

Dubai: Behind the Scenes - A study of hidden everyday spaces in Dubai

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Research Question:

Rather than the stereotypical image of Dubai as a city of artificial islands, ultra-luxurious settings, thematic shopping malls, high-aesthetic hotels and other spectacular architecture, this research asked: where in Dubai might we find everyday spaces used by low income groups, how do they use those spaces, and how do they make them their own?

The spectrum of research on Dubai has focused on polar representations of the city. It has typically portrayed Dubai's rapid urban growth as a sign of spectacle, and its labour camps as an exemplification of the dark side of the city. This study explored the struggles and experiences of the residents of Dubai through examining their everyday lives. In doing so it expands the spectrum of research on Dubai and goes beyond the polar representations of the city.

Methodology + Findings:

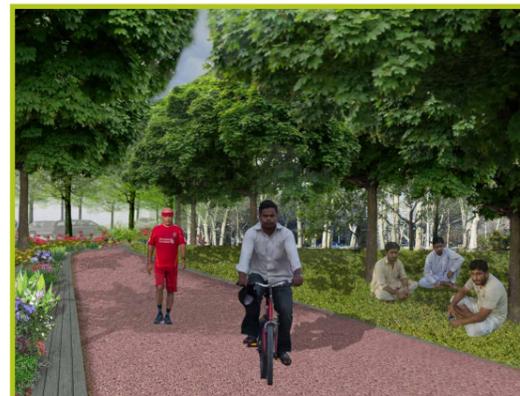
The research investigates four settings in different low-income neighbourhoods in Dubai and explores the various ways the users appropriate the spaces to suit their needs; this is achieved through detailed analysis of users, temporal use patterns, urban morphology, and history of these spaces. A key finding is the resistant nature of these spaces and how the low income inhabitants claim the settings and physically adapt them to be more responsive to their life patterns. Stemming from the research, a design strategy is proposed in one of the study sites as a response to the needs of the inhabitants as observed throughout the study. The strategy forms part of the conclusion that should lead to a more comprehensive view of the lives the low-income inhabitants lead, the types of spaces they require, and the changes that occur to their use patterns throughout the day. The intention in this research is to create and facilitate a flexible model that would cater to the needs of a large sector of inhabitants in Dubai who are being neglected and overlooked in the design and planning decisions of the city.



Scenes of everyday life in Dubai.



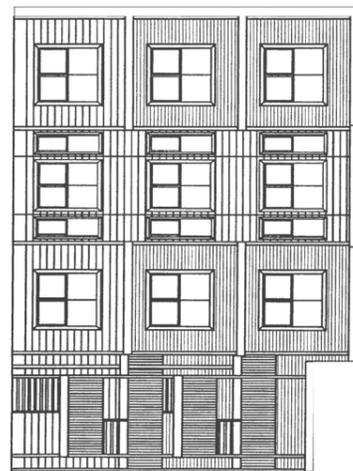
Advertisement board in a low income neighbourhood.



Potential uses of the space.



Culture of Cycling.



Section exploring the potential uses of the space.



Appropriating spaces to suit the needs of the low-income inhabitants.