NOTEBOOK

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INTRODUCTION

BAHRAIN CULTURAL MASTER PLAN

Culture as system

His Majesty King Hamad ibn Isa al-Khalifah, ruler of the Kingdom of Bahrain, has described culture as a "catalyst" reflecting the identity of a nation and defining its distinctive character.
... But what is "culture"? As a fundamental concept we have a general understanding that culture connects issues of history, heritage, arts, and society, but as a specific term its definition can be amorphous and evasive.

Social scientists define culture as a system of shared patterns of behaviour, belief, and understanding which collate to create an identity for a nation or a people. In its essence, culture is not defined by artefacts, tools, or tangible objects, but rather in how the group interprets, uses, and perceives them. By understanding that culture is a system of patterns it becomes possible to appreciate that culture can evolve to accommodate the social interventions and influences that impose themselves on a people.

With this definition in mind, the task of analysing and understanding the culture of Bahrain becomes easier to accomplish. With an ancient history of inhabitation, as a traditional "crossroads" in the region, and with a longstanding and ongoing association to the west, the culture of Bahrain is layered and dynamic. Despite Bahrain being one of the few countries in the Gulf where nationals represent the majority of the population, its culture is one that is partially defined by its association with outside influences. This heritage of cultural complexity is the basis of an identity that is immediately distinguishable from the culture its neighbours.

Culture as identity

The Kingdom of Bahrain, like its neighbouring Emirates, is in struggle to develop a new identity, a modern identity that should distinguish their nation and culture while simultaneously providing a vision for their existence in the 21st Century. After the radical transformation of their economical, architectural and urban environment in the second half of the last century, many countries of the Middle East are in the process of reorienting themselves to search out their roots and origins. This search is made more arduous by the fact that there is a sense of competition between neighbouring Emirates for a distinguishable cultural position in the region.

Nowhere is this competition more apparent (from an architectural sense) than in the multitude of proposals for new cultural institutions. This current boom of projects raises questions about the local expectations and goals for culture, and how it will define the national identities.

At a simplistic level of scrutiny, many of the cultural projects can be perceived as the crass acquisition of cultural icons either for national prestige or as attempts to engage the business of cultural tourism. However, just as with the development of many American museums in the late 19th century (by American industrialists after completing "acquisition tours" of Europe), there seems to be a strategy of social engineering; that the development of institutions will have the potential to engage the intellect of local society. These new cultural institutions in the Gulf may simply be the latest instance of a long tradition of exchange between nations with wealth and nations with cultural prestige and heritage.

The acquisition and display of foreign cultural artefacts in the Middle East can be seen as a way to create a venue for cultural exchange. By using world class exhibitions and facilities in the Gulf to attract a culturally mixed audience, the purpose of the museum extends beyond the presentation of objects. Through the development of institutions it is possible to promote awareness of western culture to the nationals, and equally, to make visitors aware that Islam is at heart a peaceful religion whose society is responsible for many historical, scientific, and artistic contributions to contemporary civilization.

Through these large scale institutions, the individual Gulf emirates and nations are taking steps onto the international stage of cultural identity. However, for an identity to be seen as unique and worthy of differentiation there is a need for the populace to collectively understand and recognize their own distinctive culture.

Culture as inspiration

Upon arrival in Bahrain one of the first impressions for the knowledgeable visitor is that, unlike many of its "booming" Gulf neighbours, the urban fabric of buildings, houses, roads, bridges, and infrastructure show a wide variety of ages and influences. With mid 20th century modernist buildings built alongside of contemporary glass towers, all within view of traditional Arabic neighbourhoods, the evolution for both the urban development and culture of Bahrain has been steady and mostly stable. This "reading" of the urban fabric is a first indication of the different history and development of the Kingdom. This differentiation, however, may be most obvious to the architect or urban designer; those who have developed an eye to recognize the systems of patterns in the city and society.

The skills required of the architect for both analysis and design have an analogy in the understanding of culture. Both tasks require the comprehension of larger systems, yet find their essence in the recognition and manipulation of patterns and details. This similarity of process gives the designer a unique perspective in the knowledge that both the form and function of their work may have a direct influence on the cultural and even the identity of a people.

Due to its longstanding history as a trading hub and as a former British protectorate, collaboration is part of Bahraini tradition. However, engagement with outsiders should in no way be seen as a negative critique of local skills and expertise. Collaboration by definition brings together the best of independent practitioners with the intention of fostering discussion, promoting

knowledge transfer, and supporting the level of intellectual critique. By engaging differences of understanding and opinion, the characteristics that make up a "system of shared patterns of behaviour, beliefs, and understanding" become clear. With a strong sense of what makes a nation unique the process can produce new inspiration for the perseverance of cultural identity.

Culture as Collaboration

In 2008 the Laboratoire de la production d'architecture (lapa) was invited to present the results of its teaching and research method in the Swiss Pavilion at the Venice International Architecture Biennale. The resulting exhibition presented three years of research and student work, focusing on a design methodology which comprehensively ranges in scale from urban design, through the development of architectural interventions, down to the scale of the architectural detail. This exhibition was open for the full three months of the Biennale and viewed by a wide international audience.

Of those who viewed the exhibition, one was the honourable Minister of Culture and Information for the Kingdom of Bahrain. After this visit to the Biennale, the minister proceeded to contact lapa to express her interest in collaboration with a specific focus on urban development and the issue of cultural identity.

For lapa, this collaboration project is an interesting proposal, as it allows lapa to test its existing design methodology with a new and specific focus on culture. The combination of the method, as well as the competences of the lapa staff gathered through past cultural projects, should provide a solid foundation for this investigation.

This invitation for collaboration was substantiated with a visit to Bahrain, the development of contacts within the architecture faculty at the University of Bahrain (UoB), and a formal agreement of collaboration with the Ministry. The proposal of an academic collaboration purposefully brings together students and professionals from Switzerland and Bahrain with the goal of greater cultural discourse and understanding.

The topic for this collaborative project is the development of a "Cultural Master Plan" (CMP) for Bahrain.

The intention of the CMP is to establish a comprehensive and binding framework for future cultural initiatives and activities. Based on the CMP students of both lapa and UoB will then develop culturally focused architectural projects. These projects will act as both "proof of concept" of the CMP and as feasibility studies for the proper development of Bahrain's future cultural projects.

PARTNERS

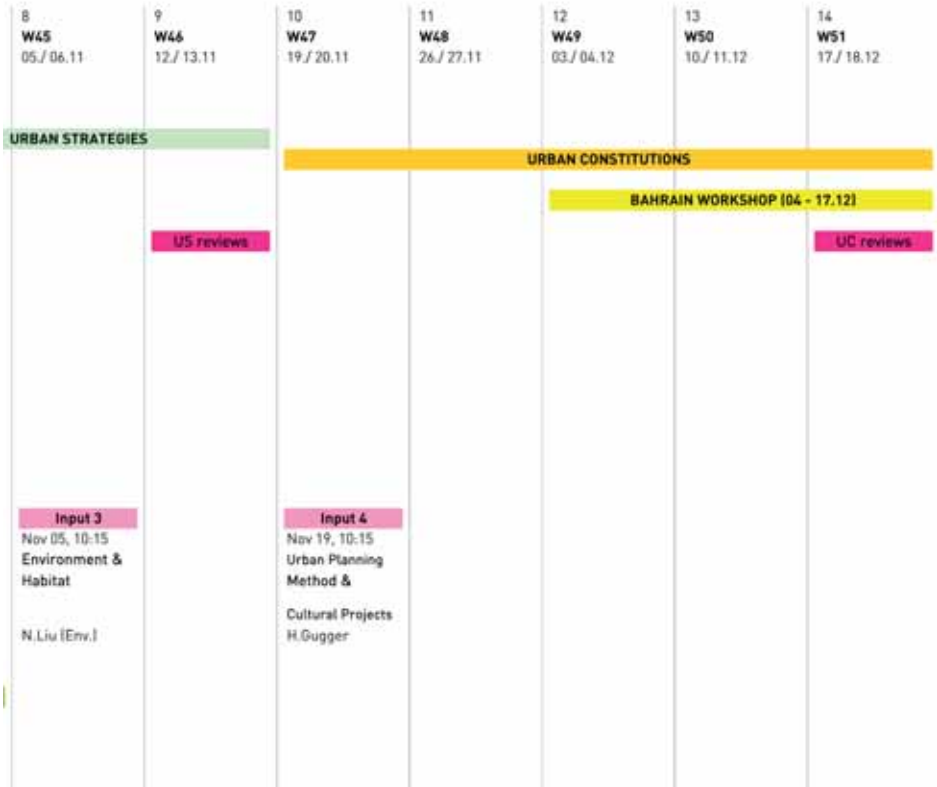
Ministry of Culture and Information

Sheikh Ebrahim Bin Mohammed Al-Khalifa
Center for Culture and Information

University of Bahrain

1
W38
17./ 18.09
2
W39
24./ 25.09
3
W40
01./ 02.10
4
W41
08./ 09.10
5
W42
15./ 16.10
6
W43
22./ 23.10
7
W44
29./ 30.10
MY BAHRAIN
CASE STUDIES
MY BAH reviews
CS reviews
Input 1
Sep 17 + 18
Intro Trip
Aarau -Basel
Input 2
Oct 8, 10:15
Society &
Economy
M. Arcand (Eco.)
Trip to BAH
Oct. 28, 29, 30
HG, SC, LB

SCHEDULE
SEMESTER 01



FIELD TRIP
BASEL 17. / 18.09.2009

Thursday 17.09.2009

Transfer Lausanne – Aarau by train

07:45 Dep. Lausanne Train Station

09:28 Arr. Aarau Train Station

10:00 Tour *Aargauer Kunsthaus, Aarau
www.aargauerkunsthaus.ch

Lunch at the Kunsthaus cafeteria

Transfer Aarau – Basel by train

13:37 Dep. Aarau Train Station

14:12 Arr. Basel train Station

15:00 Tour Schaulager
www.schaulager.org

18:00 SURPRISE EVENING

Friday 18.09.2009

Transfer to Weil am Rhein by bus

08.00 Claraplatz Basel (Bus no 55)

08.20 Vitra

09.00 Tour Vitra Design Museum

Transfer to Basel by bus

12.00 Vitra

12.25 Claraplatz Basel

14:00 Tour Kunstmuseum Basel
www.kunstmuseumbasel.ch

Individual sightseeing tour Basel and
Transfer to Lausanne

Hotel

BaselBackPack - urban hostel culture
Dornacherstrasse 192
4053 Basel
T +41 61 333 0037 | F +41 61 333 0039
www.baselbackpack.com
Reservation number 29994

INPUTS

Input 1 (17./18.09.)
Field Trip Aarau - Basel

Input 2 (Thu. 08.10.)
10h15 M. Arcand
Society & Economy

Input 3 (Thu. 05.11.)
10h15 N. Liu
Environment & Habitat

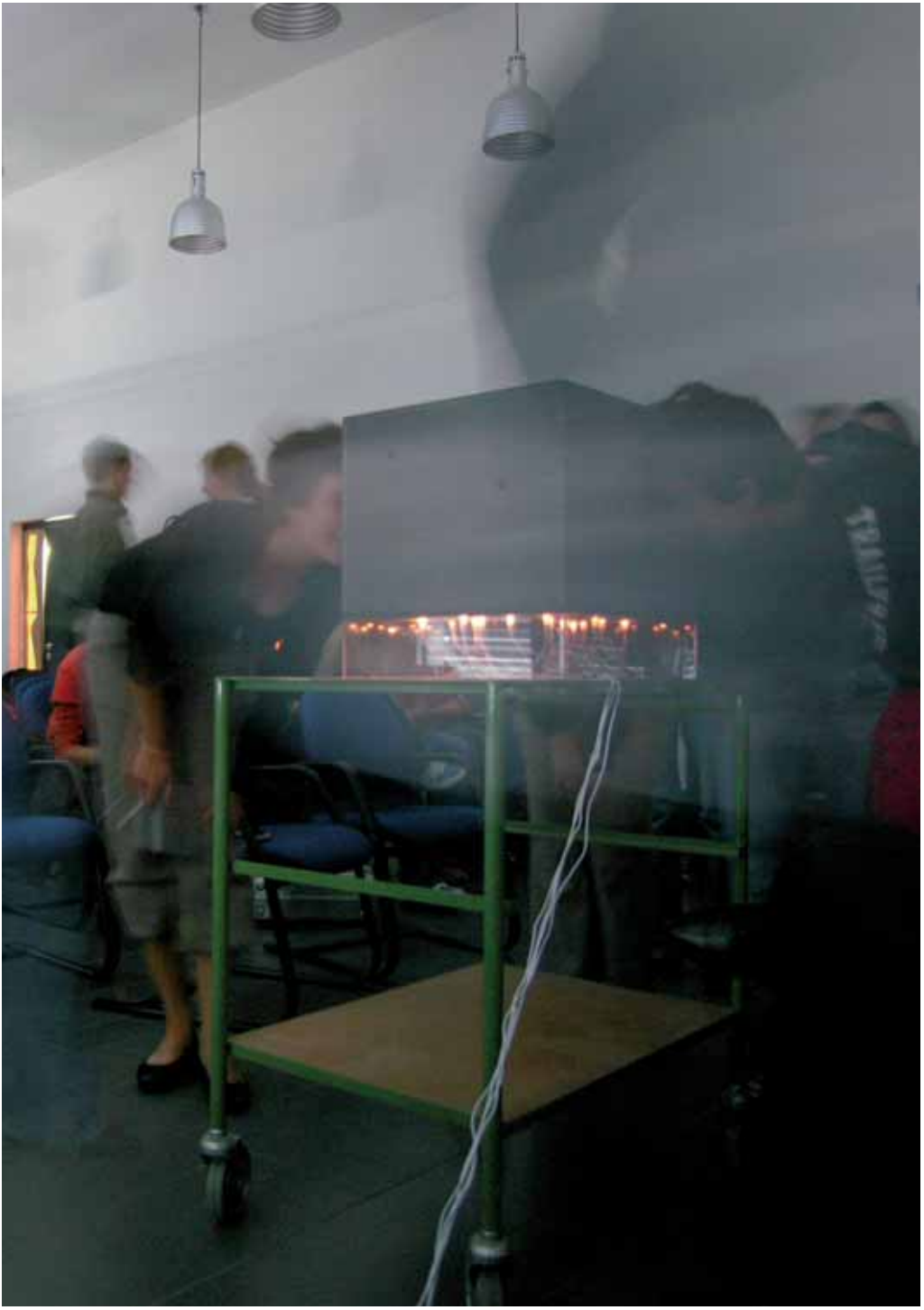
Input 4 (Thu. 19.10.)
10h15 H. Gugger - Cultural Projects
Urban Planning & Methodology

Lecture Harry Gugger at the University of Havanna, 2007

WORKSHOP

BAHRAIN 04. - 18.12.2009

Fri	04.10.	Flight GVA (or ZHR) - BAH via Doha. Arrival in the night in Bahrain.
Sat	05.10.	Sightseeing Tour of Bahrain
Sun	06.12.	Preparation for UC draft review
Mon	07.12.	UC Draft review at UoB
Tue	08.12.	Visits
Wed	09.12.	UC Charette
Thu	10.12.	UC Charette
Fri	11.12.	Visits
Sat	12.12.	Visits
Sun	13.12.	UC Charette
Mon	14.12.	UC Charette
Tue	15.12.	Final Review (1 day)
Wed	16.12.	Visits (National Day)
Thu	17.12.	Visits
Fri	18.12.	departure at night
Sat	19.12.	Arrival in the morning in CH



MY BAHRAIN

PHASE 1

«I threw myself upon the island like one dead, and was unconscious of my existence, and drowned in my stupefaction; and I ceased not to remain in this condition until the next day. The sun having then risen upon me, I awoke upon the island, and found that my feet were swollen, and that I had become reduced to the state in which I then was. Awhile I dragged myself along in a sitting posture, and then I crawled upon my knees. And there were in the island fruits in abundance, and springs of sweet water: therefore I ate of those fruits; and I ceased not to continue in this state for many days and nights. My spirit had then revived, my soul had returned to me, and my power of motion was renewed; and I began to meditate, and to walk along the shore of the island, amusing myself among the trees with the sight of the things that God (whose name be exalted!) had created; and I had made for myself a staff from those trees, to lean upon it. Thus I remained until I walked, one day, upon the shore of the island, and there appeared unto me an indistinct object in the distance.»

Stories from the Thousand and One Nights.
Nights 537–566
The First Voyage of Es-Sindibad of the Sea

Task
(individual work – 2 weeks)
Represent your conception of Bahrain. The goal of this project is to allow each student to interpret the city of Geneva in their own highly personal and individual way. The final product and medium of the work is open, but should be in some way dynamic and "presentable", so as to allow for others to reflect upon the work without explanation. No presenter will be allowed to make any spoken comments on his work during the presentation. The chosen medium, content, and presentation are therefore required to be self explanatory, while the personal message or story should be precise and clear.

Schedule
Hand in & presentation:
Thursday 01.09. / Friday 02.09.2009

Deliverables
A personal presentation of individual interpretations on the concept of "My Bahrain"

BAHRAIN
QATAR
RAS AL-KHAIMAH
OMAN
DUBAI
ABOU DHABI
OMAN

CASE STUDIES

PHASE 2

The second assignment will be a case study analysis of different gulf states. The cases have been chosen as a representative set of different urban development patterns and policies.

The five chosen case studies are:
1. Dubai
2. Abou Dhabi
3. Rasal-Khaimah
4. Quatar
5. Oman

Each student group will be assigned one citiy and will be required to research, analyse, and document the conditions and statistics relating to five important planning themes. To do this effectively, each member of a team will become a "specialist" of one of these themes.

The five research themes are:
1. Economy
2. Tourism
3. Education
4. Environment
5. Urbanism

Task
(Individual / group work – 3 weeks)
Each group will create a case study for their assigned city.
The group will be divided into five specialists; each specialist will research their theme and show its relation to the evolution of the borough and its urban structure. The final group report will be a compilation of the individual themes, including standardized statistical and physical data, as well as an overall analysis and set of conclusions.
The conclusions should identify special and unique features and clarify the advantages and problems of each case.

Schedule
Hand in: Wednesday 21.10.2009 - 18h00
Presentation: Thursday 22.10.2009

Deliverables
Each group is required to create a digital presentation, and a Case Study Book.
The presentation should include the results from research, statistics, and analysis of each of the themes for the city. The presentation should conclude with an overall assessment of the city and personal reflections on its qualities.
The digital presentation should be submitted in both high and low resolution digital files, so as to facilitate internet downloading by our partners.
The deliverable for the case study will be an A3 - Case Study Book. The Book should include all of the statistics and information from the presentation, presented as fact sheets, and graphics.
The documentation should address each of the individual specialist themes in a clear and concise format and should provide maps with coordinate scales to be used for comparison between groups.

0P1001_BAH_CHART

Urban Strategies	Economy	Tourism	Education	Environment	Urbanism	Urban Constitutions
Dubai						BAH_UC 1
Abu Dhabi						BAH_UC 2
Ras al Khaimah						BAH_UC 3
Qatar						BAH_UC 4
Oman						BAH_UC 5
Case Studies						

URBAN STRATEGY

PHASE 3

The second half of the semester shifts the studio focus onto the main topic of investigation: Bahrain.

An urban strategy is composed of many constituent components, each addressing a specialized interests, yet also requiring proper integration with the others to create an "intelligent tool" for the evolution of a masterplan. In this phase, participants will resume their role as "specialist" (Economy, Tourism, Education, Environment, Urbanism) and will develop urban strategies for the project area.

Task
(group / individual work – 3 weeks)
For this phase the specialists will work together as a Specialist Group to conduct research and analysis on Bahrain and its context.
Once the base data for the area has been compiled the specialists will then work individually, in consultation with their Design Group, to develop a Urban Strategy for their topic. This assignment creates a multi-faceted foundation for the development of a full plan for Bahrain.

Schedule
Hand in: Wednesday 11.11.2009 - 18h00
Presentation: Thursday 12.11.2009

Deliverables
Each specialized theme group is responsible for a A3 briefing booklet. This booklet should document the basic data for each theme including statistics, history, reports, images, maps, diagrams, and should provide a list of primary planning issues to be considered for the evolution of Bahrain.
Each individual student is also responsible to design a "procedural based development strategy" for the future evolution of the site with respect to their specialization. The deliverable for each strategy is an A0 plan of the site (or schematic diagram for their theme) and documentation outlining the primary concerning issues. The individual strategies will form the basis for the next assignment and should already include reflections on how the thematic issues should be integrated into an overall proposal.

GENEVA UC MAP

URBAN CONSTITUTION

PHASE 4

The goal of this phase is to produce an "Urban Constitution": a plan that provides a logical set of guiding rules which allow for an appropriate and consistent response to urban development. The goal for the lapa Geneva urban constitution is to provide different visions for the future development of Bahrain. The starting basis for this work is the amalgamation of the work of the different specialists within design group projects.
The resulting Urban Constitutions will be a designed synthesis of the individual theme strategies, combined to be flexible and responsive to future influences.
Within each constitution there should be a statement of general goals and a thesis for the development of the city.
The goal for this project is not to provide a typical fixed "master plan" for future building, but to provide a logical set of guiding rules to allow for an appropriate and consistent response to the changing influences on Bahrain and its context.

Task
(Group work – 4 weeks)
Each group is to combine their individual theme studies and create an Urban Constitution. The Urban Constitution should be a series of procedural rules that correlate to the stated goals and thesis of the group. The constitution should address the perceived needs of the city in the short, medium, and long term, and should be represented as a schematic strategy that integrates the multiple overlaying aspects of planning with a flexible methodology.
The Urban Constitutions should demonstrate that the groups understand the significant issues facing the city, the different methodological processes used to resolve typical issues, and then state how their proposals will fit within this framework.

For this phase participants are further required to define a programme which has to include housing, and choose a site within the given Urban Constitution of Bahrain.

The students should balance the project issues of program, complexity, & size, with the resources of the team members (max 2).

Schedule
Hand in: Monday 14.12.2009 - 18h00
Final presentation: Tuesday 15.12.2009

Deliverables
Each Design Group is responsible for a digital presentation. The presentation should explain the Urban Constitution, through the use of maps, diagrams, models, images, graphics, and supporting reference data.
Each group should also create an A3 book based on the presentation. This document should compile all graphic materials to support constitution.

GLOSSARY

This glossary is included so as to facilitate the understanding of words within the lapa project context. It is not intended to be a comprehensive dictionary of complete definitions.

Constituent
Serving as part of a whole; component: a constituent element. A resident of a district or member of a group that authorizes another to act as a representative

Constitution
The physical make up of the body, including its functions metabolic processes, reactions to stimuli, and resistance to the attack of pathogenic organisms: A written instrument containing the fundamental rules of a political or social organization

Infrastructure
An underlying base or foundation especially for an organization or system: The basic facilities, services, and installations needed for the functioning of a community or society, ex: transportation, communication, water, power, & public institutions.

Masterplan
A long-term plan for all interacting aspects of a project or defined area giving a concrete plan for development, or comprehensive guidance & instruction

Issues to consider include: Buildings, sizes, functions, local urbanity, program, style, history

Methodology
A body of practices, procedures, and rules used by those who work in a specific discipline or project; a set of working methods:

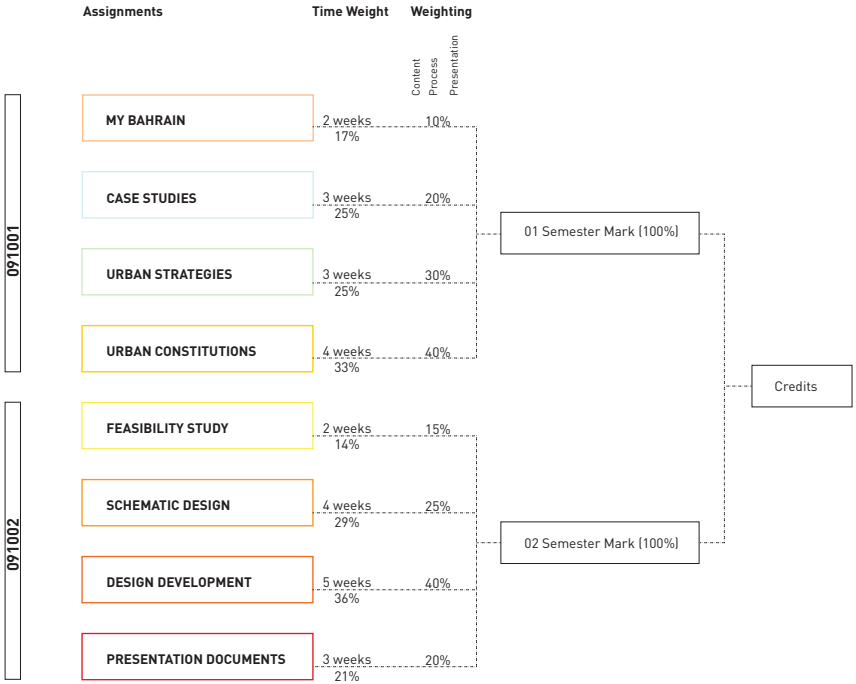
Pervasive
Spread throughout, Having the quality or tendency to pervade or permeate

Synthesis
The combining of separate elements or substances to form a coherent whole

Strategy
An adaptation or complex of adaptations of behaviour, metabolism, or structure that serves as an important function in achieving evolutionary success: An elaborate and systematic plan of action

Script
(v.) To orchestrate behaviour or an event, example as if writing a theatrical script. (n.) An interpreted written set of instructions which interact with a given program.

Ref: www.dictionary.com


Assignments
Time Weight
Weighting
Content
Process
Presentation
091001
MY BAHRAIN
2 weeks
17%
10%
CASE STUDIES
3 weeks
25%
20%
URBAN STRATEGIES
3 weeks
25%
30%
URBAN CONSTITUTIONS
4 weeks
33%
40%
091002
FEASIBILITY STUDY
2 weeks
14%
15%
SCHEMATIC DESIGN
4 weeks
29%
25%
DESIGN DEVELOPMENT
5 weeks
36%
40%
PRESENTATION DOCUMENTS
3 weeks
21%
20%
01 Semester Mark (100%)
02 Semester Mark (100%)
Credits

APPRAISAL

The emphasis of evaluation of the semester is on individual work. Although the scope of the semester project is executed at the group level so as to deal with the large scale of both area and complexity, the workflow is subdivided into individual work projects.
There are two specific reasons for this:

The first reason is the Bologna Declaration on the European space for Higher Education, which guides the academic programs at the Bachelors and Masters Level. This convention states: Each student work should be discernable as independent and evaluated individually.

The second reason is that architecture is a profession which relies on the cumulative work of many different disciplines to develop and support the process of architectural design and production. To work successfully as an architect there must be respect and an understanding of the other collaborative disciplines as well as other designers within the team. The mandate for the Laboratoire de la production d'architecure, is to study, evaluate, and develop the different architectural issues that combine to create projects of the highest quality.

To satisfy the criteria the evaluation of student work will be based on the following criteria:
- Understanding of the task
- Pertinence of analysis
- Quality of decisions in the evolution of analysis to proposal
- Development of logical process that relate to planning strategies and syntheses.
- Coherence of the proposal to the given assignment and defined scenario
- Quality of the potential social and physical design
- Quality of representation, graphics and content
- Individual contribution to the process of group work
- Individual contributions to presentations and discourse

Each assignment will be assessed based on a balance between the individual contribution and the logical and methodological resolution of integrating the individual work into a unified project.

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

Architects must study and co-design the digital technologies that are revolutionizing architectural production. Many issues of this semester topic will lend themselves well to the use of digital technologies in this study.

From a technology viewpoint, the full year project can be clearly divided into its two semesters; geographic analysis and urban planning in the first semester, and architectural design and production in the second semester. These two tasks have direct analogies in the type of digital tools and data used.

Technology Glossary

CNC - Computer Numerically Controlled
Digital control system used primarily in the controlling of CAM machines.

DRG - Digital raster graphic
A digital image that is encoded with georeferenced border information, referred to as the "map collar". Ex: ortho aerial images & scanned map images.

DTM – Digital Terrain Model
A digital surface generated by using GIS point elevation data or mapped contour line information.

FTP – File Transfer Protocol
System used to transfer individual data files using the internet or an FTP server.

GIS - Geographic Information System
A database system for the creation, management and vizualization of mapping and geo-referenced data.

Remote sensing
Technique of environmental and geographic data acquisition involving the use of instruments aboard aircraft and spacecraft.

UTM – Universal Transverse Mercator
A coordinate system based on an overlapping grid method of specifying locations on the surface of the Earth.

Visualization
The use of diagrams or three dimensional representations to represent abstract data, non-graphic, or non-spatial information in a form that facilitates human understanding.

ref: www.wikipedia.org

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CONTACT

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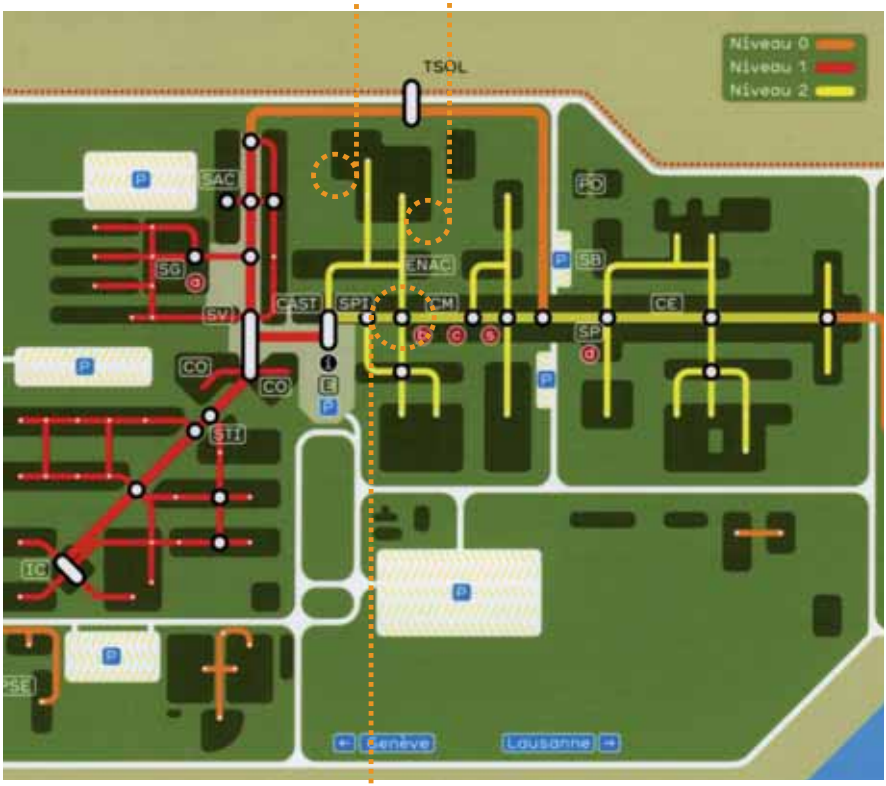
+41 21 693 14 82

HOW TO FIND lapa?

EPFL MAP

lapa Office
GC H2 614
Building GC, Zone H, Level 2, Office 614
adjacent to Hall G

lapa Studio
GC F1 10
Building GC, Zone F, Level 1, Room 10
adjacent to Hall F



To reach the lapa Office and the Atelier:
take entry GC from main passerelle on level 2

SOURCE BOOK
PRESS REVIEW

The printed sourcebook is a indicative selection of topics. The full sourcebook is available on the Studio WIKI : **http://wiki.epfl.ch/lapa-studio**

Piste de ski, musées... Tout pour attirer le touriste
Jean-Pierre Perrin
Liberation
06/01/2007

Les projets culturels sont des atouts de poids dans la course à la modernité des émirats.

C›est un point commun à toutes les monarchies arabes du Golfe: on n›y trouve presque aucune librairie. A la rigueur quelques boutiques de presse installées dans les grands hôtels où l›on vend surtout des guides touristiques de la région. Peu voyantes, peu rentables, les librairies n›ont pas leur place dans des pays où la culture se limite le plus souvent à quelques évocations folkloriques du passé et à des vidéos des superproductions d›Hollywood ou Bollywood. Pourtant, les musées commencent à s›y développer. Au point qu›il y a même une rivalité acharnée entre les différents Etats du Golfe pour attirer les plus belles antennes des établissements culturels occidentaux. Sans danger. C›est Abou Dhabi, à la fois capitale fédérale et l›une des sept entités qui composent l›Etat des Emirats arabes unis (EEAU), qui vient en tête de la compétition puisque cette minuscule monarchie projette de construire pas moins de quatre grands musées, dont des satellites des musées du Louvre et de la Fondation Guggenheim, plus une cité des arts avec un opéra. Elle précède l›Etat de Qatar, autre monarchie du Golfe. Bien sûr, ce n›est pas vraiment le souci de faire connaître à leurs peuples des oeuvres d›art prestigieuses qui constitue la motivation première des gouvernants de ces pays. Si le musée leur plaît autant, c›est d›abord parce que c›est une réalisation de prestige qui, vis-à-vis du monde extérieur, valorisera l›image du pays hôte à laquelle les émirs sont très attachés. C›est aussi parce qu›il incarne une certaine modernité, à laquelle les pays du Golfe aspirent aussi, comme le montre par exemple la création d›Al-Jezira, la télévision du Qatar, tout en étant absolument sans danger: il est bien évident que les expositions présentées «respecteront la culture et l›héritage islamiques». Seront donc exclues les oeuvres présentant des personnages dénudés ainsi que des sujets religieux autres qu›islamiques. Finalement, ces musées seront à l›image du pays: ni tout à fait libre ni vraiment sous une dictature, à mi-chemin de la charia et de la liberté de conscience.

Supermarchés.

Face à Dubaï, l›émirat rival au sein de l›EEAU, qui cavale largement en tête grâce à ses performances économiques, sa «cité informatique», sa zone franche qui éclipse toutes

celles de la région, ses prouesses architecturales, ses excentricités, comme cette piste de ski dans un pays plat comme la main et l›un des plus chauds du monde, il fallait absolument qu›Abou Dhabi fonde sa propre singularité. C›est fait grâce aux musées. Le risque est que ceux-ci apparaissent comme quelques supermarchés de plus dans un pays qui a fait de la consommation sans frein une règle de vie, réduisant Guggenheim et le Louvre à des marques concurrentes de Ralph Lauren ou Gucci. A l›heure où les Emirats misent sur le développement du tourisme, ces établissements s›intégreront dans ce cadre et pourront constituer une attraction de plus - ils seront d›ailleurs gérés par l›Autorité du tourisme d›Abou Dhabi. Attireront-ils aussi une partie des immigrés qui constituent près de 80% de la population de l›EEAU? A Bahrein, une autre monarchie du Golfe, le ministre de l›Information, il y a une douzaine d›années, avait fait fermer le beau musée ethnologique le vendredi (jour de congé). Pour ne pas que les familles pauvres y viennent profiter de l›air conditionné.

Smart art mart
The Economist
20/11/2008

The Gulf states are each vying to be the new cultural centre of the Middle East

Museum of Islamic Art Qatar

The Medicis made their money out of banking and then, to atone for the sin of usury, financed the Renaissance. America's robber barons built grand museums in provincial locales like Cleveland, Cincinnati and Chicago. Now, a similar kind of alchemy is turning the oil of the Persian Gulf into art, in a rush of royal patronage that may, some day, turn its pocket-sized monarchies into cultural meccas.

Having stashed away more than a trillion dollars as a result of high oil prices, the region's ruling families are racing to see who can embellish their realm with the best museums, the coolest art fairs, the flashiest festivals. The sudden recent fall in the oil price from its midsummer record may yet trim ambitions. But the scale and number of projects under way is already transforming the Gulf's string of Arab city-states into increasingly important stops on the international culture circuit.

The most recent arrival is Qatar's Museum of Islamic Art, unveiled on November 22nd before a flown-in crowd of more than 1,000 dignitaries. Designed by I.M. Pei, the Chinese-born creator of such landmarks as the Louvre pyramid, the Bank of China tower in Hong Kong and the East Building of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, the simple, stone-faced structure (pictured above) occupies an artificial island facing the palm-fringed corniche of Qatar's capital, Doha.

Coffered ceilings and geometric forms pay respect to Islamic architectural traditions, but the building is sober rather than sumptuous; more a receptacle than a showpiece, and well-scaled to the collection inside. This, the product of a buying spree by the ruling al-Thani family that began only in the mid-1990s, is modest in size but wide in range, and packed with high-quality objects. The pleasing impression is of a private collector's trove rather than an institution's didactic taxonomy, enlivened by such nuggets as a silk wall-hanging that once graced the Alhambra in Granada, exquisite Persian miniatures from the great 16th-century Shahnameh of Tahmasp and a jade pendant worn by a Mughal emperor, Shah Jahan.

The pendant was the subject of a discreet scandal in 2005, when the Qatari buyer, Sheikh Saud al-Thani, a cousin of the emir, was placed under house arrest after being accused of misusing public funds in buying art treasures. A two-year delay in the museum's construction, tight-lipped responses to questions about its cost and a high turnover of staff also hint at other troubles. But Qatar's subjects have reason to be pleased with the remarkable, beautifully displayed collection that their ruling family has created.

This may be only the first of several projects. Officials at the Qatar Museums Authority (QMA), a newly created body, are coy about what might be in store. What is known is that Qatari royals, including the emir's now-forgiven cousin, have been active buyers. Their purchases range from Chinese gold objects to modernist paintings, among them an abstract by Mark Rothko, sold by David Rockefeller last year for $72.8m. "They are very discreet about money and the direction of investment, but they are looking for world-class pieces," is all a QMA official would say.

Yet it is not Qatari money alone that has inflated art prices in recent years. Qatar is, according to the IMF, the world's richest country on a per-head basis. But Abu Dhabi, the oil-rich anchor among the seven statelets that make up the United Arab Emirates, has built up a far bigger cash pile. More discreetly than Qatar's, its royals are busy kitting out several even more ambitious projected museums.

At the Emirates Palace, a Versailles-scale hotel on Abu Dhabi's sleek seafront, an historic photograph opens a small exhibition displaying plans for a cultural district on a new island suburb. The black-and-white picture shows a train of pack camels wading the ford that, until 50 years ago, was the sole land access to the Manhattan-sized—and increasingly Manhattan-looking—island of Abu Dhabi. The nearby sandflat of Saadiyat, which will soon be linked to Abu Dhabi by a bridge and by causeways to the mainland, is to house no fewer than four new museums and a vast performing-arts centre, which are themselves the centrepieces of a giant, $27 billion development that includes beach resorts, a giant marina, golf courses and luxury housing for 170,000 people.

Construction has already begun. By 2018 the shore of the island is expected to be studded with giant cultural institutions, each of them rivalling Sydney's famed opera house in eye-catching monumentality. Frank Gehry, the California architect who designed the iconic Guggenheim offshoot in Bilbao, is to create an even larger, similarly metallic, swirling and shimmering contemporary-art museum here, under the same brand. The nearby branch of the Louvre, designed by another renowned architect, Jean Nouvel, features a village-like cluster of structures under a giant, translucent shallow dome intended to filter sunlight like palm fronds. Abu Dhabi has signed a $1.6 billion contract with France's national museums, by which the Louvre and its sisters will lend objects and expertise to the emirate's franchise for 30 years. Meanwhile, a Japanese architect, Tadao Ando, has designed an ultra-minimalist arch that is to function as a maritime museum, and Zaha Hadid, an Iraqi-born Briton, has conceived a Dalíesque theatre complex.

Filling all these spaces will not be easy, considering the emirate's small population, many of whom are low-paid guest workers. But Abu Dhabi's ambition is not limited to building signature monuments. It also plans to be the region's creative hub. To this end, it is, among other things, sponsoring a project to translate 1,000 of the world's great books into Arabic, launching a film-production company that plans to inject $1 billion into joint ventures with big Hollywood studios, and creating what is described as an "ecosystem for media content creation" that offers incentives to publishers, television studios and other packagers of culture.

All this effort is helping Abu Dhabi catch up with its more boisterous competitor, Dubai. Until recently, the freewheeling sister emirate was better known for excessive superlatives such as the world's tallest building, its biggest indoor ski slope and other catchy baubles. With much of its money leveraged in giant property schemes, Dubai has lacked finance for huge public institutions. But the scale of Dubai's growth has begun to generate something that is still lacking in Qatar and Abu Dhabi: a large, well-heeled and discerning class of art patrons. "There is a significant collector base emerging here, many of them young, and most of them Indian, Arab and Iranian expats," says a Dubai gallery owner.

In just a few years, contemporary-art galleries have multiplied in the emirates. The leading London auction houses are all there, and the Art Newspaper is considering launching a special Middle Eastern edition, in English and Arabic. Ideally situated between western Europe, Russia and India, the Gulf states are rapidly taking over from more staid cities, such as Cairo, Beirut and Tehran. They are already important tourist destinations. Building great museums to showcase their treasures should only increase their appeal.

Surenchère de méga-projets culturels
Nathaniel Herzberg
Le Monde
06/02/08

L›après-pétrole.
Le « Louvre » d›Abu Dhabi n›est que l›une des dix-huit réalisations monumentales en gestation dans des émirats dont la richesse en hydrocarbures n›est pas éternelle. D›où leurs investissements massifs dans l›économie de la connaissance.
A l›annonce de la création d›un nouveau « Louvre » dans les sables d›Abu Dhabi, certains ont cru déceler le caprice d›un cheikh. Si tel est le cas, il convient alors de parler d›épidémie tant la carte culturelle du Golfe arabo-persique connaît de bouleversements.

ABU DHABI.
Derrière l›enseigne du Louvre, quatre autres réalisations monumentales doivent voir le jour d›ici 2015 : trois musées - dont le plus grand « Guggenheim » du monde - mais aussi un immense centre consacré aux spectacles vivants (25 000 m2, cinq auditoriums) dessiné par l›architecte anglo-irakienne Zaha Hadid.
Le virus de la culture n›a pas touché ce seul émirat. Les voisins de Dubaï veulent bâtir un opéra et un grand auditorium et devraient accueillir la dernière implantation du mondialement populaire Cirque du Soleil (Québec). Sans oublier la construction du quartier Lyon-Dubaï : un concentré, sur 400 hectares, de la capitale des Gaules, avec l›Institut des tissus, le Musée des beaux-arts et la cinémathèque de l›Institut Louis-Lumière.

QATAR.
Ce richissime émirat n›a pas ménagé ses efforts. Une demi-douzaine de musées d›ampleur sont en gestation. Le musée des arts qataris, commandé au Français Jean Nouvel - déjà à l›oeuvre à Abu Dhabi - en est encore aux esquisses. Mais le vaste musée des arts islamiques, confié aux artisans du Grand Louvre, l›Américain Ieoh Ming Pei et le Français Jean-Michel Wilmotte, ouvrira ses 35 000 m2, à Doha, au printemps.

BAHREÏN.
Petit pays de la région, il va se doter de trois nouveaux musées et d›un grand théâtre. Là encore, ces bâtiments sortiront des ateliers de grands noms de l›architecture : Zaha Hadid, encore, mais aussi le Japonais Tadao Ando ou les Français d›Architecture studio.
Bahreïn constitue, il est vrai, une exception dans la région. « Vieille civilisation sédentaire, elle dispose d›une population très éduquée et d›une classe moyenne autochtone », insiste l›urbaniste Jean-Paul Lebas, qui conçoit actuellement la ville nouvelle de North Bahrein. La demande culturelle y est vive. L›actuel Musée national accueille près de 100 000 visiteurs par an, pour une population de 700 000 habitants. « A Dubaï, pays de Bédouins nomades, c›est exactement l›inverse, poursuit Jean-Paul

Lebas, qui coordonne également le projet Lyon-Dubaï. Leur défi, aujourd›hui, c›est de sortir de la seule culture de consommation. »

OBJECTIFS.
Chaque émirat porte en effet sa propre histoire. Bahreïn a un double objectif, avec d›un côté la transformation de vieilles demeures restaurées en bibliothèques, maison de la poésie ou petit auditorium, de l›autre la construction de grands équipements culturels. Abu Dhabi, à l›inverse, a parié sur les établissements de prestige. Ses cinq réalisations et leurs architectes stars coûteront plus de 2 milliards d›euros d›investissement. Pour le plus riche des sept émirats arabes unis, il importe de contrer le succès économique du voisin de Dubaï, autre membre de la fédération. Ce dernier, qui a compris la menace, tente donc d›ajouter à son image de paradis du business et du loisir, une dimension culturelle.
Vieille terre culturelle, disposant depuis 1970 d›une des plus belles collections d›art islamique au monde, le Koweït a abandonné le terrain, trop occupé à panser les plaies de la première guerre du Golfe et à limiter les ravages de la pollution. Qatar a donc pris sa place dans la compétition locale.

CHANGEMENTS.
Car c›est bien de cela qu›il s›agit. Qu›ils regorgent encore de pétrole ou de gaz, comme Abu Dhabi et le Qatar, ou qu›ils en aient épuisé une partie des stocks, comme Dubaï et Bahreïn, tous se préparent aux changements. « Ils savent que le pétrole n›est pas éternel et ils ont compris le discours sur l›économie de la connaissance, souligne Yves Gonzalez-Quijano, directeur du Groupe de recherche et d›études sur la Méditerranée et le Moyen-Orient (Gremmo, CNRS), animateur d›un site sur la culture arabe (culturepolitiquearabe.blogspot.com). Contrairement à nous, ils considèrent la culture comme un investissement. »

Dans ces pays très largement peuplés d›immigrés, il en va de la constitution d›une communauté nationale. « Mais aussi du recrutement d›élites venues des pays occidentaux, renchérit David Staples, directeur de Theatre Project Consultants, un bureau d›études anglais impliqué dans la plupart de ces grands projets. Lorsque vous tentez d›attirer des chercheurs en médecine, des ingénieurs ou des professeurs d›université, vous ne pouvez pas seulement leur proposer des revenus nets d›impôts. Il leur faut aussi une qualité de vie. »
Le rêve des élites locales de voir le Golfe prendre le relais de l›Egypte ou du Liban comme escale entre l›Asie et l›Europe est à ce prix. La constitution à Qatar d›un grand orchestre symphonique ou l›accord passé entre Dubaï et le London Philharmonic Orchestra en témoignent.
Les responsables locaux y ont même trouvé un intérêt personnel. Partout, le secteur de la culture a été confié aux branches latérales des familles régnantes ou aux femmes. Cheikh Sultan, à Abu Dhabi, Cheikha Mei, à Bahreïn, ou Cheikha Mozah, la femme de l›émir, à Qatar, ont ainsi pu exprimer leur dynamisme.

INTERROGATION.
Quelle est la pérennité de ces structures ? « Le scénario rose, c›est une population éduquée, des équipements bien dirigés avec un éventail d›événements variés pour les populations d›origine arabe, asiatique et occidentale, analyse David Staples. Le scénario noir ce sont des coquilles vides. » Pas à exclure, reconnaît l›entrepreneur, « car plus on utilise ces équipements, plus ça coûte d›argent. Mais je voudrais au moins qu›on leur donne une chance ». En somme, que l›on prenne les ambitions du Golfe au sérieux.

Art and architecture in the Middle East
John Arlidge
The Sunday Times
03/08/2008

That wealth and good taste do not always go together is nowhere better illustrated than in the Middle East. There, oil-slicked rulers have built gaudy monuments to their billions. But now the gold-plated palaces, revolving skyscrapers and seven-star underwater hotels have a tasteful challenger. The Museum of Islamic Art, in Doha, the new national symbol of Qatar, is an understated Gulf icon. And it might just be the best new museum or gallery building anywhere.

IM Pei, the Chinese-American architect behind the Louvre's glass pyramid, agreed to undertake the project — his last, at the age of 91 — on condition that the Emir of Qatar reclaimed an island in the Gulf on which the new institution could sit like a citadel, without being encroached on by any other building. Pei's stubbornness paid off. As you arrive by dhow, the vast, tiered limestone cubes of the 400,000 sq ft structure tower over you, giving the building colossal, instant impact. Yet thanks to the soft detailing, notably the Islamic geometric patterning and traditional Arabic arched windows, the structure is not severe.

Inside, the huge atrium is illuminated by a 150ft-high glass curtain wall looking out over the emerald sea. The galleries, with exhibitions of calligraphy, textiles and ceramics from the 7th century onwards, shoot off in every direction. Standing under the silver dome, it's hard to disagree with the director, Oliver Watson (formerly of the V&A and Oxford's Ashmolean), that it is "the most spectacular space". When it opens in November, it will, at the very least, do for Doha what the Guggenheim did for Bilbao — put it on the arts map — but the project is about more than Qatar, modern architecture or Islamic art. It is the first shot in a cultural revolution that could transform the arts across the Gulf.

Reformist sheikhs have spent the past decade using their wealth to snap up financial institutions and retail and leisure brands in an effort to transform the city-states they rule from one-camel towns into global business and tourism hubs. Now they want to use it to acquire something that is impossible to price and may, in fact, be impossible to buy at all: culture.

Like latter-day Renaissance aristocrats, the rulers of Qatar, Dubai and Abu Dhabi are sinking £100 billion into grandiose galleries and museums. As well as the new Museum of Islamic Art, the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, has four new museums on the drawing board, including an extension to the National Museum designed by the French modernist architect Jean Nouvel.

Abu Dhabi is betting £20 billion that it can transform barren Saadiyat island, just off downtown Abu Dhabi, into a 21st-century version of the pyramids of Egypt.

The city-state's ruler, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed al-Nahyan, has persuaded Frank Gehry to design the latest — and, at 450,000 sq ft, the biggest — branch of the Guggenheim. Nouvel is behind the first offshoot of the Louvre outside Paris. Zaha Hadid, the London-based Pritzker prizewinning architect, is designing a performing-arts centre, and Norman Foster the national museum. The new institutions are scheduled to open in 2012.

Dubai is opening galleries and an opera house, as well as hosting arts festivals, but it is devoting most of its efforts to becoming an art entrepôt. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum, the emirate's ruler, recently lured Sotheby's and Christie's to the city. Clearly, the sheikhs believe that by mixing their black gold with the genie of western architectural and artistic expertise, they can create a cultural oasis where a new generation of art-lovers and artists will grow. The long-term aim? To make the Gulf, a potential nexus between East and West, as much of an emerging artistic power as a financial one.

With oil at record prices, the estimated £100 billion bill for all the new developments is small change. The question is, will these museums attract local and international visitors or turn out to be white elephants, like the palaces Arab rulers built during the last oil boom?

Even their backers acknowledge that luring westerners will be tough. It's not just that travellers are reluctant to fly on airlines whose names they cannot pronounce, to cities they cannot find on a map, to look at art, much of which they will not understand. With the conflict between the West and Muslim extremists still raging in neighbouring Iraq, it's hardly a good time to be marketing "brand Islam". Watson concedes that many overseas visitors will be "more curious than passionate".

That is one reason both Qatar and Abu Dhabi are spending so much money on the museum and gallery buildings themselves. Pei has already proven his worth in Doha. If the scale models displayed in the Emirates Palace Hotel, in Abu Dhabi, are even half realised, Saadiyat island will become an architectural destination in its own right. Abu Dhabi's decision to create partnerships with the most recognised western gallery brands — the Guggenheim and the Louvre — is designed to break down suspicion. "If we'd started our own museums from scratch, it would have taken a long time and we would have made mistakes," says Mubarak Hamad al-Muhairi, the head of Abu Dhabi's tourism authority, whose office looks out over the cat's cradle of new roads and bridges that link Saadiyat to the mainland. "By bringing in partners, we can be quick; we can buy knowledge, expertise."

Luring established western brands with oil money — Abu Dhabi has paid the Louvre almost £300m for the right to the French museum's name — has prompted a chorus of criticism in the West. Some accuse the sheikhs of "bribing" western museums to give their seal of approval to what is merely the artistic version of the leisure theme parks that are being built all over the Gulf. Catherine Goguel, emeritus director of research at

the Louvre's prints and drawing department, recently dismissed the Louvre/Abu Dhabi deal as merely a matter of "petrodollars".

Others argue that there is something rotten about a cultural complex that will bring the fruits of the Renaissance, the Enlightenment and the intellectual adventures of modernity into a land where materialism and exploitation are rampant, freedom of expression is limited and democracy nonexistent. Design critics complain of "architectural megalomania". Gehry himself — despite taking the dirham — has, in these pages, condemned the decision to build so many signature buildings so close to each other on Saadiyat island as "a group grope . . . a cabinet of horrors".

Al-Muhairi insists that the Abu Dhabi developments are partnerships of equals. The architects get to build the kind of structures that would be hard to execute anywhere other than a country that has vast open space, few planning restrictions and budgets of "whatever". When it comes to the collections, the Louvre and the Guggenheim will display as much Islamic art as western art.

"This is not a cut-and-paste," al-Muhairi says. "We are creating the Louvre Arabia, the Guggenheim Arabia — not the Louvre or the Guggenheim in Arabia. There will be works from the collections of both museums, of course, but there will be curators and works of art from here, from Tehran, from Egypt, from Syria, from Morocco. We are bringing the West to the Middle East, but also showcasing the Middle East to the West."

That, it turns out, is the point of these cultural grands projets. The sheikhs want to use the new museums and galleries to change western perceptions of Islam and Islam's perceptions of the West. In her sunbaked office in Qatar, Sheikha al-Mayassa, the daughter of the Emir of Qatar and chair of the Qatar Museum Authority, acknowledges that, thanks to recent history "people see Islam as a violent religion. We want to go back in time and showcase, with evidence, the fact that Islam is a peaceful religion at the heart of the most intellectually and culturally sophisticated societies in history. That's our message".

It's one that comes through loud and clear in the museum's exhibits, most notably the collection of complex scientific instruments, such as the 10th-century astrolabes that ancient Islamic scholars used to map the stars and determine prayer times.
The sheikhs also hope that, by hosting exhibitions of western art, the new museums will drag the more conservative elements of local society by the scruff of their dishdashas into the modern artistic world. Both al-Mayassa and al-Muhairi insist that there will be no restrictions on works displayed. Nudes will be featured in paintings and sculpture — a remarkable attempt to push the boundaries of public taste in a region where some newspapers still airbrush women out of photographs, fully clothed or not. "We don't have a problem with anything, really," the US-educated al-Mayassa says.

Modern buildings may be able to grow in the desert, but can modern art? Will a new breed of artists emerge, working in a distinct East-meets-West style? The idea that the Gulf could be the next big thing in culture might sound fanciful, but it is the richest

nations that tend to call the tune in the art world, setting global tastes, anointing the next stars and establishing market trends. The Gulf states have all the money in the world and, as the modernist building blocks of this unique cultural experiment begin to rise from the dusty desert scrub, the new pharaohs are daring to dream big. "Could the Damien Hirst of 2020 be an Emirati?" al-Muhairi asks. "Well, why not?"

Les petites mains étrangères du «gros village» riche de Bahreïn
Claude Guibal
Liberation
27/12/2006

Venus d›Inde, du Sri Lanka ou du Yémen, ils font tourner l›économie de cette minipétromonarchie prisée des expatriés occidentaux pour sa tolérance.

Ils empilent des pavés sur le trottoir, l›échine courbée sous la pluie d›automne qui bat ce jour-là l›archipel. L›immense gratte-ciel de verre qui les surplombe est loin d›être fini, un autre doit pousser à côté, et, sur cette île de Bahreïn en plein boom immobilier, il y a encore pléthore de chantiers. Ali et Firoz sont contents : ici, certes le travail est dur et encore davantage l›été, où le mercure frôle voire dépasse les 50 °C , «mais il y a de quoi faire. Et c›est mieux payé que chez nous, au Pakistan», assurent-ils, dans un anglais lourdement teinté d›urdu. Dans leur équipe, pas un Bahreïni. Pas plus que dans les échoppes du souk de Bab el-Bahreïn, ou derrière les comptoirs des magasins climatisés des malls luxueux. Et pas davantage dans les multiples hôtels qui parsèment cette minuscule pétromonarchie, ou dans les bureaux de poste. A Manama, la capitale, même les policiers et militaires sont jordaniens, yéménites ou indiens. Les employés de maison sont philippins, sri-lankais.

Trottoirs inutiles. Dans les allées de l›hypermarché Géant, planté en plein centre de l›île, des mères de famille anglaises, françaises, allemandes, américaines ou australiennes poussent leurs chariots. Leurs maris sont souvent cadres dans les multiples établissements bancaires qui ont fait de Bahreïn un centre mondial de la finance. Dans les grandes avenues immaculées de Manama, aux trottoirs inutiles puisque personne n›y marche, on ne voit pas de Bahreïnis. A peine les distingue-t-on, au volant d›énormes 4x4 aux vitres teintées. Et encore. Il s›agit souvent là de la minorité sunnite, qui dirige le pays, et a accès aux plus hauts postes. Les chiites, majoritaires à 70 %, vivent pour la plupart ailleurs, retranchés dans les quartiers plus modestes ou les villages aux conditions rudimentaires. Dans cette communauté, le taux de chômage est important, officieusement autour de 12 %. «Mais ils ne veulent pas travailler ! C›est pourquoi nous sommes obligés d›importer des travailleurs étrangers», confie Emad, un entrepreneur sunnite.

Des travailleurs qui ne coûtent pas cher : le salaire minimum est de 200 dinars (un peu plus de 400 euros) et certains, comme Ali et Firoz, ne le touchent même pas. «On fait avec, on envoie un peu d›argent au pays quand on peut et on se serre la ceinture.» Ils partagent avec des compatriotes un minuscule appartement, mènent un train de vie frugal et évitent de faire des vagues. Pas le choix : comme tous les étrangers, leur visa de travail est conditionné à la présence, sur place, d›un sponsor bahreïni, qui se porte garant d›un emploi, et, souvent, conserve leur passeport. S›ils grondent trop, les immigrés peuvent se retrouver au chômage, ce qui signifie le retour immédiat dans leur pays d›origine. Le courrier des lecteurs de la presse anglophone bahreïnie se fait souvent l›écho des plaintes de la communauté indo-asiatique, mal-logée dans des

immeubles à la salubrité incertaine et en proie au racisme venant essentiellement de la population chiite.

Les chiites, qui estiment avoir été écartés de la rente pétrolière par les sunnites, ne courent pourtant pas après ces emplois subalternes, qu›ils jugent indignes. Ils voudraient avoir accès à des secteurs plus valorisants. Or, les formations qualifiantes manquent, d›où l›afflux d›Occidentaux, recrutés par les firmes internationales. La plupart des grandes entreprises financières mondiales ont installé leur siège régional à Bahreïn. La vie y est moins chère que dans le Qatar voisin, et bien plus agréable qu›en Arabie Saoudite, à laquelle Bahreïn est reliée depuis vingt ans par un pont de 25 kilomètres. Nombre d›expatriés travaillant en Arabie Saoudite ont ainsi choisi d›installer leur famille dans l›archipel. Alcool en vente libre, boutiques, cinémas : Bahreïn est un gros village, «mais très agréable», reconnaît le décorateur français Laurent Derchain, fin connaisseur des pays du Golfe qu›il pratique depuis vingt ans. «Dans la région, Bahreïn a un statut à part, ne serait-ce que par la tolérance qui y règne.»

Sérénité.
De fait, Bahreïn est une tour de Babel où se mêlent nationalités et confessions dans une apparente sérénité. Mosquées, églises, temples et synagogue se côtoient ; tout comme les magasins de saris jouxtent les boutiques de niqabs (voiles intégraux) dans les rues du souk. La population est étrangère pour plus d›un tiers et naturalisée pour presque un autre tiers. Ce déséquilibre a amené les autorités bahreïnies à imposer des quotas d›embauche de 20 % de Bahreïnis par entreprise, sous peine de refus de visas supplémentaires. Une façon d›assurer à la communauté chiite qu›elle n›est pas laissée pour compte, à l›heure où elle entend faire entendre davantage ses revendications, encouragée par les succès de ses coreligionnaires en Iran, en Irak et au Liban.

Masdar plan
The Economist
04/12/2008

Abu Dhabi has embarked upon an ambitious plan to build a zero-emission clean-tech centre in the desert. Will it work?

THE world's grubbiest people, measured by emissions of greenhouse gases per head, are the citizens of the United Arab Emirates. The country's huge oil wealth allows many of them to drive big, fuel-guzzling cars and live in huge, power-guzzling homes. What is more, the country's hot and muggy climate means that almost all the buildings are air-conditioned, and almost all the water is obtained from energy-intensive desalination plants. The result is an offence to the atmosphere.

What is more, Abu Dhabi, the biggest of the country's seven princely city-states, has a huge vested interest in the continued domination of the world economy by fossil fuels. It sits atop some 8% of the world's proven reserves of oil. At current rates of extraction, the oil will last for another 92 years. So it is with some scepticism that the world has greeted Abu Dhabi's plans to reinvent itself as a crucible of greenery.

In 2006 Abu Dhabi's development agency unveiled the Masdar Initiative, to pursue "solutions to some of mankind's most pressing issues: energy security, climate change and truly sustainable human development". The initiative consists of a research institute to develop environmental technologies, an investment arm to commercialise and deploy them, and an eco-city to house these two outfits and to serve as a test-bed for their ideas. All this, it is hoped, will turn Abu Dhabi into the Silicon Valley of clean technology, where green-minded academics, entrepreneurs and financiers will rub shoulders.

Thinking big
The project is nothing if not ambitious. Masdar's managers say they will create an academic institution on a par with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), a global manufacturing hub for technologies such as solar power and desalination, and a city of 40,000 people with no greenhouse-gas emissions and no waste—all while turning a profit. The government of Abu Dhabi is putting up $15 billion in seed capital, but the investment arm and Masdar city are intended to be run on a commercial basis, in conjunction with other companies.

In the past, some of Abu Dhabi's grandiose schemes have come to nought—most notably a plan to build a global financial hub from scratch a decade ago. More recently, developers have suggested that they might scale back other splashy projects, such as a huge new cultural quarter. But Masdar is proceeding apace. Abu Dhabi's crown prince, Sheikh Mohammed al-Nahyan, was excited about the idea from the start and is taking a personal interest in its progress, says Sultan al-Jaber, Masdar's boss.

Masdar Institute of Science and Technology (MIST) will admit its first students next year; the first phase of Masdar city is under construction and Masdar has built up a big portfolio of renewable-energy investments, including a stake in an offshore wind farm in Britain and three solar-thermal power plants in Spain. It has also placed an order for machinery for two solar-panel plants: one that is already under construction in Germany, and another that is to be built in Abu Dhabi itself.

Outsiders seem keen to get involved. MIT is helping MIST with the recruitment and training of its faculty. Credit Suisse, a Swiss bank, has invested $100m in the initiative's clean-tech fund—the same amount as Masdar itself. Foster + Partners, a British architecture firm, has come up with the master-plan for Masdar city. BP, a big oil firm, and Rio Tinto, a mining giant, will collaborate on a carbon-capture and storage scheme. Masdar is working with such partners not because it lacks capital, says Mr al-Jaber, but because it wants to take advantage of foreign expertise and have its ideas independently scrutinised.

It is Masdar city that has attracted the most scrutiny. To reduce its emissions, especially in such an unwelcoming environment, the city will employ all sorts of innovative and outlandish technology. All the buildings, naturally, will be supremely energy-efficient. Water will be recycled, to reduce the need for desalination. There will be dew-catchers, rainwater harvesting and electronic sensors to raise the alarm in case of leaky pipes. There will be green spaces, but with drought-resistant plants rather than the thirsty lawns and flowers that are the norm in Abu Dhabi.

No cars will be allowed. Instead, people will have to walk, or take "personal rapid transit"—small pods that will zoom around the city on tracks, akin to metro cars for individuals. Goods will be moved in the same way. The city will be walled, to keep out the hot desert wind. The lack of cars will allow for narrow, shaded streets that will also funnel breezes from one side of the city to the other.

Roofs, canopies and a large patch of land on the edge of the city will be given over to solar panels. The city is already testing 41 types of panel from 33 different manufacturers, to see which work best in the sunny, hot and dusty desert conditions. There will also be the odd wind turbine, solar water-heaters and small waste-to-energy facilities (the city's planners do not like to call them incinerators).

The plans leave space to adopt new technologies when they reach maturity. A spot has been saved for algae ponds that might some day produce biofuel, for example. For the time being they will be used for research. The whole city is being built on a raised platform, to give easier access to the pipes and wiring that would normally be buried underground and to allow the transport pods to zip around unfettered. That will also make it easier to install revolutionary new kit in future. Indeed, the source of roughly a fifth of the city's power supply has not yet been decided, on the assumption that there will be better options available by the time the project is due to be completed, in 2016.

Following the footprints

All this, it is hoped, will allow the city to produce more energy than it consumes and ensure that less than 2% of the waste it generates ends up in landfills. Carbon sequestered in the city's vegetation, along with exports of surplus green energy, should be enough to offset the emissions associated with construction, says Khaled Awad, who is managing the site. Contractors say they are keeping careful track of their carbon footprints and mutter about the difficulties of finding concrete and steel with a high recycled component. A bewildering array of recycling bins stands prominently in the waiting area of the site office.

A vision of the clean-tech future

But the city's zero-carbon claim is a bit of a fudge. For one thing, the city will not produce enough energy to power itself at night, due to its reliance on solar panels. Instead, it will import gas-fired power from Abu Dhabi's grid, at least until energy-storage technology improves. It will make up for this in its carbon accounting by exporting excess solar power to the grid during the day. In addition, to keep energy use down, the city will not allow any energy-intensive industries within its boundaries, even though spurring local manufacturing is a big part of the Masdar initiative.

Furthermore, in itself, Masdar will do little to improve Abu Dhabi's carbon footprint. Cheap oil, natural gas and power will continue to spur emissions-intensive industry and conspicuous consumption. Next to Masdar city, a Formula One racetrack and a Ferrari-themed amusement park are being built. In fact, Mubadala, the development agency behind Masdar, owns a 5% stake in Ferrari and sponsors its Formula One team. Just a few miles up the road, it is building the world's biggest aluminium smelter, complete with its own gas-fired power plant. A nearby mall is even planning to install an indoor ski slope, like the one in nearby Dubai.

But Masdar's creators, to be fair, seem to see it more as a development project than as an environmental one. They do not pretend that Abu Dhabi is about to wean itself off oil and gas. But its rulers, they say, want to diversify its economy, in preparation for the day it runs out of oil—or of customers for it. Since local workers and officials have already built up some expertise in energy, it makes sense to capitalise on that.

What is more, Abu Dhabi, with its intense, year-round sunlight and desperate thirst for water, is ideally suited to develop technologies such as solar power and desalination. And thanks to all that oil, there is no shortage of capital. Masdar plans to help finance promising technologies at all stages of development. It will set up its own incubator to nourish local start-ups, in addition to the clean-tech fund and other strategic investments in mature firms.

Human capital, however, is another story. Mr al-Jaber says that Masdar has studied successful technology clusters around the world in an effort to recreate the same conditions in Abu Dhabi. He is particularly keen to mimic the welcoming regulatory environment and efficient infrastructure of places such as Singapore and Ireland. Foreign firms setting up shop in Masdar city will, he points out, be able to work without

local partners if they want, and to move capital freely in and out of the country. There will be strong protection of intellectual property and little in the way of paperwork. Most alluringly, they will not pay any taxes.

MIST, meanwhile, seeks to entice great minds with the promise of minimal teaching requirements—just one course at a time—and plenty of opportunities to pursue original research. The "open laboratory" of Masdar city is another draw, says Marwan Khraisheh, who runs the institute. It has succeeded in recruiting faculty or students from grand American universities such as Cornell, MIT and Princeton.

Masdar itself, meanwhile, has recruited such figures as Rajendra Pachauri, the head of the United Nations' climate panel, and John Browne, a former boss of BP, to help select the winner of a prize for innovation in energy. Britain's Prince Charles is a patron. In the project's headquarters, renewable-energy executives hoping to sell their wares fill the waiting room, while thrusting young staffers of many nationalities rush to and fro. Jonathon Porritt, a celebrated British environmentalist, ambles past.

Of course, Abu Dhabi is still not Silicon Valley. MIST is tiny, and will not admit its first doctoral student until 2011. The city has a miserable climate and little in the way of entertainment apart from malls and restaurants. But it is more cosmopolitan and less conservative than many imagine. Most foreigners arriving in Abu Dhabi for the first time find it "better than they expect", says Mr Khraisheh. Perhaps the same will be true of Masdar, too.

A Bahreïn, il y a une vie après le pétrole
Claude Guibal
Liberation
15/01/2007

Des autoroutes rutilantes qui traversent l›île principale de l›archipel de Bahreïn, l›oeil cherche en vain les derricks. A l›horizon, seules d›immenses grues occupées à bâtir ici et là des gratte-ciel étincelants ébouriffent le paysage. De derricks, point, et pour cause : il n›y en a pas, ou si peu. Bahreïn, premier des émirats du Golfe à avoir exploité l›or noir, est aujourd›hui une pétromonarchie qui ne produit plus de pétrole. Seul un champ parvient encore à cracher une moyenne de 40 000 barils par jour. C›est peu, 60 fois moins que la production du Koweït, par exemple. Et les experts s›accordent : d›ici une quinzaine d›années, les réserves seront épuisées.

Heureusement pour la famille royale, le clan Al-Khalifa, il y a l›Arabie Saoudite voisine, qui cède chaque jour 180 000 barils supplémentaires à un prix symbolique. Une générosité tout intéressée : le maintien au pouvoir de la minorité sunnite à Bahreïn est une préoccupation constante pour Riyad, inquiet de l›activisme grandissant de la majorité chiite du petit royaume.

Bahreïn, à défaut de produire du brut, sait le transformer et le vendre : voilà comment les hydrocarbures continuent de constituer un quart du PIB de ce minuscule Etat. De quoi réaliser de confortables plus-values, quand bien même les rois du pétrole ne sont plus tout à fait ce qu›ils étaient. Les clichés ont la vie dure et ici, comme dans tous les émirats et royaumes du golfe Persique, les écrans plasma géants pullulent, les voitures de luxe se garent par dizaines dans les garages de gigantesques domaines aux pelouses parfaites et le sport national est le shopping dans les centres commerciaux où se côtoient les enseignes du luxe mondial. Mais pour maintenir sa réputation d›eldorado, Bahreïn a dû se diversifier. Après avoir été le plus gros producteur au monde de perles, l›archipel s›est créé, de toutes pièces, une production d›aluminium, important la bauxite et l›énergie nécessaires, et devenant, là encore, l›un des plus gros fournisseurs de la planète. Mais cette dépendance énergétique a poussé Bahreïn à chercher ailleurs.

Moeurs libérales et alcool en vente libre
En quelques années, le royaume s›est ainsi transformé en centre bancaire international, supplantant Dubaï, attirant sur ses côtes le gratin de la finance mondiale. Comme tant d›autres, BNP-Paribas, Calyon ou AXA y ont installé leur siège régional. «Le secteur est extrêmement propre, très contrôlé. La réputation des Bahreïnis tient à la fois à leur savoir-faire, à leur pragmatisme et à leur honnêteté», assure Pierre Fabre, directeur de la mission économique française à Bahreïn. La présence sur place du Gafi (1) est un élément rassurant pour des investisseurs parfois inquiets de la réputation plus trouble d›autres places financières de la région. Bien moins conservateur que l›Arabie Saoudite, plus abordable et vivable que Dubaï, Bahreïn joue de ses charmes pour attirer les investisseurs étrangers et leurs armadas de cadres, qui viennent ici

s›installer en famille. Pas d›impôts sur les sociétés ou les revenus, moeurs libérales et alcool en vente libre : le cocktail séduit.

Il plaît aussi aux voisins saoudiens. Tous les jeudis soir, un défilé ininterrompu de limousines et de 4 x 4 flambant neufs déferle du King Fahd Causeway, le pont de plus de 20 kilomètres qui relie l›île au royaume depuis 1986. Près de 4 millions de Saoudiens viennent chaque année dépenser leur argent et s›encanailler à Manama, la capitale. Ils viennent aussi pour le cinéma, interdit dans leur contrée : ce mois-ci, c›est donc à Bahreïn qu›ils ont couru voir le premier film saoudien jamais réalisé.

Des hôtels de luxe construits sur le sable
Pour continuer à capter ce tourisme, Bahreïn construit. Partout, des hôtels cinq étoiles éclosent, des résidences luxueuses aux prestations ahurissantes se multiplient. L›archipel est petit ? Qu›importe ! S›inspirant de Dubaï, Bahreïn construit sur la mer, déversant des tonnes de sable pour bâtir, entre autres, le complexe de Durrat el-Bahreïn, dont les îles en forme de poisson s›affichent partout sur de grands panneaux publicitaires. Les pelleteuses et les grues s›activent, transformant l›île en immense chantier. Un boom immobilier qui fait les beaux jours des Al-Khalifa, qui possèdent toute la côte et une vaste majorité du territoire. Plus généralement, 60 % du PIB est généré par des entreprises détenues pour tout ou partie par la famille royale.
Un déséquilibre d›autant plus flagrant qu›une bonne partie des Bahreïnis est exclue de cette explosion économique.

Un taux de chômage de 12 %
A l›image du petit village de Duraz, non loin des riches villas de Budaya, sur la côte ouest, avec ses canalisations crevées, sa route sans goudron, transformée en marécage sous l›effet des récentes pluies. Ceux qui vivent là sont des chiites. Cette communauté qui représente près de 70 % de la population bahreïnie se sent depuis longtemps exclue de la rente pétrolière. Si tous les chiites ne sont pas miséreux, 40 % d›entre eux vivraient en dessous du seuil de pauvreté, assure Cheikh Ali Salman, le charismatique leader de l›opposition chiite, arrivée en tête du premier tour des législatives de novembre. Frappés de discrimination à l›emploi, les chiites ne peuvent pas prétendre, par exemple, devenir policiers ou militaires. Ils sont aussi faiblement représentés dans la fonction publique. A Bahreïn, Etat riche, le taux de chômage tournerait autour de 12 %.

Pourtant, le pays continue d›importer massivement des travailleurs étrangers : main-d›oeuvre faiblement qualifiée en provenance des pays du tiers-monde ou cadres de pointe occidentaux représentent plus d›un tiers de la population. Victimes de préjugés confessionnels et d›un manque de formation, les chiites ne peuvent accéder aux postes à responsabilité et ils ne veulent pas des emplois harassants et sous-payés réservés aux immigrés pakistanais, philippins, indiens ou malaisiens. Un problème auquel le gouvernement, inquiet de la montée des revendications chiites, a promis de s›attaquer, en offrant des formations qualifiantes et en imposant des quotas d›au moins 25 % de Bahreïnis par entreprise.

Dubai, ou la mise en scène du déni géopolitique
Arnaud Brennetot
Le Courrier
29/12/2008

En présentant un univers artificiel et déshumanisé pour appâter les touristes potentiels, Dubaï, dans sa reconversion vers l›économie des loisirs haut de gamme, pousse à l›extrême la logique d›omission des réalités sociales et géopolitiques.

La puissance suggestive des cartes est souvent employée par les publicitaires pour développer un discours normatif sur les territoires. Il s›agit pour eux d›orienter les choix des spectateurs lorsqu›ils ont à organiser leurs déplacements, déterminer un mode de résidence ou opter pour une destination de vacances comme c›est le cas pour l›annonce reproduite ci-contre et publiée dans la presse française au cours de l›automne 2008. Il s›agit pour l›agence de voyage Costa Croisières et le Department of Tourism & Commerce Marketing de Dubaï d›assurer la promotion d›un circuit dans le Golfe Persique. Les figures de style utilisées dans le message donnent la possibilité de mettre en lumière le système de valeurs sur lequel s›appuient les cabinets de marketing pour vendre un imaginaire géographique conforme aux intentions et aux attentes de leurs clients. L›image doit résumer les qualités essentielles du produit associé au territoire évoqué, dans une mise en scène capable de séduire et de convaincre les lecteurs.

La carte se présente ici sous la forme d›un cheminement ponctué d›escales (Dubaï, Mascate, Foudjaïrah, Abu Dhabi, Bahrein), le tout se fondant dans un paysage de ciel étoilé surmontant un désert de sable. Il ne s›agit pas seulement de fournir une information pratique sur le contenu du séjour mais bien aussi d›éveiller les désirs et de donner un avant-goût des plaisirs du voyage.

Pour cela, les auteurs de l›affiche mobilisent les fantasmes appartenant au répertoire de l›orientalisme. Le tracé de la croisière fait penser à une délicate arabesque: la carte devient un prétexte métaphorique pour transfigurer l›espace en un signe chatoyant. Le firmament fait référence à un âge d›or mythique, celui du califat et de l›époque où les marchands arabes, circulant sur terre et sur mer, repéraient leur route grâce aux étoiles. La croisière constitue la réminiscence d›une aventure lointaine et excitante. En contrebas, les ondulations des dunes de sable exhalent une sensualité douce et voluptueuse tandis que l›évocation des Mille et Une nuits renvoie à un folklore ancien, stéréotypé et remixé par la culture hollywoodienne. Le texte qui complète la carte valorise l›ancrage dans un Orient légendaire teinté d›hédonisme postmoderne: «entre tradition et modernité, souks et boutiques de luxe, plages merveilleuses et paysages désertiques, découvrez au gré des flots une terre surprenante, pleine de charme et riche en multiples contrastes».

Cette présentation attrayante, somme toute assez ordinaire dans son principe, n›est pourtant pas anodine. Elle s›accompagne notamment d›une atténuation significative

des enjeux liés au développement touristique de la région. Le détournement symbolique de la carte se traduit par une ellipse du fond: le milieu, les rivages et les frontières sont escamotés. L›espace se résume à la topologie de l›excursion tandis que l›environnement prend une apparence abstraite et indifférenciée, masquant les tensions locales. Le Golfe Persique, le détroit d›Ormuz, la sécurisation des voies de passage ne sont pas mentionnés, ni le nom des Etats (Iran, Arabie Saoudite, Qatar). Si une petite vignette en bas de la page réinsère le circuit dans le cadre régional, seuls les Emirats arabes unis et Oman sont cités.

L›objectif est de limiter les interférences avec l›image, abondamment véhiculée par les médias occidentaux et potentiellement dissuasive, d›une zone dangereuse et conflictuelle. La proximité d›Etats appartenant à l›«Axe du Mal « (Iran, Irak), eux-mêmes entourés d›émirats autoritaires, est passée sous silence, de même que les tensions liées à la délimitation des zones économiques exclusives et à l›appropriation des ressources offshore. Représenter la trajectoire de l›excursion sous la forme d›une constellation permet en outre de cacher la pauvreté du semis d›escales disponibles dans le Golfe: les ports pouvant accueillir des croisières sont peu nombreux, du fait du caractère récent et encore lacunaire du dispositif touristique, mais aussi car la présence de vacanciers dans un secteur soumis à des tensions internationales exacerbées reste délicate. Sous cet angle, la croisière s›apparente davantage à la traversée d›un corridor de sécurité qu›à une pérégrination libre et aléatoire. Seule Doha aurait sans doute pu offrir une halte supplémentaire. Tout se passe donc comme si le territoire était nié afin de mieux éclipser l›instabilité de l›espace traversé.
Cette stratégie de communication destinée à rassurer les touristes révèle les contradictions inhérentes à la reconversion de Dubaï vers l›économie des loisirs haut de gamme: les promoteurs de l›émirat prétendent affranchir les touristes de tout contact avec la réalité géopolitique du Golfe. Les guerres entre Etats, les crispations nationales, les clivages confessionnels et linguistiques ou la pression économique internationale ne sauraient ternir l›image étincelante de la cité et empêcher son intégration dans la Société-Monde. Dubaï se présente alors comme une étape incontournable au sein de l›archipel urbain mondial, emmenant dans son sillage les villes qui, comme elle, sont capables d›inventer et de générer les conditions intellectuelles et matérielles de leur propre réussite. Comme le signale l›architecte George Katodrytis, cité par Mike Davis, «Dubaï peut être considérée comme le type émergeant de la ville du XXIe siècle: une série de prothèses urbaines et d›oasis nomades, autant de villes isolées gagnant sur la terre et sur l›eau».

Sur une illustration complémentaire figurant en bas de l›annonce, le navire de croisière apparaît comme une bulle protectrice, flottant dans un espace lisse et neutre, fait de sable, de ciel et de mer. Dans cette immensité, seul l›hôtel Burj-Al-Arab émerge, comme un phare monumental offrant un tableau grandiose au regard des voyageurs. Le territoire de l›émirat se résume à cette tour majestueuse qui, avec ses sept étoiles, s›impose comme l›icône hypermédiatique d›un mode de développement hors sol fondé sur la consommation et le luxe. Bercé par ce conte futuriste, le visiteur est invité à ignorer la population locale, comme le suggère l›absence de toute référence aux habitants.

En présentant un univers artificiel et déshumanisé, cette publicité montre comment Dubaï pousse à l›extrême la logique d›omission des réalités sociales. Le fait que le décor masque ici un régime autocratique, un système économique reposant sur l›exploitation d›un prolétariat immigré en provenance d›Asie, un compartimentage de l›espace en cellules privatisées, et même une séparation hiérarchique des touristes, hypothèque toute possibilité de construction d›une urbanité équitable. L›accumulation d›attractions plus éblouissantes et prodigieuses les unes que les autres – de «Palm Dubaï», à «Burj Dubaï» en passant par le «Dubaï Shopping Festival» ou «Dubaïland» – est conçue pour plonger le visiteur dans un plaisir ininterrompu. Sa conscience, saturée d›images hallucinantes, devient immunisée contre les désagréments. L›imprévu est évacué, la surprise est programmée et toute rencontre spontanée avec l›autre ne peut être que fortuite.

Le paysage de Dubaï prend donc la forme visionnaire et auto-réalisatrice d›un spectacle hypnotique et étourdissant, contraint à la surenchère et au renouvellement permanent. La démesure des édifices vise à détacher la métropole de son ancrage moyen-oriental pour mieux assurer son arrimage au Monde. Cette ambition extraordinaire, que l›on perçoit également dans le projet «The World», avec ses trois cents îlots artificiels, bute malgré tout sur les contradictions d›un modèle réduit à occulter les bases fondatrices de sa propre territorialité.

Note : * Arnaud Brennetot prépare une thèse de géographie intitulée «Géoéthique des territoires. Le débat public territorial à travers la presse magazine en France» à l›université de Rouen. Il utilise les théories de la justice territoriale pour interpréter le pluralisme des valeurs géographiques qui structurent l›opinion publique et travaille en particulier à partir du discours des médias.

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BASIC ARABIC PHRASES

Statement	Response
Assalaam Alaikum -Peace be up on you	Wa Alaikum assalaam -and peace be upon you
Marhabbah - hello	Marhabbteen – hi
Sabah al khair - good morning	Sabah al noor
Masah al khair -good afternoon / evening	Masah al noor
Shukran (jazeelan) -thank you (very much) or Mushkoor	Aafwaan -you›re welcome
	To which the reply is: Ahlan beek - welcome to you (to a male) Ahlan beech (to a female) Ahlan beekum (to a group) This is usually used in introductions
Keef haluk? -How are you? Sometimes shortened to Keefak	Al hamdu lillah (bi khair) - praise be to Allah (well) Ana bikhayr, shukran - I am fine, thank you
Aysh ismuk -what is your name?	Ismi Jason -my name is Jason
Titakellem ingleezi -do you speak English? Terrref arabi? -do you know Arabic	Ana la atakellem al arabi -I don›t speak Arabic Atakullum inglieezi -I speak English
Inta min weyn? -where are you from?	Ana min ingliterra -I›m from England Umreeka -USA Oostraaalia -Australia Al imaraaat -UAE Wa inta? -and you?
Maasalaamah –Goodbye	Fi aman allah or Maasalaamah

When you sneeze you say
Al hamdu lillah

To which someone will say - Yer humkullah
And you will say - Yer hamna wa yer humkum

Clothing: Male
Kandura - the long white cloak that men wear.
Guthra - the headscarf sported by the males.
Egal - the black rope that fixes the headscarf in place.

Clothing: Female
Abaya - The long flowing black gown worn by Females
Shela - the piece of material used to loosely cover their head.
Hijab - head covering, to ensure that the hair is not exposed. Use is dependant on home origin.
Burqa - head covering with a slit for the eyes, or the metallic object used to cover part of the face
Gishwa - the thin black veil that covers the face of the female.
Miscellaneous Words

Inshallah -If Allah wishes
This phrase is used in reference to a future, since all things are at Allah›s will. So if you say, see you tomorrow, you might be replied with Inshallah. Indeed, it is used in numerous contexts. You›ll send me the report tomorrow? -Inshallah.

Maashallah -What Allah wishes
This is used when complimenting something, usually in the context of family or health.

Mabrook - Congratulations
This is used in any congratulatory context, more so than you would use in English.

Naam - yes
Aywa - yeah/ok
La - no
Min fudluk - please
Shoo? - what?
Shoofi mafi? -what›s up? or what›s the matter?
Shoo hada? - what is this?
Mafi mushkil -no problem
Itfudul -by my guest / my pleasure

Tamaam - perfect
Baadin - later
Dilwaati - now
Ilyoum - today
Bukra - tomorrow
Ashoofook bukra - see you tomorrow
Aadhi - it›s normal
Jebli shai - bring me some tea
Kallemni - call me/talk to me
Ma adhri - I dont know
Maa-i-khussni - its not my problem
Inta kida - thumbs up
Intaa tabaan thumbs down
Areed areef - i want to know
Mumken asaduq - can i help you
Sida - straight
Yasar - left
Yameen - right
Tabaan - of course
Andi - i have
Kam -how much
Affwaan -excuse me
Kull -everything

Numbers

0 -siffr
1 -wahid
2 -itnain
3 -thalatha
4 -arba
5 -khumsah
6 -settah
7 -sabaa
8 -thamaaneeya
9 -tissaa
10 -asharah
11 -ihda shaar
12- ithna shaar
13 -thalatha shaar
14 - arba ata shaar
15 -khamsta shaar
16 -sitta shaar
17 -saba ata shaar
18 -tamantha shar
19 -tis ata shar
20 -ishrin
21 -wahid wa ishrin
22 -ithain wa ishrin
23 -thalatha wa ishrin
24 -arbaa wa ishrin etc
30 -thalath een
40 -arba een
50 -khamseen
60 -sitteen
70 -sabeen
80 -thamaneen
90 -tiseen
100 -miyya
200 -mittain
251 -thalatha miyaa
400 -arba miyya etc
1000 -alf
2000 -alfain
2510 -thalaathat aalaf
4000 -arbaat aalaf

NOTEBOOK