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"Despite the academic interest that the spectacular new 'cities' in the Arab Gulf have garnered lately, this fascinating book argues that our tried-and-tested theories fall short in understanding them or learning from their rapid urbanization. The various essays propose different approaches to considering this old/new form of urbanity, but, together with the editors' critical conclusion, expand the domain of urban study itself to draw concepts like mobility, transience, complexity, hybridity, contradiction, spontaneity, and even unpredictability into its interpretive paradigms."

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The fast-growing cities of the Persian Gulf—including Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Doha—have attracted much global attention over the past decade. The world's tallest building is in Dubai; Saudi Arabia is building five new cities from scratch; and the Louvre, the Guggenheim, and the Sorbonne, as well as many other European and American universities, have outposts in the region.

Bringing together a distinguished group of scholars, *The New Arab Urban* showcases the grand ambitions of the Persian Gulf, examining the impact of extreme urbanization on a region where money is plentiful, regulation is weak, and labor conditions are severe. How do authorities in these settings reconcile goals of civic betterment with hyper-segregation and radical inequality? How do they align cosmopolitan sensibilities with authoritarian rule? And how do elite custodians protect particular forms of social stratification and political control? Drawing on a range of disciplines, contributors address these important questions, and more, by situating the cities of the Persian Gulf in wider global contexts of trade, technology, and design. This timely volume provides us with original insights, adding to our understanding of the modern Arab metropolis—as well as of cities more generally—and how they impact the world.

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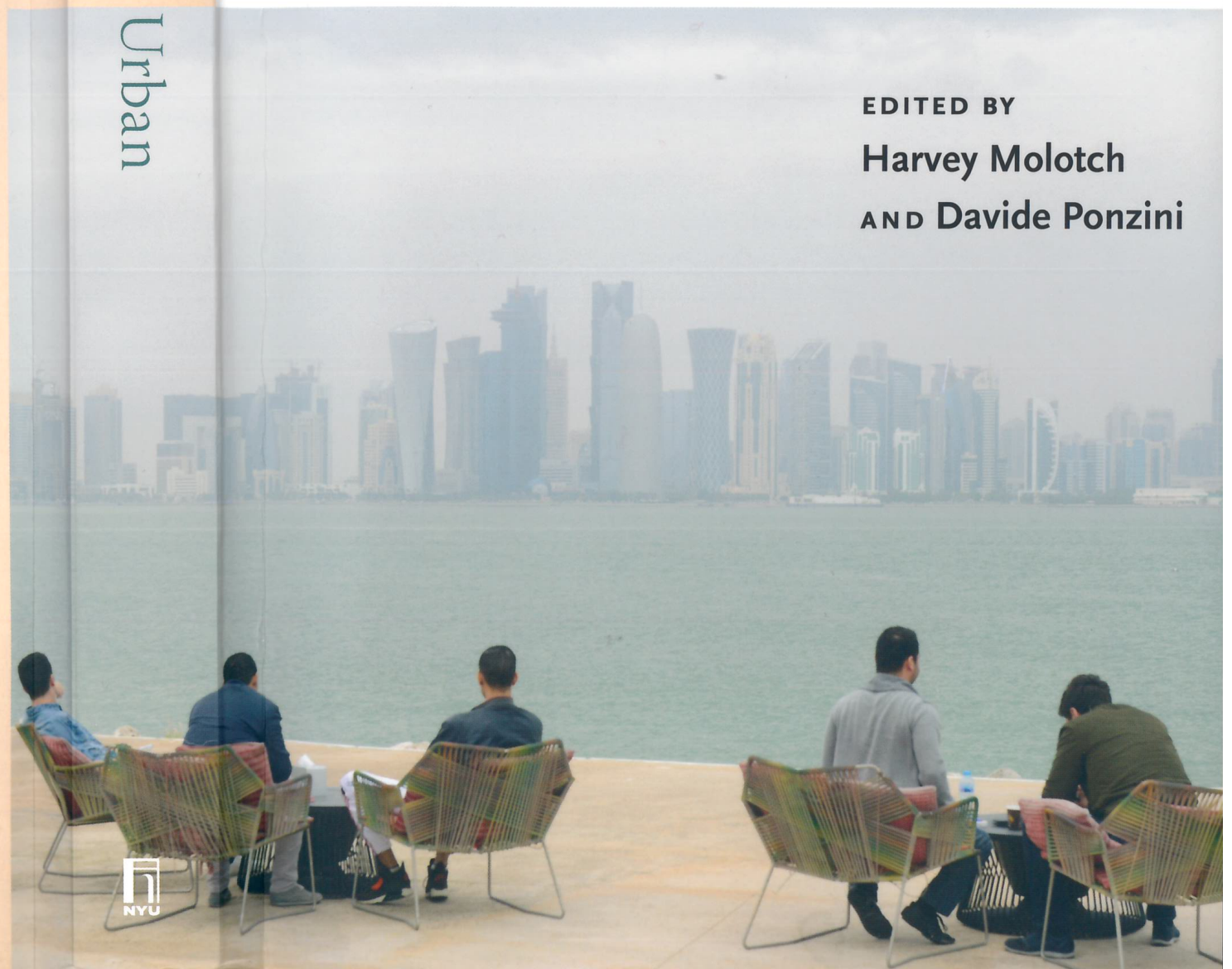
EDITED BY
**Molotch
AND
Ponzini**

The New Arab Urban

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GULF CITIES OF WEALTH, AMBITION, AND DISTRESS

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AND Davide Ponzini**



Cover photo of Doha by Michele Nastasi. Design by adam b. bohannon.

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS

Washington Square | New York, NY 10003 | www.nyupress.org

SOCIOLOGY

ISBN 978-1-4798-9725-4



9 781479 897254



In memory of
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NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS

New York

www.nyupress.org

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References to Internet websites (URLs) were accurate at the time of writing. Neither the author nor New York University Press is responsible for URLs that may have expired or changed since the manuscript was prepared.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Molotch, Harvey Lusk, editor. | Ponzini, Davide, 1979– editor.

Title: The new Arab urban : Gulf cities of wealth, ambition, and distress /
edited by Harvey Molotch and Davide Ponzini.

Description: New York : New York University Press, [2019] | bibliographical references
and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2018021510 | ISBN 9781479880010 (cl : alk. paper) |
ISBN 9781479897254 (pb : alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Urbanization—Persian Gulf Region. | Persian Region—Social conditions. |
Persian Gulf Region—Economic conditions.

Classification: LCC HT147.P35 N47 2019 | DDC 307.7609165/35—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2018021510>

New York University Press books are printed on acid-free paper, and their binding materials
are chosen for strength and durability. We strive to use environmentally responsible suppliers
and materials to the greatest extent possible in publishing our books.

Manufactured in the United States of America

Front cover: Doha, 2017.

Photograph by Michele Nastasi

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Also available as an ebook

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Planning for the Hybrid Gulf City

LAURA LIETO

The hybrid city, an emerging process of transnational urbanism, exists where global networks of power and knowledge hold together (and are reshaped by) transforming material resources and social structures in specific contexts. These can be described as metabolic processes. The Gulf region is one of the most prominent contexts for witnessing such a process: new cities are being built at the intersection of different urban ideas, political visions, technologies, and actors traveling worldwide, and they are developing by means of a massive transformation of material settlements and exploitation of natural resources.

Gulf cities have been invested with different political tasks over the past few years, according to a general strategy that has mainly knowledge-based targets and aims to create alternatives to the oil economy. As such, they must offer new, competitive “world-class” environments that mix “the best of” architecture, technology, comfort, and lifestyle. In their aspiration to be considered world or global cities, these cities are also among the most important destinations of massive labor migration flows. Dependence on foreign labor, which started in the 1970s after the oil boom, is still one of the main features—as well as political concerns—of this urban region. In this milieu, an increasingly fragmented labor structure consisting of a transnational elite of professionals and “a vast army of low skilled workers”¹ is contributing to the formation of a multicultural society, where a formal capitalist economy overlaps with the spaces of an informal or illegal economy.²

The urbanization process in the Gulf is also quickly transforming the land and its material structures, given the rapid growth of major cities in the region—Dubai and Abu Dhabi in particular, but Doha, Muscat, and others to different extents. High-density as well as sprawling urban formations entail high-energy costs, massive land consumption,

and consistent alterations of desert habitats. These two merging facets of urbanization—the social and the material—allow us to understand the transfer process of policies, actors, ideas, and values as a networked mobilization of people, natural resources, technologies, places, and norms. Within such a socio-material process, “environmental and social change co-determine each other,”³ giving rise to a hybrid metabolism processing energy, labor flows, human settlements, and natural resources.⁴

Using this perspective, one can view transnational and hybrid urbanism as a process unfolding through different stages of the global travel of urban ideas, “born” somewhere (in the West, at least in the past) and “landing” somewhere else (in the Gulf region, in this case), with a more or less windy trajectory in between.⁵ These stages are the decontextualization of ideas, as a symbolic and technical process of “reflexive extraction” from an origin context, and their recontextualization, as both a political and material assembling process within a new context.

Examining two primary cases—a planning experience with which I was involved in Saudi Arabia, the Jubail City Center Plan; and findings from current literature about a major sustainable project in the United Arab Emirates, Masdar City (discussed in further detail by Gökçe Günel in chapter 8)—brings this process into focus in different but complementary ways. The Saudi planning experience, a plan for a city-to-be, provides insights on the symbolic dimension of sociocultural hybridity; Masdar City, as an ongoing urban transformation, can help us reflect on the political implications and massive transformations of an arid environment into a specifically high-tech settlement aiming for primacy in the sustainable cities network worldwide.

Hybridity and the Urban

In the Gulf context, planning can be understood as a transnational, networked enterprise.⁶ Ideas are exchanged and confronted as different actors, things, technologies, norms, and contracts gather in a new context and produce contingent associations—be it a new plan, an international conference, a policy-making initiative. Behind my understanding of this process—on the ground—are certain conceptual advances from social science that can be fruitfully merged to help explain the processes I have witnessed and taken part in.

Hybridity

The idea of the hybrid city as the outcome of transnational relations is not new. Cities in history are the long-term results of networked relations of power and trade crossing cultural and political borders: the Mediterranean urban civilization, exemplarily depicted by Fernand Braudel, is one outstanding example.⁷ Notwithstanding the ample precedents, the hybrid and the urban have been progressing on rather analytically separate tracks for a long time, following different intellectual traditions that can now be brought closer together.

Starting at the biological beginning, hybridity historically involves a crossbreeding of two different organisms, fused to form a “third.” In the nineteenth century, the notion surfaces in genetic studies to create the essentialist social category of mulatto—the outcome of the mixing of different races. Through postcolonial studies, the notion of the hybrid, in the past a rationale for domination, gains a more liberatory connotation, indeed one that is valorized. The notion of a “mongrel city”⁸ migrates to the planning field to incorporate difference and heterogeneity as assets for a new “inter-cultural coexistence in shared spaces.”⁹ The racialized background of such a notion is still present, but it bolsters a political claim for more just cities based on cultural diversity and respect for variation. This marks a first and important convergence between the hybrid and the urban, opening a new line of inquiry about transnational flows and their effects on city life and civil coexistence. The postcolonial discourse here is a powerful lever to unsettle inequalities and inspire a transformed kind of urban politics.

A second type of rather recent conceptual advance adds to hybridity in a different way, from science and technology studies (STS) and the related field of actor network theory (ANT). STS and ANT are all about mixture. Writers in this tradition use the word “hybrid” as an explicit reference to physical and social worlds as a unity with any component being a quasi-object,¹⁰ a “cyborg” in some conceptual treatments.¹¹ STS/ANT rejects the exclusive priority attributed to human actors as causal force over physical matter, falsely understood as brute and inert. It rather maintains that humans always act in concert with things that are also “actants”—be it water, electrons, trees, pipelines, or digital technologies. So we have socio-technical interfaces that form a hybrid ensemble. Such a formulation

now restates the role of the actor as someone or something that changes relations within a network of people and things. When things have equal weight in determining actions and change within assemblages, then the key figure in action is not the human individual, but the actor-network—a hybrid object-subject.

Referring specifically to the urban, hybridity now opens new perspectives on the mutuality of society and physicality (space and its artifactual and natural elements) and ups the stakes in what gets created as buildings, infrastructure, and components. Such so-called objects themselves partake in causal efficacy. The concept of hybridity—as I use it—works in the frictional space between discourses and material processes of urban transformation. Analytically, it operates as a lever over heterogeneous elements that unsettles otherwise fixed notions of urbanization. Empirically, hybridity is assembled through both local and transnational networks, crystallizing¹² within a specific context—the Gulf in this instance.

Origin Stories and Myths

In the context of all the unsettling that goes on in the urban realm, the human condition is open to, perhaps even requires, appropriate narratives to overcome what would otherwise appear as chaos. To understand the city, as a professional matter, various parties introduce narratives of idealized fixity. They may proffer a normative vision of the “good city,” replete by its nature with specific cultural biases and perhaps a policy design method for it to be established in a particular political context. Also offered up may be benign “antecedents” or “origin stories”: a best practice successfully experienced somewhere, an educational regimen from a specific country or planning school.

The origin issue is a problem not to be underestimated. In the debate on transnational planning, some authors¹³ maintain that planners, before applying an idea to a new context, should know where and how that idea came about and why it succeeded in its “origin site.” But ideas do not arise ahistorically; when they land in a new destination, they have been already decontextualized. To be recontextualized, they go through a process of translation that makes them different from the “original version.” They will be differentially validated by social actors and thus work

in uneven ways across sites. Allies may or may not come forward. The risk of copycat urbanism and cultural flattening is clearly in play.¹⁴ In such a critical perspective, I have maintained, planning ideas are similar to other myths that round-off exceptions and nuances, and are made durable only through something like faith.¹⁵

Within modernity, mythology becomes inherently political.¹⁶ Political myth is a symbolically structured narrative whose power does not derive from tight logic, but instead from emotional force.¹⁷ As a particular form of ideological belief, political myth can be aimed at political integration, as well as at domination and populism.¹⁸ Following Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, myth is caught between a “depoliticized speech”¹⁹ and a “strategically polyvalent discourse”;²⁰ it can be a device of control and subjection or a means to open new perspectives, to refresh old ideas and provide stronger social cohesion in critical times.

When planners are engaged in a context different from their homeland—as is so often the case in the Gulf—they are contending with their own myths (as perhaps modified by interactions and sense making in the adopted environment).²¹ A planning mythology can be, for example, the idea that the gridiron city would provide clear and fair rules for a real estate market and for the efficient circulation of people and goods regardless of world region or culture, or that “well-designed” public spaces (e.g., well equipped with street furniture, artworks, and appropriate lighting) would provide a “vibrant and lively” social environment. An ongoing assumption valorizes participation of a particular sort—the idea that respect and fair dialogue with all parties affected by a new plan would create planning solutions superior to authoritarian, top-down decision making.

Such embedded ideas, once decontextualized from their origin site, undergo a complex process of translation.²² Sometimes they are used just as labels to popularize a forthcoming project having nothing in common with an original model (perhaps merely retaining the architectural surface). Other times, they can prompt intense negotiations that play a strong mediating role to build up new communities of practice and thus different outcomes, involving both new modes of decision making and built forms that arise from them.

For Western planners—and this is an aspect of the orientalist posture—the Middle East consists of “mythical regions,” held as exceptional in urbanistic terms, as well as other regards. Part of the mythology is prompted

by an imagined void: the desert land. I want to reflect about this “empty context.” One needs to challenge the common sense that, in the Gulf, the global phantasmagoria of high-rise architecture is happening because that region is a land of unlimited possibilities, a physical and social tabula rasa in a ready and open setting.²³ What is this *desert*—provided that I am not thinking of sands and dunes? There are some extreme conditions in the Gulf region that indeed make its current urbanization quite different from other known, historical processes related to capital accumulation in Western cities. These Gulf cities have relevant histories but no “post” to share with Western cities: no post-Fordism, no postindustrialization, no postwelfare state. They are indeed postnomadic; perhaps that is a “post” that might, in some meager sense, fit—and one that is disappearing in the Gulf as in other parts of the world, where urbanization has replaced it. As for colonialism, there is no close commonality with modes of resource exploitation carried out by European exploiters: Belgians in the Congo, Spaniards in South America, the British most everywhere. After the rapid development of oil starting in the 1960s, resource exploitation in the UAE “did not contribute to the underdevelopment of the region,”²⁴ as most of the sheikhdoms’ affairs were quite independent from colonizing powers. There was not a replication of the “resource curse” afflicting other world subaltern territories.

There were other distinctive aspects not only new to the region but also different from conditions otherwise commonly faced by professional consultants working in the Middle East since the “building frenzy”²⁵ started in early 2000s. There was not the need to protect (or overcome) structures against intrusion on natural areas otherwise in the path of urban growth. They were planning new cities where no brownfield had to be adapted or prior pollutions abated. In social terms, what otherwise would have been claims to the right to the city were not development impediments. Historic preservation or cultural rights groups were not insistent on protecting vestiges of tangible memory. More broadly, in an urban context where notions such as postmodernity or post-Fordism do not make much sense, a whole set of urban ideas and strategies lose their relevance. Issues like urban revitalization and gentrification, and a host of others from contemporary urban studies, have little bearing.

Instead, from the perspective of Western professional elites (and the entrepreneurs associated with them), the Gulf offers the galvanizing idea

of a “land of freedom”—from building regulations and other normative constraints.²⁶ The vista opens for architectural creativity and the crafting and construction of whole new urbanscapes. On the side of the local leading class, it caters to the aspiration for a “world-class urbanism” where everything is brand new, unique, and iconic. Risks are taken, and claims to be respecting tradition, religion, and cultural patterns are routinely made as part of business and professional practice. The hybridity in play takes in all such considerations, as it is given shape from local rulers and their circles—along with the Western transnational business class of professional and managerial workers who gain presence and voice.²⁷

On the ground, a whole related urban-design syntax arises—from the business downtown to the revitalized waterfront, from the sustainable urban village to the pedestrianized street. Developed out of historic contexts that gave rise to their “original” prototypes in the West, they are emplaced as deliberate artifacts, emptied of social and political implications. Such figurations carry the risk of being pure forms—simulacra of urbanisms gone by in other places under altogether different conditions.

Nonetheless, the transnational urbanization process is not limited to a symbolic construction: it also deals with action and change, with concrete metabolic processes, associating ideas, people, norms, and technologies formed into socio-material assemblages. Out of the matrix of interests and proclivities that are present in the Gulf come their own versions of hybridity, as in the urban design of Jubail City and the master planning for Masdar—the two projects to which I now, in succession, turn my attention. They display, albeit in somewhat contrasting ways, both socio-materiality and mythmaking as they enter into the construction of urban assemblage.

Urban Form and the Political Meaning of a “European-Style” Piazza for Jubail City

A few years ago, I was involved in a planning experience in Saudi Arabia, where an international team of Western professionals was hired to provide technical consulting to the Royal Commission of Jubail and Yanbu, a regional development agency tasked by the Saudi government with creating a plan for the new center of Jubail City. In the Gulf, developers typically enlist ambitious designs to compete for international

attention.²⁸ Planning, in absolute monarchies like Saudi Arabia, is an authoritative action of the state. State agencies hire external consultants to develop plans and projects under the supervision of top officials and counselors, and such a relationship is mostly of a client/professional kind.²⁹ This means that consulting planners do not have much political power; nor can they play a mediating role between the government and the citizens—much less between the government and the disenfranchised expats and workers. Still planners can make a difference, and—as in the case at hand—hybridity is a challenge and a possibility, an alternative strategy to just “doing what the client wants.” It becomes possible to open a space of dialogue about values and differences beyond what is a business opportunity for contractors and consulting firms.

It was within such a context that project sponsors asked our consultancy to design a European-style plaza for a new central business district. Aligned with what we thought were project goals, we worked up a scheme that would provide attractive features resembling the pleasant and human-scale environment of traditional Euro-Mediterranean towns, but appropriately adapted to the new setting. That strategy, iconic in its own way, would—in our thinking—differentiate the new urban center from other more Manhattan-style Gulf city landscapes.

We felt a need to elaborate our concept into an “origin narrative” of the European square, to explain to our interlocutors how it “came to life” in a specific historical context. Our narrative spanned the Greek agora and the Roman forum, from the medieval open market to the Renaissance square and up to the nineteenth-century square of the modern, bourgeois city. The richness of the story would thus provide help to win allies for the project. But, of course, a plaza invokes traditions of living outdoors and using open spaces for sociality and business dealings. When climate conditions are so different—as in the case in point—where temperatures in summer can reach unbearable highs, the urban outdoors need to be completely revisited as a socio-spatial consideration. A main public space in the Islamic city is the mosque, offering protection against the sun through systems of covered porticos (*riwaq*) and courtyards.³⁰ The souk, typically covered, similarly offers potential for year-round social, civic, and business functioning.

To design a big square for an Arab city, a new, hybrid myth had to be worked out—and formed through mutual learning and negotiation. In

the beginning of the process, each party had its own set of myths to bring to bear, including notions of what a modern Arab urban space could, climatically and spatially, actually be. For the planners, the square was the idealized place for social encounters and mixing. For the client, it was mostly an iconic space, featuring arcades, fountains, artworks, with the necessity of ensuring clear patterns of spatial and sexual segregation. If left unchallenged and unhybridized in the transfer process, both myths would have possibly led to decontextualized, copycat projects of some already existing versions in Europe or the Middle East. Following Roland Barthes's critique of modern mythology—aimed at controlling masses by depriving them of history, conflicts, and contingencies³¹—these different “square myths” would have conflated into a “depoliticized speech” about public space. The result could have been some mechanistic “compromise” or, if one party or the other had simply prevailed, a materialization of a vacuous contradiction, making little sense to any of the involved participants.

Heading off such an outcome, meetings were held with agendas that took up the practices and traditions of the local society, as well as realistic assessments of climate. Learning about praying, feasts, and social rituals (like weekend outdoor family reunions) helped give shape to specific layouts of the new square. At the same time, sexual segregation norms and religious concerns for privacy led to specific technical requirements. The distances between buildings were precisely measured, and the views in and out were closely considered, of facades especially. A whole series of design features were to provide shade and comfort. For client and professionals, the square became an arena of synthesis, of collaboration, of hybridity.

From my perspective, the contending myths were repoliticized as a matter of mutual adaptation. We were confronting an oxymoron—a European square in the Saudi desert. The knowledge of Western planners merged with the knowledge of local public officials and counselors, who were asked to revise their initial request for an iconic space. They were encouraged to draw on their practical and traditional knowledge, while being open to innovative socio-spatial performances. Whereas nothing like a European square exists in the traditional Arab city, there could emerge, as we came to propose, a typological innovation with the potential for achieving similar results of sociality and commerce.³² Commenting

on Foucault's discussion about the mythical, *Society Must Be Defended*, Stuart Murray highlights how mythical discourse is capable of opening “onto something new . . . to allow for something to be created out of old forms.”³³ I liken this to our endeavor.

Our negotiation for dealing with this not-yet-realized project—whose socio-material effects were unknown—occurred through the “microspace” of face-to-face interactions between client and planner, as is typical in professional practice.³⁴ This communicative effort, as it is made possible by the tradecraft of planning practice, mobilized materiality as an essential medium for dialogue and confrontation.³⁵ In the meetings, there were countless physical representations at hand—drawings, site plans, photos, and renderings. These functioned as “boundary objects”³⁶ (in the ANT lexicon)—items that diverse parties can reference, discuss, and elaborate on an ongoing basis. They get returned to, passed around, and cited. In the “swim” of so much that tends not to stay the same, they remain as quasi-durable common points of departure for discussion and alteration. These boundary objects provided a powerful mediating role in the planning process.³⁷ Things, ideas, experiences, and skills were all circulated—materially and virtually—in the process of hybridizing “the square” into a common accomplishment. They were in service to defeat the supposedly empty space and to avoid the temptation of viewing the process as beginning with the tabula rasa, “starting with nothing.”

Some prior colonial trope, either to mimic or through which to construct a postcolonial response, was also not available for us as a point of departure. This is where the no-“post” issue, discussed above, comes into concrete force as a design resource. “Post” always implies a “pre-” and thus a way to suggest some form of historical continuity for designers who might wish to replicate or at least “quote” from its traditions. Similarly, there is an absence of something to oppose, to tear down, reverse, or reject. In this Gulf context, the only thing left was to engage in intensive consideration of an alternative urban tradition and its severe climate condition: we had the opportunity to rethink our “origin narrative” of the square, focusing on features we usually take for granted (circulation, accessibility, security, exposure to light and ventilation) and recontextualizing any and all solutions. Our plan proceeded on that basis.

This example should help us understand the hybrid city as a field where knowledge transfer, bracketed and pervaded by power asymmetries and

cultural prejudices, occurs also with patterns of mutual learning. A heterogeneous assemblage of people, things, ideas, skills, and political and economic interests is always in play in transnational work settings, replete as well with misunderstandings, false starts, but also with the potential for productive *dénouement*. Hybridity is not a peaceful merging of discourses but a controversy-rich culture-nature processing of ideas and things according to a specific sociopolitical context.

The Hybrid Urban Metabolism of Masdar City

As a response to the unsustainable UAE “petro-urbanism,”³⁸ the country has launched very ambitious programs for sustainable best practices. This becomes still another realm in which Gulf cities enter the global competition to be famously best at something, in this case for being “green” and in a wondrous way. Described and evaluated by Günel (in chapter 8), Abu Dhabi’s Masdar project was heralded by the international media as the world’s first “sustainable city.” Now being master planned for about 48,000 inhabitants, it has opened the way for many other claims for “eco-city” status around the world. Unlike most projects “still on paper,” Masdar has been partly developed. The casual visitor can take a tour, ride in one of several self-driving electric vehicles (so-called personal rapid transit—PRT), and experience some urban cooling from the smart massing of close-in buildings. There is lunch and espresso. Masdar makes provisions not only for reduced carbon emission, but also for use of waste, smart grids for energy efficiency, and inventive modes of transportation.

The project holds a strong techno-utopian charge—a kind of futuristic world’s fair of coming adventure. In this, it follows in a long tradition of Western utopian thinking that invests technology as a messianic problem solver. In the face of big problems, urban planning in particular has always turned to utopian thinking—mobilizing a space of thought and innovation to put forward bold, cutting-edge solutions sufficiently disentangled from mundane facts to ease them into acceptance.³⁹ In the Gulf, the *tabula rasa* imaginary beckons along with the particularly wicked problem of environmental disaster. The UAE’s status as the worst carbon footprint in the world (along with Doha) and the highest rate of greenhouse emissions per capita⁴⁰ creates a fact on the ground (and in the atmosphere) that further induces big thinking. Moreover, the vast

economic investments in the region will likely fuel increased industrial production, massive seawater desalination, and further population growth. (Saudi Arabia has a high, although now declining, birthrate.)

From this perspective, the Masdar City project unfolds as a logical yet emotional and aestheticized response. It also fulfills another “best of” for the UAE, encasing ideas and technological solutions accumulated through research and experimentation in architecture, urban design, and engineering from all over the world, a traveling “superidea” aimed to be implemented in the Abu Dhabi transnational space. But in urbanistic terms, it is precisely in its enactment of such a visionary and ultimately technological project that it is alien to any historic experience of city building. Emblematic, in this perspective, is the contrast between projects like Masdar and the growing awareness, in the Arab world (if not in the UAE), of the importance of urban heritage, not just in terms of preserving the past or reappropriating it by means of architectural decoration, but also of maintaining traditional knowledge for coping with climate and resource challenges.⁴¹

The initial Masdar City project has suffered major cuts due to the recession of the late 2000s and the fall of oil prices in the early 2010s.⁴² The zero-carbon slogan was walked back to something more modest. The PRT system has been greatly scaled back, probably abandoned as a meaningful concept. Energy has started to come in from offsite, no longer relying on the pioneering photovoltaic solar installation. A number of firms withdrew from the project after the first enthusiastic gathering of major smart technology companies, and the major carbon-reduction deadline—scheduled for 2016—has been postponed to 2025. As always, the Masdar enterprise undergoes all the vagaries of financial markets, and so its high-expenditure-based structure is exposed to fluctuations that are hardly predictable. The major social partners of such a new enterprise—investing global firms, technology partners, and research organizations—may or may not be able to attract appropriate professionals or people who want to move into such a high-tech environment. The usual social incentives—cultural opportunities and lively surroundings—are yet to come.

Into this assemblage of smart technologies, institutions, and corporate firms, a hybrid socio-natural metabolism struggles to come into being. Paternalistic structures—transmuted through local institutions—are

reworked by means of imitative actions and projects that strive to transform external pressures over sustainability into the usual types of local development ambitions.⁴³ Natural resources are being intensively exploited (water, electricity) and at the same time—almost as trading on the disaster—using technological innovation as the come-on for global firms and researchers. The quest for mega-level novelty overlaps with a growing awareness—and story—of dire circumstance made useful.

Masdar City is part of a worldly process of assemblage where materialities—from harsh climate conditions to the abundance of oil—play a decisive role in how human and nonhuman actors move and change within transnational networks. We are far from dealing with a win-win game; as always, when it comes to socio-material metabolism, there is the potential for both enabling and disabling political and environmental conditions. The experimental, techno-utopian society forming around Masdar City may offer an extreme test of how future citizenship, in times of climate change, might fare. In Abu Dhabi, it is a techno-feudal institution with only very limited evidence of emancipatory shift. The earth's environmental problems are kept outside the wealthy citizens' lives of excess consumption, just as the workforce needs are similarly provided by outsiders who are also kept beyond meaningful societal membership.

Conclusion: Hybrid Cities in the Gulf and Beyond

In its own distinctive ways, Gulf urbanism carries asymmetric relations into the “broader totality” of capitalism—the “context of context,” as it has been termed.⁴⁴ As with any precept based in historical shifts, its mode of difference and variation is not to be considered as a “final destination,” but rather a stage where traveling “universals”⁴⁵ hybridize and incarnate into a region and its specific cities. For economic, environmental, social, and cultural reasons, Gulf cities—extreme compared to more ordinary and familiar cases in the West—further illuminate the range of what can happen under the overall process of capital accumulation.

The frame of hybridity can help planning scholars understand current projects and transformations, focusing on the constant reworking of forms, patterns, and models that are transferred from one place to another—not just as the effect of large, impersonal forces or top-down

policies, but also as step-by-step negotiation among intersecting urban visions, cultures, and traditions. The mediations conducted in the Gulf, whether built out or simply maintained as plans, models, and images, can enter into circulation in other locales and regions. However myth-based they may have been, they have the potential to “work again”—to become in turn physical, economic, and social assemblages that enter into projects elsewhere and into the future.

NOTES

- 1 Friedmann 1986, 73.
- 2 Malecki and Ewers 2007.
- 3 Swyngedouw 2006, 118.
- 4 Swyngedouw 1996 and 1998; Gandy 2004 and 2005.
- 5 Lieto 2015; Healey 2011.
- 6 Lieto 2015, and as further described in Sarah Moser's Saudi case, in this volume.
- 7 Braudel 1966.
- 8 Sandercock 2003.
- 9 Sandercock 2003, 319.
- 10 Serres 1982.
- 11 Haraway 1991.
- 12 Brenner and Schmid 2015.
- 13 Healey and Upton 2010; Healey 2011.
- 14 Roy 2010.
- 15 Lieto 2015.
- 16 Edelman 1964; Derrida and Moore 1974.
- 17 Ohana 1991.
- 18 Tudor 1972.
- 19 Barthes 1991.
- 20 Foucault 1998.
- 21 This conceptualization of mythology is quite in tune with its combinatory and controversial nature. Rejecting hybridity as panacea, as harmonization of differences, we need to be aware that—in the planning and as well as in other domains—fusing diverse or even antithetical issues into new practices or forms also implies reducing heterogeneity into a new form of homogeneity. In this sense, the oscillation between depoliticization and social cohesion strategy is always at stake.
- 22 Law 1997.
- 23 Lieto 2012.
- 24 Coles and Walsh 2010, 1320.
- 25 Ong 2011, 11.
- 26 Imrie and Street 2011.
- 27 Malecki and Ewers 2007, 470.

- 28 Lieto 2012 and 2015.
- 29 Friedmann 2010.
- 30 Hathloul 1981; Bianca 2000; Elsheshtawy 2008; Abu-Lughod 1987.
- 31 It is useful here to quote Barthes: "What the world supplies to myth is an historical reality, defined . . . by the way in which men have produced or used it; and what myth gives in return is a natural image of this reality. And just as bourgeois ideology is defined by the abandonment of the name 'bourgeois,' myth is constituted by the loss of the historical qualities of things: in it, things lose the memory that they once were made" (1991, 142).
- 32 Although completely different from the task at hand, the example of Tahir Square in Cairo shows how some crucial elements of "square life," as Europeans know it, have been emerging recently in the Arab urban world, and this reinforces the idea that a change in the conception and use of public space is possible even in those traditions that do not share similar outdoor cultures.
- 33 Murray 2003, 216.
- 34 Harris and Moore 2013.
- 35 Beauregard 2013.
- 36 Star and Griesemer 1989.
- 37 Vicari-Haddock and Vanhellemont 2016; Beauregard and Lieto 2016.
- 38 Crot 2013.
- 39 Choay 2000.
- 40 World Wide Nature Fund 2008.
- 41 Elsheshtawy 2008.
- 42 Cugurullo 2013.
- 43 Crot 2013.
- 44 Brenner, Madden, and Wachsmuth 2011.
- 45 Tsing 2009.

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Planning from Within

NYU Abu Dhabi

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The start of the twenty-first century has seen a quantum leap in the number of American university programs started abroad. These initiatives vary considerably in scope and approach and mark an experimental phase in the globalization of higher education, as American universities test different strategies to deepen connections to other parts of the world. The export of American higher education is not new. Going back to the mid-nineteenth century, universities were established in foreign lands based on American models of education, with American faculty and presidents, American donors and trustees, American charters, and English as the language of instruction. Robert College in Istanbul (now Boğaziçi University), founded in 1863, and Syrian Protestant College (now the American University of Beirut), founded in 1866, were the earliest examples. Since then dozens of universities, often called the "American University of (or in) . . .," have been founded around the world based explicitly on the American research university or liberal arts college.

One factor that distinguishes the early twenty-first-century initiatives is the direct involvement of American universities, although the nature of their participation ranges considerably from advisory work, primarily in academic planning and faculty hiring, to the creation of branch campuses that are part of the American institution. The University of Pennsylvania helped to establish the Singapore Management University in 2000. MIT was involved in the establishment of the Masdar Institute of Science and Technology in Abu Dhabi in 2009 and the Singapore University of Technology and Design in 2012. Yale participated in the creation of Yale-NUS College (cofounded with the National University of Singapore), which opened in 2011. None of the above institutions