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Modernity Meets Identity: Urban and Social Transformation in Gulf Cities

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Abstract

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This study examines the transformative role of urban structures in Gulf cities as agents of social change, aiming to understand how globalization and oil-driven urbanization have shaped their socio-cultural dynamics and built environments. Using Appadurai's theoretical framework of "scapes," the research explores key aspects such as architectural evolution, governance, and the integration of tradition and modernity. Methodologically, it employs a comparative analysis of Gulf cities, utilizing urban planning documents, historical analysis, and socio-spatial theories to investigate the reciprocal relationship between physical urban forms and social processes. The results highlight challenges such as socio-economic disparities, cultural negotiation, and environmental sustainability, while showcasing the diverse urban trajectories of Gulf cities shaped by global and local influences. The study concludes that Gulf cities exemplify the complexities of modern urbanization, contributing to the field by providing insights into the dynamic interplay of global forces and local identities in urban development.

Keywords: Gulf Cities; Urban Transformation; Social Change; Globalization; Socio-Cultural Dynamics.

1. Introduction

According to Kearney, the world today is more about cities than countries, and a place like Seoul has more in common with Singapore and Hong Kong than with smaller Korean cities. Dubai, Doha, Kuwait, Jeddah, and Manamah are more important than their hosting mostly desert countries. They are the centers of economic, cultural, political and knowledge actions. Several Gulf cities are carving their way in the top list of Global Cities. (A.T. Kearney, 2012)

Rapid urbanization that transformed Gulf cities into modern and global centers started during the mid-20th century after the discovery of oil and the wealth generated by its sale. Governments attempted to use this wealth to improve the living conditions of its people by providing modern houses, services, and amenities. Costa and Noble suggest that urbanization and economic development are closely related phenomenon. (Costa & Noble, 1986) According to Rizzo, the lack of effective urban planning in Qatar and the Arab Gulf Region stems from a disconnect between the master planning phase (contracted to foreign consultants) and the implementation phase (carried out by ineffective local government agencies), as well as a lack of discussion about ongoing mega-projects. (Rizzo, 2014) The traditional settlements were transformed into urban areas and modern cities.

The built environment found in Gulf Cities today is a product of the decisions made during its early stages of planning and construction as well as subsequent decisions and modifications made during its development and evolution. Gulf Cities First Planning initiatives imported ideas and concepts from European Countries that were very different than the vernacular environment available in the region. For example, British planners of Kuwait's First Master Plan main objectives were to illustrate and describe improvements which they considered necessary for the development of Kuwait in accordance with the highest standards of "modern town planning" of the time. Also, modern urbanization in Doha has passed through significant stages, during each stage a master plan, or a review of the master plan, was produced that contributed to its physical and socio-cultural changes. Kuwait, Doha, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai were transformed from traditional settlements overlooking the Gulf into modern urban areas and cities in a very short period.



Figure 1. Location of Kuwait and Doha (Developed by Author).



Figure 2. Old Kuwait urban fabric and streets.



Figure 3. Kuwait City Master Plan.

1.1. Background and Context

According to the most urbanized subregion in the Arab World is the GCC with 82.2 per cent in 2015 and projected at 84.3 per cent in 2030. For example, the urbanization rate for Qatar and Kuwait had reached 99.2 and 98.3 per cent respectively. (The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)/ UN Population Division (UNPD),

World Population Prospects) The population increase was due to the migration of people from other countries looking for jobs and better income. Gulf Cities stand as a testament to the intricate interplay between urban structures and social agencies, embodying a dynamic nexus where physical landscapes shape and are shaped by the collective actions of its inhabitants.

This paper investigates the multifaceted dimensions of the Gulf City, exploring its architectural composition, socio-cultural dynamics, and the reciprocal relationship between its built environment and the individuals who inhabit it. In addition, as indicated by Rode et al (2020), “the shape of cities has a considerable impact on resource efficiency, making it a critical factor for global sustainability. (Rode, et al., 2017) Analyzing Kuwait City and Doha as structural and social agents offers insights into the intricate dynamics of urban development, culture, and governance in the Gulf region. Both cities serve as prominent examples of rapid urbanization and economic transformation, shaped by historical, geographical, and socio-political factors. They exemplify the complex interplay between structural development and social agency in the Gulf region. As urban centers, they serve as catalysts for economic growth, cultural exchange, and social innovation, reflecting the aspirations and identities of their residents while navigating the challenges of modernization and globalization. Understanding their dynamics provides valuable insights into the evolving urban landscape and socio-cultural dynamics of the Gulf cities.

1.2. Objectives

The aim of this paper is to present a comprehensive analysis of the Gulf City as both a physical structure and a social agent, highlighting the intricate interplay between its physical form and the socio-cultural dynamics that animate its streets and alleyways. By elucidating the reciprocal relationship between architecture and society, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex processes that shape contemporary urban life in the Gulf region and other countries around the world. The questions paused by this paper are:

- What is the impact of rapid economic changes after the discovery of oil on the socio-cultural aspects of architecture and the built environment in the Gulf Cities during the second half of the 20th century?
- How do continuous global changes affect the development of architecture and the built environment in Gulf Cities since the beginning of the 21st century?

Gulf cities represent a confluence of diverse city planning strategies and architectural styles, reflecting the region's historical tapestry and its contemporary aspirations. From the soaring skyscrapers of Dubai to the intricate alleyways of old towns, the built environment serves as both a canvas for human expression and a tangible manifestation of socio-economic forces. Through an examination of architectural blueprints, urban planning documents, and ethnographic observations, this study explains the ways in which spatial configurations influence social interactions and cultural practices within the Gulf City. Moreover, Gulf cities serve as a receptacle for social agency, wherein individuals and communities actively negotiate their identities and aspirations within the urban milieu. From labor migrants seeking economic opportunities to affluent elites navigating the complexities of globalized capitalism, the inhabitants of the Gulf City are engaged in a perpetual process of negotiation and contestation. Through a synthesis of social theory and empirical data, this paper clarifies the ways in which power relations, class distinctions, and cultural norms intersect and shape the social landscape of the Gulf City.

Furthermore, the Gulf City transcends its physical boundaries to become a site of global significance, influencing and being influenced by transnational flows of capital, labor, and ideas. Whether through the proliferation of iconic architectural landmarks or the dissemination of cultural practices through digital media, Gulf Cities exert a profound influence on the global imagination. By situating the Gulf City within broader geopolitical and economic contexts, this paper offers insights into the ways in which urban spaces serve as nodes within global networks of power and influence.



Figure 4. Landmarks from Kuwait and Doha (Photos by Author).

2. Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis:

This paper attempts to understand the transformation of urbanism in Gulf cities from the theoretical framework suggested by Appadurai (1996) as scapes — ethnoscares, technoscares, financescares, mediascares, and ideoscares — of global cultural flows of modernity. It argues that this theoretical framework provides a more adequate understanding of the transformation of Gulf cities from traditional vernacular settlements to modern cities. In his influential work "Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization" (Appadurai A. , 1996) identified the five dimensions of global cultural flow to describe the complex, overlapping, and disjunctive flows that

characterize the modern globalized world. In the fields of architecture and urbanism, these scapes provide a lens to examine how global processes influence the design, function, and experience of built environments. Many scholars have applied Appadurai's scapes to analyze urban transformations and architectural practices. For example, Appadurai's scapes of flows were utilized by Salama who mapped them into developments and trends in Arab world and the Gulf countries. (Salama & Wiedmann, 2013) Taken as a whole, Appadurai's five flows of globalization act as the building blocks how individuals and groups of people construct a conception of their own movements within a global context. (Valentine, 2015).

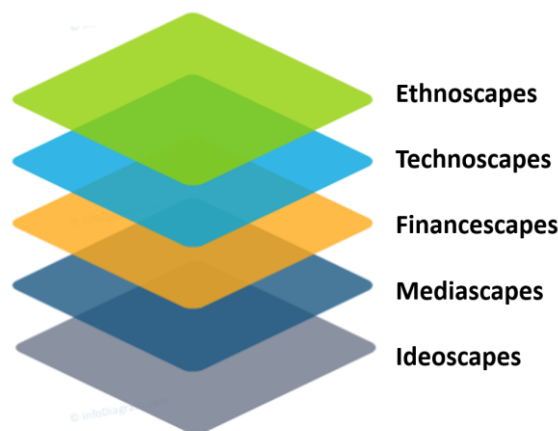


Figure 5. Scapes of Global Cultural Flows after Appadurai (Appadurai A. , 1996) (Developed by Author).

The hypothesis adopted by this paper is that contemporary Gulf cities are not the product of traditional settlements' evolution and that they are forms of cities that emerged due to the flow of modernity through the five scapes suggested by Appadurai. (Appadurai A. , 1990) The paper concluded that the proposed scapes were instrumental in understanding the transformation of the Gulf cities since the discovery of oil during the middle of the 20th century. While they existed in all parts of the world since the beginning of the 20th century, they were experienced differently in developed countries than in Third world countries.

3. Materials and Methods: Appadurai Scapes of Flows in Kuwait and Doha

The work of Appadurai has had a large impact on understanding the global dynamics of cultural, technological, political, and economic change. (Powell & Steel, 2011) When applying Appadurai's framework of "scapes" to Kuwait and Doha, the analysis reveals the intricate ways in which global and local dynamics intersect, creating a unique urban identity that reflects the broader global dynamics while also being distinctly shaped by local factors. Each of Appadurai's scapes interacts with the others, producing a complex and multifaceted urban environment.

3.1. Ethnoscapes: It is the landscape of individuals and groups who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, guest workers, and other moving persons. (Chun, 2014) This is evident in the significant expatriate populations in Gulf cities resulting from labor migration and contributing to a dynamic demographic landscape. This resulted in creating multicultural urban spaces, hybrid architectural styles, and a globalized society. (Salama, Azzali , & Wiedmann, The everyday urban environment of migrant labourers in Gulf Cities: the case of the old centre of Doha, Qatar, 2017)

The demographic composition of Kuwait and Doha is heavily influenced by the movement of people, both regionally and globally. These cities host a large number of expatriate populations, including labor migrants from South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Arab countries, as well as Western expatriates from Europe and North America. Today, the expatriate population in Kuwait and Doha is 70 percent and 86 percent respectively. This diverse population has a profound impact on urban life, from the types of housing preferences to the services provided, and even the cultural life of the city. The interplay between the expatriate communities and the local population creates a unique sociocultural fabric that is reflected in the multicultural neighborhoods, diverse culinary scenes, and the availability of international schools and cultural institutions. According to Salama et al (2017), contemporary transformation processes in Gulf cities will have to be based on diversity and social inclusion. Such a transformation should stem from the recognition that migrant communities need to have access to develop their own settings that relate to their routine spatial practices while securing the economic basis of many migrant laborers. (Salama, Azzali , & Wiedmann, 2017).



Figure 6. Construction site and migrant workers in Doha.

3.2. Technoscapes: The rapid movement and dissemination of technology across boundaries, both high and low, mechanical, and informational, during the early transformation of these cities. Technology transformation was required for the production of oil and the construction of ports, roads and buildings. Now technology moves at higher speed across various kinds of previously impermeable boundaries resulting in the introduction and implementation of smart cities and sustainable green technologies in construction promoting sustainability and resilience in urban environments. The rapid adoption of cutting-edge technologies in urban infrastructure and daily life is evident in these cities.

Kuwait and Doha are at the forefront of technological innovation, particularly in urban planning and architecture. Both cities are characterized by their futuristic skylines, dominated by skyscrapers and iconic structures that showcase cutting-edge architectural designs, construction technology and state of the art building systems, for example, Doha's Education City, museums, waterfront towers, and World Cup 2022 stadiums. These leveraging global technological advancements help Gulf cities to position themselves as leading hubs for innovation and modernity in the region.



Figure 7. Contemporary landmarks from Doha (Photo by author).

3.3. Financescapes: Gulf cities are global financial hubs, with significant capital inflows and outflows, influencing global markets. This is illustrated in the global Investment of international capital flows influencing stocks, real estate markets, and trading. leading to the development of mega-projects. On the other hand, financial globalization can exacerbate economic inequalities, affecting housing affordability and urban segregation.

The economies of Kuwait and Doha are deeply integrated into global financial networks. The wealth generated from oil and gas exports has allowed these cities to invest heavily in infrastructure, real estate, and cultural projects, attracting global capital and investing in global economies. This influx of financial resources has facilitated the development of luxury shopping malls, high-end residential areas, and world-class cultural institutions like the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha. However, the reliance on global capital also makes these cities vulnerable to fluctuations in the global economy, which can have significant impacts on local development projects and the broader urban economy.



Figure 8. Doha skylines. (Photo by author).

3.4. Mediascapes: The media portrayal of Gulf cities, both within the region and globally, shapes their image as centers of wealth, modernity, and progress. These cities are often portrayed as symbols of wealth, modernity, and rapid development, but also as sites of political and social tensions. On the contrary, the distribution of information and images through media and electronic capabilities disseminate information and images of the world among Gulf cities' residents. The rise of digital environments influences how physical spaces are perceived and utilized by the inhabitants.

Global media plays a crucial role in shaping the identity of Kuwait and Doha, both within the region and internationally. Media platforms enable rapid sharing of architectural ideas and trends, leading to homogenization or the fusion of styles. The mediascape is shaped by local media outlets, which often project a carefully crafted image of progress and stability. The influence of global media can be seen in the architecture and public spaces of these cities, where iconic structures are designed to capture global attention and reinforce the cities' identities as modern, cosmopolitan centers. As concluded by Salama (2013), a commitment toward image making, presenting an image of Doha as an emerging international hub. (Salama, 2013).



Figure 9. Integration of traditional elements in modern buildings (Photo by author).

3.5. Ideoscapes: It refers to the spread of global ideas and how they are adapted or resisted in the urban fabric and governance of these cities. In Kuwait and Doha, the flow of ideologies is complex, as these cities navigate the tensions between global ideas of modernity and development and local traditions and values. This is evident in the spread of environmental strategies promoting eco-friendly design principles and the adoption of sustainability in architecture and urbanism. What is still absent is participatory planning and community involvement in urban development processes.

The governance of these cities also reflects a negotiation between global influences, such as the adoption of international standards and practices in urban planning, and the desire to maintain cultural and religious identity. For instance, the preservation of traditional souqs alongside modern shopping malls represents an effort to balance global consumer culture with local heritage; examples include Souq Waqif in Doha and Mubarkiyya in Kuwait.



Figure 10. Mubarkiya and Souq Waqif: Traditionally looking souqs (Photo by author).

In addition to Apadurai’s 5 scapes, I suggest the addition of a sixth scape: **Conflictscape**.

3.6. Conflictscape: Wars, regional and international conflicts impact world events and are reflected in the entanglement of the Gulf Countries with world conflicts including First and Second World Wars, Middle East Wars, Gulf Wars, and the recent Middle East crises in Gaza, Lebanon, Sudan, Libya, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. These wars had destructive impact on architecture and environment; both natural and built environments. The wars also resulted in the entering of foreign forces and in the region. The wars had different impacts on Kuwait and Doha. While the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq in 1990 forced many Kuwaitis to leave their countries for almost one year, and the establishment of several US bases in Kuwait, Bahrain and Doha, the Invasion of Iraq by the US in 2003, transformed the Middle East to a chronic war zone till today.



Figure 11. Impact of war on architecture in Kuwait. (Source Mahgoub, 2007).

Kuwait and Doha represent excellent examples of how intensive global cultural scapes of flows affected Gulf cities during their urban transformation. Jeannotte asserts that “cities are created by global cultural flows.” (Jeannotte, 2003) While they are, as she suggested, “difficult to trace a direct relationship between cause and effect and where policy interventions based on the classic “command and control” model often have unintended consequences” (Jeannotte, 2003), they provide evidence of key changes that were influential in this transformation. In addition, Satler asserts that globalization may bring within reach regions of cultural difference, but it also threatens those regions with sameness. No global culture can absorb everything. A coexistence of diverse philosophies is not only possible but necessary.” (Satler, 1999, p. 22).

4. Results: Kuwait and Doha comparison

Kuwait was a regional trading hub, known for its pearl diving industry while Doha was a small fishing village on the Qatari coast. Both nations experienced rapid economic growth during the mid-20th century due to economic prosperity initiated by the oil discoveries during the 1930s and 1940s. Kuwait had a larger oil boom and established itself as a welfare state, earlier after its independence in 1961, through generous social programs, investments in infrastructure, health care and education. Doha started later after gaining independence in 1971 with smaller quantities of oil, compared to Kuwait, but has shown a stronger commitment to economic diversification. Due to Kuwait’s struggles with oil price fluctuations and political instability, continued efforts at economic diversification were attempted with mixed results. Doha increased its focus on natural gas exports and developed ambitious plans for economic diversification into tourism, education, and sports events; e.g., 2006 Asian Olympic Games, 2022 FIFA World Cup.

Kuwait has a constitutional monarchy and elected parliament, while Qatar is an absolute monarchy. Both states have significant expatriate populations mostly from South Asia, India and Arab countries attracted by job opportunities, high wages, and good quality of life. Kuwait’s social fabric is rich in cultural heritage, with a diverse population comprising Kuwaiti nationals, expatriate workers, and immigrants from various countries. Despite socio-economic disparities, Kuwait City promotes social cohesion through initiatives like public parks, cultural festivals, and community centers that foster interaction and integration among residents.

Dating back to the 18th century, Gulf countries were famous of pearl catching and as an important trade route to India. Kuwait City’s development was heavily influenced by its strategic location as a trade hub at the tip of the Arabian Gulf. The discovery of oil propelled Kuwait into a modernization drive, leading to massive urban expansion

and infrastructure development. Today, the skyline of Kuwait City reflects a blend of traditional Islamic architecture and contemporary skyscrapers, symbolizing its transition from a trading post to a global financial center. Significant investments in transportation, healthcare, education, and leisure facilities have shaped Kuwait City's urban fabric, catering to the needs of its growing population. They followed the first Master Plan of Kuwait established by the British firm Monprio, Spencly and MacFarlen in 1952.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, Doha has undergone a more dramatic transformation and urban development with ambitious architectural projects initiated by the hosting of the World Cup in 2022. Several new stadiums, tourism facilities and new cities; i.e. Lusail, were developed to host this world event. Doha's strategic location on the Arabian Peninsula has positioned it as a key player in regional politics, trade, and commerce. Its urban planning is characterized by ambitious projects such as Lusail City, Education City, Musherib, Katara and the Pearl of Qatar, aimed at diversifying the economy and enhancing the city's global appeal. The skyline of Doha features iconic structures like the Aspire Tower, the Museum of Islamic Art, and the Doha Tower, showcasing the city's architectural aptitude and ambition. Qatar's Vision 2030 emphasizes sustainable development, with initiatives focusing on environmental conservation, renewable energy, and green spaces to create a more livable city. It focuses on human development, education, and healthcare to ensure the well-being of all residents. Doha's population comprises a diverse mix of nationalities, cultures, and ethnicities, contributing to its cosmopolitan character and social vibrancy. This multicultural environment fosters cultural exchange and dialogue, with institutions like the Katara Cultural Village and the Qatar National Convention Center promoting cross-cultural understanding and appreciation.

4.1. Urban Structure

Kuwait reflects a blend of modern architecture and traditional elements. The city's layout is characterized by a juxtaposition of skyscrapers, government buildings, and historic landmarks like the Grand Mosque and Kuwait Towers. Urban planning in Kuwait City has evolved rapidly, especially since the discovery of oil in the region, leading to the development of modern infrastructure and residential areas. On the other hand, Doha is renowned for its futuristic skyline and ambitious urban projects. The cityscape features iconic structures such as the Torch Tower, the Museum of Islamic Art, and the Doha Tower. Urban planning in Doha emphasizes modernity and sustainability, with initiatives like the Msheireb Downtown regeneration project aiming to preserve Qatari heritage while embracing contemporary design and technology.

4.2. Social Dynamics

Kuwait's social fabric is influenced by a combination of Bedouin traditions and cosmopolitanism. The city serves as a melting pot of cultures, with a diverse expatriate population contributing to its vibrant atmosphere. Social life revolves around family, community, and religious gatherings, while modern amenities cater to the preferences of a youthful demographic. Similarly, Doha's society reflects a similar blend of tradition and modernity, with Qatari hospitality playing a central role in social interactions. The city's expatriate community contributes to its multicultural environment, fostering connections across nationalities and backgrounds. Social events, shopping malls, and cultural institutions provide avenues for recreation and engagement. Doha is in many ways a fractured city where the rapid growth has led to extensive urban sprawl with very high dependence on private-vehicle transportation, mostly large-sized SUVs, due to the lack of reliable and proper public transportation. (Al-Thani, Amato, Koc, & Al-Ghamdi, 2019)

4.3. Geopolitical Context

Kuwait's geopolitical significance stems from its strategic location and oil reserves. The city has historically served as a hub for commerce and diplomacy in the Gulf region, with its political stability making it an attractive destination for foreign investment and expatriate workers. Kuwait's relations with neighboring countries and global powers shape its economic policies and security arrangements. Currently, Doha plays a crucial role in regional and international politics and economics. The city's wealth, derived from natural gas reserves, has fueled its development as a major financial and cultural center. Qatar's independent foreign policy, exemplified by institutions like Al Jazeera, has sometimes led to tensions with other Gulf states but also bolstered its reputation as a mediator and influencer in regional affairs.

4.4. The Transformation: From Living Plans to Planned Lives

The transformation of Kuwait and Doha from traditional, communal, and informal living and planning settlements to modern, formalized, and individualistic approaches in architecture and urban planning reflects broader socio-cultural shifts, economic development, and advancements in technology and infrastructure. Traditionally, often informal, and organic ways in which communities developed their living spaces based on immediate needs and environmental factors were suddenly changed to modern, formalized, and comprehensive plans created by urban planners to guide the long-term development of the community or city, considering factors like infrastructure, zoning, and roads for automobiles as priorities over walkability and pedestrian considerations.

Small community clusters or districts within a city, characterized by close-knit social interactions and shared spaces were replaced by more modern concepts of a residential area, planned and organized with distinct boundaries, amenities, and infrastructure, often part of a larger urban master plan (Softaoğlu, 2019; Softaoğlu, 2021). The traditional narrow winding Farij was replaced by regular perpendicular streets suitable only for cars and automobiles. It reflected the extended family living arrangements, where multiple generations or extended family members live together in a single household or compound. Traditional living arrangements where extended families

or clans live in close proximity, often in family compounds, were replaced by “compounds” or “gated communities” and modern residential areas with controlled access, offering security and amenities, often reflecting socio-economic status.

Unwritten building regulations that followed traditional norms, customs, and practices governing building and community development, passed down through generations without formal documentation were replaced by formal, written regulations and standards set by authorities to ensure safety, health, and uniformity in construction practices. The courtyard used to be a central feature in traditional Middle Eastern homes, providing a private outdoor space within the confines of the home, often used for social and domestic activities was replaced by the “Villa”; a standalone, often luxurious, single-family residence with its own private garden or outdoor space, representing a shift towards more individualistic and spacious living arrangements. These modern nuclear family units or single-family households, reflected a trend towards individualism and personal space.

According to Nagy (2000), after Qatar's national independence in 1971 the British consultant Llewelyn Davis was appointed by the new town planning authority to design the first master plan of Doha for 1990. His plan was based on a ring concept with a clear definition and a functional distribution of land uses regarding each ring, which emphasized the old settlement area as main urban center. During the 1970s all remaining Qatari neighborhoods were replaced and the indigenous population moved to new suburban developments. (Nagy, 2006) As observed by Salama and Wiedmann, Doha's current urban structure is driven by the population's profound desire to buy detached villas, which have become the predominate residential neighborhood form, with limited provision for local neighborhood services and facilities. (Salama & Wiedmann, 2013)

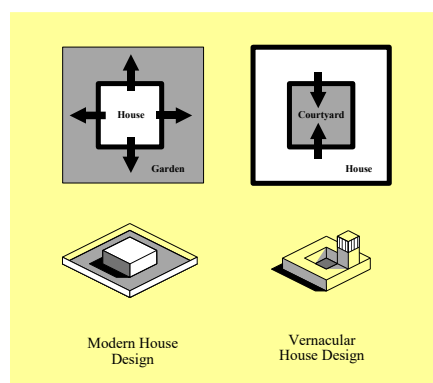


Figure 12. Comparison between courtyard houses and modern villas (Developed by the author).

Traditional building material were used in many ancient and traditional structures, made from a mixture of mud and straw, dried in the sun or coral reef stones. Modern, imported building materials, that are considered more durable, and strong, are widely used in contemporary construction. Traditional methods of cooling and ventilating buildings using architectural features like wind towers, courtyards, and strategically placed windows, were replaced by mechanical ventilation, and air conditioning systems that control indoor climate, providing comfort irrespective of external weather conditions. High rise buildings constructed using modern materials and systems reflect modernity, globalization and prosperity. All Gulf countries are striving to build large, high, and expensive structures. Traditional open-air marketplaces where vendors sell goods, often in a central location in towns and cities; Alsafat Square and Souq Waqif, were replaced by large, enclosed complexes featuring a variety of retail stores, restaurants, and entertainment options.

6. Discussion

The impact of rapid transformation is apparent in the five scapes suggested by Appadurai. (Appadurai A. , 1996) Yet, changes are more apparent on the “**Humanscapes**” trough social and cultural identity change and segregation of different social groups in different parts of the city. It is also observed in connectivity, cultural exposure through the importation of foreign services at different levels from top professional and clerical employees to house servants and migrant workers from different parts of the world. The impact on “**Urbanscapes**” due to planning decisions is evident in the transformation of urban fabric, automobile dependency and architectural styles. It is also seen in segregated neighborhoods for residence by locals or expats. As observed by Rode et al (2017), there is limited interaction between non-nationals and nationals, and there are clear differences in the way in which Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis live and travel in the city. They added that non-Kuwaitis live in high-density clusters, and are relatively more dependent on public transport while Kuwaitis live in large single-family homes and are dependent on private vehicles. (Rode, et al., 2017)

The impact on the “**Archscapes**” is noticeable in new building types, neighborhood fabric and design of individual buildings. The transformation from the traditional courtyard house to the villa has a significant impact on social and cultural values and needs. Lack of achieving required levels of privacy and increasing individualism and bragging is evident through the use of luxurious materials, construction systems and furniture. The impact on the “**Landscapes**” is seen in the introduction of neighborhood parks, waterfront development and private gardens. The “**Servicescapes**” is changing based on the neighborhood as a unit of planning as opposed to the traditional *Farij*. Consumerism behavior is on the rise through commercial activities, shopping malls and increased consumption attitude.

The rapid transformation of Kuwait and Doha has resulted two contradicting attitudes towards architecture and urbanism; on one hand a sense of loss of identity and dreams to return to traditions to reflect an identity is evident in the use of traditional elements in contemporary buildings, while on the other hand, ambitions to indulge completely in globalization is evident in continuous dependency on international consultants and construction of landmark buildings and towers. The use of traditional architectural elements such as the courtyard, small openings, colors, and materials to express cultural identity is evident. Yet, professional media, exhibitions, conferences and trade fairs allow the dissemination of global and modern ideas. The annual events of Cityscape at different Gulf cities are used to display projects and developments, that reflect modern and global ideas, attract thousands of visitors. As alarmed by Florian et al (2013), large scale projects and their strong links to Doha's macro structures instead of their orientation to local urban fabrics will lead to self-contained and segregated urban islands. (Florian , Mirincheva, & Salama, 2013)

A dichotomy between cultural forces of globalization and localization are shaping today's built environment in Gulf cities, i.e. traditional- modern, Islamic-Western, and local-global. Place typology and characteristics in Gulf cities has changed dramatically following intensive modernization and globalization that resulted in their transformation from traditional to modern permitted by economic wealth after the discovery of oil since the middle of the 20th century. During the seventies, foreign architects designed buildings attempting to reinterpret the history by reintroducing traditional Arabic architectural features in contemporary design.



Figure 13. Buildings by Starchitects in Kuwait and Doha (Photo by Author).

We are currently witnessing another cycle of modernization and globalization exhibited in more Gulf cities such as Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Jeddah using the same strategies of generating ambitious master plans, creating new cities, and inviting world renowned architects from around the world (Starchitects) to design landmark buildings.

For example, Abu Dhabi has invited Frank Ghery, Jean Nouvel, Zaha Hadid and Tadao Ando to design museum in Saadiyat Island while Doha has invited Rem Koolhaas, Jena Nouvel and Isozaki to design museums, towers, and landmark buildings at the Education City. It is expected that this trend will continue until economic and political conditions are altered. Globalization has facilitated the interventions new planning and architectural ideas through trans-service provision. Flow of knowledge, ways of life and socio-cultural transformations is expanded through these consultancy services. It is also facilitated by the dynamics of global flows of construction materials, systems, and equipment. El-Sheshtawy argues that Third World cities are moving towards a "co-existence" model which takes into account forces of modernization and change while at the same time responding to the preservation of traditional elements within the society. (El-Sheshtawy, 2000) We are currently witnessing an architectural style "in the making" as a product of the tension between globalization and localization forces. This tension is creating "clash of styles" in the resulting urban environment which requires more responsible approach towards culturally responsiveness architecture.

7. Conclusions

The results of this study help understanding the current trends taking place in the region and address major concerns for the future. The results are useful for understanding how architecture and the built environment has changed and what possible new directions it is heading to. According to Al-Thani et al (2019), Doha's "urban form has resulted in long and frequent commutes for individuals and families, increasing the number of vehicles in traffic almost every hour of every day, traffic congestion, high transportation-related CO2 emissions, additional expenses, and loss of quality family time, among several other environmental, social, and economic sustainability impacts." (Al-Thani, Amato, Koc, & Al-Ghamdi, 2019) According to Al-Ansari M and AlKhaled S (2023), while recent social housing projects in Kuwait may demonstrate an overall effective process-to-product procedure for architectural production that meets the country's housing demand, important aspects of sustainable built environments remain in question. (Al-Ansari & AlKhaled, 2023) Mahgoub (2013) suggests that the problem was not in choosing to modernize but in the "rushing" towards modernization without comprehending its drawbacks. The built environment found in Kuwait today is a product of the decisions made during its early stages of planning and construction. The major change or rupture of the traditional environment was initiated by the First Master Plan developed by the British firm, Monoprio, Spencely and Macfarlane. (Mahgoub, 2013).

Applying Appadurai's scapes to architecture and urbanism offers a multidimensional perspective on how global flows shape the physical and social landscapes of Gulf cities. It highlights the need for adaptive and inclusive design approaches that acknowledge the interconnectedness of local and global dynamics. As observed by Furlan et al

(2022), “In the past decade, the capital city of Doha of the State of Qatar has experienced rapid urban expansion and other changes due to globalization, which has caused (i) the loss of a compact urban pattern, (ii) landscape fragmentation, and (iii) deficiency of green spaces.” (Furlan, Grosvald, & Azad, 2022) Recent social housing projects in Kuwait show a successful technique for meeting housing need, although sustainability concerns remain. (Al-Ansari & AlKhaled, 2023).

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Conflict of Interests

The Author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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