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**New Developments — II:
Assumptions and Assessments**

The evolution of urban and regional planning in Saudi Arabia

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The emergence and evolution of urban and regional planning in Saudi Arabia¹ may be broadly divided into two eras (fig. 1). The first era, which began in the late 1930s in response to day-to-day needs and problems of urban areas, mainly emphasized the physical aspects of planning and culminated in the early 1970s with Doxiadis' Master Plan of Riyadh. This era is comprised of a set of measures which were taken to cope with the specific situations prevalent in certain urban centers. However, these measures were later on institutionalized and made applicable throughout the Kingdom by circulars, directives, decrees and through the demonstration effect provided by the Doxiadis Master Plan of Riyadh.

The second era, which started in the early 1970s and continues today, adopted a comprehensive urban and regional planning approach with interdisciplinary emphasis. During this era, a series of plans was successively formulated, starting from Five Year National Plans to Regional and Master Development Plans for urban and rural areas. Apart from the formulation of an entire hierarchy of development plans, certain other related activities and processes, such as enabling legislation, plan implementation, creation of urban and regional planning institutions and on the job training programs, necessary for institutionalizing the planning process, were also initiated.

The primary activity areas and major urban centers where various elements and processes of urban and regional planning evolved and provided demonstration effect for other centers in Saudi Arabia during the aforementioned two eras are shown in figure 2. The salient aspects of these eras are being described in the following sections.

The first era: Town planning with physical emphasis (late 1930s — early 1970s)

During the first era,² the spatial focus was gradually enlarged from individual "pilot" to the "master plan" of the entire urban center by increasingly developing and institutionalizing various provisions of land-use controls along with the related statutes. Let us examine the evolution of various elements of urban planning during this era.

The municipal statutes

The Statute of the Makkah Municipality and Municipalities,³ issued under a Royal Order in 1937 (no. 8723, 20 Rajab 1357 H.), was perhaps the first seminal step which formally prompted the emergence of urban planning in Saudi Arabia, at least, partially. In specifying the duties of the Municipalities, the statute added a very extensive list of responsibilities including the supervision of the town organization, town beautification and work needed to result in establishing an enhanced scenic setting; designation of places for selling of firewood, construction materials, meat and vegetables, etc; supervision of general housing conditions; prevention of projections and encroachment on streets and public spaces; extension and widening of roads; and creating public open spaces. By assigning these responsibilities, the statute in fact gave the municipality a preliminary authority to develop zoning regulations and building codes. In other words, in order to facilitate their work, the municipalities developed regulations and codes, though only as needed on a fragmentary and case by case basis.

In 1941 (1360 H.), a "Roads and Building Statute"⁴ was issued. It indicates the authorities' conception of town planning at the time. This conception emerged from the need and pressure for physical development, especially in Makkah, the country's religious capital and administrative center during the 1930s and 1940s. The statute concerns itself mainly with three issues: planning procedures, building codes, zoning and the right-of-way. It was through this statute that the setback concept was introduced in Saudi Arabia with the sole objective of meeting the need for future street widening.

The gridiron street pattern

In 1938, the Arabian-American Oil Company (ARAMCO) established its first oil-camp at Dhahran. A year later, a second oil-camp was built at Ras-Tanura and again in 1944, a third was established at Abqaiq. Although these three camps appear to have used the system of blocks and gridiron pattern for the first time in Saudi Arabia in the late 30s, the physical growth in the old towns, by and large, continued to be "organic" and followed the traditional pattern of Arab-Muslim cities with narrow and irregular streets. It was not until 1947, that the Governor of the eastern Province requested the assistance from ARAMCO to help in producing a layout plan for both towns of Dammam and Al-Khobar. The company's surveyors prepared land subdivision plans and staked out the

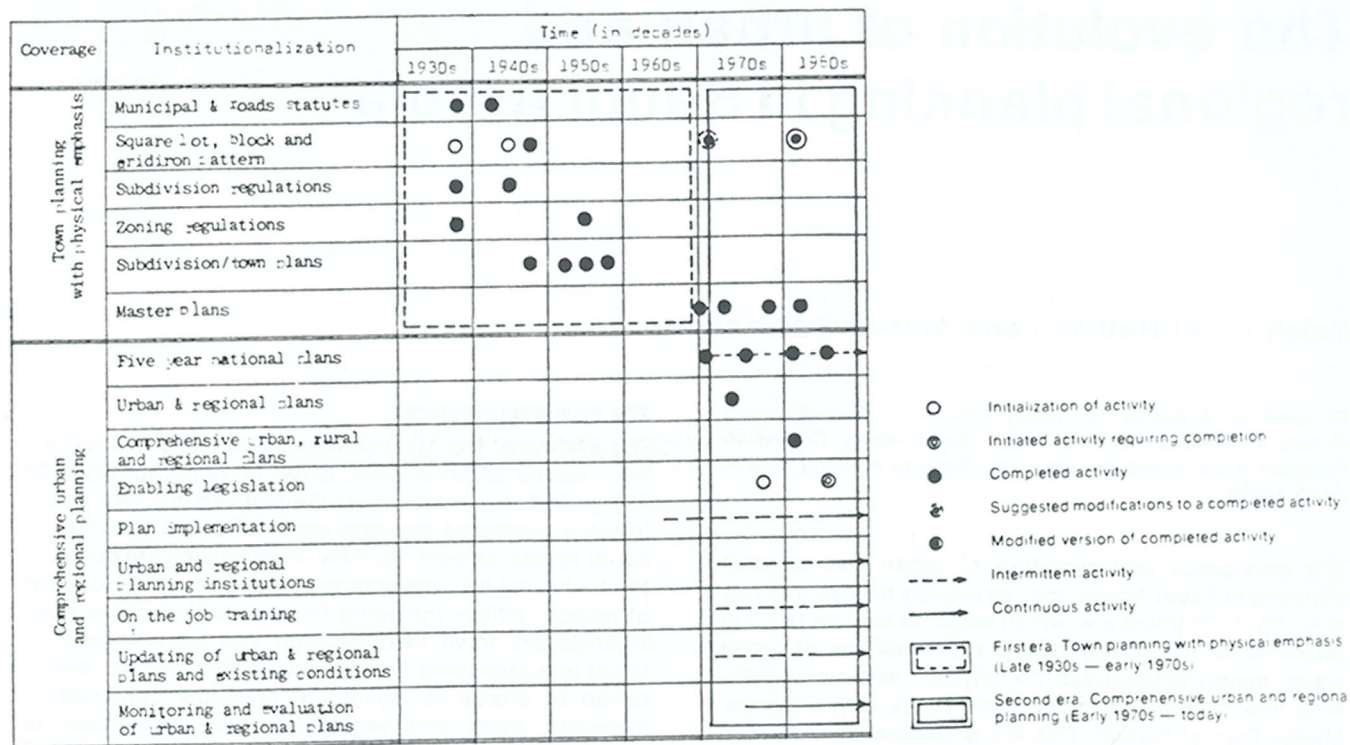


Fig. 1: Saudi Arabia: evolution and status of elements and processes of urban and regional planning.

streets and blocks on the ground. These original plans only covered limited areas and were laid out in a gridiron pattern. Also in 1952 with the shifting of the provincial capital to Dammam from Hofuf, ARAMCO engineers in cooperation with the municipality of Dammam, developed a major thoroughfare plan for the city that is still being followed today. They also developed a layout scheme for another 1,000 acres (405 hectares). Subsequent subdivision areas were laid out by the municipality and followed an earlier gridiron layout.⁵ Likewise, in Al-Khobar, ARAMCO's Land Subdivision plan followed the gridiron pattern. The grid was oriented north-south and was to be carried out irrespective of the growth of the previous fifteen years. This earlier development was treated as insignificant and structures were demolished to open up the new streets and to preserve the grid pattern of the plan.⁶

As a new community, Al-Khobar stands out in the history of urbanism in Saudi Arabia; taken as a model for many years, its planning established numerous demonstrably unfortunate precedents as it disturbed the traditional pattern of physical development and initiated the process of demolition of old parts of the town. It was, however, the first community to be wholly planned, and the first to have an overall gridiron pattern of streets. It provided the first street name signs, and even initiated the convention of numbered avenues, forsaking the traditional use of persons' names. In other words, Al-Khobar, whether consciously or not, led the way and set up a model which other Saudi Arabian cities were to follow in the 50s, 60s and 70s.

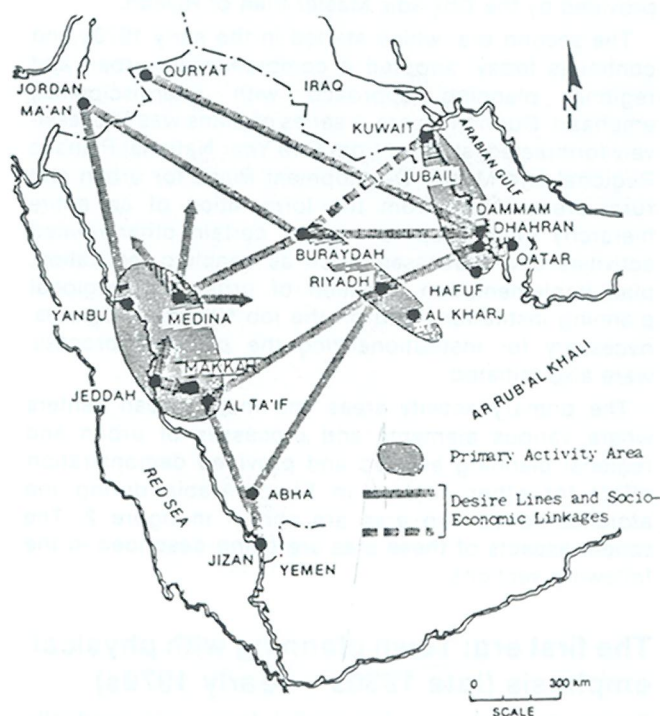


Fig. 2: Saudi Arabia: primary activity areas, major urban centers and socioeconomic linkages among them. (Source: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs, Deputy Ministry of Town Planning, *National Spatial Strategy*, p. 65, 1400-1421 AH, Vol. IV).

The square lot, villa type and setbacks

In 1951, ARAMCO felt the need to resettle its Saudi Arabian employees in surrounding communities rather than keeping them in the oil camps. According to the provisions of the program, which is ongoing, the government provides the land, either as a grant or for a nominal price, to the employees. The Company undertakes various stages of planning and land subdivision. Then the employee is given an interest-free loan by the company. The Company forgives 20 percent of the total amount of the loan which includes a 5 percent service charge, and the employee pays the balance through monthly deductions from his pay. In order to qualify for the loan, the employee has to submit a design for the house, which then has to be precisely implemented without any major changes. In the early 50s, there were very few architects in Saudi Arabia other than those employed by ARAMCO. Saudi employees, therefore, had to rely on the company's architects and engineers for the designs of their houses. To alleviate the pressure, the company worked out several design alternatives for its employees to choose. These designs were prepared by architects and engineers unfamiliar with the culture and tradition of the area, who obviously relied heavily on their own background, producing, not surprisingly, the suburban detached house-type closer to an "international Mediterranean" house rather than to a "local" one.

The program in short had a considerable impact on the ARAMCO communities in the eastern coastal belt, especially on Dammam and Al-Khobar. The introduction and accelerated construction of villa-type houses as the most favorable type affected the physical growth of these two settlements.

In 1953 the government decided to move its headquarters to Riyadh. As a consequence, the Ministry of Finance initiated the Al-Malaz project to provide housing for government employees. The physical pattern of Al-Malaz follows a gridiron plan with a hierarchy of streets, rectangular blocks, and large lots which in most cases take a square shape. Thoroughfares are 30 meters in width, main streets 20 meters, and secondary or access streets 10 and 15 meters. A 60 meter boulevard divides the project into two parts. Most blocks are 100 x 50 meters. The typical lot size is 25 x 25 meters, but some blocks include a variety of widths, from 25 meters to 50 meters. The depth of 25 meters, however, remains constant in almost all blocks.

Comparing this newly introduced pattern with the traditional pattern of Al-Dirah, Riyadh's oldest neighborhood, one can see that new values in the conception of space have been introduced: a very low density — one-fifth of the density in the traditional settlement; a large area assigned to streets three times that of the traditional; only half of the area reserved for private lots which in the traditional settlements were occupying more than seventy-five percent; and no provision for semi-private space, an essential element in traditional environments. The impact of Al-Malaz on Riyadh can be very easily seen. It is a city by itself and is sometimes known as the New Riyadh. However, what was not envisioned at the time of its initiation was the impact it later had on the pattern of physical development in Riyadh as well as all over the country. Al-Malaz introduced new patterns and

new types. Both the grid as a street pattern and the villa as the new house type became models for the new physical development that took place in the 60s and 70s in every city and town of Saudi Arabia.

The ARAMCO Home Ownership Plan and the Malaz project with the introduction of the large lot, the villa as a dwelling type and the setbacks on all sides, established the taste and style for a modern neighborhood. After the precedent of enforcing minimum lot size standards and setback requirements had been established by the Roads and Building statute, the Al-Malaz project and the ARAMCO Home Ownership Plan were decisive in reinforcing conformity to such standards. The crucial point, however, is that instead of a minimum lot size of 100 square meters, these two projects relied on the untraditional lot size of 400 square meters. And rather than having an optional setback in certain areas, they showed that it was possible and, according to their standards, actually preferable to have setbacks on all sides, in every dwelling and in all areas. Therefore, the regulations were formulated in such a way as to result in confirming the villa as the preferred dwelling type.

The apartment buildings

The development of modern apartment buildings in the central region of the country began in the 1950s. Not until the end of that decade, however, did the pattern of living in an apartment establish itself, especially in Riyadh. This was the result of two factors:

- the influx of people at that time, from the surrounding countries, Arab and other, who preferred an apartment building to a traditional house;
- the three apartment buildings included in the Al-Malaz project which were rented to government employees.

This enhanced the image of the apartment building as an appropriate residence for Saudis. As a result, the pattern was established and the process of erecting apartment buildings prospered.

The various processes concerning the emergence of zoning regulations in the late 30s and early 40s, and the introduction of the villa-type and the highrise building in the 50s and 60s culminated into certain rules that were applied uniformly throughout the entire country. These were issued in the form of circulars by the Deputy Ministry of Interior for Municipalities to all municipal and town planning offices in the country.

The Master Plan

In the late 1960s, the government of Saudi Arabia felt the need to control and direct growth in urban areas. Riyadh, the capital, was the fastest growing city in the country and the most important from the government's point of view. It was, therefore, the first to attract the attention of authorities. So, in 1968 (1388 H.) Doxiadis Associates undertook the task of planning the capital. The Doxiadis Plan can be termed as a milestone in the history of urban planning in Saudi Arabia. It was the first formal attempt towards the study and analysis of the existing conditions of the city of Riyadh, and the first to emphasize the need for planned development of the city as a whole. The final Master Plan was submitted in 1971 and was approved and sanctioned by the Council of Ministers in 1973 (1393 H.).*

The Doxiadis Master Plan of Riyadh introduced the

"supergrid" at the city level plan and also used the grid pattern in its proposals for the Action Area Studies.⁹ The plan institutionalized the grid as the most desired pattern to be followed in the planning of Riyadh as well as in other cities of the country. It preserved the trends of large lot sizes, it further developed the set-back requirements introduced in Al Malaz, and it proposed the independent house as the villa kind as the most desirable dwelling type. The plan, as a whole, institutionalized a new physical environment for the city of Riyadh which was rather different from the traditional one in density, scale and pattern.

The second era: comprehensive urban and regional planning (early 1970s — present)

As compared to the rather ad hoc, incremental, approach adopted during the "first era," the "second era" pursued a holistic approach in planning wherein the national socioeconomic objectives and policies were successively interfaced with those at the regional and local levels, thereby resulting in a hierarchy of development plans. During this successive transformation of objectives and convergence from national to local perspective, the plans increasingly became more and more space specific. The emergence and development of this new approach are highlighted by examination of various elements and processes of urban and regional planning.

The first generation of regional physical plans

The unprecedented economic growth of Saudi Arabia due to the oil boom of the early 70s gave rise to a phenomenal development of cities and towns, creating various problems with respect to the entire range of urban services and facilities.¹⁰ To cope with this, the government embarked on a very ambitious program of formulating comprehensive urban, regional and national plans. As a consequence, in 1970, the Kingdom was divided into five planning regions, and the system of Five Year National Plans was instituted (fig. 3). International consultants were appointed to prepare the first generation of regional physical plans for each region, and master plans for a number of principal cities and towns. Regional and urban planning studies were first initiated in the Western Region¹¹ (commonly known as Hijaz Region) in 1972. These were followed by studies in the Central and Northern Regions during the same year,¹² the Eastern Region¹³ in 1973, and the Southern Region¹⁴ in 1974. These plans were conceived in the context of national socioeconomic objectives spelled out in the First Five-Year Development Plan (1970-1975) and provided useful physical inputs for the public and private development programs.

The first generation of urban and regional development plans, although important in their own right, lacked the overall perspective of urbanization at the national level and also failed to institutionalize the physical planning process, per se, in the country. Realizing the magnitude and complexity of the problem of rapid urban development, the government took necessary steps towards the establishment of appropriate institutions to achieve the desired objectives. The Deputy Ministry of Interior for

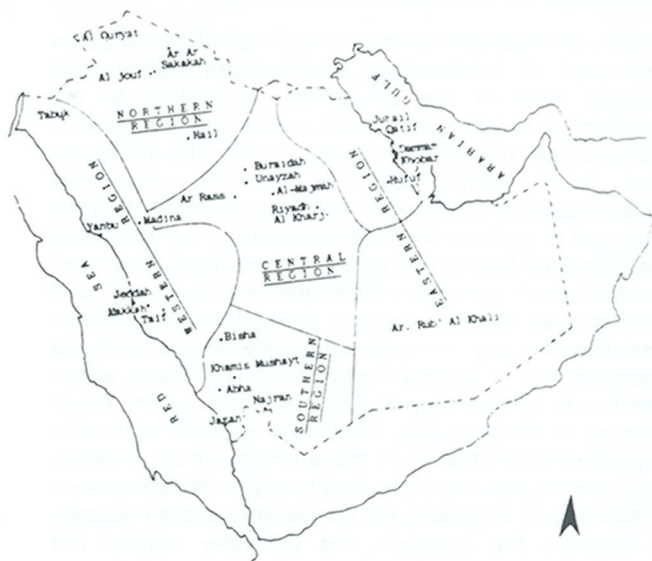


Fig. 3: Saudi Arabia: regions and centers covered by regional and master plans, 1973-75.

Municipal Affairs was upgraded to a full-fledged independent Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs in 1975. Likewise the Directorate General of Town Planning was elevated to the status of Deputy Ministry of Town Planning.

Action Master Plans

In 1976/77 (1396/97) the Deputy Ministry of Town Planning launched "Action Master Plans Projects for seven cities": Jeddah, Riyadh, Dammam, Al Madina, Al Munawara, Taif, Abha and Jizan.¹⁵ These may be viewed as the "third generation" of urban development plans as they succeeded the Doxiadis Riyadh Master Plan and the master plans prepared in the five regions of Saudi Arabia in the late 60s and early 70s respectively. Each of the seven plans, unlike previous practice, was conceived as a continuous "spin-off" of the planning process. The international consultants appointed for the formulation of these plans were therefore also required to help establish planning and development departments in the respective cities so that the master plans could be kept updated on a continuous basis. The consultants were further required to give advice to the concerned authorities on matters related to planning and development on an ad hoc basis during the preparation period.

The Action Master Plans package comprises 15 technical reports.¹⁶ Eight of these deal with background studies, analysis of socioeconomic, traffic and physical surveys, and evaluation of the existing master plan, whereas seven reports deal with the applied aspects of urban planning such as the preparation of:

- a Master Directive Plan with a time perspective of 15 years,
- Execution Plans, formulated within the framework of the Master Directive Plan, providing for the phased development during the third and fourth five-year plan periods,

- Detailed Action Area Plans for the built-up, semi built-up and unbuilt areas in accordance with the provisions of the Master Directive Plan, and
- Cultural Area Plans in order to preserve and enhance the cultural heritage of the respective urban areas.

To carry out its operational activities and to institutionalize the planning process in the country, the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs also established, in collaboration with the United Nations, a "Physical Planning Project." Its main purposes were to assist the government in:

- developing a national spatial strategy for Saudi Arabia,
- training the professional staff necessary to sustain the physical planning activities of the Kingdom, and
- monitoring the work of the international consultants engaged on the preparation of Action Master Plans for the selected cities.

Comprehensive urban, rural and regional development plans

Recently the government has undertaken the preparation of "second generation" regional development plans in collaboration with the United Nations Regional Development Planning Project. These plans are expected to be much more comprehensive and development oriented than their predecessors. They aim at integrated urban and rural development. The boundaries of the regions are

being kept, as far as possible, coterminous with the administrative boundaries of the Emirates.

Five such regional development plans have been launched:¹⁷ Hail, Tabuk, Makkah, Qassim and Baha. Three more for the regions of Jazan, Al Qatif and Al Ahsa, are in the pipeline: more are expected to follow suit.

The status of the comprehensive urban, rural and regional development plans undertaken between 1982 and 1985 are indicated in figure 4. When completed, the regional plans will serve as coordinating tools at the Emirate level where most development decisions are taken. These plans will also provide vital sectoral inputs for capital budget programming of the sectoral ministries at the national level on development and non-development expenditures.

The set of comprehensive urban, rural and regional plans have also provided the opportunity for feed-back to the zoning and subdivision regulations developed during the 1930-1970 era, and for corrections more in keeping with the Islamic traditions and climatic conditions prevalent in Saudi Arabia. For instance, according to the newly adopted zoning regulations in the Hail region, it has become possible to have Arab style houses with family oriented courtyards by doing away with the rigid requirements of side and rear setbacks, provided the owner complies with certain design criteria that would preserve the privacy of his neighbors. Likewise, the subdivision regulations encourage rectangular — narrow and deep — lots which, when developed, are more economical, because the lengths of streets and utility lines are considerably less than those required in the case of a subdivision using square lots of equivalent area as the rectangular ones. In the rural areas, also, proposed zoning and subdivision regulations are more in keeping with the rural way of life than continuing the previous practice of applying urban standards.

Because of the unique and dynamic nature of socio-economic and physical development in Saudi Arabia, urban and regional plans have evolved repeatedly. Each "generation" of plans has benefitted from the earlier ones while at the same time adjusting itself to the changing conditions. The "top down" approach adopted during the second era is by far the most comprehensive one. Often, however, real world problems demand immediate solutions and the overall development process cannot wait for the final version of the complete set of plans covering all hierarchical levels. For this reason, the next "generation" development plans are being oriented to follow both the "top down" and "bottom up" approaches responding to the exigencies of various situations. For example, the scope of work for the next generation of regional plans, currently under preparation, is also providing for "special studies" or "interim development proposals" for the important local centers within the regional framework so as to enable the local authorities to deal with their day-to-day and immediate problems, pending the preparation of comprehensive development plans for the respective local centers. On the other end of the continuum, projects of local nature — for instance, the Al Uqayr tourism plan — are also being launched and efforts are being made to conceive these plans within the context of interregional linkages and regional development strategy.

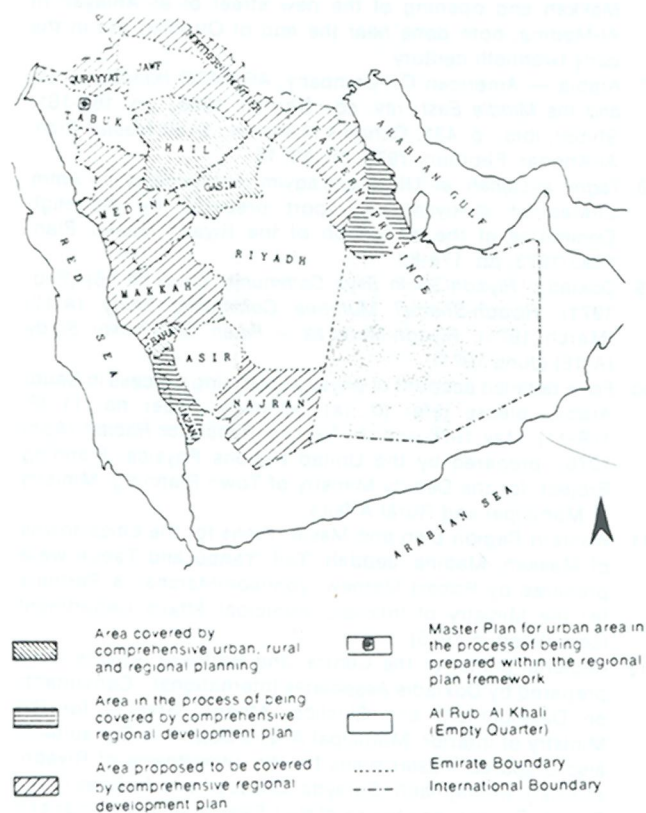


Fig. 4: Saudi Arabia: present status of comprehensive urban, rural and regional development plans undertaken between 1982 and 1985.

Conclusions

The history of comprehensive urban and regional planning in Saudi Arabia is just about fifteen years old. Within this relatively short period, the country has already had four generations of "urban" development plans for its major cities — including the Doxiadis Riyadh Master Plan — and two generations of "regional" development plans, some of which are still in the offing. This intense activity indicates the appreciation and deep commitment of the Saudi government to the cause of planned development.

The unprecedented affluence in the Kingdom during the post 1973 era, due to the increase in oil prices, has resulted in an explosion of urban development. As a consequence, planning has, at times, lagged behind development or, in other cases, plans drawn in haste and based on western concepts got implemented. Although the quality of development is improving rapidly, the transference of western planning theories and civic design concepts has also been taking place along with the transference of technology. Whereas, technology transfer is something to be encouraged, transference of planning concepts developed in the context of an entirely different set of socioeconomic value systems and climatic conditions is highly undesirable and should be jealously guarded against.

The process of comprehensive urban and regional planning in Saudi Arabia has been extremely ambitious and dynamic as compared to the other parts of the world. In fact, Saudi Arabia presents a unique challenge for planned development as it has caught up with the latest technology in a very short time and even skipped some of the sequential developmental processes experienced by western nations over long periods. This challenge has to be faced by the public as well as private sectors through a coordinated partnership of various sectoral agencies at different levels. The government is fully aware of the importance of planning and is taking appropriate steps to:

- create and strengthen the planning institutions;
- undertake plan implementation;
- coordinate the activities of various sectoral ministries;
- undertake continuous updating of development plans; and
- initiate and monitor the preparation of urban and regional plans of new areas so far not covered by development plans.

Obviously such an ambitious program cannot be carried out on a continuous basis without sufficient and properly trained Saudi manpower. Therefore, the program of "on the job training" of Saudi engineers, architects, and persons from other disciplines, which was until now an intermittent and informal activity of the Deputy Ministry of Town Planning, is being instituted and augmented on a regular basis.

The future of urban and regional planning for the remaining period of the 1980s appears very promising. The development of major infrastructural networks, during the 70s and early 80s, has paved the way for the normalization of the relationship between planning and implementation. In addition, efforts are being made, through research studies, to find innovative solutions for

the existing and anticipated challenges in the development process on a continuing basis.

Notes

1. Saudi Arabia, occupying most of the Arabian Peninsula, was founded by King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud by consolidating Nejd, Al-Hasa, Hejaz and Asir provinces along with their dependencies during the period 1902-1932 and renamed as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932.
2. This part is based on Chapters V and VI of Saleh A. Al-Hathloul's doctoral dissertation entitled: "Tradition, continuity and change in the physical environment: The Arab-Muslim city" (MIT Dept. of Architecture, 1981).
3. "Nizam Amanat al-'Asimah wa-al-Baladiyat", *Al-Anzimah*, vol. 1, pp. 11-22. The statute was augmented by the Statute of Municipalities and Villages, issued on 21/12/1397 (11.3.1977).
4. "Nizam al-Turuq wa al-Mabani", *Umm al-Qura*, vols. 18-19, beginning with no. 863, 10/6/1360 (4/7/1941), and ending with no. 912, 5/6/1361 (19/8/1942). Also *Nizam al-Turuq wa al-Mabani* (Makkah, Government Printing Press, 1392/1972). The statute was augmented by several royal decrees and numerous ministerial directives and circulars. Up to June 1976, many of these are documented in *Al-Anzimah*, vol. 1, pp. 54-55; vol. 2, pp. 95-97, 99-111, 191-192; vol. 3, pp. 57-58, 89, 176; vol. 4, pp. 70, 71 (Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia).
5. S.G. SHIBEN, "Report on city growth in the Eastern Province, Saudi Arabia" in his *Recent Arab City Growth* (Kuwait 1967), p. 430.
6. This is the first demolition for the purpose of opening new streets in an existing community in Saudi Arabia, not including, of course, the widening of al-Mas' a Street in Makkah and opening of the new street of al-'Aniyah in Al-Medina, both done near the end of Ottoman era in the early twentieth century.
7. Arabia — American Oil Company, *ARAMCO Handbook, Oil and the Middle East*, rev. ed. (Dharan, 1968), pp. 160-161; Shiber, *ibid.*, p. 431; Candilis Metra Int., Draft Master Plan, Al-Khobar, February 1976, pp. 13, 16.
8. *Taqir al-Lajnah al-'Uliya Li-Taqim al-Mukhatat al-'Amm Li-Madinat al-Riyadh*, a report prepared by the High Committee of the evaluation of the Riyadh Master Plan, 1393/1973, pp. 178-82.
9. Doxiadis, *Riyadh-South Eliya Community Study* (1-16) (Feb. 1971); *Riyadh-Shamal Murabaa Community Study* (A-17) (March 1971); *Riyadh-Murabaa - Futah Community Study* (A-18) (June 1971).
10. For a detailed account of physical planning process in Saudi Arabia, please refer to: (a) Technical Paper no. 11 (P. 1/R-11), May 1976 and (b) *National Report for Habitat* (April 1976), prepared by the United Nations Physical Planning Project, for the Deputy Ministry of Town Planning, Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs.
11. Western Region plan and Master Plans for the cities/towns of Makkah, Madina, Jeddah, Taif, Yanbu and Tabuk were prepared by Robert Mathew, Johnson-Marshall & Partners for the Ministry of Interior, Municipal Affairs Department (completed in 1973).
12. Regional plans for the Central and Northern regions were prepared by Doxiadis Associates International Consultants on Development and Ekistics (Athens, Greece) for the Ministry of Interior, Municipal Affairs Dept. The Consultants also prepared master plans for the cities/towns of Riyadh, Al-Kharj, Al-Majmaah, Burayda, Unayzah and Ar-Raas in the Central Region; and towns of Hail, Skakah Al-Jowf, Ar'ar and Nabk (Al-Qurayet) in the Northern Region. In addition, they also prepared master plans for the village clusters of Al-Aflaj and Tabarjal in the central and northern region respectively (completed 1975).

13. Development plan for the Eastern Region together with the master plans for five towns of Dammam, Al-Ahsa, Al-Khobar, Al-Jubayl and Al-Qatif for a twenty year period were prepared by G. Candilis, Metra International Consultants (Paris, France) for the Ministry of Interior, Municipal Affairs Department (1975/76).
14. Physical Plan for the Southern Region along with the master plans of Abha, Khamis Mushayt, Bishah, Najran and Jazan Town and An-Namas Village Cluster were prepared by Kenzo Tange & UTREC and delivered to the Deputy Ministry of Town Planning, Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs in 1977/78.
15. These Action Master Plans were respectively entrusted to

- the following International Consulting Firms: Messrs. Sert Jackson, SCET International, CH2M Hill International, Group of Arab Consultants for Development and Reconstruction (GACDAR), Speer Plan, Scanplan Sweco & Serete.
16. In addition to these fifteen technical reports, the consultants were required to prepare five more reports: three dealt with the annual evaluation and two with the terminal aspects of the project.
 17. These Regional Development Plans have, respectively, been entrusted to the following consulting firms: Messrs. CH2M Hill International, RSH International & Al Rajhi Consulting Engineers Joint Venture, Darul Handasa, Norconsult A.S., and Finnplanco — Ahmed A. Hajjar.

Islamabad is already twenty five

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Introduction

We first heard the name of Islamabad in 1961 in Athens. For South Asian Muslims at the time, the name had a magical ring. It symbolized the arrival of an Islamic nation based upon Indian culture. It was supposed to fuse together the speakers of Bengali and the speakers of Urdu into a single system of authority underlaid by the Quran itself.

The rulers of Pakistan at the time believed the functional capital of the new state, Karachi, was too business-oriented and irreverent. They felt the country deserved a fresh start. In the fashion of the Mogul emperors, where each dynasty created its own capital city, they would make history. The rulers, drawn from the old feudal elites of the country and trained at Sandhurst with the scions of landed gentry, imagined a *pure* city, unblemished by squatter settlements, slums, or "sinful" precincts. They would motivate those who were Muslim to migrate to a promised land of their own. Although they came from all over India, the people who came the furthest were commonly labeled by the source of their weakest, least educated contingent — the Bihari, who fled from the rain-fed, drought-prone state of Bihar. The population included mainly the idealists from India who sought a cause which was epitomized by Islamabad.

Doxiadis secured the contract, in part because he had already been designing for the refugee Bihari in an internationally sponsored community, called Korangi, a "new town" for Karachi. He was sure he could design without making the mistakes that were made in the design of Brasilia and Chandigarh, and even Canberra — he had spent two years in Australia unable to practice except to serve the U.N.

By 1961 the surveys of the chosen site were complete, and the desires of the government had become known. The mountains skirting the valley outside Rawalpindi, the old summer capital of the province of Punjab had serrated tops not dissimilar from those overlooking the plains of Attica behind Athens, although the rock here was darker and the slopes were greener. A place for a reservoir had been found. The site had been thinly settled because the soil was rain-fed hardpan. Just as in Greece, thorny brush survived that could repel the goats. The established houses had flat roofs, a tell-tale sign of low rainfall, and the poorest refugees still lived in mud-daub huts with thatched roofs. The hill-station, Murree, was only 60 km away, so relief from the blazing heat of May and June, and the hot, sultry period expected in August and September, was convenient. The British in Pindi had already laid down a calendar for making life livable. Malaria, cholera, and all the other epidemics had been left in Lahore and the cities to the south, or far to the east in Dacca and Chittagong.

The design decisions

By 1962, a three dimensional model was emerging from the podium in the center of the tiny, 40 person, Greek

