Spatial Practice: The Politics of "Activating" Public Space in the State of Kuwait

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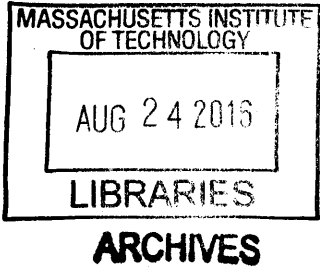
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Abstract |

My thesis examines the socio-spatial dialectics that unfold throughout the development of public spaces in Kuwait. In my thesis, public space is understood as a space of urban dialogue between the state, the city, and the people. This dialogue can be understood by examining the spatial dynamics between three complex agents: the State, Kuwaiti citizens, and public space.

This thesis examines the historical development of two site-specific typologies in Kuwait: first, the political actions taken in squares and streets; and second, the design interventions in large and small park networks within the city of Kuwait. In this thesis, I investigate the political dissent movement from Al-Safat square since 1938 and Al-Erada square since 2006, and the ways in which the government responds to each. Additionally, I examine the emergence of the park networks in Kuwait since the 1960s and more recent design movements found within the Secret Garden and the MantaqaMe movement in 2013 until today, in comparison to the larger-scale Al-Shaheed Park.

This thesis argues that each space was appropriated by socio-political citizen movements as a symbolic space for political dispute over democracy or power. With each new socio-political movement, the government responds with 'new' legislation and spatial maneuvers aimed at disrupting these claims. Finally, I propose a more nuanced reading of public space in Kuwait, highlighting a more complex spatial relationship between the Kuwaiti citizens and the State. This thesis posits that public space is not only a container for politics but the space to reinstate spatial and political agency for a broad desire for change. Studying the two contested typologies, I seek to dismantle the neutral view of public space as simply scenic or functional in favor of a far more political history that is also a spatial history.

Acknowledgements |

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Introduction

On the 10th of November of 2012, the State of Kuwait celebrated the 50th anniversary of its constitution with an unprecedented display of fireworks that earned the country a place in the *Guinness Book of World Records*. While these fireworks gained the world's attention, underscoring an image of prosperity and opulence, they were also successful in masking the inherent clashing of social tensions. In fact, that same week, Kuwait witnessed its largest mass protest that demanded political reform to restore citizens' voting rights. These protests, instigated by online blogs and twitter accounts, took place in a public space opposite the National Assembly building, which was aptly named as Sahat Al Erada, or Determination Square.

One year later, a series of community-led initiatives was launched on Instagram and Twitter, encouraging Kuwaiti nationals to participate in "improving [their] quality of life," - meaning their rights to a clean neighborhood and safe park, through multiple ad-hoc projects, renovating small-scale public parks and street cleanups, which indirectly challenged the managerial governing structures of these spaces.

My thesis takes on these two different movements, the political protest in 2012, and the renovation projects in 2013, as catalysts for a broader examination of the socio-spatial dialectics that unfold throughout the development of public spaces in Kuwait. In my thesis, public space is understood as a space of urban dialogue between the state, the city, and the citizens. This dialogue can be understood by studying the historical, social, and cultural developments of social spaces through a specific lens: "Agency."

Through a critical examination of the historical developments of two site-specific typologies in Kuwait– the political actions taken in squares and streets and the design interventions in large and small park networks within the city of Kuwait– I argue that each space was appropriated by citizen movements as a symbolic space for political dispute over democracy or power. With each new socio-political movement, the government responded with 'new' legislation and spatial maneuvers aimed at

disrupting these claims. In this thesis I propose a nuanced reading of public space in Kuwait, highlighting a complex spatial relationship between the Kuwaiti citizens and the State.

The overarching argument of my entire thesis demonstrates that public space becomes the repository of citizenship in relation not only to the nation, but also to the city, with a great emphasis on its spatial dimension. Beginning with the overall discourse of public space, the first chapter examines the general theories of spatial politics in order to develop a conceptual framework for studying different kinds of public spaces in Kuwait. In the second and third chapters, I demonstrate that there is a dialectic relationship between smaller citizen movements and larger state actions. More specifically, chapter two investigates the political dissent movement from Sahat Al-Safat since 1938 and Sahat Al-Erada since 2005 and the ways in which the government responds to each, while chapter three examines the emergence of the park networks in Kuwait since the 1960s and the more recent design interventions, such as the Secret Garden and the MantaqaMe movement, in comparison to the larger state-redevelopment of Al-Shaheed Park.

Chapter 1 | Towards a Conceptual Framework

Before delving into the specific case studies, the first chapter works towards building a conceptual framework to examine the larger idea of public space. First, I examine the ways in which public space has been defined. I argue that public space is not a single universal concept, but rather a construct imported, manipulated, and used by different groups based on the recognition that public space is a space of conflict between different positions, mainly between the state and fragments of society. Second, I criticize social readings of space, stressing the need to understand the historical, social, and cultural developments of social spaces through a specific lens of "Agency" that exists within a specific state-citizen relationship. I highlight that there is a distinctive pattern in which there is a large powerful authoritative state with a small-citizenry population that is generally overlooked in the general discourse on public space. Therefore, the third section expands on and works toward developing why the citizen-state

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relationship is important in Kuwait, an idea that needs to be studied on its own, in order to provide a focused study relevant for Kuwait.

The first section recognizes that the concepts of public spaces were and are being developed on an idealistic concept of the city and its traditional spaces. This section draws upon Henri Lefebvre's constructs of social spaces, Setha Low's readings on the politics of public space, and Tali Hatuka's studies on contemporary citizen dissent practices to show that each of these concepts arises from a specific context and a specific time, and must be recognized on its own terms. The ideas should be taken neither as universal truths, nor as identical to each other, but rather they need to be scrutinized. Therefore, the first section speculates on how we can start to think about what public space is within the context of a welfare state such as Kuwait.

Rather than unfolding the urban spatial history of Kuwait, the second section specifically focuses on the spatial relationship of pubic spaces with "Kuwaiti Nationals" themselves. This is not to say that non-Kuwaitis do not produce and construct public spaces. However, for the scope of this study, I develop a conceptual framework regarding the use of public space within which citizens impose challenges onto institutionalized vertical structures of authority– in this case the State of Kuwait. I would like to emphasize the notion of citizens, as it is the core framework upon which I build this study. It is crucial to note that citizenship plays a large role in shaping political, social, and spatial structures specifically within the context of Kuwait, since it has one of the most restrictive laws forbidding people to become citizens. Kuwaitis are a minority but are the only ones that have the right to vote politically. This is to show that there is some sort of political system in place that gives people, not only through markets, but through political decision-making, some kind of ability to potentially influence the built urban environment. This framework sets up the grounds for reading the two case studies in the next two chapters.

Chapter 2 | From Al-Safat to Al-Erada: A Spatial Account of Politics in Kuwait

The second chapter takes up the civic spaces to show how space contains history that is both created and manipulated by the spatial appropriation of political movements as well as by the ruling authorities. We find that both the 1938 Majlis Movement and the political protests of 2012 highlight a progression of youth-led opposition movements seeking more active and participatory developments by spatially claiming their political rights.

In turn, I demonstrate the way in which the urban construction and reconstruction projects allude to the hegemonic structure of the nation-state. This chapter focuses on Al-Safat Square, the National Assembly building, and Al-Erada Square as contested sites for political struggles. The production of symbolic spaces, as well as political, economic and social spaces, employed architectural and urban mechanisms as a means to legitimize Kuwait as an international political entity while the internal political environment was restrained. Additionally, urban reconstruction processes illustrate the spatial techniques employed by the State as a strategy to restrict groups of protest from assembling on the city squares. Through the construction of architecturally iconic buildings, this image-making process continues to corroborate the government's control of the urban space.

These opposing aspirations show that the city streets become a public stage both for the collective actions of the protestors and the performative actions of the state. Although the government operates within formal spatial processes that physically isolate 'public' spaces to limit political dissent, the informal spatial practices of the protest movements create new forms of opposition through the digital sphere and the physical sphere. The protesters learned to incorporate new tools of communication, using social media as an informal stage of appearance, reviving the long-standing urban practice of political protests. In the meantime, the government reinstates its power by engaging new forms of violence and performing spectacular celebrations

exemplifying the continued image of sovereignty of the ruling authority. Thus the city continues to stage the ongoing political power struggles.

Chapter 3 | From MantaqaME to AlShaheed Park: A Spatial Account of Recreational Urban Interventions in Kuwait

The third chapter investigates the history of spaces of "leisure" and "recreation," which were introduced in the early 1950s as symbolic spaces for the public. I argue that these spaces have only been implemented to build upon the constructed image of the ideal modern city that Kuwait was trying to establish, but in reality, due to varying interest and maintenance commitments by government entities that lead some recreational spaces to be overly restrictive and others to be neglected. Therefore, with the emergence of the community-led movements in 2011, a new awareness of these spaces of leisure arises. This chapter is slightly longer because it addresses two major scales of recreational spaces: smaller neighborhood gardens and larger city parks. Additionally, throughout this chapter I convey parallel narratives of the two scales to reflect upon the relationships between them.

This chapter unfolds the spatial relationship to delineate how public parks have been used and transformed since the first planned city park in 1943, the Ahmadi Park, to the most recently renovated park, Al-Shaheed Park, in comparison to the recent emergence of ad-hock community parks such as the Secret Garden and the social alterations of the neighborhood park designs.

Successively, I demonstrate the ways in which public spaces have been redefined by virtue of the multiple spatial tactics employed by both governmental authorities and design movements. I examine how the tactics of the design-centric movement worked with and against the laws, increasing both the government authorities' and the general public's awareness of the neglected spaces. Finally, this analysis demonstrates how the government responds to these movements 'positively' through learning from them and re-appropriating these spaces. Thus, the

process of redesigning one of the largest city parks illustrates the government's spatial response through the construction of large infrastructural urban projects to control and supervise their activities.

These ad-hoc design interventions have the ability to shift power dynamics so that society's wants and needs are addressed. I contend that a design intervention, just like a political protest, is a way of publicly appropriating space by projecting collective design aspirations. Such activities are acts of force that aim to alter social dynamics by defying the restrictions imposed by the government.

Chapter 4 | Conclusion

The concluding chapter illustrates how Al-Shaheed Park becomes a space of synthesis between the two chapters. I reflect back on the initial conceptual framework in order to demonstrate and discuss this notion of *"transformative agency"* to show how there are complexities and contradictions embedded within each of these agents that can hinder or progress future spatial developments. By revisiting Al-Shaheed, I illustrate a distinct understanding of the narrative of politics within public parks in which it functions as a means to think about how the process of spatial production between the state and the citizen takes place, showing how the physicality of space either by design or artifact, becomes the means in which communication happens within such a restrictive body of politics. In a city-state where political parties are illegal; social movements, monuments, and celebrations, are used instead to "speak" to multiple entities, space thus becomes the medium of exchange. Finally, I propose that future research needs to situate this study within a broader societal context with respect to a much-larger territorial space, and seek to dissect these more complex institutional analyses of the State of Kuwait.

Chapter 1 | Towards a Conceptual Framework

The recent uprisings across the Arab World have given rise to the importance of the spatial, symbolic, and geographical features of the so-called public spaces proliferating throughout these Arab cities: Tahrir Square of Cairo, the Pearl Roundabout of Bahrain, and the Martyr's Square in Tripoli, just to name a few. These recent events have renewed scholars' interest in a spatial relationship between social movements and the urban space, or, more precisely, the public space. The way in which these spaces are discussed within the overall urban planning literature suggests a typical understanding of how public spaces represent democratic processes in which the public space is claimed to voice the "publics'" opinion. However, the definitions of public spaces within the larger scope of the literature are used within a convoluted narrative in which public space becomes a hodgepodge of multiple understandings of "public" and "spaces." As a result, these definitions produce only a superficial understanding of the values and complexities that constitute a "public space," In reality, the definitions, both individual and collective, encompass all manners of overlapping layers of historical, social, and cultural values that are often overlooked. It is often difficult to decipher differences among the tangled definitions of public spaces and the multiple complexities of these definitions. In order to decipher varying definitions of public spaces, one must be critical in reading the embedded politics that exist throughout multiple spaces located in different cities and cultures.

Public space is an ideological construct that has been contested, spatialized and historicized within larger discourses of socio-spatial theories. It is a concept that is in itself paradoxical because it is based on a series of oppositions: a space of demonstration and concealment, a space of performance and inertia, a space of discourse and silence, and a space of freedom and control. For this study, public space is understood as a manifestation of all of the above, but most importantly, it is used as a space of urban dialogue, in which spatial dialectics become tools of mediation between the state, the city, and the people. This dialogue can be understood by studying the historical, social, and cultural developments of social spaces through

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the specific lens of *"Agency."* This study identifies the particular agency that exists within these spatial dynamics as a *transformative agency* that allows actors to adapt and move between multiple scales interchangeably.

Chapter 1 works towards building a conceptual framework to examine the concept of public space that is comprehended through a historical reading of spatial relations. This chapter is divided into three sections: the first section describes the ways in which the politics of public space have been defined in modern social thought. The second section focuses specifically on theories of spatial production and public space, with an emphasis on the socio-spatial theories of Henri Lefebvre, Tali Hatuka, and Setha Low. I argue that the literature on the politics of public space leaves out critical notions of nationalism, citizenship, and their relationship to the physical space, which is clearly legible within the spatial production of Kuwait City. The third section presents the ways in which public space is played out in Kuwait, with a specific focus on the state-citizen relationship, by making reference to theories of the nation-state, collective action, and the notion of agency. This section claims that there is an interesting variant of ordinary treatment of public space as being societal in scope rather than citizen-based in scope. However, within the context of this study, the actors who have the agency to change power structures are the "citizens" who are in fact a minority within the country. The last section argues that space itself acquires agency through people's use of the space and its historical associations. Throughout this chapter I argue that public space is not a single universal concept, but rather a construct imported, manipulated, and used by different groups based on the recognition that public space is a space of conflict between different groups; mainly between the state and fragments of society, which, in my study, focuses on the citizens.

The Politics of Public Space:

Theoretical Discourse on Public Space

Some scholars assert that public space is a space of performance,[1] some define it as the result of social activities,[2] others contend it is a space for control,[3] while some contest the entire definition of "public" as a space for *a public.*[4] Generally, there are two schools of thought that approach the definitions of "public space". The first takes on a physical, spatial, and geographic approach which differentiates public from a private space in terms of access, use, function, behavior and control.[5] The second takes on a social definition of public space that has a non-spatial, representational, and procedural approach in which any space of public debate, expression of civil society, or collective action is considered the public sphere, including media institutions and the production of what is called the *public opinion.*[6]

1950-1980 Jurgen Habermas[7] differentiates the "public sphere" from the "public space" to show that the public sphere represents the political and democratic spaces of discussion that make up a collection of private spheres. It is in the action of bringing the private life of an individual into the public sphere that socially constructs these spaces. It is the space of communication and

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[1] Freedom, political action, and the public space are crucial elements that fulfill human existence, thus public space becomes that stage of appearance to perform these vital actions as defined by Hannah Arendt. For a thorough understanding refer to Hannah Arendt, "The Public and the Private Realm." In *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 50-78.

[2] Henri Lefebvre, "Social Space" in *The Production of Space* (Oxford, OX, UK: Blackwell: 1991), 68-168.

[3] Michel Foucault's work used Jeremy Bentham's designs for the Panopticon as a metaphor to explore the relationship between power, control, and spaces; his writings are concerned with the increase in surveillance and control and has influenced many works that criticize the control over urban public spaces as a way to control and modify behaviors. Refer to Michel Foucault, and James D. Faubion, "Space, Knowledge, and Power", *Power,* (New York: New Press, 2000) 349-362.

[4] For a thorough breakdown of what constitutes "a public" or "the public" refer to Michael Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics" in Publics and Counterpublics. New York: Zone Books, 2002) 65-124.

[5] Kurt Iverson, "The Problem with Public Space" In *Publics and the City* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007).

[6] Ibid., 4.

[7] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society,* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989.

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debate amongst the multiple sectors of the "public".

In a more conceptual view, Hannah Arendt claims that all political action requires "the space of appearance," asserting that "actions and speech create a space between the participants which can find its proper location almost anywhere and anytime."[8] She contends that the freedom of the individual is a core active element that manifests onto the physical geographic space.[9]

On the other hand, Henri Lefebvre defines space as a container of activity that constantly changes, defined by the social activity that produces the space itself.[10] He distinguishes between three different theoretical understandings of space: *spatial practice*, which is described as the physical production in a particular space with spatial sets; *representation of space*, which is the conceived space that is conceptualized by planners, scientists, and the social imaginary; and *representational spaces*, which are a combination of both the physical and mental that hold or are associated with images and symbolism.[11] The triad of space creates a dialectical relationship among the three, illustrating that *social space* is a result of the overlapping historical, experiential, and socially *perceived, conceived, and lived space.*

On the other side of the spectrum, Michel Foucault argues that the privatization of the public space is the epitome of social control and surveillance, concluding that what constitutes a *public* is a result of authoritarian power.[12]

1980-Today In a similar manner, Richard Sennet probes the idea that public space is dead. Asserting that the loss of the "open and unconstrained" spaces of the city results in the

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[8] Hannah Arendt, "The Public and the Private Realm." In *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 50.
[9] Diana Boros, and James M. Glass, *Re-imagining Public Space: The Frankfurt School in the 21st Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) 126-129.
[10] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, OX, UK: Blackwell: 1991), 59.
[11] Lefebvre, social production of space. In order to illustrate Lefebvre's spatial triad, imagine a church or a mosque. The social act of going to pray in a church or a mosque can be understood within Lefebvre's notions of "spatial practice" (perceived space): praying within the physical structure of the mosque/church itself, can be understood as the representation of space (conceived space). The symbolic significance of the sacred typologies is the representational space.
[12] Michel Foucault, and Colin Gordon, *Power/knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980).

social withdrawal from these spaces to find refuge in the privacy of one's home, and the "loss of public diversity of the city,"[13] blaming architects and urban planners for the death of these spaces.

Setha Low's research[14] focuses on the agency of people, building upon Henri Lefebvre's theories that space is a social product. She contends that people act as social agents who attach their own symbolic value to certain spaces, thus re-emphasizing the "Lefebvrian" social *production* and *construction* of space as the means by which space is recognized.

Ash Amin refutes the constructed "lineage that the public space is linked to civic wellness." He argues, instead, against the fantasized view that social engagement within the public sphere promotes urban democracy. Rather, it is within the social acceptance of society's "codes of civic conduct and the benefits of access to collective public resources."[15]

Don Mitchel defines the public as those who have "established the right to occupy the 'material' public space," within the struggle of the excluded groups of society, like the homeless, in his case, to be included within the public space of the city.[16]

Manuel Castell's recent work explores the notions of the emergence of new public spheres with the rise of communicative technology as new spaces of flows that alter the physical spaces of urban form.[17] He argues that space is established not just according to power relations, but instead it is established through the needs, demands, and actions of protest movements.[18]

These concepts of public spaces have been based on an idealistic concept of the city and its traditional spaces throughout different time periods. Thus, each definition arises from a specific

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[13] Gary Bridge, and Sophie Watson, "Part IV: Reading City Publics" from *The Blackwell City Reader*. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub.: 2002) 335-370.
[14] Setha M. Low, and Neil Smith, *The Politics of Public Space* (New York: Routledge, 2006) and Setha M. Low, *On the Plaza: The Politics of Public Space and Culture* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000).
[15] Amin, Ash. "Collective Culture and Urban Public Space." *City* 12, no. 1 (2008): 5-24. doi:10.1080/13604810801933495.
[16] Don Mitchell, *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space* (New York: Guilford Press, 2003) and also in Kurt Iveson's, "The Problem with Public Space" In *Publics and the City* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007).
[17] Manuel Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2015)
[18] Ibid.

context and a specific period of time that must be recognized on its own and should not be taken as a universal truth, or as identical to each other, but rather that they are in constant flux. However, these theories stress the ambiguity that exists within the spatial discourse on public space in a non-western society.[19]

Therefore, this section speculates on the possibilities of how we can start to think about what public space is within the context of an Arab welfare state such as Kuwait. When we talk about public space, we must also bring up the public-private dichotomy that differentiates what is public from what is private. A number of factors come into play when we talk about public-private relationship; most importantly, the rule of access to a specific space (access), the nature of control of that space (ownership), the individual or the collective actions/behavior that are allowed to take place within that space (governance), and finally the rules directing how or when or why a space is used (use). These four elements can help develop a strategy in studying public space in the next two chapters.

This study utilizes the *Lefebvrian* notion of understanding space as a socio-spatial dialogue between multiple actors throughout a historical, cultural, and social analysis of the urban form in Kuwait as a way to understand the production of public spaces. This thesis also recognizes Setha Low's proposition that the interpretations of space are a result of a critical analysis of the historical physical manipulation of space, the social behavior, and symbolic representations of the space itself.[20]

Revisiting the Politics and (Social Production) of Space

The French urban sociologist, Henri Lefebvre, has done a great deal of work in regards to theorizing and understanding the socio-spatial relations that come about in the production of any space. Essentially, Lefebvre's main argument in a grossly simplified way is that "[(Social]) Space

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[19] For more information, refer to list of publication at the end of the bibliography.
[20] Low, On the Plaza, 47-83.

is a (social) product". His book *The Production of Space*, argues for a complex reading of space not just as an object of history, but as a result of a process of social, political, and economic production of that space. Additionally, he argues that this process of socially produced space becomes a tool of action, thus, of power and domination. Although the book covers a wide range of analysis and critique of these notions of social production of space, for this study I will be focusing on three main points to help develop a conceptual framework: first, Lefebvre's proposition that the process of spatialization is always in progress, which is done strategically throughout time;[21] second, his desire to understand language as a spatial product of social interaction that gives space its agency; [22] and third, his approach to the production of space through the notions of "appropriation." Lefebvre's theories argue that space is not neutral, or empty. In fact, in his view, social space is a product, a tool, and a work embedded within a network that is in constant production.[23]

> (Social) space is not a thing among other things, nor a product among other products: rather, it subsumes things produced, and encompasses their interrelationships in their coexistence and simultaneity...It is the outcome of a sequence and set of operations, and thus cannot be reduced to the rank of a simple object. ... Itself the outcome of past actions, social space is what permits fresh actions to occur, while suggesting others and prohibiting yet others.[24]

Lefebvre contributes to the idea of production of space within a political reading of space to conceptualize spatial strategies that are used by the state. He presents an analysis of the production of space as a way for the state to manage "the crisis-tendencies of modern capitalism."[25] He contends that the spatial interventions of the state are carried out through selective strategies that aim to reorganize specific spaces.[26] His spatial claims do not suggest reading a space as an object, but rather suggest analyzing the "spatial-dialectic" of becoming of

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[21] Lefebvre, Production of Space, 419.
[22] Ibid., 130.
[23] Ibid., 73.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Neil Brenner, *State/space: A Reader*. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2003) 10.
[26] Ibid., 10.

that space. This analysis is done based on the *form-structure-function* triad,[27] which is used to understand the strategies that apply to reading a space. Lefebvre's argument, however, is in one way or another reductive. His reading of the "state's" production and claim assumes a definite purpose within the state's actions, that are different from the non-state's action. In one way, it is a nostalgic approach to the formalities of the production of space as a direct response. Yet, given the context of Kuwait, I suggest that the relationship between the state and the non-state is more complex: Actions are not taken as cause-and-effect. Rather they are done in an informal process of production that responds to specific events, that do not have a "strategic" aim, but are sporadic responses.

> [A] space is not a thing but rather a set of relations between things (objects and products).[28] "The state and each of its constituent institutions call for spaces — but spaces which they can then organize according to their specific requirements.... Though a product to be used to be consumed, it is also a means of production; networks of exchange and flows of raw materials and energy fashion space and are determined by it.[29]

Furthermore, Lefebvre's second argument, which is most pertinent to my study, argues for a reading of a space in ways that help "decode" space, to define spatial codes that are used by each actor. For example, he argues for a reconstruction of spatial code, meaning to decipher boundaries and elements that distinguish what is "public" and "private, in order to "recapture the unity of dissociated elements, breaking down barriers between private and public, and identifying both confluences and oppositions in space that are at present indiscernible."[30] Thus, he contends that space produced from the state emerges as "spatial chaos."[31] Instead, rather ambiguously, he calls for a bottom-up approach that produces a new space which is characterized by "collective management of space" rather than by state socialism.[32] Although Lefebvre asserts that there are formal languages that signify power relationship in urban form, (e.g., the wide avenues of France),

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[27] The form-structure-function is another term used to describe Lefebvre's spatial triad, which I have explained in in the first section.
[28] Lefebvre, 83.
[29] Ibid., 85.
[30] Ibid., 64.
[31] Ibid., 63.
[32] Ibid., 102-103.

I argue that within the context of Kuwait, this "formal" language of power is not clearly demarcated. Instead, there are "architectural objects" that speak a certain language. However, these objects are not always clear; in fact, they are loose and are done in an ad-hoc manner.

> [T]he goal of any strategy is still, as it always has been, the occupation of a space by the varied means of politics and of war" and "the most effectively appropriated spaces are those occupied by symbols.[33]

Additionally, I am interested in Lefebvre's approach in reading spatial "appropriations" of multiple actors in ways that he defines as "counter-spaces." The production of counter-spaces denotes the urgency of creating space that is unconstrained by laws and regulations. In Lefebvre's point of view, the aim for such a "counter-space" is to challenge the established power structures embodied in the space. This notion of "opposition" challenges the established strategies of planning, which confines specific values and functions within regulated zoned spaces, as Lefebvre describers "promoting a counter-space in opposition to the one embodied in the strategies of power."[34]

> [T]he necessary inventiveness can only spring from interaction between plans and counter-plans, projects and counter-projects…[whose aim is a] project of a different society, a different mode of production, where social practice would be governed by different conceptual determinations [in which] [T}he progression of what might be called a 'revolution of space' (subsuming the 'urban revolution').[35]

Thus, his theories of appropriation include spatial tactics that aim to confront highly symbolic and political spaces in order to create alternative spaces that result as "counter-space." However, Lefebvre fails to show how these things are played out throughout his work. In fact, I would argue that these "counter-spaces" carry a romanticized notion of "claiming the city," which can become powerful tools of social-exclusion.

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[33] Ibid., 366.
[34] Ibid., 381.
[35] Ibid., 419.

Although I cannot directly apply his subjective arguments toward reading strategies of power in Kuwait, Lefebvre's work does offer a method in which we can begin to examine strategies for reading social spaces throughout this study.

Another interesting reading of public spaces is done by the American anthropologist Setha Low. Although she is very much influenced by theories of space that Lefebvre has developed, Low contends that the *social production of space* seeks to transform the physicality of the material settings, not excluding technology, economy, and society as tools that shape up and define the historical formations of the physicality of these urban spaces. On the other end, the phenomenological experience of the *construction of space* represents the social experiences and exchanges in which these spaces are transformed. This particular construction of space is "mediated by social processes of change, conflict, and control."[36]

Low's anthropological reading of Latin America's public plazas and parks provides us with an important framework for reading these spaces culturally, but most importantly, historically. She develops her study through three main readings: 1- tracing the design history of a place through time, 2- the social behavior that the place holds, and 3- the symbolic representations of that place. These three readings will be helpful when we delve deeper into the two case studies in the next two chapters.

Lastly, I want to draw upon Tali Hatuka's understanding of the contemporary construction and deconstruction processes of urban spaces. She contends that contemporary dissent practices initiate counter-hegemonic strategies and tactics by creating what she refers to as *transformative terrain*, "a social platform that challenges bounded politics by using imagination and space in creating new possibilities." She argues that these spatial strategies are imaginative in the way

[36] Setha Low, "Spatializing Culture: The Social Production and Social Construction of Public Space in Costa Rica," *American Ethnologist* 23, no. 4 (1996): 862. doi:10.1525/ae.1996.23.4.02a00100.

they construct unconventional views that underscore the shifting nature of space and power under the intention of generating change.[37]

Hatuka presents an attractive definition of "transformative terrains," in which she develops a flexible strategy that allows for diverse claims to shape and reshape what is "happening on the ground."[38] In a similar manner, I would like to adopt the "transformative" concept in order to allow for an adjustable framework of tactics that are adopted by many users/actors. This will allow for a better understanding of tactics as tools used by both the state and the citizens.

In conclusion, this study contends that people do have motivation to change and appropriate spaces; however, if you can understand how public space is formed through this notion of transformative agency, it proves to show that there is a more complex and fluid order of operation, regardless of the motives, which is not being studied or discussed in the overall discourse on public space.

Citizenship + Agency in Kuwait

In order to understand the relevance of the previously mentioned theories regarding public space, we need to recognize that there are multiple *publics* competing for multiple *spaces*. Rather than unfolding the urban spatial history of Kuwait to understand what defines the *general public space*, I will more productively speculate about which *publics* are constructing and producing what kinds of spaces. This speculation arises with the recognition that certain spaces are produced for and by different kinds of publics. The so-called *public* that this study focuses on, are the "Kuwaiti Nationals" themselves. This is not to say that other non-Kuwaitis or non-citizens do not produce and construct public spaces; they do have other forms of agency, but that is not the primary study

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[37] Tali Hatuka, "Transformative Terrains: Counter Hegemonic Tactics of Dissent in Israel," *Geopolitics,* (2012): 947-48.
[38] Hatuka, "Transformative Terrains," 3.

of this research.[39] However, in this study I specifically focus on the emergence and recognition of these 'public spaces' within the context of Kuwait both socially and politically.

Within this scope, I develop the conceptual framework introduced above by regarding the use of public space within which citizens impose challenges onto institutionalized vertical structures of authority; in this case, the State of Kuwait. I would like to emphasize the italicization of citizens, as it is the core framework from which I am building up this study. It is crucial to note that citizenship plays a large role in shaping political and social structures specifically within the context of Kuwait, since it has one of the most restrictive laws forbidding people to become citizens.[40] Kuwaitis make up only 30% of the total population within the country,[41] meaning, only 30% of the population in Kuwait have the right to vote politically [Figure 1]. This is to show that there is some sort of political system in place that gives citizens, not only through markets, but through political decision making, some kind of ability to potentially influence the built urban environment. The general discourse on public spaces exhibits some sort of isomorphic value of citizens and society, in which, when applied to the case of Kuwait, it is clear that these two groups rarely overlap and do not co-exist on the same level. Therefore, this specific phenomenon offers a problematic study in which my thesis will

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[39] For more information on how non-kuwaitis have defined and utilized public spaces, please refer to Reem Alissa, "Modernizing Kuwait: Nation-building and Unplanned Spatial Practices," *Berkeley Planning Journal* 22 (2009).

[40] Kuwait's Citizen law restricts anyone from gaining citizenship, unless they born from Kuwaiti parents. Certain exceptions happen, however if family ties prove to show their existence in Kuwait that date back to 1950 or earlier there are some allowances. As the law proclaims, "**Article 1:** Original Kuwaiti nationals are those persons who were settled in Kuwait prior to 1920 and who maintained their normal residence there until the date of the publication of this Law. Ancestral residence shall be deemed complementary to the period of residence of descendants. A person is deemed to have maintained his normal residence in Kuwait even if he resides in a foreign country if he has the intention of returning to Kuwait. **Article 2:** Any person born in, or outside, Kuwait whose father is a Kuwaiti national shall be a Kuwaiti national himself." For more information, refer to Kuwait's *Nationality Law, 1959*, available at: http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b4ef1c.html

[41] "Kuwait Population 2016," *World Population Report*, December 21, 2015. http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/kuwait-population/.

present a singular case.
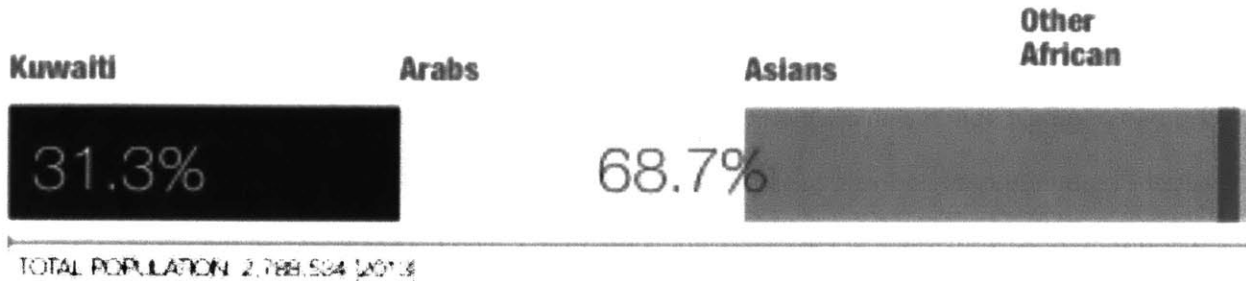
Figure 1. Kuwaiti's are a minority in Kuwait, making up only 31% of the population.

This Kuwaiti form of citizenship, is based on the notion of nationality built on the "Gulf social contract" that exists between the institutional power of the state and its citizens.[42] This section will discuss how the nation-state spatially functions with the help of "nationalism" as a tool to legitimize the authority of the government. The power relationship that exists as a result must be recognized within the discourse of public space. In order to understand the power dynamics, we must examine the degrees of agency that exist within the idea of "citizenship" to show that the actors who have the agency and power to change/claim/disrupt established systems are actually the minority within this context. This section addresses the embedded relationships among the idea of citizenship in Kuwait and its relation to collective action, and the impact of how socio-spatial dynamics relate to the urban fabric of Kuwait. This is to show that there is an overlooked variant within the provided literature that merges notions of "society" and "citizenship" when

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[42] For a clear understanding of the common characteristics of the Gulf Social Contract, refer to Christopher Davidson, "The Importance of the Unwritten Social Contract Among the Arab Monarchies." *The New York Times*, August 29, 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2012/08/28/the-staying-power-of-arab-monarchies/the-importance-of-the-unwritten-social-contract-among-the-arab-monarchies and Sultan Al Qassemi, "The Gulf's New Social Contract," *Middle East Institute*, February 8, 2016, http://www.mei.edu/content/article/gulfs-new-social-contract. For more general information regarding the rights to citizenship and human rights in general please refer to Giorgio Agamben, Beyond Human Rights in 'Means without End. Notes on Politics' in: Theory Out of Bounds, Vol. 20 (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000) 15-26; Hannah Arendt, "decline of the nation state and the end of the rights of man" in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Meridian Books, 1958) 267-302.

dealing with public space.

The thing that distinguishes Kuwait from other nations in the world is that there is a highly constrained state-citizen situation, that is not only pertinent to Kuwait, but also to the entire Arabian Gulf region. However, Kuwait's political structure as a "constitutional monarchy" in which a system of democracy is in place, differentiates it from the rest of the Gulf region. Nonetheless, I argue that within such a restrained state-citizen structure, space plays a larger role that carries significant meaning to this distinctive state-society composition. Space becomes a mediator between the two, but also a tool deployed for constraint and manipulation.

Before talking about space, let's clarify how these socio-political structures are established. Kuwait's socio-political structure was legally conceived with the formulation of a modern state in the 1950s, as citizenship was the principle characteristic for defining modern nation-states. Ever since, Kuwait has had a divisive citizenship policy in which "the legal definition of class citizenship is based partially on the date of family origin in the country."[43] The first citizenship law was established in 1948, in which citizenship was given to the people who had been permanently residing in Kuwait since 1899, and to those who were born of Kuwaiti, Arab, or Muslim men.[44] In 1959, an amendment to the law only allowed citizenship to those who were sons of Kuwaiti fathers. The establishment of this law also allowed for the authorities to revoke the citizenship of any Kuwaiti under specific circumstances.[45] Furthermore, as time progressed, the socio-economic and political structure saw numerous amendments limiting the granting of

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[43] First class citizenship is granted to those families who had been in Kuwait prior to 1920, while others who have immigrated to the country between 1920 and 1948 are granted "second-class" citizenship.
[44] Jill Crystal, *Kuwait: The Transformation of an Oil State* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992). Naturalization at that time was also granted to those who had lived for at least ten years in Kuwait if they had a job and spoke the Arabic language.
[45] According to a 2014 report of the Human Rights Watch, "The authorities can revoke a person's citizenship if they consider it in the "best interest" of the state or its external security, or if they have evidence that the person concerned has promoted principles that undermine the country's wellbeing. Citizenship can also be revoked if it was obtained fraudulently or if a court convicts a naturalized citizen of a crime related to honor or dishonesty within fifteen years of becoming a Kuwaiti."

citizenship and naturalization in Kuwait.[46] It is important to note that the period of independence saw a drastic change within the socio-economic and political structure. Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem, the ruler at that time, created a constitution and a new welfare state that distributed the oil revenues among the Kuwaiti citizens.

With the transformation into an independent state, Kuwait sought to build a national identity, using citizenship as a tool to benefit the *Kuwaiti,* as distinguished from all other parts of the society. According to Anh Longva, the significance of the Kuwaiti citizenship was the presence of a contradistinctive large *non-citizen* population that did not enjoy the social benefits and privileges that were exclusive to the Kuwaiti citizen.[47] Building up the status of citizenship in Kuwait became a mechanism through which the ideology of the Nation-state could be constructed. Kuwaiti citizenships allowed for multiple social rights and benefits such as the right to political participation, free healthcare, education, employment, and a right to own property and/or a house. Additionally, any participation in almost any business activity required the participation of a Kuwaiti entity.[48] With that mentality, citizenship became a social status within Kuwait that had the prerogative and freedom to act, behave, and work in ways that differed from non-citizens. As Anh Longva contends in her book *Walls Built on Sand*, the dynamic of social life in Kuwait shows that Kuwaitis' major preoccupation revolved around nation-building, which differed greatly from the non-Kuwaitis' interests that sought "life-improvement."[49]

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[46] The law was amended in 1960,1966, 1972,1978, 1980,1982, 1987 (made but were rejected by the Assembly), 1994, 1998, 2000 and is still ongoing. For more information, refer to Kuwait's *Nationality Law, 1959*, available at: http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b4ef1c.html or *Kuwait Constitution and Citizenship Laws Handbook 2015: Strategic Information and Basic Laws*, (Washington, DC, USA: International Business Publications, 2015) 111-113.

[47] These benefits included free access to public education, health, and housing.

[48] A new law 1985 established a requirement for any foreign investment to participate in Kuwait to hole 49% while a Kuwaiti entity must hold at least 51% of any venture.

[49] Anh describes the term "life-improvement" as a way of living, meaning their goals and aims being within the country is to work in order to gain money and better their standards of living as a whole. Anh Nga Longva, *Walls Built on Sand: Migration, Exclusion, and Society in Kuwait* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997).

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Strengthening the "national" identity, however, did not only come with these social benefits; it was also deployed spatially onto the urban form. As Lawrence Vale has described, "Government sponsored Kuwaiti-only housing districts are 'highly visible and easily understood symbols of the 'difference between the privileged Kuwaiti and the majority of the population.'"[50] The construction of the urban form became a visible landscape of power that easily depicts the social differences existing within the three dichotomies classified by Longva: the Kuwaitis-non-kuwaitis, the Arab-non-Arab, and the Muslim-non-Muslim.[51] Low-density neighborhoods arranged concentrically around the city were zoned for Kuwaiti-only families,[52] while other areas of mixed-used zones permitted non-Kuwaitis to rent apartments and allowed for living arrangements on the peripheries.[53] Therefore, the urban form of Kuwait displays socially segregated enclaves which become spatially distinct throughout the country.

The spatiality of the urban form provides an understanding of a vision for constructing a nation-state that benefits citizens with spacious neighborhoods and an economic and political city center. This also illustrates how the state uses the physical form to communicate with its citizens in developing a spatially readable "nationalistic" narrative, using public spaces throughout the city to celebrate and further build upon the "Kuwaiti" identity. As a whole, the notions of citizenship and nation-states are social-spatial concepts that impose physical and legal limits onto the individual's behavior, which plays a large part in building a national identity.[54] Such forms agree to standards of legal rights that are applied to some but not others. In the case of Kuwait, as I

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[50] Lawrence J Vale, *Designing National Identity: Recent Capitols in the Post-colonial World* (master's thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1988), 184, https://dspace.mit.edu/handle/1721.1/14762.
[51] For a thorough reading of the spatial subdivisions of the first dichotomy, refer to Farah Al-Nakib, "Revisiting Hadar and Badu in Kuwait: Citizenship, Housing, and the Construction of a Dichotomy." For a larger reading of the classification of the three dichotomies, refer to Anh Longva, *Walls Built on Sand*.
[52] Other wealthier non-Kuwaitis are able to rent homes in these neighborhoods.
[53] Refer to Farah Al-Nakib, "Revisiting Ḥaḍar And Badū In Kuwait: Citizenship, Housing, and the Construction of a Dichotomy," *International Journal of Middle East Studies Int. J. Middle East Stud.* 46, no. 01 (2014): 14-23.
[54] Refer to Agnew 1994, Amin 2004, Rumford, 2006, Hatuka 2012

have illustrated, the rights of the citizens are clearly legible and malleable according to law, while the rights of the non-citizens are almost invisible and highly controlled.

In recent years, many of the citizens' rights have been amended as a response to socio-political incidents.[55] However, although these amendments are made to restrict or alter certain legal codes of the citizens' actions, the legal structure that binds the non-citizens is much more restrictive. In the last two years, deportation of expats and labor workers has increased as a mechanism to level out the demographic imbalance between the Kuwaitis and the non-Kuwaitis. For example, in May of 2013, a local newspaper reported the deportation of 1,258 foreigners for traffic violations.[56] This only exemplifies a fraction of the restrictive laws for non-Kuwaitis, not including their rights to adequate housing, education, health, and freedom of speech. What is important to note here is that non-Kuwaitis make up seventy percent of the total population, but they do not have the right to participate politically in any way. If they do violate any law or participate in any wrong doings, they face harsh sanctions that could easily lead to deportation and expulsion. This exemplifies how the engagement of public space in Kuwait is restrictive: if you hold a certain kind of status, one misuse gets you deported. On the other hand, if you are a Kuwaiti citizen, the rules applied to you are not as restrictive, but they are limiting. One misuse of public space does not get you deported, but is absorbed back into the system of accepted behavior which gains from a proprietary right of holding the special status of citizen. Yet, the Kuwaiti who does disobey civil conduct or cross any legal boundaries could face serious charges as well, such as going to jail, and in some extreme cases having his/her citizenship revoked or withdrawn.[57]

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[55] Many laws have been amended, created, and removed throughout history. These changes reflect the socio-political tensions that exist between the state and its citizens. This will be further elaborated on in the next section and in chapters two and three.

[56] Al-anba from http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/kuwait/10066963/Speeding-Thats-deportation-for-you...-Kuwait-targets-its-expat-population.html

[57] For example, on August 10, 2014, the Cabinet revoked citizenship from a total of fourteen Kuwaitis, according to a Human Rights Watch report.

Because of those restraints, many of the civil movements in Kuwait use public spaces as a way to speak back, make a claim, or respond to what is usually a cultural or political transgression against the citizens' political or spatial rights. The internal composition of civil movements typically consists of Kuwaiti-citizens, since non-Kuwaitis do not have the right to participate within the political system. Historically, collective action has been predominantly male-dominant, yet women have been as active in participating and creating their own voice throughout history.[58] Spatially, these movements have used multiple spaces to express their concerns and discontent, thus reconstructing new "public" spaces with each new claim. Similarly, the state has deployed, transformed, and appropriated the same 'public' spaces to claim their own performances for celebrating *the nation*. Thus, many of these events occurred within the city, showcasing a joint-practice of political claims from both the citizens and the state in transforming the city as a site of appropriation. The driving force of transformation is the citizens' movements that existed within the state's appropriation. The implications of the spatial transformations, in regards to collective actions of both the state and its citizens, demonstrates that each space used acquires its own agency regardless of the spatial alterations. Its agency is apparent by virtue of socio-political associations: social interactions, leisure activities, and information exchange.[59] As a response, tracing the transformation of specific spaces can shed light on the spatial strategies deployed at the sites pertaining to both the state and the citizens.

With that in mind, I would like to highlight that there is a distinctive pattern in which there is a large, powerful authoritative state with a small-citizenry population that is generally overlooked in the general discourse on public space. Thus, the spatial dynamics that occur between the citizens and the state (and presumably what is not studied in this thesis, the broader societal

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[58] Women in Kuwait have the most active role in the political environment as compared to the rest of the women in the Gulf. Women's suffrage movement started as early as the 1950s, as will be discussed in the next chapter.
[59] Yasser Elsheshtawy, "Urban Dualities in the Arab World: From a Narrative of Loss to Neo-liberal Urbanism." In Michael Larice & Elizabeth MacDonald (Eds.), *Urban Design Reader* (London: Routledge, 2013): 475-496.

relations), distinguishes this spatial study from others. Additionally, a primary reason to study the state-citizen use of public space in Kuwait can give us a singular case which contributes to a different reading of the principal theories about which public spaces have been studied. This study presents a challenging case in which a new theoretical model is needed in order to understand the complexities and dynamics that are present in the discussions of public spaces in urban planning literature. The challenging obstacles are not only "cultural," or based on "gender" differences. The structure of this study is actually a "legal" and institutional composition that differs from other cases in literature.

Although there is a great deal of literature that argues for reading new forms of "citizenship"[60] that are divorced from the national realm, these readings focus on a spatial right to living within a city, a right to access information, express ideas, and so on. The advancement of that kind of *right to the city* demands serious changes within social and political structures that produce urban space and societal structures in general.[61] This right to the city is appealing and is crucial to be incorporated into social and political structures globally. More precisely, these calls to *the right to the city*, are ideal for the political and social structures that we do aspire to have. However, the socio-political system in Kuwait does not allow for that change, at least for now.

Rather than focus on the aesthetics and architectural characteristics of public spaces, this study stresses the importance of reading such spaces in relation to how the citizens and the state use, transform, and produce them. The emphasis on this spatial relationship can lead to understanding the urban form of Kuwait as an amalgamation of a particular type of socio-spatial dialogue between the State and its citizens.

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[60] James Holston, ed. *Cities and Citizenship* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).
[61] Etienne Balibar, "EUROPE AS BORDERLAND," Lecture, The Alexander Von Humboldt Lecture in Human Geography, University of Nijmegen, Nijmegen, The Netherlands, November 10, 2014. http://gpm.ruhosting.nl/avh/Europe%20as%20Borderland.pdf

Therefore, I argue that by tracing the spatial transformation and dynamics of at least two types of collective actions deployed on two types of public spaces, we can change our understanding of the characteristic citizen-state relations. This study will show how state-citizen constraints can open up in certain cases, while in other cases they could be tightened or closed up. This is not to say that there is a consistent pattern, but to show that these relationships take up different forms in different spaces. Consequently, the different forms of agency are going to have different outcomes, as will be seen in the next two chapters.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter sought to illustrate the dynamics of the social contract between a state and its citizens based on notions of nation-building, which are politically and spatially defined within readable borders onto the urban form of Kuwait.

Planners, urban designers, architects, and government entities partake in a historic lineage of a discipline that is concerned with spatial control governmentally in relation to social production. Thus, the process of spatial production becomes the representation of power structures fabricating cities of dynamic functions and contested spaces.

It is the action of appropriating certain spaces, temporarily or permanently, that creates a disruption which "challenges the established social codes, rules, and laws that govern a particular space."[62] These appropriations usually take place within what are labeled as "public spaces," ideally adopting Balibar's reading that every public space is by definition a political space.[63] The decision to appropriate public spaces arises from the very fact that these so-called public spaces

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[62] Tali Hatuka, "Appropriation," Urban Design and Civil Protest, February 2008, MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning, http://designprotest.tau.ac.il/appropriation.htm.
[63] Etienne Balibar, "Europe as Borderland." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space Environ. Plann. D* 27, no. 2 (2009): 190-215. doi:10.1068/d13008. "A political space becomes a public space (or 'sphere') when it is not only 'mapped' by sovereign powers (including supranational organizations), or imposed by economic forces (the 'automatic domination of the market'), "but also 'used' and 'instituted' by civic practices, debates, forms of representations and social conflicts, hence ideological antagonisms over culture, religion, and secularism.

are in fact political constructs that fit within social ideals of a shared, free, and open space. However, public spaces usually represent the authority of the state; thus, they become attractive sites for public appropriation, or more specifically, for a political message and ideal.

Building upon Henri Lefebvre's theories of reading space as a result of social exchange, I argue that he does not recognize the agency that exists within the "active group," whether that be the "citizens," the profession itself, or the space itself. Rather Lefebvre's work presents highly attractive theories toward reading space as a social product.

Additionally, Low asserts that a historical reading of public spaces is essential to our understanding of the uses and symbolism of public space.[64] Once we unfold the historical development of two site-specific typologies in Kuwait: the political actions taken in squares and streets, and the design interventions utilizing park networks within the city of Kuwait, we can begin to witness the spatial reciprocity of socio-political and spatial maneuvering of Kuwait City. This conceptual framework is necessary in order to contextualize the theoretical organization for the cases that will be studied in the next two chapters.

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[64] Low, On the Plaza, 83.

Chapter 2 | From Al-Safat to Al-Erada:
A Spatial Account of Politics in Kuwait

On the 10th of November, 2012, the State of Kuwait celebrated the 50th anniversary of its

constitution with an unprecedented display of fireworks that earned the country a place in the

Guinness Book of World Records. Spectators lined the shorelines to witness the extravagant

pyrotechnic display [Figure 2]. While these fireworks gained the world's attention, underscoring

an image of prosperity and opulence concurrently, they were also successful in masking the

country's inherent, yet latent, clashing political tensions. Amid these celebrations, in fact that

same week, thousands of Kuwaitis took over the streets to call for their constitutional rights. The

country witnessed its largest mass protests demanding political reforms. These protests took

place in a public garden opposite the National Assembly building, which was aptly named by the

protesters as Sahat Al Erada, or Determination Square. These juxtaposed events demonstrate

part of the dissonance that currently exists between the social and political systems in Kuwait.

This was not the first time a celebration of the ruling power met a protest movement. On the

10th of March, 1939, a large group of tribesmen gathered in the heart of the old city carrying

swords and weapons to show allegiance to the ruling figure, Ahmad-Al Jaber Al Sabah.[65] The

performance by the palace guards, known as 'ardha, is a traditional folkloric war dance

representing a public display of respect to the ruler[66], reaffirming his power and masculinity.[67]

[Figure 3] These particular celebrations, came right after the arrest, beating, and hanging of

prominent political supporters of the first nationalist movement in Kuwait, known as the Majlis

Movement. The Majlis movement created the first Legislative Council (LC) which institutionalized

the participation of the people in the governing of Kuwait.[68] The events of the political protest, the

hanging, and the 'ardha, all took place in a large central square in the heart of Kuwait City known

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[65] Farah Al-Nakib, "Public Space and Public Protest in Kuwait, 1938–2012," City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action, no.18 (2014), doi 10.1080/13604813.2014.962886, 727.
[66] Lisa Urkevich, Music and Traditions of the Arabian Peninsula: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar (New York: Routledge, 2015), 71.
[67] Mohammad Al-Jassar, "Constancy and Change in Contemporary Kuwait City: The Socio-Cultural Dimensions of the Kuwaiti Courtyard and Diwaniyya" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2009), 118.
[68] Ghanim Al-Najjar, "Decision-Making Process in Kuwait: The Land Acquisition Policy as a Case Study." (PhD diss., University of Exeter, 1984), 85.

Figure 2. Bright white fireworks light up the high rise buildings in the capital of the oil-rich state" [Online Image] , The Daily Mail, AP. (2012).

Figure 3. Typical performance, 'Ardah Dance, Kuwait.

as *Sahat Al-Safat, or Al-Safat* Square. Focusing on these four events, this chapter looks at how space is a receptacle of history, both created and manipulated by the spatial appropriation of political movements as well as the ruling authorities. Beginning with some historical background to Kuwait City, this chapter probes the power relationships embedded in the transformation of spatial forms. To better understand the intersection of power and space, this study will trace the deployment of public space in the service of political dissent, starting with the events of 1938 and ending with the most recent events of 2012. This chapter focuses on *Al-Safat* Square, the National Assembly building, and *Al-Erada* Square as contested sites for political struggles between the citizen and the state.

In turn, I demonstrate the ways in which public spaces have been redefined by virtue of the multiple spatial tactics employed by both political authorities and socio-political movements. By looking at historical urban interventions, this study draws on the apparatus of architecture and urban planning as tools of construction and reconstruction.

Early City Structure and Al-Safat Square

Prior to the advent of oil, Kuwait City was a closely-knit, structured trading city located at the edge of the Arabian Peninsula. This port city was founded by a group of tribal communities that settled at the bay of Kuwait and immersed themselves within trading networks between the Indian Ocean and Aleppo.[69] The city's structure was comprised of narrow streets constructed around clusters of housing complexes. Due to Kuwait's trading activities, these streets connected mercantile landmarks from the seafront, through the open-air marketplace, to a fortified wall surrounding the city[70] [Figures 4, 5].

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[69]Al-Jassar, "Constancy and Change in Contemporary Kuwait City," 66.
[70] Ahmad Hasan Ibrahim, *Madinat al-Kuwait, Dirasa Fi Jughrafiyat Al-Mudun [Kuwait City: A Geographic Study of Cities]* (Kuwait: Kuwait University), 205-207.

Figure 4. Kuwait City, Plans of towns in Kuwait. GSGS 4878, (1956), British Library

Figure 5. The main entrance from outside the wall surrounding Kuwait City, 1920.

Figure 6. Busy market streets

Historically, the public space of Islamic cities came in the form of open-hall congregational spaces of the mosque, which some have compared to the Greek Agora within European cities.[71] Just as Hannah Arendt asserted that a public space of appearance is a necessary characteristic of democratic politics, Nasser Rabbat describes the mosque as a space where communities gathered to assert their political rights while they paid homage to their shared religion.[72] Although mosques did play a minor historic role as political spaces in Kuwait, the market-space, I would argue, had a stronger political and social influence within the old early city structure of Kuwait[73] [Figure 6].

Kuwait's early closely-knit city-structure allowed for participatory politics, where the main urban space for political, economic, and social interactions occurred in the only open-air market-place,[74] known as *Sahat al-Safat*.[75] This square[76] was located at the edge of the commercial district surrounded by other significant social spaces such as local coffee-shops that would multifunction as *diwanniyyas*, male dominated socio-political spaces[77] [Figure 7]. Through these functions, we can understand *Al-Safat* as a space where society openly discussed social and

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[71] Nasser Rabbat, "The Arab Revolution Takes Back the Public Space," *Critical Inquiry 39, no. 1* (2012): 200.

[72] Ibid., 200.

[73] The market spaces, at that time, held social gatherings that also carried political importance. These spaces included important socio-cultural spaces of interaction such as the coffee shop that would informally act as Diwaniya spaces. The shops surrounding the market would become the spaces where scholars held literary discussion and debates.

[74] Open-markets were described as another typology of open public space, which Nasser refers to as *Maydan*. Although this typology pre-existed the early 19th century-imported Western models, they multi-functioned as both an open-air marketplace and a place of political upheavals due to its centrality and its affiliation with celebratory performances for the ruling power. See Nasser Rabbat, 203.

[75] The space is described as a large vacant piece of land that gathered the caravansaries of the Bedouin traders coming into the southern gates of Old Kuwait City. It was also a space where children would gather for festivities and social gatherings for entertainment purposes. For more information refer to Ibrahim, *Madinat al-Kuwait*, 210-214.

[76] Although it is referred to it as a "square," it is actually in the form of stretched out triangle.

[77] These spaces were also the space of interaction of both the coffee shop owner, his clients, and his friends. Refer to Al-Jassar 117.

political concerns.[78] It was a space where merchants, prominent figures of society, and the rulers would meet daily to discuss any disputes or issues pertaining to trade or seafaring.[79]

Al-Safat was one of the few places that saw the interaction of both men and women in public settings, the interaction of city dwellers and Bedouins [Figure 8], political upheavals, and a place where tribal allegiance was re-affirmed to the rulers.[80] It became a battleground for political contestation throughout the early 20th century when a youth-led political movement resisted the autocratic governance of the ruling power.[81] This movement became known as the 1938 *Majlis* movement,[82] whose actions culminated in the creation of the first Legislative Council in the region. It was terminated by violent clashes instigated by the ruling authorities.[83] Due to the political heterogeneity of this space, it will serve as the grounds of spatial investigation in chapter two to show the ways in which space becomes a container for politics– used for both social control and as a mechanism for political change.

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[78] According to Habermas's definition, the public sphere exists "as a sphere between civil society and the state, in which critical public discussion of matters of general interest was institutionally guaranteed. The liberal public sphere took shape in the specific historical circumstances of a developing market economy." For an elaborate explanation, refer to Habermas and Thomas Burger, "Introduction" in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere.* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), xi.

[79] Kuwait News Agency (KUNA). "Al-Safat Square, an Old Commercial Forum." Al Jarida Newspaper, January 7, 2016. http://www.aljarida.com/news/index/2012792079/.

[80] Al-Jassar, 117-118.

[81] Not only did they oppose the concessions, but called for better government-funded education and hospitals and other expenditure of the oil revenue to be distributed to serve the "people" rather than the ruler. There were also deeper reasons for the unrest: the trade embargo imposed on Kuwait by Saudi, the economic hardship as the rise of Japanese Pearl took over the Kuwaiti Pearling industry, and the overall global depression. For a full description of their demands refer to Al-Najjar, 21.

[82] Also known as "Al-Majlis Al-Tashree'i". An earlier council was initiated in 1921, known as *Al-Majlis Alshoorah*, aka "1921 Majlis", which represented a strong political voice to restrict an autocratic authority within the country. Yet it was shortlived and stopped for unknown reasons, that are still unidentified today. For more information refer to "A Study from the Late Dr.Khaldoun Al-Naqeeb on the Pre-Independence Era." Al Talee'a, July 16, 2014. http://altaleea.com/?p=8161.
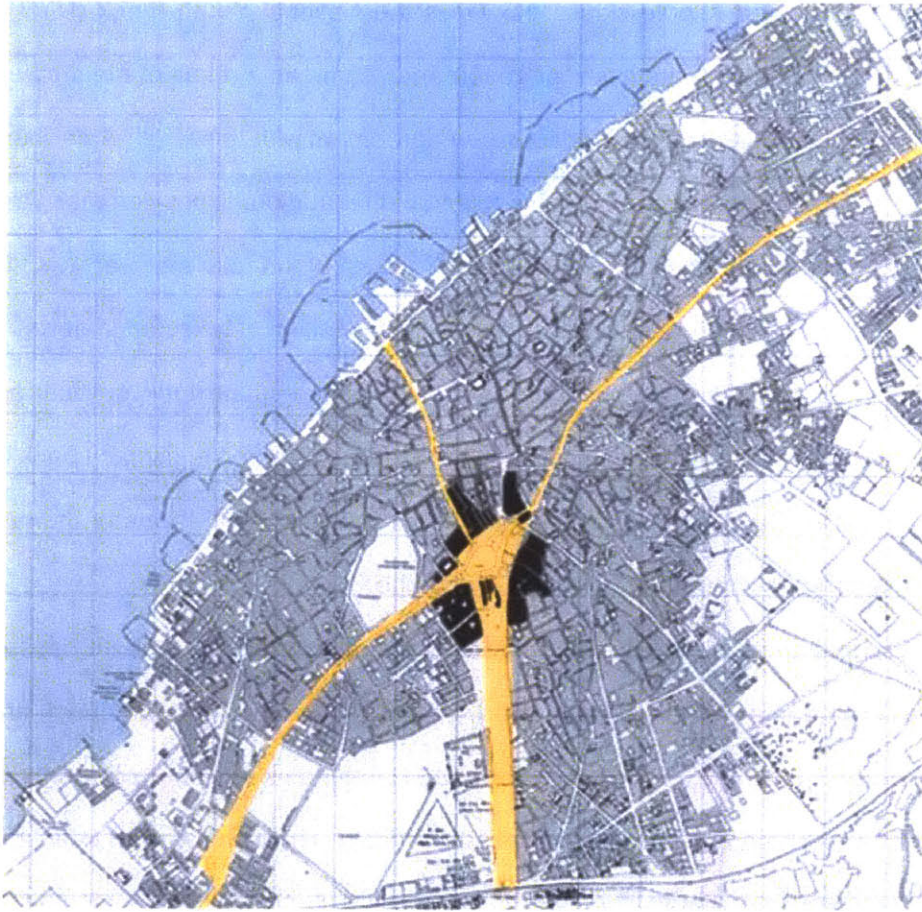
[83] Al-Najjar, 17-26.

Figure 7. Al-Safat Square, Kuwait.

The 1938 Majlis Movement

The aim of the *Majlis* movement was to call for a legislative representational government, with the goal of establishing a power-sharing principle on the decision-making processes of Kuwait. It was initiated by a team of twelve young activists, mostly consisting of liberal merchants and the newly educated middle-class, known as the National Youth Block (NYB)[84] [Figure 9]. Their demands for a more just system of governance came as a result of the shift of power once the ruler, Ahmed Al-Jaber, signed a concession agreement with the Anglo-American Kuwait Oil Company (KOC). This agreement gave the ruler a higher autocratic position that was also backed up and supported by the British forces. Previously, much of the ruler's power was tied to the economic activity of the merchant class, through the imposition of taxes on imports.[85] As a result, the NYB objected to the KOC agreement in fear of disintegrating their political and economic power, calling instead for a legislative council that would bring some legitimacy back to the people. The first Legislative Council was created in 1938 as a result of the efforts of the movement and lasted for a period of six months (July 1938-December 1938).[86]

The formation of the LC posed a threat to the ruling authority when it passed its first law stating that "the people are the source of power, as represented by the council and its elected representatives"[87] [Figure 10]. The newly formed LC gained its legitimacy through the support of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem, a member of the ruling family, who was involved in an internal conflict within the Al-Sabah ruling family.[88] Although the British did not initially oppose the inauguration of the LC, it did call for an immediate end to the LC once the ruler's sovereignty was suppressed.

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[84] Al-Najjar, 21-23.
[85] Mary Ann Tetreault, *Stories of Democracy: Politics and Society in Contemporary Kuwait* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 35-37.
[86] Al-Najjar,
[87] See *Kuwait Political Agency: Arabic Documents 1899-1949*, IOR: R/15/5/205: PA, Kuwait to PR, Bushire,12 July 1938. (Oxford, UK: Public Record Office and British Library, 1994).
[88] The Al-Sabah ruling family has had a long-standing conflict between the two branches, Al-Jaber and Al-Salem, that is criticized for corrupting the political scene in Kuwait.

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Figure 8. Bediuns and city dwellers exchanging goods at Al-Safat Square, Kuwait.

Figure 9. Shabab Al-Kuwait, National Youth Block, 1938.

Key political activities by the *Majlis* movement took place in the only public square, *Al-Safat* square. It was in this square that a supporter of the *Majlis* was reported to have 'distributed leaflets declaring the al-Sabah deposed' in March of 1939, after the LC was dissolved.[89]

As a response, the ruler was said to have demanded the arrest[90] of one of the LC members and the execution of another supporter who had given an anti-government speech.[91] Shortly after, it was known that the executed body of the supporter was left hanging in *Al-Safat*. Here is an excerpt from the diaries of Violet Dickson, the wife of Harold Dickson, a British colonial administrator based in Kuwait:

> Towards the end of 1938 there were signs of political unrest in certain quarters in Kuwait, and this culminated in the dissident elements seizing the fortress-arsenal which stood in the main marketplace of Kuwait. Sheikh Ahmad's supporters quickly regained control and the attempted revolt was abortive.... We drove to the Safat, and there Harold left me in the car while he entered the Majlis building.... As I sat in the car some of the crowd closed round me saying, 'Have you seen the wounded man?' ... but I had misheard the word for 'crucified' and believed they said 'wounded'. I asked where he was, and they made a way for me though the crowd. To my horror I then saw a man hanging on a cross-piece of wood which had been fixed to a pole in the ground. His head hung forward on his chest, and his white gown was dripping red. I was nearly sick and returned to the car.[92]

Al-Safat's Symbolic Expropriation [1938-1948]

In this very moment, *Al-Safat* transformed from an open-air market into a slaughter ground and in turn, a celebratory space for reaffirming the ruling power. The Emir's tribesmen were said to have gathered around *Al-Safat*, that same evening with their swords and weapons confirming their allegiance to Ahmed-Al Jaber.[93] These events publicly staged the effective use of violent mechanisms as a means to end popular movements in one of the most central and active spaces in the old city.

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[89] Al-Nakib, 727.
[90] Because of this incident, the emir had to build a jail for the detainees.
[91] Jill Crystal, *Kuwait: The Transformation of an Oil State* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 20.
[92] Violet Dickson, *Forty Years in Kuwait* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1971), 139.
[93] Jill Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf: Rulers and Merchants in Kuwait and Qatar.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 57-59.

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As the government developed into a stronger entity, the square was adopted into a symbolic space for the new government, surrounded with iconic symbols of state modernity.[94] *Al-Safat* became the site where the first state buildings and government headquarters were constructed in the 1940s.[95] The old mud structures were torn down and replaced with multi-story buildings and wide roads surrounding the square.[96] It is crucial to note that the construction of the first Department of Public Security took place at the north-eastern corner of *Al-Safat* square[97] following the 1938 events [Figure 11]. The political, economic, and spatial relevance of *Al-Safat* square proved to show the significance of space to both the people and the government throughout time.

Al-Safat's alterations reveal that a change in political power coincided with the change of public space. The transformation of *Al-Safat* also demonstrates how the Kuwaiti nationalist resistance movement played a large role in constantly redefining what constituted 'public' space.[98] As a response to new spatial hierarchies imposed by the authorities, multiple forms of dissent re-invented spaces for open political debate, shifting and re-shifting these typologies accordingly.

After the 1938 event, *Al-Safat* was eventually transformed into a parking lot barricaded with transportation trucks, taxis and automobiles, and isolated as a traffic circle in the late 1940s [Figures 12-15]. The reconstruction of the space came with the intention to serve as a parking lot that connected multiple government buildings rather than an open-air congressional space for men and women.

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[94] Aseel Al-Ragam, "Towards A Critique of an Architectural Nahdha: A Kuwait Example" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2008), 38.
[95] Al-Nakib, 724.
[96] Al-Ragam, 38.
[97] Ibid.
[98] For meticulous details on the National Resistance Movements, please refer to Ahmed Al-Khatib, *Al Kuwait: Min Al-Dawla Ila Al-emarah* (Al-Dār Al-Bayḍā': Al-Markaz Al-Thaqāfi Al-'Arabī, 2007).

EXPRESS LETTER
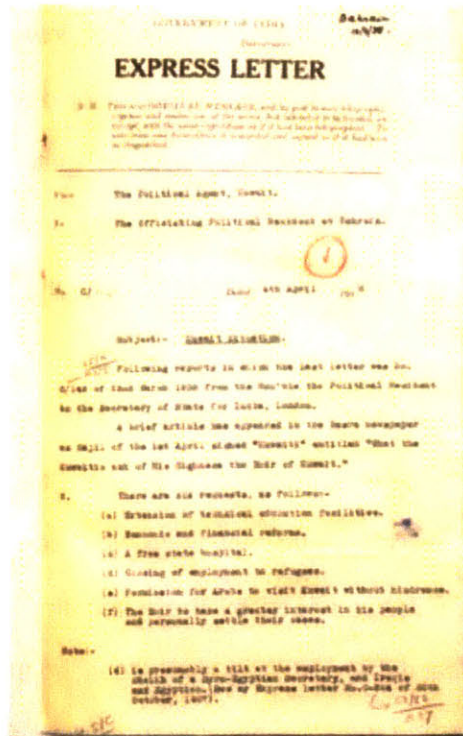
CIRCULAR No. 1.

To the people of Kuwait, the Generous, the Oppressed, the Despised, the Forgotten. To you, O people, we direct this our call, you are entitled to your rights. Our patience has been exhausted, and there remains nothing, after all the efforts which we have made to get our rights, except the defence of the soul.

In Kuwait a secret society has been formed, for the sole purpose of defending you, which has taken an Oath by the name of the Almighty God to wage a holy war for your sake, and which will never turn back untill the Almighty wills Victory for the people and shameful failure for the traitors.

Figure 10. British Political Agents exhange letter to Bushire, 1938. IOR/R/15/1/468 (above) Translation of the first circular published and distributed by the Kuwait Secret Society in June 1938, in which they list their demands. IOR/R/15/1/468 f. 56r (below)

Figure 11. Department of Public Security building, built in 1938.

Figure 12. Al Safat-Square, circa 1948.

Figure 13. Al Safat-Square, circa 1946-1948, introduction of the first paved street started from Al-Safat to Dasman, it is called today, Ahmed Al-Jaber Street,

Figure 14. Al Safat-Square amongst redevelopment, early 1950s.

Figure 15. Al Safat-Square amongst road development, 1951.

Collective Memory and the Transformation of Al-Safat Square [1950-1961]

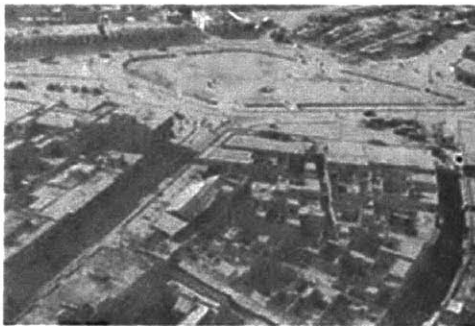During the mid-twentieth century,[99] the Arab world witnessed the implementation of Western urban models through multiple modernization projects. This process embraced new modern planning ideals and the building of new structured and gridded cities, which included expansive avenues and spacious squares. When Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah was appointed as the 11th ruler of Kuwait, he initiated a definitional shift, transforming the overall urban landscapes of Kuwait City [Figures 16,17].

A new spatial order corresponded with the investiture of a new ruler, thus *Al-Safat* became the grounds on which the crowning of Sheikh Abdullah al-Salem al-Sabah took place on February 25, 1950.[100] Spectators lined the streets to witness the event, "hailing the convoy of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salim."[101] *Al-Safat* witnessed a series of celebratory events, marching bands, and other military parades [Figures 18,19].

1952 marked the first manifestation of a planning board in Kuwait, in which the British pressured Sheikh Abdullah to hire British "experts,"[102] such as the planning office of Minoprio, Spencely, and MacFarlane (MSM), to advise on planning matters.[103] MSM's main objective was "the creation of a beautiful and dignified town center, particular attention being given to the treatment of *Al-Safat* and the siting of public buildings."[104] This was with the aim of reconstructing the city center into a commercial district and building a new urban core in the city, ensuring social stability through oil revenues.

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[99] In the case of earlier Islamic cities such as Cairo, Algiers, Damascus, Beirut, Aleppo, and Baghdad, this shift was witnessed a century earlier. See references Nasser Rabbat and Janet Abu-Lughod.
[100] Al-Ragam, 35.
[101] Mona Al-Sabah, *Kuwait: Photographs & Memories* (Kuwait: publisher not identified).
[102] Large-scale developments in the early 1950's commissioned British experts like MSM to participate in the redevelopment of Kuwait City, along with a series of British development and construction firms, known as the Big Five. For more information see [FO 371 series] Richard Trench, ed., *Arab Gulf Cities: Kuwait City Archive Editions* (England: Anthony Rowe,1994), 543-687.
[103] Al-Najjar, 85; and see PA to FO 5 Nov. 1950 in P.R.O F.O 371/82010.
[104] Al-Jassar, 92, and see Richard Trench, 601.

Figure 16. Old housing layout of urban dwellings within Kuwait City, 1927 (Top)
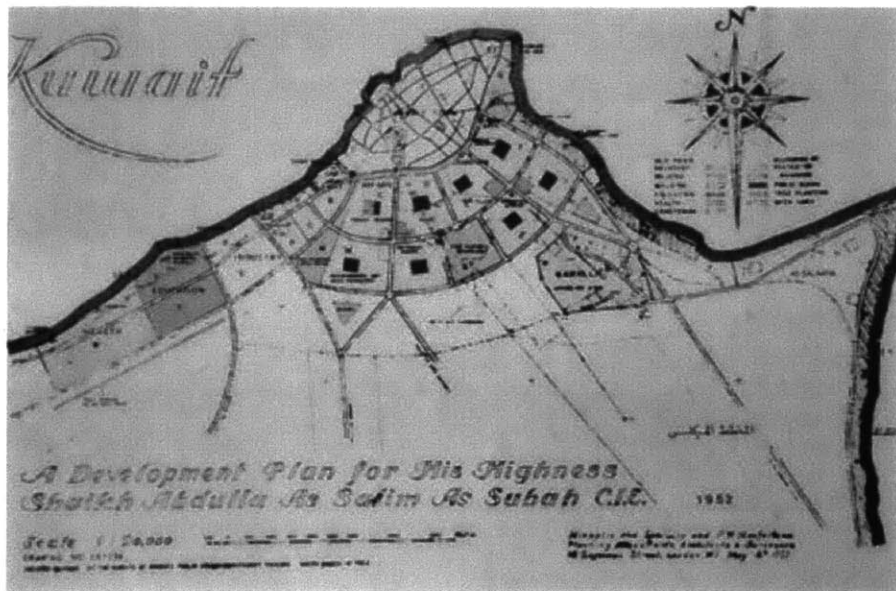Old City Plan, 1950 (Bottom

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Figure 17. The first regional Masterplan of Kuwait, developed by Minoprio, Spencely and Macfarlane, 1952.

Figure 18. Crowning of Abdullah Al-Salem, february 25, 1950.

Figure 19. Sahat Al-Safat used for a Military Parade

The social, political, and economic transformation of the new city of Kuwait, isolated the ruling Emir and again illustrated a break from the old tradition of depending on the merchant class for financial support. The transformative process of creating a new welfare state demonstrated the declining power of the merchants as their power was substituted by oil royalties.[105]

Reforming the city, reconstructing public spaces, and altering the everyday life of the metropolis constituted the creation of a new spatial hierarchy.[106] The spatial curation of the new city used MSM's urban planning concepts as a tool to drive urban dwellers outside the city center and into sub-urban neighborhood units through a Land Acquisition Program (LAP)[107] [Figure 16,17]. Thus, Kuwait City ceased to hold sites for public social and political debate.[108] Therefore, new alternative 'public' typologies emerged in the forms of social and sports clubs, semi-public and private domestic spaces, recreational areas, and other demarcations that existed outside of the city center.[109] As such, Al-Safat did not host the numerous social, economic, and political gatherings that it used to, but rather was converted into an isolated parking lot and redeveloped with new functional aims that served the government's interests.

In September, 1952, the municipality announced that Al-Safat would be the site of the first water tower in Kuwait. Water was a scarce resource prior to oil; this move utilized the square as an urban icon symbolizing a new era celebrating the availability of a water supply. A large steel reservoir tank was constructed in the middle of the square, while the old caravan routes were transformed and "built up as symbols of the states and continued technological progress"[110] [Figure 20].

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[105] Al-Najjar, 29.
[106] Reza Masoudi Nejad, "The Spatial Logic of the Crowd: The Effectiveness of Protest in Public Space." *International Journal of Islamic Architecture* (2013), 167.
[107] For a thorough social, economic, and political description of the LAP, please refer to Al-Najjar, chapter 5, "Development of LAP," 223-261.
[108] Al-Nakib, 729.
[109] One of the earliest and most active club was founded in 1954, known as *Nadi Al-Khireejeen*. During that period, many other sports and cultural clubs were formed. Evidently, these clubs actively published weekly journals with a strong national affiliation. For a thorough historical account of the the clubs, Diwawin, and other politically charged spaces, please refer to Ahmed Al-Khatib and Ghanem Al-Najjar.
[110] For a descriptive analysis of the modernization process at that time, please refer to Al-Ragam.

Although the government usurped the square as a new symbol for celebratory functions, the significance of *Al-Safat* was preserved within the historical memory of the nationalist movements. A large group of pan-Arab youth protesters carrying pictures of Egyptian President Jamal Abdul Nasser occupied the square in 1956.[111] These protesters clashed with the interference of the state's security forces who "laid about the crowd indiscriminately with staves."[112] These events happened shortly after the closure of the National Cultural Club,[113] a civil society organization, where a large pro-Nasserist support rally was violently raided leading to the death of two people and the injury of a number of others.[114]

The ruling family feared the Pan-Arabist support from these clubs, as they infiltrated the nation's internal political structure, harming Kuwait's political image externally.[115] As a result, the ruler closed down the social clubs, banned protests, and suspended newspapers the following year. The Kuwaiti Nationalist movement adopted new spatial tactics, constantly shifting venues accordingly. To protect them from any governmental interference, they appropriated new spaces, such as the central market mosque, to continue their demonstration and their public debates.[116] The mosques were safe, as they were considered as sacred spaces free of violence.[117] Shortly

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[111] Al-Nakib, 728.

[112] Ibid.

[113] As part of the modernization process, new civil society organizations were established, but they were technically classified as social and sports clubs and were restricted by Part III of the 1962 Constitution, mandating freedom of peaceful association. They acted as politically independent organizations with a large support group. With the rise of Pan-Arabist movement, these organizations became politically powerful, assembling in large protests around Al-Safat, therefore posing a threat to the ruling power. Violent clashes between security forces and the protestors culminated in the death of two and the closure of the Club. Thus an attempt to suppress and regulate their activities appeared under the legal framework, which underwent amendments in 1962, 1965, 1988, and 1994.

[114] Ahmad Al-Khatib, *Al Kuwait: Min Al-Dawla Ila Al-emarah* (Al-Dār Al-Bayḍā': Al-Markaz Al-Thaqāfi Al-' Arabī, 2007), 133.

[115] During the Pan-Arabist era, there were political tensions across nations, and since the protestors were supporting Jamal Abdulnasser and the formation of the United Arab Republic, the ruling powers of Kuwait feared the escalated support. For a personal letter written by Ahmed Al-Khatib to Abdullah Al-Salem al-Sabah condemning the violent actions of the event, please refer to Al-Khaitb, 135.

[116] Al-Nakib, 728.

[117] This tactic was also implemented during the Iraqi-Kuwait Gulf war in 1990.

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after, political activity was restricted from public spaces and had to revert back into the domestic sphere.[118]

Symbolic Architecture: Strategies of Nation-Building [1961-1992]

As the political situation was worsening, the ruling family developed a socio-political tactic of decreasing oppositional power by developing nationalist sentiments. In June 1961, Kuwait declared its independence from its British protectorate, as it became a Nation-state with a fully drafted constitution. The establishment of a new political institutional typology gave birth to a constitutional parliament, which was represented by the National Assembly. This helped strengthen national Kuwaiti Identity in 1961.[119]

The National Assembly (NA) not only institutionalized the political agreements between the ruling family and the oppositional tides, but, at the same time, it allowed for the ruler to balance out this tide by encompassing other representatives of the society beyond the merchant class including the Shia, the Bedouins and so forth.[120]

The call for new symbolic architectural elements was put in place for a new National Assembly building, built by the notable Danish architect Jørn Utzon in 1970. Additional national symbols were constructed along the major routes of the city, such as a series of buildings along the commercial street of Fahad Al-Salem, the National Assembly building, and the new $16M

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[118] One of the most significant spaces for political debate was known as the diwaniyya, a non-domestic space that engaged with socio-cultural male activities located within the traditional houses of Kuwait. To limit this chapter, I do not include the role of the diwaniya, as it does not technically constitute 'public' or 'private' but can be read as an in-between space. The diwaniya is a constant element within the spatial configuration of a Kuwaiti house. Even with the loss of all socio-cultural traditional elements of the old town, the diwaniyya continues to be constructed with the building of new houses outside the city center. The diwaniyya exists within an interstitial space between the public and the private realms, which meant that they were 'safe' from state disruption. These spaces played a large role within the future political arena of Kuwait, as they became the gathering spaces for political debates during a time of government political restrictions.

[119] Soon after Kuwait's independence from Britain in 1961, the country witnessed threats from the Iraqi Ruler Abdelkarim Qasem with attempts to annex Kuwait. Kuwaitis marched to the emir's palace chanting, "Oh Abu Salem [Refering to the emir Abdullah-al Salem], give us weapons, we will shed our blood for this country." This march played a big part in re-structuring the political system in Kuwait. Additionally, a few months after the independence, the first parliamentary elections were held to form the first National Assembly in Kuwait.

[120] Crystal, "Oil and politics in the Gulf," 83.

Kuwait Water Towers located along the waterfront [Figure 21, 22]. These symbols would glorify the new vision of a modern nation with an established constitution and a strong symbolic Kuwaiti Identity. The structures came particularly after the oil boom in 1973.

The NA also became a tool that exhibited the strength of the ruler, as he had the constitutional power to dissolve the parliament temporarily.[121] However, between the two periods of 1976-1981 and 1986-1992, the parliament was extra-judicially dissolved for an extended period, and the constitution was suspended by the Emir, Jaber-Al-Ahmad, due to the reason that "it was not acting in the country's interest."[122] This marked a pivotal period in a politically contested environment; 1979 and 1981 experienced two important legal changes. Jaber-Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah issued a law that forced any protesting group to require a permit from the authority before publicly protesting in 1979. In addition, he was in charge of restructuring the electoral system, with the aim of increasing the political power of the tribes and other sects to counterbalance strong nationalist opposition. The electoral system was changed from ten voting districts into twenty-five new ones in 1981.

While the political scene was highly controlled, we see yet another mechanism restricting the use of public spaces through the process of "redevelopment." During this period, a new design competition was called for the *Al-Safat* Square. A design proposal was submitted by Architetti BBPR in association with Jazeera Consultants in May 1981[123] but was not implemented for unknown reasons. However, the proposal from DEVCON, an industrial and engineering consulting office, won the competition and was implemented thereafter[124] [Figure 23, 24]. It does not come as a surprise to note that a design competition during a highly contested political environment was only another mechanism to hinder any possible demonstrations. To this end,

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[121] Under the constitutional right, the emir is allowed to dissolve the parliament as long as a call for a new one happens within sixty days.
[122] Simon Henderson, "Kuwait's Elections Exacerbate Differences Between Ruler and Parliament," The Washington Institute for Near East Studies, July 5, 2006, http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/.
[123] Al-Ragam, 275.
[124] "Planning Al-Safat," *Al-Benaa Magazine*, Vol 17 1989, 58-61.

Al-Safat stood as a construction site, with future intentions to become a central transportation hub. Eventually it was not implemented as a transportation hub, but rather converted into an isolated sunken island surrounded by highways in 1983.[125]

The urban construction and reconstruction projects allude to the hegemonic structure of the authoritative nation-state. The production of symbolic spaces,– political, economic and social spaces– employed architectural and urban mechanisms as a means to legitimize Kuwait as an international political entity, while the internal political environment was restrained. Additionally, urban reconstruction processes illustrate the spatial techniques employed by the authority as a strategy to restrict groups of protesters from assembling on the city squares. Through the construction of architecturally iconic buildings, this image-making process continues to corroborate the government's spatial control of the urban space.

Proclaiming New Geographies of Opposition [1992-2012]

Ever since the re-establishment of the constitution in 1992, the ruling family's management of Kuwaiti politics has been under scrutiny, and accordingly, the contestation of public space between the government and oppositional movements has continued. After the death of Emir Jaber Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah, a new era of political instability arose in 2006, marking an important shift among the parliament, the government, and the people. Two major events happened in 2006 that were the grounds for the birth of a significant political protest known as the Orange Movement.

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[125] Al-Ragam, 280.

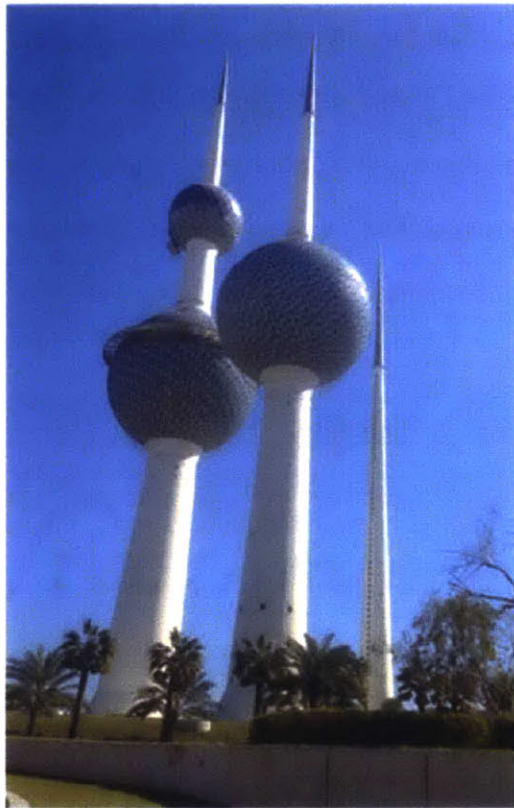Figure 21. Kuwait Water Tower by VBB, Sune and Joe Lindström, Stig Egnell, and Björn & Björn Design
(Malene Björn)

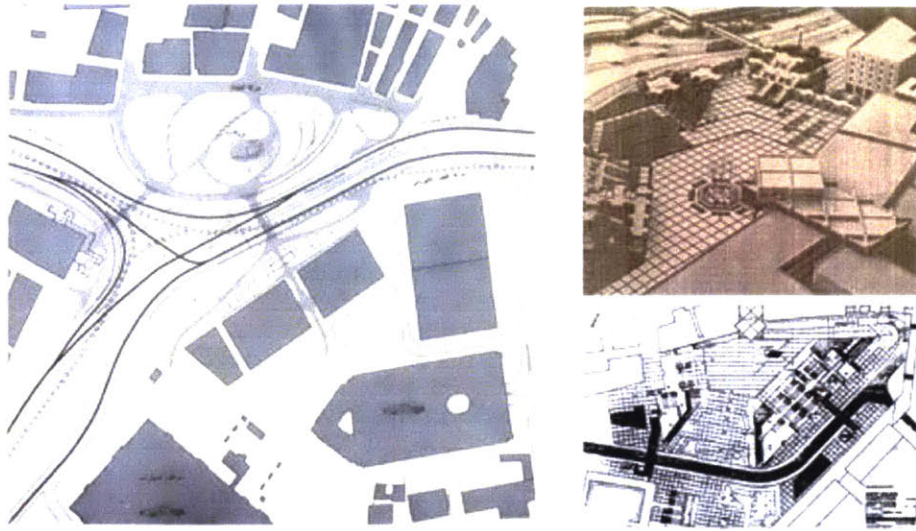Figure 22. National Assembly Building by Jorn Utzon

Figure 23. Al-Safat Square Competition Winning Scheme by DEVCON (left), Al-Safat Square Competition design submitted by Architetti BBPR in association with Jazeera Consultants (right)
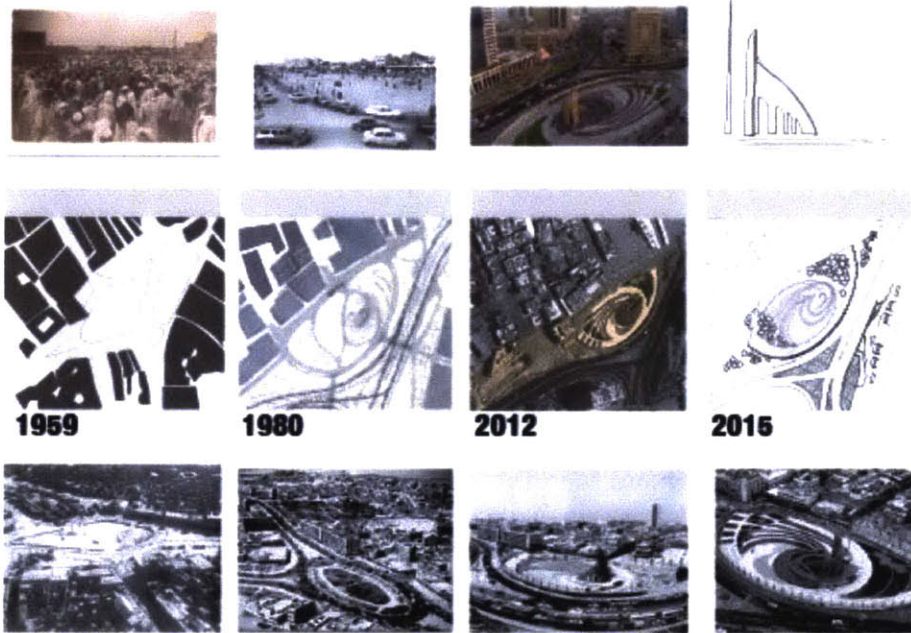
Figure 24. Al-Safat Square Transformations throughout time, 1959-2015

First, the 1979 law that restricted public protests was cancelled by the judicial court on May 1, 2006.[126] Second, a bill for women's voting rights was passed by the National Assembly[127] after a group of women's rights activists protested to pass the bill for women to vote.[128]

Shortly after these events, a group of youth activists demonstrated in peaceful protests that called for reducing Kuwait's twenty-five electoral districts into five large constituencies in order to curtail electoral corruption. The political protestors named the garden in front of the National Assembly as *Sahat al Erada*, or Determination Square. Consequently, the government successfully responded and passed a five-district plan [Figure 25].

Much of the success of this movement was due to their utilization of the digital space of social media to mobilize support. The wide accessibility to the Internet allowed for anyone and everyone to participate in strong online debates via local blogs. These were all linked to an online socio-political platform named *Sahat Al-Safat*,[129] resurrecting the lost historical memory of *Al-Safat* Square. As Farah Al-Nakib explains, "[*Safat*] thus became an 'electronic agora,' a central, if virtual, place for open debate that allowed for free and (in principle) equal access to all users."[130]

Yet, after a series of more than five parliamentary dissolutions in less than five years, another movement in 2011 took to the streets to demand political reform in response to a controversial executive emiri decree that changed the electoral constituency law from four voting options down to only one. The weakening of parliamentary institutions since 2006 disrupted the

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[126] "Kuwait Cancels The Law Restricting Assembly." *Al-Arabiya*, May 1, 2006. http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2006/05/01/23344.html.
[127] Although the emir was a strong supporter for women's rights, the women's movement had been active since the 1960s, yet this bill did not pass in previous years.
[128] For a thorough narrative on the women's suffrage movement, please refer "When the People Spoke," directed by Amer Al-Zuhair (Documentary, 2006) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RWgInWG3QzE&feature=youtu.be.
[129] Unknown Author, Sahat Al-Safat, kuwaitjunior.blogspot.com/.
[130] Nakib, 732. This is not completely true, since access to internet required a fee of subscription, a device to access the internet, and the knowledge to do so. Nonetheless, it does provide a common ground for those who do have access to debate and share their concerns online.

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Figure 25. A Garden infront of the National Assembly, re-named El-Era-
da Square in 2006.

legitimacy of the elections, calling for new elections in 2007, 2008, 2009, and twice in 2012. The 2011 movement went under the name of *Karamat Watan*, meaning the *Dignity of the Nation*, which sought to reduce corruption by forcing the resignation of the prime minister and restoring citizens' political voting rights.[131]

Once again, new spatial tactics are implemented and transformative terrains are created. These events induced many citizens to take to the streets once more. Not surprisingly, *Karamat Watan's* initial gatherings were held in *Al-Safat* Square, invoking memories of the *Majlis* movement of 1938. However, *Al-Safat* Square was immediately closed down in May of 2011, as the government claimed it was "under renovation,"[132] limiting their protests to a much smaller garden facing the National Assembly building. This space linked the protesters to the earlier protests of 2006, reinstating the new spatial value of what was then named Determination Square. Although this space was relatively small for the number of people who participated, the protest was not limited to one specific location, but, rather, was able to expand and spread along the waterfront.

These rallied events emerged as peaceful protests and public marches that crowded city-streets and public squares surrounding the National Assembly building. In fact, it became a network of marches starting from Determination Square and reaching across the other end of the city to Al-Dasman Palace [Figure 26]. It was an attempt to claim physical spaces and assert political rights for a "truly" representational parliament.

With time, the protests gained more attention and grew larger and stronger. On the 21st of October a record number of 5,000[133] people attended rallies and demonstrations in *Sahat Al-Erada.* Demonstrators repeatedly chanted, "we will not allow you, we will not allow you," after

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[131] Mary Ann Tètreault, "Looking for Revolution in Kuwait," *Middle East Research and Information Project* (2012).

[132] Ali Hassan, "Sahat Al-Safat abandoned and forgotten, ساحة الصفاة تشكو الهجران والنسيان" *Al-Jarida Newspaper*, August 2, 2015, http://www.aljarida.com/news/index/2012762919/

[133] Although some other sources claim that there were 'tens of thousand' refer to Al-nakib.

Figure 26. Karamat Watan March take over Beach front

Figure 27. Kuwaitis March in front of Kuwait Towers during the First March of Dignity
Source: Aljareeda Newspaper"

Figure 28. Night raids on Karamat Watan

speeches were given by opposition parliamentary members. One prominent demonstrator proclaimed, "In the name of the nation, in the name of the people, we will not let you, your highness, ... practice autocratic rule."[134] Security Forces came in with tear gas, smoke bombs, and stun grenades in order to disperse the demonstration consequently arresting at least fifteen protesters and injuring others [Figure 27, 28].

On October 23, a local newspaper report stated that the Cabinet declared, "citizens are not allowed to hold a gathering of more than twenty individuals on roads or at public locations without obtaining a permit from the concerned governor....Police are entitled to prevent or disperse any unlicensed grouping."[135] The demonstrations continued;[136] a series of demonstrators did obtain permits to do so, while other smaller ad-hoc ones did not. However, it is important to note that this movement did not only revert back to historical sites of contestation, like *Al-Safat*, but in fact attempted to claim alternative spaces. The largest movement was able to appropriate *Shari Al-Khaleej,*[137] a strip of the First Ring-Road, a high-way connecting multiple symbolic structures, starting with the National Assembly (the symbol of democracy), Al-Seif Palace (the symbol of national sovereignty), Liberation Tower (the symbol of liberation from the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait), *Al-Safat* square (the symbol of the oppositional movement), the Kuwait Water Towers (the national symbol of modernity), and Dasman Palace– thus, creating new geographies of opposition [Figure 29].

Hence, it is no surprise that the government's celebratory performance marking the 50th anniversary since the ratification of the constitution in 1962 took place along the same route in the following days. An hour-long display of 77,282[138] fireworks was launched from marine vessels

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[134] Harby Mahmoud. "UPDATE 3-Five Arrested at Big Kuwait Protest Rally," Reuters, October 16, 2012, http://www.reuters.com/article/kuwait-politics-protest-idUSL5E8LG12A20121016
[135] Sami Aboudi, "Kuwait Bans Gatherings of More than 20 People amid Protests," Reuters, October 23, 2012, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-kuwait-politics-protests-idUSBRE89M0CC20121023.
[136] There was a series of six demonstration starting from 2011 through 2012. Each was refered to as Karamet Watan 1, Karamet Watan 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.
[137] *Shari' Al-Khaleej,* the Gulf Road, was the site of unplanned public parades during National Days.
[138] Phil Vinter, "Celebrating a Golden Jubilee Kuwait Style: Gulf State Spends £10million to Put on the Biggest Firework Display of All Time," Daily Mail, November 10, 2012,
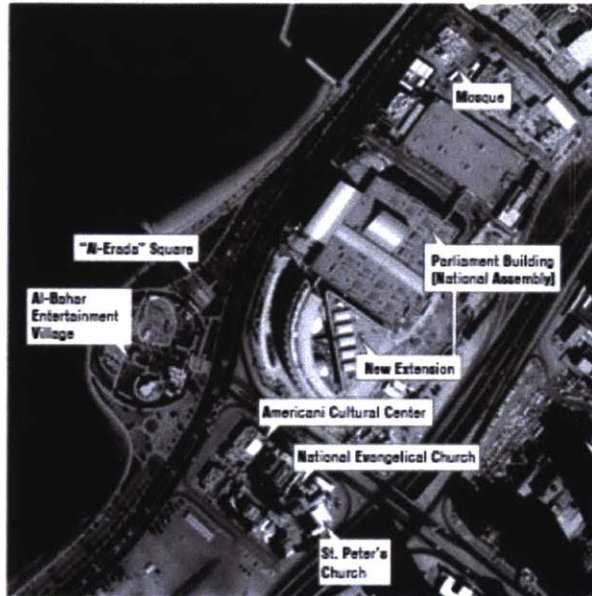
Figure 29. Al-Erada Context (Top), New Geography of opposition (Bottom)

http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2231223/Celebrating-golden-jubilee-Kuwait-style-Gulf-state-spends-10million-biggest-firework-display-time.html.

in addition to the French aircrafts and kites dropping colorful firecrackers all over Kuwait's Skyline.[139] The $15 million budget for this celebration ended with the announcement of a representative of the Guinness World Records stating, "I am happy to verify that with 77,282 fireworks, a new Guinness world record has been set tonight."[140]

Kuwait City is a contested site that displays the dynamic process of interventions by conflicting actors. The city streets transform into a public stage for political aspirations of the collective actions of the protestors and the performative actions of the state. Although the government operates within formal spatial processes that physically isolate "public" spaces limiting political dissent, the informal spatial practices of the protest movements create new forms of opposition through the digital sphere and the physical sphere. The protesters learned to incorporate new tools of communication, using social media as an informal stage of appearance, reviving the long-standing urban practice of political protests. Meanwhile, the government reinstates its power by engaging new forms of violence and performing spectacular celebrations exemplifying the continued image of sovereignty of the ruling authority. Thus, the city continues to stage the ongoing political power struggles.

Conclusion

The political spatial history of Kuwait demonstrates how various actors are involved in defining and redefining spatial relations. The spatial reciprocity between political movements and the state's institutional and spatial tactics confirm an ongoing socio-political struggle over the ever-changing definition of the dynamic process of urban development. This chapter aimed to trace the history of utilizing public space for political dissent by tracing the contestation of space between the government of Kuwait and political oppositions from 1938 until today [Figure 30].[141]

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[139] "Kuwait Constitution's Golden Jubilee Celebration Starts." KUNA, November 10, 2012, http://www.kuna.net.kw/.
[140] "Video: Watch the World's Largest Ever Firework Display Take Place in Kuwait." Guinness World Records. November 12, 2012, http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/.
[141] Throughout this chapter, I have tried to limit my research to focus on two specific events. However, the political history of the dynamic relationship between the the governing powers and the opposition

The constant tension and struggle between the government's political forces is reactive to the citizens' opposition movements. The analysis of the transformation of public spaces throughout history demonstrates that the government's spatial tactics of power and control respond and learn from the varied forms of political dissent, thus transforming the city accordingly.

Analysis of the *Al-Safat* square throughout history exhibits the contested conceptions of "public" space to both the government and the people. The diverse actors in the political dispute over governance make distinct claims in multiple spaces throughout the urban landscape of Kuwait City and transform spaces into public stages of political aspirations through collective actions.

Analyzing the spatial resistance of political movements, exposes the obscure processes of the government's spatial control on urban spaces, through establishing new or improved images of these spaces. This process is indicative of the ways the government is reactive to the active protest movements. This has not changed over the years; however, new spatial tactics are implemented to surmount the institutional powers.

It is evident that, throughout history, the authoritative methods that manipulate the urban sphere have employed rituals of architecture and urban planning as tools for spatial construction and reconstruction. Most importantly, authorities have deployed violent tactics coupled with spectacular performances to curtail oppositional forces and redefine spaces. Although these tensions develop and evolve from one group to another, appropriating multiple sites accordingly, it is clear that these spaces entrust their mark on the power of governance as the powers leave their mark on the city. These refractions, back and forth, reveal the different politics deployed in different spaces by different groups of people.

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movement in Kuwait is far more complex and consistent throughout history. A great and detailed resource to understand some of the complications can be found in the memoirs of Ahmed Al-Khatib and the research and work done by Ghanem Al-Najjar. Much of history is also published within the multiple volumes of the British Political Agency of Kuwait found in the Harvard Library and online (Qatar National Library online: http://www.qnl.qa/), however it is a bias history in favor of the British powers.
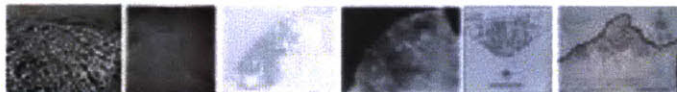
72
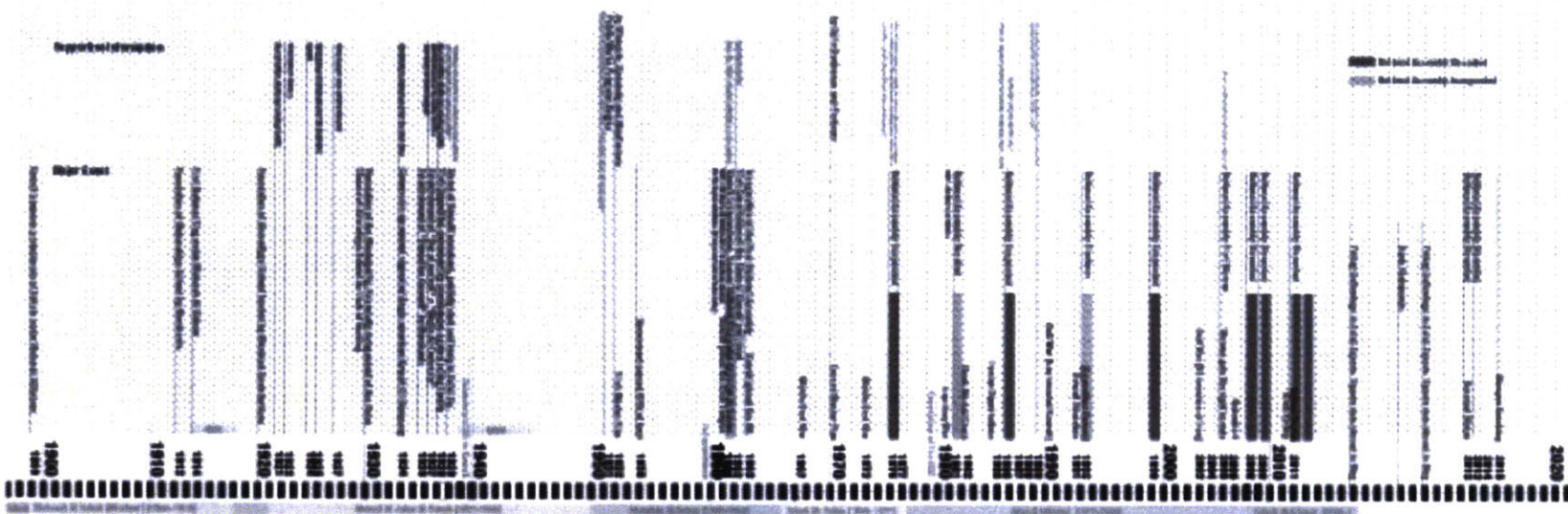
Figure 30. Timeline of Political Dissent Movements and Major Parliamentary and Political Events

Chapter 3 | From Al-Shaheed to The Secret Garden: A Spatial Account of Recreational Urban Interventions in Kuwait

Right after the political unrest of 2009-2012, Kuwait experienced a new process of urban transformation manifested through state-sponsored physical redevelopment of recreational public spaces as well as the rise of a new mode of citizen based engagement, in which citizens claimed and transformed public space through self-established initiatives. Like the spatial contestation between the state and the political protesters, this chapter illustrates how leisure and recreational spaces similarly contribute to the larger urban dialogue and mediate a reciprocal relationship that ties the public to the state, and vice-versa.

Focusing on the multi-scalar development of parks in Kuwait, this chapter is divided into three sections. The first section presents a historical reading of the development of public parks in Kuwait throughout time. I begin with the first planned park in Kuwait in 1947 the Ahmadi Park, a British planned park, to the most recently renovated park, Al-Shaheed Park, a large infrastructural governmental project. I argue that these "public" spaces have been implemented in large part to build upon the constructed image of an idealized modern city. However, in reality, due to high maintenance cost of these parks and the lack of accountability on the part of the governmental entities, public utilization of these parks is highly constrained.

In the second section, I discuss a citizen-based method of spatial production that exists outside of the government's supervision by looking at smaller-scale neighborhood spaces appropriated by citizens from 2009-2015. These include the Secret Garden, a community garden project, and MantaqaMe, community-based effort aimed at beautifying public gardens. I argue that these community-based initiatives, highlight the development of a resistance movement seeking a more active and participatory role by spatially altering neglected public spaces to enhance and improve quality of life.

The third section focuses on larger city-scale state-driven projects that are developed between 2009-2015 in parallel to the small-scale community based initiatives. Specifically, I focus on analyzing Al-Shaheed Park, the largest public park in the country, and its development to illustrate a more nuanced understanding of the narrative of politics within public parks. I argue

that the state's redevelopment of Al-Shaheed Park introduces objects that begin to speak a political language, rather than the typical aesthetics of a recreational park.

Successively, I examine how the most recent tactics of the community-led initiatives worked in tension, and with the state, increasing both the government authority's and the general public's awareness of the neglected spaces. In addition, I argue that these spaces that have historically been planned for "leisure" and to keep the society or the public busy, actually contribute to the urban dialogue. Finally, this analysis demonstrates how the government adopts and learns from these movements, by incorporating new functions to the typical public park. Thus, the process of redesigning one of the largest city parks, known as Al-Shaheed Park, illustrates the government's spatial response through the construction of large infrastructural urban projects to control and supervise leisure activities. While at the same time, the community-led ad-hoc design interventions have the ability to shift power dynamics to transform the space to work to fit society's wants and needs. I contend that a design intervention, just like the political protest, is a way of publicly appropriating the space by projecting their design aspirations collectively. It is an act of enforcement that aims to alter social dynamics by defying the restrictions and challenges imposed by the government.

Establishing Recreation: A Spatially-driven Development [Early 1900s-2009]

In order to understand the development of Kuwait, I need to go back historically and spatially to understand the socio-spatial developments of recreational areas throughout time.

Early structure of City and Community:

Before the advent of oil, the old city of Kuwait developed organically along kinship ties, and merchant trades. The close-knit structure of the streets, known as *fireej*, represented the pedestrian routes between clusters of domestic structures that lead to spaces of social gatherings

and play of both male and females, known as *Al-baraha* [Figures 31, 32].[142] Within each of these

housing clusters, typically, there would be a *housh*, known as the central courtyard within each

house or clusters of houses. The *housh* represented that "public" aspect of the house, where

women and girls roamed freely to play and go about their daily activities.[143] The *fireej*, provided

public transportation routes but contained some form of privacy, as each *fireej* had socio-cultural

ties to the families who lived in it.[144] These two elements within the old city shows that there are

vague thresholds that exist between the public/private relationship of the housing typology, the

streets, and to the city structure at large. The urban characteristic of the town was its horizontality

and its density, meaning there were no large open public space within the city walls.[145]

Additionally, other important elements of the urban fabric of the old city were the connected

souk structures, the mosques, the *diwaniyas*, and the waterfront, *al-wajha*. These four elements

made up the basic public infrastructure of the old city of Kuwait. Recreational activities came

about as a micro-geography of play in early settlements, it did not particularly depend on any

formal space. Subhi Al-Mutawa claims that the "recreation movement began with the beginning

of the country in 1756".[146] These activities included and were limited to the geographic natural

landscapes that were employed by the people to use for recreation. For example, the sea or *Al-Wajha*, used to be the place where people would use for recreation purposes such as fishing,

swimming and picnicking in the summer time to gain the cool breeze from the waterfront [Figure

33].[147] However, after the first inauguration of crude oil exports in 1946, Kuwait witnessed an influx

of revenue that became the gateway for urban transformation, which as a result saw the

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[142] Ya'qūb Yūsuf Al-Hijji, *Al-Kuwayt Al-qadīmah: Ṣuwar Wa-dhikrayāt* (Al-Kuwayt: Markaz Al-Buḥūth Wa-al-Dirāsāt Al-Kuwaytīyah, 1997) 53.
[143] Haya Al-Mughni, Women in Kuwait: The Politics of Gender (London: Saqi, 2001), 45. Also in Al-Jassar, 160.
[144] Al-Hijji, 53.
[145] The only open spaces were the large cemeteries, and Sahat Al-Safat at that time.
[146] Subhi Abdullah Al-Mutawa, Kuwait City Parks: A Critical Review of Their Design, Facilities, Programs and Management, (London: KPI, 1985), 11.
[147] Ibid, 11. Al-Mutawa declares that the men would fish, swim, and boat during the summer time, while in the winter, families would picnic and camp in the desert to escape the cold and humidity that corresponded to the coast.

construction of official spaces designated for "leisure" and "recreation".

Figure 31. View Old of "Fireej" in Kuwait

Figure 32. Some Women in the Bazaar selling goods, chatting and gossiping.

Figure 33. Women meeting at the Waterfront, gossip and laundry

The Company Town: Ahmadi Park as a predecessor 1947-1961

Since the introduction of the post-industrial way of life, new structures have been introduced synchronistically with the intentions of mitigating the effects of the working classes' efforts during the industrialization era.[148] These spaces of recreation have been fabricated within the planning discipline as part of constructing the social imaginary of such concepts that required spaces of leisure that allowed the "public" to enjoy.[149] Within the context of Kuwait, this theoretical standpoint can be understood within the context of the first British planned town in Kuwait, known as Al-Ahmadi. A major intervention which introduced a new socio-spatial structure that was both outside of the city but highly impactful on the city of Kuwait.

Ahmadi Town, located next to the largest oil field of Al-Burgan in the southern part of Kuwait, was initially populated by an exclusively foreign crowd of experts who flocked in with the first discovery of oil. British companies imported their British planning mechanism and built a new city with single-unit family houses, landscaped streets, and an ideal town center, which included a school, hospital, and other services. These living amenities emulated the Town Planning Acts which came as a result of British Planning ideologies post World War II. As Reem Alissa portrays, Ahmadi town built for the Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) and designed by Wilson, Mason and Partners, became the predecessor of the planning models applied to Kuwait city and its neighborhoods.[150]

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[148] For a thorough description and critique of the Park Planning discipline, please refer to Chapter four and Five of
Richard E. Foglesong, ""Parks and park planning" in *Planning the Capitalist City: The Colonial Era to the 1920s* (NJ: Princeton UP, 1986), 91.
[149] Sonja Dumpelmann, "Layered Landscape: Parks and Gardens in the Metropolis," In *Thick Space: Approaches to Metropolitanism*, edited by Sasha Disko, George Wagner-Kyora and Dorothee Brantz, 173-235. Bielefeld: Transcript-Verlag, 2012.
[150] The execution and planning of Al-Ahmadi were inspired by the Garden City and Abadan urban models. Reem Alissa's analysis of the landscaping elements of the town planning of Al-ahmadi unravels the socio-spatial introduction of the concepts of gardening and landscaping via the introduction of garden competitions, and the selling of various plant species at low prices to promote the notions of recreational landscaping in Kuwait.
Reem Alissa, "Building for Oil: Corporate, Nationalism, and Urban Modernity in Ahmadi, 1946-1992" (PhD diss., University of Berkeley, 2012) 42-45.

The company town structure had a different dynamic of recreation, as compared to the micro-level community spaces of the old city [Figure 34]. Al-Ahmadi was structured upon an industrial organization, in which there was a philosophy of labor relations that was clearly marked in the spatial stratification at the urban scale. The division of the company town created three main sections, each housing a separate ethnic –and professional- group. Alissa illustrates that the North section housed the senior staff of KOC, which were mostly British and American, with "fully air-conditioned houses surrounded by a large garden".[151] The mid section, however, housed the South Asian workers, mostly Indian and Pakistani clerical, financial and technical staff. While that last section- the south, known as the "Arab Village", housed the "indigenous" workers who were predominantly Kuwaiti, Arab, and Iranians.[152] Having a "happy and healthy" relationship to the workforce was important to KOC and thus, it allowed for the creation of specific kinds of spaces, most importantly an exclusive public park [Figure 35, 37].

Recreational Parks, or "pleasure gardens", and green playing fields were introduced as part of the Kuwait Building Program (1947-51) developed by KOC to provide social amenities for the laborers. Additionally, Ahmadi Streets were famous for introducing the concept of landscaping to Kuwait. Its streets were lined with lush greenery, paved curbs, and "beautiful" landscaping which is still recognizable today. These spaces stand out as very different spaces from the city, however, they became interestingly relevant to the larger development of Kuwait later on [Figure 36].

Images of the first park opening in Kuwait, Al-Ahmadi Park, reflected a lively scene of gardens filled with families picnicking on fields of greenery [Figure 38]. Alissa contends that al-Ahmadi master plan focused "specifically on landscape elements such as its garden culture and public parks. The analysis of this urban scale shows how Ahmadi as inspired by the Garden Suburb

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[151] Ibid, 47.
[152] Reem Alissa, "The Oil Town of Ahmadi: From Colonial Town to Nostalgic City", Comparative studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East, Volume 33, Number 1, (2013): 45.

Figure 34. Kuwait's Wall Expansion Diagram, 1950_First ring represents the first city wall built in 1760, Second ring represents second wall built 1811, Third ring with gates built in 1921 and demolished in 1957.

Figure 35. Al-Ahmadi Company town Structure, 1958
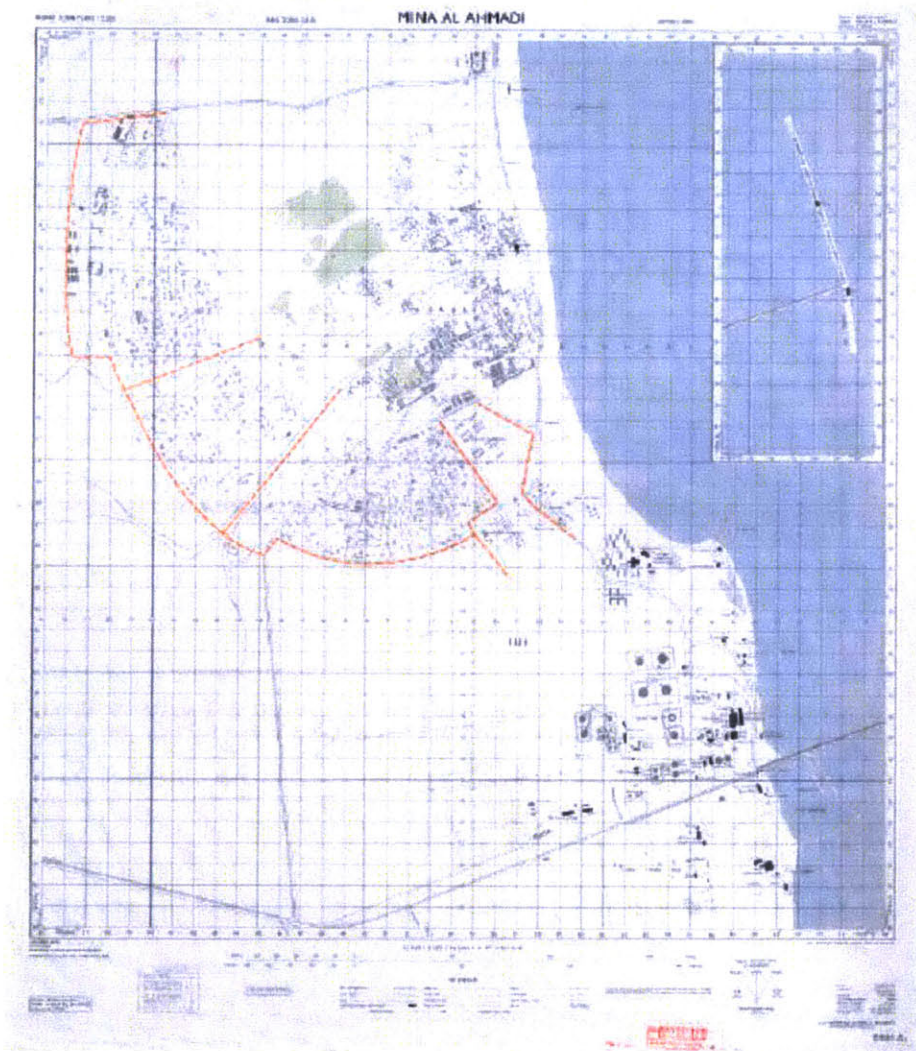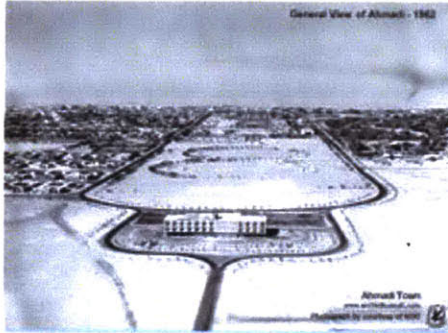
General View of Ahmadi (Company Town), 1962

Housing Complexes at Ahmadi (Company Town)

Typical Ahmadi Home housing South Asian Workers

Typical Ahmadi Home housing British and American Workers

General View of Ahmadi, 2010

Figures 36.

General View of Ahmadi Landscaping, 2010
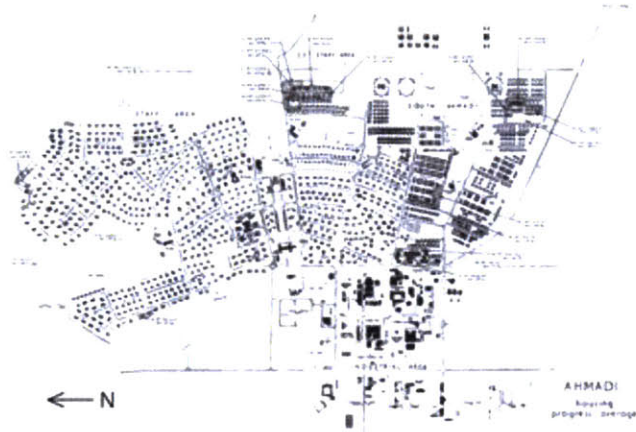
Figure 37. Al-Ahmadi Housing Program

Recreation and Boys scout in Al-Ahmadi
KDC Archives

Images of Kuwaitis using parks and enjoying Al-Ahmadi's
Landscape

Recreation and Cheer leading in Al-Ahmadi
KDC Archives

Images of Kuwait women enjoying Al-Ahmadi's Landscaping
and parks

Figures 38. Ahmadi Recreation and Public Garden Use

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model introduced the notion of recreational landscaping to Kuwait, positioning the town as the nation's most popular green public space."[153]

> Droves of people came into picnic on any patch of grass they find, even if it happened to be on someone's private front garden. In fact, the massive gathering of crowds in Ahmadi's green spaces, both public and private, led to proposal by the KOC to develop a 'suitable' semi-formal picnic and garden area" in the mid section in order to avert the presence of picnic goers in the residential areas and reduce congestion in public garden.[154]

Additionally, Alissa mentions that these landscaped urban elements were initially exclusively limited for the foreign population during the pre-independence era, "After the independence, it was suddenly open to Kuwait's public at large following the principle of egalitarianism embedded in Howard's Garden City prototype."[155] We could speculate to say that these subtle moves of exclusivity show how these British planning ideals had a larger socio-cultural affect onto the societal psyche of Kuwait and on its future urban spatial development. It might be due to the fact that these pristine spaces were restricted to the use of foreigners that even made them more attractive for the larger development plans of Kuwait with the aspirations to develop a "Modern" Nation-State, or it might simply be because these spaces were seen as "beautiful" to the public. The popularity and success of these spaces, and the influx of oil revenues, led to a major reconfiguration of the urban form of Kuwait City at large. The application of such leisure spaces constructed for the "people" of Kuwait, was part of the larger socialist welfare state reformation.

Modern City Planning: British Imposition of City Parks since 1951 and the new modes of living

Moving away from Ahmadi and into Kuwait City, I want to shift the discussion into a multi-scale framework to look at how public-state intervention replicated this typology at both a large infrastructural scale and smaller neighborhood scale. The transformation of Kuwait into a new

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[153] Ibid, 52.
[154] Ibid, 52.
[155] Alissa, "Building for Oil," 104.

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nation-state brought with it a new spatial, societal, political, and economic shift. As discussed in the previous chapter, the new spatial transformation implied a shift in the political structure. Culturally, the emerging society at that time welcomed this new *modern* ideology, ridding their future from past traditions. With the imposition of the new state-driven master plan of 1951, new spaces were introduced to Kuwait in the forms of squares, parks, office buildings, governmental buildings, educational institutes, and larger public infrastructure that brought landscaped streets and medians to the urban form [Figure 39]. Consequently, people's lifestyles also changed as a new co-gendered work force and educational facilities were established. The British MSM Firm's master plan placed emphasis on creating *open* spaces as one of their top priorities alongside zoning mechanisms and road systems.

The objectives of the MSM Master plan of Kuwait included the following seven points "in accordance with the highest standard of modern town planning":

1. The provision of a modern road system appropriate to the traffic conditions in Kuwait.
2. The location of suitable zones for public buildings, industry, commerce, schools, and other purposes.
3. The choice of zones for new houses and other buildings needed in residential areas, both inside and outside the town wall.
4. The selection of sites for parks, sports ground, school playing fields and other open spaces.
5. The creation of a **beautiful and dignified town center**, particular attention being given to the treatment of the Safat and the siting of public buildings.
6. The planting of **trees and shrubs** along the principle roads and at other important points in the town.
7. The provision of improved main roads linking Kuwait with the adjoining towns and villages.[156]

The seven points highlighted above point out to the importance of introducing open spaces with a clear emphasis on "green" spaces as a color scheme, including trees and shrubs as elements that enhance the "beauty" and "dignity" of the city. No emphasis is mentioned on how

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[156] Richard Trench, ed., Arab Gulf Cities: Kuwait City Archive Editions (England: Anthony Rowe,1994), 601.

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people use these spaces. Rather, the emphasis lies within what the planners saw as "beautiful", brought in from their own perceptions of modernist planning in addition to their own experiences of public parks in England. Therefore, for the planners, *dignity* and *beauty*, came with bold schemes for a "modern" dignified town. With that mind, a new range of typologies functioning as "open spaces", "recreation" and "parks" was introduced. These open spaces were imported as spaces to "serve leisure and rejuvenation purposes for civil society, one that supposedly allows for the simultaneity of multiplicity and plurality to occur."[157]

It was the 1951 plan that reconfigured the spatial layout of Kuwait, to introduce what was known as the "Greenbelt". Inspired by the RingstraSSe in Vienna, and Ebenezer Howard's Garden cities, the greenbelt was envisioned as a park encircling the 'Garden City of Tomorrow', it was particularly designed to constraint the physical growth of city.[158] When the walls of Vienna were demolished in 1857, a proposal to replace the demolished land with a park was implemented. Later in 1935, the same concept was executed by the London County Council, "to provide a reserve supply of public open spaces and of recreational areas and to establish a Green Belt or girdle of open space."[159] Not surprisingly, the same concept was emulated in MSM's plan in Kuwait. The demolition of the old city walls, allowed the planners to apply the same principles, and so the site of demolition was designated as along strip known as the Greenbelt. The Greenbelt was a buffer zone between the transformed central business district (the city) and the new residential areas (the suburbs) [Figure 40]. However, it was clearly imported from the Garden-City diagram which was imposed on top of the old city wall of Kuwait to introduce a new social, cultural, spatial division between the city and the people, using *gardens* as buffers between Kuwait City and its neighborhood districts.

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[157] Reem Alissa, "Modernizing Kuwait: Nation-building and Unplanned Spatial Practices", *Berkeley Planning Journal* 22 (2009): 88.
[158] Howard, Ebenezer, Frederic J. Osborn, and Lewis Mumford, *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* (London: Faber and Faber, 1960).
[159] Högselius, Per, Arne Kaijser, and Erik Van Der Vleuten, *Europe's Infrastructure Transition: Economy, War, Nature.* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan: 2005) 256.
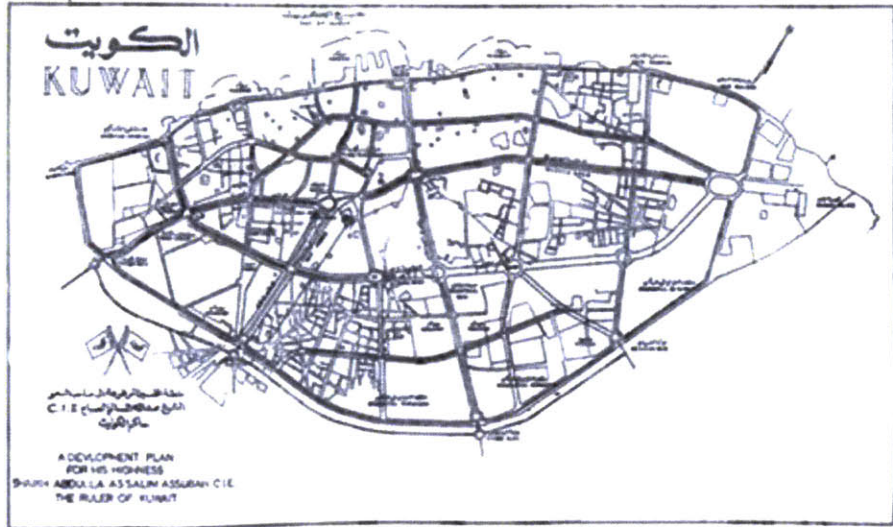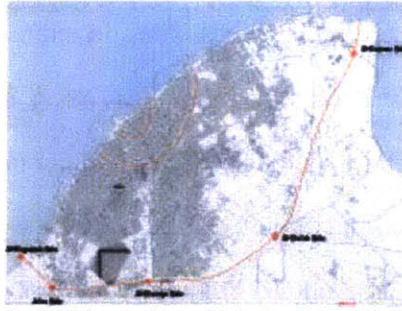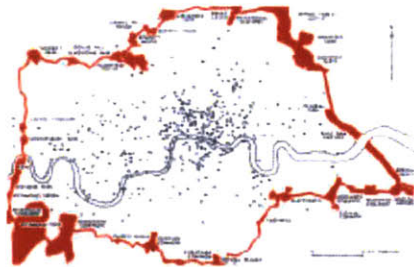
Figure 39. Kuwait Development Plan 1952.

Kuwait's Wall Expansion Diagram, Gate locations; Wall demolished in 1957

Kuwait's Plan proposal of a Greenbelt, 1967

Vienna's Plan Ringstrasse 1858

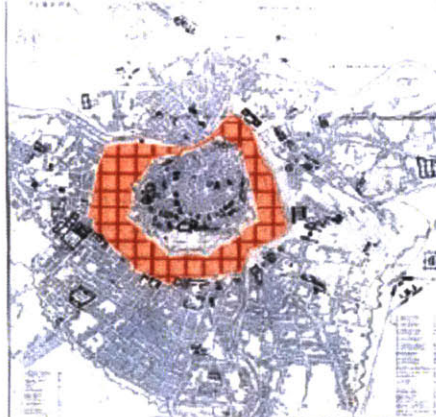London's Plan proposal of a Greenbelt, 1901

Figure 40. Greenbelt Design Precedents and Application

The desire for a cultural modernity invited an array of world-class architects, planners, and designers to develop and construct a radically new city. These world-renowned planners proposed an array of plans inspired by modernist values, which forged new forms of public space within the country.[160] With the development of Kuwait as a welfare state, new public amenities and new ideals of modern society were imported with the aspirations to become an ideal city, in the western/global definition of the modern ideal city.[161]

The mid-twentieth century reflected the period in which Kuwait witnessed its nascent urban modernity. As people adopted a new modern lifestyle, working at offices and going to public schools for many hours, concerns of health and fitness also came into play.[162] Thus, the planning and construction of western-style public parks in Kuwait, conveyed the new state's anticipations that parks would motivate/cultivate healthy, cultured leisure activities that embraced the citizens and the state to accept and adopt a new *modern* life. Consequently, the adaptation process was encouraged by the society as part of a cultural shift into a full-fledged Nation-State.[163]

Greenbelt 1958

Previous to the construction of the greenbelt, Al-Ahmadi Park played a large cultural and social role in the social imaginary of the society in terms of strengthening the role of the park within the urban space. In addition, there was a "Garden", known as the Salwa Garden, which

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[160] Please refer to Aseel Al-Ragum Dissertation. For a thorough description of the multiple design strategies developed during the early 1950's until the early 1980's.
[161] The new Nation-state welfare system, introduced and developed multiple programs such as the establishment of newly designed Schools, secondary and primary, and larger institutes for higher education. Radio stations, Newspaper magazines, social and cultural centers were established to strengthen the social, political, and cultural conditions that entailed and constructed cultural and spatial transformations of the city and the society as a whole.
[162] Shiber, Saba George. *The Kuwait Urbanization; Documentation, Analysis, Critique* (Kuwait, 1964)
[163] Refer to Asseel Al-Ragam, Muhanad Al-Barqash, and Al-Jassar's dissertation for a thorough account of this socio-cultural shift into modernity.

became popular as a private zoo, initiated by Jaber al Salem al Sabah in 1954 [Figure 41].[164] Both

the Ahmadi and the Salwa gardens, reflect the beginning of the strengthening value and growing

discourse about gardens and green spaces in Kuwait. This interest is coupled with the urban

transformation process, which was launched in the mid 1950's onward. The Greenbelt was

proposed as a non-commercial buffer zone in 1958, separating the "city" from the rest of the urban

environment. As part of the "beautification" agenda, this buffer zone was planned to include

recreational programs along the strip, which included a reserved space for the Greenbelt park

from the East, and other areas *reserved* for leisure,[165] four of the five old town's gates which still

stand today,[166] and the future Sheraton Park, at the far western corner. The establishment of the

greenbelt park that same year resulted with the construction of a 2-meter-high iron fence[167]

surrounding 200,000 m^2 green park.

A new need for "green" spaces was established as a foundational principle of public space.

It is crucial to note, that the greenness of these spaces as a color scheme, becomes the initial

motivation to build and construct these spaces. [168] Meaning, the focus was on the image of having

a "green" space (especially in hyper-arid region), rather than the functional purpose of such

spaces for social gathering and debate.

Municipality Park 1962

As part of the spatial and cultural transformation process in the mid-twentieth century, the

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[164] MonA Al-Sabah, "Established by Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah, 'Salwa Park' the First Zoo in Kuwait." *Kuwait News Agency* (Kuwait), February 21, 2011. Accessed December 5, 2014.
[165] Such areas would be constructed later in the 70's, when the Touristic Company of Kuwait is established. A series of buildings which include a Skating Rink (1979), a Musical Fountains (1983), and other more recent project like Discovery Mall (2009) outline the Greenbelt Zone.
[166] Al-Jahra, Shamiya, Al-Sha'ab, and Al-Dasman Gate is part of the entry points of the old wall surrounding the old cities. As part of the urban development program, some these gates were restored to carryout the historic memory of the old city.
[167] It is not clear when the exact dates for the construction of the iron fence.
[168] For more work in relation to this particular phenomenon refer to Gareth Goherty's unpublished dissertation or Gareth Doherty, *Paradoxes of Green Landscapes of a City-state* (Univ of California Press, 2016)

development of the social imaginary for a space for leisure, openness, and beauty is exemplified by the story of the construction of the first official park in Kuwait City. Saba Shiber,[169] an American-Arab urbanist, inspired by the modernist planning principles of CIAM, understood the city as a living unit with the garden representing the heart in the center of the city, which was generally part of the larger planning discourse at that time, globally and regionally.

> One must give credit to the old city fathers of New York City who were instrumental in the reservation, on crowded Manhattan Island, of such a breathing urban space – a lung – for the megalopolis…Cairo is beautified because of its large green areas as well as public gardens as well as its famed zoo-park or park-zoo.[170]

He was particularly influenced by multiple urban gardens around the region, most notably the gardens in Egypt, including Tahrir Square, Gardens of Alexandria, Central Park, and Hyde Park.[171] The interest of the large public gardens in cities is reflected within Shiber's extensive writings on Kuwait and Arab cities in general. Shiber notes that, "The old city itself lacked the type of necessary open space reserved solely for recreation, relaxation and leisure." His assertion that parks were "essential features in the domains of the public welfare", help initiate interest in public parks in Kuwait City.

The 1960's witnessed the "sudden metamorphosis of a large in-town cemetery to a "*muntazah*" or public park".[172] This transformation spurred a great deal of discussion on the importance and value of parks within Kuwait across the social, political, and judicial levels.[173] Not

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[169] Saba George Shiber was an Arab planner of Palestinian origin with an American citizenship who worked particularly in Lebanon and Kuwait. He was appointed as chief urban planner in the Kuwait Ministry of Public Work between 1960 and 1968. Prior to working in Kuwait, he received his higher education in planning from the planning schools in MIT and Cornell. During his time in Kuwait, Shiber was responsible for publishing *Recent Arab City Growth* and *The Kuwait Urbanization,* both publications aimed to document and record the urban reconstructions of the Middle East and more specifically Kuwait. These works were used to formulate arguments for a contextual understanding of local and historic vernacular of the Arab cities.
[170] Shiber, Kuwait Urbanization, 193.
[171] Please refer to Chapter IX "Central Park and the Corniche Scheme", in Kuwait Urbanization. 193-218
[172] Ibid., 193.
[173] Ibid.

to mention that the only "open" spaces that existed in the early spatial configurations of Kuwait were the large open spaces of Sahat Al-Safat and the cemetery at the edge of the old city. But as the old city was being usurped by the rapid urban construction of highways, roundabouts, building and parking structures, an old cemetery now stood as an eye-sore in the middle of construction. A proposal from the Kuwaiti Municipality suggested to transform the cemetery into a public park.[174] However, since the cemetery was a site of importance touching upon the religious, social, and cultural traditions, this specific case had to be transferred to the Religious *fuqaha*[175] in order to morally proceed with transforming the space into a public park.

A letter from the Municipality dated May 22, 1960 stated that the cemetery "had not been used for burial purposes for the past fifty years", which had lobbied divergent opinions from General-Muftis in Jordan and Egypt in regards to that subject. Exactly a year prior to this, a publication by the Council of Islamic Affairs in Amman noted that, "there is no objection to a cemetery wherein bodies and bones had deteriorated and decayed to being utilized for building, planting or as a market-place."[176] Consequently, building upon the previously mentioned note, a letter on December 23, 1960 from the *Qadhi al-Mahkama Al-shari'ia,* Judge Ahmad Attya, stated that,

> [I]n view of the fact that [the cemetery] had become an assemblage place for indecency and the accumulation of debris, in addition to the fact that it is a place located in the heart of the city and constitutes its lungs, and since it had already become surrounded by sumptuous buildings, the maintaining of the status quo becomes not only unbefitting but is harmful to the public good.[177]

Thus, after a series of letters and sessions with Judicial authority, the Municipality, and strong lobbying in favor of transforming the cemetery to a park by the Kuwaiti citizens, a plan was implemented in 1962 to successfully do so with a new title called, "The Municipality Park".[178]

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[174] Ibid., 194
[175] *Fuqaha*, is the plural form of *Faqih*, who is an expert in Islamic jurisprudence and Islamic law.
[176] Shiber, 194.
[177] Ibid., 194
[178] Ibid, 194.

Figure 41. Salwa Garden of Kuwait
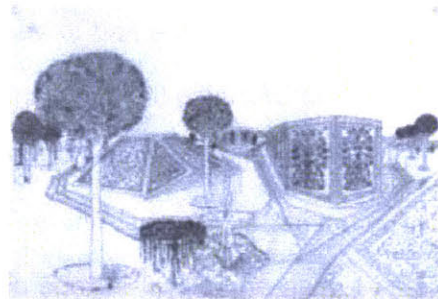

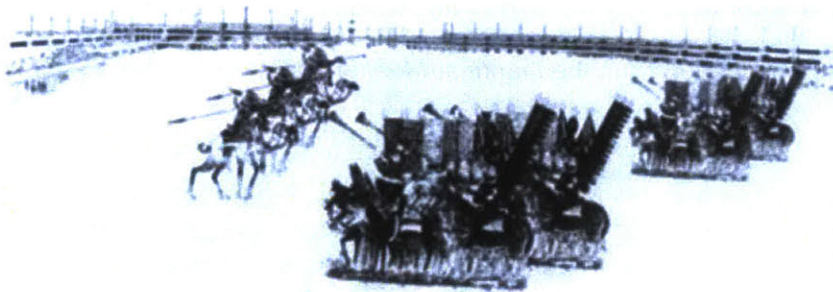Figure 42. Peter and Alison Smithson's Garden Proposal

Figure 43. "Kuwait Demonstration Building, view of Sports Maidan"

Municipality Garden Design by Shiber

Images of Municipality Garden in Kuwait's Postcard, 1967

On-site Design and Construction efforts by Shiber for the Municipality Garden

Shiber's Shading Devices

Figure 44. Municipality Park, 1968.

Shiber describes the design as an "informal" one, since many of the design decision were developed and implemented on site "due to the record rate of construction".[179] The park saw the introduction of human-scale elements within the design such as the fences, paving, amphitheaters, restrooms and concrete pergolas, to protect from the heat. The construction process of the 35,000 square meter park,[180] specifically, was recognized by Saba Shiber as a quick process that helped implement the project successfully, before any legal, political, or economic changes occurred [Figure 44].[181]

With the establishment of the park, a fenced wall was constructed around it, to protect the space from being misused or vandalized. Additionally, the park was not open to all, but was limited to be open from 4 pm until 11 pm, with only 2 gates to control entrances and exits into and outside of the park. This was the first "successful" attempt to construct a public park in the middle of the city to be used by the public, especially after their work hours. Recognizing the location of the park next to the working offices, and its late opening hours, and the strong public support to create this park exemplifies the societal change and need for such spaces to "relax" after work at that time. Al-Mutawa notes that, "because of its location [next to old and new commercial parts of the city] it is considered the most crowded park during the day".[182]

Peter and Alison Smithson's design Scheme 1968

As part of the urban development program, Peter and Alison Smithson were invited to redevelop Al-Mirqab area, a small portion of Kuwait City. Their proposal for restructuring Kuwait City was conceived from their "concept of Mat-fabric of Islamic architecture and urbanism".[183]

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[179] Ibid., 200.

[180] Al-Mutawa, Kuwait City Parks, 44.

[181] Shiber, 194.

[182] Al-Mutawa, 44.

[183] The term "mat-building" was used by Alison Smithson as a concept to imagine architecture as a dynamic and flexible armature. Inspired by the carpets from Central Asia, the term 'mat' was applied to this concept (The British would use this term instead of carpet) For a thorough explanation and description of the concept of Mat-buildings, refer to "How to Recognize and Read Mat-Building.

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They developed a research project on the Urban Form Study of Kuwait City, identifying a

horizontal concept of growth, with minarets acting as vertical urban markers for way-finding. They

envisioned a grand scheme that maintained a low-profile city, practically, but ideologically "keeps

to the patrician tradition of the subdued public face- for status and wealth being 'understood' within

a close-knit society do not need to be advertised or proved in any way".[184] As part of their proposal,

two main elements were introduced as "open spaces for cultural and civic functions", in the form

of the two *Maidans* known as the 'Orangerie Maidan' and the 'Sports Maidan' situated within their

public garden proposal titled *'Kuwait Dune and Pleasure Rampant Gardens'*. On one hand, the

two maidans, or *meyadeen*[185] functioned as separate spaces to differentiate between the

'ceremonial' functions for civic and religious events, and on the other hand, it was the first attempt

to introduce and provide a space that staged the "public" functions in the form of sports and leisure

into the Greenbelt [Figure 42, 43].

The *Kuwait Dune and Pleasure Rampant Gardens* scheme was proposed for the Greenbelt

strip as a linear garden, envisioned with a series of ramps mediating between the road system,

the park, the city, and the suburban development. It is through this proposal that we get a glimpse

of the greenbelt park functioning with the modernist ideals of greenbelt as a site for recreation.[186]

Peter and Alison Smithson envisioned a series of ramped surfaces and mounds tiled with Persian

and Isnik tiles,[187] both elements foreign to Kuwait, but the reasons for choosing this material was

for longevity, as they imagined the tiles would maintain the park's beauty regardless of

maintenance. Additionally, a glimpse of oriental fetishism also played a role in the choice of these

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Mainstream Architecture as it has Developed Towards the Mat-Building" in *Architectural Design*,
September 1974 or Peter Christensen's "The 'Inventive Jump': Curiosity, Culture and Islamicate Form in
the Works of Peter and Alison Smithson." *International Journal of Islamic Architecture* 3, no. 1 (2014): 49.
[184] As quoted from Alison and Peters Smithsons' Archive in Christensen's "The 'Inventive Jump", 43.
[185] The correct plural work for *Meydan* in Arabic, rather than Maidans. In Kuwait however, the term
Maydan is rarely used, but rather the term *Saha* (which is the definition of what a *Maydan* is) is used
more frequently to represent these large open spaces.
[186] Other proposals were also submitted by architects invited to submit designs for the Greenbelt,
including Reima Pietilla in 1969. Please refer to Al-Ragam "Towards a Critique of an Architectural
Nahdha," 210.
[187] Christensen, 50.

tiles. Although nostalgic and romantic, the architects are concerned about maintenance, which becomes a design factor that is included within the design process of the project. However, what is important to note is that their proposal highlights two things: the importance of both the image-ability of the park, through the use of the tiles, and the social function of the park. Although their representation seems foreign and out of place, the value of the project is in the notions of staging the public spaces of the park as a mediator between "celebratory events" and "recreational activities" such as sports. This proposal is important because it is resurfaced and becomes the design inspiration for the future site of Al-Shaheed park.[188]

Social Segregation: Neighborhood Parks 1960-1975

During the process of Modernization, Kuwait witnessed high rates of immigration into the city from neighboring Arab cities and other communities. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Development Program in Kuwait allowed for great reform in establishing new policies for housing, health, and education. These reformation efforts, however, also acted as a political mechanism to control social class frictions which played a large role in separating the Nationals from the Non-nationals. The reformation came under the "mask" of social benefits within a welfare system that was introduced as part of distributing the oil revenues, this political move expressed a larger notion of "identity" for the Kuwaiti citizen, as new spaces were specifically planned and built for the Kuwaitis in a way mimicking the previously mentioned socio-spatial stratification of the Company Town. Thus a new spatial grid, created a spatial division in which the identity of the Kuwaiti "citizen" is performed within centrally planned neighborhoods known as *al-Manatiq al-*

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[188] After the invasion in 1990, The Greenbelt Park was renamed Al-Shaheed Park, this project will be discussed later on in the chapter. During my interview with Ricarcdo Camacho about the design of Al-Shaheed park, this project was referenced multiple ways. Also, refer to Fabbri, Roberto. "Al Shaheed Park: Rampart Gardens and Geometrical Green Dunes Weave Paths and Collective Memories in the Project Lead by Ricardo Camacho and StroopLandscape That Revamps a Large Part of the Green Belt in Kuwait City." DOMUS. April 23, 2015.
http://www.domusweb.it/en/reviews/2015/04/23/al_shaheed_park____kuwait.html.

Namuthajiya (ideal neighborhoods), while the non-Kuwaitis would live in apartment buildings located on the edges known as *Al-Manatiq Al-Tijariya* (commercial neighborhoods).[189]

Part of MSM's initial plan of 1951, was the creation of self-sufficient neighborhoods outside the boundaries of the old city walls. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the new neighborhoods were planned as an attempt to maintain adequate living environments for the new structure of Kuwait. It was through the Land Acquisition Program that the government was able to replace the housing units from the old city,[190] with subdivided neighborhood suburban styled units. This shift outside of the city, allowed the planners to develop neighborhood models based on the Clarence Perry's Neighborhood Unit Scheme [Figure 45].[191]

> "The underlying principle of the scheme is that an urban neighborhood should be regarded both as a unit of a larger whole and as a distinct entity in itself…its residence for the most part, find their occupation outside of the neighborhood. To attend the opera, or perhaps buy a piano, they have to resort to *the "downtown"* district. But there are other aspects which are strictly local and peculiar to a well-arranged residential community: 1 the element of the school, 2 small parks and playgrounds, 3 Local shops, and 4 residential environment."[192]

In Kuwait, the MSM's plan included all of the above-mentioned public amenities, however, the inclusion of mosques and Cooperative Societies[193] was needed to maintain this neighborhood unit and to strengthen the Kuwaiti identity. Following the Garden City model, the basic ideal state

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[189] Al-Jassar, 174.

[190] The term *"fireej"* is also spelled *"fereej"*. Refer to Al-Jassar, "Consistency and Change", 124. Al-Jassar describes the *fireej* as the space where, "[S]ettlement pattern of families from the Gulf, from Najd, from Persia, from Iraq, and from the open desert flocking to establish themselves in the bustling port town, can be determined through the relative position of each fereej to the initial harbour node. Naturally, a location closer to the old center denoted earlier arrival and settlement in Kuwait, with correspondingly greater social standing for the family" as quoted from E. S. Ali, "Retracing Old Kuwait" In A. Fullerton & G. Fehervari (Eds.), *Kuwait: Art and Architecture* (pp. 173-188) (UAE: Oriental Press, 1995).

[191] Clarence Perry, "The Neighborhood Unit" from The Regional Plan of New York and its Environs (1929) 486-498.

[192] Perry, "The Neighborhood Unit", 488.

[193] The Cooperative Society was first introduced within Al-Mubarakiya School in 1941. However, the No. 20 Law issued in 1962, established to organize consumer co-operations' memberships, management, control, and liquidation. The concept of Cooperative Societies, was later developed within each neighborhood in the early 1980s. Each member of the neighborhood had a share in the overall profit of the local (within each neighborhood) Co-Op's profits. This came as an effort form the State to mediate between state agencies and Neighborhood Societies.

Figure 45. Perry's Neighborhood Unit Scheme (top), Al-Khaldiya Neighborhood Plan, *ideal neighbor-hood* (bottom)

was to maintain a healthy environment in which, "the connections between the residential areas of the neighborhood and the central public areas provide healthy social opportunities to the residents".[194] Although these social welfare efforts did seem to reflect the idealistic egalitarian concept of Ebenezer's Howards Garden City, its structure did not consider the non-Kuwaiti part of society. Instead, these efforts were directly applicable only to the Kuwaiti population as a way to legitimize the new national sovereign social contract.[195]

Public infrastructure: the Garden, the School, and the "Public"

One of the early introductions of parks came with public school infrastructure that included a playground. The success of this typology was widespread throughout the country, which eventually lead to the increase by public demand for new recreational programs and facilities to be employed in public parks [Figure 46].[196] The school also allowed for the development of society through strengthening the role of women and positioning them within the daily users of public space. The acceptance and the favorable outcome of the parks forced the government and the private agencies to adopt new recreational programs or contribute assistance to existing ones.[197]

The spatial transformation of the new villa-type housing units located within Perry's "neighborhood Unit" model had a great effect on social constructs of the concept of domestic space. Since these neighborhoods were located outside the city, separated by the Greenbelt via wide-lane highway systems, and organized according to area units, every Kuwaiti now had a "private" villa with its own lawn/garden, its own street entrance, and its own local neighborhood center, which included its local mosque, neighborhood park, and its commercial center.[198] The

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[194] Al-Jassar, 18.
[195] This particular relationship is referred to more recently as the "Gulf Social Contract", in which the state (Gulf monarchies) become the distributor of wealth and benefits, using citizenship as tool to increase the national identity and status of their citizens.
[196] Al-Mutawa, 12.
[197] Ibid.
[198] In 1954, the development plan called for the construction of 2000 multi-model housing units in 5 prominent areas.

Figure 46. Kuwait's School Programs incorporate playgrounds and gardens

Figure 47. Typical distance markers in "Mamsha" in one of the neighbor-
hood parks, 2016.

housh typology that once existed as a cultural architectural element within the house, was transformed into the lawn/garden space. New guidelines were imposed by the government, which emphasized setbacks and gardens as requirements within the 400 to 1000 square meter plot of land for each residential villa.[199] New houses were now required to have a percentage of unbuilt land to surround a house with a garden, these regulations were only allowed within the ideal suburbs, or *al-Manatiq al-Namuthajiya (also known as al-manatiq al-dakhiliya).*[200] However, due to the cultural reservation of the Kuwaiti society, large walls or partitions were built to protect the privacy of the house.

The local neighborhood parks and mosques played a large role in strengthening the Kuwaiti social identity of the neighborhood dwellers. The mosques became the space of social gathering for the predominantly male society, while the park allowed for the integration of both genders, the women and men to appear in the public parks as it was envisioned to cater for children and families. In an article arguing for the transformation of the social space for women in Kuwait, Dalal Alsayer contends that specific cultural and spatial factors of the park systems enabled the 'transformation of the social space of women from *housh* to *hadeega.* Alsayer explains that,

> [t]he *hadeega*[201] slowly became an integral part of communal and social activities, especially to women who were too old to be educated or come from more conservative families...By hiring women to [supervise these parks] women visitors felt safe..under the watchful eyes of these elderly women.[202]

In addition, due to the close proximity of the local neighborhood parks to the neighborhood dweller's domestic private space, the parks thus became a place where the Kuwaiti would

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[199] Al-Jassar, 174.

[200] For more information on the socio-spatial stratification of social dichotomies within the Kuwaiti society, please refer to Al-Nakib, Farah. "Revisiting Ḥaḍar And Badū In Kuwait: Citizenship, Housing, And The Construction Of A Dichotomy." *International Journal of Middle East Studies Int. J. Middle East Stud.* 46, no. 01 (2014): 5-30. doi:10.1017/s0020743813001268.

[201] *Hadeeqa* was the Arabic colloquial term used for a park.

[202] Dalal Alsayer, "From Domestic Housh to Consumer Moujama'a: The Social Space of Women in Kuwait." *MONU*, no. 21 (October 20, 2014). http://www.monu-magazine.com/issues.htm.

exercise or take a walk in what was known as the *mamsha* [Figure 47].[203] It is crucial to note that

all of these public amenities, including the parks within the neighborhood, were state-owned and

managed. Therefore, what begins to be evident is this new reading of space, what is more

generally known within the Roman-Greek classifications of space as private-community-public

organization, here you begin to read a new category of citizen space, which is particularly intense

in these suburbs.[204]

Another factor that transformed the spatial configuration of the public-private space was due

to the dependence on the car as a form of transportation. The private car ownership allowed for

the society to view the "public domain" of landscaped streets, public gardens, and open spaces

as visual elements for one to enjoy, rather than experience on a daily basis.[205] The luxury of

owning a private car, developed two major dynamics. First, it further isolated the individuals from

the public spaces, as they did not find a reason to use or occupy them. Second, it allowed for the

construction of vistas and landscaped elements to take place throughout the urban development

process, such as the development of the Gulf Road, which will be further discussed in the next

section.

In conclusion, the spatial development of the housing units and the *neighborhood unit* model

implemented in the early 1960's, proved to spatially segregate society to further increase the gap

between the Kuwaiti-nationals and all other non-nationals within the country, as an effort to

construct a new social system prompted by a larger political agenda.[206] These new neighborhood

models, also introduced new dynamics that exasperated the divide between private-public

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[203] *Mamsha* is the Arabic word for a walkway or a walking track. AlSayer also mentions the cultural role of the Mamsha in her article in MONU.

[204] I would like to clarify here, that public amenities like public parks, mosques, and co-ops were available in all neighborhood plans, both in the ideal and commercial neighborhoods. However, what makes the ideal suburbs citizen-intense is the phenomenon that almost all the residents in these neighborhoods were Kuwaiti. While in the other commercial neighborhoods, they were integrated with multi-ethnic communities.

[205] Suhair Al-Mosully, *"Revitalizing Kuwait's Empty City Center"* (Master's thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1992) 155.

[206] Refer to Chapter 2 for more information.

spaces, creating new "community" shared spaces within each neighborhood, and transforming the original *housh* typology into a private lawn space surrounded with fences or walls. Lastly, the foundation of a car-oriented plan, disconnected the physical relationship between the urban public elements (the streets, parks, and centers) and the users of these spaces (urban and neighborhood dwellers) into rather visual objects for the perception of the eye rather than the physical body.

Master planning the Beachfront: Designating Recreation 1975-1985

Now that each citizen household had its own private villa to cater to, the larger scale public space was seen as the responsibility of the government. Additionally, the wide acceptance and success of these public infrastructural spaces called for greater demands from the public to have more recreational areas throughout the city. In this section, I will discuss multiple threads that co-exist at a city-national scale, however, the important thing to follow is a larger understanding of the dynamics that create the conditions that will allow for the politics of large scale public spaces to flip politically, which people rarely anticipate. Therefore, I begin this section by looking at the larger development projects that begin to occupy public spaces at a city-national scale.

During the 1970's, Kuwait witnessed a massive urban and architectural development, as a result of the oil boom in the Gulf. The post-1973 oil embargo[207] economy in Kuwait, allowed for the establishment of multiple entities to serve public needs, such as the establishment of the Public Authority for Housing Welfare[208] (PAHW 1974), the Kuwait Environment Protection

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[207] During 1973, the members of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) declared an oil-embargo on countries supporting Israel during what was known as the *October* War (an Arab-Israeli War) in October 1973.
[208] "Public Authority for Housing Welfare," Public Authority for Housing Welfare, http://www.housing.gov.kw/en/AboutPHW.aspx.

Society[209] (KEPS 1947), the nationalization of the Kuwaiti oil industry[210] (1975), and the establishment of the Touristic Enterprise Company[211] (1976).

All of these entities play a large role in the development process, as the increase of housing calls for an increase of public parks, while at the same time, nationalization brought an influx of money into the Kuwaiti economy that wanted to be spent. Additionally, with the introduction of such a society like KEPS, a new phenomenon of increased environmental, legal, institutional and social awareness for the need of afforestation and beautification measures to exist within the country as a whole.

The Touristic Enterprise Company's (TEC) main goal has been to equip the public with high standard entertainment and recreational services to all the residents and visitors in Kuwait. The establishment of TEC coupled with the boom in economy and the rise for public recreational programs, resulted in directing the attention of development towards increasing recreational areas along the waterfront, rather than the greenbelt. A new coastal development proposal was spearheaded by a local architect, Ghazi al Sultan in collaboration with Kuwait Engineering Office and American planning firm Sasaki Associates.[212] Inspired by previous development plans for the

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[209] The Kuwait Environment Protection Society (KEPS) was established on March 30, 1974 which came as a reaction to the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment that took place in Stockholm in 1972. The UN Conference in 1972, was the first Environmental Conference held by the UN, that year it "considered the need for a common outlook and for common principles to inspire and guide the peoples of the world in the preservation and enhancement of the human environment". For more information, please refer to the Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, "Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment." Stockholm 1972, June 16, 1972, http://www.unep.org/documents.multilingual/default.asp?documentid=97.
And "KEPS | About Us." Kuwait Environment Protection Society.
http://www.keps.org.kw/page_details.php?pid=1.
[210] "History of Kuwait Oil Company," Kuwait Oil Company, 2012,
https://www.kockw.com/sites/EN/Pages/Profile/History/OilDiscovery.aspx.
[211] "About Us," Touristic Enterprises Company, 2015, http://www.kuwaittourism.com/aboutus.html.
[212] Brian Taylor, "Kuwait City Waterfront Development," Edited by Hasan-Udin Khan, *Mimar: Architecture in Development* 34 (1990): 14-20. http://archnet.org/sites/931/publications/2971. This projects was planned for Shaikh Jabar Al Ahmed Al Sabah, Amir of Kuwait. Ghazi al Sultan acted as the consultant for the project along side with Abdulaziz Sultan from Kuwait Engineering Office (KEO) and Paul Pawlowski, Frank James, Clarissa Rowe, Richard Rogers from the Boston based firm Sasaki Associates in the USA. The total cost of this project came to an estimate of US$ 165.7 million, and complete the first two phases at the end of 1988.

Corniche,[213] which emphasized the need to develop a public space that engages people's relationship to urban form and natural elements of the sea, "One strongly believes that a waterfront, to be viable, must serve more than show, appearance, or recreation purposes."[214] This waterfront project aimed to develop a 120 km long strip dedicated to recreation and cultural functions. It focused strictly on reconnecting a "public space" back to nature, emphasizing the pedestrian strip all along the waterfront. One of their more intriguing proposals was the construction of a man-made Island, *The Green Island*. This particular project introduced a large-scale recreational park in the center, which brought with it new features such as a large open air playground for children, sports facilities, an open-air theater, and open esplanades lined with trees to be used by the public [Figure 48].

The characteristic of the waterfront project that differentiates it from other urban infrastructural projects, was the attention given to the scale and experience of the human body (unlike the out of scale monumental Kuwait Towers) throughout the design. Brian Taylor states that the architect's development plans were used "As a means of giving the coastline beyond the highway back to the people...Conceived for non-existing users". As Ghazi Al-Sultan describes, "[we were obliged] 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."[215] Therefore, the project embodied the design and social aspirations for a future society; in a way, the project setup the framework for defining the social democratization of public space.[216]

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[213] Prior to the 1970s plan, four British Firms and one Canadian firm produced designs for the corniche project in 1960s. These earlier plans were required to provide the construction of essential sea walls, reconstruction in new location of craft harbor, construction of new boat basin, reclamation of land to allow for future construction for cafes, restaurants, bathing space, and possibly a hotel, construction of a divided double carriageway boulevard, inclusion of any other improvement and amenities that may be suggested/desirable. Source: Shiber, "Birth and design of a Corniche", The Kuwait Urbanization, 206.
[214] Shiber, "Birth and design of a Corniche" from The Kuwait Urbanization, 206.
[215] Taylor, 16.
[216] Fabbri, Roberto, Sara Saragoca, and Ricardo Camacho, *Modern Architecture Kuwait 1949–1989* (Niggli, 2016), 282.

Landscaping elements of the Beachfront Proposal by Ghazi al-Sultan and Sasaki

Green Island, one of the main featured projects of the Beachfront Proposal by Ghazi al-Sultan and Sasaki

Figure 48. Beachfront Proposal by Ghazi al-Sultan and Sasaki

The project was initially developed by the architects to attempt to "save" that strip, strictly for public use for environmental and recreational purposes. However, with the involvement of the TEC, the project witnessed the construction of 'temporary' structures that would serve to cater to recreational users of the strip, such as cafes and restaurants, sports and yacht clubs, swimming pool complexes and so on. The involvement of the TEC, allowed for the waterfront project to become an economic incentive for the involvement of the private and public sectors. As the focus became economically driven to increase the value of the strip and its surrounding property, the initial purpose to strictly serve the public need was subsiding.[217] Therefore, commercial and real-estate markets capitalized parts of it, while political agencies (such as consulates, governmental entities like the parliament, and nationalist monuments) took advantage of other parts of the project. Regardless, the waterfront project laid out a framework, both physically and symbolically, to bring back the concept of the use of recreational public facilities at a larger city-nation scale, to situate itself within the larger urban context.

Up until the1980s, the recreational focus was directed away from the Greenbelt, and across the city extending along the waterfront. However, once the establishment of a major governmental authority known as the Public Authority for Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAFR) in 1983 took place, attention was redirected inward into the neighborhood public parks. This establishment took the responsibility of managing all public park systems in Kuwait, which previously were under the supervision of the Municipality, who were in charge of all public land in Kuwait. The establishment of the PAAF, helped facilitate the construction of new parks within Kuwait, they became the mediators working between the Ministry of Water and Electricity (which would provide water and electric supply for each of the parks) and the Ministry of Public Works

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[217] Another prime example that emerged later on, was the construction of the Heritage Village, known as, *Youm Al-Bahar*, along the waterfront project. The re-design of that site, located closer towards the civic building of the Parliament and Al-Seif Palace, became the grounds for new tourists-related shops and services. Which further alienated the local population from visiting those sites. Eventually, it became the site adjacent to what was named as "Sahat Al-Erada" of the political protests in 2012.

(which had the final approval over final design and construction decisions). It is important to note that prior to PAAF, the parks have been neglected to some degree, since there was no one major body that would administrate, manage, allocate, or take the responsibility for these spaces.

In order to understand the issues pertaining to public parks, I reflect back on Subhi al-Mutawa's book, *Kuwait City Parks*. Al-Mutawa conducts surveys and interviews with park users and agencies in charge of maintaining such parks. He describes a lively use of the public parks and theaters, after the establishment of a "free-of-charge" recreational program for Kuwaiti citizens sponsored by the Ministry of Information in the summer of 1973. As reported by Al-Mutawa, a $200,000 fund was allocated for such recreational programs from the Council of Ministries. In an interview with Mr. Saleh Shehab, from the Ministry of Information, he explained that one of the greatest factors that made this program successful was the involvement and response of the public support. Al-Shehab stressed that the acceptance of criticism, support, and advice from the general public was helpful in providing better quality programs that catered to the public needs. Therefore, a rise in the budget allocated to these programs granted more than $700,000 for the summer of 1979.[218]

Additionally, Al-Mutawa notes that during the planning process of building and constructing public parks in Kuwait, the public is not involved in the selection of the design of the park, due to the fact the "public does not pay taxes or support the park by any means".[219] Instead, the public agency[220] involved is in charge of cleaning and setting the rules of the park. Al-Mutawa explains that the park rules and regulations are set because the agency in charge doesn't have another alternative nor the monetary fees to constantly maintain these parks, "the rules were set to protect the park first and the people second, since it is difficult to maintain good landscaping in the park, the rules should be restrictive in order to keep the park in good shape."[221]

However, in an interview with Mr.R. Al-Bawab, he notes that parks systems in Kuwait suffer

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[218] Al-Mutawa 78-79.
[219] According to an interview conducting with Mr. Al-Bawab by Al-Mutawa mentioned in his book Kuwait Public Parks.
[220] Al-Mutawa notes that it is within the Municipality's responsibility in his book. However, today, PAAF is in charge of all public parks.
[221] Al-Mutawa, 80.

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from four main issues: 1) the high cost of water (and its low availability) to irrigate large parks, 2) the lack of expertise and knowledge in efficient ways of maintain the parks and planning them, 3) "There is no strict law to punish the people who destroy the park and its facilities... The guard's ignorance of the law prevents the citizens from being punished," and 4) the lack of coordination amongst park management committees.[222] Al-Bawab notes that the Department of Agriculture does not want to deal with the public since they see themselves as a "technical information-oriented agency" and believed that the parks were only there to beautify the city and not for the use of the public.[223] While, the Ministry of Municipality "believes that the parks should exist for public use and pleasure." Additionally, the Ministry of Information only operated within two-three months of the summer period each year, therefore, these conflicting positions among the varying ministries contributed to the overall negligence of these spaces. Although these issues were stated in the early 1980's, they are still pertinent today. In fact, these are all important issues that will become the grounds for which the park systems in Kuwait would be challenged later on in 2012.

Recreational Space in Post War Reconstruction and the Third Master plan

The use of recreational public space decreased after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990-1991. What was once an open society, became enclosed and introverted. However, after the liberation of Kuwait in February 1991, public spaces were mostly utilized for celebratory purposes. *Shari' Al-Khaleej,* the Gulf Road which was part of the waterfront project, would witness unplanned public parades, a mass gathering of cars filled with families, streets crowded with children and families raising their Kuwaiti flags. The celebratory blasting of National songs along with the endless car horn honking along the Gulf road would then become an annual ritual of the people to go out to commemorate the Liberation Day, *Al-eid al-watani.*[224]

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[222] Ibid., 78.
[223] Ibid., 81.
[224] For more information on the beginnings of the National Day ceremonies, please refer to Linda Fuller, *National Days/national Ways: Historical, Political, and Religious Celebrations around the World.* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2004) 136-144.

Ten years after the post-war reconstruction phase,[225] an attempt to rebuild the city

employed Colin Buchanan to develop another master plan for 2005. I would like to mention that

the main goals of the plans that are pertinent to this study highlighted that the Greenbelt,

waterfront, and the recreation areas should all be used for "passive recreational purposes".[226] The

idea of a "true" recreational space, from the planning documents, is almost devoid of any meaning

or function. The following three excerpts highlight the main objectives for each of these sites

according to the third Kuwait Master Plan (3KMP):

> **Greenbelt:** The green belt of Kuwait is expected to be used for passive recreational purposes,
> under the municipality initiatives program. Only uses of public recreation, entertainment, and
> probably underground parking will be permitted. The is to foster manifestation of its principal
> function"

> **Waterfront:** The water front, has been and will continue to be the focus of the recreation areas
> of Kuwait City. Formal and informal open space gardens and beautification scheme are to be
> prompted, providing pedestrian access, parking spaces, and public transport stops.

> **Recreation Areas:** Their presence is now only a reflection of population needs in terms of land
> that provides for the passive and or active leisure ad recreation activities, but also plays a
> major role in the configuration of the urban image of the Metropolitan Area. They also have
> the effect of combating high population density areas within the metropolitan areas.[227]

The language used to describe these spaces emphasize the fact that these open spaces should

be used for passive recreational purposes and highlight the fact that they "play a major role in the

configuration of the image of the metropolitan Area", confirms the stress on the visual and

symbolic meaning, but is empty of any functional meaning or consideration of the human-scale

or social function. In fact, I argue that these "public" spaces have only been implemented to build

upon the constructed image of the ideal modern city that Kuwait was trying to establish since the

60's, but in reality, due to low maintenance and the lack of accountability on the part of the

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[225] For more detail on Kuwait's reconstruction projects, please refer to Huda Al-Bahar's article, *Kuwait's Post-war Reconstruction*, In Mimar 40: Architecture in Development, edited by Hasan-Uddin Khan, (London: Concept Media Ltd.: 1991) 14-17.
[226] Colin Buchanan and Partners and Kuwaiti Engineering Group, *Third Kuwait Master Plan Review*, (Kuwait Municipality: Kuwait, 2005), 77. This Book is divided into three volumes: 1-National Physical Plan Strategy, 2-Metropolitcan Area Structure Plan, 3-Kuwait City Structure Plan.

[227] Colin Buchanan and Partners and Kuwaiti Engineering Group, "Recreation and open space" *in Third Kuwait Master Plan Review*, (Kuwait Municipality: Kuwait, 2005), 118.

governmental entities, they are highly restrictive and limit what the public is allowed to do. Instead, these state-driven plans set aside these spaces as "passive recreation", which will become problematic when the society tries to "re-engage" with these spaces.

Reclaiming neglected parks: Citizen-State Dialectics at the small scale [2009-2014] A socially-driven development

Now that I have setup the historical development of the emergence of public recreational space in Kuwait, I unfold a very different phenomenon that delineates a new dynamic between citizen-state relations. Therefore, I shift the discussion to look into what is happening at a smaller scale, by looking at citizen-scaled action in neighborhood garden spaces. This section will unfold the development of a resistance movement seeking more active and participatory roles by spatially altering public spaces to enhance and improve their quality of life.

Social Awareness: Izala, Keep Kuwait Clean, and re:Kuwait [2009-2012]

The rise of a chaotic urban development process within neighborhoods was in place around 2009, and local inhabitants would use the public space in front of their houses to plant trees and shrubs.[228] By the end of that year, the government initiated a campaign under the name of "Izala" which sought to remove all private encroachments on "state property", or public space. The state-sponsored removal of such "unlicensed" encroachments, like the temporary built structures for diwaniyas, plantings, and trees on public property stimulated a general debate amongst the public in regards to the "justified" actions by the state on public-private property [Figure 49].[229]

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[228] Additionally, we see some form of informal gardening taking place, for example, there was an early case of using public land to create an informal garden in the Shuweikh Neighborhood. A large Kuwaiti family owned large plots of lands that surrounded an abandoned plot in the center of their block, which as I have been told used to be an old school. The land was transformed into a park by the private investment and efforts of the surrounding neighborhood, it was called "the Park of Allliance", or Hadeeqat Al-tahaluf.
[229] The Commission for the removal of public encroachment on state property established an agreement with the Council of Ministers to remove all unauthorized encroachment on public land (state property) in

Figure 49. Izala Campaign destroying a garden

all residential, industrial, agricultural and open areas. Once an illegal structure is spotted by the committee, the process of informing the violator is done with a grace period of two weeks.

A newspaper article published on November 8, 2009 titled, "An Open letter to His Highness the Prime Minister" calling for the state's wrongdoings in the mistreatment and removal of trees in a residence garden without any permission,

Greetings and more,
To plant and decorate your home with a pleasing emerald green, is a duty for a city in need of life. I've grown young saplings to surround my home in my beloved country. And day by day, I raised my family as I have raised those trees. Their prideful green animates the symbols of life in my home and family. Given that the construction of a metal fence was illegal, we opted to plant a ring of trees to enclose our garden. Yet, we were utterly surprised to wake up to the bulldozed garden, the uprooting of trees, the loss of all our greens, all without any permission! Why? What gives you the right to uproot our source of life? What have the trees done to deserve this? How are we to blame and punish the trees that grew up with my children? All these questions, crave for an answer in a nation in need for such green elements so we can hear and feel life breathing. What have I to say to my children, do I tell them that the belt of life has been robbed by concrete pavement? Or do I tell them that our lifetime care for those trees has been emancipated with an official Governmental decree? Should I instruct them to cut, instead of sow, as to not obstruct [your] vision that relishes on deracinating actions?[230]

Additionally, an online debate against the removal of trees and plantings launched a Facebook group called, "Keep Kuwait Green! Stop the Izala from cutting our trees!" as a response against the *Izala Campaign*. A person supporting this cause commented,

[T]he streets in front of a lot of hotels are used "commercially" by them (redirecting traffic, valet parking, security barriers, etc.). Isn't the street public land? Furthermore, isn't the street affecting traffic flow? How many laws are they breaking with this one act? Isn't this more deserving of mama government's attention than trees or other good practices that we should encourage rather than demolish?[231]

In the above quotes, the aggravated commenter seems to highlight the issue that there are no clear boundaries nor implementation processes that imply that there is a constant process of implementing the law, instead it seems as if it is a selective process done with specific agendas. Additionally, the notion of planting trees as a "good practice that we should encourage rather than demolish", and as "symbols of life in a country in need for more life" play up a phenomenon that uses trees as symbolic representations of citizen's wellbeing and life. The Keep Kuwait Green!

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[230] Translated by author from Al-Rai Newspaper Article translated by author. Source: http://www.alraimedia.com/ar/article/last/2009/11/08/155993/nr/nc
[231] Nouf comments in "Keep Kuwait Green!" Facebook, https://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=137690749693.

campaign precipitated a small attempt at a protest against the Izala Campaign,[232] and demonstrates an instant where the citizen is speaking back to the state.

Along with the "Keep Kuwait Green!" Campaign, a rise in interest and social awareness of urban spaces and its relationship to the "Green Spaces", which is divorced from the state increases at the same time. Such examples include the online blog re:kuwait, which was initiated as "an attempt at finding pragmatic and urgently needed solutions to the problems that plague the urban cohesion of Kuwait City." This specific blog allowed for the architects managing it to create alternative solutions to urban challenges, most prominently, critiquing the neighborhood structures in Kuwait, and applying design interventions transforming large infrastructural sites in Kuwait into public parks.[233] Inspired by the New York Highline project, the blog highlighted the opportunities that could transform the "catastrophe of the first ring road" into a highly designed pedestrian park emulating the concept borrowed from the highline.[234] Additionally, much of the interest of the blog engaged with the aspirations of the architects to redesign and rethink the ways the neighborhoods functioned in general [Figure 50]. This was also induced by the notions of "activism" and "crowdsourcing" as tools to help "improve our public spaces... [to develop] a real time "to do' list for the government."

> "The people posting to it [a local community –maintenance board] are the eyes on the ground that can direct the action that needs to take place. Mechanisms can be put in place whereby if a week goes by and a 'to do' isn't fixed then a flag goes up and the person in charge of fixing it gets a penalty. All this needs is a few people to oversee the website and collate the data and send the alerts to the people that need to fix the problem; meaning a photo of a broken lamp would be forwarded to the sub-contractors in charge of fixing them."

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[232] The "Keep Kuwait Green!" Facebook group attempted to initiate a protest against the Izala campaign, but it seems that these "protest", or shall I call "gatherings" were not successful nor carried through. I have not found adequate resources to confirm their appearance, however there were some debate on the location of where this protest should take place. [West Mishref]

[233] Refer to "First Ring Road: A Catastrophe?", re:kuwait Blog, November 16, 2010, https://rekuwait.wordpress.com/2010/11/16/first-ring-road-a-catastrophe/

[234] re:kuwait was managed by three architects that would propose new alternative project which engaged a wide range of online audience in their comment sections. Debates, critiques, and opinions were shared collectively within the blog discussing social, urban, economic, and spatial issues. For more information, please visit https://rekuwait.wordpress.com/

Re:Kuwait blog emphasize importance of Trees

The second best time is today

1991   2010

2010   2030

Re:Kuwait Blog Re-imagines the Greenbelt as the Highline Project

Neighborhood Parks not maintained

Neighborhood Park Walls covered in Graffiti

1: Playground
2: Grass Play Area
3: Fruit and Vegetable Market
4: Health Center
5: Cafes
6: Shops
7: Flower Garden
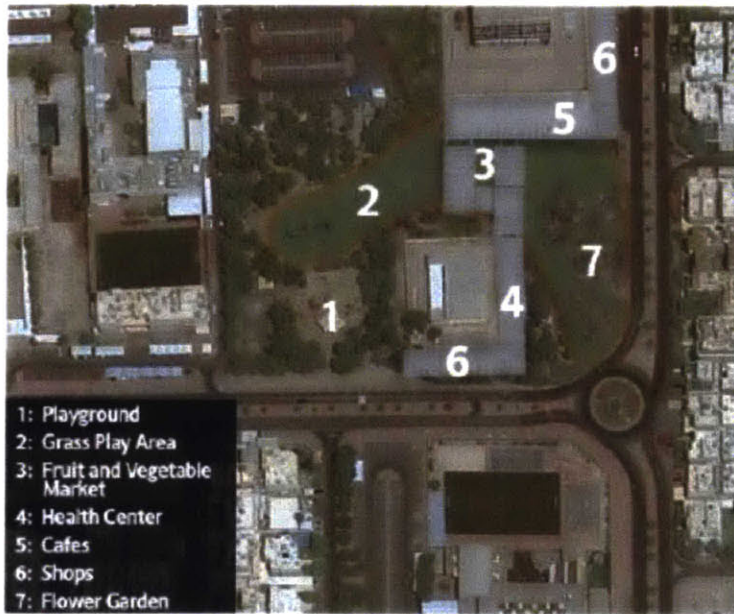
Re:Kuwait Re-imagines the Neighborhood Park Program and layout

Figure 50. Re:Kuwait re-imagines neighborhood parks, and greenbelt.

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These initial thoughts highlighted above eventually became what was known as the MantaqaME[235] movement in Kuwait later in 2012. All these events, projects, and debates increased as the municipal urban production was dwindling.[236] Yet, after the initiation of the Kuwait Mega-Projects plan, a new sudden urban construction boom started with the beginning of 2009.[237]

Although the urban development process was booming, the social response to the urban process was seen through a different lens. Much of the local debate amongst younger architects criticized this massive boom, while other parts of the society were witnessing the large-scale construction industry as a sign or progress and development.

Public Reports on the Use and Misuse of Neighborhood Gardens around Kuwait: [2006-2012]

In a broader effort to understand the public's views on the appearance and maintenance of gardens in Kuwait, a series of Newspaper articles would constantly report and interview the users of these spaces. In a 2006 report, a series of attempts to highlight the issues of neighborhood parks were reported under a series known as "al-bab al maftouh", or the "Open door". Its aims were to report the negligence on behalf of the governmental authorities, and the misuse on behalf of the public's behavior in these neighborhood gardens.[238] For example, one report covering Al-Shamiya Park reported the malfunctioning amenities of the park, such as the broken benches and swings that stand unsupervised and abandoned.[239] Another article a month later, was published by a representative from PAAFR in response their series of al-bab almaftooh,

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[235] *Mantaqa,* is the Arabic meaning of neighborhood or the literal word for "Area". "Me" referring to the individual

[236] For more information on the list of projects planned for 2009-2013 please visit: http://www.kuna.net.kw/ArticlePrintPage.aspx?id=1971028&language=en, and http://www.kuwait-embassy.or.jp/pdf/kuwait-five-year-plan.pdf

[237] http://www.alraimedia.com/ar/article/local/2009/10/21/152570/nr/nc

[238] For more information, refer to Abdullah Al-Shayji, "Al-Shamiya Park Waits for Maintenance!" *Al-Qabas Newspaper* (Kuwait), August 28, 2006; Jassim Habib Al-Bader, "PAAFR: The sabotage of garden due to aberrant behaviors" *Al-Qabas Newspaper* (Kuwait), September 2, 2006; Qassim Abdulrahman, "Al-Sulaibiya Garden without any amenities!" *Al-Qabas Newspaper* (Kuwait), October 28, 2008.

[239] Abdullah Al-Shayji, "Al-Shamiya Park Waits for Maintenance!", *Al-Qabas Newspaper.*

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claiming that one of the biggest problems these parks face was the futile attempt to keep these spaces free from the public's uncivil misbehavior.[240] Two years later, an article titled "Public Parks, destroyed by regulations and bureaucratic structures" highlighting the degradation of the gardens in terms of their appearance, their activities, and more importantly, their maintenance. Underlining the multiple claims from conflicting entities' plans towards maintaining gardens, complaints about the loss of the cultural and recreational programs that proved to be extremely successful in the early 1980's, once the TEC merged with the Ministry of Commerce and Industries, showing how the TEC has lost its initial goal of recreation which has been usurped by religious activities. Mostly the complaints exemplified the need and desires of citizens and residents to be able to utilize these spaces and re-engage with them.[241]

Furthermore, articles later in 2012 continued to reveal the public's desires for up keeping neighborhood parks all over Kuwait. In an article with the Deputy General of PAAF, it was reported that almost 50 new public parks are in progress, and an allocation of 5 Million KD/year ($16.5M) is spent on maintaining the park in general. An attempt to construct, "...43 new kids play areas will be introduced along with 29 public sports fields. In addition, the building of 29 new water fountains prior to the end of 2012".[242] In fact, when asked about future plans to renovate parks to make them pedestrian friendly, the Deputy General responded with a boasting note that Kuwait "has the highest area-garden ratio in the Gulf, however, we suffer from water scarcity issues when we renovate and upkeep the gardens."[243]

Two months after, another article interviewed visitors in multiple parks. These interviews resulted in the desire from the public to see a change or a reform in the managerial structure for the people responsible of these spaces. Many of the interviewees concerns can be summed down

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[240] Habib Al-Bader, "PAAFR: The sabotage of garden due to aberrant behaviors" *Al-Qabas Newspaper.*
[241] "Public Parks, destroyed by regulations and bureaucratic structures" *Al-Jareeda (Kuwait)* August 31, 2008, http://www.aljarida.com/news/index/274503/.
[242] Nasser Al-Farhan, "'Alhaddad' in Al-Rai Diwaniya: Agriculture oversees 144 public parks,"Al-Rai Newspaper, July 22, 2012.
[243] Ibid.

to four main complaints: 1) the lack of maintenance, 2) the need for family-oriented leisure activities and better services in the parks, 3) A change of ownership and demanding the withdrawal of the PAAFR responsibilities for these spaces, 4) the lack of any outlet for the sale of food in the parks. As the article expressed, "it seems that these spaces have been encircled in an ever enclosing circle of "Neglect", as is the investment of these spaces are wasted under the governance of the Public Authority. As it kills any chance of "private" investments to renovate, beautify, and encourage its neighbors to visit it."[244]

It is clear from the mentioned articles above, that the public finds fault in PAAFR efforts in their attempts to upkeep these parks. The lack of management, is once again a prime issue that is criticized, in addition to the lack of recreational activities due to the lack of public infrastructures and amenities in the gardens. Once again, we find that large amounts of budgets are being allocated to visually "green" up these gardens, but no such efforts in socially engaging any sort of recreational activities are being done. And so, the efforts done on behalf of the Governmental entities, are a reflection of how these public gardens are not designed to function to be used by the public, instead, they seem to only exist as part of development plans to maintain an image of a functioning neighborhood.

Re-Activating Public gardens: "Manta8aMe" movement and "Q8NeedsYou" [2013-2014]

The internet became a popular platform for citizens, and society at large, to voice their opinions and direct their desires for change. The notions of "activism" within the online community was loud and clear, it could have been a result of the success of the 2006 Women's Rights Movement and the 2009 Orange movement that called for changing the constituencies from 25 to 5 circles. Although much of the success of these movements was due to political global

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[244] 14/09/2012, Al-qabas, author: Mishary Al-Khalaf, "Consumer games ... primitive services... projects represented by ink on paper: Investing is better than they typical "Agriculture" routine!" *Al-Qabas Newspaper* (Kuwait), September 9, 2012.

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pressure,[245] some people recognized the ability they had as "citizens", and called for *empowering* people to demand for change. Such demands surfaced on *re:kuwait* when the idea of fixing a local neighborhood park through the use of online media and creating a Facebook group as a means to connect the community. In a way, the architect managing the blog, envisioned this group to emulate a localized planning board for his neighborhood park that would collaborate with the Co-Op society within each local neighborhood. He saw it as a tool to maintain a record of the governmental entities in charge, and what services they should be providing. Additionally, the group would flag any problems, issues, or concerns in regards of maintenance such as garbage accumulation, wall re-painting, or replanting and damaged plants. Although this online blog was started by three architects, their posts eventually gained momentum from the online community, and a great deal of discussion criticized the neglectful role of the government, and the passive role of the people. On the contrary, it was this notion of activating people's attention and "empowering people to take the initiative" to take responsibility or locate the problems that the online blog called for. In one of the responses, a commentator by the name of Yousef proclaimed, "We can all change for the better, we just have to 'do' rather than just 'talk'".[246]

These online debates and critiques were emerging throughout 2009-2011, two years before the official inauguration of the MantaqaME movement, which sought to take these same matters onto their own hands. During my informal interview with one of the initial members of MantaqaMe, the issue of taking responsibility and claiming ownership was raised up multiple times. He claimed that using the public park as a space for intervention would bring up the issue of ambiguous ownership of which multiple entities claimed to have [Figure 53]. It was unclear at that time, who was responsible for maintaining the parks whether it was the Co-op, the Municipality, the PAAFR, or the contracted companies or a combination of all.

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[245] See previous chapter on women's rights activities.
[246] Yousef, October 6, 2010 (6:03 pm), commented on Barrak Al-Babtain, "Crowdourced Activism", Re:Kuwait Blog, October 6, 2010. https://rekuwait.wordpress.com/2010/10/06/crowdsourced-activism/.

ممشى قرطبة؟

Figure 51. MantaqaME's first event cleanup and reconstruction at a small neighborhood park in Qortuba, Kuwait, Posted on Twitter (Top) MantaqaME's rendering for a "Mamsha" in Qortuba, Kuwait, Posted on Instagram (Bottom)

Figure 52. "Volunteer in serving your community", images inviting residents to join the project.

Figure 53. Qortuba Park Neighborhood Park Context.

The same issue of ownership was also questioned in an earlier study conducted by Subhi Al-Mutawa. In *Kuwait City Parks*, Al-Mutawa's objective was to "investigate the current [1985] management practices of the Kuwait park system and the relationship of these practices to user satisfaction." Although this book was published in 1985, it still reflects the negligence of a much larger structure at a managerial scale. His book proves to show that the challenges of public parks in Kuwait is not the design, nor the location, but in fact, the pressing issue is management and maintenance on behalf of the Government.

If we go back to follow the intentions and discussions from the re:Kuwait blog, we can see how MantaqaME was established as a localized movement. MantaqaME's initial aim was to mobilize change and try to manifest a ground-up response to the zeitgeist of the 2011-2012 events. It was known that the initial founders of the group were involved with the protests and the ongoing political movements that I have discussed in the previous chapter. However, their approach took a different path, instead of directly accusing any of the governmental entities, they found that an indirect, localized and a more de-centralized approach was more productive. In their opinion, "the absence of an actual political message is by itself a message".[247] However, it was a clear political statement that showed that no one is taking care of the space: not the Co-op, nor the PAAFR, nor the Municipality. In one way or another, it was a way of trying to shame these entities and highlight their concerns on issues of cleanliness, lighting, security, and most importantly maintenance. Additionally, MantaqaME sought to educate people that they had the "right" to demand improvement and not just wait for things to happen and be passive about it [Figure 51].

Thus, it started out with the creation of Facebook, twitter, and Instagram accounts that displayed renderings of how each local neighborhood park could be transformed, inviting local neighbors from each neighborhood to join in the transformation process and to implement these

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[247] Barrak Al-Babtain (principal of Babtain Design and founder of re:Kuwait blog), in discussion with the Author, March 10, 2016.

steps in their own neighborhood garden [Figure 52]. It was suggested that every member that wanted to join would invest in the project by contributing no more than 10KD (a maximum of $30) if she/he could afford to do so. This approach was seen as a way to equalize input from all, to make sure no one person could claim to have done more or less than others. It was also a way to activate people to become publicly aware of their responsibility as well as their rights as citizens, "if users were physically or monetarily involved in the project, then it would emulate the idea that people pay a 'tax' –physical or symbolic- in order to see good change happen in their neighborhood."[248]

Additionally, the group was aware of legal repercussions that could surface, and so they made sure not to damage nor remove any public property. For example, the paint that was used to repaint all wall surfaces followed the provided safety code from the municipality, to make sure that no one could hold anything against them. Although these acts may seem harmless and actually beneficial to the space, it can also be seen as a subversive act against the agency in charge of maintaining the parks. The informal process of gathering in that space, saw a large assembly of people digging up the soil, repainting the playground, and replanting grass onto large areas of sandy grounds. With all that in mind, the reaction to this process was extremely positive, from all neighborhood inhabitants. It also seems that the higher authorities did not get involved to try to stop or shut down any of their gatherings.

This movement became easily adoptable and applicable to any other person who was willing to take the initiative in her/his neighborhood, and so the success of these acts spread across many of the neighborhoods around Kuwait.[249] In fact, shortly after the first event of MantaqaME, the government issued a mandate to remove all fences surrounding neighborhood

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[248] My Interview with one of the founders of MantaqaME movement.
[249] There were many MantaqaME accounts created on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook to be used and utilized, but many failed to continue a few were successful like QortubaME, MishrefME, SurraME, MubarakiyaME, Al-ShamiyaME, JabriyaME, and KaifanME. Each name is set up so that the neighborhood's name, (or what is called in Arabic Mantaqa) is placed in front of ME. For example, the QortubaME projects, took place within the Qortuba Neighborhood.

parks, in order to make them more inviting for residences, "to keep a watchful eye as if the park was in their own backyard."[250]

Additionally, the success of ManataqaME and the earlier online discussion in *re:Kuwait*, gave birth to another initiative which was an offshoot of the group, known as "Q8 Needs You". The "Q8NeedsYou" account which initially started as an online website and an Instagram account, encouraged their followers, or "Responsible Citizens and residents", to report any physical urban issue, defects, flaws or any other problems that are a result of the government's (or their contractors, or individuals) negligence on these matters. This was to document these flaws in order to assist all efforts in order to maintain a higher standard of living.[251] Their method was to upload images sent by citizens and residents to highlight issues such as a compilation of garbage, unrepaired potholes, roads and sidewalks and any other street furniture that was either broken or in need of maintenance. The "Q8NeedsYou" account was successful enough to gain the governmental agencies attention and connect them online through a social media platform to fix and maintain the reported cases. Thus, the agency responsible would locate and fix the issue, and so the Q8NeedsYou account would highlight the "before and after" case to thank those who have participated.

Re-claiming Public Parks into Community Gardens: The Secret Garden and Al-Tahaluf

Another case of "re-claiming" public parks, emerged one year later, in 2014, in a much smaller park located in a commercial neighborhood known as Salmiya. Salmiya is zoned to be a mixed-use area which was heavily populated by commercial programs such as shopping malls, and commercial offices, however it also included other programs such as an array of multiple densities of housing (from high to low density housing typologies), schools and private

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[250] "State-sponsored Engineers are keen on aesthetic elements in gardens," Al-Nahar Newspaper (Kuwait), March 15, 2008.
[251] "About Us." Q8NEEDSYOU.COM. http://www.q8needsyou.com/

universities, theaters and restaurants, and also commercial clinics. An approximate area of around 2500 square meters, which was named as "The Secret Garden", was located between two high-rises of clinics and apartments. The Secret Garden was appropriated and named by a group of people, spearheaded by a Kuwaiti citizen known as Mimi. Mimi was living in one of the older sets of Kuwaiti houses that used to be located in Salmiya.[252] She is known to have started a "guerilla" food market in Kuwait, known as Shakshouka Market. The story of the garden, as I have been told, started with the planting of a lemongrass plant for one of the participating vendors in Shakshouka.[253] It started as a small attempt to fix up the garden, with the aid of some funding from a local non-profit, the garden was renovated by a group of volunteers that responded to an Instagram public-invite on Mimi's account.
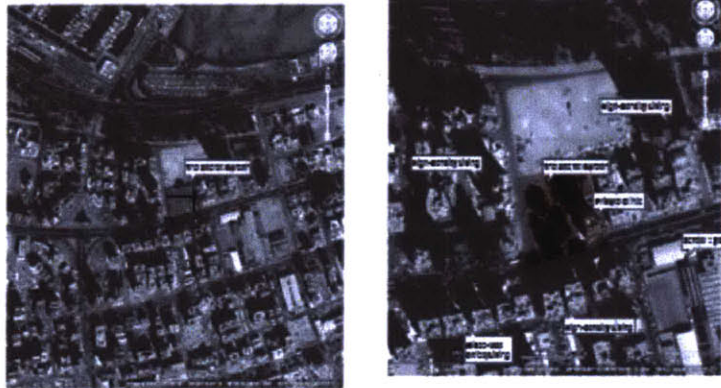
When asked about the motivation for renovating the park, Mimi explained, "I felt *disconnected* from the space I occupied on earth – the physical pavement of the streets, the people, the trees – living in a private villa disconnected form the neighborhood, getting in your own car to drive to meet the same kinds of people, made me feel disconnected with the larger public around me."[254] As she was reminiscing her lifestyle back in London, she complained that she did not feel any relationship to the *public* in the neighborhood, unlike the time she did living in London. Therefore, she sought to take up The Secret Garden, to transform it into a community garden. In order to promote and encourage the society to participate in social activates, her aim in creating this space was to meet people outside of her social circles [Figure 54]. Thus, over time, The Secret Garden project grew to follow the "community garden" typology found in North America and Europe. However, it did not have a managerial structure nor fee, but was a result

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[252] Salmiya Area used to house Kuwaiti families in the early 1950's but with all the development and re-zoning efforts since then, very few of these houses are left, and the area is heavily populated by non-Kuwaitis and commercial activities.

[253] During my interview with Mimi, she described how the lack of outdoor space and lack of lighting in one of her friend's apartment, led to the discovery of this garden. It was an open space with a little bit of trees located right in front of the high-rise apartment building where her friend lived, (who was also one of the vendors at the "Shakshouka" Market hosted monthly by Mimi).

[254] Mimi, interview by author, The Secret Garden in Al-Salmiya, Kuwait, February 3, 2016.

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The Secret Garden Location

Multiple Program at the Secret Garden

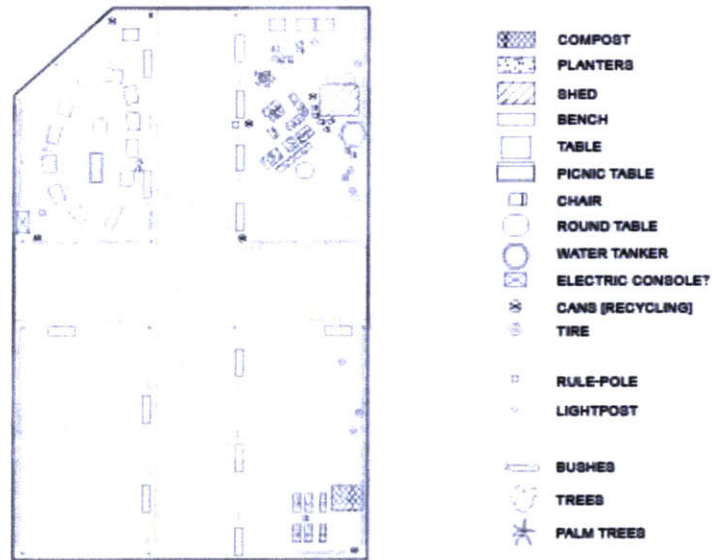| | COMPOST |
	PLANTERS
	SHED
	BENCH
	TABLE
	PICNIC TABLE
	CHAIR
	ROUND TABLE
	WATER TANKER
	ELECTRIC CONSOLE?
	CANS [RECYCLING]
	TIRE
	RULE-POLE
	LIGHTPOST
	BUSHES
	TREES
	PALM TREES

Figure 54. The Secret Garden Context, and plan, 2016

Community Gardening event happening in the Secret Garden

Community Gardening at the Secret Garden

Figure 55. The Secret Garden Community Gardening Event, January 2016.

Local Theater group rehearsing in the Secret Garden

"Shakshouka" Event, a weekly food market taking place in the Secret Garden

Figure 56.The Secret Garden Social Events

of volunteers from the involvement of the local habitants and visitors of the neighborhood [Figure 55].

On one of my visits to the garden, I had the chance to meet some of the group members that would volunteer to maintain the garden. John,[255] an American landscape architect would help with up keeping the gardening and instructing volunteers on what things need to be done. Another volunteer, Mohammed, who worked for a "Green-technology" company, would assist with providing smart solutions for irrigation. This specific initiative, spearheaded by a Kuwaiti citizen, highlights how the citizen has the ability to generate action, that if done by non-citizens can be immediately stopped. Today, the garden is home to many weekly activities, such as gardening projects, theater performances, arts and crafts meet-ups, a monthly food market, and educational activities such as book launches, lectures, and workshops promoting gardening and planting [Figure 56].[256]

The success of this garden, as Mimi explained, was due to the government's negligence of the spaces itself. She explained that they were not stopped by PAAFR or nay other entity due to the small size of the space that was purely "leftover space".[257] Mimi also mentioned that throughout their time in the Secret Garden, they have tried to coordinate with the PAAFR in order to get official recognition of the space, yet there was no protocol that helped them establish that relationship. However, she did mention that the PAAFR were cooperative as they gave them electric power, after a continuous request and a strong persistence from the group to do so.

In the case of the Secret Garden, the group did not seem to carry any political message, rather it sought to create a stronger social message that aimed to connect local residents with the friends of the garden. It was successful in the way that it brought different groups with different background into the space, which established a physical relationship to the physical urban space.

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[255] Names had been changed
[256] For more information, browse through and visit @mimikuwait Instagram and twitter.
[257] Mimi, interview by author.

However, this is not the first time that public property has been used to create a community garden through individual citizen's efforts. Prior to the Secret Garden, much earlier, Kuwait saw some form of informal gardening taking place in 2003. There was an early case of using public land to create an informal garden in the Shuweikh Neighborhood.[258] A large Kuwaiti family owned large plots of lands that surrounded an abandoned plot in the center of their block, which as I have been told used to be an old school. A recent newspaper article, explains that the land was transferred from the Ministry of Education to PAAFR after the local community asked to be transformed into a park. Thus, the land was transformed into a park with the efforts of the private donations of the surrounding neighbors who have been maintaining it from the beginning, it was called "the Park of Alliance", or *Hadeeqat Al-tahaluf* [Figure 57]. More recently, there has been much debate on this particular piece of land, as the government abruptly decided to place an electric console right in the middle of the park.[259] Which spurred some action from the surrounding neighbors petitioning to save the park, again, parallel to the "Izala" response, the newspaper article reporting the incident concluded with fearful anxieties on the future of the well-being of the state of Kuwait, wondering "Why the state does not support any "greening" initiatives, and does not worry about the health of our environment?"[260]

Again, what we are witnessing here, once more, touches upon the phenomenon of the lack of coordination between the state agencies, and a strong emotional, physical, and social response spurred by Kuwaiti citizens in the hope of improving their quality of life, through multiple greening efforts.

In this section, I examined how the most recent tactics of the citizen-based movement

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[258] Shuwiekh neighborhood is a larger residential neighborhood located close to Kuwait City, between the first and second ring roads. It is mostly populated by higher-merchant class families.
[259] It was reported that a new inhabitant who has recently moved into the block (reported from the Al-Sabah Family) did not find that the appearance of the Electric console in front of his newly acquired house appealing, and so asked to have it moved somewhere else. Refer to Ghanem Al-Sulaimany, "*Sheikh's* Electric Power Adapter…Violates Kuwait's People's Park," Al-Rai Newspaper, April 13, 2016. http://www.alraimedia.com/ar/article/local/2016/04/13/672257/nr/kuwait
[260] Al-Sulaimany, "*Sheikh's* Electric Power…".

2005 ALTAHALUF GARDEN

2015 ALTAHALUF GARDEN

Figure 57. Al-Tahaluf Garden 2005-2015, Shuweikh, Kuwait.

worked with and against the laws, increasing both the government authorities and the general public's awareness of the neglected spaces. I aimed to present the multiple attempts of the citizen's speaking *back* to the State's actions and negligence. The ad-hoc design interventions, social interactions, and collective citizens' actions, have the ability to shift power dynamics to transform the space to work to fit society's wants and needs. I contend that a design intervention, just like the political protest, is a way of publicly appropriating the space through projecting their design aspirations collectively. It is not only an act of enforcement that aims to alter social dynamics by defying the restrictions and challenges imposed by the government, but is also a case of acquiescence by the state on smaller plots.

Symbolic Appropriation: State-Based Dialectics at a Large Scale [2009-2015] A politically-driven development

Although the previously mentioned citizen-based incidents and events might seem to be limited to a smaller scale space, these smaller citizen-based moves can have a larger impact on urban form. I unravel a parallel history in this section illustrating the larger city-scale state-driven actions that are happening at the same time as the smaller-scale interventions mentioned earlier. Shifting the discussion by scaling up, I show how the state is also dealing with larger issues that try to contribute to the urban dialogue. However, the state has its own larger agenda. In this section, I highlight the spatial particularities of the "de"-politicized public space, by specifically looking at the recent transformation of Al Shaheed Park, in order to reveal a more nuanced understanding for reading a different narrative within the politics of public space.

City Economic Development 2009-2010

On Jan 25 2009, the 2035 development plan was approved by the Parliament and a set of large-scale projects were being planned as "Mega-projects" to be set in the next five years.[261]

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[261] Aeyidh Al-Barazi, "Kuwait 2035...A Pioneering Country," *Al-Rai Newspaper,* October 21, 2009, http://www.alraimedia.com/ar/article/local/2009/10/21/152570/nr/nc.

This came somewhat as a response to the political and economic instability during the beginning of the reign of the new Emir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad period, which, as mentioned in the previous chapter, was a time where Kuwait faced multiple dissolutions of the National Assembly between the years of 2008-2013, which eventually led to the rise of civil disobedience of the Orange movement between 2011-2012 as described in the previous chapter.

Many of the large scale developments in the city was seen as the number of 60+ story towers, high-rise office buildings were being constructed at a fast rate.[262] Many of these developments were built around or in close proximity to the greenbelt. The completion of the 45-story Al-Tijariya building in 2009 was a catalyst for re-imagining the opportunities of the greenbelt.[263] Although there was a rise in construction of 60+ Story buildings in Kuwait city, the Tijariya building stood as an out-of-scale monolith across the horizontality of the greenbelt site.

Prior to 2010, the greenbelt park, which was renamed into Al-Shaheed Park after the invasion, has been forgotten, abandoned, and visited by a few number of people. What stood there were the remnants of the earlier 1980's infrastructural designs such as Shiber's concrete Pergolas, bathroom structures, and windy paths lined with vegetation. However, the Greenbelt strip hosted a number of "recreation" sites such as the Ice Skating Rink, which was constructed much earlier in 1979; the "musical fountains" constructed in 1983, which became somewhat of an abandoned site; and a more recent multi-purpose children's entertainment mall, "Discovery Mall", built in 2009. These developments demonstrate an ad-hoc series of state-led interventions throughout the belt.

Al-Shaheed Park: Appropriating the commons [2012-2014]

Marking the 50th anniversary of the Kuwaiti constitution in 2012, the government started

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[262] *Al-Raya* office tower, 70+ story tower completed in 2009; *Panasonic Tower*, 75 story filled with office, built in 2009; *February 25/26 Towers* also constructed at the same time and finally a 70-Story tower designed by SOM, completed in 2010, known as *Al-Hamra* Tower was in place.
[263] Ricardo Camacho, telephone interview by author, March 4, 2016.

to find renewed interest in the Greenbelt as a strategic location for commemorating celebratory events. The choosing of the site came at a specific point in time, when Al-Safat square was fenced off with no public access for entry. Al-Safat's construction was due to the fact that a sculptural monument along with a flag pole were being erected in the middle of Al-Safat. During this construction process, concerns in regards to the location for raising of the flag, were in place.[264] In order to prepare a new location for raising the flag, the Amiri Diwan[265] started to find interest in greenbelt as a suitable site for the raising of the flag.[266] Additionally, the *Al-Shaheed* park, or the Martyrs' Park,[267] was then also chosen to be the site of a new Museum to celebrate the ruler, supplemented with a sculptural monument to commemorate the 50th year of the Constitution.[268] These three elements were chosen to create some sort of spatial and symbolic connection between the "flag" (which stood for the nation) alongside the Ruler (which stood for the authority) and most importantly, the Constitution Monument (which stood as a symbol to represent the people). This can be clearly read as an attempt to create a space of engagement between the citizens, the state, and the city. In a way, it seems as if the state is symbolically speaking to the people by occupying this space.

On November 12 of 2012, part of the renovated Al-Shaheed Park opened with the Jubilee celebrations of 50th anniversary of the Kuwaiti constitution. The opening ceremony began with the national anthem followed by a documentary depicting the story of the Kuwaiti Constitution, presented by the Amiri office, and ended with the Amir and the crown prince unveiling the monument.[269] A large glistening gold plated constitution monument was inaugurated in the middle

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[264] Ricardo Camacho, interview by author.

[265] "Amiri Diwan (or Al-Diwan Al-Amiri as it is known in Arabic) is seen as one of the symbols of the State of Kuwait's sovereignty. It is the headquarters and the permanent centre of the country's rulers"

[266] Ricardo Camacho.

[267] Al-Shaheed Park, was renamed to commemorate the Martyrs of Kuwait after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990-1992. It was previously called the Greenbelt park since its inauguration in 1959.

[268] An article in Al-Anba on July 5, 2010 discussed the beginning of constructing a memorial monument for the Martyrs (source + Source) and a constitution monument commemorating the 50th anniversary (source)

[269] "Opening of the Constitution Monument in the Martyr Garden," Al-Anba Newspaper, November 13, 2012, http://www.alanba.com.kw/ar/kuwait-news/339192/13-11-2012.

of *Al-Shaheed* park [Figure 58]. Prior to the opening, the construction of the monument site disrupted the flow of visitors walking and meandering the park. The monument was placed in a central location surrounded by a tall golden fence, to protect the newly constructed area from vandalism. The erection of the fence immediately split up the spatial arrangement of the park into two, and what was once a large open space with a walking track looping around it is now disrupted by the placement of the monument. The monument, however, did not stand alone, it was situated within a exuberant landscape designed with fountains and lined trees, to convey a narrative of Kuwait "before and the after the constitution" [Figure 59].[270] A comment from an anonymous user described the park with the following:

> *Initially the monument and the garden hosting it were supposed to be opened to the public, as the garden was designed to tell a story, the story of the state of Kuwait before and after the constitution. The side of the garden as you enter it from the Tijaria tower represents the past, you'll see only desert plants arranged in randomly and in groups, planted in sand, representing the tribes scattered over the deserted area of the country. Once you pass through the monument, which represents the Kuwait Constitution (and which is actually built from titanium plates electroplated with bronze and the bronze blocks you see on the monument are representing the articles of the constitution, one block for each article) you enter the garden representing the present, on the right, and the future on the left. The fountain to the right has few vertical sprinklers representing the oil-wells. The flowers are representing the people of Kuwait (diversity of flowers for diversity of people) and a stream of water that goes to the roots of the monument is the symbol of the will of the people feeding/changing the constitution according to the modern needs. The left side has a mirror fountain, still water, beautiful flowers; is the future of Kuwait.*

This naively *poetic* description depicts a fabricated history which reduces the past century into luxurious flowers, fountains, and trees. It is important to note that this project was specifically funded by the Amiri Diwan, which is known to be the main office or headquarters of the current *Amir* (the ruler). What we begin to read in this particular placement of the monument, is an attempt to reinstate and formalize a symbolic relationship between the "ruler", the "constitution", and the "people". The very fact that this project was funded and executed by the Amiri Diwan, illustrates

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[270] Mark. "Why There's a Fence around Kuwait's Constitution Monument." Twofortyeightam (blog), January 28, 2013. http://248am.com/mark/kuwait/why-theres-a-fence-around-kuwaits-constitution-monument/.

Water Fountains at Al-Shaheed Park Constitution monument, 2012

Constitution monument opening and celebrations, 2012

Figure 58. Constitution Garden, Kuwait.

Figure 59. Constitution Monument Garden, designed 2012 by Calatroni Silvia & Trivelli Alessandro

two things: first, that it did not need to seek any approvals from the "Municipality" or any other entity which allowed for a quick construction and design process to go unimpeded. Second, the spatial claim for the institutional office of the Amiri Diwan to place a "constitution Monument" in the middle of this particular space allows a new reading of the representational greenbelt. What was once a strictly "recreational" zone, now reads a somewhat political language, with clear demarcations of a powerful message that seeks to exhibit a spatial dialogue – both spatially, and symbolically.

A year after the official inauguration of the monument, a tendered bid to renovate the park was won by a local contracting company known as Al-Kharafi National. In April 2013, Al-Kharafi hired the local consultants, The Associated Engineering Partnership (TAEP) in collaboration with Ricardo Camacho as an international consultant, to renovate the entire park.[271] With only two months to design the park, a proposal was published in May 2013 highlighting the three main zones of the park: 1)Memorial Zone, which included a memorial garden and complex, an underpass to connect the Old city gate with the garden, administration offices, and pedestrian passageways. 2) Ceremonial Zone, which included a seasonal garden space, a ceremonial complex, the constitution monument and the main entrance of the park. 3) Museum Zone, which included an Oasis garden, a "museum garden", and a museum complex (which was zoned for public use, education and research and exhibition space).[272]

This initial scheme revived some of the earlier design proposal for this same site by Alison and Peter Smithson. It is important to note that this site has gone through multiple renovation project proposals in the past decades, however, none of them were actually built. Instead, the space has always been a large green covered open-space, with few paths encircling and cutting across it. Yet, in this proposal, we see an attempt to create some sort of staging of events at the

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[271] Ricardo Camacho.

[272] The Associated Engineering Partnership, "Reconversion Proposal for the Al-Shaheed Garden Park", May 2012, http://248am.com/files/alshaheedconcept.pdf.

center of the park. It is also crucial to note that none of the earlier designs for the Greenbelt park included such a complex set of programs, such that the design overlapped three functions: the institutional (the museum), the infrastructural (the memorial underpass), and the performative (the ceremonial square).

However, during the construction process of the museum, a decision was made to move the Ruler's museum out of the park, into a large open space known as *"Sahat Al-'Alam"*, or Flag Arena.[273] It is also important to note that Sahat Al'alam, was the site where Kuwait celebrated its 25th year anniversary in 1986 and was also the site in which people gathered to celebrate Kuwait's liberation in February 1992.[274] The decision to move the museum outside the park into the Sahat Al-Alam can be seen as a political move to "depoliticize" the garden in order to build up an image for the garden to simply be *a park*. This becomes clearer when the function of the museum is changed from a "ruler's" museum and instead replaced with a "habitat" museum. Shortly after, another decision was put forth to make the flag pole retractable, to have the ability to raise the pole only during celebratory events and descend it otherwise.[275] Eventually, however, the pole stood high up and was never retractable, instead the flag that is raised on non-celebratory days was the flag of the Logo of the park. Finally, the official opening of the park took place on March 3rd, 2015, with a grand celebration of fireworks and lightshows.[276]

It is also important to know that, for the first time in history, an Amiri funded public garden has been handed to a local non-profit organization promoting the engagement of the youth known as, *LOYAC*. Now that one of the largest public parks in Kuwait, is being managed and maintained by LOYAC, we see an entirely different approach and vision.

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[273] Ricardo Camacho.
[274] The Flag Arena was given that name on the same day as the 25th year celebrations took place, the erection of a large flag pole in that site gave it its name. National Days/National Ways: Historical, Political, and Religious Celebrations around the World, 131-138.
[275] Ricardo Camacho.
[276] To view the grand opening of the Park, please visit Mishal Al-Khaodair, "Grand Opening of Al-Shaheed Park," YouTube, March 04, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UCfm--PaPtw.

Park Rules and Regulations

- No smoking
- No littering
- Skateboards, skates, scooters or recreational wheelers are permitted around the park in the designated walking trail
- Bringing outside food, beverage or any glass items is not allowed
- No pets allowed inside the park
- Barbecuing & picnicking inside or around the park is not allowed
- Please do not destroy, deface or remove any part of any building, sign or structure, structure equipment, paths or amenities
- Please do not destroy or deface, remove, deface or mutilate any tree, shrub, plant or plant part, soil, mineral or geologic feature
- Sleeping inside the lake and fountains is not permitted
- Sitting on railings or climbing on any part of the buildings is not allowed
- Usage of Amplified sounds without permit is not allowed
- Engaging in or soliciting business or commercial activity within a park or facility requires authorization from the Parks management
- Distribution, placement, posting or erection of bills, notices, poster or advertising device or matter of any kind requires approval of the Park Management
- Any film or photography requiring equipment or exclusive use of an area requires approval of the Park Management please refer to the media form in our website
- All Events conducted in the park require approval from the Park Management

Considerations

- Please be considerate of guests who are visiting for a quiet individual experience
- Please keep your park **CLEAN & GREEN** so that others may enjoy its beauty
- Please supervise your children at all times to ensure their safety
- Please do not leave your belongings unattended - the park management is not responsible for lost items
- Please note that sleeping on grass is not allowed except in the Circle of Peace Amphitheater and around the Constitution Monument. Balls, strollers, skates and bicycles are not allowed on the grass except for wheelchairs
- Please note that the Park management has the right to issue visitors who violate the rules & regulations of Al-Shaheed Park to leave the park immediately
- Please note that the park management reserves the right if necessary to stop picture taking and video recording

Al-Shaheed Park Plan, separated into four zones, each holding symbolic monuments

Today, the park design has evolved into a large luxurious park beautifully designed with landscaped vegetation and elaborated paths connecting the major sites of the park [Figure 60]. Three paths are designed to help you navigate the park, the first is the celebratory path, known as the Amiri Path, the second is a jogging track that wraps around the park, and the third is a visitors' path directed by a constraint windy path. These three paths, inspired by Alison and Peter Smithson's "walkable city" proposal for the Mat building, guides the visitor accordingly around the major monuments, sculptors, programs, and sites. According to a recent article in *Domus*, the park, just like the waterfront project of the 80's, is an attempt to reconnect recreational activities with the outdoors:

> Shaheed Park embodies the same spirit: it is not a natural park, which would have been too far removed from local tradition. It is a geometric garden that balances lawn and stone surfaces as well as recreational areas and specific functions linked to the nearby urban center. It is a direct response to the growing need for outdoor places for social gatherings, for public spaces that are a better and more appropriate alternative to business galleries and shopping malls.[277]

As a result, with the management of LOYAC, the Al-Shaheed park now hosts an array of programs ranging from Arts & Culture to community based programs, educational programs, and a health and fitness program. An online website has been setup, with an updated list of events everyday. However, if one needed to host an event or carry out any activity there, an official application form needs to be submitted and approved accordingly.

Although the design is highly appreciated by the general public, much of the criticism of the people complained about how restrictive, regulated, and supervised the space was [Figure 60]. For example, upon entering the park, you encounter a long list of rules prohibiting the 'misuse' of the park restraining the following:

1. No smoking. 2. No littering 3. Skateboards, skates, bicycles or recreational scooters are

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[277] Fabbri, Roberto. "Al Shaheed Park: Rampart Gardens and Geometrical Green Dunes Weave Paths and Collective Memories in the Project Lead by Ricardo Camacho and StroopLandscape That Revamps a Large Part of the Green Belt in Kuwait City." DOMUS. April 23, 2015. http://www.domusweb.it/en/reviews/2015/04/23/al_shaheed_park____kuwait.html.

permitted around the park in the designated cycling track. 4. Bringing outside food, beverage or any glass items is not allowed. 5. No pets allowed inside the park. 6. Barbecuing or picnicking inside or around the park is not allowed 7. Please do not destroy, deface, or remove any part of any building, sign, sculpture, structure, equipment, paths or entrances. 8. Please do not destroy, cut, break, remove, deface or mutilate any tree, shrub, plant or plant part, rock, mineral, or geological feature. 9. Stepping inside the lake and fountains is not permitted. 10. Sitting on railings or climbing on any part of the buildings is not allowed. 11. Usage of Amplified sounds without permit is not allowed. 12. Engaging in or soliciting business or commercial activity within a park or facility requires authorization from the Park's management. 12. Distribution, placement, posting or erection of bills, notices, paper or 13. Advertising device or matter of any kind requires approval of the Park Management. 14. Any Film or photography requiring equipment or exclusive use of an area requires approval of the Park Management please refer to the media form in our website. 15. All Events conducted in the park require approval from the Park Management.[278]

The newly renovated Al-Shaheed Park envisions its role "To be the leading platform that redefines the importance of Land, History & Culture."[279] With a stunning display and crafted organization of space, the park operates more like an "open-air Museum" than an actual urban park. It is not a surprise to witness a space -that has historically been reserved for "leisure and recreation", and has been theoretically understood as a space to keep society and the working class busy- becomes the grounds to communicate a clear message, represented through a comprehensible display of nationalists' elements and monuments [Figure 61]. Although the park isn't fully controlled by the state, it does give people enormous satisfaction in different ways.

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[278] As listed in the General Rules and Regulations section on the "al-Shaheed Park Events Form", Al Shaheed Park, https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1jz2cf9jjQCIBR4hJViO57LEbDt8IZqXHCVYJPGHpm5E/viewform.
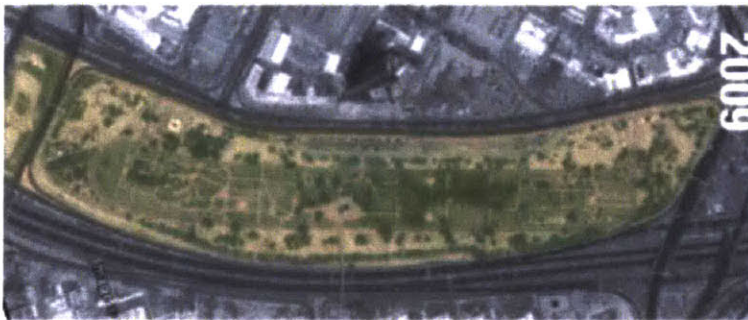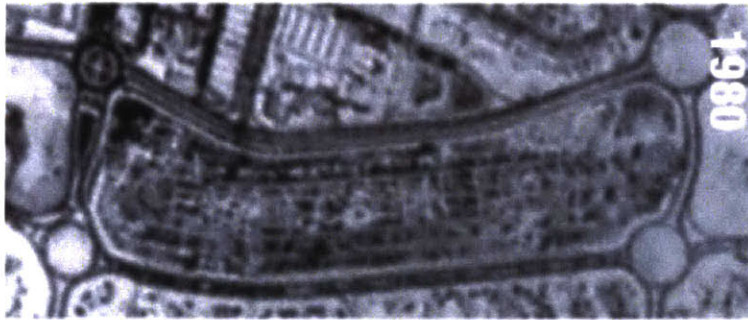[279] "Park Happenings," Al Shaheed Park official website, 2015, http://alshaheedpark.com/parkhappenings/.

Figure 61. Al-Shaheed Transformation 1967-2015

146

2013

Al-Shaheed Park, with new constitution center at the center, project started 2012, completed 2013

2014

2015

Figure 61. Al-Shaheed Transformation 1967-2015

147

Conclusion

This multi-scale analysis of the socio-political and spatial development of public parks, demonstrates how the state-citizen dialectics contribute to defining and redefining spatial relations [Figure 66]. The dialectic process between the state's politically-motivated spatial interventions and the citizens social-spatial tactics reveal a similar approach in the spatial alteration of the public parks. Therefore, the multi-scalar developments of park reveals how these spaces act as transformative spaces that have been created and manipulated by both local social initiatives and the state. In fact, these parks actually contribute to the larger urban dialogue and possess a strong reciprocal relationship that ties the public to the state, and vice-versa.

Throughout this chapter, I have demonstrated how these "public" spaces have transformed from a state-controlled image-based space, in which the state's concern focused on the image-ability of the space more than its usability, to a socially engaging space that called for multiple dynamics to occur. Even though there were two parallel histories, it is clear that once a space is appropriated (either by the state or the citizens) these spaces become charged by symbolic appropriations that are in themselves spatial.

It is evident that the state-based tactics, employed rituals of nationalist sentiments through the construction of symbolic architectural objects, to redefine socio-spatial relations between the state, the citizens, and the city. Most importantly, the government learned to adopt tactics from smaller social movements, through re-appropriating the same spaces, but at a much larger scale. Thus, the process of redesigning one of the largest city parks, known as Al-Shaheed Park, illustrates the government's spatial response through the construction of large infrastructural urban projects to control and supervise their activities.

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Figure 66. Park Design Timeline
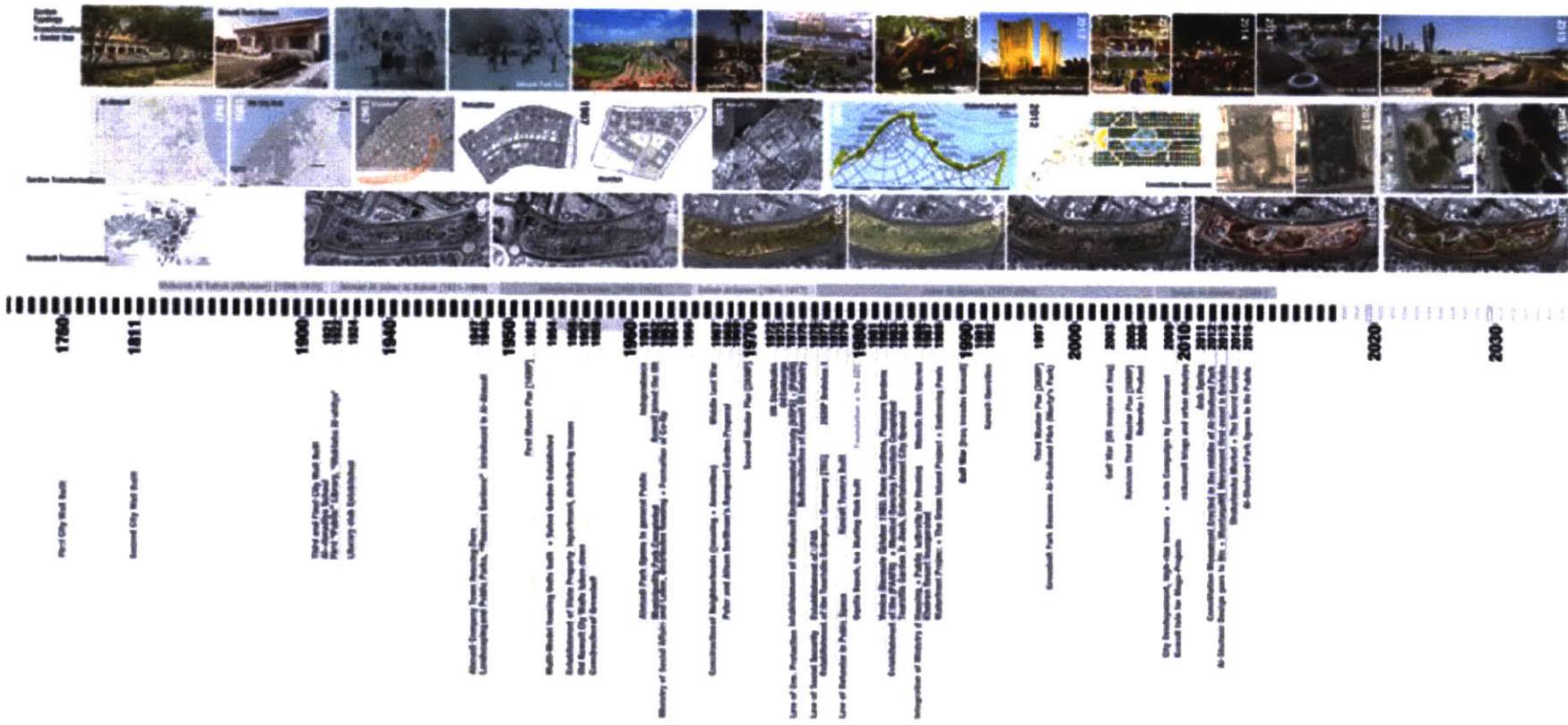
Chapter 4 | Conclusion

Since its independence in 1961, Kuwait's spatial growth has emphasized the development of "modern" urban configurations calling for large infrastructural projects. The period in which Kuwait witnessed its nascent urban modernity was spatially driven by political intentions, with hopes of socio-economic growth and sustenance. A strong British presence, prior and post oil discovery, dominated this spatial production, which resulted in a complete reshaping of the social, cultural, and economic structures that were in place. This desire for modernity brought with it new spatial typologies, such as public parks and civic squares, which were charged with the desire to transmit a certain image internationally, but locally were employed as tools of political and social engagement. Thus, this thesis aims to highlight the spatial development of Kuwait by looking at the dynamic dialectics between the state and its citizens. I demonstrated that public space is a space of contestation that is a matter of concern to multiple players within the urban landscape of Kuwait. Additionally, I argued that conception of public space is constantly shifting within a reciprocal process of socio-political and spatial maneuvering of the different spheres of communication: ideological, virtual, and spatial.

This study has attempted to convey a new reading of the socio-spatial politics of public space in Kuwait. To understand the larger consequences of spatial production, this thesis aimed to trace back the spatiality of two varying movements in order to extract the politically spatial motives and social behaviors that, as a result, imposed some form of material and symbolic meaning onto these spaces. By looking at two different case studies, this thesis demonstrates how the urban form becomes a readable manuscript of overlapping historical, social, and political narratives.

First, by looking at the dynamic relationship between the state and the trajectory of political dissent movements since 1938, we start to comprehend a destructive process imposed on these civic spaces in relation to the constrained relationships between state and society because of people's strong political demands. Second, by looking at the trajectory of recreational spaces as their own typology, we can see how it is actually not impossible to have

a constructive relationship between what could be read as "civic" spaces and recreation areas such as public parks. In fact, this constructive relationship unfolds in a different trajectory than the first political case and becomes the prospective space that the government attempts to re-claim, as was the case for Al-Shaheed Park. Through the process of constructing the largest urban park in Kuwait, we can understand how space carries its own significance and agency, that is used as a tool to re-construct and re-establish some sort of relationship between the state and its citizens. These spatial dialectics, in fact, speak more clearly to the Kuwaiti citizens than to the seventy percent non-Kuwaiti residents, who also use that space but might not read this political language or feel this state-dialectic speaking to them.

Studying Al-Shaheed Park illustrates the politics within public parks wherein the two narratives presented earlier converge to reach a somewhat "common ground." However, I posit that the very act of the state to redevelop Al-Shaheed Park introduced symbolic objects that superficially stage Kuwait's history (such as the circle of peace, the telescopic flag pole, the constitution monument, and what was once a "ruler's museum" which stands today as a "habitat" museum). [Figure 62]. These elements, I would argue, introduced functions and monuments that began to speak a political language, rather than the typical language of aesthetics for a recreational park.

The redevelopment of Al-Shaheed was a relatively successful means not only to appropriate the activities of small-scale social activities, but also to put them in close proximity to the statist political and celebratory sites in a beautifully complex and integrative design [Figure 63]. Additionally, it also had the effect of staging a state-ism in a kind of neighborhood scale, located spatially in between the two: the politically charged sites of the city and the suburban "social" spaces. Al-Shaheed is situated as a buffer– a transitory-space [Figure 64]. Although Al-Shaheed does stand out in terms of scale and effort, being a project funded by the ruler's financial office but the first project managed by a local non-profit, it still presents a highly

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Figure 62. Al-Shaheed Park elements

Constitution Monument

Circle of Peace

Figure 62. Al-Shaheed Park elements

Telescopic Flagpole, Designed to be raised during events.

The Memorial area

Figure 63. Al-Shaheed Park vs. The Secret Garden

Al-Shaheed Activities
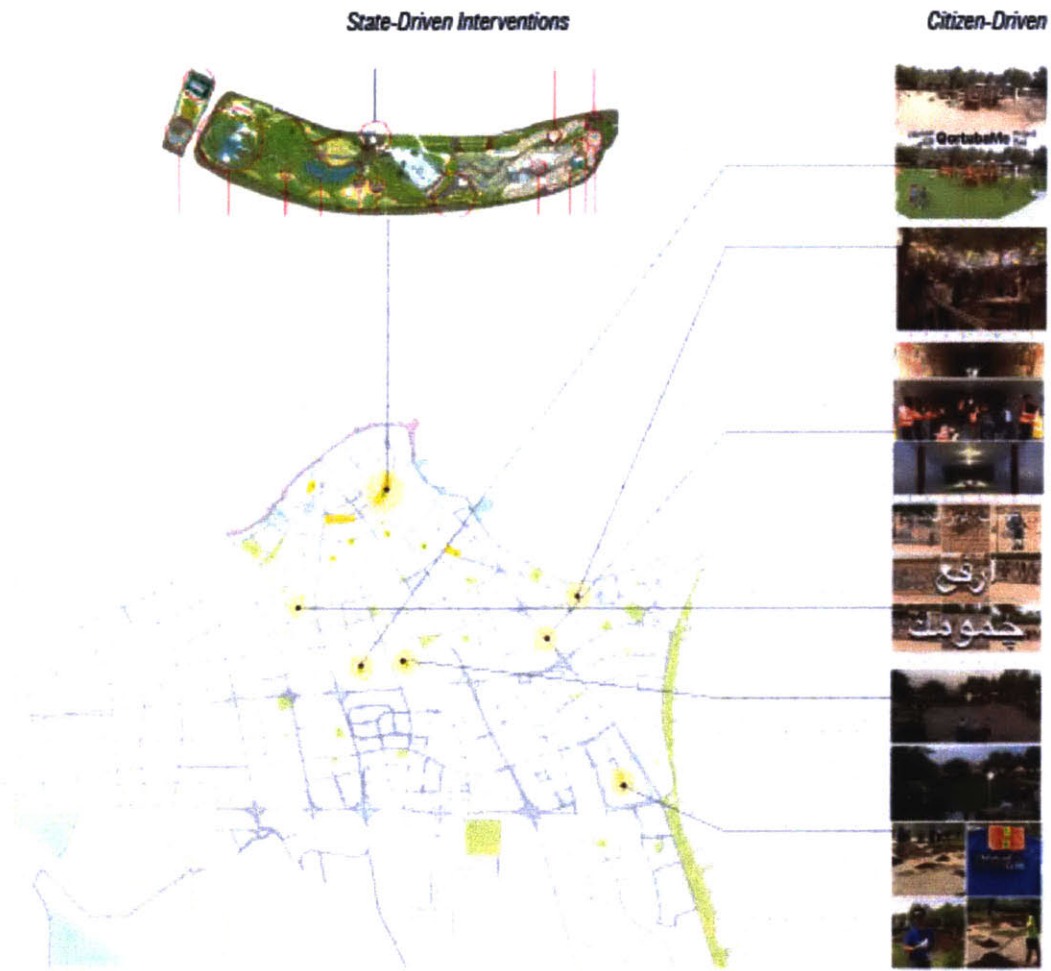
MantaqaME and The Secret Garden Activities

State-Driven Interventions

Citizen-Driven

Figure 64. Al-Shaheed vs. Citizen-driven initiatives urban interventions

restrictive space that limits not only physical movement, but also what one is allowed and not allowed to do.

Al-Shaheed park offers a space in which the two models, the political and the social, are woven together. It functions as a means to think about how the process of spatial production between the state and the citizen takes place, showing how the physicality of space (either by design or artifact) becomes the means by which communication happens within such a restrictive body of politics. In a city-state where political parties are illegal, social movements monuments and celebrations are used instead to "speak" to multiple entities. Space thus becomes the medium of exchange.

What we are left with is the state's continuous ability to operate through spatial and legal restraints, building larger and grander projects that attempt to communicate with its citizens. They are designed to allow for certain events to happen, with a constant reminder that these spaces function as a control space for controlled publics [Figure 65]. This is in itself a reflection of the lack of political discourse wherein a large body attempts to work within restrictions and recreate this kind of process at multiple scales.

Yet, it is important to highlight that people do have their own motivation for change, and thus spaces are appropriated for political dispute over democracy or power. If we can understand how public space is formed through these polemics, we can see that there is a more complex order of operation which is not being studied nor applied in the larger design schemes within Kuwait, such as the prime example of Al-Shaheed Park.

I would argue that the state is anticipating some of the lessons from history, but it still lacks a key component of citizen agency, which has its own force. If a partial lesson learned about the nature of citizen voice and agency is still not fully comprehended, then it may be predicted that Al-Shaheed will become a site of citizen action. What is clear though, is that the structural system needs to encompass a citizen-state model and take it more seriously, in order to account for and invite a further dialectic type of encounter in future spaces.

Figure 65. Al-Safat Sculptural Element vs. Al-Shaheed Park Constitution Monument
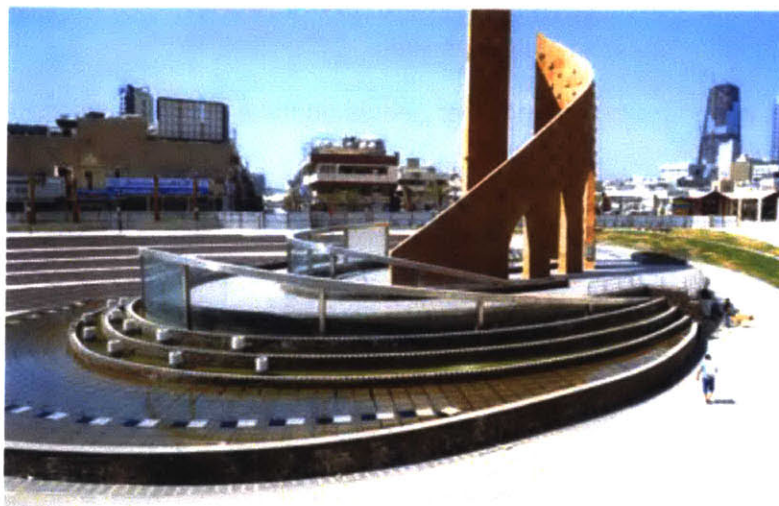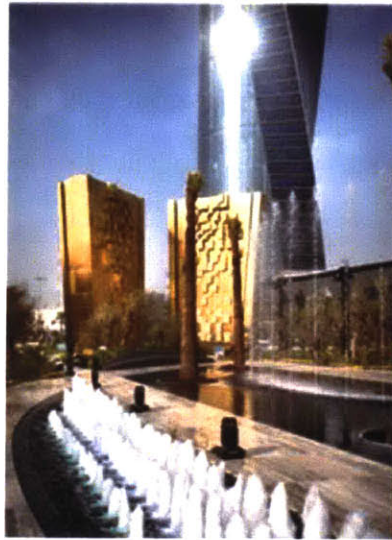
Although the sites that have been selected for the purpose of this study might vary in scales and significance, they are nonetheless significant for various reasons that I will demonstrate in the following sections.

Theoretical Insights

This thesis attempts to stress the overlooked category of "citizen" space when dealing with discourse on public space. Within the context of the Arabian Gulf region generally, and in Kuwait specifically, the tie that binds the citizen to the state is extremely relevant for a spatial reading of public space. By looking at a citizen-state dynamic, we begin to see that there is a powerful socio-spatial dialogue that is reflected in and manifested onto public space. However, the citizen-state dynamic also highlights that there is a diluted engagement between the other seventy percent of the society at large, which is both problematic and beneficial to the respective actors at play.

By precisely focusing on state-citizen engagements, this study sheds light on a specific dynamic that captures a strong affinity to public space. Yet, focusing strictly on this dynamic might also be problematic because it is limited to a specific reading of public space, which leaves out a large number of people who are not part of the state-citizen structure. Therefore, further research should be able to situate this dynamic within the larger societal context in order to fully grasp the complex spatial structures that play out throughout Kuwait.

Finally, this thesis not only assumes that this (somewhat theoretical) social configuration exists; it also traces the configuration spatially throughout the development of the overall design of the urban form of Kuwait in order to understand the value of the mechanisms of these dynamics and recognize their possibilities and constraints.

Citizens' Agency:

The notions of citizenship come with a strong social status that can be a powerful tool for generating some sort of change. Regardless of citizens' motives, it is clear that we can read the power dynamics through strong social and political forces that demonstrate the cognizance of the citizens' position within collective action. I have demonstrated that throughout history, the politics have exacerbated the positioning of the citizen as a way to instill convictions of nationalism and identity, which have now become tools used for multiple claims against the state. However, these claims are not in unison, but carry multiple messages, employ different methods, have different aims, and are directed toward various entities.

Therefore, this study posits that people do have motivation, but, if you understand how public space is formed through these dialectics, it will become clear that there is a higher order of operation often overlooked throughout literature. Yet, to fully grasp this order of operation, further research on the varying degrees of power that are imbedded within the internal composition of citizens in Kuwait, and society at large, is needed.

Nonetheless, this thesis demonstrates how citizens play an impactful role in the shaping of cities at large, and on different forms of public space at multiple scales. There are certain habits that citizens engage in, which are usually played out according to a specific process, that consequently form the city. With that in mind, how do you prevent political unrest when these actions become a practice, either through a social or physical structure? Can we begin to read these smaller informal, yet impactful, processes in a manner that reveals that they have the same modality of design— they are intentional, they have limits, and they have tools.

State's Agency

Throughout this thesis, I have presented the uneasy relationship between "citizens" and the state; however, I would like to highlight that the state is in struggle with its citizens more than with its non-citizens, whom the state has much greater and simpler control over. Yet, the citizen-state tensions are not always in competition with each other (which as I have demonstrated is sometimes constructive, other times obstructive), but are sometimes in competition with themselves. Although the State might not have an autonomous structure (as we have seen with the conflicting perceptions from the different ministries in chapter 3), it possesses an internal complex structure that is in itself in conflict, which becomes problematic for any future developments. Therefore, the tension is not only found at a citizen-state structure, but the state's composition as a whole has its own antithetical frictions which demonstrates a more complex issue.

To complicate this relationship even more, when we introduce the "Amiri Diwan" as an independent entity with a slightly stronger authority in parallel to the conflicting complex structure of the state, we can start to understand how these conflicts can benefit the "Amiri Diwan" as it has the ability to bypass these tensions and work under the "Amiri" office to get things done. (This was the case for reclaiming Al-Shaheed Park and transforming the typical organizational and managerial structure of public spaces.) With that in mind, can we still perceive these spaces, managed and constructed by the Amiri Diwan, as spaces for a socio-spatial dialogue? Or do they propose a "one-way" communication, in which the socio-spatial dialogue is lost? My findings suggest that these spaces do provide some function and value to society at large, but they are limited and indicative of the ways design is used as a powerful tactic of communication.

Spatial Agency:

This thesis demonstrates a complicated spatial relationship that is embodied in each site in the two cases presented. It is within the agency of the space that multiple dialectics are created. On one hand, the internalized significance of space in the political movement did not have any physical implications, but the spaces that were being claimed carried powerful symbolic value. The fact that new symbolic spaces were produced by virtue of a political gathering will resonate within the space itself, no matter what physical alterations the spaces face. On the other hand, because of the transformative potential of park typologies and their inherent materiality, it was easier to manipulate and excavate the ground as a whole. The spatial composition of this specific typology, made out of soil and grass, allows for the physical alteration of the site, which most likely will always be a temporary situation.

Considering the typologies of the two spaces, this thesis demonstrates that different types of spaces are bound to have distinct significance for varying claims from both the citizens and the state. Thus, the physical spatial aspects of each space enable certain spatial dialectics – from both the citizens and the state– that manifest onto the physicality (or symbolic value) of the space, while at the same time it also constrains them in multiple ways, allowing for continuous transformations, destructions, and construction of the same spaces.

In order to negotiate the diverse socio-political claims, new spaces and forms of representation are necessary to consider the overlapping allegations. The physicality of public spaces is necessary to render the social, economic, political, and cultural concerns of both the society and the state. Thus, space becomes the repository of citizenship in relation not only to the nation, but also to the city, with a great emphasis on spatial dimension.

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Socio-Spatial Dialectics and Dynamics in Movements:

By looking at two different social movements, we understand how each case used social media and the so-called 'public sphere' to disseminate their ideas virtually, alter the space physically, and pursue a political rhetoric ideologically. Throughout this thesis, I touch upon the ways in which each movement utilized each of these spheres– the virtual, physical, and ideological– to disseminate their messages and claims. That was done in order to show that despite authoritative laws and regulations, these two movements carve out new spatial demarcations that allow for the participation of the citizens within each of these three spheres with the hopes of generating some change.

Although these communicative networks are essential in galvanizing action, it is the physical appropriation of the urban space that has rendered the visibility of these movements. The importance of the physicality of the space for both movements was crucial in bringing about a message for social and political change. Their appearance and use of urban spaces developed new transformative spatial structures that did not exist during the post-war period in Kuwait. Reviving the city streets and squares rekindled the physical relationship of the protestors with the city streets. Similarly, the physical appropriation of the garden structures re-established a sense of community within each neighborhood.

The physicality of the urban form created greater interaction among citizens, volunteers, and protestors. In fact, the physical interaction amongst users of both movements generated new symbolic meanings to the palpable urban form. At the same time, these actions restored a sense of unity within the process of spatial practice of each movement. Whether through protesting and walking the streets and squares, or through renovating public parks, both actions demonstrated a collective effort in bringing new social and physical meanings to the political and physical landscape of the city.

I demonstrate how each of the movements that I have chosen to study claim public space to pursue their actions. Claiming public spaces is an act of appropriating physical spatial sites; it is done within the means of creating alternative visions, hopes for a change, and evidently redefines the symbolic meaning of a place. At the same time, the state also carries its own socio-political agendas when it chooses to alter specific kinds of spaces which already have a historic/emotional/physical relationship to the citizens. Thus they become spatially evident and relevant to each participant in this dialectic.

Despite each movement's different aims and challenges, both the Orange Movement discussed in chapter two and the community-led initiatives discussed in chapter three were acting against the established rules and regulations of the state and the municipality. These actions, however, are a result of social frustrations because of insufficient services and a sense that the government was negligent in up keeping its social responsibility, whether that be political democracy or physical maintenance of urban forms. It is important to note that both of these movements pointed out and claimed things that the government fell short of providing. For the Orange Movement, the Dignity of the Nation march not only pointed out the corruption within the parliamentary and legislative structure, but also highlighted the discrepant authoritative claims. Similarly, the community-led initiatives' actions implicitly challenged the governing bodies within each neighborhood by tacitly taking deliberate actions, regardless of large contractual sums made for up-keep of these gardens. However, it is important to note that these movements did not arise out of crisis situations, like other Arab Spring eruptions, but were a result of social and political discontent. Most of the protesters live a high-standard of life with access to free education, housing, and healthcare— tools that distinguish the benefits of a citizen from the rest of society. Yet, the larger concern that arises from this practice of dissent demonstrates that the relationship between the state and the citizens is uneasy. What will be the result of any future societal unrest, or change in citizen-state relation?

Spatial Processes and Relations:

Furthermore, it is crucial to re-instate the fact that the different constituencies, or the different neighborhoods, have varying privileges. This is not to say that the existence of space itself produced the social interactions that broke down social barriers, but that each movement developed within a reciprocity of certain privileges, specific obligations, and varying spatial results. For the Orange Movement, with a strong anti-governmental politicians' support and a wide range of participants from a range of constituencies around Kuwait, appropriating Al-Erada was distinctive to their aims and challenges directed towards the parliament and the greater political structure. This main site is crucial in understanding that space is not neutral, especially since the site was "allowed as a site for transgression" from the government itself. This is to show that the government made a certain distinction that allowed for specific transgressions on certain days, but once these transgressions progressed to take over a big part of Shari' Al-Khaleej, they were immediately stopped through violent means. On the other hand, the community-driven initiatives had the advantages of appropriating smaller community spaces within each neighborhood, directly challenging the PAAFR and the partnering corporations in charge of maintaining these parks. The MantaqaMe Movement was subtle enough that they were able to carry on the renovation of these parks regardless. In fact, the privileges of working at that smaller scale with the community residence themselves allowed for their activities to continue and expand to other neighborhoods without interference from the government or any authority. However, if they did want to continue their activities elsewhere, as in Al-Shaheed, they would not be able to do so.

The continuous refractions back and forth between society and the authority reveals a certain relationship that ideologically exists and manifests itself physically on the urban form. It is through these interactions that space is produced and valued. Yet, the government has the ability to transform spaces of socio-political discontent into larger infrastructural projects that are usually geared towards consumerist or manufactured "cultural" projects that mask the historical socio-

spatial relation that once existed. This can be easily seen in the most contemporary projects of the large-scale renovation of Al-Safat Square, and Al-Shaheed Park, both of which were sites of cultural and political importance within the past decades. We recognize that public space is not only a container for politics, but also the space to reinstate spatial and political agency for the broader desire for change. This brings a new understanding of reading the contemporary city of Kuwait, and carries a larger concern in how we read these contested sites. How can we perceive these spaces as new spaces with new definitions and new boundaries? How can we, as designers, think critically about design within such a controlled structure of governance?

Studying the state-citizen relationship illuminates how a singular case can contribute to readings of public spaces that differ from the principal theorizations that are found in the overall literature. This provides a nuanced understanding of the factors that contribute to the production of space, not only in Kuwait, but to our larger understanding of how the relationship of space and power needs to change. A lens like this will help us comprehend and study the lack of public spaces in other places, and show that underscoring certain calibrations in the socio-spatial and political dynamics will demonstrate that there are state-accommodations and citizen-appropriations that will take place. One must read these dialogical aspects in order to dismantle the neutral view of public space as simply scenic or functional in favor of a far more political history that is also a spatial history.

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Biography |

Muneerah Alrabe holds a B.Arch. from Syracuse University and has professional experience in the field of architecture and design in Kuwait and Germany. Her interests lie in the intersection of politics, sociology, economics and design in the Arab World. She currently pursued a Master of Science in Architectural Studies in the Department of Architecture, under the generous support of the Ministry of Higher education in Kuwait to study at the Aga Khan Program of Islamic Architecture (AKPIA) in MIT.

As a student of AKPIA, she has conducted research on the transnational power relations of the Gulf Cooperative Council's interconnection grid as a tool for regional power and nation building. In addition, she has investigated the current and past socio-political movements in Kuwait to understand their impact on urban form and urban life within Kuwait and the Arabian Gulf. Muneerah, along with two of her AKPIA fellows, was in charge of a Student-led colloquium following this years AKPIA's Symposium titled, New Frontiers in Gulf Urbanism.

Muneerah was also the publication coordinator and editor for a research publication that accompanied an exhibition for the Kuwaiti Pavilion at the 2016 Venice Biennale entitled "Between East and West: A Gulf". She hopes to continue her interest in the contestation of the use of public space and continue her investigation focusing on the intersection of design and research within the wonderful city of Kuwait.