

HERITAGE & RENEWAL IN DOHA

URBAN PAMPHLETEER # 4

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Urban Pamphleteer

Clare Melhuish, Ben Campkin and Rebecca Ross

WE ARE DELIGHTED TO PRESENT URBAN PAMPHLETEER #4

In the tradition of radical pamphleteering, the intention of this series is to confront key themes in contemporary urban debate from diverse perspectives, in a direct and accessible – but not reductive – way. The broader aim is to empower citizens, and inform professionals, researchers, institutions and policy-makers, with a view to positively shaping change.

#4 HERITAGE AND RENEWAL IN DOHA

This issue aims to open up a comparative discussion about the role of heritage in urban renewal in Doha – a city in the throes of rapid and substantial transformation as it re-positions itself in a global network of cosmopolitan urban centres. As such, it presents a rich opportunity for examining the ways in which discourses around physical and cultural heritage are shaping approaches to urban planning, environmental and social sustainability, and architectural preservation and renewal around the world. Our contributors represent different voices and interests within this debate, across the fields of professional, academic and artistic practice in Doha and London, as well as everyday lived experience of Doha. They explore the meanings and manifestations of Qatari heritage and identity at the local, urban and international scale; the roles played by different actors and stakeholders in their formation; and the tools – technical, aesthetic and conceptual – which bring them into being.

To ground the discussion of heritage and the value systems through which it is produced we investigate current plans for reconstruction of the central historic area of Doha, notably the neighbourhood of Al-Asmakh. Our authors and artists have created a platform for reflection and dialogue on the way that heritage is conceptualised and materialised in this context. The case of Al-Asmakh is also a microcosm for us to reflect on questions of community and belonging in cosmopolitan global cities, and the place for ordinary homes and livelihoods in those settings. These are challenges that increasingly demand our attention if cities are to be preserved as sites of thriving, diverse patterns of living.

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The city of Doha keeps repositioning itself on the map of international architecture and urbanism. But, while the rapid urban growth of the city continues

to be a subject of debate, little attention has been paid to the nature of change and intervention in the old city core.

'Art requires a delicate adjustment of outer and inner worlds in such a way that, without changing their nature, they can be seen through each other. To know oneself is to know one's region. It is also to know the world, and it is also, paradoxically, a form of exile from that world'.¹

I interrogate these processes in the light of three questions: Can an urban intervention be simultaneously local and global? Can it demonstrate international best practices without ignoring traditional knowledge? Would a prioritisation of local influences or an interest in heritage conservation represent narrow-mindedness?

Rulers and government officials classically advocate 'traditional imaging' to remind the local society of its roots, to invigorate the profile of the capital city and to impress the global community.² These aspirations are manifested in three types of change visible in Doha's old centre:³

- 1 'iconic architectural change', where a building or portion of the urban environment imposes a powerful new visual statement;
- 2 'remanufacturing of urban heritage', where an urban intervention engages directly with traditional knowledge; and
- 3 'iconic urban change', where an urban regeneration intervention integrates tradition and modernity in spatial, social and material terms.

In Doha, the first type is manifested in I. M. Pei's Museum of Islamic Art. Its exposed location makes it visible from many directions, creating a visual reconnection between the old centre and the waterfront.⁴ Sited at the eastern end of Doha's historic settlement, it sets an intended juxtaposition with the high-rise cluster of development across the water at West Bay; while facing inland, the museum connects to the old centre at the end of an urban spine. The design aspiration is to present a new image of the city while evoking a new interpretation of the regional heritage.

The 'remanufacturing of urban heritage' is revealed in the reconstruction of the traditional market, Souq Waqif, which represents an aspirational positioning of traditional knowledge. Historically, it contained different types of sub-markets for wholesale

INTERVENTION URBANISM: THE DELICACY OF ASPIRATIONAL CHANGE IN THE OLD CENTRE OF DOHA



Iconic architectural change: Museum of Islamic Art.
Photo by Ashraf M. Salama, 2013.





Remanufacturing urban heritage: Souq Waqif.
Photo by Fatma Khalfani, 2012.

**THE MUSEUM AND THE SOUQ BOTH
GENERATE A NEW URBAN DISCOURSE
IN THE CITY ON DIVERSITY, USABILITY,
ACCESSIBILITY AND CONNECTIVITY**

ment made plans for the modernisation of the city centre, it fell into a state of dereliction. However, it has recently assumed a new image, following reconstruction and renovation based on original materials and skills. While it

retains its old function as a marketplace, new art galleries, traditional cafés and restaurants, cultural events and local concerts have also been introduced to attract most of the city's residents and tourists.

Within close proximity to Souq Waqif, the Msheireb development represents 'iconic urban change'. An urban regeneration mega-project currently under construction on the remains of a

historic residential site, it includes a few intact traditional courtyard houses and others which had deteriorated and are being rebuilt. Decision-makers were concerned with the impact of the site on the city's image. The driving philosophy was to deliver a sustainable mixed-use intervention that combined an authentic representation and spatial experience of Qatari culture and heritage. It is designed to reduce the use of cars and to create a walkable public realm, supported by sustainable environmental technologies, which will attract locals back to the old centre. The intervention, described by masterplanners EDAW-AECOM, 'is



Iconic urban change: Msheireb urban regeneration, with museum and souk at top right-hand corner. Photo courtesy of Arch. Fatima Fawzi © Msheireb Properties, 2013.

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to initiate large-scale, inner-city regeneration that will create a modern Qatari homeland rooted in traditions, and to renew a piece of the city where global cultures meet but do not melt'.⁵

Decisions on urban change are made by Qatar Museums in the first case; by the Private Engineering



1 Flannery O'Connor, *Mystery and Manners: Occasional Prose* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1969), p.31.

2 Ashraf M. Salama, 'Architectural Identity Demystified: Visual Voices from the Arab World', in Paul Emmons, et al (eds.), *The Cultural Role of Architecture: Contemporary and Historical Perspectives* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 175–84.

3 R. Y. Gharib and Ashraf M. Salama, 'The Nature of Urban Interventions in the Changing Old Center of Globalizing Doha', in Cheramie, Kristi M. and Jeffrey A Carney (eds), *Building with Change: Proceedings of the Annual Conference of the Environmental Design Research Association, EDRA-45* (New Orleans, La.: EDRA, 2014).

4 Ashraf M. Salama, 'Identity Flows: The Arabian Peninsula, Emerging Metropolises', in Luis Fernández-Galiano (ed.), *Atlas Architectures of the 21st Century: Africa and Middle East* (Madrid: BBVA Foundation, 2011), pp.175–221.

5 Rosanna Law and Kevin Underwood, 'Msheireb Heart of Doha: An Alternative Approach to Urbanism in the Gulf Region', *International Journal of Islamic Architecture*, 1 (1) (2012): 131–47.

Office of the Amiri Diwan in the second case; and by a high-profile real-estate company in the third case. These three types of change in Doha's old centre are typologically different, but they all, to varying degrees, positively answer the question, 'Can an urban intervention be simultaneously local and global?' The museum and its park consciously responds to global cultural flows, translating the cultural aspirations of a country into a manifestation that speaks to world architecture while addressing demands placed on the design by the context and the regional culture. Souq Waqif validates the notion of simultaneity of the global and the local through the wide spectrum of activities and the diversity of users it enjoys, while the aspirational place-making evident in Msheireb's urban regeneration anchors a global perspective in the local vernacular and heritage. I argue that all three interventions demonstrably integrate international standards of best practice with sources of traditional knowledge. Furthermore, the Museum and the Souq both generate a new urban discourse in the city on diversity, usability, accessibility and connectivity that creates a harmonious balance between global and local aspirations, without prejudice towards either. They serve people of different age groups and many different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, even though the absence of sufficient children's activities in the Souq, and its restricted use to middle- and upper-income groups should be noted. It

remains to be seen how the Msheireb urban-regeneration project addresses these notions and whether it will achieve its promises.

Were these delicate adjustments? While the Museum and Msheireb urban-regeneration interventions have eradicated an important part of the memory of the old centre, the reconstruction of Souq Waqif seems to have enhanced it. It is hoped that the parts of old Doha which remain, such as the neighbourhoods of Al-Asmakh and Al-Najada which accommodate low-income groups and migrant workers, are also treated as important place typologies in the memory and history

of the city. While demolition and eviction notices have been issued for around half the buildings in Al-Asmakh area, the debate generated by the recent charette for revitalising these neighbourhoods may offer possibilities for fulfilling this hope. Future aspirational change in Doha's old centre could then be based not only on top-down decisions but also via initiatives generated by interest groups or the local community, employing bottom-up strategies.



Locations of neighbourhoods under discussion for future development. Source: Google Earth and Ashraf M. Salama.



THE OTHER REAL DOHA

Those best placed to guide Doha's development may not be architects or planners but rather those that inhabit it most intensely: its people. Doha's urban landscape resembles the multiplicity of cultural environments found in most cities with highly transnational populations. Therefore, in considering its heritage and renewal, we need to see beneath the physical surface of buildings and urban spectacle and consider the 'shadows' of a city as a source of inspiration and also social justice.

The stories behind the development of two neighbourhoods exemplify the need to see Doha with different eyes, paying great attention to its urban diversity as it evolves from a typical fishermen's village to Doha as a city for tomorrow. They also bring to the fore an expanded notion of urban violence as a form of spatial politics, including displacement of people as well as the more typical representations of violent practices within urban spaces. In approaching the city as a theatre of violent acts, different localities might

WE NEED TO SEE BENEATH THE
PHYSICAL SURFACE OF BUILDINGS
AND URBAN SPECTACLE

be considered: the street, the square and the neighbourhood. These stories of development shed light on the symbolic meaning of urban space and the relationship between public violence and the spatial transformation of Doha

in the past decade as a result of rapid urbanisation and urban planning.

The two projects that alerted me to the process of losing the other, everyday Doha which lies behind the urban spectacle, are major contributors to the construction of the 'Collective Memory of the City'. The two adjacent neighbourhoods of Msheireb and Al-Asmakh represent significant chapters of Doha's urban history, at the heart of the city centre. The value of history, seen as collective memory related to place, is that it helps us understand a city's particular urban structure and uniqueness, connected to original artefacts and architecture and their stories.

In a process which has been labelled the historical revitalisation of old Doha, the consulting team represented by architect Tim Makower and the client, Msheireb Properties, have decided that the best solution for this revitalisation is the full destruction of the old heart of the city. The Msheireb project literally eradicated a whole neighbourhood from top to bottom. And a good number of valuable examples of architectural and urban heritage vanished from the surface, erasing physical evidence of a unique cultural, social and commercial context. Four selected houses were dismantled, and the different components stored in boxes.

Later they were reassembled, but not on their original sites: they were grouped together to create what is labelled the 'Heart of Doha Cultural and Historical Quarter' and redesigned to accommodate a number

of galleries, exhibition spaces and art workshops. No statistics have been published yet to indicate

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The remains of a traditional house swiftly destroyed to pave the way for modern developments in the heart of old Doha. Photo by Ali A. Alraouf.

how many low-paid workers and in some cases their families, small-business owners, shopkeepers and modest service providers were aggressively deported from the site and pushed towards the harsh desert edges of the city.

Ironically, the same architect who orchestrated this eradication is conducting a huge campaign to convince the decision-makers in the country, including the Qatar Museum Authority and the Ministry of Urban Planning of the importance of preserving the heritage of Al-Asmakh area, just across the street from the Heart of Doha (Msheireb Development). In a good number of talks, presentations and conferences, he claims that Qatar can't afford to lose its heritage. In a recent lecture, as part of an event at the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, he described old areas as 'the Jewels of Qatar'. He proposes a different approach to architectural and urban conservation. A facelift and adaptive reuse of every single building within the neighbourhood will be implemented. While this is radically different from the ruthless destruction of the Msheireb area, there is also a clear consistency in the displacement of the expatriate community of workers and shopkeepers and the destruction of small businesses catering for the humbler manifestations of social diversity in Doha. This displacement was perceived as essential to paving the way for a new kind of development and lifestyle that can't accommodate the presence of such people, who are adding momentarily to the prosperity of Qatar.

The juxtaposition of these two cases highlights the complex ways in which attitudes towards social diversity, the behaviour and strategies of individuals, feelings of affiliation and official discourse and policy all overlap and interact to reproduce particular social distinctions and urban spaces. The case of Doha also shows the importance of considering multiple frameworks for understanding urban social diversity and patterns of residential distribution in transnational and global cities, combining policy-making and planning with research into the lived experiences of urban residents.



DAVID KENDALL

IN THE LIGHT OF DAY

David Kendall is an artist, researcher and visiting fellow in the Centre for Urban and Community Research, Goldsmiths, University of London. The images are taken from the ongoing project *In the Light of Day* (David Kendall © 2013), which was produced during an Openvizor residency in Doha, November and December 2013.



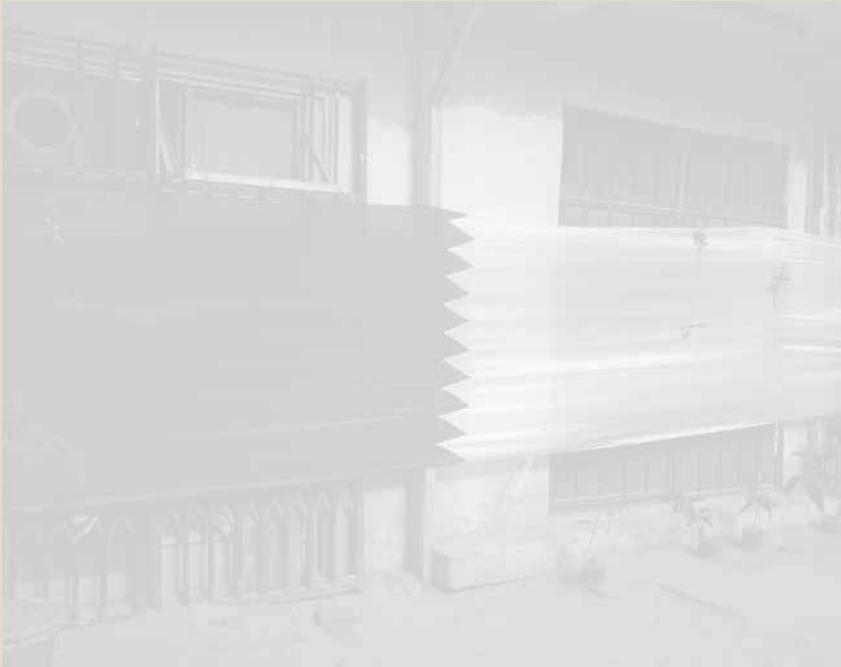
AS ONE STREET BECOMES OBSOLETE
ANOTHER COMES INTO FOCUS



Roads laden with traffic connect building sites in downtown Doha with new office buildings, shopping malls and residential estate neighbourhoods in adjacent areas. For visitors and expatriate workers dwelling in the city, walking in Doha, standing still in dust and exhaust fumes, is to experience an environment veiled by heat and pollution and punctuated by social and physical barriers, where ocular and auditory landscapes seem to have no distinct presence or absence. Twenty-four-hour construction processes encourage provisional sites to emerge as visual

pauses, momentary fragments of sensorial cohesion punctuating intersubjective experiences on foot. As one street becomes obsolete, another comes into focus. Within earshot, underexposed moments rise to the surface, interrupting monotonous journeys and auditory sensitisations that condition movement on foot in abrasive climatic conditions. Sensory absences are revealed by the relentless noise of motor vehicles and the ubiquitous presence of construction sites as backdrops to populated areas.

In Qatar and along the Arabian Peninsula, eye-catching



architecture dominates visual space. Urban development in Doha is increasingly framed by a discourse of specific cultural heritage and identity, but the spatial politics of urban development makes almost no reference to the region's fluctuating and uneven social landscape, where access to infrastructure varies widely. Yet the speed and scale of structural development coexists with ephemeral spatial routines and practices of economic migration that mutate, form and renew localised material landscapes, such as Al-Asmakh. So what other social scenes,

cultural narratives and artefacts might be included in, or omitted from, reconstruction, and what space do they occupy?

This photographic work-in-progress accepts 'temporality' as vital to structural evolution. It aims to question defined views of the city imposed by specific architectural identities, political structures and spatial borders, enshrined in a concept of heritage. It reveals 'soon to be forgotten' spaces, suggesting new lines of critical and spatial enquiry into the contemporary past and future.

THE PARADOX OF MSHEIREB

The brief for the Msheireb Masterplan, as defined by Sheikha Mozah, was to recreate, at the very heart of Doha, 'a rising homeland that confidently embraces modernisation and proudly observes traditions'. Arriving for the first time in Doha in April 2006, I stumbled upon Souk Waqif, which was half-built and charming, but I was uncertain if it were a new souk or the restoration of an old one. Set against the young, exuberant and gleaming skyline of West Bay, the gypsum plaster of the souk looked equally fresh, yet the organic layout suggested that it was not an act of modern city planning. Such was my first impression of Doha, a snapshot of a city whose pearl-diving and fishing-village identity was rapidly being replaced by modernisation, where a part of the old heart was desperately trying to hold on to its old self. This first impression was an interesting seed for what was to become the Msheireb Masterplan.

THE SHIFT FROM A FAMILIAL/
COMMUNITY-BASED DECISION-
MAKING PROCESS TO ONE WHICH
IS ANONYMOUS AND BASED ON
STATISTICS HAS RESULTED IN THE
DISPLACEMENT OF SOCIAL BONDS

The fertile soil on which this seed fell was the historic aerial photos of Doha from 1947 to 2006. Before the exponential car-based growth of the city, the fereej (a compact family-based neighbourhood), as captured in the 1947 photos, comprised the bulk of settlement in Doha, embracing the then natural shoreline and the wadi for survival, comfort and livelihood in the unforgiving desert climate. Traditional fereej neighbourhoods grew over time as family lineage expanded, based on incremental needs, with little concern about its overall form, external appearance and role in history. Decisions about additions and alterations to the fereej were made by those who lived there.

Historic photos since 1947 showed the rapid erosion of the organic fereej pattern and their replacement by progressive urban planning driven by the new economics of oil and gas. Urban expansion between the 1950s and 1970s brought land reclamation and hasty urbanisation which were fuelled by the new ring-road system. Decisions about city growth and expansion rested with city-engineers, often expatriates, who modelled Doha's expansion on copycat modern cities with no relationship to the old fereej. This shift from a familial/community-based decision-making process to one which is anonymous and based on statistics has resulted in the displacement of social bonds and the emergence of non-place in contemporary Doha.

I traced over the fereej patterns where courtyard houses formed the positive shapes and the sikkats formed the negative, residual ones that the Western tradition called the public realm. The sikkats reminded me of the urban grain of medieval cities, where spatial layering

defines the transition from the private domestic

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An early masterplan sketch exploring sikkat routes that connect incidental spaces and the main square which transforms a car-based roundabout to a place for people to occupy.

harem through the fereej neighbourhood sikkas, to the shared domains of souks and mosques. As a social observer and an outsider to the city, this social layering appeared to have been erased from Doha's modern fabric, yet phantoms of a bygone age lingered in the remnants of historic houses with H/H

numbers painted on their walls by the local authorities. The intricacies of the fereej, the accidental, the delightful, the unconscious were coming through the tracing paper, and the idea of the lattice was formed – a lattice for people and places rather than for cars and non-place. The negative shapes of sikkats and baraha were given a prominent reading in the new masterplan for Msheireb, which is to be superimposed onto a city presently defined by its rings of steel and the egotistic ensemble of skyscrapers. The grid, the paradigm of modernity, is inevitable and necessary. But, in response to the desert sun, this grid was tightened so as to create a shaded and comfortable walking environment, and this grid was consciously orientated towards the prevailing sea breeze, which echoes the conscious orientation of courtyard houses in the old fereej.

The paradox of the Msheireb Masterplan lies in the conscious act of city-planning which drew inspiration from the fereej heritage that was unplanned and unconscious. The Msheireb Masterplan was conceived with self-awareness about its own role in the urban discourse of Doha, reacting to recent city-making efforts in the region where collective heritage and genius loci had become unimportant. It was an attempt to instil the art of place-making in order to renew a piece of city, the planning of which was dominated by the measurable, the quantifiable and the visible.



When considering the role of the public realm in heritage and renewal in Doha, a series of questions immediately come to mind. How to define public space and how to define heritage? What does the public realm look like in a place as new (and as old) as Doha? With citizens representing less than a fifth of the total population, whose public space is it? Moreover, in a place with only a handful of extant vernacular buildings, what can be considered heritage?

IN SEARCH OF DOHA'S PUBLIC REALM



Structure of central Doha.

In the pre-oil era (i.e. until the 1950s), the public realm was organised organically yet displayed a clear structure: each tribe built its houses in a cluster known as a fereej. The narrow passages (or sikka) between each fereej connected to the baraha (or plaza) outside the main mosque and the souq. In this way, the vernacular structure (baraha, souq and sikka) conformed to Jan Gehl's notion of traditional uses of public space where the meeting place, marketplace and traffic space coexist in balance.¹ A glimpse of the traditional Arab town plan can be seen at the renovated (and reconstructed) Souq Waqif, Doha's oldest marketplace, which was originally built around the

junction of an intermittent river bed and Doha Bay. Today the bay has been re-shaped into the Corniche, Doha's grand public space.² A 7-kilometre-long waterfront park, this civic space is used recreationally by many different groups but offers



Souq Najada area, 2009.
Source: Xianghua Wu.

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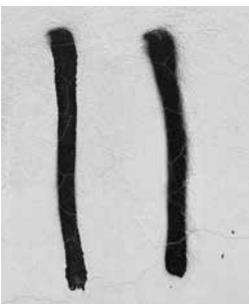
almost no amenities in its proximity. More recently constructed public spaces (Aspire Zone, Porto Arabia in the Pearl and Katara) have all been welcomed as rare opportunities for pedestrian life in a city that has long ago surrendered to the automobile. And yet, none can be accessed without a car.

GREAT CITIES THRIVE NOT JUST
ON GREAT PUBLIC SPACES, BUT
ON INTERCONNECTED DIVERSITY

These spaces are used primarily by the upper and middle classes: Qataris, as well as other Arabs and Western expatriates. This population also makes use of public spaces that are truly of the region: the majlis, the mosque and the desert, as well as one that has become a ubiquitous staple of contemporary global life: the shopping centre. All of the above represent discrete entities scattered throughout the city of Doha.

One notable exception to this phenomenon of drive-to walkable areas is Msheireb, the new development in the heart of the city. Masterplanned by Aecom with Allies & Morrison, the plan calls for a series of interconnected public spaces that tie into the existing road network and the adjacent public realm in Souq Waqif and the Emiri Diwan. Even so, this project caters explicitly to the same demographic groups noted earlier, who, when combined, represent less than 40 per cent of the city's total population.³ In fact, the current construction removed a vibrant, if dilapidated, neighbourhood of small shops and working-class residences.

Indeed, the vast majority of metropolitan Doha is comprised of working-class men from South Asia (India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal),



who, by law or by custom, are excluded from the spaces described above. Instead, they carve out a public realm of their own, opportunistically appropriating open space wherever available in the city: the street, the parking lot, the bus depot, etc. These become the impromptu market, gathering place or cricket pitch.

An example of this kind of space could be found until recently in Souq Najada, located in the north-east corner of the neighbourhood of Al-Asmakh, bordering Souq Waqif and Msheireb. Though

1 Jan Gehl and Lars Gemzoe, *New City Spaces* (Copenhagen: The Danish Architectural Press, 2000).

2 Conventional wisdom holds that the traditional urban fabric disappeared with the arrival of modernism. In fact, this was not necessarily so. Rather than completely abandoning this structure, modernist architecture and urbanism entered Doha modestly, taking their cues from the existing city. Beginning in 1972, British planners Llewelyn-Davies, Weeks, Forrester-Walker and Bor identified the radial settlement pattern of the fereej system and strengthened it by planning a series of concentric ring roads that radiated outward from Doha Bay, centred on the newly formed Corniche. See K. Adham 'Rediscovering the Island: Doha's Urbanity from Pearls to Spectacle', in Yasser El Sheshtaway (ed.), *The Evolving Arab City: Tradition, Modernity, and Urban Development* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008).

3 Qatar Population Status, 2012, Permanent Population Committee, October 2012.

4 See <http://www.skyscrapercity.com/showthread.php?t=1567818>

hardly a heritage building in the traditional sense, Souq Najada possessed some rather decent urban qualities: shaded arcades lined the perimeter and allowed easy circulation even in the hotter months, a generous collection of interconnected open spaces dotted the complex, and in the centre sat an undisputed piece of Qatar's heritage, the Wind Tower House. Built in 1935, the structure is among the oldest in the city and includes the last remaining authentic wind tower in Qatar.

Souq Najada was also noteworthy in that it served as a popular and affordable shopping centre, primarily for mobile-phone vendors. On Fridays, the 'Mobile Souq' became an appropriated space for the labourers, with the main plaza transformed into a vast informal marketplace, with hawkers selling their wares on sheets laid out on the paving. It has stood empty since 2012 and is currently being dismantled. Although its fate is not yet public, more than one proposal circulating on the internet envisions a luxury hotel complex.⁴

This would be the wrong approach, as the immediate area is now saturated with this exclusive typology (five new boutique hotels have opened in Souq Waqif in the past two years) that, by definition, keeps the general public at arm's length. The continual upgrading of the old city centre through renovation and new design has unquestionably restored some of its public realm and has strengthened connections between



Souq Najada in 2014.

various areas, but at the expense of people and uses that make it an interesting place to be. Great cities thrive not just on great public spaces but on interconnected diversity. For Doha, this means addressing not only its demographic heterogeneity (ethnicity, class, profession, etc.) but also its diversity of building types and uses, from all eras of its architectural history.



OLD DOHA: READING THE CITY

There is a growing recognition that an understanding of the unique urban form and heritage of individual cities translated into contemporary planning and harnessed to modern technologies can set a platform for robust economic growth. Cities that develop their own particular 'vernaculars' are likely to be viewed as more attractive and therefore more

successful in securing inward investment, long-term capital land values and footloose talent in a global marketplace. Doha's built form and architectural heritage reflects the culture and collective memories that make up the personality of the city. It is unique, but it is also physically fragile and paradoxically threatened by the very economic success of Qatar and the rapid but insensitive development that accompany it. The development of West Bay, the old diplomatic quarter of Doha, is a case in point. Here, over fifty high-rise commercial and apartment buildings have been constructed in the past ten years, creating an under-occupied city quarter that has little relationship to its historic context. More recently, the Msheireb development is nearing completion in central Doha. Although this has adopted a very

DISTINCTIVE LOCAL CULTURES ARE BEING REPLACED WITH GLOBALISED BLANDNESS

different urban form (mostly low-rise, high-density and with a clearly articulated, largely pedestrianised street form), it has still swept away all of the previous urban form and historic heritage (some of which is being reconstructed) that existed on the site.

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'Old Doha' comprises an area of 250 hectares, at the centre of which lies the historic Souk Waqif. It is a collection of traditional streets and buildings dating largely from the late 1930s through to the mid 1970s. Although this is not generally recognised locally as having intrinsic historic or architectural value, it does represent an important aspect of the historical development of the city comprising traditional courtyard building typologies developed using adobe, wood and then concrete.

An awareness of the importance of Old Doha as one of Qatar's principal heritage assets has recently attracted the interest of Qatar Museums (QM), the Ministry of Municipalities and Planning (MMUP), UCL Qatar (UCLQ) and other agencies. Information on the built fabric of 'Old Doha' is, however, patchy and is in need of a rigorous and comprehensive building and condition survey. This work has been initiated by Tim Makower, an architect who researched and produced the architectural language guidelines for the Msheireb project and has subsequently established his practice in Doha. Initially, two project proposals were formulated.

The first was a mapping exercise to document and record Old Doha using simple survey techniques compatible with the UCLQ Archaeology Department's own survey methodology. Piloted by students at UCLQ, the proposal is to ask students from the Bartlett School of Architecture at UCL to carry out a full survey during a





Urban change. Foreground, Old Doha; middle ground, Msheireb project under construction; background, West Bay. Source: Peter Bishop.

- 1 Calvin Chua and Georgios Eftaxiopoulos (CE-O), with Alejandra García-Templado, Faten Kamakh, May Makia.
- 2 Amna Al-Naama, Aisha Al Assiri, Harry Dobbs and Rogelio Escarcega.
- 3 Peter Barry, Riccardo Bobisse and Ali M. Selim.

ten- to twelve-day period using a combination of low-level aerial photos and street/building investigation. This will be dependent on funding from the planning authority (MMUP) into whose GIS system the survey data will be loaded. The second was a design charette to examine a range of practical demonstration projects in Old Doha which might raise awareness amongst city government and the public of the area as an important cultural asset and

also offer a model for developing lessons of Doha's





past into an (environmentally and socially) sustainable vernacular for the future.

This was organised by the British Council and QM, and supported by Msheireb Properties and the Royal Institute of British Architects, which ran an open competition for small and newly established UK-based architectural practices to partner with Qatari practitioners for a week-long project in Doha. Five firms were selected from over forty applicants, and the charette took place in November 2013, culminating in an exhibition of the five projects. They all explore ways in which a regeneration of the historic built fabric of the area might also contribute to its economic and social renewal. One entry reappropriates the traditional Islamic typology, proposing to replace the existing street system with a network of enclosed courtyard spaces that finds a public function for abandoned domestic courtyards.¹ Another proposes an incremental rehabilitation of significant houses in Al-Asmakh that aims to stimulate traditional artisanal crafts in order to produce economic activity.² A third project creates a series of links between the historic quarter and the surrounding neighbourhoods while also proposing a school to provide training and a local skill base for restoration of the historic quarter.³ The eventual winners of the competition, Alicja Borkowska and Iris Papadatou (you&me architecture), Fatima Fawzy (AEC Consultancy Office) and Alaa Larri (both also employed by Msheireb Properties) propose transforming the historic quarter into an urbanised education hub, sensitively carving out spaces and pathways that highlight key moments of material heritage in the site. The resulting spaces retain the existing intimacy of the neighbourhood while providing a platform for localised economic growth that also makes the project relevant at a much larger scale.

The essence of the project has been to demonstrate the available expertise that exists in the UK (outside the larger established practices), especially in the area of design in sensitive environments where buildings of architectural and historic value can be embedded into new urban fabric, and to introduce young practices to opportunities in the region. The British Council view the project as a successful template for application in other countries, and discussions are taking place with them on a possible follow-up in the Middle East and North Africa. It is still hoped that funding will be forthcoming for the other stages of the project, namely the building fabric survey, and discussions continue regarding this. Although this was conceived as a limited and one-off project, the lessons and the methodology could be developed and applied to challenge development taking place in many parts of the developing world where distinctive local cultures, manifested in particular and unique building fabrics are being obliterated only to be replaced with a brand of globalised blandness.



Doha, in common with many other growing wealthy cities, tends to look to foreign models of development to emulate and, hopefully, to improve on

RECONCILING HERITAGE & PROFIT

by adapting them to the local conditions. In this form, the new financial district of Doha follows the layout and typology of the very successful Manhattan district of New York, albeit at a much reduced scale. But the pattern of development consisting of high-rise glazed towers is not the most appropriate form in a place where there is no shortage of land and the solar radiation is extremely high. It is true that some of the new office buildings in Doha are spectacular, and, in one or two cases, respond to the different and extreme climatic conditions. Equally, some of the residential and commercial developments are direct transplants from other places where local materials and climatic conditions as well as culture are very different and thus seem very artificial.

For that reason, the Old Doha Prize competition was good news. For a

THE COURTYARD FORM IS NOT ONLY TRADITIONAL IN ISLAMIC CULTURE BUT IS ALSO AN EFFICIENT FORM TO MAXIMISE PLOT RATIO POTENTIAL



The winning team (from left, Papadatou, Fawzy, and Larri) at work at the Msheireb Arts Centre, Al Asmakh.

start, the brief set up the need to learn from the physical qualities of the old place as well as from the culture of the local inhabitants. Al-Asmakh is essentially a 1950s creation in the form of continuous façades of two- to three-storey buildings following relatively narrow streets. The place is full of passages and inhabited by vibrant communities carrying on with their everyday lives. An important aspect of the place is that it has not been 'beautified' and manifests local living patterns. However, the area is ripe for redevelopment because of its location and government aspirations. So there is a real tension between the identity and heritage of the place and the pressure to modernise to accommodate new technologies of transport or sanitation as well as to extract its development potential.

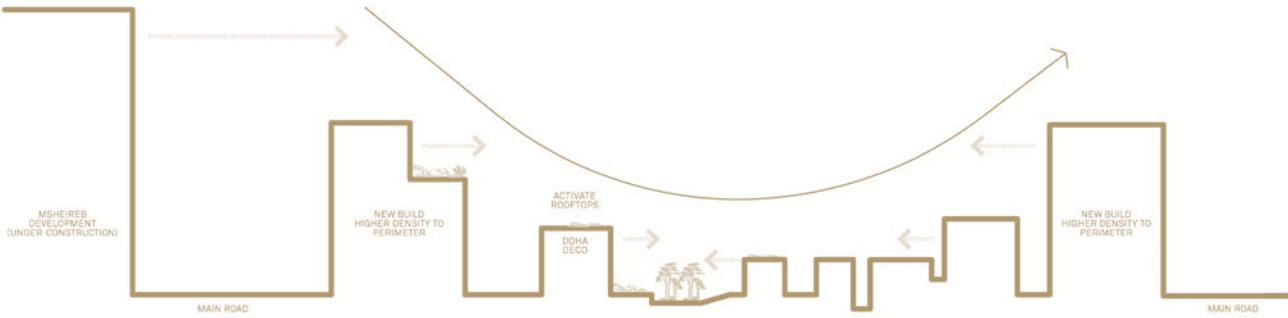
The five submissions for the prize were very positive in trying to reconcile these tensions. The winning proposal includes a substantial amount of new floor space which will guarantee an economic return in the redevelopment and makes the proposal financially

viable. The bigger buildings are arranged in the periphery, creating a giant courtyard within which a more peaceful neighbourhood can develop. A set of smaller courtyards are defined by grafting new constructions to existing buildings or removing buildings in the same way which was done so successfully in

Marcial Echenique OBE is Professor of Land Use and Transport Studies and former Head of Architecture at the University of Cambridge. He has also acted as a consultant to numerous government and local authorities, including the Chilean government, on the reconstruction of cities affected by the last earthquake, and he has directed major planning studies financed by international institutions such as the World Bank and the United Nations.



Urban Pamphleteer



cluster

Winning proposal: cross section shows bigger buildings arranged on the periphery, creating a giant courtyard within (above); photo shows existing cluster development along boundary with Msheireb construction site.

Barcelona. The courtyard form is not only traditional in Islamic culture but is also an efficient form to maximise plot ratio potential without sacrificing light and privacy.

The circulation links existing and new public spaces in an interesting sequence of open and enclosed spaces. In the periphery, a set of portals are created, forming connections to the wider city. These portals provide access to the area from public-transport stations and to subterranean car parking as well as pedestrian access. The heritage buildings are embedded in the structure of the area as part of an attractive trail which will bring tourism to the area. Other uses that are envisaged to maintain the economic vitality of the place, apart from residential provision, are essentially educational, including a madrasa, nursery, adult-learning opportunities, arts and crafts, cultural and recreational activities. Some of these activities are already present in the area. All of these ideas could be developed further into a set of regulations, design guidelines and investment proposals which could transform Old Doha, without losing its identity, and make the place an exemplar of how to redevelop old centres in rapidly growing nations.



ENERGISING HERITAGE: CULTURAL RELATIONS & THE OLD DOHA PRIZE

ENTIRELY SURROUNDED BY SITES
OF RAPID URBAN TRANSFORMATION,
AL-ASMAKH MEANT VERY DIFFERENT
THINGS TO THE BRITISH AND QATARI
PARTICIPANTS

The Old Doha Prize opened up fresh questions and possibilities for heritage masterplanning in the context of a new city with a significant migrant community and an intense focus by government and other institutions on its future development. Peter Barry, one of the participants, summed up the peculiarity of the context: 'Before I came here, I found it very difficult to find information on Old Doha. Everything you read about the city is about its future, but there's very little about the city's past.'

Doha is literally being built before one's eyes. It is impossible not to be struck by this sense of the potential despite the obvious social hierarchies and political complications of Qatari society and the inconsistent quality of much of its new architecture. Barry, a London-based Irishman, joined a team made up of two other architects he'd never worked with before: Ricardo Bobisse, from AR Studio in London, and Qatari-based Egyptian, Ali M Selim. This unlikely union of nationalities and cultural backgrounds seemed perfectly natural in the context of Doha. On the first day of the Old Doha Prize, UCL Bartlett School of Architecture tutor Adrian Lahoud had the tricky task

of pairing up sixteen British and Qatari-based architects to collaborate for a week on proposals for an urban masterplan for Al-Asmakh. The opportunity was unusual in that it was not purely commercial, cultural or academic though it combined elements of those three ways of working. As such, the Prize created a space for ideas that was real, but not compromised; collaborative, but also competitive. As one of the key projects of the Qatar UK 2013 Year of Culture, it was at moments high-profile and brought together political figures on both sides for a public demonstration of cooperation between the two countries. It also created a platform for local architects, planners and developers to come together and debate major issues surrounding the city's future development and its heritage, opening up a dialogue that did not previously exist.

Entirely surrounded by sites of rapid urban transformation, Al-Asmakh meant very different things to the British and Qatari participants. For Faten Kamakh, who is Palestinian but born in Doha, it is 'crowded and unwelcom-

ing': 'an old, dirty part of the city, dominated by lower-class labourers', she said. 'You don't see ladies there, and there are hardly any passers-by. Once the sun sets, I'm not supposed to go there.' Kamakh was teamed with London-based Calvin Chua and Georgios Eftaxiopoulos, who saw the Old Doha Prize as an

Vicky Richardson is Director of Architecture, Design and Fashion at the British Council and commissions around twenty-five projects each year worldwide, including the British Pavilion at Venice Architecture Biennale.

All quotes taken from interviews conducted by the author in Doha on 23 November 2013. For a full list of participants and partners, see <http://design.britishcouncil.org/projects/old-doha-prize>





Participants in the Old Doha Prize walk the site.

opportunity to get an insight into local culture and heritage: 'We had a chance to work with Qatari people and to build new working relationships. The interaction between us has taken the discussion about Doha to a different level. The point was not to look at the detail of Al-Asmakh, but to develop a tool for discussion.'

For Iris Papadatou, a member of the team that eventually won the Prize (with Alicja Borkowska, Fatima Fawzy and Alaa Larri), it was an exposure to how people live and work in Doha. 'I arrived with a preconception about life here and the role of women, but I've been so positively amazed at how much power women have. Fatima has her own practice and also works full-time as a design manager for a major project.' Fawzy herself said: 'the Old Doha Prize gave us the urge to really do something. It was an energising environment to work in, although we worked very long hours. It enriched the process to work as a team and exchange ideas and questions.'

The prize took the form of a grant to be used for further collaboration between the members of the winning team over the following year. All the team's proposals were developed and heard within a real and current context of major change and decision-making for the Al-Asmakh neighbourhood; however, these aspirations may not yet be realised, due to commercial forces beyond their

control. From the British Council's perspective, however, the prize has been a success through creating new friendships and professional relationships between British and Qatari architects that will lead to new and unexpected opportunities in a city of dynamic change. The architects' work might not lead to built reality in this case, but attitudes and ideas to development will have been affected long-term.



‘How would you regenerate Doha’s old city centre – learning from and referencing the historic street pattern and built form, whilst investigating appropriate elements of contemporary Qatari design – to create a vibrant and economically sustainable piece of city designed on a human scale?’

REGENERATING DOHA’S OLD CITY CENTRE

We answered the brief for the Old Doha Prize with a proposal that reimagines the neighbourhoods of Al-Asmakh and Al-Najada as places for learning. Various education programmes are injected into the site, acting as attractors and catalysts for growth and regeneration on a local as well as a global scale. Inspiration is derived from the Qatari vernacular, the courtyard as a madrasa and social place of exchange, conversation and learning, implementing it on the ‘macro’ urban scale, as well as the ‘micro’ scale.

We used the analogy of carving as our main conceptual tool, identifying vacant plots around the site and reclaiming them as ‘carved courtyards’ for educational activities, connected by a network of sikkas (routes) which also become activated as educational/cultural social spaces. A language of cutting, adding, filling, wrapping and slicing is adopted in relation to the existing urban fabric of Old Doha, in order to enhance relationships and thresholds between public and private space, old and new. The new additions are expressed as more lightweight structures that grow around the more heavyweight existing ones. New development is mostly contained in the outer perimeter edge of the site, bridging the boundary to the high-rise Msheireb development (currently under construction) and creating an inward-facing urban courtyard towards Al-Asmakh.

HERITAGE IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF URBAN IDENTITY. THE FUTURE MUST HAVE A RECOGNISABLE AND TANGIBLE PAST OR IT IS MEANINGLESS — AS OLDER QATARIS SAY, ‘اللهي ماله ماضي، ماله حاضر’ (NO PAST, NO FUTURE)



Imagined future users of new facilities provided as part of the proposed regeneration of Al Asmakh.

The approach is to regenerate the area in phases with adequate time between each, allowing for ‘room-by-room’ testing, development and reassessment. Phase 1 of the proposal starts with joining the site to a ‘heritage trail’, as well as building temporary housing for blue-collar workers currently living there in substandard conditions.

We are now looking to test our ideas on a 1:1 scale pilot project, establishing a heritage route through the sikkas and reappropriating one of the historic houses for a week of educational events during winter 2014. But the pace of development in the area is very rapid, and the site is up for demolition. We hope that this project can help change developers’ attitudes towards heritage and pres-



ervation, contributing to the creation of a step-by-step, sustainable socio-economic regeneration masterplan for the area, where old and new coexist. Our aim is to instigate further debate and dialogue on the value and future of heritage in Old Doha, playing an important role within Doha's 2030 Vision as a local and global cultural attraction.

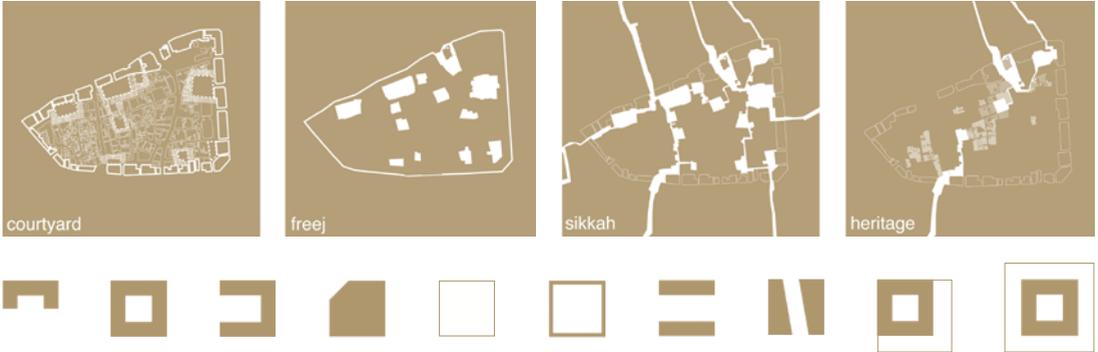


Figure ground diagrams (above) illustrating concept of carving social spaces out of the site, and a language of cutting, adding, filling, wrapping, slicing (below).

Alicja Borkowska and **Iris Papadatou** are the founders of you&me, an emerging multidisciplinary and collaborative architecture platform committed to making things using playful, challenging and inclusive methodologies. **Fatima Fawzy** is the principal at Al Ittifaq Engineering Consultants (AEC), a prominent architectural practice, founded in Qatar in 1982, in partnership with Mansour Mahfouz. **Alaa Larri** is a young Qatari architect. A graduate of Manchester School of Architecture, she was coached by architect Tim Makower and others working on the development of Msheireb Downtown.

In the globalised world that we live in, do we want every city to be the same? Doha needs to inspire a sense of place and belonging as a cultural hub in the Middle East, so it ought to turn to its heritage to inform its '2030 Vision'. *Iris Papadatou*

Student life and education have a proven track record to regenerating areas. They can also enable a step-by-step regeneration that adapts to its socio-economic context. In Doha, zoned areas such as Education City and Katara Cultural Village, positioned on the edge of the city, take away a lot of life and activity from the centre. Why not have these activities happening right at the heart of Old Doha? *Alicja Borkowska*

Working at the actual site made me see the area from a very different angle. I have not visited this part of Doha for ages. The retail is very modest. With many blue-collar worker populations the area starts to be repellent and not a family-oriented place, but with the charette and the team the area felt very different from the perception I had. It's great to think how it could be transformed. *Fatima Fawzy*

I pass by Al-Asmakh area every day on my way to work with careless eyes. However, when I got the chance to walk on foot in the streets and alleys, it was a different world. The tourist destinations around it have isolated it, like an island cut off from the surrounding land. We thought that life could be breathed into the sikkas as it creates great potential for linking the city together. *Alaa Larri*

During our time in Doha we saw two different 'faces' to the city. We were staying in West Bay, but every day we would go into old Doha, an area which we would probably not have gone to, let alone spent a week in, as tourists. *Alicja Borkowska*



BEN BARBOUR

AL-ASMAKH: A DISAPPEARING NEIGHBOURHOOD



Ansari house interior.



Mosque, Umm Wishaw street.

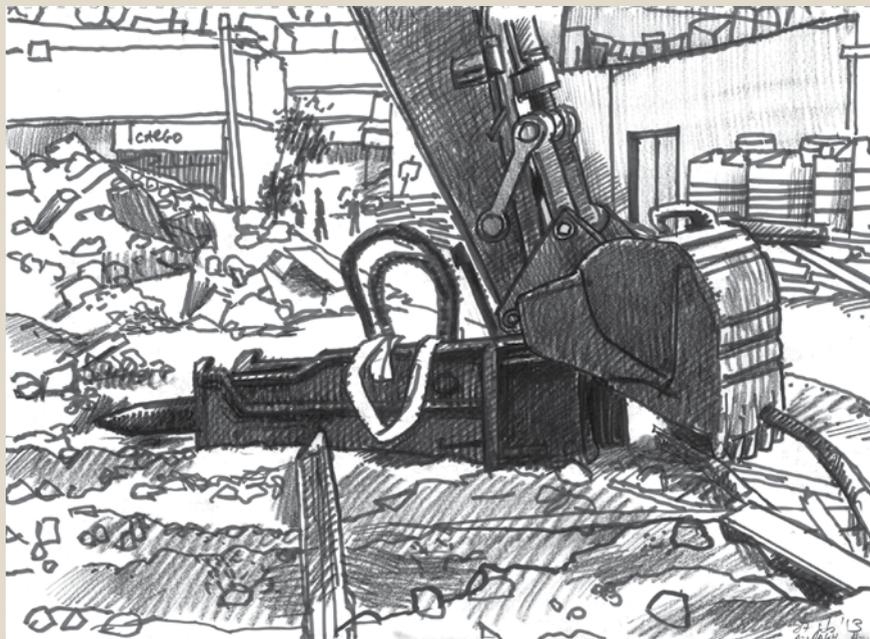


Najada wall fragment.

Urban Pamphleteer



Purple car, Asmakh.



Resting digger, Asmakh house.

The drawings in the preceding pages have been a way for me to investigate and record this neglected and run-down part of Doha, over the three years

THE POPULATION OF THE AREA HAS TRIPLED SINCE THE 1980s, WHILE THE AMENITIES HAVE NOT BEEN ADJUSTED TO COPE WITH THIS INFLUX OF PEOPLE

I've been living and working here. Walking the streets and narrow sikkas, one encounters collapsed walls and crumbling buildings, cars parked against exposed walls that had previously formed interior living spaces, and an array of shopfronts with hand-painted and neon signs advertising upholsterers, mechanics,

electrical shops, hairdressers or 'saloons', traditional bakers with wood-burning stone ovens, local restaurants and supermarkets. Some parts of the area have been knocked down completely to be replaced by multi-storey car parks and high-rise hotels and apartments, which dwarf the traditional low-rise stone and mud houses.

One particular building has a large crack running from top to bottom, but its walls seem to somehow defy gravity and stay in place. Occupants have continued to build within the existing structures, adding wooden partitions and rooftop shacks to maximise the number of inhabitants, with up to 300 people living in a single family home. 'Najada Wall Fragment' records the last section of a heritage building in neighbouring Al-Najada, which was transformed into a construction site seemingly overnight. 'Resting Digger' captures the moment when the demolition of the Al-Asmakh house, named after the family that gave their name to the area, was halted. Unfortunately, a large section of the building had already been destroyed by this time, despite it being earmarked for conservation.

Although these examples highlight one or two instances of the destruction of significant heritage buildings through redevelopment, Al-Asmakh is now entering a new phase. During April 2014 metal gates suddenly appeared at the entrance to roads leading into a large section of Al-Asmakh, and small numbered yellow Perspex signs were attached to each building, clear statements that eviction of the residents and redevelopment of this area are scheduled to take place soon. The building depicted in 'Mosque on Umm Wishaw street' for example, has been allocated a yellow building number, despite also being registered as a heritage building.

That this area is in dire need of conservation and redevelopment is not in question. The population of the area has tripled since the 1980s, while the amenities have not been adjusted to cope with this influx of people. The sewage system, for example, floods on a regular basis. But in a country that is

struggling to preserve a sense of its own identity in the face of rapid modernisation, considered urban renewal and the preservation of its

heritage quarters, would seem vital and necessary.

Ben Barbour is the Curator at the Msheireb Arts Centre, Doha, and a practising artist.



Doha is navigated through a mix of intuition, visual landmarks and building shapes and names, as the urban landscape undergoes rapid transformation.

TEA & SYMPATHY

Its roundabouts have been vital to that mnemonic system on account of their various adornments, as well as being occupied as social spaces by migrant workers. By contrast, the historic centre is being rebuilt as a 'walkable' but exclusive complex of retail, residential, office space, heritage quarter and public realm recognisable to any critic of urban gentrification and displacement, a process that also, however, links Doha with other prominent urban hubs in a world network of competing cities.

The Msheireb Downtown development scheme has been exhibited on the international circuit and is rapidly being constructed as a new model of integrated urbanism for the Gulf. It is essentially a state intervention, directly promoted by the Father Emir of Qatar and his wife Sheikha Moza through the Qatar Foundation, of which Msheireb Properties, its developer, is a subsidiary. It has been described as 'an enabler for the overall development of

Qatar...which will set a new level of living and higher form of lifestyle [and] change Doha forever in a very positive sense' (local development professional). As the site was being cleared, the material traces of humbler migrant lives which it had hosted for 30 years were gathered up and put

AS THE SITE WAS BEING CLEARED, THE MATERIAL TRACES OF HUMBLER MIGRANT LIVES WERE GATHERED UP AND PUT INTO STORAGE IN THE MSHEIREB ARTS CENTRE FOR SOME CURATED FUTURE USE

into storage in the Msheireb Arts Centre for some curated future use. It was unlikely that the inexorable logic of urban redevelopment, powered by a network of local and international agents – government officials, masterplanners and project managers, architects and visualisers, and, indeed, university institutions, academics and cultural agencies – would not extend to the neighbouring area of Al-Asmakh next. However, the Msheireb development model is capital-intensive and requires strong financial backing. At Al-Asmakh, the discussion has been around a development with a fine urban grain and varied uses, but a multiple-owner, multiple-development model (incorporating various sizes of development parcel), without a single large multi-storey basement containing integrated utilities tunnel, district cooling and large electrical supply components, as at Msheireb (ibid).

It is widely considered that to leave Al-Asmakh in its current state of under-development could not be justified. But there is also an emerging discourse in Doha around the importance of heritage and its preservation, specifically relating to Qatari identity, in which Msheireb has played a key role. The Old Doha Prize, in autumn 2013, invited young architects to consider options for a future renewal of Al-Asmakh that would respect the existing urban and social fabric. UCL Qatar (UCLQ) has also been involved through its heritage and conservation programme, and its partnership with Qatar Museums (QM), in a physical mapping of the area. At the same time, UCLQ's outreach programme has been grappling with the challenges of delivering wider social benefits, as part of its mission, to the



more disadvantaged and least accessible communities of Doha who are most vulnerable to the impacts of rapid urban transformation and displacement. These initiatives point to the role that universities can play in urban-renewal processes as institutional actors and repositories of knowledge that can be shared beyond academia, as well as spatial strategists.

But the social landscape of Doha is complex, in common with many transnational, cosmopolitan cities. The vast majority of residents, the expatriates, do not have citizenship, and the question of the government's welfare obligations to this officially mobile, yet also rooted, population is a grey area;



Tea at the MAC. Photos by C.Melhuish.

one that, upon the sudden issue of six-day notices for the disconnection of electricity and water and imminent eviction of residents in Al-Asmakh in April 2014 emerged in sharp contrast to the rhetoric of heritage, community and belonging rehearsed through the Msheireb development.

Al-Asmakh is inhabited primarily by male workers from Kerala, Nepal and Bangladesh, supporting numerous family dependants back home (notwithstanding their 'bachelor' status in the host country) but also well connected in Doha

within their own social networks, largely based on ethnicity. There's also at least one former Londoner to be found there, who affirmed a better quality of life in Al-Asmakh than in Brick Lane. Some residents have been there for several decades, others are new arrivals, and some young men, having grown up without them, come to join their fathers. They work as labourers, drivers, cleaners, hotel staff, shopkeepers, etc. According to respondents, there are anything between 25,000 and 40,000 residents in the area, many time-sharing crowded but well-organised courtyard houses adapted for intensive multiple occupation.

They have been paying moderate rents on homes abandoned by Qatari families in the 1970s for villas in the suburbs paid for out of state revenues from oil and gas. None of those householders maintained their old properties, and few set foot in the area any more, regarding it as a slum. But in February 2014, the Private Engineering Office (PEO, the Emiri Palace's development arm and developer of Souk Wakif) purchased every house in the area, and issued eviction notices to tenants. They won't expect or receive compensation, although some of Msheireb's residents were offered





Street hoarding at Msheireb Downtown development, 2012.

alternative accommodation out at the margins of the city in Barwa Village. Nor are they likely to be involved in any public consultation exercises.

Thanks to the efforts of Fatma al-Sahlawi from QM and Ben Barbour, UK-born curator of the Msheireb Arts Centre (MAC), located in the heart of the neighbourhood, water and power were temporarily restored. But residents know their options are limited. Other workers live far out at Industrial City, a long commute from places of work around the central area and described by one Doha expat as 'a yard'. In May 2014 one resident said they were 'just waiting'; another stated that the area 'needs to be redeveloped', even though the houses have accommodated their needs, but they were not happy about the lack of notice they'd been given, and some were trying to gain support from their embassies in Doha and even from the National Human Rights Committee. They are aware of global media coverage of the plight of migrant labourers working on the infrastructure for the 2022 World Cup and asked why there wasn't more interest in their own situation.

How might a process of 'community participation' be advocated in this context, where multiculturalism is a given but citizenship has no meaning? Both the winning team in the Old Doha Prize competition and the academic and outreach programmes



at UCL Qatar have declared an interest in engaging with the resident population and the hope that further awareness could be raised among the government's decision-makers at the Ministry of Municipality and Urban Planning and within the PEO about the value of the area not only as architectural heritage but also as a living social environment.

In May, the MAC and UCL Qatar organised the first of an intended series of community events in the courtyard of the newly opened MAC building – a tea party open to passers-by from the neighbourhood, in order 'to get to know each other', to have fun and to share stories. But as one of the first

and younger men to come in through the gate pointed out, 'we won't have any stories if we have to move!' He wanted to know if this was a meeting about the evictions, a question reiterated (in English) by many of the arrivals as they filled the courtyard and helped themselves to tea and biscuits.

Doha is, for many expatriates, a good place to live and work, but few have a say in its future, or in the construction of narratives of heritage and belonging about its past. Notwithstanding the structural contrasts between, say, London and Doha, these comparisons are

pertinent and all the more urgent as the inexorable logic of international investment in land at the heart of city centres expresses itself through increasingly intense urban-renewal programmes all over the world. What is the fate of ordinary city-dwellers who inhabit the urban landscape as home and livelihood and who have no means of resisting the clout of global capital? And what frameworks and processes should be put in place to ensure that cities do remain sites of diverse, thriving, practices of dwelling and everyday life?



Cars jostle for space in the public domain around the reconstructed souk.



RECOGNISING DIFFERENCE: UNIVERSITY PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IN LONDON & QATAR

In 2008, UCL was named as London's 'Beacon for Public Engagement' and awarded public funding to support institutional culture change and explore

ways in which universities might become more outward-facing. The case for change was that public engagement brings benefits both to universities and to the public; that funders and policy-makers expect universities to do it and that it helps universities adapt to a changing world.¹ Thousands of UCL students and staff each year now engage the public with their research, developing work going on in key areas such as health and urban regeneration. This in-

cludes supporting communities with their expertise, showing how academic work is relevant to the wider world and creating knowledge in collaboration with public groups.

DIFFERENT GLOBAL CONTEXTS AND CULTURES MEAN DIFFERENT THINGS FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES AND POLICY

Different global contexts and cultures mean different things for public engagement practices and policy. In London, we participate in local and national festivals, organise networking events where university staff and students and local commu-

nity groups can meet each other and run activities such as Bright Club, 'the thinking person's variety night', where academics perform their research as stand-up comedy.² We also have a specific programme of public engagement in East London, where UCL, in partnership with other institutions, is involved in plans to develop a new cultural and educational quarter as part of the regeneration legacy of the London 2012 Olympics.

However, in a very rapidly changing city such as Doha, where UCL Qatar is in partnership with the Qatar Foundation and Qatar Museums, it is more difficult to frame appropriate ambitions and contexts for public-engagement practice, especially since the university is, at the moment, staffed by non-locals. The new campus is in its second year of operation and progressing well, but the very different cultural environment regularly forces us to question our assumptions and traditional ways of working.

UCLQ offers master's programmes in cultural heritage and archaeology. Its strategic objectives relate strongly to Qatar 2030, the national strategy, but also closely correspond to UCL's objectives, especially to foster an understanding of and passion for Qatar's culture and heritage, to engage the wider community in those areas, as well as environmental and conservation concerns, and to support social enterprises and charities working in the heritage sector.

We are currently working particularly with children and young people, Qatari families and expatriate workers, through outreach activity, such as public lectures, workshops in schools and hospitals and activities for disabled people. UCLQ is committed to engaging with a wide range of people living in Qatar and to taking



Recognising Difference

Invitation to share stories in Al-Asmakh.

- 1 See <http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/why-does-it-matter/case-for-engagement>
- 2 See <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/public-engagement/creatingconnections;> <http://brightclub.wordpress.com>

Sally MacDonald is Director of Public and Cultural Engagement at UCL and has a background in museum engagement work. **Antonia Rosati**, UCLQ's Outreach Officer, has previously been engaged in community-based work with a focus on Arabic-speaking communities and managed the education outreach programme of an Arab women's organisation in London.

our current Arabic-speaking students in outreach with young people in schools, working in partnership with different organisations and museums allows us also to reach bigger audiences and to develop a better understanding of the complex cosmopolitan societal make-up and structural characteristics of Qatar. We are mindful that we are guests in Qatar and are constantly making new connections and learning about our environment and about different ways of working. Different locations will require distinct approaches to public engagement, but the need to interact constructively with local communities is an imperative for any 21st century university.

UCL's ethos of inclusivity wholeheartedly into its outreach programmes by reaching out to those in society who are often sidelined. For this reason, its students and staff have also been involved in mapping the urban and social fabric of the Al-Asmakh area since 2012, in conjunction with the QMA, as it faces imminent demolition as part of the rapid redevelopment of the old city centre.

But the practicalities of participation are very different in Doha from London. For example, there are many linguistic barriers. Outreach events are organised to coincide with prayer times, and close attention is paid to the content of an activity, the details of which, unbeknownst to us, could offend local sensibilities. We are keen to involve our Qatari advisers when planning activities to ensure that we create an atmosphere where all are at ease. Above all, the aim is to promote an idea of cultural heritage to nurture the next generation. While this primarily concerns the preservation and dissemination of Qatari and Arab heritage, and we are keen to involve



RECORDING A FORCED EXODUS

Following the compulsory purchase of properties in North Al-Asmakh for regeneration, an estimated 4000 people are now in search for alternative low-cost accommodation. They constitute an ephemeral population which is at greater risk of disappearance than the built heritage. There is a brief opportunity for communication and contact which is of considerable significance as a chance to record another departing layer of Old Doha and its social substance. Here is a selection of photos from the documentation process.



The heritage houses have been repurposed by the migrant residents to meet their occupancy needs and the increase in residential density.





Residents wait on the streets of Al-Asmakh in desperation due to the lack of low-cost living units and the implementation of both power and water cuts.



The migrant residential community has brought with it an array of commercial outlets serving both the residents of the area and attracting people from different parts of Doha.

Fatma al Sahlawi has been an architect and urban designer at Qatar Museums since 2011, and in 2012 she founded the Doha Architecture Forum. She holds a BA in Architecture from the American University, Sharjah, and an MArch in urban design from UCL.

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ROUNABOUTS ABOUND NO MORE: A EULOGY

It is business as usual when the urban layout of Doha, frequently epitomised as the fastest developing city in the world, is subjected to unannounced and drastic change. Infinite resources and pressing deadlines to modernise for the purpose of high-profile events (i.e. the 2022 FIFA World Cup) are used to legitimise all changes. When construction along the Corniche and the parallel Majlis Al Taawon Street was completed, roundabouts abounded no more. Instead, high-capacity intersections with synchronised traffic lights ushered in a new era of mobility across the waterfront, connecting more efficiently the southern and traditional part of city with the northern and modern West Bay. But will roundabouts then also be remembered as part of the fast-disappearing heritage of the city, and, if so, in what sense?

'All roundabouts along Doha's Corniche ceased to exist around Eid il-Fitr 2013. These roundabouts and their art were of uncertain age, lineage and purpose. They are survived by myriad traffic intersections, which will probably preserve the name of each roundabout that they replace and a growing source of archival images, footage, pings on Google Maps and social-media narratives. No memorial service is planned. These are remnants of a bygone era, may they rest in peace'. (Obituary, August 2013)

ROUNABOUTS ARE RARELY EMPTY SPACES

Roundabouts are a component of a European-imported circulation system commonly found across the Arabian Gulf, which are predominantly seen by users as ineffective and outdated non-spaces of transit, remnants of colonial influence on the landscape of a former British protectorate.¹ They are of value primarily as essential points of reference for navigation through the city, while, as traffic regulators, they contribute to many logjams and accidents, since their correct usage is the subject of much misinterpretation in cosmopolitan Doha.

Yet roundabouts are rarely empty spaces,² as revealed in qualitative research by UCL Qatar (UCLQ) graduate students using interviews, participant observation and archival sources. They provide a casual platform for the display of adornments of varying levels of complexity. Typically, these include artworks representing traditional practices, symbols and messages – artistic expression of particular narratives of the city's history. Selected roundabouts also function as social spaces, such as the remaining Al Mirqab roundabout, which attracts migrant workers seeking day jobs. Moreover, their formation and transformation through their life histories have often been the subject of rumour and speculation, enriching the oral-history narratives attached to the otherwise shifting grounds of the cityscape. Al Mirqab, the 'Talking Clock' roundabout, lost its clock in a traffic accident on a rainy day in the early 1980s, by some accounts.³ Roundabouts are also adaptive. The famed Al Maha (Oryx) roundabout has gone through several iterations: the pair of oryx (the national animal of Qatar) was replaced by



a globe, then reinstated, before the final elimination of this roundabout in 2013. Animal sculpture occupies an uneasy position in Islamic beliefs, and it is also said that the animals were the subject of worship practices by non-Muslim communities.⁴

1 Marjorie Kelly, 'Public Art in the Gulf', paper presented at the Gulf Studies Conference, Exeter University, July 2012. See also John Lockerbie's website *Catnaps.org*, available at <http://catnaps.org/islamic/pressures.html> (accessed 2 June 2014).

2 Marc Augé, *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*, trans. John Howe (London: Verso, 1995), with thanks to John McNally for this reference.

3 Louisa Brandt, Somaya Laram, Hannah Perry, Bojana Zivkovic and Emilio Ocampo, 'Evaluating Methodologies Throughout the Documentation of the Heritage Value of Al Mirqab Roundabout, Downtown Doha', unpublished report, 2014.

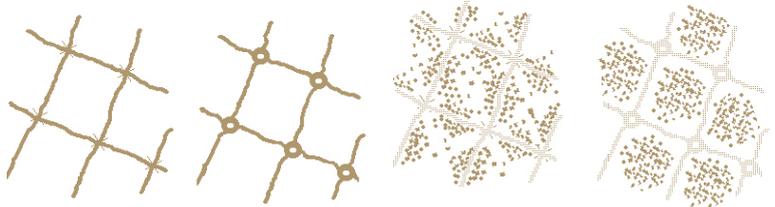
4 Alanoud Alattiya, 'Roundabouts in Qatar: The Al Maha/Oryx Roundabout', unpublished report, 2014. See also Jamal J. Elias, *Aisha's Cushion: Religious Art, Perception, and Practice in Islam* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012).

5 Kristyna Storkova, 'The Heritage Value of Sports Roundabout', unpublished report, 2014.

6 Sonia Brevin, Doha Roundabouts, a Facebook group, available at <https://www.facebook.com/DohaRoundabouts2013>

There is a growing conversation in Doha about its roundabouts that values their aesthetic and historical appeal, albeit also strongly associated with certain forms of nostalgia. For example, the Sports roundabout, still in existence, may be appreciated particularly by Qatari or Qatar-born viewers for its relevance to the striking efforts that Qatar is making towards hosting elite international sports events.⁵ This appreciation, which may have emerged only posthumously, has flowed on occasion into wider debates about heritage value.⁶

The theme of removal and destruction is endemic in Doha, yet these particular disappearing features are not yet recognised by experts as part of the heritage assemblage of Qatar. Their demise is inevitable partly due to the lack of recognition of the heritage value of modern architecture and planning worldwide, a marginalisation related to the inflexible chronological standards that still govern heritage status. Roundabouts nonetheless will survive in public memory, archives and toponyms, even if their heritage value has come too late to the attention of the limited civil society that engages with this changing landscape. This process then is a reminder that the ultimate executioner is the absence of identified stakeholders in these forms of material culture.



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In Doha, roundabouts on the ring-road system are being replaced by intersections; in Milton Keynes, roundabouts were constructed in place of the intersections proposed in the masterplan, resulting in a segregation of neighbourhoods, as experienced in Doha. Diagrams by Michael Edwards.

In the roundabout system, the densest development is pushed into the centre of the blocks and away from the main roads.



As in Doha, visitors to the new city of Milton Keynes in England often come away with enduring memories of roundabouts, of which around 300 are located on a grid of main city roads, and of confusion and disorientation as they tried to navigate the city.¹

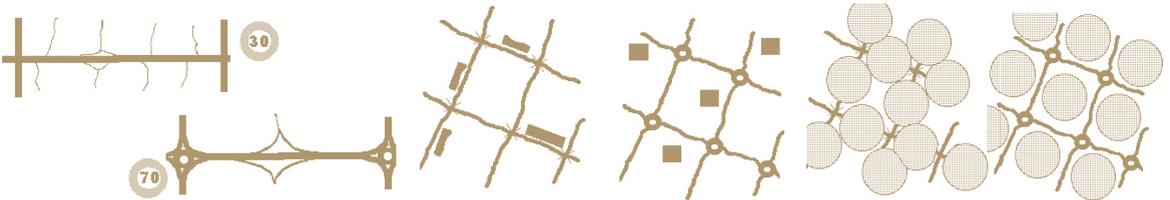
GLOBAL HERITAGE: SHARED LEGACIES OF MODERNIST PLANNING BETWEEN QATAR & THE UK

Visitors to Doha are often informed that it was the British who were responsible for introducing its much criticised roundabouts to the city, where the basis for the existing A–D ringroad system was initially established during the 1960s. The radial system was expanded in subsequent years following the successive appointments of

Llewelyn Davies Forestier-Walker Bor, Shankland Cox, William Pereira Associates and Peat Marwick Due (transport planning) to work on masterplans for Doha. Now that the roundabouts are being removed and replaced by intersections, the question of their provenance has been raised in relation to their potential status as ‘modernist heritage’ in the city.

Llewelyn Davies were appointed as consultants in Doha in 1972, when Richard Llewelyn Davies was also Professor of Urban Planning and head of the School of Environmental Studies (now the Bartlett School), UCL. During the late 1960s, the firm was responsible for designing the masterplan for Milton Keynes, implemented in 1970. This masterplan did not include roundabouts but envisaged that the grid would have intersections controlled by traffic lights. Roundabouts were only introduced when development began.

Their implementation had several impacts on the way the city is experi-



Intersection system accommodates numerous side turnings (a), while roundabout system does not, due to increased speed of traffic (b).

Schools, shops and services line the road in slower-speed system (a), but have to be set back in faster-speed system (b).

Design parcels are centred on midpoint of each road length in slow-city version (a), but separated by the main roads in high-speed city version (b).



enced. First, they led to a significant increase in speed, from 30 miles per hour on the main roads, with numerous side turnings and lay-bys which, at those speeds, could safely be managed, to 70 miles per hour, which meant that very few side turnings could safely occur. The slower-traffic version would have enabled schools, shops and other services to line the roads, with stopping places and supporting bus services, much like a normal city; while the high-speed version required services to be back away from

the highway within the city blocks. The densest housing and other activities could be close to the roads, while the lowest densities would be in mid-block. But faster traffic is noisier, so buildings had to be pushed away from main roads, and densities thus tend to be higher in mid-block, lowest at the edges.

This also influences how the territory is divided up among designers and developers (public or private) in the implementation process. In the slow-city version, it makes sense for each design parcel to be centred on the mid-point of each road length, where the centres are going to be. In the high-speed city, it seems natural to treat each block as a design unit and development unit; the parcels are separated by the main roads with their wide green margins. These margins are designed separately, with massive planting and earth banks to reduce noise. It has inhibited the growth and diversity of retailing and services and has made residential areas almost invisible. Most shopping trips and a high proportion of trips to other services are made by car. And there is a gender dimension to all this, since it still tends to be the case that, in one-car families, it is the men who have the car more than the women, while women disproportionately have to juggle buses to get children to school and themselves to work.

But the greatest disappointment is that Milton Keynes is experienced as a collection of very distinct neighbourhoods, each with its name, postcode and, with luck, a shop, following the model for Britain's early new towns, whereas the intention was to enable a city in which neighbourhoods would merge into each other, with most people having quite a few service centres to choose from within walking distance. That has been frustrated.

As El Samahy and Hutzell note earlier, it is often suggested that modernist planning introduced by foreign consultants was responsible for sweeping away the traditional urban fabric of Doha. It is certainly true that the Llewellyn Davies masterplan recommendations led to government compulsory purchase and clearance of large areas of land in the historic centre from Qatari householders. However, Llewellyn Davies spent the first year of their consultancy in Doha mapping the traditional socio-spatial patterns of city dwelling and used the compact radial structure of the fereej neighbourhood

layout as the basis for the expansion of concentric ring roads outward from the newly formed Corniche. Today, unfortunately, that system, punctuated by roundabouts, and hosting heavy high-speed non-stop traffic (waiting times to cross key roads can extend from ten minutes to half an hour), has made it even more difficult for pedestrians to move between neighbourhoods and negotiate the city than in Milton Keynes.

¹ This is a short and simplified version of M. Edwards, 'City Design: What Went Wrong at Milton Keynes?' *Journal of Urban Design*, 6 (1) (2001): 87–96. It is combined with a commentary on Doha by Clare Melhuish.

Michael Edwards, economist and planner, started his career working for Nat Lichfield and doing the economic elements of the Plan for Milton Keynes in the team led by Llewellyn Davies. He has since taught for forty years in the UCL Bartlett School of Planning, and blogs at www.michaelledwards.org.uk



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Image courtesy of Ali A.
Alraouf. Local businesses that
cater for low-paid workers are
vanishing as the huge Msheir-
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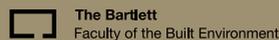
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