

Shards and Stages: Migrant Lives, Power, and Space Viewed from Doha, Qatar

Robina Mohammad & James D. Sidaway

To cite this article: Robina Mohammad & James D. Sidaway (2016): Shards and Stages: Migrant Lives, Power, and Space Viewed from Doha, Qatar, Annals of the American Association of Geographers, DOI: [10.1080/24694452.2016.1209402](https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2016.1209402)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2016.1209402>



Published online: 31 Aug 2016.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 12



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Shards and Stages: Migrant Lives, Power, and Space Viewed from Doha, Qatar

Robina Mohammad* and James D. Sidaway†

*South Asian Studies Programme, National University of Singapore

†Department of Geography, National University of Singapore

Qatar has been projecting power through a series of spectacles, investments, and interventions. These include the new Doha skyline; ownership of the tallest building in Europe (London's Shard); Al Jazeera media; involvement in the Libyan and Syrian civil wars; and, importantly, hosting global events such as the 2022 soccer World Cup. Qatar also holds 14 percent of all known natural gas reserves and boasts the world's highest per-capita income. Our article relates Qatar's global visibility and presence to processes of power and accumulation in its capital city, Doha. We do this through a focus on migrant workers who, in this highly urbanized state, make up 89 percent of the population. Their lives and labors provide a window on the relationships between different stages of power and accumulation: the spectacle and the work and labor that sustain it. Intersecting geographies of foreign labor and the urban spectacle require scrutiny through sharpened critical and postcolonial lenses on diversity and urban modernity. *Key Words:* migrants, postcolonial, power, Qatar, urban.

权力不断透过一系列的奇观、投资和介入，投射于卡塔尔。其中包含了崭新的多哈天际线；全欧洲（伦敦）最高的碎片大楼的所有权；半岛电视台；参与利比亚和叙利亚的内战；以及最重要的是，主办诸如2022世足赛等全球赛事。卡塔尔亦拥有所有已知的自然天然气储量的百分之十四，并自豪拥有全球最高平均国民所得。我们的文章将卡塔尔的全球可视性和存在，连结至其首都城市多哈的权力与积累过程。我们透过聚焦在佔此一高度城市化的国家总人口达百分之八十九的移民工来进行检视。这些移民工的生命与劳动，提供了检视不同权力和积累阶段之间的关係之视窗：奇观，以及维系奇观的工作和劳动。外国劳动和城市奇观之间相互交织的地理，必须透过敏锐的批判和后殖民视角，对多样性与城市现代性进行审视。 *关键词：* 移民，后殖民，权力，卡塔尔，城市。

Qatar ha estado haciendo gala de su poderío a través de una serie de espectáculos, inversiones e intervenciones. Entre estos se encuentran la nueva silueta de Doha; la propiedad del edificio más alto de Europa (el Shard de Londres); la cadena mediática de Al Jazeera; su involucramiento en las guerras de Libia y Siria; y, muy importante, el servir como anfitrión de eventos globales tales como la Copa Mundo del 2022. Qatar tiene también el 14 por ciento de todas las reservas conocidas de gas natural y disfruta del ingreso per cápita más alto del mundo. Nuestro artículo describe la visibilidad y presencia global de Qatar en los procesos de poderío y acumulación de su ciudad capital, Doha. Hacemos esto enfocándonos en los trabajadores migratorios que suman el 89 por ciento de la población de este estado altamente urbanizado. Sus vidas y trabajo nos proveen una ventana de las relaciones entre las diferentes etapas de potenciación y acumulación: el espectáculo y el trabajo y la fuerza laboral que las sostienen. Las geografías cruzadas de los trabajadores extranjeros y el espectáculo urbano requieren de escrutinio a través de agudos lentes críticos y poscoloniales sobre la diversidad y la modernidad urbanas. *Palabras clave:* migrantes, poscolonial, fuerza, Qatar, urbano.

Geographers and other urban scholars have long focused on sociospatial differentiation within cities, the exclusions and tensions that accompany it, and how this difference is governed. Themes relating to questions of diversity, hierarchy, difference, belonging, and the place of migrants have particular resonance in postcolonial Persian Gulf states (Vora 2013; Buckley 2014). They connect to the staging of urban spectacle that is a means and effect of state power. Our article studies migrant lives in Qatar to illuminate the relationships between different stages of power and

accumulation—the spectacular new Doha skyline, and the lives and work that build and sustain it. Drawing on face-to-face interactions with fifty-seven foreign workers plus observations in a range of sites including mosques, streets, shopping malls, homes, and small businesses, we examine the staging of Doha as it relates to the uneven spatial-temporal interfaces of labor, capital, and the state.

We deploy the notion of stage in three senses. First is the sense elaborated by Goffman (1959) that refers to how social life is presented. In our article, this self-presentation applies to individuals

and the city of Doha as a whole, as represented by the Qatari state. We also examine migrants' life stages, which are characterized by disjuncture between how time is spent in their country of origin and in Qatar. We refer to this as punctuated lives that are lived across here and there. The third sense of stage is that of staging economic growth as described by Rostow (1960) and other proponents of modernization. Such discourses of development are influential in Gulf sultanates such as Qatar, albeit without the logic of westernization and secularization present in modernization theory's template (Cooke 2014; Yetim 2014). We begin by locating Qatar within a wider regional and historic frame before turning to its global ambition and trajectory and how the development of Doha as part of this continues to attract massive inward flows of labor. We then describe our research strategy of observations and face-to-face interactions and then examine the impact of state actions in framing and configuring the transnational life worlds of migrant labor in Doha.

The empirical material on life spaces and labor in Doha informs the main part of the article. The first section ("Velocity and Hierarchy") locates migrants within a swiftly changing cityscape. By drawing on these narratives, we illustrate the growing appeal of Doha for migrants. We consider the ways in which newcomers become geographically ordered across Doha, through socially differentiated (direct and indirect) governmental strategies. These are not only part of the means for extracting and exploiting labor but also a way of managing the impact of difference (social, ethnic, gender), diversity, and issues of belonging introduced into the social fabric by guest workers and regarded by the Qatari state as a negative side effect of being a host nation. Moreover, for those on the lowest rungs of the labor hierarchy, this sociospatial ordering is continuously being reworked, in and through the changing urban form and the shifting of life and workspaces, setting the parameters within which the translocal life worlds of migrants, their labor, home, family, and leisure play out. Building on this, the section "Punctuated Lives: Globalization Through Segregation" turns to temporalities of guest working. We examine how the temporariness of work in Qatar is negotiated by migrant labor and its classed implications for the workers and their families. Our conclusions then consider how an analysis of migrant lives, and the multidimensional

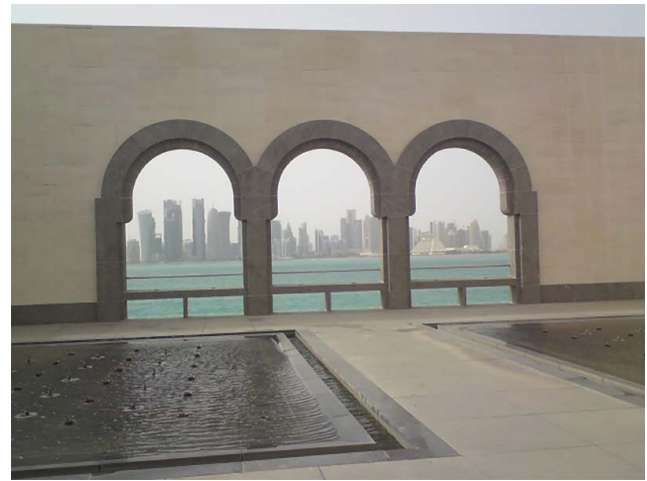


Figure 1. The skyline of Doha, Qatar. (Color figure available online.)

stages through which they and Doha are reworked, contributes to understandings of Qatar's presence on a global stage, amidst wider lessons for understanding postcolonial cities.

The Qatari state has placed its capital city in the service of building global visibility and reach. In Scharfenort's (2014) terms: "Specific emphasis is put on modelling Doha to increase international recognition and to brand (and rebrand) the country, and its capital in particular as a prestigious destination for sports, culture, arts and education" (74). Regular visitors to Doha witness the city playing host to a variety of events such as the 2012 United Nations Climate Change conference, the 2014 Qatar International Food Festival, and the annual World Innovation Summit for Education. Yet the date that is on everyone's lips is 2022, when Qatar will host the *Fédération Internationale de Football Association* (FIFA) World Cup. Preparations for 2022 have seen enormous state-initiated investment into Doha's infrastructure as well as extensive redevelopment of the old city center (Figure 1 and Figure 2), leading in turn to a drive for the recruitment of overseas labor to undertake this work. This influx of migrants has meant that the presence and labor of noncitizens, who now make up almost 90 percent of the population, is directly related to Qatar's world-stage roles and profiling.

Gulf Cities and States

Qatar and other Gulf sultanates have positioned themselves globally as essential nodes in tandem with the idea that they contain "world-class" cities



Figure 2. The spectacle of twenty-first-century Doha, Qatar. (Color figure available online.)

(Hvidt 2012). Like others elsewhere, “pointing to the future, not to the conditions of its making” (Ghertner 2015, 25), their fast development has become a template for developers and city governments in Erbil, Khartoum, Nouakchott, Rabat, and beyond (Choplin and Franck 2010). They have also promoted themselves as keys to an imagined and material geography of the “middle,” a center world of and between Africa, Asia, Europe, the Americas, and Australasia. Witness the take-off of airlines such as Emirates and Qatar Airways—both of which also fly direct to cities in the Southwestern and eastern United States and some in Canada and South America. Thus, the Gulf is also home to some of the busiest, largest, and newest airports in the world, intensifying flows through the region (Derudder, Bassens, and Witlox 2013). Gulf-based airlines now carry nearly half the passengers between the United States and South Asia; for example, up from around 10 percent a decade ago (Ulrichsen 2016). Yet, it bears recalling that these intensified flows in one of the world’s most rapidly urbanizing sites have precursors, dating back to the nineteenth century. This was when Gulf cities became linchpins of commerce between Iran, Arabia, and the Indian Ocean. They were integrated into an imperial trading and currency system centered on British India (Onley 2009), becoming fully independent states only at the start of the 1970s when the United States

replaced Britain as the dominant external power in the Persian Gulf (Sidaway 1998; Alvandi 2012).

As their financial reserves have grown, Gulf states have joined neighboring Saudi Arabia in influencing global capital networks. Their centrality to commodity and financial circuits emerged in the 1970s when oil prices boomed in a reconfiguration of relations between producer states, firms, and consumers (Mitchell 2011). Since then, transcending their role as *nouveau riche* custodians of an oil spigot run by foreign petro-capitalists, the ruling families of Arabia, including the city-states on its eastern edge, and the firms they own have increasingly become fulcra of global capitalism through their involvement in multiple circuits of credit, consumption, investment, and control (Ulrichsen 2016). Hanieh (2011a, 2011b) described their roles in the reconfiguration and expansion of capitalism since the 1940s:

Throughout each phase of internationalization and financialization, the Gulf region has become increasingly central to the functioning of the overall system. . . . Capitalism’s tendencies toward unbridled accumulation, internationalization, and financialization are materialized in the making of the Gulf region as a key node within the world market. (Hanieh 2011a, 53, 55)

Their role heightened through foreign direct investments on the part of the Gulf’s sovereign wealth funds into real estate, supermarkets, banks, soccer teams, hotels, and controlling shares in automobile companies. With reference to Dubai, Buckley and Hanieh (2014) pointed to “recent urbanization in the region as a process of financial re-engineering, and identify the emergence of capital groups whose accumulation activities are tightly connected to both the real estate and financial circuit” (155). That nexus has become especially visible in Doha. Such concentrations of wealth and power become bound up with images of hypermodernity in which Gulf cities have become competitive nodes in a circuit of urban spectacle vying for the tallest, fastest, and richest as part of a global staging of state presence and ambition.

Power and Space in Qatar: Doha and Staging the Spectacle

The Qatari state’s world-stage roles and profiling entail a range of tactics and investments, including military deployment in the Libyan civil war, hosting components of the U.S. Department of Defense’s Central Command



Figure 3. Qatar's regional context.

overseas headquarters for areas between Libya and China, and Al Jazeera Media. It also includes ownership of London's flagship department store (Harrods) and the 306-meter Shard, the tallest building in Europe, as well as ownership of nearly a fifth of Volkswagen and Porsche, a large share of Miramax Films, and the Paris Saint-Germain Football Club.

This global ambition reflects Qatar's status as the fastest growing economy on the planet, fueled by booming natural gas exports. It is the biggest exporter of liquefied natural gas and owns 14 percent of all known natural gas reserves in fields. It has become the richest (per capita income) economy in the world at \$90,000 per capita (although it must be borne in mind that the majority of people living in Qatar are foreign nationals and thus not counted in the per capita income statistic). Dubai might still be narrated as (in the title of a collection on its architecture and social spaces) *The Superlative City* (Kanna 2013). In the last few years,

however, there has been media, scholarly, and popular commentary about Qatari power eclipsing that of its neighbors (Eakin 2011; Rizzo 2013). Doha's transformations through a series of megaprojects are giving it a prominent place "on the map of international architecture and urbanism" (Salama and Weidmann 2013, xxi).

Strategically placed between Saudi Arabia and Iran (Figure 3), Doha is the latest of the petro-boom cities of the Persian Gulf, one of the fastest growing cities on Earth in the last decade, with the building of its signature skyline. Nagy (2000), for example, talked about Doha "dressing up downtown" (see also Adham 2008), and the vistas and emblems of Doha's skyline feature on the covers of a number of recent books on Qatar (Fromherz 2012; Roberts 2014; Ulrichsen 2014). Notably, the night skyline is the current banner across Qatar's Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics Web site, from where the Qatar's National Vision 2030 document (that refers to harmony, progress,

nature, Islam, and family) can be downloaded (General Secretariat for Development Planning 2008).

Images of the rising skyline also frequently appear in negative press coverage on, most recently, the controversy over the award of the World Cup to Qatar and growing publicity for the damning labor conditions amidst the frenzied pace of construction in the lead-up to Qatar 2022. For example, a September 2013 front-page story in the UK daily newspaper *The Guardian* ran under the headline “Revealed: Qatar’s World Cup ‘Slaves’” (Pattison 2013b) and, in January 2014, *The New York Times* ran an op-ed, “Qatar’s Showcase of Shame” (Aziz and Hussain 2014). Human Rights Watch (2012) and Amnesty International (2013) had already documented the abuses behind these headlines. Such agenda-setting journalism and advocacy bringing attention to the abusive and dangerous working conditions has led the government (under the auspices of the Qatar Foundation) to commission its own report with recommendations (Jureidini 2014). Despite these critical reports, the same UK *Guardian*, at the end of 2013, reflected on how Nepalese workers were continuing to “flock to the Gulf” (Pattison 2013a).

Cities like Dubai and Doha remain as sites of opportunity and glitz. A December 2013 account of the social and political landscape in Qatar from the Washington, DC-based *Middle East Review and Information Project* noted: “The population has doubled in five years and increased by 9 percent—with 170,000 new expatriate residents—in the month of October alone. Such trends show no signs of slowing as Qatar quickens preparations for its great prize—hosting the 2022 World Cup” (Gengler 2013). In keeping with this, Gardner (2011) signaled how “[m]igration to the Gulf States makes up the third largest migration flow in the contemporary world [exceeded only by flows to the United States and European Union]. In spite of the scale of these movements, both scholarship and baseline data about the fundamental aspects of these migration flows remain in their infancy” (22).

Scholarship on the intersections of urban planning, development, and spaces of migrant life in Qatar is also relatively scarce. A survey of migrant workers in Qatar, undertaken in 2007 (Seshan 2012) revealed fairly predictable data showing how migrants worked long hours, six days a week, for a small salary, much of which was remitted back to family in the homeland. Nagy’s (2006) research, conducted between 1994 and 2000, just as the boom led by natural gas exports was gathering momentum, charted axes of sociospatial

organization and distinction in Qatar. She noted how “social categories are produced and reproduced by a combination of formal and informal processes, including immigration and citizenship regulations, occupational and economic practices, marriage patterns and residents’ attitudes towards diversity and their stereotypes of ‘others’” (119). More recently, Gardner et al. (2013) offered a “portrait of low-income migrants in contemporary Qatar.” Their survey of 1,189 men living in labor camps highlights the sharp contrast between citizens and noncitizens and draws out the diversity of experiences even among unskilled and low-income laborers (see also Mahdavi [2011] on the Dubai case).

Our research serves to extend these literatures by foregrounding the geographies of migrant lives through a focus on the life spaces in which migrants live and work. In doing so, Haines (2011) has inspired us through an injunction (based on his research in Dubai) that

It is important not to slip into free-floating notions of disconnected, alienated people and spaces; the everyday lives of the migrant laborers . . . the professional expatriates and the lifestyle aspirants dreaming of being global are very much grounded in territorialized spaces, defined by state projects as much by global capital flows. (162)

Research Strategy: Encountering Stages of Power

We visited Doha several times for this project. Our first visits were in 2012 (January, April, August, and November), amounting to eight weeks in total, some carried out jointly and some by one author alone. In 2015, we (re)visited three times (March, April, and October) for a total of four weeks. Our research strategy was to observe and interact with migrants across Doha using convenience sampling. This proceeded through a mapping of the city and its sociospatial divisions and differences (Figure 4). We began from the center, working outward. Because the historic center includes the poorest neighborhoods now awaiting redevelopment, these are also dominated by the poorest male migrant labor. These workers are segregated from their higher class coethnics who reside much further out and from the population of Qatari citizens residing at a distance from both the working- and middle-class migrant areas. By moving out from the center, we were able to contextualize the migrants still living there within wider sociospatial

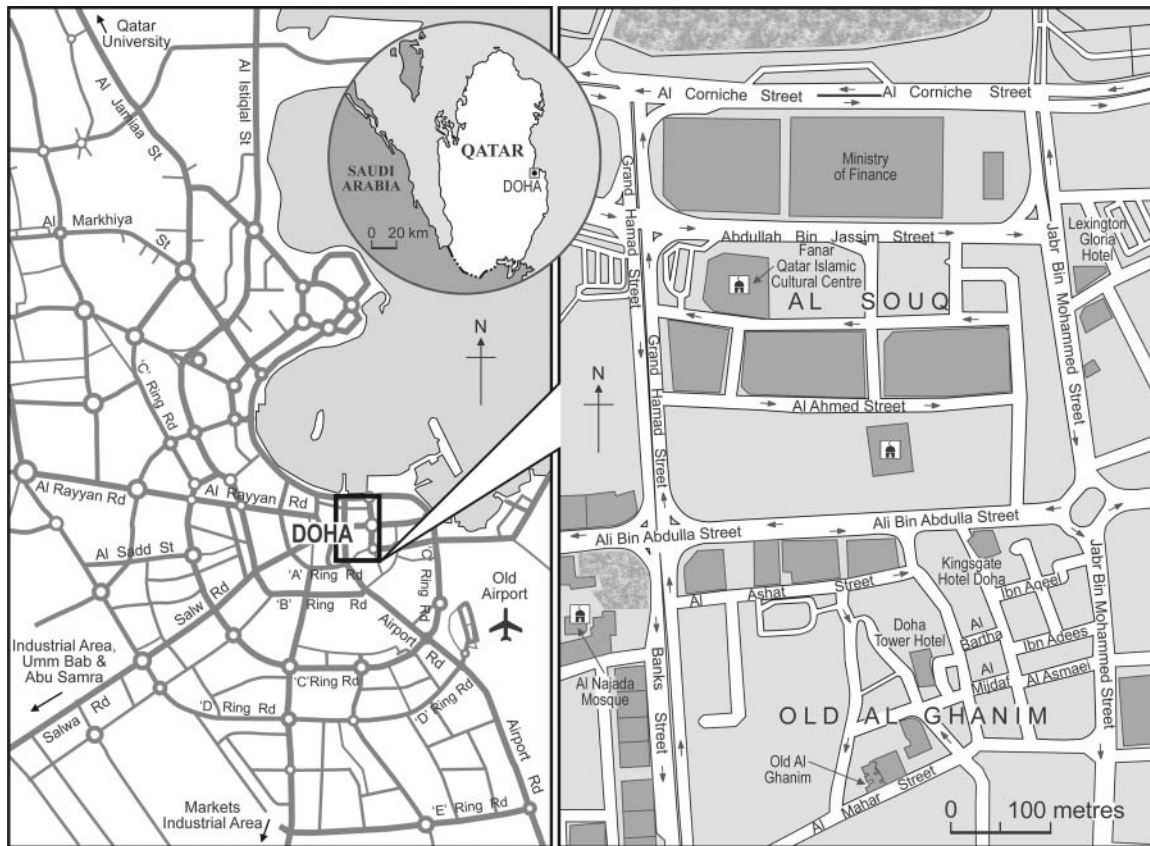


Figure 4. Map of main research area.

frames. In more peripheral spaces, we interacted more with middle-class migrants than the sales clerks, waiters, bellhops, artisans, and drivers who were our initial informants.

Our study draws on informal conversations alongside more in-depth interviews mostly in Hindi, Urdu, and English. For our informants we were university teachers, asking them to share experiences of Qatar and migration for the benefit of our students. We explained that we would be using the information for teaching purposes and would anonymize our sources. Informed by existing literatures and migrant lives in another fast-growing Gulf city (Mohammad and Sidaway 2012), discussions initially explored a series of themes (points of arrival, opportunity, issues of kinship, exploitation, alienation, commercial networks, and relations with the state and sponsors). Table 1 contains a summary list of the fifty-seven anonymized informants. The majority of our interviewees are in Doha without their own or natal families and thus in popular and state discourses are termed “bachelors,” irrespective of whether they have wives and children in the homeland (Kinninmont 2013).

Our strategy was to access migrant laborers through everyday consumption, by patronizing different cafes, restaurants, shops (baked goods, jewelry, fashion, fabric, tailoring, laundry, and beauty), and services such as taxi and hotel limousine drivers. In keeping with this strategy, we changed hotels several times to get a feel for different parts of the city and exposure to different groups of workers. Although interactions with some informants were only brief, our aim was to foster a sense of connection for longer and more detailed conversations that could be gently steered toward the completion of our set of questions. One of us is a Pakistani woman and so attracted a lot of attention from South Asian migrants always curious to know where she was from and what brought her or us to Doha. Many times they were the ones eager to engage us in conversation spurred on by yearnings for home. National, regional, and ethnic similarity and a shared mother tongue carry strong kindred feelings and values for migrants who hone in on familiar sounds and appearances in a city of strangers (see Gardner 2010). For example, Iqbal, a sales assistant from Kerala (although a tailor by trade) who we encountered during a quiet moment in a (Arabic evening gowns) shop told us:

Table 1. Summary profiles of the 57 informants encountered in Doha, Qatar, during 12 weeks of fieldwork, over seven periods (January, April, August, and November) in 2012 and (in March, April, and October) 2015

No.	Current livelihood or status	Pseudonym used	Age ^a	Nationality (and “home” place)	Period in Doha
1	Taxi driver, Karwa (state-owned company)	Dev	—	Indian (Kerala)	23 years
2	Waiter, North Indian vegetarian eatery	Akash	25	Nepalese	4 years
3	Taxi driver	Hakeem	—	Ethiopian	3 years
4	Manager, North Indian vegetarian eatery	Vishal	—	Nepalese	9 years
5	Receptionist, ^b hotel	Rebecca	—	Filipino	Not given
6	Worker, (brother’s) grocery shop	Sammi	—	Bangladeshi (Dhaka)	13 years
7	Waiter, Indian café	Zahid	50s	Bangladeshi (Chittagong)	22 years
8	Shop assistant, costume jewelry and appliances	Aftab	20s	Indian (Kerala)	4 years
9	Taxi driver	Babu	21	Nepalese	1 year
10	Taxi driver	Sadiq	—	Indian (Delhi)	3 months
11	Taxi driver	Balamuguntan	—	Sri Lanka	1 year
12	Bus driver (state company)	Cyrus	30s	Filipino	7 months
13	Taxi driver	Feruz	30s	Egyptian	18 months
14	Cashier	Shatru	40s	Indian (Bihar)	5 months
15	Owner, Lebanese restaurant	Dawood	40s	Lebanese (Beirut)	4 years
16	Shop assistant & tailor, Qatari women’s wear	Iqbal	50s	Indian (Kerala)	20 years
17	Shop assistant, (uncle’s) ladies accessories	Ashwin	18	Indian (Kerala)	2 years
18	Shop assistant, ladies accessories	Rabia	>35	Filipino/Qatari spouse	14 years
19	Maintenance worker, hotel	Zulfikar	20s	Indian (Mumbai)	4 years
20	Taxi driver	Mohsin	26	Indian (Kerala)	18 months
21	Receptionist, ^b hotel	Amina	26	Sudan	18 months
22	Taxi driver	Salim	—	Bangladeshi	5 years
23	Taxi driver	Rahul	—	Indian (Rajasthan)	12 months
24	Taxi driver	Duminda	—	Sri Lankan	3 years
25	Taxi driver	Abdullah	20s	Eritrean	12 months
26	Taxi driver	Amir	<25	Nepalese	4 months
27	Taxi driver	Aman	24	Indian (Kerala)	18 months
28	Waiter, hotel restaurant	Yusuf	30s	Indian (Kerala)	18 months
29	Manager, limousine company	Raja	30	Indian (Kerala)	18 years
30	Taxi driver	Milan	20s	Nepalese	6 months
31	Housewife and home clothing sales ^b Husband working in Qatar Petroleum (couple)	Zeenat and Riaz	20s	Pakistani	2 years
32	Taxi driver	Omar	30s	Egyptian	3 months
33	Security, hotel	Cedric	30s	Cameroonian	6 months
34	Shop assistant, dress fabrics	Shahid	20s	Indian (Kerala)	12 months
35	Taxi driver	Prem	30s	Indian (Kerala)	7 years
36	Tailor	Manish	30s	Nepalese	2 years
37	Worker, hotel	Suleiman	20s	Indonesian	12 years
38	Taxi driver	Saul	30s	Kenyan (Nairobi)	3 years
39	Taxi driver	Ravi	20s	Nepalese	7 years
40	Housewife and home clothing sales ^b	Shabana	30s	Pakistani	4 years
41	Limousine driver	Abdul	40s	Indian (Kerala)	25 years
42	Owner, laundry service	Bahadur	45	Indian (Lucknow)	Doha-born
43	Housewife and home clothing sales ^b	Alya	25	Pakistani (Lahore)	Doha-born
44	Henna artist ^b	Shamim	29	Indian (Hyderabad)	13 years
45	Shop assistant, Pakistani sweets	Azhar	40s	Pakistani (Lahore)	17 years
46	Limousine driver	Musa	40s	Indian (Kerala)	> 7 years
47	Owner, ladies fabrics shop	Mujtaba	50s	Indian (Kerala)	33 years
48	Limousine driver	Orlando	30s	Filipino	12 months
49	Receptionist, ^b hotel	Raisa	25	Jordanian	3 months
50	Taxi driver	Hugh	20s	Kenyan	2 years
51	Waiter	Htun	27	Burman	2 months

(Continued on next page)

Table 1. Summary profiles of the 57 informants encountered in Doha, Qatar, during 12 weeks of fieldwork, over seven periods (January, April, August, and November) in 2012 and (in March, April, and October) 2015 (*Continued*)

No.	Current livelihood or status	Pseudonym used	Age ^a	Nationality (and “home” place)	Period in Doha
52	Taxi driver	Peter	—	Kenyan	23 months
53	Fitness instructor ^b	Roberta	20s	South African	4 months
54	Taxi driver	David	40	Kenyan	2 years
55	Taxi driver	Akbar	30s	Pakistani	6 months
56	Bellhop, hotel	Vinod	20s	Indonesian	2 months
57	Limousine driver	Sanjeewa	20s	Sri Lankan	4 years

^aAges were not always given.

^bFemale informants.

It’s good that you came into the shop because it gave me the opportunity to talk to someone—and that too in Hindi. It brings back memories of my homeland and brings me that sense of belonging. [Local] women come here for their own purposes and once that is achieved, they leave. Nobody is interested in talking.

While accessing services brought encounters with workers serving the public in the central areas either in fixed or mobile sites, we had to think of ways to extend our access to migrant labor and sites. Certain forms of labor were not readily accessible, such as those in private or quasi-private sites, like domestic workers in the residential home, professionals based in an office, or those working on construction sites. We also aimed to get some sense not just of atomized individual workers but the extent of community among migrant groups. Replicating migrant strategies of mobilizing ethnic and gendered networks, Robina sought services that would bring her into contact with the local South Asian community, such as henna artists and vendors of Pakistani fashion. The latter also opened up a means to reach previously inaccessible groups, such as the stay-at-home wives of professional South Asian labor who form part of the Pakistani community in Doha. We quickly realized that there were few stores catering to the fashion requirements of middle-class Pakistani women, a gap filled by enterprising women, who, on visits to Pakistan returned with a stock of the latest fashions to sell from their homes in Doha by advertising online. Robina’s appointment to view fashion wear for sale took her to suburban addresses far from the downtown areas we had hitherto frequented. She visited three such vendors in total, the first one residing in noncompound and the subsequent two in compound (gated) accommodations. The trip to the home of the first clothing vendor (Zeenat) was very informal. At home with her two-year-old daughter, Zeenat made Robina feel like a

guest (rather than just a customer), serving tea and cakes and chatting. She seemed pleased to have the company and, on finding out that we were doing research on migrant experiences, was eager to narrate hers. It was five hours later when Zeenat organized a cab to take Robina back to the city center, offering an opportunity to interview the driver (Abdul), who serves this expatriate community. Such encounters tended to blur the boundaries between social activity and research that were at their sharpest in the downtown areas underlined by gender difference.

Our research conversations were framed by mutual perceptions of gender, ethnicity, class, and nationality. As a woman, Robina’s interactions with male migrants were guided by notions of Muslim morality as well as safety considerations and so took place mostly in commercial spaces such as a moving taxi or bus, a hotel, cafe, restaurant, or shop and were normalized by the need to access services. James’s conversations with male migrants also took place in commercial sites, but there were also more informal interactions/observations in parks and around mosques; quasi-public spheres constructed as masculine space. As was expected, men responded differently to James when alone with him. For example, although issues of intimacy or sexuality were not a research focus, informants were sometimes open about these issues, as part of the process of male camaraderie, even in relatively short and sometimes informal conversations with him.

Life Spaces and Labor in Doha

Velocity and Hierarchy: “Once Even a Dog Was Afraid to Come Here”

The range of our informants is indicative of labor hierarchies in Doha. Their place in the city’s fast-evolving spectacle is configured by the value attributed to different types of labor and the places of origin of

informants. Vora (2011, 2013), in her study of long-settled Indian gold merchants who are part of Dubai's entrepreneurial class, noted how despite being denied citizenship they have developed a strong sense of home and belonging in Dubai, fostered by their sense of contribution to the making of the Emirate. By contrast, the majority of our informants expressed a sense of being outsiders and a more tenuous sense of belonging. Perhaps this reflects the recentness of migrant flows to Qatar as part of the state's global trajectory. Yet even those who have been in Qatar for two or more decades appear less settled, partly because of the denial of citizenship to all foreigners but also due to a lack of recognition for their contribution to the making of Qatar. For South Asian labor, it also reflects the differing positions of Qatar and Dubai in the collective imagination. In contrast to Qatar, Dubai has long been a part of the South Asian imaginary, positioned as a destination of glitter and promise, promoting a sense of cultural familiarity and belonging. Notably, for our informants of all nationalities, Dubai is a routine point of comparison for Qatar, describing it as the new kid on the block but catching up at a frenzied pace. For example, a young hotel maintenance worker from Mumbai, Zulfikar, who has been in Doha for four years but previously has worked in UAE (Dubai and Al Ain), vehemently declared, "Of course Dubai is better. Qatar is at least ten to fifteen years behind Dubai." On a similar note, the first taxi driver (Dev) we used on arrival in Qatar told us that Qatar is becoming the new Dubai. He made this statement by way of explaining his confusion and difficulty in finding our hotel because of the extent of change in the urban landscape in recent years. He explained, "Now a lot of development has happened in this area [old Salata]. Before all this was just an empty space." The extent and speed of the transformation was again underlined by a limousine driver from Kerala, Abdul, who has worked in Doha for quarter of a century. He remarked that less than a decade ago, many areas now developed were just a barren desert, so much so that "at that time here, even a dog was afraid to come." A Sudanese hotel receptionist, Amina chose to work in Qatar rather than Dubai because of its perception as quiet and slower paced when compared with Dubai, which her parents believed carried greater dangers for young women. She had only been there a mere eighteen months and yet could not help remarking on the speed of change in Doha. "So much development has happened since I've been here. That strip of spectacular development in the financial district is also very recent; it's only been there since 2000." Informants repeatedly

affirm that their own presence here and Doha's restless cityscape reflects, in taxi driver Sadiq's terms, the changed status of the "newly wealthy Qataris."

Migrants' presence is organized across the city by state regulations and the rental market, reflecting the sociospatial hierarchies of difference that map onto the city. Through formal and informal means, the state utilizes space to manage difference to counter the perceived threats posed to the Qatari social order, values, and identity. All foreigners are viewed as posing some form of threat: The higher level European worker brings the risk of westernization and with it the potential corruption of Qatari women (see Kininmont 2013). The lower level so-called bachelors are feared for their potentially out-of-control sexuality that is believed to endanger women and family life and, as such, the social order. Thus, these differences must be quarantined to stem their contamination of conservative Qatari society (see Sarmadi 2013). Housing bachelors separately, away from the family areas of the city, limits the potential for encounter with Qataris (see also Justhere 2013). In this way, sociospatial hierarchies are also organized by the presence or absence of family, with the city divided into family neighborhoods in the suburbs and nonfamily, multioccupancy neighborhoods popularly referred to as bachelor accommodations that are more central. Family accommodation is further organized around insider-outsider status, with the Qataris in the inner suburbs and the professional classes of foreigners with families often clustering by nationality or ethnicity in compound and noncompound (gated) estates in the outer suburbs.

The old downtown areas such as Al Ghanim are a legacy of the pre-petrodollars era. They now comprise a mix of adobe (*al-ṭūb* in Arabic) huts, the housing vacated by the Qatari families as they moved out upon the acquisition of wealth, into newly built landed properties. Alongside these sit small cafes, grocery stores, and bakeries interspersed with vacant sites used as parking lots and a smattering of hotels and higher end shops more recently built or still under construction. Two frequent topics of conversation among our informants who live or work here are that "these areas are up for demolition" (Zulfikar) and the scale of the urban clearance that is scheduled to take place. This area is to be reclaimed as a new Qatari downtown (Salama and Wiedmann 2013), in a project being led by a company linked to the state-led Qatar Foundation (although subcontracted to a series of Gulf-based and multinational construction firms):



Figure 5. Clearance of dwellings in Al Ghanim, April 2015. (Color figure available online.)

Msheireb Downtown Doha will transform the centre of the capital city, recreating a way of living that is rooted in Qatari culture. Msheireb is the world's first sustainable downtown regeneration project, that will revive the old commercial district with a new architectural language that is modern, yet inspired by traditional Qatari heritage and architecture—its proportion, simplicity, space, light, layering, ornament and response to climate. (Msheireb Properties 2016)

Shopping malls, boutique shops, hotels, and upmarket residences are to replace the old migrant-inhabited housing, cafes and laundries, barbers and grocery stores, and an old shopping center that lacks the atriums and air conditioning of modern malls. During our four years of research, we have witnessed a piecemeal process of

clearance of old housing (Figure 5) that remains ongoing and have visited some of the newly developed migrant housing and commercial zones on the peripheries of Doha (Figure 6) to which migrants are required to relocate. A manager of a limousine company (Raja), for example, reflected on plans for the downtown areas:

This side, all of it is going to come down. Everybody has had a notice to vacate. They are going to destroy and then they are going to start work on the tube station. You can see the pictures here [hoardings marking the area have pictures of] . . . how it used to look like. There used to be more shops here. They have made a place for all these shops in Barwa village [a new mixed-use development about 10 km out]. It's like a big complex. It has lots of small, small shops. These people are being moved



Figure 6. Recently constructed migrant worker housing at Doha's outskirts. (Color figure available online.)

there. If they want to continue the shops, they can buy there. They have also made Barwa colony. It's like a big, cheap rate accommodation. So all the people that are staying here can shift [into that] and they will make this area into like a Paris or a London town with shopping. They don't want people to stay [live] around here.

Mujtaba, who has been in Doha for thirty-three years (although, like all our other informants, has no permanent residency) and owns a chain of textile shops, three of which were located in and around Al Ghanim, narrated the experience of displacement, disruption, and peripheralization of his business as a result of urban clearance and redevelopment:

I had a large shop that was demolished as part of the redevelopment of the area. We moved out to Barwa where we rented premises for 10,000 Qatari riyals/month but only made 12 riyals a day. I lost 400,000 riyals moving there so I had to give notice and get out of there. This shop [on the edge of Al Ghanim] is more central but I know we will have to move again.

Barwa, where people and businesses are to be rehoused, is much quieter, miles away, and not able to attract the numbers of visitors that frequent the malls or this old downtown area (prior to clearance) whose proximity to Souk Waqif encourages passing trade.

The view from our hotel in the old center (opposite the gold souk in Al Ghanim) overlooks a patchwork of dilapidated *al-ṭūb* huts. There is little evidence of conventional family life here and quite a stark absence of women. These dwellings are now multioccupancy, exclusively inhabited by South Asian male migrants. As Zulfikar informed us:

These mud huts are now home to the poorest sector workers many of whom work in construction and are provided money to find their own accommodation. They will earn around 1,200 to 1,300 Qatari riyals a month and pay 200 riyals for a bed space in housing that they may share with up to ten others.

There is a small mosque and a small park (Al Ghanim Al Qadeem) next to the roundabout at the nearby intersection of Mohd Bin Jabar Street and Ras Abu Aboud Street. The roundabout is known as the Pakistani signal because of the numbers of Pathans from northwest Pakistan residing in and around here and their conspicuous presence. North Indian Bahadur, born and raised in Doha, runs the laundry shop around the corner (that his father purchased after his retirement from Qatar petroleum) and shares a three-room *al-ṭūb* across the street, with seven compatriots. He told us:



Figure 7. Backstage dwellings. (Color figure available online.)

The Pathans are well established in this neighborhood and in Zamzam [around 11 km away]. They prefer being here because of the open verandas [Figures 7 and 8], style of the old properties here. This is what they are used to from back home. They wouldn't be able to live in high-rise apartments where it is all enclosed and there is no air.

The open veranda style means that groups of men are often visible from on high, going about their everyday life at home, shaving, bathing, cooking, and eating together all in the open air. Much of their lives are spent on the streets of Al Ghanim, which in contrast to the West Bay area—the financial district and its signature skyline—are on a human scale, humming with men engaging in a variety of activities. It is on and through these streets that these men forge social ties as they hang out together, pray, and “relax on the streets after work and on weekends” as we frequently observed:

The mosque, located next to Al Ghanim Al Qadeem Park, has the facilities of toilets and drinking water, making it a convenient spot for leisure. Laborers can use the toilets and water, and later at the prescribed time, go collectively to Friday prayers. The park also has two pergolas with seating and an open seating area. Friday morning at



Figure 8. Backstage dwellings. (Color figure available online.)

8 a.m. as I [Robina] walk out to get breakfast I note that the park is already full. It is the Muslim Sabbath and there are men everywhere. Some of the Pathans are chatting and some are resting with friends. Later in the day, worshippers flow out from the mosque greeting those who were unable to fit inside and have had to pray out on the street on mats [Figure 9]. Eventually they disperse and it is quiet until the next prayer time. (Field notes, November 2012)

The large groups of coethnic and compatriot men hanging out like this appear tightly bonded, a sociality described in other works on migrant movements in and across the region (Monsutti 2007; Ahmad 2009; Osella 2015). Among our informants, these bonds promote a strong sense of community, enabling men to counter some of the risks of being in Doha (e.g., the precariousness and illegality) with collective action such as setting up a hardship fund through

a committee which organizes a collection of 2 riyals per person per month for a hardship fund for supporting those that lose their jobs or can't find work, etc. Those that lose their jobs here rely very heavily on their friends for accommodation, food, and survival. (Bahadur)

Unlike those who are employed on two-year contracts, many of these men work as day laborers, putting them at greater risk of precariousness. Zulfikar pointed out the labor *mundy* (informal labor market [Figure 10]) that is opposite the gold souk, where Qataris go to hire skilled



Figure 9. Migrant worshippers overflow the mosque in Al Ghanim on a Friday. (Color figure available online.)

manual labor, plumbers, plasterers, carpenters, and the like. The labor *mundy* is another reason why the Pathans

prefer to be based in the center. [From the Al Ghanim Al Qadeem park] they can quickly walk down to the labor *mundy*. They need to get there early because the main business is conducted there between 4 a.m. and 6 a.m. Those sitting there after that time are clearly not going to get work.

Bahadur added:

The Pathans are strongly resisting a move from here because they will still need to be present in the central area in order to sell their labor and then they will have to organize transport and it is more costly.

Their numbers are most numerous at first light, but some remain on the streets looking for work into the



Figure 10. Casualized migrant labor markets. (Color figure available online.)

midmorning. During the last period of fieldwork, one of us [James] sat and observed the hiring process:

I unobtrusively stop and sit for 40 minutes. There are other pedestrian passers-by, perhaps about 50/hour. A few veiled women. But mostly other men, some in work overalls, all South Asian. There are no Qatari men at all who are walking further than from a parked car to an adjacent shop. Groups of Pakistani men dressed in *Shalwar Kameez* hang out and chat, some sit, some stand, they are cordial with each other and shake hands when greeting. It is all very relaxed and quiet until a van stops to hire them. They then run to the van—as many as a dozen men surround it. After less than 10 minutes, it has left with most of them. There is only one hiring episode in the 40 mins of a mid-morning that I am there. (Second author's field notes, October 2015)

The clearances of these inner-city areas coded in an official language of regeneration (Scharfenort 2013) are displacing these migrant worker communities, reconfiguring patterns of labor and sociality established over several decades. This represents a reclaiming of the city—wherein migrant workers are forced out to

purpose-built (peripheral) areas where they will be more tightly regulated and the emptied neighborhoods absorbed into a redeveloped downtown transformed into more glossy shopping malls and family sites, from where those classified as bachelors will be largely excluded (Kinnimont 2013). This redevelopment is at once an economic project, recycling petrodollars into real estate, and a political project of ordering and “Qatarizing” the inner city. Migrants will still be present but as workers, not residents. This form of what elsewhere has been termed *revanchist urbanism* (Smith 1996) articulates both economic motives and concerns with nation, identity, unity, and order. Such multiple drivers of revanchism have been charted in Western cities (Van Eijk 2010). In Qatar, they have acquired heightened forms.

Punctuated Lives: Globalization Through Segregation

As with other Persian Gulf countries, all migrant labor in Qatar is recruited and regulated through the *kafala* system. This regulatory framework sets the

sociospatial terms and the rhythms for the entry of migrant workers into Qatar. It “makes an individual national citizen or company sponsor (known as the *kafeel*) legally and economically responsible for the foreign worker for the *duration* of the contract period” (Lori 2012, 4, italics added). Most migrants are directly tied to an employer, but entrepreneurs and ad hoc laborers working more autonomously are only required to make an annual payment to their *kafeel* and, as elsewhere in Arabia, there are a range of ways in which the *kafala* system operates (Vora and Koch 2015). Once a migrant signs an employment contract, however, measures are in place to prevent him or her from terminating the contract prior to its completion. If the migrant takes up a different, more lucrative job, the penalty is that he or she must leave Qatar and is not eligible to return with another work visa for four years. One of the most important functions of the *kafala* system is to ensure that migrant labor enters Qatar as a “short-term guest” (Kinninmont 2013) using temporary contracts. This is also reinforced by the minimum salary requirement for bringing along families, which currently stands at over \$1,922 per month (Kinninmont 2013).

Echoing findings from other studies of transnational migrants elsewhere (Schiller, Basch and Szanton 1995), for the poorest workers this displacement of social reproduction to the homeland serves as a daily reminder of exclusion and their status as outsiders, hovering between the host and homeland nation-state, often with their mind in one and bodily presence in the other. The Shard (to which we return in the conclusions) might be a Qatari-owned skyscraper in London, but we might think of shards, too, as the splitting of people’s lives (between the lives migrants lead in Doha and their homelands). This forced temporality of punctuated lives that becomes a mode of “permanent temporariness” (Bailey et al. 2002) is an endurance for many workers at the lower end of the labor hierarchy, especially those who are newlyweds who might have to leave their spouses behind soon after marriage or those whose children are born and raised in their absence. Conversely, some of our interlocutors feel relieved not to have to share in the everyday struggles of raising their children and married life. As we discuss later, they can return home periodically, bearing gifts and enjoying the prestige and glamour attached to those who are working overseas. After a period of leisure, they can once again return to that other world of an all-male community away from

their main lives. In this sense, these punctuated lives invoke Bollywood, referred to as a *Cinema of Interruptions* (Gopalan 2002) because as a dream factory (a theme to which we return in our conclusion), the main narrative is frequently punctuated by fantasy sequences that take the viewers to glamorous locales away from their everyday lives. Their stints in Doha might not be lived quite like the fantasy sequences in Bollywood movies, but they could also be experienced as forms of escapism from the everyday responsibilities back home.

On completion of a contract, migrants will return to their homeland for stretches of between two and six months, usually but not always taking the form of concentrated family time. Iqbal, a shop assistant from Kerala, has been in Doha for twenty years after spending a year in Dubai. He reflected on his bifurcated work and family life:

In Doha I work from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. Where is the time to spend with a family? So what is the point in having the family here? I have two boys who are growing up in Kerala without me being around much. I go back every two years. Life is tough [away] from your families, all the holidays I will spend them away from my family.

Dev, a taxi driver who first arrived twenty-three years ago to take up a position in the Qatari army, is able to return home more frequently, working one year in Doha followed by five months back in Kerala. Similarly, Zahed, a waiter, has been in Doha twenty-two years, doing twelve- to eighteen-month contracts involving shift work, seven days. On completion, he returns to Bangladesh for three or four months. Another informant, Sammi, has worked in Doha since 1999 in a grocery shop first established by his brother in 1994. His brother also owns a real estate business in Dhaka, so the brothers alternate working between the two cities, spending half a year in each, allowing them to combine work and family time.

For some who are single, the rhythm and rationale of transnational laboring is about saving up for marriage. Aftab, a shop assistant working in a general store who is one year into his three-year contract, explained how this period in his life is for working intensively with little leisure time. He therefore envisaged working right “up to the very last minute before boarding a plane to Kerala.” At the end of this contract, he plans to return home for marriage, after which he will only spend six months overseas, alternating between Qatar and Kerala. Those on rolling contracts experience greater restrictions on time spent at home, as exemplified by a Filipina hotel receptionist, Rebecca, who is permitted only a month back in

the Philippines before returning to work for the same employer with a new contract. Those who are seeking a change of employer or host nation have greater flexibility over whether, when, and where they take up their next overseas job. Rajasthani taxi driver Rahul, for example, spent fourteen months at home on his return from working in Saudi Arabia. He built his own house before looking again for overseas work.

Some sustain this pattern of coming and going over decades. The narratives of many, however, both the most recently arrived as well as those like Iqbal, living for decades on and off away from their loved ones, are also saturated with an overwhelming sense of disillusionment and disappointment. Reflecting on why migrants keep coming despite frequent disappointments and struggle, Gardner (2012) noted the roles of poverty, structural violence, and contractual deception in the homeland and host nation. The lower class workers, who make up the majority of labor, talk repeatedly about the struggles they endure to get jobs in Doha, recounting the scams and deceptions of agents in the homeland to the misconceptions promoted by the Qatari state when hiring foreign labor. Akbar, for example, narrated the story of

my father who tried to come to the Gulf in 1979 and again in 1997. Each time the agent absconded with his money. The last time the agent took 108,000 Pakistani rupees (US\$5,700) and disappeared.

In a similar vein, David, who drives for the state-owned Karwa Taxis, informed us how during the interview process in Kenya the Qataris suggested:

I would be on a salary with a daily charge for the rental of the taxi but that never happened. They lied to me about my potential to make money here.

Yet more than these deceptions, it is the physically and economically oppressive conditions of working in Doha, doing daily battle to make enough money, that preoccupies them, often making them reluctant to return for another contract. As David (doing his first contract in Doha) told us:

It is very tough here. There is a lot of insecurity, financial and physical particularly for taxi drivers. You see this scar here [on forehead]; it is from when I was attacked by a Qatari. The guy stabbed me with a knife because he did not want to be kept waiting while I dealt with a passenger who was alighting.

Karwa taxi drivers, in particular, have also found themselves squeezed economically by the shift from

salaries to commission-only contracts on the one hand and intensified competition due to the growing number of new, private (often unlicensed) taxis serving Doha on the other. Balamuguntan is halfway through a two-year contract, having spent \$780 on a visa and travel to Doha, yet despite working eleven-hour shifts, he is simply not able to generate the level of income he expected for the costs involved in getting to Qatar and living away from his family. Additionally, many so-called bachelors are unhappy with their living conditions because accommodation with cooking facilities is often too costly or only available to married couples and families. Those who work for the government, like Karwa taxi and bus drivers and construction workers, reside in government-owned labor camps. Without cooking facilities, they are forced to use the camp canteen, which serves the cheapest, poorest quality food, unless, like Cyrus, the Filipino bus driver, they pay more and eat out. Many informants have shared their experiences of labor camp life, recounting a number of protests that have taken place in the camp regarding the quality of food, resulting in the deportation of some employees.

Shahid and Iqbal, both from Kerala, highlight how the economic conditions in the homeland leave them with little choice but to keep coming back. We first encountered Shahid in 2012 and then again in 2015. In 2012, he was eighteen months into his first contract as an assistant in a fabric shop and was already feeling very discontented. He vehemently declared that he was only completing his current contract (ending in March 2013) to cover the costs of his visa and travel (he was recruited from Kerala by the shop owners who themselves are from there) but was certain he would not be returning. Again, his issue was with his low income combined with the high cost of living. He grumbled that the accommodation he had found, despite not including cooking facilities, was costing him a quarter of his monthly salary, which meant a further fifth of his salary was spent on take-out food, leaving him too little to remit home. When we revisited the fabric shop in 2015 (which, although due for demolition, was still standing), we did not expect to encounter Shahid. Yet as we were enquiring about him, he suddenly appeared and sheepishly explained his presence by reference to his lack of judgment regarding his job. He informed us that a return to Kerala at the end of his contract had reminded him of the financial need to continue working in Doha. Iqbal, who, by contrast to Shahid has been in Doha for more than two decades, also underlined this point. For Iqbal a refusal of work in Qatar is a luxury that not everyone can afford. He was highly emotional

when he reflected on the constraints that keep him here, away from his home and family. As he spoke, his voice betrayed a deep sense of loss:

I have gotten through life this way. Those who come here end up remaining here—bound into a life as migrants. What can we do? It is a necessity!

Yet Iqbal also reminded us (and himself) that he is better off than are most migrants here. He works in a clean, air-conditioned environment, only a short walk from his air-conditioned accommodation. Cooking is shared with his three roommates, and by eating at home he avoids “outside food [that] is of poor quality” and is able to save 1,400 Qatari riyal per month. He went on to compare his own experience favorably with that of construction workers. Each day:

They are herded into vans, taking them to work and back. . . . I watch it all from here [the shop]. For those who are working in construction, it is very unpleasant: being in the searing heat all day and being paid only 800 Qatari riyals (equivalent to \$220) per month.

During our last conversation with Iqbal, an acquaintance of his approached us to collect money for his friend whose employer had retained his passport and had not paid him for more than six months, making it difficult to survive in Qatar or leave. If his friend took legal action, the employer could terminate his employment, making him illegal in the eyes of the state, while using his passport as a bargaining tool. Legal cases like this can drag on for years, leaving workers destitute and dependent on charity. It is little surprise then that Iqbal became consumed by the ways in which migrants’ dislocations can trap them in a matrix of exploitation and expectation, between “here” and “there”:

Can you imagine? You borrow money to come here, take on enormous debts to get work here and then you are not paid for months. Without money, you cannot stay here and neither can you go back because you owe money.

Some of those pauperized in this way recounted how, in David’s terms, “Qatar is just a desert.” David might have been simply drawing a contrast with the lush greenness of his native Kenya, but his tone suggested that this is not just about greenery but a sense that Qatar is a void, an uninhabitable and inhospitable place that is not nurturing of life. These are not the kind of images, however, that Gulf migrant laborers often convey to friends and family back home. They construct those images more carefully to enhance and

embellish their experiences of Doha for family and friends. Thus:

Middle class denizens of Qatar and other Gulf states are familiar with the sight of workers photographing one another in the green landscaped sites in front of shopping malls, in traffic circles, or along the Corniche. Perhaps what is less clear is that these sites are carefully selected by the migrants, and contrast sharply with the sites these men and women omit from their photographs. (Gardner 2012, 54)

Such frames of reference intersect with commoditized images to constitute

your extended family’s expectations of a relative in the Gulf. It is like they think that being in the Gulf, you are dripping in money. So many of your relatives ask you to take them, their sons, brothers, cousins to the Gulf so they can also get a piece of the pie but little do they realize how tough it is. That is why I won’t help anyone come here. (Iqbal)

Unlike the staging of power and wealth in Bollywood, for which Gulf cities are highly sought after as a backdrop (see Gupta 2014), experiences of migrant precarity frequently preclude happy endings, especially when fortune or the Gulf economies (Buckley 2012) face downturns.

Contrasting with the central districts, the suburban middle-class South Asian expatriate communities (many of whom are working for Qatar Gas and Petroleum) offer other windows into migrant experiences. In contrast to their poorer compatriots located in the central neighborhoods with whom they share religious and cultural commonalities, the professional classes are entitled to combine the labor of production and social reproduction within Qatar. Zeenat and her husband Riaz moved to Doha in 2011 (with their growing family), after four years in another Gulf sultanate. She grew up in Saudi Arabia and moved to Pakistan for her graduate studies. After completing her studies, she took up a human resources position, where she met and married Riaz. After marriage she left her job to follow her husband and his work. Riaz, who is in the human resources division of Qatar Petroleum, has also lived and worked in the Balkans and Central Asia. Spending a day in these middle-class suburbs of Doha highlights the extent to which migration experiences are shaped by class. For working-class male migrants, a spatialized gender division of labor is sharpened as it operates transnationally between the homeland and Qatar.

Equally, for professionals who are able to bring with them and maintain trailing spouses, the migration process serves to entrench gender divisions of labor locally. Zeenat and Riaz's stories, like those of other professionals, differ from people lower in the labor hierarchy. They highlight subtler forms of exclusion, which are nonetheless still acutely experienced. They talked about the ways in which Qataris dominate the roads or the ways in which they keep even professional foreigners "at arm's length," prohibiting integration "so that they never learn Arabic." Although their lives outside of work are materially fuller than the poorest of workers, their social lives are also largely restricted to their own community. Zeenat narrated how she and other stay-at-home wives combine philanthropy with pleasure by hosting fund-raising events including dinners and coffee mornings, passing the proceeds onto the Pakistani embassy for distribution locally. Like the solo male migrants in the city center, Zeenat and her husband also visit the homeland but rather than once every two years, they travel there twice per year. This also relates to Qatar's policy of denying Pakistani (and Indian) nationals tourist and social visit visas. It not only prohibits visits from family and friends but also acts as a sharp reminder of ethnonational marginality despite relative class privilege.

Conclusion

Our article's point of departure was the relationship of migrant labor to the formation (simultaneously physical, social, and cultural) of Doha's built environment. This provides a basis for scrutinizing Doha's role in the projection of Qatari state power at home and across the globe. We have drawn on the notion of a physical, geographical, theatrical, and temporal staging to explore its multidimensional (front and back, now and then, simultaneity) aspects implicated in the Qatari state's project for the pursuit of its global ambition. We situated Qatar within the region and elaborated on the state's global trajectory that has fueled a huge inward flow of migrants by foregrounding Doha's development. We organized the empirical study around the notions of stage in its physical or theatrical sense and also its temporal connotations. We then assessed the appeal of Doha for migrants and their more tenuous relationship to the host nation, highlighting the newness of Doha on the migrants' imaginary but also reflecting Qatar's new direction in its ambition.

For the Qatari state, managing migrant presence in the city is key to both the requirements of labor and also to contain influences regarded as foreign. In keeping with this, we elaborated on the ways in which migrants are ordered across the city and especially on the most precarious migrant workers of residing in the historic center, an area targeted for redevelopment. We highlighted the impact on migrant businesses and communities of revanchist redevelopment that reclaims the inner city for the commerce of Qatar's spectacle, albeit tempered here with references to sustainability and Qatari cultural values. Migrant landscapes, formed at a nexus of communities, services, and livelihoods, are being torn apart and reduced to rubble as the migrants face expulsion to stark, newly constructed housing (termed colonies) on the margins of Doha that are rigidly segregated and tightly surveilled.

The second section of the study explored the implications on migrants of the regulatory framework for labor that both manages inflows and the presence of migrants in Qatar (differentiated by class and to a lesser extent by nationality). For the poorest guest workers it serves to produce a fragmented temporality that we term punctuated lives. Migrants weigh up the costs and benefits of working far from home for long periods in the light of poorly performing local economies, unemployment, and precarity at home. Their efforts to obtain work overseas requires navigating a range of middlemen and fees along the way, the emotional shifts of being apart from family in the company of other men, and struggles to contain living costs to make the most money while there. When returning home, workers can enjoy a heroic welcome secure in the knowledge that they are a source of wealth and prestige for their families.

Whereas burgeoning international attention has focused on construction workers and the poorest workers in Gulf cities, our study, through reference to a wider range of sites, occupations, and class positions, signals the diversity of experiences in the context of Doha's development. Migrants' dislocations and adaptation reflect differential access to economic, social, and cultural capital. These hierarchies configure around family and bachelor neighborhoods, further divided around insider-outsider status. Interpreting these sociospatial divisions invites historical analogy, comparison, and contrast. Multiple subaltern circuits and nodes come into sight. Mediated movements of money and people embodied in and by the Persian Gulf pluralize

trajectories of urban modernity, pointing to wider issues of comparison in urban studies. These are both geographical (where or what and how Gulf cities are and read against) and historical (when or what they compare with). As we have argued elsewhere, drawing on the Abu Dhabi case (Mohammad and Sidaway 2012), foregrounding the connections of Persian Gulf cities supplements the current vogue for comparison in urban studies with “genealogies of co-production” (Mongha 2007, 411). This means being less fixated on the circulation of archetypes and spectacles to focus on state–labor–capital dynamics, the mediated movement of money and people.

It is notable, however, that writing on Gulf cities frequently compares them with science fiction worlds or stresses their artificial modernity. Yet rather than resort to scenes from *Blade Runner* (see Davis 2006) or fall into what Koch (2012) termed the Disney-stigma to depict Gulf cities, it might be more apt to invoke Bollywood’s scripting of heroes and antiheroes and the ever-tantalizing prospect of happiness, true love, or riches as a foil for their allure. Therefore, periods spent in Qatar recounted by many of our informants share Bollywood’s punctuations, sometimes tragic, sometimes romantic, frequently opulent, and enacted in wildly shifting locations, anywhere in the world, often as fantasies. Dasgupta (2006) described Bollywood movies as characterized by “desire-as-the-source-of-worlding” (7). Historically though, it was not Bollywood but rather British imperialism (Qatar was a British protectorate until 1971) that mediated Qatar’s worldliness. Moreover, today, in terms of the negotiation of difference, Gulf cities are analogous to a colonial city in their population and power structures, whereby a subject population grossly outnumbers an ethnically and culturally elite minority of governors. The use of the term *colonies* in reference to the new zones of worker housing on Doha’s outskirts also invites such an analogy. In the case of Doha, however, the nine-tenths majority is not an indigenous colonized population as in the age of European imperialism but migrant workers without the right of permanent residence.

Recent work on colonial cities goes beyond interpreting them as dual cities (for the colonizer and colonized) but rather points to the ways in which they were, as Legg (2007) argued, “governed as one and impacted on each other in myriad ways” (1). Similarly, the intersecting stages that our informants negotiate point to intersections between Qatar’s shifting role in the world and the sociospatial (re)worlding of Doha. It

is useful to think of Doha as addressing multiple front and back stages, integrating fiscal and other networks that connect it with the West but also extending into Asian and African migrant hinterlands. The backstage has been long in the making. It was formerly held together, like other imperial spaces of circulation such as the Bay of Bengal, “linked by journeys, memories and sinews of power” connecting Arabia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia (Amrith 2013, 285; see also Roy 2014) through European imperialism. More recently, it recomposed around postcolonial sovereigns and unevenly regulated and constituted circuits of people, representations, resources, and capital. The combination of narratives about “world-class cities” and actions of “upper class states” is hardly confined to Qatar, as recent critical studies of gentrification in India (Doshi 2015; Ghertner 2015), Abu Dhabi (Chakravarty and Qamhaieh 2015), and elsewhere (Lees, Shin, and López-Morales 2015) attest. However, via its regional and global projection, through the financial muscle of Qatari investments, Doha’s influence drives many other urban transformations.

Although the governance of migration and social difference in Western cities bear their own variants of marginality and belonging, a revanchist reworking of urban spaces now connects downtown Doha with the center of Qatar’s former colonial metropole. London’s Shard, which dominates the capital’s skyline, required Qatari money (whose investors hold an 80 percent stake). Prior to a July 2012 inauguration by Qatar’s Prime Minister (another member of the ruling Al-Thani dynasty) and Britain’s Prince Andrew, the Shard was described as a “tower of power and riches’ looking down on poverty” (Booth 2011), by virtue of its juxtaposition to some of the city’s poorest and most ethnically diverse wards. Scrutinizing these intersections and related genealogies of power, difference, and exclusion is an urgent task for urban geographers. In bearing witness to punctuated lives through successive interactions with migrants in Doha, our article simultaneously pursues grounded pathways and extends postcolonial lenses that we hope will broaden perspectives on these and other intersections of urban modernity.

Acknowledgments

We thank the editor Richard Wright and four anonymous referees for their helpful and encouraging comments on earlier drafts. We have also had useful feedback from audiences at the Department of Geography at the University of Durham and the British Society for Middle

Eastern Studies Conference at Sussex, England; the Annual Meeting of the AAG in Los Angeles; the Annual Conference of the The Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) in London; and the Social and Cultural Geographies Group at the National University of Singapore. Our experiences in Doha and its peers elsewhere in the Gulf were first enlivened by Jasmin Leila and subsequently by her brothers, Alexander Jahan Alif and Danni Jamil. We also wish to acknowledge Kharine Monteclaro Gara's assistance and perspective.

Funding

We were funded by a grant from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the National University of Singapore, "Crucibles of Globalization: Landscapes of Power, Security and Everyday Lives in Post-Colonial Asian Cities" (R-109-000-133-133).

References

- Adham, K. 2008. Rediscovering the island: Doha's urbanity from pearls to spectacle. In *The evolving Arab city: Tradition, modernity, and urban development*, ed. Y. Elshesh-tawy, 218–57. London and New York: Routledge.
- Ahmad, A. N. 2009. Bodies that (don't) matter: Desire, eroticism and melancholia in Pakistani labour migration. *Mobilities* 4:309–27.
- Alvandi, R. 2012. Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah: The origins of Iranian primacy in the Persian Gulf. *Diplomatic History* 36:337–72.
- Amnesty International. 2013. *The dark side of migration: Spotlight on Qatar's construction sector ahead of the World Cup*. London: Amnesty International.
- Amrith, S. S. 2013. *Crossing the Bay of Bengal: The furies of nature and the fortunes of migrants*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Aziz, O., and M. Hussain. 2014. Qatar's showcase of shame. *The New York Times* 5 January 2014. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/06/opinion/qatars-showcase-of-shame.html> (last accessed 15 July 2014).
- Bailey, A. J., R. A. Wright, A. Mountz, and I. M. Miyares. 2002. (Re)producing Salvadoran transnational geographies. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 92:125–44.
- Booth, R. 2011. London's Shard: A "tower of power and riches" looking down on poverty. *The Guardian* 30 December. <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2011/dec/30/shard-of-glass-london> (last accessed 12 October 2015).
- Buckley, M. 2012. From Kerala to Dubai and back again: Migrant construction workers and the global economic crisis. *Geoforum* 43 (2): 250–59.
- . 2014. On the work of urbanization: Migration, construction labor, and the commodity moment. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 104:338–47.
- Buckley, M., and A. Hanieh. 2014. Diversification by urbanization: Tracing the property–finance nexus in Dubai and the Gulf. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 38:155–75.
- Chakravarty, S., and A. Qamhaieh. 2015. City upgraded: Redesigning and disciplining downtown Abu Dhabi. In *Global gentrifications: Uneven development and displacement*, ed. L. Lees, L. H. B. Shin, and E. López-Morales, 59–80. Bristol, UK: Policy Press.
- Choplin, A., and A. Franck. 2010. A glimpse of Dubai in Khartoum and Nouakchott: Prestige urban projects on the margins of the Arab world. *Built Environment* 36:195–205.
- Cooke, M. 2014. *Tribal modern: Branding new nations in the Arab Gulf*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Dasgupta, P. 2006. Popular cinema, India and fantasy. In *Fingerprinting popular culture: The mythic and the iconic in Indian cinema*, ed. V. Lal and A. Nandy, 1–23. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Davis, M. 2006. Fear and money in Dubai. *New Left Review* 41:47–68.
- Derudder, B., D. Bassens, and F. Witlox. 2013. Political–geographic interpretations of massive air transport developments in Gulf cities. *Political Geography* 36:A4–A7.
- Doshi, S. 2015. Rethinking gentrification in India: Displacement, dispossession and the spectre of development. In *Global gentrifications: Uneven development and displacement*, ed. L. Lees, L. H. B. Shin, and E. López-Morales, 101–20. Bristol, UK: Policy Press.
- Eakin, H. 2011. The strange power of Qatar. *New York Review of Books* 27 October:43–45.
- Fromherz, A. J. 2012. *Qatar: A modern history*. London: I. B. Tauris.
- Gardner, A. M. 2010. *City of strangers: Gulf migration and the Indian community in Bahrain*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- . 2011. Gulf migration and the family. *Journal of Arabian Studies: Arabia, the Gulf and the Red Sea* 1 (1): 3–25.
- . 2012. Why do they keep coming? Labor migrants in the Persian Gulf states. In *Migrant labor in the Persian Gulf*, ed. M. Kamrava and Z. Babar, 41–58. London: Hurst.
- Gardner, A. M., S. Pessoa, A. Diop, K. Al-Ghanim, K. L. Trung, and L. Harkness. 2013. A portrait of low-income migrants in contemporary Qatar. *Journal of Arabian Studies: Arabia, the Gulf, and the Red Sea* 3 (1): 1–17.
- General Secretariat for Development Planning. 2008. *Qatar national vision 2030*. Doha, Qatar: GSDP. http://www.gsdp.gov.qa/portal/page/portal/gsdp_en/qatar_national_vision/qnv_2030_document (last accessed 14 July 2014).
- Gengler, J. 2013. Collective frustration, but no collective action, in Qatar. *Middle East Research and Information Project* 7 (December). <http://merip.org/mero/mero120713> (last accessed 10 January 2014).
- Ghertner, D. A. 2015. *Rule by aesthetics: World-class city making in Delhi*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Goffman, I. 1959. *The presentation of the self in everyday life*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor.
- Gopalan, L. 2002. *Cinema of interruptions: Action genres in contemporary Indian cinema*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

- Gupta, P. 2014. Bollywood takes Dubai. *Asharq Al-Awsat* (English edition) 23 January. <http://www.aawsat.net/2014/01/article55327808> (last accessed 2 December 2014).
- Haines, C. 2011. Cracks in the façade: Landscapes of hope and desire in Dubai. In *Worlding cities: Asian experiments and the art of being global*, ed. A. Roy and A. Ong, 160–81. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Hanieh, A. 2011a. *Capitalism and class in the Arab Gulf states*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- . 2011b. Finance, oil and the Arab uprisings: The global crisis and the Gulf states. In *The crisis and the Left: Socialist register 2012*, ed. L. Panitch, G. Albo, and V. Chibber, 176–99. London: Merlin.
- Human Rights Watch. 2012. *Building a better World Cup: Protecting migrant workers in Qatar ahead of FIFA 2022*. New York: Human Rights Watch.
- Hvidt, M. 2012. Planning for development in the GCC states: A content analysis of current development plans. *Journal of Arabian Studies: Arabia, the Gulf and the Red Sea* 2 (2): 189–207.
- Jureidini, R. 2014. *Migrant labour recruitment to Qatar: Report for Qatar Foundation Migrant Worker Welfare Initiative*. Doha, Qatar: Bloomsbury Qatar Foundation. http://www.qscience.com/userimages/ContentEditor/1404811243939/Migrant_Labour_Recruitment_to_Qatar_Web_Final.pdf (last accessed 15 July 2014).
- Justhere. 2013. No country for “bachelors” single men struggle to find accommodation in Qatar. <http://www.justhere.qa/2014/07/country-bachelors-single-men-struggle-find-accommodation-qatar/> (last accessed 21 October 2015).
- Kanna, A., ed. 2013. *The superlative city: Dubai and the urban condition in the early twenty-first century*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kinnimont, J. 2013. Qatar’s delicate balancing act. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-21029018> (last accessed 21 October 2015).
- Koch, N. 2012. Urban “utopias”: The Disney stigma and discourses of “false modernity.” *Environment and Planning A* 44:2445–62.
- Lees, L. H. B. Shin and E. López-Morales, eds. 2015. *Global gentrifications: Uneven development and displacement*. Bristol, UK: Policy Press.
- Legg, S. 2007. *Spaces of colonialism: Delhi’s urban governmentalities*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Lori, N. 2012. *Temporary workers or permanent migrants? The Kafala system and contestations over residency in the Arab Gulf states*. Paris: Institut Français des Relations Internationales.
- Mahdavi, P. 2011. *Gridlock: Labor, migration, and human trafficking in Dubai*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Mitchell, T. 2011. *Carbon democracy: Political power in the age of oil*. London: Verso.
- Mohammad, R., and J. D. Sidaway. 2012. Spectacular urbanization amidst variegated geographies of globalization: Learning from Abu Dhabi’s trajectory through the lives of South Asian men. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 36 (3): 606–27.
- Mongha, R. V. 2007. Historicizing state sovereignty: Inequality and the form of equivalence. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49 (2): 384–411.
- Monsutti, A. 2007. Migration as a rite of passage: Young Afghans building masculinity and adulthood in Iran. *Iranian Studies* 40 (2): 167–85.
- Msheireb Properties. 2016. Msheireb Properties. <http://mdd.msheireb.com/> (last accessed 2 March 2016).
- Nagy, S. 2000. Dressing up downtown: Urban development and government public image in Qatar. *City & Society* 12 (1): 125–47.
- . 2006. Making room for migrants, making sense of difference: Spatial and ideological expressions of social diversity in urban Qatar. *Urban Studies* 43:119–37.
- Onley, J. 2009. The raj reconsidered: British India’s informal empire and spheres of influence in Asia and Africa. *Asian Affairs* 40:44–62.
- Osella, F. 2015. Migration and the (im)morality of everyday life. In *Migrant encounters: Intimate labor, the state, and mobility across Asia*, ed. S. L. Friedman and P. Mahdavi, 46–67. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Pattison, P. 2013a. Nepalese workers flock to Gulf despite abuse. *The Guardian* 29 December. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/29/nepalese-workers-gulf-migration> (last accessed 15 July 2014).
- . 2013b. Revealed: Qatar’s World Cup “slaves.” *The Guardian* 25 September. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/25/revealed-qatars-world-cup-slaves> (last accessed 15 July 2014).
- Rizzo, A. 2013. Metro Doha. *Cities* 31:533–43.
- Roberts, D. 2014. *Qatar: Securing the global ambitions of a city-state*. London: Hurst.
- Rostow, W. W. 1960. *The stages of economic growth: A non-communist manifesto*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Roy, A. 2014. Worlding the South: Toward a post-colonial urban theory. In *The Routledge handbook on cities of the Global South*, ed. S. Parnell and S. Oldfield, 9–20. London and New York: Routledge.
- Salama, A. M., and F. Wiedmann. 2013. *Demystifying Doha: On architecture and urbanism in an emerging city*. Farnham, UK: Ashgate.
- Sarmadi, B. 2013. “Bachelor” in the city: Urban transformation and matter out of place in Dubai. *Journal of Arabian Studies: Arabia, the Gulf, and the Red Sea* 3 (2): 196–214.
- Scharfenort, N. 2013. In focus No. 1: Large-scale urban regeneration: A new “heart” for Doha. *Arabian Humanities* 2. <http://cy.revues.org/2532> (last accessed 5 July 2014).
- . 2014. Off and running: Qatar brands for FIFA World Cup, and life beyond. In *Under construction: Logics of urbanism in the Gulf region*, ed. S. Wippel, K. Bromber, C. Steiner, and B. Krawietz, 71–87. Farnham, UK: Ashgate.
- Schiller, G. N., L. Basch, and C. B. Szanton. 1995. From immigrant to transmigrant: Theorizing transnational migration. *Anthropology Quarterly* 68:48–63.
- Seshan, G. 2012. Migrants in Qatar: A socio-economic profile. *Journal of Arabian Studies* 27:157–71.
- Sidaway, J. D. 1998. What is in a gulf? From the “arc of crisis” to the Gulf War. In *Rethinking geopolitics*, ed. S. Dalby and G. Ó Tuathail, 224–39. London and New York: Routledge.
- Smith, N. 1996. *The new urban frontier: Gentrification and the revanchist city*. London and New York: Routledge.

- Ulrichsen, K. C. 2014. *Qatar and the Arab Spring*. London: Hurst.
- . 2016. *The Gulf states in international political economy*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Van Eijk, G. 2010. Exclusionary policies are not just about the “neoliberal city”: A critique of theories of urban revanchism and the case of Rotterdam. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 34:820–34.
- Vora, N. 2011. Unofficial citizens: Indian businessmen and the state-effect in Dubai UAE. *International Labor and Working Class History* 79:122–39.
- . 2013. *Impossible citizens: Dubai’s Indian diaspora*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Vora, N., and N. Koch. 2015. Everyday inclusions: Rethinking ethnocracy, kafala, and belonging in the Arabian peninsula. *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 15 (3): 540–52.
- Yetim, M. 2014. State-led change in Qatar in the wake of Arab Spring: Monarchical country, democratic stance? *Contemporary Review of the Middle East* 1 (4): 391–410.

ROBINA MOHAMMAD is a Visiting Research Fellow at the South Asian Studies Programme, National University of Singapore, Singapore 119260. E-mail: robina.mohammad@nus.edu.sg. Her research interests include transnational communities, feminist geographies, and South Asian popular culture.

JAMES D. SIDAWAY is Professor of Political Geography in the Department of Geography at the National University of Singapore, Singapore 117570. E-mail: geojds@nus.edu.sg. His research currently focuses on urban geopolitics, the history and philosophy of geography, and geographies of security and insecurity (“securityscapes”).