

# **THE SEARCH FOR CITY**

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## **BETWEEN BEING AND SEEMING IN THE RAPID URBANISATION OF DOHA, QATAR**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Title:*

*The Search for City : Between Being and Seeming in the Rapid Urbanisation of  
Doha, Qatar*

This dissertation's essential aim is to understand the collective nature of a rapidly evolving twenty-first-century city. Looking closely at Doha, Qatar – a city that can choose to be anything it desires – reveals a tension between the regime's aspirations and the expectations of its (mostly foreign) constituents. Doha's fundamental transformation from village to metropolis provides an interpretation of 'city' that discloses the possibilities and limitations of civic culture in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century.

This thesis' contribution to knowledge is four-fold: (1) to add generally to architectural and urban theory, and particularly to Arabian Gulf studies; (2) to develop an analytical framework based upon hermeneutic phenomenology that incorporates architecture into its structure of understanding; (3) to use this framework to illuminate the structure of Doha's urban culture during its most transformative period; (4) to publish previously unseen documents and gather original personal narratives related to the period of study.

This thesis takes as its central concern how the institutional order within Doha, Qatar, provides the ground for ethical and ontological orientation; how one specific urban society, Doha, Qatar, uses architecture and its representation in its search for an authentic orientation in history when caught between the pull of tradition and the push of modernity. This tension is expressed in the city's architecture and urban order as a mechanism to enable a shifting institutional order: new institutions arise within new forms, which in turn yield new architectural embodiments and new cultural articulations. This is Doha's search for city: the constant attempt to reconcile what the world seems to be with what it might be.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

CMC	Central Municipal Council
EI	Encyclopaedia of Islam
FIFA	Fédération Internationale de Football Association
FO	Foreign Office
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the British Government
GCC	Gulf Cooperative Council
GSDP	General Secretariat for Development and Planning
GFA	Gross Floor Area
HBKU	Hamad bin Khalifa University
HH	Her Highness
HIA	Hamad International Airport
HOK	Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum
IOR	India Office Records
Lakh	A unit of the Indian numbering system equal to 100,000
LNG	Liquefied Natural Gas
LWFB	Llewelyn-Davies, Weeks, Forestier-Walker and Bor
MIA	The Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar
MMUP	Ministry of Municipality and Urban Planning
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
PA	Political Agent
P&C	Private and Confidential: used by Eastern Bank managers
PDP	Physical Development Plan
PDQ	Petroleum Development Qatar
PEO	Private Engineer Office
QAR	Qatari Riyal (1 QAR = US \$ 0.274, GBP £ 0.177)
QPD	Qatar Petroleum District
QF	Qatar Foundation
QGPC	Qatar General Petroleum Corporation
QMA	Qatar Museums Authority
QNCC	Qatar National Convention Centre
QRDP	Qatar Rail Development Program
QSTP	Qatar Science and Engineering Park
Rs.	Indian Rupee
RST	Rentier State Theory
SCDL	Supreme Council for Delivery and Legacy
SEC	Supreme Education Council

*I have been a stranger in a strange land.*

– Exodus 2:22

*She looked over his shoulder  
For vines and olive trees,  
Marble well-governed cities  
And ships upon untamed seas,  
But there on the shining metal  
His hands had put instead  
An artificial wilderness  
And a sky like lead.*

– W.H. Auden, 'The Shield of Achilles'

*"But all the same we must examine it  
more carefully. For it is no  
ordinary matter that we are discussing,  
but the right conduct of life." "Proceed  
with your inquiry," he said. "I  
proceed," said I.*

– Plato, *The Republic*

## **PART I**

### **INTRODUCTION AND INTERPRETIVE METHOD**

#### **Chapter 1. Introduction**

##### **1.1 Overview**

**I**n 2010 the second wife of Qatar's Emir, Sheikha Moza bint Nasser Al-Misned (hereafter Sheikha Moza), broke ground on one of the world's largest, most ambitious urban redevelopment projects: 'The Heart of Doha'. When complete the new inner-city district will cover 31 hectares, and see over 100 new buildings totalling 760,000 square metres (gross floor area) at a

published cost of £3.6 billion.<sup>1</sup> To achieve this, almost every building on the site will be demolished and every one of the 50,000 long-time residents displaced. Conceptually, the project, and also Sheikha Moza's social and architectural vision, are summarized by the marketing slogan 'a meeting of cultures not a melting of them'.<sup>2</sup> Curiously, a few years later that strap line was dropped completely and the project rebranded as 'Msheireb Downtown Doha', Msheireb being the historic Arabic name for the site.

The details of this story are found in Part III; I introduce it here as a way to orient the central concerns, arguments, methods and conclusions of this thesis. While we do not know the actual reasons for changing Msheireb's marketing rhetoric, we can, more importantly, interpret the larger meanings behind the regime's desire to rebuild, rebrand and re-image Doha. The sentiment behind 'the meeting not melting of cultures' implies that as the city expands and migrants come *en masse* with their foreign ways, local Qataris and their ways will not be subsumed in the manner of 'melting pot' immigrant cities. Indeed, Doha has long avoided amalgamation, enjoying instead peaceful cultural diversity. But as the city continues its rapid expansion and transformation, pressure commensurably mounts on the local Qatari population to maintain an ancient institutional order within a modern, Western embodiment, surrounded constantly by foreign beliefs, religions and social practices. Though Qatar may welcome hordes of foreign labourers to help it modernize, it is most assuredly, and in spite of strap lines like Msheireb's, not democratic, a melting pot of foreign immigration, and its huddled masses do not enjoy all the freedoms of the UN Charter of Human Rights.

Msheireb Downtown Doha is just one of many projects by the real estate developer Msheireb Properties, a subsidiary of Qatar Foundation. Qatar Foundation was founded in 1995 by the Emir of Qatar Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani and his wife Sheikha Moza to provide Qatari citizens with

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<sup>1</sup> People familiar with the project describe the total cost as at least 50 per cent higher.

<sup>2</sup> For a description of the project's planning principles written by its master planners see Law and Underwood (2012).

greater choices in education, health and social progress.<sup>3</sup> Because both Qatar Foundation and Msheireb Properties are chaired by Her Highness Sheikha Moza, with her children and close relatives, who also head many other government ministries on their boards of directors, I shall collectively refer to these corporate entities and the royal family, from which they often seem indistinguishable, simply as 'the regime'.

I interpret the dropping of the marketing line 'meeting not melting' to mean the regime has similarly dropped notions of cosmopolitanism in framing the conditions for 'community'. The re-centring is further reinforced by changing the project's name from the English 'Heart of Doha' (it never appeared in Arabic translation) to the traditional Arabic name for the site, 'Msheireb', a place to water animals. While these changes may seem subtle, when taken together the revised rhetoric unites architecture and politics to confer the meaning of the urban reclamation as being for Qataris, proud of their traditions, culture and religion, who for too long have neglected their urban roots as evidenced in how the city has become nearly devoid of any Arab presence. Put another way, Msheireb as an architectural fact is modern, designed by Western architects, it pays homage to Arab-Islamic motifs but it is most assuredly a gleaming box set among a sea of rapidly dilapidating architecture; as a symbol Msheireb represents Qatari pride. As a fact it is a reinvestment in urban society, a bulwark against decades of urban exodus to suburban sprawl by Qatari nationals; as a symbol it reclaims the city as Qatari, Arab, Islamic. As a fact Msheireb hopes Qatari families will move back to central Doha, enjoying luxury apartments, pedestrian streets and environmentally sustainable construction; as a symbol it is only for the very wealthy who hopefully will no longer have to 'meet' other cultures on non-Qatari terms. And finally, as a fact, Msheireb will connect the city's other major developments – museums, parks, souq, metro and Emir's administrative palace; as a symbol, taken together, this linkage portrays a modern, late-capitalist, well-functioning bureaucratic state warmly welcoming the world's tourists to its idyllic city.

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<sup>3</sup> Source: <http://www.qf.org.qa/about/about> (accessed 29 May 2015).

I invoke the brief example of Msheireb to demonstrate the highly conflicted nature of re-imagining and refashioning a city. While we can forgive superficial inconsistencies, such as changing a marketing strategy, it is my contention, and what I shall argue throughout this thesis, that such dichotomies constitute a search to define the meaning of Qatar's capital city. The tension ranges in one dimension from the preservation of traditions to the embrace of modernity. And in another dimension the conflict is between a vertically oriented divine-cosmological ideal and a horizontally articulated human-centred world (grossly speaking, between theology embedded in local custom and the opportunities offered by global so-called neo-liberalism). These conflicts play out against the backdrop of a more fundamentalist interpretation of Islam than that which influenced the formation of earlier cosmopolitan Islamic cities, and against a contemporary orientation towards global capitalist icons of status, which are nominally less attached to religion or even to a nation or people than any previous understanding of 'cosmopolitanism' (Toulmin 1990). The ranges of these tensions arise from and give shape to the rapidly evolving city. That reciprocity is referred to throughout this thesis as the relationship between the urban and institutional order, suspending the city between what it factually is and symbolically seems, struggling all the while to synthesize the dichotomies in the search for a modern-Islamic city.

## 1.2 Objectives

Over and above the question of what is *a* purpose of Doha, we should ask what is *the* purpose of Doha or *any* city for that matter? Perhaps the earliest, most basic, answer comes from political philosophy's founder, Socrates, who asked 'how should we live?' (*Republic* 352D). Surely there is no more fundamental question one could ask of the purpose of a city than how we are to live, and I hasten to add the word *together*. Plato, in the subtitle to his *Republic*, provides an answer in the argument that the Republic is a search for justice, justice that harmonizes the individual to the world-soul. Plato's literary structure of dialog or dialectic mirrors what he believes makes harmony possible – symmetry between the city and the soul (Smith 2006). The analogy of city and soul was meant to posit a circular reasoning

between individuals shaping their societies, and their societies in turn shaping the individuals' characters.

Politically, every regime casts an ethos over its cities, producing particular kinds of individuals who in turn embody the regime's characteristics. The nature of this relationship underscores the contingency between the institutional order and the political order, which arises from and gives shape to the city.

Plato's student, Aristotle, pursues many of his teacher's themes but with far less derision towards individual liberty, or strident advocacy for a unity of public and private spheres. Also unlike Plato, Aristotle does not tell us exactly what kind of city (*polis*) or regime (*politeia*) is best. What he does tell us is that the *polis* provides the conditions for the possibility of self-perfection, the mechanism to achieve our *telos*, our reason for being.<sup>4</sup> And only because humankind alone in the animal world possesses language and reason (*logos*) are we able to share in communal life, debating openly what makes a city just or unjust. For Aristotle the *polis* is, as Sophocles once remarked, 'the place of men's [all citizen's] free deeds and living worlds, which could endow life with splendour' (Sophocles 1962:255).

Crucially for our discussion, Aristotle's *polis* was not a universal state of any size, but rather a highly particular one, developed according to its own unique circumstances whose identity is always reflective of the regime. The *polis*, properly speaking, required trust, and common affection among its citizens, what Ibn Khaldun later called '*aṣabīya*' (Ibn Khaldun 2005:123ff, 263ff) or group feeling, in order to grant a balance between individual liberty and communal responsibility, what Isaiah Berlin (1958) called negative and positive freedom. We will see both senses of this concept throughout this thesis as, the Islamic regime's guarantee of freedom from interference in submitting to God, the negative; and the positive as the freedom for something, and in our context the freedom for self-control over base desires. Negative freedom generally concerns the motivations of

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<sup>4</sup> What Geertz (1973) says of Balinese ritual in 'Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight' – that it represents the meaning of the collective order, or city – could be attributed to Aristotle's emphasis upon the *bios theoretikos*.



individual agents, while positive freedom describes how individuals relate to each other as members of particular collectives. Understanding how these definitions are linked to the regime, the city and its institutions is a central question in this thesis.

Some twenty-two centuries later political philosopher Hannah Arendt took the Aristotelian conjunction of political organization and urban form as a vital modern concern. I will discuss Arendt's contribution in Chapter 10, for the moment I shall only point out the enduring ontological and ethical orientation circumscribed by the relationship between politics and place as embodied in the *polis*, which always presents the problem voiced by Voegelin as 'order and history' – how can the exigencies of the latter (the particular) fulfil the former (the universal), usually understood as an ethical question?

One political category mentioned throughout this brief introduction requires some further discussion: the regime. As noted above, on one level 'regime' simply refers to Qatar's small group of business and political leaders, often both, clustered around the Emir that despite its image as a high-functioning Western-styled bureaucracy has monarchic status. On a deeper level regime forces us to question what is perhaps the oldest and most basic notion of political organization. The term 'regime' refers to Qatar's particular form of government in determining how people are ruled, and in turn what the people's rights and responsibilities to the regime and to each other are. Regime is also the formal institutions but also the culture's ethos, its way of life and its ethical, religious and legal practices. It is what the society values, and how it represents itself to itself and to others. Regime, therefore, comprises a spectrum of cultural articulations spanning the entire community, ranging on one end from definitive legal codes and the country's constitutional organization, to on the opposite pole the cultural customs of decorum and routine behaviours. This range of cultural articulations places claims upon every individual, affecting their positive and negative freedoms. Taken together I shall throughout this thesis refer collectively to these claims together with their architectural embodiments as the institutional order.

Inferred from the above discussion, and to quote the late US Senator Tip O'Neill 'all politics is local'. Common sense tells us everything, including – and perhaps especially – politics always occurs somewhere. We are always involved in a certain way of living, situated in a culture, experiencing the phenomena of that culture, in what Heidegger often calls the 'thrownness' (*Geworfenheit*) of human existence in the world. And architecture better than any other cultural artefact provides a frame of reference that unites what I am broadly calling the institutional order with the facticity of everyday experience. We can, after Heidegger (1977), distinguish between architecture as an object, simply a constitutive member of the physical world; and also as a process related to context, situation and purpose. As such architecture allows us to enter the hermeneutic circle, understanding the relationship between parts and the whole (a topic discussed at length in Chapter 2), that is to say, the specific conditions that constitute the setting for the larger institutional order. As Dalibor Vesely (1988) reminds us 'in the end it is the situation that matters most of all. We dwell in situations ... dwelling means being situated and having the ability and opportunity to come to a very rich context and live in it, inhabit it.' The term 'institutional order' emphasizes the fundamental status of the meaningful world of human activity, the relational whole of human existence that holds a structure of human possibilities.

The dialectic between architecture and politics is drawn from philosophical hermeneutics and the resulting interpretive paradigm found in social theory. The hermeneutic approach of Gadamer and Ricoeur stands in contrast to the positivist and, more obliquely, the post-structuralist approaches that dominate contemporary urban and architectural theory and analysis. Eschewing the positivist approach and the widely held explanatory theories of global commodity flows (Sassen) built upon neo-Marxist interpretations of social action, I shall instead draw upon the insights of phenomenologists and interpretive theorists. Resting upon the work of Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Taylor and Gadamer, among others, one of the virtues of phenomenological hermeneutics is that it enables one to identify the communication – or ruptures – between primordial experiences of

spatiality and more sophisticated or even abstract discourses emerging from philosophy or theology, the social sciences, the physical sciences, etc.

In large measure, this interpretive stance arose from Doha's ambiguities, strangely positioned between a modern business model and traditional Wahhabi fundamentalism, embodied in an architectural iconography that veers between pure form (or pure unadorned form) imported by high-modernist Western architects who draw upon vague notions of traditional (Orientalist) Islamism and analytical concepts such as 'space'.

The legibility of institutions in a traditional Islamic city is, in Doha, deeply compromised, even conflicted or confused. Against the usual Western disdain for Doha's architectural manners, however, I have adopted the hypothesis that they constitute a search for an 'Islamic city' appropriate for the new historical conditions, less a manifestation of global capitalism than a way to recover cultural pre-eminence in a milieu that conflicts with many Islamic beliefs. In its own way, and hidden from open debate by the manner of its achievement, Doha may be regarded as at the very early stages of a quest to preserve traditional hierarchies in a cultural context that eschews hierarchies (explicitly, at least) – that is, a way of finding orientation in history.

In sum, this thesis takes as its central concern how the institutional order within Doha, Qatar, provides the ground for ethical and ontological orientation.

By ethical I mean the ability to grant dignity and freedom (positive and negative) to its diverse peoples. Ground is understood in two, interrelated senses: as the actual places of meaningful social action; and also as a metaphor for the conditions that define Doha's particular interpretation of freedom (Carl 2012:67). By ontological I mean the study of what is. What is meaningful, the sources of meaning, and in virtue of what is anything understood as what it is. Having described what exists – that is, the general features of an urban society – I then seek to uncover the relations between these entities. In some instances this means describing the relationship

between universals and particulars (assuming, as I do, that both categories exist). In other cases it means comparing one situation to another. The ontological enquiry in this study therefore asks how beliefs held within several different social segments of Doha's urban society bring rational commitments to their understanding of the existence of certain entities, an understanding of the commitment to the existence of these entities (Hofweber 2014).

A triumph, or perhaps tragedy, of post-Cartesian philosophy is the divorce of ontological commitments from ethical ones. Seen against a pre-modern claim of the gods (a claim questioned at least as early as Xenophanes), today's ethical naturalist by contrast sees humans as part of a natural universe and their behaviours are explainable through paradigms derived from the sciences. As much as Doha takes advantage of, for example, modern medicine or engineering, it institutionally declares the measure of truth to be embodied in *shari'ah* law with Allah simultaneously at the centre of the spiritual experience and at the head of the mundane earthly community. The political and theological unity places all of Qatari society, as well as the privacy of individual members, under the direct, legislative and supervisory power of Allah as understood through divine revelation. While this sounds very much like an ancient city, and institutionally in many respects it is, it is also thoroughly modern in appearance and impression. This fundamental tension gives rise to the essential question of this thesis: to establish how to understand the collective structure of Doha.

Within this overall objective there are several subordinate questions upon which the research rests: (1) to investigate the connections between different institutional registers that range from ancient to modern, from explicit to implicit; (2) to develop an interpretive model of the city's institutional structure based upon hermeneutic phenomenology that uses aspects of ethnographic anthropology to capture the personal reflections of a wide cross section of the city's inhabitants; (3) to develop an understanding of the difference and diversity within and between Muslim societies over time, and by doing so to counter the contemporary impulse among scholarly and non-scholarly authors that essentialize all of Islam. The thread of continuity

linking the above three objectives lies in the vital importance of particularity within situations.

It is hoped these interrelated research questions in turn yield answers as to how individuals and the larger collective society experience an orientation to the central concerns of the culture; in what ways parts of Doha are held in common either through agreement or conflict, a common ground of differences, that enable an ontological orientation; and, lastly, to address Socrates' question posed at this section's opening, 'how should we live?' A response to this question – coming, at least, from a PhD Dissertation text, as against, for example, from praxis in political life – would hopefully be a well-informed discussion of humankind's ethical obligations to each other living within a diverse community.

The research presented here explores the contours of urban life that characterize Doha from its first moment of oil extraction in 1950 to the present. The architectural, social and political development of this period illuminates an unprecedented rate of change in moving from village to metropolis, but more fundamentally sheds light on the diversity and difference within Islam, and more broadly the accommodation of diversity and difference with other cultures and religions. This, which took larger cities with more historic depth many centuries to experience, unfolds in Doha before our very eyes, and will hopefully yield important insights useful to other regions also undergoing rapid rates of urbanisation and cultural change.

Looking closely at Doha, Qatar – a city with almost limitless wealth and unchallenged monarchic control over the levers of power and which can choose to be anything it desires – reveals a tension between the aspirations of its planners and the expectations of its (mostly foreign) constituents. Doha's fundamental transformation from village to metropolis provides an interpretation of 'city' that discloses the possibilities and limitations of civic culture in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. This thesis' contribution to knowledge is four-fold: (1) to add generally to architectural and urban theory, and particularly to Arabian Gulf studies; (2) to develop an

analytical framework based upon hermeneutic phenomenology that incorporates architecture into its structure of understanding; (3) to use this framework to illuminate the structure of Doha's urban culture during its most transformative period; (4) to publish previously unseen documents and gather original personal narratives related to the period of study. The theme of differences held in common by the institutional order allows a more fundamental enquiry into how a city functions as a collective structure than afforded by discipline-specific studies. As such, it is hoped, the proposed interpretive approach offers an olive branch towards those specialists, particularly in methodological positivism, in the belief that difference and diversity within unity – this thesis' key theme – would similarly serve us in the academy.

### ***1.3 Literature Review***

The 'being' of Doha's architectural landscape – the city's concrete, specific places of meaningful social action – as seen against its 'seeming' – the widely disparate subjectively experienced symbolization of that architecture – forms an essential problem in architectural-urban theory and Middle Eastern studies. Doha's urban order as expressed in the city's architecture and corresponding symbols of political participation are here inextricably related. On the one hand the importance of understanding 'city' through its architectural form and urban topography is so widely accepted that few scholars attempt to understand the meaningful lifeworld sedimented by architecture's concreteness except as generalized patterns of an abstracted whole often seen in architectural 'figure-ground' studies or the GIS visualisations of data flows. I do not wish to dismiss out of hand the important contributions by those working in quantitative time-series models, but I believe the interpretive model adopted here seeks a more fundamental, and thus universal, understanding of the ordering principles underlying any contemporary urban society regardless of location or scale. On the other hand, the often disciplinary nature of Middle Eastern scholarship typically does not anchor the institutional order to its embodied locus.

One such strand that has received much attention in recent years focuses on the unprecedented level of international labour migration. Most of the analyses point to 'globalisation' as the root cause of massive labour and financial 'flows'. The leading proponent, Saskia Sassen (1998, 1999, 2001, 2007), has concentrated for years on corporate financial centres and the resultant abuses of a networked economy. Harvey (1990, 2006) and Soja (1989, 2010) have laid out similar arguments, though theirs are largely based on Marxist interpretations of geography underlining arguments for spatial justice amid urban hierarchies. Much of this enquiry builds from Henri Lefebvre's (1991, 2008, 2009) notion of the production of space. In his 1974 book of the same name Lefebvre argues that 'space' is socially constructed and productively active through social action. Lefebvre's influence can be felt in works focusing on the 'place of the other' for lack of a better term, the experience and causation of urban centres dominated by low-paid, typically Asian workers in the boom economies of China and Arabia (Al Rasheed 2005; Appadurai 1996; Bollens 2012; Gardner 2010; Niezen 2004; Savage 2005; Smith, M.P. 2001; Tonkiss 2010; Wacquant 2008). The central limitation of these studies is that they fail to offer us what we need in order to understand the experience and meaning of urban life. Manifestations of 'space' as productive, consumptive, imaginative, gendered, Marxist, exclusionary or violent, to name the common themes expressed in the above list of authors, are generally more valuable for their case studies than their social theories, which often decant the messiness of life to statistical generalizations. Countering conceptual generalizations and spatial vagueness and resituating urban discourse within the lifeworld of individual experience is one of this thesis' main objectives. The approach seeks to be fair to the case, open to conflicts – and conflicts of interpretation – while also being honest to the position of the interpreter. Gadamer stresses above all the dialogical character of hermeneutics that the meaning happens in the encounter with the other.

Given the complexity of any city it is hardly surprising scholars adopt a particular lens to magnify their insights. Metaphors, tropes and figural language abound in describing the city, for example, as a work of art (Olsen 1988), as project (Aureli 2013), as corporation (Kanna 2011), as endless

(Burdett and Sudjic 2010), as post-colonial (Varma 2014), as text (Duncan 2005), all seeking to understand a particular view of urban 'space' in terms of larger global patterns and shifting spheres of influence. A trend in recent years (Hall 2012) seeks to connect unseen global forces such as currency or commodity flows with their expressions by everyday citizens upon their local 'streets', their publicly viewed manifestations.

The global-local (glocal) movement of urban analysis refreshingly anchors urban discourse in concrete situations. These studies begin to reclaim the notion long forgotten by social science that space is indeed spatial, and not another abstracted metaphor of vague human involvements. Many social scientists have split urban complexity into a series of discrete modalities – economic, geographic, gendered, sexual, social and cultural – and resist any attempt to integrate them into the actual places where human involvements occur: architecture. This has freed urban enquiry from vague generalizations but also from the thought that historically bound socio-architectural horizons are inherently complex and require a more holistic analysis in order to reveal the most basic institutional structures undergirding any urban society.

Over the last forty years research on the Arabian Gulf has pursued highly segregated paths. Beginning in the 1970s, the newly formed countries of the GCC (Gulf Cooperative Council) began to interest outside researchers but their highly exclusionary societies resulted in scant field research and a reliance on internationally available datasets. Two decades later, as Gulf economies exploded, new research focused on urban development and ethnic migration with greater attention paid to social and environmental transformations, particularly identity, human rights, industrialization and the legal and policy frameworks of guest workers. The current analysis of the region has once again broadened and now includes an investigation of the global networks of capital and labour flows that enable massive planning schemes.

A survey of the socio-economic scholarly research reveals several distinct strands of enquiry. The predominant corpus focuses on the geo-politics of



industrial development, petrochemical extraction and the resulting market dynamics. Because of the Gulf region's pace of rapid change, several excellent academic and non-governmental organizations both within the Gulf region and in North America and Europe regularly produce timely analyses and policy recommendations. The Kuwait Programme on Development, Governance and Globalisation in the Gulf States based at the London School of Economics focuses on particular aspects of GCC economies – sovereign wealth funds (Gawdat 2011), capital and labour migration (Chalcraft 2010), down-stream petrochemical development and economic diversification (Hvidt 2013), regional politics (Barakat 2012) – as related to a shifting global economy. The Doha branch office of the Washington, DC based Brookings Institute explores Qatari (Al-Tamimi 2015; Gause 2013) and regional topics particularly the geo-politics of Iraq and Syria.<sup>5</sup>

Nearly as strong, the sociological and anthropological literature examining the phenomenon of rapid social change (Cooke 2014; Maisel and Shoup 2009) includes labour migration (Khalaf et al. 2015; Mahdavi 2011; Winckler 2002, 2009), challenges to Arab identity (Cooke and Lawrence 2005; Dresch and Piscatori 2005) and tribal transformation (Herb 1999). Gardner's (2010) analysis of migrant workers in Bahrain applies equally well to conditions in Qatar. And Fuccaro's (2005) study, also of Bahrain, uniquely combines urban morphology with the anthropology of the Gulf.

Political science and political economy enquiries have gathered momentum in the last decade with a precipitous rise since the so-called 'Arab Spring'. These views typically build upon rentier state theories from the 1980s (Beblawi and Luciani 1987) to explain the conjunction between economics, labour and regime legitimisation (Held and Ulrichsen 2011). Two recent volumes (Gengler 2015; Kropf and Ramady 2015) along with numerous

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<sup>5</sup> The Brookings Doha office came under criticism for receiving \$14.1 million from the Qatari government by *The New York Times*, which alleged such donations have led to implicit agreements that the research and analysis will not negatively criticize Qatar's government or people. See 'Foreign Powers Buy Influence at Think Tank' by Eric Lipton, Brooke Williams and Nicholas Confessore, *The New York Times*, 6 September 2014. Scholars critical of Qatar Foundation's National Priorities Research Program, whose scholarly outcomes are rarely critical of government policy, have raised similar concerns.

policy studies from the last few years (Al-Kuwari 2013; El-Katiri et al. 2011; Gray 2011; Springborg 2013) suggest that the relatively small economies of the Gulf States are struggling to maintain their rentier policies in the face of declining oil and gas prices and reserves, increasing supply from new market entrants such as the United States through shale gas, and a desire to diversify their economies through the licensing of high technology innovation.

Finally, from the architectural and urban studies domain come architectural monographs examining the aesthetics and engineering of specific monumental projects, such as Dubai's many skyscrapers, particularly the Burj Khalifa, currently the world's tallest building, or its many artificial islands. Neighbouring Abu Dhabi also grabs scholarly and media attention for Saadiyat Island, a 27-square-kilometre mixed-use development and cultural centre on an artificial island whose collection of museum franchises are designed by world-renowned architects. Nearby Masdar City, 6 square kilometres and costing \$20 billion designed by Norman Foster + Partners, is purportedly one of the world's most environmentally sustainable, energy efficient cities. In recent years scholars have sought to understand the environmental impact of such large projects and their connection to the global economy (Fraser and Golzari 2013).

Also from the United Arab Emirates come descriptions of 'boom cities'. Dubai, the largest and most rapidly transformed Gulf city, garners the most attention from architects, planners, sociologists and anthropologists who identify specific intersections between urban transformation and cultural identity. Architect Elsheshtawy (2011, 2013) and anthropologist Kanna (2011, 2013) both seek explanatory theories for why Dubai's ruling Emirs chose the development path they did, and how the city's rapid transformation is felt and understood by everyday citizens. Uniting social anthropology and architecture, collaborating authors Caton and Ardalan (2011) have completed their *Persian Gulf Sustainable Urbanism Research Project*, an encyclopaedia of the environmental impact and approaches to environmentally sustainable urbanism and architecture.

Rarely do these four strands – the economic, political, social and architectural – intertwine; and never do they intersect the religious-ontological underpinnings stretching from medieval Muslim scholars to contemporary interpreters.

With regard to Qatar and its capital city, Doha, a handful of excellent studies have appeared in the last few years, notably Kamrava's (2013) book on Qatar's international political agenda, and Gray's (2013) detailed account of the country's economic development. Since the early 1970s only a dozen or so PhD theses from UK universities have looked at Qatar's social, industrial and educational development. And only one recent book, by Salama and Weidmann (2013), purports, according to the title, to 'demystify' Doha's architectural and urban development. In reality, the study, an odd amalgam of Lefebvre's much celebrated spatial triumvirate (lived, perceived, conceived) is without Marxist, or any critical, theory and seeks simply to tell the reader what precincts of Doha are interesting to its visitors. The main thesis of Fromherz's 2012 survey of Qatar is summed up as 'the more things change the more they stay the same', an absurd argument he builds almost solely through internet research. So scant is the literature on Qatar that one of the most highly regarded and widely cited studies, by Jill Crystal, dates from 1995, and Sharon Nagy's unpublished PhD thesis from 1997. Therefore, this thesis fills a scholarly gap in providing genuine insight into Doha's particular architectural-political circumstances, while also adding an original contribution to Arabian Gulf studies and architectural theory through a novel combination of ethnographic field method and philosophical discourse.

This thesis addresses eleven particular situations within Doha, a city whose current size approximates the area of London inside the M25 ring road. This is not customary for PhD research, which is expected to isolate an important but limited problem. In fact, an earlier draft chapter – much reduced in the current text – explored in depth the skyscrapers of Doha's West Bay. While this was instructive, the primary insight was that the significant aspects derived less from their immediate qualities or their context, but rather from their role in the larger order. More to the point, the city is a creation almost

entirely by the Emir and the ruling Al-Thani family, and so might be expected to exhibit an overall purpose or intent. It is only a few decades old in its current incarnation, reinforcing expectations of coherence. It is a capital city, but shares little with, for example, Canberra, Chandigarh or Brasilia; nor is it a pastiche of earlier 'Islamic' cities. It is something much more strange, apparently both arrogant and uncertain of itself, in which familiar types – skyscrapers, shopping malls, even grand mosques – displace their expected meanings within the seeming paradox of an opulent Wahhabism. It became clear that the issue was how the city works as a collective structure. If a city provides the most articulate embodiment of the conditions for culture, the possibility presents itself that the culture itself is the true object of the Emir's efforts.

#### **1.4 Method**

My proposed research is, therefore, synthetic and seeks to operate across several scales. Ethnic migrations, spatial exclusions, ancient beliefs, rapid urbanisation, regime legitimisation and development economics affect the structure of almost any city, particularly those in the Arabian Gulf. To touch on them all requires a unique transdisciplinary understanding that, hopefully, also contributes to methodological approaches in urban studies research.

As a thesis that examines the architecture of Doha the most fundamental research decision was choosing which specific situations to examine. Because I am seeking to understand how individuals experience an orientation to the culture's central concerns and in what ways Doha provides the common ground of difference it was vital that I hear how individuals go about their daily lives, what places people find meaningful and why. Using participant and non-participant observation from a wide cross section of Doha's demographic strata was the key to understanding how the city functions as a collective order.

My desire to understand Doha stereoscopically, from one perspective as what is, and from another as what it seems, means observing the ways in

which its inhabitants 'see' and 'use' the city. By observing how the city functions as an image and an imaginary (Anderson 2006; Taylor 1989) reveals how people situate themselves in the meaningful world of social action, deriving an orientation toward sources of meaning.

Methodologically, by closely observing everyday intersubjective interactions as grounded in some of the places people consider significant begins to surface the dynamic complexity increasingly present in an urbanising world caught between one's everyday life in particular, informal, and mundane situations, and late capitalism's totalising, homogenising, impulse.

### 1.4.1 Primary Data Sources

Data collection for this thesis comes from a variety of individual experiences, both domestic and foreign, the latter including personal, confidential and often 'secret' memos, briefings and diaries of British Foreign Service personnel and corporate officers stationed in Qatar, their documents having been released to the public either thirty or fifty years after their date of origin. These records, held in several British Archives and scholarly and private libraries throughout the United Kingdom, provide detailed accounts of Doha's political, economic, social and architectural development. In consulting the extensive record one develops an intimate sense of the characters involved, their idiosyncrasies and preferences.

The lived experience of Doha becomes known through these daily accounts, particularly during Doha's early transformation in the 1950s and 1960s. The value of the contribution to history that these documents make is equalled by the danger of relying on them too heavily, as, after all, they are only one side of the story, and a Western one at that. But with an almost total blackout of Arabic sources close to the Emir these are nearly all the researcher has to go on. The chart below summarizes the major primary source documents consulted and quoted throughout this thesis, the first group of entries on both lists were originally in Arabic:

Inside Qatar		
Source	Type	Relevance
حكومة قطر	(Hakoomi) Online government website	Qatari laws, policies and data sources

الجزيرة (Al-Jazeera)	Video	Contemporary scenes of Qatar and the GCC
الراية (Al-Reya)	News	Qatar news
الشرق (Al-Sharq)	News	Regional news
الوطن (Al-Watun)	News	Qatar news
الديوان الاميري (Emiri Diwan)		Official site of the Emir of Qatar
وزارة العدل (Ministry of Justice)		Official site of Qatar's Ministry of Justice
الميزان (Al-Meezan)	Legal portal for the State of Qatar	Opinions, rulings Official Gazette
Al Rayyan TV	Video	Journalism on Doha topics
Arab Engineering Bureau	Drawings, photographs	Architectural projects in Doha from 1990s forward
Folkloric Heritage Center	Photographs, artefacts	Qatar history
Friends of the Environment	Photographs	Qatar history, landscapes
<i>The Gulf Times</i> Archives	Newspapers	Journalism on Doha topics
Hamad Hospital	Data, reports	Research on Doha public health
Hamad International Airport	Datasets	Flight volumes
Maersk Oil of Qatar	Data, photographs	Qatar history, oil exploration
Msheireb Properties	Data, photographs, drawings, oral histories	History of Doha and Msheireb neighbourhood
The Peninsula Archives	Newspapers	Journalism on Doha topics
Post Office Museum	Stamps, artefacts	Qatar history
Private libraries	Books, maps, drawings, photographs, oral histories	Topics related to the history and development Qatar
Qatar Foundation	Photographs	History of QF development
Qatar Ministry of Municipality of Urban Planning	GIS datasets, aerial and historic photographs	The architectural and urban development of Doha from 1937 to present
Qatar Museums	Artefacts, photographs, art works	Visual culture of Qatar, information on particular museum projects
Qatar National Library	Books, maps, photographs	Material on the history of Islam and Qatar
Qatar Photographic Society	Photographs	Qatar history
Qatar Radio & TV	Video	Journalism on Doha topics
Qatar Statistics Authority	Datasets	Time series data of Doha/Qatar demographics
Qatar Supreme Education Council	Datasets, reports	Qatar primary education indices
Qatar University SESRI	Datasets, analysis, reports	Original social science research on Qatar topics
Salam Studios	Photographs	Historic photos of Doha
Sheikh Faisal Bin Qassim Al-Thani Private Museum	Photographs, artefacts	Qatari, Arab history
Sheraton Hotels	Photographs	Historic photos of Doha

### Outside Qatar

Source	Type	Relevance
Ibn Al-Athar	History	Medieval Arabic view of the Crusades
Ibn Hanbal, Ahmad	Hadith	Compilation of the sunnah and books of the Hadith
Ibn Khaldun	History	Islamic urban culture
Al-Matroudi	Fiqh	History of Ibn Taymiyyah
Ibn Taymiyyah	Fiqh	Islamic jurisprudence

Ibn Wahhab	Fiqh	Islamic jurisprudence
AECOM	Historical maps, drawings, photographs, contemporary master plans	History central Doha and the Msheireb district
Allies and Morrison Architects	Historical maps, drawings, photographs, contemporary architectural studies	History of central Doha and the Msheireb district
Bibliothèque nationale de France	Newspapers, photographs	History of Qatari–French relations
British Film Institute	Fiction and non-fiction films and videos	38 films related to Qatar’s history from 1955, commercial/industrial, journalistic
British National Archives at Kew	British Foreign Office (FO) Records, memoranda, letters, briefings	History of UK–Qatari relations
British National Archives at Kew	British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Records, memoranda, letters, briefings	History of UK–Qatari relations
British National Archives at Kew	British Ministry of Defence (MOD) Records: maps	History of Qatar’s military development, geographic reconnaissance
The British National Library	India Office Records	History of UK–Qatari relations 1700–1949
The British Royal Air force Archives	Maps, aerial photographs	History of Qatar’s air transportation
The British Royal Museums at Greenwich	Drawings	82 rolled plans for the HH Sheikh of Qatar’s yacht
Llewelyn-Davies Architects	Architectural drawings, reports	1972-5 master plan studies of Doha
London Metropolitan Archives	Corporate bank records for Doha branch offices	History of non-Qatari commercial development
Personal libraries of former Doha residents	Diaries, photographs, videos	From 1967 to the present chronicling changes in Doha and Qatar
SOAS University of London	Unpublished conference papers and proceedings	Analyses of Qatar political, industrial development
St Catherine’s College, Oxford	The personal diary of Sir Rupert Hay	Descriptions of Qatar development during the early years of oil
St Catherine’s College, Oxford	Photography collection	Aerial photographs of Doha 1960s–1970s
US National Archives	Photographs, maps, official correspondence	History of Qatari–US relations
<i>The Telegraph</i> Historical Archive, 1855–2000	Newspapers	Journalism of Qatar topics

As stated above, there are very few original source documents in Arabic that the researcher may consult in understanding Qatar’s political or architectural history. It is widely known that the Emiri Diwan contains a vast archive of such material but any attempts to access them by this author, or those close to him, were met with refusals. In order to complement the copious Western sources detailed above, I was forced to rely on two exceedingly diverse bodies of knowledge: contemporary Arabic

newspapers, and medieval Islamic scholars. Because the regime tightly controls Qatar's media outlets there is little reporting on substantive events, except perhaps those of praise such as new building openings, highway expansions or diplomatic receptions. One need not live in Qatar for long to realize the massive media conglomerate Al-Jazeera rarely turns the cameras upon their homeland. The local newspapers and local TV broadcasts help sketch out general patterns of development, and alert the researcher to public events, but great caution should be exercised in interpreting either their stories or omissions. Participant D, a local newspaper reporter and long-time Qatar resident, shared that they have come to learn over the years what the Diwan will tolerate and simply self-censor stories to avoid problems.

The medieval sources, though centuries apart from the news channels, directly illuminate the nature of Qatar's interpretation of Islamic jurisprudence. Since the late nineteenth century, Qatar's Emirs have fully embraced Wahhabism, a highly conservative eighteenth-century branch of the Hanbali *madhab*, itself the most orthodox of the four schools of Islamic jurisprudence. Much of Ibn Wahhab's theology and teachings drew directly upon the thirteenth-century Damascene Islamic scholar Ibn Taymiyyah. Both Taymiyyah and Wahhab give us the basis for understanding Qatar's *sharī'ah* legal system. This topic is taken up at length in Chapter 10.

As this study examines the experience of rapid urban change it was necessary to see how a wide diversity of Doha residents understand their city. Although a growing body of literature focuses on Arab identity in the face of radical cultural change and on the experiences of migrant labour in the Gulf, little is written on the range of perceptions of the local institutional order among Doha residents. To date, I have not found any study that specifically examines the varied experiences of the city's residents or the relationship of different social divisions to the urban order. My work helps fill this gap in the literature. I used participant and non-participant observation to obtain information about the perceptions and experiences of various resident populations. Although exceedingly time consuming, the methods yielded rich information as I established trust relationships over



many months and years, probing for details that structured survey research would not have uncovered.

#### 1.4.2 *Ethnographic Details*

From May 2011 to June 2014, I conducted thirty one in-depth personal, semi-structured interviews in the US, UK, India and, predominately, in Qatar with a wide cross section of Doha's long-time residents. The individuals interviewed ranged in age from twenty-two to eighty-two years, with an average of forty-six years: 43 per cent female and 57 per cent male (though in some situations more than one person was present). Qatari nationals formed 33 per cent with the rest coming predominately from other Arab countries and the Indian subcontinent. Lengths of time in Doha ranged from two years to sixty-eight with an average of thirty-four years. Roughly 85 per cent were Muslim, 10 per cent Hindi and 5 per cent of no practising faith (see Appendix for details). Within the Muslim fraction nearly all were Sunni, though several came from the Shī'ah, Bahá'í and Alewite traditions.

Rates of marriage and family composition varied widely. Among Qatari men many lived with their wives (several having multiple wives), while just as many were unmarried and lived either with their parents or on their own. Unmarried Qatari women are legally prohibited to live on their own and just as many of my interviewees were divorced mothers who lived with one or both of their parents as the number of those married with children living with their husband. Lower-paid male service labourers are typically not allowed to bring their families to Doha and they lived with men of their own age, ethnicity and nationality, all often hailing from the same village in India or Pakistan. A small fraction of the interviewees were high-paid managers working in professional offices who came from North Atlantic countries and were in most cases accompanied by their families.

The interviewees ranged in social and economic status from members of the royal family to a household of Filipina maids who have 'absconded', to use the local parlance, from their *kafala* sponsors, and gone into hiding.

Similarly, levels of education ranged from incomplete high school education to doctorates. Nearly all the interviews were conducted in English, with

some in Arabic, Farsi, Malayalam and Tagalog. In the case of the latter three languages English-speaking translators who were part of the interview process accompanied me. Levels of literacy, status and nationality indicated degrees of access to urban institutions. Gender seemed to be the first determinant of spatial or institutional access. Fewer distinctions were made on religious grounds as nearly all were Sunni Muslims, as are the majority of Qatari nationals.

### ***1.4.3 The Interview Process***

The interview process on average lasted sixty minutes, and each interview was digitally recorded except in several cases where the participant permitted only note-taking. Qatar's highly observant government apparatus caused all participants, without exception, to distrust the process. I assured them of complete anonymity in all aspects of my research and when cited here I have changed specific names of people, workplaces and organizations. In some instances I have combined statements of several participants in order to obscure identifying details. I have also removed grammatical idiosyncrasies of grammar or utterances from the quotations. Each interviewee was presented with a brief description of the aims and objectives of the research and how it was hoped their input would contribute specifically to the thesis and more generally to urban studies in the Arabian Gulf. In all instances consent forms were signed once I had explained the method of data protection, anonymity and that we can stop the interview process at any time for any reason.

Each interviewee was assigned an alphabetical letter that appeared on a demographic data collection sheet that also included age, occupation, contact details, level of education, and occupation. These forms were kept in a separate, locked file within my office. The recorded interviews and transcriptions were kept on a removable hard drive stored in a locked cabinet within my home. The protocols followed to protect the research subjects are both those set by London Metropolitan University (permission granted May 2011) and those set by the US Institutional Review Board requirements in the social and behavioural sciences. The reference style used

in this thesis follows the American Psychological Association Style Guide (APA Style 2010).

The interviews were usually conducted in each person's home, although twice I held them in my office for convenience, and three times in the participant's place of work. In one instance, I interviewed a man while he was driving, and in five others at neutral locations such as coffee shops or restaurants. Two interviews were conducted over the phone. I carried out follow-up interviews with four participants to clarify particular comments or pieces of information.

I entered this study not knowing exactly where the 'data' would lead me or what I might uncover. I maintained a consistent line of semi-structured questions related to the built environment. Each interview began with basic demographic facts, such as age, education, marital/family status, length of time in Qatar and circumstances of immigration. All the respondents shared a common experience of often changing homes, for example every few years. This thread allowed me to probe more deeply the circumstances of the move, and their perceptions and memories of home, neighbourhood and the intimate situations of daily life as they experienced them throughout their lives.

Because I was not seeking explanatory theories of causation it was not necessary to pay exacting attention to each utterance. However, the interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded at the sentence or paragraph level. This form of analysis allowed me to see patterns as the data were being collected, giving me increasing knowledge of what participants might or might not find meaningful in their lives.

Labelling topics and developing categories surfaced essential spatial and institutional paradigms that led directly to identifying the eleven situational studies that form Part III of this thesis. These range in depth of tradition and breadth of manifestation within their category and between categories. This matrix structures the entire thesis' enquiry into the nature of the urban order.

#### ***1.4.4 Identification of Situational Loci***

We begin with the mosque as the most important – and thus deepest – institution of daily life in the antique and modern Gulf city. Nearly as deep are the souq, diwan, majlis and home. All five categories possess diverse architectural types within typical universal conditions (see Chapter 2 for greater detail on this distinction). For example, the decorum present in the country's grand Ibn Abdul Wahhab state mosque varies only by a matter of degree not kind when compared to the far more humble neighbourhood Portacabin mosque. These five types are examined in Chapter 7.

Chapter 8 looks at institutions that have a basis in Islamic and European history – the university, museum and arcade (or cultural village in our case). These three institutions are much grander in actual size but have less universal access and thus are not as widely shared or deeply orienting as those seen in Chapter 7.

The largest, and most modern, of the institutions examined in Chapter 9 might broadly be called 'infrastructure'. These are mechanisms that make the modern state of Qatar function. Massive buildings such as stadiums, airports, hospitals and convention centres are shared by different segments of the population in great numbers. Streets, roads and, incipiently, a metro unite the entire city creating quite literally the common ground – the only parts of Doha truly shared by all strata of society – which much of this thesis seeks to understand.

The three chapters of Part III begin with intimate, often ubiquitous (mosque, majlis, house) institutions of deep historical and ontological orientation. Within this category are included institutions that are not Islamic but which nonetheless act as a dialectical reference to understand the range of cultural articulations and their claims upon diverse populations – churches and shopping malls for example. The situations of Chapter 8 are not as ontologically significant as those of the previous chapter but have a broader inclusivity within their diversity. And finally Chapter 9 might be considered

the least ontologically meaningful but the most ontically present instantiation of a regime desirous of global recognition.

In sum, the movement from depth of topic as ontologically and ethically orienting (Chapter 7) towards breadth of embodiment as visually and physically enabling (Chapter 9) was given to me in the first instance as the concerns of my interview participants; secondarily these observations were confirmed by my field notebooks and thirdly by a combination of Western contemporary observers whose descriptions were compared with those of medieval Islamic scholars, for example Ibn Khaldun on Cairo.

#### ***1.4.5 Sampling Frame Selection***

Researchers in the social sciences argue that qualitative work must begin 'where we are' (Lofland and Lofland 1984). Living continuously in Qatar alongside my participants, I was interested in how others experienced the breath-taking speed of urban and institutional transformation. My 'embeddedness' in the city, Arabic language ability, many years of living, travelling and working throughout the Middle East and employment with a leading Qatari organization gave me credibility and a high level of acceptance within various communities. With at least 30 per cent of Doha's population coming from the Indian state of Kerala I felt it important to access this population and began learning conversational Malayalam, which proved invaluable in granting an instant level of trust and access as, in their view, no one from the West they know of has ever taken the time to speak with them in their language and with good reason as Malayalam is not for the linguistically faint of heart. Rarely were my enquiries for an interview rejected by either gender, and only in a few circumstances did women request a male relative be present.

Having experienced the interview and the topics discussed, I asked at the end of each interview for names of friends or relatives who might also contribute to my research. In most cases my phone rang the next day with either a previous participant passing on names of people whom she contacted and who had agreed to meet with me, or by the referent herself.

Participants from high economic or social strata usually felt comfortable with any topic of conversation, often straying into deeply held memories and personal histories. As the saying goes, in ethnography ‘you are the cheapest therapist in town’; and this certainly seemed the case as many expressed joy, often with tears, that someone cared to hear their stories. For those of lower social standing or who were clearly involved in illegal activity, such as working outside the terms of their immigration visa, or trafficking in narcotics, a much greater degree of trust was required. Through a network of personal relationships built over many years I was able to speak with what is perhaps Qatar’s most vulnerable population.

While their insights were profound, if not heartbreaking, they often came with dangerous expectations. Being white, male, American and employed by a top government institution may have granted confidence but also a projection of power that I could solve their legal or financial problems. One must remain circumspect in these situations that what is revealed might be highly fictionalized to serve ulterior motives. Indeed, I overheard one such participant say ‘he’s *my* American, don’t talk to him’. From this perspective my participants of all social strata may have felt I was giving them ‘voice’; speaking for them in a hope I could either improve their particular situation or, more grandly, change the laws of Qatar. It was not my intention to give voice to the marginalized but I was nonetheless speaking for and about a very foreign culture.

#### **1.4.6 Who Speaks for Whom?**

Long before Edward Said penned *Orientalism* (1979), his hugely influential critique of Western views of the Middle East, scholars struggled with how to make sense of a vast geography stretching from West Africa to Indonesia. Calling such an enormous area one thing – Islamic, Arab, Middle Eastern – justifiably invites sharp criticism and accusations of bigotry and xenophobia. Said argues that Western thinkers can never escape the image of Arab culture as licentious, weak, effeminate, which was seared into cultural consciousness by writers and artists depicting the ‘other’ for over two centuries of colonial rule. Such a view, on Said’s account, dooms forever any Western attempt to accurately understand a foreign culture. His ultimate

point is not Orientalism's truthfulness or mendacity but rather, as he says of his own belief, 'that Orientalism is more particularly valuable as a sign of European-Atlantic power over the Orient than it is as a veridic discourse' (Said 1979:23).

This position becomes clear during the debate that raged between Said, Lewis and Grabar in the pages of *The New York Times* (Grabar, Lewis, Said 1982) where the latter two scholars of the Middle East declare Said guilty of exactly his own critique: seeing all Western scholars as cut from the same cloth, guilty of hegemonic ambition in the attempt to continually subjugate the subaltern regardless of stated intention. In other words, if the West is guilty of essentializing the East, then it is acceptable for Western scholars to experience the same prejudice. Such a desire on Said's part, however, erases the difference between truth and value, leaving the researcher from one culture whose interest lies in another in an awkward position by devaluing the object of attention. Said admits that he does not have in mind one type of representational theory of how one might 'correctly' write about 'the other'; nor does he address the question of whether the biases of a foreign agent writing about my culture are better or worse than my own perceptions about myself or my culture.

Perhaps because Said was not a Middle East scholar he was unable to move beyond Saussure's binary structuralism in his own field of English literature and could only posit that understanding comes through identifying differences. This line of reasoning seems to find its origin in Hegel's master-slave dialectic in Chapter IV of *Phenomenology of Mind* (2003) where each party needs the other in a structure of mutuality. The master can only understand himself as free or superior by ruling over someone else; conversely the slave comes to understand the power he possesses by enabling his master's self-understanding as master. As a form of binarism the master-slave dialectic signifies (Saussure) in what ways the two need each other. There is nothing inherent in the physical properties of either person that makes them who they are, just as there is nothing inherent in the colour red that makes me stop when seeing a stop light: the meanings are

derived from the context of knowing ourselves only in so far as we are not the 'other'.

Bhabha (1985) criticizes this kind of binarism saying:

It is this ambivalence that makes the boundaries of colonial 'positionality' – the division of self/other – and the question of colonial power the differentiation of colonizer/colonized – different from both the Hegelian master/slave dialectic or the phenomenological projection of Otherness.

(Bhabha 1985:150)

Ambivalence, or what Bhabha calls 'hybridity', describes the ability of both colonizer and colonized to possess more than one *Weltanschauung*. In eighteenth-century India, for instance, Warren Hastings, India's first governor (r. 1773–1785), advocated that members of the East India Company should deeply master the languages and customs of the people they ruled. British writer, and long-time resident of India, William Dalrymple has recently called this period a unique moment of mutual understanding which saw a great many interracial marriages seemingly based on deep love and respect for each other, as chronicled in his book *White Mughals* (2004).<sup>6</sup> For Bhabha British colonizers might possess deep local knowledge out of respect or curiosity but also in a Foucauldian sense of acquiring knowledge for the sake of power to explicitly control India through laws, and implicitly through opinions that circulate freely within society constructing and reinforcing beliefs of truth that are in reality built upon biases (Fry 2012).

For the colonized, hybridity's double consciousness means living within a structure of authority that might hover between forced acquiescence and submission on one's own terms. A simple example of this in my own research is –because of my Arabic language skills – I am often referred to as *mesheh* (Christian). Now, this can mean a special status as a member of '*ahl al-kitāb*' (people of the Scripture), a reference to Jews and Christians sharing in the same Abrahamic origins as Muslims as stated in the Qur'ān: 'And indeed, among the People of the Scripture (أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ) are those who believe

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<sup>6</sup> According to Dalrymple that period was short-lived and came to an abrupt end under Queen Victoria's puritanical zeal.



in Allah and what was revealed to you and what was revealed to them, (being) humbly submissive to Allah. They do not exchange the verses of Allah for a small price' (3:199, Sahih International translation). Or alternatively, it can mean I possess a level of ignorance as described a few verses earlier: 'If only the People of the Scripture had believed, it would have been better for them. Among them are believers, but most of them are defiantly disobedient' (3:110, Sahih International translation). The double hybridity on my part and for those around me means I may appear at times to have a privileged status (voluntarily submitting to the laws by which I am treated differently); or, at other times I might represent a corrupting impiety that must be brought under control (total acquiescence).

So either the Muslim in Doha can tolerate Christmas sales promotions in the local shopping malls, or a Qatari student at the American Jesuit University, Georgetown, can ignore the 15-m tall Christmas tree that adorns their lobby each December. Or, the hybridity can mean petitioning the authorities that such icons are forbidden (*haram*) and should be banned. The double hybridity clearly exists for both the researcher and the subject. There is never a point at which 'the other' no longer holds sway.

Trinh Minh-Ha (1991) cautions against viewing 'the other' as unique, especially when racial differences are present. For her, this is another form of essentialization that erodes identity rather than allowing differences to exist alongside identity. For me, this meant not seeing my participants as 'special' or in need of advocacy. I freely admit the challenge in resisting this impulse, as my participants and I lived parallel lives that often intersected throughout Doha. But the goal remained to capture each life story in such a way that I could see it within the particularities of their sedimented lifeworld, and not, as Said warns, simply from a position of comparative differences. But I owe a great debt to writers like Said and Bhabha, and particularly Gadamer, who challenge the researcher to question their own positions of power and knowledge, to remain aware of their horizons. Banerjee (1995) echoes this view in arguing writers from the developed world cannot adequately describe the reality of someone from the developing world. She advises that researcher and participants each speak

from their own positions: as opposed to an outside investigator viewing others as different, we might take difference as a starting point. This is precisely what Gadamer calls a 'fusion of horizons' and is one of the chief justifications for the hermeneutic approach used throughout this thesis. There is no Archimedean point of objectivity that erases the dialogue.

#### **1.4.7 Non-participant Observation**

Living continuously for six years in the site of my research meant every event, great or small, sacred or profane, contributed in some way to this thesis. Every cab ride, meeting, class taught, trip to the grocer was a chance to interact with 'the other'. Every traffic jam, *eid* holiday, Friday *khuṭbah* sermon, National Day celebration, wedding, hunting trip or just licking a stamp with the Emir's effigy was a moment of cultural articulation that placed claims upon me just as if they did for Doha's 2 million other residents. And like me, 90 per cent of those residents were not from Qatar, and very likely were experiencing new phenomena every day, if not every hour. I began capturing these moments in sketch books, and with digital cameras. I saw in the daily rhythms of my own life patterns worth documenting. I tasted the sweetness in a bowl of fresh camel's milk, felt the sting from a sandstorm's fury and every Friday morning I heard the call to prayer blanket the city. These descriptions read like an Orientalist's diary, and I suppose they are. But deeper than these 'desert' experiences I began understanding what it was to be a prisoner in a foreign land and at the mercy of someone else in the *kafala* labour system that ties residency status to employer. I saw a legal system's glaring racial injustices. And I began to see, perhaps for the first time in my life, that no matter how hard I might try to understand or sympathize with another person's plight I simply could never know the depths of their pain and suffering, but I could know it was there. And that was a start.

Perhaps just dropping into Doha from time to time would have made this project easier. It certainly would have made my analysis simpler. The field notebook served two very valuable functions, neither of which I foresaw at the start. The first was helping to ascertain a saturation point for the in-depth, semi-structured interviews. As I transcribed each interview I began to

hear echoes of events I had previously noted in the sketchbook. And conversely, my diary entries began to increasingly forecast what interviewees were telling me. Thus, in accordance with the Belmont Report's (1979) basic ethical principles of respect for persons, beneficence and justice, I felt by the thirty-first interview that the risks of harm to my participants were outweighing any new knowledge additional interviews might yield and I therefore ended this phase of the research. The second advantage of the notebook is mirrored in the commitment to live within my area of research, what I hope in this document is a narrative of the richness and depth of urban life in radical transformation.

But such an immersion, however poetic or nostalgic or life changing, has its dangers. First, it is tempting to feel one has disclosed the 'truthfulness' of the culture. This thesis is not about facts or truths but rather about understandings and interpretations. Second, the depth of my ethnographic method in Doha has provided valuable insights that could have only become known through years of building trust with my participants. Again, the danger in permanently living the same life as my research subjects inherently prejudices what they tell me. It has been a continuous struggle to bracket out my judgments and let the voices of the collaborators be heard in a manner consistent with their own beliefs. The prejudice of opinion on my part justifies one of the reasons why I have adopted an interpretive methodology, described in detail in the next chapter.