Constructing an Urban Future: The sustainability and resilience of cities – infrastructures, communities, buildings and housing.

• Paper / Proposal Title:
  Dubai’s Dark Side of Sustainability

• Format(s):
  In-person presentation / Written paper

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• Abstract (300 words):

Since its urban beginnings, Dubai has been an example of urban resilience as it constantly attempts maintain the urban system operational. The city’s aspirations to maintain efficiency, constancy, and predictability are often characterized by disruptions and efforts to combat many conditions of urban vulnerabilities. Dubai’s earlier settlements incorporated a form of flexibility and some adaptability in an extremely hot climate and economic context. Historically, the city slowly developed without major changes disrupting its fabric until the oil economy produced a new urban strategy of unrestrained growth. Today, Dubai’s increasing economic attractiveness – especially with the emergence of a service-oriented economy – emerged as an alternative for urban resilience resulting in rapid and unplanned urbanization, every month attracting thousands of new residents to its urban area. The recent new developments are pushing back on existing essential parts of the city in order to expand Dubai’s ‘superlative architecture’. For example, Jumeirah Garden city master plan is unlike many celebrated
projects which were designed for empty lands. This one is being erected on an existing urban site (namely Al Satwa). While this project is intended as a major transformation of urban life - bringing a new sustainable life style. It is exposing many vulnerabilities through the displacement of populations and threatening traditional neighborhoods that very much made an authentic and fundamental part of the city. This displacement of residents and destruction of cultural fabrics and traditional neighborhood lifestyles is seen by many as a kind of urban violence and the disruption caused by top-down - considered a case of top-down gentrification by pure capital interests (Alawadi, 2014; Elsheshtawy 2009). The paper looks at the case of Dubai in the context of literature on urban resilience. It attempts to shed light on the many urban vulnerabilities that may result from the projects associated with sustainability as well as risks that it may entail on the local identity and culture.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Nadia Mounajjed is assistant professor at Abu Dhabi University where she teaches courses in architecture and design. Mounajjed holds a PhD from the University of Sheffield and a MArch from the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL. Previously trained as an architect, Mounajjed is a registered architect in Syria and a chartered member in the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). Her academic activities include directing a research project on ‘Visual identity in the UAE’ at the Sharjah Art Foundation, while also teaching architecture and design at the American University of Sharjah for several years between 2007 and 2012. In 2012, she was also a visiting fellow at the London School of Economics. Her most recent publications include “Reflections on Public Art in the Arabian Peninsula,” (The Journal of Arabian Studies, 2017). She is also the editor of Visual Culture(s) in the Gulf: An Anthology (The Gulf Research Center Cambridge, 2016).