HISTORY, MEMORY, AND NARRATIVES OF THE PAST AND FUTURE

The new souks in Kuwait

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Introduction

Worldwide, post-war modernization in the outward form of 'urban renewal' often included wholesale demolition of neighbourhoods, a policy later regretted because of the loss of historic fabric. While the typical mid-twentieth-century world view focused on the future, a common response to twenty-first-century globalism in countries going through change is a growing interest in past histories. In the case of Kuwait, the loss of its inner-city housing was unfortunate because its historic urban heritage provided guidance, not necessarily to recreate the original but to preserve an understanding of the holistic and unified lifestyle of the vibrant pre-oil era.

Recent years witnessed the growth of literature in preservation studies throughout the Gulf area, one that reflects and is driven by an interest in the identity, sense of place, and meaning of architecture.¹ However, the recent demolition of the Al-Sawaber complex, a 500-unit residential development in Kuwait's inner city, designed by Canadian architect Arthur Erickson, demonstrated the surprising vulnerability of a heralded modern structure of the 1970s economic 'Golden Era' of social and environmental change. To many people, preserving a segment of that project would have been an appropriate addition to Kuwait's historical narrative, one that could transmit the optimism and spirited vision of that progressive decade. Muhannad Albaqshi, assistant professor at the College of Architecture, Kuwait University, notes:

One may regret that the demolitions of the 1950s were not more carefully handled; however, they did usher in a new era and spirit. Kuwait City is not a place frozen at a particular moment in history. The history of Kuwait's urbanity continues to unfold, but the memory of the old city will always be there guiding the future.²

A total erasure of a 1970s building on a site of an earlier demolished *medina*, or old town, is a second erasure of historical urban heritage, and such a loss challenges the relationship between past and present. Rising land values in Kuwait's inner city have increased the demand for new and larger structures that entails the threat to demolish urban fabric built during the latter half of the twentieth century. The situation has spurred the architectural and preservation community to research the 'memory images' of the city's pre-oil past, before the 1950s modernization. In addition, the community aims to draw attention to late twentieth-century structures, now also vulnerable due to physical deterioration or to the perception by some of their lack of cultural meaning. This can play out in the transmission of culture from one era to the next by consciously or unconsciously designating buildings for either preservation, restoration, rehabilitation, adaptive reuse, or demolition.

Kuwait's written framework to protect its built heritage is the Law of Antiquities (1960), requiring a property to be at least 40 years old as part of its classification process.³ In the United States, the country where I work as an architect, a similar, commonly accepted threshold within the field of historic preservation is the '50-year rule'. Properties that have achieved significance and are more than 50 years old are generally considered eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Selection standards such as these to protect properties have contributed to a growing awareness of mid- to late twentieth-century modern architecture. Less explicit reasons why buildings of this era may capture our interest include a natural response to increasing globalization that tends to standardize and commodify design worldwide. In the early years of the International Style, architectural schools embraced the Bauhaus legacy of the functionalist approach to architecture, and it was thought conceivable that someday buildings everywhere might be the same with regional differences handled by increasing reliance on new technology, that is, climate control and structural innovations. Since then it has become widely accepted that a building's function should also recognize and respond to regional differences, not only for economic efficiency and sustainability but also so that the language of forms – the expression of individualized dwelling units, spaces for social gathering, or even the shape of windows in a façade – can correlate with established cultural and institutional meanings.

An earlier article by the author presented a case study of a building type illustrative of Kuwait's Golden Era: the multi-purpose souk.⁴ The study offered an example of the traditional housing type and ancient souk found in the Old Town, combined in modernist form by The Architects Collaborative (TAC), the firm where the author served as lead design architect for Souk Al-Wataniya project. The present chapter builds on that study, showing how memory can play a part in urban design by forming a reinterpretation of history and by reintroducing traditional Arabic architectural features in contemporary design. How are the layers of past, present, and future defined in the development of urban fabric? As noted by Asseel Al-Ragam, associate professor at the College of Architecture, Kuwait University, "A critical appreciation of history can resurrect old meanings and also generate new ones".⁵ This chapter then also looks ahead with an example of how this building type could be repurposed to extend its useful life to sustainably accommodate the social needs and market demands of the twenty-first century while preserving links to its recent past.

Background

Settled in the early eighteenth century, Kuwait grew from a tradition of fishing, pearling, shipbuilding, and trade. Following the discovery of oil in 1938, the city's rapid environmental transformation

fig.1 Left: 1940s aerial view of pre-oil housing (Source: Kuwait Oil Co. archives. Reuse not permitted). Right: view of inner-city, high-rise development and vacated land (Photo: Edward Nilsson, 2016. Reuse not permitted).

fig.1

of Old Kuwait began after the Second World War and was soon guided by its first master plan in 1951. Led by the British firm Minoprio, Spencely, and Macfarlane, the plan was driven by the needs of transportation access and land-use development. Nearly all of the Old Town's pre-oil era residential district was demolished during the 1950s and 1960s to make way for the new government and commercial structures. ● To achieve this, residents were encouraged through economic incentives to relocate to new suburban villas developed outside the historic inner city.

The resultant erasure of urban fabric for modernization was regretted by many as the promises of new construction did not meet expectations of maintaining their cultural heritage. In response to the loss of the Old Town, the city's Advisory Planning Committee (APC) in 1968 solicited design proposals from four internationally recognized architects and planners to guide major development and expansion that would hopefully restore continuity to Kuwait's urban heritage. BBPR (Banfi, Belgiojoso, Peressutti & Rogers) from Italy; Peter and Alison Smithson from England; Candilis, Josic & Woods from France; and Reima and Raili Pietila from Finland were chosen. Each of the four proposals focused on a different segment of the city, and all were charged with exploring the creation of identity by reconciling architectural form with a wider social and cultural Kuwaiti context. The APC did not wish to recreate the lost city but rather to revitalize the now emptying city centre with new connectedness to its heritage. Georges Candilis noted that, before oil, Kuwait's main urban quality was diversity. There was a close association of the different "functions of the city life" – habitation, commerce, worship, and administration.⁶ These corresponded to the physical integration of houses, markets, mosques, streets, and squares. Each of the four proposals advocated for the expansion of the souk areas and the return of housing to the city centre.

fig.2

1973 BBPR urban design plan of Central Business District showing car parks (P), or 'new souks', and monorail system looped around the Old Souk District (shaded darker gray). Stations marked as open circles by author (Source: Edward Nilsson's personal collection. Reuse not permitted).

The 1951 master plan gave primacy to the automobile over the pedestrian. More than a decade later as the city grew, new proposals projected that up to 44 car parks were needed in the wider Old Town to reduce congestion. The 1968 BBPR proposal focused on the Central Business District (CBD), and their plan was the most detailed of the four proposals. The submittal included a multilevel zoning plan and emphasized a new framework of pedestrian walkways – sheltered from the weather, running north-south between the Dhow Harbour and historic Safat Square – that would link the waterfront with the city centre. The final report with an updated plan was presented in April 1973 showing integrated transportation, land use, and building massing. ●

fig.2

In addition to conservation of the nearby Old Souk District, the BBPR plan indicated a dozen large car parks, or new souks, in the CBD. These were connected via an elevated monorail, linking pedestrian open spaces and a system of primary and secondary roads. The following year, the BBPR plan provided guidance for TAC in the conceptual design of the new souks. Sara Saragoça Soares observes, “The consolidation of urban and architectural values was understood mainly by Kuwait’s rulers as an essential vehicle for preserving social cohesion, attributing and distributing land, and reinventing ancient typologies, like the souk”.⁷ This assortment of such large megastructures created a supporting infrastructure in the CBD by providing space for different uses at basement, ground-floor, and rooftop levels and also by generating potential linkages with later projects in the undeveloped or under-developed parcels between these structures.

Construction of TAC’s new souks

Of the eight car parks constructed during that period, three were designed by TAC: Souk Al-Manakh, Souk Al-Safat, and Souk Al-Wataniya. These structures were called souks for the retail function, which was upgraded to an air-conditioned experience in proximity of the old, traditional open-air souks, or street markets. Moreover, the projects integrated the function of car park and office or residential space. TAC’s first project in Kuwait began in 1968 with the design and construction of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) office building. This project was well-received and led to the Kuwait Investment Co. (KIC) in 1973 to commission the firm to design two of the multi-use souks, Souk Al-Manakh (CBD Area 5) and Souk Al-Safat (CBD Area 9).⁸ Within a year, TAC was retained also by the National Real Estate Co. (NRC) to design two additional buildings of this type, Souk Al-Wataniya (CBD Area 10C) and a fourth design, Souk Al-Watiya (CBD Area 15), a project that was subsequently revised and eventually designed by others.

The three new souk structures were developed under the Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) system. In exchange for constructing the car park (containing an average capacity of 1,000 vehicles), real estate shareholding companies were offered the right to lease out space within the building for a specified period, following which the lease would be transferred back to the municipality or be renewed. The rising value of inner-city real estate at the time gave incentive to the developer to repurpose the spaces if a more favourable lease could be obtained for alternate uses.

Souk Al-Manakh's relatively small, constricted, and irregular shaped parcel surrounded by banks and offices suggested a poured-in-place concrete structure, one that would accommodate smaller building elements and variations in the building footprint. The site's proximity to the Old Souk District also suggested a synergy between the historic souk and the commercial shops on the ground-floor and mezzanine level of the new souk. Each level of the building had its own distinct use: the programme's 600 parking spaces were distributed within the two basement levels and three levels above the shops, and the sixth (rooftop) level was designated for Kuwait Investment Co.'s own corporate offices.

A significant feature of the building from an urban design perspective is a structural provision to accommodate the city's proposed monorail system, which would pass through the building with a station at one of the upper parking levels, linking Souk Al-Manakh to the surrounding financial centre and other parts of the inner city. This feature demonstrated how the car parks and other elements of the BBPR plan, such as the Old Souk District, were meant to be integrated utilizing an inner-city transit loop. ● Unfortunately, the monorail system has yet to be built. Another example of the expectation of continued growth then that did not come to fruition occurred shortly after completion of the building in the late 1970s. At the request of the client, the upper of the two basement levels had sufficient space and headroom enabling it to be repurposed into an unofficial stock market. The market's subsequent collapse in 1982 triggered widespread economic loss, thus giving the event the moniker "Souk Al-Manakh stock market crash".⁹

fig.2

In contrast to the cast-in-place framing system of Souk Al-Manakh, the larger and more regular shaped footprint of Souk Al-Safat was an appropriate application of the locally available Freyssinet system. This elegantly simple, structural framing system is comprised of prefabricated, prestressed concrete I-beams spanning approximately 18 metres between cast-in-place concrete girders, the typical distance needed for column-free parking decks. Connecting each single or paired I-beam, a five-centimetre-thick, precast concrete slab is placed as a form to receive a five-centimetre, finish concrete topping. In addition to its long span, the importance of this system was its cost-effectiveness and speed

fig.3 Souk Al-Wataniya – section. TAC working drawing modified by author, n.d.
(Source: Edward Nilsson's personal collection. Reuse not permitted).

of erection. The 900 parking spaces are located totally within Souk Al-Safat's two basement levels. Shops occupy the grade and mezzanine level, and a smaller three-storey office block sits above the shops. ●

fig.3

The largest of the three souks, Souk Al-Wataniya, differed from the other two by including 50 residential courtyard units at the roof level in lieu of offices. This rectangular building also utilizes the Freyssinet system except for the rooftop residential units. Here, load-bearing masonry party walls, 4.40 metres on centre and sitting atop doubled-up, prefabricated concrete I-beams, are spanned by steel I-beams and metal roof decking. Except for the ground-floor commercial level, the building's 1,000 parking spaces are distributed throughout all levels of the building, including one of the two residential levels where many residents could drive to and park within metres of their apartment.

Concrete and masonry were the principal building materials utilized for all three buildings. The exteriors are comprised of large expanses of cast-in-place, 'bush-hammered' (textured) concrete, selected both for durability and for thermal mass to absorb midday heat. Similar to Souk Al-Safat, the two basement levels extend approximately nine metres below grade, at that time well into the water table, requiring a reinforced concrete basement slab more than one metre thick to counter the uplift effect from groundwater pressure. By today's standards, these materials represent a large quantity of embodied carbon energy, which could be a significant factor in evaluating sustainable alternative uses in the future. For flexibility to make future changes in the layout, the shopping levels at grade and mezzanine are subdivided by non-bearing, masonry walls into hundreds of three-by-six-metre shop modules. These are leased in single or multiple modules with mezzanines and often clustered into groupings of similar

product type as in the traditional souk. In observing the historical nature of the souk, Magdy Tewfik, dean of the erstwhile Faculty of Engineering & Technology at the University of Jordan notes, "The souk in its various traditional aspects created a perfect environment for social intercourse and active economic vitality, both of which were the outstanding factors in the Arab city of the past".¹⁰

Souk Al-Wataniya and traditional design elements

In the summer of 1974 the architectural team from TAC and their consulting engineers delivered to the client the final drawings for Souk Al-Manakh and Souk Al-Safat and began research for the two new projects, Souk Al-Wataniya and Souk Al-Watiya. Local impressions and architectural references were observed in the densely packed markets of the Old Souk District; in the clustering of dhows (traditional sailboats) at the old port; in buildings with cementitious exterior finish and internal courtyards; in vernacular residential neighbourhoods on the outskirts of the city, in arched fenestration and other traditional motifs (decorative screens, for instance); and in shaded colonnades and crenellations such as those atop the historic city gates. After touring the nearby, precast concrete plant, the team conferred with colleagues at Pan Arab Consulting Engineers (PACE), the local consulting firm TAC partnered with for all three souk projects, among other projects in the Gulf.¹¹ Meetings were also held with representatives of the fire brigade and municipality to discuss specific requirements, such as which of several possible building codes would be utilized for the projects.

The preliminary sketches for Souk Al-Wataniya reflected a horizontal layering of different uses as suggested by the BBPR 1973 urban design plan previously mentioned. Design decisions were made primarily at TAC's office in Cambridge, Massachusetts; feedback from the client was also part of the process and led to significant modifications to the building's appearance. One such suggestion was that the exterior colonnade contain traditional arched instead of larger rectangular openings as initially proposed. The increased wall area of the arched form would also provide additional shade in the colonnade. To visually integrate the arched forms, narrow slit openings were added just above the arch to provide a limited amount of additional natural light to the upper part of the shaded colonnade and to visually disarm the otherwise load-bearing attribute normally associated with the arched form. This allowed the colonnade façade to appear more as a decorative shade screen and not as a structural wall supporting the building above.

Following initial results of the feasibility study,¹² the preliminary design was presented and approved by the client in the autumn of 1974. The detailed working drawings and specifications were completed by early summer 1975, and the bid

fig.4 Plans of a traditional courtyard house (A) (Source: Mohammed Alajmi. Reuse not permitted), and Souk Al-Wataniya three- and two-bedroom units (B and C), TAC working drawings, n.d. (Source: Edward Nilsson's personal collection. Reuse not permitted).

documents and presentation model forwarded to Kuwait the following November. The existing site prior to construction was a partly unimproved and half-paved parking lot. The dimensional boundaries of the parcel were not clear from the reference surveys obtained from the municipality. As the government owned the building site and surrounding land, slight adjustment of the lot boundary was possible to more readily fit the programme requirements and design. PACE consultants translated TAC's documents into a locally familiar format suitable for bidding and for interfacing with local authorities having jurisdiction. After a lengthy round of pricing proposals, the Korean firm Hanyang Construction Co. was selected as general contractor for the project.

During the early 1960s, a major goal of noted Kuwait municipal planner Saba George Shiber was to see "a significant modern architecture created in the post-oil period by studying the simplicity of the structures erected in the pre-oil era".¹³ Planner Shiber "demanded a planning uprising ... that would resist the widespread development programs that eroded ... traces of the traditional urban fabric".¹⁴ As requested by the client NRC and outlined in the economic feasibility study, Souk Al-Wataniya was to include courtyard residences, perhaps the most common Arabic architectural element. ● The courtyard was an essential space-creating, space-forming feature.

This traditional house-type of the region, in addition to enhancing privacy, regulates the environment by trapping cooler evening air and redistributing it into the house during the daytime. If desired, the front bedroom of the Al-Wataniya apartments could serve as a *diwaniya*, or traditional reception room, accessed from the outside walkway or the private courtyard. ● At the uppermost level of the building, the residences are clustered around a large

Souk Al-Wataniya, schematic layout of upper and lower level residential units. Sixth floor apartments on the left; roof garden apartments on the right (Source: Edward Nilsson's personal collection. Reuse not permitted).

fig.5

gathering space in the form of a *fereej* (a traditional neighbourhood). In a typical *fereej*, 10–12 courtyard houses are grouped around a small, open, semi-public space: the micro-social unit forming a large and extended family.¹⁵ This allows the social life of the neighbourhood to be intimately integrated with the private life of the home.

Other traditional features at Al-Wataniya include a *finā*, *sabat*, *mashrabiyya*, and *liwan*. A *finā* is an approximately one-metre deep area in front of a façade that the owner or tenant had certain rights for using, such as for exterior seating or to expand floor area by adding a cantilevered floor above (*sabat*), as with many of the apartments. A *mashrabiyya*, or open decorative screen, typically used to provide shade or privacy, at Souk Al-Wataniya provides ventilation to the apartment level garage. ● The arch form is incorporated in the windows and also in the colonnade, or *liwan*, which surrounds the building on four sides, protecting from sun and heat and providing open access from surrounding buildings and walkways.

fig.6

The shops are focused around two skylit interior courtyards as large gathering spaces with fountains, similar to the roof-level apartments formed around a landscaped gathering space with fountains. The multilevel zoning concept inherent in the BBPR plan is expressed by the separate residential entrance, a free-standing elevator/stair tower and bridge that bypasses the souk and open parking level to arrive directly at landscaped terraces at the upper two residential levels. This entrance, also requested by the client, offered an option to access the residences directly without going through the busy souk. The separation of the rooftop residences from the souk by the intermediate open parking deck enables the housing to effectively float above in relative spatial and acoustic isolation from below. ●

fig.3

fig.6

Souk Al-Wataniya, 1980s. Above: view of rooftop courtyard units and landscape areas (Source: MIT Visual Collection – Aga Khan Visual Archive, Boston. Reuse not permitted). Below: presentation model with the entrance tower and bridge to upper level shown at the left side of the picture (Source: Edward Nilsson's personal collection. Reuse not permitted).

Memory images, preservation, adaptive reuse

In reflecting on the post-oil cultural environment Suhair Al-Mosully, Iraqi architecture and planning consultant observes:

Kuwaitis managed to dismantle the traditional city and eradicate the memory with which it was associated. In the late 1980s about two-thirds of the city centre was empty. At that time the people and the government realized that their city was missing something they could not identify, something to do with its traditional spirit.... They became sentimental about the lost traditions. Both the memory and nostalgia of the past became important. A three-quarters scale Kuwaiti village was built in the city centre on the seashore; it was built to remind the young generation of their history.¹⁶

The context of Souk Al-Wataniya's site offered an interpretative juxtaposition of the reconstructed low-rise traditional courtyard housing found in the medina with a modern high-rise structure, what later becomes the Liberation Tower (designed 1981, completed 1995) – a powerful symbol and expression of the country's rebound after the Iraq invasion. The Liberation Tower became a precursor of the expanded high-rise development begun a decade later when the municipality greatly increased the allowable floor-area ratio in 2004.

Noted architectural critic Ada Louise Huxtable observed that in preservation planning, "one faces a dilemma peculiar to the very process of preservation: in saving the thing, the thing is lost and a substitute provided; the past is as evanescent and irretrievable as time itself".¹⁷ In searching for the architectural imagery needed for the continuity and cultural heritage of a particular site, a reconstruction of that which came before presents a similar dilemma of interpretation. The US Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties defines reconstruction (unlike restoration, rehabilitation, or renovation) as follows:

The act or process of depicting, by means of new construction, the form, features and detailing of a non-surviving site, landscape, building, structure, or object for the purpose of replicating its appearance at a specific period of time and in its historic location.¹⁸

A reconstructed setting and its narrative may reflect both the visual imagery (tangible heritage) and the underlying lifestyle that defined the character of a particular setting (intangible heritage). The rooftop housing at Souk Al-Wataniya may be viewed through the metaphor of a palimpsest, or memory image, of what previously occupied the site – a present representation of an absent element or feature but layered atop an open parking deck and contemporary souk below. The pre-oil era setting, however, was integrally connected to its surrounding community. Without

that corresponding historical context, the building may be viewed as an isolated and inward-looking structure; and the courtyard housing as a memorial to the former demolished residences that were symbolically lifted from their foundations and transported to the newly formed single-family district of villas south of the old city. This could be interpreted alternatively, however, as both a visual memory image of the past and a precursor of a new building type – one that could reintroduce residential use, along with commercial, cultural, and educational uses in the inner city, for a more holistic, diverse, and vibrant Kuwait.

This latter scenario can be instrumental in narrating the social growth of the city. For example, in describing Beirut's reconstruction after its civil war, professor Caroline Nagel observes:

The city, in this respect, is a text in an ongoing discourse about the shape and meaning of ... nationhood and identity. And like many texts, the built environment is significant not only for what it says, but for what it neglects to say about the past and present.¹⁹

Maya Malas expands that concept by arguing that "the city resembles a multiplicity of overlapping texts, in an on-going process of being written, re-written, modified and erased".²⁰ And perhaps most importantly, professor Andreas Huyssen completes the thought by adding, "At stake in the current history/memory debate is not only a disturbance of our notions of that past but a fundamental crisis in our imagination of alternative futures".²¹ The urban designers in the 1968 APC study mentioned earlier sought re-connection with the city's pre-oil heritage, and their imagined futures continue to evoke discussion on how to make the city legible, particularly at the pedestrian level within an automobile-centred society. In broadly defining alternative futures, Georges Candilis' partner, Shadrach Woods notes, "The goals of urbanism are relatively simple to enumerate [:] the distribution of economic, social, and cultural activities throughout the urban fabric".²²

Unlike the demolition of existing structures and replacement with new construction, adaptive reuse can often provide the economic benefit of reduced construction cost, preservation of historic heritage, and greater sustainability. It is often stated that the 'greenest building is an existing building', given the carbon energy embodied in the process of its production and operating life-cycle. As Shadrach Woods described in the 1960s:

Unfortunately, most futuristic visions of urban life and form do not include any provision for recovery and conversion of the existing built domain, which represents the major investment of materials and labor since the world began. Such a massive investment can hardly be simply ignored or discarded.²³

Though damaged during the 1990 Iraq invasion and substantially repaired, Souk Al-Wataniya's fabric has suffered from neglect and deterioration. Changes of use have already taken place during the four decades since it was built. Shortly after construction, many of the residences were repurposed into offices to obtain higher rents; however, the outward appearance remains a visual link with the setting of Kuwait's pre-oil years. The brief 'residential community', evoking an image of the traditional medina originally on the site before its wholesale demolition, was repurposed into a 'business incubator' through adaptive reuse.

Potential futures

These souks may continue to serve their programmes of offices, shops, and parking indefinitely; however, their interiors are flexible and, indeed, have already adapted to new uses. From a wider perspective, one may look forward and ask, what are the spatial characteristics of a particular building that reflect its heritage and that could also determine its potential alternative futures? Interpreting the past in consideration of the present poses the question of how the useful life of the souks might be more effectively extended through restoration and/or adaptive reuse to protect its tangible and intangible heritage.

As previously noted by Candilis, early Kuwait City was a vibrant mix of functions – a close association of habitation, commerce, worship, and administration. Coincident with the growing interest in the preservation of urban heritage, as an expression of national identity in an increasingly globalized world, is a parallel concern aimed at restoring greater diversity and vibrancy to city centres through the reintroduction of housing and related uses. Contemporary cities throughout the Gulf area, such as Kuwait, are growing with a spate of new mostly isolated, and inward-looking, high-rise office towers. The potential convergence of additional new housing, preservation planning, and the sustainable adaptive reuse of existing structures offers an effective strategy for revitalizing and reconnecting Kuwait's inner city and preserving its historic urban fabric.

Around the time Candilis, Josic & Woods presented their urban design proposal for Kuwait's Old Town to the APC, Woods contributed an article to the *Harvard Education Review* titled "The Education Bazaar" on the subject "Architecture and Education". A long-time critic of isolating formal education from city life, Woods believed that the city itself is the school, college, and university, and to be relevant education requires an urban context: "Where a global viewpoint can be reflected in the education process, urbanism and education come together. Education will become part of the physical milieu".²⁴

Kuwait's masterplan has been extended and revised several times since 1951, the fourth version currently underway

and targeting completion by the year 2040. Among the suggested ideas contained in the first masterplan of 1951,²⁵ and also in BBPR's 1969 proposal *Future Development of the Old City of Kuwait*, was the notion to bring an urban university into the centre of the city. The BBPR study, headed by Professor Ludovico Belgiojoso, was "based on a survey of historic Arab cities from Morocco, Egypt, Syria, Yemen, and examples of Western old town regenerations. The urban design recommendation ... [was to include] an urban university, much like Al-Azhar University in Cairo or Edinburgh University in Scotland".²⁶ This would create a vibrant population of students, bringing in creativity and attracting business, similar to educational campuses in many major cities.

As a recent example, Babson College, an American business school rated highly for its entrepreneurship programme, has an inner-city complement to its main residential campus in several "front on the street" locations: Boston, San Francisco, Miami, and – in the Middle East – Dubai at the International Finance Centre (DIFC). As described on the college's website:

These [in-city campus] spaces provide opportunities for students, alumni, faculty, staff, as well as corporate and nonprofit partners, to learn, gather, collaborate, and innovate through graduate-level courses, special programming, and networking. The classroom and convening spaces are in-city complements to the main residential [campus], extending the ways in which [the] community can both strengthen and leverage the entrepreneurial ecosystem that is flourishing in the city.... [The] drop-in co-working space provides alumni with a place to network, brainstorm, and collaborate right in the heart of the financial district.²⁷

Woods' endorsement of including an educational component within the inner city exemplifies the current trend of Gulf cities in transitioning from carbon-based economies to more sustainable, knowledge-intensive urban development. A branch campus in the former Old Town could be a feasible alternative use within flexible, multilevel structures such as Souk Al-Wataniya, Souk Al-Safat, and Souk Al-Manakh. The latter building's comparatively small and irregular footprint limits the potential area of adaptive reuse without significantly diminishing parking. However, the larger capacity and structural framing system of Souk Al-Wataniya, on the other hand, lends itself into large interior spaces at the ground-floor level and individualized office, classroom, dormitory, or related educational spaces at the upper rooftop level. As noted above, the ground-level and mezzanine commercial floors are currently subdivided by non-structural masonry walls. While the existing souk appears to be economically stable, conveniently serving the local community, the flexible construction system allows adaption into various size spaces as the market may require. At ground-floor

and mezzanine levels, the masonry dividing walls can be removed and areas expanded into numerous 18 m wide x 35 m long spaces, if needed for a larger gathering or assembly space. Similarly, if approximately 175 parking spaces at the upper parking level between the shops and residences (now offices) can be removed (out of the building total of 1,000 spaces), the building could be modified to provide an additional 5,000 square metres of adaptive reuse space, meeting egress and access requirements. Lastly, the roof-level, former apartments could also be expanded into adjacent units as needed for larger classroom or individual studio spaces. Woods observes:

One of the essential goals of architecture and urbanism is to conceive of structures which will make the city more adaptable to necessary and electable changes in function and in the relationships between functions, which must continue to occur. In any urban future, the urban past will play a major role. In this sense, the only possible future lies in the past, i.e., the reuse or continued use of existing investments in construction.²⁸

In today's Kuwait, with the selection of the new Kuwait University Shadadiyah site outside the city centre planned to consolidate seven scattered campuses for 30,000 commuter students by 2025, an in-city satellite branch presence with relevant programmes would broaden the educational experience and revitalize the downtown area. Offering up to 20,000 gross square metres of floor space, adequate parking, proximity to public transportation (bus station), and flexible commercial adjacencies, Souk Al-Wataniya could be repurposed into such a facility.

In conclusion, the 1973 BBPR urban design plan indicating a series of multi-use car parks, or new souks, spread throughout the Central Business District suggested a new building type for Kuwait City, one that would bring together compatible, mixed uses of urban living in a multilevel setting reminiscent of the holistic environment found in earlier eras. Broadly based on the courtyard residences of the medina, Souk Al-Wataniya also offers a memory image of the past during the mid- to late twentieth-century Golden Era of prosperity and change. Today, the goal of many is to sustainably preserve and link such structures and memory images from the past in serving the needs of today and the future. Inner-city parking still remains one of the threads connecting these buildings, however, the souks' substantial construction type and flexible framework can accommodate a variety of compatible uses, such as inner-city housing, cultural centres, or an urban campus for Kuwait University and, in so doing, achieve a more diverse and vibrant inner city of Kuwait.

Notes

- 1 Caline Malek, "Rising Gulf Cities Look to Protect Landmarks", *Arab News*, September 3, 2018, <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1366346/middle-east>.
- 2 Muhannad Albaqshi, "The Social Production of Space: Kuwait's Spatial History" (PhD diss., Illinois Institute of Technology, 2010), 11.
- 3 Adl Alblushi, "To Whom Are We Giving Custody of Our Modern Architecture Heritage", in *Essays, Arguments & Interviews on Modern Architecture Kuwait*, eds. Ricardo Camacho, Sara Saragoça Soares, and Roberto Fabbri (Salenstein: Niggli, 2017), 29–36.
- 4 Edward Nilsson, "Urban Memory and Preservation in Kuwait: A Case Study of Souk Al-Wataniya" (presentation, Society of Architectural Historians annual conference, Glasgow, Scotland, 2017).
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- 7 Sara Saragoça Soares, "Souq Brutal: Kuwait's Modernity and the New Souqs", in *Essays, Arguments & Interviews on Modern Architecture Kuwait*, eds. Camacho, Soares, and Fabbri (Salenstein: Niggli, 2017), 171.
- 8 The Central Business District (CBD) was divided into numbered commercial areas: Area 1 through Area 15 ranging in size from roughly two to ten hectares each. The author and their colleague William Hall were appointed project architects for Souk Al-Manakh (Area 5) and Souk Al-Safat (Area 9), respectively. The design of Souk Al-Manakh was initiated by TAC Associate Basil Hassan in between his frequent trips to Kuwait as liaison with local clients.
- 9 Helen Chapin Metz and the Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, *Persian Gulf States: Country Studies* (Washington, DC: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1994), 70, accessed November 2, 2020, https://www.loc.gov/resource/frdcsdy.persiangulfstate00metz_0/?sp=110.
- 10 Magdy Tewfik, "The Architectural Originality of the Arab Traditional Souk", *Ekistics Journal* 59, no. 354/355 (May/June, July/August 1992): 230–234.
- 11 For additional information on PACE and TAC, see also Michael Kubo's chapter in this volume "Building Identity: Authorship and Transnational Exchange in the Construction of Modern Gulf Heritage".
- 12 Projected conservatively at 12% return with no rent increases over time, and 25% with rent increases.
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- 14 Asseel Al-Ragam, "Representation and Ideology in Postcolonial Urban Development: The Arabian Gulf", *The Journal of Architecture* 16, no. 4 (July 2011): 461.
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- 26 Steven Caton and Nader Ardalan, *New Arab Urbanism: The Challenge to Sustainability and Culture in the Gulf* (Boston: Harvard Kennedy School, Middle East Initiative, 2010), 72.
- 27 Woods, *The Man in the Street*, 35.
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