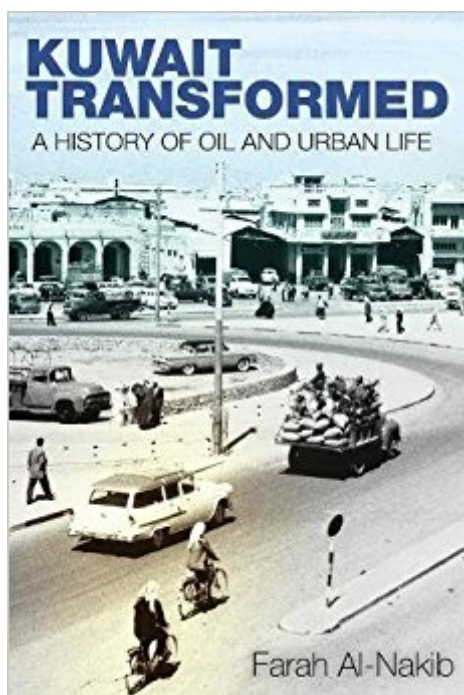


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# Kuwait Transformed: A History Of Oil And Urban Life



## Synopsis

As the first Gulf city to experience oil urbanization, Kuwait City's transformation in the mid-twentieth century inaugurated a now-familiar regional narrative: a small traditional town of mudbrick courtyard houses and plentiful foot traffic transformed into a modern city with marble-fronted buildings, vast suburbs, and wide highways. In *Kuwait Transformed*, Farah Al-Nakib connects the city's past and present, from its settlement in 1716 to the twenty-first century, through the bridge of oil discovery. She traces the relationships between the urban landscape, patterns and practices of everyday life, and social behaviors and relations in Kuwait. The history that emerges reveals how decades of urban planning, suburbanization, and privatization have eroded an open, tolerant society and given rise to the insularity, xenophobia, and divisiveness that characterize Kuwaiti social relations today. The book makes a call for a restoration of the city that modern planning eliminated. But this is not simply a case of nostalgia for a lost landscape, lifestyle, or community. It is a claim for a "right to the city"—the right of all inhabitants to shape and use the spaces of their city to meet their own needs and desires.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Farah Al-Nakib debunks some tenacious myths about modernist urban planning: far from creating a happier, more productive urban environment, it fostered bleak suburbs marked by class, gender, and race segregation. Her superb book is a hymn to everyday Kuwaitis who, after sixty years of urban upheaval, struggle to reclaim the right to their city." (Pascal Menoret Brandeis University, author of *Joyriding in Riyadh: Oil, Urbanism, and Road Revolt*) "Farah Al-Nakib's critical eye and

eloquent prose illuminate questions that have engaged generations of urban theorists, historians and activists: the destructive and alienating nature of modernism, the real and the ideal of urban pasts, and the loss of city's ownership. Kuwait Transformed is a brilliant achievement whose relevance goes far beyond the Gulf region and the Middle East, and a must read for all those interested in critical urbanism." (Nelida Fuccaro, University of London SOAS)"This beautifully written and compelling narrative explains both Kuwait's cosmopolitan history as a diverse port city and the fundamental transformation of its urban life, urban space, and political life. It is replete with a wealth of historicized and contextualized insights and is a must read for those interested in a spatial reading of Kuwaiti history, urbanity and development." (Diane Singerman American University)"Al Nakib, a historian, is a wonderfully clever detective who knows her city and its streets well. She searches archives and memoirs, make[s] excellent use of the social theory from David Harvey, Henri Lefebvre, Ash and Amin, and others." (Waleed Hazbun Jadaliyya)

Farah Al-Nakib is Assistant Professor of History and Director of the Center for Gulf Studies at the American University of Kuwait.

A fascinating and well-written book, and a very welcome addition to the field of urban history of the Middle East, which is normally focused on Cairo, French North Africa, or on the decadence of newer Gulf powers (Dubai and Abu Dhabi). Though Kuwait City was, in many ways, a forerunner and model for cities like Dubai, al-Nakib makes a strong case for the importance of understanding the conditions that led to their rapid rise and urbanization, as well as the trends they have experienced since the Iraqi invasion in 1990/91. Students and interested readers of topics like the contemporary middle east, the role of oil in state building, and urban planning will all find al-Nakib's book to be valuable and insightful.

Very important book, powerful and well written

I recommend the book for any scholar, in all fields, who are considering Kuwait as a study sample. The author discussed many issues, such as political, economical, social and related them to city planning. Yet it was written in a merchant point view. Other Kuwaitis, with different socioeconomic levels, may have a slightly different explanation of some issues that were discussed. In sum, great job Dr. Farah, highly recommended!

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