

Boris Brorman Jensen

Dubai - Dynamics of Bingo Urbanism

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introduction

Roemer van Toorn

Dubai Beyond Prejudice

Boris Brorman Jensen was the first architect I knew who started to research the new world arising in Dubai. China was hot, but what happened in the desert found no audience. It was in 2001 that he showed me the Palm resorts on internet. At that time it was just outrageous paper plans, including a hypnotizing internet video. For me the Palm showcased an amazing example of what the middle-class paradise represents. A daydream – a paradise of leisure not knowing what to do – a

world of fascinating gadgets, advanced consumption and puzzling clichés, a world without the unknown knocking at the door. A world better than the Truman Show could imagine; where citizens choose to be a tourist without the need or wish to vote except through their shopping behaviour as clients of Dubai incorporated. At the time nobody was interested in Dubai, people laughed about it, they didn't take it seriously, they didn't notice that this situation wasn't only about Dubai but concerns the fantasies of the ever increasing middle-class population worldwide.

And if Dubai shows what the future of civilization is about, we had better study it, not because the so-called bad architects take all the work of the good ones, but to understand its popular fantasies and to develop other possibilities to counter the banalization of cosmopolitan culture at large. I didn't go to Dubai – nor could I get the Berlage Institute interested at the time – but Boris Brorman Jensen was brave. He went in 2002 – he understood that more was coming, for him it is no surprise that the world largest themepark Dubai land, a new mega airport and a turning skyscraper, and more beyond any known fantasy will arise there.

Boris Brorman Jensen presents an acute analysis of this place where the future rises up out of the ocean and the desert. Dubai is being created without manifest or theory in mind. Not a palace, a mosque, a parliament, a concert hall, a public park or a library is propagating what Dubai stands for, instead an extravagant luxurious high-tech hotel celebrates it all. What the élite could only dream of in the nineteenth century: a cosmopolitan culture, becomes reality

in the 21st century. Dubai is one of the most fascinating places to investigate neoliberal cosmopolitanism, it is a city whose cosmopolitanism informs and accommodates everything it touches, from the role of Islam to that of Turbo Capitalism. With its trillions of dollars invested in tourism, leisure, entertainment and real estate, Dubai has engineered a stunning range of life qualities no one will be able to match in the coming years.

Many postmodern researchers – after the death of the grand narratives of emancipation in the 20th century – believe that demystification and deconstruction are the only positions left for the public intellectual facing global capitalism. Instead of producing alternative visions and models, developing an eye how people negotiate and create new realities beyond institutional categories and systems of control, researchers of negation analyse and find acclaim in what they hate and fear most. Negating the reality of Dubai or celebrating its success out of greed, hoping to get a commission as an architect, is no option for Boris Brorman Jensen. Instead of “applied” research, using a

theory to illustrate what Dubai does wrong or well, Brorman Jensen focuses on which new formations, new ideas, new possibilities and concepts the city Dubai generates from within its own perverse logic. Objectivication, through the mapping of data, or advocating sexy or negative one-liners, all jeopardize, according to Brorman Jensen, a research that investigates what it could mean to be modern in our global age full of paradoxes as found in Dubai.

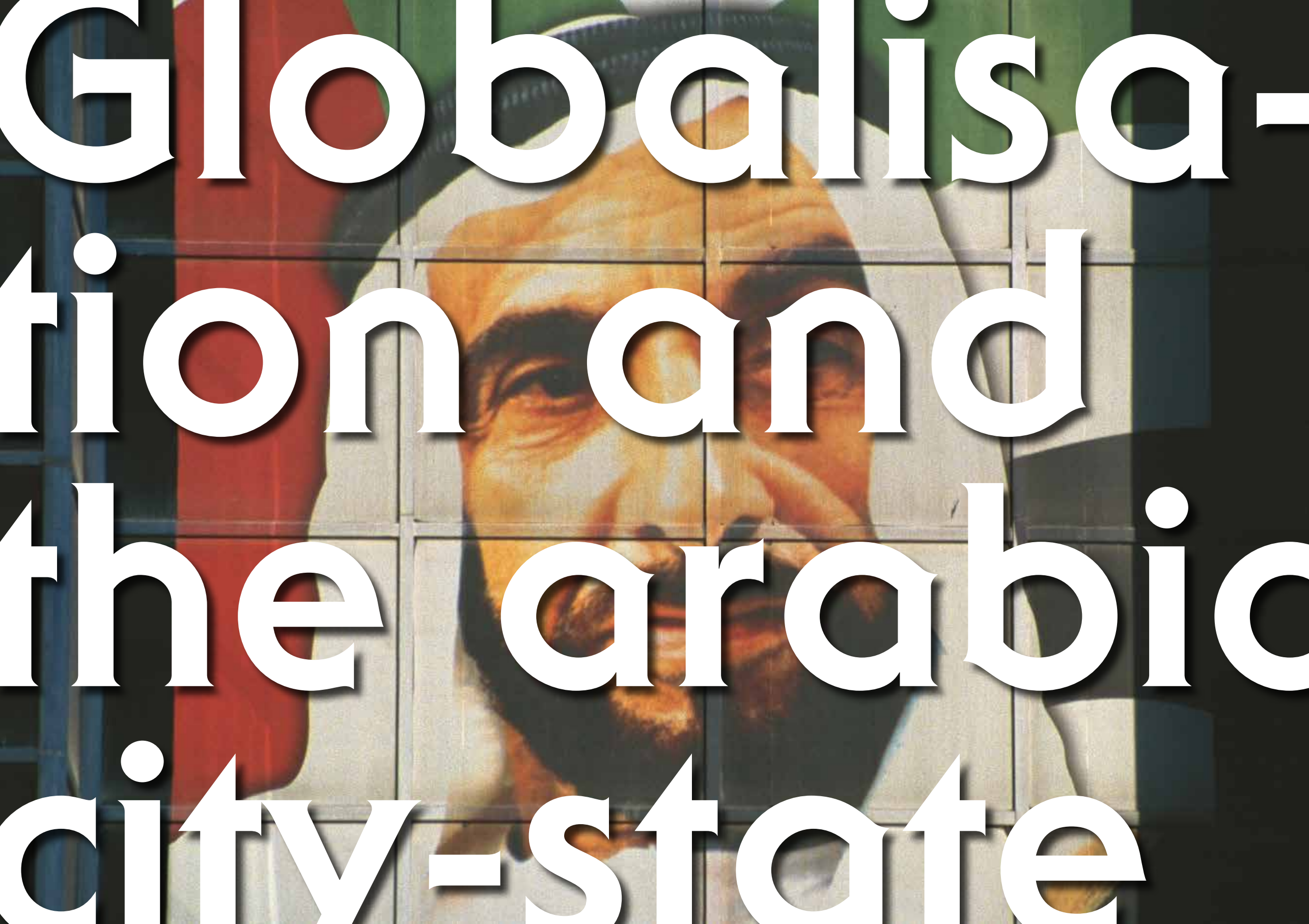
The beauty of the book is its demonstration, how urban and architectural development in Dubai goes beyond, and above, any precedent. Even the delirious capital of 'our' Abendland, Las Vegas, pales in comparison with the magnificent virtual reality of Dubai. Dubai's experiments in urban development and construction are as a rule larger, taller, more superb hyper real, expensive and exclusive than any precedent in the history of modern architecture. Brorman Jensen has tried to be as up to date as possible, but only the speed of internet can keep pace with what happens in the desert: never the printing press. Nevertheless in them-

selves the projects and many internet resources in the book provide sufficient documentation to question a large number of basic assumptions in the theory of modern architectural and urban planning - both in quantities and qualitative means. And last but not least Boris Brorman Jensen invented several new keywords (see also the names of the chapters in this book) helping us to navigate through this new world beyond prejudice.

I wish the reader an inspiring route along the paths Boris Brorman Jensen discovered and has set out for us. By marking the territory of Dubai, Brorman Jensen both documents the 'surface' of what's happening in Dubai while at the same time analyses the everyday aesthetics of globalization - neither celebrating nor condemning it -

But instead inviting the reader to judge for him/herself and to continue the route through this terrifying beauty of cosmopolitanism.

*Roemer van Toorn,
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Globalisation and
the arabic
city-state

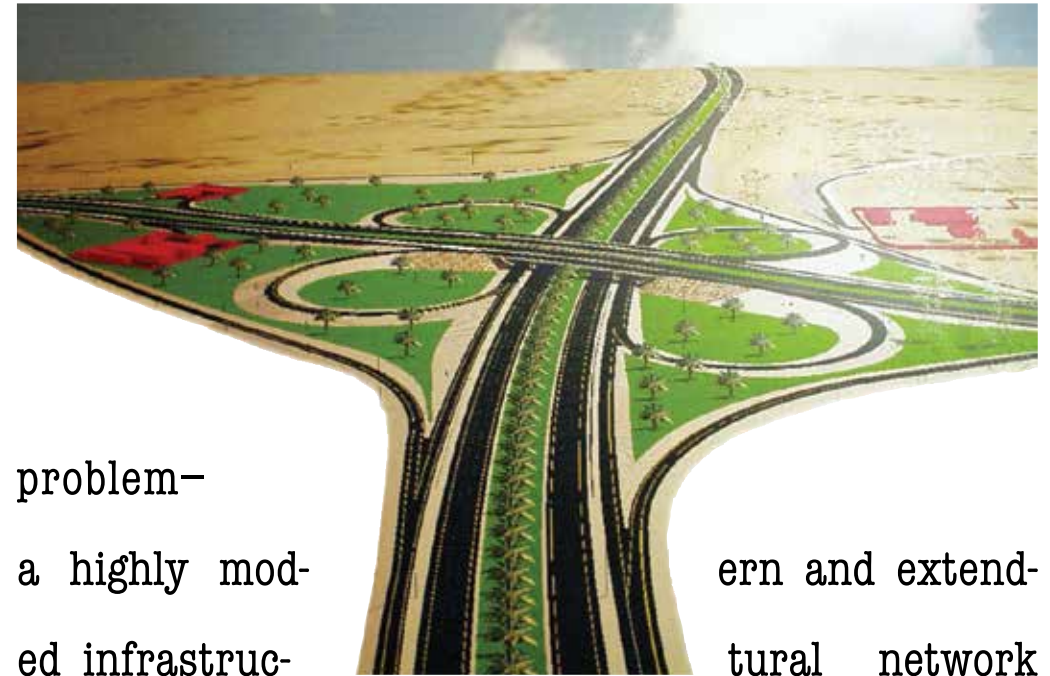
The Arabic oil economies, which have been wound up by the ever-increasing demand for energy in the finishing burst of the industrial post-war period, have been the dynamo for an urbanisation that has taken place in almost inverse relation to the structural developments of the Western world. In countries such as Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, industrialisation was introduced as some sort of strategic reinvestment of oil profits only after the prosperity explosion in the post-war period. The ambitious port-projects, turnkey plants and the extensive infrastructural developments in the desert with their far-reaching structural implications, were initiated in the wealthy states on the Arabic Peninsula, almost at the same time as the launch of a post-industrial restructuring of the Western World.

As early as a couple of decades after the re-invest-

ment of the oil reserve in industry and infrastructure that made these small petro-states develop 'western style' cities, the driving force of the economic dynamic started to change direction and, in doing so, challenged the consolidation programme on two vital points. First of all, it is no longer industrialisation but the rise of the network society that is the bearer of economical growth. Secondly, as noticed by Spanish/American sociologist Manuel Castells, what com



prises the new and all-important resources is no longer unlimited quantities of energy but, to great extent, information¹ 1. Castells, 1996. While in America and Western Europe the restructuring of the cities' industrial growth began to create large outdated areas of production in the urban landscape and a new historical zone containing a declining build environment that brought with it a transformation of the cities' identity, several of the newly developed oil-producing countries on the Arabic Peninsula faced the opposite



problem—

a highly modern and extended infrastructure-

network

that, located in a cultural desert, had still a long way to go before reaching its programmatic saturation point. The smaller state formations that have mushroomed around the free trade areas, export stations and ports of oil disembarkation along the coastline of the Persian Gulf have, by and large, avoided the transformation process which characterised the 'old' industrial societies. The tarmac of communication and movement lines, constituted by the open plug-in

network of developing zones, has in many ways overtaken the Western World as the strategic front zone of globalisation.

Within the past few decades, a series of Arabic **SimCities** with infrastructural overcapacity, little or no taxation, and low crime rates have developed into parade grounds for the economic dynamics of the post-industrial society, and have come to represent a unique growth environment for a brand-new type of global urban development. Where the cities first and foremost manifest themselves as "...hyperconcentrations of the infrastructure to house the corporate headquarters, financial management and variety of specialist business services which spring up. They also develop a significant cultural sector with entertainment districts and cultural tourist sites to provide the meeting places with the necessary ambience for deals to be enacted".² 2. Featherstone & Lash 1999, p. 6. Several of the new city-states on

the Arabic Peninsula have, therefore, been characterised by the almost total absence of material resistance from existing societal structures and as a result have the greatest flexibility in relation to globalisation's external patterns of trans-national capital movement. The particular forms of **Localized Globalism**³ that unfold here may be phenomena that are too isolated and extreme to be promoted as universal tendencies. 3. Sociologist Bonaventura de Sousa Santos distinguishes between four forms of globalization effects: globalized localism, localized globalism, cosmopolitanism and common heritage of humankind. Sousa Santos 1999, p. 217-218. However, the lack of inertness or **Flexism**,⁴ which makes the small periphery states capable of accommodating the growth of the new post-industrial



economy so effectively, still shakes the logic of proximity on which the contextual way of understanding urbanism is founded. 4. "Flexism" is introduced by American geographers Micheal Dear og Steven Flutsy as a description of the network society's production adaptability. Dear & Flusty

1999, p. 75. For, when the driving force behind the economy literally lies outside national boundaries and when urban development no longer derives directly from a territorial context but becomes a bi-product to be understood in relation to a complex global

whole, then traditional architectural ideals also to a large extent lose their relevance. At the same time, the strategic impact pat-

terns of specialised global cycles, which dominate the urban development tendency in the upcoming post-industrial economies, challenge the deep-rooted community feeling of the nation state. In the Arabic pocket states which are leading this process, demographic development is inseparably bound up with imported manpower. As a result such states have not been contained within the framework of traditional community feeling but have questioned the cosmopolitan ideal. This creates populations which are close on 90% expatriate and which by dint of temporary work and residence permits have been incorporated in a very turgid kind of public realm of production and consumption, but which, per definition, do not constitute an element of the population that are allowed 'real' citizenship or benefit from the state grants that serve as substitutes



for a political influence in these tribal-based autocratic states. New and more diffuse hierarchies distinguishing local landowners, guest workers with higher or lower levels of education, illegal immigrants and prisoners have replaced the known class barriers. A form of opportunistic Cosmo-culturalism has arisen, where society as a declared political, social and cultural community has ended and

principle of proximity which keeps topological representation, the idea of neighbourliness and the ideal of integration together, it appears that globalisation has turned the conditions for re-thinking urban planning as economic and political control with identity and cultural cohesion upside down.

Even though a democratic culture did not exist before, and even though political struggles in former Bedouin societies, for a variety of reasons, take place in closed circuits, the phenomenon has still displaced the boundaries of urbanism and raised the question: What principles of planning are there to exert control when the common interest and the political sphere tend to be reduced to questions of economics and safety? And is this transformational

been replaced by a loose bond between separately functioning units, whose primary cohesion is the infrastructure.

process from nation state community to trans-national safety state⁵ - a process that could be a result of globalisation - a threat to the democratic project and a clear deterioration of the spatiality of the modern city.⁶

In addition to undermining the prin-

The shift from discipline to control and risk man-

agement, which characterises the post-political social order, can be illustrated by the following passage from "Virtual Policemen Security Program Launched" in Dubai Police Monthly Bulletin, no. 17, October 15, 2002. "Dubai Police will launch a new security program with the aim of boosting and enhancing the security aspect in the society. The new system, which is named 'The Virtual Policemen' and has been subject to study during the last four months, will help reinforce security arrangements within the emirate and at the same time offer career opportunities for those who are willing to join the police in serving the nation while maintaining their own lifestyles as civilians". 6. Diken & Laustesen 2002, p. 93-113.

There can be little doubt that the sense of community that was once ensured through physical proximity has lost its natural roots in territorial space and that the emancipation of communication from bodily space has changed the relation to place of traditional forms of social gathering. Nor can it be denied that the destabi-

lisation of forms of social cohesion that are specific to place has brought about the retreat of the elite, the sub-culturation of programmed cultivation, the sub-urbanisation of the unitary city, the entrenchment of community and a rise in what the Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman has called a new "hand-picked uniformity" brought about by selection, separation and exclusion.⁷ 7. Ibid.

On the other hand, globalisation has proved to be dependent on the city as a cultural, social and functional network, despite altered urban agglomerations and the disintegration of the spatial conformity of modernism's communal understanding. Even though the days of planning as a visual profiling of the modern state's normative foundation through aesthetic mastery may be over, and even though the era of self-declared community is consequently coming to an end, globalisation has opened

up a number of new prospects and raised a number of new problems which, to a large extent, exemplify the need for strategic initiatives in regard to urban and social developments. The environmental issue may be the most obvious example of trans-boundary politics, but there are also trans-cultural issues at stake. Simultaneously, the separation of financial power from politics has had the effect that cultural processes are increasingly controlled by private markets and in the wake of this process, new battle zones over the right to a joint production of meaning are emerging.

There is, for instance, a need for a critical *modus operandi* that can respond in concrete terms to the sophisticated abduction of potential collective initiatives such as that represented by **Benetton Idealism**⁸. 8. The Italian firm Benetton - or "United Colors of Benetton", as it's officially branded (implying a kind of post-national powerhouse status) - is

maybe the best example of how multinational brand companies adopt what look like 'critical' positions in their marketing strategies. Simple emotional messages with connotations of social responsibility making their products an almost idealistic project and cover up the fact that they are out there to make money. For a critique of this false idealism of design - see Roemer van Toorn's article on Dirty Realism: <http://www.xs4all.nl/~rvtoorn/dirty.html>.

In the same way the commercialisation by market forces of cultural codes has created new forms of aesthetic resistance⁹ that could inspire architects and planners to back some of the forms of expression currently the property of individual consumer choice and allow forms of cultural expression that are protected against copying the chance to multiply without risking legal action.¹⁰ 9. Klein, Naomi 2001. 10. Idem.



Urbanism as material practice, however, cannot avoid a reformulation of its own instrumentality, and it must make use of the new demarcations that characterise the global economy's urban forms as its points of departure. As Bauman dryly remarks, pedantic state planning has left a vacuum in terms of values, but it has also created more freedom and a new free scope for those urban designers who have taken the place of bureaucrats.¹¹

11. Bauman 2002, p. 100.

At the same time, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that that modernist planning practice was an endeavour of harmonisation, whose spatial consensus was also largely a unification machine that

would not and could not exploit the dynamics that are found outside conformity. With the advent of post-modernism, a new sensibility towards the individual mark has emerged and with it new prospects have opened out for considering the interconnections between a world of everyday experience with its individualised urban tales and the overall physical context, which for a long time was the planner's only horizon. Post-modern understanding of urbanity seems to include both the physical pattern of the overall map, the different traces or 'songlines' of everyday life and the individual experience framing different places, situations and atmospheres. So maybe there



is a future for planning as a re-connecting tool. Although the free market has already developed generic programmes to accompa-

ny globalisation, the standardised settings of the entertainment business, the tourist industry and the consumer world do not control or monopolise the common space, because urbanism, even though it may not be formally and consciously planned, always will provide the frame of meaning for a differentiated collective identity.¹² 12. Tom Nielsen 2002, p.77-92.

A city acquires history even through it does not fit the ideals of the prevailing hegemony. In the end it is a matter of mapping new cultural references and the new material practice that are results of globalism – and formulate insights that may make urbanism capable of maintaining its critical potential.



Al Boom Tourist Village



The American University



Creek Side Marina



Creek side Park



Al Mamzar Beach Park



Bujr Al Arab



Deira City Center



Deira City Center



Bujr Al Arab



Creek Side Marina



Global Village & Dubai Shopping Festival



Deira City awaiting the future Palm Deira



Early stage of Emirates Hills Development



Emirates Hills Golf Club



Early Industrial Site



Dubai Media City



Dubai Festival City Site before construction



Heritage Village and Diving Village



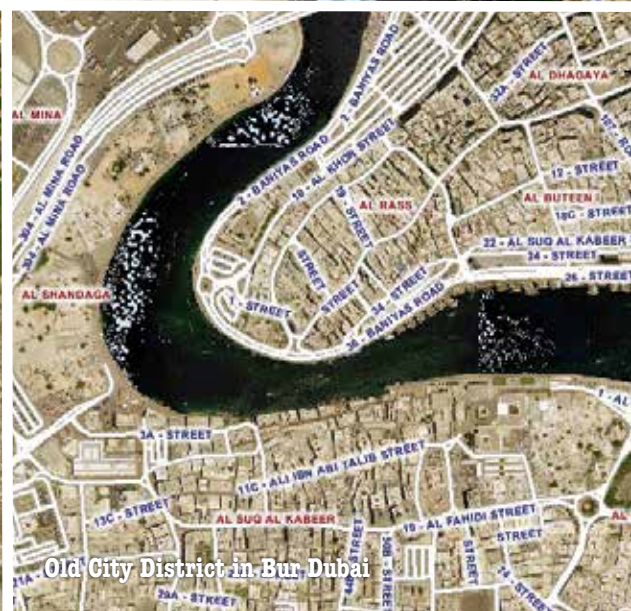
The Palm Jumeirah coming into shape



Lamza Plaza Shopping Centre



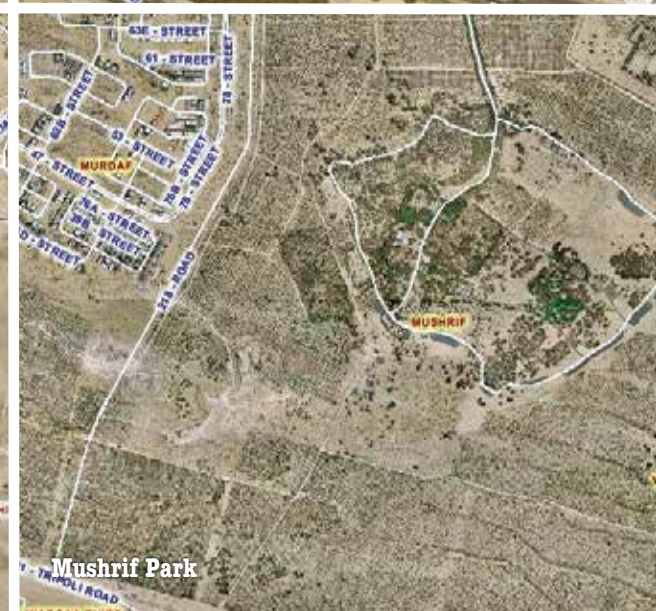
Al Bastakiya new constructed 'historic district'



Old City District in Bur Dubai



Dubai Marina under construction



Mushrif Park



Dubai -
Dynamics
of Bin-go -
Urbanism

Dubai, which is the second largest sheikdom in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), is the one of the wealthy Arabic pocket states that has been most successful in re-saddling from the unilateral utilisation of oil to an advanced post-industrial economy. Over three decades this desert area measuring roughly four thousand square kilometres has developed from a small trading station under British protectorate to a city-state of roughly 1.3 million inhabitants with one of the world's fastest growing economies.

Less than 10% of Dubai's gross national product is directly based on oil production, and one of the main reasons for this formidable shift in economics is with-

out a doubt the enormous investments over recent decades that have fertilised Dubai's desert surface with infrastructure and other site development projects. *“With the ambitious Maktoum family at the helm, billions of petro-dollars have been invested in the development of an infrastructure which has transformed Dubai into a regional capital for leisure and sport, commerce and trade re-export, exhibitions and conferences, as well as a global aviation hub and the world's fastest growing tourist destination.”*¹³

13. Dubai International Airport Yearbook and Directory 2002/03, p. 8.

Since independence at the beginning of the 70's, the UAE have spent US \$225 billion¹⁴ on expanding the

infrastructure. ¹⁴ According to Gulf News online edition 11-11-2001 (accessed 02-06-2005). *“Oil wealth has been able to give Dubai, and the whole of the UAE, the most advanced and sophisticated infrastructure in the world”.* ¹⁵ ¹⁵ According to Gulf News online edition 29-01-2002. *Eight-lane motorways linking regular clover-shaped distribution centres run through the desert of Dubai and divide almost desolate areas into strategic plots.*



Enormous power plants with pipelines connected directly to the oil wells send vibrating energy grade lines towards the horizon. Desalination plants with widely branched distribution systems alongside modern communication technologies form an open plan structure of technological fertility along the Persian Gulf.

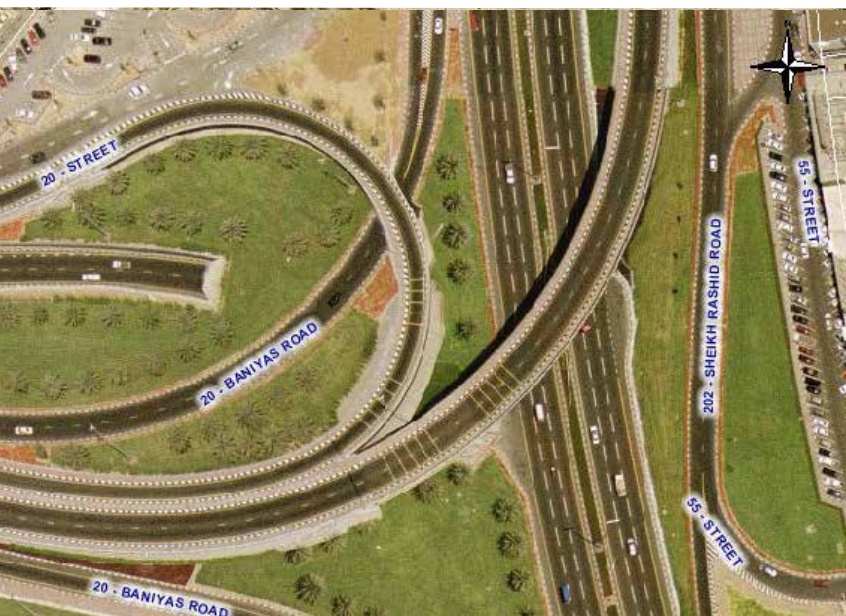
Together with a rapidly increasing number of spectacular high-profile projects and landmarks such as luxury hotels, offshore holiday resorts, extravagant golf courses, governmental offices and financial Towers of Babel, infrastructure is the very foundation on which the city makes its base, not just physically and functionally, but also very much as a unifying narrative. Like most contemporary cities, Dubai is not defined by a clear demarcation line between productive and unproductive, between culture and nature, between built-up areas and open landscape. As in most generic cities, the boundaries of urban culture are both internal and external.

In Dubai, the desert is everywhere – inside, between and around urban developments. What defines present-

day culture and marks a boundary is the limit of its infrastructure. East of the outer motorway is where the territory of Hummer expeditions and the ‘old Bedouin age’ begins.

Infrastructure is the foundation of this desert state. It shapes the very contours of the civilisation behind the formation of the state and is, therefore, the object of an indigenous ornamental culture. The pockets of inaccessible landscape fragments that are a consequence of all the large motorway intersections and roundabouts are not just downsides, meaningless distributional spaces, or logistic marks in the sand. They function as quasi-parks and oases of botanical clusters in the midst of one of the world’s most infertile areas. Seen in contrast to the all-encompassing and constant drought, these enclaves of realised mirages appear to be both convenient centres of orientation and strategic statements.

The ritualistic maintenance of all the residual areas around the larger roads along with the enormous sums that are spent on irrigation of infrastructural **SLOIP**¹⁶ have turned a term formerly referring to waste and



exclusion into the most likely candidate for a new key player in the struggle to define a post-modern public domain. 16. "SLOIP" is (Lionel Brett's) acronym for "Space Left Over In Planning". See Brett 1971. Pivotal points of the road system are monumentalised with apolitical artefacts, which, at a formal distance to the political reality, far exceed the abstraction level of 'Western' modernism's democratic sculptures.

A 30-40 foot tall coffee set, a gigantic clock with built-in fountain, and different synthetic natural scenarios adorn nexuses of a city-state that has

its roots in mobility and celebrate a seemingly random, but nonetheless collective, narrative.

The embedded codes and the Epos of Mobility, which the cultivation of all residual landscapes¹⁷ illustrates, would not just be a meta-structure of waste of heroic dimensions but altogether meaningless, if the road system was merely intended as a physical form of conveyance and a basic necessity for economical circulation.

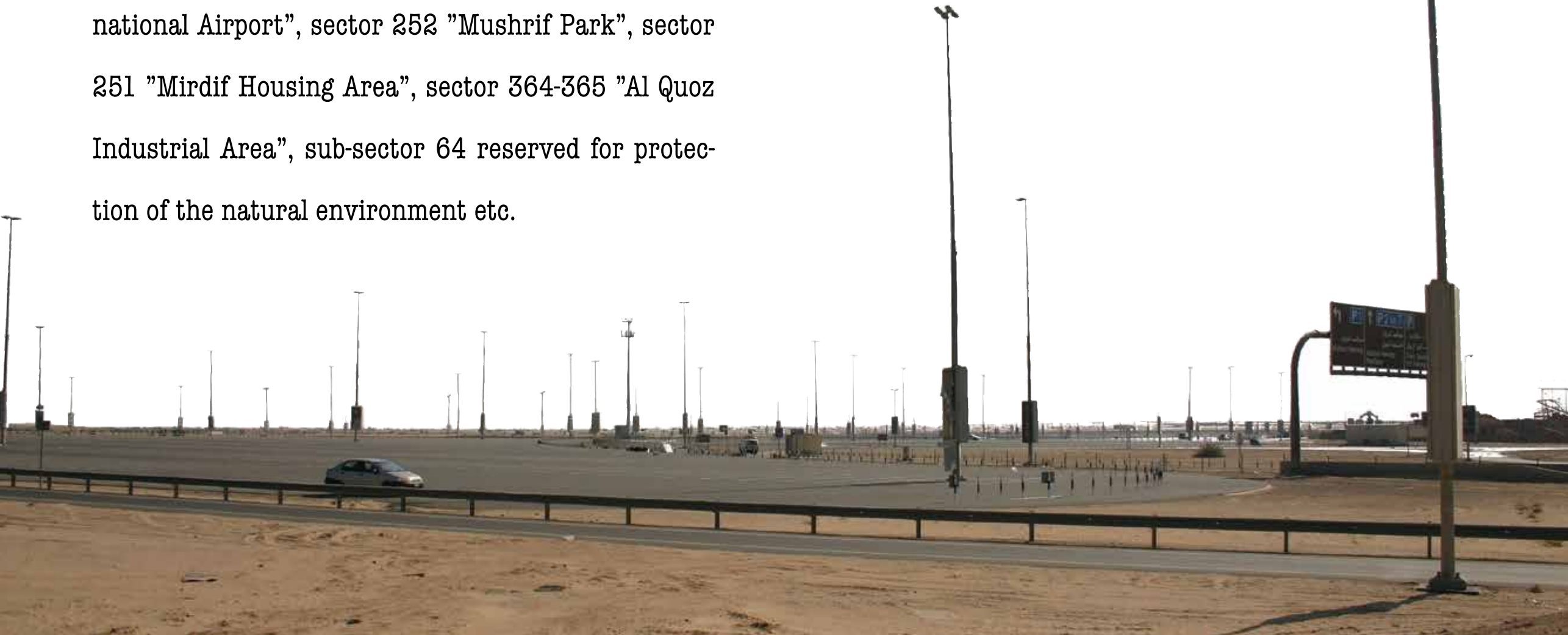
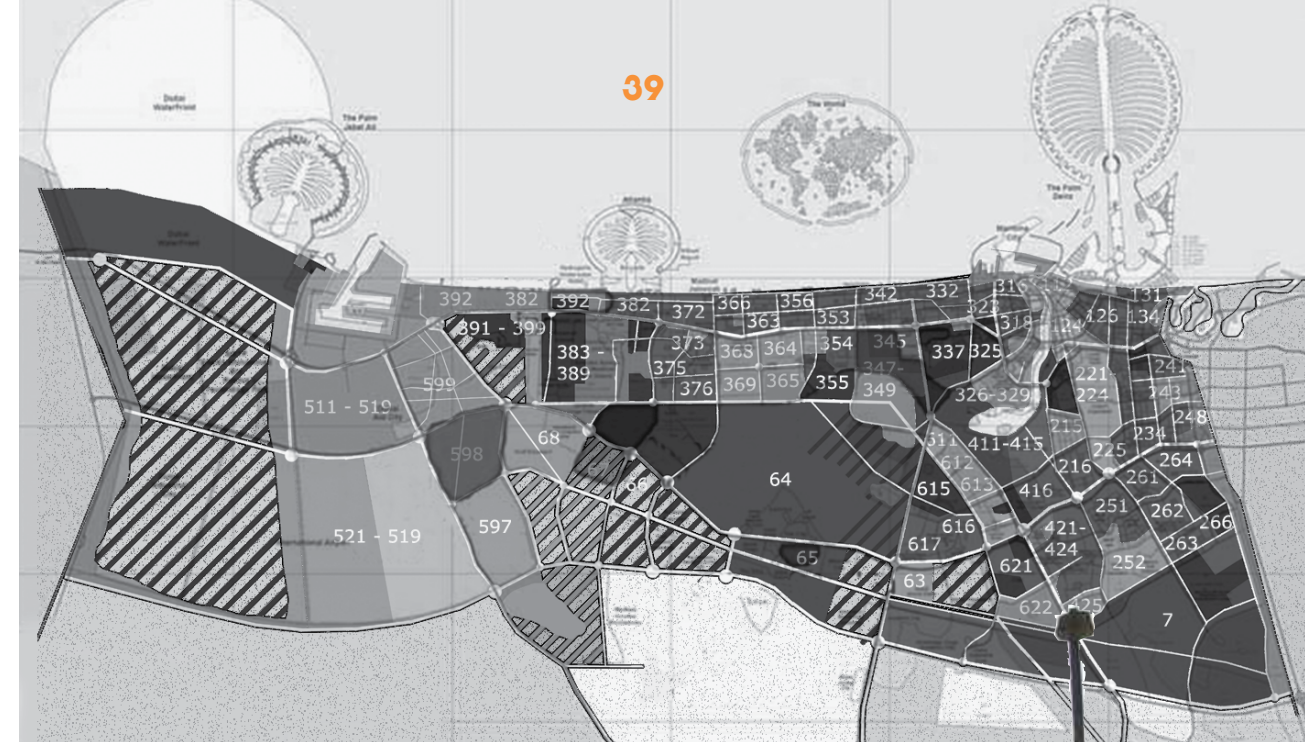
17. The areas are residual landscapes in a two-fold sense. Firstly because they constitute a residue in terms of planning areas, and secondly because they are employed as dumping sites for

the surplus residue of sludge from the wastewater treatment plants. Modern Dubai is not the result of an accumulative culture; its source of origin has eroded in the desert sands long ago, and its material history can, therefore, not be written as a progressive crossing of thresholds, celebrated by the passage through a triumphal arch in the tradition of classical architectural history. Naturally, the pivotal points of the traffic network are the crown jewels of the state-owned investment project, but they are also the dynamic spaces that best bear witness to the abrupt process which character-

ises Dubai's cultural and economic development. And why should Autopia not have its own monuments, when the motorway system of a freeway culture is, as noted by American architectural historian Reyner Banham, already a place with its own consistency and conceptual coherence?¹⁸ 18. Banham 2001, p.195. The round-about and the motorway intersection's monuments of transition may be to the post-modern city what the triumphal arch and the city wall were to the concentric city.



These regular plots of land and sites for development between corridors of transport and communication are separated into a rational sector system, where a numeric code indicates the physical location of the area, its intended utilisation and its placement in the economy, for example, sector 221 to 224 "Dubai International Airport", sector 252 "Mushrif Park", sector 251 "Mirdif Housing Area", sector 364-365 "Al Quoz Industrial Area", sub-sector 64 reserved for protection of the natural environment etc.



Urbanised Dubai comprises a rectangular system measuring roughly 500 square kilometres of more or less scattered built-up areas, which run along the coast from the frontier with neighbouring state Sharjah in the north to Jebel Ali Harbour in the south. No original city centre can effectively be said to exist. The majority of the old buildings have been demolished long ago, but the street structure around the tidal inlet Dubai Creek, which divides the old harbour area into two separate districts, Bur Dubai and Deira, has retained part of its concentric structure and has become a loose knot in an organic grid structure of north/southbound arteries and east/westbound connecting roads. Quite a bit of scattered urban development takes place, old buildings are demolished to make space for new ones and empty spaces are filled. However, primary growth takes place, unsurprisingly, within those areas left untouched by the

infrastructural system, which despite a calculated overcapacity nevertheless requires regular expansion in order to absorb the increasing growth. In Al Barshaa and Al Sufouh in the free trade zone to the south, large billboards and numerous construction cranes bear witness to ongoing development, which soon will cause a local bottleneck in the system.

There has been an attempt to organise Dubai's urban development according to something that resembles a traditional modern ideal. This involved clear zoning and a rational organisation of production in a finely woven network of mobility, which work according to some sort of **Fuzzy Functionalism**¹⁹ instead of Fordism's principle of assembly line order. 19.

"Fuzzy logic" is describing propositions handling a weak logic which is neither true nor false. Fuzzy or weak logic is used to control programmes dealing with unique processes (i.e. in

advanced washing machines!) which can not be contained within the framework of scientific management. 'Fuzzy functionalism' could then be used as a metaphor describing the highly rational and at the same time very eccentric planning schemes used in Dubai. In spite of clear planning into patterns comprising mono-functional areas and the overall rectangular systems, the culture of construction that has emerged does not behave according to any known ideal.

Clearly, the scattered structure of growth oases does not match the concentric model, but nor does it call to mind anything that can be traced back to the earlier autonomous enclaves of known polycentric conurbations. Neither is this situation controlled by the formalistic principle of dispersion, which ribbon development immediately simulates.

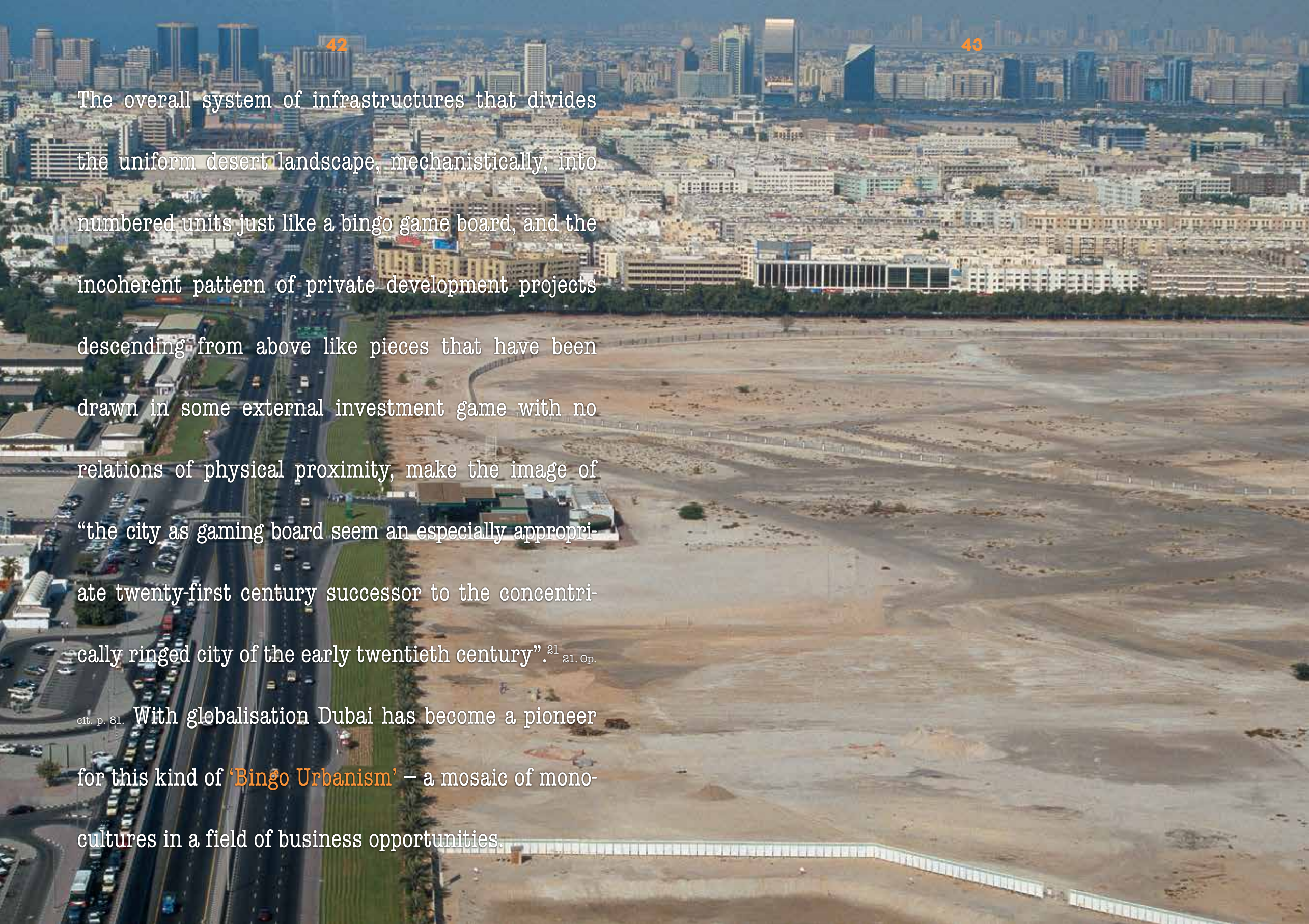
Dubai has a backbone of development along the coast, but all modern programmes such as business

parks, financial headquarters, residential

enclaves, shopping centres, tourist destinations, fun and recreational landscapes, which make up the greater part of urban growth, are too scattered to form a recognisable territorial pattern, and the single units are too solitary to form unitary connections.

The city is a fragmented post-polycentric environment held together by technologies with their base in mobility, whose general layout is a 'French landscape', but whose local organisation complies with an 'English garden plan', and whose economic dynamic is globally oriented. On many points, this combination of rational structure, autonomous internal organisation and external growth conditions makes Dubai a good representative for what California geographers Michael Dear and Steven Flusty have labelled "keno capitalism".²⁰ 20. Dear & Flusty 1999, p. 77.



An aerial photograph of Dubai, showing a dense urban skyline in the background with several skyscrapers. In the foreground, a wide, multi-lane highway runs vertically, flanked by green landscaped areas with palm trees. To the right of the highway is a vast, flat, sandy desert landscape. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image, following the curve of the highway. There are two orange numbers, '42' and '43', positioned above the text in the upper left and upper right areas respectively.

The overall system of infrastructures that divides the uniform desert landscape, mechanistically, into numbered units just like a bingo game board, and the incoherent pattern of private development projects descending from above like pieces that have been drawn in some external investment game with no relations of physical proximity, make the image of “the city as gaming board seem an especially appropriate twenty-first century successor to the concentrically ringed city of the early twentieth century”.²¹ 21. Op.

cit. p. 81. With globalisation Dubai has become a pioneer for this kind of ‘**Bingo Urbanism**’ – a mosaic of monocultures in a field of business opportunities.



The
EXPO-isation
of the **City**

The huge mass of structural imports, which forms the basis of Dubai's developmental success, were initiated and carried out by English engineering firms who were as a consequence allowed to function as a kind of local authority in the first consolidation

phase.²² 22. Fowler & Roberts 1995, p. 135. All public services such as sewage systems, electricity and water supply, waste disposal etc. were in the hands of a very small number of private companies, which thereby came to play a central role in social affairs. The close connec-



tion between the state and a few handpicked companies is in a sense a thing of the past. A locally-based expatriate labour force has taken over the operation and control of the different facilities, a new system of tenders has partly replaced the more personal connections of earlier times, and the sheiks' unit shares in several of the active consortiums have made the distinction between private corporations and state activities more diffuse.

The power of the tribal state is now everywhere, its institutions have slowly become bureaucratized, and the basic infrastructures that made modernisation possible in the first place have become naturalized. The road grid still functions as a loose unifying force, and the power of the omnipotent ruler still features in the domain of mobility by giving its name, for example, to larger roads, roundabouts, bridges, etc. Today, however, Dubai's social infrastruc-

ture is split up into different functions and units, where tasks are undertaken by operators in a market driven more by competition.

The entrepreneurial display of desalination plants and sewage systems, which were synonymous with Dubai's institutions in the first consolidation phase, has taken on a much more diverse character both economically, functionally and aesthetically.

With the booming of the globalized



economy, Dubai has become a form of world fair. Almost like a colossal Expo where several of the participating entrepreneurs have themselves become corporate micro nations, which compete against each other on the global market in regard to transportation systems, waste disposal, security, communication technologies, finance, insurance, cleaning,

theme parks, hotels, holiday resorts, luxury buildings, shopping centres and all the other components that form part of a post-modern society.²³

^{23.} Globalisation's tendentious dissolution of the nation state mirrors the tendency of international companies to nominate themselves as habitats or micro-nations for certain lifestyles. See Dear & Flusty 1999, p. 64 - 85.

Dubai has, just like the real Expo, become a home to extravagant architecture from all over the world, a gated utopia full of people of all nationalities working or having fun for a period. This Expo-isation is much more multi-faceted than the traditional world fair, and its organisation is more complex, but otherwise there is a striking similarities. In short, Dubai as a phantasmagorical picture is no longer a framed narrative but a fiction used actively to create history.²⁴

^{24.} Giddens 1996, p. 29.

The majority of Dubai's 'population' are ex-patriots with no formal political influence, so civil rights are more or less reduced to work, security and consumption. And this cosmo-cultural security state has no common ritual calendar; it has relative religious freedom, because neo-liberalism to a large extent overrules clericalism, and people thus tend to their own

Gods, while bowing to an economical cycle that operates with a permanent fun feast.

All shopping days are holy days in the calendar of the shopping centre. In this connection, Expo-isation functions as a common aesthetic basis for different expressions of lifestyle and habits of consumption, and the theatrical language which is mechanically



iterated by Dubai's inflated generic architecture has become the vernacular expression of the global space. The interconnected network of cities favoured by the new global economy establishes bridgeheads to tax havens but is also made attractive by the unique combination of booming sales and entertainment extravaganzas which is institutionalised by the Expo.

The lay-out of this experience economy or "funscape" is a significant factor for localised planning of the global flow of money and has therefore become an important strategic parameter in urban development. The multinational companies that establish their market stalls in Dubai

do not pay tax, but their display of a trans-national elite, glamorous on the golf course and enviable in its absolute consumer freedom, is extremely profitable business in itself.

This wonderland of wealth has become one of the tourist industry's new raw materials, and the entry fee is one of the Expo-ised city's most important sources of income. Today, 25% of Dubai's GNP derives, according to the Ministry of Tourism, directly or indirectly from tourism, and there are no signs that this percentage will decrease. "With its oil resources running out, Dubai, part of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), has launched a multi-billion dollar tour-

ism drive in an effort to establish itself as the Gulf's leisure hub."²⁵ 25. cf. <http://www.dubaicityguide.com/specials/palmisland.htm> (accessed 29-01-2003). The expected number of visitors will, according to the airport authorities, increase from the present 15 million to 45 million a year within the next three decades.²⁶ 26. According to Dubai International Airport's website at <http://www.dubaiairport.com/>. (accessed Feb. 2003).

The number includes transit passengers, which makes the airport the world's sixth fastest growing and at the same time Dubai's most important shopping centre. The Expo's thematic organisation of space in expressive and introvert monoliths is, moreover, a principle of order that

can assemble the various programmes and, to a certain degree, control bingo urbanism's random pattern of expansion. Dubai, in contrast to an actual Expo, is not arranged around national pavilions but established in territorially independent functioning units, which are grouped as miniature cities. The past is for example exhibited in The Heritage Village, the Diving City and the Al Boom Tourist Village.

Entertainment and events are regarded as a world order and are, therefore, to be found in Dubai Land, Dubai Festival City, Children's City, Wonderland and Global Village. Funshopping is in Wafi City & Deira City Centre. Communication, knowledge



and technology can be encountered in Dubai Internet City, Knowledge Village and Dubai Media City. The financial city is booms in World Trade Center and along Sheik Zayed Road. Exclusive accommodation, yachting and golf are united in *"Emirates Hills - Residential golf course estate"*, *"The Lakes - A professionally planned residential gated community"*, *"The Meadows - EMAAR's premium villa project"* and *"Dubai Marina - The world's largest master planned waterfront development of its kind"*. Meditative retreat and 'Lush Landscapes' lie side by side in Creek Side Park, Safa Park and Mushrif Park. The most significant alteration to

this global post-industrial city state may be the introduction of the extensive enclaving that defines the Expo's places, coordinates the heterogeneity of space, and keeps the architectural elements apart.

This Expo-isation, which has split Dubai's urban space into a solitary typology and into class enclaves, has an afterglow of re-feudalisation and therefore exceeds a poly-centric urban fragmentation in which each enclave as a decentralised unit contains the narrative of totality, so to speak. Although Dubai's post-poly-centric urban pattern is, generally, woven together by infrastructure and exclusively differentiated by



Expo-isation, the representation of the city as material culture has no indexical picture to refer to. Like the hypertext, this elusive epic has no unifying principle. There is no stylistic discrepancy between, for exam-

ple, the Egypt-inspired entrance of the Wafi shopping centre and the adjacent High-Tech residential tower. The stories are co-ordinated and post-modern citation has emancipated the continuity of history and plu-

ralized the semantic logic of urban space. A filtration must take place if the contours of the germinating information society are to be differentiated from the sea of SPAM that blurs the distinction. The narratives of

Dubai (for lack of a coherent theory to plot it with) must therefore be traced as a number of points of impact or oases of evidence in this cultural desert space.



The City of the Image

One of Dubai's most well known landmarks and one of the Expo-state's more extraordinary 'trademarks' is, without a doubt, the 321 meter tall luxury hotel Burj Al Arab, which is placed on a

man-made island approximately 300 metres off the coast of Jumeirah in the southern urbanised area. The hotel represents the extravagance that the tourist ministry eagerly identifies as the true essence of Dubai.

This monument is promoted in different brochures, not only as a point of reference for Dubai, but as “a universal symbol of the new millenium”. Like Eiffel’s tower in Paris, this hotel has an exterior skeleton that makes the building completely open internally. The balconies of the 202 duplex suites face inwards and form a 180 meter high lobby, wrapped in a filigree pattern of gilded ornamentation that might come

out of the Arabian Nights. The introverted culmination of the monument is effectively sealed from its surroundings. Apart from sunlight, only very big spenders, celebrities and other heroes of consumption can occupy this tower of wealth. If the empty interior of the Eiffel Tower was the swan song of robustness, then the cavity of Burj Al Arab is the apotheosis of the atrium.

The seven star hotel is neither the tallest nor the most expensive structure and not even half as phallic as SOM’s Burj Dubai, but has some sophisticated references to its archetype in Paris and is therefore the Expo-city’s most vigorous landmark.



“The Arab Tower’s”²⁷ over-dimensioned delicacy and the Teflon-coated, fibre-glass reinforced screen of the façade bear witness to the ‘frontier’ of contemporary engineering, just like the Eiffel Tower exposed the daring constructions of that time and formed the vantage point from which the world exhibition of 1889 and whole Paris could be observed. ²⁷ Burj Al Arab means “the Arab tower”.

In much the same way as Eiffel displaced the bourgeois saloon up into the skies by placing a restaurant on top of the old monument, so has the English engineering firm of WS Atkins elevated the bar and the jet-set beach party to a height from which the world seems more inviting. The head of ‘the giraffe’ is very

small in order to make the neck longer, just like it was on its forebear, but in contrast to the 1889 icon, the highest point on Burj Al Arab has been cleaved in two. The compositional crowning glory is the helicopter deck, which faces in towards the shore and marks the acme of this society, based as it is on mobility: its heliport. The restaurant and the vantage point, which face away from the city, have become an observation deck for the world’s skyline that only lets Dubai appear in the corner of the eye. What the observation pavilion of the Eiffel Tower provided for the general public, the Burj Al Arab provides for the international national elite. Where the Eiffel Tower, metaphorically, was a triumphal arch that had



been extended by Jacob's ladder, which made it possible for industrialism to look down over the city of the past, Burj Al Arab is an emblem of the global elite's luxury paradise.

The place of honour which this landmark occupies in the symbolic space of Dubai is closely connected to the free-standing vertical character of the hotel. Burj Al Arab is the Sphinx of Dubai that raises its head over the desert in order to fix the symbolic space of the city as a point of reference, and at the same time emphasises Dubai's enigmatic position in the new world. Smaller landmarks can easily perform the functions of local fix points without interfering with the position of the milestone. But what does the Expo-ised city do when investors keep demanding higher and still more inflated

architectural monumentality? How is a landmark surpassed without all the money that has been invested already appearing to be wasted and without destabilising the symbolic hierarchy? Dubai has the answer. Expand the reference system! Just as the opulent luxury of the Burj Al Arab hotel transcended the scale of gradation for luxury hotels, so has it expanded Kevin Lynch's cognitive parameters of urban mapping in the automobile age.²⁸ 28. Edge, node, path,

landmark & district. See Lynch 1960. Dubai has invented something like a 'Great Branding Reef strategy'; the global city has been given its **Benchmark**.

Private investors are in the process of building a series artificial islands in the sea between the harbour area, Jebel Ali, and the urban area, Jumeirah. The Palm Islands projects will be shaped as conventionalised palm tree silhouettes, and they will be

large enough to form the foundation of a brand-new affluent society in the middle of the Arabian Gulf. The Palm, Jumierah and The



hotels as its outer boundary. By virtue of its extent and its urban qualities, The



Palm, Jumeirah as the projects are called, will, when they are completed in 2007, expand Dubai's coastline by 166% and cover approximately 60 km² in area. They will boast 100 luxury hotels, 5000 exclusive beachfront houses, 3600 coastal apartments, four marinas, water parks, theme parks, innumerable restaurants, shopping centres, sport facilities, health spas, and cinemas. Each palm is compositionally divided into a trunk, consisting of a 300 meter-long suspension bridge to the mainland, which is accessible to the public, a privately gated crown as the centre, and an atoll formation in the shape of a half-moon with holiday

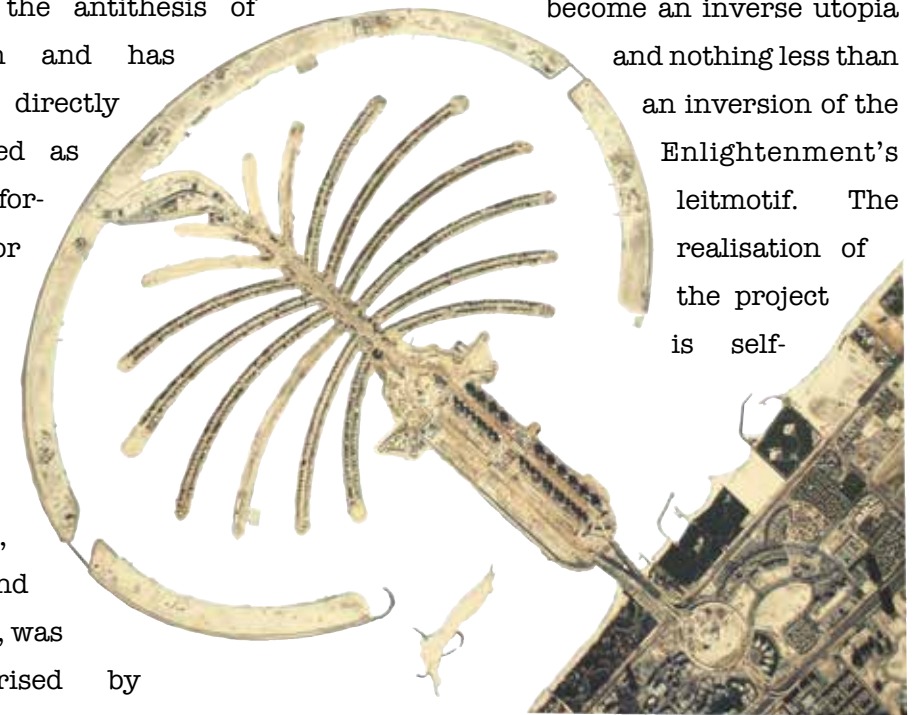
Palm is more than just an accretion on the existing city. The project has become the definitive icon of isolationistic urban development, because it has been so successful in its withdrawal from the existing urban landscape. The glamorous island has become a world-famous brand for luxury life and as such has won the prestigious "American Corporate Identity Award" even before it has been completed. That Dubai, thanks to FutureBrand²⁹, is definitively synonymous with "focus on luxury living"³⁰ should by now be clear to everyone. 29. "FutureBrand" is the world's largest marketing firms and it is responsible for designing The Palm's overall branding strategy



and the entire project's marketing profile. 30. cf. "The Palm Video Collection", 2002. The Palm as an island from which poverty has been banished is only the realisation of an ancient utopia by new means: the elegant exit of the avant-garde instead of the slow trot of common people.

The identity of the gated community and the crowning glory has their starting point exactly where common ground ceases to exist. In that sense, the project splits the utopia concept in two dimensions - both as genesis and projection. Until now, utopia has had its historical justification as the antithesis of exclusion and has been directly legitimised as a performance or fantasy world whose trans-historical ideal, first and foremost, was characterised by

being unrealisable. The Palm is, as the projections repeatedly emphasise, nothing less than the world's 8th wonder, a miracle that is singled out precisely by being something that cannot be imagined.³¹ 31. In the press material it is stated that "An incredible dream beyond even nature's vivid imagination has become reality". As such, the wonder of The Palm surpasses the power of the imagination and literally, cannot be observed as a vision from an earthly perspective. The island only introduces itself from above, to the Olympic eye, and by virtue of its *de facto* realisation; The Palm has therefore become an inverse utopia and nothing less than an inversion of the Enlightenment's leitmotif. The realisation of the project is self-



evidently an entirely pragmatic expansion strategy, even from an economic vantage point. The attractive coastline of Dubai is short, and the extra 120 km of white, sandy beach are necessary if the standard is to be maintained. There are hopes that the tourist industry of the old mainland will also increase in the wake of this new \$1.5 billion invest-

ment. This is evident from the official Palm poster, which shows the number of visitors expected as rising to astronomical levels when the project is completed. The tourist journey has been a social marker for a long time and The Palm, in this sense, plays a dual role; it is both a resort for a chosen few and a **'Kodak Destination'**³² for the aspiring masses. 32. 'Kodak



moment' is the cliché for scenic sites that are 'worth' capturing on film. The project as a benchmark is, furthermore, an extension of the exposure distance that previously existed between a culturally loaded symbol and its urban context. The advertising material states that: "Upon completion, the project will have created the world's two largest man-made islands, which are expected to be visible from the moon and are already visible from outer space."³³ 33. The Palm "Frequently asked questions", August 2002, p. 4. In fact, the current updating of the project's progress is carried out by means of satellite photos. Although the moon has a special symbolic meaning in the Arab countries, the statement should probably be seen as an expression of the project's entry into the global picture.

The moon is unlikely to be on the receiving end of any advertising campaign, but that is not true of satellites and the global awareness that have been brought along by exterritorial optics. Orbiting satellites have become the horizon of the Expo-ised city. The Palm benchmark brands itself directly into the new Google

Earth world image and all the new maps of the Lonely Planet Guides³⁴ and in this way elevates the marketing of the city literally to extraordinary heights. 34. The Bible of lifestyle tourism, "Lonely Planet", mass-produces handbooks with 'insider information' on exotic places and authentic experiences. It has a similar exterritorial conscience or distance built into its own paradox - which is to mass-produce a product and maintain the idea of the *virgin scene*.

Expressed by the promotional literature's own frame of reference:

$$\text{The Palm} = \left(\text{▲} + \text{▲} + \text{▲} + \text{▲} + \text{▲} \right)^2$$

- or *urbs* elevated to *orbit* importance.³⁵ 35. Cf. the promotional literature "Creating the 8th Wonder of the world" - the comparison which is set out here is directly inspired by the scale which the consortium has at its disposal. It is suggested, specifically, that the height of the mentioned wonders make the basis of a relative assessment of the significance of the project (as the equation illustrates).

Urbanity has been linked to a global perception and the world has become the space wherein the setting of the city as an 'image' takes place. The Palm exemplifies how "The Image of the City"³⁶ is no longer constructed by means of materialism's



edge, node, path, landmark and district, but also constitutes itself on the grounds of the collective dreams and fantasies that are broadcasted by air, because the new global city has begun to perceive itself from the outside. 36. Lynch 1960. Urbanity has become self-reflexive and the Expo-ised city has become **The City of the Image**.

The Palm was initially created as an image and was not planned as a realisable project until after the image had proven its conceptual strength. Without heavy marketing, the thousands of millionaire's residences would hardly have been sold, and without the strict design precepts and the moulded matrices of architectonic ready-mades, The Palm would never resemble its original idea, its image. In this sense, architecture has become the last link in the semiotic chain that ties a cultural image to place and city. The Palm erodes all traditional contexts; there was nothing before The Palm, and the island community carries its own pragmatic attachment in the shape of a brand. As observed by American cultural geographer Denis Cosgrove, mapping has always been synony-

mous with man encountering nature.³⁷ 37. Cosgrove 1996, p. 3-13. In a sense, however, this alliance has been turned upside down. The man-made landscapes off Dubai's coast may be expressions of an autonomous materiality in regard to the symbol, but The Palm primarily refers to its own nature and is, therefore, emblematic of the way in which habitat can be lifted out of its given otherness into a virtual ecology of conceptual projection.

The role of the architect, if we can speak of such a thing, is therefore to adapt what is built into a general concept which is a thematic adaptation to an image, and, as is stated in the official press material, to leave an 'eclectic Arabic' signature in the artificial landscape by means of the buildings that are constructed. The style that has been predetermined by the design manual is what could be referred to as a generic variation of Italian, Spanish, Scandinavian, Middle Eastern, Mexican, Japanese, Arabic, English, French, tropical and ranch styles. What the various jargons of place that are illustrated in the promotional literature have in

common is that, in an architectural sense, they do not belong anywhere but rather signal some sort of strategic alliance between the idea of a global jet-set lifestyle and a generalised stylistic locality.

Architecture as the articulation of a global focal plane has been on the programme for a long time – just consider the international style of mod-

ernism. What is new in this connection, however, is that the cultural expressions that are specific to a certain region and their diversity have been drawn into this symbolic broadcasting as generic markers. Folklore has become **'Fakelore'**.³⁸ 38. Cf. Metz, Tracy 2002, p. 177. "Fakelore" from English fake, false. Lore: knowledge or familiarity with a specific subject.





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Heritage
Planning:
Improving
the Past

Not only is Dubai's future taking shape at a rapid rate, but the city's past is also in a process of radical change. EMAAR properties, the very same company that, at the moment, is building a handful of new golf communities and luxury enclaves in the Jumeirah district, is restoring and rebuilding the 'old' Dubai around the tidal inlet's southern bank in Bur Dubai. From the Al Fahidi roundabout in the east and nearly 1000 metres to the west, there will, in a few years time, be a brand-new and historically transformed urban area consisting of the Al Bastakiya and Al Souk Kabeer districts.

Here, there are several historical fragments of isolated buildings and smaller built-up sections scattered over a large area and hidden between modern developments. As the name implies, there is a souk in the area, but also a museum of ancient history and a small cluster of traditional buildings known as "bastakiya", erected in coral stone and constructed around a confined courtyard, and with the characteristic cooling wind towers sticking out over the flat-topped roofs. The Bastakiya district is being extended, and the number of historic



looking buildings will have grown considerably in the near future.

A predetermined route through the area is the main control mechanism which, in the future, will tie the districts to the narrative of the city - "particularly those areas which are relatively unchanged by the fast pace of development."³⁹ 39. Dubai "Townwalk Explorer", Explorer Publishing, 2000. Parking is available by the roundabout or by Dubai Historical Museum, and the trip, which takes the visitor through

the 16 most important points in the thematically bound narrative of the city's history, is estimated to last two hours. It is a somewhat standardised past that is reconstructed and displayed through the connoisseur instructions of the tourist material.⁴⁰ 40. In Giddens, the standardisation of the past and the universality of the future are two sides of the same coin. Giddens 1996, p. 29.

Opposite the eastern entrance of the museum lies the "Ruler's Office" - the so-called Diwan. The building is

from 1990 but it is built in old style with majestic cooling towers. There are also a few mosques in the area,



but visits by non-Muslims are not permitted for religious reasons.

As compensation, however, the mosques fill the space as impregnable landmarks and as an auditory feature in the experience of the city.

When following the itinerary further, one is guided westward with pauses at strategic places – along Al Taleb Street, past the textile souk and further westward to a promenade that runs along the inlet. Next stop on the tour is Shaikh Saeed, Al Maktoum's former residence in



Al Shindanga. This is quite a way from the first sights, and the connec-

tion between 'the old' Dubai, the area around the museum, and the singular **Loco Parentis**, represented by

the ruler's earlier domicile, is primarily the stuff of narrative. The Al Shindanga quarter has yet to be completed; none of the 32 original houses is yet restored, but "Dubai Municipality's plans to restore the area to its former glory"⁴¹ are evident. 41. Department of Tourism

and Commerce Marketing project description of "Shindagha Cultural and Heritage Project", 2002.

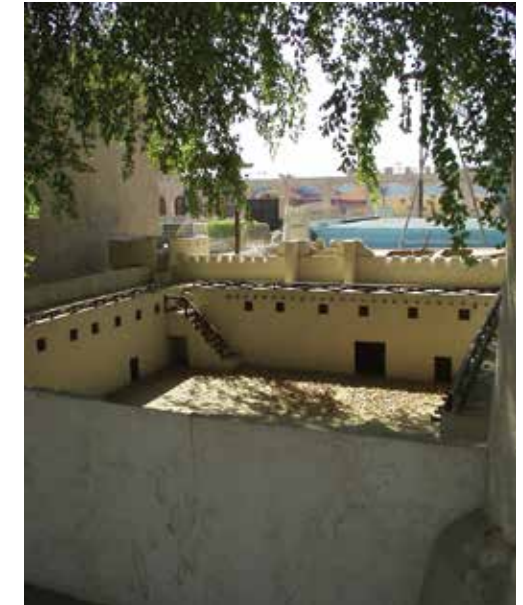
Until then the area where the inlet breaks and where district 312 and 311 converge will be dominated by

the neighbouring Carrefour supermarket and the stacked containers

at Port Rashid. If the Townwalk Explorer map had not marked out this track, the connection between these two areas would probably not have existed. If the desire to find the 'missing link' to the pre-modern world and the memory of an authentic "reality", which tourists uncover with their cameras, were not tied by such strong illusory bonds, the drastic changes of scenery in the show would simply be impracticable. The "old" Dubai we are presented with here is not an expression of a "true" past, and this can hardly be problematical.

Historicity (understood as irreducible event) and the narrativisation of it (i.e. history) are, of course, separate spaces. What is new about the example of "old Dubai", however, is that history and its physical representations are displayed here as a summarised and potential feasible past, which remains only latent. The story we are related here serves as entertainment and has, so to speak, cast off the reins of its trivial past. This does not mean that this particular story of the "old Dubai" is entirely without links to reality but it illus-

trates what Giddens calls *separation of time and space and the use of history to make history*.⁴² 42. "We can all



sense how fundamental the separation of time from space is for the massive dynamism that modernity introduces into human social affairs. The phenomenon universalises that 'use of history to make history' so intrinsic to the processes which drive modern social life away from the hold of tradition. Such historicity becomes global in form with the creation of a standardised 'past' and a universally applicable 'future': ..." Giddens 1991, p. 17. Globalisation and the dissolution of modernity and tradition make universal not only the future but also the past.

The rest of the city is similarly con-

nected by virtue of the ‘guided’ cultural narratives or **Songlines** that have been implemented by this

highly mobilised society. Restoration is not just a form of static preservation but also a means of ensuring the future, a gentle caretaking of history for posterity, which actively consolidates the general esteem of society

in the same manner as various monuments alongside modern infrastructures. However, the renovation of Makthoum House which, today functions as a museum of historic photographs, coins and of role models for

life styles, is not the remit of EMAAR, the omnipresent firm of developers. Due to the special nature of the task, the work has been carried out by “specialized consultant” Bin



Laden Contractors. Seed Al Mak-toum's house is sealed for posterity as the ground zero of the developmental triumph but, despite the respectful restoration of all the delicate structural details, the house lacks life, people and atmosphere.

Restoration alone cannot provide the humanisation of history and the vitalisation of the silent buildings of the past. Something more than construction technique is necessary for the cultural heritage to acquire scenic life, which is why new drama programmes have been added to the restoration of Al Shindaga as a form of replacement in support of buildings who have lost their function. Situat-

ed right behind the humble square namely lie Heritage Village and Diving City. These two villages are almost depopulated during the day, but troops of Bedouins, tradesmen, camels, pearl fishers and other dramatis personae turn up in the evenings.

The heritage village and the diving village are really one large open-air theatre with two stages, which with the aid of enclosures and atmospheric backdrops stage a show about life in old Dubai every night. Even the phone booth in the parking area has had authentic coral pasted onto it, and the rubbish bins certainly look handmade.

These two fabrications of cultural identity form the western rim of the journey through the past, and they exemplify how this contemporary city incorporates both fact and fiction in a finely woven fabric of construction and event through the reinterpretation of the principles of *heritage planning* or **Implanting**

Heritage.⁴³ 43. Planning is usually aiming at a better future, heritage planning or implanting history marks

Dubai's strategic improvement of the past. **The Genesis of Dubai is inextricably bound up with consumption, and the very edifices of history are now consumed just like pearls and silk.**



Jon Jerde was here



Dubai
Festival City

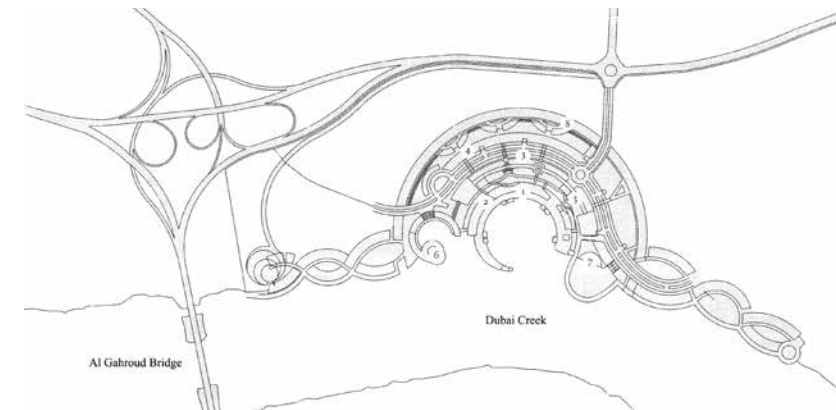
The fictionalisation of space that influences the reconstruction of the 'old' part of Dubai compensates for the lack of an irreducible historicity and is obviously also a cultural reconciliation project, but the deliberate blend of the physical structure of the city and the narrative constructions of stories and fairy-tales is not just a compensatory strategy for an urban development project. The epic urban landscape, which authorities meticulously reorganise as the localities of tradition and past, is indeed an expression of history being marketed, rearranging the city to satisfy the growing market for entertainment event in the form of spatial and cultural values.

As such, leisure time and the past have become parallel consumption domains, both of significant as regards identity and therefore constituting an important twin economic dynamic of the city. This loss of tradition and lack of historic origins constitute but one aspect of the ongoing retreat that here is being conducted by architecture, seen in a stylistic context. The reshuffling of space taking place in the Al Bastaki-

ya, Al Souk Kabeer and Al Shindagha districts, bears witness to the way in which this new economy has had an extra dimension added to its *plan*. Across the physical organization of the city's urban planning is spread a manuscript that edits the shape of space and architecture. In urbanism event has largely replaced volume in significance.

And where planning used to assume that life could be moulded through the control of space, now it is apparently space that, more or less, controls the market's organisation of life as style. The architect behind a new and striking urban development project in Dubai, the Dubai Festival City, is the Californian global place maker Jon Jerde, and he expresses this paradigmatic twist in the social grammar of architecture when he states: "*Our curves are not formal, but perceptual; they are used to draw people in.*"⁴⁴ 44. Jon Jerde - quoted from: Anderton et al., 1999, p. 198.

In much the same way as optical illusions and anamorphoses of the baroque era attempted to burst the physical limits of space by capturing the attention of the spectator from a



specific position, so urban space is now controlled by a script that directs consumers around a constantly expanding consumption. The expansion of consumption economics is not limited by the physical dimensions of the city.

Dubai Festival City is organised like a story, similar to reconstructed history in the shape of narrative. The architect treats space as a storyboard and regards urbanity as something which, first and foremost, has extends in time. *“Our work synthesizes many disciplines in order to produce the tools needed to advance human community as we move into time.”*⁴⁵ Jerde calls this space a “scripted space”, and even the name *Dubai Festival City* underlines the *festivalisation* of the city. *“‘The Disneyland effect’ has entered our language, to remind us that hypertrophied mall ‘cities’ have become essential to globalized tourism”.*⁴⁶

Klein, Op. cit. p. 113. (Hypertrophy is the medical designation of the abnormal enlargement of an organ).

The Chief Executive Officer of the festival city, American architect and businessman Lee Tabler says: *“The Internet is an essential part of Dubai Festival City’s communication with potential tenants and curious onlookers alike (...) In many circumstances it is the first contact some people*

*have with us and it is essential that the website presents a dynamic, clear and consistent message.”*⁴⁷ 47. Press statement: “Dubai Festival City Website Revitalised” at: <http://www.dubaifestivalcity.com/press15.html> (accessed March 2003). The future success of the project is largely dependent on whether or not the laying of the electronic ‘foundations’ is successful and whether this concept will break through in cyberspace. It is evident from the colourful descriptions and pictures that the project will cover an area of about 500 hectares stretching approximately 4 kilometres along the north side of the tidal creek from Al Garhoud Bridge in the east. The project has been given the status of “a city in the city”, a description which is based on its size alone. This new city-in-the-city is, as the saying goes, “designed for the future” and will consist of 15 different districts that broadly cover different target groups mapped out through market research. The plan itself is shaped like a tadpole. A 55 storey tower constitutes the landmark of the festival city and makes the development turn its main orientation westwards. A tail comprised of corbie-stepped buildings that suggest the maritime theme of “waterfront development”, with its winding curves, is attached to the tower. In spite of the colours and the formal paraphrasing of the surroundings, the building style also bears the unmistakable characteristics of Jon Jerde. The distinctive winding curves and the entire programming belong in the specific group of overgrown ‘mallificated’ developments, which Jerde International has erected on all of the world’s continents, except the Antarctic. Jon Jerde calls his strategy **‘Place Making’**, and one of its fixed reference points is clearly classical town space such as we find in the historic city centres of, for example, northern Italy. But ‘place-making’ has to be understood in a proactive sense as new creation in contrast to the European dominated contextualism that attempts to express the inherent character of the place and an impression of its spirit such as Christian Norberg-Schultz prescribes in his “Genius Loci”.⁴⁸ 48. ‘Genius Loci’ is Christian Norberg-Schultz’s expression for architecture’s pre-modern and site-specific alliance with culture. See Norberg-

Schultz 1980. In that sense Jerde is interested in historic styles as scripts and not as an expression of an alliance with character that is specific to place. Dubai Festival City is not bound to place as an expression of the idea of *genius loci*. Jerde himself delivers all the inscriptions, even those that refer to something historic and therefore have to take their starting point in a *tabula rasa*. In a press release this is expressed as follows: “When we looked at the site we found it had the right energy we were looking for, it was virgin land which

gave us the flexibility to do what we wanted to do.”⁴⁹ 49. Stars Online at <http://www.stars.com/art/101757501715460.htm> (accessed 02-04-2003). If anything, Dubai Festival City has its origins in what can be called in terms of the theory of architecture **Genius Logo**, or town planning as media strategy. The plan is a brand; a loyal double of the project’s logo. “The logo reflects the dynamism of Dubai Festival City and will assist in establishing its image with its local, regional and international audiences.”⁵⁰ 50. http://www.afwebadmin.com/futtaimwatches/new/details_press.asp?id=860 (accessed 15-01-2003).

The developer behind Dubai Festival City is the Al-Futtaim Group, which operates within a range of financial sectors and different brands like Volvo, Lexus, IKEA, Marks & Spencer’s, Toys ’R Us. The Al-Futtaim Group has financed the project alone and can therefore lease the majority of its commercial programmes itself. Once it is completed, this US\$ 4 billion development will be the largest “mixed-use real estate project” in the Middle East. The separation of living quarters, recreation, production and transportation which, linguistically, is hidden in the term ‘mixed-use’, and which formed the basis of the

industrial city,

has become an overlapping territory by virtue of franchise capitalism. The festival city will not be inhabited in the traditional sense of the word; it will be time-shared by the new citizen of the world. All of the flats and hotel rooms are plugged directly into the airport, whose air space forms the physical portal of the development. Festival City is a consumption community, the inhabitants are customers, the city is a store, and the recreational facilities form part of the development plan as effective production facilities. The 18-hole Robert Trent Jones II golf course, which is going to be the ‘green’ element in the development, is not just designated for fun. It is very much designed for the use of the elite’s BUSINESS VACATION®.⁵¹ 51. “Business Vacation®” is one of Koolhaas’ patented concepts. Koolhaas et al., 2001a, p. 704. With Dubai Festival City, the Al-Futtaim Group has completed what mallification has heralded for ages but only hinted at realising. With Dubai Festival City, the mall has passed the final obstacle in its way, and actualised its latent ambition of assuming the character of a consummated city.





Dubai Shopping Festival

Besides being the originators of Dubai Festival City, Al-Futtaim Investments is also one of the main sponsors behind Dubai Shopping Festival, which has been the biggest *"retail cum entertainment extravaganza"* performance in Dubai since 1996. The festival takes place at the beginning of the spring and is an extraordinary initiative in the

middle of the off-season period. Although the slump period essentially affects all of Dubai, the festival has managed to establish its temporary headquarters, Global Village Dubai, within the Dubai Festival City area at the foot of the Al Garhoud motorway bridge with a little help from the new sponsor. "The global village"



EXPO of the festival and it consists of different 'international' pavilions that represent the event's leading actors and, at the same time, is a frame of reference for the territories that the producers wish to portray as their domiciles.

Global Village Dubai, furthermore, stabilises the centre-less festivities by the use of a variety of effects to attract mass attention such as fireworks, music, food from all parts of the world, souvenirs, opening ceremonies and other wow effects. Although the self-display of the city lacks a centre just as much as the city does, the organisers of Dubai Shopping Festival, DSF, have realised that marketing can be centred to advantage. In the same way any shopping centre has an atrium at its centre in order for the event space and the consumption culture to maintain a kind of narcissistic self-awareness.

Fun-shopping is by its very nature constituted by its own reflected image. Moreover, DSF is also very

much a question of making Dubai visible to the global audience. The festival was started in order to get business going and it has developed into a large event – it could be referred to as the resurrection ritual of consumption culture – which includes different events and entertaining programmes. In 2002, a wide range of arrangements was held under the sub-theme “One World, One Family, One Festival”, among others the Dubai World Cup horse race, UEA World Cup “Endurance marathon”, “Ideal Arab Mother and Family Awards”, the golf tournament “Dubai Desert Classic”, the Family Fun phenomenon “Safe City”, a sand sculpture show, a wedding costume exhibition, various motor stunt shows and, last but not least, the “Hamdan

bin Rashid Al Maktoum Award for Distinguished Academic Performance” – and hundreds of other arrangements in support of the shopping adventure. The strategic dissemination of events and cultural solemnities that are represented by the different supportive arrangements reflect a new global tendency to localise shopping as the core of the cultural pattern. Nevertheless, the message seems to be: Without good malls no happy families, and without good shopping opportunities no academic achievements.

In the dominant market perspective, the city has become an extended shop and urbanity has almost become synonymous with cappuccino and croissants. These 'good' city spaces are usually made up of granite with fountains and 'son-ét-lumière' effects. The goods that are in demand in this particular **Lyon's Club Urbanism** are basically identical; so the crux of the matter is to vary the atmosphere of the surroundings and arrange the supply in new discourses of consumption. The main events of the festival either have their own arenas or make use of

the main stage in Global Village. Most of the larger theme parks are involved in the festivities in much the same way as the shopping centres, which are obviously incorporated as the projected arenas of the festival. But the space outside the commercial hotspots is also involved. In connection with the festival, several of the main arterial roads are assigned themes, which are supposed to transform the street space into outdoor galleries of artistic shows, sports activities and other “family-related” performances. At the onset of the event urban space is made use of as a market place for this form of post-industrial production, and Dubai's *citoyen simulé*⁵² are allocated the role of walk-on parts centre-stage. 52. Only 10% of Dubai's citizens are citizens in the 'civic' sense of the word – this means that 90% of public life is conducted by these “simulated citizens”, who are either visa tourists or service personnel who live in a somewhat un-marginalised sphere of tolerated residence. The modern city has no visible back stairs for servants; the segregation is invisible *én parnasse*.

In 2002 more than 2.5 million shoppers from all parts of the world participated in the performance of

this urban event. During the festival the city is also invaded by different fictive characters from the fairy-tale world: plastic dolls, smiling inflatable balloon faces and itinerant costumes from Disneyland that, typically, could be Aladdin and, almost always without exception; Snow White + dwarfs who guest perform in the city's parks and shopping centres in order to make the festival an even more fantastic experience and in order to whip up the atmosphere of controlled hysteria, which is necessary if the consumer orgy are not to lose its momentum. Certain amounts of political and moral repressive tolerance are needed in the events, in order to make the world's consumers show up.

Fun-shopping is not just muzak. In the end the free market economy demands that the ears of power tune in on "easy-listening".⁵³ 53. Norman M. Klein 1999, p. 113. One of the things that the government in Dubai must have heard is the story about the weather, and how a bad climate, by all accounts, is the only thing that should rightly give rise to concern in the generic city.⁵⁴ 54. According to Koolhaas: "Bad

weather is about the only anxiety that hovers over the Generic City.", see Koolhaas, 1994a, p. 1283. In order to compensate for the decreasing number of tourists as a result of the high temperatures in the summer, authorities have held the annual Dubai Summer Surprises, DSS, in June, July and August since 1998. It is targeted at the world's families with young children, and it is a ten-week-long series of 'surprises' and entertainment events wrapped in different commercial features and climatically controlled meeting points launched under the title "The Summer Capital of Fun". In contrast to the unadulterated consumer bonanza of the Shopping festival where entertainment and *Gruen-drift*⁵⁵ were in focus, what is stressed in the DSS arrangement is infotainment, waiting-on-children and cooling; e.g. Cartoon Surprises, knowledge Surprises, Back-2-School Surprises, Ice Surprises etc. 55. The Austrian-American urban planner and the father of modern shopping-centre-urbanism Victor Gruen, has lend his name to the so-called 'Gruen drift' - the state of unrestrained distraction that is the modus operandi of impulse buying. See Leong 2001, p. 381 - 389.



The ice-theme is probably the most consistent of all of the entertainment packages. It is abundantly clear that *Ice* plays a part conceptually on no less than three distinct levels - as potential antidote to prevailing overheating, as an exotic antidote to the surroundings desert landscape, and as a physical consumable product. That such thematisation has made its mark so effectively as the hidden thread allowing



the modern city to discover its labyrinth can perhaps be attributed to this ability to create connections that cut across the more normal topologically fixed perceptions of place. The event sites presented at the shopping festival and the “summer surprises” consist precisely of a modulations of both the time of the event and the place of the city. Just like any other city, Dubai is full of such “Chronotopes”.⁵⁶

56. Tygstrup 2003. Time/spaces matrices such as

Eskimo Land, DSS 2002 are some of the main attractions in Fun City in the EXPO area by the airport. Families with young children and other tourists on pilgrimages are offered a virtual trip to a wonderful spot outside of the site-specific localisations of the world. *“The Journey to Eskimo Land takes the children through the lifestyle and traditions of the Eskimos in their day-to-day life. Living amongst penguins and ice wolves, Eskimos live a completely different lifestyle in their icy world, and children get to live this experience through a visit to this DSS location.”*⁵⁷

57. http://www.godubai.com/dss2002/wns1.asp?article_id=2002/PKM%2388 (accessed 02-06-2005).

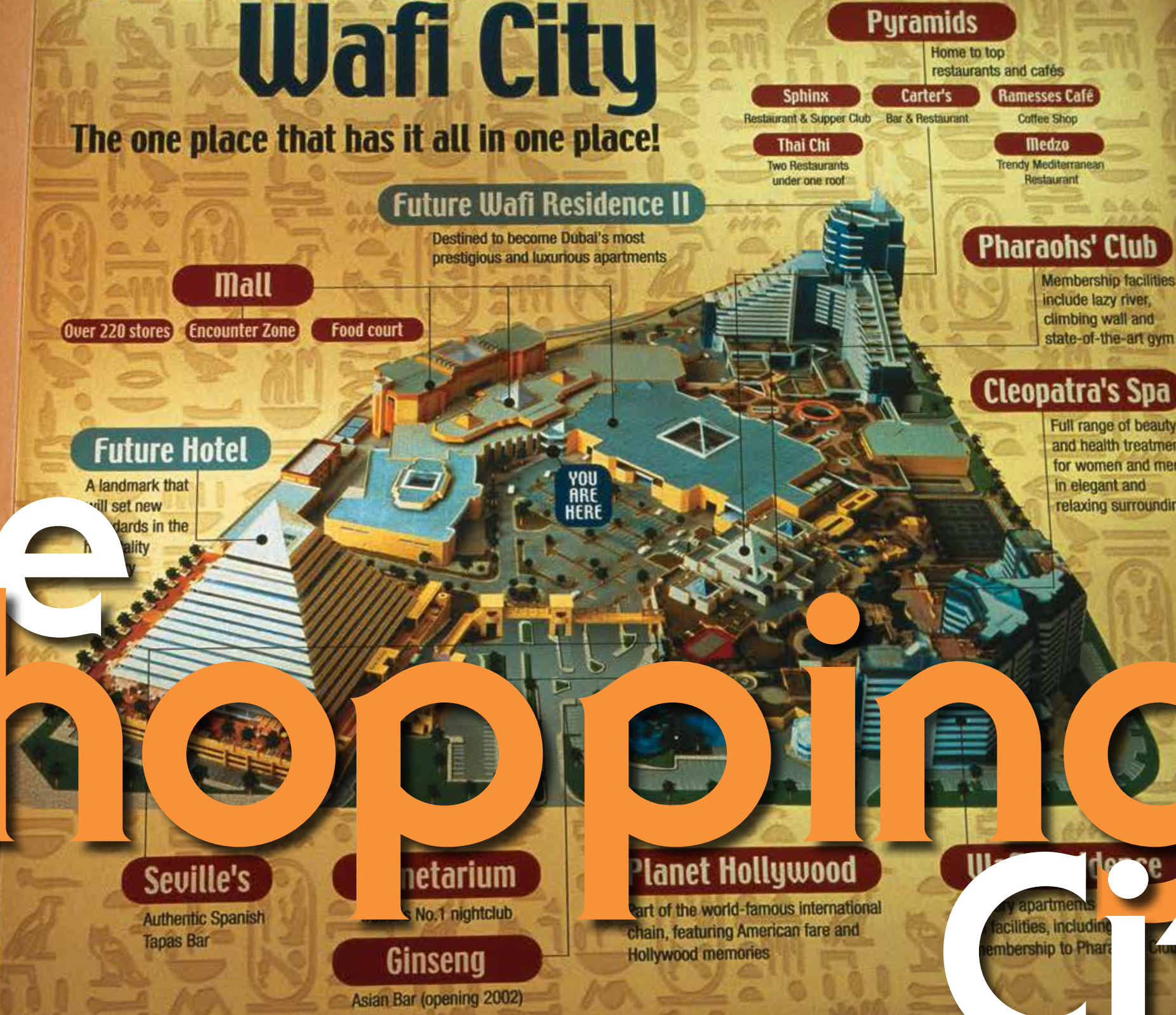
With thematisation, the modern city has the opportunity to match these ‘ice wolves’ and ‘penguins’ in a

story about a place that neither exists in a geographical sense nor is embedded in the territorial context where it is experienced, although penguins and ‘ice wolves’ live on opposite sides of the globe in the real world. Although this understanding of the place as a modulation of time and space is probably not an explanation given by the Al-Futtaim Group (the creator of Dubai Festival City and main sponsor of Global Village Dubai) when they talk, in the ‘philosophy’ paragraph on their website, about “a sense of place”,⁵⁸ it is nevertheless the place of experience and the understanding of contemporary urbanity’s chronotope character which is de facto unfolded. 58. Cf. Dubai festival’s website at: <http://www.dubaifestivalcity.com/philosophy.html> (accessed 04-02-2003).



Welcome to Wafi City

The one place that has it all in one place!



The Shopping City



With the destabilisation of this contextually embedded space reflected by this new “sense of place” comes a destabilisation of the material culture that we have inherited from the industrial society. The relation between the object, the history of its creation and its symbolic value alters profoundly once the location of production is no longer the source of the product’s history. The material objects to which we ascribe cultural expression and attach lived experience, are either ‘Made in China’ or produced in various places around the world and assembled into a whole at some random place by some international company. The location of production is no longer rel-

evant for the object, the commodity or the product – the original location or its place of belonging is, now, primarily ascribed a value in relation to the display of the object and the consumption that follows. Consumption *takes place* everywhere, and this homelessness of things is, therefore, a contributory factor in the obsession of contemporary material culture with thematisation.

The battle for entitlement to a production location has in part become a battle for control of locations of distribution, and as a result territory as the battlefield of storytelling has, in the strategic sense, become less interesting than the consumption con-

text conquered by the stories themselves. The brand has been interposed between us and the object as an arbitrary sign which is often being moulded even before the production is started.

We no longer search a production landscape like we searched the historical city's prestigious localities, the Baker Streets, Mason Streets or Cutler Streets. In modern shopping centres, we are led through the **Consumptionscape** by a "Brands Guide". The MKM Group, the owner of Wafi City in Dubai, have already understood this and incorporated it into their marketing strategy. Wafi City is located in the Bur Dubai area south of the inlet, some hundred metres from Al Garhoud Bridge and the future Dubai Festival City, DFC.

The shopping centre, which is an amalgam of living quarters, and recreational and entertaining programmes like DFC, publishes its own magazine 'Insight'. The magazine is related to, for example, Benetton's "Colours", which is neither a traditional advertisement nor an indepen-

dent lifestyle magazine but some sort of hybrid. "Insight" is printed in 25,000 copies twice a month and is a tactical expansion of the contextual framework of the consumption location. The magazine is concerned with the products and lifestyle characters that Wafi City has defined as its potential market segment, or, to quote their website: "*Insight - The magazine from Wafi City that captures the essence of the good life.*"⁵⁹

⁵⁹ The website of the shopping centre at: <http://www.waficity.com/insight/index.htm> (accessed 19-03-2003).

The magazine on the one hand exemplifies how the battle for the new consumption public's virtual territory is being fought, and demonstrates on the other hand to a very high degree the way in its discourse an awareness of the cultural displacement of 'the state of things' that





is at stake here. MKM Marketing themselves claim with some precision that: *"Insight means 'having the ability to see the inner nature of the hidden depths of things' - which is what Insight magazine is all about."*⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Ibid. What we have to ask is what significance it has for the city that the conditions for thinking about space and history that have been passed on to us by the culture of industry are confronting such radi-

cal changes. If shopping really has become the common denominator for contemporary, material culture, urban planning must as a consequence be prepared to learn from this new reality. Not least in Dubai where there are by and large no actors outside this expanding semi-public space of consumption. Most of the commercial centres in the city already address themselves as 'city' or 'city space'. In spite of their urban names, Deira City Center, Lamcy Plaza og Wafi City are all privately owned shopping centres. There is no doubt that the shopping centres' distribution locations borrow from the tableau vivant that is the image of the 'old' city, and use it as a background in their organisation of what they offer for sale. Interiors of the shopping centres are without exception deriving their spatial organisation from the shopping streets and market places of the industrial metropolis.

Furthermore, with these new mall conglomerates, the market place, the entertainment industry and the private housing market have been embodied into the same private

sphere - or as it is said, *"Wafi City... a whole new destination within one boundary."*⁶¹ ⁶¹ Ibid.

The boundary mentioned here is primarily that which is drawn by proprietary rights. What previously was separated functionally has now been brought together, and what once lay scattered as parcels of private enterprise in public space is now lumped together around a new domain, which is in a classical sense neither private nor public. That the traditional distinction between these spheres is disintegrating, however, does not mean that public space is disappearing, as it has often been claimed. Outside Wafi City, there are still spaces waiting for urbanism to formulate new programmes to ensure that different people can still meet 'the other', whether or not there is an economical basis for participating in the funshopping ritual of the consumption community. Even though the space that has been conquered by shopping centres is the reverse of what architects and planners used to refer to as the city, and even though the new 'centres' attempt to imitate the spatial qualities of this notion of city, it is

a misunderstanding if this tendency is made the cause of the alleged crisis. These new consumption locations are, at most, a symptom of the changes in the material organisation of industrial societies. When Wafi City, without restraint, copies the monuments of civilisation and uses the Sphinx as a restaurant or turns the Pyramids into an eye-catcher, it is merely a manifestation of the fact that cultural history has stepped irreversibly into what Walter Benjamin might have called: *the era of the thematic reproducible edifice*.⁶² 62. Benjamin 1936.

When the Lamzy Plaza shopping centre erects a replica of Tower Bridge opposite a lifelike waterfall in its atrium, it does not weaken the real edifice in London nor the forces of 'authentic nature'. In spite of its expansiveness, mallification does not carry the aura of traditional public urbanity, to refer to Benjamin's paraphrase. According to the statistics, it will probably prove very difficult to commercialise it completely.⁶³ 63. According to Wafi Management's own counts, about 12% of visitors only 'carry bags out of the centre'. 88% of shoppers do not use the centre for purchases, but have a errand other than simple consumption.





Lush
landscapes
and
lavish green

In much the same way that it is difficult to fit consumption locations into the classical modernistic scheme of urbanity as a squared territory of living, working, recreation and mobility - the parks in Dubai no longer resemble the traditional preserves of the traditional industrial society. Green is still the 'default layer' in the recreational enclaves and, when looking at maps of the city, there are no doubts as to where the parks are located either. Al Mamzar Park, Umm Suqueim Park, Al Rashidiya Park, Jumeirah Beach Park, Deira Park, Mushrif Park, Safa Park and Dubai Creek Side Park are clearly marked green squares on the desert's yellow ground. But there are

also other types of green areas, e.g. privately owned golf courts, polo clubs, race tracks, roundabouts, the large motorway's spaghetti intersections, and all of the common areas of the residential areas. In the case of the last-mentioned areas, however, it is only the cartographic signature that always is green. Grass, trees and bushes exist solely due to irrigation, and although UAE, with its 380-450 litres per inhabitant,⁶⁴ accounts for the next largest water consumption in the world, it is far from all green areas that actually are green.

64. United Arab Emirates Yearbook, "Infrastructure" 2002, p. 178, at: <http://www.uaeinteract.com/>

uaeint_misc/pdf/English/Infrastructure.pdf (accessed marts 2003). Often, these parcels are reminiscent of savannah equipped with-



football goals and empty benches. In contrast to most American and European urban landscapes, green is not an automatic state of things between constructions, the sprawl-substance or elements in the figurative marking of territorial boundaries, but some sort of defiance towards the surrounding landscape's climatic conditions and, at the same time, a surfacing material as luxurious as imported marble.

If the traditional city park in the modernistic prospects represents the entry of the natural into urbanity, Dubai's green enclaves are the exact opposite. Dubai's parks have no references whatsoever to the geographical context, and understood as landscapes, they are often stranger than an equivalent portion of the moon would be in relation to the natural surroundings. Here, 'green' is primarily a juicy signature for profit, and its function may be hygienic and regenerating for the labour force as in the modernistic version, but above all it is an optical contribution to the radiance of a lifestyle, which is supposed to attract the elite of post-national freelancers. These artificial

landscapes are the Sheik's contribution to the new economy's search for visually consumable goods. The parks are often referred to as "**Lush Landscapes**", and the tourist brochures identify what it is all about in so many words: "The greenery of the park is a feast for the eye".⁶⁵ Cf. "Parks & Gardens" in "Free Dubai City Tourist Map".

At the same time, these lavishness-zones expose more similarities to the local settlement tradition than one would think. Historically, desert culture has not had the same opportunities as Europe for the cultivation of the landscape as an aesthetic setting open to manipulation. Allegorically, desert people do not have the same culturally embedded allegiance to the land as we find in an agricultural settler culture. On the contrary, they have practised what could be called a ritual *unrolling* of the cultural underlay they carry with them and, instead of having the fixed settlements which Heidegger talks about,⁶⁶ they spread carpets of manufactured woven landscapes across the sands. ⁶⁶ Heidegger 1951. As such, the state-planned parks are primarily value-charged wall-to-

wall conditions in the desert space and must, to a certain degree, be understood as advanced hospitality in the form of entertainment zones for the massive numbers of foreigners, who keep the celebrations going. In Safa Park that fronts onto the E11 motorway by exit no. 2 in the Jumeirah area, authorities have literally doubled the synthetic English garden with an elevated line of loudspeakers that, from time to time, broadcast a piercing Western atmosphere of English-language pop-radio programme across the park. The grass in the park has quite tangibly been rolled out in long straight lengths, and in the strong sunlight this gives the lawn the characteristic moiré pattern, which is otherwise only known from televised football matches. Furthermore, Safa Park has safety-conscious, Danish-made playground equipment, an artificial waterfall, a pond for water cycles, a traffic school, an amusement park and so on, and is almost hyper-pastoral like most other parks in Dubai. An entrance fee is paid like in Disneyland, and on the other side of the fence, people are welcomed by The Mask, Superman and

other cartoon officers who in this context probably serve as examples of a friendly but also uncompromising preference for law and order. In addition to their collection of different exotic flora, all the parks have established a focus of attraction or a core area presenting the state of the *globe*, which adds an extra dimension to the adventure-oriented tracks of the fixed itinerary, a sense of moving around in a world of wonders. The concept 'park' signifies, then, a condition of a world-in-the-world – like the EXPO – rather than framing the constructed landscape metaphors. Safa Park's EXPO element is a series of scale models of all of the world's wonders: the Pyramids, the Sphinx, Colosseum, Taj Mahal and the Leaning Tower of Pisa – all shrunk to human dimensions. Mushrif Park in the other end of the city has a World Village of pavilions with a world-encompassing selection of regional building traditions. Dubai Creek Side Park presents a geographic theme park containing more modern and hedonistic elements. Obviously, the park has a miniature world of ice-sculpture wonder-constructions assembled in cold store pavilion of its

Snow World, but the main attraction is without a doubt its two full-scale constructions: the balloon and the zip-wire which can physically transport visitors to a point from which they can look out across most of the city of Dubai. Since the modern city has come to adopt such vast expanse and been transformed into landscape, the park has found its legitimisation as the focal point of the most spectacular forms of culture. The territory that

planning officialdom once reserved for the purpose of dutiful walks has become green with luxuriance, and promenades through the landscape have been transformed into *joy-rides* through an urban adventure space. With the last-minute Anglification of the recreational landscape brought about by mobilisation and globalisation, 'Park' has now been transformed into 'Kiss-and-Ride'.



Wonder-Sprawl



On top of the hierarchy of the desert state's green enclaves are the golf courses, and the cherries on the cake in Dubai are undoubtedly the two full 18-hole courses of Dubai Creek Golf and Emirates Golf Club. Dubai Creek Golf's clubhouse, with its contours in the shape of a fully rigged sail and prominent location at the waterfront of the inner harbour has some references to Utzon's Opera House in Sydney. These exclusive clubs have the status of cultural pearls. Dubai Creek Golf and Emirates Golf Club's courses are, furthermore, ranked highly by the international golf community. They have been awarded several internationally recognised prizes, and quite a number of prominent people are members of these paradisiacal enclaves. Moreover, golf is effective context control; a liberated symbolic conduct that combines the acceptance of rules with strict discipline in a new and exclusive time dimension for the industrial society: the amalgamation of leisure time and work – and thus they are typical of the new economy's flexible production and sense of time. Golf courses have already become the most suc-

cessful of the enclaves in the generic city; they are the contemporary city's **Wonder-Sprawl**.

'Sprawl' because they look like sprawl (not nature) and 'wonder' because golf surprisingly became the social program that, on a global scale, has most successfully inhabited the idea of an empty green space. Septic green areas between sky-scrappers, omitted in the city visions of modernist architects, have been given much of the blame for the social vacuum of the sprawl city, and it is ironic it is only after society has become post-industrial that such green interstices became attractive.

The difference, clearly, is that golf courses are not public spaces, and that the commonality of the game has individual conquest as a goal rather than the common good. Golf is what we might call a **Jackpot Community**.⁶⁷ 67. A community which is formed with the hope of creating the largest possible winnings for the individual, in contrast to, for example, the welfare model where the individual contributes whatever is possible in order to hold the values together. The golf course has, therefore, become the dominant structural foundation for Dubai's

various estates. This tendency can be traced at several levels, but the golf course is where the battle, in an urban sense, is best observed. At the same time as golf is conquering ever larger shares of the overall recreational landscape, the developmental patterns of Dubai's contemporary

Properties' "visionary community", The Greens, for example. According to the promotional literature, the twin aims of the future development in the Jumeirah district are that it "*.. meets the needs of your family and provides you with the prestige of being steps away from Emirates Golf*



urban landscape have also entered, a development that could be labelled the *golf era*. Several of the newest and most fashionable developments in Dubai have, physically, been built around greens and were initially laid out as golf-communities, EMAAR

Club.⁶⁸ 68. "The Greens at Emirates Golf Club" – promotional literature, 2002. Nearby, the 25 square kilometres of the Emirates Hills, also by EMAAR, boasts The Colin Montgomerie Golf Course Community, which has been ready for occupation since the autumn of 2002.

The development has its own golf course designed by “world champion golfer Colin Montgomerie”, but the development itself is also shaped and characterised as a golf-like terrain. All of the large villas have a view of an artificial landscape whose topography and picturesque protective planting conform to the requirements of a professional golf community. Views onto boundaries with the surrounding landscape as well as those between individual properties are camouflaged by areas of green plantation. The view from the inside suggests that the private domain is unlimited, but Emirates Hills is, in reality, a restricted area. “...for your comfort and peace of mind, we’ve

made Emirates Hills a ‘gated community’, with restricted access and round-the-clock security.”⁶⁹

“Emirates Hills” - promotional literature, 2002. Golf has become, so to speak, the universal master plan of gated communities, and although there is virtually no crime in Dubai, according to available statistics, the militarization of the boundary with the surroundings is necessary to display to outsiders that the golf community has seceded from sovereignty. The fence guarantees for its inhabitants, first and foremost, the opportunity for “*escape and tranquillity*”.⁷⁰ Ibid. The modernists’ dream of Unité d’Habitation has become **Habitation armée** - the fortified community.



Like no other place

A painting of a coastal city, likely Dubai, featuring a marina with several boats, palm trees, and modern skyscrapers in the background. The scene is set in a desert environment, with a clear sky and a few streetlights visible in the foreground.

The story of the other segment of the consumer society's sectarian agency also has a place in the picture of this purely market-driven urban development.⁷¹ ^{71.}

Douglas 1996. Parallel to the dispersion of the 'green' upper classes, EMAAR has also developed a series of developmental plans that are targeted at the 'blue segment' in regard to marketing.⁷² ^{72.} Dahl 1997. In addition to The Greens and Emirates Hills, EMAAR has designed a wide range of developments where 'blue' is the trademark: The Lakes, The Springs and The Meadows. As the names indicate, these developments are linked by access to blue recreational areas. The common grounds are not greens, but lagoons of marinas, bathing jetties and safe sandy beaches. In the desert blue is, of course, just as exotic as green, and in this connection, the branding is fundamentally the same – luxury. In Dubai, water is theoretically in short

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supply and the urban landscape is, therefore, constantly under threat of drying up - 'yellowing'. Irrigation regardless of whether it results in 'green' or 'blue', is the same type of investment. Golf clubs and marinas are two sides of the same coin.

Naturally, a prominent yachting club is affiliated to Dubai Creek Golf, and EMAAR can also match Emirates Hills with their extravagant Dubai Marina. Dubai Marina's area of 5 1/2 square kilometres will contain over 1000 so-called "waterfront apartments", and the development will, according to the plan, also contain a 9 kilometres of man-made promenade of parallel displaced coastline in the desert sand, which will be connected to the ocean by way of a series of sluice gates at Sheraton Jumeirah. That the market for luxury developments is differentiated can hardly come as a surprise.



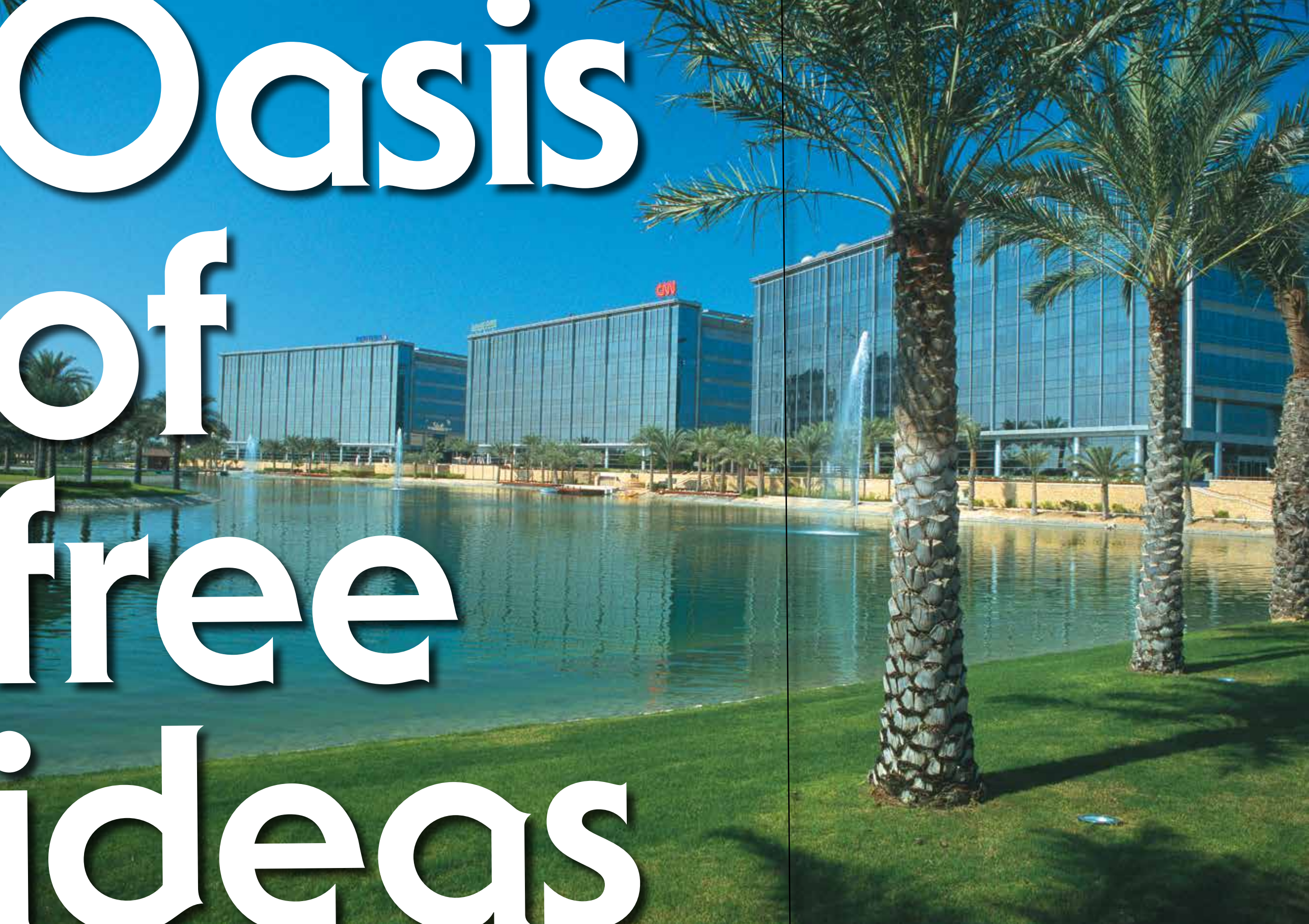
What is interesting in an urban context is that 'blue' seems to have assumed the role as a marker of the city limit. In the same way as The Palm has moved paradise into the ocean, these inland, Florida-like developments show that Dubai, due to the amalgamation of city and landscape, no longer has a constituent limit in relation to the landscape. Rather the ocean, 'the blue', is now understood as the only real counter-

weight to the dispersed city. The threshold of urbanism and the frontier of modern culture have now reached the coast. Never before has so much attention been given to the waterfront of the city, and never before has it been more reasonable to build a marina in the middle of the desert. What Dubai Marina and all of the other waterfront developments can offer is a new horizon; the dream of free access to the entire ocean of

world's nature and, at the same time, a clear profile in the middle of the sandstorm of uniformity against which Dubai's contemporary urban competitors struggle in vain. Although biotechnology has developed new strains of grass for golf courses that can be cultivated in saltwater, the greens of this city will, no matter how ingeniously natural they may appear, never be able to redefine the historical edge, which integrated

the city and made it coherent. Just as the carefully arranged carving in the rooftop garden of Villa Savoye was a symbol of modern man's perception of nature in industrial society, so the aquarium has become post-modern culture's new window onto nature. Disneyland has gentrified *das Unheimliche*, so that idea of the spectacular has moved to Sea World.

Oasis
of
free
ideas



An institution called “The American University” is located a few hundred metres from the construction site where Dubai Marina will soon come into existence. From the E11 motorway, which runs parallel to the coastline a little over a kilometre into the desert and divides Emirates Hills and Emirates Golf Club from the Marina, it is possible to overlook the university campus. At the end of the enormous parking space which faces the motorway, it is possible to catch a glimpse of a radiant white construction, built in ‘Washington style’, and to the south, right before Golf Course Interchange no. 5, there is a replica art-deco building, complete with a Hard Rock Café globe installed on the roof, which marks the spiritual presence of Westerners in the Al Sufouh quarter.

The university is the enclave that differentiates itself most drastically from the very dominant set of norms otherwise prevalent that are adapted from the Arabic building style. In all other places in Dubai, the cultural invasion has either been neutralised as ‘international’ or assimilated in the enforced tradition by virtue of

special optic filters that transform everything into some sort of generic architectonic language with an indefinable Middle Eastern flavour.

The American University and Hard Rock Cafe are the exceptions that prove the rule that all styles should be translated into a virtual language



of ‘local style’. Even the Scandinavian villas on the Palm Island have an unmistakably Arabic appearance. In reality the only thing that controls the market forces that rule the physical urban landscape of Dubai is symbolic politics, which guarantees the visual uniformity of the city through some sort of overt Arabic mass-symbolism.⁷³ 73. Canetti argues that the mass symbol is the nation state’s actual criterion of

the definition. Canetti 1996, p. 223. Even though control of the symbolic invasion of culture is relatively liberal, there is no doubt about the direction being pursued of the DICTATORSHIP OF THE EYE©.⁷⁴ 74. Koolhaas et al. 2001a, p. 705. Even where they are not directly attributable to the Sheik’s direct

visionary intervention, developments are always carefully gauged in relation to the cultural canon’s veto against Public Display of Affection, PDA.⁷⁵ 75. It is common on American campuses to find such PDA prohibitions against caressing, kissing etc. Free ‘dress code’ and the acceptance of individual material forms of expression in Dubai are subject to and regulated by a positive interpretation of the PDA regulations

- that no gesture must be demonstrate excessive concern for the individual’s feelings or express inappropriate attitudes that can be translated into a new principle: **Public Display of Affinity**. Belonging by aesthetic submission. The only domain that is not controlled in this way, and the only type of cultural invasion that can be controlled through the PDA-system’s self-monitoring, is electronic. The Internet and international news media set the agenda themselves, and the inhabitants of Dubai have relatively free access to the information flow, because the economic dynamics of the city are primarily based on the proceeds of new communication technology. As information and network society, Dubai is facing an internal conflict. On one hand, the economy must be able to function without restrictions in order to ensure continued growth, while on the other hand, the authorities’ control of the symbolic space is one of the issues that lies closest to the heart of the post-political state. Dubai’s solution to the knowledge society’s demands of “No Limits... No Boundaries”⁷⁶ has therefore been the

introduction of a privileged zone of economic freedom under political responsibility – the so-called "Dubai Technology, Electronic Commerce and Media Free Zone, TECOM" consisting of Dubai Internet City, Dubai Media City and Dubai Ideas Oasis. 76. "Expressions" – (Media City's Magazine promoting creative expression for the community) September/October 2002, p. 4. The repressive strategy of tolerance is simply concerned with authorising total tax exemption to the barrier-breaking media in order to guarantee that the torrent of speech is kept within the limits of "responsibility and accuracy". 77. 77. "Freedom to Create" advertisement and information brochure for Dubai Media City, 2002.

Or in other words, if the information current becomes 'irresponsible' or companies lose their sense of 'accuracy', tax exemption is automatically withdrawn and that argument is, apparently, respected by the private information and media companies. At least the influx of those wishing to participate in the new quartet of "a Knowledge Economy Ecosystem", 78 consisting of the university, the oasis of ideas, the inter-

net city and the media city, is massive. 78. "@ - Dubai Internet City" brochure, 2002, p. 4. Over 500 media companies, among others CNN, Reuters, MBC and Sony Broadcast, have moved into the Media City, and the Internet City has been inhabited by Microsoft, Oracle, HP, IBM, Compaq, Siemens, Cannon, Sony Ericsson and others, and housing for more than 5500 'knowledge-workers' is under construction.

The latest addition to the family will be Knowledge Village. "A vibrant, connected learning community that will develop the region's talent pool and accelerate its move to the knowledge economy." 79. Cf. <http://www.dubaicityguide.com/specials/kv.htm> (accessed 29-01-2003). The four existing enclaves are located side by side in a squared plan of approximately four times 200 hectares. Internet City in the north-east and Media City in the south-western corner are both, figuratively, oriented inwards to gardens with artificial lakes. In outline, the developments are identical; a corona of covered parking spaces frames the modernistic blocks of glass. The three current main buildings of Media City resemble huge wide-screen TVs with



smooth screen-like facades facing an artificial lake, and out-turned backsides that signal plug-in, activity and image processing in an architectural sense. The buildings of Internet City are much more abstract. An intangible membrane of blue-black plate glass gives the four boxes a crude-oil heavy, enigmatic aura of technological black-box, which speaks silently of the information society's absence of materiality and representative physiognomy in relation to its architectural tradition. The urbanity of

the information society is still a diffuse mirage, a flickering impression, which may make it possible to perceive the industrial society from a distance, but which has not itself filled a space in the sphere where planning and architecture interact. Although the knowledge and network societies fill the skyline in Dubai, it is still impossible to determine the types of architectural construction utilised behind the glass screen, and which physical contours this new information city will assume.



Sheikh Zayed's Potential Corridor

Twenty kilometres from the new knowledge city, in the northern end of the E11 motorway, between interchange no.1 and the big roundabout by World Trade Center is where Dubai's new modernistic showcase is located. This three kilometre long road is the city's 'Little Manhattan', where international finance and trade representations are lined up in the shape of a post-modern Wall-Street backdrop. A single row of skyscrapers on each side of eight-lane

and, at the same time, constitutes a sort of monumental town gate in the otherwise flat urban area. In addition to the seventies-monolithic World Trade Center, the Potemkin corridor consists of several characteristic block tower developments.

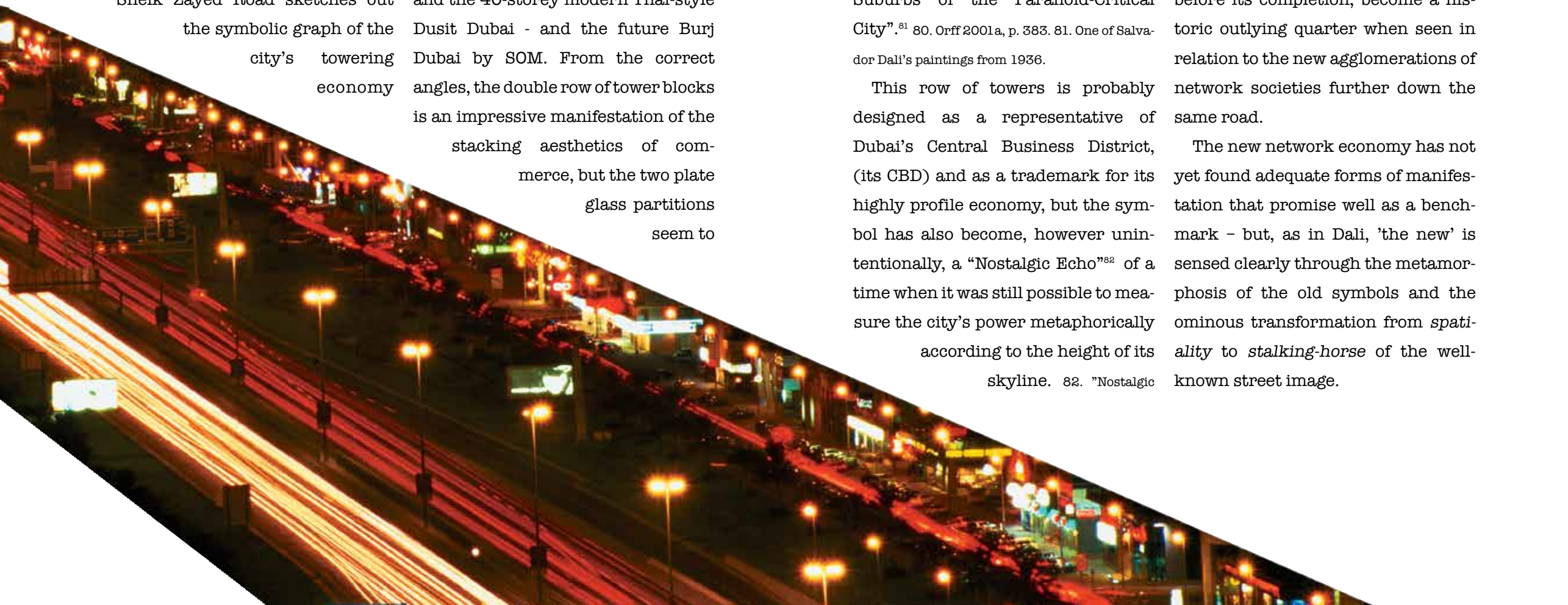
Among others, the 300 metre high Chicago-style twin Emirates Towers, the half as high but four-towered and neo-gothic Fairmont Hotel, the Big Ben inspired, 243 metre high, residential 'Tower' like a jewellery case, and the 40-storey modern Thai-style Dusit Dubai - and the future Burj Dubai by SOM. From the correct angles, the double row of tower blocks is an impressive manifestation of the stacking aesthetics of commerce, but the two plate glass partitions seem to

be of a very fragile consistency when perceived from the surrounding post-industrial urban landscape away from the skyline's internal tunnel effect. Forty metres from the centre line of the arrangement and just outside the boundary of the French garden strip's THIN© idyll,⁸⁰ the scenario is transformed into an almost surreal state, which is hardly distinguishable from an architectonic reconstruction of the artistic qualities in Salvador Dalí's painting "The Suburbs of the Paranoid-Critical City".⁸¹ 80. Orff 2001a, p. 383. 81. One of Salvador Dalí's paintings from 1936.

This row of towers is probably designed as a representative of Dubai's Central Business District, (its CBD) and as a trademark for its highly profile economy, but the symbol has also become, however unintentionally, a "Nostalgic Echo"⁸² of a time when it was still possible to measure the city's power metaphorically according to the height of its skyline. 82. "Nostalgic

echo" is the title of Dalí's painting from 1935, whose repeated motif appears as a detail in "The Suburbs of Paranoid-Critical City". See Maddox 1990, p. 52. This strong symbolic construction canalises an image of the city which was mainly connected to an emerging industrialism, and the scenario almost caricatures the modernist vision of the city as a lucky coincidence of elevated engineering and scientific rationalism.⁸³ 83. Reiph, E.C. 1987. The tower block silhouette along Sheik Zayed Road has already, before its completion, become a historic outlying quarter when seen in relation to the new agglomerations of network societies further down the same road.

The new network economy has not yet found adequate forms of manifestation that promise well as a benchmark - but, as in Dalí, 'the new' is sensed clearly through the metamorphosis of the old symbols and the ominous transformation from *spatiality* to *stalking-horse* of the well-known street image.











Learning
from
Junk-space
Deluxe

Is Dubai≠Las Vegas?

At the least the points of impact and this hyper(con)textual reading of the urban patterns of Dubai illustrate, although *in extremum*, how the global post-industrial city principally assumes the character of a Bingo Game Board – a form of **Bingo Urbanism** or field of business opportunity – controlled by external economic dynamics and held together by imported landscape principles and mobility-boosting structures. The physical infrastructure of the city, together with the Internet and other communication forms broadcast by the media and with the aid of the cultural atmosphere of the space, have become some of the most substantial localisation factors. This has opened the way for entertainment management, after bureaucratic state planning has had to hand over control

of urban planning to market forces. **PDA**, aesthetic unification and self-control under economical freedom are the new overall control principles.

In Dubai, the state is a private business, which *per definition* makes the public sphere private. Civil society has, then, united around the fortified functioning units and ‘game societies’ of **Jackpot Communities**. The majority of ex-pats are not citizens but consumer patriots – **SimCities Citoyen Simulé**. The surplus landscapes of infrastructure have become the symbolic centre of rotation of the development and the apple of the eye in the eventful epic of the state-capitalistic city-state. The spatial analyses of Dubai’s urban landscapes, furthermore, show that the post-industrial city, in spite of the clear zoning, should not be understood as a

territory of traditional production landscapes. The global city-state has to a large degree become a consumption domain, which is a hybrid version of the industrial society and the polycentric model. At the same time, however; it transcends the traditional contextual and topological spatial understanding, because the majority of its localities are shaped thematically as chronotopes – **Timeplaces**. There is no longer any attempt to control urban life through space. Instead it is manipulated as a market that shapes life in the city as a style. In that sense, the city has become self-reflexive and subjugated to global marketing principles as **The City of the Image**. New urbanity forms have replaced the old character unit of 'the city' with **EXOPisation's** mallificated cities-in-the-city, and architecture has, therefore, tendentiously become a *Brand*,

which has loosened its association to the place as locus and operates in a neo-territorial connection: **Genius Logo**.

In the new urban plot, the past and leisure time have become parallel consumptionscapes spheres that have been standardised long ago. Urban planning is controlled as a **Scripted Space**, and the principle has caught up with the past with retrospective application. The past and history of folklore have become **Fakelore**.

The myth of origin has been hooked onto the rapid development and is now staged as the ground zero of the developmental triumph. At the same time as the uncharacteristic has become the vernacular expression of the contemporary city, the universal future of the historical city space is already under the protectorate of **Lyon's Club Urbanism**.

Authenticity has become a question of constant interpretation and the globalised city-state must, therefore, be understood introvert. An 'outside' no longer exists; urbanity has become a continental condition; and 'blue' has become the new (water)frontier of urbanity.

Dubai is an extreme example of globalisation's significance to the city. It can, however, be hoped that the new concepts presented in this case study - **Benchmark, Benetton Idealism, Bingo Urbanism, Citoyen Simulé, Habitation d'Arme, EXPOisation, Genius Logo, Implanted Heritage, Lyon's Club Urbanism, SimCity, The City of The Image and Wonder-Sprawl** - can be utilised as spatial, cultural and political fragments for understanding, mapping and analysing the contemporary city increasingly affected by the forces of globalisation.

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