

Comparing Heritage Revivalism Narratives in Heritage District Preservation Projects in Sharjah
and Dubai

by
Isabella Frymoyer

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Department of Geography
McGill University
Montréal (Québec) Canada

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ABSTRACT

Heritage preservation efforts in the gulf region have been increasingly prominent in recent decades, materializing in a variety of ways and forms. Because of the inherent malleability of heritage in the construction of heritage narratives, this project will explore the ways that heritage revitalization projects, in the form of preserved heritage districts, construct heritage narratives that reflect the development trends and goals of the city. The two cases, the Al Shindagha district within the Develop Historic Dubai Project and the Heart of Sharjah district were analyzed using satellite imagery, on site observations, and discourse analysis. It was determined that Dubai presents a heritage as progress narrative while Sharjah attempts to root its heritage in the local city, resulting in a heritage as heart narrative.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Rapid urbanization in the Persian Gulf region has made it a center of international tourism and investment. Unlike other middle eastern states like Iran, Egypt, and Iraq, the Gulf region was never home to a historic empire. Many of the early urban centers have been regenerated into modern high rises and skyscrapers through rapid, oil-based development. This has led to a perceived loss in heritage both nationally and internationally, triggering an internal wave of heritage revitalization and preservation projects in the region that aim to place increased value on a little-known past. These preservation efforts manifest differently depending on the narrative that political actors wish to share with both the local population and wider world.

1.1 Research aim and questions

My project explores the ways that heritage revivalism in the built environment relates to political development goals and heritage narrative construction. To do this, I study the Dubai Historic District (DHD) developments and the Heart of Sharjah (HOS) project. These case studies present themes of heritage, tradition, culture, and authenticity in the built environment. Both are master planned revitalization projects in the UAE, located 25 kilometers away from each other in what were the former city centers before their respective cities faced massive urban change. Through these projects, I consider the following questions. First, what are these projects and what is their current development status? Second, how did these projects emerge and why? Third, how do these projects construct a heritage narrative?

1.2 Value Added

Previous research on heritage revivalism and preservation in the region largely focuses on the major urban centers of Abu Dhabi and Dubai rather than Sharjah. Also, they tend to heritage tourism or the preservation of heritage to preserve a political and national identity. When it comes to heritage tourism, academia largely considers UAE projects from the 1990s, like the Dubai Heritage and the Pearling Village (Boussaa 2003, Boussaa 2014b, Awad et al 2022) or the construction of heritage museums in the Emirates (Prager, 2015). Heritage tourism, a phenomenon not just tied to the Gulf region, sees the merging of history and political economy that depend on human desire to explore the other (Al Sayyad, 2013). Likewise, scholarship on Sharjah's heritage tourism consider older projects within the city center district (Picton, 2010). Dubai scholarship also highlights the refocus on cultural capital to boost tourism, leading to a

commercialization of heritage (Steiner 2010, Stephenson 2011, Boussaa 2014b, Tyrell & Mu'azu 2008). The theme of economic diversification away from oil is also common in heritage revivalism discourse (Picton 2010, Boussaa 2014b). Heritage revivalism is largely discussed within the realm of political identity preservation. The desire to preserve local histories is examined in the way that nationalized architecture is cited as a method to preserve a cultural tradition to counter what is lost in the increased globalization of the region (Tyrell & Mu'azu & 2008, Boussaa 2014b). Achieving authenticity is often central in these considerations (Alhasawi 2019, Fox et al 2016, Shah 2019).

My thesis will focus more on how heritage is being presented rather than address goals related to heritage tourism. It will understand heritage in the UAE as a malleable social force and will explore how presentation of such heritage through the built environment reveals narratives that connect to developmental identities of each city. This perspective merges existing works to explore how tourism-related place-making efforts create localized identities or narratives. It also disregards the importance of authenticity by viewing heritage as a construct of the present that can be used to analyze perspective and the creation of narrative. Importantly, it considers urban development projects as readable for present-day understandings of heritage.

1.3 Thesis Structure

The second chapter will introduce major themes from heritage literature, namely that heritage exists as a social construct that can reveal more about present-day motivations rather than history. The literature review will also cover the glocalization of heritage or the localization of cultural flows in response to globalization. Lastly, it will examine how and why heritage narratives are constructed.

Then the third chapter will discuss the methodology used for analysis. The fourth will examine the political and economic history of Sharjah and Dubai and how it impacted urban development in each city. Then, the fifth chapter will examine the trend of heritage revivalism in the region at large before discussing evidence of revivalism in Dubai and Sharjah. The sixth chapter will introduce the context of the two case studies, the Heart of Sharjah and the Al Shindagha district in the Dubai Historic District project.

Finally, the seventh chapter will explore the construction of heritage narratives both in the built environment as well as thematically through discourse. In the Dubai context, the

heritage as progress narrative will be presented while in Sharjah, the heritage as heart narrative will be examined.

CHAPTER 2: HERITAGE LITERATURE REVIEW

When it comes to the creation of built heritage through heritage preservation districts the following themes are explored. First, heritage is understood as a flexible construct in space, meaning that it is influenced by a variety of social factors to act as a lens to the perspective of the present. Then, built heritage is understood as a process of glocalization, the localization of socio-cultural elements in response to global cultural flows. Finally, the construction of a heritage narrative is understood in the context of utilizing symbolic power of heritage to achieve political identity.

2.1 Heritage as a Flexible Social Construct

Heritage is malleable and shaped by a variety of socio-political factors. It is a living entity that takes on many forms over space and time (Al Naboodah, 2011) closely connected to tradition, history, and culture. Graham (2000) understands heritage to be a perspective routed in the present that investigates the past or sometimes the future. Tradition is flexible, something that can be constructed and invented through symbolic, ritualistic practices that reveals present perception of the past (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1992). Heritage is also revealed with the presentation of culture, both material and immaterial (Graham 2000, Hall 1997) and the introduction of related culture systems. These systems are likewise flexible and can go through revitalization movements where the systems themselves are reconstructed, and the resulting determination of authenticity is connected to the level of adoption rather (Wallace, 1956) rather than rooted in historical accuracy. This suggests a limitation in the conflation between heritage preservation and the creation of authentic heritage histories (Shah, 2019) (Alhasawi, 2019), implying that presented heritage reveals more about present day understandings of the past.

Geography of heritage is understood in the context of location, distribution of cultural elements, and scale of distribution efforts (Graham 2000). Such site building has been largely connected to heritage tourism as mechanisms like heritage-based architectural aesthetics act as a method to attract and enhance the experience of tourists. This has been examined in the UAE by comparing the touristic value of utilizing cultural capital against iconographic grandeur that promotes progress and modernization (Tyrell & Mu'azu 2008, Boussaa 2014b). There are concerns that focusing on the modern developments to attract tourists overlook the value of cultural capital (Steiner 2010, Stephenson 2011). Understanding the cultural capital of tourism in

the creation of space inherently ties such projects to tourist-based development goals and these destination building efforts imply a flexibility to heritage that changes with the desires for the location's target audience. Ultimately, the presentation of heritage offers far more insight into present day society as the decision of which perspective to share can suggest a lot about motivations of a place (Watson, 2021). So, heritage in the UAE is not understood to be something static but malleable. Such flexibilities are also influenced by temporal factors, making heritage narrative construction a way to connect generations through preservation (Langham & Barker, 2014).

2.2 Heritage as a Process of Glocalization

Built heritage preservation in the Gulf region is often explored as an attempt to achieve localized identity through social unification and authentic links to history. Most of the scholarship on heritage preservation efforts in the region consider these projects to be in response to the rapid development brought on through the movement of global cultural flows that arose with increased interaction with global markets and societies (Fox et al. 2006, Awad & Boudiaf 2020, Picton 2010). They argue that such rapid development has led to a loss of sense of place (Awad & Boudiaf). For example, Khalaf (2002) defines heritage revivalism as a response to global culture exchange that leads to an internal desire to preserve heritage.

This desire to achieve a localized identity through heritage can arise through localized or nationalized architecture (Awad & Boudiaf 2020). Themes of promoting local cultural identity to encourage unification are similarly explored by Boussaa (2014b) who describes how heritage-based tourism can also serve to heighten local cultural identity. Shah (2019) similarly considers the social unification results of newly built heritage, regardless of authenticity. The desire to unify through heritage-based construction is often most important in places like the UAE where there is a high expatriate population (Erskine-Loftus et al, 2016).

Localization also inherently draws in concerns related to accuracy as there is a desire to reveal authentic histories. Al Naboodah discusses the importance of heritage preservation to maintain an authentic nature and cultural identity for a society, especially in response to globalization, arguing that people can draw on this authentic preserved heritage in modern production of elements of culture (Al Naboodah, 2011).

Despite localization efforts, these projects remain engaged in global markets and societies. For example, some heritage projects aim to increase global status (Shah, 2019). This is further seen through the interaction in these cities with international heritage development-based awards and the attempts to follow international standards (Alhasawi, 2019). Closely connected with the desire to increase international tourism, heritage revivalism also has appeal to cities looking to achieve or maintain global status. At the same time, the localization efforts that respond to globalization similarly act as a case of cultural flow blending which results in cultural glocalization (Robertson, 1995). This glocalized cultural flow blending creates a sense of cosmopolitanism or universality with heritage (Beck, 2006). Cosmopolitan heritage presentation inherently seeks validation from major cultural heritage institutions, making heritage production inherently political on an international and national level which is masked by an assumed natural or authentic heritage narrative (Wakefield, 2014; 2017). Of course, these international heritage systems are based on UNESCO and ICOM, revealing a limitation in localizing heritage preservation as efforts to be ‘legitimized’ must operate within international and largely Eurocentric development guidelines (Exell and Rico, 2014).

2.3 Narrative building in the presentation of heritage

The malleability of heritage is important to constructing a narrative at the local, national, and international scale through place making. Heritage can be used by the nation-state to construct a national identity (Hightower 2014) when it is central to place making. Similarly, cultural heritage is closely connected with the political motives of a nation-state (Wakefield, 2014; 2017).

The mechanisms of narrative construction are closely tied to the use of symbolic power through the built environment. Symbolic power can manifest in a lack of urban identity. People utilize symbolic power by understanding the processes and dynamics that underline the world’s symbolic cultural systems (Bourdieu, 1985). These symbols, like built space, allow for the creation of a cultural identity through distinction of social worlds (Bourdieu, 1985). This symbolism can be used through urban developments to emphasize a culture system but can also encourage a level of fragmentation in the urban fabric in the entrepreneurial city (Acuto, 2011). Acuto (2011) argues that the entrepreneurial city (as outlined by Harvey, 1989, Hall and

Hubbard 1998, Jessop 1997) relies on carefully applied symbolic power to stand out on the global stage. Basically, symbolic power is central in the construction of place-based narratives.

This power is true in symbols found in architecture as well. This is evidenced in the desire of heritage revitalization projects being used to counter modern architecture styles to construct a local identity (Fox et al. 2016, Awad & Boudiaf 2020, Picton 2010). Furthermore, architecture implemented in development projects needs to fit the symbolic goals of actors that implement them. In this case, that could refer to skyscrapers like the Burj Khalifa as emblems of modernity (Acuto, 2011) or to that of the barjeel as a symbol of Emirati heritage (Abowardah & Dwidar 2014, MacLean 2017). So, local heritage is incorporated in urban planning as a foil to modern architecture.

Heritage narratives can also be a method of securing political power, which is why alternative narratives need to be overshadowed to avoid conflicting social, cultural, and historical understanding of place (Harrison, 2010). This is evident in national museum building in the UAE (Prager, 2015). While this trend is popular all over the world, there was a rapid increase in the Gulf region by using heritage to construct historical narratives (Erskine-Loftus et al., 2016).

Such narrative constructions often inherently lead to elements of social exclusion, despite attempts to unify. These forms of exclusion can arise through the nationalization of architecture and the construction of facilities only for certain groups of people (Harms, 2016). Of course, some of these populations are necessary to the maintenance of the buildings that are being preserved either through work or habitation (Kahraman & Carter, 2019). Social exclusion can also arise in the costs of access related to financial, temporal, and other costs borne by the visitor to the site.

CHAPTER 3: Methodology and Data Collection

The goal of this project was to examine the way heritage preservation efforts relate to broader political goals and heritage narratives. Through the HOS and DHD projects, I consider what these projects are and their current development status. Then, I examine, how did these projects emerge and why. Finally, how do these projects construct a heritage narrative? To answer these questions, I used comparison analysis of satellite maps to determine the progress of the projects. I then added notes from my onsite research to determine the development status and engagement with each site. Discourse analysis was also used to study promotional materials. Finally, the discourse analysis was compared to onsite photos and observations to determine relevant heritage narratives.

3.1 Satellite Imagery Analysis

Satellite maps available from Google Earth Pro (Appendix A) were analyzed to determine the development progress of the sites from the beginning of project implementation to the present day. One limitation of this analysis is that image availability is limited to a bi-annual process limiting our understanding of changes and trends. A more specific timeline would be desired particularly in the analysis of the Develop Historic Dubai Project due to the shorter implementation period.

3.2 On-Site Observational Study

I then conducted an on-site observational study of both Heart of Sharjah and the Al Shindagha heritage museum, recording notes in a journal and collecting thousands of images of relevant buildings and design features. In doing so, I built upon the museum-as-text approach (Prager, 2015) to consider these heritage districts as readable for heritage narratives and strategies. These discoveries were then compared to the discourse analysis results. As images were being taken without clear goals for how they would be used, they were reviewed many times to determine the most important and relevant ones for the discourse-based narrative.

The major limitation to this area of study is that I was only in the UAE for two weeks. While I was able to personally examine more sites with evidence of heritage revivalism, my scope was limited by available data production. For example, I was unable to explore the true

extent of Dubai's heritage preservation efforts in the districts surrounding Al Shindagha due to a lack of available time.

3.3 Discourse Analysis

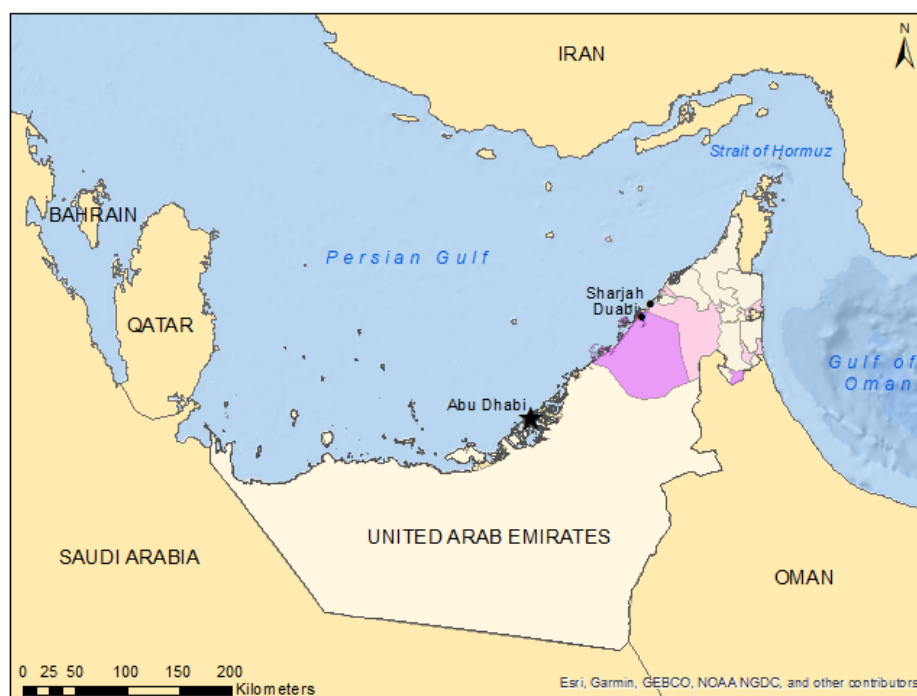
I examined the description of each site as it appeared online under official web pages and on the web pages of major contributors to see how each project is being presented to the public. For the Heart of Sharjah project this included their official website (Heart of Sharjah; 2014a, 2014b, 2016), the Shurooq government description of the site, and several related fact sheets and articles that they promoted. The Al Shindagha Museum (Al Shindagha, n.d.b), which I analyzed from the Dubai Historic District (DHD) project, relied on more international development actors in its production. The actors I chose to focus on included X Architects (X Architects, 2023), the design team behind the Welcome Pavilion, the Story of the Creek, and the Perfume House which were all major buildings in the site's production. I also took descriptions from GSM Project (GSM, 2020a; 2020b) that worked on the Perfume House Pavilion and the City Pavilion. Then, I took descriptions from the Cultura Acciona (Cultura Acciona, 2022) company that focused on the construction of the Traditions, House of Poetry, Life on the Land, and the Traditional Food House Pavilions.

Using all these sources, I followed Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (Waitt, 2016, see Appendix B), meaning I considered the language used to determine broader motivational and development goals. Then, I coded relevant statements and comments, identifying information from which I pulled out repeated themes. From there, I determined appropriate categories, or broader heritage narratives goals, based on the repeating themes. With the construction of these categories, I determined the overall heritage narratives and then compared these to those being displayed by the design of sites themselves.

One limitation is that the data for DHD is much more prevalent on the internet than that of Heart of Sharjah, even though it has been developing over a long period. It should be noted that the Heart of Sharjah website has not been updated since 2019, before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, another limitation is that I will be restricted by which articles and sites I will have access to as I do not know Arabic.

CHAPTER 4: DEVELOPMENT HISTORY OF DUBAI AND SHARJAH

Dubai and Sharjah exist as part of a megalopolis along the eastern part of the Persian Gulf coastline in the UAE. Each city is a conglomerate of political, economic, and cultural history. While both cities experienced rapid development following the 1970s oil boom, Dubai is considered a global city (Elshehtawy, 2004). Sharjah, once the most important port in the region, now acts as a cultural center which consciously tries to preserve its historical urban identity (Fox et al, 2006). Map 4.1 shows the proximity of these cities and the regional breakdown of the former Trucial States that would unite as emirates to form the UAE in the 1970s (Zahlan, 1978).



United Arab Emirates
Regional Map

Map 4.1: *United Arab Emirates regional map showing Dubai and Sharjah*

4.1 Political and Economic History: Dubai and Sharjah

Historically, the two dominant political entities along the Trucial coast were the Qawasim family of the north and the Bedouin Bani Yas federations based in the south. The Qawasim family originates from Persia (Stephenson, 2014), eventually consolidating power into a small

regional empire under Sultan bin Saqr in 1803 (Zahlan, 1978). The Qawasim empire would split after his death in the late 1800s (Peck, 2008), forming a separate but still allied state in Sharjah, making the city a point of strategic regional influence prior to British imperialism. The other major political group at the time was the Bani Yas. Ethnically Bedouin, they were understood by the French to be nomadic inhabitants of the desert dependent on herding and organized into clans which were each headed by a sheik (Muazu & Tyrell, 2008). The Bani Yas migrated from present-day Yemen, eventually settling in an annual nomadic lifestyle between the present-day Abu Dhabi city and Liwa, near the present southern border with Saudi Arabia (Fox et al, 2006). The Bani Yas were comprised of over 20 different further factions, including the Al-Bu Falasah faction that moved to Dubai Creek around 1830 under Sheik Maktoum bin Buti (Stephenson, 2014).

These early cities were heavily reliant on their ports because overseas trade was central to early economic and political activity in the Gulf region. By the 1720s, Britain wanted to protect imperial trade between Persia (Iran), Iraq, Muscat (Oman), and India which was threatened by the Qawasim raiders from Sharjah and Ras Al-Khaimah (Onley, 2005). A series of treaties would follow, before 1892 when the newly named Trucial States entered an Exclusive Agreement that bound them politically to Britain, ceding control over their foreign affairs and placing them informally within the British Empire (Onley, 2005). Britain would continue to dominate the regional economy, initiating the area's participation in the global market. With the best natural port on the coast (Peck, 2008), Dubai was also beginning to challenge Sharjah's status as the key trading city in the region at this time.

In the 1920s, pearling trade would begin to decline due to Japanese competition (Stephenson, 2014), forcing leaders in Dubai and Sharjah to look to other methods for maintaining strategic regional trade importance. In Dubai, Sheik Sa'id bin Maktoum transferred much political power to his son Rashid who would start massive reform projects before he officially became the ruler in 1958 (Zahlan, 1978). Sheik Rashid bin Sa'id is credited with much of Dubai's rapid urban development which played a key role in overtaking Sharjah as the strategic trading city in the region. Some large-scale developments included the dredging of Dubai Creek in the 1960s and the electrification of the city in 1961 as modernization initiatives (Stephenson, 2014). Sharjah, on the other hand, was facing a series of strategic setbacks. First, in 1921 Britain would recognize Ras al-Khaimah as a separate state (Peck, 2008), leading to

geographic, political, and economic losses for the state. Then following World War II, the Sharjah creek became silted after supporting a British Airforce base (Peck, 2008), impacting their trade and commerce capabilities.

Then, as Dubai was building itself into an international trade destination, oil was discovered in the Gulf region. On the Trucial Coast, the first offshore oil discoveries were in Abu Dhabi in 1958 and then in 1966 in Dubai (Zahlan, 1978). A more modest amount was discovered later in Sharjah, in 1973 (Zahlan, 1978), making oil less central to development. Oil was very important for further integrating the region into the global market and solidified the regional power of Dubai over Sharjah. As the Trucial States began to experience rapid development, respective state leaders began to look to end the Exclusive Agreement with Britain. This would happen in 1971 under the leadership of Sheikh Zayed of Abu Dhabi, who drove the formation of the United Arab Emirates (Peck, 2008). Then, Ras al-Khaimah would join the other six states in 1972 (Peck 2008). As a new state, the construction of a unifying history, tradition, culture, and heritage was one social project that the new emirates undertook.

4.2 Urban Trends in Post-Oil Gulf Cities

Globalization refers not only to economic integration but also to engagement with global cultural flows that can manifest in urban development and architecture. In the pre-oil Trucial States, there was little urbanization with cities being primarily located along the water, acting as trading ports. In these cities, emphasis was placed on the importance of the urban freej (Figure 4.1) which existed as an informal, unplanned, and walkable city center (MacLean, 2017). In popular memory, the freej is viewed as a tight-knit community with authentic and cultural values as well as spatial purity relating to the spiritual values of privacy associated with Islamic urban planning (MacLean, 2017). Importantly, the desert environment was a major factor in materials available as well as the need for certain architectural features, like the barjeel, or wind tower (Awad & Boudiaf, 2020).



Figure 4.11: Narrow alleyways (or sikeek) characteristic of the urban freej



Figure 4.12: Urban freej layout of Sharjah

Figure 4.1: *Urban Freej*. Images from Frymoyer, I (2022).

Growth of cities in the Gulf region was vastly impacted with the onset of oil production in the region for multiple reasons. First, oil resulted in revenue as participation in the world market led to massive material wealth available for development (Khalaf, 2002). In addition, oil impacted the power and wealth of sheiks in the Trucial States. Since each emirate controlled its own inter-state wealth, the dynamic of relative wealth based on oil reserves played a major role in the induction and completion of development projects (Khalaf, 2002). Lastly, the influx of migration by expatriates into the region encouraged rapid urban development and suburbanization in the region as locals would move out of the old urban freej and into western-style master planned suburbs (MacLean, 2017).

These factors came together to leave visible impacts on the urban fabric of Dubai and Sharjah. Both cities would begin to construct skyscrapers, considering them symbols of modernity (Acuto, 2017). This would require demolition of parts of the traditional city. For example, in Dubai, of the original 3,000 historic buildings in the old urban core, only 371 remain today (Boussaa, 2014). The master planned suburbs also functioned as symbols of modernity, to urbanize the relatively rural population and improve standards of living. An example is the creation of the sha'biya in Dubai (MacLean, 2017). These inner suburban neighborhoods in both Sharjah and Dubai were on the edges of the desert in the 60s and 70s but are now fully incorporated into the urban core (MacLean, 2017), showing the speed and extent of urbanization.

While these post-oil discovery urbanization trends were visible in both cities, by the 1970s Sharjah's urban development was largely driven by the urbanization of Dubai as effects of

globalization spilled over from the adjacent city. However, overall growth would begin to slow by the 1980s with the depreciation of oil prices (Khalaf, 2006). Urban developments would then begin to change as cities considered economic diversification. Dubai's turn to tourism and preserving its status as a global city would push it to develop "urban wonders" (Khalaf, 2006), essentially establishing itself as a showcase city. Sharjah would similarly seek recognition for heritage preservation and local identity formation, and it would be recognized as the cultural capital of the Arab world by the Arab League in the early 1990s and by UNESCO in 1998 (Fox et al, 2006).

The contextual history of Dubai and Sharjah reveals rapid political and economic development from each city's founding in the 1800s. Dubai's trajectory as a global city (Elsheshtawy, 2004) and Sharjah's similar rapid modern urban changes created places that fear a perceived loss of local culture and identity (Steiner 2010, Stephenson 2011, Boussaa 2014b Tyrell & Mu'azu 2008). These fears led to a trend of heritage revivalism in both cities.

CHAPTER 5: HERITAGE REVIVALISM IN THE UAE

Heritage revivalism in the Gulf region has exploded in recent years as Arab states seek to solidify a political, historical, and cultural identity. This manifested in the creation of museums, hotels, malls, and other buildings that promote a particular heritage or narrative. In the UAE, this results in both localized promotion of a loosely defined Emirati identity as well as a broader pan-Arab or pan-Islamic identity with projects taking inspiration from major civilizations around the world. Within Emirati heritage preservation districts, there are several architectural indicators of note, including maljis, souqs, traditional housing, and barjeels.

5.1 Heritage Revivalism in the Gulf

Heritage revivalism in the Gulf emerged out of concerns of a loss in heritage due to modernization efforts. Through the introduction of hyper-realistic projects and the promotion of progress and modernization in the urban form, there was a fear in loss of local culture (Steiner 2010, Stephenson 2011, Boussaa 2014b, Tyrell & Mu'azu 2008). With oil discovery, cities like Muscat, Kuwait City, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Riyadh all experienced rapid growth and change which effected their traditional urban centers (Mazzetto, 2022). As demolitions occurred to make way for urban change, these cities lost significant built heritage in part due to a lack of local regulations (Mazzetto, 2022). In the gulf region, modernization and modern development was also linked with westernization and western-style architecture and urban planning (Boussaa, 2014a). Local urban centers were largely considered in the process of rapid urbanization to be a blight to development, leading to their complete destruction (Boussaa, 2014a). The introduction of road systems also disrupted traditional city centers (Boussaa, 2014a).

Recently, heritage has become increasingly important in the Gulf region with regards to education, research, cultural programming, and urban planning (Nonneman & Valeri, 2019). So, there has been a shift to promoting restoration and reuse for historical buildings (Mazzetto, 2022). So, heritage revivalism importantly considers the way that vernacular architecture continues to be utilized beyond original context and functions of each site (Kahraman & Carter). The two arguments for heritage preservation in the urban form is to sustain a local traditional identity and for economic purposes like tourism and trade (Boussaa, 2014a). Return to heritage is also a common element in sustainable development narratives with repeated references to an environmentally and socially sustainable urban past (Mazzetto, 2022). This has exploded in

recent decades with continuous references to heritage elements and symbols in the construction of buildings that would be used for a wide range of purposes.

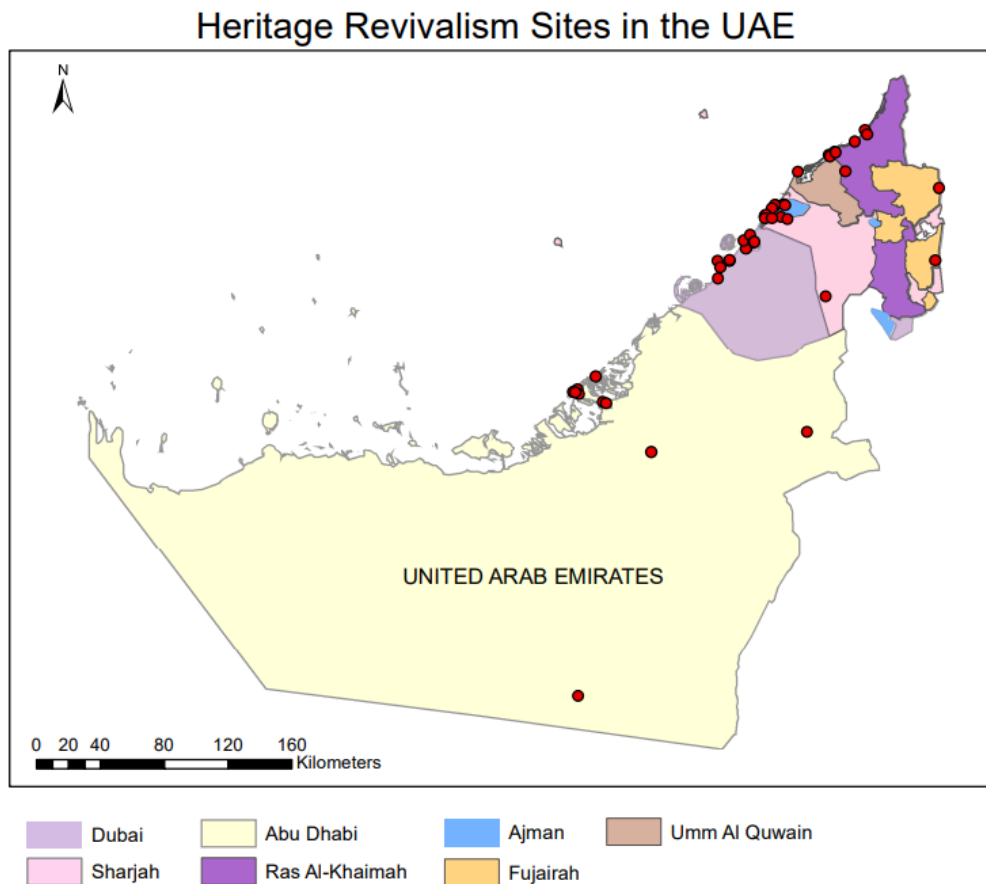
The Arab states have been looking to attract more international attention through identity building (Exell and Rico, 2014). The first national museum in the Gulf was built in 1957 in Kuwait (Langham & Barker, 2014). From there, states would create heritage museums, districts, and authorities. This trend can be seen in Qatar through the creation of a national museum in the 1970s to present the history of the nation. It was the first integrated museum in the country, presenting the political importance and legitimacy of their heritage preservation efforts (Al-Mulla, 2014). These projects interact with local as well as a broader globalized Islamic heritage, especially when identities can be varied and complex. For example, in Bahrain, the museum of Islamic Archeology attempts to unify people under a Bahraini or Arab/Islamic identity when specific ethnic identities release socio-political tensions (MacLean & Insoll, 2014). In fact, the mass influx of expatriates into the region meant that there was an increased desire to preserve a national identity and to present it through heritage (Langham & Barker, 2014).

These projects importantly do not need to function solely as museums but can be spaces of urban life (Boussaa, 2014a). In Doha, Souq Waqif, located in a former Bedouin trading area, has become a display of traditional architecture, and has become a top tourist destination (Boussaa, 2014a). Restoration of the 1950s souq also included the replacement of new structures with reconstructions of traditional ones and the removal of signs that would disrupt the heritage presentation (Boussaa, 2014a). However, the souq is also used by Qatari residents as well (Boussaa, 2014a), suggesting that such projects are not solely for tourism but also for local function.

5.2 Understanding the UAE Context

Heritage revivalism in the UAE exists in a variety of forms. A brief overview of sites like hotels, museums, and malls throughout the country reveal many examples of heritage being presented through architecture and urban planning. This heritage can be either tied to Bedouin or Qawasim histories or it can be from places all over the world that symbolize Arab or Islamic culture, like Egypt or Persia. The destruction of historic architecture to make way for fast-paced developments in Dubai and Sharjah has worried many (Hawker, 2007). In response to the loss of historical buildings and the increasingly multi-ethnic population, the UAE would see a rise in

nationalism and heritage preservation in urban planning. Map 5.1 reveals some of these sites of heritage revivalism throughout the country. These buildings are museums, hotels, cultural centers, malls, heritage preservation districts, souqs, airports, and more (Appendix C). They all include Emirati or Arabic design, revealing a broader range of heritage revivalism efforts.



Map 5.1: Heritage Revivalism Sites Throughout the Emirates

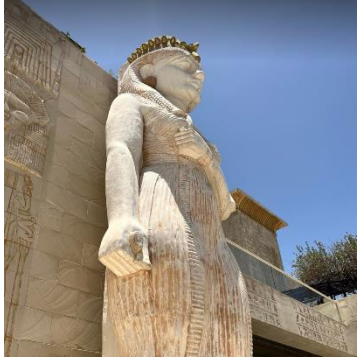


The first example of such efforts is the construction of heritage museums and districts. Each emirate has established a separate museum that preserves their history and identity (Prager, 2015). These museums were built around emblematic buildings like forts as early as 1971 (Prager, 2015). Other museums like the Zayed National Museum in Abu Dhabi (Langham and Barker, 2014) would be constructed later. The Sharjah heritage museum, re-established in 2012, is one of the more recent national museum projects (Prager 2015).

Preservation projects can be limited to a single building or to an entire district with large-scale revitalization efforts being seen as early as the 1990s. For example, Dubai revitalized the

urban areas of Bastakia while Sharjah focused on al Marija and al-Shuwahean to remove squatters (MacLean, 2017). Dubai would also pursue smaller-scale projects like that of the Heritage and Pearl Diving Village. Then, Sharjah would rebuild Fort Al Hisn in 1996 after it had been demolished (Heart of Sharjah, 2016), suggesting a refocusing on heritage preservation. Such trends remain relevant today with Saadiyat island in Abu Dhabi as a modern example of cosmopolitan heritage preservation and promotion (Wakefield, 2014).

Importantly, such presentations of heritage are not just limited to old urban centers as heritage revivalism also extends to other types of buildings, with architectural elements being used in places like airports and malls (Table 5.1). Dubai, for example, has two heritage style souqs, Souq Al Bahar and The Heritage Souq, located in the Dubai Mall complex. While these are more abstractly localized, other malls in Dubai have clear heritage presentations that connect to a broader pan-Arab or pan-Islamic identity. Ibn Battuta Mall, for example, uses the narrative of Ibn Battuta, famed Islamic geographer, to construct a mall using architectural elements that reference locations where he traveled. This includes Persia, Mughal India, and Andalusian Spain. Each court also features exhibits that tourists can interact with to learn more. This mall therefore references a larger pan-Arab Islamic tradition and heritage, created for a purpose of education. Another pan-Arab example of heritage presentation is the reverence of Egyptian civilization architecture and heritage in the Wafi city mall. From including hieroglyphs to the use of obelisks and pyramids, Wafi city is full of Egyptian references. Then the Heritage Souq portion of the mall expands on this pan-Arab representation to include design references to other major Islamic centers like Morocco, Turkey, and Iran. Sharjah's Central "Blue" Souq Mall similarly includes heritage-based design references. Ultimately, heritage revitalization exists in the creation of hotels, office buildings, museums, and even airports across the country.

Heritage Revivalism Projects Throughout Dubai and Sharjah

Site Name	Location	Description	Building Function	Image
Wafi City	Dubai, UAE	Egyptian themed mall	Mixed-used, mall	
Souq Al Bahar	Dubai, UAE	Emirati/Arabian Eclectic themed section to Dubai Mall	Mall	
Sharjah Office Tower	Sharjah, UAE	Office building located near the Heart of Sharjah district that has barjeel symbols	Office building	

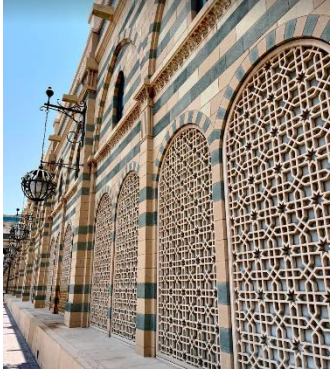

Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization	Sharjah, UAE	Islamic eclectic architecture with traditional ornamentation and a golden dome (not pictured)	Museum	
Ibn Battuta Mall	Dubai, UAE	Themed mall inspired by the travels of Ibn Battuta that includes the architecture styles of China, Persia, India, Andalusian Spain, and Tunisia	Mall	

Table 5.1: Heritage Revivalism Examples in Dubai and Sharjah. Images from I, Frymoyer (2022).

Heritage revitalization efforts also extend beyond built heritage to include intangible heritage like falconry, camel racing, poetry, festivals, and traditional dress (Langham and Barker, 2014). Of course, with Dubai's increased focus on tourism and Sharjah's position as a regional cultural center, there are implications that motivations and manifestations of heritage revivalism are not the same in these emirates. The actors behind these movements are likewise varied. First, the respective rulers of both Sharjah and Dubai played an important role in the heritage revivalism in the region, publicly approving the areas of interest for large-scale projects (Khalaf, 2002). Such projects require a figurehead to serve as a visionary for project design. There are also government ministries and sponsored institutions in both Sharjah and Dubai. Finally, international organizations like UNESCO and the Arab League also play a role in creating global recognition and setting preservation guidelines, facilitating heritage preservation in urban planning.

5.3 Architectural Evidence of Heritage Revivalism in Dubai and Sharjah

Evidence of heritage revivalism is clear throughout the UAE. Within the context of heritage preservation districts, Sharjah and Dubai contain several similar design features despite differing ethnic and historical backgrounds. For example, Dubai emphasizes Bedouin origins while Sharjah highlights the Qawasmi family and empire. Still, architectural elements exist that reference a broader Emirati culture in the built environment. Some features of interest include majlis, traditional housing, souqs, and the barjeel (Figure 5.1).



Figure 5.11: Maljis at the Al Naboodah House in Sharjah



Figure 5.12: Sheikh Obaid Bin Thani House in Dubai showing lattice work and ornamentation



Figure 5.13: Al Naboodah House showing lattice work and courtyard

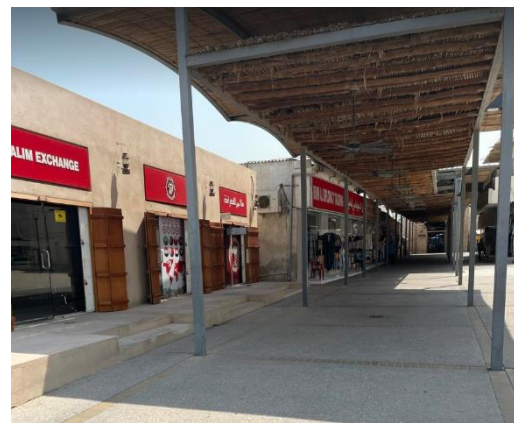


Figure 5.14: Al Shanasiyah souq

Figure 5.1: Evidence of Heritage Revivalism with majlis, traditional housing, and souqs.

Images from I, Frymoyer (2022).

Modern street-side majlis are made from modern materials using modern amenities like air conditioning to replace traditional indoor places of socialization (MacLean, 2017).

Traditional housing in the region comes in two forms. The stone, mud, and coral buildings were

often the homes of higher-income individuals like local rulers and merchants. These homes were often two stories built around a central courtyard with outsides having ornamentation in the form of lattice work, mashrabiya, and barjeels (Awad & Bourdiaz, 2020). The low status areesh style homes were temporary and often found at the urban periphery as late as the 1950s (MacLean, 2017). Another prominent feature of the urban planning in the region is that of the souq, a marketplace and site of socialization (Peck, 2008). Today's souqs in the region might have local or international goods, depending on the targeted audience and new-built replicas are also used in major malls as a symbolic return to the local heritage.

The most important architectural symbol of the region is the barjeel, or wind tower (Figure 5.2). Originally from Persia, the barjeel was brought to the Trucial states by merchants who often resided alongside the waterfronts in Sharjah and Dubai (MacLean, 2017). These towers were often made of coral reef, stones, mud, and mangrove pools, working to channel breezes from above the house into a shaded room below. With modern technology like air conditioning, barjeels now tend to be used as elements of symbolic power for Emirati history and culture.



Figure 5.21: Barjeel in the Al Shindagha District.



Figure 5.22: Barjeels line Bur Dubai souq

Figure 5.2: *The Barjeel as Symbolic Power*. Images from I, Frymoyer (2022).

Ultimately, these traditional architectural features are used to act as built heritage, referencing the past. Sometimes they exist as a part of a restoration project. In other cases, they are torn down only to be rebuilt. Sometimes, they are constructed as part of a broader urban development project with no regard to authentic presentation. Still, the way that they are implemented can be read as a heritage narrative. The construction of such narratives will be

explored in the context of the Dubai Historic District (DHD) and the Heart of Sharjah (HOS) Projects.

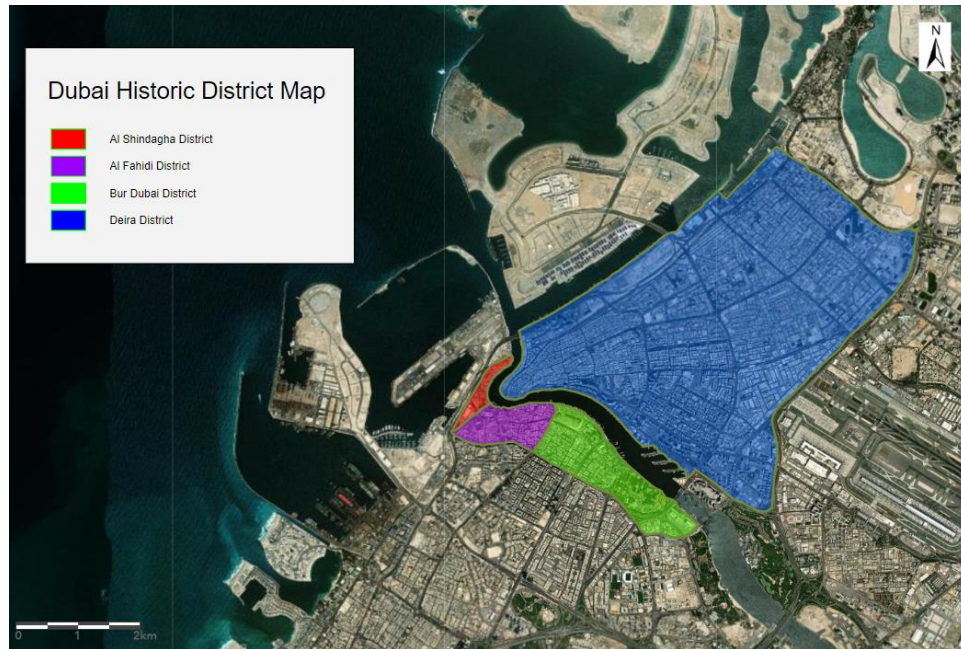
CHAPTER 6: INTRODUCING THE DUBAI HISTORIC DISTRICT AND HEART OF SHARJAH PROJECTS

The two heritage revivalist projects that will be examined both began in the early 2010s on locations of historic city centers, showing that heritage revitalization remains active today. Initially, both sites appear to have similar goals of heritage preservation and attraction of heritage-based tourism with the desire to be recognized as a UNESCO heritage site. Both projects also include heavy investment on the part of their respective leaders and governments. Importantly, both sites have undergone significant change in the past decade, as revealed by satellite imagery and on sight observation.

6.1 Dubai Historic District Project

Alhasawi uses documentation and plans obtained from the Architectural Heritage and Antiquities Department of Dubai Municipality to explain the DHD (2019). The first approval for development happened in 2015 by Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum. This plan, developed under the Dubai Municipality, Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing and Dubai Culture, aims to attract 12 million visitors by 2020 as it would transform the area into a heritage and cultural center within the city (Alhawasi, 2019).

Focused on the districts of Shindagha, al Fahidi, Deira, and Bur Dubai (Map 6.1), the development plan includes 60 projects covering an area of approximately 1.5 square km (Alhawasi, 2019). In Khor Dubai, there will be more Abra (ferry) stops, as well as daily light and sound shows. The Abra system is comprised of dhow boats that ferry people between Deira and the districts on the other side of the creek (Boussaa, 2014a). In the Al Fahidi district, there will be a focus on the arts and old crafts and trades. Deira will see improved pedestrian walkways and traditional stores revived in addition to the construction of a historic square with exhibits. Bur Dubai will see the restoration of Al Fahidi fort and the reconstruction of the old defense wall as well as the installation of interactive smart screens (Alhawasi, 2019).



Map 6.1: DHD Project Coverage Area, Divided by District

According to Alhasawi, there are five major themes that the project aims to address (Alhawasi, 2019). The first theme covers preservation of UAE heritage and traditions through the presentation of artifacts and stories. Then there is also the promotion of heritage through building preservation. The project also aims to provide new economic opportunities with traditional markets and trade. Cultural experiences for the community will be enhanced through urban renewal and the establishment of an education center. Finally, it will improve facilities to ensure preservation of original components while still enhancing visitor experience.

Important actors in the development of this district are Sheikh Maktoum Bin Rashid al Maktoum who initiated the early development stages and signed off on the project (Hanif, 2015). Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM) and the Dubai Municipality and Dubai Culture (DCAA) are the forces working to complete the phased development plan.

I focused on the largest of the 60 projects, the developments of the Al Shindagha District. This was the site of the ruling family of Dubai, Al Maktoum, concentrated around the house of Sheik Saeed which was built in 1896 (Boussaa, 2014b). In 1958, the ruler's palace moved to Zaabil, and the district fell into disrepair before being swept away in 1991 for high-rise developments (Boussaa, 2014). In 1996, heritage revitalization began to get underway in the district with the creation of the Heritage Village and the Pearly Diving Village. The Dubai

Heritage Village was founded in 1996 by the Dubai Society for Heritage Revival and the Emirates Society for Pearl Diving (Khalaf, 2002). The Heritage Village/Pearl diving village consists of references to desert, mountain, souq, and coastal life, all sections including replicas of traditional architecture (Prager, 2015). These included Bedouin tents, mountain stone houses, a souq, and an areesh house. There are examples of fauna, camels, sheep, goats, and falcons (Prager, 2015). People re-enact former ways of life in this village, directly interacting with tourists (Prager, 2015). The Pearl Diving Village includes an outdoor theatre, painted murals, photographs, diving gear, shops, restaurants, and pearling boats (Khalaf, 2002). The Dubai Shopping Festival draws people to the old Dubai district, bringing both residents and locals into the area since its launch in 1996 (Boussaa, 2014a). This history makes the district an excellent place of study for heritage revitalization in a modern context.

Under the DHD Project, the Shindagha district (Figure 6.1) is meant to be the site of interactive museums, performance centers, and outdoor malls (Alhawasi, 2019). In addition to the floating exhibits housed in traditional pearling and trade boats and outdoor majlis, the district will be home to one of the largest interactive museums in the region, the Al Shindagha museum (Alhawasi, 2019). Advertised as a place to explore both heritage and progress (Al Shindagha Museum, 2022), the museum is located directly south of the Heritage Village.

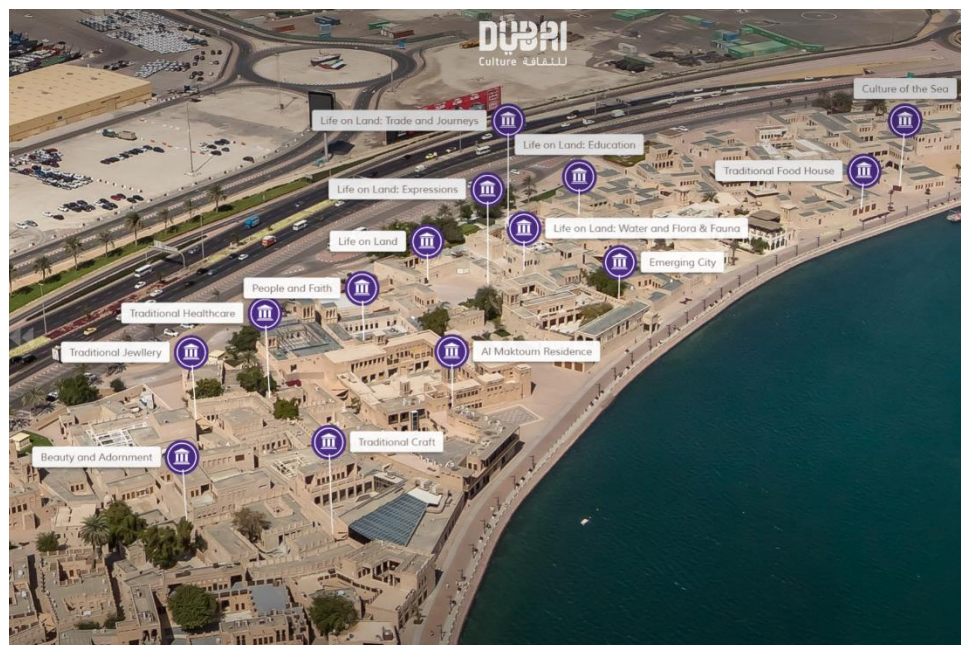


Figure 6.1: Screenshot of Interactive Map of Al Shindagha Museum. (2016). [Digital Image]. Al Shindagha Museum

Map360. <https://alshindagha.dubaiculture.gov.ae/en/Pavilions/Maps/Pages/Map360.aspx>

The Al Shindagha district has gone through much urban development over the past decade, with efforts to build upon the Heritage Village and the Pearl Diving Village from the 1990s (Boussaa 2014b, Khalaf 2002, Prager 2015). The most recent construction efforts, the Al Shindagha museum, appears to be mostly complete now. It is now connected to the Dubai metro (abra system) and consists of the museum pavilions which both blend and stand out from the old Heritage Village buildings. These old developments (Figure 6.2), located to the north appear to still need restoration although covered furniture in the central maljis area suggests that it is still in use.



Figure 6.21: Spaces in use as *maljis* in Al Shindagha



Figure 6.22: Inconsistent restoration



Figure 6.23: Close up of worn walls

Figure 6.2: Sites in need of restoration in Al Shindagha. Images from I, Frymoyer (2022)

These efforts match the history of the district. Formally redone in the 90s, it shows that some of the buildings would not have remained in top condition. This suggests that constant maintenance efforts would be needed. Satellite imagery of the region over the past 10 years reveals the rapid changes that have unfolded as entire sections of the district have been completely rebuilt even as restoration efforts have not been complete.

6.2 Heart of Sharjah (HOS) Project

Heart of Sharjah (HOS) is a fifteen-year heritage revitalization project that is being developed to recreate 1950s Sharjah, replacing high-rise structures with traditional Arabic

architecture (Heart of Sharjah, 2016). Located five minutes from the city’s corniche and ten minutes from Sharjah international airport, this project is being constructed at the central part of historic Sharjah and the site of the historic souqs and ruler’s residences, like that of fort Al Hisn. This region has been the site of prior revitalization efforts as the included districts al Marija and al-Shuwahean, to remove squatters, repair homes, and introduce NGOs and creative arts (MacLean, 2017).



Figure 6.3: Screenshot of Interactive Map of Heart of Sharjah. (2016). [Digital Image]. Heart of Sharjah. <https://www.heartofsharjah.ae/interactive-map.html>

The HOS historic area is one of the components to Sharjah’s serial nomination as the Gateway to the Trucial States. Labeled the “largest historical preservation and restoration project in the region” (Heart of Sharjah, 2016), the goal of the site is to create a tourist and trade destination that is comprised of contemporary artistic touches and 1950s architecture. The project site includes four districts that are each divided into freej with a fort Al Hisn in the center, surrounded by the wall of Sharjah and watch towers (Heart of Sharjah, 2016).

The project development focus areas are three-fold. First, there is the goal of restoring existing assets to create a sense of place, achieved through the creation of new amenities and attractions to complement existing museums, souqs, and galleries. The project also aims to

enhance accessibility through taxi stands, bus stops, underground parking, and water taxi drop-offs. Finally, new structures will be built following traditional architecture styles, whether these are hotels, restaurants, cafés, art galleries, or souqs.

Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Muhammad Al Qasimi is noted to be heavily involved in heritage preservation in Sharjah (Heart of Sharjah, 2016) and approved its implementation. Sharjah Investment and Development Authority (Shurooq) has set up a joint committee made up of representatives from leading governmental and private bodies to oversee the first phase of implementation. Shurooq is the major driving force behind all development in Sharjah and emphasizes Sharjah's cultural capital in development projects like that of HOS.

The project was meant to begin in 2010, lasting fifteen years with development ending in 2025 (Heart of Sharjah, 2016). However, it officially began in 2014 with the revival of the Al Shanasiyah souq, rebuilt on Bank Street. According to the HOS website, the project is still in its first phase of development (Heart of Sharjah, 2016) but the website has not been updated since 2019, before the pandemic. It should be noted that the hotel constructed as a part of the development, Chedi Al Bait hotel, is receiving nationwide and regional hotel awards.

Using the satellite images of the district, the major developments, like the building of Souq Al Banar and Souq Al Sharaswah are visible, both completed before 2015. However, many of the high rises are still standing around the district, including those that were supposed to be demolished in the first stage of development. Similarly, the area between the fort and the waterfront has not been replaced with buildings and instead has been made into a large open space (with cars or trees). There have been trees planted throughout the district, on script with the second phase of the plan (although the digital rendering is not following the original plan).

Restoration efforts appear to have concentrated on the buildings that were already standing and images grabbed from the site reveal these efforts (Figure 6.4). There were also tents appearing in April, suggesting that the space is being used continuously by the surrounding community, not just the visitors that are being attracted. Construction sites also appeared to be fewer following the onset of the pandemic, which could have resulted from many obvious factors, and is something that further research could explore.



Figure 6.41: Outside Al Naboodah House



Figure 6.42: Outside Sharjah National Theatre



Figure 6.43: Buildings In Use

Figure 6.4: Active construction zones in *Heart of Sharjah*, Images from I, Frymoyer (2022).

On-site observations showed multiple construction sites, for example outside of the Al Naboodah house, or spaces being used to store materials, some of which might be from the festival. There were also several buildings that were within the proposed project development plan that do not appear to be in use but also have not yet been torn down. These images suggest that construction remains active in the district and that the site has not been finalized.

CHAPTER 7: CONSTRUCTION OF HERITAGE NARRATIVES

Heritage presentation reveals insight to present understandings of important elements to regional identities. The construction of heritage narratives can therefore reveal a lot about political motivations of important institutions as the interpretations of valued heritage arise out of political motivations. As continuously explored, in a part of the world that has experienced rapid development, often at the expense of traditional buildings, heritage revivalism projects have been important to urban development. So there has been increased value placed on localized culture flows. However, continued engagement and response to effects of globalization prevent narratives from being truly localized. Discourse analysis of the DHD and HOS projects help to reveal these constructed narratives which are then visible in the design and layout of the sites themselves.

7.1 Constructing Heritage Narratives

Understanding the way that each site is presented to the desired visitors is important to exploring the heritage narratives that are being promoted in space. Narratives therefore exist both in words describing the sites as well as the design of the districts themselves. History, outward-oriented considerations, and built heritage all connect to the creation of an overall heritage narrative. In Al Shindagha Dubai, this narrative is the heritage as progress narrative. In Sharjah, this is the heritage as heart narrative.

As expected, both sites emphasize themes of culture, tradition, and history to promote a localized heritage. However, the Al Shindagha museum in the DHD project promotes a heritage narrative that considers culture and tradition within a broader context of progression or modernization development. This is first portrayed through a continuous blending of past and present while placing emphasis on the city's modernization period. This is seen through comments about progress, modernization, and human capacity for growth. When it comes to the built environment, the development projects are constantly described as being "enhancing" or "rejuvenating" which implies that they are adding to the existing fabric beyond simple restoration for historic preservation. Importantly, this project references a challenge to the international assumption that Dubai lacks a local heritage, culture, and tradition. In response to claims that the progress of the city has overshadowed historical preservation, this narrative links progress to heritage.

The Heart of Sharjah, on the other hand, promotes a heritage as heart narrative. This is achieved through the continued references to history, the past, and founding fathers as vehicles for inspiration. It depends more on historical authenticity and does little to reference the modernization period, instead highlighting the glory of the past. Such reverence is also seen in the preference for preservation and restoration of built heritage rather than revitalization. Importantly, it appears to be attempting to establish itself as the authentic Trucial State city, perhaps to stand out from Dubai. Also, as a mix-use district, HOS seeks to create a heritage district that both highlights the past but also remains a vital part of the city at large, like a heart is to the human body. The essentialism and emotion behind the district grounds it in a narrative of heritage as heart.

7.2 Heritage as Progress in DHD

The heritage as progress narrative capitalizes on Dubai's rapid development to consider the city's localized heritage primarily within the context of modernization. This is achieved on site through the blending of architecture styles and the use of modern technology.

Heritage as progress is immediately present to the visitor in the first of museum pavilion, titled Dubai: The Emerging City. This pavilion looks at the development of Dubai, painting the city's history as one that came from a Bedouin background to have major urban growth and development. The glory of progress and modernization is repeatedly emphasized in the exhibits, especially ones that are highly digitized. Therefore, this narrative is evident to the visitor through the material presented.

Heritage as progress is also revealed through the design of exhibits that incorporate high tech features. There is no attempt to maintain the traditional interior appearance, with interior rooms in pavilions appearing futuristic and modern (Figure 7.1). For example, the Perfume Pavilion shows a modern, geometric interior. The displays in this pavilion were about local scents. Each local scent (oud, rose, etc) was displayed in its natural resource form and a liquid oil-based form which, in a non-covid environment, could be smelled by visitors. While the pavilion encouraged visitors to interact with an important aspect of Emirati heritage, the construction of the room did very little to reference this history, instead showing a glamorous display of expensive resources. Then the Traditional Textile pavilion included several rooms around a central display where videos were projected against string. Not only does this show off

technological prowess but it also shows a symbolic connection between the tradition and the present day, with present day traditions being displayed on threads that symbolize tradition. However, the symbolism of certain projects was not always evident. For example, the Medicine Pavilion appeared to include purely aesthetic geometric displays that suggest the interior of the buildings are not attempting to maintain authentic historical interiors, instead having a stylized presentation.

The narrative of heritage as progress is also evident in the symbolic blending of architecture styles throughout the district. The Al Shindagha Welcome Center stands out as a modern building against the traditional mud brick buildings and contemporary architecture styles. Generally, there is continuous blending of traditional architecture with modern architecture, compared to Sharjah that used modern technology (air conditioning, lights) to improve the experience of the viewers.



Figure 7.11: Al Shindagha Welcome Center



Figure 7.12: Perfume Pavilion



Figure 7.13: Technology Inside the Beauty and Adornment Pavilion



Figure 7.14: Traditional Healthcare Pavilion Exhibits

Figure 7.1: *Museum Exhibits and Architecture in Al Shindagha, Images from I, Frymoyer (2022).*

Overall, the narrative of heritage as progression suggests that heritage is inherently cosmopolitan, that it can be constructed to encourage a specific type of interpretation. This relates to how Dubai contextualizes its heritage within the broader world, promoting its status as a global, outward looking city. This is best exemplified in the repeated references to Dubai as a global destination and power. Outward oriented place-making marketing is also seen through the repeated references of creating a welcoming space for everyone, the repeated references to tourism (which fits in with Dubai’s development goals and trends) as well as the recognition that the history of the area is also tied to non-Emirati population. One of the more interesting aspects is that through this display of cultural power, Dubai wants to counter its perception as being a luxurious and cultureless desert. It constructs its heritage as a progress narrative to do so, presenting it within the Al Shindagha district.

7.2 Heritage as Heart in HOS

The Heart of Sharjah, on the other hand, promotes a heritage as heart narrative through this mix-use district that provides museums, galleries, sites of commercial exchange, and restaurants all while attempting to preserve an authentic replication of heritage. Building upon the “Heart of Sharjah” project title that references an emotional and essential for function body

part, this district takes on both the emotional presentation of heritage while also transforming the area into one that retains active engagement from tourists and locals.

Sharjah does rely on a linear presentation model that grounds the site in its local past while providing optimism for the future. There were also more references to tourism/visitors and destination building, suggesting that this site could be a key draw to capitalize on tourists coming into the region already, providing an “authentic” and glocalized alternative to Dubai.

The heritage as heart narrative simultaneously produces a centralized and essential component to city building while introducing an element of emotional connection to history. This narrative is present in how the mixed-use district chooses to continue references to a preserved past and history as there is a clear attempt to root the past to the present, choosing to preserve local heritage to tell stories of the past. This history suggests a city of prominent figures who travelled around the world. For example, the Bait Al Naboodah Museum was very interesting because it simultaneously presented a local Sharjah heritage while connecting to other world references (Figure 7.22). Once the home of a powerful local pearl merchant, it contained outside architectural influences, specifically that of antiquity. By preserving that house and emphasizing its architectural differences, HOS is placing importance on its historical narrative.

Then, unlike Dubai, the localized heritage is not merged with high tech presentations that carry an underlying symbol of modernity. Instead, all the interior museums are different from those in Dubai as they are full of figurines and artifacts arranged almost as if someone was living there (Figure 7.2). Basically, the primary goal appears to be restoration and preservation. Furthermore, there is a repeated focus on maintaining the traditional city features from an architectural perspective, the clearest example being the maintenance of the interior courtyard without a garden or artistic pattern that was clearly added for aesthetic purposes. However, this does not mean that they are not attempting to merge the old with the present through luxury. An example of this are the Chedi Al Bait hotel and the luxury shops in the souq that sell artistic cappuccinos and products from Europe. Still, these modern luxury goods are obtained in an environment that maintains a strong emotional connection to the past.



7.21: Calligraphy House



7.22: Al Naboodah House Interior



7.23: Museum Displays, in the Al Naboodah House

Figure 7.2: *Inside of Heart of Sharjah Buildings, Images from I, Frymoyer (2022).*

Importantly, the buildings themselves remain simplistic and devoid of distracting technological features; the beauty of tradition can instead be emphasized. The Calligraphy House has a simple interior with a circular display of calligraphy art around a small seating area where people can read books. The space, while interacted with in a non-traditional way, remains relatively traditional in appearance and in terms of the material being presented inside it. Al Naboodah House interior shows a far simpler display, relying on traditional design elements to decorate the room. Museum displays in both the Al Naboodah House and in the Al Hisn fort relied heavily on artifacts/objects being arranged to suggest a “lived-in” perspective. This could be an approach to preserving authentic displays of the past. Ultimately, Sharjah appears to be marketing itself as a regional and authentic heritage center through its claims to being a “Gateway to the Trucial States”, a designation that connects to other heritage preservation projects including the Heart of Sharjah project. This is further exemplified by aiming for international recognition by UNESCO which would again solidify the city’s status as a regional heritage hub.

This project also differs from Dubai in the sense that it is creating a mixed-use destination, not just as a museum space but one where both locals and tourists can come to shop, eat, and celebrate events. Such active engagement and variety in activity only furthers the heritage as heart narrative as it reveals attempts by this project to create a space that is not just for international tourists but also essential for day-to-day life. For example, Souq Al Shanasiyah

(Figure 7.3) felt newly built. The shops sold higher end products and included stores with international necklaces, plates, bowls, etc. from Europe. In one store, the woman working there informed me that if I wanted anything “local”, then I had to go across the street to another shop, suggesting that only certain stores desired to present local objects. Similarly, the furniture at the café was very modern, sticking out against the built heritage feel. Souq Al Bahar, on the other hand, felt less high-end. Items being sold were more for daily use, to include clothes, food, and a convenience store, suggesting that it catered more to the local population rather than visitors from Dubai or abroad. The establishment of the five-star hotel also creates a luxury site for tourists who perhaps do not want to spend as much money by staying in Dubai. By centralizing this district in the city, the project only reinforces the overall importance to Sharjah’s history and heritage.



Figure 7.31: Al Shanasiyah Souq Entrance



Figure 7.32: Café at Al Shanasiyah Souq



7.33: Souq Al Bahar shops included currency exchange



7.34: Souq Al Bahar Entrance

Figure 7.3: *Comparing Souqs in Heart of Sharjah*, Images from I, Frymoyer (2022).

Ultimately, this district provides an example of how heritage can simultaneously promote deep emotional connection to the past while remaining essential to urban life. Perhaps because of the city's regional historic influence within the Qawasmi empire, it retains a lot of reverence for its past, relying on a historical narrative of localized power that is celebrated through heritage district preservation. Emotional connection with the past is also emphasized using art to show culture and tradition, something that was not present in Dubai. This deep reverence, emotional connection, and necessity of space combines to display a heritage as heart narrative.

7: CONCLUSION

This thesis explored the way that heritage narratives are constructed by considering two case studies, the Heart of Sharjah and the Dubai Historic District projects. It explored the overall history, trends in revivalism, and the sites themselves to understand how heritage revivalism has been unfolding in the Gulf region. Ultimately, it was determined that the Al Shindagha museum promoted a heritage as progress narrative while the Heart of Sharjah presented heritage as heart. These narratives appear through promotional discourse as well as the structure and design of the sites themselves.

Of course, such trends in heritage preservation can be inherently exclusionary, especially depending on the amount of interaction by marginalized communities within Emirati society. This can happen with the monetary cost, for example to enter the Al Shindagha museum. Or it can be seen in the price of goods in Souq Al Shanasiyah in Sharjah that would not be accessible for migrant workers. Also, the nationalization of architecture might symbolically exclude non-Emirati regardless of their citizenship status and the contributions that they might have made during the period of rapid modernization. However, narratives like the heritage as progress narrative in Dubai might be more effective in including their contribution. Of course, while such sentiments might exist, I did not explore them in a lot of detail in this thesis due to the lack of interviews.

These constructed heritage narratives connect back to how heritage revivalism is used for identity construction (Tyrell & Mu'azu & 2008, Boussaa 2014b) and how it relates to heritage tourism (Boussaa 2003, Boussaa 2014b, Awad et al 2022, Al Sayyad 2013). Still, the existing body of literature on Sharjah is small and comparative analysis between cities in the UAE largely focuses on Dubai and Abu Dhabi. Sharjah is an interesting city on its own with a unique urban development strategy that tries to balance local heritage preservation while attracting more visitors and international recognition. I think an analysis of Sharjah's heritage preservation efforts could be expanded to consider other aspects beyond heritage that comprise cultural districts, especially in relation to existing cultural district studies in the region (Elscheshtawy, 2020). Relating to Abu Dhabi which has seen success in the importation of world-famous art museums like the Guggenheim and Louvre (Allawi, 2017), Sharjah could be another city of art investment that would quickly rise over that of Dubai. For example, the Room Museum, an international exhibit featured in MoMA in New York, Barbican in London, LACMA in Los

Angeles, and the Yuz in Shanghai was recently relocated to Sharjah where it resides today. While these art museums might not be as internationally famous as the Louvre, they demonstrate a desire to belong to the worldwide art scene. It also is a perfect example of modern architecture in the creation of a cultural district, built directly across from a park and standing out against the surrounding high rises.

In the context of Dubai, especially with the already existing incorporation of highly digitized exhibits, I would like to further consider the use of digital heritage preservation efforts. Hawker (2007) investigates the ways that digital architecture reconstruction is used in Ras-Al Khaimah to preserve and study traditional architecture. With the rapid development of VR technologies, this has very interesting implications for future heritage preservation efforts especially in contexts where events like climate change and rising sea levels are threatening nation-states in unprecedented ways. Exhibits can also be uploaded online and visited by people all around the world, as seen with the Al Shindagha Museum (Al Shindagha Museum 360, n.d.). This not only is an unprecedented method of heritage preservation but also increases accessibility levels all around the world.

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APPENDIX A: SATELLITE IMAGES

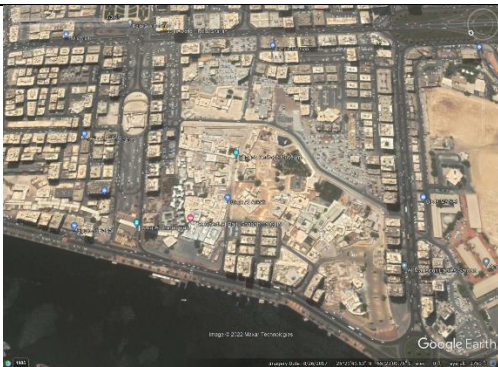
Below are tables showing the satellite imagery that was analyzed before I visited each site. I did this to determine what developments have taken place as well as the speed with which each project has been implemented. It was also important to consider the general layout of each site before visiting so that I would be aware of places to go. Data was located from Google Earth Pro (2015-2022a, 2015-2022b).



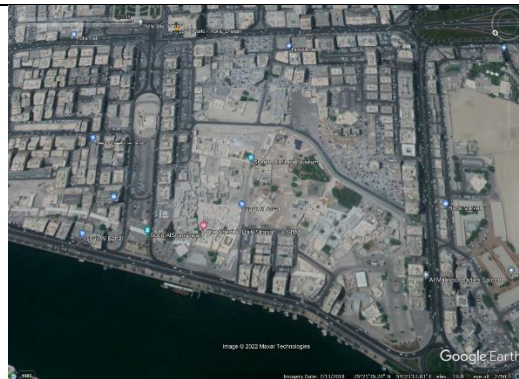
HOS District January 2015



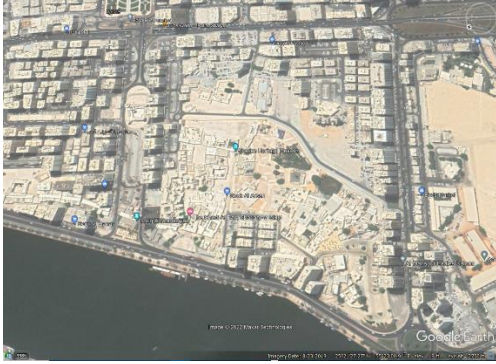
HOS District July 2016



HOS District August 2017



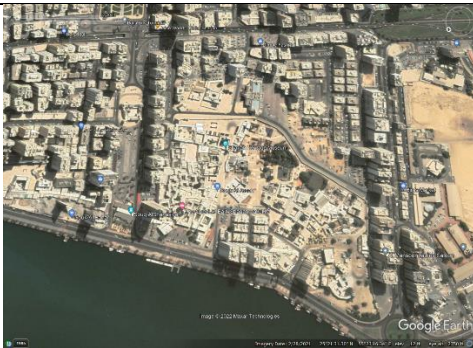
HOS District July 2018



HOS District August 2019



HOS District May 2020



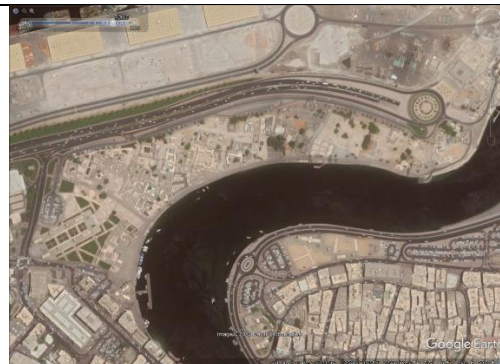
HOS District Febuary 2021



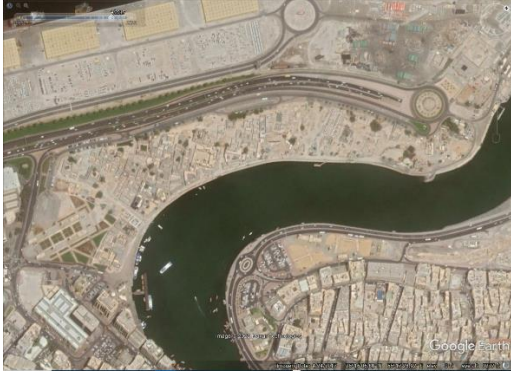
HOS District April 2022



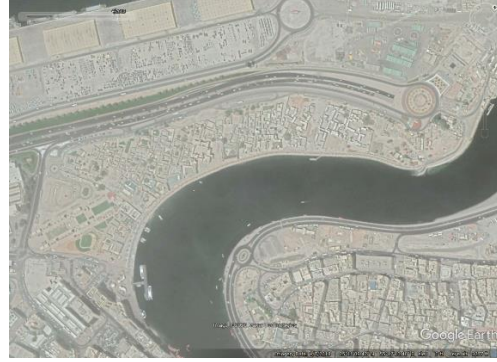
Al Shindagha District October 2015



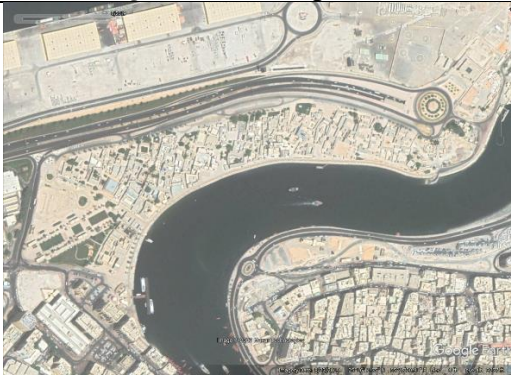
Al Shindagha District July 2016



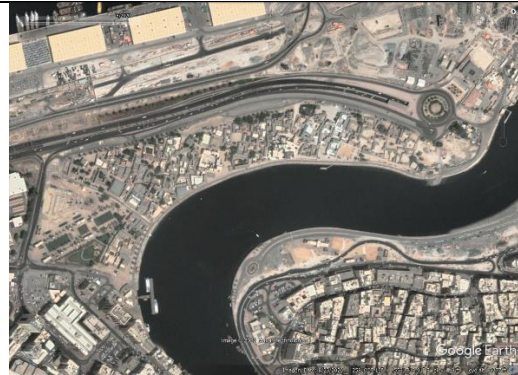
Al Shindagha District April 2017



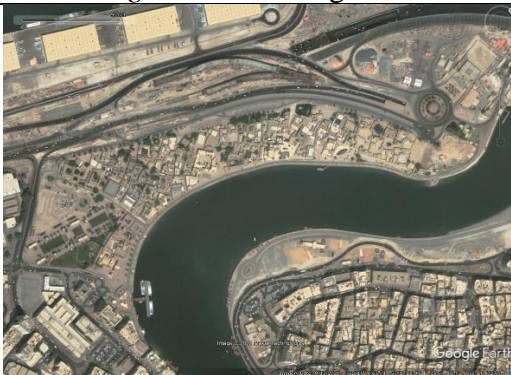
Al Shindagha District April 2018



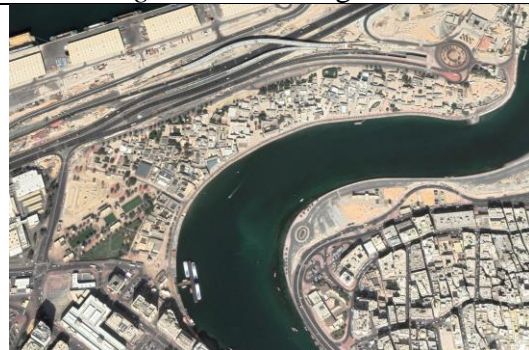
Al Shindagha District August 2019



Al Shindagha District August 2020



Al Shindagha District September 2021



Al Shindagha District February 2022

APPENDIX B: DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Below are the rough discourse analysis tables that explore the two projects. I used Foucauldian discourse analysis to examine all previously listed data sources, and these were the themes that I discovered. There are two tables, one showing the HOS project and the other showing the DHD project.

HOS		
Category	Themes	Codes
Heritage as a linear narrative	revisiting the past	beginnings, origins, history, past, references to traditional layout, references to traditional architecture, traditional city features
	heritage	culture, tradition, heritage, heritage buildings, Emirati, heritage and trade, celebration
	merging the present with the past	merging the old/new, merging the past/present, present, present day, contemporary, contemporary day
	imaging the future	future, future generations
built heritage preservation	urban revitalization	repurposing buildings, amenities, attractions, revitalization, heritage buildings, restoration, renovation, revamp, rejuvenate, enhance
	preservation	preservation, authenticity, traditional city, references to original layout/structure/architecture
targeting tourism	tourists	tourism, visitors, luxury hotel, hotel
	destination building	destination, place making

Mixed-use district development	commercial use	commercial use, restaurants, hotels, museums, market, heritage and trade
	art	art, art museums, art galleries
outward looking	award seeking	UNESCO, regional cultural leader, "gateway to Turcial States",
	development standards	international development principles, international development standards,

DHD		
Category	Themes	Codes
Linear historical narrative	revisiting the past	beginnings, origins, history, past,
	merging the present with the past	merging the old and new, merging the past and present, present day, contemporary, contemporary setting, connections to the past
	inspire the future	inspire the future, inspire those to come
	flexibility of heritage	interpretation of culture, cultural continuity, cultural power, authenticity
	heritage	heritage buildings, culture, tradition, history, Emirati, honour, celebration, traditional building materials, shared heritage

Heritage and Progress	understanding heritage	research, education, public learning, inspiration
	interpreting heritage as narrative of progress	progress, modernization, openness and progressive, desire for progress, creativity, ingenuity, awesome adaptability
	human adaptability for growth	human innovation, human resilience, desire for progress, human interaction, innovation
Heritage revitalization	enhance the space	enhance, rejuvenate,
	urban revitalization	restoration, renovation, heritage buildings, repurposing buildings, replicated building materials
Outward oriented focuses	challenge global perceptions	powerful continuity, a world they may have never known existed, fascinating traditional culture, much more to this amazing place
	global city	global prominence, cultural unification, wider world, UAE residents, expats, visitors, influence of outside forces

APPENDIX C: Attribute Table of Sites of Heritage Revivalism in the UAE

This table shows 47 sites that were found in the UAE that contained references to heritage in their architecture and/or presentation. They were all found online through quick searches and so there are almost certainly far more examples within the country. Also, the Sharjah Offices Tower, or Al Shahab Building, and Tasjeel Sharjah Auto Village were sites studied by Awad & Boudiaf (2022). The location of these sites were then transformed into Map 5.1.

OBJ ECT ID	Site Name	Emirate	City	Influences	Building Function	X	Y
1	Abu Dhabi Heritage Village	Abu Dhabi	Abu Dhabi	Emirati	museum	24.4774 0226	54.33086 062
2	Qasr Al Watan	Abu Dhabi	Abu Dhabi	Emirati/Arabian eclectic	government	24.4635 3543	54.30584 051
3	Zayed Heritage Center	Abu Dhabi	Abu Dhabi	Emirati	museum	24.4519 9091	54.33970 231
4	Sheik Zayed Grand Mosque	Abu Dhabi	Abu Dhabi	Islamic eclectic	mosque	24.4136 5379	54.47493 245
5	Anantara Qasr al Sarab Desert Resort	Abu Dhabi	Near Jereira h	Emirati/Arabic eclectic	hotel	22.9012 5638	54.33594 212
6	Al Wathba	Abu Dhabi	outside Abu Dhabi	Arabic eclectic	hotel	24.1577 5666	54.74524 64
7	Shangri-La Qaryat Al Beri	Abu Dhabi	Abu Dhabi	Arabic eclectic	hotel	24.4068 1955	54.49070 013
8	Emirates Palace	Abu Dhabi	Abu Dhabi	Arabian eclectic	hotel	24.4623 1568	54.31716 547
9	Rixos Premium Saadiyat Island	Abu Dhabi	Abu Dhabi	Arabic eclectic	hotel	24.5429 0225	54.43236 715
10	Ajman National Museum	Ajman	Ajman	Emirati	Museum	25.4141 9353	55.44581 824
11	Sheikh Zayed Ajman Mosque	Ajman	Ajman	Islamic eclectic	Mosque	25.4182 427	55.48914 023
12	Al Jarah Cultural Center	Ajman	Ajman	Emirati/Arabic eclectic	Cultural center	25.4142 7219	55.49726 342
13	Bahi Ajman Palace Hotel	Ajman		Emirati/modern eclectic	Hotel	25.4173 594	55.43915 19

14	Wafi City	Dubai	Dubai	Egyptian (mall), Arab/Islamic eclectic (souq)	Mall/multipurpose complex	25.22926868	55.31839638
15	Ibn Battuta Mall	Dubai	Dubai	Egyptian, Indian, Chinese, Andalusian, Persian, Tunisian...	mall	25.04520881	55.12051104
16	Dubai Mall Heritage Souq	Dubai	Dubai	Andalusian eclectic	Mall	25.1997288	55.27975536
17	Souq Al Bahar	Dubai	Dubai	Arabian eclectic	Mall	25.19486269	55.27644436
18	Madinat Jumeirah Souq	Dubai	Dubai	Emirati	Mall	25.13346168	55.18623944
19	Atlantis the Palm	Dubai	Dubai	Arabic eclectic	Hotel	25.13156908	55.11736434
20	Jumeriah Mosque	Dubai	Dubai	Fatimid	mosque	25.23660472	55.26489049
21	Al Fahidi District	Dubai	Dubai	Emirati	Heritage District	25.26397404	55.30034171
22	Raffles Dubai	Dubai	Dubai	Egyptian, modern eclectic	Hotel	25.22869318	55.32039318
23	One&Only The Palm Dubai	Dubai	Dubai	Arabic eclectic	Hotel	25.10041765	55.13363503
24	Jumeirah Al Qasr	Dubai	Dubai	Emirati eclectic	Hotel	25.13258475	55.18462271
25	Jumeirah Mina A'Salam	Dubai	Dubai	Emirati eclectic	hotel	25.13602058	55.18598946
26	Miramar Al Aqah Beach Resort	Fujairah	Al Aqah	Arabic eclectic	Hotel	25.50197206	56.3617646
27	Fujairah Museum	Fujairah	Fujairah	Arabic eclectic	heritage museum	25.13559757	56.33901171
28	Waldorf Astoria Ras Al Khaimah	Ras Al Khaimah		Arabic/modern eclectic	Hotel	25.68625181	55.7734328
29	Ritz-Carlton Ras Al Khaimah, AL Wadi Desert	Ras Al Khaimah		Emirati eclectic	hotel	25.58566918	55.83468036
30	The Cove Rotana Resort	Ras Al Khaimah	Al Dhait South	Emirati eclectic	hotel	25.73876611	55.88801682

31	Hilton Ras Al Khaimah Beach Resort	Ras Al Khaimah	Ras Al Khaimah	Arabic/modern eclectic	Hotel	25.67063815	55.74378887
32	Rixos Bab Al Bahr	Ras Al Khaimah	Marjan island	Arabic eclectic	hotel	25.6641334	55.75016261
33	Ras Al-Khaimah National Museum	Ras Al Khaimah	ras al khaimah	Emirati	hotel	25.79520841	55.94520821
34	Al Hamra Mall	Ras Al Khaimah	Al Jazirah Al Hamra	Emirati	Mall	25.68332473	55.78182851
35	RAK Mall	Ras Al Khaimah	Ras Al Khaimah	Emirati	Mall	25.77301946	55.9583822
36	Sheraton Sharjah	Sharjah	Sharjah	Emirati eclectic	hotel	25.398555	55.42230788
37	Tasjeel Sharjah Auto Village	Sharjah	Sharjah	Emirati	Auto Registration Facility	25.35530154	55.47348686
38	Sharjah Offices Tower - Al Shahab Building	Sharjah	Sharjah	Emirati/modern eclectic	Office Space	25.35940784	55.38412415
39	Chedi Al Bait	Sharjah	Sharjah	Emirati	Hotel	25.35964856	55.38387483
40	Mysk Al Badayer Retreat	Sharjah	Al Madam	Arabic eclectic	hotel	24.95173637	55.72479289
41	Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization	Sharjah	Sharjah	Islamic eclectic	museum	25.36596235	55.38919926
42	Central "Blue" Souq	Sharjah	Sharjah	Emirati	Souq/Shopping	25.34780005	55.38488153
43	Sharjah International Airport	Sharjah	Sharjah	Arabic influenced	Airport	25.34383627	55.51126878
44	Sharjah Archaeology Museum	Sharjah	Sharjah	Islamic eclectic	museum	25.34919741	55.42400304
45	UAQ National Museum	Umm Al Quwain			national museum	25.58469826	55.57058993
46	Al Jaddaf Rotana Suite Hotel	Dubai	Dubai	Islamic/Arabic eclectic	hotel	25.23077224	55.32635908
47	Al Ain International Airport	al Ain	Abu Dhabi	Islamic/Arabic eclectic	airport	24.25918009	55.61969625