The Evolving Arab City

Tradition, Modernity and Urban Development

Edited by Yasser Elsheshtawy

ROUTLEDGE

First published 2008 by Routledge

This paperback edition first published 2011
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxfordshire OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the US and Canada
by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

Typeset in Palatino and Humanist by PNR Design, Didcot
Printed and bound in Great Britain by CPI Antony Rowe, Chippenham, Wiltshire

This book was commissioned and edited by Alexandrine Press, Marcham, Oxfordshire

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record of this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
The evolving Arab city : tradition, modernity and urban development / edited by Yasser Elsheshtawy.
p. cm. — (Planning, history and environment series)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
1. City planning—Arab countries. 2. Cities and towns—Arab countries. I. Elsheshtawy, Yasser.
HT147.5.E86 2008
307.1'21609174927—dc22
2008001567

ISBN13: 978-0-415-66572-8 (pbk)
ISBN13: 978-0-203-69679-8 (ebk)

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Chapter 9

Rediscovering the Island: Doha's Urbanity from Pearls to Spectacle

Khaled Adham

When a man rides a long time through wild regions he feels the desire for a city.

Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*

The bedouin who had at first refused to go near the sea or take part in unloading cargoes from the small boats were soon won over. It seemed to them curious, arousing and somewhat risky, and before long they went closer to the sea. They did so hesitantly, in stages, with a sense of experimentation and secrecy.

Abdelrahman Munif, *Cities of Salt*

The island of my title alludes to the threefold components which I weave together to describe and analyse the current urban condition of Doha city. First, it refers to the semi-island, peninsula of Qatar, a barren land inhabited by people who, throughout history, have always been able to support and rediscover themselves by finding a product from the sea to sell: pearls, oil, natural gas, and today real estate. Second, it refers to 'The Pearl Island', the two and a half billion dollar real estate, commercial island being reclaimed off the coast of the Qatari capital, Doha; a mega-project I use as a prime representative of the current development efforts to re-dress the city for global audiences. Finally, it alludes to new forms of urban-archipelagoes prevalent in Doha, and elsewhere in the region. This emerging urbanity is a confluence of the strategies of consumerism, entertainment, and global tourism.

To locate the recent developments and the urban condition of today's Doha in their historical context as well as to inquire into the interrelationship between international capitalism and urban developments in Doha, I shall attempt to capture three paradigmatic scenes from the history of the city. The first scene depicts the city during the decline of the pearl industry in the 1930s and its impact on urbanization and development. The second scene is highlighted by the discovery of oil, which transformed the country between the mid-1950s and the mid-1980s from a poor British Protectorate into an independent modern state. Much of the urban development in this period was state-funded projects geared towards modernizing the infrastructure, public services, and housing. Not unlike many other cities in the world, Doha's development has always been tied to global geopolitics and prevailing economic conditions. Thus we find the city periodically experiencing times of relative austerity and slowdown in construction activities due to sharp declines in oil prices, such as the period between the mid 1980s and early 1990s. In the late 1990s, however, an economic upsurge marked a watershed in the country's modern urban history. Instigated by some geopolitical imperatives, the government, once again, searched in the surrounding sea for sources of capital, which it found in and extracted from the North Field, the world's largest natural gas field.

In the third exemplary scene, the sea was not only a source for natural energy supply to the world's industrialist countries, but also a commodity-space to be conquered by an ever growing global real-estate market. Like recent offshore projects in Dubai, Doha's largest real-estate adventure, The Pearl-Qatar, is land reclaimed from the Gulf, promising to be a controlled, sanitized, urban experience, or an Arabian Riviera, to use the words of its managing director. Although its new spaces are promising to be isolated physically and perhaps culturally from the city, these spaces will be (hyper-) linked, I shall suggest, to other spaces and urban experiences that are dotting the cityscapes in various parts of the world.

Scene I. Colonialism and the Urbanity of the Pearl Industry

We are all from the highest to the lowest slaves of one master, Pearl.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Thani

Rosemarie Zahlan (1979) tells us that the first mention of Qatar in the Western media appeared in a couple of newspaper articles around the beginning of 1935. With the popularity of the tales of the Orient in nineteenth-century Romantic literature in the West, both articles provided complete Arabian Nights accounts of Sheikh Abdullah bin Jasim al-Thani, the ruler of Qatar at that time, lolling idly on silken cushions, surrounded by eighty members of his beautiful harem, thousands of slaves, and piles of pearls. They went on to describe his sensational court and romantic country. Zahlan suggests that the intelligence units of US oil companies deliberately leaked the newspaper articles to solicit public attention to the lands of the Gulf in order to break the British policy of maintaining monopoly, which they had sustained through the suppression of all information on the region. The muffling of discourse was part of the contention between the two empires: the waning British and the waxing American. This geopolitical rivalry in the Middle East began over the acquisition of oil concessions in Qatar and the Gulf region. While these articles do not seem to have created interest outside the official circles of the British government, they marked a significant moment in Qatar's modern history. It was the start of the dislodging of Qatar from the British ambit, which was finally concluded with independence in 1971. It was also the moment when the country began to reinvent its economic system, from an economy based on pearling and, therefore, linked with limited global networks in Asia and Europe to an economy interwoven with the global political and economic circuits through the selling of vital world energy products, oil and gas.

But before Doha's arrival at this historical juncture, the daily realities of the city's life would prove further removed from the romantic, orientalists' depictions found in the two articles. On the contrary, travel accounts during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and there are very few of them, usually described the miserable and desolate conditions of Doha, and the whole province for that matter. For example, in his narratives of his one year travel in Arabia during 1862, Wilfred Gifford Palgrave (1826–1888) reflected the prevalent sentiments towards the peninsula when he described for his readers the barren, monotonous land of 'Katar'.[1] Reinforced by the harshness and severe weather conditions, particularly during the summer, as well as the scant supply of fresh water and vegetation, this insipid picture of the peninsula explains the paucity of human presence throughout most of its early modern history. The scarcity of human and natural resources mirror the dearth of available historical literature. Jenny Walker (2004) rightly, and poetically, remarks that the early history of Qatar is the history of the Bedouins, who traverse a land 'taking only memories, and leaving only footprints', which are dusted away with every erupting sandstorm. It was towards the end of the nineteenth century when the recorded events began to leave more lasting impressions on the memory of the place. The chain of events in Qatar between the end of the nineteenth century and discovery and export of oil in the middle of the twentieth century seems to have been shaped by four interrelated domains or forces: pearling, territorial disputes, the Al-Thani family, and the British geopolitics to curb other colonialist interests in the region, particularly the Turkish, German, and later American.

Most historians refer to 1868 as the most significant date for Qatar, because it signified the beginning of a transition leading to the establishment of a Qatari identity (Al-Mansour, 1980). A year before this date, a war had erupted between Qatar and Bahrain, which was finally settled when the British Political Resident in the Gulf, Colonel Lewis Pelly, signed an agreement, but not a protection treaty, in September 1868 with Sheikh Mohammad bin Thani, who acted as a representative for the people of Qatar. It is important to mention that before this agreement, events in Qatar and Bahrain were closely entwined, and the Al-Khalifa ruling family in Manama was practically the accepted ruler of Qatar. In this treaty, Sheikh Mohammad conceded to desist from maritime warfare and regulate the tribute to be paid for Bahrain. The significance of this agreement is twofold. It was the first implicit recognition of Qatar as a sovereign sheikhdom with Sheikh Mohammad bin Thani as its ruler. Secondly, it strengthened the position of the al-Thani family against other tribes through the recognition granted to it by the highest British official in the Gulf region. The Al-Thani family is a branch of the Ma'adhid tribe, who originally settled in the 'Gibrin' oasis in southern Najd and claim descent from the Bani Tamim tribe of central Arabia (Mehanna, 2001, p. 83). Following similar tribal migration patterns from central Arabia during the early eighteenth century, the Ma'adhid found the living conditions in coastal areas more lucrative than the interior, mainly because the Gulf waters were the site of rich oyster beds for harvesting pearls and there was easy access to India, the major market. The tribe initially settled in the coastal areas around Zubara in the north of the peninsula, where they fished and dived for pearls. In 1847, under the leadership of Sheikh Mohammad bin Thani, they moved to Al-Bidaa, later renamed Doha (Mehanna, 2001, p. 83). The name is derived from the Arabic *Dawh* or *Tadweeh*, which meant circle-ness, or to encircle, referring to the shoreline of the city, which extended inland in a shape similar to a circle. We learn from John Lorimer's *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf*, that in 1908 the Ma'adhid tribe was the sixth largest in the peninsula and was mainly settled in the eastern villages of al-Bidaa, Wakrah, and Lusail (Lorimer, 1970).

Just three years after the agreement with the British Political Resident, the son of Sheikh Mohamed bin Thani, Sheikh Jasim, who became the *de facto* ruler of Qatar after his father's retirement, agreed to raise the Turkish flag in Doha and establish Al-Bidaa Fort. For him, this was the most practical way to guarantee protection. The memories of the destruction of Doha during the earlier wars with Bahrain were still vivid. For the Ottomans, the opening of the Suez Canal in 1867 renewed their interest in the Gulf region and, under the leadership of the Baghdad *wali* (governor), their troops managed to extend their control over large parts of east and west Arabia. When in 1872, the one hundred Turkish troops landed in Al-Bidaa, they selected a site inland and south-east of the village and began building their fort, which became later known as Al-Koot Fort (figure 9.1). They also

Figure 9.1. Al-Koot Fort.

worked at deepening part of the port's shallow waters to accommodate the docking of their military vessels. The reason for selecting Al-Bidaa as the site of their fort is unclear, but probably it was because it was the largest of the existing villages on the east coast with a central geographical position on the peninsula. Moreover, it was easier to defend it against military attacks, particularly from the sea.

During the nineteenth century and the first few decades of the twentieth century, the urban conditions of Doha were very much influenced by two interrelated socio-economic forces: tribal affiliations and pearling.[2] While the social structure of the population remained, as elsewhere in the Gulf, tied to the tribal social system brought along with the migrant clan from central Arabia, it was during this period that a significant transformation in the economic structure began to take shape, which in turn led to what I shall call a 'fledgling capitalism'. Certainly, the process by which capitalism emerged and evolved in Qatar is a complex story that can only be sketchily dealt with here. I suggest that the process must be recognized as having roots in the transformation from a Bedouin economy based on tribes roaming, with their camels, sheep and goats, the unending sea of sand in search of grazing, to an economy based on criss-crossing the Gulf sea with boats in search of pearl banks lying offshore. There is no doubt that the pearling industry supplied some prerequisites for a capitalist system to emerge not only through the contacts, conditioned by the industry, with Indian and European traders, but also through the emergence of a primitive market and ownership systems with their peculiar relations and factors of production, particularly capital and labour. In short, the pearling industry was the principal axis around which the economic and social structures in the city revolved.

Kaltham al-Ghanim tells us that pearl trading had taught the Bedouins the value of money and the system of monetary exchange. According to her, this new system of transaction led to the emergence of new social strata that depended not only on the ownership of the tools of production, such as the camel or later the boat, but also monetary capital (Al-Ghanim, 1997, p. 53). Moreover, through the accumulation of capital, it was possible for the fledgling capitalists to expand the pearl trade by owning more ships or financing more diving expeditions, or both. Thus, the ship replaced the camel as the basic tool of production, and the number owned determined the social, political, and economic position of the owner (Al-Ghanim, 1997). From another perspective, the pearling industry ushered in a new division of labour and a new system of wage labourers selling their manpower in return for a share in the profit. According to Lorimer (1970) more than half of the male population in Doha was involved in the pearling industry with over 300 boats, constituting one of the largest fleets in the Gulf. But the emerging private ownership system did not totally replace the tribal communal one. It was the impact of the tribal social system that resisted a total transition. It is important to note that while the population of the peninsula at the beginning of the twentieth century was 27,000, that of Doha was not more than 12,000 inhabitants, including the 350 soldiers of the Turkish regiment stationed in Al-Bidaa Fort. Interestingly, the population estimates for Doha and Qatar remained unchanged throughout the first half of the twentieth century. We also learn from Lorimer's accounts that nearly one in five inhabitants of the peninsula was a slave brought from the eastern shores of Africa to work mainly as divers (*Ibid.*). The demographic mix in Doha included tribes from central Arabia and other coastal areas, slaves, and Persians. Before 1908, Persians had migrated to Qatar at different times, but from the 1939 population estimate we observe a large increase. This is so because of political and economic changes in Persia. Unlike all the other states in the Gulf region, strikingly absent from the country's demographic mix, particularly to those who are familiar with today's Doha, were people from the sub-continent. In fact, the issue of granting Indians, who were considered British subjects, residency permission in Doha was a constant dispute between the rulers of Qatar and the British Resident in the Gulf, even after the 1916 protection treaty.[3]

During this time, the total inhabited urban area was about one and a quarter square kilometres, which extended only a few hundred metres inland from the south side of Doha bay in an almost treeless environment. While in the first half of the nineteenth century, the settlements along the bay were limited to one specific area, Al-Bidaa, a century later they had metastasized into eight distinct *ferejan*, or districts: Al-Bin Ali (now renamed Al-Hitmi), Slata, Mirqab, Al-Dowayha (now renamed Al-Jasra), Al-Bidaa, and Al-Rumaila. Each *fereej* was occupied by a certain tribe or large family (figure 9.2). These *ferejan* stretched parallel to the irregular indentation of the salt marshes and tidal flats, which constituted large segments along the Arabian Gulf shoreline (Al-Kazim, 1993, p. 121). We learn from Nasser al-Othman (nd) that during the 1940s, and probably earlier, the main market place

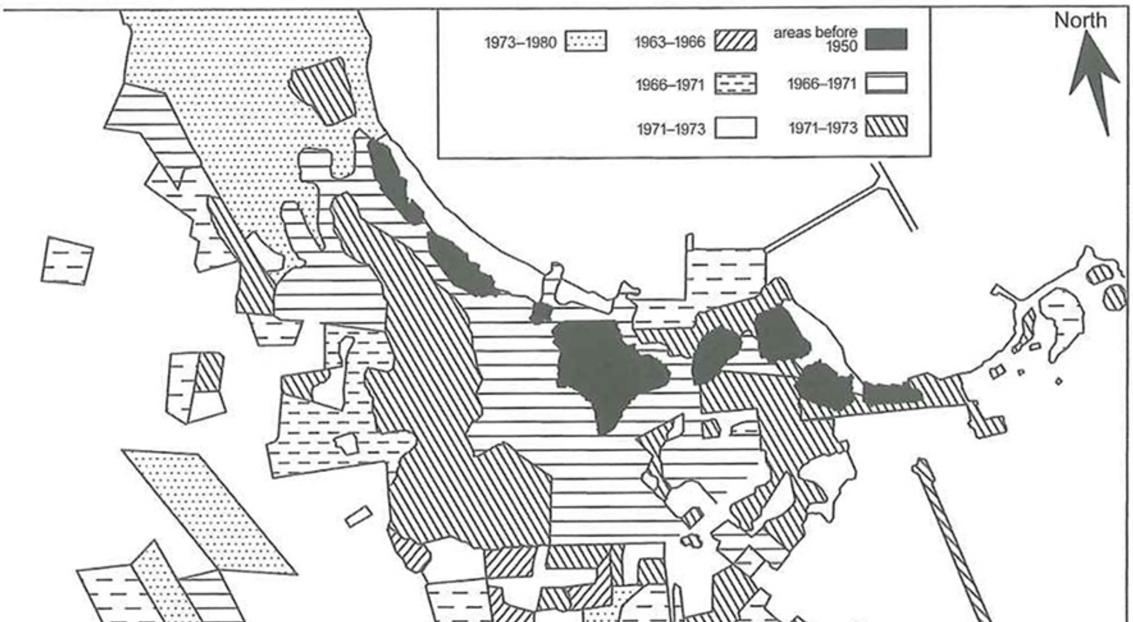

Figure 9.2. Development of Doha until 1980. (After Al-Kourdy, 1985)

in Doha stretched from the two-storey custom house at the harbour almost to Al-Asmakh Road, half a mile to the west. The market place – known at one point as Souk al-Zalam, the dark market – ran parallel to, and east, of the fort, separated from it only by a large vacant parcel of land. It is interesting to note that the fort was set apart from the densely populated areas of Al-Bidaa and Al-Jasra by a large tract on all sides. Part of this land was the main cemetery for the city. Another segment of this market stretched even further to the south and was chiefly a fish market. Between these two market places there was an open space reserved as a camel market. Mahmoud al-Kourdy (1985) observed that most alleyways which penetrated the *ferejan* of the urban area led to the harbour, which was the busiest part of the city, particularly during the preparation for the diving season between May and October. The harbour, therefore, was the hub where most of the activities were concentrated: shipyards, open markets, shops, and *majalis* (formal meeting rooms). It is important to note that social relations were determined more by blood and tribal affiliations than income and wealth. This is particularly apparent in the urbanization pattern, which put members of one tribe, regardless of their economic situation, in one area of the city.

The housing stock was composed of a few hundred simple one floor dwellings huddled closely together along narrow, winding alleys. Other structures that dotted the cityscape included the *barasti* and the Bedouin tents (Majed, 1987). Members of the tribe were given land by the sheikh upon their request, usually to accommodate a large increase in the family or for newlyweds to start a new one. A master mason was responsible for the design and execution of the house with the help of a few workers. Although we do not have accounts of the background of these workers, it is assumed that they were originally from Persia or other parts where masonry construction was the norm. This is attested by the fact that some house features, such as the *barajeel* (wind towers), were first developed in, and then imported, from Persia. In all houses, however, there was limited ornamentation in the façade, and the architectural style was similar to the architecture one would find elsewhere in the Gulf region. The most prominent house during these days was the old palace in Slata built by Shiekh Abdallah bin Jasim in the first decade of the twentieth century, which was used for both living and governance. The house was abandoned during the recession years of the 1930s until renovated as Doha's National Museum in the early 1970s (Al-Khalifi, 1990). It is interesting to note that today the prominent Parisian architect Jean Nouvel is expanding and renovating it once again.

While these urban scenes were almost unchanged during the first three decades of the twentieth century, the early 1930s came with some shattering developments that eventually caused the emergence of new urban patterns. First, the worldwide economic depression and the Japanese discovery of the cultured pearl proved a disaster for the Gulf's pearling industry. In Qatar, remembers Hussein al-Ferdan, the situation was very grim and extreme poverty forced people either to leave the peninsula or live in dismal conditions (Al-Ferdan quoted in Zearah, 2005). Some left their families in Doha and commuted to the eastern province of Saudi Arabia in search of jobs. It was in these days that the population of Qatar dropped for the first and last time during the century. The most optimistic population estimate shows a drop from 27,000 to 10,000 inhabitants (*Ibid*.). The outbreak of World War II aggravated the situation even further, but the final blow to the industry came with India's independence in 1947. One of the measures taken by India's new national government was to ban all imports of luxury items, including pearls.[4] With the decline of the pearl industry, a chapter of the city's urban history was sealed and another had begun.

Scene II: Modernization, and the Urbanity of Petrodollars

Oil is the greatest single post-war asset remaining with us. We should refuse to divide our last asset with the Americans.

Lord Beaverbrook (1944)

Next to winning the war, the most important matter before the USA as a Nation was the world oil situation.

Harold L. Ickes (1943)

Instigated by new geopolitical conditions, particularly the rise of American interest in the Gulf, the British Resident began negotiating with Sheikh Abdallah bin Jasim al-Thani the oil concession in Qatar which was finally signed in 1935.[5] According to Zahlan (1979) it was clear from all available evidence that 'Abdallah was at first totally unaware of the undreamed-of prosperity that lay ahead for Qatar with respect to oil'. Although oil was discovered in Qatar in 1939, the impact of World War II postponed its first oil exports for a decade. Both urban development and real oil wealth were slow in coming. While the population and construction boom began in the 1950s, urban development took off seriously only after Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad al-Thani took power in 1972, one year after Qatar gained independence from Britain. The period of Doha's urban transformation between 1949 and the mid-1990s has a long, complex history that could be divided into four distinct periods, or sub-scenes. These urban scenes correspond to political and economic, international and local, changes: 1. urbanity of transition (1949–1955); 2. urbanity of necessity (1956–1971); 3. urbanity of modernization (1972–1984); and, 4. urbanity of stagnation (mid-1980s to early 1990s).

No doubt the oil wealth, which began to pour in during the 1950s, acted as a catalyst for the urban development that started to overtake the country. Many observers comment that the changes were slow in the beginning, mainly, as Helga Graham (1978) has pointed out, because the rulers at that time were conservative and it took time to exploit the country's resources fully. While this might be partially true, I want to suggest three other reasons for this sluggish start. First, the development pace seems to have grown in relation to the increase in oil revenue and amount of oil exploited. For example, while the revenue from oil was US$1 million in 1950, 5 years later it grew to US$35 million, and by the mid-1960s it was approaching US$70 million. Second, the transition period from a pearl- to an oil-based economy meant a transition in the relations of production, a new division of labour and, most importantly, the invention of new methods of wealth distribution. Finally, there was no apparatus in the system of governance to take responsibility for physical planning. The ruler remained directly involved, for example, in allocating lots for houses, with the size and location determined by a resident's social and political position in society. To put it differently, the political power and decision-making seem to have remained operating through a chain of personal orders rather than a generalized regime of government. What is interesting to note from this era is the direction of urban development in the city. While during the early years the city grew like an arc around and in relation to the harbour, the source of work, after the discovery and exploitation of oil – which was first inland before American oil giants were granted concessions in the waters of the Gulf – the city began to expand to the south and west, and in a matter of a few years the area of Doha had quadrupled. Mohamed al-Gabir (1977) says that during this period many residents began to move to the new added areas of the city, such as Meshirab and Remailah. The urban fabric and housing types of these new areas, however, remained the same.

It was around 1955 that a true sense of development began to be felt in the city. Asphalt roads were extended and lit; a new desalination plant was constructed with pipes connecting it to many houses nearby; an electric plant was built in Kahraba Street near Musheireb; new schools began admitting students; and a new hospital, Al-Remailah, opened its doors for the first time in the country, followed by maternity and children's hospitals. It is interesting to note that the design competition for the hospital was sponsored by the Royal Institute of British Architects and won by John Harris, the British architect who would later establish himself in Dubai and design some of its famous modern icons (Mitchell, 1976). According to Al-Kazim (1993), a visitor to the city in 1957 described Doha as if it were 'a city after an artillery bombardment', referring to the prevalent scenes of on-going construction.

The urban expansion of the built-up area of Doha during the two decades following the discovery of oil increased ten-fold, reaching around 12 square kilometres (Al-Kourdy, 1985). Simultaneous to this unprecedented urban expansion, which was likened by some observers to the days of the gold rush in California in nineteenth-century America, was an extraordinary demographic increase (Al-Khaiat, 1982). Of course, the construction activities as well as the expansion of governmental services necessitated the use of foreign skilled and un-skilled labour. No population survey was conducted in Qatar between 1939 and 1969, let alone of the percentage of foreign labourers or expatriates in the new demographic mix. But, we know from one governmental source that, in 1970, the population of Doha reached around 85,000, with foreigners constituting around 67 per cent. Thus the period between 1949 and 1969 witnessed a population increase of nearly 600 per cent and an increase in foreigners of more than 1,000 per cent. The increase in immigration patterns from abroad was echoed, with much smaller numbers, by the flight many Qataris took from the surrounding villages and small towns towards Doha (*Ibid.*). An interesting mix of locals and expatriates began to emerge in the city as a result of these immigration patterns. According to the 1970 census – which divided the city into four distinct areas – by and large, most Qataris preferred to live in the north, east and central districts of Doha, while expatriates chose to live more in the south, west and also central zones of the city. As we shall see, this distribution was to change during the 1970s and 1980s.

With the exception of the period between 1966 and 1971, when a foreign office began to introduce some planning consultations to the authorities, the urban expansion of this period can best be described as haphazard, without any preconceived plan. The housing and public buildings reflected specific needs to ease life for the increasing population of both locals and expatriates. True, the urban character of the city began to take shape around the end of the 1960s with developments along the Gulf shores, such as the construction of Al-Corniche Road, the opening of new routes through the city, such as Abdallah bin Thani Street, and the construction of two new hotels, the Gulf and the Oasis. These hotels were not built to accommodate tourists visiting Doha, but rather for the increasing number of businessmen and high ranking employees from Europe and US oil companies. Moreover, a new type of housing, the apartment building, began to appear, such as those in Abdallah bin Thani and Kahraba Streets. This new type reflected the increasing presence of an emerging social stratum of expatriate families within the city.

What is important to note from these days is that the haphazard urbanity in the 1950s and most of the 1960s mirrored the lack of modern urban governance. As Ahmed al-Shalaq (1999) explains, in the early 1950s the British annual report on Qatar discussed the slight improvements in the system of governance in the city, but it was not until 1970 that a full government in the modern sense was formed. During the last years of the 1960s, however, the city of Doha had a new apparatus in the fledgling government with a mandate to provide infrastructure and municipal services as well as to take charge of some of the city's built environment, namely, the Public Works Department. In coordination with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Finance, the new department's first task was to establish and implement a system of housing for the low-income Qataris.

Al-Shalaq notes that the period after 1972, when Qatar gained independence and Sheikh Khalifa Bin Hamad al-Thani became the ruler, witnessed an increase and/or restructuring of the governmental various bureaucracies. Thus we find new offices and governmental authorities sharing responsibilities for the built environment, such as the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Agriculture and, later, the Ministries of Industry, Water and Power, and Telecommunications. Sharon Nagy (2000) rightly contends that the distribution of official responsibilities among various bodies within the government led to coordination problems. The relations among these various ministries were further complicated when the Emiri Diwan (the executive offices of the Emir) occasionally took 'control of particular projects, especially high-profile ones, overriding the jurisdiction of the ministries' (*Ibid.*).

No doubt, the years following Qatar's declaration of independence in 1972 were decisive to the modern urban history of the Middle East – perhaps, for decades to come. The use of the oil weapon during the 1973 October War sent shock waves to the Western hemisphere and caused an unprecedented leap in oil prices. As a clue to the scale of the increase, in 1972 Qatar's revenue from selling oil slightly passed the US$600 million dollars mark, 2 years later it tripled, and by 1980 it was more than US$5 billion. The incredible surge in oil prices swelled the government coffers and fuelled a construction boom which continued for the next decade. What made this period different from earlier booms was not only the magnitude of construction, or even the quality of buildings produced, but also the direct involvement of foreign, mainly Western, planners and designers in shaping the future development of the city. In most of what follows in this section, I shall concentrate on describing two planning projects from these days: the emptying out of the downtown and the reclamation of land from the sea. It is also important to mention that I was a resident of Doha during part of this period, specifically between 1978 and 1981.

To accommodate the population growth and the changing urban life, the government of Qatar in 1972 contracted the first foreign planning consultant, the British-based Llewelyn-Davies, to supply a master plan for Doha extending through to 1990. Llewelyn-Davies presented several proposals for different parts of the city and advised the Planning Department of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs on planning legislation. One of their recommendations for the central areas of the city was to acquire a number of older neighbourhoods from their residents and clear them for redesign and development (*Ibid.*). The intended goal for the city centre was to increase its commercial, governmental, and high-rise residential buildings. In short, the intention was to increase the population density by expanding vertically and using the extra land acquired either to expand the public ownership ratio or to add new land uses. Moreover, the plan intended to remove industrial warehouses and increase upscale shopping. This urban renewal policy proved to be a tedious and costly endeavour. Most of the central areas, around 90 per cent in one estimate, were composed of houses owned by Qataris, with a very complicated ownership system, laid along irregular *sikkas* (alleyways). Accordingly, the new Ministry of Municipal Affairs was given the task of acquiring these lands for development.[6]

The new action plan of land acquisition caused an immediate inflation in real-estate speculation, as many Qataris began to sell their homes for prices much higher than those of the market and to relocate in other, newer parts around the city peripheries. I agree with Fadila (1991) whom Nagy quotes suggesting that the government's policy to purchase the lands at inflated prices was a means to redistribute the oil wealth among Qataris. Among the obvious consequences of the urban renewal policy recommended by Llewelyn-Davies was the change in the demographic mix in the city centre. During the 1970s, the influx of expatriate Asian workers was at its zenith. While in earlier years, these newcomers were housed in peripheral parts of the city, such as the Tin District in Ne'aigah area, during the 1970s they began to move into the central district.[7] The houses that survived the bulldozing and clearance were usually divided internally and rented to low-income groups, particularly Asians, who lived in over-crowded conditions. A study conducted in Salata in 1980, for example, showed an average of thirteen people per dwelling (Al-Kazim, 1993). Another popular living area for Asian low-income workers was Um Ghowailenah. True, some Qataris remained in areas like Musheireb throughout the early 1980s, but they were the exceptions.[8] At the end of the 1970s and in the early 1980s, apartment buildings began to spread along the newly opened arteries, such as Abdallah bin Thani, Kahraba, and later Grand Hamad Streets. With all the demolition and clearance taking place, a survey conducted in 1980 showed that the residential population of the city centre had increased from that of 1970 by around 3,000 inhabitants. I recall that on Friday afternoons, thousands of low-income, Asian workers, who mainly lived around the downtown area, or commuted from other parts of the city, filled the streets of Doha's central area.

Other memories from these days in Doha centre are worth mentioning here. The apartment building where I lived with my family was located in Abdallah bin Thani Street (figure 9.3). It was a three-storey building, occupied by Egyptian, British, and Qatari families. All apartment buildings along the street, ours among them, formed a continuous urban wall, which ran from Al-Jeeda roundabout in the south until it almost reached the Emiri Diwan and the clock roundabout to the north. Looking to the east from the roof of our building, I recall how the dense urban fabric of Musheireb district, or Fereej Mohamed bin Jasim, dominated the scenery, with towering minarets occasionally changing the otherwise monotonous silhouette. The sharp contrast between the relatively high apartment buildings – most were three to five storeys – and the older low-rise dense area was striking. Like Potemkin villages, it looked from the street level as if the apartment buildings were fake drawings on canvas, erected to impress those who are traversing the street.[9] The most impressive building in this assemblage of relatively modern apartment buildings was Al-Jeedah office tower, which rose for over fifteen storeys (figure 9.4). Though it remained not in use, it was the highest building in Doha until very recently. Like other buildings of the 1970s and 1980s, such as Doha Sheraton, Qatar National Bank, Gulf Hotel, and Qatar University, Al-Jeedah tower appeared frequently on postcards and brochures of Doha (figure 9.5 and 9.6).[10] Such images were representative of the modernization that Qatar was undergoing. To put it differently, in addition to the use values of these buildings, they have acquired an image, which signalled the introduction of Qatar to the modern world.

post cards

QATAR introduction to the modern

Figure 9.3. The apartment building where I lived with my family between 1978 and 1981.

Figure 9.4. Until very recently, the Jeedah office tower was the highest structure in Doha.

What I also remember vividly from these days of modernizing Doha is the speed with which bulldozing and clearing were taking place in the central areas. I recall, for example, that in a few months, parts of the area around Souk Waqif were almost unrecognizable. Large swathes of the area were bulldozed to make way for a new route penetrating the old city, Grand Hamad Street, which ran through central Doha to the Corniche. Like Haussmann's boulevards in nineteenth-

Figure 9.5. Qatar Central Bank, one of Doha's architectural icons of the 1970s and 1980s.

Figure 9.6. Qatar University, an attempt to deal with the question of Qatar's architectural identity.

century Paris, the six-lane street was meant to be a ceremonial boulevard leading from the airport to the city. During the subsequent years, only a few banks, hotels, and small shopping centres were built along either side of the street. As we shall see, the attention of the government as well as private developers would shift to another part of the city. It is important to mention that a Lebanese firm, Dar al-Handasah, was also commissioned to prepare plans for the central areas of Doha in the early 1980s.[11] According to Corbett (2003), unlike Llewelyn-Davies, Dar al-Handasah's proposal placed greater emphasis on maintaining the traditional fabric of the central area, 'calling for a mix of new development together with renovation of older, historical buildings'. In fact, a third firm, the Hong Kong based Shankland Cox was hired before Dar al-Handasah, in 1979, to assess the earlier proposals and suggest new measures to be taken, particularly after it had become clear that the population projections made in the early 1970s were far less than reality (figure 9.7).

Among the other recommendations proposed by Llewelyn-Davies was to develop and reclaim a large area located north-west of the city centre along the shores of the Gulf. Henri Lefebvre (1991) said that any revolution which has not produced new spaces 'has not changed life itself but has merely changed ideological superstructures, institutions or political apparatuses'. As if answering to

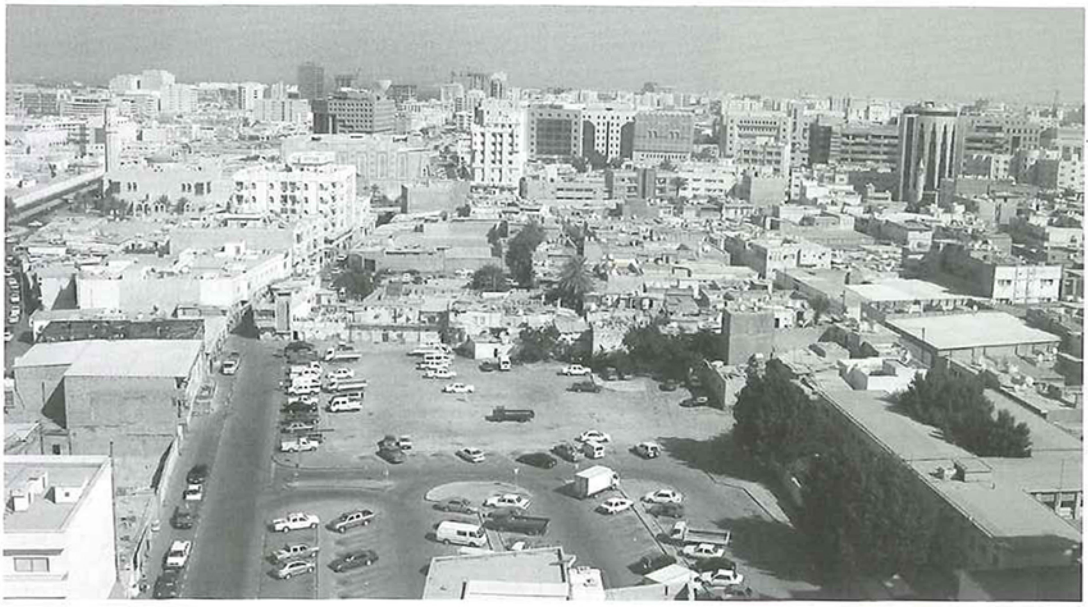

Figure 9.7. Until today, large swathes of the cleared sites of old Doha are not built as they were intended in the 1970s.

Lefebvre's prophetic observation, this project was proposed immediately following independence and a new ruler, Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad, assuming full power. The New District of Doha, as the area was formally designated, was Sheikh Khalifa's new revolutionary space for the city and the new era (figure 9.8). Nagy (2000) tells us that the project was meant not only to enhance Doha's new image of prosperity and development, but also allowed the State to possess 'large parcels of serviced residential and commercial land, which could be granted or leased to political allies'. According to Nagy, Llewelyn-Davies's original project proposal

Figure 9.8. Doha Corniche has become a defining image and a centre of activities for the city.

covered 2000 hectares, of which 750 hectares were reclaimed land. She also says the reclaimed land was to be used for up-scale housing and leisure facilities, but:

> The Emiri Diwan expanded the project to include housing for approximately 6000 residents (mostly Qatari), hotel and convention facilities, a diplomatic quarter, Qatar University, Doha Palace, a government center, and an elaborate waterfront promenade and park overlooking Doha bay. (*Ibid.*, p. 137).

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An American office, William Pereira Associates, was hired to develop the concept plan for the New District. One of the immediate effects of the reclamation project, which began in 1974, was the shaping of the Doha bay and the emergence of the long crescent-shaped Corniche (figure 9.9). Though the project required major earth moving and landfill, it proved a great instrument functionally and symbolically for the future of Doha. On the one hand, the Corniche opened new areas for development and was used by many residents during their leisure time; on the other, it became a symbol of the new city as most iconic and emblematic governmental and commercial buildings were lined up along its length. The Corniche indeed acquired a central character-defining position in the structural plan for Doha: the city was laid out in a semicircular pattern radiating outwards from the Corniche. A system of ring roads intercepted by radial ones, as presented by Llewelyn-Davies, formed the basic structure of the city. These ring roads were lettered progressively from the Corniche to the outer edges of the city. They encircled urban areas, separating and marking different zones in the city. For example, the old urban core of Doha became banded between the Corniche and the B ring road. Between B and C ring roads, there was a mix of old and new buildings. Llewelyn-Davies suggested that future extensions could be accommodated by creating new semicircular extensions defined by new ring roads. By 1980, few buildings existed beyond the C ring, or between C and D ring roads.

Figure 9.9. Doha's long crescent-shaped Corniche.

Figure 9.10. The Centre was the first Western-style department store and supermarket.

Along this six-lane road, a new Ramada hotel and two movie theatres marked the edge of the city to the south. Just a few hundred feet north of the hotel, and along one of the radial roads, Salwa, a modern shopping centre was constructed, known as The Centre, and this became popular for selling imported Western products and food during the late 1970s and 1980s (figure 9.10).

Much of the construction activities during the 1980s were taking place in the New District of Doha. Housing projects for Qataris, a new diplomatic quarter, the University, residential blocks for expatriates, compounds for Gulf Air employees, a football stadium, and the Sheraton Hotel were among the most prominent examples from this èra (figure 9.11). Located on the new reclaimed land overlooking the Doha bay, the Sheraton hotel became the new icon of the city. Other governmental buildings began to appear along the Corniche, such as the Post Office and other ministerial buildings (figure 9.12). In the decade following independence, the area of the capital city doubled to over 20 square kilometres, with a population of around 200,000, of which nearly 70 per cent were expatriate workers. By the early 1980s, a drop in the oil price caused the government either to cancel or put on hold many of the infrastructure and building projects. For example, large areas designated in the original proposal by William Periera for commercial and leisure developments, particularly on the new reclaimed land, remained undeveloped. But the population growth continued to soar through the 1980s and early 1990s. By 1995, the metropolitan population of the city, which included Al-Wakrah to the south-east and Madinat Khalifah to the south-west, was close to 400,000 with Qataris constituting almost one of every four residents.

The development of Doha during the years following independence was

Figure 9.11. Sheraton Doha, the icon for Doha since it was built in the early 1980s.

Figure 9.12. The Emiri Palace is located on the Corniche.

interwoven with the recycling of the petrodollars earned by the government, which amounted to US$5 billion at the dawn of the fall in oil prices and recession period (Al-Ghanim, 1997, p. 112). At that time, the economy was not insulated against the inevitable swings in oil prices and the troublesome changes in government revenues which come with them. Functioning as a welfare state for its citizens, the government's policy was to supply every Qatari with a plot of land and an interest free loan for building a house, which was usually very large by Western standards. The expatriate workers also usually received free housing as part of their work contracts. As we have seen, the urban renewal policy of the 1970s re-channelled much of the resources to the citizens through land-acquiring policies. According to one estimate, the governments of the Middle East spent 80 per cent of their increased revenues during the 1970s boom either on modernization projects or purchasing goods from the United States and Europe. Only the remaining 20 per cent was saved in the form of equities or loans to developing countries, particularly in South America (Mouawad and Porter, 2006). I will argue that much of what was spent in construction activities, in the sphere of housing, infrastructure, or public amenities, was necessary to accommodate the increase in population and to modernize the capital city according to specific models. To put it differently, it was the era of an urbanity of necessity. It was during the second half of the 1990s that another type of urban development began to dominate the city as elsewhere in the Gulf region. It is to this emerging urbanity in Doha that I shall now turn and describe some of its prevalent scenes.

Scene III. Globalization and the Urbanity of the Spectacle

The [pearl] island will be an iconic development which will enhance the global image of Doha and Qatar as a premier residential, shopping and tourist destination.[12]

Nick Bashkiroff, Development Director for 'The Pearl-Qatar'

No doubt, the words 'globalization' and 'global' were the catch phrases of twentieth century *fin de siècle*. Journalists, academics, politicians, business executives, such as Nick Bashkiroff quoted above, and others use these words to signify that something profound is happening, that a new world economic, political, and cultural order is emerging, or to express their desire to join the club of global cities, global images, global corporations, or whatever. With hindsight, what has been taking place during the last two decades, in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, can be described as part of a global restructuring process, a period that marked a critical turning point in the geo-economic history of capitalism. Moreover, the impact of these global changes on Qatar is aggrandized with a series of interconnected international, regional and local changes in the political and economic spheres: Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, the Second Gulf War, the bloodless coup and change of Emir in Qatar in 1995, the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington DC, the occupation of Iraq, recent oil and gas price upsurge, and the emergence of Dubai as a centre for commerce and an entertainment hub in the Gulf region. Concurrent with these recent developments, particularly since the late 1990s, we observe a rapid urbanization and building frenzy in Doha that has been characterized by explosive expansion of the existing city in almost all spatial coordinates: building skyscrapers, constructing malls and gated residential communities, establishing iconic museums and libraries, erecting new stadia and sports facilities, importing water inland, and creating artificial lakes and islands. These recent developments represent the largest urban and real-estate explosion Doha has ever seen. It is customary to find almost every week one of

Qatar's growing numbers of real-estate developers either unveiling a new project or announcing the completion of a stage of an on-going one. Since the turn of the millennium an upward trend characterizes the total number of building and demolition permits issued across the city. While the building permits granted in 1999 slightly exceeded 1,500, in 2004 they reached over 1,000 in the first few months (OBG, 2005). Every previously-vacant lot appears to have been fenced for some construction activities; old houses and commercial blocks are being demolished to make space for higher-income earning towers, and the face of the city is changing from day to day. One needs only to observe the changing skyline of the West Bay area, which will host, when completed, more than 180 high-rise buildings (figures 9.13 and 9.14). A tell-tale sign of the magnitude of the construction activities in Qatar is to recall that the ambitious projects being built or in the pipeline for the next decade are worth some US$130 billion. Of course, this construction boom is backed by the fact that Qatar is blessed with the largest non-associated gas field in the world, with proven reserves that, according to one estimate, will be sufficient to support planned production of natural gas for the next two centuries (Gulf Construction, 2006*a*).

I believe that it is not a coincidence that these urban developments are concurrent with these political and economic transformations in the 1990s. I will argue that we cannot understand the emerging urban scenes with their accompanying phantasmagorical architectural forms and spaces in Doha, which strives to become a global city, without first mapping these emerging scenes in relation to other global trends, particularly in the economic regime of late capitalism. To describe how Doha is illustrative of the contemporary workings

Figure 9.13. West Bay from the Corniche.

Figure 9.14. The emerging Doha skyline in West Bay.

of global capital, therefore, I want to put forward five interrelated theoretical observations, or discourses, which I contend represent slightly different attempts to frame the dynamics of these global urban trends, particularly in relation to urban developments in Doha.

In the first discourse, many scholars have established that something different has been occurring in the nature of the capitalist system since the 1980s and early 1990s. The drive for capital accumulation in advanced, industrialist societies and their corollaries – the loosely connected, reproduced socio-economic and political nodes or clones in developing countries – is distending a second economic tier which accumulates capital through cultural rather than industrial production, a cultural capitalism tier (Rifkin, 2000). The main trade of this expanding economic tier is not the selling and buying of goods produced in factories but the performance and consumption of cultural experiences produced in specific spaces in the city. Interestingly, Jennifer Craik (1997) suggests that at about the same time a new phase of tourism, which highlights the cultural component of tourist experiences, has emerged. Thus we find a significant portion of these new hyper-spaces of capital has been claimed for the ever-expanding entertainment, cultural, and tourism industries. Some scholars are going so far as to claim that many contemporary cities are metamorphosing to accommodate these new spaces (Hannigan, 1998). But one must remember that tourism, which is a targeted sector for growth in Doha and most of the Gulf States, is one of the oldest cultural industries in the history of capitalism. Ever since it was launched as a formal business at the hands of Thomas Cook in the middle of the nineteenth century, the tourist industry has been involved in the business of packaging cultural experiences. Like a bud that has always been embedded in the bark of the capitalist tree, cultural capitalism has only recently accelerated its growth to the extent that very soon it might outgrow the tree. One striking observation in this current condition is the twinning of the cultural entertainment and tourist industries in producing spaces that cater for a new kind of 'cosmopolitan citizen' who, as Zygmunt Bauman (1993) has written, thinks of good life as equal to a 'continuous holiday'.[13]

From this perspective, the private and public sectors in Qatar seem to have responded to this new economic reality and put much emphasis on re-orienting the economy towards this expanding economic tier, which indeed explains much of the recent architectural development which uses culture as a backdrop to answer the lack of cultural and tourist venues in the city. To expand this fledgling economic tier, Qatar has recently announced an ambitious new tourism master plan with an investment of over US$15 billion into an array of prestigious projects to establish Doha as a high-quality destination for cultural tourism, beach and lifestyle resorts, business and sports events. Two years ago, at the National Tourism Conference held in Doha to celebrate World Tourism Day, Akbar al-Baker, Chairman of the Qatar Tourism Authority (QTA), outlined the government's vision to build its capital city as a leading quality destination for leisure, business and international sporting events. 'Our plan', said al-Baker, 'includes building hotels, lifestyle resorts, cultural products, sports facilities and building a stronger infrastructure to sustain the growth and appeal of our country'.[14] In 2004, over 500,000 tourists passed through Qatar, and the government is expecting that number to more than double, reaching 1.5 million visitors in 2010. Similarly, addressing leaders in business and finance, the Qatar Museums Authority (QMA) chairperson, Sheikha Mayassa bint Hamad al-Thani, revealed the government's cultural development strategy when she told her audience that 'it is in partnership with you that the vision of Qatar for the Mecca of Museums can become a vibrant reality' (*Gulf Times*, 2007). It is worth mentioning that these developments in the art scene in Doha are instigated, motivated, and inspired by Sheikh Saud al-Thani, cousin of the ruling Emir and one of the wealthiest art collectors in the world (Goswamy, 2004). Evidence of this aggressive plan promoted by Sheikh Saud abounds with several new developments and spectacular events, attesting to the growing interest in promoting culture as a way to attract tourists and enhance the image of the city for a global audience.[15]

Consider the new Museum of Islamic Arts, for example (figure 9.15). It was first conceived in an international competition coordinated by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture in 1997. From more than eighty contestants, the jury selected the Indian architect Charles Correa and the Jordanian architect Rasem Badran by a majority vote as finalists. Initially, although the client selected the project of Badran to be built, the final project was surprisingly passed to the Chinese-American superstar architect I.M. Pei, creator of the glass pyramid at the Louvre, who in his eighties was called out of retirement to design the building.[16] The museum building, which draws much influence from ancient Sumerian, Babylonian, and Assyrian architecture, is built on an off-shore artificial island in a prime location at the end

Figure 9.15. The Islamic Museum during construction.

of the Corniche and will house a large collection of Islamic arts. The museum is meant to join forces with four other national museums that will also be built or renovated in the Doha bay area, to form centrepieces in Doha's strategy to become a tourist destination.[17] It is worth mentioning that this strategy of enhancing the city's global brand-image through the construction of museums, which the government of Qatar has taken to distinguish itself from other development tracks in other Gulf emirates, is being echoed, or perhaps, challenged by the city of Abu Dhabi. A few months ago, the government of Abu Dhabi announced its future plans to construct four large museums designed by four superstar architects on Sadiyyat Island.

But the display strategy has not been limited to items framed within the boundaries of iconic museum buildings. For example, displaying the city's history is now expanding to incorporate framing certain sections of the old city (figure 9.16). Souk Waqif, the covered market which I mentioned earlier and which originally began as a Friday market place for Bedouins to trade their wool and meat in exchange for staple goods, has been recently transformed to become a showcase for Doha's past. The market was a bit modernized during the last few decades with neon lights, aluminium doors and windows, and new paints covering the otherwise characterless shop façades. Recently, Souk Waqif underwent a massive renovation and clearing effort so that it could be displayed to wandering tourists as an 'authentic' setting, replete with all signs of a refurbished, relived past (figure 9.17). Souk Waqif is re-dressing to signify an original that never existed in this sleek form (figure 9.18).[18]

The use of daily events in the market place as animated showcases for tourists is being replicated in a more organized and official manner. The tourism authorities in Doha have been using cultural events and festivals as animators of traditional

Figure 9.16. Souk Waqif is at the heart of the city and its historical memory.

Figure 9.17. Souk Waqif underwent a massive renovation and clearing before the Asian Games in 2006.

Figure 9.18. The clearings around Souk Waqif introduced new visual contrasts to the old city.

places and the past to encourage and levy tourist itineraries throughout the whole year. Consider the annual Doha Cultural Festival, which features a supposed blend of Eastern and Western cultures, ranging from Qatari Nabatean poetry recitals to Western musicals (*Gulf News*, 2007). Or take the newly launched heritage village, which is becoming a trademark for all cities in the Gulf. Not unlike its counterparts in the region, the Doha village hosts a variety of events which are meant to showcase traditional Qatari dances, music, and handicrafts (Bibbo, 2007).

In addition to developing art and local culture scenes, Doha authorities plan to attract sports fans with new facilities and major sporting events. I suggest that in Qatari society where staged cultural and sports performances are spreading, life is increasingly presenting itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles, to paraphrase what Guy Debord wrote 40 years ago about modern societies. The spectacular year-round spectator sports activities in Doha attest to this. According to a report on the overall view of the tourism activities in Doha, the number of high-level sports events organized in the city is dazzling: MotoGP, ATP tennis, gymnastics, volleyball, basketball, handball, football, Master's golf, Grand Prix fencing, Class One and Formula 3000 power boating, as well as non-stop round-the-world yachting, are but a few of the events which fill the calendar (OBG, 2005, p. 116). But the most important event which was the focal point used in boosting the cultural capitalism tier was the spectacular 2006 Doha Asian Games. Ever since Doha was awarded the hosting of the Games in 2001, nearly US$3 billon was spent on infrastructure developments directly related to the sports facilities (Qatar Business Report, 2005). These new venues include the renovation or construction of more than thirty-eight permanent and temporary sports venues to stage the forty sports which would draw nearly 11,000 Asian athletes (figure 9.19). The centrepiece of these facilities is Sports City. Located some 11 kilometres south-west of Doha's Corniche, the City covers an area of 130 hectares and includes Khalifa International Stadium, the Aspire Sports Dome, the Hamad Aquatic Center, the Orthopaedic Sports Medicine Hospital, the Energy Center, and a host of other facilities (figure 9.20). A bird's eye perspective of the overall development reveals that the design draws heavily on the elements of the desert, such as the car-parking which has been arranged in the shape of palm fronds.[19]

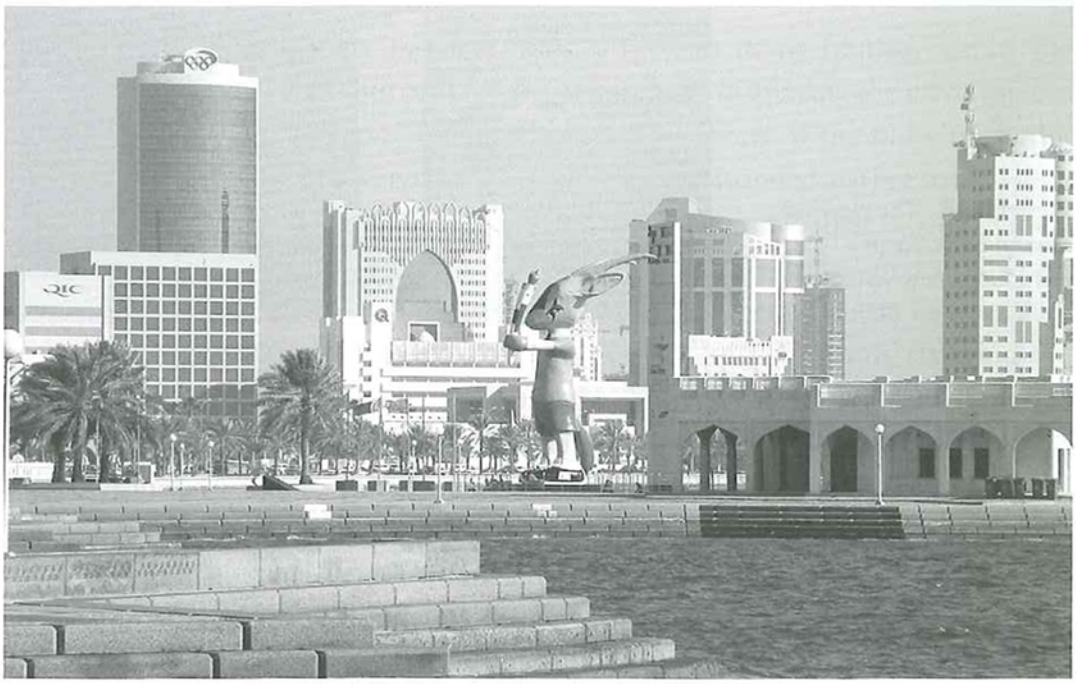

Figure 9.19. Ory, the mascot for the 2006 Asian Games in Doha, overlooks West Bay.

Figure 9.20. The Khalifa International Stadium.

The event itself was hailed as one of the most impressive, successful, and well organized of all Asian Games. To guarantee the success of the spectacular opening and closing ceremonies, the authorities hired the same Australian team who had organized the Sydney Summer Olympic Games to plan, to the minutest detail, the unfolding events of the two week spectacle. According to Barbara Bibbo (2006), the vast majority of the props, sets and scenery were shipped from Sydney, where a workshop was established to draw on 'the finest talent from the film and entertainment industry'. The organization of the sports event was a strategic focus which not only tied together a number of aspects of Qatar's ongoing development, but also used a flagship spectacle to promote the new brand-image of Qatar globally (OBG, 2005).

I want to conclude this discourse on the rise of cultural capitalism and its impact on Doha by shifting to the latest form of development which is taking place in many cities in the Gulf region, namely, the cities, as they are dubbed, of higher education. In 1995, the Emir of Qatar established the Qatar Foundation with a mandate to create an Education City, a fully functioning community, committed to imparting and creating knowledge, from early childhood education to postgraduate studies and applied research. Today, one of its key features is that it is co-located with the recently established Qatar Science and Technology Park, which is intended to spur development of Qatar's knowledge economy. The Science and Technology Park is based on free-trade zone incentives and aims to attract companies to develop their technology and help entrepreneurs launch new technology businesses. Christina Asquith (2006) says that inside the 2,500 acre, well-guarded compound on the outskirts of Doha, students from across the Arab world are enrolled in one of five premier US universities which have arrived in Qatar in recent years to deliver American-style education and degrees.[20] In the next few years, Education City will be joined by housing, shopping, sports and recreational facilities.

Arata Isozaki, the Japanese architect who designed the National Library, National Bank and other projects around Doha, including the Emir's private residence, is not only in charge of the master plan, but is designing the auditorium/convention and exhibition centre and the foundation headquarters, one of the emblematic buildings on the site, which appears on numerous postcards and periodicals about Doha. Ingeniously, the building, which was engineered by Arup, has a detached, outer screen shade controlling the amount of solar energy hitting its glassy external wall and ensuring that it never overheats. Another signature building by Isozaki planned for the Education City is a massive, state-of-the-art convention centre. The Mexican architects Legorreta & Legorreta are also leaving their mark on the vicinity with their designs for two academic buildings.

It is worth mentioning that Doha's enthusiasm to establish itself as an education hub for the Gulf region and South East Asia with an American-style education system is concurrent with the US government's desire, particularly since 9/11, to observe closely, and perhaps change, the education system in the Arab World, which has been surmised by the Western media and governments as one of the principal factors behind the ideological fanaticism of the New York and Washington suicide attacks. Moreover, the tense and acrimonious relationship between America and the Arab world in the aftermath of the attacks has been discouraging many Arab students, particularly from the Gulf region, to pursue higher education in the US. Thus, the opening of branches of several American universities in Doha might have become, particularly after 9/11, a shared goal of the different parties involved but for different reasons. It is also important to put in this context the fact that other Gulf States are also promoting American-style education by taking a similar course, for example, Knowledge Village in Dubai. In fact, this seeming competition among the various Gulf States constitutes the second discourse, to which I shall now turn and describe some of its prevalent features.

The main focus of the second discourse is on the ever expanding global capitalist corporations, whose aim today, just as in the past, is adding value to their products. It has been through branding, one of the primary instruments of capitalism, that the products assume the status of symbols and icons; in other words, products acquire sign values in addition to their use values. Thus, in the current development of hyper-inflated corporate power, we have entered the age of hyper-signification, in which the urban experience is increasingly cluttered with brand icons, 'sign wars', to use the words of Robert Goldman and Stephen Papson (1996). I want to suggest that in the Gulf region, beyond all the headlines and current media preoccupation with the situation in Iraq, an iconic war of hyper-signification is taking place in the realm of architecture. Today, architecture has become one of the primary instruments of brand communication, of lending tangible form to corporate brands. We may talk not only about making a brand into a place but also making a place or even a city into a brand. Of course, cities have always been stereotyped, or branded, because they always reflect a rational or an emotional attachment: Cairo is history; Paris is romance, and so on. As Simon Anholt (2005) has pointed out, what is different in today's globalized, networked world is that every city has to compete with every other city for the share of the world's tourists, consumers, businesses, capital, and so on. Of course, cities with powerful and positive brands find it easier to attract investment and tourists. Consider the negative image given to Qatar by the famous Lonely Planet guidebook of the 1980s which tells us that Doha has earned a reputation as the dullest place on earth. In fact, one cannot help but think that much of what is happening today has been instigated as a response to this negative image. In order to gain a share in the global economy, therefore, cities are consciously striving to construct, manage, and maintain a brand image. In this brand-setting of cities, architecture seems to have assumed the role of forging the backdrop for brand experiences with a high entertainment value, from flagship stores to themed residential gated communities, from innovative museum and mall concepts to spectacular, iconic office towers and hotels. Consider this brand-setting competition among cities in the Gulf.[21] Burj Dubai, for example, is set to top the list of the highest buildings in the world. However, three contenders from the Gulf region are lining up: Kuwait, Bahrain, and another structure in Dubai itself.

In addition to branding Doha using culture and art, as has been rehearsed in the previous discourse, the authorities are pioneering, in the Middle East, industry-based research and development to add the value of a knowledge economy to the brand. A similar project geared to differentiating Doha's developments from other cities in the Gulf is the Energy City. Located within the Lusail development and described by its developers as the only one of its kind in the region, the Energy City complex is anticipated to host a collection of regional headquarters for energy conglomerates and associated industries and suppliers.

But the centrepiece of these endeavours is the iconic 'The Pearl-Qatar' (figure 9.21). The US$2.5 billion Riviera-style, offshore island covers some 400 hectares

Figure 9.21. The Pearl-Qatar, the rediscovered island.

of reclaimed land and will triple, when completed in 2009, Doha's coastline. Built 350 metres offshore in the West Bay Lagoon area, the island is promising to house more than 35,000 inhabitants in an exclusive retreat, yet closely integrated with the mainland by an eight-lane, palm-tree lined super highway. It is worth mentioning that in keeping with the iconic rivalries and brand setting of cities in the Gulf States, The Pearl-Qatar is one of a series of emerging artificial or natural islands used to advance specific images: Bahrain has the Amwag Islands, Oman has the Wave, Dubai has three Palm islands and The World, and Kuwait is planning a major tourist investment on its existing island of Failaka.

The Seattle-based Callison Architecture Inc provided the master planning and conceptual design services for the whole reclaimed island. Clearly, Callison's main goal was to differentiate the island from the other islands in the Gulf and to create an iconic brand image for the country.[22]

In addition, both the island's name and location are of great complex significance. The Pearl-Qatar is supposedly being built on a reclaimed former pearl diving site. The name, therefore, alludes to the previous mainstay commodity of the economy, pearls. While the project clearly addresses global audiences, its progenitors waste no time in evoking a link between the cultural identity of the emerging spaces and the historical legacies of skills, stories, music, art, and poetry of the past times on the basis of their overlay with the old pearl-fishing site. Moreover, the shape of the island mirrors this illusion of pearls huddled together, extending into the Gulf waters. Now the old commodity of pearls is no longer a key economic factor. Its abstracted image and connotation, however, has become a circulating iconic fiction, while its actual spaces have been virtually non-existent until reclaimed from the sea, a reclaimed/recreated space-commodity to be conquered and sold in an ever growing global real-estate market. Apparently, for the developers of The Pearl, it is not sufficient for the new global cosmopolitan citizens to live in local historical times. Thus, we find the island encompassing ten variously themed residential and commercial districts, promising the 'ambience and lifestyle of the Mediterranean to the heart of Arabia'. I shall get back to this emphasis on lifestyles in a little while. As an incentive to attract people from across the globe, the property owners of The Pearl will automatically receive Qatari residency visas and will be granted unrestricted freehold titles to their property. According to official publications, The Pearl-Qatar is one of the designated areas that falls under the Prime Ministerial decree issued in June 2004 to allow non-Qataris to own residential units in Doha. Other designated areas in which foreigners can purchase land, buildings, and apartments include the Qutaifiya Lagoon and the Al-Khor projects – both these are projects developed by the state-owned Diar-Qatar.

The third discourse, though closely related to the second, focuses on the relationship between Dubai and Doha.[23] No doubt, a strong affinity between Dubai and Doha has grown over the years. Marriage between their ruling families and a unified currency until the early 1970s, the Qatar-Dubai riyal, are but two examples of these strong ties. Recently, a growing number of observers began to point out the impact Dubai has exerted on Doha as well as other cities in the region (Elsheshtawy, 2005; Sherwood, 2006). 'Is Doha the Next Dubai', 'The Dubai Effect', 'Dubaification', 'Dubaization', 'The Dubai Factor', 'Exporting Dubai', are but a few of the terms and titles used to reflect Dubai's growing influence and competition with Doha and other regional cities. 'Qatar and Dubai compete on many fronts', and 'Emirates and Qatar Airways slug it out for the title of the world's fastest growing airline' (Jones, 2006), and their airports, I shall add, will very soon follow suit. A quick look at a timeline of major developments in the past decade supports this argument. For example, The Pearl-Qatar was announced 2 years after the first Palm Jumeirah was being dredged; the Financial Center of Doha was established 2 years after Dubai International Financial Centre opened its doors; and the start of many of the large real-estate developments in Doha emerged in the shadows of their counterparts in Dubai. Moreover, Dubai investors have contributed to some key projects in Doha. For instance, Dubai International Properties, a member of Dubai Holding, has launched an 80-storey, 437 metre high development, Dubai Towers Doha, which will become Doha's tallest building; Dubai-based Tabreed has set up a joint venture, district cooling company with the United Development Company (UDC), which will be the first district cooling services provider in the State of Qatar; and DAMAC, the largest private developer in Dubai, made a foray into Doha with a US$300 million project, The Piazza, which will be part of Lusail City (Rahman, 2006).

From another perspective, Doha has followed the footsteps of Dubai in linking its new working and residential real-estate developments to urban ideas which, not unlike Dubai, also labels them cities. For instance, while in Dubai we find Media City, Internet City, Medical City, Studio City, International City and the ironic Residential City among many others, in Doha we observe developers increasingly using the same designations: Energy City, Entertainment City, Sports City, Education City, Bavaria City Suites, and so on. Increasingly relying on superlatives is another case in point: while Dubai has mastered this in the past few years with a series of world-breaking records such as the tallest building and the largest mall, Doha's developments are increasingly being defined in similar ways: Snow Xtreme is the only place in the Gulf where it snows all year round according to one flyer in the City Center Doha mall, another clone of Dubai's City Center in Deira. We have seen how the Aspire dome in Sports City was advertised as the largest sports dome in the world and Lusail City propagated as the largest real-estate development in the Gulf. Even the expansion of Dubai's private and state-owned business and real-estate companies in the Arab world is being replicated by Doha's emerging conglomerates. For example, following DAMAC, EMAAR, and Nakheel, the large real-estate developers in Dubai, Diar-Qatar, has recently announced two large real-estate projects: a US$170 million tourist development in Morocco near Tangier and an eco-tourist resort in Ras al-Haad, Oman. Other large projects in Egypt and elsewhere are in the pipeline.

Many observers will agree that Dubai has stirred the tourism and real-estate developments in the Gulf region. But it would be inaccurate to conclude that its influence is in a one-way direction. For example, Education City is a project conceived and launched in Qatar long before the Knowledge Village was established in Dubai and Al-Jazeera News state-owned channel has been operating since 1996, long before Al-Arabiya, the Dubai-based news channel, started broadcasting. Moreover, the emphasis on developing museums and cultural venues is unique to Doha, at least until the recent announcements in Abu Dhabi. State officials waste no time in distinguishing Doha from Dubai. For example, Jan De Boer, head of Qatar's tourism agency and a close associate of the Emir said that 'this [Dubai] gigantomania is precisely what we want to avoid. Of course, the speed of development here makes it seem like Dubai. But we have a different plan. We want to be more exclusive' (quoted in Follath, 2006). According to Follath, in Qatar, Dubai is seen as 'vulgar, boastful, nouveau riche and completely devoid of character'. On the other hand, 'Qatar wants to be a classy Portofino, not a tacky Benidorm. In fact, whether or not it wants to be like Dubai is no longer an issue' (*Ibid.*). I will argue that while it is true that Dubai may have instigated, or speeded up, Doha's recent developments and construction boom, these developments have lives and dynamics of their own. To put it differently, once the ball of development started rolling in Doha in the mid-1990s, it acquired its own dynamic energy, which is affected by both internal and external logics. It is, therefore, not a one directional predisposition, but rather a complex web of influences and interactions. Again, many of these developments in Doha started after the current Emir took power in 1995. Of course, this regime change is not related to Dubai, but to internal politics in the Al-Thani family.

In the fourth discourse, many social critics call attention to the fact that today the selection of brands has become an important factor in defining people's identities and lifestyles. For example, the American writer Naomi Klein (2002) reckons that lifestyles are becoming increasingly intrinsic markers of who one is and as a means to connect to others. Akin to an individual's possession of commodities, adoption of a certain brand or lifestyle marks and conveys to his or her peer group meaning, status, and prestige; it displays in the individual's society some sort of cultural capital. To put it differently, while for the individual the display function of commodity-signs remains a significant source for prestige and identity actualization, the accumulation of cultural experiences – travel accounts, souvenirs, and exotic photo images – represents an increasingly dominant source for identity formation and status. Illustrative of this reliance on exotic experience as a symbolic, cultural capital is the eagerness of many tourists to take photographs in certain sites so that they can tell their peers back home that they were in a particular place, the 'I have been there' feeling to paraphrase what Jean Baudrillard calls the 'I did it' feeling (Mestrovic, 1997).

It was Max Weber, according to Mark Gottdiener (2000), who first taught us that the cultural or symbolic aspects of society define people's behaviour as much as economic needs. Weber's insight has profoundly influenced numerous subsequent scholars, who emphasized the importance of symbolic or sign values in the realization of self and the exercise of identity through lifestyles, particularly in those societies that are increasingly characterized by consumption. I have in mind the long haul that runs from Thorstein Veblen (1899) to Daniel Boorstein (1961) to Guy Debord (1970) to Jean Baudrillard (1983). This semiotic approach to culture led many contemporary social observers to conclude that today's culture is about image and that consumption consists of appropriating signs (Kellner, 1995; Gottdiener, 2000). Although proponents of this approach are criticized often for being one-dimensional and one-sided, their analyses are very useful in shedding light on the importance of sign values in everyday culture (Gottdiener, 2000). There is little doubt, I want to emphasize, that signs and images play an increasingly important role in identity formation, including the identity of buildings and cities. In addition, because cultural productions in general are increasingly standardized, it became imperative that they 'attach themselves to signs that carry an additional element of value' (Goldman and Papson, 1996). Thus we find in contemporary Doha, which is trying to attract tourists, a plethora of cultural entertainment venues devising and using some overarching symbolic themes in their proliferating spaces. One may say that these tourist spaces have become like staged commercial entertainment settings replete with signs which, in addition to their function in differentiating tourist products, communicate meanings embedded in their signs that promote specific lifestyles and patterns of consumption. It is to gain cultural capital that a large segment of tourists is increasingly motivated to experience differences and the exotic; and to supply this exotic experience the urban developers and tourist industries in Doha are manufacturing the exotic brands and lifestyle spaces.

Consider, for example, how the progenitors of The Pearl-Qatar describe the main intention of the project. Catering to a particular lifestyle, the project intends to create a hybrid place of fantasy with a permanent atmosphere of festivity. In a secure and exclusive environment, the up-scale residential community, announces an editorial on the island, will bring 'the ambience and lifestyle of the Mediterranean to the heart of Arabia' (*Acari* Editorial, 2005, p. 31). Nick Bashkiroff, the Development Director of The Pearl-Qatar, tells us that 'the Porto Arabia lifestyle will be akin to that in Cannes or Nice but within the clean waters of the Arabian Gulf' (*Ibid.*). Or take the names given to the various residential areas or buildings within The Pearl island: Monaco, Tuscan, Provencal, Florentine, Catalan, Andalusian, Riviera, La Croisette, among many others. 'Select a destination. Then, select a home', says one advertisement for The Pearl-Qatar. It has been 'conceived to facilitate the most exclusive lifestyles within an environment that will constantly surprise', says another company publication. Obviously, these designations suggest the illusion of vitality, enjoyment, and fun through their semantic associations with Mediterranean destinations known for their ambience of dissociated festivity and up-scale lifestyle.

Another emerging project, which also emphasizes the lifestyle component of the development, is the US$5.5 billion Lusail City. Launched by the state-owned company Qatari-Diar and headed by the newly appointed premier Sheikh Hamad bin Jabor bin Jassim al-Thani, the new city, which will be located a few kilometres north of the West Bay area, will cover over 35 square kilometres with 8 kilometres beach-front and will accommodate up to 200,000 people. A key component for the development is the Energy City, the multibillion dollar hub for the energy industry in Qatar and supposedly the region. While the Energy City is a business hub, its advertisements evoke a lifestyle of surrounding posh houses, golf courses, themed malls, sleek restaurants, which as Sharon Zukin (1995) has observed, is a precondition for global corporations to settle in a city. In addition, the Lusail development will include, when completed, comprehensive leisure and entertainment facilities including an Entertainment City, an estimated US$500 million project developed by the Abu Dhabi Investment House. Entertainment City is a mixed-use theme park: themed hotels, themed restaurants, shopping, cinemas, and theatres. Part of Lusail and spanning over 1.6 million square metres is Fox Hills. Not unlike its neighbour, The Pearl-Qatar, it is presumably inspired by Qatari heritage and draws much influence from Mediterranean architectural themed environments and lifestyles.

Why these developments in their urban and physical environments are happening at this magnitude at this historical juncture is a question asked in the fifth discourse with the usual answer given by the authorities: to diversify the economy. Since the beginning of this real-estate boom a few years ago, the idea of diversifying the economy provided a mode of seeing, a way of diagnosing, and a remedy for improving and reaching a sustainable urban and economic growth. Of course, other possible, interrelated answers to this question have been addressed in the four discourses discussed above: the changing leadership in Doha; the rise of cultural capitalism as a paradigm for capital accumulation; the rivalry with other cities in the Gulf; the increasing influence of American and European lifestyles and business models; the growing importance of brands and lifestyles to the identity formation of citizens and cities; and the growing importance of the brand-setting of cities to attract businesses and tourists. I want to add here one further possible answer to this question: the repatriation of Arab wealth following the events of 11 September 2001 and the recycling of petrodollars.

Akin to the 1970s, the development of Doha during the past few years is interwoven with the recycling of the petrodollars earned by the government. Mohsen Khan, the Director of the Middle East and Central Asia Department at the International Monetary Fund, suggested that the export revenues collected by the oil-producing countries of the Middle East, particularly the Gulf region, would be shown to have exceeded US$500 billion in 2006 (Khan, 2005). By subtracting the import expenditures from the revenue accumulated from selling oil, Khan says that over US$200 billion would be available for saving or spending. If one's first reaction was amazement at the scale of wealth accumulated in such a short time, one soon begins to wonder about how this money is invested. Khan states that although it is difficult to trace the money, 'we can say that a large share has been likely invested in US dollar financial assets' (*Ibid.*). There is no mention in the IMF of the frenzied explosion of cities and the financing of many mega real-estate projects around the Gulf as a possible explanation for the missing petrodollars.

In a similar vein, Jad Mouawad and Eduardo Porter of the *New York Times* contend that after the 1973 oil shock, governments in the Middle East spent 80 per cent of their increase in revenue; by contrast, between 2003 and 2005, they spent less than 40 per cent of their new revenue (Mouawad and Porter, 2006). Other reports contradict these possible answers. For example, an online project tracker report published in the *Gulf News* estimates that the value of the projects planned or under development in the Gulf exceeds one trillion US dollars (Gulf News Staff Report, 2006). 'The value of more than 1400 projects', states the report, 'rose by more than 250 billion US dollars in the first quarter of 2006 and exceeded one trillion in the first week of April' (*Ibid.*, p. 37). While it is true that, historically, oil revenue has been converted into dollars or dollar-denominated assets, this time around, it is possible that a large portion of the petrodollars is invested in stock markets around the Gulf, financing large real-estate developments. Ironically, as Mike Davis (2005) has observed, terrorism deserves some of the credit for this real-estate boom. According to him, 'since 9/11, many Middle Eastern investors, fearing possible lawsuits or sanctions, have pulled up stakes in the West' (*Ibid.*). Estimates suggest, Davis contends, that 'the Saudis alone have repatriated one-third of their trillion-dollar overseas portfolio' (*Ibid.*). It is also possible to assume that much of the petrodollar surpluses are pumped back into the global economy, to the oil exporting countries. A glimpse at the number of Western companies operating in the construction as well as other industries in the Gulf attests to this observation.

Concluding Remarks

Ultimately, though, the current urban scene is mostly being driven by a projected image of Doha as a global city, an emerging command and control centre for the global economy which will be hyper-linked to other cities and other spaces. From an academic point of view, Jennifer Robinson (2002) tells us that the 'global city' emerges as a new concept for the post-colonial, one super power era, and I shall add, neo-liberal political-economic paradigm. It categorizes selected cities in the world as global or not-global on the basis of the presence and/or absence of specific concentrated transnational activities within them as well as entertainment and lifestyle venues. My first thought is precisely that what has been emerging out of the social and material production of Doha's new spaces is a specific urbanity, which functions as the city's membership card for joining the club of global cities. In a sense, the concept of 'a global city' is akin to a brand image bestowed upon some world cities, which have managed to create new spaces for work and leisure that cater for global audiences. Several of the examples discussed above suggest that the strategies of urban development in the past decade reflect a conscious approach to enhancing the city's global image through the construction of cultural, tourist, and commercial projects. Moreover, the creation of Doha's global image through the creation of spectacular, iconic built environments seems to have helped the city to conjure up an image to be marketed to tourists and visitors. This is how cities are competing under today's global capitalist system. In this iconic global-brand war, the success of architectural forms and spaces is contingent on their entertainment and fantasy qualities. Could it be that this aspiration to become a global city categorizes cities by establishing certain ones, or specific spaces and images, as the standard towards which all cities should aspire? One may wonder then which city constitutes the image-model for Doha. Is it Dubai? Is it Paris? Or is it an assortment of hybrid spaces which have neither specific geographic locale nor time frame? Or could it be that in the neo-liberal paradigm, the brand 'global city' is late-capitalism's way of expanding its grip over new territories by 'making others desire what we want them to desire', to paraphrase Joseph Nye (2004)? But one must not forget that changes in urban and architectural spaces are generated by agents and forces both local and global.

Certainly, the interaction of Qatari and international capitalism is not new. What is new, however, is that in this phase of interaction, desires and new urban values and images have been enticed to stoke the construction boom. Following Baudrillard's tripartite value system, one may suggest that if in the first urban scene, urban spaces developed on the basis of a natural use of the world, in the second urban scene, urban spaces began to develop in reference to the logic of the commodity – recall the emptying out of central Doha during the 1970s (Baudrillard, 1990). Moreover, in this scene, and perhaps due to the increasing presence of foreign planning offices, urban spaces were developed by reference to a set of modern planning models imported and localized. In the third contemporary urban scene, urban spaces have no specific reference; they are developing with references radiating from all directions: local and global signs and codes, other places, other times, interminable theming, various lifestyles. From another perspective, parallel to this tripartite account of value embedded in urban spaces is a tripartite account of the development of the relationship between Qataris and the Gulf sea. While the Gulf sea in the first scene was the source of life for Qataris through fishing and pearling and in the second scene, through extracting oil and natural gas, in the third scene it is as if suddenly the people of Qatar have discovered yet another value: real estate. In the urban dynamics of contemporary capitalism, for Doha to become a global city it must reinvent and rediscover itself, but in this round through real estate and spectacular, iconic mega-projects.

Notes

1. After travelling for a year from Syria, through Najd, and on to Bahrain and Oman, William Palgrave returned to Europe, where he wrote a narrative of his travels in Arabia. When travelling

in Qatar, he told his readers, 'to have an idea about Katar, my readers must figure to themselves miles on miles of low barren hills, bleak and sun-scorched, with hardly a single tree to vary their dry monotonous outline: below these a muddy beach extends for a quarter of a mile seaward in slimy quicksands, bordered by a rim of sludge and seaweeds. If we look landwards beyond the hills, we see what at extreme courtesy may be called pasture land, dreary downs with twenty pebbles for every blade of grass'. This quotation of Palgrave is from Arnold Wilson's article on the Gulf (Wilson, 1927).

2. Absent in the period between the landing of the Turkish troops and the beginning of the twentieth century is any descriptive account of the physical environment, demographic distributions, and other urban characteristics. This period is, however, rich in historical documents describing the political affairs of the peninsula, such as the collected historical documents 'Précis of Qatar Affairs from 1873 to 1904' written by J.A. Saldanha. Most of these documents and letters were between the chief British officer in the region, the political resident in Bushire, on the coast of Iran, and his political agents, who were stationed in various Sheikhdoms in the Gulf, but specifically in Bahrain as there was no agent in Qatar.

3. This was perhaps in fear of the competition with them over the pearl industry.

4. Ironically, today, there is a growing interest in Gulf pearls. But whereas in the old days pearls were shipped to Bombay and sold there, today, pearls are making the journey back to the Gulf, through the acquisition by rich sheikhs from the Gulf region.

5. Helmut Mejcher (1976) tells us that experts in the US State Department's committees who dealt with post-war foreign economic policy and long-range oil strategies became fully aware that the British government might monopolize the post-war oil-thirsty European market and expand its sterling oil empire in the Gulf in order to help its tattered economy.

6. Sharon Nagy says that 'while most of the land targeted for acquisition was eventually purchased, the acquisition of lands took much longer and was much more expensive than had been anticipated. The funds allotted for the acquisition and redevelopment of these areas were depleted in acquisition, preventing the implementation of the redevelopment phase. Additionally, by the time all the land was acquired, official planning priorities and preferences had shifted to other projects' (Nagy, 1997, p. 111).

7. It was named the Tin District because of the type of cheap temporary dwellings made out of tin that occupied much of it.

8. In fact, two of my Qatari schoolmates lived in Salata during the time I was a resident of Doha.

9. The myth has it that Potemkin villages were fake, hollow façades painted on canvas and erected at the direction of the Russian minister Potemkin to impress Empress Catherine II with the value of the new conquered lands during her visit.

10. Qatar University was founded in 1977 with four colleges: Education; Humanities & Social Sciences; Shariaa, Law, & Islamic Studies; and Science. The university campus was designed by the Egyptian architect Kamal Kafrawi.

11. I could find no information about this project in their main headquarters in Cairo. I was told that before the digital age, many of the files and folders were lost between their Cairo and Beirut offices.

12. http://www.asiatraveltips.com/news05/131-Qatar.shtml.

13. See Bauman (1993). The concept of an emerging cosmopolitan citizenship is borrowed from Chris Rojek (2000).

14. See an online MICE edition: http://www.miceonline.net/qatar/infrastructure.htm. Accessed 19 August 2007.

15. In March 2005, Sheikh Saud al-Thani, who has spent hundreds of millions of dollars during the last decade buying some of the most important works, has been placed under house arrest after being abruptly removed as head of his country's National Council for Culture.

16. The client of the competition, the State of Qatar, selected Rasem Badran's project to be built.

I found no information available about the reason for eventually giving this commission to I.M. Pei. It is possible that the selection of the designer of the pyramid of the Louvre was seen as a way to raise the profile of the building.

17. The other museums include the iconic photography museum that the famous Spanish architect, Santiago Calatrava, is designing to showcase mainly Sheikh Saud's photography collection which, when completed, 'will probably itself become a favorite target for flashbulbs' (Sherwood, 2006). The building is an ultra-light structure consisting of two immense curved wings, which will open and close with the light. Equally astounding is the iconic Qatar National Library and National History Museum designed by the Japanese architect, Arata Isozaki. The library is a futuristic-looking mega-structure, which will be hovering on top of three large pillars. While these pillars will support an inverted pyramid and house the library, the National History Museum will be located at ground level. Standing back from the Corniche, the existing Koot Fort will soon be refitted as a Museum of Traditional Clothes and Textiles by the Scottish architect Catherine Findlay (Goswamy, 2004). The last major museum in this array of impressive buildings is the renovated and extended former Emir's palace, mentioned earlier, which houses the Qatar National Museum. The project is designed by the French architect Jean Nouvel and planned to incorporate the most up-to-date concepts of musicology in presenting Qatar's past.

18. It is interesting to note the existing mix of modern and old shops in Souk Waqif. While the *souk* contains numerous traditional shops selling food and clothes as well as shoemakers, etc., it also contains exhibition halls for modern art and photography and other amenities geared to the taste of up-scale tourists.

19. The focal feature of the complex is the upgraded Khalifa Stadium. Arup, the world-class structural engineering firm, initially worked with Cox/PTW Architects to develop the scheme for the stadium expansion. It is worth mentioning that the Australian-based office PTW is currently designing the National Swimming Center for the 2008 Summer Olympic Games in Beijing, China. A key criterion in designing the Khalifa stadium was that it had to be highly distinctive. Built in 1976, this 20,000 seat stadium with no roof was converted into a 50,000 seat stadium with a tensile fabric roof over the western stand and a signature, distinctive lighting arch over the eastern stand (Gulf Construction, 2006*b*). Equally impressive is the Aspire Academy, which has been designed by a joint venture of the local Cico and the world famous sports facilities architect, Roger Taillibert, who also designed the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris and the Montreal Olympic stadium in Canada. Taking a cue from Dubai's infatuation with superlatives and world breaking records, Sports City is the home of the Aspire Dome, which claims to be the world's largest sports dome. The 250 metre free-span, multipurpose sports dome consists of two hemispheres covering numerous fitness halls and other sports facilities. But one of the most visible and iconic structures in the sports complex is the 300 metre high Aspire Tower. Designed by the Turkish architect, Hadi Seenan, the tower was intended to support the Olympic flame at the top, and to become after the games a high standard hotel, with revolving restaurant and sports museum.

20. The institutions include Carnegie Mellon University, the Georgetown School of Foreign Service, Texas A&M University, Virginia Commonwealth University School for the Arts and Weill Cornell Medical Center.

21. According to Peter Stanford (2004) of *The Independent*, neighbouring Bahrain has taken up this challenge by making itself into a centre for offshore banking. Dubai is now aiming to be a global tourist destination, with hotels and luxury holiday homes built on palm tree-shaped artificial sand spits in the Persian Gulf. Qatar shares the urge to modernize. Since the current Emir deposed his father in a bloodless coup in 1995, there has been a concerted effort to join the twenty-first century. Its chosen path to achieving this is by becoming a latter-day Florence.

22. Nick Bashkiroff, the Development Director tells us that 'Callison demonstrated immense creativity and style and produced designs which clearly differentiated the project and were aligned with the vision of the island's developers and promoters to produce an iconic asset for Qatar capable of attracting international investment' (Bashkiroff, 2004).

23. Exemplary of the comments and observations concerning this complex relationship is the

following waggery, which circulated on the internet in 2006 and describes and contrasts systems of governance in Dubai and Doha among other Arab Cities:

'DUBAI SYSTEM: You have two cows. You create a website for them and advertise them in all magazines. You create a Cow City or Milk Town for them. You sell off their milk before the cows have even been milked to both legit and shady investors who hope to resale the non-existent milk for a 100% profit in two years time. You bring Tiger Woods to milk the cow first to attract attention.

QATAR SYSTEM: You have two cows. They've been sitting there for decades and no one realizes that cows can produce milk. You see what Dubai is doing; you go crazy and start milking the heck out of the cows' boobs in the shortest time possible. Then you realize no one wanted the milk in the first place.'

The 'story of two cows': http://culturefusion.blogspot.com/2006/01/story-of-two-cows.html. Accessed 20 August 2007.

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