

# Under Construction

## *Under Construction.*

### **The Material and Symbolic Meaning of Architecture and Infrastructure in the Gulf Region**

International Workshop at the Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO), Berlin

6 – 10 October 2010

– Conveners: Katrin Bromber, Birgit Krawietz, Steffen Wippel –

### ***Abstract***

Maps, information brochures and newspaper articles regarding cities, infrastructure and recreational spaces on the Arab side of the Gulf often present virtual realities that have not yet been built. While the Emirate Dubai (UAE) is very much on top of the race and has already realised a huge part of its landmark architecture and strategic facilities, cities like the Qatari capital Doha – that even advertises “Doha 2030” as a label – still appear to be heavily under construction. In countries like the Sultanate of Oman, the establishment of ultra-luxury tourism projects started only recently. On the media level, advancements in this area are enthusiastically hailed and widely broadcast.

The workshop at the Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO) in Berlin traces phenomena such as the widespread construction of artificial islands (meanwhile also in countries like Kuwait), innovative infrastructure and prestige buildings (global container ports, free zones, inter-island causeways, metro connections, theme parks etc.). About 40 active participants will analyse and compare activities of this kind and their rhetoric within a theoretically informed framework from the overall perspective of material and symbolic impacts. Although emphasis is put on the Arabian Peninsula, complementary contributions will also examine the eastern coastline of the Gulf as well as Dubai-inspired experiences elsewhere in the Arab world and Africa. The conference aims to encourage a transdisciplinary dialogue between scholars, artists and practitioners from fields such as Islamic Studies, geography, architecture, culture management, economics, urban studies, history and photography. Parallel to the workshop, a photo and arts exhibitions, a video presentation and presentations of final projects and architectural models for the Gulf region will take place. An urbanistic excursion in Berlin will complement the program.

Sponsored by:

**Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft**  
(*German Research Foundation*)

**Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung**  
(*Federal Ministry of Education and Research*)

**DFG**



## Programme

Wednesday, 6 October 2010

**Venue: Otto-Suhr-Saal, Neues Stadthaus, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor**  
**Parochialstraße 3, 10179 Berlin-Mitte**

Metro station: Klosterstraße (U 2 / red line)

### 19:00-21:00 Opening: Public Talk and Debate (*in German*)

Introduction and Moderation: **Katrin Bromber** (Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin, Germany)

**Michael Schindhelm** (cultural advisor, writer and theatre-manager; former advisor to the Dubai Culture and Arts Authority, Government of Dubai, UAE)

"Dubai – Globale Blase oder nachhaltige Entwicklung einer alternativen kosmopolitischen Gesellschaft mit islamischem Hintergrund?"  
(*Dubai – Global Bubble or Sustainable Development of an Alternative Cosmopolitan Society with an Islamic Background?*)

**Michael Schwarz** (Faculty of Architectural Engineering, Ajman University of Science and Technology, UAE/associated partner in the international architecture and design studio Peter Ebner and Friends, München, Wien, Dubai et al.)

"Dubai now - der Umgang mit künstlichen Strukturen"  
(*Dubai now - Dealing with Artificial Structures*)

Thursday, 7 October 2010

**Venue: Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO)**  
**Kirchweg 33, 14129 Berlin-Nikolassee**

Suburban railway station: Nikolassee (S 1 or S 7)

### 9:00-9:20 Welcome

9:00 **Ulrike Freitag** (Director of the Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin, Germany)

Welcome

9:10 **Steffen Wippel** (Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin/Orientalisches Institut, Universität Leipzig, Germany)

Welcome and Introduction to the Workshop

### 9:25-11:45 Panel 1: *General Settings*

Chair: Yasser Elsheshtawy, Department of Architecture, UAE University, Al-Ain, UAE

9:25 **George Katodrytis** (School of Architecture and Design, American University of Sharjah, UAE)

"Dubai: Image, Infrastructures and other Connectivities"

10:00 **Hussain M. Ilias** (India-Arab Cultural Centre & West Asian Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, India)

"Sacred Geographies of Special Economic Zones in the Arab Gulf Region"

10:35 **Shaden S. Qasem Awad** (Doctoral School of Architecture, Technische Universität Graz, Austria/Department of Architectural Engineering, Birzeit University, Palestine)

"Investigating the Notion of Home in the Contemporary Residential Architecture in Gulf Countries"

11:10 **Karl Bär** (Landwirtschaftlich-Gärtnerische Fakultät, Humboldt-Universität Berlin, Germany)

"Culture and Economics of Water Use in the United Arab Emirates"

11:45 -12:10 Coffee Break

## 12:10-13:20 Panel 2: *Culture, Identity and Commodification*

Chair: Leïla Vignal, Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford University, UK/  
Département de Géographie & Laboratoire ESO, Université de Rennes-2, France

12:10 **Yasser Elsheshtawy** (Department of Architecture, UAE University, Al-Ain, UAE)

"Urban (Im)mobility: Public Encounters in Dubai and Cultural Identity"

12:45 **Birgit Krawietz** (Institut für Islamwissenschaft, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany)

"Animalscape in the Arab Gulf Region"

13:20-14:30 Lunch at the ZMO

## 14:30-16:50

14:30 **Boris Brorman Jensen** (Institut for By og Landskab, Arkitektskolen Århus, Denmark)

"Learning from Dubai – In-between Sensationalism and Caricature"

15:05 **Joachim Gierlichs** (former curator of the Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar)

"From Vision to Institution: The Making of the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, Qatar"

15:40 **Delfina Serrano** (Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas, Madrid, Spain/  
Abu Dhabi, UAE)

"Preserving Heritage and Promoting Culture in the United Arab Emirates: The Abu Dhabi Cultural Foundation"

16:15 **Nicolai Scherle** (Mathematisch-Geographische Fakultät, Katholische Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, Germany) and **Mikael Jonasson** (Sektionen för hälsa och samhälle, Högskolan Halmstad, Sweden)

"1001 Places to See Before You Die: Constructing Oriental Holiday Worlds in European Travel Guides"

16:50-17:40 Coffee Break

During the break:

17:00 Presentation of the video production "The She Zone. Gender Topographies of Global Space" (*in German*)

(Anette Baldauf, artist and university lecturer, and Dorit Margreiter, Akademie der Bildenden Künste, Video und Videoinstallation, both Vienna, Austria, Vienna/Dubai 2004, 30 min.)

**17:40-18:50 Panel 3: *Fragmented Space in Saudi Arabia***

Chair: Monika Fatima Mühlböck, Institut für Orientalistik, Universität Wien, Austria

17:40 **Stefan Maneval** (Institut für Islamwissenschaft, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany)

"Domestic Architecture in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia"

18:15 **Ulrike Freitag** (Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin/Institut für Islamwissenschaft, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany)

"Present but hidden - the Cemetery for Non-Muslims in Jeddah"

18:50 Dinner/Snack and Beverages at the ZMO

After dinner:

19:30 **Stephan Zirwes** ("studio schnittstelle" and artist, Stuttgart, Germany)

Presentation – Photographs and video with explanation of his own work in Dubai (motivation, method, realisation, ambitions)

**Friday, 8 October 2010****9:30-10:40 Panel 4: *Global (Destination) Branding***

Chair: Christian Steiner, Geographisches Institut, Center for Research on the Arab World, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz/Institut für Humangeographie, Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main, Germany

9:30 **Bruno Maquart** (former director of Agence France-Muséums, projet Louvre Abu Dhabi, Abu Dhabi, UAE)

"The Louvre Abu Dhabi: Utopia as a Reality"

9:50 **Brigitte Dumortier** (Département de Géographie et Aménagement, Université Paris-Sorbonne Abu Dhabi, UAE)

"Two Places of Globalisation in Abu Dhabi: Saadyat et Masdar, between Urban Projects, Architectural Gestures and Means of Communication"

10:10 Joint discussion of Maquart and Dumortier

10:40-11:00 Coffee Break

**11:00-12:40**

11:00 **Katrin Bromber** (Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin, Germany)

"Ice Hockey not Excluded: Sports as Branding Strategy in the Gulf States"

11:20 **Sonja Nebel** (Department of Urban Planning and Architectural Design, German University of Technology in Oman, Muscat, Oman)

"Tourism and Urbanisation in Oman – Sustainable and Socially Inclusive?"

11:40 **Steffen Wippel** (Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin/Orientalisches Institut, Universität Leipzig, Germany)

"'Vision for Oman's Economy - Oman 2020': Port and Tourism Development between Economic Diversification and Global Branding "

12:00 Joint discussion of Bromber, Nebel and Wippel

12:30-13:50 Lunch at the ZMO

During the break:

**13:10 Heike Liebau** (Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin, Germany)

Guided tour of the ZMO and the "Mittelhof"

## 13:50-14:50 Panel 5: *The Economy of Infrastructure and Architecture*

Chair: Nadine Scharfenort, Geographisches Institut, Center for Research on the Arab World, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, Germany

**13:50 Martin Hvidt** (Center for Melleløststudier, Syddansk Universitet, Odense, Denmark)

"The Gulf States: The Role of Architecture and 'Lavish Construction Projects' in 'Late-Late-Late' Developing Societies"

**14:10 Heiko Schmid** (Geographisches Institut, Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg/Institut für Geographie, Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, Germany)

"Economy of Fascination: Signification, Architecture and Marketing in Dubai"

**14:30** Joint discussion of Hvidt and Schmid

14:50-15:20 Coffee Break

## 15:30-20:00 Urbanistic excursion

Waterfront project "Mediaspree" in Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg

**16:45** Informative meeting with **Carsten Joost** from the citizens' action committee "Mediaspree versenken" ([www.ms-versenken.org](http://www.ms-versenken.org)) at Yaam Club, Stralauer Straße 33, 10243 Berlin-Friedrichshain

Suburban rail station: Ostbahnhof (several lines; from ZMO: S 7)

Followed by a round tour of the project site along the River Spree and a visit of the exhibition "Realstadt. Wünsche als Wirklichkeit" (*Real City. Wishes Knocking on Reality's Doors*) at Kraftwerk Mitte, Köpenicker Straße 70, 10179 Berlin-Mitte ([www.realstadt.de/page.php?id=1](http://www.realstadt.de/page.php?id=1))

Contribution per participant: 10 € + 2 € for the exhibition (students free!)

20:00 Dinner in Downtown Berlin

**Restaurant "Kuchen Kaiser"**

**Oranienplatz 11-13, 10999 Berlin-Kreuzberg**

Metro station: Moritzplatz (U 8 / dark blue line) or Kottbusser Tor (U 8 or U 1 / light green line);  
bus station: Oranienplatz (M 29)

Note for listening participants: Costs for the buffet plus water per participant 20 €. Please register separately in advance!

Saturday, 9 October 2010

## 10:00-11:30 Panel 6: *Orientalism and Postmodernism*

Chair: Joachim Gierlich, former curator of the Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar

- 10:00 **Felix Sommerlad** (architect, Berlin, Germany)  
"Promise and Reality in Dubai's Architectural Design"
- 10:20 **Nadine Scharfenort** (Geographisches Institut, Center for Research on the Arab World, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, Germany)  
"Postmodern Architecture and Infrastructure – How 'Oriental' are the Arab Gulf Coastal Cities?"
- 10:40 **Mamdouh Mohamed Sakr** (Performing and Visual Arts Department, American University in Cairo, Egypt)  
"Creating the 'Arabian' Architectural Style"
- 11:00 Joint discussion of Sommerlad, Scharfenort and Sakr

11:30-12:00 Coffee Break

## 12:00-13:00 Panel 7: *The Politics of Infrastructure and Architecture*

Chair: Heiko Schmid, Geographisches Institut, Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg/ Institut für Geographie, Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, Germany

- 12:00 **Christian Steiner** (Geographisches Institut, Center for Research on the Arab World, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz/Institut für Humangeographie, Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main, Germany)  
"Sign and Significance – the Political Dimension of Iconic Urban Development Projects in the Arab Gulf"
- 12:20 **Ala Al-Hamarneh** (Geographisches Institut, Center for Research on the Arab World, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, Germany)  
"Architectural Icons and/or Nepotistic Power - The Political Economy of Urban Design and Symbols in Abu Dhabi"
- 12:40 Joint discussion of Steiner and Al-Hamarneh

13:00-14:10 Lunch at the ZMO

## 14:10-15:40 Panel 8: *The "Persian" Gulf*

Chair: Ala Al-Hamarneh, Geographisches Institut, Center for Research on the Arab World, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, Germany

- 14:10 **Amin Moghadam** (Ecole Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées, Université Paris VII, France)  
"The Persian Gulf: New Dynamics and the Emergence of a New Development Pole – The 'South Pars' Project"
- 14:50 **Shahnaz Nadjmabadi** (Asien-Orient-Institut, Abteilung Ethnologie, Universität Tübingen, Germany)  
"Social Implications of Industrialization and Urbanization in the Iranian Coastal Provinces of the Persian Gulf"
- 15:10 Joint discussion of Moghadam and Nadjmabadi

15:30-16:00 Coffee Break

## 16:00-17:10 Panel 9: *Dubai Elsewhere*

Chair: Sonja Nebel, Department of Urban Planning and Architectural Design, German University of Technology in Oman, Muscat, Oman

- 16:00 **Pierre-Arnaud Barthel** (Centre d'études et de documentation économiques, juridiques et sociales/CEDEJ, Cairo, Egypt)  
"Global Waterfronts in the Maghreb: A Mere Replication of Dubai? Study Cases from Morocco and Tunisia"
- 16:20 **Leïla Vignal** (Middle East Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford University, UK/ Département de Géographie & Laboratoire ESO, Université de Rennes-2, France)  
"The Dubai Model in Damascus: A Strategy for Urban Renewal?"
- 16:40 **Britta Frede** (Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin, Germany)  
"When the Nomad Gets Rich and Settles: Dubai in Mauritania?" (remarks)
- 16:50 **Armelle Choplin** (Laboratoire PRODIG, Université Paris Est Marne-la-Vallée, Paris, France)  
"Seeing Dubai in Khartoum and Nouakchott, The Gulf Urban Model on the Margins of the Arab World"

17:10-17:20 Opportunity for a Last Coffee

## 17:20-18:20

- 17:20 **Chanfi Ahmed** (Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin, Germany)  
"Dubai Style in East Africa" (remarks)
- 17:30 **Luca Ciabbari** (Facoltà di Scienze Politiche, Università degli Studi di Pavia, Italy)  
"Dubai style: the resonances of the Gulf's Grandeur along the trade route Dubai-Somaliland"
- 17:50 Joint discussion of the case studies

## 18:20 Concluding Remarks and Farewell

**Birgit Krawietz** (Institut für Islamwissenschaft, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany)

**Sunday, 10 October 2010**

## 11:30 Supplementary program

Guided visit of the exhibition "Das Potosí-Prinzip" (*The Potosí Principle*) at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt (Kongresshalle), John-Foster-Dulles-Allee 10, 10557 Berlin-Tiergarten ([www.hkw.de/en/programm/2010/potosi/projekt\\_detail.php](http://www.hkw.de/en/programm/2010/potosi/projekt_detail.php))

Suburban rail station: Hauptbahnhof (several lines), metro station: Bundestag (U 55 / brown line), bus stop: Haus der Kulturen der Welt (busses 100 and M 85)

Explanations by **Andreas Siekmann** and **Alice Creischer** (project curators and artists, Berlin, Germany)

Possibly followed by a walk together through the governmental and diplomatic district visiting recent political architecture in Berlin-Mitte

## Exhibitions

Parallel to the workshop, the following exhibitions will take place at the Zentrum Moderner Orient from 6 to 10 October 2010:

- photo exhibition on construction activities in Dubai by **Stephan Zirwes** ("studio schnittstelle" and artist, Stuttgart, Germany)
- photo exhibition "Dubai Toy City" by **George Katodrytis** (School of Architecture and Design, American University of Sharjah, UAE)
- presentation of final projects and architectural models for the Gulf region from the Faculty of Architecture at the Technische Universität Berlin, Germany (provided by **Felix Sommerlad**, architect, Berlin, Germany)
- poster exhibition "Atlas (Spaces in Subjunctive), Dubai Folio" by **Alice Creischer** and **Andreas Siekmann** (artists, Berlin, Germany).

For further information, please contact Julian Tadesse ([just55@hotmail.de](mailto:just55@hotmail.de)) or see the ZMO website ([www.zmo.de/underconstruction.html](http://www.zmo.de/underconstruction.html)).

### Zentrum Moderner Orient

Secretariat: Dr. Silke Nagel

Kirchweg 33, 14129 Berlin, Germany

Phone: +49 30 80307-0 • Fax: +49 30 80307-210

### Tip for interested participants:

Shortly after our conference, there will be an exhibition "Stadtvisionen 1910|2010, Berlin Paris London Chicago: 100 Jahre Allgemeine Städtebau-Ausstellung in Berlin" (*City Visions 1910|2010, Berlin Paris London Chicago: 100 Years General Urban Design Exhibition in Berlin*) starting 15 October 2010

at the Architekturforum of the Technische Universität Berlin, Faculty of Architecture, Scharoun Wing, Ernst-Reuter-Platz/Straße des 17. Juni 150, Building A-F, Room A K176, 10623 Berlin-Charlottenburg  
Metro station: Ernst-Reuter-Platz (U 2 / red line)

Opening hours: Monday to Thursday 12:00-16:00 ([architekturmuseum.ub.tu-berlin.de/index.php?set=1&p=451](http://architekturmuseum.ub.tu-berlin.de/index.php?set=1&p=451)).