



**SciencesPo**

GLM 2015-2016

The background of the entire page is a watercolor wash in shades of yellow, green, and purple. At the top, there is a dark silhouette of the Dubai skyline, featuring several skyscrapers and the distinctive sail-shaped Burj Khalifa on the right side.

# BUILDING VISIONS WITH GLASS & STEEL

— DUBAI STUDY TRIP REPORT —

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# EDITORIAL NOTE

Two days into our trip to Dubai, we paid a visit to the Juma Al-Majid Center for Culture and Heritage. One of the center's main purposes is to document Dubai's humble beginnings as a coastal village in the early 1950s and 60s. The black and white photographs on display present a different version of the city, seemingly incompatible with the vertigo of glass and steel skyscrapers we have been immersed in over the last two days. We see photographs of the city's creek bespeckled with wooden barges, and its fish market, a collection of small wooden stalls with palm-leaf thatching.

It is now an integral part of Dubai's mythology to present it as a city which has "emerged" from the desert practically overnight, flouting any clear sense of agency in its construction. But pragmatically, how does one plan and oversee the construction of such a large-scale project? What could have possibly guided Dubai's builders other than that elusive sense of "vision", which has now become an integral part of the city's discourse on its own development. It is no coincidence that the current Sheikh, Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum's 2012 memoir was titled "My Vision: Challenges in the Race for Excellence".

The notion of vision is equally at the heart of the 1968 British documentary "Farewell to Arabia" which documents the early days of Abu Dhabi's Sheikh Zayed in power. In addition to the rare footage on life in 1960s Abu Dhabi it provides, the documentary draws a powerfully introverted portrait of Sheikh Zayed as a man at the crossroads of history, whose task is to selectively welcome western innovations into his kingdom. Here, vision is strategy: where should Zayed invest the country's recent wealth, the journalist asks. A new airport, or a new hospital? This sense of a strategic vision, both for Dubai and Abu Dhabi's development, is what has guided the conception of the present report: can we discern an orderly strategy in the way the city of Dubai has developed?

Consisting in a collection of articles, essays and think-pieces, our report is the product of a week-long study trip in the cities of Dubai and Abu Dhabi, undertaken in January 2016 by the first year students of Sciences Po Urban School's master's program "Governing the Large Metropolis". As students in comparative urban governance and sociology, the aim of our trip was to understand the inner workings of both Emirati cities through their governance model and strategies for further development.



Focusing specifically on Dubai, this collection of articles attempts to outline the city's continued strategy to distinguish itself in a world of competing cities. If Dubai's development model today is more closely associated with the spectacular architectural frenzies of the Burj al-Arab and Burj Khalifa, adopting a historical perspective is crucial to appreciate the city's long-term strategic vision for development. Harnessing this strategy requires sustained attention to infrastructural development, migration patterns and the political system. We have throughout this report strived to illuminate the "Dubai phenomenon" through a plurality of angles, which is also reflected in the different styles and formats of the following articles. The plurality of voices and impressions expressed throughout this report seeks to translate the multifaceted nature of a city which concentrates radical extremes.

In a sense, the starting point of this "instant-book" began before our actual trip, through a series of lectures dispensed by Profs. H  l  ne Thiollet and Harvey Molotch contextualizing Emirati growth. Once on the ground, we met with actors from a wide variety of sectors, from public officials, private contractors to public benefactors, in order to collect a variety of perspectives on the growth and governance of both cities. We are very grateful for the insight provided us by the various people and institutions we met, such as the public benefactor Juma Al-Majid, the Emirates Green Buildings Council, Smart Cities Dubai, the environmental agency of Abu Dhabi, as well as the different constructors of Dubai's trams and metro systems (Alstom & Thales), and the Suez group which manages Dubai's waste. We also had the opportunity of visiting key sites in the development of both cities, such as the Jabal Ali Power and Desalination Plant in Dubai, the site for the development of Dubai's second airport and the Expo 2020 in Dubai South. In Abu Dhabi, we visited the spectacular site of Masdar City, candidate to be the first carbon-neutral city in the world and the Abu Dhabi campus of New York University. Actors with a more economic focus such as Dubai Chamber of Commerce, IBI Group, Chalhoub, MBK Foods, and the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Dubai were also gracious enough to receive us. Finally, we wish to thank the French Embassy in Abu Dhabi for their hospitality. We thank all the people who have kindly agreed to meet us both in preparation, and over the course of our study trip, for the invaluable insight they have provided to the present report.

The Editorial Team

# EDITORIAL TEAM









## INTRODUCTION

# EXCAVATING THE BLUEPRINT FOR A METROPOLIS

by Alice Dang, Raphaël Gernath  
& Filipe Mello Rose

Although the word “medina” technically means ‘city’ in Arabic, the term is meant to designate the old quarters of a town, opposing them to the ‘modern’ or ‘new’ city. Even if it is labelled as having a souk, wandering amongst the idyllic waterways and gardens of Dubai’s “Madinat Jumeirah”, nestled between luxury hotels, does not exactly fit this definition. Its architecture, much more modest than that of neighbouring high-rises, is catered as a “luxurious interpretation of authentic Arabia”, but this development like so many others in Dubai has just recently risen from the sands. Yet its streets are teeming with life, as tourists and shoppers

who’ve flocked from across the globe are drawn to the wares, souvenirs and goods advertised in the resort. Here, Emirati heritage and tradition serves as scaffolding, erected around a mosaic of stores and restaurants where cosmopolitanism reigns as British couples mingle with Chinese tourists while they have Thai food for dinner. These juxtapositions merit reflexion, and prompt one to wonder what kind of past the souk wants to recall.

The British were first present in the Emirates in the early 1820s through the administration of a truce to control piracy in the Persian Gulf, that endangered the Empire’s interests in the Indian subcontinent. The Trucial treaties delegated colonial power to local elders and sheikhs in the region, and perpetu-

ated power relations that had previously been unstable. For the first century after the settlement of its creek, Dubai gained importance due to a secession from Abu Dhabi in 1833, and mainly lived of trade and pearl diving. By the early 20th century, when a considerable part of the world market for pearls was supplied from Dubai, the port in the Dubai creek began to attract merchants from the greater region of the Gulf (Davidson 2009). This dramatically changed in the 1920s, when pearls began to be cheaply cultured in Japan, and Dubai's prime export good could not longer find international buyers. According to Davidson, British policy over the protectorate had restricted economic modernization and non-British investment in the pearl industry, thus amplifying the devastating effects of the economic crisis (Kanna 2013).

In the context of rising tensions accompanying the surge of pan-Arabism, the British government announced in 1967 their complete withdrawal from the region within four years. The recent independence of Egypt and Syria suggested that prolonging colonial hegemony in Arab countries would jeopardize British commercial interests in the long run. This meant that state structures had to be rapidly instituted in the Emirates. Previously established Trucial institutions were increasingly filled with Emirati representatives and were turned into federal institutions. In a last-minute agreement, six Emirates agreed to unite under the presidency of the ruler of Abu Dhabi in December 1971 to form an independent nation. The particular political arrangement provided by the

Protectorate allowed for a continuity in rulership. The withdrawal of British influence only occurred gradually and kept the ruling dynasties in place.

As the businessman and philanthropist Juma Al-Majid recalls, the collective trauma of Dubai's economic crisis following the invention of the cultivated pearl made Dubai determined not to fall into the trap of over-reliance on a single resource. This desire to diversify the economy was strongly reflected when oil started to be extracted in Dubai 1952. By 1970s the oil revenues reached significant levels many of the concessions from the 1930s were already expiring, opening the possibility to Sheikh Rashid bin Said Al-Maktum to create the Dubai Petroleum Company. It was decided to use the cheap energy to open one aluminium and one cabling Company, while investing much of the profit abroad through the Dubai Holding group in order to safeguard the wealth. In 1972, Sheikh Rashid initiated the works for the massive Jebel-Ali port about 30km south of Dubai that would soon turn into the new base of the economy. This is part of a strategy specific to Dubai that is founded on supply-generated demand. At the time, the creation of industries to generate demand was used accelerate the growth of the port, while today it entails megaprojects such as the Palm Islands or the Dubai subway as examples of service provision that are expected to generate their own demand. It is the government who generally initiates such risky investments and allocates sufficient resources to ensure successful results.

Departing from the petroleum and energy-intensive industries which fueled trade flows, the rulers of Dubai have, thanks to its strategic position, managed to bypass industrialization in the creation of a service economy: like Singapore, the city-state has benefited from *entrepôt* growth, re-exporting imported goods without any additional processing or repackaging, allowing it to be catapulted to the position of financial center. Dubai thus jumped directly from a pearling and trading society to one dominated by service. For example it has been fuelled by foreign investments but also investments in the real estate sector following the beginning of freehold ownerships for foreigners in 2002, which in turn spurred a construction boom, still ongoing today.

Furthermore, branding has been instrumental in strengthening its insertion within the world economy. The use of architecture as a strategic tool has allowed the city to position itself deliberately and exclusively at the high-quality end of the market with iconic buildings like the sail-shaped Burj Al Arab or the tallest building in the world, Burj Khalifa. That is why they value and rely on international partners for development: by employing the world's top workers, the rulers of Dubai also solve the problem of lack of skills within the local population. Hence, the labor force behind its development is extremely flexible as skills are an entirely tradable commodity to be purchased on the international market.

The importance of the leader's clear vision for the city is a key element to bear

in mind throughout our report. This developmental path would not have been possible without on the one hand, turning the public sector into an income generating instance; on the other hand, the reinvestment of revenue into new income-generating projects abroad and in the regime's patronage networks. In order to keep Emirati elites satisfied, growth and the production of wealth becomes imperative. It is a model where state intervention and coordination is central to the developmental agenda, fuelled by an ambition not only to catch up with, but to surpass, the West in every way.

Interestingly, much of the development appears to be grounded by not only diversifying the risk of one natural resource but also by selling the city through branding and foreign investment whenever possible. Despite all their challenges, this type of urban development appears to be successful in importing capital, using foreign labour and creating domestic wealth. But where will this dependence lead? The fragilities of this developmental model -- extreme reliance on foreign labour and external resources -- might prove fatal in the future. Yet, it would not be the first time, that Dubai, against all odds, stands and grows.

This book seeks to discuss how Dubai's model of governance and growth turn the city into an important actor in the world economy. How does its model of urban governance address the international context and external factors? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the unique model of Dubai and in



which ways is it fit for the future?

In an attempt to answer these questions, this book is divided into six parts that represent our efforts to articulate the different aspects of Dubai's governance. By positioning itself as a crossroads of goods and people, Dubai has undergone a profound urban metamorphosis shaped in part by the interests of its rulers, but also by the demands of global forces. To understand how such a distinct city came to exist, it's necessary to look at the elements that have fuelled Dubai's growth, but also to define the place it aims to carve out for its future.

We first tried to trace out Dubai's historical legacies, considered in the light of their impact on current societal structures. Questions of identity and community are examined in the context of the Emirate's strong tribal society, to assess how a city rooted in the politics of the Arabian Peninsula negotiated its entrance onto the world stage. Indeed, the concepts of heritage and tradition, in a place which became imbued with capitalist logic at an accelerated pace, is essential to understanding how Dubai formulates its modernity.

Building a metropolis fit for the twenty-first century also meant crafting an urban vision to project to the world. Iconic mega-projects like Dubai's poster child, the Burj Khalifa, are synonymous with the image-driven development the city has become synonymous with. Whether or not the city has become a model of 'governing through attractivity', and how tenable marketing

Dubai through its own representations is for future developments, are themes examined in our second section.

We then explored the driving forces behind Dubai's growth model, monumental in scale but also impressive in scope, specifically looking at the city's insertion within the global economic system through the development of unique business models. A high volume of investment in innovative sectors, as well as heavy reliance on immigrant labor, has characterized the Emirate's often-relentless economic expansion. However, the section also evaluates the geopolitical stakes at play when it comes to Dubai's extraordinary energy sector, responsible for satisfying the appetite of a resource-hungry city, as well as the liberal approach to investments and regulation that characterizes its business strategy.

Moving from assets to innovations, the fourth section discusses the growing importance of environmental sustainability as an economic sector. Within this burgeoning sector, Dubai and its rival-partner Abu Dhabi compete to attract the latest technology through massive investments that allow them to thrive and bolster their legitimacy as global hubs for environmentally conscious development. Beyond that, however, sustainability also possesses a political component, as the embodiment of an alternative strategy to distance the Emirates from dependency on external resources and diversify the economy. However, we'll also discuss how reconciling the attitudes of a growth-based society with objectives



of conservation and protection has proved to be a difficult terrain of implementation.

Indeed, the notion of control in Dubai is a slippery one. As a city-state composed of economic free zones within a kingdom, these overlapping layers of governance are reflected in the inner workings of a socially stratified society, and overlapping types of competing regulations. Thus, in a fifth section, we attempt to provide an understanding of the forms of political authority in the Emirates, the unique (and multiple) kinds of 'citizenship' that can be conceived of in the UAE, and the socio-political implications of such hierarchies in Dubai.

It is by building on all these specific strengths, societal, spatial and political, that Dubai strives to project its own dynamism and stand out amongst competitors. Reflecting on the city's place in the flux of international relations, a sixth and final section analyzes Dubai's geopolitical positioning at the regional and global scale. With the agenda to simultaneously become a hub for global travel and an Islamic counter-model to Western global cities, the metropolises' expansion seems to know no limits.

A flamboyant urban imagination is in many ways the tinder of Dubai's ambitious governance schemes. To wrap up our reflections on the past, present, but also the future of this imposing yet chimeric metropolitan landscape, the concluding section of this report will therefore consider how Dubai has constructed a well-oiled machine that has

allowed the city to overcome and even transform its fragilities into the key for its own success. If the six previous sections tried to unravel some of the distinctive threads that characterize Dubai, the conclusion will examine how the objectives previously described each correspond to a unique form of attractivity molded in the Emirate. Amidst constant skyward growth and perpetual expansion, Dubai has managed to secure the promise of a stable future for its inhabitants, a paradox that crystallizes many of the aspirations and inspirations that define the city's governance.



## SECTION 1

# LEGACY AND HISTORY

by William Cox, Eleonora Dobbles & Rachel Souvré

**T**racing out Dubai's historical legacies, they are considered in the light of their impact on current societal structures. Questions of identity and community are examined in the context of the Emirate's strong tribal society, to assess how a city rooted in the politics of the Arabian Peninsula negotiated its entrance onto the world stage. Indeed, the concepts of heritage and tradition, in a place which became imbued with capitalist logic at an accelerated pace, is essential to understanding how Dubai formulates its modernity.

# 1.1

## HOW THE WILD WEST BE- CAME THE MIDDLE EAST? DEVELOPING FOR A FUTURE ON THE URBAN FRONTIER

by William Cox

**A**lmost 50% of Dubai's commercial buildings currently stand vacant. [i] False-Front Architecture, a popular architectural style for commercial buildings in the American Wild-West (see Example 1), employed ornamented, two-story facades attached to rudimentary one-story structures. In relation of appearance (façade) to substance (structure), 50% of Wild-West commercial buildings were just mirages in the wilderness. In his study of architecture in the American Wild-West, Kingston Wm. Heath explains that the purpose of false-front buildings were, through architectural expression, to 'strive for legitimacy and permanence' on the rugged and developing frontier. [ii] To better understand the path of urban development in Dubai, a path often described by the west as hubristic, corrupt and rushed, we need look no further than the romanticized cowboy-history of urban development in Wild-West America.

Imagine, if you can, 1850's California, Arizona, Nevada or any other Wild-West frontier glorified by movies and

television. Imagine you are on Main Street in a tightly packed valley of false-front buildings that block your vision of the unfamiliar mountainous landscape beyond. This town you're standing in has become rich on natural resources, probably gold, which at any moment could dry up. As Heath explains, the future success of the town rests on its ability to establish a stable economy independent from the finite riches in the ground.[iii] The two-story commercial facades that surround you are being built to create the perception of prosperity in order to attract new service-sector businesses, East-Coast investors and, most important, tangible prosperity in the future.

Dubai has its Main Street (Sheikh Zayed Road) and imposing facades to surround it (The Burj Kahlifa), which block inhabitant's view of the mysterious desert just beyond city limits. Dubai also knows first-hand, the fragility of being economically dependent on natural resources. Before it was bankrolled by oil, Dubai had a stable economy based on pearl harvesting. Then in the 1930's, with the innovation of artificially cultured pearls in Asia, Dubai's pearl trade was destroyed leaving the Emirate as one of the poorest countries in the region. [iv] After finding oil riches in the 1960's and 70's, Dubai's economy was tested again in 1986, when a global oil-crisis reduced barrel prices by almost 70%. [v] Dubai, and the greater UAE, understands that to be successful as a modern 'frontier' city, it must create an environment conducive to service-sector industries of the future: finance, clean-energy and technology.

Empty office buildings. In Dubai they loom over you and spawn an idea that the success Dubai's government so openly boasts might really be a façade. But Heath states: 'the sooner the young mining camp grappled with the sudden urban realities and provided the facilities necessary to manage or exploit the moment, the better were its chances for survival.'<sup>[vi]</sup> The modern economy is defined by white-collar office jobs and an ability to grow quickly. Dubai has the vacant offices. As proved by its massive growth in the last 20 years, Dubai also has the ability to construct quickly the urban infrastructural demands of foreign investors looking to migrate.

Return to our image of the Wild-West main street. If you can, imagine that on Main Street is a sheriff. This sheriff's law is one that must be dynamic; both reigning in the lawlessness inherent in frontier prospecting while also forgiving enough to attract any and all parties interested in settling the city. In the Wild-West, governance and law were defined by popular justice and the writing of laws conducive to growth.<sup>[vii]</sup> Likewise, governance and law in Dubai is being shaped to support investment in the future. In Dubai popular justice takes the form of leniency towards international, non-Islamic lifestyles. The fundamentalism of other Gulf Coast Countries is often seen as a deterrent to Middle-East relocation. Dubai however, has become known for governing with greater acceptance toward social differences such as dress, intoxicants, and sexuality.<sup>[viii]</sup> Economically, Dubai law is fluid as well. Leveraging a concept called 'free-zones' Dubai

has created areas governed by British Common-Law rather than Sharia Law in the heart of its financial districts, favorable to the legal understanding of foreign investors.<sup>[ix]</sup> Like law codes on the American frontier, Dubai's youthful legal history lacks precedent to define how development should be governed. This allows new developers such as the French transportation builder Alstom, to influence laws defining their projects' legality in the city, resulting in more rapid construction and more attractive investment potential.<sup>[x]</sup>

Dubai is often judged as being brash, exploitative, and over-confident in the way it has developed as an urban space. However if we contextualize Dubai as a modern descendent of the 'frontier-town', we can better understand the city's necessity to develop as it has. Dubai is building a façade of success in the present to better ensure actual success in the future. We have no reason to question the beauty and accomplishment of a false-front building so long as we approach it head on.



# 1.2

## TRIBAL MODEL AND NEW SOCIAL SYSTEMS

by Eleonora Dobbles &  
Rachel Souvré

In the museum of the Juma Al Majid's Center for Culture and Heritage, a small collection of pictures shows Emiratis standing in front of their *barastri* - traditional houses made of palm fronds - and the old pearl diving harbour. If it were not for these pictures we would have had a hard time to believe that this was Dubai fifty years ago. The mansions in the outskirts of the cities and Jebel Ali Port replaced it all. Skyscrapers and roads have left no tangible evidence of Dubai's past but these few photographs and the sparse Dubai Museum in Al Fahidi Fort. But if the tangible legacies left of the tribal society that the Emirates were until 50 years ago are very few and discrete, we cannot say the same of the immaterial legacy, which is very present both in the sociological structure and the political functioning of Dubai. The central idea of the article is to explore how this mode of social organization translates into the capitalistic growth machine that Dubai has embodied, which means asking these structures been adapted to fit the idea of a globalized modernity.

The modern Emirati society is structured around tribalism, understood as

a way of organising a society through tight ties of kinship and large family networks. One must bear in mind that the United Arab Emirates are constituted by tribes, who share the control of the country. Dubai is ruled by the Al Maktoum family since the XIXth Century, a family belonging to the same tribe than the Al Nahyane, ruling family of Abu Dhabi. The Sheikh is not a King in the traditional sense, but a patriarch, the head of a tribe who negotiates with other tribes in the interest of his tribe.

In Dubai, the line between the public and the private sectors is blurred and the two tend to merge. Politics and economics are thus strongly interconnected. It rests on the image of a "big man", a governor whose role is, besides that of a leader, also the one of an entrepreneur. Indeed, the importance of the figure of the Sheikh has been decisive in the development of Dubai: it was the vision and the project of Sheikh Rashid Bin Said to reorient the economy of pearls towards a business model which would generate an impressive growth in the country. Yet, the business model itself, very inserted in the global economy, carries deep marks of tribal heritage. Indeed, the importance of making solid personal connections when doing business in the UAE is an element that was highlighted throughout our field trip by both the nationals and the foreigner entrepreneurs we met. Verbal agreements are also a very common practice, even for projects of big magnitude.

Dubai is, in that sense, a very particular hybridation between a very liberal, growth-oriented economic model, also

very open to immigration since in fact only 6% of the population holds the status of citizenship. What is interesting about this dual system is that tribalism co-exists with capitalism in a very integrated manner. For instance, the environmental approach is also deeply linked to tribal tradition. The globally accepted priority of environmental sustainability - as a consequence of high carbon emissions, excessive energy consumption or desalination - is counterbalanced in the UAE by a different prioritization. The Environmental Agency in Abu Dhabi was primarily created to protect endangered fishes and wild falcons. Thus the ruling families have invested in the preservation of species and natural territories to preserve traditional tribal activities. This framing of the environmental question also seems convenient for the purposes of implementing ecological policies without truly challenging consumption patterns.

On another note, the effects of tribalism are also visible in the interesting phenomenon of the Majiliss, which are an inherently tribal mode of governing, where the patriarch holds an audience to hear the citizen's complaints and requests. It is fundamentally different from a western conception of democracy as it can only work as a form of government in a society formed only by Emiratis which is highly integrated and which places a special emphasis on inter-personal relationships, closeness and family networks. There is an idea of a direct access of to the ruler, acknowledging that those who can benefit of this citizenship belong to a very exclusive club. Exclusiveness is indeed

one of the main components to explain the Emirati society: tribalism effectively sidelines non-tribal and naturalized citizens, which can never truly become integrated.

Because of its recent history as a unified country and as an urban population, the idea of an Emirati identity is still fragile and in the process of being built. We are seeing the first fully urban generation of Dubai citizens, who think of themselves as Emirati nationals, as opposed to the previous generations who defined their identities along tribal lines. Restaurants serving traditional Emirati food have emerged in the gastronomic landscape of Dubai, where most of the offer is a mix of Lebanese, Indian and other Arabic food. There is an institutionalized effort to build this national identity. For instance, writing contests about the Emirati national identity are organized in primary schools. The army has also played an increasing role in the formation of Emiratis' sense of national belonging: in 2014, Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed introduced a mandatory military service for all Emirati men aged between 18 and 30, which is optional for women. The war in Yemen and the loss of 45 servicemen in September of 2015 plunged the whole country in a three-day period of mourning, further awakening national consciousness.

When speaking of Dubai, we cannot leave aside the decisive strategy based on the willingness to be modern. As Ortega pointed out (2009), "Dubai's neopatrimonial structure is at once both strikingly modern, and deeply imbedded in cultural and histor-

ical norms". This fusion of progressive and traditional politics is the product of nearly two centuries of kinship and loyalty-based dynamics, coupled with the emergence of a neoliberal structure in the last 1990's. There is a very particular dualism, incarnated by the coexistence of the different and often thought of as contradicting sets of values that are tribalism on the one hand, with its integration, family links and trust, and on the other hand capitalism led by growth, surplus creation, accumulation and a willingness to outdo existing records. Max Weber himself argued that states and tribes were fundamentally different and irreconcilable entities. Yet we see them coexisting in the UAE, and Dubai is especially interesting in the sense that it has demonstrated the possibility of having both coincide. Indeed, if Dubai is today this capitalist growth-led economy, it is largely due to a political project established by its tribal leaders and the commitment of Emiratis in this project. Paradoxically, it is its tribality that has made Dubai modern.









## SECTION 2

# "LA VILLE SPECTACLE" : ATTRACTIVITY, MIRAGE AND IMAGE-DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT

by Yunqing Bi, Jihye Choi, Adèle Dauxais, Anna Jönsson,  
Maria Myridinas, Candice Pigéard, Paula Querido Van Erven  
& Elizaveta Turgeneva

**B**uilding a metropolis fit for the twenty-first century also means crafting an urban vision that is projected to the world. Iconic mega-projects like Dubai's poster child, the Burj Khalifa, are emblematic of the image-driven development the city has become synonymous with. Whether or not the city has become a model of 'governing through attractivity', and how tenable marketing Dubai through its own representations is for future developments, are themes examined in our second section.

## MIRAGE IN THE DESERT

by Yunqing Bi, Adèle Dauxais &  
Elizaveta Turgeneva

Ask anyone what are Dubai's most recognizable features, and watch the litany of superlatives unfold: artificial islands, the world's largest shopping mall, the first underwater hotel, the world's first indoor skiing slope, and of course, the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building towering at 1km above ground. However, you might be surprised to know Dubai's most innovative recent development project is not the construction of a new Burj Khalifa, but plans to build a 3km canal cutting through the city. Whilst the Dubai water canal seems to represent a clear shift away from Dubai's collection of extravagant architectural mega-projects, in reality we should see the project as a continuance of Dubai's professed strategy for image-driven development. The canal is predicted to multiply the city's coastline by 5, creating high value real-estate development plots for a series of luxury waterfront villas. This reflects a logic of image-driven development, a development which aims at promoting a certain vision, being attractive, rather than meeting the needs of the inhabitants. This begs the question: to what extent is the city built on image? To be seen, to be captured through film and photographs, rather than to be experienced?

Dubai, as promoting an image of progress and dynamism relies on mega-projects to be the new entertainment capital. It plays on the image of this utopic future where human ingenuity can conquer all obstacles and where creativity can be expressed [i]. Dancing towers, twisting skyscrapers or buildings in a shape of a golf tee or jumping dolphins are part of the Dubai landscape. The 7 stars hotel Bujr Al-Arab became an iconic building of Dubai, symbolizing the luxury and the fancy. All those megaprojects aim at increasing city touristic attractiveness. The hospitality market corresponded to 84,534 rooms across 611 properties last year [ii].

As much as megaprojects nourish the vision of Dubai, Dubai is nourishing the megaprojects. Indeed, the real estate developer Nakheel Properties in charge of the \$12,3 Palm Jumeirah project [iii], is actually a subsidiary of Dubai World, an investments company looking at several businesses and projects for Dubai government. Its chairman is none other than the Ruler of Dubai [iv]. Dubai World, in turn, is part of Dubai Inc., a state control investment group, owning Emirates group, Dubai holdings for example.

MARKETING AND PROMOTIONAL  
TOOLS: SUPPLY-GENERATED DEMAND

Dubai seems to be conceived to be seen rather than to be lived in. Its marketing image is reminiscent to a park

resort, to a Disneyland for adults in the middle of the desert, offering luxury residences, marvellous hotels, state of the art office blocks, huge shopping malls, and incredible entertainment. Those mega-projects are built with the purpose of attracting tourists rather than improving living spaces for residents. One can cite as evidence the almost inexistent public space. Walking through the skyscrapers and showcase-streets, there are few public spaces like public parks, bicycle lanes or squares. Therefore how these fancy buildings designed world-famous architects are integrated into neighborhood grid of the city remains unaddressed.

In addition to using images everywhere on skyscrapers and roads to promote tourism, Dubai also uses marketing strategies promoting its real estates. In May 2002 Sheikh Mohammed announced a policy making freehold ownership of residential and other types of real estates in Dubai available to investors of all nationalities in some specially designated zones. Then the related property rights and registration rules were elaborated further in Law No. 7 of 2006. These series of policies attract more and more foreigners investing in buying house in Dubai, and in return making the city build more and more luxury housing. However does this integrate with local housing thus providing better living conditions to residents, and how does the government deal with the surplus of the luxury housing supply which remains vacant nowadays become a serious issue.

## 2.2

### BETWEEN MARKETING AND PROPHECIZING: THE CITY'S VISION FOR ITS FUTURE

by Jihye Choi & Maria Myridinas

Dubai's urban image is distinctively different from other neighboring Emirates that still rely on oil and gas. As the urban space of Dubai rapidly developed in a demand-oriented approach, the city's image was thus created. Dubai has engaged in building an image of a city successfully integrated into the circuits of global capitalism through the use of media: the city focused on promoting its rapid urbanisation, modern architecture and increased wealth, in an attempt to attract foreign investments to lessen oil dependence. But Dubai continues to evolve. It is now shifting to achieve "Urban software" that takes into account personal narratives and that displays what is life in Dubai beyond the "Hardware" of high-rise buildings and large-scale infrastructure. Amid the rapid change, we start here by asking ourselves, what is Dubai's strategy for promoting its image in the future?

Castello (2008) defines urban image as quality of life forwarded by cities to their citizens. In line with this definition, Dubai now prepares to deliver a novel image based on the successful launch

of capitalism and tourism – an exquisite urban lifestyle that allows social, cultural experience and establishes Dubai's identity. With this purpose, EXPO 2020 has an ambitious motto "connect minds, create the future." It aims to create a successful story in terms of sustainability, mobility and opportunity. The successful launch of green businesses in the district and achieving higher connectivity with the rest of the world (through the construction of a new airport and multi-modal freighters) is expected to produce more business opportunities, which will attract people from all over the world. In this sense, Dubai South along with the core spirit of EXPO 2020, is a demonstration of the image Dubai wishes to project of its future development as a city which puts its residents' well-being at the heart of its development strategy.

With these focal points that this mega-event will globally project in 2020, Dubai South should be a showcase that integrates greater sustainability into the Dubai lifestyle embodied in a newly built livable city. The Dubai South project is a master-planned neighborhood which is expected to accommodate almost one million people and employ another half million. The Dubai South project will also include the now operational Al Maktoum International Airport which is supposed to be one of the largest ones in the region -- if not the world -- once completed, a key factor in increasing GDP and employment in Dubai. The Dubai South development project aims to build a socially sustainable residential neighborhood around the airport, which embodies Dubai's ambition to become

"the happiest city in the world".

It is worth mentioning Dubai's more general attempts to recast itself as a "Smart city" not only through urban infrastructure but also in terms of lifestyle standards. The smartphone application that the Smart City Initiative Dubai is seeking to develop seems to be linking advanced urban services -- like paying fines or electricity bills directly online via the "Smart Dubai" app -- to citizens' happiness,. Such applications will, according to them, maximise the resident's satisfaction and well-being, rendering Dubai the happiest city in the near future. That is, Dubai wants to promote urban images that offer exactly what residents need in order to maximise their opportunities and happiness.

A city's ability to attract such talent capable of innovation, becomes an integral factor in urban competitiveness. To attract talented people, the city has recognised the importance of an intangible urban experience and creating a sense of connection amongst residents. Therefore, Dubai South is anticipated to successfully present how Dubai residents take advantage of urban sustainability, mobility and opportunities for the happiness.

However, this purpose may need a selective approach because a city's competitiveness is more sustained by competent people, rather than with huge population or with ferroconcrete buildings and asphalt-paved highways. In this regard, Dubai South is more likely to welcome those who can afford to live in its newly-established city and can contribute to creating desirable lifestyle.

Serving as a test-bed, it is also the first step towards a people-centered city. The degree of the quality and the happiness that the whole city can pursue would depend on Dubai South's ability to provide what their people need to maximize their happiness. That is, this novel urban space will be an example of how Dubai can accomplish its next goal. For this reason, how smoothly the project will operate and the lessons learned from it will prove to be relevant for the rest of the city in the future.

## 2.3

### DUB-EYE: WHAT IS MADE VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE?

by Anna Jönsson

Dubai displays to us the ideal of a fantasy city, one which we would never have had imagined to exist in the desert. In the reflexive surfaces of the tall skyscrapers, we mainly see ourselves and the street, and the cars passing by behind us on the wide boulevards. If you have no right to enter the building physically, you will not be able to access it visually either. Mere spectator, you stay put on the outside.

Dubai makes us think of Juhani Pallasmaa's philosophical analysis of how architecture applies to our "feeling" of a city. Architecture reflects ideas of ideal life, and in a way, the role of architecture is to structure our sense of being in the world. Buildings make us understand

the flow of reality, and also recognize who we are in this reality. They perceive and display the dialectics of permanence and change, action and power, societal and cultural order, and of identity and memory, which is why architecture also has an existential dimension. Dubai flashes us with an image of fantasy, of greatness, of a highly technological and modern world, but we feel a lack of mediation between the built and the human dimension, detaching the subject from its environment. We could be in Dubai, or anywhere else in the world.

In Dubai, things happen fast. The land that almost 40 years ago consisted of almost nothing is today a global city, ready to take on the world and compete among the greatest. This demonstrates how time seems not to be of any importance when there is money to invest and a vision to create. In a "smart" city of masterplans and modernist interventions, urban connections are planned to work quickly, smoothly, and efficiently, as if the importance of time and space disappears. This phenomenon has been articulated by David Harvey as the "time-space compression", when discussing the consequences of globalization for society. Dubai is in this sense a showcase of Globalization.

Alas, when visiting Dubai, we cannot help but wonder: for whom does this showcase exist? As argued by Pallasmaa, constructing a city also requires an understanding of the human. For Dubai, what is human in the urban realm? Can cities developing at the speed of Dubai keep up with the hu-



man dimension, and more importantly, can the humans keep up with the city? We feel that there must be more to it than shopping malls, shiny cars and extravagant light shows. In the end, this superficial display of a city needs also to integrate and create a more profound, sincere reality for its inhabitants. On the other hand, we might just have to accept that cities can look different for each spectator, and that what is being constructed today is built for a future we still have not gotten used to. Although we might see it as an incomprehensible mirage of the desert, perhaps we should try to keep up and adapt to this new, speedy and shiny reality that is Dubai.

## 2.4

### THE CAPITALIST SOLSTICE

by Candice Pigeard & Paula

If Dubai is a mirage in the desert, how does it succeed to be a sustainable one? Storytelling may be a mechanism through which Dubai builds itself as a world-city with a unique identity. Dubai does not just adopt codes developed elsewhere, but consistently excels by exceeding them. So how can a city's features be understood by everyone? More than just building itself, Dubai projects itself in the future, using storytelling as a tool to both frame its urban development and embody its identity. It uses what exists while also attempting to transcend it. Examining the discours-

es that are used is highly important in order to understand how storytelling is a key element in Dubai's development.

The tribal origins of Dubai easily seem incompatible with the reality that one sees and experiences in the city today. In order to sustain itself beyond its brief reliance on oil revenues, that were bound to deplete quickly, the city started diversifying its activities. It also developed a special interest in attractive megaprojects as a means of branding, so as to insert itself into the global circuit of city competitiveness. The quick emergence of a city that now performs economically at such a notable scale has crafted an almost fantastical fiction. Betting on its ability to defy limits and overcome commonplace barriers in development, this myth also succeeds in overcoming sceptic criticisms that question the validity of its long-term goals. Through a re-conception of its past, and a careful attention to image-driven potentialities for the future, Dubai has identified the power in creating a collective dream of the "modern" future.

A crucial part in Dubai's development is not necessarily found on the ground, but rather in the discourses of its policymakers. The rhetoric of storytelling has long been a method of establishing complacency in national-political contexts. From the myth of the Tower of Babel to Plato's Republic, storytelling has served crucial political purposes in delineating values, clarifying targets, and creating memories that can arguably defend policy choices more than any other persuasive device. As the po-

litical theorist Sheldon Wolin indicates, “audience is a metaphor for the political community whose nature is to be a community of remembrance” (Wolin 1977, p.97). Dubai’s seemingly ex-nihilo foundation has had to accommodate this notion of memory into a common repertoire of future projections. Considering Dubai’s previous nomadic constituency, a uniform and tangible nostalgia for the past was not an apparatus that such discourse could base itself on. How does a city with such a recent and immediate establishment consolidate a necessary common imaginary in order to compete and thrive on an international scale? Actually, this common imaginary can be identified to lie elsewhere: on the collective dream of the future, in a common desire for constant modern and technological transcendence.

The collective projection of a pioneering and unprecedented development that keeps challenging its own limits is carefully moulded in the “Dubai dream.” The language offered measures experience according to an appropriation of Western capitalist standards. In turn, these norms are expanded upon and reassembled in order to go beyond its previous incarnations. For instance, among its multiple goals, Dubai aims to become the world leader in the field of smart city technology. In order to ensure its top position in world-rankings, the Dubai Smart City agency developed their own international benchmark of smart cities in accordance to the city’s own competitive advantages. The developmental framework is constructed in such a manner that it not

only ensures Dubai’s leading position, but it purports to objectively measure the city’s achievements and secure international recognition. Dubai’s storytelling importantly gears towards results that fit specific (ranking) goals, as well as happiness assessments that are based on clear, easy-to-use intelligent interfaces.

The fabrication of an almost science-fiction-like, visionary future has raised the curious fact that it is assumedly impossible to imagine things that have never been experienced before. Indeed, Dubai’s “Gulf-futurism” does not escape from the idea that the notions of modernity that are guiding development can only come from a creative reassemblage of present understandings. The criteria for excellence that are being used to assess these futuristic dreams are appropriations of an already laid out capitalist lexicon, which establishes a homogenized interpretation of experience, and consequently builds a nation on a perceived consensus.

By incessantly projecting itself towards the future, Dubai seems to stand out among the cities of the 21st century incarnating an unprecedented and paradoxical growth model. Indeed, Dubai’s easily approachable facade may allow us to easily forget the fact that it still belongs to a distinct, rarely acknowledged environment with all of its particularities. Therefore inventing itself through this futuristic storytelling leads Dubai to disharmonize with its former environmental uniqueness while simultaneously being over-connected with the rest of the world. Analyzing Dubai’s urban

development model through a rather European prism appears inappropriate. Unlike European cities, that were built gradually in response to human needs as they wished to exist as a coherent and geographically fixed society, Dubai's built environment comes first, and in turn anticipates future human needs. Developing itself in a projective manner demands that Dubai stays constantly attractive. This might be why such futuristic storytelling takes place, rising from a profound need for Dubai to survive. For that reason, drawing a threshold for development becomes inconceivable, and the city becomes established on the notion of limitlessness, mirroring the vastness of its desert surroundings. This futuristic imaginary sustains the necessary mindset behind Dubai's growth.

So if the power lies where people are constantly looking forward, we may wonder what exists at Dubai's core, beyond the built environment: what are the forces powering Dubai? How does this narrative of success, easily exportable, shape Dubai's place in a globalized world? The embodiment of the city's own narrative relies on several key resources: a booming real estate market, a ready influx of wealth-generating consumers, and energy reliability which we shall explore in subsequent sections of the book.









## SECTION 3

# POWERING DUBAI'S GROWTH

by Luc Berman, Pierre De Massé, Marie Francoz, Julia Ladret,  
Camille Tchounikine & Yue Wang

**W**e then explored the driving forces behind Dubai's growth model, monumental in scale but also impressive in scope, specifically looking at the city's insertion within the global economic system through the development of unique business models. The need for foreign investments, as well as heavy reliance on immigrant labor, has characterized the Emirate's often-relentless economic expansion. This section also evaluates the geopolitical stakes at play when it comes to Dubai's extraordinary energy needs, as well as the liberal approach to investments and regulation that defines its business strategy.

# 3.1

## GEOPOLITICS OF ENERGY AND WATER IN DUBAI

by Luc Berman &  
Pierre De Massé

To delve deeper into the mechanisms fuelling Dubai's growth, or more specifically, understand how a city could grow at such an exponential pace when being located in a desert, one must inquire into how the city can sustain its need for energy throughout its growth. It has been estimated that Dubai's demand in energy has increased by 18% per year in the last ten years. Dubai relies partially on its own means of energy production, and mainly on imports, whether it is from the other emirates or countries. With an ever increasing domestic demand, and a quasi-total reliance on gas to produce its electricity and desalinate its water, the UAE is planning to increase gas consumption as well as develop alternative resources – mainly nuclear and renewable.

Even though the UAE has the world's 7th largest gas reserves, it only ranks 16th in the world as a producer. This can partly be explained by the fact that oil prices are relatively higher than those of gas. As a result - and coupled with its need in gas for electricity production, oil extraction and liquefied gas exports - the UAE needs more gas than

it can produce. Therefore it must rely on gas imports (mainly from Kuwait). The UAE's consumption in electricity has been growing constantly, placing the UAE amongst the highest electricity consumers per capita in the world[1]. According to a Emirates News Agency report, the electricity demand in the UAE is anticipated to grow by 50% from January 2013 to 2020.

Dubai's water entirely originates from seawater desalination as it lacks water sources. Desalination plants are connected to electricity plants so that they use the residual heat from electricity production. This poses two main issues: firstly, water desalination is almost fully dependent on gas; secondly, for water to be desalinated, electricity must be produced. This has led to an over-production of energy during the winter season, when the demand for water remains stable; while, in the summer, the intense use of air conditioning requires more electricity, which leads to an excess production of desalinated water. The energy constraints imposed by the process of desalinization has lead other emirates such as Abu Dhabi to invest in alternative technologies, such as water-filtering membranes which would lower energy-consumption.

The over-reliance on gas, the production interconnectedness between electricity and water, and the potential consequences of energy shortages on the economy have led the UAE into diversifying its energy supply. The two main alternatives considered so far are nuclear and renewable. Regarding nuclear, plants will only be located in the

Abu Dhabi emirate and will be finalized by 2020 to produce a quarter of the UAE's consumption.

As for renewable energy, two solar power plants have been built so far: one in Abu Dhabi (100MW) and one in Dubai (13MW). However, the extremely high summer temperatures of the region as well as the accumulation of sand on the panels create several technological challenges for solar energy. Indeed, solar energy technology is today more efficient in temperate regions such as in Germany than in arid desertic ones such as in the UAE. As long as these problems are not solved, solar energy won't be a serious alternative to existing electricity production means. However, research is currently being undertaken in places such as Masdar with the ambition to tackle existing issues.

Thus, the situation Dubai is facing is the following: to meet its energy and water-consumption demands, it relies mainly on the energy and drinkable water production of Abu Dhabi which itself originates from the use of gas and oil.

## 3.2

### WHO BUILDS DUBAI?

by Marie Francoz & Yue Wang

The fast development of Dubai depends on large human resources in sectors such as construction, tourism, finance, trade. Because the United Arab Emirates' national population is relatively small, counting only 900 000 Emiratis, the economic growth of Dubai heavily relies on foreign manpower. The national census of 2010 estimated the UAE population to be 8.2 million, with approximately 88% of migrants. With more than half of the population coming from India and the Indian subcontinent, some people described Dubai as a city of Indian communities. Migrants come not only for low skilled jobs but also positions which require high skills and education, as local Emiratis' education level does not correspond to the country's economic goals. One the one hand, 2009 official records estimates that 17,5% of the national population (older than 10 years old) has not completed primary education. On the other hand, only 13.5 % of Emiratis have studied at university [i]. Thus, the UAE aims at developing education in both general and vocational areas in order to 'emiratisatize' the labour market. For a country which develops as a financial hub and a trade center, the first choice is to employ skillful expatriate workers.

## TYPOLOGY OF WORKERS

The labor force in UAE can be divided into three categories: the Emiratis, low skilled migrant workers and high skilled migrant workers (also called “Expats”) who do not benefit from the same working and living conditions. Emiratis make up most of the upper-class, with a high percentage, working as civil servants. They work under good conditions and enjoy many privileges. Expats, referred to as high skilled workers, are coming from all over the world, especially for wealthy western countries but not exclusively, since more and more Indians of the upper-middle class have also migrated to Dubai. They are well paid, work in a good environment and are covered by company insurance. As for low skilled workers referred to as the construction workers, most of them came from Southeast Asia, with long working hours, low payment and poor living conditions. Depending on the city building projects, they are also divided into short-term and long-term workers. More than half of the expatriate workers are short-term. They work for the public or private sectors and send money back home.

## HOW DOES DUBAI ATTRACT PEOPLE ?

Large scale city construction programs attract foreign low skilled workers as well as tourists. In the free environment of commerce, companies with ambitious goals come to do business and establish headquarters in the region. Compared to other regions of the Gulf, Dubai is perceived as the safe haven of the Middle East. Income

driven partly by oil business is redistributed through wages relatively higher than the international average income.

However, high wages are not for everyone: low-skilled workers live under harsh conditions of labor camps, are lowly paid, and human rights organizations regularly denouncing their bad treatment. Why do they come to work in the UAE? In order to answer this question, Ivan Szelenyi, the former Dean of Social Sciences at New York University of Abu Dhabi conducted a study on Pakistani construction workers [iii], based on fieldwork carried out in Pakistan by the Institute of Social Research (Lahore). They interviewed 250 intending migrants who planned to go in the UAE and 260 return migrants in 2013. Interviewees reported mixed experiences in UAE: 46% were satisfied with wages, 64% were satisfied with working conditions but, 67 % felt they were treated like slaves. Nevertheless, 57 % would return to UAE, especially those who are less educated. Firstly, two thirds of the migrants who have returned feel that their family could not have survived without remittances sent from UAE. Secondly, around 80% of the former migrants feel an increase of social status compared to before they came to the UAE.

## Outsourcing civil servants

The public sectors of the UAE are affected by a strong dependency on expatriate workers. The Economist estimated that thousands of foreigners have middle or senior government jobs despite a recent acceleration of the pol-

icy of “Emiratisation”, launched three decades ago [ii] . One of the personalities that we had the chance to meet worked in the public sector and reported that official delegations for international summits and conferences were mainly composed of foreigners. Thus, there was a paradoxical situation where Emirate national interests were defended by migrants who did not have any political rights in UAE. However, this situation is changing, for instance, the delegation was mainly composed of Emiratis in the last international summit (COP 21).

Marie Francoz & Yue Wang

instance, the labor camps formed in the desert are far away from the central area; extreme weather and low-condition of residence make the working environment worse. For Ivan Szelenyi, the UAE guest worker system is only sustainable as long as South Asia remains poor and UAE remains an absolute monarchy, as political liberalization cannot accept such level of exploitation.

## A SUSTAINABLE MODEL?

High dynamics of population and new expatriate labour make the cities more flexible for facing the challenges of economic changes. Large diversification of labour market facilitates the high-speed growth observed in Dubai. Short-term workers contribute to the city construction projects with few burden for the city's social insurance and public education systems. However, the highly segregated labor market brings challenges to the sustainable development of the city. Dubai has no trade unions, no collective bargaining is allowed within the construction workers. The changes of wages are decided by the employers. Social problems, such as human rights abuses and hardships due to terrible working conditions, arise amongst the construction and industrial workers. For



# 3.3

## DUBAI'S BUSINESS MODEL

by Julia Ladret & Camille  
Tchounikine

While driving on Dubai's highways, surrounded by countless shining skyscrapers, one asks himself where does all the luxury come from. How has Dubai managed to transform from a little port of pearl traders in the desert to a global hub, where foreign investments and business workers flow to feed their 5% per year growth-machine, in less than 30 years ? The answer lies in one word: business. In Dubai, business is everything, and everything is business. Trade counts for 30% of the GDP, as much for tourism. Both are nourished by an hyperactive real estate sector fuelled by financial speculation [i]. The city's thriving business sector, advertised as the heaven for expatriates entrepreneurs, is the real pillar of the economy. Through more or less formal channels of wealth transmission, this allows the local 10% of the population, mostly employed by the government, to live on a rent basis. What are the modalities of this win-win strategy?

According to a young entrepreneur we met, "It all started with a freezone": the Jebel Ali harbour, which is today a massive goods platform situated in the entry of the Arabic Gulf, connecting the Middle East to the Indian Ocean. It was designed as the first freezone of

the city, an officially recognized, delineated area, where trade would be exempt from taxes and would be subject to British Common Law. This investment-attraction strategy rapidly transformed the core of the growth system of Dubai, which today counts dozens of similar places, all hosting hundreds of foreign companies. Freezones exist for each activity, from the "Dubai Healthcare City" to the "Media City", and the biggest, "Dubai Multi Commodities Center", which registers more than 10,000 companies.

Formally, being in a freezone exempts a company from the necessity to comply to Dubai's business law, which requires a minimum ownership of 51% by a local Emirati citizen. This arrangement is especially attractive for service companies, such as Media or Consultancy firms, since free zones do not have storage capacity. Yet it also prevents these companies from entering directly onto the local market. To benefit from the ever-growing local demand, foreign companies have to abide by the sponsorship system, which is a great channel of wealth recuperation for the government. Often, the company has in fact a side contract with the sponsor, agreeing to leave the control to the entrepreneur in exchange for regular payment. Yet at the end of the day, the sponsor can legally act as a veto player in case of any important decision concerning the company in the region, from selling to hiring through employment visas. The latter is a powerful tool for the Emiratis to control who has the right to enter the territory to work for and benefit from the "growth-machine".

A working visa for two years costs around 4,000 dirhams, (1,000 euros), for a basic migrant worker.

The sponsorship (called “kafala” system) and the visa systems are the most obvious tools of what we could consider as a complex set of “hidden taxes”. This is the flip side of the “no tax” motto used for Dubai’s - and especially its free zones - competitiveness. It also comprises a system of licences renewal, such as the registration license, which has to be renewed every year managing a fee.

This is the win-win strategy: a highly advertised legal system of fiscal advantages that facilitates the relocation of foreign businesses to Dubai, and a side system of rent that allows the government to benefit from the implantation of foreign businesses in Dubai. While maintaining channels of control over who can do business in the territory, it also puts forward an attractive image of easy, successful and relatively free investments to be made for foreigners. As such, it also allows bidding practices to attract foreign investment in order to finance grand projects. As the promise of high returns does attract international investors, infrastructures develop with all costs exteriorized for the city. The close links between real estate and the financial sector have indeed been feeding the country’s growth for 15 years. As opposed to the national legislation restricting foreign ownership, Dubai introduced in 2002 by royal decree a freehold ownership for expatriates, in selected zones of the city. Among them, the residences situated

in the manmade islands (The Palm) and in the Dubai Marina were built to be sold to foreign investors and expatriates: it is estimated that in 2007, more than 15,000 expatriates had invested in housing at the Marina Bay [ii].

Dubai’s strategy is therefore also relies on the attraction of foreign investment to sustain the artificial boost fuelling the real estate sector. Although this relies heavily on speculation, risks are minimized by the revenues made by the two most important construction companies, owned by Emiratis. Yet the World Islands project for instance is still slowly recovering from the 2008 economic crisis that completely froze foreign investments - and still 40% is not owned by private developers.

This is where we can perceive the limits of the growth machine: the looming eventuality of a crisis - or simply a slowing down of economic growth. As simple members of a “transit society”, expatriates, like in 2008, leave the country, abandoning potentially bankrupt businesses and breaking down the major channel of wealth recuperation for the locals. The 2008 crisis, when Dubai had to be bailed out to survive, is still present in collective memory, although “new regulations” have been put in practice, especially in the real estate sector, in order to stick more closely to the demand. Yet one can notice that demand for housing is very much estimated on speculations of extreme growth from the tourism sector. Besides, as future growth depends mostly on international investments, there is not much leverage for the government

to negotiate a contract with real estate or construction companies. Increasing numbers of infrastructure and development mega-projects are to be drawn up and pushed forward in order to keep the machine working. These arrangements could lead to a speculative bubble, but as it relies on the logic of every-expanding, incessant growth, the win-win strategy does not include the scenario of a potential slowing down of real estate developments.

Another limit to Dubai's win-win strategy for growth lies in the eventual implementation of corporate and value-added taxes (VAT) by the federal government, which would allow the UAE to compensate the continued low oil prices. Recent official announcement on this possibility provoked worry in expatriate and business circles, for whom the tax-free system was one the main reason to locate their business in the Emirates. If Dubai's growth is reliant on a business strategy that seeks to balance national wealth recuperation with a "paradise" of non-intervention for foreign companies, would introducing tax challenge the balance of the win-win strategy?

### **Case study: Real estate and speculation strategy**

Dubai's housing market - powered by high oil revenues, domestic investments, and an increasing recognition as a safe investment location in the region - has experienced episodes of high growth from 2002 until the global financial crisis in 2008. During that period, property prices almost quadrupled

. When the crisis hit Dubai, its speculation-based system broke down, resulting in the stalling of developments and other projects. Abu Dhabi's financial system being exposed to Dubai's economy, contagion was taken very seriously by Abu Dhabi. It resulted, among other things, in the bailing out of Dubai by Abu Dhabi. What made the agreement possible between the two kingdoms is not fully known to the public except for a few symbolic changes such as the renaming of the Burj Dubai into the the Burj Khalifa.

Recently, in a promising post-crisis recovery period, Dubai's housing market has experienced a revival - or another "Go-Go Era"- which has re-introduced or given birth to various speculative behaviours. From January 2012 to end-2014, Dubai's property prices went over 20% annually. The looming possibility of a new crash caused by excessive speculative behaviour was one of our concerns when looking at growth in Dubai.

For instance, flipping frenzy - the mechanism along which an investor buys and sells in a short amount of time a property before it is even constructed - is still widely used. It works on the assumption that speculators are constantly about to enter the market, consequently pushing prices up. In return, equally speculative practices lay the shaky bases that, for some, were the very causes of the former fall of Dubai's housing market. However, measures have been implemented to regulate real-estate speculation and to foster more responsive behaviour. Either by asking sales

agents to not resell off-plan properties until the unit is completed and handed over (in order to reduce flipping) ; or, by increasing sales transaction fees.

Pierre De Massé

**Map.**

**Powering Dubai**

**Credit: Tatiana Samsonova**





## SECTION 4

# SUSTAINABILITY AS A NEW BUSINESS STRATEGY

by Kémilia Bensassi, Célia Darrisse, Anna Jönsson, Lily Munson,  
Benjamin Rapp, Ambre Souada & Anna Tehlova

Moving from assets to innovations, the fourth section discusses the growing importance of environmental sustainability as an economic sector. Within this burgeoning sector, Dubai and its rival-partner Abu Dhabi compete to attract the latest technology through massive investments that allow them to thrive and bolster their legitimacy as global hubs for environmentally conscious development. Beyond that, however, sustainability also possesses a political component, as the embodiment of an alternative strategy to distance the Emirates from dependency on external resources and diversify the economy.

SUSTAINABILITY AS A  
MARKETING STRATEGY ?

by Célia Darrisse, Benjamin Rapp  
& Ambre Souada

Considering the high ambitions of the sheikdom, the quote “second place is the first loser” could be Dubai’s motto. Sustainability and environmental protection is no exception to this rule. Nevertheless, in today’s western countries, sustainability goes hand in hand with concepts such as degrowth or rescaling. In Dubai, this cannot be less true. Dubai announces clear ambitions for its future and the future of its dwellers; it will be number one in every conceivable domain and wants people to know it. In order to achieve their goals, Dubai’s officials have set up a massive marketing strategy to showcase their determination. To win a race, one needs first to create the race and set the rules of the game. Over the 30 previous years, Dubai has grown from a fishing port to a prolific world city. So, if the focus on growth is what has built and shaped Dubai in many ways from the beginning, it seems that now, the focus lays on making growth sustainable. To answer their many contemporary challenges, sustainability has become a priority on the Emirati political agenda and a large eco-strategy has been put in place both in Dubai and its neighbor Abu Dhabi.

“It’s a challenge and not a crisis.” This is what Sheik Saif, the United Arab Emirates’ Prime minister declared when asked about the drop of oil prices. The 1970s were the golden age of the black gold for the UAE. Their economy developed at a greater speed than any Western country’s. After Dubai discovered oil in 1966, it had, for a brief moment, based their economy on this resource. But they were aware that they could not rely on oil as much or as long as other Middle Eastern countries. In the 1990’s oil revenue represented 25% of the Dubai’s GDP, today it is a share of about 4% of it. Following the global financial crisis in 2008, when Dubai went close to bankruptcy, the Emirate had to be supported by its neighbor Abu Dhabi. Dubai came to the realization that a diversification of economic activities was essential for the sustainability of their well being. They turned their economy towards new technologies, tourism, finance and trade. Today over 100 international financial firms are operating in the Emirates, with most of them settled between Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

Sustainability in the Emirates and in Dubai is not only thought of in terms of economy. The protection of the environment has slowly appeared on their political agenda and is getting increasing attention. In 2006, the UAE had the greatest carbon footprint in the world with more than 11.5 hectares per person for a population of 4.8 million. It was also the year when the Green Building Council was created. GBC is an NGO

that is working on the construction of energy efficient buildings. Despite its total independence from the government, they still work closely together to achieve environmental goals. The Sheikh of Dubai issued a decree obliging every building to abide to strict building codes which respect international sustainability norms. Although the intentions are good, actions are missing. The Green Building Council lacks financial resources to follow up on the Sheikh's desire of making every construction in Dubai environmentally sustainable.

Dubai has understood that sustainability is on the agenda of most global cities in the world and uses it as a marketing strategy to become a world city itself. GBC's initiative to encourage the city to have retrofitting buildings goes along with this idea. After using the American environmental certification LEED for a long time, GBC created its own label Estidama (the arabic word for sustainability). Even if the label is more aspirational than constraining, it still shows that Dubai is signalling its commitment to issues surrounding environmental sustainability.

#### A DUAL STRATEGY: ECONOMIC AND ECOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF ECO-SUSTAINABILITY

One of the three pillars of the Dubai Expo 2020 is sustainability. As we were told by a representative of the project, an entire part of the exhibition's site will be dedicated to sustainability. This clearly highlights that sustainability has become one of the main Emirati priorities. 2020 will be a milestone year for

the city. The largest city in the UAE will host, in 2020, the World Exposition. For this special occasion, the city planners have decided to create a new city around it and around a soon-to-be airport three times bigger than Heathrow. As in each of their projects, the new city located in the south of Dubai will be 'seamlessly' smart and fully sustainable. However, environmental sustainability cannot be considered as the sole purpose of the project. Dubai bets a lot on the economic attractiveness of the site, which should turn into a major trading location for goods in the Middle East. The dual dimension of the very concept of sustainability is even more manifest when considering the current strategies for the development of both Dubai and Abu Dhabi. Indeed, Emirati authorities have put in place an efficient eco-strategy - often developed within partnerships with international actors and developers - through the regeneration of existing areas that are redesigned with clean technologies, as well as the development of new master-planned settlements to facilitate large-scale technological installation. Masdar City is a prime example of those ambitions. It is a US\$20 billions state funded project that has been thought to become the "world's most sustainable eco-city" (The Masdar Initiative, 2015). Constructions started in 2008 and the city will be spreading over 6 km<sup>2</sup> for a population of 50 000 people. Masdar is a very innovative project that aims to become an influential clean-tech hubs where emerging companies as well as research centres and big corporations would converge and launch new-technological products. As

it will become a large laboratory to test new devices, Masdar is really funded on innovation, financial and intellectual attractiveness as well as exportation of the newly developed technologies. Important governmental funds have been invested in Masdar City with the undeniable expectation of return on such investments. To this extent, when we consider the meaning of sustainability in every discourse and official document that targets it, it seems that sustainability is always and necessarily understood in an economic dimension. In the Emirates, the development of a project that promotes ecological modernisation never seems to lack an economical perspective and a concern for profitability.

## 4.2

### ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY IN DUBAI: BETWEEN DISCOURSE AND IMPLEMENTATION

by Kémilia Bensassi,  
Lily Munson & Anna Tehlova

While sustainability appears as a priority in the discourse of Dubai's government, it faces difficulties in translating into concrete policies that can be implemented. We suggest the following aspects to be behind this challenge: conflicts of interest within the government, absence of precise long-term strategies, resource dependence and

a lack of environmental awareness amongst the wider public.

#### CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The UAE is a young country and so are its institutions which are progressively improving their efficiency but which, however, still face some challenges. The government of Dubai includes an Executive Council of Dubai (created in 2003), chaired by H.H. Sheikh Hamdan Bin Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the Crown Prince of Dubai since 2008; the Ruler's Court has a supervisory role. However, despite the existence of these councils, fifteen departments (e.g. Dubai Municipality, Dubai Civil Defense, Department of Finance etc.), eight public authorities (e.g. Dubai Electricity and Water Authority, Roads and Transport Authority etc.) and other institutions, it is not always clear who is responsible for which sector.

Legislation is split between the Executive Council and the Ruler's Court and executive power is spread over different entities, although it is increasingly institutionalized - the Executive Council has had a growing influence. One entity might be both a regulatory authority and the service-provider as it is case for the Waste Management Department and the Electricity and Water Authority. These overlapping responsibilities may eventually lead to conflicts of interest, which, together with strong lobbies within Dubai government, impede the implementation of a strategy for environmental sustainability.

## SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES AND DEPENDENCY

Furthermore, sustainable policy is difficult to implement due to Dubai's growth-driven economy and the immediate environmental constraints posed by the desert. Despite the discourse of providing for "Generations to come" [1], a long-term strategy seems to be missing. Short-term policies create a non-resilient environment, highly dependent on external inputs and flows.

For instance, it appears that waste management lacks a long-term approach. So far, waste is collected by private or public companies depending of the neighborhood and is most of the time dealt with through public-private partnerships with companies such as Suez. The entire waste of the metropolis is then transported to a landfill in the desert. This approach ensures cleanliness of the city, but is not environmentally sustainable. However, specific projects such as Masdar or Dubai South are attempting to include recycling in their master planned cities. Data on the quantity of waste produced are missing which makes establishing a long-term waste-management strategy difficult.

Dubai relies on Abu Dhabi for the provision of part of its water and energy consumption: Jebel Ali plant ensures reserves for only 96 hours in case of a crisis. Furthermore, in Dubai, production of water and energy is interdependent since the Jebel Ali plant uses fuel for the desalinization process. This process for producing water requires

imported resources such as gas from Qatar and oil from Abu Dhabi. Furthermore, desalination has negative effects on the environment through an increase of CO<sub>2</sub> causing the acidification of the sea and subsequently an increase of the ocean's temperature. Together with a higher concentration of salt in the sea water (caused by the salt drained back to the sea after the desalination process), it negatively affects the marine life such as the Abu Dhabi coral reef. Furthermore, Dubai is dependent also in terms of food: because of its dry climate which is not favorable to agriculture, most of the food products have to be imported.

It seems that the lack of natural resources implied by a desert environment and the connectivity and dependence of a global hub such as Dubai actually trigger many challenges for a fast growing metropolis. The question remains: how can independence and sustainability be ensured in the desert?

## CHANGING PEOPLE'S BEHAVIOR: MISSING ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Implementation of environmental policies depends to a large extent on the behavior of society. However, the environment of Dubai is not propitious to raise awareness about sustainability issues and to promote environment-friendly behavior of people for several reasons. First, the economy of the country has been based on non-renewable resources which have been ample in the neighboring Emirate of Abu Dhabi. Second, a very hot cli-



mate (50°C in summer) makes the life without air-conditioned buildings and movement without air-conditioned cars unimaginable for Dubai's residents. Indeed, researchers, such as Harvey Molotch, assume that the Emirati success-story is based on the spread of air-conditioning. Third, a transit society, with most of people staying for only few years, is a strong disincentive to invest in environmental education of civil society. Fourth, the absence of any company or individual taxation makes it hard for the government to start asking people to pay for expensive treatments for water, energy and waste management.

Awareness-raising initiatives run by the government and other institutions such as Green Building Council are still mostly focused on industries and businesses and programmes targeting individuals remain weak.

However, Dubai has witnessed a progressive change in people's behavior: number of users of public transport (metro, tramway) increases every year after the city invested in public infrastructure. Despite its relatively high cost, especially compared to the taxi fare [ii], the metro connects main centers and can appear as an incentive for the inhabitants to get around the city in a more sustainable way.

## **How to create a liveable city in the desert?**

Apart from stimulating the experience of the built environment for urban dwellers, urban and environmental scholars argue that access to green space is a matter of environmental justice, as they have a positive impact on health and quality of life. [i] Green landscapes also serve as microclimate control, reducing the urban heating in densely built areas. [ii] However, although the word "green" in cities is normally associated with sustainability, this is not always the case in the desert, where maintaining green spaces requires an excessive water use for irrigation

The Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council recognizes the need for green spaces as part of its vision to create world class public spaces for the emirates, with the lead motives to promote liveability, identity and accessibility to the city. On the other hand, Abu Dhabi currently uses 21.4 billion cubic meters of ground water per year to irrigate the emirate's green forestry areas. [iii] With a 100 percent dependence on desalinated water and groundwater resources, combined with a rapid urban expansion, the role of urban planners and policy-makers is crucial to plan for a water-resilient landscape vegetation. [iv] [v] The Urban Planning Agency of Abu Dhabi is now taking action to introduce a more sustainable plan and design of the public realm. By requiring measures such as water budgeting, using recycled water for

irrigation and the use of at least 80 percent of local flora for plantation, the council aims to reduce water wastage. The question is whether green spaces necessarily have to be green? Perhaps the problem lies in the definition, and the general idea of what urban landscapes should look like. Urban landscaping is shaped by socio-economic values, the needs of society, and technology. Before air-conditioning, urban landscaping in desert cities would function to make cities more habitable in high temperatures. Air-conditioned buildings and modern technologies have changed the need for functional and strategic planning of the city green spaces, as well as the habits of city residents, reducing the function of green spaces to merely decorative. However, in desert cities such as Abu Dhabi, the well-maintained green lawns and lush trees will hardly make the city 'liveable' in the long term.

It should be possible to find alternatives to urban landscapes contributing to an improved quality of life for inhabitants, without requiring overconsumption of natural resources. Alternative public recreational spaces such as art parks are now suggested by the Abu Dhabi Environmental agency. [vii] Studies conducted in the United States show that public art, just like green spaces, ranks higher than education, safety and the local economy to improve the feeling of "welcomeness", "openness" and a attachment among citizens. [viii] Public art in cities makes it liveable and accessible, but does not require

irrigation. This also makes it "green".

Anna Jönsson



## SECTION 5

# GOVERNANCE SYSTEM BASED ON EXCLUSIVITY AND SELECTIVITY

by Marine Chevallereau, Marie Francoz, Agathe Lacombe,  
Jonathan Pichot, Sophia Torres & Yue Wang

**T**he notion of control in Dubai is a slippery one. As a city-state composed of economic free zones within a kingdom, these overlapping layers of governance are reflected in the inner workings of a socially stratified society, and overlapping types of competing regulations. Thus, in a fifth section, we attempt to provide an understanding of the forms of political authority in the Emirates, the unique and multiple kinds of 'citizenship' that can be conceived of in the UAE, and the socio-political implications of such hierarchies in Dubai.

# 5.1

## BETWEEN LOCAL AND GLOBAL: DUBAI AS A CITY-STATE

by Sophia Torres

If it is undeniable that the last centuries have borne witness to the consolidation of the nation state as preferred form of state formation worldwide, the last decades have pointed to the re-emergence of another form of state: the city states. Usually associated to the ancient Greek Polis or to the Italian cities of the Renaissance, such political form has made a comeback with contemporary heirs such as Hong Kong, Singapore and the Emirates of the UAE. The fact that those have enjoyed high levels of fast growth during the last decades has raised the attention towards the economic potentials of such political model and its compatibility with the current globalized economy.

But first of all, what is a city-state anyway? According to the Oxford Dictionary, it can be defined as “a self-governing or sovereign state consisting of a city and its surrounding territory; the community of people living in, or the body politic of, this state”. Such definition touches the two most important and defining characteristics of the city state: the city space (its limited territory) and its sovereignty. Those two elements are the foundations of a defining

relationship through city-states’ history, that between autonomy and dependence. The combination of the limited space of the city and the large autonomy it has over its own affairs allow for the uniqueness of city-states. However, it’s exactly the size and lack of resources that undermines their autonomy, implying dependence. Bearing witness to this is the fact that, through history, city-states have been both places of trade and regional cooperation.

Dubai is a perfect illustration. As a federate Emirate, it enjoys a great independence from its neighbors, exerting complete sovereignty over its internal affairs. However, as a member of the federation (however a quite loose one) it is subject to the authority of the Federal Supreme Council, composed by the leader of each Emirate, with the mission to supervise the general strategy of the federation in terms of foreign policy, defense, immigration, education and monetary policy, amongst others. If central control is indeed loose, the membership in the federation intensifies a double relationship of cooperation and competition between Dubai and the other emirates, especially Abu Dhabi. Such scenario is also present through city-state history and can be synthesized in the relationship between Greek city-states, alternating competition and alliance for securing political dominance and trade.

As mentioned before, trade has been crucial for both ancient and contemporary city-states. In Dubai, trade plays a central role not only economically, but also culturally, with trade playing a sig-

nificative role in the Emirate's history. Thus, has been key to Dubai's development, especially in what concerns securing alternatives to oil rents. The solution found saw the emirate investing intensively in infrastructure that tied it to the neighboring region. This defined the shape of the city, which developed along the coast and inland along the Dubai Creek. Later, the construction of the airport and the foundation of Emirates airlines saw Dubai consolidate itself as a strategic hub not only for the region, but also for the entire world.

However, this decision to invest on the potential of trade and logistics wouldn't have been as successful without the key ingredient of Dubai's independence. One of the key drivers of attractiveness of investments, the "easiness in doing business", relies in great part to the independence of Dubai's government in crafting its own economic and fiscal strategy. Moreover, this reliance on autonomy and independence has proven a key strategy for the emirate, with the creation of free zones, each one with its particular rules and strategy regulated by different state entities. These zones, such as the Jebel Ali Free Zone, function as city within the city, reproducing the relationship of autonomy and dependency in the city scale.

Beyond trade and the economy, city-states also allow for unique practices and institutions regarding its inhabitants. If the definition quoted above alluded to the role of population, it is because historically city-states have combined the strong communities of small territories to the multiculturalism

and cosmopolitan life of cities based on trade. In Dubai, the small community of citizens have access to the local government through the "Majlis", consultative assemblies in which the local rulers engage in exchanges with the locals. An historic political element of the Emirates, those meetings can sometimes include foreign guests, serving as a bridge between the local community and the high number of "expats" that compose Dubai's population. In this extent, the emirate also takes the lead (if compared both to its direct and regional neighbors) in creating spaces and structure of flexibility for the adaptation of foreigners.

Moreover, this multiculturalism and the fast growth observed both in Dubai and other city states, leads us to ask the question of whether this form of state is better equipped to act in our globalized and connected world. Through its small size and autonomy, Dubai has been able to reach fast growth and consolidate its autonomy. However, it is precisely two of the most iconic projects of the city who bear witness to the limits of its independence: the Burj Al Khalifa (finalized with help from Abu Dhabi) and the artificial archipelago of "The World", which had its construction work halted after the 2008 financial crisis, in a reminder of the delicate equilibrium of an interconnected world. Today, construction work has picked up again, signaling a new chapter for Dubai's growth after the international crisis. It's up to Dubai to find the right balance and keep on growing, the sky is the limit.



## The Kafala System

In the kafala system, migrant workers need an Emirati-citizen sponsor (a firm or a citizen) in order to get a visa. Upon termination of a contract, workers must leave the country immediately and stay abroad for two to three years in general, before being allowed to return under a new sponsor. National sponsors are allowed to extract significant rents from the foreign firm or worker with the minimal or no investment.

To resign, the employees need a no-objection certificate from their sponsors. This system creates a relationship in which the worker is immobile within the labor market. The migrant worker cannot transfer between firms in search of better pay so there is low level of competition among the firms who demand labor.

As for the sponsor, he has some responsibilities. For example, he is under the obligation to assume full legal and economic responsibility of the worker once in the United Arab Emirates. The sponsor also provides housing to the migrant workers in the most of time.

With this system, the social stability of the country is assured since people who come in the country have a job and economic incentives that prevent them from taking part in any kind of protests. There is a clear social contract (explored in Chapter 5) in which migrants accept not to be full citizens in favor of gaining wealth. In the case of failure to fulfil the conditions of this contract, the kafala system would make the expul-

sion of anyone that does not accept the country's social structure very easy.

Marie Francoz & Yue Wang

## 5.2

### THE DUBAI SOCIAL CONTRACT? POLITICAL SUBCONTRACTING

by Marine Chevallereau

Dubai is a city-state with a modern economy built on top of a tribal society. Its particular mix of 21st century globalized business alongside traditions and social structures that date back to a time of nomadic tribes make it a particularly interesting case study to understand how a pre-modern society confronts and incorporates contemporary capitalism.

To understand the social contract in a place like this, one must first understand the structure of the indigenous population. The Emiratis, making up around 10 to 20 percent of the total population of the country, are part of tightly knit tribal families. These families gain their power through their connections to the sheikh, the central patriarch. Citizenship is thus less a legal understanding between state and individual, and more a relationship based on kinship and family. As such, citizenship is not offered to anyone that is not part

of the extended Emirati bloodline. This particular definition of citizenship is the foundation of the Dubai social contract.

The Sheikh, then, is the legitimate and de facto leader of his clan through lineage. But what then of his legitimacy towards the other 80 percent of the population? The guiding philosophy of governance that was underlined in many conversations we had in Dubai—with business people, government officials, Emirati citizens—was happiness. If we understand the Sheikh as the patriarch overseeing a country whose citizens are his extended family, this impulse is easy to understand. What is particularly noteworthy, then, is that this governing philosophy also applies to foreigners that move to Dubai—at least those that can take part in the money making activities of the city.

Happiness, in this context, is defined as material well-being. The quantity and size of advertisements along Dubai's main thoroughfare, Sheikh Zayed Road, was the most obvious example of this. In a meeting with a group of Emirati officials working on 'smart city' tools for Dubai, the guiding purpose of their work was providing 'happiness' to citizens. In this context, 'happiness' was defined more as 'satisfaction.' The tools they presented allowed citizens to pay their bills quickly using their cell phone, access immunization records for their children, and schedule doctor visits quickly. They referred to citizens as 'customers' several times throughout the presentation. Thus, their primary goal in developing these kinds of tools was to make life easier.

The social contract offered to non-Emiratis can be thought of as a country to be purchased like a product. The power of a non-Emirati is the power of the market. The Dubai government is selling is a product: material comfort, ease of business, stability, and security. Foreigners may not be given much decision-making power, but because Dubai needs their money, and they can always move it elsewhere, the government provides them as best a product as possible. The power of foreigners is that of a consumer.

What the Emirates gets in return for this social contract is expertise and manpower. This global expertise builds businesses, undertakes large and complex infrastructure projects, it even runs their government. This is their business model. In essence, the government of Dubai is a privately-held company. Its stockholders are Emiratis and its product is its country. And like any company, its *raison d'être* is profit and return on investment. In this way, having foreign bureaucrats work in high-level government positions is not contradictory. The many expat government workers we met—in Dubai's executive council, in Abu Dhabi's environment ministry—are essentially employees of a multinational corporation that happens to be a country. And like any multinational, the competence and professionalism of their employees is the most important, not their nationality.

In this way, the concept of public-private partnerships (PPP) in Dubai is moot. Since the public sector functions like the private sector, there is very little

distinction. Contrary to some countries where PPP governance is criticized because of the lack of rules and the introduction of neoliberal policies into the State, in Dubai, commodification, namely the marketization of services and talent, is how the government has always functioned.

This global capitalist ideology naturally extends to the private sector. An employee from Chalhoub—an Egyptian company selling luxury products in the Gulf region—described her role in the ‘happiness’ machine of Dubai. She explained that though her job is to sell luxury products, the actual content of what she sells does not matter. Rather, it is the fact that she is creating jobs and wealth that contributes to the ‘happiness’ of Dubai. She understands clearly her responsibility under the Dubai social contract.

In the end, then, the legitimacy of the Sheikh is based on his vision and success in making Dubai the ‘happiest’ city in the world. The social contract he extends to his citizens is one of wealth, stability, and material comfort. To accomplish this, he welcomes workers from around the world to build, invest, and consume what Dubai has to offer. Run like a business, the growth of Dubai is material and financial. A quintessential ‘charismatic authority’ as defined by Max Weber, the Sheikh’s leadership gains its legitimacy from the significant accomplishment of transforming a society of pearl-fishing nomads into citizens of a global, growing, and modern metropolis.

## 5.3

### THE MIDDLE CLASS AND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN DUBAI

by Agathe Lacombe

Social and spatial stratification are linked in Dubai. Even though more than 200 nationalities are currently represented in the city, social stratification is quite clear: the local Emiratis on one hand and the expats on the other hand. Among the expats themselves, there is some separation, especially when it comes to housing location, lifestyle and leisure activities. Indeed there is no deep social mixing, starting by the neighborhoods expats live in: the “Western” expats (Europeans, Australians, Americans) would tend to live in places such as the Umm Suqeim-Jumeirah areas (a large area of penthouses by the beach, on one of the side of the nerve Sheik Zayed Road), whereas the Asian, Pakistani, Indian workforce is generally located on the other side of Sheik Zayed Road (desert side) where prices are cheaper and buildings older and less fancy, or in the popular neighborhood of Deira. International schools are focused on the educational system of one or another country (there is French “lycée”, an American college etc.) which does not participate to better social mixing.

The only public spaces where the residents of Dubai are actually gathering are the ones affiliated to leisure, such as the Malls (such as Mall of the Emirates, Dubai Mall or Marina Mall) as well as the seaside and the beach. Moreover, the city is arranged in such a way that this type of public space (consisting in small enclaves within the city) are the only urban area where the “Dubai lifestyle” is being expressed, where the residents of the city can actually meet and where social mixing and gathering is possible: people, during their leisure time, either go to the different malls or to the beach, or to some “pedestrian neighborhoods” such as the Marina. The city of Dubai consists mainly in a network of roads linking these types of urban public spaces to more residential neighborhoods.

Can we talk about a “middle class” when it comes to Dubai residents? In a very simplified scheme, we could consider the local Emiratis as the “privileged” category of population. They are encountering specific challenges in preserving a sense of community identity being only 10% of the total population of the city. They are also the only group to be officially recognised as UAE citizens. Another category would be the one of construction workers with low salaries (especially coming from Pakistan and India, living in workers camps or as taxi drivers, possibly excluded from the famous “Dubai lifestyle”). The middle class would comprise the “Western” expats and entrepreneurs whom, in most cases, are wealthier than most of their peers back in their home-countries (not only are their sal-

aries higher, their employer generally for schooling, housing, oil consumption etc.) which makes them able to enjoy the hospitality and leisure offered by the city. It is also the social category within which there is the most social mixing (American, French, English youth attend the same events for instance).



## SECTION 6

# LEGACY AND HISTORY

by?

**I**t is by building on all these specific strengths, societal, spatial and political, that Dubai strives to project its own dynamism and stand out amongst competitors. Reflecting on the city's place in the flux of international relations, as this final section analyzes Dubai's geopolitical positioning at the regional and global scale. With the agenda to simultaneously become a hub for global travel and an Islamic counter-model to Western global cities, the metropolises' expansion seems to know no limits.



## ABU-DUBAI: A GLOBAL URBAN CORRIDOR

by?

Dubai's influence beyond its urban boundaries is already poignant within the United Arab Emirates. Dubai's rival relationship with the powerful emirate of Abu Dhabi has an influential role in shaping urban development within each city and continues to influence power within the region today. Before the 2007 crisis, both cities competed for economic investment, a competitive alliance so fierce that the small nation-state now boasts two independent airlines. However when the future of Dubai was threatened by the economic downturn and collapse of the property market, Abu Dhabi stepped in to guarantee the future of the city. This has created a strong relationship of co-opertition (cooperative competition) between the two emirates.

Each city has clearly defined and diversified development growth paths, Dubai focuses on commerce and tourism while Abu Dhabi pursues politics and sustainability. Each city exhibits impressive expertise in attracting and promoting investment and commitment in their individual cities. This diversification enables both cities to grow into global leaders without immediate competition over resources and global attention. It also allows them to develop complementary sectors. However different

master plans are likely to also come into conflict. Sustainability is set to be a key contention point as a connected urban corridor emerges. Abu Dhabi's long-term investment in sustainability may be contradicted by Dubai's instant gratification development model.

However due to close geographical proximity and rapid urbanization through projects like Dubai South, the physical gap between the two cities is rapidly disappearing. Commuting between the two cities is increasing resulting in traffic levels reaching a critical level. Dubai and Abu Dhabi will soon be seen as Abu-Dubai, acting as one entity with the world while growing in influence.

However true cooperation between the two cities will require a much more cohesive strategy. Within the UAE's encompassing 'Vision 2021', the UAE's strategy to be to one of the world's top countries, there are clear shared objectives such as "united in destiny" and "united responsibility". However, the unification of two separate cities into a fully functioning urban corridor will require substantial adaptation and investment beyond forward looking rhetoric. Transport systems will need to be seamlessly connected and smart governance schemes will need to fuse together into a single efficient system for urban residents. It will be at this point that the true rivalry of the emirates will be tested and the UAE's overall vision of the urban future will either merge or diverge.

Turning the middle of the desert into the centre of the world using the airplane - Dubai as a model is perhaps the first true aerotropolis of the world. The globally connected city already has one of the world's largest airports, whose annual passenger traffic rose from 13th to 3rd place in under five years. Yet in an era and environment where cities are continually competing to maintain global influence, Dubai is once again undertaking an unbeatable expansion into global trade with Dubai South as part of its 'Vision 2021'.

As the global hub of the MENASA region and a gateway to Africa, Asia and the Middle East, Al Maktoum International Airport will not only be able to access over two third's of the world population within an eight hour flight but will also create a hyper-connected transport corridor linking with Dubai's Jebel Ali Port. This will see trade move seamlessly between sea and air in under four hours.

But transport is transient and what will really cement urban development and economic growth is long term roots in the Dubai South area. But will world-class residential districts and commercial centres have any staying power whilst being located next to the future biggest global airport or will Dubai South always be considered as a pitstop to elsewhere?

## 6.2

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### IN THE EYE OF THE STORM: GEOPOLITICS AND THE SAFE CITY

by?

"I LIKE IT BECAUSE IT'S SAFE":  
THE ROLE OF FEAR AND SECURITY IN  
DUBAI'S URBAN ATTRACTIVENESS

A beach is usually a place where people go to relax, get away from the hustle, and forget about their worries. You wouldn't expect it to be a site of security, and yet inscribed onto the public restroom of an Abu Dhabi beach is an inconspicuous logo for Serco. The British company is probably also responsible for the security cameras that line the underpasses leading to that same beach, and is one of numerous private multinationals present in the UAE who oversee public utilities but whose business arms dabble in surveillance technologies, security equipment (notably the construction of for-profit prisons), and supplying military services [i]. Serco is also responsible for the operation of the Dubai metro, alongside Thales, a French company operating in both the civil and military spheres. From our meeting with their representatives, it was apparent that this overlap between public service and defense industry was not trivial; a major contribution of Thales in the building of Dubai's metro, the longest driverless one in the world, was their ability to ensure a seamless and controlled security dimension to

the network's operation.

Indeed, Thales has engineered Dubai's metro around the Emirate's conception of a 'Smart City', with their systems and services interconnected through an 'Intelligent City' platform. Beyond the aim of providing more efficient and integrated services by interconnecting government agencies, these digitized urban innovations also take the lived experiences of citizens as their prime focus and place a heavy emphasis on security and safety. Peppered throughout our meetings and daily encounters, a recurrent point that kept surfacing was the evocation of Dubai's 'protected' and sheltered nature, where the government's ability to ensure protection was key in guaranteeing future urban attractiveness. Many migrants to Dubai are attracted to it precisely because it offers a safe haven from political and economic turmoil of neighboring regions such as Pakistan, and speakers from all walks of life waxed poetic about the ability to leave a car unlocked, or a purse unattended, with no risk whatsoever.

Yet behind these calls for greater security through user-friendliness lay the latent threat of a terrorist attack that cast a looming shadow over many of Dubai's entrepreneurs and agencies. In the Thales meeting, it was clear that a potential attack would deal a crippling blow to Dubai's operational systems, and its image as a secure investment destination, making the protection of infrastructure essential to the city's functioning. This pervasive unease was perhaps best illustrated as we were

escorted through the Jebel Ali power plant and desalination station during our first days in the city. The many security checkpoints and heavily guarded sites of the plant were a testament to the knowledge that threats to this precious infrastructure lay not far away. If a major selling point of the Smart Dubai business team in illustrating the efficiency of their technology was to point out that not a single casualty was registered during the massive hotel fire on New Year's Eve, incidents such as these are proof that keeping violence at bay for the city-state is much akin to playing with fire.

#### OPERATION DESERT STORM: PROTECTING AND PROJECTING THE CITADEL FROM ITS OUTSIDE WALLS

A tried-and true formula for statesmen is echoed in Tilly's words; "States make war, and war makes states". Thus, the internal infrastructure of Dubai, largely delegated to military-industrial manufacturers to become highly securitized and panoptic in the process, allows glimpses into the geopolitical climate shaping, and being shaped by Dubai.

Dubai's prodigious ability to magnetize international investment of human and economic capital has relied not only on the internal provision of a secure environment fueled by a 'smart' vision of the city. It has also been dependent on the watchwords of stability and neutrality that define its exogenous relationship with turbulences pervading the greater MENASA region. Such exigency has traditionally implied a cautious positioning vis-a-vis international affairs. Enter-

prising exhibition of military power and active participation to geopolitical conflicts have thus remained rather scarce.

The city-state's strict commitment to its historically pacific tactic are however very well being revised. Although never stated explicitly, it became clear throughout our meetings that the UAE was, indeed, at war. In fact, the exacerbated contextual sediment of the last 10 years – comprising, notably, the amplification of time-honored tensions between Sunni and Shiite factions in proximate Iran and the wave of Sunni Arab revolutions in 2011 – has urged the UAE's national army to adopt a firmer, more outwardly military strategy. As reminded by two actors we met, Dubai's security tactic can no longer remain strictly confined to the endogenous protection of a safe haven. The renewed and more robust geopolitical trajectory of the UAE has transpired most revealingly when Dubai, under the auspices of the Federal Army, sent boots on unstable ground within the 2015 Saudi-led coalition's intervention in Yemen. Prior to our arrival but still fresh in people's minds, a national day of mourning had been declared by Dubai's prince as an homage to the Emirati soldiers that had been killed during a particularly violent day of the conflict. Patriotic advertisements for army recruitment flooding national television complemented officials' remarks that the UAE had for a long time been actively engaged in an air campaign in Syria, while noting that one of France's prime economic interests in the Emirates was in the sector of arms trading.

As one embarks on the Thales metro or deciphers a recruitment advertisement for the army, one easily perceives that the rather pro-active stance of the UAE regarding regional affairs has affected Dubai's urban space. A less patent, yet particularly telling example thereof was revealed at our meeting at the Dubai South headquarters. The planning of the futuristic south-western sector – branded as Dubai 2.0 – is imbued with strategic considerations, most discernible in the UN-encouraged establishment of a district that will be entirely dedicated to the provision of out-flying humanitarian assistance to the surrounding war, tension and terrorism ridden turmoil. These latest developments inspire a daring question: can we imagine a future where the UAE would be acting as a potent and intervening stabilizer of the region? If so, to what degree would such a path alter the branding, planning and governance of Dubai? The seemingly paradoxical imbrication between a securitized urban space, advertised as a safe haven for capital, and an increasingly active geopolitical presence in the broader region, raises questions concerning the long-term sustainability of this strategy, and the potential risk such aggressivity could breed.

## DUBAI AND SINGAPORE: GOVERNING THROUGH AT- TRACTIVENESS

by?

Both Singapore and Dubai harbored ports as their main source of economic growth during their nascent years of development. The city of Singapore flourished as a trading post and during the British empire, Singapore was a port of call for the British merchant fleet and quickly grew as an entrepot trade hub. While once reliant on their ports for economic growth, both Singapore and Dubai are now fully inserted into the global economy and have developed other sectors as the basis of their economic growth model. By the 1960s, the life cycle of the Singapore river for its port-related commercial activities was over and today, Singapore's strengths lie in knowledge and innovation-intensive activities, while research and development continues to act as a cornerstone for economic development (EDB, 2016). On the other hand, Dubai found economic strength in oil revenues when oil was discovered in 1966 and from the 1980s onwards, Dubai focused on developing the city into a major international tourism destination (Government of Dubai, 2016). In studying the economic models of both cities, and how both cities became attractive places for growth and development, this article focuses on 3 prominent

sectors and compares similarities and differences between Singapore and Dubai.

### OUTLINING SINGAPORE AND DUBAI'S RESPECTIVE STRATEGIES BY SECTOR:

**POLICIES.** Both Dubai and Singapore have different foreign direct investment (FDI) policies. For Singapore, attracting FDI has always been a priority due to the lack of natural resources. The Economic Development Board (EDB) is a dedicated institution that formulates and implements economic strategies for the city, and is also tasked with attracting foreign investments. The main incentive provided by the State to attract foreign investments is the low tax rates in Singapore. There are generous tax allowances for foreign firms if they relocate their international headquarters to Singapore, as well as tax allowances on land intensification for qualifying buildings. This encourages FDI which Singapore has been able to attract successfully, being home to large, diverse global firms. In Dubai, there exists a strong legal framework to reassure foreign businesses. However, ownership rules are stricter, where only a maximum of 49% of a business can be foreign-owned, except in the 22 free zones in Dubai, where 100% foreign-ownership is allowed. Dubai has been exemplary in attracting FDI as it was the first Emirate to pioneer the free zone model, where zones are developed for specific sectors such as media, finance and healthcare. In the Jebel Ali Free Zone, there is full corporate tax and customs duty exemption on imported raw material and equipment.

**HOUSING.** One of the most remarkable differences between Dubai and Singapore is the question of land. On the one hand, in Dubai, real estate is used to attract foreign investment. Since 2002, in order to increase foreign investment, the crown prince of Dubai issued the Freehold Decree, a formal legislation that allows foreigners to buy and sell property in Dubai freely. Therefore, there is a massive construction of luxurious properties that stay empty during most of the year in Dubai. Singapore, on the other hand, is limited by its own territory but faces the problem of a growing population. The government of Singapore implements a different housing strategy, one that aims to house the local population through the construction of public housing which foreigners are not allowed to own. In 2015, 80,1% of all housing units in Singapore were managed by the Housing Development Bureau. Consequently, it is more difficult for foreigners to acquire real estate in Singapore since they are only allowed to buy private property, which often comes with a heftier price tag. Whereas in Dubai, growth the real estate sector is driven by foreign investment, in Singapore public authorities such as the Housing Development Bureau retain much more control over the housing market.

**EDUCATION.** Education is one sector where it seems Dubai is closely trying to emulate Singapore's model by seeking to attract globally-renowned universities to boost competitiveness. Whilst primary education in both countries are free for the local residents, in terms of tertiary education Dubai seems to be

lagging behind. Singapore's economic success can be attributed to its high levels of human capital, and the country has a long history of emphasizing high levels of education. With high levels of subsidies by the government, Singapore's universities are among the best in the world. The National University of Singapore (NUS) for example, has collaborations with Duke University and Yale university. Dubai started to develop education much more recently, especially with the establishment of well-known international universities like the American University in order to ensure a high level of education for its citizens. The importance of education is highlighted in both cities as crucial to development and growth, and Singapore appears as a clear model for Dubai as Dubai tries to increase the general level of education of its population to boost its competitiveness on the global stage.

**CONCLUSION.** Both Singapore and Dubai are aware of the importance of remaining attractive to foreign investments for the continuous development of each individual city. However, their different situations results in different policies and strategies. In attracting FDI, Singapore remains a more open society where foreign ownership is not controlled as strictly as in Dubai. In terms of land, Singapore is land-scarce whereas Dubai has vast expanses of undeveloped land and can thus continue to construct luxurious homes to attract foreign investors. In the land-scarce Asian city-state, attractive policies that include low tax rates and high tax allowances are more crucial to ensuring the flow of FDI into the city. Both nations



are very young, with Singapore having just celebrated her Golden Jubilee last year and Dubai will be celebrating hers during the launch of Expo 2020. While the future of both cities cannot be predicted, it is highly likely Dubai will continue to look to Singapore for inspiration in the near future (as mentioned in many of our meetings during the trip), and both cities will indeed continue to rely on FDIs for growth and development, thus the importance of remaining attractive and open to the world will still hold true.

## 6.4

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### DUBAI : THE AMERICAN DREAM OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH

by ?

Dubai is an urban model, whose attractiveness is surely as high as its Burj Khalifa. It has succeeded in embodying the dream held by many people from the West as well as from others part of the world, especially Asia and Africa. Dubai's brand invokes the idea of success. It represents an Eldorado for businessmen, and we can easily see the city as an equivalent of the United States in terms of lifestyle. Dubai is a shopping paradise and its highways are a perpetual catwalk for luxury cars: it has something of the consumerist dream found in the United States during the fifties. As stated by Juma Al Majid, a distinguished Emirati business-

man and founder of the Juma Al Majid Center for Culture and Heritage: "Dubai is a shopping center for the wealthy of the Middle East". But Dubai is not in the United States, not even on the same continent, and was simply a desert 50 years ago. To better understand the city-state it's important to examine its success, not to draw similarities with the United States but to understand where it differs from, and sometimes surpasses, the United States.

Dubai is an island for economic and political stability in the middle of a troubled region that goes from West Africa to the Indian subcontinent, through North and East Africa, the Middle East and Iran. For this reason only, Dubai can be understood as a dream city for many people. Despite the security situation of the region, its credo has always been to welcome everyone whatever his or her origin and his or her religion. It does have migrant policies, basically revolving around the principle that you can come and stay in Dubai as long as you work. However, it is noticeable that it represents a much easier path for economic migration than the USA for many nationalities or religious communities, given that there are fewer barriers to get in. Dubai remains more accessible for migrants from Africa, the Indian subcontinent, the Middle East and Asia Minor both financially and legally. It is important to bear in mind the importance of the geographic position of the city that is at the crossroad of Asia and Africa – a strategic position highlighted by different actors many times during our meetings throughout the trip. But in addition to this favorable geographic

asset, there are long-term commercial ties with some countries of the region, especially Iran, India and Pakistan on which Dubai based its transformation into one of the most important commercial hubs on earth. Thus, there is an enduring presence of old elites and merchants originating from these countries who have settled their businesses in Dubai. This explains the abundance of Iranian companies such as the Iranian Bank company, and also the existence of Iranian communities in the North of the UAE despite a claimed opposition to Shi'ism. Dubai has a real ambition to be a cosmopolitan world-city, open to all, in stark contrast to the Western world where more and more borders are being closed to people with specific backgrounds. The simple idea of Dubai is that you can come, work, make money, and come back to your country being better off, whoever you are and wherever you are from. In fact, ethnic communities are very diverse in Dubai and more than one hundred nationalities are cohabiting there. Everyone works together, sharing the same goal of assuring the city's economic growth and development. This created a city where different people, cultures, religions coexist in peace. This has become an important element in the city's branding: it is where Dubai surpasses many others.

It is also important to highlight here the importance of Islamic culture in Dubai's success. Indeed Dubai shares this Islamic culture with many countries of the region – or at least a “non-western culture” – and has claimed it in a way that could sound like revenge on

the Western World. Dubai seems to be willing to embody the “Muslim success story”, or the “Arab success story”, or maybe more broadly a “non western success story” that echoes the aspirations of many people throughout the world. Juma Al Majid stressed throughout the talk he gave us, this idea that the people of Dubai created their own wealth, and that they can compete with the United States and other big countries. He ended his speech with the words “Americans better watch out”, and Dubai's leitmotiv could be “the world better watch out”. Dubai embodies success, wealth and a luxury lifestyle, all whilst claiming its belonging to a non-Western culture. The direction taken by Dubai seems to be part of a wider trend amongst Gulf countries, specifically Qatar whose presence is exemplified through heavy investments in Europe and the widespread development of the news channel Al Jazeera. Efforts like these on the part of these countries are participating in a branding strategy that aims to show the world that the Gulf is prosperous and has opportunities to offer. This particularly speaks to racial minorities in the West, and we noticed during our trip an important share of people of North African descent among the French expats. Dubai's strategy, branding itself as an Arab-Muslim alternative to the West, is also attracting elites from Europe, where this rhetoric still speaks to certain groups.

In short, Dubai succeeded in less than a semi-century to embody a new - dare we say, even better - dream in opposition to the classic and tarnished “west-

ern dream” that seems more exclusive, more constraining to certain cultures, and above all, slowly declining.

## 6.5

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### ISLAMIC ECONOMY IN DUBAI

by ?

From the Islamic Bank’s ATM and advertising, to the clothing stores specialized in “modest clothing” or ‘abbaya’, the Islamic Business Market is noticeable in every sphere of Dubai and the UAE. In 2015 a Global Islamic Economy Summit was organized, dispensing for the third year the Islamic Economy Award to reward innovative projects considered to have “contributed to the social and economic welfare of the Muslim population” while “enhanc[ing] bilateral trade and investment relations between Islamic nations, and forg[ing] closer economic ties with the rest of the world” [i]. The award categories gather fields such as Money and Finance, Food and Health, Media, Hospitality and Tourism, Waqf and Endowments, SME Development, Islamic Economy Knowledge Infrastructure and Islamic Arts.

As the Dubai Chamber of Commerce explained to us during our meeting, the Global Islamic Economy Summit, like Dubai’s investments in Islamic Businesses more generally, reflects Dubai’s commitment to a promising market for the city State. Indeed, both from its lo-

cation and its cultural integration within the Muslim world, Dubai and the UAE are primed to play a major role in this parallel economy. As a commercial hub, Dubai exports 70% of what it imports. Part of this is explained by the Halal Food market in which it has invested: for instance, halal (legally edible food according to Islamic law) certifications are issued by a Dubai-based body in places where animals are raised and meat is produced - such as New Zealand. The halal food (especially meat) is then imported to Dubai before being sold in other countries.

Food represents a major part of Dubai’s current investments in the Islamic Economy, but it is not the only sector they have invested in. Clothing and fashion – especially women’s fashion - are a field in which Dubai also performs well. Islamic Tourism could represent the next challenge for Dubai to invest in: while other countries such as Malaysia have already established themselves as leaders in this field, boasting varied natural landscapes and distinctive cultural and historical heritage, Dubai still has to build its cultural image. Initiatives such as the Cultural and Heritage Center may be the beginning of this, but the sector will require more attention and investment to be competitive at a global level.







# CONCLUSION

by Raphaël Gernath &  
Filipe Mello Rose

Witnessing the future site of Dubai South will convince visitors that ambition is definitely in no short supply there. The scale of the project is difficult to wrap one's head around: a master-planned city designed in the context of the upcoming World Exposition in 2020, springing up from the desert and whose airport alone will welcome 220 million visitors. Anywhere else than Dubai, such a project would seem absurd and unfeasible, but alongside the Burj Khalifa it feels almost reasonable. Yet, the creation of Dubai South can also look like a gamble in a context where the lack of necessary natural resources or human capital and a troubled geopolitical setting can work

against the objectives it has set for itself. Seen in this light, Dubai South can be a metaphor for the two aspects of Dubai's growth we've tried to explore in this report: the fragility and dependence that have shaped so many of its policies, as well as the unique urban trajectory it has built for itself to overcome these vulnerabilities. Looking back to the various points discussed, we'll try to make light of the manner in which Dubai's model of governance and growth has turned the city into an important actor in the world economy through the unique ways in which weaknesses have been overcome and transformed into strengths.

In this volume the main points of fragility of Dubai's model are examined. Four main challenges are faced by Dubai:



first, it is situated in a difficult physical environment. For instance, having no natural water resources, all drinkable water is produced in an energy-intensive and expensive desalination process (Berman and de Massé, this volume). Dubai's location in a desert environment naturally attracts little investment and tourism. Only through the creation of a globally projected image is this physical problem overcome.

Second, Dubai continuously needs more labor and capital to continue to grow and to produce wealth. Both are attracted through the image driven-development and need to be controlled by the Emirati minority. A special social contract (Pichot and Chevallereau, this volume), enforced by the Kafala system thus guarantees stability for a very heterogeneous population.

Third, being a form of city-state Dubai is exposed to risks resulting from its relationship with other countries. As noted earlier in this volume, the "combination of the limited space of the city and the large autonomy it has over its own affairs allow for the uniqueness of city-states. However, it's exactly the size and lack of resources that undermines their autonomy, implying dependence" (Torres, this volume). On the other hand, this also allows Dubai to turn itself into an attractive urban business model, without having to consider interests of rural areas. Dubai is thus able to custom-fit their economic outlook to international trade and not the development of the interior.

Fourth, as part of the UAE, Dubai is

exposed to the dangers linked to its unstable neighbors. This means that the wars in Yemen, Iraq and Syria, as well as the instabilities in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia underline the importance of security and stability. These risks are stressed in explanations of how Dubai "is dependent on the watchwords of stability and neutrality that define its exogenous relationship with turbulences pervading the greater MENASA region." (Gernath and Bekka, this volume).

On paper then, Dubai would not seem like a prime investment destination; a hostile geography in a turbulent region, with neither the initial labor force nor political legroom to fuel its growth. Yet, as the past hundred pages can attest, the reality of Dubai is much more alluring than these factors, and the metropolis has managed to evolve through the construction of a unique identity that overcomes its fragilities. One of the most striking manners in which Dubai has sought to broaden the appeal of a geographically harsh surrounding is the image-driven development the city has become synonymous with. Constantly referencing its own metropolitan vision as a marker of success, "Dubai flashes us with an image of fantasy, of greatness, of a highly technological and modern world" (Jönsson, this volume). The city is marketed through the attractiveness of its brand, but also through the grandeur of its vision, where the energy required to keep Dubai running serves as a testament to its own success.

The daunting task of building a metropolis in the span of a few decades, which Dubai has largely managed to over-

come, was made possible through a system of governance based on exclusivity. By articulating a social contract that rests not on democratic participation, but on the tacit understanding of every migrant and expatriate that the “power of foreigners is that of a consumer” (Pichot and Chevallereau, this volume), the city has compensated its initial lack of workers. We’ve thus seen how policies such as the kafala system ensure a form of social stratification that helps Dubai fuel its consumerist needs.

Indeed, the demands of market forces and global economies are essential in helping Dubai to craft a model that lures investments and capital from the four corners of the world. Throughout the volume, we’ve tried to see how Dubai has attempted to exploit its status as a city-state to transform into a crossroads of goods and people, all drawn to the ease and efficiency of the Dubai (‘Do-buy’) business model. By creating an alluring system for economic investment and business implantations this “win-win model” (Ladret and Tchounikine, this volume) has drawn the eye of actors from all over the world and goes in hand with a focus on the financial promise of the Islamic economic, “a promising market for the city state” (Khaldi, this volume). These sectors of investment allow Dubai to carve out a unique position for itself along the flux of people and goods that defines trade in the region, and the world, allowing the city to position itself as a “global growth corridor” (Rothschild, this volume) where hubs of transport become gateways to various regions in the globe.

The increasingly outward-looking gaze that the myriad of businesses and governing bodies of Dubai have adopted is complemented by the promises of a stable future that many can find there. The absence of widespread crime makes the city a relative oasis of tranquility in a region marked by strife and turmoil, where “the government’s ability to ensure protection is key in guaranteeing future urban attractiveness” (Bekka and Gernath, this volume). A focus on the security and stability of the city, is seen as key in maintaining the wellbeing of the population. This mindset is also evident in the desire to preserve Dubai from the potentially crippling effects of an environmentally unsustainable pattern of ecological policy. The articulation of an ambitious agenda for greater sustainability has allowed Dubai to position itself as an actor in an emerging sustainable revolution, merging green growth and business (see Těhlová, Bensassi and Munson, this volume). Dubai’s endless projection into the future is also fuelled by the social imaginary of the migrants the city attracts. If the United States is in many ways the model for Emirati success, it is not an ideal to be reached; in its own style, Dubai has conjured up an ‘American Dream of the Global South’, creating “a dream city for many people” (Cateau, Khaldi and Leleu Amaral, this volume) that draws on pluralism and economic stability to project itself across and into neighboring regions.

All of these elements come together in Dubai to form an intriguing and wildly visionary mosaic, one where the

dreams of its leaders, once thought to be impossible, have materialized into a success-story to be emulated. To wrap up the reflections that we've presented in the previous pages, which have sought to dissect and detail the multifaceted nature of Dubai, its fragilities, its triumphs, and the Emirati approach to the urban form, we can ponder the exportability of the Dubai model as well as its implications for the development of the metropolis and the network of cities it now finds itself to be a part of. Becoming more global every minute, the iconic skyscrapers and flow of trade in Dubai are now being reproduced in various localities all over the world from Vancouver to Khartoum. Yet amidst this internationalization, Dubai has always sought to remain grounded in a well-defined Islamic modernity, a beacon and a lighthouse for the region that has defined so much of its evolution up to now. How the city will choose to reconcile, or embrace, these aspects of its identity will be crucial as its vision continue to grow larger, and bolder.



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