



Kuwait Transformed: A History of Oil and Urban Life

Farah Al-Nakib

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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.

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