Introduction

*Learning from Gulf Cities*

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To learn from the cities of the Arabian Peninsula, particularly the most controversial and dynamic among them (places like Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Doha), does not mean celebrating them or ridiculing them either. Instead, the authors in this book follow the intellectual footprints of the architectural scholars Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, who looked at a city nearer at hand and in their own time. In their now classic *Learning from Las Vegas*, they went beyond seeing Las Vegas as tasteless, materialistic, or aberrant and insisted that it had important lessons for all places.¹ According to them, the city needed to be studied on its own terms—an insistence that changed not only future understandings of Las Vegas but also of architecture, planning, and urban thinking more generally. In their view, “Withholding judgment may be a tool to make later judgment more sensitive. This is a way of learning from everything.”²

Why the Gulf?

In *The New Arab Urban*, with a group of scholars from across many academic disciplines and diverse parts of the world, we strive to learn from the cities of the Persian Gulf—in particular the global showcase cities of Abu Dhabi and Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Doha, the capital of Qatar—more or less adjoining locales at the mouth of the Gulf. Because of practical limitations, we have given shorter shrift to other parts of the urban Gulf, like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Bahrain, which are also part of the interlinked economies of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). We are also spare in our attention to Riyadh, in
Saudi Arabia—the largest GCC city but one that, in terms of history, ambitions, and contemporary relations with other parts of the world, is in a class distinct from the others. With its (currently) thin political and economic connections to the rest of the Gulf, Iran only occasionally comes into our purview. Recognizing the variation, we avoid thinking in terms of any single “Gulf City model.”

To help make the point, we adopt the plural—Gulf cities—in the book’s title. We do not want to repeat the historically common essentializing error of treating cities, variously “Islamic” or “Arab” or “Middle East,” as the same, nor to unthinkingly generalize traits observed at one point in time, whether the sixteenth century or 2018, as true of urban histories, full stop. Especially when dealing with large expanses of geography and peoples, where past scholarship has been radically uneven, we need to avoid falling back on stereotypes, including those academically generated.3

We might have even called out the cities of focus as “our Gulf cities,” to further suggest the limits of the book’s reach. They do have things in common. For example, rather than being the important urban centers of surrounding territories, like Cairo was to Egypt (or Chicago to the U.S. Midwest), their centrality is more cosmopolitan. To an increasing degree, they’ve also escaped dependence on the natural resource most prominent in their region (oil), just as they rely little on any surrounding agriculture or manufacturing. These are essentially city-states with the world as their hinterland. What distinguishes them more markedly compared to all other places is that they are rich and in the hands of people with intense ambitions, not just for themselves as individuals and families, but also for their rising cities. Given their wealth and autonomy, they are important as possible harbingers—as Las Vegas was in the earlier context in the United States.4 And also like Las Vegas—but more so—their modes of development and ways of life can come to influence the urban world farther afield.

While stressing distinctions, we are also following those scholars striving to “de-exceptionalize”5 Gulf cities and to, at least, test notions that see them as following economic, political, and cultural trajectories common to other human settlements. To do so means emplacing them in their own histories, as well as in the contemporary world currents in which they now play a significant role. This involves taking on board not only a long history of trade and governance, but also—and to a great degree—
partial particularities of recent history that do signal a departure from the usual paradigms for understanding urban development. Clearly, these Gulf cities do not conform to anything resembling a “third-world” dependency or, given the world region in which they are located, a postcolonial status. The oil-driven accumulation of capital can be seen in some places in the Gulf, but not in others; and even where oil has been important, it has been important in different ways. Our Gulf cities are, in ways we will be disentangling, following patterns that do not simply recapitulate any single development model of what has come before.

A first declaration and one to which we will eventually return: we are not, in the context of Gulf cities, oblivious to the injustices and dire circumstances that accompany the glamor and fascination of the present day. Indeed, there is a relationship, which is traced in this book, between what appears on the top and what happens lower down, between spectacular wealth and grinding hardship. Appropriately enough, much media and scholarly attention has focused on the social iniquity, as well as the environmental threat, following on from Gulf-style development: surely among the highest levels of world inequality and, as indicated by the best data sources, the highest carbon footprints. As methodological strategy, we sometimes bracket the dystopic as well as the utopian. To build knowledge, we can leverage all the idiosyncrasies, including the distressing features. By restraining judgment (remember Las Vegas), we can come back to the problematics with a greater capacity to understand and strategize. And, at least as aspiration, we can use the Gulf to further think about how the urban works more generally.

Gulf Cities Are Theoretical Puzzlers

Conditions in the Gulf do scramble some of the grand traditions of urban scholarship—indeed of social science in general. They serve notice, in effect, that those traditions may not be sufficient to grasp how societies, cultures, and economies emerge, cohere, and crumble—not just in the Gulf but elsewhere as well. As a first stop, models derived from classical economics do not work. Given the Gulf, it is hard to apply the precepts of classical thinkers like Adam Smith or David Ricardo. Whatever the general propensity to truck, barter, and exchange, in the Gulf, such tendencies are subservient to other forces. Markets are not open and
free; information is held close to the vest on vastly unequal playing fields. Crucial principles like comparative advantage as a determinant of price and productivity hardly reign with consistency. The market is not an apparatus to deliver the greatest good for the greatest number. Investments, in real estate or in other sectors, are detached from so-called market discipline.

Based as they are on economistic models, much of land economics and allied approaches in geography and urban sociology lose explanatory power. Across the history of Gulf monarchies, real estate evolved from the outset as monopolistic—explicitly and persistently. Property derives from the birthright of the sheikhs, as modified through truces with the British colonials, and—in varied ways—the playbooks of important merchant families. The bounties of oil followed arrangements of lineage as well, organized at least initially through early-twentieth-century links of favored families with the British colonials and the initiating British, European, and U.S. energy corporations. Together, they constituted parts of what James Bill refers to as “informal empire.”

Famously and noticeable on the land in the early period, oil companies created gated neighborhoods reserved for Western technocrats and managers. Nelida Fuccaro identifies a section of what became central Manama, Bahrain, as the first of its kind in the Gulf, a “neo-colonial” residential outpost built in 1937 by the American-owned Bahrain Petroleum Company (Bapco). What has evolved in various parts of the Gulf—skyscrapers, resorts, wholesalers, coffee bars, and the whole repertoire of structure and infrastructure—follows in path dependence from monarchical origin and early commercial agreements. Specific to particular Gulf states, in ways our authors indicate, there followed further layerings of privilege and connections.

Vast efforts across the disciplines of urban sociology, geography, and urban economics rely on assumptions Gulf cities do not meet. A scholarly search has been on to determine what best explains the outcomes that maximize efficiency. According to one such foundational perspective (following from the work of the economist Walter Christaller in the mid-1930s), it is geographic centrality that minimizes friction of distance. Many will recognize the centrality model in urban sociology’s concentric zone hypothesis, as inherited from the Chicago School of Human Ecology. Centrality also affords agglomeration benefits as similar types
of land users end up clustered together in central downtowns, complementing one another’s core functions. Other models turn on special geographic features, like the break of bulk points, where, for example, rivers meet up with land transport. These ideas, at least in the terms they were formulated, prove to be poor models for Gulf conditions (as we will see in the volume).

The alternative to conventional economics in any guise is, of course, Karl Marx. But Gulf conditions also challenge Marxian analysis. Along with the continuous potential for intervention through privilege and patronage, the state asserted itself with other traits we associate with feudal monarchies: colossal structures and symbolic showiness. Rather than displaying signs of withering away, the state became a tool for enhancing monarchical rule. Tax-free zones, which might otherwise be thought to have been hatched as capitalist plots, involved “political and economic logics of great powers, regional-rivals, state builders, and local businesses.” In other words, the apparently capitalist vehicle was (and is) a tool of the monarchical class, rather than (or at least as much as) vice versa. Far from being mere superstructure, these states have been active agents for furthering the wealth and legitimacy of the royal faction. None of this is to gainsay the authentic advances following from Marxian perspectives regarding the Gulf as in other world settings (or for that matter, the presence of neoclassical markets within specific delimited arenas)—but the application is approximate and, alas, sometimes contorted. We have privileged vassals, favored merchants, and armies of workers—but not a bourgeoisie in service to capitalist rulers or a class proletariat structured through the means of production.

Some contemporary urban theories, Marxian or otherwise, explain cities as following in historic stages, concomitant with shifts in economic base and changes in social organization. Agriculture, itself arising from early sedentary life, provided the surplus to allow urban-based specialization to take root. Or, from a different development paradigm, it can be said that dominant proto-urban elites forced surpluses out of the peasantry. Either way, as Laura Lieto notes (in chapter 5), the classic explanations do not fit the Gulf case. Cities like Abu Dhabi or Doha grew from small settlements with limited preexisting fixed structures or even year-round populations (especially in the case of Abu Dhabi). The open desert provided opportunity for expansion under schemes provided by
foreign planners and designers, embraced by local rulers with little regard for what had come before. In this sense, the contemporary urban form of our Gulf cities, professionally hatched and of recent vintage, is visible as an enacted construct, particular to the specificities of time and place. Some of it is surely conjuncture borne out of indeterminacy. The timing of oil and the voluntary British exit, co-occurring in an ideological climate of self-determination, created facilitating state structures.¹³ We can term our Gulf nations, borrowing language from Hossein Mahdavy, as instances of “fortuitous étatisme”,¹⁴ agencies and structures that follow on lend themselves to having a similar idiosyncratic quality.

In the development of the urban Gulf, hired consultants’ grand plans are only loosely followed; they get replaced at fairly short intervals. Real-time development happens through opaque agendas in which even otherwise privileged citizens have little say or advance knowledge. Property owners do not form coalitions to publicly lobby for infrastructures from which they will derive financial benefit—as is so common in a place like the United States, where “growth machines” actively strive to use government for pecuniary advantage.¹⁵ Public plans are drawn up and “visions” for economic and spatial development are enunciated, but they have limited efficacy. There are signs of high-level intraelite bargaining, directly or indirectly, sometimes involving the monarchs themselves.¹⁶ Conditions do vary in these regards, as well as others across the Gulf. Kuwait (and the capital, Kuwait City) has more than symbolic democratic elements; real elections occur. Citizen groups openly and energetically criticize internationally branded projects, arguing instead for expenditures that increase welfare provision or improve citizen services. Frustrated in its capacities to build spectacular structures out of general state revenues, the royal family has had to maintain a separate fund for such purposes, distinct from other public budgets.¹⁷

What about culture? Might that be a key for understanding Gulf development trends, just as it has been applied—however unevenly and with questionable results—to explain urban shifts elsewhere in the world?¹⁸ A rampant stereotype is that it is “all” indeed fundamentally cultural—with the religion of Islam as a prime proxy. But, of course, religion won’t do. Great differences across the Islamic world in doctrine and practice—from Indonesia to Saudi Arabia to Los Angeles¹⁹—yield up differences, almost surreal in their variation. Similarly, there are obvious distinctions from
one Gulf state to another. As with the overstated or just plain empirically false Weberian claim that Protestantism was the launchpad of capitalism or that Europe and North America are bonded as Christian, Islam manifests differently in its intersection with markets, policies, and lives. Two veteran and distinguished researchers of the region flatly summarize the point: “‘Islamic’ by itself explains very little indeed.”20 When other informed scholars take up their very different approaches, they rarely—appropriately rarely—invoke religion as a general explanation. Islam is varied and subtle with plenty of room for ambiguity—indeed, indeterminacy—as to what is or is not legitimate.

Even within the same branch or sect, elements can be inconsistent and “co-exist as valid doctrine.” They can be allowed to stand, writes Frank Vogel, “without being authoritatively reconciled.”21 Through the various texts and circumstances, there can be innovation in judgments—indeed sometimes necessitated by changing external conditions as well as the evolution of new “learning” among guardians of the faith (ulama).22 Thus, the “plurality of doctrine” is caused, if in no other way, by the obligation to determine true meanings within texts and also the requirement that believers unendingly search, as a personal obligation, for truth in God’s will. Islamic scholars, Vogel asserts, both “modern and classical, benefit from this pluralism of doctrine, since they can shift by various means from one view to the other, sometimes even to suit a particular circumstance.”23

Skeptical of religion as explainer, we can ask about other, perhaps less doctrinal cultural explanations of how states and societies form up. The economist Alfred Marshall used the term “industrial atmosphere” to invite attention to the nonmaterial aspects (along with the material ones) that make countries and regions productive. The concept has evolved further in more recent thinking, where, for instance, prosperity is grounded in an agglomeration of complementary skills and knowledges, along with mutually understood tacit awareness. Actors’ intuitive understandings become the basis for regional economic advantage—like the rise, a generation back, of the “Third Italy” or, more recently, Silicon Valley.24 Put in the language of economic geographer Michael Storper, these are “untraded dependencies,” meaning that the market has no way to affix prices to such assets, but they are of value—economic value—nonetheless. In current discourse, we can cast such qualities as the basis
for what makes a place “creative” or “innovative.” Jane Jacobs, in her book *The Economy of Cities*, uses something like a Marshallian atmosphere to argue that diverse kinds of people interacting in a common and proximate space (whether like her Greenwich Village neighborhood block or a national region) is the recipe for robust economies. In the Richard Florida argument, creative people are drawn to places that have just such diversity, which then makes them more creative still. (This is indeed the story of how Jane Jacobs got to the Village and then further boosted its worldwide appeal through her own writings.) It is highly dubious—as various of the authors who follow argue—that such ideas make sense when applied to the Gulf. When it comes to Gulf cities’ urban and economic development, edict from above is certainly more salient than organic complementarity growing out of the social ground.

Whatever the specifics, the urban Gulf induces, almost as analytic shock therapy, a search beyond the usual urban canons. We have to reach further, or at least differently. Made skeptical of universalistic explanations, we also have to avoid falling back on an outmoded historicism—“things happen”—or a reductionist physicalist gumbo of oil and sand. At the same time, we need to refuse any position asserting that Gulf cities are exceptional, incomparable, or eventually not even “real” cities at all. So, does a nonjudgmental study of Gulf cities make us agnostic of any grand urban theory? Maybe. Whatever “failing” attributed to the dominant paradigms—or alternatively to Gulf cities themselves—something very robust is most certainly happening within and among them. There is durability—literally of buildings and nonliterally of social structures—that are productive and that withstand impacts from the outside. Our job, in effect, is to advance understanding of how the urban whole—a new Arab urban, perhaps—could exist as it does in what might seem unlikely circumstances.

**Gulf Cities as Methodological Challenge**

Autocratic governance limits access to officials, statistical data, and fieldwork sites. Standard methods like survey, interview, or ethnography are typically not easy or possible at all. Even when data do exist, they might not be made available. A related part of the problem is lack of established traditions of professional, secular scholarship—again, in “our” Gulf, not the region as a whole. As recently as 1957, we should recall, not only
were there no universities in Abu Dhabi; there was not a single medical
doctor.27 Scholarship in the UAE locale has thus been especially depen-
dent on outsiders, with all the risks of problematic access and potential
for orientalist patronage—including among outside scholars from other
parts of the Arab world. Reflecting the troubling state of affairs, one UAE
notable put it this way: “For most of the last 200 years, the only existing
documentation consists of records and correspondence among British
and other colonialists. We are in a lamentable position. We must study
the past from the perspective of foreigners, using their old documents
and photographs in our research.”28 Those words are from the book
From Rags to Riches, whose author was an intimate of the ruling sheikh
(and holder of the national Mercedes franchise, among other important
wealth resources). Substantively informative, it is sincerely hagiographic.
Contemporary scholarship by locals needs to respect indigenous figures,
especially the monarch.

Our contributors strive to overcome such constraints, emanating from
either the past or present. Drawn from diverse parts of the world (includ-
ing the Gulf and other parts of the Middle East), they are—despite not
being native of the Gulf—anything but naïve about such matters. In terms
of background disciplines, they come from architecture, sociology, pol-
itics, planning, geography, history, and anthropology. Most are experts
on particular places in the region, but none of them is knowledgeable
about all of it. The knowledge they do have has been formed, at least in
part, through reading or close colleagueship with emerging indigenous
scholars whose work now gains attention.29 But given the limits on what
is known or knowable, scholars must pick up clues where they can, in-
evitably shaped not only by their disciplinary base but also the cultures
from which they come. Gulf cities need to be explained in terms of their
complexities, and part of that complexity is represented by the limits of
what has been said and not said.

In part, out of practical necessity but also because of its epistemologi-
cal virtue, we draw especially on the physical urban apparatus as a stra-
tegic way in. We take the city’s material instrumentation as a labora-
tory from which to trace larger lessons of politics, culture, and civic life—in
this way, following in the tradition of the Chicago school of urban soci-
ology of the mid-twentieth century. Unlike the Chicago setting with its
famous plethora of statistical, cartographic, and ethnographic data, we
make do with less, but also with ambitious analytic goals. The buildings, from a research standpoint, have the virtue of being there, and in a big way. Their sponsors avidly promote them. In contexts otherwise not rich in information, authorities boast and the media report on the structures and the ambitions of their designers, investors, developers, and government sponsors. Details of underlying technologies, architectural processes, financing, and roles of specific agencies (and sometimes even details concerning the suffering of those whose sweat went into their making) emerge. This is especially true for the major buildings, the stars of the show that, as opposed to the routine modern structures that infill around them, get into the books and catch the media eye. Large or small (but primarily large) buildings provide us, in effect, with method. We deconstruct—reverse engineer—from the physical structures to better understand the social, political, and cultural realms that gave rise to them. Using buildings, as we do, is not the only way to proceed along these lines and carries its own liabilities—risking, for example, underattending to both direct opponents as well as to those not central to creating the structures. Other researchers will hopefully join us to provide a more complete picture.30

But in the meantime, here are a few preliminary examples of the analytic process. The fabulous buildings suggest high average per capita income, although not necessarily high median income. Constructing them and providing the continuous maintenance they require demands, besides big money and governmental authority, a massive in-migration workforce. There is great economic distance between those who might own or invest in such buildings (high incomes for the average) and those who build, sweep, and polish them and their contents (the far more numerous who pull down the median figure, if they get counted in official records at all). Yes, there long has been a significant Arab middle class of professionals and merchants, augmented by immigrants (over long periods of history) from Iran and the Indian subcontinent. But most notoriously there is the presence of those who do the heavy lifting and the daily servicing. Because of social, political, and consumption differences (and the status of some at the bottom as virtually untouchable), there is a need for social sorting: Who will be doing what and where, and how will they be housed and sustained, even if at barely livable levels? We can look for the spatial relations that contain such a complex assemblage
and how the diverse elements cohere—through geographic segregation as one element. We can consider the kind of political conditions needed to sustain a stable social and political order under the circumstances. We are on our way to thinking through issues that might otherwise not rise to our attention. The “discovery” invites scholars otherwise attuned to modern Western models to ponder alternative modes of cohesion and varieties of what can appear rational.

An important source of intellectual opening comes, we think, with the notion of \textit{assemblage}, a concept that arises implicitly or explicitly in a number of chapters that follow. (Lieto, in her chapter 5, offers a specific embrace; as do Sarah Moser in chapter 9, and Harvey Molotch and Davide Ponzini in the conclusion.) It derives from the theories of Bruno Latour—along with his colleagues in their school of actor network theory (ANT).\textsuperscript{31} It allows at least a bracketing of “cause” to permit the work of looking at what is present and how diverse elements fit together. Applied to the urban bailiwick, assemblage bears resemblance to the older idea of agglomeration. Things happen through complementary linkups that form a historically durable force. This happens even when proponents have different motivations and types of projects. The factors that make up any particular assemblage are heterogeneous and, at least before the fact, significantly indeterminate. It is a modest way to theorize; it can’t explain everything, but it tries to take many things—even diverse and apparently inconsistent ones—into account.

Actor network theory is especially useful in the present context because it invites us to see Gulf cities not as bizarre or ironic, but as emerging from their own specific set of actors, resources, and circumstance. Thinking into the future, and about other world regions (emerging cities in China and Africa), one can envision elaborations and departures—different yet again, but open to the same analytic approach. What might appear as a hodgepodge is not a defeat “for theory,” but an invitation to find coherence in any given setting or historic episode. Human actors interact with one another and with physical objects (traffic lights, ports, turnstiles, seat belts) and nature as well.\textsuperscript{32} Welcome to the city as a network of linkages within and without—busy beehives of projects amounting, in an ongoing way, to \textit{something}.\textsuperscript{33}

Whether or not their specifics are bellwethers for what next comes across the world—including what refracts back to change, for example,
London or New York—these are cities that matter in new ways. The assembling and local entangling of urban policy and knowledge in the Gulf clearly shows that such processes are complex and multidirectional. It is unsatisfactory to label them with naive nostrums like “religious,” “feudal,” “tribal,” or “despotic.” Nor can Gulf cities be understood as simple recipients of one more or less coherent form of development that is coming in (typically from the West) to transform the destination society. The Gulf is a place where today, as in the long past, the transnational occurs. Ideas and solutions get tested at the urban level through (re)assembling elements, elements with multiple origins. Some such imports, especially if successfully made part of the local assemblage, then move to another region but—as always—with a landing adapted to the new setting. In at least some respects, it is thus made different yet again. We observe transnationality with specific reference to contemporary Gulf urban policy, planning, and culture. But our approach models the transnational urban as a dynamic system, applicable to any system of places and always changing in content.

The Gulf as Transnational

Gulf settlements owe their historic origins to trade, travel, and migrations. Akin to how the Mediterranean shaped the European and North African worlds into a coherent entity, as famously depicted by Fernand Braudel, so it is that the Gulf has not been a barrier, but a content maker—its own cauldron of linkups. These cities are, as articulated by Manuel Castells with respect to essentials of the modern urban, spaces of “flow.” Ideas, raw materials, and finished goods moved through towns, villages, and ports, yielding sediments of cultural content and human practice, upstream, downstream, and on all sides. In ways scarcely imaginable in thinking about Braudel’s era of focus—centered on the sixteenth century—flows came to operate at a vast scale and volume. In the lead, on a world basis, are Gulf-region initiatives and practices—topics especially central to the chapters in the first section of this book.

The image of a transnational Gulf has long been obscured, of course, by the imposition of political boundaries and other institutional arrangements that give off—or indeed enforce—a misleading fixity. In chapter 1, Alex Boodrookas and Arang Keshavarzian trace back into the prior eras
of flows, connections, and commonalities. The authors engage in historical construction, as they urge others to do, in “Giving the Transnational a History: Gulf Cities across Time and Space.” Along with contradicting the “time-honored” separation between sides of the Gulf and of the Gulf from the modern world, acknowledging historic fluidity also helps defeat the propensity to see Gulf peoples as trapped in backward and utterly parochial modes of life. They can less easily be seen as forever doomed by their exotic and conflictual primordial ways. A careful examination of the histories of Gulf cities can show, as these scholars do, how particular variants of the transnational have long been in place. Looking at the Gulf this way, we gain some vantage over what hybridity means on the ground, past and present. This Gulf (and its related waterways) constituted a sea of amalgamations, with specific regard to the economic, familial, and religious. The fixity of borders and hostilities—for example, Iran versus Saudi Arabia—is not “ancient” or essential but modern and artefact.

A real past of interconnections and comingling—and a continued presence of variation—is taken up in a very different way by the scholar-architect Amale Andraos in the book’s second chapter, “Problematizing a Regional Context: Representation in Arab and Gulf Cities.” Through the prism of design and architecture, Andraos calls into question oversimplified contemporary conversations about so-called Arab culture. All over the Middle East, there is verbal respect—even compulsion—for honoring “context,” for deference to what has come before and what is left of it. But, as she goes to great lengths to show, context is not simple to determine, and the effort to do so is not at all necessarily innocent. Indeed, it can be quite problematic. What is or is not authentically “Arab” does not come so labeled as a package off the shelf. As we would expect from histories such as those laid out by Boodrookas and Keshavarzian, any current circumstance—and its context—will be heterogeneous in origin.

Using her native Beirut as the primary case of a larger phenomenon, Andraos describes what has been not just a multiplicity of regional impacts, but a collection of eager and crucial absorptions of modern influence from the West. Part of indigeneity has been, in other words, the enthusiastic uptake of the foreign. And, at least for some other cities of the region, this Western impact includes, notably and perhaps unexpectedly, the strong role played by architects and planners from the former Soviet bloc.37
Compared to the newly rising cities that strive in their various guises to be conspicuously “Arab,” Beirut has long displayed challenging complexities. After the many layers of influence moving to and from Beirut, it becomes difficult to describe, much less proscribe, what is an “Arab” motif or an “Arab” building or an “Arab” material. Does the temporal era of the origin make it more or less Arab? (And if so, which date counts?) Does the national or religious identity of the architect or developer or their funding source determine the answer? How can the modern West be excised given its substantive role in forming what has long been present and (literally) built on? Andraos examines just how particular images, building configurations, and modes of representation might or might not meet the various tests of authenticity. She finds, as per usual, that patterns of Middle East social and physical development are in interaction with urban development elsewhere in the world, altering, in fact, what has been built locally, as well as interpretations made of it. For her part, she is ready and eager to celebrate new buildings in the Arab world that emanate, as they long have, from foreign architects and design influences. As in the past, it is the composing and combining that gives value.

The Beirut case points to dilemmas and problematic outcomes in some of the cities central to our inquiry, like Dubai, which earnestly tears down much of its urban fabric and then rebuilds with mighty spectacles, putatively “Arab.” In taking things down or building some up, judgment, Andraos argues, too often does not come from serious inquiry but reflects nationalist ideology or exigencies of tourist appeal—buildings should look Arab. To think in terms of a regional past of mixed influences, including modernistic shaping from Europe, risks charges of apostasy. Behind her thinking lie the catastrophic impacts of essentialist perspectives—of declarations that something (or somebody) is or is not truly “Arab” or “Islam” or “colonial” or “Western” or, at the extreme, “infidel.”

With the insertion of Middle-East motifs into their buildings, the designers of architectural spectacle are performing a new Gulf context, as Davide Ponzini describes in chapter 3, “Mobilities of Urban Spectacle: Plans, Projects, and Investments in the Gulf and Beyond.” Whatever their inspirations or references to an Arab past, the major buildings of our Gulf cities (and the design skills behind them) are heavily sourced from the West. But—and this too repeats a historical phenomenon of the past—these Gulf city designs have their own “legs” that carry them out again to
other parts of the world. Ponzini traces some of what is coming and going. With avid Gulf participation, a global elite of “starchitects” are setting the terms of contemporary urban form, often ebullient and, in the Gulf context, made capable of satisfying superlative claims. The tallest building in the world is Dubai’s Burj Khalifa (Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill). Doha’s spectacular Museum of Islamic Art is by the Chinese American architect I. M. Pei. London’s Lord Norman Foster and Paris’s Jean Nouvel are all over the spectacular place and come up repeatedly in our chapters. And again, we have fabulous Las Vegas as a precursor place that used superlatives to put itself on the map—albeit primarily the U.S. map.38

Whatever the national origins, these projects take form through Gulf-specific conditions and demonstrate that context matters in shaping the process and urban effects of any relevant project. Beyond a common striving—in one way or another, to be Arab-like or to respect some version of context—they also bespeak more concrete common traits: abundant financial resources, strong and monocratic political commitment, weak planning regulation, and great ambition. The “taste” for such structures, hence, follows not from some disembodied aesthetic preference, but from local interpretations of regional goals and, indeed, running global interpretations of them. Such transnational traits are augmented by the presence of skills with which to negotiate, broker, and manage the right linkages between patrons, clients, and professionals of various nationalities and specializations. Together, they bring complex and, at least potentially, inventive projects into being.

Through the speed of such projects’ execution and their sponsors’ willingness to take risks, the region functions as a “test bed” for projects that then can be picked up, sometimes by the same firms that did the initial versions and executed in other parts of the Middle East and beyond. Gulf-based real estate operators, as Ponzini traces them, have expanded their portfolios beyond the Middle East, to Europe, India, and North America. They also buy existing buildings or new ones being erected, especially those with iconic meaning. The Abu Dhabi Investment Council owns New York’s Chrysler Building. Dubai has a dominant stake in the city’s Plaza Hotel. Qatar Holding has a 95 percent share of the Shard in London—the tallest building in Europe—and the whole Porta Nuova development in Milan, which includes the tallest building in Italy. These architectural artifacts reflect a newly ambitious mode of
financial deployments: not just for real estate, but investments of all sorts (a topic taken up in other chapters). In so doing, Gulf operatives change the world that changes them.

Assembling Hybrid Cities

Such various goals, projects, hybridities, interpretations, and executions have to be developed and implemented in real time in real places by particular people. At a professional level, there is a “crafting,” in which particular forms of expertise intersect with an awareness of diverse cultural, political, and material specifics. Sheikhs do not do fenestration or air ducts. Three of our chapters take up how the places they rule nevertheless get built and how the results, including at times innovative solutions, spread to other places.

A scholar as well as a practitioner of architectural photography, Michele Nastasi, in chapter 4, “A Gulf of Images: Photography and the Circulation of Spectacular Architecture,” describes how professional photography determines, in part, how the buildings come to be. They come, in a word, from carefully contrived pictures. A critical ingredient of design adoption and transfer is the capacity to represent—to show off a project in a way that will win approval, maybe even accolades. This helps build pride, capacity, and profit for its sponsors and induce replication or commissions from other backers, local or distant. Especially for projects like those in the Gulf that are distinctive and often incongruous with what has come before, representation becomes a key aspect. The prevalent tactic, argues Nastasi, is to present buildings as sculpture—in isolation from their physical and social contexts as well as the human beings who otherwise have at least visual connection with them. Conventions of Gulf architectural photography (and this is common in the world) foster monumentality. They do this in part by excluding proximate surroundings and especially the real human beings whose miscellaneous and unscripted stances and gatherings would otherwise distract. The typical result is to present freestanding structures, sometimes as monoliths, abstracted from the urban landscape.

To get across his point, Nastasi compares original and “follow-up” photographs of buildings in Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Doha, London, Paris, and New York, among other sites. He gives us some samples of the
artfully “photogenic” commercial pictures that promote a spectacularized model. Typically, the sculptural form is enhanced by using an open sky, seductive lighting (often at dusk), and minimal interference from alterations, signage, or human-agent disturbance. To drive home his point, Nastasi also presents some of the building photographs he took not on commission, but for his own research. In such works, he leaves in some of the people and clutter of the real city, allowing them to impinge on the iconography. His shots, tellingly, are taken closer to eye level, approximating what an urban pedestrian (or even auto passenger) will more likely experience—a practice that replicates much of Denise Scott Brown’s Las Vegas photographic method.39 The overall result is to document—clearly evident in the Gulf—that architectural photography derives from the commercial (and political) purposes behind it and in ways that sustain selective notions of urban greatness. It is a professional accomplishment—one that takes its place as still another part of the contemporary practice of urban assemblage.

From a still different vantage point of expert practice, architect-planner-scholar Laura Lieto lays out how professionals accomplish hybridity in interactions with clients. She draws on her work for a Saudi client to plan a new Jubail City Center (as well as on her general familiarity with Abu Dhabi’s Masdar City project), describing in “Planning for the Hybrid Gulf City” (chapter 5) what happens. Lieto focuses, in particular, on what she has learned in the micro space of face-to-face interaction between clients and consultants—a type of encounter complicated by the coming together of a Saudi client and an Italian consultant.40 Lieto hence lays out the transfer of ideas across a gap that is geographic, cultural, and gender-specific. The participants joined in bridging disjunctions and creating planning documents that, in effect, enabled them to span the divides. The client and the professionals had somewhat incongruent design wish lists. The client’s affection for a traditional European piazza—not Lieto’s idea—needed to be reconciled with the realities of the extreme heat and the gender segregation of the Saudi city. Far from being instances of mere copycat Western urbanism or rote implementation of “tradition” (Saudi or Italian), the proposals for the public space were carefully (and arduously) worked out. In ways Lieto describes, the professionals make their way toward a deliverable version of the new city that is both an outside and an inside product, both sensible and not so sensible. Whatever the
academic debates and definitional struggles, it was their job to do the transnational and it shows in the result.

Lieto plays a special role for two reasons. One is the client’s taste for “European style,” about which she is perceived as something of an authority, but also through her status as a woman doing work that is associated with men’s roles. Her working group had to hold meetings in Dubai, more gender “liberal” than Saudi Arabia. We see still another way, in accommodating different notions of gender propriety as well as different views of urbanism, in which Middle-Eastern/Western hybridity can take form. In this case, the job breakdown is geographically distributed, like parsing out design to one city and production to another, with gender playing an evident role.

In chapter 6, “Planning from Within: NYU Abu Dhabi,” we come to another case study of professional amalgamations, one that aligns with the New York University institutional home base of several authors in the volume. The late Hilary Ballon, a historian of urban architecture and planning, was herself directly involved in the design and construction (as well as academic functioning) of the university’s Abu Dhabi campus. Ballon, as one of the key participant-administrators of the project, explains in firsthand authoritative language the process therein. Through her account, we witness the coming together of architectural practice with unusual climactic conditions and, of course, the particular social conditions of the region. The challenge was to establish a contemporary and ambitious university in a mixed Arab-U.S. milieu. The project was financed by the Abu Dhabi government, with the patronage of the country’s crown prince, made possible by linkages and face-to-face assurances—carefully tended across multiple fronts, including at the highest levels of NYU administrators and trustees. The campus was built by the country’s strong development arm, Mubadala, a company formed initially by the ruler and later expanded into a vast array of worldwide operations with assets valued at $122 billion. Mubadala’s chief executive was to become a member of the NYU Board of Trustees in New York. We can see Abu Dhabi reaching back into the cosmopolitan center, thereby increasing the NYU board’s transnationality while also occasioning the UAE elite access to the important group of alumni, donors, and Wall Street figures who govern the university. Perhaps just as significant, the creation of NYU Abu Dhabi (NYUAD), along with the founding of NYU Shanghai,
helped prompt an administrative reconfiguration of NYU overall as the “global network university.”

Besides institutional hybridity, something that occurs at levels far lower than the NYU trustees, an effort was made with this project to enact a physical embodiment of Gulf-U.S. combining. A concrete example was the way the NYUAD campus designers, led by Uruguay-born, New York–based Rafael Viñoly, configured the campus to relate to the city of Abu Dhabi. Although NYUAD is a stand-alone campus (with clear and evident borders), it does not, as Ballon explains, “stand against” the city, present or future. It has ungated openings, a departure from some local design orientations that emphasize walled-in compounds. The designers strove to enhance pedestrian interaction, both within the university and with the now emerging development in the surrounding area. These qualities differentiate the campus not only from building patterns in Abu Dhabi, but also as found in other new universities and cultural centers recently built in the Gulf region. But it also has the Gulf in it, if in no other way than the amazingly rapid speed with which it went up—far faster than any project could at NYU in New York. In Ballon’s chapter, we can look for clues as to how development and urban decision making occurs in the Gulf more generally.

Urban Test Beds for Export

In the Gulf, assemblage can happen faster than elsewhere. There is less blockage from planners, regulations, or workplace rules. Historic preservation seldom arises as a challenge; nor does the need for the meaningful mitigation of environmental impact. Gulf cities are investment-friendly. This means they can function as test beds where designs, structures, and technologies can fast-track into implementation. The resulting outcomes can then serve as precedent for replication, sometimes under Gulf sponsorship, sometimes under sponsorship of the foreign actors who participated in initiating the Gulf arrangements. Because of what is now happening in the Gulf, we can move beyond the orientation of seeing the West (or the North) as the source and learn how things happening in the Gulf move out of the Gulf.

The test bed phenomenon also means that the Gulf can teach, within the Gulf but also to those outside, about negative impacts. We can learn
what happens when projects are misguided and how, at least potentially, future correctives can be made. In civic terms, we can also learn what happens when projects are executed without citizen surveillance or traditional market discipline. Elites sometimes construct buildings that will remain mostly (or completely) empty, even causing bankruptcy for a participating investor or at least an embarrassing need to reschedule payments. The negatives are made less noticeable by the immense wealth liquidity that cushions mistakes. Buildings operating at severe cash-flow deficits can be maintained (“patient money” as it is sometimes termed) as development regimes move forward to their next projects, perhaps gaining knowledge or techniques through the failed precedent. Even if dramatically inefficient in the short term, they can become functional at a broader transnational scale or over the longer haul. (Of course, efficiency can be found after the fact, offered up as an ex post rationalization.) Or, as with chain restaurant operators in the West who envision replication from the start, the ambition to reproduce is a built-in feature. This can change the calculus of what profit level the first implementation needs to provide. The same kind of logic can be used to explain—at least to investors—complexes built at a far larger scale, even as entire new cities.

In the three chapters that address this test bed urbanism, we see the potential for diverse outcomes. One case involves the creation of the vastly significant port of Dubai; another takes up the audacious high-tech compound of Masdar City in Abu Dhabi. A third case is the Saudi-based Cityquest, an effort to systematically discover the right formula for packaging up large-scale urban systems—whole cities of hundreds of thousands—with the potential for replication de nouveau elsewhere.

First, Mina Akhavan explains the test bed success of Dubai’s ports in chapter 7, “Gateway: Revisiting Dubai as a Port City.” Akhavan analyzes the evolution of that city from fishing village into transportation and logistics world hub. The Dubai port (actually several proximate facilities) has the largest manmade harbor in the world in its Jebel Ali installation. From the Dubai base, DP World—as the overall operating company is now known—encompasses a total of seventy-seven marine and inland terminals across the world. These are sometimes the largest ports in the countries of their location. As a global operator, DP World now is third in world ranking for container throughput.
Ancillary facilities, like warehousing and logistical services, are intrinsic for port functioning, making them an aspect of ports everywhere. But under the Dubai regimen, ports push inland to organize or reorganize urban territory at increasingly distant locations, utilizing rail, highway, and air facilities as means for intermodal logistics systems. The deliberate instituting of multimodality thus goes beyond the limited physical infrastructure of what is needed for shipping per se and includes free-trade zones and other governance arrangements. The innovations move beyond the Gulf, with hardware and software aligning and coordinating across global sites. DP World also represents a great success in fostering UAE diversification away from oil and gas.

Driven by a set of even more radical industrial and economic ambitions, Abu Dhabi moves forward with the “zero-carbon” Masdar City project, as described by author Gökçe Günel in chapter 8, “Exporting the Spaceship: The Connected Isolation of Masdar City.” The project aims to create a climactically neutral mode of urbanization in a region otherwise so massively contributing to carbon-rich environmental disaster. With an investment estimated at $16 billion, ambitions include breakthroughs in solar, pollution-free driverless vehicles, and self-sufficient cooling technologies. With the Massachusetts Institute of Technology as a research and training partner, success would yield hyperadvanced goods and services for export. Günel takes stock of the project’s accomplishments and shortcomings or failures. The grand internal transit scheme ended with one origin point and one destination—the parking lot adjacent to the complex. Looking back, one can interpret the project as too much tied into a scenario of technical breakthrough—without attending to social, economic, or political transformations that might have, in Günel’s opinion, made innovation more viable. This may be a general lesson coming out of Gulf technology ventures. Weakness on the social and political side hinders the chance for technology to be effectively implemented. (This theme, both concerning Masdar and as a more general note, also comes up in Lieto’s discussions of hybridity in chapter 5.)

Although more oriented toward “soft” infrastructure rather than hard, the Cityquest KAEC Forum is also in the running as the most ambitious among current Gulf-region urban initiatives. The geographer Sarah
Moser reports on her experience at the hyperelite event, held yearly in Saudi Arabia, in chapter 9, “Two Days to Shape the Future.” Cityquest takes lessons from development initiatives in the Gulf, combining them with others, to yield up optimum strategies for creating a new genre of city. Hosted by the King Abdullah Economic City (KAEC)—the first of Saudi Arabia’s four new cities—the event was cosponsored by the Paris-based NGO New Cities Foundation. Moser offers a close-up examination of this new node in the circulation of urban strategies, supplanting what now appear to be almost antique forms of urban conferencing that otherwise exist. Amid an over-the-top luxury environment, the author was among the technologists, architects, planners, CEOs, politicians, and visionaries exchanging views on how to master plan new cities in the world. (It is worth noting that even more ambitious Saudi plans have since been put forward.)

Aligning with recent critical geographic scholarship, Moser strives to identify how, why, where, and with what consequence urban policies circulate globally—in this case, emanating from and taking at least initial form in the Gulf. In the eyes of Asian and African urban policy makers in particular, projects like King Abdullah Economic City (and others to be discussed in this volume) have become the touchstones in shaping world urbanism, inspiring with a mantle of utopian boldness—one that Moser tries to balance against questionable social and ecological consequences.

Audacity, Work-Arounds, and Spatial Segmentation

Actual and existing Gulf cities have settled into patterns that could not have been envisioned by autocracy or any version of technocratic planning. Before “disruption” became a fashionable term in Western policy circles, cities of the Gulf engaged in the practice—without using the term—to a high degree. Desert ecologies, trade relations, migration streams, and neighborhood residential patterns were arranged and rearranged through dictum, segregation, and abrupt transformation. On a continuous basis, parts that would appear inconsistent, even mutually contradictory, were made to cohere and, in ways made evident in this book’s chapters, were made durable as cities. Challenges came and some are still present, but they have been, at least thus far, held in check. In part,
but only in part, because of the long-term upward trend in world oil markets, regimes survived even risky maneuvers.

Gulf cities remain famous in their contradictions, the most often cited being the tension between cosmopolitan reach and fealty to some envisioned Arab or Islamic tradition. Evident in a number of chapters in this book is the solution of what we term the “work-around.” They are make-do arrangements to bypass awkward or “rigid” legal, social, and cultural proscriptions. Both in daily life and in the history of peoples, we have to see such creative moves as normal and indeed necessary—and a presence in societies of every kind. Here the work-around presses in, making itself evident in land use, law, and custom. It can carry into virtually all spheres, including the social-psychological, what one observer terms “an ideology of daily adjustments.”

In urban land use, one work-around mainstay is spatial separation. Whatever their etiology in other parts of the world, in the Gulf, the separations are frequently mandated—as when certain residential areas are set aside for citizens only or for particular groups of manual workers. The outcome represents a kind of “urbanism as a way of life” different from that empirically observed by past urban analysts. It is also distinct from the colonial or postcolonial cities of the Americas, Asia, or Africa. With their capacity to adapt and invent as they go, the Gulf regimes foster something new again in the urban world.

The veteran Gulf city researcher and professor of architecture Yasser Elsheshtawy gives us a view of the Dubai version. He concentrates on tracing how Dubai managed to roar back from overextension, severe debt, and world humiliation. Aptly titled “Real Estate Speculation and Transnational Development in Dubai,” Elsheshtawy’s chapter documents the way Dubai’s massive infrastructural investments (spelled out in part by Akhavan in her chapter on Dubai’s ports) facilitated the country’s rebound from its 2008 financial crisis. This only furthered the national zeal for the spectacular and a leadership role in regional construction, transportation, tourism, and consumption. There has been a reemergence of megaprojects (in part through financial rescue by neighboring Abu Dhabi), a return to sale of real estate units in advance of construction, and bidding wars for condo and townhouse units seen only online. Developers have revived projects that had been halted earlier. All kinds of
affluent people, including well-off expats or foreign buyers, have gotten in on the speculation. This has also furthered a burgeoning cross-ethnic expat community life.

A downside of the hectic tearing down and building back is, as Elsheshtawy laments, the continuous displacement of residents, destruction of “traditional” neighborhoods, and imposition of a fragmented urban form. It also means a loss of history, including modernist structures (albeit some very ordinary and nondescript), that bespeaks actual lives, tastes, and crafts of the past. Dubai acts as a showcase for the downside of turning urban environments into mechanisms for generating rent. There is a cautionary note for governments that strive to emulate the Dubai model but with weaker resources for dealing with the negative economic and social aftermath. This too constitutes a learning from the Gulf.

Often overlooked in accounts of urban regime functioning, goods consumption plays an outsized role in shaping the urban Gulf—a topic taken up by the sociologist Harvey Molotch in “Consuming Abu Dhabi” (chapter 11). Those with ancestors living in what became the UAE before 1925 (as evidenced by lineages recorded in their “Family Book”) are citizens with whom the largess is, by rights, to be shared. As a mainstay of the “contract” between the sheikhdom’s inner circle and its other citizens comes the wherewithal for the massive purchase of goods, with houses and cars (both with air conditioning) at the core. Extreme urban sprawl derives in good part from these twin elements, made especially evident given the flat topography. Building and maintaining the consumption infrastructure requires extensive and ongoing labor, performed—in lieu of an indigenous working class—by foreigners. Absent democracy, high levels of consumption yield a specific substitute form of political and social stability among the beneficiaries.

Consumption also arguably includes, in ways that are historically distinct, the import of prestige cultural institutions like the Louvre, Sorbonne, and eventually the Guggenheim. They are part of the workarounds that enable modernization, globalization, and permissive practices—among certain types of people in demarcated zones—toward sexuality, food, finance, alcohol, and artistic representation. Among the most important tools is separation into special geographic spaces, conceptually similar to free ports that exempt shippers and merchants from
duties and other taxes. But these are places that permit exception for activities like Western-style education (allowing a high degree of academic freedom) as well as easy social mixing, particularly across genders. Tourist service zones also cater to special tastes and pleasures—providing, in effect, a kind of “morality zoning” familiar enough in the West (e.g., as red-light districts). In the Gulf, a specific mode of spatiality similarly reflects the attempt to reconcile contradictory goals—further specified and elaborated by Steffen Hertog’s chapter near the end of the book.

Hertog sees the Gulf monarchies as engaged in what he terms a “quest” in the title to his chapter 12, “A Quest for Significance: Gulf Oil Monarchies’ International Strategies and their Urban Dimensions.” The oil elites have been using their wealth to buy the accoutrements of “good citizenship” and apparent “progressiveness” on the world stage. Their very costly projects—undertaken through the heavy involvement of international partners—have an audience, regardless of where they are specifically located, that is almost exclusively international. There is evidently a desire to acquire international recognition independent of hydrocarbon plutocracy. The result is a proliferation of global-elite institutions and displays, serviced by specific infrastructures, both bureaucratic and physical, with the cumulative result, in governmental terms, that state apparatuses are highly segmented not just spatially but organizationally as well. Specific elite agencies run separately from the rest of the state bureaucracy. They sometimes operate their own—what they term—“cities” (actually more akin to districts in Western terminology) or other types of enclaves operating independent of other physical and regulatory entities.

The underlying strategies are thus anchored in the monarchies’ local political economy, rather than, for example, international civil society or substantive emulation of outside forms of governance. This is all in line with a general pattern of rent-financed state building that is both top-down and deeply fragmented. While the ideas and language informing these regimes’ international strategies are often borrowed from the West, their roots are very specific—as Hertog articulates—to the Gulf situation.

The intersection of the specifics of the urban local and the patterns of the general has been one of our major themes and one we will take up again in the concluding chapter of the book. As stressed by Hertog, the
segmented patterns in Gulf cities are closely grounded in arrangements of land development and spatial form (as some of our other authors also make clear). Urban studies—whether critical or celebratory—tend to assume, at least in classic formulations, something like democratic capitalism, which then enables so much study of cities to remain Western-based, even when in a critical vein. Exceptions have, of course, been noted and even made the basis of “special” studies (“area studies” in a prior time). But the Western intellectual pattern is to presume a background familiar in the experience of Europe and North America.

Such patterns and their intellectual depictions, as we have already argued and as our authors will further elaborate, are greatly challenged by dynamics in the Gulf. Gulf city arrangements, something like them, or something else again—as in China or Asia—are in increasing contemporary evidence. They have always been around in some variant, providing anomalies indeed to our West-based paradigms that, however awkwardly, reach for generalizability. But modes of inclusion and exclusion—distinctive assemblages of peoples, capital, and spatial arrangements—however “arbitrary” to contemporary Western sensibilities, need to be taken on board as their own kind of normal, maybe even of the ordinary. Where there are “issues,” there are work-arounds that have at least the potential to manage them. As Gulf cities further evolve with their own sets of mix, they make spectacle, inequality, and authoritarianism all the more available for emulation, export, and disquiet.

NOTES
1 Venturi, Scott Brown, and Izenour 1972.
2 Venturi, Scott Brown, and Izenour 1972, xvii. It came to our most recent attention through Stierli 2013, 35 and 36.
4 Some indeed thought of Las Vegas as “the prototype of the American city of the future.” See Stierli 2013, 90, citing Fielden 1970, 64.
5 For a first example, see Fuccaro 2001.
6 Fuccaro 2009.
8 Fuccaro 2009, 191.
9 Berry and Pred 1961.
10 Alonso 1964.
11 Keshavarzian and Hazbun 2010, 208.
For a strong and strongly informed effort, see Kanna 2011. For further critique, see Farias and Bender 2010.

See Sato 2009 for details on the British exit.

Mahdavy 1970. This discussion benefits from Hanieh 2011, 10.

Logan and Molotch 1987.

Ponzini 2011.

Farah al-Nakib brought this point to our attention. We thank her for this and other valuable comments.

Hannerz 1990 and 1996.

For an edifying view of young Muslim peer group life in Los Angeles, see O'Brien 2017.

Mottahedh and Fandy 1997, 298.

Vogel 1997, 263.

Woolfhart 2016, 251.


See, for example, Putnam 1994; Piore and Sabel 1984; Saxenian 1996.

Jacobs 1969.

Kolo (2016, 164) remarks on the common characterization of the Gulf region as having a “limited indigenous capacity in virtually all professions.”

Al-Fahim 1998.

Al-Fahim 1998. This passage is also quoted in Thompson 2016, 211.

See, in particular and highly relevant to the intent of this volume, Fuccaro 2009.

Alternative strategies, like “bottom up” research, are especially useful, in part to avoid reifying the “tangible effects of empire.” See Elsheshtawy 2010; Hourani and Kanna 2014, 603; Kanna 2014; Menoret 2014; Al-Nakib 2014 and 2016; Beaugrand 2014.

For example, Michel Callon, John Law, Leigh Star, and Geoffrey Bowker.

Molotch 2011.

For prior examples of ANT in explaining urban outcomes, see Beauregard 2015; Lieto and Beauregard 2015; Farias and Bender 2010.

Braudel 1996.

Castells 1996.

See, for example, Thiollet and Vignal 2016.

See, for example, Stanek 2015.

Beauregard 2003.


In attending to the significance of sustained interpersonal relations between agents coming from the West with agents “on the ground” in places like Saudi Arabia, Lieto reinforces the emphasis on “political and sociological complexity” involved in the conjoining. See also Peck and Theodore 2012, 23, as discussed in Khirfan and Jaffer 2014.

Lindblom 1965.

Again, we can caution against simplistic characterization: monied interests in other parts of the world also may tolerate empty buildings or even build into unfavorable markets when they think markets will eventually rebound. Almost drawing from the Gulf playbook, many owners of downtown U.S. real estate would rather maintain empty storefronts than sign long-term leases at lower rent levels; Bagli 2017.

Carlisle 2010.

See, for example, Garfinkel 1967; Zimmerman 1970.

Brorman Jensen 2014, 49.


Fuccaro 2009, 231.

The names given to these “cities”—for example, Economic City, Education City, Internet City—do not necessarily describe what goes on within them. Dubai’s Internet City, for example, is the location of many non-Internet companies. See Keshavarzian 2010, 274. An extensive discussion of the issue can be found in Easterling 2014.

Roy and Ong 2011.

REFERENCES


