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Cosmopolitanism in Exclusionary Contexts

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Abstract:

While over time mass migration has brought about *de facto* cosmopolitan situations in Gulf cities, foreign residents continue to experience segregation and endure exclusionary policies and practices on a daily basis. This article unpacks two sets of internal tensions that characterise cosmopolitanism in the Gulf, through a comparison of cosmopolitan discourses and practices in Abu Dhabi, Riyadh and Jeddah. The first tension relates to official discourses and policies: Saudi and Emirati governments design and enforce exclusionary policies, and, at the same time, publicly endorse cosmopolitan ideals and projects – consisting in Islamic universalism for Saudi cities, and the rhetoric of tolerance for the UAE. Such cosmopolitan claims are, moreover, reflected in the aspirations and subjectivities of migrants and local citizens, while also generating feelings of alienation. We call this discursive paradox "cosmopolitanism in denial." The second tension concerns migrants' everyday practices and modes of consumption in urban spaces. We argue that these are best understood as a form of segregated cosmopolitanism, whereby both Gulf citizens and the various migrant communities explicitly acknowledge, and at times consume, urban diversity, but also maintain certain boundaries. Drawing on an analysis of both governmental and individual discourses, as well as on ethnographic observations collected over a decade of fieldwork in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, our research engages with theories of cosmopolitanism from a situated perspective. As such, it moves away from the dominant unitary and normative approach to cosmopolitanism, and instead emphasises both the resilience and transience of everyday cosmopolitan situations.

Keywords:

Cosmopolitanism, migration, identity, cities, segregation, Gulf

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In Arab Gulf cities, the beginning of the oil era was concomitant with a rapid, and huge, increase in regional and international immigration. Arab, Asian and European migrants flocked to the Gulf, bringing along their skills, but also their social, gender, cultural, religious and political identities to sparsely populated countries, such as Qatar, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and, equally, to larger societies like Oman and Saudi Arabia. As a result, Gulf monarchies have the highest ratio of foreign residents worldwide: in Qatar and the Emirates, today migrants account for up to 90% of the total population and 98% of the labour force.

Yet, given the legal and political context of the Gulf hindering incorporation, foreign residents have not been formally integrated into these host societies. Indeed, citizenship laws across the GCC, adopted following the birth of modern independent states over the course of the twentieth century, were underpinned by a definition of citizenship based on ethnicity and autochthony; in practice, access to citizenship was prevented or heavily restricted from the late 1970s onwards (Beaugrand, 2018; 'Abd al-Hādī Khalaf et al., 2014; Partrick, 2012; Okruhlik, 1999; Vora, 2013). Moreover, regardless of the actual duration of their residence in the Gulf, foreigners were, and still are, considered "temporary labour" and kept "in check" (Longva, 1999) by way of formal regulations (such as the sponsorship system or *kafāla*),[4] as well as informal or semi-formal practices, all of which resulted in exclusion and segmentation.

In the 2000s, these structural forms of exclusion of foreign residents were further compounded when Gulf states' migration policies took a more repressive turn. For economic diversification went hand in hand with "Saudisation" and "Emiratisation" policies with a view to replacing foreigners with Gulf nationals in the workforce. Such policies did not, however,

[4] *Kafāla* is the legal institution through which foreign labour is managed in GCC countries. It binds migrant workers to a sponsor (*kafīl*), usually their employer – be it an individual citizen or a company – who is responsible for their residence (*iqāma*) in the country. Foreign workers earning above an income threshold can, in turn, sponsor their own family. Residence is thus conditional on having a valid work permit, or on being the dependent of someone in possession of a valid work permit; being unemployed, getting fired, or retiring means being unable to remain legally in the country.

lead to lower immigration rates but, instead, to a worsening of already highly insecure living conditions for foreign workers. Besides, in the wake of the 2011 Arab uprisings and, more recently, the diplomatic conflict pitting Saudi Arabia and the UAE against Qatar, as well as the war in Yemen, new migration politics, geared towards heightened control and discriminatory policies, emerged in the region in a bid to stem migration flows and exercise greater oversight over immigrants' lives (Lori, 2011). Migrant selection on the basis of nationality has become more pervasive: for those viewed as a security threat (such as Egyptians, Syrians, or Lebanese Shias), access has been severely restricted, and sometimes denied altogether, a policy that has also led to the mass deportation of Yemenis and East Africans, in particular in Saudi Arabia (Thiollet, 2015). Conversely for a minority of privileged migrants, visa restrictions have been eased, in the United Arab Emirates, with the implementation of a skill- and investment-based "golden visa" in the late 2010s.

Two distinct lines of inquiry have been pursued to date in the literature on migration in the Gulf: on the one hand, a body of scholarly and militant writings has denounced illiberal policies and the mistreatment of migrant workers, bringing to light the disenfranchisement of lower-skilled immigrants (Gardner et al., 2013; Human Rights Watch, 2014); on the other hand, more recently another strand of scholarship, focusing on middle and upper classes, has explored power relations within and across migrant communities (Ali, 2010; Kanna, 2011; Vora, 2013). Taken together, these works, along with the findings of urban studies, document and highlight the extensive spatial segregation that prevails in the Gulf (Dresch, 2006; Elsheshtawy, 2019; Khalaf, 2006). This refers not only to the segregation of citizens and non-citizens across the GCC, but also, within each Gulf state, to the gender, class and ethnic segregation operating among citizens themselves (Sunnis and Shias, for instance) as well as among immigrant communities. And yet, as city builders in their own right working in the construction and service sectors, and as city dwellers, migrants have made a vital contribution to Gulf urban

development.

In this particular context, describing the Gulf context as "cosmopolitan" may seem like a contradiction in terms and at odds with the ideological assumptions on which the very notion of cosmopolitanism is premised: besides an emphasis on diversity, scholarly definitions are usually laden with normative expectations that appear incompatible with those "exclusionary contexts" typical of the Gulf (Parreñas et al., 2019; Pilati, 2015).

Which cosmopolitanism in the Gulf?

Gulf cities evince both "superdiverse" populations and exclusionary politics, and we use this *de facto* paradoxical combination as an entry point to the "dialectics of urban cosmopolitism," to borrow from Pnina Werbner (2015), which we investigate from the perspective of segregated contexts. The notion of cosmopolitanism that we draw on combines two dimensions that are usually treated as distinct categories in the academic literature: cosmopolitan aspirations and norms, on the one hand, and cosmopolitan practices and competence, on the other hand (Amit & Gardiner Barber, 2015). Indeed, the cosmopolitan individual is usually defined in academic literature as someone who does not merely live with difference in the manner of a passive coexistence, but instead engages "willingly" in intercultural relations, thus achieving competence in, and familiarity with a plurality of cultures (Hannerz, 1990, p. 239). In the normative sense of the word, cosmopolitanism also implies supporting the "rights of others," whether through moral prescripts, legal advocacy, or *ad hoc* practical solutions (Benhabib, 2004).

Among historians of the Middle East, and of the Muslim world more generally, the notion of cosmopolitanism is controversial, and this has resulted in contested historiographies revolving around colonial and, in more recent periods, vernacular forms of cosmopolitanism in

an Islamic context;[5] the pertinence of the very idea of a colonial cosmopolitanism, especially in territories under Ottoman or British rule; and the overall relevance of cosmopolitanism *per se* to depict historical dynamics in the Middle East. The crux of such historiographical debates is the issue of interpreting the Ottoman Empire – with its plural, multilingual administration, as well as its formal and informal regulations of diversity and mobility. Several historians, keen to qualify nostalgic accounts celebrating the culture of coexistence typically associated with the Ottoman Empire (Makdisi, 2019), have pointed out that historical forms of cosmopolitanism in the Middle East usually amounted to a mere containment of difference or "a basic level of coexistence," as noted in the case of the multi-confessional city of Istanbul in the early modern Ottoman period (Eldem, 2013, p. 219). Others have questioned whether the notion of cosmopolitanism was accurate to describe a "specific way of life and collective identity," in particular in port cities (Driessen, 2005, p. 135).

In the pre-oil era, port cities in the Arab Gulf and on the Red Sea coast had a longstanding history of exchange and circulation, especially thanks to Muslim pilgrimages: as such, Ottoman or British colonial influences cannot solely account for cosmopolitanism, which was also driven by local dynamics, notably the presence of different religious communities, fostering interactions between various groups. Polyglot, ethnically and religiously diverse merchant communities also coexisted in urban trade centres, such as Manama (Fuccaro, 2009). Moreover, the Hejaz, a region characterised by diversity for the longest time, has been,

[5] Middle Eastern historiography scholars have highlighted the many facets of cosmopolitanism over different periods of time and in various contexts: in particular, they have attempted to write back into history competing notions of universalism that had emerged in colonised societies themselves and stemmed from their own traditions, besides imperial and Western understanding and regulation of diversity. This has led, among other things, to an examination of the many forms of cosmopolitanism in the Indian Ocean and the Muslim world (Alavi, 2015; Bose & Manjapra, 2010). One edited volume, *Struggling with history*, provides a particularly compelling account of such debates on the cultural and political impact of diversity and circulation on urban centres that, from East Africa to India, connected various places around the Indian Ocean (Simpson & Kresse, 2008).

throughout its history, a site of mass circulations, be it pilgrims or merchants converging on Mecca, Medina and Jeddah, a process which has shaped local identities and cultures under Ottoman, British, and Saudi rule successively (Faroqhi, 2014; Slight, 2015; Yamani, 2009). This historical form of cosmopolitanism is generally set in sharp contrast to present-day "multinational" or "global" situations in which, according to Arang Keshavarzian, "social diversity is part of and essential for the city, but this pluralism is simultaneously confronted with a host of laws, security apparatuses, and forms of spatial segregation" (2016, p. 55).

In Middle Eastern historiography, the idea of a cosmopolitan ability to "[move] comfortably in diversity" (Sennett, 1974, p. 17) has, however, attracted strong criticism for being merely the preserve of the elite (Hanley, 2008; Zubaida, 2002). In her study of Jeddah in the late Ottoman empire, historian Ulrike Freitag (2014) has argued that a non-elitist understanding of cosmopolitanism requires casting aside the normative and political assumptions bound up with the notion, and instead shifting the focus to quotidian practices of peaceful coexistence. Freitag's critique, and class-based approaches in general, speak to contemporary situations as well, in which a class-dependent cosmopolitan ethos has proved to be the distinctive attribute of either mobile, global "flexible citizens" (Ong, 1998) or the upper classes, who ostentatiously display their cosmopolitan capital as a means of legitimising their dominant social position, as in the case of Egypt (de Koning, 2009; Peterson, 2011).

However, recent debates revolving around subaltern, working-class, or "discrepant" cosmopolitanism (Clifford, 1992; Werbner, 1999) have been conducive to approaches to the cosmopolitan condition that apply to dominated groups as well. As such, cosmopolitanism may be understood as the default condition of the majority of the world's population in a global era (Beck, 2006), regardless of one's willingness to engage in relationships with others. By the same token, the cosmopolitan condition also concerns those who are cast out, discarded, and rejected (De Genova & Peutz, 2010); in an illiberal and exclusionary context, this can even take

the shape of an "abject cosmopolitanism" (Nyers, 2003) – a political appropriation of the cosmopolitan rationale by the cast-offs themselves (the undocumented worker, the overstayer, the asylum seeker, etc.). By emphasising the quotidian and political dimensions of cosmopolitanism, such insights have brought it back into scholarly debates, thus allowing us to reclaim a notion that some had deemed "exploded" or outdated (Braidotti et al., 2013).

Building on the idea of a plurality of cosmopolitanisms (Hanley, 2008; Amar & Singerman, 2006; Schiller & Irving, 2015), this article draws on the notion of cosmopolitanism in three different ways: first, as a set normative references in emic discourses; secondly, as a means of describing the lived experiences of residents in diverse cities; and thirdly, as an analytical tool. These dimensions are interconnected and entail the following three questions underpinning our argument: in what ways does the notion of cosmopolitanism feature in the public discourses of Saudi and Emirati authorities, as well as in the aspirations of their citizens, and those of foreign residents themselves? How do cosmopolitan encounters actually happen in these highly segregated urban environments? In what ways, finally, can an analysis of various Gulf contexts result in a sharper notion of cosmopolitanism, hence a richer heuristic concept, so that we are better equipped to understand contemporary dynamics of integration and exclusion in increasingly diverse urban settings, including those outside the Gulf?

We explore these issues through a comparison of the discourses and practices of migrants and locals in three Gulf cities – Riyadh and Jeddah (Saudi Arabia), and Abu Dhabi (UAE). We argue that Saudi and Emirati urban settings, marked as they are by ethnic and cultural diversity, as well as by spatial segregation coupled with exclusionary policies, generate specific modes of engagement with diversity.

First, we demonstrate that Saudi and Emirati governments have consistently made cosmopolitan claims, yet also pursued policies that perpetuate, and even reinforce the containment and segregation of foreign residents: in effect, they both deny and claim the

diversity of their societies. Public pronouncements touting the Gulf's cosmopolitanism are closely connected to the conscious efforts of these governments to devise an international image of their countries: in the Saudi case, this image is built on the idea of Islamic universalism; as for the UAE, it consists in both a form of consumerist globalisation intended for international tourists and a broader political project formed around the notion of tolerance. These official narratives have, moreover, become woven into the discourses and aspirations of locals and migrants themselves: these combine expectations of inclusion and experiences as well as perceptions of discrimination. We call this discursive tension *cosmopolitanism in denial*: for different reasons, such denial permeates both governmental discourses and migrant subjectivities.

Secondly, we show that this tension translates into everyday encounters in Gulf cities that take the form of a "segregated cosmopolitanism" (Mermier, 2015, p. 213). Residential segregation and differentiated modes of self-presentation in public spaces reflect, and deepen, the hierarchical segmentation and policing along class, gender, age, national, and racial lines that prevail in these cities. At the same time, the diverse environment characteristic of Gulf cities fosters the emergence of cosmopolitan urban cultures, in particular through consumption practices from which fleeting, and contained encounters with the city's diversity arise. Our analysis is especially attuned to the social interactions and subjectivities of second-generation immigrants, and is based on micro-ethnographies of cosmopolitan ways of life observed in public spaces and places of consumption.

We suggest that Saudi and Emirati cities provide a unique perspective on cosmopolitanism, which reveals the tension between inclusion and exclusion, reflects the ambivalence of cosmopolitan discourses and aspirations, and bears witness to the transient and fragile nature of cosmopolitan encounters and moments.

Methodology

In order to investigate cosmopolitanism in exclusionary contexts, we have used qualitative discourse analysis and conducted urban ethnographies in three cities: Abu Dhabi, Riyadh, and Jeddah. Although lacking Dubai's global exposure and glamour, these urban societies feature comparable levels of diversity. Riyadh and Jeddah are the main cities of Saudi Arabia, a country that, until the reforms of the 2010s, kept its borders closed to tourism and exercised tight political control over cultural globalisation. We compare case studies that, both at the national level and on an urban scale, present similarities as well as differences. Saudi Arabia and the UAE lie at both ends of the GCC demographic spectrum: Saudi Arabia, the largest country (33.5 million people), has the largest immigrant group in population stocks (around 11 million people) but the smallest in share of total population (one third); whereas the UAE (9.4 million people) holds, along with Qatar, the largest proportion of immigrants relative to the population as a whole (89%) over a small total of nationals. Both countries enjoy high levels of urbanisation – 86,5% for the UAE, and 83,8% for Saudi Arabia (UNDESA-Population Division, 2017).

In the UAE, fieldwork was carried out in the capital, Abu Dhabi (2010-2016) – a city less studied than neighbouring Dubai –, focusing on young Emirati nationals and Arab foreign residents (Egyptians, Lebanese, Palestinians, Jordanians, Syrians, Iraqis, Yemenis, and other GCC nationalities) who grew up in the city. In Saudi Arabia, fieldwork took place in Riyadh and Jeddah (2006, 2013-2015, 2017) and looked at Eritrean, Sudanese, Ethiopian, Yemeni, and Pakistani immigrants. Our research is based on participant observation of social interactions, spaces, and practices. Over the course of our many stays in the region, we drew on both individual and institutional discourses to complement our ethnographic findings and, to this end, we carefully analysed these discourses in light of the specific contexts and referential and value systems in which they had occurred.

Cosmopolitanism in denial

As a result of the diversification of oil economies and the second oil boom, Gulf monarchies have nurtured new international ambitions since the 2000s. Indeed, both Saudi Arabia and the UAE have engaged in a flurry of diplomatic activity and pursued a wide range of high-profile initiatives and ventures designed to enhance their international reputation – organization of massive events, generous donations in terms of international development and humanitarian aid, domestic programmes with global reach in the education, media, or environment sectors, and so on. These policies are often construed as "nation branding" or "territorial branding" (Corbillé, 2014), and are intended to promote soft power strategies. They are, moreover, informed by a historical narrative of Saudi and Emirati identity, as well as integral to an ever-increasing interest in building *turāth* (heritage).

At the same time, besides labour and migration reforms, new and increasingly brutal apparatuses of control have been introduced in both Saudi Arabia and the UAE to further limit migrants' agency, especially targeting the low-skilled working classes, racialised groups (including Africans and Yemenis), and other categories, such as "irregular migrants" (Thiollet, 2019, p. 11). The UAE, while granting long-term residence rights or "golden visas" to wealthy expatriates, has shifted to a policy of strict enforcement of those laws designed to prevent the settlement of lower-class immigrants (even those who have been long-term residents). Such discriminatory policies not only signal an emerging global race for talent, but are also evidence of a global class divide in residence rights, a phenomenon that has been observed in liberal democracies as well (Mau, 2010; Shachar & Hirschl, 2014; Thiollet, 2019).

Both the UAE and Saudi Arabia actively want and need to maintain high levels of immigration in order to sustain their labour markets (ʻAbd al-Hādī Khalaf et al., 2014), but their

migration discourses and policies have become increasingly securitised (Lori, 2011). Such frictions are reminiscent of the "liberal paradox" that James Hollifield has identified in democratic societies (Hollifield & Faruk, 2017): Western European and North American states seek to further economic liberalism, which is contingent on continuous migration flows, but they are also constantly trying to manage the political risk that immigration creates through restrictive migration policies and anti-integration discourses (Hollifield, 1992).

In the following pages, we argue that, while the UAE and Saudi Arabia remain "exclusionary contexts" – and increasingly so for certain categories of migrants –, they profess their commitment to cosmopolitanism, a position articulated in their official pronouncements and enshrined in their public diplomacy. We call this paradoxical phenomenon "cosmopolitanism in denial." We critically analyse the modes of production and the content of these public discourses, as well as the concrete effects that they have on migrants' perceptions and aspirations. First, we focus on the ways in which the UAE's market-based rhetoric of cosmopolitanism has crystallised into a broader political project. We then examine Saudi Arabia's narrative of Islamic universalism and its ambivalent relation to diversity. In both cases, we show that such a state-sponsored cosmopolitan discourse sometimes resonates with foreign residents' own aspirations and perceptions of inclusion, but also creates conflicted feelings of belonging and alienation simultaneously.

The UAE: from commodified cosmopolitanism to universalist claims

In the UAE, the cosmopolitan trope first appeared as part of Dubai's urban marketing strategy, it then gained traction in the federal government, and evolved into what can be considered a full-fledged national project. According to the Emir of Dubai's "vision" for his city's future, the coexistence of linguistically, ethnically and religiously diverse peoples is both proof of Dubai's success and key to its "excellence" (Āl Maktūm, 2006). Such a celebration of

diversity has found expression in Dubai's urban landscape in the shape of themed amusement parks, hotels, and shopping malls. While many of these development projects offer, in a consciously "self-orientalising" move, a reinterpretation of Arab-Islamic motifs and architecture catering to international tourists (Cooke, 2014; Mounajjed, 2016; Smith, 2015), other ones, such as the Global Village or the Ibn Battuta Mall, instead epitomise a manner of "commodified cosmopolitanism" (Assaf, 2017a).

In the Ibn Battuta Mall, for example, historical references to the famous fourteenth-century Arab traveller have been harnessed to design the mall and divide it into several "courts," each staging one of his journeys. Visitors can thus walk by the replica of a Chinese junk on their way to the cinema; treat themselves to ice cream among an ancient Egyptian décor adorned with hieroglyphics; or have a cup of Starbucks coffee under a Persian-inspired dome. In official representations of Dubai, the city's urban diversity is primarily advertised by way of this commercial backdrop, indeed scenography. Yet, as diversity is fashioned into an aestheticised setting, it is kept at a somewhat safe distance: it stands for a mere object of leisurely contemplation (indeed sightseeing) and consumption, rather than a genuine, lived experience. Orientalist architecture exoticises the UAE's past and sets it in a fantasy Arab world; and commodified cosmopolitanism turns the ethnic diversity of Dubai's urban society into an exotic spectacle.[6]

As the neighbouring Abu Dhabi emirate embraced economic diversification, it too adopted a cosmopolitan rhetoric. For instance, the Sheikh Zayed Heritage Festival, much like Dubai's "Global Village", consists of pavilions in which various countries of the world showcase and sell the crafts or gourmet products meant to symbolise their respective "heritage." Yet, while the Emir of Dubai puts emphasis on "diversity," this festival is framed in different

[6] We draw on Anne Raulin's distinction between the "exotic", which denotes a fabulous and unknown world, and the "ethnic", which implies a communitarian dimension (Raulin, 2000).

terms: indeed, one of the official Abu Dhabi tourism websites draws a parallel between the Emirati past and "the universal heritage of world civilisations as a whole."[7]

The notion of universalism also features prominently in yet another large-scale project in the Emirati capital: the "universal museum" of the Louvre Abu Dhabi, inaugurated in November 2017. The museum's motto, "See Humanity in a New Light," is a play on the spectacular architecture designed by Jean Nouvel – the dome is one of the museum's main attractions. It also speaks to the grand narrative underpinning this project: it aims to offer a "universal" history of humanity by highlighting thematic connections between the various artefacts on display, regardless of their geographical provenance and cultural uses. "Universal" translates as *'ālamī* in Arabic, which also means "global," and is often the word for "cosmopolitan." By the same token, the Louvre Abu Dhabi may be construed as a form of "commodified cosmopolitanism": it amounts to the successful appropriation of a "global symbol of knowledge" by the Emirates, thereby cementing their position as a leader on the global and regional cultural scene (Mermier & Krebs, 2019).

Such a cosmopolitan rhetoric, which is integral to Abu Dhabi's and Dubai's city branding, has expanded beyond marketing strategies to encompass loftier goals. Indeed, cosmopolitanism and universalism have been woven into a public narrative that hints at a broader political project. This is particularly evident in political pronouncements in which the country's diversity is explicitly linked to tolerance (*tasāmuḥ*) as a "universal human value" (Maxwell, 2019) The notion of tolerance already figured in earlier political discourse, but it has become especially salient over the past decade, which culminated in 2019 being labelled the "Year of Tolerance" (*'ām al-tasāmuḥ*).[8] The adoption of the term is closely related to the prevailing international

[7] Sheikh Zayed Heritage Festival. In Visit Abu Dhabi. Retrieved from https://visitabudhabi.ae/en/see.and.do/leisure/events/sheikh.zayed.heritage.festival.2018.aspx

[8] For example, a quick search on the website of the official Arabic-language daily newspaper *Al Ittihad* yields the following results: the term "tolerance" appeared in seventeen articles during the year 2005, whereas it was featured in no fewer than one hundred two articles over the sole month of January 2019.

context: as part of its efforts to raise its international profile, the UAE strives to position itself as a natural ally of Western powers in the fight against religious extremism and terrorism.

The Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Hatred Law (*qānūn mukāfiḥa al-tamyīz wa-l-karāhiyya*) promulgated in 2015, the creation of a Ministry of Tolerance in 2016, the Catholic Pope and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar embracing on an Abu Dhabi stage in early 2019: the emphasis on tolerance may be understood as implying a desire to claim ownership of the "values of openness" (Mermier, 2015, p. 211), which are typically associated with the cosmopolitan past of the Arab world characterised by religious diversity and coexistence. Indeed, official discourses always contrast, more or less explicitly, the UAE's focus on tolerance and its cultural and religious diversity with the contemporary predicaments of the broader region: they portray the Emirati government as the torchbearer of tolerance and peaceful coexistence, which are otherwise jeopardised in the rest of the Arab world.

This narrative underlines the history of religious diversity in the Gulf and, indeed, the building of new churches, a Hindu temple, and a synagogue has been widely publicised.[9] Yet, for all this rhetoric of cosmopolitanism and inclusivity, the diversity of Muslims themselves is never officially acknowledged, nor are the different religious sects and schools within Islam mentioned in these discourses on tolerance. By the same token, Islamic education (prescribed by official curricula set by the Ministry of Education) and Friday sermons (written by the Ministry of Religious Affairs) are directly supervised by the Emirati state. Therefore, cosmopolitan claims in UAE official discourse amount to a selective representation of the country's diversity, primarily designed to build up its public image abroad.

Although this state-sponsored narrative blots out certain aspects of diversity that, as a

[9] The "Abrahamic Family House" project within Saadiyat Island's "Cultural district" (Abu Dhabi) plans to bring together a mosque, a church, and a synagogue. A few months before the start of the "Year of Tolerance," a synagogue, which for a few years had been informally housed in a private villa in Dubai, was publicly inaugurated, thereby leading the international media covering the Pope's visit to stress the fact that the UAE had places of worship for the three monotheistic faiths.

matter of fact, exist in the Emirates, it occasionally resonates with foreign residents. The popularity of malls and festivals staging diversity as décor bears witness to the success of commodified cosmopolitanism with residents, who often express their appreciation for the fact that their home country is represented in this internationalised setting. For example, one Egyptian couple, with whom one of the authors stayed in Abu Dhabi, would travel every weekend to Dubai to go to the Ibn Battuta Mall and eat ice cream in the Egyptian Court (Assaf, 2017b). In the same vein, the Pope's visit to Abu Dhabi in February 2019 was attended by a variegated Christian crowd, composed of foreign residents hailing from the Philippines and India in particular. The Papal Mass was followed by a short surprise concert by Filipina pop star Sarah Geronimo and by a Dubai-based Catholic band, with a line-up consisting mainly of young Keralites. These concerts were not given any official publicity and were hardly mentioned in either the local press or the international media coverage of the Pope's visit. They nonetheless indicate the authorities' unofficial recognition of the nationalities that make up the UAE's largest Christian communities, which, in turn, welcomed the Pope's visit. Christian residents were lavish in their praise for the country's religious openness, a view that was also echoed in the international press.

Migrants *vs*. pilgrims: framing Muslim mass circulation and diversity in Saudi Arabia

As a result of the pilgrimages to Mecca and Medina – the Hajj and the Umrah –[10], Saudi Arabia's western regions are a site of intense circulation and great diversity. Pilgrimages involve unparalleled international and domestic mass mobility: as part of the 2019 Hajj, 1.8 million Muslims travelled to Saudi Arabia in the last month of the Islamic calendar (*Dhu al-*

[10] Both pilgrimages involve visiting holy sites and performing rituals, but the Hajj takes place in the last month of the Islamic calendar, while the Umrah may be undertaken at any time of the year.

Hijjah), and more than half of the 600,000 "internal" pilgrims were actually migrants residing in the Kingdom.[11] As for the Umrah, 11.5 million residents – comprised of both migrants and citizens – and 6.7 million international visitors performed the "lesser pilgrimage" in 2018.[12]

Pilgrimages are a high-stakes political affair for Saudi Arabia, and they have major implications in both international and domestic terms. The Saudi regime has used the pilgrimages to bolster its global image in the *ummah* and, at the same time, to curb political unrest in the Hejaz, a region in which, historically, the Al-Saud family has not enjoyed unwavering loyalty. For the Saudi monarchy, holy sites may be a symbolic and political resource indeed,[13] but they also entail massive, unwieldy and global migration, and have unintended consequences – diversity and openness. Hajj policies are designed to regulate the social and cultural diversity induced by global circulation; to harness the politico-diplomatic potential obtaining in such diversity; and to ensure that the pilgrimage does not become a side door for labour immigration (that is, pilgrims becoming illegal migrant workers by overstaying their Hajj visa). Religious mobility by way of pilgrimages and labour migration are closely intertwined: they are two sides of the same coin – Saudi Arabia's inclusion in global mobility networks. Yet, in Saudi governmental discourse they are treated as entirely separate issues.

On the one hand, the official narrative, codified in the "Vision 2030" national development doctrine that was issued in 2018, contends that Saudi Arabia, a "vibrant society," boasts "strong roots,"[14] and that such qualities inhere in the successful organisation of the

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[11] Figures taken from General Authority for Statistics (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia), "Censuses". Retrieved from https://www.stats.gov.sa/en/28

[12] Figures taken from General Authority for Statistics (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia), *Umrah Statistics Bulletin 2018*. Retrieved from https://www.stats.gov.sa/sites/default/files/umrah_statistics_bulletin_2018_en.pdf

[13] Ever since it took over the Hejaz in 1926, the Saudi monarchy has based its legitimacy on the holy sites: by claiming the symbolic capital associated with both holy sites, and by demonstrating its ability to "manage" the pilgrimage, in particular by investing oil revenue in pilgrimage facilities as well as security forces and technology. In 1986, King Fahd adopted the title of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, which became the official title of the ruler of the Saudi dynasty. As argued by Pascal Ménoret (2003), the Saudi monarchy has long used a religious rhetoric to shape the country's "national identity" and its international position, thereby consolidating its political legitimacy.

[14] Vision 2030. Retrieved from https://vision2030.gov.sa/en/node/379

pilgrimage, which bears out and embodies the global nature of its brand of Islam. Indeed, the pilgrimage is intrinsic to the country's Muslim "national identity," its "cultural richness," and its "diversity."[15] On the other hand, immigration is glossed over as a mere labour or economic issue. Moreover, the different forms of Islam and the wide range of Muslims living in and travelling to the Kingdom are not acknowledged. In fact, the Saudi state continues to deny the cosmopolitan realities – diverse peoples and diverse forms of Islam – arising from both the pilgrimages and labour immigration.

For the Saudi monarchy, controlling the pilgrimage initially meant the imposition of a single universal form of Sunni Islam, hence the obliteration of any outward sign, indeed any expression, of Islamic diversity in the holy sites: levelling the tombs of Muslim saints in the 1930s, criminalising Sufi practices, and discriminating against Saudi Shias in the Eastern provinces. And yet, despite the aforementioned repression and discrimination, the cultural diversity of Jeddah, Mecca, and the surrounding area (the Hejaz), their urban openness, their more liberal strand of Islam are often emphasised in both scholarly and local accounts. Such features have crystallised into a recurrent trope, the idea that Hejazis, as a result or in spite of the presence of the holy sites, are more tolerant and inclusive. By the same token, the vibrant cosmopolitan culture of the Hejaz is typically contrasted with the parochial vernacularism of central Arabia (Nejd), its fictional inland Beduinism (Yamani, 2009), and its distinctive form of religious conservatism (misleadingly called "Wahhabism" by foreigners). While binary oppositions do not make for an accurate image of the sociological make-up of Saudi Arabia, such dichotomous representations nonetheless reflect a history of political struggles between

[15] "We take immense pride in the historical and cultural legacy of our Saudi, Arab, and Islamic heritage. Our land was, and continues to be, known for its ancient civilizations and as a crossroads of global trade. This heritage has given our society a great depth of cultural richness and diversity. By endeavouring to strengthen, preserve and highlight our national identity, we are ensuring it will guide the lives of future generations. We are also restoring national, Arab, Islamic and ancient cultural sites – to have them recognized internationally and be accessible to all. In doing so, we will create cultural events and build world-class museums which will attract visitors from near and far." Vision 2030. Retrieved from https://vision2030.gov.sa/en/node/379

the House of Saud and its many Hejazi opponents since the 1930s, hence competing social perceptions and mutual stereotyping between rival regions (Ménoret, 2003).

In practice, however, for Muslim migrants across the world the very existence of the holy sites in Mecca and Medina is an important part of the appeal of Saudi Arabia, and it is often cited as one of the reasons for choosing it over other destinations. This Hajj factor features prominently in skilled workers' accounts of their personal migration history. For instance, a Pakistani-American woman, employed as a doctor in a private hospital in Jeddah, stated that her motivation for leaving the United States (US) and settling in Jeddah had been the city's proximity to the holy sites. Other Muslim immigrants from Yemen, Pakistan, Eritrea, or Sudan also mentioned the ease with which the Umrah could be performed to explain their preference for Saudi Arabia, and for Jeddah especially, over other places in the Gulf. A young Pakistani lawyer – born in Jeddah, educated in the US, and interviewed in Riyadh – expressed her attachment to Jeddah, where she had grown up and her parents still lived. Her fondness for "her hometown" was steeped in a consciously idealised view of "Saudiness," which, according to her, was underpinned by Islamic observance, piety, and cultural diversity. In particular, she contrasted Saudi Arabia, where she was free to wear "her" veil and "her" *'abāya*, with the US, where she felt that her Muslim identity was stigmatised.

The pilgrimage has always been part and parcel of migrants' strategies. As early as the eighth century, Mecca was both a spiritual centre and a commercial hub in Arabia, and for the longest time, endless caravans, bringing together migrants and pilgrims, have streamed into the city. As migration control policies were gradually established in the late 1980s, governmental regulations introduced a migrant-pilgrim distinction. As a result, both the Hajj and the Umrah became the main entry point into the Kingdom for scores of "overstayers," that is, foreigners who gain access to the country thanks to a pilgrimage visa, and then remain and work there without a residence permit or a pre-established work contract. Such was the case of several

immigrants interviewed in Jeddah, who recounted how they had entered Saudi Arabia as pilgrims, and then, had got in touch with relatives, friends, or fellow nationals who had helped them find a job, a sponsor or *kafīl* (plural: *kufalā'*), and a place to stay. Indeed, for immigrants, the presence of foreigners of all nationalities in the Hejaz region reinforces the appeal of Jeddah. Wealthy foreigners and foreign entrepreneurs can act as *kufalā'* for new immigrants, which fosters chain migration among migrant communities, a process underlying centuries of intense circulation from Muslim countries to the Kingdom.

Although, historically, foreigners have used both the religious and the commercial route to travel *to*, and settle *in* Arabia, today the official narrative strictly differentiates between "foreign workers" and Muslim "pilgrims." The lines between the traveller, the merchant, and the pilgrim, which for centuries had remained indistinct, have therefore hardened and morphed into rigid categories of state-led migration management, so much so that in public discourses, the authorities see no connection between migrants and pilgrims other than the criminalisation of the illegal overstaying his or her Hajj visa. From the 1980s onwards, stricter regulation of the pilgrimage came with concomitant efforts, with varying degrees of success, to tighten migration control, a dual process that culminated in the 2010s labour market and migration policy reforms. In 1987, Saudi Arabia and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) imposed a quota system, whereby the annual number of pilgrims allowed in the Kingdom was set by nationality.[16] In 2013, this quota was drastically reduced (by 20% for foreigners, and by 50% for Saudis) in the context of the so-called "Arab spring": under the guise of renovation and expansion work in the holy sites, the Kingdom sought to stem the flow of pilgrims from other Arab countries, lest they be immigrants fleeing instability or potential "revolutionaries".

[16] The annual quota is set as follows: for Muslim countries, one thousand pilgrims per million inhabitants; and for non-Muslim countries, a number determined on an *ad hoc* basis. The quota system induces glaring inequalities between nationalities, as Muslims from non-Muslim countries have more opportunities to perform the pilgrimage than citizens of Muslim countries do. Quotas by nationality vary according to perceived sanitary risks (various African nationalities were banned between 2014 and 2016, and again in 2019, on grounds of potential Ebola contamination).

Our analysis shows that, while there are important national and local variations, both Saudi Arabia and the UAE exhibit a fundamental tension between the state-sponsored rhetoric of cosmopolitanism at the core of the official discourse, and their governments' policies of migration containment as well as continued denial of the vital contribution that immigrants make to the countries' diversity. Diversity has been recast as integral to Islamic universalism in Saudi Arabia, while in the UAE it has been framed as a marketable asset key to city-branding projects and as part and parcel of a political project organized around the notion of tolerance. Migrants themselves have, to a certain extent, made these diversity tropes their own, incorporating them into their migration strategies and narratives.

Segregated cosmopolitanism: everyday practices in urban spaces

Although Gulf migration policies have allowed some categories of foreigners to settle and to bring their families along (by way of "family visas" or "dependent residence permits"), the majority of migrants are still considered to be expendable, and hence their legal status remains precarious. The transient nature of migrants' presence in the Gulf has been studied in recent urban ethnographies (Elsheshtawy, 2019; Lori, 2019). Scholars have shown that legal statuses, which discriminate between migrants and hierarchise regimes of residence, have materialised through, and been further compounded by spatial segregation in the urban built environment (Dresch, 2006; Elsheshtawy, 2010). Yet, the urban space is also the very site where these diverse populations cross paths, meet, and sometimes mix.

In the following section, we examine the ways in which, for residents of Saudi and Emirati cities, these tensions manifest in everyday life. First, we explore the ambivalence of self-presentation in public spaces through the prism of dress codes. While governmental injunctions to citizens to wear "national dress" in public can be construed as an extension of the spatial segregation of citizens and non-citizens, we show that city dwellers may also use

dress codes to circumvent established boundaries between citizens and foreigners, as well as between genders and ethnic groups.[17] We further delve into the paradoxes of cosmopolitan encounters in segregated urban contexts, focusing on social practices and interactions in two sites that epitomise urban diversity: the modern marketplace, exemplified by shopping malls, and the street.

Close examination of the modes of inclusion and exclusion in these spaces reveals that they have become sites of a "segregated cosmopolitanism" (Mermier, 2015, p. 213): they enable and even foster encounters with diverse cultures, in particular through consumption practices, as well as with diverse peoples, to some degree. These cosmopolitan interactions are governed by spatial boundaries and defined by temporariness, and this is precisely what allows them to take place. These temporal and spatial distinctions are constitutive of city dwellers' subjectivities (their tastes, attitudes, and aspirations), as in their daily practices the latter follow explicit and implicit rules of mutual exclusion, but also constantly (re)negotiate the contours (and substance) of limited encounters and bounded togetherness.

Residential segregation, dress codes, and cosmopolitan modes of identification

Although residential segregation evinces huge national and local variations, it is a structural feature of Gulf cities at large and, as illustrated by our case studies, it generates different spatial configurations. In the UAE, land and/or housing allotted to nationals confine them to specific districts, which, in Abu Dhabi today, tend to be located on the mainland, away from the city centre. Wealthy expatriates generally live in gated communities or in individual apartments housed in upscale skyscrapers. At the same time, poorer migrants are denied access

[17] Wearing national dress is sometimes a state-sponsored legal requirement, as was the case in Saudi Arabia for all women until 2019, or in the 2000s, when Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, then governor of Riyadh, imposed it in governmental buildings for Saudi men; sometimes, and more generally, it is a broader moral and social obligation, with distinctive nationalistic undertones, whereby national dress is promoted with a view to enhance and reproduce national identity (Al-Yaum, 2017).

to the urban space, either because they are relegated to labour camps on the outskirts of Emirati cities or, in the case of domestic workers, because they live in their employers' homes, where they occupy micro-segregated spaces inside the house (Yeoh & Huang, 2010). However, for the intermediate classes, which represent the majority of the population, the urban environment and the diverse populations inhabiting it constitute an important aspect of their daily lives.

In Abu Dhabi, given the high density of the main island, middle-class and lower middle-class populations mix to some extent, and their neighbourhoods may indeed be qualified as "emerging global cities" (Elsheshtawy, 2010). Conversely, patterns of segregation can be observed in more micro-scale settings, at the district level, or even within one block or one building (Dresch, 2006; Khalaf, 2006). However, as a result of recent residential and commercial development projects, the city has expanded to the neighbouring islands and to the mainland, leading to the creation of new segregated residential areas, structured by nationality and affiliation to a particular social class.

In Riyadh and Jeddah, too, gated communities are reserved for highly skilled expatriates, but segregation patterns operate along different lines, especially in the case of low- and middle-income migrants. Middle-class migrants tend to live in multi-ethnic neighbourhoods close to city centres or in medium-income suburban areas, whereas low-income migrants reside in peripheral areas that have mushroomed as a result of informal urban growth. In these mixed neighbourhoods, migrants and their families coexist with local Saudi citizens, in particular descendants of settled Bedouin families, as observed in the al-Ma'adher and Umm Al-Hammam districts in Riyadh, or in the Al-Kandara area in Jeddah. Their differences notwithstanding, these two cities contrast sharply with Saudi oil towns in the Eastern province, where highly segregated urbanization has historically been driven by the oil economy (Seccombe & Lawless, 1987), and labour camps have long been a key component of urban growth (Adamson et al., 2018). While labour camps, notably for construction workers, do exist outside of Riyadh and,

in Jeddah, low-income, mostly undocumented, migrants live in informal settlements, both cities feature complex geographies of ethnic neighbourhoods, bringing together local Saudis and working- and middle-class communities of various origins.

Differentiation by way of vernacular dress codes can be seen as yet another expression, this time in public places, of the segregation pervasive in residential areas. Yet, dress codes are also subject to reinterpretation by foreign residents and locals alike, which in turn complicates, and somehow disrupts, the seemingly neat distinction between nationals and foreigners. In both Saudi Arabia and the UAE, status groups are recognizable through specific "regimes of visibility" (Lussault, 2013), materialised in differentiated dress codes.

"National" dress codes are meant to establish a clear visual distinction between citizens and non-citizens, setting the former apart from the latter to avoid confusion. While, in informal contexts, Saudi and Emirati citizens occasionally opt for "Western" clothing, in public places they tend to wear standardised "national" dress: for women, the *ʻabāya* (a black cloak) and a headscarf which comes in various shapes; for men, the *kandūra or dishdasha* in the UAE, or *thawb* in Saudi Arabia (a white full-length robe), the *shmāgh* (a chequered headdress fashioned from a cloth or "scarf") or the *ghutra* (a similar, albeit white, headdress), held in place by the *ʻiqāl* (a cord, usually black, placed on top of the headdress). The historical construction of national dress as integral to national identity has been part of nation-building processes and state-sponsored narratives across the region (Akinci, 2019; AlMutawa, 2016; Thiollet, 2010).

The issue of national dress became politically salient in the 1980s, and remains so to date, against a backdrop of growing public concern about the demographic weight of foreigners and its attendant impact on Emirati and Saudi societies – further evidence of the distinction these garments are meant to operate. Foreign residents are generally not expected to wear the national attire and, in some cases, may face social sanctions for doing so (Khalaf, 2005). For most of them, their daily outfit is dictated by their respective workplace and adheres to corporate

dress codes, such as the regular suit for white-collar employees, or job uniforms for lower-skilled workers. Other ethnic or national dresses are usually donned on weekends and holidays.

However, the apparent consolidation of the citizen/non-citizen divide through differentiated dress codes is, in practice, subject to many variations and subtle differences, thus undermining and, at times, blurring this very distinction. As national dress is also intended to impose strict gender codes among the citizen population, gendered hierarchies can take precedence over the need for national distinction. Such was the case of the female dress code in Saudi Arabia, since until 2019 both female citizens and foreigners were required by law to wear the *'abāya* in public places.[18] To some extent, this shared dress code, while it represented a social constraint, also allowed migrant women to blend in. For instance, Eritrean girls of Christian faith (interviewed in Riyadh) stated that they wore a headscarf, and sometimes even covered their face with a *niqāb* to move inconspicuously around public spaces. The aforementioned Jeddah-born Pakistani young woman (in her early thirties) said that being dressed in the *'abāya* was one of the reasons that she felt "completely integrated," as a "Hejazi native," in Riyadh: she had mostly Saudi friends; she spoke impeccable standard Arabic, as well as English and Urdu, and, when in informal contexts, she reverted to the Hejazi dialect. Our observations confirmed that, indeed, her attire was similar to that of her friends and many Saudi women. She recounted how, after completing her education in top-tier as well as Ivy League universities in the US, she had "returned home" to Jeddah, and thus expected some sort of social recognition for being a Saudi native. However, she had become frustrated with her present legal alienation: in the course of the interview, she frequently lamented her formal

[18] Foreign women, in general, were not required to wear a headscarf, but Arab and Muslim foreign women would usually choose to do so. For Arab and Muslim women (both Saudis and foreigners), fashion choices (differences in the colour, cloth, cut and detailing of the headscarf) clearly denoted the position that one had been ascribed in a class and racial hierarchy, among Saudis themselves and across nationalities (Le Renard, 2014). In Saudi Arabia, women, migrants and non-migrants alike, were officially required to wear the black *'abāya* in public spaces. In late 2017, coloured *'abāyāt* started to be tolerated in urban areas and, in 2019, dress code restrictions for women were dropped altogether in the context of the country's opening to tourism.

outsider status, while also reiterating that she "fitted in" perfectly with Saudi society.

Likewise, foreign men in Saudi Arabia sometimes choose to wear the *thawb*, in specific circumstances, thereby evincing a carefully negotiated understanding of their belonging. Various factors discriminate between foreigners who "can" wear the *thawb*, and those who cannot. An Eritrean immigrant, in his late forties and wearing a *thawb*, a *shmāgh*, and *'iqāl*, was interviewed in Jeddah in his workplace, a private folklore museum in the city centre. He had arrived in Saudi Arabia in 1982, had immediately settled in Jeddah, and had learnt Arabic: he considered himself a well-integrated citizen of Jeddah. He worked as a doorman at the museum. Commenting on the artefacts displayed in the museum, he emphasised his knowledge and keen appreciation of Hejazi folk culture. When asked if he chose to be in Saudi dress for work purposes, he replied that, obviously, it was important "to look Saudi," but that he actually donned such clothes in leisure time as well. He pointed out the close affinities between south-western Arabian traditions and those of Eastern Eritrea and Sudan, and argued that it was therefore only natural that he should fit in and dress like a Hejazi. In Jeddah, other Yemeni, Sudanese, and Ethiopian interviewees also asserted that they wore the *thawb* regularly, especially when they attended Friday prayers at the mosque, or they met up with Saudi or non-Saudi friends in public places.

In the UAE, although foreigners wearing national dress are generally frowned upon, similar practices exist among young adults who attended public schools, where the majority of pupils are Emirati citizens. Many of the young Arab men (of Egyptian, Palestinian, Syrian, Iraqi, Yemeni, or Sudanese origin) met in Abu Dhabi had studied at such schools and formed lasting friendships with their former Emirati classmates. Therefore, they would usually wear a *dishdasha* in social outings with their Emirati friends; by the same token, young foreign women, when invited to Emirati weddings, dressed in an *'abāya*. Outside of such social occasions, however, for the most part foreign youths tend to adopt dress codes (jeans, t-shirts, trainers,

etc.) that neutralise outward signs denoting national or ethnic status and, besides, are in keeping with generational norms pertaining to fashion tastes and trends. Occasionally, Emirati young people themselves favour such ordinary clothes, as a way to blend in with the diverse population of UAE cities. Several of the young citizens interviewed in Abu Dhabi explained that they would sometimes decide to wear jeans instead of the national attire, and to speak English in public places, as a means of temporarily escaping the social injunctions and norms prescribed by their national status.

The minutiae and practical nuances of self-presentation in everyday life call into question the more obvious, visible, entrenched modes of segregation that prevail in Gulf cities. They show how dress codes are reworked in the course of daily negotiations that can transcend or subvert the national-foreigner boundaries, thus generating more fluid forms of belonging. They reflect shifting personal and collective strategies of distinction, the latter being determined not only by the duration of one's residence in the city, but also by the cultural capital and social networks that one enjoys.

Consumer cosmopolitanism in shopping malls

Shopping malls exemplify the large-scale projects typical of the economic diversification that Gulf countries embarked on in the early 2000s. In the bulk of the literature, such marketplaces are presented as the hallmark of modernity, as well as a key factor behind the standardisation of consumer cultures and identities (Zukin, 1998). A different perspective, which has crystallised into an extensive body of scholarship, suggests that they be construed as public spaces instead, where specific modes of interaction develop and distinctive urban cultures take shape (Abaza, 2001; Assaf & Camelin, 2017).[19]

[19] This particular section focuses on shopping malls as default public spaces, which we understand as implying an area of socialisation as well as a place of consumption. This is in contrast to regular supermarkets, which are used mainly for consumption strictly speaking, and whose custom, in terms of sociological composition,

We show that poorer migrants are denied access to shopping malls through a variety of restriction measures, both formal and informal, explicit and implicit; and yet, on the whole these malls allow city dwellers, migrants and citizens alike, to experience forms of "consumer cosmopolitanism" that are bound up with practices and meanings encompassing far more than the mere consumption of exotic products (Riefler, 2015). As such, shopping malls are representative of the rather paradoxical type of segregated cosmopolitanism that plays out specifically in Gulf urban public spaces: as a place in which national, gender, and class hierarchies are manifested and enforced, they are indeed a site of socio-economic differentiation (and distancing); but they are also the locus of cosmopolitan interactions and encounters that arise either through consumer practices or by dint of simple, unwitting gestures, such as a leisurely stroll.

One significant effect of consumer practices in everyday life, with all their socio-cultural implications, is that they can disrupt the social and spatial segregation imposed on foreigners and on women. In shopping malls, foreigners enjoy the same goods as the locals do, they partake in a shared lifestyle, and they can make the acquaintance of fellow migrants and local citizens. Commercial venues may thus be conceptualised as an area of socialisation for young and/or "modern" people, but also for a broad range of individuals spanning all age and class groups. For migrants especially, malls represent "public spaces by default" where they can engage in social relations: whilst shopping also takes place in regular supermarkets, these are considered utilitarian places – less symbolic, and less socially vibrant.[20]

Indeed, although privately owned, shopping malls are used as public spaces (Le Renard,

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reflects greater class segregation, given that middle- and upper-class nationals and foreigners do not go grocery shopping, leaving such daily chores to their domestic workers. Social encounters and practices in shopping malls are, obviously, also informed by class distinctions, but it bears restating that shopping malls, which are not necessarily high-end or glamorous venues, are frequented by working-class migrants (Le Renard, 2011).

[20] Unlike Abu Dhabi, Riyadh, Jeddah, and other Saudi cities still have many popular marketplaces (*sūq sha'bī*, plur. *aswāq sha'biyya*): citizens and residents use this phrase to refer to clusters of small shops that generally do not include franchise stores or foreign brands, and are located in popular neighbourhoods.

2015, p. 317) in which public interactions occur. Access to the malls is controlled by private security guards, and granted, restricted, or denied depending on the categories to which customers are deemed to belong (as such, perceptions and judgment calls come into play). This "selection process" is undergirded by intersectional hierarchies that combine nationality with age, gender, race, and class criteria. Restriction measures also vary according to context (varying policies across different premises) and time (particular days – weekend or weekday – and hours of the day). More specifically, in Saudi Arabia it is common practice for shopping malls to restrict access for men on the weekend, and for lower-class male individuals in general.

In Saudi Arabia, single men, or "bachelors" as per the official category stipulated in visa and residence policies, are explicitly barred from entering malls on certain days, while for those admitted, women and couples' behaviours are closely monitored by the religious police (known as the *mutāwwa'*). On the weekend, for instance, access to the food courts, and sometimes to the entire shopping centre, is reserved for families, both Saudi and migrant, whereas for young men, whether they are citizens or foreigners, it is heavily restricted. In particular, groups of male teenagers or young adults are viewed as a potential threat to morality on the premises. Some malls also place limitations on the admission of low-skilled workers or dark-skinned male immigrants – limitations devised on the basis of racial and class stereotypes, thus reflecting the stigma associated with belonging to such population groups.

In some instances, malls advertise such restriction measures as part of their official policy (at the entrance, on a board specifying the rules governing access to, and use of the mall), but the actual implementation of such measures is primarily determined by *perceived* class, income, and racial hierarchies, to wit: guards do not carry out identity checks before deciding that certain individuals should be banned from the mall. Indeed, such selective practices, and the prejudiced views underpinning them, apply to many other population groups beside immigrants. As observed in the course of our fieldwork in Riyadh and Jeddah, a "well-dressed"

Indian couple or family, or a party of Filipino women, are more likely to be granted access to the mall than a group of young Saudi men wearing scruffy *athwāb* (*thawb* in the plural) or Western outfits.

In the UAE, too, the implicit hierarchies determining access, or the lack thereof, to malls are plainly visible: while there is no official policy explicitly prohibiting single men from entering malls, restrictive regulations are implemented on an ad hoc basis. In 2009, a few months after its opening, Al-Bawadi mall, in the city of Al-Ain, introduced a "rule" whereby labourers were denied access on the weekend because women had complained that they "stared." The reason alleged for this new policy was the fact that these workers had failed to wear "appropriate clothing" and to display "appropriate behaviour" in the mall (Al Ghalib, 2009): one example put forth by the manager was that some of them had been sleeping on the benches outside the mall's entrance (Assaf, 2017b). These exclusionary policies are further compounded by self-exclusion or social control on the part of customers themselves, both citizens and migrants. The exclusion of some categories of the population notwithstanding, shopping malls are probably some of the most diverse public spaces in the UAE: there, one may encounter wealthy patrons buying expensive jewellery in upscale department stores, middle-class families shopping for clothes or groceries, and low-skilled employees, such as nannies, gathering in food courts on their day off.

Furthermore, the ability to skilfully navigate the malls is also an opportunity to show off one's cosmopolitan capital (Abaza, 2001; Peterson, 2011). Given the ethnic and national division of labour that prevails in the Gulf, residents need to know at least a few words of English to take full advantage of the services available in Gulf cities, which are provided by foreign, often non Arabic-speaking, employees: to place an order at the local franchise of an international coffeehouse chain, to find one's way around recreational spaces, or even to have one's car repaired. In some instances, such cosmopolitan capital operates as a principle of

exclusion (especially for poor foreign labourers and uneducated citizens) but, once an individual has mastered its codes and subtleties, it also gives him or her a sense of belonging to the city – what Neha Vora has referred to as a form of "consumer citizenship" (Vora, 2008, p. 379). For malls are associated with lifestyles and modes of consumption that are imbued with a global dimension.

In Abu Dhabi, as in other Emirati and Saudi cities, being proficient at using these globalised commercial spaces is a key aspect of young adults' social practices, and it is one of the ways through which they gain a cosmopolitan competence. Indeed, they take pleasure in displaying their familiarity with a café's menu, their fluency in English when ordering, and their cosmopolitan tastes. For these youths, consumerist lifestyles are not simply a mark of distinction; they are also a way of taking part in the aforementioned commodified cosmopolitanism, and of making the city's global aspirations somewhat their own. As such, commercial spaces combine the actual diversity of the population and a consumer-oriented cosmopolitan setting (cosmopolitanism as décor, as argued earlier).

For city dwellers, shopping malls are thus a prime site of leisure experiences, albeit highly ambivalent ones, as they are characterised by the exclusion of the poorer categories of the population and, concomitantly, by the inclusion of mall users in global lifestyles – the global imagination, along with all its material aspects, that extends far beyond the confines of the city. By conducting social transactions, both real and symbolic, immigrants come to perceive themselves as (and to be seen as) belonging to a consumer society, one that is modernised, fully connected to global trends, yet also deeply rooted in local culture. While malls, located on the city's main streets and thoroughfares, are bigger places of encounter on which people coming from various neighbourhoods converge, smaller convenience stores, too, act as a catalyst for social interactions in the urban space. In terms of perception of the self and of others, shopping malls specifically, however, perform a particular function as shared places that convey a sense

of belonging to Gulf modernity (Thiollet, 2010).

Cosmopolitan streets: the ambivalence of coexistence

Although residential segregation patterns are generally structured around specific ethnic communities, street-level observations suggest that ethnic economies and in-group consumption practices involve, in fact, a wider urban crowd and foster intercultural interactions. In Abu Dhabi, Riyadh or Jeddah, the streets of popular neighbourhoods are dotted with signs testifying to their great cultural diversity: Indonesian or Lebanese eateries, Eritrean grocery stores, Chinese hardware shops, McDonald's and KFC fast-food restaurants, European clothing stores, and Middle Eastern or Western supermarket chains. Cheap Chinese, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, Filipino and Indian restaurants are a common sight in working-class neighbourhoods, and they are more widely used than regular American fast-food restaurants, the latter being usually located in slightly more affluent areas, where they are quite popular among young residents.

Such a landscape reflects the ethnic diversity of the population, and our ethnographic observations reveal that consumption practices are not strictly tied to one's ethnic or national identity or to the demographic composition of the surrounding area. Besides ethnic economies and globalised fare (like Japanese sushi), in Gulf cities citizens and non-citizens often become familiar with the cuisines of other ethnic groups outside their own, indeed consuming Lebanese, Pakistani, and Indian food on a daily basis; in many cases, the availability of a wide variety of cuisines sparks an interest in other types of food.

Although Gulf cities, with their large avenues and orthogonal grid, are primarily designed for car use, the urban landscape is markedly different in smaller neighbourhoods or within blocks. In Dubai, as in Abu Dhabi, there is a stark contrast between the main thoroughfares and multi-laned motorways (up to eight lanes), with their speeding cars, that

demarcate the different districts, and the city life inside neighbourhood blocks: there, one quickly gets stuck in traffic behind lines of double-parked cars, honking in front of a *shawarma* shop; children are playing cricket in the parking lot, or football in the small square outside the local mosque. To experience such a neighbourhood is, indeed, to witness the ethnic diversity of urban society. As exemplified by the ubiquitous *karak* (tea with milk), which is consumed by nearly everyone and, despite its South Asian origin, has come to be considered an inherently "local" beverage in the UAE, neighbourhood blocks are bustling with activity and lined with small shops displaying an assortment of foodstuffs and consumer goods from all over the world.

Other public spaces across Abu Dhabi, the UAE capital, evince similar forms of segregated cosmopolitanism: several groups meet up, cross paths, or coexist, without necessarily mixing. At dawn or at dusk, the ethnographer taking a stroll on the Abu Dhabi Corniche, or along the Al-Bateen beach, will encounter joggers taking advantage of the cooler temperatures. They belong to different categories of age (anywhere from twenty to fifty years old), of social class (as opposed to gyms, where membership is contingent on one's income) and of nationality, from North America to South Asia, the Middle East or Europe (Assaf, 2013). Late afternoon is also the time when picnickers start gathering on the Corniche or in public parks. First, mostly groups of Arab women bringing together several generations, who partake of tea, coffee and home-made biscuits, while the children are left to socialise freely in the playground; later on, entire families settle on the grass for more elaborate picnics, including barbecues and narghiles. On the weekend, these picnics, which in Abu Dhabi are a custom mainly associated with the *ahl al-shām* (the Levantine families), often take place in areas where a group of Filipino friends might also be celebrating a birthday nearby, and other families strolling around. These different groups carve up the area, each creating its own space, delimited by symbolic rather than physical boundaries. Such gatherings are conducive to a manner of "intimacy in the open air," whereby private lives are transposed into the outdoors

(Assaf, 2013): part of the appeal of these spaces is precisely the spectacle of urban diversity that they offer.

Similar practices, and the attendant distinctions, can be observed in mixed neighbourhoods such as Umm Al-Hammām or Al-Ma'ādher in central Riyadh, where Saudis and various migrant communities live side by side. In Jeddah, the city centre (Al-Balad), which was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2014, is surrounded by unplanned settlements that accommodate middle- and working-class populations, comprising Saudi internal migrants as well as foreign residents from extremely diverse backgrounds, notably a large Yemeni community. In Jeddah, too, the Corniche is a site of social encounter, and a place where families enjoy walking after dinner on Thursdays and Fridays: middle-class migrants and Saudis, meeting in groups of relatives or friends, stroll along the Corniche, eating ice creams and sweet pastries. In Riyadh, for more affluent migrant families and communities, weekend outings include historical sightseeing and picnics in the nearby desert, whereas working-class migrants, acting upon the set of formal and informal social constraints mentioned earlier, often choose to stay put in their neighbourhoods.

Leisure time spent, as part of everyday life, in these more informal, mundane spaces is thus inherently cosmopolitan and, as such, bears out the very paradoxes of cosmopolitanism: it brings together the various communities that make up these urban societies and, at the same time, it maintains boundaries between them. These local interactions occur in various places where diverse people come together (such as the Corniche), which recent urban development projects would tear down, replacing them with more enclave-like, secluded and segregated spaces. Such interactions are, moreover, circumscribed by rules and regulations that are enforced by the city police (*baladiyya*), and social control, having been partly internalised, is effective both within migrant communities and across society as a whole. In the UAE, some of the parks and most public beaches have introduced paying access charges, and furthermore,

several of these sites are reserved for "families," thereby excluding lower-class foreign men who have immigrated on their own.

In Saudi Arabia, given the looming presence of the ubiquitous *mutāwwa'īn* (officers or volunteers) of the *hay'a* (committee, the colloquial term for the religious police, the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice), gender segregation rules in public places and streets used to be strictly implemented. The religious police could be more accurately described as a "moral militia," and its powers were strengthened and expanded in the 1980s as part of the conservative turn. It was staffed with men armed with sticks, and empowered to patrol the streets, and to arrest, beat up, or take into custody "moral offenders," notably unmarried couples walking together in the street, and women sitting outside the family section in cafés or restaurants. While such moral policing applied to both Saudi and non-Saudi youths, for migrants, the risk of getting "caught" had far greater implications, and the attendant penalties were heavier.[21] The *hay'a* mainly operated in the large, open streets, less so in the smaller streets within a particular block, where the morality of social encounters would be supervised by families and neighbours instead, thereby enabling cross-cultural interactions between kids, young people, or housewives to take place.

Since the 2010s, the authorities have relaxed the restrictions pertaining to such street-life moral order. In 2016, the scope of the *hay'a*'s powers, notably its jurisdiction, was reduced and, since then, *mutāwwa'īn* are no longer allowed to intervene directly in public places; in accordance with the new decency laws that were passed in 2019, their policing and enforcement role has been transferred to public authorities. The general sense of anxiety that used to prevail,

[21] The constant presence of the *hay'a*, or the mere possibility of an intervention on its part, undoubtedly acted as an unremitting social and moral pressure constraining individual and collective behaviour, and its effects were most acutely felt by those falling within the gender, age and, to some extent, ethnic categories of population most likely to be targeted by the *hay'a*. If stopped or worse, the only way to escape punishment by the *hay'a* was to call on one's personal acquaintances or relations, and to mobilise one's *wāsṭa*, that is, a network of connections, involving influential citizens or foreigners who can act as intermediaries between an individual and public authorities.

in particular in Riyadh streets, has abated as a result of this change in policy. Yet, as far as immigrants are concerned, such reforms have not ushered in a fully-fledged liberalisation of Saudi streets, parks, and walking areas (*mamshāt*), especially as the police has kept carrying out residence permit checks, which even intensified in 2013 and 2017, during a spate of "correction campaigns" designed to curb irregular immigration into the Kingdom.

Conclusion: on illiberal cosmopolitan canopies

American sociologist Elijah Anderson (2004) famously described a marketplace that he had observed in the course of his ethnographic fieldwork in Philadelphia as a "cosmopolitan canopy." This expression denotes places that offer enclaves of civility, an opportunity for peaceful interracial interactions and encounters – "moments of respite" in urban contexts that are otherwise highly segregated according to class, gender, and racial hierarchies. These cosmopolitan canopies, he emphasised, only operate temporarily, for short moments; they also have specific characteristics. Anderson's thesis attracted criticism on the grounds that it primarily referred to commercial spaces frequented by the elite, which prompted him to refine his concept and expand its scope to include other forms of encounters, such as those occurring in public parks (Anderson, 2011). Indeed, ethnographic observation reveals that, at the local and micro levels, there is an enduring, resilient quality to such moments and places of conviviality, where our usual misgivings and assumptions about others are temporarily suspended.

In many ways, the cosmopolitan moments and places studied here are reminiscent of Anderson's cosmopolitan canopies: they are "transient, ambivalent and precarious," to borrow from Vered Amit's and Pauline Gardiner Barber's analysis (2015, p. 544). Over the 2000s, as part of the move towards so-called migration management, greater discrimination was written into the laws and regulations, while the resulting migration policies were enforced with

increasing brutality; as a consequence, the cosmopolitan landscape became partial and uneven. Yet, cosmopolitan enclaves have endured and they have a transforming, albeit gradual, impact on host societies. Although research on migration in the Gulf has focused on the impact of *emigration* on sending countries, the implications of *immigration* for the Gulf need to be further documented, as well as connected to broader discussions on migration and diversity as a vehicle for social change in host countries (Castles, 2001; Portes, 2010; Vertovec, 2007).[22]

Therefore, while drawing extensively on street-level ethnographies and fully embracing the "practical turn" in diversity studies, we propose a definition of cosmopolitanism that emphasises the complex and paradoxical interconnections between practices, on the one hand, and norms or discourses, on the other hand. We move away from approaches that have treated cosmopolitanism as an idealised view of social relations or as a monolithic category, as well as from scholarship that has couched diversity in neutral terms, with fewer political and normative overtones, such as the notion of "conviviality" put forth by Mowicka and Vertovec (2014). Ours is a perspective that deliberately puts the concept of cosmopolitanism front and centre. Cosmopolitanism is understood here as an etic category that brings to light the tensions and connections between norms, discourses, and everyday practices: exclusionary contexts are a case in point. Our contention then is that, as such, cosmopolitanism reflects the "dialectics" (Werbner, 2015) between the aspirations and practices of those, migrants and governments alike, who invoke and identify with cosmopolitanism. This enables us to overcome the dichotomy between discourses-norms and practices underpinning much of the ongoing debate on the heuristics of cosmopolitanism, and to highlight key dimensions that would be overlooked otherwise.

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[22] This discussion was initiated during the workshop "Social Change and Migration in the Gulf Monarchies", held at the Centre de Recherches Internationales (CERI), Sciences Po, Paris (France), on July 1, 2013. See http://www.sciencespo.fr/mobglob/?p=209.

We do not purport to describe migrants' discourses and practices, such as those recounted earlier, as a form of resistance to governmental exclusionary policies, nor do we suggest that they should be construed as an explicit political statement. Rather, we argue that, in the course of everyday interactions, such discourses and practices implicitly subvert the dominant hierarchical order – an order that entails not only segregating foreigners and nationals, but also policing relations between genders, age groups, as well as religious and ethnic communities. Cosmopolitanism in denial and segregated cosmopolitanism both inhere in, and stem from illiberal regulations and exclusionary polities. Seeing immigration into the Gulf and the immigrant condition in the Gulf through the lens of cosmopolitanism allows us not only to make sense of seemingly contradictory discourses and practices observed on the ground, but also to grasp the wider, and manifold, dynamics of diversity unfolding in other contexts around the world.

Such a perspective has already yielded an abundance of analyses and fieldwork findings, and building on such insights, our research speaks to, and elaborates on the following issues: firstly, social markers, defined by class, racial, ethnic, national, gender and age categories, as well as by intersectional hierarchies in general, have proved remarkably enduring and resilient in the course of cosmopolitan encounters and in cosmopolitan settings. Cosmopolitan interactions are bound up with asymmetrical power relations, thereby combining elite and "subaltern" forms of cosmopolitanism (Zeng, 2014) that assemble and disassemble in a process of constant (re)negotiation. Secondly, cosmopolitanism is not only *situated*; it is also "rooted" (Appiah, 1997, p. 618) in specific historical, regional, and local contexts, as well as embedded in everyday lives and practices (Schmoll, 2003), in particular moments and encounters. Thirdly, a fundamental aspect of cosmopolitanism consists in lived experiences taking place in urban environments, which stand simultaneously as the context and the product of cosmopolitan encounters, as well as the catalyst for them. Rather than serving as a mere backdrop, as a décor,

cities are therefore an integral part of the complex and contradictory dynamics of social change induced by diversity. Accordingly, this study hopes to contribute to a more nuanced appreciation of cosmopolitan practices and aspirations across a variety of contexts. For Gulf cities, rather than exceptions, outliers, or singular cases, in fact exemplify the many forms of cosmopolitanism that emerge in highly diverse societies.

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