

# The Dubai Effect Archipelago

## Neyran Turan

In parallel to the widespread effects of globalization where cities expand horizontally and vertically with urban development projects and urban/regional sprawl, the question scale remains as a question for the design disciplines. As the notion of scale paradoxically oscillates between being a symptom of emergent urban conditions, and a model for new architectural and urban organizations, architectural attitudes towards the large scale tend to oscillate within two poles: the retroactive research / mapping on emergent urban/global networks and conditions (large scale as a symptom), and the extra-fat and iconic landmark (large scale as a model). In that vein, being one of the fastest growing cities in the world, Dubai is the current paradise of the large scale. With its biggest shopping mall, tallest building, largest landfill, super congested condition of the free zones, Dubai has become the ultimate coordinate for the retroactive mapping project and a testing ground for the iconic landmark. However, almost portraying the limitations of existing disciplinary positions regarding the idea of dimension in architecture and urbanism, Dubai is also busy with prompting unusual templates of scale.

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By orienting the oil-reliant economy to service and tourism and taking Hong Kong and Singapore as its model, Dubai is the high-speed version of a regional financial hub. In order to raise the seduction level within the competition for being a hub, cities invest heavily on the rapid development of their transportation infrastructures, regulatory and legal systems, technologies, and aim to provide good quality living conditions for their expatriate bankers and emerging middle class. In this context, Dubai is the high-speed version of a global city, and it is becoming not only a model for other cities in the region (prominent examples being Financial Centers of Bahrain and Qatar; or recently announced Ras Al Khaimah Financial City), but also an important template for more dispersed locations such as São Paulo, Shanghai, Kuala Lumpur, Johannesburg and Istanbul, which are now seeking to become regional financial centers like Dubai. For Dubai, to become a high-speed regional hub meant a rapid urbanization plus a unique urban form, offering a new port city model. This new model is different not only because of its unusual metropolitan organization, land-use systems (city-state, city within city, free trade zone clusters or its regulations (independent legal, regulatory and judicial regime of the clusters sometimes may even supersede various federal and/or local laws), but also because of the new templates and configurations it presents within a global scale.

If we map this new model of Dubai not so much from its unusual urban form but through the form of its global effects, i.e. urban development projects developed by Dubai companies abroad, we see Dubai replicating itself to a new scale and geography. That is, Dubai development and investment projects are packaged and tested first as a brand within their own locality (Dubai) and then exported and franchised adaptively as templates of compact urban organization to various spots in the world. In this essay, this is referred to as the idea of the "Dubai Effect



*Dubai Effect Archipelago in the global context.*

Archipelago.” With the term, I refer to the global diffusion of Dubai model of cluster projects and their potential effects and interaction with the localities in which they come to reside. Coupling logistics and infrastructure with tourism and real estate, Dubai has already been likened to a corporation with its entrepreneurial and “visionary” projects and management. If the autonomous clusters of Dubai (Dubai International Financial Center, Dubai Internet City, Dubai Healthcare City, Dubai Media City, Dubai Silicon Oasis, etc.) present a congested form of an archipelago city, transnational configuration of the Dubai Effect Archipelago marks an expanded version of this condition.

Presenting an emerging template of large scale development, Dubai Effect Archipelago delineates an awkward symbiosis between the organizational (network) and the monumental/iconographic realms of contemporary urbanism. With its peculiar urban and transnational reconfiguration, this symbiosis extends existing templates regarding the global versus the local as well as the generic and the specific. In that light, while the floating islands of the Dubai Effect Archipelago are produced via various combinations of its existing clustering model to provide a “full-spectrum city,” this condition marks the level of interaction that corporations and cities have reached in our contemporary culture, and points to the irrelevancy of mere architectural fascination with the extravagancy of the large scale. If Bilbao Effect marked the questioning of the iconographic/self-referential landmark and the role of the architect in our contemporary culture, the Dubai Effect points perhaps a deeper shift for the architect. After a decade of mapping emerging phenomena of the contemporary city (the horizontal-BIG) on one side and monumental/expressionist iconography (the vertical-BIG) on the other, new disciplinary positions towards large scale are crucial for architecture and urbanism.

## Corporations and Cities: Envisioning Corporate Real Estate in the Urban Future

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In that vein, being one of the fastest growing cities in the world, Dubai is the current paradise of the large scale. With its biggest shopping mall, tallest building, largest landfill, super congested condition of the free zones, Dubai has become the ultimate coordinate for the retroactive mapping project and a testing ground for the iconic landmark. However, almost portraying the limitations of existing disciplinary positions regarding the idea of dimension in architecture and urbanism, Dubai is also busy with prompting unusual templates of scale.

In the following text, part of a larger study on the new scales of context within contemporary cities, I examine how Dubai stands as a switch-point for current discussions on scale. To do this, I try to highlight Dubai's swift mutation not from its locality but from its effects. I propose the idea of the "Dubai Effect Archipelago," by which I mean the application of the Dubai model of urban development to other countries in the world, by way of global large scale cluster projects initiated by Dubai companies. Dubai Effect is positioned in the essay as an emerging template of large scale development delineating an awkward symbiosis between the organizational (network) and the monumental/iconographic realms of contemporary urbanism. With its peculiar urban and transnational reconfiguration, this symbiosis not only extends our seemingly settled templates regarding the global versus the local as well as the generic and the specific, it also asks for new disciplinary frameworks within urban discussions.

## The Dubai Effect

By orienting the oil-reliant economy to service and tourism and taking Hong Kong and Singapore as its model, Dubai has become the high-speed version of a regional financial hub. In order to raise the seduction level within the competition for being a hub, cities invest heavily on the rapid development of their transportation infrastructures, regulatory and legal systems, technologies, and aim to provide good quality living conditions for their expatriate bankers and emerging middle class. In this context, Dubai is the high-speed version of a global city, and it is becoming not only a model for other cities in the region (prominent examples being Financial Centers of Bahrain and Qatar; or recently announced Ras Al Khaimah Financial City), but also an important template for more dispersed locations such as São Paulo, Shanghai, Kuala Lumpur, Johannesburg and Istanbul, which are now seeking to become regional financial centers like Dubai.

For Dubai, to become a high-speed regional hub meant a rapid urbanization plus a unique urban form, offering a new port city model.<sup>1</sup> This new model is different not only because of its unusual metropolitan organization, land-use systems (city-state, city within city, free trade zone clusters or its regulations (independent legal, regulatory and judicial regime of the Dubai International Financial Center which may even supersede various federal and/or local laws), but also because of the new templates and configurations it presents within a global scale.

If we map this new model of Dubai not so much from its unusual urban form but through the form of its global effects, i. e. urban development projects developed by Dubai companies abroad, we see Dubai replicating itself to a new scale and geography. That is, Dubai development and investment projects are packaged and tested first as a brand within their own locality (Dubai) and then exported and franchised adaptively as templates of compact urban organization to various spots in the world. In this essay, this is referred to as the idea of the "Dubai Effect." With the term, "the Dubai Effect," I refer to the global diffusion of Dubai development projects and their potential effects on the localities in which they come to reside. Coupling logistics and infrastructure with tourism and real estate with the Dubai Effect, one could argue that Dubai is moving from being a unique city to a model, a template for urban development.<sup>2</sup> While Dubai has already been likened to a corporation with its entrepreneurial and "visionary" projects and management, the

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If we map the evolution of the port-city relationships in history, the story is a one that starts with the port and city being composite parts of a whole (one thinks of the ideal port-city depictions in the 16th century) to a complete disjunction especially after the 1960s, and back again to a complete integration effort after 1990s. In the context of the contemporary reintegration discussions of the port and the city, Dubai model offers a unique urban form via the physical proximity of its port, clusters and free zones.

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See: "The Dubai Model: An Outline of Key Components of the Development Process in Dubai," *Working Paper No. 12* (October 2007), Centre for Contemporary Middle East Studies, University of Southern Denmark, <http://www.sdu.dk/~media/246A1730F5C34E2893FC512BF694E28F.ashx>; "Public-Private Ties and Their Contribution to Development: The Case of Dubai," *Middle Eastern Studies* 4:43(July 2007): 557–577.

Dubai Effect can be argued to be the extra-generation of the Dubai code of private urban development. If the autonomous clusters of Dubai (Dubai International Financial Center, Dubai Internet City, Dubai Healthcare City, Dubai Media City, Dubai Silicon Oasis, etc.) present a congested form of an archipelago city, transnational configuration of the Dubai Effect Archipelago marks an expanded version of this condition.

Here, the Dubai Effect borrows the name from the so-called “Bilbao Effect,” an expression coined for the self-referential landmark franchising itself for urban regeneration and regional development.<sup>3</sup> Namely, with the Bilbao Effect, the building becomes a flagship of seduction for tourism, entertainment and also for large-scale urban development projects, which are argued to be the “mechanisms...through which globalization becomes urbanized.”<sup>4</sup> In parallel, the Bilbao Effect signifies architecture’s desire for an alternative reality:

The concept of indigenization affords a more nuanced understanding of the way architectural ideas get disseminated and the experience of their varied materializations. It reminds us that the “context” of any built work encompasses not just the “authentic,” pre-existing characteristics of a place. Architecture also has the capacity to embody the often conflicted feeling a place harbors about its own past and future, its insecurities about being provincial, its fantasies and desires for a reality that is alternative to the present. The assimilation of foreign tendencies within a local situation is in this sense not just or not necessarily, a hegemonic process, but sometimes, as at Bilbao, one of voluntary adaptation and a consciously acknowledged need for change.<sup>5</sup>

If the Bilbao Effect marks an aspiration for an alternative reality for a city or region, and a desire for change, the Dubai Effect is its “BIGGER” version. While Bilbao Effect franchises architectural spectacles to promote local authenticities, the Dubai Effect validates its spectacle first by its own locality and then franchises templates of compact urban organization to other spots as a package.

The projects of the largest real estate and investment companies of Dubai—of Emaar Properties, Damac Properties, Sama Dubai, Istithmar, Nakheel, Limitless, Dubai World – are now spread all over the world. These projects appear regionally and globally, in places as diverse as Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Qatar and Turkey; reaching out to Russia, China, India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Philippines, and Vietnam in Asia; South Africa, Djibouti, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Algeria, Senegal, and Rwanda, Zanzibar, and Mozambique in Africa; Germany, England, Czech Republic, and Malta in Europe, and in United States. Among the list, Africa and Southeast Asia are projected to become one of the major components of the list soon with more project announcements in the near future. Considering Emaar Properties’ recently announced large scale Lombok Island project in Indonesia, the projects of Limitless in Indonesia and Vietnam, and also various “eco-tourism” projects and wildlife reserves of Dubai World in Mozambique, Rwanda, Senegal, and South Africa, the planned expansion of the company investments in Africa and Southeast Asia is evident.<sup>6</sup>

Being large in scale and investment, these new projects not only trigger already existing real estate forces, but also instigate various other urban developments in their localities. For instance, for one of the recent Dubai investments in Turkey (Dubai Towers-Istanbul), Dubai acts as a validation for property value. As the developer of Sama Dubai company announces that “[t]he reason of choosing Turkey for such a big project is our trust in Turkish economy’s growth potential and our belief in the strategic position of the country as the center of business, trade and tourism,”<sup>7</sup> Dubai’s investments activate the property sector as well as further investments in the area: “The commitment of these [Dubai] giants to the investment property market in Turkey just proves that there is massive potential in the country and that the time is definitely right for property investors to do their due diligence on Turkey and commit to careful real estate investment projects.”<sup>8</sup>

## The Dubai Effect Archipelago

An important aspect of the Dubai Effect Archipelago is its clever symbiosis of branding, infrastructure and real estate development, providing various combinations of autonomous clusters for different locations. Example to this would be the “SmartCity” joint venture by real estate firm Sama Dubai with the Technology and Media Free Zone Authority (TECOM), both companies being divisions of the Dubai Holding, which is owned by Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum. Using the autonomous clusters of Dubai Internet City, Dubai Media City and Dubai Knowledge Village as their model, the aim of the SmartCity venture is to “harness the power” of existing technology clusters in Dubai and to build a large network of knowledge-based industry townships across the world. While exploring the global

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For discussions on the “Bibao Effect,” see A. M. Guasch and J. Zulaika, eds., *Learning from the Bilbao Guggenheim* (Reno: Center for Basque Studies, 2005); and G. C. Santamaria, *Bilbao: Basque Pathways to Globalization* (Elsevier, 2007). To promote the Bilbao city as the new cultural and business center, Guggenheim Museum was one of the two major landmarks of a waterfront development project which also included the construction of 80,000m<sup>2</sup> office space, a 27,000m<sup>2</sup> shopping center, a luxury hotel, university facilities, and 800 housing units, and 122,000m<sup>2</sup> of green space. See: Frank Moulaert, Arantxa Rodriguez, and Erik Swynedouw, “Neoliberal Urbanization in Europe: Large-Scale Urban Development Projects and the New Urban Policy,” *Antipode* 3 (July 2002), pp. 542-582. For more on the Bilbao Effect and the relationship between urban development and museums, see, C. Hammett and N. Shoval, “Museums as Flagships of Urban Development,” in *Cities and Visitors: Regulating People, Markets and City Space*, L. M. Hoffman, D. Judd and S. S. Fainstein, eds., (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), pp.219-236. Recent references on the relationship between the “Bilbao Effect,” architecture, spectacle and branding: D. Medina Lasansky and Brian McLaren (eds.), *Architecture and Tourism: Perception, Performance and Place* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2004); Gugenheim Joan Ockman and Salomon Frausto, *Architourism: Authentic, Escapist, Exotic, Spectacular* (Prestel, 2005); A. Klingman, *Brandscapes: Architects in the Experience Economy* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2007); Anthony Vidler, *Architecture Between Spectacle and Use* (Williamstown, Mass.: Sterling and Francine Clark Institute, 2008).

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“In sum, large-scale urban development projects are the mechanisms *par excellence* through which globalization becomes urbanized.” Frank Moulaert, Arantxa Rodriguez, and Erik Swynedouw, eds., *The Globalized City: Economic Restructuring and Social Polarization in European Cities*, (Oxford University Press, New York, 2003), p.3.

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Joan Ockman, “New Politics of the Spectacle: ‘Bilbao’ and the Global Imagination,” *Architecture and Tourism: Perception, Performance and Place*, ed. by D. Medina Lasansky and Brian McLaren, (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2004), p.235.

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See “Dubai Realtors Look to China,” *AmeInfo*, March 23, 2007, <http://www.ameinfo.com/114474.html>, (retrieved April 9, 2007); and “Istithmar Planning Aggressive Expansion into Asia with \$1.75b,” *Gulf News*, March 28, 2007, <http://archive.gulfnews.com/business/Investment/10114097.html> (retrieved April 17, 2007). Also see: “Dubai Targets Further Africa Investment,” *Arabian Business*, March 3, 2008, <http://www.arabianbusiness.com/512748-dubai-world-announces-further-africa-investment> (retrieved April 5, 2008).

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“Mayor Topbas: ‘This Tender is the Expression of Turkey’s Stability and Istanbul’s Opening-up to the World,’” *Istanbul Municipality News*, March 23, 2007, < <http://www.ibb.gov.tr/IBB/Popup/en-US/PrinterFriendlyHaberler.aspx?CultureId=en-US&HaberId=1065>>, (March 25, 2007).

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“Emaar’s Expansion into Turkey’s Investment Property Sector,” <http://www.amberlamb.com/index.php/a/n/emaar-turkey-investment-property-sector>, (retrieved September 17, 2006).



"TECOM and Sama Dubai to Jointly Create 'Smart City' Clusters Worldwide," Sama Dubai News, March 20 2007, <<http://www.sama-dubai.com/news/070320A.asp>>, (retrieved on March 27, 2007).

For an interview with the prime minister of Malta (Lawrence Gonzi) regarding the Smart City@Malta project: Mohammed Ezz Al Deen, "Malta's Dubai-backed Smart City will Put Island on IT Map," *Gulf News*, March 30, 2007, <http://archive.gulfnews.com/articles/07/03/30/10114645.html>, (retrieved on April 1, 2007).

Vimala Vasan, "Kochi Smart City: DIC Plans Study for Prospective Firms," *Business Line*, September 12, 2005, <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2005/09/12/stories/2005091200681300.html>, (retrieved on November 15, 2006). "SmartCity Kochi Go-Ahead," *AME Info*, May 13 2007, <http://www.ameinfo.com/119959.html>, (retrieved on May 17 2007).

The project site for Smart City Malta is 350,000 square meters.

"Tecom's Kerala Smart City Project Gets sez Status," *Khaleej Times Online*, 21 March 2008, [http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle.asp?xfile=/data/business/2008/March/business\\_March643.xml&section=business](http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle.asp?xfile=/data/business/2008/March/business_March643.xml&section=business), (retrieved April 1, 2008).

A \$709 million contract was signed by the DP World and the Senegal Government to upgrade the Port of Dakar and to build a container terminal.

expansion of various business parks (information and communication technology, media, education, biotechnology, and energy), and coupling those investments with real estate projects, the joint venture promises technological and economic impact and "sustainable development" to regions. As announced by the CEO of TECOM: "The benefits of the SmartCity concept, as we have seen in Dubai, transcend to all areas of the socio-economic sphere."<sup>9</sup>

As stated above, Smart City is based on the model of the existing technology clusters in Dubai. For instance, like the regulations of the Dubai Internet City and Dubai Knowledge Village, in global Smart City locations, companies will take land on long lease to build their own facilities according to their requirements. In addition to the similarities to existing facilities in Dubai, Smart City brand also has other features that would be specific to the Dubai Effect Archipelago. For instance, for each company that chooses to be located in a Smart City in a particular country or region, it is announced that opportunities will be offered to that company to expand into new markets or to set up facilities in other Smart City clusters, which are located in other countries, and to have global interconnections with them. While the locations of the Smart Citys are chosen according to their potentiality to become a regional knowledge-economy hub, and for attracting "knowledge workers," the local governments' commitment for knowledge based development is considered as an important factor for selection.

One of the first projects of the Smart City brand is the Smart City@ Ricasoli (Malta) project, which was approved by the Malta parliament in 2006. While being the "first European outpost" for the Dubai Internet City and the Dubai Media City, Smart City@ Ricasoli is promoted by the Malta government as a prospect for radical transformation for the island's economic activity after its recently approved EU membership. Not only the project is expected to generate 5,600 jobs in the region, the Malta government sees Dubai's investment for the Smart City as an instigator for other future Middle Eastern investments in the area.<sup>10</sup>

The second Smart City project to be implemented is the Smart City@Cochin (Kerala, India). Upon the signing of the bilateral agreement in 2005 to develop the Smart City@Cochin, Ahmad bin Bayat, Director General of TECOM declared: "Dubai Internet City has developed considerable expertise in developing business campuses that provide infrastructure and support services for IT companies...This project is also part of Dubai Internet City's global expansion plans where it is seeking to evolve from a regional venture to an internationally diversified organization. Our mission is to become the ICR business campus provider of choice across the world."<sup>11</sup>

In spite of this bilateral agreement, signed between the Kerala Government and TECOM in 2005, because of the resistance of the government of Kerala to Dubai's insistence on freehold rights to the land, the final decision has not been finalized until very recently. The implementation of the project has been cleared by the Kerala government by declaring almost half of the site as a Special Economic Zone for the mega IT facility.<sup>12</sup> Being a Special Economic Zone means being like a Dubai free zone cluster; that is, no foreign ownership restrictions will be applied in developing zone infrastructure, residential areas, and recreation centers in the facility.<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, in Dubai Effect Archipelago Urbanism, Dubai corporation city is conditional upon creating proper regulatory conditions for various offshore localities.

Dubai Effect Archipelago is not limited only to the cloning of its technology clusters like the Dubai Internet City. Taking Dubai's Jebel Ali Port and Free Zone (JAFZA) as a model, the integration of infrastructure, port development and real estate would be another form of configuration for the exporting of autonomous clusters. For instance, as part of Senegal's development plans for the new administrative city in the north of Dakar, and become the "Dubai on the Atlantic," the Government of Senegal and Jafza International (of Dubai World) signed an agreement to develop an integrated Special Economic Zone in Dakar.<sup>14</sup> Aiming to harness the know-how of the Jebel Ali Free Trade Zone in Dubai, other important international free trade zone projects of Jafza International are Hiep Phuoc Harbour City in Vietnam, Djibouti Port and Free Zone, Orangeburg County Port Project in South Carolina-United States, and Subic Bay Freeport in Philippines. Important to note here would be the relationship between the generic and the specific. That is, in an attempt to present the "compact port city" configuration within various localities, port infrastructures are always coupled with business, residential and leisure areas which are all provided by Limitless and Nakheel, JAFZA International's sister real estate companies.

In relation to this, one development project in Africa seems unique and at the same time remarkable for a possible contemplation on the provision of free zones within Dubai Effect Archipelago. As of 2000, Dubai's involvement in developing Djibouti's oil terminal, port infrastructure, industrial and commercial free zone with projects (worth \$800 million) stimulates Djibouti's economic growth, helping it develop as

While Jafza International manages Djibouti Free Zone and Dubai Customs International manages Djibouti's customs operations, DP World has invested \$30 million in the Horizon Djibouti Terminal facility and committed \$300 million for a new container port. In addition to infrastructural projects, Nakheel is developing its first overseas development, a five star hotel at the center of Djibouti City, capital of Djibouti; and Al Fajer Properties is in talks to set up to build an island resort close to the Djiboutian coast. In addition to those, Jafza International has recently announced Phase II of its Djibouti Free Zone project comprising the development of 280,700 sq feet of space for light industrial units and warehousing facilities, and 23,000 sq feet of office space. For the expansion and re-development of the Djibouti port, certain Arab financial institutions are involved in the project: the Arab Fund for Social and Economic Development (AFSED), funds from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia will finance the project. Also, as part of its World Food Program, The United Nations will fund the project for the improvement of its port facilities and connections to the hinterland via upgraded highways.

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While Jafza International manages Djibouti Free Zone and Dubai Customs International manages Djibouti's customs operations, DP World has invested \$30 million in the Horizon Djibouti Terminal facility and committed \$300 million for a new container port. In addition to infrastructural projects, Nakheel is developing a five-star waterfront hotel and Al Fajer Properties is in talks to set up to build an island resort close to the Djiboutian coast. In addition to those, Jafza International has recently announced Phase II of its Djibouti Free Zone project comprising the development of 280,700 sq feet of space for light industrial units and warehousing facilities, and 23,000 sq feet of office space.

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"Dubai Projects Stimulate Djibouti Economic Growth," *Gulf News*, April 1, 2006,

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Danish consulting engineering group COWI is commissioned for the giant project. It is estimated that it will take twelve years to design and construct the bridge, for which the estimated construction cost will be around USD 20bn. See: "Yemen: Africa Bridge," AME Info, February 2, 2007, <<http://www.ameinfo.com/111352.html>>, (March 5, 2007). Also for the project announcement in Denmark's Ministry Foreign Affairs news note: "Danish Engineers to Design Giant Bridge over Red Sea," March 13 2008, <http://www.investindk.com/visNyhed.asp?artikelID=19277>, (retrieved April 2, 2008).

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Plans for the causeway also include a gas pipeline from Yemen to provide energy for industrial investors in Djibouti. A \$3.7bn liquefied natural gas (LNG) export terminal in Yemen, which will be developed by France's Total and the us' Hunt Oil, is due to begin production at the end of 2008. Dubai's Middle Eastern Developments Plans Cities across Africa," April 7 2008, [http://www.meed.com/yemen/news/2008/04/dubais\\_middle\\_east\\_developments\\_plans\\_cities\\_across\\_africa.html](http://www.meed.com/yemen/news/2008/04/dubais_middle_east_developments_plans_cities_across_africa.html), (retrieved April 16, 2008).

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[italics added]. "Emaar Showcases International Projects of over AED 220 billion at Cityscape," INR News, December 2, 2006, [http://www.inrnews.com/realstateproperty/middle\\_east/dubai/emaar\\_showcases\\_international.html](http://www.inrnews.com/realstateproperty/middle_east/dubai/emaar_showcases_international.html), (retrieved January 16, 2007).

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Masdar (which means "the source" in Arabic) is a six-square-kilometer zero-pollution, zero-waste city for 100,000 people, designed by Norman Foster. The city will be capable of housing 50,000 but eventually 100,000 people, who are scheduled to start moving there in 2009. In phase one of the project a large solar photovoltaic power plant will be built as a central energy source. As for RAK Gateway Project, it is a 2km x 2km city with a density of 400 residents per hectare and is designed by Rem Koolhaas.

regional hub for the Red Sea and Indian ocean, and becoming a business and tourist destination.<sup>15</sup> DP World (Dubai Ports World) manages the port and has been key in the development of an oil terminal, container terminal and industrial and commercial free zone. While the port has grown to become one of the fastest growing container terminals in Africa, it also accommodates Dubai real estate firm Nakheel's first overseas development, a five star hotel at the center of Djibouti City, capital of Djibouti.<sup>16</sup>

According to Said Omar Moussa, president of Djibouti's International Chamber of Commerce and Industry, collaboration with Dubai is more than positive: "[T]he relationship with Dubai has made our dream of becoming a commercial centre more real...We are no longer looking at Hong Kong and Singapore but at Dubai." Aboubaker Omar Hadi, commercial director of Djibouti port, summarizes the importance of Dubai's role even more prominently: "Dubai has done in five years what the French did not do (to help Djibouti) during 115 years of colonization. And Dubai is doing it without showing any arrogance. That is the difference."<sup>17</sup>

Recent news that Dubai-based real estate company Middle East Development LLC will be building a 28 km long bridge (six-lane motorway and a four-track railway) to link Yemen with Africa (via Djibouti) definitely positions the strategic importance of Djibouti for Dubai.<sup>18</sup> While Middle East Development LLC also announces plans for two new cities to be built at either end of the bridge (Djibouti and Yemen), and that both cities will be "a free-trade zone and will have their own law, court system and administration,"<sup>19</sup> it is also noted that the JAFZA International will be developing an airport zone in the area, serving as an air-land-sea link for the inner neighboring landlocked African states.

In addition to using specified free zone models of Dubai (Dubai Internet City, Dubai Media City and Jebel Ali Free Trade Zone) as brands and franchise, iconography is also exported in the Dubai Effect Archipelago. For instance, Sama Dubai has created the real estate brand "Dubai Towers" for the iconic high-rise complexes to be built by the company (Dubai Towers-Doha in Qatar to be completed in 2005, Dubai Towers-Istanbul in Turkey to be completed in 2010 and recently announced Dubai Towers-Casablanca) with an attempt to create Dubai Tower landmarks in other cities.

### "Full-spectrum City Provider"

Of the BIG projects of the Dubai Effect, King Abdullah Economic City in Saudi Arabia, a mega city that spreads across 168 million square meters land (55 square meters of built area) and located on the 22 mile shore lines of the Red Sea, marks the most prominent aspect of the Dubai Effect. With a promise to the potential investor the access of both regional and global markets by land, air and sea, the city is divided up to six zones: Sea Port (that spreads across 2 million square meters), Financial Island, Education Zone, Residential Area, Industrial District and The Resorts (with 18-hole golf course). Dubai based real estate company Emaar's positioning of the projects enlightens our understanding of the Dubai Effect: "King Abdullah Economic City...signals a strategic move of Emaar from being a property developer to a *full-spectrum city provider*."<sup>20</sup>

This idea of the "full-spectrum city provider" is important as it marks the ultimate aim of the Dubai Effect Archipelago: to go beyond the provision of Dubai islands abroad and essentially to provide compact variations of the Dubai Archipelago City. A perfect example of this is the giant airport city "The Dubai World Central" (140 square meters, twice the size of Hong Kong, housing a population of 750,000) planned to transform the region into a powerful global hub. Composed of 6 clustered zones, the Dubai World Central will consist of Dubai Logistics City, International Airport, Golf Resort, Commercial City, Residential City and Enterprise Park. With this and other similar examples in the region for such large scale projects (i. e. Masdar Eco-town project in Abu Dhabi and the RAK Gateway Project in Ras Al Khaimah),<sup>21</sup> one wonders if the next step would be the franchising of "compact cities" to the world. Considering such examples as the announcement of 20 eco-towns in the UK, or the Dongtan project in Shanghai, the self-contained city from scratch poses urgent questions within contemporary urban discussions, regarding the issues of ecology, density, publicness and urbanity.

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Especially in terms of urban policy making, exceptionality is argued as the main driving force for large-scale urban development projects. "The framework of 'exceptionality' associated with these initiatives favors a more autonomous, if not autocratic, dynamic marked by special plans and projects that relegate statutory norms and procedures to a secondary and subordinated place... 'Exceptionality' is a fundamental feature of the new urban policy, based on the primacy of project-based initiatives over regulatory plans and procedures." Frank Moulaert, et. al. "Neoliberal Urbanization in Europe: Large-Scale Urban Development Projects and the New Urban Policy," p.577.

23

Rem Koolhaas, "Bigness or the Problem of the Large," *Small, Medium, Large, Extra-Large: Office for Metropolitan Architecture*, ed. by Jennifer Sigler, (Rotterdam, Netherlands: 010 Publishers; New York, N.Y.: Monacelli Press, 1995), p. 495-516.

24

In addition to the compactness and undecorated technological purism of the ocean liner, Corbusier's provocation is a clear modernist admiration for the scale of the ship. The quote as a whole as it appears below the Aquitania collage in *Towards a New Architecture*: "Architects live and move within the narrow limits of academic requirements and in ignorance of new ways of building, and they are quite willing that their conceptions should remain at doves kissing one another. But our daring and masterly constructors of steamships produce palaces in comparison with which cathedrals are tiny things, and they throw them on to the sea. Architecture is stifled by custom." Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970).

25

A very interesting note is a related comparison between Koolhaas's and Corbusier's work from F. Jameson. See: Fredric Jameson, *Seeds of Time*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 127-205.

26

[Italics added]. Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City: Elements of a Doctrine of Urbanism to Be Used as the Basis of Our Machine-Age Civilization*, (New York, Orion Press, 1967), p.118.

27

Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p.97.

28

Rem Koolhaas, *Bigness*, p.515.

Among all the projects, the crucial question seems to be whether the Dubai Effect Archipelago marks a territorial reconfiguration of globalization as it relates to urbanism and development. If "exceptionality" is the main dictum for neo-liberal urbanization and large-scale development projects as argued by theorists,<sup>22</sup> by replicating and re-configuring its clusters and free zones into various "full-spectrum city" models, Dubai is generating "exceptionalities" within a global scale. With their separate laws and regulations, these "exceptional zones," are the clever symbiosis between the iconographic branding and the infrastructural realm of urban development within a transnational scale. As the autonomous character of the Dubai clusters is often discussed as offering flexible land-use regulation, urban form and legislation in Dubai itself, it should be added that this new model also allows for easy adaptations into new global locales, strategic cooperation with various local government agencies in the world, and various (infrastructural and iconographic) combinations of "full-package" urban development when needed.

## BIG and the Dubai Effect

What exactly does the expanding large scale of the Dubai Effect Archipelago suggest for contemporary architecture and urbanism? The first idea is architecture's changing relation to large scale. For more than a decade, various discussions on scale saw the large scale either as a symptom or a model. On the one hand, with an attempt to analyze and understand our complex urban condition and develop a repertoire of concepts, research on the contemporary city presented an abundance of retroactive manifestos with the ungraspable evidences of political and technological imagination. On the other hand, driven by economic intensity and market forces, the necessities of large scale and private development provided various templates of corporate architecture and urbanism. As "Bigness or the Problem of Large," Rem Koolhaas' renowned manifesto for the large scale, set the latent theory and provocation for the large scale a decade ago, the BIG skyscraper has been both the symptom and the model within emergent urban phenomena.<sup>23</sup>

Koolhaas' admiration for the skyscraper, and manifestly with the BIG resonates with Le Corbusier's fascination the ocean liner, best expressed in Corbusier's Aquitania collages.<sup>24</sup> In this context, it would be important to note that, both for Corbusier and Koolhaas, the significance of the ship and the skyscraper lies not only in their expansive scale, but more importantly, in their provocation for a suggestive template for possible urban architectures: the ship and the skyscraper as floating islands independent of any context. Corbusian intervention was like a ship, a floating city, conceived as a hygienic separation from the existing urban fabric, positioned itself as opposed to the unsanitary traditional city, where a vertical city would float on nature (i. e. urban parks provided on the ground plane).<sup>25</sup> Written as a caption showing the cross-section of the Aquitania ocean liner in *The Radiant City*, the direct relationship to Corbusier's proposal for a city model is evident. Here, Corbusier writes: "Inside this floating city [the ocean liner] where all ought to be confusion and chaos, everything functions, on the contrary, with amazing discipline. [M]ain services...are all separately located. Why should a city apartment house not attempt to provide us with the same comfort as a ship?"<sup>26</sup>

Koolhaasian intervention, on the other hand, was like a skyscraper, again a floating island/city, conceived as the hedonistic and zipped replication of the metropolitan culture (i. e. the absurdities of the private domain and its unconventional programmatic and social encounters) detached from the urban tissue. If, for Koolhaas, Manhattan is "a dry archipelago of blocks...[where]...each block is now alone like an island, fundamentally on its own,"<sup>27</sup> then, beyond a certain scale, architecture would take the inventiveness of the autonomous skyscraper: independence of context, layering in section for an self-sufficient programming, and generic form separating itself from function etc. all of which, in turn, would inform a new architectural urbanism: "Bigness, through its very independence of context, is the one architecture that can survive...[I]t gravitates opportunistically to locations of maximum infrastructural promise."<sup>28</sup>

In parallel to that, within the last decade or so, infrastructure urbanism – with its clear and necessary replacement of the post-war "contextualisms" and its intricate emphasis on scale – saw design and infrastructure in a symbiotic relationship where infrastructure became the context, resulting with vertical/sectional dispositions (Bigness, Koolhaas) or topographical/operative urban surfaces (Landscape Urbanism). However, with current urban aspirations within rapidly urbanizing coordinates (such as examples in China, and Dubai), the large scale urban architectures come even before or at the same time with the infrastructure, where infrastructure might result from the extension of the design intervention. Thus, in those conditions, rather than reacting to a predefined context, designers are bound to redefine and shape their contexts. This condition not only marks the shifting role of infrastructure in design but also puts the pressure on the agency of the architect

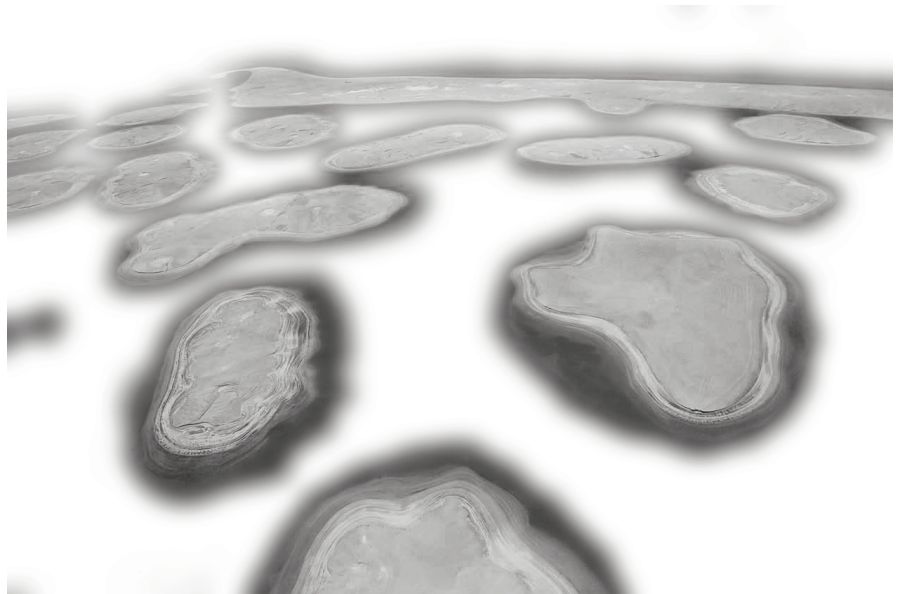


within a much wider contextual scale, where ecological, regional, social and political questions come upfront and design decisions cannot simply be an innocent extension of external realities.

In that light, while the floating islands of the Dubai Effect Archipelago are produced via various combinations of its existing clusters for a “full-spectrum city,” this condition marks the level of interaction that corporations and cities have reached in our contemporary culture; and points to the irrelevancy of mere architectural fascination with the extravagancy of the large scale. If Bilbao Effect marked the questioning of the iconographic/self-referential landmark and the role of the architect in our contemporary culture, the Dubai Effect points perhaps a deeper shift for the architect. After a decade of mapping emerging phenomena of city (the horizontal-BIG) on one side and monumental/expressionist iconography (the vertical-BIG) on the other, new disciplinary positions towards large scale are crucial for architecture and urbanism.



*Dubai Effect Archipelago in the global context. Courtesy of the author.*





Smart City brand advertisement. Courtesy of TECOM& Sama Dubai.



Architecture and the large scale. Le Corbusier's Aquitania collage, Rem Koolhaas' New York skyscraper and Burj Dubai. Courtesy of the author.