>392</sup> Morellet’s *Papier 2.5°-92.5°, trou (carré) 0°-90°* was recently displayed at the Centre Pompidou-Musée d’Art Moderne in the François Morellet Reinstallation show.

that gives the black square its material form, while being a negative space.<sup>393</sup> At the same time, the Smithsons thought a 22.5° angle “suit[ed] the grain of the city,” thereby elevating the value of the void in their plan, while also allowing one to look at the void as a support for the mass, neither of which can exist without the other.

## **Conclusion**

In order to assert itself as an independent nation, Kuwait had to follow specific guidelines controlled by larger intergovernmental institutions that advised the Kuwaiti government to construct specific buildings that would together construct Kuwait’s modern nationalism.

Building Kuwait’s national image as an independent, modern, and democratic nation-state, ironically, depended on a network of international consultants and other agencies that supported a Western framework as the only way to modernize postcolonial nations such as Kuwait. These consultants suggested the construction of monumental buildings such as a national museum, parliament, and stadium to create a national identity and act as disciplining apparatus to assimilate and shape the Kuwaiti public. Museums as educational institutions, parliament as a governing entity, and stadiums as national amphitheater that nurture patriotic sentiments and build athletes’ sense of discipline and patriotism, all belong to building typologies or institutions (re)established in Europe during its Early Modern period and all were inspired by similar models in ancient Greece – “the cradle of Western civilization.” The nationalist architecture of Kuwait and the institutions it promotes were all suggested by a group of international advisors and

<sup>393</sup> Serge Lemoine, *François Morellet: reinstallation, Catalogue officiel de l’exposition* (Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 2011), 244.

designed by world-renowned architects to carry monumental characters and symbolic forms inspired by the vernacular life of Kuwait in order to forge a local connection, historical continuity, and traditional legitimacy to conceal the contradicting realities that led to its establishment or Kuwait's dependency on global power structures.

In the first chapter I introduced the postcolonial framework of my research, which allowed me to introduce the meaning of nation building and modernization. Nation building, as the term suggests, is the active and conscious construction of a national identity that aims at public assimilation and conditioning. Beside unification, postcolonial nationalism is also connected to modernization. As modernization theories suggest, the process of modernization is understood as an evolutionary process that puts Western nations in a higher position and renders postcolonial nations such as Kuwait always delayed, dependent, and inferior. The second part of the first chapter provided an overview of the historical development of Kuwait's nation building, its relationship to competing regional nationalism, and the role of Western powers in Kuwait's modernization and nation building from 1899 (the date Kuwait signed a protection agreement with Britain) through 1991 (the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait).

Chapter II discusses the role of the museum in nation building and critically analyzes the role of UNESCO and ICOM in establishing the model of a national museum to be constructed in postcolonial states to explain that, by imposing a specific Western model, postcolonial nations would act as new territories for investment available only to the West. The focus of the chapter is on the architectural competition for the Kuwait National Museum, offering a formal analysis of the submitted proposals with a focus on

the winning proposal of Michel Écochard. The chapter also discusses the background of Écochard as a colonial architect who continued his role in postcolonial nation-states.

Chapter III presents the Kuwait National Assembly building as a national monument of democracy and discusses how the architectural competition to design the nation's monument of democracy was, ironically, undemocratic. In this chapter I also provided formal analysis of the submitted proposals with a focus on Jørn Utzon's winning scheme. As a symbol of governing power, the KNA building was analyzed in comparison with other power structures in Kuwait such as the Grand Mosque and the Seif Palace, to explain the multitude of competing powers as a way to neutralize them locally.

Chapter IV discusses the Kuwait Sports Center, which is a complex of sports facilities and an Olympic stadium. National stadiums are one of the major components of nation building as they build solidarity between the public and amplify national sentiments in various ways. The revival of the ancient Greek Olympic Games during the nineteenth century belongs to Western modernity.

In the final chapter I analyzed the competition for the Future Development of Old Kuwait City and demonstrated its aim to knit together the urban fabric of the recently demolished vernacular city and establish it as a new financial center. The competition also asked the invited architects to reproduce the local urban character that would contribute to the development of Kuwait's nation building. After analyzing the proposals submitted by the invited architectural firms it becomes clear that all the architectural solutions were designed to convey superficial local references while their main target was to organize the city, amplify public control, and increase the security of the city center.



The process of modernization of Kuwait is linked to the production of Kuwait's nationalism, which relied on a network institutions and professional agents who guided the construction of a cluster of architectural projects according to a Western framework. The ability of architecture, as a medium, to create poetic images inspired by local vernacular life able to invoke national sentiments is crucial to building Kuwait's independent image, yet it could only be maintained by its dependency on postcolonial world powers.

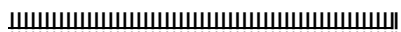
International consultants suggested the construction of museum, stadium, and parliament to shape the public into unified modern citizens. As modern institutions the museum, stadium, and parliament have different yet complementary roles in nation building such as education, recreation, and governance. Those buildings reconstructed the new cultural, political, social, and economic norms of Kuwait. Although the propagated intention of building a unique national character suited Kuwait's new status as independent nation, almost all the institutions constructed to modernize and build Kuwait's nationalism belong to a Western discourse of modernity that ensured Kuwait's support and engagement in the new global market and its new world powers.

Kuwait's nation building was only possible after comprehensive studies conducted by British agents before Kuwait's official independence for the sake of understanding the social, cultural, economic, and topographic make up of the territory that would assist in masterfully constructing the modern national image of Kuwait. The depth and complexity of the data collected in the 1940s and 1950s by British experts, particularly after the discovery of oil, was a foundational step for the work of

professionals to initiate and produce a convincing image of Kuwait as a modern and sovereign country.<sup>394</sup>

Modernizing postcolonial nations is foundational to their sovereignty. The development of Third World countries during the postwar era and re-construction of their cultures was regarded as a necessary step for world peace. Hiring experts and architects recommended by organizations such as the UN, UNESCO, ICOM, IBDR, and the IOC to build modern institutions in Kuwait, with structures such as the National Museum, the National Assembly, the Sports Center, among others, that in their parts shape and condition the culture of Kuwaitis, was the only path available for Kuwait to follow in order to establish and maintain its sovereignty. Franchising model institutions in a country like Kuwait means opening new architectural markets accessible only to the network of experts who specialize in constructing such institutions according to the required rules. Furthermore, building universal cultural norms defined by one part of the world always establishes the other as socially inferior, economically dependent, and culturally lagging behind, which establishes imbalances that work against the primary aim of world peace.

The plans of nation building in Kuwait were supported in daily newspapers, magazines, and other publications to ensure the public's approval. The boom of architectural production was increasing during the 1960s. This was an international mission and its efforts were praised in national and international publications. The



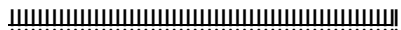
<sup>394</sup> Alison and Peter Smithson's archive the Frances Loeb Library (Harvard University) contains various survey maps and data sheets about Kuwait. Perhaps the English couple had access to the data collected by the British government before Kuwait's independence.

commissions in Kuwait caused the influential *Architectural Design* magazine to publish the following:

Strange stories are coming out of Kuwait. This oil-rich state, with the highest *per capita* income in the world, has not been noted for the architectural excellence – in fact the decorative overkill on their building has been notorious throughout the world. But now, with their appointment of Dr. Omar Azzam and, later, Professor Sir Leslie Martin of Great Britain and Professor Franco Albini of Italy as advisers to the Government, it seems possible that Kuwait may even become a kind of architectural mecca. Like Brasilia or Chandigarh, we may all, in twenty years' time, be beating a path to see its glories.<sup>395</sup>

Indeed Kuwait saw the establishment of its architectural excellence, which according to the author of the above quote, would not have been possible without the input of this particular international group of intelligent experts who share with the author specific norms for what could be regarded as “excellence”. The reference to Mecca could be accidental, but almost every proposal submitted by the invited architects has similarities to the centralization and defensiveness of the Kaba’a (fig. 93).

Besides recognizing certain building types – such as museums to construct the norms of the local culture, a parliament to advertise its democracy, and stadiums to mold disciplined citizens – as the architecture of modern nation building, my research ends by compiling a list of architectural elements and geometrical organization identified as components of nationalist architecture. The following architectural elements or characters all exist in all the projects discussed in this dissertation, hence identifying these elements would suggest the existence of a particular typology:



<sup>395</sup> E.H., “Kuwait Sports Centre,” *Architectural Design* (March, 1970): 135.

## **1. Vernacular Symbolism and Organic Nation Building**

Symbolic forms inspired by vernacular origins allow the architecture to instigate a connection to the roots of the nation. Examples include camel, tent, and oasis in various examples discussed in this dissertation such as in the KNM, KNA, KSC, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (fig. 19, 21, 22, 73, 127, and 128).

## **2. Streets in the Sky and Atriums: Connectivity, Order, and Control**

Alison and Peter Smithson used “streets in the sky” in their social housing complex in London to create communities far more imaginative than those of Benedict Anderson, but very visible, as each resident entered and exited their apartments in the Robin Hood Gardens project. This element is also visible in Écochard’s design for the KNM explained in Chapter II, Utzon’s KNA building explained in Chapter III, the Kuwait mat-building, and other projects such as BBPR’s “connecting frame” explained in this chapter. Streets in the sky not only create closed networks of corridors but they expose a labyrinth of passages that is able to condition its public (see also fig. 16, 18, 24, 42, 124, and 125). The voided cores of a city (e.g. public plazas) are visible to the entire organizations of buildings surrounding them, and are therefore controlled public spaces. Not only the core but also the periphery of the courtyard geometry (a central void such as the atrium in an office building with glass offices, or in a courtyard house); the courtyard provides panoptic (panoramic) views over all individuals (employees, users, or the general public in a plaza) within its structure. The central courtyard was the form of a typical mud-house typology associated with Kuwait’s vernacular architecture.

### 3. Monumentality: Axis, Symmetry, Light, and Reflection

Structures with grandiose scales and monumental characters prompt memory that eventually plays a role in nation building. The play of light, shade, and shadows is able to create a majestic, sublime, and romantic feeling, best demonstrated here in Michel Écochard's Kuwait National Museum (fig. 127), Jørn Utzon's Kuwait National Assembly building (fig. 128), and the Kuwait Ministry of Foreign Affairs by Raili and Reima Pietilä.

Reflective pools as an architectural element have various esthetical properties connected to nationalist architecture and civic structures. They duplicate the image of the building, providing dramatic effect, complex rhythms, and symmetry found in civic (monumental) structures. The Kuwait National Assembly is constructed near the coastline so the sea could possibly act as a reflective pool (fig. 126), the original design of the Kuwait National Museum was also meant to have reflective pools in various areas within its complex (fig. 125), Alshaheed Park (fig. 129), and the Kuwait Sports Center is inspired by an oasis.

Planning along a central cross-axis could be seen in all the projects discussed here. Beside regulating movement within a building, the creation of a bold axis organizes complex buildings. An axis also allows for designing buildings in accordance with the movement of the sun, wind, and rain which could have a mystical effect as well as establishing grids that control the overall layout of a building.<sup>396</sup> Figure 133 demonstrates how all the buildings discussed



<sup>396</sup> See for example Ferdinando Castagnoli, *Orthogonal Town Planning in Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1971); Leslie Martin, *Space and Structures*, ed. Leslie Martin and Lionel March (London: Cambridge University Press, 1972); Leslie Martin and Peter Geoffrey Hall, "The Grid as Generator," in *Arq: Architectural Research Quarterly*, 4, No. 4 (2000), 309-320. Reprint of

in this dissertation were designed according to the major axis established by the architect.

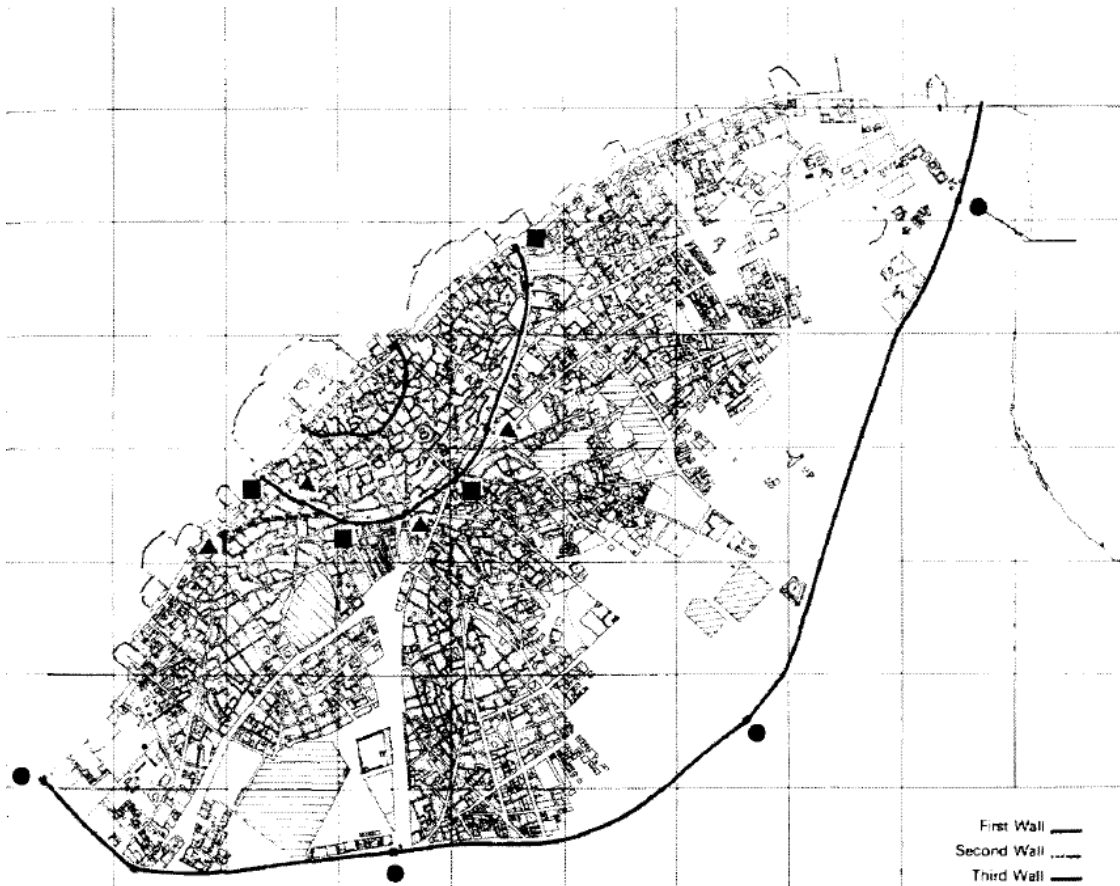
The forms and geometry of the architectural projects that were constructed in Kuwait after its independence produce the image needed to assert its sovereignty as well as creating a configuration that controls and regulates the population eventually to create a “self-disciplined” nation.

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opening essay in Leslie Martin's 1972 book, *Urban Space and Structures*; Rosalind Krauss, “Grids,” *October* No. 09 (1979), 51-64; and Jill Grand, “The Dark Side of the Grid: Power and Urban Design,” *Planning Perspectives*, 16, No. 03 (2001), 219-241.

## **ILLUSTRATIONS**



**Figure 1:** Old Kuwait City, the illustration demonstrates the three walls of the old city. Source: Rashid al-Rashid. *Planning and Urban Development in Kuwait*. (Kuwait: Kuwait Government, 1977).



**Figure 2:** A close-up of an aerial photograph showing the old vernacular fabric of Kuwait before its demolition. Source: Gian Banfi, Ludovico Belgiojoso, Enrico Peressutti, and Ernesto Rogers (BBPR), *Architectural Report for the Future Development of Old Kuwait City project*, 1969 (The Archives of Franco Albini, Milan).

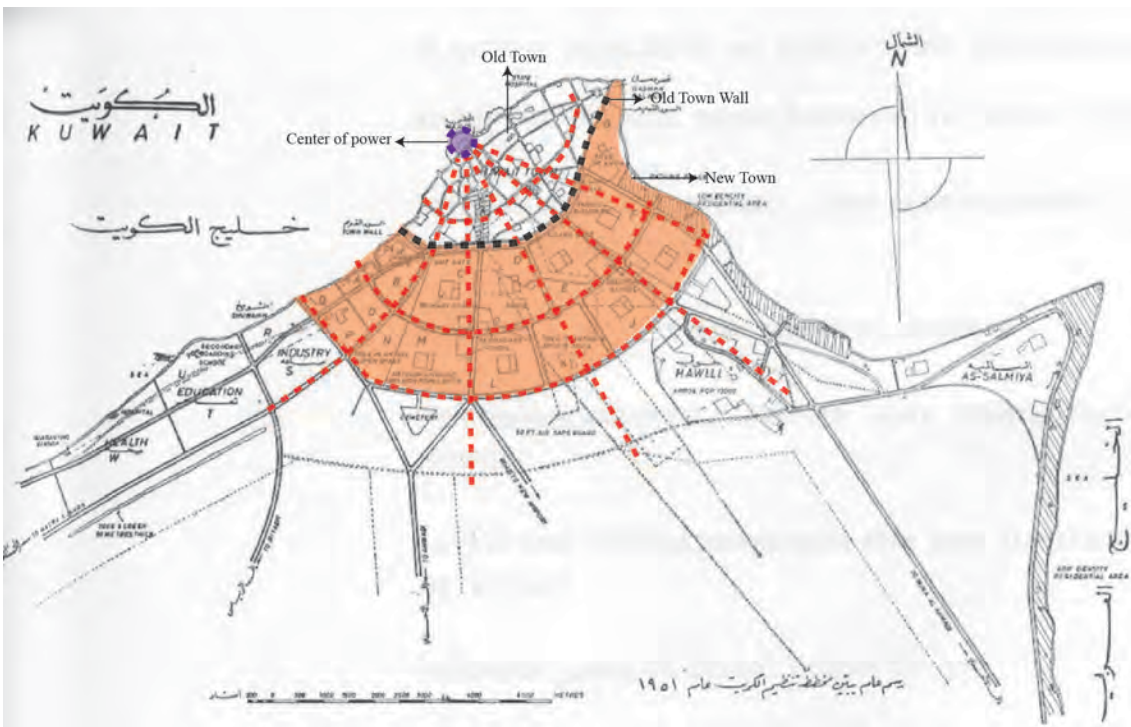




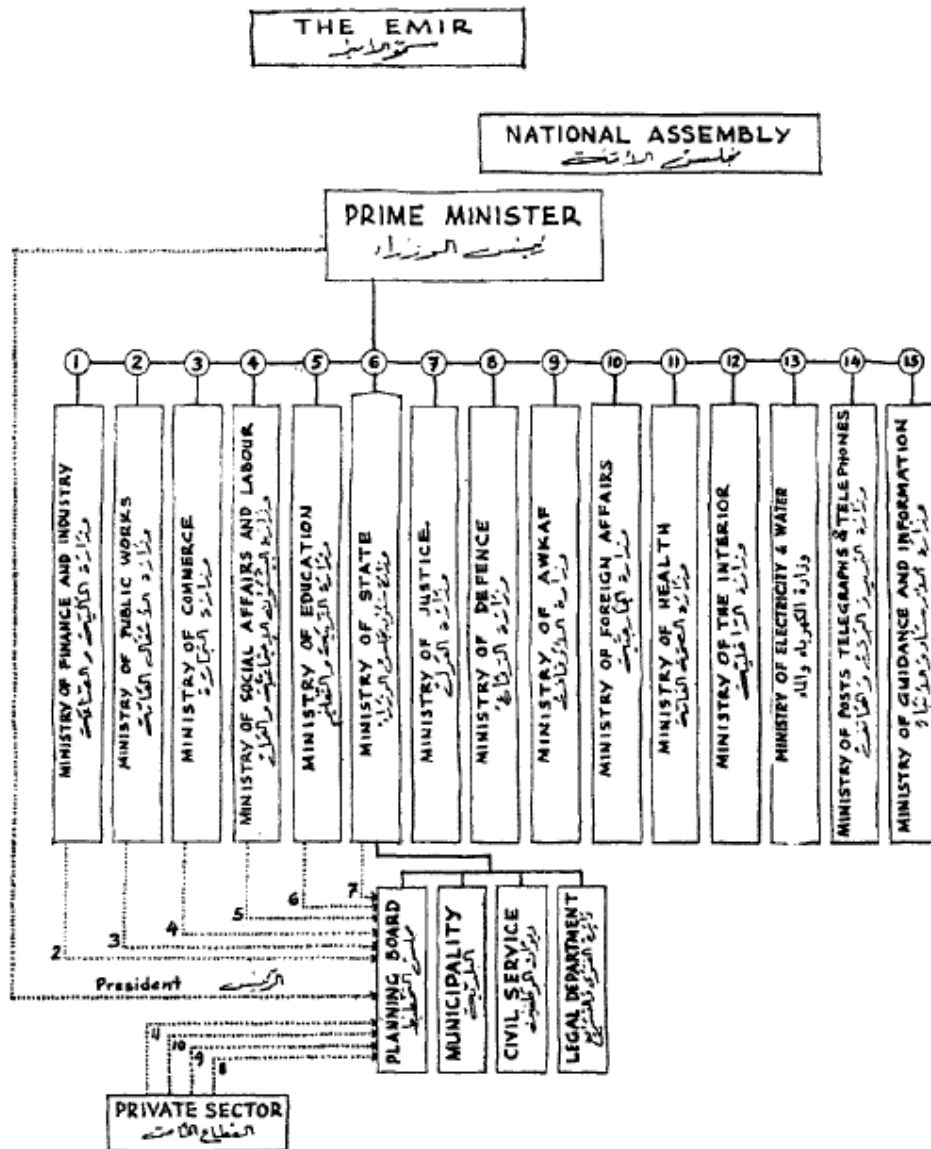
**Figure 3:** A series of areal photographs of the progress of the urban fabric of Kuwait from organic/vernacular to modern radial grid allowing for wider streets for automobiles. Source: Gian Banfi, Ludovico Belgiojoso, Enrico Peressutti, and Ernesto Rogers (BBPR), *Architectural Report for the Future Development of Old Kuwait City project*, 1969 (The Archives of Franco Albini, Milan).



**Figure 4:** Kuwait's first master plan by Minoprio & Spencely and Macfarlane (1952) showing the new residential neighborhood (in orange) outside of old Kuwait City. Source: Kuwait Municipality Archives



**Figure 5:** Diagram highlighting the radial grid and its center (the Seif Palace): Source: author. Base map from source: Saba Shiber, *The Kuwait Urbanization* (Kuwait: Government of Kuwait, 1964)



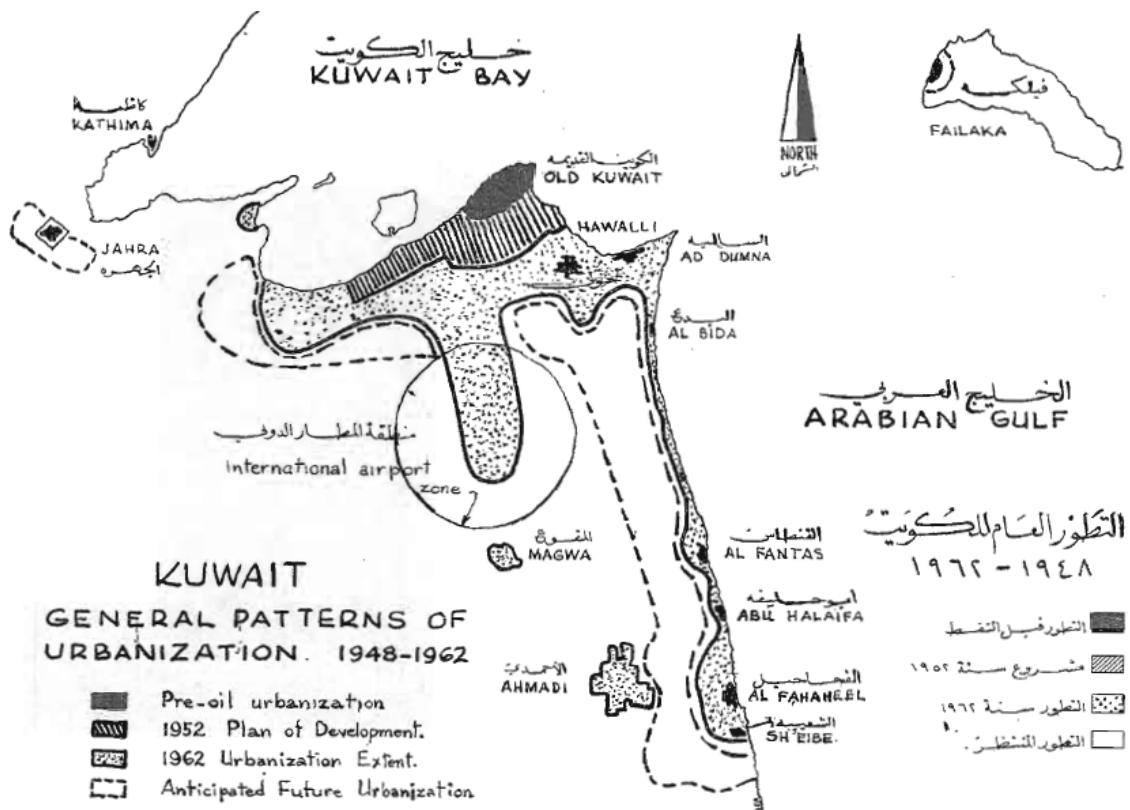
THE PLANNING FUNCTION WITHIN THE STRUCTURE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF KUWAIT AS OF JANUARY, 1963

ادارة التخطيط في هيكل الحكومة الكويتية ابتداءً من كانون الثاني ١٩٦٣

Prepared and drawn by S.G. Shiber  
Source: Official Gazette

اعداد رسم س. شيبير  
المصدر: الجريدة الرسمية

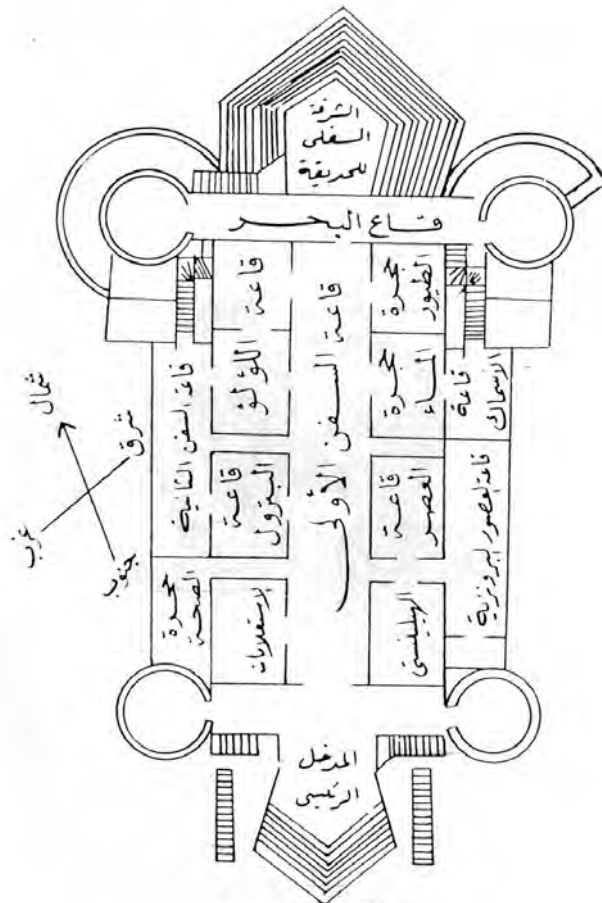
**Figure 6:** The new structure of the government demonstrating the importance of the newly established Development Board. Source: Saba Shiber, *The Kuwait Urbanization* (Kuwait City: Government of Kuwait, 1964).



**Figure 7:** A sketch of Kuwait urban development (1962) showing how the second master plan is anticipated to guide future urbanization (dash-lined areas) behind the coastline of Kuwait. The area with darkest shade is old Kuwait city (Central Business District), which is the other area the second master plan focused on developing. Source: Saba Shiber, *The Kuwait Urbanization* (Kuwait City: Government of Kuwait, 1964).



**Figure 8:** Photograph of old Kuwait National Museum (Sheikh Khaz'al's Palace in Kuwait). Source: Aga Khan Award for Architecture.



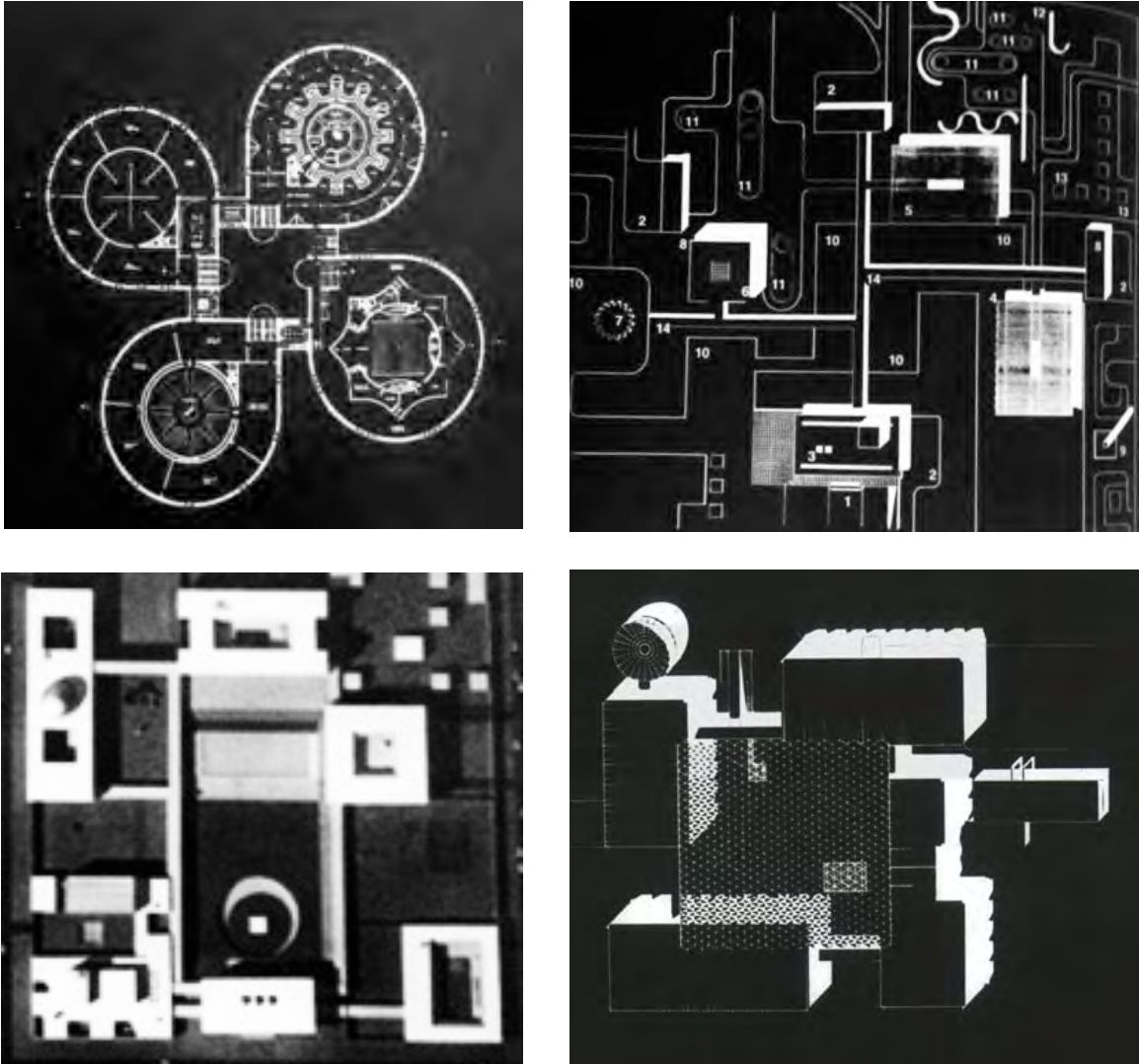
**Figure 9:** Plan of Old Kuwait National Museum (Sheikh Khaz'al's Palace in Kuwait). Source: National Council for Culture, Arts & Letters Archives.



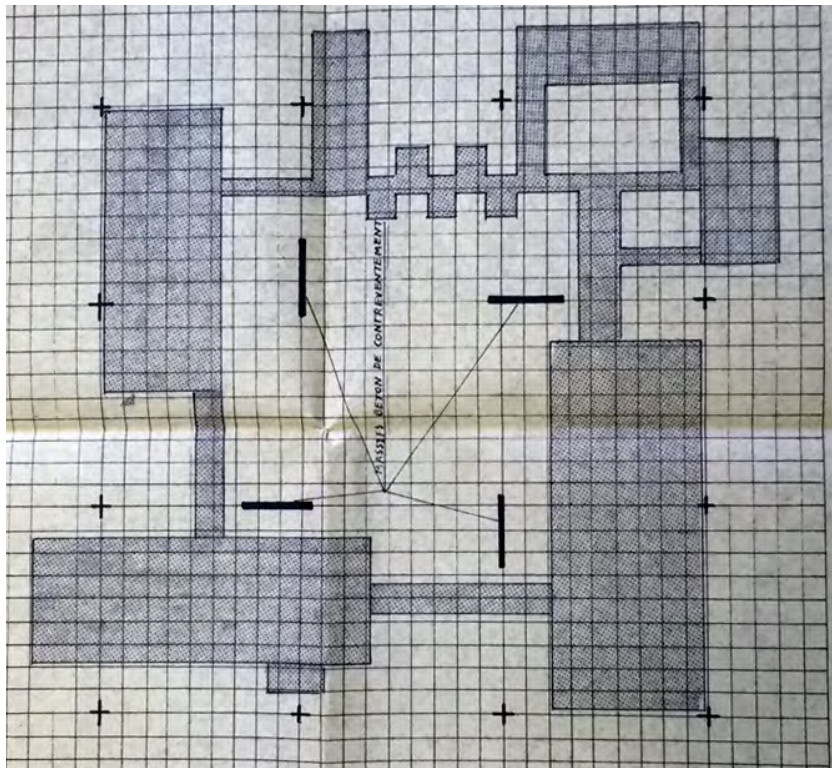
**Figure 10:** Qatar National Museum, Doha. The images demonstrate the traditional Bedouin tent displayed as part of museum's artifacts. Source: Source: Aga Khan Award for Architecture.



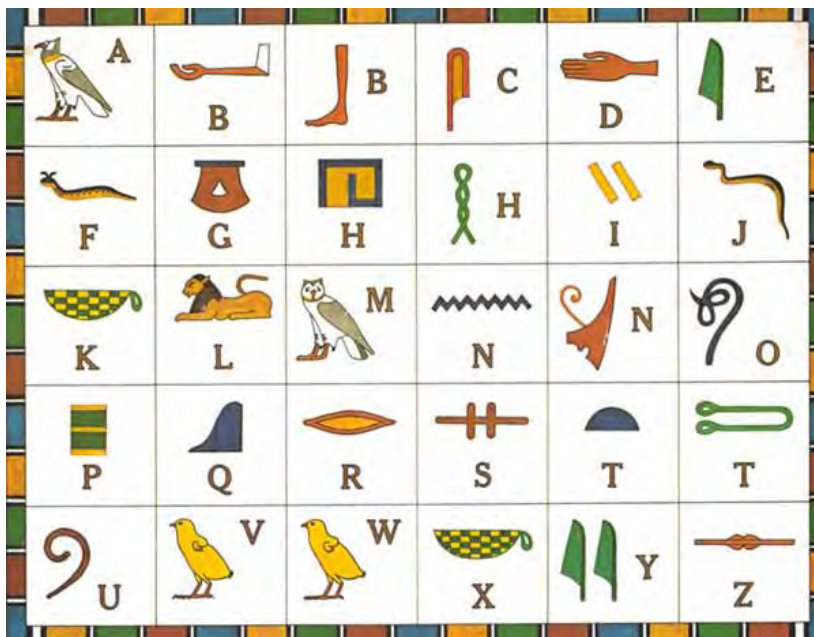
**Figure 11:** Qatar National Museum, Doha. Source: Source: Aga Khan Award for Architecture.



**Figure 12:** Plans of the proposals submitted by the invited architects in the Kuwait National Museum Competition. (Clockwise) Hans Asplund, Affonso Reidy, Michel Écochard, and Zdravko Bregovac Source: Source: [Aga Khan Award for Architecture.](#)



**Figure 13:** Earlier plan of Kuwait National Museum by Michel Écochard. Source: Michel Écochard's Archive at Ifa/Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, Paris.

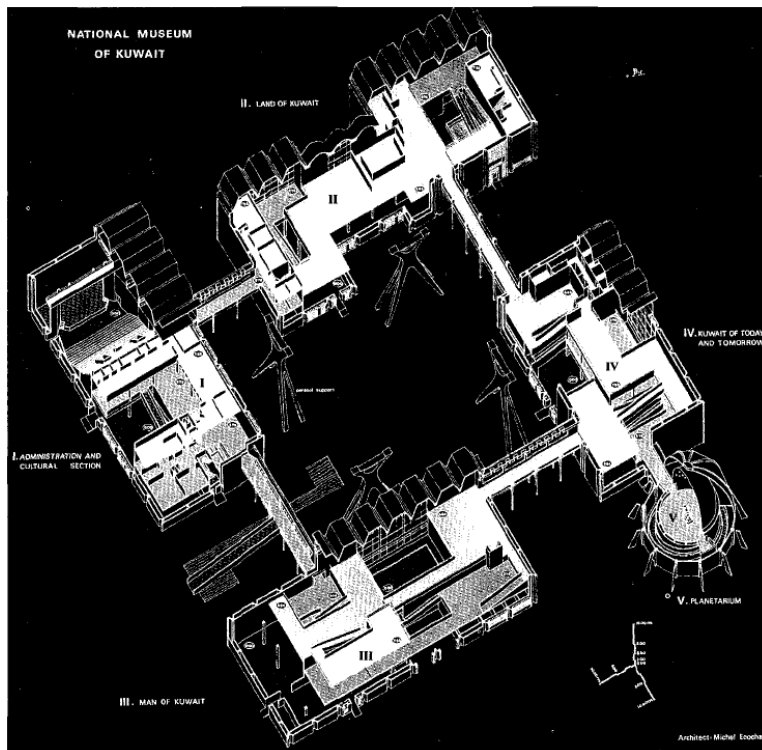


**Figure 14:** Representations of hieroglyph characters and their corresponding English letters. Source: <http://www.crystalinks.com/egyptwriting.html>

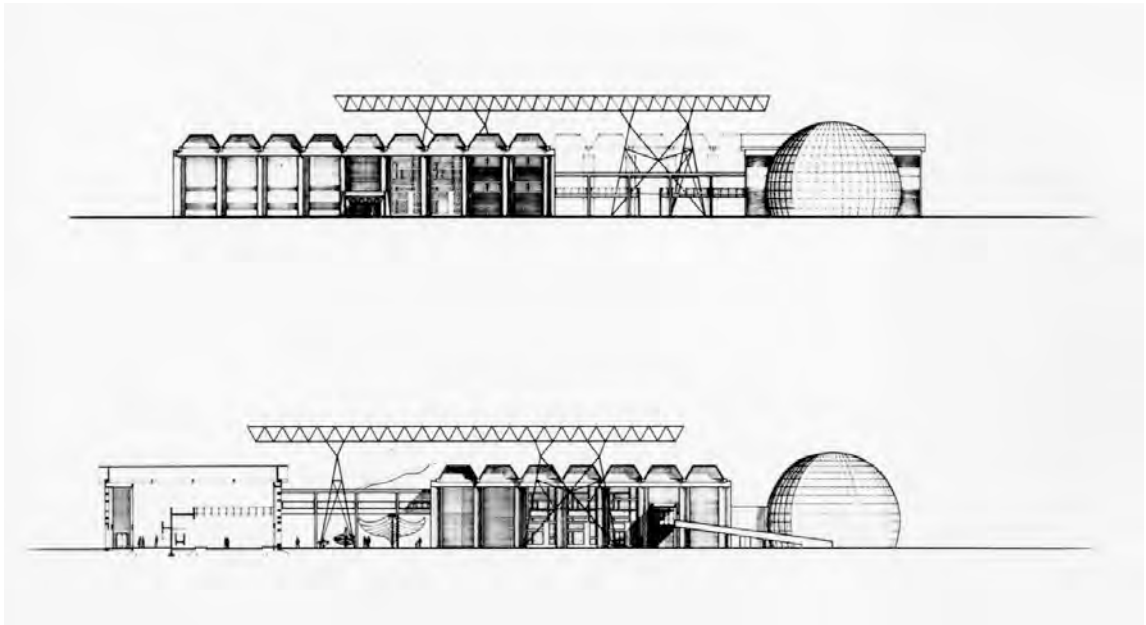




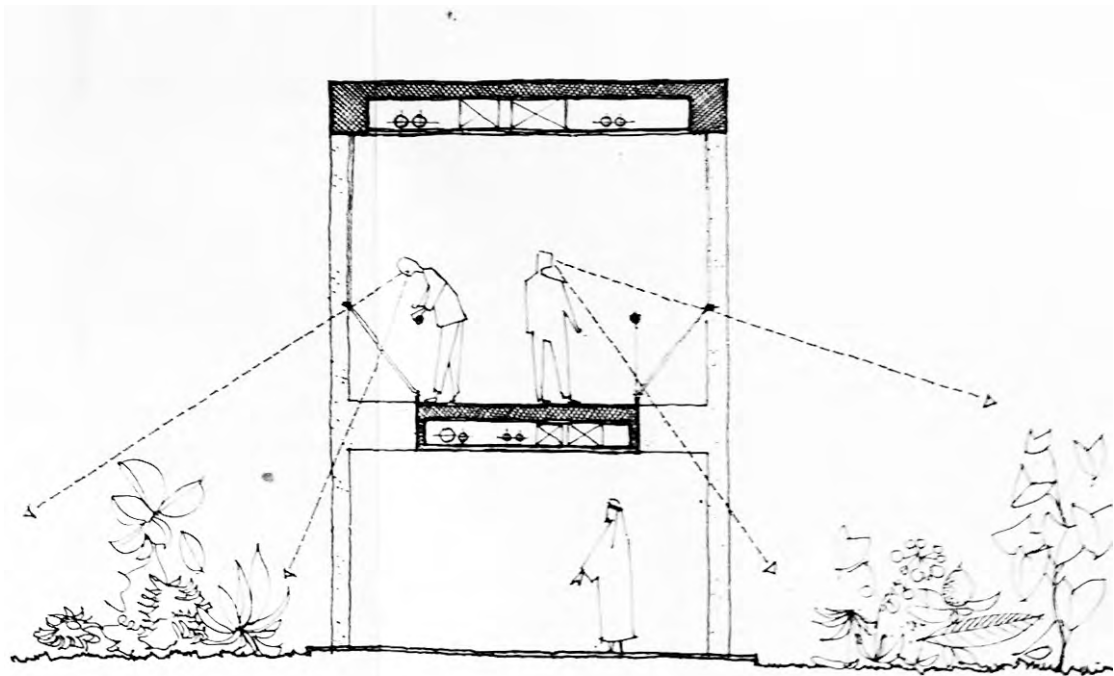
**Figure 15:** Photograph of the Kuwait National Museum’s Planetarium under construction. Source: Aga Khan Award for Architecture.



**Figure 16:** Axonometric drawing of Michel Écochard’s design for Kuwait National Museum. The drawing also shows the connecting bridges between the separate buildings and the planetarium on the right bottom corner. Source: Michel Écochard, “The National Museum of Kuwait”. In *Places of Public Gathering in Islam*, edited by Linda Safran. (Philadelphia: Aga Khan Award for Architecture, 1980.)



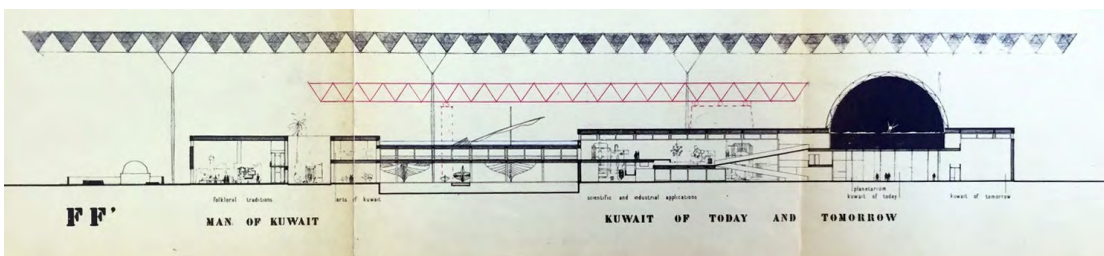
**Figure 17:** Two sections of Kuwait National Museum. Source: Aga Khan Award for Architecture.



**Figure 18:** Section through one of the connecting bridges within the Kuwait National Museum complex. Source: Aga Khan Award for Architecture.



**Figure 19:** A close-up photograph of one of the columns with the four legs (a symbolic form of a camel) of the Kuwait National Museum showing. Source: Aga Khan Award for Architecture.



**Figure 20:** A long section through Kuwait National Museum showing the Écochard's earlier proposal for the space-frame to cover the entire complex. Source: Michel Écochard's Archive at Ifa/Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle.



**Figure 21:** A conceptual drawing by Raili and Reima Pietilä showing the arches and of the Ministry of Exterior Affairs in Kuwait. Source: Franco Albini's Archive, Milan.



**Figure 22:** A photograph of the Ministry of Exterior Affairs in Kuwait. Source: Aga Khan Award for Architecture.



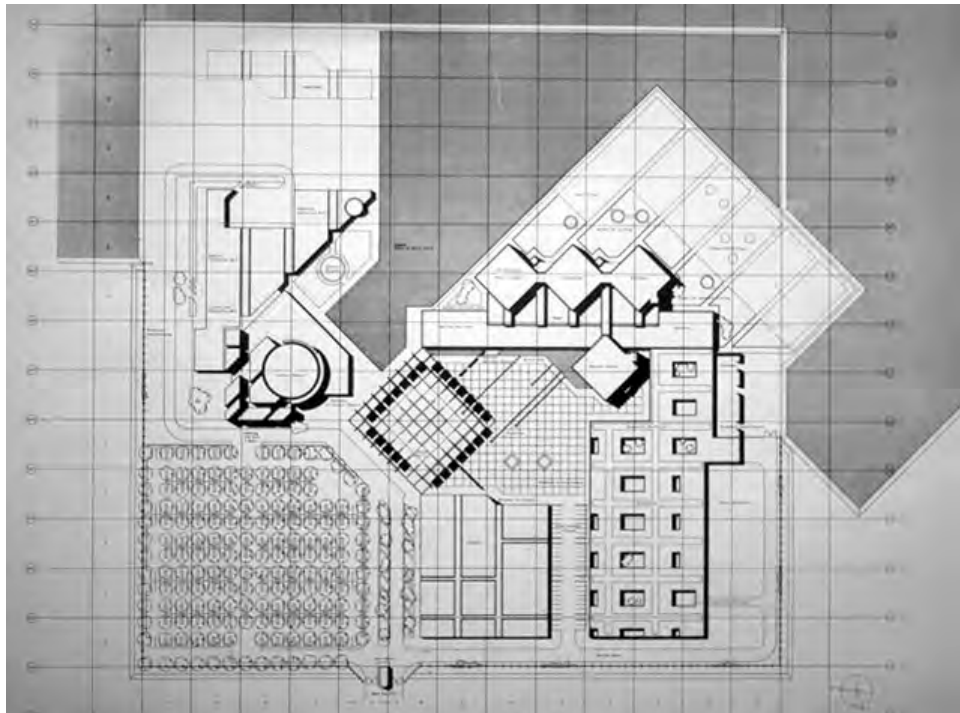
**Figure 23:** A photograph of Kuwait National Museum showing the redbrick cladding and one of the window patterns. Source: Aga Khan Award for Architecture.



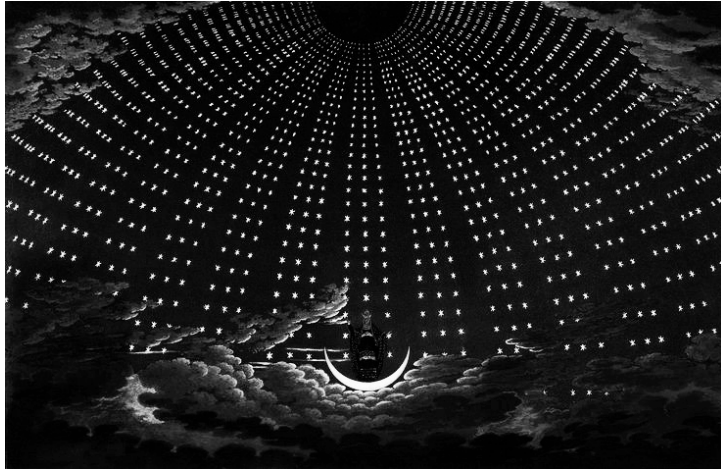
**Figure 24:** A photograph of Kuwait National Museum showing one of the connecting bridges. Source: Aga Khan Award for Architecture.



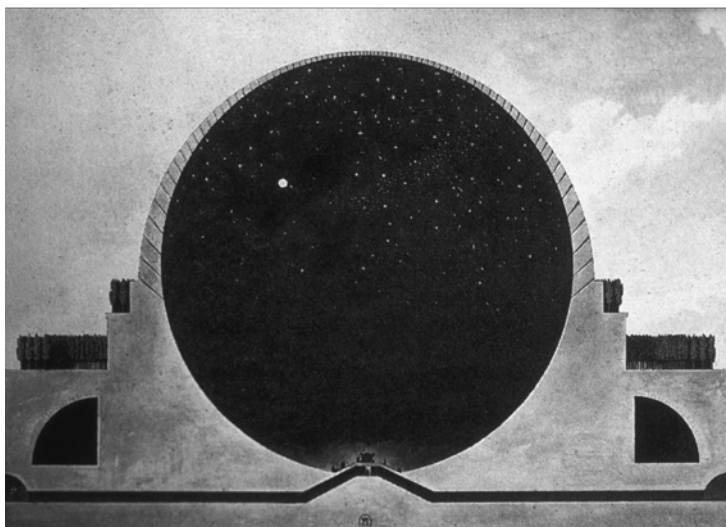
**Figure 25:** Photograph of the Bahrain National Museum showing the entire complex. Source: Knud Holscher, “The National Museum of Bahrain”. *Mimar 35: Architecture in Development*, Hasan-Uddin Khan, ed. (London: Concept Media Ltd., 1990). 24-29.



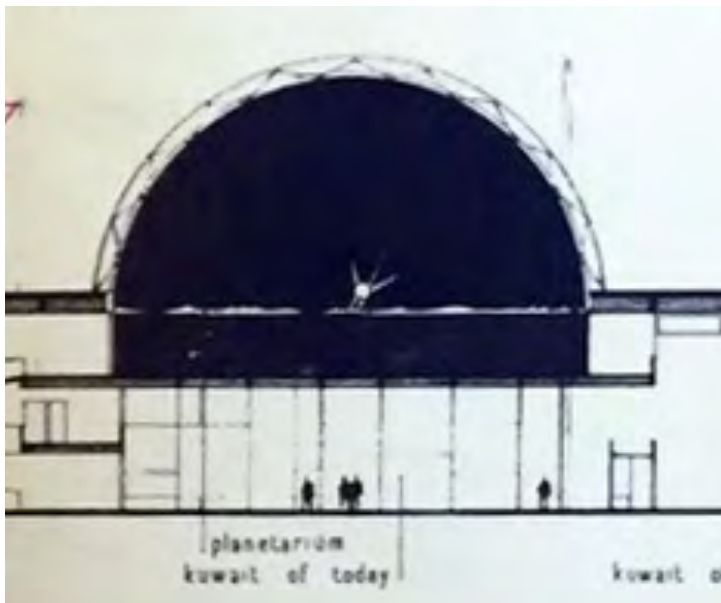
**Figure 26:** Plan of Bahrain National Museum the top right part of the museum holds similar resemblance to Michel Écochard’s earlier design for Kuwait National Museum shown in figure 10. Source: Knud Holscher, “The National Museum of Bahrain”. *Mimar 35: Architecture in Development*, Hasan-Uddin Khan, ed. (London: Concept Media Ltd., 1990). 24-29.



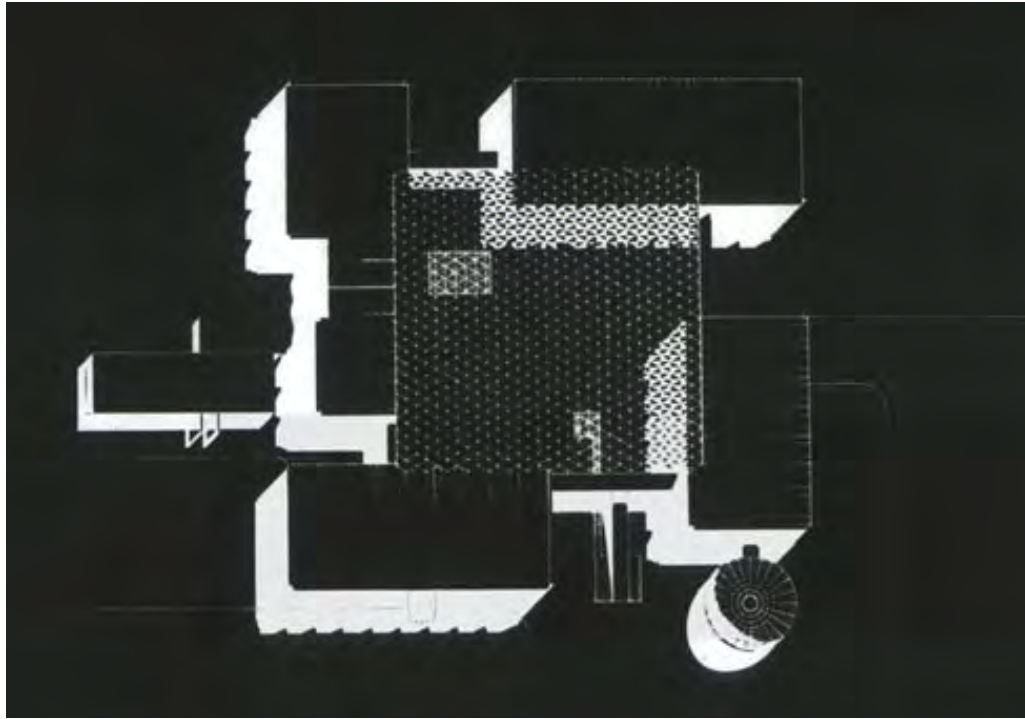
**Figure 27:** One of Karl Friedrich Schinkel's original set designs for *The Magic Flute*. Source: <http://www.kunsthalle-muc.de/en/exhibitions/details/karl-friedrich-schinkel-2/>



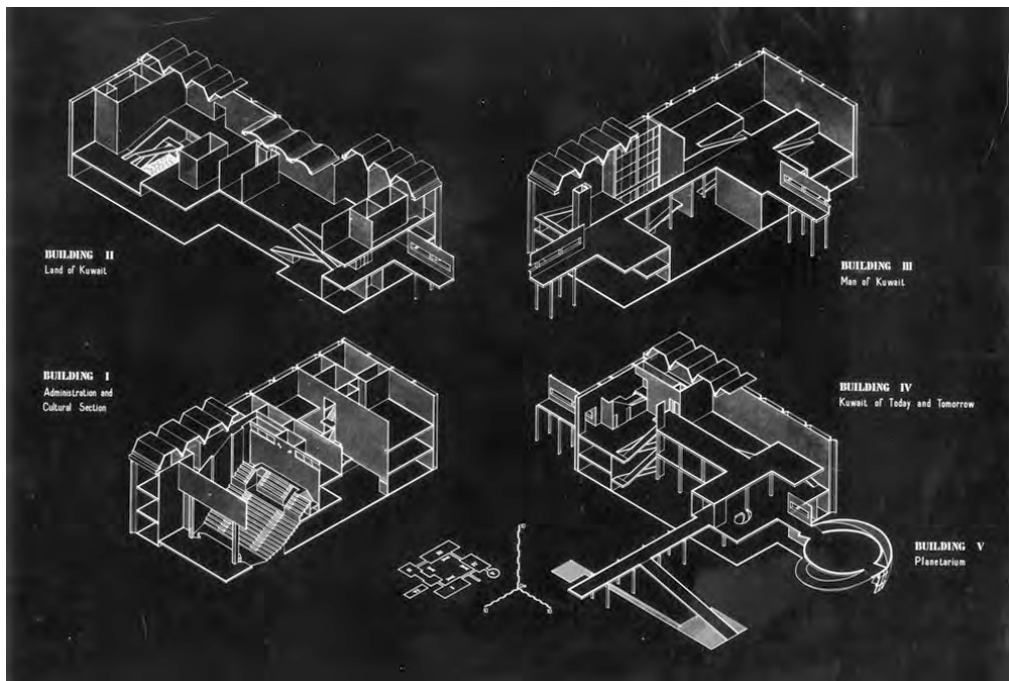
**Figure 28:** Section drawing of Etienne-Louis Boullée's Cenotaph for Newton. Source: Michelle Miller. "AD Classics: Cenotaph for Newton / Etienne-Louis Boullée" 10 Sep 2014. ArchDaily. Accessed 10 Apr 2016. <<http://www.archdaily.com/544946/ad-classics-cenotaph-for-newton-etienne-louis-boullée/>>



**Figure 29:** Section through the planetarium of Kuwait National Museum showing the Écochard's earlier proposal for the space-frame to cover the entire complex. Source: Michel Écochard's Archive at Ifa/Archives d'architecture du XXe siècle.

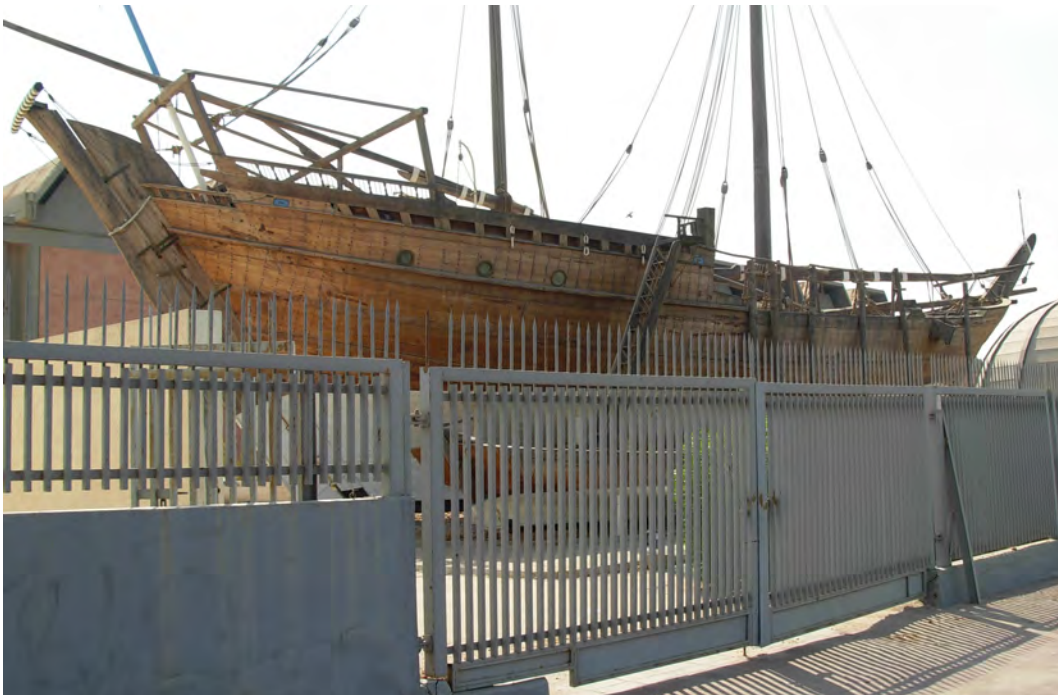


**Figure 30:** Axonometric drawing of Kuwait National Museum. Source: Aga Khan Award for Architecture.



**Figure 31:** Exploded axonometric drawing of Kuwait National Museum. Source: Aga Khan Award for Architecture.





**Figure 32:** Photograph of Kuwait National Museum's old fence: Source: Aga Khan Award for Architecture.



**Figure 33:** Photograph of the Kuwait National Museum's model after renovations and extension. Source: Pace Architecture Engineering + Planning Archive.



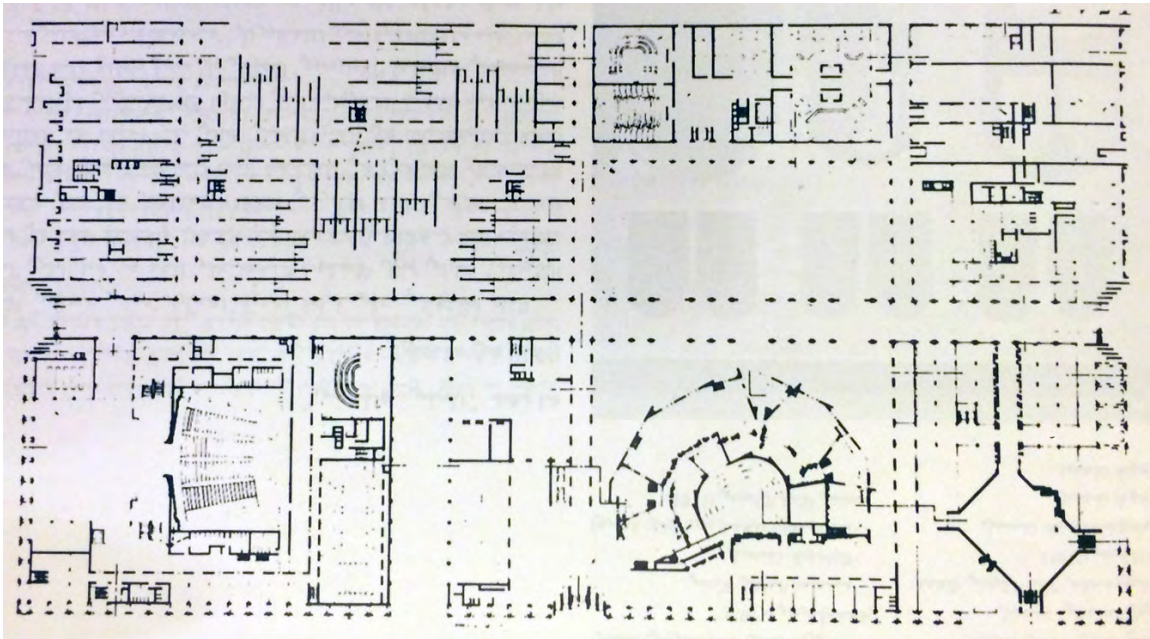
**Figure 34:** Balkrishna Vithaldas Doshi's proposal for Kuwait National Assembly. Source: Roberto Fabbri, Sara Saragoça Soare, and Ricardo Camacho. *Modern Architecture Kuwait. 1949-1989.* (Zurich: Niggli, 2016).



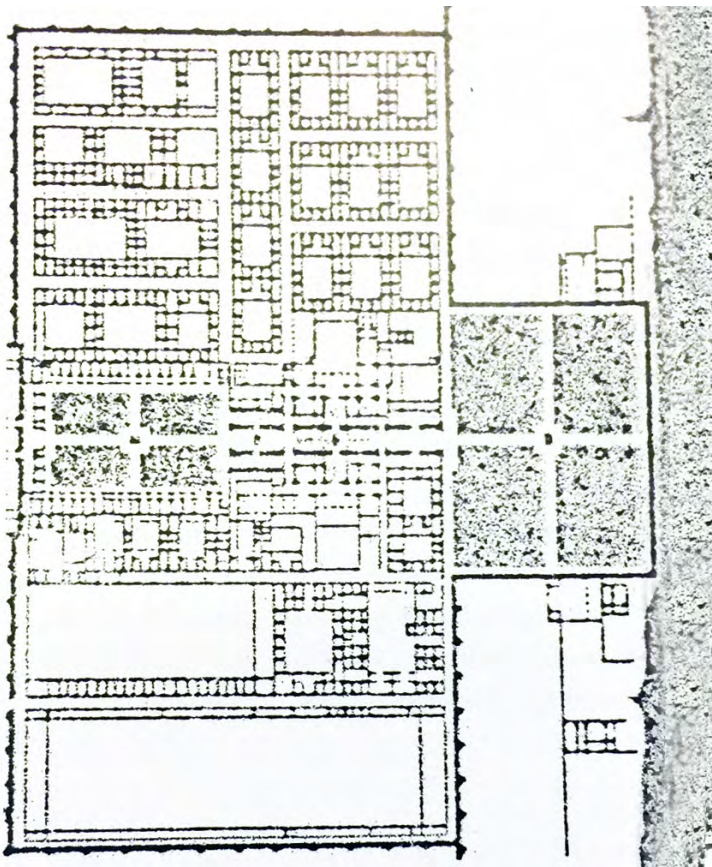
**Figure 35:** Balkrishna Vithaldas Doshi's proposal for Kuwait National Assembly. Source: Roberto Fabbri, Sara Saragoça Soare, and Ricardo Camacho. *Modern Architecture Kuwait. 1949-1989.* (Zurich: Niggli, 2016).



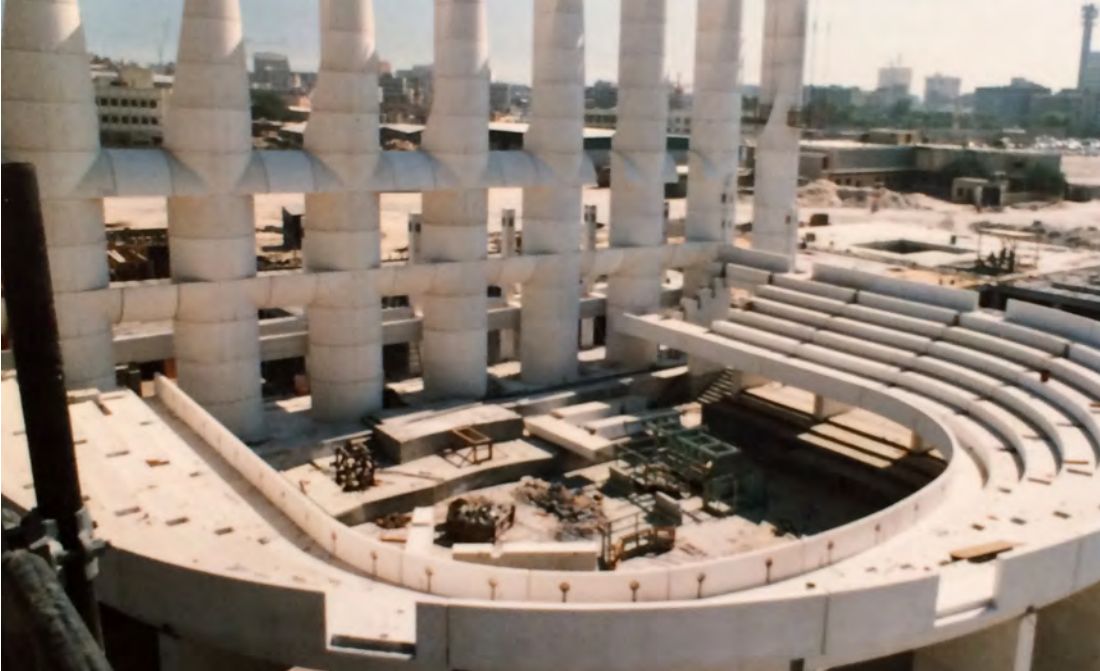
**Figure 36:** Three photographs of Spence, Bonnington & Collins' architectural model of their proposal for Kuwait National Assembly. Source: "Kuwait National Assembly Competition: Competition Entry by Sir Basil Spence, Bonnington & Collins" in *Building Design*, n.137 (Feb. 1973) 16-7.



**Figure 37:** Plan of Rifat Chadirji's proposal for the Kuwait National Assembly:  
Source Khalid al-Sultani. *Tanas Memari* [Architectural Intertextuality],  
(Damascus: Almada, 2007).



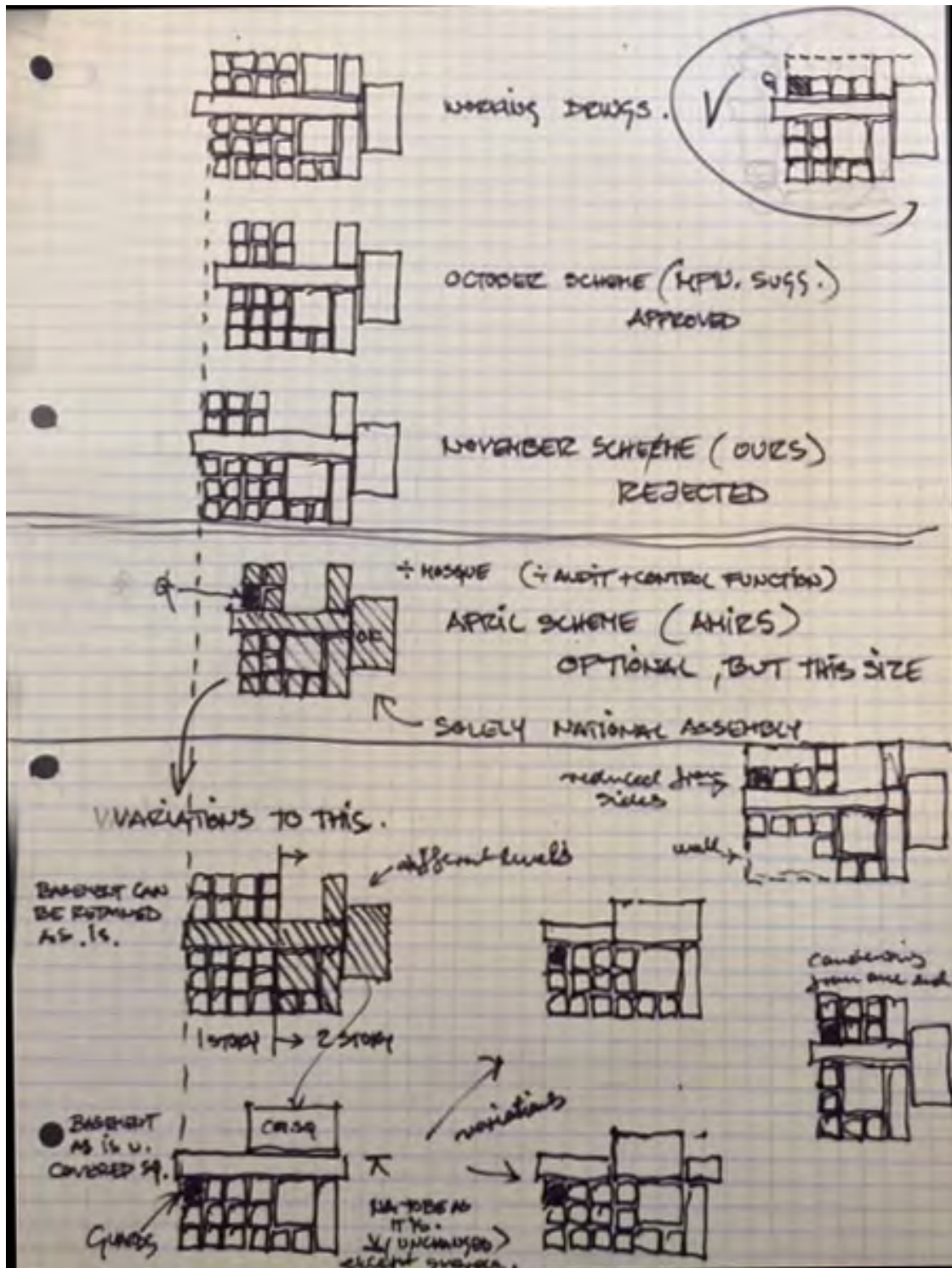
**Figure 38:** Early plan of Jørn Utzon's proposal for Kuwait National Assembly.  
Source Khalid al-Sultani. *Tanas Memari* [Architectural Intertextuality],  
(Damascus: Almada, 2007).



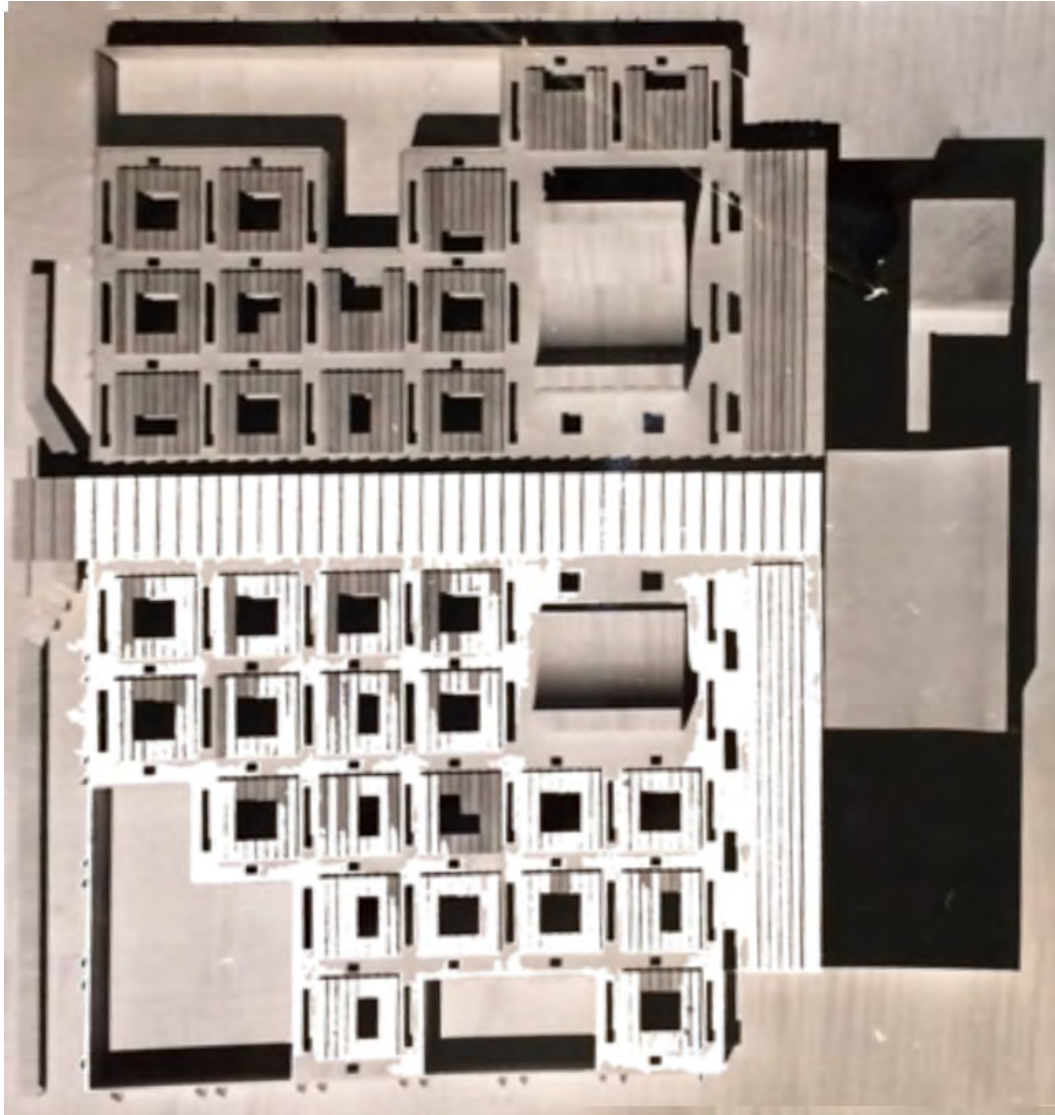
**Figure 39:** A photograph of the Kuwait National Assembly Building under construction showing the curve of seating arrangement in the main assembly Hall. Source: Jørn Utzon Archive, Aalborg.



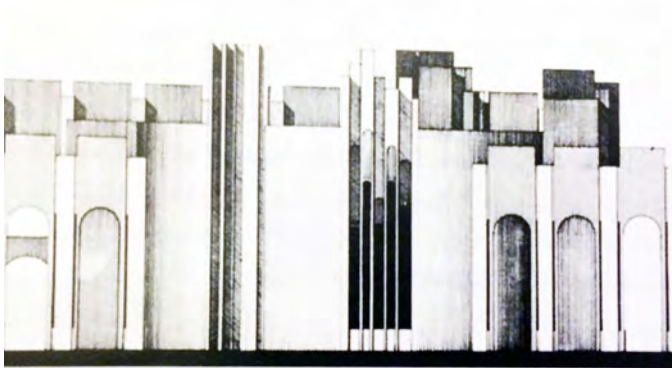
**Figure 40:** A photograph of the original Kuwait Central Bank before renovation. Source: Aga Khan Award for Architecture.



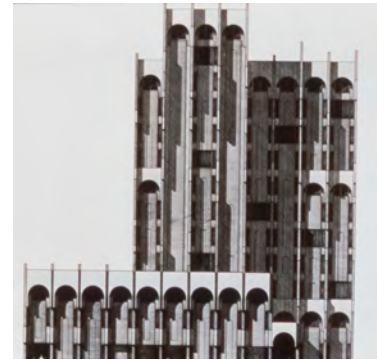
**Figure 41:** Diagram showing Jørn Utzon's concept of "additive architecture" for Kuwait National Assembly. Source: Jørn Utzon Archive, Aalborg.



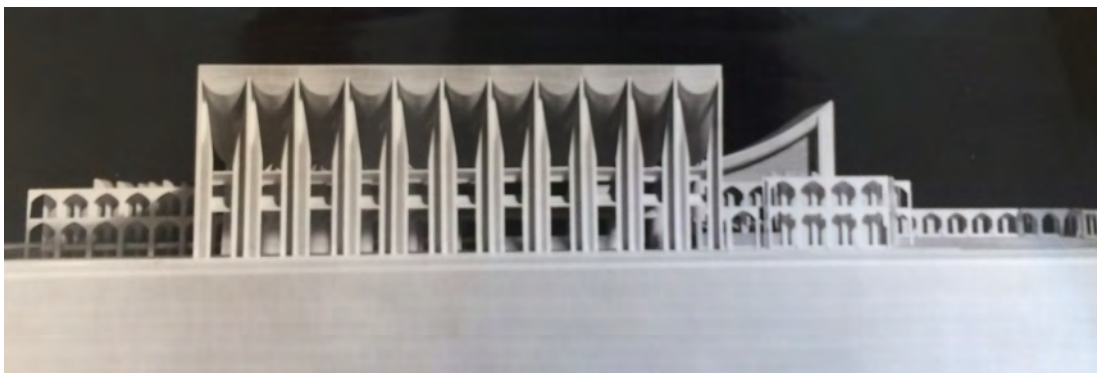
**Figure 42:** A photograph of Kuwait National Assembly model showing his additive architecture concept. The image also demonstrate the “street in the sky” or connecting bridge in the back of the building (the edge on the left side of the photograph). Source: Jørn Utzon et al, eds. *Logbook Vol. IV: Kuwait National Assembly – prefab*. Hellerup: Edition Bløndal, 2008.



**Figure 43:** Elevation drawing of Rifat Chadirji's proposal for Kuwait National Assembly. Source: Khalid al-Sultani. *Tanas Memari* [Architectural Intertextuality], (Demasuc: Almada, 2007).



**Figure 44:** Elevation drawing of Rifat Chadirji design of Baghdad's Central Post Office. Source: Aga Khan Award for Architecture.



**Figure 45:** Photograph of Jørn Utzon model for Kuwait National Assembly. Source: Jørn Utzon Archive, Aalborg.





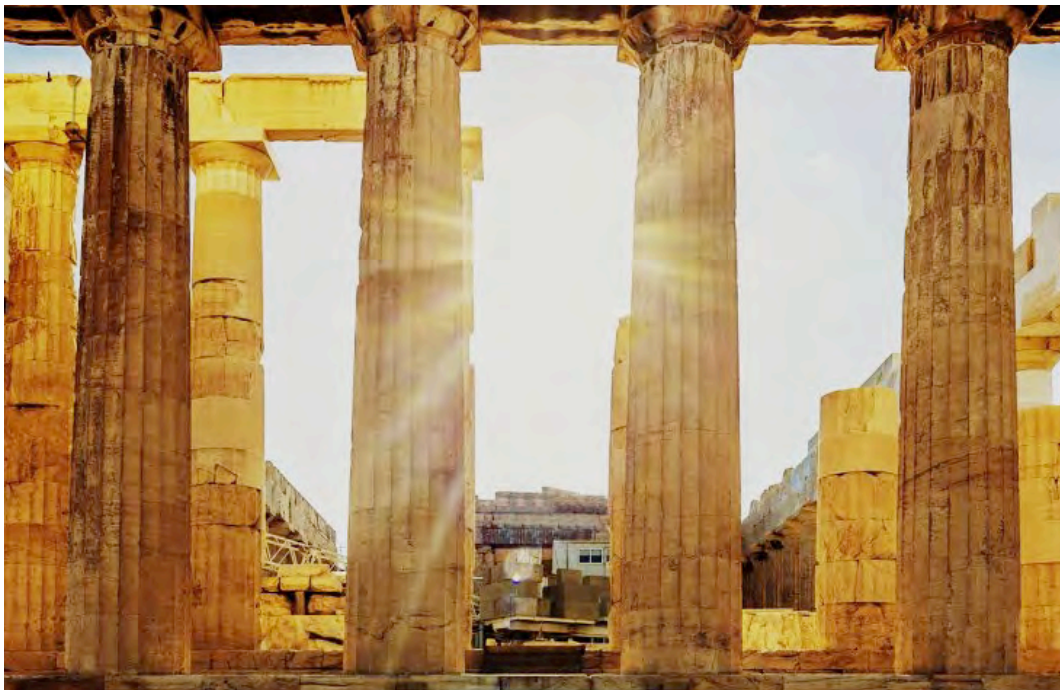
**Figure 46:** Still from Graham Stevens' film of the "Desert Cloud" shot in Kuwait (1974). Source: Graham Stevens, "Graham Stevens Desert Cloud and other lightweight wonders", University of Westminster. <https://youtu.be/4-hGmd-j34I>



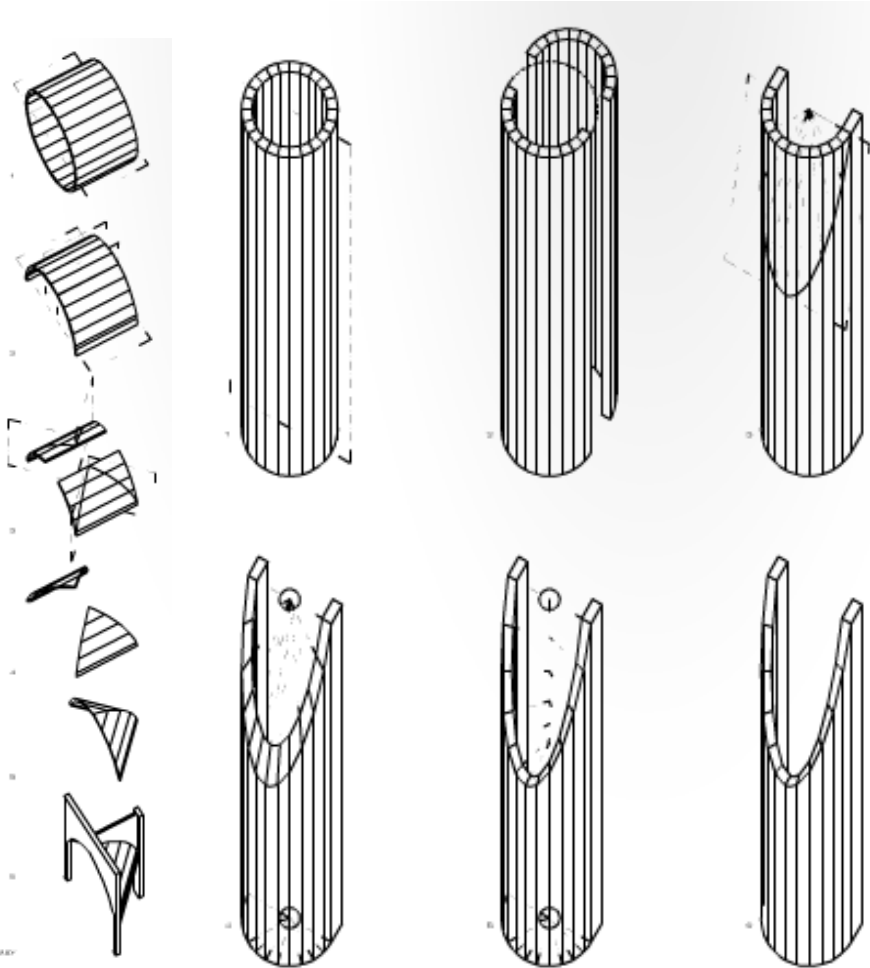
**Figure 47:** Photograph of Kuwait National Assembly's canopy. Source: <http://catalogo.artium.org/book/export/html/7747> (the image is flipped horizontally and modified to grey scale mode)



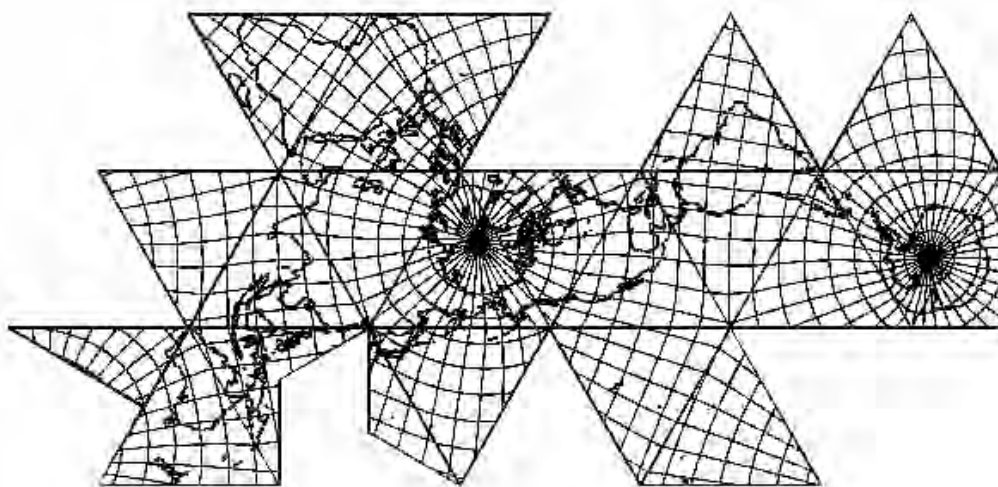
**Figure 48:** Photograph of Kuwait National Assembly columniation. Source: Jørn Utzon Archive, Aalborg.



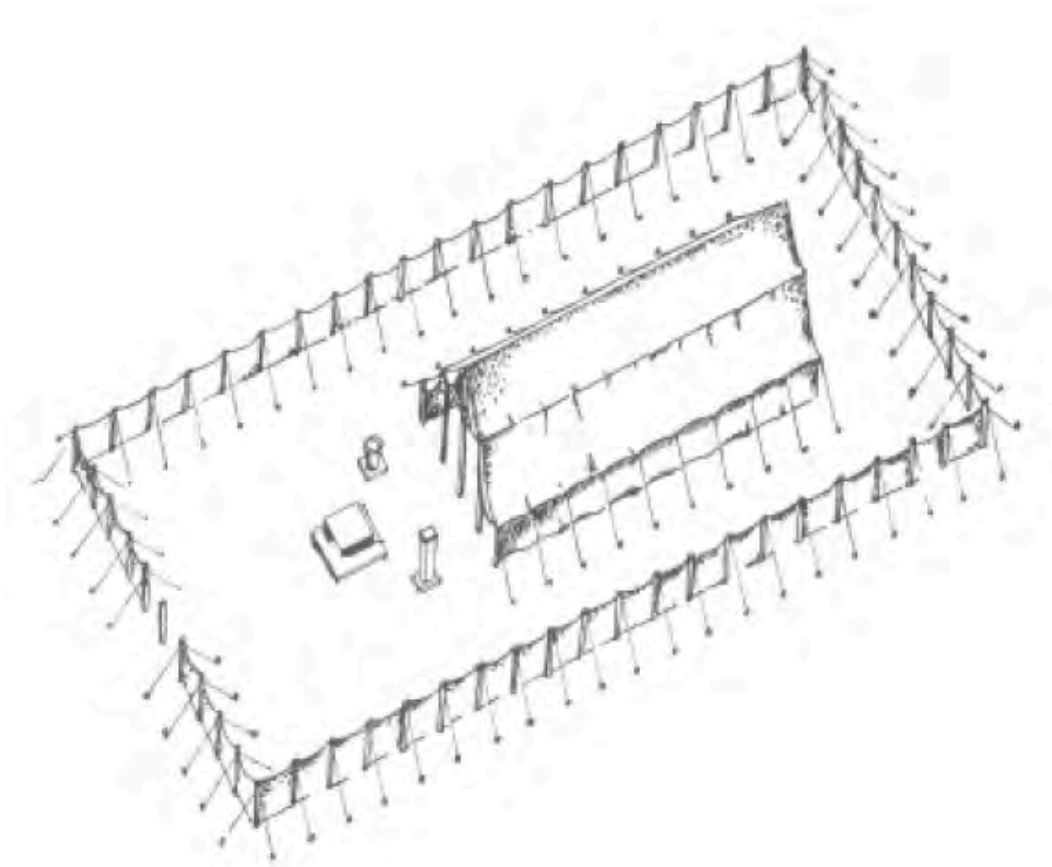
**Figure 49:** Photograph of the columniation of the Parthenon, Greece. Source: Laurie L. Dove "Does the Parthenon really follow the golden ratio?" 22 April 2015. HowStuffWorks.com. <<http://history.howstuffworks.com/history-vs-myth/parthenon-golden-ratio.htm>>



**Figure 50:** Diagram showing Jørn Utzon's process in designing the columns of Kuwait National Assembly. Source: Jørn Utzon et al, eds. *Logbook Vol. IV: Kuwait National Assembly – prefab*. Hellerup: Edition Bløndal, 2008.



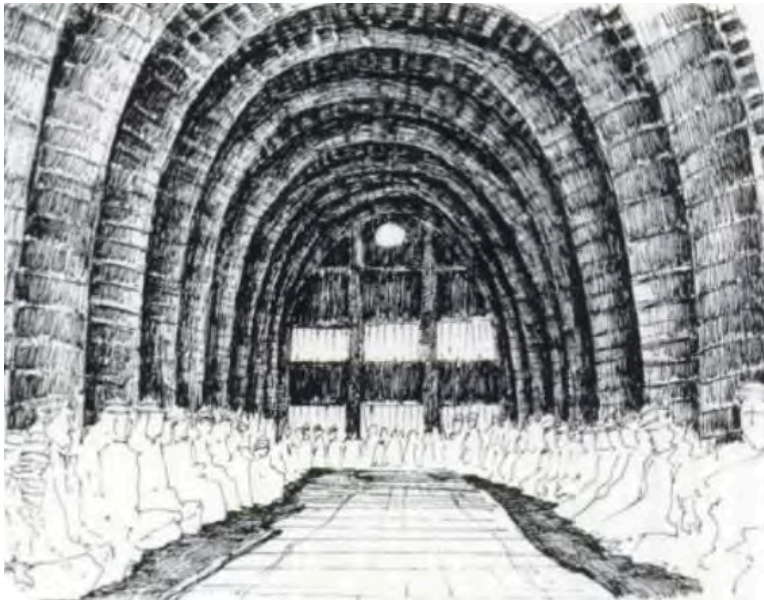
**Figure 51:** Buckminster Fuller's Dymaxion Map. Source: Robert Gray, <http://www.rwgrayprojects.com/rbfnote/maps/images/fmap3.gif>



**Figure 52:** Drawing of tabernacle. Source: Michael Asgaard Andersen, “Revisiting Utzon’s Bagsværd Church”. *Nordisk Arkitekturforskning*, 2005.



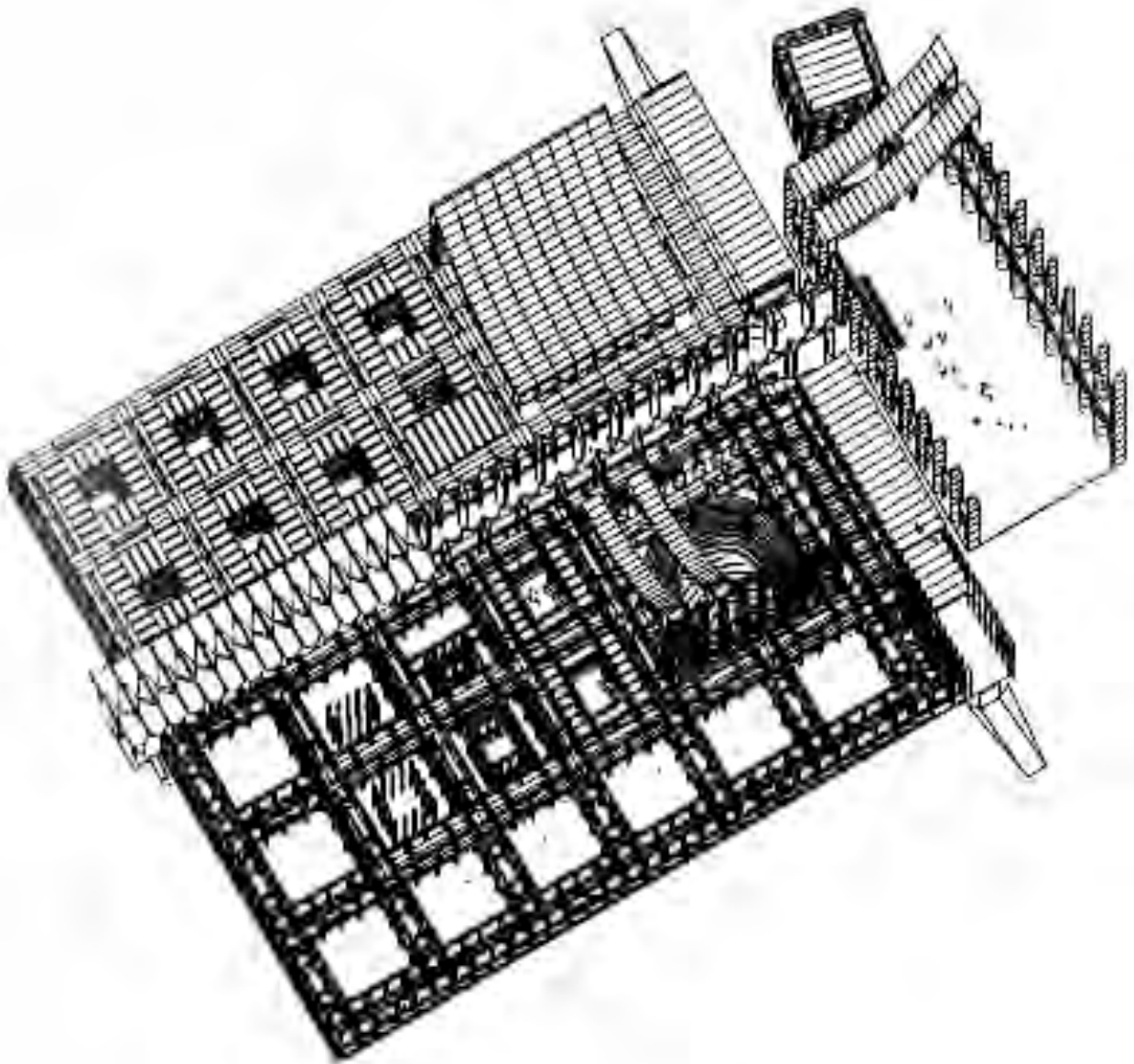
**Figure 53:** Photograph of a *Bait Shaar* (Bedouin tent ). Source: Jørn Utzon et al., eds. *Logbook Vol. IV: Kuwait National Assembly – prefab*. Hellerup: Edition Bløndal, 2008.



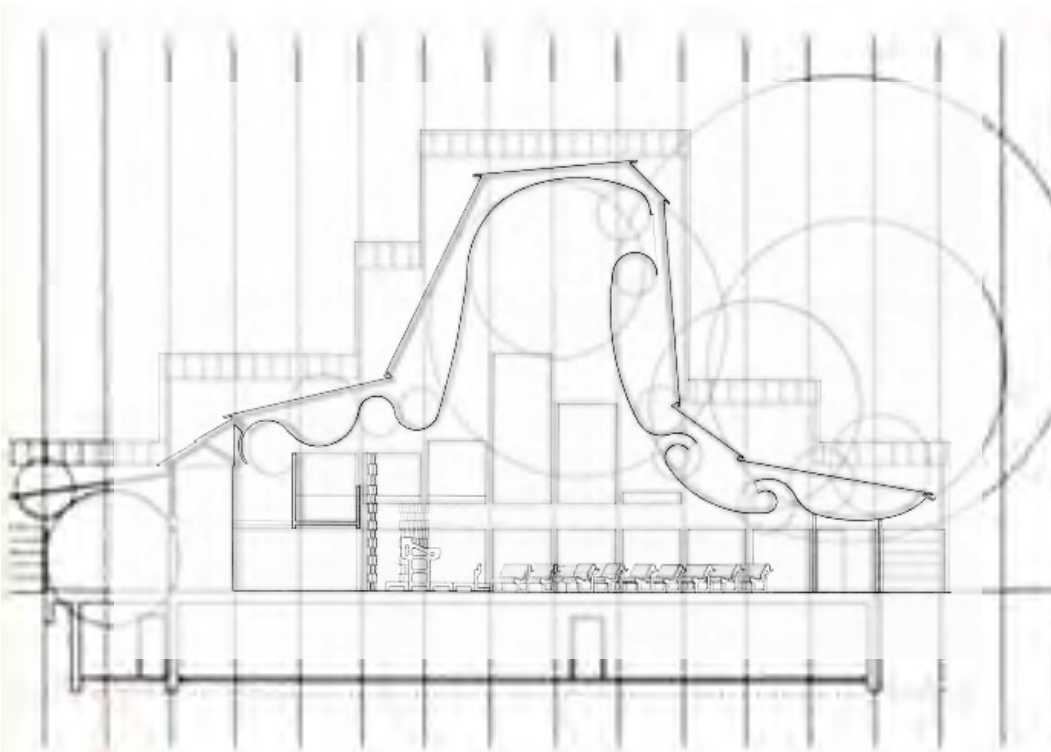
**Figure 54:** Drawing of the Marsh Arab mudhif. Source: Lawrence Vale. *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).



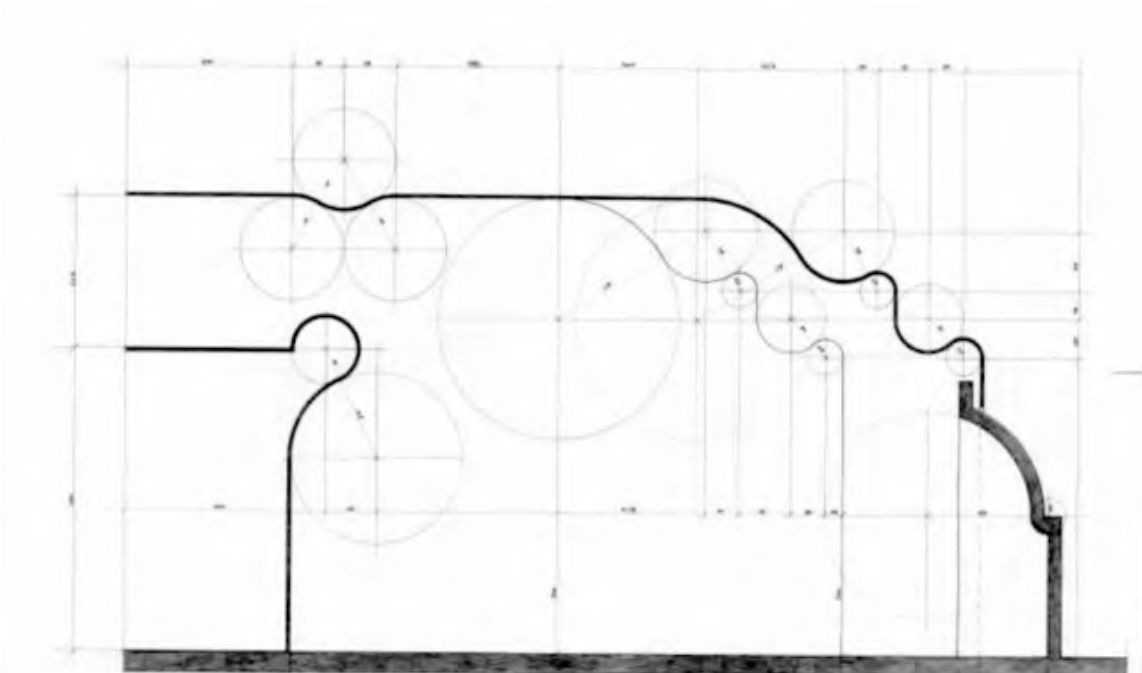
**Figure 55:** Photograph of Kuwait National Assembly hall. Source: Lawrence Vale. *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).



**Figure 56:** Axonometric drawing of Jørn Utzon's Kuwait National Assembly showing the mosque on the top right corner (angled cube structure). Source: Jørn Utzon et al., eds. *Logbook Vol. IV: Kuwait National Assembly – prefab*. Hellerup: Edition Bløndal, 2008.



**Figure 57:** Section drawing of Jørn Utzon's Bagsværd Church. Source: Jørn Utzon Archive, Aalborg.



**Figure 58:** Section drawing of Jørn Utzon's mosque of Kuwait National Assembly. Source: Jørn Utzon Archive, Aalborg.



**Figure 59:** Photograph of Fredrick Gibbered’s London Central Mosque. Source: <http://www.almrsal.com/post/130191/regents-park-mosque-also-known-as-london-central-mosque>

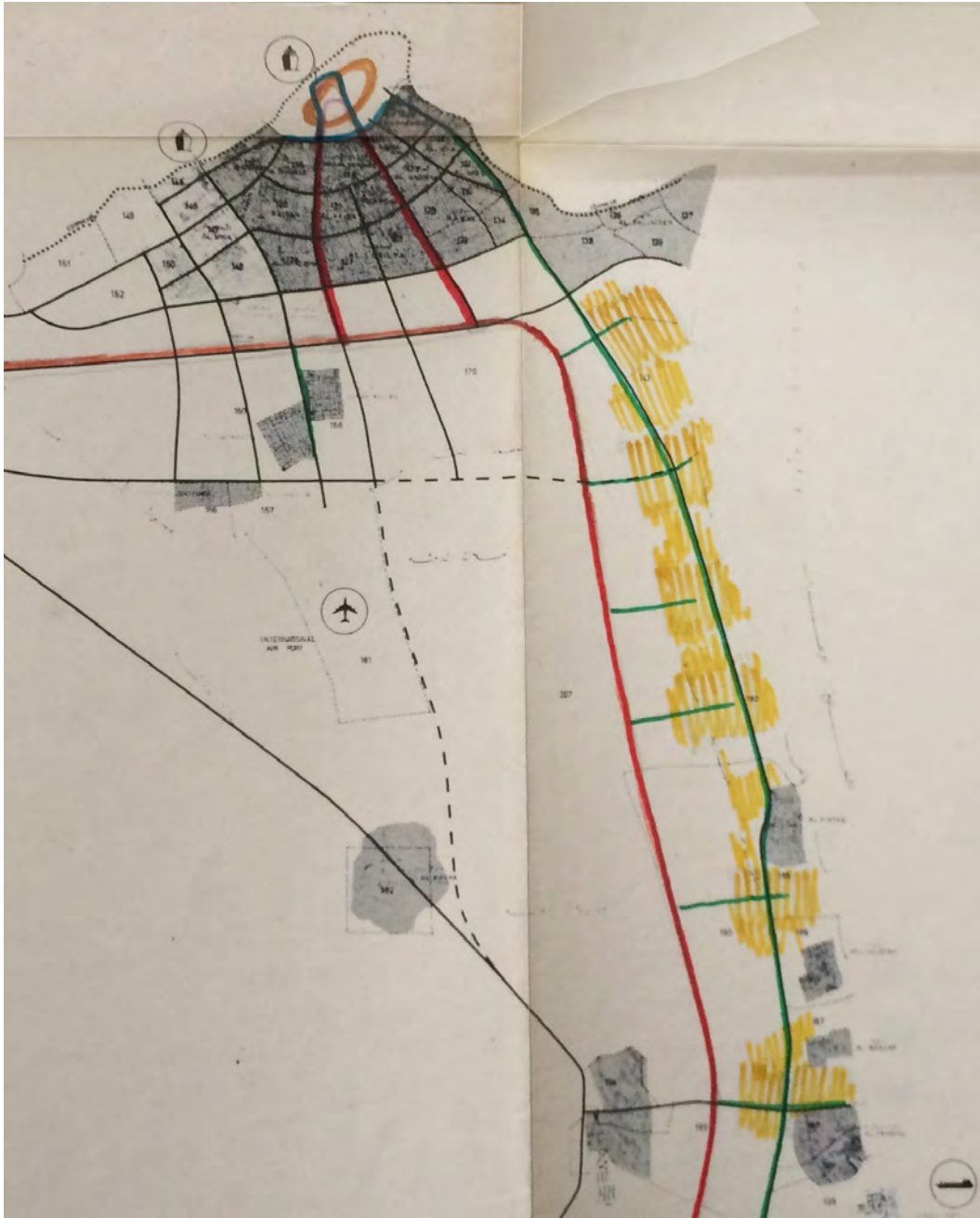


**Figure 60:** Photograph of Mohamed Makiya’s Kuwait Grand Mosque. . Source: <http://www.tourism-in-kuwait.com/grand-mosque/>

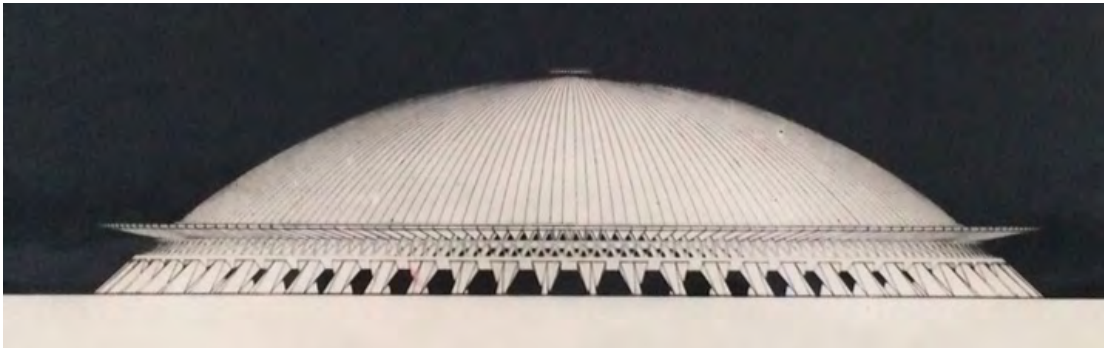




**Figure 61:** Highlights over Kuwait map showing major roads and the location of three important areas in Kuwait: old Kuwait city (top black dot), Kuwait International airport (black dot on the bottom left of the drawing), and Kuwait Sports Center (currently Kuwait International Fair Ground, the location is shown as a black dot on the bottom right of the image). Source: Franco Albini's Archive, Milan.



**Figure 62:** Highlights over a map of Kuwait showing major roads extensions and the location of future residential neighborhoods (shown in yellow). Source: Franco Albini's Archive, Milan.



**Figure 63:** Computer rendering of Pier Luigi Nervi's dome for Kuwait Sports Center. Source: Pier Luigi Nervi's archive in the Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo (MAXXI), Rome.



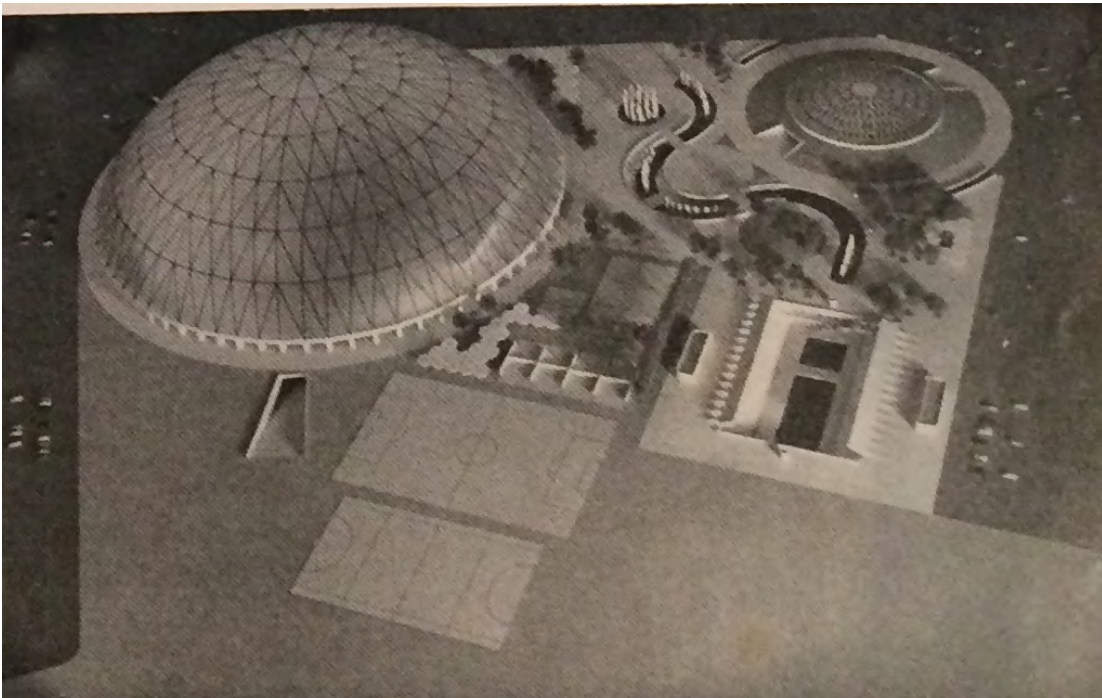
**Figure 64:** Photograph of Pier Luigi Nervi's model for the Kuwait Sports Center. Source: Nervi's archive in the Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo (MAXXI), Rome.



**Figure 65:** Perspective drawing of Kenzo Tange and Frei Otto's proposal for the Arctic City. Source: Douglas Murphy. "Frei Otto's Arctic City" 9 Apr 2014. *Icon: Design Worth Knowing*. Accessed 17 Dec 2015  
<http://www.iconeye.com/architecture/features/item/10164-frei-otto-s-arctic-city>



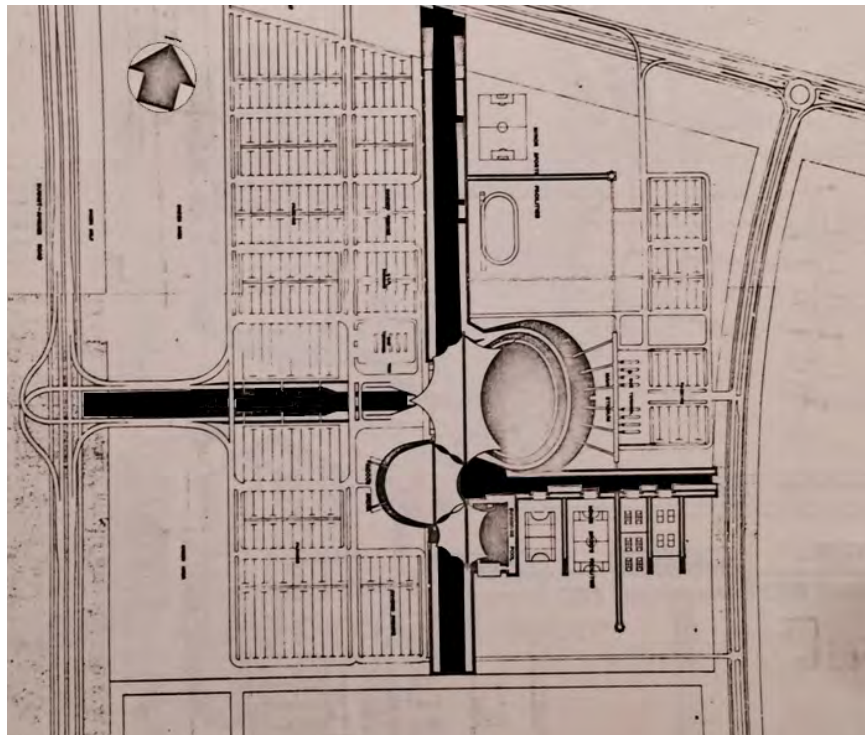
**Figure 66:** Photograph of Pier Luigi Nervi's model for Kuwait Sports Center showing the urban layout. Source: Nervi's archive in the Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo (MAXXI), Rome.



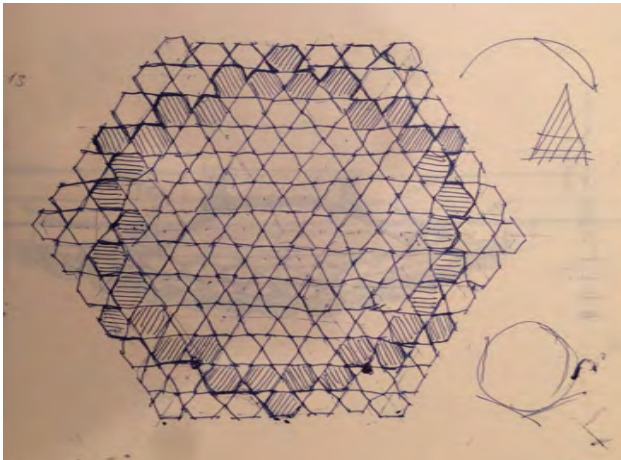
**Figure 67:** Photograph of Morgan, Lloyd, and Jones' model for Kuwait Sports Center. Source: Source: E.H. "Kuwait Sports Centre", *Architectural Design* (March, 1970). 134-7.



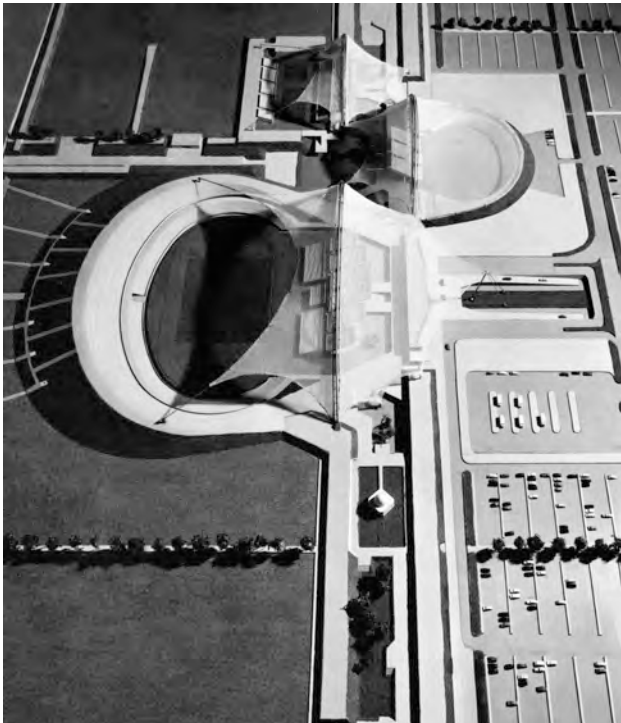
**Figure 68:** Photograph of Félix Candela, Juan Antonio Tonda, and Juan Avila's model for Kuwait Sports Center showing the site plan. Source: E.H. "Kuwait Sports Centre", *Architectural Design* (March, 1970). 134-7.



**Figure 69:** Site plan of Kenzo Tange and Frei Otto's Kuwait Sports Center. Source: E.H. "Kuwait Sports Centre", *Architectural Design* (March, 1970). 134-7.



**Figure 70:** Structural sketch of Félix Candela's proposal for Kuwait Sports Center. Source: Félix Candela Archive at Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library (Columbia University, NYC).

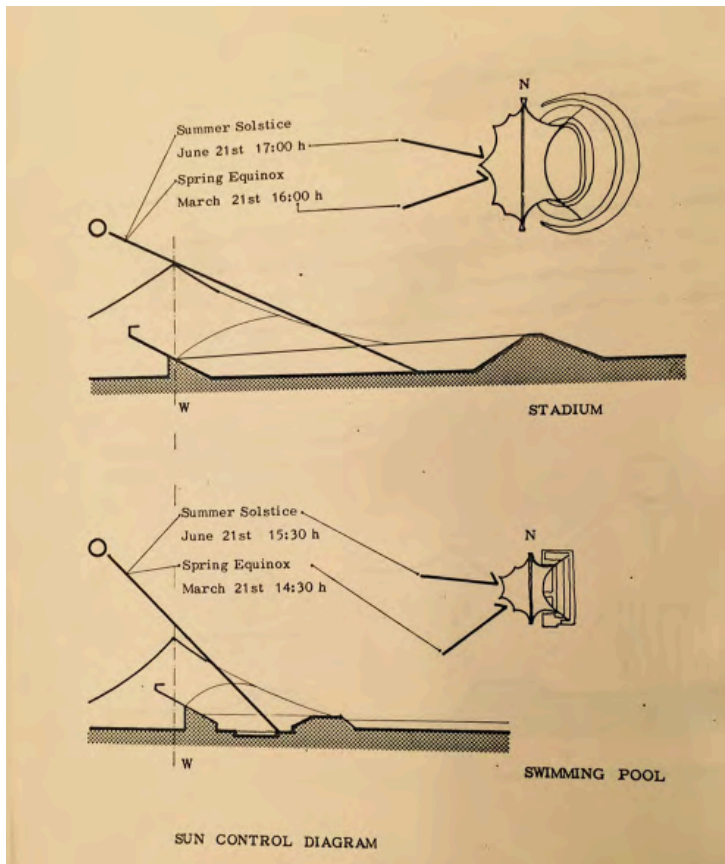
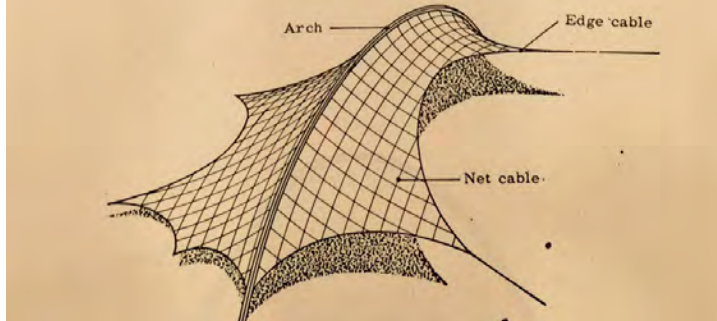


**Figure 71:** Photograph of Kenzo Tange and Frei Otto's model for Kuwait Sports Center. Source: E.H. "Kuwait Sports Centre", *Architectural Design* (March, 1970). 134-7.



**Figure 72:** Aerial photograph of Frei Otto's tensile structure for the Munich Olympic Stadium (in association with Gunther Behnisch). Source: Andrew Kroll. "AD Classics: Munich Olympic Stadium / Frei Otto and Gunther Behnisch" 11 Feb 2011. *ArchDaily*. Accessed 17 Dec 2015. <<http://www.archdaily.com/109136/ad-classics-munich-olympic-stadium-frei-otto-gunther-behnisch/>>

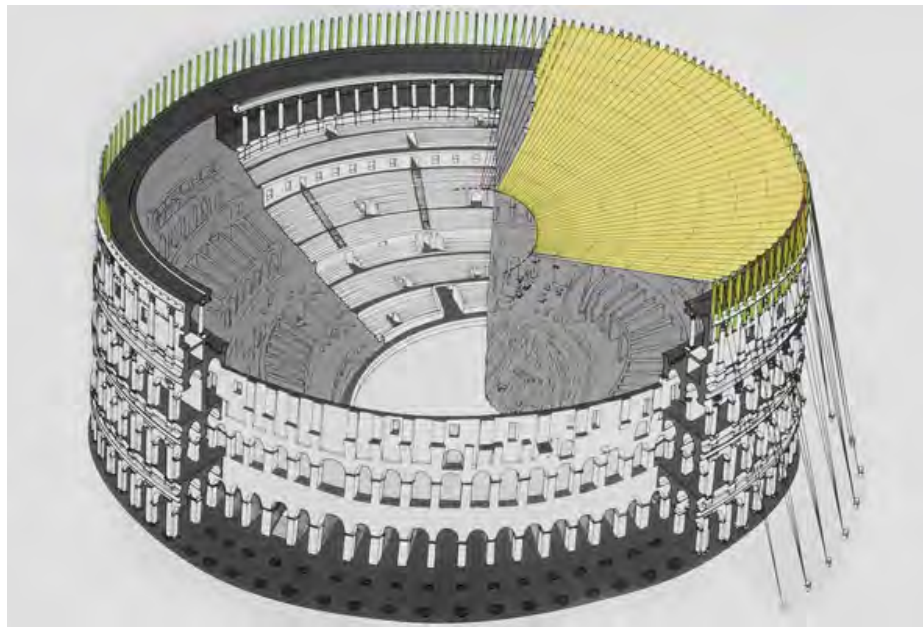
In a practical sense, the development of tension structures has progressed rapidly over recent years. The National Gymnasium in Tokyo for the 1964 Olympic Games, and the German Pavillion for the Montreal Exposition are instances of its recent practical application. The projected Olympic Centre in Munich is another adaption.



**Figure 73:** Rendering of Frei Otto's tensile structure and sections of Kenzo Tange's proposal for Kuwait Sports Center showing their structure's climate control ability that acts as an oasis in desert. Source: Kenzo Tange and Urtec and Frei Otto, "Report on Sport Center Project: Kuwait, February 1969. Félix Candela Archive at Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, NYC.



**Figure 74:** Photograph of Kenzo Tange and Frei Otto's model for Kuwait Sports Center. Source: S. Z. "Ahdath Madina Reyadhiya" ["Newest Sports City"], *Alarabi*. No 130 (September, 1969): 52-8.



**Figure 75:** a drawing of coliseum showing how the *velarium* or the protective awning that might have been stretched over the spectators' seating. Source: <http://www.necpa.org/blog/velarium-vibe>

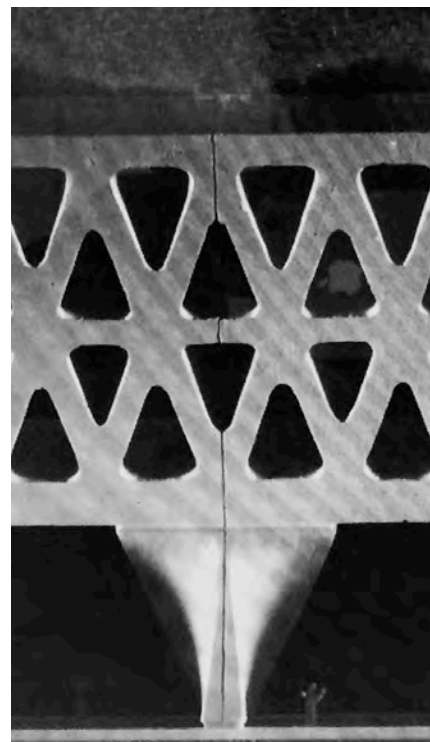
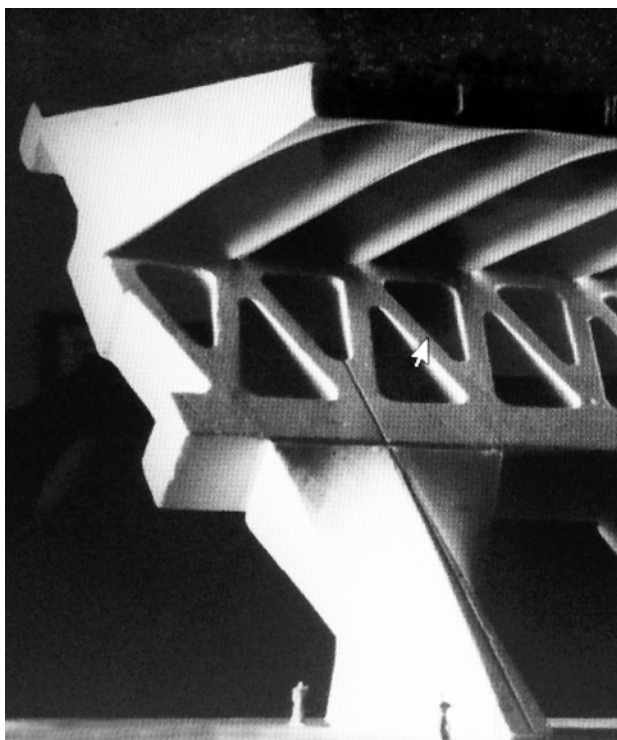




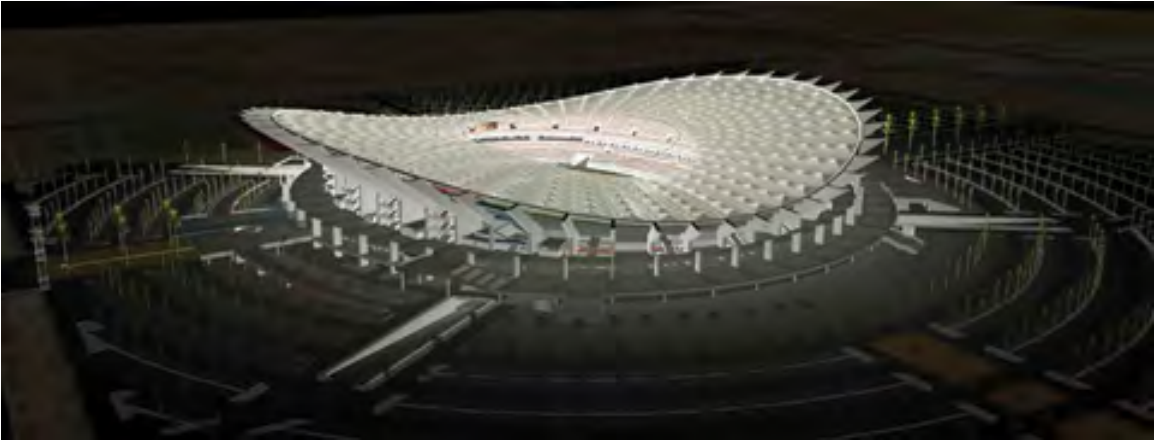
**Figure 76:** Computer rendering of Google headquarters designed by the collaboration of Bjarke Ingels and Thomas Heatherwick. Source: <http://www.dezeen.com/2015/03/05/bjarke-ingels-interview-movie-google-california-hq-thomas-heatherwick-workshop/>



**Figure 77:** Photograph of Kenzo Tange Yoyogi National Gymnasium. Source: Andrew Kroll. “AD Classics: Yoyogi National Gymnasium / Kenzo Tange” 15 Feb 2011. *ArchDaily*. Accessed 20 Dec 2015. <<http://www.archdaily.com/109138/ad-classics-yoyogi-national-gymnasium-kenzo-tange/>>



**Figure 78:** The two images on the top are photographs of a typical structure of the three sports club that were constructed between 1970-1977, while the two images on the bottom are two view of the structure proposed by Pier Luigi Nervi for the Kuwait Sport Center competition (supposedly never realized). The similarity between the two is impeccable Source: Roberto Fabbri, Sara Saragoça Soare, and Ricardo Camacho. *Modern Architecture Kuwait. 1949-1989.* (Zurich: Niggli, 2016), and Pier Luigi Nervi's archive in the Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo (MAXXI), Rome.



**Figure 79:** Aerial photograph of Sheikh Jabir al-Ahmed Al-Sabah Stadium. Source: Hanan Al-Saadoun. “Interior Ministry overseas Jaber Stadium Security Plan”. 08 Dec 2015. *Kuwait Times*. Accessed 17 Dec 2015. <http://news.kuwaittimes.net/website/10667-2/>



**Figure 80:** Side view photograph of Sheikh Jabir al-Ahmed Al-Sabah Stadium the day of its inauguration. Source: Iddris Seidu. “Triumphant Opening for Kuwait All-Stars – Great Atmosphere, Great Stadium, Says Beckham”. 19 Dec 2015. *Arab Times*. Accessed 19 Jan 2016. <http://www.arabtimesonline.com/news/triumphant-opening-for-kuwait-all-stars-great-atmosphere-great-stadium-says-beckham/>



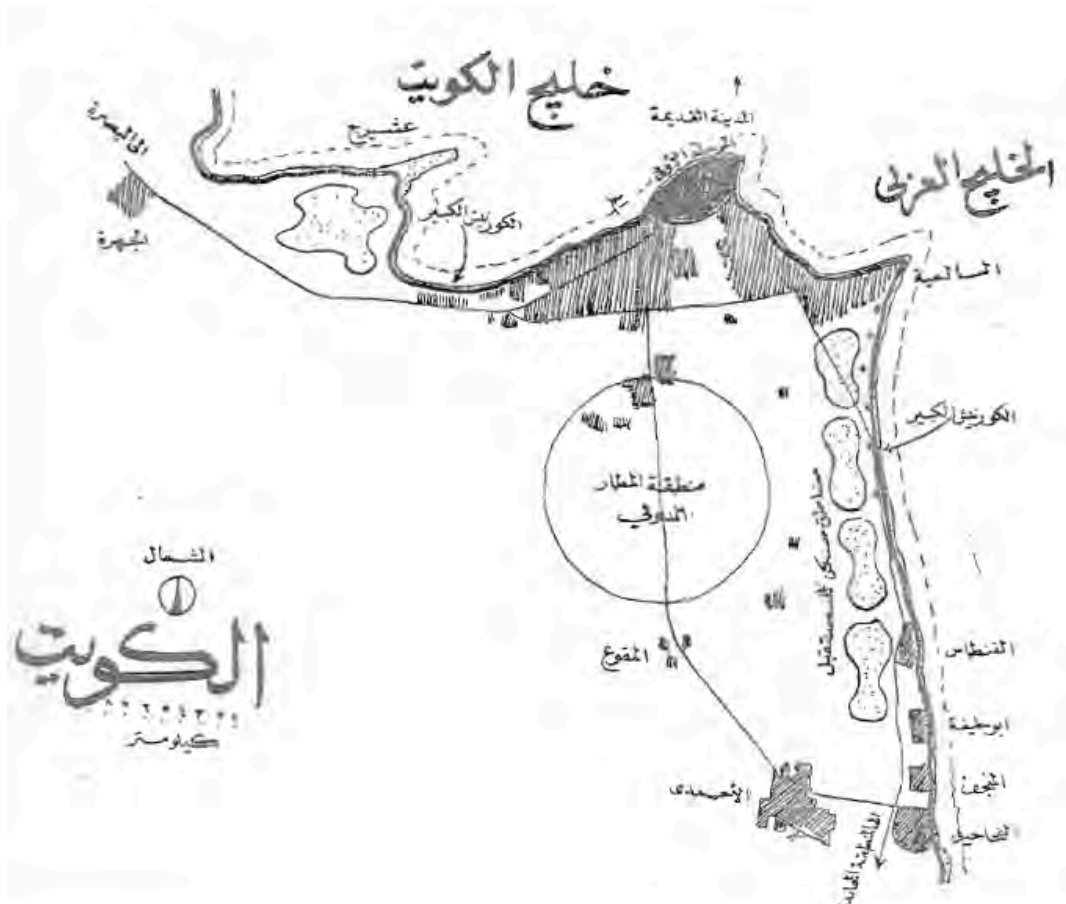
**Figure 81:** Statue of Sheikh Abdullah al-Salim by Sami Mohhamed. Source: Zahra Ahmed Ali. *Sami Mohammad and the Semiotics of Abstraction: Kuwaiti Folk Art As Muse*. Al-Mansouria, Kuwait: Centre for Research and Studies on Kuwait, 2004.



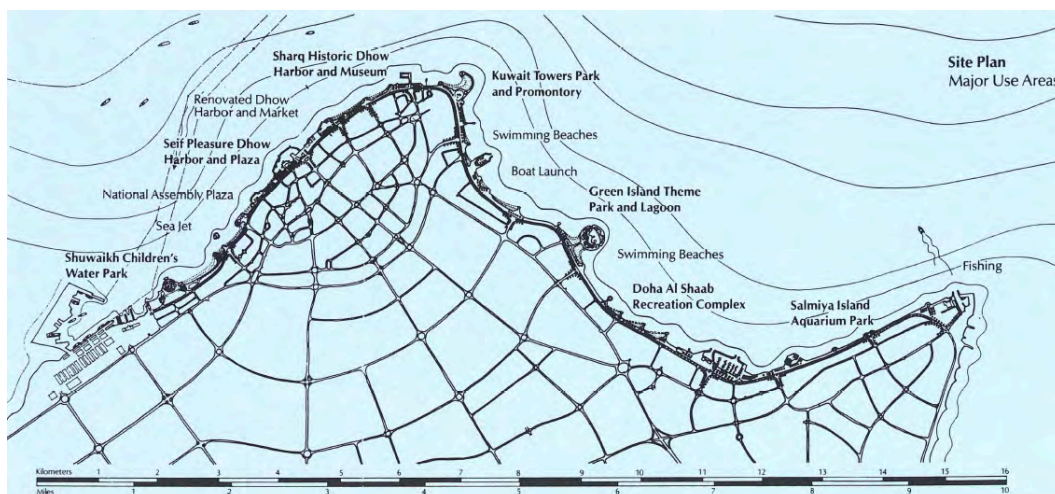
**Figure 82:** AD magazine front page showing a sketch of a belly dancer in the dessert next to Kenzo Tange and Frei Otto's stadium in Kuwait. Source: *Architectural Design* (March, 1970).



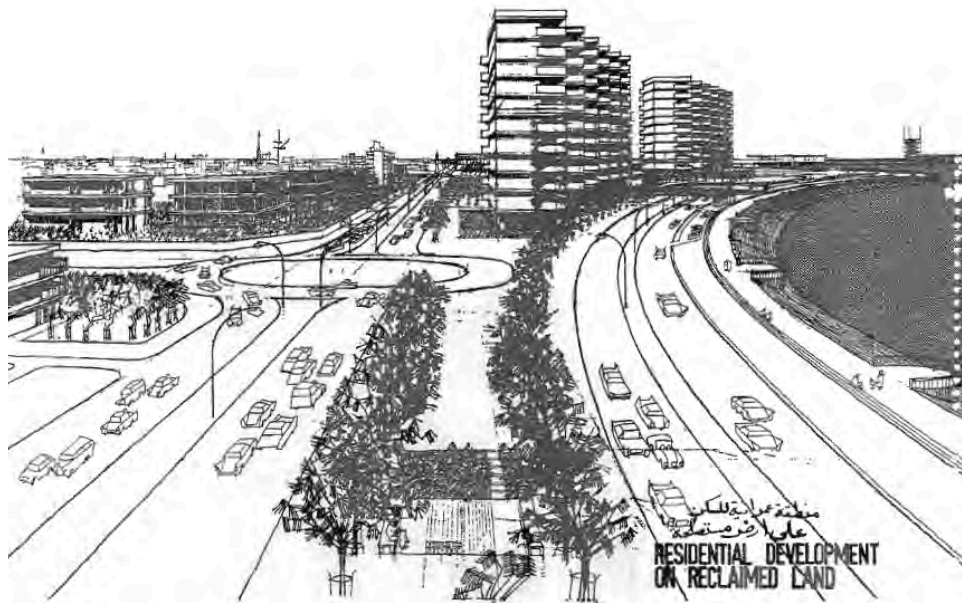
**Figure 83:** Titian's *Venus of Urbino*. Source: [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/06/arts/06iht-manet06.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/06/arts/06iht-manet06.html?_r=0) (Uffizi Gallery, Florence).



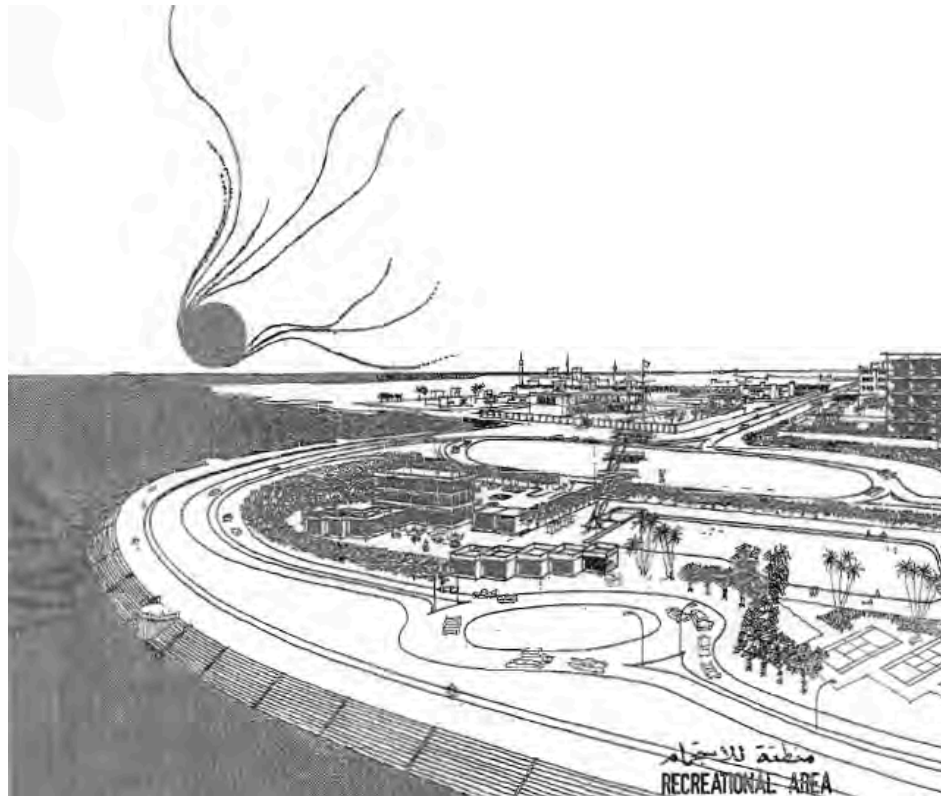
**Figure 84:** Master plan of the first waterfront development project of 1961. Source: Saba Shiber, *The Kuwait Urbanization* (Kuwait: Government of Kuwait, 1964).



**Figure 85:** Master plan of the second waterfront development project. Source: Brian Brace Taylor. "Kuwait City Waterfront Development", In *Mimar 34: Architecture in Development*, edited by Hasan-Uddin Khan. London: Concept Media Ltd., 1990.



**Figure 86:** A perspective drawing of one of the competition proposals by a British firm to development Kuwait's Waterfront on a reclaimed land. Source: Saba Shiber, *The Kuwait Urbanization* (Kuwait: Government of Kuwait, 1964).



**Figure 87:** A perspective drawing of a recreational area proposed for the Waterfront competition by one of the invited firms. Source: Saba Shiber, *The Kuwait Urbanization* (Kuwait: Government of Kuwait, 1964).



**Figure 88:** Three Photographs showing the structures of the Kuwait's waterfront development project of 1977(amphitheater, Stonehenge-like structure, and geodesic dome on top of ziggurat-like circular steps). Source: Brian Brace Taylor. "Kuwait City Waterfront Development", In *Mimar 34: Architecture in Development*, edited by Hasan-Uddin Khan. London: Concept Media Ltd., 1990.

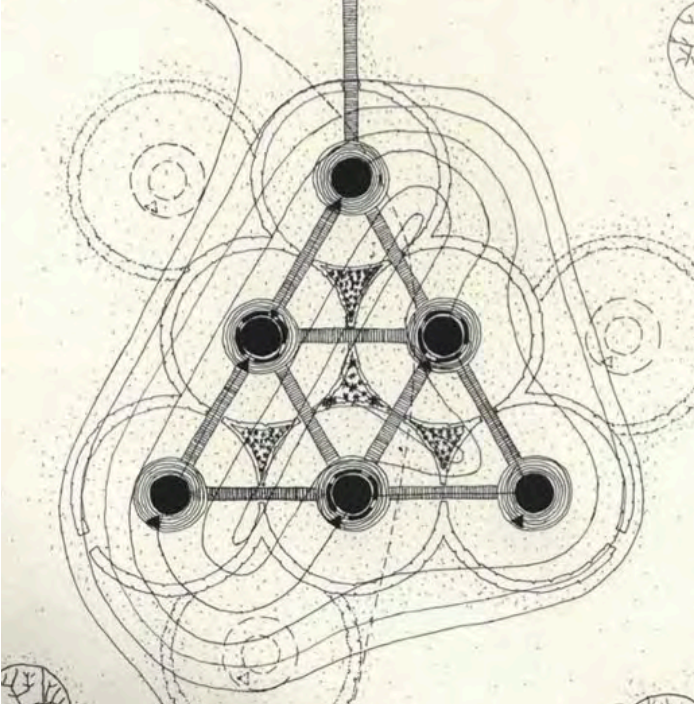


**Figure 89:** Photograph of the viewing dome of Kuwait Towers. Source: Aga Khan Award for Architecture.



**Figure 90:** Photograph of Kuwait Towers. Source: Aga Khan Award for Architecture.





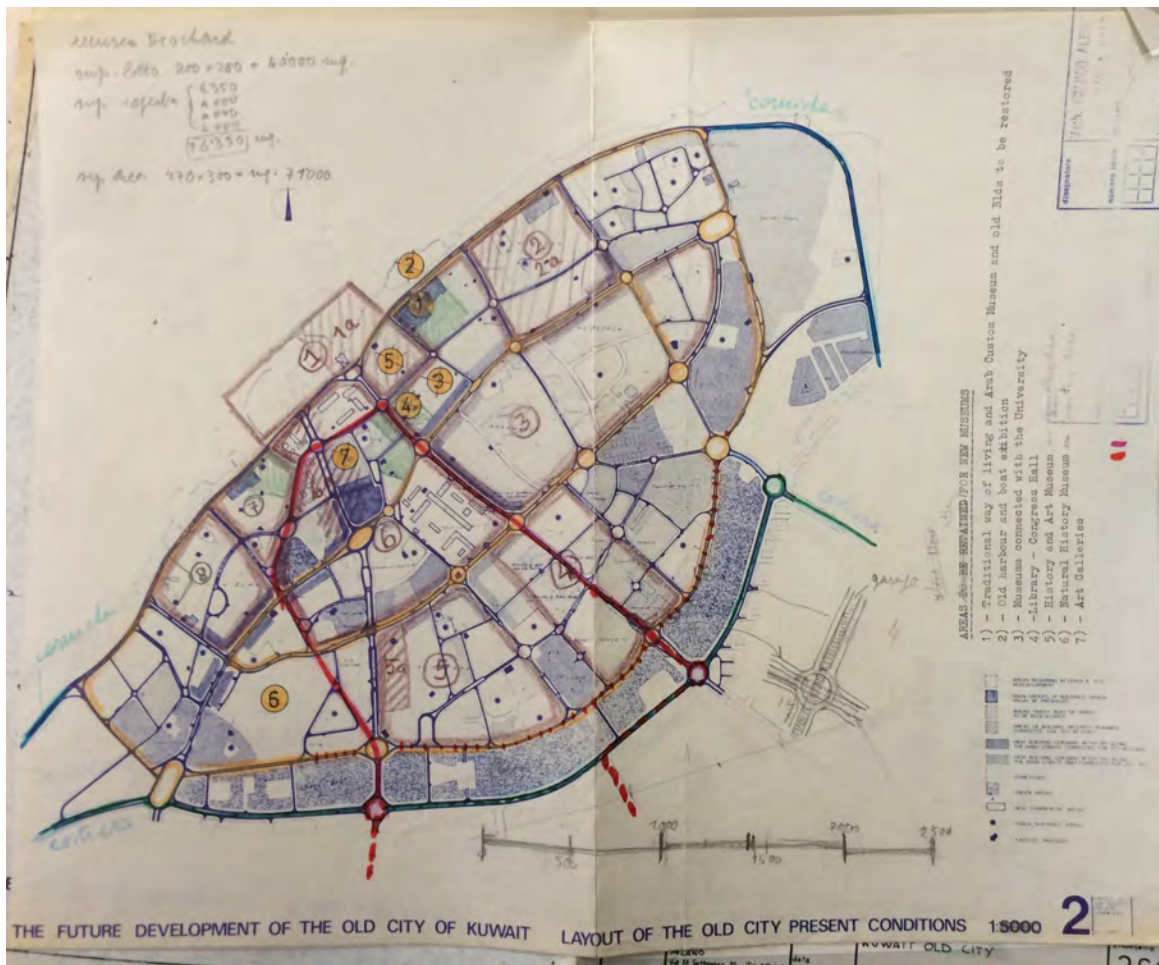
**Figure 91:** Drawing plan of Kuwait Water Towers.  
Source: Stephen Gardiner.  
*Kuwait: the Making of a City.*  
Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1983.



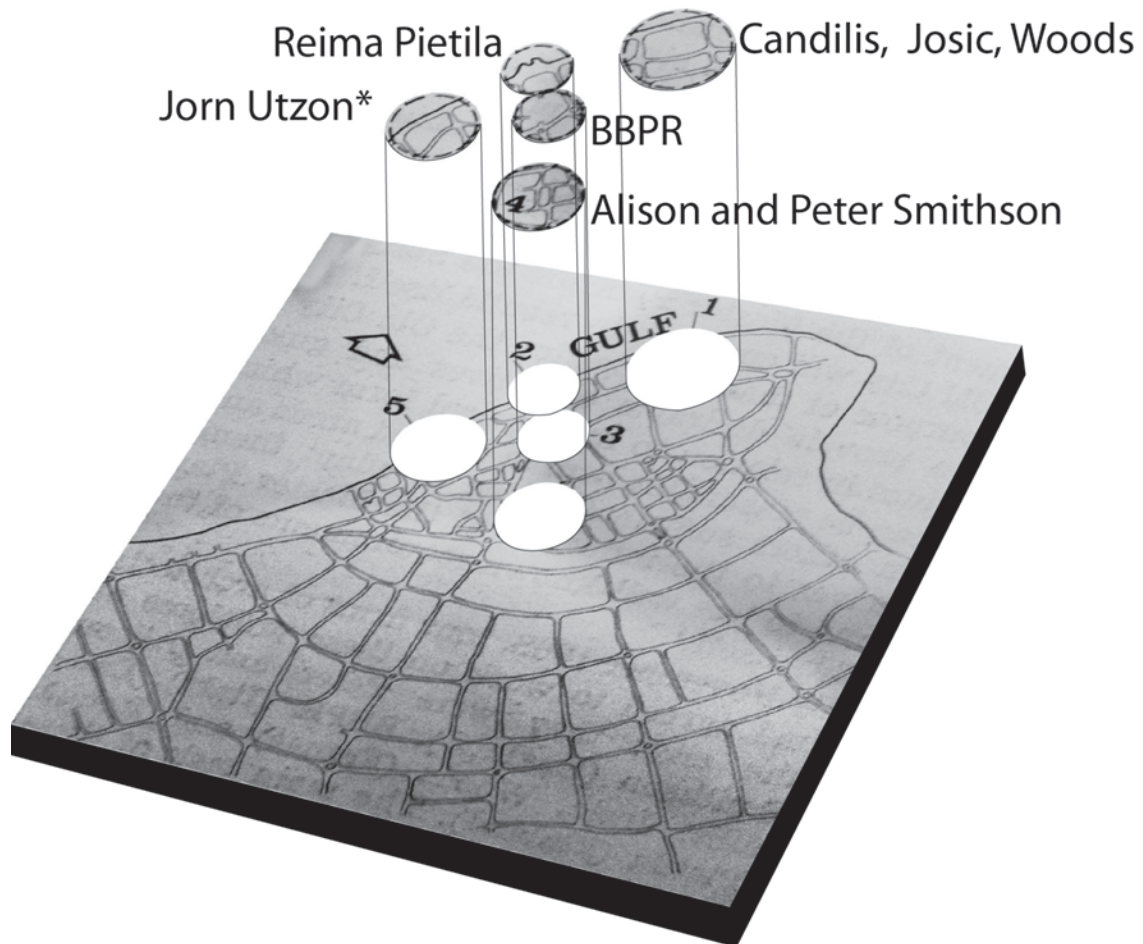
**Figure 92:** Photograph of Kuwait Water Towers.  
Source: Aga Khan Award for Architecture.



**Figure 93:** Photograph of an Islamic carpet section belonging to Sheikh Nasser and Sheikha Hussa Al-Sabah Islamic collection. Source: Anon. “Al-Mat’haf al-Wattani [The National Museum]” *Al-Resalah Al-Arabeya*, issue 2, June 1<sup>st</sup>, 1982. 15.



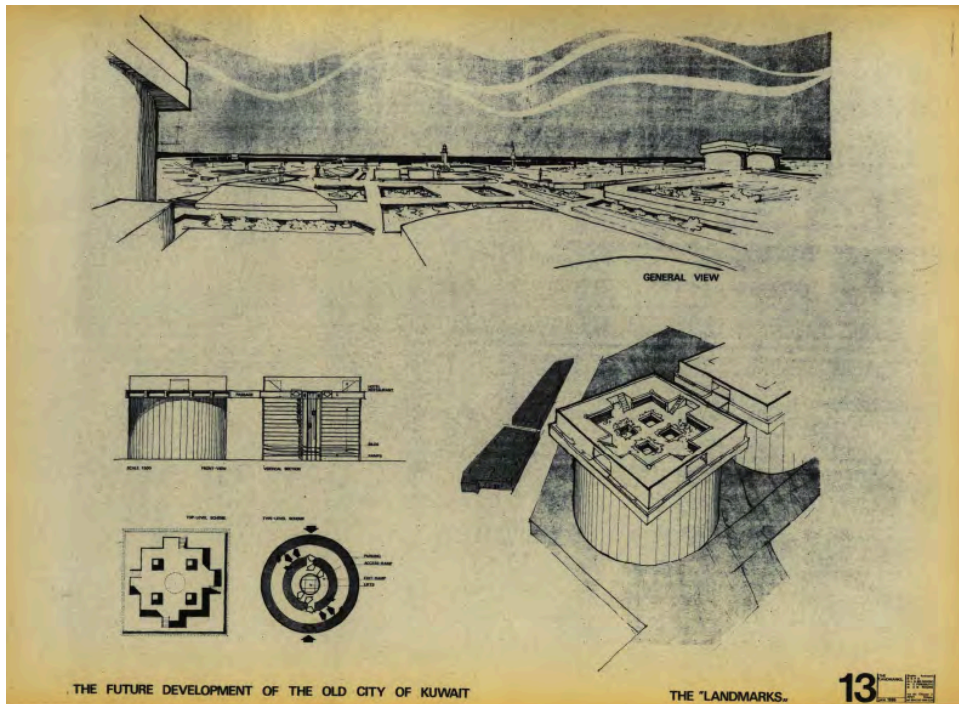
**Figure 94:** a photograph of a map found at Franco Albini archives showing his sketches over a blue print of Kuwait City. The map demonstrates the locations of major projects within the borders of the old city. It seems that these locations were first identified as potential sites for a number of museums. Many highlighted locations became the sites of other important projects discussed in this dissertation while few retained their original purpose. For example, area number 2a and 2 (written and shaded in pencil) is the location of Kuwait Museum of Modern Art, area 5a and 5 (written and shaded in pencil) is the current location of the Ministries Complex, area 8 (written in pencil) is the current location of Kuwait National Assembly, and the previous area 5 (printed and highlighted in yellow and crossed in pencil) is the current location of Kuwait Grand Mosque. Source: the archives of Franco Albini, Milan.



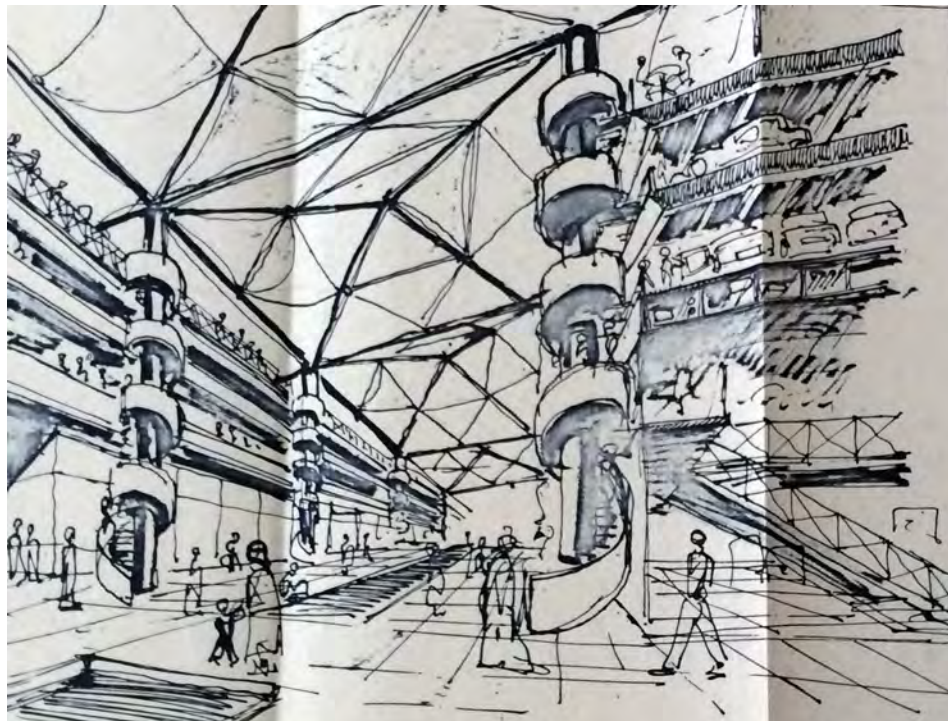
**Figure 95:** Photoshopped map demonstrating the location of various projects, each assigned by direct commission or closed competition to an architectural firm. Those architects are: Jørn Utzon, Gian Banfi, Ludovico Belgiojoso, Enrico Peressutti, and Ernesto Rogers (BBPR), Reima and Raili Pietilä, Alison and Peter Smithson, and Candilis, Josic, Woods. Source: By author (base map: Alison Smithson. “Proposals for Restructuring Kuwait” in *Architectural Review* 156 (1974): 178-82).



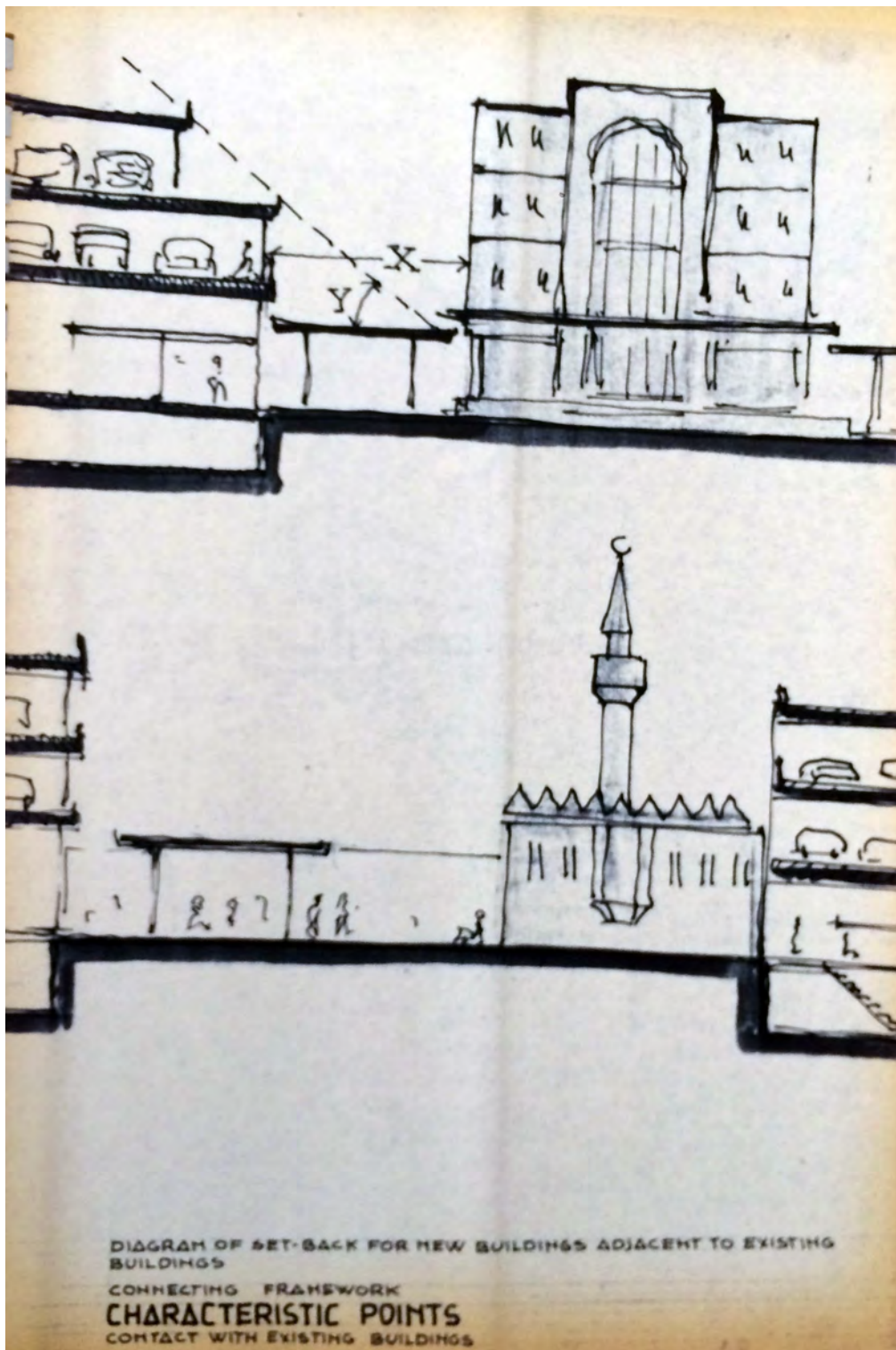
**Figure 96:** Gian Banfi, Ludovico Belgiojoso, Enrico Peressutti, and Ernesto Rogers' (BBPR) "connecting framework" [highlighted in yellow], part of their proposal for the development of old Kuwait City. The drawings also shows the location of the Seif palace [highlighted in red]. Source: By author, base drawing is from Gian Banfi, Ludovico Belgiojoso, Enrico Peressutti, and Ernesto Rogers (BBPR), *Architectural Report for the Future Development of Old Kuwait City project*, 1969 (preserved at The Franco Albini Archives, Milan).



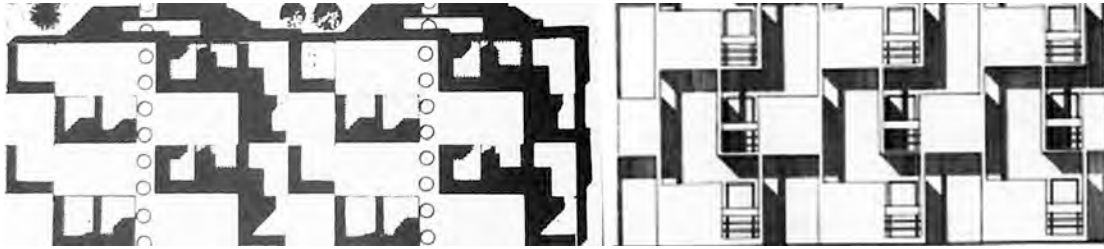
**Figure 97:** Plans, sections, elevations, and perspectival drawings of BBPR’s “Landmarks”. Source: Gian Banfi, Ludovico Belgiojoso, Enrico Peressutti, and Ernesto Rogers (BBPR), *Architectural Report for the Future Development of Old Kuwait City project*, 1969. The Archives of Franco Albini, Milan.



**Figure 98:** BBPR’s connecting framework of the souk area. Source: Gian Banfi, Ludovico Belgiojoso, Enrico Peressutti, and Ernesto Rogers (BBPR), *Architectural Report for the Future Development of Old Kuwait City project*, 1969. The Archives of Franco Albini, Milan.



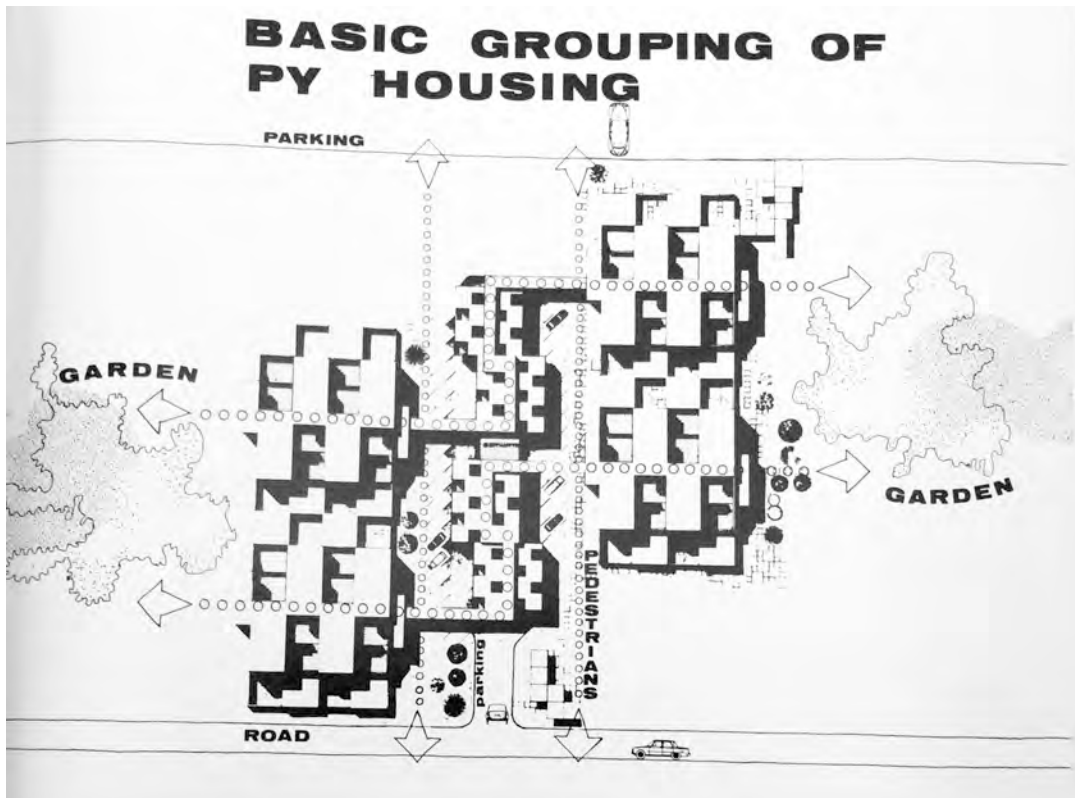
**Figure 99:** BBPR's parking structures in relation to the connecting framework and the vernacular mosques. Source: Gian Banfi, Ludovico Belgiojoso, Enrico Peressutti, and Ernesto Rogers (BBPR), *Architectural Report for the Future Development of Old Kuwait City project*, 1969. The Archives of Franco Albini, Milan.



**Figure 100:** A partial plan of George Candilis housing proposal for a neighborhood in old Kuwait City. Source: Report on New Housing for the City of Kuwait, Franco Albini's Archive.

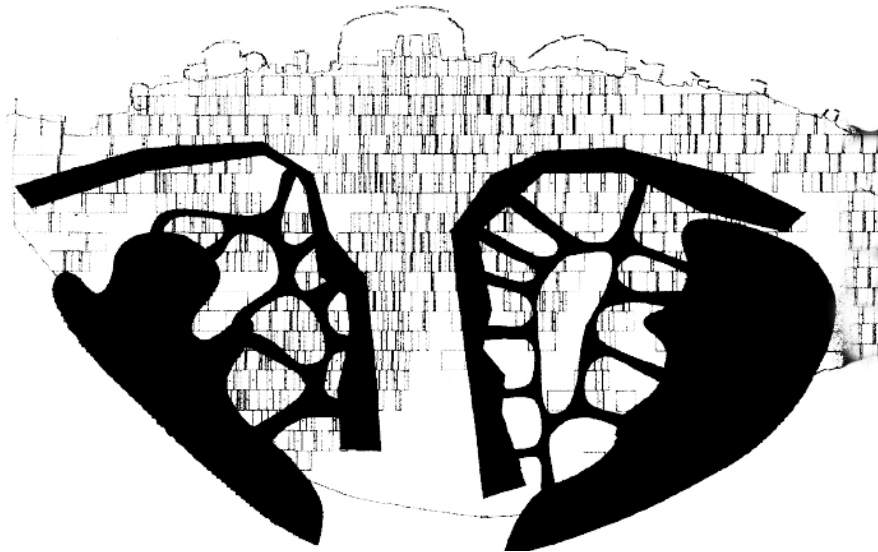


**Figure 101:** Elevation drawing of Candilis, Josic, and Woods' housing proposal in Morocco. Source: Marion von Osten. "Housing for the Greatest Number." *Model House*. 5 Mar. 2012. <http://transculturalmodernism.org/article/123>



**Figure 102:** Candilis, Josic, and Woods' housing proposal for a neighborhood in old Kuwait City. Source: George Candilis, Report on New Housing for the City of Kuwait, Franco Albini's Archive, Milan.

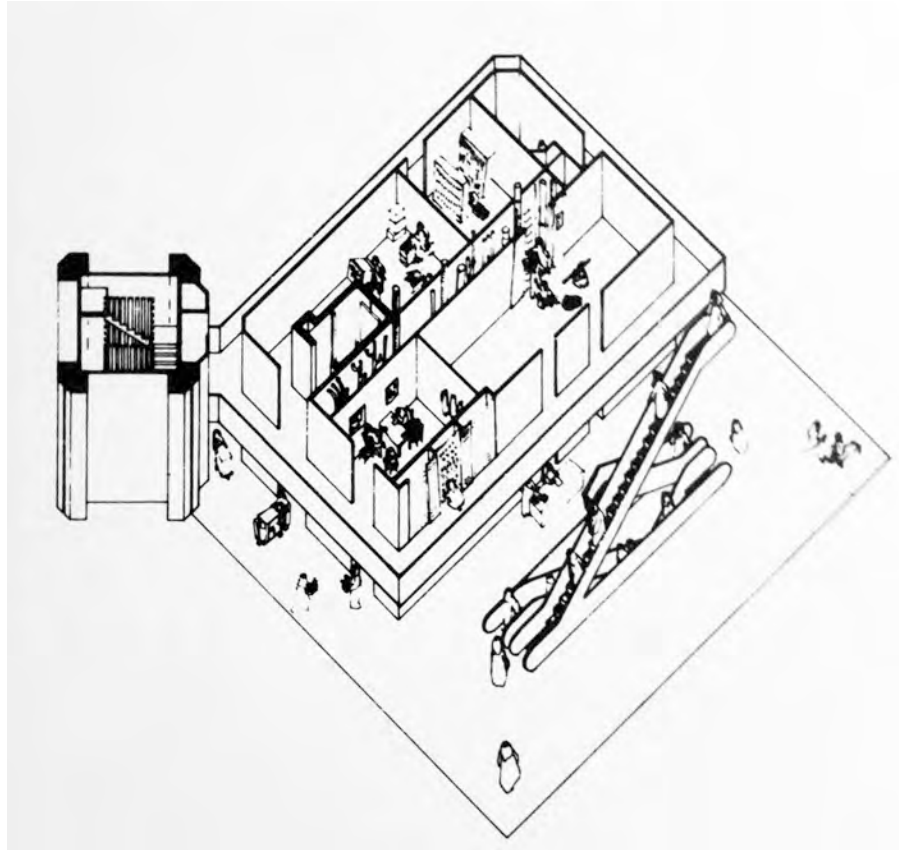




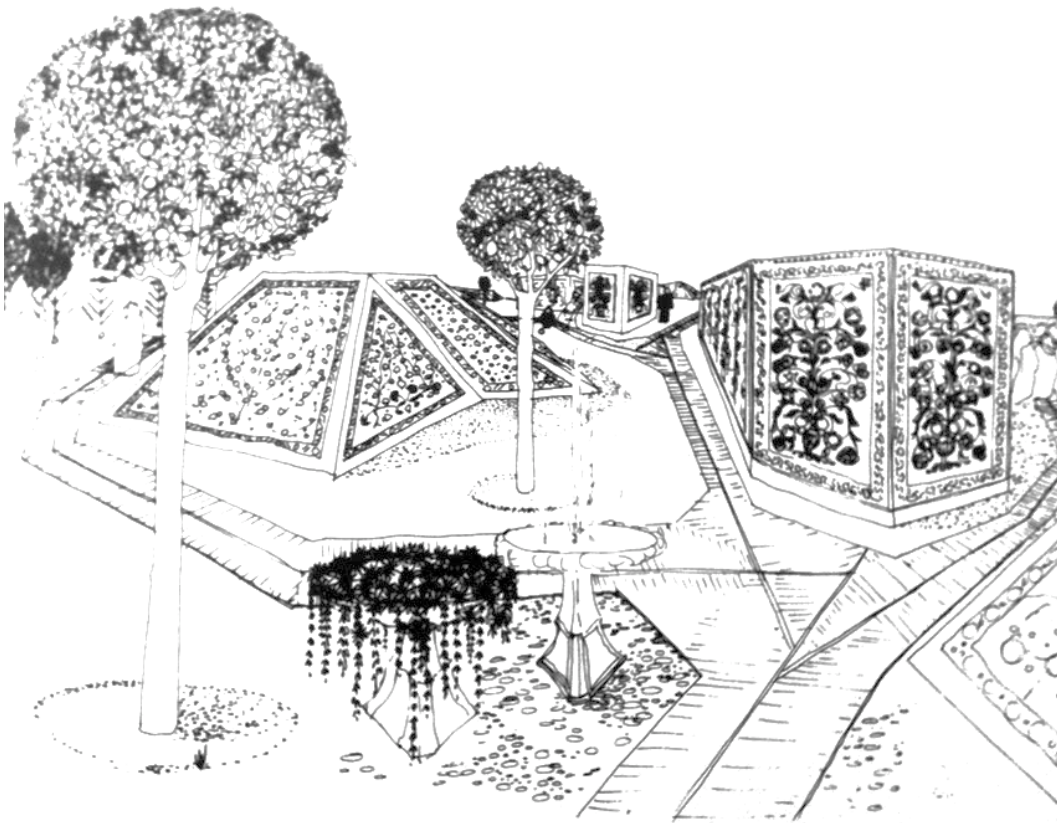
**Figure 103:** Reima and Raili Pietilä's site plan proposal for the future development of old Kuwait City competition, the image demonstrates Pietiläs' poche' drawing as lungs. Source: Government of Kuwait. *Reima Pietila: City of Kuwait: A Future Concept*. Kuwait: Kuwait Municipality, 1969.



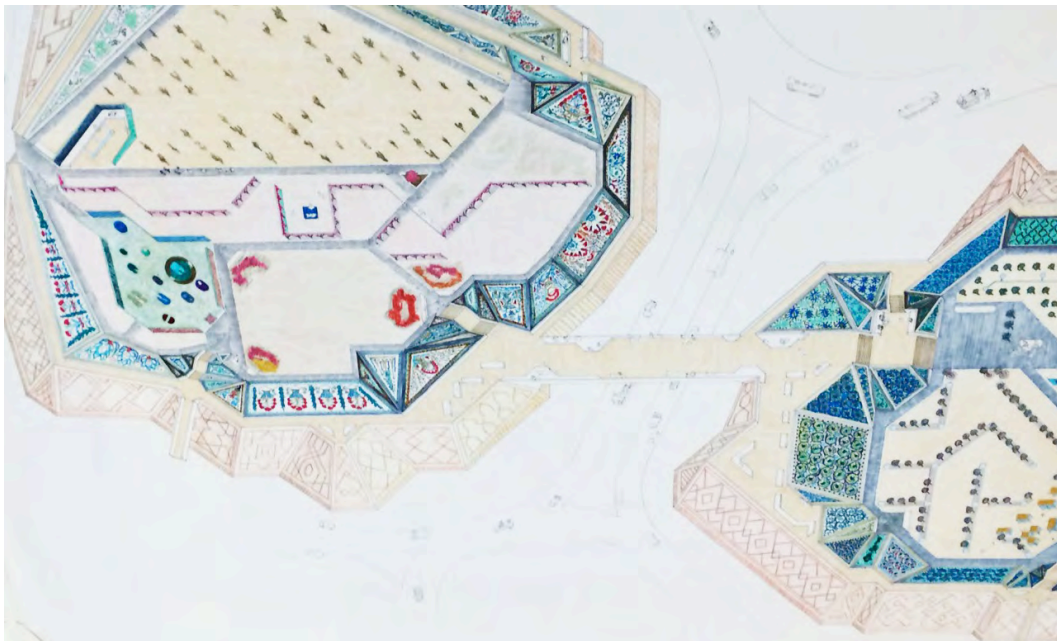
**Figure 104:** Alison and Peter Smithson's grid in respect to existing old mosques underneath a diagram of the radial grid of Kuwait that was established by Minoprio, Spencely and MacFarlane in the 1950s. The diagram also demonstrates the location of the Seif Palace as the center. Source: Author (base map: Alison and Peter Smithson's Archive at Frances Loeb Library at Harvard Graduate School of Design, Cambridge).



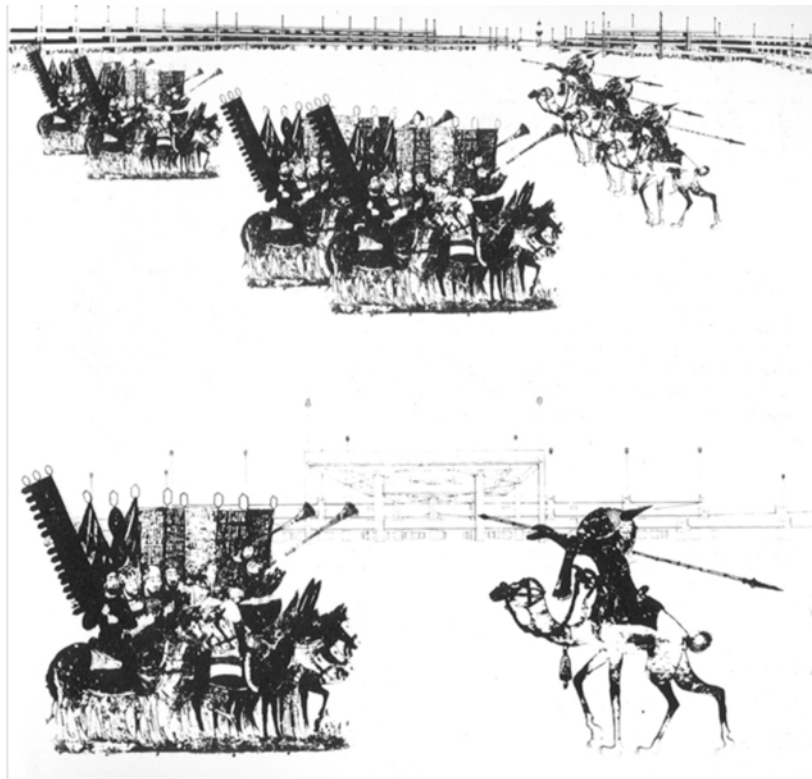
**Figure 105:** Axonometric of 'station' or a single unit of Alison and Peter Smithson Proposal for the governmental complex. Source: Alison and Peter Smithson's Archive, Frances Loeb Library at Harvard Graduate School of Design, Cambridge.



**Figure 106:** Perspective view of Alison and Peter Smithson's proposal for the development of Kuwait's green belt. Source: Alison and Peter Smithson's Archive, Frances Loeb Library at Harvard Graduate School of Design, Cambridge.



**Figure 107:** Axonometric drawing of Alison and Peter Smithson's proposal for the development of Kuwait's green belt. Source: Alison and Peter Smithson's Archive, Frances Loeb Library at Harvard Graduate School of Design, Cambridge.



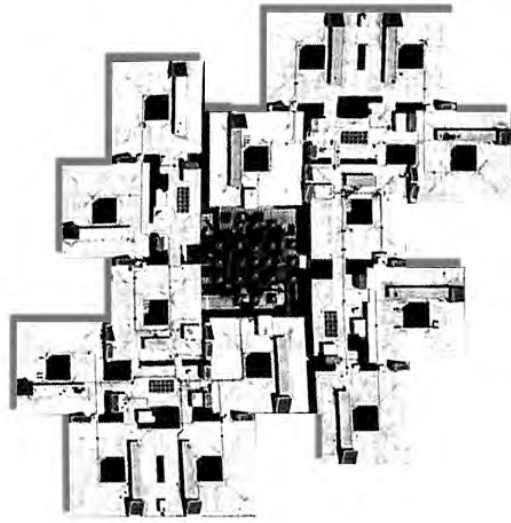
**Figure 108:** Perspective drawing/collage of Alison and Peter Smithson's proposal for *Orangerie Maidan* within their proposal for the mat-building of Kuwait. Source: Alison and Peter Smithson's Archive, Frances Loeb Library at Harvard Graduate School of Design, Cambridge.



**Figure 109:** Reima and Raili Pietilä's proposal for a hotel and other development for the coastline of Old Kuwait City. Source: Government of Kuwait. *Reima Pietila: City of Kuwait: A Future Concept*. Kuwait: Kuwait Municipality, 1969.



**Figure 110:** Partial site plan of Alison and Peter Smithson's Kuwait governmental building (Ministries Complex). Source: Alison and Peter Smithson's Archive, Frances Loeb Library at Harvard Graduate School of Design, Cambridge.



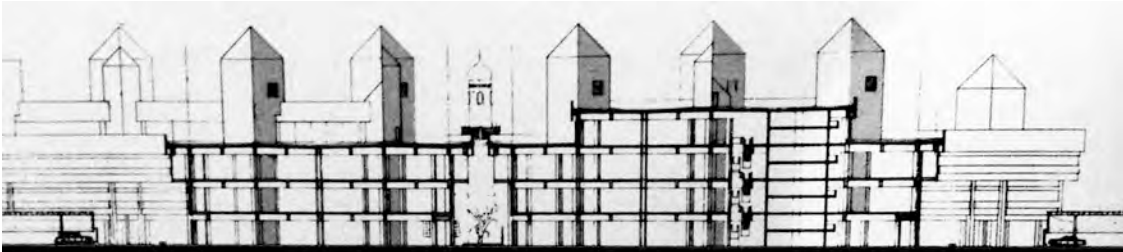
**Figure 111:** Site plan of Ministries Building in Kuwait designed by Abdullah Qabazard following the Smithsons' earlier proposal. Source: Author, base image from Google Earth.



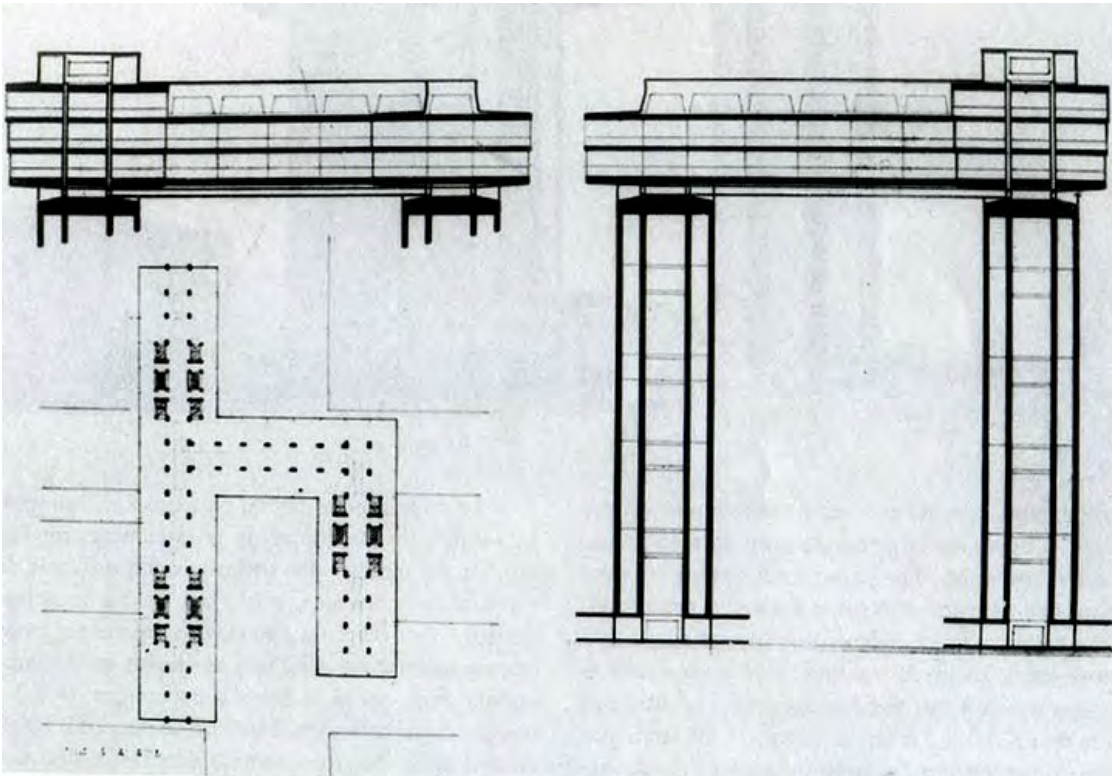
**Figure 112:** Aerial view of the vernacular fabric of old Kuwait City. Source: BBPR's Architectural Report for the Future Development of Old Kuwait City project preserved at Franco Albini's archive, Milan.



**Figure 113:** Photograph of Free University model designed by Candilis, Josic, and Woods. Source: Alison Smithson. "How to Recognize and Read Mat-Building". *Architectural Design* (September 1974): 573-590.



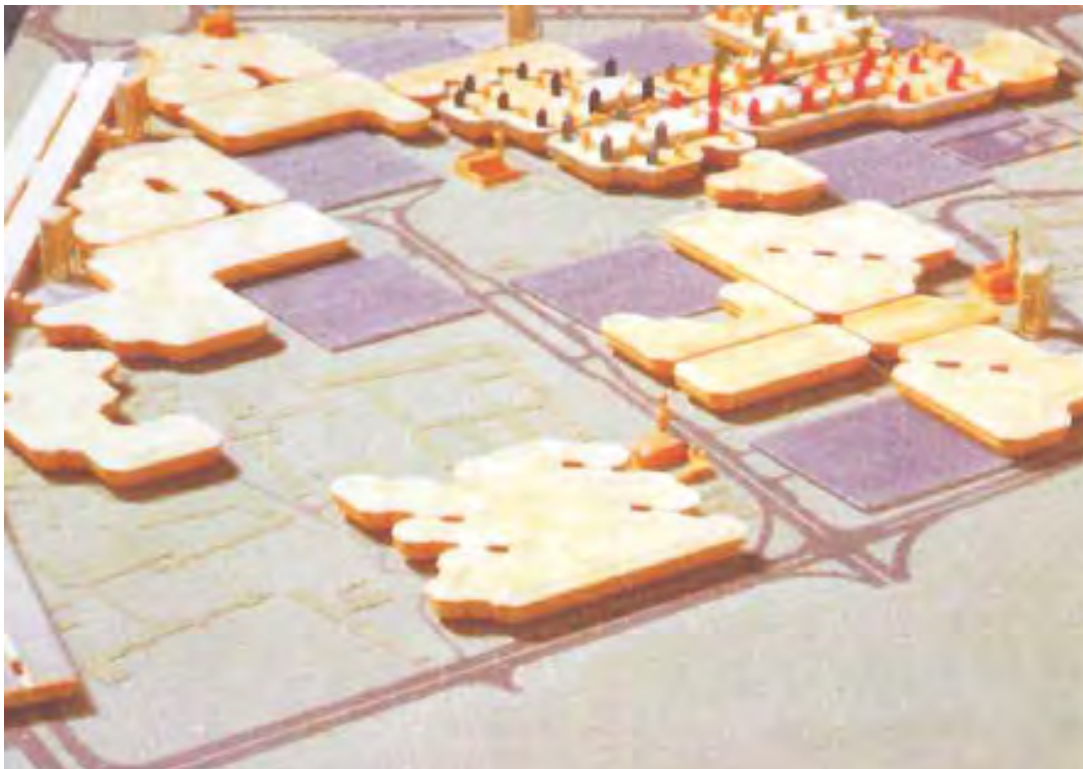
**Figure 114:** Section through Alison and Peter Smithson's mat-building of Kuwait showing the towers as they mimic the minarets of an old mosque. Source: Alison and Peter Smithson's Archive, Frances Loeb Library at Harvard Graduate School of Design, Cambridge.



**Figure 115:** Plan and sections of El Lissitzky's *Wolkenbügel* (cloud-hanger). Source: <http://www.dieselpunks.org/profiles/blogs/horizontal-skyscrapers>



**Figure 116:** Aerial view of Alison and Peter Smithson model for the Mat-Building of Kuwait. Source: Alison and Peter Smithson's Archive, Frances Loeb Library at Harvard Graduate School of Design, Cambridge.



**Figure 117:** Plan and sections of El Lissitzky's *Wolkenbügel* (cloud-hanger). Source: <http://www.dieselpunks.org/profiles/blogs/horizontal-skyscrapers>



**Figure 118:** El Lissitzky's collage for his design of *Wolkenbügel* (cloud-hanger). Source: <http://www.dieselpunks.org/profiles/blogs/horizontal-skyscrapers>



**Figure 119:** El Lissitzky's proposal for the locations of *Wolkenbügel* (cloud-hanger) on a map of Moscow. Source: <http://www.dieselpunks.org/profiles/blogs/horizontal-skyscrapers>

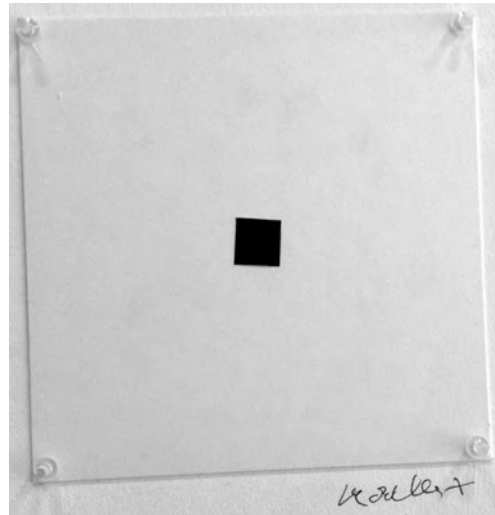




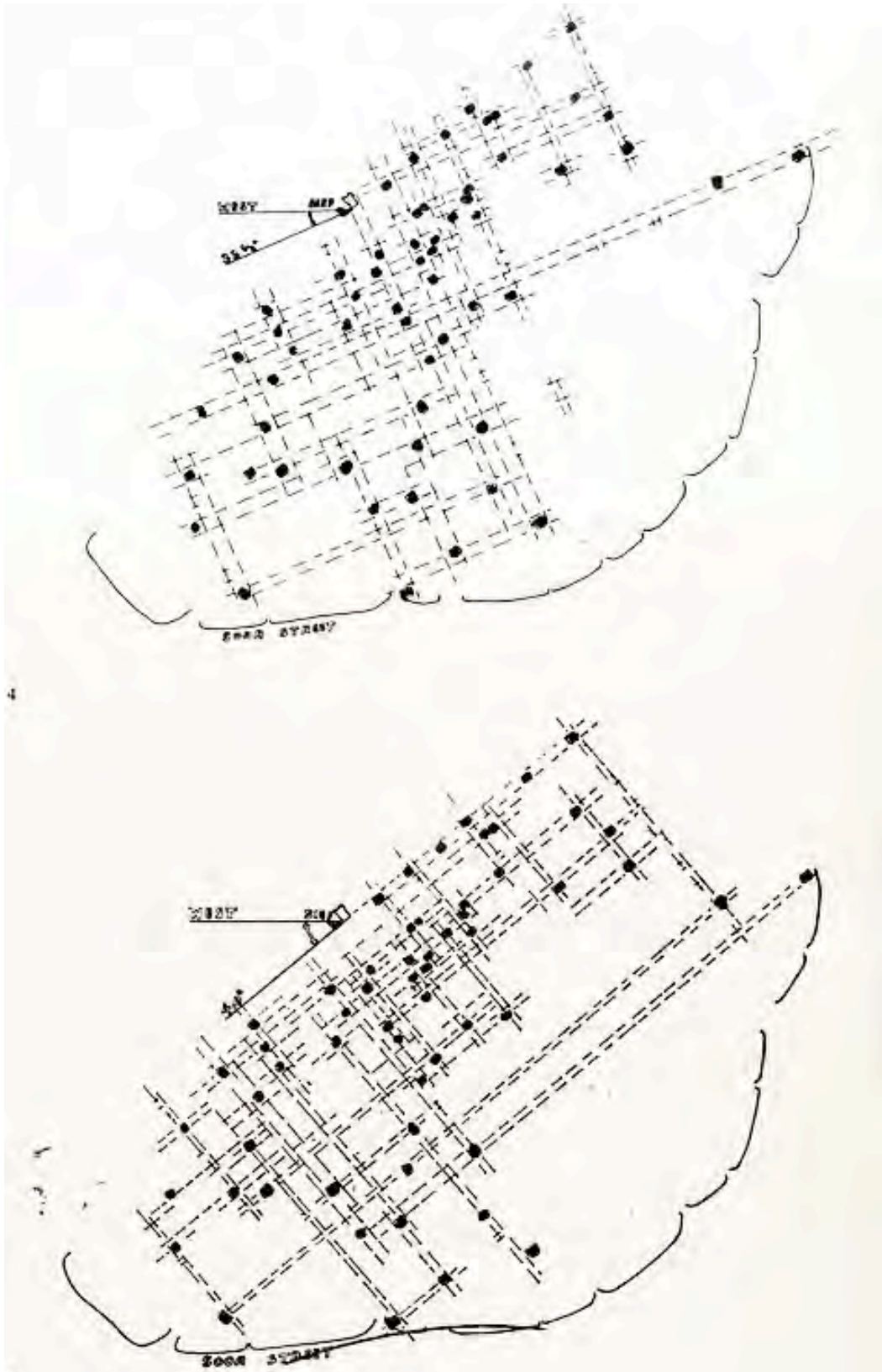
**Figure 120:** A detailed plan of Alison and Peter Smithson's mat-building of Kuwait (the voids are represented in white/ lighter shade). Source: Alison and Peter Smithson's Archive, Frances Loeb Library at Harvard Graduate School of Design, Cambridge.



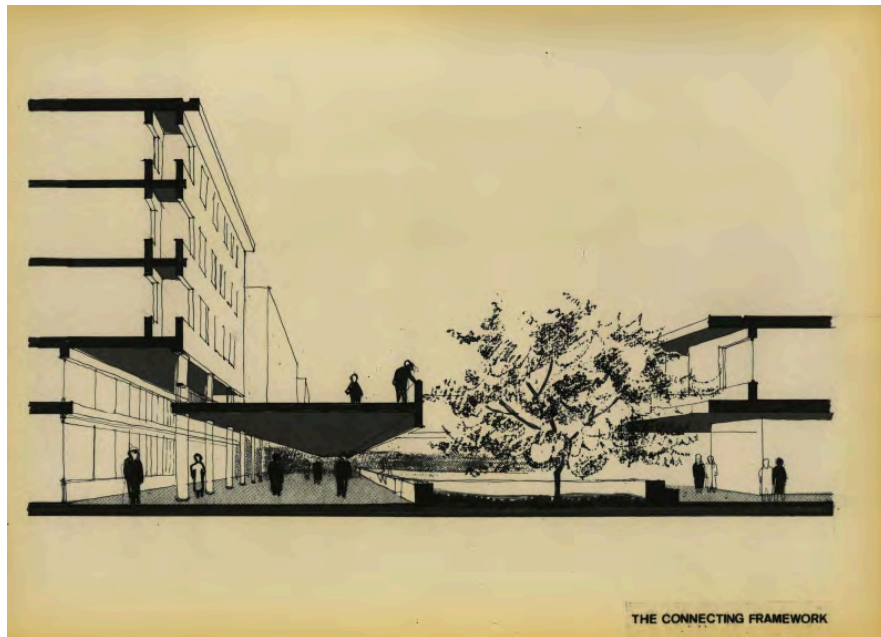
**Figure 121:** One of Superstudio's collages demonstrating the use of grids in their artwork and conceptual architecture such as in their *Continuous Monument: An Architectural Model for Total Urbanization* (1969) series. Source: <http://www.fondazionemaxxi.it/en/events/superstudio-50/>



**Figure 122:** François Morellet's *Papier 2,5°-92,5°, trou (carré) 0°-90°*, 1982. Source: Photographed by the author.



**Figure 123:** Alison and Peter Smithson's proposed base grid for their Mat-Building proposal in Kuwait (top is the 22.5° grid and the bottom is the 40° grid). Source: Alison and Peter Smithson's Archive, Frances Loeb Library at Harvard Graduate School of Design, Cambridge.



**Figure 124:** Sectional perspective of “streets in the sky” as proposed by Gian Banfi, Ludovico Belgiojoso, Enrico Peressutti, and Ernesto Rogers (BBPR) for their development of old Kuwait City. Source: Gian Banfi, Ludovico Belgiojoso, Enrico Peressutti, and Ernesto Rogers (BBPR), *Architectural Report for the Future Development of Old Kuwait City project*, 1969 (preserved at the Archives of Franco Albini, Milan).



**Figure 125:** Model photograph of Michel Écochard’s Kuwait National Museums, the image shows the bridges (streets in the sky) connecting various buildings of the museum’s complex. Source: Aga Khan Award for Architecture.



**Figure 126:** Photograph of Kuwait National Assembly and its reflection over the water of Kuwait Bay. Source: Jørn Utzon Archive, Alborg.



**Figure 127:** Photograph of Kuwait National Museum's space-frame and tensile shadings demonstrating the play of shade, shadow, and light on the museum's buildings and one of the columns (the columns meant to represent a camel figure. Source: Aga Khan Award for Architecture.



**Figure 128:** Photograph of Kuwait National Assembly front columniation and the tent-canopy under the sunlight. Source: Jørn Utzon Archive, Alborg.



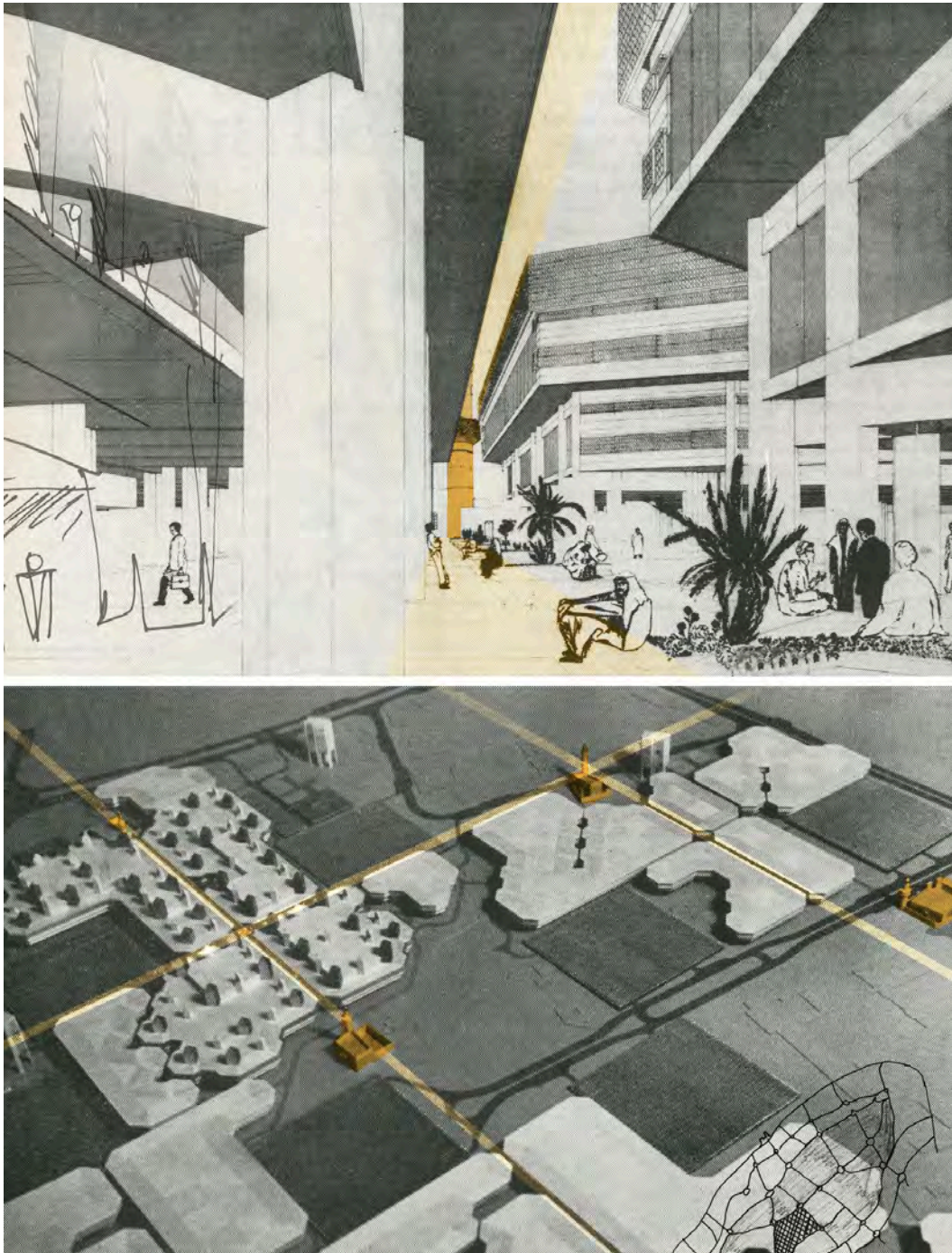
alshaheedpark  
حديقة الشهيد

1h



♥ 310 likes

**Figure 129:** Screen capture of a photograph of Al Shaheed Park showing a reflection of the palm trees on floor tiles.  
Source: @alshaheedpark, Instagram (captured by author).



**Figure 130:** Two composite montages of Alison and Peter Smithson; one is a re-worked perspective of a galleria within their Kuwait's Mat-Building, and the other is a photograph of their model for the same building demonstrating the importance of the old mosque for their proposal. Source: Rapha e Memon (based on the original Smithson's images published in *AR*, 1974).

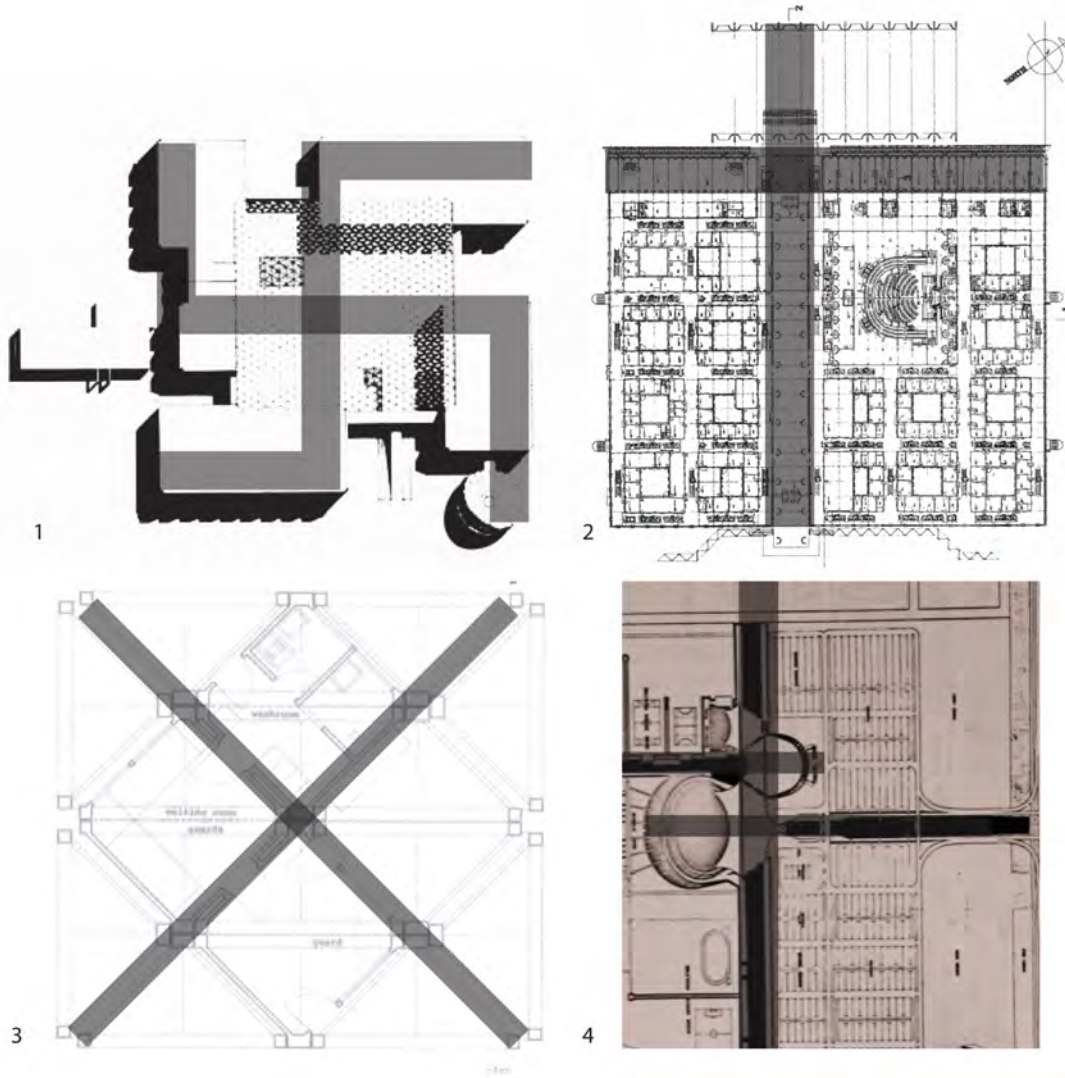


**Figure 131:** Photograph of the Seif Place's clock tower. Source: Gian Banfi, Ludovico Belgiojoso, Enrico Peressutti, and Ernesto Rogers (BBPR), *Architectural Report for the Future Development of Old Kuwait City project*, 1969 (preserved at the Archives of Franco Albini, Milan).





**Figure 132:** Photograph of the Aberconway Kurdish Garden Carpet Northwest Persia, 18th century 3.75 x 9.25m (12ft 3in x 30ft 4in). Source: The al-Sabah Collection, Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah, Kuwait National Museum, inv.no. LNS 10R.



**Figure 133:** Diagrams showing the use of a major axis in the plans of: 1) Michel Écochard's Kuwait National Museum. 2) Jørn Utzon's Kuwait National Assembly. 3) A unit of the Smithsons' Kuwait governmental complex. 4) Kenzo Tange and Frei Otto's Kuwait Sports Center. 5) The Smithsons' Mat-Building of Kuwait. Source: author, base images 1) Aga Khan Award for Architecture, 2) University Archives, 3 & 5) Alison and Peter Smithson's Archive at Frances Loeb Library, and 4) *Architectural Design* (March, 1970).



## **APPENDICES**

**Appendix I: Fee Negotiation between Jørn Utzon's Firm and Kuwait Government**

FEE NEGOTIATIONS

| 2

MEETING WITH "THE SELECTION COMMITTEE OF THE PLANNING BOARD" (CHAIRMAN: ABDEL MOHSEN THLUETNY) is also a contractor,

① DISCUSSION ABOUT FEES. 11½% NOT ACCEPTABLE "IF THIS IS YOUR FINAL OFFER, FURTHER CONNECTION WITH UTZON WILL BE DISCONTINUED". PHONE TO HAWAII, WHEREAFTER 9½% WAS PROPOSED. ARCH. FEE DISCUSS. STOPPED HERE.

② — RESIDENT ENGINEER (ARCHITECT), MONTHLY REMUNERATION OF,

"THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS" WILL REQUIRE 3 PEOPLE FROM OUR OFFICE WHO HAD PARTICIPATED IN THE DESIGN

② RESIDENT ENGINEER (ARCHITECT) ③ RESIDENT (SITE) ENGINEER (ARCHITECT) "ONE OF THESE TWO SHOULD BE AN ARCHITECT", ③ QUANTITY SURVEYOR ;

MONTHLY RATES INCLUDING EVERYTHING: TRAVEL, HOUSING, CAR, MEDICAL CARE ect. - WERE DISCUSSED, WE TOLD THEM THAT WE WANTED 1300-1500KD/MONTH (ROUGH ESTIMATE) FOR THE NO. 1 PERSON AND 1200 KD FOR THE 2 OTHERS (THEY FAINTED)

③ "WILL THE DESIGN AND THE APPEARANCE OF THE COMPLEX BE VERY MUCH AFFECTED IF WE EXCLUDE THE CONFERENCE HALL COMPLEX" ?? ANSWER: "YES, VERY MUCH" — AFTER THIS BRIEF DISCUSSION →

"THE SELECTION COMMITTEE" LEFT FOR A MEETING IN THE PARLIAMENT, WITH "THE PARLIAMENT GROUP" HEADED BY "HIS EXCELLENCY KHALID GHUNAM" CHAIRMAN OF THE PARLIAMENT (3<sup>rd</sup> MAN IN THE NATION AFTER THE EMIR AND HIS SON) (NICE, SMILING, GENTLE, ELDERLY, THIN, SMALL AND GREYHAIRED MAN)

WE ALSO LEFT FOR THE PARLIAMENT WHERE WE WAITED IN THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY TO THE CHAIRMAN, UNTIL WE WERE CALLED INTO THE MAIN MEETING ROOM, ~~WITH~~ <sup>WHERE</sup> THE OTHERS HAD BEEN TALKING FOR ABOUT 20 MINUTES. THEY WERE SEATED IN A SEMICIRCLE AROUND THE MODEL (1:400) ABOUT 15 PEOPLE.

THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SELECTION COMMITTEE (ACTING AS SPOKESMAN FOR HIS EXCL. WHO SPEAKS ONLY ARABIC) TOLD US THAT IT HAD BEEN DECIDED TO LEAVE THE CONFERENCE HALL COMPLEX WITHIN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY COMPLEX AS PREVIOUSLY ARRANGED AND THAT THE CIELING OF CONSTRUCTION COST NOW WOULD BE 8.5 MILLIONS KD, AND THAT THEIR FINAL COUNTEROFFER FOR OUR FEES WAS 8% OF THE CONSTRUCTION COST, AT THIS STAGE IT WAS DECIDED TO CONTACT HIS HIGHNESS AL JORN IBN UTZON IN HAWAII, WHO SET THE FEE PROPOSAL DOWN FROM 9½% TO 9%. THIS WAS NOT SATISFACTORY TO THE COMMITTEE AND THEY

DECIDED TO GIVE US 24 HOURS IN WHICH <sup>3</sup>  
TO DISCUSS THE PROBLEMS —  
THIS WAS PUT AS A FIRM ULTIMATUM AND THE  
CHAIRMAN EXPLAINED US THAT OUR NEAREST  
COMPETITOR (CHADIRJI) HAD MADE AN OFFER  
OF 7%. WE EXPLAINED THAT DIFFERENT  
DEGREES OF RESEARCH + DETAILING AND  
THAT THE 2 OFFICES COULD NOT BE  
COMPARED, THEY ADMITTED THIS BUT THE  
COMMITTEE ANSWERED THAT THEY CONSI-  
DERED ALL THE FIRMS INVITED FOR  
THE COMPETITION TO BE OF EQUAL INTER-  
NATIONAL STANDARD AND PROFESSIONAL  
LEVEL IN ALL RESPECTS. AND THEY  
COULD HAVE TAKEN ANY OF THESE. —  
AFTER TALKING WITH J.U. WE MET THE  
SELECTION COMMITTEE AND RELUCTANTLY  
ACCEPTED THE (8%). NOW AGAIN THE QUESTION  
OF THE MONTHLY REMUNERATION FOR THE  
RESIDENT SUPERVISORY STAFF WAS TAKEN  
UP AND WE PROPOSED 1300 KD - 1100 KD -  
1100 KD. THE SELEC. COMMIT. ACCEPTED  
RELUCTANTLY THE 1<sup>ST</sup> FIGURE, AND EXPLAI-  
NED THAT FOR SIMILAR WORK STARTING  
ALSO 2 YEARS FROM NOW THEY PAID  
NEVER MORE THAN 7-800 KD. WE PUT  
FORWARD OUR CONCERN ABOUT THE RISING  
COSTS OF LIVING, AND THE LACK ON  
CONTROL WITH THIS. THEY ANSWERED US

THAT IT WAS VERY EASY TO RENT A FLAT (4  
OR HOUSE AND THAT THEY WOULD NOT RISE  
IN COST OF LIVING FOR A LONG TIME  
AS THERE IS A LARGE SURPLUS OF  
DWELLINGS. AS AN EXAMPLE WE WERE  
TOLD THAT A GOOD FLAT WOULD COST  
ABOUT 100 KD/MONTH, AND THAT A  
NEW (NW) WOULD COST 500 KD. -  
AFTER SOME DISCUSSION THE RATES  
WERE FIXED TO 1300KD - 1000KD - 1000KD.  
ALL THESE AGREEMENTS WERE PUT IN  
WRITING AND HANDED TO THE PLANNING  
BOARD 2/3/4 - THE PLANNING BOARD DID NOT  
WISH TO INTRODUCE US TO THE MINISTER OF  
PUBLIC WORKS BEFORE AN AGREEMENT HAD  
BEEN REACHED CONCERNING THE ~~WHOLE~~  
ABOVE. THE WHOLE PROCEDURE IS  
RATHER BUREAUCRATIC + FORMALISTIC AND IT  
IS NORMALLY ADVISABLE TO FOLLOW THE  
USUAL PROCEDURE WHICH MEANS THAT AFTER  
SIGNING THE CONTRACT ALL CONTACTS +  
REQUESTS HAVE TO BE MADE THROUGH  
THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS. THIS  
ADVISE WAS GIVEN TO US IN A FRIENDLY  
WAY BY AZIZ HAMDAD AND IN A  
MORE DEFINITE WAY BY MR. TURKI DEPT.  
CHIEF ENGINEER AT THE DEPARTMENT OF  
MAJOR PROJECTS, IN THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC  
WORKS. AFTER RECEIVING OUR LETTER

5

THE SECRETARY (A HIGH RANKING FEMALE KUWAITI SECRETARY WITH HER OWN OFFICE + MALE SECRETARY) ARRANGED A MEETING FOR US WITH THE CHIEF ENGINEER OF THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS (M.P.W.) WHICH TOOK PLACE SOON AFTERWARDS IN THE OFFICE OF MR. TURKI IN MPW. THE MEETING WAS PARTLY ATTENDED BY THE CHIEF ENGINEER OF MPW MR. MUTAWA. HERE THE QUESTIONS OF TRAVEL EXPENSES AND PRINTS AND MODE OF PAYMENT WERE DISCUSSED.

- ① THE CONDITIONS CONCERNING UTZONS PROPOSED ADVANCED PAYMENTS WOULD BE POSSIBLE IF J.U. COULD PROVIDE A BANK GUARANTEE. WE AGREED THAT THIS COULD PROBABLY BE ARRANGED
- ② THE MPW WILL REQUIRE J.U. TO PAY FOR A MAXIMUM OF 8 VISITS TO KUWAIT. EXTRA VISITS REQUESTED BY THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE PAID BY THE M.P.W.
- ③ THE PRINTS WERE SUBJECT TO A LENGTHY DISCUSSION AS THE M.P.W. REQUIRES 40 SETS OF TENDER DRAWINGS + 50 SETS OF ALL DOCUMENTS. WE PROTESTED AGAINST THIS AND SUGGESTED THAT WE SUPPLIED THEM WITH MOTHERPRINTS SO THEY ~~COULD~~ COULD PRODUCE AS MANY DRAWINGS AS THEY LIKED, THEY DECLINED AND WE AGREED TO DISCUSS THIS QUESTION LATER AFTER SOME CALCULATION OF



6  
THE EXPENSES INVOLVED, THE NUMBER OF DRAWINGS ARE NEEDED BECAUSE A PROJECT THIS SIZE IS BY LAW SUBJECT TO BE GIVEN OUT TO INTERNATIONAL TENDER WHERE IT IS EXPECTED THAT AT LEAST 20 FIRMS, WILL BE INTERESTED (CONTRACTORS)

THEN WE DISCUSSED THE TIME IT WOULD TAKE TO FINALIZE + SIGN OUR CONTRACT. THE M.P.W. WOULD NOW PREPARE A DRAFT BASED ON OUR AGREED TERMS, THIS WOULD TAKE ABOUT 2 WEEKS AND THEN BE SEND TO US WHO WILL BE ASKED FOR HIS PROVISIONAL SIGNATURE (MAILING TIME CA 5 DAYS EACH WAY) HEREFTER THE DRAFT WILL BE SEND TO THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT AND ACCOUNTS DEPARTMENT FOR APPROVAL, THIS WILL TAKE NOT LESS THAN 2-4 WEEKS (THIS HAS A TENDENCY TO BE A PROLONGED PROCEDURE AND MR AZIZ WAMDAD. PROPOSED THAT J.U. SEND HIM A COPY OF THE PROVISIONALLY SIGNED DRAFT, HE WOULD THEN TRY TO SPEED UP THINGS A BIT, EASING THE DRAFT QUICKER THROUGH THE DEPARTMENTS (SEND UNOFFICIALLY + PRIVATELY) NB.NB.NB. — (EVERYONE RECOMMENDED US TO WORK + DECIDE AS FAST AS POSSIBLE IN ALL MATTERS LEADING UP TO THE SIGNING OF THE CONTRACT AS THERE IS A TENDENCY FOR LARGE PROJECTS TO BECOME RUINED OR STOPPED IF NEGOTIATIONS TAKE TOO

LONG TIME " TIME WORK AGAINST THE PROJECT " ) AFTER APPROVAL BY ALL PARTIES INVOLVED JO. WILL BE ASKED TO COME TO KUWAIT FOR HIS FORMAL SIGNATURE. MR. TURKI SAID THAT THIS WOULD TAKE PLACE AT THE EARLIEST 2 MONTH FROM NOW → (APRIL 1973) (IF THE ~~SA~~ CONTRACT IS NOT SIGNED BEFORE 15/6 THIS WILL PROBABLY NOT TAKE PLACE UNTIL AFTER 1/9 AS NO IMPORTANT GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WILL BE PRESENT IN KUWAIT DURING THAT PERIOD (SUMMER HOLIDAY). MR. TURKI SAID THAT THE 24 MONTH PROJECTING TIME ARE OF CAUSE ONLY FOR THE ACTUAL DESIGN WORK. THE PERIODS NEEDED FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE VARIOUS STAGES OF THE PROJECT WILL BE ADDED TO THE 24 MONTH AND WILL BE DEFINED IN THE DRAFT.

IT WAS AGAIN STRESSED THAT WE FOLLOW THE CORRECT PROCEDURE IN CONTACTING DIFFERENT PEOPLE IN THE GOVERNMENT. OUR MENTION OF MR REED IN THE FEE + ESTIMATE PROPOSAL HAD CAUSED GREAT DISTURBANCE.

## LOCAL CONNECTIONS

8

NEITHER THE PLANNING BOARD OR THE MPW. HAS EXPRESSED THE DEMAND FOR A LOCAL PARTICIPATION IN THE PROJECT AS WE HAD UNDERSTOOD FROM RUMORS (~~REPORT~~ (RUMOR))

HOWEVER WE VISITED PAN ARAB CONSULTANTS AND TALKED TO MR SABAH AL-RAYYES ~~THESE~~ <sup>THEY</sup> WERE WILLING TO COOPERATE WITH US, MOSTLY IN TAKING PARTS OF THE PROJECT INTO THE OFFICE, BUT WERE NOT WILLING TO GIVE US ANY INDICATION OF THEIR FEES OR OTHER CONDITIONS. (THIS MEETING TOOK PLACE BEFORE ANY AGREEMENTS HAD BEEN REACHED WITH THE GOVERNMENT) (THEY LET SHINE THROUGH THAT THEY KNEW ALL WE HAD BEEN TALKING ABOUT WITH THE ~~THE~~ GOVERNMENT), "EVERYONE KNOWS EVERYTHING"

WE WERE ALSO APPROACHED (AFTER FINALIZING NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE GOVERNMENT) BY ONE OF THE PARTNERS OF "KUWAITI ENGINEERS OFFICE" MR. CRUICKSHANK WHO OFFERED THEIR SERVICES AS QUANTITY SURVEYORS (FEE  $\frac{3}{4}\%$ , ~~REPORT~~ OUR FACES WERE BLANK AND HE HESITATED AND SAID THAT THIS PERCENTAGE WAS OF CAUSE SUBJECT TO NEGOTIATION) HE TOLD US THAT LONDON FIRMS TAKE 1,5 - 1,75%. THEY WOULD BE WILLING TO COME TO OUR OFFICE AT ANY TIME AT THEIR OWN EXPENSE

HE WAS IN 'HIPW' AND SAYS THAT HE IS VERY 'PERMITTED' WITH EVERYTHING A GOOD THING FOR A Q.S. I SUPPOSE

DURING PROJECT EXECUTION, "THIS WOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE FEE OF CAUSE" THEY CAN ALSO ASSIST IN COORDINATING DRAWINGS

THEY ARE ON PIETILAS PROJECT AS SUB CONTRACTORS. (Q.S.) CAN HELP ENSURE THAT ALL ITEMS COMPLY WITH LOCAL REQUIREMENTS CAN KEEP COST CONTROL SERVICE WHETHER Q.S. OR NOT.

HAS BEEN Q.S. ON AIRPORT - THEIR RAFFPORT WAS APPROVED BY GOVERNMENT AFTER 32 DAYS.

MR. CRUICKSHANK HAS BEEN EMPLOYED BY THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS FOR MANY YEARS AS A Q.S. BEFORE HE LEFT TO START ON HIS OWN WITH THE OTHER PARTNERS HE PROMISED TO SEND US A LIST OF REFERENCE OF HIMSELF + PARTNERS + DESCRIPTION OF THEIR OFFICE STRUCTURE. HE ALSO GAVE US SOME BOOKS OF TENDER WHICH SHOW KUWAITI REQUIREMENTS + SETTING UP.

T.A.C. - VISITED CANTOUS AND SAW THE OFFICE, DRAWINGS AND THE SITE OF THE KUWAIT FUND FOUNDATION, ALL DRAWINGS WERE OF HIGHEST AMERICAN STANDARD, ALL SAME SIZE, BOUND, ALL DETAILED FINISH SCHEDULES ON DRAWINGS. COMPARED TO ORDINARY KUWAITI BUILDINGS

THIS WAS OF AN EXCEPTIONAL HIGH STANDARD (10 OF FINISHES. THE MAIN STRUCTURE CAST IN SITU (IN PLYWOOD SCAFF.) SURFACE BUSH-HAMMERED. MASONRY (MOSSUL STONE IMPORTED FROM IRAQ) WAS USED IN EXTERIOR WALLS AND PLAZZA COVERING, ROOFING TOP TO INTERIOR:  
4cm THICK 60x60 cm PREFAB CONCRETE SLABS JOINED WITH CHALKING COMPOUND.  
5cm SAND  
5 LAYERS OF RUBBER PAINT  
IN SITU CONCRETE

GENERAL: WE HAVE NOT SAID ANYTHING FINAL ABOUT HAWAII AS LOCATION FOR THE OFFICE, WE CAN EXPECT VISITS DURING SUMMER FROM A2/28 AND OTHERS! THERE IS A DANISH CONSULATE IN KUWAIT HEADED BY A JORDANIAN TO THIS IS ALSO CONNECTED A YOUNG DANISH TRADE OFFICER, HANS BECHGÅRD, WHO EXPRESSED HIS WILLINGNESS TO HELP IN ANY WAY, COULD HELP SOLVING MINOR PROBLEMS THAT WOULD NOT JUSTIFY A VISIT TO KUWAIT. (SEEMED VERY ENERGETIC, AGE ABOUT 30)  
SELECTION COMMITTEE TOLD US ABOUT KUWAITI ENGINEERS WORKING FOR 1½ - 2½%.

IF WE WANT INFORMATION ABOUT ROAD NETWORK ETC. WE HAVE TO WRITE A LIST OF OUR REQUIREMENT TO M.P.W. AND NO ONE ELSE. — WHILE WE WERE VISITING THE PROVISIONAL

(11)  
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, WE "UNOFFICIALLY"  
MET THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL MR  
ABDUL LATIF AL FOULETDJ, THE MAN THAT  
ALSO SHOWED THE PARLIAMENT TO J.U. HE  
GAVE US WITH HIS CRITICISM OF THE  
PROJECT AN INDICATION OF WHAT PROBLEMS  
MIGHT ARISE LATER. HE WANTED THE  
LIBRARY TO BE OF A DIFFERENT ARCHITECTURAL  
EXPRESSION TO THE OFFICE MODULES AND  
ALSO BY A SEPERATE ENTRANCE OPEN  
TO THE PUBLIC PREFERABLY SITUATED  
WITH A SEA VIEW. - AUDIT SECTION IN  
A SEPERATE BUILDING, OFFICE LAND-  
SCAPES AND A LOT OF OTHER REMARKS  
THAT SHOWED THAT HE HAD NOT STUDIED  
THE PLANS CAREFULLY.

THERE IS ALSO A CERTAIN CONCERN <sup>OVER</sup> ~~THAT~~  
ONE IS ABLE TO DRIVE A LOAD OF EXPLOSIVES  
UNDER ANY PART OF THE BUILDING.

THE GENERAL ATTITUDE IS TO NOT BUILD  
EXPENSIVELY.

MULTISTORY GARAGE 25 KD/M<sup>2</sup>

LAND IN THIS AREA 200 KD/M<sup>2</sup>

1 KD (KUWAITI DINAR) = 2,15 DHS. (1/4 - '73)

PLANNING BOARD FOLLOWS PROJECT TILL SIGNING OF  
CONTRACT WHERE UPON M.P.W. TAKES OVER.

NORMAL OFFICE HOURS 7<sup>00</sup> - 13<sup>00</sup>  
IN REALITY 9<sup>00</sup> - 12<sup>00</sup>

## Appendix II: Letter from the Planning Board to Rifat Chadirji



Ref. : PB/30(4)-1052/72  
Date : 2 April 1972

**THE PLANNING BOARD  
DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT**

Messrs. Iraq Consult,  
P. O. Box 2291,  
Baghdad,  
IRAQ

Dear Mr. Chadirji,

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BUILDINGS

You will see from the attached Report that your scheme and one other scheme (by Mr. Utzon) are the two schemes from which the winning design will be selected. Before taking this final decision our advisers would be glad if you will kindly supply the following information to clarify certain aspects of your proposals:

- 1) The number of members of Parliament is at present only 50 and the size of the administration is limited. Residential accommodation for members is not required. Could you illustrate how the building could be phased to start from present requirements and to increase later?
- 2) The accommodation for visitors to the Assembly Chamber may be reduced to 500. Could you kindly show the effect of this.
- 3) The office accommodation for the Audit building seems inflexible. Could this be remedied.

There are several other points which have been raised particularly the way in which the screen walls conceal the form of the Assembly and other significant elements in the group. These are probably more easily cleared by discussion. Dr. Azzam can be contacted in Beirut and would be ready to clarify these points if you could contact him in Beirut.

contd.



THE PLANNING BOARD  
DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Ref. : \_\_\_\_\_  
Date : \_\_\_\_\_

Page 2

It would be of great assistance if you could send these revisions to Kuwait at the beginning of June for our advisers' final deliberation and recommendation.

Arrangements are being made to send you a cheque in payment for your submission and you should receive it soon.

I should like to thank you for all your work and the most interesting scheme which you have proposed.

Yours sincerely,

(Ahmad Duaij)  
DIRECTOR-GENERAL  
THE PLANNING BOARD



cc: Advisory Group - Master Planning Committee  
cc: Ministry of Public Works  
cc: Department of the Environment



## Appendix III: Letter from the Planning Board to Jørn Utzon



Ref. : PB/30 (4)-1049/72  
Date : 2 April 1972

THE PLANNING BOARD  
DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Architect Jørn Utzen, M.A.A., F.R.A.I.A.,  
3150 Hellebaek,  
DENMARK

Dear Mr. Utzon,

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BUILDINGS

You will see from the attached Report that your scheme and one other scheme from I.Q.C. (Iraq) are the two schemes from which the winning scheme will be selected. Before taking this final decision our advisers would be glad if you would kindly supply the following information to clarify certain aspects of your proposals:

1. It is felt that the Conference Suite should be self-contained and should have its own independent entrance. Could this be done conveniently and could you kindly illustrate this.
2. The accommodation for the public in the Assembly Chamber seems to be small. Accommodation for 1000 people was required. This could be reduced but could your scheme accommodate 500 people comfortably? Could these people have their separate entrance and access. Could the sight lines be improved so that each separate group can see the whole assembly of members and so that the view is not limited by the flanking supports?
3. The mosque needs to be correctly orientated and this should be accessible to the public from outside the building as well as to members.
4. The number of members of Parliament is at present only 50 and the size of the administration is limited. Could you illustrate how the building could be phased to start from the present requirements and to increase later?

contd.



Ref. PB/30(4) 1049 /  
Date : \_\_\_\_\_

THE PLANNING BOARD  
DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

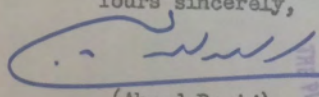

Page 2

There are one or two further points which have been raised which are perhaps best covered by discussion. Sir Leslie Martin has offered to meet you or your representative in London to clarify these and perhaps you could kindly contact him.

It would be of great assistance if you could send these revisions to Kuwait on the first of June, 1972 for our advisers' final deliberation and recommendation.

Arrangements are being made to send you a cheque in payment for your submission and you should receive it soon.

I should like to thank you for all your work and the most interesting scheme which you have proposed.

Yours sincerely,  
  
(Ahmad Duaij)  
DIRECTOR-GENERAL  
THE PLANNING BOARD  


- cc: Advisory Group - Master Planning Committee
- cc: Ministry of Public Works
- cc: Department of the Environment



**Appendix V: “Wazir Al-ashghal: Al-Mashrou Ahad Ma’alim Al-Democratiya wa Al-hadara fi Al- Kuwayet [The Minister of Public Works: the Project is a Landmark of Democracy and Civilization in Kuwait]”**

**القبس**  
 المسر القصة / الكويت  
 التاريخ ١٤ يونيو ١٩٧٨

**توقيع عقد إنشاء مبنى مجلس الأمة بمبلغ ١٧ مليون دينار**



**وزير الأشغال: المشروع أحد معالم الديمقراطية والحضارة في الكويت**

وقع وزير الأشغال السيد دكتور يوسف السعيد أمس عقد إنشاء وأعمال مبنى مجلس الأمة الجديد . حضر التوقيع واستؤذرة الاستاذ بدر بن محمد والعميد الزقاني ، ونائب رئيس مجلس إدارة المشاريع الكويتية السيد يوسف المشرف المشرف مدير القطاع شحاته ، كما حضر من الشركة الكويتية الجاهزة بديرها العام السيد عبدالعزيم الفايح وولفته بدر بن مبارك . تبلغ قيمة العقد حوالي ١٧ مليون دينار ، وبمدة اجازة ٢٢ شهرا .

سرع وزير الأشغال على توقيع العقد الذي تبلغ قيمته ١٧ مليون دينار ، وهو من أهم المشاريع التي تنفذها الكويت في إطار خططها الخمسية الأولى . وقد تم اختيار الشركة الكويتية الجاهزة بديرها العام السيد عبدالعزيم الفايح وولفته بدر بن مبارك ، لتقوم بتنفيذ الأعمال الإنشائية والخدمية للمبنى .

ويذكر ان مبنى مجلس الأمة الجديد ، الذي تبلغ مساحته الإجمالية ١٠٠ ألف متر مربع ، وسيتكون من ١٧ جناحا ، ويضم ١٠٠ غرفة ، وسيتم افتتاحه في نهاية العام ١٩٧٩ .

ويذكر ان مبنى مجلس الأمة الجديد ، الذي تبلغ مساحته الإجمالية ١٠٠ ألف متر مربع ، وسيتكون من ١٧ جناحا ، ويضم ١٠٠ غرفة ، وسيتم افتتاحه في نهاية العام ١٩٧٩ .

أعمال البناء والتشييد والمعدات الكهربائية والميكانيكية والتهوية والتكييف والبريد والبرق والمياه والغاز والمعدات الخاصة بالمجلس .

ويذكر ان مبنى مجلس الأمة الجديد ، الذي تبلغ مساحته الإجمالية ١٠٠ ألف متر مربع ، وسيتكون من ١٧ جناحا ، ويضم ١٠٠ غرفة ، وسيتم افتتاحه في نهاية العام ١٩٧٩ .

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● صوران مجيدان التنسيي . الصور العليا لقاعة الرئيسية ، والصور القليلة الواردة للخدمة التنفيذية .

Appendix VI: " Al-nuwab Al-judod Yamdhoon Nesif Omrahum Al-barlamani Bimabna Al-Majlis Al-Qadeem [The New Members of Parliament Spend Half of their Ages in the Old Assembly Building]

**الاقبىس**  
 المصنف: **الاقبىس**  
 التاريخ: **العدد ٨ مارس ١٩٨١**  
 رقم العدد: **٢١٦٧** الصفحة: **٦**

**لأن نسبة الإنجاز في المبنى الجديد لم تبلغ ربع بالمائة:**

## النواب الجدد يرضون نصف عمرهم البرلماني بمبنى المجلس القديم

**كتب صفوان البني:**  
 قد ينتهي دور الأمتعة الثاني من الفصل التشريعي الخامس قبل أن يحظى أعضاء مجلس الأمة ببهجة الجلوس في مكاتبهم الجديدة بمبنى مجلس الأمة الجديد ، وحتى الآن لم تتجاوز نسبة الإنجاز في مشروع المبنى أكثر من ٣٠ إلى ٤٠ بالمائة من النسبة الكلية ، ومعظمها أعمال إنشائية تبحثة من دون التجهيزات التشغيلية التي سوف تأتي في مرحلة لاحقة . وذلك لمن المحتمل أن يضي النواب الجدد نصف عمرهم البرلماني في المبنى القديم .

وربما يكون تعطل الحياة البرلمانية للسنوات الأربع الماضية قد أضفى نسيباً من روح الحماس أكثر لاجاز المشروع لدى المسؤولين عنه . وقد مر المشروع بسلسلة من المشاكل أدت في قبتها إلى سحب المشروع من شركة كورية ، وإعادة طرحه مجدداً بعد إجراء تعديلات جوهرية عليه ، حيث غارت في المطاف شركة الماني الجائزة الكورية ، مما أضر عملية التجازة بالكامل حوالي سنتين .

وهي الآن يمكن القول أن الهيكل الرئيسي الخارجي للمشروع قد بدأت ملامحه لتتضح ، حيث تم إنجاز حوض أجزاء المرصانة الخاصة بالسقوف ، وجرى حالياً تركيب بعض الإعمال الكهربائية ، وتجهيزات الإعمال الإنشائية للمنصة الرئيسية في قاعة الاجتماعات .

وبالنسبة لإعمال الخدمات كالترافق الصحية ، ومعدات ومستلزمات التكييف فقد قطعت شوطاً كبيراً وجرى إنجاز معظمها في المراداب ، وبلغت نسبة ما تم إنجازها منها حوالي ٨٠ بالمائة ، والإنجاز الأكبر لهذه المعدات يرجع إلى ارتباط خدمات الإدار العلية بها مثل التكييف وتجهيزات المياه والكهرباء .

وتجربياً يتعلق بقية أجزاء المشروع فعرضي حالياً تركيب العديد من الوحدات المسبقة الصنع ، وخاصة الإسقف الخاصة بالمكاتب المختلفة ضمن المشروع . أما بالنسبة للدوائر الرئيسية فقد تم تركيب جميع الأعمدة الرئيسية التابعة لها وهي في معظمها من النوع المسبق الجيد ، ولم يتبق من البرابرة الرئيسية إلا الإسقف الذي سيقام في شكله وفي تصميجه مع شكل سقف الصالة الرئيسية ، وجرى حالياً تجهيز العمل لسحب هذا الإسقف ، ويوجه عام فإن ما تبقى من أعمال في المشروع هو ما ينبع عادة الأعمال المتعلقة بتركيب الأجزاء المسبقة الصنع

● المبنى الرئيسي للمجلس كما يبدو بعد إنجاز ٣٠ بالمائة من المشروع .

● نظام التصويت بالمجلس الجديد مماثل للامم المتحدة ويتم الكترونياً

● غرفة تحكم الكترونية لتسيير كافة تجهيزات المبنى

وتزود المعالين وقاعات اجتماعات اللجان وملحقاتها ومكاتب أعضاء المجلس الأمة .

● أما المراداب فيحتوي على أجهزة خدمات الكهرباء والتكييف وتوصيلات المياه والصرف ومعدات وأجهزة الصيانة .

● تقدم المداخل الرئيسية مظلة تتناسب في حجمها وشكلها مع عظمة وأهمية المشروع . وقد روعي في التصميم الطابع العربي الإسلامي حيث المكاتب مكونة من وحدات متكررة تتوسط كل وحدة حديقة داخلية صغيرة مساحتها ١٠٠ متر مربع كما توجد حديقة وأخلة رئيسية أمام صالات الاستقبال مساحتها حوالي ألفي متر مربع .

● جهزت القاعة الرئيسية بأجهزة الكترونية لأخذ الأصوات وإعلان النتائج والترجمة الفورية والنقل الإذاعي واللفظي وخصصت أماكن إطلالي الصحابة وكبار الزوار .

● أما طريقة الإنشاء فتعتمد على المرصانة المسلحة سابقة التجهيز وكذا على الطابق الرابي .

● ستكون على النحو التالي :  
 ● مساحة الموقع الإجمالية ١٢٠ ألف متر مربع ، ومساحة المباني حوالي ١٨ ألف متر مربع .

● يتكون المبنى من طابقين فوق الأرض بالإضافة إلى طابق تحت الأرض «بدروم» يكامل سطح المبنى .

● يشتمل الطابق الأرضي على القاعة الرئيسية واجتماعات مجلس الأمة ومساحتها حوالي ألفي متر مربع وعلى أجهزة الاستقبال الرئيسية لسمو الأمير وسيمو ولي العهد وجناح الأمانة العامة كما يحتوي على مكاتب رئيس المجلس ونائبه والأمين العام والأمين العام المساعد وغرف المداولة وقاعات اجتماعات اللجان الفرعية وملحقاتها من مستشارين وسكرتارية وغير ذلك ، وكذا إدارات الأرشيف والتسؤون المالية والإدارية والمكتبة العامة والكافتريا بالإضافة إلى مكاتب بعض السادة الأعضاء ومكاتب الحرس الخاص بالمجلس ، كما يشتمل الدور الأول على أقسام اللجان والإدارة والسجل والأجهزة والملاقات العامة

والتي تتركز في مجملها بالأعمدة الرئيسية لأي جزء من أجزاء المشروع .

**التصويب الآلي**  
 ويضرب مشروع مبنى مجلس الأمة من حيث التصميم وطبيعة الإنشاء والارتفاع ومن جهة الحجم أيضاً بشرطاً لم يسبق له مثيل في الكويت ، ومن الإنشاءات القليلة التي ستصنعها المشروع بعد التجازة بالكامل عامل التصويت الآلي خلال عمليات الاقتراع على شروحات القوانين من قبل النواب ، وربط هذا النظام «بكنترول» الكتروني ينظم بصورة آلية عملية فرز الأصوات وتحديد الأغلبية ضمن شائبات رقمية وحرفية ، وهذا النظام مماثل تماماً - وبصورة مصفورة نسبياً - للنظام المتبع في الأمم المتحدة .

كما يحتوي المبنى على دار للفظونية معلقة وغرفة تحكم الكترونية بالإضافة إلى أجهزة الاتصالات الداخلية بين المكاتب ببعضها .

**الصورة النهائية للمشروع**  
 أما الصورة النهائية للمشروع

**Appendix VII: “Al-Observer: Al-Mabna al-Jadid li-Majlis al-Ummag al-Kuwayti Yutheer Mazeerjan min Masha’er al-Bara’a wa al-Jalal wa al-Raoa’a [The Observer: The New Building of Kuwait National Assembly Instigates Assorted Feelings of Innocence, Majesty, and Magnificence]”**



جانب من مبنى مجلس الأمة الذي يجري تشييده الآن

وهي تصفه بأنه من اعظم مباني العالم

**الابزرقر : المبنى الجديد لمجلس  
الامة الكويتي يثير مزيجا من مشاعر  
البراءة والجلال والروعة**

الاطلاق مع المناخ في الكويت .  
ومضت تقول انه خلال السبعينات  
اخذت نوعية المباني في الكويت تتخذ  
فجأة طابعا يختلف كلية عما سببه  
المهندسون المعماريون من اذى في  
تصميماتهم السابقة .

واوضحت ان مبنى مجلس الأمة  
الكويتي الجديد هو نموذج رئيسي  
يحتذى لما يتناسب مع اجواء البلد .  
واشارت الى ان المبنى الذي سيتسع  
لالف شخص قد صمم على شكل  
شبه بالخيمة الكبيرة وقالت ان  
الاحوال المناخية قد استوجبت مثل  
هذا التصميم .

واوضحت ان المهندس اوتزون وضع  
في تصورات اثناء تصميم المبنى  
مدينة عربية قديمة مظلة الشوارع  
والمتاجر من بقعة شمس منتصف  
النهار .

ولاحظت ان الناس في الاجواء الحارة  
يكونون بحاجة لاتساع المكان وقالت  
ان المدرج البيضاوي داخل المبنى  
يعطي مساحة كافية لا تعترضها  
اعمدة من اي نوع .

واشارت الى ان المسافة الشاسعة بين  
جدران المدرج تتطلب اعمدة اسمنتية  
شديد الانحناء وقالت غير ان هذه  
ليست مشكلة بالنسبة لكفاءة  
المهندس اوتزون فقد صمم سقف  
المدرج بحيث لا يزيد وزنه عن وزن  
خيمة .

قالت صحيفة الابزرقر البريطانية  
امس في تقرير عن مبنى مجلس الأمة  
الكويتي الجديد بأنه ( سيكون من  
اعظم المباني في العالم ) .

واضافت ان المهندس المعماري  
الدانماركي الشهير جون اوتزون  
الذي قام بتصميم دار الاوبرا في  
سدني باستراليا هو الذي صمم  
ايضا مبنى مجلس الأمة الكويتي .  
وقالت ان البنين الجميل للمبنى يبدو  
ناضجا بالحياة شأنه في ذلك شأن  
الاعمال الفنية العظيمة ويعطي  
مشاعر مثيرة هي مزيج من البراءة  
والجلال والروعة .

واشارت الى ان معظم المباني التي  
بنيت في الكويت في الخمسينات  
والستينات والتي صممت في الخارج  
لم تكن تصميماتها تتناسب على



## **Appendix IX: Timeline of Major Events in Kuwait 1899-1991**

**1899** Kuwait becomes a protectorate of the British Empire (or independence from the Ottoman Empire).

**1904:** Halford Mackinder research initiates the study of geopolitics.

**1904:** Plans to build the American Mission Hospital were first announced (faced some local resistance).

**1911:** The American Mission Hospital begins its operation.

**1911:** First all-boys school opens.

**1914:** The British Post office services commence.

**1914:** First World War (WWI) begins.

**1918:** British Empire imposes a blockade against Kuwait after suspecting Kuwaitis exportation of goods to support the Ottoman Empire in the war.

**1918:** WWI ends.

**1921:** Arab uprising peaks due to the domination of the British and other Western powers in the Middle East.

**1921:** The first *Shoura* (consultative) board was established in Kuwait.

**1921:** First all-girls school in Kuwait was established.

**1923:** Saudis imposes a trade blockade against Kuwait until 1937.

**1937:** Oil was discovered in Kuwait (no revenues before the end of WWII).

**1938:** Arab Nationalist Party threatens to annex Kuwait (some historians explain that the Kuwaiti public supported the annexation against the royal family's support to the British domination).

**1938:** The first Legislative Council was established to give the local a sense of authority.

**1939:** Second World War (WW II) begins.

**1945:** WW II ended.

**1945:** Arab League founded.



**1945:** United Nations inaugurates.

**1947:** Construction of the Trans-Arabian Pipeline (TAPline) begins.

**1948:** Oil production begins (financial boost).

**1950:** oil starts flowing through TAPline.

**1951:** First master Plan for Kuwait City by Minoprio, Spencely and MacFarlane.

**1951:** Demolition of the vernacular architecture of old Kuwait city.

**1953:** Alexandria, Egypt hosts the Pan Arab Games.

**1954:** Construction of three new hospitals, several schools, and new souks begins.

**1957:** Beirut, Lebanon hosts the Pan Arab Games.

**1957:** The British architect Raglan Squire designs the first hotel in Kuwait.

**1957:** The Suez Crisis accompanied by Arab uprisings instigating decolonization process.

**1958:** The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)

**1958:** Abdul-Karim Qassim overthrows King Faisal II ending the monarchy in Iraq.

**1958:** Kuwait Institute of Scientific Research opens.

**1960:**France tests its first atomic bomb in Algeria

**1960:** Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) forms.

**1960:** The Sheikh of Kuwait establishes the first historical preservation law.

**1961:** Kuwait's independence from the British Empire.

**1961:** Governmental decree permits free press in Kuwait.

**1961:** the Advisory Planning Committee (APC) forms and approves the use of architectural competitions as its system to select the best designs and architects.

**1961:** Casablanca, Morocco hosts the Pan Arab Games.

- 1962:** The first issue of *Sawt al-Khaleej* magazine (*Voice of the Gulf*) is published.
- 1962:** Kuwait National Assembly (parliament) inaugurates.
- 1962:** Constitution of Kuwait was drafted.
- 1962:** Kuwait's Waterfront Development Competition takes place to test architectural competitions as a system to commission well-renowned architects.
- 1963:** Kuwait officially becomes a member of the United Nations (UN).
- 1963:** Kuwait receives UN's consultants to help directing the future urbanization plans of Kuwait through the APC.
- 1963:** Women's Cultural and Social Society opens in Kuwait.
- 1964:** Kuwait National Museum Competition announces Michel Écochard (Paris) the winner. Other participants include: Hans Asplund (Stockholm), Zdavko Breg Ovac (Zagreb), Dr. Sayyid Karim (Cairo) and Affonso Reidy (Brazil).
- 1964:** First Kuwaiti Theater Group forms.
- 1965:** First Kuwaiti Film (*Bas Ya Bahar*) was produced.
- 1965:** The Sheikh chooses VBB, Stockholm to design the Kuwait Water Towers.
- 1965:** Sheikh Abdulla Al-Sabah dies, a major figure in the modernization of Kuwait.
- 1965:** Cairo, Egypt hosts the Pan Arab Games.
- 1966:** The establishment of Kuwait University (first mixed-gender educational system).
- 1966:** Kuwait Sports Center Competition announces Kenzo Tange + Frei Otto (Japan Germany) the winners. Other participants include Felix Candela (Mexico), Pier Luigi Nervi (Italy) Lloyd, Morgan and Jones (UK).
- 1967:** The sheikh of Kuwait selects Björn and Lindström design for Kuwait Towers (the first national monument).
- 1967:** The APC commissions Kenzo Tange to design Kuwait International Airport.
- 1967:** Colin Buchanan and Partners create Kuwait's Second Master Plan.
- 1967:** Six-Day War.

**1968:** Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Libya create the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC).

**1968:** Planning Solutions for Old Kuwait City Competition (no winner announced). Participants: Alison and Peter Smithson (England), Peresutti, Banfi, Belgiojoso, and Rogers – PBBR (Italy), Candilis, Josic, and Woods (France), and Reima Pietila (Finland).

**1968:** Kuwait National Assembly Building Competition, won by Jørn Utzon. Other participants: Rifat Chadirji (Iraq), Pier Luigi Nervi (Italy), Balkrishna Vithaldas *Doshi* (India), Spence, Bonnington & Collins (London).

**1969:** Global Positioning System (GPS) concept synthesizes.

**1969:** Intergraph was founded (a software operates through Process, Power & Marine (PP&M), Security, Government & Infrastructure (SG&I), and Hexagon Geospatial.

**1971:** The United Arab Emirates forms.

**1971:** Bahrain, United Arab Emirates and Qatar announce their independence.

**1971:** Frei Otto and Rolf Gutbrod designs Hotel and Conference Center in Mecca.

**1972:** University of Petroleum in Saudi Arabia begins construction, designed by Caudill, Rowlett & Scott.

**1973:** Skidmore, Owings and Merrill designs the Haj Terminal, Saudi Arabia.

**1973:** Major advancement in satellites technology boosts progress in various fields.

**1973:** Yom Kippur War (October War).

**1973:** Oil Embargo on Europe and America (The Oil Crisis, a decision by OAPEC).

**1973:** Major architectural projects (mostly the ones by European and American architects) stop their construction.

**1973** Hassan Fathy's *Architecture for the Poor* is translated to English.

**1973:** Arab Architects start receiving more local commissions such as the University of Qatar, Governmental buildings in Bahrain, and Grand Mosques in various Arab Gulf states.

**1976:** Damascus, Syria hosts the Pan Arab Games after cancelling it for over a decade.

**1978:** First GPS satellite launches.

**1978:** Edward Said's *Orientalism* becomes available.

**1979:** Kuwait Towers opens and other nationalist structures resume their construction.

**1979:** The Kuwait Amateur Radio Society (KARS) was established.

**1979:** Islamic Revolution overthrows the Shah of Iran.

**1980:** The first Gulf War between Iraq and Iran causes enmity between Sunnis and Shias, socialist Pan-Arabism parties condemned as atheist, and Kuwaiti nationalism joins Sunni beliefs to rise during the 1980s.

**1981:** Gulf Cooperation Council inaugurates (an intergovernmental, political and economic union between Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and United Arab Emirates).

**1982:** *Souk Al-Manakh*, stock market, crashes in Kuwait.

**1982:** National Assembly building in Kuwait Opens.

**1986:** Kuwait National museum opens to public.

**1988:** Iraq-Iran war ends.

**1990:** Iraq invades Kuwait (Dessert Storm, The second Gulf War).

**1991:** Kuwait's liberation, Kuwaiti nationalism reaches a new peak, privatization and capitalism gains popularity.

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