

RECREATION IN THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES
with special reference to KUWAIT - a unique example

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Recreation in the Developing Countries
with Special Reference to KUWAIT - a Unique Example

Introduction:

1. Apart from the active side of recreation which is almost similar in most countries, the passive side is lacking in most developing communities. Nevertheless, the provision of the first kind of recreation is not at the same level as in most of the developed countries. The majority of the working population in the developing countries try to raise their income by working extra hours per day. In many cases one may have more than a single job. The continuous increase in the birth rate and decrease in the death rate, put an extra load on the limited resources in the developing countries. Consequently the same phenomenon causes an extra strain on both average and low income groups. As a result of these circumstances, recreation became of a secondary importance to the common people as they cannot afford its expenses or hence the adequate leisure time. The provision of recreation facilities as social amenities becomes the responsibility of the Governments and public authorities. The economic profit of recreation could not be ignored.
2. The objective of this paper is to discover the socio-economic and physical factors affecting recreation in a developing

community in the Arab World. Kuwait will be the study^{case} examined in this paper.

Kuwait as a Unique Example:

3. In fact Kuwait represents a unique example in the developing communities and specially in the Arab World. It is well known that the per capita income in Kuwait is one of the highest in the world. The rapid rate of economic changes which the community in Kuwait has witnessed in the last twenty years was not accompanied by the same rate of change in the social life. During this period, the Kuwaiti community was supported by a mixed foreign community almost double its size. On the other hand, the Kuwaiti community became widely opened to Western culture and civilization. This situation left its great influence on the habits, culture and way of life of the native community. A great part of the people's recreation was then easily provided outside Kuwait.
4. This situation has created a considerable socio-economic problem in the country. A considerable part of the people's income is continuously spent abroad. Many people have other homes in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Iran and elsewhere. It was found that the average period of holidays spent outside the country amounts to three months per year. Recent census figures indicate that the number of Kuwaities leaving the country every year is

more than those returning to the country. It is clear that all type of recreation facilities abroad are easily reached by the common Kuwaiti.

5. The climatic conditions in the country have a great effect on recreation in Kuwait. The weather is extremely hot with a high percentage of humidity in summer, while it is very cold in winter. The temperature tends to be moderate during the months of March, April, October and November, accompanied sometimes with sandy storms. These climatic conditions represent the main constraints facing any planning for open air recreation facilities. They also represent the main repulsive factors which discourage the Kuwaitis to spend most of their time in their home country. Because most of the buildings in Kuwait are air-conditioned, the outdoor weather is usually felt at its extreme.

Physical Potentialities:

6. Unfortunately, the physical environment of the country does not provide any significant resources for open air recreation. The great part of the country constitutes a desert zone with the exception of some green patches of desert plantation along the coastal area. The water level in the Gulf is considerably shallow. Most of the coastline of Kuwait Bay, North of the city is not suitable for sailing or swimming, nor at low

tide is its appearance particularly pleasing.

7. There are possibilities of changing the character of the Bay. The long-term strategy drawn for Kuwait in March 1970 suggested the construction of new beaches in this area by means of dredging and land fill, or parts of the Bay where the water is shallow might be poldered. The strategy also suggested the building of a barrage to enclose an expanse of water and provide a more direct and convenient route across the Bay.
8. The shores still have great unrealised potential for a wide range of recreation pursuits. The coast East of the Southern suburbs of Kuwait Town, with its more steeply sandy beaches, is at present used for recreation more than the shoreline around Kuwait Bay.
9. In spite of the detailed analysis of soils, natural vegetation, forestry and agricultural potentialities illustrated in the long-term strategy plan of Kuwait, the inland natural resources for leisure and recreation will remain very limited. The recreation potentialities suggested in the physical plan are limited to those connected with both the Gulf and the desert. The Gulf provides the facilities for sailing and swimming as mentioned before, and the desert provides potentialities for traditional camping. At present there are five projects drawn

for establishing five sea clubs along the Eastern coastline on adequate sites to serve most of the urban areas south of Kuwait Town.

The Search for Recreation Facilities:

10. The question of leisure, recreation and amusement is still under continuous consideration. Beside the project of the five sea clubs, there is a proposition for establishing an amusement centre, the site of which has not yet been determined. There is also a plan for the island of Failaka East of Kuwait Town to be developed as a touristic area. The island has recreation potentialities along its coastline beside the existing archeological discoverings. In the central area of Kuwait Town, the plan for the commercial centre suggests the provision of some indoor amusement facilities for the shoppers. In the meantime, a site south of the fourth ring road has been provisionally chosen for an International Fair beside the site proposed for an Athletic Centre.
11. It is clear that these several projects and proposals have been drawn individually within the framework of the physical plan, but without an overall study for the problem as a whole. The need for such a study is essentially important as the size of the community in Kuwait cannot support any piece-meal planning of that nature.

12. There are five basic factors affecting the determination of types, sizes and locations of recreation centres in Kuwait.

These factors are:

- a. Socio-economic structure of population as a determinate factor affecting the types needed.
- b. Cultural status of both local and foreign communities affecting the types of recreation facilities and the media of entertainment and amusement.
- c. The climatic conditions and physical environment affecting human behaviour in leisure time.
- d. Working hours and public holidays as determinate factors affecting frequencies and seasonal periods allocated for recreation.
- e. Physical environment and means of transportation as determinate factors affecting the location of recreation areas.

Culture through Recreation:

13. The objectives of recreation in the developing countries could not only be limited to passive and active sides as in most developed countries. For the developing communities, recreation becomes a good conductor to knowledge and education. Culture through recreation could be transferred to all age and sex groups in the developing communities by the different audio-visual media.

Human and natural history could be illustrated within the children playgrounds. National heritage of literature, art, music and songs could be heard and seen in the amusement areas. Swings and merry-go-round may carry some local or international features or characteristics of the world and outer space. Technology and science may be expressed through amusing devices for the youth and the old.

14. The temperaments and behaviour of the people should be always observed throughout their movements in the recreation areas. It is known that the energy of the common person decreases in a hot weather as in the case of Kuwait, Therefore he should get more relaxation and may be carried now and then between different recreation activities if possible.

Population and Recreation:

15. The size of total population to benefit from recreation facilities will be about 1.140.000 inhabitants in the period between 1975 and 1980 as indicated in the Long-term Strategy of March 1970. Out of the total population 400.000 are Kuwaities and the rest 740.000 are of other Arab and foreign nationalities. The Kuwaiti community has a stable and balanced structure leading to an even rate of population growth. Consequently, types and sizes of recreation facilities could be easily estimated for the different age and sex groups.

16. The Non-Kuwaiti population, on the other hand, has a disproportionate number of males, especially those of working ages between 15 and 45 years old. This means that most of the immigrants entering the country are of males; part of them are singles and the others are married but not accompanied by their families. The need for recreation facilities may be of a secondary importance to this sector of the non-Kuwaiti community. The great majority of that sector of non-Kuwaities go to Kuwait for one main interest: to get higher payments. The continuation of their presence in Kuwait depends mostly on the opportunities of work they can get. A great part of their savings is transferred to their home countries. The separation of recreation facilities for the singles and the families should therefore be recognized. Most of the singles spend their leisure time in public places like cafeterias, cinemas or promenading along the main shopping streets. In-door amusement facilities may be provided for that sector of the non-Kuwaiti community in Down Town. The provision of such types of recreation may cause a non-moral effect on the Kuwaiti singles or youngsters. This fact should be taken into consideration in the design of the urban centres of Kuwait Town.

17. Although the two main communities in Kuwait, the Kuwaities and non-Kuwaities spend their working hours together in offices, shops, schools and factories, they spend their leisure

time separately. The Kuwaiti families spend most of their leisure time during their stay in Kuwait at home watching TV or entertaining visitors and friends in their Duwanias (a reception room attached to the house). Part of them spend the rest of their leisure time camping or site-seeing when weather conditions permit. Few of them are seen in public places together with the non-Kuwaities on special occasions. Social intermingling between the two communities is so limited. A great number of the Kuwaities have the means to spend their long vacations abroad specially in summer. Environmental conditions and restricted social values could be easily overcome by travelling abroad. The non-Kuwaities, on the other hand, have their social obligations which make them spend their long vacations with their relatives abroad.

Organization of Leisure Time:

18. The working hours a day in most public services, including government departments, begin at 7 a.m. and end at 1 p.m. except on Thursdays that it ends at 11 a.m. Shops and other private enterprises re-open after three hours at 4 p.m. and close at 8 p.m. Climatic conditions and social attitude do not help the continuation of work from the morning until the afternoon as in any developed country. Apart from the productivity point of view, leisure time in the average is longer than any where else. The short working period in government offices encourages most of their

men employees to do some extra private work in the evening when weather conditions become agreeable. This means that leisure time for men starts after 8 p.m. while their families at home have a longer period starting after lunch time. This is why both men and women have their own way of spending their leisure time. Children and teenagers try also to have their own way. Schools have a mid-term vacation of two weeks in January, while the summer vacation covers almost four months.

19. The problem now has two sides. The first is how to provide the necessary recreation facilities for the different age and sex groups in both Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti communities during their daily leisure time. The second is how to limit the summer exodus of the population outside the country. For the organization of daily leisure time, a suggestion was proposed to limit the working days to five days a week excluding Thursday and Friday and to extend the working hours by one hour for each working day. To attract the people to spend a longer time of their vacations in Kuwait, the Government intends to build five sea-clubs along the coastline to serve the different urban sectors of the city. These clubs may provide both daily active and passive recreation facilities for the different age and sex groups of the population as much as the social status may permit.

Prospects of the Proposed Sea-Clubs:

20. To ensure the organic integration of the five sea-clubs as recreation centres, they should be associated with other inland recreation potentialities according to the site and location of each centre. The Hilton centre could be associated in plan with the recreation potentialities which the green belt around the Old Town may provide. The green belt could be developed as a recreation area including a water channel connecting the water of the Gulf at Hilton recreation centre with the waters of Kuwait Bay at the Shiraton centre at the other end. The development of the the green belt as a recreation area of that character will also bring more life to the city as a whole. All the radial roads connecting the Old Town will cross the artificial water channel over a series of bridges. A new architectural interpretation of the old wall which was built around the Old Town may bring back to the area a sense of the historical heritage.

21. The Fourth Ring Road sea-club as a recreation centre may be associated in plan with the existing group of athletic clubs in that area and then the shopping street of Hawalli. In the same sense, the Ras Sea-club as a recreation centre could also be associated with the main shopping street of Assalmia. The same concept could also be applied to the other sea-clubs when

developed recreation centres in order to achieve the integration between the entertainment and amusement.

The Need for Passive Recreation:

22. In Kuwait, the need for the passive side of recreation exceeds that of the active recreation provided by the athletic clubs, sea-clubs and schools. On the other hand, the physical environment does not give the adequate potentialities for that kind of passive recreation including entertainment and amusement. A considerable part of passive recreation therefore should be provided in-doors. To achieve an economic solution to this problem, it becomes essential to increase the planning efficiency of such centres in order to perform more than one function throughout the year long. This is where amusement, exhibitions and sport activities could be integrated. This is a basic concept for a small sized community like that of Kuwait as will be elaborated upon later on in this paper.

23. There are other recreation activities lacking in most Arab countries and Kuwait in particular. These are the activities associated with religious and national celebrations. Most of these celebrations are organised by the governments with less public participation. The full participation of the people in such festivals and ceremonies becomes more important, not only to

emphasize the importance of these occasions, but also to bring the population into a more stronger relationship with their urban environment. This is one of the main factors missing in the Arab town. Street lighting, parades, fireworks, national dances and other common entertainments will create a more sociable atmosphere to the Arab town. The young generations will be the most affected sector of population by such activities. This social phenomenon is essentially important for the young Kuwaities who have always the possibilities to be affected by foreign culture. The development of such types of entertainment will add more potentialities to the tourist industry. The Mosque place will become the centre for such activities.

24. The other types of recreation are those associated with the commercial activities as exhibitions and fairs. Before oil, Kuwait was one of the main trade centres in the area. The country still retains this status but not as a main source of national income. To face the expected decrease of oil output, the State is seeking a policy for expanding industrialization, but the size of the local man-power will remain one of the main constrains. The location of Kuwait on cross-roads between East and West, its free market and its vast investments abroad, all these are encouraging factors which give the country great potentialities to become an international trade centre. The construction of Kuwait

International Fair will become one of the main steps for achieving this status.

Exhibitions & International Fairs as Sources for Recreation:

25. Beside the main commercial function of the Fair, it provides the space for other cultural and recreational functions as in the case of most international fairs in the world.* This is why the subject of Kuwait International Fair becomes an integral part of this study. The Fair will represent a main recreation area in the urban structure of the city. Its relationship with the other recreation centres in the city should then be established not only in space, but also in time and function. For a small sized community as that of Kuwait, it will be necessary to achieve the integration of functions which could be performed by individual buildings. This is where exhibitions, sports, culture, recreation and amusement could be integrated. The location of the Fair depends mostly on this factor.

This integration of function could be seen in similar cases as in the exhibitions and fairs of Brussels, New York, Seattle (U.S.A.)

* Exhibitions and International Fairs - planning, architecture and construction - with special reference - New Cairo International Fair - A study by the author - Cairo 1964.

Milan, Bari, Luzan and many other exhibitions and fairs in the world. The same concept has been also applied when planning the new International Fair of Cairo. The sites of the international fairs should be served by adequate communication and transportation systems and public utilities. The parking areas may serve the whole recreation complex.

Alternative Sites for a Recreation Complex in Kuwait

26. The allocation of site for the recreation complex in Kuwait including the International Fair, has three alternatives within the framework of the urban strategy:
- a. The first is the site which has been chosen south of the 6th Ring Road for a large sports stadium and incorporating a comprehensive range of recreational facilities including the Olympic City and the International Fair. The amusement centre could be integrated in that complex as a complimentary part to the International Fair. The new site chosen for Kuwait University at the junction of Fahahil Road and the 4th ring road, is easily connected with the site of the Olympic City. The whole area is easily accessible from all parts of the City, the Airport and the Harbour.

At the present time, it is disputable if this area will be developed for these purposes. The project of the Olympic City is

postponed and the University Complex will be split into two parts: the faculties of human studies will be situated in the Old Town, and the faculties of technical studies may be transferred to the Shuwaikh area, west of the city. This fact will consequently affect the integration of activities in this area which has no other recreation potentialities.

- b. The second is the Doha peninsula which has been allocated as a recreation area in the urban strategy. This site which is not very far from the city centre, has fine views of the Zor ridge in the west and the Old Town in the east. The site also enjoys better weather conditions. Tree planting has been proposed by the planners to improve the character of this area. The site is served by a main road connected with the Ban Arab Road from Basra to Kuwait through Jahra settlement. The site could also be served by hovercraft routes to connect it with the Old Town at Sheraton centre, the harbour and Shuwaikh industrial area. This area could be developed to comprise the Olympic City which is not far from the University new site, the International Fair and the amusement centre as an integral part of this recreation complex. Consequently, it will be necessary to extend the Shuaiba-Ammadi road to connect the site

with the urban areas along the eastern coast in order to reduce any traffic jam in the city centre. Driving to site from all parts of the city will be a kind of recreation to the Kuwaities. The development of Doha in that way will help the extension of the coastal urbanization of the city to the west around Kuwait Bay.

- c. The third alternative is based on the distribution of functions for both the International Fair and the amusement centre within the Old Town. The Olympic City will then be disintegrated elsewhere. In this case the International Fair may be changed to a series of exhibition halls to be located wherever suitable. The amusement centre may then be stretched along the Green belt if it is developed in the same concept suggested before. In this case the load of traffic will increase around the central area causing a major planning problem which could not be easily solved.

27. The evaluation of the three alternatives depends on the optimum size required for each function in the recreation complex, and the future prospect of each function. It should also be clear whether each of these functions will have a local, a regional or an international status. The Fair may get the

international status while the Olympic City serves the region and the amusement centre serves the local community. To achieve the international status, the Fair should be opened annually for five successive years. The size of such Fair could not be adequately served or absorbed in the Old Town. If the University of Kuwait is going to be split between the Old Town and Shuwaikh area, the Olympic City in the present proposed site therefore, will lose part of its function in relation to the sports activities of the University. Consequently, the International Fair in the same area will lose part of the common services and public utilities enjoyed by the whole complex. It seems, therefore, that the second alternative is the most appropriate for the recreation complex including the Olympic City, the International Fair and the Amusement Centre. The development of Doha peninsular for this purpose will be part of the whole development of Kuwait Bay and its surroundings as a recreation area within the context of the urban strategy drawn for Kuwait.

The Scope of Complementary Studies:

28. The completion of this study requires a more detailed analysis for the recreation needs of the different age and sex groups of the population in Kuwait. These needs could then be classified after that according to the planning levels of the City and the State. The size of each recreation centre could then be

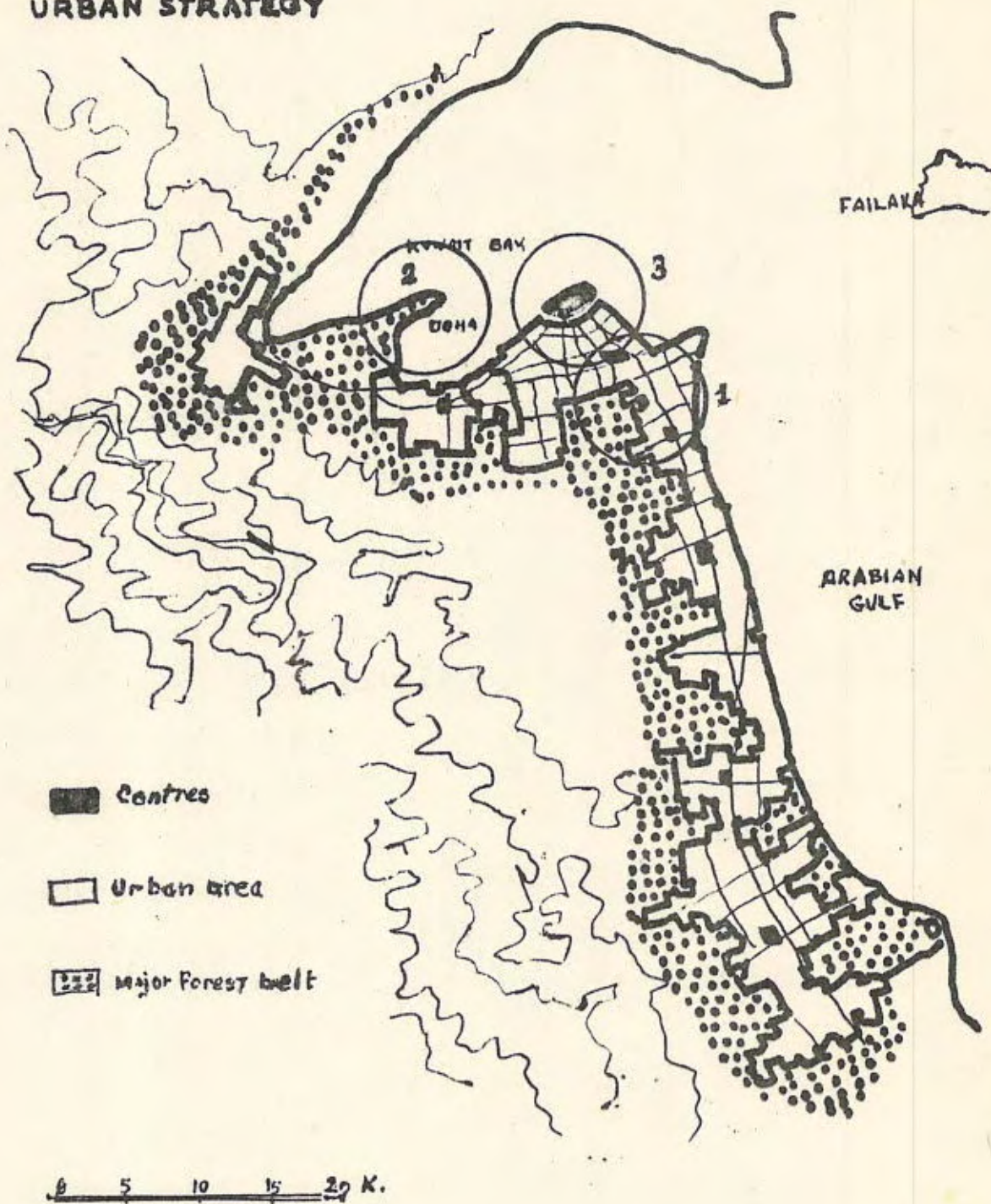
determined and transferred to an architected programme. Planning and design concepts may be drawn for each site according to its physical characteristics. The planning of the recreation complex comprising the Olympic City, the International Fair and the Amusement Centre could be dealt with separately in a comprehensive study. This study should tackle the different aspects of accessibility, circulation, architecture, construction, landscape and public utilities in an integrated manner. The design of such recreation complex requires a team of architects, engineers, landscapers and artists to work together according to one main theme derived from the local conditions in Kuwait.

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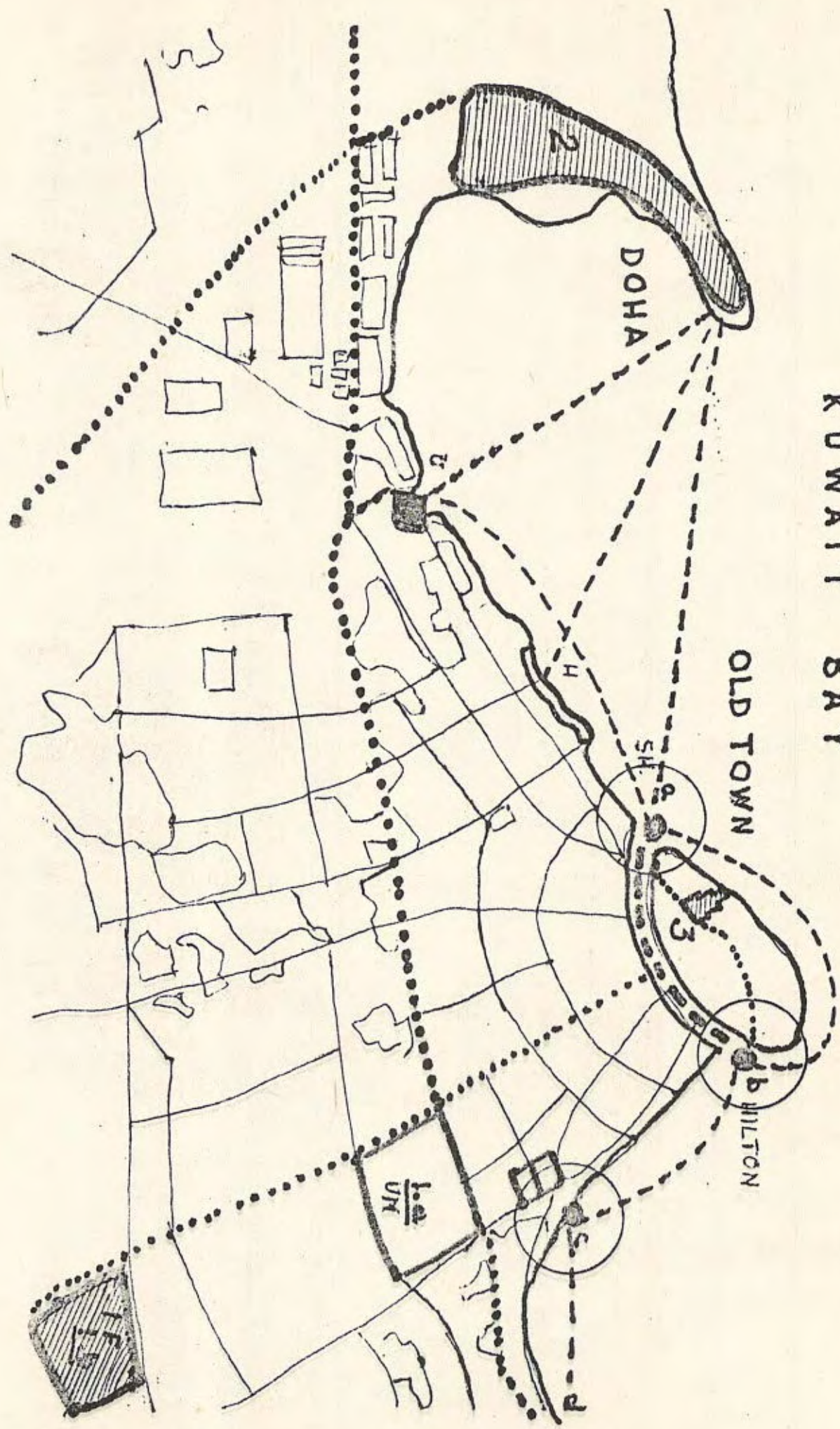
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KUWAIT URBAN STRATEGY

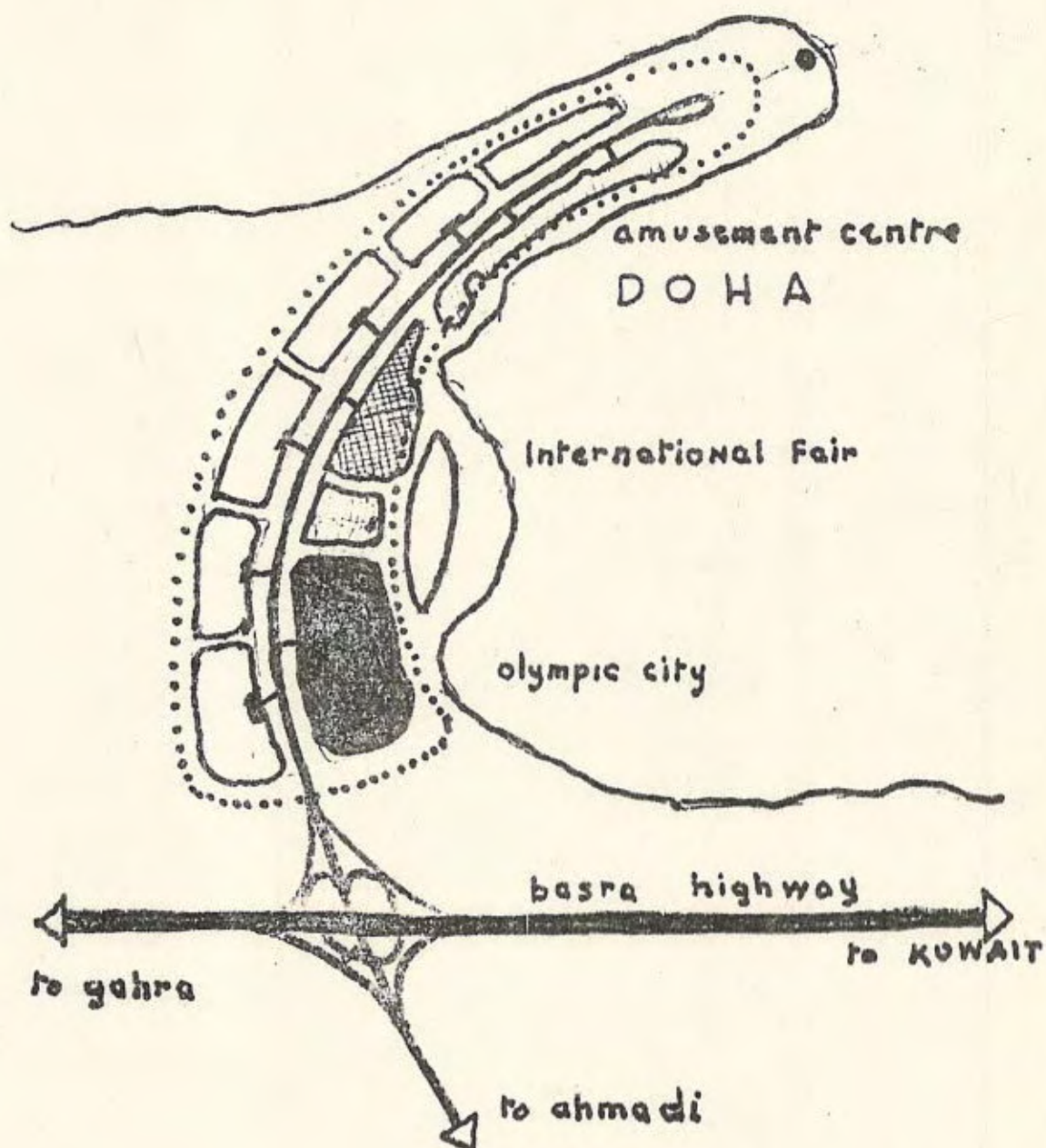
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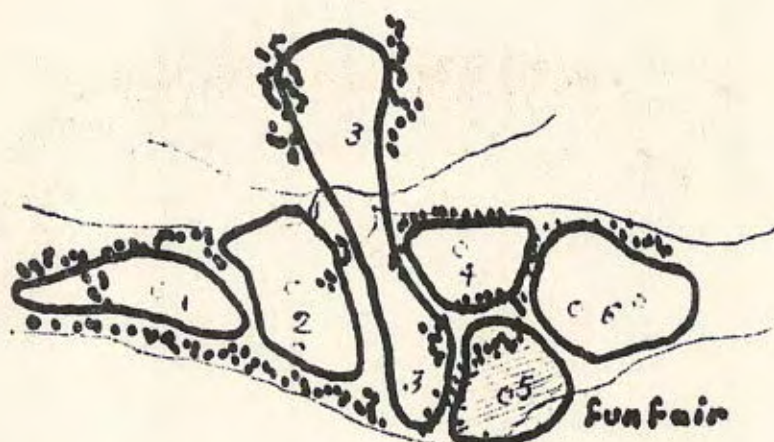
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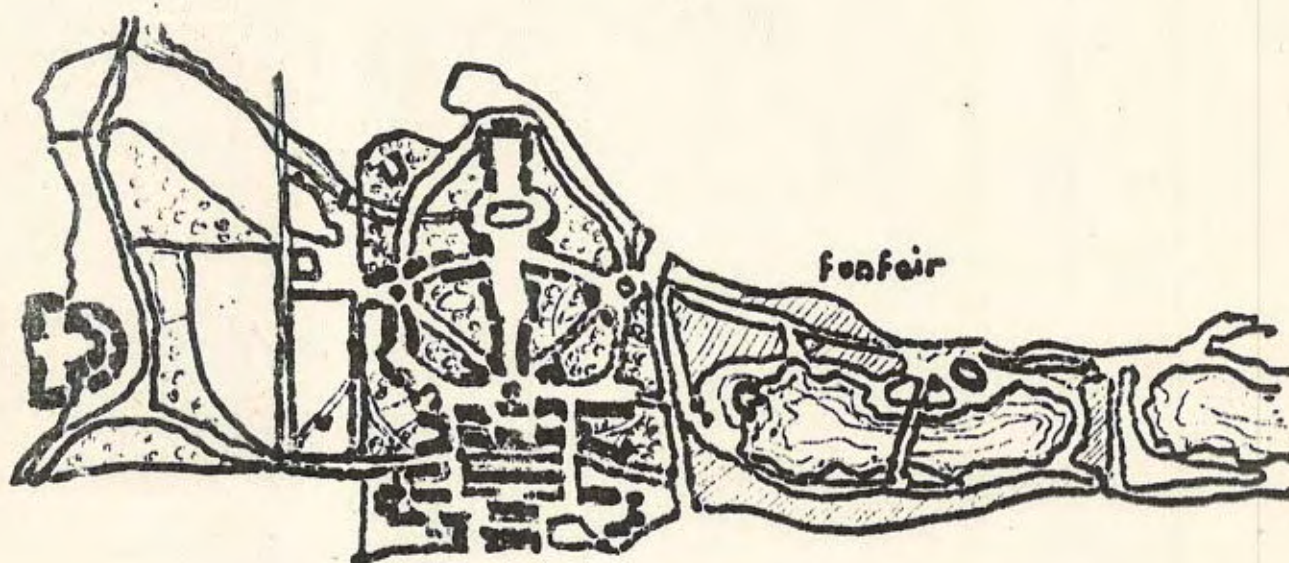
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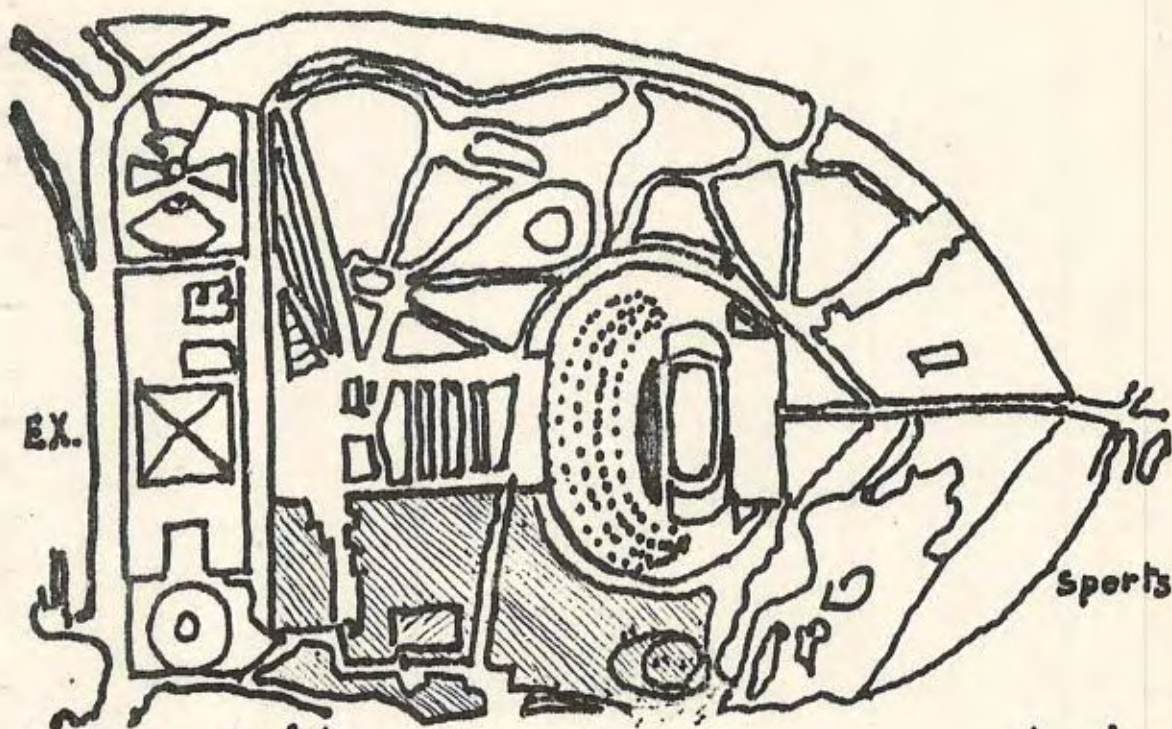
SWISS EXHIBITION-LAUSANNE 1964



NEW YORK WORLD'S FAIR

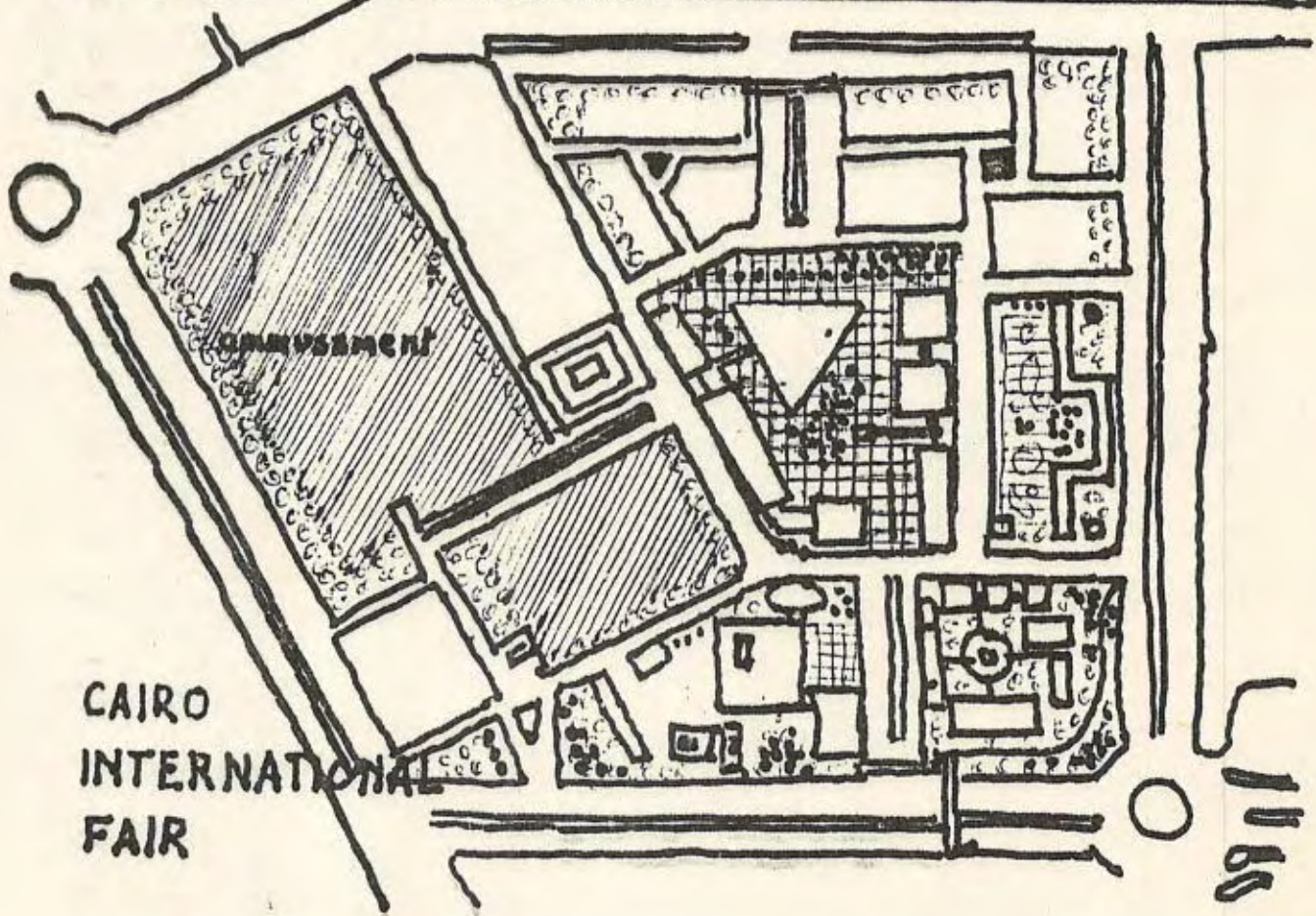
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CRYSTAL PALACE SITE-London



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