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**Salama, Ashraf M. (2015) Urban traditions in the contemporary lived space of cities on the Arabian Peninsula. Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review, 27 (1). pp. 21-39. ISSN 1050-2092 ,**

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# URBAN TRADITIONS IN THE CONTEMPORARY LIVED SPACE OF CITIES IN THE ARABIAN PENINSULA

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- CONTEXTUALIZING TRADITION WITHIN THE GEO-CULTURAL POLITICS OF THE ARABIAN PENINSULA
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## URBAN TRADITIONS IN THE CONTEMPORARY LIVED SPACE OF CITIES IN THE ARABIAN PENINSULA

This article aims to answer the question of whose tradition in the Arabian Peninsula. It first contextualizes tradition within the geo-cultural politics of the Arab World, and then identifies key factors that shaped traditional settlements including tribal governance, social system, building materials and construction techniques. The article puts forward an argument about how urban traditions were transformed from those shaped by common people to those being shaped by the elite; where the role of rulers is heavily emphasized. Representative urban scenes in the contemporary lived space with case examples for the cities of Dubai and Doha are critically analyzed. They are articulated in terms of the emergence of elite enterprises, the persistent patterns of social and ethnic segregation, and the continuous struggle for constructing identity. While a conclusion is drawn from these urban scenes delineating key answers to the question of whose tradition, a framework for examining urban traditions is introduced to highlight that the lived space and the traditions ensued cannot be seen in isolation from other types of spaces such as the conceived and perceived spaces and there needs to be a cycle of knowledge that integrate the three toward a better understanding of urban traditions.

Cities on the Arabian Peninsula are continuously witnessing vivid turns that represent a diverse spectrum of intents and attitudes. What is now the rapidly emerging global region was a series of oases settlements or fishing hamlets and later small port settlements just a few decades ago. The relationship between the ruler and ruled have changed to asymmetric power affiliation. From a tribal tradition of people making their decisions about their own environment under a tribal leadership, the 'Modern State' became an organizing body and a legal authority that represents the will of its people. It gave itself the right to intervene and make decisions about people's most aspects of life.<sup>1</sup>

Guided by the principles of the 'Modern State,' the region is in a continuous process of repositioning itself on the map of international architecture and urbanism with different types of expression of its qualities in terms of economy, environment, culture, and global outlook. The concerned and concerted reactions to the global condition in the form of economic diversification have become an integral component of most national development strategies. Since the beginning of the new millennium, all GCC countries are actively involved in developing and promoting oil and gas-independent economies, predominantly in sectors such as trade, finance, tourism, sports, and culture. These developments are clear evidence of emerging qualities specific to the urban environment in cities on the Peninsula. Within these qualities the dominant urban tradition of the past has already been altered and new types of urban traditions are emerging requiring different types of conceptualization, contextualization, and rigorous investigation.

## **CONTEXTUALIZING TRADITION WITHIN THE GEO-CULTURAL POLITICS OF THE ARABIAN PENINSULA**

Within contextual geo-cultural politics of the Arabian Peninsula, one can identify an amalgam of influences that include 'Mediterraneanism,' 'Middle Easternism,' 'Pan-Arabism,' and 'Islamism.' These stimuli, however, being constructs serving political and ideological ends, they are of heuristic value, posing questions of meaning, identity, and the sharing of urban and existential values at a regional scale.

The Arabian Peninsula continues to have strong ties with government, cultural, and religious institutions of Levantine and Mediterranean countries. The threads of Mediterranean cultural and economic unity have been woven and intertwined through centuries of trade and cultural exchange and as such is actually a type of globalization, albeit on a much a smaller scale. These centuries-old cultural and economic connections have resulted in substantial influences that can be clearly seen within models of cultural politics. Further, in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was also the important influence of 'Pan-Arabism;' a secular Arab nationalist ideology designed to constitute one huge Arabo-Islamic nation comprised of different societies, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Arabian Sea, linked together by common linguistic, cultural, and religious ties, and a shared historical heritage. More recently, there has also been the less direct influence of 'Islamism,' a revivalist ideology that has largely displaced 'Pan-Arabism.' Across the Peninsula, the influence of 'Islamism' may also be coming from the rigid ideologies of contemporary Iran or the conservatism flowing from Saudi Arabia, the heartland of the Peninsula, or even the recent controversial Islamist movements.

In the world of cultural politics it would appear that 'Mediterraneanism' took a back seat in recent debates while other competing forces such as the Arab League, European Union and 'Middle Easternism' have emerged. European debates on the Mediterranean however, manifest two attitudes: the first perceives it as a bridge in terms of history and culture, while the second sees it as a line of division or barrier. The first refuses Huntington's thesis of the 'Clash of Civilizations,'<sup>2</sup> while the second reflects the typical North- South conflict as expressed in a growing fortress mentality that has only one interest; closing the frontiers against the culture of the south for merely political purposes. In this context, scholars voiced the opinion that an attempt to re-build the Euro-Arab partnership is critically needed. 'Middle Easternism,' on the other hand, was introduced to the world community from the 1950s for this region to be more inclusive and accommodating other non-Arab countries.

'Mediterraneanism' and 'Middle Easternism' have been described as 'partnership' and 'conflicting' models. They have, however, several features in common. Both include polar partners and in the context of globalization none of the partners can ignore others where the main characteristic is the downfall of barriers between regions and societies.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, some voices from poorer Arab nations are now arguing that the globalization paradigm is paused since local problems—exemplified by economic hardship, poverty, and political instability—are much stronger in influence than the idea of a global world and thus its potential was never realized. Other voices from oil and gas based economies are receptive to the global condition, recognizing the positive impact of globalization on urbanism and development.

'Pan-Arabism' is a secular Arab nationalist ideology, founded in the late 1920s by Michel Aflaq, but championed lucratively by former Egyptian president Gamal Abdul Nasser who called for the rejuvenation and political union in the Arab world. The core premise of Arab nationalism is that the societies of the Arab World, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Arabian Sea, constitute one nation bound together by common linguistic, cultural, religious, and historical heritage. Nasser capitalized on the anti-imperialist public feeling of the 1950s to become the leader of a Pan-Arab ideology, which attempted to encourage a program of modernization and secularization.<sup>4</sup> This program met opposition from Muslim traditionalists. By the late 1960s, 'Pan-Arabism' declined after what is called 'Arab defeat' in the six-day war. The rise of 'Islamism,' offered an ideology that largely displaced 'Pan-Arabism,' but was also challenged by 'nationalist particularism' that became the norm in most Arab countries since the late 1970s.

Cultural politics in recent years has had significant impact on development, architecture, and urbanism. Although 'Mediterraneanism,' 'Middle Easternism,' 'Pan-Arabism' and 'Islamism' are constructs that serve political ends they bring into focus questions about collective identity and the sharing of deeper meanings at the cultural and human existence levels. The unique cultural and geopolitical position of the Peninsula, coupled with the contemporary global condition, created a rich soil for urban experimentation where a number of voices have emerged toward originating identity and in search of meaning.<sup>5</sup> While establishing correlations between cultural politics and urban tradition is a challenging quest, the result of cultural politics discourse is that architecture and cities continue to be labeled, debated, and referred to as 'Arabic,' 'Islamic,' 'Mediterranean,' 'Gulf,' 'Kuwaiti,' 'Qatari,' 'Saudi,' etc.

In questioning whether cultural politics can or can not generate a discourse on urban tradition, I refer to key interpretations of 'tradition.' Depicting some of the characteristics of urban traditions of cities and settlements in the Arabian Peninsula, the postulation of Henry Glassie in his classical article that *all architecture is the embodiment of cultural norms that pre-exist individual buildings*<sup>6</sup> seems to enable a validation that constructs such as Mediterraneanism or Islamism can signify the shaping of built environments in this region collectively. The spread of certain architectural or urban elements such as balconies, terraces, or plazas and public spaces that have originated in one context—Northern Mediterranean, became a norm in other parts of the Arabian Peninsula. The spatial practice of a specific community, such the various expressions to achieve or regulate interaction of an individual with others, seem to have been manifested in various parts of the Peninsula, reflecting a specific religious doctrine. In essence, I argue that manifestations of cultural norms are not only instigated from within a society or a local community but can also be comprehended as influences borrowed or imported from other contexts.

Ostensibly, the multiplicity of views, interpretations, and definitions of 'tradition,' as a concept, which were critiqued by Alsayyad in his latest book *Traditions: The "Real", the Hyper, and the Virtual in the Built Environment* as well as his earlier writings,<sup>7</sup> reveal deeper insights into the understanding of urban traditions in the peninsula. The traditionality of the process and that of the product proposed by Rapoport offer insights in this context.<sup>8</sup> The outcomes of cultural norms and practices both in the past and the present of the Peninsula involve processes, tribal affiliations, contemporary decision-making capacities, ruling and social systems, and family structures that form integral parts of a process by which the built environment is produced.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the analysis of governance models and social orders and agents within a society become critical when debating urban tradition.<sup>10</sup>

Urban tradition is not necessarily representing what is 'authentic.' Current practices suggest that tradition could be imagined, manufactured, and packaged, and sold,<sup>11</sup> where debates of academics and intellectuals always suggest the recycling of elements of traditional architecture as a way of perpetrating character upon the city. Old palaces or souqs were refurbished to become cultural enterprises and potentially visual references for future practices. This is clearly palpable in the rise of the reconstruction of historical buildings, real or imagined, such as Bastakiya district in Dubai and Souq Waqif in Doha, or commercial projects developed around historic cores or on waterfront developments such

Kasr Al Hokm in Riyadh or Souq Sharq in Kuwait. These are examples of interventions that utilize traditional imaging at various scales to impress local societies by their roots and at the same time vaunt the marketing profile of the city. More recent examples of urban regeneration that utilize elements from traditional settlements attempt to depict a real or imagined past such as Msheireb urban regeneration project in the heart of Doha. The project was instigated, and is being supported, by the ruling family to create a contemporary national urban image.

In expanding the discussion on the contextualization of tradition in the Arabian Peninsula it is evident that geo-cultural politics as constructs can enable a discussion on tradition. Nonetheless and in parallel, the growing interest in 'nationalist particularism' manifest itself in many interventions in cities on the Peninsula. In this respect, urban traditions can be valued at the interface between the dominance of regional or national or local culture including its underlying value system and the power and governance structures that have the capacity to influence such a culture by the decisions they make. Such an understanding is apparent when looking at how rulers are making decisions about land use, public spaces, and the overall urban environment in cities such as Dubai and Doha.

The preceding understandings convey that primarily urban tradition is changing; a view that was emphasized by many critics who argued that tradition is amenable to change.<sup>12</sup> However, such an awareness of change mandates an understanding of what constitutes continuity as contended by Jefferson Pocock who stated, "*awareness of the past is in fact society's awareness of its continuity.*"<sup>13</sup> Within the awareness of continuity the critical question raised by IASTE-2014 Conference in Kuala Lumpur: '*Whose Tradition?*' becomes a requisite for the discussion. How the present condition of urbanism of cities in the Arabian Peninsula came to be what it is and so the fundamental questions of tradition of whom, by whom, and for whom become vital in establishing perceptiveness on urban tradition in such a context.

## **PRE-OIL FACTORS PRODUCING TRADITIONAL SETTLEMENTS**

In the pre-oil era the process of developing settlements throughout the Arabian Peninsula was a collective effort based on local practices instead of a formal idea or plan imposed by a central authority (FIG 1). The factors that produced traditional settlements can be identified in two terms. The first is tribal traditions that acted as a system of governance imbuing a sense of law and regulation. The second is local knowledge that represented a

complete system of designing, extracting materials from the natural environment, and developing appropriate construction techniques.

Historically, tribal affiliation and family structure were the key factor of survival in the Peninsula. Strong social networks and kinship groups helped weaker members to survive and the clear hierarchy with a tribal leader as the *sheikh* made for an effective organization that advocated and defended common interests. The size and wealth of a tribe determined the amount of land that it had under its control and jurisdiction. As a result of the constant struggle for survival in a harsh environment, many tribal conflicts and wars occurred during the course of the history of the Arabian Peninsula; the need for protection and support led to the establishment of tribal alliances with a strong clan and kinship identity.

*Fig.1: Major settlements in the Arabian Peninsula in the pre-oil era*

From generation to generation tribes passed on the knowledge they gained on how to build settlements and houses that were well suited to climatic and environmental constraints. One example of this is the construction of wind towers, a traditional and practical Persian architectural feature designed to keep dwellings comfortably cool, introduced by Persian merchants, builders and craftsmen who migrated to and settled at various harbors and hamlets along the Gulf coast.

Apart from buildings designed to combat the exigencies of the harsh desert climate, the requirements of the Islamic faith prescribed stringent building rules and principles to ensure the appropriate privacy and separation necessary to adhere to its teachings. Such privacy was ensured by following specified building regulations such as a designated minimum building height or constructing bent entrances; these features made it impossible for passers-by to view the inside of someone's house. In such communities, the Friday mosque, besides its function as a religious center, was also the most important public arena for the community and communal events. It was often used as a courthouse to arbitrate disputes or dispense justice, or as a religious school, particularly in smaller settlements.<sup>14</sup>

Land was usually distributed and shared between tribes and their clans. The leading *sheikh* was the most important personage in such a community; he had to reconcile issues and disputes and was therefore in charge of resolving arguments about buildings and land; he also coordinated the allocation of land for public use such as mosques, cemeteries or markets. His judgments, normally based on cultural norms and social rules, were unchallengeable and perceived as laws.<sup>15</sup> These laws helped to clarify



issues about streets and their use and control social problems such as noise, or environmental concerns like pollution, that might cause disturbance or harm. In addition, regulations regarding overlooking elements, such as roofs or balconies, walls between neighbors and their rights of ownership, as well as the use, and even the drainage, of rain and wastewater were considered part of these laws.<sup>16</sup> These settlements were primarily built by the collective efforts of each clan who followed traditional building regulations and injunctions to employ prescribed construction techniques based on centuries-old knowledge of the use and application of local building materials.

An oasis settlement was characterized by the strong segregation of public and private life, wherein private housing and shelter occupied the most land. Smaller alleys led from the main roads to the private homes of the oasis settlers. The narrowness of the streets and the tight spaces between buildings had two major purposes, on the one hand, to maximize land use within the settlement and, on the other, to provide cooling and welcome shade as the close proximity of the buildings and walls of neighboring houses were used as natural protection from the sun for the streets and passageways and the houses that lined them<sup>17</sup> (FIG. 2). Additionally, the network of narrow side roads and cul-de-sacs or dead-end alleys served to reinforce the private character of these neighborhoods, known as *fareej*; they were developed by a system of branching side streets, which ended in a cellular arrangement of houses of related clans and kinsfolk.

*Fig.2: A typical structure of a traditional settlement (left) - A typical structure of a traditional neighborhood; fareej (right)*

The architecture of oasis settlements was generally uniform due to the application of the same building rules and traditions and the use of the same materials and construction techniques; this resulted in similar settlement typologies with some minor variations.<sup>18</sup> As well, differences in typologies were based on the unique particularities of a locality. In addition to the traditional courtyard house, which formed the most common housing typology, simple cubic buildings were often built in remote desert settlements.<sup>19</sup> The flat rooftops were important as open-air spaces that the family could use for cooking or sleeping in the hot summer months. The ground floor, which normally had very few window openings for privacy purposes, was often used as a storage space and as a private *majlis* where male guests were received. Only in the cold winter months were the ground floors favored as housing space for the family; in addition to the rooftops, the first floors were used as a private living area for socializing and sleeping. In some settlements, it was common for first floors to be extended over the street to link to the neighboring

house opposite. Such a room bridging a street was called a *sabat*, which provided an increase in private living space and additional shaded areas for the streets (FIG. 3).

*Fig.3: A traditional alleyway with a sabat dominating the setting*

Building materials that were generally available in the local context usually determined architectural form; for instance, in settlements along the coast, where apart from sun-dried adobe, readily available coral stone and gypsum were often used for constructing walls. However, poor families often lived in *barasti* huts, which were simple structures, made of date palm fronds. Further inland adobe, deposits of which could be found along the *wadis* or dry riverbeds, was used as basic building material for walls and ceilings; these were supported by strong beams made of palm trunks. The positioning of narrow rectangular openings in the walls helped to cool down the indoor temperature by providing natural ventilation. Located in the wall slightly above the floor and further up, just below the ceiling, these small apertures helped to maintain constant airflow movement and exchange. This system of natural ventilation was perfected by the introduction of Persian wind towers; these functional structures were up to fifteen meters in height with separate chambers, for catching the wind currents and releasing the air (FIG. 4). Although the architectural design was mainly characterized by such adaptations to external climate conditions, there was also a widespread use of ornamental features such as wooden screens, geometrical block-outs or crenulated roofs to decorate or personalize spaces and façades.

*Fig.4: A typical wind tower, a characteristic of traditional architecture in the gulf*

## **FROM THE TRADITION OF THE ORDINARY TO THE TRADITION OF THE ELITE**

Throughout the history of the Peninsula it is evident that most of architecture and urban traditions were shaped by common people without the help of professionals. However, there were series of key incidents that reveal important roots toward understanding the what, who, why, and how of urban traditions in recent years. Since World War I, the peninsula has been witnessing continuous transformations with varied paces of development relevant to the intensity, value, and impact of key socio-political, cultural, or socio-economic incidents. A mapping of these and their relevancy to shaping urban tradition was undertaken.<sup>20</sup> While such a mapping may delineate that impact of socio-political structures, it conveys the continuous impact of political, economical, organizational events on shaping the urban environment. Thus, the role of governments and rulers should be underscored.

In the western Arabian Peninsula, along the coast of the Red Sea, the fishing town of Jeddah and its nearby settlements and hamlets developed into a major harbor city. Jeddah was the ancient arrival point for many devout Muslim pilgrims heading to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. Although the western part of the peninsula from Jerusalem to Sana'a was under the control and administration of the Ottoman caliphate from the 16th to the beginning of the 20th century, the influence of the Ottoman rulers on the built environment was rather minimal apart from the importation of certain building materials and construction techniques. The most important cities in the western part of the Arabian Peninsula were Mecca and Medina because of their religious significance and therefore decisive political and religious role. Many smaller settlements were founded in the western highlands and the central plateau, including the fortified hamlet of Riyadh. Riyadh was a traditional crossroads for two important caravan routes, one of which was connected to the coasts of the Gulf, while the other led to more established settlements along the Red Sea; as a result of its strategic location and importance, Riyadh soon developed into a flourishing oasis town.

In the context of their history and the geopolitical location of Gulf cities, astute regional rulers recognized the potential to develop them into viable trading hubs between Asia, Europe and Africa. On the other side of the Peninsula and along the Gulf coast, a number of deep-water harbors have been built in order to increase capacities for global trade. In addition to harbors, international airports have been eventually established then expanded and new airports launched in order to create air cargo and passenger hubs. The development of trade as an essential part of a future economy has been accelerated through the introduction of the concept of 'free trade zones' (FTZ) in the Gulf by the Emirate of Dubai. In 1985, the first FTZ was established in Jebel Ali, this attracted many companies because of minimal or no taxation and modern, sophisticated infrastructure. Reduced bureaucratic requirements and less restrictive labor legislation have attracted the interest of international entrepreneurs and investors in establishing businesses in Dubai. Similarly, over the following decade, several FTZs were founded in the Emirate Kuwait, the Kingdom of Bahrain and, most particularly in other emirates in the UAE. The size of FTZs, which have generally been located near airports or harbors, varies large industrial areas such as Jebel Ali Free Trade Zone in Dubai or Science Parks such as Qatar Science and Technology Park (QSTP) in Doha.

One of the unique aspects of contemporary urbanism in the Gulf is the new generation of desert and coastal cities supplied with state-of-the-art infrastructure, partially

designed to attract global investment and well-trained expatriate residents that will help transform these newly built shells into vibrant and desirable hubs. As a result, urban governance in Gulf cities has been the initiator and facilitator of space for evolving economic interaction and transnational practices, as for example, recent public investment in the development of infrastructure and the promotion of attractive marketing and branding strategies and perks to attract international attention. This has resulted in the cities themselves becoming brands for investment; today's regional rulers have found themselves in the role of CEOs managing urban development as a 'business idea.'<sup>21</sup> The majority of knowledge-economies that initially relocated to the Gulf in connection with the execution of these 'business ideas' have mostly been investment banks and construction-related companies.

As a direct consequence of the growing role of the private sector in urban development, major developers have started to operate as managers of large-scale developments and blueprints, in the form of new housing districts (FIG. 5), business parks and mixed-use projects. One interesting transformation is the fact that the public sector has now taken over the government's former function of organizing and developing the infrastructural supply of these projects. However, all decisions related to the major planning of developments and the distribution of land have remained in the hands of the rulers and their top officials, many of whom have become direct or indirect associates and sponsors of these developments. Although planning authorities remain in control at the helm, real estate developers have more freedom and opportunities to design and implement development master plans individually with far fewer restrictions. This new decentralized form of governance, based on case-by-case decision-making, has led to new dynamics in urban developments and rapid growth on one hand, and an increasing lack of infrastructural consolidation on the other. In essence, in most cities in the Gulf, the liberalization and opening up of markets driven by a hub vision, in combination with large-scale public investments, has resulted in and impacted on a new urban transformation process (FIG 6).

*Fig.5: Emerging high-rise housing districts, a characteristic of the urban environment in most gulf cities*

*Fig.6: A typical structure of a contemporary Gulf city (left) – Waterfront high-rise agglomerations and developments on reclaimed lands (right)*

At the dawn of the new millennium, regional rulers, decision-makers, and top government officials started to demonstrate a stronger and more attentive interest in architecture, urban development projects and real estate investment; this concerted interest and attention have resulted in a new influential phase impacting on the

development of architecture and urbanism in the Arabian Peninsula. With such a focused and vested interest and investment, it can be argued that a departure from the typical understanding of tradition which is created by and for ordinary people to an emerging understanding that present itself at the interface between the authority and the public. Today, many cities in the are experiencing rapid growth coupled with fast track urbanization processes; this is marked by large-scale projects, new educational and residential environments, and mixed-use developments that serve specific segments of society; the rich and affluent rather than the masses.<sup>22</sup>

## **SCENES FROM THE CONTEMPORARY LIVED SPACE**

The contemporary urban condition has primarily resulted from partnerships of rulers and investors and large-scale developers. The impacts of the new planning strategies have also stemmed from various responses to adapt to and accommodate global flows.<sup>23</sup> Such an urban condition can be articulated in two representative urban scenes pertinent to debating urban traditions. The two scenes are culled from governance and urban practices over the past 15 years in two rapidly growing cities; Dubai and Doha.

### ***SCENE 1: ELITE ENTERPRISES AND SOCIAL SEGREGATION***

One of the far-reaching effects of decentralizing urban governance and decision-making has been the emergence of a new urban phenomenon, known as “cities within the city,” or CiC, which can be observed in all major cities of the Peninsula, in particular Gulf cities.<sup>24</sup> While such cities are usually client-particular due to their large-scale developments, spatial quality, iconic design, exclusivity, and the fact that they stem from public-private-partnerships, unfortunately, these new cluster developments in actuality have a negative impact on urban growth. This is due to the fact that their very exclusivity generates disengaged urban fragmentation that in turn promotes divisive social segregation. In the past fifteen years, the oil-impooverished Emirate of Dubai has been pioneering such types of exclusive development, beginning with its early initiative in 1999 to introduce freehold property rights for its first large-scale project, “Emirates Hills,” in the northern suburb of Jumeirah. The project was developed by the newly founded real estate company Emaar, of which 33 percent of shares are actually owned by the rulers of Dubai.<sup>25</sup> In the following decade, a number of new real estate development companies were established, many of which are subsidiaries of public holdings, in order to initiate iconic and unprecedentedly ambitious urban projects. One such example, the private island and holiday-destination

project, “World Islands” launched in 2009, is an archipelago consisting of man-made islands resembling a map of the world.

In vigorous competition with Dubai, Doha has introduced similar urban growth strategies encouraged by policies liberalizing markets and the establishment of real estate development companies with public shares. Despite the fact that several luxury construction projects launched in Dubai have not yet been sold, this has not deterred property developers from launching comparable projects in cities such as Doha in terms of branding and scale (FIG. 7). Today, three main types of CiC projects can be identified: mixed-use projects, tourism projects, and FEZ projects. While mixed-use CiC projects integrate commercial facilities in the form of retail districts and malls, tourism projects typically provide areas for resorts, marinas, theme parks, and promenades (FIG. 8).

*Fig.7: Artificial and reclaimed island developments in Dubai (top) and Doha (bottom), an example of CiC mixed-use projects*

*Fig.8: Promenades around Burj Khalifa development in Dubai (top) – Pearl Qatar development marina and promenade in Doha (bottom)*

A very recent phenomenon is the newly established satellite cities that usually consist of several CiC projects. While tourism projects are mainly located at waterfronts, where they are often developed on reclaimed land or man-made islands, FEZ projects are typically located at the junctions of main infrastructural networks. One of the most significant characteristics of these development types is their planning process, which is usually carried out independently from general master planning strategies adopted and approved by local authorities and the public sector. Consequently, despite the reliance on public infrastructure, many projects developed by major real estate companies actually formulate their own building and planning controls and guidelines. This laissez-faire approach has resulted in unprecedented rapid and sometimes shoddy urban and suburban growth, where these development projects give their back to the city. Thus, Consolidating new and existing urban structures has become a major challenge for contemporary urbanism in both in Dubai and Doha.

The new development strategies endorsed by the rulers of Gulf States have had a significant impact on both urban structure and architectural development. The decentralization of planning decision-making has led to the increasing influence of private and semi-public developers and wealthy property tycoons. These have initiated master-plan projects in the form of exclusive man-made islands, attractive but isolated new suburban districts, and mixed-use cities and residential enclaves within the primary city such as Palm Island in Dubai or Pearl Qatar. While newly initiated master-developers

launched impressive and eye-catching large-scale development projects, high-rise agglomerations were also being built along the urban periphery. These peripheral projects have resulted in new purpose-designed business districts, as ancillary support hubs, emerging along main growth corridors, like Sheikh Zayed Road in Dubai and West Bay in Doha (FIG 9).<sup>26</sup> Due to disinterested laissez-faire policies, areas previously designated as low-rise, low-density residential districts were subjected to unbridled development and are now frequently characterized by disparate clusters of mixed-use residential and commercial high-rises often populated by unattractive, closely packed tower blocks. This energetic construction activity has been fuelled by the exponential need for housing and commercial establishments due to rapid influx of migrant labor and expatriate workers<sup>27</sup> as well as investment pressures. In addition to high-rise clusters and master plan development projects, urban sprawl in the form of low-rise housing projects has continued at the periphery of major cities. In spite of concerted efforts to revitalize old or historical centers, the focus of the development has primarily been on the urban periphery due to lower land prices and higher accessibility, and along waterfronts dramatically expanded by land reclamation.<sup>28</sup>

*Fig.9: The modern business district along Sheikh Zayed road in Dubai (top) – Emerging West Bay waterfront development in Doha (bottom)*

Coupled with these elite developments a characteristic of urbanism in most Gulf cities is the presence of certain segregation patterns due to new real estate typologies and the extensive inflow of a medium- to high-income expatriate workforce and their families. The residences of higher income expatriate groups were initially located on the fringes of the historic center cores, where the first compounds were usually built as gated communities, and thus, as a rule, maintained the existent segregation patterns preferred by the locals. However, the recent surge in construction activities has given rise to new locations for this type of housing on the peripheries of cities where established local communities and neighborhoods already exist. In addition to compounds geared towards well-paid expatriates, a new residential typology—the serviced apartment and apartment hotels—has emerged. Such high-rental apartments are generally located in residential high-rises and tower blocks built in key sites within cities, often close to business areas or service locations, again along Sheikh Zayed Road in Dubai and at the West Bay in Doha.

In addition to Dubai, the city of Doha clearly exemplifies this growing phenomenon where, upon close examination, undeniable segregation patterns are revealed. For instance, in order to prevent over-crowding in Doha's central areas and residential

neighborhoods as well as to maintain prevalent segregation patterns, low-income groups and laborers are often housed in insalubrious areas located in the southern periphery of the city. One such locale is the Industrial Area where low rentals encourage employers and sponsors to house their technical staff and laborers in cheap accommodation (FIG. 10). These inadequate, crowded, and substandard accommodations have recently attracted international scrutiny and negative commentary. The lack of affordable accommodation for this employee sector is a growing problem that some property companies have tried to address.<sup>29</sup> While such initiatives are an attempt to provide appropriate yet affordable housing for laborers and low-wage earners, the peripheral location of such housing continues extant residential segregations patterns. As such, these prevailing patterns of segregation have resulted in forming “island” communities of expatriate workers that only serve to increase residential fragmentation. In this regard, one would argue that this represents a new type of urbanism that demonstrate a new form contemporary tradition. In effect, accommodation segregation is practiced deliberately in order to maintain the status quo by reserving housing areas for certain groups of the population (FIG. 11). This endorsement is partially based on exorbitant property prices as well as a keen desire to keep neighborhoods primarily populated by local citizens as separate as possible.

*Fig.10: An example of a labor camp in Al Quoz District in Dubai (top) – An example of labor compound in the Industrial Area in Doha (bottom)*

*Fig.11: Very similar, if not identical, spatial practice of labor communities in Dubai (top) and Doha (bottom)*

On the other hand, while high-income groups mainly reside in the north and west peripheries of Doha, low- to medium-income groups generally live in marginalized shabby or derelict housing in congested city core neighborhoods which are being demolished so that the employers of these groups are forced to move them to substandard and often appalling accommodations in peripheral industrial areas in the south.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, since the local population is only a small minority of the total population (approximately 15 per cent), there is no coherent majority within Doha’s society apart from the extremely diverse groups of expatriates. The most well represented groups of expatriates are South Asians from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Prominently, segregation patterns between nationals and expatriates are zealously maintained. Furthermore, constraints to developing a less anonymous and more integrated society are also due to the continuous labor movement patterns and exchange of a large percentage of the expatriate workforce on a regular basis.<sup>31</sup>



In their desire to maintain the existing status quo, possibly due to the morbid fear of “cultural contamination” and negative influence, little effort has been made by decision-makers to develop more integrated environments and public realms to be used as platforms for an emerging society.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, there is some, very limited, mixing in the cultural venues and shopping malls which are the most frequently used leisure and entertainment spaces for higher income groups; low-income groups, however, usually shop and stay close to their residences, a clear indication of social and income demarcation which extends beyond residential patterns. This shopping pattern is due in part to unavailability of public transport as most low-income workers depend on the inadequate and infrequent bus service provided one public transportation company only in Qatar. Most bus routes require two or three transfers, a further discouragement to venturing too far away from home turf. In addition, many of these low-paid workers cannot afford to hire taxis that are expensive and hard to find. In view of these exclusionary residential policies and practices, as a new form of tradition it can be argued that the contemporary society and social fabric of Doha is built on a plurality of parallel societies living in various segregated environments in very different living conditions and standards.

### ***SCENE 2: STRUGGLING FOR CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY***

The narrative of expressing cultural identity through architecture and urban form has been typically represented on the map of architectural and urban discourse, not only in the Gulf region but also throughout the Arab world. Examination of the notion of identity in contemporary literature reveals divergent interpretations; for example, while some theorists see the quest for identity as a human need, others regard it as a process of constructing meaning on the basis of giving priority to a set of cultural attributes over other sources of meaning. However, in architecture and urbanism, identity can be further envisioned as the collective aspect of a set of characteristics by which a building or a portion of the urban environment is definitively recognizable.

Issues that pertain to identity and character in Gulf architecture have been the topic of fervent debate, the more so because of this region’s contradictory state of both cultural exclusivity and plurality. However, it is this very cultural uniqueness that has made the debate a tough pursuit and has, in many cases, culminated into a type of overt and occasionally crass symbolism that is painful to comprehend. Some critics question the seeming necessity to use cultural or religious symbolism in architecture to reflect or maintain a specific identity while others argue that Gulf architecture should embody the

collective aspirations of societies in this region. Still others query the need to debate architectural and urban identity at all, claiming that such debates merely display a lack of “self-confidence” as a region or as a group of nations. In effect, the on-going debates in the contemporary architectural scene show that we still seem to be at odds with the issue of identity.

Charles Correa defines identity as a process, not a found object, and not a self-conscious process. He posits that our search for identity could give us a much greater sensitivity not only to our environment, but also to ourselves and to the society in which we live.<sup>33</sup> Hall similarly argues: “*cultural identity is a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’ and it belongs to the future as much as to the past.*”<sup>34</sup> Two polar qualities in Hall’s position reflect a more in- depth understanding of identity: one relates to similarity and continuity, while the other recounts difference and rupture. In actuality, contemporary architecture in the Gulf vividly exemplifies this contrasting yet somehow complementary duality. In essence, identity can be represented by three cogent underlying characteristics: a) the permanence over time of a subject unaffected by environmental changes below a certain threshold level, b) the notion of unity, which establishes the limits of a subject and enables us to distinguish it from the others, and c) a relationship between two elements, which enables us to recognize them as identical.<sup>35</sup> Together these characteristics suggest permanence, recognition, and distinction and determine the presence of identity in a physical object, a work of architecture, or a portion of a built environment.

In attempting to construct architectural identity in the Gulf, it should be noted that identities can be invented and endorsed, in some cases, by the various, cultural, social, and political institutions decision- makers impose and decree, which are often self-indulgent schemes and realizations of key personal preferences. In other instances, identities are created by property developers whose main interest is based on economic concerns, market logic, and market demands rather than social needs or environmental concerns. Within this tightly controlled context, some architects and urban designers are in continual conflict constantly criticizing and evaluating their own versions of modern and postmodern architecture against prevailing contemporary practices and discourse which may suggest and promote the recycling of traditional architecture and its elements as a way of establishing and imposing a more meaningful character in the contemporary city. Examples of this approach are evident in conservation and reconstruction efforts like those in old Bastakiya quarter in Dubai or those carried out in Souq Waqif in Doha (FIG. 12).

*Fig. 12: Recycled traditional architecture. Bastakiya quarter in Dubai (left) and Souq Waqif in Doha (right)*

Another approach is to establish visual references borrowed from the past, either real or imagined, and to utilize these in contemporary buildings. Historical architectural revivalism is one of the paradigms that characterize such schemes. With a view to constructing a recognizable architectural identity, some architects adopt and adapt a selection of historic features derived from Arabic and Islamic heritage. They believe that simulating or even fabricating history in contemporary buildings can help establish a sense of belonging and forge strong emotional ties between society, place memory, and contemporary interventions. Mina Al Salam at Jumeirah Beach in Dubai and Al-Fanar Islamic and Cultural Center in Doha, are just two structures that manifest this composite approach (FIG. 13), further examples of which can be found in many other urban settings in the two cities. Underpinning these two approaches and in order to boast and boost the profile of their capital cities, Gulf rulers, governments, and officials typically adopt projects upholding traditional imaging to excite local society with a carefully contrived reconstruction and reimagining of their origins and traditions. In this respect, AlSayyad argues, and rightly so, that “... *A particular tradition is made so obvious and apparent that outsiders can see it... its mere legibility does not by itself make it a tradition.*”<sup>36</sup>

*Fig.13: Instituting visual references (local & regional) as an approach to construct identity: Mina Al Salam in Dubai (left), and Al-Fanar Islamic and Cultural Center in Doha (right)*

Addressing and visually representing tradition and modernity is another paradigm that necessitates international architects to construct architectural identity as they or their clients conceive it. Tradition in this respect can be regarded either as an internal action or as a reaction to external forces. In essence, the result of the interaction between internal influences and external forces creates and fosters a perceived, if not necessarily authentic, an identity. While the discourse continues on the dialectic relationships between tradition and modernity, the contemporary and the historic, and the global and the local, a number of important projects either recently built or currently under construction exemplify the acknowledgement, presence, and incorporation of such multiple identities.

One such building is the satellite engineering college branch of Texas A&M University at Qatar, established under the aegis of Hamad bin Khalifa University (HBKU), in Education City in Doha. In his monolithic and visually stunning structure, architect Ricardo Legoretta’s striking application and adaptation of pre- Colombian and post-Colombian Mexican architecture dramatically represents this wider global context. Legoretta uses traditional Mexican architectural elements in his work, including earth tones, plays of light and shadow, and features such as central patios, courtyards, and

porticos, as well as massive solid volumes. The design concept is based on two independent but adjoining masses linked by a wide, spacious atrium: the Academic Quadrangle and the Research Building. The overall expression of the building demonstrates a masterful integration of solid geometry with a skillful use of color and tone values, resulting in a visually pleasing conceptual dialogue between tradition and modernity. Such a dialogue is also evident in his latest intervention, the HBKU Student Center, a striking building that acts as a catalyst for a vibrant and welcoming environment, with a cinema, bookshop, art gallery, gymnasium, black-box theatre, and even a crèche and nursery. Such user-friendly accouterments inevitably foster dynamic social and cultural interaction (Fig. 14).

*Fig.14: Bringing and adapting Legortetta's own traditional into the local context of Doha: HBKU-Texas A&M engineering campus (left) – HBKU Student Center (right)*

Similarly, the huge Msheireb urban regeneration project in Doha<sup>37</sup> is another example of once vibrant urban commercial landscape frequented by low-income office workers, employees, and laborers that will soon be catering to a more affluent sector of society. Already some of the massive fortress-like buildings under construction give the impression of distinct class barriers and exclusivity (FIG. 15). Interestingly, in an attempt to balance global aspirations and the re-interpretations derived from traditional environments, such projects endeavor to recount spatial and visual language concerns in an integrated yet highly selective manner. The considered selection and/or rejection of appropriate/inappropriate architectural elements are crucial to the success of such projects.

On the one hand, the Emiri Diwan Quarter, designed by Tim Makower Architects, one of the main urban segments of the regeneration project attempts to create an intervention that is not just a glass or metal greenhouse but a structure that is ostensibly rooted in perceived, if not actual, Qatari culture. At a smaller scale, Al Barahat Square of Mossessian and Partners is another intervention and a central element of the larger project. Drawing on traditional Qatari architecture as a main feature of the surrounding buildings, it is intended to act as an urban lung for the development (FIG 15).

*Fig.15: Msheireb Urban Regeneration in Doha; an example of a CiC presenting distinct class barriers*

On the other hand, as part of the struggle to construct identity, one can find multiple approaches and many examples characterizing the urban scene in Doha and Dubai. They demonstrate the profound determination to claim ownership of advanced construction technologies as evident in O-14 tower in Dubai and the competing skyscrapers in Doha (FIG. 16). They also validate the grit of rulers to act on their cities,

and on behalf on their very people, as hubs for cultural performances and the arts as palpable in the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha and the recently built Dubai Opera House (FIG. 17). It remains to be seen however what impact the World Cup won bid and the initial planning for other failed bids for hall mark events have on the identity of Dubai and Doha and the perceived role of both as sport and mega events hubs.

*Fig.16: Advanced technology as represented in skyscrapers and high-rise towers. O-14 tower in Dubai (left) – Skyscrapers in the West Bay in Doha*

*Fig.17: Cultural enterprises simulating regional tradition or assimilating the global condition: Dubai Opera House (left) – Museum of Islamic Art in Doha*

## **CONCLUSION: TOWARD A FRAMEWORK FOR EXAMINING CONTEMPORARY URBAN TRADITIONS IN THE ARABIAN PENINSULA**

The resulting transformation of the urban environment in cities on the Peninsula and in particular Dubai and Doha has led to a new, more dynamic and more functional type of city. While this took place in the form of an aspiring emerging service hub, the transformation itself has dramatically oversimplified past traditions and shaped new and evolving traditions that attempt to balance local ambitions but clearly speak to the global condition.

While the answer to the question of whose tradition is not just a straightforward reaction I argue that its elements can be dissected. The arguments put forward earlier in vis-à-vis the transformation from the tradition of the ordinary to the tradition of the elite and the resulting urban scenes which articulate class exclusivity and social and ethnic segregation offer key but not full answers. Tribal governance and decision-making were replaced by modern governance and institutions though it still has elements of tribalism. Decisions about the environment that were once made and articulated by Sheikhs and tribal leaders in collaboration with the common people are now envisioned in collaboration and partnership between rulers, institutions, private sector, and with significant input of international planners and architects. Settlements and environments that used to reflect cultural norms and religious beliefs and the immediate needs of a homogenous community are now reflecting multiple interests and very different parallel communities that are not necessarily bound by, or rooted in, a place or a locality. In fact, the environments resulting from decisions that are made in the present are not clear essentially about which society or community they are going to serve in the future though priority in these decisions is given to economic parameters that serve the interest of the rich and affluent. This leads to

multiple identities in the form of multiple manifestations and multiple socio-spatial practices.

Palpably, the contemporary lived space in the Peninsula and in particular the Gulf is characterized by the drive to establish a sustainable identity and the need to react and respond opportunistically to the global condition. The question that now presents itself in this context is whether or not the lived space actually represents the collective mind of the culture in which it exists. One answer would be that no one collective mind can be conceptually utilized to generalize or to build upon; rather there is an ongoing ever-changing plurality and multiplicity that fundamentally invigorates and sustains the urban footprint of the region. This denotes that there are emerging traditions and if indeed the lived space is to sustain itself as a form of human and cultural expression, used to characterize the traditional environment of this region's past, a thorough examination of contemporary urban projects in the Gulf and their capacity for cultural, functional and symbolic representation is mandatory.

While many of the projects and the emerging place typologies are succeeding in responding to the global condition, they are raising many questions relevant to whose tradition and to their socio-cultural impact on the average citizen, the expatriate professional, and the migrant worker. I argue in this context that Lefebvre's triadic notion of the conceived-perceived-lived is amenable to be integral to such an examination,<sup>38</sup> which can be applied in a given timeframe and in an evolutionary manner. How the urban environment of contemporary Gulf cities is conceived by planners, architects, and authorities and who are they is critical to probe. How such a space is spatially practiced and how interactions between agents, institutions, and individuals take place and develop are important questions that need scrutinizing. How interaction between people and their environments develops socially, spatially, and allegorically is crucial to examine. The results of the study into the lived—individual experiences of the environment, and the perceived—socio-economic networks within a society should feed back into the conceived again. What is observed currently is that the lived and the perceived are an outcome of a non-responsive conceived that does cater to all segments of society. Such a cycle is fostered when applying rigorous conceptual/qualitative and empirical/quantitative tools so that responsive urban traditions can take root.

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<sup>2</sup> S. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> A. M. Salama, "Architectural Identity in the Middle East: Hidden Assumptions and Philosophical Perspectives," in D. Mazzoleni et al. (eds), *Shores of the Mediterranean: Architecture as Language of Peace* (Napoli: Intra Moenia, 2005), 77-85, and A. M. Salama, "Doha: Between Making an Instant City and Skirmishing Globalization," *Middle East Institute-Viewpoints*, Washington, DC: American University, (2008), pp. 40-44.

<sup>4</sup> See Y. M. Choueiri, *Arab Nationalism: A History* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> In my earlier writings I have elaborated on the notion of meaning and identity in Arab architecture. See A. M. Salama, "Architectural Identity Demystified: Visual Voices from the Arab World," in P. Emmons, J. Lomholt, and J.S. Hendrix (eds.), *The Cultural Role of Architecture: Contemporary and Historical Perspectives*, P. Emmons, J. Lomholt, and J.S. Hendrix (London: Routledge, 2012), pp.175-184.

<sup>6</sup> H. Glassie, "Vernacular Traditions and Society," *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*, Vol.1, No.3 (1990), pp.9-21.

<sup>7</sup> N. AlSayyad, *Traditions: The 'Real', the Hyper, and the Virtual in the Built Environment*, (London: Routledge, 2014), p.30 and N. AlSayyad and E. Tomlinson, "Traditional Environments," in *Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems*, (Isle of Man, UK: Eolss Publishers Co Ltd, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> A. Rapoport, "On the Attributes of Tradition," in N. AlSayyad and J. P. Bourdier (eds.), *Dwellings, Settlements, and Tradition: Cross-Cultural Perspectives* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989), pp. 77-105.

<sup>9</sup> Suggesting an analogy between the spatial formation and social construction Janet Abu-Lughod emphasized the process aspect of tradition, and introduced the term 'traditioning' to denote the series of actions that ultimately create an environment. See J. Abu-Lughod. "Disappearing Dichotomies: First World-Third World; Traditional-Modern," *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*, Vol.3, No.2 (1992), pp.7-12.

<sup>10</sup> Implicitly and explicitly in various contexts within the Arab World, scholars over the past decade or so have instigated discussions and offered examples on social governance delineating its value in understanding urban traditions. See M. Khechen, "Beyond the Spectacle: Al-Saha Village, Beirut," *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*, Vol.19, No.1 (2007), pp.7-21, and M. G. Abdelmonem, "The Practice of Home in Old Cairo: Towards Socio-Spatial Models of Sustainable Living," *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*, Vol. 23, No.2 (2012), pp.35-50.

<sup>11</sup> Dismissing the assumption that tradition represents the authentic product of a community, Alsayyad proposed that tradition could also be catalogued, packaged, imagined, and sold. Still, he maintained that traditional environments continue to represent places where real social encounters take place. See N. AlSayyad, "Global Norms and Urban Forms in the Age of Tourism." In N. AlSayyad (ed.), *Consuming Tradition-Manufacturing Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp.1-33.

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<sup>13</sup> J. G. A. Pocock, "The Origins of Study of the Past: A Comparative Approach," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1962), pp.209-246

<sup>14</sup> F. A. De Montequin, "The Essence of Urban Existence in the World of Islam," In *Islamic Architecture and Urbanism; Symposium organized by the College of Architecture and Planning*, 5–10 January 1980 (Dammam: King Faisal University, 1983) pp. 48–55.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p.51.

<sup>16</sup> B. Hakim, "Revitalizing Traditional Towns and Heritage Districts," *Archnet-IJAR: International Journal of Architectural Research*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (2007), pp.153–166.

<sup>17</sup> Based on workshop discussions as part of the research project GESU (2012) for developing the Gulf Encyclopaedia for Sustainable Urbanism, a holistic, cross-disciplinary, cross-border study by a research team from Harvard University, focusing on sustainable urbanism in the Gulf Region, 16 February 2012 (Doha: Msheireb Properties, February 16, 2012).

<sup>18</sup> Y. O. Fadan, "Traditional Houses of Makkah." In *Islamic Architecture and Urbanism; Symposium organized by the College of Architecture and Planning*, 5–10 January 1980 (Dammam: King Faisal University, 1983) pp. 295–311.

<sup>19</sup> Courtyard houses in the traditional context of the Arab World have been analyzed heavily in the literature as an important manifestation of tradition. See, for example B. Edwards, M. Sible, M. Hakmi and P. Land (eds.) (2005), *Courtyard Housing: Past, Present and Future* (London: Routledge, 2005); A. M. Salama, "A Typological Perspective: The Impact of Cultural Paradigmatic Shifts on the Evolution of Courtyard Houses in Cairo," *JFA-METU: Journal of the Faculty of Architecture*, Middle East Technical University, Vol. 23, No. 1 (2006), pp. 41–58; and N. O. Rabbat, (ed.), *The Courtyard House: From Cultural Reference to Universal Relevance* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010).

<sup>20</sup> I was commissioned by the Ministry of Culture in Bahrain and the Arab Center in Beirut commissioned a study of the evolution of architecture and urbanism in the peninsula to the author. The study revealed that key socio-political events and institutional decisions have had direct dramatic impact on urbanism. Key findings of this study are included in the Kingdom of Bahrain's Catalogue Pavillion in Venice Architecture Biennale 2014. See A. M. Salama, "A Century of Architecture in the Arabian Peninsula: Evolving Isms and Multiple Architectural Identities in a Growing Region," in G. Arbid (ed.), *Architecture from the Arab world (1914-2014): A Selection* (Ministry of Culture, 2014), pp. 137-143.

<sup>21</sup> M. Davis, "Sand, Fear and Money in Dubai," in M. Davis and D.B. Monk (eds), *Evil Paradises: Dreamworlds of Neoliberalism* (New York, NY: The New Press) pp. 49–67.

<sup>22</sup> New large-scale interventions intended for rich locals and high profile expatriate communities are on the rise from Abu- Dhabi's Saadiyat Island Development to Bahrain Financial Harbour, and from Kuwait's City of Silk to Qatar's City of the Future, Lusail.

<sup>23</sup> Arjun Appadurai labelled global cities as scapes of flows, and identified five types of scapes: ethnoscapas, mediascapas, finanscapas, technoscapas and ideascapes. While scholars may argue that such a notion has been overused in contemporary literature I find the mapping of Appadurai's flows revealing a clearer interpretation of the global condition in major cities in the Gulf. Emerging hub cities in the Arabian Peninsula can be regarded as *ethnoscapas*, that is, environments created by the need for workforce and the interaction of diverse cultures: places where large numbers of expatriate workers and professionals live, work, or visit. They can also be envisioned as *mediascapas*, spaces that are generated by the expanding role of media as a result of the revolution in information technology. Developing media cities and controversial TV news channels, such as Al-Jazeera Channel in Doha and Al-Arabiya in Dubai are clear manifestations of the important role of media in the Middle East today. Further, some cities on the peninsula, such as Dubai, can be viewed as *finanscapas*, places that are created by flows of capital and the establishment of transnational corporations and stock exchanges. In addition, these emerging cities can also be regarded as *technoscapas* and *ideascapes*, challenging and stimulating environments that reflect the influence of telecommunication technologies and the resulting spread of ideologies. Industries in the free trade zone of Dubai, Qatar Science and Technology Park in Doha, and the many international university campuses in Dubai are clear examples in this context. By and large, these 'scapes' are important players in the shaping of social and professional practices and the resulting spatial environments that accommodate them. They accentuate the role global flows play in shaping contemporary development processes.

<sup>24</sup> The phenomenon of projects, known as "cities within the city" (CiC projects), can be observed in many cities across the Peninsula. It can be attributed to the diminishing ability of public authorities to deliver efficient urban environments or to renew existing fragmented urban fabric. However, I would argue that it is primarily attributed to privatization and decentralization within urban governance that took place over the past two decades. This argument can be supported when looking at several studies relevant to contemporary urbanism and the specific role of the private sector and its large-scale developments. In this respect, Michael



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J. Dear has analyzed recent liberalization tendencies in urban governance that had a significant impact understanding cities as branded corporate entities. See M. J. Dear, *The Postmodern Urban Condition*. (New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons, 2001). Other authors, such as Nan Ellin and Jason Hackworth have traced the phenomenon of “cities within the city” and its roots and various causes. See N. Ellin. *Postmodern Urbanism*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999), and J. Hackworth. *The Neoliberal City: Governance, Ideology, and Development in American Urbanism*. (New York, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).

<sup>25</sup> Christopher Davidson. *Dubai: The Vulnerability of Success*. (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2008).

<sup>26</sup> A. M. Salama and F. Wiedmann, *Demystifying Doha: On Architecture and Urbanism in an Emerging City* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013) p.39.

<sup>27</sup> For an expanded discussion on segregation aspects of migrant communities in the Gulf and the qualities of the environment in which they live, see A. Gardner. “Why Do They Keep Coming? Labor Migrants in the Gulf States,” In M. Kamrava and Z. Babar (eds.), *Migrant Labor in the Persian Gulf* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2012), pp.41-58.

<sup>28</sup> F. Wiedmann, A. M. Salama, and A. Thierstein, "Urban Evolution Of The City Of Doha: An Investigation Into The Impact of Economic Transformations on Urban Structures," *JFA/METU Journal of the Faculty of Architecture*, Vol. 29 No. 2 (2012), pp.35-61.

<sup>29</sup> For example, in order to increase the capacity of labor housing for low-income classes, Barwa, a major real estate player, in cooperation with the public sector has launched a 1.8 sq km low-income housing development known as *Barwa Al Baraha*. It is currently expected that around fifty thousand laborers will be housed in this worker community in Doha's industrial zone.

<sup>30</sup> From an anthropological perspective, studies have argued against the socio-spatial segregation in Gulf cities and Doha is no exception. See, for example, S. Naqy. “Making Room for Migrants, Making Sense of Difference: Spatial and Ideological Expression of Social Diversity in Urban Qatar.” *Urban Studies* 43, (2006), pp.119-137. From an urban and decision-making perspective, I have recently questioned urban regeneration interventions in the city of Doha arguing that the neighborhoods of Al-Asmakh and Al-Najada which accommodate low-income groups and migrant workers, should be treated as important place typologies in the memory and history of the city given that in 2014 demolition and eviction notices have been issued for around half the buildings in Al-Asmakh area at the heart of the old part of the city. See A. M. Salama, “Intervention Urbanism: The Delicacy of Aspirational Change in the Old Centre of Doha,” in C. Melhuish, B. Campkin, and R. Ross (eds.), *Urban Pamphleteer # 4: Heritage and Renewal in Doha* (London: UCL Urban Laboratory, 2014), pp.1-3.

<sup>31</sup> A. M. Salama and F. Wiedmann (2013). *Ibid*, p.229.

<sup>32</sup> Anthony K. Appiah discussed the term ‘cultural contamination’ to emphasize the tendency of globalization to homogenize cultures and the resulting fears of local societies. See A. K. Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*. (Reprint edition, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007).

<sup>33</sup> C. Correa, “Quest for Identity,” in R. Powell (ed.), *Architecture and Identity* (Singapore: Concept Media/The Aga Khan Award for Architecture, 1983) pp.10-13.

<sup>34</sup> S. Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in J. Rutherford (ed.), *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), pp. 223-237.

<sup>35</sup> A. M. Salama (2005). *Ibid*, p.79.

<sup>36</sup> N. AlSayyad (2014). *Ibid*, p.35

<sup>37</sup> The project is conceived by AECOM in partnership with Mossessian and Partners and Allies and Morrison Architects.

<sup>38</sup> While my earlier research has utilized aspects of this triadic notion within the overall urban development process, focusing on aspects relevant to tradition would be beneficial. See H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991); and M. Purcell, "Excavating Lefebvre: The right to the city and its urban

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